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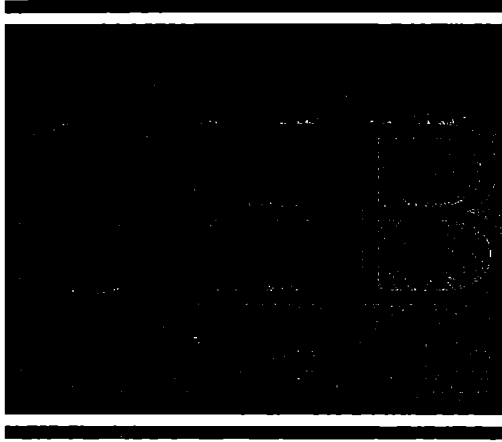
COMMON  
ENGLISH  
BIBLE





THE  
CEB  
**STUDY BIBLE**





**Joel B. Green**  
General Editor

COMMON  
ENGLISH  
BIBLE  


## **The CEB Study Bible**

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Typesetting: E.T. Lowe Publishing

Concordance: Glenn Weaver and BibleWorks software

Page design: Graphic World, Inc.

Cover design: Every Little Thing Studio

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 978-1-60926-028-6 Hardcover

ISBN 978-1-60926-040-8 Decotone

ISBN 978-1-60926-027-9 Bonded leather

ISBN 978-1-60926-029-3 Hardcover with Apocrypha

13 14 15 16 17 18 19—10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America

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1. The first step in the process of identifying a problem is to define the problem clearly. This involves identifying the symptoms and the underlying causes of the problem.

2. Once the problem has been defined, the next step is to gather information about the problem. This involves conducting research and consulting with experts in the field.

3. After gathering information, the next step is to analyze the information and identify the most likely causes of the problem. This involves using logical reasoning and critical thinking skills.

4. Once the causes of the problem have been identified, the next step is to develop a plan of action to address the problem. This involves setting goals and determining the steps that need to be taken.

5. The final step in the process is to implement the plan of action and monitor the results. This involves taking action on the plan and evaluating the progress made towards solving the problem.

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# INTRODUCTION



People turn to scripture for lots of reasons—for encouragement and challenge, for guidance and reflection, for study and prayer. For whatever reason you are opening the Bible today, undoubtedly you want not only to read the words of scripture but also to understand them. You've made a good beginning by choosing the Common English Bible, since it's one of the most readable translations available in the English language. Even so, while reading the Bible we sometimes stumble over events we're not sure about and customs that seem strange to us. Sometimes we need some help understanding the story line of a narrative or grasping an image introduced by a prophet. To address questions like these, we've asked experts on each book of the Bible to provide reliable help for reading that book.

Consider a story from the book of Acts. In chapter 8 we read about an encounter between a Christ-follower named Philip and an Ethiopian man who was on his way home after a visit to Jerusalem. Along the way, the Ethiopian was reading from the book of Isaiah. When Philip saw this, he asked, "Do you really understand what you are reading?" The Ethiopian responded, "Without someone to guide me, how could I?" (Acts 8:30-31). Many of us have had this kind of experience. We understand the words on the page well enough, but we need something more—some context, some background, a little guidance.

We've prepared *The CEB Study Bible* to provide ordinary Bible readers and reading groups with guidance for learning and understanding. We've worked to explain such things as the culture of these writers and books, historical background, the way biblical books relate to each other, difficult translation issues, and more. We've provided the kind of information that helps to make sense of texts but that isn't actually mentioned by the text itself—the kind of information often assumed by the writers and early readers of the biblical texts. How do we understand a text within the larger book in which we find it? What background knowledge sheds light on a text? What are some of the important theological issues raised by these texts? Our study notes, cross references, maps, concordance, and introductory essays won't do all of the work of interpreting a text. We think that the study helps in a Bible shouldn't replace the biblical text but should help to open it up to our understanding as we seek to hear these texts speak today.

People turn to scripture for many reasons. Most of us come to the Bible because of its centrality to our faith. We trust God to use *The CEB Study Bible* as a tool to strengthen the faith of God's people.

For the Editors  
Joel B. Green



# PREFACE TO THE COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE

The King James Version of the Bible was published in 1611. For two centuries the KJV competed for readership with the Geneva Bible. However, by the nineteenth century in America, the KJV would be described as the “common English Bible,” because it was the most widely used translation of Christian scripture. Numerous translations have appeared since that time. However, it has proved difficult to combine concern for accuracy and accessibility in one translation that the typical reader or worshipper would be able to understand. Therefore, readers in the twenty-first century, four hundred years after the creation of the KJV, need and deserve a new translation that is suitable for personal devotion, for communal worship, and for classroom study.

The Common English Bible (CEB), completed in 2011, is a fresh translation of the Bible. Some editions include the books of the Apocrypha that are used in Anglican, Orthodox, and Catholic congregations. The translation is sponsored by the Common English Bible Committee, which is an alliance of denominational publishers, including Presbyterian (USA), Episcopalian, United Methodist, Disciples of Christ, and United Church of Christ representatives.

One hundred twenty biblical scholars from twenty-two faith traditions worked as translators for the CEB. In addition, members of seventy-seven reading groups from congregations throughout North America reviewed and responded to early drafts of the translation. As a result, more than five hundred individuals were integrally involved in the preparation of the CEB. These individuals represent the sorts of diversity that permit this new translation to speak to people of various religious convictions and different social locations.

The translators, reviewers, and editors represent the following faith communities: African Methodist Episcopal Church, American Baptist, Anglican, Baptist, Baptist General Conference, Church of the Nazarene, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Free Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Free Methodist, Mennonite, Moravian, National Baptist, Presbyterian (USA), Progressive National Baptist, Quaker, Reformed Church in America, Reform Judaism, Roman Catholic Church, Seventh-day Adventist, United Churches of Christ, and United Methodist. The CEB is truly a Bible created by churches and for the Church.

*Accuracy and clarity.* The CEB translators balance rigorous accuracy in the rendition of ancient texts with an equally passionate commitment to clarity of expression in the target language. Translators create sentences and choose vocabulary that will be readily understood when the biblical text is read aloud. Two examples illustrate this concern for accuracy and clarity.

First, *ben 'adam* (Hebrew) and *huios tou anthrōpou* (Greek) are best translated as “human being” (rather than “son of man”) except in cases of direct address, where CEB renders “human one” (instead of “son of man” or “mortal”; e.g., Ezek 2:1). When *ho huios tou anthrōpou* is used as a title for Jesus, the CEB refers to Jesus as “the Human One.” People who have grown accustomed to hearing Jesus refer to himself in the Gospels as “the Son of Man” may find this jarring. Why “Human One”? Jesus’ primary language would have been Aramaic, so he would have used the Aramaic phrase *bar enosha*. This phrase has the sense of “a human” or “a human such as I.” This phrase was taken over into Greek in a phrase that might be translated woodenly as “son of humanity.” However, Greek usage often refers to “a son of x” in the sense of “one who has the character of x.” For example, Luke 10:6 refers in Greek to “a son of peace,” a phrase that

has the sense of “one who shares in peace.” In the Greek of Acts 13:10 Paul calls a sorcerer “a son of the devil.” This is not a reference to the sorcerer’s actual ancestry, but it serves to identify his character. He is devilish—or more simply in English “a devil.” Human or human one represents accurately the Aramaic and Greek idioms and reflects common English usage. Finally, many references to Jesus as “the Human One” refer back to Daniel 7:13, where Daniel “saw one like a human being” (Greek *huios anthropou*). By using the title Human One in the Gospels and Acts, the CEB preserves this connection to Daniel’s vision.

Second, the phrase “Lord of hosts” (*Yahweh sebaoth* in Hebrew; *Kyrios sabaoth* in Greek) appears hundreds of times in older Bibles and persists as an idiom in translations that preserve King James usage. This archaic translation is no longer meaningful to most English speakers. The CEB renders *Yahweh sebaoth* and *Kyrios sabaoth* as “Lord of heavenly forces,” which conveys accurately the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek phrases by using contemporary English language.

English speakers, especially when telling a story, writing a letter, or engaging in conversation, make frequent use of contractions. As a result, translators have often used contractions, particularly in direct speech, in the CEB. However, formal genres of literature typically do not include contractions. As a result, translators did not include contractions in contexts such as (a) formal trials or royal interviews (socially formal situations), (b) much divine discourse (e.g., Hos 11:9; Exod 24:12), and (c) poetic and/or liturgical discourse (several types of psalms).

*Texts.* Translators of the Old Testament used as their base text the Masoretic Text (MT) as found in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and the published fascicles of *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*. For some books the Hebrew University Bible Project was consulted. Judicious departures from the Masoretic Text, based on ancient manuscript (e.g., reading with the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1 Sam 10:27b or Deut 32:8) and versional evidence (e.g., reading with the Septuagint in Gen 4:8), were sometimes necessary. In those situations, in which one may postulate two literary editions of a biblical book, or in which there are major or lengthy differences between the Masoretic Text and other texts or versions (e.g., 1 Sam 17), the CEB translated the edition that became canon in the Masoretic Text.

Translators of the New Testament used as their base text the eclectic Greek text known as Nestle Aland, the twenty-seventh edition, which was published in 1993.

Translators of the Apocrypha faced a more complicated set of choices. Translators generally used the base text presented in the Göttingen Septuagint. For those books not yet published in the fascicles of the Göttingen Septuagint, translators used the 2006 revised edition of Rahlfs’ Septuaginta, edited by Robert Hanhart. However, in those instances in which Hebrew texts have survived and offer a better reading (e.g., in Sirach and Tobit), the translator noted alternative readings to the Greek Septuagint. Second Esdras presents a special problem, explained in a footnote about the Latin text.

*Footnotes.* Translators decided, in certain instances, that they should explain their translations or textual decisions. However, notes are kept to a minimum and are rendered with utmost concision. Such notes when present offer: (a) evidence from ancient texts and versions (e.g., LXX; MT *men of*); (b) brief philological comment (e.g., Heb uncertain); (c) explanations of anomalies in versification (e.g., Acts 8:37: Critical editions of the Gk New Testament do not include 8:37 *Philip said to him, “If you believe with your whole heart, you can be.” The eunuch answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is God’s Son”*); (d) citations of the Old Testament in the New Testament; and rarely (e) alternative translations (e.g., *Or everyone*). In those instances in which the Old Testament is cited in the New Testament, the quoted text is set in italic font.

*Measurements.* When possible, the CEB converts linear and spatial dimensions to feet and inches. Thus archaic terms such as rods, cubits, spans, handbreadths, and fingerbreadths are replaced with feet and inches. For example, Genesis 6:15 gives the dimensions of Noah's ark in 'ammah or "forearms." Most translations since the KJV use the archaic English cubit to translate 'ammah: "the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits." The CEB translates the dimensions of the ark as "four hundred fifty feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and forty-five feet high."

The CEB prefers to transliterate (rather than translate) measurements of capacity, both wet (e.g., bath) and dry (e.g., homer), as well as measurements of weight (e.g., kikkar). When feasible, a footnote is allowed to calculate the rough equivalent in a U.S. English measurement, such as quarts.

Monetary values are inherently relative, and prices are constantly changing. Therefore, the CEB prefers to transliterate (rather than translate) monetary weights (e.g., shekel) and coins (e.g., denarion).

Months in the biblical lunar calendar are transliterated, with a footnote to indicate the approximate month or months in the Gregorian solar calendar (e.g., Nisan is March–April).

*Pronouns.* In ancient Hebrew and Greek a pronoun is often bound with the verb. If the translator is too literal, the English reader loses the antecedent of the pronoun so that one cannot tell who is speaking or acting in the sentence or paragraph. This problem occurs throughout much biblical literature. The CEB addresses this issue by substituting a noun for a pronoun, but only when the antecedent is clear. Because this problem and its resolution are so common, the CEB usually does not offer footnotes to identify these substitutions. CEB translators also use gender-inclusive or neutral syntax for translating pronouns that refer to humans, unless context requires otherwise.

*Consistency.* Although translators often try to use the same English word for a Hebrew or Greek word, many words in any language offer a breadth of meanings that do not readily correlate with a single word in the target language. For example, the Hebrew word *torah*, which has often been translated as Law, is often better translated as Instruction. The same could be said for Sheol (Hebrew) and Hades (Greek). The CEB translates these two terms as "grave" or "death" and "underworld" or "hell," respectively depending on context. A mechanical selection of any one term for words that involve semantic breadth would preclude a translation sensitive to the originating literary context.

The women and men who participated in the creation of the CEB hope that those who read and study it will find the translation to be an accurate, clear, and inspiring version of Christian scripture.

The Editorial Board of the Common English Bible  
[www.CommonEnglishBible.com](http://www.CommonEnglishBible.com)

1. The first step in the process of identifying a problem is to define the problem clearly. This involves identifying the symptoms and the underlying causes of the problem.

2. The second step is to gather information about the problem. This involves collecting data and consulting with others who may have experience with the problem.

3. The third step is to analyze the information and identify the root cause of the problem. This involves using logical reasoning and critical thinking to determine the most likely cause of the problem.

4. The fourth step is to develop a plan of action to address the problem. This involves identifying the steps that need to be taken to solve the problem and determining the resources that will be needed to implement the plan.

5. The fifth step is to implement the plan and monitor the results. This involves putting the plan into action and tracking the progress of the solution to ensure that the problem is being resolved.

6. The sixth step is to evaluate the solution and determine if the problem has been resolved. This involves assessing the effectiveness of the solution and identifying any areas for improvement.

7. The seventh step is to communicate the results of the solution to the relevant stakeholders. This involves sharing the findings and the actions that were taken to solve the problem.

8. The eighth step is to document the solution and the lessons learned. This involves creating a record of the problem-solving process and the actions that were taken to resolve the problem.

# ABBREVIATIONS, TERMS, AND SOURCES

## Abbreviations and Terms

**Aram** Aramaic

**AP** Apocrypha

**BCE** Before the Common Era; traditionally BC: before Christ

**CE** Common Era; traditionally Anno Domini: year since the Lord's birth

**cf** compare

**chap** chapter

**Gk** Greek. **Gk uncertain** The meaning of the Greek text is uncertain.

**Heb** Hebrew. **Heb uncertain** The meaning of the Hebrew text is uncertain.

**Kethib** Aramaic term meaning what is written (the written consonantal text)

**Lat** Latin

**NT** New Testament

**OT** Old Testament

**pl** plural

**Qere** Aramaic term meaning what is read aloud (the vocalized text)

**Selah** Musical direction of uncertain meaning found in Psalms

## Sources

**DSS** Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran

(**1QIsa<sup>a</sup>**) Isaiah scroll *a* in Cave 1 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

(**1QDeut<sup>b</sup>**) Deuteronomy scroll *b* in Cave 1 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

(**4QDeut<sup>b</sup>**) Deuteronomy scroll *b* in Cave 4 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

(**4QDeut<sup>h</sup>**) Deuteronomy scroll *h* in Cave 4 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

(**4QDeut<sup>j</sup>**) Deuteronomy scroll *j* in Cave 4 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

(**4QDeut<sup>q</sup>**) Deuteronomy scroll *q* in Cave 4 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

(**4QPhyl<sup>n</sup>**) Phylactery scroll *n* in Cave 4 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

(**4QSam<sup>a</sup>**) Samuel scroll *a* in Cave 4 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

(**4QSam<sup>b</sup>**) Samuel scroll *b* in Cave 4 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

(**4QSam<sup>c</sup>**) Samuel scroll *c* in Cave 4 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

(**4QTest**) Testimonia in Cave 4 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

(**8QMez**) Mezuzah scroll in Cave 8 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

(**11QPs<sup>a</sup>**) Psalms scroll *a* in Cave 11 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

**Eth** Ethiopic translation of 2 Esdras in the Ge'ez language

**Josephus Ant.** Works of Flavius Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews

**LXX** Septuagint; Greek translation of Hebrew Bible by seventy translators

**LXX<sup>A</sup>** In Samuel, the Greek uncial Alexandrinus

**LXX<sup>B</sup>** In Samuel, the Greek uncial Vaticanus

**LXX<sup>L</sup>** In Samuel, Lucianic Greek manuscripts

**LXX<sup>M</sup>** In Samuel, the Greek uncial Coislinianus

**LXX<sup>N</sup>** In Samuel, the Greek uncials Basilianus and Vaticanus

**LXX<sup>1</sup>** In Tobit, the Greek uncial Sinaiticus

**LXX<sup>2</sup>** In Tobit, the Greek uncials Alexandrinus and Vaticanus

**LXX<sup>a</sup>** in Sirach the Greek uncials Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, and Vaticanus

**LXX<sup>b</sup>** in Sirach the Origenic and Lucianic Greek manuscripts

**MT** Masoretic Text; the Hebrew Bible

**OL** Old Latin; manuscripts in Latin prior to the Vulgate

**Sam** Samaritan Hebrew text of the Old Testament

**Sym** Greek version of the Old Testament translated by Symmachus

**Syr** Syriac, a translation known as the Peshitta in a dialect of the Aramaic language

**Tg** Targum; Aramaic translation of Hebrew Bible

**Vulg** Vulgate; standardized Latin version of the Bible





# BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Books of the OT, NT, and Apocrypha in alphabetical order. The first abbreviation is the CEB standard; the second is the form used in the cross references and the concordance.

Acts . . . . .	Acts . . . . .	Ac	Leviticus . . . . .	Lev . . . . .	Lv
Amos . . . . .	Amos . . . . .	Am	Luke . . . . .	Luke . . . . .	Lk
Baruch . . . . .	Bar . . . . .	Bar	1 Maccabees . . . . .	1 Macc . . . . .	1Macc
Bel and the Snake . . . . .	Bel . . . . .	Bel	2 Maccabees . . . . .	2 Macc . . . . .	2Macc
1 Chronicles . . . . .	1 Chron . . . . .	1Ch	3 Maccabees . . . . .	3 Macc . . . . .	3Macc
2 Chronicles . . . . .	2 Chron . . . . .	2Ch	4 Maccabees . . . . .	4 Macc . . . . .	4Macc
Daniel . . . . .	Dan . . . . .	Dn	Malachi . . . . .	Mal . . . . .	Mal
Deuteronomy . . . . .	Deut . . . . .	Dt	Mark . . . . .	Mark . . . . .	Mk
Ecclesiastes . . . . .	Ecdl . . . . .	Ecc	Matthew . . . . .	Matt . . . . .	Mt
Ephesians . . . . .	Eph . . . . .	Eph	Micah . . . . .	Mic . . . . .	Mi
1 Esdras . . . . .	1 Esdr . . . . .	1Esd	Nahum . . . . .	Nah . . . . .	Na
2 Esdras . . . . .	2 Esdr . . . . .	2Esd	Nehemiah . . . . .	Neh . . . . .	Neh
Esther . . . . .	Esth . . . . .	Est	Numbers . . . . .	Num . . . . .	Nm
Esther (Greek) . . . . .	Gk Esth . . . . .	GkEst	Obadiah . . . . .	Obad . . . . .	Obad
Exodus . . . . .	Exod . . . . .	Ex	1 Peter . . . . .	1 Pet . . . . .	1Pt
Ezekiel . . . . .	Ezek . . . . .	Eze	2 Peter . . . . .	2 Pet . . . . .	2Pt
Ezra . . . . .	Ezra . . . . .	Ezr	Philemon . . . . .	Phlm . . . . .	Phm
Galatians . . . . .	Gal . . . . .	Ga	Philippians . . . . .	Phil . . . . .	Phi
Genesis . . . . .	Gen . . . . .	Gn	Prayer of Azariah . . . . .	Pr Azar . . . . .	PrAz
Habakkuk . . . . .	Hab . . . . .	Hab	Prayer of Manasseh . . . . .	Pr Man . . . . .	PrMan
Haggai . . . . .	Hag . . . . .	Hg	Proverbs . . . . .	Prov . . . . .	Prv
Hebrews . . . . .	Heb . . . . .	Heb	Psalms . . . . .	Ps . . . . .	Ps
Hosea . . . . .	Hos . . . . .	Hos	Psalm 151 . . . . .	Ps 151 . . . . .	Ps151
Isaiah . . . . .	Isa . . . . .	Is	Revelation . . . . .	Rev . . . . .	Rev
James . . . . .	Jas . . . . .	Jas	Romans . . . . .	Rom . . . . .	Ro
Jeremiah . . . . .	Jer . . . . .	Jer	Ruth . . . . .	Ruth . . . . .	Ru
Job . . . . .	Job . . . . .	Job	1 Samuel . . . . .	1 Sam . . . . .	1Sa
Joel . . . . .	Joel . . . . .	Jl	2 Samuel . . . . .	2 Sam . . . . .	2Sa
John . . . . .	John . . . . .	Jn	Sirach . . . . .	Sir . . . . .	Sir
1 John . . . . .	1 John . . . . .	1Jn	Song of Songs . . . . .	Song . . . . .	Song
2 John . . . . .	2 John . . . . .	2Jn	Susanna . . . . .	Sus . . . . .	Sus
3 John . . . . .	3 John . . . . .	3Jn	1 Thessalonians . . . . .	1 Thess . . . . .	1Th
Jonah . . . . .	Jon . . . . .	Jon	2 Thessalonians . . . . .	2 Thess . . . . .	2Th
Joshua . . . . .	Josh . . . . .	Josh	1 Timothy . . . . .	1 Tim . . . . .	1Ti
Jude . . . . .	Jude . . . . .	Jud	2 Timothy . . . . .	2 Tim . . . . .	2Ti
Judges . . . . .	Judg . . . . .	Jgs	Titus . . . . .	Titus . . . . .	Ti
Judith . . . . .	Jdt . . . . .	Jdt	Tobit . . . . .	Tob . . . . .	Tob
1 Kings . . . . .	1 Kgs . . . . .	1Ki	Wisdom of Solomon . . . . .	Wis . . . . .	Wis
2 Kings . . . . .	2 Kgs . . . . .	2Ki	Zechariah . . . . .	Zech . . . . .	Zec
Lamentations . . . . .	Lam . . . . .	Lam	Zephaniah . . . . .	Zeph . . . . .	Zep
Letter of Jeremiah . . . . .	Ltr Jer . . . . .	LJer			

Year	Country	Value	Unit
1980	USA	100	1000
1981	USA	105	1000
1982	USA	110	1000
1983	USA	115	1000
1984	USA	120	1000
1985	USA	125	1000
1986	USA	130	1000
1987	USA	135	1000
1988	USA	140	1000
1989	USA	145	1000
1990	USA	150	1000
1991	USA	155	1000
1992	USA	160	1000
1993	USA	165	1000
1994	USA	170	1000
1995	USA	175	1000
1996	USA	180	1000
1997	USA	185	1000
1998	USA	190	1000
1999	USA	195	1000
2000	USA	200	1000
2001	USA	205	1000
2002	USA	210	1000
2003	USA	215	1000
2004	USA	220	1000
2005	USA	225	1000
2006	USA	230	1000
2007	USA	235	1000
2008	USA	240	1000
2009	USA	245	1000
2010	USA	250	1000
2011	USA	255	1000
2012	USA	260	1000
2013	USA	265	1000
2014	USA	270	1000
2015	USA	275	1000
2016	USA	280	1000
2017	USA	285	1000
2018	USA	290	1000
2019	USA	295	1000
2020	USA	300	1000
2021	USA	305	1000
2022	USA	310	1000
2023	USA	315	1000
2024	USA	320	1000
2025	USA	325	1000
2026	USA	330	1000
2027	USA	335	1000
2028	USA	340	1000
2029	USA	345	1000
2030	USA	350	1000
2031	USA	355	1000
2032	USA	360	1000
2033	USA	365	1000
2034	USA	370	1000
2035	USA	375	1000
2036	USA	380	1000
2037	USA	385	1000
2038	USA	390	1000
2039	USA	395	1000
2040	USA	400	1000
2041	USA	405	1000
2042	USA	410	1000
2043	USA	415	1000
2044	USA	420	1000
2045	USA	425	1000
2046	USA	430	1000
2047	USA	435	1000
2048	USA	440	1000
2049	USA	445	1000
2050	USA	450	1000

# MEASURES

## Capacity and linear measures

**ammah** length of a forearm, standardized at eighteen inches; traditionally a cubit

**bath** a liquid measure equivalent to approximately twenty quarts

**ephah** a dry measure for flour or grains, approximately twenty quarts (five gallons)

**etsbah** length of the finger or thumb; traditionally a fingerbreadth

**hin** a liquid measure for wine or water, approximately one gallon

**homer** the largest dry measure, fifty gallons, equivalent to ten ephah

**issaron** one-tenth of an unknown weight; possibly an equivalent for omer

**kab** an unknown measure in 2 Kgs 6:25

**kor** a dry measure for grain, possibly equal to a homer; approximately fifty gallons as a liquid measure in Ezekiel

**litra** a Roman pound equal to approximately twelve ounces dry

**log** a liquid measure for oil in Leviticus, approximately two-thirds of a pint

**metretes** a liquid measure of approximately ten gallons

**million** a mile; a Roman mile was 1,000 paces or approximately 4,855 feet

**omer** one-tenth of an ephah or two quarts dry

**pechon** approximately eighteen inches; traditionally a cubit

**pim** two-thirds of a shekel

**qaneh** a measuring rod in Ezekiel equivalent to six ammah or nine feet

**seah** a dry measure of grain, possibly seven and a half quarts but may be smaller amount in Genesis

**shearim** an unknown dry measure of grain

**stadion** a Roman linear measurement of approximately 607 feet

**tefakh or tofakh** width of the hand at the base of the fingers; traditionally a handbreadth or a palm

**tsimdo** traditionally an acre, the area that a team can plow in a day

**zereth** distance between tip of thumb to little finger; traditionally a span

## Monetary measures

**beqa** one-half shekel, typically one-fifth of an ounce; ten or twelve gerahs

**daric** a gold Persian coin named after Darius 1, weighing one-third of an ounce

**denarion, denaria (pl)** a coin equivalent in value to one day's work

**drachme, drachmen (pl)** a silver coin equivalent in value to a denarion; also possibly a daric

**gerah** one-twentieth or one twenty-fourth of a shekel

**kikkar** a unit of weight in the common shekel system; traditionally a talent

**kodrantas** a coin equivalent to two lepta

**lepto** a coin equivalent to one 128th of a denarion

**maneh** in the Old Testament possibly fifty or sixty sanctuary shekels; in the New Testament a monetary unit equivalent to one hundred denaria

**shekel** basic measure, typically two-fifths of an ounce, for three monetary weight systems attested in the Old Testament: the royal shekel, the sanctuary shekel, and the common shekel

**talanta** a coin equivalent to six thousand denaria; traditionally a talent. In the Greek period, one talent is approximately 57 pounds of weight.

**qesitah** an unknown monetary weight



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The Ancestors in Their Environment . . . . .	24 OT
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Temple and Name . . . . .	534 OT
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Idolatry . . . . .	540 OT
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The Heavens . . . . .	368 NT
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God's Name . . . . .	1546 OT	The Love Commandment . . . . .	186 OT
God's People, North or South . . . . .	683 OT	Loyal Living . . . . .	414 OT
God's Response to Prayer in Chronicles . . . . .	649 OT	Masters, Managers, and Servants . . . . .	138 NT
God's Word . . . . .	1265 OT	Meat . . . . .	173 OT
The Gold Bull Calf . . . . .	138 OT	The Mesha Inscription . . . . .	573 OT
Hallelu-yah ("Praise the LORD!") Collections . . . . .	956 OT	The Moral Dilemma of the Sacrifice of Isaac . . . . .	37 OT
The Heart . . . . .	1526 OT	Moses . . . . .	328 OT
The Heavens . . . . .	368 NT	Moses and Joshua, David and Solomon . . . . .	539 OT
Holy War . . . . .	235 OT	Moses and Paul . . . . .	341 NT
Holy War and Violence . . . . .	407 OT	Moses and the Story of Sargon . . . . .	85 OT
Hope in the Resurrection . . . . .	266 NT	Mourning Customs . . . . .	1449 OT
Hosea and the Book of the Twelve . . . . .	1431 OT	Music and Singing . . . . .	875 OT
Hospitality . . . . .	491 NT	Name as Identity . . . . .	1032 OT
The Household Code . . . . .	370 NT	Narratives Concerning Hezekiah . . . . .	1149 OT
The Human One in Daniel . . . . .	1411 OT	Nebuzaradan . . . . .	1274 OT
The Human One in Luke . . . . .	117 NT	The New Covenant . . . . .	1261 OT
The Human One in Mark . . . . .	97 NT	Old and New Covenants . . . . .	443 NT
"I Am Among You as One Who Serves" . . . . .	165 NT	On God and the Gods . . . . .	1162 OT
Idolatry . . . . .	540 OT	Only God Brings Security . . . . .	688 OT
Imperial Boasting and Divine Power . . . . .	1111 OT	Oracles Against the Nations . . . . .	1355 OT
In God's Image . . . . .	5 OT	Oracles Concerning the Whole Earth . . . . .	1128 OT
Individual Retribution . . . . .	1343 OT	Oral Law and Written Law . . . . .	35 NT
Instruction Scroll . . . . .	329 OT	OT Sacrifices . . . . .	445 NT
Instruction Scroll . . . . .	610 OT	Paul and Judaism . . . . .	378 NT
Isaiah 60–62 . . . . .	1194 OT	Paul's Arrests . . . . .	251 NT
Israel among the Nations . . . . .	18 OT	Paul's Defense Speeches . . . . .	263 NT
Israel's Scriptures . . . . .	14 NT	Paul's Opponents in Corinth . . . . .	348 NT
Jealous God . . . . .	364 OT	Pharaoh's Stubbornness . . . . .	96 OT
Jerusalem . . . . .	480 OT	Pharisees . . . . .	118 NT
The Jerusalem Council . . . . .	249 NT	Pharisees and Sadducees . . . . .	37 NT
Jesus' Farewell Speech . . . . .	202 NT	The Philistines . . . . .	427 OT
Jesus in the Letter of James . . . . .	460 NT	The Pilgrimage Songs . . . . .	980 OT
Jews and Gentiles in Christ . . . . .	292 NT	Pointless . . . . .	1056 OT
John as a Student of the OT . . . . .	505 NT	The Poor and Needy . . . . .	932 OT
Joshua, Judges, and the Early History of Israel . . . . .	371 OT	Power and Violence . . . . .	461 OT
Joshua and Josiah . . . . .	613 OT	The Powers and Authorities . . . . .	367 NT
Jubilee . . . . .	194 OT	Prayer . . . . .	407 NT
Judea under Foreign Rule . . . . .	9 NT	Priests . . . . .	168 OT
Judgment and Confession . . . . .	487 OT	The Prologue . . . . .	171 NT
The Kingdom of Heaven . . . . .	10 NT	The Promises to the Ancestors . . . . .	23 OT
Land . . . . .	305 OT	Prophecies during Hezekiah's Reign . . . . .	1135 OT
The Last Supper in Luke . . . . .	159 NT	Prophetic Beginnings . . . . .	1209 OT
The Lawless Person . . . . .	399 NT	Prophetic Oracles about the Nations . . . . .	1114 OT
Leaders . . . . .	426 NT	Psalms 46–48: Jerusalem and God's Kingship . . . . .	893 OT
Life/Eternal Life . . . . .	285 NT	The Psalms and Jesus . . . . .	863 OT
The Living Creatures . . . . .	1319 OT	The "Rapture" . . . . .	394 NT
The Lord Has Given; the Lord Has Taken . . . . .	782 OT	Receiving the Spirit at Pentecost . . . . .	219 NT
The Lord's Chest . . . . .	532 OT	The Recognition Formula . . . . .	1326 OT



Reconciliation/Atonement . . . . .	181 OT	The Stoning That Doesn't Happen . . . . .	187 NT
Redeemer . . . . .	804 OT	Support from Persia . . . . .	725 OT
The Reed Sea or the Red Sea? . . . . .	99 OT	Surprised by Mercy. . . . .	697 OT
The Reform of Josiah. . . . .	611 OT	Symbolic Colors . . . . .	510 NT
Refuge Cities . . . . .	358 OT	Symbolic Numbers . . . . .	508 NT
The Rejection of Saul . . . . .	444 OT	The Synagogues . . . . .	154 NT
Remorseful Journey . . . . .	495 OT	Tax Collectors . . . . .	112 NT
Responsibility for Sin. . . . .	715 OT	Temple and Name . . . . .	534 OT
Resurrection. . . . .	1422 OT	The Temple Plan . . . . .	1379 OT
Reversals in the Book of Esther . . . . .	776 OT	Theological Language of Violence . . . . .	1293 OT
Righteousness . . . . .	279 NT	Third Isaiah's Setting and Arrangement . . . . .	1187 OT
Righteousness . . . . .	473 NT	Torah (Instruction): Psalms 15–24 . . . . .	855 OT
The Sabbath, Creation, and Building the Lord's Dwelling . . . . .	125 OT	True and False Worship. . . . .	1223 OT
The Sabbath Day of Rest . . . . .	111 OT	True Happiness . . . . .	840 OT
Satan . . . . .	653 OT	Two Kingdoms. . . . .	478 OT
Saul/Paul . . . . .	243 NT	The Two Parts of David's Story . . . . .	484 OT
Scripture . . . . .	419 NT	Ungodly People . . . . .	495 NT
The Sea, the Fish, and the Underworld . . . . .	1478 OT	The Use of an Ancient Household Code in 1 Peter . . . . .	465 NT
The Sea of Chaos: God's Enemy or Ally? . . . . .	109 OT	The Wealthy and the Poor. . . . .	1021 OT
Second Isaiah . . . . .	1155 OT	What Holds Back Lawlessness? . . . . .	400 NT
Secrecy . . . . .	83 NT	Who Killed Jesus? . . . . .	228 NT
Sennacherib's Campaign . . . . .	1484 OT	Why Do Bad Things Happen? . . . . .	1505 OT
The Servant and Daughter Zion as Representative Figures . . . . .	1177 OT	Wisdom . . . . .	815 OT
The Setting of Isaiah 6–9 . . . . .	1104 OT	Woman Wisdom and the Mysterious Woman . . . . .	1019 OT
Sex . . . . .	184 OT	Women . . . . .	409 NT
Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Ezekiel. . . . .	1341 OT	Women, Gender, and Violence in Judges . . . . .	391 OT
The Shema . . . . .	273 OT	Women and Property. . . . .	353 OT
Sheol . . . . .	1007 OT	Women in Worship. . . . .	328 NT
Sinning/Not Sinning . . . . .	479 NT	A World Under Divine Judgment . . . . .	1250 OT
Social Justice in Isaiah . . . . .	1100 OT	Worship and Christology . . . . .	377 NT
Songs in Stories . . . . .	379 OT	Worship and Music. . . . .	675 OT
The Source of the Divisions at Corinth . . . . .	311 NT		



# CHARTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Apostles Identified in Matthew, Mark, Luke/Acts, and Paul . . . . .	23 NT	The Meeting Tent and the Courtyard . . . . .	128 OT
Arrangement of the Wilderness Camp . . . . .	207 OT	Miracle Stories in the Gospels . . . . .	174 NT
The Banquets in Esther . . . . .	773 OT	Moses and Paul . . . . .	341 NT
Chart of Major Offerings . . . . .	165 OT	Nebuchadnezzar's First Campaign . . . . .	1249 OT
The Chest Containing the Covenant . . . . .	619 OT	Nehemiah's Reconstruction of the Wall of Jerusalem . . . . .	744 OT
The Chronology of Jesus' Final Days in Jerusalem . . . . .	46 NT	Outline of the Leaders and Chieftans . . . . .	375 OT
David as Fugitive from Saul . . . . .	452 OT	Overview of the Tribal Leaders . . . . .	386 OT
David's Battles Against the Arameans . . . . .	651 OT	Parables in Matthew, Mark, and Luke . . . . .	136 NT
Dialogue Between Job and the Three Friends . . . . .	785 OT	Paul's Ministry and Writing . . . . .	244 NT
The Exodus . . . . .	105 OT	The Philistine Conquests . . . . .	706 OT
The Family Tree of David . . . . .	474 OT	The Portion . . . . .	1388 OT
Family Tree of Herod the Great . . . . .	.7 NT	Roman Emperors 49 BCE–138 CE . . . . .	521 NT
The Fertile Crescent at the Turn of the 7th/6th Centuries BCE . . . . .	1254 OT	The "Sea" in Solomon's Temple . . . . .	673 OT
Geographical Setting of Jacob's Journey . . . . .	49 OT	The Seven Churches of Revelation . . . . .	502 NT
Historical Setting of the Prophetic Books . . . . .	1156 OT	Solomon's Temple and Palace Complex . . . . .	527 OT
Kings of Israel and Judah . . . . .	543 OT	Synopsis of the Sermon on the Mount/Sermon on the Plain . . . . .	121 NT
		The Temple in Ezekiel's Vision . . . . .	1383 OT



# THE CANONS OF SCRIPTURE

Almost complete agreement prevails within contemporary Christianity regarding the content of the NT canon. The following tables list only the various OT canons.

All Christian churches accept the 39-book Jewish canon for the OT (Table I). The Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions accept additional books into the OT canon. Anglicans, Lutherans, and other Protestants call these books the Apocrypha.

## Table I: The Jewish Canon

Jewish Scriptures are divided into three parts: Torah, Prophets, and Writings. 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, and the twelve minor prophets are each considered a single book because each set of writings forms one complete scroll.

Torah	Prophets	Writings
Genesis	<i>Former Prophets</i>	Psalms
Exodus	Joshua	Proverbs
Leviticus	Judges	Job
Numbers	1–2 Samuel	Song of Songs
Deuteronomy	1–2 Kings	Ruth
	Lamentations	Ecclesiastes
	<i>Latter Prophets</i>	Esther
	Isaiah	Daniel
	Jeremiah	Ezra
	Ezekiel	Nehemiah
	<i>The Twelve</i>	1–2 Chronicles
	Hosea	
	Joel	
	Amos	
	Obadiah	
	Jonah	
	Micah	
	Nahum	
	Habakkuk	
	Zephaniah	
	Haggai	
	Zechariah	
	Malachi	

## Table II: The Protestant Old Testament

Most Protestant denominations accept the following 39 books as the canon of the OT. Most Lutheran denominations possess no official canon of Scripture, but in actual practice, Lutherans generally use the 39-book Protestant OT canon.

Genesis	Isaiah
Exodus	Jeremiah
Leviticus	Lamentations
Numbers	Ezekiel
Deuteronomy	Daniel
Joshua	Hosea
Judges	Joel
Ruth	Amos
1-2 Samuel	Obadiah
1-2 Kings	Jonah
1-2 Chronicles	Micah
Ezra	Nahum
Nehemiah	Habakkuk
Esther	Zephaniah
Job	Haggai
Psalms	Zechariah
Proverbs	Malachi
Ecclesiastes	
Song of Songs	

### Table III: The Roman Catholic Old Testament Canon

The Roman Catholic Canon includes all 39 books found in the OT in Table II, plus 11 additional books. These books are arranged variously in different Roman Catholic Bibles. The order below reflects that of the New American Bible. The names of books in italics are those books not found in the Protestant canon.

Genesis	<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>
Exodus	<i>Sirach</i>
Leviticus	Isaiah
Numbers	Jeremiah
Deuteronomy	Lamentations
Joshua	<i>Baruch (Baruch 6 = Letter of Jeremiah)</i>
Judges	Ezekiel
Ruth	Daniel (with three additions: <i>the Prayer of Azariah [and Hymn of the Three Young Men], Susanna, and Bel and the Snake</i> )
1 Samuel	Hosea
2 Samuel	Joel
1 Kings	Amos
2 Kings	Obadiah
1 Chronicles	Jonah
2 Chronicles	Micah
Ezra	Nahum
Nehemiah	Habakkuk
<i>Tobit</i>	Zephaniah
<i>Judith</i>	Haggai
Esther ( <i>with six additions</i> )	Zechariah
<i>1 Maccabees</i>	Malachi
<i>2 Maccabees</i>	
Job	
Psalms	
Proverbs	
Ecclesiastes	
Song of Songs	

[The Vulgate, or Latin, translation of the Roman Catholic Bible contains 3 *Esdras* = 1 *Esdras*, 4 *Esdras* = 2 *Esdras*, and *the Prayer of Manasseh* in an appendix.]

## Table IV: The Orthodox Old Testament Canon

The Orthodox tradition includes all 39 books of the OT found in Table II, plus 14 additional books. In the Greek Orthodox Church, the traditional text for the OT is the Greek Septuagint (LXX). The Slavonic translation of the Septuagint is the traditionally used OT text for the Russian Orthodox Church. The names of books in italics are those not found in the Protestant canon.

Genesis	Song of Solomon (= Song of Songs)
Exodus	<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>
Leviticus	<i>Wisdom of Sirach</i> (= Sirach in the
Numbers	CEB Apocrypha)
Deuteronomy	Hosea
Joshua	Amos
Judges	Micah
Ruth	Joel
1 Kingdoms (= 1 Samuel)	Obadiah
2 Kingdoms (= 2 Samuel)	Jonah
3 Kingdoms (= 1 Kings)	Nahum
4 Kingdoms (= 2 Kings)	Habakkuk
1 Chronicles	Zephaniah
2 Chronicles	Haggai
1 <i>Esdras</i> (= 1 Esdras in the CEB Apocrypha, = 2 Esdras in Slavonic Bibles)	Zechariah
2 <i>Esdras</i> (= Ezra, in some Orthodox Bibles 2 Esdras also included Nehemiah)	Malachi
Nehemiah	Isaiah
<i>Tobit</i>	Jeremiah
<i>Judith</i>	<i>Baruch</i>
Esther ( <i>with six additions</i> )	Lamentations
1 <i>Maccabees</i>	<i>Letter of Jeremiah</i>
2 <i>Maccabees</i>	Ezekiel
3 <i>Maccabees</i>	Daniel (with three additions: <i>the Prayer of</i> <i>Azariah [and Hymn of the Three Young Men],</i> <i>Susanna, and Bel and the Snake</i> )
Psalms ( <i>with Psalm 151</i> )	[Greek Orthodox Bibles contain 4 <i>Maccabees</i> <i>and the Prayer of Manasseh</i> in an appendix. Slavonic Bibles add 3 <i>Esdras</i> = 1 <i>Esdras</i> to this appendix.]
Job	
Proverbs	
Ecclesiastes	



## Table V: The Anglican Apocrypha

Anglicans accept the 39-book Jewish OT canon. Additionally, the Anglican Church, according to Article VI, the Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer*, accepts the Apocrypha as to be “read for example of life and instruction of manners; but [are] not [applied] to establish any doctrine.” In actual practice, only Wisdom and Sirach are used in the lectionary cycle, and short readings from Judith and 2 Esdras are used for two minor festivals. Some Anglicans would reject any canonical value for the Apocrypha and accept only the 39-book Protestant canon.

1 Esdras

2 Esdras

Tobit

Judith

Esther (Greek)

Wisdom

Sirach

Baruch

The Prayer of Azariah (and Hymn of the Three Young Men), Susanna, and Bel and the Snake

The Prayer of Manasseh

1 Maccabees

2 Maccabees

1994

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

2000

2001

2002

2003

THE  
CEB  
STUDY BIBLE



# Old Testament

ntest

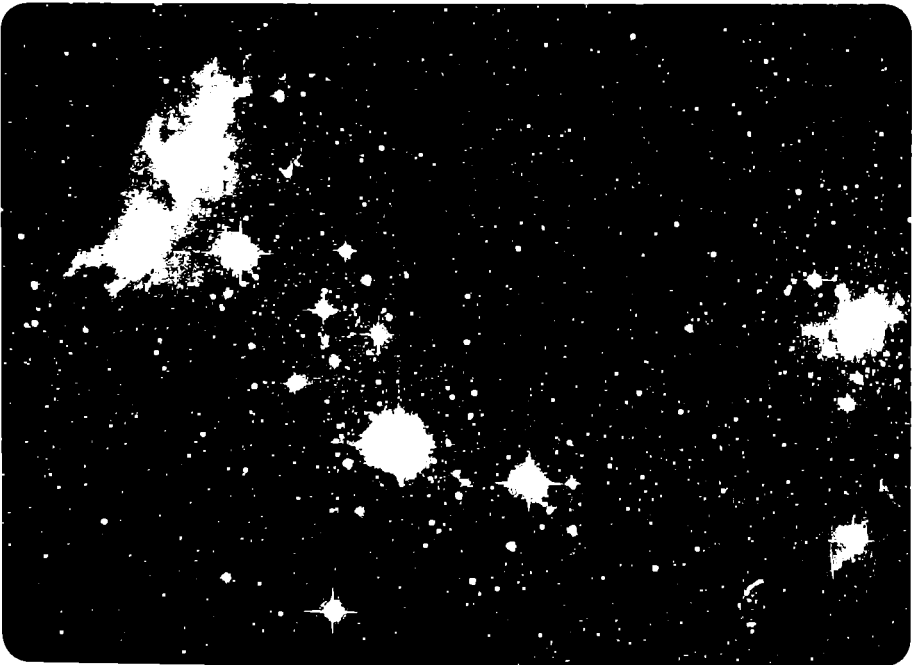
# GENESIS

Stories about beginnings deal more with the present than the past. The stories of Genesis focus on the present world and the lives of the people who composed them. The authors' aim was to make sense of the world they knew by explaining how it came into being. They came to terms with who they were as a people by explaining their own origins in that world. So these stories describe their people's identity and their particular role in the world. The writers of Genesis explain their own connection to their natural landscape and how that environment shaped their lives. They also explain their place in the larger cultural landscape they occupied as a small ancient kingdom. As a deeply religious people, they showed how their origins were part of God's design for the world and themselves.

Even modern readers sense intuitively how these stories are about the present, including

their own present circumstances. The world that these stories bring into being is still, of course, in many ways, the world in which we all live. As we will see, the world that the authors of Genesis set out to explain was their own small world. They describe their own society in its actual ancient natural and cultural landscape, far removed from the realities of modern readers. Yet, when the particular is described with enough depth and insight, the universal truths of our common humanity can speak through it. Readers of Genesis thus face a decision: when to understand its view of the world as limited by its time and place, and when to understand its view of the world as touching the very roots of our humanity.

To tell this story of themselves and their place in the world, the writers of Genesis used the genealogy list, which is foreign to most modern readers. Modern readers stall when repeatedly



The Large Magellanic Cloud, a satellite galaxy of The Milky Way (Gen 1:16; 15:5)  
ESA/NASA/Hubble

reading that so-and-so became the father of so-and-so. They usually skip these parts of the Bible. But even the well-known stories in Genesis are part of this genealogical design. They explain with detail what happened to key people in genealogies.

For ancient societies, and for traditional societies today, genealogies provide a key way to understand one's identity and relationships with others in the world. These lists of names are actually cultural maps. By identifying their earliest ancestors and their relations to each other, the authors of Genesis tell us (1) who they considered to be within their human "family"; (2) how they were related to others in their family; and (3) what their particular role in the family was. In a genealogy, every person stands not merely for the one historical figure but for all that figure's descendants. For example, the story of Jacob and Esau isn't only the story of the conflict and reconciliation of two brothers, but also the story of the relationship between their descendants, the Israelites and the Edomites.

Readers of Genesis notice that several of the events in the book are told twice. There are two accounts of creation, two records of the generations between creation and the flood, two flood narratives (woven together), three stories of Israel's ancestors presenting their wives as their sisters on foreign soil, two stories of Hagar's exile from Abraham's family, two explanations of how Jacob's name was changed to Israel, and so on. These are all genuine marks that the book of Genesis wasn't written down as a single story by a single author—such as Moses, as tradition has it—but that the book is a collection of multiple traditions of Israel's beginnings from different sources or authors. The book of Genesis itself doesn't identify its authors, and biblical scholars have suggested a number of different proposals for them.

The classic proposal is that there were three authors. None of these figures should be considered authors in the modern sense, but rather skilled communicators who preserved and passed along traditions that had been developed over time by many before them. The two earliest of these are the Yahwist and the Elohist.

The Yahwist, it is believed, lived during the Davidic monarchy, founded around 1025 BCE, an important and influential ancient Near Eastern kingdom (1 and 2 Sam; 1 and 2 Kgs). Scholars gave him his name because he used Israel's personal name of God, "Yahweh," rendered in the CEB as "the LORD," a title traditionally substituted for Yahweh. The Elohist, it is believed, lived during the monarchy as well and has been associated with the northern kingdom of Israel. His name comes from his avoidance of God's personal name in Genesis and his use of the common Hebrew word *elohim*, "God." The third author is the Priestly writer, so called because his contributions to Genesis reflect the practices of Israelite religion, like the Sabbath and circumcision, and his interest in thorough record keeping. He lived either during or after the Babylonian exile, which began in 587 BCE, a time when the Israelites hoped for the restoration of their monarchy and the reconstruction of their temple.

Editors skillfully combined the stories of these three writers into a single account of Israel's beginnings. Genesis, therefore, provides the reader not one but multiple viewpoints on beginnings. The reader will still notice at times the special styles and perspectives of the writers and differences in their traditions. As a result, the reader experiences a richer picture of God, of the world, and of God's people than would be possible from a single ancient writer. At key places in Genesis where details and religious viewpoints differ, the notes will help the reader hear these unique voices more clearly.

The book of Genesis isn't an independent and complete volume in the Bible. It's only the start of the stories of Israel's beginnings found in the first four books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. These books deal with the exodus from Egypt, the revelation of the Instruction at Mount Sinai, and the journey through the desert back to Canaan. As the beginning of this whole story, and as a sacred text in Jewish and Christian scripture, Genesis becomes the starting point for thinking about the nature of the world and of humanity itself. Its power to shape the beliefs and practices of its readers has never ceased.



**I. First Age of the World's History (1:1–9:17)**

- A. Creation (1:1–3:24)
  - 1. World's creation in seven days (1:1–2:4a)
  - 2. World's creation in the garden (2:4b–3:24)
- B. Life in the world's first age (4:1–6:4)
  - 1. Cain, Abel, and Cain's descendants (4:1–26)
  - 2. Genealogy of the first generations (5:1–32)
  - 3. Ancient heroes (6:1–4)
- C. Great flood (6:5–9:17)
  - 1. Flood and the survival of Noah's family (6:5–8:19)
  - 2. New order established for a new age (8:20–9:17)

**II. New Age of the World's History, Its Civilizations, and Israel's Place among Them (9:18–50:26)**

- A. Origin of the world's cultures (9:18–11:32)
  - 1. Role of Canaan (9:18–29)
  - 2. Noah's descendants and the world's cultures (10:1–32)
  - 3. Origins of languages and cultures (11:1–9)
  - 4. Israel's lineage in Noah's family and its place in the world's cultures (11:10–32)
- B. Abraham's family: Sarah and Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael (12:1–25:18)
  - 1. Arrival in Canaan, journey to Egypt, and settlement in Hebron (12:1–13:18)
  - 2. Abraham rescues Lot, is blessed by Melchizedek of Salem (14:1–24)
  - 3. Two accounts of God's covenant with Abraham (15:1–21; 17:1–27)
  - 4. Hagar and the Ishmaelites' origin (16:1–16; 21:8–21)
  - 5. Sarah and Isaac's birth (18:1–15; 21:1–7)
  - 6. Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed (18:16–19:38)
  - 7. Abimelech and Beersheba's wells (20:1–18; 21:22–34)

- 8. The binding of Isaac (22:1–24)
- 9. Sarah's burial (23:1–20)
- 10. The engagement of Isaac and Rebekah (24:1–67)
- 11. Abraham's burial and his extended family (25:1–18)
- C. Jacob's family: Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, Bilhah, and their children (25:19–36:43)
  - 1. Jacob's and Esau's births (25:19–34)
  - 2. Isaac, Abimelech, and Beersheba's wells (26:1–35)
  - 3. Isaac's blessing of Jacob and Esau (27:1–46)
  - 4. Jacob's dream at Bethel and departure from Canaan (28:1–22)
  - 5. At Laban's house: Jacob's marriage, children, and flocks (29:1–31:55)
  - 6. Jacob's wrestling with God and reunion with Esau (32:1–33:20)
  - 7. Dinah and the Shechemites (34:1–31)
  - 8. Bethel's altar, and Rachel's and Isaac's burials (35:1–29)
  - 9. Esau's descendants (36:1–43)
- D. Joseph and his family move to Egypt (37:1–50:26)
  - 1. Joseph sold by his brothers (37:1–36)
  - 2. Judah and Tamar (38:1–30)
  - 3. Joseph and Potiphar's wife (39:1–23)
  - 4. Joseph: interpreter of dreams and governor of Egypt (40:1–41:57)
  - 5. Joseph and his brothers reunited in Egypt (42:1–45:15)
  - 6. Jacob's family moves to Egypt (45:16–47:26)
  - 7. Jacob's blessings on Ephraim and Manasseh (47:27–48:22)
  - 8. Jacob's blessings on his 12 sons (49:1–28)
  - 9. Jacob's death and burial (49:29–50:14)
  - 10. Joseph's last days (50:15–26)

*Theodore Hiebert*

1:1 Neh 9:6;  
Job 38:4, 18:42, 5;  
Is 1:1; Ac 17:24

1:2 Job 33:4;  
Ps 104:30;  
Jer 4:23

1:3 Ps 33:6,  
Ps 33:9,  
Ps 148:5;  
Is 45:7; 2Co 4:6

1:4 Gn 1:10,  
Gn 1:12,  
Gn 1:18,  
Gn 1:25,  
Gn 1:31

1:5 Gn 1:8,  
Gn 1:13,  
Gn 1:19,  
Gn 1:23,  
Gn 1:31

1:6 Gn 1:7,  
Gn 1:14,  
Gn 1:20;  
Ps 19:1;  
Jer 10:12

### World's creation in seven days

**1** When God began to create<sup>a</sup> the heavens and the earth—<sup>2</sup>the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God's wind swept over the waters—<sup>3</sup>God said, "Let there be light." And so light appeared. <sup>4</sup>God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God named the light Day and the darkness Night.

There was evening and there was morning: the first day.

<sup>6</sup>God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other." <sup>7</sup>God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. <sup>8</sup>God named the dome Sky.

There was evening and there was morning: the second day.

<sup>9</sup>God said, "Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear." And that's what happened. <sup>10</sup>God named the dry land Earth, and he named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. <sup>11</sup>God said, "Let the earth grow plant life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth." And that's what happened. <sup>12</sup>The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was.

<sup>a</sup>Or *In the beginning, God created*

1:7 Ps 148:4 1:8 Gn 1:5, Gn 1:13, Gn 1:19, Gn 1:23, Gn 1:31 1:9 Job 38:8; Ps 24:2, Ps 95:5; Jer 5:22; 2Pt 3:5 1:10 Ps 33:7, Ps 95:5 1:11 Gn 1:12, Gn 1:29, Gn 2:5; Ps 104:14 1:12 Gn 1:11

1:1–2:4a Genesis gives readers two perspectives on creation: one in Genesis 1:1–2:4a and another in Genesis 2:4b–3:24. This first account is more spacious, taking in the whole world. The following account in Genesis 2 and 3 has a more limited, localized setting, taking place entirely at a garden in Eden. Here in the first account, God creates the world in six days. God then rests on the seventh, establishing the Sabbath as a day of rest and a part of the natural order. God's week of creative work follows a perfectly symmetrical pattern. In the first three days, God marks out three earthly realms: (1) day and night; (2) sky and sea; and (3) land and plants. In the second three days, God populates these three realms with stars and planets, birds and sea creatures, and land animals including humans. God is viewed as high and powerful in this account, creating mostly by command. This creation story was likely written by one of Israel's priests. It connects with several of Israel's religious practices and rituals. This account describes the Sabbath as creation's climax (2:1-3). It refers to the major events of Israel's religious calendar (1:14). It divides the world into the spaces separating clean from unclean animals (1:20-25). Finally, it employs repetition, which may have been intended for liturgical reading. This Priestly writer aimed to describe creation with such harmony and beauty that it would inspire the people of Israel to praise and worship their creator. This text shows how Israel's religious practices connect with the very structure of the world.

1:1-2 The introduction mentions the vast *waters* on the unformed *earth* from which God creates an ordered world. 1:2 The *deep sea* is the great reservoir of water preceding creation, which on the second day of creation (Gen 1:6-7) will be divided. *wind*: translates a Hebrew term whose basic meaning is "air." Depending on its context, it is usually translated either "wind" or "breath." Here both meanings may be intended. In some cases, *God's wind* is connected to God's activity in creation (Ps 104:4). Here God's breath is connected to God's creative activity, since God's commands bring everything into being. The translation "Spirit" used in some English translations (KJV, RSV, NIV) comes from later Greek ideas. The author of Genesis

doesn't divide between spirit and matter as did later Greek thought. Nor is the author referring here to the third member of the Trinity.

1:3 The first day begins, as does each day, with a divine command: *God said*.

1:4 The translation *God saw how good . . .* appears here and at each stage of creation (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). It emphasizes God's approval of creation and better reflects the underlying Hebrew than the usual translation, "God saw that it was good." The English word "good" doesn't adequately capture the full meaning of the Hebrew term, which is usually used for what is beautiful, excellent, valuable, and of high quality. This statement is one of the Bible's clearest and strongest claims that the world of creation has great value on its own terms apart from its usefulness to humans, who won't be created until the sixth day. 1:5 The phrase *evening . . . morning* closes each day. It probably reflects the idea that night (between evening and morning) ends the day. A new day thus begins at dawn, when each new creative act takes place. Some texts indicate this practice of beginning days at sunrise (Lev 7:15), while others lay the framework for the current Jewish practice of beginning days at sunset (Lev 23:32).

1:6-8 On the *second day* of creation, God creates the *Sky* by forming a *dome* to separate the vast waters at the beginning of creation (Gen 1:2) into two great reservoirs, one above the dome or sky and one beneath it. According to ancient Israel's concept of the world's design, this *dome* (sometimes translated "firmament") is a barrier that holds back a great reservoir of water in the sky, the source of rainfall. When the "windows in the skies" are opened (e.g., Gen 7:11), the water in this reservoir falls as rain. The reservoir of water below the sky will become the world's seas when separated from the land on the third day of creation. 1:9-13 On the *third day*, *dry land* and *plants* appear in two creative acts: God separates the waters under the sky from the dry land (1:9-10); and God calls forth plants, earth's first forms of life (1:11-13).

1:11-12 The earth, formed by God's first act on the third day (Gen 1:9-10), now participates in God's creative activity, producing the world's *plant life*. The writer of this

1:13 Gn 1:5

1:14 Gn 8:22;  
Ps 74:16,  
Ps 104:19,  
Ps 136:7,  
Jer 10:2

1:16 Job 38:7;  
Ps 8:3, Ps 74:16,  
Ps 136:8-9

1:18 Jer 31:35

1:19 Gn 1:5

1:20 Gn 2:19

1:21 Job 7:12

1:22 Gn 8:17,  
Gn 9:1

1:23 Gn 1:5

*In God's Image* How does being formed in God's image make humans unique in creation? Interpreters have answered that question in many different ways. Their answers typically relate to how they themselves view human nature.

Early Christian interpreters believed that having God's image made humans like God spiritually. It gave humans a soul. For example, Augustine believed the image of God referred to the rational soul, placed by God in the human body. Thus God and humans were spiritual beings, while all other life was merely material. However, this division between soul and body, or spirit and matter, is a later development in Greek thought. The idea of a soul isn't shared by OT writers.

A different answer given by interpreters from ancient to modern times is that being made in God's image gives humans special dignity. According to this interpretation, the divine image refers to the worth of all human beings. In this view, all persons carry God's image and are to be treated with equal respect. This understanding of human nature focuses, as Genesis does, on the whole person rather than on the soul alone. It has given powerful support for those who are demeaned, marginalized, and oppressed.

Recent biblical scholars have looked in ancient cultures around Israel to understand better this idea of the image of God in Genesis 1. Egypt and Mesopotamia described reigning kings as the images of particular gods. The phrase designated a ruler as a certain god's special representative on earth. So by adapting this expression, the writer of Genesis 1 identifies human beings as the representatives of divine rule on earth.

This interpretation of humans as representatives of divine rule matches what comes next in Genesis. God says that humanity is made in the image of God so *that* humans can take charge of animals (Gen 1:28). So when read in light of its literary and ancient cultural contexts, the image of God describes humanity's prominent position in the world. It shows humanity's responsibility to rule creation as God's representative. Human beings are thus considered mediators of God's presence in the world.

<sup>13</sup>There was evening and there was morning: the third day.

<sup>14</sup>God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years. <sup>15</sup>They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth." And that's what happened. <sup>16</sup>God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. <sup>17</sup>God put them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was.

<sup>19</sup>There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup>God said, "Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky." <sup>21</sup>God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. <sup>22</sup>Then God blessed them: "Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."

<sup>23</sup>There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.

text carefully observed and classified the world. Here, the writer divided vegetation into the two kinds of plants cultivated by Israelite farmers. The first, *plants yielding seeds*, may also be translated "grains yielding seed." It refers to wheat and barley, whose seed is plainly visible on the stalk. These grains were the primary crops of Israelite agriculture. The second kind of plant life, *trees bearing fruit*, are the tree crops, primarily olives, whose seeds are hidden inside the fruit (*with seeds inside it*). Israelite farmers used fruit to supplement grain production. God gives these two kinds of plants to human beings as their food later in this story (Gen 1:29). The term "kind" is the closest ancient equivalent of the modern scientific term "species," since it indicates a distinct form of life that reproduces.

1:14-19 On the *fourth day*, God begins filling the world's spaces created on the first three days by populating the realms of day and night with the heavenly bodies that inhabit and regulate these realms.

1:14-15 The heavenly bodies have two purposes: to provide light for earth and to determine time by

marking out its significant periods. *days* and *years*: the basic units of time. *sacred seasons*: the primary periods in Israel's liturgical year, that is, its major religious festivals (see Lev 23).

1:20-23 God divides the animal world into three categories: (1) the animals in the sea, created on the *fifth day*; (2) the birds in the sky, also created on the *fifth day*; and (3) the land animals, created on the sixth day. These are the three categories used by Israel's priests to classify animals when they make distinctions between clean (edible) and unclean (inedible) animals in Leviticus 11:1-19.

1:20-21 The *swarm of living things* refers here to all of the animal life that inhabits seas and rivers (Lev 11:10, 46). The *great sea animals* are probably the largest sea creatures (KJV "whales"), as this same Hebrew term is used for "crocodile" in Ezekiel 29:3 and "sea monster" in Ezekiel 32:2. See also the note on Exodus 7:8-13.

1:22 God's blessing gives animals the ability to reproduce. In ancient times, the mysterious nature of conception was directly associated with divine activity (Gen 4:1; 16:2).

1:24 Gn 2:19,  
Gn 7:14  
1:25 Jer 27:5  
1:26 Gn 5:1,  
Gn 9:2, Gn 9:6;  
1Co 11:7, Jas 3:9  
1:17 Gn 1:26,  
Gn 5:2, Mt 19:4;  
Mk 10:6,  
1Co 11:7  
1:28 Gn 9:1,  
Gn 9:7; Ps 8:6  
1:29 Gn 9:3,  
Ps 104:14,  
Ps 136:25,  
Ps 145:15  
1:30 Ps 104:14,  
Ps 145:15-16,  
Ps 147:9  
1:31 Gn 1:5,  
Ps 104:24;  
1Ti 4:4  
2:1 Dt 4:19  
2:2 Ex 20:11,  
Ex 31:17,  
Heb 4:4  
2:3 Ex 16:23,  
Ex 20:11,  
Ex 23:12,  
Ex 35:2,  
Neh 9:14  
2:4 Gn 1:1

<sup>24</sup>God said, "Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife." And that's what happened. <sup>25</sup>God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. <sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."

<sup>27</sup>God created humanity in God's own image, in the divine image God created them,<sup>b</sup> male and female God created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them and said to them, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground." <sup>29</sup>Then God said, "I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. <sup>30</sup>To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food." And that's what happened. <sup>31</sup>God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

**2**The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. <sup>2</sup>On the sixth<sup>c</sup> day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. <sup>3</sup>God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation. <sup>4</sup><sup>d</sup>This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

<sup>b</sup>Heb has singular *him*, referring to *humanity*. <sup>c</sup>LXX, Sam, Syr; MT *seventh* <sup>d</sup>Or *from all his work, which God created to do*

1:24-31 On the *sixth day*, God populates the earth with land animals, including human beings.

1:24-25 As on the third day, the earth participates in God's creative activity. This time, the earth produces the land's animals. The earth and its animals are also closely linked in the second creation story, where animals are made from the soil of the earth itself (Gen 2:19). The word translated *livestock* can refer both to the larger animals on a typical Israelite farm and to all large animals (Gen 6:20; Lev 11:1-8). These animals contrast with the *crawling things*, that is, the smaller creatures.

1:26-31 Human beings are created on the sixth day with the other animals, but they are given a unique place among all living things. Humans alone are made in God's image, and they are commanded to *Take charge* of the other animals (see sidebar, "In God's Image" at Gen 1; "Dominion or Dependence?" at Gen 2).

1:26 When God uses the word "us" here and in Genesis 11:7, God is addressing the divine council, the assembly of heavenly beings believed to assist God in governing the world and communicating with the human race (Gen 1:16; 16:7; 1 Kgs 22:19-23; Job 1:6-7; Jer 23:18, 22). *humanity* translates the Hebrew word *adam*. Later, this word is used as the name of the first man, Adam (e.g., Gen 5:1). Here, it is used more generally for *humanity*, since it is defined in the following phrase as including both *male and female* (see sidebar, "Gender in Genesis" at Gen 3).

1:29 Here humans were vegetarians before the flood. They were given food from the two traditional Mediterranean crops, grains and fruits, created on the third day of creation (Gen 1:11-12).

2:1-4a The first creation account comes to its climax when the seventh day of the week is designated as a sacred day of rest, modeled on God's own behavior at creation (cf. Exod 20:8-11). As seen clearly here, the Priestly writer's aim

is to show that Israel's religious practices are part of the structure and rhythms of the world itself.

2:2 A number of ancient translations identified in translation note c preserve the original designation *sixth* as the day when God finished creating. "LXX" refers to the Septuagint, an ancient Greek translation. "Sam" refers to the Samaritan Pentateuch. "Syr" refers to the Syriac (also called the Peshitta). Our current Hebrew text is called the Masoretic Text. It is abbreviated MT in translation note c. The MT contains the alternative "seventh." Because this word differs from many other ancient translations and contradicts the aim of rest on the seventh day, it is likely an error made by scribes who copied ancient manuscripts by hand. The Hebrew terms for *rested* and "Sabbath" are different forms of the same Hebrew word.

2:4 The word "account" translates a Hebrew term that usually means "an account of a man and his descendants." So this word introduces part of a larger genealogy. In the case of Genesis, the word appears 13 times, dividing the book's genealogical framework into major sections (Gen 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; etc.). Here the writer uses it to say that creation itself is the very beginning of the genealogical record of the world's people.

2:4b-3:24 Here in the second account of creation, the world comes into existence by God's acts and purposes. The same was true of the first account of creation (Gen 1:1-2:4a). Yet the reader will notice a number of differences between this story and the previous story of creation. Here the scene is limited to a garden, and there is no mention of the time it took God to create the world. Further, the order of creation is different from the first account: Here the first human being is made before anything else. In this story, God is closer and more personal, planting and shaping things on the ground rather than commanding from a distance. In place of the formal, repetitious style of the

**World's creation in the garden**

On the day the LORD God made earth and sky—<sup>5</sup>before any wild plants appeared on the earth, and before any field crops grew, because the LORD God hadn't yet sent rain on the earth and there was still no human being<sup>a</sup> to farm the fertile land, <sup>6</sup>though a stream rose from the earth and watered all of the fertile land—<sup>7</sup>the LORD God formed the human<sup>f</sup> from the topsoil of the fertile land<sup>g</sup> and blew life's breath into his nostrils. The human came to life. <sup>8</sup>The LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east and put there the human he had formed. <sup>9</sup>In the fertile land, the LORD God grew every beautiful tree with edible fruit, and also he grew the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup>A river flows from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides into four headwaters. <sup>11</sup>The name of the first river is the Pishon. It flows around the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup>That land's gold is pure, and the land also has sweet-smelling resins and gemstones. <sup>13</sup>The name of the second river is the Gihon. It flows around the entire land of Cush. <sup>14</sup>The name of the third river is the Tigris, flowing east of Assyria; and the name of the fourth river is the Euphrates.

<sup>a</sup>Or *man* (Heb *adam*) <sup>f</sup>Heb *adam* <sup>g</sup>Heb *adamah* <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain

2:5 Gn 1:11, Gn 1:12; Ps 65:9; Jer 10:13  
2:6 Gn 2:5; ZPh 2:17  
2:7 Gn 3:19, Gn 7:22; Job 27:3; Job 33:4; 1Co 15:45  
2:8 Gn 2:15, Gn 3:23; Is 51:3; Eze 28:13; JI 2:3  
2:9 Gn 3:22; Prv 3:18; Eze 47:12; Rv 2:7, Rv 22:2  
2:10 Ps 46:4  
2:11 Gn 10:7, Gn 25:18  
2:12 Nm 11:7; Eze 28:13  
2:13 Gn 10:6  
2:14 Gn 10:11, Gn 15:18; Dt 11:24; Dn 10:4

first account, this dramatic story features interacting characters and a different vocabulary for creation. The Israelite name of God is introduced for the first time. Probably pronounced "Yahweh," it is represented by the word "LORD" (in capital and small capital letters; Gen 2:4b, 5, 7, etc.), following an old tradition that regarded the name as too holy to read aloud. Because this writer uses the divine name "Yahweh," he has been called the Yahwist. These differences in the style, the details, and the portraits and names of God in the two stories of creation in Genesis reflect the distinct views of their writers. They show that Israel valued and honored a variety of voices and their unique historical and religious perspectives. The special aim of the Eden story is to explain the Israelites' relationship to their landscape (2:4b-15; 3:14, 17-19); to God (2:16-17; 3:1-13, 20-24); and to each other (2:18-25; 3:16).

2:4b-15 The opening of this creation story describes its setting in the garden. The aim of this description is to explain the relationship of humans to creation itself, their natural environment. The details of creation in this setting, as in the first story (Gen 1:1-2:4a), are drawn from the concrete realities of the agricultural landscape in the highlands east of the Mediterranean Sea, which was home to ancient Israel.

2:4b The first creation story spoke of "the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1; 2:1, 4). The second story reverses these words and speaks of *earth and sky*, which points to this story's stronger earthly focus. The center of the story is, in fact, the garden's fertile land.

2:5 The phrase *before any wild plants appeared* doesn't describe nothingness or a dry wasteland. Rather, it refers to the time before the actual realities of the audience's agricultural landscape had appeared. *wild plants*: likely the low bushes and dwarf shrubs just beyond Israel's cultivated fields that were used as pasture for farm animals. *field crops*: the grains, wheat and barley, that Israelite farmers cultivated. *rain*: mentioned because Israelite agriculture was dependent on direct rainfall rather than irrigation systems.

2:6 The *stream* (sometimes translated "mist") rising from the ground must refer to a spring, a common phenomenon of the biblical landscape. A spring without the rainfall to feed it (Gen 2:5) made sense for the original audience,

who imagined a large and permanent reservoir of water under the earth (cf. Gen 1:2, 6-7).

2:7 God's first act of creation in this second story is to form a human being out of topsoil. Usually translated "dust" (KJV, NRSV, NIV), this is the best soil lying on the surface of the *fertile land* from which the first human was made. As translation notes f and g indicate, the Hebrew words for *human (adam)* and *fertile land (adamah)* sound alike and emphasize the connection between human beings and their land. Such a story makes sense of the world for an ancient agricultural society in which its members' livelihood and survival were linked closely to the soil. The fertile land was the source of the food that sustained their lives, and it shaped their identity as farmers. The Hebrew term for the first human created in this account, *adam*, can mean "a man" or "a human being," as translation note e in Genesis 2:5 indicates. The ancient listener would probably have heard both meanings in this term (see sidebar, "Gender in Genesis" at Gen 3). *life's breath*: the capacity to breathe shared by all animals (Gen 7:22). God gives and sustains this ability in everything that breathes (Ps 104:29-30).

2:8 The name *Eden* is taken from a Hebrew term meaning "fertility" and reflects the garden's abundant plant life. The details of the garden's landscape don't match typical Israelite farmland. The description of Eden better matches Jordan Valley oases (like Jericho) and the temple gardens in Jerusalem, which were both irrigated by springs, like Eden. Cultures often connect creation with the site of their temple.

2:9 God creates the garden's plants from the same *fertile land* from which God created human beings. The *tree of life* and the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil* introduced here play important roles later when the writer explains the relationships between God and humans (see notes on Gen 2:16-17 and 3:22-23).

2:10-14 Scholars have been unsuccessful in connecting all these rivers with actual waterways in the Middle East. They have therefore never agreed on the actual location of Eden. The *Pishon* can't be identified, nor can *Havilah*, the land where it flows, but the mention of *gold, resins, and gemstones* points to the Arabian Peninsula, as does the later mention in Genesis of the Ishmaelites in Havilah (Gen 25:18). The *Gihon* is the name of the spring that is

2:15 Gn 2:8  
 2:16 Gn 3:1  
 2:17 Gn 3:1,  
 Gn 3:3, Gn 3:17,  
 Ro 5:12, Ro 6:23  
 2:18 Pev 18:22;  
 1Co 11:9  
 2:19 Gn 1:20,  
 Gn 1:24,  
 Gn 1:26,  
 Gn 2:20,  
 Gn 2:23  
 2:20 Gn 2:18, 19  
 2:21 Gn 15:12,  
 1Sa 26:12  
 2:22 1Ti 2:13  
 2:23 Gn 29:14,  
 1Co 11:8,  
 Eph 5:28

*Dominion or Dependence?* Humanity is increasingly endangering its environment. How, then, should we understand God's giving humanity power over creation in Genesis 1:26, 28? These verses have been interpreted by some as granting humans unlimited power and license to exploit nature for their own use.

"Take charge of" (Gen 1:26; KJV, NRSV: "have dominion") translates the Hebrew word for "rule." It's used elsewhere for the authority of masters over servants (Lev 25:43) and kings over subjects (Ps 72:8). So it does grant humanity power and authority over the animal world. But the word doesn't in itself define the way power is exercised, since power can be used for either caring or harsh rule. In the context of Genesis 1, humans are viewed as God's representatives in creation (see sidebar, "In God's Image" at Gen 1). So, "taking charge" must be understood as exercising the same kind of authority God would exercise in the natural world.

An entirely different picture of the human place in nature is present in Genesis 2:4b–3:24. Here, the first human is made out of the "topsoil" of the earth's "fertile land" and given the command to "farm" it (Gen 2:5, 7, 15). The word translated "farm" in the CEB almost always means "serve." It expresses the service of servants to masters (Gen 12:6); of one people to another (Exod 5:9); and of people to God (Exod 4:23). So human beings are created specifically to serve the fertile soil. Humans in this account depend on nature rather than exert dominion over it.

These two different images of the human as ruler and as servant point to universally acknowledged realities: Humanity has the unique power to alter the world, but we are ultimately dependent on the earth and its life for survival.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it. <sup>16</sup>The LORD God commanded the human, "Eat your fill from all of the garden's trees; <sup>17</sup>but don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because on the day you eat from it, you will die!" <sup>18</sup>Then the LORD God said, "It's not good that the human is alone. I will make him a helper that is perfect for him." <sup>19</sup>So the LORD God formed from the fertile land all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky and brought them to the human to see what he would name them. The human gave each living being its name. <sup>20</sup>The human named all the livestock, all the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals. But a helper perfect for him was nowhere to be found.

<sup>21</sup>So the LORD God put the human into a deep and heavy sleep, and took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh over it. <sup>22</sup>With the rib taken from the human, the LORD God fashioned a woman and brought her to the human being. <sup>23</sup>The human<sup>1</sup> said,

<sup>1</sup>Or *man* (Heb *adam*)

Jerusalem's primary source of water, though its association with *Cush* (probably in northwest Arabia or south of Egypt) here is unclear. If the author locates creation and Eden at the site of the temple in Jerusalem, then the *Gihon* fits this context nicely (while the other rivers don't; see the note for Gen 2:8). The *Tigris* and *Euphrates* are the major rivers of the Mesopotamian river valley, where Israel's ancestors originated (Gen 11:28, 31; 15:7). Perhaps the author saw the important rivers of his time all springing from the same underground reservoir that fed Eden's spring.

2:15 God put Israel's first ancestor in the garden to do the typical work of Israel's ancient agricultural society: to farm the land and to take care of it. "Farm" translates a Hebrew verb used for cultivating land. It can also mean "serve" (see sidebar, "Dominion or Dependence?" at Gen 2). The Hebrew word for *take care of* also means to "protect" or "watch carefully."

2:16–17 Once the landscape of creation is brought to life and the human relationship to it is described (Gen 2:4b–15), the story's two plotlines begin. One starts here when God commands the first human not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It continues in the second half of the Eden story in Genesis 3:1–24. Its aim is to explain humanity's relationship to God. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil provides the

self-consciousness that gives humans the ability to make moral choices.

2:18–25 This creation story's other plotline begins in Genesis 2:18, when God recognizes that the first human being is alone. It concludes when a second human being is created and the human family begins. Its aim is to describe the basic relationships of humans to each other in ancient Israelite society.

2:18 *perfect for him*: translates a difficult Hebrew expression that can also be rendered "like himself" or "corresponding to him."

2:19 God creates the animals from the same *fertile land* out of which the first human was made (Gen 2:7). Naming the animals is an act of recognition, identification, and relationship to them. It doesn't necessarily express human power over them (cf. Gen 16:13).

2:20 The animals God created were, in fact, helpers on the Israelite farm, but none were like the first human, corresponding to him, or *perfect for him*. In other words, none were suitable partners to begin the human family.

2:21–22 While customarily translated "rib," the part of the body out of which the second human is made is in fact uncertain, since the Hebrew term is used nowhere else of the human body.

2:23 To identify the new human being as a woman, and

"This one finally is bone from my bones  
and flesh from my flesh.  
She will be called a woman<sup>l</sup>  
because from a man<sup>k</sup> she was taken."

<sup>24</sup>This is the reason that a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife, and they become one flesh. <sup>25</sup>The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, but they weren't embarrassed.

**Knowledge, not eternal life**

**3**The snake was the most intelligent<sup>l</sup> of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. <sup>3</sup>He said to the woman, "Did God really say that you shouldn't eat from any tree in the garden?"

<sup>2</sup>The woman said to the snake, "We may eat the fruit of the garden's trees <sup>3</sup>but not the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. God said, 'Don't eat from it, and don't touch it, or you will die.'"

<sup>4</sup>The snake said to the woman, "You won't die! <sup>5</sup>God knows that on the day you eat from it, you will see clearly and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup>The woman saw that the tree was beautiful with delicious food and that the tree would provide wisdom, so she took some of its fruit and ate it, and also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. <sup>7</sup>Then they both saw clearly and knew that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made garments for themselves.

<sup>8</sup>During that day's cool evening breeze, they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden; and the man and his wife hid themselves from the LORD God in the middle of the garden's trees. <sup>9</sup>The LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

<sup>10</sup>The man<sup>m</sup> replied, "I heard your sound in the garden; I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself."

<sup>11</sup>He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree, which I commanded you not to eat?"

<sup>12</sup>The man said, "The woman you gave me, she gave me some fruit<sup>n</sup> from the tree, and I ate."

<sup>13</sup>The LORD God said to the woman, "What have you done?!"

And the woman said, "The snake tricked me, and I ate."

<sup>14</sup>The LORD God said to the snake,

"Because you did this,  
you are the one cursed

**2:24** Mt 19:5;  
Mk 10:7;  
1Co 6:16;  
1Co 7:10;  
Eph 5:31  
**2:25** Gn 3:7;  
Gn 3:10  
**3:1** Mt 10:16;  
2Co 11:3;  
Rev 12:9;  
Rev 20:2  
**3:2** Gn 2:16  
**3:3** Gn 2:17  
**3:4** Gn 3:5;  
In 8:44; 2Co 11:3  
**3:5** Gn 3:4;  
Gn 3:6; Is 14:14;  
Eze 28:2  
**3:6** Ro 5:12;  
2Co 11:3;  
1Ti 2:14;  
Jas 1:14; 1In 2:16  
**3:7** Gn 2:25  
**3:8** Lv 26:12;  
Dt 23:14;  
Job 31:33;  
Jer 23:24  
**3:9** Gn 4:9;  
Gn 18:9  
**3:10** Gn 2:25;  
Gn 3:7; Ex 20:18  
**3:11** Gn 2:17;  
Gn 3:12;  
Gn 4:10;  
Ro 5:12  
**3:12** Job 31:33;  
Prov 28:13  
**3:13** Gn 4:10;  
Ex 32:22;  
2Co 11:3;  
1Ti 2:14  
**3:14** Gn 3:1;  
Is 65:25;  
Mt 7:17

<sup>l</sup>Or wife (Heb *ishshah*) <sup>k</sup>Or husband (Heb *ish*) <sup>l</sup>Heb sounds like *naked*. <sup>m</sup>Or He <sup>n</sup>Heb lacks *some fruit*.

to link man and woman together, two new Hebrew terms are introduced into the story: *ishshah*, which means "woman" or "wife" (see translation note j); and *ish*, which means "man" or "husband" (see translation note k). The play on words in the Hebrew emphasizes their likeness and compatibility with each other. (See sidebar, "Gender in Genesis" at Gen 3.) These two words identify both biological roles (*man/woman*) and social roles ("husband/wife"). **2:24 one flesh**: identifies both biological and social roles. Biologically, it refers to the physical union in marriage that produces children. Socially, it describes how different families are joined together in marriage. **2:25** Only after gaining self-consciousness by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil do humans recognize their nakedness (Gen 3:6-7). **3:1-24** The Eden creation story now shifts back to the other plotline that began in Genesis 2:16-17. It focuses on the two trees with divine fruit (Gen 2:9, 16-17). As the chapter heading in the CEB states, humans gain knowledge from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, they will be denied the tree of life, thus never gaining eternal life (Gen 3:22-23). Humans thus share God's knowledge but not God's immortality. **3:1 snake**: In the ancient Near East, snakes were often

thought to have sacred qualities, including immortality, because they shed their skins annually. **3:4-5** The *snake* was right. When the couple ate the fruit, they didn't *die* immediately, and they became *like God, knowing good and evil* (3:4). God must have changed God's mind after saying "on the day you eat from it, you will die!" (Gen 2:17; cf. Gen 6:6). The people died not as a punishment for eating the fruit but because they were created mortal (Gen 2:7; 3:19); and God denied them the immortality from the life-giving tree (Gen 3:22). **3:6** The *woman* actively debates with the snake. As a result, some readers emphasize her guilt. Others point to her initiative and intelligence. (See sidebar, "Gender in Genesis.") **3:8-11** The couple recognize that they are *naked* because they have gained self-consciousness from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. **3:12-13** When confronted with their disobedience, the people pass the blame instead of accepting responsibility. The man even blames God indirectly (*The woman you gave me*). **3:14-15** God punishes the *snake* with a curse that explains why snakes have no legs. This curse also explains human *contempt* for them: Snakes attack humans by striking at their heels, and humans kill them by striking their heads.

3:15 Is 7:14;  
 Ro 16:20;  
 Ga 4:4; Heb 2:14;  
 Rev 12:17  
 3:16 Gn 4:7;  
 1Co 11:3;  
 1Co 14:34;  
 Eph 5:22; 1Pt 3:1

*Gender in Genesis* Creation stories in Genesis have been used throughout history both to blame women for the origin of sin and to give women lower status than men. This is especially true of the story of creation at the garden in Eden. To support this way of reading Genesis, interpreters point out that the woman ate the forbidden fruit first and then gave some to her husband (Gen 3:6). She is punished by being placed under her husband's authority (Gen 3:16). This interpretation is reinforced by understanding the first human as male (Gen 2:7), and then seeing the woman as derived from the man and made to be his helper (Gen 2:20-23).

Modern interpreters have challenged the negative view of women in this traditional reading of Genesis 1-3. They point out that in the first creation story both "male and female" are created at the same time in God's image (Gen 1:27). They note that even if the woman was created after the man in the second creation story (Gen 2:23), this ordering doesn't necessarily make her inferior. After all, humanity isn't inferior by virtue of being created after many other things in Genesis 1. While the woman fills the role of "helper" in the second creation story (Gen 2:18, 20), this title doesn't necessarily mean she is inferior. In fact, God is often called a "helper" (e.g., Ps 30:10). Furthermore, the woman and the man *both* disobey in the second story. Interestingly, the woman here is the more active, thoughtful person, engaging the questions and issues raised by the snake. The man, by contrast, is entirely passive and unreflective (Gen 3:1-6). Finally, interpreters argue, the subordination of women to men isn't a part of the ideal world God created in the garden. It's one of the consequences of human sin (Gen 3:16). Thus Genesis 2-3 actually presents an ideal of sexual equality in human society.

At the same time, the picture of Israelite society that emerges from Genesis and the OT as a whole isn't one where the sexes have equal status. It's rather a society that has some powerful women, but gives authority to men. Men hold positions of institutional power (1) as head of the Israelite family (called the "father's household," Gen 12:1); (2) as leaders of Israelite society (kings, 2 Sam 7:11-14); and (3) as religious leaders (priests, Exod 28:1; and prophets, Gen 20:7). Furthermore, Israelite society is structured around men. Genealogies figure descent through men and usually omit the names of women (Gen 5:3-32). Property is owned and passed down through males (Gen 27:1-4). The family resides in the man's house (Gen 24:5-9, 57-61). Even the second story of creation in the garden reflects aspects of Israel's male-centered society. The man represents the woman in the writer's narrative (Gen 3:22, 24) and when speaking with God (Gen 2:16-17; 3:9-10). He names his wife (Gen 2:23; 3:20) and holds authority over her (Gen 3:16).

While biblical women don't possess institutional authority, they are often powerful and influential figures, especially in the family setting of the stories in Genesis. Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, Rachel, and Tamar are all strong characters. They take the lead in order to direct male-centered structures toward their own goals. They often subvert male-centered authority and exert more influence over the outcome of events than their husbands. Furthermore, what women want often aligns with what God intends (e.g., see Gen 25:23; 27:5-10). Thus the stories of Genesis both recognize the male-centered structure of Israelite society and undermine its power and authority.

out of all the farm animals,  
 out of all the wild animals.

On your belly you will crawl,  
 and dust you will eat  
 every day of your life.

<sup>15</sup> will put contempt  
 between you and the woman,  
 between your offspring and hers.  
 They will strike your head,  
 but you will strike at their heels."

<sup>16</sup>To the woman he said,  
 "I will make your pregnancy very painful;  
 in pain you will bear children.  
 You will desire your husband,  
 but he will rule over you."

**3:16** God punishes the woman by increasing the difficulty of her primary role in the Israelite family: bearing children. By associating *pain* both with *pregnancy* and with *bear[ing] children*, punishment includes the anxieties, difficulties, and dangers of conceiving, carrying, and giving birth to children (cf. Gen 16:1; 30:1; 35:16-20). The second

part of the punishment guarantees male authority in the family. *desire*: translates a Hebrew term that also includes an element of power or persuasion, as it does when used in the story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:7). The underlying Hebrew could also be translated "entice." See sidebar, "Gender in Genesis."



<sup>17</sup>To the man he said, "Because you listened to your wife's voice and you ate from the tree that I commanded, 'Don't eat from it,' cursed is the fertile land because of you; in pain you will eat from it every day of your life.  
<sup>18</sup>Weeds and thistles will grow for you, even as you eat the field's plants;  
<sup>19</sup>by the sweat of your face you will eat bread—until you return to the fertile land, since from it you were taken; you are soil, to the soil you will return."

3:17 Gn 2:17, Gn 5:29; Job 5:7, Job 14:1, Ecc 2:23  
 3:18 Gn 3:17; Job 31:40; Hos 10:8; Heb 6:8  
 3:19 Gn 2:7; Ps 90:3, Ps 104:29; Ecc 3:20, Ecc 12:7  
 3:20 Gn 2:20, Gn 2:23; 2Co 11:3; 1Ti 2:13  
 3:21 Gn 3:7  
 3:22 Gn 1:26, Gn 2:9; Pvr 3:18; Rev 2:7  
 3:23 Gn 2:8  
 3:24 Gn 2:8; Ps 104:4  
 4:1 Gn 4:25; 1Jn 3:12  
 4:2 Gn 9:20  
 4:3 Nm 18:12  
 4:4 Ex 13:12; Heb 11:4  
 4:5 Gn 4:6, Gn 4:8; Heb 11:4; Jud 1:11  
 4:6 Gn 4:5; Jon 4:4  
 4:7 Gn 3:16; Nm 32:23; Ecc 8:12-13; Is 3:10

<sup>20</sup>The man named his wife Eve<sup>o</sup> because she is the mother of everyone who lives. <sup>21</sup>The LORD God made the man and his wife leather clothes and dressed them. <sup>22</sup>The LORD God said, "The human being<sup>p</sup> has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil." Now, so he doesn't stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever, <sup>23</sup>the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to farm the fertile land from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup>He drove out the human. To the east of the garden of Eden, he stationed winged creatures wielding flaming swords to guard the way to the tree of life.

**Cain and Abel**

**4**The man Adam knew his wife Eve intimately. She became pregnant and gave birth to Cain, and said, "I have given life to<sup>q</sup> a man with the LORD's help."<sup>2</sup>She gave birth a second time to Cain's brother Abel. Abel cared for the flocks, and Cain farmed the fertile land.

<sup>3</sup>Some time later, Cain presented an offering to the LORD from the land's crops <sup>4</sup>while Abel presented his flock's oldest offspring with their fat. The LORD looked favorably on Abel and his sacrifice <sup>5</sup>but didn't look favorably on Cain and his sacrifice. Cain became very angry and looked resentful. <sup>6</sup>The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why do you look so resentful? <sup>7</sup>If you do the right thing, won't you be accepted? But if you don't do the right thing, sin will be waiting at the door ready to strike! It will entice you, but you must rule over it."

<sup>o</sup>Heb sounds like *live*. <sup>p</sup>Or *man* (Heb *adam*) <sup>q</sup>Or *created*; Heb sounds similar to *Cain*.

3:17-19 God punishes the *man* by increasing the difficulty of his primary role in the Israelite family: farming. The *ground* God curses is the same fertile land out of which humans were made (Gen 2:7) and which they were given to farm (Gen 2:5, 15; 3:23). The curse on fertile land continues until the flood, when God removes it (Gen 4:11-12; 5:29; 8:21). The *return to the fertile land* at death isn't part of the punishment. It ends the hard life of farming, the punishment imposed.

3:20-23 The story of the garden in Eden ends when the first couple are driven out of the garden. God expels them not as their punishment for eating from the tree of knowledge, but in order to keep them from eating also the fruit of the tree of life and gaining eternal life (3:22-23). The difference between humans and God is drawn: Humans share God's knowledge but not God's immortality. They remain mortal.

3:24 The *winged creatures* are sometimes called "cherubim," which is merely the Hebrew term. They aren't angels but probably look like lions with eagle's wings and human faces. They are closely associated with God (1 Kgs 6:23-28; Ps 18:10).

4:1-16 The story of Cain and Abel is about family conflict. It parallels the story of the garden in Eden in many ways: God issues a command, humans disobey, God confronts them, they protest, and God punishes them with expulsion. In the stories of Genesis, the first period of human history before the flood was an era of human failure,

which ended with the punishment of the flood and the survival of the first righteous person, Noah (Gen 6:8; 7:1). Here in Genesis 4, the failure is the breakdown of family bonds when Cain kills his brother, Abel. It shows how family conflict should not be handled. Conflicts between brothers also threaten generations *after* the flood in Genesis, but these later conflicts are resolved without bloodshed (see sidebar, "Family Conflict in Genesis").

4:1 In Hebrew, the name *Cain* sounds like the verb for *given life to* (or "created"; see translation note). It's a suitable name for the first human born. In stories written by the Yahwist, mothers name their children (Gen 4:25; 16:10; 29:31-35). Eve credits God for the birth, since pregnancies and children were considered God's gifts (cf. Gen 16:2).

4:2 While Cain and Abel are often viewed as representing farming and herding cultures, they are better understood as the story actually describes them: brothers doing the two main tasks on an Israelite family farm. *Cain*, the older son and heir to the family's land, *farmed the fertile land*, as did his father. *Abel*, the younger son, *cared for the flocks*, as was customary for the youngest son in Israelite families (cf. 1 Sam 16:11).

4:3-5 The story doesn't give the reason God accepted Abel and his sacrifice over Cain and his sacrifice. Similarly, God's choice of one brother over another isn't explained in later generations in Genesis (e.g., Gen 25:23). The point of the story is to examine how to deal with the conflict between brothers, not to explain God's preferences.

4:8 Mt 23:35;

Lk 11:51;

Heb 12:24;

Hm 3:12;

Jud 1:11

4:9 Gn 3:9;

Isa 8:44

4:10 Gn 3:13;

Ps 9:12;

Heb 12:24;

Rev 6:10

4:11 Nm 35:33;

Ga 3:10

4:12 Lv 26:20;

Ps 109:10

4:13 Gn 4:14

4:14 Gn 4:12;

Gn 9:6;

Nm 35:19;

Ps 51:11;

Isa 52:3

4:15 Gn 4:24;

Ps 79:12;

Eze 9:4; Eze 9:6

4:16 Gn 2:8

4:17 Ps 49:11

**Family Conflict in Genesis** The rivalry between Cain and Abel introduces the theme of family conflict that appears throughout Genesis. Readers find quarrels and discord between:

- Noah's sons (Gen 9:20-27);
- Abraham and his nephew Lot (Gen 13:1-18);
- Sarah and her household servant Hagar (Gen 16:1-16);
- their sons Isaac and Ishmael (Gen 21:8-21);
- Jacob and Rachel (Gen 30:1-4);
- Rachel and Leah (Gen 30:14-16);
- Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:1-55);
- Jacob and Esau (Gen 25-36);
- Tamar and Judah (Gen 38); and
- Joseph and his brothers (Gen 37; 39-50).

In many of these cases, conflict is introduced when a younger son is favored over the older son, who is the legitimate heir. Brotherly disputes result.

These sorts of conflicts occur frequently because Genesis focuses on family stories. In biblical Israel, the family is the basic unit of society. Each higher level of social organization—clan, tribe, kingdom—is modeled on family structures. In such a society, the stability of the family is essential for the stability of society as a whole. The passing of authority from one generation to the next is a matter of highest concern. The most pressing need is to pass authority without the violence that could destroy the family and society itself.

Cain and Abel clearly fail. They are the negative model for dealing with conflict. By contrast, the stories of brotherly conflict after the flood are all resolved by reconciliation without violence. In the stories of Jacob and Esau and of Joseph and his brothers, the elder brothers whose authority has been challenged consider murder, as did Cain. In both of these cases, however, conflict is resolved by reconciliation. The brother who has been wronged, and who is also the more powerful, sets aside his anger in order to reunite the family.

These stories are immensely entertaining. But they also carry the deeper message that social conflicts need to be resolved through peaceful means, not violence.

<sup>8</sup>Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field."<sup>9</sup> When they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

<sup>9</sup>The LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

Cain said, "I don't know. Am I my brother's guardian?"

<sup>10</sup>The LORD said, "What did you do? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. <sup>11</sup>You are now cursed from the ground that opened its mouth to take your brother's blood from your hand. <sup>12</sup>When you farm the fertile land, it will no longer grow anything for you, and you will become a roving nomad on the earth."

<sup>13</sup>Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. <sup>14</sup>Now that you've driven me away from the fertile land and I am hidden from your presence, I'm about to become a roving nomad on the earth, and anyone who finds me will kill me."

<sup>15</sup>The LORD said to him, "It won't happen," anyone who kills Cain will be paid back seven times. The LORD put a sign on Cain so that no one who found him would assault him. <sup>16</sup>Cain left the LORD's presence, and he settled down in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

### **Cain's descendants**

<sup>17</sup>Cain knew his wife intimately. She became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain built a city and named the city after his son Enoch.

<sup>9</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg, Sam; MT lacks *Let's go out to the field*. <sup>10</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT *therefore*

**4:10-12** Cain's sin continues the curse on *fertile land* that began in Eden as God's punishment for his father's disobedience (Gen 3:17). In this case, the land is polluted by Abel's blood. It will produce nothing for Cain.

**4:13-14** For an ancient Near Eastern farmer like Cain, removal to the desert was a death sentence. Vegetation and water were lacking, if not gone altogether. God was not even present there.

**4:15-16** The *sign* given to Cain isn't explained in the story. The text says that God provided it to Cain to assure him of protection, but interpreters don't know what

it looked like or how those who found Cain would know what it meant. *Nod* means "wandering" and is related to the Hebrew term translated "nomad" in Genesis 4:12. *Nod* isn't a specific country but a reference to the desert where nomads lived.

**4:17-26** This is the Yahwist's record of the generations who lived before the flood. The Priest's record is found in Genesis 5. This account of Cain's descendants pays special attention to the last generation, Lamech's family. The text links Lamech's family with the origins of several human occupations (4:20-22) and a short song (4:23-24).

<sup>18</sup>Irada was born to Enoch. Irada fathered Mehujael, Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. <sup>19</sup>Lamech took two wives, the first named Adah and the second Zillah. <sup>20</sup>Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the ancestor of those who live in tents and own livestock. <sup>21</sup>His brother's name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of those who play stringed and wind instruments. <sup>22</sup>Zillah also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the ancestor of<sup>e</sup> blacksmiths and all artisans of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain's sister was Naamah.

<sup>23</sup>Lamech said to his wives,  
"Adah and Zillah, listen to my voice;  
wives of Lamech, pay attention to my words:

I killed a man for wounding me,  
a boy for striking me;

<sup>24</sup>so Cain will be paid back seven times  
and Lamech seventy-seven times."

<sup>25</sup>Adam knew his wife intimately again, and she gave birth to a son. She named him Seth<sup>a</sup> "because God has given me another child in place of Abel, whom Cain killed." <sup>26</sup>Seth also fathered a son and named him Enosh. At that time, people began to worship in the LORD's name.

### Adam's descendants

**5** This is the record of Adam's descendants. On the day God created humanity, he made them to resemble God<sup>2</sup> and created them male and female. He blessed them and called them humanity<sup>7</sup> on the day they were created. <sup>3</sup>When Adam was 130 years old, he became the father of a son in his image, resembling him, and named him Seth. <sup>4</sup>After Seth's birth, Adam lived 800 years; he had other sons and daughters. <sup>5</sup>In all, Adam lived 930 years, and he died.

<sup>6</sup>When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of Enosh. <sup>7</sup>After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived 807 years; and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>8</sup>In all, Seth lived 912 years, and he died.

<sup>9</sup>When Enosh was 90 years old, he became the father of Kenan. <sup>10</sup>After Kenan's birth, Enosh lived 815 years; and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>11</sup>In all, Enosh lived 905 years, and he died.

<sup>12</sup>When Kenan was 70 years old, he became the father of Mahalalel. <sup>13</sup>After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived 840 years; and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>14</sup>In all, Kenan lived 910 years, and he died.

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks the ancestor of. <sup>2</sup>Sounds like the Heb verb gave <sup>7</sup>Heb *adam*

4:17 The *city* is simply mentioned. No anti-urban attitudes are present here or elsewhere in Genesis.

4:20 *Jabal* is the first seminomadic herder whose descendants *live in tents*, similar to modern Bedouin.

4:21 *Jubal*, the first musician, may have been the first epic singer of traditions like those found in Genesis narratives. *stringed and wind instruments*: used to accompany songs of Israel's epic story (Exod 15; Judg 5).

4:22 *Tubal-cain* is the first blacksmith, making tools for planting, harvesting, and preparing food used in agricultural economies like Israel's.

4:23-24 *Lamech's* song, composed in archaic Hebrew poetry, is so short and obscure that its meaning and purpose are hard to determine. It may be a boast in battle, similar to Samson's (Judg 15:16) or David's (1 Sam 17:46). Here it emphasizes Lamech's strength and prowess. Lamech emphasizes his power by comparing his revenge to his ancestor Cain's.

4:25 On *Adam*, see the note on Genesis 5:1-3.

5:1-32 The interest in genealogies springs from the belief that one's ancestry and heritage determine one's identity (see the intro. to Genesis). This is the Priest's record of the generations before the flood. While the genealogy in 5:1-32 shares some of the names of the Yahwist's genealogy that precedes it (e.g., Enoch and Lamech; Gen 4:17-18), it also has unique features. Most obviously, it

tells readers how long figures lived. It also traces Adam's lineage through Seth (5:4-6) instead of through Cain (Gen 4:17; cf. Gen 4:25-26). It contains different names in a different order (see note on 5:9-20). Furthermore, it includes ten generations instead of seven.

5:1-3 The two most important figures in Genesis 5:1-32 are Adam and Noah, who receive more attention than others. Genesis 5:1-3 repeats phrases from the Priest's creation story, especially Genesis 1:26-28: *God created humanity... to resemble... male and female... blessed them*. It begins with the phrase *This is the record of Adam's descendants*, which is similar to Genesis 2:4a. In Genesis 5:1a, 3-5, Genesis uses the Hebrew word *adam* as the proper name Adam. Typically, the Hebrew word means *humanity* (as in 5:1b-2; see translation note).

5:4 The long life spans of these pre-flood individuals appears to stem from an ancient Near Eastern belief that people before the flood long outlived their descendants after the flood. On other flood stories in the ancient Near East, see the note on Genesis 6:5-8:19.

5:6-8 The genealogy here traces humanity through *Seth*, not Cain (cf. Gen 4:17-26). Thus this genealogy excludes the murderer Cain from the ancestors of Noah and the human race.

5:9-20 While the names *Kenan*, *Mahalalel*, and *Jared* are similar to Cain, Mehujael, and Irada in Genesis 4:17-18, they

4:18 Gn 4:17

4:19 Gn 2:24;

1Sa 1:2

4:20 Gn 4:2;

Ac 18:3

4:21 Job 21:12;

Job 30:31;

Ps 150:4

4:22 Gn 4:19;

Gn 4:23;

1Sa 13:19;

2Ts 4:14

4:23 Gn 4:19;

Gn 4:22;

Gn 4:24;

Ex 20:13;

Lv 19:18

4:24 Gn 4:15

4:25 Gn 4:1;

Gn 4:8;

Gn 5:3-4;

1Ch 1:1

4:26 Gn 5:6;

Gn 12:8;

Ps 116:17;

Zep 3:9;

Lk 3:38

5:1 Gn 1:26-27;

1Ch 1:1

5:2 Gn 1:27

5:3 Gn 4:25;

Lk 3:38

5:4 1Ch 1:1

5:5 Gn 3:19;

1Co 15:22

5:6 Gn 4:26;

Lk 3:38

5:8 Gn 4:25-26;

Gn 5:3-4;

Lk 3:38

5:9 1Ch 1:2;

Lk 3:37

5:12 Lk 3:37

5:15 1Ch 1:2

5:16 Gn 5:15;  
Gn 5:18-19;  
Gn 5:205:18 Lk 3:37;  
Heb 11:5;  
Jud 1:145:19 Gn 5:15-16;  
Gn 5:18;  
Gn 5:205:20 Gn 5:15-16;  
Gn 5:18-195:21 1Ch 1:3;  
Lk 3:375:22 Gn 5:24;  
Gn 6:9; Mt 6:8;  
Mal 2:65:23 Gn 5:22;  
Gn 5:245:24 Gn 5:22;  
2Ki 2:11;  
Ps 49:5;  
Heb 11:55:25 1Ch 1:3;  
Lk 3:365:27 Gn 5:21;  
1Ch 1:3

5:29 Gn 3:17

6:1 Gn 1:28

6:2 Job 1:6

6:3 Ps 78:39;  
Ga 5:16-17;  
1Pt 3:20

6:4 Nm 13:33

6:5 Gn 8:21;  
Ps 11:3; Prov 6:18;  
Jer 17:9;  
Mt 15:196:6 Ex 32:14;  
Isa 5:11;  
2Sa 24:16;  
Is 63:10;  
Eph 4:30

<sup>15</sup>When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he became the father of Jared. <sup>16</sup>After Jared's birth, Mahalalel lived 830 years; and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>17</sup>In all, Mahalalel lived 895 years, and he died.

<sup>18</sup>When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch. <sup>19</sup>After Enoch's birth, Jared lived 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup>In all, Jared lived 962 years, and he died.

<sup>21</sup>When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah. <sup>22</sup>Enoch walked with God. After Methuselah's birth, Enoch lived 300 years; and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>23</sup>In all, Enoch lived 365 years. <sup>24</sup>Enoch walked with God and disappeared because God took him.

<sup>25</sup>When Methuselah was 187 years old, he became the father of Lamech. <sup>26</sup>After Lamech's birth, Methuselah lived 782 years; and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>27</sup>In all, Methuselah lived 969 years, and he died.

<sup>28</sup>When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son <sup>29</sup>and named him Noah, saying, "This one will give us relief<sup>w</sup> from our hard work, from the pain in our hands, because of the fertile land that the LORD cursed." <sup>30</sup>After Noah's birth, Lamech lived 595 years; and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>31</sup>In all, Lamech lived 777 years, and he died.

<sup>32</sup>When Noah was 500 years old, Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

### Ancient heroes

**6**When the number of people started to increase throughout the fertile land, daughters were born to them. <sup>2</sup>The divine beings saw how beautiful these human women were, so they married the ones they chose. <sup>3</sup>The LORD said, "My breath<sup>w</sup> will not remain in humans forever, because they are flesh. They will live one hundred twenty years." <sup>4</sup>In those days, giants<sup>y</sup> lived on the earth and also afterward, when divine beings and human daughters had sexual relations and gave birth to children. These were the ancient heroes, famous men.

### Great flood

<sup>5</sup>The LORD saw that humanity had become thoroughly evil on the earth and that every idea their minds thought up was always completely evil. <sup>6</sup>The LORD regretted making human

<sup>w</sup>Heb resembles the sound of Noah's name. <sup>x</sup>Or spirit <sup>y</sup>Or the Nephilim

are neither identical nor in the same order. Their relationship has been impossible to determine. The Yahwist's and the Priest's traditions differ here.

5:22-24 The phrase *walked with God* is used also of the great ancestors Noah (Gen 6:9) and Abraham (cf. Gen 17:1). 5:27 *Methuselah* lived the longest of all.

5:28-29 *Lamech* refers back to the curse on the *fertile land* described in earlier stories (Gen 3:17-19; cf. Gen 4:10-12).

6:1-4 This unusual story tells about *ancient heroes*, *famous men* who were born to divine men and human women before the flood. Most interpreters have considered these divine-human unions offensive and regarded this story as an introduction to the wickedness that preceded the flood. But this story describes these men in heroic terms. It mentions no sins, as do the following verses introducing the flood (Gen 6:5-13). *giants* (Hebrew *Nephilim*; see translation note y) are mentioned again in Numbers 13:33, where they are described as warriors of great physical stature.

6:5-8:19 Israel shared with its neighbors the idea that history was divided into two ages. The first age ended with a great flood. Both the Epic of Gilgamesh and the Atrahasis Epic from Mesopotamia describe such a flood. They have many parallels to the biblical story. One key difference is that the Atrahasis Epic explains the flood as the gods' attempt to control overpopulation, while Genesis describes it as God's judgment of human sin. All of these flood stories appear to give expression to the deep human uneasiness about the stability of order in the world and the constant

threat of chaos. In the biblical world, uncontrolled floodwaters were the primary symbol of chaos. The reader will notice a number of details that contrast or conflict with each other in the flood story. These can be best explained as coming from two writers, whose different stories have been skillfully combined here (rather than set side by side, as were the two creation stories). In the Yahwist's flood story, God is referred to by name (Yahweh, "the LORD" in the CEB). Heavy rain brings on the flood (7:4, 12; 8:2b), and it lasts 40 days and nights (7:4, 12, 17; 8:6). Noah brings seven pairs of the clean animals onto the ark (7:2-3), because they can be eaten and sacrificed, as Noah does immediately after the flood (Gen 8:20). The Priest always uses the word "God" in his story. The flood happens because the orders of creation fall apart (7:11; 8:2a), and it lasts an entire year (7:11, 24; 8:3b, 4-5, 13-14). Noah brings only one pair of all the animals onto the ark (6:19-20; 7:9, 15), since the Priest's traditions say that people don't eat meat until after the flood (Gen 1:29, 9:3), and they don't make sacrifices until God gives instructions for them at Mount Sinai (Lev 1-7).

6:5 With the phrase *every idea their minds thought up*, the text describes sin in personal, interior language. Sin is also described in inward terms elsewhere by the Yahwist in the Cain and Abel story (Gen 4:6-7) and in the conclusion to the flood story (Gen 8:20-22).

6:6 *The Lord regretted*: Regret and grief illustrate the Yahwist's view of God as a very humanlike figure. *he was heart-broken*: can also be translated "he felt pain in his heart."

beings on the earth, and he was heartbroken. <sup>7</sup>So the LORD said, "I will wipe off of the land the human race that I've created: from human beings to livestock to the crawling things to the birds in the skies, because I regret I ever made them." <sup>8</sup>But as for Noah, the LORD approved of him.

<sup>9</sup>These are Noah's descendants. In his generation, Noah was a moral and exemplary man; he <sup>a</sup>walked with God. <sup>10</sup>Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. <sup>11</sup>In God's sight, the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. <sup>12</sup>God saw that the earth was corrupt, because all creatures behaved corruptly on the earth.

<sup>13</sup>God said to Noah, "The end has come for all creatures, since they have filled the earth with violence. I am now about to destroy them along with the earth, <sup>14</sup>so make a wooden ark. <sup>a</sup>Make the ark with nesting places and cover it inside and out with tar. <sup>15</sup>This is how you should make it: four hundred fifty feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and forty-five feet high. <sup>16</sup>Make a roof <sup>b</sup> for the ark and complete it one foot from the top. <sup>c</sup> Put a door in its side. In the hold below, make the second and third decks.

<sup>17</sup>"I am now bringing the floodwaters over the earth to destroy everything under the sky that breathes. Everything on earth is about to take its last breath. <sup>18</sup>But I will set up my covenant with you. You will go into the ark together with your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives. <sup>19</sup>From all living things—from all creatures—you are to bring a pair, male and female, into the ark with you to keep them alive. <sup>20</sup>From each kind of bird, from each kind of livestock, and from each kind of everything that crawls on the ground—a pair from each will go in with you to stay alive. <sup>21</sup>Take some from every kind of food and stow it as food for you and for the animals."

<sup>22</sup>Noah did everything exactly as God commanded him.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark with your whole household, because among this generation I've seen that you are a moral man. <sup>2</sup>From every clean animal, take seven pairs, a male and his mate; and from every unclean animal, take one pair, a male and his mate; <sup>3</sup>and from the birds in the sky as well, take seven pairs, male and female, so that their offspring will survive throughout the earth. <sup>4</sup>In seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights. I will wipe off from the fertile land every living thing that I have made."

<sup>5</sup>Noah did everything the LORD commanded him.

<sup>6</sup>Noah was 600 years old when the floodwaters arrived on earth. <sup>7</sup>Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him entered the ark to escape the floodwaters. <sup>8</sup>From the clean and unclean animals, from the birds and everything crawling on the ground, <sup>9</sup>two of each, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, just as God commanded Noah. <sup>10</sup>After seven days, the floodwaters arrived on the earth. <sup>11</sup>In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day—on that day all the springs of the deep sea erupted, and

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Noah* <sup>b</sup>Or *ark of gopher wood*, an unknown species of tree <sup>c</sup>Or *window* <sup>d</sup>Heb *uncertain*

The same Hebrew word was used earlier for the woman's "pain" in pregnancy and childbirth (Gen 3:16) and for the man's "pain" in farming (Gen 3:17).

6:8 *approved of*: a typical phrase for describing the favorable regard and special generosity of one individual for another (Gen 18:3; 19:19).

6:9 *These are Noah's descendants*: This phrase identifies Noah as the first ancestor of the second age of history, which will begin after the flood. Aside from Enoch (Gen 5:22-23), Noah is the first person who *walked with God*. He is the first to be called *moral and exemplary*.

6:11-13 Whereas Genesis 6:5 described sin in personal terms, the Priest's focus here is more general: *the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence*.

6:14-16 Neither the ark's building materials nor its design is completely understood. They don't appear to reflect the typical structure of ships in ancient times. The terms for the ark's wood and the *tar* to cover it in 6:14 (see translation note a) are used nowhere else in the Bible. The ark's

dimensions in 6:15 suggest a rectangular shape. Such a boxy design appears to be part of the ancient Near Eastern flood tradition: The ship described in the Epic of Gilgamesh was a perfect cube, 180 feet on a side.

6:18 God's *covenant* with Noah is described more fully in Genesis 9:1-17.

6:22 This summary statement about Noah's obedience is meant to emphasize his moral and exemplary character (Gen 6:9).

7:1 On the word "moral," see notes on Genesis 6:9, 22.

7:2-3 In the Yahwist's story *seven pairs of clean animals* and birds are needed because clean animals are suitable for food during the flood and for sacrifice afterward (Gen 8:20). The Priest's story speaks of just one pair of all animals (Gen 6:19-20; 7:9, 15) because he believes that people did not eat meat or make sacrifices until later.

7:5 Noah was the first obedient person (Gen 6:22).

7:11 The Priest describes the flood as undoing creation: The reservoirs of water above and below the earth,

6:7 Gn 6:17

6:8 Gn 19:19;

Ex 33:12;

Ex 33:17;

Lk 1:30

6:9 Gn 5:22,

Gn 5:24, Gn 7:1;

Job 1:1; 2Pt 2:5

6:11 Eze 6:17

6:12 Ps 14:1.

Ps 14:2

6:13 Gn 6:17;

Eze 7:2; Am 8:2

6:14 Ex 2:3;

Mt 24:38;

Heb 11:7;

1Pt 3:20

6:15 Dt 3:11

6:16 Dt 3:11

6:17 Gn 6:7,

Gn 6:13; 2Pt 2:5

6:18 Gn 7:7,

Gn 9:9, Gn 17:7

6:19 Gn 7:2,

Gn 7:9, Gn 7:15

6:20 Gn 7:3

6:22 Gn 7:5;

Ex 40:16;

Heb 11:7

7:1 Gn 6:9;

Mt 24:38;

Heb 11:7;

1Pt 3:20; 2Pt 2:5

7:2 Gn 8:20,

Lv 11:1

7:3 Gn 6:20

7:4 Gn 6:7,

Gn 6:13,

Gn 7:10,

Gn 7:12,

Gn 7:17

7:5 Gn 6:22,

Gn 7:9;

Heb 11:7

7:6 Gn 5:32,

Gn 8:13

7:7 Gn 6:18,

Gn 7:13

7:8 Gn 6:19-20,

Gn 7:2

7:9 Gn 7:5

7:10 Gn 7:4

7:11 Gn 8:2,

Is 24:18;

Mal 3:10

7:13 Gn 5:32;  
Gn 6:10,  
Gn 6:18,  
Gn 9:18  
7:16 Gn 7:2-3  
7:17 Gn 7:4;  
Gn 7:12  
7:20 Gn 8:4;  
2Pt 3:6  
7:21 Gn 6:7,  
Gn 6:13,  
Gn 6:17, Gn 7:4  
7:22 Gn 2:7  
7:23 Mt 24:39;  
Lk 17:27;  
Heb 11:7;  
1Pt 3:20; 2Pt 2:5  
8:1 Gn 19:29;  
Gn 30:22;  
Ex 2:24;  
Ex 14:21;  
1Sa 1:19  
8:4 Gn 7:11;  
2Ki 19:37;  
Is 37:38;  
Jer 51:27  
8:6 Gn 6:16  
8:7 Dt 14:14;  
1Ki 17:4;  
Ps 147:9  
8:8 Gn 8:10;  
Mt 10:16  
8:10 Gn 8:12  
8:12 Gn 8:10  
8:13 Gn 7:6;  
Gn 7:11  
8:16 Gn 7:1,  
Gn 7:13  
8:20 Gn 7:2,  
Gn 12:7,  
Gn 13:18,  
Gn 22:9,  
Gn 35:7  
8:21 Gn 6:5,  
Gn 9:11; Lv 1:9;  
Is 54:9; Ro 1:21

the windows in the skies opened. <sup>12</sup>It rained on the earth forty days and forty nights. <sup>13</sup>That same day Noah, with his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, Noah's wife, and his sons' three wives, went into the ark. <sup>14</sup>They and every kind of animal—every kind of livestock, every kind that crawls on the ground, every kind of bird<sup>d</sup>—<sup>15</sup>they came to Noah and entered the ark, two of every creature that breathes. <sup>16</sup>Male and female of every creature went in, just as God had commanded him. Then the LORD closed the door behind them.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>17</sup>The flood remained on the earth for forty days. The waters rose, lifted the ark, and it rode high above the earth. <sup>18</sup>The waters rose and spread out over the earth. The ark floated on the surface of the waters. <sup>19</sup>The waters rose even higher over the earth; they covered all of the highest mountains under the sky. <sup>20</sup>The waters rose twenty-three feet high, covering the mountains. <sup>21</sup>Every creature took its last breath: the things crawling on the ground, birds, livestock, wild animals, everything swarming on the ground, and every human being. <sup>22</sup>Everything on dry land with life's breath in its nostrils died. <sup>23</sup>God wiped away every living thing that was on the fertile land—from human beings to livestock to crawling things to birds in the sky. They were wiped off the earth. Only Noah and those with him in the ark were left. <sup>24</sup>The waters rose over the earth for one hundred fifty days.

**8** God remembered Noah, all those alive, and all the animals with him in the ark. God sent a wind over the earth so that the waters receded. <sup>2</sup>The springs of the deep sea and the skies<sup>f</sup> closed up. The skies held back the rain. <sup>3</sup>The waters receded gradually from the earth. After one hundred fifty days, the waters decreased; <sup>4</sup>and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day, the ark came to rest on the Ararat mountains. <sup>5</sup>The waters decreased gradually until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the mountain peaks appeared.

<sup>6</sup>After forty days, Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made. <sup>7</sup>He sent out a raven, and it flew back and forth until the waters over the entire earth had dried up. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent out a dove to see if the waters on all of the fertile land had subsided, <sup>9</sup>but the dove found no place to set its foot. It returned to him in the ark since waters still covered the entire earth. Noah stretched out his hand, took it, and brought it back into the ark. <sup>10</sup>He waited seven more days and sent the dove out from the ark again. <sup>11</sup>The dove came back to him in the evening, grasping a torn olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the waters were subsiding from the earth. <sup>12</sup>He waited seven more days and sent out the dove, but it didn't come back to him again. <sup>13</sup>In Noah's six hundred first year, on the first day of the first month, the waters dried up from the earth. Noah removed the ark's hatch and saw that the surface of the fertile land had dried up. <sup>14</sup>In the second month, on the seventeenth day, the earth was dry.

<sup>15</sup>God spoke to Noah, <sup>16</sup>"Go out of the ark, you and your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you. <sup>17</sup>Bring out with you all the animals of every kind—birds, livestock, everything crawling on the ground—so that they may populate the earth, be fertile, and multiply on the earth." <sup>18</sup>So Noah went out of the ark with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives. <sup>19</sup>All the animals, all the livestock,<sup>g</sup> all the birds, and everything crawling on the ground, came out of the ark by their families.

### God's promise for the earth

<sup>20</sup>Noah built an altar to the LORD. He took some of the clean large animals and some of the clean birds, and placed entirely burned offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup>The LORD smelled the

<sup>d</sup>LXX; MT every bird, every winged thing <sup>e</sup>Heb lacks the door. <sup>f</sup>Or the windows of the skies <sup>g</sup>LXX; MT lacks all the livestock.

separated by a dome on the second day of creation (Gen 1:6-8), now rush together into the watery chaos present before creation began (Gen 1:2).

7:12-24 Here, at the height of the catastrophe, the two themes of the flood story converge. One is the deep human fear that order and life will collapse and disappear. The other is the deep human hope that life, like the animals and people aboard Noah's boat, will persevere and triumph in the end.

8:1 Just as God's wind blew over the chaotic waters at creation to bring order to them (Gen 1:2), so God's wind blows over the floodwaters to bring order again as the world is re-created after the flood.

8:3-4 Ararat was an ancient kingdom that included parts of modern Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Armenia.

8:13 Noah sees the new world on the first day of the new year, which gives the day special importance.

8:13-14 In the Priest's story, the earth was dry a year after the flood began (see Gen 7:11).

8:20-22 These verses conclude the Yahwist's flood story, along with the Priest's account of the covenant in Genesis 9:1-17. Both this text and the account of the covenant describe how God reestablishes order and re-creates the world. Here the focus is on the stability of the earth's regular agricultural cycles in the new post-flood age (e.g., seedtime and harvest).

pleasing scent, and the LORD thought to himself, I will not curse the fertile land anymore because of human beings since the ideas of the human mind are evil from their youth. I will never again destroy every living thing as I have done.

<sup>22</sup>As long as the earth exists,  
seedtime and harvest,  
cold and hot,  
summer and autumn,  
day and night  
will not cease.

**God's covenant with all life**

**9** God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fertile, multiply, and fill the earth. <sup>2</sup>All of the animals on the earth will fear you and dread you—all the birds in the skies, everything crawling on the ground, and all of the sea's fish. They are in your power. <sup>3</sup>Everything that lives and moves will be your food. Just as I gave you the green grasses, I now give you everything. <sup>4</sup>However, you must not eat meat with its life, its blood, in it.

<sup>5</sup>I will surely demand your blood for a human life,  
from every living thing I will demand it.  
From humans, from a man for his brother,  
I will demand something for a human life.

<sup>6</sup>Whoever sheds human blood,  
by a human his blood will be shed;  
for in the divine image God made human beings.

<sup>7</sup>As for you, be fertile and multiply. Populate the earth and multiply in it." <sup>8</sup>God said to Noah and to his sons with him, <sup>9</sup>"I am now setting up my covenant with you, with your descendants, <sup>10</sup>and with every living being with you—with the birds, with the large animals, and with all the animals of the earth, leaving the ark with you." <sup>11</sup>I will set up my covenant with you so that never again will all life be cut off by floodwaters. There will never again be a flood to destroy the earth."

<sup>b</sup>LXX; MT includes *for all the animals of the earth*.

8:20 Noah begins life after the flood by building an *altar* and making *offerings*. He thus reestablishes religious rituals, *entirely burned offerings*: made to give thanks, to ask for something, or to request forgiveness of sin.

8:21 Noah's sacrifice moves God to promise never again to *curse the fertile land* as punishment for human sin (Gen 3:17-19; 4:11-13; 5:29). Farmers in the new age therefore won't live constantly under this threat of destruction.

8:22 God's promise to protect the *earth* highlights the key events in Israel's agricultural calendar. *seedtime*: the sowing of barley and wheat in the fall. *harvest*: the gathering of these grain crops in the spring. *summer* and *autumn*: refer more specifically to the summer fruit harvest (primarily grapes) and the autumn fruit harvest (primarily olives). *cold* and *hot*: refer to the winter rainy season and the summer dry season into which the Mediterranean year is divided.

9:1-17 Here God reestablishes order and re-creates the world through a *covenant*, as the CEB section heading notes. A covenant establishes a committed relationship between God and human beings, between God and the world, or between one human and another human. This text describes the first covenant in the Bible. By it God begins the new age following the flood (Gen 8:8-17).

9:1-7 Creation's orders are reestablished and somewhat revised after the flood (see note on Gen 9:2-3).

9:1 God re-creates the fertility of the world in the new age by repeating the blessing given at creation (Gen 1:28; see also Gen 9:7).

9:2-3 The relationship established at creation between

*animals* and humans changes. Whereas people were given only *green grasses* (the grains wheat and barley) for food at creation (Gen 1:29), they are now allowed to kill animals for food. This new order institutes Israel's practice of eating meat. It also legitimates sacrifice, which is established in the covenant at Mount Sinai.

9:4-6 Two prohibitions are introduced to prevent the violence that brought the flood (Gen 6:13). They will govern the new order between human beings and between human beings and animals. First, people aren't allowed to *eat meat with its life, its blood, in it*, a prohibition based on the idea that the blood carried life (Lev 17:10-14; Deut 12:23-25; cf. Lev 1:5, 15). Second, capital punishment is ordered for anyone shedding *human blood* and thereby taking *human life*. Human beings, unlike animals, were made in the *divine image* (Gen 1:26-27).

9:8-17 The orders of the new era following the flood are guaranteed by a *covenant* God makes with the entire world: with the *earth* (9:13); with *every living being* (that is, with all the world's animals; 9:10); and with *Noah* and all his *descendants* (that is, with all the world's people; 9:9). It's the first of three covenants that mark the major periods of history in the post-flood era. The second is with Abraham (Gen 15:1-21; 17:1-27); and the third and climactic covenant is with Israel at Mount Sinai, where all the instructions for living as a religious people are given (Exod 31:12-17).

9:9-11 The *covenant* is initiated, drawn up, and guaranteed by God. It is eternal (Gen 9:11, 12, 16).

9:11 Gn 1:22.

Gn 1:28

9:2 Gn 1:26;

Jas 3:7

9:3 Gn 1:29

9:4 Lv 3:17;

Lv 17:10;

Dt 12:16;

Dt 12:23;

Ac 15:20

9:5 Ex 21:12;

Ex 21:28

9:6 Gn 1:26-27;

Gn 5:1; Ex 21:12;

Lv 24:17

9:7 Gn 1:28;

Gn 9:1

9:9 Gn 6:18

9:11 Gn 8:21;

Is 54:9

9:12 Gn 17:11  
 9:19 Gn 5:32,  
 Gn 10:32,  
 1Ch 1:4

*Israel among the Nations* The stories in Genesis speak on two levels. The first is the family level. Here the characters represent the individuals that make up a typical biblical family. The second is the national level. On this more symbolic level, the characters represent the nations made up of their descendants. Thus Jacob (renamed Israel) represents a single ancestor and at the same time the entire people of Israel who count themselves as his descendants.

The stories in Genesis, therefore, describe not only the relations between the individuals in the stories but also the relations between the nations descended from them. In this regard, Genesis contains a political map. Its stories are intended to describe the relations between the nations that existed at later times in Israel's history when the writers of Genesis lived.

The major nations represented in Genesis by their ancestors are the Canaanites (Gen 9:20-27); the Ishmaelites (Gen 16:1-6; 21:8-21); the Moabites and Ammonites (Gen 19:30-38); the Philistines (Gen 21:22-34; 26:1-33); the Edomites (Gen 25:19-34; 27:1-45; 32:1-33:17); and the Arameans (Gen 29:1-31:55). These peoples shared Israel's borders and shaped its national life. In these stories of the origins of Israel and these nations, the authors of Genesis reveal the values toward international relations present in their own time.

Genesis presents a two-sided message about Israel's neighbors. On the one hand, the text says that Israel's neighbors are close relatives of Israel's own ancestors. The Ishmaelites, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Arameans are all descendants of Abraham's father, Terah. Thus these neighboring nations aren't viewed as foreign or alien. Instead, these groups share Israel's identity and deserve the respect and privileges given to any family member. God appears to the ancestors of Israel's neighbors and makes promises to them (Gen 16:7-11). Genesis portrays the ancestors of Israel's neighbors as generous peacemakers who often work to reconcile differences (Gen 21:22; 26:26-29; 33:1-4).

While embracing these nations as members of Israel's own family, the authors of Genesis frequently present them in a less-than-favorable light. The Canaanites' ancestors show disrespect to their father, Noah, and are cursed to serve the Israelites (Gen 9:20-27). The Ishmaelites' mother, Hagar, is forced out from Abraham's household. Her descendants live in the desert, facing constant conflict with surrounding peoples (Gen 16:12). The Moabites and Ammonites have questionable origins in the union of Lot and his daughters (Gen 19:30-38). The Edomites are descendants of Esau, Jacob's (Israel's) own brother. However, his descendants are placed in Israel's service (Gen 27:29). Each of these stories seeks to position the Israelite kingdom—the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—most favorably in its ancient political context.

This twofold picture of Israel's relations with its neighbors effectively describes both the bonds and the conflicts between Israel and the surrounding nations. Genesis affirms the identity and interests Israel shares with its neighbors. Yet the book recognizes the tensions, conflicts, and self-interest that emerge between nations. When tensions do arise in Genesis between Israel's ancestors and the ancestors of the surrounding nations, they are resolved through reconciliation or by a formal agreement, rather than by conflict and violence. Such is the case with the Philistines (Gen 21:27; 26:31); the Arameans (Gen 31:44); and the Edomites (Gen 33:1-4). When Simeon and Levi choose violence, Jacob disapproves and disinherits them (Gen 34:30; 49:5-7). Underlying these stories is the confidence that international conflict is best resolved peacefully.

<sup>12</sup>God said, "This is the symbol of the covenant that I am drawing up between me and you and every living thing with you, on behalf of every future generation. <sup>13</sup>I have placed my bow in the clouds; it will be the symbol of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup>When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, <sup>15</sup>I will remember the covenant between me and you and every living being among all the creatures. Floodwaters will never again destroy all creatures. <sup>16</sup>The bow will be in the clouds, and upon seeing it I will remember the enduring covenant between God and every living being of all the earth's creatures." <sup>17</sup>God said to Noah, "This is the symbol of the covenant that I have set up between me and all creatures on earth."

### ***Shem's blessing and Canaan's curse***

<sup>18</sup>Noah's sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth came out of the ark. Now Ham was Canaan's father. <sup>19</sup>These were Noah's three sons, and from them the whole earth was populated.

9:12-16 The *symbol of the covenant* with the world is a natural phenomenon: the rainbow. The Hebrew word is actually *bow*, which usually refers to the weapon used by ancient Near Eastern soldiers and deities, including Israel's God (Hab 3:9; Lam 2:4). God's weapon of war and death is laid aside in the clouds and becomes the sign of the peace and life assured in the covenant.

9:18-27 One purpose of the Genesis genealogies and stories after the flood is to explain how all the world's cultures came into being and how they are related to each other. Another purpose is to describe Israel's identity and role among these cultures. See the introduction; see sidebar, "Israel among the Nations." This first story of Noah and his sons, from whom *the whole earth was*



<sup>20</sup>Noah, a farmer, made a new start and planted a vineyard. <sup>21</sup>He drank some of the wine, became drunk, and took off his clothes in his tent. <sup>22</sup>Ham, Canaan's father, saw his father naked and told his two brothers who were outside. <sup>23</sup>Shem and Japheth took a robe, threw it over their shoulders, walked backward, and covered their naked father without looking at him because they turned away. <sup>24</sup>When Noah woke up from his wine, he discovered what his youngest son had done to him. <sup>25</sup>He said,

"Cursed be Canaan:  
the lowest servant  
he will be for his brothers."

<sup>26</sup>He also said,  
"Bless the LORD,  
the God of Shem;  
Canaan will be his servant.

<sup>27</sup>May God give space<sup>l</sup> to Japheth;  
he will live in Shem's tents,  
and Canaan will be his servant."

<sup>28</sup>After the flood, Noah lived 350 years. <sup>29</sup>In all, Noah lived 950 years; then he died.

**Noah's descendants**

**10** These are the descendants of Noah's sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, to whom children were born after the flood. <sup>2</sup>Japheth's sons: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. <sup>3</sup>Gomer's sons: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. <sup>4</sup>Javan's sons: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.<sup>j</sup> <sup>5</sup>From these the island-nations were divided into their own countries, each according to their languages and their clans within their nations.

<sup>i</sup>Heb sounds like *Japheth*. <sup>j</sup>LXX, Sam, 1 Chron 1:7; MT *Dodanim*

populated (9:19), begins the portrayal of this great "map" of the world.

9:20 The first thing Noah does is plant a vineyard. Vineyards were common in the agricultural world of ancient Israel. Like Adam and Cain before him, Noah was a Mediterranean farmer.

9:21 Although later interpreters often saw this story as a moral tale against drinking too much, the story doesn't take this approach or criticize Noah, who is always called a moral man (Gen 6:9). The story focuses instead on Ham's disgraceful act and the consequences for Canaan. The verb translated *became drunk* here means "to drink generously," as Joseph and his brothers do later in Genesis to celebrate (Gen 43:34).

9:22-23 Ham's sin is difficult to determine. The phrase *saw his father naked* can be interpreted different ways. Some suggest that the phrase refers to sexual contact of some kind, as in Leviticus 20:17, when a similar Hebrew expression is used. However, it may refer to the disrespect in observing a parent naked and telling others about it.

9:25-27 Though Ham sinned, Noah curses Ham's son Canaan (Gen 9:22; 10:6). The story aims to justify Canaan's descendants, the Canaanites, later serving Shem's descendants, the Israelites (Gen 11:10-30). Because the Canaanites posed the strongest threat to the Israelites at the very beginning of their history in Canaan (Josh; Judg), the narrator here wants to explain Israel's successes against them. While the Canaanites are reduced to servants in this story, they are portrayed elsewhere in Genesis in more neutral or positive terms. The text says they live alongside and even marry Israel's ancestors (Gen 12:6; 38:2).

9:28-29 These verses connect back to Genesis 5:32; 6:9.

10:1-32 This genealogy explains how the cultures of the

known world originated in the new era after the flood. It shows how these cultures were related to each other through Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. It's a branched genealogy: a family tree that traces more than one line of descent from a single ancestor in order to show the relationship between individuals and the nations descended from them. This genealogy thus represents a map of the world as the writer knew it. See sidebar, "Israel among the Nations" at Genesis 9. While many of these names are well known, some are no longer identifiable. Exactly 70 names are listed, a number likely signifying the totality of the human race. Compare with Genesis 46:27.

10:1 The genealogy begins with the words *These are the descendants of*, which Genesis uses to begin the major sections within its genealogical framework (cf. Gen 2:4a; 5:1; 6:9).

10:2-5 *Japheth's sons* represent the nations north and northwest of biblical Israel, in the general area now covered by the modern countries of Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus.

10:2 *Magog's* identity is uncertain. It has been related to a ruler of ancient Lydia, located in modern Turkey. Ezekiel considered it the location of an apocalyptic battle (Ezek 38-39).

10:3 *Ashkenaz*: While used by Jews since the Middle Ages as a designation for eastern European Jews, in antiquity it referred to the Scythians, who were located between the Black and Caspian Seas.

10:4 *Javan* (cf. Gen 10:2) refers to the Ionians, that is, Greeks who settled the west coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). *Elishah* is the island of Cyprus; and *Kittim* is ancient Kition (modern Larnaka), a city on Cyprus's southeast coast. *Rodanim* probably refers to the inhabitants of the island of Rhodes.

9:20 Gn 4:2;  
Gn 5:29  
9:21 Prv 20:1  
9:22 Gn 9:25;  
Gn 10:6;  
Gn 10:15;  
Hab 2:15  
9:23 Gn 9:27  
9:24 Gn 9:25  
9:25 Dt 27:16;  
Josh 9:23  
9:26 Gn 14:20  
9:27 Gn 10:2  
10:2 1 Ch 1:5;  
Is 66:19;  
Eze 38:2

10:8 1Ch 1:10;  
Mi 5:6  
10:9 Gn 25:27  
10:10 Gn 11:2,  
Gn 11:9,  
Gn 14:1, Is 10:9,  
Is 11:11  
10:11 2Ki 19:36;  
Mi 5:6; Na 1:4  
10:12 Gn 10:11  
10:13 Gn 10:6;  
1Ch 1:11  
10:14 Dt 2:23,  
1Ch 1:12;  
Jer 47:4; Am 9:7  
10:15 Gn 23:3,  
Gn 27:46,  
Gn 49:32,  
1Ch 1:13  
10:16 Gn 10:15,  
Gn 15:16; Dt 7:1;  
1Ch 1:13-14  
10:17 Gn 34:2  
10:20 Gn 10:5-6,  
Gn 10:31,  
Gn 11:1  
10:21 Gn 11:10  
10:25 Gn 11:16;  
1Ch 1:19  
10:31 Gn 10:5,  
Gn 10:20  
10:32 Gn 9:19,  
Gn 10:1  
11:1 Gn 11:6  
11:2 Gn 10:10,  
Gn 14:1;  
Is 11:11; Dn 1:2;  
Zec 5:11  
11:3 Gn 14:10;  
Ex 1:14; Ex 2:3,  
Ex 5:7; Is 9:10

<sup>6</sup>Ham's sons: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. <sup>7</sup>Cush's sons: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. Raamah's sons: Sheba and Dedan. <sup>8</sup>Cush fathered Nimrod, the first great warrior on earth. <sup>9</sup>The LORD saw him as a great hunter, and so it is said, "Like Nimrod, whom the LORD saw as a great hunter." <sup>10</sup>The most important cities in his kingdom were Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar. <sup>11</sup>Asshur left that land and built Nineveh, Rehoboth City, Calah, <sup>12</sup>and Resen, the great city between Nineveh and Calah. <sup>13</sup>Egypt fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, <sup>14</sup>Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim,<sup>a</sup> from which the Philistines came.

<sup>15</sup>Canaan fathered Sidon his oldest son, and Heth, <sup>16</sup>the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, <sup>17</sup>the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, <sup>18</sup>the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. After this the Canaanite clans were dispersed. <sup>19</sup>The Canaanite boundary extends from Sidon by way of Gerar to Gaza and by way of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim to Lasha. <sup>20</sup>These are Ham's sons according to their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

<sup>21</sup>Children were also born to Shem the father of all Eber's children and Japheth's older brother.

<sup>22</sup>Shem's sons: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. <sup>23</sup>Aram's sons: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. <sup>24</sup>Arpachshad fathered Shelah, and Shelah fathered Eber. <sup>25</sup>To Eber were born two sons: The first was named Peleg,<sup>1</sup> because during his lifetime the earth was divided. His brother's name was Joktan. <sup>26</sup>Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, <sup>27</sup>Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, <sup>28</sup>Obal, Abimael, Sheba, <sup>29</sup>Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All of these were Joktan's sons. <sup>30</sup>Their settlements extended from Mesha by way of Sephar, the eastern mountains. <sup>31</sup>These are Shem's sons according to their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

<sup>32</sup>These are the clans of Noah's sons according to their generations and their nations. From them the earth's nations branched out after the flood.

### Origin of languages and cultures

**11** All people<sup>m</sup> on the earth had one language and the same words. <sup>2</sup>When they traveled east,<sup>a</sup> they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. <sup>3</sup>They said to each

<sup>a</sup>Or Casluhim, from which the Philistines set out, and Caphtorim <sup>1</sup>Or separation <sup>m</sup>Heb lacks people. <sup>o</sup>Or from the east

10:6-20 *Ham's sons* represent the nations south of biblical Israel, including the modern countries of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Libya. They also represent the Canaanites, the traditional inhabitants of the land of biblical Israel. They are not linked only to Africa, as many later interpreters claimed.

10:6-7 While *Cush* is identified by later interpreters with Ethiopia, his sons here are connected with places in modern Saudi Arabia and the Sudan. *Put* is likely Libya.

10:8-10 *Nimrod* can't be identified with any historical figure. Though interpreters have made him out to be an evil Babylonian ruler, he's simply described here as a legendary warrior (cf. Mic 5:6). *great hunter*: a common description for ancient kings. *Babel* refers to Babylon. On *Shinar*, see Genesis 11:2.

10:11-12 *Asshur* has been identified with Assyria (cf. Gen 10:22); and *Nineveh* with its capital.

10:13-14 The *Philistines*, who play a role in the stories that follow (e.g., Gen 26), are associated with *Egypt* and linked to *Caphtorim*, the island of Crete. This preserves the historical memory of the Philistines, a seafaring people from the Greek world who invaded Egypt and eventually settled on the southern coast of Canaan, where they appear in the Genesis narratives.

10:15-19 This list of *Canaanite clans* appears again later (with some changes) when God promises this land to Israel's ancestors (e.g., Gen 15:18-21; Exod 3:8). Their territory is identified primarily with the lowlands along the Mediterranean coast and in the Jordan Valley.

10:22-32 *Shem's sons* represent the nations east of biblical Israel, in the general area now covered by the modern countries of Syria, Iraq, and Iran. This lineage and this area are featured because the writers connect this location with the origins of civilization (Gen 11:1-9) and the Israelites themselves (Gen 11:10-32). The biblical Hebrew language is, in fact, more closely related to the ancient northwest and northeast Semitic languages spoken in these areas than to the languages once spoken in the areas of most of Ham's and Japheth's descendants.

10:22-23 Among *Shem's sons* are *Asshur* (Assyria) in Mesopotamia, the ancient homeland of Israel's ancestors (Gen 11:27-28); and *Aram* (Syria), ancestor of the Arameans, with whom Israel's ancestors are closely related (Gen 24:1-10; 25:20; 28:1-5).

10:31 The phrase *their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations* concludes the listing of Shem's sons (as Gen 10:5 did for Japheth's sons and Gen 10:20 did for Ham's sons). Peoples and nations are distinguished by different languages and locations.

11:1-9 This story describes the origin of the world's cultures. The story has been interpreted as a story of human pride and divine punishment. In fact, the text itself emphasizes the human wish to preserve one common culture (11:1-4). This wish comes into conflict with God's aim to create a new world with different cultures (11:5-9). The reader may find it strange that after Genesis 10 describes the entire world being populated, Genesis 11 begins by saying everyone lived in one place and spoke the same

other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them hard." They used bricks for stones and asphalt for mortar. <sup>4</sup>They said, "Come, let's build for ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky, and let's make a name for ourselves so that we won't be dispersed over all the earth."

<sup>5</sup>Then the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the humans built. <sup>6</sup>And the LORD said, "There is now one people and they all have one language. This is what they have begun to do, and now all that they plan to do will be possible for them. <sup>7</sup>Come, let's go down and mix up their language there so they won't understand each other's language." <sup>8</sup>Then the LORD dispersed them from there over all of the earth, and they stopped building the city. <sup>9</sup>Therefore, it is named Babel, because there the LORD mixed up<sup>o</sup> the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD dispersed them over all the earth.

**Shem's descendants**

<sup>10</sup>These are Shem's descendants.

When Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arpachshad, two years after the flood. <sup>11</sup>After Arpachshad was born, Shem lived 500 years; he had other sons and daughters.

<sup>12</sup>When Arpachshad was 35 years old, he became the father of Shelah. <sup>13</sup>After Shelah was born, Arpachshad lived 403 years; he had other sons and daughters.

<sup>14</sup>When Shelah was 30 years old, he became the father of Eber. <sup>15</sup>After Eber was born, Shelah lived 403 years; he had other sons and daughters.

<sup>16</sup>When Eber was 34 years old, he became the father of Peleg. <sup>17</sup>After Peleg was born, Eber lived 430 years; he had other sons and daughters.

<sup>18</sup>When Peleg was 30 years old, he became the father of Reu. <sup>19</sup>After Reu was born, Peleg lived 209 years; he had other sons and daughters.

<sup>20</sup>When Reu was 32 years old, he became the father of Serug. <sup>21</sup>After Serug was born, Reu lived 207 years; he had other sons and daughters.

<sup>22</sup>When Serug was 30 years old, he became the father of Nahor. <sup>23</sup>After Nahor was born, Serug lived 200 years; he had other sons and daughters.

<sup>24</sup>When Nahor was 29 years old, he became the father of Terah. <sup>25</sup>After Terah was born, Nahor lived 119 years; he had other sons and daughters.

<sup>26</sup>When Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

<sup>o</sup>Heb *balal*, wordplay on Babel

11:23 Gn 11:22 11:24 Josh 24:2 11:25 Gn 11:22, Gn 11:24; 1Ch 1:26 11:26 Josh 24:2; 1Ch 1:26

11:4 Dt 1:28, Dt 9:1  
 11:5 Gn 18:21; Ex 3:8, Ex 19:11  
 11:6 Gn 11:1  
 11:7 Gn 1:26, Gn 11:5, Gn 42:23, Dt 28:49; Jer 5:15  
 11:8 Dt 32:8; Lk 1:51  
 11:9 Gn 10:10  
 11:10  
 Gn 10:21-22; 1Ch 1:17; Lk 3:36  
 11:11 Gn 5:4, Gn 11:10  
 11:12 Gn 10:24, Gn 11:13; 1Ch 1:18; 1Ch 1:24; Lk 3:35  
 11:13 Gn 11:12  
 11:14 Gn 10:21, Gn 10:24, Gn 11:15; 1Ch 1:19; 1Ch 1:25  
 11:15 Gn 11:14  
 11:16 Gn 10:25; 1Ch 1:19  
 11:17 Gn 11:16  
 11:18 Lk 3:35  
 11:19 Gn 11:18  
 11:20 Gn 11:21; 1Ch 1:26; Lk 3:35  
 11:21 Gn 11:20  
 11:22 1Ch 1:26

language. These are different traditions about the beginning of the world's cultures, the Priest's in Genesis 10 and the Yahwist's here.

11:1 The theme of a single culture with *one language* is emphasized by the repetition of the word for *one* four times in the story, in one case in this verse translated *same* (see Gen 11:6 for the other two).

11:2 *Shinar* is the Mesopotamian river valley where Babylon was located (Gen 11:9; cf. Gen 10:10). Together with the Nile Valley, it gave birth to civilization in the ancient Near East.

11:4 The people clearly state their reason for building the city and its tower: *so that we won't be dispersed over all the earth*. Their aim was to stay in one place, speaking one language. It wasn't to storm heaven and challenge God by building the tower, as interpreters have claimed. *a tower with its top in the sky*: simply a cliché for a tall tower. *make a name*: or reputation. This can be a good thing (cf. Gen 12:2).

11:6 When God arrives at the city, God notices the people's common culture and their aim to preserve it, not any challenge to God's sovereignty.

11:7-8 God turns one culture into many by introducing different languages and by dispersing the people to different lands (see note on Gen 10:31).

11:9 *Babel* refers to ancient Babylon. Though this word

doesn't come from the Hebrew word for "mixed up" (Hebrew *balal*; see translation note), they sound alike. Genesis often explains names on the basis of similar-sounding words.

11:10-32 This genealogy traces the line of Shem again, just like the one in Genesis 10:21-31. Shem's line was important because it was the line of Israel's own ancestors. This time the writer uses a linear genealogy (like Gen 5:1-32), rather than a branched genealogy (like Gen 10:1-32). The first five generations in this linear genealogy (11:10-17) are the same as those in Shem's genealogy in Genesis 10:21-25. The last five generations in this genealogy are unique (11:18-26). This genealogy's purpose is to describe the status of a single family line, that of Israel, within human history.

11:11 In biblical traditions, as in Mesopotamian traditions, the first generations after the flood approach the long life spans of their pre-flood ancestors, though their ages gradually decrease as time goes by (cf. Gen 11:13, 19; see note on Gen 5:4).

11:16 The term "Hebrew" comes from the name *Eber*.

11:26 The final generation includes *Abram* and his brothers *Nahor* and *Haran*. *Nahor* is the grandfather of *Rebekah*, the woman *Abram's* son *Isaac* marries (Gen 22:20-24; 24:15). *Nahor* is also the great-grandfather of *Leah* and *Rachel*, the women *Isaac's* son *Jacob* marries (Gen 28:1-2;

11:27 Gn 11:31,  
Gn 12:4,  
Gn 13:1,  
Gn 14:12,  
Gn 19:1

11:28 Gn 11:27,  
Gn 11:31,  
Gn 15:7; Neh 9:7

11:29 Gn 17:15,  
Gn 22:20,  
Gn 22:23,  
Gn 24:15

11:31  
Gn 11:27-28,  
Gn 12:4,  
Josh 24:2,  
Neh 9:7

11:32 Josh 24:2  
Gn 11:31

12:1 Gn 15:7;  
Neh 9:7; Ac 7:3;  
Heb 11:8

12:2 Gn 18:18,  
Gn 22:17,  
Gn 46:3; Dt 26:5

12:3 Gn 18:18,  
Gn 22:18,  
Gn 27:29;  
Nm 24:9; Ga 3:8

12:4 Gn 11:27,  
Gn 11:31

12:5 Gn 11:31,  
Gn 14:14

<sup>27</sup>These are Terah's descendants. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran became the father of Lot. <sup>28</sup>Haran died while with his father Terah in his native land,<sup>p</sup> in Ur of the Chaldeans. <sup>29</sup>Abram and Nahor both married; Abram's wife was Sarai, and Nahor's wife was Milcah the daughter of Haran, father of both Milcah and Iscah. <sup>30</sup>Sarai was unable to have children. <sup>31</sup>Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (son of Haran), and his son Abram's wife, Sarai his daughter-in-law. They left Ur of the Chaldeans for the land of Canaan, and arriving at Haran, they settled there. <sup>32</sup>Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran.

### Abram's family moves to Canaan

**12** The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your land, your family, and your father's household for the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make of you a great nation and will bless you. I will make your name respected, and you will be a blessing.

<sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, those who curse you I will curse;

all the families of the earth will be blessed because of you."<sup>q</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Abram left just as the LORD told him, and Lot went with him. Now Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. <sup>5</sup>Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all of their possessions, and those who became members of their household in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, <sup>6</sup>Abram traveled through the land as far as the sacred place at Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. The Canaanites lived in the land at that time. <sup>7</sup>The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I give this land to your descendants," so Abram built an

<sup>p</sup>Or birthplace <sup>q</sup>Or will bless themselves because of you; or will find a blessing because of you

12:6 Gn 13:7, Gn 33:18, Gn 35:4; Dt 11:30; Jgs 7:1 12:7 Gn 8:20, Gn 13:15, Gn 13:18, Gn 17:1, Gn 18:1

Gen 29:5-6). Haran is the father of Lot, whom Abram takes to Canaan (Gen 11:27; 12:4-5). The name *Haran* in this verse refers to a person, whereas in Genesis 11:31-32 and Genesis 12:4, the name Haran refers to the city where Terah's family settles. Although they are identical in English, the names differ in the original Hebrew.

11:30 Sarai's childlessness continues a theme that began with the woman's punishment at the garden in Eden (Gen 3:16). It will run throughout the stories that follow. Women in Genesis face difficulties getting pregnant (Gen 16:1; 25:21; 30:1); carrying a child to term (Gen 25:22); and delivering it safely (Gen 35:16-19). Women in ancient Israel would have experienced and related to these difficulties. The Eden creation story explained their own difficulties and those of their ancestors.

11:31 Here and in Genesis 11:28, Israel's origins are located among the people of the Mesopotamian river valley—the location of *Ur of the Chaldeans* (see note on Gen 11:2). Haran was a city northeast of Canaan near the modern border between Syria and Turkey (see note on Gen 11:26). 12:1-9 This story begins the narratives about Abram, who was introduced in the preceding genealogy (Gen 11:27-32). The purpose of this first story is to link him with the land of Canaan. This land will become the homeland of his descendants, the Israelites.

12:1 The *land* and *family* that Abram leaves will continue to play an important role in Genesis. Abram's relatives in Haran (Gen 11:31) provide wives for Isaac and Jacob. They also shelter Jacob from Esau's anger (Gen 27-31).

12:2 The first in a series of promises made to Israel's ancestors. See sidebar, "The Promises to the Ancestors." The *great nation* refers to Israel under the monarchy that started with David, in which the writer's audience lived. *make your name respected*: refers to the reputation Israel and its ancestors enjoy among their neighbors.

*blessing*: refers to all the benefits of a good life in this world.

12:3 The Hebrew word for *blessed* in the final phrase of this verse has three possible translations (see translation note). One, *will be blessed*, as used here, suggests that Israel's own wealth and well-being will be so great that they will overflow to *all the families of the earth*. This happens, in fact, even in the generations of the ancestors themselves (Gen 30:27, 30; 39:5). Christian interpreters have usually preferred this translation. Paul uses it in the NT to argue that God's blessings would extend even to the Gentiles (Gal 3:8). A second possible translation, "will bless themselves," suggests that *all the families of the earth* will take Abram's great wealth and well-being as the desired standard when asking for a blessing for themselves: "May we be as blessed as Abram was" (see Gen 48:20). A third possible translation, "will find a blessing," is similar to the first. 12:6 Abram stops at each of the urban centers of the Canaanite mountains, which become the homeland of biblical Israel. *Shechem* is in the north. Bethel is in the central region (Gen 12:8). Hebron is in the south (Gen 13:18). The text thus links these important Israelite cities with Israel's first ancestors. By visiting the *sacred place* at Shechem and receiving a divine revelation there (Gen 12:7), Abram begins Israelite worship at this site. *Moreh* is a Hebrew term meaning "teaching, instructing." This term indicates that the *oak of Moreh*—literally "an oak that teaches"—is one where divine messages are received. Aspects of the natural landscape are viewed as sacred. God communicates through them (e.g., Gen 13:18; 18:1; 28:22). See sidebar, "The Ancestors in Their Environment" at Genesis 13.

12:7 The *land* promised to Abram's *descendants* is the land where the writer's audience lived and farmed. The *altar* initiates the worship of God there that was continued by the Israelites, Abram's descendants.

*The Promises to the Ancestors* God's promises link the stories of Israel's ancestors together. They provide a goal toward which these stories point. Their aim is to show the people of Israel, to whom these stories were told, that their identity and lives hadn't come into being haphazardly but were God's purpose for them from the beginning. Their nation, their land, their population, their blessings of wealth and well-being, their relations with their neighbors—these were all part of God's design.

During Israel's monarchy, the Israelites who listened to the Yahwist's and Elohist's stories experienced these promises as coming true in their own time and as describing exactly who they were. Much later, at the time of the Priestly writer, when Israel and Judah had been conquered, these promises were no longer a reality. Yet these old promises gave a vision about who God's people might be again in the future. Readers hoped they might once again see these promises come true.

altar there to the LORD who appeared to him. <sup>8</sup>From there he traveled toward the mountains east of Bethel, and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and worshipped in the LORD's name. <sup>9</sup>Then Abram set out toward the arid southern plain, making and breaking camp as he went.

**Abram and Sarai visit Egypt**

<sup>10</sup>When a famine struck the land, Abram went down toward Egypt to live as an immigrant since the famine was so severe in the land. <sup>11</sup>Just before he arrived in Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know you are a good-looking woman. <sup>12</sup>When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife,' and they will kill me but let you live. <sup>13</sup>So tell them you are my sister so that they will treat me well for your sake, and I will survive because of you."

<sup>14</sup>When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw how beautiful his wife was. <sup>15</sup>When Pharaoh's princes saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's household. <sup>16</sup>Things went well for Abram because of her: he acquired flocks, cattle, male donkeys, men servants, women servants, female donkeys, and camels. <sup>17</sup>Then the LORD struck Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Abram's wife Sarai. <sup>18</sup>So Pharaoh summoned Abram and said, "What's this you've done to me? Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? <sup>19</sup>Why did you say, 'She's my sister,' so that I made her my wife? Now, here's your wife. Take her and go!" <sup>20</sup>Pharaoh gave his men orders concerning Abram, and they expelled him with his wife and everything he had.

12:8 The next *altar* similarly initiates the worship of God near *Bethel*. Whereas Shechem was the key city in the north, Bethel was a key city in the central part of biblical Israel.

12:9 The *arid southern plain* is located south of the mountains of biblical Israel at the northern edge of the Sinai Peninsula.

12:10-20 This story troubles modern readers because Abram puts his wife, *Sarai*, in a disreputable situation. He tells her to lie (12:13) and makes her available to *Pharaoh* (12:15). Yet it must have been an important story for ancient Israel, because similar stories are found twice more, in Genesis 20:1-18 and Genesis 26:1-11. The story develops out of two major social issues. One is the powerlessness of immigrants (12:10) in their host societies, where the norms of hospitality that should protect the foreigner (cf. Gen 18:1-5; 19:1-8) couldn't always be trusted (12:12). The other is the danger of powerful men in male-dominated societies. Kings, such as the pharaoh in this story, had the power to take any desirable woman they chose (12:14-15) and to eliminate any rivals to her (12:12). This is exactly what King David did with Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam 11). So Abram's act was the survival strategy of an immigrant in a foreign society that he didn't trust and where he had no status or power. Yet Abram, in his own social world, is also a powerful man, and he devises an arrangement between powerful men: Abram makes his wife, *Sarai*, available to Pharaoh to

save his own life and to gain honor and wealth as *Sarai's* brother (12:13, 16).

12:10 This story looks ahead to Genesis 41:57-42:3; 43:1, 15; 45:16-47:12. A *famine* in Canaan causes Israel's ancestors to move to *Egypt*. Dryland farming in ancient Israel depended on rainfall, which wasn't always reliable. Agriculture in Egypt, on the other hand, used water from the Nile, a more stable source of water. As a result, Egypt is considered the breadbasket of the Mediterranean world. 12:17 God counters Pharaoh's power and possession of *Sarai* (Gen 12:19) by sending *plagues*. This event looks ahead to the plagues in Exodus 7-11. Throughout Genesis, God protects Israel's ancestors, especially in hopeless situations.

12:18-19 In his protest to Abram, Pharaoh suggests that he would have honored the norms of hospitality if he had known Abram was married to *Sarai*. His claim to be honorable and innocent could be read as what he had to say to end the plagues. However, it could also be taken at face value. In the other two stories of this kind in Genesis, the writers make it very clear that the foreign king was genuinely hospitable, dealing honestly and honorably with Israel's ancestors (Gen 20:6-10; 26:8-11).

12:20 Abram and *Sarai* leave Egypt with *everything he had*. As Genesis 12:16 and 13:2 indicate, Abram possessed great wealth comparable to the wealth the Israelites left Egypt with in the later story of the exodus (Exod 12:35-36).

12:10 Gn 26:1; Gn 43:1; Ru 1:1; 2Sa 21:1  
12:11 Gn 24:16; Gn 26:7; Gn 29:17  
12:12 Gn 20:11  
12:13 Gn 20:2; Gn 26:7  
12:15 Gn 20:2  
12:16 Gn 13:2; Gn 20:14; Gn 30:43; Gn 32:5; Job 1:3  
12:17 Gn 20:18; 1Ch 16:21; Ps 105:14  
12:18 Gn 20:9; Gn 26:10; Gn 31:26

13:1 Gn 12:9

13:2 Gn 24:35;  
Job 1:3; Prv 10:2213:5 Gn 11:27;  
Gn 12:4-5,  
Gn 13:2,  
Gn 25:2713:6 Gn 12:5,  
Gn 36:713:7 Gn 12:6,  
Gn 15:20,  
Gn 26:2013:8 Prv 15:18  
13:9 Gn 20:15,  
Gn 34:1013:10 Gn 2:8,  
Gn 14:2,  
Gn 19:22,  
Gn 19:24;  
Dt 34:313:11 Gn 11:27;  
Gn 11:31,  
Gn 12:4,  
Gn 13:1,  
Gn 13:10**Abram and Lot separate**

**13** Abram went up from Egypt toward the arid southern plain with his wife, with everything he had, and with Lot. <sup>2</sup>Abram was very wealthy in livestock, silver, and gold. <sup>3</sup>Abram traveled, making and breaking camp, from the arid southern plain to Bethel and to the sacred place there, where he had first pitched his tent between Bethel and Ai. <sup>4</sup>That is, to the place at which he had earlier built the altar. There he worshipped in the LORD's name. <sup>5</sup>Now Lot, who traveled with Abram, also had flocks, cattle, and tents. <sup>6</sup>They had so many possessions between them that the land couldn't support both of them. They could no longer live together. <sup>7</sup>Conflicts broke out between those herding Abram's livestock and those herding Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites lived in the land.

<sup>8</sup>Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have disputes between me and you and between our herders since we are relatives. <sup>9</sup>Isn't the whole land in front of you? Let's separate. If you go north, I will go south; and if you go south, I will go north." <sup>10</sup>Lot looked up and saw the entire Jordan Valley. All of it was well irrigated, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as far as Zoar (this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah). <sup>11</sup>So Lot chose for himself the entire Jordan Valley. Lot set out toward the east, and they separated

*The Ancestors in Their Environment* Israel's ancestors are commonly pictured in Bible studies, in popular art, and on television as shepherds who roamed the desert as nomads. They were not nomads. They were typical ancient farmers in the mountains east of the Mediterranean. It's true that they traveled through the land of Canaan, pitched tents, and owned herds of sheep, goats, cattle, donkeys, and camels. However, the specific details of their lives reveal characters whose agricultural way of life mirrored their Israelite descendants', including the authors of Genesis who wrote these stories about them.

God gives Israel's ancestors the agricultural land in the Canaanite mountains (e.g., Gen 12:7; 13:1-15). They live on this land and cultivate grain on it (Gen 26:12). God gives them the produce of the vineyard and the field of grain as divine blessings (Gen 27:28). They live in houses (Gen 27:15; 33:17) in and near the urban centers of their agrarian landscape (Gen 13:18). They don't live on the desert fringes, where seminomads raised sheep and goats. The animals the ancestors owned—sheep and goats, donkeys, cattle—were typical livestock on a Mediterranean family farm. Cattle pulled plows. Donkeys carried loads. Sheep and goats provided milk products and wool. Israel's ancestors are described as practicing the same agricultural style of life as their descendants'. They are farmers involved in the mixed agricultural economy typical of the Mediterranean highlands: cultivating grains and fruits while raising animals to assist in cultivation and to supplement its produce. They traveled not as nomadic shepherds but as settled farmers, moving as immigrants from one place to another (Gen 12:10; 45:17-20).

The highlands east of the Mediterranean Sea not only provided a place for Israel's ancestors to farm but were also a sacred landscape. God appeared to them at places marked by particular natural features, such as the oak tree (Gen 12:6; 18:1); the mountain (Gen 12:8); and the source of water (Gen 16:7, 14; 26:24-25; 32:22-23). At these places of divine revelation, the ancestors built altars that identified the locations as sacred (Gen 12:8; 13:18; 26:25; cf. 28:10-20).

Thus the religion of Israel's ancestors was linked closely with the land where they lived and farmed. Their landscape provided a way of experiencing God. They saw the land's produce as God's blessing on them. Interpreters have sometimes portrayed nature as the realm of pagan deities and history as the realm of the biblical God. This portrayal doesn't hold true in Genesis. The religious experience of Israel's ancestors connected them closely with the landscape that sustained them.

**13:1-18** This story begins a longer narrative, continued in Genesis 19, that explains the relationship between Abram's descendants, the Israelites, and Lot's descendants, the Moabites and Ammonites. (See intro.; see sidebar, "Israel among the Nations" at Gen 9.) It makes the claim that Israelites are closely related to two of their nearest neighbors, the Moabites and the Ammonites (Gen 19:36-38). The narrative shows how Abram (and his descendants, the Israelites) claimed the land in the mountains of biblical Israel (13:14-17) and how Lot (and his descendants, the Moabites and Ammonites) came to live in the highlands east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea (13:11-13; Gen 19:29-30).

**13:3-4** *Bethel* is an important city in the central region of

the land of Israel where Abram had lived and built an altar before his trip to Egypt (see notes on Gen 12:6, 8).

**13:8-9** Israel's ancestors are portrayed as kind and generous toward others. Here *Abram* is the peacemaker, mediating the dispute between his and Lot's shepherds. He is also generous, offering *Lot* his choice of *land*.

**13:10** The *Jordan Valley* in biblical times, as today, was an arid plain except for the Jordan River and a few spring-fed oases. But the writer believed it had been a lush valley, as green as *the garden of the LORD* (a reference to the garden in Eden) and *Egypt* (that is, the fertile Nile Valley) before its vegetation was wiped out by the firestorm that destroyed *Sodom and Gomorrah* (Gen 19:24-28).

from each other. <sup>12</sup>Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot settled near the cities of the valley and pitched his tent close to Sodom. <sup>13</sup>The citizens of Sodom were very evil and sinful against the LORD.

<sup>14</sup>After Lot separated from him, the LORD said to Abram, "From the place where you are standing, look up and gaze to the north, south, east, and west, <sup>15</sup>because all the land that you see I give you and your descendants forever. <sup>16</sup>I will make your descendants like the dust of the earth. If someone could count the bits of dust on the earth, then they could also count your descendants. <sup>17</sup>Stand up and walk around through the length and breadth of the land because I am giving it to you." <sup>18</sup>So Abram packed his tent and went and settled by the oaks of Mamre in Hebron. There he built an altar to the LORD.

**Abram rescues Lot**

**14** While Amraphel was king of Shinar, Ellasar's King Arioch, Elam's King Chedorlaomer, and Goiim's King Tidal <sup>2</sup>declared war on Sodom's King Bera, Gomorrah's King Birsha, Admah's King Shinab, Zeboiim's King Shemeber, and the king of Bela, that is, Zoar. <sup>3</sup>These latter kings formed an alliance in the Siddim Valley (that is, the Dead Sea). <sup>4</sup>For twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they revolted. <sup>5</sup>In the fourteenth year, Chedorlaomer and the kings of his alliance came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, <sup>6</sup>and the Horites in the mountains of Seir as far as El-paran near the desert. <sup>7</sup>Then they turned back, came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and attacked the territory of the Amalekites, as well as the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-tamar.

<sup>8</sup>Then the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bera (that is, Zoar) took up battle positions in the Siddim Valley <sup>9</sup>against King Chedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Shinar, and King Arioch of Ellasar, four kings against five.

<sup>10</sup>Now the Siddim Valley was filled with tar pits. When the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah retreated, they fell into them; and the rest fled to the mountains. <sup>11</sup>They took everything from Sodom and Gomorrah, including its food supplies, and left. <sup>12</sup>They also took Lot, Abram's nephew who lived in Sodom, and everything he owned, and took off. <sup>13</sup>When a survivor arrived, he told Abram the Hebrew, who lived near the oaks of the Amorite Mamre, who was the brother of Eshcol and Aner, Abram's treaty partners.

<sup>14</sup>When Abram heard that his relative had been captured, he took all of the loyal men born in his household, three hundred eighteen, and went after them as far as Dan. <sup>15</sup>During the night, he and his servants divided themselves up against them, attacked, and chased them to Hobab, north of Damascus. <sup>16</sup>He brought back all of the looted property, together with his relative Lot and Lot's property, wives, and people.

**Abram blessed by Melchizedek**

<sup>17</sup>After Abram returned from his attack on Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom came out to the Shaveh Valley (that is, the King's Valley) to meet

<sup>1</sup>Or Salt Sea

13:14-17 Now God promises Abram and his numerous descendants *all the land* in the central region of Israel's homeland. See sidebar, "The Promises to the Ancestors" at Genesis 12.

13:18 The *oaks of Mamre* are sacred trees, as is the oak of Moreh at Shechem (Gen 12:6-7). See sidebar, "The Ancestors in Their Environment." *Hebron* is the main city in the southern region of biblical Israel (see note on Gen 12:6). Abram settled and built an altar there, just as he had lived and built altars at the main cities of Shechem in the northern region of Israel (Gen 12:7) and Bethel in the central region (Gen 12:8). Here, too, Abram's altar establishes true Israelite worship.

14:1-24 Most stories in Genesis focus on family interactions. However, this narrative is international in scope. It is the only story in Genesis that describes a major military campaign and pictures Abram as the commander of a militia. The story is important to many interpreters because

of the figure of Melchizedek, who blesses Abram when he returns from battle (14:18-20).

14:1-13 An alliance of four kings from Mesopotamia mounts an attack on an alliance of five kings from the Jordan Valley (14:1-4). This event can't be connected with any historical event known through sources outside the Bible. The kings, only a few of which have known ancient Near Eastern names, can't be linked to identified historical figures. In this battle, *Sodom* is sacked. *Lot*, who had settled there (Gen 13:11-12), is taken captive (14:10-12).

14:13 *Hebrew* is another term for "Israelite," used to describe God's people. This verse is the only time this word describes Abram in the OT.

14:14-16 This portrait of Abram as the commander of an army is unusual and seems out of character in the context of the other traditions about him, which describe him only as the head of a family. At the same time, acting as Lot's protector is consistent with the surrounding narratives,

13:12 Gn 13:10; Gn 14:12; Gn 19:1; Gn 19:29

13:13 Gn 18:20; Gn 19:4; Is 3:9; Eze 16:49; 2Pr 2:7

13:14 Gn 12:1; Gn 13:10; Gn 15:18; Gn 28:14; Dt 3:27

13:15 Gn 12:7; Gn 17:8

13:16 Gn 15:5; Gn 22:17; Gn 28:14; Nm 23:10; 1Ki 3:8

13:17 Gn 13:15; Nm 13:17

14:1 Gn 10:10; Gn 10:22; Gn 11:2; Is 11:11

14:2 Gn 10:19; Gn 13:10; Gn 19:22; Dt 29:23; Hos 11:8

14:3 Gn 14:8; Gn 14:10; Nm 34:12; Dt 3:17; Josh 3:16

14:10 Gn 11:3; Gn 19:17; Gn 19:30

14:13 Gn 13:18; Gn 14:24; Gn 40:15

14:14 Gn 12:5; Gn 17:27; Dt 34:1; Jgs 18:29; Ecc 2:7

14:15 Gn 15:2; Jgs 7:16

14:16 Gn 14:11-12; 1Sa 30:8; 1Sa 30:18-19

14:18 Ps 76:2;  
Ps 110:4;  
Heb 5:6;  
Heb 5:10;  
Heb 7:1

14:19 Gn 14:22;  
Mt 11:25;  
Heb 7:6-7

14:20 Gn  
28:22; Lv 27:30;  
Heb 7:4

14:22 Gn 14:19;  
Dn 12:7;  
Rev 10:5

14:23 2Ki 5:16;  
Est 9:15

14:24 Gn 14:13

15:1 Gn 26:24;  
Gn 46:2;  
Dt 33:29;  
Ps 58:11;  
Ps 84:11

15:3 Gn 14:14

15:4 Gn 17:16;  
Ga 4:28

15:5 Gn 22:17;  
Gn 26:4; Dt 10:10;  
Ro 4:18;  
Heb 11:12

15:6 Ps 106:31;  
Ro 4:3; Ro 4:20;  
Ga 3:6; Jas 2:23

15:7 Gn 11:28;  
Gn 11:31;  
Gn 12:1;  
Gn 13:15;  
Neh 9:7

him. <sup>18</sup>Now Melchizedek the king of Salem and the priest of El Elyon<sup>a</sup> had brought bread and wine, <sup>19</sup>and he blessed him,

“Bless Abram by El Elyon, creator of heaven and earth;

<sup>20</sup>bless El Elyon, who gave you the victory over your enemies.”

Abram gave Melchizedek one-tenth of everything. <sup>21</sup>Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the people and take the property for yourself.”

<sup>22</sup>But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I promised the LORD, El Elyon, creator of heaven and earth, <sup>23</sup>that I wouldn’t take even a thread or a sandal strap from anything that was yours so that you couldn’t say, ‘I’m the one who made Abram rich.’ <sup>24</sup>The only exception is that the young men may keep whatever they have taken to eat, and the men who went with me—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre—may keep their share.”

#### God’s covenant with Abram

**15** After these events, the LORD’s word came to Abram in a vision, “Don’t be afraid, Abram. I am your protector.<sup>b</sup> Your reward will be very great.”

<sup>2</sup>But Abram said, “LORD God, what can you possibly give me, since I still have no children? The head of my household is Eliezer, a man from Damascus.”<sup>a</sup> <sup>3</sup>He continued, “Since you haven’t given me any children, the head of my household will be my heir.”

<sup>4</sup>The LORD’s word came immediately to him, “This man will not be your heir. Your heir will definitely be your very own biological child.” <sup>5</sup>Then he brought Abram outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars if you think you can count them. He continued, “This is how many children you will have.” <sup>6</sup>Abram trusted the LORD, and the LORD recognized Abram’s high moral character.

<sup>7</sup>He said to Abram, “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession.”

<sup>a</sup>Or God Most High <sup>b</sup>Or shield or benefactor <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

where he offers Lot his choice of the best lands (Gen 13:8-9) and then pleads with God not to destroy Sodom, where Lot has settled (Gen 18:16-33).

14:18 *Melchizedek* means “my king is Sidqu [a Canaanite god],” “my king is righteous,” or “my king is legitimate.” Melchizedek was both *king* and *priest*, offices held by a single individual in some ancient Near Eastern societies but kept separate in Israel. He was king of *Salem*, which is elsewhere called Jerusalem. Thus Melchizedek’s blessing of Abram links Israel’s ancestor directly with Jerusalem, the central political and religious city from the time of David onward. The text also says that as a *priest*, Melchizedek served *El Elyon*. As translation note *s* indicates, *El Elyon* is a divine title meaning “God Most High.” This title could be used to refer to the chief Canaanite god, but Abram identifies *El Elyon* with Israel’s own God, “the LORD” (Gen 14:22). Melchizedek brought *bread and wine* to refresh Abram’s returning troops (cf. 2 Sam 17:27-29). Because Melchizedek appears without background or explanation, later interpreters have given his encounter with Abram various meanings. In Jewish interpretation, Melchizedek is a memorable individual, either a righteous priest or a cosmic figure signaling the end time. In Christian interpretation, he is seen as a forerunner of Jesus and Jesus’ priestly office (Heb 6:19-20; 7:9-25).

15:1-21 The covenant between Abram and God is described in two versions, the Yahwist’s version in this chapter and the Priest’s version in Genesis 17. Here the text focuses on two key promises to Israel’s ancestors: descendants (15:1-6) and land (15:7-21). See sidebar, “The Promises to the Ancestors” at Genesis 12.

15:1-6 God’s promise of descendants to Abram follows a three-part pattern: God’s promise (15:1); Abram’s protest (15:2-3); and God’s reassurance (15:4-6).

15:1 God’s title *protector* may also be translated “benefactor” (see translation note). Both titles make sense in context. *protector*: relates to God’s constant care for Abraham in times of conflict and danger. The word “benefactor” refers to the one who gives Abram the *reward*, that is, the descendants promised in Genesis 15:4-5.

15:2-3 Abram’s protest is reasonable, since Sarai was unable to have *children* (Gen 11:30). According to an ancient Near Eastern custom, a servant could be adopted as the heir of a childless couple. This servant would inherit their wealth in exchange for assuming the duties of a son.

15:4-5 God reassures Abram by renewing the promise of *children* (Gen 12:7; 13:14-17).

15:6 Abram’s *trust* and *high moral character* are key qualities that match how Abram is described in Genesis 18:19; 22:15-19; 26:4-5. In the NT, both Paul and James refer to this verse. Paul observes that Abram is here considered righteous, even before the circumcision of Genesis 17:24. On that basis, Paul interprets this verse to mean that God declared Abram righteous because of his faith and not because of his actions and observance of the Law (or instruction in the OT). Therefore, circumcision isn’t required of Gentiles to enter God’s kingdom (Rom 4:3, 9, 22; Gal 3:6). Meanwhile, James observes that Abraham was so obedient that he was willing to sacrifice his own son in Genesis 22. On that basis, James interprets this verse to say that actions must accompany faith (Jas 2:21-24).

15:7-21 God’s promise of *land* to Abram follows the same three-part pattern as the promise of descendants in Genesis 15:1-6: God’s promise (15:7); Abram’s protest (15:8); and God’s reassurance (15:9-21).

15:7 *Ur of the Chaldeans* was in Mesopotamia. It was a great ancient culture to the east of Canaan, where Israel’s ancestors originated (see note on Gen 11:31).



<sup>8</sup>But Abram said, "LORD God, how do I know that I will actually possess it?"

<sup>9</sup>He said, "Bring me a three-year-old female calf, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a dove, and a young pigeon." <sup>10</sup>He took all of these animals, split them in half, and laid the halves facing each other, but he didn't split the birds. <sup>11</sup>When vultures swooped down on the carcasses, Abram waved them off. <sup>12</sup>After the sun set, Abram slept deeply. A terrifying and deep darkness settled over him.

<sup>13</sup>Then the LORD said to Abram, "Have no doubt that your descendants will live as immigrants in a land that isn't their own, where they will be oppressed slaves for four hundred years.

<sup>14</sup>But after I punish the nation they serve, they will leave it with great wealth. <sup>15</sup>As for you, you will join your ancestors in peace and be buried after a good long life. <sup>16</sup>The fourth generation will return here since the Amorites' wrongdoing won't have reached its peak until then."

<sup>17</sup>After the sun had set and darkness had deepened, a smoking vessel with a fiery flame passed between the split-open animals. <sup>18</sup>That day the LORD cut a covenant with Abram: "To your descendants I give this land, from Egypt's river to the great Euphrates, <sup>19</sup>together with the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, <sup>20</sup>the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, <sup>21</sup>the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

**Hagar and the Ishmaelites' origins**

**16** Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to have children. Since she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar, <sup>2</sup>Sarai said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from giving birth, so go to my servant. Maybe she will provide me with children." Abram did just as Sarai said. <sup>3</sup>After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took her Egyptian servant Hagar and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. <sup>4</sup>He slept with

15:8 Jgs 6:17;  
2Ki 20:8;  
1k 1:18  
15:9 Lv 1:14,  
Lv 5:7, Lv 12:8,  
Lv 14:22;  
Nm 19:2  
15:10 Lv 1:17;  
Jer 34:18  
15:11 Dt 28:26  
15:12 Gn 2:21;  
1Sa 26:12;  
Job 4:13  
15:13 Ex 1:11,  
Ex 12:40;  
Ac 7:6-7;  
Ga 3:17  
15:14 Gn 15:13;  
Ex 3:21, Ex 3:22,  
Ex 6:6, Ex 7:1  
15:15 Gn 25:8,  
Gn 35:29;  
1Ch 29:28;  
Job 5:26,  
Job 42:17  
15:16 Gn 10:16,  
Gn 15:13,  
Gn 48:21;  
1Ki 21:26;  
Mt 23:32  
15:17  
Jer 34:18-19

15:18 Gn 2:14, Gn 12:7, Gn 17:8, Dt 1:7, Josh 1:4 15:19 Nm 24:21 15:20 Gn 14:5; Ex 3:8 15:21 Ex 3:8, Ex 3:17, Ex 23:23, Ex 34:11; Dt 7:1 16:1 Gn 11:30, Gn 12:16, Gn 21:9 16:2 Gn 30:3, Gn 30:9 16:3 Gn 12:4-5 16:4 1Sa 1:6

15:9-12 In the ancient Near East, two parties would sometimes bind themselves to each other by slaughtering and splitting animals. Next the partners would walk between the pieces of animals, taking upon themselves the fate of the animals should they violate the covenant (cf. Jer 34:18). In this ritual, God alone, symbolized by a "fiery flame," passes between the pieces of animals (Gen 15:17-18). Abram himself *slept deeply* (15:12).

15:13-16 These verses look forward to later events. Near the end of Genesis (Gen 45:16-47:12), Abraham's descendants move to a *land that isn't their own*. As the beginning of Exodus describes (Exod 1:8-14), there they become *oppressed slaves*. The Yahwist's tradition of *four hundred years* in Genesis 15:13 contrasts slightly with the Priest's reference to 430 years in Exodus 12:40.

15:16 Genesis often reflects the idea that sin brings punishment, as seen in the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah. Here that idea is used to explain why the *Amorites*, Canaan's local inhabitants, were eventually conquered by the Israelites, Abram's descendants.

15:17 The *smoking vessel* is literally a clay oven used for baking (Lev 2:4). Its *fiery flame* symbolizes God (Isa 31:9). By passing *between* the animal pieces alone, while Abram sleeps (Gen 15:12), God takes sole responsibility for fulfilling the covenant with Abram (see the note on Gen 15:9-12).

15:18 The Hebrew expression *cut a covenant* likely comes from the ritual of splitting animals in this ceremony (Gen 15:9-10, 17). The text here focuses on *land* (cf. Gen 12:7; 13:14-15). *Egypt's river* probably refers to the Wadi el-Arish, 45 miles southwest of Gaza, rather than to the Nile. The *Euphrates* is one of the great rivers of Mesopotamia. These boundaries, more ideal than real, reflect the land claimed by Israel during the reign of Solomon (1 Kgs 4:21; cf. Isa 27:12).

15:19-21 Lists of the groups inhabiting Canaan vary in length and in the identity of the groups (e.g., Gen 12:6; 13:7; Exod 3:8). Some can't be clearly identified.

16:1-16 The story of Sarai and Hagar provides an intimate portrait of the relationship between women in a male-centered household. It focuses on the woman with least power in this family, the outsider and servant Hagar. Its events raise ethical questions for contemporary readers (see note on 16:6). As a national story, it explains the relationships between Sarai's descendants, the Israelites; and Hagar's descendants, the Ishmaelites (see sidebar, "Israel among the Nations" at Gen 9).

16:1-6 The first half of the story takes place in Abram's household, the second half in the desert (Gen 16:7-16).

16:1 *Hagar* was Sarai's *servant*, one of a number of men and women servants in Abram's household (Gen 12:16). This kind of slavery was common in ancient Near Eastern and biblical society (Exod 21:1-11). Frequently servants were outsiders, as was the Egyptian Hagar.

16:2 Ancient Near Eastern legal texts describe similar situations where an infertile wife gives her servant to her husband, hoping that *children* will be born through that union. In such cases, the principal wife may possess legal rights to the children of her servant (cf. Gen 30:1-13). Sarai's proposal follows accepted practices and shouldn't necessarily be considered an act of faithlessness in God's promises of descendants. God hasn't yet prescribed the line through which Abram's heirs will come.

16:3 *Hagar* becomes Abram's *wife*. However, she is the secondary wife with a status below *Sarai*, Abram's principal wife.

16:4 In biblical society, pregnancy was highly regarded, while childlessness was shameful. Because of these cultural values, Hagar uses her new status to challenge Sarai's authority, even though Hagar is the secondary wife.

16:5 Gn 31:53;  
1Sa 24:12  
16:6 Gn 16:5  
16:7 Gn 20:1,  
Gn 21:17,  
Gn 25:18;  
1Sa 15:7  
16:8 Gn 3:9,  
Gn 16:1  
16:9 1Pt 2:18  
16:10 Gn 17:20  
16:11 Gn 17:19,  
Gn 29:32;  
Ex 2:24, Ex 3:7;  
Mt 1:21  
16:12 Gn 25:18;  
Job 39:5  
16:13 Gn 32:30,  
Ps 139:1  
16:14 Gn 14:7,  
Gn 24:62,  
Gn 25:11  
17:1 Gn 6:9,  
Gn 12:1,  
Gn 12:7,  
Dt 18:13;  
Mt 5:48  
17:2 Gn 12:2,  
Gn 13:16,  
Gn 15:18

Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when she realized that she was pregnant, she no longer respected her mistress. <sup>5</sup>Sarai said to Abram, "This harassment is your fault. I allowed you to embrace my servant, but when she realized she was pregnant, I lost her respect. Let the LORD decide who is right, you or me."

<sup>6</sup>Abram said to Sarai, "Since she's your servant, do whatever you wish to her." So Sarai treated her harshly, and she ran away from Sarai.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD's messenger found Hagar at a spring in the desert, the spring on the road to Shur, <sup>8</sup>and said, "Hagar! Sarai's servant! Where did you come from and where are you going?" She said, "From Sarai my mistress. I'm running away."

<sup>9</sup>The LORD's messenger said to her, "Go back to your mistress. Put up with her harsh treatment of you." <sup>10</sup>The LORD's messenger also said to her,

"I will give you many children,  
so many they can't be counted!"

<sup>11</sup>The LORD's messenger said to her,  
"You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son.  
You will name him Ishmael"

because the LORD has heard about your harsh treatment.

<sup>12</sup>He will be a wild mule of a man;  
he will fight everyone, and they will fight him.  
He will live at odds with all his relatives."<sup>w</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Hagar named the LORD who spoke to her, "You are El Roi"<sup>x</sup> because she said, "Can I still see after he saw me?"<sup>y</sup> <sup>14</sup>Therefore, that well is called Beer-lahai-roi,<sup>z</sup> it's the well between Kadesh and Bered. <sup>15</sup>Hagar gave birth to a son for Abram, and Abram named him Ishmael. <sup>16</sup>Abram was 86 years old when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael for Abram.

#### God's covenant with Abraham

**17** When Abram was 99 years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am El Shaddai.<sup>a</sup> Walk with me and be trustworthy. <sup>2</sup>I will make a covenant between us and

<sup>v</sup>Or God hears <sup>w</sup>Or He will reside near all his relatives. <sup>x</sup>Or God who sees or God whom I've seen <sup>y</sup>Heb uncertain; or Have I really seen God and survived? <sup>z</sup>Or the Well of the Living One who sees me or whom I've seen <sup>a</sup>Or God Almighty or God of the Mountain

16:5 Sarai blames Abram, the male head of the household, for allowing Hagar's *harassment* and lack of *respect*. He hasn't protected Sarai's status as the principal wife.

16:6 *treated... harshly*: translates the same verb used for the Egyptians' oppression of their Israelite servants (Gen 15:13; Exod 1:11). Within her social world (and in the narrator's perspective), Sarai was defending her rights as the principal wife, calling both her servant and her husband to account for transgressing accepted family norms and undermining her legitimate status. At its time, Sarai's harsh treatment of Hagar was considered the appropriate punishment for a servant who usurped her mistress' status. Such practices conflict directly with contemporary laws and values. Slavery and the harsh behavior mentioned here illustrate the differences between biblical and modern values. These differences caution the reader against imitating what biblical characters do. Critical reflection is needed. 16:7-16 The second half of the story is set in the *desert* where Hagar escapes. This location is important because it places the origin of Hagar's descendants, the Ishmaelites, in the desert, where they lived and traveled (Gen 37:25, 28b; 39:1).

16:7 The precise location of *Shur* and its *spring* are unknown. They were somewhere south of the mountains of Israel in the Sinai desert on the way to Egypt, Hagar's homeland (Gen 20:1; 25:18).

16:9-10 God tells Hagar to return to Sarai and accept her authority over her. Yet God also honors Hagar, who lacks social status for three reasons: She is a woman, she is a servant, and she is a foreigner. God speaks directly to her and

makes the same promise to her as God made to Abram, that she will have *children* beyond number (Gen 13:16).

16:11 *Ishmael*: means "God hears" (see translation note). It shows that God gives special attention to those who experience *harsh treatment* (Gen 18:20-21; Exod 3:7-8).

16:12 Ishmael is compared to a *wild mule*, a traveling species in the southern desert. His descendants, the Ishmaelites, are described elsewhere in Genesis as traveling desert traders (Gen 37:25, 28b; 39:1). See sidebar, "Israel among the Nations" at Genesis 9. The picture of Ishmael fighting others may arise from the viewpoint of settled Israelite farmers who were suspicious of those who traveled in the desert beyond their boundaries.

16:13-14 Hagar's question shows her amazement that she has seen God directly and survived (see translation note y; cf. Gen 32:30). Hagar named both God (*El Roi*) and the well (*Beer-lahai-roi*) to honor and remember God's direct appearance to her (see translation notes x and z). The exact location of this well can no longer be identified.

17:1-27 This is the second account of God's covenant with Abram. As in the Yahwist's version of the covenant in Genesis 15, God promises Abram descendants (17:2, 6) and land (17:8). However, here in the Priest's version in Genesis 17, the covenant focuses especially on the ritual of circumcision. Like the Priest's covenant with Noah, the covenant with Abram here in Genesis 17 is *set up* by God (Gen 9:9; 17:7, 19) as an *enduring covenant* (Gen 9:16; 17:7, 13, 19) accompanied by a covenant *symbol* (Gen 9:12; 17:11).

17:1 *El Shaddai* is traditionally translated "God Almighty." It likely means "God of the Mountain" (see translation note).

I will give you many, many descendants.”<sup>3</sup> Abram fell on his face, and God said to him, “<sup>4</sup>But me, my covenant is with you; you will be the ancestor of many nations. <sup>5</sup>And because I have made you the ancestor of many nations, your name will no longer be Abram<sup>b</sup> but Abraham.<sup>c</sup> <sup>6</sup>I will make you very fertile. I will produce nations from you, and kings will come from you. <sup>7</sup>I will set up my covenant with you and your descendants after you in every generation as an enduring covenant. I will be your God and your descendants’ God after you. <sup>8</sup>I will give you and your descendants the land in which you are immigrants, the whole land of Canaan, as an enduring possession. And I will be their God.”

<sup>9</sup>God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants in every generation. <sup>10</sup>This is my covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Circumcise every male. <sup>11</sup>You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it will be a symbol of the covenant between us. <sup>12</sup>On the eighth day after birth, every male in every generation must be circumcised, including those who are not your own children: those born in your household and those purchased with silver from foreigners. <sup>13</sup>Be sure you circumcise those born in your household and those purchased with your silver. Your flesh will embody my covenant as an enduring covenant. <sup>14</sup>Any uncircumcised male whose flesh of his foreskin remains uncircumcised will be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant.”

<sup>15</sup>God said to Abraham, “As for your wife Sarai, you will no longer call her Sarai. Her name will now be Sarah. <sup>16</sup>I will bless her and even give you a son from her. I will bless her so that she will become nations, and kings of peoples will come from her.”

<sup>17</sup>Abraham fell on his face and laughed. He said to himself, Can a 100-year-old man become a father, or Sarah, a 90-year-old woman, have a child? <sup>18</sup>To God Abraham said, “If only you would accept Ishmael!”

<sup>19</sup>But God said, “No, your wife Sarah will give birth to a son for you, and you will name him Isaac.<sup>d</sup> I will set up my covenant with him and with his descendants after him as an enduring covenant. <sup>20</sup>As for Ishmael, I’ve heard your request. I will bless him and make him fertile and give him many, many descendants. He will be the ancestor of twelve tribal leaders, and I will make a great nation of him. <sup>21</sup>But I will set up my covenant with Isaac, who will be born to Sarah at this time next year. <sup>22</sup>When God finished speaking to him, God ascended, leaving Abraham alone.

<sup>23</sup>Abraham took his son Ishmael, all those born in his household, and all those purchased with his silver—that is, every male in Abraham’s household—and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that same day, just as God had told him to do. <sup>24</sup>Abraham was 99 years old when he circumcised the flesh of his foreskin, <sup>25</sup>and his son Ishmael was 13 years old when the flesh of his foreskin was circumcised. <sup>26</sup>That same day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. <sup>27</sup>All the men of his household, those born in his household and those purchased with silver from foreigners, were circumcised with him.

<sup>b</sup>Or exalted ancestor <sup>c</sup>Or ancestor of a multitude <sup>d</sup>Or he laughs

Like other gods in the ancient Near East, the God of the Bible is often associated with mountains (Exod 19:3; Ps 48:1; see sidebar, “The Ancestors in Their Environment” at Gen 13). Abram is commanded to *Walk with God*, a phrase used to describe Enoch (Gen 5:22) and Noah (Gen 6:9).

17:5 On *Abram* and *Abraham*, see translation notes b and c. In ancient societies and in some communities today, a new name marks a new phase in the life of its bearer. Here it marks a new covenant relationship.

17:8 The Yahwist describes Israel’s ancestors as at home in Canaan, where God promises them land, and as immigrants only outside of Canaan (Gen 12:10). But the Priest calls his ancestors *immigrants* in Canaan where they are promised land. This may be because the Priest observes a careful historical difference between the era of the ancestors and the time of later Israel.

17:9-14 Circumcision is the *symbol* of the covenant with Abraham, just as the rainbow is the symbol of the covenant with Noah and the whole world (Gen 9:12-17). The origins and meaning of the ritual of circumcision are difficult to

determine. It was practiced in many ancient Near Eastern cultures (though not among the Philistines; Judg 14:3; 1 Sam 17:26, 36). Here circumcision is nevertheless viewed as the required ritual of entrance into the community of Israel. It illustrates the male-centered character of Israelite society and religion. The biblical *household* or family included not only Abraham’s *own children* but also his servants, those *purchased with your silver* (cf. Gen 12:5, 16; 15:2).

17:15-16 *Sarai* may be an alternate form of *Sarah*, which means “princess.” The name *Sarah*, “princess,” is related to God’s promise that she will be the mother of *kings*. The writer has in mind here the kings in David’s line.

17:17-19 Here Abraham is the one who *laughed* at God’s promise that he and Sarah would have a son. Later it is Sarah who laughs (Gen 18:12-15). The name of their son *Isaac* means “he laughs” (see translation note d).

17:20 Abraham appeals for *Ishmael* to be his heir (Gen 17:18). While God selects Isaac (Gen 17:19, 21), God makes to Ishmael the same promises made to Abraham: *many descendants* and a *great nation*.

17:3 Gn 17:17  
17:4 Ro 4:11  
17:5 Gn 17:15,  
Gn 32:28;  
Neh 9:7; Ro 4:17  
17:6 Gn 17:16,  
Gn 35:11  
17:7 Gn 26:24;  
Lv 26:12;  
Heb 11:16  
17:8 Gn 12:7,  
Gn 13:15; Ex 6:4;  
Ps 105:11  
17:9 Ex 19:5  
17:10 Ac 7:8  
17:11 Ac 7:8;  
Ro 4:11  
17:12 Gn 21:4;  
Lv 12:3; Lk 1:59;  
Phi 3:5  
17:13 Ex 12:44  
17:14 Ex 4:24  
17:15 Gn 17:5  
17:16 Gn 17:6,  
Gn 18:10  
17:17 Gn 17:3,  
Gn 18:12,  
Gn 21:6,  
Gn 21:7; Ro 4:19  
17:18 Gn 21:11  
17:19 Gn 17:21,  
Gn 18:10,  
Gn 21:2,  
Gn 21:3  
17:20 Gn 16:10,  
Gn 21:13,  
Gn 21:18,  
Gn 25:12,  
Gn 25:16  
17:21 Gn 17:19,  
Gn 18:10,  
Gn 18:14,  
Gn 21:2  
17:22 Gn 18:33,  
Gn 35:13  
17:26 Gn 22:3,  
Gn 22:4  
17:27 Gn 14:14

18:1 Gn 12:7.

Gn 13:18,  
Gn 14:13,  
Gn 17:1

18:2 Gn 18:22.

Gn 19:1.

Gn 43:28;

Josh 5:13;

Heb 13:2

18:3 Gn 43:5

18:4 Gn 19:2,

Gn 24:32,

Gn 43:24;

2Sa 11:8; Lk 7:44

18:5 Jgs 6:18,

Jgs 13:15,

Jgs 19:5;

Ps 104:15

18:6 1Sa 28:24

18:7 1Sa 28:24;

Am 6:4; Lk 15:23

18:8 Dt 32:14;

Jgs 4:19; Jgs 5:25;

2Sa 17:29; Is 7:15

18:9 Gn 24:67

18:10 Gn 17:19,

Gn 17:21,

Gn 21:2.

2Ki 4:16; Ro 9:9

18:11 Gn 17:17;

Lk 1:18; Ro 4:19;

Heb 11:11

18:12 Gn 17:17;

Gn 20:2; Gn 21:6;

Lk 1:18; 1Pt 3:6

18:13 Gn 17:17;

Gn 21:3; Gn 21:6

18:14 Gn 18:10;

Job 42:2;

Jer 32:17;

Jer 32:27;

Mt 19:26

18:16 Gn 18:2,

Gn 18:22

18:17 Gn 18:33;

Ps 25:14; Am 3:7

**Isaac's birth announced**

**18**The LORD appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre while he sat at the entrance of his tent in the day's heat. <sup>2</sup>He looked up and suddenly saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from his tent entrance to greet them and bowed deeply. <sup>3</sup>He said, "Sirs, if you would be so kind, don't just pass by your servant. <sup>4</sup>Let a little water be brought so you may wash your feet and refresh yourselves under the tree. <sup>5</sup>Let me offer you a little bread so you will feel stronger, and after that you may leave your servant and go on your way—since you have visited your servant."

They responded, "Fine. Do just as you have said."

<sup>6</sup>So Abraham hurried to Sarah at his tent and said, "Hurry! Knead three seahs\* of the finest flour and make some baked goods!" <sup>7</sup>Abraham ran to the cattle, took a healthy young calf, and gave it to a young servant, who prepared it quickly. <sup>8</sup>Then Abraham took butter, milk, and the calf that had been prepared, put the food in front of them, and stood under the tree near them as they ate.

<sup>9</sup>They said to him, "Where's your wife Sarah?"

And he said, "Right here in the tent."

<sup>10</sup>Then one of the men said, "I will definitely return to you about this time next year. Then your wife Sarah will have a son!"

Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. <sup>11</sup>Now Abraham and Sarah were both very old. Sarah was no longer menstruating. <sup>12</sup>So Sarah laughed to herself, thinking, I'm no longer able to have children and my husband's old.

<sup>13</sup>The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Me give birth? At my age?'"

<sup>14</sup>Is anything too difficult for the LORD? When I return to you about this time next year, Sarah will have a son."

<sup>15</sup>Sarah lied and said, "I didn't laugh," because she was frightened.

But he said, "No, you laughed."

**Abraham pleads for Sodom**

<sup>16</sup>The men got up from there and went over to look down on Sodom. Abraham was walking along with them to send them off <sup>17</sup>when the LORD said, "Will I keep from Abraham what

\*One seah is seven and a half quarts.

**18:1-15** This is the Yahwist's account of the announcement of Isaac's birth, parallel to the Priest's account in the previous chapter (Gen 17:15-22). This story has two scenes: Abraham's generous hospitality to three visitors (18:1-8); and the visitors' announcement of Sarah's pregnancy (18:9-15).

**18:1** God frequently appears to the ancestors at natural features, such as majestic oaks (see notes on Gen 12:6; 13:18; see sidebar, "The Ancestors in Their Environment" at Gen 13).

**18:2** Abraham models true hospitality by rushing to greet his visitors respectfully. Hospitality is an important theme in this story. It's also important in the story of Lot that follows (Gen 19:1-11) and in the book of Genesis as a whole (see the notes on Gen 12:10-20; 12:18-19). Biblical society valued openness and generosity to strangers and outsiders. Throughout this story, the visitors' identity is unclear. Here they are referred to as *three men* (Gen 18:16, 22), but in Genesis 18:1, 13 one of them appears to be "The Lord," the God of Israel. Blurring of the line between human and divine is found elsewhere in Genesis 32:22-32.

**18:6-8** Abraham, the host, *hurried* to prepare the meal and served only the best food. Meat was reserved for special occasions. The term translated *butter* here may refer to leben, a common Middle Eastern dairy product similar to yogurt.

**18:10** The phrase *this time next year* translates the Hebrew idiom "at the time of life." It can signal the time when pregnancy results in birth (cf. 2 Kgs 4:16).

**18:12** Sarah *laughed* at the announcement of Isaac's birth, given her age.

**18:13** Now we know that one of the three men (Gen 18:2) is actually the Lord.

**18:14** The question *Is anything too difficult for the LORD?* expresses a key theme of Genesis. Many stories show that God's promises reach fulfillment not as the result of human strength but because of divine power. See sidebar, "The Promises to the Ancestors" at Genesis 12.

**18:16-19:38** The drama of an heir for Abraham and Sarah is temporarily interrupted by the story of Sodom, a city considered so wicked that it lacked 10 righteous people (18:32). In fact, this event, rather than the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the garden, is regarded as the prime example of crime and punishment in the OT (see Isa 1:9-10; Jer 23:14; Amos 4:11; cf. Matt 10:25; Rom 9:29). Sodom's sin isn't primarily the sexual acts of its citizens but rather Sodom's harsh treatment of outsiders. The story itself and its earliest interpreters focus on Sodom's lack of hospitality (see note on Gen 18:2).

**18:16-33** In the first scene of the Sodom story, Abraham appeals to God to save the city. Abraham's concern illustrates his generosity to outsiders, as did his hospitality in entertaining strangers in the preceding story (Gen 18:1-15).

**18:16** The exact location of Sodom is uncertain, but the narrative locates it somewhere on the southern shores of the Dead Sea.

**18:17-19** These verses describe Abraham as Israel's

I'm about to do? <sup>18</sup>Abraham will certainly become a great populous nation, and all the earth's nations will be blessed because of him. <sup>19</sup>I have formed a relationship with him so that he will instruct his children and his household after him. And they will keep to the LORD's path, being moral and just so that the LORD can do for Abraham everything he said he would." <sup>20</sup>Then the LORD said, "The cries of injustice from Sodom and Gomorrah are countless, and their sin is very serious! <sup>21</sup>I will go down now to examine the cries of injustice that have reached me. Have they really done all this? If not, I want to know."

<sup>22</sup>The men turned away and walked toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing in front of the LORD. <sup>23</sup>Abraham approached and said, "Will you really sweep away the innocent<sup>a</sup> with the guilty?<sup>b</sup> <sup>24</sup>What if there are fifty innocent people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not save the place for the sake of the fifty innocent people in it? <sup>25</sup>It's not like you to do this, killing the innocent with the guilty as if there were no difference. It's not like you! Will the judge of all the earth not act justly?"

<sup>26</sup>The LORD said, "If I find fifty innocent people in the city of Sodom, I will save it because of them."

<sup>27</sup>Abraham responded, "Since I've already decided to speak with my Lord, even though I'm just soil and ash, <sup>28</sup>what if there are five fewer innocent people than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city over just five?"

The LORD said, "If I find forty-five there, I won't destroy it."

<sup>29</sup>Once again Abraham spoke, "What if forty are there?"

The LORD said, "For the sake of forty, I will do nothing."

<sup>30</sup>He said, "Don't be angry with me, my Lord, but let me speak. What if thirty are there?"

The LORD said, "I won't do it if I find thirty there."

<sup>31</sup>Abraham said, "Since I've already decided to speak with my Lord, what if twenty are there?"

The LORD said, "I won't do it, for the sake of twenty."

<sup>32</sup>Abraham said, "Don't be angry with me, my Lord, but let me speak just once more. What if there are ten?"

And the LORD said, "I will not destroy it because of those ten." <sup>33</sup>When the LORD finished speaking with Abraham, he left; but Abraham stayed there in that place.

**Lot leaves Sodom**

**19** The two messengers entered Sodom in the evening. Lot, who was sitting at the gate of Sodom, saw them, got up to greet them, and bowed low. <sup>2</sup>He said, "Come to your servant's house, spend the night, and wash your feet. Then you can get up early and go on your way."

But they said, "No, we will spend the night in the town square." <sup>3</sup>He pleaded earnestly with them, so they went with him and entered his house. He made a big meal for them, even baking unleavened bread, and they ate.

<sup>4</sup>Before they went to bed, the men of the city of Sodom—everyone from the youngest

<sup>f</sup>Some ancient manuscripts read *but the LORD remained standing in front of Abraham*. <sup>g</sup>Or *righteous* <sup>h</sup>Or *wicked*

primary ancestor. Even his descendants, Isaac, Jacob, and their children, receive God's promises because of Abraham's relationship to God. The phrase *oversee his children* (18:19) can mean providing instruction to descendants. 18:20-21 *cries of injustice*: translates a term that elsewhere refers to the outcry of victims of oppression (Exod 3:7; Isa 5:7; cf. Gen 19:13). So the primary sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is the harsh treatment of their citizens, neighbors, and visitors. As in Genesis 11:5, God decides to *go down* to investigate earth's affairs (18:21). 18:23-33 Abraham argues with God. Abraham's willingness to challenge God when God's rule appears unjust isn't viewed as a lack of faith in God. It's viewed as a legitimate religious act, one found also among the psalmists (e.g., Pss 10; 22); the prophets (e.g., Jer 12:1-4); and Job's speeches. In fact, here it only boosts Abraham's reputation as one who appears unusually generous to others, even the citizens of Sodom. Abraham's concern for Sodom's people illustrates God's promise that the blessings on Abraham and his descendants will overflow to their neighbors (see note on Gen 12:3).

19:1-11 In the second scene of the Sodom story, Lot's guests arrive to rescue him (Gen 19:12-13). When they are placed in danger, the injustices (Gen 18:20; 19:13) of Sodom become clear. Judges 19:10-30 tells a very similar story of a Levite traveler in Gibeah. Both of these stories vividly criticize the harsh treatment of foreigners. Hospitality should reign instead. 19:1 The men who visit Abraham (Gen 18:2) and now Lot (Gen 18:5, 10, 12, 16, 17) are referred to as (divine) *messengers* in this story (Gen 18:11, 15; see the note on Gen 18:2). Lot sits at the *gate of Sodom*, the place for official business, in the city in which he had settled after separating from Abraham (Gen 13:10-13). 19:2-3 Lot's hospitality mirrors that of Abraham, which has just been described (Gen 18:1-15). In fact, hospitality is the main theme in this part of the Sodom story. Lot's earnest plea that the strangers spend the night in Lot's house rather than in the *town square* contrasts the safe hospitality of his home with the potential dangers in Sodom's town square. 19:4-5 *have sex with them*: Here the type of sex is violent

18:18 Gn 12:3; Gn 22:18; Ac 3:25; Ga 3:8  
18:19 Gn 17:9; Dt 6:7; Josh 24:15  
18:20 Gn 13:13; Gn 19:13; Is 3:9  
18:21 Gn 11:5; Gn 11:7; Ex 3:8  
18:22 Gn 18:1; Gn 18:16; Gn 19:1; Gn 19:27; Ps 106:23  
18:23 Gn 20:4; Nm 16:22; 2Sa 24:17; Ps 11:4  
18:24 Jer 5:1  
18:25 Dt 32:4; Job 8:3; Ps 58:11; Ps 94:2; Ro 3:6  
18:26 Is 65:8; Jer 5:1  
18:27 Gn 2:7  
18:28 Gn 18:26  
18:30 Gn 18:32; Gn 44:18  
18:32 Gn 18:30; Jgs 6:39  
18:33 Gn 17:22  
19:1 Gn 18:2; Gn 18:22  
19:2 Gn 18:4; Lk 7:44  
19:3 Gn 18:6; Jgs 6:19; 1Sa 28:24  
19:4 Gn 13:13

19:5 Lv 18:22;  
Jgs 19:22;  
Ro 1:24, Ro 1:27;  
Jud 1:7

19:6 Jgs 19:23  
19:7 Lv 18:22

19:8 Jgs 19:24  
19:9 Gn 13:12;  
Ex 2:14

19:10 Gn 19:1  
19:11 Dt 28:28;  
2Ki 6:18;  
Ac 13:11

19:12 2Pt 2:7  
19:13 Gn 18:20;  
1Ch 21:15

19:14 Nm 16:21;  
Rev 18:4

19:15 Rev 18:4

19:16 Ex 34:6;  
Is 63:9; 2Co 1:3;  
Ti 3:5; 2Pt 2:7

19:17 Gn 13:10;  
Gn 19:26;  
1Ki 19:3;  
Mt 24:16

19:19 Gn 6:8;  
Gn 18:3

19:20 Gn 19:30

19:21 Job 42:9

19:22 Gn 13:10;  
Gn 14:2; Is 15:5

19:23 Gn 11:27;  
Gn 11:31;  
Gn 12:4;  
Gn 13:1;  
Gn 13:10

19:24 Dt 29:23;  
Job 18:15;

Ps 11:6; Is 13:19;  
Lk 17:29

19:25 Gn 19:24;  
Ps 107:34

19:26 Gn 19:17;  
Lk 17:32

to the oldest—surrounded the house <sup>5</sup>and called to Lot, “Where are the men who arrived tonight? Bring them out to us so that we may have sex with them.”

<sup>6</sup>Lot went out toward the entrance, closed the door behind him, <sup>7</sup>and said, “My brothers, don’t do such an evil thing. <sup>8</sup>I’ve got two daughters who are virgins. Let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them whatever you wish. But don’t do anything to these men because they are now under the protection of my roof.”

<sup>9</sup>They said, “Get out of the way!” And they continued, “Does this immigrant want to judge us? Now we will hurt you more than we will hurt them.” They pushed Lot back and came close to breaking down the door. <sup>10</sup>The men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house with them and slammed the door. <sup>11</sup>Then the messengers blinded the men near the entrance of the house, from the youngest to the oldest, so that they groped around trying to find the entrance.

<sup>12</sup>The men said to Lot, “Who’s still with you here? Take away from this place your sons-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and everyone else you have in the city <sup>13</sup>because we are about to destroy this place. The LORD has found the cries of injustice so serious that the LORD sent us to destroy it.”

<sup>14</sup>Lot went to speak to his sons-in-law, married to his daughters, and said, “Get up and get out of this place because the LORD is about to destroy the city.” But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

<sup>15</sup>When dawn broke, the messengers urged Lot, “Get up and take your wife and your two daughters who are here so that you are not swept away because of the evil in this city.” <sup>16</sup>He hesitated, but because the LORD intended to save him, the men grabbed him, his wife, and two daughters by the hand, took him out, and left him outside the city.

<sup>17</sup>After getting them out, the men said, “Save your lives! Don’t look back! And don’t stay in the valley. Escape to the mountains so that you are not swept away.”

<sup>18</sup>But Lot said to them, “No, my lords, please. <sup>19</sup>You’ve done me a favor and have been so kind to save my life. But I can’t escape to the mountains since the catastrophe might overtake me there and I’d die. <sup>20</sup>This city here is close enough to flee to, and it’s small. It’s small, right? Let me escape there, and my life will be saved.”

<sup>21</sup>He said to Lot, “I’ll do this for you as well; I won’t overthrow the city that you have described. <sup>22</sup>Hurry! Escape to it! I can’t do anything until you get there.” That is why the name of the city is Zoar.<sup>1</sup>

### **Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed**

<sup>23</sup>As the sun rose over the earth, Lot arrived in Zoar; <sup>24</sup>and the LORD rained down burning asphalt from the skies onto Sodom and Gomorrah. <sup>25</sup>The LORD destroyed these cities, the entire valley, everyone who lived in the cities, and all of the fertile land’s vegetation. <sup>26</sup>When Lot’s wife looked back, she turned into a pillar of salt.

<sup>1</sup>Or *small*

sex, rape that demeans and humiliates its male victims (see Gen 19:9). The townsmen see this abuse as a way to harm and eliminate outsiders (cf. Judg 19:22; 20:5). This story therefore specifically criticizes rape, whether it is against men, Lot’s visitors; or against women, Lot’s daughters (Gen 19:8). Such behavior is utterly opposed to the sacred duty to be hospitable. The story’s earliest interpreters focus on the townsmen’s harsh treatment of outsiders, rather than on the sexual activity by which they meant to cause harm (e.g., Ezek 16:49; Matt 10:11-15).

19:6-11 Lot is determined to show hospitality to the men who came *under the protection of his roof*. He goes to such lengths to protect them that he puts himself in danger (19:6, 9-10) and offers his own daughters in their place (19:8). The storyteller likely views Lot’s offer of his daughters as the desperate act of a father fiercely committed to ancient standards of hospitality. Lot’s action also reveals the dangerous place of women as second-class citizens

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in a male-dominated world and the violence they could experience there (cf. Judg 19:22-26). See sidebar, “Gender in Genesis” at Genesis 3.

19:12-28 The third scene of the Sodom story describes Lot’s rescue and the city’s destruction. Lot’s sons-in-law stay in their city (19:14); but Lot, his wife, and his daughters leave.

19:18-22 Lot’s appeal explains why *Zoar* (meaning “small”; see 19:20 and translation note), a small oasis town south-east of the Dead Sea, escaped the catastrophe.

19:25 Destruction strikes the *cities, valley, inhabitants, and all of the fertile land’s vegetation*, reducing the valley to a desert. Today, meteorologists see the desert landscape around the Dead Sea as resulting from the meager rainfall in the rain shadow produced by the mountains to the west.

19:26 Salt deposits around the Dead Sea can take the form of *pillars*, some with lifelike shapes, which provides the source for this familiar detail about Lot’s wife.

<sup>27</sup>Abraham set out early for the place where he had stood with the LORD, <sup>28</sup>and looked out over Sodom and Gomorrah and over all the land of the valley. He saw the smoke from the land rise like the smoke from a kiln.

**Origin of Moab and Ammon**

<sup>29</sup>When God destroyed the cities in the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot away from the disaster that overtook the cities in which Lot had lived. <sup>30</sup>Since Lot had become fearful of living in Zoar, he and his two daughters headed up from Zoar and settled in the mountains where he and his two daughters lived in a cave. <sup>31</sup>The older daughter said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there are no men in the land to sleep with us as is the custom everywhere. <sup>32</sup>Come on, let's give our father wine to drink, lie down with him, and we'll have children from our father." <sup>33</sup>That night they served their father wine, and the older daughter went in and lay down with her father, without him noticing when she lay down or got up. <sup>34</sup>The next day the older daughter said to the younger, "Since I lay down with our father last night, let's serve him wine tonight too, and you go in and lie down with him so that we will both have children from our father." <sup>35</sup>They served their father wine that night also, and the younger daughter lay down with him, without him knowing when she lay down or got up. <sup>36</sup>Both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. <sup>37</sup>The older daughter gave birth to a son and named him Moab. He is the ancestor of today's Moabites. <sup>38</sup>The younger daughter also gave birth to a son and named him Ben-ammi.<sup>1</sup> He is the ancestor of today's Ammonites.

**Abraham and Sarah visit Gerar**

**20** Abraham traveled from there toward the land of the arid southern plain, and he settled as an immigrant in Gerar, between Kadesh and Shur. <sup>2</sup>Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She's my sister." So King Abimelech of Gerar took her into his household.

<sup>3</sup>But God appeared to Abimelech that night in a dream and said to him, "You are as good as dead because of this woman you have taken. She is a married woman."

<sup>4</sup>Now Abimelech hadn't gone near her, and he said, "Lord, will you really put an innocent nation to death? <sup>5</sup>Didn't he say to me, 'She's my sister,' and didn't she—even she—say, 'He's my brother'? My intentions were pure, and I acted innocently when I did this."

<sup>6</sup>God said to him in the dream, "I know that your intentions were pure when you did this. In fact, I kept you from sinning against me. That's why I didn't allow you to touch her. <sup>7</sup>Now return the man's wife. He's a prophet; he will pray for you so you may live. But if you don't return her, know that you and everyone with you will die!"

<sup>1</sup>Or son of my people

19:29-38 The final scene of the Sodom story explains the origin of two of Israel's closest neighbors east of the Jordan River, the *Moabites* and the *Ammonites* (19:37-38). The phrases *today's Moabites* and *today's Ammonites* show that this story was written during the Israelite monarchy, when these peoples already existed. The writer connects the birth of their ancestors with the territory, the *mountains east of the Dead Sea* (19:30), where the Moabites and Ammonites actually lived. The narrative describes these two neighbors of Israel in ambiguous terms. On the one hand, the Moabites and Ammonites are close relatives of Abraham and his descendants: They are children of Abraham's nephew Lot. Thus they deserve special respect. On the other hand, they derive from questionable beginnings, the incestuous union of Lot and his daughters (19:31-36). Such narratives were an effective way of describing both the bonds and the tensions between Israel and its neighbors during the Israelite monarchy (see 1 Sam 22:3-4; 2 Sam 8:2). 20:1-18 This is the second of the three narratives in Genesis in which an ancestor (Abraham or Isaac), while an immigrant in a foreign country, presents his wife as his sister to protect himself (Gen 12:10-20; 26:1-11). The social factors that led the ancestor to do this are explained in the notes on Genesis 12:10-20. This story introduces the third

author in Genesis, the Elohists. Like the Yahwist, the Elohists told the stories of his ancestors to explain the identity and role of Israel in its world during the monarchy in which he lived (see intro.). We see here many of the Elohists' most distinctive traits that will appear in his stories that follow: God's appearance in dreams (20:3, 6); an interest in prophecy (20:7); a regard for the reverence toward God (20:11); and a special concern for moral integrity (20:4-6, 12).

20:1 *Gerar* is located in the *arid southern plain*, southwest of Hebron in the foothills, where Abraham had been living (Gen 13:18; 18:1).

20:3 Here God communicates with humans indirectly through dreams or messengers, rather than face-to-face as in Genesis 3:9; 18:22. *God appeared* in dreams to Israel's neighbors (Gen 41:25) just as to Israel's own ancestors (Gen 37:5).

20:4-6 This storyteller makes a point to protect the moral integrity of each major character. Here the text says that God saw that Abimelech's *intentions were pure* and *didn't allow* Abimelech to *touch her* (20:6; cf. Gen 12:19).

20:7 Israel's classic prophets, such as Isaiah and Amos, lived and preached when there were kings in Israel and Judah. By calling Abraham a *prophet*, the writer connects the prophets of his era with Israel's earliest ancestors.

19:27 Gn 18:22  
 19:28 Rev 9:2,  
 Rev 18:9  
 19:29 Gn 8:1;  
 2Pt 2:7  
 19:30 Gn 13:10,  
 Gn 19:17,  
 Gn 19:19  
 19:31 Gn 16:2,  
 Gn 38:8  
 19:32 Gn 9:21;  
 Lv 18:7;  
 Prv 23:31;  
 Hab 2:15  
 19:37 Dt 2:9  
 19:38 Dt 2:19  
 20:1 Gn 14:7,  
 Gn 16:7,  
 Gn 18:1,  
 Gn 26:1,  
 Gn 26:6  
 20:2 Gn 12:11,  
 Gn 12:13,  
 Gn 12:15,  
 Gn 26:7  
 20:3 Gn 12:17,  
 Gn 20:7,  
 Gn 31:24;  
 Job 33:15;  
 Ps 105:14  
 20:4 Gn 18:23  
 20:5 Ps 7:8,  
 Ps 25:21, Ps 26:6  
 20:6 Isa 25:26,  
 Isa 25:34;  
 Ps 51:4

20:11 Gn 12:12;  
Gn 26:7;  
Neh 5:15;  
Prv 16:6

20:12 Gn 11:29;  
Gn 12:13

20:14 Gn 12:16;  
Gn 20:2

20:17 Jas 5:16

20:18 Gn 12:17

21:1 Gn 18:10;  
Gn 18:14;  
1Sa 2:21

21:2 Gn 17:21;  
Gn 18:10;  
Gn 18:14;  
Ga 4:22;

Heb 11:11

21:3 Gn 17:19;  
Gn 21:6

21:5 Gn 17:17

21:6 Gn 17:17;

Gn 18:12-13;

Gn 21:3; 15:54-1

21:8 1Sa 1:22

21:9 Gn 16:1;  
Gn 16:4;

Gn 16:15;

Ga 4:29

21:10 Gn 25:5-6;

Ga 4:30

<sup>8</sup>Abimelech got up early in the morning and summoned all of his servants. When he told them everything that had happened, the men were terrified. <sup>9</sup>Then Abimelech summoned Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? What sin did I commit against you that you have brought this terrible sin to me and my kingdom, by doing to me something that simply isn't done?" <sup>10</sup>Abimelech said to Abraham, "What were you thinking when you did this thing?"

<sup>11</sup>Abraham said, "I thought to myself, No one reveres God here and they will kill me to get my wife. <sup>12</sup>She is, truthfully, my sister—my father's daughter but not my mother's daughter—and she's now my wife. <sup>13</sup>When God led me away from my father's household, I said to her, "This is the loyalty I expect from you: in each place we visit, tell them, "He is my brother."'"

<sup>14</sup>Abimelech took flocks, cattle, male servants, and female servants, and gave them to Abraham; and Abimelech returned his wife Sarah. <sup>15</sup>Abimelech said, "My land is here available to you. Live wherever you wish." <sup>16</sup>To Sarah, he said, "I've given your brother one thousand pieces of silver. It means that neither you nor anyone with you has done anything wrong. Everything has been set right." <sup>17</sup>Abraham prayed to God; and God restored Abimelech, his wife, and his women servants to health, and they were able to have children. <sup>18</sup>Because of the incident with Abraham's wife Sarah, the LORD had kept all of the women in Abimelech's household from having children.

### Isaac's birth

**21** The LORD was attentive to Sarah just as he had said, and the LORD carried out just what he had promised her. <sup>2</sup>She became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Abraham when he was old, at the very time God had told him. <sup>3</sup>Abraham named his son—the one Sarah bore him—Isaac. <sup>4</sup>Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old just as God had commanded him. <sup>5</sup>Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born. <sup>6</sup>Sarah said, "God has given me laughter. Everyone who hears about it will laugh with me."<sup>1</sup> <sup>7</sup>She said, "Who could have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse sons? But now I've given birth to a son when he was old!"

### Hagar and Ishmael evicted

<sup>8</sup>The boy grew and stopped nursing. On the day he stopped nursing, Abraham prepared a huge banquet. <sup>9</sup>Sarah saw Hagar's son laughing, the one Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham. <sup>10</sup>So she said to Abraham, "Send this servant away with her son! This servant's son won't share the inheritance with my son Isaac."

<sup>1</sup>Or he laughs <sup>1</sup>Or God has made a joke of me. Everyone who hears about it will laugh at me.

Praying for others (see also Gen 20:17) is a characteristic of the classical prophets (e.g., Amos 7:2, 5).

20:11 Here and in Genesis 22:12, revering God is the mark of doing what is right. Abraham explains his acts by expressing his doubt that a foreign king would hold the same high standards of hospitality that he observes. See the notes on Genesis 12:10-20; 18:2.

20:12 Abraham gave a legitimate explanation about Sarah being his sister. As he explains, they share the same father but not the same mother. The genealogies in Genesis don't give her lineage (Gen 11:27-32). Some legal codes (Lev 18:9, 11; 20:17; Deut 27:22) forbade the marriage of a half brother or sister, while this text shows that other writers found this practice acceptable (cf. 2 Sam 13:13).

21:1-7 Isaac's birth is the finale of repeated promises to Abraham of an heir and descendants (Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:4-6; 17:15-19; 18:9-15). These promises had appeared hopeless because of Sarah's inability to have children (Gen 11:30; 16:1); Abraham's and Sarah's ages (Gen 17:17; 18:11-12); and Sarah's endangerment in foreign countries (Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-18).

21:1-2 God fulfills the specific promises made to

Abraham and Sarah that she would have a son (Gen 17:19; 18:10, 14).

21:3-5 Abraham named Isaac and circumcised him just as God had commanded in Genesis 17:12, 19.

21:6 Isaac's name means "he laughs" (see translation note at Gen 21:3). Here Sarah's laughter is likely the laughter of joy, rather than the laughter of disbelief (cf. Gen 17:17; 18:12, 15). However, as the translation note indicates, the Hebrew allows more than one interpretation.

21:8-21 This is the Elohist's story of Hagar's expulsion from Abraham's household. In the overall narrative of Genesis, this text now provides the sequel to the Yahwist's account in Genesis 16.

21:9-10 Sarah considers Hagar's child a threat to the status of her son, Isaac. While Sarah is the primary wife, Hagar's son was born first. Sarah wants to protect both her son's status as primary heir and her own status as primary wife. When Sarah saw Hagar's son laughing, it may have ignited her fears that he would take over the identity and role of Isaac, whose name means "he laughs" (Gen 17:17; 18:13-15; 21:6). On Sarah's possession and treatment of Hagar as her servant, see the note on Genesis 16:6.



<sup>11</sup>This upset Abraham terribly because the boy was his son. <sup>12</sup>God said to Abraham, "Don't be upset about the boy and your servant. Do everything Sarah tells you to do because your descendants will be traced through Isaac. <sup>13</sup>But I will make of your servant's son a great nation too, because he is also your descendant." <sup>14</sup>Abraham got up early in the morning, took some bread and a flask of water, and gave it to Hagar. He put the boy in her shoulder sling and sent her away.

She left and wandered through the desert near Beer-sheba. <sup>15</sup>Finally the water in the flask ran out, and she put the boy down under one of the desert shrubs. <sup>16</sup>She walked away from him about as far as a bow shot and sat down, telling herself, I can't bear to see the boy die. She sat at a distance, cried out in grief, and wept.

<sup>17</sup>God heard the boy's cries, and God's messenger called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "Hagar! What's wrong? Don't be afraid. God has heard the boy's cries over there. <sup>18</sup>Get up, pick up the boy, and take him by the hand because I will make of him a great nation." <sup>19</sup>Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well. She went over, filled the water flask, and gave the boy a drink. <sup>20</sup>God remained with the boy; he grew up, lived in the desert, and became an expert archer. <sup>21</sup>He lived in the Paran desert, and his mother found him an Egyptian wife.

**Abraham's treaty with the Philistines**

<sup>22</sup>At that time Abimelech, and Phicol commander of his forces, said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything that you do. <sup>23</sup>So give me your word under God that you won't cheat me, my children, or my descendants. Just as I have treated you fairly, so you must treat me and the land in which you are an immigrant."

<sup>24</sup>Abraham said, "I give you my word. <sup>25</sup>Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech's servants had seized.

<sup>26</sup>Abimelech said, "I don't know who has done this, and you didn't tell me. I didn't even hear about it until today." <sup>27</sup>Abraham took flocks and cattle, gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them drew up a treaty. <sup>28</sup>Abraham set aside, by themselves, seven female lambs from the flock. <sup>29</sup>So Abimelech said to Abraham, "What are these seven lambs you've set apart?"

<sup>30</sup>Abraham said, "These seven lambs that you take from me will attest that I dug this well." <sup>31</sup>Therefore, the name of that place is Beer-sheba<sup>a</sup> because there they gave each other their word. <sup>32</sup>After they drew up a treaty<sup>o</sup> at Beer-sheba, Abimelech, and Phicol commander of his forces, returned to the land of the Philistines. <sup>33</sup>Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and he worshipped there in the name of the LORD, El Olam.<sup>p</sup> <sup>34</sup>Abraham lived as an immigrant in the Philistines' land for a long time.

<sup>a</sup>Or covenant <sup>b</sup>Or Well of seven; or Well of giving one's word <sup>o</sup>Or covenant <sup>p</sup>Or the eternal God

21:11-14 The writer seeks to emphasize Abraham's moral character. Abraham is terribly upset about sending Hagar and her son away. God assures Abraham that Sarah's request is legitimate since his *descendants will be traced through Isaac*. God directs Abraham to *Do everything Sarah tells him*. God also promises to make the descendants of Hagar's son a *great nation* (cf. Gen 21:18), just as Isaac's descendants would become. Abraham provides food and water for Hagar and her child.

21:16 The story describes Hagar's emotions in an unusually strong and intimate way.

21:17 Ishmael isn't named in this account, but the phrase *God heard* appears twice in this verse. It seems related to the name Ishmael, meaning "God hears" (Gen 16:11).

21:18-21 The story connects Hagar's son with the southern desert, which was home to his descendants, the Ishmaelites. The *Paran desert* is south of Israel and its southernmost city, Beer-sheba (Gen 21:14). It's the same desert to which Hagar flees in Genesis 16:7-14. Ishmael is portrayed as an *expert archer*, though references later in Genesis identify his descendants as desert traders (Gen 37:25, 28b; 39:1).

21:22-34 This narrative continues the story of Abraham and Sarah in Gerar from Genesis 20:1-18. Its purpose is to

show that the city of Beer-sheba (along with its well) is the legitimate possession of Abraham and his descendants. It presents both Abimelech and Abraham as honest brokers of a treaty between themselves and, by extension, their descendants.

21:22-24 The foreign king *Abimelech* initiates a good-faith agreement between him, his people, and Abraham.

21:25-26 Abimelech, as in the earlier case with Sarah (Gen 20:5, 9-10), acts honestly and with integrity in response to Abraham's complaint.

21:27-31 The *treaty* recognizes *Beer-sheba* and its *well* as Abraham's. The Hebrew word *Beer* means "well," and *sheba* can mean either "seven" or "to give one's word." So Beer-sheba can mean "well of seven" or "well of giving one's word." The text relates events to both meanings: Abraham gave Abimelech *seven lambs*, and Abraham and Abimelech *gave each other their word*.

21:32-34 The conclusion to the story identifies *Abimelech* with the *Philistines*, the people who lived on the coastal plain where Gerar was located during the days of Israelite kings when the writer lived. Trees mark sacred sites (see Gen 12:6-7; 13:18; 18:1; sidebar, "The Ancestors in Their Environment" at Gen 13). Ancient titles of Israel's God, such as *El Olam*, "the eternal God" (see translation note p),

21:11 Gn 17:18  
21:12 Ro 9:7;  
Heb 11:18  
21:13 Gn 16:10,  
Gn 17:20,  
Gn 21:18,  
Gn 25:12  
21:14 Gn 22:3  
21:15 Gn 21:14  
21:16 Gn 27:38;  
1Ki 3:26;  
Is 49:15;  
Jer 6:26;  
Am 8:10  
21:17 Ex 3:7  
21:18 Gn 17:20,  
Gn 21:13,  
Gn 25:12  
21:19 Nm 22:31;  
2Ki 6:17  
21:20 Gn 27:3,  
Gn 28:15,  
Gn 39:2,  
Gn 39:21  
21:21 Gn 24:4;  
Nm 10:12  
21:22 Gn 20:2,  
Gn 21:32,  
Gn 26:26,  
Gn 26:28  
21:30 Gn 26:18,  
Gn 31:48  
21:31 Gn 21:14,  
Gn 26:33

22:1 Gn 22:11;  
Dt 8:2, Dt 8:16;  
Heb 11:17;  
Jas 1:12

### Binding of Isaac

**22** After these events, God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" Abraham answered, "I'm here."

22:2-2 Ch 3:1;  
Jn 3:16;  
Heb 11:17

<sup>2</sup>God said, "Take your son, your only son whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah. Offer him up as an entirely burned offering there on one of the mountains that I will show you." <sup>3</sup>Abraham got up early in the morning, harnessed his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, together with his son Isaac. He split the wood for the entirely burned offering, set out, and went to the place God had described to him.

22:3 Gn 22:14  
22:4 Gn 22:13

<sup>4</sup>On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the place at a distance. <sup>5</sup>Abraham said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will walk up there, worship, and then come back to you."

22:5 2Sa 12:20  
22:6 Jn 19:17

<sup>6</sup>Abraham took the wood for the entirely burned offering and laid it on his son Isaac. He took the fire and the knife in his hand, and the two of them walked on together. <sup>7</sup>Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father?"

22:7 Gn 22:1  
22:8 Gn 22:14;  
Jn 1:29

Abraham said, "I'm here, my son."

22:9 Gn 12:7,  
Gn 13:18,  
Gn 22:2;  
Heb 11:17;  
Jas 2:21

Isaac said, "Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the entirely burned offering?"

22:10 Heb  
11:17; Jas 2:21  
22:11 Gn 16:7,  
Gn 22:1

<sup>8</sup>Abraham said, "The lamb for the entirely burned offering? God will see to it,<sup>9</sup> my son." The two of them walked on together.

22:12 Jas 2:21  
22:13 Gn 22:8

<sup>9</sup>They arrived at the place God had described to him. Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He tied up his son Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.

22:14 Gn 22:8  
22:15 Gn 22:11

<sup>10</sup>Then Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. <sup>11</sup>But the LORD's messenger called out to Abraham from heaven, "Abraham? Abraham?"

22:16 Ps 105:9;  
Is 45:23;  
Jer 22:5; Lk 1:73;  
Heb 6:13

Abraham said, "I'm here."

22:17 Gn 15:5,  
Gn 24:60,  
Gn 26:4;  
Hos 1:10

<sup>12</sup>The messenger said, "Don't stretch out your hand against the young man, and don't do anything to him. I now know that you revere God and didn't hold back your son, your only son, from me." <sup>13</sup>Abraham looked up and saw a single ram<sup>a</sup> caught by its horns in the dense underbrush. Abraham went over, took the ram, and offered it as an entirely burned offering instead of his son. <sup>14</sup>Abraham named that place "the LORD sees."<sup>b</sup> That is the reason people today say, "On this mountain the LORD is seen."<sup>c</sup>

<sup>15</sup>The LORD's messenger called out to Abraham from heaven a second time <sup>16</sup>and said, "I give my word as the LORD that because you did this and didn't hold back your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup>I will bless you richly and I will give you countless descendants, as many as the

<sup>a</sup>Or *God will see*; or *God will provide* <sup>b</sup>LXX, Sam, Syr, Tg; MT a ram behind <sup>c</sup>Or *the LORD is seen*; or *the LORD provides* <sup>d</sup>Or *the LORD sees*; or *on the LORD's mountain, it will be provided*

are common in these ancestral stories. Others are El Elyon, "God Most High" (Gen 14:18-20); and El Shaddai, "God of the Mountain" (Gen 17:1).

**22:1-19** This story of Abraham and Isaac is one of the most admired and most troubling stories in Genesis. Abraham is presented as the model of supreme obedience to God, but to obey God, Abraham must be prepared to kill his son. Nowhere in Genesis does a single event contain such a strong moral tension for the interpreter (see note on Gen 22:12-13; sidebar, "The Moral Dilemma of the Sacrifice of Isaac"). In Jewish tradition, the story is known as the Akeidah or Binding of Isaac, from the Hebrew verb translated *tied up* in Genesis 22:9.

**22:1** Testing is a key theme in several stories in the Bible's first five books (Exod 15:25; 16:4; Deut 8:2, 16; 13:3). Abraham's response, *I'm here*, occurs at three crucial points in this story: when God commands Abraham here to sacrifice Isaac; when Isaac asks Abraham what the sacrifice will be (Gen 22:7); and when God's messenger commands Abraham not to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:11-12).

**22:2** The phrase *your son, your only son whom you love, Isaac* focuses attention on the object of the test and on God's extremely harsh demand. *Moriah* resembles the verb "to see," used repeatedly in this story (Gen 22:4, 8, 14;

see the notes following). Neither its exact meaning nor its precise location is clear, though 2 Chronicles 3:1 identifies Moriah with the temple mount in Jerusalem. An *entirely burned offering* is one where fire consumes the entire sacrifice on the altar (cf. Lev 1).

**22:6** Here Abraham *laid* the wood on top of Isaac. Later he "laid" Isaac on top of the wood (Gen 22:9). The phrase *the two of them walked on together* frames the frightening question Isaac asks his father, appearing here and in Genesis 22:8.

**22:8** Abraham's reply, *God will see*, is similar to the phrase used to name the mountain, "the LORD sees" (Gen 22:14). Since Abraham's inner thoughts aren't described, his response could be taken as an expression of faith or as a parent being intentionally vague.

**22:10** The verb translated *kill* . . . as a sacrifice is customarily used for the slaughter of animals in sacrifices (e.g., Exod 29:11).

**22:12-13** Abraham has passed the ultimate test (Gen 22:1). To *revere God* is a primary religious duty in Genesis 20:11; 42:18. See sidebar, "The Moral Dilemma of the Sacrifice of Isaac"

**22:15-19** This text emphasizes key themes: the promise of numerous *descendants* (cf. Gen 13:16; 15:5) and the

*The Moral Dilemma of the Sacrifice of Isaac* The moral dilemma in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac comes to a climax in Genesis 22:12-13. There God allows an animal to be sacrificed in place of Isaac but also praises Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac. Many interpreters have read the story as an argument *against* human sacrifice. According to this interpretation, the story describes God demanding a human sacrifice, only to show that in the end God desires not human but animal sacrifices. This interpretation appears to be supported by frequent condemnations of human sacrifice in the OT (Deut 12:31; Jer 7:30-32).

The key difficulty with this interpretation is that it works against the main point of the text, Abraham's absolute obedience in his willingness to slay Isaac. How can the story honor Abraham so highly for his willingness to do what the story condemns? Abraham's obedience is meaningful only if the story takes human sacrifice as a genuine act of worship, as was the case in the ancient Near East and apparently at some point even in ancient Israel (Exod 22:29-30; Ezek 20:25-26; see also notes on Exod 11:5; 13:1-2; Num 3:11-13).

Among the many attempts to respond to this moral dilemma are two major proposals. According to one, God is above all human moral codes and is free to act in divine wisdom: God's ways aren't human ways. According to the other proposal, the vast difference between ancient and modern cultural practices must be recognized. The obedience of Abraham and God's praise of him might be understood from a historical perspective. However, as texts like Deuteronomy 12:31 and Jeremiah 7:30-32 recognize, human sacrifice is a contradiction to genuine worship and morality.

22:18 Gn 12:3;  
Gn 18:18;  
Gn 26:5; Ac 3:25;  
Ga 3:8  
22:19 Gn 21:31;  
Gn 22:5;  
Gn 28:10  
23:1 Gn 17:15;  
Gn 17:17;  
Gn 18:12;  
Gn 20:2;  
Gn 21:6  
23:2 Gn 13:18;  
Gn 23:19;  
Josh 14:15  
23:3 Gn 10:15;  
Gn 27:46  
23:4 Gn 17:8;  
1Ch 29:15;  
Ps 39:12;  
Ps 105:12;  
Heb 11:13  
23:6 Gn 14:14

stars in the sky and as the grains of sand on the seashore. They will conquer their enemies' cities. <sup>18</sup>All the nations of the earth will be blessed because of your descendants, because you obeyed me." <sup>19</sup>After Abraham returned to the young men, they got up and went to Beer-sheba where Abraham lived.

**Abraham's nephews in Syria**

<sup>20</sup>After these events, Abraham was told: "Milcah has now also given birth to sons for your brother Nahor. <sup>21</sup>They are Uz his oldest son, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, <sup>22</sup>Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." <sup>23</sup>Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. These are the eight Milcah bore for Nahor, Abraham's brother. <sup>24</sup>His secondary wife's name was Reumah, and she gave birth to Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

**Sarah's death and burial site**

**23** Sarah lived to be 127 years old; this was how long she lived. <sup>2</sup>She died in Kiriath-arba, that is, in Hebron, in the land of Canaan; and Abraham cried out in grief and wept for Sarah. <sup>3</sup>After he got up from embracing his deceased wife, he spoke with the Hittites: "I am an immigrant and a temporary resident with you. Give me some property for a burial plot among you so that I can bury my deceased wife near me."

<sup>5</sup>The Hittites responded to Abraham, <sup>6</sup>"Listen to us, sir. You are an eminent man of God among us. Bury your dead in one of our own select burial sites. None of us will keep our own burial plots from you to bury your dead."

promise of being a *bless[ing]* for the *nations* (cf. Gen 12:3; 18:18). Both of these promises are directly related to Abraham's obedience (cf. Gen 18:18-19; 26:3-5).

**22:20-24** The family tree of *Nahor*, Abraham's brother, adds to the genealogical information in Genesis 11:28-30. The references to *Bethuel* and *Rebekah* provide the background for the account of the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah in Genesis 24.

**23:1-20** This story shows how highly the Israelites revered their matriarch, Sarah. The exact historical location of Sarah's grave in the area near Hebron is no longer known. Some connect this site with the great mosque known as Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi (Sanctuary of Abraham) in the center of the modern city of Hebron. The site is also called the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

**23:2** *Hebron* was the largest and most important city in the south during the Israelite monarchy. It was David's first capital (Jerusalem was his second; 2 Sam 5:1-10). In Genesis, Hebron is the primary residence of Abraham and Sarah (Gen 13:18; 18:1).

**23:3** Genesis regards the *Hittites* as one of the peoples native to Canaan (Gen 10:15; 15:20; 26:34). The relationship between this group and the great Hittite Empire in Anatolia (modern Turkey and northern Syria) before and during the biblical period is difficult to determine.

**23:4** As an *immigrant* living outside the sphere of his own family and relatives, Abraham lacked the privileges of a citizen, including the ownership of land. This image of the ancestors as immigrants in Canaan is unique to the Priestly writer, who preserves the fact that the Israelites had not yet inherited the land (cf. Gen 17:8). The Yahwist, by contrast, pictures the ancestors at home in Canaan, just as their descendants were in his own day, and as immigrants only outside Canaan (Gen 12:10; 15:13; 26:3).

**23:5-6** The *Hittites* and *Abraham* reach an agreement with each other respectfully. The Hittites don't wish to sell their land, because in ancient times land stayed within families. However, the Hittites do make a generous offer to the immigrant Abraham that he use one of their *own select burial sites* (Gen 23:10-11).

23:7 Gn 10:15;  
Gn 18:2;  
Gn 19:1;  
Gn 23:3;  
Gn 23:5

23:9 Gn 50:13

23:11 Gn 23:6;  
Ru 4:1, Ru 4:4,  
Ru 4:9, Ru 4:11

23:16 Gn 23:10;  
Jer 32:9,  
Jer 32:10;  
Zec 11:12

23:17 Gn 25:9,  
Gn 49:29-30,  
Gn 50:13;  
Ac 7:16

23:19 Gn 25:9,  
Gn 50:13

24:1 Gn 12:2,  
Gn 18:11,  
Gn 24:35; Ga 3:9

24:2 Gn 24:9,  
Gn 39:4,  
Gn 47:29

24:3 Gn 14:22,  
Gn 26:34,  
Gn 26:35,  
Gn 28:1; Dt 7:3

24:4 Gn 12:1

24:6 Gn 24:8

24:7 Gn 12:1;  
Ex 23:20

24:8 Gn 24:6;  
Josh 2:17

24:9 Gn 24:2

24:10 Dt 23:4;  
Jgs 3:8

24:11 Gn 24:13;  
Ex 22:16;  
1Sa 9:11; 1n 4:7

<sup>7</sup>Abraham rose, bowed to the local citizens the Hittites, <sup>8</sup>and spoke with them: "If you yourselves allow me to bury my dead near me, listen to me and ask Ephron, Zohar's son, <sup>9</sup>to give me his own cave in Machpelah at the edge of his field. Let him give it to me for the full price, to be witnessed by you, as my own burial property."

<sup>10</sup>Now Ephron was a native Hittite. So Ephron the Hittite responded to Abraham publicly in order that the Hittites and everyone at his city's gate could hear: <sup>11</sup>"No, sir. Listen, I will give you the field, and I will give you the cave in it. In front of my people's witnesses, I will give it to you. Bury your dead!"

<sup>12</sup>Abraham bowed before the local citizens <sup>13</sup>and spoke to Ephron publicly in the presence of the local citizens: "If only you would accept my offer. I will give you the price of the field. Take it from me so that I can bury my dead there."

<sup>14</sup>Ephron responded to Abraham, <sup>15</sup>"Sir, what is four hundred shekels of silver between me and you for the land so that you can bury your dead?" <sup>16</sup>Abraham accepted Ephron's offer and weighed out for Ephron the silver he requested publicly before the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver at the current rate of exchange.

<sup>17</sup>So the field of Ephron in Machpelah near Mamre—the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the field's boundaries—was officially transferred <sup>18</sup>to Abraham as his property in the presence of the Hittites and of everyone at his city's gate. <sup>19</sup>After this, Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre, that is, Hebron, in the land of Canaan. <sup>20</sup>The field and the cave in it were officially transferred from the Hittites to Abraham as his burial property.

### Isaac marries Rebekah

**24** As the days went by and Abraham became older, the LORD blessed Abraham in every way. <sup>2</sup>Abraham said to the oldest servant of his household, who was in charge of everything he owned, "Put your hand under my thigh. <sup>3</sup>By the LORD, God of heaven and earth, give me your word that you won't choose a wife for my son from the Canaanite women among whom I live. <sup>4</sup>Go to my land and my family and find a wife for my son Isaac there."

<sup>5</sup>The servant said to him, "What if the woman doesn't agree to come back with me to this land? Shouldn't I take your son back to the land you left?"

<sup>6</sup>Abraham said to him, "Be sure you don't take my son back there. <sup>7</sup>The LORD, God of heaven—who took me from my father's household and from my family's land, who spoke with me and who gave me his word, saying, 'I will give this land to your descendants'—he will send his messenger in front of you, and you will find a wife for my son there. <sup>8</sup>If the woman won't agree to come back with you, you will be free from this obligation to me. Only don't take my son back there." <sup>9</sup>So the servant put his hand under his master Abraham's thigh and gave him his word about this mission.

<sup>10</sup>The servant took ten of his master's camels and all of his master's best provisions, set out, and traveled to Nahor's city in Aram-naharaim. <sup>11</sup>He had the camels kneel down outside

23:7-9 Abraham wishes to buy the land in part because he will gain status as a property owner. The land will then belong to him and his descendants. For his descendants who are telling this story, Abraham's purchasing this land boosts their claim to it.

23:10 Archaeological digs have uncovered benches in the gate areas of ancient cities. Legal and economic agreements typically took place in these gate areas, as is the case here (cf. Gen 19:1).

23:14-16 We don't know whether *four hundred shekels of silver* was a high price for the field or not.

23:17-20 The public exchange of money and official transfer of the land for Sarah's burial aims to say that this burial site was in Israelite hands from very ancient times.

24:1-67 The scene shifts from Sarah to her daughter-in-law Rebekah. The story reflects numerous customs governing marriage in biblical Israel. Its aims are (1) to honor Rebekah's character and beauty (Gen 24:16-20, 24-25, 56-58); and (2) to show how in her union with Isaac, God's promises to Abraham endure and unfold (Gen 24:7, 27, 50-51, 60).

24:2 Abraham's *oldest servant* may be Eliezer, the man

Abraham thought would be his heir before Isaac was born (Gen 15:2-3). The ritual required of Abraham's servant isn't entirely understood. It may involve touching the male genitals, one meaning of the Hebrew term translated *thigh* (Gen 24:9). If so, this hand placement would be a solemn act symbolizing the life-or-death power of the agreement. 24:3 Some traditional societies like biblical Israel stress marriage within one's larger group of extended family and distant relatives. See note on Genesis 28:1-2.

24:7 Abraham repeats God's promise of the *land* of Canaan (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 15:18). He also insists that his son Isaac not leave Canaan (Gen 24:6, 8). In doing so, he again emphasizes the ancient connection between his descendants, the Israelites, and their homeland in Canaan (see sidebar, "The Promises to the Ancestors" at Gen 12).

24:10 Brief genealogies of Abraham's brother *Nahor* (Gen 24:15) are found in Genesis 11:27-32; 22:20-24. The location *Aram-naharaim* connects Abraham's own ancestral homeland with an area to the northeast of Canaan, within the ancient Aramean kingdom (modern Syria; cf. Gen 11:31-32; 12:1).

the city at the well in the evening, when women come out to draw water. <sup>12</sup>He said, "LORD, God of my master Abraham, make something good happen for me today and be loyal to my master Abraham. <sup>13</sup>I will stand here by the spring while the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water. <sup>14</sup>When I say to a young woman, 'Hand me your water jar so I can drink,' and she says to me, 'Drink, and I will give your camels water too,' may she be the one you've selected for my servant Isaac. In this way I will know that you've been loyal to my master." <sup>15</sup>Even before he finished speaking, Rebekah—daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother—was coming out with a water jar on her shoulder. <sup>16</sup>The young woman was very beautiful, old enough to be married, and hadn't known a man intimately. She went down to the spring, filled her water jar, and came back up.

<sup>17</sup>The servant ran to meet her and said, "Give me a little sip of water from your jar."

<sup>18</sup>She said, "Drink, sir." Then she quickly lowered the water jar with her hands and gave him some water to drink. <sup>19</sup>When she finished giving him a drink, she said, "I'll draw some water for your camels too, till they've had enough to drink." <sup>20</sup>She emptied her water jar quickly into the watering trough, ran to the well again to draw water, and drew water for all of the camels. <sup>21</sup>The man stood gazing at her, wondering silently if the LORD had made his trip successful or not.

<sup>22</sup>As soon as the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold ring, weighing a half shekel,<sup>a</sup> and two gold bracelets for her arms, weighing ten shekels. <sup>23</sup>He said, "Please tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?"

<sup>24</sup>She responded, "I'm the daughter of Bethuel, who is the son of Milcah and Nahor." <sup>25</sup>She continued, "We have plenty of straw and feed for the camels, and a place to spend the night."

<sup>26</sup>The man bowed down and praised the LORD: <sup>27</sup>"Bless the LORD, God of my master Abraham, who hasn't given up his loyalty and his faithfulness to my master. The LORD has shown me the way to the household of my master's brother."

<sup>28</sup>The young woman ran and told her mother's household everything that had happened.

<sup>29</sup>Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and Laban ran to the man outside by the spring.

<sup>30</sup>When he had seen the ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and when he had heard his sister Rebekah say, "This is what the man said to me," he went to the man, who was still standing by the spring with his camels. <sup>31</sup>Laban said, "Come in, favored one of the LORD! Why are you standing outside? I've prepared the house and a place for the camels." <sup>32</sup>So the man entered the house. Then Laban unbridled the camels, provided straw and feed for them and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men with him, <sup>33</sup>and set out a meal for him.

But the man said, "I won't eat until I've said something."

Laban replied, "Say it."

<sup>34</sup>The man said, "I am Abraham's servant." <sup>35</sup>The LORD has richly blessed my master, has made him a great man, and has given him flocks, cattle, silver, gold, men servants, women servants, camels, and donkeys. <sup>36</sup>My master's wife Sarah gave birth to a son for my master in her old age, and he's given him everything he owns. <sup>37</sup>My master made me give him my word: 'Don't choose a wife for my son from the Canaanite women, in whose land I'm living.

<sup>38</sup>No, instead, go to my father's household and to my relatives and choose a wife for my son.'

<sup>39</sup>I said to my master, 'What if the woman won't come back with me?' <sup>40</sup>He said to me, 'The LORD, whom I've traveled with everywhere, will send his messenger with you and make your trip successful; and you will choose a wife for my son from my relatives and from my father's household. <sup>41</sup>If you go to my relatives, you will be free from your obligation to me. Even if they provide no one for you, you will be free from your obligation to me.'

<sup>42</sup>"Today I arrived at the spring, and I said, 'LORD, God of my master Abraham, if you wish to make the trip I'm taking successful, <sup>43</sup>when I'm standing by the spring and the

24:12 Gn 24:27.  
Gn 24:42.  
Gn 24:48.  
Gn 26:24.  
Gn 28:13  
24:13 Gn  
24:11, Gn 24:43;  
Ex 2:16  
24:14 Gn 15:8;  
Jgs 6:17;  
Isa 14:10  
24:15 Gn 11:27,  
Gn 11:29,  
Gn 22:20,  
Gn 22:23,  
Gn 24:45  
24:16 Gn 12:11,  
Gn 26:7  
24:17 1Ki 17:10;  
Jn 4:7  
24:18 Gn 24:14  
24:19 Gn 24:14  
24:20 Gn 24:19;  
Ex 2:16  
24:21 Gn 24:12  
24:22 Gn 24:47;  
Ex 32:2;  
Eze 16:11-12  
24:24 Gn 11:29,  
Gn 22:20,  
Gn 22:23,  
Gn 24:15,  
Gn 24:47  
24:25 Jgs 19:19  
24:26 Gn 22:5,  
Gn 24:48,  
Gn 24:52;  
Ex 4:31, Ex 12:27  
24:27 Gn 24:12,  
Gn 24:48,  
Gn 32:10,  
Ps 98:3; Lk 1:68  
24:28 Gn 29:12  
24:29 Gn 28:2,  
Gn 29:5  
24:31 Gn 26:29;  
Ru 3:10,  
Ps 115:15  
24:32 Gn 18:4,  
Gn 19:2,  
Gn 43:24;  
Jgs 19:21;  
Lk 7:44  
24:33 Lk 24:29,  
Lk 24:30  
24:34 Gn 24:2  
24:35 Gn 12:16,  
Gn 13:2, Gn 24:1  
24:36 Gn 21:1,  
Gn 25:5  
24:37 Gn 24:2-3  
24:39 Gn 24:5  
24:40 Gn 5:22,  
Gn 17:1,  
Gn 24:7;  
Ex 23:20  
24:41 Gn 24:8  
24:42 Gn 24:12

<sup>a</sup>Heb beqa

24:11 Other biblical stories also describe encounters at wells leading to marriage (Gen 29:1-30; Exod 2:11-22). In biblical and other traditional societies, drawing water is usually women's work (Ruth 2:9 being an exception).

24:12-14 The servant's prayer to God emphasizes the fact that his selection of Rebekah isn't the result of chance or his own judgment but a part of God's larger plan (cf. Gen 24:21, 27, 50-51).

24:22 According to ancient custom, the husband gave his

bride jewelry at their marriage. Both here and later, Abraham's servant offers them on Isaac's behalf (Gen 24:30, 53).

24:23-25 Rebekah demonstrates the same kind of hospitality that Abraham and Lot had previously offered to strangers (Gen 24:31-33; cf. Gen 18:2-5; 19:1-2).

24:28 Rebekah's *mother's household* includes her mother (Bethuel's wife); her mother's servants; and her mother's children (including Rebekah herself and her brother Laban).

24:34-49 The servant describes in detail what happened

24:43  
Gn 24:13-14  
24:44 Gn 24:14  
24:45 Gn 24:15;  
1Sa 1:13  
24:46 Gn 24:18  
24:47 Gn 24:22;  
Gn 24:24;  
Eze 16:11  
24:48  
Gn 24:26-27;  
Gn 24:52  
24:49 Gn 47:29;  
Josh 2:14  
24:50 Gn 31:24;  
Gn 31:29;  
Ps 118:23  
24:51 Gn 24:15  
24:52 Gn 24:26;  
Gn 24:48  
24:53 Gn 24:22;  
Ex 32:2;  
Ex 12:35  
24:54 Gn 24:56;  
Gn 24:59  
24:55 Igs 19:4  
24:57 Gn 24:58  
24:58 Gn 24:57  
24:59 Gn 35:8  
24:60 Gn 17:16;  
Gn 22:17  
24:61 Gn 24:59;  
Gn 24:64  
24:62 Gn 12:9;  
Gn 16:14;  
Gn 25:11  
24:63 Ps 1:2;  
Ps 77:12;  
Ps 119:15;  
Ps 143:5  
24:64 Gn 22:3;  
Gn 24:61;  
Gn 31:17  
24:65 Gn 38:14

young woman who comes out to draw water and to whom I say, "Please give me a little drink of water from your jar,"<sup>44</sup> and she responds to me, "Drink, and I will draw water for your camels too," may she be the woman the LORD has selected for my master's son.<sup>45</sup> Before I finished saying this to myself, Rebekah came out with her water jar on her shoulder and went down to the spring to draw water. And I said to her, "Please give me something to drink."<sup>46</sup> She immediately lowered her water jar and said, "Drink, and I will give your camels something to drink too." So I drank and she also gave water to the camels.<sup>47</sup> Then I asked her, "Whose daughter are you?" And she said, "The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son whom Milcah bore him." I put a ring in her nose and bracelets on her arms.<sup>48</sup> I bowed and worshipped the LORD and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who led me in the right direction to choose the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son.<sup>49</sup> Now if you're loyal and faithful to my master, tell me. If not, tell me so I will know where I stand either way."

<sup>50</sup>Laban and Bethuel both responded, "This is all the LORD's doing. We have nothing to say about it."<sup>51</sup> Here is Rebekah, right in front of you. Take her and go. She will be the wife of your master's son, just as the LORD said."<sup>52</sup> When Abraham's servant heard what they said, he bowed low before the LORD.<sup>53</sup> The servant brought out gold and silver jewelry and clothing and gave them to Rebekah. To her brother and to her mother he gave the finest gifts.<sup>54</sup> He and the men with him ate and drank and spent the night.

When they got up in the morning, the servant said, "See me off to my master."

<sup>55</sup>Her brother and mother said, "Let the young woman stay with us not more than ten days, and after that she may go."

<sup>56</sup>But he said to them, "Don't delay me. The LORD has made my trip successful. See me off so that I can go to my master."

<sup>57</sup>They said, "Summon the young woman, and let's ask her opinion."<sup>58</sup> They called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?"

She said, "I will go."

<sup>59</sup>So they sent off their sister Rebekah, her nurse, Abraham's servant, and his men.<sup>60</sup> And they blessed Rebekah, saying to her,

"May you, our sister, become thousands of ten thousand;  
may your children possess their enemies' cities."

<sup>61</sup>Rebekah and her young women got up, mounted the camels, and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

<sup>62</sup>Now Isaac had come from the region of Beer-lahai-roi and had settled in the arid southern plain.<sup>63</sup> One evening, Isaac went out to inspect the pasture,<sup>64</sup> and while staring he saw camels approaching.<sup>65</sup> Rebekah stared at Isaac. She got down from the camel<sup>66</sup> and said to the servant, "Who is this man walking through the pasture to meet us?"

The servant said, "He's my master." So she took her headscarf and covered herself.<sup>67</sup> The servant told Isaac everything that had happened.<sup>68</sup> Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent. He received Rebekah as his wife and loved her. So Isaac found comfort after his mother's death.

<sup>v</sup>Heb uncertain; LXX through the desert of <sup>w</sup>Heb uncertain; possibly to walk around in the pasture or to meditate in the pasture

previously. Such repetition is a common feature of biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature.

24:50-52 Marriage arrangements for women in ancient Near Eastern and biblical society were handled by the men who had legal responsibility for them, typically their fathers and brothers.

24:53 According to biblical custom, the family of the groom gave a "bride price" to the family of the bride (cf. Gen 31:15; 34:12). Here, the finest gifts that Abraham's servant gives Rebekah's brother and mother are her bride price. This exchange of wealth was seen as a normal way of compensating the family that lost its daughter. The wealth could provide funds for the daughter's dowry or for her brother to obtain a wife.

Rebekah's jewelry in Genesis 24:22 is her husband's marriage gift.

24:59 Rebekah's nurse was likely a household servant who nursed her when she was young and remained her female servant (Gen 35:8).

24:60 The blessing Rebekah's family gave her mirrors the blessing God gave Abraham (Gen 22:17).

24:62 Isaac lives in the arid southern plain not far from Hebron where Abraham and Sarah lived (Gen 13:18; 23:19). Beer-lahai-roi is the well in this region where Hagar encountered God (Gen 16:14).

24:65 The purpose of Rebekah's headscarf is unclear. Veiling isn't mentioned as customary for married women in biblical society.

**Abraham and Keturah's children**

**25** Abraham married another wife, named Keturah. <sup>2</sup>The children she bore him were Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. <sup>3</sup>Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan. Dedan's sons were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. <sup>4</sup>Midian's sons were Ephah, Epher, Enoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All of these were Keturah's sons. <sup>5</sup>Abraham gave everything he owned to Isaac. <sup>6</sup>To the sons of Abraham's secondary wives, Abraham gave gifts and, while he was still living, sent them away from his son Isaac to land in the east.

**Abraham's death**

<sup>7</sup>Abraham lived to the age of 175. <sup>8</sup>Abraham took his last breath and died after a good long life, a content old man, and he was placed with his ancestors. <sup>9</sup>His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave in Machpelah, which is in the field of Zohar's son Ephron the Hittite, near Mamre. <sup>10</sup>Thus Abraham and his wife Sarah were both buried in the field Abraham had purchased from the Hittites. <sup>11</sup>After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, and Isaac lived in Beer-lahai-roi.

**Ishmael's descendants**

<sup>12</sup>These are the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant, bore for Abraham. <sup>13</sup>These are the names of Ishmael's sons, by their names and according to their birth order: Nebaioth, Ishmael's oldest son; Kedar; Adbeel; Mibsam; <sup>14</sup>Mishma; Dumah; Massa; <sup>15</sup>Hadad; Tema; Jetur; Naphish; and Kedemah. <sup>16</sup>These are Ishmael's sons. These are their names by their villages and their settlements: twelve tribal leaders according to their tribes. <sup>17</sup>Ishmael lived to the age of 137. He took his last breath and died, and was placed with his ancestors. <sup>18</sup>He established camps\* from Havilah to Shur, which is near Egypt on the road to Assyria. He died<sup>7</sup> among all of his brothers.

**Jacob and Esau are born**

<sup>19</sup>These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham became the father of Isaac. <sup>20</sup>Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean and the sister of Laban the Aramean, from Paddan-aram. <sup>21</sup>Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, since she was unable to have children. The LORD was moved by his prayer, and his wife

\*LXX; MT they established camps <sup>7</sup>Or He fell

24:67 Gn 18:9,  
Gn 23:1,  
Gn 25:20  
25:1 1Ch 1:32,  
1Ch 1:33  
25:5 Gn 21:10,  
Gn 24:36  
25:6 Gn 21:10,  
Gn 21:14; Jgs 6:3  
25:7 Gn 12:4  
25:8 Gn 15:15,  
Gn 25:17,  
Gn 35:29,  
Gn 49:33  
25:9 Gn 23:17,  
Gn 35:29,  
Gn 49:29-30,  
Gn 50:13  
25:10 Gn 23:16,  
Gn 49:31  
25:13 Gn 28:9,  
Gn 36:3,  
1Ch 1:29; Is 60:7  
25:17 Gn 25:8  
25:21 Gn 11:30;  
1Ch 5:20;  
2Ch 33:13;  
Ezr 8:23;  
Ro 9:10

25:1-34 This chapter provides the transition from one generation to the next. It describes the concluding events of Abraham's life (25:1-11); and it introduces the families of his two sons, Ishmael (25:12-18) and Isaac (25:19-34).  
25:1-6 This short summary of Abraham's third wife, Keturah, and of their children adds to the more detailed accounts of Sarah, Hagar, and their children in earlier chapters.  
25:2 The only one of Keturah's children who figures prominently in biblical traditions is *Midian*, from whose descendants came Moses' wife Zipporah (Exod 2:15-21). Midianites are often pictured as traders (Gen 37:28, 36).  
25:5-6 Abraham's *secondary wives* are Hagar and Keturah. This last narrative of Abraham's family concludes with the statement that among all his sons, Isaac is his sole legitimate heir.  
25:7-11 Genesis recounts the death and burial of many of the great ancestors: Sarah (Gen 23); Abraham (in this text); Rachel (Gen 35:16-21); Isaac (Gen 35:27-29); Jacob (Gen 49:29-33; 50:12-13); and Joseph (Gen 50:22-26). On Rebekah and Leah, see Genesis 49:31.  
25:7 Regarding Abraham's long life, see the notes on Genesis 5:4; 11:11.  
25:9-10 Once Abraham had purchased the *field of Zohar's son Ephron* near Hebron as a burial plot (Gen 23:17-20), most of Israel's ancestors were buried there (Gen 35:27-29; 49:29-32; 50:12-13). The key exception is Joseph, who is first placed in a coffin in Egypt (Gen 50:26) and then buried in Shechem (Josh 24:32). Sons typically bury their fathers (Gen 35:29; 50:12-13).

25:11 Isaac's residence, *Beer-lahai-roi*, can no longer be identified, but it was located somewhere in the arid plain south of Hebron (cf. Gen 16:14; 24:62).  
25:12-18 This genealogy of *Ishmael* begins with the phrase *These are the descendants of*, which marks off a major branch in the genealogical framework of Genesis (Gen 2:4a; 5:1-3; 6:9; 25:19). As in Genesis 16:1-14; 21:8-21, the Ishmaelites are a nomadic people traveling the southern deserts. They live in *villages and settlements* and are organized by *tribes with tribal leaders* (25:16). They inhabit the arid terrain from *Egypt toward Arabia (Havilah to Shur)* in the south (25:18).  
25:19-20 While the narratives that follow are identified with *Isaac*, they are in fact primarily about his sons, Jacob and Esau. Isaac plays a less prominent role in Genesis than Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. The stories about Isaac's childhood are included in the Abraham narratives (Gen 21-22). Stories about him as patriarch are included in the Jacob narratives (Gen 26).  
25:21-26 Struggle marks the first story about Jacob and Esau, even though it describes their birth. Conflict will continue to characterize their stories as a whole (see sidebar, "Family Conflict in Genesis" at Gen 4). In the story of the struggle between these brothers, Genesis explains the roots of later tensions between their descendants, the Israelites and Edomites (see sidebar, "Israel among the Nations" at Gen 9).  
25:21 Like other mothers in Genesis, Rebekah is unable to have children at first (Gen 3:16; 11:30; 16:1; 30:1; see note on Gen 11:30).

25:22 1Sa 9:9,  
1Sa 10:22

25:23 Gn 27:29,  
Gn 27:40,  
Gn 48:19;  
Ro 9:11

25:24 Gn 38:27

25:25 Gn 27:11

25:26 Gn 25:20,  
Gn 27:36;  
Hos 12:3

25:27 Gn 10:9,  
Gn 27:3, Gn 27:5;  
Heb 11:9

25:28 Gn 27:4,  
Gn 27:6,  
Gn 27:19

25:29 Gn 25:33;  
2Ki 4:38

25:30 Gn 36:1

25:31 Dt 21:16;  
Heb 12:16

25:32 Gn 25:33;  
Heb 12:16

25:33 Gn 25:29,  
Gn 27:36;  
Heb 12:16

25:34 2Sa 17:28,  
2Sa 23:11;  
Eze 4:9;  
Heb 12:16

26:1 Gn 12:10,  
Gn 30:1, 2;  
Gn 21:34

26:2 Gn 12:1,  
Gn 12:7,  
Gn 17:1,  
Gn 18:1,  
Gn 26:24

26:3 Gn 12:7,  
Gn 13:15,  
Gn 20:1,  
Gn 22:16,  
Gn 26:24

26:4 Gn 12:3,  
Gn 15:5,  
Gn 22:17-18;  
Ga 3:8

Rebekah became pregnant. <sup>22</sup>But the boys pushed against each other inside of her, and she said, "If this is what it's like, why did it happen to me?"<sup>a</sup>

So she went to ask the LORD. <sup>23</sup>And the LORD said to her,

"Two nations are in your womb;

two different peoples will emerge from your body.

One people will be stronger than the other;

the older will serve the younger."<sup>b</sup>

<sup>24</sup>When she reached the end of her pregnancy, she discovered that she had twins. <sup>25</sup>The first came out red all over, clothed with hair, and she named him Esau. <sup>26</sup>Immediately afterward, his brother came out gripping Esau's heel, and she named him Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when they were born.

### *Jacob acquires the oldest son's rights*

<sup>27</sup>When the young men grew up, Esau became an outdoorsman who knew how to hunt, and Jacob became a quiet man who stayed at home. <sup>28</sup>Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. <sup>29</sup>Once when Jacob was boiling stew, Esau came in from the field hungry <sup>30</sup>and said to Jacob, "I'm starving! Let me devour some of this red stuff." That's why his name is Edom.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright<sup>b</sup> today."

<sup>32</sup>Esau said, "Since I'm going to die anyway, what good is my birthright to me?"

<sup>33</sup>Jacob said, "Give me your word today." And he did. He sold his birthright to Jacob. <sup>34</sup>So Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew. He ate, drank, got up, and left, showing just how little he thought of his birthright.

### *Isaac and Rebekah visit Gerar*

**26** When a famine gripped the land, a different one from the first famine that occurred in Abraham's time, Isaac set out toward Gerar and toward King Abimelech of the Philistines. <sup>2</sup>The LORD appeared to him and said, "Don't go down to Egypt but settle temporarily in the land that I will show you. <sup>3</sup>Stay in this land as an immigrant, and I will be with you and bless you because I will give all of these lands to you and your descendants. I will keep my word, which I gave to your father Abraham. <sup>4</sup>I will give you as many descendants as the stars in the sky, and I will give your descendants all of these lands. All of the nations

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>a</sup>Or red <sup>b</sup>Or oldest son's rights

25:23 God's response to Rebekah reveals what these stories are really about: the *Two nations* of the author's own time, the Israelites and the Edomites. On the two nations, see the note on Genesis 25:21-26. On how *the older will serve the younger*, see 2 Samuel 8:13-14.

25:25 The Hebrew term for *hair* sounds like *Esau*. Esau's *red* color is the origin of his other name, "Edom" (Gen 25:30), which can mean "red."

25:26 The name *Jacob* is a verb derived from the noun "heel." When the verb appears elsewhere (Gen 27:36; Jer 9:3; Hos 12:4), it describes one brother usurping the rights of another.

25:27-34 Like the preceding birth story, this account of Esau, as the oldest male child giving up his rights to Jacob, explains why the younger brother became prominent over the older brother. For early readers of this text, this story also signaled the prominence of Jacob's descendants, the Israelites, over Esau's descendants, the Edomites.

25:30 In Hebrew, the word for *Edom* means *red* (see translation note). This story links this name with the red lentil dish (Gen 25:34) that Jacob prepared and that Esau ate (cf. Gen 25:25).

25:31-33 The oldest son had unique rights, including the primary share of the family's wealth when his father died (Gen 43:33; Deut 21:15-17). Though Esau gave his rights as oldest son to Jacob, only their father's formal recognition

of one son would confirm that son as his legitimate heir (Gen 27:36).

26:1-33 This text contains the only story with Isaac as the main character. It's important because God repeats to Isaac the promises first made to Abraham (26:2-5, 24). This story relates the Yahwist's traditions about Israel's ancestors' relations with Abimelech and Gerar. They are parallel to the Elohist's traditions in Genesis 20:1-17, where Abraham and Sarah visit Abimelech in Gerar; as well as in Genesis 21:22-31, where Abraham and Abimelech dispute ownership of a well. Here Isaac and Rebekah are the main characters, and Abimelech is the king of the Philistines. The Philistines lived in the coastal plain during the later period of Israel's judges and kings (ca. 1200-586 BCE). The story thus reflects the later political world of Israel. The Philistines provided David refuge before he became king, but they were also a threat to his kingdom (1 Sam 27:31; 2 Sam 5).

26:1-11 Twice before, Genesis has told a story of Israel's patriarch presenting his wife as his sister on foreign soil to save his life: once about Sarah in Egypt (Gen 12:10-20); and once about Sarah in Gerar (Gen 20:1-17). The social factors that motivate Isaac's actions are explained in the notes on Genesis 12:10-20.

26:1 *Gerar* is located in the southern coastal plain. On the Philistines, see the notes on Genesis 26:1-33.

26:3-5 God makes to Isaac the same promises previously made to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 22:16-18).



of the earth will be blessed because of your descendants. <sup>4</sup>I will do this because Abraham obeyed me and kept my orders, my commandments, my statutes, and my instructions.”

<sup>6</sup>So Isaac lived in Gerar. <sup>7</sup>When the men who lived there asked about his wife, he said, “She’s my sister,” because he was afraid to say, “my wife,” thinking, “The men who live there will kill me for Rebekah because she’s very beautiful. <sup>8</sup>After Isaac had lived there for some time, the Philistines’ King Abimelech looked out his window and saw Isaac laughing together with his wife Rebekah.

<sup>9</sup>So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, “She’s your wife, isn’t she? How could you say, ‘She’s my sister’?”

Isaac responded, “Because I thought that I might be killed because of her.”

<sup>10</sup>Abimelech said, “What are you trying to do to us? Before long, one of the people would have slept with your wife; and you would have made us guilty.” <sup>11</sup>Abimelech gave orders to all of the people, “Anyone who touches this man or his wife will be put to death!”

**Isaac’s treaty with the Philistines**

<sup>12</sup>Isaac planted grain in that land and reaped one hundred shearim<sup>c</sup> that year because the LORD had blessed him. <sup>13</sup>Isaac grew richer and richer until he was extremely wealthy. <sup>14</sup>He had livestock, both flocks and cattle, and many servants. As a result, the Philistines envied him. <sup>15</sup>The Philistines closed up and filled with dirt all of the wells that his father’s servants had dug during his father Abraham’s lifetime. <sup>16</sup>Abimelech said to Isaac, “Move away from us because you have become too powerful among us.”

<sup>17</sup>So Isaac moved away from there, camped in the valley of Gerar, and lived there. <sup>18</sup>Isaac dug out again the wells that were dug during the lifetime of his father Abraham. The Philistines had closed them up after Abraham’s death. Isaac gave them the same names his father had given them. <sup>19</sup>Isaac’s servants dug wells in the valley and found a well there with fresh water. <sup>20</sup>Isaac’s shepherds argued with Gerar’s shepherds, each claiming, “This is our water.” So Isaac named the well Esek<sup>d</sup> because they quarreled with him. <sup>21</sup>They dug another well and argued about it too, so he named it Sitnah.<sup>e</sup> <sup>22</sup>He left there and dug another well, but they didn’t argue about it, so he named it Rehoboth<sup>f</sup> and said, “Now the LORD has made an open space for us and has made us fertile in the land.”

<sup>23</sup>Then he went up from Gerar to Beer-sheba. <sup>24</sup>The LORD appeared to him that night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Don’t be afraid because I am with you. I will bless you, and I will give you many children for my servant Abraham’s sake.” <sup>25</sup>So Isaac built an altar there and worshipped in the LORD’s name. Isaac pitched his tent there, and his servants dug a well.

<sup>26</sup>But Abimelech set out toward him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his ally and Phicol the commander of his forces. <sup>27</sup>Isaac said to him, “Why have you come after me? You resented me and sent me away from you.”

<sup>a</sup>An unknown measure of grain <sup>d</sup>Or quarrel <sup>e</sup>Or accusation <sup>f</sup>Or open spaces

26:6-11 In this story, Abimelech doesn’t take Rebekah into his household, as the foreign king does to Sarah in the other stories (Gen 12:15; 20:2). Isaac and Rebekah *laughing* is a play on the name Isaac, meaning “the laughs” (Gen 17:17-19; 18:15; 21:5-6). It must have signaled something about their relationship that made Abimelech suspicious. In the other stories like this, the foreign king finds out about the marriage because God punishes him (Gen 12:17-18) or tells him directly (Gen 20:3-6). In all the stories, once the foreign king finds out, he acts honorably and restores the patriarch’s wife to him. The modern reader may be puzzled by the fact that Abimelech lived long enough to go through this same experience with Abraham and Sarah (20:1-17) and then a generation later with Isaac and Rebekah. The reader may also find it strange that Abimelech didn’t learn his lesson the first time and wasn’t prepared when the same thing happened again. This can be quite easily explained if we recognize that these are Abimelech stories from two different authors that were later combined in the book of Genesis, this one from the Yahwist and the other from the Elohist (Gen 20:1-17).

26:12-33 The treaty between Isaac and Abimelech explains the relationship between their descendants, the Israelites and the Philistines. In particular, it signals their mutual recognition of Beer-sheba and its well as Israelite possessions (see sidebar, “Israel among the Nations” at Gen 9). The conflict at the story’s outset is control of water, a key issue in land disputes in the Middle East over the centuries. The story supports the settlement of disputes through diplomacy rather than violence. This is the Yahwist’s version of the treaty with Abimelech described also by the Elohist in Genesis 21:22-31.

26:12-14 Isaac is pictured here as a typical Israelite farmer, cultivating grain and raising livestock (see sidebar, “The Ancestors in Their Environment” at Gen 13). His success is the result of God’s blessings (Gen 26:3, 24, 29).

26:15-18 These wells of Abraham aren’t mentioned earlier in Genesis. Sometimes, Genesis refers back to earlier events that weren’t mentioned previously (see notes on Gen 42:21; 49:31; 50:5, 16-17).

26:24-25 Genesis frequently speaks of the Lord’s appearance to an ancestor, the Lord’s promise, the ancestor’s

26:5 Gn 18:19,  
Gn 22:18  
26:6 Gn 20:1  
26:7 Gn 12:13,  
Gn 20:2,  
Gn 24:16  
26:9 Gn 26:10  
26:10 Gn 12:18,  
Gn 20:9  
26:11 Ps 105:15  
26:12 Gn 26:3  
26:15 Gn 21:25,  
Gn 21:30  
26:18 Gn 21:30  
26:20 Gn 13:7,  
Gn 21:25  
26:22 Gn 17:6  
26:24 Gn 15:1,  
Gn 17:7,  
Gn 24:12,  
Gn 26:2-3

26:31 Gn 21:23,  
Gn 21:31  
27:1 Gn 25:25,  
Gn 48:10; 1Sa 3:2  
27:2 Gn 47:29;  
1Sa 20:3;  
Ecc 9:10; Is 38:1  
27:9 1Sa 16:20;  
Prv 31:15  
27:15 Gn 27:27

<sup>28</sup>They said, "We now see that the LORD was with you. We propose that there be a formal agreement between us and that we draw up a treaty<sup>a</sup> with you. <sup>29</sup>you must not treat us badly since we haven't harmed you and since we have treated you well at all times. Then we will send you away peacefully, for you are now blessed by the LORD." <sup>30</sup>Isaac prepared a banquet for them, and they ate and drank. <sup>31</sup>They got up early in the morning, and they gave each other their word. Isaac sent them off, and they left peacefully.

<sup>32</sup>That day Isaac's servants informed him about the well that they had been digging and said to him, "We found water." <sup>33</sup>He called it Shibah;<sup>b</sup> therefore, the city's name has been Beer-sheba<sup>a</sup> until today.

#### *Esau's wives*

<sup>34</sup>When Esau was 40 years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. <sup>35</sup>They made life very difficult for Isaac and Rebekah.

#### *Jacob acquires his father's blessing*

**27**When Isaac had grown old and his eyesight was failing, he summoned his older son Esau and said to him, "My son?"

And Esau said, "I'm here."

<sup>2</sup>He said, "I'm old and don't know when I will die. <sup>3</sup>So now, take your hunting gear, your bow and quiver of arrows, go out to the field, and hunt game for me. <sup>4</sup>Make me the delicious food that I love and bring it to me so I can eat. Then I can bless you before I die."

<sup>5</sup>Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau went out to the field to hunt game to bring back, <sup>6</sup>Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "I just heard your father saying to your brother Esau, 'Bring me some game and make me some delicious food so I can eat, and I will bless you in the LORD's presence before I die.' <sup>7</sup>Now, my son, listen to me, to what I'm telling you to do. <sup>8</sup>Go to the flock and get me two healthy young goats so I can prepare them as the delicious food your father loves. <sup>9</sup>You can bring it to your father, he will eat, and then he will bless you before he dies."

<sup>11</sup>Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, "My brother Esau is a hairy man, but I have smooth skin. <sup>12</sup>What if my father touches me and thinks I'm making fun of him? I will be cursed instead of blessed."

<sup>13</sup>His mother said to him, "Your curse will be on me, my son. Just listen to me: go and get them for me." <sup>14</sup>So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother made the delicious food that his father loved. <sup>15</sup>Rebekah took her older son Esau's favorite

<sup>a</sup>Or covenant <sup>b</sup>Or giving one's word or seven <sup>1</sup>Or Well of giving one's word or Well of seven

building an altar at that site, and the ancestor's worshiping in the Lord's name (Gen 12:7, 8; 13:18; 18:1, 10; see sidebar, "The Ancestors in Their Environment" at Gen 13).

**26:30-31** Eating a common meal is a customary ritual when making a treaty in the biblical period (Gen 31:44-46; Exod 24:9-11).

**26:32-33** Compare the Elohist's traditions in Genesis 21:30-31, where Abraham founds Beer-sheba. Here in the Yahwist's traditions, Isaac founds the city.

**26:34-35** On the Hittites, see the note on Genesis 23:3. The phrase *made life very difficult* is used because some traditional societies like biblical Israel stress marriage within one's larger group of extended family and kin, rather than outside it (see Gen 24:3; 27:46; 28:1-2).

**27:1-29** According to custom, the oldest son was the family's primary heir. Although Jacob is the younger son, he becomes the family's primary heir by deceiving his father, Isaac, who unknowingly gives him his blessing. The previous chapter contained clues that this reversal would happen, particularly when the Lord predicted to Rebekah that her older child would serve the younger (Gen 26:23) and when Esau sold Jacob his birthright (Gen 26:33). This episode is part of a larger pattern within Genesis in which the primary blessing goes to the younger son. This story's aim is to describe the passing of God's promises and

blessings to Jacob. It also accounts for the relationships between Jacob's descendants, the Israelites, and Esau's descendants, the Edomites. (See note on Gen 25:23; see sidebar, "Israel among the Nations" at Gen 9.)

**27:1-25** Women and secondary sons were excluded from the privileges of power and property that biblical society typically gave to the father and the oldest son. As a result, those without formal authority found ways to work within and around social structures in order to achieve their goals. Here Rebekah determines the outcome of this contest between those with power and those without—as well as the outcome of Genesis as a whole (see sidebar, "Gender in Genesis" at Gen 3). Since the storyteller treats all the characters as real and complex people and makes no explicit judgments about their behavior, it's hard to tell exactly how to interpret their actions. If we read the story from the viewpoint of the men with power, Isaac and Esau, we may disapprove of the deception that Rebekah and Isaac resorted to in order to achieve their goals. After all, the Bible views cheating and deception negatively on many occasions (e.g., Gen 21:23; 29:25; Lev 19:11; Ps 101:7). Furthermore, we may relate to the distress of Isaac and Esau when their plans failed (Gen 27:30-40). On the other hand, if we read the story from the viewpoint of women and secondary sons without power,

clothes that were in the house with her, and she put them on her younger son Jacob. <sup>16</sup>On his arms and smooth neck she put the hide of young goats, <sup>17</sup>and the delicious food and the bread she had made she put into her son's hands.

<sup>18</sup>Jacob went to his father and said, "My father."

And he said, "I'm here. Who are you, my son?"

<sup>19</sup>Jacob said to his father, "I'm Esau your oldest son. I've made what you asked me to. Sit up and eat some of the game so you can bless me."

<sup>20</sup>Isaac said to his son, "How could you find this so quickly, my son?"

He said, "The LORD your God led me right to it."<sup>j</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Isaac said to Jacob, "Come here and let me touch you, my son. Are you my son Esau or not?" <sup>22</sup>So Jacob approached his father Isaac, and Isaac touched him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the arms are Esau's arms." <sup>23</sup>Isaac didn't recognize him because his arms were hairy like Esau's arms, so he blessed him.

<sup>24</sup>Isaac said, "Are you really my son Esau?"

And he said, "I am."

<sup>25</sup>Isaac said, "Bring some food here and let me eat some of my son's game so I can bless you." Jacob put it before him and he ate, and he brought him wine and he drank. <sup>26</sup>His father Isaac said to him, "Come here and kiss me, my son." <sup>27</sup>So he came close and kissed him. When Isaac smelled the scent of his clothes, he blessed him,

"See, the scent of my son  
is like the scent of the field that the LORD has blessed.

<sup>28</sup>May God give you  
showers from the sky,  
olive oil from the earth,  
plenty of grain and new wine.

<sup>29</sup>May the nations serve you,  
may peoples bow down to you.  
Be the most powerful man among your brothers,  
and may your mother's sons bow down to you.  
Those who curse you will be cursed,  
and those who bless you will be blessed."

**Esau receives a secondary blessing**

<sup>30</sup>After Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and just as Jacob left his father Isaac, his brother Esau came back from his hunt. <sup>31</sup>He too made some delicious food, brought it to his father, and said, "Let my father sit up and eat from his son's game so that you may bless me."

<sup>32</sup>His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?"

And he said, "I'm your son, your oldest son, Esau."

<sup>33</sup>Isaac was so shocked that he trembled violently. He said, "Who was the hunter just here with game? He brought me food, and I ate all of it before you came. I blessed him, and he will stay blessed!"

<sup>34</sup>When Esau heard what his father said, he let out a loud agonizing cry and wept bitterly. He said to his father, "Bless me! Me too, my father!"

<sup>35</sup>Isaac said, "Your brother has already come deceitfully and has taken your blessing."

<sup>36</sup>Esau said, "Isn't this why he's called Jacob? He's taken me<sup>k</sup> twice now: he took my

<sup>j</sup>Or made something good happen for me <sup>k</sup>Heb ya'acob, a wordplay on Jacob

27:19 Gn 27:4  
27:20 Gn 24:12; Ex 20:7  
27:21 Gn 27:12  
27:25 Gn 27:4  
27:27 Heb 11:20  
27:28 Gn 27:39; Dt 7:13; Dt 33:28; Jl 2:19  
27:29 Gn 12:3; Gn 25:23; Gn 27:37; Gn 49:8; Nm 24:9  
27:33 Gn 27:5; Gn 27:30; Gn 27:35; Gn 28:1; Gn 28:3  
27:36 Gn 25:26; Gn 25:33

Rebekah and Jacob, then we may regard their actions as an understandable response of those disadvantaged by social structures that privilege some members of society over others. In fact, Rebekah appears to be acting in light of the Lord's plan that Jacob be stronger (Gen 25:23). The story is told so effectively that we are likely meant to see both of these viewpoints.

27:26-29 Isaac passes the blessing to Jacob. It emphasizes agricultural abundance. *grain, wine, and olive oil*: the three primary crops of the typical Israelite farmer (Deut 8:7-9). The blessing also emphasizes the power of the descendants of Jacob, the Israelites, over other peoples

surrounding Israel (Gen 9:25-26; 22:17-18) and over brothers, which would include Esau and his descendants, the Edomites. The word "brothers" is plural because the Hebrew word behind it can refer not only to brothers, but also to other male relatives such as nephews. Thus the same word is translated "relatives" in Genesis 13:8 when describing Abram and Lot.

27:30-40 Esau, the older son, loses the blessing reserved for the oldest male and can't become the family's primary heir. He receives only a secondary blessing.

27:36 The name *Jacob* is related to both the word "heel" (see Gen 25:26) and the word *taken* (see translation note).

27:37 Gn 25:23,  
Gn 27:28-29;  
2Sa 8:14

27:39 Gn 27:28,  
Gn 36:6;  
Heb 11:20

27:40 Gn 25:23;  
2Sa 8:14;  
2Ki 8:20

27:41 Gn 37:4,  
Gn 50:10;  
Obad 10

27:42 Gn 27:41,  
Gn 32:3,  
Gn 32:11,  
Gn 33:4

27:43 Gn 11:31,  
Gn 24:29,  
Gn 27:8

27:44 Gn 31:38

27:45 Gn 27:35

27:46 Gn 10:15,  
Gn 23:3,  
Gn 26:34-35,  
Gn 28:8

28:1 Gn 24:3

28:2 Gn 22:23,  
Gn 24:15,  
Gn 24:24,  
Gn 34:29,  
Gn 25:20

28:3 Gn 17:1,  
Gn 17:6,  
Gn 35:11

28:4 Gn 12:2,  
Gn 17:8

28:5 Gn 25:20,  
Gn 28:2

birthright, and now he's taken my blessing." He continued, "Haven't you saved a blessing for me?"

<sup>37</sup>Isaac replied to Esau, "I've already made him more powerful than you, and I've made all of his brothers his servants. I've made him strong with grain and wine. What can I do for you, my son?"

<sup>38</sup>Esau said to his father, "Do you really have only one blessing, Father? Bless me too, my father!" And Esau wept loudly.

<sup>39</sup>His father Isaac responded and said to him,

"Now, you will make a home far away from the olive groves of the earth, far away from the showers of the sky above.

<sup>40</sup>You will live by your sword; you will serve your brother.

But when you grow restless,<sup>1</sup> you will tear away his harness from your neck."

### *Jacob sent away for protection*

<sup>41</sup>Esau was furious at Jacob because his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, "When the period of mourning for the death of my father is over, I will kill my brother.

<sup>42</sup>Rebekah was told what her older son Esau was planning, so she summoned her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Esau your brother is planning revenge. He plans to kill you. <sup>43</sup>So now, my son, listen to me: Get up and escape to my brother Laban in Haran. <sup>44</sup>Live with him for a short while until your brother's rage subsides, <sup>45</sup>until your brother's anger at you goes away and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send for you and bring you back from there. Why should I suffer the loss of both of you on one day?"

<sup>46</sup>Rebekah then said to Isaac, "I really loathe these Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women, like the women of this land, why should I go on living?"

**28** So Isaac summoned Jacob, blessed him, and gave him these orders: "Don't marry a Canaanite woman. <sup>2</sup>Get up and go to Paddan-aram, to the household of Bethuel, your mother's father, and once there, marry one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. <sup>3</sup>God Almighty<sup>m</sup> will bless you, make you fertile, and give you many descendants so that you will become a large group of peoples. <sup>4</sup>He will give you and your descendants Abraham's blessing so that you will own the land in which you are now immigrants, the land God gave to Abraham." <sup>5</sup>So Isaac sent Jacob off, and he traveled to Paddan-aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean and brother of Rebekah, Jacob and Esau's mother.

<sup>6</sup>Esau understood that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram to marry a woman from there. He recognized that, when Isaac blessed Jacob, he had ordered him,

<sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>m</sup>Heb *El Shaddai* or *God of the Mountain*

As in Jeremiah 9:3 and Hosea 12:4, this verse describes one brother taking the rights of another.

27:39 It's difficult to tell whether Isaac grants Esau any agricultural bounty, as he had Jacob (Gen 27:27-28). The Hebrew behind *far away from* can also be translated "from" or "out of." These other meanings suggest that Esau would enjoy *olive groves* and *showers*. He thus would *make a home* "from" or "out of" these resources. The Edomites lived in the mountains east of the Jordan Valley, where they farmed but with less rainfall than the Israelites in the mountains west of the Jordan.

27:40 Esau's secondary blessing grants his descendants eventual independence from serving Jacob's descendants. Edom remained under Israelite control from the time of David (2 Sam 8:13-14) until they revolted in the time of Jehoram (2 Kgs 8:16-22; see sidebar "Israel among the Nations" at Gen 9).

27:41-46 Two explanations are given for Jacob's trip back to Abraham's homeland and family in Haran (Gen 12:1; 24:3): (1) In 27:41-45, Rebekah hears that Esau is *planning*

*revenge* and aims to *kill* Jacob after Isaac's death. So she works again to benefit her favorite son, Jacob (Gen 25:28), this time to protect him from his brother's anger. (2) In 27:46, Rebekah wants Jacob to marry within the extended family (see notes on Gen 24:3; 26:34-35; 28:1-2).

28:1-2 In Genesis 24:2-4, Isaac needed to marry within his own group of extended family and distant relatives. Now Isaac requires the same thing of his primary heir, Jacob. Marrying within this group was important to maintain social position, legal status, ethnic identity, and family ownership of property.

28:3-4 The blessing Isaac gave Jacob in Genesis 27:27-29 is here supplemented by another *blessing* that shows the Priest's style and thought. It draws upon themes and language from the blessing of Abraham in Genesis 17. Isaac asks *God Almighty* (Gen 17:1) to make Jacob *fertile* and numerous (Gen 1:28; 9:1; 17:2, 6) and to grant him the *land* where he now lives as an *immigrant* (Gen 17:8).

28:6-9 In this account, Esau wants to follow his brother's example of marrying someone from his extended family

"Don't marry a Canaanite woman," <sup>7</sup>and that Jacob had listened to his father and mother and gone to Paddan-aram. <sup>8</sup>Esau realized that his father Isaac considered Canaanite women unacceptable. <sup>9</sup>So he went to Ishmael and married Mahalath daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth, in addition to his other wives.

**Jacob's dream at Bethel**

<sup>10</sup>Jacob left Beer-sheba and set out for Haran. <sup>11</sup>He reached a certain place and spent the night there. When the sun had set, he took one of the stones at that place and put it near his head. Then he lay down there. <sup>12</sup>He dreamed and saw a raised staircase, its foundation on earth and its top touching the sky, and God's messengers were ascending and descending on it. <sup>13</sup>Suddenly the LORD was standing on it<sup>a</sup> and saying, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. <sup>14</sup>Your descendants will become like the dust of the earth; you will spread out to the west, east, north, and south. Every family of earth will be blessed because of you and your descendants. <sup>15</sup>I am with you now, I will protect you everywhere you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done everything that I have promised you."

<sup>16</sup>When Jacob woke from his sleep, he thought to himself, The LORD is definitely in this place, but I didn't know it. <sup>17</sup>He was terrified and thought, This sacred place is awesome. It's none other than God's house and the entrance to heaven. <sup>18</sup>After Jacob got up early in the morning, he took the stone that he had put near his head, set it up as a sacred pillar, and poured oil on the top of it. <sup>19</sup>He named that sacred place Bethel,<sup>b</sup> though Luz was the city's original name. <sup>20</sup>Jacob made a solemn promise: "If God is with me and protects me on this trip I'm taking, and gives me bread to eat and clothes to wear, <sup>21</sup>and I return safely to my father's household, then the LORD will be my God. <sup>22</sup>This stone that I've set up as a sacred pillar will be God's house, and of everything you give me I will give a tenth back to you."

**Jacob meets Rachel**

**29** <sup>1</sup>Jacob got to his feet and set out for the land of the easterners. <sup>2</sup>He saw a well in the field in front of him, near which three flocks of sheep were lying down. That well was their source for water because the flocks drank from that well. A huge stone covered the well's opening. <sup>3</sup>When all of the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the well's opening, water the sheep, and return the stone to its place at the well's opening. <sup>4</sup>Jacob said to them, "Where are you from, my brothers?"

They said, "We're from Haran."

<sup>5</sup>Then he said to them, "Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?"

<sup>a</sup>Or beside it or beside him <sup>b</sup>Or God's house

and distant relatives. He does so because he sees that it pleases his father, Isaac. Previously, Esau had made things difficult for Isaac and Rebekah by marrying local Hittite (i.e., Canaanite) women (Gen 26:34-35). See note on Genesis 28:1-2.

28:10-22 Jacob encounters God twice: here at Bethel when he departs from Canaan, and once again at the Jabbok River when he returns (Gen 32:22-32). These two encounters provide the framework for Jacob's trip to Haran. They show that God is present with him on his journey (28:15).

28:11 *place*: a key word that appears five times in Genesis 28:10-22. It may be translated "place" or "sacred place." As Jacob discovers, he has come to a "sacred place" (see Gen 28:17) where God appears. Jacob will designate it as God's house (Gen 28:17, 22).

28:12 God's communication through dreams is common in the Elohist's stories in Genesis 20:3; 31:10-11, 24; 40:4-41:32. The story points to the importance of Bethel and its temple, which was an important religious site later in the writer's time (e.g., Judg 20:18, 26; Amos 7:12). Jacob's dream likely includes the image of the *raised staircase* that was part of Bethel's actual temple platform.

28:13-16 The LORD makes Jacob the same promises of land, descendants, and blessing made to Abraham and Isaac (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 26:3-5).

28:17 *God's house* refers to the temple at Bethel, which, according to this story, was actually founded by Israel's ancestor Jacob (Gen 28:22).

28:18 Archaeologists have discovered upright stone slabs in the inner rooms of ancient Israelite temples. The *sacred pillar* in this story likely refers to such a sacred object in the temple at Bethel (Gen 28:22).

28:19 The name *Bethel* means "house (Beth) of God (el)," or "God's house," as translation note o indicates. Bethel was one of the two worship centers of the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kgs 12:25-33).

29:1-31:55 These three chapters describe Jacob's living in the household of his uncle Laban for 20 years. Readers learn of Jacob's marriages, his children, his wealth, and his relationship and treaty with Laban. God's promise of descendants and blessing to Jacob (Gen 28:13-15) moves toward fulfillment even while he is away from Canaan.

29:1-14 The Bible contains several other stories where a future wife is found at a well (cf. Gen 24:10-33; Exod 2:11-22).

28:7 Gn 27:43, Gn 28:6, Gn 29:1, Gn 47:30  
28:10 Gn 11:31  
28:11 Gn 28:18  
28:12 Nm 12:6; Jn 1:51  
28:13 Gn 26:24, Gn 35:1, Gn 35:12, Gn 48:3  
28:14 Gn 12:3, Gn 13:14, Gn 13:16, Gn 18:18, Gn 26:4  
28:15 Gn 31:3; Dt 31:6; Ps 121:5  
28:16 Josh 5:15; 1Ki 3:15  
28:17 Gn 28:22  
28:18 Gn 31:13, Gn 31:45, Gn 35:14; 1Sa 7:12  
28:19 Gn 35:6, Gn 48:3; Josh 16:2; Jgs 1:23  
28:20 Gn 31:13; Jgs 11:30; 2Sa 15:8; 1Ti 6:8  
28:21 Gn 28:20; Ex 15:2; Dt 26:17; Jgs 11:31  
29:1 Gn 25:6, Gn 25:26, Gn 27:6; Nm 23:7; Jgs 6:3

29:9 *Ea* 2:16-1729:10 *Ea* 2:1729:11 *Gn* 29:13,*Gn* 33:4,*Gn* 45:14

29:12

*Gn* 24:28-2929:13 *Gn* 24:2929:14 *Gn* 2:23,*Gn* 37:27;*Igs* 9:2; *2Sa* 5:1;*2Sa* 19:1229:15 *Gn* 29:12,*Gn* 30:28,*Gn* 31:7,*Gn* 31:4129:17 *Gn* 12:1129:18 *Hos* 12:1229:20 *Gn* 29:18,*Gn* 29:30;*Song* 8:7;*Hos* 12:1229:21 *Igs* 15:129:23 *Gn* 29:16,*Gn* 29:3029:28 *Gn* 4:19,*Gn* 29:1629:32 *Gn* 37:21,*Gn* 49:3

They said, "We know him."

<sup>6</sup>He said to them, "Is he well?"

They said, "He's fine. In fact, this is his daughter Rachel now, coming with the flock."

<sup>7</sup>He said to them, "It's now only the middle of the day. It's not time yet to gather the animals. Water the flock, and then go, put them out to pasture."

<sup>8</sup>They said to him, "We can't until all the herds are gathered, and then we<sup>P</sup> roll the stone away from the well's opening and water the flock."

<sup>9</sup>While he was still talking to them, Rachel came with her father's flock since she was its shepherd. <sup>10</sup>When Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his uncle, and the flock of Laban, Jacob came up, rolled the stone from the well's opening, and watered the flock of his uncle Laban. <sup>11</sup>Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. <sup>12</sup>Jacob told Rachel that he was related to her father and that he was Rebekah's son. She then ran to tell her father. <sup>13</sup>When Laban heard about Jacob his sister's son, he ran to meet him. Laban embraced him, kissed him, and invited him into his house, where Jacob recounted to Laban everything that had happened. <sup>14</sup>Laban said to him, "Yes, you are my flesh and blood."

### ***Jacob marries Leah and Rachel***

After Jacob had stayed with Laban for a month, <sup>15</sup>Laban said to Jacob, "You shouldn't have to work for free just because you are my relative. Tell me what you would like to be paid."

<sup>16</sup>Now Laban had two daughters: the older was named Leah and the younger Rachel. <sup>17</sup>Leah had delicate eyes,<sup>Q</sup> but Rachel had a beautiful figure and was good-looking. <sup>18</sup>Jacob loved Rachel and said, "I will work for you for seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter." <sup>19</sup>Laban said, "I'd rather give her to you than to another man. Stay with me."

<sup>20</sup>Jacob worked for Rachel for seven years, but it seemed like a few days because he loved her. <sup>21</sup>Jacob said to Laban, "The time has come. Give me my wife so that I may sleep with her." <sup>22</sup>So Laban invited all the people of that place and prepared a banquet. <sup>23</sup>However, in the evening, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he slept with her. <sup>24</sup>Laban had given his servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her servant. <sup>25</sup>In the morning, there she was—Leah! Jacob said to Laban, "What have you done to me? Didn't I work for you to have Rachel? Why did you betray me?"

<sup>26</sup>Laban said, "Where we live, we don't give the younger woman before the oldest. <sup>27</sup>Complete the celebratory week with this woman. Then I will give<sup>R</sup> you this other woman too for your work, if you work for me seven more years." <sup>28</sup>So that is what Jacob did. He completed the celebratory week with this woman, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. <sup>29</sup>Laban had given his servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her servant. <sup>30</sup>Jacob slept with Rachel, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. He worked for Laban seven more years.

### ***Jacob's sons are born***

<sup>31</sup>When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, he opened her womb; but Rachel was unable to have children. <sup>32</sup>Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him

<sup>P</sup>Or they <sup>Q</sup>Heb uncertain; perhaps *Leah had poor eyesight* <sup>R</sup>LXX, Sam, Syr, Tg, Vulg; MT *we will give*

**29:9** Able-bodied men took primary responsibility for farming the fields, while herding sheep was assigned to older men, children, and sometimes women, such as *Rachel* in this story.

**29:14** The phrase *flesh and blood* translates the Hebrew phrase for "bone and flesh." It refers to a family relationship (*Gen* 2:23-24; 37:27).

**29:15-30** Because of Laban's deception, Leah becomes Jacob's first, or primary wife. Rachel, whom Jacob loves more, becomes his second wife.

**29:17** The term describing Leah's eyes can mean either *delicate* or "weak" (see translation note), and thus it may be either a compliment or a criticism.

**29:18** In place of the customary bride price (see notes on *Gen* 24:53; 31:15; 34:12), Jacob offers to work for Rachel's father for seven years.

**29:23-26** While Leah's identity could have been hidden at first by a veil (*Gen* 24:65), it's unclear why Jacob didn't realize who she was earlier. Perhaps the narrator means to say that it was only in the morning that Jacob confronted Laban. The words "betray" in 29:25 and "deceitfully" in *Genesis* 27:35 come from the same Hebrew term. Now, however, Jacob's roles are reversed. Originally the deceiver, he is now the deceived. Whereas previously the younger brother had replaced the older, now the older sister replaces the younger.

**29:27** Marriage ceremonies traditionally lasted a week (*cf.* *Judg* 14:8-17).

**29:31-30:24** *Genesis* contains two detailed records of the children of Jacob and his wives, Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah. This account describes their births, and *Genesis* 49 describes their blessings before Jacob's death. In the two

Reuben<sup>a</sup> because she said, "The LORD saw my harsh treatment, and now my husband will love me."<sup>33</sup>She became pregnant again and gave birth to a son. She said, "The LORD heard that I was unloved, so he gave me this son too," and she named him Simeon.<sup>34</sup>She became pregnant again and gave birth to a son. She said, "Now, this time my husband will embrace me,"<sup>35</sup> since I have given birth to three sons for him." So she named him Levi.<sup>36</sup>She became pregnant again and gave birth to a son. She said, "This time I will praise the LORD." So she named him Judah.<sup>37</sup> Then she stopped bearing children.

29:33 Gn 34:25.  
Gn 49:5  
29:34 Gn 35:23.  
Gn 49:5.  
Nm 18:2  
29:35 Gn 38:1.  
Gn 46:12.  
Gn 49:8; Mt 1:2  
30:1 Gn 29:31

**30**When Rachel realized that she could bear Jacob no children, Rachel became jealous of her sister and said to Jacob, "Give me children! If you don't, I may as well be dead."

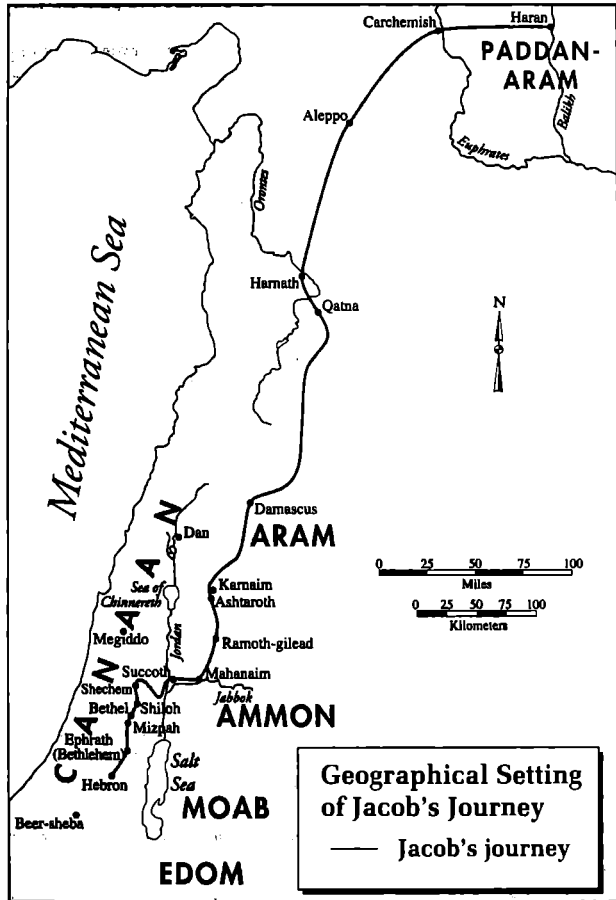
<sup>2</sup>Jacob was angry at Rachel and said, "Do you think I'm God? God alone has kept you from giving birth!"

<sup>3</sup>She said, "Here's my servant Bilhah. Sleep with her, and she will give birth for me. Because of her, I will also have children."

<sup>4</sup>So Rachel gave her servant Bilhah to Jacob as his wife, and he slept with her. <sup>5</sup>Bilhah became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Jacob. <sup>6</sup>Rachel said, "God has judged in my favor, heard my voice, and given me a son." So she named him Dan.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Rachel's servant Bilhah became pregnant again and gave birth to a second son for Jacob. <sup>8</sup>Rachel said, "I've competed fiercely with my sister, and now I've won." So she named him Naphtali.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>When Leah realized that she had stopped bearing children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as his wife. <sup>10</sup>Leah's servant Zilpah gave birth to a son for Jacob, <sup>11</sup>and Leah said, "What good luck!" So she named him Gad.<sup>12</sup>Leah's



**Geographical Setting of Jacob's Journey**  
— Jacob's journey

<sup>a</sup>Or see, a son <sup>b</sup>Sounds like the Heb verb hear <sup>c</sup>Or be connected to me <sup>d</sup>Sounds like the Heb verb embrace, or connect <sup>e</sup>Sounds like the Heb verb praise <sup>f</sup>Or he judged <sup>g</sup>Or my competition or my wrestling <sup>h</sup>Or good fortune

30:2 Gn 16:2, Gn 50:19, 2Ks 5:7 30:3 Gn 16:2, Gn 29:29, Gn 50:23 30:8 Gn 35:25, Gn 49:21

generations in Genesis before this, Abraham's family and Isaac's family, one son was the ancestor of the Israelites (Isaac, Jacob) and the other son was the ancestor of one of Israel's neighbors (Ishmael, Esau/Edom). So these stories were about the relationship between Israel and its neighbors. In the family of Jacob, whose name will be changed to Israel (Gen 32:28), each son is the ancestor of one of the Israelite tribes. So these stories are about the relationships among the Israelite tribes themselves.

29:31-35 Jacob's first four sons, *Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah*, are the sons of his primary wife, *Leah*. The Lord counteracts Jacob's lack of love for Leah by giving her sons. Bearing children gave women status in biblical society (Gen 16:4-5; 30:1).

30:1-2 Rachel competes with Leah (cf. Gen 30:8) because biblical society attached so much honor to childbearing and so much shame to infertility (cf. Gen 16:4-5; 1 Sam 1). 30:3-13 The custom of acquiring children through one's

30:14 Song 7:13  
 30:15 Gn 29:30,  
 Gn 30:1,  
 Gn 30:22,  
 Nm 16:9,  
 Nm 16:13  
 30:16 Gn 30:14  
 30:20 Gn 35:23,  
 Gn 46:14,  
 Gn 49:13

servant Zilpah gave birth to a second son for Jacob,<sup>13</sup> and Leah said, "I'm happy now because women call me happy." So she named him Asher.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>14</sup>During the wheat harvest, Reuben found some erotic herbs<sup>b</sup> in the field and brought them to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Give me your son's erotic herbs."

<sup>15</sup>Leah replied, "Isn't it enough that you've taken my husband? Now you want to take my son's erotic herbs too?"

Rachel said, "For your son's erotic herbs, Jacob<sup>c</sup> may sleep with you tonight."

<sup>16</sup>When Jacob came back from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must sleep with me because I've paid for you with my son's erotic herbs." So he slept with her that night.

<sup>17</sup>God responded to Leah. She became pregnant and gave birth to a fifth son for Jacob.

<sup>18</sup>Leah said, "God gave me what I paid for, what I deserved for giving my servant to my husband." So she named him Issachar.<sup>d</sup> <sup>19</sup>Leah became pregnant again and gave birth to a sixth son for Jacob,<sup>20</sup> and she said, "God has given me a wonderful gift. Now my husband will honor me since I've borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun.<sup>e</sup> <sup>21</sup>After this, she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

<sup>22</sup>Then God remembered Rachel, responded to her, and let her conceive. <sup>23</sup>She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, "God has taken away my shame." <sup>24</sup>She named him Joseph,<sup>f</sup> saying to herself, May the LORD give me another son.

### God blesses Jacob and Laban

<sup>25</sup>After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me off so that I can go to my own place and my own country. <sup>26</sup>Give me my wives and children whom I've worked for, and I will go. You know the work I've done for you."

<sup>27</sup>Laban said to him, "Do me this favor. I've discovered by a divine sign that the LORD has blessed me because of you, <sup>28</sup>so name your price and I will pay it."

<sup>29</sup>Jacob said to him, "You know how I've worked for you, and how well your livestock have done with me. <sup>30</sup>While in my care, what little you had has multiplied a great deal. The LORD blessed you wherever I took your livestock.<sup>g</sup> Now, when will I be able to work for my own household too?"

<sup>31</sup>Laban said, "What will I pay you?"

Jacob said, "Don't pay me anything. If you will do this for me, I will take care of your flock again, and keep a portion.<sup>h</sup> <sup>32</sup>I will go through the entire flock today, taking out all of the speckled and spotted sheep, all of the black male lambs, and all of the spotted and speckled female goats. That will be my price. <sup>33</sup>I will be completely honest with you: when you come to check on our agreement, every female goat with me that isn't speckled or spotted and every male lamb with me that isn't black will be considered stolen."

<sup>34</sup>Laban said, "All right; let's do it." <sup>35</sup>However, on that very day Laban took out the striped and spotted male goats and all of the speckled and spotted female goats—any with some white in it—and all of the black male lambs, and gave them to his sons. <sup>36</sup>He put a three-day trip between himself and Jacob, while Jacob was watching the rest of Laban's flock.

<sup>a</sup>Or happy <sup>b</sup>Or mandrakes <sup>c</sup>Or he <sup>d</sup>Or there is payment <sup>e</sup>Or honor <sup>f</sup>Or he adds <sup>g</sup>Or them <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain

*servant* is also reflected in the story of Sarah and Hagar (see note on Gen 16:2). *Bilhah* is Rachel's servant who becomes Jacob's third wife (30:4). *Zilpah* is Leah's servant who becomes Jacob's fourth wife (30:9).

30:14 *erotic herbs*: often translated "mandrakes" (see translation note), which are members of the nightshade family. These herbs were believed to increase fertility, perhaps because of their fragrance, or because their roots often have a torso shape, or because the Hebrew terms for "erotic herb" and "love" sound alike.

30:21 *Dinah* is the only one of Jacob's daughters mentioned. She is a major figure in Genesis 34.

30:22-24 While Joseph is Jacob's eleventh son, he is the first son of Jacob's favorite wife. Like many younger sons in Genesis, he will play a major role in the family.

30:25-43 After describing the births of Jacob's sons, the

narrative turns to his gaining wealth. Throughout the ancestral stories, wealth and well-being are regarded as part of God's blessing (Gen 12:16; 13:2; 26:12-14, 28-29). The Bible understands well-being in terms of having things that provide a healthy and secure life: land, family, food, and respect.

30:27 The activity described with the phrase *discovered by a divine sign* is sometimes called divination. Through a ritual, the diviner (here, Laban) learns God's will. Here in Genesis, divination seems entirely acceptable (see Gen 44:5, 15). Yet other texts forbid this practice (Deut 18:10). Certain religious practices were regarded differently at different times and places in the biblical period.

30:30 Laban experiences the Lord's promise that the blessings of Israel's ancestors would flow to others (Gen 12:3).



<sup>37</sup>Then Jacob took new branches from poplar, almond, and plane trees; and he peeled white stripes on them, exposing the branches' white color. <sup>38</sup>He set the branches that he had peeled near the watering troughs so that they were in front of the flock when they drank, because they often mated when they came to drink. <sup>39</sup>When the flock mated in front of the branches, they gave birth to striped, speckled, and spotted young. <sup>40</sup>Jacob sorted out the lambs, turning the flock to face the striped and black ones in Laban's flock but keeping his flock separate, setting them apart from Laban's flock. <sup>41</sup>Whenever the strongest of the flock mated, Jacob put the branches in front of them near the watering troughs so that they mated near the branches. <sup>42</sup>But he didn't put branches up for the weakest of the flock. So the weakest became Laban's and the strongest Jacob's. <sup>43</sup>The man Jacob became very, very rich: he owned large flocks, female and male servants, camels, and donkeys.

*Jacob's household leaves Laban*

**31** Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob took everything our father owned and from it he produced all of this wealth." <sup>2</sup>And Jacob saw that Laban no longer liked him as much as he used to.

<sup>3</sup>Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your ancestors and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

<sup>4</sup>So Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah and summoned them into the field where his flock was. <sup>5</sup>He said to them, "I am aware that your father no longer likes me as much as he used to. But my father's God has been with me. <sup>6</sup>You know that I've worked for your father as hard as I could. <sup>7</sup>But your father cheated me and changed my payment ten times. Yet God didn't let him harm me. <sup>8</sup>If he said, 'The speckled ones will be your payment,' the whole flock gave birth to speckled young. And if he said, 'The striped ones will be your payment,' the whole flock gave birth to striped young. <sup>9</sup>God took away your father's livestock and gave them to me. <sup>10</sup>When the flocks were mating, I looked up and saw in a dream that the male goats that mounted the flock were striped, speckled, and spotted. <sup>11</sup>In the dream, God's messenger said to me, 'Jacob!' and I said, 'I'm here.' <sup>12</sup>He said, 'Look up and watch all the striped, speckled, and spotted male goats mounting the flock. I've seen everything that Laban is doing to you. <sup>13</sup>I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a sacred pillar and where you made a solemn promise to me. Now, get up and leave this country and go back to the land of your relatives.'"

<sup>14</sup>Rachel and Leah answered him, "Is there any share or inheritance left for us in our father's household? <sup>15</sup>Doesn't he think of us as foreigners since he sold us and has even used up the payment he received for us? <sup>16</sup>All of the wealth God took from our father belongs to us and our children. Now, do everything God told you to do."

<sup>17</sup>So Jacob got up, put his sons and wives on the camels, <sup>18</sup>and set out with all of his livestock and all of his possessions that he had acquired<sup>1</sup> in Paddan-aram in order to return to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. <sup>19</sup>Now, while Laban was out shearing his sheep, Rachel stole the household's divine images that belonged to her father. <sup>20</sup>Moreover, Jacob

<sup>1</sup>LXX; MT includes *he had acquired, the livestock in his possession.*

30:37-42 Jacob's breeding strategy is a combination of ancient and more scientific techniques. On the one hand, it reflects the ancient idea that animals who see the striped images of tree limbs while mating will have striped offspring. On the other hand, Jacob's strategy also aligns with the contemporary idea that breeding stronger animals increases the quality of the herd.

31:1-42 Having been blessed with a large family and great wealth, Jacob makes arrangements to return to Canaan.

31:1-16 Genesis again describes family conflict. Laban's sons feel that Jacob has robbed their father (31:1). Laban likes Jacob less than previously (31:2, 5). Jacob believes Laban has cheated him (31:6-13). Rachel and Leah believe Laban has mistreated them (31:14-16). So Jacob and his wives decide to leave secretly. See sidebar, "Family Conflict in Genesis" at Genesis 4.

31:13 God refers to Jacob's dream at Bethel in Genesis 28:18-22.

31:15 *the payment he received for us:* refers to the bride price. It's customarily given to the father of the bride. The father may use it to purchase wives for his sons or for other purposes. However, some of the bride price may go back to the bride as an "indirect dowry." Rachel and Leah may be blaming their father for using the part of the bride price that they considered rightfully theirs. See notes on Genesis 24:53; 34:12.

31:19 Neither the nature of the household's divine images nor Rachel's reason for taking them is clear. They appear to represent deities (Gen 31:30); to be associated with religious settings (Judg 17:5); and to be used in divination to determine divine intentions (Ezek 21:26; Zech 10:2; cf. note on Gen 30:27). In these cases they are viewed positively, but some biblical texts condemn them (2 Kgs 23:24). Some evidence from ancient Nuzi associates such images with the family's estate. So Rachel's (Gen 31:33-35) and Laban's (Gen 31:30) interest in

30:37 *Eze 31:8*  
 30:38 *Ex 2:16*  
 30:41 *Gn 30:37*  
 30:42 *Gn 31:1, Gn 31:43*  
 30:43  
*Gn 12:16, Gn 13:2, Gn 24:35, Gn 26:13-14*  
 31:2 *Gn 4:5, Gn 30:27, Gn 31:5*  
 31:5 *Gn 21:22, Gn 31:2, Gn 31:29, Gn 31:42, Gn 31:53*  
 31:7 *Gn 31:41, Nm 14:22, Zec 8:23*  
 31:10 *Gn 28:12, Gn 30:39*  
 31:11 *Gn 16:7, Gn 22:1*  
 31:12 *Ex 3:7*  
 31:13 *Gn 28:18, Gn 28:20, Gn 31:3, Gn 32:9*  
 31:15 *Gn 29:20, Gn 29:27*  
 31:19 *Gn 31:30, Gn 31:34, Jgs 17:5, 1Sa 19:13, Hos 3:4*

31:27 Gn 4:21;  
Ex 15:20;  
1Sa 10:5; 1s 24:8  
31:29 Gn 31:24,  
Gn 31:42,  
Gn 31:53  
31:32 Gn 31:19,  
Gn 44:9  
31:36 Gn 29:21,  
Gn 30:2,  
Gn 31:7,  
Gn 49:7  
31:38 Gn 30:27  
31:39 Ex 22:13  
31:40 Neh 4:21;  
Jer 36:30; Lk 2:8  
31:41 Gn 31:7  
31:42 Gn 31:53  
31:44 Gn 26:28  
31:45 Gn 28:18,  
Gn 31:46;  
1Sa 7:12  
31:46 Gn 31:45,  
Gn 31:54  
31:47 Gn 31:48

deceived Laban the Aramean by not sending word to him that he was leaving. <sup>21</sup>So Jacob and his entire household left. He got up, crossed the river, and set out directly for the mountains of Gilead.

<sup>22</sup>Three days later, Laban found out that Jacob had gone, <sup>23</sup>so Laban took his brothers with him, chased Jacob for seven days, and caught up with him in the mountains of Gilead. <sup>24</sup>That night, God appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream and said, “Be careful and don’t say anything hastily to Jacob one way or the other.”

<sup>25</sup>Laban reached Jacob after Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains. So Laban and his brothers also pitched theirs in the mountains of Gilead. <sup>26</sup>Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? You have deceived me and taken off with my daughters as if they were prisoners of war. <sup>27</sup>Why did you leave secretly, deceiving me, and not letting me know? I would’ve sent you off with a celebration, with songs and tambourines and harps. <sup>28</sup>You didn’t even let me kiss my sons and my daughters good-bye. Now you’ve acted like a fool, <sup>29</sup>and I have the power to punish you. However, your father’s God told me yesterday, ‘Be careful and don’t say anything hastily to Jacob one way or the other.’ <sup>30</sup>You’ve rushed off now because you missed your father’s household so much, but why did you steal my gods?”

<sup>31</sup>Jacob responded to Laban, “I was afraid and convinced myself that you would take your daughters away from me. <sup>32</sup>Whoever you find with your divine images won’t live. Identify whatever I have that is yours, in front of your brothers, and take it.” Jacob didn’t know that Rachel had stolen them. <sup>33</sup>Laban went into Jacob’s tent, Leah’s tent, and her two servants’ tent and didn’t find them.

So he left Leah’s tent and went into Rachel’s. <sup>34</sup>Now Rachel had taken the divine images and put them into the camel’s saddlebag and sat on them. Laban felt around in the whole tent but couldn’t find them. <sup>35</sup>Rachel said to her father, “Sir, don’t be angry with me because I can’t get up for you; I’m having my period.” He searched but couldn’t find the divine images.

<sup>36</sup>Jacob was angry and complained to Laban, “What have I done wrong and what’s my crime that you’ve tracked me down like this? <sup>37</sup>You’ve now felt through all of my baggage, and what have you found from your household’s belongings? Put it in front of our relatives, and let them decide between us. <sup>38</sup>For these twenty years I’ve been with you, your female sheep and goats haven’t miscarried, and I haven’t eaten your flock’s rams. <sup>39</sup>When animals were killed, I didn’t bring them to you but took the loss myself. You demanded compensation from me for any animals poached during the day or night. <sup>40</sup>The dry heat consumed me during the day, and the frost at night; I couldn’t sleep. <sup>41</sup>I’ve now spent twenty years in your household. I worked for fourteen years for your two daughters and for six years for your flock, and you changed my pay ten times. <sup>42</sup>If the God of my father—the God of Abraham and the awesome one of Isaac—hadn’t been with me, you’d have no doubt sent me away without anything. God saw my harsh treatment and my hard work and reprimanded you yesterday.”

### *Jacob and Laban’s treaty*

<sup>43</sup>Laban responded and told Jacob, “The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks. Everything you see is mine. But what can I do now about my daughters and about their sons? <sup>44</sup>Come, let’s make a treaty, you and me, and let something be our witness.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>45</sup>So Jacob took a stone, set it up as a sacred pillar, <sup>46</sup>and said to his relatives, “Gather stones.” So they took stones, made a mound, and ate there near the mound. <sup>47</sup>Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha,<sup>2</sup> but Jacob called it Galeed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Or covenant or testimony <sup>2</sup>Or mound of witness (Aram) <sup>1</sup>Or mound of witness

them may be related to the property Jacob has taken (Gen 31:9, 16).

31:21 *Gilead* is the mountainous territory that rises to the east of the Jordan Valley.

31:24 God’s communication through dreams and God’s direction of human affairs (Gen 31:11-13) play important roles in this narrative (Gen 31:29, 42) and elsewhere (Gen 45:5-9; 50:20).

31:43-55 The *treaty* defines the relationship between Jacob, Laban, and their heirs (see sidebar, “Israel among

the Nations” at Gen 9). The story places great value on the reconciliation of differences in peaceful ways (Gen 30:26, 31). The treaty between Laban and Jacob is accompanied by rituals typical of ancient treaty ceremonies, such as making promises (31:53) and sharing a *meal* (31:46, 54).

31:45-46 The *sacred pillar and mound of stones* are intended as boundary markers between Jacob’s and Laban’s lands (Gen 31:51-52).

31:47 The stone mound is named both in Hebrew (*Galeed*)

<sup>48</sup>Laban said, “This mound is our witness today,” and, therefore, he too named it Galeed. <sup>49</sup>He also named it Mizpah,<sup>m</sup> because he said, “The LORD will observe both of us when we are separated from each other. <sup>50</sup>If you treat my daughters badly and if you marry other women, though we aren’t there, know that God observed our witness.”

<sup>51</sup>Laban said to Jacob, “Here is this mound and here is the sacred pillar that I’ve set up for us. <sup>52</sup>This mound and the sacred pillar are witnesses that I won’t travel beyond this mound and that you won’t travel beyond this mound and this pillar to do harm. <sup>53</sup>The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor<sup>a</sup> will keep order between us.” So Jacob gave his word in the name of the awesome one of his father Isaac. <sup>54</sup>Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and invited his relatives to a meal. They ate together and spent the night on the mountain. <sup>55</sup>Laban got up early in the morning, kissed his sons and daughters, blessed them, and left to go back to his own place.

*Jacob prepares to meet Esau*

**32** Jacob went on his way, and God’s messengers approached him. <sup>2</sup>When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is God’s camp,” and he named that sacred place Mahanaim.<sup>p</sup> <sup>3</sup>Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau, toward the land of Seir, the open country of Edom. <sup>4</sup>He gave them these orders: “Say this to my master Esau. This is the message of your servant Jacob: ‘I’ve lived as an immigrant with Laban, where I’ve stayed till now. <sup>5</sup>I own cattle, donkeys, flocks, men servants, and women servants. I’m sending this message to my master now to ask that he<sup>q</sup> be kind.’”

<sup>6</sup>The messengers returned to Jacob and said, “We went out to your brother Esau, and he’s coming to meet you with four hundred men.”

<sup>7</sup>Jacob was terrified and felt trapped, so he divided the people with him, and the flocks, cattle, and camels, into two camps. <sup>8</sup>He thought, If Esau meets the first camp and attacks it, at least one camp will be left to escape.

<sup>9</sup>Jacob said, “LORD, God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, who said to me, ‘Go back to your country and your relatives, and I’ll make sure things go well for you,’ <sup>10</sup>I don’t deserve how loyal and truthful you’ve been to your servant. I went away across the Jordan with just my staff, but now I’ve become two camps. <sup>11</sup>Save me from my brother Esau! I’m afraid he will come and kill me, the mothers, and their children. <sup>12</sup>You were the one who told me, ‘I will make sure things go well for you, and I will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, so many you won’t be able to count them.’”

<sup>13</sup>Jacob spent that night there. From what he had acquired, he set aside a gift for his brother Esau: <sup>14</sup>two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, <sup>15</sup>thirty nursing camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. <sup>16</sup>He separated these herds and gave them to his servants. He said to them, “Go ahead of me and put some distance between each of the herds.” <sup>17</sup>He ordered the first group, “When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, ‘Who are you with? Where are you going? And whose herds are these in front of you?’ <sup>18</sup>say, ‘They are your servant Jacob’s, a gift sent to my master Esau. And Jacob is actually right behind us.’” <sup>19</sup>He also ordered the second group, the third group, and everybody following the herds, “Say exactly the same thing to Esau when you find him. <sup>20</sup>Say also, ‘Your servant Jacob is right

31:48 Gn 31:47; Josh 24:27  
31:49 Jgs 10:17; Jgs 11:29  
31:53 Gn 16:5; Gn 31:42  
32:1 Gn 32:2; 2Ki 6:16; Ps 34:7; Ps 91:11  
32:2 Josh 5:14; Josh 21:38; 2Sa 28; 2Sa 17:24; 2Sa 17:27  
32:3 Gn 14:6; Gn 33:14; Gn 36:8-9; Dt 2:5  
32:5 Gn 12:16; Gn 30:43; Gn 33:8; Gn 33:15  
32:7 Gn 35:3  
32:10 Gn 24:27  
32:11 Gn 27:41; Isa 12:10; Ps 59:1-2  
32:14 Isa 25:2

<sup>m</sup>Or *observation* <sup>a</sup>LXX; MT includes *their father’s God*. <sup>q</sup>32:1 in Heb <sup>p</sup>Or *two camps* <sup>o</sup>Or *you*

and in Aramaic (*Jegar-sahadutha*; see translation notes). Aramaic is the language of the land where Laban lived, east of biblical Israel (Gen 29:1). Because Gilead (Gen 31:21) sounds like Galeed, this story explained the name of this territory east of the Jordan for early readers. It also explained the boundary marker there and the peace between the Israelites and the Arameans (the people associated with Laban in Gen 31:14, 20). See sidebar, “Israel among the Nations” at Genesis 9. <sup>31:54</sup> Ceremonial meals were a normal part of treaty rituals (Gen 31:46; 26:30). <sup>32:1-21</sup> Jacob returns to Canaan and faces Esau, the brother he robbed and fled from in Genesis 27. Like the story of Joseph and his brothers to follow (Gen 37-50), this account praises reconciliation rather than violence

(cf. Gen 4:1-16; see sidebar, “Family Conflict in Genesis” at Gen 4). It urges readers in later generations to find peace instead of resorting to warfare (see sidebar, “Israel among the Nations” at Gen 9). <sup>32:3-5</sup> Jacob prepares to meet Esau by sending messengers with a peaceful overture. *your servant and my master*: formal terms of respect (Gen 18:3; 32:18). *To be kind* means to be gracious beyond what is deserved or required. <sup>32:6-8</sup> Jacob can imagine only a violent end to his conflict with Esau (Gen 32:11). <sup>32:9-12</sup> Jacob has followed the Lord’s instructions (Gen 31:3) and now asks for protection. He admits that his successes in Haran were not his own achievements (but the Lord’s blessings) (cf. Gen 28:15). <sup>32:20</sup> In anticipation of seeing God’s face (Gen 32:30)

32:22 Dt 2:37;  
Dt 3:16;  
Josh 12:2

32:24 Hos 12:3

32:25 Gn 32:32

32:26 Hos 12:4;  
Lk 18:1

32:27 Gn 25:26

32:28 Gn 17:5,  
Gn 35:10;  
2Ki 17:34

32:29 Gn 35:9;  
Jgs 13:17;  
Jgs 13:18

32:30 Gn 16:13;  
Ez 24:10;  
Jgs 13:22

32:31 Jgs 8:8;  
1Ki 12:25

32:32 Gn 32:25

behind us.” Jacob thought, I may be able to pacify Esau with the gift I’m sending ahead. When I meet him, perhaps he will be kind to me. <sup>21</sup>So Jacob sent the gift ahead of him, but he spent that night in the camp.

### Jacob wrestles with God

<sup>22</sup>Jacob got up during the night, took his two wives, his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed the Jabbok River’s shallow water. <sup>23</sup>He took them and everything that belonged to him, and he helped them cross the river. <sup>24</sup>But Jacob stayed apart by himself, and a man wrestled with him until dawn broke. <sup>25</sup>When the man saw that he couldn’t defeat Jacob, he grabbed Jacob’s thigh and tore a muscle in Jacob’s thigh as he wrestled with him. <sup>26</sup>The man said, “Let me go because the dawn is breaking.”

But Jacob said, “I won’t let you go until you bless me.”

<sup>27</sup>He said to Jacob, “What’s your name?” and he said, “Jacob.” <sup>28</sup>Then he said, “Your name won’t be Jacob any longer, but Israel,” because you struggled with God and with men and won.”

<sup>29</sup>Jacob also asked and said, “Tell me your name.”

But he said, “Why do you ask for my name?” and he blessed Jacob there. <sup>30</sup>Jacob named the place Peniel, <sup>31</sup>“because I’ve seen God face-to-face, and my life has been saved.” <sup>32</sup>Therefore, Israelites don’t eat the tendon attached to the thigh muscle to this day, because he grabbed Jacob’s thigh muscle at the tendon.

### Esau forgives Jacob

**33** Jacob looked up and saw Esau approaching with four hundred men. Jacob divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two women servants. <sup>2</sup>He put the servants and their children first, Leah and her children after them, and Rachel and Joseph last.

<sup>1</sup>Or God struggles or one who struggles with God <sup>2</sup>Or face of God

and Esau’s face (Gen 33:10), Jacob uses the word “face” four times in this verse. This is a literal translation: “I may appease his face with the present that goes before my face, and afterwards I shall see his face; perhaps he will lift up my face.” These face-to-face encounters underline the theme of negotiation and reconciliation in this story.

32:22-32 Jacob’s struggle at night with a mysterious attacker is one of the most memorable stories in Genesis. Its mysterious elements have inspired an array of interpretations. Some people read the story as a battle with a river demon. Others think it is a contest with an enemy like Esau or Esau’s guardian angel. It’s also been viewed as a rite of passage, a test of fitness for future responsibilities, and an inner struggle leading to a transformed self. As both Jacob (32:30) and his attacker (32:28) say, it’s about a direct encounter with God. This story is important to the broader movement of Genesis. It occurs as Jacob reenters the land of promise—just as the dream at Bethel occurred when he left that land (Gen 28:10-22). The story also looks forward to Jacob’s encounter with Esau, another feared adversary with whom he has struggled and yet will survive. Additionally, the story introduces something new that will shape biblical history for all time: Jacob’s name is changed to *Israel*—the name that will be used for his descendants as well.

32:22 The *Jabbok River* flows into the Jordan River from the highlands to the east. It’s mentioned elsewhere as marking the border of Israelite territory (Num 21:24; Deut 3:16). The Hebrew word for “wrestle” (Gen 32:24-25) sounds like *Jabbok*, and even a bit like the name *Jacob*. So a play on words links the river’s name, the event that happened there, and the central character.

32:24 The narrator refers to Jacob’s attacker as a *man* (also in Gen 32:25), but Jacob later says he has seen God’s face (Gen 32:30). Elsewhere, Genesis sometimes pictures the

Lord as a humanlike figure (Gen 18:1-2, 13). See note on Genesis 32:30.

32:25 The winner of the wrestling match is left in some doubt. The attacker *couldn’t defeat Jacob* and said that Jacob “won” (Gen 32:28). Yet the attacker wounds Jacob and has the power to bless him (Gen 32:29). The attacker *tore a muscle in Jacob’s thigh*. Such injuries commonly occur while wrestling. It’s unlikely that the text refers to a hip dislocation as often translated (KJV, NRSV), since a hip dislocation is so serious that the injured person doesn’t walk away from it, even with a limp (Gen 32:28).

32:28 The storyteller understands the name *Israel* to mean “God struggles” or “one who struggles with God” (see translation note). It thus relates to the struggle between God and Jacob that has just occurred. By also mentioning Jacob’s struggles *with men*, the narrator connects this name with Jacob’s larger story of conflict with his brother, Esau. It also relates to Israel’s struggles with its neighbors, including Edom (see sidebar, “Israel among the Nations” at Gen 9).

32:29 Jacob is *blessed* again (Gen 27:26; 28:14).

32:30 The story explains the origin of the name *Peniel* (called “Penuel” in Gen 32:31), meaning “face of God.” This site can no longer be located with certainty. In this verse, Jacob speaks of a direct encounter with *God*. Yet, as noted in Genesis 32:24-25, the text speaks of Jacob wrestling with a man. Further, in Genesis 33:10, Jacob tells Esau, “Seeing your face is like seeing God’s face.” Here, as in the story of Abraham’s visitors (Gen 18:1-2, 13), the narrator pictures God’s appearance in humanlike form.

32:31 See note on Genesis 32:25.

33:1-17 Like the story of Joseph and his brothers (Gen 37-50), the story of Jacob and Esau comes to its climax with the reconciliation of brothers who have been feuding. As such, the story promotes reconciliation rather

<sup>3</sup>He himself went in front of them and bowed to the ground seven times as he was approaching his brother. <sup>4</sup>But Esau ran to meet him, threw his arms around his neck, kissed him, and they wept. <sup>5</sup>Esau looked up and saw the women and children and said, "Who are these with you?"

Jacob said, "The children that God generously gave your servant." <sup>6</sup>The women servants and their children came forward and bowed down. <sup>7</sup>Then Leah and her servants also came forward and bowed, and afterward Joseph and Rachel came forward and bowed.

<sup>8</sup>Esau said, "What's the meaning of this entire group of animals that I met?"

Jacob said, "To ask for my master's kindness."

<sup>9</sup>Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what's yours."

<sup>10</sup>Jacob said, "No, please, do me the kindness of accepting my gift. Seeing your face is like seeing God's face, since you've accepted me so warmly. <sup>11</sup>Take this present that I've brought because God has been generous to me, and I have everything I need." So Jacob persuaded him, and he took it.

<sup>12</sup>Esau said, "Let's break camp and set out, and I'll go with you."

<sup>13</sup>But Jacob said to him, "My master knows that the children aren't strong and that I am responsible for the nursing flocks and cattle. If I push them hard for even one day, all of the flocks will die. <sup>14</sup>My master, go on ahead of your servant, but I've got to take it easy, going only as fast as the animals in front of me and the children are able to go, until I meet you in Seir."

<sup>15</sup>Esau said, "Let me leave some of my people with you."

But Jacob said, "Why should you do this since my master has already been so kind to me?" <sup>16</sup>That day Esau returned on the road to Seir, <sup>17</sup>but Jacob traveled to Succoth. He built a house for himself but made temporary shelters for his animals; therefore, he named the place Succoth.<sup>†</sup>

**Dinah and the conflict at Shechem**

<sup>18</sup>Jacob arrived safely at the city of Shechem in the land of Canaan on his trip from Padan-aram, and he camped in front of the city. <sup>19</sup>He bought the section of the field where he pitched his tent from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred qesitahs.<sup>‡</sup> <sup>20</sup>Then he set up an altar there and named it El Elohe Israel.<sup>§</sup>

**34** Dinah, the daughter whom Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to meet the women of that country. <sup>2</sup>When Shechem the son of the Hivite Hamor and the country's prince

<sup>†</sup>Or temporary shelters <sup>‡</sup>A monetary weight <sup>§</sup>Or El, God of Israel

than violence when conflicts arise. Because Jacob and Esau represent the Israelites and the Edomites, the text promotes peace between family members and nations (see sidebars, "Family Conflict in Genesis" at Gen 3; "Israel among the Nations" at Gen 9). In both the Jacob and Joseph stories, the injured party (1) has good reasons for revenge; (2) has the power to harm the wrongdoer (Gen 33:1; 32:6-8, 11, 20); and (3) makes sure that peace comes about instead (33:4, 10).

33:2 The arrangement of Jacob's household represents the relative status of his wives, except for his bias toward Rachel and her children (Gen 29:31, 33; 30:15). Leah, the first wife, should hold the position of honor.

33:4 Esau has been wronged and has the power to exact justice (see Gen 32:6). However, he chooses reconciliation rather than revenge (Gen 33:10).

33:8 *kindness*: translates a Hebrew word that means graciousness beyond what is deserved or required (Gen 32:5).

33:10 The phrase *Seeing your face* . . . *God's face* links this episode with the nighttime wrestling match (see Gen 32:30).

33:11 Presenting gifts is a common ritual in biblical society. The Hebrew term behind *present* can also mean "blessing." The same term was used in Genesis 27:35-36 to refer to the blessing Jacob stole from Esau. Jacob uses the word here to say that he is giving back what he wrongfully took—or at least is making amends.

33:12-17 Jacob and Esau go their own ways. Their separation points to how their descendants were divided and lived in different homelands. *Seir* is a name for the land of Edom southeast of the Dead Sea (Gen 32:3; Num 24:18). *Succoth* is probably located at the mouth of the Jabbok River in the Jordan Valley, on the traditional border of Israel (Num 21:24; Deut 3:16).

33:18–34:31 The story of Jacob at Shechem starts peacefully and ends violently (see also Gen 49:5-7). Shechem (modern Nablus) is the largest city in the northern region of biblical Israel and the first capital of the northern kingdom (1 Kgs 12:1, 25).

33:18-20 Jacob's return journey to the promised land parallels the earlier journey of his grandfather Abraham (Gen 12:1-7). Both make their first stop at *Shechem* and build an altar there to God. Jacob acquires land through purchase, as occurs elsewhere in Genesis 23:1-20. The peace between Jacob and the people of Shechem contrasts sharply with the conflict between them in the story that follows.

34:1-31 Like many narratives in Genesis, the story of Dinah operates at two levels: the family and the tribe. On the one hand, the story describes conflict between the families of Shechem and Dinah (a daughter of Jacob mentioned in Gen 30:21). On the other hand, the story deals with the relationship between the city of Shechem (represented by Hamor's son, Shechem) and the Israelites (represented by

33:3 Gn 18:2, Gn 42:6, Gn 43:26  
33:4 Gn 45:14-15; Lk 15:20  
33:8 Gn 32:5  
33:10 Gn 32:30  
33:11 Isa 25:27; 2Ki 5:23  
33:18 Gn 12:6, Gn 25:20; Josh 24:1; Jgs 9:1  
33:19 Gn 34:2; Josh 24:32; Jgs 9:28; Jn 4:5; Ac 7:16  
33:20 Gn 8:20, Gn 13:18, Gn 35:1, Gn 35:7  
34:1 Gn 30:21  
34:2 Gn 33:19

34:3 Is 40:2

34:5 Gn 34:13,  
Gn 34:27,  
Gn 34:30,  
Gn 35:2234:7 Dt 22:21,  
Jgs 20:6,  
2Sa 13:1234:25  
Gn 29:33-34,  
Gn 49:5,  
Gn 49:7, Josh 5:834:26 Gn 33:19,  
Gn 34:3,  
Gn 34:6,  
Gn 34:20,  
Gn 49:634:27 Gn 34:5,  
Gn 34:13

saw her, he took her, slept with her, and humiliated her. <sup>3</sup>He was drawn to Dinah, Jacob's daughter. He loved the young woman and tried to win her heart. <sup>4</sup>Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get this girl for me as my wife." <sup>5</sup>Now Jacob heard that Shechem defiled his daughter Dinah; but his sons were with the animals in the countryside, so he decided to keep quiet until they got back. <sup>6</sup>Meanwhile, Hamor, Shechem's father, went out to Jacob to speak with him. <sup>7</sup>Just then, Jacob's sons got back from the countryside. When they heard what had happened, they were deeply offended and very angry, because Shechem had disgraced Israel by sleeping with Jacob's daughter. Such things are simply not done.

<sup>8</sup>Hamor said to them, "My son Shechem's heart is set on your daughter. Please let him marry her. <sup>9</sup>Arrange marriages with us: give us your daughters and take our daughters for yourselves. <sup>10</sup>Live with us. The land is available to you: settle down, travel through it, and buy property in it."

<sup>11</sup>Shechem said to Dinah's father and brothers, "If you approve of me, tell me what you want, and I will give it to you. <sup>12</sup>Make the bride price and marriage gifts as large as you like, and I will pay whatever you tell me. Then let me marry the young woman."

<sup>13</sup>Jacob's sons responded deviously to Shechem and his father Hamor because Shechem defiled their sister Dinah. <sup>14</sup>They said to them, "We can't do this, allowing our sisters to marry uncircumcised men, because it's disgraceful to us. <sup>15</sup>We can only agree to do this if you circumcise every male as we do. <sup>16</sup>Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves. We will live with you and be one people. <sup>17</sup>But if you don't listen to us and become circumcised, we will take our daughter and leave."

<sup>18</sup>Their idea seemed like a good one to Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. <sup>19</sup>The young man didn't waste any time doing this because he liked Jacob's daughter so much. He was more respected than anyone else in his father's household. <sup>20</sup>Hamor and his son Shechem went to their city's gate and spoke to the men of their city: <sup>21</sup>"These men want peace with us. Let them live in the land and travel through it; there's plenty of land for them. We will marry their daughters and give them our daughters. <sup>22</sup>But the men will agree to live with us and become one people only if we circumcise every male just as they do. <sup>23</sup>Their livestock, their property, and all of their animals—won't they be ours? Let's agree with them and let them live with us." <sup>24</sup>Everyone at the city gate agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, so every able-bodied male in the city was circumcised.

<sup>25</sup>On the third day, when they were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons and Dinah's brothers Simeon and Levi took their swords, came into the city, which suspected nothing, and killed every male. <sup>26</sup>They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with their swords, took Dinah from Shechem's household, and left. <sup>27</sup>When Jacob's other sons discovered the dead, they looted

Jacob's sons). For more, see sidebar, "Israel among the Nations" at Genesis 9. At both levels, the story struggles with the question of how wrongs should be set right.

**34:2-3** We can't tell exactly what the storyteller meant to say about how Shechem treated Dinah. The Hebrew word translated *humiliated* is sometimes used to mean putting a virgin in a difficult social situation by having sex with her before marriage (Deut 22:29). In this case, the man was required to marry the woman and couldn't divorce her. In other texts, this Hebrew word refers to abusive sex, that is, rape (Judg 20:5; 1 Sam 13:12, 14). Because the story stresses Shechem's love for Dinah (cf. Gen 34:11, 19), it may imply the first meaning, that by having sex with Dinah before marriage Shechem damaged Dinah's social standing. As required, he seeks to marry her (Gen 34:4-12). In any event, Dinah's brothers clearly felt Shechem had committed a serious wrong (Gen 34:7).

**34:4** Shechem asks his father to arrange his marriage to Dinah, because parents arrange marriages in biblical society (Gen 21:21; 24:1-4).

**34:5** *defiled*: like "humiliated" in Genesis 35:3, has multiple meanings. It can, like "humiliated," mean jeopardizing a woman's position in society by having sex with her outside marriage (cf. Lev 18:20; Num 5:19). In light of Dinah's

brothers' complaint later about Shechem being uncircumcised (Gen 34:7, 14), it may also refer to her intimate contact with a non-Israelite.

**34:7** *Israel* here refers to the later audience listening to this story, rather than the name of the individual ancestor, Jacob, from whom it descended.

**34:8-10** *Hamor* proposes an arrangement so that Jacob's family will share citizenship with his family in Shechem and surrounding areas. Jacob's family would be free to intermarry, move about, and own property.

**34:12** A *bride price* is customary for marriage (see notes on Gen 24:53; 31:15). In fact, a man who had sexual relations with an unmarried and unengaged woman was required by Israelite teaching to pay a bride price and marry this woman (Deut 22:28-29).

**34:13** Jacob's sons regarded their devious response and the deadly revenge toward which it leads (Gen 34:25) as a legitimate reaction to their sister's treatment (Gen 34:31). Absalom reacted in the same way in response to what happened to his sister Tamar (2 Sam 13).

**34:14-17** Circumcision was the mark of membership in the Israelite community (Gen 17:9-14).

**34:23** This verse suggests a second, economic motive for Hamor's invitation to Jacob (Gen 34:9-10, 21): gaining at least some of Jacob's wealth.

the city that had defiled their sister. <sup>28</sup>They took their flocks, their cattle, and their donkeys, whether in the city or in the fields nearby. <sup>29</sup>They carried off their property, their children, and their wives. They looted the entire place. <sup>30</sup>Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You've put me in danger by making me offensive to those who live here in the land, to the Canaanites and the Perizzites. I have only a few men. They may join forces, attack me, and destroy me, and my household."

<sup>31</sup>They said, "But didn't he treat our sister like a prostitute?"

**Jacob establishes worship at Bethel**

**35** God said to Jacob, "Get up, go to Bethel, and live there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you ran away from your brother Esau."

<sup>2</sup>Jacob said to his household and to everyone who was with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you. Clean yourselves and change your clothes. <sup>3</sup>Then let's rise and go up to Bethel so that I can build an altar there to the God who answered me when I was in trouble and who has been with me wherever I've gone." <sup>4</sup>So they gave Jacob all of the foreign gods they had, as well as the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the terebinth at Shechem. <sup>5</sup>When they set out, God made all of the surrounding cities fearful so that they didn't pursue Jacob's sons. <sup>6</sup>Jacob and all of the people with him arrived in Luz, otherwise known as Bethel, in the land of Canaan. <sup>7</sup>He built an altar there and named the place El-bethel,<sup>†</sup> because God had revealed himself to him there when he ran away from his brother. <sup>8</sup>Rebekah's nurse Deborah died and was buried at Bethel under the oak, and Jacob named it Allon-bacuth.<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>9</sup>God appeared to Jacob again, while he was on his way back from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. <sup>10</sup>God said to him, "Your name is Jacob, but your name will be Jacob no longer. No, your name will be Israel." And he named him Israel. <sup>11</sup>God said to him, "I am El Shaddai.<sup>‡</sup> Be fertile and multiply. A nation, even a large group of nations, will come from you; kings will descend from your own children. <sup>12</sup>The land I gave to Abraham and to Isaac, I give to you; and I will give the land to your descendants after you." <sup>13</sup>Then God ascended, leaving him alone in the place where he spoke to him. <sup>14</sup>So Jacob set up a sacred pillar, a stone pillar, at the place

34:29 Nm 31:9  
34:30 Ex 5:21;  
Josh 7:25;  
1Sa 13:4;  
1Sa 27:12;  
2Sa 10:6  
35:1 Gn 31:3,  
Gn 35:7  
35:4 Josh 24:26;  
Jgs 9:6  
35:6 Gn 28:19  
35:7 Gn 8:20,  
Gn 28:13,  
Gn 35:1,  
Gn 35:3  
35:8 Gn 24:59  
35:9 Gn 32:29  
35:10 Gn 17:5,  
Gn 32:28;  
1Ki 18:31;  
2Ki 17:34

<sup>†</sup>Or God of Bethel <sup>\*</sup>Or oak of weeping <sup>‡</sup>Or God Almighty or God of the Mountain

34:30-31 Jacob disagrees with his sons Simeon and Levi about how to respond to Shechem. Other texts in the Bible support each position. On the one hand, Israelite teaching prescribes the death penalty for those who engage in some kinds of unacceptable sexual activity (Deut 22:22-27). In fact, Absalom ordered the killing of Amnon when Amnon raped his sister Tamar (2 Sam 13). On the other hand, Israelite teaching states that a man having sexual relations with an unwed and unengaged woman like Dinah will pay the bride price and marry her (Deut 22:28-29), much like Shechem's proposal (Gen 34:11-12). This latter approach, favored by Jacob, appears to be affirmed by this story and the book of Genesis as a whole. Jacob here is the head of the household, and his opinion carries the highest authority. Later, on his deathbed, Jacob disinherits both Simeon and Levi because of their excessive violence (Gen 49:5-7). This story, therefore, reaffirms a value, seen elsewhere in Genesis 21:25-34; 33:1-11, that conflict—between families and between tribes and nations—should be resolved peacefully rather than through violence. Of course, neither this analysis nor the narrative itself takes into consideration the viewpoint of Dinah, the woman at the center of the story. We never hear her voice. This illustrates once again the male-centered character of biblical society, where the welfare of daughters, sisters, and wives is determined by their legal guardians, their fathers, brothers, or husbands. While the story describes a struggle between two male responses, it doesn't explore the response of the female, even though

she is the central character of the story. See sidebar, "Gender in Genesis" at Genesis 3.

35:1-15 Jacob establishes Israelite worship at Bethel.

35:1 In the Yahwist's traditions, Abraham builds Bethel's altar (Gen 12:8; 13:4); while in the Elohist's tradition here, Jacob does (cf. Gen 28:17-18, 20-22).

35:2 This is the only mention of *foreign gods* in Genesis. In the rest of Genesis, Israel's ancestors and their neighbors alike all relate to a single God. Earlier, Jacob's and Rachel's divine images are mentioned without criticism (see the note on Gen 31:19). Clean bodies and clothes are symbolic of religious purification (cf. Exod 19:10, 14).

35:4 A *terebinth* is a sacred tree. The significance of the earrings is unknown, but in several other instances they are associated with divine images (Exod 32:1-4; Judg 8:24-27).

35:8 Jacob's mother, Rebekah, had taken her nurse Deborah with her from Haran when she was brought to Canaan as Isaac's wife (Gen 24:59). She is now part of Jacob's household.

35:9-12 This is the Priest's account of God changing Jacob's name. God's promise to Jacob shares much of the content and many of the words and phrases of the Priest's accounts of God's covenant with Noah in Genesis 9:1, 7; and with Abraham in Genesis 17:1-8 (cf. Gen 28:3-4). The Yahwist's version of God changing Jacob's name is in the story of Jacob's wrestling with God (Gen 32:22-32).

35:14 The *sacred pillar* is what Jacob had set up at Bethel after his dream (Gen 28:18, 22).

35:16 Gn 3:16;  
Gn 35:19;  
Gn 48:7; Ru 4:11;  
Mt 5:2

35:18 Gn 35:24;  
Gn 49:27

35:19 Gn 48:7;  
Ru 4:11; Mt 5:2

35:20 1Sa 10:2

35:21 Mt 4:8

35:22 Gn 46:8;  
Gn 49:4; Ex 1:1;  
1Ch 5:1

35:29 Gn 15:15;  
Gn 25:8-9;  
Gn 49:31

36:11 Gn 36:15;  
Gn 36:16;  
1Ch 1:36;  
Eze 25:13;  
Am 1:12

God spoke to him. He poured an offering of wine on it and then poured oil over it. <sup>15</sup>Jacob named the place Bethel where God spoke to him.

### **Benjamin's birth and Rachel's death**

<sup>16</sup>They left Bethel, and when they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel went into hard labor. <sup>17</sup>During her difficult labor, the midwife said to her, "Don't be afraid. You have another son." <sup>18</sup>As her life faded away, just before she died, she named him Ben-oni,<sup>a</sup> but his father named him Benjamin.<sup>a</sup> <sup>19</sup>Rachel died and was buried near the road to Ephrath, that is, Bethlehem. <sup>20</sup>Jacob set up a pillar on her grave. It's the pillar on Rachel's tomb that's still there today. <sup>21</sup>Israel continued his trip and pitched his tent farther on near the tower of Eder.

### **Jacob's family**

<sup>22</sup>While Israel stayed in that place, Reuben went and slept with Bilhah his father's secondary wife, and Israel heard about it.

Jacob had twelve sons. <sup>23</sup>The sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's oldest son, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. <sup>24</sup>The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin. <sup>25</sup>The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant, were Dan and Naphtali. <sup>26</sup>The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant, were Gad and Asher. These were Jacob's sons born to him in Paddan-aram.

### **Isaac's death**

<sup>27</sup>Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, that is, Kiriath-arba. This is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac lived as immigrants. <sup>28</sup>At the age of 180 years, <sup>29</sup>Isaac took his last breath and died. He was buried with his ancestors after a long, satisfying life. His sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

### **Esau's descendants**

**36** These are the descendants of Esau, that is, Edom. <sup>2</sup>Esau married Canaanite women: Adah the daughter of the Hittite Elon; Oholibamah the daughter of Anah son of the Hittite Zibeon,<sup>b</sup> and Basemath the daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth. <sup>4</sup>Adah gave birth to Eliphaz for Esau, Basemath gave birth to Reuel, <sup>5</sup>and Oholibamah gave birth to Jeshu, Jalam, and Korah. These are Esau's sons born to him in the land of Canaan.

<sup>6</sup>Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and everyone in his household, and his livestock, all of his animals, and all of the property he had acquired in the land of Canaan; and he moved away from the land of Canaan<sup>c</sup> and from his brother Jacob. <sup>7</sup>They had so many possessions that they couldn't live together. The land where they lived as immigrants couldn't support all of their livestock. <sup>8</sup>So Esau, that is, Edom, lived in the mountains of Seir.

<sup>9</sup>These are the descendants of Esau, the ancestor of Edom, which lies in the mountains of Seir. <sup>10</sup>These are the names of Edom's sons: Eliphaz son of Esau's wife Adah, and Reuel son of Esau's wife Basemath. <sup>11</sup>Eliphaz's sons were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. <sup>12</sup>Timna was the secondary wife of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she gave birth to Amalek for Eliphaz. These are the sons of Esau's wife Adah. <sup>13</sup>These are Reuel's sons: Nahath,

<sup>a</sup>Or my suffering son <sup>a</sup>Or right-hand son or strong son <sup>b</sup>LXX, Sam, Syr; MT daughter <sup>c</sup>LXX, Sam; MT to a land

35:16-21 *Benjamin* is the only one of Jacob's sons who is born in Canaan in the general area occupied by his descendants, the tribe of Benjamin. The village of Benjamin's birth, *Ephrath*, is identified with *Bethlehem*, just south of Jerusalem (Gen 48:7). The *pillar* Jacob sets up here (35:20) is similar to the "sacred pillar" set up at Bethel (Gen 28:18) and at the site of the treaty between Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:51). Childbirth, without modern technology to deal with its many possible complications, was often a dangerous event in ancient times (cf. Gen 3:16).

35:22-26 In spite of Reuben's status as oldest male son, he is disinherited because he *slept with Bilhah his father's secondary wife* (Gen 49:3-4). The list of Jacob's sons is arranged according to the status of Jacob's wives, starting with the sons of Jacob's first wife, Leah.

35:27-29 Like Abraham and Sarah, Isaac is buried at *Hebron* (Gen 23:19; 25:9). Both Esau and Jacob bury him.

36:1-43 The conclusion of the Jacob narratives in Genesis

35 is followed by his brother Esau's family tree. It's divided into sections on Esau's family (36:1-5); Esau's settlement in Edom (36:6-8); and Esau's descendants (36:9-19, 40-43). This text also contains a list of descendants of Seir the Horite (36:20-30) and a list of Edomite kings (36:31-39).

36:1-5 Genesis preserves two different traditions about Esau's family: this record of his three wives as *Adah*, *Oholibamah*, and *Basemath*; and another tradition in the preceding stories of his wives as *Judith*, *Basemath* (with different parents), and *Mahalath* (Gen 26:34; 28:9).

36:6-8 This account of Jacob and Esau's separation has similarities with Genesis 33:15-17. It also echoes the earlier separation of Abraham and Lot (Gen 13:6).

36:9-19 The record of Esau's *descendants* in Genesis 36:9-14 is paralleled by the record of Esau's clans in 36:15-18. Of these descendants and clans, only *Amalek* is a significant people in recorded biblical history. In Exodus 17:8-16 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19, Amalek is Israel's enemy.



Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the sons of Esau's wife Basemath. <sup>14</sup>These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah, Zibeon's son:<sup>d</sup> she gave birth to Esau, Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

<sup>15</sup>These are the tribal chiefs from Esau's sons. The sons of Eliphaz, Esau's oldest son: Chief Teman, Chief Omar, Chief Zepho, Chief Kenaz, <sup>16</sup>Chief Korah, Chief Gatam, and Chief Amalek. These are the tribal chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; they are Adah's sons. <sup>17</sup>These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: Chief Nahath, Chief Zerah, Chief Shammah, and Chief Mizzah. These are the tribal chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom; they are the sons of Esau's wife Basemath. <sup>18</sup>These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: Chief Jeush, Chief Jalam, and Chief Korah. They are the tribal chiefs of Esau's wife Oholibamah the daughter of Anah. <sup>19</sup>These are the sons of Esau, who is Edom, and these are their tribal chiefs.

<sup>20</sup>These are the sons of Seir, the Horite, who live in the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, <sup>21</sup>Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These are the Horite tribal chiefs, Seir's sons, in the land of Edom. <sup>22</sup>Lotan's sons are Hori and Heman, and Lotan's sister was Timna. <sup>23</sup>These are Shobal's sons: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. <sup>24</sup>These are Zibeon's sons: Aiah and Anah. Anah is the one who found water<sup>e</sup> in the desert while pasturing his father Zibeon's donkeys.

<sup>25</sup>These are Anah's children: Dishon and Anah's daughter Oholibamah. <sup>26</sup>These are Dishon's<sup>f</sup> sons: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. <sup>27</sup>These are Ezer's sons: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. <sup>28</sup>These are Dishan's sons: Uz and Aran. <sup>29</sup>These are the Horite tribal chiefs: Chiefs Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, <sup>30</sup>Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These are the Horite tribal chiefs, listed according to their chiefs in the land of Seir.

<sup>31</sup>These are the kings who ruled in the land of Edom before a king ruled over the Israelites. <sup>32</sup>Bela, Beor's son, ruled in Edom; his city's name was Dinhabah. <sup>33</sup>After Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah became king. <sup>34</sup>After Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites became king. <sup>35</sup>After Husham died, Hadad, Bedad's son who defeated Midian in the countryside of Moab, became king; his city's name was Avith. <sup>36</sup>After Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah became king. <sup>37</sup>After Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the river became king. <sup>38</sup>After Shaul died, Baal-hanan, Achbor's son, became king. <sup>39</sup>After Baal-hanan, Achbor's son, died, Hadar became king; his city's name was Pau and his wife's name was Mehetabel the daughter of Matred and granddaughter of Me-zahab.

<sup>40</sup>These are the names of Esau's tribal chiefs according to their families, their locations, and their names: Chief Timna, Chief Alvah, Chief Jetheth, <sup>41</sup>Chief Oholibamah, Chief Elah, Chief Pinon, <sup>42</sup>Chief Kenaz, Chief Teman, Chief Mibzar, <sup>43</sup>Chief Magdiel, and Chief Iram. These are Edom's tribal chiefs according to their settlements in the land they possessed. This is Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites.

*Joseph dreams of power*

**37** Jacob lived in the land of Canaan where his father was an immigrant. <sup>2</sup>This is the account of Jacob's descendants. Joseph was 17 years old and tended the flock with his brothers. While he was helping the sons of Bihah and Zilpah, his father's wives, Joseph told

<sup>d</sup>LXX, Sam, Syr; MT *daughter* <sup>e</sup>Syr; Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Sam, Syr; MT *Dishan's*

36:20-30 The *Horites* are a people who occupy Edomite territory together with Esau's descendants (Gen 14:6; Deut 2:12, 22). Among them is Esau's wife *Oholibamah* (Gen 36:2, 25).

36:31-39 The tradition that kings reigned in Edom before in Israel (36:31) is related to the memory of Esau being Jacob's (Israel's) older brother (Gen 25:23).

36:40-43 This is a different record of the tribal chiefs descended from Esau than the one in Genesis 36:15-19. Only Kenaz and Teman appear in both lists.

37:1-50:26 The last major section of the book of Genesis recounts the story of Joseph, Jacob's favorite son (Gen 33:2; 37:3-4). Like the story of Jacob and Esau before it, the Joseph narrative begins with a falling-out between brothers and concludes with their reconciliation (see sidebar,

"Family Conflict in Genesis" at Gen 4). Also like the story of Jacob and Esau, the main character is forced away from home before reuniting with his family. Unlike the Jacob story, the Joseph story doesn't end in the land of Canaan. It describes how Jacob's family moved to Egypt because of a severe famine in Canaan. It thus provides the transition to the next major events in the stories of Israel's ancestors: slavery and deliverance in the land of Egypt (Exod 1-15). **37:1-36** This story of the split between Joseph and his brothers contains a number of details that contrast or conflict with each other. They can be best explained as coming from two writers, whose different stories have been skillfully combined here. In the Yahwist's story, set in the south (37:14), Joseph's brothers are jealous of Jacob's love for Joseph and his long robe (37:3-4). Judah persuades

36:15 Gn 36:11; Ex 15:15  
36:42 1Ch 1:53  
37:1 Gn 17:8, Gn 28:4  
37:2 Gn 35:25-26, Gn 41:46

37:4 Gn 27:41;  
1Sa 17:28  
37:7 Gn 42:6,  
Gn 42:9,  
Gn 43:26,  
Gn 43:28,  
Gn 44:14  
37:9 Gn 37:7  
37:10 Gn 27:29  
37:14 Gn 13:18,  
Gn 35:27,  
1Sa 17:18  
37:18 Ps 31:13,  
Ps 37:12,  
Ps 37:32;  
Mk 14:1;  
Ac 23:12  
37:19 Gn 28:12,  
Gn 37:20  
37:20 Gn 37:33  
37:22 Gn 37:29

their father unflattering things about them. <sup>3</sup>Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he was born when Jacob was old. Jacob had made for him a long<sup>g</sup> robe. <sup>4</sup>When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him and couldn't even talk nicely to him.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph had a dream and told it to his brothers, which made them hate him even more. <sup>6</sup>He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had. <sup>7</sup>When we were binding stalks of grain in the field, my stalk got up and stood upright, while your stalks gathered around it and bowed down to my stalk."

<sup>8</sup>His brothers said to him, "Will you really be our king and rule over us?" So they hated him even more because of the dreams he told them.

<sup>9</sup>Then Joseph had another dream and described it to his brothers: "I've just dreamed again, and this time the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

<sup>10</sup>When he described it to his father and brothers, his father scolded him and said to him, "What kind of dreams have you dreamed? Am I and your mother and your brothers supposed to come and bow down to the ground in front of you?" <sup>11</sup>His brothers were jealous of him, but his father took careful note of the matter.

### Joseph's brothers take revenge

<sup>12</sup>Joseph's brothers went to tend their father's flocks near Shechem. <sup>13</sup>Israel said to Joseph, "Aren't your brothers tending the sheep near Shechem? Come, I'll send you to them." And he said, "I'm ready."

<sup>14</sup>Jacob said to him, "Go! Find out how your brothers are and how the flock is, and report back to me."

So Jacob sent him from the Hebron Valley. When he approached Shechem, <sup>15a</sup>a man found him wandering in the field and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

<sup>16</sup>Joseph said, "I'm looking for my brothers. Tell me, where are they tending the sheep?"

<sup>17</sup>The man said, "They left here. I heard them saying, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.

<sup>18</sup>They saw Joseph in the distance before he got close to them, and they plotted to kill him. <sup>19</sup>The brothers said to each other, "Here comes the big dreamer. <sup>20</sup>Come on now, let's kill him and throw him into one of the cisterns, and we'll say a wild animal devoured him. Then we will see what becomes of his dreams!"

<sup>21</sup>When Reuben heard what they said, he saved him from them, telling them, "Let's not take his life." <sup>22</sup>Reuben said to them, "Don't spill his blood! Throw him into this desert cistern, but don't lay a hand on him." He intended to save Joseph from them and take him back to his father.

<sup>g</sup>LXX *many-colored*

them not to kill Joseph but to sell him to Ishmaelite traders (37:25-27), who carry Joseph to Egypt and sell him to Potiphar, Pharaoh's chief officer (37:28b; cf. Gen 39:1). In the Elohist's story, set in the north (37:12, 17), Joseph's brothers are jealous of Joseph's dreams (37:5-11). Reuben persuades them not to kill Joseph but to throw him into a dry cistern, hoping to later rescue him (37:19-22, 24). Midianite traders find Joseph, pull him from the cistern (37:28a), carry him to Egypt, and sell him to Potiphar (37:36). Reuben is heartbroken at Joseph's disappearance (37:29-30). 37:1-11 The Joseph story begins with the conflict that drives the brothers apart. For similar conflict and separation between brothers, see Genesis 21:8-14; 27:41-45. 37:1-2 The Joseph story is introduced by the Priest's phrase used elsewhere in Genesis to introduce genealogies: *This is the account of Jacob's descendants* (Gen 2:4a; 5:1; 6:9; etc.). In his introduction, the Priest gives his own explanation for the conflict between Joseph and his brothers: Joseph said *unflattering things about them to their father, Jacob*. 37:3-4 These verses point to the Yahwist's version of the conflict: Joseph's brothers were jealous because Jacob/Israel *loved Joseph more* and gave him a *long robe*. The

rare Hebrew word translated "long" appears to refer to the palms of the hands or soles of the feet. Thus, the garment is probably "a long robe with sleeves" (cf. 2 Sam 13:18, 19) or simply an ankle-length robe. The traditional translation, "a coat of many colors," is based on the old Greek translation (LXX), which took this unusual Hebrew term to mean "multicolored."

37:5-11 Readers here find the Elohist's reason for the conflict between Joseph and his brothers (cf. Gen 37:2, 3-4). Joseph has dreams that predict his superiority in the family. On dreams elsewhere in Genesis, see Genesis 20:3; 28:12.

37:12-39 Initially, the brothers plot to kill Joseph out of jealousy, just as Cain killed his brother, Abel (Gen 4:4-7; cf. Gen 27:41-45). However, Joseph's brothers back away from such a plan.

37:12 *Shechem* is a major city in the north (cf. Gen 12:5-7). 37:14 *Hebron* is a major city in the south (cf. Gen 13:18).

37:17 *Dothan* is located in the north like Shechem (Gen 37:12).

37:19-22 *Reuben*, the Elohist's hero, is Jacob's oldest son. Here he appealed for Joseph's life with the hope of rescuing him later from the cistern into which they threw him.

<sup>23</sup>When Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped off Joseph's long robe, <sup>24</sup>took him, and threw him into the cistern, an empty cistern with no water in it. <sup>25</sup>When they sat down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with camels carrying sweet resin, medicinal resin, and fragrant resin on their way down to Egypt. <sup>26</sup>Judah said to his brothers, "What do we gain if we kill our brother and hide his blood? <sup>27</sup>Come on, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites. Let's not harm him because he's our brother; he's family." His brothers agreed. <sup>28</sup>When some Midianite traders passed by, they pulled Joseph up out of the cistern. They sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, and they brought Joseph to Egypt.

<sup>29</sup>When Reuben returned to the cistern and found that Joseph wasn't in it, he tore his clothes. <sup>30</sup>Then he returned to his brothers and said, "The boy's gone! And I—where can I go now?"

<sup>31</sup>His brothers took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a male goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. <sup>32</sup>They took the long robe, brought it to their father, and said, "We found this. See if it's your son's robe or not."

<sup>33</sup>He recognized it and said, "It's my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him. Joseph must have been torn to pieces!" <sup>34</sup>Then Jacob tore his clothes, put a simple mourning cloth around his waist, and mourned for his son for many days. <sup>35</sup>All of his sons and daughters got up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted, telling them, "I'll go to my grave mourning for my son." And Joseph's father wept for him. <sup>36</sup>Meanwhile the Midianites had sold Joseph to the Egyptians, to Potiphar, Pharaoh's chief officer, commander of the royal guard.

**Tamar's place in Judah's family**

**38**At that time, Judah moved away from his brothers and settled near an Adullamite named Hirah. <sup>2</sup>There Judah saw the daughter of a Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her. After he slept with her, <sup>3</sup>she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, whom she<sup>b</sup> named Er. <sup>4</sup>She became pregnant again, gave birth to a son, and named him Onan. <sup>5</sup>Then she gave birth to one more son and named him Shelah. She was in Chezib when she gave birth to him.

<sup>6</sup>Judah married his oldest son Er to a woman named Tamar. <sup>7</sup>But the LORD considered Judah's oldest son Er immoral, and the LORD put him to death. <sup>8</sup>Judah said to Onan, "Go to your brother's wife, do your duty as her brother-in-law, and provide children for your brother." <sup>9</sup>Onan knew the children wouldn't be his so when he slept with his brother's wife, he wasted his semen on the ground, so he wouldn't give his brother children. <sup>10</sup>The LORD considered what he did as wrong and put him to death too. <sup>11</sup>Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law,

<sup>b</sup>Sam, Tg; MT *he*

37:25-27 *Judah*, the Yahwist's hero, is Jacob's fourth son and the ancestor of King David. Here he appealed for Joseph's life and convinced his brothers to sell him to Ishmaelite traders. The identity of the traders who carried Joseph to Egypt varies between the *Ishmaelites* (37:25, 27, 28b) in the Yahwist's story; and the *Midianites* in the Elohist's story (Gen 37:28a, 36).

37:29, 34 Tearing one's clothes is a sign of grief and dismay in the Bible (Num 14:6; Judg 11:35). Similarly, *mourning cloth* is a traditional sign of loss and sorrow (1 Kgs 21:27).

38:1-30 The story of Tamar temporarily interrupts the Joseph narratives. It's the story of a woman who, like other important women before her (e.g., Rebekah in Gen 27), works within the male-dominated structures of her society to achieve her goals and change the direction of Israelite history. The sexual relationships in this story can be understood only within the realities of ancient Israelite society, as the notes below illustrate. The story has been preserved in Genesis in part because it relates to the family of Judah, from which King David descended (Ruth 4:18-22; Matt 1:1-6).

38:1-6 Earlier generations of Israel's ancestors had married only members of their family from Haran (Gen 24:3;

28:1-2). As a result, it's interesting that Judah, David's own ancestor, marries Shua's daughter, a *Canaanite* woman. Since Judah is living *away from his brothers* among Canaanites, *Tamar*, the wife he selects for his oldest son *Er*, may also be Canaanite.

38:7-10 Judah's instructions to *Onan* are strange to the modern reader. However, they are based on an Israelite custom designed to protect widows and to maintain stable families. In biblical times, married women depended on their husbands and sons for economic support. A woman without a husband or sons, like Tamar, would have difficulty finding a way to survive. To protect the childless widow, an Israelite law required that the deceased husband's brother have sexual relations with his sister-in-law. As a result, she could have children who would in time provide economic support for their mother (Deut 25:5-10). They would also be regarded as the sons of the woman's deceased husband. However, brothers frequently resisted their responsibility, as Onan does in this story (cf. Deut 25:7-10). They did so because they saw their older brother's sons as their rivals to the family's inheritance and estate.

38:11 Tamar has become a social and economic member

37:23 Gn 37:3

37:25 Gn 37:28, Gn 39:1, Gn 43:1; Jer 8:22, Jer 46:11

37:28 Gn 37:36, Gn 39:1, Gn 45:4; Ps 105:17; Ac 7:9

37:29 Gn 37:34, Gn 44:13; Nm 14:6; Job 1:20

37:33 Gn 37:20, Gn 44:28

37:35 Gn 42:38, Gn 44:29, Gn 44:31; Job 2:11; Jer 31:15

37:36 Gn 37:28, Gn 39:1, Gn 41:10

38:1 Josh 15:35; 1Sa 22:1; Mi 1:15

38:4 Gn 38:8, Gn 46:12; Nm 26:19; 1Ch 2:3

38:5 Gn 38:11, Gn 38:26, Gn 46:12; Nm 26:20; 1Ch 4:21

38:6 Gn 38:3, Gn 38:7, Gn 38:11, Gn 38:13, Gn 46:12

38:9 Dt 25:6

38:12 Gn 31:19,  
Gn 38:1-2;  
Josh 15:10;  
Jgs 14:1

38:13 Gn 31:19

38:14 Gn 24:65,  
Gn 38:11,  
Gn 38:19,  
Gn 38:26

38:15 Jgs 11:1,  
Jgs 16:1

38:16 Lv 18:15;  
2Sa 13:11;  
Eze 16:33

38:17 Gn 38:20;  
Jgs 15:1

38:18 Gn 38:25;  
Jer 22:24;  
Hg 2:23

38:19 Gn 38:14;  
2Sa 14:2

38:20 Gn 38:1

38:24 Lv 20:14,  
Lv 21:9

38:25 Gn 37:32;  
Gn 38:18

38:26 Gn 38:11,  
Gn 38:14;  
1Sa 24:17

38:27 Gn 25:24

38:28 Gn 35:17

38:29 Gn 46:12;  
Nm 26:20;  
Ru 4:12; 1Ch 2:4;  
Mt 1:3

"Stay as a widow in your father's household until my son Shelah grows up." He thought Shelah would die like his brothers had. So Tamar went and lived in her father's household.

<sup>12</sup>After a long time, Judah's wife the daughter of Shua died. Then, after a period of mourning, he and his neighbor Hirah the Adullamite went up to Timnah, to those who were shearing his sheep. <sup>13</sup>Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is now on his way up to Timnah to shear his sheep." <sup>14</sup>So Tamar took off the clothing she wore as a widow, covered herself with a veil, put on makeup,<sup>1</sup> and sat down at the entrance to Enaim on the road to Timnah, since she realized that although Shelah had already grown up, she hadn't been given to him as a wife.

<sup>15</sup>Judah saw her and thought she was a prostitute because she had covered her face. <sup>16</sup>He turned to her beside the road and said, "Let me sleep with you," because he didn't know she was his daughter-in-law.

She said, "What will you give me for sleeping with you?"

<sup>17</sup>He said, "I will give you a kid goat from my flock."

She said, "Only if you give me some deposit, as security to guarantee that you will send it."

<sup>18</sup>He said, "What kind of deposit should I give you?"

And she said, "Your seal, its cord, and the staff in your hand." He gave these to her, slept with her, and she became pregnant by him.

<sup>19</sup>Then she got up, left, and took off her veil, dressing once again in the clothing she wore as a widow. <sup>20</sup>Judah sent the kid goat with his neighbor the Adullamite so he could take back the deposits from the woman, but he couldn't find her. <sup>21</sup>He asked the locals of that place, "Where's the consecrated worker<sup>1</sup> who was at Enaim on the road?"

But they said, "There's no consecrated worker here."

<sup>22</sup>So he went back to Judah and said, "I couldn't find her. The locals even said, 'There's no holy woman here.'"

<sup>23</sup>Judah said, "Let her keep everything so we aren't laughed at. I did send this kid goat, but you couldn't find her."

<sup>24</sup>About three months later, Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has become a prostitute and is now pregnant because of it."

And Judah said, "Bring her out so that she may be burned."

<sup>25</sup>When she was brought out, she sent this message to her father-in-law, "I'm pregnant by the man who owns these things. See if you recognize whose seal, cord, and staff these are."

<sup>26</sup>Judah recognized them and said, "She's more righteous than I am, because I didn't allow her to marry my son Shelah." Judah never knew her intimately again.

<sup>27</sup>When she gave birth, she discovered she had twins in her womb. <sup>28</sup>At birth, one boy put out his hand, and the midwife took it and tied a red thread on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." <sup>29</sup>As soon as he pulled his hand back, his brother came out, and she said,

<sup>1</sup>Or *perfumed herself* or *wrapped herself up* <sup>1</sup>Traditionally *cultic prostitute*

of Judah's household through marriage to his son Er. So when Judah told Tamar to stay in her *father's household*, he abandoned his legal responsibilities toward her. Though Judah presents his action as a temporary solution, the storyteller suggests that Judah wanted to protect his last son, *Shelah*, and had no intention of taking her back (Gen 38:14). 38:12-16 Without a husband or children, Tamar has no status or future in her ancient society (cf. Gen 30:1). She has been placed in this position because Judah, the man responsible for her, has failed at his responsibilities. Her only option is to take matters into her own hands. She comes up with a plan to trick Judah into fulfilling his responsibilities required by Israelite law. Her plan is to sleep with Judah.

38:17-18 Tamar tells Judah the *deposit* is to *guarantee* future payment. However, her real reason appears to be identifying Judah as the father of her child should she become pregnant (Gen 38:22, 25). The narrator doesn't criticize Judah for going to a prostitute.

38:21-22 Both *consecrated worker* and *holy woman* translate the same Hebrew word. Why Judah's friend asks for the holy woman rather than the "prostitute" (a different

Hebrew word in Gen 38:15) is unclear. The Hebrew word for *holy woman* has traditionally been interpreted as a "temple prostitute" (NRSV; see CEB translation note j). Some biblical scholars claim that religious prostitution existed in the ancient Near East (cf. Hos 4:14). The idea is that people engaged in ritual sexual relations at a holy site to promote fertility. However, there is virtually no evidence that such practices existed.

38:24 Texts like Deuteronomy 22:22 prescribe the death penalty for sexual relations outside marriage and outside the special norms for a widow (see note on Gen 38:7-10).

38:26 Judah admits that he hasn't fulfilled his responsibilities to Tamar, who is a member of his family. He even recognizes her actions as just and fair. Modern readers may be troubled by her acting as a prostitute and sleeping with her father-in-law. However, the story itself completely defends Tamar. The story thus praises women who claim their rights when the men responsible for them fail to do what is right.

38:29 *Perez* is the son of Judah. King David will descend from him (Ruth 4:18-22; Matt 1:1-6).

"You've burst out on your own." So he was named Perez.<sup>h</sup> <sup>30</sup>Afterward, his brother with the red thread on his hand came out, and he was named Zerah.<sup>1</sup>

**Joseph's rise and betrayal**

**39**When Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, Potiphar, Pharaoh's chief officer, the commander of the royal guard and an Egyptian, purchased him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. <sup>2</sup>The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man and served in his Egyptian master's household. <sup>3</sup>His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he did successful. <sup>4</sup>Potiphar thought highly of Joseph, and Joseph became his assistant; he appointed Joseph head of his household and put everything he had under Joseph's supervision. <sup>5</sup>From the time he appointed Joseph head of his household and of everything he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's household because of Joseph. The LORD blessed everything he had, both in the household and in the field. <sup>6</sup>So he handed over everything he had to Joseph and didn't pay attention to anything except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome.

<sup>7</sup>Some time later, his master's wife became attracted to Joseph and said, "Sleep with me."

<sup>8</sup>He refused and said to his master's wife, "With me here, my master doesn't pay attention to anything in his household; he's put everything he has under my supervision. <sup>9</sup>No one is greater than I am in this household, and he hasn't denied me anything except you, since you are his wife. How could I do this terrible thing and sin against God?" <sup>10</sup>Every single day she tried to convince him, but he wouldn't agree to sleep with her or even to be with her.

<sup>11</sup>One day when Joseph arrived at the house to do his work, none of the household's men were there. <sup>12</sup>She grabbed his garment, saying, "Lie down with me." But he left his garment in her hands and ran outside. <sup>13</sup>When she realized that he had left his garment in her hands and run outside, <sup>14</sup>she summoned the men of her house and said to them, "Look, my husband brought us a Hebrew to ridicule us. He came to me to lie down with me, but I screamed. <sup>15</sup>When he heard me raise my voice and scream, he left his garment with me and ran outside." <sup>16</sup>She kept his garment with her until Joseph's master came home, <sup>17</sup>and she told him the same thing: "The Hebrew slave whom you brought to us, to ridicule me, came to me; <sup>18</sup>but when I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment with me and ran outside."

<sup>19</sup>When Joseph's master heard the thing that his wife told him, "This is what your servant did to me," he was incensed. <sup>20</sup>Joseph's master took him and threw him in jail, the place where the king's prisoners were held. While he was in jail, <sup>21</sup>the LORD was with Joseph and remained loyal to him. He caused the jail's commander to think highly of Joseph. <sup>22</sup>The jail's commander put all of the prisoners in the jail under Joseph's supervision, and he was the one who determined everything that happened there. <sup>23</sup>The jail's commander paid no attention to anything under Joseph's supervision, because the LORD was with him and made everything he did successful.

**Joseph interprets dreams in prison**

**40**Some time later, both the wine steward and the baker for Egypt's king offended their master, the king of Egypt. <sup>2</sup>Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief wine

<sup>h</sup>Or bursting out <sup>1</sup>Or dawn

38:30 Gn 46:12; 1Ch 2:4  
 39:1 Gn 37:25, Gn 37:28, Gn 37:36; Ps 105:17  
 39:2 Gn 21:22, Gn 39:21, Gn 39:23; Ac 7:9  
 39:3 Gn 21:22, Gn 39:23; 2Ch 26:5; Ps 1:3  
 39:4 Gn 18:3, Gn 19:19, Gn 24:2, Gn 39:8, Gn 39:21  
 39:5 Gn 30:27; Dt 28:3; 2Sa 6:11  
 39:6 Gn 29:17; 1Sa 16:12  
 39:7 2Sa 13:11; Job 31:1; Prv 2:16, Prv 7:15  
 39:8 Gn 39:4; Prv 6:23  
 39:9 Gn 42:18; 2Sa 12:13; Ps 51:4  
 39:12 Prv 7:13  
 39:14 Gn 14:13, Gn 40:15  
 39:15 Gn 39:12  
 39:17 Ex 20:16, Ex 23:1  
 39:19 Prv 6:34  
 39:20 Gn 40:3, Gn 40:15, Gn 41:14; Ps 105:18  
 39:23 Gn 39:2, Gn 39:3

39:1-23 This story focuses on the abuse of power and the importance of integrity. Such themes are common in world literature. In the Egyptian "Story of Two Brothers," the wife of the older brother tries to seduce the younger. She accuses him of rape when he resists her advances. In the Joseph narrative, these same themes appear. The abuse of power is represented by a woman with higher status, and the importance of integrity is represented by a man with lower status. The story emphasizes Joseph's character and God's presence with him. The story also provides a look ahead to Egyptian abuses of power when the Israelites are slaves in the book of Exodus.

39:1 On the *Ishmaelites*, see note on Genesis 37:25.  
 39:5 As in Genesis 12:3; 30:27, God's blessing overflows to people who come into contact with Israel's ancestors.

39:6 Joseph's *handsome* looks are described in the same Hebrew words as his mother's beauty (Gen 29:17).  
 39:14-19 Deuteronomy 22:23-27 instructs women to cry out for help when sexually assaulted. Her cry is accepted as evidence against the man. So to make Joseph appear guilty, Potiphar's wife claims she *screamed*. Of course, her status as Potiphar's wife and Joseph's status as a slave are the primary reasons her account is accepted.  
 39:20-23 *in jail*: Just as in Potiphar's household, Joseph rises to power because of the Lord's presence with him.  
 40:1-41:57 This story describes Joseph's rise to power in Egypt. He ends up in a position of authority second only to the king of Egypt. Joseph reaches such status not through his own political skills but because of his ability to interpret dreams, an ability given to him by God (40:8);

40:4 Gn 30:24,  
Gn 33:2,  
Gn 37:2,  
Gn 37:28,  
Gn 37:36

40:7 Neh 2:2  
40:8  
Gn 41:15-16;  
Dn 2:28,  
Dn 2:47

40:14 Gn 41:9;  
Josh 2:12;  
1Sa 20:14;  
1Ki 2:7

40:15 Gn 14:13,  
Gn 39:20;  
2Co 11:22

40:20 Gn 40:13,  
Gn 40:19;  
Mt 14:6;  
Mk 6:21

40:22 Gn 40:19

40:23 Ecc 9:15

41:1 Gn 40:5,  
Gn 41:17;  
Ex 1:22

steward and the chief baker,<sup>3</sup> and he put them under arrest with the commander of the royal guard in the same jail where Joseph was imprisoned. <sup>4</sup>The commander of the royal guard assigned Joseph to assist them. After they had been under arrest for some time, <sup>5</sup>both of them—the wine steward and the baker for Egypt's king who were imprisoned in the jail—had dreams one night, and each man's dream had its own meaning. <sup>6</sup>When Joseph met them in the morning, he saw that they were upset. <sup>7</sup>He asked the officers of Pharaoh who were under arrest with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so distressed today?"

<sup>8</sup>They answered, "We've both had dreams, but there's no one to interpret them."

Joseph said to them, "Don't interpretations belong to God? Describe your dreams to me."

<sup>9</sup>The chief wine steward described his dream to Joseph: "In my dream there was a vine right in front of me, <sup>10</sup>and on the vine were three branches. When it budded, its blossoms appeared, and its clusters ripened into grapes. <sup>11</sup>Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, so I took the grapes, crushed them into Pharaoh's cup, and put the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

<sup>12</sup>Joseph said to him, "This is the dream's interpretation: The three branches are three days. <sup>13</sup>After three days, Pharaoh will give you an audience and return you to your position. You will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just the way things were before when you were his wine steward. <sup>14</sup>But please, remember me when you are doing well and be loyal to me. Put in a good word for me to Pharaoh, so he sets me free from this prison. <sup>15</sup>I was stolen from the land of the Hebrews, and here too I've done nothing to be thrown into this dungeon."

<sup>16</sup>When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, "It was the same for me. In my dream, there were three baskets of white bread<sup>m</sup> on my head. <sup>17</sup>In the basket on top there were baked goods for Pharaoh's food, but birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."

<sup>18</sup>Joseph responded, "This is the dream's interpretation: The three baskets are three days.

<sup>19</sup>After three days, Pharaoh will give you an audience and will hang you from a tree where birds will peck your flesh from you."

<sup>20</sup>The third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he gave a party for all of his servants. Before all of his servants, he gave an audience to the chief wine steward and the chief baker. <sup>21</sup>He returned the chief wine steward to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. <sup>22</sup>But the chief baker he hanged, just as Joseph had said would happen when he interpreted their dreams for them. <sup>23</sup>But the chief wine steward didn't remember Joseph; he forgot all about him.

### Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams

**41** Two years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing near the Nile. <sup>2</sup>In front of him, seven healthy-looking, fattened cows climbed up out of the Nile and grazed on the reeds. <sup>3</sup>Just then, seven other cows, terrible-looking and scrawny, climbed up out of the Nile after them and stood beside them on the bank of the Nile. <sup>4</sup>The terrible-looking, scrawny cows devoured the seven healthy-looking, fattened cows. Then Pharaoh woke

<sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain

41:16, 38-39). Dreams were widely regarded in the ancient Near East as a means by which God communicated with human beings. Through these nighttime messages, God gave instructions or alerted people to coming events. Dreams are a special mark of the Elohist's stories (Gen 20:3, 6; 28:12; 31:10-11, 24; 37:5-11).

40:1-23 Dreams occur in pairs in Genesis, a fact that confirms they are reliable (Gen 41:32). The first two dreams that Joseph interprets are those of Pharaoh's wine steward and his baker. Joseph's relationship to Pharaoh's wine steward becomes the basis for his release at a later time (Gen 41:9-14).

40:1 Pharaoh's *wine steward* and *baker* held important roles in the court because they controlled access to the king's food. They had to be trusted completely, since poisoning food was one of the most common ways for rivals and traitors to harm their king. We aren't told why they had *offended their master*.

40:8 Joseph's own *dreams* ignited his brothers' anger and

got him into this difficulty (Gen 37:5-11). Now he will interpret dreams to get himself out of prison.

40:15 Joseph's reference to being *stolen from the land* refers back to Midianite traders finding Joseph in a desert cistern, pulling him out, and bringing him to Egypt to sell him as a slave (Gen 37:21-22, 24, 28a, 36; see note on Gen 37:1-36).

40:23 Two years later, when Pharaoh needs dreams interpreted, the *wine steward* will remember how Joseph interpreted his own dreams. At that time, the steward will recommend him to Pharaoh (Gen 41:9-13).

41:1-32 Having proved himself a reliable interpreter of dreams in jail (Gen 40:1-23), Joseph now interprets the dreams of the king of Egypt. As a result, he gains power second only to that of Pharaoh himself (Gen 41:33-57).

41:1 The *Nile River* is the site of Pharaoh's dream. Egypt has been described as "the gift of the Nile." From ancient times, nearly all of Egypt's people lived in the Nile Valley and depended on this river to survive. Today, the Nile

up. <sup>5</sup>He went back to sleep and had a second dream, in which seven ears of grain, full and healthy, grew on a single stalk. <sup>6</sup>Just then, seven ears of grain, scrawny and scorched by the east wind, sprouted after them, <sup>7</sup>and the scrawny ears swallowed up the full and well-formed ears. Then Pharaoh woke up and realized it was a dream. <sup>8</sup>In the morning, he was disturbed and summoned all of Egypt's religious experts<sup>a</sup> and all of its advisors. Pharaoh described his dreams<sup>b</sup> to them, but they couldn't interpret them for Pharaoh.

<sup>9</sup>Then the chief wine steward spoke to Pharaoh: "Today I've just remembered my mistake. <sup>10</sup>Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker under arrest with the commander of the royal guard. <sup>11</sup>We both dreamed one night, he and I, and each of our dreams had its own interpretation. <sup>12</sup>A young Hebrew man, a servant of the commander of the royal guard, was with us. We described our dreams to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us, giving us an interpretation for each dream. <sup>13</sup>His interpretations came true exactly: Pharaoh restored me to my position but hanged him."

<sup>14</sup>So Pharaoh summoned Joseph, and they quickly brought him from the dungeon. He shaved, changed clothes, and appeared before Pharaoh. <sup>15</sup>Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, but no one could interpret it. Then I heard that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it."

<sup>16</sup>Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It's not me. God will give Pharaoh a favorable response."

<sup>17</sup>So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile. <sup>18</sup>In front of me, seven fattened, stout cows climbed up out of the Nile and grazed on the reeds. <sup>19</sup>Just then, seven other cows, weak and frail and thin, climbed up after them. I've never seen such awful cows in all the land of Egypt. <sup>20</sup>Then the thin, frail cows devoured the first seven, fattened cows. <sup>21</sup>But after they swallowed them whole, no one would have known it. They looked just as bad as they had before. Then I woke up. <sup>22</sup>I went to sleep again<sup>c</sup> and saw in my dream seven full and healthy ears of grain growing on one stalk. <sup>23</sup>Just then, seven hard and thin ears of grain, scorched by the east wind, sprouted after them, <sup>24</sup>and the thin ears swallowed up the healthy ears. I told the religious experts,<sup>d</sup> but they couldn't explain it to me."

<sup>25</sup>Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh has actually had one dream. God has announced to Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>26</sup>The seven healthy cows are seven years, and the seven healthy ears of grain are seven years. It's actually one dream. <sup>27</sup>The seven thin and frail cows, climbing up after them, are seven years. The seven thin ears of grain, scorched by the east wind, are seven years of famine. <sup>28</sup>It's just as I told Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>29</sup>Seven years of great abundance are now coming throughout the entire land of Egypt. <sup>30</sup>After them, seven years of famine will appear, and all of the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten. The famine will devastate the land. <sup>31</sup>No one will remember the abundance in the land because the famine that follows will be so very severe. <sup>32</sup>The dream occurred to Pharaoh twice because God has determined to do it, and God will make it happen soon.

**Joseph's rise to power**

<sup>33</sup>"Now Pharaoh should find an intelligent, wise man and give him authority over the land of Egypt. <sup>34</sup>Then Pharaoh should appoint administrators over the land and take one-fifth of

<sup>a</sup>Or magicians <sup>o</sup>Sam; MT *dream* <sup>p</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT lacks *I went to sleep again*. <sup>q</sup>Or magicians

Valley makes up less than 5 percent of Egypt's land area, but it's home to over 95 percent of its population.

41:5 Two dreams with the same theme are considered particularly reliable (Gen 41:32; 37:5-11; see note on Gen 40:1-23).

41:8 The word for *religious experts* in this story may be borrowed from the Egyptian language. These officers are found only in Pharaoh's court. Later they have the ability to duplicate some (but not all) of Moses' amazing acts (Exod 7:11; 8:7, 18-19).

41:16 Joseph always gives *God* credit for interpreting dreams (Gen 41:28, 39; 40:8).

41:17-24 Detailed repetition of previous events is a common feature of stories from the biblical world (cf. Gen 24:34-49).

41:27-31 Egypt's agricultural economy has been one of the most stable in the Middle East, due to the regular flow

of the Nile, which is fed by rains and rivers across a broad area of northeastern Africa. It was the breadbasket of the Mediterranean world. Famine is therefore a remarkable event, more unusual in Egypt than in Canaan, where rainfall was always variable (Gen 12:10; 26:1).

41:33-57 Because of Joseph's wisdom, he gains power over all Pharaoh's other officials. His position is second only to Pharaoh, a post known as vizier in Egyptian records. It's impossible to place this story in any known historical setting in Egyptian history. Yet the idea of a foreigner achieving high status in the Egyptian administration isn't entirely fanciful. Egyptian records identify some non-Egyptians in high official roles during the 14th and 13th centuries BCE.

41:34-36 Joseph suggests centralized control of Egypt's agricultural economy and a 20 percent tax in order to stockpile *reserved* food in preparation for the coming *famine*.

41:9 Gn 40:14  
41:17 Gn 41:1  
41:22 Gn 41:5  
41:25 Gn 40:12;  
Dn 2:28;  
Dn 2:45  
41:29 Gn 41:47  
41:32 Gn 41:25;  
Gn 41:28;  
Nm 23:19;  
Is 14:24, Is 46:10  
41:33 Gn 41:39;  
Dt 1:13

41:38 Nm 27:18;  
Dn 4:8,  
Dn 4:18,  
Dn 5:11,  
Dn 5:14  
41:39 Gn 41:16,  
Gn 41:33  
41:40 Ps 105:21;  
Ac 7:10  
41:42 Est 3:10,  
Est 8:2;  
Eze 16:11;  
Dn 5:7, Dn 5:29  
41:43 Gn 45:8,  
Gn 46:29;  
Est 6:9  
41:44 Ps 105:22  
41:45 Gn 41:50,  
Gn 46:20;  
Eze 30:17  
41:49 Gn 22:17,  
Gn 41:54;  
Jgs 7:12;  
1Sa 13:5;  
Ps 78:27  
41:50 Gn 41:45,  
Gn 46:20,  
Gn 48:5  
41:51 Gn 48:5,  
Gn 48:14  
41:52 Gn 48:5,  
Gn 49:22  
41:54 Gn 41:30,  
Ps 105:16;  
Ac 7:11  
41:55 Gn 41:41  
41:56 Gn 42:6,  
Gn 47:14  
41:57 Gn 41:54,  
Gn 41:56,  
Gn 42:5  
42:1 Ac 7:12  
42:2 Gn 43:2,  
Gn 43:8

all the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. <sup>35</sup>During the good years that are coming, they should collect all such food and store the grain under Pharaoh's control, protecting the food in the cities. <sup>36</sup>This food will be reserved for the seven years of famine to follow in the land of Egypt so that the land won't be ravaged by the famine."

<sup>37</sup>This advice seemed wise to Pharaoh and all his servants, <sup>38</sup>and Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man with more God-given gifts<sup>f</sup> than this one?" <sup>39</sup>Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, no one is as intelligent and wise as you are. <sup>40</sup>You will be in charge of my kingdom,<sup>g</sup> and all my people will obey<sup>g</sup> your command. Only as the enthroned king will I be greater than you." <sup>41</sup>Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Know this: I've given you authority over the entire land of Egypt." <sup>42</sup>Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, he dressed him in linen clothes, and he put a gold necklace around his neck. <sup>43</sup>He put Joseph on the chariot of his second-in-command, and everyone in front of him cried out, "Attention!"<sup>h</sup> So Pharaoh installed him over the entire land of Egypt. <sup>44</sup>Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh; no one will do anything or go anywhere in all the land of Egypt without your permission." <sup>45</sup>Pharaoh renamed Joseph, Zaphenath-paneah, and married him to Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara the priest of Heliopolis.<sup>i</sup>

Then Joseph assumed control of the land of Egypt. <sup>46</sup>Joseph was 30 years old when he began to serve Pharaoh, Egypt's king, when he left Pharaoh's court and traveled through the entire land of Egypt. <sup>47</sup>During the seven years of abundance, the land produced plentifully. <sup>48</sup>He collected all of the food during the seven years of abundance<sup>j</sup> in the land of Egypt, and stored the food in cities. In each city, he stored the food from the fields surrounding it. <sup>49</sup>Joseph amassed grain like the sand of the sea. There was so much that he stopped trying to measure it because it was beyond measuring. <sup>50</sup>Before the years of famine arrived, Asenath the daughter of Potiphara, priest of Heliopolis,<sup>k</sup> gave birth to two sons for Joseph. <sup>51</sup>Joseph named the oldest son Manasseh,<sup>l</sup> "because," he said, "God has helped me forget all of my troubles and everyone in my father's household." <sup>52</sup>He named the second Ephraim,<sup>m</sup> "because," he said, "God has given me children in the land where I've been treated harshly." <sup>53</sup>The seven years of abundance in the land of Egypt came to an end, <sup>54</sup>and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. The famine struck every country, but the entire land of Egypt had bread. <sup>55</sup>When the famine ravaged the entire land of Egypt and the people pleaded to Pharaoh for bread, Pharaoh said to all of the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph. Do whatever he tells you." <sup>56</sup>The famine covered every part of the land, and Joseph opened all of the granaries<sup>n</sup> and sold grain to the Egyptians. In the land of Egypt, the famine became more and more severe. <sup>57</sup>Every country came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because in every country the famine had also become more severe.

### Joseph's brothers arrive in Egypt

**42** When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why are you staring blankly at each other? <sup>2</sup>I've just heard that there's grain in Egypt. Go down

<sup>f</sup>Or like this one, in whom is the spirit of God <sup>g</sup>Or house <sup>h</sup>LXX; Heb uncertain, perhaps submit themselves to your command <sup>i</sup>An Egyptian loanword similar to the Heb word kneel <sup>j</sup>Heb On <sup>k</sup>LXX; MT lacks of abundance.

<sup>l</sup>Heb On <sup>m</sup>Or making forget <sup>n</sup>Sounds like has given me children <sup>o</sup>LXX, Syr; MT what was in them

41:42 Pharaoh's signet ring bore the king's seal. It gave Joseph the authority to act and to validate documents on the king's behalf. *linen clothes*: worn by high officials in Egypt and in Israel (Exod 39:27-29). The *gold necklace* was a symbol of distinction given by the king to those with special favor.

41:45 Joseph's new name symbolizes his new status. *Zaphenath-paneah* is Egyptian and means either "God speaks, he lives" or "Sustainer of life." Both meanings reflect the activity of Joseph in these narratives. *Asenath* means "she who belongs to (the goddess) Neith." She is the daughter of a powerful religious figure. *Heliopolis* is just north of Cairo. Heliopolis is the modern name for ancient On (see translation note). Joseph, now a high official, marries a woman of Egypt's royal house. Earlier generations of Israel's ancestors had married only members of their family from Haran (Gen 24:3; 28:1-2). As a result, it's interesting that Joseph marries outside the family.

41:50-52 *Manasseh and Ephraim* are Joseph's sons. Their descendants become the two most powerful tribes in the northern region of Israel. As the children of Asenath, they are half Egyptian. Joseph names them to express his (and their) identity. Joseph is now both a successful Egyptian official and a Hebrew (Gen 41:12) in exile from his family in Canaan.

41:53-57 Egypt plays the role of the breadbasket of the Mediterranean world, opening its granaries to every country who came to purchase grain.

42:1-45:15 The conflict between Joseph and his brothers (Gen 37:1-36) slowly reaches resolution. Joseph is now the more powerful party in the conflict. He moves to repair the relationship rather than to exact revenge for past wrongs. Perhaps no other narrative in Genesis describes the emotions of its major characters with such care and power. This story, as many in Genesis, operates



there and buy some for us so that we can survive and not starve to death.”<sup>3</sup> So Joseph’s ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. <sup>4</sup> However, Jacob didn’t send Joseph’s brother Benjamin along with his brothers because he thought something bad might happen to him. <sup>5</sup> Israel’s sons came to buy grain with others who also came since the famine had spread to the land of Canaan.

<sup>6</sup> As for Joseph, he was the land’s governor, and he was the one selling grain to all the land’s people. When Joseph’s brothers arrived, they bowed down to him, their faces to the ground. <sup>7</sup> When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he acted like he didn’t know them. He spoke to them with a harsh tone and said, “Where have you come from?”

And they said, “From the land of Canaan to buy food.”

<sup>8</sup> Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn’t recognize him. <sup>9</sup> Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed about them, and said to them, “You are spies. You’ve come to look for the country’s weaknesses.”

<sup>10</sup> They said to him, “No, Master. Your servants have just come to buy food. <sup>11</sup> We are all sons of one man. We are honest men. Your servants aren’t spies.”

<sup>12</sup> He said to them, “No. You’ve come to look for the country’s weaknesses.”

<sup>13</sup> They said, “We, your servants, are twelve brothers, sons of one man in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, but one is gone.”

<sup>14</sup> Joseph said to them, “It’s just as I’ve said to you. You are spies! <sup>15</sup> But here is how to prove yourselves: As Pharaoh lives, you won’t leave here until your youngest brother arrives. <sup>16</sup> Send one of you to get your brother, but the rest of you will stay in prison. We will find out if your words are true. If not, as Pharaoh lives, you are certainly spies.”

**Joseph’s brothers return to Canaan**

<sup>17</sup> He put them all in prison for three days. <sup>18</sup> On the third day, Joseph said to them, “Do this and you will live, for I’m a God-fearing man. <sup>19</sup> If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay in prison, and the rest of you, go, take grain back to those in your households who are hungry. <sup>20</sup> But bring your youngest brother back to me so that your words will prove true and you won’t die.”

So they prepared to do this. <sup>21</sup> The brothers said to each other, “We are clearly guilty for what we did to our brother when we saw his life in danger and when he begged us for mercy, but we didn’t listen. That’s why we’re in this danger now.”

<sup>22</sup> Reuben responded to them, “Didn’t I tell you, ‘Don’t do anything wrong to the boy?’ But you wouldn’t listen. So now this is payback for his death.” <sup>23</sup> They didn’t know that Joseph was listening to them because they were using an interpreter. <sup>24</sup> He stepped away from them and wept. When he returned, he spoke with them again. Then he took Simeon from them and tied him up in front of them.

at two levels. One is the level of the family, where brotherly conflicts are peacefully resolved (see sidebar, “Family Conflict in Genesis” at Gen 4). The other is the level of the nation of Israel, where each brother represents one of the 12 tribes. Their unification results from Judah’s leadership (Gen 44:18-34), which points to King David—a descendant of Judah—bringing together the 12 tribes of Israel at a later time. The story itself describes two trips to Egypt to buy grain, the first made by the brothers without Benjamin (42:1-38); the second made with Benjamin (43:1-44:34). Though they have been artfully woven together, variations in the accounts of these two trips show that the first, in which Reuben is the spokesman, is the Elohist’s; while the second, in which Judah is the spokesman, is the Yahwist’s (see notes on Gen 37:1-36). The story ends with Joseph’s overture to his brothers and their reconciliation (45:1-15).

42:1-16 On their first trip to Egypt to buy grain, Jacob’s oldest son, Reuben, provides leadership. The brothers meet a hostile Joseph, who accuses them of spying and sends them back for Benjamin to prove that they are honest.

42:4 Jacob continues to play favorites among his sons. Having already lost Joseph, Jacob keeps his youngest son,

Benjamin, at home. In Jacob’s mind, Benjamin is the only remaining son of his favorite wife, Rachel (Gen 35:16-20).

42:5 *Canaan* was even more likely to face *famine* than Egypt, since its farming depended entirely on local rainfall. 42:9 Joseph realizes that his *dreams* as a young man (Gen 37:5-11) have come true. The Egyptians were always alert about the security of their northeastern border. It was the border between Egypt and its major military rivals in the ancient Near East. Joseph, of course, knows that although the men have just crossed this border, they aren’t *spies* (Gen 42:7-8). He uses this accusation to get more information from them and to get them to bring his brother Benjamin to Egypt (Gen 42:15).

42:17-38 On their trip back to Canaan to get Benjamin, Reuben takes charge (42:22, 37; cf. notes on Gen 37:19-22; 42:1-45:15).

42:21 The brothers say that Joseph *begged us for mercy*, which wasn’t mentioned in Genesis 37:18-30.

42:22 Reuben reminds his brothers that he tried to protect Joseph in Genesis 37:19-22, 24, 29-30.

42:24 Joseph *wept* in private. In doing so, he reflects the tension between his tough, hostile exterior and his inner affections. Joseph likely selected *Simeon* because he knew

42:5 Gn 41:57  
42:9 Gn 42:16,  
Gn 42:30;  
Josh 2:1  
42:15 Gn 42:16,  
Gn 43:3;  
1Sa 17:55  
42:16 Gn 42:15  
42:21 Gn 37:26,  
Gn 45:3;  
Has 5:15  
42:22 Gn 9:5,  
Gn 37:21;  
1Ki 2:32;  
2Ch 24:22  
42:24 Gn 34:25,  
Gn 43:23,  
Gn 43:30,  
Gn 45:14,  
Gn 49:5

42:36 Gn 43:14

42:38 Gn 37:33.

Gn 37:35.

Gn 42:4.

Gn 44:29.

Gn 44:31.

43:9 Gn 42:37.

Gn 44:32.

Phm 18

43:14 Gn 17:1.

Gn 42:36.

Neh 1:11

<sup>25</sup>Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put back each man's silver into his own sack, and to give them provisions for their trip, and it was done. <sup>26</sup>They loaded their grain onto their donkeys, and they set out. <sup>27</sup>When they stopped to spend the night, one of them opened his sack to feed his donkey, and he saw his silver at the top of his sack. <sup>28</sup>He said to his brothers, "My silver's been returned. It's right here in my sack." Their hearts stopped. Terrified, they said to each other, "What has God done to us?"

<sup>29</sup>When they got back to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they described to him everything that had happened to them: <sup>30</sup>"The man, the country's governor, spoke to us with a harsh tone and accused us of being spies in the country. <sup>31</sup>We told him, 'We're honest men, not spies. <sup>32</sup>We are twelve brothers, all our father's sons. One of us is gone, but the youngest is right now with our father in the land of Canaan.' <sup>33</sup>The man, the country's governor, told us, 'This is how I will know you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers with me, take grain for those in your households who are hungry, and go. <sup>34</sup>But bring back your youngest brother to me. Then I will know that you are not spies but honest men. I will give your brother back to you, and you may travel throughout the country.'"

<sup>35</sup>When they opened their sacks, each man found a pouch of his silver in his sack. When they and their father saw their pouches of silver, they were afraid. <sup>36</sup>Their father Jacob said to them, "You've taken my children from me. Joseph's gone. Simeon's gone. And you are taking Benjamin. All this can't really be happening to me!"

<sup>37</sup>Reuben said to his father, "You may put both of my sons to death if I don't bring him back to you. Make him my responsibility, and I will make sure he returns to you."

<sup>38</sup>But Jacob said to him, "My son won't go down with you because his brother's dead and he's been left all alone. If anything were to happen to him on the trip you are taking, you would send me—old as I am—to my grave in grief."

#### *Joseph's brothers return with Benjamin*

**43** The famine was severe in the land, <sup>2</sup>and when they had eaten all the grain that they brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little food."

<sup>3</sup>Judah said to him, "The man was absolutely serious when he said, 'You may not see me again without your brother with you.' <sup>4</sup>If you agree to send our brother with us, then we will go down and buy you food. <sup>5</sup>But if you don't agree to send him, then we can't go down because the man said to us, 'You may not see me again without your brother with you.'"

<sup>6</sup>Israel said, "Why have you caused me such pain by telling the man you had another brother?"

<sup>7</sup>They said, "The man asked us pointedly about our family: 'Is your father still alive? Do you have a brother?' So we told him just what we've said. How were we to know he'd say, 'Bring your brother down here?'"

<sup>8</sup>Judah said to his father Israel, "Send the young man with me. Let's get ready to leave so that we can stay alive and not die—we, you, and our children. <sup>9</sup>I will guarantee his safety; you can hold me responsible. If I don't bring him back to you and place him here in front of you, it will be my fault forever. <sup>10</sup>If we hadn't waited so long, we would've returned twice by now."

<sup>11</sup>Their father Israel said to them, "If it has to be, then do this. Take in your bags some of the land's choice produce, and bring it down to the man as a gift: a little medicinal resin, a little honey, gum, resin, pistachios, and almonds. <sup>12</sup>Take twice as much silver with you, and take back the silver returned in the top of your sacks. It might have been a mistake. <sup>13</sup>And take your brother, get ready, and go back to the man. <sup>14</sup>May God Almighty<sup>b</sup> make the man compassionate toward you so that he may send back our other brother and Benjamin with you. But me, if I'm left childless, then I'm left childless."

<sup>b</sup>Heb *El Shaddai* or *God of the Mountain*

he was second in age and rank, just behind Reuben, the oldest brother (Gen 43:33; 44:12).

42:37-38 Reuben tries to convince his father that he will protect Benjamin. He puts the responsibility on his own shoulders. Jacob is unwilling to part with Benjamin, who has become the favorite son.

43:1-34 On their second trip to Egypt to buy grain, Judah—Jacob's fourth son, the ancestor of David—provides

leadership (cf. note on Gen 42:1-45:15). In Egypt, the brothers are immediately invited to Joseph's residence for a banquet. Nothing is said about Joseph's earlier accusation that they were spies.

43:8-9 Judah guarantees Benjamin's *safety* on this trip. On the previous trip in Genesis 42:37, Reuben made a similar promise (cf. note on Gen 42:1-45:15).

43:11 The *gift* is intended to gain Joseph's favor (Gen

<sup>15</sup>So the men took this gift. They took twice as much silver with them, together with Benjamin. They left, traveled down to Egypt, and received an audience with Joseph. <sup>16</sup>When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the manager of his household, "Bring the men to the house and slaughter an animal and prepare it because the men will have dinner with me at noon." <sup>17</sup>The man did as Joseph told him and brought the men to Joseph's house.

<sup>18</sup>When they were brought to Joseph's house, the men were frightened and said, "We've been brought here because of the silver put back in our sacks on our first trip so he can overpower us, capture us, make slaves of us, and take our donkeys."

<sup>19</sup>They approached the man who was Joseph's household manager and spoke to him at the house's entrance: <sup>20</sup>"Please, Master, we came down the first time just to buy food, <sup>21</sup>but when we stopped to spend the night and opened our sacks, there was the exact amount of each man's silver at the top of his sack. We've brought it back with us, <sup>22</sup>and we've brought down with us additional silver to buy food. We don't know who put our silver in our sacks."

<sup>23</sup>He said, "You are fine. Don't be afraid. Your God and your father's God must have hidden a treasure in your sacks. I received your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them.

<sup>24</sup>The manager brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water to wash their feet and feed for their donkeys. <sup>25</sup>They prepared the gift, anticipating Joseph's arrival at noon, since they had heard that they would have a meal there. <sup>26</sup>When Joseph came into the house, they presented him the gift they had brought with them into the house, and they bowed low in front of him. <sup>27</sup>He asked them how they were and said, "How is your elderly father, about whom you spoke? Is he still alive?"

<sup>28</sup>They said, "Your servant our father is fine. He's still alive." And they bowed down again with deep respect.

<sup>29</sup>Joseph looked up and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, and he said, "Is this your youngest brother whom you told me about? God be gracious to you, my son." <sup>30</sup>Joseph's feelings for his brother were so strong he was about to weep, so he rushed to another room and wept there. <sup>31</sup>He washed his face, came back, pulled himself together, and said, "Set out the dinner." <sup>32</sup>So they set out his food by himself, their food by themselves, and the Egyptians' who ate with him by themselves because Egyptians don't allow themselves to eat with Hebrews; the Egyptians think it beneath their dignity. <sup>33</sup>They were seated in front of him from the oldest to the youngest in their exact birth order, and the men looked at each other with amazement. <sup>34</sup>Portions of food from Joseph's table were brought to them, but Benjamin's portion was five times as large as theirs. So they drank together and were at ease.

**Joseph tests his brothers**

**44** Joseph gave commands to his household manager: "Fill the men's sacks with as much food as they'll hold, and put each man's silver at the top of his sack. <sup>2</sup>Put my cup, the silver cup, on top of the youngest brother's sack, together with the silver for his grain." So he did just as Joseph told him to do.

<sup>3</sup>At dawn, the men and their donkeys were sent off. <sup>4</sup>They had left the city but hadn't gone far when Joseph said to his household manager, "Get ready, go after the men and catch up with them! Ask them, 'Why have you repaid hospitality with ingratitude?' <sup>5</sup>Isn't this the cup<sup>d</sup> my master drinks from and uses to discover God's plans?<sup>e</sup> What you've done is despicable."

<sup>c</sup>LXX adds *Why have you stolen my silver cup?* <sup>d</sup>Syr; MT lacks *cup*. <sup>e</sup>Or *uses for divination*

43:25-26). It's similar to the gift offered by Jacob to Esau (Gen 33:10). *honey*: may be date syrup, a common Canaanite delicacy.

**43:15** On *twice as much silver*, see Genesis 42:25-28; 43:23.

**43:23** *Simeon* was tied up and taken from his brothers in Genesis 42:24 (see also Gen 42:17-20). Now, he is reunited with them.

**43:30** On *Joseph's feelings*, see note on Genesis 42:24.

**43:32** Joseph dines separately because of his high status among the Egyptians. Dietary rules and practices are a common way in which cultures (including ancient Israel) identify themselves, set themselves apart, and preserve their differences from others.

**43:33** The brothers' amazement at being seated by *birth*

*order* increases the suspense developed by Joseph's scheme.

**44:1-17** Following the banquet for his brothers, Joseph sets in motion a scheme to separate Benjamin from them and keep him in Egypt. At this point in the story, Joseph wants to be reunited only with Benjamin, his sole full brother. Joseph doesn't seem to want reconciliation with his half brothers, who harmed him in Genesis 37.

**44:5** *discover God's plans*: or "divination" (see translation note e), which involves a ritual procedure, such as watching how liquid appears inside a cup. This type of practice seems entirely acceptable when practiced by Joseph (Gen 44:15) and others in Genesis (Gen 30:27). Yet it is condemned elsewhere in the Bible (Deut 18:10).

43:16 Gn 44:1  
 43:23 Gn 42:24,  
 Gn 42:28,  
 Gn 42:36  
 43:30 Gn 42:24,  
 Gn 46:29;  
 1Ki 3:26  
 43:34 Gn 45:22  
 44:2 Gn 30:24,  
 Gn 33:2,  
 Gn 37:2,  
 Gn 37:28,  
 Gn 39:2  
 44:4 Gn 43:16;  
 Ps 35:12;  
 Prv 17:13  
 44:5 Gn 30:27,  
 Gn 44:15

<sup>6</sup>When he caught up to them, he repeated these words. <sup>7</sup>They replied, "Why does my master talk to us like this? Your servants would never do such a thing. <sup>8</sup>The silver that we found at the top of our sacks, we've just brought back to you from the land of Canaan. We didn't steal silver or gold from your master's house. <sup>9</sup>Whoever of your servants is found with it will be put to death, and we'll be my master's slaves."

<sup>10</sup>He said, "Fine. We'll do just as you've said. Whoever is found with it will be my slave, and the rest of you will go free." <sup>11</sup>Everyone quickly lowered their sacks down to the ground and each opened his sack. <sup>12</sup>He searched the oldest first and the youngest last, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. <sup>13</sup>At this, they tore their clothing. Then everyone loaded their donkeys, and they returned to the city.

<sup>14</sup>When Judah and his brothers arrived at Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell to the ground in front of him. <sup>15</sup>Joseph said to them, "What's this you've done? Didn't you know someone like me can discover God's plans?"<sup>f</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Judah replied, "What can we say to my master? What words can we use? How can we prove we are innocent? God has found your servants guilty. We are now your slaves, all of us, including the one found with the cup."

<sup>17</sup>Joseph said, "I'd never do such a thing. Only the man found with the cup will be my slave. As for the rest of you, you are free to go back to your father."

#### *Judah appeals for Benjamin*

<sup>18</sup>Judah approached him and said, "Please, my master, allow your servant to say something to my master without getting angry with your servant since you are like Pharaoh himself. <sup>19</sup>My master asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or brother?' <sup>20</sup>And we said to my master, 'Yes, we have an elderly father and a young brother, born when he was old. His brother is dead and he's his mother's only child. But his father loves him.' <sup>21</sup>You told your servants, 'Bring him down to me so I can see him.' <sup>22</sup>And we said to my master, 'The young man can't leave his father. If he leaves, his father will die.' <sup>23</sup>You said to your servants, 'If your youngest brother doesn't come down with you, you'll never see my face again.'

<sup>24</sup>"When we went back to my father your servant, we told him what you said. <sup>25</sup>Our father told us, 'Go back and buy for us a little food.' <sup>26</sup>But we said, 'We can't go down. We will go down only if our youngest brother is with us. We won't be able to gain an audience with the man without our youngest brother with us.' <sup>27</sup>Your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife gave birth to two sons for me. <sup>28</sup>One disappeared and I said, "He must have been torn up by a wild animal," and I haven't seen him since. <sup>29</sup>And if you take this one from me too, something terrible will happen to him, and you will send me—old as I am—to my grave in despair.' <sup>30</sup>When I now go back to your servant my father without the young man—whose life is so bound up with his—<sup>31</sup>and when he sees that the young man isn't with us,<sup>g</sup> he will die, and your servants will have sent our father your servant—old as he is—to his grave in grief. <sup>32</sup>I, your servant, guarantee the young man's safety to my father, telling him, 'If I don't bring him back to you, it will be my fault forever.' <sup>33</sup>Now, please let your servant stay as your slave instead of the young man so that he can go back with his brothers. <sup>34</sup>How can I go back to my father without the young man? I couldn't bear to see how badly my father would be hurt."

#### *Joseph reveals his identity*

**45** Joseph could no longer control himself in front of all his attendants, so he declared, "Everyone, leave now!" So no one stayed with him when he revealed his identity to

<sup>f</sup>Or *can practice divination* <sup>g</sup>Sam, LXX; MT lacks *with us*.

**44:14-16** This story continues the previous one, in which Judah provides leadership (Gen 43:1-34).

**44:17** Joseph tells his brothers they are *free to go*. As a result, the brothers face a situation similar to what they faced in Genesis 37. Will they abandon Benjamin now, just as they had once forsaken Joseph? When they refuse to do so (Gen 44:18-34), they convince Joseph that they now recognize the importance of family and their responsibilities to each other.

**44:18-34** Judah delivers a speech that brings about the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers. At the family level, it models what brothers must do to keep the family

together and to reconcile differences without force. At the national level, Judah's work brings brothers together just as King David, Judah's descendant, united the 12 tribes of Israel descended from these brothers into a single kingdom (2 Sam 5:1-5).

**44:28** Judah recalls the brothers' earlier lies when they falsely told their father that Joseph had been killed by a *wild animal* (Gen 37:31-33).

**44:32-34** Judah is willing to sacrifice himself for the good of the family in line with what he said in Genesis 43:8-9.

**45:1-15** The conflict between Joseph and his brothers comes to a peaceful ending. Joseph has gained the power

his brothers. <sup>2</sup>He wept so loudly that the Egyptians and Pharaoh's household heard him. <sup>3</sup>Joseph said to his brothers, "I'm Joseph! Is my father really still alive?" His brothers couldn't respond because they were terrified before him.

<sup>4</sup>Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me," and they moved closer. He said, "I'm your brother Joseph! The one you sold to Egypt. <sup>5</sup>Now, don't be upset and don't be angry with yourselves that you sold me here. Actually, God sent me before you to save lives. <sup>6</sup>We've already had two years of famine in the land, and there are five years left without planting or harvesting. <sup>7</sup>God sent me before you to make sure you'd survive<sup>b</sup> and to rescue your lives in this amazing way. <sup>8</sup>You didn't send me here; it was God who made me a father to Pharaoh, master of his entire household, and ruler of the whole land of Egypt.

<sup>9</sup>"Hurry! Go back to your father. Tell him this is what your son Joseph says: 'God has made me master of all of Egypt. Come down to me. Don't delay. <sup>10</sup>You may live in the land of Goshen, so you will be near me, your children, your grandchildren, your flocks, your herds, and everyone with you. <sup>11</sup>I will support you there, so you, your household, and everyone with you won't starve, since the famine will still last five years.' <sup>12</sup>You and my brother Benjamin have seen with your own eyes that I'm speaking to you. <sup>13</sup>Tell my father about my power in Egypt and about everything you've seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." <sup>14</sup>He threw his arms around his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his shoulder. <sup>15</sup>He kissed all of his brothers and wept, embracing them. After that, his brothers were finally able to talk to him.

**Joseph's brothers return for Jacob**

<sup>16</sup>When Pharaoh's household heard the message "Joseph's brothers have arrived," both Pharaoh and his servants were pleased. <sup>17</sup>Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Give your brothers these instructions: Load your pack animals and go back to the land of Canaan. <sup>18</sup>Get your father and your households and come back to me. Let me provide you with good things from the land of Egypt so that you may eat the land's best food. <sup>19</sup>Give them these instructions too: Take wagons from the land of Egypt for your children and wives, and pick up your father and come back. <sup>20</sup>Don't worry about your possessions because you will have good things from the entire land of Egypt."

<sup>21</sup>So Israel's sons did that. Joseph gave them wagons as Pharaoh instructed, and he gave them provisions for the road. <sup>22</sup>To all of them he gave a change of clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of clothing. <sup>23</sup>To his father he sent ten male donkeys carrying goods from Egypt, ten female donkeys carrying grain and bread, and rations for his father for the road. <sup>24</sup>He sent his brothers off; and as they were leaving, he told them, "Don't be worried about the trip."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>25</sup>So they left Egypt and returned to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. <sup>26</sup>They announced to him, "Joseph's still alive! He's actually ruler of all the land of Egypt!" Jacob's heart nearly failed, and he didn't believe them.

<sup>27</sup>When they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, Jacob recovered. <sup>28</sup>Then Israel said, "This is too much! My son Joseph is still alive! Let me go and see him before I die."

**Jacob's household moves to Egypt**

**46** Israel packed up everything he owned and traveled to Beer-sheba. There he offered sacrifices to his father Isaac's God. <sup>2</sup>God said to Israel in a vision at night, "Jacob!

<sup>b</sup>Or *survive on earth* <sup>1</sup>Or *Don't quarrel during the trip.*

to determine the outcome of events. Yet he chooses not to take revenge for past wrongs. Instead, he makes peace with those who have mistreated him. The family is reunited.

45:5-8 Here Joseph suggests that everything that happened previously was in fact part of God's plan. In this plan, even the brothers' criminal acts could be used by God with positive results (cf. Gen 50:19-20). In the stories at the end of Genesis, Egypt is portrayed as a refuge where Israel's ancestors' lives were saved. It isn't the harsh oppressor it becomes in the stories at the beginning of Exodus.

45:2 Gn 42:24,  
Gn 45:14,  
Gn 45:16,  
Gn 46:29;  
Ac 7:13  
45:5 Gn 45:7-8,  
Gn 50:20;  
Ps 105:17  
45:6 Ex 34:21  
45:7 Gn 45:5  
45:8 Gn 41:41,  
Gn 45:5;  
Jgs 17:10  
45:9 Gn 46:29,  
Gn 47:12;  
Ac 7:14  
45:24 Ps 133:1

45:10 *Goshen* is the Hebrew name biblical writers gave to the northeastern part of Egypt in the Nile Delta.

45:16-28 Pharaoh tells Joseph's brothers to return to Canaan with supplies, wagons, and a promise of land in Egypt for Jacob's entire family. In these stories at the end of Genesis, the Egyptians welcome Israelite immigrants and are generous to them, offering them *the land's best food* and *good things* from the entire land of Egypt.

46:1-30 Jacob moves his entire household from Canaan to Egypt at Pharaoh's invitation (Gen 45:17-20).

46:1-4 In Genesis 21:25-31, Abraham established *Beer-sheba*.

46:3 Gn 12:2,  
Gn 26:2,  
Gn 28:13; Ex 1:7;  
Dt 26:5

46:4 Gn 28:15,  
Gn 48:21,  
Gn 50:1,  
Gn 50:24; Ex 3:8

46:8 Gn 29:32;  
Ex 11; Ex 6:14;  
Nm 26:4

46:11 Ex 6:16;  
Nm 3:17,  
Nm 26:57;  
1Ch 6:1

46:20 Gn 41:45,  
Gn 41:50;  
Nm 26:28

46:26 Ex 1:5;  
46:27 Ex 1:5;  
Dt 10:22; Ac 7:14

46:29 Gn 41:43,  
Gn 45:14

Jacob!" and he said, "I'm here." <sup>3</sup>He said, "I am El,<sup>1</sup> your father's God. Don't be afraid to go down to Egypt because I will make a great nation of you there. <sup>4</sup>I will go down to Egypt with you, and I promise to bring you out again. Joseph will close your eyes when you die." <sup>5</sup>Then Jacob left Beer-sheba. Israel's sons put their father Jacob, their children, and their wives on the wagons Pharaoh had sent to carry him. <sup>6</sup>They took their livestock and their possessions that they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and arrived in Egypt, Jacob and all of his children with him. <sup>7</sup>His sons and grandsons, his daughters and his granddaughters—all of his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

<sup>8</sup>These are the names of the Israelites who went to Egypt, including Jacob and his sons. Jacob's oldest son was Reuben. <sup>9</sup>Reuben's sons were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

<sup>10</sup>Simeon's sons were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, whose mother was a Canaanite. <sup>11</sup>Levi's sons were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. <sup>12</sup>Judah's sons were Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah. Er and Onan both died in the land of Canaan. Perez's sons were Hezron and Hamul. <sup>13</sup>Issachar's sons were Tola, Puvah, Iob, and Shimron.

<sup>14</sup>Zebulun's sons were Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. <sup>15</sup>These are the sons Leah bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram. Her daughter was Dinah. All of these persons, including his sons and daughters, totaled 33.

<sup>16</sup>Gad's sons were Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. <sup>17</sup>Asher's sons were Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah. Beriah's sons were Heber and Malchiel. <sup>18</sup>These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah. She bore these to Jacob, a total of 16 persons.

<sup>19</sup>The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin. <sup>20</sup>To Joseph, in the land of Egypt, were born Manasseh and Ephraim. Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of Heliopolis,<sup>k</sup> bore them to him. <sup>21</sup>Benjamin's sons were Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. <sup>22</sup>These are Rachel's sons who were born to Jacob, a total of 14 persons.

<sup>23</sup>Dan's son<sup>l</sup> was Hushim. <sup>24</sup>Naphtali's sons were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. <sup>25</sup>These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel. She bore these to Jacob, a total of 7 persons. <sup>26</sup>All of the persons going to Egypt with Jacob—his own children, excluding Jacob's sons' wives—totaled 66 persons. <sup>27</sup>Joseph's sons born to him in Egypt were 2 persons. Thus, all of the persons in Jacob's household going to Egypt totaled 70.

<sup>28</sup>Israel had sent Judah ahead to Joseph so that Joseph could explain the way to Goshen. Then they arrived in the land of Goshen. <sup>29</sup>Joseph hitched up his chariot and went to meet his father Israel in Goshen. When he arrived, he threw his arms around his neck and wept,

<sup>1</sup>Or God <sup>k</sup>Heb On <sup>l</sup>Or sons

In Genesis 26:23-33, Isaac built an altar there. In this text it is recognized as a sacred site by God's appearance to Jacob.

46:4 God's *promise to bring Jacob out again* may refer both to his own burial in Canaan (Gen 50:12-14) and to his descendants' leaving Egyptian bondage for the land of promise (Gen 15:13-16; Exod 1-15).

46:7-27 The narrative of Jacob's move to Egypt switches to genealogical information that lists all the members of Jacob's household. As is typical of an Israelite household, it includes three generations: Jacob, the oldest male and head of the household, and his wives; his children; and his grandchildren. The record that follows shares much information with other records of Jacob's household (Gen 35:22-36; Exod 6:14-25; Num 26:4-51; 1 Chron 2-8). As is customary in many biblical genealogies, women are almost entirely omitted. The few that are mentioned aren't counted in the number of offspring provided in Genesis 46:15, 18.

46:8-15 The record of Jacob's household begins with the children of his first, primary wife, Leah (cf. Gen 29:31-35; 30:17-21). *Judah's* family (46:12) is described in Genesis 38:1-30. *Perez's* sons, the only great-grandsons of Jacob mentioned, are listed here because one of them, *Hezron*, was the ancestor of King David (Ruth 4:18-22). In spite

of the concluding phrase, *his sons and daughters* (46:15), *Dinah* isn't counted. The number 33 includes only male offspring.

46:16-18 *Zilpah* was Leah's servant (Gen 29:24; 30:9-13). *Asher's* daughter *Serah* isn't included in the number 16.

46:19-22 *Rachel's* sons include *Joseph* (Gen 30:22-24; 35:16-19). Joseph's two sons were born in Egypt (Gen 41:50-52).

46:23-27 Before a summary of the entire household, the records conclude with the sons of Rachel's servant *Bilhah* (Gen 29:29; 30:3-7).

46:26 The total number 66 includes all the male offspring listed above, except Er and Onan, who died in Canaan (Gen 46:12); and Manasseh and Ephraim, who were born in Egypt (Gen 46:20).

46:27 There is no obvious way to arrive at the total of 70 people from the list above. Because the number 70 can symbolize completeness, the writer appears to use it as a symbolic way of saying that "all" Israel went to Egypt (Exod 1:5; Deut 10:22). Compare the note on Genesis 10:1-32.

46:28-30 *Israel* (also called Jacob) is finally reunited with his son Joseph. Here *Judah* acts on behalf of his brothers (Gen 43:3; 44:18).

embracing him for a long time. <sup>30</sup>Israel said to Joseph, "I can die now after seeing your face. You are really still alive!"

**Jacob's household settles in Egypt**

<sup>31</sup>Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "Let me go up and inform Pharaoh and tell him, 'My brothers and my father's household who were in the land of Canaan have arrived. <sup>32</sup>The men are shepherds, because they own livestock. They've brought with them their flocks and herds and everything they own.' <sup>33</sup>When Pharaoh summons you and says, 'What do you do?' <sup>34</sup>say, 'Your servants have owned livestock since we were young, both we and our ancestors,' so that you will be able to settle in the land of Goshen, since Egyptians think all shepherds are beneath their dignity."

**47** Joseph went to inform Pharaoh and said, "My father and brothers with their flocks, herds, and everything they own have come from the land of Canaan and are now in the land of Goshen." <sup>2</sup>From all of his brothers, he selected five men and presented them before Pharaoh.

<sup>3</sup>Pharaoh said to Joseph's brothers, "What do you do?"

They said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, both we and our ancestors." <sup>4</sup>They continued, "We've come to the land as immigrants because the famine is so severe in the land of Canaan that there are no more pastures for your servants' flocks. Please allow your servants to settle in the land of Goshen."

<sup>5</sup>Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since your father and brothers have arrived, <sup>6</sup>the land of Egypt is available to you. Settle your father and brothers in the land's best location. Let them live in the land of Goshen. And if you know capable men among them, put them in charge of my own livestock."

<sup>7</sup>Joseph brought his father Jacob and gave him an audience with Pharaoh. Jacob blessed Pharaoh, <sup>8</sup>and Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How old are you?"

<sup>9</sup>Jacob said to Pharaoh, "I've been a traveler for 130 years. My years have been few and difficult. They don't come close to the years my ancestors lived during their travels." <sup>10</sup>Jacob blessed Pharaoh and left Pharaoh's presence. <sup>11</sup>Joseph settled his father and brothers and gave them property in the land of Egypt, in the best location in the land of Rameses, just as Pharaoh had ordered. <sup>12</sup>Joseph provided food for his father, his brothers, and his father's entire household, in proportion to the number of children.

**Joseph centralizes power in Egypt**

<sup>13</sup>There was no food in the land because the famine was so severe. The land of Egypt and the land of Canaan dried up from the famine. <sup>14</sup>Joseph collected all of the silver to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan for the grain, which people came to buy, and he deposited it in Pharaoh's treasury. <sup>15</sup>The silver from the land of Egypt and from the land of Canaan had been spent, and all of the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes, just because the silver is gone?"

<sup>16</sup>Joseph said, "Give me your livestock, and I will give you food for your livestock if the silver is gone." <sup>17</sup>So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food for the horses, flocks, cattle, and donkeys. He got them through that year with food in exchange for all of their livestock.

<sup>18</sup>When that year was over, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We can't hide from my master that the silver is spent and that we've given the livestock to my master.

46:31–47:12 Joseph oversees the settlement of his family in Egypt.

46:31-34 On *shepherds*, see sidebar, "The Ancestors in Their Environment" at Genesis 13. Joseph gives these instructions because his brothers are actually typical Mediterranean farmers. If they had been shepherds raising livestock, Joseph wouldn't have to instruct them to say so. As immigrants in Egypt (Gen 47:4), his brothers don't have the rights of natives to own land (though Joseph does grant them property in Gen 47:11). Guests who work for Egyptians, shepherding their livestock (Gen 47:6), are less a threat than visitors who seek land.

47:6 Outside their own land, Jacob's sons support

themselves by caring for the *livestock* of their hosts, just as Jacob had cared for the livestock of Laban in Haran (Gen 30:29-30).

47:7 God's blessing of Israel's neighbors through their ancestors is a central theme in Genesis (Gen 47:10; 12:3; 30:27; 39:5).

47:11 The *land of Rameses* is another name for the land of Goshen, the northeastern Nile Delta. In the 13th century BCE, the pharaoh Rameses II made a city in this area, Tanis, his capital (Exod 1:11; 12:37).

47:13-26 In order to survive the most difficult years of the famine, Joseph centralizes Egypt's economy to secure sufficient production for the entire population. The story

47:9 Gn 25:7;  
1Ch 29:15;  
Job 14:1;  
Ps 39:12;  
Heb 11:9

47:14 Gn 41:56

47:15 Gn 47:19

47:16 Gn 47:15

47:19 Neh 5:2  
 47:25 Gn 33:15,  
 Gn 41:45,  
 Gn 47:19  
 47:29 Gn 24:2,  
 Gn 24:49,  
 Gn 50:25;  
 Dt 31:14; 1Ki 2:1  
 47:31 Gn 21:23,  
 Gn 24:3,  
 Gn 50:25;  
 1Ki 1:47;  
 Heb 11:21  
 48:3 Gn 17:1,  
 Gn 26:13,  
 Gn 28:19,  
 Gn 35:6,  
 Gn 35:9  
 48:4 Gn 17:8  
 48:5 Gn 41:50,  
 Gn 41:51,  
 Gn 41:52;  
 Josh 14:4;  
 1Ch 5:1

All that's left for my master is our corpses and our farmland. <sup>19</sup>Why should we die before your eyes, we and our farmland too? Buy us and our farms for food, and we and our farms will be under Pharaoh's control. Give us seed so that we can stay alive and not die, and so that our farmland won't become unproductive." <sup>20</sup>So Joseph bought all of Egypt's farmland for Pharaoh because every Egyptian sold his field when the famine worsened. So the land became Pharaoh's. <sup>21</sup>He moved the people to the cities<sup>m</sup> from one end of Egypt to the other. <sup>22</sup>However, he didn't buy the farmland of the priests because Pharaoh allowed the priests a subsidy, and they were able to eat from the subsidy Pharaoh gave them. Therefore, they didn't have to sell their farmland.

<sup>23</sup>Joseph said to the people, "Since I've now purchased you and your farmland for Pharaoh, here's seed for you. Plant the seed on the land. <sup>24</sup>When the crop comes in, you must give one-fifth to Pharaoh. You may keep four-fifths for yourselves, for planting fields, and for feeding yourselves, those in your households, and your children."

<sup>25</sup>The people said, "You've saved our lives. If you wish, we will be Pharaoh's slaves." <sup>26</sup>So Joseph made a law that still exists today: Pharaoh receives one-fifth from Egypt's farmland. Only the priests' farmland didn't become Pharaoh's.

### Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh

<sup>27</sup>Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. They settled in it, had many children, and became numerous. <sup>28</sup>After Jacob had lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years, and after he had lived a total of 147 years, <sup>29</sup>Israel's death approached. He summoned his son Joseph and said to him, "If you would be so kind, lay your hand under my thigh, and be loyal and true to me. Don't bury me in Egypt. <sup>30</sup>When I lie down with my fathers, carry me from Egypt and bury me in their grave."

Joseph said, "I will do just as you say."

<sup>31</sup>Israel said, "Give me your word!" and Joseph gave his word. Then Israel slumped down at the head of the bed.

**48**After this happened, Joseph was told,<sup>a</sup> "Your father is getting weaker," so he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him. <sup>2</sup>When Jacob was informed,<sup>b</sup> "Your son Joseph is here now," he<sup>c</sup> pulled himself together and sat up in bed. <sup>3</sup>Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty<sup>d</sup> appeared to me in Luz in the land of Canaan. He blessed me <sup>4</sup>and said to me, 'I am about to give you many children, to increase your numbers, and to make you a large group of peoples. I will give this land to your descendants following you as an enduring possession.' <sup>5</sup>Now, your two sons born to you in the land of Egypt before I arrived in Egypt are my own. Ephraim and Manasseh are just like Reuben and Simeon to me. <sup>6</sup>Your family who is born to you after them are yours, but their inheritance will be determined under their

<sup>a</sup>Sam, LXX he made the people slaves <sup>b</sup>LXX, Syr, Tg, Vulg; MT he told <sup>c</sup>LXX; MT he informed <sup>d</sup>Heb Israel  
<sup>e</sup>Heb El Shaddai or God of the Mountain

emphasizes Joseph's wisdom as a shrewd administrator. It may also contrast Egypt's centralized government with Israel's less centralized tribal society.

**47:20-26** Royal grants of land to temples and their priests were common in the ancient Near East. However, existing Egyptian records don't speak of the king owning the entire land (47:20) or a one-fifth tax rate (47:24).

**47:27-48:22** Jacob's life story comes to an end with a series of instructions and blessings made just before his death. After providing instructions for his burial (47:29-31; Gen 49:29-33), he blesses Joseph's sons (48:1-22).

**47:29-31** The instructions Jacob gives Joseph about his burial are carried out immediately after Jacob's death (Gen 50:4-14).

**47:29** The ritual of placing the *hand* under the *thigh* is explained in the note on Genesis 24:2.

**47:30** Jacob wishes to be buried in his own land in his family's own burial place (Gen 35:27-29), not in the land where he lives as an immigrant (Gen 47:4).

**48:1-22** Before his final words to his own sons (Gen 49), Jacob blesses his grandsons, *Manasseh and Ephraim*. This special attention to Joseph's sons reflects the fact that they became ancestors, in place of their father, of two of the most important tribes of Israel (Num 26; Josh 13-19). In later lists of tribes in Israel (e.g., Num 1:4-16), Manasseh and Ephraim take Joseph's place. Yet the number of tribes in Israel remains at 12 because Levi isn't mentioned either. Levi's descendants (the Levites) played special religious roles different from those of other tribes (e.g., Num 1:48-53).

**48:1** The births of *Manasseh and Ephraim* are recorded in Genesis 41:50-52.

**48:3-4** Jacob refers here to God's appearance to him in Genesis 35:9-12.

**48:5-6** Jacob claims that Joseph's sons are just like his own sons. This claim gives *Manasseh and Ephraim* a place among his own sons as ancestors of the tribes of the people of Israel. Jacob compares them to his oldest sons, *Reuben and Simeon*.



brothers' names. <sup>7</sup>When I came back from Paddan-aram,<sup>7</sup> Rachel died, to my sorrow, on the road in the land of Canaan, with some distance yet to go to Ephrathah, so I buried her there near the road to Ephrathah,<sup>7</sup> which is Bethlehem.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>8</sup>When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?"

<sup>9</sup>Joseph told his father, "They're my sons, whom God gave me here."

Israel said, "Bring them to me and I will bless them."<sup>10</sup>Because Israel's eyesight had failed from old age and he wasn't able to see, Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed and embraced them.

<sup>11</sup>Israel said to Joseph, "I didn't expect I'd see your face, but now God has shown me your children too."<sup>12</sup>Then Joseph took them from Israel's knees, and he bowed low with his face to the ground.<sup>13</sup>Joseph took both of them, Ephraim in his right hand at Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand at Israel's right hand, and brought them close to him.<sup>14</sup>But Israel put out his right hand and placed it on the head of Ephraim, the younger one, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands because Manasseh was the oldest son.<sup>15</sup>He blessed them<sup>8</sup> and said,

"May the God before whom my fathers

Abraham and Isaac walked,

may the God who was my shepherd

from the beginning until this day,

<sup>16</sup>may the divine messenger who protected me from all harm,  
bless the young men.

Through them may my name be kept alive

and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac.

May they grow into a great multitude

throughout the land."

<sup>17</sup>When Joseph saw that his father had placed his right hand on Ephraim's head, he was upset and grasped his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.<sup>18</sup>Joseph said to his father, "No, my father! This is the oldest son. Put your right hand on his head."

<sup>19</sup>But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He'll become a people too, and he'll also be great. But his younger brother will be greater than he will, and his descendants will become many nations."<sup>20</sup>Israel blessed them that day, saying,

"Through you, Israel will pronounce blessings, saying,

'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.'

So Israel put Ephraim before Manasseh.<sup>21</sup>Then Israel said to Joseph, "I'm about to die. God will be with you and return you to the land of your fathers.<sup>22</sup>I'm giving you one portion more than to your brothers," a portion that I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow."

### Jacob reveals his sons' destinies

**49** Jacob summoned his sons and said, "Gather around so that I can tell you what will happen to you in the coming days.

<sup>7</sup>Sam, LXX, Syr; MT lacks *aram*. <sup>8</sup>Sam; MT *Ephrath* <sup>9</sup>LXX; MT *Joseph* <sup>10</sup>Heb uncertain

**48:7** Jacob mentions *Rachel* because she is Joseph's mother (Gen 30:22-24). Her death is described in Genesis 35:16-20.

**48:13-14** Jacob reverses the status of Manasseh and Ephraim in his blessing by placing his right hand (the symbol of honor) on the head of Ephraim, Joseph's younger son. This event recalls an earlier deathbed blessing in which Jacob received status above his older brother, Esau (Gen 27:1-45). This event also explains for the author and his audience the status and power of the tribe of Ephraim among the northern tribes in their own time (Gen 48:19). By the period of the divided monarchy, the name Ephraim could be used for the entire northern kingdom of Israel (Hos 11:8; Isa 7:9; Jer 31:9).

**48:16** Throughout the book of Genesis, *divine messengers* play roles providing guidance and protection (Gen 16:7-12; 21:17-19; 22:11-12; 24:7).

**48:20** *Ephraim* and *Manasseh* will be the standards by which blessings are measured.

**48:22** The Hebrew of this verse is difficult (see translation note). The Hebrew word translated *portion* can refer to the city Shechem, which was on the border between Ephraim and Manasseh. But Genesis doesn't tell us of Jacob's taking it from the Amorites. The word can also be translated "shoulder," meaning the "burden" or *portion* that the shoulder carried (cf. Gen 49:15).

**49:1-28** Jacob's final words to his sons are from an ancient poem. Much of the Hebrew text is difficult, and many of the images are obscure. However, several features reflect the later realities of the Israelite tribes. Here as elsewhere in Genesis, Jacob's sons represent the later Israelite tribes that bear their names. Thus the fortunes of the sons described here are in fact the fortunes experienced by their tribal descendants, who make up the audience listening

48:7 Gn 35:16; Gn 35:19; 1Sa 10:2; Mt 5:2  
48:9 Gn 27:4; Gn 33:5; Heb 11:21  
48:10 Gn 27:1; Gn 27:27  
48:11 Gn 45:26  
48:13 Gn 48:14  
48:14 Gn 41:51; Gn 48:5  
48:15 Gn 17:1; Gn 48:16; Gn 49:24; Ps 23:1  
48:16 Ex 23:20  
48:17 Gn 48:14  
48:19 Gn 25:23; Dt 33:17  
48:22 Josh 24:32; Jn 4:5  
49:1 Nm 24:14; Dt 31:29; Jer 23:20; Dn 2:28; Dn 10:14

49:2 Ps 34:11  
 49:3 Gn 29:32;  
 Dt 21:17;  
 1Ch 5:1  
 49:4 Gn 35:22;  
 1Ch 5:1  
 49:5  
 Gn 29:33-34;  
 Gn 34:25;  
 Gn 46:10  
 49:6 Gn 34:26  
 49:7 Josh 19:1;  
 Josh 21:1  
 49:8 Gn 27:29;  
 Gn 29:35;  
 1Ch 5:2  
 49:9 Nm 23:24;  
 Nm 24:9;  
 Hos 5:14; Mi 5:8;  
 Rev 5:5  
 49:10 Nm 24:17;  
 Ps 60:7; Ps 72:8;  
 Is 42:1; Is 49:6  
 49:11 Dt 32:14;  
 2Ki 18:32  
 49:12 Prv 23:29  
 49:13 Gn 30:20;  
 Dt 33:18-19;  
 Josh 19:10

<sup>2</sup>Assemble yourselves and listen, sons of Jacob;  
 listen to Israel your father.

<sup>3</sup>Reuben, you are my oldest son,  
 my strength and my first contender,<sup>▼</sup>  
 superior in status and superior in might.

<sup>4</sup>As wild as the waters, you won't endure,  
 for you went up to your father's bed,  
 you went up<sup>▼</sup> and violated my couch.

<sup>5</sup>Simeon and Levi are brothers,  
 weapons of violence their stock in trade.

<sup>6</sup>May I myself never enter their council.  
 May my honor never be linked to their group;  
 for when they were angry, they killed men,  
 and whenever they wished, they maimed oxen.

<sup>7</sup>Cursed be their anger; it is violent,  
 their rage; it is relentless.  
 I'll divide them up within Jacob  
 and disperse them within Israel.

<sup>8</sup>Judah, you are the one your brothers will honor;  
 your hand will be on the neck of your enemies;  
 your father's sons will bow down to you.

<sup>9</sup>Judah is a lion's cub;  
 from the prey, my son, you rise up.  
 He lies down and crouches like a lion;  
 like a lioness—who dares disturb him?

<sup>10</sup>The scepter won't depart from Judah,  
 nor the ruler's staff from among his banners.<sup>▼</sup>  
 Gifts will be brought to him;  
 people will obey him.

<sup>11</sup>He ties his male donkey to the vine,  
 the colt of his female donkey to the vine's branches.  
 He washes his clothes in wine,  
 his garments in the blood of grapes.

<sup>12</sup>His eyes are darker than wine,  
 and his teeth whiter than milk.

<sup>13</sup>Zebulun will live at the seashore;  
 he'll live at the harbor of ships,  
 his border will be at Sidon.

<sup>▼</sup>Or *first of my power* <sup>▼</sup>LXX; MT *he went up* <sup>▼</sup>Sam; MT *his feet*

to these stories. A similar list of tribal blessings is found in Deuteronomy 33:1-29.

49:3-4 *Reuben's* status as oldest male child represents the ancient prominence of this tribe, and his illicit sexual activity, recorded both here and in Genesis 35:22, explains the tribe's early collapse (Deut 33:6; Judg 5:15-16). Reuben, the oldest son, played an important role in Genesis 37:21-22; 42:37.

49:5-7 Like Reuben, *Simeon* and *Levi* appear to have once been prominent tribes in Israel, but both appear to have lost landed status (49:7b), explained here by their violent behavior (49:5-7a; Gen 34:25-31). Simeon was incorporated into Judah (Josh 19:1). Levi was a tribe without landholdings, explained here by its excessive violence, but elsewhere in the Bible because of God's selection of them for priestly service (Num 18:20-24; Deut 33:8-11).

49:8-12 *Judah* finds favored status over his older brothers (Reuben, Simeon, and Levi). This text reflects the period of the monarchy. At that time the tribe of Judah rose to highest importance in Israelite history when David, a Judahite, became king of Israel. In contrast to the criticism of his older brothers, Judah is praised. The *scepter* (49:10) is a sign of kingship (Ps 45:6). It symbolizes Judah's rule over his brothers (49:8). Fertility, suggested by an abundance of *wine* (49:11-12), indicates God's favor.

49:13-15 The relative status of *Zebulun* and *Issachar* varies. Here, as in Judges 5:14-15, Zebulun appears first. Elsewhere in Genesis, Issachar is listed first as the older brother (Gen 30:17-20; 35:23; 46:13-14). The tribal allotments in Joshua 19:10-16 place Zebulun inland. However, Jacob's and Moses' blessings (Deut 33:18-19) locate the tribe of Zebulun along the Mediterranean *seashore* in the

- <sup>14</sup>Issachar is a sturdy donkey,  
bedding down beside the village hearths.<sup>7</sup>
- <sup>15</sup>He saw that a resting place was good  
and that the land was pleasant.  
He lowered his shoulder to haul loads  
and joined the work gangs.
- <sup>16</sup>Dan<sup>a</sup> will settle disputes for his people,  
as one of Israel's tribes.
- <sup>17</sup>Dan will be a snake on the road,  
a serpent on the path,  
biting a horse's heels,  
so its rider falls backward.
- <sup>18</sup>I long for your victory, LORD.
- <sup>19</sup>Gad<sup>a</sup> will be attacked by attackers,  
but he'll attack their back.
- <sup>20</sup>Asher<sup>b</sup> grows fine foods,  
and he will supply the king's delicacies.
- <sup>21</sup>Naphtali is a wild doe  
that gives birth to beautiful fawns.<sup>c</sup>
- <sup>22</sup>Joseph is a young bull,<sup>d</sup>  
a young bull by a spring,  
who strides with oxen.<sup>e</sup>
- <sup>23</sup>They attacked him fiercely and fired arrows;  
the archers attacked him furiously.
- <sup>24</sup>But his bow stayed strong,  
and his forearms were nimble,<sup>f</sup>  
by the hands of the strong one of Jacob,  
by the name of the shepherd, the rock of Israel,  
<sup>25</sup>by God, your father, who supports you,  
by the Almighty<sup>g</sup> who blesses you  
with blessings from the skies above  
and blessings from the deep sea below,  
blessings from breasts and womb.
- <sup>26</sup>The blessings of your father exceed  
the blessings of the eternal mountains,<sup>h</sup>  
the wealth of the everlasting hills.  
May they all rest on Joseph's head,  
on the forehead of the one set apart from his brothers.

49:14 Gn 30:18;  
Dt 33:18;  
Josh 19:17;  
Jgs 5:16;  
1Ch 12:32

49:15 Gn 49:14;  
Eze 29:18

49:16 Gn 30:6,  
Gn 49:17;  
Dt 33:22

49:17 Gn 49:16

49:18 Ps 25:5,  
Ps 40:1,  
Ps 119:166,  
Ps 119:174;  
Is 25:9

49:19 Gn 30:11;  
Dt 33:20,  
1Ch 5:11

49:20 Gn 30:13,  
Gn 35:26;  
Dt 33:24-25

49:21 Gn 30:8;  
Dt 33:23

49:22 Gn 41:52;  
Dt 33:13;  
Josh 17:14

49:23 Gn 37:24

49:24 Job 29:20;  
Ps 80:1, Ps 132:2,  
Ps 132:5; Is 1:24

49:25 Gn 17:1

49:26  
Dt 33:15-16;  
Hab 3:6

<sup>7</sup>Or stubbornly lying beneath its saddlebags <sup>a</sup>Or he judges, or settles disputes <sup>b</sup>Or he attacks or good fortune <sup>c</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT from Asher <sup>d</sup>Or who gives beautiful words <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain; or flexible <sup>h</sup>Heb Shaddai or the Mountain One <sup>i</sup>LXX; Heb uncertain

northeast part of Israel. Issachar's description is brief and obscure. References to a *donkey* and joining *work gangs* may indicate that the members of this tribe were laborers for the Canaanites.

**49:16-17** The name *Dan* is a form of a Hebrew word meaning "judge, advocate, fight for." The first line of 49:16 could also be translated "Dan will fight for his people." The text contains military imagery, as the *horse* and *rider* are cavalry.

**49:18** A short prayer is inserted into the list of tribal descriptions.

**49:19-21** The descriptions of Gad, Asher, and Naphtali are too brief to provide full explanations of their intent. *Gad*, which is a play on the word "attack" (translation note a), appears to be praised for the tribe's military strength (Deut 33:20; 1 Chron 5:18). *Asher*, located in the fertile land of western Galilee (Josh 19:24-31), is noted for its abundant produce (Deut 33:24). The *wild doe*, to which *Naphtali* is compared, suggests many possible meanings. One is quickness and sure-footedness in battle (Ps 18:33; Hab 3:19).

**49:22-26** Together with Judah (Gen 49:8-12), *Joseph* gets special attention in Jacob's blessings. This is because the

49:27 Gn 35:18;  
Jgs 20:21  
49:28 Gn 35:22  
49:29 Gn 25:8-9,  
Gn 47:30,  
Gn 49:30,  
Gn 50:13  
49:30 Gn 11:31,  
Gn 12:5,  
Gn 13:12,  
Gn 23:8,  
Gn 49:29  
49:31 Gn 23:19,  
Gn 25:9,  
Gn 35:29  
50:1 Gn 46:4  
50:3 Gn 50:10;  
Nm 20:29;  
Dt 34:8  
50:11 Gn 50:10

27 Benjamin is a wolf who hunts:  
in the morning he devours the prey;  
in the evening he divides the plunder.”

28 These are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them. He blessed them by giving each man his own particular blessing.

### *Jacob's death and burial*

29 Jacob ordered them, “I am soon to join my people. Bury me with my ancestors in the cave that’s in the field of Ephron the Hittite; 30 in the cave that’s in the field of Machpelah near Mamre in the land of Canaan that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burial property. 31 That is where Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried, and where Isaac and his wife Rebekah are buried, and where I buried Leah. 32 It is the field and the cave in it that belonged to the Hittites.” 33 After he finished giving orders to his sons, he put his feet up on the bed, took his last breath, and joined his people.

50 Joseph fell across his father’s body, wept over him, and kissed him. 2 Joseph then ordered the physicians in his service to embalm his father, and the physicians embalmed Israel. 3 They mourned for him forty days because that is the period required for embalming. Then the Egyptians mourned him for seventy days. 4 After the period of mourning had passed, Joseph spoke to Pharaoh’s household: “If you approve my request, give Pharaoh this message: 5 My father made me promise, telling me, ‘I’m about to die. You must bury me in the tomb I dug for myself in the land of Canaan.’ Now, let me leave and let me bury my father, and then I will return.”

6 Pharaoh replied, “Go, bury your father as you promised.”

7 So Joseph left to bury his father. All of Pharaoh’s servants went with him, together with the elder statesmen in his household and all of the elder statesmen in the land of Egypt, 8 Joseph’s entire household, his brothers, and his father’s household. Only the children, flocks, and cattle remained in the land of Goshen. 9 Even chariots and horsemen went with him; it was a huge collection of people. 10 When they arrived at the threshing floor of Atad on the other side of the Jordan River, they observed a solemn, deeply sorrowful period of mourning. He grieved seven days for his father.

11 When the Canaanites who lived in the land saw the observance of grief on Atad’s threshing floor, they said, “This is a solemn observance of grief by the Egyptians.” Therefore, its name is Abel-mizraim.<sup>1</sup> It is on the other side of the Jordan River. 12 Israel’s sons did for

<sup>1</sup>Or the Egyptians’ observance of grief

Joseph tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, were the prominent tribes in northern Israel. Jacob’s blessing focuses on fertility (49:22, 25-26) and military strength (49:23-24). The northern mountains inhabited by these tribes yielded agricultural wealth.

49:27 Comparing *Benjamin* to a wolf portrays him as a warlike tribe. This portrayal reflects both Benjamin’s role in Israel’s early battles (Judg 5:14) and its native son Saul, who was Israel’s first warrior king (1 Sam 9:1).

49:29-50:14 As he has instructed his sons, Jacob is buried not in Egypt where he is an immigrant (Gen 47:4), but in his own land.

49:29-33 These burial instructions are more detailed than the instructions in Genesis 47:29-31. This text refers to other parts of Genesis, including the purchase of the *field of Machpelah near Mamre* (Gen 23:1-18) and the burial there of *Sarah* (Gen 23:19-20); *Abraham* (Gen 25:9-10); and *Isaac* (Gen 35:27-29). The deaths and burials of *Rebekah* and *Leah* aren’t recorded earlier in Genesis. Rachel isn’t mentioned in this list because she died and was buried while her family was traveling near Ephrath (i.e., Bethlehem; Gen 35:16-21). 50:1-14 Following Jacob’s death, his sons bury him in Canaan as he instructed them (Gen 47:29-31; 49:29-33).

50:2-3 Joseph has come to embody both Israelite and Egyptian cultures. As an Israelite, he respects his father’s wish to be buried with his own ancestors in Canaan. As an Egyptian, he embraces the Egyptian religious ritual of *embalming* the dead and mourning for *seventy days*, in which he is joined by the Egyptians themselves.

50:5 Joseph refers to Jacob’s deathbed request described in Genesis 47:31, but Jacob’s reference to digging his own tomb isn’t recorded elsewhere.

50:6-9 Joseph has achieved such high status within Egyptian culture that he gets Pharaoh’s support to make the trip to bury his father. He also receives an Egyptian military escort and is accompanied by an array of Egyptian officials.

50:10-11 Joseph’s twofold identity remains clear. As an Israelite, he and his party observed the *seven days* of mourning connected with Israelite custom (1 Sam 31:13). Yet Joseph and his fellow travelers had embraced Egyptian culture so fully that the Canaanites called Joseph and his household *Egyptians*. The location of the threshing floor of *Atad* or *Abel-mizraim* can no longer be identified.

50:12-13 These verses make clear that Jacob was in fact buried in the same plot Abraham had purchased (Gen 23:1-20).

him just as he had ordered. <sup>13</sup>His sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre, which Abraham had purchased as burial property from Ephron the Hittite. <sup>14</sup>Then<sup>l</sup> Joseph returned to Egypt, he, his brothers, and everyone who left with him to bury his father.

**Joseph and his brothers in Egypt**

<sup>15</sup>When Joseph's brothers realized that their father was now dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us, and wants to pay us back seriously for all of the terrible things we did to him?" <sup>16</sup>So they approached<sup>k</sup> Joseph and said, "Your father gave orders before he died, telling us, <sup>17</sup>'This is what you should say to Joseph. "Please, forgive your brothers' sins and misdeeds, for they did terrible things to you. Now, please forgive the sins of the servants of your father's God.'"<sup>m</sup> Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

<sup>18</sup>His brothers wept<sup>l</sup> too, fell down in front of him, and said, "We're here as your slaves."

<sup>19</sup>But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I God? <sup>20</sup>You planned something bad for me, but God produced something good from it, in order to save the lives of many people, just as he's doing today. <sup>21</sup>Now, don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your children." So he put them at ease and spoke reassuringly to them.

<sup>22</sup>Thus Joseph lived in Egypt, he and his father's household. Joseph lived 110 years <sup>23</sup>and saw Ephraim's grandchildren. The children of Machir, Manasseh's son, were also born on Joseph's knees. <sup>24</sup>Joseph said to his brothers, "I'm about to die. God will certainly take care of you and bring you out of this land to the land he promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." <sup>25</sup>Joseph made Israel's sons promise, "When God takes care of you, you must bring up my bones out of here." <sup>26</sup>Joseph died when he was 110 years old. They embalmed him and placed him in a coffin in Egypt.

50:19 Gn 30:2, Gn 45:5  
50:20 Gn 45:5  
50:22 Ex 1:5  
50:23 Gn 30:3; Nm 32:39; Josh 17:1; Job 42:16  
50:24 Gn 26:3, Gn 28:13, Gn 35:12, Gn 48:21; Ex 3:16  
50:26 Gn 50:2

<sup>l</sup>LXX; MT includes *after he buried his father*. <sup>k</sup>LXX, Syr; MT *they commanded* <sup>l</sup>Or *came*

50:15-26 After Jacob's burial, the focus turns to Joseph, who reassures his brothers of his loyalty, sees his grandchildren born, and gives final instructions about his own burial.

50:15 Jacob, as head of the household, provided authority over his sons and united them. Following his death, each son assumed authority over his own household. The unity among brothers came into question. Jacob's sons felt vulnerable in the face of Joseph's special status in Egypt.

50:16-17 No previous story in Genesis describes Jacob giving these instructions. However, references are occasionally made to earlier events not recorded (Gen 26:15-18; 42:21; 49:31; 50:5). The brothers aren't necessarily inventing Jacob's instructions to protect themselves.

50:20 This verse suggests that God directs all human affairs. Even more, it claims that God directs human affairs to a positive end, even when human beings act wrongfully (cf. Gen 45:5-8). The well-being of the ancestors and their Israelite descendants is therefore viewed as more dependent on divine blessing than on human achievement.

Joseph views Egypt as a place of refuge where the lives of Israel's ancestors were saved.

50:23 *Machir* is an important clan in the tribe of *Manasseh*. It's mentioned by itself (perhaps in place of *Manasseh*) in Judges 5:14.

50:24-25 To his death, Joseph remains both an Israelite and an Egyptian. He anticipates the day when Jacob's entire household will leave Egypt and return to the land of Canaan that God had promised them. He tells his brothers to carry his own bones back with them, as he had done with the remains of his father, Jacob (Exod 13:19). Later tradition placed Joseph's burial in Shechem (Josh 24:32; cf. Gen 33:18-19). At the same time, Joseph remains fully an Egyptian, who dies, is embalmed, and is buried in *a coffin in Egypt*. While Joseph's death brings the stories of Israel's ancestors to a close, the book of Exodus picks up where Genesis left off. Joseph's death sets the stage for the rise of an Egyptian pharaoh who was no longer familiar with Joseph, his wise governance, or his family (Exod 1:8-14).



# EXODUS

The title of the book, Exodus, comes from the name of the ancient Greek translation of the original Hebrew text, *Exodus Aigyptou* ("Exit out of Egypt"). Exodus is the story of God's rescue of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Exod 1–15), Israel's travels in the wilderness (Exod 16–18), and God's making and restoring a covenant relationship with the Israelites at Mount Sinai as they begin their journey toward the land of Canaan (Exod 19–40).

Exodus is part of the larger collection of the first five books of the OT called the Pentateuch or the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). The traditions of Genesis provide important background leading up to the events of Exodus. For example, Genesis recounts three key promises from God to the people of Israel: many descendants, the land of Canaan, and a special covenant relationship with the Lord (Gen 12:1-9; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-22; 22:15-18; 28:10-15). These three promises from Genesis begin a process of fulfillment in Exodus. Israel experiences amazing

population growth in Egypt (Exod 1:1-3; 12:37). The Lord rescues the Israelites from slavery in Egypt so they can travel back to the promised land of Canaan (Exod 3:7-10; 12:29-51; 13:3-5; 23:23-33; 33; 34:11). The Lord makes a formal covenant relationship with Israel with instructions and promises (Exod 19–24), including the promise to be close and at home with the Israelites (Exod 25–31; see Exod 29:46).

In addition, two key themes that run throughout Exodus have their roots in Genesis: the Sabbath and God's names. The Sabbath first appears at the end of the creation story in Genesis 2:1-3 and then reappears as an important theme throughout Exodus: the manna story (Exod 16:23-29), the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:8-11), the instructions of the covenant document (Exod 23:12), at the end of the instructions for building the Lord's tent dwelling (Exod 31:14-16), the instructions of the restored covenant (Exod 34:21), and at the beginning of the actual building of the Lord's tent dwelling (Exod 35:2). The Sabbath is built into the fabric



The Sinai mountains  
Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

of creation from the beginning in Genesis but becomes a special part of Israel's identity as the people of God in Exodus.

A second recurring theme is the unfolding of God's name and character in several stages throughout Exodus. In Genesis, God's name was known as "the LORD" (Gen 15:7; 28:13), the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac (28:13; 31:42, 53), the God of Jacob (Gen 28:20-21) and God Almighty (Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3). In Exodus, God reveals additional divine names that provide a deepening of insight into God's character at key points (Exod 3:13-15; 6:2-8; 15:26; 20:2, 5-6; 23:21; 29:46; 33:19; 34:6-7). In the end, this progressive revealing of God's names and character makes it possible for the Lord's holy presence to live in the middle of Israel's camp, in spite of Israel's sin in worshipping the gold calf (Exod 32; see notes on Exod 33:19; 34:6-7).

Exodus contains many different forms of literature: stories (much of Exod 1-18; 32-34), an ancient poetic song (Exod 15), a ritual ceremony for making a covenant between God and people (Exod 19; 24), commandments (Exod 20:1-14), an ancient instruction containing case laws (Exod 20:19-23:19), detailed plans and instructions for building and furnishing a tent dwelling for God's presence (Exod 25-31), and a detailed account of actually carrying out the plan for the tent dwelling (Exod 35-40).

A number of different traditions have been gathered and gradually woven together over centuries to make up the present form of Exodus. The final version of Exodus probably emerged sometime in the 6th or 5th century BCE, after the exile to Babylon in 587 BCE and the return of many of the exiles to Judah during the Persian period of Israel's history. The Exodus story of Israelites being freed from a foreign land so that they could return to their homeland would have had powerful meaning for exiles returning home to Judah in the 5th century BCE.

Not surprisingly, historical records from ancient Egypt provide little evidence for reconstructing the history of Israelite slavery in Egypt. Although some scholars connect the exodus with the reign of an Egyptian pharaoh or king named Rameses II (1290-1224 BCE; see Exod

1:11), others aren't convinced it can be dated with any certainty. Many scholars thus prefer to speak of the biblical account in Exodus not as a history but as Israel's cultural memory of what happened in Egypt. This recognizes that it is difficult to peg specific events in Exodus to particular times and dates with modern historical certainty. As cultural memory, it is assumed that there were changes and additions to the exodus traditions along the way. The traditions of Exodus, however, carried enormous significance over the centuries for Israel's understanding of its origins, its identity, the nature of its God, and the shape of its covenant and life with God and other peoples.

The book of Exodus continues to inspire and influence people today. Jews celebrate the Festival of Passover every spring as an annual ritual meal of identity ("we were slaves"—Exod 13:14) and faith ("I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery"—Exod 20:2). According to the NT Gospel writers, Christian celebration of the Lord's Supper originated in Jesus' celebration of this Jewish Passover meal (Mark 14:12-25; Matt 26:17-29; Luke 22:7-23). Moreover, Israel's memory of its slavery in Egypt shaped OT instructions protecting the disadvantaged, the vulnerable, and the outsider (e.g., Exod 23:9; Lev 19:33-34). Some OT prophets reinterpreted the ancient story of the exodus for their own time and context (Isa 51:10).

The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and other teaching traditions in Exodus have had enormous influence in ethical and legal matters in both religion and politics. The story of the Lord's special revelation of God's name and character to Moses in Exodus 33-34 stands as one of the most important theological summaries of God's core qualities of mercy and compassion in the entire Bible (especially Exod 34:6-7; see Num 14:17-19; Neh 9:16-19; Pss 25:4-11; 86:15; 103:8; Jon 4:2; Joel 2:23; Nah 1:2-3). Liberation movements in many parts of the world have been inspired by the story of God's victory over Egyptian oppressors and Israel's freedom from slavery. Exodus remains a living word that echoes powerfully from generation to generation.



**I. Israel's Slavery in Egypt (1:1-22)****II. Calling Moses to Lead God's People (2:1-7:7)**

- A. Moses' early years: from Egypt to Midian (2:1-25)
- B. The call of Moses (3:1-4:17)
- C. Moses returns to Egypt (4:18-5:23)
- D. The call of Moses renewed (6:1-7:7)

**III. Freeing Israel from Slavery in Egypt (7:8-15:21)**

- A. The disasters against the Egyptians (7:8-11:10)
- B. Passover and the death of Egypt's oldest children (12:1-13:16)
- C. Rescue at the Reed Sea (13:17-14:31)
- D. In praise of God's victory: the Song of the Sea (15:1-21)

**IV. Early Struggles in the Wilderness (15:22-18:27)**

- A. Hunger and thirst in the wilderness (15:22-17:7)
  - 1. Thirst: bitter water made sweet (15:22-27)
  - 2. Hunger: manna and quail (16:1-36)
  - 3. Again, thirst: water at Massah and Meribah (17:1-7)

B. War with the Amalekites (17:8-16)

C. Sharing the burdens of leadership: Jethro visits Moses (18:1-27)

**V. Making the Covenant: Israel at Mount Sinai (19:1-24:18)**

- A. The Lord appears on Mount Sinai (19:1-25)
- B. The Ten Commandments (20:1-21)
- C. Additional instructions of the covenant (20:22-23:33)
- D. Sealing the covenant and the covenant meal (24:1-18)

**VI. Instructions for Building the Tent Dwelling and Its Equipment (25:1-31:18)****VII. Breaking the Covenant: Worshipping the Gold Calf (32:1-35)****VIII. Making a New Covenant: The Lord's Forgiveness (33:1-34:35)****IX. Building the Tent Dwelling: The Lord at Home with Israel (35:1-40:38)**

*Dennis T. Olson*

... Gn 35:23;  
Gn 46:8; 1Ch 2:1  
... Gn 29:33,  
Gn 35:22-23;  
1Ch 2:1  
... Gn 46:26-27;  
Dt 10:22  
... Ac 7:18  
... Ps 105:24  
... Ex 83:3,  
Ps 105:25;  
Ac 7:19  
... Gn 15:13,  
Gn 47:11;  
Ex 2:11; Ex 3:7;  
Ex 5:4  
... Ex 1:7;  
Nm 12:3;  
Jer 24:5  
... Gn 15:13  
... Ex 2:23,  
Ex 6:9;  
Nm 20:15;  
Dt 26:6; Ac 7:19  
... Gn 35:17  
... Ex 1:22;  
Ac 7:19  
... Gn 42:18;  
Ex 1:21;  
Prv 16:6;  
Dn 3:16; Ac 5:29  
... Josh 2:4;  
2Sa 17:20  
... Prv 11:18;  
Ecc 8:12; Is 3:10;  
Heb 6:10  
... Gn 41:1;  
Ex 1:16; Ac 7:19

**1** These are the names of the Israelites who came to Egypt with Jacob along with their households: <sup>2</sup>Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, <sup>3</sup>Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, <sup>4</sup>Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. <sup>5</sup>The total number in Jacob's family was seventy. Joseph was already in Egypt. <sup>6</sup>Eventually, Joseph, his brothers, and everyone in his generation died. <sup>7</sup>But the Israelites were fertile and became populous. They multiplied and grew dramatically, filling the whole land.

### **Israel is oppressed**

<sup>8</sup>Now a new king came to power in Egypt who didn't know Joseph. <sup>9</sup>He said to his people, "The Israelite people are now larger in number and stronger than we are. <sup>10</sup>Come on, let's be smart and deal with them. Otherwise, they will only grow in number. And if war breaks out, they will join our enemies, fight against us, and then escape from the land." <sup>11</sup>As a result, the Egyptians put foremen of forced work gangs over the Israelites to harass them with hard work. They had to build storage cities named Pithom and Rameses for Pharaoh. <sup>12</sup>But the more they were oppressed, the more they grew and spread, so much so that the Egyptians started to look at the Israelites with disgust and dread. <sup>13</sup>So the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites. <sup>14</sup>They made their lives miserable with hard labor, making mortar and bricks, doing field work, and by forcing them to do all kinds of other cruel work.

<sup>15</sup>The king of Egypt spoke to two Hebrew midwives named Shiphrah and Puah: <sup>16</sup>"When you are helping the Hebrew women give birth and you see the baby being born, if it's a boy, kill him. But if it's a girl, you can let her live." <sup>17</sup>Now the two midwives respected God so they didn't obey the Egyptian king's order. Instead, they let the baby boys live.

<sup>18</sup>So the king of Egypt called the two midwives and said to them, "Why are you doing this? Why are you letting the baby boys live?"

<sup>19</sup>The two midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because Hebrew women aren't like Egyptian women. They're much stronger and give birth before any midwives can get to them." <sup>20</sup>So God treated the midwives well, and the people kept on multiplying and became very strong. <sup>21</sup>And because the midwives respected God, God gave them households of their own.

<sup>22</sup>Then Pharaoh gave an order to all his people: "Throw every baby boy born to the Hebrews into the Nile River, but you can let all the girls live."

**1:1-5** The book of Exodus begins with a list of names of Jacob's 11 sons. They and their families came from the land of Canaan to Egypt in search of food (Gen 42-47). They discovered that their long-lost brother Joseph rose from being a lowly slave to a powerful leader second only to Egypt's king (Gen 41:37-45). These 12 sons of Jacob (the 11 plus Joseph) are the ancestors of the 12 tribes of Israel. The story in Exodus marks a shift from the family stories of Genesis to the history of Israel as a people and a nation.

**1:1** In the Jewish tradition, the book of Exodus is called *Shemot*, which is the Hebrew word in this verse for *names*.

**1:1-5** *seventy*: A full list of the names of the 70 family members appears in Genesis 46:8-27.

**1:7** *multiplied and grew dramatically*: The great increase in Israel's population fulfills in part God's promises to Abraham and Sarah and the other ancestors in Genesis. God had often promised that they would have many offspring (Gen 12:1-4; 13:16; 26:4; 32:12). When the Israelites eventually leave Egypt, they will number 600,000 adult men plus women, children, and elderly (Exod 12:37): a total of two and a half million people.

**1:9-10** *a new king... who didn't know Joseph*: A previous king of Egypt had honored Joseph and welcomed his father, his brothers, and their families to live in Egypt (Gen 47:1-12). Now, this new king sees the Israelites not as welcome guests but only as dangerous foreigners.

**1:9-10** *larger in number and stronger than we are*: The king of Egypt exaggerates the threat of the Israelite minority within Egypt. He does so to justify his harsh actions against them.

**1:13** *Pharaoh*: the Egyptian title for their king.

**1:15-22** The king of Egypt believes that Hebrew baby boys and not girls are his greatest threat. However, the two midwives, along with Moses' mother, Moses' sister, and Pharaoh's own daughter (Exod 2:1-10), disobey the king's commands. Their actions save the baby named Moses, who will one day join God in leading the downfall of Egypt's king and his army (Exod 14:26-31). As often happens in scripture, God uses those whom others disregard to shame and overthrow the powerful (1 Sam 2:1-10; Jer 9:23; Luke 1:46-55; 1 Cor 1:26-29).

**1:15** The midwives tell a lie to the king about the Hebrew mothers giving birth so quickly. They use the lie to disguise their stubborn refusal to obey the king's order to kill the Hebrew babies. This is one of the Bible's first examples of disobeying and defying an unjust and violent ruler. *Hebrew*: another term for "Israelite" used to describe God's people.

**1:22** *Nile River*: The one major river that provides water and life in Egypt is used by Pharaoh to kill Hebrew boys. The first disaster God will bring upon Egypt will be turning the Nile River into blood. It will be a way to remember the death of Israel's children (Exod 4:9; 7:14-25).

**Moses' birth**

**2**Now a man from Levi's household married a Levite woman. **2**The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She saw that the baby was healthy and beautiful, so she hid him for three months. **3**When she couldn't hide him any longer, she took a reed basket and sealed it up with black tar. She put the child in the basket and set the basket among the reeds at the riverbank. **4**The baby's older sister stood watch nearby to see what would happen to him.

**5**Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe in the river, while her women servants walked along beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds, and she sent one of her servants to bring it to her. **6**When she opened it, she saw the child. The boy was crying, and she felt sorry for him. She said, "This must be one of the Hebrews' children."

**7**Then the baby's sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Would you like me to go and find one of the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?"

**8**Pharaoh's daughter agreed, "Yes, do that." So the girl went and called the child's mother. **9**Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I'll pay you for your work." So the woman took the child and nursed it. **10**After the child had grown up, she brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him as her son. She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I pulled him out<sup>a</sup> of the water."

**Moses runs away to Midian**

**11**One day after Moses had become an adult, he went out among his people and he saw their forced labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. **12**He looked around to make sure no one else was there. Then he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

**13**When Moses went out the next day, he saw two Hebrew men fighting with each other. Moses said to the one who had started the fight, "Why are you abusing your fellow Hebrew?"

**14**He replied, "Who made you a boss or judge over us? Are you planning to kill me like you killed the Egyptian?"

**Moses and the Story of Sargon** Like the story of Moses, other stories in the ancient world talk about heroes who as a baby were put in a basket floating in a river. One such story is about a king of Akkad in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) called Sargon. The original Sargon I ruled around 2600 BCE. A later king of Assyria (7th century BCE) took on the name Sargon II and applied Sargon's story to himself. The story tells of how a woman priest had a baby in secret. She made "a basket of reeds" and "with bitumen she sealed the lid." She put her baby in the basket and then put the basket in the Euphrates River. She hoped that someone would find the baby and adopt him. Akki was the name of an Assyrian god known as "the drawer of water." Akki found the baby in the basket and adopted him as his son. Eventually this baby grew up and became the great king Sargon. The birth of Moses has some interesting similarities to this story of Sargon. One important difference is that Moses didn't become a king of Egypt but rather a leader of runaway slaves.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *mashah* sounds like Moses (*mashe*).

**2:1-25** The chapter contains three short stories about attempted rescues in the early life of Moses: the birth of Moses (2:1-10), Moses' killing the Egyptian (2:11-15a), and Moses' rescue of the Midianite daughters of Reuel (2:15b-22). Three women work together to save Moses in the first story. Moses saves a Hebrew man but then is rejected by other Hebrews in the second story. Moses saves seven Midianite women in the third story. These stories look forward to God's future rescue of the Israelites from their slavery that will be led by Moses.

**2:1** The mother and father of Moses are both from the Israelite tribe of Levi. The Levites were a tribe of priests who led the Israelites in the worship of God (Exod 32:25-29). The names of Moses' parents were Amran and Jochebed (Exod 6:20). Moses had a brother named Aaron who became the high priest of Israel (Exod 6:20). He also had a

sister named Miriam who was a prophet in Israel (Exod 15:20; Num 12:1; 26:59; Mic 6:4).

**2:3** *basket*: a rare word in Hebrew used only in this story and Genesis 6:14-9:18. There it refers to Noah's "ark," a large ship that enabled Noah's family and pairs of all other creatures to survive the great flood.

**2:4** *The baby's older sister*: This is likely Miriam, the only named sister of Moses (Num 26:59).

**2:9** *Pharaoh's daughter pays Moses' mother for nursing her own baby*, in contrast to the other Israelite slaves who work for Pharaoh and receive nothing. The kindness of Pharaoh's daughter shows that other Egyptians aren't necessarily as evil as Pharaoh himself.

**2:10** *Moses*: The name Moses (Heb. *Moshe*) is presented here as a wordplay on the Hebrew verb *mashah*, "to draw (out of the water)." Moses also often appears in

**2:1** Ex 6:16; Ex 6:20; Nm 26:59; 1Ch 6:1

**2:3-4** Ac 7:21; Heb 11:24

**2:9** Ex 1:11; Ex 5:4; Ac 7:23; Heb 11:24

**2:14** Ac 7:24

Ac 7:26

**2:15** Gn 13:8; Gn 19:9; Ex 2:10; Ex 3:3; Ac 7:35

2:15 Gn 24:11;  
Gn 29:2; Ac 7:29;  
Heb 11:27

2:16 Gn 24:11;  
Gn 24:13;  
Gn 24:19; Ex 3:1;  
Isa 9:11

2:17 Gn 29:10  
2:18 Ex 3:1,  
Ex 4:18, Ex 18:1,  
Ex 18:12;  
Nm 10:29

2:20 Gn 19:2;  
Job 31:32

2:21 Ex 4:25,  
Ex 18:2;  
Nm 12:1

2:22 Ex 18:3;  
Ac 7:29;  
Heb 11:13-14

2:23 Ex 3:7,  
Ex 3:9; Dt 26:7;  
Jas 5:4

2:24 Gn 28:13;  
Ex 6:5;  
2Ki 13:23;  
Ps 105:8,  
Ps 105:42

3:1 Ex 4:27,  
Ex 17:6; Ex 18:5,  
Ex 24:13;  
1Ki 19:8

3:2 Gn 16:7;  
Ex 3:4; Dt 33:16;  
Mk 12:26;  
Ac 7:30

3:3 Ex 2:10,  
Ex 2:14; Ex 3:11,  
Ex 6:1; Ac 7:31

3:4 Ex 19:3;  
Lv 1:1

3:5 Gn 28:17;  
Ex 19:12;  
Josh 5:15;

Ecc 3:1; Ac 7:33

3:6 Gn 28:13;  
Ex 4:5; Mt 22:32;  
Mk 12:26;  
Lk 20:37

3:7 Ex 2:23;  
Neh 9:9;  
Ps 106:44;  
Is 63:9

Then Moses was afraid when he realized: They obviously know what I did. <sup>15</sup>When Pharaoh heard about it, he tried to kill Moses.

But Moses ran away from Pharaoh and settled down in the land of Midian. One day Moses was sitting by a well. <sup>16</sup>Now there was a Midianite priest who had seven daughters. The daughters came to draw water and fill the troughs so that their father's flock could drink. <sup>17</sup>But some shepherds came along and rudely chased them away. Moses got up, rescued the women, and gave their flock water to drink.

<sup>18</sup>When they went back home to their father Reuel,<sup>b</sup> he asked, "How were you able to come back home so soon today?"

<sup>19</sup>They replied, "An Egyptian man rescued us from a bunch of shepherds. Afterward, he even helped us draw water to let the flock drink."

<sup>20</sup>Reuel said to his daughters, "So where is he? Why did you leave this man? Invite him to eat a meal with us."

<sup>21</sup>Moses agreed to come and live with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses as his wife. <sup>22</sup>She gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, "because," he said, "I've been an immigrant<sup>c</sup> living in a foreign land."

<sup>23</sup>A long time passed, and the Egyptian king died. The Israelites were still groaning because of their hard work. They cried out, and their cry to be rescued from the hard work rose up to God. <sup>24</sup>God heard their cry of grief, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. <sup>25</sup>God looked at the Israelites, and God understood.

### Moses at the burning bush

**3**Moses was taking care of the flock for his father-in-law Jethro,<sup>d</sup> Midian's priest. He led his flock out to the edge of the desert, and he came to God's mountain called Horeb. <sup>2</sup>The LORD's messenger appeared to him in a flame of fire in the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was in flames, but it didn't burn up. <sup>3</sup>Then Moses said to himself, Let me check out this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn't burning up.

<sup>4</sup>When the LORD saw that he was coming to look, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

Moses said, "I'm here."

<sup>5</sup>Then the LORD said, "Don't come any closer! Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground." <sup>6</sup>He continued, "I am the God of your father, Abraham's God, Isaac's God, and Jacob's God." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup>Then the LORD said, "I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their

<sup>b</sup>Also called Jethro <sup>c</sup>Heb *ger* sounds like *Gershom*. <sup>d</sup>Also called Reuel

ancient Egyptian names with the meaning "son" or "son of."

**2:15 Midian:** The Midianites were also known as Kenites (Judg 1:16). They were distant relatives of Israelites who lived in the wilderness or desert regions east of Egypt and east of Canaan (Gen 25:2; 36:35; 37:28).

**2:18 Reuel:** The "Midianite priest" (Exod 2:16) who becomes Moses' father-in-law (Exod 2:21) is named Reuel here. Other texts refer to this same Reuel as either "Jethro" (Exod 3:1; 4:18; 18:1) or "Hobab" (Num 10:29; Judg 4:11). These are alternate traditions about the same person.

**2:22 Gershom:** Moses identifies himself as an *immigrant* as he names his son. Moses is considered a foreigner and not fully at home among all three groups of people that he has encountered: Egyptians (Exod 2:6, 15), Israelites (Exod 2:13-14), and Midianites (Exod 2:19).

**3:1 Jethro:** Another name for Moses' father-in-law, who earlier was called "Reuel" (Exod 2:18). *God's mountain... Horeb:* The mountain named Horeb is elsewhere called "Mount Sinai" (Exod 19:11) or simply "God's mountain" (Exod 4:27; 24:13). Mountaintops in the ancient world were considered places where divine beings would live.

**3:2 The LORD's messenger:** For the most part, there is little difference between the direct appearance of the LORD and

the appearance of the LORD's messenger (Heb. *ml'k*). They are virtually one and the same (see Exod 3:2, 4-5; 14:19, 24, 25). In a few instances, the LORD and the messenger seem to be related but remain separate entities (Exod 23:20-22; 32:34; 33:2-3). *bush:* The Hebrew word for "bush," *sineh*, is closely related to "Sinai" (Exod 19:11), the other name for Mount Horeb. God's presence in the fire of the burning bush is a foretaste of the dramatic fire associated with God's presence on Mount Sinai later in Exodus 19:18. Fire is a frequent image of God's presence in the Bible (Gen 15:17; Exod 40:38; Isa 29:6; Acts 2:3). *didn't burn up:* a sign of God's never-ending power that will enable Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

**3:5 Take off your sandals:** Taking off shoes is a custom that honors a sacred place ("God's mountain") in the ancient world. It's also a custom when coming into a home. Moses felt like an "immigrant" or stranger in many places (Exod 2:22), but he finds a home here in God's presence.

**3:6 God of your father:** The God whom Moses encounters at Horeb is the same God whom Moses' ancestors (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) worshipped in past generations (Gen 28:13; 48:15). *Moses hid his face:* A human who looked directly at God could die instantly (Exod 33:20; Isa 6:5).

**3:7 seen... heard... know:** God became fully aware of

cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. <sup>8</sup>I've come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and bring them to a good and broad land, a land that's full of milk and honey, a place where the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites all live. <sup>9</sup>Now the Israelites' cries of injustice have reached me. I've seen just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them. <sup>10</sup>So get going. I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

<sup>11</sup>But Moses said to God, "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and to bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

<sup>12</sup>God said, "I'll be with you. And this will show you that I'm the one who sent you. After you bring the people out of Egypt, you will come back here and worship God on this mountain."

**God's special name**

<sup>13</sup>But Moses said to God, "If I now come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they are going to ask me, 'What's this God's name?' What am I supposed to say to them?"

<sup>14</sup>God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am. \* So say to the Israelites, 'I Am has sent me to you.'"

<sup>15</sup>God continued, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, Abraham's God, Isaac's God, and Jacob's God, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever; this is how all generations will remember me.

<sup>16</sup>Go and get Israel's elders together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me. The LORD said, "I've been paying close attention to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt. <sup>17</sup>I've decided to take you away from the harassment in Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land full of milk and honey.' <sup>18</sup>They will accept what you say to them. Then you and Israel's elders will go to Egypt's king

3:8 Ex 3:17; Ex 13:5, Ex 33:3; Lv 20:24; Nm 13:27  
3:10 Ps 105:26; Mt 6:4  
3:11 Ex 4:10; Ex 6:12; 1Sa 16:18; 2Sa 7:18; 1s 6:5  
3:13 Gn 32:28-29; Ex 3:14, Ex 15:3; Nm 16:28  
3:14 Jn 8:58; Heb 13:8; Rev 4:8  
3:15 Ex 3:6; Ps 102:12; Ps 135:13; Hos 12:5  
3:16 Gn 50:24; Ex 4:29, Ex 4:31  
3:17 Gn 46:4; Ex 3:8  
3:18 Ex 4:31; Ex 5:1, Ex 5:3; Ex 8:27

*The Divine Name "the LORD"* One of the most frequent names of God in the OT is "the LORD" (Heb. *YHWH*). This divine name appears related to the Hebrew verb "to be" (Heb. *hwh*; although see note on Exod 34:14). It may originally have been pronounced as *Yahweh* with the meaning of "he causes to be" or "he creates." We can't be sure of this pronunciation because the Hebrew language was originally written without vowels. Later scribes inserted vowels above or below the written consonants. However, they didn't add the normal vowels for pronunciation with *YHWH*. This name was considered so holy that it wasn't pronounced out loud (Exod 20:7). So Hebrew scribes substituted alternate vowels from the Hebrew word for "my Lord" (Heb. *Adonai*). These vowels told readers to read out loud the Hebrew for "my Lord" or simply "the Lord" whenever they encountered the divine name *Yahweh* in the biblical text. In English translations, this divine name is marked in capital letters as "the LORD." The ever-deeper meanings of this name will progressively reveal the character of God at several key points throughout Exodus (Exod 3:14; 15:26; 20:2, 5-6; 29:45-46; 33:19; 34:6-7).

\*Or I Will Be Who I will Be.

Israel's suffering under Egyptian slavery in every sense: seeing the oppression, hearing the cry, and knowing intimately Israel's pain.

3:8 *a land that's full of milk and honey*: This phrase describes the fertile abundance of the promised land of Canaan. The phrase occurs here for the first time but will be repeated often to describe Canaan (Exod 13:5; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27; Deut 6:3; Josh 5:6; Ezek 20:6). *Canaanites ... Jebusites*: a traditional listing of all the native peoples living within the borders of Canaan (Gen 15:19-21; Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10).

3:11-12 Moses gives five reasons why God shouldn't use Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (3:11-4:17). Leaders in the Bible often object when God calls them (Judg 6:14-15; Isa 6:1-13; Jer 1:4-10; 1 Cor 15:3-11). The first reason is that Moses doesn't feel adequate for the job: "Who am I?" God assures Moses that he won't be alone: "I'll be

with you" (3:12). God also promises to bring Moses back to this same mountain (Horeb/Sinai) after he has led the Israelites out of Egypt (Exod 19:11).

3:13-15 Moses' second objection to God's call is his fear that the people will ask Moses for the specific name of this God, and Moses will have no answer for them. In response, God reveals to Moses the name, "I Am Who I Am." The name plays on the Hebrew verb for "to be." This name may also be translated as "I Will Be Who I Will Be." The name invites God's people to trust God into the future. God will continue to reveal who God is by actions and words at key moments in the story of Exodus (see notes on Exod 20:2, 5-6; 23:21; 29:46; 33:19; 34:6-7). This same Hebrew verb for "to be" is also the root for the frequent Hebrew name for God, *Yahweh*, translated as "the LORD."

3:17 *the Canaanites ... the Jebusites*: See note on Exodus 3:8.  
3:18 *offer sacrifices*: God commands Moses to tell a lie to

3:19 Ex 5:2,  
Ex 6:1, Ex 10:1  
3:29 Ex 11:2, 3,  
Ex 12:36,  
Ps 106:46

3:22 Gn 15:14;  
Ex 11:2,  
Ex 12:35;  
Eze 39:10

4:1 Ex 3:1,  
Ex 3:11, Ex 3:18,  
Ex 4:10, Ex 6:12

4:2 Ex 4:17,  
Ex 4:20

4:3 Ex 7:10

4:4 Ex 4:3,  
Ex 4:30, Ex 7:10,  
Ex 8:8, Ex 9:29

4:5 Ex 3:6,  
Ex 3:15, Ex 19:9

4:6 Ex 4:7;  
Nm 12:10;  
2Ki 5:27

4:7 Ex 4:6,  
2Ki 5:14; Mt 8:3

4:8 Ex 4:30

4:9 Ex 7:19

4:10 Ex 3:11,  
Ex 4:1, Ex 6:12;  
Jer 1:6

4:11 Ps 94:9,  
Ps 146:8,  
Lk 1:20, Lk 1:64

4:12 Ex 4:15;  
Is 50:4; Mt 10:19;  
Lk 12:12,  
Lk 21:15

4:13 Ex 4:1,  
Ex 4:10; Jer 1:6

4:14 Ex 4:27

4:17 Ex 4:2,  
Ex 4:20, Ex 7:9,  
Ex 7:19; Ex 8:16

and say to him, "The LORD, the Hebrews' God, has met with us. So now let us go on a three-day journey into the desert so that we can offer sacrifices to the LORD our God."<sup>19</sup> However, I know that Egypt's king won't let you go unless he's forced to do it.<sup>20</sup> So I'll use my strength and hit Egypt with dramatic displays of my power. After that, he'll let you go.

<sup>21</sup>"I'll make it so that when you leave Egypt, the Egyptians will be kind to you and you won't go away empty-handed. <sup>22</sup>Every woman will ask her neighbor along with the immigrant in her household for their silver and their gold jewelry as well as their clothing. Then you will put it on your sons and daughters, and you will rob the Egyptians."

### Signs of power

**4** Then Moses replied, "But what if they don't believe me or pay attention to me? They might say to me, 'The LORD didn't appear to you!'"

<sup>2</sup>The LORD said to him, "What's that in your hand?"

Moses replied, "A shepherd's rod."

<sup>3</sup>The LORD said, "Throw it down on the ground." So Moses threw it on the ground, and it turned into a snake. Moses jumped back from it. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Reach out and grab the snake by the tail." So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it turned back into a rod in his hand. <sup>5</sup>"Do this so that they will believe that the LORD, the God of their ancestors, Abraham's God, Isaac's God, and Jacob's God has in fact appeared to you."

<sup>6</sup>Again, the LORD said to Moses, "Put your hand inside your coat." So Moses put his hand inside his coat. When he took his hand out, his hand had a skin disease flaky like snow. <sup>7</sup>Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your coat." So Moses put his hand back inside his coat. When he took it back out again, the skin of his hand had returned to normal. <sup>8</sup>"If they won't believe you or pay attention to the first sign, they may believe the second sign. <sup>9</sup>If they won't believe even these two signs or pay attention to you, then take some water from the Nile River and pour it out on dry ground. The water that you take from the Nile will turn into blood on the dry ground."

<sup>10</sup>But Moses said to the LORD, "My Lord, I've never been able to speak well, not yesterday, not the day before, and certainly not now since you've been talking to your servant. I have a slow mouth and a thick tongue."

<sup>11</sup>Then the LORD said to him, "Who gives people the ability to speak? Who's responsible for making them unable to speak or hard of hearing, sighted or blind? Isn't it I, the LORD?"

<sup>12</sup>Now go! I'll help you speak, and I'll teach you what you should say."

<sup>13</sup>But Moses said, "Please, my Lord, just send someone else."

<sup>14</sup>Then the LORD got angry at Moses and said, "What about your brother Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak very well. He's on his way out to meet you now, and he's looking forward to seeing you. <sup>15</sup>Speak to him and tell him what he's supposed to say. I'll help both of you speak, and I'll teach both of you what to do. <sup>16</sup>Aaron will speak for you to the people. He'll be a spokesperson for you, and you will be like God for him. <sup>17</sup>Take this shepherd's rod with you too so that you can do the signs."

Egypt's king. Moses is to tell Pharaoh that the Israelites would like to go on a three-day journey into the desert. There they will offer animal and grain sacrifices to their God as an act of worship and devotion. The implication seems to be that the Israelites would return to Egypt after offering their sacrifices. God's real plan, however, is to take the Israelites away from Egypt and bring them to settle in Canaan (Exod 3:17).

**3:22** *rob the Egyptians*: In the end, God will make it so hard on the Egyptians that they will be desperate to set the Israelites free. They will even give the Israelites their gold, silver, and clothing as encouragement to leave Egypt for good. This prediction comes true in Exodus 12:33-36.

**4:1-9** Moses' third objection to God's call. Moses is afraid that the Israelites won't believe that God really appeared to him. God gives Moses two small but amazing tricks as demonstrations of power: turning a rod into a snake and healing his hand from skin disease. Such magic or "secret knowledge" was a part of ancient Egypt's culture.

God will give Moses the power to do what the Egyptian wizards can do and much more (Exod 4:30; 7:11; 8:18-19; 9:11).

**4:9** *Nile River*: the one major river that supplies water to the otherwise dry desert nation of Egypt. *water... into blood*: God provides a third amazing sign to Moses in case the Israelites need more convincing. Turning the Nile River into blood will become the first of 10 great disasters that God will bring upon Egypt (Exod 7:14-25).

**4:10-12** Moses' fourth reason to say no to God's call is that he isn't able to speak well in public. God already knows the needs Moses has and will teach Moses what to say.

**4:13-16** Moses has a fifth and final objection to God's call. This time, however, Moses has no real reason. He tells God to *just send someone else* instead of Moses. God gets angry and won't take no for an answer. But God also agrees to send someone else alongside Moses. His brother Aaron will be a *spokesperson* for Moses, as Moses is a *spokesperson* for God.

### Moses goes back to Egypt

<sup>18</sup>Moses went back to his father-in-law Jethro and said to him, "Please let me go back to my family in Egypt and see whether or not they are still living."

Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."

<sup>19</sup>The LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt because everyone there who wanted to kill you has died." <sup>20</sup>So Moses took his wife and his children, put them on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. Moses also carried the shepherd's rod from God in his hand.

<sup>21</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, make sure that you appear before Pharaoh and do all the amazing acts that I've given you the power to do. But I'll make him stubborn so that he won't let the people go. <sup>22</sup>Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my oldest son. <sup>23</sup>I said to you, "Let my son go so he could worship me." But you refused to let him go. As a result, now I'm going to kill your oldest son.'"

<sup>24</sup>During their journey, as they camped overnight, the LORD met Moses<sup>f</sup> and tried to kill him. <sup>25</sup>But Zipporah took a sharp-edged flint stone and cut off her son's foreskin. Then she touched Moses' genitals<sup>g</sup> with it, and she said, "You are my bridegroom because of bloodshed." <sup>26</sup>So the LORD let him alone. At that time, she announced, "A bridegroom because of bloodshed by circumcision."

<sup>27</sup>The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the desert to meet Moses." So he went, and Aaron met him at God's mountain and greeted him with a kiss. <sup>28</sup>Moses told Aaron what the LORD had said about his mission and all the signs that the LORD had told him to do. <sup>29</sup>Then Moses and Aaron called together all the Israelite elders. <sup>30</sup>Aaron told them everything that the LORD

4:20 Ex 17:9;  
Nm 20:9  
4:21 Ex 7:3,  
Ex 7:13, Ex 9:12,  
Ex 9:35;  
Josh 11:20  
4:22 Is 63:16;  
Jer 31:9;  
Hos 11:1; Ro 9:4  
4:23 Ex 5:1,  
Ex 7:16, Ex 11:5,  
Ex 12:29;  
Ps 135:8  
4:24 Gn 17:14,  
Gn 42:27;  
Nm 22:22  
4:25 Ex 2:21;  
Josh 5:2, Josh 5:3  
4:27 Ex 3:1,  
Ex 4:14, Ex 18:5,  
Ex 24:13

**God Tries to Kill Moses** Why does God try to kill Moses? And how does the circumcision performed by Moses' wife Zipporah help to rescue Moses' life? Many explanations have been offered for this strange story.

First, this story may be a sign about the importance of the ritual of circumcision (cf. Gen 17).

Second, this story may be related to the Passover. In the previous verse, God predicts that Pharaoh's son will eventually be killed (Exod 4:23). In Exodus 12, God's destroyer kills the oldest male offspring of every house except those whose doorposts have been touched by the blood of the Passover lamb (Exod 12:12, 22-23). Zipporah's action with the blood here in Exodus 4:24-26 may be a sign that points forward to this greater event involving blood and deliverance from death.

Third, this story has similarities with other stories where God attacks or nearly attacks people chosen for a special mission. God (or God's messenger) threatens Jacob in Genesis 32:22-32, Balaam in Numbers 22:22-35, and Joshua in Joshua 5:13-15. The threat of the attack reminds those whom God has chosen to be very careful. They shouldn't assume that God will always be on their side. They remain subject to God's judgment and may be punished for disobedience. (See Num 20:9-13, 24; 27:12-14; Deut 32:48-52; 34:1-12.)

<sup>f</sup>Or him <sup>g</sup>Or his feet

4:21 God gives Moses *amazing acts* to try to convince a stubborn Pharaoh to let Israel go. Many times Pharaoh will make himself stubborn and resist Moses (Exod 7:13; 8:15, 32; 9:7, 34-35). At other times, God will be the one who will *make him stubborn* (Exod 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8, 17). The story holds together Pharaoh's responsibility for his own actions and God's final control over the end result.

4:22-23 God predicts that Pharaoh's *oldest son* will be killed because Pharaoh has mistreated the Israelites, who are God's *oldest son*. This will happen in the last or tenth disaster that God will bring on Egypt (Exod 12:29-32).

4:24-26 Moses and his family obediently begin their journey back to Egypt so that Moses can lead the Israelites out of their slavery, as God commanded. But then God suddenly attacks Moses and tries to kill him! The story is hard to understand. We may not have all the necessary historical background to grasp the story fully. Moreover, the underlying Hebrew is unclear whether God tries to

kill Moses or his son (see translation note). *Zipporah*: wife of Moses, mother of their son Gershom, and daughter of a Midianite priest (Exod 2:18-22). *flint stone*: a thin stone with a sharp edge used as a knife. *cut off... foreskin*: a ritual of removing the foreskin from the penis, called *circumcision* (4:26). Israelite tradition commands that circumcision normally be done when a male baby is eight days old (Gen 17:9-14). In ancient Egypt, circumcision was done on young adult males when they were old enough to be married. The story seems to combine these two different traditions, with the young son being circumcised and then his mother, Zipporah, touching Moses with the foreskin and saying that Moses is a *bridegroom because of bloodshed*. This act succeeds in protecting Moses so that God doesn't kill him. See sidebar, "God Tries to Kill Moses."

4:27 *God's mountain*: Mount Horeb (Exod 3:1), also known as Mount Sinai (Exod 19:11).

5:1 Ex 10:9  
 5:2 Ex 3:19;  
 Job 21:15  
 5:6 Ex 1:11,  
 Ex 5:10,  
 Ex 5:14-15,  
 Ex 5:19  
 5:8 Ex 5:18  
 5:9 Dt 26:6;  
 Eph 5:6  
 5:17 Ex 5:8

had told to Moses, and he performed the signs in front of the people. <sup>31</sup>The people believed. When they heard that the LORD had paid attention to the Israelites and had seen their oppression, they bowed down and worshipped.

### First meeting with Pharaoh

**5** Afterward, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, Israel's God, says: 'Let my people go so that they can hold a festival for me in the desert.'"

<sup>2</sup>But Pharaoh said, "Who is this LORD whom I'm supposed to obey by letting Israel go? I don't know this LORD, and I certainly won't let Israel go."

<sup>3</sup>Then they said, "The Hebrews' God has appeared to us. Let us go on a three-day journey into the desert so we can offer sacrifices to the LORD our God. Otherwise, the LORD will give us a deadly disease or violence."

<sup>4</sup>The king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why are you making the people slack off from their work? Do the hard work yourselves!" <sup>5</sup>Pharaoh continued, "The land's people are now numerous. Yet you want them to stop their hard work?"

<sup>6</sup>On the very same day Pharaoh commanded the people's slave masters and supervisors, <sup>7</sup>"Don't supply the people with the straw they need to make bricks like you did before. Let them go out and gather the straw for themselves. <sup>8</sup>But still make sure that they produce the same number of bricks as they made before. Don't reduce the number! They are weak and lazy, and that's why they cry, 'Let's go and offer sacrifices to our God.' <sup>9</sup>Make the men's work so hard that it's all they can do, and they can't focus on these empty lies."

<sup>10</sup>So the people's slave masters and supervisors came out and spoke to the people, "This is what Pharaoh says, 'I'm not giving you straw anymore. <sup>11</sup>Go and get the straw on your own, wherever you can find it. But your work won't be reduced at all.'" <sup>12</sup>So the people spread out all through the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. <sup>13</sup>The slave masters drove them hard and said, "Make sure you make the same daily quota as when you had the straw." <sup>14</sup>The Israelite supervisors, whom Pharaoh's slave masters had set over them, were also beaten and asked, "Why didn't you produce the same number of bricks yesterday and today as you did before?"

<sup>15</sup>Then the Israelite supervisors came and pleaded to Pharaoh, "Why do you treat your servants like this? <sup>16</sup>No straw is supplied to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' Look at how your servants are being beaten! Your own people are to blame!"

<sup>17</sup>Pharaoh replied, "You are lazy bums, nothing but lazy bums. That's why you say, 'Let us go and offer sacrifices to the LORD.' <sup>18</sup>Go and get back to work! No straw will be given to you, but you still need to make the same number of bricks."

<sup>19</sup>The Israelite supervisors saw how impossible their situation was when they were commanded, "Don't reduce your daily quota of bricks." <sup>20</sup>When they left Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them. <sup>21</sup>The supervisors said to them, "Let the LORD see and judge what you've done! You've made us stink in the opinion of Pharaoh and his servants. You've given them a reason to kill us."

<sup>22</sup>Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, "My Lord, why have you abused this people? Why did you send me for this? <sup>23</sup>Ever since I first came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has abused this people. And you've done absolutely nothing to rescue your people."

5:2 I don't know this LORD: Pharaoh doesn't yet know Israel's God. God will, however, be interested in making sure that Pharaoh and the other Egyptians eventually do know the Lord (Exod 7:5, 17; 8:10; 9:14; 14:18).

5:3 a three-day journey: Moses and Aaron tell Pharaoh a lie about wanting to leave Egypt for a short journey into the wilderness in order to offer sacrifices to God. The real intention is for the Israelites to leave Egypt for good and travel through the wilderness to the land of Canaan (Exod 3:17-18). *deadly disease or violence*: This is a subtle warning of the disasters that the Lord will soon bring upon the Egyptians because of Pharaoh's refusal to let the Israelites go.

5:7 straw . . . bricks: The Hebrews used wet clay mixed with straw to form bricks, which they then baked in the sun.

5:21 made us stink: Now it is the Israelites who stink to Pharaoh. Later, the Nile River and the whole land of Egypt will stink from rotted fish and frogs in the first two disasters that occur in Exodus 7:21; 8:13-14.

5:22-23 My Lord, why . . . this people?: Moses complains to God for not making good on God's promise to deliver the Israelites from their suffering (Exod 3:8). The OT has a strong tradition of Israelite leaders and prophets who boldly complain to God when life becomes difficult. Examples include the Israelite king in Psalm 89 and the prophet in Jeremiah 11:18-12:6; 15:10-21; 20:7-13. Moses' original complaints to God when God first called him to be Israel's leader are in the same tradition (Exod 3:11-4:17). Moses will feel overwhelmed by the burdens of leadership and complain to God a number of times in the future.



**God reassures Moses**

**6** The LORD replied to Moses, "Now you will see what I'll do to Pharaoh. In fact, he'll be so eager to let them go that he'll drive them out of his land by force."

<sup>2</sup>God also said to Moses: "I am the LORD. <sup>3</sup>I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty,<sup>b</sup> but I didn't reveal myself to them by my name 'The LORD.' <sup>4</sup>I also set up my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan where they lived as immigrants. <sup>5</sup>I've also heard the cry of grief of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians have turned into slaves, and I've remembered my covenant. <sup>6</sup>Therefore, say to the Israelites, 'I am the LORD. I'll bring you out from Egyptian forced labor. <sup>7</sup>I'll rescue you from your slavery to them. I'll set you free with great power and with momentous events of justice. <sup>8</sup>I'll take you as my people, and I'll be your God. You will know that I, the LORD, am your God, who has freed you from Egyptian forced labor. <sup>9</sup>I'll bring you into the land that I promised to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I'll give it to you as your possession. I am the LORD.'" <sup>9</sup>Moses told this to the Israelites. But they didn't listen to Moses, because of their complete exhaustion and their hard labor.

<sup>10</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, <sup>11</sup>"Go and tell Pharaoh, Egypt's king, to let the Israelites out of his land."

<sup>12</sup>But Moses said to the LORD, "The Israelites haven't even listened to me. How can I expect Pharaoh to listen to me, especially since I'm not a very good speaker?" <sup>13</sup>Nevertheless, the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron about the Israelites and Pharaoh, Egypt's king, giving them orders to let the Israelites go from the land of Egypt.

**Family line of Moses and Aaron**

<sup>14</sup>These were the leaders of their households.

The descendants of Reuben, Israel's oldest son: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

These were Reuben's clans. <sup>15</sup>The Simeonites: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, a Canaanite woman's son. These were Simeon's clans.

<sup>16</sup>These were the Levites' names by their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Levi lived 137 years. <sup>17</sup>The Gershonites: Libni and Shimei and their clans. <sup>18</sup>The Kohathites: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. Kohath lived 133 years. <sup>19</sup>The Merarites: Mahli and Mushi. These were the Levite clans by their generations.

<sup>b</sup>Heb *El Shaddai* or *God of the Mountain*

(Exod 15:24-25; Num 11:10-15). In each case, God will listen patiently to Moses and provide him the help that he needs to keep going.

6:1-13 This section is a second version of God's call of Moses. The first call story was in Exodus 3:7-4:17. The two versions share a number of similarities. God promises to deliver the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt (6:1; see Exod 3:7). God had appeared before in the book of Genesis as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (6:3; see Exod 3:6). God appears now with a new name (6:3; see Exod 3:14). God instructs Moses to tell the Israelites that God will deliver them from slavery in Egypt and bring them to the promised land of Canaan (6:6-8; see Exod 3:16-17). God tells Moses what he should say to Pharaoh (6:10; see Exod 3:18). Moses complains that he is unable to speak well in public (6:12; see Exod 4:10). The two versions of the call of Moses also have some important differences. God's new name in the first story of Moses' call is "I Am Who I Am" (Exod 3:14) alongside the name *the LORD* (Exod 3:15). The new name in the second version of Moses' call is simply *The LORD* (6:3). In the first story, Moses has five different objections to God's command that he lead Israel (Exod 3:11-4:16), but in the second story Moses protests God's call only once (6:12). This second story of God's call to Moses affirms that God remains confident in Moses as a leader, even though his first attempts to lead didn't go well. His first attempt to

speak to Pharaoh led to more suffering of the Israelites, not less (Exod 5:19-20). Moses had become discouraged (Exod 5:22-23). Moses finds out that leadership comes with struggles and burdens along the way. He needs to hear again that God is still with him.

6:3 In one version of stories about Israel's ancestors earlier in Genesis, God publicly revealed God's name as *God Almighty* (Heb. *El Shaddai*) and not as *the LORD* (Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3). This is the same version of traditions that continues here in Exodus 6:3. According to this version, the name *The LORD* is revealed for the first time to Moses in Exodus. In a different set of traditions within Genesis, God revealed the name "the LORD" much earlier to pre-Israelite humans and Israel's ancestors Abraham and Jacob (Gen 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 15:7; 21:33; 22:14; 26:24; 28:13). As a result, the name "the LORD" appears at many points throughout the book of Genesis in spite of the claim of Exodus 6:3.

6:14-19 *descendants of Reuben... the Simeonites... the Levites*: Reuben, Simeon, and Levi were the first three of the 12 sons born to their father, Jacob (Gen 29:31-34). The focus of this version of Jacob's family is on the line of Levi, who will become the official tribe of priests in Israel (Exod 32:28-29; Num 3:1-51). The family line within the tribe of Levi concentrates further on Levi's son Kohath and his descendants (6:16). For more on the Kohathites, see Numbers 3:27-32; 4:1-20.

6:1 Ex 3:19-20;  
Ex 11:1,  
Ex 12:31,  
Ex 12:33  
6:2 Ex 3:14-15  
6:3 Gn 17:1,  
Gn 48:3;  
Ex 3:15; Ps 68:4,  
Ps 83:18  
6:6 Ex 7:4,  
Ex 15:13;  
Dt 26:8;  
1Ch 17:21;  
Ps 136:11  
6:9 Ex 2:23  
6:11 Ex 6:29  
6:12 Ex 4:1,  
Ex 4:10, Ex 6:30;  
Jer 1:6  
6:16 Gn 46:11;  
Nm 3:17;  
Nm 26:57;  
1Ch 6:1,  
1Ch 6:16

Lv 10:1;  
Nm 1:7; Nm 2:3;  
Nm 3:2;  
1Ch 2:10

Ex 6:21;  
Nm 16:1;  
1Ch 6:22-23;  
1Ch 6:37

Nm 25:7;  
Nm 31:6;  
Josh 22:13;  
Josh 24:33;  
Jgs 20:28

Ex 6:2;  
Ex 6:11; Ex 7:2

Ex 4:16  
Ex 4:21;  
Ex 11:9; Ac 7:36

Ex 4:2;  
Is 7:11; Jn 2:18;  
Jn 6:30

Ex 4:3;  
Ex 7:9

Gn 41:8;  
Ex 7:22; Ex 8:7;  
Ex 8:18; 2Ti 3:8

Ex 4:14;  
Ex 4:30; Ex 5:20;  
Ex 6:20; Ex 7:1

<sup>20</sup>Amram married Jochebed, his father's sister. She gave birth to Aaron and Moses. Amram lived 137 years. <sup>21</sup>The Izharites: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. <sup>22</sup>The Uzzielites: Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri. <sup>23</sup>Aaron married Elisheba, Amminadab's daughter and Nahshon's sister. She gave birth to Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. <sup>24</sup>The Korahites: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. These were the Korahite clans. <sup>25</sup>Aaron's son Eleazar married one of Putiel's daughters. She gave birth to Phinehas. These were the leaders of Levite households by their clans.

<sup>26</sup>It was this same Aaron and Moses whom the LORD commanded, "Bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt in military formation." <sup>27</sup>It was also this same Moses and Aaron who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

<sup>28</sup>At the time the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, <sup>29</sup>the LORD said to him, "I am the LORD. Tell Pharaoh, Egypt's king, everything that I've said to you."

<sup>30</sup>But Moses replied to the LORD, "Look, I'm not a very good speaker. How is Pharaoh ever going to listen to me?"

**7**The LORD said to Moses, "See, I've made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. <sup>2</sup>You will say everything that I command you, and your brother Aaron will tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites out of his land. <sup>3</sup>But I'll make Pharaoh stubborn, and I'll perform many of my signs and amazing acts in the land of Egypt. <sup>4</sup>When Pharaoh refuses to listen to you, then I'll act against Egypt and I'll bring my people the Israelites out of the land of Egypt in military formation by momentous events of justice. <sup>5</sup>The Egyptians will come to know that I am the LORD, when I act against Egypt and bring the Israelites out from among them." <sup>6</sup>Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded them. <sup>7</sup>Moses was 80 years old and Aaron was 83 when they spoke to Pharaoh.

### Turning rods into snakes

<sup>8</sup>The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, <sup>9</sup>"When Pharaoh says to you, 'Do one of your amazing acts,' then say to Aaron, 'Take your shepherd's rod and throw it down in front of Pharaoh, and it will turn into a cobra.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>10</sup>So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw down his shepherd's rod in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it turned into a cobra. <sup>11</sup>Then Pharaoh called together his wise men and wizards, and Egypt's religious experts<sup>1</sup> did the same thing by using their secret knowledge. <sup>12</sup>Each one threw down his rod,

<sup>1</sup>Or serpent <sup>1</sup>Or magicians

**6:20** Amram... Jochebed: In the next generation, attention focuses on Kohath's son Amram and his wife Jochebed, the parents of Aaron and Moses (Exod 6:18, 20; see Exod 2:1). This is a rare example of Aaron being named first and then Moses, indicating that Aaron is the eldest son (Exod 7:7). Aaron and his descendants are also the focus of this section of the family tree of Levites (Exod 6:20, 26; Num 3:1). Elsewhere in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, Moses is always listed first as most important, and Aaron is listed second (60 times; for example, Exod 6:26-27).

**6:21-25** Aaron... Eleazar... Phinehas: The most important names in this family tree trace the line of Israel's high priests across three generations: Aaron (Exod 40:13), Aaron's son Eleazar (Num 3:32; 20:22-29), and Eleazar's son Phinehas (Num 25:10-13). This reflects a tradition with special interests in honoring the line of priests in Israel.

**6:25** military formation: The listing of households and tribal leaders among the Israelites, including priests, was for the purpose of organizing for a military battle as they escaped Egypt (Exod 12:41; with "the Lord" as the primary fighter—Exod 14:14). The census list in Numbers 1–2 is a similar but more detailed organizational plan of Israel's military arrangements as they prepare to enter the land of Canaan (Num 1:1-3; see also Num 26:1-4).

**6:28-30** After the interruption of the family line in Exodus

6:14-27, the text returns to Moses' complaint to God about not being able to speak well (Exod 6:10-13).

**7:1** God reminds an anxious Moses that Aaron will be available as his spokesperson when speaking to Pharaoh. Moses will be *like God* to Pharaoh in the sense that God normally uses a human messenger when talking to a human leader like Pharaoh. Aaron will be that human messenger for Moses, acting as his *prophet* or spokesperson. This text repeats what God first suggested in Exodus 4:14-16.

**7:3** *make Pharaoh stubborn*: See note on Exodus 4:21.

**7:5** God is interested in making sure that the Egyptians will know the power of Israel's God. This theme that Egypt would one day know Israel's God is repeated throughout the stories of the 10 disasters that God brings upon the Egyptians (Exod 7:17; 8:6, 18; 9:14; 10:2; 11:7). The prediction is fulfilled in the crossing of the Reed Sea when God defeats Pharaoh and his army (Exod 14:18, 25).

**7:7** Moses is younger (80 years old) than Aaron (83 years old). Yet Moses is Aaron's superior as the primary leader of Israel. Usually in the ancient world, the eldest son is favored and most important. In the Bible, however, the younger child is often favored and chosen by God (Gen 17:15-22; 25:23; 37:5-11). God frequently works in ways contrary to what humans expect.

**7:8-13** *your shepherd's rod... will turn into a cobra*: God first gave this amazing trick to Moses as a way to convince

and they turned into cobras. But then Aaron's rod swallowed up each of their rods. <sup>13</sup>However, Pharaoh remained stubborn. He wouldn't listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

### Water into blood

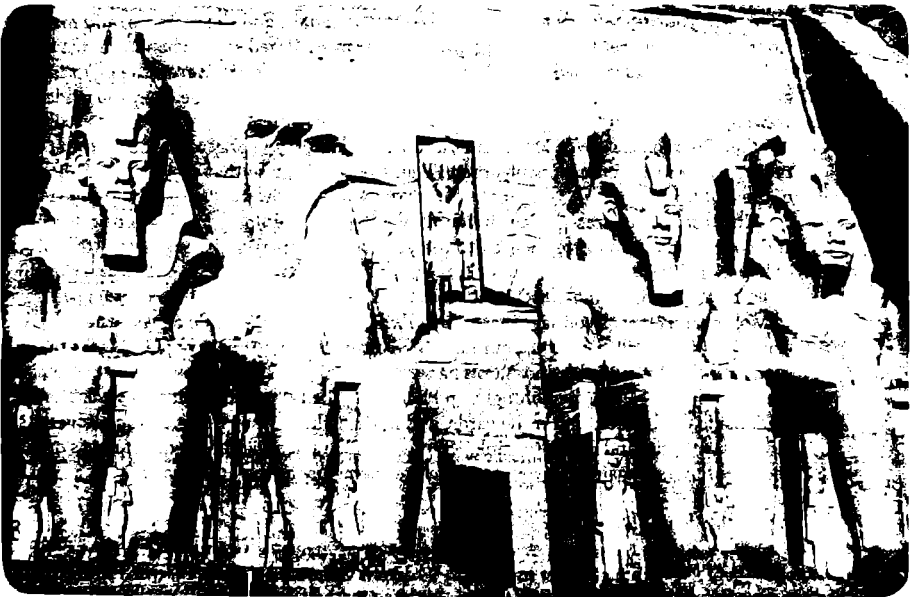
<sup>14</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh is stubborn. He still refuses to let the people go. <sup>15</sup>Go to Pharaoh in the morning. As he is going out to the water, make sure you stand at the bank of the Nile River so you will run into him. Bring along the shepherd's rod that turned into a snake. <sup>16</sup>Say to him, The LORD, the Hebrews' God, has sent me to you with this message: Let my people go so that they can worship me in the desert. Up to now you still haven't listened. <sup>17</sup>This is what the LORD says: By this you will know that I am the LORD. I'm now going to hit the water of the Nile River with this rod in my hand, and it will turn into blood. <sup>18</sup>The fish in the Nile are going to die, the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians won't be able to drink water from the Nile." <sup>19</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, "Take your shepherd's rod and stretch out your hand over Egypt's waters—over their rivers, their canals, their marshes, and all their bodies of water—so that they turn into blood. There will be blood all over the land of Egypt, even in wooden and stone containers.'"

<sup>7:13</sup> Ex 4:21,  
Ex 7:3, Ex 8:15,  
Ex 10:20,  
Ex 10:27

<sup>7:14</sup> Ex 8:15,  
Ex 10:1,  
Ex 10:20,  
Ex 10:27

<sup>7:15</sup> Ex 3:18,  
Ex 5:1, Ex 5:3,  
Ex 9:1, Ex 9:13  
<sup>7:16</sup> Ex 4:9,  
Ex 7:5

<sup>7:17</sup> Ex 8:5-6,  
Ex 8:16,  
Ex 10:12,  
Ex 14:21



Great Temple of Ramses II at Abu Simbel

Todd Balen/BiblePlaces.com

the Israelites to believe that his power came from God (Exod 4:1-5, 30). This time Aaron uses a similar miracle or sign to try to convince Pharaoh of the power of Israel's God. The ancient Egyptians were famous for their magicians. They do what Aaron did, turning their rods into serpents. However, Aaron's rod or snake *swallowed up* the Egyptians' rods or snakes. This demonstrated the superior power of Israel's God, but still *Pharaoh remained stubborn*. The Hebrew word for "cobra" or "serpent" (*tannin*) often refers to a sea creature (Gen 1:21) or a "dragon" (Isa 27:1). Such sea monsters were often seen by ancient people as opponents of God and sources of chaos and evil in the world. The text of Ezekiel 29:3 identifies Egypt's pharaoh as a "crocodile" (Hebrew *tannin*), which the Lord will fight

and destroy. In a similar way, Aaron's serpent swallowing the Egyptian serpents is a symbol of God's future victory over Pharaoh at the Reed Sea (Exod 15:3-10).

**7:14-25** The first disaster in Egypt. Turning the water of the Nile River into blood is the first of a series of 10 disasters that God will bring upon Pharaoh and the whole people of Egypt in Exodus 7:14–14:29. After each disaster, Pharaoh will in the end stubbornly refuse to let the Israelite slaves go.

**7:15** Years earlier, Moses' mother had placed the baby Moses in a basket at the riverbank. Shortly thereafter, Pharaoh's daughter had met Moses (Exod 2:3-6). This time, Moses meets Pharaoh *at the bank of the Nile*.

**7:17** *turn into blood*: The Nile River is the main source of

7:20 Ex 17:5.

Ps 78:44.

Ps 105:29.

7:21 Ex 7:18.

Ex 7:24.

7:22 Ex 7:3.

Ex 7:11, Ex 7:13.

Ex 8:7.

8:1 Ex 3:18.

Ex 5:1.

8:2 Ex 9:2.

Ps 78:45.

Ps 105:30.

Rev 16:13.

8:7 Ex 7:11.

Ex 7:22.

Mt 24:24.

<sup>20</sup>Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded. He raised the shepherd's rod and hit the water in the Nile in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. <sup>21</sup>The fish in the Nile died, and the Nile began to stink so that the Egyptians couldn't drink water from the Nile. There was blood all over the land of Egypt. <sup>22</sup>But the Egyptian religious experts did the same thing with their secret knowledge. As a result, Pharaoh remained stubborn, and he wouldn't listen to them, just as the LORD had said. <sup>23</sup>Pharaoh turned and went back to his palace. He wasn't impressed even by this. <sup>24</sup>Meanwhile, all the Egyptians had to dig for drinking water along the banks of the Nile River, because they couldn't drink the water of the Nile itself. <sup>25</sup>Seven days went by after the LORD had struck the Nile River.

### *Invasion of frogs*

**8**<sup>1</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and tell him: This is what the LORD says: Let my people go so that they can worship me. <sup>2</sup>If you refuse to let them go, then I'll send a plague of frogs over your whole country. <sup>3</sup>The Nile will overflow with frogs. They'll get into your palace, into your bedroom and onto your bed, into your officials' houses, and among all your people, and even into your ovens and bread pans. <sup>4</sup>The frogs will crawl up on you, your people, and all your officials." <sup>5</sup>And<sup>1</sup> the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your shepherd's rod over the rivers, the canals, and the marshes, and make the frogs crawl up all over the land of Egypt.'" <sup>6</sup>So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt. The frogs crawled up and covered the land of Egypt. <sup>7</sup>However, the Egyptian religious experts were able to do the same thing by their secret knowledge. They too made frogs crawl up onto the land of Egypt.

<sup>8</sup>Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "If you pray to the LORD to get rid of the frogs from me and my people, then I'll let the people go so that they can offer sacrifices to the LORD."

<sup>9</sup>Moses said to Pharaoh, "Have it your way. When should I pray for you and your officials and your people to remove the frogs from your houses, courtyards, and fields? They'll stay only in the Nile."

<sup>10</sup>Pharaoh said, "Tomorrow!"

Moses said, "Just as you say! That way you will know that there is no one like the LORD our God. <sup>11</sup>The frogs will leave you, your houses, your officials, and your people. They'll stay only in the Nile." <sup>12</sup>After Moses and Aaron had left Pharaoh, Moses cried out to the LORD about the frogs that the LORD had brought on Pharaoh. <sup>13</sup>The LORD did as Moses asked. The frogs died inside the houses, out in the yards, and in the fields. <sup>14</sup>They gathered them together in big piles, and the land began to stink. <sup>15</sup>But when Pharaoh saw that the disaster was over, he became stubborn again and wouldn't listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

<sup>1</sup>7:26 in Heb <sup>1</sup>8:1 in Heb

life-giving water in Egypt. Pharaoh had earlier used the Nile's water not to give life but as a means of drowning Hebrew babies (Exod 1:22). As a consequence of Pharaoh's earlier action, God commands Moses to tell Aaron to hit the water with his rod. This action will cause the whole river and all water everywhere in Egypt to turn to blood. The fish will all die, stink, and pollute the water.

7:22 Egypt's magicians are also able to turn water into blood (see also Exod 7:11; 8:7). As the 10 disasters progress, Egypt's *religious experts* will reach a point where they are unable to do the same amazing acts of power as Moses and Aaron (Exod 8:18-19; 9:11).

7:25 The phrase *Seven days* may point back to the story of the seven-day creation of the world in Genesis 1:1-2:3. God's creation involved setting boundaries between light and darkness (Gen 1:4-5), water and land (Gen 1:9), and different spaces for different creatures (birds in the air, fish in the sea, animals on the land; Gen 1:20-21, 24-25). In various ways, the disasters in Egypt involve the breaking down of these boundaries set up in creation. This chaos leads to death and destruction. Great human injustice

(Pharaoh's enslaving the Israelites) leads to the ecological disasters that follow.

8:1-15 The second disaster in Egypt. When Pharaoh again refuses to let the Israelites go, God causes the frogs to leave the rivers and other wetlands where they normally live. The frogs cross their usual boundary between water and land. They invade all the spaces on dry land where humans live. The wild animals of nature are overrunning the areas of human civilization.

8:8 *If you pray... I'll let the people go*: This is the first instance in which Pharaoh seems to give in a little. Pharaoh even seems to admit that Moses' God is real and that Moses' prayer to God may have the power to stop the plague. Pharaoh agrees to let the Israelites go for a few days to *offer sacrifices to the LORD*, nothing more.

8:15 *became stubborn again*: Even though Pharaoh had earlier seemed to give in (Exod 8:8), in the end he refused to let Israel go, just as God had predicted. Pharaoh will continue to move back and forth between giving in and then changing his mind, becoming stubborn again at several points (Exod 8:28, 32; 9:27-28, 34-35;

**Swarming lice**

<sup>16</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your shepherd's rod and hit the land's dirt so that lice<sup>m</sup> appear in the whole land of Egypt.'" <sup>17</sup>They did this. Aaron stretched out his hand with his shepherd's rod, hit the land's dirt, and lice appeared on both people and animals. All the land's dirt turned into lice throughout the whole land of Egypt.

<sup>18</sup>The religious experts<sup>n</sup> tried to produce lice by their secret knowledge, but they weren't able to do it. There were lice on people and animals. <sup>19</sup>The religious experts said to Pharaoh, "This is something only God could do!" But Pharaoh was stubborn, and he wouldn't listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

**Insects fill Egypt**

<sup>20</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh as he goes out to the water. Say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go so that they can worship me. <sup>21</sup>If you refuse to let my people go, I'll send swarms of insects<sup>o</sup> on you, your officials, your people, and your houses. All Egyptian houses will be filled with swarms of insects and also the ground that they cover. <sup>22</sup>But on that day I'll set apart the land of Goshen, where my people live. No swarms of insects will come there so you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land. <sup>23</sup>I'll put a barrier between my people and your people. This sign will happen tomorrow.'" <sup>24</sup>The LORD did this. Great swarms of insects came into the houses of Pharaoh and his officials and into the whole land of Egypt. The land was ruined by the insects.

<sup>25</sup>Then Pharaoh called in Moses and Aaron and said, "Go, offer sacrifices to your God within the land."

<sup>26</sup>Moses replied, "It wouldn't be right to do that, because the sacrifices that we offer to the LORD our God will offend Egyptians. If we openly offer sacrifices that offend Egyptians, won't they stone us to death? <sup>27</sup>We need to go for a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God as he has ordered us."

<sup>28</sup>So Pharaoh said, "I'll let you go to offer sacrifices to the LORD your God in the desert, provided you don't go too far away and you pray for me."

<sup>29</sup>Moses said, "I'll leave you now, and I'll pray to the LORD. Tomorrow the swarms of insects will leave Pharaoh, his officials, and his people. Just don't let Pharaoh lie to us again and not let the people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD."

<sup>30</sup>So Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD. <sup>31</sup>The LORD did as Moses asked and removed the swarms of insects from Pharaoh, from his officials, and from his people. Not one insect remained. <sup>32</sup>But Pharaoh was stubborn once again, and he wouldn't let the people go.

**Animals sick and dying**

**G** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD, the Hebrews' God, says: Let my people go so that they can worship me. <sup>2</sup>If you refuse to let

8:18 Ex 7:11, Ex 8:7, Ex 9:11  
8:19 Ps 8:3, Lk 11:20  
8:21 Ps 78:45, Ps 105:31  
8:22 Ex 7:17, Ex 9:4, Ex 9:6, Ex 9:26, Ex 11:7  
8:23 Ex 9:4  
8:25 Ex 8:8, Ex 9:27, Ex 10:16, Ex 12:31  
8:26 Gn 43:32, Gn 46:34  
8:27 Ex 3:18  
8:28 Ex 8:8, Ex 8:15, Ex 8:29, Ex 8:32, Ex 9:28  
8:29 Ex 8:8, Ex 8:15  
8:32 Ex 4:21, Ex 8:15

<sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>n</sup>Or magicians <sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain

10:16-17, 20, 24, 27). See sidebar, "Pharaoh's Stubbornness" at Exodus 9.

8:16-19 The third disaster in Egypt. All the land's dirt turns into lice, which infect humans and animals. The first two plagues had originated with water. This third plague arises from the land's dirt, which turns into lice that swarm across the land.

8:18-19 For the first time, Egypt's magicians are unable to perform the same act of power as God does through Moses and Aaron. The magicians admit to Pharaoh that only God could do something like this.

8:20-32 The fourth disaster in Egypt. Swarms of insects invade the whole of Egypt except for the region where the Israelites live separately from the Egyptians.

8:22 The area of Goshen is a narrow strip of grasslands near where the Nile River enters the Mediterranean Sea. When Jacob had first come with his family to Egypt from Canaan, his son Joseph had been a favored official in Egypt. Joseph had chosen the grasslands of Goshen for his family since they were shepherds (Gen 45:10). In addition, Egyptians didn't like to be around sheep or shepherds,

so it was good for the Israelites to live apart (Gen 43:32; 46:34). Being in a separate area became an advantage for the Israelites during this plague of insects since the insects stayed away from Goshen. Some of the other coming disasters will likewise strike only Egyptian houses (Exod 9:4, 26; 10:23).

8:25 Pharaoh is willing to allow the Israelites to offer their sacrifices to the Lord but only within the land (i.e., inside the boundaries of Egypt). Moses earlier demanded that the Israelites go into the wilderness on a three-day journey to offer their sacrifices to the Lord, but Pharaoh refused (Exod 3:18; 5:3). This original demand to go on a three-day journey was actually a plot that would allow Israel to escape from Egypt permanently.

8:26 sacrifices... offend Egyptians: The Israelites probably sacrificed sheep (Exod 12:1-10), and Egyptians didn't like shepherds or sheep (Gen 46:34).

8:30 Moses... prayed to the Lord: See note on Exodus 9:33.

8:32 Pharaoh... stubborn once again: See notes on Exodus 4:21; 8:8, 15; sidebar, "Pharaoh's Stubbornness" at Exodus 9. 9:1-7 The fifth disaster in Egypt. God sends disease that

Ex 7:4;  
1Sa 5:6; Ps 78:50;  
Ac 13:11

Dt 28:27

Ex 7:11

Ex 4:21

them go and you continue to hold them back,<sup>3</sup> the LORD will send a very deadly disease on your livestock in the field: on horses, donkeys, camels, cattle, and flocks. <sup>4</sup>But the LORD will distinguish Israel's livestock from Egypt's livestock so that not one that belongs to the Israelites will die." <sup>5</sup>The LORD set a time and said, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this in the land." <sup>6</sup>And the next day the LORD did it. All of the Egyptian livestock died, but not one animal that belonged to the Israelites died. <sup>7</sup>Pharaoh asked around and found out that not one of Israel's livestock had died. But Pharaoh was stubborn, and he wouldn't let the people go.

### **Skin sores and blisters**

<sup>8</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of ashes from a furnace and have Moses throw it up in the air in front of Pharaoh. <sup>9</sup>The ashes will turn to soot over the whole land of Egypt. It will cause skin sores that will break out in blisters on people and animals in the whole land of Egypt." <sup>10</sup>So they took ashes from the furnace, and they stood in front of Pharaoh. Moses threw the ash up in the air, and it caused skin sores and blisters to break out on people and animals. <sup>11</sup>The religious experts<sup>P</sup> couldn't stand up to Moses because of the skin sores, because there were skin sores on the religious experts as well as on all the Egyptians. <sup>12</sup>But the LORD made Pharaoh stubborn, and Pharaoh wouldn't listen to them, just as the LORD had said to Moses.

<sup>P</sup>Or magicians

**Pharaoh's Stubbornness** The Lord sends one disaster after another against Pharaoh and Egypt. The purpose of the disasters appears to be to persuade Pharaoh to decide to let the Israelites go. Pharaoh seems to have some freedom of choice in the matter. However, the Lord steps in after several disasters have happened. The Lord begins to make Pharaoh stubborn so he won't let the Israelites go (Exod 9:12). God had predicted as much from the beginning (Exod 4:21; 7:3). The book of Exodus seems to hold both human freedom and God's will together in a delicate balance. Early in the series of disasters, Pharaoh himself (not the Lord) is primarily responsible for being stubborn (Exod 7:22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7). But in Exodus 9:12, God steps in and begins to take over. In the rest of the narratives, the Lord increasingly makes Pharaoh stubborn (Exod 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8). In this way, Exodus holds together human freedom and God's will as both essential to understanding the ways of God and humans in the world.

kill all the domestic animals or livestock of the Egyptians but not those of the Israelites. Some previous disasters had involved the deaths of wild animals (frogs and fish). Now, for the first time, death strikes Egypt's valuable horses, cattle, donkeys, and camels.

<sup>3</sup> *The LORD set a time:* This time limit increases the sense of urgency and rising tension in these stories of worsening disaster.

<sup>3-5</sup> *All... livestock died:* Some of the upcoming disasters will again involve the Egyptians' domestic animals (Exod 9:10, 19-21; 11:5; 12:29). Where did these animals come from if their livestock had all died in this plague? Perhaps new shipments of livestock arrived. Or perhaps the storytellers were not as bothered by such conflicts in details as we might be. The word "all" could be an exaggeration to heighten the story's drama.

<sup>6-7</sup> *Pharaoh asked around... was stubborn:* Pharaoh discovers for himself the truth that all the Israelite animals had lived while all the Egyptian animals had died. He sees firsthand the evidence of the Lord's power against Egypt and for Israel. Even in the face of the direct evidence, Pharaoh remains stubborn.

<sup>8-12</sup> *The sixth disaster in Egypt:* For the first time, the bodies of the Egyptian people are physically affected by the disaster. The effects of these disasters are striking closer and closer to home for the Egyptians.

<sup>10</sup> *Up in the air:* Previous disasters had begun either from

water (Exod 7:20; 8:3) or from the dust of the ground (Exod 8:17). This sixth disaster comes from the air or sky. Every part of creation—water, land, and air—has started to become chaotic, extreme, and dangerous.

<sup>9</sup> *Skin sores on the religious experts:* In earlier disasters, Egypt's religious experts had been able to produce the same plagues as Moses and God did (Exod 7:11, 22; 8:7). In this case, they aren't able to cause the plague (Exod 8:18), and they can't escape the effects of the disaster on their own bodies.

<sup>12</sup> *The LORD made Pharaoh stubborn:* The Lord had earlier predicted that at some point the Lord would be the one who would make Pharaoh stubborn and refuse to let the Israelites go (Exod 4:21; 7:3). Up to this point in the series of disasters, Pharaoh has been making himself stubborn. Here, for the first time, it is God who actually makes the Egyptian king stubborn. God has given Pharaoh many warnings through several disasters. Pharaoh has had many chances to change his mind and see the error of his ways. In each case, Pharaoh refused to see the plain evidence of the power of Israel's God. Pharaoh has resisted God so many times that the Lord has determined: Pharaoh is doomed. Pharaoh has no way out from this point forward. His doom is inevitable. In the end, Pharaoh will experience the full consequences of his evil oppression of the Israelites slaves (Exod 14:26-29). See sidebar, "Pharaoh's Stubbornness."

**Hail and thunder**

<sup>13</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh. Say to him, This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go so that they can worship me. <sup>14</sup>This time I'm going to send all my plagues on you, your officials, and your people so that you will know that there is no one like me in the whole world. <sup>15</sup>By now I could have used my power to strike you and your people with a deadly disease so that you would have disappeared from the earth. <sup>16</sup>But I've left you standing for this reason: in order to show you my power and in order to make my name known in the whole world. <sup>17</sup>You are still abusing your power against my people, and you refuse to let them go. <sup>18</sup>Tomorrow at this time I'll cause the heaviest hail to fall on Egypt that has ever fallen from the day Egypt was founded until now. <sup>19</sup>So bring under shelter your livestock and all that belongs to you that is out in the open. Every person or animal that is out in the open field and isn't brought inside will die when the hail rains down on them." <sup>20</sup>Some of Pharaoh's officials who took the LORD's word seriously rushed to bring their servants and livestock inside for shelter. <sup>21</sup>Others who didn't take the LORD's word to heart left their servants and livestock out in the open field.

<sup>22</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Raise your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall on the whole land of Egypt, on people and animals and all the grain in the fields in the land of Egypt." <sup>23</sup>Then Moses raised his shepherd's rod toward the sky, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning struck the earth. The LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. <sup>24</sup>The hail and the lightning flashing in the middle of the hail were so severe that there had been nothing like it in the entire land of Egypt since it first became a nation. <sup>25</sup>The hail beat down everything that was in the open field throughout the entire land of Egypt, both people and animals. The hail also beat down all the grain in the fields, and it shattered every tree out in the field. <sup>26</sup>The only place where hail didn't fall was in the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived.

<sup>27</sup>Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron and said to them, "This time I've sinned. The LORD is right, and I and my people are wrong." <sup>28</sup>"Pray to the LORD! Enough of God's thunder and hail! I'm going to let you go. You don't need to stay here any longer."

<sup>29</sup>Moses said to him, "As soon as I've left the city, I'll spread out my hands to the LORD. Then the thunder and the hail will stop and won't return so that you will know that the earth belongs to the LORD. <sup>30</sup>But I know that you and your officials still don't take the LORD God seriously." (<sup>31</sup>Now the flax and the barley were destroyed, because the barley had ears of grain and the flax had buds. <sup>32</sup>But both durum and spelt wheat weren't ruined, because they hadn't come up.) <sup>33</sup>Moses left Pharaoh and the city, and spread out his hands to the LORD.

**9:13-33** The seventh disaster in Egypt. As with the sixth plague, which came from "up in the air" (Exod 9:10), the seventh disaster also comes from the sky. The most severe storm of hail, thunder, and lightning that had ever been seen comes upon Egypt. The hail beats down Egyptian people, animals, and fields of grain that aren't protected by shelter. For the first time, the disaster directly affects plant life as well as humans and animals.

**9:14** *in the whole world*: God gives Moses a longer message to give to Pharaoh. This is a sign of greater urgency as the disasters continue. The message begins with God's claim that there is no other god *in the whole world* like Israel's God. Later, the Lord will repeat a similar claim to the Israelites when they arrive at Mount Sinai. The Lord will remind the Israelites that "the whole earth belongs to me" (Exod 19:5). Pharaoh is dealing not with a local or tribal god but the God of all nations.

**9:15-16** The Lord would be able to wipe out the Egyptians all at once with a *deadly disease*, if the Lord wanted to do so. However, God has allowed the Egyptians to live so that they could witness God's power and make God known *in the whole world*. The Egyptians will indeed end up testifying to the greatness of Israel's God as a result of all the disasters that God brings upon them (Exod 14:4, 25; see Exod 8:19; 9:20, 27; 10:7; 11:3).

**9:20-21** *Some... took the Lord's word seriously... Others...*

*didn't*: For the first time, there is a strong division within Pharaoh's inner circle of advisors. Some believe in the Lord's power, but others don't. Pharaoh is losing control over many of his own officials.

**9:23** *thunder and hail, and lightning*: Powerful storms with thunder or lightning are often signs of God's holy presence or God's angry judgment in the Bible (Exod 19:16; 20:18; 1 Sam 2:10; Pss 29:3; 77:18; 104:7; Isa 28:2; 29:6; Jer 23:19; Ezek 1:24; Rev 11:19).

**9:25** *Goshen*: See note on Exodus 8:22.

**9:27** *I've sinned*: Pharaoh is overwhelmed by the disaster. He confesses for the first time that *the Lord is right* and he is *wrong*. Pharaoh has finally taken responsibility for his actions and recognized the Lord. Yet, when the storm ends, Pharaoh goes right back to his old stubborn ways; and "he sinned again" (Exod 9:34-35). Pharaoh will confess his sin one more time after the next disaster (Exod 10:16). Yet the Lord will make Pharaoh stubborn once again (Exod 10:20; see note on Exod 4:21, see sidebar, "Pharaoh's Stubbornness").

**9:29** *you will know... to the Lord*: See note on Exodus 9:14.

**9:31-32** The hail totally destroyed grain plants that had already sprouted. Other grain seeds hadn't yet emerged from the ground and weren't destroyed. These newer crops will be destroyed in the next disaster (Exod 10:12, 15).

**9:33** *Moses... spread out his hands to the Lord*: Moses lifts

**9:13** Ex 14:17;

Prv 16:4;

Ro 9:17, Ro 9:22

**9:14** Ex 7:23

**9:17** Josh 10:11;

Ps 18:13; Rev 8:7

**9:15** Ps 78:47;

Ps 105:33

**9:16** Ex 8:8;

Ex 8:26;

Ex 10:17; Ac 8:24

**9:18** Ki 8:22;

Ps 24:1, Ps 143:6;

Is 1:15;

1Co 10:26

**9:27** Jgs 6:11;

Is 28:25

9:35 Ex 4:21  
10:1 Ex 4:21  
10:2 Ex 13:8,  
Ex 13:14; Dt 4:9;  
Ps 78:5, 11; 1:3  
10:6 Ex 8:3,  
Ex 8:21  
10:10 Ex 10:24  
10:11 Ex 10:28

Then the thunder and the hail stopped, and the rain stopped pouring down on the earth. <sup>34</sup>But when Pharaoh saw that the rain, hail, and thunder had stopped, he sinned again. Pharaoh and his officials became stubborn. <sup>35</sup>Because of his stubbornness, Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had told Moses.

### Invasion of locusts

**10** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh. I've made him and his officials stubborn so that I can show them my signs <sup>2</sup>and so that you can tell your children and grandchildren how I overpowered the Egyptians with the signs I did among them. You will know that I am the LORD."

<sup>3</sup>So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "This is what the LORD, the Hebrews' God, says: How long will you refuse to respect me? Let my people go so that they can worship me. <sup>4</sup>Otherwise, if you refuse to let my people go, I'm going to bring locusts into your country tomorrow. <sup>5</sup>They will cover the landscape so that you won't be able to see the ground. They will eat the last bit of vegetation that was left after the hail. They will eat all your trees growing in the fields. <sup>6</sup>The locusts will fill your houses and all your officials' houses and all the Egyptians' houses. Your parents and even your grandparents have never seen anything like it during their entire lifetimes in this fertile land." Then Moses turned and left Pharaoh.

<sup>7</sup>Pharaoh's officials said to him, "How long will this man trap us in a corner like this? Let the people go so that they can worship the LORD their God. Don't you get it? Egypt is being destroyed!"

<sup>8</sup>So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go! Worship the LORD your God! But who exactly is going with you?"

<sup>9</sup>Moses said, "We'll go with our young and old, with our sons and daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we all must observe the LORD's festival."

<sup>10</sup>Pharaoh said to them, "Yes, the LORD will be with you, all right, especially if I let your children go with you! Obviously, you are plotting some evil scheme. <sup>11</sup>No way! Only your men can go and worship the LORD, because that's what you asked for." Then Pharaoh had them chased out of his presence.

<sup>12</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses: "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt so that the locusts will swarm over the land of Egypt and eat all of the land's grain and everything that the hail left." <sup>13</sup>So Moses stretched out his shepherd's rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD made an east wind blow over the land all that day and all that night. When morning came, the east wind had carried in the locusts. <sup>14</sup>The locusts swarmed over the whole land of Egypt and settled on the whole country. Such a huge swarming of locusts had never happened before and would never happen ever again. <sup>15</sup>They covered the whole landscape so that the land turned black with them. They ate all of the land's grain and all of the orchards'

his hands in prayer to God (cf. 1 Kgs 8:38, 54; Ps 141:2). God stops the storm in response to Moses' prayer. Moses has a special relationship with God. God often responds positively when Moses prays for other people (Exod 15:25; 32:11-14; Num 12:13; 14:13-20).

**9:35** just as the LORD had told Moses: See Exodus 4:21; 7:3; and the note on Exodus 4:21.

**10:1-20** The eighth disaster in Egypt. The whole land of Egypt will be covered by big swarms of hungry locusts. The locusts will eat all the grain and fruit that remained after the last disaster of the hailstorm (Exod 9:31-32; 10:5, 15). Hunger and famine will result. The locusts will also invade the houses of all the Egyptians, including Pharaoh and his officials, just as the frogs had done earlier (Exod 8:3-4). The frogs had come from the water. The locusts will come on the east wind (10:13).

**10:2** so that . . . children and grandchildren: One purpose of this long string of disasters is to show future generations of Israelites the great power of their God even against a strong empire like Egypt.

**10:3** so that they can worship me: See note on Exodus 8:25.

**10:7** Pharaoh's officials had a divided opinion about the

Lord and the hailstorm in the last disaster (Exod 9:20-21). This time the officials are of one mind. They all try to convince Pharaoh to let the Israelites go because they see that *Egypt is being destroyed!*

**10:8-10** Pharaoh gives in a little to the demands of Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh is willing to allow only the adult males among the Hebrews to go to worship God and offer sacrifices in the wilderness (Exod 3:18; 8:27; 10:3). Moses insists that all the Israelites, *young and old . . . sons and daughters . . . flocks and herds*, must be allowed to leave Egypt so that they can worship the Lord.

**10:13 east wind . . . all that night:** The nighttime *east wind* points ahead to God's final victory against Pharaoh and his army at the Reed Sea. A similar east wind will blow all night and push back the waters of the sea. The Israelites will escape through the dry land in the middle of the sea, but then the waters will fall back on Pharaoh and his army as he chases them, drowning them all (Exod 14:21, 27-28).

**10:15 the land turned black:** The blackness of the locusts on the land points ahead to the continual darkness of the sky both day and night in the next disaster to visit Egypt (Exod 10:21-22).



fruit that the hail had left. Nothing green was left in any orchard or in any grain field in the whole land of Egypt.

<sup>16</sup>Pharaoh called urgently for Moses and Aaron and said, "I've sinned against the LORD your God and against you. <sup>17</sup>Please forgive my sin this time. Pray to the LORD your God just to take this deadly disaster away from me."

<sup>18</sup>So Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD. <sup>19</sup>The LORD turned the wind into a very strong west wind that lifted the locusts and drove them into the Reed Sea. <sup>9</sup> Not a single locust was left in the whole country of Egypt. <sup>20</sup>But the LORD made Pharaoh stubborn so that he wouldn't let the Israelites go.

### Darkness covers Egypt

<sup>21</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Raise your hand toward the sky so that darkness spreads over the land of Egypt, a darkness that you can feel." <sup>22</sup>So Moses raised his hand toward the sky, and an intense darkness fell on the whole land of Egypt for three days. <sup>23</sup>People couldn't see each other, and they couldn't go anywhere for three days. But the Israelites all had light where they lived.

<sup>24</sup>Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, "Go! Worship the LORD! Only your flocks and herds need to stay behind. Even your children can go with you."

<sup>25</sup>But Moses said, "You need to let us have sacrifices and entirely burned offerings to present to the LORD our God. <sup>26</sup>So our livestock must go with us. Not one animal can be left behind. We'll need some of them for worshipping the LORD our God. We won't know which to use to worship the LORD until we get there."

10:21 Ex 9:22.

Ex 10:22.

Ps 105:28

10:22 Ps 105:28

10:24 Ex 8:8.

Ex 10:8.

Ex 10:10

10:25 Ex 39:1.

Ex 40:1

*The Reed Sea or the Red Sea?* The Hebrew phrase *yam sup* means "Reed Sea" and may best be understood as a general term for a body of water full of reeds or rushes rather than as a name for a specific lake or sea. The term appears over 20 times in the OT, five of which occur in Exodus (Exod 10:19; 13:18; 15:4, 22; 23:31). Early biblical translations of the phrase from Hebrew to Greek (the Septuagint) and to Latin (the Vulgate) understood *yam sup* to refer to the large and well-known sea to the south and east of Egypt along the western edge of the Arabian Peninsula known as the Red Sea. This traditional translation influenced many English translations up to the present day. However, reeds or rushes do not grow in the salty Red Sea, so *yam sup* (Reed Sea) does not seem to match well with the Red Sea. Moreover, the Israelite slaves lived in the delta region of the Nile River in northern Egypt (the land of Goshen—Gen 47:27; 8:22; 9:26), and their escape route to the wilderness and Canaan should have sent them through marshy bodies of water in northern Egypt, not much farther south to the Red Sea. It may be that the Greek and Latin translators had in mind the Gulf of Suez, which lies alongside the eastern boundary of Egypt and is one of two fingers of water that extend north from the Red Sea (Gulfs of Suez and Aqaba/Eilat).

<sup>9</sup>Or *Red Sea*

10:16-17 *I've sinned... forgive... Pray*: Pharaoh had admitted his sin once before (Exod 9:27) but then changed his mind (Exod 9:34). He may say the right words, but he is unable to follow through with the right actions (Exod 10:20).  
10:18 *Moses... prayed to the LORD*: See note on Exodus 9:33.  
10:19 The wind blowing the locusts into the *Reed Sea* so that not one locust was left points ahead to what will happen to Pharaoh and his army. In the end, God will use a wind to drown them in the Reed Sea (Exod 15:10). Not one of Pharaoh's army will remain (Exod 14:28). These details are a sign that Pharaoh's end is coming ever closer.

10:19 *the Reed Sea* may refer to a smaller lake filled with reeds somewhere east of the Nile River delta region. Its exact location is unknown. The later Greek translation of Exodus (the Septuagint) incorrectly translated the Hebrew phrase as the much larger and better known "Red Sea," which lies farther south along the western edge of the Arabian Peninsula. See sidebar, "The Reed Sea or the Red Sea?"

10:20 *the LORD made Pharaoh stubborn*: See note on Exodus 9:12.

10:21-29 The ninth disaster in Egypt. Darkness comes upon all of Egypt for three days. This disaster may not seem as harsh as some of the others. However, one should understand that these disasters undo the order and boundaries of creation. Recall that the Bible's first creation story begins at a time before light was created: "The earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea" (Gen 1:2). The first act of God's creation was the creation of light (Gen 1:3). In effect, the three days of darkness bring Egypt back for a time to the chaotic beginnings of creation when there was no light and only darkness.

10:23 Once again the disaster affects only the Egyptians and not the Israelites. The Israelites are probably living in the separate land of Goshen. See note on Exodus 8:22.

10:24-25 Pharaoh again gives in a little but not enough (Exod 8:25, 28; 10:8-10). This time Pharaoh will allow all Israelites to go into the wilderness and offer sacrifices to God. The only exception is that Pharaoh won't allow the Israelites to take their animals with them. Moses insists that the animals must come with them since they will be offered as sacrifices to God. See note on Exodus 3:18.

10:28 Ex 10:11

11:1 Ex 6:1,  
Ex 12:3111:2 Ex 3:22,  
Ex 12:35,  
Ex 12:3611:4 Ex 12:29,  
Job 34:2011:5 Ex 4:23,  
Ex 12:12,  
Ex 12:29,  
Ex 13:15,  
Mt 24:4111:7 Ex 8:22,  
Ex 9:412:1 Ex 4:14,  
Ex 5:20, Ex 6:20,  
Ex 7:1, Ex 7:712:2 Ex 13:4,  
Ex 23:15,  
Ex 34:18,  
Dt 16:112:3 Ex 12:6,  
1Co 5:7

<sup>27</sup>But the LORD made Pharaoh stubborn so that he wasn't willing to let them go. <sup>28</sup>Pharaoh said to him, "Get out of here! Make sure you never see my face again, because the next time you see my face you will die."

<sup>29</sup>Moses said, "You've said it! I'll never see your face again!"

### God announces the final disaster

**11** The LORD said to Moses, "I'll bring one more disaster on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he'll let you go from here. In fact, when he lets you go, he'll eagerly chase you out of here. <sup>2</sup>Tell every man to ask his neighbor and every woman to ask her neighbor for all their silver and gold jewelry." <sup>3</sup>The LORD made sure that the Egyptians were kind to the Hebrew people. In addition, Pharaoh's officials and the Egyptian people even came to honor Moses as a great and important man in the land.

<sup>4</sup>Moses said, "This is what the LORD says: At midnight I'll go throughout Egypt. <sup>5</sup>Every oldest child in the land of Egypt will die, from the oldest child of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the oldest child of the servant woman by the millstones, and all the first offspring of the animals. <sup>6</sup>Then a terrible cry of agony will echo throughout the whole land of Egypt unlike any heard before or that ever will be again. <sup>7</sup>But as for the Israelites, not even a dog will growl at them, at the people, or at their animals. By this, you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. <sup>8</sup>Then all your officials will come down to me, bow to me, and say, 'Get out, you and all your followers!' After that I'll leave." Then Moses, furious, left Pharaoh.

<sup>9</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh won't listen to you so that I can perform even more amazing acts in the land of Egypt." <sup>10</sup>Now Moses and Aaron did all these amazing acts in front of Pharaoh, but the LORD made Pharaoh stubborn so that he didn't let the Israelites go from his land.

### First Passover

**12** The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, <sup>2</sup>"This month will be the first month; it will be the first month of the year for you." <sup>3</sup>Tell the whole Israelite

<sup>1</sup>March–April; cf Exod 13:4

10:27 See note on Exodus 9:12.

10:28–29 *never see my face again*: Pharaoh predicts his own death without realizing it. Moses agrees that he will never see Pharaoh's face again. Pharaoh and his army will soon be destroyed by the Lord (Exod 14:26–28). This is a sign that the last and greatest disaster against Egypt is coming in the near future.

11:1–10 Moses warns Pharaoh about the tenth and final disaster to come upon Egypt. God had announced this final plague in Exodus 4:22–23.

11:1–2 God promises Moses that this last disaster will be so severe that the Egyptians will gladly give the Israelites silver and gold as a way to encourage them to leave Egypt. God originally made this prediction in Exodus 3:22. It will come true in Exodus 12:35–36. This gold and silver will be used later on two occasions at Mount Sinai. The Israelites will provide the metal to make the gold calf, which they worship as an idol (Exod 32:2–5). Later the Israelites will offer materials of silver, gold, and fine cloth to build the special dwelling or tent for God and all its equipment (Exod 25:1–9; 35:20–29; 36–37).

11:2 *neighbor*: Although previous texts depicted the Israelites living separate from the Egyptians (e.g., Exod 8:22), this verse suggests that at least some Israelites and Egyptians lived near each other (see also Exod 12:23). This is an example of how different ancient traditions have been woven together into the present book of Exodus.

11:5 The final disaster will involve the death of *Every oldest child* in every Egyptian family, from Pharaoh's family on down. In Exodus 4:22–23, God had said that Pharaoh's oldest son would die. Those words are expanded here to include all Egyptian families and even animals. Israel's

God is the creator of all beings. Therefore, God claims the right to take back every oldest male whom God chooses, whether human or animal (Exod 13:1–2; Gen 22:15–18; Num 3:11–13).

11:7 *the LORD makes a distinction*: God has kept Israel separate and safe from the previous disasters that struck the Egyptians (Exod 8:22–23; 9:4, 6–7, 26; 10:23). The Israelites will be kept safe from this last and greatest disaster as well. When the Egyptians see how Israel is protected, the Egyptians finally *will know* the power of Israel's God. God is deeply interested in what the Egyptians think about God (Exod 7:5; 8:10, 22–23; 9:14, 29; 14:4, 18; 32:11–14).

11:8 *Moses, furious*: As God's messenger, Moses not only speaks God's words but also feels God's emotion of anger (Exod 11:18; see Exod 32:11, 19).

11:10 *the LORD made Pharaoh stubborn*: See note on Exodus 9:12.

12:1–32 The Lord gives instructions about how Israelites should observe the annual festivals of *Passover* and *Unleavened Bread*. The Passover meal with the roasted lamb and its blood smeared on the doorposts plays an immediate role in the story of the exodus (12:7, 21–23). In addition, Passover is presented as an annual festival to be celebrated in the spring of every year by all future generations (12:14, 24–27). The full seven-day Festival of Unleavened Bread occurs alongside the Passover. It is intended for a later time after the Israelites have arrived in the land of Canaan (12:17–20; Exod 13:3–8). The Israelites leave Egypt the very next day after the night of Passover (12:29–32).

12:2 *the first month of the year*: Israel's religious calendar begins in the spring of the year (sometime in April–May

community: On the tenth day of this month they must take a lamb for each household, a lamb per house. <sup>4</sup>If a household is too small for a lamb, it should share one with a neighbor nearby. You should divide the lamb in proportion to the number of people who will be eating it. <sup>5</sup>Your lamb should be a flawless year-old male. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. <sup>6</sup>You should keep close watch over it until the fourteenth day of this month. At twilight on that day, the whole assembled Israelite community should slaughter their lambs. <sup>7</sup>They should take some of the blood and smear it on the two doorposts and on the beam over the door of the houses in which they are eating. <sup>8</sup>That same night they should eat the meat roasted over the fire. They should eat it along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. <sup>9</sup>Don't eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over fire with its head, legs, and internal organs. <sup>10</sup>Don't let any of it remain until morning, and burn any of it left over in the morning. <sup>11</sup>This is how you should eat it. You should be dressed, with your sandals on your feet and your walking stick in your hand. You should eat the meal in a hurry. It is the Passover of the LORD. <sup>12</sup>I'll pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I'll strike down every oldest child in the land of Egypt, both humans and animals. I'll impose judgments on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup>The blood will be your sign on the houses where you live. Whenever I see the blood, I'll pass over<sup>a</sup> you. No plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

<sup>14</sup>This day will be a day of remembering for you. You will observe it as a festival to the LORD. You will observe it in every generation as a regulation for all time. <sup>15</sup>You will eat unleavened bread for seven days. On the first day you must remove yeast from your houses because anyone who eats leavened bread anytime during those seven days will be cut off from Israel. <sup>16</sup>The first day and the seventh day will be a holy occasion for you. No work at all should be done on those days, except for preparing the food that everyone is going to eat. That is the only work you may do. <sup>17</sup>You should observe the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because on this precise day I brought you out of the land of Egypt in military formation. You should observe this day in every generation as a regulation for all time. <sup>18</sup>In the first month, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day, you should eat unleavened bread. <sup>19</sup>For seven days no yeast should be found in your houses because whoever eats leavened bread will be cut off from the Israelite community, whether

12:5 Heb 9:14; 1Pt 1:19  
 12:6 Ex 16:12; Lv 23:5  
 12:7 Ex 12:22; Heb 11:28  
 12:8 Ex 13:3; Ex 34:25; Nm 9:11; Dt 16:3; 1Co 5:8  
 12:9 Dt 16:7  
 12:10 Ex 23:18; Ex 29:34; Ex 34:25; Dt 16:4  
 12:11 Ex 12:27; Lk 12:35; 1Co 5:7  
 12:12 Ex 6:2; Ex 11:4; Ex 11:5; Nm 33:4; Is 19:11  
 12:13 Gn 17:11; Ex 12:23; Heb 11:28  
 12:14 Ex 12:17; Ex 12:24; Ex 13:9-10  
 12:15 Gn 17:14; Ex 12:19; Ex 13:6; Ex 23:15; Dt 16:3  
 12:16 Lv 23:7-8; Nm 28:18; Nm 28:25  
 12:17 Ex 12:14; Ex 12:41; Ex 13:3  
 12:18 Ex 12:2; Lv 23:5; Nm 28:16  
 12:19 Ex 12:15

<sup>a</sup>Heb verb of the noun *Passover*

of our modern calendar). The biblical name for this first month in some traditions is Abib (Exod 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Deut 16:1). In some later biblical traditions, the same month is called Nisan (Neh 2:1; Esth 3:7). Other biblical traditions use an entirely different calendar based on farming cycles of planting and harvesting. This alternate agricultural calendar sets the first month of the year in autumn after the fall harvest of grain (Exod 23:16; 34:22).

12:5 *flawless*: Animal sacrifices offered to the Lord are typically required to be healthy and in good form (Exod 29:1; Lev 3:1; 22:21; Num 28:3).

12:7 *take some of the blood and smear it*: so that the plague of the death of the oldest sons will pass over the Israelite homes and attack only the Egyptian homes (Exod 12:12-13, 21-23).

12:8 *unleavened bread and bitter herbs*: These elements in the Passover meal came to have symbolic meaning. The *unleavened bread* recalls the speed with which Israel suddenly had to leave Egypt. The Israelites didn't have time to wait for bread with yeast to rise as part of the baking process (Exod 12:11, 33-34). The *bitter herbs* recall the bitterness of the suffering and slavery of the Israelites in Egypt (Exod 2:23).

12:9 The meat of the lamb was to be *roasted* so that its blood would be drained and not eaten. Blood was considered to bear the essence of a creature's life. Thus the blood of any meat that was eaten had to be poured back to the ground after slaughter and allowed to return back to God,

its creator (Gen 9:4; Lev 17:3-6, 11, 14; Deut 12:16). A second version of the Passover instruction in Deuteronomy 16:7 commands that the Israelites "cook" (that is, boil) the lamb meat rather than roast it. The text of 2 Chronicles 35:13 appears to harmonize the two traditions of roasting and boiling the Passover lamb.

12:11 *Passover*: The name of this festival comes from the Hebrew verb that we translate as "to pass over." The name recalls how the Lord's destroyer passed over Israelite homes so that no Israelites died during the plague, only Egyptians (see Exod 12:23, 27).

12:12 *the gods of Egypt*: It's assumed that other gods exist as gods of other nations. These other gods, however, are powerless before the Lord (Exod 15:11; see Exod 9:11, 14).

12:15 *cut off from Israel*: The phrase may not necessarily mean capital punishment imposed by the community. Rather, God is frequently the one who will *cut off* the person, meaning an early death without children left behind (Lev 17:10; 20:1-6; 23:29-30). The harsh punishment covers a range of ritual or sexual misconduct. (Exod 30:33, 38; 31:14; Gen 17:14; Lev 7:20, 21, 25, 27; 17:4, 9, 14; 18:29; 19:8; 20:17-18; 22:3; 23:29; Num 9:13; 19:13, 20). The violations are often done "deliberately" (or "with a high hand") (cf. Num 15:30-31) and in secret, making them difficult to detect. In those cases, God imposes the penalty. In other instances, the community can play a role in the punishment (e.g., Exod 31:14; cf. Num 15:32-36; see also Lev 20:2-6).

12:21 Ex 3:16;  
Ex 12:3  
12:22 Ex 12:7;  
Lv 14:6;  
Nm 19:18;  
Ps 51:7;  
Heb 9:19

12:23  
Ex 12:12-13;  
1Co 10:10;  
Heb 11:28;  
Rev 7:3

12:27 Ex 4:31;  
Ex 12:11;  
Ex 13:8

12:29 Ex 4:23;  
Ex 11:4-5;  
Ps 78:51;  
Ps 105:36

12:30 Ex 11:6;  
Ex 12:29

12:34 Ex 8:3

12:35  
Ex 3:21-22;  
Ex 11:2-3;  
Ps 105:37

the person is an immigrant or a native of the land. <sup>20</sup>You should not eat anything made with yeast in all your settlements. You should eat only unleavened bread."

<sup>21</sup>Then Moses called together all of Israel's elders and said to them, "Go pick out one of the flock for your families, and slaughter the Passover lamb. <sup>22</sup>Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood that is in the bowl, and touch the beam above the door and the two doorposts with the blood in the bowl. None of you should go out the door of your house until morning. <sup>23</sup>When the LORD comes by to strike down the Egyptians and sees the blood on the beam above the door and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over that door. He won't let the destroyer enter your houses to strike you down. <sup>24</sup>You should observe this ritual as a regulation for all time for you and your children. <sup>25</sup>When you enter the land that the LORD has promised to give you, be sure that you observe this ritual. <sup>26</sup>And when your children ask you, 'What does this ritual mean to you?' <sup>27</sup>you will say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, for the LORD passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. When he struck down the Egyptians, he spared our houses.' The people then bowed down and worshipped. <sup>28</sup>The Israelites went and did exactly what the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron to do.

*The Festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread* These two festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread likely had different origins, but they have been woven together in the story of the exodus. The Passover is a nighttime meal celebrated on one day (Exod 12:1-13). The Festival of Unleavened Bread lasts seven days. It was not celebrated by the Israelites in Egypt itself but only by future generations when they came into the land of Canaan (Exod 12:14-20). Some biblical texts discuss the Festival of Unleavened Bread without any mention of Passover (Exod 23:15; 34:18). Other texts combine Passover and Unleavened Bread as one festival following the other (Lev 23:5-6; Num 28:16-17) or as one integrated festival (Deut 16:1-8). The immediate purpose of Passover for the Israelites was to mark their homes with the blood of the Passover lamb to protect their oldest sons from death (Exod 12:7, 13, 22-23). The second function of Passover and Unleavened Bread was for future generations to remember the story of Israel's exodus from Egypt (Exod 12:14-17, 24-27). The Passover meal was the occasion for the Lord's Supper, which Jesus celebrated with his 12 disciples on the evening before his crucifixion in Jerusalem (Matt 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:1-20).

### Death of Egypt's oldest children

<sup>29</sup>At midnight the LORD struck down all the first offspring in the land of Egypt, from the oldest child of Pharaoh sitting on his throne to the oldest child of the prisoner in jail, and all the first offspring of the animals. <sup>30</sup>When Pharaoh, all his officials, and all the Egyptians got up that night, a terrible cry of agony rang out across Egypt because every house had someone in it who had died. <sup>31</sup>Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron that night and said, "Get up! Get away from my people, both you and the Israelites! Go! Worship the LORD, as you said! <sup>32</sup>You can even take your flocks and herds, as you asked. Just go! And bring a blessing on me as well!"

### Israel set free

<sup>33</sup>The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the land because they thought, 'We'll all be dead.' <sup>34</sup>So the people picked up their bread dough before the yeast made it rise, with their bread pans wrapped in their robes on their shoulders. <sup>35</sup>The Israelites did as Moses had

12:22 *hyssop*: a bushy plant often used for ritual purposes (Lev 14:4, 6; Num 19:6).

12:23 *the destroyer*: an angel-like figure used by God to bring judgment and death (see 2 Sam 24:16-17 for a similar figure). In Exodus 12:12-13, God is the one who will kill the oldest children directly; no *destroyer* is mentioned.

12:25 *the land . . . to give you*: See Exodus 3:8; 6:4-8.

12:26-27 The future celebrations of the Passover meal should focus on *children* and their questions about the meaning of the ritual meal. The meaning arises from retelling and reclaiming the story of the exodus for every new generation (the Lord *spared our houses*).

12:29-32 The tenth and final disaster in Egypt. The terrifying death of all of Egypt's oldest children and animals fulfills the Lord's prediction and warning given in Exodus 11:4-8 (see also Exod 4:23). As a result, Pharaoh finally lets

the Israelites go so that they can *Worship the Lord* (12:31). Moses had demanded all along only that Pharaoh let the Israelites go on a three-day journey out of Egypt into the wilderness in order to worship and make sacrifices to the Lord (Exod 3:18; 4:23; 5:3; 7:16; 8:1, 20, 25-28; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 7, 11, 24-25). The Lord's actual plan was always to remove the Israelites permanently from their slavery in Egypt and bring them to settle in the promised land of Canaan (Exod 3:17; 6:4-8).

12:33 *hurry and leave*: The Egyptians plead with the Israelites to leave quickly. This plea provides the reason why the Passover meal is to be eaten hurriedly (Exod 12:11). It also explains the symbolism of the unleavened bread. The bakers don't have time for the bread to rise (Exod 12:34, 39).

12:35 *silver and gold jewelry . . . their clothing*: The Egyptians are so anxious to get rid of the Israelites after the deaths of

told them and asked the Egyptians for their silver and gold jewelry as well as their clothing. <sup>36</sup>The LORD made sure that the Egyptians were kind to the people so that they let them have whatever they asked for. And so they robbed the Egyptians.

<sup>37</sup>The Israelites traveled from Rameses to Succoth. They numbered about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. <sup>38</sup>A diverse crowd also went up with them along with a huge number of livestock, both flocks and herds. <sup>39</sup>They baked unleavened cakes from the dough they had brought out of Egypt. The dough didn't rise because they were driven out of Egypt and they couldn't wait. In fact, they didn't have time to prepare any food for themselves.

<sup>40</sup>The length of time that the Israelites had lived in Egypt was four hundred thirty years. <sup>41</sup>At the end of four hundred thirty years, on that precise day, all the LORD's people in military formation left the land of Egypt. <sup>42</sup>For the LORD, that was a night of intent watching, to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For all Israelites in every generation, this same night is a time of intent watching to honor the LORD.

### Instructions for observing Passover

<sup>43</sup>The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: This is the regulation for the Passover. No foreigner may eat it. <sup>44</sup>However, any slave who has been bought may eat it after he's been circumcised. <sup>45</sup>No temporary foreign resident or day laborer may eat it. <sup>46</sup>It should be eaten in one house. You shouldn't take any of the meat outside the house, and you shouldn't break the bones. <sup>47</sup>The whole Israelite community should observe it. <sup>48</sup>If an immigrant who lives with you wants to observe the Passover to the LORD, then he and all his males should be circumcised. Then he may join in observing it. He should be regarded as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat it. <sup>49</sup>There will be one instruction for the native and for the immigrant who lives with you.

<sup>50</sup>All the Israelites did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron. <sup>51</sup>On that precise day, the LORD brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt in military formation.

**13** The LORD said to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Dedicate to me all your oldest children. Each first offspring from any Israelite womb belongs to me, whether human or animal.

### Unleavened bread

<sup>3</sup>Moses said to the people, "Remember this day which is the day that you came out of Egypt, out of the place you were slaves, because the LORD acted with power to bring you out

their oldest children that they willingly give the Israelites silver, gold, and clothing. See note on Exodus 11:2.

**12:36** The Israelites *robbed the Egyptians* as a concrete sign that the Lord had won the battle against Pharaoh.

**12:37** The city of *Rameses* is one of the cities that the Israelite slaves built for Pharaoh (Exod 1:11). *Succoth* is the first place outside Egypt on Israel's journey into the wilderness. It recalls the annual Festival of Sukkoth (a Hebrew word meaning "booths" or "huts"), when Israelite families built temporary shelters and lived in them for a period of time (Lev 23:42-43; Deut 16:13-17). *six hundred thousand men*: This is the number of men eligible to be warriors. If one adds women, children, and elderly people, the total population of the Israelites would have been incredibly large at more than two million people. A similar number is given in a census of Israelites in Numbers 1:46 (a total of 603,550 warriors; see also Num 26:51). In these ancient times, an army of 20,000 warriors would have been considered quite large.

**12:38** *A diverse crowd*: The group of slaves who ran out of Egypt with the Israelites included a mix of people of different races and ethnic backgrounds (see Num 11:4). The mention of ethnically diverse peoples among the Israelites may be the reason for teachings about foreigners and immigrants taking part in the Passover meal in Exodus 12:43-49. **12:39** See note on Exodus 12:33. **12:40-41** *four hundred thirty years*: This length of time for

Israel's stay in Egypt is close to the 400 years predicted in Genesis 15:13. Another tradition in Genesis 15:16 predicted a time period of four generations (about 160 years, assuming 40 years per generation). This would match up with Moses as a member of the fourth generation of Israelites who lived in Egypt (Exod 6:16-20).

**12:43-49** These additional Passover instructions about foreigners and immigrants may be related to the mention of a "diverse crowd" that accompanied the Israelites as they escaped from Egypt (Exod 12:38). On circumcision, see note on Exodus 4:24-26.

**12:46** *shouldn't break the bones*: The bones of the Passover lamb are to remain intact. This finds an echo in the Gospel of John regarding Jesus on the cross (John 19:32-36; see John 1:29, 36).

**13:1-16** God gives Moses additional instructions about dedicating the oldest child of every family to God and celebrating the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The teaching points forward to a time when Israel will leave Egypt behind and live in the land of Canaan (Exod 13:5, 11).

**13:1-2** The death of Egypt's oldest children (Exod 12:29) connects to a broader claim that all oldest children among the Israelites also belong to God and should be dedicated to the Lord (Exod 13:15). The claim is repeated in the teaching at Exodus 22:29.

**13:3-10** Moses gives further instructions about the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The instructions emphasize

**12:36** Ex 3:22.

Ex 11:3;  
Ps 105:37

**12:37** Gn 47:11;  
Ex 38:26;  
Nm 2:32;  
Nm 33:3;  
Nm 33:5

**12:38** Nm 11:4

**12:40** Gn 15:13;  
Ac 7:6; Ga 3:17

**12:41** Gn 15:13;  
Ex 3:10; Ex 6:26;  
Ex 12:40;  
Ex 12:51

**12:42** Dt 16:1

**12:43** Ex 12:48;  
Nm 9:14

**12:44**  
Gn 17:12-13

**12:45** Lv 22:10

**12:46** Nm 9:12;  
Ps 34:20;  
Jn 19:36

**12:47** Ex 12:3;  
Ex 12:6; Lv 4:13

**12:48** Nm 9:14

**13:1** Ex 6:10;  
Ex 7:1; Ex 8:1;  
Ex 9:1; Ex 10:1

**13:2** Ex 13:12;  
Ex 22:29;  
Lv 27:26;  
Nm 3:13;  
Dt 15:19

**13:3** Ex 6:1;  
Ex 12:8;  
Ex 12:42;  
Ex 13:14;  
Dt 16:3

Ex 12:15  
Ex 14:2  
Josh 13:4

of there. No leavened bread may be eaten. <sup>4</sup>Today, in the month of Abib,<sup>a</sup> you are going to leave. <sup>5</sup>The LORD will bring you to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. It is the land that the LORD promised your ancestors to give to you, a land full of milk and honey. You should perform this ritual in this month. <sup>6</sup>You must eat unleavened bread for seven days. The seventh day is a festival to the LORD. <sup>7</sup>Only unleavened bread should be eaten for seven days. No leavened bread and no yeast should be seen among you in your whole country. <sup>8</sup>You should explain to your child on that day, 'It's because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.'

<sup>9</sup>"It will be a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead so that you will often discuss the LORD's Instruction, for the LORD brought you out of Egypt with great power. <sup>10</sup>So you should follow this regulation at its appointed time every year.

### **Dedication of Israel's oldest offspring**

<sup>11</sup>"When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you as promised to you and your ancestors, <sup>12</sup>you should set aside for the LORD whatever comes out of the womb first. All of the first males born to your animal belong to the LORD. <sup>13</sup>But every first male donkey you should ransom with a sheep. If you don't ransom it, you must break its neck. You should ransom every oldest male among your children. <sup>14</sup>When in the future your child asks you, 'What does this mean?' you should answer, 'The LORD brought us with great power out of Egypt, out of the place we were slaves. <sup>15</sup>When Pharaoh refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the oldest offspring in the land of Egypt, from the oldest sons to the oldest male animals. That is why I offer to the LORD as a sacrifice every male that first comes out of the womb. But I ransom my oldest sons.' <sup>16</sup>It will be a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with great power."

### **God leads the way**

<sup>17</sup>When Pharaoh let the people go, God didn't lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, even though that was the shorter route. God thought, If the people have to fight and face war, they will run back to Egypt. <sup>18</sup>So God led the people by the roundabout way of the Reed Sea<sup>a</sup> desert. The Israelites went up out of the land of Egypt ready for battle.

<sup>a</sup>March–April, named Nisan after the exile <sup>b</sup>Or Red Sea

the festival's primary teaching purpose: to *explain to your child . . . what the LORD did for me and to discuss the LORD's Instruction* (13:8-9).

<sup>11-12</sup> *the Canaanites . . . the Jebusites*: a traditional list of the inhabitants of Canaan whom the Lord will remove when Israel enters the land (see note on Exod 23:23).

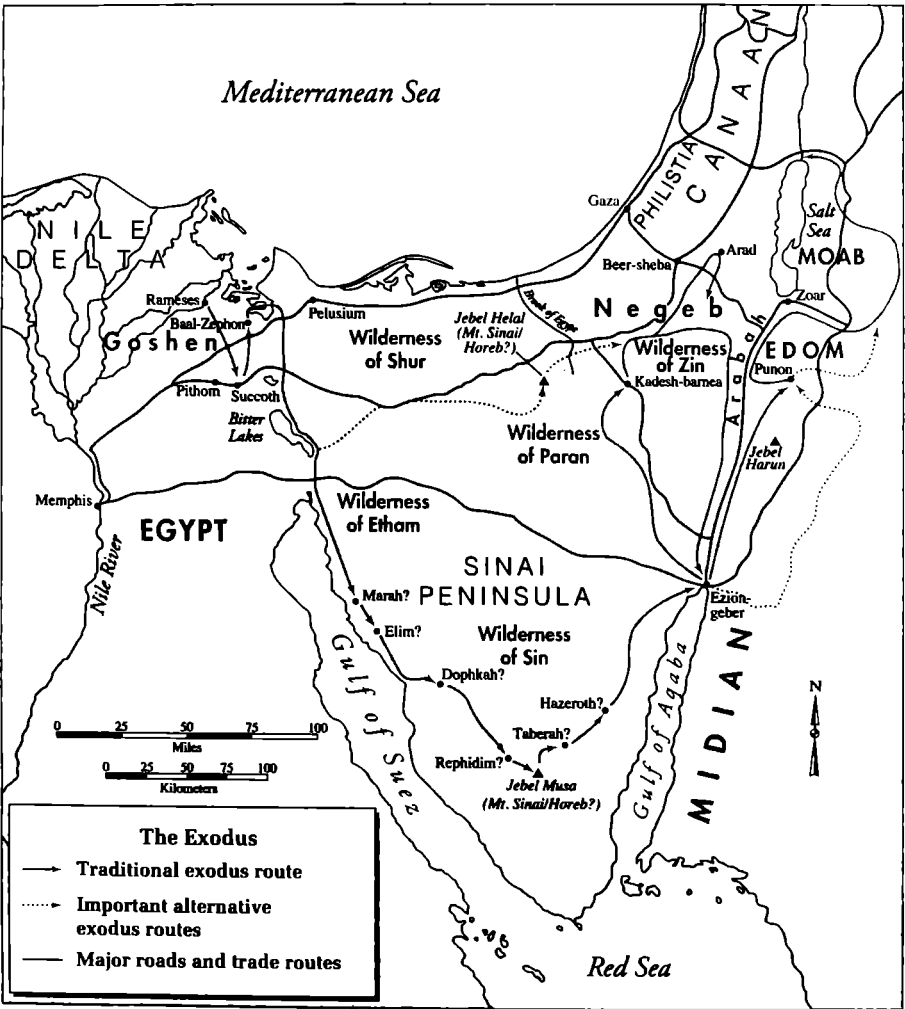
<sup>13-16</sup> *sign on your hand . . . reminder on your forehead*: These items refer to seals or ornaments attached to the hand and forehead as symbols. They remind the Israelites of the Lord's deliverance out of Egypt. They cause discussion of God's teachings, guiding both action (what you do with your hands) and thought (what you think with your head). This command occurs here and in three other places: Exodus 13:16; Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18. These biblical texts are the basis for the Jewish practice of wearing phylacteries (also called tefillin) during weekday morning prayers. The phylacteries are two small leather boxes, each one containing miniature written versions of the four biblical texts. One box is tied to the head, and the other is bound to the arm, both with leather straps.

<sup>13:13-15</sup> The broad claim made in Exodus 13:1-2 about the dedication of every oldest child to God is clarified here. The first offspring of any domestic animal should be dedicated and offered as an entirely burned sacrifice to God. The oldest son in an Israelite family is also to be dedicated to God. However, rather than sacrifice the child, the parents *should ransom* their oldest child (13:13, 15). Later instructions provide that the members of the priestly tribe of Levi may act as substitutes and thus act as ransom for the oldest

sons of the other Israelite tribes and families (Num 3:11-13). The Levites were not literally sacrificed. Instead, the Levites were priestly assistants who dedicated their lives to serving God by helping Aaron and the other priests in the worship and sacrifices in the meeting tent (Exod 38:21). Alternatively, parents may pay money to the priests as ransom for their oldest child (Num 3:40-51; 18:15-16). The dedication and ransom are thankful responses to what the Lord did for Israel in saving them from Egypt's slavery (13:14-16). See also Exodus 34:19-20; Numbers 8:16-18; Deuteronomy 15:19.

<sup>13:13</sup> The *donkey* is considered an unclean or impure animal according to the priestly criteria of Leviticus 11:2-8. Sheep are considered ritually clean by the same criteria. Thus, a sheep may be offered as a ransom for the oldest offspring of a donkey. If a sheep isn't available, the donkey's neck is broken. As an unclean animal, the donkey can't be slaughtered in the usual way that clean animals are sacrificed. Israelites may eat the meat of only clean animals, not unclean animals.

<sup>13:17-18</sup> *land of the Philistines*: The Philistines were a people who lived on the western border of Canaan along the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. This would have been the most direct route to Canaan. However, God believed that the Israelites needed more time to prepare for war against the Canaanites. Thus the Israelites traveled instead by the *roundabout way of the Reed Sea*; see sidebar, "The Reed Sea or the Red Sea?" at Exodus 10. This is the sea that Israel will cross and in which Pharaoh and his army will be drowned (Exod 14:21-28).



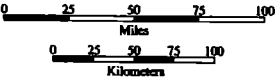
Mediterranean Sea

NILE DELTA

Goshen

EGYPT

Nile River



**The Exodus**

- Traditional exodus route
- ..... Important alternative exodus routes
- Major roads and trade routes

Wilderness of Shur

Wilderness of Etham

SINAI PENINSULA

Wilderness of Sin

Gaza

PHILISTIA

Beer-sheba

Negeb

Wilderness of Zin

MOAB

EDOM

Wilderness of Paran

Wilderness of Paran

Punon

Memphis

Pithom Succoth

Bitter Lakes

Pelusium

Jebel Helal (Mt. Sinai/Horeb?)

Wilderness of Paran

Wilderness of Zin

Sale Sea

Punon

Jebel Harun

Wilderness of Etham

SINAI PENINSULA

Wilderness of Sin

Marah?

Elim?

Dophkah?

Hazeroth?

Taberah?

Rephidim?

Jebel Musa (Mt. Sinai/Horeb?)

Ezion-geber

Gulf of Agaba

MIDIAN

Red Sea



13:19 Gn 50:25;  
 Josh 24:32;  
 Ac 7:16;  
 Heb 11:22  
 13:20 Ex 12:37;  
 Nm 33:6  
 13:21 Ex 14:19;  
 Dt 1:33;  
 Neh 9:12;  
 Ps 9:19;  
 Ps 78:14

13:22 Ex 40:38;  
 Neh 9:19

14:1 Ex 7:1,  
 Ex 8:1, Ex 9:1,  
 Ex 10:1, Ex 11:1

14:4 Ex 4:21,  
 Ex 7:5, Ex 14:8,  
 Ex 14:17-18

14:8 Ex 14:4;  
 Nm 33:3;  
 Ac 13:17

14:9 Ex 14:2,  
 Ex 15:9;  
 Josh 24:6

14:11 Ex 15:24,  
 Ex 16:2, Ex 17:3;  
 Nm 11:1,  
 Nm 21:5

14:12 Ex 5:21

14:13 Ex 14:30;  
 2Ch 20:15,  
 2Ch 20:17;

Is 41:10, Is 41:13  
 14:14 Ex 14:25;  
 Dt 1:30, Dt 3:22;  
 2Ch 20:29;  
 Neh 4:20

**19**Moses took with him Joseph's bones just as Joseph had made Israel's sons promise when he said to them, "When God takes care of you, you must carry my bones out of here with you."<sup>20</sup>They set out from Succoth and camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. **21**The LORD went in front of them during the day in a column of cloud to guide them and at night in a column of lightning to give them light. This way they could travel during the day and at night. **22**The column of cloud during the day and the column of lightning at night never left its place in front of the people.

### Israel crossing the sea

**14** Then the LORD said to Moses: **2**Tell the Israelites to turn back and set up camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea in front of Baal-zephon. You should set up camp in front of it by the sea. **3**Pharaoh will think to himself, The Israelites are lost and confused in the land. The desert has trapped them. **4**I'll make Pharaoh stubborn, and he'll chase them. I'll gain honor at the expense of Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD. And they did exactly that.

**5**When Egypt's king was told that the people had run away, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about the people. They said, "What have we done, letting Israel go free from their slavery to us?" **6**So he sent for his chariot and took his army with him. **7**He took six hundred elite chariots and all of Egypt's other chariots with captains on all of them. **8**The LORD made Pharaoh, Egypt's king, stubborn, and he chased the Israelites, who were leaving confidently. **9**The Egyptians, including all of Pharaoh's horse-drawn chariots, his cavalry, and his army, chased them and caught up with them as they were camped by the sea, by Pi-hahiroth in front of Baal-zephon.

**10**As Pharaoh drew closer, the Israelites looked back and saw the Egyptians marching toward them. The Israelites were terrified and cried out to the LORD. **11**They said to Moses, "Weren't there enough graves in Egypt that you took us away to die in the desert? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt like this? **12**Didn't we tell you the same thing in Egypt? 'Leave us alone! Let us work for the Egyptians!' It would have been better for us to work for the Egyptians than to die in the desert."

**13**But Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. Stand your ground, and watch the LORD rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never ever see again. **14**The LORD will fight for you. You just keep still."

**13:19** *Joseph's bones*: Generations earlier, Joseph had requested that his bones be taken from Egypt and buried back in the land of Canaan (Gen 50:24-26). Moses makes sure to honor his ancestor's request.

**13:20** *Succoth*: See note on Exodus 12:37.

**13:21-22** God is present within the *column of cloud* by day and the *column of lightning* by night. The columns of cloud and lightning seem to be one and the same, just visible in different ways depending on the time of day (Exod 14:24-25; 24:15-17; 40:34-38). The images of cloud and lightning reflect how the Lord is often described with images of a powerful storm, dazzling light, and other awesome forces of nature (Exod 15:8-10; 19:16-19; Pss 18:7-15; 29:1-11; see note on Exod 33:18). The column of cloud or lightning as the visible expression of God's presence marks three important moments in the story of Exodus: God's defeat of the Egyptians at the Reed Sea (Exod 14:19, 24-25), the Lord's coming down on Mount Sinai to give the commandments and instructions to Israel (Exod 19:16-19), and the climactic moment when God's presence in the cloud settles on the meeting tent or dwelling built by the Israelites (Exod 40:34-38).

**14:1-31** Israel eventually crosses the Reed Sea safely while the Lord defeats Pharaoh and his army. Pharaoh had commanded the drowning of Hebrew babies in the Nile River at the beginning of the book of Exodus (Exod 1:22). Now Pharaoh himself and his army will be drowned in the Reed Sea (14:26-28).

**14:1-3** *the LORD* commands Moses to make the Israelites

turn around and come back toward the land of Egypt. God wishes to tempt Pharaoh to chase after the Israelites one more time. The place-names (Pi-hahiroth, Migdol, Baal-zephon) are unknown but are probably located in the border region of northeast Egypt.

**14:4** *I'll make Pharaoh stubborn*: God has repeatedly made Pharaoh stubborn during the series of disasters. See notes on Exodus 4:21; 9:12. God is interested that *the Egyptians will know* that Israel's God is *the LORD*. The earlier instructions for the Festival of Passover (Exod 12-13) had been aimed at helping Israel to know and remember the amazing things that God had done against the Egyptians. God also wants the *Egyptians* to know and not forget who *the LORD* is (see also Exod 7:5; 8:10, 22-23; 9:14, 29; 14:18; 32:11-14).

**14:9** *horse-drawn chariots... cavalry... army*: Pharaoh is approaching the Israelites with the full weight of his military might, which causes the Israelites to be terrified (Exod 14:10).

**14:12** *Didn't we tell you?*: The Israelites refer back to an earlier time when they also complained to Moses (Exod 5:19-21). Their complaints against Moses will continue throughout Israel's future journey in the wilderness (Exod 15:22-26; 17:1-7; Num 11:1-6; 14:1-5; 20:2-13; 21:4-9).

**14:13** *The Egyptians... you will never ever see again*: Moses tells the Israelites what he had earlier told directly to Pharaoh (Exod 10:28-29).

**14:14** *The LORD will fight for you*: This image of God as a warrior occurs frequently in the OT. Sometimes God fights



<sup>15</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to get moving. <sup>16</sup>As for you, lift your shepherd’s rod, stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it in two so that the Israelites can go into the sea on dry ground. <sup>17</sup>But me, I’ll make the Egyptians stubborn so that they will go in after them, and I’ll gain honor at the expense of Pharaoh, all his army, his chariots, and his cavalry. <sup>18</sup>The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I gain honor at the expense of Pharaoh, his chariots, and his cavalry.”

<sup>19</sup>God’s messenger, who had been in front of Israel’s camp, moved and went behind them. The column of cloud moved from the front and took its place behind them. <sup>20</sup>It stood between Egypt’s camp and Israel’s camp. The cloud remained there, and when darkness fell it lit up the night. They didn’t come near each other all night.

<sup>21</sup>Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD pushed the sea back by a strong east wind all night, turning the sea into dry land. The waters were split into two. <sup>22</sup>The Israelites walked into the sea on dry ground. The waters formed a wall for them on their right hand and on their left. <sup>23</sup>The Egyptians chased them and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and cavalry. <sup>24</sup>As morning approached, the LORD looked down on the Egyptian camp from the column of lightning and cloud and threw the Egyptian camp into a panic. <sup>25</sup>The LORD jammed their chariot wheels so that they wouldn’t turn easily. The Egyptians said, “Let’s get away from the Israelites, because the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt!”

<sup>26</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the water comes back and covers the Egyptians, their chariots, and their cavalry.” <sup>27</sup>So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. At daybreak, the sea returned to its normal depth. The Egyptians were driving toward it, and the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. <sup>28</sup>The waters returned and covered the chariots and the cavalry, Pharaoh’s entire army that had followed them into the sea. Not one of them remained. <sup>29</sup>The Israelites, however, walked on dry ground through the sea. The waters formed a wall for them on their right hand and on their left.

<sup>30</sup>The LORD rescued Israel from the Egyptians that day. Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup>Israel saw the amazing power of the LORD against the Egyptians. The people were in awe of the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

### Moses’ victory song

**15** Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:  
I will sing to the LORD, for an overflowing victory!

Horse and rider he threw into the sea!

<sup>2</sup>The LORD is my strength and my power;<sup>3</sup>  
he has become my salvation.

<sup>4</sup>Or song

against Israel’s enemies (Exod 15:3; Deut 1:30; Josh 10:14; Ps 24:8; Isa 42:13). Sometimes the Lord fights against God’s own people when they have sinned (Isa 10:5; Ezek 21:1-5). Sometimes God doesn’t take sides and stands ready to fight against either Israel or its enemies (Josh 5:13-15). In Exodus, God fights against Pharaoh, and Israel only has to *keep still*. 14:15 God just told Israel to “keep still” (14:14), but now God instructs Israel to *get moving*. Moses will stretch his rod over the sea, and God will split the waters and expose dry ground. Israel will walk to safety through the split waters of the sea. Two traditions seem to be woven together here. One tradition emphasizes God alone directly fighting against Pharaoh while Israel stood and watched (Exod 14:19-20, 24-25, 30-31). The second tradition emphasizes God working through Moses and his rod to split the waters of the sea while Israel walked on dry ground through the sea (14:15-18, 21-23, 26-29). A third tradition retells the same event in yet another way in the Song of Moses (Exod 15:1-10). The three different traditions about the battle at the sea all contribute their own unique perspective to this one event. They mark the importance of God’s victory at the sea as a high point in Israel’s memory.

14:17 *I’ll make the Egyptians stubborn*: See notes on Exodus 4:21; 9:12.

14:18 *The Egyptians will know*: See note on Exodus 14:4.

14:19 *God’s messenger*: another way of describing God’s presence in the *column of cloud* (see Exod 14:24). For the most part in Exodus, there seems virtually no difference between the direct appearance of God and the appearance of God’s messenger (Heb. *m'l'k*). They seem to be one and the same (see Exod 3:2, 4-5; 14:19, 24, 25). In a few cases, God and the messenger seem to be distinguished as separate, although closely related (Exod 23:20-22; 32:34; 33:2-3).

14:25 The Egyptians have finally come to know the LORD as the one who is fighting . . . against Egypt (see Exod 14:18 and the note on Exod 14:4).

15:1-21 God’s defeat of Pharaoh and rescue of Israel is celebrated with two songs. Moses sings (15:1-18), and then Miriam sings her song (15:21). The Song of Moses provides another poetic account of what happened in the battle between God and Pharaoh at the sea (see note on Exod 14:15). For example, the song makes no mention of the Israelites passing through the sea on dry ground (Exod 14:22). Both songs are written in Hebrew poetry. The

14:15 Ex 3:11,  
Ex 4:1, Ex 4:10,  
Ex 5:22,  
Josh 7:10

14:16 Ex 4:17,  
Ex 7:19

14:17 Ex 4:21,  
Ex 14:4, Ex 14:8,  
Ex 14:18

14:18 Ex 7:5,  
Ex 14:4

14:19 Ex 13:21,  
Ex 23:20, 16:63-9

14:20 Ex 14:19

14:21 Ex 14:16,  
Ex 15:8;  
Josh 4:23;

Ps 66:6, 16:63-12

14:22 Ex 14:29,  
Ex 15:8,  
Ex 15:19;  
Ps 66:6, Ps 78:13

14:23 Ex 14:17

14:24 Ex 13:21,  
Ex 14:25;  
Jgs 7:19;  
1Sa 11:11

14:25 Ex 14:14

14:26 Ex 14:16

14:27 Ex 15:1;  
Josh 4:18;  
Ps 78:53

14:28 Ex 9:7,  
Ex 14:23,  
Ex 15:19;  
Neh 9:11,  
Ps 78:53

14:29 Ex 14:22

14:30 Ps 106:8,  
Ps 106:10

14:31 Ex 4:31,  
Ex 19:9;  
Ps 106:12;  
Jn 2:11, Jn 11:45

15:1 Ex 15:21;  
Nm 21:17;  
Jgs 5:1;  
Ps 106:12;  
Rev 15:3

15:2 Ps 18:1-2,  
Ps 99:5,  
Ps 118:14;  
Is 12:2

15:4 Ex 14:7;  
Ex 14:28  
15:5 Ex 14:28,  
Ex 15:10;  
Neh 9:11  
15:6 Ps 17:7;  
Ps 118:15,  
Ps 118:16  
15:9 Ex 14:5,  
Ex 14:9; Jgs 5:30;  
Is 53:12;  
Lk 11:22  
15:10 Ex 15:5  
15:11 Ex 8:10;  
Dt 3:24; 1Sa 2:2;  
Is 6:3; Rev 4:8  
15:16 Ps 74:2

- This is my God, whom I will praise,  
the God of my ancestors, whom I will acclaim.
- <sup>3</sup>The LORD is a warrior;  
the LORD is his name.
- <sup>4</sup>Pharaoh's chariots and his army he hurled into the sea;  
his elite captains were sunk in the Reed Sea.<sup>W</sup>
- <sup>5</sup>The deep sea covered them;  
they sank into the deep waters like a stone.
- <sup>6</sup>Your strong hand, LORD, is dominant in power;  
your strong hand, LORD, shatters the enemy!
- <sup>7</sup>With your great surge you overthrow your opponents;  
you send out your hot anger; it burns them up like straw.
- <sup>8</sup>With the breath of your nostrils the waters swelled up,  
the floods surged up in a great wave;  
the deep waters foamed in the depths of the sea.
- <sup>9</sup>The enemy said, "I'll pursue, I'll overtake,  
I'll divide the spoils of war.  
I'll be overfilled with them.  
I'll draw my sword; my hand will destroy them."
- <sup>10</sup>You blew with your wind; the sea covered over them.  
They sank like lead in the towering waters.
- <sup>11</sup>Who is like you among the gods, LORD?  
Who is like you, foremost in holiness,  
worthy of highest praise, doing awesome deeds?
- <sup>12</sup>You raised your strong hand;  
earth swallowed them up.
- <sup>13</sup>With your great loyalty you led the people you rescued;  
with your power you guided them to your sanctuary.
- <sup>14</sup>The peoples heard, they shook in terror;  
horror grabbed hold of Philistia's inhabitants.
- <sup>15</sup>Then Edom's tribal chiefs were terrified;  
panic grabbed hold of Moab's rulers;  
all of Canaan's inhabitants melted in fear.
- <sup>16</sup>Terror and fear came over them;  
because of your great power,  
they were as still as a stone  
until your people, LORD, passed by,  
until the people you made your own passed by.

<sup>W</sup>Or Red Sea

poetry is rich with imagery, metaphors, and emotion. The poetic lines are generally in either couplets (two doubled or parallel lines—for example, 15:3) or triplets (three parallel lines—for example, 15:8). One important contrast in the poem involves stones, heavy lead, and a mountain. Pharaoh and the other enemies of God sink into the sea like a stone (15:5), drown like heavy lead (15:10) or freeze in fear like a stone (15:16). In contrast, God's people live in security and peace on another kind of stone, *planted . . . on [the LORD's] own mountain* (15:17).

15:3 *The LORD is a warrior*: see note on Exodus 14:14. *On the LORD is his name*, see Exodus 3:13–15; 6:3.

15:4 *the Reed Sea*: See note on Exodus 10:19.

15:11 *Who is like you among the gods, LORD?*: The question assumes that there are other gods worshipped by other nations and peoples. However, the Lord, the God of Israel,

is superior to them. Other OT texts also appear to agree that other gods exist for other nations (Deut 32:8–9; Pss 86:8; 89:6–8). Some OT texts seem to deny the existence or power of other gods altogether (Isa 44:6–20).

15:12 The phrase *earth swallowed them up* works here as an image for the burial of the dead in a grave or for the dead going down into Sheol, the place of the dead (Isa 5:14). Compare Numbers 16:32, where disobedient Israelites are swallowed up in an earthquake.

15:13–18 The poem moves from celebrating God's past victory over Pharaoh in Egypt to God's future protection and guidance of Israel as it enters into the land of Canaan with God's *sanctuary* at its center (15:13, 17). *Philistia's inhabitants* live at the western border of Canaan (15:14). *Edom* lies to the south and east of Canaan, and *Moab* is on the eastern border (15:15).

<sup>17</sup>You brought them in and planted them on your own mountain,  
the place, LORD, that you made your home,  
the sanctuary, LORD, that your hand created.

<sup>18</sup>The LORD will rule forever and always.

<sup>19</sup>When Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and cavalry went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea over them. But the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.

**Miriam's victory song**

<sup>20</sup>Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand. All the women followed her playing tambourines and dancing. <sup>21</sup>Miriam sang the refrain back to them:  
Sing to the LORD, for an overflowing victory!  
Horse and rider he threw into the sea!

*The Sea of Chaos: God's Enemy or Ally?* Creation myths from ancient cultures around Israel often portrayed the sea as a god of chaos, evil, and death. The divine sea and its monsters (named Leviathan or Rahab) fought against the good gods of life and order. The gods of life eventually won the battle over the sea and its fierce dragons, dividing the sea and drying it up. The OT borrows and adapts this imagery of the sea in some of its poetry. In Psalm 74:12-15, the poet addresses the Lord as a victorious king: "You split the sea with your power. You shattered the heads of the sea monsters on the water. . . . You split open springs and streams; you made strong-flowing rivers dry right up" (see also Isa 27:1; 51:9-10; Job 41:1-34). The poem in Exodus 15 adapts this imagery in new ways. The sea isn't the enemy of God but an ally. The Lord uses the sea as a weapon against Pharaoh and his army. Thrown into the sea, the Egyptians sink and drown (Exod 15:1, 4-5, 10).

**Turning bitter water sweet**

<sup>22</sup>Then Moses had Israel leave the Reed Sea<sup>a</sup> and go out into the Shur desert. They traveled for three days in the desert and found no water. <sup>23</sup>When they came to Marah, they couldn't drink Marah's water because it was bitter. That's why it was called Marah.<sup>b</sup> <sup>24</sup>The people complained against Moses, "What will we drink?" <sup>25</sup>Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD pointed out a tree to him. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

<sup>a</sup>Or Red Sea <sup>b</sup>Or bitter

15:17 *planted them on your own mountain. . . the sanctuary.* This verse likely refers to Mount Zion and the city of Jerusalem, where the Lord's temple will be built generations later under King Solomon (1 Kgs 6-8; Pss 48:1-14; 78:51-55). The building of the wilderness dwelling for the Lord and "the chest containing the covenant" at the end of Exodus point forward to the eventual building of the Jerusalem temple, which became the new home for the same "chest containing the covenant" (Exod 40:3, 20-21, 34-38; 1 Kgs 6:14, 19; 8:20-21). Both Jerusalem's Mount Zion and Mount Sinai/Horeb can be seen as the dwelling place and mountain of God (Exod 3:1, 12; 19:1-25; 24:1-14). See also Exodus 6:8.

15:20 *the prophet Miriam* leads the Israelite women in dance and song to celebrate the end of the battle and victory over the enemy. Her actions appear to reflect Israelite custom (Judg 11:34; 1 Sam 18:6-7). Miriam was a sister to both Aaron and Moses (Exod 2:4; Num 26:59). She is called a *prophet* or messenger of God. She is elsewhere listed with her brothers as one of the three leaders of Israel during their journey through the wilderness (Mic 6:4). She and Aaron later have a dispute with Moses about whether they also speak for God (Num 12:1-9).

15:22-17:7 In the barren desert, the runaway slaves immediately face a crisis: a lack of water (15:22-27; 17:1-7) and food (16:1-36). The people complain to Moses (15:24; 16:2-3; 17:2-3). God tells Moses that their complaints are justified and responds positively in each case.

God gives the people what they need (15:25; 16:11-14; 17:5-6). The Israelites are at the beginning of their wilderness journey. They will gradually struggle to learn that God will provide and meet their daily needs. At a much later stage of the journey, the people complain again. At that point the Lord will become angry because by then the Israelites should have learned to trust God (Num 11:1-3, 4-6, 10).

15:22-27 The most immediate crisis in the desert is the lack of water for all the Israelites.

15:23 *Marah*: The name means "bitter" in Hebrew. The bitterness made the water undrinkable.

15:25 *Moses cried out to the LORD*: Moses often takes on the role of praying to God on behalf of others in need (Exod 9:33; 32:11-14; Num 12:13; 14:13-20).

15:25 *a tree. . . the water became sweet*: In the first of the 10 disasters that God brought upon Egypt, the clear water of the Nile River was turned into undrinkable blood (Exod 7:14-25). Here at Marah, the process is reversed. Undrinkable water is made drinkable through the miracle of the tree. The 10 disasters in Egypt are replaced by nature returning to its intended function of sustaining life (see note on Exod 7:25). The prophet Elijah performed a similar life-giving miracle with water (2 Kgs 2:19-22).

15:25-26 *he tested them*: The Lord sets up a test of Israel's obedience (Exod 16:4; 17:7; see also Gen 22:1). If the Israelites obey God's commandments, then God won't bring upon Israel the diseases suffered by the Egyptians during

15:17 Ex 23:20;  
Ps 44:2; Ps 78:54;  
Ps 80:8,  
Ps 132:13

15:19  
Ex 14:22-23,  
Ex 14:26-29  
15:20 Ex 2:4;  
Nm 26:59;  
Jgs 11:34;  
1Sa 18:6;  
Ps 150:4

15:21 Ex 15:1,  
Ex 15:20,  
1Sa 18:7

15:22 Gn 16:7;  
Gn 20:1,  
Gn 25:18;  
Ex 17:1;  
1Sa 15:7

15:23 Nm 33:8;  
Ru 1:20

15:24 Ex 14:11,  
Ex 16:2, Ex 17:3;  
Nm 11:1,  
Nm 21:5

15:25 Ex 14:10,  
Ex 16:4, Jgs 3:4,  
2Ki 2:21

15:26 Ex 19:5,  
Ex 23:25;  
Dt 7:12, Dt 7:15;  
Ps 103:3

15:27 Nm 33:9

16:1 Ex 17:1;  
Nm 33:11

16:2 Ex 14:11,  
Ex 15:24,  
Ex 17:3;  
Nm 21:5;  
1Co 10:10

16:3 Ex 17:3;  
Nm 11:4-5,  
Nm 14:2,  
Nm 20:3

16:4 Ex 15:25;  
Dt 8:2; Neh 9:15;  
Ps 78:24; In 6:31

16:6 Ex 6:6-7,  
Ex 12:51,  
Ex 16:12;  
Nm 16:28

16:7 Ex 16:10,  
Ex 40:34;  
Nm 16:11

16:8 1Sa 8:7;  
Lk 10:16;  
Ro 13:2; 1Th 4:8

16:10 Ex 13:21,  
Ex 16:7;  
Nm 12:5,  
Nm 16:42

The LORD made a regulation and a ruling there, and there he tested them. <sup>26</sup>The LORD said, "If you are careful to obey the LORD your God, do what God thinks is right, pay attention to his commandments, and keep all of his regulations, then I won't bring on you any of the diseases that I brought on the Egyptians. I am the LORD who heals you."

<sup>27</sup>Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees. They camped there by the water.

### Wilderness food: manna and quail

**16** The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Sin desert, which is located between Elim and Sinai. They set out on the fifteenth day of the second month<sup>a</sup> after they had left the land of Egypt. <sup>2</sup>The whole Israelite community complained against Moses and Aaron in the desert. <sup>3</sup>The Israelites said to them, "Oh, how we wish that the LORD had just put us to death while we were still in the land of Egypt. There we could sit by the pots cooking meat and eat our fill of bread. Instead, you've brought us out into this desert to starve this whole assembly to death."

<sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "I'm going to make bread rain down from the sky for you. The people will go out each day and gather just enough for that day. In this way, I'll test them to see whether or not they follow my Instruction. <sup>5</sup>On the sixth day, when they measure out what they have collected, it will be twice as much as they collected on other days." <sup>6</sup>So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "This evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt. <sup>7</sup>And in the morning you will see the LORD's glorious presence, because your complaints against the LORD have been heard. Who are we? Why blame us?" <sup>8</sup>Moses continued, "The LORD will give you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning because the LORD heard the complaints you made against him. Who are we? Your complaints aren't against us but against the LORD."

<sup>9</sup>Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole Israelite community, 'Come near to the LORD, because he's heard your complaints.'" <sup>10</sup>As Aaron spoke to the whole Israelite community, they turned to look toward the desert, and just then the glorious presence of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

<sup>a</sup>April–May, Iyar

the 10 disasters. Just as Pharaoh and Egypt suffered consequences because of their disobedience, the Israelites are also subject to God's laws and may be punished (see the curses in Deut 28:27). The actual *commandments* and *regulations* will be given later at Mount Sinai, beginning in Exodus 19–24.

**15:26** *I am the LORD who heals you*: This is the first of several stages of revealing the character of God through God's name in the book of Exodus. God's new name in Exodus began as "I Am Who I Am" (Exod 3:14). This episode of healing the people's thirst reveals something deeper about who God is: *I am the LORD who heals you* (see also Hos 7:1; 14:4). Further stages of revealing the full name and character of God will occur at several other key points in Exodus (Exod 20:2, 5–6; 29:45–46; 33:19; 34:6–7). We learn that God's ultimate desire for God's people is healing and life.

**15:27** *twelve springs of water*: The water at Marah had been provided through a miracle. When the Israelites come to *Elim*, a great abundance of water is available more naturally in the many underground springs. The large number of palm trees suggests a flourishing oasis in the desert.

**16:1–36** After water, food is the second-most-important element of basic human need. The Israelites complain to Moses and Aaron about the lack of food. God responds by sending daily bread or manna as well as meat in the form of birds called quail.

**16:1** *Sin desert*: named because of how the Hebrew name

sounds, not because of any connection with the English word "sin."

**16:3** *Oh, how we wish*: The Israelites yearn for the "good old days" of slavery in Egypt. Their words are similar to what they said when Pharaoh was approaching them at the Reed Sea (Exod 14:11–12; see also Num 11:4–6). Looking back and yearning only for the past sometimes seems better than taking risks in freedom and moving into a new future.

**16:4** *I'll test them*: God had earlier tested Israel with the water at Marah (Exod 15:25–26). The Lord tests Israel a second time by instructing them to *go out each day and gather just enough* bread for that one day and no more. The test is whether they trust that God will provide what they need each day. This story of the manna provides some of the background for the line in the Lord's Prayer that Jesus taught his disciples: "Give us the bread we need for today" (Matt 6:11; Luke 11:3; see Matt 6:25–34; Luke 12:22–31).

**16:5** *On the sixth day*: The seventh day of every week is *a holy Sabbath to the LORD* (Exod 16:22–30). No one is to do any work on the Sabbath, including the work of picking up the daily bread or manna. As a result, twice as much manna will be given *On the sixth day* so that half of it can be carried over for the Sabbath day.

**16:10** *the glorious presence... in the cloud*: God comes near to the people in the cloud in response to their need. Such appearances by God occur at critical points in the exodus story. The presence of the cloud marks the manna story as having special importance.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses, <sup>12</sup>"I've heard the complaints of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat. And in the morning you will have your fill of bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'"

<sup>13</sup>In the evening a flock of quail flew down and covered the camp. And in the morning there was a layer of dew all around the camp. <sup>14</sup>When the layer of dew lifted, there on the desert surface were thin flakes, as thin as frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup>When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What<sup>a</sup> is it?" They didn't know what it was.

Moses said to them, "This is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. <sup>16</sup>This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Collect as much of it as each of you can eat, one omer<sup>b</sup> per person. You may collect for the number of people in your household.'" <sup>17</sup>The Israelites did as Moses said, some collecting more, some less. <sup>18</sup>But when they measured it out by the omer, the ones who had collected more had nothing left over, and the ones who had collected less had no shortage. Everyone collected just as much as they could eat. <sup>19</sup>Moses said to them, "Don't keep any of it until morning." <sup>20</sup>But they didn't listen to Moses. Some kept part of it until morning, but it became infested with worms and stank. Moses got angry with them. <sup>21</sup>Every morning they gathered it, as much as each person could eat. But when the sun grew hot, it melted away.

<sup>22</sup>On the sixth day the people collected twice as much food as usual, two omers per person. All the chiefs of the community came and told Moses. <sup>23</sup>He said to them, "This is what the LORD has said, 'Tomorrow is a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. But you can set aside and keep all the leftovers until the next morning.'" <sup>24</sup>So they set the leftovers aside until morning, as Moses had commanded. They didn't stink or become infested with worms. <sup>25</sup>The next day Moses said, "Eat it today, because today is a Sabbath to the LORD. Today you won't find it out in the field. <sup>26</sup>Six days you will gather it. But on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be nothing to gather."

<sup>27</sup>On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather bread, but they found nothing. <sup>28</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to obey my commandments and instructions? <sup>29</sup>Look! The LORD has given you the Sabbath. Therefore, on the sixth day he gives you enough food for two days. Each of you should stay where you are and not leave your place on the seventh day." <sup>30</sup>So the people rested on the seventh day.

<sup>31</sup>The Israelite people called it manna. It was like coriander seed, white, and tasted like honey wafers. <sup>32</sup>Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Let an omer of it be kept safe for future generations so that they can see the food that I used to feed you in the desert when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'"

*The Sabbath Day of Rest* The Sabbath commandment is one of the major Ten Commandments that will be given to Israel at Mount Sinai (Exod 20:8-11). Although the Sabbath commandment hasn't yet been formally given to the Israelites, the manna story assumes the Sabbath requirement is in place and expects the Israelites to obey it as they gather their food each day. Why is this? The reason goes back to the first chapters of Genesis. Resting on the seventh day of the week was already part of the rhythm of time ever since God first created the heavens and the earth. The creation was divided into six days, and on the seventh day God rested, making that day "holy" (Gen 2:1-3). The Sabbath is holy for all creation, according to Genesis 2:1-3. The Israelites, however, are the first people chosen by God to put the Sabbath into actual practice, beginning with the story of the manna. The Sabbath will also play an important role later in Exodus in the building of the tent for God's presence among the Israelites (see sidebar, "The Sabbath, Creation, and Building the Lord's Dwelling" at Exod 25:1).

16:11 Jn 6:32  
 16:12 Ex 6:7, Ex 16:7-8  
 16:13 Nm 11:9, Nm 11:31; Ps 78:27-28, Ps 105:40  
 16:14 Ex 16:31; Nm 11:7; Neh 9:15; Ps 78:24, Ps 105:40  
 16:15 Ex 16:4; Neh 9:15; Jn 6:31  
 16:16 Ex 16:32, Ex 16:36  
 16:18 2Co 8:15  
 16:19 Ex 12:10, Ex 16:20, Ex 23:18  
 16:20 Ex 16:19, Ex 16:24  
 16:22 Ex 16:5, Ex 34:31  
 16:23 Gn 2:3; Ex 20:8  
 16:24 Ex 16:20  
 16:25 Ex 16:23; Neh 9:14  
 16:26 Ex 20:9  
 16:28 Ex 10:3; Nm 14:11; Ps 78:10; Ps 106:13  
 16:31  
 Ex 16:14-15; Nm 11:7  
 16:32 Ex 13:3

<sup>a</sup>Heb man (= What?); cf Exod 16:31 <sup>b</sup>Two quarts

16:15 *What is it?*: The word for *What?* in Hebrew is "man." It is a wordplay on *manna*, the name of the special bread (Exod 16:31).

16:22-30 The rule that no food should be collected on the Sabbath is part of God's test of the people's obedience (Exod 16:4). Some fail the test, and they are reminded of the need to rest on the Sabbath (16:27-30).

16:23-24 *Bake what you want to bake... set the leftovers aside*: Cooking food is prohibited on the Sabbath (see Exod 35:3).

16:31 *tasted like honey wafers*: Another biblical tradition describes the manna as tasting like "cakes baked in olive oil" (Num 11:8). Later interpreters took this disagreement about the taste of manna to mean that manna tasted like whatever your favorite food was. However, it seems likely that there were simply two different traditions about the taste of manna.

16:32-34 God commands that a jar of the manna be kept for future generations as a reminder that God provided food for the Israelites throughout their 40 years in the

16:33 Ex 16:4,  
Ex 16:34;  
Heb 9:4;  
Rev 2:17

16:34 Ex 25:16,  
Ex 25:21,  
Ex 27:21;  
Nm 17:10

16:35 Josh 5:12;  
Neh 9:21

16:36 Ex 16:16;  
Lv 5:11, Lv 6:20

17:1 Ex 16:1,  
Ex 17:8, Ex 19:2;  
Nm 33:12,  
Nm 33:14

17:4 Nm 14:10;  
1Sa 30:6; Jn 8:59

17:6 Ex 3:1;  
Nm 20:11;  
Dt 8:15;  
Ps 78:15;  
1Co 10:4

17:8 Gn 36:12;  
Ex 17:1;  
Nm 24:20;  
Dt 25:17;  
1Sa 15:2

17:9 Ex 4:20,  
Ex 24:13,  
Ex 32:17,  
Ex 33:11;  
Nm 11:28

17:10 Ex 17:9,  
Ex 17:12,  
Ex 24:14

17:11 1Ti 2:8

17:12 Ex 4:14,  
Ex 5:20, Ex 6:20,  
Ex 17:10,  
Ex 24:14

17:13 Ex 17:8

<sup>33</sup>Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar, and put one full omer of manna in it. Then set it in the LORD's presence, where it should be kept safe for future generations."<sup>34</sup>Aaron did as the LORD commanded Moses, and he put it in front of the covenant document for safekeeping.<sup>35</sup>The Israelites ate manna for forty years, until they came to a livable land. They ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. (<sup>36</sup>An omer<sup>c</sup> is one-tenth of an ephah.)

### Water from a rock

**17**The whole Israelite community broke camp and set out from the Sin desert to continue their journey, as the LORD commanded. They set up their camp at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup>The people argued with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink."

Moses said to them, "Why are you arguing with me? Why are you testing the LORD?"

<sup>3</sup>But the people were very thirsty for water there, and they complained to Moses, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?"

<sup>4</sup>So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What should I do with this people? They are getting ready to stone me."

<sup>5</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of Israel's elders with you. Take in your hand the shepherd's rod that you used to strike the Nile River, and go. <sup>6</sup>I'll be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Hit the rock. Water will come out of it, and the people will be able to drink." Moses did so while Israel's elders watched. <sup>7</sup>He called the place Massah<sup>d</sup> and Meribah,<sup>e</sup> because the Israelites argued with and tested the LORD, asking, "Is the LORD really with us or not?"

### Israel defeats Amalek

<sup>8</sup>Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. <sup>9</sup>Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some men for us and go fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I'll stand on top of the hill with the shepherd's rod of God in my hand." <sup>10</sup>So Joshua did as Moses told him. He fought with Amalek while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. <sup>11</sup>Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel would start winning the battle. Whenever Moses lowered his hand, Amalek would start winning. <sup>12</sup>But Moses' hands grew tired. So they took a stone and put it under Moses so he could sit down on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on each side of him so that his hands remained steady until sunset. <sup>13</sup>So Joshua defeated Amalek and his army with the sword.

<sup>c</sup>Two quarts <sup>d</sup>Or test <sup>e</sup>Or argument

desert. Looking forward, the manna jar is to be placed in the LORD's presence (16:33) and in front of the covenant document (16:34). This refers to God's wilderness dwelling, which will be built only later in Exodus 35–40.

**16:35** This comment looks ahead 40 years to a time when Israel will enter and eat the food of the land of Canaan. Only then will the manna stop (Josh 5:6, 11–12).

**17:1–7** The two previous stories portrayed God as the one who tested Israel when they had no water or food (Exod 15:25; 16:4). Here at a desert location called *Rephidim*, the Israelites were the ones who tested the LORD (17:1, 7). Once again, the issue is a lack of water. And again, God meets their need.

**17:3** The Israelites complain to Moses about the lack of water in words similar to their earlier complaint in the manna story (Exod 16:3).

**17:5 take . . . elders with you:** God reminds Moses not to go alone but to take other leaders with him. This reminder points forward to the story about the need for Moses to share the burden of leadership with others in the community (Exod 18:1–27; see also Num 11:10–29). God tells Moses to pick up the same *shepherd's rod* that Moses had earlier used to turn the Nile River into blood, thus robbing the Egyptians of water (Exod 7:20). This time Moses' rod will be used not to take away water but rather to provide life-giving nourishment to the Israelites. Moses will hit the

rock and water will flow from it (Exod 17:6). For a similar story, see Numbers 20:1–13.

**17:6** God had first met Moses at the mountain of God called *Horeb*, which is also called *Sinai* (Exod 3:1; cf. Exod 19:11). God had promised that Moses would return to Horeb after leading the Israelites out of Egypt (Exod 3:12). Now God has fulfilled the promise.

**17:7 Massah and Meribah:** The two place names mean "test" and "argument" in Hebrew. God had responded positively to the Israelites' complaint, but at the same time their complaint seemed to be testing God. The people continue to wonder, "Is the LORD really with us or not?"

**17:8–16** The first incident at *Rephidim* involved a natural threat to Israel's future: the lack of water (Exod 17:1). The second incident at *Rephidim* involves a human threat from the outside: an attack by Amalek and his army (17:8). The Israelites were runaway slaves. They were vulnerable and had few resources, which is why Amalek's attack was so morally shameful. Moses sends his assistant Joshua to lead the Israelites in fighting against Amalek's army (17:9). That won't be enough, however. Moses will also need God's and others' assistance. In the next story (Exod 18:1–27), Moses will also use help from others.

**17:10–12 Hur:** an elder and leader from the tribe of Judah (Exod 24:14; 31:2).

**The Amalekites as Israel's Enemy** God's command to "completely wipe out the memory of Amalek" may sound disturbing to our sensibilities (Exod 17:14; see also Deut 25:17-19; Num 24:20). God issued a similar blanket command to destroy all the Canaanites when Israel entered the land of Canaan because of the Canaanites' (or Amorites') wickedness (Deut 20:16-18; see also Gen 15:16; Deut 9:4). Eventually God had a change of heart and withdrew the command to kill all the Canaanites (Judg 2:20-23; 3:1-6). In contrast, nowhere in the Bible does God withdraw the command to destroy the Amalekites. In the world of the Bible, the Amalekites and the Canaanites symbolized the enemies of God and Israel (Num 14:45). The Amalekites kept reappearing in Israel's history. King Saul was ordered to wipe out the Amalekites, but he failed to kill the Amalekite king named Agag (1 Sam 15:1-35). Generations later, a man named Haman, described as a descendant of King Agag and thus an Amalekite, "planned to wipe out all the Jews" in Persia (Esth 3:1, 6). The Amalekites came to represent the continuing threat of any group or nation who sought to destroy God's people. The statement in Exodus 17:16 reflects this ongoing struggle: "The LORD is at war with Amalek in every generation."

17:14 Ex 34:27;  
Dt 25:19  
17:15 Gn 8:20,  
Gn 22:14,  
Gn 33:20;  
Ex 24:4  
17:16 Ex 17:14  
18:1 Ex 2:16,  
Ex 2:18, Ex 3:1  
18:3 Ex 2:22,  
Ex 4:20; Ac 7:29  
18:4 1Ch 23:15,  
1Ch 23:17

<sup>14</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this as a reminder on a scroll and read it to Joshua: I will completely wipe out the memory of Amalek under the sky."

<sup>15</sup>Moses built an altar there and called it, "The LORD is my banner." <sup>16</sup>He said, "The power of the LORD's banner!<sup>f</sup> The LORD is at war with Amalek in every generation."

**Sharing the burden of leadership**

**18**Jethro, Midian's priest and Moses' father-in-law, heard about everything that God had done for Moses and for God's people Israel, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. <sup>2</sup>Moses' father-in-law Jethro took with him Zipporah, Moses' wife whom he had sent away, <sup>3</sup>along with her two sons. One was named Gershom because he said, "I have been an immigrant<sup>g</sup> living in a foreign land." <sup>4</sup>The other was named Eliezer<sup>h</sup> because he said, "The God of my ancestors was my helper who rescued me from Pharaoh's sword." <sup>5</sup>Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought Moses' sons and wife back to him in the desert where he had set up camp at God's mountain. <sup>6</sup>He sent word to Moses: "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you along with your wife and her two sons." <sup>7</sup>Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him. They asked each other how they were doing, and then they went into the tent. <sup>8</sup>Moses then told his father-in-law everything that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians on Israel's behalf, all the difficulty they had on their journey, and how the LORD had rescued them. <sup>9</sup>Jethro was glad about all the good things that the LORD had done for Israel in saving them from the Egyptians' power.

<sup>10</sup>Jethro said, "Bless the LORD who rescued you from the Egyptians' power and from Pharaoh's power, who rescued the people from Egypt's oppressive power. <sup>11</sup>Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods, because of what happened when the Egyptians plotted against them." <sup>12</sup>Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought an entirely burned offering and

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Heb *ger* sounds like *Gershom*. <sup>h</sup>Or *my God is a helper*.

17:14 *Write this*: This is the first example of Moses being told to write something on a scroll. He will write several other documents in his lifetime (Exod 24:4; 34:27; Num 33:2; Deut 31:9, 22, 24). Writing is the means by which words and memories live on for succeeding generations as a reminder. The people of Amalek live in an arid wilderness south of Canaan (Num 13:29), called the Negeb today. God's command to wipe out the Amalekites arose because of their ruthless attack on the weak and vulnerable Israelites.

17:15 "The LORD is my banner": Moses builds an altar and gives it a name. The altar and its name celebrate the power of the Lord's military victory against Amalek. It serves as a reminder for future generations.

18:1-27 Two other versions of this same story of Moses sharing authority among other leaders occur in Numbers 11:10-30 and Deuteronomy 1:9-18. Moses' Midianite father-in-law, Jethro, is the one who suggests the change in leadership structure here in Exodus 18. In Numbers 11,

it is God who comes up with the idea. In Deuteronomy 1:9-18, Moses claims that the distribution of leadership was his own invention.

18:1 *Jethro*: Moses' Midianite father-in-law (Exod 3:1; 4:18), also known as Reuel (Exod 2:18) or as Hobab (Num 10:29-32; Judg 4:11).

18:2 Moses had married *Zipporah* in Midian (Exod 3:21) and then traveled with her and their son to Egypt to lead the Israelites out of slavery (Exod 4:20). Moses had apparently sent them away to live with Jethro at some point before the Israelites left Egypt. Jethro is now bringing them back to live with Moses (Exod 18:5).

18:3 *Gershom*: See note on Exodus 2:22.

18:5 *God's mountain*: Mount Horeb (Exod 3:1), also known as Mount Sinai (Exod 19:11).

18:11 *the LORD is greater than all the gods*: See note on Exodus 15:11.

18:12 *Jethro* is a Midianite priest (Exod 18:1; see Exod 2:16), and Aaron will become Israel's high priest (Exod

10:13 Ex 18:26;  
Nm 11:16;  
Nm 11:24;  
Jgs 5:10

18:15 Nm 27:5  
18:16 Ex 24:14

18:18  
Nm 11:14;  
Nm 11:17;  
Dt 1:9, Dt 1:12

18:19 Ex 3:12;  
Nm 27:5

18:20 Dt 1:8,  
Dt 4:1, Dt 4:5,  
Dt 5:1, Ps 143:8

18:21 Ex 18:25;  
Dt 1:13, Dt 1:15,  
Dt 16:18-19

18:22 Lv 24:11;  
Nm 11:17;  
Dt 1:17, Dt 17:8

18:23 Ex 18:18  
18:25 Ex 18:21;  
Dt 1:15

19:1 Ex 12:6,  
Ex 16:1;  
Nm 1:1,  
Nm 33:15;  
1Ki 6:1

sacrifices to God. Aaron came with all of Israel's elders to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law in God's presence.

<sup>13</sup>The next day Moses sat as a judge for the people, while the people stood around Moses from morning until evening. <sup>14</sup>When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What's this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people are standing around you from morning until evening?"

<sup>15</sup>Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. <sup>16</sup>When a conflict arises between them, they come to me and I judge between the two of them. I also teach them God's regulations and instructions."

<sup>17</sup>Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing isn't good. <sup>18</sup>You will end up totally wearing yourself out, both you and these people who are with you. The work is too difficult for you. You can't do it alone. <sup>19</sup>Now listen to me and let me give you some advice. And may God be with you! Your role should be to represent the people before God. You should bring their disputes before God yourself. <sup>20</sup>Explain the regulations and instructions to them. Let them know the way they are supposed to go and the things they are supposed to do. <sup>21</sup>But you should also look among all the people for capable persons who respect God. They should be trustworthy and not corrupt. Set these persons over the people as officers of groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. <sup>22</sup>Let them sit as judges for the people at all times. They should bring every major dispute to you, but they should decide all of the minor cases themselves. This will be much easier for you, and they will share your load. <sup>23</sup>If you do this and God directs you, then you will be able to endure. And all these people will be able to go back to their homes much happier."

<sup>24</sup>Moses listened to his father-in-law's suggestions and did everything that he had said. <sup>25</sup>Moses chose capable persons from all Israel and set them as leaders over the people, as officers over groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. <sup>26</sup>They acted as judges for the people at all times. They would refer the hard cases to Moses, but all of the minor cases they decided themselves. <sup>27</sup>Then Moses said good-bye to his father-in-law, and Jethro went back to his own country.

### Arrival at Mount Sinai

**19** On exactly the third-month anniversary of the Israelites' leaving the land of Egypt, they came into the Sinai desert. <sup>2</sup>They traveled from Rephidim, came into the Sinai desert, and set up camp there. Israel camped there in front of the mountain <sup>3</sup>while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him from the mountain, "This is what you should say to Jacob's household and declare to the Israelites: <sup>4</sup>You saw what I did to the Egyptians, and

40:13). They meet with Moses in a worship service to offer sacrifices and to eat a meal in God's presence. The *entirely burned offering* played an important role in Israel's sacrificial system (cf. Lev 1:1-17).

18:21 *thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens*: These numbered divisions are similar to those used in military groupings (1 Sam 8:12; 2 Kgs 1:14).

18:23 *If... God directs you*: The advice about Moses sharing the burdens of leadership comes from a Midianite outsider. Jethro, however, also urges Moses to make sure Jethro's recommendation fits with what Israel's God commands Moses to do. Wisdom from the outside is welcomed but needs to be tested.

19:1-8 The Israelites arrive at Mount Sinai, otherwise known as Mount Horeb (Exod 3:1) or "God's mountain" (Exod 3:1; 4:27; 18:5; 24:13). This was the mountain where God had first called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Exod 3:1-10). God thus fulfills the promise God made to Moses that he would return to this mountain after leading the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt (Exod 3:12). God will formally make a covenant or agreement with the people of Israel here at the mountain. As part of the covenant, God will give to Israel the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17) and the instructions in

the covenant scroll (Exod 20:22-23:19). The whole section of instructions and covenant making runs from 19:1 to 24:18. The Israelites will remain here in their camp around Mount Sinai from Exodus 19:1 until Numbers 10:11-12.

19:1 *the third-month anniversary*: See note on Exodus 12:2. See also Exodus 12:6, 40. Located east of Egypt in the Sinai Peninsula, *the Sinai desert* has some mountainous regions. The exact location of Mount Sinai itself isn't known with certainty. The traditional location is in the south-central part of the Sinai Peninsula in a mountainous area called Jebel Musa.

19:3 *Moses went up*: Moses will go up and down Mount Sinai many times (up—Exod 19:3, 20; 24:9; 32:31; 33:4; down—Exod 19:14, 25; 32:15; 34:29). In the ancient world, gods were often understood to live or appear on top of mountains. In Exodus 19, the Lord comes down from the sky and appears at the top of Mount Sinai (Exod 19:18, 20; 20:22; 34:5). The Lord thus comes somewhat nearer but also remains separate from the people of Israel. By going up and down the mountain, Moses acts as a messenger between God and the people of Israel.

19:4 *on eagles' wings*: A similar image for God's rescue of the Israelites from Egypt appears in Deuteronomy 32:11.



*The Covenant* A "covenant" is an agreement and committed relationship binding two persons or groups (Gen 21:27, 32; 2 Sam 5:3). Treaties were often made between rulers of different nations in the ancient world. One type of treaty involved an unequal relationship between two rulers. The superior ruler would set up a treaty that demanded loyalty and other duties from the lesser king. The treaty would also promise blessings and protection if the lesser king and his nation obeyed the more powerful king. This more unequal form of an ancient treaty provides an analogy for the covenant at Mount Sinai. The Lord is the supreme ruler of the nations (Exod 19:5). The Lord reminds the Israelites that the Lord had rescued Israel from slavery (Exod 19:4; 20:2). God proposes a set of covenant duties or instructions that the Israelites agree to obey (Exod 20:1-17; 20:22-23:19). The Lord promises blessings and protection if the Israelites follow the covenant instructions (Exod 23:20-33). This kind of conditional covenant is also prominent in Deuteronomy (Deut 4:31; 5:3; 7:9, 12; 9:9-15; 29:1-29), the prophet Hosea (Hos 6:7; 8:1), the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 11:1-17; 31:31-34) and elsewhere (2 Kgs 17:1-41; 22:1-23:27).

19:5 Ex 9:29;  
Dt 7:6, Dt 10:14,  
Dt 26:18;  
Job 41:11  
19:6 Dt 26:19;  
1Pt 2:5, 1Pt 2:9;  
Rev 1:6,  
Rev 5:10  
19:8 Ex 24:3,  
Ex 24:7, Dt 5:27,  
Dt 26:17  
19:9 Ex 14:31,  
Ex 19:16,  
Ex 24:15-16;  
Dt 4:11  
19:10 Gn 35:2;  
Ex 19:14;  
Lv 11:44  
19:11 Ex 19:16,  
Ex 19:20  
19:12 Heb 12:20  
19:13 Heb 12:20

how I lifted you up on eagles' wings and brought you to me. <sup>5</sup>So now, if you faithfully obey me and stay true to my covenant, you will be my most precious possession out of all the peoples, since the whole earth belongs to me. <sup>6</sup>You will be a kingdom of priests for me and a holy nation. These are the words you should say to the Israelites."

<sup>7</sup>So Moses came down, called together the people's elders, and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. <sup>8</sup>The people all responded with one voice: "Everything that the LORD has said we will do." Moses reported to the LORD what the people said.

**Preparing for a divine encounter**

<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "I'm about to come to you in a thick cloud in order that the people will hear me talking with you so that they will always trust you."

Moses told the LORD what the people said, <sup>10</sup>and the LORD said to Moses: "Go to the people and take today and tomorrow to make them holy. Have them wash their clothes. <sup>11</sup>Be ready for the third day, because on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai for all the people to see. <sup>12</sup>Set up a fence for the people all around and tell them, 'Be careful not to go up the mountain or to touch any part of it.' Anyone who even touches the mountain must be put to death. <sup>13</sup>No one should touch anyone who has touched it, or they must be either stoned to death or shot with arrows. Whether an animal or a human being, they must not be allowed to live. Only when the ram's horn sounds may they go up on the mountain."

19:5 God makes a *covenant* through Moses with the Israelites. A *covenant* is a committed relationship that involves gifts and duties. God has already given Israel the gift of freedom from slavery in Egypt (Exod 19:4). Israel's expected response is to *faithfully obey* the Lord (19:5) by keeping the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17) and the instructions in the covenant scroll (Exod 20:22-23:19). If Israel is obedient and faithful to the covenant, then Israel will be the Lord's *most precious possession* among all the peoples and nations of the earth (see also Deut 7:6). *the whole earth belongs* to the Lord, even as the Lord has chosen the Israelites as God's special people.

19:6 *kingdom of priests ... a holy nation*: The people of Israel relate to other nations as Israelite priests relate to fellow Israelites. Priests are required to maintain stricter degrees of holiness in their role as messengers between God and people. In a similar way, Israel has a calling to be stricter in matters of holiness as it goes between God and other nations. The image of God's people as a priestly nation also occurs in Isaiah 61:6 as applied to Judah. In the NT, the image of a priestly nation is applied to the Christian community (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6).

19:8 *Everything ... we will do*: The Israelite elders agree to the covenant, including the duty to obey God's Instruction. Later, in a concluding ceremony, all the Israelite

people (not just the elders) will agree to do what the covenant requires (Exod 24:3, 7).

19:10-11 *make them holy*: Holiness implies being set apart and separated from what is ritually unclean or impure. God's holiness is most intense. It is transferred to Mount Sinai itself since it is in direct contact with God's presence. Thus, the people around the base of the mountain are required to maintain a certain level of holiness and ritual purity. They are to *wash their clothes* and not have sexual relations (Exod 19:15). The sexual act made a person ritually impure for a day (Deut 23:10-11; 1 Sam 21:4). For more on this topic, see sidebar, "Clean/Unclean" at Leviticus 13.

19:12 *touches the mountain ... death*: Although humans can gain a certain degree of holiness and purity, it isn't comparable to the intensity of God's holiness. As a result, any human or animal that touches the holy mountain of God's presence *must be put to death*.

19:13 *may they go up on the mountain*: This allowance that the people may go up on the mountain when someone blows the *ram's horn* seems to go against all the other strict instruction against the people even touching the mountain (Exod 19:12; 21, 23; 24:2). This seems to be an odd exception. Nowhere in the story are the ram's horn blown and the people allowed to go up the mountain. See note on Exodus 19:22.

19:14 Ex 19:10

19:15  
1Sa 21:4, 5;  
1Co 7:519:16 Ex 19:9,  
Ex 20:18;  
Heb 12:18-19,  
Heb 12:2119:17  
Dt 4:10-1119:18 Gn 19:28;  
Ex 3:2, Ex 24:17;  
Dt 4:11, Ps 68:8

19:19 Ps 81:7

19:20 Ex 19:3,  
Ex 19:11

19:21 1Sa 6:19

19:22 Ex 19:24,  
Ex 24:5; Lv 10:320:1 Ex 19:3,  
Ex 34:28; Dt 5:4,  
Dt 5:7, Dt 5:2220:2 Ex 13:3;  
Ps 81:1020:3 Dt 6:14;  
Jer 25:6,  
Jer 35:1520:4 Ex 34:17;  
Lv 26:1;  
Dt 27:1520:5 Ex 23:24,  
Ex 34:7,  
Ex 34:14;  
Nm 14:18;  
Dt 4:24

<sup>14</sup>So Moses went down the mountain to the people. He made sure the people were holy and that they washed their clothes. <sup>15</sup>He told the men, "Prepare yourselves for three days. Don't go near a woman."

<sup>16</sup>When morning dawned on the third day, there was thunder, lightning, and a thick cloud on the mountain, and a very loud blast of a horn. All the people in the camp shook with fear. <sup>17</sup>Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their place at the foot of the mountain. <sup>18</sup>Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD had come down on it with lightning. The smoke went up like the smoke of a hot furnace, while the whole mountain shook violently. <sup>19</sup>The blasts of the horn grew louder and louder. Moses would speak, and God would answer him with thunder. <sup>20</sup>The LORD came down on Mount Sinai to the top of the mountain. The LORD called Moses to come up to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. <sup>21</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people not to break through to try to see the LORD, or many of them will fall dead. <sup>22</sup>Even the priests who come near to the LORD must keep themselves holy, or the LORD will break loose against them."

<sup>23</sup>Moses said to the LORD, "The people aren't allowed to come up on Mount Sinai because you warned us and said, 'Set up a fence around the mountain to keep it holy.'"

<sup>24</sup>The LORD said to him, "Go down, and bring Aaron back up with you. But the priests and the people must not break through and come up to the LORD. Otherwise, the LORD will break loose against them." <sup>25</sup>So Moses went down to the people and told them.

### The Ten Commandments

**20** Then God spoke all these words:

<sup>1</sup>I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

<sup>2</sup>You must have no other gods before<sup>1</sup> me.

<sup>4</sup>Do not make an idol for yourself—no form whatsoever—of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. <sup>5</sup>Do not bow down to them or

<sup>1</sup>Or *besides*

19:15 *Don't go near a woman*: See note on Exodus 19:10-11. 19:22 *Even the priests*: The priests must keep to strict purity rules in God's presence, or God's holiness may *break loose* and destroy them (Lev 10:1-5; 2 Sam 6:7-8). This verse seems to suggest that all the priests may go up Mount Sinai, but the next verse says that only Aaron the priest is allowed to come up with Moses (Exod 19:23). Different traditions concerning who may go up the mountain of God have apparently been allowed to coexist in this important chapter on God's covenant at Sinai (*all the people*—Exod 19:13; *none of the people*—Exod 19:21, 23; Moses and *all the priests*—Exod 19:22; *only Moses and Aaron*—Exod 19:24). In Exodus 24, the people cannot go up on the mountain at all (Exod 24:2). However, Aaron, his two sons (Nadab and Abihu), and 70 elders are allowed to go halfway up Mount Sinai (Exod 24:1). Moses and Joshua go up higher than Aaron and the elders (Exod 24:13), but Moses alone is allowed to go all the way to the top of the mountain to *come near to the LORD* (Exod 24:2, 15). These different traditions about the relative status of people, elders, priests, and Moses likely reflect historical debates and conflicts about which groups had the most direct access to God (see Num 12:1-16; 16:1-50).

20:1-21 These Ten Commandments are the most important of all the Instruction that God gives at Mount Sinai. They are the first set of expectations that God gives there. These commandments are the only instruction that God speaks directly to the people. God gives all the other instructions to Moses, and then Moses passes them on to the people (20:1, 18-21). The form of the Ten Commandments as short, direct commands stands apart from the other instruction in Exodus 20:22-23:19 (see also note on Exod 20:22-23:19). These special "ten words" are written

"by God's finger" (Exod 31:18) on the two stone tablets (Exod 24:4, 12; 34:1, 28; Deut 4:13; 5:22; 10:4). The importance of the Ten Commandments is further highlighted by their repetition in Deuteronomy 5:6-21 and by their placement in the special "wooden chest" (Deut 10:1-3). The Ten Commandments include duties to God (20:2-7), duties to other humans (20:12-17), and one duty that involves God, humans and non-human creation (the Sabbath commandment in 20:8-11).

20:2 *I am the Lord . . . house of slavery*: This introduction to the Ten Commandments is the next step in unfolding the name and character of God in Exodus. In Exodus 3:14, God had revealed God's name to Moses as "I Am Who I Am." Here God reveals another layer of God's name and character as the God who brought the Israelites out of the slavery of Egypt. God is a liberator from slavery. *I am . . . your God*: The Israelites are already God's people. The instructions that follow grow out of an already established relationship between God and the Israelites whom God has freed from slavery. See note on Exodus 29:46.

20:3 *no other gods before me*: See note on Exodus 15:11. This first rule is the most important of the Ten Commandments. 20:4 *Do not make an idol*: The expectation applies to images of Israel's God, as well as images of any other foreign gods. The great crisis of the gold calf involves Israel's breaking this commandment and thus threatening the whole covenant relationship with the Lord (Exod 32:1-10). See also Exodus 20:23; 34:14, 17; Leviticus 19:4; 26:1; Deuteronomy 4:15-20; 6:13-15.

20:5-6: God reveals another part of God's name and character. God doesn't focus here on what God has done for Israel (Exod 20:2) but on God's intense relationship with Israel: *passionate . . . punish[ing] . . . gracious*. God's passion

worship them, because I, the LORD your God, am a passionate God. I punish children for their parents' sins even to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me. **6**But I am loyal and gracious to the thousandth generation<sup>l</sup> of those who love me and keep my commandments.

**7**Do not use the LORD your God's name as if it were of no significance; the LORD won't forgive anyone who uses his name that way.

**8**Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy. **9**Six days you may work and do all your tasks, **10**but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. Do not do any work on it—not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your animals, or the immigrant who is living with you. **11**Because the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them in six days, but rested on the seventh day. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

**12**Honor your father and your mother so that your life will be long on the fertile land that the LORD your God is giving you.

**13**Do not kill.<sup>k</sup>

**14**Do not commit adultery.

**15**Do not steal.

**16**Do not testify falsely against your neighbor.

**17**Do not desire your neighbor's house. Do not desire and try to take your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox, donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

20:6 Dt 7:9  
20:7 Lv 19:12; Jas 5:12  
20:8 Ex 31:13; Lv 19:3, Lv 19:30, Lv 26:2  
20:9 Ex 23:12; Ex 34:21; Ex 35:2; Lv 23:3; Lk 13:14  
20:10 Ex 23:12; Dt 5:14  
20:11 Gn 1:1; Gn 2:2-3; Ex 31:17  
20:12 Lv 19:3; Mt 15:4; Mt 19:19; Lk 18:20; Eph 6:2  
20:13 Gn 9:6; Mt 5:21; Mt 19:18; Ro 13:9; Jas 2:11  
20:14 Lv 18:20; Lv 20:10; Mt 5:27; Ro 13:9  
20:15 Lv 19:11; Lv 19:13; Mt 19:18; Ro 13:9; Eph 4:28

<sup>l</sup>Or to thousands <sup>k</sup>Or murder

20:5 Ex 23:1, Ex 23:7; Lv 19:11, Lv 19:16; Mt 19:18 20:17 Mt 2:2; Mt 5:28; Lk 12:15; Ro 7:7; Eph 5:3

for Israel is expressed both as powerful king (see note on Exod 19:3—"covenant") and as loving parent (Exod 4:22). God will *punish* Israel for disobedience, and the effects may linger for up to three or four generations. God, however, will be *loyal and gracious* in ways that will multiply to the thousandth generation for all those who love and obey the Lord. This description of God's character will be taken up a second time and adapted in crucial ways in Exodus 34:6-7 as part of the unfolding meaning of God's name throughout the book (see notes on Exod 3:14; 20:2; 23:21; 29:46; 33:19; 34:6-7).

20:5 *third and fourth generations*: Some later prophets declared that future generations wouldn't suffer in this way for the sins of their parents (Jer 31:29-30; Ezek 18:1-32).

20:7 *God's name*: One example of misusing God's name was making a promise in the Lord's name and then not fulfilling that promise (Lev 6:3; 19:12; Ps 24:4). Making such promises using God's name was a common practice (Gen 14:22-24; 24:3). Calling on God's name was also a way to show that an expectation for blessing would help make the blessing happen (Num 6:24-27). Therefore, humans needed to be very careful whenever they used God's name.

20:8-11 The word "Sabbath" is related to a Hebrew verb meaning "to stop" or "break the routine." The earlier manna story in Exodus 16:5 already assumed this rule about not working every seventh day. This restful command is grounded in the story of God's creation of the world. God rested on the seventh day of creation (Gen 2:1-3). Thus God's people should imitate God and also rest every seventh day of every week. The alternate version of this same commandment in Deuteronomy finds its motivation not in God's creation but in God's liberation of the Israelites from their harsh work as slaves in Egypt (Deut 5:12-15). Note that the requirement for rest every seven days applies to family members, workers, immigrants, and even animals. The Sabbath commandment brings together obligations to God, other humans, and nonhuman creation. It is the longest of the Ten Commandments and stands at

its center, dividing duties to God (Exod 20:2-7) and duties to other humans (Exod 20:12-17).

20:12 *Honor your father and your mother*: The original and primary concern of this command was for adult children to take care of older parents. *so that your life will be long*: To obey such a command makes it more likely that the next generation will treat their parents in a similar way. Israel's relationship with God was often portrayed in the image of a child's duty to honor a parent (Exod 4:22; Deut 32:16-21; Hos 11:1-11; Isa 1:2; Mal 1:6).

20:13 *Do not kill*: The Hebrew verb can mean "to kill" or "to murder." More precisely, the command means to stop any individual person from killing another human being without the permission of the larger community. Any acts of purely personal revenge aren't allowed (Exod 21:12; Lev 24:17; Num 35:30-34; Deut 19:11-13). All life belongs to God, so any taking of life is a matter of heavy responsibility (Gen 9:5-6).

20:14 *adultery*: The command seeks to stop any married person from having sexual relations with anyone other than their spouse. Other biblical prohibitions against adultery provide severe punishments (Lev 18:20; 20:10; Deut 22:22; see John 8:1-11). The Bible sometimes uses the image of husband and wife to describe the relationship of God and God's people. Adultery then becomes an image for Israel's going after and worshipping gods other than the true God of Israel (Hos 1-3; Ezek 16:1-63; Mal 2:13-16).

20:16 *testify falsely*: The command probably began in an informal setting where people in the community brought disputes to elders, who functioned as judges. Its aim was to ensure that those who accused someone in a dispute were telling the truth (Exod 23:1; Deut 19:15-19; 1 Kgs 21:13; Prov 6:19; 14:5, 25; 19:5, 9). The expectation eventually came to include lying about someone in any public context (Lev 19:16). Destroying someone's reputation by dishonoring their name is the human counterpart to misusing God's name (Exod 20:7).

20:17 *Do not desire and try to take*: This last of the Ten

20:16 Ex 19:16;  
Ex 19:18;  
Heb 12:18  
20:19 Dt 5:5  
20:20 Gn 22:1;  
Dt 13:3;  
Prv 16:6  
20:21 Dt 5:22;  
1Ki 8:12; Ps 18:9;  
Ps 97:2  
20:22 Dt 4:36;  
Neb 9:13  
20:23 Ex 20:3  
20:24 Dt 12:5;  
Dt 16:6;  
Dt 16:11;  
Dt 26:2; 2Ch 6:6  
21:2 Lv 25:39;  
Dt 15:12;  
Jer 34:14;  
Mt 18:25  
21:6 Dt 15:17;  
Ps 40:6

<sup>18</sup>When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the horn, and the mountain smoking, the people shook with fear and stood at a distance. <sup>19</sup>They said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we'll listen. But don't let God speak to us, or we'll die."

<sup>20</sup>Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid, because God has come only to test you and to make sure you are always in awe of God so that you don't sin." <sup>21</sup>The people stood at a distance while Moses approached the thick darkness in which God was present.

### Instructions about worship

<sup>22</sup>The LORD said to Moses: "Say this to the Israelites: You saw for yourselves how I spoke with you from heaven. <sup>23</sup>Don't make alongside me gods of silver or gold for yourselves. <sup>24</sup>Make for me an altar from fertile soil on which to sacrifice your entirely burned offerings, your well-being sacrifices, your sheep, and your oxen. I will come to you and bless you in every place where I make sure my name is remembered. <sup>25</sup>But if you do make for me an altar from stones, don't build it with chiseled stone since using your chisel on the stone will make it impure. <sup>26</sup>Don't climb onto my altar using steps: then your genitals won't be exposed by doing so."

### Instructions about slaves

**21** These are the case laws that you should set before them:

<sup>21</sup>When you buy a male Hebrew slave, he will serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he will go free without any payment. <sup>3</sup>If he came in single, he will leave single. If he came in married, then his wife will leave with him. <sup>4</sup>If his master gave him a wife and she bore him sons or daughters, the wife and her children will belong to her master. He will leave single. <sup>5</sup>However, if the slave clearly states, "I love my master, my wife, and my children, and I don't want to go free," then his master will bring him before God. He will bring him to the door or the doorpost. There his master will pierce his ear with a pointed tool, and he will serve him as his slave for life.

Commandments focuses on a person's inner thoughts. It is especially aimed at those who are richer and more powerful in the community so that they don't take advantage of the vulnerable (1 Kgs 21:1-19). This last commandment and the first commandment (having other gods) both treat inner commitments and desires. The other commandments, in contrast, focus on outward actions.

**20:18-21** God speaks the Ten Commandments directly to the people, but the other instructions are mediated through Moses. This marks the Ten Commandments as special and important among all God's Instruction. The people's fear also reflects the danger when humans encounter the holiness of God directly without a mediator (see Lev 10:1-3; Deut 4:33; 5:23-26; Isa 6:1-5).

**20:22-23:19** These instructions are likely among the oldest of all the expectations in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They contain some similarities to laws from neighboring ancient cultures in Mesopotamia, including the so-called Code of Hammurabi. The biblical instructions, however, also reflect the unique theology of the Israelites. Unlike other legal codes, biblical instructions emphasize worshipping only one God without any silver or gold idols (20:22-23). The topics of the instructions range widely. They deal with crimes and violence, social relationships, economic disputes, and religious concerns. Many of the instructions have the form of "if/when—then" statements (21:2), as opposed to the more direct commands of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:3). Scholars refer to this group of teachings as "the Book of the Covenant" or "the Covenant Code" (see "the covenant scroll" in Exod 24:7). Many of the instructions here expand upon or add details to the Ten Commandments.

**20:22-23** Earlier in this chapter, the Lord *spoke* to the Israelites *from heaven*, but the people saw no form or image

of God. *gods of silver or gold*: This instruction expands on the command against making idols in Exodus 20:4-6. This command is the first one that the Israelites will break in the dramatic story of the gold calf (Exod 32:1-35).

**20:24** *entirely burned offerings*: See Leviticus 1:1-17. *well-being sacrifices*: See Leviticus 3:1-17.

**20:25** *using your chisel . . . will make it impure*: The instruction seeks to avoid the possibility of making a carved idol or image connected with the altar at which the Lord is worshipped (1 Kgs 6:7).

**20:26** The instruction against going up steps to a high altar assumes those who offered sacrifices were men with robes that may be open at the bottom without any underwear. The modesty of Israelite worship may have contrasted with certain fertility rituals among non-Israelite worshippers. Priests wore undergarments to preserve their modesty and prevent exposure in the Lord's presence (Exod 28:42).

**21:1-11** The large section of instructions about Israelite slaves reflects the prominent theme of Israelite slavery in the exodus story (Exod 3:7-10; 20:2). Israelite slaves typically sold themselves as temporary workers as a way to pay off debts (Exod 22:3; Lev 25:39-40; 2 Kgs 4:1). Whatever the amount of the debt, the Israelite worker was to be set free at the seventh (or sabbath) year (21:2; Deut 15:12). In the instructions of Leviticus, all Israelite servants were to be freed every fiftieth year, the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25:39-43). Israelites could have foreign slaves who could be kept permanently (Lev 25:44-46).

**21:5-6** If an Israelite worker decides to stay as a slave after the six years, his ear is pierced and the blood is smeared on the door or doorpost of the house. This ritual is a sign of the worker's decision to remain permanently as a member of the household. For another version of the instruction, see Deuteronomy 15:12-17.

<sup>7</sup>When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shouldn't be set free in the same way as male slaves are set free. <sup>8</sup>If she doesn't please her master who chose her for himself, then her master must let her be bought back by her family. He has no right to sell her to a foreign people since he has treated her unfairly. <sup>9</sup>If he assigns her to his son, he must give her the rights of a daughter. <sup>10</sup>If he takes another woman for himself, he may not reduce her food, clothing, or marital rights. <sup>11</sup>If he doesn't do these three things for her, she will go free without any payment, for no money.

**Instructions about human violence**

<sup>12</sup>Anyone who hits and kills someone should be put to death. <sup>13</sup>If the killing wasn't on purpose but an accident allowed by God, then I will designate a place to which the killer can run away. <sup>14</sup>But if someone plots and kills another person on purpose, you should remove the killer from my altar and put him to death.

<sup>15</sup>Anyone who violently hits their father or mother should be put to death.

<sup>16</sup>Anyone who kidnaps a person, whether they have been sold or are still being held, should be put to death.

<sup>17</sup>Anyone who curses their father or mother should be put to death.

<sup>18</sup>When two people are fighting and one hits the other with a stone or with his fist so that he is in bed for a while but doesn't die—<sup>19</sup>if he recovers and is able to walk around outside with a cane, then the one who hit him shouldn't be punished, except to pay for the loss of time from work and to pay for his full recovery.

<sup>20</sup>When a slave owner hits a male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies immediately, the owner should be punished. <sup>21</sup>But if the slave gets up after a day or two, the slave owner shouldn't be punished because the slave is the owner's property.

<sup>22</sup>When people who are fighting injure a pregnant woman so that she has a miscarriage but no other injury occurs, then the guilty party will be fined what the woman's husband demands, as negotiated with the judges. <sup>23</sup>If there is further injury, then you will give a life for a life, <sup>24</sup>an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot, <sup>25</sup>a burn for a burn, a bruise for a bruise, a wound for a wound.

<sup>26</sup>When a slave owner hits and blinds the eye of a male or female slave, he should let the slave go free on account of the eye. <sup>27</sup>If he knocks out a tooth of a male or female slave, he should let the slave go free on account of the tooth.

**Instructions about animals and property**

<sup>28</sup>When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox should be stoned to death, and the meat of the ox shouldn't be eaten. But the owner of the ox shouldn't be punished. <sup>29</sup>However, if the ox had gored people in the past and its owner had been warned but didn't watch out for it, and the ox ends up killing a man or a woman, then the ox should be stoned to death, and its owner should also be put to death. <sup>30</sup>If the owner has to pay compensation instead, he must pay the agreed amount to save his life. <sup>31</sup>If the ox gores a boy or a girl, this same case law applies to the owner. <sup>32</sup>If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner will pay thirty silver shekels to the slave's owner, and the ox will be stoned to death.

<sup>33</sup>When someone leaves a pit open or digs a pit and doesn't cover it and an ox or a donkey falls into the pit, <sup>34</sup>the owner of the pit must make good on the loss. He should pay money to the ox's owner, but he may keep the dead animal.

21:7-11 These instructions concern a daughter who is sold by her father to become a wife to another man in payment for a debt. The practice reflects a patriarchal society (that is, a society largely controlled by men) in which a woman's sexuality is under the control of a man, usually her father or her husband.

21:12 Humans are created in God's image (Gen 9:4-6). Therefore, taking a human life is a serious offense against the person and against God ("a life for a life"; Exod 21:23). 21:13-14 *a place...run away*: Those who accidentally caused someone else to die could go to a special temple or altar in a designated refuge city (Num 35:9-15, 22-28; Deut 19:1-13; 1 Kgs 2:28-34). The killer could live there in safety. The victim's family member couldn't take revenge on the killer at the designated place. Anyone, however,

who killed another person on purpose and ran away to the refuge city would be removed from the altar in the city and killed (21:14).

21:23-24 *a life for a life... a wound for a wound*: The instruction puts a limit on how much revenge can be taken in response to a death or injury (Lev 24:19-21; Deut 19-21; see Matt 5:38-39). In contrast to some law codes in the ancient world, this instruction also doesn't allow simple payment of money as a sufficient penalty for taking a life or a limb from another human being.

21:28 *the ox should be stoned... shouldn't be eaten*: The ox is seen as ritually impure or unclean for eating because it killed a human being (Gen 9:5).

21:30 The ox's owner can pay money to the victim's family instead of being killed. Intentional murderers didn't have

21:10 1Co 7:3  
21:12 Gn 9:6;  
Lv 24:17;  
Nm 35:16;  
Nm 35:30;  
Dt 19:11  
21:13  
Nm 35:11,  
Nm 35:22;  
Dt 19:2;  
Josh 20:2  
21:15 Dt 21:10;  
Prv 19:26,  
Prv 30:11,  
Prv 30:17  
21:17 Lv 20:9;  
Prv 20:20,  
Prv 30:11;  
Mi 15:4;  
Mk 7:10  
21:18 Ex 21:22  
21:19 Zec 8:4  
21:21 Gn 37:28;  
Ex 21:20;  
Lv 25:44-46  
21:22 Ex 21:10,  
Ex 21:30;  
Dt 22:18-19  
21:23 Dt 19:21  
21:24 Lv 24:20;  
Dt 19:21;  
Mi 5:30  
21:28 Gn 9:5;  
Ex 21:32  
21:29 Gn 9:6;  
Dt 21:1

21:36 Lv 24:18

21:37 Lv 6:1;  
2Sa 12:6;  
Pv 6:31;  
Lk 19:822:2 Jc 2:34;  
Mt 6:19;  
Mt 24:43

22:8 Ex 21:6

22:9 Dt 25:1

22:12 Gn 31:39

22:18 Lv 19:31;  
Lv 20:6;  
Lv 20:27;  
Dt 18:10;  
1Sa 28:322:19 Lv 18:23;  
Lv 20:15-16;  
Dt 27:2122:20 Ex 34:15;  
Nm 25:2;  
Dt 17:2;

Josh 23:16

22:21 Ex 23:9;  
Lv 19:33;  
Dt 10:19; Jer 7:6;  
Zec 7:1022:22 Dt 24:17;  
Dt 27:19;  
Pv 23:10;  
Is 1:17; Jas 1:2722:23 Dt 15:9;  
Job 34:28;  
Ps 16:17;  
Lk 18:7; Jas 5:422:24 Ps 69:24;  
Ps 90:11;  
Ps 109:9;  
Jer 15:8; Lam 5:3

<sup>35</sup>When someone's ox hurts someone else's ox and it dies, then they should sell the live ox and divide its price. They should also divide the dead animal between them. <sup>36</sup>But if the ox was known for goring in the past and its owner hadn't watched out for it, the owner must make good the loss, an ox for an ox, but may keep the dead animal.

**22**<sup>1</sup>When someone steals an ox or a sheep and then slaughters or sells it, the thief must pay back five oxen for the one ox or four sheep for the one sheep.

<sup>2</sup>If the thief is caught breaking in and is beaten and dies, the one who killed him won't be guilty of bloodshed. <sup>3</sup>However, if this happens in broad daylight, then the one who killed him is guilty of bloodshed. For his part, the thief must make good on what he stole. If he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft. <sup>4</sup>If an animal (whether ox, donkey, or sheep) is found alive in the thief's possession, he must pay back double.

<sup>5</sup>When someone lets an animal loose to eat in another person's field and causes the field or vineyard to be stripped of its crop, the owner must pay them back with the best from his own field or vineyard.

<sup>6</sup>When someone starts a fire and it catches in thorns and then spreads to someone else's stacked grain, standing grain, or a whole field, the one who started the fire must fully repay the loss.

<sup>7</sup>When someone entrusts money or other items to another person to keep safe and they are stolen from the other person's house and the thief is caught, the thief must pay back double. <sup>8</sup>If the thief isn't caught, the owner of the house should be brought before God to determine whether or not the owner stole the other's property.

<sup>9</sup>When any dispute of ownership over an ox, donkey, sheep, piece of clothing, or any other loss arises in which someone claims, "This is mine," the cases of both parties should come before God. The one whom God finds at fault must pay double to the other.

<sup>10</sup>When someone gives a donkey, ox, sheep, or any other animal to another person to keep safe, and the animal dies or is injured or taken and no one saw what happened, <sup>11</sup>the person should swear a solemn pledge before the LORD in the presence of the owner that he didn't touch the other's property. The owner must accept that, and no payment needs to be made. <sup>12</sup>But if the animal was stolen, the person must make full payment to its owner. <sup>13</sup>If the animal was attacked and ripped apart and its torn body is brought as evidence, no payment needs to be made.

<sup>14</sup>When someone borrows an animal from another and it is injured or dies while the owner isn't present, full payment must be made. <sup>15</sup>If the owner was present, no payment needs to be made. If the animal was hired, only the fee for hiring the animal is due.

### Instructions about social and religious matters

<sup>16</sup>When a man seduces a young woman who isn't engaged to be married yet and he sleeps with her, he must marry her and pay the bride-price for her. <sup>17</sup>But if her father absolutely refuses to let them marry, he must still pay the same amount as the bride-price for young women.

<sup>18</sup>Don't allow a female sorcerer to live.

<sup>19</sup>Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal should be put to death.

<sup>20</sup>Anyone who offers sacrifices to any god, other than the LORD alone, should be destroyed.

<sup>21</sup>Don't mistreat or oppress an immigrant, because you were once immigrants in the land of Egypt. <sup>22</sup>Don't treat any widow or orphan badly. <sup>23</sup>If you do treat them badly and they cry out to me, you can be sure that I'll hear their cry. <sup>24</sup>I'll be furious, and I'll kill you with the sword. Then your wives will be widows, and your children will be orphans.

<sup>1</sup>21:37 in Heb <sup>2</sup>22:1 in Heb

such an option (Num 35:31). In this case, however, the killing wasn't on purpose.

**22:8-9 before God:** God's decision on the owner's guilt or innocence would come through a process similar to flipping a coin or rolling dice.

**22:16 the bride-price:** In every marriage, the husband-to-be was expected to pay a certain amount of money to the father of the bride.

**22:18 female sorcerer:** Elsewhere, male sorcerers are condemned (Deut 18:10).

**22:20 who offers sacrifices to any god, other than the LORD:**

This instruction restates the first of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:3) and imposes the death penalty for violating the instruction. The worshippers of the gold calf will ignore this instruction in Exodus 32:4-6.

**22:21 Don't mistreat... an immigrant:** The Israelites are to treat immigrants well because they experienced the difficulties of being immigrant slaves in Egypt.

**22:23-24 I'll hear their cry:** The Lord pays special attention to the cry of those who are weak and oppressed, whether they are Israelites (Exod 2:23-25; 3:7-9; 22:27; Deut 24:15) or people of other nations (Gen 4:10; 21:16-20). If the

<sup>25</sup>If you lend money to my people who are poor among you, don't be a creditor and charge them interest. <sup>26</sup>If you take a piece of clothing from someone as a security deposit, you should return it before the sun goes down. <sup>27</sup>His clothing may well be his only blanket to cover himself. What else will that person have to sleep in? And if he cries out to me, I'll listen, because I'm compassionate.

<sup>28</sup>Don't say a curse against God, and don't curse your people's chief.

<sup>29</sup>Don't delay offering the produce of your vineyards and winepresses. Give me your oldest son. <sup>30</sup>Do the same with your oxen and with your sheep. They should stay with their mother for seven days. On the eighth day, you should give them to me.

<sup>31</sup>You are holy people to me. Don't eat any meat killed by wild animals out in the field. Throw it to the dogs instead.

**23** Don't spread false rumors. Don't plot with evil people to act as a lying witness. <sup>2</sup>Don't take sides with important people to do wrong. When you act as a witness, don't stretch the truth to favor important people. <sup>3</sup>But don't privilege unimportant people in their lawsuits either.

<sup>4</sup>When you happen to come upon your enemy's ox or donkey that has wandered off, you should bring it back to them.

<sup>5</sup>When you see a donkey that belongs to someone who hates you and it's lying down under its load and you are inclined not to help set it free, you must help set it free.

<sup>6</sup>Don't undermine the justice that your poor deserve in their lawsuits. <sup>7</sup>Stay away from making a false charge. Don't put an innocent person who is in the right to death, because I will not consider innocent those who do such evil. <sup>8</sup>Don't take a bribe, because a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

<sup>9</sup>Don't oppress an immigrant. You know what it's like to be an immigrant, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt.

**Sabbaths and festivals**

<sup>10</sup>For six years you should plant crops on your land and gather in its produce. <sup>11</sup>But in the seventh year you should leave it alone and undisturbed so that the poor among your people may eat. What they leave behind, the wild animals may eat. You should do the same with your vineyard and your olive trees.

<sup>12</sup>Do your work in six days. But on the seventh day you should rest so that your ox and donkey may rest, and even the child of your female slave and the immigrant may be refreshed.

23:9 Ex 22:21; Lv 19:33; Dt 10:19, Dt 24:14, Dt 27:19 23:11 Lv 19:9-10, Lv 25:3, Lv 25:4, Lv 25:6

Israelites oppress the poor, then God will attack the Israelites as God attacked Egypt (see Exod 12:29-30; Josh 5:13-15; Amos 5:1-24).

22:25 *don't...charge them interest*: Israelites couldn't charge interest on loans made to other Israelites (Lv 25:36-37; Ps 15:5; Ezek 18:8, 13, 17). They could, however, charge interest from non-Israelites (Deut 23:19-20).

22:27 *if he cries out to me*: See note on Exodus 22:23-24.

22:29 *Give me your oldest son*: See notes on Exodus 11:5; 13:1-2.

22:30 *seven days*: When a mother gives birth, the mother and baby are ritually unclean because of the flow of blood at birth. After a waiting period of seven days, both mother and child become ritually clean or pure. This regulation applies both to animals used for sacrifice and to humans (Lv 12:2-3; 22:27).

22:31 *You are holy people to me*: See note on Exodus 19:6. Israel was holy and set apart from other nations in part because Israel obeyed special rules for eating. In this case, only meat that is properly slaughtered may be eaten. See Leviticus 17:1-16 and Deuteronomy 12:15-16 for instructions about the proper slaughter of animals for meat.

23:1-3 These expectations about witnesses telling the truth during a dispute expand upon the commandment in Exodus 20:16 (see Lv 19:16; Ps 27:12; Prov 14:5; 19:5). The penalty for lying as a witness is found in Deuteronomy 19:18-19.

22:25 Lv 25:35; Dt 23:20; Neh 5:7; Ps 15:5; Eze 18:8  
22:27 Ex 22:23, Ex 34:6

22:28 Ecc 10:20; Ac 23:5; Jud 1:8  
22:29 Ex 13:2, Ex 13:12, Ex 23:19; Dt 18:4; Prv 3:9

22:31 Ex 19:6; Lv 17:15, Lv 19:2, Lv 22:8; Eze 4:14  
23:1 Ex 20:16; Dt 5:20, Dt 19:16; Ps 35:11, Ps 101:5  
23:2 Ex 23:3, Ex 23:6; Dt 1:17; Prv 1:15, Prv 4:14

23:3 Ex 23:6; Lv 19:15; Dt 1:17  
23:4 Dt 22:1; Prv 25:21; Mt 5:44; Ro 12:20

23:5 Dt 22:4; Ro 12:20  
23:6 Ex 23:2-3; Dt 27:19  
23:7 Ex 20:16, Ex 23:1, Ex 34:7; Dt 25:1; Eph 4:25

23:8 Dt 16:19; Isa 8:3; Ps 26:10; Prv 17:23; Is 5:23

23:4-5 These two instructions focus on showing kindness to animals, even animals that belong to an enemy. On showing kindness to enemies, see 1 Samuel 24:8-20; Matthew 5:43-47; Romans 12:19-21.

23:6-8 These instructions are for the elders during disputes and follow the expectations for witnesses in Exodus 23:1-3. For the elders to *put an innocent person... to death* is a serious injustice (see 1 Kgs 21:1-29; Ps 94:6-7; Luke 23:13-17, 46-47).

23:9 *Don't oppress an immigrant... you were immigrants*: The instruction invites Israelites to remember what life was like as oppressed immigrants in Egypt (Exod 2:23). The memory should encourage Israelites to support and not oppress immigrants in their community. Kindness and generosity toward immigrants is a frequent theme in biblical instruction (Lv 19:34; Deut 10:19; 15:13-15; 16:11-12; 24:21-22).

23:10-11 The instruction commands the owner of the land not to harvest the crop every seventh year. The seventh-year crop is dedicated entirely to *the poor and the wild animals* so that they *may eat*. In another version of the same teaching in Leviticus 25:1-8, 20-23, the land has its sabbath rest every seventh year as a reminder that the land belongs to the Lord. The Israelites are only "immigrants" and "foreign guests" living temporarily on God's land (Lv 25:23).

23:12 This may be the earliest among several versions of

23:13 Dt 4:9;  
 Josh 23:7;  
 Ps 16:4;  
 Hos 2:17;  
 1Ti 4:16  
 23:14 Ex 23:17;  
 Ex 34:23;  
 Dt 16:16  
 23:15 Ex 13:4;  
 Ex 34:18;  
 Ex 34:20  
 23:16 Ex 34:22;  
 Lv 23:34;  
 Nm 28:26  
 23:17 Ex 23:14;  
 Ex 34:23;  
 Dt 16:16  
 23:20 Ex 14:19;  
 Ex 32:34;  
 Ex 33:2;  
 Ps 91:11; Is 63:9  
 23:21 Josh  
 24:19; Ps 78:40;  
 Ps 78:56  
 23:22 Gn 12:3;  
 Dt 30:7

<sup>13</sup>Be careful to obey everything that I have said to you. Don't call on the names of other gods. Don't even mention them.

<sup>14</sup>You should observe a festival for me three times a year. <sup>15</sup>Observe the Festival of Unleavened Bread, as I commanded you. Eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib,<sup>a</sup> because it was in that month that you came out of Egypt.

No one should appear before me empty-handed. <sup>16</sup>Observe the Harvest Festival for the early produce of your crops that you planted in the field, and the Gathering Festival at the end of the year, when you gather your crop of fruit from the field. <sup>17</sup>All your males should appear three times a year before the LORD God.

<sup>18</sup>Don't offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened. Don't let the fat of my festival offering be left over until the morning.

<sup>19</sup>Bring the best of your land's early produce to the LORD your God's temple. Don't boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

#### **God's promise: messenger and land**

<sup>20</sup>I'm about to send a messenger in front of you to guard you on your way and to bring you to the place that I've made ready. <sup>21</sup>Pay attention to him and do as he says. Don't rebel against him. He won't forgive the things you do wrong because I<sup>o</sup> am with him. <sup>22</sup>But if you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, then I'll be an enemy to your enemies and fight those fighting you.

<sup>a</sup>March–April, named Nisan after the exile <sup>o</sup>Or my name

the Sabbath commandment in the Bible. According to this version, the Sabbath ensures that the most vulnerable animals and workers have at least one day off from work every seven days. In the version in Exodus 20:11, the purpose of rest on the Sabbath is to follow the example of the Lord, who rested on the seventh day of creation (Gen 2:1-3). In Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the purpose of the Sabbath is to pause for a day and remember how the Lord rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt.

**23:13** *Be careful to obey everything:* In order to fulfill this call to careful obedience, some of the instructions will require further interpretation and expansion, especially in Deuteronomy 12–26 and Leviticus 17–26. The verse also includes a modified version of the first and most important of the Ten Commandments: *Don't call on the names of other gods* (see Exod 20:3). This commandment is what the Israelites disobey when they worship the gold calf and break the covenant with the Lord (Exod 32:1-6).

**23:14-19** The instruction concludes with habits regarding three yearly festivals and the sacrifices related to them.

**23:15** *the Festival of Unleavened Bread:* The festival is a remembrance of Israel's liberation from slavery in Egypt (Exod 12:14-20; 13:3-10). It occurs in the spring during the barley harvest. The Passover Festival is joined with the Festival of Unleavened Bread in Exodus 12:1-10 (see also Lev 23:5-6; Num 28:16-17; Deut 16:1-8). Here, however, the celebration of Passover isn't mentioned (see also Exod 34:18). *On the month of Abib,* see note on Exodus 12:2. *No one... empty-handed:* When Israelites attend the festivals and worship at the temple, they should bring with them a portion of their animals and crops as offerings to God.

**23:16** *Harvest Festival:* See Exodus 34:22 and the note on Exodus 12:2. The festival is elsewhere called the Festival of Weeks (Lev 23:15-21; Num 28:26-31; Deut 16:9-12). It celebrates the grain harvest in the spring, seven weeks after the harvest begins. Later, Greek-speaking Jews called this festival Pentecost (see Acts 2:1-14). *Gathering Festival:* This festival is held in the fall at the end of the agricultural year during the last harvests of grapes and olives. It is also known as the Festival of Booths, Tabernacles, or Sukkot

(Lev 23:34-36; Num 29:12-39; Deut 16:13-15). See note on Exodus 12:37.

**23:17** *appear... before the LORD God:* See Deuteronomy 16:16. Every Israelite male had a duty to come to the central place of worship during these three annual festivals. This place of worship would eventually be the temple in Jerusalem built by King Solomon (1 Kgs 8:1-21). The Jerusalem temple was destroyed by the Babylonian army in 587 BCE (2 Kgs 25:1-21) and then rebuilt in 515 BCE (Ezra 6:13-18).

**23:18** *Don't offer the blood... with anything leavened:* This is an additional instruction for the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Exod 23:15). *the blood of my sacrifice* refers to the blood of the Passover lamb (see Exod 34:25; Deut 16:2-4). *Don't let the fat... be left over:* All of the fat surrounding the internal organs (liver, kidneys) of the animals was to be burned up in the sacrifice and turned into good-smelling smoke (Exod 29:13; Lev 3:5; see Gen 8:20-21).

**23:19** *Don't boil... mother's milk:* The dietary instruction reflects a larger principle. Crossing certain created boundaries (like something alive touching something dead) causes ritual impurity or uncleanness. In this case, using a mother goat's milk (intended to give life to a young goat) as the liquid in which to boil the meat of a young goat (now dead) causes the food to be considered ritually unclean. It shouldn't be eaten (Exod 34:26; Deut 14:21). This is the basis in Jewish dietary instruction for the practice of not mixing any dairy with meat in cooking.

**23:20** *a messenger in front of you:* The Lord promises to send a divine messenger who will command the Lord's heavenly forces to protect the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness (Exod 14:19; 32:34; 33:2; Josh 5:13-15; Judg 2:1-5). The messenger will also be a topic of discussion between Moses and God in Exodus 32:34 and 33:2.

**23:21** *because I am with him:* or "because my name is with him" (see translation note). This statement reveals another layer of God's name and character that continues to unfold throughout the book of Exodus (see notes on Exod 3:14; 15:26; 20:2, 5-6). See also Exodus 29:45-46; 33:19; 34:6-7.



<sup>23</sup>When my messenger goes in front of you and brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I wipe them out, <sup>24</sup>don't bow down to their gods, worship them, or do what they do. Instead, you should completely destroy them and smash their sacred stone pillars to bits. <sup>25</sup>If you worship the LORD your God, the LORD will bless your bread and your water. I'll take sickness away from you, <sup>26</sup>and no woman will miscarry or be infertile in your land. I'll let you live a full, long life. <sup>27</sup>My terrifying reputation will precede you, and I'll throw all the people that you meet into a panic. I'll make all your enemies turn their backs to you. <sup>28</sup>I'll send insect swarms in front of you and drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you. <sup>29</sup>I won't drive them out before you in a single year so the land won't be abandoned and the wild animals won't multiply around you. <sup>30</sup>I'll drive them out before you little by little, until your numbers grow and you eventually possess the land. <sup>31</sup>I'll set your borders from the Reed Sea<sup>P</sup> to the Philistine Sea and from the desert to the River. I'll hand the inhabitants of the land over to you, and you will drive them out before you. <sup>32</sup>Don't make any covenants with them or their gods. <sup>33</sup>Don't allow them to live in your land, or else they will lead you to sin against me. If you worship their gods, it will become a dangerous trap for you.

23:23 Ex 3:8;  
Ex 3:17;  
Ex 23:20;  
Josh 24:8  
23:24 Ex 20:5;  
Ex 34:13;  
Nm 33:52;  
Dt 7:5; Dt 7:25  
23:26 Dt 4:40;  
Dt 7:14; Job 5:26;  
Ps 55:23  
24:1 Ex 6:23;  
Ex 19:24;  
Ex 24:9; Ex 28:1;  
Nm 11:16  
24:2 Ex 20:21

**Covenant at Sinai**

**24** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of Israel's elders, and worship from a distance. <sup>2</sup>Only Moses may come near to the LORD. The others shouldn't come near, while the people shouldn't come up with him at all."

<sup>P</sup>Or Red Sea

23:23 *the Amorites... Jebusites:* This is the traditional list of the inhabitants in the land of Canaan who will be removed when the Lord brings Israel into the land (see also Exod 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:2; 34:11; Num 13:29; Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10).

23:24 *don't bow down to their gods:* Once again, the first of the Ten Commandments is emphasized as especially important (Exod 20:3; see notes on Exod 20:22-23, 22:20; 23:13). The command not to worship other gods runs as a thread throughout these teachings. *sacred stone pillars:* These were smooth stone pillars that represented gods. Archaeologists have uncovered such ancient stone pillars dating back to biblical times in the land of Canaan. Some OT traditions affirm the stone pillar as an appropriate way to represent Israel's God. Offerings of olive oil were poured over the stone as an act of worship (Gen 28:18, 22; 31:13; 35:14; Isa 19:19). However, the majority of biblical traditions condemn the stone pillars as inappropriate for Israelite worship (Exod 34:13; Deut 7:5; 12:3; 16:22; 2 Kgs 18:4; 23:14; Jer 43:13; Mic 5:13).

23:25-31 The instructions in Exodus 20-23 are part of a covenant agreement between the more powerful king (the Lord) and the less powerful people of Israel (see sidebar, "The Covenant" at Exod 19). This type of conditional covenant between unequal partners appears to be adapted from covenants between kings in the ancient Near East. These agreements are usually conditional ("if \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_"). If the lesser party obeys all the commands of the more powerful king, then certain blessings are promised at the end of the covenant document. The document also typically includes curses for disobeying the instructions. In this case, the blessings (23:25-31) are emphasized rather than the curses. In contrast, the instruction and covenant in Deuteronomy place a much stronger emphasis on curses for disobedience (Deut 28:15-68; cf. Deut 28:1-14).

23:31 *the Philistine sea:* the Mediterranean or Western Sea (Deut 11:24). *the desert:* the arid wilderness region,

called the Negeb, just south of Canaan and north of the Sinai Peninsula. *the River:* the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia, far to the northeast (Deut 11:24). These boundaries are similar to the size of Solomon's kingdom (1 Kgs 4:21).

23:32-33 The covenant document concludes with warnings against worshipping the gods of the Canaanites when Israel lives in the promised land. Again, the first of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:3) is emphasized (see also notes on Exod 20:22-23; 22:20; 23:13, 24). *Don't allow them to live in your land:* This command is repeated in the holy war law of Deuteronomy 20:16-18, which requires the Israelites to kill every "living thing" when they enter the land of Canaan. However, this plan to get rid of all the Canaanites doesn't ultimately work out, and God ends up rejecting it (Judg 2:20-23; 3:1-6). The Canaanites are allowed to live among the Israelites.

24:1-18 The instructions in Exodus 20-23 are framed by two covenant-making ceremonies, one in Exodus 19 and one in Exodus 24. In Exodus 19, clouds, smoke, and fire combine with sounds of thunder, trumpets, and earthquakes. In contrast, the covenant ceremony in Exodus 24 is more peaceful, orderly, and visual. Israel's leaders see God as they drink and eat a meal (24:10-12). The rest of the Israelites see *the Lord's glorious presence*, which looks like *a blazing fire* on top of Mount Sinai (24:17). Unlike Exodus 19, with its mix of different traditions (see notes on Exod 19:13, 22), Exodus 24 has one consistent set of instructions about who is allowed to go up the mountain and how far. The priest Aaron, his two sons and 70 elders are allowed to come partway up Mount Sinai *to worship from a distance* (24:1). The rest of the people can't come up the mountain at all (24:2). Only Moses can come near to the Lord at the very top of the mountain (24:2).

24:1 *Nadab and Abihu:* These are the two sons of Aaron who will serve with him as priests (Exod 6:23; 24:9; 28:1).

24:3 Ex 19:8,  
Ex 21:1, Ex 24:7;  
Dt 5:27

24:4 Gn 28:18;  
Ex 17:14-15,  
Ex 34:27;  
Dt 31:9

24:6 Heb 9:18

24:7 Ex 24:3

24:8 Mt 26:28;  
Heb 9:19-20;  
1Pt 1:2

24:10 Ex 33:23;  
Is 6:1; Eze 1:26,  
Eze 10:1; Jn 1:18

24:12 Ex 31:18,  
Ex 32:15,  
Ex 34:1, Dt 5:22

24:15 Ex 19:9,  
Ex 19:16;  
Mt 17:5

24:17 Ex 3:2,  
Ex 19:18;  
Dt 4:24;  
Heb 12:18,  
Heb 12:29

<sup>3</sup>Moses came and told the people all the LORD's words and all the case laws. All the people answered in unison, "Everything that the LORD has said we will do." <sup>4</sup>Moses then wrote down all the LORD's words. He got up early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He set up twelve sacred stone pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>5</sup>He appointed certain young Israelite men to offer entirely burned offerings and slaughter oxen as well-being sacrifices to the LORD. <sup>6</sup>Moses took half of the blood and put it in large bowls. The other half of the blood he threw against the altar. <sup>7</sup>Then he took the covenant scroll and read it out loud for the people to hear. They responded, "Everything that the LORD has said we will do, and we will obey."

<sup>8</sup>Moses then took the blood and threw it over the people. Moses said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD now makes with you on the basis of all these words."

### **Covenant meal with God**

<sup>9</sup>Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel went up, <sup>10</sup>and they saw Israel's God. Under God's feet there was what looked like a floor of lapis-lazuli tiles, dazzlingly pure like the sky. <sup>11</sup>God didn't harm the Israelite leaders, though they looked at God, and they ate and drank.

<sup>12</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and wait there. I'll give you the stone tablets with the instructions and the commandments that I've written in order to teach them."

<sup>13</sup>So Moses and his assistant Joshua got up, and Moses went up God's mountain. <sup>14</sup>Moses had said to the elders, "Wait for us here until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur will be here with you. Whoever has a legal dispute may go to them."

<sup>15</sup>Then Moses went up the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. <sup>16</sup>The LORD's glorious presence settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from the cloud. <sup>17</sup>To the Israelites, the LORD's glorious

24:3-8 Moses leads the Israelites in a ritual that sets up a covenant relationship with the Lord.

24:3 *the Lord's words*: refers to the Ten Commandments written by God on the two stone tablets in Exodus 20:1-17 (see Exod 24:12; 31:18; 32:15-16). *all the case laws*: refers to the instructions in Exodus 20:22-23:19 written down by Moses (Exod 24:4) on "the covenant scroll" (Exod 24:7). Three times the people say at Mount Sinai, "We will obey" (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7). Their words heighten the dramatic act of disobedience later in the episode with the gold calf in Exodus 32:1-35.

24:4 *twelve sacred stone pillars*: These 12 stone pillars represent the 12 tribes. They are different from the sacred stone pillars that represent gods in worship (see note on Exod 23:24). The tribal stone pillars act as witnesses to the covenant being made (Gen 31:44-48; Josh 24:26-27).

24:5-8 *the blood* is taken from the sacrificed animals and put in large bowls. The *altar* is a symbol of God's presence. The ritual action of throwing half the blood on the altar and the other half on the people (24:8) is a sign that binds together the Lord and the Israelites in a covenant relationship of promise and duty. *the blood of the covenant*: Jesus used this phrase in his words associated with the Lord's Supper. The context was Jesus eating the Passover meal with his disciples on the night before his death on the cross (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24).

24:9-11 Making or affirming covenant agreements between humans in the ancient world often included sharing a meal together (Exod 18:12; Gen 26:30). God and people seal the covenant between them also by sharing a meal together. The animal sacrifices were offered to God (Exod 24:5), and the Israelite leaders ate and drank (24:11). 24:9 *Nadab and Abihu*: See note on Exodus 24:1. 24:10-11 *they saw Israel's God*: Traditionally, looking at

God could put a human at risk of immediate death (Deut 18:16). Normally, humans couldn't endure a direct visual encounter with the awesome holiness and presence of the divine. But there were at least partial exceptions (Gen 32:30—Jacob sees God in the dark of night; Exod 33:12-23—Moses sees the back side of God; Judg 6:22—Gideon sees the Lord's messenger; Isa 6:1-5—Isaiah sees the hem of God's robe in the smoke-filled temple). Even Moses wasn't allowed to see the front or face of God (Exod 33:23). Thus the Israelite priests and elders likely saw some small part of God, and yet *God didn't harm* them (24:11). *lapis-lazuli*: a brilliant blue gemstone often used in ancient temples because of its association with the blue color of the sky or heavens where gods had their home.

24:12 *the stone tablets . . . that I've written*: See note on Exodus 24:3.

24:13 *An assistant* to Moses, Joshua had earlier led the Israelites in their fight against Amalek (Exod 17:9; see Exod 32:17). *God's mountain*: See Exodus 3:1 as the place where the Lord first called Moses from the burning bush.

24:14 *Hur*: See note on Exodus 17:10-12. Hur and Aaron will temporarily take over Moses' duties as a judge of legal disputes (Exod 18:14-16).

24:15-16 *God's glorious presence* is hidden and veiled within *the cloud* on top of Mount Sinai (Exod 19:9, 16). The Lord traveled in the cloud with the Israelites from Egypt to Mount Sinai (Exod 13:21-22; 14:19-20, 24; 16:10). In the dramatic conclusion to the book of Exodus, "the Lord's glorious presence" in the cloud will move down from Mount Sinai and settle on the meeting tent or dwelling in the middle of the 12 tribes of Israel (Exod 40:34).

24:17 God's presence is often associated with *fire* (Gen 15:17; Exod 3:2; 13:21-22; 19:18; Lev 9:24; 10:2; Deut 4:33, 36; 5:4-5, 22-24; Isa 30:30; Ezek 1:4, 27-28; Acts 2:1-4).

presence looked like a blazing fire on top of the mountain. <sup>10</sup>Moses entered the cloud and went up the mountain. Moses stayed on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

**Gifts offered for the dwelling**

**25** The LORD said to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Tell the Israelites to collect gift offerings for me. Receive my gift offerings from everyone who freely wants to give. <sup>3</sup>These are the gift offerings that you should receive from them: gold, silver, and copper; <sup>4</sup>blue, purple, and deep red yarns; fine linen; goats' hair; <sup>5</sup>rams' skins dyed red; beaded leather; <sup>6</sup>acacia wood; <sup>6a</sup>oil for the lamps; spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet-smelling incense; <sup>7</sup>gemstones; and gems for setting in the priest's vest<sup>a</sup> and chest piece. <sup>8</sup>They should make me a sanctuary so I can be present among them. <sup>9</sup>You should follow the blueprints that I will show you for the dwelling and for all its equipment.

24:18 Ex 34:28; Dt 9:9; Dt 9:18; Dt 9:25; Dt 10:10  
25:1 Ex 35:4  
25:2 Ex 35:5; Ex 35:21; 1Ch 29:5; 1Ch 29:9; Ear 2:68  
25:4 Ex 26:1; Ex 28:5  
25:8 Ex 29:45; Ex 36:1; 1Ki 6:13; 2Co 6:16; Heb 9:1  
25:9 Ex 25:40; Ex 26:30; 1Ch 28:11; Ac 7:44; Heb 8:5  
25:10 Ex 37:1; Dt 10:1; Heb 9:4  
25:11 Ex 25:24; Ex 30:3; Ex 37:2  
25:12 Ex 25:26; Ex 37:3

*The Sabbath, Creation, and Building the Lord's Dwelling* The instructions for building God's dwelling in Exodus 25:1-31:17 divide into seven sections (with the sections beginning at Exod 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1, 12, each marked by the phrase, "The LORD spoke/said to Moses"). The seventh, concluding section (Exod 31:12-17) ends with a command to rest on the Sabbath because God had also rested on the Sabbath at the end of the six days of creation. These seven sections for constructing God's wilderness dwelling are parallel to the seven days of God's creation of the world in Genesis 1:1-2:3. Creation stories from other cultures in the ancient world often ended with the building of a grand temple for the creator god, but the creation story in Genesis contains no such dwelling for the Lord. The building of God's tent dwelling in Exodus 25-31 in a sense continues the project of creation in Genesis 1:1-2:4. God explains that the ultimate purpose for bringing the Israelites out of Egypt and for building the mobile dwelling is "so I can be present among them" (Exod 25:8). In Exodus, God's presence with God's people is revealed as God's ultimate purpose from creation and the beginning of time (see John 1:1-4, 14).

**Instructions for building the chest containing the covenant**

<sup>10</sup>Have them make an acacia-wood chest. It should be forty-five inches long, twenty-seven inches wide, and twenty-seven inches high. <sup>11</sup>Cover it with pure gold, inside and out, and make a gold molding all around it. <sup>12</sup>Cast four gold rings for it and put them on its four feet, two rings on one side and two rings on the other. <sup>13</sup>Make acacia-wood poles and cover

<sup>a</sup>Or *dolphin skins* <sup>b</sup>Heb *ephod*

24:18 *forty days and forty nights*: a customary length of time in biblical texts indicating a full cycle from beginning to end (Gen 7:17; Exod 34:28; Num 13:25; Deut 9:9, 11, 18; 10:10; 1 Sam 17:16; 1 Kgs 19:8; Ezek 4:6; Jon 3:4; Matt 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2; Acts 1:3).

25:1-9 A major new section in Exodus begins here with God's instructions for building a mobile wilderness dwelling for God (Exod 25:1-31:18). The goal of the Israelites' construction project is so that the Lord *can be present among them* (25:8) as the Israelites travel through the wilderness to the promised land of Canaan (Exod 6:6-8; Num 10:11-28). God's presence will move from the distant top of Mount Sinai into the wilderness dwelling, which will be in the center of Israel's camp (Exod 40:34; Num 2:2, 17). The instructions for building the dwelling end in Exodus 31. The actual building of God's dwelling won't begin until Exodus 35. In the meantime, the crisis of the gold calf and its aftermath in Exodus 32-34 will dramatically interrupt the story's movement from instructions (Exod 25-31) to building (Exod 35-40).

25:2 The Lord instructs Moses to receive *gift offerings* from every Israelite *who freely wants to give* the materials to build God's sanctuary. This construction project contrasts sharply with the building projects for Pharaoh in Egypt. In Egypt, the Israelites were forced to work as slaves under harsh conditions (Exod 1:11-14). The building of God's

dwelling is a voluntary effort in which the Israelites will be eager to participate (Exod 35:20-29; 36:2-7).

25:3 *gold, silver, and copper*: The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and yet they have gold, silver, exotic fabrics, gemstones, and other rare items to contribute as offerings to building and furnishing God's dwelling in the wilderness. How did they obtain these items? Earlier in Exodus, the Israelites had received them from the Egyptians who encouraged them to leave Egypt (Exod 3:22; 11:1-2; 12:35-36). Gold is the most valuable of the three metals. On the one hand, some of the Israelites' gold will be used sinfully in the making of the gold calf. This violation of the first commandment against worshipping another god or idol (Exod 20:3-6) will threaten the whole covenant relationship with the Lord (Exod 32:1-6). On the other hand, the Israelites will in the end offer these valuable materials, including gold, for the building and furnishing of God's dwelling (Exod 35:20-29; 39:32-43).

25:4 *blue, purple, and deep red*: These colors along with fine linen are associated with positions of power and honor (Gen 41:42; Judg 8:26; Esth 1:6; 8:15; Dan 5:7, 29).

25:7 *the priest's vest*: a special piece of clothing with gemstones worn by the priest (Heb. *ephod*). It was often used to help receive an oracle or message from God (1 Sam 23:9-12).

25:10 *an acacia-wood chest*: This wooden container is

25:17 Ex 37:6;  
Re 3:25;  
Heb 4:16

25:18  
Ex 37:7; 1Ki  
6:23; Heb 9:5

25:21 Ex 25:16,  
Ex 26:34,  
Ex 40:20

25:22  
Ex 29:42-43,  
Ex 30:6;

Lv 16:2;  
Nm 7:89

25:23 Ex 37:10,  
Ex 40:22;  
Nm 3:31;  
1Ki 7:46; Heb 9:2

25:24 Ex 25:11

25:31 Ex 31:8,  
Ex 37:17;  
1Ki 7:49;  
Zec 4:2;  
Rev 1:12

them with gold. <sup>14</sup>Then put the poles into the rings on the chest's sides and use them to carry the chest. <sup>15</sup>The poles should stay in the chest's rings. They shouldn't be taken out of them.

<sup>16</sup>Put the covenant document that I will give you into the chest.

<sup>17</sup>Then make a cover of pure gold, forty-five inches long and twenty-seven inches wide.

<sup>18</sup>Make two winged heavenly creatures of hammered gold, one for each end of the cover.

<sup>19</sup>Put one winged heavenly creature at one end and one winged heavenly creature at the other. Place the winged heavenly creatures at the cover's two ends. <sup>20</sup>The heavenly creatures should have their wings spread out above, shielding the cover with their wings. The winged heavenly creatures should face each other toward the cover's center. <sup>21</sup>Put the gold cover on top of the chest and put the covenant document that I will give you inside the chest. <sup>22</sup>There I will meet with you. From there above the cover, from between the two winged heavenly creatures that are on top of the chest containing the covenant, I will deliver to you all that I command you concerning the Israelites.

### Instructions for the table

<sup>23</sup>Make an acacia-wood table, three feet long, eighteen inches wide, and twenty-seven inches high. <sup>24</sup>Cover it with pure gold and make a gold molding all around it. <sup>25</sup>Make a frame around it that is four inches wide and a gold molding around the frame. <sup>26</sup>Make four gold rings for the table. Fasten the rings to the four corners at its four legs. <sup>27</sup>The rings that house the poles used for carrying the table should be close to the frame. <sup>28</sup>Make the poles from acacia wood and cover them with gold. The table should be carried with these poles. <sup>29</sup>Make its plates, dishes, jars, and bowls for pouring drink offerings. Make them of pure gold. <sup>30</sup>Set the bread of the presence on the table so it is always in front of me.

### Instructions for the lampstand

<sup>31</sup>Make a lampstand of pure hammered gold. The lampstand's base, branches, cups, flowers, and petals should all be attached to it. <sup>32</sup>It should have six branches growing out from its sides, three branches on one side of the lampstand and three branches on the other side

the most important item in the dwelling that will be constructed. It has two main functions. One function is to be a container for the "covenant document" (Exod 25:16). The document includes the two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17) engraved by God (Exod 24:12; 31:18; 32:15-16; 40:20). It isn't clear that the "covenant scroll" written by Moses (Exod 24:4, 7) with the additional case laws (Exod 20:22-23:19) was placed into the chest. In Deuteronomy, the "Instruction scroll" written by Moses was put "next to the chest," not inside it (Deut 31:25). The second function of the *acacia-wood chest* is as a footstool or throne for God's presence. Some biblical traditions suggest a third function of the chest as a sign of God's power and presence that the Israelites took with them when they went to war against enemy armies (Num 10:33-36; 1 Sam 4:1-11, 5:1-7.2). This chest is sometimes called "the ark of the covenant" 25:15 The Levites will eventually move the chest with the poles . . . in the chest's rings so they don't touch the chest itself (cf. Exod 25:16, 21; 40:20; Num 3:31). Since the Lord engraved the stone tablets in the wooden chest (Exod 24:12; 31:18; 32:15-16), the tablets and chest were considered intensely holy, powerful, and even dangerous. Any human who touched the chest itself might die from contact with it (2 Sam 6:6-7).

25:17-22 See note on Exodus 25:10. God's presence will sit above the gold cover on top of the chest that contains the covenant document (25:21). From there, the Lord promises to continue to speak and deliver to you all that I command you (25:22). God had already spoken the Ten Commandments directly to the people from the top of Mount Sinai (Exod 20:1, 18-21). The Lord then wrote and engraved the commands on stone tablets (Exod 24:12; 31:18; 32:15-16) so they could be placed in the wooden

chest. Along with them, however, God will continue to provide new instructions and interpretations of the expectations already given (Lev 1:1-2; Num 7:89; 27:1-11). In this way, God's Instruction will continue to develop, expand, and be interpreted in the face of new situations and contexts.

25:18 Figures like the two gold winged heavenly creatures frequently appear with the thrones of kings or gods in images from other cultures near ancient Israel. Similar images are used in the Bible of the Lord seated on a royal throne above the wooden chest and winged heavenly creatures (Num 7:89; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:15; 1 Chron 28:2; Pss 80:1; 99:1). These winged heavenly creatures (Heb. *cherubim*) were hybrid figures: wings attached to the body of a bull, lion, or other animal with a human head. Similar figures appear in the OT: in the Jerusalem temple (1 Kgs 6:23-28; Isa 6:1-3), in Ezekiel's vision (Ezek 1:5-12), and in the vision of a new future temple in Jerusalem (Ezek 41:18-20).

25:30 the bread of the presence: The bread is laid out on the table in front of the Lord's presence in the dwelling as an offering of hospitality, symbolically welcoming the Lord's presence among the people (Exod 39:36; Num 4:7). The Lord doesn't actually eat or drink, so the bread is set out each week on the Sabbath and then eaten by the priests (Lev 24:5-9; Num 4:7; 1 Sam 21:1-6; see Matt 12:4; Mark 2:26; Luke 6:4).

25:31-40 The solid gold lampstand had six branches along with the main stem, making seven lamps in all (25:37). Each evening a priest filled the lamps with olive oil, lit them, and let them burn until the morning (Exod 27:20-21). The lamp's light was a sign of hospitality for the Lord's presence and an aid to the priest's work at

of the lampstand. <sup>33</sup>One branch will have three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with a flower and petals, and the next branch will also have three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with a flower and petals. So it will be for the six branches that grow out of the lampstand. <sup>34</sup>In addition, on the lampstand itself there will be four cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with its flower and petals. <sup>35</sup>There will be a flower attached under the first pair of branches, a flower attached under the next pair of branches, and a flower attached under the last pair of branches. So it will be for the six branches that grow out of the lampstand. <sup>36</sup>Their flowers and their branches will be permanently attached to it. The whole lampstand should be one piece of pure hammered gold. <sup>37</sup>Make its seven lamps and set up its lamps so that they direct their light in front of the lampstand. <sup>38</sup>You should also make its tongs and fire pans out of pure gold. <sup>39</sup>All these items should be made from pure gold weighing one *ekkar*. <sup>40</sup>See to it that you make them according to the blueprint for them that you were shown on the mountain.

25:37 Ex 30:8; Nm 8:2; 2Ch 13:11  
25:40 Ex 25:9, Ex 26:30; Nm 8:4; Ac 7:44; Heb 8:5  
26:1 Ex 36:8  
26:2 Ex 26:8  
26:7 Ex 36:14  
26:8 Ex 26:2

**Instructions for building the dwelling**

**26** Make the dwelling with ten curtains of fine twisted linen and blue, purple, and deep red yarns. Work figures of winged heavenly creatures into their design. <sup>2</sup>Each curtain should be forty-two feet long and each curtain six feet wide. All the curtains should be the same size. <sup>3</sup>Five curtains will be joined to each other as one set, while the other five curtains will be joined together as a second set. <sup>4</sup>Make loops of blue thread on the edge of the outer curtain in the first set. Do the same on the edge of the outer curtain in the second set. <sup>5</sup>Make fifty loops on the one curtain in the first set and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is in the second set. The loops should be opposite each other. <sup>6</sup>Then make fifty gold clasps. Join the curtains to each other with the clasps so that the dwelling becomes one whole structure.

<sup>7</sup>You should also make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the dwelling. Make eleven curtains. <sup>8</sup>Each curtain should be forty-five feet long and each curtain six feet wide. The eleven curtains should all be the same size. <sup>9</sup>Join five of the curtains together, and join the six other curtains together. Double over the sixth curtain at the front of the tent. <sup>10</sup>Make fifty loops on the edge of the outer curtain in one set and fifty loops on the edge of the outer curtain in the second set.

<sup>11</sup>Make fifty copper clasps. Put the clasps into the loops and join the tent together so that it becomes one whole structure. <sup>12</sup>The extra cloth that is left over from the tent curtains, that is, the half curtain that remains, should hang over the back of the dwelling. <sup>13</sup>Eighteen inches on one side and eighteen inches on the other side of the leftover length of the tent's curtains will hang over the two sides of the dwelling to cover it. <sup>14</sup>Then for the tent, make a covering of rams' skins dyed red and an outer covering of beaded leather.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Make acacia-wood boards to stand upright as a frame for the dwelling. <sup>16</sup>Each board will be fifteen feet long and twenty-seven inches wide. <sup>17</sup>Put two pegs on each board for joining them to each other. Do this for all the dwelling's boards. <sup>18</sup>Make twenty boards for the dwelling's southern side. <sup>19</sup>Then make forty silver bases to go under the twenty boards. There will be two bases under the first board for its two pegs, two bases under the next board for its two pegs, and so on. <sup>20</sup>For the dwelling's other side on the north, make twenty boards <sup>21</sup>and

<sup>15</sup>Or *dolphin skin*

night (Exod 30:7-8; Lev 24:1-4; Num 8:1-3). The design of *branches* and *almond blossoms* suggests life and fertility, similar to the "tree of life" in the garden of Eden (Gen 2:9; 3:22). The almond blossoms may also refer to the uniqueness of Aaron and his descendants, who were specially chosen to serve as priests before the Lord (Num 17:1-13). Solomon's temple in Jerusalem was said to contain ten such lampstands (1 Kgs 7:48-49). The second temple built after the Babylonian exile and return had only one lampstand (2 Chron 13:11). It was this lampstand or "menorah" that became the central element in the Jewish Festival of Hanukkah. According to tradition, the lampstand miraculously kept burning in the temple without

additional oil for eight days during the rededication of the Jerusalem temple at the time of the Maccabees in the second century BCE.

**26:1-14** The dwelling containing God's presence has four layers of coverings to protect it: (1) the inner curtains made of fine linen and multicolored yarns with images of *winged heavenly creatures* on them (26:1-6); (2) a second layer of curtains made of *goats' hair* (26:7-13), (3) a third layer of red *rams' skins* (26:14), and (4) an outer layer of *beaded leather* (26:14).

**26:1** *fine twisted linen and blue, purple, and deep red*: See note on Exodus 25:4. *winged heavenly creatures*: See notes on Exodus 25:10, 16.

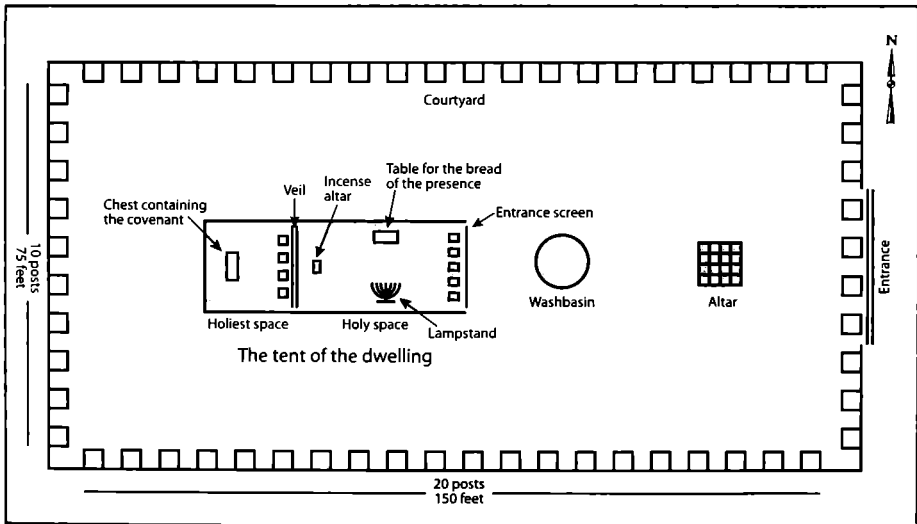
26:26 Ex 36:31  
 26:31 Ex 26:1,  
 Ex 36:35;  
 2Ch 3:14;  
 Mt 27:51;  
 Heb 9:3  
 26:33 Ex 40:21;  
 Heb 9:2-3  
 26:35 Ex 25:31,  
 Ex 40:22,  
 Ex 40:24;  
 Heb 9:2  
 26:37 Ex 36:38

their forty silver bases, two bases under the first board, two bases under the next board, and so on. <sup>22</sup>For the back of the dwelling on the west, make six boards. <sup>23</sup>Make two additional boards for the dwelling's rear corners. <sup>24</sup>They should be spread out at the bottom but joined together at the top with one ring. In this way, these two boards will form the two corners. <sup>25</sup>And so there will be eight boards with their sixteen silver bases, two bases under the first board, two bases under the next board, and so on.

<sup>26</sup>You should also make acacia-wood bars: five for the boards on one side of the dwelling, <sup>27</sup>five bars for the boards on the other side of the dwelling, and five bars for the boards on the back wall of the dwelling on the west. <sup>28</sup>The middle bar, halfway up the boards, should run from one end to the other. <sup>29</sup>Cover the boards with gold. Make gold rings to house the bars. Cover the bars with gold. <sup>30</sup>Then set up the dwelling according to the plan for it that you were shown on the mountain.

<sup>31</sup>Make a veil of blue, purple, and deep red yarns and of fine twisted linen. Work figures of winged heavenly creatures into its design. <sup>32</sup>Hang it on four acacia-wood posts covered in gold. They should have gold hooks and stand on four silver bases. <sup>33</sup>Hang the veil under the clasps, and put the chest containing the covenant there behind the veil. The veil will separate for you the holy from the holiest space. <sup>34</sup>Place the gold cover on the chest containing the covenant in the holiest space. <sup>35</sup>Place the table outside the veil, and set the lampstand opposite the table by the south wall of the dwelling. Place the table by the north wall.

<sup>36</sup>Make a screen for the tent's entrance of blue, purple, and deep red yarns and of fine twisted linen, decorated with needlework. <sup>37</sup>Make five acacia-wood posts for the screen. Cover the posts with gold. Their hooks should be gold. Cast five copper bases for the posts.



Layout of the meeting tent and the courtyard

26:31-37 The *veil* covers the entrance to the inner room of the dwelling. This inner room is the *holiest space* (26:34-35). God's presence will be enthroned there above the *chest* that contains "the covenant document" (Exod 25:10-22; see note on Exod 25:10). Even the high priest Aaron will die if he enters this *holiest space* at any time, except on the annual Day of Reconciliation (Lev 16:2).

A second *screen* (26:36-37) covers the *tent's* entrance to the outside courtyard. This marks off a secondary holy space in the tent, although it is not as holy as the *holiest space* of the inner room.

26:31 *blue, purple and deep red ... fine twisted linen*: See note on Exodus 25:4. *winged heavenly creatures*: See notes on Exodus 25:10, 16.

**Instructions for the altar**

**27** Make an acacia-wood altar. The altar should be square, seven and a half feet long and seven and a half feet wide. It should be four and a half feet high. <sup>2</sup>Make horns for the altar and attach them to it, one horn on each of its four corners. Cover it with copper. <sup>3</sup>Make pails for removing its ashes and its shovels, bowls, and trays. Make all its equipment out of copper. <sup>4</sup>Make for the altar a grate made of copper mesh. Make four copper rings for each of the four corners of the mesh. <sup>5</sup>Slide the mesh underneath the bottom edge of the altar and then extend the mesh halfway up to the middle of the altar. <sup>6</sup>Make acacia-wood poles for the altar and cover them with copper. <sup>7</sup>Put the poles through the rings so that the poles will be on the two sides of the altar when it is carried. <sup>8</sup>Make the altar with planks but hollow inside. All these should be made just as you were shown on the mountain.

27:1 Ex 38:1;  
2Ch 4:1;  
Eze 43:13;  
Heb 13:10  
27:20 Ex 25:6,  
Ex 27:21;  
Lv 24:2-3

**Instructions for the dwelling's courtyard**

<sup>9</sup>You should also set up the dwelling's courtyard. The courtyard's south side should have drapes of fine twisted linen stretching one hundred fifty feet on that side, <sup>10</sup>with twenty posts, twenty copper bases, and silver hooks and bands for the posts. <sup>11</sup>Likewise along the north side the drapes should stretch one hundred fifty feet, with twenty posts, twenty copper bases, and silver hooks and bands for the posts. <sup>12</sup>The courtyard's width on the west side should consist of seventy-five feet of drapes with their ten posts and their ten bases. <sup>13</sup>The courtyard's width on the front, facing east should be seventy-five feet. <sup>14</sup>There should be twenty-two and a half feet of drapes on one side with three posts and three bases for them. <sup>15</sup>There should be twenty-two and a half feet of drapes on the other side with three posts and three bases for them. <sup>16</sup>For the gate into the courtyard there will be a screen thirty feet long, made of blue, purple, and deep red yarns and of fine twisted linen, decorated with needlework. It will have four posts with their four bases. <sup>17</sup>All the posts around the courtyard will have silver bands, silver hooks, and copper bases. <sup>18</sup>The courtyard will be one hundred fifty feet long and seventy-five feet wide. Its walls' height will be seven and a half feet of fine twisted linen and its copper bases. <sup>19</sup>All the dwelling's equipment for any use and all its tent pegs and all the courtyard's tent pegs will be made of copper.

**Olive oil for the lampstand**

<sup>20</sup>You must require the Israelites to bring you pure oil of crushed olives for the light so that the lamp may be set up to burn continually. <sup>21</sup>In the meeting tent, outside the veil that hangs in front of the covenant document, Aaron and his sons will tend the lamp from

27:1-8 Exodus describes two altars. One is overlaid with gold and used to burn incense near the holiest space (Exod 30:1-10; cf. Num 4:11). Here, however, the text describes the other altar, which was covered in copper and used to burn sacrifices in the dwelling's courtyard. The "entirely burned offerings" of grain and animals were to be sacrificed twice daily on this altar (Exod 29:38; 38:1). The altar was used for other kinds of sacrifices as well (Lev 1-7). These sacrifices to the Lord were ways of honoring God, expressing thanks, making persons or a community ritually clean, or forgiving sin. The sacrifices give off "a soothing smell" to the Lord (Exod 29:18, 25, 41; Lev 1:9; see Gen 8:21), an expression of the Lord's acceptance of the gift. Other ancient cultures in Mesopotamia had temples in which the gods were believed to eat or consume the sacrifices as actual food. The god's image was closed off in an inner room. Priests would daily enter the inner room and place food sacrifices from the altar on a table. A curtain or veil would be drawn during this daily ritual. In contrast, Israel's God didn't eat the sacrifices or drink the oil or wine offerings. There was no table in the inner room where God was present. The table in the dwelling was set in a second area, the court within the tent of meeting. The table was separated from God's presence by a veil (see note on Exod 25:30). Moreover, no priests could enter the holiest inner space where the Lord dwelled except for the high priest once a year (see note on Exod 26:31-37). The copper altar

was located in a third area, the outer courtyard (Exod 27:9-19). The sacrifices to the Lord in Israel's worship life had several different functions, but none of them were believed to include actually feeding God on a daily basis.

27:2 *horns for the altar*: Each of the four corners of the altar was shaped like an animal horn, perhaps the horn of a bull, which was a common symbol of divine power in the ancient world (Exod 29:12; Num 23:22; 2 Sam 22:3; Ps 18:2; Isa 10:13; see 1 Kgs 1:50-53; 2:28-34). Modern archaeologists have uncovered a number of ancient Israelite altars with such horns at their corners. The protruding horns may have also served a practical purpose to hold up the grates above the fire on which animals were sacrificed and burned. *Cover it with copper*: Since the altar stood in the outer courtyard of the dwelling and not in the holiest space, it was covered not with gold but with copper. Copper was less valuable, a sign of the lower level of holiness in the outer courtyard area.

27:9-19 Four walls of drapes mark the rectangular outside boundary of the dwelling's courtyard. This courtyard has no roof and is open to the sky. This is in contrast to the meeting tent inside the courtyard, which is completely enclosed and contains the holiest space.

27:20-21 See note on Exodus 25:31-40. Throughout most of Exodus, the meeting tent (Exod 27:21; 28:43; 29:4, 44; 31:7; 39:32; 40:2, 34-35) or simply "the tent" (Exod 26:7, 9, 11-14; 26:36) refers to the inner tent within the larger

28:1 Ex 6:23,  
Ex 24:1, Ex 24:9,  
Ex 29:1; Heb 5:4

evening to morning in the LORD's presence. It will be a permanent regulation for the Israelites in every generation.

28:2 Ex 29:5,  
Ex 29:29,  
Ex 31:10,  
Ex 39:1; Lv 8:7

### Instructions for the priests' clothing

**28** Summon to you your brother Aaron and his sons from among the Israelites to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, and Eleazar and Ithamar. <sup>2</sup>Make holy clothing that will give honor and dignity to your brother Aaron. <sup>3</sup>Tell all who are skilled, to whom I have given special abilities, to make clothing for Aaron for his dedication to serve me as a priest. <sup>4</sup>These are the articles of clothing that they should make: a chest pendant, a vest, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban, and a sash. When they make this holy clothing for your brother Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests, <sup>5</sup>they should use gold, blue, purple, and deep red yarns and fine linen.

28:3 Ex 31:3,  
Ex 31:6, Ex 36:1

28:4 Ex 28:15,  
Ex 28:31,  
Ex 28:39,  
Ex 39:28; Lv 8:7

28:5 Ex 25:3-4

28:6 Ex 25:7,  
Ex 26:1, Ex 39:2

28:8 Ex 28:27,  
Ex 29:5; Lv 8:7

### Priest's ornamental vest

<sup>6</sup>They should make the vest of gold, of blue, purple, and deep red yarns and of fine twisted linen with embroidered designs. <sup>7</sup>The vest will have two shoulder pieces attached to its two edges so that they may be joined together. <sup>8</sup>The vest's belt should be attached to it and made in the same way of gold, of blue, purple, and deep red yarns and fine twisted linen. <sup>9</sup>Take two gemstones and engrave on them the names of Israel's sons, <sup>10</sup>six names on one stone and the other six names on the other stone, in the order of their birth. <sup>11</sup>Like a gem cutter who engraves official seals, you will engrave the two stones with the names of Israel's sons. Mount them in gold settings. <sup>12</sup>Attach the two stones to the vest's shoulder pieces as stones of reminder for the Israelites. Aaron will carry into the LORD's presence their names on his two shoulders as a reminder. <sup>13</sup>Then make gold settings <sup>14</sup>along with two chains of pure gold, twisted like cords. Attach the corded chains to the gold settings.

28:12 Ex 28:29;  
Nm 31:54;  
Josh 4:7

28:14 Ex 39:15;  
1Ki 7:17;  
2Ch 4:12

28:15 Ex 25:7,  
Ex 39:8; Lv 8:8

28:16 Ex 39:9;  
1Sa 17:4

### Priest's chest pendant used for making decisions

<sup>15</sup>Make an embroidered chest pendant used for making decisions. Make it in the style of the vest, using gold, blue and purple and deep red yarns, and fine twisted linen. <sup>16</sup>It will be

"dwelling" (Exod 25:9; 26:1, 30; 27:9; 39:32; 40:2, 34-35; see also Lev 17:4; Num 3:25, 38; 4:25-26; 2 Sam 7:6). The meeting tent is enclosed with a roof. It contains both the holiest space of God's constant presence and the inner court with the table of the bread of the presence. Around the meeting tent was a courtyard that contained the sacrificial altar (Exod 27:1-8). The larger dwelling included both this courtyard and the *meeting tent*. It was intended to be located in the center of the Israelites' camp (Num 2:2, 17). For an alternate tradition of the *meeting tent*, see note on Exod 33:7-11.

**28:1-43** The Lord gives instructions about making the *holy clothing* for Aaron and his sons, who will serve as priests. The clothing is to be worn only when the priests are serving in the holy spaces of the sanctuary (Lev 6:10; Ezek 42:14; 44:17-19). The focus is on clothing worn by the high priest, Aaron, when he serves in the dwelling (28:1-39). The items of special clothing give *honor and dignity* to the priest (28:2). They also protect the priest as he interacts with the powerful, dangerous and holy presence of God in the *meeting tent* and at the *altar*. The priests may misstep and *bring guilt on themselves and die* (Exod 28:35, 43; 30:20-21; see Lev 10:1-3).

**28:1** *Nadab and Abihu, and Eleazar and Ithamar*: These are the four sons of Aaron (Exod 6:23; 24:1). The role of the priest in ancient Israel was hereditary and stayed within family lines.

**28:3** *to whom I have given special abilities*: The Lord is the giver of extraordinary artistic skills, which allow the designers to make the priests' clothing. *for his dedication*: The clothing will be placed on Aaron for the first time during the ceremony celebrating his ordination as high priest (Exod 28:41; 29:1-29; Lev 8:7-9, 13; see Num 20:26, 28).

**28:5** *gold, blue, purple, and deep red . . . fine linen*: See notes on Exod 25:3, 4.

**28:6** *the vest*: The long linen vest (Heb. *ephod*) will be made of the same materials as the curtains (Exod 26:1) and screens (Exod 26:36; 27:16) of the dwelling. The vest was worn when an individual served in the place of worship (1 Sam 2:18; 2 Sam 6:14). The priestly vest could be misused as an idol that the Israelites worshipped (Judg 8:27; 17:3-6). At other times, the priestly vest was used to determine the Lord's will in making decisions (1 Sam 23:6-14; 30:7-10). This may reflect the close association of the priestly vest with the "chest pendant used for making decisions" (Exod 28:15). The priest's vest and "chest pendant" were physically attached to each other (Exod 28:28).

**28:9** *the names of Israel's sons*: The names of the 12 tribes of Israel who were descended from the 12 sons of Jacob (Exod 1:1-5). Jacob was also known as Israel (Gen 32:28; 35:10).

**28:10** *in the order of their birth*: For the order in which the 12 sons of Jacob/Israel were born, see Genesis 29:32-30:24; 35:16-18.

**28:12** *stones of reminder*: One of the functions of the priest was to represent all the members of the 12 tribes of Israel before God, reminding the Lord of the covenant relationship between God and the people. The stones for each tribe functioned as a prayer for the Lord's blessing upon the tribe whenever the priest entered the sanctuary (see Moses' prayer of blessing for the 12 tribes in Deut 33:1-29).

**28:15** *chest pendant used for making decisions*: See note on Exod 28:6. The *pendant* was a pouch about nine inches square (Exod 28:16), which contained the "Urim and Thummim" used for decision making (see Exod 28:30).



square and doubled, nine inches long and nine inches wide. <sup>17</sup>Set in it four rows of gemstone settings. The first row will be a row of carnelian, topaz, and emerald stones. <sup>18</sup>The second row will be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a moonstone. <sup>19</sup>The third row will be a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst. <sup>20</sup>The fourth row will be a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. Their settings will be made of decorative gold. <sup>21</sup>There will be twelve stones with names corresponding to the names of Israel's sons. They will be engraved like official seals, each with its name for the twelve tribes.

<sup>22</sup>Make chains of pure gold twisted like cords for the chest pendant. <sup>23</sup>Make two gold rings for the chest pendant and attach the two rings to the two edges of the chest pendant. <sup>24</sup>Attach the two gold cords to the two rings at the edges of the chest pendant. <sup>25</sup>Then fasten the two ends of the cords to the two settings, which you should attach to the vest's two front shoulder pieces. <sup>26</sup>Make two gold rings and attach them to the two ends of the chest pendant on its inside edge facing the vest. <sup>27</sup>Make two gold rings and fasten them on the front of the lower part of the two shoulder pieces of the vest, at its seam just above the vest's belt. <sup>28</sup>The chest pendant should be held in place by a blue cord binding its rings to the vest's rings so that the chest pendant rests on the vest's belt and won't come loose from the vest. <sup>29</sup>In this way, Aaron will carry the names of Israel's sons on the chest pendant for making decisions over his heart when he goes into the sanctuary as a reminder before the LORD at all times. <sup>30</sup>Put into the chest pendant used for making decisions the Urim and the Thummim, so they will be over Aaron's heart when he goes into the LORD's presence. In this way, Aaron will carry the means to make decisions for the Israelites over his heart when in the LORD's presence at all times.

**Instructions for other priestly clothing**

<sup>31</sup>You will make the robe for the vest all of blue. <sup>32</sup>The opening for the head should be in the middle of it. The opening should be reinforced by a woven binding, a strong border so that it doesn't tear. <sup>33</sup>On its lower hem add pomegranates made of blue, purple, and deep red yarns all around the lower hem, with gold bells between the pomegranates all around it. <sup>34</sup>A gold bell and a pomegranate should alternate all around the lower hem of the robe. <sup>35</sup>Aaron will wear the robe when he ministers as a priest. Its sound will be heard when he goes into the sanctuary in the LORD's presence and when he comes out, so that he will not die.

<sup>36</sup>Make a flower ornament of pure gold and engrave on it like an official seal: "Holy to the LORD." <sup>37</sup>You should fasten it on the turban with a blue cord. It should be on the front of the turban. <sup>38</sup>It will be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron will take on himself any guilt connected with the holy offerings that the Israelites give as their sacred donations.

28:17 Ex 39:10;  
Job 28:19;  
Eze 28:13;  
Rev 21:19-20  
28:18 Ex 39:11;  
Jer 17:1;  
Eze 1:26;  
Eze 27:16;  
Eze 28:13  
28:19 Is 54:12;  
Rev 21:20  
28:20 Eze 1:16;  
Eze 10:9;  
Dn 10:6  
28:21 Ex 28:9;  
Ex 28:11,  
Ex 39:14;  
Josh 4:8;  
Rev 21:12  
28:27 Ex 28:8  
28:28 Ex 28:37;  
Ex 39:21,  
Ex 39:31;  
Nm 15:38  
28:29 Ex 28:12;  
Ex 28:30  
28:33 Ex 39:24  
28:35 Lv 16:2  
28:36 Ex 28:11,  
Ex 39:30;  
Lv 8:9;  
Zec 14:20  
28:37 Ex 28:28,  
Ex 39:31;  
Nm 15:38  
28:38 Lv 10:17;  
Nm 18:1; Eze 4:4

28:17-21 The 12 gemstones on the pendant correspond to the 12 tribes of Israel (Exod 28:29; see notes on Exod 28:9, 12). Several of the 12 gemstones are described by the prophet Ezekiel as part of "Eden, God's garden" (Ezek 28:13; see Gen 2:8, 12). The NT vision of the New Jerusalem includes several of these 12 gemstones built into the walls and foundations of the future city (Rev 21:19-20).

28:30 in the LORD's presence: The process of getting decisions from the Lord apparently happened in the sanctuary or dwelling where the priest served. *the Urim and the Thummim*: some combination of light and dark stones or dice that the priest would pour out of the pendant onto his lap (Prov 16:33). The particular combination of stones would determine God's answer to an important question that human leaders couldn't adequately answer for themselves. The range of decisions in need of divine guidance included military decisions in time of war (Num 27:21; Judg 20:18; 1 Sam 14:36-42; 2 Sam 5:23-24), the selection of leaders (1 Sam 10:20-22; Ezra 2:63), a verdict of guilt or innocence when evidence was inadequate (Exod 22:8; Josh 7:14-18), dividing up land among tribes (Judg 1:1-2), or deciding where to live (2 Sam 2:1). The answers usually came in one of three forms: yes, no, or inconclusive. See also the note on Leviticus 8:7-9.

28:31 the robe for the vest: The blue robe was worn under the vest and with the vest and pendant.

28:33-34 pomegranates...gold bells: The hem of the blue robe is lined with tassels shaped like pomegranates alternating with small gold bells. The pomegranate was a symbol of fertility and a decoration in Solomon's temple in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 7:42; 2 Kgs 25:17; Jer 52:23).

28:35 Its sound will be heard...so that he will not die: The small gold bells around the hem of the priest's robe will make noise as the priest enters the sanctuary. The bells apparently provide advance warning so that the Lord's powerful and holy presence doesn't unexpectedly erupt and cause the death of the priest as he enters the sanctuary. The sanctuary is a dangerous place, even for priests (Exod 28:43; 30:20-21, 33, 37; Lev 10:6, 9; 16:2, 13; Num 4:15, 19-20; 17:12-13; 18:3, 22; see Exod 19:21-22; see note on Exod 28:1-43).

28:36-38 The high priest Aaron wears a turban or head-dress of fabric wound up into a cone shape. A flower ornament with an inscription "Holy to the Lord" is attached to the turban with a blue cord. Archaeologists have uncovered ancient images of priests and even gods in Mesopotamia who wear flower-shaped ornaments tied to their foreheads by a blue cord. Their function seems to be as protection against attacks by evil spirits or other dangerous

28:40 Ex 28:2,  
Ex 28:4, Ex 29:9,  
Ex 39:27,  
Ex 39:41

28:42 Ex 39:28;  
Lv 6:10, Lv 16:4;  
Ezek 44:18

28:43 Ex 27:21

29:1 Ex 28:1  
29:3 Lv 8:2

29:4 Ex 40:12,  
Lv 8:6, Lv 14:8;  
Heb 10:22

29:5 Ex 28:2,  
Ex 28:8; Lv 8:7

29:6 Ex 28:36,  
Lv 8:9

29:7 Ex 28:41,  
Ex 30:25;  
Lv 21:10;  
Nm 35:25;  
Ps 133:2

29:9 Ex 27:21,  
Ex 28:40-41;  
Nm 3:10,  
Nm 18:7

It will always be on his forehead so that the people may be remembered favorably in the LORD's presence.

<sup>39</sup>Weave the tunic out of fine linen. Make the turban out of fine linen. Make a sash decorated with needlework. <sup>40</sup>For Aaron's sons, you should also make tunics, sashes, and turbans to mark their honor and dignity. <sup>41</sup>Put these garments on your brother Aaron and on his sons with him. Anoint them with oil, ordain them, and make them holy to serve me as priests. <sup>42</sup>You should also make linen undergarments for them to cover their naked skin from their hips to their thighs. <sup>43</sup>Aaron and his sons should wear this clothing when they go into the meeting tent or when they approach the altar to minister as priests in the sanctuary. Otherwise, they will bring guilt on themselves and die. This will be a permanent regulation for him and for his descendants after him.

### Instructions for the priests' ordination

**29** Now this is what you should do to make them holy in order to serve me as priests. <sup>1</sup>Take a young bull and two flawless rams. <sup>2</sup>Take unleavened bread, unleavened flat-bread made with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil. Make them out of high-quality wheat flour. <sup>3</sup>Put them all in one basket and present them in the basket along with the bull and the two rams. <sup>4</sup>Present Aaron and his sons at the entrance to the meeting tent and wash them with water. <sup>5</sup>Then take the priestly clothes and put them on Aaron: the tunic, the vest's robe, the vest itself, and the chest pendant. Put the vest on him with the vest's belt. <sup>6</sup>Set the turban on his head and place the holy crown on the turban. <sup>7</sup>Take the anointing oil and pour it on his head to anoint him. <sup>8</sup>Then present his sons and put the tunics on them. <sup>9</sup>Tighten the sashes on them, on both Aaron and his sons. Wrap the turbans on their heads. It will be a permanent regulation that the duties of priesthood belong to them. In this way, you will ordain Aaron and his sons.

<sup>10</sup>Present the bull at the front of the meeting tent. Aaron and his sons will lay their hands on the bull's head. <sup>11</sup>Then slaughter the bull in the LORD's presence at the meeting tent's

divine powers. In the case of Aaron, the function of the forehead ornament is not so much to protect him. Rather, its purpose is to ensure that the Israelite people *may be remembered favorably* by the Lord, even when they have done something wrong when they offer sacrifices to the Lord. As high priest, Aaron *will take on himself any guilt* that the people have accumulated as a result of making improper sacrifices (Exod 28:38).

28:39 The embroidered *sash* is a sign of authority and office (Isa 22:21). It will be worn by both Aaron and his sons (Exod 29:9).

28:41 The priestly clothing will be worn when Aaron and his sons are made holy at their ordination to the priesthood (Exod 29:5-9; Lev 8:6-13). When priests, kings, or prophets were chosen by God, an official would pour or sprinkle olive oil upon their heads as a sign of their being dedicated by God to that role (Exod 29:7, 21; 30:22-24, 30; see 1 Sam 15:1; 16:12; 1 Kgs 1:34; 19:16).

28:42-43 *undergarments*: Priests had to be sure that they didn't risk death and accidentally expose their genitals before the Lord's presence (see note on Exod 28:35). Therefore, although it may have been optional elsewhere in the camp, the priests were required to wear underwear while working in the sanctuary (see note on Exod 20:26). *approach the altar to minister as priests*: The primary priestly duties included offering sacrifices of grain and animals upon the altar (see note on Exod 27:1-8; see also Exod 30:20; Ezek 44:15, 27; 1 Chron 23:13; 2 Chron 31:2).

29:1-37 The Lord gives instructions for the ceremony in which Aaron and his sons will be made holy and ordained to the priesthood. The ceremony has seven elements: (1) 29:2-3—gathering the breads and wafers into a basket along with the animals for the offerings on the altar (29:2-3); (2) 29:4—ritual washing and purifying of the bodies of

the priestly candidate; (3) 29:5-9—putting on the priestly clothing of Aaron and his sons as a sign of their ordination as priests; (4) 29:10-18—the sacrificial offering of the bull and the first ram *as a purification offering*, which will cleanse the altar of any impurities caused by the donors of the materials or the builders of the altar; (5) 29:19-21—the sacrifice of the second ram and the anointing of Aaron and his sons with the holy oil and the blood of the ram; (6) 29:22-25—burning the fatty parts of the ram along with the breads and wafers *as an uplifted offering and food gift for the Lord*; and (7) 29:26-28—offering the *breast of the ram* and *the thigh* as the choice portions of the meat of the ram *as an uplifted offering* given to the priests by the Israelites to support them in their service to the Lord. The ceremony ordaining Aaron and his sons to the priesthood is actually carried out in Leviticus 8-9 (see Exod 40:12-15). 29:1 The Lord tells Moses (*you*) to take on the role of priest temporarily during the ordination ceremony for Aaron and his sons. At the end of the ceremony, Aaron and his sons will then take over as priests and Moses will step aside.

29:2 *unleavened bread*: No leavened bread containing yeast is allowed to be offered as a "burned" sacrifice on the altar of the Lord (Exod 29:23-25; see Lev 2:11).

29:4 *wash them with water*: Bathing the human body in water is a frequent part of ritual cleansing from a wide range of impurities (Lev 14-17; see Lev 16:4).

29:5-6 *the priestly clothes*: See Exodus 28:1-43.

29:7 *the anointing oil*: See note on Exodus 28:41. For the ingredients of the oil, see Exodus 30:22-33. *pour it on his head*: The act of pouring precious and sweet-smelling oil over someone's head was a gesture of luxury and honor (Pss 23:5; 133:2; Eccl 9:7-8).

29:10 *lay their hands on the bull's head*: This gesture indicates that the animal is owned and being donated

entrance. <sup>12</sup>Take some of the bull's blood and smear it on the altar's horns with your finger. Pour out the rest of the blood at the altar's base. <sup>13</sup>Then take all the fat that covers the inner organs, the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys along with the fat that is on them, and burn them up in smoke on the altar. <sup>14</sup>Burn the rest of the meat of the bull, its hide, and the intestines with their contents with a fire outside the camp. It is a purification offering.

<sup>15</sup>Choose one of the rams, and have Aaron and his sons lay their hands on the ram's head. <sup>16</sup>Then slaughter the ram. Take its blood and throw it against all the altar's sides. <sup>17</sup>Cut up the ram into parts. Wash its inner organs and legs, and put them together with its parts and its head. <sup>18</sup>Then turn the entire ram into smoke by burning it on the altar. It is an entirely burned offering for the LORD, a soothing smell, a food gift for the LORD.

<sup>19</sup>Take the second ram, and have Aaron and his sons lay their hands on the ram's head. <sup>20</sup>Slaughter the ram. Take some of its blood and smear it on the right earlobes of Aaron and his sons, on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. Throw the rest of the blood against all the altar's sides. <sup>21</sup>Then take some of the blood on the altar and some of the anointing oil and sprinkle them on Aaron and on his clothes and on his sons and on his sons' clothes. In this way, Aaron, his sons, and all their priestly garments will be holy.

<sup>22</sup>Take the fatty parts of the ram: the fat tail, the fat around the inner organs, the lobe of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat around them, and the right thigh (because it is a ram for ordination). <sup>23</sup>Add one loaf of bread, one flatbread made with oil, and one wafer from the basket of unleavened bread that was presented to the LORD. <sup>24</sup>Place all of these in the hands of Aaron and his sons, and lift them as an uplifted offering in the LORD's presence. <sup>25</sup>Then take them from their hands and turn them into smoke by burning them on the altar with the entirely burned offering as a soothing smell in the LORD's presence. It is a food gift for the LORD.

by the one laying hands on the animal (in this case, the priests who are donating the bull). The gesture assures that the owners are the ones who will receive the purifying benefits of the animal offering (Lev 1:4; 4:4; see Num 8:10). Community leaders or elders may represent the whole community by laying their hands on an animal to be sacrificed. In that case, the sacrifice benefits the whole community, making reconciliation for sin (Lev 4:15). When someone lays both hands on an animal or person, something different is achieved. With two hands, sin or guilt may be transferred from one party to another. Thus, in Leviticus 16:21, Aaron as high priest represented all the people of Israel by laying both his hands on a live goat and transferring the sins of all Israel upon the goat (see also Lev 24:14).

**29:12** The *blood* of the animal sacrifice was viewed as a powerful purifying agent (Gen 9:4; Lev 17:11). Smearing blood on the *altar's horns* at each of the four corners of the altar in effect cleansed the entire altar (see note on Exod 27:2; see also Ezek 43:20).

**29:14** Since the animal's blood was used to purify the altar, its *meat* couldn't be eaten by the priests. Instead, it was burned *outside the camp* along with the hide and intestines (Lev 4:11-12; 6:30; 8:17; 16:27), *purification offering*: The instructions here follow the model for such offerings in Leviticus 4:1-2.

**29:15** *lay their hands*: See note on Exodus 29:10.

**29:16** Throwing the *blood... against all the altar's sides* in effect returns the blood and the animal's life back to God, to whom it belongs (Lev 17:6, 10-14; see also Gen 4:10; 9:4; Deut 12:23-25).

**29:18** *a soothing smell, a food gift for the Lord*: See note on Exodus 27:1-8.

**29:12** Ex 27:2; Lv 4:7, Lv 4:18, Lv 4:25, Lv 8:15

**29:13** Lv 3:3-4, Lv 7:3; Is 43:24

**29:14** Lv 4:11-12, Lv 4:21, Lv 16:27; Heb 13:11

**29:22** Ex 29:13; Lv 8:25

**29:19** *lay their hands on the ram's head*: See note on Exodus 29:10.

**29:20** Smearing blood on the *earlobes... thumbs and big toes* of the priests' bodies purified their whole bodies in a way similar to doing so on the horns of the altar (see note on Exod 29:12; see also Lev 14:14). On throwing the rest of the blood *against all the altar's sides*, see note on Exodus 29:16.

**29:21** Sprinkling the *anointing oil and the blood* on the priests makes them *holy* (cf. Exod 30:22-33). The *blood* makes things holy because it had touched the holy altar (Exod 29:37). Holiness is contagious by touch, according to this understanding (Lev 6:16-18).

**29:22** *The right thigh* of the animal is normally set aside in other sacrifices and given to the priest (Lev 7:32-33). The ordination sacrifice is special, however, so the *right thigh* is also burned and offered as "a food gift for the Lord."

**29:23** *unleavened bread*: See note on Exodus 29:2. See also Leviticus 6:19-23.

**29:24** *lift them as an uplifted offering*: The gesture of lifting up the offering normally is performed by the one giving the offering along with the priest (Lev 7:28-31). The gesture indicates that the sacrifice is transferred from the giver to God through the priest. Here Aaron and his sons are the donors of the offering. They aren't yet officially priests until the conclusion of the ceremony. Thus it will be Moses who will take the priestly role of placing the offering *in the hands of Aaron and his sons*. Moses will also receive the priestly portions of the sacrifices (Exod 29:26). Once the priests are officially ordained, Moses will pass the priestly portions of the sacrifices on to Aaron and his sons, who alone will be allowed to eat them (Exod 29:27-28, 31-34; see also Lev 22:10-16).

29:36

Ex 30:26,

Ex 40:10;

Nm 7:1

29:38 Nm 28:3;

1Ch 16:40;

Dn 12:11

29:39 Ezk 46:13

29:40 Gn 35:14;

Lv 23:13;

Nm 15:4-5;

Nm 28:5

29:41 Ex 29:40;

Ex 30:9;

Ex 40:29;

Ps 141:2;

Dn 9:21

29:42 Ex 25:22

29:43 Ex 40:34;

1Ki 6:11;

2Ch 5:14

29:44 Ex 28:1;

Ex 29:9;

Lv 21:15, Lv 22:9;

Lv 22:16

29:45 Ex 25:8;

Lv 26:12;

Zec 2:10;

2Co 6:16;

Rev 21:3

<sup>26</sup>Take the breast of the ram for Aaron's ordination and lift it as an uplifted offering in the LORD's presence. It will be your portion. <sup>27</sup>Make holy the breast that was lifted for the uplifted offering and the thigh that was raised for the gift offering from the ram for the ordination. They belong to Aaron and his sons. <sup>28</sup>Those parts will be given to Aaron and his sons from the Israelites as a permanent provision, because they are a gift offering. They will be a gift offering from the Israelites, their gift offering to the LORD from their well-being sacrifices.

<sup>29</sup>Aaron's holy clothes should be passed on to his sons after him. His sons should be anointed in them and ordained in them. <sup>30</sup>The son who is priest in his place should wear them seven days when he comes into the meeting tent to minister in the sanctuary.

<sup>31</sup>Take the ram for the ordination and boil its meat in a holy place. <sup>32</sup>Aaron and his sons will eat the ram's meat and the bread that is in the basket at the meeting tent's entrance.

<sup>33</sup>They alone should eat the food that was used to purify them, to ordain them, and to make them holy. No one else should eat it because it is holy. <sup>34</sup>If any meat for the ordination or any of the bread is left over until morning, then you should burn the leftovers with fire. It shouldn't be eaten because it's holy.

<sup>35</sup>Treat Aaron and his sons just as I have commanded you. Ordain them for seven days.

<sup>36</sup>Every day you should offer a bull as a purification offering for reconciliation. You should remove the sin from the altar through a ritual of reconciliation, and you should anoint the altar to make it holy. <sup>37</sup>Seven days you should perform the ritual of reconciliation for the altar and make it holy. In this way, the altar will become most holy, and whatever touches the altar will also become holy.

### **Instructions for daily entirely burned offerings**

<sup>38</sup>Now this is what you should offer on the altar: two one-year-old lambs regularly every day. <sup>39</sup>Offer one lamb in the morning and offer the other lamb at twilight. <sup>40</sup>With the first lamb, add one-tenth of a measure of the high-quality flour mixed with a quarter of a hin<sup>†</sup> of oil from crushed olives and a quarter of a hin of wine for a drink offering. <sup>41</sup>With the second lamb offered at twilight, again include a grain offering and its drink offering as in the morning as a soothing smell, a gift offering for the LORD. <sup>42</sup>This should be the regular entirely burned offering in every generation at the meeting tent's entrance in the LORD's presence. There I will meet with you, and there I will speak to you. <sup>43</sup>I will meet with the Israelites there, and it will be made holy by my glorious presence. <sup>44</sup>I will make the meeting tent and the altar holy. Likewise, I will make Aaron and his sons holy to serve me as priests. <sup>45</sup>I will be at home among the Israelites, and I will be their God. <sup>46</sup>They will know that I am the LORD

<sup>†</sup>One hin is approximately one gallon.

**29:28** The instructions for the sacrifices of the ordination ceremony are similar (with small changes; see note on Lev 29:22) to those of the communal sacrifice of *well-being* in Leviticus 3:6-11; 7:11-34.

**29:35-37** The sacrifices for purifying the altar and ordaining the priests are to be repeated for seven days. The number seven points to completeness or wholeness (Gen 1:1-23), so at the end of seven days the altar will become *most holy* (29:37; see 2 Chron 7:9; Ezek 43:25-26).

**29:38-41** The instructions for the divine dwelling, all its equipment, and the ordination of the priests have all been given (Exod 25:1-29:37). Now the text gives the instructions for the entirely burned sacrifices that are required each day (see Num 28:3-8; Ezek 43:18-27; Dan 8:11). *one lamb* is to be sacrificed every morning, and another lamb is to be sacrificed every twilight (29:39). Each sacrifice also includes flour, olive oil, and wine. These items, along with the relatively inexpensive lamb meat, are the common things that ancient Israelites would eat and drink in their daily lives. The daily offering is intended as a small but sincere token of thanks as a gift offering for the LORD. The offering recognizes the many ordinary gifts given by God to sustain life.

**29:42-45** The Lord promises to *meet with the Israelites and speak to them from the meeting tent's entrance . . . in every generation* (29:42-43). *The meeting tent, the altar, and Aaron and his sons* will all be made holy by the Lord's own glorious presence (29:43). The human activities performed by Moses and Aaron during the seven-day rituals of purification and ordination are important (Exod 29:35-37). They play a role in making the sanctuary, altar, and priests holy (Exod 29:21; 30:29-30). However, it is ultimately the Lord's glorious presence that makes the meeting tent, the altar, and the priests holy and set apart for their primary purpose (see Lev 21:15; 21:23; 22:9, 16). That primary purpose is so that the Lord *will be at home among the Israelites and will be their God* (29:45). The meeting tent and dwelling will allow the Lord's holy presence to move down from Mount Sinai and be close to the Israelites, traveling with them. In this way, God's people will be under God's care and protection as they make their way through the wilderness toward the promised land of Canaan (see note on Exod 25:1-9; see also Exod 6:6-8).

**29:46** The Lord reveals here an additional part of God's name and character, which have been unfolding throughout the book of Exodus. The Lord has declared God's

their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt so that I could make a home among them. I am the LORD their God.

**Instructions for the incense altar**

**30** Make an acacia-wood altar for burning incense. <sup>2</sup>The altar should be square, eighteen inches long and eighteen inches wide. It should be three feet high. Its horns should be permanently attached. <sup>3</sup>Cover the altar with pure gold, including its top, all its sides, and its horns. You should also make a gold molding all around it. <sup>4</sup>Make two gold rings and attach them under the molding on two opposite sides of the altar. They will house the poles used to carry the altar. <sup>5</sup>Make acacia-wood poles and cover them with gold. <sup>6</sup>Place the incense altar in front of the veil that hangs before the chest containing the covenant, in front of the cover that is on top of the covenant document where I will meet with you. <sup>7</sup>Aaron will burn sweet-smelling incense on the incense altar every morning when he takes care of the lamps. <sup>8</sup>And again when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he will burn incense. It should be a regular incense offering in the LORD's presence in every generation. <sup>9</sup>Don't offer the wrong incense on the altar or an entirely burned offering or a grain offering. Don't pour a drink offering on it. <sup>10</sup>Once a year Aaron should perform a ritual of reconciliation on its horns with the blood of the purification offering for reconciliation. Once a year in every generation he should perform a ritual of reconciliation at the altar. It is most holy to the LORD.

30:1 Ex 37:25, Ex 40:5; Lv 4:7; Rev 8:3  
30:2 Ex 27:2  
30:3 Ex 25:11  
30:4 Ex 25:12, Ex 25:27  
30:5 Ex 25:13  
30:6 Ex 25:22, Ex 26:34, Ex 40:5, Ex 40:26; Nm 7:89  
30:7 Ex 40:27; 1Sa 2:28; 1Ch 23:13; 2Ch 2:4  
30:8 Ex 27:21, Ex 30:7; Nm 8:3  
30:9 Lv 10:1

**Census and compensation**

<sup>11</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>12</sup>When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each of them should pay compensation for their life to the LORD when they are counted. Then no plague will descend on them when they are counted. <sup>13</sup>Every one who is counted should pay a half shekel according to the official shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs). The half shekel is a gift offering to the LORD. <sup>14</sup>Every one who is counted, from 20 years old and above, should present a gift offering to the LORD. <sup>15</sup>When you bring this gift offering to the LORD to pay compensation for your lives, the rich shouldn't give more and

expanding divine name in a series of "I am ..." statements: "I Am Who I Am" (Exod 3:14); "I am the LORD who heals you" (Exod 15:26); "I am the LORD ... who brought you out of Egypt" (Exod 20:2); "... am a passionate God ... I am loyal and gracious" (Exod 20:5-6); and "I'm about to send a messenger ... because I am [or my name is] with him" (Exod 23:20-21). The Lord now adds one more element to God's name: *I am the LORD ... who brought them out of the land of Egypt so that I could make a home among them*. God's ultimate desire and purpose has been to free the Israelites from Egypt in order that the Lord could live and travel in close relationship with God's people, Israel. Freedom from slavery isn't an end in itself but a step on the way to finding a home with God and living in covenant with the Lord. In a sense, the goal of the exodus will be achieved even before Israel's conquest of the land of Canaan happens (Josh 1-15). A good part of the mission of the exodus will be accomplished by the actual arrival of God's glorious presence into the wilderness dwelling (Exod 40:34). However, God's glorious presence will continue with Israel also in the Jerusalem temple on Mount Zion (see note on Exod 15:17). For future expansions of God's name and character, see notes on Exodus 33:19; 34:6-7.

**30:1-31:17** In Exodus 25:1, instructions began that explained the building of the dwelling, the construction of its equipment, and the ordination of its priests. These instructions now conclude with various directions for items associated with the worship service within the dwelling: building an altar for burning incense (30:1-10), taking a census of the Israelites and collecting money to support the service of the meeting tent (30:11-16), setting up the copper basin for washing (30:17-21), listing the ingredients for the holy oil and the incense (30:22-38), selecting the

construction leaders (31:1-11), and repeating the Sabbath commandment against working on the seventh day of the week (31:12-17).

**30:1-10** The incense altar stood in front of the veil leading into the holiest place, where the Lord's glorious presence would dwell (30:6). The table (Exod 25:23-30) and the lampstand (Exod 25:31-40) stood on either side of the incense altar. All three items played a role in regular daily rituals. The table held the bread of the presence each day (Exod 25:30; Lev 24:5-9). The lampstand provided light for the sanctuary every night (Exod 27:20-21; 30:7-8; Lev 24:1-4). In the center, the altar held burning incense each morning and evening (30:7-8).

**30:6** *the chest containing the covenant*: See note on Exodus 25:10.

**30:9** *Don't offer the wrong incense*: The incense must contain only the ingredients mentioned in Exodus 30:34-36. For a dramatic example of wrong incense, see Leviticus 10:1-2. The instruction also commands that no meat, grain, or drink offerings be offered on the incense altar within the meeting tent. Burned food sacrifices were banned from the area closest to the Lord's presence. This suggests the sacrifices weren't meant as food or drink for God. Rather, sacrifices were made in the courtyard on a copper altar. They were gifts and tokens of thanks, purification, or reconciliation given by worshippers primarily for their benefit rather than God's benefit. See notes on Exodus 25:30; 27:1-8.

**30:10** *Once a year ... a ritual of reconciliation*: presumably the Day of Reconciliation (also known as the Day of Atonement; see Lev 4:18; 16:16).

**30:11-16** The Lord commands that when a census is taken to count the Israelites, a half shekel of silver should

30:20 Ex 28:43  
30:23 Is 43:24;  
Jer 6:20;  
Eze 27:19  
30:24 Ex 29:40;  
Ps 45:8;  
Eze 27:19

30:25 Ex 29:7;  
Ex 30:35;  
Ex 37:29;  
1Ch 9:30;  
2Ch 16:14

30:26 Ex 40:9;  
Lv 8:10; Nm 7:1

30:27 Ex 30:26;  
Ex 40:9; Lv 4:7

30:28 Ex 40:11;  
Lv 8:11

30:29 Ex 29:37

30:30 Ex 28:41;  
Ex 29:7; Lv 8:12;  
Lv 8:30

30:32 Ex 30:25;  
Ex 30:37

30:33 Gn 17:14;  
Ex 12:15;  
Ex 30:38;  
Lv 7:20;  
Lv 17:9

30:34 Ex 3:6;  
Ex 25:6;  
Ex 30:7;  
Ex 37:29;  
Lv 5:11

30:38 Ex 30:33

31:1 Ex 35:30

31:2 Ex 35:30;  
Ex 36:1; Ex 37:1;  
Ex 38:22;  
1Ch 2:20

31:3 Ex 28:3;  
Ex 35:31;  
1Ki 7:14;  
1Co 12:4

31:4 2Ch 2:7

31:5 1Ki 6:18

31:6 Ex 28:3;  
Ex 35:34-35;  
Ex 36:1;  
Ex 38:23

the poor shouldn't give less than the half shekel. <sup>16</sup>Take the compensation money from the Israelites and use it to support the service of the meeting tent. It will serve for the Israelites as a reminder in the LORD's presence of the compensation paid for your lives.

### Instructions for the washbasin

<sup>17</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>18</sup>Make a copper basin for washing along with its copper stand. Put it between the meeting tent and the altar, and put water in it. <sup>19</sup>Aaron and his sons will use it to wash their hands and their feet. <sup>20</sup>When they go into the meeting tent or approach the altar to minister and to offer a food gift to the LORD, they must wash with water so that they don't die. <sup>21</sup>They must wash their hands and their feet so that they don't die. This will be a permanent regulation for them, for Aaron and his descendants in every generation.

### Instructions for oil and incense

<sup>22</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>23</sup>Now take for yourself high-quality spices: five hundred weight of solid myrrh; half as much of sweet-smelling cinnamon, that is, two hundred fifty; two hundred fifty weight of sweet-smelling cane; <sup>24</sup>five hundred of cassia—measured by the sanctuary shekel—and a hin<sup>a</sup> of olive oil. <sup>25</sup>Prepare a holy anointing oil, blending them like a skilled perfume maker to produce the holy anointing oil. <sup>26</sup>Use it to anoint the meeting tent, the chest containing the covenant, <sup>27</sup>the table and all its equipment, the lampstand and its equipment, the incense altar, <sup>28</sup>the altar for entirely burned offerings and all its equipment, and the washbasin with its stand. <sup>29</sup>Make them holy so that they may be perfectly holy. Whatever touches them will become holy. <sup>30</sup>Then anoint Aaron and his sons and make them holy to serve me as priests. <sup>31</sup>Say to the Israelites: This will be my holy anointing oil in every generation. <sup>32</sup>Don't allow anyone else to use this oil. Don't make another oil like it by using the same formula. This oil is holy, and you should regard it as holy. <sup>33</sup>Whoever blends an oil like it or whoever uses the oil on someone else will be cut off from the people.

<sup>34</sup>The LORD said to Moses: Take an equal amount of each of these spices: gum resin, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense. <sup>35</sup>Like a skilled perfume maker, carefully blend them together and make incense, seasoned with salt, pure and holy. <sup>36</sup>Beat some of it into a fine powder and put part of it in front of the covenant document in the meeting tent where I will meet with you. You should regard it as perfectly holy. <sup>37</sup>When you make incense according to this formula, you shouldn't make any of it for your own use. You should regard it as holy to the LORD. <sup>38</sup>Whoever makes incense with this same formula to enjoy its fragrance will be cut off from the people.

### Construction leaders: Bezalel and Oholiab

**31** The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Look, I have chosen Bezalel, Uri's son and Hur's grandson from the tribe of Judah. <sup>3</sup>I have filled him with the divine spirit, with skill, ability, and knowledge for every kind of work. <sup>4</sup>He will be able to create designs; do metalwork in gold, silver, and copper; <sup>5</sup>cut stones for setting; carve wood; and do every kind of work. <sup>6</sup>I have also appointed with him Oholiab, Ahisamach's son from the tribe of Dan. To all who are skillful, I have given the skill to make everything that I have commanded you: <sup>7</sup>the meeting tent, the chest containing the covenant, the cover that is on top of it, all the tent's furnishings,

<sup>a</sup>One hin is approximately one gallon.

be collected as *compensation*. In the biblical world, people believed that taking a census of a group could cause a plague or disaster (2 Sam 24:1-15; 2 Chron 21:1-14). It was believed that a payment of money would protect those being counted from such a disaster (Num 31:48-50, 54). The *compensation* would also help to provide the silver necessary for building the wilderness dwelling (Exod 30:16; 26:19, 21, 25; 27:10-11, 17; 38:25-28).

30:17-21 The washing by the priests is a ritual cleansing of *their hands and their feet* (30:19). These parts of their bodies will make contact with surfaces that are holy: the items and area inside the meeting tent, the altar, the sacrifices, and the ground around the altar. For the source of the copper for the *basin for washing*, see Exodus 38:8. *so that they don't die*: See note on Exodus 28:35.

30:22-33 This particular recipe for the *holy anointing oil* (30:25) was to be made only by the priests and to be used only in the sanctuary (Exod 30:32-33). Scented oils were used regularly for common health and cosmetic reasons by ancient people.

30:29 *Whatever touches them will become holy*: See note on Exodus 29:21.

30:33 *cut off from the people*: See note on Exodus 12:15.

30:34-38 The unique recipe for the holy incense is reserved only for the priests and for the incense altar in the meeting tent (Exod 30:1-10).

30:36 *in front of the covenant document . . . where I will meet with you*: See Exodus 30:6; 25:22; 29:42.

30:38 *cut off from the people*: See note on Exodus 12:15.

31:1-11 Two construction supervisors are chosen. The

<sup>8</sup>the table and its equipment, the pure lampstand with all its equipment, the incense altar, <sup>9</sup>the altar for entirely burned offerings with all its equipment, the washbasin with its stand, <sup>10</sup>the woven clothing, the holy clothes for Aaron the priest and for his sons for their service as priests, <sup>11</sup>the anointing oil, and the sweet-smelling incense for the sanctuary. They will do just as I have commanded you.

**Instructions for keeping the Sabbath**

<sup>12</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>13</sup>Tell the Israelites: “Be sure to keep my sabbaths, because the Sabbath is a sign between me and you in every generation so you will know that I am the LORD who makes you holy. <sup>14</sup>Keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who violates the Sabbath will be put to death. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath, that person will be cut off from the people. <sup>15</sup>Do your work for six days. But the seventh day is a Sabbath of complete rest that is holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day will be put to death. <sup>16</sup>The Israelites should keep the Sabbath. They should observe the Sabbath in every generation as a covenant for all time. <sup>17</sup>It is a sign forever between me and the Israelites that in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day the LORD rested and was refreshed.”

<sup>18</sup>When God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, God gave him the two covenant tablets, the stone tablets written by God’s finger.

**Worshipping the gold bull calf**

**32** The people saw that Moses was taking a long time to come down from the mountain. They gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Come on! Make us gods” who can lead

<sup>v</sup>Or a god

chief supervisor, *Bezalel*, is filled... with the divine spirit and is from the southern tribe of Judah. *Oholiab* is from the far northern tribe of Dan. Thus, both southern Judah and northern Israel are represented. The tribe of Judah will eventually lay claim to God’s presence in the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 6; see note on Exod 15:17). The northern kingdom had a competing worship shrine in Dan (1 Kgs 12:25-30; see note on Exod 32:1-35). The supervisors begin their work constructing the dwelling in Exodus 35:30-36:1, after the gold calf incident in Exodus 32-34.

<sup>31:12-17</sup> The large section of instructions about God’s holy dwelling and all its equipment began in Exodus 25:1 and ends here with a strong command to rest and not work on the Sabbath, every seventh day of the week. On the significance of the seven sections in Exodus 25:1-31:17 and the Sabbath as the final and seventh section, see sidebar, “The Sabbath, Creation, and Building the Lord’s Dwelling” at Exodus 25. Israel’s building of God’s wilderness dwelling in holy space is an echo of God’s building of the world in creation. Both building projects end with the Sabbath as a holy dwelling in time (31:12-17; Gen 2:1-3). See sidebar, “The Sabbath Day of Rest” at Exodus 16 and the note on Exodus 20:8-11.

<sup>31:18</sup> two covenant tablets... written by God’s finger. See Exodus 24:12. The stone tablets contain the Ten Commandments and are the only instructions written by God. All the other teachings are given by the Lord through Moses (Exod 24:3-4, 7). This reminder of the precious and unique quality of the stone tablets will heighten the dramatic effect when Moses throws the tablets to the ground and breaks them (Exod 32:15-16, 19; see Exod 34:1, 27-28). <sup>32:1-34:35</sup> The Lord has just completed making a covenant of promises and obligations with the Israelites at Mount Sinai (see sidebar, “The Covenant” at Exod 19). The people have heard the Ten Commandments spoken directly by God to them (see note on Exod 20:18-21). The first and most important commandments in Israel’s

covenant with the Lord prohibited the worship of other gods and the making of idols of any kind (Exod 20:1-5). The instructions that followed the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:22-23:19) begin with forbidding Israel from making “gods of silver or gold for yourselves” (Exod 20:23). These teachings end with a command not to “call on the names of other gods” (Exod 23:13). Three times the Israelites agree that they will surely obey “everything that the Lord has said” (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7). The instructions for the building of God’s holy dwelling have all been given to Moses by the Lord (Exod 25:1-31:17). The reader’s expectation is that now the story will proceed to the actual construction of the dwelling that will provide a home for the Lord’s glorious presence. That, after all, was God’s ultimate desire and intention—that the Lord would “make a home” among the Israelites (see note on Exod 29:46). This scene of teaching and obedience, however, is suddenly and unexpectedly shattered. Israel breaks the most important commandment against worshipping other gods and against making idols of gold or silver. The Israelites make a gold calf at the foot of Mount Sinai and then worship it. Breaking this first and most important commandment means that the whole covenant between the Lord and the Israelites is broken. How will a sinful and disobedient Israel be able to go forward on its journey from here? How can a rebellious human community coexist with a holy and passionate God who punishes the guilty (Exod 20:5) and doesn’t forgive (Exod 32:21)? These are the central questions that hang over Exodus 32-34.

<sup>32:1-35</sup> The action in the chapter moves back and forth between the top of Mount Sinai and the foot of Mount Sinai. Aaron and the Israelites make and worship a gold calf at the foot of Mount Sinai (32:1-6). Moses and the Lord enter into a debate about the future of the people on top of Mount Sinai (32:7-14). Then Moses comes down and confronts the people and Aaron at the bottom of the mountain (32:15-29). Finally, Moses returns again

<sup>31:13</sup> Ex 20:8.  
<sup>Ex 31:17:</sup>  
<sup>Lv 20:8:</sup>  
<sup>Exe 20:12:</sup>  
<sup>Exe 20:20</sup>  
<sup>31:18</sup> Ex 24:12.  
<sup>Ex 32:15-16:</sup>  
<sup>Ex 34:1: Dt 4:13</sup>  
<sup>32:1</sup> Ex 13:21.  
<sup>Ex 24:18:</sup>  
<sup>Ex 32:23:</sup>  
<sup>Ac 7:40</sup>

32:2 Jgs 8:24  
 32:3 Ex 32:2  
 32:4 Ex 32:8;  
 Dt 9:16;  
 1Ki 12:26;  
 Neh 9:18;  
 Ps 106:19  
 32:5 2Ki 10:20  
 32:6 Nm 25:2;  
 Jgs 16:23;  
 Ac 7:41;  
 1Co 10:7  
 32:7 Ex 32:11;  
 Ex 33:1; Dt 9:12;  
 Hos 9:9

us. As for this man Moses who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't have a clue what has happened to him."

<sup>2</sup>Aaron said to them, "All right, take out the gold rings from the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."<sup>3</sup> So all the people took out the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron. <sup>4</sup>He collected them and tied them up in a cloth.<sup>5</sup> Then he made a metal image of a bull calf, and the people declared, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

<sup>6</sup>When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf. Then Aaron announced, "Tomorrow will be a festival to the LORD!"<sup>7</sup> They got up early the next day and offered up entirely burned offerings and brought well-being sacrifices. The people sat down to eat and drink and then got up to celebrate.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: "Hurry up and go down! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, are ruining everything! <sup>9</sup>They've already abandoned the path that I commanded. They have made a metal bull calf for themselves. They've bowed down

<sup>10</sup>Or formed them into a mold or engraved them with a stylus

to speak with God on the top of Mount Sinai (32:30-34). Moreover, the story sets up a contrast in leadership between Moses and Aaron. Moses takes full responsibility for the future of the people and pleads on behalf of the Israelites before God (32:11-14, 32). Aaron, on the other hand, blames the people for his own bad actions and refuses to accept responsibility as a leader (32:21-24; see also 32:2-4).

**32:1 a long time:** The reader knows that Moses will be on the mountain for a period of 40 days and 40 nights (Exod 24:18). The Israelites, however, haven't been told how long Moses will be away, and so they grow impatient. Aaron is a brother to Moses (Exod 6:20) and will eventually become the high priest who will lead Israel's worship of God in the wilderness dwelling (Exod 28:1, 41; 29:1-29; Lev 8:7-9, 13). Moses also put Aaron in charge while Moses went up to speak to God on top of the mountain (Exod 24:14). Thus the people turn to Aaron with their demand that he make a gold calf and lead them in bowing down to other gods. *Make us gods:* The Hebrew word for "gods" (*elohim*) can mean multiple gods or it can be a plural of majesty referring to one great god. In any case, the people demand that Aaron make an idol of one or more alternate gods to replace the Lord as the object of their worship and devotion. *Moses:* The people seek a new human leader to replace Moses, presumably Aaron. *who brought us up out of the land of Egypt:* Before this point, it is the Lord who is almost always named as the primary one responsible for bringing Israel out of slavery in Egypt, not Moses (Exod 3:17; 6:6-7; 18:1, 12; 20:2; 29:46; one exception is Exod 3:12). The people in effect deny the Lord by associating their deliverance with Moses instead.

**The Gold Bull Calf** In and around Israel, archaeologists have uncovered numerous statues and stone images of calves and bulls. They were used in worship, each serving either as an image of a god or as a throne on which a god would stand or sit. In Exodus 32, the gold bull calf could be understood in one of three ways. First, it could be an improper substitute for the Lord's throne on top of the chest containing the covenant document in the tent dwelling (Exod 25:17-22). Second, it could be an image of gods other than the Lord (Exod 32:1, 4—breaking the commandment against having other gods—Exod 20:3; see Ps 106:19-20). Third, it could be an idol and image of the Lord (Exod 32:5—breaking the commandment against making idols of any kind—Exod 20:4-5; see Neh 9:18). The story about the gold bull calf likely has some connection with King Jeroboam's two gold calves in Dan and Bethel in 1 Kings 12:25-30. Jeroboam set up two gold calves at Dan and Bethel as a rival to southern Judah's temple in Jerusalem. King Jeroboam made a proclamation that is almost identical to the people's proclamation in Exodus 32:4 (see 1 Kgs 12:28).

**32:2 gold rings:** The gold rings apparently were part of the silver and gold that the Egyptians gave to the Israelites as an encouragement for them to leave Egypt quickly (Exod 3:22; 11:2-3; 12:35-36). The Lord had originally intended the gold to be used for the construction of the Lord's sanctuary or dwelling (see note on Exod 25:3).

**32:4 he made a metal image:** Aaron disobeys the commandment against making an image of a god (Exod 20:4-5, 23). *a bull calf:* The image of a bull is frequently associated with gods in the ancient Near East, including Canaanite religious texts from Ugarit. Some traditions in northern Israel also connected the image of a bull calf with the worship of the Lord (1 Kgs 12:25-33). See sidebar, "The Gold Bull Calf" *your gods, Israel, who brought you up:* The phrase implies more than one god. The people now attach the deliverance from Egypt to these gods rather than to Moses (Exod 32:1) or to the Lord (Exod 20:2; 29:46).

**32:5 a festival to the LORD:** Aaron tries to redefine the people's worship of the gold bull calf. For Aaron, the gold calf isn't an idol of these other gods but an image of the LORD. Even so, bowing down to an idol that is identified with the Lord still violates the commandment against the making of any "idol" in Exodus 20:4-5, 23.

**32:6** The scene here is strikingly similar to the original covenant the Israelites made with the Lord in Exodus 24:5-11. Both covenants are made with *entirely burned offerings, well-being sacrifices*, eating, drinking, and looking at the deity. In effect, the Israelites make their own new covenant with the idol.

**32:7 The Lord spoke to Moses:** The scene suddenly shifts from the foot of Mount Sinai to the top of the mountain.



to it and offered sacrifices to it and declared, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" <sup>9</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "I've been watching these people, and I've seen how stubborn they are. <sup>10</sup>Now leave me alone! Let my fury burn and devour them. Then I'll make a great nation out of you."

<sup>11</sup>But Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, "LORD, why does your fury burn against your own people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and amazing force? <sup>12</sup>Why should the Egyptians say, 'He had an evil plan to take the people out and kill them in the mountains and so wipe them off the earth'? Calm down your fierce anger. Change your mind about doing terrible things to your own people. <sup>13</sup>Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, whom you yourself promised, 'I'll make your descendants as many as the stars in the sky. And I've promised to give your descendants this whole land to possess for all time.'" <sup>14</sup>Then the LORD changed his mind about the terrible things he said he would do to his people.

<sup>15</sup>Moses then turned around and came down the mountain. He carried the two covenant tablets in his hands. The tablets were written on both sides, front and back. <sup>16</sup>The tablets were God's own work. What was written there was God's own writing inscribed on the tablets. <sup>17</sup>When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "It sounds like war in the camp."

<sup>18</sup>But Moses said,

"It isn't the sound of a victory song.

It isn't the sound of a song of defeat.

The sound of party songs is what I hear."

<sup>19</sup>When he got near the camp and saw the bull calf and the dancing, Moses was furious.

*The LORD sees what has been happening among the Israelites with the gold calf and informs Moses (Exod 24:18; 32:1). Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt. Earlier throughout Exodus, the Israelites were always the Lord's people (Exod 3:10; 5:1, 16, 23; 6:7; 7:4, 16; 8:1, 20, 21, 22, 23; 9:1, 13, 17; 10:3, 4; 18:1; 19:5-6; 22:25). Here the Lord tells Moses that the Israelites are Your people, not the Lord's people. The Lord also transfers the responsibility of bringing the Israelites out of Egypt onto Moses (see note on Exod 32:1). The Lord effectively disowns the people of Israel because of their idolatry.*

*32:9-10 leave me alone... devour them: The Lord instructs Moses to step aside and allow God to destroy all the Israelites as a punishment for their sin of disobeying the commandments by worshipping the image of another god. The stubborn Israelites haven't even left Mount Sinai, and yet they have broken the covenant with God. I'll make a great nation out of you: God gives Moses the chance to abandon the Israelites and start all over. Moses can become a new Abraham, the father of a whole new and great nation (see Gen 12:2; 18:18; 22:17-18).*

*32:11 But Moses pleaded with the LORD: Moses denies himself the opportunity to become a new Abraham. Instead, Moses begins to make a strong case for why the Lord shouldn't destroy the Israelites but remain committed to them, even though they have disobeyed God's covenant. your own people... out of the land of Egypt: Moses begins by reminding the Lord that the Israelites are primarily God's own people, not Moses' people (Exod 19:3-6). Moreover, it was ultimately the Lord who rescued Israel out of the land of Egypt, not Moses (Exod 20:2; 29:46). The Lord has invested too much in Israel to abandon them now.*

*32:12 Why should the Egyptians say: Moses' second argument is that destroying Israel in the wilderness would hurt the Lord's international reputation among nations like Egypt. The argument has force. The Lord has consistently been interested in what the Egyptians believe about Israel's God (Exod 7:5; 11:7; 14:4, 18).*

*32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel: Moses' third argument is that God has made an enduring covenant and commitment to Israel's ancestors. God promised that they would have many descendants, and the Lord would bring them to the promised land of Canaan (Gen 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-16; 15:5, 15-18; 17:7-8; 22:17; Exod 3:16-17; 6:6-8). Moses appeals to God's faithfulness to keep the promises that God has made (Num 23:19; Ps 145:13).*

*32:14 Then the Lord changed his mind: Earlier in Exodus, Moses had argued with God and lost (Exod 3:11-4:17). God refused to change God's mind about Moses leading Israel out of Egypt. This time, however, Moses advocates not for himself but for the Israelites—and the human wins the argument. God changed God's mind. Elsewhere in the Bible, claims are made that God doesn't change God's mind as humans change their minds (e.g., 1 Sam 15:29). Ironically, in this case, God reverses course about destroying Israel in order avoid reversing earlier long-standing promises to bless Israel (see note on Exod 32:13). A similar argument between Moses and the Lord will occur at another crisis point when Israel arrives at Canaan's border in Numbers 14:1-25.*

*32:15 the two covenant tablets: See note on Exodus 31:18.*

*32:16 tablets... God's own writing: See note on Exodus 24:3.*

*32:17 Joshua is Moses' assistant who had gone up the mountain with Moses (Exod 24:13).*

*32:19 Moses was furious: Moses had earlier defended Israel against the Lord's anger (Exod 32:11-14). As he sees the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses switches roles. Moses reflects the Lord's anger and condemns the Israelites. shattered them in pieces: Moses breaks the two precious stone tablets on which God had engraved the Ten Commandments (Exod 32:16). The dramatic act is a sign that the covenant between the Lord and the Israelites has been broken by Israel's actions. The actions violated the first and most important commandments against worshipping other gods and making an idol (Exod 20:3-5).*

32:9 Ex 33:3,  
Ex 33:5, Ex 34:9;  
Dt 9:6; Ac 7:51  
32:10 Ex 22:24;  
Nm 14:12,  
Nm 16:21,  
Nm 16:45;  
Dt 9:14  
32:11 Dt 9:18,  
Dt 9:26;  
Ps 106:23  
32:15 Ex 24:12,  
Ex 31:18,  
Ex 34:29;  
Dt 9:15  
32:16 Ex 31:18,  
Ex 34:1,  
Ex 34:28;  
Dt 4:13  
32:17 Ex 17:9,  
Ex 24:13,  
Ex 33:11  
32:18 Ex 32:19  
32:19 Ex 32:6;  
Dt 9:16, Dt 9:17

32:20 Dt 9:21

32:23 Ex 32:1

32:26 Nm 3:6,

Nm 3:9;

Dt 33:9-10;

2Sa 20:11

32:27 Nm 25:5;

Dt 33:9

32:28 Dt 33:9

32:29 Ex 28:41;

Nm 25:11;

Dt 13:6;

Zec 13:3;

Mt 10:37

32:30 Isa 12:20

32:31 Ex 32:30;

Dt 9:18

32:32

Nm 14:19;

Ps 69:28;

Dn 12:1; Ro 9:3;

Ph 4:3

32:33 Ps 69:28;

Rev 1:5

32:34 Ex 23:20

He hurled the tablets down and shattered them in pieces at the foot of the mountain. <sup>20</sup>He took the calf that they had made and burned it in a fire. Then he ground it down to crushed powder, scattered it on the water, and made the Israelites drink it.

<sup>21</sup>Moses said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you that you led them to commit such a terrible sin?"

<sup>22</sup>Aaron replied, "Don't get angry with me, sir. You know yourself that these people are out of control." <sup>23</sup>They said to me, 'Make us gods who can lead us. As for this man Moses who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't have a clue what has happened to him.' <sup>24</sup>So I said to them, 'Whoever has gold, take it off! So they gave it to me, I threw it into the fire, and out came this bull calf!'

<sup>25</sup>Moses saw that the people were out of control because Aaron had let them get out of control, making them an easy target for their enemies. <sup>26</sup>So Moses stood at the camp's gate and said, "Whoever is on the LORD's side, come to me!" All the Levites gathered around him. <sup>27</sup>Moses said to them, "This is what the LORD, Israel's God, says: Each of you, strap on your sword! Go back and forth from one end of the camp to the other. Each of you, kill your brother, your friend, and your neighbor!" <sup>28</sup>The Levites did as Moses commanded. About three thousand people were killed that day. <sup>29</sup>Moses said, "Today you've been ordained to the LORD, each one of you at the cost of a son or a brother. Today you've gained a special blessing for yourselves."

<sup>30</sup>The next day Moses said to the people, "You've committed a terrible sin. So now I will go up to the LORD. Maybe I can arrange reconciliation on account of your sin." <sup>31</sup>So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a terrible sin these people have committed! They made for themselves gods<sup>7</sup> of gold. <sup>32</sup>But now, please forgive their sin! And if not, then wipe me out of your scroll that you've written."

<sup>33</sup>But the LORD said to Moses, "The ones I'll wipe out of my scroll are those who sinned against me. <sup>34</sup>Now go and lead the people to the place I described to you. My messenger here will go in front of you. When the day of reckoning comes, I'll count their sin against them."

<sup>7</sup>Sam; MT *evil* <sup>7</sup>Or *a god*

32:20 *burned it in a fire*: Moses completely destroys the idol by first burning it and then grinding the gold to powder. That a human like Moses can so easily destroy this gold calf shows how powerless and empty the idol is. The people are forced to *drink* the powdered gold as a test of guilt and innocence. Those guilty of idolatry will become ill and die from the powder. Those who are innocent will be spared and live. A similar process occurs in the case of someone suspected of adultery in Numbers 5:11-31.

32:21 Moses demands an explanation from Aaron because Moses had put Aaron in charge during his absence (Exod 24:14).

32:22-24 As a leader, Moses had earlier denied his own interests and advocated for the Israelites before God (see note on Exod 32:11). Aaron presents a dramatic contrast to Moses. He takes no responsibility as a leader, blames the people, and lies about his active role in making the gold calf (cf. 32:24 with Exod 32:4; see Exod 32:35).

32:26-28 Moses is a Levite (Exod 2:1-10; 6:19-20). The Levites join Moses in punishing the guilty by killing 3,000 of their fellow Israelites by the sword. Elsewhere in the Bible, the tribe of Levi is associated with excessive violence (Gen 49:5-7; see Gen 34:25-31). Here Moses claims the Levites' violence is justified and commanded by God. The text is disturbing, but it serves to emphasize the severe nature of the people's sin and the disastrous consequences that flow from it. God had initially planned to kill all the Israelites before Moses changed God's mind (Exod 32:10, 14).

32:29 *Today... ordained to the LORD*: Moses ordains all members of the tribe of Levites into special service, presumably as priests to lead worship and offer sacrifices (see also Deut 10:8-9; 18:1-8; 33:8-10). Another tradition views the Levites not as full priests but as servants subordinate to the sole priestly line of Aaron and his descendants (Exod 28:1; 29:44; 38:21; Num 3:5-11; 8:5-22; Num 16-18).

32:31 Moses returns to the top of Mount Sinai to seek further reconciliation from the Lord. The Lord has not forgiven the Israelites but only allowed them to survive (Exod 32:14). Moses wants something more.

32:32 *your scroll that you've written*: This likely refers to "the scroll of life" (Ps 69:28; Isa 4:3) on which God lists the names of the faithful. Moses puts his own life and status on the line for the people and their forgiveness (see also Exod 32:10-11).

32:33 The Lord says no to Moses' offer to take his life for the people. The Lord also says no to forgiving *those who sinned*.

32:34 *My messenger*: The Lord commands Moses to lead the Israelites through the wilderness to the land of Canaan. The Lord won't go with him because of the people's sin. Instead, the Lord will send a divine *messenger*, a warrior who will be a substitute for God's presence among the Israelites. The divine *messenger* had been promised earlier (Exod 23:20-22). The original plan had been that the Lord and the *messenger* would travel with the Israelites to Canaan (Exod 29:44-46). Now only the *messenger* will accompany the Israelites. *I'll count their sin against them*: These words echo the Lord's earlier warning concerning

<sup>35</sup>Then the LORD sent a plague on the people because of what they did with the bull calf that Aaron made.

**The LORD: "I can't go"**

**33**The LORD said to Moses, "Go and leave this place, you and the people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt. Go to the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I said, 'I'll give it to your descendants.' I'll send a messenger before you. I'll drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Go to this land full of milk and honey. But I won't go up with you because I would end up destroying you along the way since you are a stubborn people."

<sup>4</sup>When the people heard the bad news, they were sorry. No one put on any jewelry, <sup>5</sup>because the LORD had said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites, 'You are a stubborn people. If I were to go up with you even for a single moment, I would destroy you. So now take off your jewelry, while I figure out what to do with you.'" <sup>6</sup>So after leaving Mount Horeb the Israelites rid themselves of their jewelry.

**Speaking with the LORD at the meeting tent**

<sup>7</sup>Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, far away from the camp. He called it the meeting tent. Everyone who wanted advice from the LORD would go out to the meeting tent outside the camp. <sup>8</sup>Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise and stand at the entrance to their tents and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. <sup>9</sup>When Moses entered the tent, the column of cloud would come down and stand at the tent's entrance while the LORD talked with Moses. <sup>10</sup>When all the people saw the column of cloud standing at the tent's entrance, they would all rise and then bow down at the entrances to their tents. <sup>11</sup>In this way the LORD used to speak to Moses face-to-face, like two people

the messenger: "He won't forgive the things you do wrong" (Exod 23:21).

**32:35 a plague on the people:** The word for *plague* used here is from the same Hebrew root as the word used when God struck the Egyptians with plagues because they enslaved the Israelites (Exod 8:2; 12:13, 23, 27). God punishes Israel just as God punished Egypt. The *plague* may be the outcome of the test of guilt and innocence in Exodus 32:20. **33:1-23** Moses pleads with God a second time. Moses had managed to convince God to change plans about destroying Israel in the first round of arguing with God (Exod 32:10-14). Moses, however, is not satisfied with Israel's mere survival. Nor is Moses satisfied with only the divine messenger as they travel to Canaan. Moses insists that the Lord must *go with us* (33:16). The Lord ultimately gives in to Moses' demands, including a request that Moses be allowed to see a glimpse of the Lord's glorious presence (33:18). In doing so, Moses will see more deeply into the profound goodness of God's character and name (33:19).

**33:1** The Lord continues to keep the Israelites at arm's length. The Lord tells Moses that these are the *people whom you* (not the Lord) brought up from Egypt (see note on Exod 32:7). *the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:* See note on Exodus 32:13.

**33:2 I'll send a messenger:** See note on Exodus 32:34. *the Canaanites . . . Jebusites:* This is the traditional list of all the groups of people who live in the land of Canaan. The Lord promises that the divine messenger or warrior will drive them out (see note on Exod 23:23).

**33:3 But I won't go up with you.** The Lord's original plan and goal had been to make a home in the middle of the Israelite camp in the tent dwelling as the Israelites traveled to Canaan (see Exod 25-31, esp. 29:42-46). That entire plan is now on hold. *because I would end up destroying you:* God's glorious presence is holy, powerful, and dangerous, even for priests (see notes on Exod 28:1-43 and 28:35). Close contact with God's awesome holiness will destroy an

unholy or sinful people. Although Israel was called to be a "kingdom of priests . . . and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6), the gold calf disaster has shown that they have not lived up to their calling. By the end of Exodus, however, the Lord's glorious presence will come down and fill the tent dwelling in the midst of the Israelites in spite of Israel's rebellion. How that becomes possible is the subject of Exodus 33-34.

**33:4-6** As commanded, the people *take off their jewelry*. This gold and silver had been given to the Israelites as they left Egypt (see note on Exod 32:2). The Israelites have become like the Egyptians in several ways. They have become a *stubborn people* (33:5), similar to Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Exod 7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 14:17). God punished Israel with a plague, as God did with the Egyptians (see note on Exod 32:35). The Israelites were compelled to give away their jewelry, just as the Egyptians did (Exod 12:35-36). *Mount Horeb:* The alternate name for Mount Sinai (see note on Exod 19:1-8).

**33:7-11** *Moses took the tent . . . outside the camp:* In Exodus 25-31, the *meeting tent* is connected with a larger "dwelling" in the middle of the camp. Those chapters assume that the Lord is always present in the tent (Exod 29:46; see Num 2:2, 17), the priests are in charge, and daily sacrifices are offered there. However, here in Exodus 33, the holy presence of the Lord isn't able to be present in the middle of Israel's camp because of their great sin (Exod 33:3). In response, Moses moves the *meeting tent* to an area outside the boundaries of Israel's camp. This *meeting tent* provides a temporary place for Moses and the Lord to communicate while Joshua stands guard at the tent (33:7-11). After the brief communication, the Lord's presence in the *column of cloud* would leave the tent. Some texts in Numbers and Deuteronomy have more in common with the *meeting tent* in Exodus 33:7-11 than with the "dwelling" in Exodus 25-31 (Num 11:16-17, 24-30; 12:4-13; Deut 31:14-15). See note on Exodus 27:20-21.

**33:11** *the LORD used to speak to Moses face-to-face:* The

32:35 Ex 32:25

33:1 Gn 12:7; Ex 32:13

33:2 Ex 23:20, Ex 32:34, Ex 34:11

33:3 Ex 3:8, Ex 32:9, Ex 32:10

33:7 Dt 4:29; 2Sa 21:1

33:10 Ex 4:31, Ex 33:9

33:11 Ex 17:9, Ex 24:13, Ex 32:17; Nm 12:8; Dt 34:10

33:12 Gn 6:8;  
Ex 33:17

33:13 Dt 9:26,  
Dt 9:29; Ps 25:4,  
Ps 27:11,  
Ps 103:7

33:14

Josh 21:44,  
Josh 22:4; Is 63:9

33:15 Ex 33:3,  
Ex 33:14,

Ex 34:9; Ps 80:3,  
Ps 80:7

33:16 Lv 20:24,  
Lv 20:26;

Nm 14:14,  
Nm 23:9;

Dt 4:34

33:17 Ex 33:12

33:18 Ex 33:20;  
2Co 3:18;

1Ti 6:16;  
Rev 21:23

33:19 Ex 34:5-6,  
Ex 34:7; Ro 9:15

talking to each other. Then Moses would come back to the camp. But his young assistant Joshua, Nun's son, wouldn't leave the tent.

### **Moses pleads with God**

<sup>12</sup>Moses said to the LORD, "Look, you've been telling me, 'Lead these people forward.' But you haven't told me whom you will send with me. Yet you've assured me, 'I know you by name and think highly of you.' <sup>13</sup>Now if you do think highly of me, show me your ways so that I may know you and so that you may really approve of me. Remember too that this nation is your people."

<sup>14</sup>The LORD replied, "I'll go myself, and I'll help you."

<sup>15</sup>Moses replied, "If you won't go yourself, don't make us leave here. <sup>16</sup>Because how will anyone know that we have your special approval, both I and your people, unless you go with us? Only that distinguishes us, me and your people, from every other people on the earth."

<sup>17</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "I'll do exactly what you've asked because you have my special approval, and I know you by name."

<sup>18</sup>Moses said, "Please show me your glorious presence."

<sup>19</sup>The LORD said, "I'll make all my goodness pass in front of you, and I'll proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD.' I will be kind to whomever I wish to be kind, and I will have

phrase expresses the intimacy of communication between the Lord and Moses. The Bible elsewhere indicates that humans can't see God face-to-face without at least the threat of losing their lives (Exod 3:6; 24:11; 33:20, 23; Gen 32:30; Judg 6:22-23; 13:22-23; Isa 6:5). Moses is able to *speak* to God face-to-face but not see God face-to-face (Exod 33:20, 23). The *column of cloud* associated with the meeting tent (Exod 33:10) presumably veils God's physical appearance as God and Moses speak closely with each other.

**33:12-23** Moses enters into an extended negotiation with the Lord about how the Lord will be present with the Israelites as they continue their journey. Moses had earlier persuaded God to change God's mind about destroying Israel in the wilderness (Exod 32:9-14). Moses now seeks to persuade God personally (not just God's "messenger"—Exod 33:2) to *go with us* to Canaan (33:16).

**33:12** Moses notes that the Lord hasn't told him *whom you will send with me* as Moses leads the Israelites into Canaan. The Lord had promised to send an unnamed "messenger" (Exod 33:2; see note on Exod 32:34). It appears to the reader that perhaps Moses is asking for the messenger's name (Gen 32:29-30; Judg 13:17-18). Moses bases his request on both God's previous claims that God knows Moses *by name* (indicating a very close relationship) and God's high regard for Moses.

**33:13** Moses presses the Lord further. It is clear that Moses wants most of all to *know* the Lord and the Lord's ways. Moses asks to know something deeper and more profound about the Lord's ways, that is, the Lord's character, name, and ways of dealing with human sin and disobedience. The Lord's ways will be revealed in Exodus 33:19 and Exodus 34:6-7 (see Ps 103:7-19). The ways of the Lord's promised messenger involved strict obedience and no possibility of forgiveness (Exod 23:21). Moses hopes that the Lord's ways may be something different. Moses appeals to his intimate relationship with the Lord to move the Lord to a deeper revealing of God's ways and character. *Remember... this nation is your people*: See note on Exodus 32:11.

**33:14** *I'll go myself*: Surprisingly, the Lord appears moved by Moses' appeal and decides to do more than just send a messenger (Exod 33:2). The Lord promises to go to Canaan as well and help Israel in defeating the Canaanites. But what does that mean? Will the Lord go ahead of the Israelites? Alongside the Israelites? The Lord had earlier said

that going "with you" in the midst of Israel's camp was not an option (Exod 33:3).

**33:15-16** Moses insists that the Lord must indeed personally go to Canaan. If not, Israel should just remain in the wilderness (33:15). Moses makes two bold rhetorical moves in Exodus 33:16. First, Moses subtly expands the *special approval* that the Lord had affirmed for Moses alone to the whole people of Israel. Second, Moses insists that the Lord *must go with us* since the Lord's presence in the midst of the Israelites (*with us*) is the only thing that distinguishes Israel *from every other people on the earth*. Israel on its own has begun to look like Egypt (see note on Exod 33:4-6). Israel's only claim to uniqueness among the nations is that the Lord is *with us*. In effect, Moses is asking that the Lord find a way to reinstate the plans for building the tent dwelling in Exodus 25-31. The tent dwelling represents the Lord's presence permanently at home *with us*, which has been the Lord's desire all along (Exod 29:46). But how can a holy God live with a sinful people? It will have to be through God's somehow reaching deeper into God's own ways, character, and name. There God will find the resources that make reconciliation with a disobedient Israel possible.

**33:17** The Lord assures Moses that his request for the Lord's presence with us will be fulfilled. The Lord has agreed because of the Lord's special relationship with Moses. No mention is made of the Lord's "special approval" of the people (Exod 33:15). But God's intimacy with Moses is sufficient for God to move forward.

**33:18** Moses responds with one more request: "*Please show me your glorious presence*." This request is a deepening of Moses' earlier appeal to God to "show me your ways" (Exod 33:13). Moses wants to have a more profound experience and knowledge of God's mysterious and dazzling *glorious presence*. The Lord's *glorious presence* often has a visual dimension of intense light, lightning, or fire. It's often associated with divine holiness, purity, power, and beauty (Exod 3:1-5; 13:21-22; 19:18; 24:10, 17; 40:34-38; Ps 104:1-2; Isa 60:1-3, 19; Ezek 1:26-28; Hab 3:4). Its background lies in images of the powerful God of the storm (Ps 18:7-15). Humans typically react to the divine *glorious presence* with a mixture of fear, awe, and attraction. Moses seeks to be drawn further into a deeper experience of the Lord's presence in order to know more deeply the divine character.

**33:19** Moses has asked the Lord to show him the Lord's

compassion to whomever I wish to be compassionate. <sup>20</sup>But,” the LORD said, “you can’t see my face because no one can see me and live.” <sup>21</sup>The LORD said, “Here is a place near me where you will stand beside the rock. <sup>22</sup>As my glorious presence passes by, I’ll set you in a gap in the rock, and I’ll cover you with my hand until I’ve passed by. <sup>23</sup>Then I’ll take away my hand, and you will see my back, but my face won’t be visible.”

**A deeper revealing of God’s character**

**34** The LORD said to Moses, “Cut two stone tablets like the first ones. I’ll write on these tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke into pieces. <sup>2</sup>Get ready in the morning and come up to Mount Sinai. Stand there on top of the mountain in front of me. <sup>3</sup>No one else can come up with you. Don’t allow anyone even to be seen anywhere on the mountain. Don’t even let sheep and cattle graze in front of the mountain.” <sup>4</sup>So Moses cut two stone tablets like the first ones. He got up early in the morning and climbed up Mount Sinai, just as the LORD had commanded him. He carried the two stone tablets in his hands. <sup>5</sup>The LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him, and proclaimed the name, “The LORD.” <sup>6</sup>The LORD passed in front of him and proclaimed:

“The LORD! The LORD!  
a God who is compassionate and merciful,  
very patient,  
full of great loyalty and faithfulness,

“ways” (Exod 33:13) and the Lord’s “glorious presence” (Exod 33:18). In response, the Lord promises to parade the Lord’s goodness and proclaim the name, “The LORD,” in front of Moses. All of these descriptions set up the expectation that Moses is about to receive a unique experience of knowing God’s deeper character, name and presence. *I will be kind . . . will have compassion to whomever I wish to be compassionate:* The Lord gives Moses a preview of the fuller meaning of the divine name, “The LORD,” that he is about to receive. When God first called Moses to lead the Israelites, God revealed a special divine name. That name of God could be translated either as “I Am Who I Am” or “I Will Be Who I Will Be” (Exod 3:14). The fuller meaning of this divine name unfolds in stages across the chapters of the book of Exodus (see notes on Exod 15:26; 20:2, 5-6; 23:21; 29:46; 34:6-7). Now Moses learns of the foundational kindness and compassion undergirding the divine name and character. At the same time, God preserves the right to determine who will receive kindness and compassion.

**33:20** *But . . . you can’t see my face:* Although Moses will be allowed to glimpse some part of God’s “glorious presence” (Exod 33:18), Moses won’t see God’s face. The face is the most revealing part, whether of humans or of God. Thus Moses will indeed come to know God more deeply. Yet profound mystery and lingering questions about God’s actions and character will remain even for Moses, Israel’s most trusted servant of God. *no one can see me and live:* See notes on Exodus 3:6; 24:10-11; 33:11.

**33:21** The rock is apparently located at the top of Mount Sinai (Exod 34:2, 4).

**33:22-23** *my hand . . . my back . . . my face:* The Lord is described as having a humanlike body (see Ezek 1:26-28). Ironically, some part of God’s body (*my hand*) will shield Moses from seeing another part of God’s body (*my face*). See note on Exodus 33:20.

**34:1-9** These verses represent a key point in the book of Exodus. They are a gracious response to Moses’ urgent pleas in Exodus 33. Throughout Exodus, the Lord has unfolded new insights into the Lord’s character and name (see note on Exod 33:19). Now these verses provide a definitive revealing of who God truly is. God’s deep character

is primarily *compassionate and merciful . . . forgiving every kind of sin* (34:6-7). It is God’s compassion, loyalty, and forgiveness that make possible the restoring of the broken covenant relationship between the Lord and Israel (Exod 34:10; see Exod 32). The people of Israel will surely continue to suffer the consequences of future disobedience (34:7). But the core of the relationship between God and Israel will rest on God’s mercy and faithfulness (34:6-7). In response, Moses requests that the Lord *go along with us* (34:9; see note on Exod 33:3). Moses is eager to resume the project of building the “tent dwelling” as the place of the Lord’s presence in the middle of Israel’s camp (see Exod 25-31; 35-40). Moses also requests that the Lord *forgive the stubborn people* and take them again as the Lord’s *own possession* (34:9). This forgiveness means restoring the broken covenant relationship first established in Exodus 19-24 (see note on Exod 19:5). The restoration, however, relies less on the people’s obedience and more on God’s mercy and loyalty to Israel.

**34:1** *two stone tablets like the first ones:* See Exodus 24:3, 12; see note on Exodus 31:18. *which you broke into pieces:* See note on Exodus 32:19. In the first instance, the Lord had cut the two stone tablets and engraved them with the Ten Commandments (see Exod 24:12; 31:18; 32:15-16; see note on Exod 24:3). Moses had written the rest of God’s instruction on a “covenant scroll” (Exod 24:3-4, 7). On this second set of stone tablets in Exodus 34, Moses will apparently be the one who will cut and prepare the stone tablets (Exod 34:4). But who will write on them? The chapter begins and ends with two different answers, which appear to reflect different traditions (34:1—the Lord; Exod 34:27-28—Moses). It is also unclear whether it is the instructions of Exodus 34 or the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17 that will be engraved on the tablets (see note on Exod 34:27-28).

**34:3** These restrictions are similar to those given when the Lord “came down” and settled on top of Mount Sinai the first time (see Exod 34:5; 19:12, 21-24).

**34:5** *proclaimed the name, “The LORD”:* See notes on Exodus 3:13-15; 33:19.

**34:6-7** This listing of qualities stands as one of the most

**33:20** Dt 5:24; Is 6:5; Jn 1:18; 1Ti 6:16  
**33:21** Ps 18:2; Ps 62:7  
**33:22** Ps 91:1; Ps 91:4; Is 2:21; Is 49:2; Is 51:16  
**33:23** Ex 33:20; Jn 1:18; 1Ti 6:16  
**34:1** Ex 24:12; Ex 31:18; Ex 32:16; Ex 32:19; Dt 10:1  
**34:2** Ex 19:20  
**34:4** Ex 8:20; Ex 19:3; Ex 24:2; Ex 24:4; Ex 32:15  
**34:5** Ex 19:9; Ex 33:19; Nm 11:25  
**34:6** Nm 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; Ps 103:8; Jl 2:13

34:7 Ex 20:5-6;  
Dt 5:10;  
Job 10:14;  
Ps 103:3  
34:8 Ex 4:31  
34:9 Ex 32:9;  
Dt 32:9; Ps 28:9;  
Ps 33:12  
34:14 Ex 20:3;  
Ex 20:5;  
Dt 4:24;  
Josh 24:19;  
Na 1:2  
34:15 Ex 34:12

<sup>7</sup>showing great loyalty to a thousand generations, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion, yet by no means clearing the guilty, punishing for their parents' sins their children and their grandchildren, as well as the third and the fourth generation."

<sup>8</sup>At once Moses bowed to the ground and worshipped. <sup>9</sup>He said, "If you approve of me, my Lord, please go along with us." Although these are stubborn people, forgive our guilt and our sin and take us as your own possession."

### **Renewing the broken covenant**

<sup>10</sup>The LORD said: I now make a covenant. In front of all your people, I'll perform dramatic displays of power that have never been done before anywhere on earth or in any nation. All the people who are around you will see what the LORD does, because I will do an awesome thing with you.

<sup>11</sup>Be sure to obey what I command you today. I'm about to drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>12</sup>Be careful that you don't make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you are going, or it will become a dangerous trap for you. <sup>13</sup>You must tear down their altars, smash their sacred stone pillars, and cut down their sacred poles. <sup>14</sup>You must not bow down to another god, because the LORD is passionate: the LORD's name means "a passionate God." <sup>15</sup>Don't make

<sup>2</sup>LXX; MT adds *my Lord*.

important definitions of the character of God in the entire Bible. It is an intentional adaptation of an earlier list of God's qualities first given in the context of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:5-6). The earlier version in Exodus 20:5-6 described God's character in two parts: first of all, as punishing all those "who hate me," and second, as being loyal and gracious to those "who love me and keep my commandments." In Exodus 34:6-7, the punishing of God is moved down to second place. The consequences for disobedience remain in place, but they are no longer the first word. The loyalty and graciousness of God are moved up to first place and greatly expanded in comparison to Exodus 20:5-6 ("loyal and gracious" in Exod 20:5-6 compared with *compassionate and merciful, very patient, full of great loyalty and faithfulness, showing great loyalty* in 34:6-7). The crucial quality of God's forgiveness was not present in Exodus 20:5-6 (see Exod 23:21), but forgiveness now appears prominently in 34:7: *forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion*. Finally, the condition or qualification in Exodus 20:5-6 that God would show loyalty and grace only to "those who love me and keep my commandments" disappears in 34:6-7. The Lord will be merciful, compassionate, and forgiving, even when the people disobey and don't love the Lord. It's only on the basis of this clear glimpse of the true character and name of the Lord that the journey of God and Israel can continue from Mount Sinai to the land of Canaan. Moses will appeal to this self-declaration of God's mercy at another crisis point in the wilderness journey (Num 14:17-19). See also Nehemiah 9:16-19; Psalm 25:4-11; 86:15; 103:8; Jonah 4:2; Joel 2:23; Nahum 1:2-3.

**34:9** The Lord had previously thought it would be impossible to go along with Israel after the disaster with the gold calf (Exod 32). Such nearness to God's holiness would have destroyed the sinful Israelites (Exod 33:3). Moses refused to accept that reality and instead pressed God to reveal God's inner character ("show me your ways"—Exod 33:12-16). The Lord agreed, and now Moses asks again that the Lord *go along with us*. To do so was

God's earlier goal and desire (see note on Exod 29:46). *take us as your own possession*: Moses urges the Lord to return to the special covenant relationship established when Israel first arrived at Mount Sinai (see note on Exod 19:5; see also Deut 4:20; 9:29).

**34:10-28** The Lord formally announces the making of a new covenant relationship with Israel. The old covenant in Exodus 19-24 had been broken by Israel's worship with the gold calf (Exod 32; see notes on Exod 19:5; 32:19). The Lord expands several instructions regarding religious duties from the earlier expectations in Exodus 20:22-23:19 (the so-called covenant scroll—Exod 24:7). The instructions here come from a particular section of the earlier expectations, primarily from Exodus 23:13-33. Instruction restricting any kind of idolatry tops the list in Exodus 34 in light of the disaster with the gold calf (34:11-17, with parallels in Exod 20:23 and 23:20-33). The other instructions focus on proper practices of worship, festivals, and sacrifices that provide an alternative to the worship of idols (34:18-26, with parallels in Exod 23:12-19).

**34:10** *dramatic displays of power*: The Lord promises to perform amazing acts of power for Israel's benefit in the future as it enters the land of Canaan, just as the Lord had done against Egypt (Exod 7:3; 9:14-16; 10:1-2).

**34:11** *the Amorites, the Canaanites... the Jebusites*: See note on Exodus 33:2.

**34:13** *their sacred stone pillars*: See note on Exodus 23:24. *their sacred poles*: wooden posts used in worship in Canaanite religion (Heb. *asherah*). The wooden poles may symbolize a tree and its fertility or nourishment, probably associated with worship of the Canaanite goddess Asherah (Deut 16:21; Judg 6:25-32; 2 Kgs 21:3, 7).

**34:14** *the LORD is passionate*: See Exodus 20:5. *the LORD's name means "a passionate God"*: The divine name (Heb. *Yahweh*) translated as "the LORD" can be read as a form of a verb (Heb. *hwah*) that means "desire" or "passion" (Prov 10:3). The Lord is passionate about Israel and desires Israel's total loyalty and love (Deut 6:4-15).

**34:15-16** *prostitute themselves*: See Numbers 25:1-3.

a covenant with those who live in the land. When they prostitute themselves with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, they may invite you and you may end up eating some of the sacrifice. <sup>16</sup>Then you might go and choose their daughters as wives for your sons. And their daughters who prostitute themselves with their gods might lead your sons to prostitute themselves with their gods.

<sup>17</sup>Don't make metal gods for yourself.

<sup>18</sup>Observe the Festival of Unleavened Bread. You should eat unleavened bread for seven days, as I commanded you, at the set time in the month of Abib,<sup>a</sup> because it was in the month of Abib that you came out of Egypt.

<sup>19</sup>Every first offspring is mine. That includes all your male livestock, the oldest offspring of cows and sheep. <sup>20</sup>But a donkey's oldest offspring you may ransom with a sheep. Or if you don't ransom it, you must break its neck. You should ransom all of your oldest sons.

No one should appear before me empty-handed.

<sup>21</sup>Every first offspring is mine. That includes all your male livestock, the oldest offspring of cows and sheep. <sup>22</sup>You should observe the Festival of Weeks, but on the seventh day you should rest. Even during plowing or harvesttime you should rest. <sup>23</sup>You should observe the Festival of Weeks, for the early produce of the wheat harvest, and the Gathering Festival at the end of the year.

<sup>23</sup>All your males should appear three times a year before the LORD God, Israel's God. <sup>24</sup>I will drive out nations before you and extend your borders. No one will desire and try to take your land if you go up and appear before the LORD your God three times a year.

<sup>25</sup>Don't slaughter the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened. The sacrifice of the Passover Festival shouldn't be left over until the morning.

<sup>26</sup>Bring the best of the early produce of your farmland to the LORD your God's temple.

Don't boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

<sup>27</sup>The LORD said to Moses: "Write down these words because by these words I hereby make a covenant with you and with Israel." <sup>28</sup>Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He didn't eat any bread or drink any water. He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten words.

### Moses' brightly shining face

<sup>29</sup>Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two covenant tablets in his hand, Moses didn't realize that the skin of his face shone brightly

34:16 Dt 7:3, Dt 7:4; Ezr 9:2  
 34:19 Ex 13:2  
 34:20 Ex 13:13, Ex 13:15, Ex 23:15, Nm 18:15, Dt 16:16  
 34:28 Ex 24:18, Ex 31:18, Ex 32:16, Ex 34:1; Dt 4:13  
 34:29 Ex 32:15; 2Co 3:7, 2Co 3:13

<sup>a</sup>March–April, named Nisan after the exile

34:17 *Don't make metal gods*: This is the important instruction that the Israelites had violated in the incident with the gold calf in Exodus 32. Earlier versions of the instruction appeared in Exodus 20:4, 23.

34:18 See note on Exodus 23:14-15.

34:19-20 *Every first offspring is mine*: See notes on Exodus 11:5; 13:11-16. A related instruction also appears in Exodus 22:29. *No one . . . empty-handed*: See Exodus 23:15.

34:21 *on the seventh day you should rest*: The instruction to rest on the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:8-11) and is repeated again in Exodus 23:12. Resting on the Sabbath ought to be a priority even at the busiest times, such as *during plowing or harvesttime*. It also applies while building the Lord's tent dwelling (Exod 31:12-17; 35:2-3).

34:22 *Festival of Weeks . . . Gathering Festival*: See note on Exodus 23:16.

34:23-24 *three times a year*: See note on Exodus 23:17.

34:25-26 See Exodus 12:6-11, 21-27; 23:18-19. *Don't boil . . . mother's milk*: See note on Exodus 23:19.

34:27-28 *He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten words*: In light of Exodus 34:1 (see note there), it isn't completely clear who wrote what. The lack of clarity may be the result of two competing traditions that haven't been fully harmonized. If we understand that the Lord engraved the second set of tablets with the Ten Commandments (34:28), and Moses wrote down on a scroll the new instructions of 34:27, then this new covenant would have

a form and authority equal to the first covenant (God's engraving the Ten Commandments—Exod 24:12; 31:18; 32:15-16; Moses writing other instructions on a scroll—Exod 24:3-4, 7). *He didn't eat any bread or drink any water*: When Moses made the first covenant with the Lord on Mount Sinai, eating and drinking were involved (see note on Exod 24:9-11). In this restoration of the covenant, Moses lives without bread or water for 40 days. His ability to survive this severe fast suggests three things. First, Moses' normal needs as a human being were superseded by the nourishment of this uniquely close encounter with God's presence (cf. Matt 4:2; Luke 4:2). Second, Moses' severe fast is a way of admitting before God the severity of Israel's sin in worshipping with the golden calf (1 Sam 7:6; Neh 1:4-7; Jon 3:5). Third, Moses' personal sacrifice of his own basic needs and interests played some role in making possible the reconciliation of a sinful Israel and the Lord (Deut 9:9, 18; for a pattern of Moses sacrificing his own interests for the sake of the community, see notes on Exod 32:10, 11, 32).

34:29 *the skin of his face shone brightly*: Moses comes close to the dazzling light of the Lord's "glorious presence" (see note on Exod 33:18). Some of the divine brilliance rubs off or reflects onto Moses. It shines through his face when he comes down from Mount Sinai. The radiance of Moses' face confirms his close relationship with the Lord. Early Christian writers interpreted Moses' radiant face in light of the story of Jesus' transformation (Matt 17:2; Mark

34:30 2Co 3:7

34:31 Ex 3:15,  
Ex 16:22,  
Ex 24:134:32 Ex 21:1,  
Ex 24:4,  
Ex 34:27,  
Ex 35:1, Ex 35:4

34:33 2Co 3:13

34:34 2Co 3:16

34:35 Ex 34:29;

2Co 3:13

35:1 Ex 25:1,

Ex 31:1,  
Ex 34:3235:2 Ex 20:9,  
Ex 23:12,  
Ex 31:15,  
Ex 34:21;

Lv 23:3

35:3 Ex 16:23

because he had been talking with God. <sup>30</sup>When Aaron and all the Israelites saw the skin of Moses' face shining brightly, they were afraid to come near him. <sup>31</sup>But Moses called them closer. So Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and Moses spoke with them. <sup>32</sup>After that, all the Israelites came near as well, and Moses commanded them everything that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. <sup>33</sup>When Moses finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. <sup>34</sup>Whenever Moses went into the LORD's presence to speak with him, Moses would take the veil off until he came out again. When Moses came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, <sup>35</sup>the Israelites would see that the skin of Moses' face was shining brightly. So Moses would put the veil on his face again until the next time he went in to speak with the LORD.

**35** Moses gathered together the whole Israelite community and said to them: These are the things that the LORD has commanded you to do:

#### *Instructions for the Sabbath*

<sup>2</sup>Do your work for six days, but the seventh day should be holy to you, a Sabbath of complete rest for the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath will be put to death. <sup>3</sup>Don't start a fire in any of your homes on the Sabbath day.

#### *Preparing to build the dwelling*

<sup>4</sup>Moses said to the whole Israelite community, This is what the LORD has commanded: <sup>5</sup>Collect gift offerings for the LORD from all of you. Whoever freely wants to give should bring the LORD's gift offerings: gold, silver, and copper; <sup>6</sup>blue, purple, and deep red yarns; fine linen; goats' hair; <sup>7</sup>rams' skins dyed red; beaded leather; <sup>8</sup>acacia wood; <sup>9</sup>the oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet-smelling incense; <sup>9</sup>gemstones; and gems for setting in the priest's vest <sup>10</sup>and in the priest's chest pendant.

<sup>10</sup>All of you who are skilled in crafts should come forward and make everything that the LORD has commanded: <sup>11</sup>the dwelling, its tent and its covering, its clasps, its boards, its bars, its posts, and its bases, <sup>12</sup>the chest with its poles and its cover, the veil for a screen,

<sup>b</sup>Or *dolphin skins* <sup>c</sup>Heb *ephod*

9:2; Luke 9:28-36). The Hebrew word for "shone brightly" (*qaran*) is related to the Hebrew word for "horn" (*qeren*) with the sense of projecting out "rays" or "horns" of light (Hab 3:4). In the Latin Vulgate translation, the image is taken literally. Moses' face does not shine but is horned. As a result, medieval painters and sculptors sometimes portrayed Moses as having horns poking out of his head. An example is Michelangelo's famous sculpture of Moses. 34:33 Just as the cloud veiled the bright radiance of God's "glorious presence" (see note on Exod 24:15-16), so Moses put a veil over his face to protect other humans from direct contact with the dazzling light of his face.

35:1-40:38 Israel's rebellion against the Lord (Exod 32) with the gold calf threatened the entire exodus project. God's original plan was to free the Israelites from slavery in Egypt so that God "could make a home among them" (Exod 25-31; see note on Exod 29:46). Then the gold calf interrupted the story. God wanted to abandon hope of being present in the middle of Israel's camp (see note on Exod 33:3). Moses, however, refused to accept the seemingly hopeless situation. Moses urged the Lord to reveal more deeply the Lord's name and character, rooted less in punishment and more in divine mercy, forgiveness, and faithfulness. The Lord agreed and restored the relationship with the Israelites with a new covenant (Exod 33-34). It is only with this background in mind that readers can understand the lavish attention to the details of building the tent dwelling that follow in Exodus 35-40. Three aspects of these last chapters in Exodus are noteworthy. First of all, the description of the construction of the Lord's tent dwelling in Exodus 35-40 follows closely (with some minor abbreviations) the instructions for the tent dwelling in

Exodus 25-31. The careful repetition conveys the remarkable care taken by the people to follow the Lord's instructions. Second, the text emphasizes repeatedly that the people did their work *as the Lord had commanded Moses* (Exod 39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31, 32, 42; 40:19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32). Earlier, the Israelites had committed to obey the Lord (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7), but then they failed to keep their word in Exodus 32. Now, in building the tent dwelling, the Israelites actually *do* obey all the Lord's instructions. Their faithfulness offers hope for the journey forward. Third, the people of Israel are very generous in giving *spontaneous gifts* of silver, gold, precious fabrics, oils, and gems to support the building project for the Lord's tent dwelling (35:1-35). In fact, their overwhelming generosity contributed so much material that Moses was compelled to ask the people to stop giving their gifts (36:4-7).

35:2-3 Moses repeats the Lord's command to take a Sabbath rest from all work every *seventh day*. The reminder is appropriate since the Israelites are about to begin a large and complex work project with the building of the Lord's tent dwelling and all its intricate equipment. As the instructions for building the Lord's dwelling (Exod 25-31) ended with the Sabbath command (Exod 31:12-17), so the actual building of the tent dwelling *begins* here with the Sabbath command. Israel's endless work without rest during its slavery in Egypt forms an important background to the emphasis on sabbath rest throughout Exodus (Exod 16:23-29; 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:12-17; 34:21).

35:3 *Don't start a fire*: Cooking is prohibited on the Sabbath (Exod 16:23).

35:4-29 The list of materials here is roughly parallel to the list of materials in Exodus 25:1-9.



<sup>13</sup>the table with its poles and all its equipment, the bread of the presence, <sup>14</sup>the lampstand for light with its equipment and its lamps, the oil for the light, <sup>15</sup>the incense altar with its poles, the anointing oil and the sweet-smelling incense, the entrance screen for the dwelling's entrance, <sup>16</sup>the altar for entirely burned offerings with its copper grate, its poles, and all its equipment, the washbasin with its stand, <sup>17</sup>the courtyard's drapes, its posts, and its bases, and the screen for the courtyard gate, <sup>18</sup>the dwelling's tent pegs and the courtyard's tent pegs, and their cords, <sup>19</sup>the woven clothing for ministering in the sanctuary, and the holy clothes for Aaron the priest and his sons for their service as priests.

**Gifts for building the dwelling**

<sup>20</sup>The whole Israelite community left Moses. <sup>21</sup>Everyone who was excited and eager to participate brought the LORD's gift offerings to be used for building the meeting tent and all its furnishings and for the holy clothes. <sup>22</sup>Both men and women came forward. Everyone who was eager to participate brought pins, earrings, rings, and necklaces, all sorts of gold objects. Everyone raised an uplifted offering of gold to the LORD. <sup>23</sup>And everyone who had blue or purple or deep red yarn or fine linen or goats' hair or rams' skins dyed red or beaded leather brought them. <sup>24</sup>Everyone who could make a gift offering of silver or copper brought it as the LORD's gift offering. Everyone who had acacia wood that could be used in any kind of building work brought it. <sup>25</sup>All the skilled women spun cloth with their hands, and brought what they had spun in blue and purple and deep red yarns and fine linen. <sup>26</sup>All the women who were eager to use their skill spun the goats' hair. <sup>27</sup>The chiefs brought gemstones and gems to be set in the priest's vest and the chest pendant, <sup>28</sup>spices and oil for light and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet-smelling incense. <sup>29</sup>All the Israelite men and women who were eager to contribute something for the work that the LORD had commanded Moses to do brought it as a spontaneous gift to the LORD.

**Moses introduces Bezalel and Oholiab**

<sup>30</sup>Then Moses said to the Israelites: "Look, the LORD has chosen Bezalel, Uri's son and Hur's grandson from the tribe of Judah. <sup>31</sup>The LORD has filled him with the divine spirit that will give him skill, ability, and knowledge for every kind of work. <sup>32</sup>He will be able to create designs, do metalwork in gold, silver, and copper, <sup>33</sup>cut stones for setting, carve wood, do every kind of creative work, <sup>34</sup>and have the ability to teach others. Both he and Oholiab, Ahisamach's son from the tribe of Dan, <sup>35</sup>have been given the skill to do every kind of work done by a gem cutter or a designer or a needleworker in blue, purple, and deep red yarns and in fine linen or a weaver or anyone else doing work or creating designs.

**36** "Let Bezalel, Oholiab, and every other skilled worker whom the LORD has given skill, ability, and knowledge for the work of building the sanctuary do all that the LORD has commanded."

<sup>2</sup>Moses then called together Bezalel, Oholiab, and every skilled person whom the LORD had given skill and who was eager to come and do the work. <sup>3</sup>Moses gave them all the gift offerings that the Israelites had contributed to the work on the sanctuary. They kept bringing him spontaneous gifts, morning after morning.

<sup>4</sup>Finally, all the skilled workers building the sanctuary left their work that they were doing one by one to come <sup>5</sup>and say to Moses, "The people are contributing way too much material for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do."

<sup>6</sup>So Moses issued a command that was proclaimed throughout the camp: "Every man and woman should stop making gift offerings for the sanctuary project." So the people stopped bringing anything more <sup>7</sup>because what they had already brought was more than enough to do all the work.

**Construction of the dwelling**

<sup>8</sup>All the skilled workers made the dwelling out of ten curtains of fine twisted linen and blue, purple, and deep red yarns, with figures of winged heavenly creatures worked into their design. <sup>9</sup>Each curtain was forty-two feet long and six feet wide. All the curtains were the same size.

35:22 *all sorts of gold objects*: The Israelites offer to Moses the gold that they had originally received from the Egyptians (Exod 3:22; 11:2-3; 12:35-36). This time they offer the gold in obedience to God (to help build the Lord's sanctuary), rather than in disobedience to make the gold

idol in the shape of a calf (see notes on Exod 25:3; 32:2). 35:30-36:1 The naming of the two main construction supervisors, Bezalel and Oholiab, follows closely a similar section in Exodus 31:1-11. 36:8-38 See Exodus 26:1-37.

35:17 Ex 27:9  
35:23 Ex 25:4, Ex 25:5, Ex 35:6, Ex 35:7, Nm 19:2  
35:27 1Ch 29:6  
35:30 Ex 31:1, Ex 31:2, Ex 36:1, Ex 38:22  
35:31 Ex 35:35, 2Ch 2:14; Is 11:2, Is 61:1  
36:1 Ex 28:3, Ex 31:2, Ex 31:6, Ex 35:30  
36:2 Ex 31:6, Ex 35:21, Ex 35:26  
36:8 Ex 26:1

37:1 Ex 25:10,  
Ex 31:2  
37:2 Ex 25:11,  
Ex 37:11

<sup>10</sup>They joined five of the curtains to each other and joined the other five curtains to each other. <sup>11</sup>They made loops of blue thread on the edge of the outer curtain of the first set. They did the same on the edge of the outer curtain of the second set. <sup>12</sup>They made fifty loops on the one curtain and fifty loops on the other curtain that was in the second set. The loops were opposite each other. <sup>13</sup>They also made fifty gold clasps, and they used the clasps to join the curtains to each other so that the dwelling was one whole structure.

<sup>14</sup>They also made curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the dwelling. They made eleven curtains. <sup>15</sup>Each curtain was forty-five feet long and each curtain six feet wide. All eleven curtains were the same size. <sup>16</sup>They joined five curtains together and the six other curtains together. <sup>17</sup>They made fifty loops on the edge of the outer curtain of the one set and fifty loops on the edge of the other set of curtains. <sup>18</sup>They made fifty copper clasps to join the tent together so that it would be one whole structure. <sup>19</sup>They also made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red and an outer covering of beaded leather.

<sup>20</sup>Then they made acacia-wood boards to stand upright as a frame for the dwelling. <sup>21</sup>Each board was fifteen feet long and twenty-seven inches wide. <sup>22</sup>Each board had two pegs for joining them to each other. They did this for all the dwelling's boards. <sup>23</sup>They made twenty boards for the dwelling's southern side. <sup>24</sup>They made forty silver bases under the twenty boards, with two bases under the first board for its two pegs, two bases under the next board for its two pegs, and so on. <sup>25</sup>For the dwelling's other side on the north, they made twenty boards <sup>26</sup>and forty silver bases, two bases under the first board, two bases under the next board, and so on. <sup>27</sup>For the back of the dwelling on the west, they made six boards. <sup>28</sup>They made two additional boards for the dwelling's rear corners. <sup>29</sup>They were spread out at the bottom but joined together at the top with one ring. In this way, these two boards formed the two corners. <sup>30</sup>And so there were eight boards with their sixteen silver bases, with two bases under every board.

<sup>31</sup>They also made acacia-wood bars: five for the boards on one side of the dwelling, <sup>32</sup>five bars for the boards on the other side of the dwelling, and five bars for the boards on the back wall of the dwelling on the west. <sup>33</sup>They made the middle bar, which was halfway up the boards, run from one end to the other. <sup>34</sup>They covered the boards with gold. They made gold rings to house the bars and covered the bars with gold.

<sup>35</sup>They made the veil of blue, purple, and deep red yarns and fine twisted linen, with figures of winged heavenly creatures worked into its design. <sup>36</sup>They made for it four acacia-wood posts covered in gold with gold hooks and cast four silver bases for them. <sup>37</sup>They made a screen for the entrance to the tent of blue, purple, and deep red yarns and fine twisted linen, decorated with needlework. <sup>38</sup>They made its five posts with hooks. They covered their tops and bands with gold, but made their five bases out of copper.

#### *Building the chest containing the covenant document*

**37**Bezalel made the chest of acacia wood. It was forty-five inches long, twenty-seven inches wide, and twenty-seven inches high. <sup>2</sup>He covered the chest with pure gold inside and out, and made a gold molding all around it. <sup>3</sup>He cast four gold rings for it and put them on its four feet, two rings on one side and two rings on the other. <sup>4</sup>He made acacia-wood poles and covered them with gold. <sup>5</sup>He put the poles into the rings on the chest's sides to use to carry the chest. <sup>6</sup>He made a cover for the chest out of pure gold, forty-five inches long and twenty-seven inches wide. <sup>7</sup>He made two winged heavenly creatures of hammered gold for the two ends of the cover, <sup>8</sup>one winged heavenly creature at one end and one winged heavenly creature at the other. He placed the winged heavenly creatures at the cover's two ends. <sup>9</sup>The winged heavenly creatures spread out their wings above, shielding the cover with their wings. The winged heavenly creatures faced each other toward the cover's center.

#### *Constructing the table and lampstand*

<sup>10</sup>He also made the table of acacia wood, three feet long, eighteen inches wide, and twenty-seven inches high. <sup>11</sup>He covered it with pure gold and made a gold molding all around it. <sup>12</sup>He made a frame around it that was four inches wide and gold molding around the frame. <sup>13</sup>He made four gold rings for the table. He fastened the rings to the four corners at its four legs. <sup>14</sup>The rings that housed the poles used for carrying the table were close to the frame. <sup>15</sup>He made the poles used to carry the table out of acacia wood, and he covered them with gold.

16He made the containers of pure gold that were to be on the table: its plates, dishes, bowls, and jars for pouring drink offerings.

17He also made the lampstand of pure, hammered gold. The lampstand's base, branches, cups, flowers, and petals were all attached to it. 18It had six branches growing out from its sides, three branches on one side of the lampstand and three branches on the other side of the lampstand. 19One branch had three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with a flower and petals, and the next branch also had three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with a flower and petals. A total of six branches grew out of the lampstand. 20In addition, on the lampstand itself there were four cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with its flower and petals. 21There was a flower attached under the first pair of branches, a flower attached under the next pair of branches, and a flower attached under the last pair of branches. 22Their flowers and their branches were attached to it. The whole lampstand was one piece of pure hammered gold. 23He made its seven lamps and its tongs and its fire pans out of pure gold. 24He made the lampstand and all its equipment from pure gold weighing one kikkar.

38:18 Ex 30:18,  
Ex 40:7;  
1Sa 2:22  
38:18 Ex 27:16;  
2Ch 3:14

***Making the incense altar, incense, and oil***

25He made the incense altar out of acacia wood. The altar was square, eighteen inches long by eighteen inches wide. It was three feet high, and its horns were permanently attached. 26He covered it with pure gold, including its top, all its sides, and its horns. He also made a gold molding all around it. 27He made two gold rings, and he attached them under the molding on two opposite sides of the altar. They housed the poles used to carry it. 28He made the poles of acacia wood, and he covered them with gold.

29He also made the holy anointing oil and the pure sweet-smelling incense like a skilled perfume maker.

***Making the altar for entirely burned offerings***

**38**He made the altar for entirely burned offerings out of acacia wood. The altar was square, seven and a half feet long and seven and a half feet wide. It was four and a half feet high. 2He made horns for it, one horn on each of its four corners. Its horns were attached to the altar, and he covered it with copper. 3He made all the altar's equipment: the pails, the shovels, the bowls, the meat forks, and the trays. He made all its equipment out of copper. 4He made a grate for the altar of copper mesh underneath its bottom edge and extending halfway up to the middle of the altar. 5He made four rings for each of the four corners of the copper grate to house the poles. 6He made the poles out of acacia wood, and he covered them with copper. 7He put the poles through the rings so that the poles were on the two sides of the altar when it was carried. He made the altar with planks but hollow inside.

8He made the copper washbasin with its copper stand from the copper mirrors among the ranks of women assigned to the meeting tent's entrance.

***Constructing the dwelling's plaza***

9He also set up the courtyard. The courtyard's south side had drapes of fine twisted linen stretching one hundred fifty feet 10with twenty posts, twenty copper bases, and silver hooks and bands for the posts. 11Likewise the north side stretched one hundred fifty feet, with twenty posts, twenty copper bases, and silver hooks and bands for the posts. 12On the west side the drapes stretched seventy-five feet, with their ten posts, their ten bases, and silver hooks and bands for the posts. 13The front side facing east was seventy-five feet. 14There were twenty-two and a half feet of drapes on one side with three posts and three bases for them. 15Likewise, there were twenty-two and a half feet of drapes on the other side of the plaza's gate with three posts and three bases for them. 16All the drapes around the courtyard were made of fine twisted linen. 17The bases for the posts were made of copper, but the hooks for the posts and their bands were made of silver. The tops of the posts were covered with silver, and all the posts surrounding the courtyard had silver bands. 18The screen for the gate into the courtyard was made with blue, purple, and deep red yarns and fine twisted linen, decorated with needlework. It was thirty feet long and, along the width of it, seven and a half feet high, corresponding to the courtyard's drapes. 19It had four posts, their four copper

37:29 See Exodus 30:22-38.

38:1-7 See Exodus 27:1-8.

38:8 See Exodus 30:17-21. *from the copper mirrors among the ranks of women assigned to the meeting tent's entrance:*

This suggests that some Israelite women worked in some capacity in service to the Lord's meeting tent. See 1 Samuel 2:22.

38:9-20 See Exodus 27:9-19.

38:21 Nm 1:50;  
2Ch 24:6  
38:24 Ex 30:13  
38:26 Ex 12:37;  
Nm 1:46  
39:1 Ex 28:2;  
Ex 31:10;  
Ex 35:19;  
Ex 35:23;  
Ex 39:41;  
Lv 8:13  
39:6 Ex 28:9;  
Ex 28:11

bases, their silver hooks, and their tops and bands covered with silver.<sup>20</sup>All the tent pegs for the dwelling and for the courtyard all around were made of copper.

#### **A listing of materials used**

<sup>21</sup>These are the accounts of the dwelling, the covenant dwelling, that were recorded at Moses' instructions. They are the work of the Levites, under the direction of Ithamar, Aaron the priest's son. <sup>22</sup>Bezalel, Uri's son and Hur's grandson from the tribe of Judah, made everything that the LORD had commanded Moses to make. <sup>23</sup>Working with Bezalel was Oholiab, Ahisamach's son from the tribe of Dan, who was a gem cutter, a designer, and a needleworker in blue, purple, and deep red yarns and in fine linen.

<sup>24</sup>The total amount of the gold that was used for construction of the whole sanctuary, gold from the uplifted offerings, was twenty-nine kikkars and seven hundred thirty shekels in weight, measured by the sanctuary shekel. <sup>25</sup>The silver from the community census totaled one hundred kikkars and one thousand seven hundred seventy-five shekels in weight, measured by the sanctuary shekel. <sup>26</sup>They gave a beqa per person (that is, half a shekel, measured by the sanctuary shekel) for everyone who was counted in the census, 20 years old and above, 603,550 men. <sup>27</sup>One hundred kikkars of silver were used to cast the bases for the sanctuary and the bases for the veil, one hundred bases from one hundred kikkars of silver, one kikkar for every base. <sup>28</sup>He used one thousand seven hundred seventy-five shekels of silver<sup>d</sup> to make the hooks for the posts, cover their tops, and make bands for them. <sup>29</sup>The amount of copper from the uplifted offering was seventy kikkars and two thousand four hundred shekels in weight. <sup>30</sup>He used it to make the bases for the meeting tent's entrance, the copper altar, its copper grate, and all the altar's equipment, <sup>31</sup>the bases all around the courtyard, and the bases for the courtyard's gate, all the dwelling's tent pegs, and all the tent pegs used around the courtyard.

#### **Making the priests' clothing**

**39** They used the blue, purple, and deep red yarns to make the woven clothing for those ministering as priests in the sanctuary. They made the holy clothes for Aaron as the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>2</sup>They made the vest<sup>e</sup> of gold, of blue, purple, and deep red yarns, and of fine twisted linen. <sup>3</sup>They beat out thin sheets of gold and cut them into threads to work into designs among the blue, purple, and deep red yarns and the fine linen. <sup>4</sup>They made shoulder pieces for it attached to its two edges so that they could be joined together. <sup>5</sup>The vest's belt was attached to it and made in the same way of gold, of blue, purple, and deep red yarns, and of fine twisted linen, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>6</sup>They prepared the gemstones by mounting them in gold settings and engraving on them the names of Israel's sons, like an official seal is engraved. <sup>7</sup>The stones were attached to the vest's shoulder pieces as reminder stones for the Israelites, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>8</sup>They made the embroidered chest pendant in the style of the vest, using gold, blue, purple, and deep red yarns, and fine twisted linen. <sup>9</sup>They made the chest pendant square and doubled, nine inches long and nine inches wide when doubled. <sup>10</sup>They set in it four rows of gemstones. The first row was a row of carnelian, topaz, and emerald stones. <sup>11</sup>The second row

<sup>d</sup>Heb lacks *shekels of silver*. <sup>e</sup>Heb *ephod*

38:21-31 These verses present a complete inventory of all the materials donated by the Israelites (cf. Exod 36:2-3). These verses have no parallel in Exodus 25-31. The donations were given in the context of a census of all Israelite men over 20 years of age, which totaled 603,550 men (38:26; see Exod 12:37; 30:11-16). This large number agrees with the censuses in Numbers (Num 1:46; 2:32). The census here in Exodus likely would have occurred before the building of the tent dwelling. Meanwhile, the census in Numbers 1 is dated to a month after the building of the tent dwelling (Exod 40:17; Num 1:1, 18). The weight of the various precious metals is enormous: roughly 2,000 pounds of gold, roughly 7,000 pounds of silver, and roughly 5,000 pounds of copper. The large quantities of

the metals point to the abundant generosity of the Israelites in supporting the building project.

38:21 The *Levites* were in charge of the census and inventory of donations (see note on Exod 32:29). *Ithamar* is the fourth son of the high priest Aaron (Exod 6:23; 28:1) and a member of the Levite tribe.

38:23 *Bezalel*... *Oholiab*: See Exodus 31:1-11; 35:30-35.

38:30 *the copper altar*: See Exodus 27:1-8.

39:1-31 See Exodus 28:1-43. The refrain *as the LORD had commanded Moses*, occurs seven times marking the various steps in making the priestly garments (39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31). This structure is similar to the seven-day creation story in Genesis 1:1-2:4 with its seven repeated refrains, one at the end of each day. See sidebar, "The

was a turquoise, a sapphire, and a moonstone. <sup>12</sup>The third row was a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst. <sup>13</sup>The fourth row was a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. The settings around them were decorative gold. <sup>14</sup>There were twelve stones with names corresponding to the names of Israel's sons. They were engraved like official seals, each with its name for the twelve tribes. <sup>15</sup>They made chains of pure gold, twisted like cords, for the chest pendant. <sup>16</sup>They made two gold settings and two gold rings. They attached the two rings to the two edges of the chest pendant. <sup>17</sup>They attached the two gold cords to the two rings at the edges of the chest pendant. <sup>18</sup>Then they fastened the two ends of the two cords to the two gold settings and attached them to the front of the vest's shoulder pieces. <sup>19</sup>They made two gold rings, and they attached them to the two edges of the chest pendant, on its inside edge facing the vest. <sup>20</sup>They made two gold rings and fastened them on the front of the lower part of the two shoulder pieces of the vest, at its seam just above the vest's belt. <sup>21</sup>The chest pendant was held in place by a blue cord binding its rings to the vest's rings so that the chest pendant rested on the vest's belt and didn't come loose from the vest, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>22</sup>They also made the vest's robe, woven completely in blue. <sup>23</sup>The opening of the robe in the middle of it was reinforced with a strong border so that it didn't tear. <sup>24</sup>On the robe's lower hem, they added pomegranates made of blue, purple, and deep red yarns and of fine twisted linen. <sup>25</sup>They also made pure gold bells and sewed the bells between the pomegranates, all around the robe's lower hem, <sup>26</sup>with a bell and a pomegranate alternating all around the lower hem of the robe that is used for ministering as a priest, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>27</sup>They also made the tunics woven out of fine linen for Aaron and his sons, <sup>28</sup>the turban of fine linen, the decorated turbans of fine linen, the linen undergarments of fine twisted linen, <sup>29</sup>the sashes of fine twisted linen, and of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, decorated with needlework, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>30</sup>They made the flower ornament for the holy crown out of pure gold. Like the engraving on an official seal, they engraved on it the saying "Holy to the LORD." <sup>31</sup>They fastened to it a blue cord to tie it to the top of the turban, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

### Completion of dwelling construction

<sup>32</sup>In this way all the work of the meeting tent dwelling was finished. The Israelites did everything just exactly as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>33</sup>Then they brought to Moses the dwelling, the tent, and all its equipment:

its clasps, its boards, its bars, its posts, and its bases,

<sup>34</sup>the covering of rams' skins dyed red, the covering of beaded leather, and the veil for a screen,

<sup>35</sup>the chest containing the covenant with its poles and the cover,

<sup>36</sup>the table with all its equipment and the bread of the presence,

<sup>37</sup>the pure lampstand with its lamps set on it and all its equipment, and the oil for the light,

<sup>38</sup>the gold altar, the anointing oil, and the sweet-smelling incense, the screen for the tent's entrance,

<sup>39</sup>the copper altar and its copper grate, its poles, and all its equipment, the washbasin with its stand,

<sup>40</sup>the courtyard's drapes, its posts, and its bases,

the screen for the plaza's gate, its cords, and its tent pegs,

and all the other equipment for the service of the dwelling, for the meeting tent,

<sup>41</sup>the woven clothes for ministering as priests in the sanctuary, the holy clothes for the priest Aaron and the clothes for his sons to serve as priests.

<sup>42</sup>The Israelites did all of the work just as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>43</sup>When Moses saw that they in fact had done all the work exactly as the LORD had commanded, Moses blessed them.

Sabbath, Creation, and Building the Lord's Dwelling" at Exodus 25.

39:32-43 It is affirmed twice that the Israelites do their work *exactly as the LORD had commanded* (39:32, 42). Moses inspects the items and adds a third affirmation of the people's work (39:43).

39:42-43 *The Israelites did all of the work...Moses saw...Moses blessed.* The language here is similar to the end of the creation story (Gen 1:31; 2:1-3—"God saw...God completed...God blessed"). For the important connection between the story of God's creation of the world in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and Israel's building of the

39:14 Ex 28:11,  
Ex 28:21;  
Rev 21:12

39:30 Ex 28:36,  
Ex 29:6;  
Zec 14:20

40:2 Ex 12:2.

Ex 26:30.

Ex 40:17.

40:3 Ex 26:33.

Ex 40:21.

40:10 Ex 29:36.

Lv 8:11; Nm 7:1.

40:12 Ex 29:4.

Lv 8:6, 1v 16:26;

Nm 19:7.

40:13 Lv 8:12.

40:10 2Ch 1:3.

40:20 Ex 16:34.

Ex 25:16.

Ex 25:21.

Ex 26:34.

Ex 31:18;

Heb 9:4.

### Moses sets up the dwelling

**40** The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Set up the meeting tent dwelling on the first day of the first month.<sup>3</sup> Place the chest containing the covenant inside the dwelling. Hide the chest from view with the veil. <sup>4</sup>Bring in the table and arrange its items. Bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. <sup>5</sup>Place the gold altar for burning incense in front of the chest containing the covenant. Set up the screen at the dwelling's entrance. <sup>6</sup>Put the altar for entirely burned offerings in front of the entrance to the meeting tent dwelling. <sup>7</sup>Put the washbasin between the meeting tent and the altar and put water in it. <sup>8</sup>Set up the courtyard all around. Hang up the screen at the courtyard gate. <sup>9</sup>Then take the anointing oil and anoint the dwelling and everything in it. Make holy the dwelling and all its equipment, and it will be holy. <sup>10</sup>Anoint the altar for entirely burned offerings and all its equipment. Make the altar holy, and the altar will be most holy. <sup>11</sup>Anoint the washbasin with its stand and make it holy.

<sup>12</sup>Then bring Aaron and his sons to the meeting tent's entrance and wash them with water. <sup>13</sup>Dress Aaron in the holy clothes. Anoint him and make him holy so that he may serve me as priest. <sup>14</sup>Then bring his sons and dress them in tunics. <sup>15</sup>Anoint them like you anointed their father so that they may serve me as priests. Their anointing is to the priesthood for all time in every generation.

<sup>16</sup>Moses did everything exactly as the LORD had commanded him. <sup>17</sup>In the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the dwelling was set up. <sup>18</sup>Moses set up the dwelling. He laid out its bases. He set up its boards, inserted its bars, and raised up its posts. <sup>19</sup>He spread the tent out over the dwelling, and he put the covering of the tent over it, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>20</sup>He took the covenant document and placed it inside the chest. He put the poles on the chest, and he set the cover on top of the chest. <sup>21</sup>He brought the chest into the dwelling. He set up the veil as a screen to hide from view the chest containing the covenant, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>22</sup>He placed the table in the meeting tent, on the north side of the dwelling, outside the veil. <sup>23</sup>He set the bread in its proper place on the table in the LORD's presence, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>24</sup>He put the lampstand in the meeting tent, opposite the table on the south side of the dwelling. <sup>25</sup>He set up the lamps in the LORD's presence, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>26</sup>He put the gold altar in the meeting tent in front of the veil. <sup>27</sup>He burned sweet-smelling incense on it, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>28</sup>He also set up the screen at the entrance to the dwelling. <sup>29</sup>He placed the altar for entirely burned offerings at the entrance to the meeting tent dwelling. He offered the entirely burned offering and the grain offering on it, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>30</sup>He put the washbasin between the meeting tent and the altar, and put water in it for washing. <sup>31</sup>Moses, Aaron, and his sons used it to wash their hands and their feet. <sup>32</sup>Whenever they went into the meeting tent and

<sup>f</sup>March–April, Abib

tent dwelling as the Lord's sanctuary or home in the midst of Israel, see the sidebar, "The Sabbath, Creation, and Building the Lord's Dwelling" at Exodus 25.

**40:1-15** The Lord tells Moses to carry out three major tasks: (1) to set up the tent dwelling and all its objects (40:2-8), (2) to anoint with oil and *Make holy* the tent dwelling and all its objects (40:9-11), and (3) to Anoint Aaron and his sons as priests (40:12-15). Moses will complete the first task in Exodus 40:17-33. Moses will accomplish the second and third tasks only later in Leviticus 8:1-13.

**40:1-2** *The Lord spoke to Moses: Set up the meeting tent dwelling:* Moses is the only one who will set up the tent dwelling and all its objects since he alone received the instructions from the Lord (Exod 25:9). Aaron and his sons haven't yet been ordained as priests (Exod 29:1-37; Lev 8:1-9:24). Only Moses can do priestly tasks until their ordination (Exod 40:4, 23, 25, 27; see Exod 25:30; 30:7-8).

**40:2** *On the first day of the first month:* In the ritual calendar of the Israelites, the beginning of the new year celebrates both the creation of the world and the setting up of the Lord's tent dwelling in the wilderness (see sidebar,

"The Sabbath, Creation, and Building the Lord's Dwelling" at Exod 25).

**40:9-11** See Exodus 30:25-29.

**40:12-15** See Exodus 29:4-9; 30:30.

**40:16-33** Moses obediently begins to set up the tent dwelling and all its equipment in obedience to the Lord's instructions in Exodus 40:2-8. The section begins with a general affirmation that *Moses did everything exactly as the Lord had commanded him* (40:16). A similar phrase occurs seven times as each section of the tent dwelling is completed (Exod 40:19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32). These seven refrains mirror the story of the seven-day creation with its refrains (Gen 1:1-2:3; see sidebar, "The Sabbath, Creation, and Building the Lord's Dwelling" at Exod 25; see note on Exod 39:1-31).

**40:17** *In the first month in the second year, on the first day:* See note on Exodus 40:2. It has been one full year since Israel left the land of Egypt. The *second year* is about to begin (Exod 12:40-41). Thus Israel has been at Mount Sinai for a total of nine months (Exod 19:1).

**40:27-29** Moses performs some duties here that are

whenever they approached the altar, they washed themselves, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>33</sup>He set up the courtyard around the dwelling and the altar, and he hung up the screen at the courtyard's gate.

**God's presence fills the dwelling!**

When Moses had finished all the work, <sup>34</sup>the cloud covered the meeting tent and the LORD's glorious presence filled the dwelling. <sup>35</sup>Moses couldn't enter the meeting tent because the cloud had settled on it, and the LORD's glorious presence filled the dwelling. <sup>36</sup>Whenever the cloud rose from the dwelling, the Israelites would set out on their journeys. <sup>37</sup>But if the cloud didn't rise, then they didn't set out until the day it rose. <sup>38</sup>The LORD's cloud stayed over the dwelling during the day, with lightning in it at night, clearly visible to the whole household of Israel at every stage of their journey.

**40:34** Lv 16:2;  
Nm 9:15;  
1Ki 8:10;  
2Ch 5:13; 1s 6:4;  
Rev 15:8  
**40:36** Ex 13:21,  
Ex 14:19,  
Ex 16:10,  
Nm 9:7,  
Nm 10:11;  
Neh 9:19;  
Ps 78:14,  
Ps 105:39

usually done only by priests (burning incense and offering sacrifices on the altar). See note on Exodus 40:1-2.

**40:34-38** These final verses mark the climax of the story of the book of Exodus. The Lord's presence leaves the top of Mount Sinai (see note on Exod 29:42-45) and settles down on the newly constructed tent dwelling. The Lord adopts the dwelling as the Lord's home in the middle of the Israelites' camp. All is ready for God to move with the people to the promised land of Canaan. This moment represents the Lord's ultimate purpose and desire in rescuing Israel from the slavery in Egypt (see note on Exod 29:46). The rebellion with the gold calf (Exod 32) had threatened the entire tent dwelling project (see note on Exod 33:3). The revelation to Moses of the Lord's deep compassion and forgiveness allowed healing of the broken relationship between God

and Israel. It made a new covenant possible (see notes on Exod 34:1-9, 34:10-28). The Lord will no longer communicate with Moses from Mount Sinai but rather from the *meeting tent*, beginning with Leviticus 1:1.

**40:34 the cloud:** See notes on Exodus 13:21-22; 24:15-16. *the LORD's glorious presence:* See note on Exodus 33:18.

**40:36-38 Whenever the cloud rose:** The Lord's presence in the cloud will travel with the Israelites' camp through the wilderness, guiding their path along the way (see Num 9:15-23; 10:17-21, 34). The official anointing of the tent dwelling and the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests will occur later, in Leviticus 8-9. For now, the Lord is fully present, visible, and at home with God's people as they continue their journey to the promised land of Canaan.

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# LEVITICUS

Leviticus contains mostly instructions. The Lord speaks to Moses, telling him to repeat these instructions to the Israelites (Lev 1:2) or to the priests (Lev 6:9). Leviticus focuses first on rules for making offerings, then on purification procedures. The last third of the book contains rules for a wide variety of activities, including criminal acts, sexual conduct, social justice, priestly marriage, and annual festivals. It also continues to focus on proper worship of God.

Leviticus assumes that readers know the contents of Exodus and Numbers, that Israel came out of Egypt and camped at Mount Sinai. There God appeared to Moses on the mountain and told him to build the meeting tent (also called the “tabernacle”). Now God appears in the meeting tent to give Moses these instructions (Lev 1:1; cf. Lev 7:38). Afterward, Israel will break camp and travel toward the promised land, taking the meeting tent and its rituals with them (as instructed in Num 1–10).

That story explains why Israel should obey these rules in the book of Leviticus. The Lord rescued them from Egypt and promised to protect them in the new land. In return, Israel promised to obey the Lord as they would obey a king (Exod 24:7). These instructions explain what that obedience involves. They must bring offerings to God as they would pay taxes to a king. They must treat each other fairly and generously. Along with similar instructions in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, these rules give the details of the covenant between God and Israel. They are the heart of the *Torah*, the “Instruction” or “Law,” that became Israel’s first scripture.

Because Leviticus consists mostly of instructions, many people find it hard to read. What makes it even harder to read is that the instructions involve things that most people don’t do anymore. Neither Jews nor Christians make offerings like those in Leviticus 1–7 (see sidebar, “Animal Offerings” at Lev 1). Many Jews



Altar with four horns at Beer-sheba (Lev 4:7)

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follow the food rules of Leviticus 11 (see sidebar, “Meat” at Lev 11), and some also follow the purity rules of Leviticus 12 and 15 (see sidebar, “Clean/Unclean” at Lev 13). However, very few Christians do. Modern readers from both traditions find the rest of the book a confusing mix of inspiring moral teachings (such as the love commandments in Lev 19:18, 34), obscure regulations (such as the rule against mixtures in Lev 19:19), and laws whose application could lead to social upheaval (such as returning all real property every 50 years, Lev 25:10, 14-18; see sidebar, “Jubilee” at Lev 25).

Leviticus remains at the heart of Jewish and Christian scriptures because it preserves one of the original reasons for needing written scriptures. In the ancient Near East, the idea of needing to follow written instructions first developed around ritual instructions. Kings and priests would justify their religious practices by showing and reading old texts (e.g., 2 Kgs 22-23; Neh 8). Many believe that the Torah (Pentateuch) began to function as scripture for Jews after the Babylonian exile in the 6th or 5th century BCE when priests used it to justify how they were running the temple. Today, ritual rules in Leviticus still remind readers of scripture’s purpose: to teach obedience to God’s instructions.

The book’s Hebrew title, *wayyiqra*, which

means “and he called,” comes from its first word. The ancient Greek Septuagint translation called it *leuitikon*, or “the Levitical book,” which led to the English title, Leviticus. Despite this title, Leviticus focuses on the priests, Aaron and his sons, not the larger tribe of Levites of which they were part. All but three of the book’s chapters consist of God speaking to Moses (sometimes with Aaron as well; e.g., Lev 11:1). Moses must repeat these instructions to the people and the priests. But God’s speeches do not focus on Moses. Instead, they call attention to how priests should help the people worship God. They also point out the priests’ roles in gaining forgiveness and purification for the people (Lev 4-5; 12-16), and in teaching them all the rules of Torah (Lev 10:10-11).

Though the book’s setting is in the time of the exodus from Egypt, its Hebrew language and style match that of other OT books, especially Ezekiel and 1 and 2 Chronicles. Therefore, most biblical scholars think it was written in the middle of the first millennium BCE, though it likely includes older traditions. That was when priests began to take over leadership in Judea and Samaria after kings disappeared along with their kingdoms. The priests’ support for placing Leviticus in the middle of the Pentateuch probably promoted Jewish commitment to monotheism, the Jerusalem temple, and the Torah.

#### **I. Instructions for Offerings (1:1-7:38)**

- A. Entirely burned offerings (1:1-17)
- B. Grain offerings (2:1-16)
- C. Well-being sacrifices (3:1-17)
- D. Purification and compensation offerings (4:1-6:7)
- E. Priestly incomes from offerings (6:8-7:38)

#### **II. Inauguration of Worship (8:1-10:20)**

- A. Inauguration of priests and meeting tent (8:1-36)
- B. Inauguration of regular offerings (9:1-24)
- C. Ritual failure and restoration (10:1-20)

#### **III. Instructions for Purifications (11:1-15:33)**

- A. Rules for meat and dead animals (11:1-47)
- B. Rules for purification after giving birth (12:1-8)
- C. Rules for purification of skin, houses and cloth (13:1-14:57)
- D. Rules for purification of genital emissions (15:1-33)

#### **IV. Instructions for the Day of Reconciliation (16:1-34)**

#### **V. Instructions for Food and Worship (17:1-15)**

#### **VI. Instructions for Holy Relationships (18:1-20:27)**

- A. Sexual relationships (18:1-30)
- B. Holy living (19:1-37)
- C. Penalties for religious and sexual sins (20:1-37)

#### **VII. Instructions for Priestly Purity (21:1-22:33)**

#### **VIII. Instructions for Holy Events (23:1-25:55)**

- A. Annual calendar (23:1-44)
- B. Rules about holy provisions and blasphemy (24:1-23)
- C. Sabbatical years and jubilee (25:1-55)

#### **IX. Covenant Blessings and Curses (26:1-46)**

#### **X. Appendix on Vows and Tithes (27:1-34)**

**1** Then the LORD called to Moses and said to him from the meeting tent, <sup>2</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When any of you present a livestock offering to the LORD, you can present it from either the herd or the flock.

### *The entirely burned offering*

<sup>3</sup>If the offering is an entirely burned offering from the herd, you must present a flawless male, bringing it to the meeting tent's entrance for its acceptance before the LORD. <sup>4</sup>You must press your hand on the head of the entirely burned offering so that it will be accepted for you, to make reconciliation for you. <sup>5</sup>Then you will slaughter the bull before the LORD. Aaron's sons the priests will present the blood and toss it against every side of the altar at the meeting tent's entrance. <sup>6</sup>Then the entirely burned offering will be skinned and cut up into pieces. <sup>7</sup>The sons of Aaron the priest<sup>a</sup> will light the altar and lay wood on the fire. <sup>8</sup>Then Aaron's sons the priests will arrange the pieces, the head, and the fat on the wood that is on the altar fire, <sup>9</sup>but the animal's insides and lower legs must be washed with water. The priest will then completely burn all of it on the altar as an entirely burned offering, a food gift<sup>b</sup> of soothing smell to the LORD.

<sup>10</sup>If the offering is an entirely burned offering from the flock—whether sheep or goat—you must present a flawless male. <sup>11</sup>You must slaughter it on the north side of the altar before the LORD. Aaron's sons the priests will toss its blood against every side of the altar. <sup>12</sup>Once it has been cut into pieces, including the head and the fat, the priest will arrange these out

<sup>a</sup>Some Heb sources, Sam, LXX, Syr, and some Tg sources have *Aaron's sons, the priests*, as in 1:5, 8. <sup>b</sup>Or (here and throughout Leviticus) *offering by fire* (cf 3:11)

1:1-17 Leviticus begins with instructions for entirely burned offerings because they demonstrate completely selfless worship of God. Priests, and sometimes worshippers, get to eat most of the meat from other offerings, but because these animals are entirely burned on the altar, they provide no food for people. They model an ideal of worship as selfless service to God. Chapter 1 says that entirely burned offerings may consist of three kinds of domestic animals: bulls (1:3-9), sheep or goats (1:10-13), and doves or pigeons (1:14-17). Bulls were very expensive while birds were cheap. Well-being sacrifices (Lev 3) and purification offerings (Lev 5:7) also can consist of valuable or cheap animals (see sidebar, "Animal Offerings" at Lev 1). That way, people could worship God with offerings whether they were rich or poor.

1:1 Like Exodus and Numbers, Leviticus quotes the Lord speaking to Moses. Moses must repeat the instructions to the Israelites, but that isn't narrated here. Deuteronomy quotes Moses repeating God's commandments as he remembers them. Now that the meeting tent (also called the tabernacle) has been finished (Exod 40), all divine instructions come to Moses from there, rather than on Mount Sinai.

1:2 *any of you*: Leviticus places no limits on who may present offerings to God (cf. Lev 2:1, "anyone"). Later temples in Jerusalem segregated men from women and Israel from the nations by separate courtyards, but the meeting tent's instructions in Exodus don't mention these divisions. Exodus and Leviticus do separate laypeople from the more holy areas, such as the altar and the inner rooms. Only priests have access there.

1:3 *entirely burned offering*: The underlying Hebrew is "rising (offering)." The translation points out how this offering differed from the others: All of it must be burned on the altar (Lev 1:8-9; except the hide, Lev 7:8). *flawless*: Damaged goods do not make acceptable gifts for humans, much less for God (cf. Mal 1:8). *male*: reflects higher status in a patriarchal society, and also the custom of killing most male herd animals before they grow

up so that a cattle herd contains only one (male) bull and many (female) cows.

1:4 *You must press your hand on the head of every herd animal offering* (see Lev 3:2; 4:4). This action probably doesn't substitute the animal for the worshipper, but rather identifies it as belonging to the worshipper. *accepted for you*: or "count in your favor" (cf. Lev 1:3). *make reconciliation for you*: often translated "atone for you" (see sidebar, "Reconciliation/Atonement" at Lev 16). The themes of "favor" and "reconciliation" that appear here foreshadow the book's emphasis on how priests present all the people's offerings and for their benefit.

1:5 *you will slaughter the bull*: doesn't say how, because that is common knowledge in herding cultures. The focus isn't on killing (unlike many modern discussions of "sacrifice") but rather on distributing the parts of the animal. The *blood of all animal offerings must be poured or splashed on the sides of the altar* (see note on Lev 3:17; see sidebar, "Blood" at Lev 4). Because the altar is holy, only priests can approach it. *Aaron's sons*: Only Aaron and his male descendants can be priests (Exod 28; Lev 8-10; Num 16-18).

1:7 *Aaron the priest*: See translation note a.

1:8 The distinguishing feature of the entirely burned offering is that priests must burn up everything but the animal's hide (Lev 7:8) on the altar, thus giving it to God. By contrast, the priests, and in one case the worshippers, must eat the meat of other offerings, from which only the animal's fat gets burned on the altar (Lev 3-7).

1:9 *food gift*: The underlying Hebrew is "fire (offering)," a term for all the altar offerings. *soothing smell*: While the OT does not show God eating offerings, this common formula (cf. Lev 1:13, 17; 2:2, 9, 16; 3:5, 11, 16) suggests that God likes the smell of grilled meat and burning incense (see also Lev 21:6). Other OT texts reject the idea that God depends on Israel's offerings (Ps 51:16; Isa 1:11-17; Mic 6:6-8).

1:10-13 Entirely burned offerings of sheep and goats are made just like the bull offerings that have already been described. So these instructions are shorter.

2:1 Lv 2:15,  
Lv 2:16, Lv 6:14,  
Lv 9:17,  
Nm 15:4  
2:5 Lv 6:21,  
Lv 7:9

**Animal Offerings** Many ancient and traditional cultures gave animals as offerings to their gods. People treated their gods as they would guests by offering them elaborate meals. Often, meat was the most important part of these meals.

The custom of burning offerings in temple courtyards came from Syria in the second millennium BCE. From there it spread through Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures, including Israel. Perhaps it became popular because it seems to deliver offerings up to heaven in the form of smoke.

Jews and Christians do not usually make animal offerings anymore. For Jews, that is because the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, and it has never been rebuilt. Since offerings can only be presented there (Lev 17:1-9), Jews stopped making animal offerings. They replaced them with prayer, study of Torah, and acts of charity to fulfill God's commandments. Christians stopped making animal offerings out of the belief that the death of Jesus Christ took the offerings' place. Hebrews 9:11-28 teaches that Jesus' sacrifice provides purification and forgiveness of sin, making other blood offerings unnecessary. Some Christians think that celebrating the Eucharist reproduces Christ's sacrifice, while others think it only recalls it.

on the wood that is on the altar fire, <sup>13</sup>but its insides and lower legs must be washed with water. Then the priest will present all of it and completely burn it on the altar. It is an entirely burned offering, a food gift of soothing smell to the LORD.

<sup>14</sup>If the offering for the LORD is an entirely burned offering from the birds, you can present your offering from the doves or pigeons. <sup>15</sup>The priest will bring it to the altar. He will tear off its head and completely burn it on the altar. Its blood will be drained against the side of the altar. <sup>16</sup>Then the priest will remove its throat along with its contents<sup>a</sup> and throw it by the east side of the altar, into the place for the ashes. <sup>17</sup>He will then tear the bird open by its wings, without splitting it. The priest will completely burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the altar fire. It is an entirely burned offering, a food gift of soothing smell to the LORD.

### The grain offering

**2** When anyone presents a grain offering to the LORD, the offering must be of choice flour. They must pour oil on it and put frankincense on it, <sup>2</sup>then bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests. A priest will take a handful of its choice flour and oil, along with all of its frankincense, and will completely burn this token portion on the altar as a food gift of soothing smell to the LORD. <sup>3</sup>The rest of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons as a most holy portion from the LORD's food gifts.

<sup>4</sup>When you present a grain offering baked in an oven, it must be of choice flour: unleavened flatbread mixed with oil or unleavened wafers spread with oil. <sup>5</sup>If your offering is grain prepared on a griddle, it must be of choice flour mixed with oil and it must be unleavened.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

1:14-17 *doves or pigeons* were domesticated and raised for food in Israel and many of its neighbors. They provided the cheapest meat and so the most affordable animal offerings. Their small size and anatomy required different instructions.

1:16 *throat and its contents*: refers to the crop, a pouch in a bird's throat that contains partially digested food. The Hebrew is unclear and could mean instead "its anus and its (tail) feathers."

2:1-16 Vegetarian food offerings can consist of flour (2:1-3), bread (2:4-13), or roasted grain (2:14-16). The priests burn a token portion on the altar while eating the rest themselves (2:3, 10). Grain offerings therefore provided a major source of income for the priests. The chapter focuses on additives as much as on the grain itself. Olive oil, frankincense, and salt must accompany the offerings. But priests must never burn yeast or honey on the altar (2:11). 2:1 *grain offering*: The Hebrew word describes gifts (Gen 32:19-22), tribute (Judg 3:15), and offerings of all kinds (Gen 4:3-5). Leviticus uses it only for offerings of grain products. *choice flour*: semolina, which was more valuable than common flour or barley. *frankincense*: an expensive

spice produced from the resin of a tree that grows in Somalia and the Sudan. It is a major ingredient in the incense (Exod 30:34-38) offered on the inner golden altar (Exod 30:1-10).

2:2 *token portion*: or "memorial." Leviticus does not explain who or what this ritual memorializes. The word also names the frankincense placed with bread on the table inside the tent (Lev 24:7). Israelites didn't eat frankincense, so here all of it must be burned on the altar as incense. It probably covered the smell of the burning grain.

2:3 *most holy* describes spaces, items, and foods set apart for the priests alone. *food gifts*: See note on Leviticus 1:9.

2:4-10 Three kinds of unleavened bread offerings: baked (2:4), cooked on a griddle (2:5), and cooked in a pan (2:7). The rules for bread offerings are the central trio in three nested trios of instructions: three kinds of bread offerings (2:4-10) at the center of three kinds of grain offerings (Lev 2) at the center of three kinds of "soothing smell" offerings (Lev 1-3). The Hebrew words describing how the breads should be made and what they look like are no longer clearly understood. But all of them should be offered in the same way (2:8-10).

<sup>6</sup>Crumble it into pieces and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. <sup>7</sup>If your offering is grain prepared in a pan, it must be made of choice flour with oil. <sup>8</sup>You will bring the grain offering made in one of these ways to the LORD, presenting it to the priest, who will then bring it to the altar. <sup>9</sup>The priest will remove from the grain offering the token portion and completely burn it on the altar as a food gift of soothing smell to the LORD. <sup>10</sup>The rest of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons as a most holy portion from the LORD's food gifts.

<sup>11</sup>No grain offering that you give to the LORD can be made with yeast. You must not completely burn any yeast or honey as a food gift for the LORD. <sup>12</sup>You can present those as first-choice offerings to the LORD, but they must not be entirely burned up on the altar as a soothing smell.

<sup>13</sup>You must season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not omit the salt of your God's covenant from your grain offering. You must offer salt with all your offerings.

<sup>14</sup>If you present a grain offering to the LORD from the first produce, you must make such an offering from the crushed heads of newly ripe grain, roasted with fire. <sup>15</sup>You must put oil and frankincense on it; it is a grain offering. <sup>16</sup>The priest will completely burn the token portion—some of the crushed new grain and oil along with all of the frankincense—as a food gift for the LORD.

### The well-being sacrifice

**3** If the offering is a communal sacrifice of well-being,<sup>d</sup> the one who offers the herd animal—whether it is male or female—must present a flawless specimen before the LORD. <sup>2</sup>You must press your hand on the head of the offering and slaughter it at the meeting tent's entrance. Aaron's sons the priests will toss the blood against every side of the altar. <sup>3</sup>Then you can offer a food gift to the LORD from the communal sacrifice of well-being: the fat that covers and surrounds the insides; <sup>4</sup>the two kidneys and the fat around them at the loins; and the lobe on the liver, which should be removed with the kidneys. <sup>5</sup>Aaron's sons will completely burn all of this on the altar—along with the entirely burned offering on the wood that is on the altar fire—as a food gift of soothing smell to the LORD.

<sup>6</sup>If the offering for a communal sacrifice of well-being for the LORD is from the flock—whether it is male or female—you must present a flawless specimen. <sup>7</sup>If you present a sheep as the offering, you must present it before the LORD. <sup>8</sup>You must press your hand on the head of the offering and slaughter it before the meeting tent. Aaron's sons will toss the blood against every side of the altar. <sup>9</sup>Then you may offer the fat from the communal sacrifice of

<sup>d</sup>Or *peace offering*

2:11-13 *yeast* (or "sourdough") and *honey* (or "syrup") must not be burned on the altar. That is why only "unleavened" bread may be offered (Lev 2:4, 5, but cf. Lev 7:13) and yeast must be avoided at Passover (Exod 16:15-20). Maybe Israelites associated yeast and honey with rotting food (though nothing in the OT suggests this), and so they emphasized preserving offerings with *salt* instead (2:13). But unburned offerings may contain leavened breads and honey (2:12), so negative associations are unlikely. *salt of your God's covenant* suggests instead that salt symbolized treaty commitments (cf. Num 18:19; 2 Chron 13:5) as in other ancient cultures. So adding salt probably showed worshippers' loyalty to their king, the Lord. 2:14-16 *first produce*: usually translated "firstfruits," but this is about wheat and barley, not fruit. Farmers must offer the first grain they harvest each year at the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:9-14).

3:1-17 The most common offerings in ancient Israel were well-being sacrifices. They account for the largest number in lists of offerings (Num 7:12-88; 2 Chron 29:33-35). Well-being sacrifices provided food for priests (Lev 7:32-24) and people (Lev 7:15-27)—maybe the only beef or mutton that laypeople ate if they obeyed Lev 17:2-9 (but cf. Deut 12:15).

3:1 *sacrifice of well-being* consists of two Hebrew words:

the common term "slaughter" or "sacrifice" and a plural noun from the root meaning "peace, well-being." This plural noun already names a kind of offering in texts from Ugarit, a kingdom north of Israel that thrived in the second millennium BCE. So it was a traditional term for Israelites, who likely gave little thought to its connection with peace. The offering is *communal* because God, priests, and people share it as a communal meal. Food often serves as a basic element in religious services of all kinds. The *communal sacrifice of well-being* let Israelites engage with the Lord in the sanctuary like guests and hosts in a home. *male or female*: unlike all other offerings of herd animals (Lev 1:3, 10; 4:22, 27; 5:14), maybe because so many well-being sacrifices were offered that it wasn't practical to limit the sex of the animal. *flawless*: See Leviticus 1:3.

3:2 *press your hand*: See note on Leviticus 1:4. *toss the blood*: See note on Leviticus 1:5.

3:3-4 *fat... kidneys... liver*: Priests burn only the animal's fat and some internal organs on the altar. *Fat* here refers only to suet around internal organs that is easily removed. Priests and worshippers divide the meat between them (Lev 7:15-24).

3:5 See note on Leviticus 1:9.

3:6-16 Well-being sacrifices of sheep and goats must be offered just like cattle (Lev 1-5). Unlike cows, goats, and

2:11 Lv 6:17

2:13 Nm 18:19;

2Ch 13:5;

Eze 43:24;

Mk 9:49

3:1 Lv 7:11;

Lv 7:29, Lv 17:5;

Lv 22:21

3:4 Ex 29:13;

Lv 3:10, Lv 4:9

3:17 Gn 9:4;  
Lv 7:23, Lv 17:10;  
Dt 12:16;  
Ac 15:20

4:2 Lv 4:13,  
Lv 4:22, Lv 4:27,  
Lv 5:15, Lv 5:17

4:3 Lv 9:2

4:5 Lv 4:16,  
Lv 4:17,  
Lv 16:14

well-being as a food gift for the LORD: the whole fat tail, which should be removed close to the tailbone; the fat that covers and surrounds the insides; <sup>10</sup>the two kidneys and the fat around them at the loins; and the lobe on the liver, which should be removed with the kidneys. <sup>11</sup>The priest will then completely burn all of this on the altar as food—as a food gift for the LORD.

<sup>12</sup>If the offering is a goat, you must present it before the LORD. <sup>13</sup>You must press your hand on its head and slaughter it before the meeting tent. Aaron's sons will toss its blood against every side of the altar. <sup>14</sup>Then you may present as your offering—a food gift for the LORD—the fat that covers and surrounds the insides; <sup>15</sup>the two kidneys and the fat around them at the loins; and the lobe on the liver, which should be removed with the kidneys. <sup>16</sup>The priest will then completely burn all of this on the altar as food—as a food gift for a soothing smell.

All fat belongs to the LORD. <sup>17</sup>This is a permanent rule for your future generations, wherever you live: you must not eat any fat or blood.

### The purification offering

**4** The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>Say to the Israelites: Do the following whenever someone sins unintentionally against any of the LORD's commands, doing something that shouldn't be done:

<sup>3</sup>If it is the anointed priest who has sinned, making the people guilty of sin, he must present to the LORD a flawless bull from the herd as a purification offering\* for the sin he has committed. <sup>4</sup>He will bring the bull before the LORD at the entrance to the meeting tent and press his hand on the bull's head. Then he will slaughter the bull before the LORD. <sup>5</sup>The anointed

\*Or *sin offering* (Heb *hatta't*, which recurs frequently in Lev)

other kinds of sheep, Middle Eastern sheep have a distinctive *fat tail* (3:9) that must be burned on the altar with the other fats. So Leviticus 3:6-11 gives separate instructions for the sheep.

3:17 *permanent rule... wherever you live*: rules out any exceptions in time or space. This phrase is usually associated with rules allocating the priests' share of offerings (Lev 6:18, 22; 7:34, 36), but here it specifies what humans may not have. *you must not eat any fat or blood* summarizes the most basic of all food rules. Leviticus uses these prohibitions here to climax the rules for soothing-smell offerings in Leviticus 1-3 (see also Lev 7:23-27). God had already refused *blood* to Noah (see Gen 9:4) because it represents life (also Lev 17:10-14). Priests must splash the blood of offerings against the altar. Hunters must pour out the blood of wild game on the ground (Lev 17:13). Therefore, some people have concluded that non-Jews as well as Jews should refuse to eat blood (Acts 15:20, 29). But most Christian cultures have abandoned this prohibition (see 1 Cor 8 on good reasons for both observing and not observing food prohibitions, though without mentioning blood or fat). Animal *fat*, the suet around internal organs and the sheep's fat tail, cannot be eaten because it belongs only to God. Priests must burn the fat of all animal offerings on the altar (e.g., Lev 1:8; 3:3-5; 4:31). In the OT, "fat" is a symbol of the land's best produce (Gen 45:18; Pss 63:5; 147:14). So offering literal fat returns the best to God, who provided the land in the first place. Later Judaism limited the prohibition on eating fat, and Christian cultures usually ignore it altogether. (For more examples of instructions and rules that have been modified or ignored, see sidebars, "Animal Offerings" at Lev 1 and "The Love Commandment" at Lev 19.)  
4:1-6:7 Leviticus 4-5 give instructions for purification and compensation offerings. Each set of rules begins by describing the sins that require one of these offerings. Usually they are described generally as breaking "any of the LORD's commandments," but lists of specific sins appear in 5:1-4; 6:1-7. These chapters emphasize mistakes (4:2, 13,

22), but make provision for dealing with some deliberate sins by confessing them and restoring what was damaged or stolen (5:5-6; 6:4-5). Almost every set of rules ends by declaring that the priest makes reconciliation for the offenders so that they will be forgiven.

4:3-5:13 The animal required for a purification offering depends on the status (4:3-26) or wealth (4:27-5:13) of the worshipper. The same Hebrew word translated "purification offering" can on other occasions refer to *sin* (as in 4:3). This word thus describes both the problem (*sin*) and its solution (*offering*). While some translators call this offering a "sin offering," the CEB translation points to the offering's function. Some interpreters think the offering purifies only the sanctuary, others only the worshipper, and some that it purifies both sanctuary and worshipper. This offering purifies for more than moral sins. It also purifies mothers after childbirth (Lev 12:6-8) and persons healed of skin diseases (Lev 14:19). The unusual feature of this ritual is how the priest handles the animal's blood (see sidebar, "Blood" at Lev 4).

4:3 *anointed priest*: the high priest who is installed in office by being anointed with oil (Exod 29:7; 8:12). Leviticus prefers this phrase (Lev 4:3, 5, 16; 6:15) to "great priest" or "high priest" used in other OT books. The Hebrew word for "anointed" is *meshiach*, from which we get the English word "messiah." Leviticus speaks of the institution of the high priesthood, not predictions about future anointed leaders. But its use of the word "messiah" led to expectations of a future high priest like the future messianic king. Christians combined both expectations to describe Jesus as "Christ," that is, Messiah (Heb 6:20-7:27; 9:1-10:18).

4:4 *press his hand*: See note on Leviticus 1:4.

4:5-7 Purification offerings for the high priest or the community require the high priest to bring *blood* into the meeting tent. There he must sprinkle it toward the curtain in front of the chest containing the covenant and rub it on the horns of the incense altar. This ritual demonstrates the high priest's unique status. He alone can perform this

priest will take some of the bull's blood and take it into the meeting tent. <sup>6</sup>The priest will dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the LORD, toward the sanctuary's inner curtain. <sup>7</sup>Then the priest will put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of perfumed incense, which is in the meeting tent before the LORD. But he will pour out all the rest of the bull's blood at the base of the altar of entirely burned offerings, which is at the meeting tent's entrance. <sup>8</sup>Then he will remove all the fat from the bull for the purification offering: the fat that covers and surrounds the insides; <sup>9</sup>the two kidneys and the fat around them at the loins; and the lobe on the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys, <sup>10</sup>just as this is removed from the ox for the communal sacrifice of well-being. Then the priest will completely burn these on the altar of entirely burned offerings. <sup>11</sup>But the bull's hide and all of its flesh, along with its head, lower legs, entrails, and dung—<sup>12</sup>all that remains of the bull—will be taken to a clean location outside the camp, to the ash heap. It should be burned there at the ash heap on a wood fire.

4:14 Lv 4:3  
4:16 Lv 4:5  
4:18 Lv 4:7,  
Lv 4:25, Lv 8:15  
4:22 Lv 4:2,  
Lv 4:13, Lv 4:27

<sup>13</sup>If it is the entire Israelite community that has done something wrong unintentionally and the deed escapes the assembly's notice—but they've done something that shouldn't be done in violation of the LORD's commands, becoming guilty of sin—<sup>14</sup>once the sin that they committed becomes known, the assembly must present a bull from the herd as a purification offering. They will bring it before the meeting tent. <sup>15</sup>The community elders will press their hands on the bull's head before the LORD and then slaughter it before the LORD. <sup>16</sup>The anointed priest will take some of the bull's blood into the meeting tent. <sup>17</sup>The priest will dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD toward the inner curtain. <sup>18</sup>Then he will put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the LORD in the meeting tent. But he will pour all the rest of the blood out at the base of the altar of entirely burned offerings that is at the meeting tent's entrance. <sup>19</sup>Then he will remove all the fat from it and completely burn it on the altar. <sup>20</sup>He will do the same with this bull as he did with the other bull for the purification offering; that is exactly what he must do. In this way, the priest will make reconciliation for them, and they will be forgiven. <sup>21</sup>Then the priest will take the bull outside the camp and burn it, just as the first bull was burned. It is the purification offering for the assembly.

<sup>22</sup>If a leader sins by unintentionally breaking any of the commands of the LORD his God, doing something that shouldn't be done, and becomes guilty of sin—<sup>23</sup>once the sin that he committed is made known to him—he must bring as his offering a flawless male goat. <sup>24</sup>He will press his hand on the goat's head. It will be slaughtered<sup>f</sup> at the place where an entirely burned offering would be slaughtered before the LORD. It is a purification offering. <sup>25</sup>The priest will take some of the blood from the purification offering and, using his finger, will put it on the horns of the altar of entirely burned offerings. But he will pour the rest of the blood out at the base of the altar of entirely burned offerings. <sup>26</sup>He will completely burn all of its fat on the altar just as the fat of the communal sacrifice of well-being is burned. In this way the priest will make reconciliation for the leader to remove his sin, and he will be forgiven.

<sup>f</sup>Or *He will slaughter it . . . where he would slaughter*

ritual (cf. Lev 16) for his own sake and for the sake of the community (Lev 4:16-18).

4:6 *the sanctuary's inner curtain*: the veil that separates the holiest space (the Holy of Holies), where the chest containing the covenant was, from the outer room (Exod 26:31-35).

4:7 The meeting tent had two altars. Exodus 30:1-10 describes *the altar of perfumed incense*, which was inside the meeting tent, at the entry to the holiest space. Exodus 27:1-8 and 40:6 describe *the altar of entirely burned offerings*, which was just outside the meeting tent in its courtyard.

4:11-12 The meat from regular purification offerings goes to the priests to eat (Lev 6:26). But the carcass of the sin offerings for the high priest and community could not be eaten and had to be burned outside the camp. That is because it's not right for priests to benefit from offerings for their own individual or communal sins.

4:13-21 Since the sins of the *entire Israelite community* involve the high priest, too, this purification offering is identical to that for the high priest (Lev 4:3-12).

4:22-26 Unlike the high priest, a secular *leader's* purification offering must be conducted like that of any worshipper (Lev 4:27-13). But the leader must offer a more valuable animal, a *male goat* (or "ram"). On the sex of offering animals, see note on Leviticus 1:3.

4:24 *It will be slaughtered*: The subject of the Hebrew "he will slaughter" is indefinite. It could be the worshipper, but someone else could also slaughter the animal (cf. 2 Chron 30:17).

4:25 For regular purification offerings, the priest must rub blood on the horns of the altar in the courtyard (see note on Lev 4:7) and pour out the rest at the base of the altar. This is different from all the other offerings, because in other offerings the blood gets splashed against the sides of the altar (Lev 1:5; 3:3).

4:27 Lv 4:2;  
Nm 15:27  
4:29 Lv 1:4;  
Lv 4:4, Lv 4:15,  
Lv 4:24  
5:1 Lv 5:17;  
Lv 7:18, Lv 17:16;  
Prv 29:24;  
Mt 26:63  
5:4 Nm 30:6;  
Nm 30:8;  
Jgs 11:31;  
1Sa 14:24;  
1Sa 25:22

<sup>27</sup>If any ordinary person<sup>a</sup> sins unintentionally by breaking one of the LORD's commands, doing something that shouldn't be done, and becomes guilty of sin—<sup>28</sup>once the sin they committed is made known to them—they must bring as their offering a flawless female goat because of the sin that was committed. <sup>29</sup>They will press their hand on the head of the purification offering. It will be slaughtered<sup>b</sup> at the place for the entirely burned offerings. <sup>30</sup>The priest will take some of its blood and, using his finger, will put it on the horns of the altar of entirely burned offerings. But he will pour all the rest of the blood out at the base of the altar. <sup>31</sup>He will remove all of its fat, just as the fat from a communal sacrifice of well-being is removed. Then the priest will completely burn it on the altar as a soothing smell to the LORD. In this way, the priest will make reconciliation for them, and they will be forgiven.

<sup>32</sup>If you offer a sheep as a purification offering, it must be a flawless female. <sup>33</sup>You must press your hand on the head of the purification offering. It will be slaughtered<sup>1</sup> as a purification offering in the place where the entirely burned offering is slaughtered. <sup>34</sup>Then the priest will take some of the blood from the purification offering and, using his finger, will put it on the horns of the altar of entirely burned offerings. But he will pour all the rest of the blood out at the base of the altar. <sup>35</sup>He will remove all of its fat, just as the fat of a sheep would be removed from the communal sacrifice of well-being. Then the priest will completely burn it on the altar along with the LORD's food gifts. In this way, the priest will make reconciliation for you for the sin you committed, and you will be forgiven.

### Unintentional sin

**5** If you sin:

by not providing information after hearing a public solemn pledge even though you are a witness, knowing something, or having seen something so that you become liable to punishment;

<sup>2</sup>or by touching some unclean thing—the dead body of an unclean wild animal, unclean livestock, or unclean swarming creature—but the fact goes unknown so that you become unclean and guilty of sin;

<sup>3</sup>or by touching human uncleanness—any uncleanness that makes one unclean—and the fact goes unknown, but you later learn of it and become guilty of sin;

<sup>4</sup>or by carelessly swearing to do something, whether bad or good—whatever one might swear carelessly—and the fact goes unknown, but you later learn of it and become guilty of sin concerning one of these things—

<sup>a</sup>Or one of the people of the land <sup>b</sup>Or They will slaughter it. <sup>1</sup>Or You will slaughter it.

4:27–5:13 Regular worshippers may offer goats (4:27–31), sheep (4:32–35), birds (5:7–10), or flour (5:11–13) as purification offerings, depending on their ability to pay for them (5:7, 11).

4:27 *ordinary person*: The underlying Hebrew is “one of the people of the land.” This phrase means anyone (perhaps any landowner) besides the leaders already mentioned. The rules don't restrict who may bring offerings by nationality, gender, or age.

4:29 *It will be slaughtered*: See note on Leviticus 4:24.

5:1–6 Sins of omission and negligence (5:1–4) can be reconciled by confessing (5:5) and presenting a purification

offering (5:6). Some of these offenses are minor (5:2–3). But failing to clean oneself could pollute other people or the sanctuary (Lev 7:19–21), which leads to major problems.

5:1 *hearing a public solemn pledge*: A victim of a crime would swear an oath asking for support from witnesses (cf. Prov 29:24). *liable to punishment*: doesn't specify how or by whom.

5:2 *touching some unclean thing*: See Leviticus 11.

5:3 *human uncleanness*: See Leviticus 12–13; 15.

5:4 *carelessly swearing*: without thinking whether you can or should do what you swear to do.

*Blood* Hittite, Israelite, and Greek rituals stood out from other ancient temple services because they involved splashing animal blood on the sides of altars and using blood to purify people and places. Leviticus requires special uses of blood in purification offerings and on the Day of Reconciliation. Priests smear the blood of purification offerings on the altar's horns (Lev 4:25, 30, 34) and sometimes bring the blood into the meeting tent's (i.e., the tabernacle's) holy area (Lev 4:5–7, 16–18). On the Day of Reconciliation, the high priest sprinkles it on the covenant document's cover (Lev 16:14–15). Only the high priest can do this.

While worshippers present and slaughter the animals, even eating much of the meat, only priests handle the blood. The distinctive blood rituals of the Day of Reconciliation, as well as some purification offerings, call attention to the high priest's status as Israel's top religious leader.



<sup>5</sup>at that point, when you have become guilty of sin in one of these ways, you must confess how you have sinned <sup>6</sup>and bring to the LORD as compensation for the sin that was committed a female from the flock, either a sheep or goat, as a purification offering. The priest will then make reconciliation for you, to remove your sin.

### Alternative offerings

<sup>7</sup>If you can't afford an animal from the flock, you can bring to the LORD as compensation for your sin two doves or two pigeons, one as a purification offering and the other as an entirely burned offering. <sup>8</sup>You will bring them to the priest, who will first present the one for the purification offering. He will pinch off its head at the back of its neck without splitting it. <sup>9</sup>Then he will sprinkle some of the blood of the purification offering on the side of the altar. The rest of the blood will be drained out at the base of the altar. It is a purification offering. <sup>10</sup>Then, with the second bird, the priest will perform an entirely burned offering according to the regulation. In this way, the priest will make reconciliation for you because of the sin you committed, and you will be forgiven.

<sup>11</sup>If you cannot afford two doves or two pigeons, you can bring as the offering for your sin a tenth of an ephah<sup>1</sup> of choice flour as a purification offering. You must not put any oil on it, nor any frankincense, because it is a purification offering. <sup>12</sup>You will bring it to the priest, and the priest will take a handful from it—the token portion—and will burn it completely on the altar along with the food gifts for the LORD. It is a purification offering. <sup>13</sup>In this way, the priest will make reconciliation for you for whichever one of the sins you committed, and you will be forgiven. The rest of the offering will belong to the priest like the grain offering.

### The compensation offering

<sup>14</sup>The LORD said to Moses, <sup>15</sup>Whenever you commit wrongdoing, unintentionally sinning against any of the LORD's holy things, you must bring to the LORD as your compensation a flawless ram from the flock, its value calculated in silver shekels according to the sanctuary's shekel, as a compensation offering. <sup>16</sup>You will make amends for the way you have sinned against the holy thing: you will add one-fifth to its value and give it to the priest. Then the priest will make reconciliation for you with the ram for the compensation offering, and you will be forgiven.

<sup>17</sup>If you sin by breaking any of the LORD's commands, but without realizing it, doing something that shouldn't be done, and then become guilty and liable to punishment, <sup>18</sup>you must bring a flawless ram from the flock, at the standard value, as a compensation offering to the priest. The priest will make reconciliation for you for the unintentional fault that you committed, even though you didn't realize it, and you will be forgiven. <sup>19</sup>It is a compensation offering. You have definitely become guilty before the LORD.

<sup>1</sup>Two quarts; one ephah is approximately twenty quarts dry.

5:7 People in the ancient Near East raised doves and pigeons for food. They were much cheaper than cattle, sheep, or goats. Because they had little fat (cf. Lev 4:26, 31, 35), the priest burned one bird for the Lord as an entirely burned offering (see Lev 1:14-17), while he kept the other bird as his take from the purification offering (cf. Lev 6:26, 29). Mary and Joseph made bird offerings to complete her purification after the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:24; cf. Lev 12).  
5:11 Even cheaper was a tenth of an ephah (two quarts) of choice flour (semolina), so poor Israelites could bring purification offerings when they needed to. Lack of oil and frankincense separates this purification offering from a regular grain offering (Lev 2:2).

5:14-6:7 Direct offenses against the Lord always require repayment plus 20 percent (5:16; 6:5) and an expensive compensation offering (or "guilt offering"); the underlying Heb. is the same word as "guilty" in 5:17). Like the "purification offering" (see note on Lev 4:3), it describes both the problem and its solution. The CEB translation points to its function to compensate for the sin. The rules for conducting the compensation offering appear in Leviticus 7:1-7. They resemble those for the well-being sacrifice,

except that the meat goes to the priests rather than the worshippers.

5:15 *sinning against any of the LORD's holy things*: by stealing, ruining, or polluting sacred offerings, objects (e.g., temple tools, the priests' clothes), and spaces (the meeting tent or temple); or failing to fulfill oaths using the Lord's name (see Lev 5:1-4). *a flawless ram*: A male goat was a fairly expensive animal. It marks off this offering from purification offerings that require different flock animals (Lev 4:23, 28, 32). *its value calculated*: The priests assess the animal's value in weights of silver, or maybe people pay in silver to buy a ram at the sanctuary. Priests could adjust their assessment by people's ability to pay (Lev 27:8). *the sanctuary's shekel*: standardized weights kept in the sanctuary. One shekel would weigh about 0.4 oz.

5:16 *make amends*: repay the damaged or stolen goods plus 20 percent.

5:17 *breaking any of the LORD's commands, but without realizing it*: When people suspect they did something wrong but don't know what, they must bring a compensation offering instead of a purification offering because it could have involved "any of the LORD's holy things" (Lev 5:15).

5:5 Lv 16:21.

Lv 26:40.

Nm 5:7.

Josh 7:19.

Prv 28:13

5:6 Lv 4:28.

Lv 4:32, Lv 7:1.

Lv 14:12.

Lv 19:22

5:16 Lv 6:5.

Lv 22:14.

Lv 27:13; Nm 5:7

6:3 Ex 23:4;  
Lv 19:12;  
Dt 22:1; 7ec 5:4

6:16 Lv 2:3,  
Lv 10:12;  
Eze 44:29

**6**<sup>a</sup>The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>If you sin:  
by acting unfaithfully against the LORD;  
by deceiving a fellow citizen concerning a deposit or pledged property;  
by cheating a fellow citizen through robbery;  
<sup>3</sup>or, though you've found lost property, you lie about it;  
or by swearing falsely about anything that someone might do and so sin,

<sup>4</sup>at that point, once you have sinned and become guilty of sin, you must return the property you took by robbery or fraud, or the deposit that was left with you for safekeeping, or the lost property that you found, <sup>5</sup>or whatever it was that you swore falsely about. You must make amends for the principal amount and add one-fifth to it. You must give it to the owner on the day you become guilty. <sup>6</sup>You must bring to the priest as your compensation to the LORD a flawless ram from the flock at the standard value as a compensation offering. <sup>7</sup>The priest will make reconciliation for you before the LORD, and you will be forgiven for anything you may have done that made you guilty.

### Priestly instructions

<sup>8</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>9</sup>Command Aaron and his sons: This is the Instruction for the entirely burned offering—the entirely burned offering that must remain on the altar hearth all night until morning, while the fire is kept burning. <sup>10</sup>The priest will dress in his linen robe, with linen undergarments on his body. Because the fire will have devoured the entirely burned offering on the altar, he must remove the ashes and place them beside the altar. <sup>11</sup>The priest will then take off his clothes, dress in a different set of clothes, and take the ashes outside the camp to a clean location. <sup>12</sup>The altar fire must be kept burning; it must not go out. Each morning the priest will burn wood on it, will lay out the entirely burned offering on it, and will completely burn the fat of the well-being offering on it. <sup>13</sup>A continuous fire must be kept burning on the altar; it must not go out.

<sup>14</sup>This is the Instruction for the grain offering: Aaron's sons will present it before the LORD in front of the altar. <sup>15</sup>The priest will remove a handful of the choice flour and oil from the grain offering, and all of the frankincense that is on it, and burn this token portion completely on the altar as a soothing smell to the LORD. <sup>16</sup>Aaron and his sons will eat the rest of it. It must be eaten as unleavened bread in a holy place; the priests must eat it in the meeting tent's courtyard. <sup>17</sup>It must not be baked with leaven. I have made it the priests'

<sup>k</sup>5:20 in Heb <sup>l</sup>6:1 in Heb

6:1-7 These seven verses begin chapter 6 in the Christian tradition of counting chapters and verses, but end chapter 5 in the Jewish count. *swearing falsely* (6:3) turns all these crimes into offenses *against the Lord* (6:2) because oaths used the divine name. They therefore require repayment (6:4-5), confession (Num 5:7) and a compensation offering instead of a purification offering (6:6).

6:5 *on the day you become guilty*: when you show your guilt by repayments and offerings.

6:8-7:36 Leviticus 6-7 revisits the offerings described in the first five chapters to focus on the portions that should go to priests. The rhetoric emphasizes careful performance of the rituals, with threats to "cut off" those who don't do them right (see note on Lev 7:20-21).

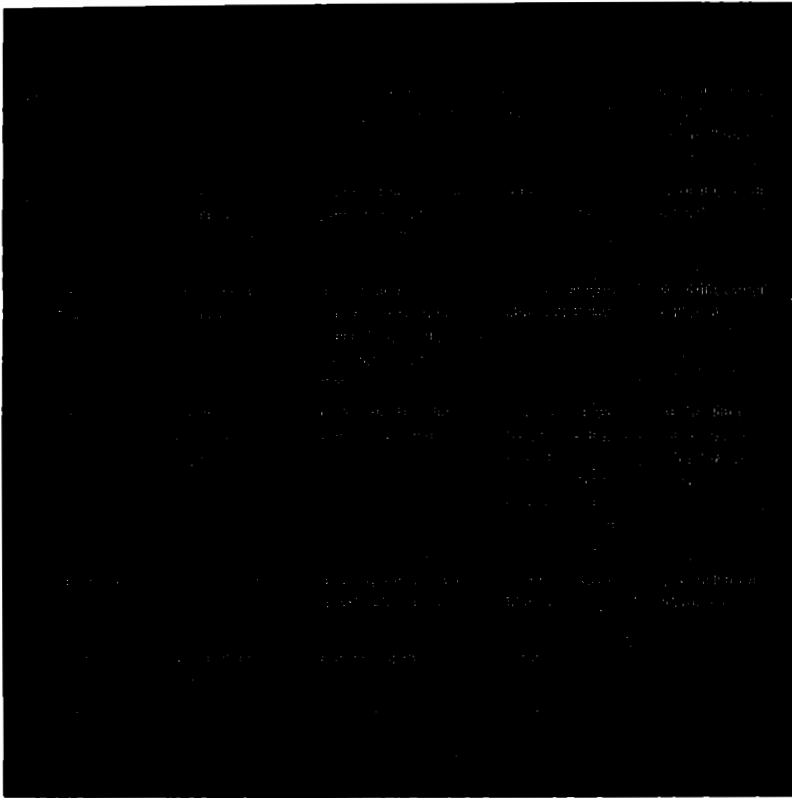
6:9 *Command Aaron and his sons*: God has addressed previous instructions to all Israelites (Lev 1:2; 4:2), but now intends these for the priests (Lev 6:25; but cf. Lev 7:22, 28) because they deal with priestly duties and incomes. Nevertheless, everyone overhears these instructions to priests since they appear in a book addressed to them all. This way, priests and non-priests can hold each other accountable. *the Instruction*: Hebrew *Torah*. The heading, "This is the *torah* for..." begins the instructions for each offering (Lev 6:9, 14, 25; 7:1, 11) and summarizes them all (Lev 7:37). The word frequently describes the teachings of priests in the OT (e.g., Deut 33:10; Hag 2:11; Mal 2:6-9).

Elsewhere, *torah* can refer to all the instructions God gave to Israel (e.g., Exod 16:8; 24:12; Lev 26:46; Ps 105:45). It became the name of books containing those laws (Deut 28:61; 31:26; 2 Kgs 22:8) and eventually the name of the entire Pentateuch (Neh 8:2).

6:10 *dress in his linen robe*: Whenever priests approach the holy altar, even just to take away the ashes, they must wear their robes (Exod 28:40-43; Lev 16:4) that have been made holy (Lev 8:30). But they must take them off before going outside (Lev 6:11) so they don't pollute the clothes. 6:13 *continuous fire*: Ancient people kept fires burning all night in cold weather so they didn't have to light them again in the morning. The continuous altar fire came to symbolize God's presence in the sanctuary. Priests also had to keep oil lamps lit through the night inside the meeting tent (Lev 24:2-4). 2 Maccabees 1:19-2:1 reports a legend that the altar fire miraculously survived the Babylonian exile in liquid form until revived by Nehemiah. The oracles at Delphi in Greece and the vestal virgins in Rome also tended continuous fires.

6:14-18 Rules for presenting the *grain offering* appear in Leviticus 2 (see note on Lev 2:2). This instruction makes clear that only priests may eat them and must do so in the meeting tent.

6:17 *leaven*: See Leviticus 2:11-13. *most holy* labels the three offerings that priests may eat but laypeople may not.



share from my food gifts. It is most holy like the purification offering and the compensation offering. <sup>18</sup>Only the males from Aaron's descendants can eat it as a permanent portion from the LORD's food gifts throughout your future generations. Anything that touches these food gifts will become holy.

<sup>19</sup>The LORD said to Moses, <sup>20</sup>This is the offering that Aaron and his sons must present to the LORD on the day of his anointment: one-tenth of an ephah<sup>m</sup> of choice flour as a regular grain offering, half in the morning and half in the evening. <sup>21</sup>It must be prepared on a griddle with oil. You must bring it thoroughly mixed up and must present it as a grain offering of crumbled pieces<sup>n</sup> as a soothing smell to the LORD. <sup>22</sup>The priest who is anointed from among Aaron's sons to succeed him will prepare the offering as a permanent portion for the LORD. It will be completely burned as a complete offering. <sup>23</sup>Every priestly grain offering must be a complete offering; it must not be eaten.

<sup>m</sup>Two quarts; an ephah is approximately twenty quarts dry. <sup>n</sup>Heb uncertain

**6:18** *Only the males:* unlike the priests' portion of well-being sacrifices that they can share with everyone in their households (Lev 22:10-13), *will become holy:* or "must [already] be holy." Interpreters disagree over whether the writers of Leviticus thought that holiness was contagious or not. Compare with Ezekiel 44:19; 46:20; Haggai 2:11-13. *permanent portion* or "permanent rule" (Lev 3:17) emphasizes priestly incomes four times in chapters 6-7 (Lev 6:18, 22; 7:34, 36).

**6:19-23** The *regular grain offering* of the priests has not been described before, so its ritual instructions appear here (cf. Lev 2). Unlike other grain offerings, priests cannot eat any of it because they should not get income from their own offerings. So it must be *completely burned* on the altar.

**6:21** *crumbled pieces:* The Hebrew word's meaning is uncertain because it appears only here in the OT.

6:30 Lv 4:11,  
Lv 4:12, Lv 4:18,  
Lv 4:21,  
Lv 16:27  
7:14 Ex 29:27,  
Nm 18:8,  
Nm 18:19  
7:20 Lv 22:3

<sup>24</sup>The LORD said to Moses, <sup>25</sup>Say to Aaron and his sons: This is the Instruction for the purification offering: The purification offering must be slaughtered before the LORD at the same place the entirely burned offering is slaughtered; it is most holy. <sup>26</sup>The priest who offers it as a purification offering will eat it. It must be eaten in a holy place, in the meeting tent's courtyard. <sup>27</sup>Anything that touches the purification offering's flesh will become holy. If some of its blood splashes on a garment, you must wash the bloodied part in a holy place. <sup>28</sup>A pottery container in which the purification offering is cooked must be broken, but if it is cooked in a bronze container, that must be scrubbed and rinsed with water. <sup>29</sup>Any male priest can eat it; it is most holy. <sup>30</sup>But no purification offering can be eaten if blood from it is brought into the meeting tent to make reconciliation in the holy place; it must be burned with fire.

**7**This is the Instruction for the compensation offering: It is most holy. <sup>2</sup>The compensation offering must be slaughtered at the same place where the entirely burned offering is slaughtered, and its blood must be tossed against all sides of the altar. <sup>3</sup>All of its fat will be offered: the fat tail; the fat that covers the insides; <sup>4</sup>the two kidneys and the fat around them at the loins; and the lobe on the liver, which must be removed with the kidneys. <sup>5</sup>The priest must burn them completely on the altar as a food gift for the LORD; it is a compensation offering. <sup>6</sup>Any male priest can eat it. It must be eaten in a holy place; it is most holy.

<sup>7</sup>The compensation offering is like the purification offering—they share the same Instruction: It belongs to the priest who makes reconciliation with it. <sup>8</sup>The hide of the entirely burned offering that a priest has offered belongs to the priest who offered it. <sup>9</sup>Any grain offering that is baked in an oven or that is prepared in a pan or on a griddle also belongs to the priest who offered it. <sup>10</sup>But every other grain offering, whether mixed with oil or dry, will belong to all of Aaron's sons equally.

<sup>11</sup>This is the Instruction for the communal sacrifice of well-being that someone may offer to the LORD: <sup>12</sup>If you are offering it for thanksgiving, you must offer the following with the communal sacrifice of thanksgiving: unleavened flatbread mixed with oil, unleavened thin loaves spread with oil, and flatbread of choice flour thoroughly mixed with oil. <sup>13</sup>You must present this offering, plus the leavened flatbread, with the communal thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being. <sup>14</sup>From this you will present one of each kind of offering as a gift to the LORD. It will belong to the priest who tosses the blood of the well-being offering.

<sup>15</sup>The flesh of your communal thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being must be eaten on the day you offer it; you cannot save any of it until morning. <sup>16</sup>But if your communal sacrifice of well-being is payment for a solemn promise or if it is a spontaneous gift, it may be eaten on the day you offer it as your communal sacrifice, and whatever is left over can be eaten the next day. <sup>17</sup>But whatever is left over of the flesh of the communal sacrifice on the third day must be burned with fire. <sup>18</sup>If any of it is eaten on the third day, it will not be accepted. It will not be credited to the one who offered it. It will be considered foul, and the person who eats of it will be liable to punishment.

<sup>19</sup>Flesh that touches any unclean thing must not be eaten; it must be burned with fire. Any clean person may eat the flesh, <sup>20</sup>but anyone who eats the flesh of a communal sacrifice

6:24-30 Priests receive all the meat from the *purification offering*, unless it is offered for themselves (6:30; see Lev 4:3-21).

6:27-28 If blood or meat touches clothes or pots, they must be cleaned thoroughly. Interpreters disagree as to why. *will become holy* can also be translated "must (already) be holy" (see note on Lev 6:18).

7:1-7 Leviticus 5 did not give rules for presenting the *compensation offering*, so they appear here in 7:2-5 instead. It goes like a well-being sacrifice (Lev 3), except the priest gets all the meat, like a purification offering (7:7).

7:3 *fat*... *fat tail*: See notes on Leviticus 3:3-4 and 3:6-16.

7:8-10 Additional rules for entirely burned offerings and grain offerings appear here instead of in Leviticus 6:8-18. It turns out that *entirely burned offerings* are not entirely burned. The animal's hide belongs to the priest who presents it, as do baked or fried grain offerings. But all the priests share offerings of raw flour equally.

7:11-34 Worshipers and priests share the meat of well-being sacrifices. So these rules tell worshipers how to

handle and eat it (7:12-30) before describing the priests' portion (7:31-34).

7:12-14 A well-being sacrifice must include bread as well as meat. These three kinds of bread can also be offered as a grain offering (Lev 2:5-7), but in that case the priest gets everything that isn't burned on the altar (Lev 2:10). Here the priest gets only one (loaf or cake) of each kind of unleavened bread as well as *leavened flatbread*. The worshiper eats the rest, just like the meat (Lev 7:15-16).

7:15-16 *thanksgiving sacrifice*... *payment for a solemn promise*... *spontaneous gift* name three different types of well-being sacrifices or three different reasons for presenting this offering, with different schedules for eating them.

7:18 *foul*: Rotten meat is no longer holy.

7:19-21 *unclean*: Humans and animals can be sources of uncleanness (see Lev 11-15), which was considered contagious by touch. Holy things that become unclean are no longer valid.

7:20-21 *cut off from their people*: This common threat (13 times in Leviticus-Numbers) doesn't make clear how and

of well-being that belongs to the LORD while in an unclean state will be cut off from their people. <sup>21</sup>Whenever anyone touches any unclean thing—whether it is human uncleanness, an unclean animal, or any unclean and disgusting creature—and then eats the flesh of a communal sacrifice of well-being that belongs to the LORD, that person will be cut off from their people.

<sup>22</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>23</sup>Tell the Israelites: You must not eat the fat of an ox, sheep, or goat. <sup>24</sup>The fat of an animal that has died naturally or the fat of an animal that was killed by another animal may be put to any use, but you must definitely not eat it. <sup>25</sup>If anyone eats the fat of an animal from which a food gift could be offered to the LORD, that person will be cut off from their people. <sup>26</sup>You must not consume any blood whatsoever—whether bird or animal blood—wherever you may live. <sup>27</sup>Any person who consumes any blood whatsoever will be cut off from their people.

<sup>28</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>29</sup>Say to the Israelites: If you wish to offer a communal sacrifice of well-being to the LORD, you are allowed to bring your offering to the LORD as your communal sacrifice of well-being. <sup>30</sup>Your own hands must bring the LORD's food gifts. You will bring the fat with the breast so that the breast can be lifted as an uplifted offering before the LORD. <sup>31</sup>The priest will completely burn the fat on the altar, but the breast will go to Aaron and his sons. <sup>32</sup>You will give the right thigh of your communal sacrifice of well-being to the priest as a gift. <sup>33</sup>The right thigh will belong to the son of Aaron who offers the blood and fat of the well-being offering. <sup>34</sup>I have taken the breast of the uplifted offering and the thigh that is given by the Israelites from their communal sacrifices of well-being, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons as a permanent portion from the Israelites.

<sup>35</sup>This is what Aaron and his sons are allotted from the LORD's food gifts once they have been presented to serve the LORD as priests. <sup>36</sup>The LORD commanded that these things be given to the priests by the Israelites, following their anointment. It is their permanent portion throughout their future generations.

**Conclusion concerning offerings**

<sup>37</sup>This concludes the Instructions for the entirely burned offering, the grain offering, the purification offering, the compensation offering, the ordination offering, and the communal sacrifice of well-being, <sup>38</sup>which the LORD commanded Moses at Mount Sinai on the day when he ordered the Israelites to present their offerings to the LORD, in the Sinai desert.

**The priests' ordination**

**8** The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>Take Aaron and his sons with him, the basketly clothing, the anointing oil, a bull for the purification offering, two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread, <sup>3</sup>and assemble the whole community at the meeting tent's entrance.

<sup>4</sup>Moses did as the LORD commanded him, and the community assembled at the meeting tent's entrance. <sup>5</sup>Moses said to the community, "This is what the LORD has commanded us

<sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain

by whom the penalty should be enforced. It may mean a death penalty, loss of family and descendants, or exclusion from the community. But the threatening tone is clear: Israelites should be very careful not to bring uncleanness into the sanctuary.

7:22-27 Warnings reach a climax in prohibitions on eating fat and blood (see Lev 3:17).

7:24 *you must definitely not eat it*: While the Israelites cannot eat the fat, they are permitted to eat the meat of some animals that die naturally or are killed by other animals (Lev 11:39-40; 17:15). *fat... may be put to any use*: maybe as lubricants, soaps, or lamp oil.

7:28-36 Priests (i.e., Aaron and his sons) receive income from well-being sacrifices. Worshipers must present the blood, fat, breast, and right thigh of this offering to the priest with their *own hands*. The blood and fat go on the altar. The priest keeps the breast and right thigh for himself.

7:30 *lifted as an uplifted offering*: probably a gesture dedicating it to God.

7:34-35 *permanent portion*: God grants the priests a permanent income from Israel's offerings (see Lev 6:18, 22).

8:1-10:20 This is the only long story in Leviticus. It tells of the inauguration of priests and worship in the meeting tent. It emphasizes 22 times that everything was done *just as the LORD had commanded* (8:4, 5, 9). Once it shows the disastrous results when priests did what the LORD *had not commanded them* (10:1). Then God tells Aaron that he and his sons have the authority to determine the right way to do the rituals and interpret God's instructions to Israel (10:10-11). So this story justifies Aaron's family in controlling the priesthood and temple. See sidebar, "Priests" at Leviticus 8.

8:1-36 Moses ordains the priests and the meeting tent as instructed in Exodus 29.

8:2 Aaron and his sons: See Exodus 6:23.

8:3-4 *whole community*: to see the priests ordained and know that they are legitimate.

7:32 Ex 29:27;  
Nm 6:20  
7:34 Ex 29:27,  
Ex 29:28;  
Lv 10:15;  
Nm 6:20,  
Nm 18:18  
8:1 Ex 29:1  
8:2 Ex 28:2  
8:3 Nm 8:9

8:12 Ex 30:30;  
Lv 21:10;  
Ps 133:2  
8:23 Ex 29:20,  
Ex 29:21;  
Lv 8:24,  
Lv 14:14  
8:24 Ex 29:20,  
Ex 29:21;  
Lv 8:23

*Priests* Throughout the ancient world, priests presided over offerings at temples. Priests had to protect the holiness of their temples by keeping themselves clean. In exchange for their work, they could eat some of the offerings. Priests were usually men, though sometimes women presided over offerings and temples dedicated to goddesses. Kings often put priests in office (e.g., 1 Kgs 2:26-27), but sometimes the role of priest rotated among leaders of a community.

Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers mandate a hereditary priesthood for Israel. Only male descendants of Aaron can serve as priests. It is not clear whether this mandate was followed in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. But starting in 535 BCE, after the exile, Aaron's descendants controlled the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and also the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim. In Jerusalem, two dynasties of priests controlled the high priesthood for 500 years. They were universally recognized as leaders of the Jews.

This was the same period when the Torah (the Pentateuch) first began to function widely as Jewish scripture. Priests taught the importance of obeying Torah, and the Torah justified the role of the priests, so the authority of priests and scripture grew together. But after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE, Jewish religious leadership shifted from hereditary priests to learned rabbis. Christians declared Jesus Christ the new high priest in a different priestly line (Heb 7). Denominations disagree over whether to call ministers "priests" or to use that term for all Christians (Exod 19:6; 1 Pet 2:9). However, a hereditary high priest still leads Samaritans to this day.

to do." <sup>6</sup>Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them in water. <sup>7</sup>Moses put the tunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, and dressed him in the robe. Moses then put the priestly vest on Aaron, tied the woven waistband of the vest around him, and secured the vest to him with it. <sup>8</sup>Then Moses placed the chest piece on Aaron and set the Urim and Thummim into the chest piece. <sup>9</sup>Moses placed the turban on Aaron's head and put the gold flower ornament, the holy crown, on the turban's front, just as the LORD had commanded him.

<sup>10</sup>Moses then took the anointing oil and anointed the dwelling<sup>a</sup> and everything in it, making them holy by doing so. <sup>11</sup>He sprinkled some of the oil on the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its equipment, as well as the basin and its base, to make them holy. <sup>12</sup>He poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head, thereby anointing him to make him holy. <sup>13</sup>Then Moses brought Aaron's sons forward, dressed them in tunics, tied sashes around them, and wrapped headbands on them, just as the LORD had commanded him.

<sup>14</sup>Next Moses brought forward the bull for the purification offering. Aaron and his sons pressed their hands on its head. <sup>15</sup>Moses slaughtered it, then took the blood and, using his finger, put it on all of the altar's horns, purifying the altar. He poured the rest of the blood out at the altar's base. Then he made the altar holy so that reconciliation could be performed on it. <sup>16</sup>Moses removed all the fat that was around the insides, the lobe of the liver, the two kidneys and their fat, and he completely burned it on the altar. <sup>17</sup>But the rest of the bull, including its hide, its flesh, and its dung, he burned with fire outside the camp just as the LORD had commanded him.

<sup>18</sup>Then Moses presented the ram for the entirely burned offering, and Aaron and his sons pressed their hands on its head. <sup>19</sup>Moses slaughtered it, then tossed the blood against all sides of the altar. <sup>20</sup>He cut up the ram into pieces, and then completely burned the head, pieces, and fat. <sup>21</sup>After he washed the insides and lower legs with water, Moses completely burned the whole ram on the altar. It was an entirely burned offering for a soothing smell; it was a food gift for the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>22</sup>Moses then presented the second ram, the ram for ordination, and Aaron and his sons pressed their hands on its head. <sup>23</sup>Moses slaughtered it, then took some of its blood and put it on Aaron's right earlobe, on his right thumb, and on his right big toe. <sup>24</sup>Then Moses brought forward Aaron's sons and put some of the blood on their right earlobes, their right

<sup>a</sup>Or *tabernacle* <sup>9</sup>Or *to make reconciliation for it* (i.e., the altar)

8:7-9 For the priests' clothes, see Exodus 28 and 39. *Urim and Thummim*: objects used by priests to determine God's will (Num 27:21; 1 Sam 28:6). It is no longer known what they looked like or how they worked.

8:10 *anointing oil*: See Exodus 30:22-33; 37:29.

8:11-12 *holy*: "set apart" for the Lord.

8:14 *bull for the purification offering*: See Leviticus 4:3-12.

8:15 *reconciliation*: or "atonement." See sidebar, "Reconciliation/Atonement" at Leviticus 16.

8:18 *ram for the entirely burned offering*: See Leviticus 1:10-13.

8:22-24 *ram for ordination*: See Exodus 29:19-28. Leviticus has no instructions for the ordination offering, though it mentions this offering in the list in Leviticus 7:37. The ritual imitates a well-being sacrifice (Lev 3) but also puts blood

thumbs, and their right big toes. Moses tossed the rest of the blood against all of the altar's sides. <sup>25</sup>Then he took the fat—the fat tail, all the fat that was around the insides, the lobe of the liver, the two kidneys and their fat—as well as the right thigh. <sup>26</sup>From the basket of unleavened bread that was before the LORD, he took one loaf of unleavened flatbread, one loaf of flatbread made with oil, and one unleavened wafer, and he placed these on the fat pieces and on the right thigh. <sup>27</sup>Moses set all of this in Aaron's and his sons' hands, then lifted them as an uplifted offering before the LORD. <sup>28</sup>Next Moses took this out of their hands and completely burned it on the altar, along with the entirely burned offering. This was an ordination offering for a soothing smell; it was a food gift for the LORD. <sup>29</sup>Next Moses took the breast from the ram for the ordination offering and lifted it as an uplifted offering before the LORD. It belonged to Moses as his portion, just as the LORD had commanded him. <sup>30</sup>Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron and his clothes, and on his sons and their clothes as well. In this way, Moses made holy Aaron, his clothing, and Aaron's sons and their clothing.

<sup>31</sup>Moses said to Aaron and his sons: "Cook the meat at the meeting tent's entrance. You may eat it there along with the bread that is in the basket of the ordination offering, just as I was commanded,<sup>f</sup> 'Aaron and his sons can eat it.' <sup>32</sup>But you must burn whatever is left over of the meat and bread with fire. <sup>33</sup>You must not leave the meeting tent's entrance for seven days, until the period of your ordination is completed, because your ordination takes seven days. <sup>34</sup>What was done today was commanded by the LORD, to make reconciliation for you. <sup>35</sup>You must stay at the meeting tent's entrance for seven days, day and night, observing the LORD's requirement so you don't die, because that's what I was commanded."

<sup>36</sup>Aaron and his sons did everything the LORD commanded through Moses.

### The priests' initiation

**9**On the eighth day, Moses called for Aaron, Aaron's sons, and Israel's elders. <sup>2</sup>He said to Aaron, "Take a young bull from the herd as a purification offering and a ram as an entirely burned offering, both flawless animals, and bring them before the LORD. <sup>3</sup>Then tell the Israelites, 'Take a male goat as a purification offering; a young bull and a sheep—both one-year-old flawless animals—as an entirely burned offering; <sup>4</sup>an ox and a ram as a well-being sacrifice before the LORD; and a grain offering mixed with oil, because today the LORD will appear to you.'

<sup>5</sup>They brought what Moses had commanded to the front of the meeting tent. Then the whole community came forward and stood before the LORD. <sup>6</sup>Moses said, "The LORD has ordered you to do this so that the LORD's glorious presence will appear to you." <sup>7</sup>Moses said to Aaron, "Come up to the altar and perform your purification offering and your entirely burned offering, making reconciliation for yourself and the people. Then perform the people's offering in order to make reconciliation for them, just as the LORD commanded."

<sup>8</sup>Aaron went to the altar and slaughtered the young bull for his purification offering. <sup>9</sup>Then Aaron's sons presented the blood to him, and he dipped his finger into the blood and put it on the altar's horns. He poured the rest of the blood out at the altar's base. <sup>10</sup>He completely burned on the altar the fat, kidneys, and lobe of the liver from the purification offering, just as the LORD commanded Moses. <sup>11</sup>But he burned the flesh and hide with fire outside the camp.

<sup>12</sup>Then Aaron slaughtered the entirely burned offering. Aaron's sons handed him the blood, and he tossed it against all sides of the altar. <sup>13</sup>They handed him the entirely burned offering in pieces, including the head, and he completely burned them on the altar. <sup>14</sup>Then he washed the insides and lower legs and completely burned them on the altar along with the rest of the entirely burned offering.

<sup>f</sup>LXX, Syr, Tg; cf 8:35; MT as I commanded

on the priests' ears, thumbs, and toes, just as Moses put blood on the altar's horns (Lev 8:15). The blood probably purifies the priests, while anointing them with oil (Lev 8:30) makes them holy.

8:27–29 *uplifted offering*: See note on Leviticus 7:30.

8:30 *anointing oil*: See Exodus 30:22–33; 37:29. The priests and their clothes both become *holy* (cf. Exod 10:7).

8:31 *Cook the meat*: Compare with Leviticus 7:14–33.

9:1–24 Now ordained, the priests take over the rituals

from Moses. Aaron begins making the regular offerings as instructed in Leviticus 1–5, first for himself (9:8–14), then for the people (9:15–21).

9:1 *eighth day*: after seven days of ordination (Lev 8:33–35).

9:4 *the Lord will appear to you*: See Leviticus 9:6, 23–24.

9:6 *the Lord's glorious presence* appeared as a cloud (Exod 16:7–10; 24:16–17) that has already filled the meeting tent (Exod 40:34–38). This time, it will instead take the form of a fire bolt (Lev 9:24).

8:31 Ex 29:31.

Ex 29:32;

Lev 6:16

8:33 Ex 29:35;

Eze 43:25

8:34 Heb 7:16

9:7 Lv 4:20,

Lv 16:6;

Heb 5:1, Heb 5:3,

Heb 7:27

9:24 Jgs 6:21;

1Ki 18:38;

1Ki 18:39;

1Ch 21:26;

2Ch 7:1;

10:1 Ex 6:23;

Ex 28:1; Nm 3:4;

Nm 16:46;

Nm 26:61

10:2 Nm 3:4;

Nm 16:35;

Nm 26:61

10:6 Lv 13:45;

Lv 21:10;

Nm 16:22;

Josh 7:1;

Josh 22:18

10:8 Ex 12:1;

Lv 10:3; Lv 11:1;

Lv 13:1; Lv 15:1

10:9 Nm 6:3;

Is 28:7;

Eze 44:21;

Lk 1:15; Eph 5:18

10:10 Lv 11:47;

Lv 20:25;

Eze 22:26

<sup>15</sup>Next, Aaron presented the people's offering. He took the male goat for the people's purification offering, slaughtered it, and offered it as a purification offering like the first purification offering. <sup>16</sup>He presented the entirely burned offering and did with it according to the regulation. <sup>17</sup>Then he presented the grain offering, took a handful from it, and completely burned it on the altar, in addition to the morning's entirely burned offering.

<sup>18</sup>Aaron then slaughtered the ox and the ram—the people's communal sacrifice of well-being. Aaron's sons handed him the blood, which he tossed against all sides of the altar, <sup>19</sup>and the fat pieces of the ox and ram—the fat tail, the covering fat, the kidneys, and the lobe of the liver. <sup>20</sup>They placed these fat pieces on the animals' breasts, and Aaron completely burned them on the altar. <sup>21</sup>But Aaron lifted up the breasts and the right thigh as an uplifted offering before the LORD, just as Moses had commanded.

<sup>22</sup>Aaron then raised his hands toward the people and blessed them. After performing the purification offering, the entirely burned offering, and the well-being sacrifice, he came down. <sup>23</sup>Moses and Aaron then entered the meeting tent. When they came out, they blessed the people, and the LORD's glorious presence appeared to all the people. <sup>24</sup>Fire flew out from before the LORD and devoured the entirely burned offering and the fat pieces on the altar. All the people saw it. They shouted for joy and fell facedown.

### Nadab and Abihu

**10** Now Nadab and Abihu, two of Aaron's sons, each took an incense pan. They put fire and incense on them and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. <sup>2</sup>Then fire flew out from before the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

<sup>3</sup>Moses said to Aaron, "When the LORD said, 'I will show that I am holy among those near me, and before all the people I will manifest my glorious presence,' this is what he meant!" But Aaron was silent.

<sup>4</sup>Then Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan the sons of Uzziel, Aaron's uncle, and told them, "Go carry your relatives out from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp." <sup>5</sup>So they went forward and carried Nadab and Abihu out by their tunics to a place outside the camp, just as Moses had ordered. <sup>6</sup>Moses then said to Aaron and his sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Don't dishevel your hair and don't rip your clothes into pieces, or you will die and bring anger upon the whole community. Your family—all of Israel's house—will mourn the burning the LORD has done. <sup>7</sup>But you must not leave the meeting tent, or you will die because the LORD's anointing oil is on you." So they did what Moses ordered.

### Priestly drinking and eating

<sup>8</sup>The LORD said to Aaron: <sup>9</sup>Both you and your sons must not drink wine or beer when you enter the meeting tent so that you don't die—this is a permanent rule throughout your future generations—<sup>10</sup>so that you can distinguish between the holy and the common, and

9:21 *uplifted offering*: See note on Leviticus 7:30.

9:22 *blessed them*: probably with the words of the priestly blessing from Numbers 6:24-26.

9:24 *from before the LORD*: from out of the meeting tent. The *Fire* shows that God approves the offerings and those who presented them (as in 1 Kgs 18:38; 1 Chron 21:26; 2 Chron 7:1; cf. Judg 6:21).

10:1-20 Only once in Leviticus 8-10 do the priests do something that the LORD... *had not commanded* (10:1). As a result, two priests die. The rest of the chapter deals with the question of whether the priests have the authority to decide on correct ritual practice.

10:1 *Nadab and Abihu*: Aaron's oldest sons (Exod 6:23). *Unauthorized fire* doesn't explain exactly what they did wrong, only that they didn't follow God's instructions.

10:2 *fire... from before the LORD* is the same phrase as in Leviticus 9:24. But in this case, the fire shows God's judgment on those who don't follow instructions.

10:3 *When the LORD said*: This message is not recorded elsewhere. Interpreters have debated its meaning for thousands of years. Its moral, though, is clear: Priests risk death by coming close to God's presence. They must be very careful to do their jobs correctly.

10:4 *Mishael and Elzaphan*: the closest family members who were not priests and not required to stay in the sanctuary (Lev 10:7).

10:5 *carried Nadab and Abihu out by their tunics*: so Mishael and Elzaphan would not become unclean by touching the corpses.

10:6 *Eleazar and Ithamar*: Aaron's remaining sons (Exod 6:23). The priests must present the offerings, so they can't mourn in traditional ways by disheveling their hair (they must wear turbans; Exod 28:40), ripping their clothes (their clothes are holy; Exod 28:41; Lev 8:30), drinking alcohol (Lev 10:8), or fasting (Lev 10:13-18).

10:7 *you must not leave the meeting tent*: until they finish the day's offerings. Priests can and did leave the sanctuary. Their homes in the land were in scattered villages (Josh 21:4-19). But now they must stay in the sanctuary and not attend their brothers' funeral.

10:8 *The LORD said to Aaron*: God speaks directly to Aaron alone, rather than through or with Moses, only here and in Numbers 18. This emphasizes the message in Leviticus 10:9-11.

10:9-11 *this is a permanent rule... so that you can distinguish... can teach*: or "This is a permanent rule... : to



between the unclean and the clean,<sup>11</sup> and so that you can teach the Israelites all the rules that the LORD spoke to them through Moses.

<sup>12</sup>Moses then told Aaron and his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Take the grain offering that is left over from the LORD's food gifts and eat it unleavened next to the altar, because it is most holy. <sup>13</sup>You must eat it in a holy place because it is your portion and your sons' portion from the LORD's food gifts, as I have been commanded. <sup>14</sup>You must eat the breast for the uplifted offering and the thigh for the gift offering in a clean place—both you and your sons and daughters. These things are designated as your portion and your children's portion from the Israelites' communal sacrifices of well-being. <sup>15</sup>The Israelites must bring the thigh for the gift and the breast for the uplifted offering along with the food gifts of the fat pieces, to be lifted up as an uplifted offering before the LORD. These will belong to both you and your children as a permanent portion, just as the LORD has commanded."

<sup>16</sup>Then Moses asked about the male goat for the purification offering, and discovered that it had already been burned. He was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and asked, <sup>17</sup>"Why didn't you eat the purification offering in the holy area? It's most holy, and it was assigned to you for bearing the community's punishment by making reconciliation for them before the LORD. <sup>18</sup>Since its blood wasn't brought into the sanctuary's interior, you were to have eaten it in the sanctuary, just as I was commanded."

<sup>19</sup>"Look," Aaron said to Moses, "today they offered their purification offerings and their entirely burned offerings before the LORD, but these things still happened to me! Would the LORD have approved if I had eaten a purification offering today?" <sup>20</sup>When Moses heard that, he approved.<sup>†</sup>

### Dietary rules

**11** The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: <sup>2</sup>Say to the Israelites: These are the creatures that you are allowed to eat from the land animals: <sup>3</sup>You can eat any animal that has divided hoofs, completely split, and that rechews food. <sup>4</sup>But of animals that chew food and have divided hoofs you must not eat the following: the camel—though it rechews food, it does not have divided hoofs, so it is unclean for you; <sup>5</sup>the rock badger—though it rechews food, it does not have divided hoofs, so it is unclean for you; <sup>6</sup>the hare—though it rechews food, it does not have divided hoofs, so it is unclean for you; <sup>7</sup>the pig—though it has completely divided hoofs, it does not chew food, so it is unclean for you. <sup>8</sup>You must not eat the flesh of these animals or touch their dead bodies; they are unclean for you.

<sup>9</sup>You are allowed to eat the following from all water animals: You may eat anything in the water that has fins and scales, whether in sea or stream. <sup>10</sup>But anything in the seas or streams that does not have fins and scales—whether it be any of the swarming creatures in the water or any of the other living creatures in the water—is detestable to you <sup>11</sup>and must

<sup>†</sup>Syr, Tg, Vulg; MT as I commanded; cf 8:31 <sup>†</sup>Or he was satisfied.

distinguish . . . to teach" (as in Lev 16:34). The priests have authority to decide correct ritual practice and teach *all the rules* of the Torah to Israel. Priests *distinguish between the holy and the common*, for example, by marking the limits of holy and most holy space in the meeting tent (Exod 26:33, 36) and by treating most holy and holy offerings correctly (Lev 7:27-30; 10:17). They must also stay *clean* themselves (Lev 21), diagnose (Lev 13-14) and purify uncleanliness (Lev 15:15) in others, and keep *the unclean away* from holy things (Lev 7:19-21).

10:9 Priests must abstain from wine and beer while presenting offerings so they can think clearly and don't make fatal mistakes.

10:12-15 The priests must eat their portion of the offerings on the same day in the courtyard of the meeting tent (Lev 6:16; 7:31-34). So they can't fast to mourn their sons or brothers.

10:16-18 The meat of the purification offering was supposed to be eaten by the priests (Lev 7:26-29), but it was burned outside the camp. Only purification offerings for

the high priest and the community as a whole, whose *blood is brought into the sanctuary's interior*, should be burned outside the camp (Lev 4:5-12, 16-21; 7:30).

10:18 as I was commanded: or "as I commanded" (see translation note). Early Hebrew texts did not distinguish between active and passive verbs.

10:19 Aaron's argument is not clear, but involves what is the appropriate response to the deaths of his sons, Nadab and Abihu (*these things still happened to me*; see Lev 10:2).

10:20 Since God has now granted Aaron final authority to decide correct ritual practice (Lev 10:10), even Moses must approve or at least be satisfied by his decision.

11:1-47 These lists and principles for recognizing unclean animals set rules for what meat may or may not be eaten (see sidebar, "Meat" at Lev 11). A related list of edible animals appears in Deuteronomy 14.

11:3-8 *divided hoofs . . . rechews food*: includes cattle, sheep, goats, and deer. Israel's neighbors often ate the animals that are prohibited here.

11:9-12 Water animals without *fins and scales* include

10:12 Lv 6:14

11:1 Dt 14:3

11:2 Dt 14:3;

Ac 10:12

11:9 Ac 10:14

11:5 Ps 104:18;

Prv 30:26

11:7 Is 65:4;

Is 66:3; Is 66:7

11:13 Dt 14:12

11:14 Job 28:7

11:20 Dt 14:19

11:24 Lv 5:2,

Lv 11:31,

Lv 14:46, Lv 15:5

11:23 Ex 19:10;

Lv 11:28, Lv 14:8,

Lv 15:5;

Nm 31:24

11:29 Is 66:17

remain so. You must not eat their flesh, and you must detest their dead bodies. <sup>12</sup>Anything in the water that does not have fins or scales is detestable to you.

<sup>13</sup>Of the birds, the following are the ones you must detest—they must not be eaten; they are detestable: the eagle, the black vulture, the bearded vulture, <sup>14</sup>the kite, any kind of falcon, <sup>15</sup>any kind of raven, <sup>16</sup>the eagle owl, the short-eared owl, the long-eared owl, any kind of hawk, <sup>17</sup>the tawny owl, the fisher owl, the screech owl, <sup>18</sup>the white owl, the scops owl, the osprey, <sup>19</sup>the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Any flying insect that walks on four feet is detestable to you, <sup>21</sup>but you can eat four-footed flying insects that have jointed legs above their feet with which they hop on the ground. <sup>22</sup>Of these you can eat the following: any kind of migrating locust, any kind of bald locust, any kind of cricket, and any kind of grasshopper. <sup>23</sup>But every other flying insect that has four feet is detestable to you.

### Unclean animals

<sup>24</sup>You make yourself unclean by the following animals—whoever touches their dead bodies will be unclean until evening, <sup>25</sup>and anyone who carries any part of their dead bodies must wash their clothes and will be unclean until evening; <sup>26</sup>All animals that have divided hoofs, but they are not completely split, and that do not rechew food are unclean for you—whoever touches them will be unclean. <sup>27</sup>Of all the animals that walk on four feet, the ones that walk on their paws are unclean for you—anyone who touches their dead bodies will be unclean until evening. <sup>28</sup>Anyone who carries one of their dead bodies must wash their clothes and will be unclean until evening; these animals are unclean for you.

<sup>29</sup>The following are unclean for you among the small creatures that move about on the ground: the rat, the mouse, any kind of large lizard, <sup>30</sup>the gecko, the spotted lizard, the lizard, the skink, and the chameleon.<sup>▼</sup> <sup>31</sup>Of all small moving creatures, these are unclean for you—anyone who touches them when they are dead will be unclean until evening. <sup>32</sup>Moreover, anything on which one of these creatures falls when it is dead will be unclean, whether it is wood, cloth, skin, or funeral clothing—any such item that can be used to do work. It must be put into water and will be unclean until evening. Then it will be clean again. <sup>33</sup>If any of these creatures fall into a pottery jar, everything inside it will be unclean; you must smash the pot. <sup>34</sup>If water from such a jar gets on any edible food, it will be unclean; any drinkable beverage in such a jar will be unclean. <sup>35</sup>Anything on which a part of these animals' dead bodies might fall will be unclean. If it is an oven or stove, it must be destroyed; they are unclean for you and must remain that way. <sup>36</sup>Now, a spring or cistern that collects water is clean, but anyone who touches one of these animals' dead bodies in it will be unclean.<sup>¶</sup> <sup>37</sup>If any part of these animals' dead bodies falls on seed that is to be planted, the seed is still clean. <sup>38</sup>But if water is poured on some seed and part of their dead bodies falls on it, it is unclean for you.

<sup>39</sup>If one of the animals that you are allowed to eat dies naturally, anyone who touches its dead body will be unclean until evening. <sup>40</sup>Anyone who eats from the dead body must wash their clothes and will be unclean until evening. Anyone who carries such a dead body must wash their clothes and will be unclean until evening.

<sup>a</sup>Many of the species in 11:13-19 cannot be identified with certainty. <sup>▼</sup>Many of the species in 11:29-30 cannot be identified with certainty. <sup>¶</sup>Heb lacks in it.

sharks, rays, octopuses, and all kinds of shellfish. *detest/detestable* strengthens the rule against touching dead animals. People should avoid them completely.

**11:13-19** Many of these names of birds are rare and poorly understood (see translation note u). The clearer terms name predatory birds. Perhaps the whole list consists of meat-eating birds that do not keep to the vegetarian diet provided by God in Genesis 1:29-30.

**11:20-23** Flying insects with *four feet* probably means “at least four feet,” unlike birds, which have only two. Among insects, only locusts, crickets, and grasshoppers may be eaten. After locusts destroyed crops, they were often one of the few food sources left to eat.

**11:24-28** People who touch a dead land animal become unclean, but need only to wash and wait until evening

before becoming clean again. They are not allowed to enter the sanctuary, but can behave normally elsewhere. They have not sinned.

**11:26** Animals with *paws* do not have hooves (Lev 11:3). They also tend to be predators (bears, wild and domestic cats and dogs), like unclean birds (Lev 11:13-19).

**11:29-30** These rodents and reptiles are unclean because they move close to *the ground* (cf. Lev 11:41-42).

**11:32-38** People, pots, and water that touch corpses of land animals become unclean. The same is not said of unclean fish, bird, and insects. Otherwise, almost every water supply would be unclean. Those animals must simply not be eaten (Lev 11:10-12, 23, 42).

**11:39-40** While some animals that die *naturally* can be eaten (Lev 17:15), their fat should not be (Lev 7:24).

*Meat* God first gave only vegetarian food to humans and animals, according to Genesis 1:29-30. After the flood, God allowed humans to eat meat so long as they avoided blood (Gen 9:2-5). Prohibitions on eating blood and animal fat are the most basic food laws (see Lev 3:17). Leviticus 11 distinguishes “unclean” and “detestable” animals from clean ones. Unclean animals can’t be eaten, though they may be used otherwise. Horses, donkeys, and camels, for example, have undivided hooves (Lev 11:3) and so can’t be eaten. That didn’t stop Israelites from using them as pack animals (Gen 12:16; 1 Kgs 10:29). The live animals don’t transmit uncleanness, but their corpses do (Lev 11:8, 24-28). Leviticus 11 gives principles for distinguishing clean animals (Lev 11:3, 20, 27) and then lists ambiguous cases for land animals (Lev 11:4-8) and insects (Lev 11:21-23). Leviticus simply gives a principle for water animals (Lev 11:9-12) and only lists of unclean birds (Lev 11:13-19) and ground animals (Lev 11:29-30). The rest of the chapter gives instructions on how to purify such uncleanness (Lev 11:31-40) and warns Israelites to avoid it (Lev 11:41-45).

Offering animals (oxen, sheep, goats, pigeons) form a subset of clean domestic animals. So Leviticus distinguishes three categories of animals: those that may be offered on the altar, those that may be eaten, and those that may not be eaten. Interpreters have long debated why Leviticus teaches these principles and bans these animals. Most likely, the lists reflect traditional ideas about edible and inedible meat. The principles in Leviticus 11:3, 21, and 27 generalize from two of the lists based on how the animal moves in its environment (land and water) and whether it preys on other animals. Jewish interpreters have often emphasized that food rules require daily obedience to God, and so train people in a devout lifestyle. Christian interpreters have often allegorized the principles and lists of animals as representing desirable and undesirable moral qualities in people. This difference comes from the fact that many Jews continue to follow these food (*kosher*) rules as interpreted in the Talmud. Most Christians, on the other hand, believe the NT allows them to set aside these rules for how they eat (Acts 10; 15; 1 Cor 8).

11:44 Lv 19:2;  
Lv 20:7;  
1Th 4:7;  
1Pt 1:15;  
1Pt 1:16  
11:45 Ex 6:7  
12:2 Lv 15:19;  
Lv 18:19;  
Lk 2:22  
12:3 Gn 17:12;  
Lk 1:59; Lk 2:21;  
Jn 7:22

<sup>41</sup>Every creature that swarms on the earth is detestable; it must not be eaten. <sup>42</sup>Among all such creatures that swarm on the earth, you must not eat anything that moves on its belly or anything that walks on four or more feet because they are detestable. <sup>43</sup>Do not make yourselves detestable by means of any swarming creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean with them or be made unclean by them. <sup>44</sup>I am the LORD your God. You must keep yourselves holy and be holy, because I am holy. You must not make yourselves unclean by any swarming creature that crawls on the ground. <sup>45</sup>I am the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God. You must be holy, because I am holy.

### Conclusion concerning animals and diet

<sup>46</sup>This concludes the Instruction concerning animals, birds, all creatures that live in water, and all the creatures that swarm on the earth, <sup>47</sup>in order to distinguish between the unclean and the clean and between creatures that can be eaten and those that cannot.

### Purification after childbirth

**12** The LORD said to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Say to the Israelites: If a woman conceives a child and gives birth to a son, she will be unclean for seven days—just as she is during her menstrual period. <sup>3</sup>On the eighth day, the flesh of the boy’s foreskin must be circumcised.

11:41-42 *swarm on the earth . . . moves on its belly*; animals that move close to or under the ground (cf. Gen 1:21, 25). *four or more feet*: (cf. Lev 11:20) among the “swarmers,” not including large land animals.

11:44-45 *I am the LORD your God*: This refrain echoes through the second half of Leviticus (e.g., Lev 18:5, 6, 21, 30; 19:10). It reminds readers of their covenant relationship with God that obliges them to keep these commandments. *holy* means “set apart” *be holy, because I am holy* also appears frequently in the latter part of the book (e.g., Lev 19:2; 20:7; 21:15). The refrain announces a fundamental principle for ethics and religious practice: Imitate God’s holiness.

12:1-8 Ancient Israelites believed that mothers must purify themselves after giving birth. The Bible views childbirth as a very positive event that is endorsed by God (Gen 1:28; 21:1). But it causes genital bleeding and so makes the mother unclean, just as . . . during her menstrual

period (see sidebar, “Clean/Unclean” at Lev 13). Many traditional cultures, including some Western ones through the 19th century, encouraged new mothers to seclude themselves for a period of time. Here mothers are unclean for one or two weeks, followed by a longer period for purifying them from the blood flow, for a total of 40 days after giving birth to a boy and 80 days after a girl. Leviticus does not explain the difference, and interpreters have not been able to agree on the reason. One factor was probably the lower status of females in traditional cultures. But the offerings required to complete the purification (12:6) are the same for “a son or a daughter,” which also shows that women as well as men could bring offerings to the sanctuary.

12:3 *On the eighth day . . . must be circumcised*: cut off the loose skin on the boy’s penis as a sign of God’s covenant with Israel (see Gen 17:10-14).

12:4 Lk 2:22  
 12:8 Lv 1:14,  
 Lv 4:26,  
 Lv 5:7, Lv 14:22;  
 Lk 2:24  
 13:1 Ex 12:1,  
 Lv 10:8, Lv 11:1,  
 Lv 14:1, Lv 15:1  
 13:2 Lv 14:56;  
 Dt 24:8  
 13:3 Lv 10:10,  
 Lv 13:11,  
 Lv 13:30  
 13:4 Lv 13:46,  
 Lv 14:38,  
 Nm 12:14,  
 Nm 12:15  
 13:6 Lv 11:25,  
 Lv 14:8, Lv 14:9

<sup>4</sup>For thirty-three days the mother will be in a state of blood purification. She must not touch anything holy or enter the sacred area until her time of purification is completed. <sup>5</sup>But if the woman gives birth to a daughter, she will be unclean for two weeks—just as she is during her menstrual period—and will be in a state of blood purification<sup>a</sup> for sixty-six days.

<sup>6</sup>When the time of purification is complete, whether for a son or a daughter, the mother must bring a one-year-old lamb as an entirely burned offering and a pigeon or turtledove as a purification offering to the priest at the meeting tent's entrance. <sup>7</sup>The priest will present it before the LORD and make reconciliation for her. She will then be cleansed from her blood flow. This is the instruction for any woman who has a child, male or female. <sup>8</sup>But if the mother cannot afford a sheep, she can bring two turtledoves or two pigeons—one for the entirely burned offering and the other for the purification offering. The priest will then make reconciliation for her, and she will be clean.

### Diagnosis of skin disease

**13** The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, <sup>2</sup>When a person has a swelling, a scab, or a shiny spot on their skin, and it becomes an infection of skin disease<sup>7</sup> on their skin, they will be brought to the priests, either to Aaron or one of his sons. <sup>3</sup>The priest will examine the infection on the skin. If hair in the infected area has turned white and the infection appears to be deeper than the skin, then it is an infection of skin disease. Once the priest sees this, he will declare the person unclean. <sup>4</sup>But if the shiny spot on the skin is white and does not appear to be deeper than the skin and the hair has not turned white, the priest will quarantine the infected person for seven days. <sup>5</sup>On the seventh day the priest will again examine the infection. If he sees that it has remained the same—the infection has not spread on the skin—the priest will quarantine the person for seven more days. <sup>6</sup>On the seventh day the priest will examine it again. If the infection has faded and has not spread over the skin, the priest will declare the person clean; it is just a rash. The person must wash their clothes, then they will be clean again. <sup>7</sup>But if the rash continues to spread over the skin after they appeared before the priest for purification, they must again show themselves to the priest. <sup>8</sup>If the priest sees that the rash has spread over the skin, the priest will declare the person unclean; it is a case of skin disease.

<sup>9</sup>Whenever someone has an infection of skin disease, they will be brought to the priest. <sup>10</sup>If the priest sees that there is a white swelling on the skin, it has turned the hair white, and there is a patch of raw flesh in the swelling, <sup>11</sup>then it is a case of chronic skin disease on their skin. The priest will declare the person unclean. The priest will not quarantine such persons, because they are already unclean. <sup>12</sup>But if the skin disease continues to break out so that the disease covers all of the infected person's skin from head to toe, as far as the priest can tell—<sup>13</sup>then the priest will make an examination. If the skin disease has covered the person's whole body, the priest will declare the infected person clean. The person has turned entirely white; he is clean. <sup>14</sup>But as soon as raw flesh appears in the swelling, they will be unclean. <sup>15</sup>When the priest sees the raw flesh, he will declare the person unclean. Raw flesh is unclean; it is a case of skin disease. <sup>16</sup>But if the raw flesh turns white again, the person will go back to the priest. <sup>17</sup>The priest will examine it. If the infection has turned white, the priest will declare the infected person clean; at that point, the person is clean.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>7</sup>The precise meaning is uncertain; traditionally *leprosy*—a term used for several different skin diseases.

12:6–7 Perhaps the *entirely burned offering* shows thankfulness for the safe birth. The *purification offering* (see Lev 4) here leads to *reconciliation* not for sins but to be *cleansed* (see sidebar, “Clean/Unclean” at Lev 13). *Instruction*: See note on Leviticus 6:9.

12:8 *turtledoves* or ... *pigeons*: See Leviticus 5:7-10.

13:1–14:57 These rules for purification treat unclean skin, houses, and clothes as similar to each other. Maybe Israelites thought that some skin diseases and mildew on walls or cloth looked like flesh that was decomposing (Lev 7:18; Num 12:10-12; see sidebar, “Clean/Unclean” at Lev 13).

13:2 *skin disease*: not “leprosy” (Hansen’s disease), more likely something like psoriasis. See translation note y.

13:3 *The priest will examine*: not to cure—priests were not doctors—but to declare clean or unclean (Lev 10:10).

13:4 *quarantine*: Priests must take time to make sure of ambiguous cases, because uncleanness due to skin disease is contagious and leads to banishment from the camp (Lev 13:46).

13:13 *turned entirely white; he is clean*: It is not the white scales, but rather the “raw flesh” (Lev 13:10,16) that makes someone unclean.

13:31 Lv 13:2,  
Lv 13:4,  
Lv 14:2-3,  
Lv 14:8, Lv 14:34;  
Nm 5:2;  
Dt 23:10-11  
13:34 Lv 13:6

*Clean/Unclean* Humans have always separated clean from unclean, pure from polluted. But different cultures apply these labels differently. Leviticus 11–15 and many other verses in Leviticus show how ancient Israelites applied this distinction. They considered things unclean if they were dead or reminded them of death. Dead bodies of humans or animals made anyone unclean who touched them (Lev 11:8). Growths on skin, walls, and clothes that looked like decomposing meat made people, houses, and clothes unclean (Lev 13:3, 49; 14:37). Like many other ancient peoples, they probably thought that semen and menstrual blood were vital fluids. Losing them seemed death-like and so made people unclean (Lev 15:2, 19).

Being unclean kept Israelites from entering the sanctuary. Therefore they were to be careful to avoid uncleanness when possible. When it wasn't possible, they were required to clean themselves afterward, so they could worship God. Cleaning minor uncleanness required only washing and waiting until evening (Lev 11:39-40; 15:16). Cleansing major uncleanness required purification offerings and other rituals (Lev 12:6-8; 14:1-32; 15:13-15, 28-30). Purification offerings also provided forgiveness from sins (Lev 4:20), but Leviticus does not usually regard uncleanness as sinful. It was often necessary to become unclean, for example, to bury bodies (Lev 10:4-5). Sometimes, people became unclean because of very happy occasions, such as giving birth to children (Lev 12:1-8). So "unclean" did not mean "bad" or "immoral." It simply meant that people should be careful that they not make other people unclean and not bring uncleanness into the sanctuary.

<sup>18</sup>Whenever someone has a boil on their skin, it heals, <sup>19</sup>and in place of the boil there is a white swelling or reddish-white shiny spot, it must be shown to the priest. <sup>20</sup>If the priest sees that it appears to be lower than the skin, and its hair has turned white, the priest will declare the person unclean. It is an infection of skin disease that has broken out in the boil. <sup>21</sup>But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in it, it is not lower than the skin, and it is faded, the priest will quarantine the person seven days. <sup>22</sup>If it continues to spread over the skin, the priest will declare the person unclean; it is an infection. <sup>23</sup>But if the shiny spot remains where it was and does not spread, it is just a scar from the boil. The priest will declare the person clean.

<sup>24</sup>Whenever there is a burn on someone's skin, and the raw patch of the burn becomes a reddish-white or white shiny spot, <sup>25</sup>the priest will examine it. If the hair has turned white in the shiny spot, and it appears to be deeper than the skin, it is a case of skin disease that has broken out in the burn. The priest will declare the person unclean; it is an infection of skin disease. <sup>26</sup>But if the priest examines it, and there is no white hair in the shiny spot, it is not lower than the skin, and it is faded, the priest will quarantine the person seven days. <sup>27</sup>On the seventh day the priest will again examine it. If it has continued to spread over the skin, the priest will declare the person unclean; it is an infection of skin disease. <sup>28</sup>But if the shiny spot remains where it was, has not spread over the skin, and is faded, it is just swelling from the burn. The priest will declare the person clean, because it is just the scar from the burn.

<sup>29</sup>Whenever a man or woman has an infection, whether on the head or in the beard, <sup>30</sup>the priest will examine it. If it appears to be deeper than the skin, and there is thin yellow hair in it, the priest will declare the person unclean; it is a case of scabies—a skin disease of the head or beard. <sup>31</sup>When the priest examines the scabies infection, if it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, but there is no black hair in it, the priest will quarantine the person with the scabies infection for seven days. <sup>32</sup>On the seventh day the priest will examine the infection again. If the scabies has not spread, there is no yellow hair in it, and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, <sup>33</sup>the person must shave the area, without shaving the scabies. The priest will then quarantine that person another seven days. <sup>34</sup>On the seventh day the priest will again examine the scabies. If it has not spread over the skin and does not appear to be deeper than the skin, the priest will declare the person clean. They must wash their clothes; then they will be clean again. <sup>35</sup>But if the scabies continues to spread over the skin after the person's purification, <sup>36</sup>the priest must examine it again. If the scabies has spread over the skin at all, the priest does not need to look for the yellow hair; the person is unclean. <sup>37</sup>But if the priest sees that the scabies has remained the same, and black hair has grown in it, the scabies has healed. The person is clean, and the priest will declare them to be so.

13:18-28 Skin disease may result from *boils* (13:18-23) or *burns* (13:24-28). The concern is *infection*, not the scar.

13:29-37 *scabies* in hair or beard may require *shaving* (13:33) to tell whether it is skin disease or not.

13:40 Lv 13:41;  
2Ki 2:23; Is 15:2  
14:1; Lv 13:1;  
Nm 5:1;  
Nm 12:14;  
Mt 8:4; Lk 5:14  
14:2 Lv 13:2;  
Dt 24:8; Mt 8:2;  
Mt 8:4; Lk 17:14  
14:3 Lv 13:46  
14:4 Ex 12:22;  
Lv 14:6;  
Lv 14:49;  
Lv 14:51;  
Nm 19:6  
14:5 Lv 14:50  
14:6 Lv 14:4

<sup>38</sup>Whenever a man or woman has many white shiny spots on their skin, <sup>39</sup>if the priest sees that there are faded white shiny spots on the skin of the body, it is just a rash that has broken out on the skin; the person is clean.

<sup>40</sup>If someone loses their hair, they are bald, but they are clean. <sup>41</sup>If the hair is lost at the sides of the forehead, the person has a receding hairline, but they are clean. <sup>42</sup>But whenever there is a reddish-white infection in the bald spot or in the receding hairline, it is a case of skin disease breaking out there. <sup>43</sup>The priest must examine it. If the swelling of the infection is reddish white in the bald spot or receding hairline and resembles skin disease on the body, <sup>44</sup>the person is afflicted with skin disease; they are unclean. The priest must declare them unclean on account of the head infection.

<sup>45</sup>Anyone with an infection of skin disease must wear torn clothes, dishevel their hair, cover their upper lip, and shout out, "Unclean! Unclean!" <sup>46</sup>They will be unclean as long as they are infected. They are unclean. They must live alone outside the camp.

### Articles with skin disease

<sup>47</sup>Whenever there is an infection of skin disease on clothing—on wool or linen clothing, <sup>48</sup>in the weaving of the linen or wool, or on a skin or skin item—<sup>49</sup>and the infection is greenish or reddish on the clothing, the weaving, or the skin or skin item, it is an infection of skin disease. It must be shown to the priest. <sup>50</sup>The priest will examine the infection and quarantine the infected item seven days. <sup>51</sup>On the seventh day he will examine the infection again. If the infection has spread in the clothing, the weaving, or the skin, whatever it is used for, the infection is a case of infectious skin disease; the item is unclean. <sup>52</sup>The priest will burn the clothing, the weaving of the wool or linen, or whatever skin item in which the infection was found, because it is an infectious skin disease; it must be burned with fire.

<sup>53</sup>But if the priest sees that the infection has not spread in the clothing, the weaving, or on any skin item, <sup>54</sup>the priest will order that the infected piece be washed, and he will quarantine it for another seven days. <sup>55</sup>After it has been washed, if the priest sees that the infection has not changed its appearance, even though the infection has not spread, it is unclean. You must burn it with fire. It is a fungus,<sup>a</sup> whether it is on the inside or outside.

<sup>56</sup>But if, after it is washed, the priest sees that the infection has faded, he will tear the infected part out of the cloth, the weaving, or the skin. <sup>57</sup>If it appears again in the cloth, the weaving, or any item of skin, it is starting to break out. You must burn the infected item with fire. <sup>58</sup>But if the infection disappears from the cloth, the weaving, or any item of skin that you washed, it must be washed again. Then it will be clean.

<sup>59</sup>This concludes the Instruction about the infection of skin disease in a woolen or linen cloth, weaving, or any skin item, in order to declare whether it is clean or unclean.

### Persons with skin disease

**14** The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>This will be the Instruction for anyone with skin disease<sup>a</sup> at the time of purification: When it has been reported to the priest, <sup>3</sup>he will go outside the camp. If the priest sees that the person afflicted with skin disease has been healed of the infection, <sup>4</sup>the priest will order that two birds—wild<sup>b</sup> and clean—and cedarwood, crimson yarn, and hyssop be brought for the person who needs purification. <sup>5</sup>The priest will order that one bird be slaughtered over fresh water in a pottery jar. <sup>6</sup>He will then take the other

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>a</sup>The precise meaning is uncertain; traditionally *leprosy*—a term used for several different skin diseases. <sup>b</sup>Or *live* or *healthy*; also in 14:6-7

13:45-46 Because uncleanness is contagious, people with skin disease must warn others to stay away by how they look and what they say. They also have to live *outside the camp*. So a diagnosis of skin disease had terrible effects on people's lives (see Num 12:10-15; 2 Kgs 5; 2 Chron 26:16-23; Luke 17:11-19).

13:47-59 Leviticus uses the same Hebrew word (translated *skin disease*) for some kinds of mildew in cloth and on the walls of buildings (Lev 14:35-53), maybe because mildew can look like rotting meat (see sidebar, "Clean/Unclean" at Lev 13). The priests decide whether they are unclean or clean in the same way that they decide whether people have skin disease or not.

13:48 *skin or skin item*: leather.

13:55 *burn*: Cloth or houses (Lev 14:45) with persistent skin disease must be destroyed. *fungus*: The Hebrew word appears only here. Its meaning is unknown (see translation note z).

13:59; 14:2 *Instruction*: See note on Leviticus 6:9.

14:3-9 Unlike offerings that take place at the altar in the sanctuary, this unusual ritual takes place *outside the camp* (Lev 14:2; cf. Num 19) because people must become clean before they can enter the sanctuary. Leviticus does not explain why the priest must use *cedarwood*, *crimson yarn*, *hyssop*, and *fresh water*. The smell of *cedar* may replace holy incense that cannot be used outside the sanctuary

wild bird, along with the cedarwood, crimson yarn, and hyssop, and will dip all of this into the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water. <sup>7</sup>He will sprinkle the person who needs purification from skin disease seven times and declare that they are clean. Then the priest will release the wild bird into the countryside. <sup>8</sup>The person who needs purification will then wash their clothes, shave off all of their hair, and bathe in water; at that point, they will be clean. After that, they can return to the camp, but they must live outside their tent for seven days. <sup>9</sup>On the seventh day, the person must shave off all their hair again: head, beard, and eyebrows—everything. They must wash their clothes and bathe in water; then they will be clean again.

<sup>10</sup>On the eighth day, that person must take two flawless male sheep, one flawless one-year-old ewe, a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah<sup>c</sup> of choice flour mixed with oil, and one log<sup>d</sup> of oil. <sup>11</sup>The priest performing the purification will place these and the person needing purification before the LORD at the meeting tent's entrance.

<sup>12</sup>The priest will take one of the male sheep and present it as a compensation offering, along with the log of oil, and will lift them as an uplifted offering before the LORD. <sup>13</sup>The priest will slaughter the sheep at the same place where the purification offering and the entirely burned offering are slaughtered: in the holy area. The compensation offering, like the purification offering, belongs to the priest; it is most holy. <sup>14</sup>The priest will take some of the blood from the compensation offering and will put it on the right earlobe, the right thumb, and the right big toe of the person needing purification. <sup>15</sup>Then the priest will take some of the log of oil and pour it into his left palm. <sup>16</sup>The priest will then dip his right finger into the oil and sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the LORD. <sup>17</sup>Then the priest will put some of the oil that is left in his hand on the right earlobe, the right thumb, and the right big toe of the person needing purification—this oil will be placed on top of the blood of the compensation offering. <sup>18</sup>The priest will put whatever is left of the oil in his hand on the head of the person needing purification. In this way, the priest will make reconciliation for the person before the LORD.

<sup>19</sup>The priest will then perform the purification offering and make reconciliation for the person needing purification from their uncleanness. After that, the entirely burned offering will be slaughtered. <sup>20</sup>The priest will offer up the entirely burned offering and the grain offering on the altar. In this way, the priest will make reconciliation for the person, and they will be clean again.

<sup>21</sup>Now if the person is poor and cannot afford these things, they can bring one male sheep as a compensation offering, to be lifted up in order to make reconciliation for them; a grain offering of one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil; a log of oil; <sup>22</sup>and two turtledoves or two pigeons, whatever they can afford—one as a purification offering and the other as an entirely burned offering. <sup>23</sup>On the eighth day, they must bring these items for their purification to the priest at the meeting tent's entrance before the LORD.

<sup>24</sup>The priest will take the male sheep for the compensation offering and the log of oil, and will lift them as an uplifted offering before the LORD. <sup>25</sup>The priest will slaughter the sheep for the compensation offering and will take some of its blood and put it on the right earlobe, the right thumb, and the right big toe of the person needing purification. <sup>26</sup>The priest will pour some of the oil into his left palm. <sup>27</sup>Next, the priest will sprinkle some of the oil seven

14:7 Lv 4:6.

Lv 14:51.

Lv 16:22.

2Ki 5:10.

2Ki 5:14.

14:8 Lv 11:25.

Lv 13:6, Lv 14:9;

Nm 5:2, Nm 8:7.

14:9 Lv 14:8.

14:10 Lv 2:1.

Lv 14:12.

Lv 14:15.

Lv 14:21.

Lv 14:24.

14:12 Ex 29:24;

Lv 5:6, Lv 5:18,

Lv 6:6, Lv 6:7.

14:13 Ex 29:11;

Lv 1:11, Lv 2:3,

Lv 4:24, Lv 7:7.

14:14 Ex 29:20;

Lv 8:23, Lv 8:24.

Lv 14:17.

Lv 14:25.

14:15 Lv 14:10.

14:16 Lv 4:6.

14:17 Ex 29:20;

Lv 14:14.

14:18 Lv 4:26.

14:19 Lv 5:1.

Lv 12:6, Lv 14:12,

Lv 14:31,

Lv 15:15.

14:20 Lv 14:8,

Lv 14:10.

14:21 Lv 5:7,

Lv 5:11, Lv 12:8,

Lv 14:10,

Lv 14:22.

14:22 Lv 5:7,

Lv 12:8,

Lv 14:21.

14:23 Lv 14:10,

Lv 14:11.

14:24 Lv 14:10,

Lv 14:12.

14:25 Lv 14:14.

<sup>c</sup>Heb lacks *ephah*; an ephah is approximately twenty quarts dry. <sup>d</sup>Heb *log*; two-thirds of a pint; also in 14:12, 15, 21, 24

(Exod 30:34-38). Branches of *hyssop* can be used for *sprinkling* (see Num 19:18; cf. Lev 4:17; 8:30; Exod 24:8). *crimson yarn* marks significant objects (Gen 38:28-30; Josh 2:18, 21) and may represent blood. *water* is used for many purifications (e.g., Lev 15:11-13). Releasing the *wild bird* carries away the uncleanness (cf. the goat in Lev 16:10, 20-22). 14:10-11 *ephah*...*log*: See translation notes c, d. These units of measure match how they sound in Hebrew; *log* has nothing to do with the English word "log" (meaning a large cut of wood). Only after becoming clean can a healed person make offerings *before the LORD* in the meeting tent.

14:12 *compensation offering*: See Leviticus 5:14-19; 7:1-7. *uplifted offering*: See Leviticus 7:30.

14:13 *at the same place*: on the altar in the courtyard just outside the meeting tent. See note on Leviticus 4:7.

14:14, 17, 25 *earlobe*...*thumb*...*big toe*: like the priests' ordination (see note on Lev 8:22-24).

14:19-20 *purification offering*: See Leviticus 4:27-35. *entirely burned offering*: See Leviticus 1:10-13. *grain offering*: See Leviticus 2:1-16. *reconciliation*: See sidebar, "Reconciliation/Atonement" at Leviticus 16.

14:21-31 Poor people can give animals and grain of lesser value for all the offerings (see Lev 1:14-17; 5:13) except

14:28 Lv 14:14  
 14:29 Lv 14:18  
 14:30 Lv 14:22, Lv 15:15  
 14:31 Lv 5:7, Lv 14:18, Lv 14:19, Lv 14:22, Lv 15:30  
 14:32 Lv 14:10, Lv 14:21  
 14:34 Gn 17:8; Dt 32:49  
 14:35 Ps 91:10  
 14:37 Lv 13:3, Lv 13:19  
 14:38 Lv 13:4  
 14:42 Lv 14:43  
 14:43 Lv 14:42  
 14:44 Lv 13:51  
 14:45 Lv 14:41  
 14:49 Lv 14:4  
 14:50 Lv 14:5  
 14:51 Lv 14:4, Lv 14:6, Lv 14:7; Ps 51:7  
 14:53 Lv 14:20

times before the LORD using his right finger. <sup>28</sup>The priest will then put some of the oil that is in his hand on the right earlobe, the right thumb, and the right big toe of the person needing purification—on top of the same places as the blood of the compensation offering. <sup>29</sup>The priest will put whatever is left of the oil in his hand on the head of the person needing purification, to make reconciliation for them before the LORD.

<sup>30</sup>The person will then offer one of the turtledoves or pigeons, whatever they can afford—<sup>31</sup>one as a purification offering and the other as an entirely burned offering along with the grain offering.<sup>32</sup> In this way, the priest will make reconciliation before the LORD for the person needing purification.

<sup>32</sup>This is the Instruction concerning those who have an infection of skin disease but who cannot afford the normal means of purification.

### Houses with skin disease

<sup>33</sup>The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: <sup>34</sup>When you enter the land of Canaan, which I am giving to you as a possession, and I put an infection of skin disease on a house in the land you possess, <sup>35</sup>the homeowner must come and tell the priest, “I think some sort of infection is in my house.” <sup>36</sup>The priest will order that the house be emptied before he comes to examine it so that nothing else in the house will become unclean. After that, the priest will come to examine the house. <sup>37</sup>If he examines the infection, and the infection in the walls of the house consists of greenish or reddish depressions, which appear to be deeper than the surface of the wall, <sup>38</sup>the priest will exit the house, go to the front door, and quarantine the house for seven days. <sup>39</sup>On the seventh day, the priest will return. If he finds that the infection has spread over the walls of the house, <sup>40</sup>the priest will order the stones in which the infection is found to be pulled out and discarded outside the city in an unclean area. <sup>41</sup>The inside of the house will then be scraped on all sides, and the plaster that has been scraped off must be dumped outside the city in an unclean area. <sup>42</sup>Then different stones will be used in place of the first ones, and new coating will be used to replaster the house.

<sup>43</sup>If the infection breaks out again in the house after the stones have been pulled out and the house scraped and replastered, <sup>44</sup>the priest will return. If he finds that the infection has spread throughout the house, it is a case of infectious skin disease in the house; the house is unclean. <sup>45</sup>The house must be destroyed—its stones, wood, and all the plaster in the house. All of it must be taken outside the city to an unclean area. <sup>46</sup>Anyone who enters the house during the entire period when it is quarantined will be unclean until evening. <sup>47</sup>Anyone who lies down in the house must wash their clothes. Anyone who eats in the house must also wash their clothes.

<sup>48</sup>But if the priest arrives and finds that the infection has not spread after the house was replastered, the priest will declare the house clean because the infection has been healed. <sup>49</sup>To cleanse the house, the priest will take two birds, cedarwood, crimson yarn, and hyssop. <sup>50</sup>He will slaughter one bird over fresh water in a pottery jar. <sup>51</sup>He will then take the cedarwood, hyssop, and crimson yarn, along with the wild<sup>f</sup> bird, and will dip all of this into the fresh water and into the blood of the bird that was slaughtered. He will then sprinkle the house seven times. <sup>52</sup>In this way, the priest will cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, the fresh water, the wild bird, the cedarwood, the hyssop, and the crimson yarn. <sup>53</sup>Then he will release the wild bird outside the city into the countryside. In this way, he will make reconciliation for the house, and it will be clean.

### Conclusion concerning skin disease

<sup>54</sup>This concludes the Instruction concerning every infection of skin disease: for scabies, <sup>55</sup>for skin disease on clothing or in houses, <sup>56</sup>and for swelling, scabs, or shiny spots, <sup>57</sup>in order to determine when it is unclean or clean. This concludes the Instruction concerning skin disease.

<sup>f</sup>LXX, Syr; MT repeats *whatever they can afford* at the beginning of 14:31. <sup>f</sup>Or live or healthy

the compensation offering, which must always be a *male sheep* (Lev 14:21; 5:15).

14:32, 54, 57 *Instruction*: See note on Leviticus 6:9.

14:33-53 *infection of skin disease*: See note on Leviticus 13:47-59. Like infected cloth, infected buildings must be destroyed (14:45). If the infection does not spread, the

house can be purified with a ritual (14:49-53) like that for people who recover from skin disease (Lev 14:2-9).

14:34 *I put an infection of skin disease on a house* presumes that God is behind every unexplained event, just as some people today call a natural disaster “an act of God.” Leviticus does not teach that uncleanness usually comes



**Male genital emissions**

**15**The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: <sup>2</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: Whenever a man has a genital emission, that emission is unclean. <sup>3</sup>This is the nature of the uncleanness brought about by his emission: regardless of whether his genital organ allows his emission to flow or blocks the flow, it is unclean to him. <sup>4</sup>Any bed on which someone with an emission lies will be unclean, and any object on which that person sits will be unclean. <sup>5</sup>Anyone who touches such a bed must wash their clothes, bathe in water, and will be unclean until evening. <sup>6</sup>Anyone who sits on something that the one with the emission also sat on must wash their clothes, bathe in water, and will be unclean until evening. <sup>7</sup>Anyone who touches the body of the one with the emission must wash their clothes, bathe in water, and will be unclean until evening. <sup>8</sup>If the one with the emission spits on a clean person, the clean person must wash their clothes, bathe in water, and will be unclean until evening. <sup>9</sup>Every saddle on which the person with the emission rode will be unclean. <sup>10</sup>Anyone who touches anything that has been under such a person will be unclean until evening. Anyone who carries such items must wash their clothes, bathe in water, and will be unclean until evening. <sup>11</sup>If the one with the emission touches someone without first rinsing his hands with water, that person must wash their clothes, bathe in water, and will be unclean until evening. <sup>12</sup>Any pottery jar that the one with the emission touches must be broken, and any wooden tool must be rinsed with water.

<sup>13</sup>When the man with the emission is cleansed of his emission, he will count off seven days for his purification. He must wash his clothes and bathe his body in running water; then he will be clean again. <sup>14</sup>On the eighth day he will take two turtledoves or two pigeons and come before the LORD to the meeting tent's entrance and give these to the priest. <sup>15</sup>The priest will offer them, one as a purification offering and the other as an entirely burned offering. In this way, the priest will make reconciliation for him before the LORD because of his emission.

<sup>16</sup>If it is an emission of semen, the man must bathe his whole body in water and will be unclean until evening. <sup>17</sup>Any clothing or skin on which there is an emission of semen must be washed in water and will be unclean until evening. <sup>18</sup>If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them must bathe in water and will be unclean until evening.

**Female genital emissions**

<sup>19</sup>Whenever a woman has a discharge of blood that is her normal bodily discharge, she will be unclean due to her menstruation for seven days. Anyone who touches her will be unclean until evening. <sup>20</sup>Anything on which she lies or sits during her menstruation will be unclean. <sup>21</sup>Anyone who touches her bed must wash their clothes, bathe in water, and will be unclean until evening. <sup>22</sup>Anyone who touches anything on which she has sat must wash their clothes, bathe in water, and will be unclean until evening. <sup>23</sup>Whenever anyone touches something—whether it was on the bed or where she has been sitting—they will be unclean until evening. <sup>24</sup>If a man has sexual intercourse with her and her menstruation gets on him, he will be unclean for seven days. Any bed he lies on will be unclean.

<sup>25</sup>Whenever a woman has a bloody discharge for a long time, which is not during her menstrual period, or whenever she has a discharge beyond her menstrual period, the duration of her unclean discharge will be like the period of her menstruation; she will be unclean.

from God punishing people for sins (see sidebar, "Clean/Unclean" at Lev 13).

15:1-33 Both normal (15:16-24) and abnormal (15:3-15, 25-30) genital emissions of blood and semen make people unclean and contagious. Many interpreters think Israelites regarded genital fluids as vital to life, so their loss reminded them of death (see sidebar, "Clean/Unclean" at Lev 13). That is not as obvious in the case of genital emissions as in the cases of unclean infections of skin and mildew (Lev 13-14) and unclean animal corpses (Lev 11).

15:2 *man... genital emission: of semen* (Lev 15:16) or of fluids due to infection. Normal urine and feces do not make one ritually unclean.

15:3 *flow or blocks the flow*: probably due to sexually transmitted diseases or prostate problems.

15:4-12 Israelites considered uncleanness due to genital

emissions to be highly contagious. Therefore, people must be careful not to infect others, because they might unknowingly infect the sanctuary (Lev 15:31).

15:13-15 Men healed of genital emissions must present bird offerings (see Lev 5:7-10).

15:16-18 Normal *emission of semen*, whether during sex (15:18) or not, makes someone unclean. This is a minor uncleanness that requires only washing and waiting *until evening* to be clean.

15:19-24 Normal *menstruation* makes women unclean for seven days and is contagious (Lev 18:19; 20:18). For why it is unclean, see sidebar, "Clean/Unclean" at Leviticus 13. This is also a minor uncleanness that requires only washing and letting time pass before being clean.

15:25-30 Women bleeding genitally for a long time or irregularly are unclean and contagious as long as it lasts.

15:2 Lev 22:4;

Nm 5:2;

2Sa 3:29

15:10 Lv 15:5

15:13 Lv 8:33;

Lv 14:8

15:18 1Sa 21:4

15:19 Lv 5:3;

Lv 12:2, Lv 18:19;

Lv 20:18

15:25 Mt 9:20;

Mk 5:25; Lk 8:43

15:31 Nm 5:3,  
Nm 19:13,  
Nm 19:20;  
Ezr 5:11,  
Ezr 23:38  
16:1 Lv 10:1,  
Lv 10:2  
16:2 Ez 25:22,  
Ex 30:10,  
Ex 40:34,  
Ex 40:35;  
Heb 9:7  
16:5 Lv 4:13;  
2Ch 29:21;  
Ezr 6:17  
16:6 Lv 9:7;  
Heb 9:7  
16:8 Lv 16:26;  
Nm 26:55;  
Prv 16:33

<sup>26</sup>Any bed she lies on during the discharge should be treated like the bed she uses during her menstruation; and any object she sits on will be unclean, as during her menstruation. <sup>27</sup>Anyone who touches these things will be unclean. They must wash their clothes, bathe in water, and will be unclean until evening.

<sup>28</sup>When the woman is cleansed of her discharge, she will count off seven days; after that, she will be clean again. <sup>29</sup>On the eighth day she will take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest at the meeting tent's entrance. <sup>30</sup>The priest will perform a purification offering with one and an entirely burned offering with the other. In this way, the priest will make reconciliation for her before the LORD because of her unclean discharge.

<sup>31</sup>You must separate the Israelites from their uncleanness so that they don't die on account of it, by making my dwelling<sup>g</sup> unclean, which is in their midst.

<sup>32</sup>This concludes the Instruction concerning those with discharges: men with emissions of semen that make them unclean, <sup>33</sup>women during their menstruation, men or women with discharges, and men who have had sexual intercourse with an unclean woman.

### The Day of Reconciliation

**16** After the death of Aaron's two sons, which happened when they approached the LORD and died, the LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Tell your brother Aaron that he cannot come whenever he wants into the holy area inside the inner curtain, to the front of the cover<sup>h</sup> that is on the chest, or else he will die, because I am present<sup>i</sup> in the cloud above the cover. <sup>3</sup>No, but Aaron must enter the holy area as follows: with a bull from the herd as a purification offering and a ram as an entirely burned offering. <sup>4</sup>Aaron must dress in a holy linen tunic and wear linen undergarments on his body. He must tie a linen sash around himself and wrap a linen turban around his head. These are holy clothes—Aaron will first bathe his body in water and then put them on. <sup>5</sup>He will take from the Israelite community two male goats for a purification offering and one ram for an entirely burned offering.

<sup>6</sup>Aaron will offer the bull as a purification offering to make reconciliation for himself and his household. <sup>7</sup>He will take the two male goats and place them before the LORD at the meeting tent's entrance. <sup>8</sup>Aaron will cast lots over the two goats: one lot labeled "the LORD's" and the other lot labeled "Azazel's."<sup>j</sup> <sup>9</sup>Aaron will present the goat selected by the LORD's lot and perform a purification offering with it. <sup>10</sup>But the goat selected by Azazel's lot will be left standing alive before the LORD in order to make reconciliation upon it<sup>k</sup> by sending it away into the wilderness to Azazel.

<sup>11</sup>Aaron will offer the bull for his purification offering to make reconciliation for himself and his household. He will slaughter the bull for his purification offering. <sup>12</sup>Then he will take an incense pan full of burning coals from the altar, from before the LORD, and two handfuls of finely ground perfumed incense and bring them inside the inner curtain. <sup>13</sup>He will put the

<sup>g</sup>Or tabernacle <sup>h</sup>Or mercy seat or perhaps reconciliation cover (Heb *kapporet*) <sup>i</sup>Or I am seen or I appear <sup>j</sup>Or scapegoat <sup>k</sup>Or over it or for it or with it

Once healed, they must present bird offerings like men healed of abnormal emissions (Lev 15:13-15; 5:7-10).

15:31 *by making my dwelling unclean* states the reason for the concern about uncleanness from genital emissions: the belief that God's holy sanctuary must not be infected by uncleanness (Lev 11:43-45). *dwelling*: See translation note g.

16:1-34 Instructions for the Day of Reconciliation climax and conclude the rules for rituals in Leviticus 1-16, just as the Day of Reconciliation climaxed Israel's annual religious calendar (Lev 23). The Day of Reconciliation, Hebrew *Yom Kippur*, is still the holiest day of the Jewish year, though the offerings described here have not been presented since the Romans destroyed the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE.

16:1 *After the death of Aaron's two sons*: See Leviticus 10:1-2. That story shows the kinds of sins and impurity from corpses that Yom Kippur needs to reconcile (Lev 16:16).

16:2 *the holy area inside the inner curtain* is often called "the Holy of Holies." Only on the Day of Reconciliation, once a

year (Lev 16:29-31), may the high priest enter this inner room of the sanctuary where a cloud (Exod 40:35) shows God's presence. *chest*: See Exodus 25:10-22. *cover*: The Hebrew name of the chest's cover is related to the Hebrew verb meaning "reconcile, atone" (see translation note h).

16:3, 5 *purification offering*: See Leviticus 4. *entirely burned offering*: See Leviticus 1.

16:4 The high priest wears plain linen clothing, rather than his elaborate vestments (Lev 16:24; 6:10; Exod 28).

16:6 *reconciliation*: See sidebar, "Reconciliation/Atone-ment" at Leviticus 16.

16:8, 10 The word *Azazel* appears only in this chapter. It has been translated "scapegoat," as "a rocky place," or as the name of a demon. If a name, then interpreters have no good explanation for why it gets a legitimate offering, which otherwise should go to the Lord alone.

16:12 *incense*: See Exodus 30:1-10, 22-38.

16:13 *cover*: See Leviticus 16:2. *covenant document*: See Exodus 25:21.

*Reconciliation/Atonement* The Hebrew word *kipper* (“reconcile, reconciliation”) is often translated “atone, atonement.” Leviticus uses this word for the actions of priests who present offerings on behalf of people. Reconciliation through purification and compensation offerings is necessary for forgiving sins (Lev 4:20, 26, 31) and purifying uncleanness (Lev 12:8; 14:20; 16:16). Israel’s worship climaxes once every year in the offerings of the Day of Reconciliation, which reconcile all of the people’s remaining sins and uncleanness (Lev 16:16, 21–22).

Leviticus’ use of the word *kipper* (“reconcile, atone”) is its only indication of how the offerings work (e.g., in Lev 1:4; 17:11). Interpreters have therefore used atonement and reconciliation to explain the nature of Israel’s offerings and the nature of sacrifice in general. Christian theologians use atonement and reconciliation to explain Jesus’ death as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:9; 4:10). Leviticus provides the language and images for such theories, but does not itself explain how reconciliation/atonement works.

incense on the fire before the LORD so that the cloud of incense conceals the cover that is on top of the covenant document, or else he will die. <sup>14</sup>He will take some of the bull’s blood and sprinkle it with his finger on the cover from the east side. He will then sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times in front of the cover. <sup>15</sup>Then he will slaughter the goat for the people’s purification offering, bring the blood inside the inner curtain, and do with it as he did with the bull’s blood: he will sprinkle it on the cover and in front of the cover. <sup>16</sup>In this way, he will make reconciliation for the inner holy area because of the pollution of the Israelites and because of their rebellious sins, as well as for all their other sins.

Aaron must do the same for the meeting tent, which is with them among their pollution. <sup>17</sup>No one can be in the meeting tent from the time Aaron enters to make reconciliation in the inner holy area until the time he comes out. He will make reconciliation for himself, for his household, and for the whole assembly of Israel.

<sup>18</sup>Aaron will then go to the altar that is before the LORD and make reconciliation for it: He will take some of the bull’s blood and some of the goat’s blood and put it on each of the altar’s horns. <sup>19</sup>He will sprinkle some of the blood on the altar with his finger seven times. In this way, he will purify it and make it holy again from the Israelites’ pollution.

<sup>20</sup>When Aaron has finished reconciling the inner holy area, the rest of the meeting tent, and the altar, he will bring forward the live goat. <sup>21</sup>Aaron will press both his hands on its head and confess over it all the Israelites’ offenses and all their rebellious sins, as well as all their other sins, putting all these on the goat’s head. Then he will send it away into the wilderness with someone designated for the job. <sup>22</sup>The goat will carry on itself all their offenses to a desolate region, then the goat will be released into the wild.

<sup>23</sup>After this, Aaron will enter the meeting tent, take off the linen clothes he was wearing when he entered the inner holy area, and will leave them there. <sup>24</sup>He will bathe his body in water in a holy place and dress in his priestly clothing. Then he will go out and perform the entirely burned offerings for himself and for the people. In this way, he will make reconciliation for himself and for the people. <sup>25</sup>He will completely burn the fat of the purification offering on the altar. <sup>26</sup>The one who set the goat free for Azazel must wash their clothes and bathe their body in water; after that they can return to the camp. <sup>27</sup>The bull and the goat for the purification offerings, whose blood was brought in to make reconciliation in the inner holy area, will be taken outside the camp. Their hides, flesh, and dung will be burned with fire. <sup>28</sup>The person who burns them must wash their clothes and bathe their body in water; after that, they can return to the camp.

<sup>29</sup>This will be a permanent rule for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month,<sup>m</sup> you

<sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>m</sup>September–October, Tishrei

16:14–15 *blood and sprinkle it*: See sidebar, “Blood” at Leviticus 4.

16:16 These purification offerings reconcile the effects of both *pollution* and *sins* on the chest and the sanctuary. *their rebellious sins, as well as for all their other sins*: or “their rebellions, that is all their sins.” Unlike Leviticus 5–6 and Numbers 15:22–31, which limit forgiveness to unintentional or confessed sins, this verse extends the effects of the Day of Reconciliation rituals to all sins.

16:18 *The altar that is before the LORD* was used to burn incense, not to make entirely burned sacrifices (see note on Lev 4:7).

16:21–22 *press . . . confess . . . on the goat’s head*: This ritual places the accumulated offenses of the people for the entire year on the goat, which carries them away into the wild (cf. the bird that carries away uncleanness in Lev 14:6–7).

16:29 *the tenth day of the seventh month*, Tishrei, falls in the

16:14 Lv 4:5,  
Lv 4:6; Heb 9:7,  
Heb 9:13,  
Heb 9:25  
16:23 Eze 42:14  
16:24 Lv 16:3,  
Lv 16:4  
16:29 Lv 23:27;  
Nm 29:7

16:31 Lv 23:32;  
Is 58:3  
16:34 Ex 30:10;  
Heb 9:7  
17:2 Lv 10:6,  
Lv 16:12  
17:3 Lv 7:23,  
Lv 17:8,  
Lv 17:12,  
Lv 17:13;  
Dt 12:5  
17:4 Lv 1:3,  
Lv 17:9; Dt 12:5,  
Dt 12:6  
17:5 Ex 24:5;  
Lv 3:1, Lv 14:7  
17:6 Ex 29:13;  
Nm 18:17  
17:7 Ex 34:15;  
Dt 32:17;  
2Ch 11:15;  
Ps 106:37;  
1Co 10:20  
17:8 Lv 1:2  
17:9 Lv 17:4  
17:10 Gn 9:4;  
Lv 3:17, Lv 7:26,  
Lv 20:3;  
Jer 44:11  
17:11 Lv 17:14;  
Heb 9:22  
17:12 Lv 3:17,  
Lv 17:10

must deny yourselves. You must not do any work—neither the citizen nor the immigrant who lives among you. <sup>30</sup>On that day reconciliation will be made for you in order to cleanse you. You will be clean before the LORD from all your sins. <sup>31</sup>It will be a Sabbath of special rest for you, and you will deny yourselves. This is a permanent rule.

### Conclusion concerning the Day of Reconciliation

<sup>32</sup>The priest who is anointed and ordained to serve as priest after his father will perform the reconciliation, wearing the holy linen clothes. <sup>33</sup>He will reconcile the holiest part of the sanctuary and will do the same for the meeting tent and the altar. He will make reconciliation for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. <sup>34</sup>This will be a permanent rule for you, in order to make reconciliation for the Israelites from all their sins once a year.

It was done just as the LORD commanded Moses.

### Sacrifice at the sanctuary

**17** The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>Say to Aaron, to his sons, and to all the Israelites: This is what the LORD has commanded: <sup>3</sup>Anyone from the house of Israel who slaughters an ox, sheep, or goat inside or outside the camp <sup>4</sup>but does not bring it to the meeting tent's entrance to present it as an offering to the LORD in front of the LORD's dwelling<sup>a</sup> will be considered guilty of bloodshed; they have spilled blood. They will be cut off from their people. <sup>5</sup>This will make the Israelites bring the communal sacrifices, which they are sacrificing in the countryside, to the LORD, to the priest at the meeting tent's entrance, and sacrifice them as communal sacrifices of well-being to the LORD. <sup>6</sup>The priest will toss the blood against the LORD's altar at the meeting tent's entrance and burn the fat completely as a soothing smell to the LORD. <sup>7</sup>The Israelites must no longer sacrifice their communal sacrifices to the goat demons that they follow so faithlessly. <sup>8</sup>This will be a permanent rule for them throughout their future generations. <sup>9</sup>You will also say to them: Anyone from Israel's house or from the immigrants who live with you who offers up an entirely burned offering or communal sacrifice <sup>9</sup>without bringing it to the meeting tent's entrance in order to offer it to the LORD will be cut off from their people.

### Consuming blood forbidden

<sup>10</sup>I will oppose the person who consumes blood—whether they are from Israel's house or from the immigrants who live with you—and I will cut them off from their people. <sup>11</sup>A creature's life is in the blood. I have provided you the blood to make reconciliation for your lives on the altar, because the blood reconciles by means of the life.<sup>b</sup> <sup>12</sup>That is why I have told the Israelites: No one among you can consume blood, nor can the immigrant who lives with you consume blood.

<sup>a</sup>Or tabernacle <sup>b</sup>Or promiscuously <sup>c</sup>Or as life

autumn. The Festival of Booths follows five days later (Lev 23:33-36).

**16:31** The Day of Reconciliation is a special day of rest, a Sabbath (Lev 23:26-32).

**16:32** *The priest who is anointed:* the high priest (Lev 4:3; 8:12).

**17:1-16** These rules for food and worship emphasize the place of offerings within the lives of Israelite people. They mark a change of emphasis from the first part of Leviticus, which focuses mostly on the actions of priests. The later chapters focus mostly on the actions of the people or of the priests outside the sanctuary. As a result, many interpreters think that most of Leviticus 1-16 comes from the "Priestly Code" or P source, while Leviticus 17-27 come from the "Holiness Code" or H source.

**17:3-8** Before eating any domestic animal, it must first be presented as a communal well-being sacrifice at the sanctuary (Lev 3). Deuteronomy 12:15-25 allows secular slaughter of domestic animals, just like wild game (Lev 17:13). Here, the concern is to stop offerings in the countryside to *goat demons* (17:7: When this Hebrew

word appears without any other description, it refers to wild goats or spirits, not to domesticated goats that may be sacrificed to the Lord).

**17:4** *bloodshed:* murder. *cut off:* See notes on Leviticus 7:20-21 and 20:3.

**17:6-7** *toss the blood... burn the fat:* See Leviticus 3:2-5. The worshippers and priests eat the meat of *communal sacrifices* (Lev 7:11-34).

**17:8** *the immigrants:* This rule applies to anyone living in Israel's communities.

**17:10-14** This most basic food law bans consuming blood (Gen 9:4; Lev 3:17; Deut 12:16; see sidebar, "Meat" at Lev 11). Only here is that rule explained and related to the blood of offerings.

**17:11** *A creature's life is in the blood:* Like many ancient cultures, Israelites regarded blood as a vital force, the essence of life. That means priests can use it to *reconcile* for a worshipper's life on the altar (see sidebar, "Reconciliation/Atonement" at Lev 16). Many interpreters think this verse means that blood represents life or substitutes for life, but Leviticus does not make that clear (see note on Lev 1:4).

<sup>13</sup>Anyone who hunts any animal or bird that can be eaten—whether the hunter is an Israelite or an immigrant who lives with you—must drain its blood out and cover it with dirt. <sup>14</sup>Again: for every creature's life, its blood is its life. That is why I have told the Israelites: You must not consume any creature's blood because every creature's life is its blood. Anyone who consumes it will be cut off.

### Eating meat

<sup>15</sup>Anyone, whether citizen or immigrant, who eats an animal that has died naturally or that was killed by another animal, must wash their clothes, bathe in water, and will be unclean until evening. At that time, they will be clean again. <sup>16</sup>If they do not wash or bathe their body, they will be liable to punishment.

### Sexual conduct

**18** The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: I am the LORD your God. <sup>3</sup>You must not do things like they are done in the land of Egypt, where you used to live. And you must not do things like they are done in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. You must not follow the practices<sup>q</sup> of those places. <sup>4</sup>No, my regulations and my rules are the ones you must keep by following them: I am the LORD your God. <sup>5</sup>You must keep my rules and my regulations; by doing them one will live; I am the LORD.

<sup>6</sup>No one is allowed to approach any blood relative for sexual contact.<sup>r</sup> I am the LORD. <sup>7</sup>You must not uncover your father's nakedness, which is your mother's nakedness. She is your mother; you must not have sexual contact with her. <sup>8</sup>You must not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness. <sup>9</sup>You must not have sexual contact with your sister—regardless of whether she is your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether born into the same household as you or outside it. <sup>10</sup>You must not have sexual contact with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter, because their nakedness is your own nakedness.<sup>s</sup> <sup>11</sup>You must not have sexual contact with the daughter of your father's wife, who was born into your father's family; she is your sister. <sup>12</sup>You must not have sexual contact with your father's sister; she is your father's blood relative. <sup>13</sup>You must not have sexual contact with your mother's sister because she is your mother's blood relative. <sup>14</sup>You will not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother—that is, you will not approach his wife for sex; she is your aunt. <sup>15</sup>You must not have sexual contact with your daughter-in-law; she is your son's wife. You must not have sexual contact with her. <sup>16</sup>You will not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness.

<sup>q</sup>Or rules or customs <sup>r</sup>Or to uncover nakedness <sup>s</sup>Heb uncertain

What is clear is that this rule reserves animal blood exclusively for reconciliation at the altar, so people must not consume it.

17:13 Wild game cannot be offered in the sanctuary, where only domestic animals may be presented. So hunters must drain the blood before they can eat the meat.

17:15 Touching dead corpses makes people unclean (Lev 11:24-40; see sidebar, "Clean/Unclean" at Lev 13). See also Leviticus 7:24.

18:1-20:27 These instructions for holy living consist of two chapters mostly about sex (Lev 18; 20) that surround a chapter of more varied rules and exhortations (Lev 19). They are united by the refrain "I am the LORD (your God)" (24 times, mostly in Lev 19). The reason for these rules appears in 19:2: "You must be holy, because I, the LORD your God, am holy."

18:1-30 Leviticus 18 lists prohibited sexual relationships, while Leviticus 20 lists punishments for many of the same relationships. These rules reflect ancient Israel's concern with preserving traditional boundaries. They feared that irregular sex could disrupt relationships both between groups and within groups (see sidebar, "Sex"). You addresses a male and his relationships with women among his parents' generation (18:7-8, 12-14), his sisters (18:9, 11,

16), his daughters-in-law (18:15), and his granddaughters (18:10). The omission of his daughters puzzles interpreters, though they are probably assumed as *blood relatives* (18:6). Sex between first cousins is not mentioned here, which may imply it was permitted. This omission has fueled debates about modern incest laws that ban such marriages.

18:3 *You must not do things like . . . Egypt . . . Canaan*: These rules about sex mark ethnic and religious boundaries that distinguish Israel from other nations (see sidebar, "Sex" at Lev 18).

18:6-20 *approach any blood relative*: Rules against incest appear in almost every culture, but they define "incest" differently. The following prohibitions include more than just blood relatives (see 18:8, 15-18). *uncover nakedness* and *sexual contact* translate the same Hebrew phrase. It is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

18:8 *father's wife*: stepmother.

18:9 *whether . . . father's daughter or your mother's daughter*: half sisters. Full sisters are included since they are daughters of both parents.

18:10 *their nakedness is your own nakedness*: or "See, it is your nakedness."

18:11 *daughter of your father's wife*: stepsister.

17:13 Dt 12:16,  
Dt 12:24;  
Eze 24:7

17:14 Gn 9:4;  
Lv 17:10,  
Lv 17:11

18:2 Ex 6:7;  
Lv 11:44;  
Eze 20:5

18:3 Ex 23:24;  
Lv 20:23;  
Ps 106:35;  
Eze 20:7,  
Eze 20:8

18:4 Dt 4:1;  
Eze 20:19

18:5 Neh 9:29;  
Eze 20:11;  
Lk 10:28;  
Ro 10:5; Ga 3:12

18:6 Lv 20:11,  
Lv 20:12,  
Lv 20:17

18:7 Lv 20:11;  
Eze 22:10

18:8 Gn 35:22;  
Lv 20:11;  
Dt 22:30,  
Dt 27:20;  
1Co 5:1

18:9 Lv 20:17;  
Dt 27:22;  
Eze 22:11

18:18 1Sa 1:6;  
Mal 2:15  
18:19 Lv 15:19,  
Lv 15:24,  
Lv 20:18;  
Eze 18:6,  
Eze 22:10  
18:20 Ex 20:14;  
Lv 20:10;  
Prv 6:29;  
Mt 5:27;  
Heb 13:4  
18:21 Lv 19:12,  
Lv 20:2, Lv 20:3,  
Lv 21:6;  
Dt 12:31  
18:22 Gn 19:5;  
Lv 20:13;  
Jgs 19:22;  
Ro 1:27; 1Co 6:9

כַּרְמָא Cultures express their deep values by, among other things, making rules about who may and may not have sex with whom. For contemporary Western cultures, the worst sexual offenses involve adults molesting children or raping other adults. Laws against them express the culture's revulsion at anyone being forced into sex. Punishment for rape also appears among OT laws (Deut 22:25-27; but cf. Exod 22:16; Lev 19:20; Deut 21:10-14; 22:28-29). But like the rules of many other traditional cultures, they pay more attention to incest and intermarriage. Their overriding concern involves proper behavior between groups and within groups so that traditional boundaries don't get confused. OT writers express revulsion at sex between members of groups they think do not belong together: married women and other men (Exod 20:14; Lev 18:20; 20:10; Num 5:11-31; Deut 5:18; 22:22-24); parent-child relationships (Lev 18; 20; Deut 22:30; 27:20, 22-23); human-animal relationships (Lev 18:23; 20:15-16; Deut 27:21); same-sex relationships (Lev 18:22; 20:13); but also couples from different ethnic or religious groups (Gen 34; Exod 34:12-16; Num 25; Deut 7:3-4; Ezra 9-10) and even interbreeding different animal and plant species (Lev 19:19; Deut 22:9-11).

Jewish and Christian debates over sexual ethics therefore usually involve disagreements over which is more important: social tradition (authority), individual freedom (self-determination), or group identity (ethnicity). The psychology of human sexuality has recently influenced these debates too. As a result, political arguments about incest and about homosexuality frequently cite Leviticus 18 and 20. Contemporary nuclear families and pluralistic societies, however, don't resemble ancient Israel's families and society very much. That's why they rarely try to follow all of the laws in Leviticus 18-20 (e.g., Lev 19:9-10, 23-25). Applying these rules to other societies can distort their meaning and can harm vulnerable people rather than protecting them. Sometimes people have even cited Leviticus 20's harsh punishments to justify violent attacks on others (see note on Lev 20:9). Religious debates over sexual ethics must instead start with the fundamental biblical mandate to love others and protect the vulnerable (Lev 19:13-14, 18, 34; for the love commandment's fundamental status for Christians, see Matt 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37; Gal 5:14; 1 John 3:22-24; 4:7-21; see sidebar "The Love Commandment" at Lev 19). From there, they can work out rules about who can have sex with whom.

<sup>17</sup>You must not have sexual contact with a woman and her daughter. You will not marry her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter, thereby uncovering her nakedness. They are her blood relatives; it is shameful. <sup>18</sup>You must not marry your wife's sister as a rival and have sexual contact with her while her sister is alive. <sup>19</sup>You must not approach a woman for sexual contact during her menstrual uncleanness. <sup>20</sup>You must not have sexual relations with the wife of your fellow Israelite, becoming unclean by it.

<sup>21</sup>You must not give any of your children<sup>†</sup> to offer them over to Molech so that you do not defile your God's name: I am the LORD. <sup>22</sup>You must not have sexual intercourse with a man as you would with a woman; it is a detestable practice. <sup>23</sup>You will not have sexual relations with any animal, becoming unclean by it. Nor will a woman present herself before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion.

<sup>†</sup>Or *seed*

18:17-18 Biblical laws do not prohibit marrying several women (polygamy; e.g., 1 Sam 1:2), as long as the wives are not blood relatives with each other (levirate marriage is an exception; Deut 25:5-10).

18:19 *menstrual uncleanness* is considered contagious; see Leviticus 15:19-24.

18:20-21 *unclean... defile*: As noted in the sidebar, "Clean/Unclean" at Leviticus 13, Leviticus does not regard most uncleanness as sinful. So people became unclean through normal activities like giving birth or burying the dead. Many interpreters distinguish such "ritual uncleanness" or "ceremonial impurity," from which people can clean themselves from the uncleanness of adultery and child sacrifice, which can contaminate the land and lead to being expelled from it (Lev 18:24-30). Leviticus offers hope for cleansing and forgiveness (Lev 16:16) and also threatens expulsion for some sins and uncleanness.

18:20 *wife of your fellow Israelite* defines adultery as an offense against a woman's husband. On sex with unmarried women, see Exodus 22:16; Leviticus 19:20; Deuteronomy 21:10-14; 22:28-29.

18:21 *give any of your children*: refers to child sacrifice or, possibly, a child dedication ritual (see Lev 20:1-5). Many OT texts condemn practices associated with the Canaanite deity *Molech* (e.g., 2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 32:35). This prohibition probably appears among the prohibited sexual relations because biblical authors blamed both practices on Canaanite influence (Lev 18:3, 24-30).

18:22 *with a man as... with a woman*: male homosexual acts. Like most other ancient texts, it does not recognize the modern idea that sexual identity may differ among people of the same sex. *detestable* distinguishes it from any emission of semen that always pollutes (Lev 15:16-18).

18:23 *a perversion*: or "a confusion"; see sidebar, "Sex."

**Warning against uncleanness and moral pollution**

<sup>24</sup>Do not make yourselves unclean in any of these ways because that is how the nations that I am throwing out before you became unclean. <sup>25</sup>That is also how the land became unclean, and I held it liable for punishment, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. <sup>26</sup>But all of you must keep my rules and my regulations. You must not do any of these detestable things, neither citizen nor immigrant who lives with you (<sup>27</sup>because the people who had the land before you did all of these detestable things and the land became unclean), <sup>28</sup>so that the land does not vomit you out because you have made it unclean, just as it vomited out the nations that were before you. <sup>29</sup>Anyone who does any of these detestable things will be cut off from their people. <sup>30</sup>You must keep my requirement of not doing any of the detestable practices<sup>a</sup> that were done before you arrived so that you don't make yourselves unclean by them; I am the LORD your God.

**Living as holy people**

**19** The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>Say to the whole community of the Israelites: You must be holy, because I, the LORD your God, am holy. <sup>3</sup>Each of you must respect your mother and father, and you must keep my sabbaths; I am the LORD your God. <sup>4</sup>Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves; I am the LORD your God. <sup>5</sup>When you sacrifice a communal sacrifice of well-being to the LORD, offer it so that it will be accepted on your account. <sup>6</sup>It must be eaten on the day of your sacrifice or the following day; whatever is left over on the third day must be burned with fire. <sup>7</sup>If any of it is eaten on the third day, it is foul; it will not be accepted. <sup>8</sup>Anyone who eats it will be liable to punishment, because they defiled what is holy to the LORD. That person will be cut off from their people. <sup>9</sup>When you harvest your land's produce, you must not harvest all the way to the edge of your field; and don't gather up every remaining bit of your harvest. <sup>10</sup>Also do not pick your vineyard clean or gather up all the grapes that have fallen there. Leave these items for the poor and the immigrant; I am the LORD your God.

<sup>11</sup>You must not steal nor deceive nor lie to each other. <sup>12</sup>You must not swear falsely by my name, desecrating your God's name in doing so; I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup>You must not oppress your neighbors or rob them. Do not withhold a hired laborer's pay overnight. <sup>14</sup>You must not insult a deaf person or put some obstacle in front of a blind person that would cause them to trip. Instead, fear your God; I am the LORD.

<sup>15</sup>You must not act unjustly in a legal case. Do not show favoritism to the poor or deference to the great; you must judge your fellow Israelites fairly. <sup>16</sup>Do not go around slandering

<sup>a</sup>Or rules or customs

18:24-30 The covenant between God and Israel includes these rules. This covenant granted Israel its land. Leviticus urges obeying these rules to avoid losing the land like the Canaanites did (Lev 20:22-24; 26:27-39). For readers after Assyrians and Babylonians destroyed Israel and Judah, this threat would already have come to pass.

18:29 *cut off*: See note on Leviticus 7:20-21.

19:1-37 These instructions for holy living (19:2) cover a wide variety of issues. Their themes and style resemble the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:2-17; Deut 5:6-21).

19:2 *be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy*: This refrain echoes through the second half of Leviticus (e.g., Lev 19:2; 20:7; 21:15). *holy* means "set apart." The Lord is "set apart," that is, utterly different or other than humans and the world (Isa 6). Following these rules distinguishes Israel as "set apart," that is, as belonging to God (Exod 19:5-6). The refrain reminds readers of their covenant relationship with God that obliges them to keep these commandments. It announces a fundamental principle for ethics and religious practice: Imitate God (cf. Matt 5:48).

19:3 *respect your mother and father*: Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 say "honor" and list the father first. *respect* (often translated "fear") more often takes God as the object (Lev 19:14, 21). *keep my sabbaths*: Every seventh

day must be a day of rest, as are some annual holidays (see Exod 20:8-9; Deut 5:12-15; Lev 23).

19:4 *turn to*: worship instead of the Lord. *idols or... gods of cast metal*: See Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 5:8. Avoiding divine images distinguished Israel from other ancient cultures.

19:5-8 *sacrifice of well-being*: See Leviticus 7:15-18. *not be accepted*: Lack of care in eating the offering meat will defile *what is holy* and so fail to gain God's favor (cf. Lev 1:4). *cut off*: See note on Leviticus 7:20-21.

19:9-10 Farmers should not take everything for themselves, but leave some grain and fruit for *the poor and the immigrant* (i.e., people without means or family to support them; Deut 24:19-22).

19:11-14 These rules prohibit taking advantage of other people for one's own benefit by stealing (19:11, 13), lying (19:11-12), lawsuits (19:12), failing to pay workers (19:13), and making fun of people with disabilities (19:14). All such actions fail to respect the Lord (19:14).

19:11 *steal*: See Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17.

19:12 *swear falsely*: See Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11. The false oath differs from a lie (Lev 19:11) because it uses *God's name* to deceive and so desecrates it.

19:15-16 These rules against acting *unjustly in a legal case*

19:2 Ex 19:6;  
Lv 11:44,  
Lv 20:7, Lv 20:26;  
1Pt 1:16  
19:6 Lv 7:16  
19:9 Lv 23:22;  
Dt 24:19;  
Nu 2:15  
19:10 Ex 23:11;  
Lv 19:9, Lv 23:22;  
Dt 24:19,  
Dt 24:21  
19:11 Ex 20:15;  
Lv 6:2; Eph 4:25;  
Col 3:9  
19:12 Ex 20:7;  
Lv 6:3, Lv 18:21;  
Mal 3:5; Mt 5:33  
19:13 Dt 24:14,  
Dt 24:15;  
Jer 22:13;  
Mal 3:5; Jas 5:4  
19:14 Lv 19:32;  
Lv 25:17;  
Lv 25:36;  
Dt 27:18;  
1Pt 2:17  
19:15 Ex 23:2;  
Ex 23:3; Dt 1:17;  
Dt 16:19;  
Prv 24:23

19:17 Mt 18:15;  
Lk 17:3;  
Eph 5:11;  
1Jn 2:9, 1Jn 2:11  
19:18 Mk 12:31;  
Ro 12:19;  
Ro 13:9; Ga 5:14;  
Jas 2:8  
19:20 Dt 22:23  
19:23 Dt 20:19;  
Dt 20:20  
19:26 Gn 9:4;  
Lv 3:17, Lv 17:10;  
Dt 18:10;  
2Ki 17:17  
19:27 Lv 21:5;  
Jer 9:26;  
Jer 48:37

*The Love Commandment* Many Jews and Christians have identified “Love your neighbor as yourself” as the essence and summary of all moral rules. Jesus paired it with the command to love God (Deut 6:5) as the most important laws (Mark 12:29-31) and extended its application to enemies (Matt 5:43-48). Pointing to Jesus’ words, Christians often have based ethics on general principles rather than rules about specific situations. Many even argue that the love commandment should determine whether and how one observes particular rules. But it is not always clear what “loving your neighbor” requires. Jesus’ so-called “Golden Rule” provides one key for figuring that out: “Treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you” (Matt 7:12). It laid the basis for a long tradition of ethical thought that includes Immanuel Kant’s “Categorical Imperative” never to treat other people just as means to an end, but always as ends themselves.

As a result, many people who accept the Bible as scripture do not follow all of its rules. They use the love commandment and other principles to reason that some rules should be ignored and others can be improved. Thus, most Christians ignore laws that permit slavery and that deprive women of equal rights with men (e.g., Lev 25:39-55; Num 5:11-31; 30:3-15). Meanwhile, they follow rules against deception, murder, and oppressing the poor and foreigners (e.g., Lev 19:9-16). Other rules remain hotly debated, such as those banning homosexual activity (e.g., Lev 18:22) and permitting the death penalty (e.g., Lev 20). However, most Christians and Jews involved in these debates agree that the love commandment must play an important role in deciding them.

your people.<sup>v</sup> Do not stand by while your neighbor’s blood is shed;<sup>w</sup> I am the LORD. <sup>17</sup>You must not hate your fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your fellow Israelite strongly, so you don’t become responsible for his sin.<sup>x</sup> <sup>18</sup>You must not take revenge nor hold a grudge against any of your people; instead, you must love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

<sup>19</sup>You must keep my rules. Do not crossbreed your livestock, do not plant your field with two kinds of seed, and do not wear clothes made from two kinds of material. <sup>20</sup>If a man has sexual relations with a woman who is a slave engaged to another man, who hasn’t yet been released or given her freedom, there must be a punishment.<sup>y</sup> But they will not be put to death because she had not yet been freed. <sup>21</sup>The man must bring as his compensation to the LORD at the meeting tent’s entrance a ram for a compensation offering. <sup>22</sup>The priest will use the ram for the compensation offering to make reconciliation for him before the LORD on account of the sin he committed. Then he will be forgiven of the sin that he committed.

<sup>23</sup>When you enter the land and plant any fruit tree, you must consider its fruit off-limits.<sup>z</sup> For three years it will be off-limits to you;<sup>a</sup> it must not be eaten. <sup>24</sup>In the fourth year, all of the tree’s fruit will be holy, a celebration for the LORD. <sup>25</sup>In the fifth year you can eat the fruit. This is so as to increase its produce for you; I am the LORD your God.

<sup>26</sup>You must not eat anything with its blood. You must not participate in divination or fortune-telling. <sup>27</sup>You must not cut off the hair on your forehead or clip the ends of your

<sup>v</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>w</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>x</sup>Or strongly, but don’t become liable for punishment because of it; Heb uncertain  
<sup>y</sup>Or an inquiry <sup>z</sup>Or treat its fruit as a foreskin <sup>a</sup>Or uncircumcised to you

(see Exod 20:16; Deut 5:20) include showing bias against the rich or the poor, *slandering* or spreading false rumors about someone, and failing to testify against violence. Do not stand by while your neighbor’s blood is shed also can be translated, “Do not stand on your neighbor’s blood.”

19:17-18 These rules for relationships start with *You must not hate* and end with *you must love*. They apply to *your fellow Israelite* and *your neighbor*, but Leviticus 19:34 extends them to include everyone in the community.

19:17 *hate...in your heart*: You must not nurse grudges but instead *rebuke your fellow* (i.e., confront the issue openly). *don’t become responsible for his sin* by failing to confront and resolve the problem.

19:18 *love your neighbor as yourself*: See sidebar, “The Love Commandment.” *neighbor*: This rule gets extended to immigrants in Leviticus 19:34, to enemies in Matthew 5:43-48, and to anyone in need in Luke 10:25-37.

19:19 The writers believed that mixtures of animal and plant species, and even cloths, risked confusing categories that should be kept distinct (see sidebar, “Sex” at Lev 18).

19:20-22 *sexual relations* does not say whether the *slave engaged to another man* consented or was raped. It is concerned instead with the loss to that other man (cf. Deut 21:10-14). *punishment* or “an inquiry” will require compensating him before a *compensation offering* can be presented (Lev 5:14-19; 6:4-7). For the same situation involving a free woman, see Deuteronomy 22:22-29.

19:23-25 Israelites must leave fruit “uncircumcised” (i.e., uncut [off-limits]) for three years. They must dedicate all the fruit of the fourth year as *holy*. In this way, they admit that the Lord owns their land.

19:26 The prohibition against eating *blood* is the most basic food law (see note on Lev 3:17; see sidebar, “Meat” at Lev 11). *divination* or *fortune-telling* probably means communicating with ghosts (Lev 19:31) or other spirits. Israel may ask for information and help from the Lord only with prayers or through priests (Num 27:21) or prophets (Deut 18:15-22).

19:27-28 *cut off the hair...cut your bodies...put marks on yourselves* probably all refer to mourning rituals for



beard. <sup>28</sup>Do not cut your bodies for the dead<sup>b</sup> or put marks on<sup>c</sup> yourselves; I am the LORD. <sup>29</sup>Do not defile your daughter by making her sexually promiscuous or else the land will become promiscuous<sup>d</sup> and full of shame. <sup>30</sup>You must keep my sabbaths and treat my sanctuary with respect; I am the LORD. <sup>31</sup>Do not resort to dead spirits or inquire of spirits of divination—you will be made unclean by them; I am the LORD your God. <sup>32</sup>You must rise in the presence of an old person and respect the elderly. You must fear your God; I am the LORD.

<sup>33</sup>When immigrants live in your land with you, you must not cheat them. <sup>34</sup>Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. <sup>35</sup>You must not act unjustly in a legal case involving measures of length, weight, or volume. <sup>36</sup>You must have accurate scales and accurate weights, an accurate ephah<sup>e</sup> and an accurate hin.<sup>f</sup> I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. <sup>37</sup>You must keep all my rules and all my regulations, and do them; I am the LORD.

### Worship of Molech forbidden

**20** The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>You will also say to the Israelites: Any Israelite or any immigrant living in Israel who gives their children to Molech must be executed. The common people will stone such a person. <sup>3</sup>Moreover, I will set my own face against such a person, cutting them off from their people, because they gave their children to Molech, making my sanctuary unclean and degrading my holy name by doing so. <sup>4</sup>But if the common people choose to look the other way when someone gives their children to Molech and do not execute such a person, <sup>5</sup>I will set my own face against such a person and their extended family, cutting off from their people—both the guilty party and anyone with them who faithlessly followed Molech. <sup>6</sup>I will also oppose anyone who resorts to dead spirits or spirits of divination and faithlessly follows those things. I will cut such an individual off from their people.

### Sexual prohibitions

<sup>7</sup>You must be holy and keep yourselves holy because I am the LORD your God. <sup>8</sup>You will keep my rules and do them; I am the LORD, who makes you holy. <sup>9</sup>If anyone curses their father or mother, they must be executed. They have cursed their own father and mother; that person's blood is on their own heads. <sup>10</sup>If a man commits adultery with a married woman, committing adultery with a neighbor's wife, both the adulterer and the adulteress

<sup>b</sup>Or for the living <sup>c</sup>Or tattoo; Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Or making her a prostitute so that the land won't become a prostitute  
<sup>e</sup>Approximately twenty quarts <sup>f</sup>Approximately one gallon of liquid

*the dead* (a phrase that can also be translated "for a life" or "for a spirit"). Israelites may show their grief by tearing or changing their clothes and putting ashes on themselves (e.g., Gen 37:34; Jer 6:26), but not by disfiguring themselves.

19:29 *making her sexually promiscuous*: or "prostituting her." Leviticus and other OT books give sexual promiscuity as one reason why the Canaanites lost their land. Therefore, it threatens Israel's place in the land too (Lev 18:24-30).

19:30 *sabbaths*: See note on Leviticus 19:3. *treat my sanctuary with respect*: See note on Leviticus 5:14-6:7.

19:31 *dead spirits . . . divination*: See note on Leviticus 19:26. 19:33-34 *immigrants must be treated just like natives and "neighbors"* (Lev 19:16; see sidebar, "The Love Commandment" at Lev 19).

19:35-36 Right relationships include honest business deals and fair legal decisions. *ephah . . . hin*: See translation notes e and f.

20:1-27 Leviticus 20 lists punishments (20:7-21) for many of the sexual relationships prohibited in Leviticus 18. It reflects the fear that irregular sex can disrupt distinctions between groups and relationships within groups (see sidebar, "Sex" at Lev 18). The chapter begins and ends by urging Israel to distinguish itself from the religious and sexual practices of other nations.

20:2, 4 *common people*: See note on "ordinary person" at Leviticus 4:27, where the underlying Hebrew is similar.

20:2 *gives their children to Molech*: refers to child sacrifice or, possibly, a child dedication ritual (see Lev 18:21). Many OT texts condemn this practice (e.g., 2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 32:35). This penalty introduces the punishments for prohibited sexual relations here because biblical authors blamed both on Canaanite influence (cf. Lev 20:23-26). *stone such a person*: Most Jews and Christians reject the severe penalties in this chapter as incompatible with Leviticus 19:18 (see sidebar, "The Love Commandment" at Lev 19).

20:3 *cutting them off from their people*: without descendants. See note on Leviticus 7:20-21.

20:6 *dead spirits . . . divination*: See note on Leviticus 19:26.

20:7 *be holy*: See note on Leviticus 11:45.

20:9 *curses their father or mother*: Compare with Leviticus 19:3. Ancient Israelites took oaths and curses very seriously because they used God's name, Yahweh, which appears here as "the LORD" (see Lev 19:12). *that person's blood is on their own heads* here and in following verses means no guilt comes from just executions carried out by an official court (see Exod 18:13-26; Deut 17:2-12). It does not permit private people to use these offenses as an excuse for killing someone, which is murder (see Exod 20:13; cf. John 8:1-11). 20:10 *adultery*: See Leviticus 18:20.

19:29 Dt 23:17;

Dt 23:18

19:31 Ex 22:18;

Lv 20:6;

Lv 20:27;

Dt 18:11; Is 8:19

19:32 Lv 19:14;

Job 32:4;

Prv 23:22;

Lam 5:12;

1Ti 5:1

19:33 Ex 22:21;

Ex 23:9;

Jer 7:6;

Eze 22:29;

Mal 3:5

19:34 Ex 22:21;

Ex 23:9;

Lv 19:18;

Dt 10:19

19:36 Dt 25:13;

Dt 25:15;

Prv 11:1;

Prv 16:11;

Prv 20:10

20:7 Lv 11:44;

Lv 11:45;

Lv 19:2; Eph 1:4;

1Pt 1:16

20:9 Ex 21:17;

Dt 27:16;

2Sa 1:16;

Mk 7:10

20:10 Ex 20:14;

Dt 22:22; Jn 8:4;

Jn 8:5

20:13 Lv 18:22  
 20:15 Ex 22:19;  
 Lv 18:23;  
 Dt 27:21  
 20:17 Lv 18:9;  
 Dt 27:22  
 20:18 Lv 15:24,  
 Lv 18:19;  
 Eze 18:6  
 20:21 Lv 18:16  
 20:24 Ex 3:8,  
 Ex 6:8, Ex 33:16;  
 Lv 20:26, Dt 7:6  
 21:1 Nm 19:11;  
 Eze 44:25

must be executed. <sup>11</sup>If a man has sexual intercourse with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness. Both of them must be executed; their blood is on their own heads. <sup>12</sup>If a man has sexual intercourse with his daughter-in-law, both of them must be executed. They have acted perversely; their blood is on their own heads. <sup>13</sup>If a man has sexual intercourse with a man as he would with a woman, the two of them have done something detestable. They must be executed; their blood is on their own heads. <sup>14</sup>If a man marries a woman and her mother as well, it is shameful. They will be burned with fire—the man and the two women—so that no such shameful thing will be found among you. <sup>15</sup>If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he must be executed and you must kill the animal. <sup>16</sup>If a woman approaches any kind of animal to mate with it, you must kill the woman and the animal. They must be executed; their blood is on their own heads. <sup>17</sup>If a man marries his sister—his father's daughter or his mother's daughter—and they have sexual contact with each other, it is a disgrace. They will be cut off in the sight of their people. Such a man has had sexual contact with his sister; he will be liable to punishment. <sup>18</sup>If a man sleeps with a woman during her menstrual period and has sexual contact with her, he has exposed the source of her blood flow and she has uncovered the same. Both of them will be cut off from their people. <sup>19</sup>You must not have sexual contact with your mother's sister or your father's sister, because that exposes your own close relative; both of you will be liable to punishment. <sup>20</sup>If a man has sexual intercourse with his aunt, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness. The man and the aunt will be liable to punishment; they will die childless. <sup>21</sup>If a man marries his brother's wife, it is indecent. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness; the man and the woman will be childless.

### Conclusion concerning conduct

<sup>22</sup>You must keep all my rules and all my regulations, and do them so that the land I am bringing you to, where you will live, won't vomit you out. <sup>23</sup>You must not follow the practices<sup>a</sup> of the nations that I am throwing out before you, because they did all these things and I was disgusted with them. <sup>24</sup>But I have told you, "You will certainly possess their fertile land; I am giving it to you to possess. It is a land full of milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from all other peoples. <sup>25</sup>So you must separate between clean and unclean animals, and between clean and unclean birds. Do not become detestable through some animal, bird, or anything that moves on the fertile ground that I have separated from you as unclean. <sup>26</sup>You must be holy to me, because I the LORD am holy, and I have separated you from all other peoples to be my own. <sup>27</sup>If someone, whether male or female, is a medium with the dead or a diviner,<sup>b</sup> they must be executed. They will be stoned; their blood is on their own head.

### Rules for priests

**21** The LORD said to Moses, Say to the priests, Aaron's sons: None of you are allowed to make yourselves unclean by any dead person among your community <sup>2</sup>except for your closest relatives: for your mother, father, son, daughter, brother; <sup>3</sup>also for your unmarried sister, who is close to you because she isn't married—you may be polluted for her sake. <sup>4</sup>You must not make yourself unclean for in-laws, defiling yourself by doing so.

<sup>a</sup>Or rules or customs <sup>b</sup>Or has a spirit of the dead or a spirit of divination

20:11 *father's wife*: See Leviticus 18:7-8.

20:12 *daughter-in-law*: See Leviticus 18:15.

20:13 *man as . . . with a woman*: See note on Leviticus 18:22.

20:14 *marries a woman and her mother*: See note on Leviticus 18:17.

20:15-16 *animal*: See Leviticus 18:23.

20:17 *sister*: See Leviticus 18:9.

20:18 *during her menstrual period*: See Leviticus 15:19-24; 18:19.

20:19-20 *mother's sister or . . . father's sister*: See Leviticus 18:12-13.

20:21 *brother's wife*: See Leviticus 18:16.

20:22-27 Like Leviticus 18, this chapter explains that observing these rules will prevent Israel from losing its land as the Canaanites did (*the nations that I am throwing out*

*before you*, 20:23). The sex rules function to preserve Israel's distinct identity (see sidebar, "Sex" at Lev 18).

20:24 *I have told you*: Exodus 3:8.

20:25 Israel expresses its *separate* identity (Lev 20:24) by following food rules (Lev 11) as well as the sexual rules of this chapter.

20:27 *medium . . . or a diviner*: See Leviticus 19:26.

21:1-22:23 Instructions for priests require them to stay clean and fit for duty. Priests must observe the rules for purification and marriage more strictly than other Israelites, and the high priest most of all. Because they work in the sanctuary, their uncleanness would more likely come into contact with holy places and things.

21:1-4 Touching dead bodies makes people unclean and contagious. Priests should not attend funerals except for

<sup>5</sup>Priests must not shave bald patches on their heads or cut off the ends of their beards or make gashes in their bodies. <sup>6</sup>They must be holy to their God so that they do not make their God's name impure. They must be holy because they offer the LORD's food gifts, their God's food. <sup>7</sup>Priests must not marry a woman who is promiscuous and defiled, nor can they marry a woman divorced from her husband, because priests must be<sup>1</sup> holy to their God. <sup>8</sup>You will treat the priests as holy, because they offer your God's food. The priests will be holy to you, because I am the holy LORD, who makes you holy. <sup>9</sup>If the daughter of a priest defiles herself by being promiscuous, she defiles her father. She must be burned with fire.

<sup>10</sup>The high priest<sup>j</sup>—the one whose head has been anointed with the anointing oil and who is ordained to dress in the priestly clothing—must not dishevel his hair or tear his clothing. <sup>11</sup>He must not go near any dead bodies and cannot make himself unclean even for his father or mother. <sup>12</sup>He must not exit the sanctuary, making his God's sanctuary impure by doing so, because his God's anointing oil, which separates,<sup>k</sup> is upon him; I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup>The high priest must marry a woman who is a virgin. <sup>14</sup>He cannot marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a woman defiled by promiscuity. He can only marry a virgin from his own people <sup>15</sup>so that he doesn't make his children impure among his people, because I am the LORD, who makes him holy.

<sup>16</sup>The LORD said to Moses, <sup>17</sup>Say to Aaron: None of your future descendants who have some kind of imperfection are allowed to offer their God's food. <sup>18</sup>No one who has an imperfection will be allowed to make an offering: this includes anyone who is blind, crippled, disfigured, or deformed; <sup>19</sup>anyone who has a broken foot or hand; <sup>20</sup>anyone who is a hunchback or too small; anyone who has an eye disease, a rash, scabs, or a crushed testicle.<sup>1</sup> <sup>21</sup>No descendant of Aaron the priest who has an imperfection will be allowed to offer the LORD's food gifts; since he has an imperfection, he will not be allowed to offer his God's food. <sup>22</sup>He may, of course, eat of his God's most holy or holy food, <sup>23</sup>but since he has an imperfection, he cannot enter toward the inner curtain or officiate at the altar, making these parts of my sanctuary impure by doing so. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.

<sup>24</sup>This is what Moses said to Aaron, his sons, and to all the Israelites.

### Priestly uncleanness

**22** The LORD said to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Tell Aaron and his sons to be very careful how they treat the holy things that the Israelites devote to me so that they do not make my holy name impure: I am the LORD. <sup>3</sup>Say to them: If any descendant of yours should ever come near the holy things that the Israelites have dedicated to the LORD while he is in an unclean state, he will be cut off from before me; I am the LORD. <sup>4</sup>Any descendant of Aaron who is afflicted with skin disease<sup>m</sup> or has a discharge cannot eat of the holy things until he is clean. Anyone who

<sup>1</sup>Or are <sup>i</sup>Or the priest who is greater than his brothers <sup>k</sup>Or consecrates <sup>l</sup>The meaning of several words in 21:18-20 is uncertain. <sup>m</sup>The precise meaning is uncertain; traditionally *leprosy*—a term used for several different skin diseases.

close family members. It is surprising that wives are not mentioned, but maybe they are assumed as obvious.

21:4 for *in-laws*: or, "as a husband among his people."

21:5 *shave... cut*: See note on Leviticus 19:27-28.

21:6 Priests offer the LORD's food gifts, their God's food, not because they are more holy by nature but because they have been ordained (Lev 8:30).

21:7 Priests have more limited marriage options than other Israelites (Lev 18) to preserve their cleanliness.

21:8 *treat the priests as holy*: See note on Leviticus 21:6.

21:9 *daughter of a priest*: Compare with Leviticus 20 and the sidebar, "Sex" at Leviticus 18.

21:10-15 *The high priest*: or, "the priest who is greater than his brothers." See Leviticus 8 for his anointing and dressing, and Leviticus 10:5-8, 12-20 for limits on his mourning.

21:12 *must not exit*: in order to mourn when he should be making offerings. Priests and high priests did leave the sanctuary at other times (see note on Lev 10:7), *anointing oil which separates*: or "which consecrates" or "which is a crown."

21:14 a *virgin from his own people* could mean another priest's daughter, a Levite woman, or an Israelite (see Ezek 44:22).

21:16-23 Priests who have physical imperfections cannot serve, just as animals for offerings must be "flawless" (Lev 22:17-25). Ancient Israel's ideas about appropriate bodies in appropriate relationships shape Leviticus' rules for offerings (Lev 1-7), uncleanness (Lev 11-15), sex (Lev 18, 20), and priests' fitness for duty. Many Jews and Christians reject this demeaning view of people's bodies that do not look "normal" because it fails the standard of the love commandment (Lev 19:18; see sidebar, "The Love Commandment" at Lev 19).

21:22-23 Priests with physical imperfections retain their right to eat meat and bread from offerings (Lev 6:14-7:36; unlike the unclean in Lev 22:4-6), but they may not approach the altar and present offerings.

22:1-9 Priests must stay especially clean because they come near the holy things inside the meeting tent: the offerings, the altar, and other holy furnishings (22:3). The

21:5 Lv 19:27, Lv 19:28; Dt 14:1; Jer 16:6; Eze 44:20

21:7 Lv 21:13, Lv 21:14; Dt 24:1; Eze 44:22

21:9 Gn 38:24; Lv 20:14

21:10 Lv 8:12, Lv 10:6; Nm 35:25

21:11 Lv 21:1, Lv 21:2; Nm 19:14

21:12 Lv 10:7

21:13 Lv 21:7; Eze 44:22; 2Co 11:2

21:14 Lv 21:7; Eze 44:22

21:17 Lv 10:3, Lv 21:6, Lv 21:21

21:18 Lv 22:19, Lv 22:23; 2Sa 4:4

21:20 Dt 23:1

21:21 Lv 21:6, Lv 21:7

21:22 Lv 6:17

21:23 Lv 21:12

22:11 Gn 17:13;  
Ex 12:44;  
Nm 18:11  
22:13 Gn 38:11;  
Lv 10:14  
22:19 Lv 1:3;  
Dt 15:21  
22:22 Lv 21:20;  
Mal 1:8  
22:23 Lv 21:18

touches anything made unclean by a dead body, or who has an emission of semen,<sup>5</sup> or who touches any swarming creature or another person who makes him unclean—whatever the uncleanness might be—the person who touches these things will be unclean until evening. He must not eat of the holy things unless he has bathed his body in water.<sup>7</sup> Once the sun has set and he has become clean again, he may eat of the holy things, for that is his food.<sup>8</sup> He must not eat an animal that has died naturally or that was killed by another animal, becoming unclean by doing so; I am the LORD.<sup>9</sup> The priests must keep my requirement so that they don't become liable to punishment and die for having made it impure.<sup>10</sup> I am the LORD, who makes them holy.

### **Unauthorized eating**

<sup>10</sup>No layperson is allowed to eat the holy offerings. No foreign guest or hired laborer of a priest can eat it. <sup>11</sup>But if a priest purchases a servant, that person can eat it, and servants born into the priest's household can also eat his food. <sup>12</sup>If a priest's daughter marries a layman, she is not allowed to eat the holy offerings. <sup>13</sup>But if a priest's daughter is a widow or divorced and has no children and so returns to her father's household as when she was young, she can eat her father's food. But, again, no layperson is allowed to eat it. <sup>14</sup>If someone eats a holy offering unintentionally, they must provide the priest with an equal item, plus one-fifth. <sup>15</sup>The Israelites must not make the holy offerings impure that they offer up to the LORD <sup>16</sup>or make themselves liable to punishment requiring compensation by eating their own holy offerings. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.

### **Unacceptable animal offerings**

<sup>17</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>18</sup>Tell Aaron, his sons, and all the Israelites: Whenever someone from Israel's house or from the immigrants in Israel presents their offering to the LORD as an entirely burned offering—whether it is payment for a solemn promise or a spontaneous gift—<sup>19</sup>for it to be acceptable on your behalf, it must be a flawless male from the herd, the sheep, or the goats. <sup>20</sup>You must not present anything that has an imperfection, because it will not be acceptable on your behalf. <sup>21</sup>Whenever someone presents a communal sacrifice of well-being to the LORD from the herd or flock—whether it is payment for a solemn promise or a spontaneous gift—it must be flawless to be acceptable; it must not have any imperfection. <sup>22</sup>You must not present to the LORD anything that is blind or that has an injury, mutilation, warts, a rash, or scabs. You must not put any such animal on the altar as a food gift for the LORD. <sup>23</sup>You can, however, offer an ox or sheep that is deformed or stunted as a spontaneous gift, but it will not be acceptable as payment for a solemn promise. <sup>24</sup>You must not offer to the LORD anything with bruised, crushed, torn, or cut-off testicles. You must not do that in your land. <sup>25</sup>You are not allowed to offer such animals as your God's food even if they come from a foreigner. Because these animals have blemishes and imperfections in them, they will not be acceptable on your behalf.

### **Additional rules for sacrifice**

<sup>26</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>27</sup>When an ox or sheep or goat is born, it must remain with its mother for seven days. From the eighth day on it will be acceptable as an offering, a food gift for the LORD. <sup>28</sup>But you will not slaughter an ox or sheep and its offspring on the same day.

<sup>28</sup>Vulg; MT and die in it

same things make priests unclean as other people (22:4-8): skin disease (Lev 13-14), genital discharges (Lev 15:1-18), touching a dead body or swarming animal (Lev 11:39-43), or touching someone who is unclean (Lev 15:21-27). They clean themselves in the same way, too, but can't serve in the temple or eat the holy food until they do. The penalties for not doing so are severe (22:9).

22:10-16 Priests get paid for their work by getting a share of the offerings. Purification, compensation, and grain offerings must be eaten only by priests in the sanctuary (Lev 6:14-7:10). But a priest's portions of the most common offering, communal sacrifices of well-being (Lev 7:31-34), can be shared with everyone in his household (22:11-13), though not with a layperson from outside the household.

22:14 *an equal item, plus one-fifth*: Compare with Leviticus 5:16.

22:17-25 Animals must be physically *flawless* to serve as offerings (Lev 1:3). Verses 22-24 list *blemishes and imperfections* (22:25) that disqualify animals from the altar. Similar things disqualify priests from serving at the altar (Lev 21:16-23).

22:18 *payment for a solemn promise or a spontaneous gift*: See note on Leviticus 7:15-16.

22:27 *must remain with its mother for seven days*: maybe to make sure the young animal is healthy (see Lev 22:17-25) or to get the mother animal's milk started.

22:28 This rule against slaughtering mother animals with their *offspring* also appears in Deuteronomy 22:6-7.

<sup>29</sup>When you sacrifice a communal sacrifice of thanksgiving for the LORD, you must sacrifice it so that it will be acceptable on your behalf. <sup>30</sup>It must be eaten on the same day; you must not leave any of it until morning; I am the LORD. <sup>31</sup>You must keep my commands and do them; I am the LORD. <sup>32</sup>You must not make my holy name impure so that I will be treated as holy by the Israelites. I am the LORD—the one who makes you holy <sup>33</sup>and who is bringing you out of the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the LORD.

### Sacred times

**23** The LORD said to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: These are my appointed times, the LORD's appointed times, which you will declare to be holy occasions: <sup>3</sup>Work can be done for six days, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of special rest, a holy occasion. You must not do any work on it; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the LORD. <sup>4</sup>These are the LORD's appointed times, holy occasions, which you will celebrate at their appointed times:

<sup>5</sup>The LORD's Passover is on the fourteenth day of the first month\* at twilight. <sup>6</sup>The LORD's Festival of Unleavened Bread is on the fifteenth day of the same month. You must eat unleavened bread for seven days. <sup>7</sup>On the first day you will hold a holy occasion and must not do any job-related work. <sup>8</sup>You will offer food gifts to the LORD for seven days. The seventh day will be a holy occasion; you must not do any job-related work.

<sup>9</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>10</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you and harvest its produce, you must bring the first bundle of your harvest to the priest. <sup>11</sup>The priest will lift up the bundle before the LORD so that it will be acceptable on your behalf. The priest will do this on the day after the Sabbath. <sup>12</sup>On the day the bundle is lifted up for you, you must offer a flawless one-year-old lamb as an entirely burned offering to the LORD. <sup>13</sup>The accompanying grain offering must be two-tenths of an ephah<sup>†</sup> of choice flour mixed with oil, as a food gift for the LORD, a soothing smell. The accompanying drink offering must be a quarter of a hin of wine. <sup>14</sup>You must not eat any bread, roasted grain, or fresh grain until the exact day when you bring your God's offering. This is a permanent rule throughout your future generations, wherever you live.

<sup>15</sup>You must count off seven weeks starting with the day after the Sabbath, the day you bring the bundle for the uplifted offering; these must be complete. <sup>16</sup>You will count off fifty days until the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you must present a new grain offering to the LORD. <sup>17</sup>From wherever you live, you will bring two loaves of bread as an uplifted offering. These must be made of two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour, baked with leaven, as early produce<sup>‡</sup> to the LORD. <sup>18</sup>Along with the bread you must present seven flawless one-year-old lambs, one bull from the herd, and two rams. These will be an entirely burned offering to the LORD, along with their grain offerings and drink offerings, as a food gift of soothing smell to the LORD. <sup>19</sup>You must also offer one male goat as a purification offering and two one-year-old lambs as a communal sacrifice of well-being. <sup>20</sup>The priest will lift up the two sheep,

\*March–April, Nisan †Four quarts dry; also in 23:17 ‡Or *firstfruits*; also in 23:20

Compare with the rule against boiling the meat of an animal in its mother's milk (Exod 23:19; 34:26; Deut 14:21). Both reflect ancient Israelites' unease with relationships that are too close, like some of the sexual rules (Lev 18:17; 20:14).

22:30 *eaten on the same day*: See Leviticus 7:15.

23:1–44 Two chapters of Leviticus describe calendars for *holy occasions* (23:4) in weekly, annual (Lev 23), and multi-year cycles (Lev 25). Shorter calendars of holidays also appear in Exodus 23:10–19; 34:18–24; and Deuteronomy 16:1–17. They emphasize that everyone should come to the sanctuary for three pilgrimage festivals each year. Numbers 28–29 lists the offerings for each festival. Leviticus 23 emphasizes that every festival is a special Sabbath. People must rest from work on these days no matter where they are. (See sidebar, "Festivals" at Lev 23.)

23:3 Twelve times the Pentateuch commands resting on the seventh day, the *Sabbath* (which means "cease, rest"). Doing so imitates God's rest after creation (Gen 2:1–3; on

imitating God, see note on Lev 19:2). Sabbath rest became a typical feature of Jewish practice. Christians usually observe the Sabbath on Sunday, the first day of the week, because on that day Christ rose from the dead (Mark 16:2). 23:5–9 *Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread* commemorate God's rescue of Israel from Egypt (Exod 12–13) with seven days of offerings (see Num 28:16–25).

23:9–14 During or after the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the first harvested grain must be offered to God before anyone can eat it (23:14).

23:11 *lift up the bundle*: See Leviticus 2:14–16. It is not clear which day is meant by *the day after the Sabbath*.

23:15–22 The Festival of Weeks commemorates the harvest of *new grain*. The Hebrew and Greek names for this festival come from its timing of *seven weeks (Shavuot)* or *fifty days (Pentecost)* after the end of the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

23:17–19 For the kinds of offerings, see Numbers 28:26–31.

23:20 *uplifted offering*: See Leviticus 7:30, 34.

23:1 Lv 25:1;  
Neh 9:14;  
Ac 15:21

23:2 Ex 23:14;  
Lv 23:4, Lv 23:37,  
Lv 23:44;  
Nm 29:39

23:5 Ex 12:2,  
Ex 12:6,  
Ex 12:18;  
Nm 28:16;  
Dt 16:1

23:6 Ex 12:15,  
Ex 34:18

23:7 Lv 23:8,  
Lv 23:21,  
Lv 23:36;  
Nm 28:18

23:10 Nm 15:18

23:11 Ex 29:24

23:18 Lv 23:13

23:24 Lv 25:9;  
Nm 10:10;  
Nm 29:1  
23:25 Lv 23:21  
23:26 Lv 1:1,  
Lv 16:29;  
Nm 29:7;  
Dn 9:13;  
Lk 16:31  
23:27 Ex 30:10;  
Lv 16:29,  
Lv 16:30, Lv 25:9;  
Nm 29:7  
23:28 Lv 16:34,  
Lv 23:27,  
Lv 23:31  
23:29 Gn 17:14  
23:30 Lv 20:3  
23:31 Lv 23:14  
23:32 Lv 16:31  
23:34 Nm 29:12;  
Dt 16:13;  
Ezr 3:4;  
Neh 8:14; In 7:2  
23:35 Lv 23:25;  
Nm 29:35  
23:36 Nm 29:12,  
Nm 29:35;  
Neh 8:18;  
Jn 7:37  
23:37 Lv 23:2  
23:38 Nm 29:39  
23:39 Ex 23:16;  
Lv 23:34;  
Nm 29:12;  
Dt 16:13  
23:40 Neh 8:15  
23:41 Nm 29:12  
23:42 Neh 8:14

along with the bread of the early produce, as an uplifted offering before the LORD. These will be holy to the LORD and will belong to the priest. <sup>21</sup>On that very same day you must make a proclamation; it will be a holy occasion for you. You must not do any job-related work. This is a permanent rule wherever you live throughout your future generations. <sup>22</sup>When you harvest your land's produce, you must not harvest all the way to the edge of your field; and don't gather every remaining bit of your harvest. Leave these items for the poor and the immigrant; I am the LORD your God.

<sup>23</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>24</sup>Say to the Israelites: On the first day of the seventh month,<sup>a</sup> you will have a special rest, a holy occasion marked by a trumpet signal. <sup>25</sup>You must not do any job-related work, and you must offer a food gift to the LORD.

<sup>26</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>27</sup>Note that the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Reconciliation. It will be a holy occasion for you. You must deny yourselves and offer a food gift to the LORD. <sup>28</sup>You must not do any work that day because it is a Day of Reconciliation to make reconciliation for you before the LORD your God. <sup>29</sup>Anyone who does not deny themselves on that day will be cut off from their people. <sup>30</sup>Moreover, I will destroy from their people anyone who does any work on that day. <sup>31</sup>You must not do any work! This is a permanent rule throughout your future generations wherever you live. <sup>32</sup>This is a Sabbath of special rest for you, and you must deny yourselves. You will observe your Sabbath on the ninth day of the month from evening to the following evening.

<sup>33</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>34</sup>Say to the Israelites: The Festival of Booths to the LORD will start on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and will last for seven days. <sup>35</sup>The first day is a holy occasion. You must not do any job-related work. <sup>36</sup>For seven days you will offer food gifts to the LORD. On the eighth day you will have a holy occasion and must offer a food gift to the LORD. It is a holiday: you must not do any job-related work.

<sup>37</sup>These are the LORD's appointed times that you will proclaim as holy occasions, offering food gifts to the LORD: entirely burned offerings, grain offerings, communal sacrifices, and drink offerings—each on its proper day. <sup>38</sup>This is in addition to the LORD's sabbaths and in addition to your presents, all the payments for solemn promises, and all the spontaneous gifts that you give to the LORD.

<sup>39</sup>Note that on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered the land's crops, you will celebrate the LORD's festival for seven days. The first day and the eighth day are days of special rest. <sup>40</sup>On the first day you must take fruit from majestic trees,<sup>b</sup> palm branches, branches of leafy trees,<sup>c</sup> and willows of the streams, and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. <sup>41</sup>You will celebrate this festival to the LORD for seven days each year; this is a permanent rule throughout your future generations. You will celebrate it in the seventh month. <sup>42</sup>For seven days you must live in huts. Every citizen of Israel must live in

*Festivals* Though neither Jews nor Christians make offerings as Leviticus requires, they do observe annual holy days and festivals. The Israelite calendar of three to five festivals appears five times in the Pentateuch (Exod 23; 34; Lev 23; Num 28–29; Deut 16). It is based on harvesttimes in the agricultural cycle of ancient Palestine. Harvests produce the material for making offerings at the sanctuary. Unlike the other calendars, however, Leviticus 23 emphasizes not offerings but rather observing the festivals by resting from all work. These special Sabbaths were not affected by the temple's destruction, and they continue to shape the Jewish year. Christians replaced this calendar of holy days with a liturgical year based on the life of Christ.

<sup>a</sup>September–October, Tishrei; also in 23:27, 33, 39, 41 <sup>b</sup>Or *hadar trees* <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

23:22 On leaving some of the harvest for the poor and the immigrant, see note on Leviticus 19:9-10.

23:23-25 the seventh month (Tishrei) includes the Day of Reconciliation (Lev 23:26-32) and the Festival of Booths (Lev 23:34-36). A Sabbath on its first day alerts people to the holy days to come. See Numbers 29:1-6 for the day's special offerings. Jews now observe this day as the beginning of the new year (Heb. *Rosh Hashanah*).

23:26-32 For the offering rituals of the Day of Reconciliation, see Leviticus 16. Here the emphasis falls on everyone resting from work on this most holy occasion of the year.

23:27 deny yourselves: Fast from food. food gift: See Leviticus 16 and Numbers 29:7-11.

23:28 make reconciliation for you: See sidebar, "Reconciliation/Atonement" at Leviticus 16.

23:29 cut off: See notes on Leviticus 7:20-21; 20:3.

23:34-43 The Festival of Booths (Heb. *Sukkot*) commemorates Israel's camping in the wilderness (23:42-43).

23:36 food gifts: See Numbers 29:12-38 for the festival's offerings.

23:40-43 The people made the huts (also called "booths" or "tabernacles") out of tree branches (Neh 8:13-17).

huts <sup>43</sup>so that your future generations will know that I made the Israelites live in huts when I brought them out of the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.

<sup>44</sup>So Moses announced the LORD's appointed times to the Israelites.

### The sanctuary's lamp and bread

**24** The LORD said to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Command the Israelites to bring pure, pressed olive oil to you for the lamp, to keep a light burning constantly. <sup>3</sup>Aaron will tend the lamp, which will be inside the meeting tent but outside the inner curtain of the covenant document, from evening until morning before the LORD. This is a permanent rule throughout your future generations. <sup>4</sup>Aaron must continually tend the lights on the pure lampstand<sup>a</sup> before the LORD.

<sup>5</sup>You will take choice flour and bake twelve loaves of flatbread, two-tenths of an ephah<sup>b</sup> for each loaf. <sup>6</sup>You must place them in two stacks, six in a stack, on the pure table<sup>c</sup> before the LORD. <sup>7</sup>Put pure frankincense on each stack, as a token portion for the bread; it is a food gift for the LORD. <sup>8</sup>Aaron will always set it out before the LORD, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of<sup>d</sup> the Israelites, as a permanent covenant. <sup>9</sup>It will belong to Aaron and his sons. They must eat it in a holy place because it is the most holy part of their share of the LORD's food gifts, a permanent portion.

### Assault and blasphemy

<sup>10</sup>The son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father came out among the Israelites. A fight broke out between this half-Israelite<sup>e</sup> and another Israelite man in the camp, <sup>11</sup>during which the half-Israelite blasphemed the Lord's name and cursed. So he was brought to Moses. (His mother's name was Shelomith, Dibri's daughter from the tribe of Dan.) <sup>12</sup>He was put under guard until they could determine the LORD's verdict.

<sup>13</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses: <sup>14</sup>Take the one who cursed outside the camp. All who heard him will press their hands on his head. Then the whole community will stone him. <sup>15</sup>Tell the Israelites: Anyone who curses God will be liable to punishment. <sup>16</sup>And anyone who blasphemes the LORD's name must be executed. The whole community will stone that person. Immigrant and citizen alike: whenever someone blasphemes the Lord's name, that person will be executed.

<sup>17</sup>If anyone kills another person, they must be executed. <sup>18</sup>Someone who kills an animal may make amends for it: a life for a life. <sup>19</sup>If someone injures a fellow citizen, they will suffer the same injury they inflicted: <sup>20</sup>broken bone for broken bone, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. The same injury the person inflicted on the other will be inflicted on them. <sup>21</sup>Someone who kills an animal must make amends for it, but whoever kills a human being must be

<sup>a</sup>Perhaps pure gold lampstand <sup>b</sup>Approximately four quarts dry <sup>c</sup>Perhaps pure gold table <sup>d</sup>Or from or as a gift of; Heb uncertain <sup>e</sup>Or Israelite woman's son; also in 24:11

24:1-9 The priests must tend the lampstand and table inside the meeting tent (see Exod 25:23-40). These rituals represent Israel's constant service to the Lord in the place closest to the chest of the *covenant document*. This chest is sometimes called "the ark of the covenant," and it shows God's presence with Israel. Priests also had to keep the fire burning all night on the main altar in the courtyard (Lev 6:12).

24:2-4 Seven oil lamps (Heb. *menorah*, 24:4) sat on branches of the lampstand. They must be filled and lit every night. *Aaron* is expanded to "Aaron and his sons" (i.e., the priests) in Exodus 27:20-21. *pure lampstand*: or, "pure gold" lampstand (Exod 25:31).

24:5-9 *twelve loaves of flatbread* sit on the gold table with frankincense. They must be replaced with fresh bread every week. They are sometimes called "the bread of the presence" or "the showbread." See note on Numbers 4:7.

24:6 *pure table*: covered in "pure gold" (Exod 25:24).

24:7 *token portion*: See note on Leviticus 2:2. *food gift*: See note on Leviticus 1:9.

24:10-23 This is the only story in Leviticus except for the story of the inauguration of the meeting tent and priests

in Leviticus 8-10. Interpreters disagree over why it appears here. Maybe, like the story of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1-3), it shows what happens when the Lord is not served well. In that way, it emphasizes the importance of obeying the surrounding rules (cf. the story of the golden calf in Exod 32-34).

24:10 *half-Israelite*: The emphasis on his mixed parentage in Leviticus 24:10-11 shows that the blasphemy rule applies to everyone (Lev 24:16).

24:12 *until... the LORD's verdict* as to whether the rule against blasphemy applies to a half-Israelite (Lev 24:16, 22).

24:13-16 On the death penalty for blasphemy, see Leviticus 6:1-7; 19:12.

24:17-22 The rule that the punishment should match the crime appears here with examples, illustrating that the same laws apply to *immigrant or citizen alike* (24:22).

24:20 *an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*: This famous line appears three times in the Pentateuch (Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21). It expresses the legal principle that punishment must equal the crime. There is no evidence that ancient Israelites applied these examples literally. They allowed compensation for damages in the form of

23:43 Ps 78:5

23:44 Lv 23:2

24:2 Ex 27:20, Ex 27:21

24:3 Ex 27:21

24:14 Lv 20:2;

Dt 13:9;

Dt 13:10;

Dt 17:5; Dt 17:7

24:16 1 Ki 21:10;

Jn 10:33

24:17 Gn 9:5;

Gn 9:6; Ex 21:12;

Nm 35:31;

Dt 19:11

24:18 Ex 21:34;

Lv 24:21

24:19 Dt 19:21;

Mt 5:38; Mt 7:2

24:20 Ex 21:23;

Ex 21:24;

Dt 19:21;

Mt 5:38

24:21 Lv 24:17;

Lv 24:18

24:22 Ex 12:49;  
Lv 19:34;  
Nm 9:14;  
Nm 15:15;  
Nm 15:16

25:2 Ex 23:10;  
Lv 26:34

25:3 Ex 23:10;  
Is 5:6; In 15:2

25:4 Ex 23:11;  
Lv 25:20

25:5 2Ki 19:29

25:6 Ex 23:11  
25:7 Ex 23:11

25:10 Lv 25:28;  
Nm 36:4;  
Is 61:1; Jer 34:8;  
Jer 34:15

25:13 Lv 25:10;  
Lv 27:24

executed. <sup>22</sup>There is but one law on this matter for you, immigrant or citizen alike, because I am the LORD your God.

<sup>23</sup>Moses told this to the Israelites. So they took the one who had cursed outside the camp and stoned him. The Israelites did just as the LORD commanded Moses.

### The sabbatical year

**25** The LORD said to Moses on Mount Sinai, <sup>25</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: Once you enter the land that I am giving you, the land must celebrate a sabbath rest to the LORD. <sup>3</sup>You will plant your fields for six years, and prune your vineyards and gather their crops for six years. <sup>4</sup>But in the seventh year the land will have a special sabbath rest, a Sabbath to the LORD: You must not plant your fields or prune your vineyards. <sup>5</sup>You must not harvest the secondary growth of your produce or gather the grapes of your freely growing vines. It will be a year of special rest for the land. <sup>6</sup>Whatever the land produces during its sabbath will be your food—for you, for your male and female servants, and for your hired laborers and foreign guests who live with you, <sup>7</sup>as well as for your livestock and for the wild animals in your land. All of the land's produce can be eaten.

### The Jubilee year

<sup>8</sup>Count off seven weeks of years—that is, seven times seven—so that the seven weeks of years totals forty-nine years. <sup>9</sup>Then have the trumpet<sup>a</sup> blown on the tenth day of the seventh month. <sup>10</sup>Have the trumpet blown throughout your land on the Day of Reconciliation. <sup>10</sup>You will make the fiftieth year holy, proclaiming freedom throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It will be a Jubilee year<sup>b</sup> for you: each of you must return to your family property and to your extended family. <sup>11</sup>The fiftieth year will be a Jubilee year for you. Do not plant, do not harvest the secondary growth, and do not gather from the freely growing vines <sup>12</sup>because it is a Jubilee: it will be holy to you. You can eat only the produce directly out of the field. <sup>13</sup>Each of you must return to your family property in this year of Jubilee.

<sup>14</sup>When you sell something to or buy something from your fellow citizen, you must not cheat each other. <sup>15</sup>You will buy from your fellow citizen according to the number of years

*Jubilee* Leviticus describes the Jubilee year as a time for restoring people and land to their original state after Israel settled the land of Canaan. People must return to their original homes (Lev 25:10, 13), slaves must be freed (Lev 25:35-55), land must be restored to its original owners (Lev 25:14-16, 23-34), and farmland must not be planted or harvested (Lev 25:11-12, 19-22). Deuteronomy 15:1-18 lets slaves go free every seven years during the sabbatical year, when debts are also forgiven. (People often became slaves in the ancient world because they could not pay back their debts.) These rules have the effect of keeping someone from buying land or a fellow Israelite outright. Instead, they can only rent the land or the person's labor for a set period of time, until the Jubilee or sabbatical year. These rules emphasize that both land and people belong to the Lord ("the land is mine," Lev 25:23; "the Israelites belong to me," Lev 25:55), and so they cannot be bought and sold permanently.

The Jubilee expresses the wish that Israel remain just as it was in the time of Joshua. These rules were hard to keep through the changing fortunes of history. There is no record in the Bible or other ancient texts of Israelites actually observing the Jubilee. But the ideal of the Jubilee has stimulated many later attempts to reform society for the better by, for example, banning slavery and reducing debts.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *shofar* <sup>b</sup>September–October, Tishrei <sup>b</sup>Heb *yobel*

money or other goods (Exod 21:26-36), except in cases of murder (cf. Lev 24:21; Num 35:31-34; Gen 9:6; Exod 21:12-14).

25:1-55 Sabbatical and Jubilee years extend the calendar of weekly and annual holy days (Lev 23) to cycles of 7 and 50 years.

25:2-7 No planting or harvesting in the seventh year means that people must eat whatever grows by itself.

25:8-55 See sidebar, "Jubilee" at Leviticus 25.

25:9 trumpet: Hebrew *shofar*, a ram's horn used like a trumpet. Day of Reconciliation: See Leviticus 16:1-34; 23:27-32.

25:10 The fiftieth year follows a sabbatical year (the forty-ninth year). Jubilee: The Hebrew *yobel* refers to a ram's horn in Exodus 19:13 but may also mean "bring home." It is not related to Latin *jubilare*, "shout for joy" (English "jubilation"), though later traditions link the words.

25:12 eat... directly out of the field for the second year in a row, since the Jubilee follows a sabbatical year (Lev 25:8, 10).

25:13 family property: See Joshua 13–21.

25:14-17 Since land must go back to its original owner in the Jubilee year, prices should reflect the amount of time until then.



since the Jubilee; he will sell to you according to the number of years left for harvests. <sup>16</sup>You will raise the price if there are more years, or lower the price if there are less years because it is the number of harvests that are being sold to you. <sup>17</sup>You must not cheat each other but fear your God because I am the LORD your God. <sup>18</sup>You will observe my rules, and you will keep my regulations and do them so that you can live securely on the land.

25:21 Dt 28:8  
25:35 Dt 15:7,  
Dt 15:8;  
Ps 112:9  
25:36 Ex 22:25;  
Dt 23:19

### **Food during fallow years**

<sup>19</sup>The land will give its fruit so that you can eat your fill and live securely on it. <sup>20</sup>Suppose you ask, "What will we eat in the seventh year if we don't plant or gather our crops then?" <sup>21</sup>I will send my blessing on you in the sixth year so that it will make enough produce for three years. <sup>22</sup>You can plant again in the eighth year and eat food from the previous year's produce until the ninth year. Until its produce comes, you will eat the food from the previous year.

### **Buying back family property**

<sup>23</sup>The land must not be permanently sold because the land is mine. You are just immigrants and foreign guests of mine.

<sup>24</sup>Throughout the whole land that you possess, you must allow for the land to be bought back. <sup>25</sup>When one of your fellow Israelites faces financial difficulty and must sell part of their family property, the closest relative<sup>c</sup> will come and buy back what their fellow Israelite has sold. <sup>26</sup>If the person doesn't have someone to buy it back, but then manages to afford buying it back, <sup>27</sup>they must calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the person to whom they sold it. Then it will go back to the family property.<sup>d</sup> <sup>28</sup>If they cannot afford to make a refund to the buyer, whatever was sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Jubilee year. It will be released in the Jubilee year, at which point it will return to the family property.

<sup>29</sup>When a person sells a home in a walled city, it may be bought back until a year after its sale. The period for buying it back will be one year. <sup>30</sup>If it is not bought back before a full year has passed, the house in the walled city will belong to the buyer permanently and their descendants forever. It will not be released at the Jubilee. <sup>31</sup>But houses in settlements that are unwallled will be considered as if they were country fields. They can be bought back, and they must be released at the Jubilee.

<sup>32</sup>Levites will always have the right to buy back homes in the levitical cities that are part of their family property. <sup>33</sup>Levite property that can be bought back—houses sold in a city that is their family property—must be released at the Jubilee, because homes in levitical cities are the Levites' family property among the Israelites. <sup>34</sup>But the pastureland around their cities cannot be sold, because that is their permanent family property.

### **Poor Israelites and slavery**

<sup>35</sup>If one of your fellow Israelites faces financial difficulty and is in a shaky situation with you,<sup>e</sup> you must assist them as you would an immigrant or foreign guest so that they can survive among you. <sup>36</sup>Do not take interest from them, or any kind of profit from interest, but

<sup>c</sup>Or next of kin; traditionally redeemer <sup>d</sup>Or they will go back to their family property; also in 25:28. <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain

25:23 *the land is mine*: This principle is basic not just to Sabbath and Jubilee rules, but to all the rules for offerings and tithes. Israelites are tenant farmers who must pay the divine landlord rent in all these ways to keep their right to work and live on the land.

25:25 *faces financial difficulty and must sell* presumes that the only good reason to sell land given by God would be to pay debts. Selling such land for profit would reject God's gift. The *closest relative* or "redeemer" should try to keep the land in the family to whom God gave it in the first place. They may also buy back family members who have become slaves (Lev 25:47-55). The role of redeemer can elsewhere be used to describe God's justification or rescue of someone (Exod 6:6; 15:13; Isa 43:1; Ps 19:14; Job 19:25). 25:29 *a home in a walled city* is not considered part of the land divided among the tribes and clans. It can be sold outright, with a one year buyback option.

25:32 *homes in the levitical cities* are part of God's gift to the Levites (Josh 21), so there is an eternal buyback option. They must be treated like the villages and farmland of other tribes.

25:34 The Levites' *pastureland* can never be sold, which ensures they always have the means to serve in the sanctuary.

25:35-37 Concern for the poor must extend beyond land rights.

25:35 *shaky situation with you*: or "dependent on you" or "under your authority."

25:36 *Do not take interest*: because interest makes it harder for poor people to pay their debts (Exod 22:25; Deut 23:19-20). Jews and Christians have in previous centuries often followed this rule by prohibiting interest on loans between people within each religious community. Such prohibitions are rare today.

25:55 Ex 29:45;

Lv 11:44;

Lv 11:45;

Lv 22:32;

Lv 25:42

26:1 Ex 20:4;

Ex 23:24;

Lv 19:4;

Nm 33:52;

Dt 16:22

26:2 Ex 20:8;

Lv 19:30;

26:3 Lv 18:4;

Dt 7:12;

Dt 11:13;

Dt 28:1

26:4 Dt 11:14;

Ps 67:6, Ps 68:9;

Is 30:23; Jl 2:23

26:5 Lv 25:18;

Lv 25:19;

Dt 11:15;

Is 30:23;

Am 9:13

26:6 1Ch 22:9;

Ps 29:11;

Ps 147:14;

Is 35:9; Zep 3:13

fear your God so that your fellow Israelite can survive among you. <sup>37</sup>Do not lend a poor Israelite money with interest or lend food at a profit. <sup>38</sup>I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt to give you Canaan's land and to be your God.

<sup>39</sup>If one of your fellow Israelites faces financial difficulty with you and sells themselves to you, you must not make him work as a slave. <sup>40</sup>Instead, they will be like a hired laborer or foreign guest to you. They will work for you until the Jubilee year, <sup>41</sup>at which point the poor Israelite along with their children will be released from you. They can return to their extended family and to their family property. <sup>42</sup>You must do this because these people are my servants—I brought them out of Egypt's land. They must not be sold as slaves. <sup>43</sup>You will not harshly rule over them but must fear your God.

<sup>44</sup>Regarding male or female slaves that you are allowed to have: You can buy a male or a female slave from the nations that are around you. <sup>45</sup>You can also buy them from the foreign guests who live with you and from their extended families that are with you, who were born in your land. These can belong to you as property. <sup>46</sup>You can pass them on to your work as inheritance that they can own as permanent property. You can make these people work as slaves, but you must not rule harshly over your own people, the Israelites.

<sup>47</sup>If an immigrant or foreign guest prospers financially among you, but your fellow Israelite faces financial difficulty and so sells themselves to the immigrant or foreign guest, or to a descendant of a foreigner, <sup>48</sup>the Israelite will have the right to be bought back after they sold themselves. One of their relatives can buy them back: <sup>49</sup>their uncle or cousin can buy them back; one of their blood relatives from their family can buy them back; or they may be able to afford their own purchase. <sup>50</sup>The Israelite will calculate with their owner the time from the year they were sold until the Jubilee year. The price of their release will be based on the number of years they were with the owner, as in the case of a hired laborer. <sup>51</sup>If there are many years left before the Jubilee, the Israelite will pay for their purchase in proportion to their purchase price. <sup>52</sup>If only a few years are left, they will calculate that and pay for their purchase according to the years of service. <sup>53</sup>Regardless, the Israelite will be to the buyer like a yearly laborer; the buyer must not harshly rule over them in your sight. <sup>54</sup>If the Israelite is not bought back in one of these ways, they and their children must be released in the Jubilee year <sup>55</sup>because the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants—I brought them out of Egypt's land; I am the LORD your God.

### Covenant blessings

**26** You must not make any idols, and do not set up any divine image or sacred pillar. You must not place any carved<sup>f</sup> stone in your land, bowing down to it, because I am the LORD your God. <sup>2</sup>You must keep my sabbaths and respect my sanctuary; I am the LORD.

<sup>3</sup>If you live according to my rules, keep my commands, and do them, <sup>4</sup>I will give you rain at the proper time, the land will produce its yield, and the trees of the field will produce their fruit. <sup>5</sup>Your threshing season will last until the grape harvest, and the grape harvest will last until planting time. You will eat your fill of food and live securely in your land. <sup>6</sup>I will grant peace in the land so that you can lie down without anyone frightening you. I will remove

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain

25:39 *sells themselves to you*: either to pay off debts or to obtain food and support.

25:40 Like the land, Israelite slaves must be freed in the fiftieth year. See sidebar, "Jubilee" at Leviticus 25.

25:42 *servants and slaves* come from the same Hebrew word. The Lord owns the people and the land, so neither can be sold outright, only leased for a time.

25:43 *your God*: the true owner of people and land.

25:44-46 *slave from the nations*: Non-Israelite slaves do not go free at the Jubilee. Later interpretations of the Jubilee ideal reversed this distinction in order to abolish all slavery.

25:47-55 Israelite slaves have the right to release in the Jubilee whether their owners were Israelites or not. Just as *relatives* can buy back family land (Lev 25:25), they also have the right to buy back family members who have sold

themselves (25:48-52). The price depends on how long until the Jubilee, when Israelite slaves must be let go without payment (25:54).

25:55 God's rescue of the Israelites from Egypt gives the Lord a special claim to own this people (see Exod 19:4-6).

26:1-46 Threats and promises usually appear at the end of law collections (see sidebar, "Blessings and Curses" at Lev 26). This chapter brings together many of Leviticus' themes to motivate readers to follow its rules and commandments.

26:1-2 Faithfulness to the Lord involves banning *idols, divine images, and carved stones* (Exod 20:4, 23; see note on Lev 19:4); observing *sabbaths* (Lev 19:3; 23:3-4); and worshipping at the *sanctuary* (Lev 7:20-21; 15:31; 22:3).

26:3-13 Blessings for obedience include good *harvests* (26:4-5, 10), victory and *peace* (26:6-8), a growing

**Blessings and Curses** Lists of promises and threats appear at the end of collections of rules in the Pentateuch (Exod 23; Lev 26; Deut 27–30). They complete the rhetoric of instruction by showing what will happen if the people obey the teaching and if they don't. In these speeches, the Lord doesn't determine the future. Instead, God forecasts two different futures depending on what the people of Israel do. If the people keep the covenantal instruction, they will live peaceful and prosperous lives in the land. If they do not, they will suffer famine, plague, invasion, and eventually lose the land. The message is that the people are responsible for their own fate.

In Leviticus 26:44–46, God promises to preserve the covenant no matter what. For those in exile who lost their land (see 2 Kgs 25), this message provided hope for restoration. The post-exilic community vowed to keep the Instruction as their ancestors had not (Neh 9–10). They believed that in this way they could turn the tide of history. This hope has sustained Jews through many exiles since.

26:8 Dt 32:30;  
Josh 23:10  
26:9 Gn 17:6,  
Gn 17:7;  
Neh 9:23  
26:10 Lv 25:22  
26:11 Ex 25:8,  
Ex 29:45;  
Eze 37:26  
26:12 Gn 3:8;  
Ex 6:7; Dt 23:14;  
Jer 7:23;  
2Co 6:16  
26:13 Jer 2:20,  
Jer 28:10;  
Eze 34:27  
26:24 2Sa 22:27  
26:27 Lv 26:24  
26:28 Is 59:18

dangerous animals from the land, and no sword will pass through it. <sup>7</sup>You will chase your enemies, and they will fall before you in battle. <sup>8</sup>Five of you will chase away a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase away ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you in battle. <sup>9</sup>I will turn my face to you, will make you fruitful and numerous, and will keep my covenant with you. <sup>10</sup>You will still be eating the previous year's harvest when the time will come to clear it out to make room for the new! <sup>11</sup>I will place my dwelling<sup>a</sup> among you, and I will not despise you. <sup>12</sup>I will walk around among you; I will be your God, and you will be my people. <sup>13</sup>I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt's land—who brought you out from being Egypt's slaves. I broke your bonds and made you stand up straight.

### Covenant curses

<sup>14</sup>But if you do not obey me and do not carry out all these commands—<sup>15</sup>if you reject my rules and despise my regulations, not doing all my commands and breaking my covenant—<sup>16</sup>then I will do the following to you:

I will bring horrific things:<sup>b</sup> wasting diseases and fevers that make the eyes fail and drain life away.

You will plant seed for no reason because your enemies will eat the food.

<sup>17</sup>I will turn my face against you: you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you; and you will run away even when no one is chasing you.

<sup>18</sup>If, despite all that, you still do not obey me, I will punish you for your sins seven more times: <sup>19</sup>I will destroy your prideful power. I will turn your sky to iron and your land to bronze <sup>20</sup>so that your strength will be spent for no reason: your land will not produce its yield, and the trees of the land won't produce their fruit.

<sup>21</sup>If you continue to oppose me and are unwilling to obey me, I will strike you for your sins seven more times: <sup>22</sup>I will send wild animals against you, and they will kill your children and destroy your livestock. They will make you so few in number that your roads will seem deserted.

<sup>23</sup>If, despite these things, you still do not accept my discipline and continue to oppose me, <sup>24</sup>then I will continue to oppose you. I will strike you for your sins seven more times: <sup>25</sup>I will bring the sword against you, avenging the breaking of the covenant. <sup>1</sup>If you retreat into your cities, I will send a plague on you, and you will be handed over to the enemy. <sup>26</sup>When I destroy your food supply, ten women will bake bread in a single oven, and they will ration out bread by weight. You will eat but will never get full.

<sup>27</sup>If, despite all this, you still do not obey me and continue to oppose me, <sup>28</sup>then I will continue to oppose you—with anger! I will punish you for your sins seven more times: <sup>29</sup>You will

<sup>a</sup>Or tabernacle <sup>b</sup>Precise nature of the diseases uncertain <sup>1</sup>Or executing covenant vengeance

population (26:9), and God's presence in the dwelling with the people (26:11–13).

26:14–39 Punishments for disobedience reverse all these blessings and add more distress.

26:16 The Hebrew words translated *horrific things: wasting diseases and fevers... drain* are rare and not well understood.

26:19 *turn your sky to iron and your land to bronze*: a long drought.

26:25 *the breaking of the covenant*: See translation note i.

26:26 *ten women... single oven*: Refugees crowded into cities (Lev 26:25) must share kitchens and food.

26:27–33 The horrors of defeat, destruction, and exile deliver the final punishment for breaking the covenant.

26:30 2Ki 23:20;  
2Ch 34:4; 1s 27:9;  
Eze 6:3

26:34 Lv 25:2,  
Lv 26:43;  
2Ch 36:21

26:40 Nm 5:7;  
Neh 9:2; Ps 32:5;  
Prv 28:13;  
Hos 5:15

26:41 Jer 4:4,  
Jer 9:26;  
Eze 44:7;  
Ac 7:51

26:44 Lv 26:11;  
Dt 4:31; Ro 11:2

eat the flesh of your own sons and daughters. <sup>30</sup>I will eliminate your shrines, chop down your incense altars, and pile your dead bodies on the dead bodies of your idols. I will despise you. <sup>31</sup>I will turn your cities into ruins, I will devastate your sanctuaries, and I will not smell the soothing smells of your offerings. <sup>32</sup>I will personally devastate the land so much that your enemies who resettled it will be astonished by it. <sup>33</sup>I will scatter you among the nations. I will unsheathe my sword against you. Your land will be devastated and your cities will be ruins.

<sup>34</sup>At that time, while it is devastated and you are in enemy territory, the land will enjoy its sabbaths. At that time, the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. <sup>35</sup>During the whole time it is devastated, it will have the rest it didn't have during the sabbaths you lived in it.

<sup>36</sup>I will bring despair into the hearts of those of you who survive in enemy territory. Just the sound of a windblown leaf will put them to running, and they will run scared as if running from a sword! They will fall even when no one is chasing them! <sup>37</sup>They will stumble over each other as they would before a sword, even though no one is chasing them! You will have no power to stand before your enemies. <sup>38</sup>You will disappear among the nations—the land of your enemies will devour you. <sup>39</sup>Any of you who do survive will rot in enemy territory on account of their guilty deeds. And they will rot too on account of their ancestors' guilty deeds.

### Covenant and restoration

<sup>40</sup>But if they confess their and their ancestors' guilt for the wrongdoing they did to me, and for their continued opposition to me—<sup>41</sup>which made me oppose them, so I took them into enemy territory—or if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they make up for their guilt, <sup>42</sup>then I will remember my covenant with Jacob. I will also remember my covenant with Isaac. And my covenant with Abraham. And I will remember the land. <sup>43</sup>The land will be absent of them and will be enjoying its sabbaths while it lies devastated, free of them. They will be making up for their guilty deeds for no other reason than the fact that they rejected my regulations and despised my rules. <sup>44</sup>But despite all that, when they are in enemy territory, I will not reject them or despise them to the point of totally destroying them, breaking my covenant with them by doing so, because I am the LORD their God. <sup>45</sup>But for their sake I will remember the covenant with the first generation, the ones I brought out of Egypt's land in the sight of all the nations, in order to be their God; I am the LORD.

<sup>46</sup>These are the rules, regulations, and instructions between the LORD and the Israelites that he gave through Moses on Mount Sinai.

### Dedications

**27**The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When a person makes a solemn promise to the LORD involving the value of a person, <sup>3</sup>if it is the value for a male between 20 and 60 years old, his value is fifty silver shekels according to the sanctuary's shekel. <sup>4</sup>If the person is a female, her value is thirty shekels. <sup>5</sup>If the age of the person is between 5 and 20 years, the value for a male is twenty shekels, for a female ten shekels. <sup>6</sup>If the age of the person is between one month and 5 years, the value for a male is five silver shekels, for a female three silver shekels. <sup>7</sup>If the age of the person is 60 years or more, the value is fifteen shekels if the person is male, ten shekels for a female. <sup>8</sup>But if financial difficulty prevents the promise maker from giving the full value, they must set the person before the priest. The priest will assign the person a value according to what the promise maker can afford.

Survivors lose their families (26:29), their places of worship (26:30–31), and the land God gave them (26:33).

26:34–35 *the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths*: as it should have been allowed to do before (Lev 25:1–7, 19–22).  
26:36–39 Exile will not end the punishment for those who survive.

26:40–45 The covenant between God and Israel does not stop with loss of the land. The Lord promises to keep the covenant with those in exile who *confess their... guilt*. When exile did occur, later generations confessed their ancestors' guilt to claim this promise and restore Judea (see Neh 9–10).

27:1–34 Leviticus 27 looks like an appendix containing rules and instructions about payments.

27:2–25 *A solemn promise* (or vow) pledged people, animals, houses, or land to God in return for help. This chapter sets prices for paying those vows in silver weights (*shekels*) instead.

27:2–8 *The value of a person* is based on their strength for labor. A *shekel* is about 0.4 oz., so the weights listed in these verses range from 1.2 oz. (for a female under five years old) to 20 oz. (for a male between 20 and 60 years old). Priests can adjust the amount based on what someone can afford (27:8).

<sup>9</sup>If a solemn promise involves livestock that can be offered to the LORD, any such animal given to the LORD will be considered holy. <sup>10</sup>The promise maker cannot replace or substitute for it, either good for bad or bad for good. But if one should substitute one animal for another, both it and the substitute will be holy. <sup>11</sup>If the solemn promise involves any kind of unclean animal that cannot be offered to the LORD, the promise maker must set the animal before the priest. <sup>12</sup>The priest will assign it a value, whether high or low.<sup>j</sup> Its value will be what the priest says. <sup>13</sup>If the promise maker wishes to buy it back, they must add one-fifth to its value.

<sup>14</sup>When someone dedicates their house to the LORD as holy, the priest will assign a value to it, whether high or low. The value is fixed, whatever value the priest assigns to it. <sup>15</sup>If the one who dedicates the house wishes to buy it back, they must add one-fifth to its valued price, and it will be theirs again.

<sup>16</sup>If a person dedicates part of the land from their family property to the LORD, the value will be set according to the seed needed to plant it: fifty silver shekels per homer of barley seed. <sup>17</sup>If the person dedicates the piece of land during the Jubilee year, its value will stay fixed. <sup>18</sup>But if the person dedicates the piece after the Jubilee year, the priest will calculate the price according to the years that are left until the next Jubilee year, and the value will be reduced. <sup>19</sup>If the one who dedicates the land wishes to buy it back, they must add one-fifth to its valued price, and it will be theirs again. <sup>20</sup>But if they do not buy it back or if it was sold to someone else, it is no longer able to be bought back. <sup>21</sup>When the piece of land is released in the Jubilee year, it will be holy to the LORD like a piece of devoted land; it will be the priest's property. <sup>22</sup>If the person dedicates land they purchased to the LORD—land that is not part of their family property—<sup>23</sup>the priest will calculate the amount of its value until the Jubilee year. The person must pay the value on that day as a holy donation to the LORD. <sup>24</sup>In the Jubilee year the piece of land will return to the seller, to the one who is the original owner of the family property. <sup>25</sup>Every value will be according to the sanctuary's shekel. The shekel will be twenty gerahs.

<sup>26</sup>But note that a person cannot dedicate any oldest offspring from livestock, which already belongs to the LORD because it is the oldest. Whether ox or sheep, it belongs to the LORD. <sup>27</sup>If it is an unclean animal, it may be bought back at its value plus twenty percent. If it is not bought back, it will be sold at its set value.

<sup>28</sup>Also note that everything someone devotes<sup>k</sup> to the LORD from their possessions—whether humans, animals, or pieces of land from their family property—cannot be sold or bought back. Every devoted thing is most holy to the LORD. <sup>29</sup>No human beings that have been devoted can be bought back; they must be executed.

<sup>30</sup>All tenth-part gifts<sup>l</sup> from the land, whether of seed from the ground or fruit from the trees, belong to the LORD; they are holy to the LORD. <sup>31</sup>If someone wishes to buy back part of their tenth-part gift, they must add one-fifth to it. <sup>32</sup>All tenth-part gifts from a herd or flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's staff—will be holy to the LORD. <sup>33</sup>The one bringing the tenth-part gift must not pick out the good from the bad, and cannot substitute any animal. But if one should substitute an animal, both it and the substitute will be holy and cannot be bought back.

<sup>34</sup>These are the commands that the LORD gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites.

<sup>j</sup>Or *good or bad*; also in 27:14. <sup>k</sup>Or *places under the ban* (also in 27:29), a technique of holy war, in which all is dedicated to the deity who helps in the battle; it often involved total destruction. <sup>l</sup>Or *tithes*

27:9-13 If animals *can be offered*, they must be. Silver can be paid only in place of *unclean* animals.

27:12, 14 *whether high or low*, or "good or bad." The priest's decision is final.

27:14 *dedicates* means "make holy," that is, "set apart" for God.

27:16-24 Land falls under the Jubilee rules (Lev 25; see sidebar, "Jubilee" at Lev 25). If people give God their own inherited land, it belongs to the priests even after Jubilee (27:21). But if they buy land from someone else and give it to God, it goes back to its original owners in the Jubilee (27:24).

27:26-29 Things and people that already belong to God cannot be vowed again. This includes *any oldest offspring from livestock* (see Exod 34:19-20) and anything and anyone *devoted to the LORD* (or "put to the ban"; see Josh 6:17-18; 7:1-15; not the same as vowing something to God, Lev 27:2-24).

27:30-33 *tenth-part gifts* or "tithes": Ten percent of all crops and herds *belong to the LORD*. They provide income for Levites who serve in the sanctuary (Num 18:21-32; Deut 26:12-15).

27:34 *on Mount Sinai*: at Mount Sinai in the meeting place (or tabernacle) at the mountain's base (see Lev 26:46; 1:1).

27:30 Gn 28:22;  
Nm 18:21;  
Dt 12:6,  
Dt 14:22,  
Dt 14:28  
27:31 Lv 27:13  
27:32 Jer 33:13;  
Eze 20:37

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# NUMBERS

Numbers contains a wide range of dramatic stories. A wife suspected of adultery suffers humiliation to satisfy her jealous husband. A man is stoned to death for gathering sticks on the Sabbath. The earth swallows up rebellious Levites. A foreign diviner talks with a donkey and turns curses into blessings for Israel.

The book also contains different types of literature: lists, case laws, ritual instructions, rebellion stories, battle reports, travel plans, poetic prophecies, popular songs, and a religious calendar.

The assorted material at first seems to lack structure or organization. Events don't always have a clear relationship to what precedes or follows. Numbers appears to be a hodgepodge only loosely connected by a movement from the Sinai desert to the plains of Moab.

This complex narrative reflects a long, complicated history of its becoming a book within the Pentateuch. It appears to have been handed down through centuries and woven together by different traditions.

However, Numbers' lack of organization raises questions about the integrity of the book. If no literary pattern or order is detected, is the book a mere collection of random materials with no unifying intention or meaning? Two titles associated with the book provide preliminary answers.

The title "Numbers" originated through the Latin Vulgate translation of the Greek Septuagint. It points to the importance of the two censuses in chapters 1 and 26. Their location in the book divides it into two parts. The first 25 chapters describe the fate of the exodus generation, who die in the wilderness because of their repeated disobedience. The last 11 chapters point to a potential future for a new generation ready to enter the promised land.

In this light, the title "Numbers" highlights God's faithfulness in keeping the promise of land. When the exodus generation rejects this promise, they are punished by God and excluded from entering the promised land. Nevertheless, God not only declares the power of this



The wilderness in southern Israel  
*Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com*

promise; God also carries it out by raising another generation in the wilderness.

The other title, "In the Wilderness," is taken from the fifth Hebrew word in the first chapter. Focusing on the wilderness lets us divide Numbers into three parts: preparation for the journey (Num 1:1–10:10); the journey itself from Sinai to the plains of Moab (Num 10:11–21:35); and ending the journey by preparing to enter Canaan (Num 22:1–36:13).

Theologically, the stress here is on God's guidance of Israel through the wilderness. God prepares and leads their march, endures rebellions along the journey, and affirms that

they will eventually enter the land. No doubt these themes are present in other books of the Pentateuch, but they take a distinctive accent in Numbers, where readers see God's visual, active, and intimate presence in Israel's midst.

In a larger narrative context of Exodus to Deuteronomy, Numbers presents a new beginning for Israel. After the first generation's failure, the people display greater faithfulness and enjoy more success. The Israelites no longer wander in the wilderness. They are now organized and marching toward the promised land as God's congregation.

### I. Preparation for the Journey: Instructions at Sinai (1:1–10:10)

#### A. Organization of the twelve tribes (1:1–2:34)

1. Military census (1:1–54)
2. Marching orders (2:1–34)

#### B. Organization of the sanctuary personnel (3:1–10:10)

1. The Levites on the matters related to the departure (3:1–4:49)
  - a. The Levites' first census (3:1–51)
  - b. The Levites' second census; duties on the journey (4:1–49)
2. The priests on the matters related to duties (5:1–8:4)
  - a. Camp purity (5:1–10)
  - b. Suspicion of adultery (5:11–31)
  - c. Nazirite instructions (6:1–21)
  - d. Priestly blessing (6:22–27)
  - e. Dedicating the meeting tent (7:1–8:4)
3. The Levites on matters related to duties (8:5–26)
4. The priests on matters related to the departure (9:1–10:10)
  - a. Keeping the Passover (9:1–14)
  - b. God's presence (9:15–23)
  - c. Communicating with the people (10:1–10)

#### c. Complaints about Moses' wife (12:1–16)

#### d. Complaints about the inhabitants of Canaan (13:1–14:45)

#### B. Consequence: entrance into the promised land delayed by 40 years (15:1–36:13)

1. God's leadership restored: offerings and other religious instructions (15:1–41)
2. Leadership of Moses and the sanctuary personnel restored (16:1–19:22)
  - a. Korah's rebellions against Moses and Aaron (16:1–50)
  - b. Aaron's budding staff (17:1–13)
  - c. Priests and Levites: duties and compensation (18:1–32)
  - d. Purification from contact with a dead body (19:1–22)
3. The end of the exodus generation (20:1–29)
  - a. Moses' and Aaron's rebellion (20:1–13)
  - b. Moses' misguided leadership: Edom refuses to let Israel pass (20:14–22a)
  - c. Death of Aaron (20:22b–29)
4. The characteristics of the new generation (21:1–25:18)
  - a. Victory over the Canaanites (21:1–3)
  - b. Rebellion about lack of food and water (21:4–9)
  - c. Travels from Mount Hor to the valley near Pisgah in Moab (21:10–20)
  - d. Victories over Sihon and Og (21:21–35)
  - e. God's blessings through Balaam, a foreign prophet (22:1–24:25)
  - f. Rebellion caused by intermarrying with Moabites and Midianites (25:1–18)

### II. The Journey Itself: Through the Wilderness (10:11–36:13)

#### A. Event: failure to enter the promised land from the south (10:11–14:45)

1. Programmatic departure (10:11–36)
2. The people's complaints and God's responses (11:1–14:45)
  - a. Generic complaint (11:1–3)
  - b. Complaints about meat and leadership (11:4–35)



5. The goal of the new generation: the promised land (26:1–36:13)
    - a. A census for distribution of the land (26:1-65)
    - b. Inheritance law (27:1-11)
    - c. Succession of Moses' leadership (27:12-23)
    - d. Public offerings: daily, monthly, and yearly (28:1–29:40)
    - e. Solemn promises (30:1-16)
    - f. Israel's holy war against Midian (31:1-54)
    - g. The allotment of land for Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh (32:1-42)
    - h. Summarizing the journey (33:1-49)
    - i. The division of the land of Canaan (33:50–34:29)
    - j. The Levites' cities and land (35:1-34)
    - k. Addendum to inheritance law (36:1-13)
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*Won W. Lee*

1:1 Ex 19:1,  
Ex 25:22,  
Ex 40:17; Lv 1:1;  
Nm 9:1  
1:3 Ex 30:14;  
Nm 26:2  
1:12 Nm 2:25,  
Nm 7:66,  
Nm 10:25  
1:18 Ex 18:21,  
Ex 18:25;  
Nm 7:2,  
Nm 16:2,  
Nm 26:9;  
1Ch 27:16  
1:20 Gn 29:32;  
Nm 26:5;  
1Ch 5:1  
1:22 Gn 29:33;  
Nm 2:13,  
Nm 26:12

### First census

**1** The LORD spoke to Moses in the Sinai desert in the meeting tent on the first day of the second month,\* in the second year after they left the land of Egypt: **2**Take a census of the entire Israelite community by their clans and their households, recording the name of every male, **3**20 years old and above, who is eligible for military service in Israel. These you and Aaron will enlist in their military units. **4**Take with you one man from each tribe who is the head of his household. **5**These are the names of the men who will assist you:

- 6**from Reuben, Elizur, Shedeur's son;
- 7**from Simeon, Shelumiel, Zurishaddai's son;
- 8**from Judah, Nahshon, Amminadab's son;
- 9**from Issachar, Nethanel, Zuar's son;
- 10**from Zebulun, Eliab, Helon's son;
- 11**from Joseph's sons:  
from Ephraim, Elishama, Ammihud's son;  
from Manasseh, Gamaliel, Pedahzur's son;
- 12**from Benjamin, Abidan, Gideon's son;
- 13**from Dan, Ahiezer, Ammishaddai's son;
- 14**from Asher, Pagiel, Ochran's son;
- 15**from Gad, Eliasaph, Deuel's son;
- 16**from Naphtali, Ahira, Enan's son.

**16**These are the ones appointed from the community, chiefs of their ancestral tribes and leaders of the divisions of Israel.

**17**Moses and Aaron took these men who were selected by name **18**and they assembled the entire community on the first day of the second month. They registered them by their clans and their households, recording the name of each male 20 years old and above. **19**Moses enlisted them in the Sinai desert just as the LORD commanded him.

**20**There were the descendants of Reuben, Israel's oldest, registered by their clans and their households. Every man 20 years old and above eligible for military service was individually recorded by name. **21**Those enlisted from the tribe of Reuben were 46,500.

**22**There were the descendants of Simeon, registered by their clans and their households. Every male 20 years old and above eligible for military service was individually recorded by name. **23**Those enlisted from the tribe of Simeon were 59,300.

\*April–May, Iyar

1:1–47 The purpose of the census is to determine the numbers of Israelites eligible for military duty.

1:1 *The LORD spoke*: This phrase is repeated many times in Numbers. What follows is the will of God, and so complete obedience is required. In Numbers, God speaks to Moses alone 30 times and to Moses and Aaron together 6 times, which indicates that Moses is God's chief representative. *in the Sinai desert*: connects the census to the larger story. The Israelites stay at this place from their arrival in Exodus 19:1 until Numbers 10:11–12. *meeting tent*: understood as a shrine, God's short-term residence. This term and "dwelling" were used in the description of building the sanctuary (Exod 25–40). The two terms refer to the same structure (Num 3:38), which is sometimes called the "tabernacle." *on the first day of the second month, in the second year*: This date is based on the exodus event (Exod 12; cf. Num 33:3) and is one of three complete dates in Numbers, listing day, month, and year (Num 10:11; 33:38). It indicates that the Israelites have been in the Sinai desert 11 months (see Exod 19:1). They spend another 19 days there before setting out (Num 1:1–10:10). *second month*: called Iyar on the Hebrew calendar. As its meaning ("blossom") suggests, it is a spring month. Lasting 29 days, it usually overlaps with April and May on the Christian calendar.

1:2–3 Not all Israelites are counted, but only those who are males 20 years and older and eligible for military service.

Tribes can be divided into *clans*, and *clans* can be divided into *households*. *recording the name of every male*: stresses the name of each individual, suggesting a complete census.

1:4–16 God appoints one person from each tribe to assist Moses and Aaron with counting. They are described as *appointed, chiefs, and leaders* (1:16). Later, they play both military (Num 2:3–31; 10:14–28) and economic roles (Num 7:1–89). The phrase *These are the names of* can introduce families (Num 3:2–3; cf. Num 3:18; 27:1) or people with a special assignment (Num 13:16; 34:17; cf. Num 13:4). The leaders are listed according to their origins from the 12 sons of Jacob (Gen 29:31–30:24; 35:22–26): the sons of Leah (Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun); the (grand) sons of Rachel (Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin); and the sons of Zilpah and Bilhah, the handmaidens of Leah and Rachel (Dan, Asher, Gad, Naphtali). Levi isn't mentioned (see Num 1:48–53). Instead, Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh appear in his place so that the number of tribes remains at 12.

1:18 *on the first day of the second month*: The census is completed on the same day it's commanded.

1:20–43 Each tribe's report has the same elements: the tribe's name, who they are, how they were selected, and the total number. The pattern indicates equal treatment of all 12 tribes, regardless of the number of soldiers enlisted

<sup>24</sup>There were the descendants of Gad, registered by their clans and their households. The men 20 years old and above eligible for military service were recorded by name. <sup>25</sup>Those enlisted from the tribe of Gad were 45,650.

<sup>26</sup>There were the descendants of Judah, registered by their clans and their households. The men 20 years old and above eligible for military service were recorded by name.

<sup>27</sup>Those enlisted from the tribe of Judah were 74,600.

<sup>28</sup>There were the descendants of Issachar, registered by their clans and their households. The men 20 years old and above eligible for military service were recorded by name.

<sup>29</sup>Those enlisted from the tribe of Issachar were 54,400.

<sup>30</sup>There were the descendants of Zebulun, registered by their clans and their households. The men 20 years old and above eligible for military service were recorded by name.

<sup>31</sup>Those enlisted from the tribe of Zebulun were 57,400.

<sup>32</sup>From Joseph's descendants there were the descendants of Ephraim, registered by their clans and their households. The men 20 years old and above eligible for military service were recorded by name. <sup>33</sup>Those enlisted from the tribe of Ephraim were 40,500.

<sup>34</sup>There were the descendants of Manasseh, registered by their clans and their households. The men 20 years old and above eligible for military service were recorded by name.

<sup>35</sup>Those enlisted from the tribe of Manasseh were 32,200.

<sup>36</sup>There were the descendants of Benjamin, registered by their clans and their households. The men 20 years old and above eligible for military service were recorded by name.

<sup>37</sup>Those enlisted from the tribe of Benjamin were 35,400.

<sup>38</sup>There were the descendants of Dan, registered by their clans and their households. The men 20 years old and above eligible for military service were recorded by name.

<sup>39</sup>Those enlisted from the tribe of Dan were 62,700.

<sup>40</sup>There were the descendants of Asher, registered by their clans and their households. The men 20 years old and above eligible for military service were recorded by name.

<sup>41</sup>Those enlisted from the tribe of Asher were 41,500.

<sup>42</sup>There were the descendants of Naphtali, registered by their clans and their households. The men 20 years old and above eligible for military service were recorded by name.

<sup>43</sup>Those enlisted from the tribe of Naphtali were 53,400.

<sup>44</sup>These are the ones who were enlisted by Moses, Aaron, and the twelve chiefs of Israel, each from his own household. <sup>45</sup>All the Israelites 20 years old and above eligible for military service in Israel were enlisted by their households. <sup>46</sup>All those enlisted were 603,550. <sup>47</sup>But the Levites, belonging to their own ancestral tribe, weren't enlisted along with them.

**The Levites' exclusion from the census**

<sup>48</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>49</sup>You must not enlist the tribe of Levi, nor should you take their census along with the Israelites. <sup>50</sup>Rather, assign the Levites to the covenant dwelling, to all its equipment, and to everything that belongs to it. They will carry the dwelling and all its equipment, perform its religious ceremonies, and camp around the dwelling. <sup>51</sup>When it's time to break camp, the Levites will take down the dwelling; and when it's time to make camp, the Levites will set up the dwelling. Any other person who approaches will be put to death. <sup>52</sup>The Israelites will camp each in their own place under the banner of their own

1:24 Gn 30:11; Nm 26:15  
 1:26 Gn 29:35; Nm 2:4, Nm 26:19  
 1:28 Gn 30:18; Nm 2:6  
 1:30 Gn 30:20; Nm 26:26  
 1:32 Gn 46:20, Gn 48:1; Nm 26:35  
 1:34 Gn 41:51; Nm 26:28  
 1:36 Gn 35:18, Gn 46:21; Nm 1:37, Nm 26:38; 2Ch 17:17  
 1:38 Gn 30:6, Gn 46:23, Gn 49:16-17; Nm 2:25, Nm 26:42; Dt 33:22  
 1:40 Gn 30:13, Gn 49:20; Nm 26:44; 1Ch 7:40, 1Ch 12:36  
 1:42 Gn 30:8, Gn 46:24, Gn 49:21; Nm 26:48  
 1:49 Nm 2:33, Nm 26:62  
 1:50 Ex 38:21; Nm 3:23  
 1:51  
 Nm 3:10, Nm 3:38, Nm 4:5

from each tribe. At the same time, the precise number of the soldiers from each tribe points to which tribes had the most military strength.

1:24 *Gad* was listed eleventh in naming the tribe's leaders (Num 1:14). This shift to third place creates a four-group structure that relates to the mother of each tribe: two Leah groups, one Rachel group, and one handmaidens group. This structure is used for the marching order (Num 2:3-31). 1:46 *603,550*: the total number of fighting men recorded in the census. It's similar to the number of people who came out from Egypt, "about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children" (Exod 12:37); and to the number of militia counted after 40 years in the wilderness: "601,730" (Num 26:51). These numbers are unrealistically high in the historical context. Scholars have made different suggestions, such as the numbers being literary

exaggerations or scribal errors. However, the issue hasn't been completely resolved.

1:48-54 The text explains why the Levites aren't included in the census. Instead of military service, they perform different tasks, guarding and working at the covenant dwelling. Their duties are elaborated (Num 3:5-4:49; 8:5-26) after the organization of Israel's militia (Num 1:1-2:34).

1:50 *the covenant dwelling*: the same place as the "meeting tent" in Numbers 1:1 and the "covenant tent" (Num 9:15; 17:8; 18:2). Some translations call it the "tabernacle." 1:51 *the dwelling* is a tent that can be moved. God is mobile.

1:52 *the banner* designates each tribe. It may have been a flag with one of the colors of the 12 stones in the high priest's chest pendant (Exod 28:15-21). Or it could have

2:1 Lv 11:1  
2:3 Ex 6:23;  
Nm 1:7;  
Nm 10:14;  
1Ch 2:10

military unit. <sup>53</sup>But the Levites will camp around the covenant dwelling so that God's anger will not strike the Israelite community. The Levites will guard the covenant dwelling.

<sup>54</sup>The Israelites did everything exactly as the LORD commanded Moses.

### *The wilderness camp's arrangement*

**2**The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron: <sup>2</sup>The Israelites will camp each under the banner with the symbol of their household. They will camp around the meeting tent some distance from it.

### *The camp's east side*

<sup>3</sup>On the east side toward the sunrise will be the banner of Judah's camp with its military units. The chief of the people of Judah is Nahshon, Amminadab's son. <sup>4</sup>His military unit and those enlisted in it are 74,600. <sup>5</sup>Those camping on one side of him are the tribe of Issachar. The chief of the people of Issachar is Nethanel, Zuar's son. <sup>6</sup>His military unit and those enlisted in it are 54,400. <sup>7</sup>On the other side, the tribe of Zebulun: the chief of the people of Zebulun is Eliab, Helon's son. <sup>8</sup>His military unit and those enlisted in it are 57,400. <sup>9</sup>All those enlisted in Judah's camp with their military units are 186,400. They will march first.

### *The camp's south side*

<sup>10</sup>On the south side will be the banner of Reuben's camp with its military units. The chief of the people of Reuben is Elizur, Shedeur's son. <sup>11</sup>His military unit and those enlisted in it are 46,500. <sup>12</sup>Those camping on one side of him are the tribe of Simeon. The chief of the people of Simeon is Shelumiel, Zurishaddai's son. <sup>13</sup>His military unit and those enlisted in it are 59,300. <sup>14</sup>On the other side, the tribe of Gad: the chief of the people of Gad is Eliasaph, Reuel's son. <sup>15</sup>His military unit and those enlisted in it are 45,650. <sup>16</sup>All those enlisted in Reuben's camp with their military units are 151,450. They will march second.

### *The camp's center*

<sup>17</sup>The meeting tent and the Levites' camp will march in the center of the camps. They will march in the same order as they camp: each in position under his banner.

*Characteristics of Israel's March* Israel's march has three defining marks. First and most obviously, it involves moving. The cycle of breaking and making camp is found throughout the book (Num 1-2; 9:17-23; 21:10-20; 33:1-49). Words like "march" and "camp" appear more than 130 times.

Second, Israel's march is a military campaign. The census determines who can fight (Num 1:2-3; cf. Num 26:1-3). The march itself is an offensive movement, with the flanks and rear of the camp well-protected (Num 2:1-34; cf. Num 10:11-36). Battle reports pop up repeatedly (Num 14:39-45; 21:1-3, 21-31, 32-35; 31:1-12).

Third, Israel's march is sacred. Religious leaders play key roles throughout the book and in the march itself (for example, Num 3-4). Religious symbols are literally at the center of the march and camp. The meeting tent plays a key role when on the move and when stationary.

been decorated with symbols of the tribes (such as a lion for Judah, Gen 49:3-27).

1:53 Besides taking care of the *covenant dwelling* and performing ceremonies, the Levites must *guard* it from any non-Levite trying to approach it. In this way, they protect the camp from the wrath of God.

1:54 *The Israelites did everything exactly*: Emphasis is on the whole of Israel and complete compliance: God commands, Moses and Aaron supervise, leaders from each tribe execute, and individual recruits comply while the Levites and other people obey, all according to God's instructions.

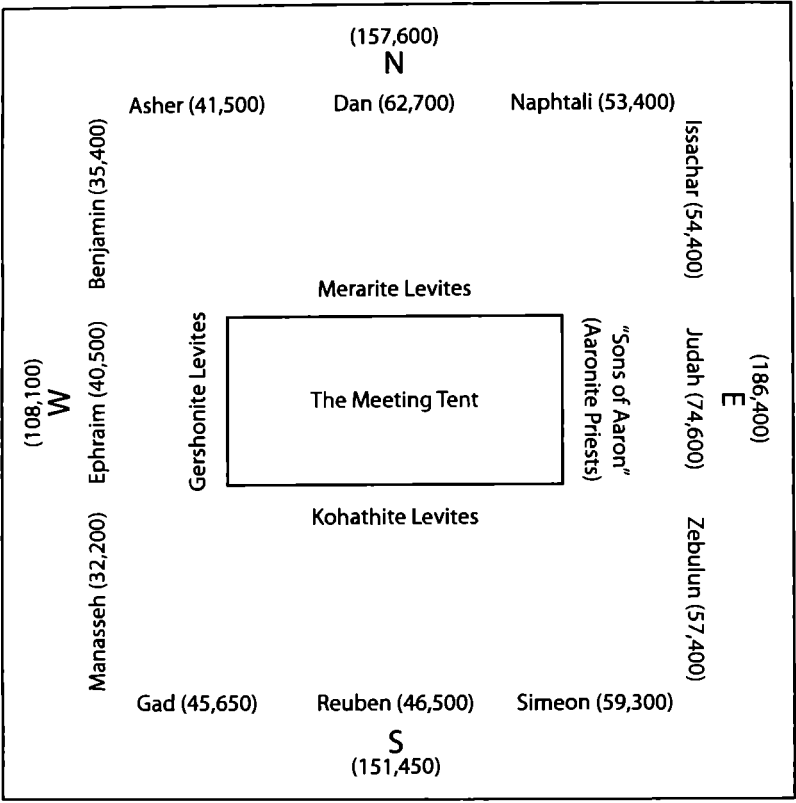
2:1-34 Three tribes are positioned on each side of the meeting tent. One of the three is dominant and in the middle of that side. That tribe's banner functions for all three. On the east is Judah between two related tribes, Issachar and Zebulun; on the south is Reuben between Simeon and Gad; on the west is Ephraim between Manasseh and Benjamin; and on the north is Dan between Asher and Naphtali. East is the favored side. It

has the largest number of troops, and it will be the first to move (Num 2:9; 10:14). East is also the direction of the meeting tent's opening and the direction of the rising sun (2:3). Judah is the dominant tribe on the east, which points to the tribe's importance, as predicted by his father (Gen 49:8-12). This marching order is designed for offense, with 186,400 troops on the side that marches first.

2:2 *The banner*. See Numbers 1:52. *the symbol*: Within a tribe, each family had its own sign.

2:3-9 The literary pattern found here is also used for the south (Num 2:10-16); west (Num 2:18-24); and north (Num 2:25-31) sides of the camp. The dominant tribe is mentioned (in this case, *Judah*). Next, the tribes on each side of the dominant one are given (here, *Issachar* and *Zebulun*). A summary sentence concludes the section, mentioning total numbers and marching orders (2:9).

2:17 The location of this verse in the chapter corresponds with its content: The mobile sanctuary is in the middle of



**The camp's west side**

<sup>18</sup>On the west will be the banner of Ephraim's camp with its military units. The chief of the people of Ephraim is Elishama, Ammihud's son. <sup>19</sup>His military unit and those enlisted in it are 40,500. <sup>20</sup>On one side of him is the tribe of Manasseh. The chief of the people of Manasseh is Gamaliel, Pedahzur's son. <sup>21</sup>His military unit and those enlisted in it are 32,200. <sup>22</sup>On the other side, the tribe of Benjamin: the chief of the people of Benjamin is Abidan, Gideon's son. <sup>23</sup>His military unit and those enlisted in it are 35,400. <sup>24</sup>All those enlisted in Ephraim's camp with their military units are 108,100. They will march third.

**The camp's north side**

<sup>25</sup>On the north will be the banner of Dan's camp with its military units. The chief of the people of Dan is Ahiezer, Ammishaddai's son. <sup>26</sup>His military unit and those enlisted in it are 62,700. <sup>27</sup>Those camping on one side of him are the tribe of Asher. The chief of the people of Asher is Pagiel, Ochrans's son. <sup>28</sup>His military unit and those enlisted in it are 41,500. <sup>29</sup>On the other side, the tribe of Naphtali: the chief of the people of Naphtali is Ahira, Enan's son. <sup>30</sup>His military unit and those enlisted in it are 53,400. <sup>31</sup>All those enlisted in the camp of Dan are 157,600. They will march last under their banners.

<sup>32</sup>These are the enlisted Israelites by their households. The total enlisted in the camps with their military units is 603,550. <sup>33</sup>But the Levites weren't enlisted among the Israelites, as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>34</sup>The Israelites did everything exactly as the LORD had commanded Moses: they camped under their banners and they marched by their clans and by their households.

the camp, and the tribe protecting it is mentioned in the middle of the marching order, after the second of the four divisions of Israel's camp.

2:32-34 The militia total is the same as the number in Numbers 1:46. *the Levites weren't enlisted* because detailed instructions for them are given in Numbers 3-4.

3:1 Ex 6:20,  
Ex 6:27,  
Ex 19:3; Lv 25:1,  
Lv 27:34

3:12 Nm 3:41,  
Nm 3:45,  
Nm 8:14,  
Nm 8:16,  
Nm 8:18

3:13 Ex 13:2,  
Ex 13:12,  
Lv 27:26;  
Nm 8:17

3:32 Nm 4:16

### Aaron's sons

**3** These are the descendants of Aaron and Moses at the time when the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. **2** These are the names of Aaron's sons: Nadab the oldest, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. **3** These are the names of Aaron's sons, who are the anointed priests and ordained to the priesthood. **4** Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD when they made an unauthorized offering to the LORD in the Sinai desert. They didn't have any sons. Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests during the lifetime of their father Aaron.

### The Levites' first census

**5** The LORD spoke to Moses: **6** Bring near the tribe of Levi and place them before Aaron the priest. They will assist him. **7** They will perform duties for him and for the entire community before the meeting tent, doing the work of the dwelling. **8** They will be responsible for all the equipment of the meeting tent and the duties on behalf of the Israelites when they do the work of the dwelling. **9** You will give the Levites to Aaron and his sons. They have been assigned as a gift to him from the Israelites. **10** You will appoint Aaron and his sons to be responsible for the priesthood. Any other person who approaches will be put to death.

**11** The LORD spoke to Moses: **12** I claim the Levites from the Israelites in place of all the oldest males who open an Israelite womb. The Levites are mine **13** because all the oldest males are mine. When I killed all the oldest males in the land of Egypt, I reserved for myself all the oldest males in Israel, both humans and animals. They are mine; I am the LORD.

**14** The LORD spoke to Moses in the Sinai desert: **15** Enroll the Levites by their households and their clans. You will enroll all the males over one month old. **16** Moses enrolled them according to the LORD's word as he was commanded. **17** These were Levi's sons by name: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. **18** These were the names of Gershon's sons by their clans: Libni and Shimei. **19** Kohath's sons by their clans: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. **20** Merari's sons by their clans: Mahli and Mushi. These were the clans of Levi by their households.

**21** To Gershon belonged the clans of Libni and Shimei. These were the clans of the Gershonites. **22** Their enrollment, according to the number of males over one month old, was 7,500. **23** The clans of the Gershonites were to camp behind the dwelling on the west side. **24** The chief of the household of the Gershonites was Eliasaph, Lael's son. **25** In the dwelling, the Gershonites were responsible for the meeting tent, the tent with its covering, the screen for the entrance of the meeting tent, **26** the curtains of the courtyard, the screen for the entrance of the courtyard surrounding the meeting tent and the altar, and its cords—all these structures.

**27** To Kohath belonged the clans of the Amramites, Izharites, Hebronites, and Uzzielites. These were the clans of the Kohathites. **28** The number of males over one month old, who would perform duties for the sanctuary, was 8,600. **29** The clans of the Kohathites were to camp on the south side of the dwelling. **30** The chief of the household representing the clans of the Kohathites was Elizaphan, Uzziel's son. **31** They were responsible for the chest, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the equipment of the sanctuary with which they would minister, and the screen—all these furnishings. **32** The head chief over the chiefs of the Levites was Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest. He was supervisor over those performing the duties of the sanctuary.

**33** To Merari belonged the clans of Mahli and Mushi. These were the clans of the Merarites. **34** Their enrollment, according to the number of males over one month old, was 6,200. **35** The

**3:1-4** The first sanctuary workers mentioned are the descendants of Aaron (3:1). They are priests whom the Levites assist.

**3:1** the LORD spoke: God approves of the special status of Aaron and his descendants.

**3:3** priests were anointed: See Exodus 29; Leviticus 8-9. ordained: or "filled the hand," referring to transferring authority from one person to another.

**3:4** an unauthorized offering: See Leviticus 10:1-5.

**3:5-4:49** The focus shifts from the priests to their assistants, the Levites.

**3:5-10** This introductory paragraph describes the Levites as a gift to [Aaron], whom they assist.

**3:11-13** Exodus says that the oldest child must be dedicated or given to the Lord (Exod 13:2, 11-16; 22:29-30; 34:19-20). Here and in Numbers 8:16-18, the text says that Levites can serve in their place. in the land of Egypt:

See Exodus 11-13. The common expression *I am the LORD* emphasizes God's holiness and authority.

**3:14-39** The text lists the numbers and duties of the three levitical houses.

**3:17** Gershon, Kohath, and Merari represent clans rather than particular individuals. Despite being mentioned second, the Kohathites play the most important roles, preceding the Gershonites (Num 4:1-45; cf. 1 Chron 15:5-7; 2 Chron 29:12).

**3:21-37** A fixed sequence is used for describing each house—Gershon (3:21-26); Kohath (3:27-32); Merari (3:33-37): (1) the house and its clans; (2) the total number of males older than one month; (3) the location of its camp in reference to the meeting tent; (4) the name of the chieftain; and (5) the objects that it is responsible to guard.

**3:28** sanctuary: designates the entire tabernacle complex, including the meeting tent.

**3:31** chest: traditionally called the "ark" of the covenant.

chief of the household representing the clans of the Merarites was Zuriel, Abihail's son. They were to camp on the north side of the dwelling.<sup>36</sup>The Merarites were assigned responsibility for the frames of the dwelling, its bars, pillars, bases, and all its equipment—all these items<sup>37</sup>and the pillars of the courtyard all around, their bases, pegs, and cords.

<sup>38</sup>Those camping in front of the dwelling eastward (that is, before the meeting tent on the east side) were Moses, Aaron, and his sons, who performed the duties of the sanctuary as service for the Israelites. Anyone else who approached would be put to death.<sup>39</sup>The total enrollment of the Levites, all the males over one month old whom Moses and Aaron enrolled by orders from the LORD, according to their clans, was 22,000.

#### *Levites rescue the oldest male Israelites*

<sup>40</sup>The LORD said to Moses: Enroll all the oldest males of the Israelites over one month of age and record their names.<sup>41</sup>Take the Levites for me, in place of all the oldest sons of the Israelites, for I am the LORD, and the cattle of the Levites in place of all the oldest cattle of the Israelites.<sup>42</sup>Moses enrolled all the oldest males of the Israelites as the LORD commanded.<sup>43</sup>All the oldest males over one month old, recorded by name according to their enrollment, were 22,273.

<sup>44</sup>Then the LORD spoke to Moses:<sup>45</sup>Take the Levites in place of all the oldest Israelites and the cattle of the Levites in place of their cattle. The Levites are mine; I am the LORD.<sup>46</sup>To rescue the 273 remaining oldest Israelites over and above the number of Levites,<sup>47</sup>you will receive five shekels each. You will receive them according to the sanctuary shekel of twenty gerahs to the shekel.<sup>48</sup>You will give the money for their rescue to Aaron and his sons.

<sup>49</sup>So Moses took the money from those rescued over and above the ones rescued by the Levites.<sup>50</sup>He took the money from the oldest of the Israelites, 1,365 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel.<sup>51</sup>Moses gave the money for those rescued to Aaron and his sons according to the LORD's word, as the LORD commanded Moses.

#### *Second census and the Levites' duties*

##### *The Kohathites' duties*

**4** The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron:<sup>2</sup>Take a census of the Kohathites from among the Levites by their clans and their households,<sup>3</sup>from 30 to 50 years old, all who are eligible for service to do the work of the meeting tent.<sup>4</sup>These are the responsibilities of the Kohathites in the meeting tent: the most holy things.

<sup>5</sup>When it's time to break camp, Aaron and his sons will enter and take down the screening curtain, and they will cover the chest containing the covenant with it.<sup>6</sup>Then they will place a

3:38-39 The Gershonites, the Kohathites, and the Merarites camp to the west, south, and north of the meeting tent, respectively. The priests occupy the most honored position, the east, facing its entrance. *The total enrollment... was 22,000:* This figure doesn't match the total of the three sums given in Numbers 3:22, 28, and 34 (22,300). A scribe copying ancient manuscripts may have mistakenly written 8,600 in Numbers 3:28 instead of 8,300. The Hebrew words for those numbers are similar.

3:40-51 *Take the Levites for me, in place of all the oldest sons:* See note on Numbers 3:11-13.

3:46 *To rescue:* means "to redeem, buy back." The term points to a situation in which an owner would be paid for releasing a servant from bondage.

3:47 A *shekel* weighed about two-fifths of an ounce, and a *gerah* weighed one-twentieth of a shekel. So *five shekels* would be two ounces.

3:50 *1,365 shekels:* about 34 pounds.

4:1-49 The first census in Numbers 3 determines the number of firstborn levitical males over one month in age. This second census determines the number of Levites ages 30 to 50 years. Except for 4:17-20, God's commands follow the same literary pattern for each levitical house: taking the census (4:1-3, 21-23, 29-30); detailing duties (4:4-15, 24-28a, 31-33a); and indicating supervision by the priests

(4:16, 28b, 33b). The Kohathites are now listed first. Their instructions are more elaborate. Their tasks are more dangerous (4:17-20). They carry the most holy vessels.

4:3-4 *from 30 to 50 years old:* occurs seven times in this chapter (Num 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, 47), reflecting an established tradition (see, however, Num 8:24). *the most holy things:* See Numbers 3:31.

4:5-15 *Aaron and his sons* are priests, the only persons who touch the holiest things in order to wrap them. They must do this in the order of holiness associated with the furnishings and vessels: beginning with the chest containing the covenant (located in the holiest place) and moving outward to the utensils of the altar of entirely burned offerings (in the courtyard outside the dwelling). The priests are to prepare them for transport by covering them and either inserting poles or placing them on carrying frames. This way, the Kohathites don't touch the sacred objects themselves.

4:5 *When it's time to break camp:* Levitical tasks are preparation for departure from Sinai. *screening curtain:* See Exodus 26:31; 35:12; 39:34; 40:21; Leviticus 4:6; 24:3. *the chest containing the covenant:* See Exodus 25:10-22.

4:6 *fine leather:* possibly leather dyed a yellow-orange color. It may also refer to dolphin skin (see translation note b), which played roles in ancient Near Eastern rituals. Dolphins were plentiful in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba

3:45 Nm 3:12;  
Nm 3:41  
3:47 Ex 30:13;  
Lv 27:6, Lv 27:25;  
Nm 18:16;  
Eze 45:12

4:1 Ex 12:1;  
Lv 10:6, Lv 11:1,  
Lv 13:1, Lv 15:1

4:3 Nm 4:23,  
Nm 4:30,  
Nm 8:24;  
1Ch 23:3,  
1Ch 23:24

4:5 Ex 25:10,  
Ex 26:31,  
Nm 1:51

4:12 | Ch 9:29  
4:23 Nm 4:3

covering of fine leather<sup>b</sup> on it. They will spread a whole cloth of blue over it, and they will set its poles in place. <sup>7</sup>They will spread a blue cloth on the presentation table and place on it the plates, the dishes, the bowls, and the container for the drink offering. The usual bread will be on it. <sup>8</sup>They will spread on them a red cloth, cover it with fine leather, and set its poles in place. <sup>9</sup>They will take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand used for light, its lamps, its extinguishers, its trays, and all the containers for oil that are used in its service. <sup>10</sup>They will place it and its equipment in a covering of fine leather, and then place it on the carrying frame. <sup>11</sup>They will spread a blue cloth on the gold altar and cover it with fine leather. <sup>12</sup>They will take all the service equipment used in the sanctuary, place it in a blue cloth, and cover it with fine leather. Then they will place it on the carrying frame. <sup>13</sup>They will remove the ashes from the altar and spread a purple cloth on it. <sup>14</sup>They will place on it all the equipment used for servicing it, the censers, the meat fork, the shovels, the bowls, all the equipment of the altar. They will spread a covering of fine leather over it and then set its poles in place.

<sup>15</sup>Aaron and his sons will finish covering the sanctuary and all the equipment of the sanctuary when it is time to break camp. After that the Kohathites will enter to carry it, but they will not touch the sanctuary, lest they die. These are the objects in the dwelling that the Kohathites are to carry. <sup>16</sup>But Eleazar son of Aaron the priest will have oversight of the oil for lighting, the fragrant incense, the regular grain offering, and the anointing oil, as well as oversight of the entire dwelling and everything in it related to the sanctuary and its equipment.

<sup>17</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron: <sup>18</sup>You must not let the tribe of the Kohathite clans be eliminated from the Levites. <sup>19</sup>This is what you must do for them so that they stay alive and don't die when they approach the most holy things. Aaron and his sons will enter and assign each of them his work and his load. <sup>20</sup>But they may not enter to look at the sanctuary even for a moment, lest they die.

### **The Gershonites' duties**

<sup>21</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>22</sup>Take a census of the Gershonites also, by their households and their clans. <sup>23</sup>You will enroll those from 30 to 50 years old, all who are eligible for service to do work in the dwelling. <sup>24</sup>This is the duty of the Gershonite clans for work and for carrying the load: <sup>25</sup>They will carry the fabric of the dwelling, the meeting tent with its covering, the outer covering of fine leather, the screen for the entrance of the meeting tent, <sup>26</sup>the curtains of the courtyard, the screen of the entrance at the gate of the courtyard that surrounds the meeting tent and the altar, their cords, and all their equipment for their work. They will do everything that needs to be done with these objects.

<sup>27</sup>All the duties of the Gershonites for carrying their load and for their work will be at the command of Aaron and his sons. You will assign to them the responsibility to carry their load. <sup>28</sup>This is the work of the Gershonite clans in the dwelling. Their responsibility will be under Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

<sup>b</sup>Or *dolphin skin*; see also 4:8, 10-12.

(east of the Sinai Peninsula). *its poles*: handles for carrying the chest without touching it. See 2 Samuel 6:3-8 for the deadly consequences of contact with it.

4:7 *The usual bread*: refers to the bread that is always present before God (Exod 25:30), sometimes called "the bread of the presence" or "showbread." Leviticus 24:5-9 gives basic instructions about it. See also Exodus 35:13; 39:36; 1 Samuel 21:7; 1 Kings 7:48; 2 Chronicles 4:19; Matthew 12:4; Mark 2:26; Luke 6:4; Hebrews 9:2. The bread may designate fellowship with, dependence on, commitment to, or provision by God. It's displayed on the *presentation table* located in the north side of the meeting tent (Exod 25:23-30).

4:9-10 *the lampstand*: See Exodus 25:31-40.

4:11 *The gold altar* is located in front of the screen outside the most holy place. It's also called the incense altar (Exod 30:1-10). It's different from the copper *altar* for animal sacrifices that is mentioned in Numbers 4:13-14.

4:13-14 *the altar*: located in the courtyard outside the dwelling and called the altar of entirely burned offerings (Exod 27:1-8).

4:16 *Eleazar* is the older of Aaron's two surviving sons. He has *oversight* of the special ingredients used in the meeting tent's rituals: *the oil for lighting* (Exod 27:20-21); *the fragrant incense* (Exod 30:34-38); *the regular grain offering* (see Lev 2:1-16; 6:14-18); and *the anointing oil* (Exod 30:22-33).

4:21-28 *the Gershonites* pack and carry the *fabric and leather* items that cover the meeting tent's structure and the courtyard enclosure. They will receive two wagons and four oxen (Numbers 7:7) for transporting these items. 4:25-27 Materials are described in Exodus: *the fabric of the dwelling* (Exod 26:1-14); *the screen for the entrance of the meeting tent* (Exod 26:36-37); *the curtains of the courtyard* (Exod 27:9-15); and *the screen of the entrance at the gate of the courtyard* (Exod 27:16).



**The Merarites' duties**

<sup>29</sup>You will enroll the Merarites by their clans and their households. <sup>30</sup>You will enroll those from 30 to 50 years old, all who are eligible for service to do work in the meeting tent. <sup>31</sup>This is what they are responsible to carry as their work in the meeting tent: the frames of the meeting tent, its bars, pillars, and bases; <sup>32</sup>the pillars of the courtyard all around, with their bases, pegs, cords, and all the equipment used with them. You will list by name the objects they are required to carry. <sup>33</sup>This is the duty of the Merarite clans for all their work in the meeting tent under the supervision of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

**Summary of the census**

<sup>34</sup>So Moses, Aaron, and the chiefs of the community enrolled the Kohathites by their clans and their households, <sup>35</sup>those from 30 to 50 years old who were eligible for work in the meeting tent. <sup>36</sup>Their enrollment by their clans was 2,750. <sup>37</sup>These are the enrolled of the Kohathite clans, all who worked in the meeting tent and whom Moses and Aaron enrolled according to the LORD's command through Moses.

<sup>38</sup>The enrollment of the Gershonites by their clans and their households, <sup>39</sup>those 30 to 50 years old who were eligible for work in the meeting tent: <sup>40</sup>their enrollment by their clans and their households was 2,630. <sup>41</sup>These are the enrolled of the Gershonite clans, all who worked in the meeting tent, and whom Moses and Aaron enrolled according to the LORD's command.

<sup>42</sup>The enrollment of the Merarite clans by their clans and their households, <sup>43</sup>those 30 to 50 years old who were eligible for work in the meeting tent: <sup>44</sup>their enrollment by their clans was 3,200. <sup>45</sup>These are the enrolled of the Merarite clans, whom Moses and Aaron enrolled according to the LORD's command through Moses.

<sup>46</sup>All the enrolled Levites whom Moses, Aaron, and the chiefs of Israel enrolled by their clans and their households, <sup>47</sup>those 30 to 50 years old who were eligible to do the work and to carry the load of the meeting tent: <sup>48</sup>their enrollment was 8,580. <sup>49</sup>Each was enrolled by the LORD's command through Moses to work and to carry his load. Each was assigned just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

**Instructions about purity in the camp**

**5** The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Command the Israelites to send out from the camp anyone with a skin disease, an oozing discharge, or who has become unclean from contact with a corpse. <sup>3</sup>You must send out both male and female. You must send them outside the camp so that they will not make their camp, where I live among them, unclean.

<sup>4</sup>The Israelites did so and sent them outside the camp. The Israelites did just what the LORD said to Moses.

<sup>5</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>6</sup>Tell the Israelites: When a man or a woman commits any sin against anyone else, thus breaking faith with the LORD, that person becomes guilty. <sup>7</sup>Such persons will confess the sin they have done. Each will make payment for his guilt, add one-fifth more, and give it to the injured party. <sup>8</sup>If the person has no close relative to whom the payment can be made, then the compensation payment will go to the LORD for the priest. This is in addition to the ram of reconciliation by which the guilty party himself is reconciled. <sup>9</sup>Any gift offering from all the sacred donations that the Israelites offer will be the property of the priest. <sup>10</sup>The sacred donations belong to each person alone; whatever anyone gives to the priest will be his.

**4:29-33** The Merarites pack and carry the framework of the meeting tent and the courtyard. They will receive four wagons and eight oxen to transport these items (Num 7:8); the frames of the meeting tent are described in Exodus 26:15-25; and the pillars of the courtyard in Exodus 27:9-19. **4:34-49** Summarizes the census and emphasizes completely obeying God's commands.

**5:1-4** The three kinds of unclean persons are sent out from the camp for a time. The text presupposes: (1) The cases listed in 5:2 make a person ritually unclean; (2) the person's impurity is contagious; (3) the camp is where God dwells among the people; (4) God can't dwell in a contaminated camp; and (5) God's presence demands the expulsion of any unclean person from the camp.

**5:2** a skin disease: See Leviticus 13. an oozing discharge: from the genitals (see Lev 15). unclean from contact with a corpse: See Numbers 19:11-22 (cf. Lev 21:1-3, 11; Num 6:6-12).

**5:5-10** An instruction regarding a generalized sin against others (cf. Exod 22:7-15; Lev 6:1-7). It doesn't specify the nature of crime. The text emphasizes that (1) crimes against others must be resolved under any circumstance; (2) the priests both oversee the sin offering and receive restitution; and (3) by reconciling with the one wronged and with God, the culprit can become part of the community again.

**5:8** the ram of reconciliation: The forgiveness process includes a sacrifice of a ram or its equivalent (Lev 6:6b-7a), in addition to compensation for the damage.

4:30 Nm 4:3

4:35 Nm 4:3.

Nm 4:23;

1Ch 23:24

5:1 Lv 13:1,

Lv 14:1;

Nm 12:14;

Mt 8:4; Lk 5:14

5:2 Lv 13:46,

Lv 15:2; Nm 9:6.

Nm 12:14,

Nm 19:11

5:9 Ex 29:28

5:11 In 8:5

5:15 Lv 5:11;  
1Ki 17:18;  
Eze 29:165:18 Lv 10:6;  
Nm 5:155:19 Ex 22:11;  
1Ki 8:31

5:20 Nm 5:12

5:21 Josh 6:26;  
1Sa 14:24;  
Neh 10:295:22 Dt 27:15;  
Ps 109:18

5:25 Lv 8:27

5:26 Lv 2:2;  
Lv 2:9, Lv 5:125:27 Jer 29:18;  
Jer 42:18;  
Zec 8:13**A woman accused of adultery**

<sup>11</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>12</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: A man may suspect that his wife has had an affair<sup>c</sup> and has broken faith with him, <sup>13</sup>that a man has had intercourse with her unknown to her husband and that she has defiled herself in secret—even though there are no witnesses and she isn't caught. <sup>14</sup>If jealousy overcomes him and he is jealous of his wife who has defiled herself, or if jealousy overcomes him and he is jealous of his wife who hasn't defiled herself, <sup>15</sup>then the man will bring his wife to the priest. He will bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah<sup>d</sup> of barley flour. He will not pour oil on it, nor offer frankincense with it, because it is a grain offering for jealousy, a grain offering for recognition in order to recognize guilt. <sup>16</sup>The priest will bring her close and make her stand before the LORD <sup>17</sup>The priest will take holy water in a clay jar, and taking dust from the floor of the dwelling, the priest will place it in the water. <sup>18</sup>The priest will make the woman stand before the LORD, let the hair of the woman hang down, and place the grain offering for recognition, that is, the grain offering for jealousy, in her hands. The water of bitterness that brings the curse will be in the hands of the priest.

<sup>19</sup>Then the priest will make her swear a solemn pledge, saying to the woman, "If no man has slept with you and if you haven't had an affair, becoming defiled while married to your husband, then be immune from the water of bitterness that brings these curses. <sup>20</sup>But if you have had an affair while married to your husband, if you have defiled yourself, and a man other than your husband has had intercourse with you"—<sup>21</sup>then the priest must make the woman utter the curse and say to the woman, "May the LORD make you a curse and a harmful pledge among your people, when the LORD induces a miscarriage and your womb discharges. <sup>22</sup>And may the water that brings these curses enter your stomach and make your womb discharge and make you miscarry."

And the woman will say, "I agree, I agree."

<sup>23</sup>The priest will write these curses in the scroll and wipe them off into the water of bitterness. <sup>24</sup>Then he will make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings the curse. And the water that brings the curse will enter her, causing bitterness. <sup>25</sup>The priest will take the grain offering for jealousy from the woman's hands, elevate the grain offering before the LORD, and bring it to the altar. <sup>26</sup>The priest will take a handful of the grain offering as a token part of it and turn it into smoke on the altar. And afterward he will make the woman drink the water. <sup>27</sup>When he has made her drink the water, if she has defiled herself and has broken faith with her husband, then the water that brings the curse will enter her, causing bitterness, and her womb will discharge and she will miscarry. The woman will be a curse among her people. <sup>28</sup>But if the woman hasn't defiled herself and she is pure, then she will be immune and able to conceive.

<sup>29</sup>These are the instructions about jealousy, when a wife has an affair while married to her husband and defiles herself, <sup>30</sup>or when jealousy overcomes a man and he is jealous of his wife. The priest will make the woman stand before the LORD and will follow all these instructions concerning her. <sup>31</sup>The man will be free from guilt, but the woman will bear her guilt.

<sup>c</sup>Or *goes astray*; see also 5:19-20, 29. <sup>d</sup>Two quarts; one ephah is approximately twenty quarts dry.

5:11-31 An instruction regarding a husband's jealousy about the possible adultery of his wife. This case can't be resolved in a civil court. However intrusive the instructions for determining the wife's innocence may be, they must be followed judiciously because the purity of the community is at stake. Also, in this way the suspected wife can be acquitted from false accusations and protected from her husband's impulsive revenge. Even if the accusations are accurate, the punishment is less severe than in Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22. Nevertheless, the passage ends with a statement that the husband is free from guilt regardless of the outcome (5:31). The husband suffers no punishment, even if he has unjustly accused his wife and forced her to go through this ordeal.

5:12-14 *has had an affair*: straying away from the true path, especially in terms of sexual behavior (Prov 7:25). *has broken faith*: The same phrase is used in Numbers 5:6b, indicating a sacred dimension to her act. The prohibition of adultery is stated in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18), the foundation of Israel's covenant with God.

5:15 *one-tenth of an ephah*: approximately one-half gallon. *grain offering*: See Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-18.

5:17 *holy water*: See Exodus 30:17-21.

5:18 *let the hair of the woman hang down*: may indicate a state of uncleanness (Lev 13:45) or mourning (Lev 10:6; 21:10).

5:26b-28 Her ability to conceive is the verdict.

*Instructions for the nazirite*

**6**The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: If a man or a woman makes a binding promise to be a nazirite in order to be dedicated to the LORD, <sup>3</sup>that person must refrain from wine and brandy. He or she may not drink wine vinegar or brandy vinegar, nor drink any grape juice or eat grapes, whether fresh or dried. <sup>4</sup>While a nazirite, the person may not eat anything produced from the grapevine, not even its seeds or skin.

<sup>5</sup>For the term of the nazirite promise, no razor may be used on the head until the period of dedication to the LORD is fulfilled. The person is to be holy, letting his or her hair grow untrimmed. <sup>6</sup>The period of dedication to the LORD also requires that the person not go near a corpse, <sup>7</sup>whether father, mother, brother, or sister. Nazirites should not defile themselves because of the death of these people, because they bear the sign of their dedication to God on their heads.

<sup>8</sup>While a nazirite, the person is holy to the LORD. <sup>9</sup>If someone suddenly dies nearby, defiling the head of the nazirite, he or she will shave the head on the day of cleansing; they will shave it on the seventh day. <sup>10</sup>On the eighth day the person will bring two turtledoves or two young doves to the priest at the entrance of the meeting tent. <sup>11</sup>The priest will offer one for a purification offering and the other as an entirely burned offering. He will seek reconciliation for the person on account of the guilt acquired from the corpse, and he will make the head holy again on that same day. <sup>12</sup>The person will be rededicated to the LORD as a nazirite and bring a one-year-old male lamb for a compensation offering. The previous period will be invalid, because the nazirite promise was defiled.

<sup>13</sup>This is the Instruction for the nazirite. When the term as a nazirite is completed, the person will be brought to the entrance of the meeting tent <sup>14</sup>and offer a gift to the LORD, consisting of a flawless one-year-old male lamb as an entirely burned offering, a flawless one-year-old female lamb as a purification offering, one flawless ram as a well-being sacrifice, <sup>15</sup>and a basket of loaves of unleavened bread made with fine flour and mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil, along with their grain offering and their drink offering. <sup>16</sup>The priest will come close to the LORD and offer the purification and entirely burned offerings. <sup>17</sup>The ram he will offer as a well-being sacrifice to the LORD with the basket of unleavened bread; then the priest will offer the grain offering and the drink offering. <sup>18</sup>The nazirite will shave his ordained head at the meeting tent's entrance, take the hair from his ordained head, and put it in the fire under the well-being sacrifice. <sup>19</sup>The priest will take the shoulder from the ram after it is boiled, one piece of unleavened bread from the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and place them in the hands of the nazirite after the ordained head is shaved. <sup>20</sup>Then the priest will raise them as an uplifted offering before the LORD; they are holy to the priest, with the breast of the uplifted offering and the thigh of the gift offering. After this the nazirite may drink wine.

6:1-21 The word "nazirite" means "one who is set apart." At first the nazirites were sacred persons who received divine power for a specific task for their whole lives, such as Samson (Judg 13-16) and Samuel (1 Sam 1:21-28). Later in the history of Israel, any person who made a solemn promise to observe a set of specific regulations could become a nazirite for a temporary period. Thus, a nazirite is not an ethnic designation but a special category for a person who has vowed to perform a sacred duty. For this reason, the CEB does not capitalize the word, though some translations do. This text stresses the voluntary and temporary nature of being a nazirite. It also stresses the responsibility of the priests in supervising nazirites.

6:2 *a man or a woman*: a layperson, not a priest. *makes a binding promise*: no specific purpose for the pledge is given.

6:9-12 Deals with accidental contamination by a corpse, which requires the same purification as that for people who have become unclean from physical disorders (Lev 12-15).

6:11 *purification offering*: See Leviticus 4:1-5:13; Numbers 15:22-31. This offering traditionally was called a "sin offering" in English, but "purification" is more accurate because it cleanses the sanctuary. Since a nazirite is separated to

God by promising to keep a specific pattern of conduct, her or his breaking the solemn promise causes a contamination to God's dwelling. Because a holy God can't dwell in a contaminated place, the priest must purge the contaminated dwelling. In so doing, the *reconciliation* between the nazirite and God can be achieved. (See also the sidebar, "Reconciliation/Atonement" at Lev 16.) *entirely burned offering*: must be dedicated to God alone to invoke God's presence. See Leviticus 1:3-17; 6:8-13.

6:12 *compensation offering*: See Leviticus 7:1-6. This offering was traditionally called a "guilt offering" in English, but "compensation" is more accurate. Here, it repays God for the nazirites' inability to perform their duties due to uncleanness.

6:13-20 Describes the process for ending one's time as a nazirite (that is, becoming an ordinary layperson again).

6:14 *entirely burned offering and purification offering*: See note on Numbers 6:11. *well-being sacrifice*: See Leviticus 3:1-17; 7:11-36.

6:15 *grain offering*: See Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-18. *drink offering*: See Numbers 15:1-21.

6:20 *uplifted offering . . . gift offering*: See Exodus 29:26-28; Leviticus 7:30-34; 10:14-15.

6:2 Jgs 13:5;  
Jgs 16:17;  
Am 2:11;  
Ac 21:23  
6:3 Lv 10:9;  
Jgs 13:14;  
Ru 2:14; Lk 1:15  
6:4 Nm 6:3;  
Jgs 13:14;  
2Ki 4:42  
6:5 Jgs 13:5;  
Jgs 16:17;  
1Sa 1:11  
6:6 Nm 19:11  
6:7 Nm 9:6  
6:9 Nm 6:18;  
Ac 21:24  
6:10 Lv 5:7;  
Lv 14:22  
6:11 Ex 10:10;  
Lv 14:31;  
Nm 6:10;  
Nm 6:14;  
Nm 8:8  
6:12 Lv 5:6  
6:13 Ac 21:26  
6:14 Lv 3:6;  
Nm 6:11  
6:15 Ex 29:2;  
Lv 2:4  
6:16 Nm 6:10;  
Nm 6:11;  
Nm 6:14  
6:17 Ex 29:41;  
Lv 23:13  
6:18 Nm 6:9;  
Ac 18:18;  
Ac 21:24  
6:19 Ex 29:23  
6:20 Ex 29:27;  
Ex 29:28;  
Lv 7:31; Lv 7:34;  
Nm 5:25

6:24 1Sa 2:9;  
Ps 28:9  
6:25 Gn 43:29;  
Ps 31:16,  
Ps 67:1, Ps 80:3,  
Ps 119:135

7:1 Ex 40:9,  
Ex 40:17;  
Lv 8:10, Lv 8:11  
7:3 Gn 45:19

7:12 Ex 6:23;  
Nm 1:7, Nm 2:3,  
Nm 10:14,  
Nm 7:17;  
Ru 4:20;  
1Ch 2:10

7:18 Nm 1:8,  
Nm 2:5,  
Nm 10:15

<sup>21</sup>This is the instruction for the nazirite who takes the solemn promise. That person's offering to the LORD will be in accordance with the nazirite promise, in addition to whatever else the person may have offered. The person must do just as they have promised, in adherence with the nazirite promise.

### Priestly blessing

<sup>22</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>23</sup>Tell Aaron and his sons: You will bless the Israelites as follows. Say to them:

<sup>24</sup>The LORD bless you and protect you.

<sup>25</sup>The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

<sup>26</sup>The LORD lift up his face to you and grant you peace.

<sup>27</sup>They will place my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.

### The dwelling's dedication

**7**On the day when Moses finished setting up the dwelling, he anointed and made it holy. All its equipment, as well as the altar and all its equipment, he also anointed and made holy. <sup>2</sup>The chiefs of Israel, the leaders of their households, made their presentations. They were the tribal chiefs and those who were in charge of the enlistment. <sup>3</sup>They brought their offerings before the LORD: six covered wagons and twelve oxen—a wagon for every two chiefs, and an ox for every chief. They brought them near before the dwelling.

<sup>4</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>5</sup>Take these from them and use them for service in the meeting tent. Give them to the Levites according to their duties.

<sup>6</sup>So Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and he gave them to the Levites. <sup>7</sup>Two wagons and four oxen he gave to the Gershonites for their duty. <sup>8</sup>Four wagons and eight oxen he gave to the Merarites for their duty under the supervision of Ithamar, Aaron the priest's son. <sup>9</sup>But to the Kohathites he gave nothing because their duty concerned the holy things that had to be carried on the shoulders. <sup>10</sup>The chiefs made their presentations for the dedication of the altar on the day it was anointed. The chiefs presented their offerings before the altar.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD said to Moses: One chief per day will present their offering for the dedication of the altar.

<sup>12</sup>The one presenting his offering on the first day was Nahshon, Amminadab's son, from the tribe of Judah. <sup>13</sup>His offering was one silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels according to the sanctuary shekel, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; <sup>14</sup>one gold bowl weighing ten shekels full of incense; <sup>15</sup>one bull from the herd, one ram, and one year-old male lamb for an entirely burned offering; <sup>16</sup>one male goat for a purification offering; <sup>17</sup>and for the well-being sacrifice two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Nahshon, Amminadab's son.

<sup>18</sup>On the second day Nethanel, Zuar's son, the chief of Issachar, presented his offering. <sup>19</sup>He presented as his offering one silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver

**6:22-27** The blessings are organized as a series of three sentences of three, five, and seven Hebrew words respectively, suggesting a rhythmical oral performance. If the name of God isn't counted, the total word count is 12, which may signify the 12 tribes of Israel. Though short, these sentences cover the complete life of Israel in six acts of God: *bless, keep, make his face shine, be gracious, lift up his face, grant . . . peace*. These blessings look to the future. God's blessings will materialize as the people live out their lives with God's name on them.

**6:24** *bless*: relates to concrete and physical gifts, including descendants and prosperity. *protect*: means "guard, watch over" from all forms of evil (cf. Ps 121:7-8).

**6:25** *make his face shine*: refers to the loving presence of God, in contrast to hiding his face, which conveys anger.

**6:26** *lift up his face*: can involve answering requests, as in Genesis 19:21, which uses the same Hebrew words. *grant you peace*: provides well-being in all areas of life.

**6:27** The blessings are a consequence of invoking God's name, which is the source of all blessings. *They will place*

*my name on the Israelites*: Through the priest's benediction, God's name functions as a protection from all harm. More deeply, it means that God owns Israel. The Israelites belong to God.

**7:1-89** This text's context is Exodus 40, where the dwelling is set up. The chiefs and leaders give wagons and oxen so the Levites can move it (7:2-9). They also give bowls and animals for sacrifice (7:10-88). Each tribe, regardless of its size, brings the same offering. The wealth of the total offering is enormous. Such gifts may come from the materials that God provided for the Israelites from the Egyptians at the beginning of their journey in the wilderness (Exod 12:35-36).

**7:1** *On the day*: one month before the start of Numbers (cf. Exod 40:17 and Num 1:1), so we have a flashback. However, prior material in Numbers prepares for this chapter: the names of leaders (Num 1:5b-15); the order of tribes (Num 2); and the assignments of the levitical houses (Num 4:1-33). **7:10-89** Describes the gifts that the 12 leaders individually bring on 12 consecutive days. The description of each leader's gift is identical. The day and name of the leader

basin weighing seventy shekels according to the sanctuary shekel, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; <sup>20</sup>one gold bowl weighing ten shekels full of incense; <sup>21</sup>one bull from the herd, one ram, and one year-old male lamb for an entirely burned offering; <sup>22</sup>one male goat for a purification offering; <sup>23</sup>and for the well-being sacrifice two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Nethanel, Zuar's son.

<sup>24</sup>On the third day Zebulun's Chief Eliab, Helon's son: <sup>25</sup>this offering was one silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels according to the sanctuary shekel, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; <sup>26</sup>one gold bowl weighing ten shekels full of incense; <sup>27</sup>one bull from the herd, one ram, and one year-old male lamb for an entirely burned offering; <sup>28</sup>one male goat for a purification offering; <sup>29</sup>and for the well-being sacrifice, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliab, Helon's son.

<sup>30</sup>On the fourth day Reuben's Chief Elizur, Shedeur's son: <sup>31</sup>this offering was one silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels according to the sanctuary shekel, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; <sup>32</sup>one gold bowl weighing ten shekels full of incense; <sup>33</sup>one bull from the herd, one ram, and one year-old male lamb for an entirely burned offering; <sup>34</sup>one male goat for a purification offering; <sup>35</sup>and for the well-being sacrifice two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Elizur, Shedeur's son.

<sup>36</sup>On the fifth day Simeon's Chief Shelumiel, Zurishaddai's son: <sup>37</sup>this offering was one silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one basin weighing seventy shekels according to the sanctuary shekel, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; <sup>38</sup>one gold bowl weighing ten shekels full of incense; <sup>39</sup>one bull from the herd, one ram, and one year-old male lamb for an entirely burned offering; <sup>40</sup>one male goat for a purification offering; <sup>41</sup>and for the well-being sacrifice two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Shelumiel, Zurishaddai's son.

<sup>42</sup>On the sixth day Gad's Chief Eliasaph, Deuel's son: <sup>43</sup>this offering was one silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels according to the sanctuary shekel, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; <sup>44</sup>one gold bowl weighing ten shekels full of incense; <sup>45</sup>one bull from the herd, one ram, and one year-old male lamb for an entirely burned offering; <sup>46</sup>one male goat for a purification offering; <sup>47</sup>and for the well-being sacrifice two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliasaph, Deuel's son.

<sup>48</sup>On the seventh day Ephraim's Chief Elishama, Ammihud's son: <sup>49</sup>this offering was one silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels according to the sanctuary shekel, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; <sup>50</sup>one gold bowl weighing ten shekels full of incense; <sup>51</sup>one bull from the herd, one ram, and one year-old male lamb for an entirely burned offering; <sup>52</sup>one male goat for a purification offering; <sup>53</sup>and for the well-being sacrifice two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Elishama, Ammihud's son.

<sup>54</sup>On the eighth day Manasseh's Chief Gamaliel, Pedahzur's son: <sup>55</sup>this offering was one silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels by the sanctuary scale, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; <sup>56</sup>one gold bowl weighing ten shekels full of incense; <sup>57</sup>one bull from the herd, one ram, and one year-old male lamb for an entirely burned offering; <sup>58</sup>one male goat for a purification offering; <sup>59</sup>and for the well-being sacrifice two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Gamaliel, Pedahzur's son.

<sup>60</sup>On the ninth day Benjamin's Chief Abidan, Gideon's son: <sup>61</sup>this offering was one silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels according to the sanctuary shekel, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; <sup>62</sup>one gold bowl weighing ten shekels full of incense; <sup>63</sup>one bull from the herd, one ram, and

7:24 Nm 1:9.

Nm 2:7.

Nm 10:16

7:29 Nm 1:9.

Nm 2:7.

Nm 7:24.

Nm 10:16

7:30 Nm 1:5.

Nm 2:10.

Nm 7:35.

Nm 10:18

7:36 Nm 1:6.

Nm 2:12.

Nm 7:41.

Nm 10:19

7:42 Nm 1:14.

Nm 2:14.

Nm 7:47.

Nm 10:20

7:48 Gn 46:20.

Nm 1:10.

Nm 2:18.

Nm 10:22.

1Ch 7:26

7:54 Nm 1:10.

Nm 2:20.

Nm 10:23

7:60 Nm 1:11.

Nm 2:22.

Nm 10:24

are given, followed by a record of gifts related to four types of offerings: *grain* (see Lev 2:1-16; 6:14-18); *entirely burned* (see Lev 1:3-17; 6:8-13); *purification* (see Lev 4:1-5:13; Num 15:22-31); and *well-being* (see Lev 3:1-17; 7:11-36). *one hundred thirty shekels*: three and one-quarter pounds. *seventy shekels*: one and three-quarters pounds. *ten shekels*:

one-quarter pound. After repeating nearly identical descriptions 12 times (7:12-83), the text summarizes the total amounts of the gifts (7:84-88), emphasizing their abundance: *two thousand four hundred shekels*, or about 60 pounds of *silver equipment* (7:85); and *one hundred twenty shekels*, or about three pounds of *gold . . . bowls* (7:86).

7:66 Nm 1:12.  
Nm 2:25.  
Nm 10:25

7:72 Nm 1:13.  
Nm 2:27.  
Nm 10:26

7:78 Nm 1:15.  
Nm 2:29.  
Nm 10:27

one year-old male lamb for an entirely burned offering; <sup>64</sup>one male goat for a purification offering; <sup>65</sup>and for the well-being sacrifice two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Abidan, Gideoni's son.

<sup>66</sup>On the tenth day Dan's Chief Ahiezer, Ammishaddai's son: <sup>67</sup>his offering was one silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels according to the sanctuary shekel, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; <sup>68</sup>one gold bowl weighing ten shekels full of incense; <sup>69</sup>one bull from the herd, one ram, and one year-old male lamb for an entirely burned offering; <sup>70</sup>one male goat for a purification offering; <sup>71</sup>and for the well-being sacrifice two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Ahiezer, Ammishaddai's son.

<sup>72</sup>On the eleventh day Asher's Chief Pagiel, Ochrans son: <sup>73</sup>his offering was one silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels according to the sanctuary shekel, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; <sup>74</sup>one gold bowl weighing ten shekels full of incense; <sup>75</sup>one bull from the herd, one ram, and one year-old male lamb for an entirely burned offering; <sup>76</sup>one male goat for a purification offering; <sup>77</sup>and for the well-being sacrifice two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Pagiel, Ochrans son.

<sup>78</sup>On the twelfth day Naphtali's Chief Ahira, Enans son: <sup>79</sup>his offering was one silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels according to the sanctuary shekel, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; <sup>80</sup>one gold bowl weighing ten shekels full of incense; <sup>81</sup>one bull from the herd, one ram, one year-old male lamb for an entirely burned offering; <sup>82</sup>one male goat for a purification offering; <sup>83</sup>and for the well-being sacrifice two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Ahira, Enans son.

<sup>84</sup>This is what the Israelite chiefs provided for the dedication of the altar on the day it was anointed: twelve silver dishes, twelve silver basins, and twelve gold bowls; <sup>85</sup>each silver dish weighing one hundred thirty shekels and each basin seventy shekels—all the silver equipment weighed two thousand four hundred shekels according to the sanctuary shekel; <sup>86</sup>the twelve gold bowls full of incense weighing ten shekels each according to the sanctuary shekel—all the gold of the bowls weighed one hundred twenty shekels; <sup>87</sup>all the animals for the entirely burned offering were twelve bulls, twelve rams, twelve male lambs a year old, with their grain offering; twelve male goats for the purification offering; <sup>88</sup>and all the animals for the well-being sacrifice were twenty-four bulls, sixty rams, sixty male goats, and sixty male lambs a year old. This was the dedication offering for the altar after it was anointed.

### Moses in the dwelling

<sup>89</sup>When Moses entered the meeting tent to speak with the LORD, <sup>90</sup>he would hear the voice speaking to him from above the cover<sup>f</sup> that was on the chest containing the covenant, from between the two winged creatures. In this way he spoke to Moses.

### The lampstand

**O**The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you set them up, the seven lamps will give light in front of the lampstand.

<sup>3</sup>Aaron did so. He set up its lamps in front of the lampstand as the LORD commanded Moses. <sup>4</sup>This is how the lampstand was made: it was hammered gold; from its base to its flower it was hammered. Moses made the lampstand according to the vision that the LORD had shown Moses.

<sup>90</sup>Or him <sup>f</sup>Or mercy seat or perhaps reconciliation cover (Heb *kapporet*)

7:89 The verse is difficult to translate for several reasons. For example, the underlying Hebrew uses the word "him," and it isn't entirely clear whether that word refers to Moses or the Lord (see translation note e). Our translation is based on reading the verse in its larger c context. cover: See translation note f. chest containing the covenant: See Exodus 25:17-22. 8:2 Aaron sets up the lamps. Earlier materials (Exod 27:20-21; Lev 24:2-4) state that Aaron (and his sons) is responsible for taking care of the lamps, but they don't specify

who will set them up in the first place. lamps . . . give light in front of the lampstand: This is more precise than previous instructions (Exod 25:37). The Hebrew word for lampstand is *menorah*, and it plays an important role in the Jewish Festival of Hanukkah.

8:4 how the lampstand was made: See Exodus 25:31-40; 37:17-24. The seven lamps and their flowery design may symbolize the tree of life (Gen 3:22, 24). See also Zechariah 4:1-7.

### Dedication of the Levites

<sup>5</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>6</sup>Separate the Levites from the Israelites and cleanse them. <sup>7</sup>This is what you will do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, have them shave their bodies, wash their clothes, and cleanse themselves. <sup>8</sup>They will take a bull from the herd, with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil. You will take a second bull from the herd for a purification offering. <sup>9</sup>You will bring the Levites before the meeting tent and gather the entire Israelite community. <sup>10</sup>Then you will bring the Levites into the LORD's presence, and the Israelites will lay their hands on the Levites. <sup>11</sup>Aaron will present the Levites as an uplifted offering in the LORD's presence from the Israelites so that they may do the LORD's service. <sup>12</sup>Then the Levites will lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, and Aaron will offer one as a purification offering and the other as an entirely burned offering to the LORD in order to seek reconciliation for the Levites.

<sup>13</sup>You will have the Levites stand before Aaron and his sons and you will present them as an uplifted offering to the LORD. <sup>14</sup>You will separate the Levites from the Israelites, and the Levites will be mine. <sup>15</sup>The Levites will enter to serve the meeting tent, after you have cleansed them and presented them as an uplifted offering. <sup>16</sup>They are given over to me from the Israelites in place of all the newborn, the oldest of all the Israelites. I take them for myself. <sup>17</sup>Every oldest male among the Israelites is mine, whether human or animal. When I killed all the oldest males in the land of Egypt, I dedicated them to myself. <sup>18</sup>I have taken the Levites in place of all the oldest among the Israelites. <sup>19</sup>I have selected the Levites from the Israelites for Aaron and his sons to perform the service of the Israelites in the meeting tent and to seek reconciliation for the Israelites so that there will not be a plague when the Israelites approach the sanctuary.

<sup>20</sup>Moses, Aaron, and the entire Israelite community carried out for the Levites everything the LORD had commanded Moses. That is what the Israelites did for the Levites. <sup>21</sup>The Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes. Aaron presented them as an uplifted offering in the LORD's presence, and he sought reconciliation for them in order to cleanse them. <sup>22</sup>After this the Levites went in to perform their service in the meeting tent before Aaron and his sons. They did for the Levites just as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning them.

<sup>23</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>24</sup>This rule applies<sup>6</sup> to the Levites: Everyone 25 years old and above will enter into service, performing the duties for the meeting tent. <sup>25</sup>At 50 years old each will retire from service. They will perform their duties no longer. <sup>26</sup>Each may assist his fellow Levites in the meeting tent with some responsibilities, but he may not perform service. This is how you should assign responsibilities to the Levites.

<sup>6</sup>Heb lacks *rule applies*.

**8:6** *cleanse*: another term for "purify." There are two reasons for purification of the Levites. First, they could defile the sanctuary, which would endanger the entire community with God's wrath (Num 1:53). Second, they are an offering to God in place of the oldest male Israelites (Num 3:12, 41, 45-46; 8:18).

**8:7** *water of purification*: This exact phrase occurs only here in the OT, but a similar expression appears in other places (Num 19:9, 13, 20; 31:23). The source of the water isn't stated. It could be either the water mixed with the ashes of the red cow used in cleansing those contaminated by touching the dead (Num 19) or the water mentioned in the case of a woman accused of adultery (Num 5:17). Both of these waters are used for the same purpose: removing impurity or sinfulness. *shave their bodies*: The reason for this ritual is unclear, but it is mentioned in connection with cleansing persons with skin disease (Lev 14:8-9). The nazirites must shave their heads when they defile themselves by being near the dead (Num 6:9) and when completing a term of dedication (Num 6:18), but obviously not during the period of dedication to God (Num 6:5).

**8:8-13** In some ways, the Levites are treated like animals to be sacrificed. *lay their hands* symbolizes identification or

a substitution. The impurity of the Israelites is transferred to the bulls via the Levites. The Levites are an offering to God on behalf of the Israelites.

**8:8** *grain offering*: See Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-18. *purification offering*: See Leviticus 4:1-5:13; Numbers 15:22-31.

**8:11** *uplifted offering*: See Exodus 29:26-28; Leviticus 7:30-34; 10:14-15.

**8:12** *entirely burned offering*: See Leviticus 1:3-17; 6:8-13. *reconciliation for the Levites*: Aaron the priest will give an entirely burned offering to God on behalf of the Levites so that they will be protected from God's wrath (Num 8:21). They themselves need to be redeemed or reconciled with God in order to work in the meeting tent, since anyone who approaches the holy God may incur God's wrath. **8:17** See Exodus 11.

**8:19** *Aaron and his sons*: another phrase for "priests." A *plague* is the outcome of unlawful contact with the sanctuary (see also Num 16:46-50; 25:9, 18).

**8:23-26** Changes the age for becoming a Levite to 25 years old (cf. 30 years in Num 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, 47). This change might be because there aren't enough Levites, or because of a need for additional physical strength in taking down, carrying, and reassembling the sanctuary structures.

**8:6** Lv 22:2,  
Lv 22:3;  
Nm 8:7,  
Nm 8:14;  
Is 52:11

**8:7** Gn 35:2;  
Lv 14:8, Lv 14:9;  
Nm 19:9

**8:16** Ex 13:2;  
Nm 3:9,  
Nm 3:12,  
Nm 3:40,  
Nm 3:45

9:2 Ex 12:3,  
Ex 12:6; Dt 16:1  
9:10 Nm 9:6  
9:11 Ex 12:8;  
2Ch 30:2  
9:12 Ex 12:10,  
Ex 12:46;  
In 19:36  
9:13 Gn 17:14;  
Ex 12:15  
9:15 Ex 13:21,  
Ex 40:34,  
Ex 40:38

### Passover

**9**The LORD spoke to Moses in the Sinai desert in the first month<sup>a</sup> of the second year after they had left the land of Egypt: **2**Let the Israelites keep the Passover at its appointed time. **3**On the fourteenth day of this month at twilight you will keep it at its appointed time. Keep it according to all its regulations and its customary practices.

**4**Moses instructed the Israelites to keep the Passover. **5**At twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month<sup>1</sup> they kept the Passover in the Sinai desert. The Israelites did everything just as the LORD commanded Moses.

**6**But there were persons who were unclean from contact with a human corpse, and they were unable to keep the Passover on that day. They approached Moses and Aaron that day. **7**These persons said to him, "Although we are unclean from contact with a human corpse, why must we be prohibited from presenting the LORD's offering at its appointed time with the rest of the Israelites?"

**8**Moses said to them, "Wait while I listen for what the LORD will command concerning you."

**9**The LORD spoke to Moses: **10**Tell the Israelites: When any of you or your descendants are unclean from contact with a corpse or are on a long trip, they may still keep the Passover to the LORD. **11**They will keep it at twilight on the fourteenth day of the second month.<sup>1</sup> They will eat the Passover lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. **12**They must not leave any of it until morning, nor break any of its bones. They will keep the Passover according to all its regulations. **13**But any persons who are clean and not on a trip, yet don't keep the Passover, those persons will be cut off from their people, because they didn't present the LORD's offering at its appointed time. Those persons will bear their sin. **14**If an immigrant resides among you and wishes to keep the Passover to the LORD, that one also will keep it according to its regulations and its customary practices. There will be one set of regulations for both of you, for the immigrant and for the native of the land.

### Cloud over the dwelling

**15**On the day the dwelling was erected, the cloud covered the dwelling, the covenant tent. At night until morning, the cloud appeared with lightning over the dwelling. **16**It was always there. The cloud covered it by day,<sup>a</sup> appearing with lightning at night. **17**Whenever the cloud ascended from the tent, the Israelites would march. And the Israelites would camp wherever the cloud settled. **18**At the LORD's command, the Israelites would march, and at the LORD's command they would camp. As long as the cloud settled on the dwelling, they would camp. **19**When the cloud lingered on the meeting tent for many days, the Israelites would observe the LORD's direction and they wouldn't march. **20**Sometimes the cloud would be over the dwelling for a number of days, so they would camp at the LORD's command, marching again only at the LORD's command. **21**Sometimes the cloud would settle only overnight, and they would march when the cloud ascended in the morning. Whether it was day or night, they would march when the cloud ascended. **22**Whether it was two days, or a month, or a long time, the Israelites would camp so long as the cloud lingered on the dwelling and settled on it. They wouldn't march. But when it ascended, they would march. **23**They camped at the LORD's command and they marched at the LORD's command. They followed the LORD's direction according to the LORD's command through Moses.

<sup>a</sup>March–April, Nisan <sup>1</sup>March–April, Nisan <sup>1</sup>April–May, Iyar <sup>a</sup>LXX; MT lacks by day.

9:1–14 The text supplements the Passover regulations in Exodus 12, explaining what to do if ceremonially unclean, traveling, or an immigrant.

9:1–5 in the first month of the second year: continues the flashback begun at Numbers 7:1, referring to the month before the date in Numbers 1:1. at its appointed time: divinely selected time (Lev 23:2, 4, 37). kept the Passover: In Exodus 12–13, the Passover took place before the people traveled. The same is true here (Num 10:12).

9:6 Anyone unclean must be separated from the camp so as not to defile the rest of the community (Num 5:1–4; 6:6; 19:1–22).

9:12 nor break any of its bones: also stated in Exodus 12:46.

9:13 cut off: This punishment can involve death or being kept out of the community.

9:14 an immigrant: distinguished from the foreigner, temporary resident, and day laborer, all of whom are forbidden to eat the lamb (Exod 12:43, 45). They need to be circumcised to observe Passover (Exod 12:48).

9:15–23 the cloud: a symbol of God's presence. Its fiery appearance at night agrees with that of Exodus 13:21–22. lightning: See Exodus 19:16; 20:18.

9:15–16 On the day the dwelling was erected: recalls Exodus 40:34–38 (cf. Num 7:1). covenant tent: See note on Numbers 1:50.

9:18–23 At the LORD's command: This phrase appears six



**Trumpets**

**10** The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Make two silver trumpets and make them from hammered metalwork. Use them for summoning the community and for breaking camp. <sup>3</sup>When both are blown, the entire community will meet you at the entrance of the meeting tent. <sup>4</sup>When one is blown, the chiefs, the leaders of Israel's divisions, will meet you. <sup>5</sup>When you blow a series of short blasts, the camp on the east side will march. <sup>6</sup>And when you blow a second series of short blasts, the camp on the south side will march. You will blow a series of short blasts to announce their march.

<sup>7</sup>To gather the assembly, blow a long blast, not a series of short blasts. <sup>8</sup>Aaron's sons the priests will blow the trumpets. This will be a permanent regulation for you throughout time.

<sup>9</sup>When you go to war in your land against an enemy who is attacking you, you will blow short blasts with the trumpets so that you may be remembered by the LORD your God and be saved from your enemies.

<sup>10</sup>On your festival days, your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you will blow the trumpets over your entirely burned offerings and your well-being sacrifices. They will serve as a reminder of you to your God. I am the LORD your God.

**Organization of the wilderness march**

<sup>11</sup>On the twentieth day of the second month in the second year, the cloud ascended from the covenant dwelling. <sup>12</sup>The Israelites set out on their march from the Sinai desert, and the cloud settled in the Paran desert.

<sup>13</sup>They marched for the first time at the LORD's command through Moses. <sup>14</sup>The banner of Judah's camp marched first with its military units. Nahshon, Amminadab's son, commanded its military. <sup>15</sup>Nethanel, Zuar's son, commanded the military of the tribe of Issachar. <sup>16</sup>Eliab, Helon's son, commanded the military of the tribe of Zebulun. <sup>17</sup>The dwelling was taken down, and the Gershonites and the Merarites, who carried the dwelling, marched. <sup>18</sup>The banner of Reuben's camp marched with its military units. Elizur, Shedeur's son, commanded its military. <sup>19</sup>Shelumiel, Zurishaddai's son, commanded the military of the tribe of Simeon. <sup>20</sup>Eliasaph, Deuel's son, commanded the military of the tribe of Gad. <sup>21</sup>The Kohathites, who carried the holy things, marched. The dwelling would be set up before their arrival. <sup>22</sup>The banner of Ephraim's camp marched with its military units. Elishama, Ammihud's son, commanded its military. <sup>23</sup>Gamaliel, Pedahzur's son, commanded the military of the tribe of Manasseh. <sup>24</sup>Abidan, Gideon's son, commanded the military of the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>25</sup>The banner of Dan's camp, at the rear of the whole camp, marched with its military units. Ahiezer, Ammishaddai's son, commanded its military. <sup>26</sup>Pagiel, Ochran's son, commanded the military of the tribe of Asher. <sup>27</sup>Ahira, Enan's son, commanded the military of the tribe of Naphtali. <sup>28</sup>This was the order of departure of the Israelites with their military units when they set out.

**The chest leads**

<sup>29</sup>Moses said to Hobab the Midianite, Reuel's son and Moses' father-in-law, "We're marching to the place about which the LORD has said, 'I'll give it to you.' Come with us and we'll treat you well, for the LORD has promised to treat Israel well."

times, emphasizing God's direction and the people's obedience.

**10:2** The trumpets are different from the ram's horn (called a *shofar*) mentioned in Exodus 19:13-19.

**10:5-6 east... south:** The reason for mentioning only the eastern and the southern camps is not given. The Greek version of the Hebrew Bible added the departure of the western and the northern camps, using similar wording.

**10:8 a permanent regulation for you throughout time:** The priest's calling God's people was to be an ongoing practice. However, no meeting tent or temple has stood since the destruction of the temple in 70 CE.

**10:9 a reminder of you to your God:** In the context of battle, Israel suffers defeat if God "forgets" (cf. Ps 44:24). Blowing the trumpets functions like prayer, reminding God about the covenant that God made with Israel. (See also Num 10:10, 2 Chron 13:12-16.)

**10:10 On your festival days:** See the religious calendar in Numbers 28-29.

**10:11-36** As a freed (Exod 1-18); covenantal (Exod 19-40); holy (Leviticus); and organized (Num 1:1-10:10) community, they now set out toward the promised land. The same Hebrew verb lies behind *set out* and *march*, making 14 appearances in these verses.

**10:11 the twentieth day... second year:** a precise date related to the exodus event (Exod 12). It's 19 days after the census of Israel's militia (Num 1:1-3) and 11 months after Israel's arrival at Sinai (Exod 19:1). The time marks a fundamental shift from staying at one particular place to moving on.

**10:12 the Paran desert:** territory north of Mount Sinai (1 Kgs 11:18; cf. Gen 14:6; 21:21; Deut 33:2) between Egypt and Canaan.

**10:13-28** The marching order reflects Numbers 2:3-31, where the 12 tribes were divided into four groups. See also Numbers 1:5b-15; 7:20-83. The Levites march in their midst (Num 10:17, 21).

**10:29-36** Moses asks Hobab the Midianite for help in navigating the desert. Perhaps Moses thinks the guidance of

**10:2** Is 1:13  
**10:3** Jer 4:5;  
 Jl 2:15  
**10:4** Ex 18:21;  
 Nm 1:16, Nm 7:2  
**10:5** Nm 2:3,  
 Nm 10:14  
**10:6** Nm 2:10,  
 Nm 10:18  
**10:7** Nm 10:3;  
 Jl 2:1  
**10:8** 2Ch 13:12  
**10:9** Gn 8:1;  
 Nm 31:6;  
 Jgs 2:18;  
 1Sa 10:18;  
 2Ch 13:14  
**10:10**  
 Nm 28:11;  
 Ps 81:3  
**10:29** Gn 12:7;  
 Ex 2:18, Ex 3:1;  
 Jgs 4:11

11:1 Ex 14:11;  
Ex 15:24;  
Ex 16:2; Lv 10:2;  
Nm 16:35

11:2 Nm 21:7

11:3 Dt 9:22

11:4 Ex 12:38;  
Ex 16:3;  
Ps 78:18;  
1Co 10:6

11:5 Ex 16:3;  
Is 1:8

11:6 Nm 21:5

11:12 Ex 13:5;  
Is 40:11; Is 49:23

11:14 Ex 18:18

11:15 Ex 32:32;

1Ki 19:4;

Job 7:15;

Jon 4:3

<sup>30</sup>Hobab said to him, "I won't go; I'd rather go to my land and to my folk."

<sup>31</sup>Moses said, "Please don't abandon us, for you know where we can camp in the desert, and you can be our eyes. <sup>32</sup>If you go with us, whatever good the LORD does for us, we'll do for you."

<sup>33</sup>They marched from the LORD's mountain for three days. The LORD's chest containing the covenant marched ahead of them for three days to look for a resting place for them.

<sup>34</sup>Now the LORD's cloud was over them by day when they marched from the camp. <sup>35</sup>When the chest set out, Moses would say, "Arise, LORD, let your enemies scatter, and those who hate you flee." <sup>36</sup>When it rested, he would say, "Return, LORD of the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

### Complaint at Taberah

**11** When the people complained intensely in the LORD's hearing, the LORD heard and became angry. Then the LORD's fire burned them and consumed the edges of the camp.

<sup>2</sup>When the people cried out to Moses, Moses prayed to the LORD, and the fire subsided. <sup>3</sup>The name of that place was called Taberah,<sup>1</sup> because the LORD's fire burned against them.

### Complaint over the lack of meat

<sup>4</sup>The riffraff among them had a strong craving. Even the Israelites cried again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat? <sup>5</sup>We remember the fish we ate in Egypt for free, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. <sup>6</sup>Now our lives are wasting away. There is nothing but manna in front of us."

<sup>7</sup>The manna was like coriander seed and its color was like resin. <sup>8</sup>The people would roam around and collect it and grind it with millstones or pound it in a mortar. Then they would boil it in pots and make it into cakes. It tasted like cakes baked in olive oil. <sup>9</sup>When the dew fell on the camp during the night, the manna would fall with it.

### Moses' complaint about leadership

<sup>10</sup>Moses heard the people crying throughout their clans, each at his tent's entrance. The LORD was outraged, and Moses was upset. <sup>11</sup>Moses said to the LORD, "Why have you treated your servant so badly? And why haven't I found favor in your eyes, for you have placed the burden of all these people on me? <sup>12</sup>Did I conceive all these people? Did I give birth to them, that you would say to me, 'Carry them at the breast, as a nurse carries an unweaned child,' to the fertile land that you promised their ancestors? <sup>13</sup>Where am I to get meat for all these people? They are crying before me and saying, 'Give us meat, so we can eat.' <sup>14</sup>I can't bear this people on my own. They're too heavy for me. <sup>15</sup>If you're going to treat me like this, please kill me. If I've found favor in your eyes, then don't let me endure this wretched situation."

<sup>1</sup>Or the place of burning

the cloud is insufficient. Or the text may be showing the importance of human and divine powers working cooperatively.

10:29 Moses' father-in-law is called not only Hobab (Judg 4:11), but also Jethro (Exod 3:1; 4:18; 18:1-12) and Reuel (Exod 2:18).

10:33 They may refer to Hobab and Moses, suggesting the father-in-law eventually agrees to Moses' persistent request. *marched ahead of them*: The order is different from Numbers 10:21, where the Kohathites, presumably carrying the chest, march in the middle. *for three days*: appears twice in this verse. The second appearance may be a scribal error.

10:34-36 The *cloud* and *chest* are symbols of God's commitment and presence. The Lord is portrayed as a warrior who gives victory (cf. Exod 15:3; 1 Sam 4-6; Ps 132:8).

11:1-3 This is the first rebellion story in the book of Numbers. The text highlights the sharp contrast between what precedes (the perfect preparation and ideal departure from Sinai) and what follows (constant complaints). It provides a pattern found in later stories: complaining, punishment, a cry for help, intercession, and removal of punishment. Eventually, this generation will fail to conquer the promised land from the south (Num 13-14).

11:1 *complained intensely*: What they complained about is unknown. *the LORD... became angry*: A similar expression occurs in other places as well (Num 11:10, 33; 12:9; 16:46; 22:22; 25:3, 4; 32:10, 13-14; see sidebar, "Divine Anger").

11:2 *fire* is sometimes connected with anger in the OT (e.g., Deut 32:22). Here, it may refer to lightning (Exod 9:23-24).

11:3 *Taberah*: As is often the case (cf. Num 11:34), a place is given a name that relates to an event that happened there (see translation note I).

11:4-34 These verses share the pattern of Numbers 11:1-3, but focus on leadership. The event is recounted in Psalm 78:26-31.

11:4 *The riffraff*: may refer to non-Israelites who went along with the Israelites from Egypt (Exod 12:38).

11:7-9 This description of the *manna* counters Numbers 11:6. The divine gift of manna was tasty and substantial, and it was provided daily (Exod 16:14-21, 31) until the Israelites came to the promised land (Exod 16:35; Josh 5:12).

11:10-15 Moses complains about his own responsibility by using a maternal metaphor. He portrays God as having conceived and given birth to the Israelites, but neglecting to nurse these suckling children (cf. Deut 32:18; Isa 40:11). Moses is not rejecting responsibility altogether, but complaining of caring for the Israelites alone.

*Divine Anger* God's anger appears frequently in the book of Numbers (Num 1:53; 11:1, 10, 33; 12:9; 14:18; 16:22, 46; 18:5; 22:22; 25:3-4, 11; 32:10, 13-14). Divine anger is both similar to and different from human anger.

Both God and humans become upset over wrongdoings. In Numbers, God's wrath arises over the people yearning to return to Egypt (Num 11:10, 33; 12:9); wanting to worship other gods (Num 25:3-4); and refusing to enter the promised land (Num 32:10, 13-14).

Both divine and human anger can be frightening. Certainly, that is the case with God's anger here in Numbers, as it frequently results in disaster and death (e.g., Num 11:1, 33).

However, unlike some forms of human anger, God's anger is not an unpredictable outburst. It stems from God's opposition to evil and wickedness. It reflects God's love for those who have wrongfully suffered.

Many biblical texts emphasize that God is slow to anger. Unlike many humans, "The LORD is very patient and absolutely loyal, forgiving wrongs and disloyalty" (Num 14:18; see also Exod 34:6; Ps 103:8; Jon 4:2). People today tend to assume either that God does not get angry—displaying only love—or that God becomes instantly angry over the smallest wrongdoing. Neither assumption matches what the Bible teaches: God's wrath can come, but only after exhausting God's patience.

<sup>16</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Gather before me seventy men from Israel's elders, whom you know as elders and officers of the people. Take them to the meeting tent, and let them stand there with you. <sup>17</sup>Then I'll descend and speak with you there. I'll take some of the spirit that is on you and place it on them. Then they will carry the burden of the people with you so that you won't bear it alone. <sup>18</sup>To the people you will say, 'Make yourselves holy for tomorrow; then you will eat meat, for you've cried in the LORD's hearing, "Who will give us meat to eat? It was better for us in Egypt.'" The LORD will give you meat, and you will eat. <sup>19</sup>You won't eat for just one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, <sup>20</sup>but for a whole month until it comes out of your nostrils and nauseates you. You've rejected the LORD who's been with you and you have cried before him, saying, "Why did we leave Egypt?"'"

<sup>21</sup>Moses said, "The people I'm with are six hundred thousand on foot and you're saying, 'I will give them meat, and they will eat for a month.' <sup>22</sup>Can flocks and herds be found and slaughtered for them? Or can all the fish in the sea be found and caught for them?"

<sup>23</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Is the LORD's power too weak? Now you will see whether my word will come true for you or not."

<sup>24</sup>So Moses went out and told the people the LORD's words. He assembled seventy men from the people's elders and placed them around the tent. <sup>25</sup>The LORD descended in a cloud, spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and placed it on the seventy elders. When the spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but only this once. <sup>26</sup>Two men had remained in the camp, one named Eldad and the second named Medad, and the spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they hadn't gone out to the tent, so they prophesied in the camp. <sup>27</sup>A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."

<sup>28</sup>Joshua, Nun's son and Moses' assistant since his youth, responded, "My master Moses, stop them!"

<sup>29</sup>Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? If only all the LORD's people were prophets with the LORD placing his spirit on them!"

**Quail from the sea**

<sup>30</sup>Moses and Israel's elders were assembled in the camp. <sup>31</sup>A wind from the LORD blew up and brought quails from the sea. It let them fall by the camp, about a day's journey all around the camp and about three feet deep on the ground. <sup>32</sup>Then the people arose and gathered the quail all that day, all night, and all the next day. The least collected was ten homers,<sup>m</sup> and

<sup>m</sup>Five hundred gallons; one homer is two hundred quarts

11:16 The *elders* are different from the leaders selected in Exodus 18:25-26.  
 11:20 The phrase *out of your nostrils* sounds like *You've rejected* in Hebrew, suggesting their punishment fits their rejection.  
 11:25 *the spirit that was on him*: The elders receive a

portion of the spirit given to Moses. God's spirit also comes upon Balaam (Num 24:2) and various judges (e.g., Judg 3:10).  
 11:31 *a wind*: In Hebrew this is the same as the word for "spirit" used in Numbers 11:25.  
 11:32 *ten homers*: about 500 gallons.

11:16 Ex 3:16,  
 Ex 24:1, Ex 24:9  
 11:17  
 Nm 11:25;  
 1Sa 10:6; 2Ki 2:9,  
 2Ki 2:15; Jl 2:28  
 11:18 Ex 19:10;  
 Nm 11:5  
 11:20 Ps 106:15  
 11:23 Nm 23:19;  
 1s 50:2; Is 59:1;  
 Eze 12:25;  
 Eze 24:14  
 11:24 Ex 24:9;  
 Nm 11:16  
 11:25 Ex 34:5;  
 Nm 11:17,  
 Nm 12:5;  
 1Sa 19:20  
 11:26 1Sa 20:26;  
 Jer 36:5  
 11:28 Ex 17:9;  
 Ex 24:13;  
 Ex 33:11;  
 Nm 26:65;  
 Mk 9:38  
 11:29 1Co 14:5  
 11:31 Ex 16:13;  
 Ps 78:26;  
 Ps 105:40  
 11:32 Eze 45:11

11:34 Nm 33:16;  
Dt 9:22  
12:1 Ex 2:21,  
Ex 15:20;  
Dt 24:9  
12:2 Nm 11:1,  
Nm 16:3  
12:3 Mt 11:29  
12:5 Ex 13:21,  
Ex 34:5;  
Nm 11:25  
12:6 Gn 31:11,  
Gn 46:2; 1Ki 3:5;  
Job 33:15;  
Jer 23:28  
12:7 Ps 105:26;  
Heb 3:2, Heb 3:5  
12:8 Ex 33:11;  
Dt 34:10  
12:10 Dt 24:9;  
2Ki 5:27  
12:13 Nm 12:14;  
Jer 17:14  
12:14 Lv 13:46;  
Dt 25:9;  
Job 30:10  
12:15 Nm 12:10;  
Dt 24:9, Mt 6:4  
13:1 Dt 1:22;  
Josh 14:7

they laid them out around the camp. <sup>33</sup>While the meat was still between their teeth and not yet consumed, the LORD's anger blazed against the people. The LORD struck the people with a very great punishment. <sup>34</sup>The name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah,<sup>a</sup> because there they buried the people who had the craving.

### Miriam and Aaron challenge Moses

<sup>35</sup>From Kibroth-hattaavah the people marched to Hazeroth. **12** When they were in Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses on account of the Cushite woman whom he had married—for he had married a Cushite woman. <sup>2</sup>They said, “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Hasn't he also spoken through us?” The LORD heard it. <sup>3</sup>Now the man Moses was humble, more so than anyone on earth.

### The LORD defends Moses

<sup>4</sup>Immediately, the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, “You three go out to the meeting tent.” So the three of them went out. <sup>5</sup>Then the LORD descended in a column of cloud, stood at the entrance of the tent, and called to Aaron and Miriam. The two of them came forward. <sup>6</sup>He said, “Listen to my words: If there is a prophet of the LORD among you,<sup>o</sup> I make myself known to him in visions. I speak to him in dreams. <sup>7</sup>But not with my servant Moses. He has proved to be reliable with all my household. <sup>8</sup>I speak with him face-to-face, visibly, not in riddles. He sees the LORD's form. So why aren't you afraid to criticize my servant Moses?” <sup>9</sup>The LORD's anger blazed against them, and they went back.

### The LORD punishes Miriam

<sup>10</sup>When the cloud went away from over the tent, Miriam suddenly developed a skin disease flaky like snow. Aaron turned toward Miriam and saw her skin disease. <sup>11</sup>Then Aaron said to Moses, “Oh, my master, please don't punish us for the sin that we foolishly committed. <sup>12</sup>Please don't let her be like the stillborn, whose flesh is half eaten as it comes out of the mother's womb.”

<sup>13</sup>So Moses cried to the LORD, “God, please heal her!”

<sup>14</sup>The LORD said to Moses, “If her father had spit in her face, would she not be shamed for seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp for seven days, and afterward she will be brought back.” <sup>15</sup>So they shut Miriam out of the camp seven days. And the people didn't march until Miriam was brought back. <sup>16</sup>Afterward the people marched from Hazeroth, and they camped in the Paran desert.

### Leaders explore the land of Canaan

**13** The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Send out men to explore the land of Canaan, which I'm giving to the Israelites. Send one man from each ancestral tribe, each a chief among them. <sup>3</sup>So Moses sent them out from the Paran desert according to the LORD's command. All the men were leaders among the Israelites. <sup>4</sup>These are their names:

from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua, Zaccur's son;

<sup>5</sup>from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat, Hori's son;

<sup>6</sup>from the tribe of Judah, Caleb, Jephunneh's son;

<sup>7</sup>from the tribe of Issachar, Igal, Joseph's son;

<sup>a</sup>Or *graves of craving* <sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain; LXX *If there is a prophet of you for the Lord*

11:34 *Kibroth-hattaavah*: As is often the case (cf. Num 11:3), a place is named in a way that matches biblical events (see translation note n). This location is mentioned in Numbers 33:16-17.

11:35 *Hazeroth*: See Numbers 33:17-18.

12:1 *the Cushite woman*: might be Zipporah (Exod 2:15-22), since Cush appears in tandem with Midian (Hab 3:7). However, she could be another woman from Ethiopia.

12:3 *humble*: doesn't mean submissive or lacking courage, but having an unassuming integrity.

12:6-8 Some prophets receive God's word in *visions, dreams, and riddles*. However, God speaks to Moses *face-to-face, visibly* (see Exod 33:7-11; 34:6-7; Deut 34:10).

12:10 *a skin disease flaky like snow*: The precise nature of this disease is unknown (also mentioned in Exod 4:6; Lev

13:44-45; 14:2-3; 22:4; Num 5:2; 2 Kgs 5:27). While *Miriam* alone is mentioned as contracting this disease, *Aaron* fears similar punishment (Num 12:11).

12:14-15 *spit in her face*: a sign of contempt (Deut 25:9) and insult (Isa 50:6). *shut out of the camp for seven days*: prescribed in Leviticus 13:4 and 14:3. *didn't march*: Miriam is a leader, called a “prophet” in Exodus 15:20.

13:1-2 *The Lord spoke*: See Deuteronomy 1:19-46, where the people approached Moses and requested that he send out spies. *which I'm giving to the Israelites*: recalls God's promise to Israel's ancestors (Gen 23:2; Lev 14:34; 18:3; 25:38; Num 32:30).

13:3-16 *The leaders* aren't the same people as in Numbers 1:5-15. Except *Hoshea* (*Joshua*) and *Caleb*, none of the leaders are mentioned in the Bible again. The order of

<sup>8</sup>from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea, Nun's son;

<sup>9</sup>from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti, Raphu's son;

<sup>10</sup>from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel, Sodi's son;

<sup>11</sup>from the tribe of Joseph:

from the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi, Susi's son;

<sup>12</sup>from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel, Gemalli's son;

<sup>13</sup>from the tribe of Asher, Sethur, Michael's son;

<sup>14</sup>from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi, Vophsi's son;

<sup>15</sup>from the tribe of Gad, Geuel, Machi's son.

<sup>16</sup>These are the names of the men whom Moses sent out to explore the land. Moses changed the name of Hoshea, Nun's son, to Joshua.

<sup>17</sup>When Moses sent them out to explore the land of Canaan, he said to them, "Go up there into the arid southern plain and into the mountains. <sup>18</sup>You must inspect the land. What is it like? Are the people who live in it strong or weak, few or many? <sup>19</sup>Is the land in which they live good or bad? Are the towns in which they live camps or fortresses? <sup>20</sup>Is the land rich or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Be courageous and bring back the land's fruit." It was the season of the first ripe grapes.

<sup>21</sup>They went up and explored the land from the Zin desert to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath.

<sup>22</sup>They went up into the arid southern plain and entered Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of the Anakites, lived. (Hebron was built seven years before Tanis<sup>a</sup> in Egypt.) <sup>23</sup>Then they entered the Cluster<sup>a</sup> ravine, cut down from there a branch with one cluster of grapes, and carried it on a pole between them. They also took pomegranates and figs. <sup>24</sup>That place was called the Cluster ravine because of the cluster of grapes that the Israelites cut down from there.

### Report about the land of Canaan

<sup>25</sup>They returned from exploring the land after forty days. <sup>26</sup>They went directly to Moses, Aaron, and the entire Israelite community in the Paran desert at Kadesh. They brought back a report to them and to the entire community and showed them the land's fruit. <sup>27</sup>Then they gave their report: "We entered the land to which you sent us. It's actually full of milk and honey, and this is its fruit. <sup>28</sup>There are, however, powerful people who live in the land. The cities have huge fortifications. And we even saw the descendants of the Anakites there. <sup>29</sup>The Amalekites live in the land of the arid southern plain; the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the mountains; and the Canaanites live by the sea and along the Jordan."

<sup>30</sup>Now Caleb calmed the people before Moses and said, "We must go up and take possession of it, because we are more than able to do it."

<sup>31</sup>But the men who went up with him said, "We can't go up against the people because they are stronger than we." <sup>32</sup>They started a rumor about the land that they had explored, telling the Israelites, "The land that we crossed over to explore is a land that devours its residents. All the people we saw in it are huge men. <sup>33</sup>We saw there the Nephilim (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We saw ourselves as grasshoppers, and that's how we appeared to them."

### The Israelites' complaint

**14** The entire community raised their voice and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup>All the Israelites criticized Moses and Aaron. The entire community said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt or if only we had died in this desert! <sup>3</sup>Why is the LORD bringing us

<sup>a</sup>Heb Zoan <sup>q</sup>Or cluster of grapes

the tribes begins with Reuben (as in Num 1: 26; but unlike Num 2: 7; 10; 34). *Hoshea* means "he saved" (cf. Deut 32:44). *Joshua* means "the LORD saves." Joshua and Caleb, the two spies who don't fall under God's judgment, lead *Ephraim* and *Judah*, two of the most important tribes in the Bible. *Ephraim* will later be used as a name for the northern kingdom of Israel (Jer 31:9); and *Judah* becomes the southern kingdom that includes Jerusalem.   
13:20 the season of the first ripe grapes: late summer.   
13:21 the land from the Zin desert to Rehob, near Lebo-

*hamath*: the full land of Canaan from the south to the north (cf. Num 33:3-4; Josh 15:1, 3; Ezek 48:1).

13:22 *Anakites*: legendary warriors of great size. See Numbers 13:28, 32-33.

13:29 *the mountains*: located in the central region between the sea to the west and the Jordan to the east.

13:33 *descendants of Anak*: Anakites (Num 13:28).

*Nephilim*: semidivine, mythological giants (see Gen 6:1-4).

14:1-4 *Egypt*: As in Numbers 11:5, the people voice their preference for the land where they were slaves.

13:8 Nm 11:28,  
Nm 13:16;  
Dt 32:44;  
Josh 1:1  
13:16 Nm 13:8;  
Dt 32:44  
13:20 Dt 31:6,  
Dt 31:23  
13:23 Gn 14:13;  
Nm 13:24,  
Nm 32:9;  
Dt 1:24, Dt 8:8  
13:24 Nm 13:23  
13:27 Ex 3:8,  
Ex 3:17; Dt 1:25  
13:28 Nm 13:22,  
Nm 13:33;  
Dt 1:28, Dt 9:1,  
Dt 9:2  
14:3 Ex 5:21;  
Nm 14:31;  
Dt 1:39

14:4 Neh 9:17

14:5 Nm 16:4,  
Nm 20:6;  
1Ch 21:1614:6 Gn 37:29,  
Gn 37:34;  
Nm 13:30,  
Nm 14:30;  
Jgs 11:3514:10 Ex 16:10,  
Ex 17:4; Lv 9:23;  
Nm 16:19,  
Nm 16:4214:11 Ps 78:22,  
Ps 106:24

14:12 Ex 32:10

14:13 Ex 32:11;  
Josh 7:9;Ps 106:23;  
Exe 20:914:18 Ex 20:5,  
Ex 20:6,  
Ex 34:6, Ex 34:7;  
Jon 4:214:21 Dt 32:40;  
Ps 72:19; Is 6:3,  
Is 49:18;  
Hab 2:1414:23 Nm 26:65,  
Nm 32:11;Dt 1:35;  
Ps 95:11;  
Heb 3:1814:24 Nm 14:6,  
Nm 26:65,  
Nm 32:12;  
Dt 1:36;  
Josh 14:8

14:27 Ex 16:12

14:28 Nm 14:21

14:29 Nm 1:45,  
Nm 14:32;1Co 10:5;  
Heb 3:1714:30 Nm 14:38,  
Nm 32:1214:31 Nm 14:3;  
Ps 106:24

to this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our children will be taken by force. Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt?" <sup>4</sup>So they said to each other, "Let's pick a leader and let's go back to Egypt."

<sup>5</sup>Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the assembled Israelite community. <sup>6</sup>But Joshua, Nun's son, and Caleb, Jephunneh's son, from those who had explored the land, tore their clothes <sup>7</sup>and said to the entire Israelite community, "The land we crossed through to explore is an exceptionally good land. <sup>8</sup>If the LORD is pleased with us, he'll bring us into this land and give it to us. It's a land that's full of milk and honey. <sup>9</sup>Only don't rebel against the LORD and don't be afraid of the people of the land. They are our prey.<sup>9</sup> Their defense has deserted them, but the LORD is with us. So don't be afraid of them." <sup>10</sup>But the entire community intended to stone them.

### *The LORD's anger and Moses' intercession*

Then the LORD's glory appeared in the meeting tent to all the Israelites. <sup>11</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people disrespect me? And how long will they doubt me after all the signs that I performed among them? <sup>12</sup>I'll strike them down with a plague and disown them. Then I'll make you into a great nation, stronger than they."

<sup>13</sup>Moses said to the LORD, "The Egyptians will hear, for with your power you brought these people up from among them. <sup>14</sup>They'll tell the inhabitants of this land. They've heard that you, LORD, are with this people. You, LORD, appear to them face-to-face. Your cloud stands over them. You go before them in a column of cloud by day and in a column of lightning by night. <sup>15</sup>If you kill these people, every last one of them, the nations who heard about you will say, <sup>16</sup>'The LORD wasn't able to bring these people to the land that he solemnly promised to give them. So he slaughtered them in the desert.'<sup>17</sup> Now let my master's power be as great as you declared when you said, <sup>18</sup>'The LORD is very patient and absolutely loyal, forgiving wrongs and disloyalty. Yet he doesn't forgo all punishment, disciplining the grandchildren and great-grandchildren for their ancestors' wrongs.'<sup>19</sup> Please forgive the wrongs of these people because of your absolute loyalty, just as you've forgiven these people from their time in Egypt until now."

<sup>20</sup>Then the LORD said, "I will forgive as you requested. <sup>21</sup>But as I live and as the LORD's glory fills the entire earth, <sup>22</sup>none of the men who saw my glory and the signs I did in Egypt and in the desert, but tested me these ten times and haven't listened to my voice, <sup>23</sup>will see the land I promised to their ancestors. All who disrespected me won't see it. <sup>24</sup>But I'll bring my servant Caleb into the land that he explored, and his descendants will possess it because he has a different spirit, and he has remained true to me. <sup>25</sup>Since the Amalekites and the Canaanites live in the valley, tomorrow turn and march into the desert by the route of the Reed Sea."<sup>26</sup>

### *The Israelites' punishment*

<sup>26</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron: <sup>27</sup>How long will this wicked community complain against me? I've heard the Israelites' dissent as they continue to complain against me. <sup>28</sup>Say to them, "As I live," says the LORD, "just as I've heard you say, so I'll do to you. <sup>29</sup>Your dead bodies will fall in this desert. None of you who were enlisted and were registered from 20 years old and above, who complained against me, <sup>30</sup>will enter the land in which I promised<sup>d</sup> to settle you, with the exception of Caleb, Jephunneh's son, and Joshua, Nun's son. <sup>31</sup>But your children, whom you said would be taken by force, I'll bring them in and they will know

<sup>r</sup>Or our bread <sup>s</sup>Or Red Sea <sup>t</sup>Or raised my hand

14:5 *fell on their faces*: more than expressing fear of the angry mob, this action prepares Moses and Aaron for the imminent appearance of God (Num 14:10b).

14:6 *tore their clothes*: a sign of distress.

14:9 *They are our prey*: See translation note r. This statement contrasts with Numbers 13:32, where the land devours its residents; and Numbers 13:33, where the Israelites are mere grasshoppers.

14:10 *the LORD's glory appeared*: likely in a cloud (as in Exod 16:10; Num 9:15-23).

14:14 *face-to-face*: The Hebrew idiom here is "eye-to-eye." In Numbers 12:8, the Hebrew idiom is "mouth-to-mouth."

14:18 See Exodus 34:6-7.

14:21 *as I live*: marks the beginning of a solemn pledge.

14:22 *ten times*: a figure of speech meaning "frequently," as in Genesis 31:7.

14:25 *Reed Sea*: See note on Exodus 10:19.

14:28 *just as I've heard you say, so I'll do to you*: Their desire for death in the desert (Num 14:2) is granted (Num 14:29, 32-33). Their perception that they will fall by the sword (Num 14:3) comes true (Num 14:43). Their plot to go back to Egypt (Num 14:3-4) is at least partially successful, as they march away from the promised land (Num 14:25). The spies' 40 days of scouting the promised land

14:37 Nm 16:49;  
1Co 10:10;  
Heb 3:17

the land that you rejected. <sup>32</sup>Your bodies, however, will fall in this desert, <sup>33</sup>and your children will be shepherds in the desert for forty years. They will suffer for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies fall in the desert. <sup>34</sup>For as many days as you explored the land, that is, forty days, just as many years you'll bear your guilt, that is, forty years. This is how you will understand my frustration." <sup>35</sup>[The LORD have spoken. I will do this to the entire wicked community who gathered against me. They will die in this desert. There they'll meet their end.

<sup>36</sup>The men whom Moses sent out to explore the land had returned and caused the entire community to complain against him by starting a rumor about the land. <sup>37</sup>These men died by a plague in the LORD's presence on account of their false rumor. <sup>38</sup>But Joshua, Nun's son, and Caleb, Jephunneh's son, survived from those men who went to explore the land.

<sup>39</sup>Moses spoke these words to all the Israelites, and the people mourned bitterly. <sup>40</sup>They rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain range, saying, "Let's go up to the place the LORD told us to, for we have sinned."

<sup>41</sup>But Moses said, "Why do you disobey the LORD's command? It won't succeed. <sup>42</sup>Don't go up, for the LORD isn't with you. Don't be struck down before your enemies. <sup>43</sup>The Amalekites and the Canaanites will be there in front of you and you will fall by the sword because you turned away from the LORD, and the LORD is no longer with you." <sup>44</sup>Yet they recklessly<sup>a</sup> ascended toward the top of the mountains, even though Moses and the LORD's chest containing the covenant didn't depart from the camp. <sup>45</sup>Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites, who lived in those mountains, descended, struck them down, and beat them all the way to Hormah.

**Immigrants in the land of Canaan**

**15** The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you enter the land where you will live, which I am giving you, <sup>3</sup>and you make a food gift<sup>b</sup> to the LORD as a soothing smell for the LORD from the herd or the flock—whether an entirely burned offering, or a sacrifice to fulfill a solemn promise, or a spontaneous gift, or at your sacred seasons—<sup>4</sup>the one presenting the offering to the LORD will bring a grain offering of one-tenth of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin<sup>c</sup> of oil. <sup>5</sup>You will also offer one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering with either the entirely burned offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb. <sup>6</sup>For a ram you will offer a grain offering of two-tenths of a measure of fine flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil. You will also present one-third of a hin of wine for a drink offering as a soothing smell for the LORD. <sup>8</sup>When you offer a bull for an entirely burned offering, or a sacrifice to fulfill a solemn promise, or a well-being sacrifice to the LORD, <sup>9</sup>you will present<sup>d</sup> with the bull a grain offering of three-tenths of a measure of fine flour mixed with a half hin of oil. <sup>10</sup>You will present a half hin of wine for a drink offering as a food gift that is a soothing smell to the LORD. <sup>11</sup>So will it be done with each ox, each ram, or for any sheep or goat. <sup>12</sup>However many you offer, you will do the same for each one.

<sup>13</sup>Every citizen will perform these rituals in bringing a food gift that is a soothing smell to the LORD. <sup>14</sup>If an immigrant lives with you or has settled among you for many years and would also like to offer a food gift that is a soothing smell to the LORD, that person must do just as you do. <sup>15</sup>The assembly will have the same regulation for you and for the immigrant. The regulation will be permanent for all time. You and the immigrant will be the same in the LORD's presence. <sup>16</sup>There will be one set of instructions and one legal norm for the immigrant and for you.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Or offering by fire (cf Lev 3:11) <sup>c</sup>One hin is approximately one gallon. <sup>d</sup>Or he will present

is transformed into 40 years of wandering in the desert (Num 14:34). The punishment matches the crime.

14:33 *forty years*: the length of time usually associated with one generation (e.g., Judg 3:11).

14:44 *the LORD's chest... didn't depart*: The Israelites deviate from the pattern in Numbers 10:33-36 with deadly consequences.

14:45 *Hormah* means "utter destruction." This city reappears in Numbers 21:1-3, where the new generation begins their march by utterly destroying the Canaanites.

15:1-19:22 The regulations in these chapters show that God has not given up on the people. Two regulations are for when they enter the promised land (15:1-16,

17-31). Three assume settlement there (15:37-41; 18:1-32; 19:1-22).

15:3 *a food gift*: can be translated "an offering by fire" (see translation note v). This refers to various sacrifices that were burned on the altar (see Lev 1:9). *an entirely burned offering*: See Leviticus 1:3-17; 6:8-13. *a sacrifice to fulfill a solemn promise*: See Leviticus 22:21. *a spontaneous gift*: See Leviticus 7:16-17. *at your sacred seasons*: See Numbers 28-29.

15:4-12 Bigger animals require bigger grain and drink offerings. A *measure* is approximately five gallons, and a *hin* is about one gallon.

15:13-16 This text promotes equal treatment of the citizen and immigrant, as in Numbers 15:26, 29, 30.

15:25 Lv 4:20  
 15:30 Ps 19:13  
 15:32 Ex 20:8,  
 Ex 31:14,  
 Ex 31:15,  
 Ex 35:2, Ex 35:3  
 15:34 Lv 24:12;  
 Nm 9:8  
 15:35 Ex 31:14;  
 Lv 24:14  
 15:36 Lv 20:2;  
 Nm 15:35;  
 Josh 7:25  
 15:38 Dt 22:12;  
 Mt 23:5  
 15:39 Job 31:7;  
 Ps 73:27; Eccl 6:9

<sup>17</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>18</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you enter the land to which I'm bringing you, <sup>19</sup>whenever you eat the land's food you will present a gift offering to the LORD. <sup>20</sup>You will present a gift offering from the first bread you bake just like you present a gift offering from the threshing floor. <sup>21</sup>You will give a gift offering from the first bread you bake for all time.

### **Offerings for accidental sin**

<sup>22</sup>If by accident you don't obey all these commands that the LORD spoke to Moses, <sup>23</sup>or everything that the LORD commanded you through Moses from the day of the LORD's command onward for all time, <sup>24</sup>then if it was done unintentionally without the knowledge of the community, the entire community must offer one bull from the herd as an entirely burned offering, a soothing smell to the LORD, with its grain and drink offering according to the specific instruction, and one male goat for a purification offering. <sup>25</sup>The priest will seek reconciliation for the entire Israelite community. They will be forgiven, because it was unintentional and because they brought their food gift to the LORD, along with their purification offering in the LORD's presence for their accidental error. <sup>26</sup>The entire Israelite community and the immigrant residing among them will be forgiven, because all the people acted unintentionally.

<sup>27</sup>If an individual sins unintentionally, that person must present a one-year-old female goat for a purification offering. <sup>28</sup>The priest will seek reconciliation in the LORD's presence for the person who sinned unintentionally, when the sin is an accident, seeking reconciliation so that person will be forgiven. <sup>29</sup>There will be one set of instructions for the Israelite citizen and the immigrant residing with you for anyone who commits an unintentional sin.

### **Punishment for intentional sin**

<sup>30</sup>But the person who acts deliberately,<sup>7</sup> whether a citizen or an immigrant, and insults the LORD, that person will be cut off from the people <sup>31</sup>for despising the LORD's word and breaking his commands. That person will be completely cut off and bear the guilt.

### **Instructions for Sabbath observance**

<sup>32</sup>When the Israelites were in the desert, they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. <sup>33</sup>Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses, Aaron, and the entire community. <sup>34</sup>They placed him in custody, because it wasn't clear what should be done to him. <sup>35</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses: The man should be put to death. The entire community should stone him outside the camp. <sup>36</sup>The entire community took him outside the camp and stoned him. He died as the LORD had commanded Moses.

### **Fringes on garments**

<sup>37</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>38</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: Make fringes on the edges of your clothing for all time. Have them put blue cords on the fringe on the edges. <sup>39</sup>This will be your fringe. You will see it and remember all the LORD's commands and do them. Then you won't go exploring the lusts of your own heart or your eyes. <sup>40</sup>In this way you'll remember to do all my commands. Then you will be holy to your God. <sup>41</sup>I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD your God.

<sup>7</sup>Or with a high hand

15:17-21 *the first bread*: the first in quality as well as in baking sequence (see also Lev 23:9-14). *the threshing floor*: a place where the grain is separated from the chaff (also mentioned in Num 18:27).

15:22-29 *an entirely burned offering*: See Leviticus 1:3-17; 6:8-13. *purification offering*: See Leviticus 4:1-5; 13. *reconciliation*: between God and either the community (15:25) or the individual (15:28).

15:30-31 *acts deliberately*: in contrast to accidental sin in Numbers 15:22-29. In Leviticus 5:1-6, even intentional sins can be redeemed when persons confess publicly how they have sinned. This option isn't available here, perhaps because of the severe sins of Numbers 11-14. *cut off*: This punishment can involve death or being kept out of the community.

15:32-36 This text provides an example of the deliberate sin described in the previous verses. Unlike the previous and the following texts, this one retells a past event, rather than recounting God's speech. It follows the pattern of Leviticus 24:10-16, which involves blasphemy: The case is defined, the offender is detained, Moses waits for God's direction, and the entire community executes God's verdict. *put to death*: as in Exodus 31:14-15; 35:2-3.

15:37-41 *blue cords*: reminders to keep God's commandments (see Deut 22:12). *exploring the lusts*: not only in the physical sense of committing an improper sexual act, but also in the metaphorical sense of disregarding God to chase after idols. *holy*: godly, set apart, distinct, dedicated, pure, and belonging to God (see Exod 19:6; Lev 19:2).



**A challenge to the priesthood**

**16** Korah—*Izhar's son, Kohath's grandson, and Levi's great-grandson*—with Dathan and Abiram, Eliab's sons, and On, Peleth's son, descendants of Reuben, <sup>2</sup>rose up against Moses, along with two hundred fifty Israelite men, leaders of the community, chosen by the assembly, men of reputation. <sup>3</sup>They assembled against Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You've gone too far, because the entire community is holy, every last one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the LORD's assembly?"

<sup>4</sup>When Moses heard this, he fell on his face. <sup>5</sup>He spoke to Korah and all his community, "In the morning the LORD will make known who is his, who is holy, and who is able to approach him. The one he chooses for himself is the one who will be able to approach him. <sup>6</sup>This is what must be done. Korah and your entire community: Take censers for yourselves. <sup>7</sup>Tomorrow put fire in them and place incense on them in the LORD's presence. The man whom the LORD chooses, that one is holy. You Levites have gone too far!" <sup>8</sup>Moses said to Korah, "Listen, you Levites, <sup>9</sup>isn't it enough for you that Israel's God has separated you from the Israelite community to allow you to approach him, to perform the service of the LORD's dwelling, and to serve before the community by ministering for them? <sup>10</sup>He has allowed you and all your fellow Levites with you to approach him. Yet you also seek the priesthood? <sup>11</sup>Thus you and your entire community have assembled against the LORD. But Aaron, what is he that you complain about him?"

**Test of priesthood**

<sup>12</sup>Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, Eliab's sons. But they said, "We won't come up! <sup>13</sup>Isn't it enough that you've brought us up from a land full of milk and honey to kill us in the desert so that you'd also dominate us? <sup>14</sup>Moreover, you haven't brought us to a land full of milk and honey, nor given us the inheritance of field and vineyard. Would you also gouge out the eyes of these men? We won't come up!"

<sup>15</sup>Moses became very angry and he said to the LORD, "Pay no attention to their offering. I haven't taken a single donkey from them, nor have I wronged any one of them."

<sup>16</sup>Moses said to Korah, "You and your entire community should appear before the LORD tomorrow, you, they, and Aaron. <sup>17</sup>Every person should take his censer, place incense on it, and present it before the LORD. Each person will carry his censer, two hundred fifty censers in all, including you and Aaron." <sup>18</sup>Then every person took his censer, placed fire on it, put incense on it, and stood at the entrance of the meeting tent with Moses and Aaron. <sup>19</sup>Korah gathered the entire community with them to the entrance of the meeting tent.

Then the LORD's glory appeared to the entire community. <sup>20</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, <sup>21</sup>"Separate yourselves from this community so that I may consume them in a moment."

<sup>22</sup>They fell on their faces and said, "God, the God of all living things. If one person sins, should you become angry with the entire community?"

<sup>23</sup>The LORD said to Moses, <sup>24</sup>"Speak to the community and say, 'Withdraw from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.'"

<sup>25</sup>Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram. Israel's elders followed him. <sup>26</sup>He spoke to the community: "Move away from the tents of these wicked men and don't touch anything of theirs, lest you too be wiped out for all their sins." <sup>27</sup>They withdrew from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Then Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the entrance of their tents with their wives, children, and little ones. <sup>28</sup>Moses said, "By this you will know that the LORD sent me to do these deeds and that it wasn't my own desire. <sup>29</sup>If all these people die a natural death, or if their fate be that of all humans, then the LORD hasn't sent me. <sup>30</sup>But if the LORD performs an act of creation, and the ground opens its mouth

16:1 Ex 6:18, Ex 6:21; Nm 26:9; Dt 11:6; Jud 1:11  
16:2 Nm 1:16, Nm 26:9  
16:3 Ex 19:6; Nm 16:7; Ps 106:16  
16:4 Nm 14:5, Nm 20:6  
16:5 Lv 10:3; Nm 17:5; Ps 65:4; 2Ti 2:19  
16:6 Lv 10:1; Lv 16:12; Nm 16:16  
16:7 Nm 16:3  
16:9 Dt 10:8  
16:10 Nm 3:10  
16:11 Ex 4:14, Ex 5:20; Ex 16:7; Ex 16:8; 1Co 3:5  
16:12 Nm 16:1; Nm 16:27  
16:13 Ex 2:14; Ex 3:8; Ex 16:3; Ac 7:35  
16:14 Ex 22:5; Ex 23:11; Lv 20:34; Nm 20:5; Jgs 16:21  
16:15 Ex 32:19; 1Sa 12:3  
16:16 Nm 16:6  
16:17 Nm 16:16, Nm 16:46  
16:18 Lv 10:1  
16:19 Nm 14:10; Nm 16:1; Nm 16:42; Nm 20:6  
16:20 Ex 33:5; Nm 11:10; Nm 14:11; Nm 21:7; Nm 25:4  
16:21 Ex 32:10; Ex 33:5; Nm 16:45; 2Co 6:17; Rev 18:4  
16:22 Gn 18:23; Nm 14:5; Nm 27:16; Job 12:10; Zec 12:1  
16:25 Nm 11:16  
16:26 Gn 19:12; Is 52:11; 2Co 6:17; Rev 18:4  
16:27 Nm 16:12  
16:28 Ex 3:12; Jn 5:36  
16:29 1Ki 22:28  
16:30 Nm 14:11; Nm 16:33; Ps 55:15

16:1 *Korah* belonged to the Kohathites, a group of Levites who were responsible for the most holy things (Num 4:4), though they were not to see or touch them (Num 4:15, 20). *Reuben*: prominent among the 12 tribes as the first son of Jacob.  
16:4 *fell on his face*: a sign of humility and waiting for God's instructions.  
16:6-7 *censers*: containers for burning incense.  
16:9 *perform the service*: The Levites' responsibilities are

outlined in Numbers 1:48-53; 3:5-39; 4:1-49; 8:5-26.  
16:14 *gouge out the eyes of*: a figure of speech meaning "mislead."  
16:15 *a single donkey*: See 1 Samuel 8:16; 12:3.  
16:19 *the Lord's glory appeared*: likely in a cloud (as in Exod 16:10; Num 9:15-23).  
16:22 *They*: Moses and Aaron. *one person... entire community*: See Genesis 18:23-25; Ezekiel 18:4.  
16:25 *elders*: See Numbers 11:10-29.

16:31 Nm 26:10;  
Dt 11:6;  
Ps 106:17

16:32 Nm 26:11;  
1Ch 6:22

16:33 Jud 1:11

16:34 Nm 17:12;  
Zec 14:5

16:35 Lv 10:2;  
Nm 11:1;  
Nm 26:10

16:38 Nm 17:10;  
Nm 26:10;  
Prv 20:2;  
Eze 14:8; 2Pl 2:6

16:40 Nm 3:10;  
Nm 3:38;  
2Ch 26:18

16:41 Nm 14:2;  
Nm 16:3

16:46 Lv 10:1;  
Lv 10:6;  
Nm 8:19

16:47 Nm 16:46;  
Nm 25:6

16:48 Nm 25:8;  
2Sa 24:25

17:1 Ex 8:8;  
Ex 9:29;  
Ex 10:1;  
Ex 10:16;  
Ex 11:1

17:5 Nm 16:5

17:7 Ex 38:21;  
Nm 17:8;  
2Ch 24:6;  
Ac 7:44

17:8 Nm 17:7;  
2Ch 24:6;  
Eze 17:24;  
Heb 9:4

and swallows them and everything that belongs to them, so that they descend alive to their graves, then you'll know that these men disrespected the LORD."

### *The rebels' punishment*

<sup>31</sup>As soon as he finished speaking these words, the ground under them split open. <sup>32</sup>The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, including every human that belonged to Korah and all their possessions. <sup>33</sup>They along with all their possessions descended alive to their graves, and the earth closed over them. They perished in the middle of the assembly. <sup>34</sup>All the Israelites who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, "The earth may swallow us." <sup>35</sup>Then fire went out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred fifty men offering incense.

### *The reminder of the censers*

<sup>36</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>37</sup>Tell Eleazar, Aaron the priest's son, to raise the censers from the fire and scatter the ashes about, because they are holy. <sup>38</sup>Hammer the censers of those who sinned and lost their lives into thin plates for the altar. Since they presented them in the LORD's presence, they had become holy. They will be a sign for the Israelites.

<sup>39</sup>Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers presented by those who had been consumed by fire and hammered them into a covering for the altar, <sup>40</sup>just as the LORD instructed him through Moses. This was a reminder for the Israelites that no outsider who isn't one of Aaron's descendants should approach to burn incense in the LORD's presence, so as not to be like Korah and his community.

<sup>41</sup>On the next day the entire Israelite community complained to Moses and Aaron, "You killed the LORD's people." <sup>42</sup>When the community assembled against Moses and Aaron, they turned toward the meeting tent. At that moment the cloud covered it, and the LORD's glory appeared. <sup>43</sup>Moses and Aaron came to the front of the meeting tent, <sup>44</sup>and the LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>45</sup>Get away from this community, so that I may consume them in an instant.

They fell on their faces, <sup>46</sup>and Moses said to Aaron, "Take the censer, put fire from the altar on it, place incense on it, go quickly to the community, and seek reconciliation for them. Indeed, the LORD's anger has gone out. The plague has begun." <sup>47</sup>Aaron took it as Moses said and ran into the middle of the assembly, for the plague had already begun among the people. He burned incense and sought reconciliation for the people. <sup>48</sup>He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague stopped. <sup>49</sup>Those who died from the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, in addition to those who died because of Korah. <sup>50</sup>Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the meeting tent once the plague stopped.

### *Aaron's budding staff*

**17**<sup>1</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Speak to the Israelites and take from them a staff from each household, from each of the chiefs of their households, twelve staffs. Write each person's name on his staff. <sup>3</sup>Write Aaron's name on Levi's staff, for there will be one staff for the leader of each household. <sup>4</sup>Then you will place them in the meeting tent in front of the chest containing the covenant, where I meet you. <sup>5</sup>The staff of the person I choose will sprout. Then I will rid myself of the Israelites' complaints that they make against you.

<sup>6</sup>Moses spoke to the Israelites, and each of their chiefs gave him a staff, one staff for each chief and his household, twelve staffs, and the staff of Aaron was with their staffs. <sup>7</sup>Moses placed the staffs before the LORD in the meeting tent. <sup>8</sup>The next day Moses entered the covenant tent, and Aaron's staff of Levi's household had sprouted. It grew shoots, produced

<sup>1</sup>17:1 in Heb <sup>2</sup>17:16 in Heb

**16:35** *fire*: See Numbers 11:1.

**16:36-40** *holy*: God's rejection of the person bringing the offering doesn't automatically mean God rejects the substance of the offering. Accordingly, the censers of the 250 leaders are gathered from the fire and made into *plates*, metal sheets that covered the altar.

**16:42** *the LORD's glory appeared*: See Exodus 16:10; Numbers 9:15-23.

**16:46-50** *Aaron* represents the legitimate priests. Unlike the incense brought by the 250 leaders wanting to be priests, Aaron's incense stops punishment.

**17:1-13** Unlike previous texts, which focus on the authority of both Moses and Aaron among other Levites, this text concentrates on Aaron as representing the whole tribe of Levi, not the priesthood. *staff*: same word as "tribe" in Hebrew. See also Exodus 7:8-13.

**17:4** *meeting tent*: See note on Numbers 1:1. *chest containing the covenant*: See note on Numbers 4:5.

**17:5, 10** The Hebrew word for *complaints* doesn't appear again in Numbers. However, the people continue to engage in similar behavior (e.g., Num 21:5).

**17:8** *covenant tent*: See note on Numbers 1:50.

blossoms, and bore almonds. <sup>9</sup>Moses brought out all the staffs from the LORD's presence to the Israelites. They saw what happened, and each person took back his staff.

<sup>10</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Return Aaron's staff in front of the chest containing the covenant to serve as a sign to the rebels so that their complaints against me end and they don't die." <sup>11</sup>Moses did exactly as the LORD commanded him.

<sup>12</sup>The Israelites said to Moses, "We are perishing. We are being destroyed. All of us are being destroyed. <sup>13</sup>Anyone who approaches the LORD's dwelling will die. Are we doomed to perish?"

17:10 Heb 9:4  
17:12 Is 6:5;  
Hos 10:8  
18:1 Ex 28:38  
18:7 Nm 1:51,  
Nm 3:10  
18:8 Lv 6:16,  
Lv 7:6, Lv 7:31  
18:12 Dt 18:4;  
Neh 10:35

*The priests' and Levites' duties*

**18** The LORD said to Aaron: You, your sons, and your household will bear the guilt of offenses connected with the sanctuary. You and your sons will bear the guilt of offenses connected with your priesthood. <sup>2</sup>Bring with you your brothers from the tribe of Levi, your father's tribe, so that they can assist you and serve you and your sons before the covenant tent. <sup>3</sup>They will perform their duties for you and the service for the entire tent. But they will not approach the holy equipment of the sanctuary or the altar, lest both they and you die. <sup>4</sup>They will assist you and they will perform the duties of the meeting tent with regard to all the work of the tent. But no outsider may accompany you. <sup>5</sup>You will perform the duties of the sanctuary and the altar. Then there will no longer be any anger against the Israelites. <sup>6</sup>I have taken your brothers, the Levites, from the Israelites. They are a gift to you, dedicated to the LORD to perform the service of the meeting tent. <sup>7</sup>You and your sons must perform the duties of your priesthood for all the matters of the altar and the area behind the curtain. I give you your priestly service as a gift. But an outsider who approaches will die.

*The priests' compensation*

<sup>8</sup>The LORD spoke to Aaron: I now place you in charge of my gifts, including all the Israelites' sacred offerings. I have given them to you and your sons as an allowance. This is a permanent regulation. <sup>9</sup>This is what belongs to you from the most holy offerings, from the offerings by fire: all their offerings, including their grain offerings, their purification offerings, and their compensation offerings. The most holy offerings that they bring to me will be yours and your sons'. <sup>10</sup>You will eat it as a most holy thing. Every male may eat it. It will be holy to you. <sup>11</sup>This will also belong to you, your sons, and your daughters: I'm giving you the gift offerings and all the Israelites' uplifted offerings. This is a permanent regulation. Anyone who is clean in your household may eat it. <sup>12</sup>All the choice oil, new wine, and the grain's first harvest that they give to the LORD, I'm giving to you. <sup>13</sup>The early produce of everything in their land, which they bring to the LORD, will be yours. Anyone who is clean in

17:13 *Are we doomed to perish?*: Biblical stories can end in questions for readers to consider (as in Jon 4:11).

18:1-7 The terms "sanctuary," "covenant tent," and "meeting tent" essentially mean the same thing. See notes on Numbers 1:1, 50; 3:28.

18:1 *The LORD said to Aaron*: a rare occurrence of God's speaking to Aaron alone (Lev 10:8). *bear the guilt*: face the consequences—divine punishment—for allowing the sanctuary to become unclean.

18:2 *your brothers from the tribe of Levi*: Levites' duties are to assist and serve the priests before the covenant tent, perform physical labor related to all the work of the tent, and guard the sanctuary from trespassing by other Levites and laypeople (Num 1:50-53; 3:5-10; 4:1-33; 8:14-19). They are defined by their association with the priests. They are subordinate and given to the priests as a gift. They have access only to the outer areas of the sanctuary and must not touch the sacred objects or altar.

18:5 *anger*: recalls divine anger in Numbers 1:53; 11:1, 33; 12:9; 14:1-25; 16:22, 46.

18:7 *the area behind the curtain*: the most sacred part of the meeting tent, home to the chest containing the covenant. Only one person, the high priest, could enter it once a year on the Day of Reconciliation (also called "the Day of

Atonement.") It's called "the holiest space" in Exodus 26:33-34; "the inner holy area" in Leviticus 16; and "the holy of holies" in Hebrews 9:3.

18:8-32 Similar instructions are found in Leviticus 6:8-7:36; 10:12-15.

18:9-10 *the most holy offerings*: Three of these are mentioned (grain, purification, compensation). *from the offerings by fire*: Part of the sacrifice (usually the fat, see Lev 4:8-10) was burned in fire as an offering to God, but other parts went to the priests. *grain offerings*: See Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-18. *purification offerings*: See Leviticus 4:1-5:13; Numbers 15:22-31. *compensation offerings*: See Leviticus 5:14-6:7; Leviticus 7:1-6. *You will eat it as a most holy thing*: could indicate they should eat it in a holy place (see Lev 10:13).

18:11 *gift offerings... uplifted offerings*: See Exodus 29:26-28; Leviticus 7:30-34; 10:14-15.

18:12-13 *All the choice... first... The early produce*: the best, the foremost. Before the people enjoy the produce of the land, they should offer various kinds of early produce and the first yield of grain to God, who in turn gives them to the priests. *clean*: instructions for being ritually clean and pure can be found in Leviticus 12-15; 21; Numbers 19.

18:15 Ex 13:2;  
Ex 13:13;  
Ex 34:20;  
Nm 3:46

18:16 Ex 30:13;  
Lv 27:6;  
Nm 3:47

18:19 Lv 2:13;  
Nm 18:8;  
Nm 18:11;  
2Ch 13:5

18:20 Dt 10:9;  
Dt 12:12;  
Dt 14:27;  
Josh 13:33;  
Eze 44:28

18:21 Lv 27:30;  
Nm 18:24;  
Dt 14:22;  
Neh 10:37;  
Heb 7:5

18:22 Nm 1:51;  
Nm 3:38

18:23 Nm 18:20

18:24 Lv 10:14;  
Nm 5:9;  
Nm 18:20;  
Nm 18:21;  
Nm 18:26

18:26 Nm 18:21;  
Nm 18:28;  
Neh 10:38

18:27 Nm 18:30;  
Dt 15:14

19:1 Ex 12:1;  
Lv 10:8, Lv 11:1;  
Lv 13:1, Lv 15:1

19:2 Gn 15:9;  
Dt 21:3; 15a 6:7;  
Heb 9:13

your household may eat it. <sup>14</sup>Everything that is devoted to the LORD in Israel will be yours. <sup>15</sup>Any oldest male from the womb of any living thing that is presented to the LORD, whether human or animal, will be yours. However, you will redeem the oldest males of humans and of unclean animals. <sup>16</sup>Their redemption price from one month of age you will calculate at five shekels of silver according to the sanctuary shekel, which is twenty gerahs. <sup>17</sup>But the oldest offspring of a cow, sheep, or goat you may not redeem. They are holy. You must dash their blood on the altar and turn their fat into smoke for a soothing smell to the LORD. <sup>18</sup>But their meat is yours. It will be yours just as the breast of the uplifted offering and the right thigh are yours. <sup>19</sup>All the holy gift offerings that the Israelites raise to the LORD I have given to you, your sons, and your daughters. This is a permanent regulation. It is a covenant of salt forever in the LORD's presence, for you and your descendants.

<sup>20</sup>The LORD said to Aaron: You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have a share among them. I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites.

### The Levites' compensation

<sup>21</sup>I have given all the one-tenth portions in Israel to the Levites as an inheritance. They are a reward for performing their service in the meeting tent. <sup>22</sup>The Israelites will no longer be able to approach the meeting tent, or they will be responsible for their sin and die. <sup>23</sup>The Levites will perform the service of the meeting tent, and they will be responsible for their own sins. This is a permanent regulation for all time. But they will not inherit land among the Israelites <sup>24</sup>because I've given the Israelites' one-tenth portion, which they have raised to the LORD as a gift offering, as an inheritance to the Levites. Therefore, I've said to them, "They won't inherit land among the Israelites."

<sup>25</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>26</sup>Speak to the Levites and say to them: When you receive from the Israelites the one-tenth portion that I have given you from them as your inheritance, you also must present a gift offering to the LORD from it, a tenth from the one-tenth portion. <sup>27</sup>It will be considered your gift offering, like the grain of the threshing floor and what fills the winepress. <sup>28</sup>In this way you will also present a gift offering to the LORD from all the one-tenth portions that you take from the Israelites. You will provide from it a gift offering to the LORD for Aaron the priest. <sup>29</sup>You will present each gift offering to the LORD from all your gifts, from its best portions and its holiest parts.

<sup>30</sup>You will say to them: When you have presented the best portion, it will be considered for the Levites equivalent to the produce of the grain and the produce of the winepress. <sup>31</sup>You and your household may eat it anywhere, because it is payment for your service in the meeting tent. <sup>32</sup>You will not bear guilt after you have presented the best portion. But you must not make the sacred gifts of the Israelites impure, on penalty of death.

### Instructions about the red cow and the water of purification

**19** The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron: <sup>2</sup>This is the regulation in the Instruction that the LORD commanded. Tell the Israelites that they must bring you a red cow without

18:14 *Everything that is devoted*: See Leviticus 27:28, including translation note k.

18:15-16 See Exodus 13:2, 11-16; 22:29-30; 34:19-20; Numbers 3:12, 47-48. *redeem*: to receive the redemption price. *unclean animals*: explained in Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14. *shekels*: See note on Numbers 3:47.

18:17-18 The offering of the *oldest offspring* of these clean animals is similar to the peace offering (Lev 3:1-17; 7:11-36). The key difference is that here the unburned meat is given to the priests, not divided between priests and offerer. *uplifted offering*: See note on Numbers 18:11.

18:19 *salt*: played important roles in rituals. It made in-cense pure and holy (Exod 30:35) and was offered with all sacrifices (Lev 2:13). See also 2 Chronicles 13:5.

18:20 A similar statement is made in Deuteronomy 18:1-2. 18:21 *all the one-tenth portions*: may refer to both agricultural produce and animals (cf. Neh 10:36-38; 13:5). See also Leviticus 27:30-33; Deuteronomy 12:6-18; 14:22-29;

26:12-15. *reward*: in the sense of a wage or salary in exchange for labor related to the tent.

18:23-24 *they will not inherit land*: No territory is given to the Levites, except 48 cities for them to live in (Num 35:1-8).

18:25-32 The tenth the Levites receive from the Israelites (18:26) is considered *sacred gifts* (18:32). They must bring a *tenth from the one-tenth portion* to God. When they do so, the remaining nine-tenths becomes *equivalent to the produce* (18:30), that is, no longer holy, but ordinary wages for the Levites' work. At that point, they can eat the nine-tenths *anywhere* (18:31). Prior to that time, however, it's sacred and set apart. Treating it as ordinary food before giving God *the best portion* (18:30) is how *the sacred gifts* are made *impure* (18:32).

19:2 *Instruction*: The Hebrew word is *Torah*, a term that sometimes refers to the first five books of the Old Testament. (See also Exod 12:49; 16:4.) *red*: symbolizes blood. *without defect, which is flawless*: See Leviticus 22:20;

defect, which is flawless and on which no yoke has been laid. <sup>3</sup>You will give it to Eleazar the priest, and he will take it outside the camp and slaughter it in front of him. <sup>4</sup>Eleazar the priest will take some of its blood with his finger and sprinkle it seven times in front of the meeting tent. <sup>5</sup>Then he will burn the cow in front of him, its skin, flesh, and blood, with its dung. <sup>6</sup>The priest will take cedarwood, hyssop, and crimson cloth and throw them into the fire where the cow is burning. <sup>7</sup>Then the priest will wash his clothes and bathe his body in water. Afterward the priest will enter the camp, but he will be unclean until evening. <sup>8</sup>The one who burned the cow will wash his clothes in water and bathe his body in water, but he will be unclean until evening. <sup>9</sup>A person who is clean will gather the ashes of the cow and place them outside the camp in a clean place. They will be kept for the water of purification for the Israelite community as a purification offering. <sup>10</sup>The one who gathers the ashes of the cow will wash his clothes but will be unclean until evening. This will be a permanent regulation for the Israelites and for the immigrant who lives among them.

### Contact with a dead body

<sup>11</sup>The person who touches the dead body of any human will be unclean for seven days. <sup>12</sup>That person must be cleansed with water on the third and seventh days to be clean. If he fails to be cleansed with water on the third and seventh days, he will not be clean. <sup>13</sup>Anyone who touches the body of a human who has died and doesn't cleanse himself defiles the LORD's dwelling. Such persons must be cut off from Israel because the water of purification wasn't sprinkled on them. They remain unclean.

<sup>14</sup>This is the instruction: When anyone dies in a tent, all who go into the tent and all who are in the tent are unclean for seven days. <sup>15</sup>Any open jar without a sealed cover on it is unclean. <sup>16</sup>Anyone in the open field who touches a person slain by the sword, or who died naturally, or a human bone or a grave, will be unclean for seven days. <sup>17</sup>For the unclean person, they will take some of the ashes of the purification offering and place fresh water with it in a jar. <sup>18</sup>Then a clean person will take hyssop, dip it into the water, and sprinkle it on the tent, on all the jars, on the people who were there, and on anyone who touched bone, the slain, the dead, or the grave. <sup>19</sup>On the third day and the seventh day the clean person will sprinkle it on the unclean, so that he will have purified him on the seventh day. He will then wash his clothes, bathe in water, and be clean at evening. <sup>20</sup>Any person who is unclean and didn't cleanse himself will be cut off from the assembly, because he has defiled the LORD's sanctuary. He didn't have the water of purification sprinkled on him. He is unclean. <sup>21</sup>This will be a permanent regulation for them. The one who sprinkles the water of purification will wash his own clothes. Anyone who touches the water of purification will be unclean until evening. <sup>22</sup>Whoever the unclean person touches will be unclean, and the one who touches the unclean will be unclean until evening.

### Lawsuit over water and Moses' disobedience

**20** In the first month,<sup>b</sup> the entire Israelite community entered the Zin desert and the people stayed at Kadesh. Miriam died and was buried there. <sup>2</sup>Now there was no water

<sup>b</sup>March–April, Nisan

Deuteronomy 17:1. *on which no yoke had been laid*: never used for physical work (Deut 21:3).

19:3 *Eleazar the priest*: Aaron's son and eventual successor. He's chosen for this procedure either to prevent the high priest from dealing with a dead body (Lev 21:11); to prevent the high priest from becoming unclean (Num 19:7); or to emphasize the permanent status of this regulation (Num 19:10, 21). Sacrifices usually occur in the meeting tent. However, ashes—the focus of this sacrifice—go *outside the camp* (e.g., Lev 4:12).

19:4 *sprinkle it seven times in front of the meeting tent*: similar to the practice of the purification offering (Lev 4:6, 17; 16:14-15; Num 8:7), except that the blood is sprinkled in front of the meeting tent, not before the veil.

19:5 Usually *blood* isn't burned as part of the offering. However, blood is the primary agent for purification, and burning it means its cleansing power is in the ashes (which are used for cleansing in Num 19:17-19).

19:6 Three items used to purify persons with skin disease (Lev 14:4-6, 49-52) are also used here. *cedarwood* is well known for its pleasing aroma. *hyssop* is connected with removing impurity (Ps 51:9). *crimson cloth* symbolizes blood.

19:7-10 Unlike most sacrifices, this one makes the *priest* and helpers *unclean*. (See sidebar, "Clean/Unclean" at Lev 13.)

19:9 *water of purification*: necessary for cleansing those who touch a dead body, as explained in Numbers 19:11-22.

19:11-22 The purpose of the ritual in Numbers 19:1-10 is to produce the water of purification, which allows those who touch a dead body to be *cleansed*.

19:13, 20 *cut off*: See note on Numbers 9:13.

19:21 *Anyone who touches the water of purification will be unclean*: See Numbers 19:7-10.

20:1-13 Similar to Exodus 17:1-7.

20:1 *the first month*: refers to the fortieth year of Israel's journey in the wilderness, *the Zin desert*: See note on Numbers 13:21. The people began their journey at *Kadesh*

19:3 Lv 4:12, Lv 4:21; Nm 3:4; Heb 13:11

19:4 Lv 4:6, Lv 4:17, Lv 16:14

19:5 Ex 29:14; Lv 4:11, Lv 4:12

19:6 Lv 14:4, Lv 14:6, Lv 14:49; Ps 51:7; Heb 9:19

19:7 Lv 11:25, Lv 14:8, Lv 16:26, Lv 16:28

19:9 Nm 19:13, Nm 31:23; Heb 9:13

19:10 Nm 19:7

19:11 Lv 21:1; Nm 5:2, Nm 9:6, Nm 19:16, Nm 31:19

19:12 Nm 19:19, Nm 31:19

19:13 Lv 7:20, Lv 15:31, Lv 22:3; Nm 19:20

20:1 Ex 15:20; Nm 12:1, Nm 13:21, Nm 13:26, Nm 33:36

20:2 Ex 17:1; Nm 16:19, Nm 16:42

20:3 Ex 17:2;  
Nm 14:2;  
Nm 16:31  
20:4 Ex 14:11;  
Ex 16:3; Ex 17:3;  
Nm 16:13  
20:5 Nm 13:23;  
Nm 16:14; Jer 2:2  
20:6 Nm 14:5  
20:8 Ex 4:17;  
Ex 17:5; Ex 17:6  
20:9 Nm 17:10  
20:10 Ps 106:32;  
Ps 106:33  
20:11 Ex 17:6;  
Nm 20:8;  
Nm 20:10;  
1Co 10:4  
20:12 Nm 11:21;  
Nm 20:24;  
Nm 27:14;  
Dt 1:37;  
Dt 32:51  
20:13 Ex 17:7;  
Ps 95:8  
20:17 Nm 21:22;  
Dt 2:27;  
Jgs 11:17

for the community, and they assembled against Moses and Aaron. <sup>3</sup>Then the people confronted Moses and said to him, "If only we too had died when our brothers perished in the LORD's presence! <sup>4</sup>Why have you brought the LORD's assembly into this desert to kill us and our animals here? <sup>5</sup>Why have you led us up from Egypt to bring us to this evil place without grain, figs, vines, or pomegranates? And there's no water to drink!"

<sup>6</sup>Moses and Aaron went away from the assembly to the entrance of the meeting tent and they fell on their faces. Then the LORD's glory appeared to them. <sup>7</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>8</sup>"You and Aaron your brother, take the staff and assemble the community. In their presence, tell the rock to provide water. You will produce water from the rock for them and allow the community and their animals to drink."

<sup>9</sup>Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence, as the LORD had commanded him. <sup>10</sup>Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. He said to them, "Listen, you rebels! Should we produce water from the rock for you?" <sup>11</sup>Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice. Out flooded water so that the community and their animals could drink.

<sup>12</sup>The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you didn't trust me to show my holiness before the Israelites, you will not bring this assembly into the land that I am giving them."

<sup>13</sup>These were the waters of Meribah,<sup>c</sup> where the Israelites confronted the LORD with controversy and he showed his holiness to them.

### *The Israelites confront Edom*

<sup>14</sup>Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom: "This is what your brother Israel says: 'You know all the adversity that has happened to us. <sup>15</sup>How our ancestors went down to Egypt and lived in Egypt for a long time. The Egyptians oppressed us as they had our ancestors, <sup>16</sup>and we cried out to the LORD. He heard our voice, sent a messenger, and brought us out of Egypt. Now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border. <sup>17</sup>Please let us cross through your land. We won't pass through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will walk on the King's Highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have crossed your border.'"

<sup>18</sup>Edom said to him, "You won't cross through, or I will come out against you with a sword."

<sup>19</sup>The Israelites said to him, "We'll go up by the road. If we drink from your water, either we or our livestock, we'll pay for it. It's a small matter. We would only ask to cross on foot."

<sup>c</sup>Or confrontation

(Num 14:26). Now they come back to the same place after many years of wandering in the wilderness. The name of the place sounds like the Hebrew word for "holiness," which appears in Numbers 20:12-13.

20:2 *no water*: appears here and in Numbers 20:5, suggesting the Israelites have a legitimate concern.

20:3 *confronted*: The Hebrew can mean "make a case against" and is often used in disputes (see title above Num 20:1). It's related to "Meribah," the name given to the site in Numbers 20:13. *If only we too had died when our brothers perished*: recalls Korah's rebellion and what followed (Num 17:12-13).

20:5 The Hebrew word translated here as *evil* can also mean "bad" or "threatening."

20:6 *fell on their faces*: See Numbers 14:5; 16:4, 22, 45. *the LORD's glory appeared*: See note on Numbers 14:10.

20:8 *the staff*: Aaron's budding staff that was placed in the meeting tent. It subdued rebellion before (Num 17:2-11). *tell the rock to provide water*: God gives Moses step-by-step instructions for producing water. No evidence of God's displeasure or anger is reported, in contrast to previous rebellions (Num 11:1, 20, 33; 12:9; 14:11-12; 16:46).

20:9-11 Moses and Aaron take the staff and gather the assembly as instructed (20:9-10a). However, Moses speaks to the people instead of to the rock (20:10b). By calling the people *rebels*, Moses misjudges them (20:10b). The people confronted, but didn't rebel, as seen in God's lack of anger.

In fact, God later uses the word "rebelled" to label Moses and Aaron's transgression (Num 20:24; 27:14). *Should we produce water from the rock for you?*: Moses knows he should. God just commanded him to do so. *Moses raised his hand and struck... twice*: contrasts with God's instruction to speak to the rock.

20:12-13 It isn't entirely clear how the Lord *showed his holiness* or how Moses and Aaron failed to *trust* that God would do so. However, failing to trust (or doubting) the Lord is the same sin the first generation committed in Numbers 14:11. Now Moses and Aaron must share their fate.

20:14-16 A similar short history of early Israel is found in Deuteronomy 26:5-8.

20:14 *your brother Israel*: Moses uses diplomatic language that may also appeal to a family relationship between Israel and Edom, as in the stories of Jacob (Israel) and Esau (Edom) in Genesis 25:19-33:20.

20:16 *messenger*: See Exodus 3:2; 14:19.

20:17 *Please let us cross through your land*: Marching through Edom is the best route for entering Canaan from the east. (Entering from the south failed in Num 14:44-45.) *the King's Highway*: an ancient north-south roadway on the east side of the Jordan River, connecting Damascus and the Gulf of Aqaba. The name implies a wide and guarded road for soldiers, merchants, and their animals.

20:18 *Edom said to him... against you with a sword*: Edom's

<sup>20</sup>But he said, "You won't cross." Then Edom came out against them with a powerful army and a strong hand. <sup>21</sup>Edom refused to allow Israel to cross his border. And Israel turned away from him. <sup>22</sup>They marched from Kadesh.

**Aaron's death at Mount Hor**

The entire Israelite community came to Mount Hor. <sup>23</sup>The LORD said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor on the border of the land of Edom: <sup>24</sup>Aaron will join his ancestors, for he may not enter the land that I've given to the Israelites, because you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah. <sup>25</sup>Take Aaron and his son Eleazar, and bring them up Mount Hor. <sup>26</sup>Strip Aaron of his clothes and put them on Eleazar his son. Then Aaron will die there.

<sup>27</sup>Moses did as the LORD commanded. They went up Mount Hor in the sight of the entire community. <sup>28</sup>Moses stripped Aaron of his clothes and put them on Eleazar his son. Aaron died there at the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar descended from the mountain. <sup>29</sup>When the entire community saw that Aaron had died, the entire household of Israel wept thirty days for Aaron.

**Defeat of the Canaanite king of Arad**

**21** When the Canaanite king of Arad, who ruled in the arid southern plain, heard that the Israelites were coming on the Atharim road, he fought against Israel and took some of them captive. <sup>2</sup>Then Israel made a solemn promise to the LORD and said, "If you give this people into our hands, we will completely destroy their city." <sup>3</sup>The LORD heard the voice of Israel and handed the Canaanites over. They completely destroyed them and their cities, so the name of the place is called Hormah. <sup>4</sup>

**The bronze snake's healing power**

<sup>4</sup>They marched from Mount Hor on the Reed Sea\* road around the land of Edom. The people became impatient on the road. <sup>5</sup>The people spoke against God and Moses: "Why did you bring us up from Egypt to kill us in the desert, where there is no food or water. And we detest this miserable bread!" <sup>6</sup>So the LORD sent poisonous<sup>f</sup> snakes among the people and they bit the people. Many of the Israelites died.

<sup>7</sup>The people went to Moses and said, "We've sinned, for we spoke against the LORD and you. Pray to the LORD so that he will send the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

<sup>d</sup>Or destruction <sup>e</sup>Or Red Sea <sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain

refusal and show of force in Numbers 20:20 may be what is severely criticized in Amos 1:11.

20:22b-29 Aaron's death begins to fulfill the Lord's word in Numbers 20:12. The text is very similar to the account of Moses' death in Deuteronomy 34:1-9. Both die on a mountain (20:22-23; Deut 34:1). Neither enters the promised land (20:24; Deut 34:4b). Their leadership transfers to the designated persons (20:25-26; Deut 34:9). The people mourn their deaths for 30 days (20:29; Deut 34:8). Aaron's death, together with the deaths of Miriam (Num 20:1); Korah; and the 250 leaders (Num 16:31-50), signals the end of the generation who came out of Egypt (Num 14:26-35). 20:22b *Mount Hor*. The precise location is unknown.

20:24 *Aaron will join his ancestors*: a figure of speech referring to death (Abraham [Gen 25:8]; Isaac [Gen 35:29]; Jacob [Gen 49:33]; and Moses [Num 27:13; Deut 32:50]), because you rebelled: See note on Numbers 20:9-11.

20:26 *Strip Aaron of his clothes and put them on Eleazar his son*: similar to Elijah and Elisha (2 Kgs 2:1-18). Aaron's clothes: his priestly vestments, described in Exodus 28 and Leviticus 8:7-9.

20:29 *wept thirty days*: exceeds the normal period for mourning (seven days) because of Aaron's importance.

21:1-3 *Arad*: south of Hebron in the arid southern plain (Josh 12:14). *on the Atharim road*: location unknown.

*completely destroy*: translates a technical term for a holy war, totally destroying the enemy and dedicating their lives and the spoils to God (Deut 7:1-2; Josh 6:17; see sidebar, "Holy War"). *Hormah*: derived from the Hebrew word for "completely destroy." It's the same place where the Israelites were completely defeated at the beginning of their campaign (Num 14:45). This victory signals an appropriate beginning for the new generation.

21:4-25:18 Characterizes the double nature of the new generation. Unlike the exodus generation, they confidently carry out God's plan for claiming the promised land (21:21-31, 32, 33-35). On the other hand, they behave like the exodus generation by complaining of hardships (21:4-9) and following other gods (25:1-18). Despite their ambivalent character, God intends to bring them into the promised land. God is faithful to keep the promise of land to Abraham (Gen 12:2; 15:7). God fulfills it not because of the obedience of the new generation but because of God's own faithfulness to the promise.

21:4 *Mount Hor*. See note on Numbers 20:22.

21:5 The contents of their complaint are similar to those of earlier events (Exod 17:2-3; Num 11:4-35; 16:13-14; 20:4-5).

21:6 *poisonous*: The Hebrew can also mean "burning," perhaps describing the effect of the poison.

21:7 The Israelites admit their sin honestly for the first time.

20:20 Nm 20:18; Jgs 11:17; Am 1:11  
20:24 Gn 25:8; Nm 20:10; Nm 20:12; Nm 27:13; Nm 31:2

20:25 Ex 4:14; Ex 5:20; Ex 6:20; Lv 10:6; Nm 33:38

20:26 Ex 29:29; Nm 20:24

20:27 Nm 20:12; Nm 20:23; Nm 20:28

20:28 Ex 29:29; Nm 20:26; Nm 33:38; Dt 10:6; Dt 32:50

20:29 Lv 10:6; Nm 33:38; Nm 33:39; Dt 34:8

21:1 Nm 33:40; Josh 12:14; Jgs 1:16

21:4 Nm 20:22; Jgs 11:18

21:5 Ex 14:11; Ex 15:24; Ex 16:2; Ex 17:3; Ps 78:19

21:6 Nm 21:7; Dt 8:15; Is 30:6; Jer 8:17; 1Co 10:9

21:7 Ex 8:8; Nm 11:2; 1Sa 12:19; Ps 78:34; Ac 8:24

21:8 Nm 21:9;  
Jn 3:14  
21:9 Nm 21:8;  
2Ki 18:4; Jn 3:14,  
Jn 3:15

21:22 Nm 20:17

21:24 Gn 32:22;  
Dt 2:37; Dt 3:16;  
Josh 12:2;  
Jgs 11:13

<sup>8</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous snake and place it on a pole. Whoever is bitten can look at it and live." <sup>9</sup>Moses made a bronze snake and placed it on a pole. If a snake bit someone, that person could look at the bronze snake and live.

### March around Moab

<sup>10</sup>Then the Israelites marched and they camped at Oboth. <sup>11</sup>They marched from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim in the desert on the border of Moab toward the east. <sup>12</sup>From there they marched and camped in the Zered ravine. <sup>13</sup>From there they marched and camped across the Arnon in the desert that extends from the border of the Amorites, for the Arnon was the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. <sup>14</sup>For this reason the scroll of the LORD's wars says:

Waheb in Suphah and the ravines.  
The Arnon <sup>15</sup>and the ravines  
that extend to the settlement of Ar  
and lie along the border of Moab.

<sup>16</sup>From there they marched to Beer, the well where the LORD said to Moses, "Gather the people, and I'll give them water." <sup>17</sup>Then the Israelites sang this song:

"Well, flow up!  
Sing about it!

<sup>18</sup>The well that the officials dug,  
that the officials of the people hollowed out  
with the ruler's scepter and their staffs."

They marched from the desert to Mattanah; <sup>19</sup>from Mattanah to Nahaliel; from Nahaliel to Bamoth; <sup>20</sup>from Bamoth to the valley in the Moabite countryside, to the top of Pisgah overlooking Jeshimon.<sup>8</sup>

### Wars against Sihon and Og

<sup>21</sup>Then the Israelites sent messengers to Sihon the Amorite king: <sup>22</sup>"Let us pass through your land. We won't turn aside into a field or vineyard. We won't drink water from a well. We will walk on the King's Highway until we cross your border."

<sup>23</sup>But Sihon wouldn't allow the Israelites to cross his border. Sihon gathered all his people and went out to meet the Israelites in the desert. When he came to Jahaz, he attacked the Israelites. <sup>24</sup>The Israelites struck him down with their swords and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the Ammonites, for the border of the Ammonites was fortified. <sup>25</sup>The Israelites took all these cities. Then the Israelites settled in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon and all its villages.

<sup>26</sup>Now Heshbon was the city of Sihon the Amorite king who had fought against the former king of Moab. He had taken all his land from him as far as the Arnon. <sup>27</sup>Therefore, the poets say:

"Come to Heshbon, let it be built.  
Let the city of Sihon be established.

<sup>8</sup>Or wasteland

21:9 The bronze snake . . . on a pole is later placed in the temple and treated as an object of worship. Hezekiah finally removes it from the temple (2 Kgs 18:4). Jesus mentions this episode in John 3:14.

21:10-20 A summary of Israel's journey from Mount Hor to the top of Pisgah in Moab. Israel marches to nine stations in this journey, which takes them around Edom and Moab while skirting Amorite territory. The exact locations of these stations are uncertain, and their sequence doesn't correspond to the itinerary in Numbers 33:41-49.

21:14 the scroll of the Lord's wars: an unknown book. It points to the nature of Israel's warfare: God fights for the Israelites.

21:16-18a Beer: unknown site, meaning "well." The Song of the Well (21:17-18a) describes what workers would sing while digging a well. After digging, they would sing it again as an official (or chieftain) touched the well with a

ceremonial staff to begin drawing water. It's used here to highlight God's provision of water.

21:20 Pisgah: near Mount Nebo, where Moses dies. Jeshimon: the wasteland north of the Dead Sea (see translation note g).

21:21-31 Recalls Israel's encounter with Edom.

21:21 Sihon the Amorite king: sometimes called "Heshbon's king" (Deut 2:26; Josh 12:5), he is ruler of the territory extending from the Jabbok River on the north to the Arnon River on the south and the Ammonite territory on the east.

21:23-25 as far as the Ammonites, for the border of the Ammonites was fortified: Deuteronomy 2:19 provides another reason Israel refrains from attacking the Ammonites. Heshbon: probably located about 47 miles east of Jerusalem; it is later given to the Levites (Josh 21:39).

21:26-30 Heshbon first belonged to Moab, but fell to



*Holy War* The root meaning of the Hebrew word *herem* is “to devote” or “to destroy.” In the context of war, it refers to the total destruction of enemies and their belongings. No survivors were left. The population and the animals were slaughtered, while the city and plundered goods were burned. The word *herem* also refers to removing something from the sphere of the ordinary and setting it apart for God (Lev 27:21, 28; Deut 2:34; 3:2; Josh 6:17-18). When Joshua pronounced *herem* over Jericho, he made it clear that the gold, silver, and vessels of bronze and iron were holy to God and were therefore to be put into God’s treasury (Josh 6:19). The aspects of war and the sacred overlap in our text, where *herem* is undertaken in consequence of a solemn pledge. With a solemn pledge, Israel destroyed enemies and their properties as a sacrifice to God. Christians often wrestle with how to understand texts like this one in light of Jesus’ commands to love enemies (Matt 5:43-48).

- <sup>28</sup> Fire went out from Heshbon,  
flame from Sihon’s city.  
It consumed Ar of Moab  
and swallowed up the shrines of the Arnon.
- <sup>29</sup> You are doomed, Moab!  
You are destroyed, people of Chemosh!  
He gave his sons as fugitives,  
and his daughters as captives to the Amorite king Sihon.
- <sup>30</sup> Yet we have thrown them down,  
destroying them<sup>b</sup> from Heshbon to Dibon.  
We brought ruin until Nophah, which is by Medeba.”

<sup>31</sup> Israel settled in the land of the Amorites. <sup>32</sup> Moses sent spies to Jazer. They captured its villages and took possession of the Amorites who were there. <sup>33</sup> Then they turned and ascended the road of Bashan. Og, Bashan’s king, came out at Edrei to meet them in battle, he and all his people. <sup>34</sup> The LORD said to Moses: Don’t be afraid of him, for I have handed over all his people and his land. Do to him as you did to Sihon the Amorite king who ruled in Heshbon.

<sup>35</sup> They slaughtered Og, his sons, and all his people until there were no survivors. Then they took possession of his land.

### Balak summons Balaam to curse the Israelites

**22** The Israelites marched and camped in the plains of Moab across the Jordan from Jericho. <sup>2</sup> Balak, Zippor’s son, saw everything that the Israelites did to the Amorites. <sup>3</sup> The Moabites greatly feared the people, for they were so numerous. The Moabites were terrified of the Israelites. <sup>4</sup> The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, “Now this assembly will devour everything around us, as an ox eats up the grass in the field.”

Balak, Zippor’s son, was king of Moab at that time. <sup>5</sup> He sent messengers to Balaam, Beor’s son, at Pethor, which is by the river in the land of his people,<sup>1</sup> to summon him: “A people has

<sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain; LXX *their posterity has perished* <sup>1</sup>Sam, Syr, Vulg *the Ammonites*

*Sihon*. Its fall was memorialized in the song in 21:27-30. Now the Israelites displace the Amorites.

21:32 *Jazer*: located on the Ammonite border (Num 33:34-36).

21:33-35 Similar to Deuteronomy 3:1-3. The text as a whole focuses on God and Israel, rather than Moses.

21:34 The command *Don’t be afraid* is similar to Numbers 14:9, but this time the people obey.

21:35 *until there were no survivors*: warfare of complete destruction (as in Num 21:2-3).

22:1-24:25 Balak’s failed plan to curse Israel takes place without Israel’s involvement. No Israelites are present in the story. Moses, God’s chief representative, isn’t mentioned. God works behind the scenes to turn a dangerous situation into a marvelous blessing without the Israelites’ knowledge.

22:1 *the plains of Moab*: a territory about six miles wide, northeast of the Dead Sea, where the second census takes

place (Num 26:3, 63) and where Moses speaks his final words before dying on Mount Nebo (Deut 34:1, 8). It’s the last region they inhabit before crossing the Jordan River (Num 33:49; Josh 3:1). It’s assigned to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh (Josh 13:32).

22:2-3 *Balak* means “crusher”; yet his people *greatly feared*. 22:4 While *Midian* is some distance south of Moab (on the other side of Edom, east side of the Gulf of Aqaba), the Midianites were nomadic, going west into the Sinai Peninsula and north into Canaan and the Transjordan. Their appearance here (along with Num 25:6-9) anticipates Israel’s war with them in Numbers 31.

22:5 An archaeological discovery at Tell Deir ‘Alla in Jordan mentions a diviner, *Balaam*, the son of *Beor*. It dates to the 8th century BCE. According to Numbers, *Balaam*, *Beor’s son*, might have come from the Transjordan area, particularly Edom (see Gen 36:32). If so, *the land of his people* could be interpreted as the land of the Ammonites.

22:12 Gn 12:2  
 22:17 Nm 22:6,  
 Nm 24:11  
 22:20 Nm 22:9,  
 Nm 22:35,  
 Nm 23:5,  
 Nm 23:26,  
 Nm 24:13  
 22:21 2Pt 1:15  
 22:22 Ex 4:14,  
 Ex 4:24;  
 Nm 11:1,  
 Nm 22:32  
 22:23 Nm 22:25,  
 Nm 22:27,  
 Nm 22:31;  
 Josh 5:13;  
 1Ch 21:16  
 22:28 2Pt 2:16

come out of Egypt, and they have now covered the land. They have settled next to me. <sup>6</sup>Now please come and curse this people for me because they are stronger than I am. Perhaps I'll be able to destroy them and drive them from the land, for I know that whomever you bless is blessed and whomever you curse is cursed."

<sup>7</sup>So the elders of Moab and Midian went with the payment for divination in their hands. They came to Balaam and told him Balak's words. <sup>8</sup>He said to them, "Spend the night here and I'll bring back to you a word exactly as the LORD speaks to me." So the officials of Moab stayed with Balaam.

<sup>9</sup>God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?"

<sup>10</sup>Balaam said to God, "Moab's King Balak, Zippor's son, sent them to me with the message, 'A people has come out of Egypt and covered the land. Now come and curse them for me. Perhaps I'll be able to fight against them and drive them out.'"

<sup>12</sup>God said to Balaam, "Don't go with them. Don't curse the people, because they are blessed."

<sup>13</sup>Then Balaam arose in the morning and said to Balak's officials, "Go to your land, for the LORD has refused to allow me to go with you."

<sup>14</sup>The officials of Moab arose, they went to Balak, and they said, "Balaam refused to come with us."

<sup>15</sup>Balak continued to send other officials more numerous and important than these. <sup>16</sup>They came to Balaam and said to him, "This is what Balak, Zippor's son, says: 'Please let nothing hold you back from coming to me, '17for I'll greatly honor you and I'll do anything you ask of me. Please come and curse this people for me.'"

<sup>18</sup>Balaam answered and said to Balak's servants, "If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I wouldn't be able to do anything, small or great, to break the command of the LORD my God. <sup>19</sup>Now you also must remain the night here so that I may know what else the LORD may say to me."

<sup>20</sup>God came to Balaam in the night and said to him, "If the men have come to summon you, arise and go with them. But you must do only what I tell you to do." <sup>21</sup>So Balaam arose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the officials of Moab.

### **Balaam and the LORD's messenger**

<sup>22</sup>Then God became angry because he went. So while he was riding on his donkey accompanied by his two servants, the LORD's messenger stood in the road as his adversary. <sup>23</sup>The donkey saw the LORD's messenger standing in the road with his sword drawn in his hand, so the donkey turned from the road and went into the field. Balaam struck the donkey in order to turn him back onto the road. <sup>24</sup>Then the LORD's messenger stood in the narrow path between vineyards with a stone wall on each side. <sup>25</sup>When the donkey saw the LORD's messenger, it leaned against the wall and squeezed Balaam's foot against the wall, so he continued to beat it. <sup>26</sup>The LORD's messenger persisted and crossed over and stood in a narrow place, where it wasn't possible to turn either right or left. <sup>27</sup>The donkey saw the LORD's messenger and lay down underneath Balaam. Balaam became angry and beat the donkey with the rod. <sup>28</sup>Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you've beaten me these three times?"

Or, he might have been from northeastern Syria (see Num 23:7). *Pethor, which is by the river*, may refer to a well-known site on the Euphrates (Deut 23:4). If so, the distance between Pethor and the plains of Moab would be well over 370 miles, requiring the delegates to journey more than 20 days each way to Balaam. *A people . . . now covered the land*: recalls the plague of locusts brought upon Egypt (Exod 15:5, 15).

**22:6** *whomever you bless is blessed and whomever you curse is cursed*: reflects performative speech associated with curses on enemies in ancient warfare. The act of speaking the curse becomes part of the battle itself. Balaam's curse is intended to weaken Israel, whose militia are too numerous to face.

**22:8, 18** Although Balaam isn't an Israelite, he consults the LORD, that is, Israel's God.

**22:22-35** This fable seems awkwardly connected with

what precedes and follows. The fable paints a negative portrait of Balaam: The respected diviner is of lower character than his donkey. Balaam ironically can't see the Lord's messenger, whereas his donkey sees him clearly. His behavior in beating his donkey is beastly, while the donkey argues persuasively (22:30). This fable matches the negative pictures of Balaam found in other biblical texts (Num 31:16; Deut 23:4-7; Neh 13:1-2; 2 Pet 2:15-16; Jude 11); although there are also positive (Mic 6:3-5) and neutral (Josh 24:9-10) views of him. Perhaps the fable is God's way of testing that Balaam speaks only God's word (22:35). There are similar tests for Abraham (Gen 22:1-19); Jacob (Gen 32:22-32); and Moses (Exod 4:24-26). Balaam admits throughout the story that he is dependent on God (Num 22:8, 18, 35, 38; 23:3, 5, 8, 12, 16, 20, 26; 24:13).

**22:22** *the LORD's messenger*: See Exodus 3:2; 14:19.

**22:28, 30**: On a few occasions, especially in metaphorical

<sup>29</sup>Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you've tormented me. If I had a sword in my hand, I'd kill you now."

<sup>30</sup>The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, on whom you've often ridden to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?"

Balaam said, "No."

<sup>31</sup>Then the LORD uncovered Balaam's eyes, and Balaam saw the LORD's messenger standing in the road with his sword drawn in his hand. Then he bowed low and worshipped. <sup>32</sup>The LORD's messenger said to him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I've come out here as an adversary, because you took the road recklessly in front of me. <sup>33</sup>The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it hadn't turned away from me, I would just now have killed you and let it live."

<sup>34</sup>Balaam said to the LORD's messenger, "I've sinned, because I didn't know that you were standing against me in the road. Now, if you think it's wrong, I'll go back."

<sup>35</sup>The LORD's messenger said to Balaam, "Go with the men. But don't say anything. Say only that which I tell you." So Balaam went with Balak's officials.

### **Balaam and Balak meet**

<sup>36</sup>When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at Ir-moab, which is on the border of the Arnon at the farthest point of the border. <sup>37</sup>Balak said to Balaam, "Didn't I send urgently and summon you? Why didn't you come to me? Am I really not able to honor you?"

<sup>38</sup>Balaam said to Balak, "I've now come to you. But I'm only able to speak whatever word God gives me to say. That is what I will speak."

### **Balaam's first blessing of the Israelites**

<sup>39</sup>Then Balaam went with Balak and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. <sup>40</sup>Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep and sent them to Balaam and the officials who were with him. <sup>41</sup>In the morning Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth-baal, where he could see part of the people.

**23** Balaam said to Balak, "Build me seven altars here and prepare for me seven bulls and seven rams." <sup>2</sup>Balak did as Balaam had said. Then Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar. <sup>3</sup>Balaam said to Balak, "Stay by your entirely burned offering. I will go and perhaps the LORD will grant me an appearance and speak. Whatever he shows me, I will tell you." Then he went off to a high outlook.

<sup>4</sup>God granted Balaam an appearance. Balaam said to him, "I have arranged seven altars and I have sacrificed a bull and a ram on each altar."

<sup>5</sup>The LORD gave Balaam something to say, and said to him, "Return to Balak and say this."

<sup>6</sup>Balaam returned to him, while he and all the officials of Moab were standing next to his entirely burned offering. <sup>7</sup>Then he raised his voice and made his address:

"From Aram Balak led me, the king of Moab, from the eastern mountains.

Come, curse Jacob for me; come, denounce Israel.

<sup>8</sup>How can I curse whom God hasn't cursed?

How can I denounce whom God hasn't denounced?

or symbolic literature, nonhumans speak in the Bible: Genesis 3; Judges 9:7-20; Luke 19:40.

22:36-38 Balak shows his determination to have Israel cursed by traveling to the *border* to greet the famous seer and assure him of a handsome benefit for his service. *Ir-moab*: The underlying Hebrew is "the town of Moab" (see the possibly related "Ar" in Num 21:15, 28).

22:39-24:24 Balak's three attempts to curse Israel follow the same pattern: Balak takes Balaam to a place where seven altars and sacrifices are made. Balaam usually separates, has a revelation, and returns. Balaam speaks God's word, and Balak responds with dismay.

22:39 *Kiriath-huzoth*: an unknown site. The Hebrew means "the town of markets," which suggests abundant materials for a feast.

22:41 *Bamoth-baal*: north of Arnon, a site associated with the Moabite countryside (Num 21:20) and Heshbon (Josh 13:17). The Hebrew means "high places of Baal." From

there, Balaam can see *part of the people*, meaning the far end of the people.

23:1 *seven*: a sacred number for perfection or completeness (cf. Gen 1:1-2:4a).

23:3-5 Balak's sacrifice is called an *entirely burned offering*, which is part of Israel's sacrificial system (Lev 1:3-17; 6:8-13), so it seems odd for a non-Israelite king. This identification stresses the fact that everything of the animal is burned to create a soothing aroma for God, which Balak hopes will persuade God to grant his wishes. *I will go . . . he went off*: God's appearance to Balaam is separated from Balak's offering. *The LORD gave Balaam something to say*: or "the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth," an idiomatic expression used for the prophets of Israel (Deut 18:18). It's consistent with the portrayal of Balaam, who is obligated to speak only the word that God gives.

23:7-10 *He raised his voice and made his address*: occurs in all Balaam's oracles (Num 23:7, 18; 24:3, 15, 20-21, 23).

23:10 Gn 13:16;  
Ps 37:37;  
Ps 116:15;  
Is 57:1  
23:14 Nm 21:20;  
Nm 23:1;  
Nm 23:2;  
Nm 23:29  
23:19 1Sa 15:29;  
Mal 3:6; Ti 1:2;  
Heb 6:18;  
Jas 1:17  
23:21 Jer 50:20  
23:22 Nm 24:8;  
Dt 33:17;  
Job 39:9;  
Ps 22:21  
23:23 Nm 24:1

<sup>9</sup>From the top of the rocks I see him;  
from the hills I gaze on him.  
Here is a people living alone;  
it doesn't consider itself among the nations.

<sup>10</sup>Who can count the dust of Jacob,  
or number a fourth of Israel?  
Let me die the death of those who do right,  
and let my end be like his."

<sup>11</sup>Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemy.  
But now you've blessed him."

<sup>12</sup>He answered and said, "Don't I have to take care to speak whatever the LORD gives me to say?"

### ***Balaam's second blessing of the Israelites***

<sup>13</sup>Then Balak said to Balaam, "Come with me, please, to another place where you'll see them. You'll see only part of them. You won't see all of them. Then curse them for me from there." <sup>14</sup>He took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah. He built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

<sup>15</sup>Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here by your entirely burned offering, while I seek an appearance over there."

<sup>16</sup>The LORD granted Balaam an appearance and gave him a message. He said, "Return to Balak and say this."

<sup>17</sup>Balaam approached Balak, who was standing by his entirely burned offering with the officials of Moab. Balak said to him, "What did the LORD say?"

<sup>18</sup>Then Balaam raised his voice and made his address:

"Arise, Balak, and listen;  
hear me out, Zippor's son.

<sup>19</sup>God isn't a man that he would lie,  
or a human being that he would change his mind.  
Has he ever spoken and not done it,  
or promised and not fulfilled it?

<sup>20</sup>I received a blessing, and he blessed.  
I can't take it back.

<sup>21</sup>He hasn't envisioned misfortune for Jacob,  
nor has he seen trouble for Israel.  
The LORD his God is with him,  
proclaimed as his king.

<sup>22</sup>God, who brought them out of Egypt,  
is like a magnificent wild bull for him.

<sup>23</sup>There is no omen against Jacob,  
no divination against Israel.  
Instantly it is told to Jacob,  
and to Israel, what God performs.

As is often the case with Hebrew poetry, there is repetition and parallelism (e.g., 23:8). As in Numbers 22:8, 18, 35, 38; 23:3, 5, Balaam acknowledges his inability to curse Israel if it isn't God's will.

23:7 *Aram*: modern Syria. *Jacob* is another name for *Israel*.

23:9 The phrase *Here is a people living alone* doesn't point to Israel's solitary situation, but to its special status of being singled out among the nations. *it doesn't consider itself among the nations*: refers to its unique relationship with God.

23:10 *the dust of Jacob*: an immeasurable quantity, similar to "the stars in the sky and . . . the grains of sand on the seashore" (Gen 22:17).

23:11-12 Balak understands Balaam to be a sorcerer who attempts primarily to manipulate the future, whereas Balaam declares that he is a diviner who conveys divine will.

23:14 *the field of Zophim*: location unknown. *Pisgah*: See note on Numbers 21:20.

23:17 *Balak said to him, "What did the LORD say?"*: Balak begins to recognize that Balaam must communicate only what God says.

23:18-24 Focuses more on God than Numbers 23:7-10. Balak, who wants to change the future through sorcery, must learn that God will not be manipulated to *lie, change his mind, or break promises* (23:19). For more on the idea of God "changing his mind," see 1 Samuel 15:11, 29, 35.

23:20 *I can't take it back*: Balaam's inability to reverse a divine pronouncement, grounded in God's determination to carry out what God had promised (cf. Isa 45:23; 55:11; Amos 1:3). By now, Balak should acknowledge that Israel's future is so secure that "no divination" could harm them (Num 23:23).

23:22 While God is *like a magnificent wild bull* (also in

<sup>24</sup>A people now rises like a lioness,  
like a lion it stands up.  
It doesn't lie down until it eats the prey  
and drinks the blood of the slain."

<sup>25</sup>Then Balak said to Balaam, "Don't curse them or bless them."

<sup>26</sup>But Balaam answered and said to Balak, "Didn't I say to you, 'I'll do whatever the LORD tells me to?'"

**Balaam's third blessing of the Israelites**

<sup>27</sup>Balak said to Balaam, "Please come and I'll take you to another place. Perhaps God will prefer it, so that you could curse him for me from there."

<sup>28</sup>So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks Jeshimon.<sup>1</sup> <sup>29</sup>Balaam said to Balak, "Build me seven altars here and prepare for me seven bulls and seven rams." <sup>30</sup>Balak did just as Balaam said. He offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

**24** Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless the Israelites, so he didn't go as the other times to seek omens. Instead, he turned toward the desert. <sup>2</sup>Balaam looked up and saw Israel camping by tribes. Then God's spirit came on him. <sup>3</sup>He raised his voice and made his address:

"The oracle of Balaam, Beor's son;  
the oracle of a man whose eye is open.<sup>k</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The oracle of one who hears God's speech,  
who perceives the Almighty's<sup>l</sup> visions,  
who falls down with eyes uncovered.

<sup>5</sup>How beautiful are your tents, Jacob,  
your camps, Israel!

<sup>6</sup>Like palm groves that stretch out,  
like gardens next to a river,  
like eaglewood trees that the LORD has planted,  
like cedar trees next to water.

<sup>7</sup>Water will drip from his branches;  
his seed will have plenty of water;  
his king will be higher than Agag,  
and his kingdom will be lifted up.

<sup>8</sup>God, who brought him from Egypt,  
is like a magnificent wild bull for him.  
He will devour enemy nations  
and break their bones;  
he will strike with his arrows.

<sup>9</sup>He crouched and lay down like a lion;  
like a lioness, who can make her rise?  
The one blessing you will be blessed,  
and the one cursing you will be cursed."

<sup>j</sup>Or wasteland <sup>k</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>l</sup>Heb Shaddai or Mountain One

Num 24:8; Deut 33:17), this metaphor was taken too far by those who pursued idolatry with images of cows (Exod 32; Hos 8:5-6; 10:5).

23:27-24:24 Balak's third and final attempt differs from the first two. Balaam doesn't seek omens as he did previously (24:1). Instead, Balaam receives God's spirit (24:2) and predicts the fates of Israel (24:3-9); Moab (24:15-17); Edom (24:18-19); Amalek (24:20); the Kenites (24:21-22); and an unnamed nation (24:23-24).

23:28 *Peor*: See Numbers 25:3, 5, 18; 31:16. *Jeshimon*: a wasteland east of the Jordan Valley (see Num 21:20).

24:2 *God's spirit came on him*: Such an event can precede prophecy, as in 1 Samuel 19:20.

24:3-4 Balaam's oracle begins with his self-understanding

as a divine seer with exceptional receptiveness to God's revelations. This description differs from the previous oracles and is the opposite of the description in Numbers 22:22-35.

24:4 *falls down*: Saul experiences similar prophetic behavior in 1 Samuel 19:24. *the Almighty's*: The Hebrew is *Shaddai* (see translation note l); and a similar term is used to describe divine beings in the Tell Deir 'Alla inscription (see note on Num 22:5).

24:5-7 The images in these verses stress Israel's prosperity and abundance. The emphasis on fertile land and water contrasts with the desert wilderness, where food and drink were scarce. In 1 Samuel 15:8, *Agag* is an Amalekite king, defeated by Saul.

24:3 Nm 23:7,

Nm 24:15

24:4 Gn 15:1;

Nm 12:6,

Nm 24:16;

Eze 1:28;

Ac 10:10

24:5 Jer 30:18

24:6 Ps 1:3,

Ps 45:8,

Ps 104:16;

Is 61:3; Jer 17:8

24:7 1Sa 15:8;

2Sa 5:12;

1Ch 14:2

24:8 Nm 23:22,

Nm 23:24;

Ps 45:5;

Jer 50:17

24:9 Gn 12:3,

Gn 27:29;

Gn 49:9;

Nm 23:24

24:10 Nm 23:11;  
Dt 23:5;  
Eze 21:14  
24:11 Nm 22:17,  
Nm 22:37  
24:12 Nm 22:18,  
Nm 22:38  
24:13 Nm 22:18  
24:14 Gn 49:1;  
Mi 6:5  
24:15 Nm 24:3  
24:16 Nm 24:4  
24:17 Gn 49:10;  
2Sa 8:2;  
Jer 48:45; Mt 2:2;  
Rev 22:16  
24:18 Gn 32:3;  
Am 9:12  
24:19 Mi 5:2

<sup>10</sup>Balak was angry with Balaam. He pounded his fists. Balak said to Balaam, "I summoned you to curse my enemies, but now you've given a blessing these three times. <sup>11</sup>Now get out of here and go home. I told you I'd greatly honor you, but the LORD has denied you any honor."

**Balaam predicts Moab's destruction**

<sup>12</sup>Balaam said to Balak, "Didn't I tell your messengers, whom you sent to me, <sup>13</sup>If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I wouldn't be able to break the LORD's command for good or ill by my own will. I'll say whatever the LORD says? <sup>14</sup>So now I'm going to my people. Let me advise you what this people will do to your people in the days to come."

<sup>15</sup>He raised his voice and made his address:

"The oracle of Balaam, Beor's son,  
the oracle of a man whose eye is open.

<sup>16</sup>The oracle of one who hears God's speech,  
and understands the Most High's<sup>m</sup> knowledge,  
who perceives the Almighty's<sup>n</sup> visions,  
who falls down with eyes uncovered.

<sup>17</sup>I see him, but not now;  
I look at him, but not nearby.  
A star comes from Jacob;  
a scepter arises from Israel,  
smashing Moab's forehead,  
the head of all the Sethites.

<sup>18</sup>Edom will become a possession,  
Seir a possession of its enemies.  
But Israel acts powerfully.

<sup>19</sup>Someone from Jacob will rule  
and destroy the survivors from Ir."

<sup>20</sup>He looked at Amalek  
and raised his voice and gave his address:  
"Amalek is foremost among the nations,  
but its end is to perish forever."

<sup>21</sup>He looked at the Kenites  
and raised his voice and gave his address:  
"Your dwelling is secure;  
your nest is set in the rock.

<sup>22</sup>Yet Kain will burn  
when Asshur takes you away captive."

<sup>m</sup>Heb *Elyon* <sup>n</sup>Heb *Shaddai* or *Mountain One*

**24:10** *pounded his fists*: The Hebrew idiom is "clapped his hands," which in the Bible is a sign not of applause but of scorn (see Lam 2:15).

**24:15-24** Many prophetic writings contain similar words, sometimes called "oracles against the nations" (Isa 13-23; Jer 46-51; Ezek 25-32; Amos 1:3-2:3).

**24:17** *star*: likely refers to a victorious king (as in Isa 14:12, where the Babylonian king is called a "morning star"). Many candidates for this victorious king have been proposed in later interpretations, including David, who defeated the Moabites (2 Sam 8:2, 13-14); and the risen Jesus, who is called the bright morning star (Rev 22:16). *a scepter*: the distinguishing mark of royal office (Ps 45:6). *the head of all the Sethites*: may refer to the descendants of Seth (Gen 4:25-26). The Moabites originated from Seth through Lot, Abraham's nephew.

**24:18-19** *Edom* and *Seir* can refer to the same land (Gen 32:3). *Israel acts powerfully*: in contrast to Israel's previous retreat from Edom (Num 20:14-21). This prophecy may be related to David's victory over Edom (2 Sam 8:2, 13-14; 1 Kgs 11:15-16). *Ir*: can mean "city" (see note on Num 22:36-38) and perhaps refers to Edom's capital.

**24:20** *Amalek*: a powerful enemy against Israel (Exod 17:8-16; Num 14:25), later defeated by Saul (1 Sam 15:1-3) and David (1 Sam 30:1-31).

**24:21** *Kenites*: possibly descendants from Cain (Gen 4:1-15). They enjoyed a friendly relationship with Israel (Judg 1:16; 1 Sam 15:4-9), but are also associated with the Amalekites.

**24:22** *Kain*: likely refers to the Kenites or their possessions (though the Hebrew is the same as for "Cain" in Gen 4:1-15). *Asshur*: another name for Assyria, one of the superpowers in biblical times.

<sup>23</sup>He raised his voice and made his address:

"How terrible!

Who will live when God does this?

<sup>24</sup>Ships from Kittim will attack Asshur;  
they will attack Eber,  
and even he will perish forever."

<sup>25</sup>Then Balaam arose, set out, and returned home. Balak also went on his way.

**Israelites and Moabites intermarry**

**25**When the Israelites lived at Shittim, the people made themselves impure by having illicit sex with Moabite women. <sup>2</sup>The Moabite women invited the people to the sacrifices for their god. So the people ate a meal, and they worshipped their god. <sup>3</sup>Israel became attached to the Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry at the Israelites. <sup>4</sup>The LORD said to Moses: Take all the leaders of the people and kill them on behalf of the LORD in broad daylight, so that the LORD's anger turns away from Israel.

<sup>5</sup>Then Moses said to Israel's officials, "Each of you: kill your men who are attached to the Baal of Peor."

**Israelites and Midianites intermarry**

<sup>6</sup>An Israelite man brought a Midianite woman to his brothers in the sight of Moses and the entire Israelite community, who were weeping at the entrance of the meeting tent. <sup>7</sup>When Phinehas (Eleazar's son and Aaron the priest's grandson) saw this, he arose in the middle of the community, took a spear in his hand, <sup>8</sup>went after the Israelite man into the chamber, and stabbed the two of them, the Israelite man and the woman, through the stomach. Then the plague stopped spreading among the Israelites. <sup>9</sup>Yet those who died by the plague numbered twenty-four thousand.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>11</sup>Phinehas (Eleazar's son and Aaron the priest's grandson) has turned back my rage toward the Israelites. Because he was jealous for me among you, I didn't consume the Israelites due to my jealousy. <sup>12</sup>Therefore, say: I'm now giving him my covenant of well-being. <sup>13</sup>It will be for him and his descendants a covenant of permanent priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and sought reconciliation for the Israelites.

<sup>14</sup>The name of the slain Israelite man who was killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri the son of Salu, chief of Simeon's household. <sup>15</sup>The name of the slain Midianite woman was

25:1 Nm 31:16;  
Nm 33:49;  
Josh 2:1; Mi 6:5;  
Rev 2:14  
25:2 Ex 34:15;  
Josh 22:17;  
1Co 10:20  
25:3 Dt 4:3;  
1Ki 16:2;  
Ps 106:28;  
Hos 9:10  
25:4 Nm 25:11;  
Dt 13:17;  
Josh 7:26;  
2Sa 21:6  
25:5 Ex 18:25;  
Ex 32:27;  
Hos 9:10  
25:6 Nm 16:42;  
Nm 16:43;  
Nm 20:6; Jgs 2:4;  
Jl 2:17  
25:7 Ex 6:25;  
Josh 22:13;  
Jgs 20:28;  
1Sa 18:10;  
Ps 106:30  
25:8 Nm 16:46;  
Nm 25:5;  
Nm 25:11;  
2Sa 24:25;  
Ps 106:29  
25:9 Nm 14:37;  
Nm 25:5;  
1Co 10:8  
25:10 Ex 32:30;  
Nm 16:47  
25:11 Ex 20:5;  
Dt 32:16;  
Dt 32:21;  
Ps 78:58;  
Ps 106:30  
25:12 Is 54:10;  
Eze 34:25;  
Eze 37:26;  
Mal 2:4; Mal 2:5

25:13 Ex 40:15; Nm 25:11; 1Ki 19:10 25:14 Nm 26:14 25:15 Nm 25:18, Nm 31:8; Josh 13:21

24:23-24 The meaning of these verses isn't entirely clear. *Kittim*: Cyprus. *Asshur*: Assyria. *Eber*: probably the land east of the Euphrates, possibly Babylonia.

25:1-5 The story of the gold calf (Exod 32) likewise deals with idolatry and shows God's anger lessening when the idolaters are killed (Exod 32:26-28).

25:1 *Shittim*: short version of Abel-shittim, the last place of the Israelite march before entering the promised land (Nm 33:49; Josh 2:1; 3:1; 4:18).

25:3 *Baal*: the Canaanite storm god of fertility, though here it may be a localized deity associated with *Peor*, a location near the Israelite camp mentioned in the Balaam story (Nm 23:28).

25:4 *kill them ... in broad daylight*: a public execution (cf. the death of Saul's seven sons, 2 Sam 21:6).

25:5 *officials*: These officials behave like judges (see also Exod 18:25-26).

25:6 *An Israelite man brought a Midianite woman to his brothers*: Sexual activity may be involved, as Phinehas seems to stab both of them at once in Numbers 25:8. *On Midianite*, see note on Numbers 22:4. *in the sight of Moses and the entire Israelite community*: defines the behavior as public in nature. The community was weeping because of either the killing (Nm 25:4-5) or the plague (Nm 25:8, 18).

25:7 *Phinehas*: as part of the priestly family (grandson of Aaron through the line of Eleazar [Exod 6:25]), he is

responsible to maintain the holiness of the camp by guarding any unlawful approach to the meeting tent.

25:8 *the stomach*: can also be translated "her stomach," which suggests the two are having sex when stabbed. *the plague stopped*: Phinehas' execution of the guilty parties appeases divine wrath. See Aaron's similar action in Numbers 16:46-48.

25:9 *twenty-four thousand*: 23,000 in 1 Corinthians 10:8.

25:11 *he was jealous for me among you*: the Hebrew idiom, "Phinehas was jealous with my jealousy." God's jealousy is an expression of God's desire to have an exclusive relationship with Israel. Phinehas' action reflects his fierce loyalty to God and affects the well-being of the entire community. 25:12 *I'm now giving him my covenant of well-being*: In the immediate context, God protects Phinehas from revenge by Zimri's clan of the tribe of Simeon (Nm 25:14) and affirms the duty of the Levites (and the priests) to protect the holiness of the meeting tent. The killing is necessary to sanctify the community and, in fact, saves the rest of the people from death by the plague.

25:13 *covenant of permanent priesthood*: See Nehemiah 13:23-31, which deals with similar topics like intermarriage and the priestly covenant. *reconciliation for the Israelites*: Phinehas mediates between God and Israel by killing the guilty, which averts God's wrath, secures God's forgiveness, and restores the broken relationship.

25:14-18 *chief ... tribal leader*: These prominent positions

26:1 Nm 25:9  
 26:3 Nm 22:1,  
 Nm 26:63,  
 Nm 31:12,  
 Nm 33:48,  
 Nm 35:1,  
 Dt 29:1, Dt 34:1;  
 Josh 13:32  
 26:5 Gn 46:9;  
 Ex 6:14;  
 Nm 26:8,  
 Nm 1:20;  
 1Ch 5:1  
 26:7 Nm 1:21  
 26:12 Gn 46:10;  
 Ex 6:15;  
 1Ch 4:24  
 26:14 Nm 1:23  
 26:15 Gn 46:16;  
 1 Ch 5:11  
 26:18 Nm 1:25  
 26:19 Gn 38:3-4,  
 Gn 38:7;  
 Gn 46:12;  
 1Ch 2:3  
 26:22 Nm 1:27

Cozbi the daughter of Zur, a tribal leader of a Midianite household. <sup>16</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>17</sup>Go after the Midianites and destroy them <sup>18</sup>because they went after you by the deception they devised for you at Peor with Cozbi, the Midianite chief's daughter and their sister, who was killed on the same day as the plague during the events at Peor.

### Second census of the Israelite tribes

**26** <sup>1</sup>After the plague <sup>2</sup>the LORD said to Moses and Eleazar, Aaron the priest's son: <sup>3</sup>Take a census of the entire Israelite community, from 20 years old and above by their households, to determine everyone in Israel who is eligible for military service.

<sup>4</sup>Moses and Eleazar the priest spoke to the people on the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho: <sup>5</sup>"Take a census of those 20 years old and above as the LORD commanded Moses." The Israelites who left the land of Egypt were:

<sup>6</sup>Reuben, Israel's oldest son.

Reuben's descendants: from Hanoch, the Hanochite clan; from Pallu, the Palluite clan; <sup>6</sup>from Hezron, the Hezronite clan; from Carmi, the Carmite clan. <sup>7</sup>These are the Reubenite clans. Their enrollment was 43,730.

<sup>8</sup>Pallu's descendants: Eliab.

<sup>9</sup>Eliab's descendants: Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. These are the Dathan and Abiram chosen by the community who fought against Moses and Aaron with the community of Korah, when they fought against the LORD. <sup>10</sup>The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, along with Korah, when the community died and fire devoured 250 persons. They became a warning sign. <sup>11</sup>But Korah's descendants didn't die.

<sup>12</sup>Simeon's descendants according to their clans: from Nemuel, the Nemuelite clan; from Jamin, the Jaminite clan; from Jachin, the Jachinite clan; <sup>13</sup>from Zerah, the Zerachite clan; from Shaul, the Shaulite clan. <sup>14</sup>These are the Simeonite clans, 22,200.

<sup>15</sup>Gad's descendants according to their clans: from Zephon, the Zephonite clan; from Haggi, the Haggite clan; from Shuni, the Shunite clan; <sup>16</sup>from Ozni, the Oznite clan; from Eri, the Erite clan; <sup>17</sup>from Arod, the Arodite clan; from Areli, the Arelite clan. <sup>18</sup>These are the Gadite clans. Their enrollment was 40,500.

<sup>19</sup>Judah's descendants: Er and Onan. Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. <sup>20</sup>Judah's descendants according to their clans: from Shelah, the Shelanite clan; from Perez, the Perezite clan; from Zerach, the Zerachite clan.

<sup>21</sup>Perez's descendants: from Hezron, the Hezronite clan; from Hamul, the Hamulite clan. <sup>22</sup>These are the Judahite clans. Their enrollment was 76,500.

<sup>25:19</sup> in Heb <sup>26:1</sup> in Heb

suggest the couple was influential and may have caused others to act similarly. *Cozbi*: means "deceptive," which matches the *deception* described in 25:18. This event leads up to the Midianite war (Num 31).

26:1–36:13 This section focuses on the land, the goal of the new generation's campaign.

26:1–65 This census has similarities with the first census in Numbers 1. However, this census is for the second generation. *Eleazar*, not Aaron, his father, takes it with *Moses*. It occurs at the edge of the promised land, not the Sinai desert. The census itself mentions previous events, including Korah's rebellion (26:9–11); the deaths of Er and Onan (26:19); and the deaths of Nadab and Abihu (26:61). The total number of each tribe differs from that of the first census, although the sum of the numbers of the 12 tribes has no significant change (601,730 here, compared to 603,550 in Num 1:46). The primary purpose of this census is to provide a basis for the division of the promised land (26:52–55). The Levites are excluded from the census because they don't receive any inheritance of land (unlike Num 1:47–53, where they are excluded because they perform duties related to the meeting tent).

26:1 *After the plague*: See Numbers 25:8, 18. This plague seems to have wiped out the last members of the first generation (Num 26:63–65).

26:3 *on the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho*: See note on Numbers 22:1.

26:4–51 This text has much in common with Genesis 46:8–26, which describes "the Israelites who went to Egypt." The phrase *The Israelites who left the land of Egypt* (26:4) shows the same families coming out of Egypt. To prevent confusion with the exodus generation of Numbers 1, this chapter clarifies that the next generation is in view (Num 26:63–65). Each tribe's description includes: (a) the tribe's name and how it was counted; (b) a list of clan names; and (c) confirmation that the clans belong to the tribe and the total number. 26:5–11 See Genesis 46:9; compare with Exodus 6:14. *Dathan... Abiram... Korah*: See Numbers 16:1–50. *But Korah's descendants didn't die*: The line of Korah wasn't terminated, as seen in later descriptions of the sons of Korah as temple singers (Pss 42; 44–49; 84–85; 87) and temple guards (1 Chron 9:19).

26:12–14 See Genesis 46:10; compare with Exodus 6:15. The decrease in population from 59,300 to 22,200 might be related to Numbers 25:1–18.

26:15–18 See Genesis 46:16.

26:19–22 See Genesis 46:12. *Er and Onan*: See Genesis 38; Deuteronomy 25:5–10. The focus on *Perez* may indicate a concern for tracing the line of David (Ruth 4:18–22; see also Matt 1:13; Luke 3:33). Judah's population increases.



<sup>23</sup>Issachar's descendants according to their clans: from Tola, the Tolaite clan; from Puvah, the Punite clan; <sup>24</sup>from Jashub, the Jashubite clan; from Shimron, the Shimronite clan. <sup>25</sup>These are the Issacharite clans. Their enrollment was 64,300.

<sup>26</sup>Zebulun's descendants according to their clans: from Sered, the Seredite clan; from Elon, the Elonite clan; from Jahleel, the Jahleelite clan. <sup>27</sup>These are the Zebulunite clans. Their enrollment was 60,500.

<sup>28</sup>Joseph's descendants according to their clans: Manasseh and Ephraim.

<sup>29</sup>Manasseh's descendants: from Machir, the Machirite clan. Machir fathered Gilead. From Gilead, the Gileadite clan. <sup>30</sup>These are Gilead's descendants: from Iezer, the Iezerite clan; from Helek, the Helekite clan; <sup>31</sup>from Asriel, the Asrielite clan; from Shechem, the Shechemite clan; <sup>32</sup>from Shemida, the Shemidaite clan; and from Hephher, the Hephherite clan. <sup>33</sup>But Zelophehad, Hephher's son, had no sons, only daughters. The names of Zelophehad's daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. <sup>34</sup>These are the Manassehite clans. Their enrollment was 52,700.

<sup>35</sup>These are Ephraim's descendants according to their clans: from Shuthelah, the Shuthelahite clan; from Becher, the Becherite clan; from Tahan, the Tahanite clan. <sup>36</sup>These are Shuthelah's descendants: from Eran, the Eranite clan. <sup>37</sup>These are Ephraim's descendants. Their enrollment was 32,500.

These are Joseph's descendants according to their clans.

<sup>38</sup>Benjamin's descendants according to their clans: from Bela, the Belaite clan; from Ashbel, the Ashbelite clan; from Ahiram, the Ahiramite clan; <sup>39</sup>from Shupham,<sup>9</sup> the Shuphamite clan; from Hupham, the Huphamite clan. <sup>40</sup>Bela's descendants were Ard and Naaman: from Ard, the Ardite clan; from Naaman, the Naamite clan. <sup>41</sup>These are Benjamin's descendants according to their clans. Their enrollment was 45,600.

<sup>42</sup>These are Dan's descendants according to their clans: from Shuham, the Shuhamite clan. These are the Danite clans according to their clans. <sup>43</sup>All the Shuhamite clans according to their enrollment were 64,400.

<sup>44</sup>Asher's descendants according to their clans: from Imnah, the Imnite clan; from Ishvi, the Ishvite clan; from Beriah, the Beriite clan. <sup>45</sup>From Beriah's descendants: from Heber, the Heberite clan; from Malchiel, the Malchielite clan. <sup>46</sup>The name of Asher's daughter was Serah. <sup>47</sup>These are the clans of Asher's descendants. Their enrollment was 53,400.

<sup>48</sup>Naphtali's descendants according to their clans: from Jahzeel, the Jahzeelite clan; from Guni, the Gunite clan; <sup>49</sup>from Jezer, the Jezerite clan; from Shillem, the Shillemite clan. <sup>50</sup>These are Naphtali's clans according to their clans. Their enrollment was 45,400.

<sup>51</sup>These are the ones enrolled as Israelites: 601,730.

<sup>52</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>53</sup>The land will be apportioned to these as an inheritance according to the number of names. <sup>54</sup>To a large clan you will give a large inheritance, and to a small clan you will give a small inheritance. Each will be given its inheritance according to the number of its enrollment. <sup>55</sup>The land, however, will be apportioned by lot. They will inherit according to the names of their ancestral tribes. <sup>56</sup>Whether they are large or small, each tribe will inherit by means of the lot.

### Second census of the Levites

<sup>57</sup>These are the ones enrolled as Levites according to their clans: from Gershon, the Gershonite clan; from Kohath, the Kohathite clan; from Merari, the Merarite clan.

<sup>9</sup>LXX, Syr, Tg, Vulg; MT *Shephupham*

26:23-25 See Genesis 46:13.

26:26-27 See Genesis 46:14.

26:28 The tribe of Joseph is divided in two in order to compensate for the exclusion of the Levites from the 12-tribe system. (See note on Num 1:4-16.)

26:29-34 Compare with Joshua 17:1-3. *Zelophehad's daughters*: See Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13.

26:35-37 Compare with 1 Chronicles 7:1, 6-8, 20.

26:38-41 See Genesis 46:21; compare with 1 Chronicles 7:6-12; 8:1-40.

26:42-43 See Genesis 46:23.

26:44-47 See Genesis 46:17. The name of *Asher's daughter*

is mentioned. Perhaps it's related to the right of inheritance for daughters (Num 27:8), similar to the case of Zelophehad's daughters (Num 27:1-11; 36:1-13).

26:48-50 See Genesis 46:24.

26:52-56 The location where each tribe ends up is determined by lot (the use of a small object to seek out divine will as in 1 Sam 10:17-22). However, distribution also occurs according to the number of its enrollment so that large clans receive enough land.

26:57-62 The male Levites are counted from one month of age and older due to their unique duties (Num 3:15). Unlike other tribes, they won't inherit any land. For these

26:23 Gn 46:13;

1Ch 7:1

26:25 Nm 1:29

26:26 Gn 30:20;

Gn 46:14

26:27 Nm 1:31

26:28 Gn 46:20;

Gn 48:5;

Josh 16:4

26:29 Gn 50:23;

Nm 27:1;

Nm 36:1;

Josh 17:1;

1Ch 7:14

26:34 Nm 1:35

26:35 1Ch 7:20

26:37 Nm 1:33

26:38 Gn 46:21;

1Ch 8:1

26:41 Nm 1:37

26:42 Gn 30:6;

Gn 46:23

26:43 Nm 1:39

26:44 Gn 46:17;

Nm 1:40;

1Ch 7:30

26:47 Nm 1:41

26:48 Gn 46:24;

1Ch 7:13

26:50 Nm 1:43

26:51 Nm 1:46

26:57 Gn 46:11;

Ex 6:16; 1Ch 6:1

26:61 Nm 1:47;  
Nm 2:33,  
Nm 3:39,  
Nm 18:20;  
Dt 10:9;  
Dt 14:27;  
Dt 18:1;  
Josh 13:14;  
Josh 14:3

<sup>58</sup>These are the Levite clans: the Libnite clan, the Hebronite clan, the Mahlite clan, the Mushite clan, and the Korahite clan. Now Kohath fathered Amram. <sup>59</sup>The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, Levi's daughter, who was born to Levi in Egypt. She gave birth for Amram to Aaron, Moses, and Miriam their sister. <sup>60</sup>To Aaron were born Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. <sup>61</sup>Nadab and Abihu died when they made an unauthorized offering to the LORD. <sup>62</sup>Their enrollment was 23,000, consisting of every male one month old and above. They weren't enrolled with the Israelites because no inheritance of land was given to them among the Israelites.

### Summary

<sup>63</sup>These are the ones whom Moses and Eleazar the priest enrolled. They enrolled the Israelites on the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho. <sup>64</sup>There wasn't one person among these from those enrolled by Moses and Aaron the priest when they enrolled the Israelites in the Sinai desert. <sup>65</sup>The LORD had said to them, "They will die in the desert." Not one of them remained, except Caleb, Jephunneh's son, and Joshua, Nun's son.

### Zelophehad's daughters' inheritance

**27**The daughters of Zelophehad, Hephher's son, Gilead's grandson, Machir's great-grandson, and Manasseh's great-great-grandson, belonging to the clan of Manasseh and son of Joseph, came forward. His daughters' names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. <sup>2</sup>They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the chiefs, and the entire community at the entrance of the meeting tent and said, <sup>3</sup>"Our father died in the desert. He wasn't part of the community who gathered against the LORD with Korah's community. He died for his own sin, but he had no sons. <sup>4</sup>Why should our father's name be taken away from his clan because he didn't have a son? Give us property among our father's brothers."

<sup>5</sup>Moses brought their case before the LORD. <sup>6</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>7</sup>Zelophehad's daughters are right in what they are saying. By all means, give them property as an inheritance among their father's brothers. Hand over their father's inheritance to them. <sup>8</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say: If a man dies and doesn't have a son, you must hand his inheritance over to his daughters. <sup>9</sup>If he doesn't have a daughter, you will give his inheritance to his brothers. <sup>10</sup>If he doesn't have any brothers, you should give his inheritance to his father's brothers. <sup>11</sup>If his father had no brothers, you should give his inheritance to his nearest relative from his clan. He will take possession of it. This will be a regulation and a case law for the Israelites, as the LORD commanded Moses.

### Announcement of Moses' death

<sup>12</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Go up this mountain, Abarim, and look at the land that I've given to the Israelites. <sup>13</sup>You will see it and then join your ancestors just as Aaron your

reasons, they are excluded from the census of the 12 tribes. Verses 57 and 62 together would satisfy the basic pattern used for another tribal entry. The middle section (26:58-61), however, provides information focused on the clan of Kohath, from which Moses, Aaron, and Miriam came (see also Exod 6:14-27). Aaron's descendants are listed (not Moses' or Miriam's) because they were priests. *Nadab and Abihu*: See Leviticus 10:1-7.

**26:63-65** Concludes the second census and recalls Numbers 13-14.

**27:1-11** Land is given to clans of the tribe from God. No portion of land can be permanently sold or taken away from its family of origin. Land inheritance typically follows the line of succession of male heirs (Lev 25; Num 26:52-54; 1 Kgs 21:1-4). However, this creates a legal problem when there are no male heirs to inherit the family property, as in the case brought by the daughters of Zelophehad. God's ruling is carried out later (Josh 17:3-6). Their case redefines the line of succession, applicable to all Israel (27:8-11). See also Numbers 36:1-13.

**27:1** See Numbers 26:29-33.

**27:2** before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the chiefs, and the entire community at the entrance of the meeting tent.

setting for a civil case brought to the public and resolved by God.

**27:3** *wasn't part of... Korah's community*: If he had participated in Korah's rebellion (Num 16:1-50), he would have forfeited his right of inheritance. *He died for his own sin*: as part of the first generation that died in the wilderness. Because Zelophehad *had no sons*, his land would be inherited by his brothers.

**27:5** The daughters' case is unprecedented, and it requires Moses to receive divine revelation, as in other cases (Lev 24:10-23; Num 9:6-14; 15:32-36). *brought*: The underlying Hebrew verb is similar to "came forward" in Numbers 27:1, indicating a step in the process of bringing the dispute to a higher authority for a ruling.

**27:6-11** God's favorable ruling leads to more general regulations on the inheritance cases, expanding the existing law. *case law*: deals with specific circumstances (27:11), frequently with a word like "if" that precedes a description of when the law is applicable (27:8).

**27:12-23** Follows a pattern similar to the death report of Aaron (Num 20:22-29): specific places; God's prediction of and reason for the death (Num 20:1-13); appointment of a successor; and Moses' execution of God's command

brother has, <sup>14</sup>because in the Zin desert, when the community confronted you, you rebelled against my command to show them my holiness by means of the water.” (These are the waters of Meribah<sup>a</sup> of Kadesh in the Zin desert.)

<sup>15</sup>Moses spoke to the LORD: <sup>16</sup>“Let the LORD, the God of all living things, appoint someone over the community <sup>17</sup>who will go out before them and return before them, someone who will lead them out and bring them back, so that the LORD’s community won’t be like sheep without their shepherd.”

<sup>18</sup>The LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua, Nun’s son, a man who has the spirit, and lay your hand on him. <sup>19</sup>Place him before Eleazar the priest and the entire community and commission him before them. <sup>20</sup>You will give him some of your power so that the entire Israelite community may obey. <sup>21</sup>He will stand before Eleazar the priest, who will determine for him the decision by lot before the LORD. At his command, he and all the Israelites with him, the entire community, will go out, and at his command they will return.”

<sup>22</sup>Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and placed him before Eleazar the priest and the entire community. <sup>23</sup>He laid his hands on him and commissioned him as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

### Daily offering

**28** The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Command the Israelites and say to them: Make sure to offer to me my offering, my food, my food gift as a soothing smell to me at its appointed time.

<sup>3</sup>You will say to them: This is the food gift that you must present to the LORD: two flawless one-year-old lambs as the regular entirely burned offering every day. <sup>4</sup>One lamb you will offer in the morning and the second at twilight, <sup>5</sup>with a tenth of an ephah<sup>a</sup> of fine flour for a grain offering mixed with a fourth of a hin<sup>c</sup> of beaten oil. <sup>6</sup>It is the regular entirely burned offering begun at Mount Sinai, a food gift that is a soothing smell to the LORD. <sup>7</sup>Their drink offering will be a fourth of a hin for each lamb. In the sanctuary a drink offering of brandy will be poured out for the LORD. <sup>8</sup>The second lamb you will offer at twilight like the grain offering and the drink offering in the morning. You will offer a food gift that is a soothing smell to the LORD.

<sup>a</sup>Or confrontation <sup>b</sup>One ephah is approximately twenty quarts. <sup>c</sup>One hin is approximately one gallon.

to install the successor. But unlike Numbers 20:22-29, this text doesn’t report the actual death of Moses (Deut 34:4-6) or the people’s mourning (Deut 34:8). Also, the request for a successor originates from Moses, not from God. Moreover, the commissioning procedure is greatly expanded (27:18-21).

27:12 *Abanim*: See Numbers 33:47-48; Deuteronomy 32:49.

27:13 *Join your ancestors*: die (Num 20:24).

27:14 See Numbers 20:1-13.

27:17 *go out... return... lead them out and bring them back*: military activity (Deut 31:2-3; Josh 14:11).

27:18 *Joshua, Nun’s son*: See Exodus 17:8-16; Numbers 11:28; 13:16; 14:6, 30, 38. *a man who has the spirit*: recalls the sharing of Moses’ spirit with the 70 elders (Num 11:16-27), although Joshua isn’t mentioned as one of them. See also Deuteronomy 34:9. *lay your hand on him*: symbolic act of transferring authority (cf. Num 8:10).

27:19 *Place him before Eleazar the priest and the entire community*: official presentation to the public (cf. 8:13). *commission him*: The underlying Hebrew can mean “command him,” which God does with Moses. See Deuteronomy 31:7-8.

27:20 *some of your power*: See Numbers 11:17.

27:21 *lot*: Unlike Numbers 26:55-56, the underlying Hebrew points to a specific type of lot, the Urim, which is used by the high priest with the Thummim to learn God’s will (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; 1 Sam 14:41; Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65). The Urim and the Thummim are small objects, made of

stones with symbols (indicating affirmative and negative answers) impressed on each side. They were kept in a small, square pocket of the high priest’s chest pendant (Exod 28:16, 29-30; 29:5; Lev 8:8). The high priest either pulled one out from the pocket or cast both of them on the ground to determine God’s will.

28:1-29:40 Compared to other ritual calendars (Exod 23:10-19; 34:18-26; Lev 23:1-44; Deut 16:1-17; Ezek 45:18-46:15), this text is more detailed regarding times and quantities for each occasion. Festivals are closely related to annual harvesttimes (spring and fall); as well as to the history of Israel (exodus, receiving the Instruction from Mount Sinai, and the wilderness journey).

28:2 *my food*: A similar expression is found in Leviticus 21:6. *my food gift*: See note on Numbers 15:3. *at its appointed time*: refers to sacred times/seasons that structured Israel’s worship life (Lev 23:2, 4, 37), just as the meeting tent refers to Israel’s sacred place. See also Numbers 9:1-5; 10:10; 15:3. 28:3-8 Compare with Exodus 29:38-46.

28:3 *entirely burned offering*: an offering of the entire animal consumed by the altar fire and offered regularly (see Lev 1:3-17; 6:8-13). This daily offering is foundational for the rest of offerings, which are offered “in addition to” it (Num 28:10, 15, 24, 31; 29:6, 11, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 38).

28:5 *a tenth of an ephah*: a half-gallon (see translation note s). *grain offering*: See Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-18. *a fourth of a hin*: one quart (see translation note t).

27:16 Nm 16:22

27:17 Dt 31:2;

1Ki 22:17;

2Ch 1:10;

Eze 34:5;

Mt 9:36

27:18 Gn 41:38;

Nm 11:28;

Nm 27:23;

Dt 1:38, Dt 34:9

27:20 Josh 1:16;

1Ch 29:25

27:23 Nm 27:19;

Dt 31:7;

Dt 31:23

28:2 Lv 3:11

28:9 Mt 12:5  
28:10 Eze 46:4,  
Eze 46:5

<sup>9</sup>On the Sabbath day: two flawless one-year-old male lambs and two-tenths of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, and its drink offering. <sup>10</sup>This is the entirely burned offering for every Sabbath, in addition to the regular entirely burned offering and its drink offering.

### Monthly offering

<sup>11</sup>At the beginning of every month you will present an entirely burned offering to the LORD: two bulls from the herd, one ram, and seven one-year-old male lambs, all flawless. <sup>12</sup>Use three-tenths of fine flour for a grain offering mixed with oil for each bull, two-tenths of fine flour for a grain offering mixed with oil for each ram, <sup>13</sup>and one-tenth of fine flour for a grain offering mixed with oil for each lamb. It is an entirely burned offering with a soothing smell, a food gift to the LORD. <sup>14</sup>Their drink offerings will be half a hin of wine for a bull, a third a hin of wine for a ram, and a fourth a hin of wine for a lamb. This is the monthly entirely burned offering for every month through the months of the year. <sup>15</sup>There will be one male goat for a purification offering to the LORD in addition to the regular entirely burned offering and its drink offering.

### Yearly offerings

#### Passover and unleavened bread

<sup>16</sup>On the fourteenth day of the first month<sup>a</sup> there will be a Passover offering to the LORD. <sup>17</sup>On the fifteenth day of this month there will be a festival. For seven days unleavened bread will be eaten. <sup>18</sup>The first day will be a holy occasion. You will not do any job-related work. <sup>19</sup>You will bring a food gift, an entirely burned offering to the LORD: two bulls from the herd, one ram, and seven male lambs one year old. They will be flawless. <sup>20</sup>Their grain offering will be fine flour mixed with oil. You will offer three-tenths for the bull, two-tenths for the ram, <sup>21</sup>and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs, <sup>22</sup>along with one male goat for a purification offering to seek reconciliation for yourselves. <sup>23</sup>You will offer these in addition to the entirely burned offering of the morning, which is the regular entirely burned offering. <sup>24</sup>Like these, you will also offer each day for seven days a food gift as a soothing smell to the LORD. It will be offered in addition to the regular entirely burned offering and its drink offering. <sup>25</sup>The seventh day will be a holy occasion for you. You will not do any job-related work.

#### Festival of Weeks

<sup>26</sup>The day of the early produce, when you present your new grain offering to the LORD at your Festival of Weeks, will be a holy occasion for you. You will not do any job-related work. <sup>27</sup>You will present an entirely burned offering as a soothing smell to the LORD: two bulls

<sup>a</sup>March–April, Nisan

28:9 Compare with Leviticus 23:3. An ephah (approximately five gallons; see note s), is used to measure the fine flour. So two-tenths of an ephah would be about one gallon.

28:11 *the beginning of every month*: based on a lunar calendar. *two bulls... one ram... seven one-year-old male lambs*: The same animals and quantities are used on each of the seven days of the celebration of Unleavened Bread (Num 28:19) and on the day of the Festival of Weeks (Num 28:27).

28:12-13 *tenths of fine flour*: See note on Numbers 28:9. *grain offering*: See Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-18.

28:14 A *hin* is approximately one gallon (see note t), so *half* would be about two quarts, *a third* would be about one and one-half quarts, and *a fourth* would be about one quart.

28:15 *purification offering*: See Leviticus 4:1-5:13; Numbers 15:22-31.

28:16 See Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:1-14. The Passover celebrates God's saving Israel in Egypt (Exod 12:3-14). The *Passover offering* is a family matter, separate from the public Feast of Unleavened Bread.

28:17-25 *festival*: the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread (see Exod 12:15-20; Lev 23:6-8). The amount of

offerings for each day is the same as for the monthly offerings (without the drink offering here). The first day and the seventh day are called a *holy occasion*. It pictures the priestly calling of the people to make a pilgrimage to the sanctuary on the fifteenth and twenty-first days of the first month of every year to celebrate God's mighty act of the exodus.

28:20 *grain offering*: See Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-18.

28:22 The *purification offering* restores the defiled sanctuary's purity, so that the unholy people can be reconciled with the holy God (see Lev 4:1-5:13; Num 15:22-31).

28:26-31 *Festival of Weeks*: See Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10. Also called the Harvest Festival (Exod 23:16); Pentecost (Acts 2); and the Day of First Fruits (cf. Lev 23:9-22). No specific date for this agricultural festival is stated here, but Leviticus 23:15-16 speaks of 50 days from the day on which the grain from the new crop is presented to the Lord for the priests' use (Lev 23:15-22; Num 18:12-13). The offerings for this festival are the same as that for each day's offering for the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

28:26 *the early produce*: sometimes translated "the first fruits."

28:27 *entirely burned offering*: See note on Numbers 28:3.

from the herd, one ram, and seven male lambs one year old.<sup>28</sup> Their grain offering will be fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths for each bull, two-tenths for the one ram,<sup>29</sup> and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs.<sup>30</sup> Offer one male goat to seek reconciliation for yourselves.<sup>31</sup> You will offer these in addition to the regular entirely burned offering, its grain offering and drink offerings. They will be flawless.

29:5 Nm 28:15,  
Nm 28:30  
29:7 Lv 16:29,  
Lv 23:27,  
Ps 35:13;  
Ac 27:9

### Blowing of the trumpet

**29** The first day of the seventh month<sup>7</sup> will be a holy occasion for you. You will not do any job-related work. It will be for you a day of the trumpet's sound.<sup>2</sup> You will offer an entirely burned offering as a soothing smell to the LORD: one bull from the herd, one ram, and seven male lambs one year old, all flawless.<sup>3</sup> Their grain offering will be fine flour mixed with oil, three-tenths for the bull, two-tenths for the ram,<sup>4</sup> and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs.<sup>5</sup> There will be one male goat for a purification offering to seek reconciliation for yourselves.<sup>6</sup> This is in addition to the monthly entirely burned offering with its grain offering, and the regular entirely burned offering with its grain offering and drink offerings as prescribed. It will be a soothing smell, a food gift to the LORD.

### Day of Reconciliation

<sup>7</sup>The tenth day of this seventh month will be a holy occasion for you. You will deny yourselves and not do any work.<sup>8</sup> You will present an entirely burned offering to the LORD as a soothing smell: one bull from the herd, one ram, and seven male lambs one year old. They will be flawless.<sup>9</sup> Their grain offering will be fine flour mixed with oil, three-tenths for the bull, two-tenths for the one ram,<sup>10</sup> and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs.<sup>11</sup> There will be one male goat for a purification offering in addition to the purification offering of reconciliation, and the regular entirely burned offering with its grain offering and drink offerings.

### Festival of Booths

<sup>12</sup>The fifteenth day of the seventh month<sup>13</sup> will be a holy occasion for you. You will not do any job-related work. You will celebrate a festival to the LORD for seven days.<sup>13</sup> You will present an entirely burned offering, a food gift as a soothing smell to the LORD: thirteen bulls from the herd, two rams, and fourteen male lambs one year old. They will be flawless.<sup>14</sup> Their grain offering will be fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams,<sup>15</sup> and one-tenth for each of the fourteen lambs.<sup>16</sup> There will be one male goat for a purification offering in addition to the regular entirely burned offering with its grain offering and its drink offering.

<sup>17</sup>On the second day: twelve bulls from the herd, two rams, and fourteen male lambs one year old, all flawless.<sup>18</sup> The grain offering and drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs will be as prescribed for their number.<sup>19</sup> There will be one male goat for a purification

<sup>7</sup>September–October, Tishrei <sup>13</sup>September–October, Tishrei

28:28-30 *grain offering*: See Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-18. *reconciliation*: See Numbers 28:22.

29:1-6 Compare with Leviticus 23:23-25. The first month of the Jewish calendar is the month of Nissan (March–April) when Passover occurs (Exod 12:2; Ezek 45:18). However, the first day of the seventh month (Tishrei, September–October) is the Jewish New Year's Day (called "Rosh Hashanah") because it is when the Jewish calendar year advances and is seen traditionally as the date when the world was created. A horn is blown to announce this beginning (see Num 10:10; Ps 81:3).

29:2 *entirely burned offering*: See note on Numbers 28:3.

29:3 *grain offering*: See Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-18. *tenths*: See note on Numbers 28:9.

29:5 *purification offering*: See note on Numbers 28:22.

29:6 This verse refers to the offerings described in Numbers 28:11-15.

29:7-11 The Day of Reconciliation can also be called the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur. Similar instructions appear in Leviticus 16:1-34; 23:26-32. The main purpose is to cleanse the sanctuary of contamination from the people's

sin. The offerings are similar to those of the New Year's Day celebration.

29:11 *purification offering in addition to the purification offering of reconciliation*: might refer to the purification offering for the high priest and his household (a bull, not a male goat, Lev 16:6) or another purification offering on behalf of the people (Lev 16:7-9).

29:12-38 See Leviticus 23:33-43; Deuteronomy 16:13-15. No name is given for this festival in the text, but other passages call it the Gathering Festival (Exod 23:16; 34:22) or the Festival of Booths (Lev 23:33; Deut 16:13). It can also be called by the Hebrew word for "booths," *Sukkoth*. This word refers to the temporary structures of workers during harvest, so this festival celebrates the fall harvest and is also connected to Israel's wilderness journey. It lasts *seven days* (29:12), as does the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the first month (Num 28:17-24). However, it requires more animals for an entirely burned offering (e.g., 13 bulls, 2 rams, and 14 male yearling lambs on the first day); and the number of bulls decreases one per day from 13 on the first day

30:2 Dt 23:21;  
Job 22:27;  
Ps 50:14; Ecc 5:4;  
Mt 5:33

offering in addition to the regular entirely burned offering with its grain offering and drink offerings.

<sup>20</sup>On the third day: eleven bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs one year old, all flawless. <sup>21</sup>The grain offering and drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs will be as prescribed for their number. <sup>22</sup>There will be one male goat for a purification offering in addition to the regular entirely burned offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

<sup>23</sup>On the fourth day: ten bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs one year old, all flawless. <sup>24</sup>The grain offering and drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs will be as prescribed for their number. <sup>25</sup>There will be one male goat for a purification offering in addition to the regular entirely burned offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

<sup>26</sup>On the fifth day: nine bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs one year old, all flawless. <sup>27</sup>The grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs will be as prescribed for their number. <sup>28</sup>There will be one male goat for a purification offering in addition to the regular entirely burned offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

<sup>29</sup>On the sixth day: eight bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs one year old, all flawless. <sup>30</sup>The grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs will be as prescribed for their number. <sup>31</sup>There will be one male goat for a purification offering in addition to the regular entirely burned offering with its grain offering and its drink offerings.

<sup>32</sup>On the seventh day: seven bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs one year old, all flawless. <sup>33</sup>The grain offering and their drink offering for the bulls, rams, and lambs will be as prescribed for their number. <sup>34</sup>There will be one male goat for a purification offering in addition to the regular entirely burned offering with its grain offering and its drink offering.

<sup>35</sup>On the eighth day you will have a holiday. You will not do any job-related work. <sup>36</sup>You will present an entirely burned offering, a food gift as a soothing smell to the LORD: one bull, one ram, and seven male lambs one year old, all without blemish. <sup>37</sup>The grain offering and their drink offerings for the bull, ram, and lambs will be as prescribed for their number. <sup>38</sup>There will be one male goat for a purification offering in addition to the regular entirely burned offering with its grain offering and its drink offering.

<sup>39</sup>These you will offer to the LORD at your appointed times in addition to your payments for solemn promises, your spontaneous gifts, your entirely burned offerings, your grain offerings, your drink offerings, and your well-being sacrifices.

<sup>40</sup>Moses told the Israelites everything that the LORD commanded Moses.

### Solemn promises by men

**30** Moses spoke to the leaders of the tribes of the Israelites: This is what the LORD has commanded: <sup>2</sup>When a man makes a solemn promise to the LORD or swears a solemn pledge of binding obligation for himself, he cannot break his word. He must do everything he said.

### Solemn promises by women

<sup>3</sup>When a woman makes a solemn promise to the LORD or a binding obligation while she is young and in her father's household, <sup>4</sup>and her father hears her solemn promise or her

<sup>\*30:1</sup> in Heb

to seven on the seventh day. The accompanying grain and drink offerings are also scaled down for each day, while the purification offerings remain the same. The size of these public offerings reflects the abundance of the fertile land, from which the Israelites can thank God. The number *seven* (a symbol of perfection and completeness) is important to this text. The total number of animals sacrificed for a seven-day period is 70 bulls (10x7); 14 rams (2x7); and 98 yearling male lambs (2x7x7). Also, the decrease of a bull per day results in seven bulls for the burned offering on the seventh day. The seventh day of this festival is on the twenty-first day (3x7) of the seventh month. Seven is also important to Numbers 28:1–29:40: Seven feasts are mentioned. Both the spring (Unleavened Bread) and fall (Booths) festivals last seven days. The sabbath offering is given on the seventh day of the week. The Festival of Weeks

begins on the day after seven Sabbaths from when the first part of the harvest was dedicated to God.

**29:35–38** the *eighth day*: called a *holiday* (or “sacred gathering”), different from “a holy occasion” on the first day (Num 29:12). However, the same prohibition of *work* is mentioned for both days. It’s likely that the eighth-day celebration had a distinct origin (see 1 Kgs 8:2, 65–66) that was later integrated into the Feast of Booths.

**30:2** a *solemn promise to the LORD*: committing to do something for God in exchange for divine support. Solemn promises in the Bible are conditional promises: If God does *X*, then the promise-maker will do *Y* (e.g., make a sacrifice). a *solemn pledge*: either promising that something is true (cf. Lev 6:3) or committing to do (or not to do) something. *binding obligation for himself*: suggests that the promise-maker’s own life is tied up in the agreement.

**30:3–16** The text outlines in what circumstances fathers

binding obligation for herself and keeps silent<sup>7</sup>—then all her solemn promises and any of her binding obligations for herself will stand. <sup>5</sup>But if her father expresses disapproval to her on the day that he hears her, none of her solemn promises nor any of her binding obligations for herself will stand. The LORD will forgive her, because her father expressed disapproval to her.

<sup>6</sup>If she marries while her solemn promise is in effect or makes a statement by which she binds herself, <sup>7</sup>and her husband hears it and on the day he hears it keeps silent—her solemn promises will stand as well as her binding obligations for herself. <sup>8</sup>But if on the day that her husband hears it he expresses disapproval to her, he can break her solemn promise and the statement by which she bound herself. Then the LORD will forgive her.

<sup>9</sup>Every solemn promise of a widow or a divorced woman who makes a binding obligation for herself will stand.

<sup>10</sup>If a woman makes a solemn promise in her husband's household or makes a binding obligation for herself with a solemn pledge, <sup>11</sup>and her husband hears, keeps silent, and doesn't express disapproval to her—then all her solemn promises will stand and all her binding obligations for herself will stand. <sup>12</sup>If her husband breaks them on the day he hears them, then whatever she said with regard to her solemn promises or the binding obligations for herself will not stand. Her husband has broken them. The LORD will forgive her.

<sup>13</sup>Her husband may allow any solemn promise or any binding pledge of self-denial to stand or be broken. <sup>14</sup>But if her husband keeps silent from one day to the next, he has upheld all her solemn promises, or all her binding obligations. He has upheld them because he remained silent on the day he heard them. <sup>15</sup>If he breaks them after he has heard them, he will assume her guilt.

<sup>16</sup>These are the regulations that the LORD commanded Moses concerning a husband and his wife and between a father and his daughter while she is young and in her father's household.

**War against the Midianites**

**31** The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Take just reparations for the Israelites from the Midianites. Afterward you will join your ancestors.

<sup>3</sup>Moses spoke to the people: "Equip some of your men for battle so that they may go against Midian and execute the LORD's just punishment against Midian. <sup>4</sup>You will send out for battle one thousand from each of the tribes of Israel."

<sup>5</sup>From the thousands of Israel, one thousand from each tribe were selected. Twelve thousand were equipped for battle. <sup>6</sup>Moses sent them to battle, one thousand from each tribe, along with Phinehas, Eleazar the priest's son, who carried the sanctuary equipment and the trumpets for sounding the alarm in his hand. <sup>7</sup>They battled against Midian as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they killed every male. <sup>8</sup>They killed the kings of Midian: Evi,

<sup>7</sup>Or her father is deaf to her.

(30:3-5) and husbands (30:6-15) can nullify promises made by their daughters and wives. If the father or husband keeps silent on the day he learns of it, the promise will stand (i.e., remain binding). However, if he expresses disapproval to her on that day, then the promise may be broken without bearing guilt.

30:6-8 Addresses the situation of a woman who marries after she makes a solemn promise while unmarried. It presupposes that her promise has been approved by her father and has not been fulfilled when she marries.

30:9 a widow or a divorced woman is obligated to keep her promise, as is a man (Num 30:3).

30:13 The sorts of self-denial that a wife could and would make are not entirely clear.

30:15 The husband's authoritative status comes with great accountability: If he objects to her promise after the day he learns of it, he must bear the penalty.

31:1-12 Israel carries out God's command given in Numbers 25:16-18.

31:2 just reparations: in response to both Midian's support for Balak's plan to curse Israel through Balaam (Num 22:4, 7) and Midian's intermarriage with Israel (Num 25:6-18). join your ancestors: See note on Numbers 27:13.

31:3-4 just punishment: See note on Numbers 31:2. one thousand from each of the tribes of Israel: The number is small compared to the registered militia of 601,730 (Num 26:51), which suggests this is God's war.

31:5-6 The word "thousand" can also refer to a "military unit" (Josh 22:14).

31:6 Phinehas: chosen because of his killing Zimri and the Midianite woman Cozbi for their sin of intermarriage (Num 25:6-18). the sanctuary equipment: likely the chest containing the covenant. trumpets: See Numbers 10:9.

31:7 they killed every male: See notes on Numbers 21:1-3; Deuteronomy 20:1-18.

31:8 For names of the five slain Midianite kings, see Joshua 13:21. Zur is the father of the Midianite woman

31:3 Gn 25:2, Gn 36:35; Ex 2:10, Ex 17:9; Jer 46:10  
31:8 Nm 22:5, Nm 25:15; Josh 13:21, Josh 13:22

31:1-11 Dt 20:14  
 31:15 1Sa 15:3  
 31:16 Nm 25:1;  
 2Pt 2:15;  
 Rev 2:14  
 31:18 Dt 21:10

Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian, along with others slain. They also killed Balaam, Beor's son, with the sword. <sup>9</sup>The Israelites took captive the Midianite women, their little ones, all their cattle, their herds, and their possessions. <sup>10</sup>They burned all the cities where they lived and their encampments. <sup>11</sup>They took all the spoils of war and the valuable property, both human and animal, <sup>12</sup>and they brought the captives, the valuable property, and the spoils of war to Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the Israelite community, at the camp on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.

#### **Purification from war**

<sup>13</sup>Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the chiefs of the community went to meet them outside the camp. <sup>14</sup>Moses became angry with the commanders of the army, the officers of thousands and the officers of hundreds, who came back from the battle. <sup>15</sup>Moses said to them, "Have you let all the women live? <sup>16</sup>These very women, on Balaam's advice, made the Israelites break faith with the LORD in the affair at Peor, so there was a plague among the LORD's community. <sup>17</sup>Now kill every male child and every female who has known a man intimately by sleeping with him. <sup>18</sup>But all the young girls who have not known a man intimately by sleeping with him, spare for yourselves. <sup>19</sup>You will remain outside the camp for seven days. Everyone among you or your captives who has killed a person or touched a corpse must purify themselves on the third and seventh days. <sup>20</sup>You must also purify every garment, and everything made of leather, goats' hair, or wood."

#### **Instructions about the spoils of war**

<sup>21</sup>Eleazar the priest said to the men of battle who had gone out to war, "This is the regulation in the Instruction that the LORD commanded Moses: <sup>22</sup>Gold, silver, copper, iron, tin, and lead— <sup>23</sup>anything that can withstand fire—you will put through the fire and it will be clean. It will also be purified with the water of purification. Anything that isn't able to withstand fire, you will immerse in water. <sup>24</sup>You must wash your clothes on the seventh day and you will be clean. Afterward you may enter the camp."

<sup>25</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>26</sup>You, Eleazar the priest, and the leaders of the community's households must take an inventory of the valuable property and the captives, both human and animals, <sup>27</sup>and divide the valuable property between the warriors who went into battle and the entire community. <sup>28</sup>You will offer as tribute to the LORD from each warrior who went into battle one living being in five hundred, whether human, oxen, donkeys, or flocks. <sup>29</sup>Take it from the warriors' half and give it to Eleazar the priest as a gift offering to the LORD. <sup>30</sup>But from the Israelites' half you will take one out of every fifty, whether from human, oxen, donkeys, or flock—all the animals. You will give them to the Levites who carry out the duties of the LORD's dwelling.

<sup>31</sup>Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses. <sup>32</sup>The valuable property remaining from the spoils of war that the people of the army had taken was 675,000 sheep, <sup>33</sup>72,000 oxen, <sup>34</sup>61,000 donkeys, <sup>35</sup>and 32,000 women who hadn't known a man intimately by sleeping with him. <sup>36</sup>The half-share of those who had gone out to battle numbered 337,500 sheep, <sup>37</sup>of which the LORD's tribute was 675. <sup>38</sup>The oxen were 36,000,

Cozbi, whom Phinehas stabbed (Num 25:15). *Balaam, Beor's son*: See Numbers 22-24; Joshua 13:22; 24:9-10.

31:9-12 *took captive... burned all the cities... took all the spoils of war and the valuable property*: actions of a holy war (see Deut 20:1-18). The detailed description builds up curiosity as to what will happen to the spoils, a key concern of the text.

31:13-18 The commanders' and officers' actions match the rules of holy war given in Deuteronomy 20:10-14, killing all males but taking women, children, and animals as spoils of war. Yet Moses becomes angry for sparing the Midianite women. He commands the killing of all male children and all women who aren't virgins. This severe command is issued because of the role the Midianite women played in the Baal of Peor affair (Num 25). According to Moses, they lured the Israelites to idolatrous rebellion, following *Balaam's advice* (although Num 25 didn't

mention him). Inter-marriage with the Midianite women (Num 25:6-18) can be understood in light of the behavior of the Moabite women (Num 25:1-5). The virgins are spared for yourselves, that is, for marriage (Deut 21:10-14). 31:19-24 *outside the camp... purify themselves*: Because the war involved contact with dead bodies, the instructions of Numbers 19 need to be followed. *third and seventh days*: See Numbers 19:12, 19. Instructions for making the *water of purification* are given in Numbers 19:1-10, and its use in cleansing is found in Numbers 19:11-22.

31:25-47 God commands Moses to take an inventory of all spoils and to distribute them according to the following formula: (1) Divide them equally between the warriors who went to battle and the rest of the community (Josh 22:8; 1 Sam 30:23-25); (2) take a tax from each warrior at a rate of 1/500th (0.2 percent) for support of the priests and from each remaining Israelite at a rate of



of which the LORD's tribute was 72. <sup>39</sup>The donkeys were 30,500, of which the LORD's tribute was 61. <sup>40</sup>Humans were 16,000, of which the LORD's tribute was 32 persons. <sup>41</sup>Moses gave the tribute, a gift offering for the LORD, to Eleazar the priest as the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>42</sup>As for the half-share of the Israelites that Moses divided from those who had gone out to battle: <sup>43</sup>the community's half-share was 337,500 sheep, <sup>44</sup>36,000 oxen, <sup>45</sup>30,500 donkeys, <sup>46</sup>and 16,000 humans. <sup>47</sup>Moses took from the Israelites' half one out of every fifty, from humans and animals. He gave them to the Levites who carry out the duties of the LORD's dwelling, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>48</sup>The commanders over the thousands of the army, officers over thousands and officers over hundreds, approached Moses <sup>49</sup>and said to Moses, "Your servants have counted the warriors in our charge and not one of us is missing. <sup>50</sup>We have brought the LORD's offering that each found, gold articles—anklets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and necklaces—to seek reconciliation for ourselves before the LORD." <sup>51</sup>Moses and Eleazar the priest took all the gold articles from them. <sup>52</sup>All the gold for the gift offering that was presented to the LORD from the officers of thousands and the officers of hundreds was sixteen thousand seven hundred fifty shekels. <sup>53</sup>Each of the men of battle took spoils of war for himself. <sup>54</sup>Yet Moses and Eleazar the priest also received the gold from the officers of thousands and of hundreds, and they brought it to the meeting tent as a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD.

**Reuben and Gad request land**

**32** The livestock owned by the Reubenites and the Gadites were unusually vast and numerous. They saw that the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead were exactly the place for livestock. <sup>2</sup>So the Gadites and the Reubenites came and said to Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the chiefs of the community: <sup>3</sup>"Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon is <sup>4</sup>the land that the LORD struck down before the Israelite community. It is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock." <sup>5</sup>They said, "If you approve our request, give this land to your servants as property. Don't make us cross the Jordan."

<sup>6</sup>Moses said to the Gadites and the Reubenites, "Should your brothers go to war, while you stay here? <sup>7</sup>Why would you destroy the Israelites' resolve to cross into the land that the LORD gave them? <sup>8</sup>Your ancestors did this, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to inspect the land. <sup>9</sup>They went up to the Cluster ravine, saw the land, and destroyed the Israelites' resolve to enter the land that the LORD had given them. <sup>10</sup>The LORD became angry on that day and promised, <sup>11</sup>"None of the persons that went up from Egypt, those 20 years old and above, will see the fertile ground that I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they didn't remain true to me, <sup>12</sup>except Caleb, Jephunneh the Kenizzite's son, and Joshua, Nun's son, because they remained true to the LORD.' <sup>13</sup>The LORD became angry with the Israelites and made them wander in the desert for forty years until the entire generation had died, which had done evil in the LORD's eyes. <sup>14</sup>Now you've taken the place of your ancestors, a group of sinful men, to intensify the LORD's anger against Israel. <sup>15</sup>If you turn away from him, he will turn away again to abandon Israel in the desert. Then you will destroy this entire people."

31:47 Nm 31:30  
32:1 Nm 21:32; Josh 13:25  
32:13 Nm 14:33; Nm 26:64  
32:15 Dt 30:17; 2Ch 7:19-20

1/50th (2 percent) for support of the Levites. The formula is applied to both human (virgins) and animal booty. The total booty is exceptionally large.

31:49 *not one of us is missing*: No Israelite soldier is dead.  
31:50 *the LORD's offering*: serves as ransom for each soldier (cf. Exod 30:11-16). *seek reconciliation for ourselves before the LORD*: to seek God's acceptance of the offering (Num 31:50-52) as substitution for their lives.

31:52 In response to God's miraculous help, the officers give 16,750 shekels of gold (about 400 pounds) to God. Unlike the portions given to the priest and the Levites, which are given at God's instruction, this gift is voluntary. It's an expression of thanks for God's sparing their lives in war.

31:54 *a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD*: a reminder of God's protection.

32:1-42 Compare with Deuteronomy 3:12-20. The text as a whole legitimizes the Transjordan settlement, on the condition that the Reubenites and the Gadites wage war west of the Jordan.

32:1-5 *Jazer*: a city near the Ammonite border within the land of Gilead, which refers to a region east of the Dead Sea and Jordan River (between the Arnon and the Jab-bok Rivers). *Moses . . . community*: Unlike the private negotiations in Numbers 32:16-27, this request is made in public.

32:6-15 Moses interprets the two tribes' request (Num 32:5) to be as serious as what the entire old generation did at Kadesh-barnea (Num 13-14).

32:15 *this entire people*: all the Israelites (not just the older generation, as in Num 13-14).

32:20 Dt 3:18;

Josh 1:13,  
Josh 4:12

32:28 Nm 11:28;

Nm 27:18;

Dt 34:9;

Josh 1:13;

Josh 14:1;

Josh 17:4;

Josh 19:51

32:33 Nm 34:14;

Dt 29:8;

Josh 4:12;

Josh 12:6;

Josh 13:12

**Conditions for possession of the land**

<sup>16</sup>So they approached him and said, "We will build walled enclosures here for our livestock and towns for our children. <sup>17</sup>Then we will eagerly fight in front of the Israelites until we have brought them into their place. Our children will live in the fortified cities because of the land's inhabitants. <sup>18</sup>And we won't return to our homes until each one of the Israelites takes possession of his property. <sup>19</sup>We won't inherit land with them there across the Jordan, because we've received our property on the east side of the Jordan."

<sup>20</sup>Moses said to them, "Do this and fight before the LORD in war. <sup>21</sup>All of you who are equipped for war, cross the Jordan before the LORD until he has driven his enemies out before him <sup>22</sup>and the land is subdued in the LORD's presence. Then you may return innocently before the LORD and Israel, and this land will be your property before the LORD. <sup>23</sup>But if you don't do this, you've sinned against the LORD. Know that your sin will find you. <sup>24</sup>So build towns for your children and walled enclosures for your flocks, but do what you have promised."

<sup>25</sup>The Gadites and the Reubenites said to Moses, "Your servants will do as my master has commanded. <sup>26</sup>Our children, wives, livestock, and all of our animals will remain in the cities of Gilead. <sup>27</sup>But your servants, everyone equipped for war before the LORD, will go over to do battle as my master said."

<sup>28</sup>Moses made demands for them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua, Nun's son, and to the leaders of the households of the Israelite tribes. <sup>29</sup>Moses said to them, "If the Gadites and the Reubenites cross the Jordan with you, each equipped for battle before the LORD, and the land is subdued before you, then you will give them the land of Gilead as a possession. <sup>30</sup>If, however, they don't cross with you, equipped for war, they will take possession of property with you in the land of Canaan."

<sup>31</sup>The Gadites and the Reubenites answered, "We'll do just as the LORD has spoken to your servants. <sup>32</sup>We'll cross into the land of Canaan before the LORD, equipped for war. But the property we inherit will be across the Jordan."

**Territory of Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh**

<sup>33</sup>So Moses gave to them—the Gadites, the Reubenites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, Joseph's son—the kingdom of Sihon the king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og the king of Bashan, including the land, its cities, and the territory surrounding the land's cities. <sup>34</sup>The Gadites built Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, <sup>35</sup>Atroth-shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, <sup>36</sup>Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran, fortified cities and walled enclosures for flocks. <sup>37</sup>The Reubenites built Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, <sup>38</sup>Nebo, and Baal-meon (whose names were changed), and Sibmah. They named the cities that they built. <sup>39</sup>The descendants of Machir, Manasseh's son, went to Gilead, captured it, and drove out the Amorites who were there. <sup>40</sup>So Moses gave Gilead to Machir, Manasseh's son, and he lived there. <sup>41</sup>Manasseh's son Jair went and captured their villages and named them Havvoth-jair. <sup>42</sup>Nobah went and captured Kenath and its surrounding villages. He renamed it Nobah after himself.

**March out of Egypt and through the sea**

**33** These were the stages by which the Israelites marched when they left the land of Egypt, according to their military units under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

<sup>a</sup>Or the villages of Jair

**32:16-27** Unlike what precedes (Num 32:1-5) and follows (Num 32:28), this passage depicts private negotiations between the Reubenites, Gadites, and Moses. The phrase *before the LORD* appears in Numbers 32:20-22 (x2). 27. It emphasizes that all their activities must be done in God's presence. God is in charge of fulfilling the land promise.

**32:17** *in front of the Israelites*: The Reubenites and Gadites offer to lead the campaign.

**32:20-24** *Do this . . . But if you don't do this*: This language is often used in covenants.

**32:23** *your sin will find you*: On sin as an active agent, see Genesis 4:7.

**32:28-32** Moses presents the negotiated agreement to the whole community, represented by Eleazar, Joshua, and the leaders of the tribes. They serve as witnesses to the deal.

**32:33-42** *half the tribe of Manasseh*: appears for the first time and becomes an additional recipient of the Transjordan territory (32:39-42). (On the other half of the tribe, see Josh 17:1-13.) The *Gadites* and *Reubenites* receive territories that have already been conquered (Num 21:21-35). They rebuild them and give them new names (32:34-38). Meanwhile, the descendants of Manasseh go after previously unconquered territory (32:39-42). Perhaps their own military campaign allows them to settle there, but it contradicts the normal character of holy war, with full participation of all Israelite tribes. See also Deuteronomy 3:12-15; Joshua 12:6.

**33:1-49** This itinerary contains 42 campsites, the majority of which cannot be clearly identified. Of these sites, 17 aren't mentioned elsewhere in the OT. Four names are geographical designations (the wilderness of Sin, the

<sup>2</sup>Moses recorded the points of departure for each stage of the march at the LORD's command. These are the stages of their march according to their points of departure.

<sup>3</sup>They marched from Rameses on the fifteenth day of the first month.<sup>a</sup> On the day after the Passover the Israelites went out defiantly<sup>b</sup> in the sight of all the Egyptians, <sup>4</sup>while the Egyptians were burying their oldest males, whom the LORD had killed. The LORD also executed judgments against their gods. <sup>5</sup>The Israelites marched from Rameses and they camped at Succoth. <sup>6</sup>They marched from Succoth and camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. <sup>7</sup>They marched from Etham and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which faces Baal-zephon, and they camped before Migdol. <sup>8</sup>They marched from Pi-hahiroth and they crossed through the sea toward the desert.

33:5 Ex 12:37;  
Nm 33:3  
33:9 Ex 15:27

**March through the southern desert**

Then they traveled three days in the Etham desert and they camped at Marah.

<sup>9</sup>They marched from Marah and arrived at Elim. At Elim there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees and they camped there.

<sup>10</sup>They marched from Elim and camped by the Reed Sea.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>11</sup>They marched from the Reed Sea and camped in the Sin desert.

<sup>12</sup>They marched from the Sin desert and camped at Dophkah.

<sup>13</sup>They marched from Dophkah and camped at Alush.

<sup>14</sup>They marched from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.

<sup>15</sup>They marched from Rephidim and camped in the Sinai desert.

<sup>16</sup>They marched from the Sinai desert and camped at Kibroth-hattaavah.

<sup>17</sup>They marched from Kibroth-hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth.

<sup>18</sup>They marched from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah.

<sup>19</sup>They marched from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon-perez.

<sup>20</sup>They marched from Rimmon-perez and camped at Libnah.

<sup>21</sup>They marched from Libnah and camped at Rissah.

<sup>22</sup>They marched from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah.

<sup>23</sup>They marched from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher.

<sup>24</sup>They marched from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah.

<sup>25</sup>They marched from Haradah and camped at Makheloth.

<sup>26</sup>They marched from Makheloth and camped at Tahath.

<sup>27</sup>They marched from Tahath and camped at Terah.

<sup>28</sup>They marched from Terah and camped at Mithkah.

<sup>a</sup>March–April, Nisan <sup>b</sup>Or with a high hand <sup>c</sup>Or Red Sea

wilderness of Sinai, the wilderness of Zin, the plains of Moab), which include a limited number of locations. A few places mentioned in Exodus and elsewhere in Numbers don't appear on this list: the wilderness of Shur (Exod 15:22); Taberah (Num 11:3); Hormah (Num 14:45; Num 21:3); Beer (Num 21:16); the valley of Zered (Num 21:12); Mattanah (Num 21:18-19); Nahaliel (Num 21:19); and Bamoth (Num 21:19-20).

33:2 *Moses recorded*: a rare reference to Moses' writing (cf. Exod 24:4, when Moses writes down God's words at Mount Sinai).

33:3-4 The typical pattern for describing the journey is "They marched from A and camped at B" (Num 33:5-36, 41-49). This pattern isn't followed here when describing the beginning of the journey. Similarly, it isn't followed in Numbers 33:37-40 when describing the death of Aaron near the end of their march.

33:3 *from Rameses*: See Exodus 12:37. *the Israelites went out defiantly*: Compare with Exodus 12:28-31.

33:4 *The Lord also executed judgments against their gods*: Compare with Exodus 12:12.

33:5 *they camped at Succoth*: Compare with Exodus 12:37. 33:6 *at Etham*: See Exodus 13:20.

33:7 *Pi-hahiroth...Baal-zephon...Migdol*: See Exodus 14:2, 9.

33:8 *crossed through the sea*: See Exodus 14–15. *Marah*: See Exodus 15:23.

33:9-10 *Elim*: See Exodus 15:27. *camped by the Reed Sea*: Exodus 16:1 doesn't mention camping here between Elim and the Sin desert.

33:11 *the Sin desert*: perhaps refers to the western region of the Sinai Peninsula. It's called the "Sin" desert because of how the Hebrew name sounds. It has nothing to do with the English word "sin" (in the sense of "iniquity"). See Exodus 16:1, 17:1.

33:12 *Dophkah*: unknown location.

33:13 *Alush*: unknown location.

33:14 *Rephidim*: See Exodus 17:1-8.

33:15 *the Sinai desert*: where God made the covenant and revealed the instructions, where the sanctuary was built, and where the camp was organized (Exod 19:1–Num 10:10).

33:16-36 Only a few sites are mentioned in other passages: *Kibroth-hattaavah* (Num 11:4-35); *Hazeroth* (Num 11:35; 12:16); *Moseroth, Bene-jaakan, Jotbathah* (Deut 10:6-9, with spelling differences); *Ezion-geber* (Deut 2:8);

33:38 Nm 20:28;  
Dt 10:6,  
Dt 32:50  
33:47 Nm 27:12  
33:48 Nm 22:1,  
Nm 33:49

- <sup>29</sup>They marched from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah.  
<sup>30</sup>They marched from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth.  
<sup>31</sup>They marched from Moseroth and camped at Bene-jaakan.  
<sup>32</sup>They marched from Bene-jaakan and camped at Hor-haggidgad.  
<sup>33</sup>They marched from Hor-haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah.  
<sup>34</sup>They marched from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah.  
<sup>35</sup>They marched from Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber.  
<sup>36</sup>They marched from Ezion-geber and camped in the Zin desert (that is, Kadesh).

### March through the Transjordan region

<sup>37</sup>They marched from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom. <sup>38</sup>Aaron the priest ascended Mount Hor at the LORD's command, and he died there in the fortieth year on the first day of the fifth month<sup>d</sup> after the Israelites left the land of Egypt. <sup>39</sup>Aaron was 123 years old when he died on Mount Hor. <sup>40</sup>The Canaanite king of Arad, who ruled in the arid southern plain in the land of Canaan, heard of the Israelites' coming.

- <sup>41</sup>They marched from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah.  
<sup>42</sup>They marched from Zalmonah and camped at Punon.  
<sup>43</sup>They marched from Punon and camped at Oboth.  
<sup>44</sup>They marched from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim in the territory of Moab.  
<sup>45</sup>They marched from Iyim and camped at Dibon-gad.  
<sup>46</sup>They marched from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-diblathaim.  
<sup>47</sup>They marched from Almon-diblathaim and camped in the Abarim mountains in front of Nebo.  
<sup>48</sup>They marched from the Abarim mountains and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.  
<sup>49</sup>They camped by the Jordan from Beth-jeshimoth to Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.

### Divine instruction about the land

<sup>50</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho: <sup>51</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, <sup>52</sup>you will drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you. You will destroy all their carved figures. You will also destroy all their cast images. You will eliminate all their shrines. <sup>53</sup>You will take possession of the land and live in it, because I've given the land to you to possess. <sup>54</sup>You will divide up the land by lot according to your clans. To the large you will make its inheritance large, and to the small you will make its inheritance small. To whomever the lot falls, that place will be his. You will inherit land according to your ancestral tribes. <sup>55</sup>But if you don't drive out the inhabitants of the land before you, then those you allow to remain will prick your eyes and be thorns in your side. They will harass you in the land in which you are living. <sup>56</sup>Then what I intended to do to them, I'll do to you.

### Boundaries of the land of Canaan

**34** The LORD said to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Command the Israelites and say to them: When you enter the land of Canaan, this is the land that will fall to you as an inheritance. The land of Canaan according to its boundaries:

<sup>d</sup>July–August, probably Av

the Zin desert (Num 20:1). It isn't clear whether *Kadesh* belongs to the Zin desert or the Paran desert (Num 13:26).

33:37–40 While recalling the death of Aaron (Num 20:22–29), these verses add the date and his age when he died.

The Canaanite king of Arad: See Numbers 21:1–3, which describes the first military victory of the Israelites, signaling the appearance of the second generation.

33:41–49 This route provides an itinerary for the events recorded in Numbers 21, as *Mount Hor*, *Oboth*, *Iye-abarim*, *Dibon-gad*, and *the plains of Moab* are mentioned there.

33:42 *Punon* is in Edom, but see Numbers 20:14–22.

33:50–56 *When you cross the Jordan into the land of*

*Canaan*: This future orientation is the key to interpreting this text and the remainder of Numbers (Num 34:1; 35:9).

33:52 See Deuteronomy 12:2–3.

33:54 See Numbers 26:52–56.

33:56 Israel will lose the land if they don't completely take it from the Canaanites.

34:1–15 "From Dan to Beer-sheba" is a common way of speaking of the promised land's borders (1 Sam 3:20; 2 Sam 3:10; 2 Sam 17:11; 24:2; 1 Kgs 4:25). Here, the northern border (*Lebo-hamath*) is farther north than Dan; and the southern border (*Kadesh-barnea*) is farther south than Beer-sheba. These expanded borders recall the spy story

<sup>3</sup>Your southern boundary extends from the Zin desert alongside Edom. Your southern border extends from the edge of the Dead Sea on the east. <sup>4</sup>Your border will turn south of the ascent of Akkrabbim and cross toward Zin. Its limit will be south of Kadesh-barnea. It will go out to Hazar-addar and cross toward Azmon. <sup>5</sup>The border will then turn from Azmon to the Egypt ravine. Its limit will be at the Mediterranean Sea.

<sup>6</sup>Your western border will be the Mediterranean Sea. This will be your western border.

<sup>7</sup>This will be your northern border: From the Mediterranean Sea you will mark out your boundary to Mount Hor. <sup>8</sup>From Mount Hor you will mark out your boundary to Lebo-hamath. The limit of the border will be Zedad. <sup>9</sup>The border will go out to Ziphron. Its limit will be Hazar-enan. This will be your northern border.

<sup>10</sup>You will mark out your eastern border from Hazar-enan to Shepham. <sup>11</sup>The border will descend from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain. The border will go down and meet the eastern slope of the Galilee Sea. <sup>12</sup>The border will descend to the Jordan. Its limit will be the Dead Sea.

This will be your land with its borders all around.

<sup>13</sup>Moses commanded the Israelites: This is the land that you will inherit by lot, which the LORD has commanded to give to the nine and a half tribes, <sup>14</sup>because the tribe of Reuben by their households and the tribe of Gad by their households, and half the tribe of Manasseh have taken their inheritance. <sup>15</sup>The two and a half tribes have taken their inheritance across the Jordan at Jericho toward the east.

### **Appointment of leaders to assign the inheritance**

<sup>16</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>17</sup>These are the names of the men who will assign the inheritance of the land: Eleazar the priest and Joshua, Nun's son. <sup>18</sup>You will also take one chief from each tribe to apportion the land. <sup>19</sup>These are the names of the men: from the tribe of Judah, Caleb, Jephunneh's son; <sup>20</sup>from the tribe of the Simeonites, Shemuel, Ammihud's son; <sup>21</sup>from the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad, Chislon's son; <sup>22</sup>from the tribe of the Danites, a chief, Bukki, Jogli's son; <sup>23</sup>from Joseph's descendants: of the tribe of the Manassites, a chief, Hanniel, Ephod's son; <sup>24</sup>and from the tribe of the Ephraimites, a chief, Kemuel, Shipthan's son; <sup>25</sup>from the tribe of the Zebulunites, a chief, Elizaphan, Parnach's son; <sup>26</sup>from the tribe of the Issacharites, a chief, Paltiel, Azzan's son; <sup>27</sup>from the tribe of the Asherites, a chief, Ahihud, Shelomi's son; <sup>28</sup>from the tribe of the Naphtalites, a chief, Pedahel, Ammihud's son.

<sup>29</sup>These are the ones whom the LORD commanded to assign the inheritance of the Israelites in the land of Canaan.

### **Cities and pastures of the Levites**

**35** The LORD spoke to Moses in the Moab plains by the Jordan across from Jericho: <sup>2</sup>Command the Israelites that they give cities from their inherited property to the

(Num 13–14). Throughout the political history of Israel, at no time do its boundaries reflect those listed in this text. Instead, these boundaries correspond to the land of Canaan known from Near Eastern (15th century) and Egyptian (13th century) texts. This suggests that the text is an idealized vision of Canaan as God's gift to Israel.

34:2 *Command the Israelites*: a phrase to introduce divine law and rituals (Num 5:2; 28:2; 35:2).

34:3-5 The southern border (cf. Josh 15:1-4; Ezek 47:19) is described generally (34:3a), as well as specifically (34:3b-5).

34:6 The western border is marked by a single landmark, *the Mediterranean Sea*, without mentioning the Judahites (Josh 15:12) or the link to Lebo-hamath (Ezek 47:20).

34:7-9 The northern border is similar to Ezekiel 47:15-17. It differs from Joshua 15:5b-11, which marks the northern tip of the Dead Sea as the beginning of the border and includes many more locations. Note that *Mount Hor* must be a different site than the place where Aaron died (Num 20:22; 33:38).

34:10-12 The eastern border (cf. Josh 15:5a; Ezek 47:18) clearly distinguishes the land Israel is to inherit from the land in the Transjordan (see Num 34:14-15).

34:13-15 These verses reaffirm the principles of distribution of the land (Num 26:52-56), as well as the decision made for the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh (Num 32:1-32).

34:16-29 Eleazar and Joshua, succeeding Aaron and Moses, supervise the land distribution, which is carried out by the 10 leaders, selected from each of the 10 tribes (excluding Reuben and Gad). Except Caleb (Num 13:6; 14:24), all other names are new in Numbers and appear rarely in other texts. The order of the tribes is also new and reflects Israel's settlement from the south (Judah, Simeon, Benjamin, and Dan, 34:19-22); to the central region (half of Manasseh and Ephraim, 34:23-24); and finally to the north (Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, and Naphtali, 34:25-28). The tribe of Judah is prominent, placed first (see also Num 2:3-9; 7:12-17; 10:14).

35:1-8 During the wilderness journey the Levites are separated from the other tribes. They are a divine possession, functioning as substitutes for Israel's oldest male child (Num 3:40-51), dedicated to God (Num 8:5-26). They are given two main tasks: caring for (taking down, carrying, and setting up) the covenant dwelling

34:5 Gn 15:18;  
Josh 15:4;  
Josh 15:47;  
1Kj 8:65;  
Is 27:12  
35:1 Nm 22:1  
35:2 Lv 25:32;  
Josh 14:4

35:3 Josh 14:4;  
2Ch 11:14  
35:6 Josh 20:2,  
Josh 21:13  
35:7 Josh 21:41  
35:8 Nm 26:54,  
Nm 33:54,  
Josh 21:3  
35:11 Ex 21:13;  
Nm 35:22  
35:13 Nm 35:6

Levites in which to live. You will also give the Levites pastures around their cities. <sup>3</sup>The cities will be theirs in which to live. Their pastures will be for their cattle, their possessions, and all their animals. <sup>4</sup>The pastures of the cities that you must give to the Levites will extend from the wall of the city outward for one thousand five hundred feet in all directions. <sup>5</sup>You will measure outside the city on the east side three thousand feet, on the south side three thousand feet, on the west side three thousand feet, and on the north side three thousand feet, with the city in the middle. These will be their cities' pastures.

<sup>6</sup>Six of the cities that you give to the Levites will be refuge cities. You will allow the person who kills someone to flee there. In addition to these you will give them forty-two cities. <sup>7</sup>All the cities that you give to the Levites will total forty-eight, along with their pastures. <sup>8</sup>As for the cities that you give from the property of the Israelites, you will take more from the larger tribes and less from the smaller. Each in proportion to its inheritance will give cities to the Levites.

### Refuge cities

<sup>9</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>10</sup>Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, <sup>11</sup>identify for yourselves cities to be refuge cities, where a person who kills someone by accident may flee. <sup>12</sup>The cities will be for you a place of refuge from the close relative of the dead. The person who killed someone may not be put to death until he stands before the community for judgment. <sup>13</sup>You will establish six refuge cities for yourselves. <sup>14</sup>You will establish three cities across the Jordan and three cities in the land of Canaan. They will be the refuge cities. <sup>15</sup>These six cities will be refuge for Israelites, immigrants, and temporary residents, as a place to flee for anyone who kills a person by accident.

<sup>16</sup>But if someone strikes a person with an iron object and he dies, he is a murderer. The murderer must definitely be put to death. <sup>17</sup>If someone strikes another with a stone in hand that could cause death and he dies, he is a murderer. The murderer must definitely be put to death. <sup>18</sup>Or if someone strikes with a wood object in hand that could cause death, he is a murderer. The murderer must definitely be put to death. <sup>19</sup>The close relative responsible for the blood<sup>e</sup> of the dead is the one who will put the murderer to death. When he meets him, he will execute him. <sup>20</sup>If in hatred someone hits another or throws something at him with premeditation, he will be put to death. <sup>21</sup>Or if in hostility someone strikes another with his hand and he dies, the one who struck is a murderer and he will be put to death. The close relative will put the murderer to death when he meets him.

<sup>e</sup>Or (here and throughout Num 36) *the close relative of the blood*

and guarding it from unlawful encroachment (Num 1:48-53; 3:5-4:49). For this service, they receive a tenth portion (or tithe) from the Israelites instead of inheriting land (Num 18:21-24). When Israel enters the promised land, the special status of the Levites must be maintained. They separate from the other tribes. For this service, God commands the Israelites to allocate from their land inheritance, on a proportional scale, a total of 48 cities (including six cities of refuge) and associated pastures for the Levites. Israel executes God's command faithfully (Josh 21:1-42).

35:1 *in the Moab plains by the Jordan across from Jericho*: the location of the Israelites since Numbers 22:1.

35:4-5 It's possible that *three thousand feet* describes the size of just the city. In that case, the pastures extend another *one thousand five hundred feet* in each direction. Or, 3,000 feet may be the (minimum) length of one side of the pastures' perimeter, measured corner to corner. If the town is considered as a point, then 1,500 feet would be the length from that point to the outside perimeter.

35:6-7 *Six of the cities... refuge cities... total forty-eight*: According to Joshua 21, the tribes of Judah and Simeon

together provide nine cities and each of the other tribes four cities, except Naphtali, which allocates only three.

35:8 Follows the principle of distributing land proportionally (Num 26:54; 33:54).

35:9-34 See also Deuteronomy 19:1-13; Joshua 20:1-9.

35:10-15 *refuge cities*: places of asylum for those who kill accidentally. Sanctuary altars had the same function during the early part of Israel's history (1 Kgs 1:49-53; 2:28-34). Six cities are allocated (cf. Deut 4:41-43; Josh 21). There are three inside Canaan: Kadesh in the north (Naphtali); Shechem in the center (Ephraim); and Hebron in the south (Judah); and three in the Transjordan territory: Bezer in the south (Reuben); Ramoth in Gilead in the center (Gad); and Golan in the north (Manasseh).

35:15 *Israelites, immigrants, and temporary residents*: Compare with Numbers 9:14; 15:14-16, 26-30.

35:16-21 The criteria used for determining the killer's intention are, first, the object used to *strike*; and, second, the motive for the action. As Numbers 15:30-31 explains, intentionally committed sin will not be forgiven through sacrifices. Payment for injury can be made with some deliberate sins (Num 5:5-10). With deliberate killing, however, the guilty person is executed. *The close relative* restores the

<sup>22</sup>But if suddenly and without hostility someone hits another or throws any object at him without premeditation, <sup>23</sup>or accidentally drops any stone on him that could cause death and he dies—even though they weren't enemies and no evil was intended—<sup>24</sup>then the community must come to a verdict between the killer and the close relative in accordance with these case laws. <sup>25</sup>The community will protect the killer from the hand of the close relative and return him to the refuge city where he fled. He will live there until the death of the high priest who was anointed with holy oil. <sup>26</sup>But if the killer ever goes outside the boundaries of the refuge city where he fled <sup>27</sup>and the close relative finds him outside the boundary of his refuge city and kills him, he will not be responsible for his blood. <sup>28</sup>The killer must live in his refuge city until the high priest's death. After the high priest's death the killer may return to the land he owns.

<sup>29</sup>These will be the regulations and case laws for all time in all your settlements.

<sup>30</sup>Anyone who kills another will be executed on the evidence of witnesses. But one witness alone cannot testify against a person for a death sentence. <sup>31</sup>You may not accept a ransom for the life of a killer, who is guilty of a capital crime, for he must definitely be put to death. <sup>32</sup>You may not accept a ransom for someone who has fled to his refuge city so that he can return and live in the land before the priest's death. <sup>33</sup>You may not pollute the land in which you live, for the blood pollutes the land. There can be no recovery<sup>f</sup> for the land from the blood that is shed in it, except by the death of the one who shed it. <sup>34</sup>You will not make the land in which you live unclean, the land in the middle of which I reside, for I the LORD reside among the Israelites.

#### *Inheritance of Zelophehad's daughters*

**36** The leaders of the households of the clans of Gilead, Machir's son and Manasseh's grandson, of Joseph's clans, approached and spoke before Moses and the chiefs, who were the leaders of the Israelite households. <sup>2</sup>They said, "The LORD commanded my master to give the land as an inheritance by lot to the Israelites. But my master was also commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother to his daughters. <sup>3</sup>If they are married to someone from another Israelite tribe, their inheritance will be taken away from our household and given to another tribe into which they marry. Then it will be taken away from the lot of our inheritance. <sup>4</sup>At the Israelite Jubilee, their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they married. Then their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of our ancestral tribe."

<sup>5</sup>Then Moses commanded the Israelites according to the LORD's word: "The tribe of Joseph's descendants are correct in what they're saying. <sup>6</sup>This is the word that the LORD commands to Zelophehad's daughters: They may marry whomever seems best to them, but they may only marry into one of the clans of their ancestral tribe,<sup>g</sup> so that the inheritance of the Israelites doesn't transfer from one tribe to another. The Israelites will each retain the tribal inheritance of his ancestral tribe. <sup>8</sup>Every daughter who inherits land from an Israelite tribe

<sup>f</sup>Or reconciliation

loss incurred to the family of the victim and will carry out the execution (see also Num 5:8).

35:22-28 Unintentional killing lacks premeditation and motive. Yet one who commits it isn't free from all consequences. That person is confined in a designated refuge city, away from both the avenger of blood and the rest of the community, until the death of the high priest.

35:25, 28 The blood of those killed intentionally pollutes the land. The land recovers only by the death of the killer (Num 35:33). Similarly, the death of the high priest is necessary for the land and community to recover fully after an unintentional death.

35:30 See Deuteronomy 19:15; John 8:17; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Hebrews 10:28.

35:31-32 *not accept a ransom*: Killers can't buy their way out of the death penalty or confinement to a refuge city. See also Genesis 9:6.

35:33-34 While people may become unclean in the course

of life's events (e.g., by touching a corpse, Num 19), a serious sin like murder or grave immorality (Lev 18) *pollutes the land* itself. God's holiness can't tolerate impurity, meaning either that God will abandon the defiled land or that the land will vomit out its polluting inhabitants (Lev 18:24-25).

36:1-12 This text recalls the case brought by the daughters of Zelophehad (Num 27:1-11). A problem arises if these daughters (who can inherit land) marry outside their tribe of Manasseh. In that case, the husband(s) would gain possession of the land, which would transfer to his tribe. Thus, land belonging to the tribe of Manasseh could end up belonging to another tribe, which isn't God's intent (Num 26:55; 33:54).

36:1 *approached*: same Hebrew word as in Numbers 27:1, a step in the procedure of disputing the boundary.

36:2-4 *At the Israelite Jubilee*: See Leviticus 25:8-55. On this occasion, land that has been sold—but not inherited land—returns to original owners.

35:30 Dt 17:6;  
Dt 19:15;  
Mt 18:16;  
Jn 8:17;  
2Co 13:1  
36:5 Nm 27:7  
36:6 Nm 27:7;  
Nm 36:12  
36:7 1Ki 21:3

must marry into one of the clans of her father's tribe. In this way each Israelite will own the land of his ancestors. <sup>9</sup>An inheritance of land may not be transferred from one tribe to another, for the Israelite tribes will each retain its own inheritance."

<sup>10</sup>Zelophehad's daughters did as the LORD commanded Moses. <sup>11</sup>Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, Zelophehad's daughters, married their cousins. <sup>12</sup>They married into the clan of Manasseh, Joseph's son. Their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father's clan.

**Conclusion**

<sup>13</sup>These are the commandments and the case laws that the LORD commanded the Israelites through Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.

36:13 Concluding statement on God's instructions (cf. Lev 7:37-38; 26:46; 27:34).



# DEUTERONOMY

The book of Deuteronomy is the fifth and final book of the Instruction from Moses. It is set in the last days of Moses' life and records his final words to the Israelites. In its literary setting the book looks backward and forward. It looks back to the four other books of the Instruction. It gives special attention to the giving of the Instruction to Moses at Mount Sinai and the wanderings in the wilderness. Deuteronomy also looks forward to the conquest of the land of Canaan. But beyond that it foresees the whole of Israel's history with God, including the disobedience of the Israelites in the time of the monarchy and the exile that comes as punishment. The book can helpfully be seen as a turning point between the books of the Instruction and the history of Israel in the promised land.

The book's name draws attention to its relationship with the rest of the Instruction. The name comes from the Greek *deuteronomium*, which means "second law." It was used in ancient times in translating Deuteronomy 17:18. A better translation is "a copy of this Instruction" (CEB). Nevertheless, if we understand "second law" to mean a repetition of the Instruction, the name Deuteronomy does point to an important feature of the book. Deuteronomy claims to be the definitive summary of the Instruction given to Moses on Mount Sinai. A number of laws in Deuteronomy already appear in the book of Exodus, especially Exodus 21–23 (see sidebar, "Deuteronomy and the Covenant Code" at Deut 12). In Deuteronomy these have been revised, reworked, and given new emphases. These changes often make the laws given at Sinai quite different from that at Moab.

In that sense we do have a second law or instruction that is different from the first.

At the heart of Deuteronomy stand the laws, which are found in chapters 12–26. The surrounding chapters provide a framework for these laws. They include stories, sermon-like passages, and even poetry, which show rather than tell the people how to live. Repeated words and phrases are some of the most important rhetorical tools used in the book. They all aim to motivate the people to remember and obey the commandments. The commandments are to be in the minds and move the hearts of the people.

The book of Deuteronomy is told by an anonymous narrator, but the principal character is Moses. Moses speaks most in the book, and at the end of the book we are told of his death. The book can be seen as a series of speeches by Moses, with shorter passages providing bridges between the speeches. The first speech is introduced in 1:1 and gives a history of the Israelites up to the present day (Deut 1–3), with a final concluding sermon drawing some lessons from the history (Deut 4). There is then a brief mention of the cities of refuge (Deut 4:41–43) before the second and most important speech of Moses begins. Moses' second speech is a long sermon on loyalty to the one God (Deut 5–11), followed by the laws of Deuteronomy (Deut 12–26). These instructions or teachings are the content of the agreement, or covenant, made between the Lord and Israel. This covenant is concluded in Deuteronomy 26:16–28:68, which is a bridge to the following speech.



Moses' third speech is also full of encouragement to obey the commandments and keep the covenant (Deut 29:1–30:20). While the first speech mostly looks back into history, the third speech looks into the future. Moses anticipates Israel's later rebellion and exile. The bridge to the final speech tells of how Moses arranges for various successors to replace him: Joshua, the instruction book, and a song (Deut 31:1–32:52). The final speech of Moses is his blessing of the tribes (Deut 33), which parallels Jacob's blessing of his children at the end of the book of Genesis (Gen 49). Finally, the book concludes with the story of Moses' death on Mount Nebo (Deut 34).

The book's setting is very early in Israel's history, before the conquest of the land of Canaan. In the chronology that the Bible provides, this would be about 1400 BCE. Various factors suggest that the book was composed much later. The most important of these is the mention of events later in Israel's history, most especially the Babylonian exile (6th century BCE). There are also Deuteronomy's similarities to treaties from the Assyrian Empire (ca. 7th century BCE). Finally, we may observe that there is no evidence of Deuteronomy's ideas or style until around the time of the Babylonian exile, after which point its influence is very strong.

One moment in Judah's history may provide help in knowing when Deuteronomy was written. According to 2 Kings 22, the book of the Instruction was discovered in the temple during repairs in the reign of Josiah (622 BCE). Josiah's reform of worship has many similarities with Deuteronomy's religious program. He makes a covenant with the Lord, closes the sanctuaries outside Jerusalem, destroys the idols, and celebrates Passover in Jerusalem. When he dies he

is celebrated as someone who turned to the Lord with "all his heart, all his being, and all his strength" (2 Kgs 23:25). This is a conscious echo of Deuteronomy 6:5. The majority of scholars date a first version of the book of Deuteronomy to Josiah's reign, but there are also some who think it comes from a little later in the time of the Babylonian exile. Most scholars think there was some editing of the book after it was first written.

The book of Deuteronomy has a distinctive and influential theology. Many of the instructions are focused around the theme of a single sanctuary that the Lord chose. This idea emphasizes the need for worship to be practiced according to God's desire. The instructions in Deuteronomy are often similar to those in Exodus, but they have been revised to reflect this central idea of the chosen place. The central issue in the framing chapters (Deut 1–11; 29–34) is the unwavering commitment to Israel's God, the Lord. Israel is not to worship any other gods, and various encouragements and threats are given to ensure that Moses' audience and all future generations remain faithful to their only Lord. These two themes—worshipping in the chosen place and worshipping the Lord alone—do not come together especially closely. They can do so if we suppose the other gods to have been worshipped at other sanctuaries.

The commitment of Israel to its one God is brought under the comprehensive idea of covenant. This idea has been taken over from the political realm of international treaties. Israel enters into an exclusive relationship with its God. In this covenant Israel promises to be loyal to the Lord, and in return the Lord promises to bless Israel in the land of Canaan.

**I. Moses' First Speech: The Words (1:1–4:40)**

- A. Introduction to the book (1:1-5)
- B. Moses' reminder of the past (1:6–3:29)
  - 1. Leaving Mount Horeb and appointing judges (1:6-18)
  - 2. The failed invasion (1:19-46)
  - 3. Success in Transjordan (2:1–3:22)
  - 4. Moses' prayer to see the land (3:23-29)
- C. Learning from the past (4:1-40)

**II. Side Note: The Cities of Refuge (4:41-43)**

**III. Moses' Second Speech: The Instructions (4:44–11:32)**

- A. Introduction to the instructions (4:44-49)
- B. Events at Mount Horeb (5:1-32)
  - 1. The Ten Commandments (5:1-22)
  - 2. Moses the intercessor (5:23-32)
- C. Expectation to obey the instruction (6:1–11:32)
  - 1. Love and follow the Lord alone (6:1-25)
  - 2. The worship of the Canaanites (7:1-26)
  - 3. Remembering the Lord (8:1-20)
  - 4. The sin of the gold calf (9:1–10:11)
  - 5. Final encouragement and warning to obey the Lord (10:12–11:32)

**IV. Moses' Second Speech (Continued):**

**The Regulations and Case Laws (12:1–26:15)**

- A. Unity and purity of worship (12:1–14:21)
  - 1. Worship at the chosen place alone (12:1-28)
  - 2. The danger of false gods (12:29–13:18)
  - 3. Clean and unclean food (14:1-21)
- B. The rhythm of time (14:22–16:17)
  - 1. God's tenth part (14:22-29)
  - 2. Canceling debts and releasing slaves after seven years (15:1-23)
  - 3. Israel's festivals (16:1-17)
- C. Israel's leaders and officials (16:18–18:22)
  - 1. Tribal leaders and pure worship (16:18–17:7)
  - 2. Central justice (17:8-13)
  - 3. The king (17:14-20)
  - 4. The levitical priests (18:1-8)
  - 5. The prophet (18:9-22)
- D. Murder and killing (19:1–21:9)
  - 1. Cities of refuge (19:1-13)

- 2. False testimony (19:14-21)
- 3. Rules for warfare (20:1-20)
- 4. An unsolved murder (21:1-9)
- E. Family and property laws (21:10–22:30)
  - 1. Marriage and inheritance (21:10-23)
  - 2. Protection of life (22:1-12)
  - 3. Marriage and sexual relations (22:13-30)
- F. Further community rules (23:1–25:19)
  - 1. Purity of the assembly (23:1-8)
  - 2. Purity of the camp (23:9-14)
  - 3. Obligations to God and others (23:15-25)
  - 4. Marriage and divorce (24:1-5)
  - 5. Communal welfare (24:6–25:4)
  - 6. Preservation of the family (25:5-12)
  - 7. Honest dealings and Amalek (25:13-19)
- G. Ceremonies for the land (26:1-15)

**V: Completing the Covenant (26:16–28:68)**

- A. Israel's affirmation of the regulations and case laws (26:16-19)
- B. Writing of the instruction in the land (27:1-10)
- C. Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (27:11-26)
  - 1. Blessing and curse (27:11-13)
  - 2. Curses on hidden deeds (27:14-26)
- D. Blessings and curses (28:1-68)

**VI: Moses' Third Speech: The Words of the Covenant (29:1–30:20)**

- A. Past experience (29:1-9)
- B. Entering into the covenant (29:10-15)
- C. Warning against disobedience and its future consequences (29:16-29)
- D. Changing hearts and restoration (30:1-14)
- E. Life and death (30:15-20)

**VII: Moses' Final Words and Deeds (31:1–32:52)**

- A. Preparations for life after Moses (31:1-29)
- B. The Song of Moses (31:30–32:47)
- C. Announcement of Moses' death (32:48-52)

**VIII: Moses' Fourth Speech: The Blessing (33:1–29)**

- A. Introduction (33:1)
- B. Opening: the king arrives with his army (33:2-5)
- C. The individual blessings (33:6-25)
- D. Conclusion: the divine warrior who protects Israel (33:26-29)

**IX: The Death of Moses (34:1-12)**

1:7 Gn 15:18;  
Dt 11:24;  
Josh 1:4

1:10 Gn 15:5;  
Gn 22:17;  
Dt 7:13;  
Dt 10:22;  
Dt 28:62

### The first heading: Introducing Deuteronomy

**1** These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel across the Jordan River, in the desert, on the plain across from Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazereth, and Dizahab. <sup>(2)</sup>It is eleven days from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea along the Mount Seir route.) <sup>(3)</sup>It was in the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, that Moses spoke to the Israelites precisely what the LORD had commanded him for them. <sup>(4)</sup>This was after the defeat of Sihon, the Amorite king who ruled in Heshbon, and Og, Bashan's king, who ruled in Ashtaroth and<sup>a</sup> Edrei.) <sup>(5)</sup>Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this Instruction. He said the following:

#### Leaving Mount Horeb

<sup>(6)</sup>At Horeb, the LORD our God told us: You've been at this mountain long enough. <sup>(7)</sup>Get going! Enter the hills of the Amorites and the surrounding areas in the desert, the highlands, the lowlands, the arid southern region, and the seacoast—the land of the Canaanites—and the Lebanon range, all the way to the great Euphrates River. <sup>(8)</sup>Look, I have laid the land before you. Go and possess the land that I<sup>b</sup> promised to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as to their descendants after them.

<sup>(9)</sup>At that same time, I told you: I can't handle all of you by myself. <sup>(10)</sup>The LORD your God has multiplied your number—you are now as countless as the stars in the sky. <sup>(11)</sup>May the LORD, your ancestors' God, continue to multiply you—a thousand times more! And may God bless you, just as he promised. <sup>(12)</sup>But how can I handle all your troubles, burdens, and disputes by myself? <sup>(13)</sup>Now, for each of your tribes, choose wise, discerning, and well-regarded individuals. I will appoint them as your leaders.

<sup>(14)</sup>You answered me: "What you have proposed is a good idea."

<sup>(15)</sup>So I took leading individuals from your tribes, people who were wise and well-regarded, and I set them up as your leaders. There were commanders over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, as well as officials for each of your tribes.

<sup>a</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT lacks *and*. <sup>b</sup>Sam, LXX; MT *the Lord*

1:1-5 The introduction provides the setting for the entire book of Deuteronomy. The book consists mostly of words delivered by Moses on the day of his death (Deut 32:48). This is at the end of the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Moses and the people of Israel are camping in the plains of Moab, which are on the east side of the Jordan River at the north end of the Dead Sea opposite the city of Jericho. This is the same geographical setting as the last chapters of the book of Numbers (Num 22:1; 36:13).

1:1 The first of four headings in Deuteronomy, which all begin "This is" or "These are" (Deut 1:1; 4:44; 29:1; 33:1). The heading in this verse is a title for the first speech of Moses (Deut 1:1-4:40), but it is also suitable as a heading for the entire book.

1:2 *Horeb*: the name that the book of Deuteronomy gives for Mount Sinai (cf. Exod 3:1). The only exceptions are Deuteronomy 33:2, 16.

1:4 The defeat of Sihon and Og is described in Deuteronomy 2:24-3:7 and in Numbers 21:21-35.

1:5 *explain* could mean to clarify the instructions given in Exodus-Numbers. The book of Deuteronomy is then to be understood as an explanation of the instructions that were given at Horeb and in the wilderness. An alternative translation would be "put into effect." In this understanding, Moses begins to put the Instruction into effect here, and it takes full effect in Deuteronomy 26:16-31:29 with the binding agreement of God and Israel, the recording of its statutes, and the depositing of the Instruction in the chest. The translation *Instruction* rightly draws attention to the fact that the expectations in Exodus-Deuteronomy are not simply

minimum standards. The traditional translation "Law" rightly highlights that these are obligations that must be followed.

1:6-3:29 A review of Israel's history from Horeb to the Israelites' current location on the banks of the Jordan River. For the reader of the entire Pentateuch, this review provides a summary of what has already been told in the book of Numbers. Deuteronomy's retelling is more concise and theologically focused. The historical review is the basis of Moses' warnings in 4:1-40.

1:6 *the LORD our God*: Deuteronomy uses this and similar titles (especially *the LORD your God*) over 300 times.

1:7 The description of the land includes all the land between the Mediterranean Sea in the east and the Jordan River in the west, and between the Sinai desert in the south and the Euphrates River in the north. This roughly agrees with Genesis 15:18-21; Deuteronomy 11:24; Joshua 1:4. The description presents what the people would ideally have. Historically, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah never possessed all this territory.

1:9-18 The Lord's command is given in 1:6-8. The people don't begin obeying it until 1:19. Between the command and obedience, readers learn of appointment of tribal leaders in 1:9-18. The appointment of leaders is also told in Exodus 18:13-26; Numbers 11:4-34. In Exodus 18 the appointment of tribal leaders results from Jethro's suggestion, and in Numbers 11 it occurs due to God's initiative. Here in Deuteronomy 1 Moses decides to appoint leaders.

1:10 *stars in the sky*: The people are now very numerous (see Num 1:46; 26:51). This is a fulfillment of the promise to Israel's ancestors (see Gen 15:5; 22:17).

<sup>16</sup>At that same time, I commanded your judges: Listen to your fellow tribe members and judge fairly, whether the dispute is between one fellow tribe member or between a tribe member and an immigrant. <sup>17</sup>Don't show favoritism in a decision. Hear both sides out, whether the person is important or not. Don't be afraid of anyone because the ruling belongs to God. Any dispute that is too difficult for you to decide, bring to me and I will take care of it.

<sup>18</sup>So at that time, I commanded you concerning everything you were to do.

### The spy disaster

<sup>19</sup>We left Horeb and journeyed through that vast and terrifying desert you saw, on the way to the hills of the Amorites, exactly as the LORD our God commanded us. Then we arrived at Kadesh-barnea. <sup>20</sup>I said to you: You have come to the hills of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving to us. <sup>21</sup>Look! The LORD your God has laid out the land before you. Go up and take it, just as the LORD, your ancestors' God, has promised you. Don't be afraid! Don't be frightened!

<sup>22</sup>Then all of you approached me, saying, "Let's send spies ahead of us—they can check out the land for us. Then they can return with word about the route we should use and bring a report about the cities that we'll be entering."

<sup>23</sup>This idea seemed good to me, so I selected twelve men, one from each tribe. <sup>24</sup>These set out and went up into the hills, going as far as the Cluster<sup>c</sup> ravine. They walked all around that area. <sup>25</sup>They took some of the land's fruit and then came back down to us. They reported to us: "The land that the LORD our God is giving to us is wonderful!" <sup>26</sup>But you weren't willing to go up. You rejected the LORD your God's instruction. <sup>27</sup>You complained in your tents, saying things like, "The LORD hates us! That's why he brought us out of Egypt—to hand us over to the Amorites, to destroy us!" <sup>28</sup>What are we doing? Our brothers have made our hearts sick by saying, 'People far stronger and much taller than we live there, and the cities are huge, with walls sky-high! Worse still, we saw the descendants of the Anakites there!'"

<sup>29</sup>But I said to you: Don't be terrified! Don't be afraid of them! <sup>30</sup>The LORD your God is going before you. He will fight for you just as he fought for you in Egypt while you watched, <sup>31</sup>and as you saw him do in the desert. Throughout your entire journey, until you reached this very place, the LORD your God has carried you just as a parent carries a child.

<sup>32</sup>But you had no faith in the LORD your God about this matter, <sup>33</sup>even though he went ahead of you, scouting places where you should camp, in fire by night, so you could see the road you were taking, and in cloud during the daytime.

<sup>34</sup>The LORD heard what you said. He was angry and he swore: <sup>35</sup>Not even one of these people—this wicked generation!—will see the wonderful land that I promised to give to your ancestors. <sup>36</sup>The only exception is Caleb, Jephunneh's son. He will see it. I will give the land he walked on to him and his children for this reason: he was completely devoted to the LORD.

<sup>c</sup>Heb *Eshcol* means *bunch, a cluster (of grapes)*; cf Num 13:23-24; 32:9.

1:16-17 The role of the tribal leaders is described in terms similar to Deuteronomy 16:18-20.

1:16 *judges*: The role of the tribal leaders in ancient Israel was not simply that of settling disputes. It probably included leadership within the community.

1:17 *Don't show favoritism*: In small communities the interests of everyone were often tightly connected. Tribal leaders were often people involved in every bit of community life. Although they had personal interests, it was especially important to be fair and neutral in making decisions.

1:19-2:1 This section retells the story of the rebellion at Kadesh-barnea and the disastrous invasion from the south. The same events are first told in Numbers 13-14. In Deuteronomy, the disobedience and complete failure of the old generation will contrast strongly with the obedience and success of their children (Deut 2:16-3:7).

1:19 *Kadesh-barnea*: an oasis on the southern edge of the land of Canaan, about 50 miles south of Beer-sheba.

1:26 The failed invasion results from the disobedience of the people. The book of Deuteronomy emphasizes

repeatedly that God's instructions must be obeyed. Failure to do so results in loss of the land and leads to disaster. 1:27 *hates us*: In sharp contrast to the people's statement, Deuteronomy repeatedly insists that God loves the people of Israel (e.g., Deut 7:8).

1:28 *Anakites*: or "Anakim," were remembered as a race of giants (Num 13:33; Deut 2:21; 9:2).

1:29-30 Deuteronomy insists that the people are not to fear, because God is among them (see Deut 20:2-4).

1:31 The relationship between God and Israel is compared to the relationship of a parent who loves a child. See also Deuteronomy 8:5; 32:1-43. The image is also common in Hosea and may have been taken from there.

1:33 The column of cloud and lightning is described more fully in Numbers 9:15-23.

1:36 *Caleb* gave a positive report about the land and encouraged the people to enter it (Num 13:30; 14:6-9). As a result of his faithfulness, he was the only one of his generation to enter the land. He received the southern town of Hebron as an inheritance (see Josh 14:6-15).

1:16 Dt 16:18;

Jn 7:24

1:17 Ex 18:26;

Ex 23:3;

Lv 19:15;

2Ch 19:6;

Prv 24:23

1:31 Ex 19:4;

Is 46:3; Is 46:4;

Is 63:9; Hos 11:3

2:1 Nm 14:25,  
Nm 21:4, Dt 1:2,  
Dt 1:40

<sup>37</sup>The LORD was even angry with me because of what you did. “You won’t enter the land either,” God said. <sup>38</sup>“But Nun’s son Joshua, your assistant, will enter it. Strengthen him because he’s the one who will help Israel inherit the land.”)

<sup>39</sup>Now as for your toddlers, those you said would be taken in war, and your young children who don’t yet know right and wrong—they will enter the land. I will give it to them. They will possess it! <sup>40</sup>But you all must now turn around. Head back toward the wilderness along the route of the Reed Sea.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>41</sup>You replied to me: “We’ve sinned against the LORD! We will go up! We will fight, just as the LORD our God commanded.” Each one of you grabbed your weapons. You thought it would be easy<sup>e</sup> to go up into the hills. <sup>42</sup>But the LORD told me: Tell them: Don’t go up! Don’t fight because I will not be with you. You will be defeated by your enemies.

<sup>43</sup>I reported this to you but you wouldn’t listen. You disobeyed the LORD’s instruction. Hotheadedly, you went up into the hills. <sup>44</sup>And the Amorites who lived in those hills came out to meet you in battle. They chased you like bees give chase! They gave you a beating from Seir all the way to Hormah. <sup>45</sup>When you came back, you cried before the LORD, but he wouldn’t respond to your tears or give you a hearing.

<sup>46</sup>And so you stayed in Kadesh-barnea for quite some time.

### *Journeys in Transjordan*

**2**Next, we turned around and headed back toward the wilderness along the Reed Sea<sup>f</sup> road, exactly as the LORD instructed me. We traveled all around Mount Seir for a time.

<sup>2</sup>Eventually the LORD said: <sup>3</sup>You’ve been traveling around this mountain long enough. Head north. <sup>4</sup>Command the people as follows: You are about to enter into the territory of your relatives who live in Seir: Esau’s descendants. They will be afraid of you, so watch yourselves most carefully. <sup>5</sup>Don’t fight with them because I will not give the tiniest parcel of their land to you. I have given Mount Seir to Esau’s family as their property. <sup>6</sup>Of course you may buy food from them with money so you can eat, and also water with money so you can drink.

<sup>7</sup>No doubt about it: the LORD your God has blessed you in all that you have done. He watched over your journey through that vast desert. Throughout these forty years the LORD your God has been with you. You haven’t needed a thing.

<sup>8</sup>So we passed through the territory of our relatives who live in Seir, Esau’s descendants, leaving the desert road from Elath and from Ezion-geber. Next we turned and went along the Moab wilderness route. <sup>9</sup>The LORD said to me: Don’t aggravate Moab. Don’t fight them in battle because I won’t give any part of their land to you as your own. I have given Ar to Lot’s descendants as their property.

<sup>10</sup>Now the Emim<sup>g</sup> had lived there before. They were big and numerous and tall—just like the Anakim. <sup>11</sup>Most people thought the Emim were Rephaim, like the Anakim were. But the Moabites called them “Emim.” <sup>12</sup>Additionally, the Horim<sup>h</sup> had lived in Seir previously, but Esau’s descendants took possession of their area, eliminating them altogether and settling in their place. That is exactly what Israel did in the land it took possession of, which the LORD gave to them.)

<sup>d</sup>Or Red Sea <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Or Red Sea <sup>g</sup>Or Frighteners <sup>h</sup>Or Cave-dwellers or Hurrians

1:37 *angry with me*: Deuteronomy attributes Moses’ exclusion from the land to the people’s disobedience at Kadesh-barnea (cf. Deut 3:26; 4:21). In Numbers 20:1-13, Moses and Aaron are excluded because of their disobedience at the waters of Meribah (cf. Deut 32:51).

1:42 *I will not be with you*: God’s presence is needed in Israel’s holy wars (cf. Deut 20:2-4).

1:44 *bees*: For similar imagery, see note on Deuteronomy 7:20.

2:1 *Mount Seir*: the uplands west of the rift valley that runs between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba.

2:2-8 The Israelites are instructed to avoid confrontation with Edom, the descendants of Esau. The story of Israel and Edom’s encounter is recounted in Numbers 20:14-21.

2:5 *as their property*: In Deuteronomy it’s not only Israel

that receives land from God, but also the other nations that are related to Abraham: the Edomites, the Ammonites, and the Moabites. Thus Israel’s taking of the land isn’t seen as a unique event (see Deut 2:12).

2:8 *passed through*: Deuteronomy suggests that Israel marched through Edom’s land (cf. Deut 2:27-29). In Numbers 20:14-22, the Edomites oppose Israel and won’t let them pass through. As a result, Israel has to take a long detour around Edom (Num 21:4).

2:10-12 Deuteronomy records the details of the earlier inhabitants not only for Israel but also for the nations of the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Philistines (see also Deut 2:20-23). These are remembered as legendary giants; see note on Deuteronomy 1:28.

2:11 *Rephaim*: legendary pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan.

<sup>13</sup>“So then, get going. Cross the Zered ravine.”

So we crossed the Zered ravine.

<sup>14</sup>It took us a total of thirty-eight years to go from Kadesh-barnea until we crossed the Zered ravine. It was at that point that the last of the previous generation, every one of fighting age in the camp, had died, just as the LORD had sworn about them. <sup>15</sup>In fact, the LORD’s power was against them, to rid the camp of them, until they were all gone.

<sup>16</sup>Now as soon as all those of fighting age had died, <sup>17</sup>the LORD said to me: <sup>18</sup>Today you are crossing through the territory of Moab and Ar <sup>19</sup>and you will come close to the Ammonites. Don’t aggravate them. Don’t fight with them because I won’t give any part of the Ammonites’ land to you as your own. I’ve given it to Lot’s descendants as their property.

<sup>20</sup>Now people thought that land was Rephaim territory as well. The Rephaim had lived there previously. But the Ammonites called them “Zamzummim.” <sup>21</sup>They were large, numerous, and tall, just like the Anakim. But the LORD completely destroyed the Zamzummim before the Ammonites, and they took possession of that area, settling in their place. <sup>22</sup>That is exactly what God did for Esau’s descendants, who live in Seir, when he completely destroyed the Horites in their presence, and they took possession of the Horites’ area, settling in their place to this very day. <sup>23</sup>The Avvim,<sup>1</sup> who had lived in settlements around Gaza, were completely destroyed by the Caphtorim, who had come from Caphtor. They replaced the Avvim there.

### Victories in Transjordan

<sup>24</sup>“So get going. Cross the Arnon ravine. I have handed Sihon the Amorite king of Heshbon and his land over to you. It’s time to possess the area! It’s time to fight him in battle! <sup>25</sup>Starting right now, I am making everyone everywhere afraid of you and scared of you. Once they hear news of you, they will be shaking and worrying because of you.”

<sup>26</sup>I then sent messengers from the Kedemoth desert to Sihon, Heshbon’s king, with words of peace: <sup>27</sup>“Please let us<sup>2</sup> pass through your land. We promise to stay on the road. We won’t step off it, right or left. <sup>28</sup>Please sell us food for money so we can eat; sell us water for money so we can drink. Let us pass through on foot— <sup>29</sup>just as Esau’s descendants who live in Seir and the Moabites who live in Ar did for me—until we cross the Jordan River into the land that the LORD our God is giving to us.”

<sup>30</sup>But Sihon, Heshbon’s king, wasn’t willing to let us pass through his land because the LORD your God had made his spirit hard and his heart inflexible so that God could hand him over to you, which is exactly how it happened. <sup>31</sup>The LORD said to me: Look! Right now I’m laying Sihon and his land before you. It’s time to take possession of his land!

<sup>32</sup>Sihon and all his forces came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz. <sup>33</sup>But the LORD our God gave him to us. We struck him down, along with his sons, and all his forces. <sup>34</sup>At that time, we captured all of Sihon’s cities, and we placed every town—men, women, and children—under the ban.<sup>3</sup> We left no survivors. <sup>35</sup>The only things we kept for ourselves were the animals and the plunder from the towns we had taken. <sup>36</sup>From Aroer, which is on the edge of the Arnon Ravine, to the town that is in the valley there,<sup>4</sup> even as far as Gilead, there wasn’t a city that could resist us. The LORD our God laid everything out before us. <sup>37</sup>But you didn’t go near the

<sup>1</sup>Or *Mumblers* <sup>2</sup>Or *Ruiners* <sup>3</sup>Heb here and through 2:29a is singular *me*, i. <sup>4</sup>A technique of holy war that often involves total destruction, in which everything that is destroyed is dedicated to the deity who helps in the battle  
<sup>5</sup>Heb uncertain

2:13-15 *Zered ravine*: The book of Deuteronomy identifies the precise moment when the older sinful generation dies out. The book of Numbers does not have this sharp transition between the disobedient and the obedient generation.

2:15 *the Lord’s power was against them*: This phrase can also be translated “the LORD’s hand was against them.” It invokes the language of holy war (see sidebar, “The Ban” at Deut 7). Here, it’s not applied to Israel’s enemies as is usually the case. Instead, the idea is reversed and used to describe God’s punishment of the disobedient generation.

2:23 *Caphtorim*: the Philistines who were believed to come from Crete (Caphtor; see Amos 9:7).

2:24-37 The defeat of *Sihon* is also described in Numbers 21:21-32.

2:25 *afraid of you . . . worrying because of you*: The language

of holy war is now applied in the normal direction, that is, to Israel’s enemies (unlike Deut 2:15).

2:26 *peace*: In Deuteronomy’s rules of war, cities and nations outside the land of Canaan were first to be offered peace (Deut 20:10).

2:27 *through your land*: The land of Canaan was west of the Jordan and did not include Sihon’s land.

2:30 Sihon’s stubbornness is similar to what happened to Pharaoh in Exodus 7-14 (see sidebar, “Pharaoh’s Stubbornness” at Exod 9).

2:34 *under the ban*: See sidebar, “The Ban” at Deuteronomy 7.

2:34-35 The killing of all the people follows Deuteronomy’s rules of war for cities inside the land of Canaan (Deut 20:15-18).

2:37 *Jabbok River*: the border of Ammonite land.

2:23 Gn 10:14,  
Gn 10:19;  
Josh 13:3;  
Jer 47:4; Am 9:7  
2:34 Dt 3:6,  
Dt 7:2; Josh 6:21

Ammonite lands or hillside cities alongside the Jabbok River, in compliance with all<sup>a</sup> that the LORD our God had commanded.

**3**Next we turned and went up along the road to Bashan. Og, Bashan's king, came out with all his forces to meet us in battle at Edrei. <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to me: Don't be afraid of him! I have handed him, all his forces, and his land over to you. Do the same thing to him that you did to Sihon, the Amorite king who ruled in Heshbon.

<sup>3</sup>And so the LORD our God also handed Og, Bashan's king, along with his forces, over to us. We struck them down until no survivor was left. <sup>4</sup>We also captured all of Og's towns at that time. There wasn't a single city that we didn't take from them—a total of sixty towns, the entire region of Argob, the whole kingdom of Og in Bashan. <sup>5</sup>Each of these towns was fortified with high walls, double gates, and crossbars. Outside the towns there were also a great number of villages. <sup>6</sup>We placed them under the ban, just as we did with Sihon, Heshn's king. Every town—men, women, and children—was under the ban.<sup>b</sup> <sup>7</sup>The only things we kept for ourselves were the animals and the plunder from the towns.

<sup>8</sup>So at that time, we took the land that had belonged to the two Amorite kings beyond the Jordan, all the way from the Arnon Ravine to Mount Hermon (<sup>9</sup>Sidonians call Hermon "Sirion," but the Amorites call it "Senir"), <sup>10</sup>including all the towns on the plateau, in the regions of Gilead and Bashan, and all the way to Salecah and Edrei—all the towns that belonged to Og's kingdom in Bashan.

(<sup>11</sup>By the way, Bashan's King Og was the last of the Rephaim. His bed was made of iron. Isn't it still in the Ammonite town of Rabbah? By standard measurements, it was thirteen and a half feet long and six feet wide.)

<sup>12</sup>So this is the land we possessed at that time. I gave some of it, from Aroer, which is beside the Arnon River, up through half of the Gilead highlands, along with its cities, to the Reubenites and the Gadites. <sup>13</sup>The rest of the Gilead region and all of Bashan, Og's kingdom, I gave to half the tribe of Manasseh.

(Now the whole Argob area, including all of Bashan, was often called Rephaim Country. <sup>14</sup>Jair, from the tribe of Manasseh, took possession of the entire Argob region, as far as the border with the Geshurites and the Maacathites. He named the Bashan area after himself, Jair's Settlement. That's what it's still called today.)

<sup>15</sup>I also gave Gilead to Machir. <sup>16</sup>To the Reubenites and the Gadites, I gave land from the Gilead, as far as the Arnon River—the middle of the river being the boundary line—to the Jabbok River, which is the boundary line with the Ammonites. <sup>17</sup>Also the desert plain, with the Jordan River as the boundary, from the Galilee Sea<sup>c</sup> down to the desert sea (the Dead Sea<sup>d</sup>) below the slopes of Mount Pisgah on the east.

<sup>18</sup>Then I commanded you: Although the LORD your God has given you this land to possess, you must now cross over before the rest of your Israelite relatives as a fighting force ready for battle! <sup>19</sup>However, your wives, children, and herds—I know you have lots of herds!—may remain in the towns that I have given to you. <sup>20</sup>Once the LORD settles your relatives, as you have been settled, and they also possess the land that the LORD your God is giving them across the Jordan River, each of you can return to the property that I have given to you.

<sup>21</sup>It was at that same time that I commanded Joshua: You saw everything that the LORD your God did to these two kings. That is exactly what the LORD will do to all the kingdoms where you're going! <sup>22</sup>Don't be afraid of them because the LORD your God is the one who will be fighting for you.

<sup>a</sup>LXX, Tg Jonathan; MT and all <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>See note at 2:34. <sup>d</sup>Heb Chinnereth <sup>e</sup>Or the Salt Sea

3:1-7 The defeat of Og is also described in Numbers 21:33-35.

3:6 *under the ban*: See sidebar, "The Ban" at Deuteronomy 7.

3:11 *Rephaim*: legendary pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan. *bed was made of iron*: This may have been the bed or couch that Og rested upon or, possibly, his stone coffin. 3:12-17 The division of the land to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh is also told in Numbers 32. In the book of Numbers, the two and a half tribes ask Moses if they might settle east of the Jordan and at first are strongly criticized for their request (Num 32:6-15). In

Deuteronomy no mention is made of this request, only of Moses' dividing the land to them. The division of the land is described from south to north (3:12-13) and, slightly differently, from north to south (3:14-17).

3:18-20 Moses addresses the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. According to Numbers 32:16-32, the fighting men from these tribes were to go into battle to help other tribes on the other side of the Jordan River.

3:21-22 The encouragement of Joshua is similar to what is found in Joshua 1.



**Moses' prayer**

<sup>23</sup>It was also at that same time that I begged the LORD: <sup>24</sup>Please, LORD God! You have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. What god in heaven or on earth can act as you do or can perform your deeds and powerful acts? <sup>25</sup>Please let me cross over the Jordan River so I can see the wonderful land that lies beyond it: those beautiful highlands, even the Lebanon region.

<sup>26</sup>But the LORD was angry with me because of you! He wouldn't listen to me. He said to me: That's enough from you! Don't ever ask me about this again! <sup>27</sup>Go up to the top of Mount Pisgah. Look west, north, south, and east. Have a good look, but you will not cross the Jordan River. <sup>28</sup>Instead, command Joshua, strengthen him, and encourage him because he's the one who will cross the river before this people. He's the one who will make sure they inherit the land you will see.

<sup>29</sup>After that, we stayed in the valley across from Beth-peor.

**The events at Mount Horeb**

**4** Now, Israel, in light of all that, listen to the regulations and the case laws that I am teaching you to follow, so that you may live, enter, and possess the land that the LORD, your ancestors' God, is giving to you. <sup>2</sup>Don't add anything to the word that I am commanding you, and don't take anything away from it. Instead, keep the commands of the LORD your God that I am commanding all of you.

<sup>3</sup>You saw with your own eyes what the LORD did concerning the Baal of Peor. The LORD your God destroyed everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, <sup>4</sup>but all of you who stayed true to the LORD your God are alive today. <sup>5</sup>So pay attention! I am teaching all of you the regulations and the case laws exactly as the LORD my God commanded me. You must do these in the land you are entering to possess. <sup>6</sup>Keep them faithfully because that will show your wisdom and insight to the nations who will hear about all these regulations. They will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and insightful people!" <sup>7</sup>After all, is there any great nation that has gods<sup>a</sup> as close to it as the LORD our God is close to us whenever we call to him? <sup>8</sup>Or does any great nation have regulations and case laws as righteous as all this Instruction that I am setting before you today?

<sup>9</sup>But be on guard and watch yourselves closely so that you don't forget the things your eyes saw and so they never leave your mind as long as you live. Teach them to your children and your grandchildren. <sup>10</sup>Remember that<sup>b</sup> day when you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me: "Gather the people to me. I will declare my words to them so that they will learn to fear me every day of their lives on the fertile land, and teach their

<sup>a</sup>MT; LXX, Syr. Tg a god so close <sup>b</sup>Heb lacks remember that.

3:24 *What god*: For the uniqueness of the Lord, who is beyond comparison, see also Deuteronomy 4:32-40.

3:26 *because of you*: Deuteronomy attributes Moses' exclusion from the land to the people's disobedience at Kadesh-barnea (Deut 1:37).

3:27 *Pisgah*: also known as Mount Nebo. This is the place of Moses' death. His final sight will be of the land that God has promised the people.

3:28 *command*: or "commission." The commissioning of Joshua is described more fully in Deuteronomy 31.

3:29 *Beth-peor*: a place known especially for Israel's worship of Baal of Peor (see Num 25).

4:1-40 The climax to Moses' speech is a lengthy sermon drawn from the history retold in Deuteronomy 1:6-3:29.

4:1 *the regulations and the case laws*: a common expression in Deuteronomy. It means the entire Instruction in Deuteronomy 12-26. *live, enter, and possess the land*: Life in the land of Canaan and all the good God promised depend on the people's obedience. The stories in Deuteronomy 1-3 have shown that disobedience leads to failure and life outside the land (Deut 1), but

obedience leads to success and conquest of the land (Deut 2-3).

4:2 *Don't add . . . don't take anything away from it*: Words such as these are common in laws from the ancient Near East.

4:3 *Baal of Peor*: The idolatrous worship of this Moabite god is described in Numbers 25.

4:6 *wise and insightful*: Solomon is described in the same way in 1 Kings 3:12. His wisdom also gains international recognition.

4:7 *as close*: God is near to the people through mighty actions and the words of the Instruction (Deut 30:14).

4:9 *don't forget*: One of the central themes in Deuteronomy is the importance of remembering God and God's instructions. See especially Deuteronomy 6 and 8. *Teach them*: Memory is not an individual concern, but a national one. Deuteronomy 6:7, 20-25 also stresses the need for teaching children.

4:10 *fear*: doesn't mean terror, but the proper response of obedience toward God (see Exod 20:20). "Fear of God" is a central theme in Deuteronomy and Proverbs.

3:26 Dt 1:37

4:1 Lv 18:5;

Dt 5:1, Dt 8:1

4:2 Dt 12:32;

Josh 1:7;

Prv 30:6;

Rev 22:18;

Rev 22:19

4:4 Josh 23:8

4:7 2Sa 7:23;

Ps 145:18

4:10 Ex 19:16;

Dt 4:9, Dt 5:2,

Dt 14:23,

Dt 17:19

4:12 Dt 4:36,  
Dt 5:4, Dt 5:22  
4:13 Ex 24:12,  
Ex 31:18,  
Ex 34:28; Dt 9:9,  
Dt 10:4  
4:14 Ex 21:1,  
Ex 24:3-4; Dt 4:5  
4:15 Dt 4:12;  
Josh 23:11;  
Is 40:18  
4:16 Ex 20:4;  
Dt 4:23; Ro 1:23  
4:17 Ro 1:23  
4:19 Dt 17:3;  
2Ki 17:16,  
2Ki 21:3;  
Job 31:26; Jer 8:2  
4:20 1Ki 8:51;  
Jer 11:4  
4:23 Ex 20:4;  
Dt 4:9; Dt 4:16  
4:24 Ex 20:5;  
Dt 6:15; Is 33:14;  
Heb 12:29  
4:26 Dt 30:19,  
Dt 31:28,  
Dt 32:1; Is 1:2;  
Mi 6:2

children to do the same.”<sup>11</sup> Then you all came close and stood at the foot of the mountain. The mountain was blazing with fire up to the sky, with darkness, cloud, and thick smoke!<sup>12</sup> The LORD spoke to you out of the very fire itself. You heard the sound of words, but you didn’t see any form. There was only a voice.<sup>13</sup> The LORD declared his covenant to you, which he commanded you to do—the Ten Commandments<sup>14</sup>—and wrote them on two stone tablets.<sup>14</sup> At that time, the LORD commanded me to teach you all the regulations and the case laws that you must keep in the land that you are entering to possess.

<sup>15</sup> So watch your conduct closely, because you didn’t see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the very fire itself.<sup>16</sup> Don’t ruin everything and make an idol for yourself: a form of any image, any likeness—male or female—<sup>17</sup> or any likeness whatsoever, whether of a land animal, a bird that flies in the sky,<sup>18</sup> an insect that crawls on the earth, or a fish that lives in the sea.<sup>19</sup> Don’t look to the skies, to the sun or the moon or the stars, all the heavenly bodies, and be led astray, worshipping and serving them. The LORD your God has granted these things to all the nations who live under heaven.<sup>20</sup> But the LORD took you and brought you out of that iron furnace, out of Egypt, so that you might be his own treasured people, which is what you are right now.

<sup>21</sup> The LORD was angry with me because of your deeds and swore that I couldn’t cross the Jordan River or enter the wonderful land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.<sup>22</sup> I will die here in this land. I won’t cross the Jordan River. But you will, and you will take possession of that wonderful land.<sup>23</sup> So all of you, watch yourselves! Don’t forget the covenant that the LORD your God made with you by making an idol or an image of any kind or anything the LORD your God forbids,<sup>24</sup> because the LORD your God is an all-consuming fire. He is a passionate God.

### Warnings and teachings about future disobedience

<sup>25</sup> Once you have had children and grandchildren and have grown old on the land, if you ruin things by making an idol, in any form whatsoever, and do what is evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and anger him,<sup>26</sup> I call heaven and earth as my witnesses against you today: You will definitely disappear—and quickly—from the land that you are crossing over the Jordan River to possess. You won’t extend your time there but will instead be totally destroyed.<sup>27</sup> The LORD will scatter you among the nations. Only a very few of you will survive

<sup>a</sup>Or the ten words

4:11 For the description of the events at Horeb, see Exodus 19–20, where “Horeb” is called “Sinai.”

4:12 *didn’t see any form*: This doesn’t state that God was invisible, only that God wasn’t seen. *only a voice*: In the ancient Near East, the gods were made present through physical statues. Israel’s God is present through God’s words.

4:13 *covenant*: See sidebar, “Covenant” at Deuteronomy 5. *Ten Commandments*: The giving of the Ten Commandments is told about in Exodus 20 (cf. Deut 5:1–22).

4:14 *all the regulations and the case laws*: probably a reference to the instructions of the Covenant Code (Exod 20:22–23:19), which Moses received from God after the Ten Commandments. These are given to the people in altered form in Deuteronomy 12–26. The instructions of the Covenant Code are repeated and developed in the book of Deuteronomy. See sidebar, “Deuteronomy and the Covenant Code (Exodus 21–23)” at Deuteronomy 12.

4:15–24 Moses insists on the importance of not making idols.

4:16–19 Israel must not make an image of anything on earth: bird, land animal, or fish (4:16–18). The words for these creatures echo the language of Genesis 1. Israel mustn’t make an image of anything in the heavens: sun, moon, or stars (4:19). The division into images of earthly things and heavenly things corresponds to the way that the Lord has revealed himself to Israel. God showed his fire on earth, and his voice spoke

from heaven (Deut 4:36). Neither can be represented by images.

4:20 *took you*: the same choice of Israel from all the nations. *iron furnace*: The same image is found in 1 Kings 8:51 and Jeremiah 11:4. It suggests the people’s suffering and their purification. *own treasured people*: or “inheritance.” The word is usually used of property and suggests that Israel is God’s special possession.

4:21 *because of your deeds*: Deuteronomy attributes Moses’ exclusion from the land to the people’s disobedience at Kadesh-barnea (cf. Deut 1:37).

4:24 *all-consuming fire*: Fire is often a symbol of God’s presence (e.g., Deut 4:36). *a passionate God*: or “jealous God.” God won’t tolerate the worship of any other god. Likewise, God won’t tolerate idols. That is, both images of other gods and images of the Lord are forbidden. The mention of God’s passion is a suitable conclusion to the section on idolatry (Deut 4:15–24). But God isn’t only a jealous God. God is also compassionate (Deut 4:31).

4:25–31 Moses describes what will happen if the Israelites commit idolatry.

4:26 *heaven and earth*: the natural world. *my witnesses against you*: or, perhaps, “my witnesses to warn you.” See also Deuteronomy 30:19; 31:28; 32:1. *disappear . . . from the land*: Obedience to the covenant and living in the land are closely bound together in Deuteronomy (see Deut 4:40).

4:27 *scatter you*: predicts exactly the kind of situation that Israel and Judah suffered during the exile.

in the countries where the LORD will drag you. <sup>28</sup>There you will worship other<sup>v</sup> gods, made of wood and stone by human hands—gods that cannot see, listen, eat, or smell. <sup>29</sup>You will seek the LORD your God from there, and you will find him<sup>w</sup> if you seek him with all your heart and with all your being. <sup>30</sup>In your distress, when all these things happen to you in the future, you will return to the LORD your God and you will obey his voice, <sup>31</sup>because the LORD your God is a compassionate God. He won't let you go, he won't destroy you, and he won't forget the covenant that he swore to your ancestors.

<sup>32</sup>Now look into it: into days long past, before your time—all the way back to the day God first created human beings on earth, from one end of heaven to the other. Has anything this amazing ever happened? Has anything like it ever been heard of before? <sup>33</sup>Has any people ever listened to a god's voice speaking out of fire, as each of you have, and survived? <sup>34</sup>Or has any god ever tried to take one nation out of another nation using tests, miracles, wonders, war, a strong hand and outstretched arm, or awesome power like all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt while you watched? <sup>35</sup>You were shown these things so that you would know this: The LORD is the only God. There's no other god except him. <sup>36</sup>From heaven he made you hear his voice in order to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire. You heard his words from that very fire. <sup>37</sup>And because he loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, God brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his own great power, <sup>38</sup>in order to remove larger and stronger nations from before you and bring you into their land, giving it to you as an inheritance. That's where things stand right now. <sup>39</sup>Know then today and keep in mind that the LORD is the only God in heaven above or on earth below. There is no other. <sup>40</sup>Keep the Lord's regulations and his commandments. I'm commanding them to you today for your well-being and for the well-being of your children after you, so that you may extend your time on the fertile land that the LORD your God is giving you forever.

### Cities of refuge

<sup>41</sup>Then Moses set aside three cities on the eastern side of the Jordan River <sup>42</sup>so that anyone who killed someone accidentally and without prior hatred could flee to one of these

<sup>v</sup>LXX; MT lacks *other*. <sup>w</sup>Heb lacks *him*.

4:28 *made of wood and stone*: The mocking of other gods is similar to what is found in Isaiah 40–48 and Jeremiah 10.  
4:29 Deuteronomy offers the hope of return after Israel has been punished for its sins (cf. Deut 30:1–10).

4:31 *compassionate God*: The Lord is not merely a passionate God (Deut 4:24). The Lord is also a compassionate God. The Lord's mercy on the people despite their disobedience is a strong demonstration of God's compassion and grace. *he won't forget the covenant that he swore to your ancestors*: probably an indirect way of saying that the people will return to the land and possess it again. Deuteronomy usually speaks of the covenant in relation to Israel rather than the ancestors: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For the same idea, see Deuteronomy 7:12; 8:18.

4:32–40 The climax of Moses' sermon rehearses history from creation (4:32) to the present (4:38) and leads to two confessions. First, Israel's God is the only true God (4:35). Second, God is the only true God in heaven and on earth (4:39). This leads to a final warning to be obedient in order to enjoy life in the land of Canaan (4:40).

4:32 *first created human beings*: the only mention of creation in the book of Deuteronomy. The significance of creation here is that it's as far back as history stretches. Also, the Lord's creation of all people confirms the uniqueness of God that is central to this passage.

4:33 *and survived*: Hearing or seeing God was thought to lead to immediate death (Exod 20:19).

4:34 *has any god ever tried*: Although other nations were settled into land that God had allocated to them, only Israel has experienced something like the exodus.

4:32 Job 8:8

4:33 Ex 33:20;  
Dt 4:12, Dt 5:24,  
Dt 5:26

4:34 Ex 6:6;  
Dt 5:15, Dt 6:21,  
Dt 7:19, Dt 26:8

4:35 Dt 4:39,  
Dt 32:39;  
1Sa 2:2; Is 44:6;  
Mk 12:32

4:37 Dt 10:15;

Mal 1:2

4:39 Dt 4:35;  
Josh 2:11

4:35 *There's no other god except him*: Interestingly, the previous verses speak about other gods (Deut 4:32–34).

4:36 *heaven is the place where God spoke*. The *earth* is where God revealed the fire, which is closely associated with divine character (Deut 4:24). The Lord's presence in heaven and earth is a contrast to idols that are modeled on earthly creatures or heavenly bodies (Deut 4:16–19). *discipline you*: The display at Horeb was to make the people's obedience certain. In Deuteronomy 8:5 God's relationship to Israel is compared to a father disciplining his children. *You heard his words from that very fire*: God is not in either heaven or earth, but in both.

4:38 *larger and stronger nations*: Taking the land of Canaan will take place only because of God's power, not the strength of Israel's armies. This lesson can be drawn from the history in Deuteronomy 1:6–3:29.

4:40 *Keep*: In Deuteronomy, confession (Deut 4:39) and obedience (4:40) go hand in hand. *well-being*: The purpose of the instruction was to help the people enjoy God's good gift of the land.

4:41–43 According to Numbers 35, there were to be six cities of refuge in the Israelites' land. If someone killed someone else accidentally, they could flee to a city of refuge and be safe from revenge by the dead person's relatives. Murderers who acted deliberately were not allowed refuge, and their guilt would be assessed or punished by the tribal leaders. These verses name the three cities of refuge that were established east of the Jordan River. For the others, see Joshua 20:1–9. Their mention here is something of an afterthought and not

5:1 Dt 4:1

5:2 Ex 19:5;

Dt 4:10

5:5 Ex 19:16.

Ex 20:18.

Dt 5:27; Ga 3:19;

Heb 12:18

cities and be safe: <sup>43</sup>Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.

### **The second heading: Recounting the Horeb covenant**

<sup>44</sup>Now this is the Instruction that Moses set before the Israelites. <sup>45</sup>These are the laws and the regulations and the case laws that Moses spoke to the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. <sup>46</sup>This took place across the Jordan River, in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon the Amorite king who ruled in Heshbon, whom Moses and the Israelites defeated when they came out of Egypt. <sup>47</sup>They took possession of his land and the land of Og, Bashan's king—the two Amorite kings across the Jordan River to the east—<sup>48</sup>from Aroer, which is on the banks of the Arnon River, all the way to Mount Sion,<sup>x</sup> also known as Hermon, <sup>49</sup>and all the desert regions across the Jordan River, on the east, down to the Dead Sea, beneath the slopes of Mount Pisgah.

### **Ten Commandments**

**5** Moses called out to all Israel, saying to them: “Israel! Listen to the regulations and the case laws that I’m recounting in your hearing right now. Learn them and carefully do them. <sup>2</sup>The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Mount Horeb. <sup>3</sup>The LORD didn’t make this covenant with our ancestors but with us—all of us who are here and alive right now. <sup>4</sup>The LORD spoke with you face-to-face on the mountain from the very fire itself. <sup>5</sup>At that time, I was standing between the LORD and you, declaring to you the LORD’s word, because you were terrified of the fire and didn’t go up on the mountain.”

*Covenant* The central theological idea of the book of Deuteronomy is that a covenant is created between two parties: the Lord and Israel (see Deut 26:16-19). The idea of a covenant was taken from the world of international politics. The same Hebrew word translated as “covenant” could also be translated as “treaty” when made between two human parties. In the ancient Near East, treaties were made between different nations, especially between larger empires and smaller subject nations. These “treaties” are known from various parts of the ancient Near East and from different periods.

The book of Deuteronomy is particularly close to a treaty known as the Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon. This treaty was imposed on subject-nations by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon in order to ensure their loyalty to his son, Ashurbanipal. It is especially close to elements in Deuteronomy like the instructions to love the Lord, the strong encouragement to keep the commandments, and the various curses in Deuteronomy 28. An important feature of this treaty was the devastating destruction promised on those who didn’t show loyalty to Esarhaddon and his son. Possible rebels had to be handed over for execution. In Deuteronomy this idea is found in chapters 5–11; 13; 17; and 26–30.

The treaty analogy, however, doesn’t fully explain the relationship between the Lord and the people of Israel. Some parts of Deuteronomy speak of a parent-child relationship (Deut 1:31; 8:5). This suggests a level of love and commitment beyond that in a human treaty.

<sup>x</sup>Syr Sirion; see 3:9.

part of Moses’ first speech. They are here because the dividing of the land east of the Jordan is described in Deuteronomy 3.

**4:44** *this is the Instruction*: the second of four headings in Deuteronomy (see note on Deut 1:1). This heading covers 4:44–26:15, the section of Deuteronomy that contains all the instructions and obligations. For the meaning of “instruction,” see note on Deuteronomy 1:5.

**4:45** *These are the laws . . . the case laws*: a subtitle to Deuteronomy 5–11. The laws refer to the Ten Commandments, *the regulations and the case laws* must refer to Deuteronomy 6–11. The theme of these chapters is the love of God. The command to love God is seen as a summary of the instructions in Deuteronomy 12–26, which are usually given the title *the regulations and the case laws* (see Deut 12:1). *that Moses . . . Egypt*: The 40 years in the wilderness are now passed over. It is as if they didn’t happen, or should not have happened.

**5:2** *covenant*: See sidebar, “Covenant.”

**5:3** *with us*: Strictly speaking, none of the current generation that Moses addresses were present at Horeb. Moses addresses the previous disobedient generation who had died in the wilderness. It is a common rhetorical move in the book of Deuteronomy to collapse the distinction between the different generations.

**5:4** *face-to-face*: The Ten Commandments were spoken directly to the people of Israel, unlike the rest of the commandments, which were given to Moses (see Exod 20:18-21; Deut 5:22-31).

**5:5** *standing between the LORD and you*: This statement stands in some tension with the previous verse. Deuteronomy 5:4 emphasizes God’s direct speaking of the Instruction to the people, but 5:5 mentions Moses’ role as a go-between for the people and God. In Exodus 20:18-21, Moses takes on this go-between role for the obligations that follow, not for the Ten Commandments.

The LORD said:

<sup>6</sup>I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

<sup>7</sup>You must have no other gods before<sup>7</sup> me. <sup>8</sup>Do not make an idol for yourself—no form whatsoever—of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. <sup>9</sup>Do not bow down to them or worship them because I, the LORD your God, am a passionate God. I punish children for their parents' sins—even to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me. <sup>10</sup>But I am loyal and gracious to the thousandth generation<sup>8</sup> of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>11</sup>Do not use the LORD your God's name as if it were of no significance; the LORD won't forgive anyone who uses his name that way.

<sup>12</sup>Keep the Sabbath day and treat it as holy, exactly as the LORD your God commanded:

<sup>13</sup>Six days you may work and do all your tasks, <sup>14</sup>but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. Don't do any work on it—not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your oxen or donkeys or any of your animals, or the immigrant who is living among you—so that your male and female servants can rest just like you. <sup>15</sup>Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, but the LORD your God brought you out of there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. That's why the LORD your God commands you to keep the Sabbath day.

<sup>16</sup>Honor your father and your mother, exactly as the LORD your God requires, so that your life will be long and so that things will go well for you on the fertile land that the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>17</sup>Do not kill.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Do not commit adultery.

<sup>7</sup>Or besides <sup>8</sup>Or to thousands <sup>9</sup>Or murder

5:6 Ex 20:2;  
Lv 26:1; Dt 6:4  
5:7 Ex 20:3  
5:8 Dt 4:15  
5:9 Ex 34:7;  
Dt 4:24  
5:10 Dt 7:9;  
Jer 32:18; Dn 9:4  
5:11 Ex 20:7;  
Lv 19:12; Dt 6:13,  
Dt 10:20; Mt 5:33  
5:12 Ex 20:8  
5:13 Ex 23:12;  
Ex 35:2  
5:14 Gn 2:2;  
Ex 23:12; Heb 4:4  
5:15 Dt 4:34;  
Dt 15:15,  
Dt 16:12,  
Dt 24:18  
5:16 Lv 19:3;  
Dt 4:40; Mt 15:4  
5:17 Gn 9:6;  
Ex 20:13; Mt 5:21;  
Ro 13:9; Jas 2:11  
5:18 Ex 20:14;  
Mt 5:27,  
Mt 19:18;  
Lk 18:20; Jas 2:11

5:6 *I am the LORD:* God self-identifies as the one who rescued Israel. It's on this basis that God can require Israel to obey the commandments.

5:7-10 In Deuteronomy the requirement not to have other gods and the requirement not to worship idols are one commandment. In Exodus they are two separate commandments. Thus in Exodus and Deuteronomy the commandments are numbered differently. The author of Deuteronomy combined the first two commandments of Exodus: the commandments against other gods and image worship. The author kept the total number at 10 by splitting the last commandment: the commandment against desiring a neighbor's wife, and the commandment against desiring his possessions (see Deut 5:21).

5:7 *no other gods:* The Ten Commandments, like the rest of the book of Deuteronomy, see other gods as a real threat to Israel's devotion. The existence of other gods is not denied here (cf. Deut 4:35). Rather, Israel must not worship them. *before me:* or "over and against me."

5:8 The commandment not to make an image of anything in the sky, the earth, or the sea has already been mentioned in Deuteronomy 4:16-19.

5:9 *to them:* the other gods mentioned in Deuteronomy 5:7. *passionate God:* or "jealous God." The Lord will not share worship with other gods. *of those who hate me:* God's punishment is not arbitrary but is brought only on future generations that disobey.

5:10-11 *thousandth generation:* The relationship between God's passionate jealousy and God's graciousness is unbalanced. God's graciousness to the thousandth generation far outweighs the requirements of divine justice to the third and fourth generations. God's long-lasting mercy is the basis of Israel's hopes for restoration after punishment (see Deut 30:1-10).

5:11 *Lord your God:* God is now spoken of in the third person, rather than the first person "I" (Deut 5:6-10). Moses

resumes as the main speaker. *of no significance:* forbids any misuse of God's name, Yahweh (usually represented as "LORD"). This could include cursing, false testimony, and false prophesying (Deut 18:20-22).

5:12-15 Most of the Ten Commandments prohibit people from doing things. However, the sabbath commandment (described in these verses) and the command to honor father and mother (in Deut 5:16) speak positively about what people should do. In the book of Exodus, the Sabbath is justified by appeal to creation: God created the world in six days. In the book of Deuteronomy, the Sabbath is justified by appeal to the exodus from Egypt. Israel has experienced what it's like to work without rest. The book of Deuteronomy makes clear that sabbath rest applies to the common beasts of burden, the ox and the donkey.

5:12 *Keep:* Exodus 20 has "remember." Deuteronomy uses "remember" for historical events. The Hebrew word *sabbath* means "rest." It can be used in the OT for various festive days, but here it is used of the seventh day of the week.

5:14 *you:* The sabbath commandment is addressed to landowners. The *immigrant* wasn't native and had no land. Immigrants depended on landowners to survive. They had certain limited rights, and the instructions in Deuteronomy show a particular concern for them.

5:16 *Honor:* Submission to parental authority is also found in Deuteronomy 21:18-21 and 27:16. The Israelites lived together in family groupings across a number of generations. *life will be long:* Obedience to the commandments is frequently connected to enjoying life in the land. See note on Exodus 20:12.

5:17 *kill:* The killing of other persons is prohibited. Detailed laws about killing are found in Deuteronomy 19:1-13.

5:18 *adultery:* In ancient Israel the exclusive rights of the husband to his wife or his wife-to-be were protected. Although some instructions regulated men's sexual

5:19 Ex 20:15;  
Lv 19:11; Ro 13:9;  
Eph 4:28

5:20 Ex 20:16;  
Ex 23:1; Dt 19:16;  
Mt 19:18

5:21 Ex 20:17;  
Mt 2:2; Ro 7:7;  
Ro 13:9

5:22 Ex 24:12;  
Ex 31:18;  
Dt 4:11; Dt 4:13;  
Dt 5:4

5:24 Ex 19:19;  
Dt 3:24; Dt 4:33

5:26 Dt 4:33;  
Josh 3:10

5:27 Ex 19:8;  
Ex 20:19

5:29 Dt 4:40;  
Dt 5:16;  
Ps 81:13

5:31 Ex 24:12;  
Ga 3:19

5:32 Dt 17:20;  
Dt 28:14;  
Josh 1:7;  
Josh 23:6;  
Prv 4:27

6:2 Ps 128:1;  
Eccl 12:13

6:3 Gn 15:5;  
Ex 3:8

<sup>19</sup>Do not steal.

<sup>20</sup>Do not testify falsely against your neighbor.

<sup>21</sup>Do not desire and try to take your neighbor's wife.

Do not crave your neighbor's house, field, male or female servant, ox, donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

<sup>22</sup>Those are the words the LORD spoke to your entire assembly with a loud voice while on the mountain, from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick smoke. He added no more. God wrote them on two stone tablets, then gave them to me.

### Moses' intercessory role

<sup>23</sup>Now once you heard the voice from the darkness while the mountain was blazing with fire, you came to me—more specifically, all the chiefs of your tribes and your elders came—

<sup>24</sup>and you said: "Look here! The LORD our God has shown us his glory and greatness. We've heard his voice come out of the very fire itself. We've seen firsthand that God can speak to a human being and they can survive! <sup>25</sup>But why should we die? Surely this massive fire will consume us! If we hear any more of the LORD our God's voice, we will die. <sup>26</sup>Is there anyone who has heard the living God's voice speaking out of the very fire itself, like we have, and survived? <sup>27</sup>You go and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us all that the LORD our God speaks to you. We'll listen and we'll do it."

<sup>28</sup>The LORD heard what you said, when you said this to me. The LORD then told me: I heard what the people said when they spoke with you. Everything they suggest is good.

<sup>29</sup>If only their minds were like this: always fearing me and keeping all my commandments so that things would go well for them and their children forever! <sup>30</sup>Go and tell them: You may go back to your tents. <sup>31</sup>But you, Moses, must stay here with me. I will tell you all the commandments,<sup>b</sup> the regulations, and the case laws that you must teach the Israelites to do in the land that I am giving them to possess.

<sup>32</sup>So you must carefully do exactly what the LORD your God commands you. Don't deviate even a bit! <sup>33</sup>You must walk the precise path that the LORD your God indicates for you so that you will live, and so that things will go well for you, and so you will extend your time on the land that you will possess.

### The great commandment

**6** Now these are the commandments, the regulations, and the case laws that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you to follow in the land you are entering to possess, <sup>2</sup>so that you will fear the LORD your God by keeping all his regulations and his commandments that I am commanding you—both you and your sons and daughters—all the days of your life and so that you will lengthen your life. <sup>3</sup>Listen to them, Israel! Follow them carefully

<sup>b</sup>Heb is singular, *commandment* (see 6:1).

behavior (cf. Deut 22:13-30), women didn't have the same rights over their husbands' sexuality (cf. Num 5:11-31). This was probably due to securing the rights of a man's heirs, and also because women were considered the men's property.

**5:20 testify falsely:** The commandment doesn't concern lying in general, but false witness in a dispute. Individual testimony was almost the only means for determining guilt or innocence in Israel's tribal justice. False testimony threatened the whole system of instruction. For more detailed rules on testimony, see Deuteronomy 19:15-21.

**5:21** In Exodus just one commandment forbids desiring what others possess. In Deuteronomy this is split into two commandments: a command not to desire your neighbor's wife, and a command not to crave the possessions of your neighbor. *desire*... *crave*: Prohibiting an internal attitude is unusual in Israel's laws. It may be that the law is concerned with the actions that stem from desire or craving. *wife*: See note on Deuteronomy 5:18.

**5:22** *Those are the words:* In early rabbinic Judaism the Ten Commandments are known as the "ten words" (cf. Exod 34:28). *He added no more:* draws a sharp distinction

between the Ten Commandments and the rest of the commandments. The Ten Commandments were spoken by God directly to the people. The rest of the commandments were mediated to the people by Moses (cf. Exod 20:18-19). *God wrote them:* The book of Deuteronomy is particularly concerned with the writing of the Instruction (see Deut 31). **5:24-25** *God can speak... and they can survive:* In Israel direct encounter with God was thought to bring death. A number of verses suggest that a person can't see God and live (e.g., Gen 32:30; Exod 33:20). The dangers involved in hearing God's voice are also mentioned in Deuteronomy 4:33. These dangers suggest the need for Moses to act as a go-between.

**5:29** *always fearing... all my commandments:* God reminds the people that the most threatening thing isn't hearing God's voice, but failing to obey God. See Deuteronomy 5:32-33.

**5:30** *go back to your tents:* The assembly of the people is ended.

**5:31** *commandments... case laws:* This all-encompassing description refers to the entire collection of instructions in Deuteronomy 12-26.

so that things will go well for you and so that you will continue to multiply exactly as the LORD, your ancestors' God, promised you, in a land full of milk and honey.

<sup>4</sup>Israel, listen! Our God is the LORD! Only the LORD!<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Love the LORD your God with all your heart, and all your strength. <sup>6</sup>These words that I am commanding you today must always be on your minds. <sup>7</sup>Recite them to your children. Talk about them when you are sitting around your house and when you are out and

*The Shema* Deuteronomy 6:4 and the following verses are often known as the Shema. This name comes from the opening word in Hebrew, *shema*, which is translated "listen." These verses have played a central role in Jewish and Christian traditions. In Judaism it is recited at the beginning and end of the day. To repeat its words is "to take on the yoke of the kingdom of heaven." In Christianity the Shema introduces the greatest commandment: to love God. One of the challenges in understanding the Shema is the translation of Deuteronomy 6:4. Translation footnote c outlines the various possibilities. The different translations give rise to different understandings of the Shema. There are two main interpretations. The first interpretation understands the Shema as a statement of God's being or character. God is unique and always faithful. The second interpretation understands the Shema as a statement about the relationship between the Lord and Israel. The Lord is loved as the only God for them. The interpretation offered in the notes seeks to combine the best of both these possibilities. The Lord is to be Israel's only God, but that is because of the Lord's uniqueness. Another challenge in understanding the Shema is determining whether Deuteronomy 6:6-9 should be understood as literal practices or metaphors for complete commitment. In Judaism the literal approach is taken. The Shema is repeated daily and texts are carried in small boxes on the head and arms. In Christianity the instructions in Deuteronomy 6:6-9 are usually understood as metaphors for wholehearted commitment. (See notes on Deut 6:6-9.) The question is whether complete commitment is possible without the practices that express it.

<sup>6</sup>Or *The LORD is our God, the LORD only*; or *The LORD is our God, the LORD alone*; or *The LORD our God is one LORD*; or *The LORD our God, the LORD is one*; or *The LORD is our God, the LORD is one*.

6:1-11:32 These chapters provide a long introduction to the Instruction that Moses received from God on Mount Horeb. He will relay these to the people in Deuteronomy 12-26. The introduction is a long exhortation encouragement to obey the instructions. It insists on the importance of obeying God and the dangers of disobedience. It uses various examples from Israel's history in the wilderness to point out both the dangers of disobedience and God's generosity.

6:1 *commandments . . . case laws*: See note on Deuteronomy 5:31.

6:2 *fear the LORD*: See note on Deuteronomy 4:10.

6:3 *land full of milk and honey*: a common description of the land in the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy. It's found most frequently in Deuteronomy and is an ideal description of the land. Milk and honey are two choice foods in ancient Israel. They are plentiful because of the natural abundance of the land. Unlike cereal crops, nobody needed to cultivate milk and honey.

6:4 *Our God . . . the LORD*: The original Hebrew is difficult to translate. There are four nouns: "LORD"; "our God"; "LORD"; "one." Because of how Hebrew works, the reader must decide where to place the word "is." The footnote gives the different possible translations. The translation *Our God is the LORD! Only the LORD!* is correct in highlighting the relationship between God and Israel as the central issue. We may compare the use of the word "one" in Song of Songs 6:8-9. The lover knows that there are many other beautiful women, but in his eyes the woman he loves is the "one." In a similar way Deuteronomy 6:4 insists that the Lord is the only god for Israel. In the ancient world there were many gods, but Deuteronomy again and again requires the

people to worship and obey only the Lord. This verse relates to the first commandment: The people should have no other gods before the Lord because the Lord is the only God for Israel. See sidebar, "The Shema."

6:5 *Love the LORD*: One God means Israel must be totally devoted to the Lord. Jesus in Matthew 22:37-39 calls this the most important commandment. Together with the commandment to love your neighbor it summarizes the Instruction for the Gospel writers (cf. Lev 19:18). *heart*: with thoughts and intentions. *being*: with desires and emotions. The meanings of *heart* and *being* have some overlap. These two terms are often found together in Deuteronomy. *strength*: a term that covers any other instincts and wishes of a person. It's only otherwise used together with "heart" and "being" in 2 Kings 23:25. There it describes Josiah, who is presented as someone who followed the Instruction of Deuteronomy completely.

6:6-9 *These words*: It's unclear whether this refers to Deuteronomy 6:4-5, the Ten Commandments, or the entirety of Deuteronomy. If the whole book is meant, the commandments in 6:6-9 can be understood metaphorically. They point to the central place the commandments must have in Israel's life, and the need to constantly remember. If "these words" refer to 6:4-5, then the commandments in 6:6-9 can be obeyed literally. The commands were to be written and carried upon the head and arms; they were to be written on doors and gates. Amulets and charms discovered in Israel suggest that words mentioning God's presence and protection were worn. We may also compare this with the high priest's headgear in Exodus 28:36-38.

6:7 *Recite them to your children*: Deuteronomy is particularly concerned with the teaching of the next generation,

6:4 Dt 4:35;

Dt 4:39;

Is 44:6;

Mk 12:29;

1Co 8:4

6:5 Dt 10:12;

Dt 11:1;

Mt 23:37;

Mk 12:30;

Lk 10:27

6:6 Dt 11:18;

Ps 37:31;

Ps 119:11;

Is 51:7

6:7 Dt 4:9;

Dt 11:19; Eph 6:4

6:8 Ex 13:9;  
Dt 11:18;  
Pv 3:3, Prv 7:3;  
Mt 23:5

6:11 Dt 8:10;  
Josh 24:13

6:12 Dt 4:9;  
Dt 8:11

6:13 Dt 10:20,  
Dt 13:4;  
Jer 12:16;  
Mt 4:10; Lk 4:8

6:15 Ex 20:5;  
Nm 32:10;  
Dt 4:24, Dt 5:9,  
Dt 11:17

6:16 Ex 17:2,  
Ex 17:7; Mt 4:7;  
Lk 4:12;  
1Co 10:9

6:21 Ex 20:2;  
Dt 5:15, Dt 7:8;  
Neh 9:10

about, when you are lying down and when you are getting up. <sup>8</sup>Tie them on your hand as a sign. They should be on your forehead as a symbol.<sup>4</sup> <sup>9</sup>Write them on your house's doorframes and on your city's gates.

<sup>10</sup>Now once the LORD your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give to you—a land that will be full of large and wonderful towns that you didn't build, <sup>11</sup>houses stocked with all kinds of goods that you didn't stock, cisterns that you didn't make, vineyards and olive trees that you didn't plant—and you eat and get stuffed, <sup>12</sup>watch yourself! Don't forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <sup>13</sup>Revere the LORD your God, serve him, and take your solemn pledges in his name! <sup>14</sup>Don't follow other gods, those gods of the people around you—<sup>15</sup>because the LORD your God, who is with you and among you, is a passionate God. The LORD your God's anger will burn against you, and he will wipe you off the fertile land. <sup>16</sup>Don't test the LORD your God the way you frustrated him at Massah. <sup>17</sup>You must carefully follow the LORD your God's commands along with the laws and regulations he has given you. <sup>18</sup>Do what is right and good in the LORD's sight so that things will go well for you and so you will enter and take possession of the wonderful land that the LORD swore to your ancestors, <sup>19</sup>and so the LORD will drive out all your enemies from before you, just as he promised.

### The next generation

<sup>20</sup>In the future, your children will ask you, "What is the meaning of the laws,<sup>a</sup> the regulations, and the case laws that the LORD our God commanded you?" <sup>21</sup>tell them: We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. But the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. <sup>22</sup>Before our own eyes, the LORD performed great and awesome deeds of power<sup>b</sup> against Egypt, Pharaoh, and his entire dynasty. <sup>23</sup>But the Lord brought us out from there so that he could bring us in, giving us the land that he swore to our ancestors. <sup>24</sup>Then the LORD commanded us to perform all these regulations, revering the LORD our God, so that things go well for us always and so we continue to live, as we're doing right now. <sup>25</sup>What's more, we will be considered righteous if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, just as he commanded us.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain; cf Exod 13:16; Syr *sign or mark*; Tg *phylacteries* <sup>b</sup>Or *What are the laws . . . ?* <sup>c</sup>Or *signs and wonders*

as well as the remembering of commandments from one generation to the next. The commandments are viewed as having an uncertain place in Israel's life, so care must be taken to remember them.

6:8 *Tie them*: See Exodus 13:9, 16. *symbol*: Translation note d points out the uncertainty in translating this word. In Jewish tradition the word is understood to refer to phylacteries. These are the small boxes worn by some Jews during prayer, which contain select Bible verses.

6:10-12 Deuteronomy 6-11 repeatedly warns about the dangers of eating until satisfied and then forgetting God. God's generous gift of land and food is a danger to the people. In Deuteronomy 12-26, however, food and feasting are always celebrated as something positive.

6:10 *Now . . . brought you into the land*: The same phrase is used in Deuteronomy 7:1 and 8:6. The commandments in Deuteronomy 12-26 concern Israel's life in the land of Canaan.

6:13 *Revere the LORD*: or "fear the LORD." See note on Deuteronomy 4:10. *solemn pledges in his name*: These pledges were made in various contexts, such as during a dispute with another person or when making agreements. In solemn pledges, people invoked the names of their gods as witnesses. The command here is to make oaths in the Lord's name because such an oath shows allegiance to the Lord.

6:14 *Don't follow*: Worship of other gods can be described using the language of journeys and paths.

6:15 *passionate God*: See note on Deuteronomy 4:24.

6:16 *Don't test*: Testing God is seen as a lack of trust. It reverses the relationship between God and the people. God may test the covenant people, but they shouldn't test God. *Massah*: See Exodus 17:1-7.

6:18 *ancestors*: could refer to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) or the people's parents, who experienced the exodus from Egypt.

6:20 *children will ask you*: Similar questioning occurred in the Passover Festival (Exod 12:21-13:16).

6:21-23 The child's question is answered by telling Israel's story. In Deuteronomy the instruction is closely bound up with Israel's story with God. It's because of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt that God has a special claim on the covenant people and can demand that Israel obey divine instruction.

6:22 *Before our own eyes*: Moses speaks to the children of those who experienced the exodus. The book of Deuteronomy frequently blends the two generations together in order to make its theological and ethical points. What one generation experiences, all experience as the story is retold. See Deuteronomy 5:3.

6:25 *righteous*: The term means that Israel's relationship with God is in order.



**Dealing with foreign worship**

**7** Now once the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to take possession of, and he drives out numerous nations before you—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: seven nations that are larger and stronger than you—<sup>2</sup>once the LORD your God lays them before you, you must strike them down, placing them under the ban.<sup>3</sup> Don't make any covenants with them, and don't be merciful to them. <sup>3</sup>Don't intermarry with them. Don't give your daughter to one of their sons to marry, and don't take one of their daughters to marry your son, <sup>4</sup>because they will turn your child away from following me so that they end up serving other gods. That will make the LORD's anger burn against you, and he will quickly annihilate you.

<sup>5</sup>Instead, this is what you must do with these nations: rip down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their sacred poles,<sup>b</sup> and burn their idols <sup>6</sup>because you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God chose you to be his own treasured people beyond all others on the fertile land. <sup>7</sup>It was not because you were greater than all other

7:1 Dt 4:38  
7:2 Ex 23:32, Ex 34:12; Dt 20:17; Jgs 2:3  
7:3 Ex 34:16; Josh 23:12; Ear 9:2  
7:5 Ex 23:24, Ex 34:13; Dt 7:25, Dt 12:3  
7:6 Ex 19:6; Dt 14:2, Dt 26:19, Dt 28:9; Ps 50:5  
7:7 Dt 4:37

**The Ban** The seven Canaanite nations are to be placed under the “ban.” The use of the word here and in Deuteronomy 2:34 and 3:6 suggests that the nations are to be completely destroyed. The Hebrew word for “ban,” *herem*, is not simply a word for destruction, but something devoted to God and placed off-limits for everyone else. In Leviticus 27 items that have been devoted can't be sold or redeemed. They are holy to the Lord. When something is *herem*, all human claims to it are renounced. But what does it mean to devote human beings to the Lord? What is a modern reader to make of a divine commandment that requires men, women, and children to be killed?

The rabbis suggested that Joshua gave a proclamation that allowed the Canaanites to choose to leave, submit, or fight. If they chose to fight, they would be destroyed. Some argue that the ban is divine judgment because the Canaanites were especially unrighteous. Since the book of Deuteronomy was written many centuries after the conquest of Canaan, many scholars think Deuteronomy offers a model that wasn't carried out historically. Deuteronomy presents how the conquest under Joshua was supposed to happen.

There is another solution. Given that the term *herem* is unusual, perhaps readers should understand it as a metaphor. The Israelites are to treat the Canaanites as though they were dead and turned over to the Lord's judgment. The Israelites should not marry them (Deut 7:3). They should destroy Canaanite religious objects (Deut 7:5). The concern thus is wholehearted devotion to the Lord, who is worshipped in the way God chooses.

<sup>a</sup>See note at 2:34. <sup>b</sup>Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah

7:1-26 The central theme of Deuteronomy 7 is that Israel's special chosen status requires the complete avoidance of idolatry.

7:1 *seven nations*: The list of nations is found in various places in the OT and can vary. Here, seven implies the complete list of nations that Israel must face. Though there are many foes, God will defeat them. *larger and stronger*: Deuteronomy insists that it is the Lord who defeats the Canaanite nations, not Israel.

7:2 *God lays them*: The Lord defeats the nations. *ban*: See sidebar, “The Ban.” *any covenants*: A covenant of peace is probably meant. The word “covenant” can refer to either a treaty with another nation, as is the case here, or Israel's relationship with God, as was the case in Deuteronomy 5:2 (see sidebar, “Covenant” at Deut 5). In essence, Israel is told to choose whether to have a covenant with these Canaanite nations or with God. God's people cannot have both.

7:3 *Don't intermarry*: A number of other OT texts express the concern that Israel will intermarry with the surrounding nations. The worry is that this intermarriage will lead to idolatry. See Exodus 34:16; Numbers 25; Ezra 9:1-2. The commandment in 7:3 seems rather strange if the people are annihilated as Deuteronomy 7:2 commands.

7:5 *sacred stones*: stone monuments that were set up at

various places and used in worship. Some were even erected by the ancestors in Genesis. In Deuteronomy they contradict the commandment to worship the Lord in the chosen place (Deut 12). *sacred poles*: Translation note h draws attention to the possible connection with the goddess Asherah. In Deuteronomy the pole may have been understood to represent the goddess, or it may simply have been part of the religious worship of other gods.

7:6 *people holy*: Israel is separate from other nations because of its special relationship to God. It is like the objects in the temple. Though they are in many respects ordinary objects, they have been set aside for a special purpose. As a result, they can't be put to any other use. *chose you*: Israel's special status can also be described with the language of choice or election. God chose Israel from the nations. *own treasured people*: Israel is compared to a king's treasury. Israel is God's personal and special property.

7:7-8 *the Lord loved you and chose you . . . because the Lord loved you*: The verses describe a paradox. The Lord loves because the Lord loves! God's generosity is based on God alone, not anything the people have done or are.

7:7 God's choice isn't based on any quality that the people possess (see Deut 9:4-5). It's based solely on God's decision to love Israel.

7:8 Ex 32:13;  
Dt 10:15; Jer 31:3  
7:13 Dt 28:4;  
Is 14:21  
7:21 Dt 10:17;  
Josh 3:10;  
Neh 1:5;  
Neh 9:32  
7:22 Ex 23:29;  
Ex 23:30  
7:23 Ex 23:27;  
Dt 7:2; Dt 9:3;  
Josh 10:10

people that the LORD loved you and chose you. In fact, you were the smallest of peoples! <sup>8</sup>No, it is because the LORD loved you and because he kept the solemn pledge he swore to your ancestors that the LORD brought you out with a strong hand and saved you from the house of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh, Egypt's king. <sup>9</sup>Know now then that the LORD your God is the only true God! He is the faithful God, who keeps the covenant and proves loyal to everyone who loves him and keeps his commands—even to the thousandth generation! <sup>10</sup>He is the God who personally repays anyone who hates him, ultimately destroying that kind of person. The LORD does not waste time with anyone who hates him; he repays them personally. <sup>11</sup>So make sure you carefully keep the commandment, the regulations, and the case laws that I am commanding you right now.

<sup>12</sup>If you listen to these case laws and follow them carefully, the LORD your God will keep the covenant and display the loyalty that he promised your ancestors. <sup>13</sup>He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will bless the fruit of your wombs and the fruit of your fertile land—all your grain, your wine, your oil, and the offspring of your cattle and flocks—upon the very fertile land that he swore to your ancestors to give to you. <sup>14</sup>You will be more blessed than any other group of people. No one will be sterile or infertile—not among you or your animals. <sup>15</sup>The LORD will remove all sickness from you. As for all those dreadful Egyptian diseases you experienced, the Lord won't put them on you but will inflict them on all who hate you. <sup>16</sup>You will destroy all the peoples that the LORD your God is handing over to you. Show them no pity. And don't serve their gods because that would be a trap for you.

### Against power and lack of trust

<sup>17</sup>If you happen to think to yourself, These nations are greater than we are; how can we possibly possess their land? <sup>18</sup>Don't be afraid of them! Remember, instead, what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and all Egypt: <sup>19</sup>the great trials that you saw with your own eyes, the signs and wonders, and the strong hand and outstretched arm the LORD your God used to rescue you. That's what the LORD your God will do to any people you fear. <sup>20</sup>The LORD your God will send terror<sup>i</sup> on them until even the survivors and those hiding from you are destroyed. <sup>21</sup>Don't dread these nations because the LORD your God, the great and awesome God, is with you and among you. (<sup>22</sup>The LORD your God will drive out these nations before you bit by bit. You won't be able to finish them off quickly; otherwise, the wild animals would become too much for you to handle.) <sup>23</sup>The LORD your God will lay these nations before you, throwing them into a huge panic until they are destroyed. <sup>24</sup>He will hand their kings over

<sup>i</sup>Heb uncertain; perhaps *wasp, plague, or pestilence*

7:8 *saved you*: or “redeemed you.” The same verb is used of saving an animal or person from death by providing a substitute or making a payment.

7:9 *Know now then*: In the book of Deuteronomy, God is known through the things that God does for Israel. *proves loyal*: This is a restatement of part of the Ten Commandments (see Deut 5:10).

7:10 *anyone who hates*: God's generosity in the previous verse is no excuse for carelessness. God chose Israel, and Israel must obey God's Instruction. As love is shown through obeying the Instruction, hating God is seen in disobedience. In Hebrew, the word for “anyone” here implies one person, unlike “everyone” in Deuteronomy 7:9, which refers to a group of people. So the person hating God is seen as the exception.

7:12 *If you listen*: In Deuteronomy blessing depends upon obedience. *covenant*: God's covenant is mostly used of the agreement between God and Israel. Only here and in Deuteronomy 4:31 and 8:18 is it used of a covenant with Israel's ancestors: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. See sidebar, “Covenant” at Deuteronomy 5.

7:13 *your grain, your wine, your oil*: the three main crops of the land of Israel. They are mentioned regularly in Deuteronomy. The terms refer to the crops as they appear just after harvest and before they have been processed.

7:15 *The LORD . . . sickness*: For God as healer, see Exodus 15:26. *dreadful Egyptian diseases*: a reference to the 10 disasters that came on Egypt (see Exod 7–14).

7:18 *don't be afraid*: a regular instruction during occasions of war in the OT. When the people are obedient, God will fight for them and they need not fear.

7:20 *terror*: The translation note refers to “wasp” as a possible translation. A similar idea is found in Deuteronomy 1:44.

7:22 *wild animals*: The slow progress of the conquest of the land of Canaan is explained. In Judges 2:20–23 the slow conquest is due to sin, but in Judges 3:1–4 the remaining peoples are there to test Israel. The explanation that we find here in Deuteronomy 7:22 is also found in Exodus 23:29.

7:23 *huge panic*: For God sending panic on foreign armies, see also Exodus 14:24; 23:27; Joshua 10:10. This is common in portrayals of God fighting for Israel.

7:24 *their names*: In Israel and neighboring nations, people wanted their names to be remembered even after their deaths. This remembering could be by their descendants or through a monument. If this didn't happen, the individual no longer had any place in the world of the living. God commands Israel to make this feared possibility a reality for the Canaanite kings.

to you, and you will wipe their names out from under the skies. No one will be able to stand before you; you will crush them.

<sup>25</sup>Burn the images of their gods. Don't desire the silver or the gold that is on them and take it for yourself, or you will be trapped by it. That is detestable to the LORD your God. <sup>26</sup>Don't bring any detestable thing into your house, or you will be placed under the ban too, just like it is! You must utterly detest these kinds of things, despising them completely, because they are under the ban.

**G**You must carefully perform all of the commandment that I am commanding you right now so you can live and multiply and enter and take possession of the land that the LORD swore to your ancestors. <sup>2</sup>Remember the long road on which the LORD your God led you during these forty years in the desert so he could humble you, testing you to find out what was in your heart: whether you would keep his commandments or not. <sup>3</sup>He humbled you by making you hungry and then feeding you the manna that neither you nor your ancestors had ever experienced, so he could teach you that people don't live on bread alone. No, they live based on whatever the LORD says.<sup>j</sup> <sup>4</sup>During these forty years, your clothes didn't wear out and your feet didn't swell up. <sup>5</sup>Know then in your heart that the LORD your God has been disciplining you just as a father disciplines his children. <sup>6</sup>Keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him, <sup>7</sup>because the LORD your God is bringing you to a wonderful land, a land with streams of water, springs, and wells that gush up in the valleys and on the hills; <sup>8a</sup>a land of wheat and barley, vines, fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey; <sup>9a</sup>a land where you will eat food without any shortage—you won't lack a thing there—a land where stone is hard as iron and where you will mine copper from the hills. <sup>10</sup>You will eat, you will be satisfied, and you will bless the LORD your God in the wonderful land that he's given you.

#### **Against wealth and overconfidence**

<sup>11</sup>But watch yourself! Don't forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commands or his case laws or his regulations that I am commanding you right now. <sup>12</sup>When you eat, get full, build nice houses, and settle down, <sup>13</sup>and when your herds and your flocks are growing large, your silver and gold are multiplying, and everything you have is thriving, <sup>14</sup>don't become arrogant, forgetting the LORD your God:

<sup>j</sup>Or whatever comes out of the LORD's mouth

7:25 *the silver or the gold*: Images of the gods were commonly made of wood and covered with precious metal. Moses forbids even the reuse of the metal from idols. The Lord's choice of Israel has enduring results. In a similar way, using metal for idol making has lasting consequences. *detestable to the LORD*: In Deuteronomy the word "detestable" is used a number of times for various practices that are obnoxious to the Lord. These practices often come from Canaanite worship.

7:26 Those who take the precious metal come under the ban (see sidebar, "The Ban" at Deut 7). A vivid application of this instruction is found in the story of Achan in Joshua 6–7.

8:1–20 Deuteronomy 8 is dominated by the theme of memory, as can be seen by the repeated use of the words "remember" and "forget." The lessons of the past (8:2–6) must be followed in the future when Israel enters the land (8:7–20).

8:2–4 The 40 years in the wilderness are understood as God's disciplining of Israel. Obedience to the Instruction requires Israel to recognize its dependence on the Lord.

8:2 *testing*: For the wilderness as a test from the Lord, see Exodus 15:23–17:7.

8:3 *they* refers to all human beings, and not just Israel. *whatever the LORD says*: As translation note j points out, the Hebrew idiom is "whatever comes out of the LORD's mouth." This proverbial statement means that all people depend on what God determines. In the wilderness

Israel depended upon the bread that God provided (Exod 16:13). In Deuteronomy, Israel is also dependent on what God has commanded. This dual meaning unites Israel's past experience in the wilderness and future events in the land of Canaan.

8:4 For a similar description of the wilderness, see Deuteronomy 29:5–6.

8:5 For God as a father, see Deuteronomy 1:31. In Israel's Wisdom literature such as Proverbs, disciplining children—including physical punishment—is a strong theme.

8:7–10 The description of the land of Canaan is a little exaggerated. The land isn't a good source of iron or copper. The description has a similar purpose to the words "a land full of milk and honey": It emphasizes the generosity of the Lord to the people (see note on Deut 6:3). In this way it seeks to make disobedience of the Instruction unthinkable.

8:10 *eat . . . satisfied*: The climax of God's generosity is often seen in Israel's enjoying the land's goodness in a meal. See note on Deuteronomy 6:10–12. Food is central to life, and a good supply wasn't guaranteed in the ancient world. The gift of land was first and foremost a gift of regular meals.

8:14 *don't become arrogant*: Prosperity is linked to a belief in self-sufficiency. The Lord's generosity to Israel brings with it a danger that the people will attribute their wealth to their own power and hard work. Deuteronomy insists

7:25 Ex 32:20;  
Dt 7:5

7:26 Lv 27:28;  
Dt 13:17;  
Josh 6:18,  
Josh 7:1,  
Josh 7:11

8:2 Gn 22:1;  
Ex 15:25;  
Dt 8:16;  
2Ch 32:31;  
Am 2:10

8:3 Dt 8:16;  
Mt 4:4; Lk 4:4

8:4 Dt 29:5;  
Neh 9:21

8:5 2Sa 7:14;  
Pv 3:11,  
Pv 3:12;  
Heb 12:5;  
Rev 3:19

8:11 Dt 4:9,  
Dt 6:12

8:12 Dt 28:47,  
Dt 32:5;  
Pv 30:9;  
Hos 13:6

8:13 Dt 8:14

8:14 Dt 8:11;  
Ps 106:21

8:15 Ex 17:6;  
Nm 21:6;  
Dt 1:19;  
Dt 32:13;  
Ps 78:15

8:17 Dt 9:4  
8:18 1 Ch 29:12;  
Prv 10:22;  
Hos 2:8

9:2 Nm 13:22;  
Nm 13:28;  
Dt 1:28

9:3 Dt 4:24;  
Dt 7:24; Dt 31:3;  
Josh 3:11;  
Heb 12:29

9:4 Lv 10:24;  
Dt 8:17;  
Dt 18:12

9:5 Ti 3:5

9:6 Ex 32:9;  
Dt 9:13;  
Dt 10:16

the one who rescued you from Egypt, from the house of slavery;  
<sup>15</sup>the one who led you through this vast and terrifying desert of poisonous snakes and scorpions, of cracked ground with no water;  
the one who made water flow for you out of a hard rock;

<sup>16</sup>the one who fed you manna in the wilderness, which your ancestors had never experienced, in order to humble and test you, but in order to do good to you in the end.

<sup>17</sup>Don't think to yourself, My own strength and abilities have produced all this prosperity for me. <sup>18</sup>Remember the LORD your God! He's the one who gives you the strength to be prosperous in order to establish the covenant he made with your ancestors—and that's how things stand right now. <sup>19</sup>But if you do, in fact, forget the LORD your God and follow other gods, serving and bowing down to them, I swear to you right now that you will be completely destroyed. <sup>20</sup>Just like the nations that the LORD is destroying before you, that's exactly how you will be destroyed—all because you didn't obey the LORD your God's voice.

### Against false piety and immodesty

**9** Listen, Israel! Today you will cross the Jordan River to enter and take possession of nations larger and more powerful than you, along with huge cities with fortifications that reach to the sky. <sup>2</sup>These people are large and tall—they are the Anakim. You know and have heard what people say: “Who can stand up to the Anakim?” <sup>3</sup>Know right now that the LORD your God, who is crossing over before you, is an all-consuming fire! He will wipe them out! He will subdue them before you! Then you will take possession of their land, eliminating them quickly, exactly as the LORD told you.

<sup>4</sup>Once the LORD your God has driven them out before you, don't think to yourself, It's because I'm righteous that the LORD brought me in to possess this land. It is instead because of these nations' wickedness that the LORD is removing them before you. <sup>5</sup>You aren't entering and taking possession of their land because you are righteous or because your heart is especially virtuous; rather, it is because these nations are wicked—that's why the LORD your God is removing them before you, and because he wishes to establish the promise he made to your ancestors: to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

### Gold calf

<sup>6</sup>Know then that the LORD your God isn't giving you this excellent land for you to possess on account of your righteousness—because you are a stubborn people! <sup>7</sup>Remember—don't ever forget!—how you made the LORD your God furious in the wilderness. From the very first day you stepped out of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebels

that everything comes from God. This is as true in the land of Canaan as it was in the wilderness when the food appeared every day from heaven. *house of slavery*: The same words are found at the beginning of the Ten Commandments (Deut 5:6).

8:15-16 The description of the wilderness in these verses is meant to contrast with the generous picture of the land of Canaan in Deuteronomy 8:7-10.

8:15 *poisonous snakes*: Numbers 21:4-9 tells of the troubles with snakes in the wilderness. *hard rock*: The same words are found in Deuteronomy 32:13.

8:16 *good to you in the end*: Deuteronomy presents God's discipline as something with a positive end. This is true even in Deuteronomy 28–30, where Israel's exile from the promised land is predicted. The exile will also be a time of discipline so that God can eventually bring Israel back to the land. The people will then be prepared to obey the Instruction.

8:18 Usually the word *covenant* refers to the agreement between God and the Israelites. Here it refers to the ancestors: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. See Deuteronomy 4:31; 7:12; see sidebar, “Covenant” at Deuteronomy 5.

8:19-20 The theme of forgetfulness concludes with a reference to following other gods. In this way the theme of Deuteronomy 9–10 (i.e., the golden calf) is introduced.

Idolatry will lead to destruction, and the story of the gold calf is a good example of how this almost happened in the wilderness.

9:1-6 Israel can't think that its size was the reason that it possesses the land of Canaan (9:1-3). Nor should it imagine it's because of its righteousness (9:4-6).

9:1 *reach to the sky*: The same description of the Canaanite cities is found in the spies' report in Deuteronomy 1:28.

9:2 *Anakim*: See note on Deuteronomy 1:28.

9:3 *all-consuming fire*: The same image is used in Deuteronomy 4:24. *eliminating them quickly*: a contrast with Deuteronomy 7:22, where the conquest is slow so that the wild animals don't take over the land.

9:4-5 *righteous . . . wicked*: These are originally legal terms. Israel's victory won't show it to be right or innocent. In view of Deuteronomy 8:19-20, Israel, too, may prove to be as guilty as the Canaanites. *nations are wicked*: The same idea is found in Genesis 15:16.

9:6 *stubborn people*: The Hebrew idiom “stiff-necked” implies that the people can't turn their heads in order to hear God. With this word Moses introduces one of the key ideas in the story of the gold calf that follows.

9:7-10:11 The story of the gold calf is also told in more detail in Exodus 32–34. In Deuteronomy's account the themes of rebellion and Moses' intercession are in

against the LORD. <sup>8</sup>Even at Horeb you angered the LORD! He was so enraged by you that he threatened to wipe you out. <sup>9</sup>When I went up on the mountain to get the stone tablets, the covenant tablets that the LORD made with you, I was up there forty days and forty nights. I ate no bread, drank no water. <sup>10</sup>The LORD gave me the two stone tablets, written by God's finger, and on them were all the words that the LORD had said to you on the mountain, out of the very fire itself, on the day we assembled. <sup>11</sup>At the end of those forty days and nights, the LORD gave me the two stone tablets—the covenant tablets. <sup>12</sup>Then the LORD said to me, "Get going! Get down from here quickly because your people, whom you brought out of Egypt, have ruined everything! They couldn't wait to turn from the path I commanded them! They've made themselves an idol out of cast metal."

<sup>13</sup>The LORD said more to me: "I have seen this people. Look! What a stubborn people they are! <sup>14</sup>Now stand back. I am going to wipe them out. I will erase their name from under heaven, then I will make a nation out of you—one stronger and larger than they were."

<sup>15</sup>So I went down the mountain while it was blazing with fire. The two covenant tablets were in my two hands. <sup>16</sup>It was then that I saw how you sinned against the LORD your God: you made yourselves a calf, an idol made of cast metal! You couldn't wait to turn from the path the LORD commanded you! <sup>17</sup>I grabbed the two tablets and threw them down with my own hands, shattering them while you watched. <sup>18</sup>Then I fell before the LORD as I had done the previous forty days and forty nights. I ate no bread and drank no water, all because of the sin that you had committed by doing such evil in the LORD's sight, infuriating him. <sup>19</sup>I was afraid of the massive anger and rage the LORD had for you—he was going to wipe you out! However, the LORD listened to me again in that moment.

<sup>20</sup>But the LORD was furious with Aaron—he was going to wipe him out! So I also prayed hard for Aaron at that time. <sup>21</sup>And as for that sinful thing you made, that calf, I took it and I burned it with fire. Then I smashed it, grinding it thoroughly until it was as fine as dust. Then I dumped the dust into the stream that ran down the mountain.

<sup>22</sup>Also at Taberah, again at Massah, and then again at Kibroth-hattaavah, you have been the kind of people who make the LORD angry. <sup>23</sup>And then, when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, telling you: "Go up and take possession of the land that I'm giving you," you disobeyed the LORD your God's command. You didn't trust him. You didn't obey God's voice.

<sup>24</sup>You've been rebellious toward the LORD from the day I<sup>b</sup> met you.

<sup>b</sup>LXX, Sam he (God) met you

particular focus. The covenant is broken, but because of Moses' actions it could be remade.

9:8 *Even at Horeb*: The rebellion was not only serious but also took place at the very location where Israel heard God speak the Ten Commandments!

9:9 *no bread... no water*: Moses' act of fasting is a form of self-discipline.

9:10 *God's finger*: See Exodus 31:18. In Deuteronomy 5 the special place of the Ten Commandments is expressed by the fact that only they were spoken by God directly to the people. In this verse their special status is shown in that they are written by God's own finger.

9:12 *your people... you brought out*: God withdraws from Israel. The Bible usually calls the Israelites God's people and says that God brought them out of Egypt. Now God makes them Moses' responsibility. *from the path*: the Ten Commandments.

9:13 *stubborn people*: See note on Deuteronomy 9:6.

9:14 *erase their name*: Israel was meant to erase the name of the Canaanites (Deut 7:24). God threatens to do that to Israel itself.

9:16 *calf*: Worship of a calf has a long history in the ancient region where Israel emerged (see 1 Kgs 12). The calf was probably a symbol of agricultural fertility and strength.

9:17 *shattering them*: The breaking of a (stone) document symbolizes the breaking of the legal agreement. Both the covenant and the committed relationship are broken!

9:18 *forty days and forty nights*: In Deuteronomy Moses seems to spend another 40 days on the mountain before destroying the gold calf. This isn't found in Exodus. In Deuteronomy the periods of 40 days and nights give a structure to the story (see Deut 9:9, 18, 25; 10:10).

9:20 *Aaron*: Moses' intercession for Aaron is not mentioned in Exodus 32. This appears to be part of a concern with the priesthood, which is also found in Deuteronomy 10:6-9.

9:21 The description of the destruction of the gold calf is slightly different from what is found in Exodus 32:20. A number of these differences make the destruction more like the destruction of worship objects in the books of Kings. *dust into the stream*: In Exodus 32:20 the people are made to drink the water. In Deuteronomy food and drink are always seen as good. Any problems lie in the people's response, rather than with what they consume.

9:22 *Taberah*: See Numbers 11:1-3. *Massah*: See Exodus 17:1-7; Deuteronomy 6:16. *Kibroth-hattaavah*: See Numbers 11:4-34. On each occasion Moses successfully intercedes for the people.

9:23 *Kadesh-barnea*: See Deuteronomy 1:19-46.

9:9 Ex 24:12;  
Ex 24:18;  
Ex 34:28;  
Dt 9:18

9:10 Ex 31:18;  
Dt 4:10; Dt 10:4;  
Dt 18:16

9:11 Dt 9:9

9:12 Ex 32:7;  
Ex 32:8; Jgs 2:17

9:20 Gn 20:7;  
Ex 4:14;

Ex 28:12;  
Ex 28:29;  
Ex 28:30

9:25 Dt 9:18

9:28 Ex 32:12;  
Nm 14:16;  
Dt 32:279:29 Dt 4:20,  
Dt 4:34, Dt 32:9;  
JG 8:51;  
Neh 1:1010:6 Nm 20:28,  
Nm 33:30,  
Nm 33:3810:10 Dt 9:18,  
Dt 9:1910:12 Dt 6:5,  
Dt 6:13; Mt 6:8;  
Mt 22:37

10:13 Dt 6:24

**Moses' intercessory prayer**

<sup>25</sup>But I fell on my knees in the LORD's presence forty days and forty nights, lying flat out, because the LORD planned on wiping you out. <sup>26</sup>But I prayed to the LORD! I said: LORD, my Lord! Don't destroy your people, your own possession, whom you saved by your own power, whom you brought out of Egypt with a strong hand! <sup>27</sup>Remember your servants: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Don't focus on this people's stubbornness, wickedness, and sin. <sup>28</sup>Otherwise, that land out of which you brought us will say: The LORD wasn't strong enough to bring them into the land he'd promised them. Because he didn't care for them in the least, he brought them out to die in the desert. <sup>29</sup>But these are your people! Your own possession! The people you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm!

**New tablets**

**10** At that time the LORD told me: Carve two stone tablets, just like the first ones, and hike up the mountain to me. Construct a wooden chest as well. <sup>21</sup>I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets—the ones you smashed—then you will place them in the chest.

<sup>3</sup>So I built a chest out of acacia wood and carved two stone tablets just like the first ones. Then I hiked up the mountain holding the two tablets in my hands. <sup>4</sup>God wrote on the new tablets what had been written on the first set: the Ten Commandments that the LORD spoke to you on the mountain, from the very fire itself, on the day we assembled there. Then the LORD gave them to me.

<sup>5</sup>So I came back down the mountain. I put the tablets in the chest that I'd made, and that's where they are now, exactly as the LORD commanded me.

(<sup>6</sup>Now, the Israelites had set out from Beeroth-bene-jaakan<sup>1</sup> to Moserah. It was there that Aaron died and was buried. His son Eleazar succeeded him in the priestly role. <sup>7</sup>From there the Israelites traveled to Gudgodah, then from Gudgodah to Jobbathah, which is a land with flowing streams. <sup>8</sup>At that time, the LORD selected the tribe of Levi to carry the chest containing the LORD's covenant, to minister before the LORD, to serve him, and to offer blessings in his name. That's the way things are right now. <sup>9</sup>That's why the Levites don't have a stake or inheritance with the rest of their relatives. The LORD is the Levites' inheritance, just as the LORD your God promised them.)

<sup>10</sup>Just as the first time, I remained on the mountain forty days and nights. And the LORD listened to me again in this instance. The LORD wasn't willing to destroy you. <sup>11</sup>Then the LORD told me: Get going. Lead the people so they can enter and take possession of the land that I promised I'd give to their ancestors.

**What the Lord requires**

<sup>12</sup>Now in light of all that, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you? Only this: to revere the LORD your God by walking in all his ways, by loving him, by serving the LORD your God with all your heart and being, <sup>13</sup>and by keeping the LORD's commandments and his regulations that I'm commanding you right now. It's for your own good!

<sup>1</sup>Or from the wells of the Jaakanites

9:25-29 This intercession is very similar to the first intercession in Exodus 32:7-14. In Exodus, however, Moses prayed before he went down from the mountain the first time. In both cases, Moses appeals to God's earlier promises, the righteousness of the ancestors, and God's own honor.

9:26 Despite God's words in Deuteronomy 9:12, Moses insists that the Israelites are God's people.

10:1 *wooden chest*: In Deuteronomy the wooden chest houses the Ten Commandments. It's often known as the "chest containing the LORD's covenant" (Deut 10:8; 31:9, 25).

10:6-9 These verses are an insertion into the story of the gold calf. They have an interest in tasks of the priests and Levites. This concern is already found in Deuteronomy 9:20.

10:6 *Beeroth-bene-jaakan to Moserah*: These locations are mentioned in Numbers 33:31. In Numbers 20 the place of Aaron's death is said to be Mount Hor.

10:7 *Gudgodah...Jobbathah*: For these locations, see Numbers 33:32.

10:8 The tasks listed here include levitical and priestly roles.

10:9 *The LORD is the Levites' inheritance*: The Levites received a tenth of Israelite crops, the tithes. The priests received parts of the sacrifices offered by the Israelites. For details, see Numbers 18.

10:10 *to destroy you*: The story of the gold calf ends with the important fact that God chose not to destroy Israel for her sin. The story shows that Israel was stubborn, but also that the Lord was faithful to the promise to the ancestors.

10:12-11:32 In Deuteronomy 12 God's instructions for Israel will be given in detail. Moses' strong encouragement in Deuteronomy 5-11 is brought to a conclusion with a lengthy sermon. Israel is urged again and again to love God and follow the commandments. Various reasons are given, including God's actions in Israel's history and the promises concerning the land.

10:12 *Now in light of all that*: The story about the gold calf leads into the encouragement to keep the instruction.

<sup>14</sup>Clearly, the LORD owns the sky, the highest heavens, the earth, and everything in it. <sup>15</sup>But the LORD adored your ancestors, loving them and choosing the descendants that followed them—you!—from all other people. That's how things still stand now. <sup>16</sup>So circumcise your hearts<sup>m</sup> and stop being so stubborn, <sup>17</sup>because the LORD your God is the God of all gods and Lord of all lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God who doesn't play favorites and doesn't take bribes. <sup>18</sup>He enacts justice for orphans and widows, and he loves immigrants, giving them food and clothing. <sup>19</sup>That means you must also love immigrants because you were immigrants in Egypt. <sup>20</sup>Revere the LORD your God, serve him, cling to him, swear by his name alone! <sup>21</sup>He is your praise, and he is your God—the one who performed these great and awesome acts that you witnessed with your very own eyes. <sup>22</sup>Your ancestors went down to Egypt with a total of seventy people, but now look! The LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the nighttime sky!

**11** So love the LORD your God and follow his instruction, his regulations, his case laws, and his commandments always. <sup>2</sup>And know right now what your children haven't known or yet witnessed.<sup>n</sup>

The LORD your God's discipline, his power, his mighty hand and outstretched arm;

<sup>3</sup>the signs and the acts that he performed in the heart of Egyptian territory, against Egypt's King Pharaoh and all his land;

<sup>4</sup>what God did to the Egyptian army, to its horses and chariots—how he made the water of the Reed Sea<sup>o</sup> flow over their heads when they chased after you, but the LORD destroyed them, and that's how things stand right now;

<sup>5</sup>what the Lord did for you in the desert, until you arrived at this place;

<sup>6</sup>and what he did to Dathan and Abiram, the descendants of Eliab the Reubenite, when the ground opened up its mouth and swallowed them, their families, their tents, and every living thing they possessed in the presence of all Israel.

<sup>7</sup>Your own eyes witnessed each of these powerful acts the LORD performed. <sup>8</sup>So keep every part of the commandment that I am giving you today so that you stay strong to enter and take possession of the land that you are crossing over to possess, <sup>9</sup>and so that you might prolong your life on the fertile land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give to them and their descendants—a land full of milk and honey.

<sup>10</sup>The land you are about to enter and possess is definitely not like the land of Egypt, where you came from, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it by hand<sup>p</sup> like a vegetable

10:14 Ex 19:5;  
1Ki 8:27;  
Neh 9:6; Ps 24:1;  
Ps 115:16

10:15 Dt 4:37;  
Dt 7:7; Dt 7:8;  
Ro 11:28

10:16 Lv 26:41;  
Dt 9:6; Dt 30:6;  
Jer 4:4; Ro 2:29

10:17 Dt 7:21;  
Josh 22:22;  
2Ch 19:7;  
Ps 136:2;  
Dn 2:47

10:19 Ex 22:21;  
Ex 23:9;  
Lv 19:33;  
Lv 19:34

10:20 Dt 6:13;  
Dt 13:4

10:22 Gn 15:5;  
Gn 46:27; Ex 1:5;  
Dt 1:10; Ac 7:14

11:10 Dt 8:7;  
1Ki 21:2;  
Is 58:11;  
Zec 14:18

<sup>m</sup>Or the foreskin of your hearts; cf 30:6 <sup>n</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>o</sup>Or Red Sea <sup>p</sup>Or foot

Israel is advised to revere, to walk in God's ways, to love and serve God in every way. In short, Israel is told to obey the Instruction and take it to heart.

10:14-15 *the LORD owns*: God's choice of Israel isn't opposed to God's universal reign over all the parts of creation but depends upon it. Because everything in creation belongs to the Lord, God can choose Israel. The same idea is found in Deuteronomy 7:6-8.

10:16 *circumcise your hearts*: This vivid metaphor means that the Israelites must be devoted to the Lord in a committed relationship. Here the Israelites are asked to remove any obstacle from being devoted to God. After the people fail and are punished with exile, Deuteronomy 30:6 foresees a day when God will need to circumcise the people's hearts, because they can't do it themselves.

10:17-18 God is portrayed not only as a king, but as a just king. God isn't partial by taking bribes from the rich and powerful. Instead, God is known as one who acts for the poor and outsiders. Providing for the poor and weak was one of the ways that the ideal king was pictured in the ancient world.

10:19 *you must also love*: The instructions of Deuteronomy have a special concern for the orphans, widows, and immigrants. Various commandments describe how they are to be cared for. This is an example of how Israel is required to imitate God's mercy and compassion.

10:20 See note on Deuteronomy 6:13.

10:21 *your very own eyes*: For the merging of generations, see note on Deuteronomy 6:22.

10:22 Two passages in Genesis are brought together. According to Genesis 46:27, Jacob's family numbered 70 people when they went down into Egypt. Now, many years later, they fulfill the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that they would become more numerous than the stars (Gen 22:17; 26:4).

11:2 *Lord your God's discipline*: Israel's history with God (Deut 11:2-6) is seen as a story of discipline. The people have been trained to obey and follow God.

11:6 *Dathan and Abiram*: The story of Dathan and Abiram is found in Numbers 16, which also speaks of a rebellion by Korah.

11:7 *Your own eyes*: For the merging of generations, see note on Deuteronomy 6:22.

11:9 *land full*: See note on Deuteronomy 6:3.

11:10-12 Egypt gets very little rain, and its agriculture depends upon water from the Nile River. As a result, much work is required in taking the water to the fields. By contrast, Israel's agriculture was based on water from rain. The land was terraced so that the rainwater would run down the hills and onto the terraces. Vegetables that needed more water were rarely grown. They were found only in vegetable gardens, which needed to be watered regularly.

11:11 Dt 8:7

11:14 Lv 26:4;  
Dt 28:12;  
Jer 5:24; Jl 2:23;  
Jas 5:711:26 Dt 30:1,  
Dt 30:15,  
Dt 30:1911:27 Dt 28:11;  
Lk 11:28

garden. <sup>11</sup>No, the land you are entering to possess is a land of hills and valleys, where your drinking water will be rain from heaven. <sup>12</sup>It's a land that the LORD cares for: the LORD's eyes are on it constantly from the first of the year until the very end of the year.

<sup>13</sup>Now, if you completely obey God's<sup>a</sup> commandments that I am giving you right now, by loving the LORD your God and by serving him with all your heart and all your being, <sup>14</sup>then he<sup>f</sup> will provide rain for your land at the right time—early rain and late rain—so you can stock up your grain, wine, and oil. <sup>15</sup>He<sup>g</sup> will also make your fields lush for your livestock, and you will eat and be satisfied. <sup>16</sup>But watch yourselves! Otherwise, your heart might be led astray so you stray away, serving other gods and worshipping them. <sup>17</sup>Then the LORD's anger would burn against you. He will close the sky up tight. There won't be any rain, and the ground won't yield any of its crops. You will quickly disappear off the wonderful land the LORD is giving to you.

<sup>18</sup>Place these words I'm speaking on your heart and in your very being. Tie them on your hand as a sign. They should be on your forehead as a symbol.<sup>h</sup> <sup>19</sup>Teach them to your children, by talking about them when you are sitting around your house and when you are out and about, when you are lying down and when you are getting up. <sup>20</sup>Write them on your house's doorframes and on your city's gates. <sup>21</sup>Do all that so your days and your children's days on the fertile land the LORD swore to give to your ancestors are many—indeed, as many as the number of days that the sky's been over the earth!

<sup>22</sup>It's true: if you carefully keep all this commandment that I'm giving you, by doing it, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in all his ways, and by clinging to him, <sup>23</sup>then the LORD will clear out all these nations before you. You will inherit what belonged to nations that are larger and stronger than you are. <sup>24</sup>Every place you set foot on will be yours: your territory will run from the wilderness all the way to the Lebanon range, and from the Euphrates River all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. <sup>25</sup>No one will be able to stand up to you. Just as he promised, the LORD your God will make the entire land deathly afraid of you wherever you advance in it.

### Ceremony on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal

<sup>26</sup>Pay attention! I am setting blessing and curse before you right now: <sup>27</sup>the blessing if you obey the LORD your God's commandments that I am giving you right now, <sup>28</sup>but the curse if you don't obey the LORD your God's commandments and stray from the path that I am giving you today by following other gods that you have not known. <sup>29</sup>Now when the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of, put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. (<sup>30</sup>Aren't both of these mountains across the Jordan River, down along the western road in the region of the Canaanites who live in the desert plain, across from Gilgal, next to the Moreh Oak Grove?)

<sup>a</sup>LXX *his*; MT *my* <sup>f</sup>Sam, LXX, DSS (8QM2); Heb, Vulg, Syr, Tg, and several DSS *I*, in which case the text shifts to direct divine discourse. <sup>g</sup>Sam, LXX, two DSS; Heb, four DSS, Syr, Tg *I*, in which case the text shifts to direct divine discourse. <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain; cf Exod 13:16; Syr *sign or mark*; Tg *phylacteries*

This rain-based agriculture meant that Israel's life was in some ways easier, but also more dependent upon regular rain. This rain was in God's control, and the land needed God's constant care (11:12).

11:13-17 Israel's dependence upon the rain made it vulnerable to irregular weather. In Deuteronomy the failure of the rain to come, or to come in the right amount, is attributed to God's anger at disobedience.

11:14 *early rain and late rain*: The rainy season lasts from about the end of October to the beginning of April. The early and late rains are the crucial rains at the beginning and end of the season. If the rain came late or finished early, the growing season was reduced, with devastating results for the harvest.

11:17 *There won't be any rain*: The idea of drought as divine punishment is found in Deuteronomy 28:32-33 and probably also in the story of Ahab and Elijah (1 Kgs 17).

11:18-21 The idea of binding words on hands and foreheads is taken up from Deuteronomy 6:6-9. Since *these*

*words* refers to the instructions more generally, which are taught to the children, it's likely that the words should be taken to heart, rather than literally written. They should affect intentions and desires. See sidebar, "The Shema" at Deuteronomy 6.

11:24 The land that Israel is given is generously described. Israel rarely, if ever, possessed land as far as the Euphrates River.

11:26 *blessing and curse*: This theme will occur again in Deuteronomy 27. These chapters about blessings and curses make a clear border around the instructions in Deuteronomy 12-26.

11:29 *Mount Gerizim... Mount Ebal*: These two hills are found near Shechem in the middle of Israel. The covenant ceremony in which the blessings and curses are said by the Israelites is described in more detail in Deuteronomy 27.

11:30 *Moreh Oak Grove*: the first place that Abram stopped in the land of Canaan and received a promise from God (Gen 12:6).



<sup>31</sup>So then, once you cross the Jordan River to enter and possess the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you take possession of it, settling down in it, <sup>32</sup>you must carefully follow the regulations and the case laws that I am laying out before you right now.

### Regulations and the case laws:

#### Worship at the location the Lord selects

**12** These are the regulations and the case laws that you must carefully keep in the fertile land the LORD, your ancestors' God, has given to you to possess for as long as you live on that land:

<sup>2</sup>You must completely destroy every place where the nations that you are displacing worshipped their gods—whether on high mountains or hills or under leafy green trees. <sup>3</sup>Rip down their altars and shatter their sacred stones. Burn their sacred poles<sup>a</sup> with fire. Hack their gods' idols into pieces. Wipe out their names from that place.

<sup>4</sup>Don't act like they did toward the LORD your God!

<sup>5</sup>Instead, you must search for the location the LORD your God will select from all your tribes to put his name there, as his residence, and you must go there. <sup>6</sup>You must bring your

12:1 Dt 6:1;  
1Ki 8:40;  
12:2 1Ki 14:23;  
2Ki 16:4;  
2Ki 17:10;  
Jer 3:6  
12:3 Ex 23:13;  
Zec 13:2  
12:4 Dt 12:30;  
Dt 12:31  
12:5 Dt 12:11;  
Dt 16:2; Dt 26:2;  
2Ch 7:12;  
Ps 78:68  
12:6 Dt 14:22

*Deuteronomy and the Covenant Code (Exodus 21–23)* The teachings in the book of Deuteronomy have a number of noticeable similarities with the so-called Covenant Code (Exodus 20:22–23:19). Both begin with an instruction about the sanctuary (Exod 20:22–26 // Deut 12:1–28) and include laws on slavery (Exod 21:1–11 // Deut 15:12–18) and the festivals (Exod 23:10–19 // Deut 16:1–15).

The Covenant Code is usually understood to be an earlier body of instruction than that found in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy can be seen as a revision of the Covenant Code. The decisive difference between the two codes is in their ideas about sanctuaries. According to Exodus 20:22–26, the Israelites may worship the Lord in any place where the Lord is revealed. But for Deuteronomy there is only one place that the Lord has chosen for the divine name. This insistence on only one chosen sanctuary results in changes to many teachings. These changes include practical issues such as how to make sacrifices and eat meat (Deut 12:1–31); where to celebrate festivals (Deut 16:1–8); and how to make gifts of money to God (Deut 14:22–27).

The idea of a single sanctuary is the most important revision of the instruction, but there are others. Deuteronomy more often provides motivations for obeying the commandments. Appeals are made to Israel's history as well as self-interest. Some of the teachings have a humanitarian concern, especially instruction that commands the Israelites to be generous to the poor and marginalized.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah

12:1–14:21 The case laws in Deuteronomy begin with the most important instructions: those that concern the unity and purity of Israel's worship. Deuteronomy 5–11 has insisted that God must be loved and that no other gods may be followed. Now these instructions describe what this exclusive love looks like in practical terms.

12:1–28 This chapter requires Israel to worship the Lord only at the place God has chosen. The focus in the text is that Israel's worship must be conducted according to God's requirements. The emphasis is on God's choosing a place, rather than there being just one place. The repetitiveness and length of this chapter show how important this idea is in Deuteronomy. The chosen place is never named. In Samaritan theology it was understood to be Mount Gerizim; and in Judaism, Jerusalem. Israel's history shows that this commandment was rarely followed. The books of Kings often complains about worship at other shrines. Only in the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah is worship restricted to the chosen place of Jerusalem.

12:1 *These are the regulations and the case laws*: a subtitle for the instructions in Deuteronomy 12–26 (see Deut 4:45), *has given*: The taking of the land is seen as a past event. Though Deuteronomy 5–11 encourages the people from the perspective of life outside the land, the instructions in

Deuteronomy 12–26 concern life in the land. This verse marks this change in perspective.

12:2 *high mountains . . . leafy green trees*: The places to be destroyed aren't temple buildings, but altars placed at significant points in the natural environment. Mountains were probably chosen because they were near to heaven. A tree marks a place of special fruitfulness.

12:3 *sacred stones . . . sacred poles*: See note on Deuteronomy 7:5. *Wipe out their names*: The names of other gods aren't to be present in the land. Only the Lord's name is to be there at the chosen place. The name of another god might signal that god's presence in the land or ownership of it.

12:5 *search*: the verb used for visiting a sanctuary in the OT. *location*: Nothing is said of a temple building. The only structure mentioned is an altar. Deuteronomy 12 is concerned with sacrifices for which an altar is necessary. *will select*: The choice of the place for worship is the Lord's.

12:6 The regulation insists that all sacrifices and donations are to be brought to the chosen place. *entirely burned offerings*: The entire animal was burned in the fire. *sacrifices*: a general term for offerings. *tenth-part gifts*: A tenth of the harvest was put to one side and eaten by the people in God's chosen place. Precise instructions are given in

12:7 Lv 23:40;

Dt 14:26

12:8 Jgs 17:6;

Jgs 21:25

12:9 Dt 3:20;

Dt 4:21;

1Ki 8:56;

Ps 95:11

12:10 Dt 11:31

12:11 Dt 12:5

12:12 Dt 10:9;

Dt 12:7;

Dt 12:19;

Dt 16:11

12:13 Dt 12:5

12:14 Dt 12:5;

Dt 12:11

12:15 Dt 12:22;

Dt 14:5;

Dt 15:22

12:16 Gn 9:4;

Lv 3:17; Lv 7:26;

Dt 15:23;

Ac 15:20

12:17 Lv 27:30;

Dt 12:6;

Dt 12:11;

Dt 12:26;

Dt 14:22

entirely burned offerings, your sacrifices, your tenth-part gifts, your contributions,<sup>▼</sup> your payments for solemn promises, your spontaneous gifts, and the oldest offspring of your herds and flocks to that place. <sup>7</sup>You will have a feast there, each of you and your families, in the LORD your God's presence, and you will celebrate all you have done because the LORD your God has blessed you. <sup>8</sup>Don't act like we've been acting here lately—everyone doing what seems right to them—<sup>9</sup>because up to this point you haven't yet reached the place of rest or the inheritance the LORD your God is giving you. <sup>10</sup>But you are about to cross the Jordan River and will settle in the land the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance. Then he will give you rest from all your enemies on every side so that you live safely and securely. <sup>11</sup>At that point, you must bring all that I am commanding you, your entirely burned offerings, your sacrifices, your tenth-part gifts, your contributions, and all your best payments that you solemnly promised to the LORD, to the location the LORD your God selects for his name to reside. <sup>12</sup>Then you will rejoice in the LORD your God's presence: each of you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites who dwell in your cities because they have no designated inheritance.

<sup>13</sup>But watch yourself! Make sure you don't offer up your entirely burned offerings in just any place you see. <sup>14</sup>No, only at the location the LORD selects from one of your tribal areas—that's where you must offer up your entirely burned offerings and that's where you must perform everything I'm telling you. <sup>15</sup>However, whenever you wish, you may slaughter and eat meat, as the LORD your God sees fit to bless you with such in your cities. People who are polluted and people who are purified can join in the feast, as they would if they were eating gazelle or deer. <sup>16</sup>But you must not consume any of the animals' blood. Pour it out on the ground, just like water.

<sup>17</sup>Within your cities you are not allowed to eat any of the following: your tenth-part gifts

<sup>▼</sup>Or the contribution of your hands; also in 12:11, 17

Deuteronomy 14:22-29. *contributions*: the contribution from the offering given to the priest (see Lev 7:28-36). *your payments for solemn promises*: offerings that were promised in a solemn promise. Further instructions about solemn promises are given in Deuteronomy 23:21-23. *your spontaneous gifts*: additional offerings to the Lord that weren't part of a solemn promise. See Deuteronomy 16:10; 23:23. *oldest offspring*: The first male animal was to be dedicated to the Lord and consumed by the Israelite landholder and his family. For further details, see Deuteronomy 15:19-23.

12:7 *feast*: Most of the sacrificed animals were eaten by the family bringing them, with a portion going to the serving priest. Only in rare cases was the entire animal burned completely on the altar. *celebrate*: The heart of worship in Deuteronomy is celebration before the Lord concerning the good land God has given. The animals and the harvest are the clearest sign of the Lord's goodness in giving the land. *all you have done*: the hard work of farming and the food that results.

12:8 *Don't act . . . lately*: refers to the time in the wilderness, when the people hadn't reached the land of Canaan (Deut 12:9), though it would also be true of other periods in Israel's history. The expression *everyone doing what seems right to them* appears also in the book of Judges to describe the social chaos in the time before Saul and David were kings (cf. Judg 17:6; 21:25).

12:9 *place of rest*: the land where the wanderings of the Israelites will end. The idea of rest includes peace and security from enemies.

12:10 *inheritance*: In Deuteronomy the land is Israel's possession that the people receive because of the promises to their ancestors. Leviticus prefers to speak about the land as God's possession. There, the Israelites are tenants who may be expelled if they disobey.

12:12 Deuteronomy shows particular concern for the poor and marginalized. Here Moses instructs the people to include their servants in the feasting. Similarly, in the sabbath commandment the servants are included in the day of rest (Deut 5:14-15). Moses provides a number of measures to protect the *Levites*. In Deuteronomy they are presented as a marginalized group without any land.

12:13-14 The instruction about sacrifice has a number of similarities with Exodus 20:24. The meaning is, however, quite different. In Exodus, sacrifice may be given in various places where God's self is made known, but in Deuteronomy, only one place is in view.

12:15 Deuteronomy's insistence that sacrifices can take place only at the chosen place raises questions about eating meat. This verse assumes that, if meat were to be eaten, the usual practice was to sacrifice it. But with only one chosen place, this becomes impractical. Those who lived at a distance from the chosen place would hardly ever get to eat meat. The solution offered in this verse is that the people may eat meat whenever they wish. They can slaughter a domestic animal—a sheep, a cow, or a goat—whenever they desire. They would treat it like they would an animal that had been hunted, such as a gazelle or a deer. These animals weren't sacrificed. When they were caught by a hunter, they were simply killed and eaten without religious ceremony. *polluted and . . . purified*: Anyone taking part in a sacrifice had to be ritually pure. Since the slaughter of animals away from the chosen place wasn't sacrifice, these rules didn't apply.

12:16 Slaughter without sacrifice is permitted, but the *blood*, as the means of the animal's life, must be disposed of properly. It is returned to the *ground* from where, perhaps, it was believed to have come.

12:17 Permission to slaughter and eat animals in other places doesn't do away with the requirement to bring the

of grain, wine, and oil; the oldest offspring of your herds and flocks; any of the payments you have solemnly promised; your spontaneous gifts or your contributions. <sup>18</sup>Only in the presence of the LORD your God, at the location the LORD your God selects, can you eat these things—that holds true for you, your son and daughter, your male and female servant, and the Levite who lives in your city. Then celebrate all you have done in the LORD your God's presence. <sup>19</sup>But watch yourself: as long as you are on the land, don't forget about the Levites.

<sup>20</sup>Once the LORD your God has enlarged your territory, as he promised you, and you think to yourself, I'd like to eat some meat (because you have the desire to do so), feel free to do so whenever you want. <sup>21</sup>But if the location that the LORD your God will choose to put his name is far away from where you live, then slaughter an animal from your herd or flock that the LORD has given you, just as I have commanded you, and eat it in your cities whenever you wish. <sup>22</sup>But be sure to eat it as if it were gazelle or deer. People who are polluted and people who are purified can feast on it together.

<sup>23</sup>Furthermore, make sure that you don't consume any of the blood, because blood is life. You must not consume the life along with the meat. <sup>24</sup>You must not consume any of it. Pour it out on the ground, just like water. <sup>25</sup>You must not consume any of it so that things go well for you and for your children later because you did what was right in the LORD's eyes.

<sup>26</sup>Note that you must bring your sacred offerings and your payments for solemn promises to the location the LORD selects, <sup>27</sup>offering up your entirely burned sacrifices—both meat and blood—on the LORD your God's altar. The blood from your sacrifices must be poured out on the LORD your God's altar, but you are allowed to eat the meat. <sup>28</sup>Observe and obey all these words that I am commanding you so that things always go well for you and your children later because you did what was good and right in the LORD your God's eyes.

<sup>29</sup>Once the LORD your God has removed from before you all the nations that you are entering and taking possession of, and you have displaced them and are living in their land, <sup>30</sup>then watch yourself! Don't be trapped by following their practices after they've been wiped out before you. Don't go investigating their gods, thinking, How did these nations worship their gods? I want to do the very same thing!

<sup>31</sup>Don't act like they did toward the LORD your God because they did things for their gods that are detestable to the LORD, which he hates. They even burned their own sons and daughters with fire for their gods!

<sup>32</sup>Everything I'm commanding you, you must do it with utmost care! Don't add anything to it or take anything away from it.

### False prophets and false gods

**13** <sup>1</sup>Now if a prophet or a dream interpreter appears among you and performs a sign or wonder for you, <sup>2</sup>and the sign or wonder that was spoken actually occurs; if he says:

<sup>1</sup>13:1 in Heb <sup>2</sup>13:2 in Heb

tenth-part gifts, the oldest offspring, and other offerings to the chosen place.

12:19 On concern for the Levite, see Deuteronomy 12:12. 12:20-21 Additional conditions are given for slaughtering and eating outside the chosen place. Moses has in view the expansion of Israelite land so that the chosen place is far away. Deuteronomy 12:13-19 suggests anyone can avoid the trip to the temple if they want to eat meat. These verses imply that this wasn't the case for those within easy reach of the chosen place.

12:27 The blood from the sacrifice was traditionally placed on the altar or poured out at its base.

12:28 The instructions about the chosen place end with an appeal to obey. The people will benefit if they obey: All will go well for them and their children. A similar appeal is found in Deuteronomy 12:25.

12:29-13:18 In Deuteronomy 12:1-28 the Israelites are given instructions about how they are to worship. The following section tells them how to avoid disobeying.

12:29-30 These verses return to the theme of Deuteronomy 12:2-4. The nations that lived in the land of Canaan

worshipped their own gods in ways that weren't permitted to the Israelites.

12:31 *detestable*: See note on Deuteronomy 7:25. The link between this word and Canaanite practices is very clear in this verse. *burned... with fire*: The Canaanites are accused of child sacrifice. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel claim that this was practiced by some of the people of Judah toward the end of the monarchy (Jer 7:31; Ezek 20:26).

12:32 *Don't add... take anything away*: A similar statement appears in Deuteronomy 4:2. Words such as these are common in laws from the ancient Near East. In this verse it particularly concerns the laws about other gods (Deut 13:1-18). They weren't originally meant to protect the text of Deuteronomy. However, they were later understood to apply to the whole of Deuteronomy.

13:1-5 Deuteronomy 13 imagines three cases of religious temptation: the false prophet (13:1-5); a relative (Deut 13:6-11); and a whole city (Deut 13:12-18) following other gods. In each case the people must root out and destroy the threat to the true worship of the Lord. The approach is

12:18 Dt 12:7,

Dt 12:12

12:19 Dt 12:12,

Dt 14:27

12:20 Ex 34:24;

Dt 11:24,

Dt 19:8

12:21 Dt 12:5,

Dt 14:24

12:22 Dt 12:15

12:23 Gn 9:4;

Lv 3:17, Lv 17:11;

Dt 12:16

12:24 Dt 12:16

12:25 Lv 15:26;

Dt 4:40, Dt 6:18,

Dt 12:28;

1Ki 11:38

12:26 Nm 5:9,

Nm 18:19;

Dt 12:6;

Dt 12:11,

Dt 12:17

12:30 Ex 23:33;

Lv 18:3, Dt 7:16;

Dt 13:6, Igs 2:2

12:31 Lv 18:21;

2Ki 3:27;

Jer 7:31

12:32 Dt 4:2;

Prv 30:6;

Rev 22:18,

Rev 22:19

13:1 Jer 23:25;

Jer 27:9, Jer 29:8;

Zec 10:2

13:2 Dt 13:13,

Dt 18:22

13:3 Dt 6:5,  
Dt 8:2;  
1Co 11:19

13:4 Dt 6:13,  
Dt 10:20;  
2Ki 23:3;  
2Ch 34:31

13:5 Dt 17:7;  
Dt 19:19,  
Dt 22:21,  
Dt 24:7;  
1Co 5:13

13:6 Dt 17:2

13:7 Dt 6:14

13:8 Dt 7:2,  
Dt 7:16,  
Dt 19:13;  
Prv 1:10

13:9 Dt 17:7;  
Ac 7:58

13:10 Lv 20:2,  
Lv 24:14;  
Dt 17:5;  
Josh 7:25

13:13 Dt 13:2;  
Jgs 19:22;  
1Sa 2:12,  
1Sa 25:17;  
1Ki 21:10

13:14 Dt 17:4

13:15 Ex 22:20;  
Dt 7:2

"Come on! We should follow other gods"—ones you haven't experienced—"and we should worship them,"<sup>3</sup> you must not listen to that prophet's or dream interpreter's words, because the LORD your God is testing you to see if you love the LORD your God with all your mind and all your being.<sup>4</sup> You must follow the LORD your God alone! Reverse him! Follow his commandments! Obey his voice! Worship him! Cling to him—no other! <sup>5</sup>That prophet or dream interpreter must be executed because he encouraged you to turn away from the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, who redeemed you from the house of slavery; they tried to lead you away from the path the LORD your God commanded you to take. Remove<sup>7</sup> such evil from your community!

<sup>6</sup>Similarly, if one of your relatives—even one of your own siblings—or your own son or daughter or your dear spouse or best friend entices you secretly, if someone like that says: "Come on! We should follow and worship other gods"—ones that neither you nor your ancestors have experienced, <sup>7</sup>gods from all the neighboring peoples, whether nearby or far away, from one end of the earth to the other—<sup>8</sup>don't give in to them! Don't obey them! Don't have any mercy on them! Don't have compassion on them and don't protect them! <sup>9</sup>Instead, you must execute them. Your own hand must be against them from the beginning of the execution; the hand of all the people will be involved at the end. <sup>10</sup>Stone them until they are dead because they desired to lead you away from the LORD your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <sup>11</sup>All Israel will hear about this and be afraid. They won't do that sort of evil thing among you again.

<sup>12</sup>Or if you hear about one of your towns the LORD your God is giving you to inhabit, that <sup>13</sup>certain wicked people have gone out from your community and they've led the citizens of their town astray by saying: "Come on! We should follow and worship other gods"—ones you haven't experienced before; <sup>14</sup>at that point you must look into this situation very carefully to see if it's true. And if it's definitely true that this detestable thing was done in your community, <sup>15</sup>you must completely strike down the inhabitants of that city with the sword. Place

<sup>7</sup>Or burn

similar to the treatment described in ancient treaties for dealing with rebellion.

13:1-2 *prophet or a dream interpreter*: In the ancient Near East, the gods were believed to speak in various ways. A number of these are condemned in Deuteronomy 18:14-22. However, dreams and prophecy were ways in which the Lord did speak. A *sign* is something performed to confirm the prophet. A *wonder* is a miraculous deed. According to Deuteronomy 18:21-22, if a prophet's word was fulfilled, this was believed to be a sign that the prophet was genuine. In Deuteronomy 13 it's recognized that a prophet's word might be fulfilled, and the prophet might still be false. See also 1 Kings 13.

13:3 *testing you*: If a prophet performs a wonder and tempts the people to follow another god, the only explanation must be that the Lord is testing the people. *love... all your mind and all your being*: See Deuteronomy 6:5.

13:4 This verse repeats many of the encouragements from Deuteronomy 6:10-19, but in a more emphatic fashion. *follow the LORD your God alone*: Only here in Deuteronomy are the people commanded to follow the Lord. The book often speaks of following other gods. This verse creates a strong contrast between following the Lord and following other gods.

13:5 *Remove such evil*: The prophet or dream interpreter is condemned in the strongest terms. This expression is used in Deut 17:7, 12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21, 22, 24; 24:6. Elsewhere it's used in connection with the death penalty (cf. *must be executed* here). The danger is to be removed through the killing of the prophet or dream interpreter.

13:6 The words are addressed to the head of the house. This person must act even if the guilty party is a sibling,

*secretly*: The enticing doesn't go beyond the family. *your ancestors have experienced*: in contrast to the Lord's actions for Israel's ancestors described in Deuteronomy 4:31, 37.

13:7 *gods*: The perspective includes not only the Canaanite gods mentioned in Deuteronomy 12:29-30, but any gods.

13:8 They are to be treated in the same way as the Canaanites (see Deut 7:1-5).

13:9 *Your own hand*: The instruction places loyalty to the Lord above even family loyalty. In Deuteronomy's instructions about trials, the witnesses must be first in punishing (Deut 17:7). *hand of all the people*: The entire community had to take part in removing the threat.

13:11 *Israel will hear*: The purpose of stoning wasn't merely to punish. The event is meant to have a profound impact on the people.

13:12-18 What to do when an entire town follows other gods.

13:13 *certain wicked people*: The verse assumes that a faithful town was subverted by a few rebellious persons within it. The threat of a few underlines the importance of the previous verses. The danger is to be stamped out as soon as it becomes apparent.

13:14 *look into this situation*: As was the case with the family members, a careful investigation is required. *detestable thing*: See notes on Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:31.

13:15 *under the ban*: For this expression, see sidebar, "The Ban" at Deuteronomy 7. The Israelite town is to be treated in the same manner as a Canaanite one. *animals to the sword*: The punishment goes beyond what was required for the Canaanite city in Deuteronomy 7. Even the animals

it and all that is in it under the ban.<sup>14</sup> Put its animals to the sword.<sup>16</sup> Gather all the plunder into the middle of the town's square. Then burn the city and all of its plunder as an entirely burned offering to the LORD your God. It must remain a heap of rubble forever. It must not be rebuilt.<sup>17</sup> Don't hold on to any of the banned items—this will ensure that the LORD turns from his great anger and is compassionate to you, showing you mercy and multiplying you just like he swore to your ancestors.<sup>18</sup> You must definitely obey the LORD your God's voice, keeping all his commandments that I am giving you right now, by doing what is right in the LORD your God's eyes!

### Complete devotion to the Lord

**14** You are the LORD's children. Don't cut yourselves and don't shave your foreheads for the dead,<sup>2</sup> because you are a people holy to the LORD your God. You are the ones whom the LORD selected to be his own, to be a treasured people out of all other people on earth.

### Dietary laws

<sup>3</sup>Don't eat any detestable thing.<sup>4</sup> Here's a list of animals you are allowed to eat: ox, sheep, goat,<sup>5</sup> deer, gazelle, roebuck, wild goat, ibex, antelope, and mountain sheep.<sup>6</sup> You are also allowed to eat any animal with a divided hoof—the hoof being divided into two parts—and that chews food among the various kinds of animals.<sup>7</sup> However, here's a list of animals that either chew food or have hooves divided in two parts that you are not allowed to eat:

the camel, the hare, and the rock badger—because these chew food but don't have divided hooves, they are off-limits for you;

\*See note at 2:34.

are to be killed. The threat of contamination requires that everything be destroyed.

13:16 *all the plunder*: Even the inanimate objects are to be destroyed. There are to be no exceptions. *entirely burned offering*: Only here in Deuteronomy do we find the ban being described with a sacrificial term. Perhaps the destruction is meant to purge the land. *It must not be rebuilt*: The same instruction is given for Jericho (Josh 6:26). The purpose is to make the ruin an example for future generations.

13:17 *hold on*: Similar instructions were given about Jericho, and were broken by Achan (Josh 7).

13:18 Insists emphatically that the instructions be kept. The instructions about the chosen place in Deuteronomy 12 end in a similar manner (Deut 12:28).

14:1-2 These two verses provide a bridge between the instructions about religious temptation in Deuteronomy 13 and the dietary instructions in Deuteronomy 14. Both teachings have in common the idea that Israel is a holy people. Holiness implies separation. This means complete devotion to the Lord (Deut 13) and not consuming those things that are impure.

14:1 *Lord's children*: For this idea, see note on Deuteronomy 1:31. The special relationship to the Lord means that Israel must hold to the Lord's commandments. *Don't cut yourselves*: Cutting and shaving were common mourning practices in ancient Israel (see Amos 8:10; Isa 15:2; 22:12). They expressed the deep emotions that result from the death of a relative or friend. Because of their holiness, Israel's priests weren't permitted to take part in traditional mourning practices (see Lev 21:5, 10-11). It appears that these instructions were not required of all the people. Alternatively, such mourning practices may have been used in the worship of other deities (see 1 Kgs 18:28; Ezek 8:14).

14:2 *people holy ... treasured people*: See Deuteronomy 7:6. 14:3-21 The instructions about clean and unclean food are also found in Leviticus 11, but with a number of significant differences. In Deuteronomy a simple distinction

occurs between clean and unclean animals, but in Leviticus 11 detestable animals are noted. Deuteronomy addresses animals that are to be eaten, but Leviticus 11 describes in detail which dead animals may pass on uncleanness through touch. Deuteronomy 14 lists the land animals that may be eaten, but Leviticus lists only forbidden animals. Overall, Deuteronomy 14 gives a picture consistent with teaching about the chosen place in Deuteronomy 12. The Lord wants Israel to eat and enjoy meat. The emphasis is on what the Israelites may eat. The distinction between clean and unclean animals isn't made for health reasons. The reason relates to Israel's holiness, or distinctiveness, from other nations. The animals are discussed according to where they live: land animals (14:4-8); water animals (14:9-10); and animals of the air (14:11-20). No one single rule explains why one animal is clean or unclean. It's likely, though, that the ideas of "fit" and "order" are important. The animals fit where they live. Land animals should chew grass and have divided hooves, and fish should have scales and fins. The central idea is, then, that God's creation has an order, and the people of Israel should follow that order.

14:3 *detestable thing*: See notes on Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:31.

14:4-5 Unlike Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14 lists land animals that may be eaten. These include domestic animals (14:4) and wild animals (14:5). *ibex ... mountain sheep*: The exact identification of some of these animals is uncertain. 14:6-8 Both Deuteronomy and Leviticus discuss borderline animals. For land animals to be clean, they need both to chew their food and to have a divided hoof. The *camel*, *hare*, and *rock badger* don't have divided hooves and are excluded; whereas the *pig* doesn't chew its food. The pig was very often kept as a domestic animal in the ancient world. This was particularly important in the time of the Maccabees (approximately 165 BCE). From that time on, not eating pork—together with

13:16 Josh 6:24, Josh 8:28; Is 17:1, Is 25:2; Jer 49:2

13:17 Gn 22:17, Gn 26:4, Gn 26:24;

Dt 7:13, Dt 7:26

13:18 Dt 12:25, Dt 12:28

14:1 Lv 19:28; Jn 1:12; Ro 9:8, Ro 9:26; Ga 3:26

14:2 Lv 20:26; Dt 7:6, Dt 26:18; 1Pt 2:9

14:3 Eze 4:14

14:5 Dt 12:15

14:7 Lv 11:5,

Lv 11:6;

Prv 30:26

14:12 Lv 11:13  
 14:21 Ex 23:19,  
 Ex 34:26;  
 Dt 14:2  
 14:22 Lv 27:30;  
 Nm 18:21;  
 Dt 12:6,  
 Dt 12:17

<sup>8</sup>and the pig—because it has a divided hoof but doesn't rechew food, it's off-limits for you.

You may not eat these animals' meat, and you must not touch their carcasses.

<sup>9</sup>Here's a list of the water animals you are allowed to eat: you can eat anything that has fins and scales. <sup>10</sup>But you aren't allowed to eat anything that lacks scales or fins. These are off-limits for you.

<sup>11</sup>You are allowed to eat any clean bird. <sup>12</sup>Here's a list of those you are not allowed to eat: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, <sup>13</sup>the red kite, the black kite, and any kind of bird of prey, <sup>14</sup>any kind of raven, <sup>15</sup>the ostrich, the nighthawk, the seagull, any kind of hawk, <sup>16</sup>the small owl and the large owl, the water hen, <sup>17</sup>the desert owl, the carrion vulture, the cormorant, <sup>18</sup>the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Also, all winged insects are off-limits for you. They are not to be eaten. <sup>20</sup>Any clean winged creature can be eaten, however.

<sup>21</sup>You must not eat any decayed animal flesh because you are a people holy to the LORD your God. You can give decayed animal flesh to the immigrants who live in your cities, and they can eat it; or you can sell it to foreigners.

Don't cook a lamb in its own mother's milk.

### Tenth part

<sup>22</sup>You must reserve a tenth part of whatever your fields produce each year. <sup>23</sup>Eat the tenth part of your grain, wine, oil, oldest offspring of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God in the location he selects for his name to reside so that you learn to fear the LORD your God at all times. <sup>24</sup>But if the trip is too long, because the location the LORD your God has selected to put his name is far away from where you live so that you can't transport the tenth part—because the LORD your God will certainly bless you—<sup>25</sup>then you can convert it to money. Take the money with you and go to the location the LORD your God selects. <sup>26</sup>Then you can use the money for anything you want: cattle, sheep, wine, beer, or whatever else you might like. Then you should feast there and celebrate in the presence of the LORD

<sup>a</sup>The species of many of the birds in 14:12-18 is uncertain.

circumcision—became one of the central signs of Jewish identity.

14:8 *touch their carcasses*: The avoidance of unclean animals is absolute.

14:11 Neither Leviticus nor Deuteronomy identifies any clean birds or provides a rule to follow. Simply a list of unclean birds is given. From archaeological evidence we know that quail, partridge, geese, ducks, and pigeons were eaten in ancient Israel.

14:12-18 Twenty birds are listed as unclean. The identification of some of the species of birds is uncertain. Also uncertain is the reason why they were considered unclean. In some cases it is probably because the bird was a scavenger or a bird of prey. In other cases it might have been because they lived in abandoned ruins.

14:19-20 Leviticus 11:20-23 gives a list of winged creatures that can be eaten. These include the locust, grasshopper, and cricket.

14:21 *decayed animal flesh*: an animal that died of natural causes, or when attacked by another animal. Deuteronomy allows this meat to be given to the immigrant, or it may be sold to the foreigner. Elsewhere Deuteronomy encourages the Israelites to show charity to the immigrant (see Deut 10:19; 16:11). *Don't cook a lamb . . . milk*: This commandment is also found in Exodus 23:19; 34:26. The reason for the instruction is uncertain. The problem may be the mixing of life—the mother's milk—and death. 14:22-16:17 The instructions in 14:22-16:17 all concern time. They begin with the tenth-part offering made every year (14:22-27) and the tenth-part offering in the third

year (14:28-29). After seven years, debts were to be canceled and slaves released (15:1-18). Oldest male animals were to be set aside (15:19-22) and eaten at the chosen place during the three festivals that took place every year (16:1-17).

14:22-29 Moses insists that there was a single chosen place of worship. This had implications for how the sanctuary was supported. When there were many shrines, people could easily take their offering to a local place, but a single place of worship made this more difficult. The instruction in these verses explains how offerings at a single place would happen. The offering could be converted into silver and taken to the sanctuary in this portable form. At the chosen place it could be converted back into sacrificial offerings.

14:22 *tenth part*: Abraham is already said to have given a tenth part to Melchizedek (Gen 14:20). The practice is also mentioned elsewhere in the OT (e.g., Amos 4:4).

14:23 *your grain, wine, oil*: the three main crops of Israel (see note on Deut 7:23).

14:24 *because the LORD your God will certainly bless you*: According to Deuteronomy, obedience will lead to blessing in the land.

14:25 *money*: or simply "silver." Silver was a means to exchange goods into something transportable. Pieces of silver could be weighed to the appropriate measure. Coins weren't introduced into the region until after 400 BCE.

14:26 The silver was to be converted back into food for the family feast. Some of the offering was probably given to the sanctuary officials.

your God, along with your entire household. <sup>27</sup>Only make sure not to neglect the Levites who are living in your cities because they don't have a designated inheritance like you do.

<sup>28</sup>Every third year you must bring the tenth part of your produce from that year and leave it at your city gates. <sup>29</sup>Then the Levites, who have no designated inheritance like you do, along with the immigrants, orphans, and widows who live in your cities, will come and feast until they are full. Do this so that the LORD your God might bless you in everything you do.

### Year of canceled debts

**15** Every seventh year you must cancel all debts. <sup>2</sup>This is how the cancellation is to be handled: Creditors will forgive the loans of their fellow Israelites. They won't demand repayment from their neighbors or their relatives because the LORD's year of debt cancellation has been announced. <sup>3</sup>You are allowed to demand payment from foreigners, but whatever is owed you from your fellow Israelites you must forgive. <sup>4</sup>Of course there won't be any poor persons among you because the LORD will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, <sup>5</sup>but only if you carefully obey the LORD your God's voice, by carefully doing every bit of this commandment that I'm giving you right now. <sup>6</sup>Once the LORD your God has blessed you, exactly as he said he would, you will end up lending to many different peoples but won't need to borrow a thing. You will dominate many different peoples, but they won't dominate you.

<sup>7</sup>Now if there are some poor persons among you, say one of your fellow Israelites in one of your cities in the land that the LORD your God is giving you, don't be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward your poor fellow Israelites. <sup>8</sup>To the contrary! Open your hand wide to them. You must generously lend them whatever they need. <sup>9</sup>But watch yourself! Make sure no wicked thought crosses your mind, such as, The seventh year is coming—the year of debt cancellation—so that you resent your poor fellow Israelites and don't give them anything. If you do that, they will cry out to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin. <sup>10</sup>No, give generously to needy persons. Don't resent giving to them because it is this very thing that will lead to the LORD your God's blessing you in all you do and work at. <sup>11</sup>Poor persons will never disappear from the earth. That's why I'm giving you this command: you must open your hand generously to your fellow Israelites, to the needy among you, and to the poor who live with you in your land.

<sup>12</sup>If any of your fellow Hebrews, male or female, sell themselves into your service, they can work for you for six years, but in the seventh year you must set them free from your service.

14:27 *Levites*: For the care of the Levite, see Deuteronomy 12:12.

14:28-29 In the third year the tenth part was put to a different use. It was used to support the poor and marginalized in society, which included *the Levites*, as well as *the immigrants, orphans, and widows*. Other instructions providing for these groups can be found in Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 24:17-22).

15:1-11 The practice of allowing the land to lie fallow (i.e., unplanted) every seven years is mentioned in Exodus 23:10-11. In Deuteronomy this idea is moved into the economic world. Debt was a significant problem for many people in the ancient world (see 2 Kgs 4). One solution was the occasional cancellation of all debts. This was often done at the beginning of a new king's reign. In Deuteronomy this policy is made into a regular event.

15:1 *seventh year*: Mention of the Lord's year of debt cancellation (Deut 15:2) and the situation described in Deuteronomy 15:9-10 means that we should understand there to have been a particular point when all debts were canceled across Israel. It's not that debts were considered to be forgiven seven years after they were taken on.

15:2 *announced*: a public proclamation.

15:3 *foreigners* weren't part of the community, and they weren't subject to the cancellation of debts. The foreigner is distinguished from the immigrant who had settled in the community. The immigrants would have been included.

15:4-5 As elsewhere in Deuteronomy, obedience brings blessing. The result is that no Israelite will be poor. This is the ideal, but this statement stands in tension with Deuteronomy 15:11, which is more realistic.

15:6 The idea of Israel as a creditor-nation is found in the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 28:12 (see also Deut 28:44).

15:7-11 These verses are clearly encouragement rather than law. The passage fits with the encouraging style in Deuteronomy 1-11, more than the case laws of Deuteronomy 12-26.

15:7 *hard-hearted*: a characteristic of Sihon (Deut 2:30).

15:9 Moses anticipates the situation where credit isn't available because the year of debt cancellation gets close. A credit crunch is avoided by appealing to generosity while portraying credit refusal as wicked and sinful. Community bonds are emphasized by calling the debtor "your fellow Israelite." The generous Israelite will also find that God more than rewards an openhanded approach (Deut 15:10).

15:11 A more sober view on poverty that contrasts with Deuteronomy 15:4.

15:12-18 The instruction about slaves in Deuteronomy 15 is similar to the expectation in Exodus 21:2-6. In Deuteronomy both male and female slaves are released after seven years.

15:12 *Hebrews, male or female*: The parallel law in Exodus 21:1-11 also mentions Hebrew slaves. The term "Hebrew"

14:28 Dt 26:12

15:1 Ex 23:11;  
Dt 31:10;  
Neh 10:31

15:2 Dt 15:3;  
Lk 6:34

15:4 Dt 28:8

15:7 Lv 25:35;  
Jn 3:17

15:8 Mt 5:42;  
Lk 6:34

15:9 Ex 22:23;  
Dt 24:15;

Mt 20:15; Jas 5:4

15:12 Ex 21:2;  
Lv 25:39;  
Jer 34:14

15:21 Lv 22:19,  
Lv 22:20;  
Dt 17:1; Mal 1:8  
15:23 Gn 9:4;  
Lv 7:26;  
Dt 12:16;  
Dt 12:23;  
Eze 33:25  
16:1 Ex 12:2,  
Ex 12:11,  
Ex 13:4,  
Ex 23:15,  
Ex 34:18

<sup>13</sup>Furthermore, when you set them free from your service, you must not let them go empty-handed. <sup>14</sup>Instead, provide for them fully from your flock, food, and wine. You must give to them from that with which the LORD your God has blessed you. <sup>15</sup>Remember how each of you were slaves in Egypt and how the LORD your God saved you. That's why I am commanding you to do this right now. (<sup>16</sup>Now if your male servant says to you: "I don't want to leave your service" because he loves you and your family and because life is good for him in your service, <sup>17</sup>then you may take a needle and pierce his ear with it into the doorframe. From that point on, he will be your permanent servant. Do the same thing for female servants.) <sup>18</sup>Don't consider it a hardship to set these servants free from your service, because they worked for you for six years—at a value double that of a paid worker. The LORD your God will bless you in everything that you do.

<sup>19</sup>You must devote every oldest male animal from your herds or flocks to the LORD your God. Don't plow with your oldest male ox and don't shear your oldest male sheep. <sup>20</sup>Year after year, you and your family are allowed to eat these animals in the presence of the LORD your God, in the location the LORD selects. <sup>21</sup>But if there is any defect in it, lameness, blindness, any flaw whatsoever, you must not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. <sup>22</sup>You are allowed to eat those in your own cities, whether you are polluted or purified, just as you would eat gazelle or deer. <sup>23</sup>Even so, don't consume any blood. Pour it out on the ground, like water.

### Passover celebration

**16** Wait for the month of Abib,<sup>b</sup> at which time you must perform the Passover for the LORD your God, because the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt at nighttime

<sup>b</sup>March–April; called Nisan in post-exilic period

appears to have been used once of a lower social group. It only later became a term for the Israelites (see Jon 1:9). The mention of *six years* might suggest that the release of slaves is only after six years of service and not at the Lord's year of debt cancellation. However, slaves were probably released at the same time. The instruction about slaves goes together with the teaching about debts, because most slaves in Israel entered slavery as a result of falling into debt. This is implied by the fact that slaves *sell themselves into your service*.

15:14 *provide for them fully*: an encouragement rather than commandment (see note on Deut 15:7-11). The concern may pertain to the slaves' reentry into society. They aren't to be sent out empty-handed so that slavery follows again a little while later. *blessed you*: All should share in the blessing that the Lord promises Israel.

15:15 *each of you were slaves in Egypt*: Israel's experience in Egypt is a motive for obeying the instructions elsewhere in this book (see Deut 5:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22).

15:16 *I don't want to leave*: Exodus 21:5 mentions a case where the slave doesn't wish to leave because he has received a wife in slavery. Although the male slave could go free, the wife and her children couldn't (Exod 21:4). Here in Deuteronomy, things are different: Men and women go out together after seven years. In 15:16, the slave decides to stay permanently solely because of the goodness of his master. *life is good for him*: The same expression is used of God's goodness to Israel (e.g., Deut 5:16). Masters are to be as generous to their slaves as God is to Israel.

15:17 *pierce his ear*: In Exodus 21:6 the master takes the slave to the sanctuary. This isn't practical with just one chosen sanctuary. In Deuteronomy, then, the piercing of the ear takes place at home. The ear is easily visible, but is also the part of the body needed to hear (and obey).

15:18 Deuteronomy again uses encouragement to make sure that the people obey.

15:19-23 The oldest male animal born each year was set aside to be eaten at the chosen sanctuary. Since the

occasions for these feasts would have been the festivals mentioned in Deuteronomy 16, these verses are closer to chapter 16 than the rest of chapter 15.

15:20 *Year after year*: According to Exodus 22:30, the oldest male animal was to be sacrificed on the eighth day. This isn't practical with a single sanctuary. Deuteronomy allows the sacrifice to be made any time within the year.

15:21-22 Sacrificial animals must have no defect. The flawed animal may be eaten like any other animal away from the sanctuary. See Deuteronomy 17:1.

16:1-17 The festival calendar is found elsewhere in the OT with a number of differences: Exodus 23:14-19; 34:17-26; Leviticus 23:1-44. In addition, Numbers 28:1-29:40 outlines the sacrifices to be made at different festivals. The festival calendar is distinct in certain ways because of Deuteronomy's idea of a single chosen sanctuary. The calendar describes the three main festivals. There is the joint Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread (16:1-8); the Feast of Weeks (16:9-12); and the Feast of Booths (16:13-15). The calendar probably is intended to take the people from remembering the pain of Egypt by eating the bread of misery to celebrating the good land.

16:1-8 Before the book of Deuteronomy, Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were two separate feasts. Passover was celebrated at home, and the blood of a lamb was wiped on the doorframe. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was a pilgrimage feast held at a sanctuary. From earliest times it celebrated the exodus from Egypt. In Deuteronomy Passover is transformed into a pilgrimage festival and combined with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. See sidebar, "The Festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread" at Exodus 12.

16:1 The name *Abib* is found only here and in Exodus 13:4; 23:15. It is March–April. *Passover*: There is still uncertainty about the meaning of this word. The traditional understanding is that it refers to the passing over of the angel of death during the exodus (see Exod 12:11 and note). This tradition is certainly very old.



during the month of Abib. <sup>2</sup>Offer a Passover sacrifice from the flock or herd to the LORD your God at the location the LORD selects for his name to reside. <sup>3</sup>You must not eat anything containing yeast along with it. <sup>4</sup>Instead, for seven days you must eat unleavened bread, bread symbolizing misery, along with it because you fled Egypt in a great hurry. Do this so you remember the day you fled Egypt for as long as you live. <sup>5</sup>No dough with yeast should appear in any of your territory for seven days. Furthermore, none of the meat that you sacrificed on the first night should remain until morning. <sup>6</sup>You are not permitted to offer the Passover sacrifice in any of the cities that the LORD your God is giving you. <sup>7</sup>Instead, you must offer the Passover sacrifice at the location the LORD your God selects for his name to reside, at evening time, when the sun sets, which was the time you fled Egypt. <sup>8</sup>Cook it and eat it in the location that the LORD your God selects. The next morning you can return to your tents. <sup>9</sup>For six days you will eat unleavened bread. The seventh day will be a celebration for the LORD your God. Don't do any work.

16:3 Ex 12:8,  
Ex 12:11,  
Ex 12:15,  
Ex 12:39,  
Ex 34:18  
16:5 Dt 16:2  
16:6 Ex 12:6;  
Dt 12:5  
16:8 Lv 23:8,  
Lv 23:36  
16:9 Ex 23:16,  
Ex 34:22;  
Lv 23:15;  
Nm 28:26; Ac 2:1  
16:10 Ex 34:22;  
Dt 16:17;  
Dt 23:23;  
1Co 16:2

**Festival of Weeks**

<sup>9</sup>Count out seven weeks, starting the count from the beginning of the grain harvest. <sup>10</sup>At that point, perform the Festival of Weeks for the LORD your God. Offer a spontaneous gift in precise measure with the blessing the LORD your God gives you. <sup>11</sup>Then celebrate in the presence of the LORD your God—you, your sons, your daughters, your male and female servants, the Levites who live in your cities, the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows who are among you—in the location the LORD your God selects for his name to reside. <sup>12</sup>Remember how each of you was a slave in Egypt, so follow these regulations most carefully.

**Festival of Booths**

<sup>13</sup>Once you have collected the food and drink you need, perform the Festival of Booths for seven days. <sup>14</sup>Celebrate your festival: you, your sons, your daughters, your male and female servants, the Levites, the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows who live in your cities. <sup>15</sup>Seven days you must perform the festival for the LORD your God in the location the LORD selects because the LORD your God will bless you in all you do and in all your work. You will be overjoyed.

<sup>9</sup>It, the Passover sacrifice

16:2 *flock or herd*: In Deuteronomy a sheep, goat, or calf may be sacrificed. In Exodus 12:3-6 only a lamb is allowed.  
 16:3 *bread symbolizing misery*: Elsewhere in Deuteronomy food is always a cause for celebration and a symbol of God's blessing. In the story of the exodus, the people must bake flat cakes because there was no time to let them rise (Exod 12:39).  
 16:4 The verse combines instructions for the Festival of Unleavened Bread and the Passover sacrifice (see translation note c).  
 16:5-6 *you must offer . . . his name to reside*: The Passover is no longer a family festival celebrated at home, but a public feast in the chosen place (see note on Deut 16:1-8).  
 16:7 *Cook it*: In Exodus 12:9 cooking with water is forbidden. Instead the Passover food must roast over a fire. The phrase *return to your tents* could refer to three things. First, it could suggest that the people camped around the sanctuary during the festival. Second, it could be a way of speaking about the Israelites' houses. Third, the reference to tents could be a reminder of the people's time in the wilderness. They remember the exodus, return to their "tents," and then return to the sanctuary later in the year to celebrate the harvest and the gift of the land during the Festivals of Weeks and Booths.  
 16:8 *celebration*: The last day of the feast was a community assembly.  
 16:9-12 The Festival of Weeks isn't described with much detail, though it's clearly a joyful occasion. In Exodus 23:16 the same festival is called the Harvest Festival. The name of

the festival comes from the seven weeks that are counted from the beginning of the harvest (16:9).  
 16:9 It would appear that the seven weeks are counted from when the harvest began, and so its timing might vary from year to year. The seven weeks allowed the harvest to be collected across the country before the people gathered together for a festival of celebration. In Leviticus 23 the seven weeks are counted from the festival of early produce, which eventually becomes connected to the Festival of Unleavened Bread. In the modern calendar the Festival of Weeks, known to Christians as Pentecost, takes place seven weeks after the Festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread. It's celebrated in May.  
 16:10 *spontaneous gift*: See note on Deuteronomy 12:6.  
 16:11 *the Levites . . . and the widows*: The poor and marginalized are also to enjoy the blessings of the land.  
 16:12 The encouragement to remember gives reason for being generous to the immigrants, orphans, and widows.  
 16:13-15 Deuteronomy contains little detail about the Feast of Booths. It's clearly meant to be a celebration with plenty to eat and drink.  
 16:13 *Booths*: In Exodus 23:16 it's called the Gathering Festival. It celebrates the completion of the grape harvest and the storage of grain and grape. It occurred in September.  
 16:14 *the Levites . . . and the widows*: The poor and marginalized are also to enjoy the blessings of the land.  
 16:15 *overjoyed*: God's goodness is seen particularly in the giving of the land with all its harvests. In Deuteronomy,

16:16  
Ex 23:14-16,  
Ex 34:20,  
Ex 34:23

16:18 Dt 1:16;  
2Ch 19:5

16:19 Ex 23:2,  
Ex 23:8;

Lv 19:15;  
Dt 1:17,  
Dt 24:17

16:20 Is 56:1

<sup>16</sup>Three times a year every male among you must appear before the presence of the LORD your God in the location he will select: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks, and the Festival of Booths. They must not appear before the LORD's presence empty-handed. <sup>17</sup>Each one should have his gift in hand, in precise measure with the blessing the LORD your God gives you.

### Judges and officials

<sup>18</sup>Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every city that the LORD your God gives you. They must judge the people fairly. <sup>19</sup>Don't delay justice; don't show favoritism. Don't take bribes because bribery blinds the vision of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. <sup>20</sup>Righteousness! Pursue righteousness so that you live long and take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

### Rules for worship

<sup>21</sup>Don't plant any tree to serve as a sacred pole<sup>d</sup> next to the altar you make for the LORD your God. <sup>22</sup>Don't set up any sacred stone either, because the LORD your God hates such things. <sup>1</sup>Don't sacrifice to the LORD your God any oxen or sheep that have defects of any kind, because that is detestable to the LORD your God.

### Capital punishment

<sup>2</sup>If someone, whether male or female, is found in your community—in one of the cities the LORD your God is giving you—who does evil in the LORD your God's eyes, by breaking

<sup>d</sup>Heb *asherah*, perhaps an object devoted to the goddess Asherah

worship, joy, and celebration go hand in hand. The Festival of Booths is a climax to the year.

**16:16-17** This summary is based upon Exodus 23:15-17. *must appear*: The language suggests subjects appearing before a king, *in precise measure*: God's generosity is meant to be paralleled by human generosity.

**16:18-18:22** The third main section of the instruction is concerned with state officials. These include judges and officials (16:18-17:13); the king (17:14-20); levitical priests (18:1-8); and the prophet (18:9-22). Since there is a single sanctuary, the instruction is different in this section of the requirements from the parallel laws in Exodus.

**16:18-17:13** Traditionally all of the town elders would have judged disputes. There was no need for a central court, because disputes were decided locally. In Deuteronomy, however, the system of judges appears to be centralized, though the king doesn't appoint the judges (unlike Jehoshaphat's reform in 2 Chron 19:5). Here the appointing of leaders to settle disputes is similar to the description of what Moses did in Deuteronomy 1:16-17. The system of justice in the land continues Moses' system.

**16:18 judges**: The role was more than settling disputes, because it also included ruling and leading the people. *officials*: possibly administrators who assisted the judges. Their role may have been to record decisions. *in every city*: The Hebrew idiom is "in all your gates." The gate was where the town elders assembled to make decisions (see Ruth 4:1-12; 1 Kgs 22:10). *judge the people fairly*: For the challenges of local justice in small communities, see note on Deuteronomy 1:17.

**16:19** An appeal to judge rightly. For similar advice, see Exodus 23:8. The reasons for judging fairly sound like the kinds of sayings we might find in the book of Proverbs. Bribery is to be avoided not just because it's wrong, but also because of the distorting effect it has on the person who takes the bribe.

**16:20 Righteousness! Pursue righteousness**: The word *order*

of the Hebrew idiom uses a simple repetition: "Righteousness! Righteousness pursue . . ."

**16:21-17:1** Religious offenses suddenly appear, and it's difficult to see why they have been introduced here. Instructions about judges and courts will continue in Deuteronomy 17:8-13. The offenses described in Deuteronomy 17:2-7 involve the death penalty, and great care is taken to ensure that proper procedure is followed, including more than one witness (Deut 16:6-7). Perhaps it's these very serious crimes that require the judges to be especially careful to make sure they are being fair. In Deuteronomy 13 the threat of disloyalty by the people to the Lord is described, and it's clear that this disloyalty must be rooted out immediately.

**16:21 sacred pole**: See note on Deuteronomy 7:5. The sacred pole is described as planted. This suggests that it may have looked like a living tree. *the altar*: the altar at the chosen place. A number of biblical passages describe a sacred pole together with an altar: Judges 6:25; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 21:3; 23:15.

**16:22 sacred stone**: stone pillars that were erected at places of worship. In Kings they are often mentioned with forbidden altars and sacred poles (1 Kgs 14:23; 2 Kgs 17:10; 18:4; 23:14). In Genesis, however, the ancestors of Israel worship God with sacred stones. They are not condemned for doing so (see Gen 28:18; 31:45). *such things*: the sacred poles and the sacred stones.

**17:1 defects of any kind**: The rule about offering unblemished animals is already found in Deuteronomy 15:21. In this verse it is linked to worship with sacred poles and stones in order to make it appear even more reprehensible. *detestable*: See notes on Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:31.

**17:2-7** This section has close links to Deuteronomy 13:6-11. It describes how a person is to be investigated when accused of following other gods.

**17:2 God's covenant** may refer specifically to the Ten Commandments, especially the first commandment.

God's covenant, <sup>3</sup>by following and serving other gods, and by bowing down to them, to the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly bodies that I haven't permitted—<sup>4</sup>and you hear news about it, then you must look into this situation very carefully. And if it's definitely true that this detestable thing was done in Israel, <sup>5</sup>then you must bring out the man or woman who has done this evil thing to the gates of the city. Stone that person until he or she is dead.

<sup>6</sup>Capital punishment must be decided by two or three witnesses. No one may be executed on the basis of only one testimony. <sup>7</sup>In the execution, the hands of the witnesses must be against the guilty person from the start; the hand of all the people will be involved at the end. Remove<sup>8</sup> such evil from your community!

### Legal disputes

<sup>8</sup>If some legal dispute in your cities is too difficult for you to decide—say, between different kinds of bloodshed, different kinds of legal ruling, or different kinds of injury—then take it to the location the LORD your God selects. <sup>9</sup>Go to the levitical priests and to the head judge in office at that time and look into things there. They will announce to you the correct ruling. <sup>10</sup>You must then act according to the ruling they announced to you from that location, the one the LORD selects. You must follow very carefully everything they instruct you to do. <sup>11</sup>Act precisely according to the instruction they give you and the ruling they announce to you. Don't deviate even a bit from the word they announce. <sup>12</sup>And whoever acts rashly by not listening to the priest who is in office serving the LORD your God or to the head judge will die. Remove<sup>9</sup> such evil from Israel! <sup>13</sup>All the people will hear about this and be afraid. They won't act arrogantly anymore.

### Law of the king

<sup>14</sup>Once you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you and you have taken possession of it and settled down in it, you might say: "Let's appoint a king over us, as all our neighboring nations have done." <sup>15</sup>You can indeed appoint over you a king that the LORD your God selects. You can appoint over you a king who is one of your fellow Israelites. You are not allowed to appoint over you a foreigner who is not one of your fellow Israelites. <sup>16</sup>That granted, the king must not acquire too many horses, and he must not return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, because the LORD told you: "You will never go back by that road again." <sup>17</sup>The king must not take numerous wives so that his heart doesn't go

<sup>8</sup>Or burn <sup>9</sup>Or burn

17:3 *the sun... heavenly bodies*: These are permitted for the nations (see Deut 4:19).

17:6 *two or three witnesses*: The principle that there must be more than one witness to a crime is stated in more detail in Deuteronomy 19:15-21.

17:7 *the hands of the witnesses*: The witnesses must begin the act of killing the guilty person. *Remove such evil*: See note on Deuteronomy 13:5.

17:8-13 When Moses appointed judges he instructed them to come to him with disputes that were too difficult for them (Deut 1:9-18). The permanent system of judges in the promised land is set up similarly. The central court is there for disputes that the local judges can't handle.

17:8 *different kinds of injury*: possibly a reference to judging between skin infections. The same word is used in Leviticus 13-14.

17:9 *levitical priests*: Deuteronomy frequently identifies the priests as levitical. No clear distinction is made between Levites and priests as we find in Numbers or Chronicles. See note on Deuteronomy 10:8. *head judge*: This translation suggests a single figure appointed to the role. It could also be one among a number of judges, which Deuteronomy 19:17 suggests. *look into things*: or "inquire." This may suggest seeking a message from God.

17:11 *Don't deviate*: The priests and their instructions are

the final authority. Their rulings have the same force as the commandments from God (see Deut 5:32).

17:12 *Remove such evil*: See note on Deuteronomy 13:5.

17:13 *All the people will hear*: See note on Deuteronomy 13:11.

17:14-20 Traditionally the king was the final judge (2 Sam 15:1-11), but in Deuteronomy this role has been assigned to others (Deut 17:8-13). The king's role is limited. He is a fellow Israelite and is subject to the Instruction.

17:14 *Let's appoint a king*: In 1 Samuel 8 the people request a king, despite Samuel's resistance. *neighboring nations*: 1 Samuel 8:5 also sees kings as a practice introduced from outside of Israel. Both here and in 1 Samuel, this imitation of surrounding nations is permitted, but is not seen as praiseworthy.

17:15 *selects*: As with the chosen place, the king is chosen by God. The theology of divine choice emphasizes God's role.

17:16-17 Solomon is said to have had numerous horses, wives, and gold—exactly what this text forbids (1 Kgs 10:14, 25-26; 11:3).

17:16 *You will never go back*: Returning to Egypt for political help is condemned in Isaiah 30-31 and Jeremiah 42-44. This declaration by the Lord is also mentioned in Deuteronomy 28:68.

17:5 Lv 24:14;

Dt 13:10;

Dt 22:24;

Josh 7:25;

Jer 20:2

17:6 Nm 35:30;

Dt 19:15;

Mt 18:16;

In 8:17;

2Co 13:1

17:7 Lv 24:14;

Dt 13:5, Dt 13:9;

Ac 7:58;

1Co 5:13

17:9 Dt 17:8,

Dt 19:17;

2Ch 19:8;

Eze 44:24;

Hg 2:11

17:11 Dt 5:32

17:12

Nm 15:30;

Dt 10:8,

Dt 13:11,

Dt 18:20,

Ezr 10:8

17:13 Dt 13:11,

Dt 19:20

17:15 1Sa 10:24,

1Sa 16:12,

1Ch 22:10;

Jer 30:21

17:19 Dt 4:10;  
 Josh 1:8; Is 34:16;  
 Jn 5:39  
 18:1 Nm 18:8;  
 Nm 18:20;  
 Dt 10:9;  
 Josh 13:14;  
 1Co 9:13  
 18:2 Nm 18:20;  
 Josh 13:14  
 18:10 Ex 22:18;  
 Lv 18:21;  
 Lv 19:26;  
 Lv 19:31;  
 2Ki 17:17  
 18:11 Lv 19:31;  
 Is 8:19  
 18:13 Gn 6:9;  
 Gn 17:1; Mt 5:48  
 18:14 2Ki 21:6

astray. Nor can the king acquire too much silver and gold. <sup>18</sup>Instead, when he sits on his royal throne, he himself must write a copy of this Instruction on a scroll in the presence of the levitical priests. <sup>19</sup>That Instruction must remain with him, and he must read in it every day of his life so that he learns to revere the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this Instruction and these regulations, by doing them, <sup>20</sup>by not being overbearing toward his fellow Israelites, and by not deviating even a bit from the commandment. If the king does all that, he will ensure lasting rule in Israel for himself and for his successors.

### Priests and Levites

**18** Neither the levitical priests nor any Levite tribe member will have a designated inheritance in Israel. They can eat the sacrifices offered to the LORD, which are the LORD's portion,<sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup>but they won't share an inheritance with their fellow Israelites. The LORD alone is the Levites' inheritance—just as God promised them.

<sup>3</sup>Now this is what the priests may keep from the people's sacrifices of oxen or sheep: They must give the priest the shoulder, the jaws, and the stomach. <sup>4</sup>You must also give the priest the first portions of your grain, wine, and oil, and the first of your sheep's shearing <sup>5</sup>because the LORD your God selected Levi from all of your tribes to stand and minister in the LORD's name—both him and his descendants for all time.

<sup>6</sup>Now if a Levite leaves one of your cities or departs from any location in Israel where he's been living and, because he wants to, comes to the location the LORD selects <sup>7</sup>and ministers in the LORD his God's name, just like his relatives—the other Levites serving there in the LORD's presence—<sup>8</sup>he is allowed to eat equal portions, despite the finances he has from his family.<sup>b</sup>

### Communicating with God

<sup>9</sup>Once you enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, don't try to imitate the detestable things those nations do. <sup>10</sup>There must not be anyone among you who passes his son or daughter through fire; who practices divination, is a sign reader, fortune-teller, sorcerer, <sup>11</sup>or spell caster; who converses with ghosts or spirits or communicates with the dead. <sup>12</sup>All who do these things are detestable to the LORD! It is on account of these detestable practices that the LORD your God is driving these nations<sup>1</sup> out before you.

<sup>13</sup>Instead, you must be perfect before the LORD your God. <sup>14</sup>These nations you are displacing listened to sign readers and diviners, but the LORD your God doesn't permit you to do

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>1</sup>Or them

17:18 *he himself must write a copy*: The king would most likely have had someone else write the copy. Making copies was time-consuming and expensive. The fact that the king must have a copy points to its importance for him. *copy of this Instruction*: The Greek translation of this phrase is *deuteronomium*, meaning "second law." This gave the book its title; see the introduction.

17:20 David encourages Solomon in a similar way in 1 Kings 2:1-4.

18:1-8 The rights and livelihood of the Levites and priests are described. The Levites and the priests are not as clearly distinguished as they are in the book of Numbers. Even Deuteronomy's favorite title "levitical priest" blends the two roles together.

18:1 *eat the sacrifices*: For detailed description of the portions for priests and Levites, see Numbers 18:8-32. There are some differences in what is assigned to the priests from what is described in Deuteronomy 18:3-4.

18:3 *the shoulder, the jaws, and the stomach*: In Leviticus 7:28-34 the breast and the right thigh are assigned to the priest.

18:4 *first portions*: also assigned to the priests in Numbers 18:12.

18:5 *selected Levi*: As God chose the place and the king, so God also chose the tribe of Levi. The theology of divine choice emphasizes God's rule.

18:6-8 The Levites were found throughout Israel and Judah, and they probably served at various sanctuaries. Since there is to be only one chosen place, the Levites can only serve there. This rule encourages the Levites to come to the chosen place where they can share in the sacrifices. The rule about the Levites may relate to the priests mentioned in 2 Kings 23:9.

18:8 *despite the finances he has from his family*: possibly a reference to the sale of family property (cf. Lev 25:32-34).

18:9-22 Deuteronomy gives the prophet a very important role in communicating God's will. Moses himself is presented as a prophet.

18:9 *detestable*: See notes on Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:31.

18:10 *passes... through fire*: This probably isn't to be understood as child sacrifice, but some form of divination. The children may have been passed through the fire and examined to see whether they had been harmed.

18:10-11 *divination... dead*: Various ways of learning about the future are condemned. The exact meaning of some of them isn't certain. Those mentioned first probably examined objects such as patterns in clouds or liquids in order to tell the future. The *sorcerer* and *spell caster* made magical spells. Finally, there are those who conjure up the dead.

18:12 *detestable*: See notes on Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:31.

18:14 *These nations you are displacing*: Prophecy was

the same! <sup>15</sup>The LORD your God will raise up a prophet like me from your community, from your fellow Israelites. He's the one you must listen to. <sup>16</sup>That's exactly what you requested from the LORD your God at Horeb, on the day of the assembly, when you said, "I can't listen to the LORD my God's voice anymore or look at this great fire any longer. I don't want to die!"

<sup>17</sup>The LORD said to me: What they've said is right. <sup>18</sup>I'll raise up a prophet for them from among their fellow Israelites—one just like you. I'll put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. <sup>19</sup>I myself will hold accountable anyone who doesn't listen to my words, which that prophet will speak in my name. <sup>20</sup>However, any prophet who arrogantly speaks a word in my name that I haven't commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods—that prophet must die.

<sup>21</sup>Now, you might be wondering, How will we know which word God hasn't spoken?

<sup>22</sup>Here's the answer: The prophet who speaks in the LORD's name and the thing doesn't happen or come about—that's the word the LORD hasn't spoken. That prophet spoke arrogantly. Don't be afraid of him.<sup>3</sup>

**Cities of refuge**

**19**Once the LORD your God has eliminated those nations—whose land the LORD your God is giving you—and you displace them, settling into their cities and their houses, <sup>2</sup>you must designate three cities for your use in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess. <sup>3</sup>Mark out the roads to them<sup>4</sup> and divide the regions of the land the LORD your God is apportioning to you into three parts. These cities are the places to which a person who has killed can escape. <sup>4</sup>Here is the rule concerning a person who killed someone and is permitted to escape to one of these cities and live:

If it is someone who killed his neighbor accidentally, without having hated that person previously; <sup>5</sup>or if someone goes into the forest with a neighbor to chop some wood, and while swinging an ax to cut down the tree, the axhead flies off its handle and hits the neighbor, who subsequently dies—these kinds of killers may escape to one of these cities and live. <sup>6</sup>Otherwise, the blood avenger will chase after the killer out of rage and—especially if the distance to one of these cities<sup>1</sup> is too far—might catch and kill him, even though a death sentence was not in order because the killer didn't have prior malice toward the other. <sup>7</sup>This is why I am commanding you as follows: Designate three cities for your use.

<sup>8</sup>Now if the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he swore to your ancestors—and he will give you all the land he swore to give to them<sup>9</sup> as long as you keep all this commandment

18:15 Dt 18:18;  
Jn 1:21; Ac 3:22,  
Ac 7:37  
18:16 Ex 20:19  
18:17 Dt 5:28  
18:18 Dt 18:15;  
Jn 4:25; Jn 8:28;  
Jn 12:49; Ac 3:22  
18:19 Ac 3:23;  
Heb 12:25  
18:20 Dt 13:1,  
Dt 13:5;  
Jer 14:15;  
Zec 13:3  
18:21 1Jn 4:1  
18:22 Dt 13:2,  
Dt 18:20; Jer  
28:9  
19:4 Nm 35:15;  
Dt 4:42  
19:5 1Sa 13:20;  
2Sa 12:31;  
2Ki 6:5; Ps 74:5;  
Mt 3:10  
19:6 Nm 35:12

<sup>3</sup>Or *bothered by it* (the prophecy) <sup>4</sup>Heb uncertain and lacks to them. <sup>1</sup>Heb lacks to one of these cities.

certainly practiced by other nations, including by those who lived in Canaan before the Israelites. The emphasis on prophecy in the OT is unusual compared to what we know from elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Divination was more commonly used as a means to know the future. 18:15 *a prophet*: not one person, but a line of prophets. Deuteronomy is speaking about the prophetic office. *like me*: The prophet is viewed as a go-between who stood between God and Israel (see Gen 20:7). 18:16 Moses is the best example of the prophet as go-between because he brought God's Instruction to the people when they didn't want to hear the law directly from God. 18:19 This idea is developed in Ezekiel 33:1-20, where Ezekiel is called a "lookout." Just as a guard on a watchtower lets out an alarm, so Ezekiel must relay God's word. 18:20 The problem of false prophecy is found especially in Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 13. 18:21-22 The prophet is seen as someone who speaks accurately about the future. See 1 Samuel 3:19-20; 10:1-7; Jeremiah 28:9. 19:1-21:9 With these chapters the book of Deuteronomy moves closer to what we might recognize today as civil law. This passage covers death penalty cases and warfare. Issues of human life come before disputes about family

or property. The idea of one sanctuary is still important. Sanctuaries were originally places of refuge, but in 19:1-13 various cities are set aside for refuge. 19:1-13 The cities of refuge were mentioned in Deuteronomy 4:41-43, where Moses sets aside three cities across the Jordan. That brief passage assumes the instructions set out here. 19:1 The *land* is not the area east of the Jordan that has already been conquered, but the land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. 19:3 The location of the cities represents the principle of fairness and equality. *has killed*: At this point, no judgment is passed about whether this is intentional or not. Unintentional killings are addressed in Deuteronomy 19:4-10, and intentional murders receive attention in Deuteronomy 19:11-13. The distinction between deliberate and accidental killing is already made in Exodus 21:12-14. 19:6 *blood avenger*: Members of the dead person's family are assumed to seek revenge for the death. Ancient Israel had limited organization for settling disputes. They had no police force. Family loyalty and protection were important parts of community life and held together the order of society. 19:8-9 *add three more cities*: This could mean the three cities in the land will be gradually added to the three

19:11 Gn 9:6;  
Ex 21:12;  
Nm 35:16

19:13 Dt 7:16,  
Dt 13:8, Dt 21:9;  
1Ki 2:31

19:14 Dt 27:17;  
Job 24:2;  
Prv 22:28,  
Prv 23:10;  
Hos 5:10

19:15 Nm 35:30;  
Dt 17:6;  
Mt 18:16;  
Jn 8:17;  
2Co 13:1

19:16 Ex 23:1;  
Ps 27:12,  
Ps 35:11

19:17 Dt 17:9,  
Dt 21:5

19:18 Dt 13:14,  
Dt 17:4

19:19 Prv 19:5,  
Prv 19:9

19:20 Dt 13:11,  
Dt 17:13,  
Dt 21:21

19:21 Ex 21:23,  
Ex 21:24;  
Dt 19:13;  
Mt 5:38

20:1 Dt 32:2,  
Dt 31:6;  
2Ch 32:8;  
Ps 20:7; Is 31:1

that I am giving you right now by doing it, by loving the LORD your God, and by always walking in his ways—you can add three more cities for your use along with the first three.

<sup>10</sup>Innocent blood must not be spilled in the land the LORD your God is giving to you as an inheritance, or it will be bloodshed that will be required of you.

<sup>11</sup>But if someone does hate a neighbor and ambushes him, rising up against him and attacking him so he dies, and then escapes to one of these cities, <sup>12</sup>elders from the killer's hometown will send word, and the killer will be sent back from there. They will then hand him over to the blood avenger, and he will be executed. <sup>13</sup>Show no mercy to such killers. Remove<sup>m</sup> innocent bloodshed from Israel so that things go well for you.

### Property laws

<sup>14</sup>Now in the land the LORD your God is giving you, in your allotted property that you will receive there, you must not tamper with your neighbor's property line, which has been previously established.

### Rules for testimony

<sup>15</sup>A solitary witness against someone in any crime, wrongdoing, or in any sort of misdeed that might be done is not sufficient. The decision must stand by two or three witnesses.

<sup>16</sup>Now if a spiteful witness comes forward against someone, so as to testify against them falsely, <sup>17</sup>the two persons who have a legal suit must stand before the LORD, before the priests, and before the judges that are in office at that time. <sup>18</sup>The judges will look into the situation very carefully. If it turns out that the witness is a liar—that the witness has given false testimony against his fellow Israelite—<sup>19</sup>then you must do to him what he had planned to do to his fellow Israelite. Remove<sup>m</sup> such evil from your community! <sup>20</sup>The rest of the people will hear about this and be afraid. They won't do that sort of evil thing among you again. <sup>21</sup>Show no mercy on this point: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

### Rules for warfare

**20**When you march out to battle your enemies and you see horses, chariots, and a fighting force larger than yours, don't be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, the one who brought you up from Egypt, is with you. <sup>2</sup>As you advance toward the war, the priest will come forward and will address the troops. <sup>3</sup>He will say to them: "Listen, Israel: Right now you are advancing to wage war against your enemies. Don't be discouraged! Don't be afraid! Don't panic! Don't shake in fear on account of them, <sup>4</sup>because the LORD your God is going with you to fight your enemies for you and to save you."

<sup>m</sup>Or burn <sup>m</sup>Or burn

mentioned in Deuteronomy 4:41-43. Or it could be a way of speaking about those three cities themselves.

**19:10 Innocent blood:** A powerful relationship exists between land and innocent shed blood. The same idea is found in the story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:10-11). In Numbers 35:33-34, bloodshed pollutes the land and needs to be purged.

**19:11-13** These verses outline what to do in cases where murder was intended.

**19:14** The instruction about property boundaries is rather surprising here in the middle of death penalty crimes. The link is perhaps the careful dividing of the land mentioned in Deuteronomy 19:3 and 19:14. Protection of land boundaries is also required in Proverbs 22:28; 23:10.

**19:15-21** Giving true witness is important in all disputes, and these verses mention legal judgments for many different kinds of crimes. Of all cases, though, false witness is most significant in death penalty crimes.

**19:15** This verse establishes the principle that more than one witness is needed in a dispute.

**19:16-18** The dispute described in this verse is slightly different from that in Deuteronomy 19:15. Two people are in dispute, and one is a false witness. The judges have to examine the controversy to decide who is speaking the

truth. There is no mention of there being more than one witness on either side of this dispute. *look into the situation:* could also mean using ritual to discover the truth.

**19:20 rest of the people will hear:** The purpose of the resolution is not merely justice, but also to discourage others from doing the same evil thing. See note on Deuteronomy 13:1. **19:21** The "eye for an eye" principle is found in Exodus 21:23-25. It's used in a different way here. This principle aims to discourage malicious testimony. It may rebound on the one seeking to harm his neighbor.

**20:1-20** Various rules for warfare are set out in this chapter. First, the preparations for warfare are described (20:1-9). Second, how the war is to be conducted against enemy cities is set out (20:10-18). Third, if there is to be warfare, there are to be certain limitations (20:19-20).

**20:1 larger than yours:** The situation described is very specific. Israel faces a larger enemy army. Despite instincts to be afraid, the people are to remember that God fights for them. *up from Egypt:* The deliverance from Egypt provides a reminder of the Lord's actions in the past.

**20:3 Don't be afraid!** See Deuteronomy 1:29-30. Rather, the people are to fear God (Deut 6:13).

**20:4 God is going with you:** The presence of God is seen as essential in the stories of Deuteronomy 1-3.

<sup>5</sup>The officials will also say to the troops: "Is there anyone here who has just built a new house but hasn't yet dedicated it? He can leave and go back to his house; otherwise, he might die in the war and someone else would dedicate the house. <sup>6</sup>Or is there anyone here who has planted a vineyard but hasn't yet put it to good use? He can leave and go back to his house; otherwise, he might die in the battle and someone else would use the vineyard. <sup>7</sup>Or is there anyone here who is engaged but not yet married? He may leave and go back to his house; otherwise, he might die in the battle and someone else would marry his fiancée."

<sup>8</sup>The officials will continue to address the troops, stating: "Is there anyone here who is afraid and discouraged? He can leave and go back to his house; otherwise, his comrades might lose courage just as he has." <sup>9</sup>Once the officials have completed their speech to the troops, the army commanders will assume leadership of the forces.

<sup>10</sup>When you approach a city to fight against it, you should first extend peaceful terms to it. <sup>11</sup>If the city responds with peaceful terms and surrenders to you, then all the people in the city will serve you as forced laborers. <sup>12</sup>However, if the city does not negotiate peacefully with you but makes war against you, you may attack it. <sup>13</sup>The LORD your God will hand it over to you; you must kill all the city's males with the sword. <sup>14</sup>However, you can take for yourselves the women, the children, the animals, and all that is in the city—all its plunder. You can then enjoy your enemies' plunder, which the LORD your God has given you.

<sup>15</sup>That's what you must do to all the cities that are located far away from you—specifically, those cities that don't belong to these nations here. <sup>16</sup>But in the case of any of the cities of these peoples—the ones the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance—you must not spare any living thing. <sup>17</sup>Instead, you must place these under the ban:<sup>o</sup> Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites—just as the LORD your God commanded you. <sup>18</sup>Then they can't teach you to do all the detestable things they did for their gods, with the result that you end up sinning against the LORD your God.

<sup>19</sup>Now if you have been attacking a city for some time, fighting against it and trying to conquer it, don't destroy its trees by cutting them down with axes. You can eat from those trees; don't cut them down! Do you think a tree of the field is some sort of warrior to be attacked by you in battle? <sup>20</sup>That said, if you know that a tree is not a food-producing tree, you are allowed to destroy it, cutting it down and using it in the siege against the city that is fighting against you until it falls.

### Unsolved homicides

**21** If a corpse is found on the ground the LORD your God is giving you to possess, lying in a field, and the identity of the killer is unknown, <sup>2</sup>your elders and judges must come out and measure the distances to the cities nearest the body. <sup>3</sup>Once it is determined which city is closest to the dead body, its elders must take a young cow that hasn't been

<sup>o</sup>See note at Deut 2:34.

20:5-7 This law seeks to prevent the people from becoming victims of senselessness. A number of the curses in Deuteronomy 28 describe situations where the natural relationship between starting something and completing it is broken. These "futility curses" are signs that God is against Israel. This law stops this from happening. The new house is dedicated by the one who built it. The new vineyard is enjoyed by the one who planted it. The new wife is enjoyed by the one who married her.

20:8 Gideon also dismisses those who lack courage (Judg 7:3). The purpose may not have been to reduce the numbers of fighting men but to ensure they were courageous.

20:10 *peaceful terms*: offer the city the opportunity to surrender without a fight.

20:11 *forced laborers* are mentioned in the building projects of David's and Solomon's reigns (e.g., 2 Sam 20:24; 1 Kgs 9:15).

20:15 This verse insists that the rules in Deuteronomy 20:10-14 apply only to cities outside the land of Canaan.

The difference between far and near is important in the story of Gibeon (Josh 9).

20:17 The list of nations is the same as Deuteronomy 7:1 except that the Girgashites are missing here. *ban*: See sidebar, "The Ban" at Deuteronomy 7.

20:18 *detestable*: See notes on Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:31.

20:19 This teaching can be viewed as environmental instruction. Warfare is only for a brief time, and lands shouldn't be put out of use indefinitely. At the same time, the logic may simply be practical. Fruit trees can provide food. There is no gain in wasting effort chopping down trees; rather, warriors have to be killed.

20:20 If a tree cannot provide food to eat, it can be cut down to attack a city.

21:1-9 The problem of bloodguilt in the case of an unsolved murder is resolved through a ritual. These verses show the close relationship between bloodshed and the land (see Deut 19:10).

21:1 *corpse*: the body of someone who has been killed.

20:6 Jer 31:5;

1Co 9:7

20:7 Dt 24:5.

Dt 28:30

20:8 Jgs 7:3

20:10 Dt 2:26

21:10 *Joah* 21:44  
 21:11 *Gn* 6:2,  
*Gn* 34:8  
 21:12 *Lv* 14:9  
 21:13 *Ps* 45:10  
 21:15 *Gn* 29:30,  
*Gn* 29:33  
 21:17 *Gn* 25:31,  
*Gn* 49:3  
 21:18 *Ex* 21:15;  
*Prv* 30:17

used or yet pulled a plow, <sup>4</sup>and those elders will take the cow down to a ravine with a flowing stream—one that has not been plowed or planted—and they will break the cow's neck right there in the river valley. <sup>5</sup>Then the priests, the descendants of Levi, will step forward because the LORD your God selected them to minister for him and to bless in the LORD's name, and because every legal dispute and case of assault is decided by them. <sup>6</sup>All the elders of the city closest to the corpse will wash their hands over the cow whose neck was broken in the river valley. <sup>7</sup>They will then solemnly state: "Our hands did not shed this blood. Our eyes did not see it happen. <sup>8</sup>LORD, please forgive your people Israel, whom you saved. Don't put the guilt of innocent bloodshed on your people Israel."

Then the bloodguilt will be forgiven them.

<sup>9</sup>But you must remove<sup>P</sup> innocent bloodshed from your community; do only what is right in the LORD's eyes.

### Foreign wives

<sup>10</sup>When you wage war against your enemies and the LORD hands them over to you and you take prisoners, <sup>11</sup>if you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you fall in love with her and take her as your wife, <sup>12</sup>bringing her into your home, she must shave her head, cut her nails, <sup>13</sup>remove her prisoner's clothing, and live in your house, mourning her father and her mother for one month. After that, you may consummate the marriage. You will be her husband, and she will be your wife. <sup>14</sup>But if you aren't pleased with her, you must send her away as she wishes. You are not allowed to sell her for money or treat her as a slave because you have humiliated her.

### Right of the oldest son

<sup>15</sup>Now suppose a man has two wives—one of them loved and the other unloved. Both wives bear children, but the oldest male is the unloved wife's child. <sup>16</sup>On the day when the man decides what will go to each of his children as an inheritance, he isn't allowed to treat his loved wife's son as the oldest male rather than his unloved wife's son, who is the real oldest male. <sup>17</sup>Instead, he must acknowledge the unloved wife's son as the oldest male, giving to him two-thirds of everything that he owns, because that son is the earliest produce of his physical power. The oldest male's rights belong to that son.

### Rebellious children

<sup>18</sup>Now if someone has a consistently stubborn and rebellious child, who refuses to listen to their father and mother—even when the parents discipline him, he won't listen to

<sup>P</sup>Or burn

21:4 The animal is slain in an area that isn't used and where the water can wash the guilt away. By this ritual the community can distance itself from the murder. The shed blood is associated with this waste area, and not with the town's productive land. *break the cow's neck*: This procedure is used with animals that aren't sacrificed (see Exod 13:13; 34:20).

21:5 *minister . . . and to bless*: See Deuteronomy 10:6-7; 18:1-8. *every legal dispute . . . assault*: See Deuteronomy 17:8.

21:6 *wash their hands*: The guilt is transferred to the cow and away in the stream.

21:7-8 The ritual action is accompanied by words. The elders distance the town from the murder. *forgive*: or "reconcile" or "wipe away." A common word in Leviticus; it's used only here in Deuteronomy.

21:10-22:30 It becomes harder to say why some of the commandments have been collected together as they have. The present section is concerned mostly with family matters and property disputes.

21:10-14 The instruction about a foreign wife taken in battle must apply only to wars fought against distant enemies (see Deut 20:10-18). It's the first requirement in this section because of its close relationship to the war behaviors in Deuteronomy 21:1-20.

21:12-13 *shave . . . clothing*: These actions mark the woman's

change of status. *one month*: The Israelites mourn for Moses for one month in Deuteronomy 34:8.

21:14 *send her away*: a common way of speaking about divorce. In Exodus 21:8 the slave girl who doesn't please may not be sold to foreigners, and in certain circumstances may go free (Deut 21:11). Exodus talks about treating her fairly, and Deuteronomy about not humiliating her.

21:15-17 Questions of inheritance were very important in ancient Israel, especially when there was more than one wife. The problem is a theme in the stories of Jacob (Gen 29-35) and Elkanah (1 Sam 1). This instruction seeks to provide clear guidance that gives rights to the oldest male offspring.

21:17 *earliest produce*: The idea is that the first son carries more of the father's strength and potency.

21:18-21 The *rebellious child* should be understood as an adult, and the parents rely on his taking over the family land and providing for them. Stubborn and rebellious behavior threatens the parents' existence. The relationship between Israel and God is compared to a father-son relationship in Deuteronomy 1:31; 8:5. So this teaching about a rebellious child may have been intended to speak also to the relationship between God and Israel.

21:18 *child*: The parallel between the punishments of the



them—<sup>19</sup>the father and mother will take the son before the elders of that city at its gates. <sup>20</sup>Then they will inform the city's elders: "This son of ours is consistently stubborn and rebellious, refusing to listen to us. What's more, he's wild and a drunkard."

<sup>21</sup>Then all the people of that town will stone him until he dies.

Remove<sup>a</sup> such evil from your community! All Israel will hear about this and be afraid.

### Hangings

<sup>22</sup>Now if someone is guilty of a capital crime, and they are executed, and you then hang them on a tree, <sup>23</sup>you must not leave the body hanging on the tree but must bury it the same day because God's curse is on those who are hanged.<sup>f</sup> Furthermore, you must not pollute the ground that the LORD your God is giving to you as an inheritance.

### Rules for property and mixtures

**22** Don't just watch your fellow Israelite's ox or sheep wandering around and do nothing about it. You must return the animal to its owner. <sup>2</sup>If the owner doesn't live nearby, or you don't know who owns the animal, then you must take care of it. It should stay with you until your fellow Israelite comes looking for it, at which point you must return it to him.

<sup>3</sup>Do the same thing in the case of a donkey. Do the same thing in the case of a piece of clothing. Do the same thing in the case of anything that your fellow Israelite loses and you end up finding. You are not allowed to sit back and do nothing about it.

<sup>4</sup>Don't just watch your fellow Israelite's donkey or ox fall down in the road and do nothing about it. You must help your fellow Israelite get the animal up again.

<sup>5</sup>Women must not wear men's clothes, and men must not wear women's clothes. Everyone who does such things is detestable to the LORD your God.

<sup>6</sup>If you come across a bird's nest along your way, whether in a tree or on the ground, with baby birds or eggs, and the mother is sitting on the baby birds or eggs, do not remove the mother from her young. <sup>7</sup>You must let the mother go, though you may take the young for yourself so that things go well for you and so you can prolong your life.

<sup>8</sup>Whenever you build a new house, you must build a railing for the roof so that you don't end up with innocent blood on your hands because someone fell off of it.

<sup>9</sup>Don't plant your vineyards with two types of seed; otherwise, the entire crop that you have planted and the produce of the vineyard will be unusable.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Don't plow with an ox and a donkey together.

<sup>11</sup>Don't wear clothes that mix wool and linen together.

<sup>12</sup>Make tassels for the four corners of the coat you wear.

<sup>a</sup>Or burn <sup>f</sup>LXX, Vulg, Tg Neofiti God's curse is on those who are hanged; Syr, Tg Onqelos those who curse God are to be hanged; Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Or sanctified

son in Deuteronomy 21:18-21 and the daughter in 22:13-21 suggests that the son-daughter pair was deliberate.

21:19 *its gates*: See note on Deuteronomy 16:18. The elders act as the judges in the gate.

21:20 *wild and a drunkard*: The same description is found in Proverbs 23:20-22, where it also occurs with disobeying parents.

21:21 *all the people . . . stone him*: an identical punishment to that given to the daughter who had extramarital sex (Deut 22:21). *All Israel will hear*: See note on Deuteronomy 13:11. The rebellious son does not keep the fifth commandment, which insists that obedience of parents is necessary to keep the land (Deut 5:16).

21:22-23 *hang them on a tree*: The person is already dead, but their body is displayed as a warning. *pollute the ground*: For the threat that bloodshed poses to the land, see Deuteronomy 19:10.

22:1-12 A short collection of instructions that show concern for protecting life.

22:1 A similar teaching is found in Exodus 23:4. In Exodus the instruction speaks about caring for an enemy's animal. In Deuteronomy the teaching is made general and applies to all Israelites. In Deuteronomy 22:2-3 the instruction is expanded to consider an unknown owner.

22:3 A very similar list of lost items is found in Exodus 22:9. 22:4 Similar to Exodus 23:5. In Exodus the animal lies under the weight of its burden, but in Deuteronomy it has fallen down in the road.

22:5 This verse introduces the theme of mixture. All sorts of mixtures aren't allowed. The underlying idea may be that the world has a certain order granted by God. Mixing disturbs this divine order. See Deuteronomy 22:9-11. *detestable*: See notes on Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:31.

22:6-7 The instruction about the *bird's nest* belongs more closely with Deuteronomy 22:1-4. The teachings about caring for animals and about mixtures have been interlocked by making the situations overlap. *let the mother go*: There may be an environmental concern. Or we may simply have a recognition that the mother is needed to keep the species continuing. Future supplies of eggs or baby birds for the Israelites are guaranteed.

22:8 Roofs were flat in ancient Israel and had a variety of uses.

22:9 The same instruction is found in Leviticus 19:19. The resulting mix can't be used by the Israelites (see note on Deut 22:5).

22:11 The same teaching is found in Leviticus 19:19.

22:12 There is no explanation for the *tassels*. In

21:21 Dt 13:11;

Dt 19:19;

Dt 22:21

21:22 Nm 25:4;

Dt 22:26;

Josh 8:29;

Mt 26:66;

Ac 23:29

21:23 Lv 18:25;

Josh 8:29;

Josh 10:26-27;

Gal 3:13

22:1 Ex 23:4;

Zec 7:9

22:4 Ex 23:5

22:5 Dt 18:12

22:9 Lv 19:19

22:10 2Co 6:14

22:12

Nm 15:37-38;

Mt 23:5

22:13 Gn 29:21;  
Dt 24:1; Jgs 15:1  
22:15 Dt 21:19  
22:18 Ex 18:21;  
Dt 1:9  
22:19 Dt 22:29  
22:20 Dt 17:4  
22:21 Gn 34:7;  
Dt 13:5;  
Dt 21:21;  
2Sa 13:12  
22:22 Lv 20:10;  
Jn 8:5; Heb 13:4  
22:23 Mt 1:18;  
Mt 1:19  
22:24 Dt 22:21

### Virgin bride

<sup>13</sup>Suppose a man gets married and consummates the marriage but subsequently despises his wife. <sup>14</sup>He then spreads false claims about her to the point that she has a bad reputation, because he said such things as, “I married this woman, but when I went to have sex with her, I couldn’t find any proof that she was a virgin.”

<sup>15</sup>At that point, the young woman’s father and mother will bring proof of her virginity to the city’s elders at the city gate. <sup>16</sup>The young woman’s father will say to the elders: “I gave my daughter to this man to be his wife, but he doesn’t like her anymore. <sup>17</sup>That’s why he has spread false claims about her, saying, ‘I couldn’t find any proof that your daughter was a virgin.’ But look! Here’s proof of my daughter’s virginity.” At that point they will spread out the blanket in front of the city’s elders. <sup>18</sup>The city’s elders must then take that husband and punish him. <sup>19</sup>They will fine him one hundred silver shekels, giving that to the young woman’s father, because that husband gave one of Israel’s virgin daughters a bad reputation. Moreover, she must remain his wife; he is never allowed to divorce her.

<sup>20</sup>However, if the claim is true and proof of the young woman’s virginity can’t be produced, <sup>21</sup>then the city’s elders will bring the young woman to the door of her father’s house. The citizens of that city must stone her until she dies because she acted so sinfully in Israel by having extramarital sex while still in her father’s house.

Remove<sup>c</sup> such evil from your community!

### Inappropriate sexual behavior

<sup>22</sup>If a man is found having sex with a woman who is married to someone else, both of them must die—the man who was having sex with the woman and the woman herself.

Remove such evil from Israel!

<sup>23</sup>If a young woman who is a virgin is engaged to one man and another man meets up with her in a town and has sex with her, <sup>24</sup>you must bring both of them to the city gates there and stone them until they die—the young woman because she didn’t call for help in the city, and the man because of the fact that he humiliated his neighbor’s wife.

Remove such evil from your community!

<sup>25</sup>But if the man met up with the engaged woman in a field, grabbing her and having sex with her there, only the man will die. <sup>26</sup>Don’t do anything whatsoever to the young woman. She hasn’t committed any capital crime—rather, this situation is exactly like the one where someone attacks his neighbor and kills him.<sup>u</sup> <sup>27</sup>Since the man met up with her in a field, the engaged woman may well have called out for help, but there was no one to rescue her.

<sup>c</sup>Or burn; so also 22:22, 24 <sup>u</sup>See 19:11.

Numbers 15:37-41 tassels are a way of remembering God’s commandments.

22:13-30 The teaching in this section is concerned with sex.

22:13 *despises*: a term used in divorce, which comes before sending the wife away (Deut 24:1). In addition to divorce, the husband here likely wants to have the bride-price returned. For more on what a bride-price was, see Exodus 22:16 and note.

22:14 *proof that she was a virgin*: a bloodstained blanket (Deut 22:17). This would result either from tearing of the hymen, which was often taken as proof of virginity; or from menstruation, which proved the woman wasn’t already pregnant.

22:17 *proof*: It’s unclear how the elders could be sure that the blood was the woman’s. The instruction may have meant that such proof was always kept. This then prevented disputes.

22:19 *one hundred silver shekels*: twice the bride price (Deut 22:29). *never allowed to divorce her*: Since the wife was dependent on her husband or family, her damaged reputation would threaten her survival.

22:21 *she acted so sinfully*: In Deuteronomy 22:28-29 extramarital sex means that the couple must marry. Here

in 22:21, extramarital sex has occurred, but the woman has then gone on to marry someone else. In ancient Israel the husband expected to have the rights to his wife’s virginity. This made sure that it was his children who inherited his property. *The citizens . . . must stone her*: Her punishment is identical to that of the rebellious son (see Deut 21:18).

22:22 *a woman who is married to someone else*: The marital status of the man isn’t important, only the marital status of the woman. Adultery violated the husband’s rights, meaning the husband couldn’t be sure the children were his.

22:23 For an *engaged* woman, extramarital sex is dealt with as if she were married (see Deut 22:22).

22:24 *she didn’t call for help*: In the city it’s assumed someone would hear and come to help. Since she didn’t call, the writers of Deuteronomy assume the woman agreed to sex.

22:25 *in a field*: The woman is assumed to be innocent, since no one would have heard calls for help.

22:26 *like the one . . . and kills him*: the only place in the OT when one instruction is compared to another. The law about murder is found in Deuteronomy 19:11. The man seizing the woman intended to act criminally.

<sup>28</sup>If a man meets up with a young woman who is a virgin and not engaged, grabs her and has sex with her, and they are caught in the act, <sup>29</sup>the man who had sex with her must give fifty silver shekels to the young woman's father. She will also become his wife because he has humiliated her. He is never allowed to divorce her.

<sup>30</sup>A man cannot marry his father's former wife so that his father's private matters are not exposed.<sup>31</sup>

### The Lord's assembly

**23**<sup>1</sup>No man whose testicles are crushed or whose penis is cut off can belong to the LORD's assembly. <sup>2</sup>No one born of an illegitimate marriage<sup>3</sup> can belong to the LORD's assembly either. Not even the tenth generation of such children can belong to the LORD's assembly. <sup>4</sup>Ammonites and Moabites can't belong to the LORD's assembly. Not even the tenth generation of such people can belong to the LORD's assembly, as a rule, <sup>5</sup>because they didn't help you with food or water on your journey out of Egypt, and because they hired Balaam, Beor's son, from Pethor of Mesopotamia to curse you. <sup>6</sup>But the LORD your God wasn't interested in listening to Balaam. The LORD your God turned that curse into a blessing because the LORD your God loves you. <sup>7</sup>So don't be concerned with their health and well-being as long as you live.

<sup>8</sup>Don't detest Edomites, because they are your relatives. Don't detest Egyptians because you were immigrants in their land. <sup>9</sup>Children born to them are permitted to belong to the LORD's assembly starting with the third generation.

### Rules for the war camp

<sup>10</sup>When you are camped in battle against your enemies, guard yourself from every possible evil. <sup>11</sup>If an individual in the camp becomes polluted due to a nighttime emission, he must exit the camp area and not reenter. <sup>12</sup>When the next evening arrives, he must wash with water; and when the sun sets, he can come back to the camp.

<sup>13</sup>The latrines<sup>4</sup> must be outside the camp. You will use them there, outside the camp. <sup>14</sup>Carry a shovel with the rest of your gear; once you have relieved yourself, use it to dig a hole, then refill it, covering your excrement.

<sup>15</sup>Do these things because the LORD your God travels with you, right in the middle of your camp, ready to save you and to hand your enemies over to you. For this reason your camp

<sup>23:1</sup> in Heb <sup>30</sup>Or so that he doesn't uncover his father's skirt <sup>23:2</sup> in Heb <sup>3</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>4</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg place of the hand (a euphemism); MT has only hand.

22:28-29 *grabs her*: The parallel law in Exodus 22:15-16 speaks about seduction. In Deuteronomy the law is more ambiguous. It could mean seduction, but grabbing suggests the man forced himself on the woman.

22:30 The same instruction is found in Leviticus 18:8; 20:11 alongside other similar instructions.

23:1-25:19 It's difficult to see a logical arrangement for the final collection of teaching in Deuteronomy. This collection begins and ends with references to other nations: Edom, Ammon, and Moab in 23:1-8; and then Amalek in 25:17-19. Purity is an important theme in 23:1-14, and in inner-community relationships in the rest of the section.

23:1-8 *the LORD's assembly* is a rare expression and it is unclear what its precise significance is. Entry into the Lord's assembly is restricted to those who have some Israelite descent.

23:1 In Deuteronomy the *assembly* is viewed as an inter-generational community. In the community teaching is passed on through the generations and so is property. Those who cannot procreate are excluded.

23:2 *No one born of an illegitimate marriage*: children from relationships that were forbidden.

23:3 *Not even the tenth generation*: emphasizing that this is an absolute exclusion of Ammonites and Moabites.

23:4 Ammonites and Moabites are excluded because of

their failure to show hospitality. A different story about the Moabites is given in Deuteronomy 2:28-29. *Balaam, Beor's son*: The story about Balaam is told in Numbers 22-24.

23:7 *Don't detest Edomites*: The positive view of Edomites is unusual given that the Edomites were no more generous to Israel in the wilderness than the Ammonites and Moabites (Deut 2:1-8). Many texts in the Prophets are very hostile toward Edom (e.g., Mal 1:2-5). *immigrants*: perhaps suggesting that Israel was shown generosity by Egypt. This would be true of Joseph's time, but less so of Israel's later experience in Egypt. Perhaps the author has the gifts of the Egyptians in Exodus 12:35-37 in mind.

23:9-14 The theme of the purity of the camp continues from Deuteronomy 1-8, but the rules in 23:9-14 concern the war camp. See also Deuteronomy 20:1-20; 21:10-14.

23:10 *nighttime emission*: Uncleanliness because of the emission of semen is also found in Leviticus 15:16-17. In Leviticus as well the man must wash himself and becomes clean at evening.

23:12-13 Ritual uncleanliness because of excrement is not found in Leviticus. It's assumed in Ezekiel 4:1-15.

23:14 The presence of God in the war camp is mentioned in Deuteronomy 1:30; 20:4. God's presence is necessary to bring victory. *anything indecent*: an imprecise expression that seems to relate to ritual impurity.

22:28 Ex 22:16;

Ex 22:17

22:29 Ex 22:16;

Dt 22:19

23:1 Lv 21:20;

Is 56:3

23:3 Gn 19:38;

Dt 23:4;

Neh 13:1;

Neh 13:2

23:7 Gn 25:24;

Ex 22:31;

Ex 23:9;

Lv 19:34;

Dt 10:19

23:17 Lv 19:29;  
IKi 14:24;  
IKi 15:12;  
IKi 22:46;  
2Ki 23:7

23:18 Lv 20:13;  
Dt 23:21;  
Rev 22:15

23:19 Ex 22:25;  
Lv 25:35

23:20 Dt 15:3;  
Dt 15:10

23:21 Nm 30:2;  
Job 22:7;  
Ps 76:11; Ecc 5:4

23:23 Dt 16:10

23:24 Ex 20:15;  
Ex 22:5;

Lv 19:10;  
Dt 22:9; Zec 5:3

23:25 Mt 12:1;  
Mk 2:23; Lk 6:1

24:1 Is 50:1;  
Jer 3:8; Mi 5:31;

Mt 19:7;  
Mk 10:4

24:4 Jer 3:1

must be holy. The LORD must not see anything indecent among you, or he will turn away from you.

### Escaped slaves

<sup>15</sup>Don't return slaves to owners if they've escaped and come to you. <sup>16</sup>They can stay with you: in your own community or in any place they select from one of your cities, whatever seems good to them. Don't oppress them.

### Consecrated workers

<sup>17</sup>No Israelite daughter is allowed to be a consecrated worker.<sup>a</sup> Neither is any Israelite son allowed to be a consecrated worker.<sup>b</sup> <sup>18</sup>Don't bring a female prostitute's fee or a male prostitute's<sup>c</sup> payment to the LORD your God's temple to pay a solemn promise because both of these things are detestable to the LORD your God.

### Charging interest

<sup>19</sup>Don't charge your fellow Israelites interest—whether on money, provisions, or anything one might loan. <sup>20</sup>You can charge foreigners interest, but not your fellow Israelite. Do this so that the LORD your God blesses you in all your work on the land you are entering to possess.

### Solemn promise

<sup>21</sup>When you make a promise to the LORD your God, don't put off making good on it, because the LORD your God will certainly be expecting it from you; delaying would make you guilty. <sup>22</sup>Now if you simply don't make any promises, you won't be guilty of anything. <sup>23</sup>But whatever you say, you should be sure to make good on, exactly according to the promise you freely made to the LORD your God because you promised it with your own mouth.

### Neighbor's goods

<sup>24</sup>If you go into your neighbor's vineyard, you can eat as many grapes as you like, until full, but don't carry any away in a basket. <sup>25</sup>If you go into your neighbor's grain field, you can pluck ears by hand, but you aren't allowed to cut off any of your neighbor's grain with a sickle.

### Marriage and divorce

**24** Let's say a man marries a woman, but she isn't pleasing to him because he's discovered something inappropriate about her. So he writes up divorce papers, hands them to her, and sends her out of his house. <sup>2</sup>She leaves his house and ends up marrying someone else. <sup>3</sup>But this new husband also dislikes her, writes up divorce papers, hands them to her, and sends her out of his house (or suppose the second husband dies). <sup>4</sup>In this case, the first husband who originally divorced this woman is not allowed to take her back and marry her

<sup>a</sup>Traditionally *cultic prostitute* <sup>b</sup>Traditionally *cultic prostitute* <sup>c</sup>Or a dog

23:15 *come to you*: This would suggest that the slave has escaped from foreign slavery, rather than Israelite slaves fleeing to another area.

23:17 *consecrated worker*: a worker in the temple. The expression is known from elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Because biblical texts (e.g., Deut 23:18) often speak about consecrated workers together with prostitution, the traditional translation of *consecrated worker* is "cultic prostitute" (see translation footnotes a and b). The evidence for cultic prostitution in Israel is now thought to be questionable.

23:18 *male prostitute's payment*: The underlying Hebrew reads "dog's payment" (see translation footnote c). This may refer to male prostitution or some other forbidden behavior. *detestable*: See notes on Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:31.

23:19-20 *fellow Israelites*: The rule about interest is found in Exodus 22:25. Deuteronomy draws attention to the family relationship. The Hebrew for "fellow" can also be translated "brother." *foreigners*: This doesn't include the immigrant, who should probably be treated like an Israelite. See note on Deuteronomy 15:3.

23:21, 23 A similar statement about solemn promises is

found in Ecclesiastes 5:4. Such promises would be to make an offering in the sanctuary in thanks to God for help.

23:22 *simply don't make any promises*: The idea is different from the surrounding verses. Verses 21 and 23 assume the validity of making promises, but verse 22 recommends not making any solemn promises.

23:24-25 Sharing the land's goodness is also found in Deuteronomy 24:19-22. Here the fruit of the land is to be shared with all, not just the poor. Similar ideas about sharing the land's goodness are found in Deuteronomy's teaching about sharing the feast with the poor and marginalized (see Deut 12:12 and note).

24:1-4 Deuteronomy's rules for divorce are narrowly concerned with the issue of the same man remarrying a wife he earlier divorced. It doesn't directly address how and when divorce can happen, but it assumes that a man can divorce his wife on almost any grounds.

24:1 *something inappropriate*: an imprecise term. It may refer to some form of ritual uncleanness (see Deut 23:14); or it may be a broad term that covers any reason for wanting a divorce.

24:4 The original husband can't remarry the woman

again after she has been polluted in this way because the LORD detests that. Don't pollute the land the LORD your God is giving to you as an inheritance.

<sup>5</sup>A newly married man doesn't have to march in battle. Neither should any related duties be placed on him. He is to live free of such responsibilities for one year, so he can bring joy to his new wife.

### **Pawning**

<sup>6</sup>Millstones or even just the upper millstone must not be pawned, because that would be pawning someone's livelihood.

### **Kidnapping**

<sup>7</sup>If someone is caught kidnapping their fellow Israelites, intending to enslave the Israelite or sell them, that kidnapper must die. Remove<sup>4</sup> such evil from your community!

### **Skin disease**

<sup>8</sup>Be on guard against outbreaks of skin disease<sup>6</sup> by being very careful about what you do. You must carefully do everything the levitical priests teach you, just as I have commanded them. <sup>9</sup>Remember, after all, what the LORD your God did to Miriam on your departure from Egypt!

### **Loans**

<sup>10</sup>When you make any type of loan to your neighbor, don't enter their house to receive the collateral. <sup>11</sup>You must wait outside. The person to whom you are lending will bring the collateral to you out there. <sup>12</sup>Moreover, if the person is poor, you are not allowed to sleep in their pawned coat. <sup>13</sup>Instead, be certain to give the pawned coat back by sunset so they can sleep in their own coat. They will bless you, and you will be considered righteous before the LORD your God.

### **Payment for workers**

<sup>14</sup>Don't take advantage of poor or needy workers, whether they are fellow Israelites or immigrants who live in your land or your cities. <sup>15</sup>Pay them their salary the same day, before the sun sets, because they are poor, and their very life depends on that pay, and so they don't cry out against you to the LORD. That would make you guilty.

### **Generational punishment**

<sup>16</sup>Parents shouldn't be executed because of what their children have done; neither should children be executed because of what their parents have done. Each person should be executed for their own guilty acts.

### **Rights of widows, orphans, and immigrants**

<sup>17</sup>Don't obstruct the legal rights of an immigrant or orphan. Don't take a widow's coat as pledge for a loan. <sup>18</sup>Remember how you were a slave in Egypt but how the LORD your God saved you from that. That's why I'm commanding you to do this thing.

<sup>19</sup>Whenever you are reaping the harvest of your field and you leave some grain in the field, don't go back and get it. Let it go to the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows so

<sup>4</sup>Or burn <sup>6</sup>Heb uncertain; traditionally *leprosy*—a term used for several different skin diseases

because of defilement, not for any financial or ethical reason. The issue is probably that the original husband divorced her on some grounds that can't now be ignored. *detests*: See notes on Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:31.

24:5 Similar teachings are found in Deuteronomy 20:5-7. The year away from other duties may be so that a child can be produced.

24:6 The hard stone used for milling grain was essential for human survival (see Deut 24:10-13, 17).

24:7 Enslaving another Israelite violates the sense of a united community that Deuteronomy is trying to achieve. A similar teaching is found in Exodus 21:16.

24:8 This verse presupposes the instructions on skin diseases in Leviticus 13-14.

24:9 The story of *Miriam* is found in Numbers 12. She was placed outside the camp for seven days.

24:10-13 The taking of a cloak as collateral is also found in Exodus 22:26-27. Deuteronomy doesn't allow the lender into the debtor's home (24:10). Deuteronomy also gives a reason for the commandment: favor with others and God (24:13).

24:14 Payment of workers keeps the focus on care for the poor that is found in Deuteronomy 24:10-13.

24:15 *cry out against you*: in contrast to blessing you (Deut 24:13).

24:16 The instruction is cited in 2 Kings 14:6. In ordinary matters this principle is followed. In the case of divine and human covenants, however, loyalty can last over generations, as can punishment.

24:17 The importance of looking after the legal rights of the poor is also found in Deuteronomy 17:19.

24:19-22 A similar teaching is found in Leviticus 19:9-10.

24:10  
Ex 22:25-27;  
Dt 24:11;  
Prv 22:26

24:11 Dt 24:10

24:12 Ex 22:26,  
Ex 23:11;  
Lv 25:25; Ps 41:1;  
Prv 28:27

24:13  
Ex 22:26-27;  
Dt 6:25;  
Ps 106:31;  
Dn 4:27

24:16 2Ki 14:6;  
2Ch 25:4;  
Jer 31:29;  
Jer 31:30;  
Eze 18:20

24:19  
Lv 19:9-10,  
Lv 23:22;  
Dt 14:29;  
Prv 19:17

24:20 Lv 19:10  
 24:21 Lv 19:10  
 25:3 Mt 27:26;  
 2Co 11:24  
 25:4 Prv 12:10;  
 1Co 9:9;  
 1Ti 5:18  
 25:5 Gn 38:8;  
 Ru 3:9, Ru 4:5;  
 Mt 22:24;  
 Mk 12:19  
 25:6 Ru 4:5,  
 Ru 4:10  
 25:7 Dt 21:19;  
 Ru 4:1  
 25:8 Ru 4:6  
 25:9 Nm 12:14;  
 Ru 4:7-8,  
 Ru 4:11;  
 Job 30:10  
 25:13 Lv 19:36;  
 Prv 11:1,  
 Prv 16:11;  
 Eze 45:10;  
 Mt 6:11  
 25:15 Ex 20:12;  
 Dt 4:40

that the LORD your God blesses you in all that you do. <sup>20</sup>Similarly, when you beat the olives off your olive trees, don't go back over them twice. Let the leftovers go to the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows. <sup>21</sup>Again, when you pick the grapes of your vineyard, don't pick them over twice. Let the leftovers go to the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows. <sup>22</sup>Remember how you were a slave in Egypt. That's why I am commanding you to do this thing.

### Corporal punishment

**25** Now two people have a disagreement and they enter into litigation and their case is decided, with the judges declaring one person legally right and the other legally liable. <sup>2</sup>If the guilty party is to be beaten, the presiding judge will have that person lie down and be punished in his presence—the number of blows in measure with the guilt determined. <sup>3</sup>Give no more than forty blows. If more than that is given, your fellow Israelite would be completely disgraced in your eyes.

### Working oxen

<sup>4</sup>Don't muzzle an ox while it is threshing grain.

### The brother-in-law's duty

<sup>5</sup>If brothers live together and one of them dies without having a son, the dead man's wife must not go outside the family and marry a stranger. Instead, her brother-in-law should go to her and take her as his wife. He will then consummate the marriage according to the brother-in-law's duty. <sup>6</sup>The brother-in-law will name the oldest male son that she bears after his dead brother so that his brother's legacy will not be forgotten in Israel. <sup>7</sup>If the brother does not want to marry his sister-in-law, she can go to the elders at the city gate, informing them: "My brother-in-law refuses to continue his brother's legacy in Israel. He's not willing to perform the brother-in-law's duty with me." <sup>8</sup>The city's elders will summon him and talk to him about this. If he doesn't budge, insisting, "I don't want to marry her," <sup>9</sup>then the sister-in-law will approach him while the elders watch. She will pull the sandal off his foot and spit in his face. Then she will exclaim: "That's what's done to any man who won't build up his own brother's family!" <sup>10</sup>Subsequently, that man's family will be known throughout Israel as "the house of the removed sandal."

### Improper touching

<sup>11</sup>If two men are fighting with each other—a man and his fellow Israelite—and the wife of one of them gets into the fight, trying to save her husband from his attacker and does so by reaching out and grabbing his genitals, <sup>12</sup>you must cut off her hand. Show no mercy.

### Honest business practices

<sup>13</sup>Don't have two different types of money weights in your bag, a heavy one and a light one. <sup>14</sup>Don't have two different types of ephahs in your house, a large one and a small one. <sup>15</sup>Instead, you must have only one weight, complete and correct, and only one ephah, also complete and correct, so that your life might be long in the fertile land the LORD your God

The book of Ruth provides a memorable story of this practice (Ruth 2).

**25:1-3** This instruction prevents corporal punishment from being taken too far. The two parties can't reach agreement and have decided to have their dispute decided by the judges. The purpose of this law about corporal punishment may be to encourage disputing parties to settle their differences, rather than going before the leaders. If they can't, they risk a public beating. The avoidance of public shame is also a theme in Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

**25:4** Denying the worker, even an animal, some of the fruits of its hard work is seen as unjust.

**25:5-10** Many biblical texts show that Israelites cared about the continuation of the family line. If a male family member died, the traditional practice was that the nearest male family member would marry the widow. The children would inherit the land of the dead family member. This practice is reflected in Genesis 38 and the book of Ruth. Both stories suggest that the traditional solution wasn't

seen as an attractive option. Presumably if there was no heir, the children of the surviving family member would inherit more. The marriage means acting in the family interest rather than the individual interest. Deuteronomy's teaching allows that an Israelite might refuse to marry his dead brother's widow. The only means the widow has is persuasion and public shaming.

**25:9** *pull the sandal off his foot*: Removing the sandal probably had some symbolic meaning, which is no longer clear to us. It also was a legal action (see Ruth 4:7).

**25:12** *you must cut off her hand*: the only case of mutilation as a punishment in the OT. It may show Deuteronomy's concern with the Israelites' having children. See also Deuteronomy 23:1.

**25:13-15** Deuteronomy insists that weights and measures be true and fair. The same idea is found in Proverbs 11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23. In ancient Israel it was difficult to ensure weights were true. It is no accident, then, that Deuteronomy doesn't give a law, but warns the people.

is giving you. <sup>16</sup>What's more, all who do such things, all who do business dishonestly, are detestable to the LORD your God. <sup>17</sup>Remember, after all, what Amalek did to you on your departure from Egypt: <sup>18</sup>how he met up with you on the way, striking from behind those who were lagging back because you were weak and tired, and because he didn't fear God. <sup>19</sup>So once the LORD your God gives you relief from all the enemies that surround you in the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, you must wipe out Amalek's memory from under the heavens. Don't forget this!

### **The ceremony upon entering the land**

**26** Once you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you take possession of it and are settled there, <sup>2</sup>take some of the early produce of the fertile ground that you have harvested from the land the LORD your God is giving you, and put it in a basket. Then go to the location the LORD your God selects for his name to reside. <sup>3</sup>Go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him: "I am declaring right now before the LORD my<sup>f</sup> God that I have indeed arrived in the land the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us."

<sup>4</sup>The priest will then take the basket from you and place it before the LORD your God's altar. <sup>5</sup>Then you should solemnly state before the LORD your God:

"My father was a starving Aramean. He went down to Egypt, living as an immigrant there with few family members, but that is where he became a great nation, mighty and numerous. <sup>6</sup>The Egyptians treated us terribly, oppressing us and forcing hard labor on us. <sup>7</sup>So we cried out for help to the LORD, our ancestors' God. The LORD heard our call. God saw our misery, our trouble, and our oppression. <sup>8</sup>The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, with awesome power, and with signs and wonders. <sup>9</sup>He brought us to this place and gave us this land—a land full of milk and honey. <sup>10</sup>So now I am bringing the early produce of the fertile ground that you, LORD, have given me."

Set the produce before the LORD your God, bowing down before the LORD your God. <sup>11</sup>Then celebrate all the good things the LORD your God has done for you and your family—each one of you along with the Levites and the immigrants who are among you.

*Land* It's important not to overlook the importance of land for the book of Deuteronomy. This temptation is perhaps especially strong for Christian readers of the book. The land's importance is seen in a number of respects. The book opens with the people on the way to the promised land. The book is set on the edge of the land of Canaan. They are about to enter, but they need to remain obedient. If they are obedient, then the conquest of the land will succeed. Historically, the book was probably written when the land was under threat or the people were in exile (see Deut 29–30). The book holds open the possibility of return to the land if the people change their intentions and are obedient.

The land is the most obvious sign of the blessings that come from being in covenant with God. The land is described as "full of milk and honey" (Deut 6:3) and is often contrasted with life in the wilderness (Deut 8). It was promised to the fathers. Now, their children are taking possession of what was promised. But the land can also be taken away in the future if the covenant isn't followed.

<sup>f</sup>LXX; MT and most versions read *your*.

25:16 *detestable*: See notes on Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:31.

25:17 *what Amalek did*: The story of Amalek is told in Exodus 17:8–16. Nothing is said in Exodus about Amalek attacking Israel when the people were weak and tired. God does promise to fight against Amalek forever in Exodus 17. This passage in Deuteronomy might have been written to explain this permanent warfare.

25:18 *striking . . . those who were lagging back*: Amalek's actions are the exact opposite of those demanded of Israel. He struck down the *weak*. In contrast, Israel is again and again told to help the poor and marginalized.

25:19 *wipe out Amalek's memory*: Saul is condemned in 1 Samuel 15 for failing to carry out this commandment when he fought against Agag the Amalekite.

26:1–11 The harvest ceremonies are mentioned in Deuteronomy 16. This chapter appears to be out of place.

What is described is, perhaps, to be understood as the first ceremony of harvest on entering the land. No doubt it provided a pattern for future celebrations, for the first part of the harvest was offered to God every year (see Lev 23:9–22).

26:5 *starving Aramean*: An alternative translation is "wandering Aramean." The reference to hunger makes a strong contrast to the Israelite worshipper now offering from the fruit of the land.

26:6 *The Egyptians treated us*: The solemn statement brings together the past and the present. The "I" of the Israelite worshipper joins with the "they" of the ancestors.

26:9 *this place*: the land or the chosen sanctuary. *land full of milk and honey*: See note on Deuteronomy 6:3.

26:11 *the Levites and the immigrants*: See note on Deuteronomy 12:12.

26:12 Lv 27:30;  
Dt 14:28-29  
26:15 Is 63:15;  
Zec 2:13  
26:17 Ex 19:8;  
Ex 24:7  
26:18 Ex 6:7,  
Ex 19:5; Dt 7:6,  
Dt 14:2  
27:1 Ex 3:16,  
Ex 3:18; Ex 4:29;  
Ex 12:21; Dt 4:1  
27:5  
Ex 20:24-25;  
Josh 8:31

<sup>12</sup>When you have finished paying the entire tenth part of your produce on the third year—that is the year for paying the tenth-part—you will give it to the Levites, the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows so they can eat in your cities until they are full. <sup>13</sup>Then announce before the LORD your God: “I have removed the holy portion from my<sup>a</sup> house, and I have given it to the Levites, the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows—in full compliance with your entire commandment that you commanded me. I haven’t broken your commandments. I haven’t forgotten one! <sup>14</sup>I haven’t eaten from the holy portion while mourning, nor did I remove it while I was polluted, nor have I dedicated any of it to the dead. I’ve obeyed the LORD my God’s voice. I’ve done everything just as you commanded me. <sup>15</sup>Please look down from your holy home, from heaven itself, and bless your people Israel and the fertile land that you have given us—a land full of milk and honey—just like you promised our ancestors.”

### Conclusion to the regulations and case laws

<sup>16</sup>This very moment the LORD your God is commanding you to keep these regulations and case laws. So keep them and do them with all your mind and with your entire being! <sup>17</sup>Today you have affirmed that the LORD will be your God and that you will walk in his ways and follow his regulations, his commandments, and his case laws, and that you will obey his voice. <sup>18</sup>Today the LORD has gotten your agreement<sup>b</sup> that you will be his treasured people, just like he promised—by keeping his commandments—<sup>19</sup>in order to set you high above all the other nations that he made in praise, fame, and honor; and so that you are a people holy to the LORD your God, just as he said you would be.

### Stones of the Instruction

**27** Then Moses and Israel’s elders commanded the people: <sup>1</sup>Keep all of the commandment that I am giving you right now. <sup>2</sup>The same day you cross the Jordan River to enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, set up large stones and cover them with plaster. <sup>3</sup>Once you have crossed over, write on the stones all the words of this Instruction because you will have entered<sup>d</sup> the land the LORD your God is giving to you—a land full of milk and honey—exactly as the LORD, your ancestors’ God, promised you. <sup>4</sup>Once you have crossed over the Jordan River, set up these stones that I’m telling you about right now on Mount Ebal. Cover them with plaster <sup>5</sup>and build an altar there for the LORD your God—an altar of stones that haven’t been cut with iron tools. <sup>6</sup>(You must build

<sup>a</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT lacks *my*. <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Or *in order that you might enter*; Heb uncertain

26:12-15 The tithe celebrates the goodness of the land and reflects the need to be generous to the poor and marginalized.

26:12 See the teaching about giving a tenth in Deuteronomy 14:22-29.

26:13 *I have removed the holy portion*: Because of the offering’s holy purpose, none of it can be kept back.

26:14 Before giving the food to others, the Israelite landowner confesses that the food hasn’t been defiled or used for offerings to the dead. This confession is similar to the insistence that sacrificial animals have no defect (see Deut 15:21). Second-best offerings that the worshipper would rather not keep are unacceptable. *to the dead*: Offerings to dead ancestors were made in ancient Israel.

26:15 *your holy home, from heaven itself*: Heaven as God’s home isn’t a significant theme in Deuteronomy. Compare with 1 Kings 8:27. *land full of milk and honey*: See note on Deuteronomy 6:3.

26:16–28:68 The expectations in Deuteronomy 12:1–26:15 are the content of the covenant. This covenant is now sealed through a number of different rituals.

26:16-19 These verses contain the covenant formula, which describes the commitments of both the covenant parties to each other.

26:16 *regulations and case laws* refers to Deuteronomy 12–26. See Deuteronomy 12:1.

26:17 Describes the people’s obligations to the Lord. They must obey all the commandments given in Deuteronomy 12–26.

26:18-19 The Lord’s commitment to the people. *his treasured people*: See Deuteronomy 7:6. *set you high*: If obedient, the people will be greatly honored by the other nations.

27:1-10 Moses takes steps to make sure that the Instruction is written down and visible for all to see in the promised land.

27:2 *The same day* suggests something done near Jericho after the crossing of the Jordan. However, Deuteronomy 27:4 talks of Mount Ebal, which is in the middle of the land of Canaan, more removed from the Jordan. The fulfillment of this chapter is found in Joshua 8:30-35, which also mentions Mount Ebal.

27:3 *a land full of milk and honey*: See note on Deuteronomy 6:3.

27:4 *Mount Ebal*: a mountain by the modern city of Nablus.

27:5 *haven’t been cut with iron tools*: The stones for the altar were not to be cut with tools (see Exod 20:25).

27:6 The Samaritans claimed that Mount Gerizim, which is mentioned together with Mount Ebal in Deuteronomy



the LORD your God's altar with uncut stones.) Then offer up on that altar entirely burned sacrifices to the LORD your God. <sup>7</sup>Offer up well-being sacrifices and eat them there, celebrating in the LORD your God's presence. <sup>8</sup>Make sure to write all the words of this Instruction on the stones plainly and clearly.

<sup>9</sup>Then Moses and the levitical priests said to all Israel: Quiet down and listen, Israel! This very moment you have become the people of the LORD your God. <sup>10</sup>So obey the LORD your God's voice. Do his commandments and his regulations that I'm giving you right now.

### **Ceremony on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal**

<sup>11</sup>That same day Moses commanded the people: <sup>12</sup>Once you have crossed over the Jordan River, the following tribes will stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. <sup>13</sup>And these are the tribes that will stand on Mount Ebal for the cursing: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. <sup>14</sup>The Levites will address every individual Israelite with a loud voice:

<sup>15</sup>"Cursed is anyone who makes an idol or an image—things detestable to the LORD, made by artisans—and sets it up secretly."

All the people will reply: "We agree!"

<sup>16</sup>"Cursed is anyone who belittles their father or mother."

All the people will reply: "We agree!"

<sup>17</sup>"Cursed is anyone who tampers with their neighbor's property lines."

All the people will reply: "We agree!"

<sup>18</sup>"Cursed is anyone who misleads a blind person on a road."

All the people will reply: "We agree!"

<sup>19</sup>"Cursed is anyone who obstructs the legal rights of immigrants, orphans, or widows."

All the people will reply: "We agree!"

<sup>20</sup>"Cursed is anyone who has sex with his father's wife, because that exposes his father's private matters."<sup>k</sup>

All the people will reply: "We agree!"

<sup>21</sup>"Cursed is anyone who has sex with any kind of animal."

All the people will reply: "We agree!"

<sup>22</sup>"Cursed is anyone who has sex with his sister, whether his father's daughter or his mother's daughter."

All the people will reply: "We agree!"

<sup>23</sup>"Cursed is anyone who has sex with his mother-in-law."

All the people will reply: "We agree!"

<sup>24</sup>"Cursed is anyone who kills his neighbor in secret."

All the people will reply: "We agree!"

<sup>25</sup>"Cursed is anyone who accepts money to kill an innocent person."

All the people will reply: "We agree!"

<sup>j</sup>Heb *Amen*; also in the following verses <sup>k</sup>Or *because that uncovers his father's skirt*

27:12-13, was the chosen place for the altar. In Judaism the chosen place is Jerusalem.

27:7 *celebrating*: eating a festival meal.

27:8 *on the stones*: presumably the stones mentioned in Deuteronomy 27:4, and not the stones of the altar (Deut 27:5-7).

27:9 *This very moment*: The covenant formula in Deuteronomy 26:16-19 results in a change of status. Israel has become God's people and has taken on the commitments of the covenant.

27:11-26 The tribes assemble on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal to proclaim the blessings and curses of the covenant.

27:12-13 The southern mountain, Mount Gerizim, has the tribes who live in the center of the land. The northern mountain, Mount Ebal, has the tribes who live in Galilee or on the other side of the Jordan. *bless the people... cursing*: Only curses are given in Deuteronomy 27:14-26. In Deuteronomy 28 blessings will also be listed, as well as more curses.

27:15-26 Many of the actions that are cursed are things done in secret.

27:15 *idol*: Idolatry is a central concern in Deuteronomy. It opens the Ten Commandments (Deut 5:7-10) and is a major theme in Deuteronomy 6-11. It provides a fitting opening to the series of curses. *detestable*: See notes on Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:31.

27:16 Behaving badly toward parents has already been mentioned (Deut 21:18-21).

27:17 See note on Deuteronomy 19:14.

27:18 The abuse of those with disabilities is also condemned in Leviticus 19:14.

27:19 The poor and marginalized are mentioned frequently in Deuteronomy.

27:20 See note on Deuteronomy 22:30.

27:21 Sex with animals is condemned in Leviticus 18:23; 20:15.

27:22-23 These types of incest are also condemned in Leviticus 18:9, 17; 20:14, 17.

27:8 Josh 8:32;  
Hab 2:2  
27:9 Ex 3:6,  
Ex 4:22,  
Ex 29:45;  
Lv 22:32;  
Dt 26:18  
27:15 Ex 20:4,  
Ex 34:17;  
1Co 14:16  
27:17 Dt 19:14;  
Prv 22:28,  
Prv 23:10;  
Hos 5:10  
27:25 Ex 23:7-8;  
Dt 16:19;  
Eze 22:12

27:26 Dt 28:15;  
Ps 119:21;  
Jer 11:3; Ga 3:10

28:4 Gn 49:25;  
Dt 7:13

28:12 Lv 26:4;  
Dt 11:14,  
Dt 15:6,  
Dt 28:44;  
Ps 135:7

28:16 Dt 28:3

<sup>26</sup>“Cursed is anyone who doesn’t support the words of this Instruction by carrying them out.”

All the people will reply: “We agree!”

### Future blessing

**28** Now if you really obey the LORD your God’s voice, by carefully keeping all his commandments that I am giving you right now, then the LORD your God will set you high above all nations on earth. <sup>2</sup>All these blessings will come upon you and find you if you obey the LORD your God’s voice: <sup>3</sup>You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the field. <sup>4</sup>Your own fertility, your soil’s produce, and your livestock’s offspring—the young of both cattle and flocks—will be blessed. <sup>5</sup>Your basket and your kneading bowl will be blessed. <sup>6</sup>You will be blessed when you are out and about and blessed when you come back. <sup>7</sup>The LORD will defeat any enemies who attack you. They will come against you from one direction but will run for their lives away from you in seven different directions. <sup>8</sup>The LORD will command the blessing to be with you—in your barns and on all the work you do—and he will bless you on the land the LORD your God is giving you. <sup>9</sup>The LORD will establish you as his own, a holy nation, just as he swore to you, if you keep the LORD your God’s commandments and walk in his ways. <sup>10</sup>All the earth’s peoples will see that you are called by the LORD’s name, and they will be in awe of you. <sup>11</sup>The LORD will make good things abound for you—whether the fertility of your womb, your livestock’s offspring, or your fertile soil’s produce—on the very land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give to you. <sup>12</sup>The LORD will open up for you his own well-stocked storehouse, the heavens, providing your land with rain at just the right time and blessing all your work. You will lend to many nations, but you won’t have any need to borrow. <sup>13</sup>The LORD will make you the head of things, not the tail; you will be at the top of things, not the bottom, as long as you obey the LORD your God’s commandments that I’m commanding you right now, by carefully doing them. <sup>14</sup>Don’t deviate even a bit from any of these words that I’m commanding you right now by following other gods and serving them.

### Future curses

<sup>15</sup>But if you don’t obey the LORD your God’s voice by carefully doing all his commandments and his regulations that I am commanding you right now, all these curses will come upon you and find you. <sup>16</sup>You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the field. <sup>17</sup>Your basket and kneading bowl will be cursed. <sup>18</sup>Your own fertility, your soil’s produce, your cattle’s young, and your flock’s offspring will be cursed. <sup>19</sup>You will be cursed when you are out and about and cursed when you come back. <sup>20</sup>The LORD will send calamity, confusion, and frustration on you no matter what work you are doing until you are wiped out and until you disappear—it’ll be quick!—because of the evil acts by which you have abandoned him.<sup>1</sup> <sup>21</sup>The LORD will make a plague stick to you until he has totally wiped you off the fertile land you are entering to possess. <sup>22</sup>The LORD will strike you with consumption, fever, and

<sup>1</sup>Or *me*, in which case the text shifts to direct divine discourse.

**27:26** The final curse ends the series by requiring obedience of the entire Instruction.

**28:1-68** The chapter sets out some blessings when the teaching is obeyed (28:1-14) and a longer list of curses that will come on Israel if the people disobey (28:15-68). The content of these blessings and curses is very close to the blessings and curses found in international treaties at the time.

**28:1** *high above all nations on earth*: picks up the ideas in Deuteronomy 26:19.

**28:3** *city . . . field*: The contrasting pair means that God will bless the Israelites everywhere.

**28:4** *Your own fertility*: Bearing children and passing on knowledge to the next generation are important in Deuteronomy.

**28:5** *basket*: for the harvest (see Deut 26:4).

**28:6** *when you are out . . . when you come back*: could mean all of life’s activities. Alternatively, the expression is used in the OT of armies going out to war and returning from war

(e.g., 1 Sam 18:13). This leads on to the theme of warfare in Deuteronomy 28:7.

**28:7** *The LORD*: From this verse the Lord is identified as the one who does the blessing.

**28:9** *swore to you*: Elsewhere in Deuteronomy God’s swearing a promise always relates to the ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It perhaps looks back to Exodus 19:6.

**28:10** *called by the Lord’s name*: a sign of the Lord’s ownership.

**28:12** *providing your land with rain*: Israel’s dependence on rain is also mentioned in Deuteronomy 11:14.

**28:14** The conclusion of the blessings reminds the people of the centrality of the first commandment (Deut 5:7).

**28:15** Almost the reverse of Deuteronomy 28:1.

**28:16-19** Reverses Deuteronomy 28:4-6.

**28:20** Probably a reversal of Deuteronomy 28:7. The people will be confused and frustrated in battle.

**28:21-22** In the curses, disease is a theme that appears twice more (see Deut 28:27, 35).

inflammation; with scorching heat and drought;<sup>m</sup> with destruction and disease for your crops.<sup>n</sup> These things will chase you until you are dead and gone. <sup>23</sup>The sky over your head will be as hard as bronze; the earth under your feet will be like iron. <sup>24</sup>The LORD will turn the rain on your land into dust. Only dirt will fall down on you from the sky until you are completely wiped out. <sup>25</sup>The LORD will hand you over defeated to your enemies. You will go out against them by one direction, but you will run for your life away from them in seven different directions. All the earth's kingdoms will be horrified by you. <sup>26</sup>Your corpses will be food for every bird in the sky and animal on earth; no one will frighten them off. <sup>27</sup>The LORD will afflict you with Egyptian inflammation, hemorrhoids,<sup>o</sup> rash, and itch. You will be untreatable. <sup>28</sup>The LORD will make you go crazy, make you blind, make your mind confused. <sup>29</sup>You will fumble around at high noon as blind people fumble around in darkness. Your plans won't prosper. Instead, you will be constantly oppressed and taken advantage of without any savior. <sup>30</sup>You might get engaged to a woman, but another man will have sex with her. You might build a house, but you won't get to live in it. You might plant a vineyard, but you won't enjoy it. <sup>31</sup>Your ox will be slaughtered while you watch, but you won't get to eat any of it. Your donkey will be stolen right out from under you, and it won't come back. Your flocks will be given to your enemies. No one will save you. <sup>32</sup>Your sons and daughters will be given to another nation while you watch; you will long for them constantly, but you won't have the power to do anything about it. <sup>33</sup>The produce of your land and all your hard work will be consumed by people you don't know. You will be nothing but oppressed and mistreated constantly. <sup>34</sup>The sights your eyes see will drive you insane. <sup>35</sup>The LORD will strike you with horrible inflammation in your knees and legs, from the sole of your foot to the top of your head. You will be untreatable. <sup>36</sup>The LORD will send you and the king that you appoint over you far away to a nation that neither you nor your ancestors have known. There you will worship other gods made of wood and stone. <sup>37</sup>You will become a horror, fit only for use in proverbs and in insults by all the nations where the LORD drives you. <sup>38</sup>You might scatter a lot of seed on the field, but you will gather almost nothing because the locusts will eat it all. <sup>39</sup>You might plant lots of vineyards and work hard in them, but you won't drink any wine or harvest the grapes because worms will devour them. <sup>40</sup>You might have many olive trees throughout your territories, but you won't cover yourself with their oil because your olive trees will fail. <sup>41</sup>You might have sons and daughters, but they won't be yours for long because they will be taken away as prisoners. <sup>42</sup>Crickets will take over all your trees and your soil's produce. <sup>43</sup>The immigrants who live among you will be promoted over you, higher and higher! But you will be demoted, lower and lower! <sup>44</sup>They will lend to you, but you will have nothing to lend to them. They will be the head of things; you will be the tail.

<sup>45</sup>That's how all these curses will come over you, pursuing you, reaching you until you are completely wiped out, because you didn't obey the LORD your God's voice by keeping his commandments and his regulations that he gave you. <sup>46</sup>These things will be a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever. <sup>47</sup>Because you didn't serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly above all else,<sup>p</sup> <sup>48</sup>you will serve your enemies—the ones the LORD will send against you—during famine, drought, nakedness, and total deprivation. God will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has wiped you out. <sup>49</sup>The LORD will bring a distant nation—one from the far ends of the earth—against you as fast as the eagle flies: a nation

<sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>n</sup>Or *blight and mildew* <sup>o</sup>Qere; Kethib *tumors* <sup>p</sup>Heb uncertain

28:23 *bronze . . . iron*: The sky will not give rain, and the earth will not bring up plants.

28:25 Reverses Deuteronomy 28:7. *horrified by you*: instead of being honored. See Deuteronomy 28:10.

28:26 Not having a proper burial was considered a terrible punishment. To be eaten by animals makes it much worse (e.g., 1 Kgs 21:23-24).

28:27 See note on Deuteronomy 28:21-22. In Exodus 15:26 and Deuteronomy 7:15, Egypt and disease are mentioned together. This is probably a reference to the plagues.

28:28 The same words occur in Zechariah 12:4.

28:30-31 A collection of futility curses. The natural

relationship between starting something and completing it has been broken (see Deut 20:5-7).

28:32 Deuteronomy 28:41 also mentions sons and daughters being carried away.

28:35 See note on Deuteronomy 28:21-22.

28:36 Worshipping gods of wood and stone in exile is also mentioned in Deuteronomy 4:28.

28:38-40 Three curses covering the three main crops: grain, grapes, and olives.

28:41 See Deuteronomy 28:32.

28:43-44 See Deuteronomy 28:12-13.

28:45 A summary that echoes Deuteronomy 28:1, 15.

28:47-57 The curses now continue with a sketch of how

28:23 Lv 26:19  
28:39 Jl 1:4;  
Zep 1:13  
28:44 Dt 28:12  
28:48 Jer 28:14  
28:49 Is 5:26;  
Jer 4:13, Jer 5:15,  
Jer 48:40,  
Jer 49:22;  
Lam 4:19

28:52 2Ki 25:1  
 28:53 Lv 26:29;  
 Dt 28:57;  
 2Ki 6:28;  
 Jer 19:9;  
 Lam 2:20;  
 Lam 4:10;  
 Eze 5:10  
 28:58 Dt 6:13;  
 Neh 9:5; Ps 96:4;  
 Is 29:23;  
 Eze 36:23;  
 Mt 10:28  
 28:63 Dt 30:9;  
 Prv 1:26;  
 Jer 12:14;  
 Jer 32:41;  
 Zep 3:17  
 28:67 Dt 28:34;  
 Job 7:3-4

that speaks a language you can't understand, <sup>50</sup>a stern nation that doesn't go easy on the very old or show pity to the very young. <sup>51</sup>That nation will devour your livestock's offspring and your soil's produce until you yourselves are destroyed because you will have no grain, wine, or oil left—nor any young from your cattle or offspring from your flocks—that is, until that nation annihilates you. <sup>52</sup>That nation will attack you in all your cities until your high, reinforced walls that you thought were so safe fall down across your entire countryside. That nation will attack you in all your cities throughout the land the LORD your God has given you. <sup>53</sup>You will eat the offspring of your own womb—the flesh of your own sons and daughters, whom the LORD your God gave you—because of the desperate and dire circumstances that your enemy has brought on you.

<sup>54</sup>Even the most gentle and refined man among you will scowl at his brother or his own dear wife, or the last of his surviving children. <sup>55</sup>He won't want to give them any of his children's flesh that he will be eating because he has no other food due to the desperate and dire circumstances that your enemy has brought on you in all your cities. <sup>56</sup>Even the most gentle and refined woman among you, who is so refined and gentle she wouldn't stomp her foot on the ground, will scowl at her own dear husband, her son, or her daughter—<sup>57</sup>not wanting to give them any of the afterbirth she pushed out or the babies she bore, because she will be eating them secretly while starving due to the desperate and dire circumstances that your enemy will bring on you in your cities.

<sup>58</sup>If you don't carefully keep all the words of this Instruction that are written in this scroll, by fearing the awesome and glorious name of the LORD your God—<sup>59</sup>the LORD will overwhelm you and your descendants with severe and chronic afflictions, and with terrible and untreatable sicknesses. <sup>60</sup>He'll put on you all the Egyptian diseases about which you were so afraid; they will stick to you! <sup>61</sup>What's more, the LORD will bring on you all the other diseases and plagues that aren't written in this Instruction scroll until you are completely wiped out. <sup>62</sup>Once as countless as the stars in the night sky, only a few of you will be left alive—all because you didn't obey the LORD your God's voice. <sup>63</sup>And just as before, the LORD enjoyed doing good things for you and increasing your numbers, now the LORD will enjoy annihilating and destroying you. You will be torn off the very fertile land you are entering to possess. <sup>64</sup>The LORD will scatter you among every nation, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will serve other gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known—gods of wood and stone. <sup>65</sup>Among those nations you will have no rest and no place to call your own. <sup>66</sup>There the LORD will give you an agitated mind, failing eyes, and a depressed spirit. <sup>67</sup>Your life will seem to dangle before your very eyes. You will be afraid night and day. You won't be able to count on surviving for long. <sup>68</sup>In the morning you will say: "I wish it was nighttime," but at nighttime you will say, "I wish it was morning"—on account of your tortured mind, which will be terrified, and because of the horrible sights that your eyes will see. <sup>69</sup>Finally, the LORD will take you back to Egypt in ships, by the route I promised you would never see again. There you will try to sell yourselves as slaves—both male and female—but no one will want to buy you.

### **The third heading: The new covenant at Moab**

**29**<sup>a</sup>These are the words of the covenant the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in the land of Moab in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb. <sup>2b</sup>Moses summoned all Israel, saying to them:

<sup>a</sup>Or *resting place for the sole of your foot* <sup>b</sup>28:69 in Heb <sup>c</sup>29:1 in Heb

God will bring an enemy against Israel to destroy it. The description is particularly close to Jeremiah 5:15-19.

**28:53-57** The horrible picture of parents consuming their own children is found elsewhere in the Bible (Lev 26:29; 2 Kgs 6:28-29; Jer 19:9; Lam 2:20; 4:10).

**28:60** For *Egyptian diseases*, see note on Deuteronomy 28:27.

**28:62** *stars in the night sky*: an echo of the promise to Abraham. See note on Deuteronomy 1:10.

**28:64** *wood and stone*: See note on Deuteronomy 28:36.

**28:68** See Deuteronomy 17:16.

**29:1-30:20** The terms of the covenant. The blessings and curses are now completed. With these words Moses seeks

to encourage the people to keep the covenant. Deuteronomy 29 and 30 belong together and are series of speeches. Moses reminds the people of their history (29:2-9) before calling all to the moment of decision (29:10-15). He warns them about the dangers of disobedience (29:16-29). If the people do disobey, there is the possibility of changing their hearts and lives and returning into relationship with the Lord (30:1-14). Finally, Moses encourages the people to choose obedience, because to do so is to choose life and not death (30:15-20).

**29:1** In the Hebrew text this verse concludes chapter 28. It's probably best understood as a heading to chapter 29, since it's like the other three headings in Deuteronomy

You've seen with your own eyes everything the LORD did in Egypt, to Pharaoh, his servants, and all his land—<sup>3</sup>the great trials your eyes witnessed, those awesome signs and wonders! <sup>4</sup>But until this very moment, the LORD hasn't given you insight to understand, eyes to see, or ears to hear. <sup>5</sup>I've led you in the wilderness forty years now; neither the clothes on your back nor the sandals on your feet have worn out. <sup>6</sup>Neither have you eaten bread nor drunk wine or beer during this time—so that you would know that I am the LORD your God. <sup>7</sup>When you arrived here, Sihon, Heshbon's king, and Og, Bashan's king, marched out to fight against us, but we defeated them. <sup>8</sup>We took possession of their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half of Manasseh's tribe. <sup>9</sup>So then keep the words of this covenant and do them so you can succeed in all you do.

<sup>10</sup>Right now, all of you are in the presence of the LORD your God—the leaders of your tribes, <sup>11</sup>your elders, and your officials, all the Israelite males, <sup>12</sup>your children, your wives, and the immigrants who live with you in your camp, the ones who chop your wood and those who draw your water—<sup>13</sup>ready to enter into the LORD your God's covenant and into the agreement that the LORD your God is making with you right now. <sup>14</sup>That means the Lord will make you his own people right now—he will be your God just as he promised you and just as he swore to our ancestors: to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. <sup>15</sup>But I'm not making this covenant and this agreement with you alone <sup>16</sup>but also with those standing here with us right now before the LORD our God, and also with those who aren't here with us right now.

<sup>17</sup>You know firsthand how we used to live in Egypt and how we passed right through the nations that you passed through. <sup>18</sup>You saw the horrific things, the filthy idols of wood and stone, silver and gold, that they had with them. <sup>19</sup>Make sure there isn't any one among you right now—male or female, clan or tribe—whose mind is turning from being with the LORD our God in favor of going to serve these nations' gods. Make sure there isn't any root among you that is sprouting poison and bitterness. <sup>20</sup>When that kind of person hears the words of this agreement, they congratulate themselves, thinking: I'll be fine even though I insist on being stubborn. This would cause something wet to dry up and become like something parched. <sup>21</sup>The LORD won't be willing to forgive that kind of person; instead, the LORD's anger and passion will smolder against that person. Every curse written in this scroll will stretch out over them, and the LORD will wipe out their name from under the heavens.

<sup>3</sup>Or that I, the LORD, am your God. <sup>4</sup>LXX, Syr; MT *your leaders, your tribes* <sup>5</sup>Heb uncertain; perhaps the agricultural imagery of 29:18 is continued here or the terms are metaphors for human states.

(Deut 1:1; 4:44; 33:1). Covenant is the main theme of Deuteronomy 29 (see Deut 29:9, 12, 14, 21, 25). *Moab... Horeb*: This verse draws a clear distinction between the covenant made at Horeb (see note on Deut 1:2) and that made 40 years later here at Moab.

29:2-9 Moses begins by giving an overview of the people's experience in Egypt and the wilderness.

29:2 *your own eyes*: Strictly speaking, the people in Moab didn't see the events in Egypt. These events were seen by their parents. Here and elsewhere in Deuteronomy, the different generations are often merged together (e.g., Deut 5:3).

29:4 *insight to understand, eyes to see, or ears to hear*: Although the people saw the events, they didn't understand their significance.

29:5 The same idea is found in Deuteronomy 8:4.

29:6 *so that you would know that I am the LORD your God*: The humbling experience in the wilderness is needed in order to recognize who the Lord is. A similar idea is found in Deuteronomy 8:2-5.

29:7-8 These events are told in detail in Deuteronomy 2:24-3:20.

29:9 The recognition of the Lord (Deut 29:6) should lead to obedience.

29:10-15 Moses declares that all Israelites and immigrants, including future children of those present, are entering into the covenant with the Lord. The words "right

now" appear five times, signaling that this is the crucial moment of decision.

29:11 *The immigrants who live in the land will also come under the covenant*. See note on Deuteronomy 15:3. *chop your wood... draw your water*: the most menial tasks. The Gibeonites are given these duties in Joshua 9:27.

29:13 This verse echoes the covenant formula in Deuteronomy 26:16-19. This is the formal expression for entering into covenant with God. *swore to our ancestors*: The promise to the ancestors is usually the promise to give the people the land. In Genesis 17:7-8 the Lord promises to be the God of Abraham's children.

29:15 Future generations could also be included in international treaties.

29:16-21 Moses insists that the commitment to the covenant must be both outward and inward.

29:16 *You know firsthand*: The Israelites with Moses are blended with their parents, who were in Egypt. (See note on Deut 29:2.)

29:17-18 *horrific things... filthy idols*: In Deuteronomy, this language is found only here. It is more common in Ezekiel for expressing utter disgust toward idolatry.

29:18 *these nations' gods*: Deuteronomy assumes the existence of the gods of other nations and their threat to Israel's commitment.

29:19 *This would cause... something parched*: or, "in order to sweep away wet and dry." Rebellious Israelites might

29:5 Dt 8:2,  
Dt 8:4; Neh 9:21  
29:17 Dt 4:28  
29:18 Jer 9:15;  
Lam 3:19;  
Heb 12:15

29:23 Gn 19:24;  
Hos 11:8;  
Zep 2:9  
29:29 Ac 1:7  
30:1 Lv 26:40;  
Dt 11:26;  
Dt 30:15;  
1Ki 8:47  
30:2 Dt 4:30;  
Neh 1:9  
30:6 Dt 6:5;  
Dt 10:16;  
Jer 4:4; Ro 2:29;  
Col 2:11

<sup>21</sup>Out of all Israel's tribes, the LORD will single them out for disaster in compliance with all the covenant curses that are written in this Instruction scroll.

<sup>22</sup>Future generations, your children after you, or foreigners from distant lands will say: Look<sup>w</sup> at all that land's plagues and the sicknesses that the LORD laid on it! <sup>23</sup>Look at all its land burned by sulfur and salt, unsuitable for planting, unable to grow or produce any vegetation, as devastated as Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD devastated in anger and wrath! <sup>24</sup>Indeed, all nations will ask: Why did the LORD do this to this land? What led to this terrible display of anger? <sup>25</sup>They will deduce: It was because those people abandoned the covenant of the LORD, their ancestors' God, which he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. <sup>26</sup>They followed other gods, serving them and worshipping them—other gods that they hadn't experienced before and that the Lord hadn't designated for them. <sup>27</sup>Then the LORD's anger burned against that land, and he brought against it every curse written in this scroll. <sup>28</sup>The LORD ripped them off their land in anger, wrath, and great fury. He threw them into other lands, and that's how things still stand today.

<sup>29</sup>The secret things belong to the LORD our God. The revealed things belong to us and to our children forever: to keep all the words of this covenant.

**30** Now, once all these things happen to you, the blessing and the curse that I'm setting before you, you must call them to mind as you sit among the various nations where the LORD your God has driven you; <sup>2</sup>and you must return to the LORD your God, obeying his voice, in line with all that I'm commanding you right now—you and your children—with all your mind and with all your being. <sup>3</sup>Then the LORD your God will restore you as you were before and will have compassion on you, gathering you up from all the peoples where the LORD your God scattered you. <sup>4</sup>Even if he has driven you to the far end of heaven, the LORD your God will gather you up from there; he will take you back from there. <sup>5</sup>The LORD your God will bring you home to the land that your ancestors possessed; you will possess it again. And he will do good things for you and multiply you—making you more numerous even than your ancestors!

<sup>6</sup>Then the LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants so that you love the LORD your God with all your mind and with all your being in order that you may live. <sup>7</sup>The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those

<sup>w</sup>Or *after they see*

imagine that everyone else (the wet and the dry probably mean everyone here) will be punished, but that they will be safe because of the Lord's commitment to Israel. The following verses promise that the Lord will punish rebellious Israelites individually.

**29:21** *single them out . . . all the covenant curses*: The curses will come upon the guilty, even if the disobedient party is just one person.

**29:22-29** Moses now imagines what will happen if all Israel rebels against the covenant. He gives the viewpoint of other nations seeing Israel's destruction.

**29:23** *Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim*: The cities that were destroyed in Genesis 19 are bywords of complete destruction (see Gen 10:19; 14:8; Hos 11:8).

**29:24** *Why*: Moses invites his listeners to ask the same question as the nations.

**29:25** There is an irony in the nations' having a better understanding than Israel about its covenant with the Lord.

**29:26** *They followed other gods*: Moses again emphasizes the first commandment (Deut 5:7). *designated for them*: Other gods have been assigned to other nations and are off-limits for Israel (see Deut 4:19).

**29:28** *threw them into other lands*: Moses speaks about exile. *still stand today*: The text has the viewpoint of the exile (after 587 BCE).

**29:29** This verse has no obvious links to its surroundings. The secret things may be the future. Only God can see what this is. Moses encourages the Israelites to focus on

what they know. They have the words of the covenant, and they are to keep them.

**30:1-10** When Israel has broken the covenant, there remains the possibility of return.

**30:1** *the blessing and the curse . . . call them to mind*: The Israelites are to reflect upon both the good that comes from obedience and the bad that has resulted from their disobedience. *as you sit*: We return to the perspective of Moses (see Deut 29:27). The text envisions the exile, which is something that happens in the distant future.

**30:2** *with all your mind and with all your being*: echoes Deuteronomy 6:5. The phrase emphasizes the complete devotion needed from Israel.

**30:3** *will restore you*: a play on the word "turn/return" (see note on Deut 30:1-10). If Israel "returns" to the Lord, the Lord will "return" to them, thus restoring them. Although Israel is said to "return" or "repent," the Lord is not said to do so.

**30:4** *far end of heaven*: the very ends of the earth. This verse emphasizes the Lord's control and willingness to return his people.

**30:5** *bring you home to the land*: The land is seen as the great benefit of the covenant. Although Israel's disobedience didn't result in the covenant's being lost forever, Israel has missed out on the benefits of its covenant with the Lord. *more numerous*: The generosity of the Lord is seen in Israel exceeding even its earlier size.

**30:6** *circumcise your hearts*: See note on Deuteronomy 10:16. The Lord has to do the task of inward renewal. This

who hate you and chase you. <sup>8</sup>But you will change and obey the LORD's voice and do all his commandments that I'm commanding you right now. <sup>9</sup>The LORD your God will help you succeed in everything you do—in your own fertility, your livestock's offspring, and your land's produce—everything will be great! Because the LORD will once again enjoy doing good things for you just as he enjoyed doing them for your ancestors, <sup>10</sup>and because you will be obeying the LORD your God's voice, keeping his commandments and his regulations that are written in this Instruction scroll, and because you will have returned to the LORD your God with all your heart and all your being.

<sup>11</sup>This commandment that I'm giving you right now is definitely not too difficult for you. It isn't unreachable. <sup>12</sup>It isn't up in heaven somewhere so that you have to ask, "Who will go up for us to heaven and get it for us that we can hear it and do it?" <sup>13</sup>Nor is it across the ocean somewhere so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the ocean for us and get it for us that we can hear it and do it?" <sup>14</sup>Not at all! The word is very close to you. It's in your mouth and in your heart, waiting for you to do it.

### Life and death

<sup>15</sup>Look here! Today I've set before you life and what's good versus death and what's wrong. <sup>16</sup>If you obey the LORD your God's commandments that I'm commanding you right now by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments, his regulations, and his case laws, then you will live and thrive, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. <sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and so are misled, worshipping other gods and serving them, <sup>18</sup>I'm telling you right now that you will definitely die. You will not prolong your life on the fertile land that you are crossing the Jordan River to enter and possess. <sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth as my witnesses against you right now: I have set life and death, blessing and curse before you. Now choose life—so that you and your descendants will live—<sup>20</sup>by loving the LORD your God, by obeying his voice, and by clinging to him. That's how you will survive and live long on the fertile land the LORD swore to give to your ancestors: to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

### Moses announces his death

**31** Then Moses said<sup>7</sup> these words to all Israel, <sup>2</sup>telling them: I'm 120 years old today. I can't move around well anymore. Plus, the LORD told me "You won't cross the Jordan River."<sup>3</sup> But the LORD your God, he's the one who will cross over

<sup>7</sup>LXX; MT lacks *if you obey the LORD your God's commandments*. <sup>7</sup>LXX, DSS (1QDeut<sup>b</sup>) *When Moses had finished speaking*

inner change prevents the thoughts of secret rebellion described in Deuteronomy 29:16-21. *with all your mind and with all your being*: echoes Deuteronomy 6:5.

**30:9** Repeats the blessing in Deuteronomy 28:4.  
**30:10** *because you will have returned*: Despite the rebellion and exile, Moses imagines a situation where things will be even better than they were before.

**30:11-14** Moses expresses a similar thought in Deuteronomy 29:29. The Israelites have the commandments. To experience blessing they simply need to obey.

**30:11** *too difficult*: or, "too wonderful." Moses denies that what is needed is some heavenly knowledge beyond them.

**30:12-13** *up in heaven... across the ocean*: Job 28 describes quests for wisdom that can't be reached.

**30:14** *very close to you*: The instructions in Deuteronomy are internalized. The people have heard them and can repeat them daily (Deut 6:6-9).

**30:15-20** Moses concludes his encouragement speech by identifying obedience with life.

**30:17-18** *you will definitely die*: The consequences of disobedience are presented in stark terms.

**30:19** *as my witnesses*: or, "to warn you." *choose life*: the high rhetorical point of Moses' speech in Deuteronomy 29-30.

**31:1-29** The covenant is sealed, and Moses has given his extended encouragement to obey the commandments.

**30:9** Dt 28:11;

Dt 28:63;  
Jer 32:41

**30:10** Dt 4:29,  
Dt 29:21,  
Dt 30:2

**30:11** Is 45:19

**30:12** Ro 10:6

**30:14** Ro 10:8

**30:15** Dt 11:26,  
Dt 30:1,  
Dt 32:47

**30:16** Dt 6:5,  
Dt 30:6,  
Dt 30:19

**30:19** Dt 4:26,  
Dt 11:26,  
Dt 30:1;  
Josh 24:15

**30:20** Dt 32:47;  
Ac 17:28

**31:1** Nm 35:1,  
Nm 36:1;  
Dt 29:1, Dt 33:1

**31:2** Ex 7:7;  
Nm 27:17;  
Dt 3:27, Dt 34:7;  
1 Ki 3:7

**31:3** Nm 27:18;  
Dt 1:38, Dt 3:28,  
Dt 9:3, Dt 31:7

In the final chapters he turns to Israel's continued existence after his death. In Deuteronomy 31 he introduces various successors who will help the Israelites in the land. Joshua is commissioned (31:7-8, 14-15). The scroll of the Instruction is given to the Levites for regular reading (31:9-13, 24-29). A song that the people are to remember is recited (Deut 31:16-22; 31:29-32:43).

**31:1** These words can be seen as the introduction to the chapter, as the CEB's translation indicates. They mark a new topic. However, as translation note y indicates, they could also be translated as "When Moses had finished speaking these words to all Israel." They would then mark the close of the "words of the covenant" that began in Deuteronomy 29:1.

**31:2-8** Already in Deuteronomy 3:23-29 the reader has been made aware that Moses will die outside the land of Canaan. Moses encourages the people for the task of conquering the land and speaks especially to Joshua.

**31:2** *120 years old*: See Deuteronomy 34:7. Moses was 80 when he was called to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Exod 7:7). *I can't move around well anymore*: or, "go out and come in." This phrase is possibly a reference to military leadership; see note on Deuteronomy 28:6.

**31:3** *he's the one who will cross... Joshua too will cross over*. The absence of Moses isn't a matter of concern, because the Lord is with them (see Deut 1:42; 20:2-4). Joshua will

31:7 Dt 1:38;  
Dt 3:28, Dt 31:23  
31:16 Ex 34:15;  
Jgs 2:12, Jgs 2:17,  
Jgs 10:6  
31:17 Nm 14:42;  
Dt 32:20;  
Jgs 6:13;  
2Ch 15:2,  
2Ch 24:20

before you! He's the one who will destroy these nations before you so you can displace them. Joshua too will cross over before you just like the LORD indicated. <sup>4</sup>The LORD will do to these enemies the same thing he did to the Amorite kings Sihon and Og, and to their land, when he destroyed them. <sup>5</sup>The LORD will lay them out before you, and you will do to them exactly what the command I've given you dictates. <sup>6</sup>Be strong! Be fearless! Don't be afraid and don't be scared by your enemies, because the LORD your God is the one who marches with you. He won't let you down, and he won't abandon you.

<sup>7</sup>Then Moses called Joshua and, with all Israel watching, said to him: "Be strong and fearless because you are the one who will lead<sup>a</sup> this people to the land the LORD swore to their ancestors to give to them; you are the one who will divide up the land for them. <sup>8</sup>But the LORD is the one who is marching before you! He is the one who will be with you! He won't let you down. He won't abandon you. So don't be afraid or scared!"

### Regular reading of the instruction

<sup>9</sup>Then Moses wrote this Instruction down and gave it to the priests—the Levites who carry the chest containing the LORD's covenant—and to all of the Israelite elders. <sup>10</sup>Moses then commanded them:

At the end of seven years, at the appointed time in the year of debt cancellation, during the Festival of Booths, <sup>11</sup>when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the location he selects, you must read this Instruction aloud, in the hearing of all the people. <sup>12</sup>Gather everyone—men, women, children, and the immigrants who live in your cities—in order that they hear it, learn it, and revere the LORD your God, carefully doing all the words of this Instruction, <sup>13</sup>and so that their children, who don't yet know the Instruction, may hear it and learn to revere the LORD your God for as long as you live on the ground you are crossing the Jordan River to possess.

### Joshua commissioned

<sup>14</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses: "It's almost time for you to die. Summon Joshua. The two of you must present yourselves at the meeting tent so I can command him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the meeting tent. <sup>15</sup>The LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud; the cloud pillar stood at the tent's entrance. <sup>16</sup>The LORD then said to Moses:

"Soon you will rest with your ancestors, and the people will rise up and act unfaithfully, going after strange gods of the land they are entering. They will abandon me, breaking my covenant that I made with them. <sup>17</sup>At that point my anger will burn against them, and I'll be

<sup>a</sup>Sam, Vulg, Syr; MT, Tg accompany

lead the people now, not Moses. *the LORD indicated:* See Deuteronomy 3:28.

31:5 *exactly what the command I've given you dictates:* that is, to put the Canaanite nations to the ban. See Deuteronomy 7:2.

31:6 *Don't be afraid:* The reason for not fearing is God's presence with the people. God will guarantee victory in battle.

31:7 *divide up the land:* Joshua's task is not only to lead the people into battle but to divide the land between the tribes. This verse neatly summarizes the book of Joshua, which divides into roughly two parts: conquest and division of the land.

31:9-13 Moses was the go-between for the Lord and the people (see Deut 5:5, 24-25 and notes). He passed on the teaching. This role will now continue in the form of a scroll that will be read every seven years.

31:9 *who carry the chest:* The scroll was kept by the chest (Deut 31:26). The Ten Commandments were kept within the chest, which is why it is called *the chest containing the LORD's covenant* (Exod 25:16; Deut 31:26).

31:10 *year of debt cancellation:* See Deuteronomy 15:1-6. *Festival of Booths:* See Deuteronomy 16:13-15.

31:11 *appear:* Attending the festivals is described as appearing before the Lord in Deuteronomy 16:16.

31:13 *children . . . may hear it and learn:* For the importance of children hearing the Instruction, see Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25.

31:14-15 The focus returns to Joshua. *meeting tent:* the only mention of the meeting tent and the cloud in Deuteronomy. In Numbers 11 it's the place where the Lord takes some of Moses' spirit and gives it to 70 leaders. Here, too, Joshua will take over from Moses.

31:16-22 Moses is to teach a *poem* to the people, and it will remain in their memories after he dies. It appears in Deuteronomy 32:1-43. It acts like an alarm that will go off when the people rebel against the covenant. The Song of Moses shares many ideas with the rest of Deuteronomy, but the way it puts them is quite different. These verses bring together some of these different expressions.

31:16 *act unfaithfully:* uses a marriage term to describe Israel's sin. In the Song of Moses Israel is said to have made the Lord jealous (Deut 32:16). *strange gods:* This expression occurs otherwise only in Deuteronomy 32:12. Elsewhere Deuteronomy talks about "other gods." A major theme of the book is *covenant*, but the term is absent from the song in Deuteronomy 32:1-43.

31:17 *I'll be the one who abandons them:* Israel's abandoning of the Lord will result in God's abandoning of them.



the one who abandons them! I'll hide my face from them. They will become nothing but food for their enemies,\* and all sorts of bad things and misfortunes will happen to them. Then they will say: 'Haven't these terrible things happened to us because our God is no longer with us?' <sup>18</sup>But I will hide my face at that time because of the many wrong things they have done, because they have turned to other gods! <sup>19</sup>So in light of all that, you must write down this poem and teach it to the Israelites. Put it in their mouths so that the poem becomes a witness for me against them. <sup>20</sup>When I bring the Israelites to the land I swore to their ancestors, which is full of milk and honey, and they eat, get full, then fat, and then turn toward other gods, serving them and disrespecting me and breaking my covenant, <sup>21</sup>then, when all kinds of bad things and misfortunes happen to them, this poem will witness against them, giving its testimony, because it won't be lost from the mouths of their descendants. Yes, I know right now what they are inclined to do, even before I've brought them into the land I swore."

31:18 Dt 31:17;  
Is 59:2, Is 64:7;  
Mt 3:4  
31:20 Dt 6:10,  
Dt 8:10,  
Dt 32:15  
31:23 Dt 31:7,  
Dt 31:14; Josh 1:5

<sup>22</sup>So Moses wrote this poem down that very day, and he taught it to the Israelites.

<sup>23</sup>Then the Lord commissioned Joshua, Nun's son: "Be strong and fearless because you are the one who will bring the Israelites to the land I swore to them. I myself will be with you."

### Life after Moses

<sup>24</sup>Once Moses had finished writing in their entirety all the words of this Instruction scroll, <sup>25</sup>he commanded the Levites who carry the chest containing the LORD's covenant as follows:

<sup>26</sup>"Take this Instruction scroll and put it next to the chest containing the LORD your God's covenant. It must remain there as a witness against you <sup>27</sup>because I know how rebellious and hardheaded you are. If you are this rebellious toward the LORD while I'm still alive, it's bound to get worse once I'm dead! <sup>28</sup>Assemble all of your tribes' elders and your officials in front of me, so I can speak these words in their hearing, and so I can call heaven and earth as my witnesses against them, <sup>29</sup>because I know that after I'm dead, you will ruin everything, departing from the path I've commanded you. Terrible things will happen to you in the future because you will do evil in the LORD's eyes, aggravating him with the things your hands have made."

### The poem of instruction

<sup>30</sup>Then Moses recited in their entirety the words of this poem in the hearing of the entire assembly of Israel:

\*Heb lacks for their enemies.

*I'll hide my face from them:* looking ahead to the song (Deut 32:20). *bad things:* The same word is found in Deuteronomy 32:23. "Haven't these terrible things . . . God is no longer with us?": The nations ask a similar question in Deuteronomy 29:24.

31:19 *in their mouths:* learned by memory. *witness:* The song's role is to accuse the Israelites and witness against them when they sin.

31:20 *full of milk and honey:* a classic expression in Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 6:3). *they eat, get full, then fat:* This expression is closer to how the song portrays Israel's rebellion (Deut 32:15). The richness of the land of Canaan is seen as a potential threat, similar to what we see in Deuteronomy 8:11–20. *disrespecting me:* A similar Hebrew word is used in Deuteronomy 32:19 to refer to God's rejection of the people.

31:21 *inclined to do:* Even at the edge of the promised land, Deuteronomy presents Israel's sin and exile as a certainty.

31:23 For the third time, Joshua comes into focus and is finally commissioned at the meeting tent (Deut 31:14–15; cf. Deut 1:38; 3:28).

31:24–30 The spotlight comes back to the Instruction scroll. Like the song, it will be a witness against the Israelites when they turn from the Lord.

31:26 The scroll is accessible to both partners in the covenant and can be referenced.

31:27 *rebellious and hardheaded:* echoes the rebellion of the gold calf (see Deut 9:6, 7, 13, 23, 24). *it's bound to get worse:* The people turned to the gold calf after just 40 days of Moses' being absent.

31:28 *heaven and earth:* See Deuteronomy 4:26; 30:19; 32:1. *as my witnesses:* or, "to warn you."

31:29 *Moses* echoes the Lord in predicting Israel's future rebellion. *the things your hands have made:* idols.

31:30–32:47 It's usually thought that the Song of Moses had its own history separately from the book of Deuteronomy. Nevertheless, the song shares many ideas and emphases with the book of Deuteronomy, though it does put them in its own way. The song provides further insight into how Israel will turn away from the Lord and, even more, how it will be brought back into relationship. When the people are oppressed, the Lord will have compassion on them. The song is made up of a series of speeches. These move between the narrator of the song and the Lord (or the elders in Deut 31:8–14). It may be that the song was to be recited by two parties. The song tells a story of God's generosity, the people's rebellion and punishment, and how God brings them back.

32:1 Dt 4:26;  
Is 1:2  
32:2 2Sa 23:4;  
Job 29:22;  
Ps 72:6; Is 55:11;  
Mi 5:7

32:4 Gn 18:25;  
Isa 2:2;  
2Sa 22:31;  
Ps 18:30;  
Dn 4:37

32:5 Mt 17:17;  
Lk 9:41; Phi 2:15

32:6 Dt 32:15;  
Is 63:16

32:7 Dt 4:32;  
Job 8:8; Ps 44:1

32:8 Ac 17:26

32:9 Jer 10:16;  
Jer 51:19

32:10 Ps 17:8;  
Pv 7:7; 2ec 2:8

**32** Heaven! Pay attention and I will speak;  
Earth! Listen to the words of my mouth.

<sup>2</sup>My teaching will fall like raindrops;  
my speech will settle like dew—  
like gentle rains on grass,  
like spring showers on all that is green—  
<sup>3</sup>because I proclaim the LORD's name:  
Give praise to our God!

<sup>4</sup>The rock: his acts are perfection!  
No doubt about it: all his ways are right!  
He's the faithful God, never deceiving;  
altogether righteous and true is he.  
<sup>5</sup>But children who weren't his own<sup>b</sup>  
sinned against him with their defects;<sup>c</sup>  
they are a twisted and perverse generation.  
<sup>6</sup>Is this how you thank the LORD,  
you stupid, senseless people?  
Isn't he your father, your creator?  
Didn't he make you and establish you?

<sup>7</sup>Remember the days long past;  
consider the years long gone.  
Ask your father, he will tell you about it;  
ask your elders, they will give you the details:  
<sup>8</sup>When God Most High divided up the nations—  
when he divided up humankind—  
he decided the people's boundaries  
based on the number of the gods.<sup>d</sup>  
<sup>9</sup>Surely the LORD's property was his people;  
Jacob was his part of the inheritance.  
<sup>10</sup>God found<sup>e</sup> Israel in a wild land—  
in a howling desert wasteland—

<sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>LXX, Vulg; Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>DSS (4QDeut<sup>h</sup>), LXX; MT *the Israelites* <sup>e</sup>Vulg, Syr, and others; Sam, LXX, Tg Onkelos *sustained him*

**32:1-6** The opening of the song sets out the main themes of the song: the faithfulness of the Lord and the twisted thinking of God's children.

**32:1** *Heaven...Earth*: The entire world is called to hear the song.

**32:2** *My teaching*: The song, like the instructions in the whole book of Deuteronomy, is seen as a form of teaching. Those who give heed to it will find it to be life-giving like *gentle rains*.

**32:3** *proclaim the Lord's name*: This name expresses the Lord's character. The name is probably the "rock" in Deuteronomy 32:4.

**32:4** *rock*: A central theme of the song is that the Lord is the rock (see Deut 32:15, 18, 30, 31, 37). This image expresses the faithful love of the Lord despite the people's unfaithfulness.

**32:5** *children who weren't his own*: The people are portrayed as the Lord's children throughout the song (Deut 32:6, 11, 19, 20, 43).

**32:6** *stupid, senseless people*: Deuteronomy speaks in terms of disobedience and lack of loyalty. Here, the people show lack of wisdom. They act against their best interests.

**32:7-14** Describes the beginnings of God's relationship

with Israel. Israel's story begins in the wilderness and moves to the promised land.

**32:7** In its own way, the song reflects the idea of teaching the children.

**32:8-9** The song utilizes a myth. At the very beginning of time, the nations were divided up according to the number of gods. The same idea is found in a different way in Deuteronomy 4:19: The gods have been assigned to the other nations. The number of nations and gods was probably 70 (see Gen 10). *God Most High*: identical with the Lord in this song. *number of the gods*: This reading follows the ancient Greek translation of the OT and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Hebrew text has probably been changed to read "number of the Israelites." This change may have been attempted to deliberately avoid the implication that there are other gods. Or, scribes may have written "the Israelites" as a side note in the text about the term "children," which refers to the Israelites elsewhere in the song. This side note may eventually have found its way into the song's text. *the Lord's property was his people*: Israel has a unique position among the nations.

**32:10** *God found Israel in a wild land*: Israel's origins are placed in the wilderness in order to emphasize the

he protected him, cared for him,  
watched over him with his very own eye.

- <sup>11</sup> Like an eagle protecting its nest,  
hovering over its young,  
God spread out his wings, took hold of Israel,  
carried him on his back.
- <sup>12</sup> The LORD alone led Israel;  
no foreign god assisted.
- <sup>13</sup> God<sup>f</sup> made Israel<sup>g</sup> glide over the highlands;  
he fed him<sup>h</sup> with food from the field,  
nursed him with honey from a boulder,  
with oil from a hard rock:
- <sup>14</sup> curds from the herd, milk from the flock,  
along with the best of lambs,  
rams from Bashan, he-goats too,  
along with the finest wheat—  
and for drink, wine from the juiciest grapes!
- <sup>15</sup> Jacob ate until he was stuffed;<sup>i</sup>  
Jeshurun<sup>j</sup> got fat, then rebellious.<sup>k</sup>

It was you who got fat, thick, stubborn!<sup>l</sup>

Jeshurun<sup>m</sup> gave up on the God who made him,  
thought the rock of his salvation was worthless.

- <sup>16</sup> They made God<sup>n</sup> jealous with strange gods,  
aggravated him with detestable things.
- <sup>17</sup> They sacrificed to demons, not to God,  
to deities of which they had no knowledge—  
new gods only recently on the scene,  
ones about which your ancestors had never heard.<sup>o</sup>
- <sup>18</sup> You deserted<sup>p</sup> the rock that sired you;  
you forgot the God who gave birth to you!
- <sup>19</sup> The LORD saw this and rejected  
out of aggravation his sons and his daughters.<sup>q</sup>

<sup>f</sup>Or *he* <sup>g</sup>Or *him* <sup>h</sup>Sam, Syr, LXX, Tg; MT *he ate* <sup>i</sup>DSS (4QPhyl<sup>n</sup>), Sam, LXX; MT lacks *Jacob ate until he was stuffed*.

<sup>j</sup>A poetic name for Israel; see also 33:5, 26. <sup>k</sup>Or *kicked* <sup>l</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>m</sup>Or *he* <sup>n</sup>Or *him* <sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain

<sup>p</sup>LXX, Vulg; Heb uncertain <sup>q</sup>Or, following LXX, DSS (4QPhyl<sup>n</sup>), and correcting *the LORD saw this and was jealous; he spurned his sons and daughters*.

contrast with the goodness of the promised land. See Hosea 9:10.

32:11 One of the benefits that the Lord offers Israel is protection.

32:12 *LORD alone*: The relationship in the wilderness was exclusive.

32:13-14 The goodness of the land of Canaan is described in poetic terms. As in the rest of Deuteronomy, there is a particular emphasis on food. Like the phrase “the land full of milk and honey,” these verses suggest a land with natural bounty that cannot stop producing things to eat and drink.

32:15-18 The generosity of the Lord is met with the disdain of the people.

32:15 *ate until he was stuffed*: In the teaching of Deuteronomy, food and drink are things to celebrate before the Lord. At the same time, they are a potential threat to Israel’s faithfulness. The perspective here is similar to Deuteronomy 8:11-20. *Jeshurun*: a rare name for Israel. It also occurs in the blessing of Moses (Deut 33:5, 26)

and provides a link between these two poetic chapters. Otherwise, it’s found only in Isaiah 44:2. Its meaning is uncertain. If it’s related to the Hebrew word *jasher*, which means “does the right thing,” then its use here is ironic.

32:16 *jealous*: a term from marital relationships (see note on Deut 31:16). The relationship between the Lord and Israel was to be exclusive, as it was in the wilderness (Deut 32:12). *strange gods*: or “strangers.” The point is that Israel had no history with these gods. *detestable*: See notes on Deuteronomy 7:25; 12:31.

32:17 *demons*: This rare word is found only here and in Psalm 106:37. These deities are unimportant. They are certainly not the Most High, who divided up the nations (Deut 32:8).

32:18 *forgot the God*: Forgetfulness is seen as a threat in Deuteronomy 8. It stands behind Deuteronomy’s insistence that the instructions be learned and repeated all the time. *who gave birth to you*: The imagery is now maternal.

32:19-25 God’s anger is shown against Israel.

32:11 Ex 19:4

32:12 Is 43:12

32:13 Dt 6:8,

Dt 8:15;

Job 29:6;

Ps 81:16;

Is 58:14

32:14 Gn 49:11;

2Sa 17:29;

Ps 147:14;

Is 7:22

32:15 Dt 31:20,

Dt 33:5,

Dt 33:26;

Ps 89:26; Is 44:2

32:16 Nm

25:11; Ps 78:58;

1Co 10:22

32:17 Lv 17:7;

Dt 28:64; Jgs 5:8;

Ps 106:37;

1Co 10:20

32:18 Ps 106:21;

Jer 2:32;

Hos 8:14

32:19 Ps 78:59;

Ps 106:40

32:20 Dt 31:17;  
Dt 32:5  
32:21 Dt 32:17;  
1Ki 16:13;  
1Ki 16:26;  
Ps 31:6;  
Ro 10:19  
32:22 Ps 86:13;  
Jer 15:14;  
Lam 4:11  
32:23 Ps 7:13;  
Eze 5:16  
32:24 Lv 26:22;  
Ps 58:4  
32:25 Lam 1:20;  
Lam 2:21;  
Eze 7:15  
32:30 Lv 26:8;  
Josh 23:10;  
Jgs 2:14;  
Ps 44:12

- 20** He said: I will hide my face from them—  
I will see what becomes of them—  
because they are a confused generation;  
they are children lacking loyalty.
- 21** They provoked me with “no-gods,”  
aggravated me with their pieces of junk.  
So I am going to provoke them with “No-People,”  
aggravate them with a nation of fools.
- 22** A fire burns in me—  
it will blaze to the depths of the grave;<sup>f</sup>  
it will destroy the land and its crops;  
it will blacken the base of the mountains.
- 23** I’ll throw<sup>g</sup> on them disaster after disaster;  
I’ll destroy them with my arrows:  
**24** devastating hunger, consuming plague, bitter sickness.  
I’ll send animal fangs after them,  
venom from dust crawlers too.
- 25** Outside, in the streets, the sword will bereave!  
Inside, in the safest room, there will be terror  
for young men and women,  
nursing baby and senior citizen.
- 26** I thought about it: I could have struck them down,<sup>h</sup>  
erased them from human memory,  
**27** but their enemies’ rage concerned me;  
their opponents might misunderstand.  
They might say, “Our strong hands,  
not the LORD’s, did all this,”  
**28** because they are not a thoughtful nation;  
they lack any insight.
- 29** If they had any wisdom, they would understand this;  
they would discern what will become of them.
- 30** How could one person chase off a thousand in battle?  
How could two people make ten thousand flee for their lives?  
Only because their rock sold them off,  
only because the LORD handed them over!

<sup>f</sup>Heb *Sheol* <sup>g</sup>LXX <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain; LXX *scattered them*

32:20 *hide my face*: an expression of anger. It’s the opposite of God’s allowing the divine presence to shine upon someone (e.g., Num 6:25-26). These expressions of God’s anger and pleasure are very common in the Psalms.

32:21 *no-gods*: continues the idea of Deuteronomy 32:17. The gods that Israel worshipped are nothing, *pieces of junk*, especially when compared to the Most High (Deut 32:8). This expression also sets up the punishment. As the people have provoked God Most High with *no-gods*, so God will punish them with *No-People*. This name *No-People* is a deliberately unclear expression. It may originally have referred to a particular nation, but it isn’t possible any longer to determine who that might have been.

32:22 *fire burns in me*: This description is similar to Deuteronomy 4:24, where the Lord is a consuming fire and a jealous God. *the grave*: As translation note *r* indicates, the Hebrew word for “grave” is *Sheol*. This word refers to the world of the dead. *destroy the land and its crops*: Throughout the book of Deuteronomy, the destruction of the land is a sign of the broken relationship.

32:23 *my arrows*: The Lord is pictured as a divine warrior firing arrows at the people.

32:24 The Lord fires five arrows at Israel. They are plagues

that infect the people. This punishment for disloyalty is similar to what is found in the curses of Deuteronomy 28. The punishments may well be allusions to the names of demons. For example, the Hebrew word for *consuming plague* is also the name of the demon Reshep (see Hab 3:5).

32:25 *nursing baby and senior citizen*: The two extremes in age indicate that all will be affected.

32:26-38 The Lord’s actions are misunderstood by the nations. The nations think that Israel’s weakness is because of their own strength in battle.

32:26 *I thought about it*: the turning point of the song. At the point when Israel might have been completely destroyed, the Lord considers the consequences of that happening.

32:27 *might misunderstand*: Moses uses a similar logic when he prays for the people after the sin of the gold calf (Deut 9:28). The fate of the Lord and the people are bound together by their relationship.

32:28 *they are not a thoughtful nation*: It isn’t clear whether the song is referring to Israel or another nation that attacked it here. Probably another nation is meant.

32:30 *one person chase off a thousand*: The disaster was so

- 31 But, no, their rocks can't compare to our rock!  
Our enemies are completely stupid.<sup>a</sup>
- 32 Their roots run straight from Sodom—  
from the fields of Gomorrah!  
Their grapes are pure poison;  
their grape clusters, nothing but bitter;
- 33 their wine is snake poison,  
venom from a cruel cobra.
- 34 Don't I have this stored up,  
sealed in my vaults?
- 35 Revenge is my domain, so is punishment-in-kind,  
at the exact moment their step slips up,  
because the day of their destruction is just around the corner;  
their final destiny is speeding on its way!
- 36 But the LORD will acquit his people,  
will have compassion on those who serve him,  
once he sees that their strength is all gone,  
that both prisoners and free people are wiped out.<sup>b</sup>
- 37 The Lord will ask, "Where are their gods—  
the rocks they trusted in—  
38 who ate up the fat of their sacrifices,  
who drank their sacred wine?  
They should stand up and help you!  
They should protect you now!
- 39 Now, look here: I myself, I'm the one;  
there are no other gods with me.  
I'm the one who deals death and gives life;  
I'm the one who wounded, but now I will heal.  
There's no escaping my hand.
- 40 But now I'm lifting my hand to heaven—  
I swear by my own eternity:  
41 when I sharpen my blazing sword  
and my hand grabs hold of justice,  
I'll pay my enemies back;  
I'll punish in kind everyone who hates me.
- 42 I'll make my arrows drink much blood,  
while my sword devours flesh,  
the blood of the dead and captured,  
flowing from the heads of enemy generals."<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>LXX; Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

extreme that it could only have happened because God was against them. The description of the defeat is similar to that described in Deuteronomy 28:25.

32:31 *their rocks*: The idea is perhaps that the nations think their gods have helped them. But Israel's God is the Most High (Deut 32:8). Their defeat can only be because the Lord has turned against them. *Our enemies are completely stupid*: The Hebrew is difficult. It might also be translated "Our enemies are judges."

32:32 *Sodom ... Gomorrah*: The origin of the enemies is seen as deeply corrupt. It can't be that they have gained victory because of who they are.

32:35 The nations have overstepped, and the day of punishment is also coming for them. The thought is similar to what we find in some of the Prophets (see Isa 10; Hab 1–2).

32:36 In contrast to the other nations (Deut 32:35), the Lord will have compassion on the people. *those who serve him*: presents Israel in a positive light as servants, rather

than disobedient children. *prisoners and free people*: two extremes used to cover all the people.

32:37 *the rocks they trusted in*: The other gods proved not to be worth following. At the time of need, they proved to be useless.

32:39–43 The triumphant end of the song in which the Lord shows himself to be unique as Israel's deliverer.

32:39 *there are no other gods with me*: The Lord alone comes to save the people. The situation is exactly the same as in the wilderness (Deut 32:12). There is no one else with him. *deals death and gives life*: points to the Lord's authority. The Lord is the one who punishes and has mercy. See Isaiah 45:7; Hosea 6:1–2.

32:40 *lifting my hand*: a pose for making a promise (see Ps 106:26).

32:41 God is presented as a divine warrior. This image is also found in Deuteronomy 33:2, 26–29; as well as Exodus 15:3 and Isaiah 63.

32:31 Ex 14:25;

Isa 2:2

32:32 Dt 29:18;

Is 1:10; Jer 23:14;

Lam 4:6

32:33 Dt 32:24;

Job 20:14,

Job 20:16;

Ps 58:4; Is 11:8

32:34 Job 14:17;

Jer 2:22;

Hos 13:12

32:35 Ps 94:1;

Na 1:2; Ro 12:19;

Heb 10:30

32:39 1Sa 2:6;

Job 5:18,

Job 10:7;

Ps 68:20; Is 41:4

32:41 Dt 32:35;

Ps 7:12; Is 27:1,

Is 34:6, Is 66:16

32:42 Dt 32:23;

Jer 46:10

32:43 Ro 15:10;  
Rev 6:10

32:49 Nm 27:12;  
Nm 33:48;  
Dt 34:1

32:50 Gn 25:8;  
Nm 20:22;  
Nm 20:24;  
Nm 20:28;  
Nm 33:38

32:51 Nm 13:21;  
Nm 20:1;  
Nm 20:11-12;  
Nm 27:14

32:52 Dt 3:27;  
Dt 34:1

33:1 Josh 14:6;  
1Ti 6:11

33:2 Ex 19:18;  
Jgs 5:4; Ps 68:8;  
Hab 3:3; Ac 7:53

**43**Heavens:<sup>a</sup> Rejoice with God!<sup>7</sup>

All you gods: bow down to the Lord!<sup>a</sup>

Because he will avenge his children's<sup>a</sup> blood;

he will pay back his enemies;

he will punish in kind those who hate him;<sup>b</sup>

he will cleanse his people's land.<sup>c</sup>

**44**So Moses came and recited all the words of this poem in everyone's hearing: Joshua,<sup>d</sup> Nun's son, joined him. **45**When Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel, **46**he told them: Set your mind on all these words I'm testifying against you right now, because you must command your children to perform carefully all the words of this Instruction. **47**This is no trivial matter for you—this is your very life! It is by this means<sup>e</sup> alone that you will prolong your life on the fertile land you are crossing the Jordan River to possess.

### Moses' death imminent

**48**The LORD spoke to Moses that very same day: **49**"Hike up the Abarim mountains, to Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho. Take a good look at the land of Canaan, which I'm giving to the Israelites as their property. **50**You will die on the mountain you have hiked up, and you will be gathered to your people just like your brother Aaron, who died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people, **51**because the two of you were unfaithful toward me in front of the Israelites at the waters of Meribath-kadesh, in the Zin wilderness, because you didn't treat me with proper respect before the Israelites. **52**You can look at the land from the other side of the river,<sup>f</sup> but you won't enter there."<sup>g</sup>

### The fourth heading: Moses' blessing

**33**This is the blessing that Moses the man of God gave the Israelites before he died. **33**<sup>2</sup>He said:

<sup>a</sup>DSS (4QDeut<sup>9</sup>), LXX; MT *nations* <sup>7</sup>DSS (4QDeut<sup>9</sup>), LXX; MT *his people* <sup>8</sup>This line is missing in Heb; it is found in DSS (4QDeut<sup>9</sup>); LXX *him for the Lord*. <sup>a</sup>DSS (4QDeut<sup>9</sup>), LXX; MT *his servants* <sup>b</sup>DSS (4QDeut<sup>9</sup>), LXX; MT lacks this line. <sup>c</sup>Sam, DSS (4QDeut<sup>9</sup>), LXX, Vulg; MT *his land his people or his land for his people*; or, *correcting, he will wipe away his people's tears*. <sup>d</sup>Sam, Syr, Tg Neofiti; MT *Hoshea* <sup>e</sup>Or *word* <sup>f</sup>Heb lacks *of the river*. <sup>g</sup>LXX; MT, Sam, Vulg, Syr, Tg add *to the land that I am giving to the Israelites*

32:43 The climax of the song. The traditional Hebrew text, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the earliest Greek translations are quite different from each other. There may be an attempt to remove references to other gods (see note on Deut 32:8). *Heavens... All you gods*: The other gods are called to acknowledge the Lord. The supreme status of the Lord is recognized by all: not only Israel and the nations, but even the other gods.

32:44-47 These words help frame the song. Like Deuteronomy 31:16-22, these verses connect the song with some of the major themes in the rest of the book. Unlike Deuteronomy 31:16-22, these verses give a slightly more positive role to the song.

32:44 *Joshua, Nun's son, joined him*: These words are something of an afterthought, but they do underline the fact that Joshua has been commissioned as Moses' successor.

32:45 *all these words*: could refer to the entirety of the book or to the words of the song. The words are said to testify against, or warn, the Israelites. The same expression is used in Deuteronomy 31:28. It's possible that the words originally referred to the whole book, but with the inclusion of the song now refer to the song (see note on Deut 31:30-32:47).

32:46 *I'm testifying against you*: or "I'm warning you." A reference to words warning Israel is also found in Deuteronomy 31:28. *All the words of this Instruction*: The positive role of the song is to ensure that Israel obeys the teaching of Deuteronomy.

32:47 *this is your very life*: an emphatic statement similar to Deuteronomy 30:19.

32:48-52 The book draws near to its close by preparing Moses and the reader for the approaching death of Israel's leader. Moses' death won't be told until Deuteronomy 34, but the closeness of death sets the stage for the final blessing in Deuteronomy 33.

32:48 *that very same day*: The book of Deuteronomy is presented as a series of speeches told on the very day that Moses dies (see Deut 1:3).

32:49 *Mount Nebo*: called Mount Pisgah in Deuteronomy 3:27. *Take a good look*: Moses has been promised that he may see the land, but not enter it (Deut 3:27).

32:50 *gathered to your people*: an expression that usually refers to burial in the family tomb. Since Moses was not buried with his family, the expression refers merely to burial. *just like your brother Aaron*: Moses' death is told in an almost identical way to that of his brother. Both go up a mountain to die when commanded by the Lord. *Mount Hor*: called Moserah in Deuteronomy 10:6.

32:51 The story of Moses and Aaron's sin is told in Numbers 20:1-13. *you didn't treat me with proper respect* could also be translated "you didn't treat me as holy." Compare with Numbers 20:12.

33:1-29 Like the Song of Moses, the blessing may have originally had an existence outside the book of Deuteronomy (see note on Deut 31:30-32:47). The book of Deuteronomy has been given an ending like the book of Genesis (see Gen 49). There is no blessing for Simeon in Deuteronomy 33, and Joseph and Levi's tribes get the most attention. The blessings are organized according to their mothers. First come the sons of Jacob's primary wives:

The LORD came from Sinai:  
 from Seir he shone like the dawn on us,<sup>b</sup>  
 from Paran Mountain he beamed down.  
 Thousands of holy ones were with him,<sup>i</sup>  
 his warriors were next to him, ready.<sup>j</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Yes, those who love<sup>k</sup> the nations—  
 all his holy ones—were at your command;  
 they followed your footsteps;  
 they got moving when you said so.

<sup>4</sup>Moses gave the Instruction to us—  
 it's the prized possession of Jacob's assembly.

<sup>5</sup>A king came to rule in Jeshurun,  
 when the people's leaders gathered together,  
 when Israel's tribes were one.

<sup>6</sup>"I pray that Reuben lives, doesn't die,  
 though his numbers are so few."

<sup>7</sup>Moses said this to Judah:  
 "LORD, listen to Judah's voice!  
 Bring him back to his own people,  
 strengthen his hands,<sup>l</sup>  
 be his help against every enemy."

<sup>8</sup>Then he told Levi:  
 "Give your Thummim to Levi,<sup>m</sup>  
 your Urim to your faithful one—  
 the one you tested at Massah,  
 the one you challenged by Meribah's waters;  
<sup>9</sup>the one who said of his own mother and father:  
 'I don't consider them as such';

<sup>b</sup>Correcting with LXX, Vulg, Syr, Tg Onkelos (see 33:4); MT and Sam on them <sup>i</sup>Correction; cf LXX, Sam, Syr, Vulg; MT he came from Ribebboth-kodesh <sup>j</sup>LXX angels; Heb uncertain <sup>k</sup>Correction; MT lover of <sup>l</sup>Or with his hands he contended <sup>m</sup>DSS (4QDeut<sup>a</sup>, 4QTest) and LXX; MT lacks Give to Levi.

Leah's sons and then Rachel's. Second come the sons from Jacob's secondary wives: Bilhah and Zilpah.

**33:1** The last of four headings in Deuteronomy (see Deut 1:1), *the man of God*: See Joshua 14:6 and the title of Psalm 90. The title is used of prophets, especially those with powers to do wonders.

**33:2-5** The blessings themselves are framed by descriptions of the divine warrior (see Deut 33:26-29).

**33:2** *Sinai*: See note on Deuteronomy 1:2. This name is used only here and in Deuteronomy 33:16 (though see translation note p on Deut 33:16). *Seir*: the mountains that were the traditional home of the Edomites. They were also located to the south of Israel. *shone like the dawn*: The divine warrior appears like the sun. See also Habakkuk 3:4. *holy ones*: not Israel, but divine beings that come with the Lord into battle. This picture is perhaps what is meant by the title "the LORD of heavenly forces."

**33:3** *the nations*: perhaps a reference to Israel with all its different parts (see Deut 33:19). The early Greek translation has "people." A reference to nations other than Israel seems out of place here.

**33:4** *Moses gave the Instruction to us*: See Deuteronomy 1:5 and note. This verse links the blessing of Moses to the rest of the book of Deuteronomy.

**33:5** *king came to rule*: The king is probably the Lord, rather than Moses or some later king of Israel. *Jeshurun*: See note on Deuteronomy 32:15.

**33:6** The blessing on Reuben. Although Reuben was the oldest male offspring of Jacob, it would seem the tribe was not especially strong. In Genesis 49:3-4 this is blamed on Reuben's actions.

**33:7** The blessing on Judah. The positive blessing of Judah reflects the leading position his tribe is given in the story of Israel. *Bring him back to his own people*: The historical background for these words is unclear.

**33:8-11** The blessing on Levi. The blessing is longer than almost all the others. The blessing begins, as do the others, with a blessing of Levi as an individual, but the perspective quickly becomes the tribe as a whole.

**33:8** *Thummim . . . Urim*: previously mentioned (Exod 28:30; Lev 7:7; Num 27:21). As in Numbers 27 they were means to discover God's will. *Massah . . . Meribah*: These two place-names are where the Israelites tested the Lord (Exod 17:1-7). The story makes no mention of Levi or the Levites.

**33:9** *"I don't consider them as such"*: In the story of the gold calf, the Levites are particularly committed to God's cause, even if this means killing brother and friends (Exod 32:25-29). The blessing seems to allude to the same story.

33:5 Nm 23:21;  
 Dt 32:15;  
 Dt 33:26; Is 44:2  
 33:6 Gn 49:3,  
 Gn 49:4  
 33:8 Gn 49:5;  
 Ex 17:7;  
 Ex 28:30; Lv 8:8;  
 Nm 20:13  
 33:9 Ex 32:26;  
 Mal 2:5

33:11 2Sa 24:23;  
Ps 20:3;  
Eze 20:40-41,  
Eze 43:27

33:12 Gn 35:18,  
Gn 49:27;  
Ex 19:4,  
Ex 28:12;  
Dt 12:10

33:13 Gn 27:28,  
Gn 49:22

33:14 Ps 104:19

33:15 Gn 49:26;  
Hab 3:6

33:16 Gn 49:26;  
Ex 3:2

33:17 Nm 23:22;  
1Ki 22:11;  
Ps 44:5

33:18 Gn 49:13

of their siblings: 'I don't recognize them';  
of their own children, 'I don't know them'—  
but who obeyed your words  
and who guarded your covenant!

<sup>10</sup>They teach your case laws to Jacob,  
your Instruction to Israel.

They hold sweet incense to your nose;  
put the entirely burned offering on your altar.

<sup>11</sup>I pray that the LORD blesses Levi's strength,  
favors his hard work,  
and crushes the insides of his enemies  
so that those who hate him can't fight anymore."

<sup>12</sup>He said to Benjamin:

"The LORD's dearest one rests safely on him.  
The Lord always shields him; he rests on God's chest."

<sup>13</sup>Then he told Joseph:

"I pray that his land is blessed by God:  
with heaven's gifts from above,<sup>a</sup>  
with the deep waters stretching out underneath;

<sup>14</sup>with the gifts produced by the sun,  
with the gifts generated by the moon;<sup>b</sup>

<sup>15</sup>with the best fruit from ancient mountains,  
with the gifts of eternal hills;

<sup>16</sup>with the gifts of the earth and all that fills it,  
and the favor of the one who lives on Sinai.<sup>c</sup>

I pray that all these rest on Joseph's head,  
on the crown of that prince among brothers.

<sup>17</sup>A firstborn bull<sup>d</sup>—that's how majestic he is!

A wild ox's horns—those are his horns!  
With them he gores all peoples  
completely, to the far ends of the earth!  
His horns<sup>e</sup> are Ephraim's tens of thousands.  
His horns are Manasseh's thousands."

<sup>18</sup>Then he told Zebulun:

"Zebulun: celebrate when you are out and about;  
Issachar: celebrate when you are at home in your tents!

<sup>a</sup>Or from the dew <sup>b</sup>Or moons or months <sup>c</sup>Or lives in a bush <sup>d</sup>Sam, LXX, Vulg; DSS (4QDeut<sup>h</sup>) and Heb the oldest offspring of his bull <sup>e</sup>Or they; also in the next line

33:10 *teach your case laws*: The role of the Levites included knowing and applying the teaching from Moses (see Deut 17:8-13). *sweet incense* refers to the role of the tribes of Levi in offering sacrifices to the Lord.

33:11 Levi's enemies are introduced rather abruptly. Moses wishes for them to be thwarted.

33:12 The blessing on Benjamin. *dearest one*: perhaps reflects Benjamin as the youngest of Jacob's sons, who eventually became the one that Jacob was most concerned about (see Gen 42:36-38).

33:13-17 The blessing on Joseph, which is the longest of the blessings. Verse 17 mentions *Ephraim* and *Manasseh*, who were Joseph's sons and the two tribes that came from Joseph. Their presence together with Levi means that the tribes number 12, despite the fact that Simeon is missing.

33:13 *his land is blessed by God*: The tribes of Joseph possessed some of the richest land in the center of Israel.

33:14 *moon*: As translation note o suggests, the underlying Hebrew could be translated as "months." The blessing may relate to the different months that crops were harvested.

33:16 *Sinai*: The Hebrew could also be read as "bush," an allusion to the events in Exodus 3. *crown of that prince among brothers*: The praise of Joseph's tribes points to their strong position within Israel.

33:17 *A firstborn bull*: The bull was greatly celebrated, and images of bulls were used in worship both in Israel and in surrounding nations. The bull symbolized strength and fertility. *Ephraim's... Manasseh's*: The two sons of Joseph became separate tribes within Israel.

33:18-19 The blessings on Zebulun and Issachar. *out and about... at home in your tents*: This would appear to be mentioning two different activities as a way of speaking about everything. Celebration is right at all times. *to the mountain*: Mount Tabor lay on the border between the



33:22  
Gn 49:16-17;  
Josh 19:47  
33:24 Gn 30:13;  
Gn 49:20;  
Job 29:6

<sup>19</sup>They call all sorts of people to the mountain,  
where they offer right sacrifices.  
It's true: They're nourished on the sea's abundance;  
they are nourished on buried treasures in the sand.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Then he told Gad:  
"May Gad's broad lands<sup>g</sup> be blessed!  
He lives like a lion:  
he rips an arm, even a head!

<sup>21</sup>He chose the best part for himself  
because there, where the commander's portion was,  
the leaders of the people gathered together.<sup>h</sup>  
Gad executed the LORD's justice  
and the Lord's judgments for Israel."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Then he told Dan:  
"Dan is a lion cub.  
He jumps up from Bashan."

<sup>23</sup>Then he told Naphtali:  
"Naphtali—you are full of favor,  
overflowing with the LORD's blessing—  
go possess the west and the south!"

<sup>24</sup>Finally, he told Asher:  
"Asher is the most blessed of sons.  
I pray that he's his brothers' favorite—  
one who dips his foot in fine oil.

<sup>25</sup>I pray that your dead bolts are iron and copper,  
and that your strength lasts all your days."<sup>b</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Jeshurun! No one compares to God!  
He rides through heaven to help you,  
rides majestically through the clouds.

<sup>27</sup>The most ancient God is a place of safety;<sup>c</sup>  
the eternal arms are a support.<sup>d</sup>  
He drove out the enemy before you.  
He commanded: "Destroy them!"

<sup>28</sup>So Israel now lives in safety—  
Jacob's residence<sup>e</sup> is secure—  
in a land full of grain and wine,  
where the heavens drip dew.

<sup>f</sup>Or the one who makes Gad large <sup>g</sup>Cf LXX; MT there the commander's portion was reserved; he came at the front of the people or there was the portion of the respected commander; the people's leaders came. <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>i</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>j</sup>Or He humiliates the oldest gods. <sup>k</sup>Or He shatters the most ancient forces. <sup>l</sup>Or fountain

two tribes, and a sanctuary was there (Hos 5:1). *sea's abundance*: The two tribes are located near the coast and could benefit from its trade.

33:20-21 The blessing on Gad. *broad lands*: Gad had large holdings east of the Jordan River. The incident referred to in 33:21 is obscure.

33:22 The blessing on Dan. *Bashan*: perhaps means that the lion is from Bashan. The tribe of Dan had land in other places. (For the division of the land, see Josh 13-19.)

33:23 The blessing on Naphtali. *the west and the south*: Naphtali's land was in the north and east of Canaan.

33:24-25 The blessing on Asher. *most blessed*: a play on the name Asher, which means "blessed." *dead bolts*: the bolts of the city and the source of its strength.

33:26-29 The end of the blessings, like their opening, also refers to the divine warrior.

33:26 *Jeshurun*: See note on Deuteronomy 32:15. *rides through heaven*: The picture is of a chariot riding across the sky.

33:27 *the eternal arms are a support*: or "underneath are the eternal arms." The image could be God's providing support or God as a warrior reaching down to fight (see translation note x). *drove out the enemy*... "Destroy them!": In Deuteronomy this can be understood only as the conquest of Canaan and the practice of the ban (see Deut 7:2).

33:28 The end of the blessing matches the rest of the book's concern with the land, which is secure and full of abundance.

34:5 Josh 1:1

34:6 Dt 3:29,  
Dt 4:46; Jud 1:9

34:7 Gn 27:1,

Gn 48:10;

Dt 31:2;

Josh 14:11

34:8 Gn 50:3;

Nm 20:29

34:9 Nm 27:18,

Nm 27:23;

Is 11:2

34:10 Ex 33:11;

Nm 12:6;

Dt 18:15;

Dt 18:18

34:11 Dt 4:34

34:12 Ex 3:10,

Ex 6:13, Ex 7:2,

Ex 19:3,

Ex 33:11

**29** Happy are you, Israel! Who is like you?

You are a people saved by the LORD!

He's the shield that helps you,

your majestic sword!

Your enemies will come crawling on their knees to you,

but you will stomp on their backs!<sup>a</sup>**Moses' death**

**34** Then Moses hiked up from the Moabite plains to Mount Nebo, the peak of the Pisgah slope, which faces Jericho. The LORD showed him the whole land: the Gilead region as far as Dan's territory; <sup>2</sup>all the parts belonging to Naphtali along with the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, as well as the entirety of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea; <sup>3</sup>also the arid southern plain, and the plain—including the Jericho Valley, Palm City—as far as Zoar.

<sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses: "This is the land that I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I promised: 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have shown it to you with your own eyes; however, you will not cross over into it."

<sup>5</sup>Then Moses, the LORD's servant, died—right there in the land of Moab, according to the LORD's command. <sup>6</sup>The Lord buried him in a valley in Moabite country across from Beth-peor. Even now, no one knows where Moses' grave is.

<sup>7</sup>Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eyesight wasn't impaired, and his vigor hadn't diminished a bit.

<sup>8</sup>Back down in the Moabite plains, the Israelites mourned Moses' death for thirty days. At that point, the time for weeping and for mourning Moses was over.

<sup>9</sup>Joshua, Nun's son, was filled with wisdom because Moses had placed his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to Joshua, and they did exactly what the LORD commanded Moses.

<sup>10</sup>No prophet like Moses has yet emerged in Israel; Moses knew the LORD face-to-face!

<sup>11</sup>That's not even to mention all those signs and wonders that the LORD sent Moses to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh, to all his servants, and to his entire land—<sup>12</sup>as well as all the extraordinary power that Moses displayed before Israel's own eyes!

<sup>a</sup>Or *their shrines*

**33:29** *Your enemies:* Defeated by the divine warrior, they come to submit.

**34:1-12** The book of Deuteronomy concludes with the death of Moses. Moses' life has spanned four biblical books from the beginning of the book of Exodus. The final words about Moses mark him off as someone without comparison. The death of Moses closes a significant chapter in the canonical story of Israel. It allows a new chapter to open with the book of Joshua.

**34:1** *Mount Nebo, the peak of the Pisgah slope:* The two names of the mountain are brought together (see Deut 3:27; 32:49). *Gilead region:* Moses' visual tour of the land begins with the area closest, the southern part of the land on the other side of the Jordan. *as far as Dan's territory:* Moses' view then moves up all the way to the most northern part of the land, near modern-day Lake Huleh.

**34:2** *all the parts belonging to Naphtali:* His eyes come down through Galilee. *the land of Ephraim and Manasseh:* The two tribes of Joseph possessed large portions of land in the central highlands of Israel. *as well as the entirety of Judah:* Moses looks right down to the southern highlands.

*as far as the Mediterranean Sea:* He sees all the central parts of Israel between the Jordan and the Mediterranean.

**34:3** *the arid southern plain:* the Negeb. The southern-most part of the land of Israel. *and the plain:* Moses' view of the land returns to where he started by seeing the southern end of the Jordan River and the area around the Dead Sea. *Palm City:* Jericho (see 2 Chron 28:15).

**34:6** *Even now, no one knows where Moses' grave is:* The narrator of Deuteronomy writes from a perspective some time after Moses' death.

**34:7** *120 years old:* See note on Deuteronomy 31:2. *His eyesight . . . hadn't diminished a bit:* Moses' continued strength and vigor highlight that his death was the result of sin, rather than old age. His age places him among Israel's ancestors who lived over a century.

**34:9** *filled with wisdom:* See Joshua's commissioning in Numbers 27:18-23.

**34:10** *No prophet like Moses:* This verse not only sets Moses apart, but also the books that contain his words. *face-to-face:* Moses had unmediated access to the Lord that no one else enjoyed before or after (see Exod 33:11).

# JOSHUA

The book of Joshua tells the story of how God gave Israel the land of Canaan (Josh 1–12) and allotted the land to them as an inheritance (Josh 13–22). In Genesis, God promised Abraham that his descendants would possess the land (Gen 12:7; 15:12–16) and Joshua essentially reports that the promise has been fulfilled. Joshua concludes with a call for Israel to be devoted completely to God, a call that is also central to the message of the OT (Josh 23–24). Indeed, the charge to serve only the Lord is related in its language and theology to Moses' insistence on absolute devotion to the God who brought Israel out of Egypt (Exod 20:1; Deut 6:5).

Joshua is set during the period of Israel's entry into the land of Canaan, perhaps during the 13th century BCE. The writing of the book, however, took place much later and thus Joshua reflects the theological concerns of later times. At least two periods in Israel's history seem to be crucial times of composition. First, portions of Joshua were composed in the late 7th century during the reign of King Josiah (2 Kgs 22–23). That period was marked by Josiah's strong concern for religious purity and absolute devotion to God. Hence, the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan was shaped by and speaks to that concern. This is evident in Joshua's frequent references to the instructions of Moses and their charge to obey the covenant Moses established (see Josh 1:7; 24). Second,

the book wasn't completed until after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, and perhaps not until the residents of Judah returned from exile in 539 BCE. The finished product therefore is intended to be read in the light of the trauma of exile and the identity crises it produced.

The main character in the book is Joshua, first introduced in Exodus as a military leader who fought the Amalekites just after the Israelites left Egypt (Exod 17:8–16). Joshua became Moses' assistant during the period of wilderness wandering, and Moses appointed him as his successor (Num 27:18–23). In Joshua 1, God commissions Joshua to lead the Israelites into Canaan and to take possession of it. Despite the centrality of Joshua to the book, however, his authority and influence are tempered by two other figures: Moses and Eleazar.

The authority of Moses continues to overshadow Joshua even though Moses died at the end of Deuteronomy. The book's opening note about Moses' death (Josh 1:1) hints that his influence remains, and indeed it continues through the written instructions he left behind (the "Instruction scroll," see Josh 1:7–8). Thus, although Joshua is the main character in the book, he is presented constantly in relation to Moses (Josh 8:30–35; 11:23).

In addition to Moses, Eleazar the priest and his son Phinehas also appear prominently in the book. In Joshua 14–19, Eleazar stands with Joshua



A ram's horn or shofar (Josh 6:4–5)  
*iStockPhoto*

to cast lots to determine inheritance. In Joshua 22:13-34 it is Phinehas, not Joshua, whom the Israelites west of the Jordan send to settle their dispute with their kindred east of the river. Furthermore, the book concludes with a note about the death of Eleazar, not Joshua (Josh 24:33). The presence of these priestly figures serves to temper Joshua's authority. They effectively bring the character of Joshua more in line with the presentation of shared authority of priest and military leader in Numbers 27:20-23; 34:17.

The book of Joshua occupies a pivotal place in the canons of Judaism and Christianity. In the Jewish canon, Joshua is the first book of the Former Prophets (Joshua through Kings; the Latter Prophets follow with the books of Isaiah through Malachi). That canonical identification highlights the fact that Joshua promotes obedience to the Instruction (the Torah, or Genesis–Deuteronomy, which it follows). The fact that Joshua opens with a charge to obey the Instruction scroll from Moses (see Josh 1:7-8) illustrates the logic of this place in the canon and anticipates the attention to the Mosaic Instruction throughout the Prophets (note that Mal 4:4 concludes the collection of the prophets with a similar command to obey the teachings of Moses). In the Christian Bible, Joshua is part of a grand narrative that runs from Genesis through Esther, a narrative that tells the story of God's people from their creation (Gen 12) to their exile in Babylon.

The juxtaposition of Joshua and Deuteronomy is an important clue to the meaning and significance of the book of Joshua. Joshua was likely written as a type of sequel to Deuteronomy and was intended to be read with it. The books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings were likely part of this continuing story based on the values and concerns of Deuteronomy. Perhaps the most basic and most pervasive theme in Joshua that draws from Deuteronomy is the idea that the primary authority for Israel is God's

teachings through Moses that Moses left behind in written form (Deut 30:10; 31:9). Like Deuteronomy, Joshua has a strong emphasis on the divine initiative in taking the land (Deut 20:4). This understanding of the land as God's gift provides an important foundation for the conquest story. Because in Joshua it is God's power that wins battles, warfare becomes a type of ritual for the Israelites. At Jericho the people march in order for the divinely prescribed six days, with priests at the head of the procession, and then on the seventh day the walls tumble at the blast of the priests' trumpets. There is no strategy about how to breach the walls of the city, because Israel captures Jericho and Canaan by God's might, not their own military prowess (Josh 6:8-21).

Joshua, like Deuteronomy, speaks often of "all Israel" gathered for instruction and conquest (Deut 1:1; 5:1; 11:6; 27:14; 29:9; Josh 3:7, 17; 4:14; 7:22-26; 8:21, 24; 23:2). The fact that national unity is a real concern in Joshua is apparent through passages that deal with the threat of disunity. This is seen particularly when the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh settle east of the Jordan River. Joshua, just as Moses did before him, cautiously and diplomatically allows the Transjordan tribal groups to live separately, but only after they first aid their kindred in the conquest east of the river (Deut 3:12-20; Josh 1:12-15; 4:12). The idealistic picture in Deuteronomy and Joshua is probably influenced by tension between some Israelite groups in the period after the Babylonian exile. Joshua 22 hints that the land east of the Jordan River was considered unclean (Josh 22:19) and that the tribes who occupied it were of secondary status, a circumstance that probably prevailed late in Israel's history. For that reason the status of the eastern tribes is highlighted in the book (Josh 1:12-18; 13:8-32). Joshua affirms that they are part of Israel and that all the tribes act in one accord.

**I. God Gives the Land (1–12)**

- A. Joshua's installation (1:1-18)
  - 1. Charge to faithfulness (1:1-9)
  - 2. Address to the people (1:10-18)
- B. Rahab and the Israelite spies (2:1-24)
- C. Crossing the Jordan River (3:1–5:12)
  - 1. Preparation for crossing (3:1-13)
  - 2. Israel begins to cross (3:14-17)
  - 3. Memorial stones collected (4:1-9)
  - 4. Crossing completed (4:10-19)
  - 5. Memorial stones placed at Gilgal (4:20-24)
  - 6. Canaanite reaction (5:1)
  - 7. Circumcision (5:2-9)
  - 8. Passover (5:10-12)
- D. The Lord conquers Jericho (5:13–6:27)
  - 1. Commander of heavenly forces (5:13-15)
  - 2. Attack and destruction (6:1-21)
  - 3. Rahab preserved (6:22-25)
  - 4. Curse on rebuilding Jericho (6:26-27)
- E. Israel captures Ai (7:1–8:29)
  - 1. Achan's sin and Israel's defeat (7:1-26)
  - 2. The Lord's anger subsides (8:1-29)
- F. Covenant renewed (8:30-35)
- G. Gibeonites saved by trickery (9:1-27)
  - 1. Kings in the land oppose Joshua (9:1-2)
  - 2. Gibeonites seek treaty by trickery (9:3-15)
  - 3. Israelites discover trick (9:16-27)
- H. Joshua defends Gibeonites (10:1-43)
  - 1. Southern kings attack Gibeon (10:1-7)
  - 2. The sun stands still (10:8-15)
  - 3. Joshua defeats southern kings (10:16-27)
  - 4. Other southern areas captured (10:28-43)
- I. Joshua captures northern territory (11:1-23)
  - 1. Northern kings attack Israel (11:1-5)
  - 2. Joshua defeats northern kings (11:6-15)
  - 3. Summary of Joshua's success (11:16-23)
- J. Lists of kings defeated (12:1-24)
  - 1. Moses' previous victories (12:1-6)
  - 2. Kings Joshua defeated (12:7-24)

**II. The Land Divided as Inheritance (13–22)**

- A. Call to allot land (13:1-14)
  - 1. Promise to drive out Canaanites (13:1-7)
  - 2. Remembering Moses' allotments (13:8-14)
- B. Land east of the Jordan River (13:15-33)
  - 1. Reuben (13:15-23)
  - 2. Gad (13:24-28)
  - 3. Half the tribe of Manasseh (13:29-33)
- C. Distribution to Judah (14–15)
  - 1. Distribution by lot (14:1-5)
  - 2. Hebron given to Caleb (14:6-15)
  - 3. Judah's legacy (15:1-13)
  - 4. Caleb gives land to Achsah (15:14-19)
  - 5. Towns of Judah (15:20-63)
- D. Distribution to Joseph tribes (16–17)
  - 1. Ephraim (16)
  - 2. Western half of Manasseh (17)
- E. Remaining territories (18–19)
  - 1. Seven tribes gather at Shiloh (18:1-10)
  - 2. Benjamin's legacy (18:11-28)
  - 3. Simeon's legacy (19:1-9)
  - 4. Zebulun's legacy (19:10-16)
  - 5. Issachar's legacy (19:17-23)
  - 6. Asher's legacy (19:24-31)
  - 7. Naphtali's legacy (19:32-39)
  - 8. Dan's legacy (19:40-48)
  - 9. Legacy for Joshua (19:49-51)
- F. Refuge cities (20)
- G. Cities for the Levites (21)
- H. Eastern tribes settle in their land (22:1-34)
  - 1. Joshua blesses and sends eastern tribes to their inheritance (22:1-8)
  - 2. Controversy over an altar (22:9-34)

**III. Joshua's Final Words (23:1–24:28)**

- A. Warning to be faithful in the land (23:1-16)
- B. Choose whom you will serve (24:1-28)

**IV. Death and Burial (24:29-33)**

- A. Joshua dies and is buried (24:29-31)
- B. Joseph's bones buried in the land (24:32)
- C. Eleazar dies and is buried (24:33)

1:1 Ex 24:13;  
Dt 1:38; Dt 34:5  
1:2 Dt 34:5  
1:5 Dt 7:24;  
Dt 31:6;  
Josh 1:7;  
Josh 3:7;  
Heb 13:5  
1:6 Dt 31:6;  
Josh 10:25  
1:7 Dt 5:32;  
Josh 11:15;  
Josh 23:6  
1:8 Dt 29:9;  
Ps 1:2  
1:9 Dt 31:6;  
Dt 31:8; Josh 1:7

### Orders from the LORD

**1** After Moses the LORD's servant died, the LORD spoke to Joshua, Nun's son. He had been Moses' helper. <sup>2</sup>"My servant Moses is dead. Now get ready to cross over the Jordan with this entire people to the land that I am going to give to the Israelites. <sup>3</sup>I am giving you every place where you set foot, exactly as I promised Moses. <sup>4</sup>Your territory will stretch from the desert and the Lebanon as far as the great Euphrates River, including all Hittite land, up to the Mediterranean Sea on the west. <sup>5</sup>No one will be able to stand up against you during your lifetime. I will be with you in the same way I was with Moses. I won't desert you or leave you. <sup>6</sup>Be brave and strong, because you are the one who will help this people take possession of the land, which I pledged to give to their ancestors.

<sup>7</sup>"Be very brave and strong as you carefully obey all of the Instruction that Moses my servant commanded you. Don't deviate even a bit from it, either to the right or left. Then you will have success wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>Never stop speaking about this Instruction scroll. Recite it day and night so you can carefully obey everything written in it. Then you will accomplish your objectives and you will succeed. <sup>9</sup>I've commanded you to be brave

**Moses** Moses was Israel's leader whom God chose to rescue the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Exod 3–4). The books of Exodus through Deuteronomy have Moses as the main character, and Deuteronomy ends with a report of Moses' death (Deut 34). The book of Joshua now begins "after Moses the LORD's servant died" (Deut 34). This note communicates a simple progression in time and leadership, from Moses to Joshua. But it also directs the reader to the authority of Moses that continues even after his death. The book of Deuteronomy, immediately preceding Joshua, is a collection of Moses' speeches that he gave the Israelites before they entered the land of Canaan. Moses wrote the speeches and left them for the Israelites, however, in the form of an Instruction scroll (see note on Josh 1:7) that was to guide the Israelites as they settled in Canaan. On the one hand, Moses' death marks the appropriate time of the Israelites' entry into Canaan (Num 20:12; Deut 32:48–52). But on the other hand, Moses' death simply marks a transition from his physical presence to his written instructions as the primary authority for God's people. Therefore, throughout the book, Joshua is presented as faithful precisely because he followed in Moses' footsteps, and he obeyed Moses' instructions that Moses gave before his death (Josh 8:30–35; 11:23).

1:1–9 The book opens with God commissioning Joshua as the leader who will take the Israelites into the land of Canaan. The installation follows a pattern found in other accounts of God investing power in someone new: (1) charge with encouragement ("Be very brave and strong," 1:6, 7); (2) description of the mission; and (3) promise of assistance ("I will be with you," 1:5, 9). See Exodus 3–4; 2 Chronicles 19:4–11. The language of the charge to Joshua is particularly close to that in 1 Kings 1–2 in which David installs Solomon as king. David charges Solomon to be brave (1 Kgs 2:2) and to keep the Instructions from Moses (1 Kgs 2:3; see Josh 1:7–8). It is also apparent that the charge to Joshua includes language and themes like that found in the final evaluation of King Josiah (2 Kgs 23). Josiah is praised particularly for obedience to the written instructions of Moses (2 Kgs 23:24; see note on Josh 1:7–9). Thus, Joshua's installation and his performance as Israel's leader anticipate the rule of Israel's kings and provide a model for those kings to follow.

1:1–2 **Joshua:** The name means "the LORD saves." The equivalent name in Greek is Jesus (Matt 1:21). Thus the NT remembers Joshua's leadership as the foreshadowing of Jesus' work. Hebrews 4:8 declares that Jesus gives his followers the "rest" that Joshua couldn't give (see note on Josh 1:13). **The LORD's servant:** an expression that describes the status of a select number of leaders (David, 1 Kgs 8:66; the prophets, Jer 7:25). The label implies that God is completely in charge of the person's life. Thus the person's authority derives from obedience to God. **Jordan:** This river, which runs from the Galilee Sea in the north to the Dead Sea in the south, was the natural border of the land of Canaan.

1:1 **Moses' helper:** This expression refers to Joshua's role during the wilderness wandering period when Joshua accompanied Moses to the mountain where God is present and served as Moses' assistant (Exod 24:13; 33:11; Num 11:28). The label validates the transition from Moses to Joshua. (See sidebar, "Moses"). Joshua's role involves two actions, both anticipated in Deuteronomy: Joshua will lead the people into the land (Deut 1:38; 3:21, 28) and put them in possession of it (Deut 31:7). Despite Joshua's important place in the story, however, God's action is primary. God promises to give the land of Canaan to the Israelites (Josh 1:2–3) and to be constantly present with Joshua (Josh 1:5). Joshua's main task is to be faithful and obedient and to believe confidently in God's promises (Josh 1:6, 7, 9).

1:4 The land of Canaan lay west of the Jordan River. It stretched from the arid southern plain (Negeb, which was north of the Sinai desert) to the mountains of Lebanon in the north and to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. The description of Israelite territory here however includes a much-expanded area and probably reflects the ideal borders of the Davidic kingdom. According to this verse, the borders will stretch from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Euphrates River in the east. Northern and southern borders are less clear, particularly the reference *from the desert* which describes the southern limits of the land. But the description of the land suggests the Israelites will be like the powerful empires of the ancient world. Such descriptions likely arose within the period of monarchy or when the Israelites had lost their land and were dreaming of a glorious restoration. The land is described

1:13 Nm 32:20;  
Dt 3:18  
1:14 Josh 4:12  
1:15 Josh 22:4

*Instruction Scroll* The directions God commands Joshua to follow appear on an Instruction scroll that contained the words of Moses (Josh 1:7). The scroll mentioned here is probably some version of the speeches of Moses found in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 4:44–26:19 in particular are presented as Moses’ instructions that he gave the Israelites on the plains of Moab just before the Israelites entered the land of Canaan (Deut 4:44). According to Deuteronomy 31:24–29, Moses wrote down these speeches and left them as a permanent record. The scroll then served as a surrogate for Moses after his death. Moses’ speeches in written form became a foundational document for the Israelites, similar to a constitution or polity document. This status of the scroll is indicated most clearly in Deuteronomy 17:18–20, which states that the Israelite king, when appointed, is to have this Instruction scroll always before him to guide him. Later David charged Solomon to be faithful to God by obeying the written Instruction from Moses (1 Kgs 2:3). A direct link between the Instruction scroll and King Josiah appears in 2 Kings 23:3. Thus when God charges Joshua with obedience to the writings of Moses, God is presenting Joshua as a precursor of and model for Israel’s future monarchs.

and strong, haven’t I? Don’t be alarmed or terrified, because the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

**Joshua gives orders**

<sup>10</sup>Then Joshua gave orders to the people’s officers: <sup>11</sup>“Go through the camp and give orders to the people. Say, ‘Get supplies ready for yourselves because in three days you will be crossing over the Jordan to enter the land and take it over. The LORD your God is going to give it to you as your possession.’”

<sup>12</sup>Then Joshua addressed the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh: <sup>13</sup>“Remember the command that Moses the LORD’s servant gave you: ‘The LORD your God will give you rest and give you this land.’ <sup>14</sup>Your wives, children, and cattle may remain in the land that Moses has given you on the east side of the Jordan. But all you brave fighters, organized for war, must cross over in front of your fellow Israelites. You must help them <sup>15</sup>until the LORD gives a rest like yours to your fellow Israelites and they too take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. Then you may return and take over the land that belongs to you, which Moses the LORD’s servant has given you on the east side of the Jordan.”

<sup>16</sup>They answered Joshua, “We will obey everything you have commanded us and go anywhere you send us. <sup>17</sup>We will obey you in the same way that we obeyed Moses. Just let the

as *Hittite land*, which refers to the area once controlled by a powerful kingdom located in what is present-day Turkey and portions of Syria. The territory outlined in the verse also includes areas ruled by the Assyrians and Babylonians. This expansive land was never actually controlled fully by the Israelites. The description probably intended to suggest, however, that Israel would be as powerful and influential in world politics as any of the great empires because God fought for them and God ultimately controlled the land.

1:7-9 *Be very brave and strong*: The command to “be very brave and strong” sounds like encouragement to engage in battle, but it’s actually a mandate to have faith and depend on God. The bravery ordered will be seen specifically in Joshua’s obedience to God’s Instruction that came through Moses. Joshua will be successful if he reads and recites the words of the Instruction scroll Moses left behind (see sidebar, “Instruction Scroll”). Thus his success isn’t determined by military planning or ability. The concluding imperative, *Don’t be alarmed or terrified*, is similar. It is paired with the promise that *the LORD your God is with you* (1:9).

1:10-18 As Joshua prepares the people to enter Canaan, he addresses first three and a half tribes whom Moses gave land east of the Jordan River (Num 32; Deut 3:12-17): Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. Manasseh is

unique in that half the tribe, mentioned here, will occupy territory east of the Jordan, while the other half will have a share of the land of Canaan. That the address to the three eastern groups appears here at the beginning of Joshua anticipates the question of their inclusion in the chosen people and the nature of the land they occupy. The fact that Moses assigned their territory would seem to clarify that they have holy land just as the other tribes west of the Jordan. Joshua 22 will raise questions about this, however, that reflect doubts about the nature of the land east of the Jordan (see notes on Josh 22).

1:11 *three days*: The reference to three days is a common biblical expression referring to a complete period of time and doesn’t necessarily mean a 72-hour period (see Josh 2:22; 3:3; 9:16). “In three days” or “after three days” is the equivalent of modern expressions like “after a while” or “after some time passed.”

1:13 *rest*: The word refers to the state of living at peace in the land without the threat of enemies (Josh 1:15; 11:23). The word also has symbolic dimensions, referring to the state of being reconciled to God (see Ps 95:11). Hebrews 4:8 adopts this meaning when it says Jesus provides the rest Joshua could not.

1:16-18 The eastern tribes’ obedience indicates that Joshua is accepted as Moses’ successor. It also paints a picture of a unified people who are ready to receive the land

2:1 Nm 25:1;

Josh 3:1;

Josh 6:17;

Heb 11:31;

Jas 2:25

2:9 Ex 15:15-16;

Ex 23:27;

Josh 2:11

LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses!<sup>18</sup> Anybody who stubbornly opposes what you declare and doesn't obey any of your commands will be put to death. Be brave and strong!

### Joshua sends spies

**2** Joshua, Nun's son, secretly sent two men as spies from Shittim. He said, "Go. Look over the land, especially Jericho." They set out and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab. They bedded down there.

<sup>2</sup>Someone told the king of Jericho, "Men from the Israelites have come here tonight to spy on the land."

<sup>3</sup>So the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab: "Send out the men who came to you, the ones who came to your house, because they have come to spy on the entire land."

### Rahab takes action

<sup>4</sup>But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. Then she said, "Of course the men came to me. But I didn't know where they were from. <sup>5</sup>The men left when it was time to close the gate at dark, but I don't know where the men went. Hurry! Chase after them! You might catch up with them." <sup>6</sup>But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the flax stalks that she had laid out on the roof. <sup>7</sup>The men from Jericho<sup>a</sup> chased after them in the direction of the Jordan up to the fords. As soon as those chasing them went out, the gate was shut behind them.

### Rahab sets terms

<sup>8</sup>Before the spies bedded down, Rahab went up to them on the roof. <sup>9</sup>She said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land. Terror over you has overwhelmed us. The

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks from Jericho.

and trust that God will give it to them. This generation that enters the land with Joshua stands in marked contrast with the generation that came out of Egypt with Moses and didn't believe God's promise. See note on Joshua 5:2-9, where this difference between the two generations is explicit.

2:1-3 The spy mission is reminiscent of Moses sending spies into Canaan (Num 13). In contrast to the previous reconnaissance of the land, however, there is no mention here of God ordering spies to be sent (cf. Num 13:1). The characterization of the mission as secret (2:1) may suggest the Israelites are trying to hide it from God. Regardless, the mission doesn't seem to go well. Though Joshua sent the spies *secretly* (2:1), they are immediately detected by the king's men (2:2). Moreover, the prostitute Rahab controls the spies throughout their time in Jericho, and she gets concessions from them to preserve her family during the invasion.

2:1 *Rahab*: She is identified as a prostitute, but the exact nature of that identity is uncertain. Prostitution simply for economic survival was practiced (Prov 6:26). The nature of Rahab's prostitution isn't specified. It's also not clear whether the two Israelite spies came to Rahab as her customers. Some of the language of the story implies sexual activity (*they bedded down there*), but there is no indication the spies actually engaged in sex with Rahab. What is clear, however, is that Rahab's identity as a prostitute is ironic. Though she engaged in disreputable activity, she hides the spies and is preserved for this act when the Israelites invade Jericho (Josh 6:17). The NT includes her in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt 1:5). She is also praised as a person of great faith (Heb 11:31) and as one who was justified by the act of harboring the Israelite spies (Jas 2:25). *Shittim*: site of the Israelite camp east of the Jordan River and northeast of the Dead Sea (Num 25:1). Its exact location is uncertain. The name, however, means "Acacias," which may indicate the desert trees at the site of the last wilderness encampment.

*Jericho*: located about 10 miles north of the Dead Sea and just east of the Jordan River, about 23 miles east of Jerusalem. Jericho is the oldest continuously populated city in the world, established around 9000 BCE. Remains of a massive defensive wall from the earliest period of occupation make Jericho a hallmark of ancient fortifications. Thus the report of Israel's capture and defeat of Jericho is an important symbolic statement about God's power over all nations, as well as a logical movement in the story of the Israelites entering Canaan from the wilderness.

2:4-7 Rahab hides the spies but also makes them dependent on her and vulnerable to the king's lookouts. A rooftop wasn't a good place to hide (2 Sam 11:2; 16:22), and this location creates one of the humorous elements of the story. The spies came to uncover secrets and to be undetected, but instead are buried beneath a pile of flax on Rahab's roof. They are in danger always of being seen by officials of the city. Though the spies represent a powerful approaching army, they are held captive by a woman in her home, and the woman proves to be shrewder than they.

2:6 *flax*: material from which linen is made. Flax was wet to separate the fibers. The rooftop was a good place for drying the material.

2:8-14 Rahab shows keen awareness of God's power and of the vulnerability of the Canaanites. She isn't presented, however, as a Gentile convert. She identifies Israel's God as *your God* (2:11). Nevertheless, she shows great insight as she proclaims the power of Israel's God and states her knowledge of what God has done to those who opposed the Israelites. This awareness of God's power and her reaction to that awareness sets her apart from most of the other Canaanites.

2:9-11 Rahab introduces a theme that will appear again in Joshua 5:1; 9:1-2; 10:1-5; and 11:1-5. She describes the Canaanite response to the Israelites' entry into the land first by rehearsing what God did for the Israelites in the exodus



entire population of the land has melted down in fear because of you. <sup>10</sup>We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Reed Sea<sup>b</sup> in front of you when you left Egypt. We have also heard what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites on the other side of the Jordan. You utterly wiped them out. <sup>11</sup>We heard this and our hearts turned to water. Because of you, people can no longer work up their courage. This is because the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below. <sup>12</sup>Now, I have been loyal to you. So pledge to me by the LORD that you in turn will deal loyally with my family. Give me a sign of good faith. <sup>13</sup>Spare the lives of my father, mother, brothers, and sisters, along with everything they own. Rescue us from death.”

<sup>14</sup>The men said to her, “We swear by our own lives to secure yours. If you don’t reveal our mission, we will deal loyally and faithfully with you when the LORD gives us the land.”

**The spies escape**

<sup>15</sup>So she lowered the spies on a rope through the window. Her house was on the outer side of the city wall, and she lived inside the wall. <sup>16</sup>Then she said to them, “Go toward the highlands so that those chasing you don’t run into you. Hide there for three days until those chasing you return. Then you may go on your way.”

<sup>17</sup>The men said to her, “We won’t be responsible for this pledge you made us swear <sup>18</sup>unless, when we come into the land, you tie this red woven cord in the window through which you lowered us. Gather your father, your mother, your brothers, and your whole family into the house with you. <sup>19</sup>Those who go outside the doors of your house into the street will have only themselves to blame for their own deaths. We won’t be responsible. If anyone lays a hand on those who are with you in the house, we will take the blame for their death. <sup>20</sup>But if you reveal our mission, we won’t be responsible for this pledge you made us swear.”

<sup>21</sup>She said, “These things will happen just like you said.” She sent them away and they went off. Then she tied the red cord in the window.

<sup>b</sup>Or Red Sea

2:10 Ex 14:21;  
Nm 21:21;  
Josh 9:10  
2:11 Dt 4:39;  
Josh 5:1,  
Josh 7:5, 16 13:7  
2:15 1Sa 19:12;  
Ac 9:25;  
2Co 11:33  
2:18 Josh 2:21,  
Josh 6:23  
2:19 Mt 27:25

and then by describing the Canaanites’ fear of the Israelites. An important aspect of this theme each time it appears will be how the Canaanites react to their fear of the Israelites. Some will fight against the Israelites and thus act against what God is doing in the land (see notes on Josh 9:1-2; 10:1-7; 11:1-5). But Rahab confesses the power of Israel’s God and seeks to be preserved when the Israelites enter Jericho (Josh 2:12). Thus she sets herself apart from the people in the land. The Gibeonites will also stand in contrast to the other residents of the land who oppose Joshua (Josh 9:1-2).

2:10 *Reed Sea*: a body of water the Israelites crossed to escape Pharaoh after coming out of Egypt (Exod 14). The Greek translation of the Bible (Septuagint) mistakes the site of the crossing as the Red Sea, the large body of water between Africa and Arabia. The Hebrew, however, reads “Reed Sea” and could denote a marshy area far west of the Red Sea. The exact location therefore is uncertain (see also Josh 4:24). *Amorites*: This label originally (in documents outside the OT) referred to a kingdom west of the Euphrates River in modern-day Syria. The OT seems to expand this term and uses it as an ethnic label mainly for the people who lived east of the Jordan River in territories occupied by Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh (Josh 1:12-15). Kings Sihon and Og are here identified as Amorites. *Sihon and Og*: The accounts of Israel’s trek from Sinai to Canaan highlight the encounter with these two Amorite kings (Num 21:21-35; Deut 2:26-3:17). Although the Israelites offered them terms of peace, asking only to pass through their land unharmed, Sihon and Og both attacked them (Deut 2:30; 3:1). King Og is portrayed as the last of the Rephaim, a race of giants (Deut 2:10-11; 3:11)

that arose as a result of heavenly beings mating with women (Gen 6:1-5). Thus the two kings are emblems of evil forces opposed to God. Israel’s encounter with Sihon and Og is the primary example of how God protected the Israelites from evil forces that would have prevented them from entering Canaan (see Josh 9:10; 12:1-6).

2:15-21 Having bound the spies by a pledge to preserve her and her family, Rahab now releases the spies with directions for a safe escape. The spies only demand that Rahab keep their mission secret (2:20). This concluding portion of the spy account indicates again that Rahab controlled the situation, and she controlled the spies who came to her.

2:15 *she lived inside the wall*: The description of Rahab’s living quarters reflects a common building practice in ancient fortified cities. Two parallel walls were often built on the outermost portion of the fortification. The space between the two walls was then partitioned and used for storage or dwellings. Rahab’s house was located thus within the protective outer walls of Jericho. This description explains why the spies were able to escape the city even though the gate of the city was closed (Josh 2:7).

2:18 *this red woven cord*: The cord doesn’t seem to be a rope, as Joshua 2:15 includes another word to refer to the line Rahab used to lower the spies from the wall. The color suggests a dyeing industry. Colored cloth was produced by dyeing single threads and weaving them together. The flax on Rahab’s roof also suggests cloth-making activity (see note on Josh 2:6). The significance of the color and of the material isn’t made clear by the story. It states only that the woven cord would identify Rahab’s house during the invasion.

3:1 Nm 25:1;

Josh 2:1.

Josh 6:12.

Josh 7:16

3:5 Ex 19:10;

1: 20:7;

Josh 7:13;

1Sa 16:5

3:7 Josh 1:5;

Josh 4:14;

1Ch 29:25

3:8 Josh 3:3

3:9 Ex 24:4;

Dt 4:1, Dt 31:9;

Dt 31:19;

Josh 8:32

3:10 Dt 5:26;

Dt 7:1;

1Sa 17:26

### *Mission accomplished*

<sup>22</sup>The spies went out and entered the highlands. They stayed there for three days until those chasing them came back. Those chasing them had searched all along the road but never found them. <sup>23</sup>Then the two men came back down from the highlands. They crossed the Jordan and came to Joshua, Nun's son. They told him everything that had happened to them. <sup>24</sup>They said to Joshua, "The LORD has definitely given the entire land into our power. In addition, all of the land's population has melted down in fear because of us."

### *Directions for crossing the Jordan*

**3** Joshua took down the camp early in the morning. He and all the Israelites marched out of Shittim and came to the Jordan, where they stayed overnight before crossing. <sup>2</sup>At the end of three days the officers went through the middle of the camp. <sup>3</sup>They commanded the people, "As soon as you see the LORD your God's chest containing the covenant and the levitical priests carrying it, you are to march out from your places and follow it. <sup>4</sup>But let there be some distance between you and it, about three thousand feet. Don't come near it! You will know the way you should go, even though you've never traveled this way before."

<sup>5</sup>Joshua said to the people, "Make yourselves holy! Tomorrow the LORD will do wonderful things among you." <sup>6</sup>Then Joshua said to the priests, "Lift up the covenant chest. Go along in front of the people." So they lifted up the covenant chest and went in front of the people.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to make you great in the opinion of all Israel. Then they will know that I will be with you in the same way that I was with Moses. <sup>8</sup>"You are to command the priests who carry the covenant chest, 'As soon as you come to the bank of the Jordan, stand still in the Jordan.'"

<sup>9</sup>Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come close. Listen to the words of the LORD your God." <sup>10</sup>Then Joshua said, "This is how you will know that the living God is among you and will completely remove the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and

*Chest Containing the Covenant* The term refers to a sacred object that Moses constructed according to God's specifications after the Israelites left Egypt (Exod 25:10-22; 37:1-9). It was approximately 45 inches long, 27 inches wide, and 27 inches deep (Exod 25:10). The chest was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold inside and out (Exod 25:11). The cover for the chest had two winged creatures, one on each side (Exod 25:18). The object represented God's nearness and probably signified God's throne (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2). The exact significance of the chest varies depending on the context. The OT contains more than 200 references to this chest, and there are 22 different labels for it. For example, it is sometimes called the "covenant chest" because it contained the tablets God gave to Moses (see Exod 24:12). It is also called the "LORD's chest" and "God's chest." In Joshua it seems to act as a war palladium (see 1 Sam 4), which is an object that goes in front of the Israelites in battle to ensure victory. The chest is a holy object, infused with the power of God, whose presence it represents. Therefore, it is also able to stop the waters of the Jordan River. After the Israelites settled in the land, it was placed in the sanctuary at Shiloh (1 Sam 3-6), and eventually David brought it to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6).

2:22-24 The spies return to Joshua with a report, but what they discovered is limited to the information Rahab gave in her speech to them (Josh 2:9-11), namely that the people of the land melted in fear because they heard how God gave the Israelites victory at the Reed Sea and against Sihon and Og.

2:22 *three days*: See note on Joshua 1:10.

3:1-13 Crossing the Jordan is described as a reenactment of the crossing of the Reed Sea, with the water standing up in a pile and the Israelites passing through on dry ground (Exod 14:21-22). The crossing of the Jordan River is described in fact as a liturgical event that is meant to be repeated. The presence of God's chest in front of the procession indicates the religious and ceremonial quality of the event. See sidebar, "Chest Containing the Covenant."

3:4 *let there be some distance*: The chest was a holy object and was therefore dangerous for people to touch. The Israelites were to remain separate from it as from all sacred

objects lest the power inherent in the chest destroy them (see 2 Sam 6:7).

3:5 *Make yourselves holy*: Making oneself holy implies separation from ordinary things, from objects, including food thought to be ritually unclean. The notion of ritual cleanliness may come from the assumption that some things have fallen away from the order and purpose God intended in creation. Thus animals that could be used for food or sacrifices had certain characteristics perhaps thought to reflect God's initial design (see Lev 11:2-23). Other animals may have been conceived as falling out of the intended order (see Lev 11:24-44). Also certain experiences in life, such as childbirth (Lev 12) or certain diseases or bodily conditions (Lev 13), brought a period of ritual uncleanness.

3:10 *living God*: The expression appears only eight times in the OT. It refers to God's power to deliver Israel and put Israel in possession of Canaan (see the expression in Isa 37:4, 17). The primary sign of the living God among the

Jebusites before you. <sup>11</sup>Look! The covenant chest of the ruler of the entire earth is going to cross over in front of you in the Jordan. <sup>12</sup>Now pick twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one per tribe. <sup>13</sup>The soles of the priests' feet, who are carrying the chest of the LORD, ruler of the whole earth, will come to rest in the water of the Jordan. At that moment, the water of the Jordan will be cut off. The water flowing downstream will stand still in a single heap."

**Marching across the Jordan**

<sup>14</sup>The people marched out from their tents to cross over the Jordan. The priests carrying the covenant chest were in front of the people. <sup>15</sup>When the priests who were carrying the chest came to the Jordan, their feet touched the edge of the water. The Jordan had overflowed its banks completely, the way it does during the entire harvest season. <sup>16</sup>But at that moment the water of the Jordan coming downstream stood still. It rose up as a single heap very far off, just below Adam, which is the city next to Zarethan. The water going down to the desert sea (that is, the Dead Sea) was cut off completely. The people crossed opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup>So the priests carrying the LORD's covenant chest stood firmly on dry land in the middle of the Jordan. Meanwhile, all Israel crossed over on dry land, until the entire nation finished crossing over the Jordan.

**Twelve stones at Gilgal**

**4** <sup>1</sup>When the entire nation had finished crossing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, <sup>2</sup>"Pick twelve men from the people, one man per tribe. <sup>3</sup>Command them, 'Pick up twelve stones from right here in the middle of the Jordan, where the feet of the priests had been firmly planted. Bring them across with you and put them down in the camp where you are staying tonight.'"

<sup>4</sup>Joshua called for the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one man per tribe. <sup>5</sup>Joshua said to them, "Cross over into the middle of the Jordan, up to the LORD your God's chest. Each of you, lift up a stone on his shoulder to match the number of the tribes of the Israelites. <sup>6</sup>This will be a symbol among you. In the future your children may ask, 'What do these stones mean to you?' <sup>7</sup>Then you will tell them that the water of the Jordan was cut off before the LORD's covenant chest. When it crossed over the Jordan, the water of the Jordan was cut off. These stones will be an enduring memorial for the Israelites."

<sup>8</sup>The Israelites did exactly what Joshua ordered. They lifted twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, matching the number of the tribes of the Israelites, exactly as the LORD had said to Joshua. They brought them over to the camp and put them down there. <sup>9</sup>Joshua also set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan where the feet of the priests had stood while carrying the covenant chest. They are still there today.

**Crossing completed**

<sup>10</sup>Meanwhile, the priests carrying the chest were standing in the middle of the Jordan. They stood there until every command that the LORD had ordered Joshua to tell the people

Israelites seems to be the presence of the "covenant chest" (Josh 3:11) that crosses in front of the Israelites and causes the waters of the Jordan River to cut off. The sign of God's power isn't simply the chest as an object but the miraculous signs that accompany it. See sidebar, "Chest Containing the Covenant"

3:11 *ruler of the entire earth*: The power of God to deliver the Israelites comes from the fact that Israel's God is *ruler of the entire earth*. In some other passages this expression refers to God's reign over all nations (Ps 97:5; Mic 4:13). The word translated "earth" can also simply mean land, as in the land of Canaan. Certainly part of the claim here is that God rules over Canaan and is able to give it to whomever God chooses.

3:14-17 The miraculous stoppage of the water of the Jordan River is effected by the priests carrying the chest into the water. It represents the power and presence of God that stand ready to deliver the Israelites from trouble.

3:15 *overflowed its banks*: Assyrian military records include reports of Assyrian kings crossing the flooded Euphrates River en route to major battles. The comment about the

Jordan River overflowing thus subtly compares the Israelites to their powerful neighbors to the east. The message is that the Israelites could accomplish as much as the great empires because God fought for them (see notes on Josh 1:4; 15:45-47).

4:1-9 This section breaks the narrative account of crossing the Jordan River with Joshua's instructions for preserving the memory of the event. Joshua instructs the Israelites to remove 12 stones, one for each tribe, from the river and place them as a monument in the camp at Gilgal. Joshua then prescribes a liturgy that will be led by the question of children (*What do these stones mean to you?* 4:6; see Exod 12:26). Joshua 4:9 presents yet another memorial of stones in the middle of the river. The referent in the case of the second memorial is confusing. Perhaps 4:9 has in mind a walkway created by the stones in the river; or perhaps the stones are placed where the water is low, and the stones can be seen clearly. Otherwise, this second set of stones would have no purpose for future generations.

4:10-19 The crossing of the Jordan River has been described as finished two times already (Josh 3:17; 4:1), but

3:11 Job 41:11;  
Ps 24:1;  
Mi 4:13;  
Zec 4:14, Zec 6:5  
3:12 Nm 13:2;  
Josh 4:2, Josh 4:4  
3:13 Ex 15:8;  
Josh 3:16  
3:14 Ac 7:44,  
Ac 7:45  
3:15 Josh 4:18;  
1Ch 12:15;  
Jer 12:5,  
Jer 49:19  
3:16 Gn 14:3;  
1Ki 4:12,  
1Ki 7:46  
3:17 Ex 14:22,  
Ex 14:29  
4:3 Josh 4:19-20

4:20 Josh 4:3,  
Josh 4:8-9  
5:2 Gn 17:10;  
Ex 4:25  
5:4 Nm 26:64-65  
5:6 Ex 3:8;  
Nm 14:23;  
Dt 2:14

had been carried out. This was exactly what Moses had commanded Joshua. The people crossed over quickly. <sup>11</sup>As soon as all the people had finished crossing, the LORD's chest crossed over. The priests then moved to the front of the people. <sup>12</sup>The people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over, organized for war ahead of the Israelites, exactly as Moses had told them. <sup>13</sup>Approximately forty thousand armed for war crossed over in the LORD's presence to the plains of Jericho, ready for battle. <sup>14</sup>The LORD made Joshua great in the opinion of all Israel on that day. So they revered him in the same way that they had revered Moses during all of his life.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD said to Joshua, <sup>16</sup>"Command the priests carrying the chest containing the testimony to come up out of the Jordan."

<sup>17</sup>So Joshua commanded the priests, "Come up from the Jordan." <sup>18</sup>The priests carrying the LORD's covenant chest came up from the middle of the Jordan, and the soles of their feet touched dry ground. At that moment, the water of the Jordan started flowing again. It ran as before, completely over its banks. <sup>19</sup>The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month. <sup>6</sup>They camped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.

### **Stones at Gilgal**

<sup>20</sup>Joshua set up at Gilgal those twelve stones they had taken from the Jordan. <sup>21</sup>He said to the Israelites, "In the future your children will ask their parents, 'What about these stones?' <sup>22</sup>Then you will let your children know: 'Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground.' <sup>23</sup>This was because the LORD your God dried up the water of the Jordan before you until you crossed over. This was exactly what the LORD your God did to the Reed Sea. <sup>4</sup>He dried it up before us until we crossed over. <sup>24</sup>This happened so that all the earth's peoples might know that the LORD's power is great and that you may always revere the LORD your God."

### **Enemy kings react**

**5**All the Amorite kings on the west side of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings near the sea heard that the LORD had dried up the water of the Jordan before the Israelites until they had crossed over. Then their hearts melted. They lost all courage because of the Israelites.

### **Circumcision**

<sup>2</sup>At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make yourself flint knives. Circumcise the Israelites for a second time." <sup>3</sup>So Joshua made flint knives for himself. He circumcised the Israelites at Foreskins Hill. <sup>4</sup>This is the reason Joshua did so: All the people who went out of Egypt, that is, all the men who were soldiers, had died in the desert on the way after they left Egypt. <sup>5</sup>All the people who went out were circumcised. But none of the people born in the desert on the way after they had left Egypt had been circumcised. <sup>6</sup>This was because the Israelites journeyed forty years in the desert until the whole nation died off. These were the men old

<sup>6</sup>March–April, Nisan <sup>4</sup>Or Red Sea

in 4:10-19 the narrative description resumes, and the description of the crossing is finally completed. The focus of this conclusion is the power of the chest carried by the priests and the success of Joshua in leading God's people. The priests move in front of the people so the chest leads the way (4:11). When the chest comes out of the Jordan River, the water of the river begins to flow again (4:18). There is also an emphasis on the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossing over with the other Israelites to capture the land across the Jordan. The point is that the Israelites are one people and that tribes east of the Jordan River stand with the western tribes (see intro; see note on Josh 1:10-18).

4:20-24 This section gives yet another report of a memorial at Gilgal and the plans for a liturgical celebration (see Josh 4:1-8). The celebration Joshua commands is essentially the same as Joshua 4:1-8. This second version, however, broadens the significance of the memorial with references to the Lord rescuing the Israelites at the Reed Sea (4:23). Now Joshua makes explicit that the Jordan River crossing and its reenactment is to recall the exodus. Moreover, while the first account of the ceremony is for

the benefit of the Israelites (Josh 4:7), this version aims the ceremony at *all the earth's peoples* (4:24). It is a testimony to the nations of what God has done.

5:1 Rahab earlier told the Israelite spies that she and the other Canaanites heard that God was fighting for the Israelites and that the Canaanites "melted down in fear" (Josh 2:9). Joshua 5:1 is the first in a series of subsequent notes that the kings in the territory across the Jordan River also heard the Israelites had entered the land and that God was fighting for them (Josh 9:1; 10:1-5; 11:1-5). The focus of this first note is that the hearts of the kings melted, just as the hearts of the Canaanites Rahab described. Subsequent notes emphasize that the kings of the land didn't fear but instead gathered for war against the Israelites and their allies (see Josh 10:1-5; 11:1-5).

5:2-9 Circumcision and Passover were two identifying marks of the Israelites. According to Exodus 12:48, all males participating in the Passover Festival had to be circumcised. Joshua 5:2-9 assumes the generation of those who came out of Egypt with Moses may be separated exactly from the generation of those born in the wilderness. Each member of the exodus generation was circumcised

enough to fight who went out from Egypt and who hadn't obeyed the LORD. The LORD had pledged to them never to show them the land that the LORD had pledged to their ancestors to give us. It is a land full of milk and honey. <sup>7</sup>Joshua circumcised their children, the ones the LORD had set in their place. They were uncircumcised because they hadn't been circumcised on the way. <sup>8</sup>After the whole nation had undergone circumcision, they remained in the camp until they got well again. <sup>9</sup>Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt." So the place was called Gilgal,<sup>a</sup> as it is today.

5:7 Dt 1:39;  
Josh 5:2  
5:8 Gn 34:25  
5:9 Gn 34:14;  
Josh 4:19  
5:10 Ex 12:6;  
Nm 9:5  
5:11 Lv 23:14  
5:12 Ex 16:35  
5:13 Gn 10:2,  
Gn 32:24;  
Nm 22:23,  
Nm 22:31  
5:14 Gn 17:3;  
Josh 5:15  
5:15 Ex 3:5;  
Josh 5:14;  
Ac 7:33  
6:1 Nm 21:21,  
Nm 22:1;  
Josh 7:1,  
Josh 10:1,  
Josh 12:1  
6:2 Dt 7:24;  
Josh 2:24,  
Josh 8:1

**Passover**

<sup>10</sup>The Israelites camped in Gilgal. They celebrated Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month<sup>f</sup> on the plains of Jericho. <sup>11</sup>On the very next day after Passover, they ate food produced in the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. <sup>12</sup>The manna stopped on that next day, when they ate food produced in the land. There was no longer any manna for the Israelites. So that year they ate the crops of the land of Canaan.

**Commander of the Lord's heavenly force**

<sup>13</sup>When Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up. He caught sight of a man standing in front of him with his sword drawn. Joshua went up and said to him, "Are you on our side or that of our enemies?"

<sup>14</sup>He said, "Neither! I'm the commander of the LORD's heavenly force. Now I have arrived!"

Then Joshua fell flat on his face and worshipped. Joshua said to him, "What is my master saying to his servant?"

<sup>15</sup>The commander of the LORD's heavenly force said to Joshua, "Take your sandals off your feet because the place where you are standing is holy." So Joshua did this.

**Instructions about Jericho**

**6** Now Jericho was closed up tightly because of the Israelites. No one went out or came in. <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to Joshua, "Look. I have given Jericho and its king into your power,

<sup>a</sup>Gilgal sounds like the Heb verb *galal*, "to roll away." <sup>f</sup>March—April, Nisan

in Egypt, but none of those born in the wilderness were circumcised until now. The circumcision of those born in the wilderness marks the beginning of the generation that will possess the promised land. The importance of this story lies in part in the memory of the event for future generations. Circumcision and Passover became particularly important for the Israelites during their exile in Babylon. This account of the first Passover in Canaan, and the accompanying circumcision, likely provided those exiles with inspiration and identity as they practiced the two rites as testimony to their captors of what they believed.

5:9 *disgrace of Egypt*: This expression seems to refer to the notion that the Israelites who came out of bondage in Egypt were never freed spiritually because they didn't fully accept God's gift of the land of Canaan. The circumcision of the next generation thus marks the end of that disgrace. The Israelites have now entered the land God promised their ancestors and through circumcision they have affirmed their covenant with God, who rescued them from Egypt. *Gilgal*: The name comes from a Hebrew word that means "to roll." Thus the statement that the disgrace of Egypt is rolled away uses a play on the name of the place of the circumcision.

5:10-12 The celebration of Passover in the land of Canaan officially marked the end of the wilderness period in Israel's history. The first Passover was during the exodus (Exod 12:43-13:10). During the wilderness-wandering period God sustained the Israelites with manna (Exod 16:14), a flaky substance that appeared on the ground each morning. *manna*: from a Hebrew word meaning "What is it?" (see note on Exod 16:15). The mysterious substance appeared on the ground every morning the Israelites were

in the wilderness. Now that the Israelites are settled in the land, the manna ceases and the wilderness wandering comes to a close.

5:13-15 *commander of the Lord's heavenly force*: a divine messenger who represents God's attempt to bring justice to the earth. He states that he is neither on the side of Israel nor Israel's enemy. Thus he shows that God's desire for justice transcends Israel's desire for land and freedom. In line with this divine character, the commander of God's army doesn't instruct Joshua to engage in battle or use a particular military strategy. Rather, he tells Joshua to take off his sandals and take on a posture of worship. The command for Joshua to remove his shoes is reminiscent of God's instruction to Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:5). 6:1-5 Jericho's residents react in fear of the Israelites, as did the other people of the land (Josh 5:1). The note that the city was *closed up tightly* indicates that the residents expected the Israelites to besiege the town and try to breach its walls or gates. The account, however, emphasizes God's actions and not the Israelites' military strategy. The people of Jericho perhaps know that their battle wasn't against the Israelite army but against God who had given Jericho into Joshua's hands (see Josh 2:9-11). God's command to the Israelites reinforces this point. The action God prescribes is closer to an act of worship than a military endeavor. The march around Jericho emphasizes the number seven, a number that stood for wholeness and perfection. The march around Jericho progresses each day until they reach the complete number of days. Seven priests carrying seven ram's horns led the procession. On the final day they march around the city the same number of times.

6:1 *Jericho*: See note on Joshua 2:1.

6:4 Lv 25:9  
 6:5 Josh 6:20;  
 1Sa 4:5  
 6:6 Josh 3:6  
 6:7 Josh 4:13;  
 Josh 6:6; 1Sa 4:4  
 6:8 Josh 6:4  
 6:9 Josh 6:13;  
 Is 52:12  
 6:12 Josh 3:1;  
 Josh 3:6  
 6:13 Josh 6:4  
 6:15 Josh 3:1;  
 Ps 119:147  
 6:16 Josh 6:2  
 6:17 Lv 27:28;  
 Dt 20:17;  
 Josh 2:1;  
 Josh 2:4;  
 Heb 11:31  
 6:18 Dt 7:26;  
 Dt 13:17;  
 Josh 7:1;  
 Josh 7:12;  
 Josh 7:25  
 6:19 Josh 6:24

along with its mighty warriors. <sup>3</sup>Circle the city with all the soldiers, going around the city one time. Do this for six days. <sup>4</sup>Have seven priests carry seven trumpets made from rams' horns in front of the chest. On the seventh day, circle the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets.

<sup>5</sup>"Have them blow a long blast on the ram's horn. As soon as you hear that trumpet blast, have all the people shout out a loud war cry. Then the city wall will collapse, and the people will rise up, attacking straight ahead."

### **Israel destroys Jericho**

<sup>6</sup>So Joshua, Nun's son, called the priests. He said to them, "Lift up the covenant chest. Let seven priests carry seven trumpets made from rams' horns in front of the LORD's chest." <sup>7</sup>He said to the people, "Go forward. Circle the city. Let the armed soldiers go in front of the LORD's chest." <sup>8</sup>As soon as Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying seven ram's horn trumpets moved forward in front of the LORD. They blew the trumpets. The LORD's covenant chest followed. <sup>9</sup>The initial group of soldiers was going in front of the priests who were blowing the trumpets. The rear guard was coming behind the chest, with trumpets blowing continuously. <sup>10</sup>Joshua ordered the people, "Don't shout. Don't let your voice be heard. Don't let a word come out of your mouth until the day I tell you, 'Shout!' Then shout!"

<sup>11</sup>He made the LORD's chest circle the city, going around one time. They went back to the camp and stayed there overnight. <sup>12</sup>Joshua got up early in the morning. The priests lifted up the LORD's chest. <sup>13</sup>The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets made from rams' horns were going in front of the LORD's chest, blowing trumpets continuously. The armed soldiers were going in front of them. The rear guard was coming after the LORD's chest, blowing trumpets continuously. <sup>14</sup>They circled the city one time on the second day. Then they went back to the camp. They did this for six days.

<sup>15</sup>On the seventh day, they got up at dawn. They circled the city in this way seven times. It was only on that day that they circled the city seven times. <sup>16</sup>The seventh time, the priests blew the trumpets. Then Joshua said to the people, "Shout, because the LORD has given you the city! <sup>17</sup>The city and everything in it is to be utterly wiped out as something reserved for the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute is to stay alive, along with everyone with her in her house. This is because she hid the messengers we sent. <sup>18</sup>But you, keep away from the things set aside for God so that you don't desire<sup>b</sup> and take some of the things reserved. That would turn the camp of Israel into a thing doomed to be utterly wiped out and bring calamity on it. <sup>19</sup>All silver and gold, along with bronze and iron equipment, are holy to the LORD. They must

*Ban: Utterly Wiped Out* This expression refers to the practice of devoting to God the loot taken in battle in order to acknowledge that God gave the victory. As the intensive language indicates, the practice was similar to making an entirely burned sacrifice so that nothing but smoke remained afterward. Items "reserved for God" aren't to be possessed by soldiers conquering a city (see note on Josh 7:1). People were often included among those things reserved for God.

The practice of the ban is known outside the Bible. In an inscription dating to the 9th century BCE, Moab's King Mesha recalls how he devoted to utter destruction and then utterly wiped out certain Israelites. He reserved for his god Chemosh the spoils of the battle. Similarly, Numbers 21:1-3 reports that the Israelites called on God for help against the Ammonites and promised to reserve the spoils of war for God. Note that in these cases the ban is applied at the initiative of humans on an ad hoc basis. The description of the practice in Joshua (and Deuteronomy) is different in that it comes as part of God's order and is to be applied at all times. The instruction to place people under the ban in some passages, however, seems to refer to religious purity and is not a literal order to kill (see especially Deut 7:2, which follows the order with instructions not to intermarry).

<sup>b</sup>LXX; Heb *wipe out as something reserved for God*

**6:4 rams' horns:** refers to the shofar, a horn used to call the Israelites to worship (Lev 25:9) and to war (Judg 3:27).

**6:6-21** Joshua gives instructions for the march around Jericho, and the people obey. The Lord's chest containing the covenant goes in front of the Israelites, thus symbolizing that the power to conquer Jericho belongs to God. The warning to keep away from the things set aside for God is a

further reminder that the Israelites won't possess Jericho because of their military capacity. God will give Jericho into their hands.

**6:18 things set aside for God:** items placed under the ban, that is, items to be *utterly wiped out* (see Josh 2:8; see sidebar, "Ban: Utterly Wiped Out"). The Israelites weren't to possess the loot obtained from the victory at Jericho.

go into the LORD's treasury." <sup>20</sup>Then the people shouted. They blew the trumpets. As soon as the people heard the trumpet blast, they shouted a loud war cry. Then the wall collapsed. The people went up against the city, attacking straight ahead. They captured the city. <sup>21</sup>Without mercy, they wiped out everything in the city as something reserved for God—man and woman, young and old, cattle, sheep, and donkeys.

**Consequences**

<sup>22</sup>Joshua spoke to the two men who had scouted out the land. "Go to the prostitute's house. Bring out the woman from there, along with everyone related to her, exactly as you pledged to her." <sup>23</sup>So the young men who had been spies went and brought Rahab out, along with her father, her mother, her brothers, and everyone related to her. They brought her whole clan out and let them stay outside Israel's camp. <sup>24</sup>They burned the city and everything in it. But they put the silver and gold, along with the bronze and iron equipment, into the treasury of the LORD's house. <sup>25</sup>Joshua let Rahab the prostitute live, her family, and everyone related to her. So her family still lives among Israel today, because she hid the spies whom Joshua had sent to scout out Jericho.

<sup>26</sup>At that time Joshua made this decree: "Anyone who starts to rebuild this city of Jericho will be cursed before the LORD. Laying its foundations will cost them their oldest child. Setting up its gates will cost them their youngest child."

<sup>27</sup>The LORD was with Joshua. News about him spread throughout the land.

**Israel defeated at Ai**

**7**The Israelites did a disrespectful thing concerning the items reserved for God. Achan was the son of Carmi, grandson of Zabdi, great-grandson of Zerach. He was from the tribe of Judah. He took some of the things reserved for God. So the LORD was furious with the Israelites.

<sup>2</sup>Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven to the east of Bethel. He said to them, "Go up. Scout out the land."

So the men went up and scouted out Ai. <sup>3</sup>They came back to Joshua and said to him, "There is no need for all of the people to go up. Two or three thousand men could go up and strike Ai. Don't make all of the people bother going there. There are just a few of them." <sup>4</sup>So about three thousand men from the people went up in that direction. But they fled from the men of Ai. <sup>5</sup>The men of Ai struck down approximately thirty-six of them. They chased them from outside the gate as far as Shebarim. They struck them down on the slope. Then the hearts of the people melted and turned to water.

Instead, they were to devote these items to God to recognize that they only captured the city because God gave it to them (Josh 6:17).

6:22-27 In the conclusion to the story of the fall of Jericho, Rahab again becomes a prominent character. As the Israelites capture the city of Jericho, Joshua orders the soldiers to preserve Rahab and her family. This order seems to contradict earlier orders to destroy everything in the city. Moreover, it is striking that Rahab and her family members are preserved, though Joshua 6:21 indicates that they wiped out everything in the city. Joshua 2 emphasized Rahab's agreement with the spies as the reason for her salvation, but 6:25 seems to indicate this is an act of compassion simply because she hid the spies.

7:1-5 The narrator here gives background information for the next event in the conquest story. Achan kept some of the spoils from Jericho that were reserved for God (see note on Josh 6:18; see sidebar, "Ban: Utterly Wiped Out" at Josh 6). Achan's family identity is important in the overall message sent by this sinful act. Achan is from the tribe of Judah, the most prominent tribe. As an Israelite with pedigree, Achan thus stands in marked contrast with Rahab the foreigner in the previous account. Achan fails to recognize the obligation of the Israelites to God, whereas Rahab fully acknowledges that God controlled the land and gave

Jericho into the hands of the Israelites. By keeping some of the loot from the battle, Achan acted as though the Israelites possessed the city by their own power and ability. The Israelites follow Achan's attitude at Ai. They don't recognize Ai is God's gift to them. As a result the people of Ai defeat the Israelites. Now the Israelites' hearts melt, as earlier the hearts of the Canaanites melted in fear (Josh 2:9-11; 5:1). The story of Achan provides an implicit reminder that the people of God aren't an ethnic group identified by tribe, clan, and family. Rather, they are people who receive God's gift in faith. Thus someone like Achan could be rejected because of his unfaithfulness, while a foreigner like Rahab could be included because of her acknowledgment of God's power.

7:1 *items reserved for God*: also referred to as "items set aside for God." See note on Joshua 6:18.

7:2 *Ai*: The Hebrew word means "ruin." The site is probably identified with a particular ruin called et-Tell, which in Arabic also means "the mound" or "the ruin." It is located about two miles southeast of Bethel (see Gen 12:8; 13:3). Ai was established in approximately 3000 BCE, and was at times in its history a prominent city. By the time the Israelites entered Canaan, however, Ai seems little more than a village. That may explain the spies' confidence that they could capture Ai easily (Josh 7:3).

6:20 Josh 6:5;  
Heb 11:30  
6:21 Dt 2:34;  
Dt 7:2; Dt 20:16  
6:22 Josh 2:1;  
Josh 2:12;  
Josh 2:14;  
Heb 11:31  
6:23 Heb 11:31  
6:25 Josh 6:17;  
Jgs 1:25;  
Heb 11:31  
7:1 Josh 6:18;  
Josh 22:20;  
1Ch 2:7  
7:2 Josh 8:1;  
Josh 18:12;  
1Sa 13:5;  
1Sa 14:23;  
Hos 4:15  
7:3 Josh 7:2  
7:4 Lv 26:17;  
Dt 28:25  
7:5 Lv 26:36;  
Josh 2:11

7:6 Gn 37:29;

Nm 14:6;

Jgs 20:23;

Jgs 20:26;

Job 2:12

7:7 Ex 5:22

7:8 1Ki 8:25-26;

1Ki 8:59;

1Ki 18:36;

2Ki 19:15

7:9 Ex 32:12;

Nm 14:13;

Dt 9:28

7:10 Ex 14:15;

Josh 1:1;

Josh 6:2;

Josh 7:6; Josh 8:1

7:11 Josh 6:17;

Josh 6:18;

Josh 7:1;

Josh 7:15;

Jgs 2:20

7:12 Josh 6:18;

Jgs 2:14

7:13 Josh 3:5

7:14 1Sa 10:19;

Pv 16:33

7:15 Gn 34:7;

Josh 7:11;

Jgs 20:6;

1Sa 14:39

7:16 Josh 3:1

7:17 Nm 26:20

7:18 Josh 7:1

### Cause of Israel's defeat

<sup>6</sup>Joshua ripped open his clothes. He, along with the elders of Israel, lay flat on their faces before the LORD's chest until evening. They put dust on their heads. <sup>7</sup>Then Joshua said, "Oh no, LORD God! Why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan? Was it to hand us over to the power of the Amorites, to destroy us? If only we had been prepared to live on the other side of the Jordan! <sup>8</sup>Please forgive me, LORD. What can I say now that Israel has retreated before its enemies? <sup>9</sup>The Canaanites and the whole population of the land will hear of it. They will surround us and make our name disappear from the earth. What will you do about your great name then?"

<sup>10</sup>The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why do you lie flat on your face like this? <sup>11</sup>Israel has sinned. They have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the things reserved for me and put them with their own things. They have stolen and kept it a secret. <sup>12</sup>The Israelites can't stand up to their enemies. They retreat before their enemies because they themselves have become a doomed thing reserved for me. I will no longer be with you unless you destroy the things reserved for me that are present among you. <sup>13</sup>Go and make the people holy. Say, 'Get ready for tomorrow by making yourselves holy. This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: "Israel! Things reserved for me are present among you. You won't be able to stand up to your enemies until you remove from your presence the things reserved for me."' <sup>14</sup>In the morning, come forward tribe by tribe. Whichever tribe the LORD selects must come forward clan by clan. Whichever clan the LORD selects must come forward family by family. Whichever family the LORD selects will come forward by individual soldiers. <sup>15</sup>The person selected, who has the things reserved for God, must be put to death by burning. Burn everything that belongs to him too. This is because he has violated the LORD's covenant and has committed an outrage in Israel."

### Achan discovered and punished

<sup>16</sup>Joshua got up early in the morning. He made Israel come forward tribe by tribe. The tribe of Judah was selected. <sup>17</sup>He made the clans of Judah come forward. He selected the clan of Zerah. He made the clan of Zerah come forward as individual soldiers. Zabdi was selected. <sup>18</sup>He made each soldier of his family come forward. Achan was selected. He was a son

7:6-15 Joshua assumes the Israelites' defeat is the result of God breaking a covenant promise. He appeals to God on that basis, presenting the argument that God's reputation among the Canaanites will be damaged. Moses appealed to God the same way (Exod 32:11-14).

7:6 *ripped open his clothes... lay flat on their faces... put dust on their heads:* indicates a ritual of turning away from sin. See 1 Kings 21:27-29. Lying on the ground and putting dust on the head indicates awareness of human frailty (Pss 103:14; 104:29). Thus Joshua's prayer begins with the assumption that the Israelites, who are limited and weak, are victims of God's random behaviors and must beg God to be fair. As Joshua learns, however, the Israelites were defeated as the direct result of their own unfaithfulness.

7:7 *Amorites:* general term for the people east of the Jordan River. See note on Joshua 2:10.

7:9 *your great name:* "name" refers to God's reputation, or the view of God's character among the nations. Joshua's appeal to God seems to assume God has been unfaithful to God's promises. So he prays not for justice or fairness but for God to consider what others will say about God. *our name:* God promised Abraham a great name through his many descendants (Gen 12:2). Now the promise to Abraham seems in jeopardy.

7:11-12 *They have stolen:* Achan took items reserved only for God. *doomed thing:* Because the Israelites kept some of "the items reserved for God" (see Josh 7:1), the Israelites themselves were doomed to destruction. They became like the items to be destroyed (see Deut 7:26).

7:13 *make... holy:* Holiness is an attribute of God and all places and people closely associated with God. Holiness is

the opposite of being profane (which applies to ordinary things), and is sometimes associated with ritual purity, the removal of oneself from foods, objects, and experiences thought to be unworthy of God's presence. In Joshua 7 the Israelites are to make themselves holy by removing the forbidden objects, the doomed things, from their camp. See note on Joshua 3:5.

7:14 The structure and values of ancient Israelite society are revealed in the labels *tribe*, *clan*, and *family*. Individuals weren't recognized apart from their relatives. The family consisted of a patriarch, his wife or wives, their sons, and their sons' wives and children (the patriarch's daughters would have become members of their husbands' households). Thus *family* translates a Hebrew idiom, "the father's house." This was the most intimate and important association. Within the family, property was passed from generation to generation, thus providing financial stability. The clan was the extended family in which blood relations could still be established. The tribe was a large group of families, somewhat loosely connected, in which blood relations were assumed but weren't altogether certain.

7:15 *Burn everything:* The doomed things were like sacrifices and were burned as an offering to God. This was the original intention for the objects reserved for the Lord (see 1 Sam 15:15).

7:16-26 Joshua searches for the Israelite who kept plunder from Jericho by going through the series of social networks related to family relations that become more narrow as the search goes on (see Josh 7:14). *Judah:* Judah was the fourth son of Jacob and Leah and therefore wouldn't normally be the most important (Gen 29:31-35).



of Carmi, grandson of Zabdi, great-grandson of Zerah, and of the tribe of Judah. <sup>19</sup>Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD the God of Israel. Tell me what you have done. Don't hide anything from me."

<sup>20</sup>Achan answered Joshua, "It's true. I've sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: <sup>21</sup>Among the booty I saw a single beautiful robe in the Babylonian style, two hundred shekels of silver, and a single gold bar weighing fifty shekels. I desired them and took them. Now they are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver on the bottom."

<sup>22</sup>Then Joshua sent messengers. They ran to the tent. There it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver on the bottom. <sup>23</sup>They took the things from inside the tent. They brought them to Joshua and to all the Israelites and emptied them out before the LORD. <sup>24</sup>Then Joshua seized Achan, Zerah's son, along with the silver, the robe, the gold bar, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys, flocks, tent, and everything that belonged to him. All Israel joined Joshua. They brought them up to Achor Valley. <sup>25</sup>Joshua said, "You have brought disaster to us! May the LORD bring disaster to you today!" Then all Israel stoned him. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. <sup>26</sup>They raised over him a great pile of stones that is still there today. Then the LORD turned away from his fury. So he named that place Achor Valley.<sup>b</sup> It is still called that today.

7:19 Nm 5:6;  
1Sa 6:5;  
1Sa 14:43;  
Jer 13:16; Jn 9:24  
7:20 Josh 7:1,  
Josh 7:25;  
Josh 22:20;  
1Sa 15:30;  
1Ch 2:7  
7:21 Gn 3:6;  
1Ti 6:10  
7:24 Josh 7:26,  
Josh 15:7;  
Is 65:10;  
Hos 2:15  
7:25 Lv 20:2;  
Dt 17:5;  
Josh 6:18;  
1Ch 2:7  
7:26 Josh 6:29;  
2Sa 18:17;  
Is 65:10;  
Hos 2:15

**Plan to capture Ai**

**8** The LORD said to Joshua, "Don't be afraid or terrified. Take the entire army with you. Start to go up to Ai. Look! I have given the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land into your power. <sup>2</sup>Do to Ai and its king what you did to Jericho and its king. But you may take its booty and cattle as plunder. Set your ambush behind the city."

<sup>3</sup>So Joshua and the whole army got ready to go up to Ai. Joshua chose thirty thousand brave soldiers. He sent them out by night. <sup>4</sup>He commanded them, "Look. You are to ambush the city from behind. Don't move too far away from the city. Be ready, all of you. <sup>5</sup>I will approach the city with all the people. When they come out against us the same way as before, we will flee from them. <sup>6</sup>They will come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city. They will think, They are fleeing from us as before. So we will flee from them. <sup>7</sup>But you will rise up from the ambush and take over the city. The LORD your God will give it into your power. <sup>8</sup>As soon as you seize the city, set it on fire. Act according to the LORD's word. Indeed, I have given you an order!"

<sup>9</sup>Joshua sent them off, and they went to set the ambush. They stayed between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai. Joshua spent that night among the people. <sup>10</sup>Joshua got up early in the morning and mustered the people. Then he and the elders of Israel went up in front of the people to Ai. <sup>11</sup>The entire army that was with him went up. They moved in close, in front of the city. Then they camped north of Ai, with the valley between them and Ai. <sup>12</sup>He took about five thousand men and positioned them as an ambush between Bethel and Ai to the west of the city. <sup>13</sup>The people positioned the main camp on the north side of the city and its rear guard on its west side. That night, Joshua went into the middle of the valley.

<sup>b</sup>Or Calamity Valley

The tribe of Judah, however, became the central tribe during the Israelite monarchy since it was the tribe of King David.

7:21 *shekels*: A shekel was a unit of weight that averaged about two-fifths of an ounce. Later the shekel became a designation of currency (see Exod 30:13).

7:24 *All Israel*: An important theme in Joshua is the unity of the Israelite tribes. Thus all the tribes gather for key events, as here to determine who is guilty of disobeying God and causing the Israelites to be defeated. See note on Joshua 1:10-18.

8:1-13 The attack on Ai involves a recognizable military strategy, unlike the attack on Jericho. At Ai Joshua feigned retreat and set an ambush for the soldiers of Ai who pursued them. Nevertheless, the story insists that God gave Ai

into the power of the Israelites (8:7) just as God delivered Jericho to them.

8:2 *take its booty and cattle as plunder*: Although the city's residents were dedicated to the Lord, its livestock and other material wealth could be taken as plunder from war. The rules concerning the possession of material like this seem to vary from town to town (cf. Josh 6:17).

8:9 *Bethel*: one of Israel's most sacred places, location of Jacob's dream of a stairway to heaven (Gen 28:10-22), and later, an important sanctuary (1 Kgs 12:29). The narrative at points suggests the Israelites also attacked and captured Bethel, though this isn't stated explicitly (Josh 8:17). Bethel's king is listed in Joshua 12:9 as one of those the Israelites defeated. Bethel and Ai are closely linked, and Ai is nearly always described in relation to Bethel (see Josh 12:9).

8:23 Josh 8:29.  
Josh 10:17.  
Josh 10:22.  
1Sa 15:8

### *Israel's successful strategy*

<sup>14</sup>As soon as the king of Ai saw this, he and all his troops, the men of the city, hurried out early in the morning to meet Israel in battle. They moved out to the battleground on the slopes down toward the Jordan.<sup>1</sup> He didn't know that there was an ambush set against him behind the city. <sup>15</sup>Then Joshua and all Israel let themselves be beaten before them. They fled in the direction of the desert. <sup>16</sup>Next, all the troops who were still in the city were called out to chase them. They chased after Joshua and so let themselves be drawn away from the city. <sup>17</sup>No one who hadn't gone out after Israel was left in either Ai or Bethel. They left the city wide open and chased after Israel.

<sup>18</sup>The LORD said to Joshua, "Point the dagger in your hand toward Ai, because I will give it into your power." So Joshua pointed the dagger in his hand toward the city. <sup>19</sup>The ambush quickly rose from its place. As soon as he reached out his hand, it charged. They entered the city and captured it. They set the city on fire at once. <sup>20</sup>Then the men of Ai turned around. They caught sight of the smoke of the city rising toward the sky. They had no chance to flee one way or the other. The troops who were fleeing toward the desert turned against the pursuit. <sup>21</sup>Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had captured the city and that the smoke of the city was rising. So they turned and struck down the men of Ai. <sup>22</sup>When other Israelites came out of the city to confront them, the men of Ai were caught in the middle. Some Israelites were on one side of them and some on the other. The Israelites struck them down until there was no one left to escape. <sup>23</sup>But they seized the king of Ai alive and brought him to Joshua.

<sup>24</sup>Israel finished killing the entire population of Ai that had chased them out into the open wasteland. All of them were finished off without mercy. Then all Israel went back to Ai and struck it down without mercy. <sup>25</sup>Twelve thousand men and women died that day, all the people of Ai. <sup>26</sup>Joshua didn't pull back the hand that was stretched out holding a dagger until he had wiped out the whole population of Ai as something reserved for God. <sup>27</sup>However, Israel did take the cattle and other booty of that city as plunder for themselves, in agreement with the command that the LORD had given Joshua. <sup>28</sup>Then Joshua burned Ai. He made it a permanently deserted mound. That is still the case today. <sup>29</sup>He hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening. At sundown, Joshua gave an order, and they took his body down from the tree. They threw it down at the opening of the city gate. Then they raised over it a great pile of stones that is still there today.

### *Joshua reads the Instruction*

<sup>30</sup>Then Joshua built an altar on Mount Ebal to the LORD, the God of Israel. <sup>31</sup>This was exactly what Moses the LORD's servant had commanded the Israelites. It is what is written in the Instruction scroll from Moses: "an altar of crude stones against which no iron tool has

<sup>i</sup>Or *the Arabah*

**8:14-29** The ruse at Ai is successful, and Joshua captures the city. The order to take down the body of the king of Ai at sundown shows respect for those defeated in war. It follows the general belief that anyone who hangs on a tree after sundown is under God's curse. The act of leaving a body hanging after sundown also defiles the land (for both ideas, see Deut 21:22-23).

**8:18** *Point the dagger*: The word for the object Joshua points isn't one of the common terms for sword or knife. It may refer to an implement known in ancient Near Eastern artwork as a symbol of royal authority. The gesture of pointing the dagger thus may have been equal to a proclamation of God's power over the city of Ai. Compare with Moses' stretching out his staff over the sea in Exodus 14:16 and lifting his hands in prayer in Exodus 17:11. Such a gesture could also be part of a proclamation and pronouncement of judgment (see Josh 8:26).

**8:17** The reference to Bethel seems to imply that Bethel was also captured. This perhaps explains the reference in Joshua 12:16 to Joshua defeating Bethel's king (see note on Josh 12:7-24).

**8:28** *deserted mound*: The name of the place, Ai, means "ruin" or "mound" (see Josh 7:2).

**8:29** *still there today*: that is, from the perspective of the storyteller. The expression appears frequently in the OT in explanations of names and monuments (see Ezek 20:29).

**8:30-35** Joshua fulfills Moses' instructions for a covenant renewal ceremony after entering the land (Deut 11:29-30; 27). The account emphasizes Joshua's faithfulness to Moses' commands (8:33, 35). It also highlights the authority of the Instruction scroll Moses left the Israelites (see Josh 1:8; see sidebar, "Instruction Scroll" at Josh 1). Joshua wrote a copy of the scroll on the stones of the altar (8:32), and he read the contents of the Instruction scroll as part of the ceremony. The ceremony took place in the space between two mountains. Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim stood on opposite sides of Shechem, one of the most important sites for Israel's ancestors (Gen 12:6; 34). Consistent with Israelite assemblies in Deuteronomy, the group here includes women, children, and immigrants (see 8:33, 35). Thus *all Israel* came together to renew the covenant.

swung.<sup>31</sup> On it they offered entirely burned offerings to the LORD and sacrificed well-being offerings.<sup>32</sup> There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua wrote on the stones a copy of the Instruction from Moses, which Moses had written earlier.<sup>33</sup> All Israel—with its elders, officers, and judges—were standing on either side of the chest. They were facing the levitical priests who carry the LORD's chest containing the covenant. They included both immigrants and full citizens. Half stood facing Mount Gerizim and half stood facing Mount Ebal. This was exactly what Moses the LORD's servant had initially commanded for the blessing of the Israelite people.<sup>34</sup> Afterward, Joshua read aloud all the words of the Instruction, both blessing and curse, in agreement with everything written in the Instruction scroll.<sup>35</sup> There wasn't a single word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua failed to read aloud in the presence of the entire assembly of Israel. This assembly included the women and small children, along with the immigrants who lived among them.

9:1 Nm 34:6  
9:3 Josh 9:17;  
2Sa 21:2

### The Gibeonites' trick

**9** All the kings on the west side of the Jordan heard about this, including those in the highlands, the lowlands, and along the entire coast of the Mediterranean Sea toward Lebanon. They were Hittites and Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.<sup>2</sup> They formed an alliance to fight Joshua and Israel.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, when the population of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai,<sup>4</sup> they acted cleverly. They set out pretending to be messengers.<sup>5</sup> They took worn-out sacks for their donkeys and worn-out wineskins that were split and mended.<sup>6</sup> They had worn-out, patched sandals on their feet and were wearing worn-out clothes. All the bread in their supplies was dry and crumbly.

<sup>6</sup> They went to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal. They said to him and to Israel, "We have come from a distant country. So now, make a treaty with us."

<sup>7</sup> Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you live among us. How then could we make a treaty with you?"

<sup>8</sup> Then they said to Joshua, "We are your servants."

Joshua said to them, "Who are you? Where have you come from?"

<sup>1</sup>Deut 27:5-6 <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain

**8:34 blessing and curse:** words thought to bring about in their speaking the performance of that speech. Here the reference is to the specific blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 27–28, which Moses gave the Israelites as part of a ceremony to be performed after entering the land. The curses are promises of disaster and lack of fruitfulness for those who disobey the covenant, while the blessings proclaim the opposite for those who are obedient.

**8:35 immigrants:** The term refers to people from other tribes living among the Israelites. Without extensive family connections such persons were economically vulnerable. Thus Moses' instructions include special care for them, along with other vulnerable members of society, like widows and orphans (see Deut 24:14).

**9:1-15** The Gibeonites are like Rahab (Josh 2) in that they recognize the power of Israel's God (9:10) and enter a covenant with the Israelites by outsmarting them. They seem to know the instruction in Deuteronomy 20:10-18, particularly what seems to be more openness to establish covenants with people far away. Thus, the Gibeonites pretend to be from a distant land (9:4-5, 11-13). See note on Joshua 9:7.

**9:1-2** Like Joshua 5:1, these two verses report that the kings in the land of Canaan heard of the Israelites' entry into the land and of the victories God gave them. Instead of melting in fear, however, the kings in 9:1-2 gather for war against the Israelites. The implication is that they could have made peace with the Israelites and submitted to the power of Israel's God, but they chose to engage in battle instead (see Josh 11:19). The story that follows thus sets the Gibeonites apart from these other residents of Canaan.

**9:1 heard about this:** This expression likely refers to the Israelite victories at Jericho and Ai, not to the covenant ceremony that immediately precedes chapter 9.

**9:3 population:** The actions of the people of Gibeon stand in contrast with those of the surrounding towns, not only in their stance toward the Israelites but also in the identity of those making decisions. In Joshua 9:1-2 it is the kings who decide to go to war. In 9:3, however, the population of Gibeon hears what Joshua and the Israelites did to Jericho and Ai and seeks to establish a covenant with the Israelites. This difference is crucial for understanding the accounts about Israel taking portions of the land and conquering people in the land. The kings of Canaan are presented as oppressive masters who maintain control by brute force. They rely on military might to acquire and keep what they possess. The Israelites represent the rule of God. They don't depend on military provisions. In fact, the book of Joshua makes clear they don't have chariots and war horses, the primary instruments of royal power. One message of Joshua 1-12 seems to be that those who follow the Canaanite kings don't trust in God and don't recognize God's power. The Gibeonites, however, see clearly that they must align with the God of the Israelites. Like Rahab, they become part of the Israelite community, albeit of secondary status. See notes on Joshua 10:2; 11:4.

**9:7 Hivites:** the ethnic designation of the residents of Gibeon. The Hivites originated in the region of modern-day Turkey, so the Gibeonites' claim of being from a distant land is technically correct. They came from that distant land, however, several hundred years earlier!

9:15 Josh 9:3,  
Josh 11:19;  
2Sa 21:2  
9:27 Dt 12:5;  
Josh 9:21  
10:1 Josh 8:1,  
Josh 8:22,  
Josh 9:15

<sup>9</sup>They said to him, "Your servants have come from a very distant country because of the reputation of the LORD your God. We have heard a report about him and everything he did in Egypt. <sup>10</sup>We heard about everything he did to the two kings of the Amorites on the east side of the Jordan, Heshbon's King Sihon and Bashan's King Og, who was in Ashtaroth. <sup>11</sup>Our elders and all the population of our land said to us, "Take along supplies for the journey. Go meet them and say to them, "We are your servants. So now make a treaty with us." <sup>12</sup>This is our bread. On the day we left to come to you we took it warm from our houses as supplies. But now here it is, dried up and crumbly. <sup>13</sup>These wineskins were new when we filled them. But here they are, split open. These clothes and sandals of ours are worn out from the very long journey." <sup>14</sup>The Israelites<sup>1</sup> took some of their supplies, but they didn't ask for any decision from the LORD. <sup>15</sup>Joshua made peace with them. He made a treaty with them to protect their lives. The leaders of the community made a solemn pledge to them.

### *Israel discovers the trick*

<sup>16</sup>Three days after the Israelites made a treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were actually their neighbors and were living among them. <sup>17</sup>So on the third day the Israelites marched out and came to their cities: Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirath-jearim. <sup>18</sup>But the Israelites didn't strike at them. This was because the leaders of the community had made a solemn pledge to them by the LORD, the God of Israel. The entire community grumbled against the leaders. <sup>19</sup>Then all the leaders said to the whole community, "We have made a solemn pledge to them by the LORD, the God of Israel. So we can't touch them now. <sup>20</sup>This is what we'll do with them. We'll let them live so that wrath won't come down on us because of the solemn pledge that we made to them." <sup>21</sup>The leaders went on to say to them, "Let them live." So they became woodcutters and water haulers for the whole community, exactly as the leaders had intended for them.

<sup>22</sup>Joshua called for the Gibeonites and spoke to them: "Why have you deceived us by saying, 'We live very far away from you,' when actually you live among us? <sup>23</sup>So now you are cursed. Some of you will always serve as woodcutters and water haulers for my God's house."

<sup>24</sup>They answered Joshua, "Your servants had been told that the LORD your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you the entire land and to wipe out all its population on your account. So we feared for our very lives because of you and did this thing. <sup>25</sup>Now, here we are in your power. Do to us whatever seems good and proper to you." <sup>26</sup>So Joshua treated them in this way. He spared them from the power of the Israelites, and they didn't kill them. <sup>27</sup>That day Joshua assigned them as woodcutters and water haulers for the community and for the LORD's altar, located wherever God<sup>m</sup> would choose. That is still the case today.

### *Gibeonites under attack*

**10** Jerusalem's King Adoni-zedek heard that Joshua had captured Ai and had wiped it out as something reserved for God. Joshua did the same thing to Ai and its king that he had done to Jericho and its king. He also heard that the population of Gibeon had

<sup>1</sup>Or men <sup>m</sup>Or he

9:10 The Gibeonites give essentially the same testimony as Rahab (Josh 2:9-11). They state that they heard how God defeated the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. Therefore, they seek to make peace with the Israelites. This seeking of peace in view of the power of Israel's God sets the Gibeonites apart from the other residents of the land.

9:16-27 When the Israelites discover that the Gibeonites tricked their representatives, they are furious and curse the Gibeonites. The nature of the curse, however, doesn't seem severe. The Gibeonites are sentenced to do manual labor for the temple in the future. Since some OT writers forbid foreigners from entering the temple, much less serving there, the role assigned the Gibeonites could be understood as a sign of favor and acceptance instead of punishment (cf. Ezek 44:7-9).

9:27 *woodcutters and water haulers*: The description of the Gibeonites sounds as if they are relegated to menial labor and occupy secondary status in the community. According to Deuteronomy 29:11, however, "woodcutters and

water haulers" are to be an integral part of the covenant community. Moreover, their role as servants in the temple indicates a privilege foreigners didn't typically have (see note on Josh 9:16-27), *wherever God would choose*. The idea that God would choose a single place for worship is firmly rooted in Deuteronomy's concern for religious purity. Deuteronomy speaks of the place as one God would choose for God's name (Deut 12:5). Originally the place was Shiloh (Jer 7:12-14). Later Shiloh was replaced by Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:17). That such a place would be the only location of an approved altar anticipates the controversy over the altar the tribes east of the Jordan River build for themselves (see notes on Josh 22).

10:1-7 As in Joshua 5:1 and Joshua 9:1-2, the kings of the land respond in fear when they hear of the Israelites' exploits in Canaan. Specifically, they heard how the Israelites won a great victory over Ai and how the Israelites made a covenant with the Gibeonites. In response, the king of Jerusalem led an attack on the Gibeonites. This report thus

made peace with Israel and were living among them. <sup>2</sup>Adoni-zedek and his people<sup>a</sup> were very afraid, because Gibeon was a large city, like one of the royal cities. It was larger than Ai. All its men were soldiers. <sup>3</sup>So Jerusalem's King Adoni-zedek sent word to Hebron's King Hoham, Jarmuth's King Piram, Lachish's King Japhia, and Eglon's King Debir: <sup>4</sup>"Come up and help me. We will strike at Gibeon, because it has made peace with Joshua and with the Israelites." <sup>5</sup>Then the five kings of the Amorites gathered. These were the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. They went up with all their armies, camped against Gibeon, and attacked it. <sup>6</sup>The people of Gibeon sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: "Don't desert your servants! Come to us quickly. Rescue us! Help us! All the Amorite kings from the highlands have assembled together against us." <sup>7</sup>So Joshua went up from Gilgal with the entire army and all the bravest soldiers.

10:3 Josh 10:5, Josh 10:23  
10:12 Josh 19:42; Hab 3:11  
10:13 2Sa 1:18; Is 38:8; Hab 3:11  
10:14 Ex 14:14; Josh 10:42; Josh 23:3  
10:16 Jgs 6:2; 1Sa 13:6

**The LORD fights for Israel**

<sup>8</sup>Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Don't be afraid of them. I have given them into your power. Not a single one of them can stand up against you." <sup>9</sup>Joshua quickly attacked them, having come up overnight from Gilgal. <sup>10</sup>Then the LORD threw them into a panic before Israel. Joshua struck a mighty blow against them at Gibeon. He chased them on the way up to Beth-horon and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. <sup>11</sup>When they were fleeing from Israel and were on the slope of Beth-horon, the LORD threw down large stones from the sky all the way to Azekah. So they died. More died from the hailstones than the Israelites killed with the sword.

<sup>12</sup>On the day the LORD gave the Amorites into the power of Israel, Joshua spoke to the LORD in the presence of the Israelites:

"Sun, stand still at Gibeon!  
and Moon, at the Aijalon Valley!"

<sup>13</sup>The sun stood still and the moon stood motionless until a nation took revenge on its enemies.

Isn't this written in the Jashar scroll? So the sun stood motionless in the middle of the sky. For a whole day, it was in no hurry to go down. <sup>14</sup>There hasn't been a day like it before or since, when the LORD responded to a human voice. The LORD fought for Israel. <sup>15</sup>Then Joshua along with all Israel came back to the camp at Gilgal.

**Israel executes five kings**

<sup>16</sup>Then those five kings fled and hid in the cave at Makkedah. <sup>17</sup>It was reported to Joshua, "The five kings have been found, hidden in the cave at Makkedah."

<sup>18</sup>Joshua said, "Roll large stones over the mouth of the cave. Station some men by it to guard them, <sup>19</sup>but don't you stay there. Chase after your enemies and attack them from the rear. Don't let them enter their cities, because the LORD your God has given them into your

<sup>a</sup>Or *they*

portrays the kings of Canaan as aggressive and violent. The Israelite action against these kings is presented as a defensive action. This is especially true since the Israelites are obligated by their covenant to defend the Gibeonites against the coalition of kings.

10:1 *Jerusalem*: a city founded by the Jebusites. David conquers Jerusalem and makes it his capital and the center of his kingdom (2 Sam 5:6-10). Here the city is the center of opposition to Joshua and the Israelites in the southern part of Canaan. *Adoni-zedek*: king of Jerusalem. According to Judges 1:5-7 he was a cruel king who tortured and humiliated his defeated enemies. This picture of Adoni-zedek is consistent with the idea that the kings of Canaan were oppressive rulers who didn't acknowledge the prerogative of God to govern the land.

10:2 *royal cities*: Joshua's author seems to assume royal power, such as that expressed by the Canaanite kings, is oppressive. It was supported by massive military resources, which were to be rejected by Israelite kings in favor of reliance on God (Deut 17:14-20).

10:8-15 The theme of the sun standing still to prolong the day of battle appears also in the *Iliad* (2.412). The point of the biblical story is that God fought for Israel by using elements of the nonhuman world at God's disposal.

10:13 *Jashar scroll*: an ancient source mentioned also in 2 Samuel 1:18. The origin and contents of the scroll are unknown, but apparently it contained at least these two poems and perhaps others. The Jashar scroll was available to the author of Joshua, and he drew information from it in writing his account. Other sources are sometimes mentioned in the OT, such as the scroll about the Lord's wars (Num 21:14) and official records of the kings of Judah (1 Kgs 22:45).

10:16-27 Joshua executes the five southern kings who attacked the Israelites. The note that *Not a single person threatened the Israelites* (10:21) describes the complete victory that results from God giving the people of Ai into Israel's power. After killing the five kings, Joshua ordered that they be taken down at sundown (see note on Josh 8:14-29) and be given proper burial. This is consistent with

10:26 Dt 21:23;  
 Josh 8:29;  
 Ga 3:13  
 10:28 Dt 20:16;  
 Josh 6:21  
 10:36 Gn 13:18;  
 Nm 13:22;  
 Josh 14:13;  
 Josh 15:13;  
 2Sa 5:1  
 10:38 Josh 15:15;  
 Jdg 1:11  
 10:40 Dt 1:7;  
 Dt 20:16;  
 Josh 8:27

power.”<sup>20</sup> Joshua and the Israelites finished dealing them a stunning blow until they were finished off. Some survivors among them escaped into the fortified cities.<sup>21</sup> Then the whole people came back safely to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah. Not a single person threatened the Israelites.

<sup>22</sup> Joshua said, “Open up the mouth of the cave. Bring those five kings out of the cave to me.”<sup>23</sup> They did so. They brought the five kings out of the cave to him: the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon.<sup>24</sup> When they brought these kings out to Joshua, Joshua called for every Israelite. He said to the military commanders who had gone out with him, “Come forward. Put your feet on the necks of these kings.” So they went forward and put their feet on their necks.<sup>25</sup> Then Joshua said to them, “Don’t be afraid or terrified. Be brave and strong, because this is how the LORD will deal with all the enemies you fight.”<sup>26</sup> Next, Joshua struck them down. He put them to death and then hanged them on five trees. They were hanging on the trees until evening.<sup>27</sup> At sundown, Joshua gave an order, and they took them down from the trees. They threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and they set large stones over the mouth of the cave. The stones are still there to this very day.

### *Victories in the south*

<sup>28</sup> On that day, Joshua captured Makkedah. With a sword, he struck it and its king without mercy. He wiped them out, treating everyone in the city as something reserved for God. He left no survivors. He did to the king of Makkedah exactly as he had done to the king of Jericho.

<sup>29</sup> Then Joshua along with all Israel moved on from Makkedah to Libnah. They attacked Libnah.<sup>30</sup> The LORD also gave it and its king into the power of Israel. With a sword, he struck it and everyone in it without mercy. He left no survivors in it. He did to its king exactly as he had done to the king of Jericho.

<sup>31</sup> Joshua along with all Israel moved on from Libnah to Lachish. They camped near it and attacked it.<sup>32</sup> The LORD gave Lachish into the power of Israel. Joshua captured it on the second day. With a sword, he struck it and everyone in it without mercy, just exactly as he had done to Libnah.<sup>33</sup> Then Gezer’s King Horam came up to help Lachish. But Joshua struck him and his people down, until no survivors were left.

<sup>34</sup> Joshua along with all Israel moved on from Lachish to Eglon. They camped against it and attacked it.<sup>35</sup> They captured it on the same day and struck it down without mercy. On that day, he wiped out everyone in it as something reserved for God, just exactly as he had done to Lachish.

<sup>36</sup> Joshua along with all Israel went up from Eglon to Hebron and attacked it.<sup>37</sup> They captured it and struck it down without mercy, along with its king, all its towns, and everyone in it. He left no survivors, just exactly as he had done to Eglon. He wiped out the city and everyone in it as something reserved for God.

<sup>38</sup> Joshua along with all Israel turned back to Debir and attacked it.<sup>39</sup> He captured it along with its king and all its cities. They struck them down without mercy and wiped out everyone in it as something reserved for God. He left no survivors. Exactly as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and its king—exactly as he had done to Libnah and its king.

<sup>40</sup> So Joshua struck at the whole land: the highlands, the arid southern plains, the lowlands, the slopes, and all their kings. He left no survivors. He wiped out everything that breathed as something reserved for God, exactly as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded.<sup>41</sup> Joshua struck them down from Kadesh-barnea to Gaza, and the whole land of Goshen as far as Gibeon.<sup>42</sup> Joshua captured all these kings and their land all at the same time. This was because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.<sup>43</sup> Then Joshua along with all Israel came back to the camp at Gilgal.

Moses’ instructions concerning treatment of enemies (Deut 20–21).

10:28–42 Joshua captures southernmost territories in Canaan. Lachish was a prominent city well known as an economic and cultural center of the region. It was besieged and destroyed by Assyria’s King Sennacherib (2 Kgs 18:17), which is evidence of its prominence. Lachish is here paired with Libnah, a nearby city that is less well known.

Although the exact site of Libnah isn’t known, it may be identified with Tel-Zayit where excavations have uncovered the earliest known Hebrew alphabet. The discovery of scribal activity at the site may indicate that Libnah was also quite prominent in the region and deserved to be mentioned here. Indeed, Libnah may have been closely related to Lachish in strategic importance, as Joshua 10:28–42 indicates.

11:2 Nm 34:11;  
Josh 12:23,  
Josh 12:3  
11:10 Josh 11:1;  
Jgs 4:2

**Victories in the north**

**11** King Jabin of Hazor heard about this. So he sent word to Madon's King Jobab, to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph. <sup>2</sup>He sent word to the kings from the north part of the highlands, in the desert plain south of Chinneroth, in the lowlands, and in Naphoth-dor on the west. <sup>3</sup>He sent word to the Canaanites from east and west, to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, and Jebusites in the highlands, and to the Hivites at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpah. <sup>4</sup>They went out with all their battalions as a great army. They were as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore. There were very many horses and chariots. <sup>5</sup>All these kings came together. They came and camped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD said to Joshua, "Don't be afraid of them. By this time tomorrow, I will make them all dead bodies in Israel's presence. Cripple their horses! Burn their chariots!"

<sup>7</sup>Then Joshua along with the entire army launched a surprise attack against them at the waters of Merom. <sup>8</sup>The LORD gave them into Israel's power. They struck them down. They chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim, then to the east as far as the Mizpeh Valley. They struck them down until no survivors were left. <sup>9</sup>Joshua dealt with them exactly as the LORD had told him. He crippled their horses and burned their chariots.

<sup>10</sup>Joshua turned back at that time. He captured Hazor and struck down its king with the sword. Hazor had been the head of all those kingdoms in the past. <sup>11</sup>They struck down everyone there without mercy, wiping them out as something reserved for God. Nothing that breathed was left. Hazor itself he burned. <sup>12</sup>Joshua captured all these kings and their cities. He struck them down without mercy. He wiped them out as something reserved for God. This was exactly as Moses the LORD's servant had commanded. <sup>13</sup>But Israel didn't burn any of the cities that still are standing on their mounds. Joshua burned only Hazor. <sup>14</sup>The Israelites took all the valuable things from those cities and the cattle as plunder for themselves. But they struck down every person without mercy until they had wiped them out. They didn't let anything that breathed survive. <sup>15</sup>What the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, Moses had commanded Joshua, and Joshua did exactly that. He didn't deviate a bit from any command that the LORD had given Moses.

**Summary of Israel's victories**

<sup>16</sup>So Joshua took this whole land: the highlands, the whole arid southern plain, the whole land of Goshen, the lowlands, the desert plain, and both the highlands and the lowlands of Israel. <sup>17</sup>He took land stretching from Mount Halak, which goes up toward Seir, as far as Baal-gad at the foot of Mount Hermon in the Lebanon Valley. He captured all their kings. He struck them down and killed them. <sup>18</sup>Joshua waged war against all these kings for a long time. <sup>19</sup>There wasn't one city that made peace with the Israelites, except the Hivites who

11:1-15 Kings in northern areas oppose the Israelites just as the southern kings had done (see Josh 10). The description of the northern kings enhances the idea that these kings control Canaan by violence and brute force (see note on 11:4). Thus the Israelites' actions described here are presented as acts that serve the larger purpose of establishing justice.

11:1-5 Northern kings react to the Israelites' presence in the same way as the southern kings. When they heard about this (Joshua's defeat of the kings in the south), the kings in the north gathered for war against Joshua. Their opposition to the Israelites, however, seems to intensify. They came out as a great army... as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore (11:4). They also came to battle with very many horses and chariots.

11:1 Jabin: He is known also in Judges 4 as the king of the Canaanites. This identity perhaps comes from the fact that he is the king who organizes opposition to the Israelites in the northern areas, and he rules over Hazor, perhaps the most prominent city in those northern areas.

11:4 horses and chariots: instruments of war and primary signs of royal power. Horses and chariots symbolized military might. The OT presents two primary problems with these tools of war. First, horses and chariots tempted

kings to rely on military might rather than on God. Deuteronomy 17:16 warns Israel's kings not to acquire many horses because reliance on such resources could give the impression that military success was gained by the king's own power. The king was to rely on God instead. Second, horses and chariots allowed kings to oppress their subjects as well as their enemies.

11:9 crippled their horses and burned their chariots: reflects the destruction of the main instruments of war that were used by kings to oppress their subjects (see note on Josh 11:4). Horses were the engines of war chariots and thus are treated like part of the machinery for war. Crippled refers to cutting the fetlock or the hamstring.

11:15 The summary of Joshua's defeat of the northern kings emphasizes that Joshua acted on divine authority as it was mediated through Moses. It also presents Joshua as completely obedient to the commands of Moses, which were, in turn, the commands of God (see note on Josh 1:1; see sidebar, "Moses" at Josh 1).

11:16-23 The idea that Joshua took this whole land brackets this section and presents Joshua as an ideal leader. The claim seems at odds with Joshua 13:1, which notes that "much of the land remains to be taken over."

11:19 This verse seems to assume all the Canaanites had

11:20 Ex 4:21

11:21 Nm 13:22;

Dt 9:2;

Josh 15:13-14

11:22 Josh 11:21;

1Sa 5:1, 1Sa 5:8,

1Sa 17:4

12:5 Dt 3:10, 14;

Josh 13:11;

1Sa 27:8

lived in Gibeon. They captured every single one in battle. <sup>20</sup>Their stubborn resistance came from the LORD and led them to wage war against Israel. Israel was then able to wipe them out as something reserved for God, without showing them any mercy. This was exactly what the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>21</sup>At that time, Joshua went and wiped out the Anakim from the highlands. He wiped them out from Hebron, from Debir, and from Anab, from the whole highlands of Judah, and the whole highlands of Israel. Joshua wiped them out along with their cities as something reserved for God. <sup>22</sup>The Anakim no longer remained in the land of the Israelites. They survived only in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. <sup>23</sup>So Joshua took the whole land, exactly as the LORD had promised Moses. Joshua gave it as a legacy to Israel according to their tribal shares. Then the land had a rest from war.

### Moses defeated two kings

**12** The Israelites struck down these kings of the land and took over their land on the east side of the Jordan. This ran from the Arnon Valley as far as Mount Hermon and included the whole eastern part of the desert plain. <sup>2</sup>First there was the Amorites' King Sihon, who lived in Heshbon. He ruled from Aroer by the rim of Arnon Valley and then from the middle of the valley as far as the Jabbok Valley, the border of the Ammonites. This was half of Gilead. <sup>3</sup>He ruled the desert plain up to the east side of the Chinneroth Sea. This ran southward in the direction of Beth-jeshimoth at the foot of the Pisgah slopes as far as the east side of the desert plain (that is, the Dead Sea) and <sup>4</sup>the territory next to it.<sup>5</sup> Then there was Bashan's King Og. He was one of the last of the Rephaim. He lived in Ashtaroth and Edrei. <sup>5</sup>He ruled over Mount Hermon, Salecah, and all of Bashan as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and half of Gilead down to the border of Heshbon's King Sihon. <sup>6</sup>Moses the LORD's servant and the Israelites struck them down. Moses the LORD's servant gave their land as property to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

### Kings west of the Jordan

<sup>7</sup>Joshua and the Israelites struck down these kings of the land and took over their land on the west side of the Jordan. This ran from Baal-gad in the Lebanon Valley as far as Mount Halak, which goes up toward Seir. Joshua gave it to the tribes of Israel as shares of property. <sup>8</sup>This was in the highlands, in the lowlands, in the desert plain, in the slopes, in the desert, and in the arid southern plain. The land belonged to Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. They were:

<sup>5</sup>Heb lacks *next to it*.

opportunity to make peace. It seems to contradict the accounts of the conquest of Jericho and Ai. The statement perhaps intends to indicate that indeed all the residents of the land could have made peace. The descriptions of the Canaanite kings' reactions to the Israelites in Joshua 10:1-5 and Joshua 11:1-5 show they didn't take the opportunity for peace as did Rahab (Josh 2) and the Gibeonites (Josh 9). 11:20 *their stubborn resistance came from the LORD*: The words are identical to the statement in Exodus that God made Pharaoh's heart stubborn (Exod 14:4). The writer understands the Canaanite opposition as God's doing, at least indirectly. The purpose of the Canaanite resistance was to lead the Canaanites to destruction. This perspective isn't consistent with many other parts of the OT (Isa 19:24-25). Broadly speaking, however, it makes sense that anyone who opposes God will inevitably come up against God's power and destroy himself or herself.

11:21 *Anakim*: A race of giants who populated the land and caused the spies to fear entering Canaan (Num 13:32-33; Deut 1:28; 2:10-11; 9:2). The Anakim seem to represent forces opposed to the will of God. Thus Joshua's defeat of them proves his faithfulness to God and to the cause of right and truth.

12:1-6 The first major division of the book concludes in Joshua 12 with a summary of the careers of Moses and Joshua. Joshua 12:1-6 recalls the victories Moses won

east of the Jordan River during the period of wilderness wandering (see Num 21-24; Deut 2:26-3:17). The two kings east of the Jordan are Sihon and Og, mentioned in speeches by Rahab (Josh 2:10) and the Gibeonites (Josh 9:10). Moses gave the territory Sihon and Og occupied to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh (12:6). The summary of territory goes from south (Amon) to north (Hermon) and includes wilderness areas around the Dead Sea (12:3) as well as lush pastureland in Bashan (12:4). 12:7-24 The second part of the summary of victories includes kings defeated after the Israelites crossed the Jordan River into Canaan. Some of the towns and their kings listed appear prominently in Joshua 2-11 (Jericho, Ai, Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, Hazor), while others, such as Aphek and Megiddo, don't appear at all. The list was probably borrowed from a source that listed prominent towns in Canaan and wasn't written originally to summarize the victories of Joshua. Note that Bethel is mentioned both in relation to Ai (12:9), as in Joshua 8:9, and independently (12:16). This indicates the importance of Bethel later in Israel's history and the importance Bethel held by the time Joshua was written.

12:7 *shares of property*: The description anticipates Joshua's division of the land beginning in Joshua 13:7. The divisions of land are made with God's direction, and each tribe receives a share allotted by divine direction.



9 the king of Jericho the king of Ai (which is near Bethel)	one	13:1 Dt 31:3; Josh 14:10; Josh 23:1
10 the king of Jerusalem the king of Hebron	one	13:3 Jdg 3:3; 1Sa 6:4
11 the king of Jarmuth the king of Lachish	one	13:5 Nm 34:8; Josh 12:7; Josh 11:17;
12 the king of Eglon the king of Gezer	one	1Ki 5:18; Ps 83:7; Eze 27:9
13 the king of Debir the king of Geder	one	
14 the king of Hormah the king of Arad	one	
15 the king of Libnah the king of Adullam	one	
16 the king of Makkedah the king of Bethel	one	
17 the king of Tappuah the king of Hepher	one	
18 the king of Aphek the king of Lasharon	one	
19 the king of Madon the king of Hazor	one	
20 the king of Shimron-meron the king of Achshaph	one	
21 the king of Taanach the king of Megiddo	one	
22 the king of Kedesh the king of Jokneam in Carmel	one	
23 the king of Dor in Naphath-dor the king of Goiim of Gilgal	one	
24 the king of Tirzah	one	
Total of all kings:	thirty-one.	

**Land still unconquered**

**13** Now Joshua had reached old age. The LORD said to him, "You have reached old age, but much of the land remains to be taken over. <sup>2</sup>This is the land that remains: All the districts of the Philistines and all those of the Geshurites. <sup>3</sup>(The land stretching from the Shihor near Egypt northward as far as the Ekron territory is considered to be Canaanite. There are five rulers of the Philistines, for Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron.) The land of the Avvites <sup>4</sup>in the south. The whole land of the Canaanites, along with Mearah, which belongs to the Sidonians, as far as Aphek and as far as the Amorite border. <sup>5</sup>The land of the Gebalites and the whole Lebanon eastward, stretching from Baal-gad at the foot of Mount Hermon to Lebo-hamath.

<sup>6</sup>"I myself will remove the entire population of the highlands from Lebanon to Misrephoth-maim before the Israelites, that is, all the Sidonians. You have only to allot it to Israel as a

13:1-7 The second major portion of the book begins with Joshua at the end of his life. His second primary task of dividing the land among the Israelite tribes remains to be done. Joshua 13-21 thus reports how Joshua and Eleazar the priest (Josh 14:1) allot territory to the tribes (see map 5). But the issue at the beginning of this section is that much land *remains to be taken over* (13:1). This comment seems to contradict statements in Joshua 11:23 ("so Joshua took the whole land") and the summary in Joshua 12. The picture of land partially conquered accords with Judges 1-3, however, in which the Israelites battle the people of the land for control of allotted territories. Nevertheless, Joshua 13-21 is like Joshua 1-12 in that

God promises to take the land (*I myself will remove the entire population*, 13:6) and give it to the Israelites. God tells Joshua only to allot the unconquered territories, and God will give the land to them (13:6-7).

13:2-3 *Philistines and all those of the Geshurites*: peoples who occupied territory near the Mediterranean coast in the southern region of Canaan. *Avvites*: group that occupied coastal territory between Egypt and the Philistine areas (see Deut 2:23).

13:6 *allot it to Israel*: The divine origin of the land distribution is emphasized further by this language. When the Lord tells Joshua to "allot" the land, God uses a term meaning "to let fall" that often appears in the context of casting

13:8 Nu 32:33;  
Josh 12:6

legacy exactly as I commanded you. <sup>7</sup>So now divide up this land as a legacy for the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh. You will give it out from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. The Mediterranean Sea is the border.”<sup>P</sup>

#### **Land east of the Jordan**

<sup>8</sup>As for the other half of the tribe of Manasseh, <sup>9</sup>the Reubenites and Gadites together with it had already taken their legacy that Moses had given them on the east side of the Jordan. It was exactly what Moses the LORD’s servant had given them. <sup>9</sup>It ran from Aroer by the rim of the Arnon Valley and the city in the middle of the valley through the whole Medeba plateau as far as Dibon. <sup>10</sup>It included all the cities of the Amorites’ King Sihon, who ruled in Heshbon, as far as the Ammonite border. <sup>11</sup>It also included Gilead and the territory of the Geshurites and Maacathites, all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan as far as Salecah—<sup>12</sup>the entire kingdom of Og in Bashan, who ruled in Ashtaroth and in Edrei. He survived as the last of the Rephaim. Moses had struck down and removed them. <sup>13</sup>But the Israelites didn’t remove the Geshurites or the Maacathites. So Geshur and Maacath still live among Israel today. <sup>14</sup>It was only to the tribe of Levi that he gave no legacy. Their legacy consists of the fire offerings for the LORD, the God of Israel, exactly as he had promised them.

#### **For Reuben**

<sup>15</sup>Moses provided for the clans of the Reubenite tribe. <sup>16</sup>Their territory ran from Aroer by the rim of the Arnon Valley and the city in the middle of the ravine, and the whole plateau as far as Medeba. <sup>17</sup>It included Heshbon and all its cities that are on the plateau: Dibon, Bamoth-baal, Beth-baal-meon, <sup>18</sup>Jahaz, Kedemoth, Mephaath, <sup>19</sup>Kiriathaim, Sibmah, the Zereth-shahar highlands, <sup>20</sup>Beth-peor, the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth. <sup>21</sup>It included all the cities of the plateau and the whole kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon. Moses had struck him down, along with Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the leaders of Midian. They had lived in the land as princes of Sihon. <sup>22</sup>In addition to those others slain, the Israelites killed the fortune-teller Balaam, Beor’s son, with the sword. <sup>23</sup>The border of the people of Reuben was the Jordan and the territory next to it. This was the legacy of the people of Reuben—for their clans, their cities, and their settlements.

<sup>P</sup>LXX; MT lacks *You will give it out from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. The Mediterranean Sea is the border.* <sup>9</sup>LXX; MT lacks *As for the other half of the tribe of Manasseh.*

lots (Neh 10:34). The lot was an implement cast like dice, and then “read,” in order to receive directions from God (e.g., Josh 7:14; 1 Sam 10:16-26; see Josh 14:1).

13:7 *legacy*: or, “inheritance.” In ancient Near Eastern society a supreme concern was the property passed from the family’s patriarch to his children. Such property provided family identity as well as financial security. The designation here of territory as a “legacy” or inheritance has two important implications. First, it means the property isn’t gained through military conquest but bequeathed as part of an ancestral claim. Therefore, even the assignment of certain areas to particular tribal groups was due to the Lord’s action. Second, as part of a legacy given by God, the territory of each family, clan, and tribe gave those groups an enduring kinship with God. The land was a reminder that they belonged to and benefited from the love of God. 13:8-14 The land east of the Jordan River given to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh was previously allotted by Moses (Deut 3:8-17).

13:14 *the tribe of Levi*: the priestly tribe that descended from Jacob’s son Levi (Gen 29:34). Moses and Aaron were Levites (Exod 2:1; 4:14). The tribe of Levi didn’t receive land as an inheritance. Instead they received *the fire offerings for the Lord*, that is, both the privilege of overseeing the sacrificial system and a portion of the food offered as sacrifices (Num 3:5-4:49; 8:5-26). In order to keep the land divisions at the perfect number 12, to reflect the number of Jacob’s sons, Joseph’s territory was apportioned to his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh (see Josh 14:4).

13:15-31 Each section on the two and a half tribes that occupied territory east of the Jordan River begins and ends with the same formula (*Moses provided*; see Josh 13:15, 24, 29; *for their clans/it belonged to the clans*; Josh 13:23, 28, 31). The first of these sections describes the territory for the tribe of Reuben. Reuben was the oldest of Jacob’s sons and therefore rightly is treated first. However, the fact that Reuben occupies land east of the Jordan River indicates the tribe isn’t as important as those tribes west of the Jordan, particularly not as important as Judah (see note on Josh 15:1-12). The focus of these sections is on the clans of each tribe.

13:15 *clans*: extended families that might include several generations. The focus on clans reflects the fact that clans had responsibility to maintain land inheritance and to redeem land for families that possessed it originally as inheritance (see Lev 25:23-28, 41, 49; Num 36:6-12). The description of the land is repetitious and somewhat unclear at points. The main message seems to be that God gave it completely to the assigned tribe.

13:21 *Sihon*: Amorite king who opposed the Israelites as they came out of Egypt and traveled toward Canaan (see Josh 2:10; Deut 2:16-3:17).

13:22 *Balaam*: a diviner, or someone who perceives the future, at the center of the story and oracles in Numbers 22-24. Balaam was a hired mercenary who attempted to bring God’s wrath on the Israelites through a curse. As the agent of Moab’s King Balak, Balaam stands with those kings and peoples who opposed the Israelites on their way to the land of Canaan (see Deut 23:3-6).

**For Gad**

<sup>24</sup>Moses provided for the clans of the Gadite tribe. <sup>25</sup>Their territory was Jazer, all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the Ammonites as far as Aroer near Rabbah. <sup>26</sup>It also ran from Heshbon as far as Ramath-mizpeh and Betonim, and from Mahanaim as far as the territory of Lidebir. <sup>27</sup>In the valley were Beth-haram, Beth-nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon. This was the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon. It included the Jordan and the territory next to it up to the tip of the Chinnereth Sea on the east side of the Jordan. <sup>28</sup>This was the legacy of the Gadites—for their clans, their cities, and their settlements.

14:1 Nm 34:17;  
Josh 19:51;  
Josh 21:1  
14:3 Josh 13:14;  
Josh 13:33  
14:6 Nm 13:6,  
Nm 13:26,  
Nm 14:24,  
Nm 14:30;  
Dt 33:1

**For half of Manasseh**

<sup>29</sup>Moses provided for half the tribe of Manasseh. It was for the clans in half the tribe of the people of Manasseh. <sup>30</sup>Their territory ran from Mahanaim, all Bashan, the whole kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all sixty of the tent villages of Jair that are in Bashan. <sup>31</sup>Half of Gilead along with Ashtaroth and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, belonged to the people of Machir son of Manasseh. It belonged to the clans for half of the people of Machir.

<sup>32</sup>Moses assigned these territories when he was in the Moab plains on the other side of the Jordan, east of Jericho. <sup>33</sup>But Moses gave no legacy to the tribe of Levi. The LORD God of Israel is their legacy, exactly as he promised them.

**Dividing up Canaan**

**14** The Israelites received these inheritances in the land of Canaan. Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the families of the Israelite tribes assigned them. <sup>2</sup>Their legacy was assigned by lot, exactly as the LORD had commanded the nine and a half tribes through Moses. <sup>3</sup>In fact, Moses had given out the legacy of the two and a half tribes on the other side of the Jordan. But he gave no legacy among them to the Levites. <sup>4</sup>The people of Joseph consisted of two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. The Levites weren't given any portion of the land, except cities to live in and pastureland for their cattle and flocks. <sup>5</sup>The Israelites divided up the land exactly as the LORD had commanded Moses.

**Caleb receives Hebron**

<sup>6</sup>In Gilgal, the people of Judah approached Joshua. Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the LORD said to Moses, man of God, about you and me when we were in Kadesh-barnea. <sup>7</sup>I was 40 years old when Moses the LORD's servant sent me from Kadesh-barnea to scout out the land. I brought back a report to him of what I really thought.

13:24-28 This section describes the territory reserved for Gad. It includes territory once controlled by King Sihon, the Amorite king who opposed the Israelites when they came out of Egypt (see Josh 2:10). The inheritance begins just north of the Dead Sea in the south. The note that it extended to the tip of the Chinnereth Sea (later called the Galilee Sea), however, is unclear since half the tribe of Manasseh occupies Gilead, which would have included the area around the Chinnereth Sea (see Josh 13:29-33).

13:29-33 The territory of half the tribe of Manasseh is described here. This section concludes with a summary that recalls how Moses divided the territory east of the Jordan River before his death. He gave half the tribe of Manasseh what was once the kingdom of Og (see Num 21:33-35). The final note repeats the status of the Levites: Moses gave them no legacy or inheritance; the Lord God was their inheritance (see Josh 13:14).

14:1-5 The allotment of land to the tribes west of the Jordan River begins with two statements about the process. First, it names those involved in the allotment: Eleazar the priest, Joshua, and the heads of each tribe. In Joshua 13:7 only Joshua is identified as the agent who divides the land. Now more are involved. Particularly important is the presence of Eleazar, who shares power here with Joshua. He also appears alongside Moses in Numbers 31. To people in exile, who had experienced the failure of royal power to maintain the land, such a juxtaposition

of Joshua and priestly figures may have addressed their doubts about the use, abuse, and limitations of the king. Second, the land is divided by lot. This description relates to the fact that God told Joshua to "allot" the land (Josh 13:7). The word for allot can also mean "to let fall." The same word often appears in the context of casting lots (Neh 10:34). Joshua 14:1 then says this is exactly how the land was divided. The lot was an implement cast, and then interpreted, in order to receive directions from God (e.g. Josh 7:14; 1 Sam 10:16-26). Two points are important about the division of land by lots. First, casting lots was a priestly duty. Thus it makes sense that Eleazar the priest was part of the process of dividing territory. Second, each portion of land was given as an inheritance. It isn't property gained through military conquest but bequeathed as part of an ancestral claim. Therefore, even the assignment of certain areas to particular tribal groups was due to the Lord's action.

14:3-5 The account of allotment of land to the tribes west of the Jordan River reiterates the point that Moses assigned land to the groups east of the Jordan, and that the present act of land division showed obedience to Moses (see Josh 13:29-33).

14:4 *people of Joseph*: See note on Joshua 13:14.

14:6-15 Caleb served as one of the twelve spies who viewed the land of Canaan while the Israelites were in the wilderness (Num 13). He and Joshua were the only ones to

14:15 Gn 22:2;  
 Josh 11:23;  
 Josh 15:13;  
 Jgs 3:11;  
 1Ki 4:24

<sup>8</sup>My companions who had gone up with me made the people's heart melt. But I remained loyal to the LORD my God. <sup>9</sup>So Moses pledged on that day, "The land on which you have walked will forever be a legacy for you and your children. This is because you remained loyal to the LORD my God." <sup>10</sup>Now look. The LORD has kept me alive, exactly as he promised. It is forty-five years since the LORD spoke about this to Moses. It was while Israel was journeying in the desert. Now look. Today I'm 85 years old. <sup>11</sup>I'm just as strong today as I was the day Moses sent me out. My strength then was as my strength is now, whether for war or for everyday activities. <sup>12</sup>So now, give me this highland that the LORD promised me that day. True, the Anakim are there with large fortified cities, as you yourself heard that day. But if the LORD is with me, I should be able to remove them, exactly as the LORD promised."

<sup>13</sup>So Joshua blessed him. He gave Hebron to Caleb, Jephunneh's son, as a legacy. <sup>14</sup>So Hebron still belongs to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite as a legacy today. This was because he remained loyal to the LORD God of Israel. <sup>15</sup>(Hebron used to be called Kiriath-arba. Arba had been the greatest of the Anakim.) Then the land rested from war.

### Border of Judah

**15** The land determined by lot for the clans of the Judahite tribe ran southward to the border of Edom. The Zin wasteland was the southern limit. <sup>2</sup>Their south border ran from the end of the Dead Sea, from the bay that faces south. <sup>3</sup>It went south from the ascent of Akkrabbim, passed on to Zin, and went up south of Kadesh-barnea. It passed on to Hezron, went up to Addar, and turned toward Karka. <sup>4</sup>It passed on to Azmon and went by the border<sup>a</sup> of Egypt. The border ended at the sea. This will be their south border.

<sup>5</sup>The east border was the Dead Sea as far as the mouth of the Jordan.

The border on the north side ran from the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup>The border went up to Beth-hoglah and passed north of Beth-arabah. The border went up to the Stone of Bohan (Reuben's son). <sup>7</sup>The border went up to Debir from the Achor Valley, turning north to Gilgal. Gilgal was opposite the ascent of Adummim, which was south of the ravine. The border passed on to the waters of En-shemesh and ended at En-rogel. <sup>8</sup>The border went up by the valley of Ben-Hinnom to the slope of the Jebusite city, Jerusalem, on the south. The border went up to the top of the mountain that is opposite the Hinnom Valley on the west, which is at the north end of the Rephaim Valley. <sup>9</sup>The border turned from the top of the mountain to the waters of Nephtoah Spring and went to the cities of Mount Ephron. The border turned toward Baalah (that is, Kiriath-jearim). <sup>10</sup>The border turned westward from Baalah to Mount Seir. It passed on to the slope of Mount Jearim on the north (that is, Chesalon), went down to Beth-shemesh, and passed by Timnah. <sup>11</sup>The border went to the slope of Ekron on the north. The border turned toward Shikkeron, passed on to Mount Baalah, and went to Jabneel. The border ended at the sea.

<sup>12</sup>The west border was the Mediterranean Sea and its shoreline. This was the border surrounding the clans of the Judahites.

<sup>a</sup>Or *Wadi*, traditionally *Brook*; LXX *their south border*, MT *your south border*

believe they could possess it (Num 14:38). Thus Caleb asks for a special parcel of land and the opportunity to possess the land as a show of his faith in God's promise to give Canaan to the Israelites. Joshua gives Caleb the town of Hebron, which was important in the tribal territory of Judah. The fact that Caleb is from the tribe of Judah highlights Judah's central role later during the Davidic monarchy.

14:12 *Anakim*: The Anakim (Num 13:33) were a race of giants who descended from semidivine beings called the Nephilim (Gen 6:4). The spies sent into Canaan reported the Anakim were there, and the Israelites were like grasshoppers compared to them (Num 13:33). Therefore, these giants prevented the spies from supporting the faith of Israel to enter and possess the land. The Anakim, as a result, came to symbolize those forces that oppose faith and dependence on God. Caleb's desire to remove the Anakim from the land is a subtle indication of his faith and commitment to God's promises.

14:15 *the land rested from war*: the ultimate sign of God's

blessing. The land's rest from war accompanies faithful human leadership. Thus the land enjoyed rest when the ideal judges were in power (Judg 3:11). Here the land rested when Caleb, who was trusting and faithful, occupied the land.

15:1-12 The first tribal allotment of land in Canaan is to the tribe of Judah. The prominence of this tribe in the account of territorial division is probably due to the importance Judah had later, during the period of monarchy. Judah would become the most important tribe and had at its center the city of Jerusalem, which was David's capital. The border details emphasize the city of Jerusalem so as to demarcate the borders of Judah to exclude it. Jerusalem is referred to as *the Jebusite city* (15:8), and later it will be noted that the Jebusites remained in the city (Josh 15:63). This focus on Jerusalem anticipates the time when David captures the elevated fortress and makes it his capital. Joshua 15:1-12, however, seems concerned to show that Jerusalem wasn't a city in Judah until the time of David.

**Caleb and Achsah**

<sup>13</sup>In agreement with the LORD's command to him, Joshua gave a portion among the Judahites to Caleb, Jephunneh's son. It was Kiriath-arba, that is, Hebron (Arba was the father of Anak). <sup>14</sup>Caleb removed the three sons of Anak from there: Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi. They were the offspring of Anak. <sup>15</sup>Then he went up from there against the population of Debir. Debir were to be called Kiriath-sepher. <sup>16</sup>Caleb said, "I will give Achsah my daughter in marriage to whoever strikes Kiriath-sepher and captures it." <sup>17</sup>So Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's brother, captured it, and Caleb gave him Achsah his daughter in marriage.

<sup>18</sup>Now when she arrived, she prodded Othniel into asking for a field from her father. After she got down off her donkey, Caleb asked her, "What do you want?"

<sup>19</sup>She said, "Give me a blessing. Since the land you've given me is in the arid southern plain, you should also give me springs of water." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

**Cities of Judah**

<sup>20</sup>This is the legacy for the clans of the tribe of the people of Judah. <sup>21</sup>The outlying cities of the tribe of the people of Judah ran down to the border of Edom.

In the arid southern plain: Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, <sup>22</sup>Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, <sup>23</sup>Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, <sup>24</sup>Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, <sup>25</sup>Hazor-hadattah, Kerioth-hezron (that is, Hazor), <sup>26</sup>Amam, Shema, Moladah, <sup>27</sup>Hazar-gaddah, Heshmon, Beth-pelet, <sup>28</sup>Hazar-shual, Beer-sheba and its dependent cities, <sup>29</sup>Baalath, Iim, Ezem, <sup>30</sup>Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, <sup>31</sup>Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, <sup>32</sup>Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon. In total: twenty-nine cities and their surrounding areas.

<sup>33</sup>In the lowlands: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah, <sup>34</sup>Zanoah, En-gannim, Tappuah, Enam, <sup>35</sup>Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, <sup>36</sup>Shaaraim, Adithaim, Gederah, and Gederothaim. In total: fourteen cities and their surrounding areas.

<sup>37</sup>Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal-gad, <sup>38</sup>Dilan, Mizpeh, Jokthe-el, <sup>39</sup>Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon, <sup>40</sup>Cabbon, Lahmam, Chitlish, <sup>41</sup>Gederoth, Beth-dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah. In total: sixteen cities and their surrounding areas.

<sup>1</sup>LXX and Neh 11:27; Heb *Biziothiah*

15:13 Nm 13:22;  
Josh 14:13,  
Josh 14:15  
15:14 Nm 13:22;  
Jgs 1:10, Jgs 1:20  
15:15 Josh 10:38,  
Josh 15:49;  
Jgs 1:11  
15:18 Jgs 1:14  
15:34 Josh 12:17;  
Neh 3:13,  
Neh 11:30

15:13-19 This passage repeats part of what was said in Joshua 14:6-15 concerning Caleb. Caleb, a member of the tribe of Judah, requests and is granted possession of Hebron in Joshua 14:6-15, and occupies it in 15:13-19. His daughter Achsah now asks Caleb for a piece of land with *springs of water* (15:18-19). The expression "springs of water" could be a place name, Gulloth-mayim, which means "basins of water," but the presence of water is obviously the identifying mark of the place. In a land where water was at a premium, and survival of towns often depended on capturing and storing water in cisterns, owning land with a water source would have been a sign of power and influence. The land Achsah receives isn't inheritance; it's simply a gift from her father. The present Caleb gives Achsah thus suggests Caleb values his daughter. She isn't just a commodity he used to motivate a potential son-in-law to capture territory for him (see 15:16-17). The importance of the brief story of Achsah appears again in Judges 1:11-15 and provides an important link between Joshua and Judges. Specifically, the gift of watered land to Achsah in this story sets the stage for the treatment of women in Judges. After the gift to Achsah in Judges 1:11-15 and stories of women's leadership in Judges 4-5, the status of women declines dramatically. This decline becomes a symbol for the decline of Israel as a whole (see especially Judg 19-20).

15:20-63 This section gives the legacy for Judah in an extensive list of towns and territories. The list of towns belonging to Judah subtly indicates an important theological statement about Judah's relationship with Assyria,

the dominant Mesopotamian kingdom that destroyed Israel in 722 BCE and who dominated Judah through the end of the 8th century BCE. The list includes towns that served as Assyrian administrative centers and towns that Assyria clearly controlled. The message behind the details of the list, therefore, is that Assyria was no match for the power of Israel's God.

15:33-44 The description of towns and areas is arranged by major valleys that provided access to the territory. Joshua 15:33-44 contains three units that list towns in three valleys of the lowlands, but the valleys seem out of logical order. The list begins with the northern Serek-Elay Valleys, but then moves to the southernmost area, the Lachish Valley, before going back to the central portion of the lowlands, the Shephelah. The best explanation for this order seems to be that it reflects movements of Assyria's King Sennacherib through the Shephelah lowlands in his military campaign in 701 BCE. The northern and southern valleys of the lowlands had come under the control of Judah before the campaign while the central valley maintained closer ties with coastal areas. Thus Sennacherib established control of these pro-Judah areas first before engaging the towns of the central valleys. Second Kings 19:8 confirms this movement by noting that Sennacherib attacked Libnah (in the central valley) after Lachish (in the southern valley). Thus the town lists in Joshua 15 draw upon the movement of Sennacherib.

15:33 *lowlands*: sometimes referred to as the Shephelah, areas north of the arid southern plan (called Negeb) but south of Jerusalem.

15:44 1Sa 23:1;  
Neh 3:17  
16:8 Josh 12:17,  
Josh 17:8-9

<sup>42</sup>Libnah, Ether, Ashan, <sup>43</sup>Iptah, Ashnah, Nezib, <sup>44</sup>Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah. In total: nine cities and their surrounding areas.

<sup>45</sup>Ekron, its dependent cities and surrounding areas. <sup>46</sup>From Ekron toward the sea, everything that was near Ashdod and its surrounding areas. <sup>47</sup>Ashdod, its dependent cities and surrounding areas. Gaza, its dependent cities and surrounding areas as far as the border of Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea and its shoreline.

<sup>48</sup>In the highlands: Shamir, Jattir, Socoh, <sup>49</sup>Dannah, Kiriath-sannah (that is, Debir), <sup>50</sup>Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, <sup>51</sup>Goshen, Holon, and Giloh. In total: eleven cities and their surrounding areas.

<sup>52</sup>Arab, Dumah, Eshan, <sup>53</sup>Janim, Beth-tappuah, Aphekah, <sup>54</sup>Humtah, Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), and Zior. In total: nine cities and their surrounding areas.

<sup>55</sup>Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, <sup>56</sup>Jezeel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, <sup>57</sup>Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah. In total: ten cities and their surrounding areas.

<sup>58</sup>Halhul, Beth-zur, Gedor, <sup>59</sup>Maarath, Beth-anoth, and Eltekon. In total: six cities and their surrounding areas.

Tekoa, Ephrathah (that is, Bethlehem), Peor, Etam, Koulon, Tatam, Sores, Karem, Galim, Bether, and Manahath. In total: eleven cities and their surrounding areas.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>60</sup>Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-yearim) and Rabbah. In total: two cities and their surrounding areas.

<sup>61</sup>In the desert: Beth-arabah, Middin, Secacah, <sup>62</sup>Nibshan (the Salt City), and En-gedi. In total: six cities and their surrounding areas.

<sup>63</sup>But the people of Judah couldn't remove the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem. So today the Jebusites still live along with the people of Judah in Jerusalem.

### Ephraim

**16** The land determined by lot for the people of Joseph went out from the Jordan near Jericho eastward to the waters of Jericho. It went up by the desert from Jericho to the Bethel highlands. <sup>2</sup>It goes from Bethel to Luz and passes on to the border of the Archites at Ataroth. <sup>3</sup>It goes down westward to the border of the Japhletites as far as the border of Lower Beth-horon and as far as Gezer. It ends at the sea. <sup>4</sup>The people of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, received their legacy.

<sup>5</sup>This was the territory for the clans of the people of Ephraim. The border of their legacy ran from Ataroth-adar on the east as far as Upper Beth-horon. <sup>6</sup>The border goes to the sea. Michmethath is on the north. The border turns east of Taanath-shiloh and passes along beyond it east of Janoah. <sup>7</sup>It goes down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah, touches Jericho, and goes to the Jordan. <sup>8</sup>From Tappuah the border goes westward by the Kanah Valley. It ends at the sea. This is the legacy for the clans of the Ephraimite tribe. <sup>9</sup>It included cities set apart for the people of Ephraim within the legacy of the people of Manasseh, all the cities

<sup>†</sup>LXX; MT lacks Tekoa, Ephrathah . . . surrounding areas.

15:45-47 These verses give a particularly interesting list of towns that indicates something of Judah's attitude toward Assyria. These verses highlight three towns along the Mediterranean coast: *Ekron*, *Ashdod*, and *Gaza*. Each town is mentioned singularly so that it stands out from the rest of the larger town list. In addition to this break in form, it is striking that Ashkelon isn't mentioned here, since it was perhaps the most prominent city in this region. The answer seems to lie in the message Joshua's authors were trying to make about Israel's relationship to the other nations. Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza were Assyrian administrative centers, towns populated and controlled by Assyrian officials during their dominance of Israel's land in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE. By listing these three towns as belonging to Judah, as they appear in Assyrian administrative documents, Joshua's authors seem to be saying what they have said already in the book, that Israel isn't the property or under the control of any foreign power (Josh 1:4). Also, no Israelite ruler defends the land against

foreign enemies. The Lord controls and guards the land and gives it to Israel as its inheritance.

15:48 *highlands*: less desirable territory for agricultural purposes, the highlands feature many rocky hills and crags. Jerusalem is located in the highlands.

15:63 The concluding note that the tribe of Judah couldn't drive out the Jebusites is similar to other references to the people of the land remaining (Josh 16:10). According to Judges 3:1-6 the people of the land remained to test the Israelites to see if they would be faithful to the Instruction of Moses or not.

16:1-10 The Joseph group is divided into two tribes named after Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen 34:50-52). Since the Levites didn't inherit territory, this division kept the total number of allotments at twelve. The Joseph tribes occupied the region north of Jerusalem in the central highlands.

16:5-10 Ephraim occupied the southern portion of the Joseph tribes. Its southern boundary ran from Jericho to

and their surrounding areas. <sup>10</sup>But they didn't remove the Canaanites who lived in Gezer. So today the Canaanites, who were used for forced labor, still live within Ephraim.

<sup>17:8</sup> Josh 12:17,  
Josh 16:8

### Manasseh

**17** Land was determined by lot for the tribe of Manasseh, who was actually Joseph's oldest son. Gilead and Bashan belonged to Machir, who was Manasseh's oldest son and Gilead's father. This was because he was a warrior. <sup>2</sup>So an allotment took place for the rest of the clans of the people of Manasseh—for the people of Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hephher, and Shemida. These were the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the male descendants by their clans.

<sup>3</sup>Zelophehad was Hephher's son, Gilead's grandson, Machir's great-grandson and Manasseh's great-great-grandson. Zelophehad had no sons, only daughters, who were named Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. <sup>4</sup>The daughters approached Eleazar the priest, Joshua, Nun's son, and the leaders. They said, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us a legacy along with our male relatives." So in agreement with the LORD's command, they were given a legacy along with their uncles. <sup>5</sup>Manasseh had ten parcels in addition to the land of Gilead and Bashan on the other side of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup>This was because the daughters of Manasseh received a legacy along with his sons. The land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the people of Manasseh.

<sup>7</sup>The border of Manasseh ran from Asher to Michmethath, which is opposite Shechem. The border went south to the population of En-tappuah. <sup>8</sup>The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh. But Tappuah itself belonged to the people of Ephraim, even though it was on the border of Manasseh. <sup>9</sup>The border went down by the Kanah Valley. South of the ravine are those cities that belong to Ephraim, even though they are located among the cities of Manasseh. The border of Manasseh lay on the north side of the ravine and ended at the sea. <sup>10</sup>What lay south of the border belonged to Ephraim, and what lay north of it belonged to

*Women and Property* Since the daughters of Zelophehad had no brothers, their family heritage couldn't be carried on in the land unless they were granted an inheritance on their father's behalf to pass on to their children. This account records the fulfillment of what was already promised in Numbers 27:1-11. There the daughters of Zelophehad came to Moses to argue that their father had been faithful to the Lord in the wilderness. They proclaimed that he didn't enter into the rebellion led by Korah (Num 16) but remained faithful to God and the leadership of Moses. Then the daughters made the case that their father shouldn't lose his inheritance simply because he had no sons. Instead, Zelophehad's allotment should be given to them. The story casts important light on gender roles in ancient Israel. Ancient Israelite society is rightly called "patriarchal" insofar as property was normally passed on from father to son, and family structures were typically determined by a male line of descent. But women and men were interdependent, and women often had significant influence even if it wasn't formalized. The story of the daughters of Zelophehad shows flexibility in the tradition that could bend in order to ensure that all Israelites had access to the blessings and resources of the land. In this case, the tradition of male inheritance gives way to the higher ideal of access to the land.

The focus on the daughters of Zelophehad here is significant also because of the attention given to the female children of this man. The account here includes two striking features from the story in Numbers 27. First, the daughters aren't only mentioned but are named: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah (Num 27:1; Josh 17:3). In a society that passed property from father to sons and traced lineage through male heirs, the naming of daughters is unusual (see Job 42:13-15). But it does testify strongly to the concern for all Israelites to have a share in the promises God made to Abraham. Second, the fact that the daughters spoke on behalf of their father and were rewarded with the allotment of land indicates the potential for women like them to occupy significant roles of leadership.

the Mediterranean Sea. The final note that the Canaanites remained in Gezer explains why the population remained mixed even after the Israelites received their land.

17:1-13 The territory of Manasseh west of the Jordan River is outlined here. Manasseh's portion is north of the territory occupied by Ephraim. Earlier a portion of territory was given to half the tribe of Manasseh east of the Jordan River (Josh 13:8-13). In that allotment Manasseh's son

Machir possessed the areas of Gilead and Bashan (Josh 13:29-31). The rest of the tribe of Manasseh will now occupy the areas directly across the Jordan River to the west (17:7-10).

17:3-6 This portion of the account of land allotment introduces a problem; namely Zelophehad had no sons, only daughters. Normally property was passed from father to sons, and daughters didn't receive an inheritance. But

18:1 Josh 19:51,  
Josh 21:2;  
Jgs 18:31;  
1Sa 1:3, 1Sa 4:3

Manasseh. The sea was its border. The territory bordered Asher on the north and Issachar on the east.

<sup>11</sup>Belonging to Manasseh in Issachar and in Asher were Beth-shean and its dependent cities, Ibleam and its dependent cities, the population of Dor and its dependent cities, the population of En-dor and its dependent cities, the population of Taanach and its dependent cities, and the population of Megiddo and its dependent cities. (The third one is Naphath.)<sup>a</sup>  
<sup>12</sup>The people of Manasseh couldn't take over these cities, and the Canaanites were determined to live in this land. <sup>13</sup>When the Israelites grew strong, they subjected the Canaanites to hard labor but didn't remove them.

#### Future expansion for Joseph

<sup>14</sup>The tribe of Joseph spoke to Joshua: "Why have you only given us a single lot and a solitary parcel for a legacy? We are a numerous people whom the LORD has blessed so richly."

<sup>15</sup>Then Joshua said, "Yes, you are a numerous people. So go up to the forest and clear ground for yourselves there in the land of the Perizzites and Rephaim, because the Ephraimite highland is too small for you."

<sup>16</sup>The people of Joseph said, "The highland isn't enough for us. But all the Canaanites who live in the valley region have iron chariots, both those in Beth-shean and its dependent cities and those in the Jezreel Valley."

<sup>17</sup>Joshua then said to the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and to Manasseh, "You are a numerous people and possess great strength. You will have more than a single lot. <sup>18</sup>The highland will belong to you. Because it is a forest, you can clear it. Its farthest limits will be yours. You will definitely remove the Canaanites, even though they have iron chariots and are strong."

#### Remainder of the land

**18**The whole community of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh and set up the meeting tent there. The conquered land lay before them. <sup>2</sup>Among the Israelites, seven tribes were left that had not yet received their legacy. <sup>3</sup>Joshua said to the Israelites, "How long will you avoid going to take over the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you? <sup>4</sup>Pick out three men for each tribe. I will send them out, and they will go up and travel throughout the land. They will write a description of it as the basis for determining their legacy. Then they will come back to me. <sup>5</sup>They will divide up the land among themselves into seven portions. Judah will stay on its territory to the south. The house of Joseph will stay on their territory to the north. <sup>6</sup>But you will write a report in seven parts and bring the report back here to me. Then I will cast the lot for you here, before the LORD our God. <sup>7</sup>However, there won't be a portion among you for the Levites because their legacy is the priesthood of the LORD. Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh have already received their legacy on the east side of the Jordan. Moses the LORD's servant gave it to them."

<sup>8</sup>When the men had prepared to go, Joshua gave orders to those going to write a description of the land. "Go and travel around the land, write about it, and return to me. I will cast

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

here the daughters of Zelophehad sought an inheritance alongside their male relatives in the tribe of Manasseh. See sidebar, "Women and Property."

18:1-10 The possession of the remainder of the land is presented with a question about the Israelites' faith, *How long will you avoid going to take over the land that the Lord... has given you?* (18:3). The land is already conquered (18:1) and lies before the Israelites to claim as their inheritance from God. Thus possession of the land is essentially a sign of trust in God's promises. Joshua's allotment of the land did include practical matters of surveying the land to determine sizes of allotments and cities to be included in each allotment. But the focus is on trust in God.

18:1 *whole community of the Israelites*: Once again the emphasis is on the unity of the Israelite tribes. They appear together as one body, not as divided tribes (see Josh 3:1; 4:1; 23:2; 24:1). *Shiloh*: As a town 20 miles north of Jerusalem, it was the first location of a permanent central sanctuary

(see Jer 7:12-14). The prophet Samuel was raised in the sanctuary at Shiloh and there received God's call to lead Israel (1 Sam 1-3). Later Shiloh would be replaced by Jerusalem as the central worship site. *meeting tent*: This tent was a portable shrine the Israelites made during their wilderness wandering (Exod 33:7; Num 11:16; Deut 31:14). God would descend to this tent and meet Moses and the leaders of Israel. Now the tent is set up at Shiloh, thus linking that site for the first time with the presence and indwelling of God.

18:5 *seven portions*: The description of the land again focuses on God's ownership of the land and God's gift of the land to the Israelites. Seven is a complete number, as is the number 12, which will be the full number of allotments. To clarify how the count of allotments for the remainder of the territory is seven, the writer again states that the Levites didn't receive a portion of land as inheritance.



the lot for you before the LORD here in Shiloh.”<sup>9</sup> So the men went and passed through the land and wrote about it in a document, city by city, in seven sections. They came back to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh.<sup>10</sup> Then Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD. There Joshua divided up the shares of the land for the Israelites.

18:28 Josh 15:8;  
Jgs 19:10;  
2Sa 21:14  
19:1 Gn 49:7;  
Josh 19:9; Jgs 1:3

### Border of Benjamin

<sup>11</sup>The lot for the clans of the Benjaminite tribe appeared first. The border of their allotment went out between the people of Judah and the people of Joseph.<sup>12</sup> Their border on the north side ran from the Jordan. The border went up to the slope of Jericho on the north. It went up westward in the highlands and ended at the wasteland of Beth-aven.<sup>13</sup> The border passed on from there to Luz, to the slope of Luz on the south (that is, Bethel). The border went down to Ataroth-adar on the mountain that is south of Lower Beth-horon.<sup>14</sup> The border turned and came around southward on the west side, running from the mountain that is opposite Beth-horon on the south. It ended at Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), a city of the people of Judah. This was its west side.

<sup>15</sup>The south side ran from the limits of Kiriath-jearim. The border went out westward. It then proceeded to the waters of Nephtoa Spring.<sup>16</sup> The border went down to the foot of the mountain that is opposite the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is in the north part of the Rephaim Valley. It went down through the Hinnom Valley to the slope of the Jebusite city on the south. It then went down to En-rogel.<sup>17</sup> It turned northward. Then it went to En-shemesh and then to Geliath, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim. It went down to the Stone of Bohan (Reuben's son).<sup>18</sup> It passed on to the slope of Beth-arabah<sup>7</sup> on the north and went down into the desert plain.<sup>19</sup> The border passed on to the slope of Beth-hoglah on the north. The border ended at the north bay of the Dead Sea, at the southern mouth of the Jordan. This was the southern border.<sup>20</sup> The Jordan bordered it on the east side. This is the legacy of the Benjaminite clans according to its borders.

### Cities of Benjamin

<sup>21</sup>The cities of the clans of the Benjaminite tribe are Jericho, Beth-hoglah, Emek-keziz,<sup>22</sup> Beth-arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel,<sup>23</sup> Avvim, Parah, Ophrah,<sup>24</sup> Chephar-ammoni, Ophni, and Geba. In total: twelve cities and their surrounding areas.

<sup>25</sup>Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth,<sup>26</sup> Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah,<sup>27</sup> Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah,<sup>28</sup> Zela, Haeleph, the Jebusite city (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeath, and Kiriath. In total: fourteen cities and their surrounding areas. This is the legacy of the Benjaminite clans.

### Simeon

**19** The second lot fell to Simeon. The legacy of the clans of the Simeonite tribe lay inside the legacy of the people of Judah.<sup>2</sup> They had in their legacy: Beer-sheba, Sheba, Moladah,<sup>3</sup> Hazar-shual, Balah, Ezem,<sup>4</sup> Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah,<sup>5</sup> Ziklag, Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susah,<sup>6</sup> Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuh. In total: thirteen cities and their surrounding areas.<sup>7</sup> Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan. In total: four cities and their surrounding areas.<sup>8</sup> In addition were all the areas that surround these cities as far as Baalath-beer and Ramah of the arid southern plain. This is the legacy of the clans of the Simeonite tribe.<sup>9</sup> Some of the portion of the people of Judah belonged to the legacy of the people of Simeon. This was because the portion of the people of Judah was too large for them. So the people of Simeon received a legacy inside Judah's legacy.

<sup>7</sup>LXX and Josh 15:6; MT *slope opposite the desert plain*

18:10 *Joshua cast lots*: Joshua alone cast lots to divide the remainder of the territory (cf. Josh 14:1). Casting lots was a priestly function, and prior to this Joshua has been accompanied by Eleazar the priest (see note on Josh 14:1).

18:11-20 The territories of Benjamin are carefully delineated in relation to the allotments of the tribe of Judah that lie immediately to their south (see 18:14). The divisions along the Hinnom Valley (18:16) run around the city of Jerusalem, here referred to as the *Jebusite city* as in Joshua 15:8.

18:21-28 Jerusalem is listed as one of the cities that belonged to Benjamin (18:28), though it is listed earlier in association with the tribe of Judah (Josh 15:63).

19:1-9 Simeon, one of the smaller tribes, has its legacy within the confines of the territory of Judah. Therefore, Simeon's legacy is described not by borders but by a list of towns. This circumstance is explained by Judah's generosity to his brother (19:9). According to some accounts, however, Simeon was once located much farther north (see Gen 34; 49:5-6).

19:15 Josh 11:1,  
Josh 21:35;  
Jgs 1:30  
19:30 Josh 12:18,  
Josh 19:28,  
Josh 21:31  
19:43 Gn 38:12

### Zebulun

<sup>10</sup>The lot turned up third for the clans of Zebulun. The border of their legacy ran as far as Sarid. <sup>11</sup>Their border went up westward to Maralah, touched Dabbesheth, and touched the ravine that is opposite Jokneam. <sup>12</sup>It reversed from Sarid eastward toward the east to the border of Chisloth-tabor. It went to Daberath and then up to Japhia. <sup>13</sup>From there it passed on the east side, running eastward to Gath-hepher and Eth-kazin. Going to Rimmon, it bent toward Neah. <sup>14</sup>The border turned north of Hannathon and ended at the Iphtah-el Valley. <sup>15</sup>They also owned Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem; in total: twelve cities and their surrounding areas. <sup>16</sup>These cities and their surrounding areas are the legacy of Zebulun's clans.

### Issachar

<sup>17</sup>The lot went out fourth for the clans of Issachar. <sup>18</sup>Their border ran toward Jezreel. They also owned Chesulloth, Shunem, <sup>19</sup>Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, <sup>20</sup>Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, <sup>21</sup>Remeth, En-gannim, En-haddah, and Beth-pazzez. <sup>22</sup>The border touched Tabor, Shazumah, and Beth-shemesh. Their border ended at the Jordan; in total: sixteen cities with their surrounding areas. <sup>23</sup>These cities and their surrounding areas are the legacy for the clans of the Issachar tribe.

### Asher

<sup>24</sup>The lot went out fifth for the clans of the tribe of Asher. <sup>25</sup>Their border included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, <sup>26</sup>Allammelech, Amad, and Mishal. It touched Carmel on the west and Shihor-libnath. <sup>27</sup>The border reversed eastward to Beth-dagon. It touched Zebulun and the Iphtah-el Valley on the north, also Beth-emek and Neiel. It went to Cabul on the north, <sup>28</sup>as far as Great Sidon. They also owned Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah. <sup>29</sup>The border turned around to Ramah as far as the fortified city of Tyre. The border turned around to Hosah and ended at the sea. They also owned Mahalab,<sup>w</sup> Achzib, <sup>30</sup>Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob; in total: twenty-two cities and their surrounding areas. <sup>31</sup>These cities and their surrounding areas are the legacy for the clans of the Asher tribe.

### Naphtali

<sup>32</sup>For the people of Naphtali, the lot went out sixth. For the clans of Naphtali <sup>33</sup>their border ran from Heleph, from the oak in Zaanannim and Adami-nekeb and Jabneel as far as Lakkum. It ended at the Jordan. <sup>34</sup>The border reversed westward to Aznoth-tabor. It went from there to Hukkuk. It touched Zebulun on the south, Asher on the west, and Judah at the Jordan on the east. <sup>35</sup>They also owned the fortified cities Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, <sup>36</sup>Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, <sup>37</sup>Kedesh, Edrei, En-hazor, <sup>38</sup>Iron, Migdal-el, Horem, Beth-anath, and Beth-shemesh; in total: nineteen cities and their surrounding areas. <sup>39</sup>These cities and their surrounding areas are the legacy for the clans of the Naphtali tribe.

### Dan

<sup>40</sup>The lot went out seventh for the clans of the Danite tribe. <sup>41</sup>The territory of their legacy was Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-shemesh, <sup>42</sup>Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah, <sup>43</sup>Elon, Timnah, Ekron, <sup>44</sup>Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, <sup>45</sup>Jehud, Bene-berak, Gath-rimmon, <sup>46</sup>Me-jarkon, and Rakkon, along with the territory opposite Joppa. <sup>47</sup>But the territory of the people of Dan was lost to them. So the people of Dan went up and attacked Leshem and captured it. They struck it down without mercy. They took it over and settled it. Then they named Leshem as Dan, after the name of Dan their ancestor. <sup>48</sup>These cities and their surrounding areas are the legacy for the clans of the Danite tribe.

<sup>w</sup>LXX, MT *Mehebel*

19:10-16 The legacy of Zebulun is outlined here.

19:17-23 The description of Issachar's territory doesn't include an exact set of borders. Rather, it refers mainly to cities and valleys. Most notable is Jezreel, a fertile valley that later becomes the site of major disputes (see 2 Kgs 9:30-37; Hos 1:4-5).

19:24-31 The tribe of Asher is said to possess the prominent Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon. This association is idealistic since these cities remained independent and weren't under Israelite control. The listing of Tyre and Sidon is probably due to the same theological convictions

that led to the inclusion of Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza in the territory of Judah, such as the belief that God controlled the whole land, and no nation or city could defy God's will (see note on Josh 15:45-47). Thus all peoples came under the governance of God, who gave Israel the land.

19:32-39 The legacy of Naphtali is outlined in relation to the legacies of Zebulun, Asher, and Judah.

19:40-48 The tribe of Dan was the northernmost tribe according to this information. Some traditions, however, had Dan much farther south and then migrating north (Judg 18).

**Legacy for Joshua**

<sup>49</sup>So when they finished assigning the borders of the land, the Israelites gave to Joshua, Nun's son, a legacy among them. <sup>50</sup>By the LORD's command, they gave him the city that he asked for. This was Timnath-serah in the highlands of Ephraim. He built a city and lived in it. <sup>51</sup>These are the legacies that Eleazar the priest, Joshua, Nun's son, and the heads of the families of the Israelite tribes assigned by lot at Shiloh. They did this before the LORD at the entrance of the meeting tent and finished dividing up the land.

19:50 Josh 24:30; Igs 2:9  
20:2 Ex 21:13; Nu 35:6; Dt 4:41  
20:4 Dt 21:19; Dt 22:15;  
Ru 4:1; Jer 38:7; Zec 8:16  
20:8 Dt 4:43; Josh 21:36, 27, 36; 1Ch 6:78  
21:1 Nu 34:17; Josh 14:1; Josh 17:4; Josh 19:51

**Refuge cities**

**20** The LORD spoke to Joshua: <sup>2</sup>"Say to the Israelites, 'Set up refuge cities for yourselves. I spoke to you about these through Moses. <sup>3</sup>Anyone who kills by striking down someone unintentionally or by mistake may flee there. These places will be a refuge for you from any member of the victim's family seeking revenge. <sup>4</sup>The killer will flee to one of these cities, stand at the entrance of the city gate, and explain their situation to the elders of that city. The elders are to let the killer into the city and provide a place of refuge for the killer to live with them. <sup>5</sup>If a member of the victim's family follows, seeking revenge, they won't hand the killer over. This is because the killer struck down the neighbor by accident and hadn't been an enemy in the past. <sup>6</sup>The killer will live in that city until there can be a trial before the community or <sup>7</sup>until the death of the one who is high priest at that time. Then the killer may return home, back to the city from which the flight began.'"

<sup>7</sup>So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the highlands of Naphtali, Shechem in the highlands of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the highlands of Judah. <sup>8</sup>On the other side of the Jordan east of Jericho, they set up Bezer in the wasteland on the plateau from the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan from the tribe of Manasseh. <sup>9</sup>These cities were the ones designated for all the Israelites and for immigrants residing among them. Anyone who struck down a person by mistake could flee there and escape death at the hand of some member of the victim's family seeking revenge, until there could be a trial before the community.

**Cities for the Levites**

**21** The heads of the levitical families approached Eleazar the priest, Joshua, Nun's son, and the heads of the families of the Israelite tribes. <sup>2</sup>They spoke to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan: "The LORD gave a command through Moses to give us cities to live in and their pasturelands for our cattle." <sup>3</sup>So the Israelites gave the Levites the following cities and their pasturelands out of their own legacy. This was in agreement with the LORD's command.

<sup>4</sup>The lot went out for the clans of the Kohathites. The descendants of Aaron the priest from among the Levites acquired thirteen cities by lot from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin. <sup>5</sup>The rest of the descendants of Kohath acquired ten cities by lot from the clans of the tribes of Ephraim, Dan, and half of Manasseh. <sup>6</sup>The descendants of Gershon acquired thirteen cities by lot from the clans of the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and the half of Manasseh located in Bashan. <sup>7</sup>The descendants of Merari acquired twelve cities for their clans from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun. <sup>8</sup>So the Israelites gave these cities and their pasturelands to the Levites by lot, exactly as the LORD had commanded through Moses.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

19:49-51 A few individuals' allotments are listed apart from allotments of their tribes. Here Joshua is given his own inheritance, the city of Timnath-serah within the tribal allotments of Ephraim (19:50). The whole section that describes the allotments concludes in 19:51 with the reminder that Eleazar and Joshua assigned the legacies at Shiloh *before the LORD at the entrance of the meeting tent* (see note on Josh 18:1).

20:1-9 In Numbers 35:1-8, God commanded the Israelites to give, from their inherited territories, cities for the Levites (see Josh 21:1-42). Some of those cities were to be designated as cities of refuge. God designated cities of refuge to protect life. Joshua 20 designates some cities as places of refuge for those who have killed another person under

such circumstances that the killing wasn't considered a capital crime. (See sidebar, "Refuge Cities"). The cities of refuge are discussed also in Exodus 21:13; Numbers 35:9-15; Deuteronomy 4:41-43; 19:1-13; and 1 Chronicles 6:54-81. The overarching concern of these texts and Joshua 20 is the shedding of innocent blood.

21:1-42 Joshua 13-21 accentuates the notion that the land and its people are holy by carefully delineating the divisions of land in relation to the Levites. The assignment by Moses of land east of the Jordan River (Josh 13:15-31) is framed by notes that "Moses gave no legacy to the tribe of Levi" (Josh 13:14, 33). God alone would be the inheritance for this tribe (Josh 13:33). The allotments by Joshua, Eleazar, and the heads of the tribes begins

*Refuge Cities* The identification of these towns, and the need for them, is tied to specific ancient Near Eastern assumptions about murder and the punishment for it, ideas that may seem strange to modern readers. At the core of Joshua 20 is the notion that the spilling of blood (which was understood in an almost magical sense as representative of life) by murder brought an imbalance (as well as an injustice) to the created order. It brought a type of curse on the land (Deut 19:10). As Numbers 35:33 states, “blood pollutes the land.” Bloodguilt could be averted, it was believed, by the action of an “avenger of blood,” an individual designated by the family of the dead person to seek revenge in the case of homicide (the avenger was usually the nearest relative to the deceased). To understand the concept further, it is important to recognize that the English “avenger” translates the Hebrew term which more properly means “redeemer” (Ruth 2:20; 3:13). Hence, the avenger was thought to “redeem” the blood of the dead relative, spilled in a manner that wasn’t proper, by shedding the blood of the murderer. Again, as Numbers 35:33 states, in the case of the land being polluted by blood, no redemption or purification can be made for the land except by the blood of the one who shed it. The practice of avenging a murder was so deeply ingrained in the Israelite psyche that it was institutionalized (Deut 19:12). It was recognized, however, that homicide occurred sometimes under circumstances that weren’t clearly premeditated and, therefore, didn’t warrant avenging (Num 35:22-24). In fact, if the avenger took the life of someone who had killed by accident, that act of retaliation itself would amount to shedding innocent blood and, therefore, perpetuate bloodguilt (again, see Deut 19:10). In terms of modern justice, the cases exempted from the avenger would be classified as manslaughter or perhaps third-degree murder. Deuteronomy 19:4-5 provides a classic example. Two men go into the forest to cut wood. The ax head belonging to one man slips and kills the other. If there was no previous hatred between the men, the case might be judged an accident, and the killer would be entitled to protection from the avenger of the dead man’s family (see further, Num 35:22-24).

Like so many other aspects of Joshua’s leadership, this allotment of refuge cities follows the guidelines of Moses in Deuteronomy (Deut 19:1-13). The identity of the cities seems to be motivated by consideration for even geographical distribution. Three cities were named east of the Jordan (Golan, Ramoth, and Bezer) and three west of the river (Kedesh, Shechem, and Hebron); in both cases cities were located in northern, central, and southern regions. The particular place of asylum in each of these cities may have been a sanctuary in which the person was thought to be protected by God’s “shelter” at the altar (see an expression of the general idea, though perhaps not the specific notion of refuge from an avenger, in Ps 61:1-4). Exodus 21:14 implies that a sanctuary is the site of refuge when it notes that a person who kills another by accident should be given refuge, but one who “plots and kills another person on purpose” should be taken from the altar for execution. Whether or not Joshua 20 has a sanctuary in mind isn’t certain, but the initial procedure for the one seeking refuge is clear, and Joshua 20:4-5 is somewhat unique in this detail. The slayer is to appear before the elders of the refuge city. They decide whether the person deserves asylum. If so, they are responsible for protecting the man from the avenger who pursues him (cf. Deut 19:12, which speaks of the elders of the town from which the killer has come; see Num 35:24). Joshua 24:6 includes another provision of uncertain meaning, namely, that at the death of the high priest at the time of the murder, the slayer could return to his home. This loophole for the manslayer is emphasized in Numbers 35:25, 28, 32. It probably reflects an extension of amnesty offered when a high priest died. Moreover, it also indicates that the action of the avenger of blood wasn’t primarily for retaliation (though that may have motivated him as well). Rather, the death of a murderer was to purify the land of bloodguilt. Thus refuge cities are appointed not only as refuge for the person who killed accidentally but also as a kind of quarantined space to ensure the purity of the land. Even though the killing was accidental, blood was still spilled, and thus the land was polluted by it. This concern for the purity of the land explains why the refuge cities are also levitical towns. The Levites are placed so as to oversee the boundaries between clean and unclean, and to oversee the process of justice.

<sup>9</sup>They gave the following cities, identified here by name, from the tribe of the Judahites and the tribe of the Simeonites. <sup>10</sup>The cities belonged to the descendants of Aaron, one of the Kohathite clans of the Levites, because the lot had fallen to them first. <sup>11</sup>They gave them Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the highlands of Judah and the pastures around it. (Arba was the father of Anak.) <sup>12</sup>But they had already given the fields of the city and its surrounding areas to Caleb, Jephunneh’s son, as his property. <sup>13</sup>To the descendants of Aaron the priest they gave: Hebron, the refuge city for a killer, and its pastures; Libnah and its pastures;

with similar comments (Josh 14:3-4), and the allotment concludes in Joshua 21 with a list of 48 towns given as places to live for the Levites. Thus the entire account of

land distribution is ordered to call attention to the special status of the Levites, which entails what they did and didn’t possess.

<sup>14</sup>Jattir and its pastures; Eshtemoa and its pastures; <sup>15</sup>Holon and its pastures; Debir and its pastures; <sup>16</sup>Ain and its pastures; Juttah and its pastures; and Beth-shemesh and its pastures. Total from these two tribes: nine cities. <sup>17</sup>From the tribe of Benjamin: Gibeon and its pastures, Geba and its pastures, <sup>18</sup>Anathoth and its pastures, and Almon and its pastures. In total: four cities. <sup>19</sup>This is the total of all the cities of the priests descended from Aaron: thirteen cities with their pastures.

<sup>20</sup>Other clans from the levitical descendants of Kohath still remained from among the descendants of Kohath. Some of their allotted cities were from the tribe of Ephraim. <sup>21</sup>They gave them: Shechem, the refuge city for a killer, and its pastures in the highlands of Ephraim; Gezer and its pastures; <sup>22</sup>Kibzaim and its pastures; and Beth-horon and its pastures; in total: four cities. <sup>23</sup>From the tribe of Dan: Elteke and its pastures, Gibbethon and its pastures, <sup>24</sup>Aijalon and its pastures, Gath-rimmon and its pastures; in total: four cities. <sup>25</sup>From half the tribe of Manasseh: Taanach and its pastures, and Gath-rimmon and its pastures; in total: two cities. <sup>26</sup>This is the total of all cities for the clans of the remaining descendants of Kohath: ten cities with their pastures.

<sup>27</sup>To the descendants of Gershon, one of the clans of the Levites, from half the tribe of Manasseh: Golan in Bashan, the refuge city for a killer, and its pastures; and Beeshterah and its pastures; in total: two cities. <sup>28</sup>From the tribe of Issachar: Kishion and its pastures, Daberath and its pastures, <sup>29</sup>Jarmuth and its pastures, En-gannim and its pastures; in total: four cities. <sup>30</sup>From the tribe of Asher: Mishal and its pastures, Abdon and its pastures, <sup>31</sup>Helkath and its pastures, and Rehob and its pastures; in total: four cities. <sup>32</sup>From the tribe of Naphtali: Kedesh in Galilee, the refuge city for the killer, and its pastures; Hammoth-dor and its pastures; and Kartan and its pastures; in total: three cities. <sup>33</sup>This is the total of all cities of the Gershonites for their clans: thirteen cities with their pastures.

<sup>34</sup>To the clans of the descendants of Merari, the rest of the Levites, from the tribe of Zebulun: Jokneam and its pastures, Kartah and its pastures, <sup>35</sup>Dimnah and its pastures, Nahalal and its pastures; in total: four cities. <sup>36</sup>From the tribe of Reuben: Bezer and its pastures, Jahaz and its pastures, <sup>37</sup>Kedemoth and its pastures, and Mephaath and its pastures; in total: four cities. <sup>38</sup>From the tribe of Gad: Ramoth in Gilead, the refuge city for a killer, and its pastures; Mahanaim and its pastures; <sup>39</sup>Heshbon and its pastures; Jazer and its pastures; in total: four cities. <sup>40</sup>As for the cities of the descendants of Merari for their clans, the remaining clans of the Levites, their total allotment was twelve cities.

<sup>41</sup>This is the total of all the cities of the Levites within the property of the Israelites: forty-eight cities with their pastures. <sup>42</sup>Each of these cities had its pastures around it. This was the case for all these cities.

**Summary of the conquest**

<sup>43</sup>The LORD gave to Israel all the land he had pledged to give to their ancestors. They took it over and settled there. <sup>44</sup>The LORD gave them rest from surrounding danger, exactly as he had pledged to their ancestors. Not one of all their enemies held out against them. The LORD gave all their enemies into their power. <sup>45</sup>Not one of all the good things that the LORD had promised to the house of Israel failed. Every promise was fulfilled.

**Eastern tribes go home**

**22** Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh. <sup>2</sup>He said to them, “You obeyed everything that Moses the LORD’s servant commanded you. You have also obeyed me in everything that I have commanded you. <sup>3</sup>During these many years, you never once deserted your fellow Israelites. You faithfully obeyed the command of the LORD your God. <sup>4</sup>The LORD your God has now given rest to your fellow Israelites, exactly as he promised them. So turn around and go back home. Go to the land

21:18 1Ki 2:26;  
Jer 1:1  
21:20 Josh 21:5;  
1Ch 6:66  
21:27 Dt 4:43;  
Josh 20:8,  
Josh 21:6;  
1Ch 6:71  
21:34 Josh 21:7;  
1Ch 6:77  
21:38 Gn 32:2;  
Dt 4:43,  
Josh 20:8;  
1Ch 6:80  
21:43 Gn 12:7,  
Gn 13:15,  
Gn 26:3,  
Gn 28:4,  
Gn 28:13;  
Dt 11:31,  
Dt 17:14,  
Dt 34:4,  
Jdg 1:1  
21:44 Dt 7:24;  
Josh 11:23  
21:45 Josh 23:14;  
1Ki 8:56

<sup>1</sup>LXX and 1 Chron 6:78-79 (Heb 6:63-64); some Heb manuscripts lack 21:36-37.

21:43-45 The distribution of the land concludes with a summary that declares all God’s promises to Israel’s ancestors are complete, a common theme in Joshua (see Josh 11:23; 22:4; 23:14).

22:1-8 Joshua gives a final blessing to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, and sends them to their territories. Joshua’s words to them have two focal

points. First, he praises them for remaining faithful to the other tribes and for being obedient to the covenant. The emphasis here is on the unity of the tribes in their service to God. This unity will become an issue in the next section (see Josh 22:9-34). Second, Joshua charges the two and a half eastern tribes to obey the instruction from Moses. Specifically, he charges them to *Love the LORD your God*

22:9 Nm 32:1,  
Nm 32:26,  
Nm 32:29  
22:10 Nm 32:1;  
Josh 18:17,  
Josh 22:25,  
Josh 22:34  
22:11 Lv 17:8,  
Lv 17:9;  
Nm 32:1;  
Dt 12:5,  
Dt 13:12  
22:12 Josh 18:1;  
Jgs 20:1

where you hold property, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on the other side of the Jordan. <sup>5</sup>Just be very careful to carry out the commandment and Instruction that Moses the LORD's servant commanded you. Love the LORD your God. Walk in all his ways and obey his commandments. Hold on to him and serve him with all your heart and being." <sup>6</sup>Then Joshua blessed them. He sent them away, and they went home.

<sup>7</sup>Moses had provided for half of the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan. But Joshua provided for the other half on the west side of the Jordan along with their fellow Israelites. When he sent them back home, Joshua also blessed them. <sup>8</sup>He said to them, "Return home with great wealth and many cattle, with silver, gold, bronze, and iron, and with much clothing. Divide the spoil taken from your enemies among your own people."

### *Disagreement about an altar*

<sup>9</sup>So the people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh went back. They left the Israelites at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. They went to the land of Gilead, to the land that they owned. They had settled there at the LORD's command given by Moses. <sup>10</sup>They came to the districts<sup>a</sup> of the Jordan that are in the land of Canaan. The people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, an altar that appeared to be immense. <sup>11</sup>Then the Israelites heard a report: "Look. The people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the far edge of the land of Canaan. It lies in the districts of the Jordan on the Israelite side!" <sup>12</sup>When the Israelites heard this, the entire Israelite community assembled at Shiloh to go up to war against them.

<sup>13</sup>Then the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest to the people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh in the land of Gilead. <sup>14</sup>They sent with him ten leaders, one leader from each important family among the tribes of Israel. Each was the head of an important family among the military units of Israel. <sup>15</sup>They came to the people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh in the land of Gilead and spoke with them. <sup>16</sup>They said, "Here is what the LORD's entire community says: 'What's this disrespectful thing that you've done to the God of Israel? Today you've turned away from following the LORD by building yourselves an altar as an act of rebellion against the LORD. <sup>17</sup>Wasn't the offense of Peor enough for us? Even today we still haven't cleansed ourselves from that sin, when there was a plague on the LORD's community! <sup>18</sup>Today you are turning away from following the LORD. If you rebel against the LORD today, he will be angry with the entire community of Israel tomorrow. <sup>19</sup>If your own property is unclean land, then cross over into the land of the LORD's property and settle among us. That's where the dwelling of the LORD stands. But don't rebel against the LORD. And don't involve us in rebellion<sup>a</sup> by building an altar for yourselves other than the altar of the LORD our God. <sup>20</sup>Didn't Achan, Zerah's son, do such a disrespectful thing with the items reserved for God? Wrath came on the entire community of Israel. And he wasn't the only one to die for his crime.'"

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Geliloth* <sup>a</sup>Or *rebel against us*

(22:5). This language reflects the basic covenant expectation. Deuteronomy 6:5 commands love of God completely, and now Joshua repeats the expectation.

22:9-34 When the two and a half eastern tribes return to their territories, controversy arises about proper worship. The Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh built an altar, which the other tribes interpreted as rebellion against them. Although the reason for this conflict isn't specified, they apparently thought the altar violated the instruction in Deuteronomy against making sacrifices anywhere except the central worship site (Deut 12:13, 14). The eastern tribes defend themselves, however, by saying the altar wasn't for sacrifice. Rather, it was to serve as a reminder that they too belonged to Israel's worshipping community. It was essentially a model or copy of an altar that would serve as a monument for the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh (22:28).

22:11 *Israelite side*: It isn't certain which side is meant. Are

the western tribes claiming that the eastern tribes have built an altar west of the Jordan River or east of it? Regardless, it is clear that the Jordan River boundary poses a problem. The tribes east of the Jordan at least perceive that they are in inferior territory and risk being cut off from the people of God (see Josh 22:21-34).

22:13-20 It is fitting that the Israelites sent Phinehas to address the matter of the altar. In the wilderness period, Phinehas proved zealous for religious purity. He compared the building of the altar to a well-known sin of the Israelites during that time, the *offense of Peor* (22:17). At a place called Peor the Israelites began to worship a fertility god called the Baal of Peor, and God ordered all those who worshipped the deity to be killed (Num 25:3). A plague fell on the Israelites. Phinehas saw an Israelite man take a Moabite woman (presumably a worshipper of the Baal of Peor) into his tent. Phinehas went in and ran a spear through them both (Num 25:8), thus stopping the plague.

22:20 *Achan*: See Joshua 7:1.

<sup>21</sup>Then the people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh answered the heads of the military units of Israel: <sup>22</sup>"The LORD is God of gods! The LORD is God of gods! He already knows, and now let Israel also know it! If we acted in rebellion or in disrespect against the LORD, don't spare us today. <sup>23</sup>If we've built ourselves an altar to turn away from following the LORD or to offer on it an entirely burned offering or gift offering, or to perform well-being sacrifices on it, let the LORD himself seek punishment. <sup>24</sup>No! The truth is we did this out of concern for what might happen. In the future your children might say to our children, 'What have you got to do with the LORD, the God of Israel?' <sup>25</sup>The LORD has set the Jordan as a border between us and you people of Reuben and Gad. You have no portion in the LORD!' So your children might make our children stop worshipping the LORD. <sup>26</sup>As a result we said, 'Let's protect ourselves by building an altar. It isn't to be for an entirely burned offering or for sacrifice.' <sup>27</sup>But it is to be a witness between us and you and between our descendants after us. It witnesses that we too perform the service of the LORD in his presence through our entirely burned offerings, sacrifices, and well-being offerings. So in the future your children could never say to our children, 'You have no portion in the LORD.' <sup>28</sup>We thought, If in the future they ever say this to us or to our descendants, we could say, 'Look at this replica of the altar of the LORD that our ancestors made. It isn't for entirely burned offerings or for sacrifice but to be a witness between us and you.' <sup>29</sup>God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away today from following the LORD by building an altar for an entirely burned offering, gift offering, or sacrifice, other than the altar of the LORD our God that stands before his dwelling!"

<sup>30</sup>Phinehas the priest, the leaders of the community, and the heads of the military units of Israel who were with him heard the words that the people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh spoke and approved them. <sup>31</sup>So Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, "Today we know that the LORD is among us, because you haven't done a disrespectful thing against the LORD. Now you've delivered the Israelites from the power of the LORD." <sup>32</sup>Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest and the leaders left the people of Reuben and Gad in the land of Gilead and came back to the Israelites in the land of Canaan. They brought word back to them. <sup>33</sup>The Israelites agreed and blessed God. They no longer spoke of going to war against them to destroy the land where the people of Reuben and Gad were living. <sup>34</sup>The people of Reuben and Gad referred to the altar in this way: "It is a witness between us that the LORD is God."

### Joshua's word of warning

**23** A long time passed. The LORD had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies, and Joshua had grown very old. <sup>2</sup>Joshua summoned all Israel, their elders, their heads, their judges, and their officers. He said to them, "I've grown very old. <sup>3</sup>You've seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you. It is the LORD your God who fights for you. <sup>4</sup>Look. I've allotted to you these remaining nations as a legacy for

22:21-34 At the center of the controversy over the altar east of the Jordan River is the nature of the territory occupied by the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh. The eastern tribes express fear that the other tribes will regard the Jordan River as a border that cuts them off from the people of God. The altar is meant to serve as a *witness* that the eastern tribes are indeed part of the chosen people (22:34).

22:34 *the LORD is God*: "the LORD" is the common translation for four Hebrew letters that stand for the name of God (see Exod 3:13-15). The confession here is that the one the Israelites worship is the supreme deity.

23:1-16 In this first of two concluding speeches, Joshua reminds the Israelites of all God has done for them. Then Joshua charges them to be faithful to God, and warns them God will remove them from the land if they worship other gods. Joshua's farewell speech is like those of other great leaders (Moses, Deut 19-31; Samuel, 1 Sam 12; David, 1 Kgs 2:1-9). The language and themes of the speech follow closely the religious convictions of Deuteronomy: assurance that the Lord gave Israel the

land (Deut 1:8); call to singular devotion to Israel's God (Deut 6:4-5); warnings against mixing and intermarrying with those who worship other gods (Deut 7:1-11), and threat of losing the land if the people are unfaithful (Deut 29:25-28).

23:1 The setting for this speech in Joshua's old age is identical to the setting of Joshua 13:1 when Joshua allotted the land to the Israelites. Both the distribution of inheritances and the final warnings to the Israelites are essential acts before Joshua's death.

23:2 *all Israel*: The tribes are unified completely under the leadership of Joshua, and all are present for Joshua's last words as for other major events (see Josh 4:1; 8:33; 18:1).

23:3 *It is the LORD your God who fights for you*: This theme of God fighting for Israel goes back to the exodus, when God defeated Pharaoh and the Israelites simply stood still (Exod 14:14). Throughout Joshua this notion has been prominent as well, with emphasis on God defeating the residents of the land and giving the land to the Israelites (Josh 1:3; 2:10-11; 6:2; 11:6; 21:43-45).

23:4 The borders of the land here are from the Jordan

22:27 Gn 31:48;  
Dt 12:6;  
Josh 22:34,  
Josh 24:27

23:6 Dt 5:32;  
Josh 1:7

23:7 Ex 23:13;  
Dt 7:2; Jer 5:7

23:8 Dt 10:20,  
Dt 13:4;  
Josh 22:5;  
Ac 11:23

23:10 Ex 14:14;  
Lv 26:8; Dt 3:22;  
Dt 32:30

23:12 Ex 34:16;  
Dt 7:3-4;  
Ezr 9:12

23:14 Josh 21:45;  
1Ki 2:2, 1Ki 8:56

24:1 Josh 23:2

24:2 Gn 11:26,  
Gn 11:31

your tribes, along with all the nations I have destroyed. They stretch from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. <sup>5</sup>The LORD your God will force them out before you and remove them from you. Then you will take over their land, exactly as the LORD your God has promised you. <sup>6</sup>Be very strong. Carefully obey everything written in the Instruction scroll from Moses. Don't deviate a bit from it either to the right or to the left. <sup>7</sup>Don't have anything to do with these nations that remain with you. Don't invoke the names of their gods or take oaths by them. Don't serve them or worship them. <sup>8</sup>Hold on to the LORD your God instead, exactly as you've done right up to today.

<sup>9</sup>"The LORD has removed great and powerful nations before you. To this day, no one has stood up to you. <sup>10</sup>A single one of you puts a thousand to flight. This is because the LORD your God fights for you, exactly as he promised you. <sup>11</sup>For your own sake, be very careful to love the LORD your God. <sup>12</sup>But if you should turn away and join the rest of these nations that remain with you, intermarry with them, and associate with each other, <sup>13</sup>then know for certain that the LORD your God won't keep on removing these nations before you. Instead, they will be a snare and a trap for you. They will be a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you vanish from this fertile land that the LORD your God has given you.

<sup>14</sup>"Look. I'm now walking on the road to death that all the earth must take. You know with all your heart and being that not a single one of all the good things that the LORD your God promised about you has failed. They were all fulfilled for you. Not a single one of them has failed. <sup>15</sup>But in the same way that every good thing that the LORD your God promised about you has been fulfilled, so the LORD could bring against you every bad thing as well. He could wipe you out from this fertile land that the LORD your God has given you. <sup>16</sup>If you violate the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you to keep, and go on to serve other gods and worship them, then the LORD will be furious with you. You will quickly vanish from the fertile land that he has given you."

#### What God has done

**24** Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders of Israel, its leaders, judges, and officers. They presented themselves before God. <sup>2</sup>Then Joshua

River to the Mediterranean Sea, in contrast to the idealistic borders given in Joshua 1:4.

23:6 *Instruction scroll*: the written deposit of Moses' final instructions (see note on Josh 1:7; Deut 31:9, 24; see sidebar, "Instruction Scroll" at Josh 1), *to the right or to the left*: denotes complete commitment (see Josh 1:7).

23:7 The warning against mixing with the people of the land, lest the Israelites worship the gods of the nations, is an important theme drawn from Deuteronomy 7:1-11.

23:12 The warning against intermarriage is driven by the concern that intermarriage will lead Israel to worship the gods of the nations (see Josh 23:7). Therefore, the charge to separate completely from the people of the land is intended to preserve Israel's pure faith in God. The concern and the way it is expressed here is drawn from similar concerns in Deuteronomy 7:1-11.

23:13 *a snare and a trap*: The idea that the nations remain to provoke and test Israel is a theme in the book of Judges as well (Judg 2:23). The underlying notion is that Israel could have removed all the people of the land if they had had enough trust in God.

23:14 The theme of God's promises being fulfilled completely appears in Joshua 11:23; 21:43-45; 22:4.

23:16 The threat of Israel losing the land if they worship other gods is another prominent theme in Deuteronomy and the books that are influenced by it (Deut 28:30, 33, 36; 1 Kgs 8:46-51).

24:1-28 The final chapter seems like a second ending to the book, since Joshua spoke to the Israelites in chapter 23 when he was "very old" and admonished them to worship God alone. Nevertheless, since chapter 24 has no new introduction in terms of time, it follows chapter 23 logically

with an additional charge, albeit in a new place: *Shechem*. In this final speech, Joshua charges the Israelites to be faithful to their God. Joshua's speech resembles ancient Near Eastern treaties, known primarily from the Hittites, in which powerful kings laid down conditions for their relationships with less powerful peoples. Such treaties begin with a historical prologue in which the king reminds his subjects of how he has protected them in the past in order to motivate the people to obedience. In Joshua's speech the primary motivation for faithfulness is the history of what God has done for the Israelites (24:2-13). Ancient Near Eastern treaties of this sort then list stipulations of covenant obedience. Thus Joshua charges the Israelites to put away their foreign gods (24:14). In addition to these elements, the Hittite treaties typically included warnings for unfaithfulness (see 24:19-20) and witnesses to the treaty. In Joshua 24 the Israelites are said to be witnesses against themselves (24:22). Joshua also sets up a stone to commemorate the event, and the stone serves as a witness of the covenant (24:27). The comparison of 24:1-28 to a treaty, however, has limitations. Unlike the treaties made by Hittite kings, this passage doesn't actually present the expectations as God's demands. Rather, the Israelites led by Joshua place stipulations on themselves. Nevertheless, the comparison to ancient Near Eastern treaties is useful in that it indicates the seriousness of the demands on Israel and the expectations for absolute loyalty to God. (See sidebar, "Jealous God").

24:1 *Shechem*: An important religious site in northern Israel. God first appeared to Abraham at Shechem (Gen 12:7). The site was associated with making a covenant and covenant renewal (Gen 35:2-4).

24:2-13 The historical summary may be compared to



24:12 Ex 23:28;  
Dt 7:20; Ps 44:3  
24:14 Dt 10:12;  
Josh 24:23;  
1Sa 12:24

said to the entire people, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Long ago your ancestors lived on the other side of the Euphrates. They served other gods. Among them was Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor. <sup>3</sup>I took Abraham your ancestor from the other side of the Euphrates. I led him around through the whole land of Canaan. I added to his descendants and gave him Isaac. <sup>4</sup>To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I gave Mount Seir to Esau to take over. But Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. <sup>5</sup>Then I sent Moses and Aaron. I plagued Egypt with what I did to them. After that I brought you out. <sup>6</sup>I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, and you came to the sea. The Egyptians chased your ancestors with chariots and horses to the Reed Sea. <sup>7</sup>Then they cried for help to the LORD. So he set darkness between you and the Egyptians. He brought the sea down on them, and it covered them. With your own eyes you saw what I did to the Egyptians. You lived in the desert for a long time.

<sup>8</sup>Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They attacked you, but I gave them into your power, and you took over their land. I wiped them out before you. <sup>9</sup>Then Moab’s King Balak, Zippor’s son, set out to attack Israel. He summoned Balaam, Beor’s son, to curse you. <sup>10</sup>But I wasn’t willing to listen to Balaam, so he actually blessed you. I rescued you from his power. <sup>11</sup>Then you crossed over the Jordan. You came to Jericho, and the citizens of Jericho attacked you. They were Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites, and Jebusites. But I gave them into your power. <sup>12</sup>I sent the hornet<sup>c</sup> before you. It drove them out before you and did the same to the two kings of the Amorites. It wasn’t your sword or bow that did this. <sup>13</sup>I gave you land on which you hadn’t toiled and cities that you hadn’t built. You settled in them and are enjoying produce from vineyards and olive groves that you didn’t plant.

**Challenge to be faithful**

<sup>14</sup>So now, revere the LORD. Serve him honestly and faithfully. Put aside the gods that your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt and serve the LORD. <sup>15</sup>But if it seems wrong in your opinion to serve the LORD, then choose today whom you will serve. Choose the gods whom your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But my family and I will serve the LORD.”

<sup>16</sup>Then the people answered, “God forbid that we ever leave the LORD to serve other gods! <sup>17</sup>The LORD is our God. He is the one who brought us and our ancestors up from the land

<sup>b</sup>Or Red Sea <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

Deuteronomy 26:5-9 in its broad outline. Both of these summaries also have a creedal quality in that they profess faith in God through the summary of God’s action for Israel. Joshua 24:2-13 is unique, however, in two important details. First, 24:2-4 includes details in the story of the patriarchs, including the account of Abraham’s origins in Mesopotamia, that don’t appear in Deuteronomy 26:5-9 (see Gen 11:27-32). Second, the entire summary in 24:2-13 emphasizes God’s initiative and God’s action to a degree that isn’t evident in the Deuteronomy summary. Even Abraham’s movement from *the other side of the Euphrates River* is presented as God’s doing (*I took Abraham*, 24:3). The effect of this focus on God’s action is to heighten the sense of Israel’s obligation to revere and serve God alone. 24:2 *your ancestors lived on the other side of the Euphrates*: The beginning of Israel’s creed emphasizes Abraham’s beginnings in Mesopotamia (Gen 11:27-32; Deut 26:5-9). The note about worshipping other gods is somewhat unique in summaries of this type. It anticipates the call in Joshua 24:14 to put away foreign gods. 24:3 *I took Abraham*: The creed highlights God’s action and barely acknowledges the ancestors’ action. Compare with Deuteronomy 26:5. Indeed, the only statement about human action concerns the Israelites’ travel to Egypt (“Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt,” Josh 24:4). 24:4 *Mount Seir*: Esau is the ancestor of the Edomites. Seir is located in Edom (Gen 25:25; 36:8). 24:6-7 Once again the account emphasizes God’s actions

for Israel (*I brought your ancestors out of Egypt; he set darkness . . . He brought the sea down*). Only two human actions are reported: The Egyptians pursued the Israelites, and the Israelites cried to God for help. Thus the historical summary emphasizes Israel’s helplessness on the one hand and God’s power on the other hand. 24:8 *Amorites*: the people east of the Jordan led by kings Sihon and Og (Deut 1:7; 2:26–3:22; Josh 2:10). See note on Joshua 2:10. 24:9-10 *Balaam*: a prophet who hired himself out to Moab’s King Balak to curse the Israelites (Num 22–24). 24:11-13 The conclusion to the historical summary states again, and now more directly, that Israel’s success was due to God’s action for them. Two statements highlight this point: *It wasn’t your sword or bow that did this* (24:12) and *I gave you land on which you hadn’t toiled* (24:13). 24:14-24 After Joshua recalls how God established and saved Israel from its enemies, he now charges them to faithfulness, and the people respond with statements of their desire to serve God alone. 24:14-15 Joshua charges Israel to faithfulness, and then makes his own declaration of devotion to God. The word *revere* is sometimes translated “fear,” but the rendering here is most helpful. The term has to do with the reverence and honor for God seen in complete devotion. As 24:15 indicates, serving God is ultimately a choice. 24:16-18 The people respond to Joshua’s charge with awareness of the historical summary. They declare they

24:19 Ex 20:5.

Ex 23:21.

Ex 34:14.

Le 19:2; Ps 99:9

24:23 Gn 35:2;

Josh 24:14;

Jgs 10:16;

1Sa 7:3

24:26 Gn 28:18.

Gn 35:4;

Dt 31:24; Jgs 9:6

24:27 Josh 22:27.

Josh 22:34

24:28 Jgs 2:6

*Jealous God* The label “jealous God” indicates God’s passionate desire for Israel’s love and devotion. This characterization of God is a key element of OT faith in that it distinguishes Israel’s God from the gods of the nations. God’s jealousy in Joshua 24:19 indicates that God expects absolute devotion. Israel’s neighbors typically worshipped multiple deities, and a single God who expected them to worship no other god would have been a foreign concept. The notion that God is jealous, however, indicates that the Israelites can’t divide their commitment between God and another deity. God’s jealousy also has another, deeper meaning in the OT. The first occurrence of this label in the OT is in the explanation of the commandment against making idols (Exod 20:5). Since the commandment is probably a prohibition against representing Israel’s God with images, the idea that God is jealous also means God won’t be limited by human conceptions and representations. God defines God’s self and reveals God’s self in God’s own terms. God is known by God’s action in Israel’s history, primarily by God’s rescue of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Exod 20:1-2; Josh 24:17).

of Egypt, from the house of bondage. He has done these mighty signs in our sight. He has protected us the whole way we’ve gone and in all the nations through which we’ve passed. <sup>18</sup>The LORD has driven out all the nations before us, including the Amorites who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God.”

<sup>19</sup>Then Joshua said to the people, “You can’t serve the LORD, because he is a holy God. He is a jealous God. He won’t forgive your rebellion and your sins. <sup>20</sup>If you leave the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn around and do you harm and finish you off, in spite of having done you good in the past.”

<sup>21</sup>Then the people said to Joshua, “No! The LORD is the one we will serve.”

<sup>22</sup>So Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD.”

They said, “We are witnesses!”

<sup>23</sup>“So now put aside the foreign gods that are among you. Focus your hearts on the LORD, the God of Israel.”

<sup>24</sup>The people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and will obey him.”

### **Joshua makes a covenant**

<sup>25</sup>On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people and established just rule for them at Shechem. <sup>26</sup>Joshua wrote these words in God’s instruction scroll. Then he took a large stone and put it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the LORD. <sup>27</sup>Joshua said to all the people, “This stone will serve here as a witness against us, because it has heard all the LORD’s words that he spoke to us. It will serve as a witness against you in case you aren’t true to your God.” <sup>28</sup>Then Joshua sent the people away to each one’s legacy.

will serve God because God is the one who brought their ancestors from Egypt and brought them safely to Canaan. The people’s response begins and ends appropriately with the confession, *he is our God*.

**24:19-20** *He won’t forgive your rebellion... he will turn around and do you harm:* This statement seems at odds with God’s character described in other passages (Exod 34:6-7). It fits, however, with the statement that God is *jealous*. (See sidebar, “Jealous God”). The extreme actions of God reflect God’s passion for God’s people and represents the backside of God’s love.

**24:23** *put aside the foreign gods that are among you:* Earlier, Joshua charged the Israelites to “Put aside the gods that your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates” (Josh 24:14). Now Joshua repeats the charge so as to recognize the Israelites have their own false gods to put aside. The charge is an approximate quotation from Genesis 35:2, in which Jacob charged members of his household to relinquish their foreign gods. The multiple references to this issue reveals that the Israelites were never without foreign gods

and the call to get rid of them. Furthermore, the liturgical setting of 24:23 is evidence that the Israelites made the putting away of foreign gods an aspect of worship in order to aid their devotion to God.

**24:25-28** The report of Joshua making a covenant with the Israelites at Shechem concludes with a summary of what transpired: Joshua made a covenant with the Israelites. Although it also says Joshua made statutes and ordinances, Joshua only reiterated those already made by Moses. But Joshua sums up the covenant expectations with his own unique expression of God’s demand to serve the Lord alone (Josh 24:14-15). Then Joshua wrote down the words of the covenant *in God’s instruction scroll* (see note on Josh 1:7; see sidebar, “Instruction Scroll” at Josh 1). He also presents a witness against the Israelites should they break the covenant: a memorial stone that has *heard* the agreement. **24:27** Deuteronomy 16:21-22 forbids the placement of stones as objects of worship or as representative of a deity. This stone merely reminds Israel of what God has done for them.

**Three important graves**

<sup>29</sup>After these events, Joshua, Nun's son, the LORD's servant, died. He was 110. <sup>30</sup>They buried him within the border of his own legacy, in Timnath-serah in the highlands of Ephraim north of Mount Gaash. <sup>31</sup>Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua. They had known every act the LORD had done for Israel.

<sup>32</sup>The Israelites had brought up the bones of Joseph from Egypt. They buried them at Shechem in the portion of field that Jacob had purchased for one hundred qesitahs from the descendants of Hamor the father of Shechem. They became a legacy of the descendants of Joseph.

<sup>33</sup>Eleazar son of Aaron died. They buried him at Gibeah, which belonged to his son Phinehas. It had been given to him in the highlands of Ephraim.

24:29 Jgs 2:8  
 24:30 Josh 19:50;  
 Jgs 2:9; 2Sa 23:30  
 24:32 Gn 33:19;  
 Gn 50:25;  
 Ex 13:19;  
 Ac 7:16;  
 Heb 11:22  
 24:33 Josh 22:13

24:29-33 The book concludes with a record of two deaths. Verses 29-31 report that Joshua died and was buried in the territory God gave him as an inheritance. Two notes on Joshua's death recognize that he was successful in responding to God's commission to lead the Israelites (Josh 1:1-9). He is called *the LORD's servant* (24:29), the same label given to Moses at the opening of the book (Josh 1:1). Under Joshua's leadership the people of Israel also served the Lord (24:31) as Joshua had charged them to do in his final speech (Josh 24:14). The book's final note

concerns the death of Eleazar, the priest who helped Joshua divide the land for the Israelites (24:33). Between these the records of these two deaths is the note that Joseph's bones were buried at Shechem. With this note the story of Joshua and the conquest appears to conclude the larger story of God's promise to the ancestors concerning the possession of Canaan. Joseph's bones are buried in the place Jacob purchased in Genesis 33. Thus the whole story of God's wandering, homeless people reaches the resolution God promised Abraham (Gen 12:7).

The first of these is the fact that the  
 government has been unable to raise  
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# JUDGES

The book of Judges is a collection of stories about the time between Israel's entrance into the land of Canaan and the rise of kings. It shows Israel as a society divided into tribal groups dealing with foreign enemies and each other. The stories feature a series of tribal figures who are raised up by God for specific occasions. They serve as military leaders who rescue the people from enemies. The book's name comes from the decision of the Vulgate (a Latin translation) to call these figures "judges," but they are called "leaders" in the CEB in Judges 2:16-19. Several statements indicate that some of them "led" Israel (translated "judged" in older translations at Judges 3:10; 10:2-3; 15:20; 16:31). The Hebrew root for "judge" has the basic meaning of settling disputes. However, with the exception of Deborah (Judg 4:4-5), the book uses this Hebrew term for a tribal leader who delivers or rescues the people from distress. Alongside the

central characters, Judges mentions five minor leaders in lists rather than in developed stories. Judges describes these leaders as people who governed all Israel for some period of time (Judg 10:1-5; 12:7-15).

The production of the book has a complicated history, and the exact process and date of its composition remain unclear. The stories of local, tribal deliverers appear within an overarching framework that presents a sequence of leaders ruling over a united Israel. This framework has Israel worshipping other gods, for which they are punished by being attacked. Then they call to God for help, and God sends someone to rescue them. At this point, the stories of the "leaders" appear inside the frame. These stories range from one sentence to up to four chapters in length. After the main story ends, the frame story concludes with a statement that Israel was at peace for a period of



Oak tree (Judg 6:11)  
*iStockPhoto*

time. In its present form, Judges is part of what scholars call the Deuteronomistic History (the books of Joshua through Kings). Together, these books reflect theologically on the past and future of God's people in light of the exile in 587 BCE. Judges is now a unified work that can be fruitfully studied as a whole, especially by focusing on its use of literary elements, such as characterization, repetition, and irony.

Judges presents several problems for contemporary readers. First, it isn't clear how accurately its stories reflect historical events and circumstances in the time of Israel's emergence (ca. 1200–1050 BCE; see notes on Judg 1:1–2:5). For example, the stories seem to preserve an accurate picture of the general social and religious character of Israel in the early Iron Age. Yet the number of years given for the persons and events is difficult to reconcile with other data, and the history of the book's composition and its theological character make it hard to match with current histories of Israel's origins (see sidebar, "Joshua, Judges, and the Early History of Israel" at Judg 1). Second, the stories portray a troubling type of "holy war" in which God fights against Israel's enemies. They portray brutal violence against entire populations and the most defenseless members of society (see notes on Judg 1:17; 19:1–21:25). This problem has special force with regard to how the book depicts women. Nearly 20 different female characters appear in the book, and almost every major tribal leader is connected in some way to a female figure. Yet women often appear as trophies of war or as items of property. As Israel's faithfulness declines throughout the book, the descriptions of women become increasingly negative,

and they become more and more the victims of violence.

The book's primary theological focus is to show the people's increasing unfaithfulness to God and the decline of the people's social and moral life. Several stories portray a repeating cycle of unfaithfulness, oppression, changed hearts, and deliverance (see Judg 2:11–23), though all these elements do not appear in every story. Most prominent is the book's description of the tribal leaders' era as a downward slide from beginning to end. There is a steady religious and moral decline from obedient and successful leaders like Othniel, to tragic figures like Samson, to complete moral chaos and civil war. This movement features gradual increases in religious unfaithfulness, murder, revenge, and sexual violence. In this way, Judges appears to approve the need for kings in Israel (see Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). Yet the book actually holds different views about kings in tension. Some stories critique attempts at royal rule (see Judg 8:1–35; 9:1–57), while others critique nonroyal leadership (see Judg 11:1–40; 13:1–16:31). In the context of the entire Deuteronomistic History, the book calls on God's people in exile to examine their past and possible futures. Various stories critique different types of leadership, including kings, in an effort to explore what kinds of community character and moral leadership are required for God's people to live faithfully into the future. The book invites its readers—both ancient and modern—into a conversation about the possibilities and problems of different forms of leadership and community, and whether they will lead to a future characterized by religious faithfulness and moral uprightness.

**I. First Introduction: The Tribes and Their Military Conflicts (1:1–2:5)**

- A. Southern tribes (1:1-21)
- B. Central and northern tribes (1:22-36)
- C. People's disobedience and incomplete conquest (2:1-5)

**II. Second Introduction: The Pattern of Israel's Unfaithfulness (2:6–3:6)**

- A. Death of Joshua and his generation (2:6-10)
- B. Israel's pattern of sin and punishment (2:11-23)
- C. Nations remaining in the land (3:1-6)

**III. Stories of the Tribal Leaders and Israel's Social and Moral Decline (3:7–16:31)**

- A. Othniel, the model leader (3:7-11)
- B. Ehud (3:12-30)
- C. Shamgar (3:31)
- D. Deborah, with Barak and Jael (4:1–5:31)
  - 1. Defeat of King Jabin and Sisera (4:1-24)
  - 2. Deborah's song (5:1-31)
- E. Gideon (6:1–8:35)
  - 1. Gideon's commissioning (6:1-40)
  - 2. Battle with Midian (7:1-25)
  - 3. Gideon's revenge (8:1-35)
- F. Abimelech, the failed king (9:1-57)
- G. Tola and Jair (10:1-5)

H. Jephthah (10:6–12:7)

- 1. Israel's unfaithfulness and oppression by the Ammonites (10:6-18)
- 2. Jephthah's commissioning and negotiations (11:1-28)
- 3. Jephthah's rash vow and sacrifice of his daughter (11:29-40)
- 4. War with the Ephraimites (12:1-7)

I. Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (12:8-15)

J. Samson (13:1–16:31)

- 1. Samson's birth (13:1-25)
- 2. Samson's marriage to a Philistine woman and its violent consequences (14:1–15:20)
- 3. Samson, Delilah, and revenge against the Philistines (16:1-31)

**IV. Two Appendixes: Israel's Social and Moral Breakdown (17:1–21:25)**

- A. Micah's sanctuary and land for the tribe of Dan (17:1–18:31)
- B. Violence at Gibeah and civil war (19:1–21:25)
  - 1. Rape of the Levite's secondary wife (19:1-30)
  - 2. Civil War (20:1-48)
  - 3. Kidnapping of wives for the Benjaminites (21:1-25)

*Brad E. Kelle*

1:1 Nm 27:21;  
Josh 24:29;  
Jgs 3:1, Jgs 20:10  
1:13 Josh 15:17;  
Jgs 1:12, Jgs 3:9,  
Jgs 3:11  
1:14 Josh 15:18  
1:15 Nm 13:6

### The tribes and their military conflicts

**1** After Joshua's death, the Israelites asked the LORD, "Who should go up first to fight for us against the Canaanites?"

<sup>2</sup>The LORD said, "The tribe of Judah will go up. I've handed over the land to them."

<sup>3</sup>So the tribe of Judah said to the tribe of Simeon, their brothers, "Come up with us into our territory, and let's fight against the Canaanites. Then we'll go with you into your territory too." So Simeon went with them.

<sup>4</sup>When Judah went up, the LORD handed them the Canaanites and Perizzites. They defeated ten thousand men at Bezek. <sup>5</sup>There they found Adoni-bezek at Bezek, fought against him, and defeated the Canaanites and Perizzites. <sup>6</sup>Adoni-bezek fled, but they chased after him, captured him, and cut off his thumbs and big toes. <sup>7</sup>He said, "Seventy kings with severed thumbs and big toes used to pick up scraps under my table, so God has paid me back exactly for what I did." They brought him to Jerusalem, where he died. <sup>8</sup>The people of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it. They killed its people with their swords and set the city on fire.

<sup>9</sup>Afterward, the people of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the highlands, the southern plain,<sup>a</sup> and the western foothills.<sup>b</sup> <sup>10</sup>Judah moved against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron, known before as Kiriath-arba, and they defeated Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi. <sup>11</sup>From there they moved against those who lived in Debir, known before as Kiriath-sepher. <sup>12</sup>Caleb said, "I'll give my daughter Achsah as a wife to the one who defeats and captures Kiriath-sepher." <sup>13</sup>Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, captured it; so Caleb gave him his daughter Achsah as a wife. <sup>14</sup>When she arrived, she convinced Othniel to ask her father for a certain piece of land. As she got down from her donkey, Caleb said to her, "What do you want?"

<sup>15</sup>Achsah said to Caleb, "Give me a gift. Since you've given me land in the southern plain, give me springs of water." So Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *negeb* <sup>b</sup>Heb *shephelah*

1:1–2:5 The language of 1:1 echoes the opening phrase of the book of Joshua ("After Moses the Lord's servant died," Josh 1:1) and marks the start of a new era focused on the generation that followed Joshua (but cf. Judg 2:6–8, where Joshua is still alive and his death reported). The opening unit extends to 2:5 and forms the first of two introductions to the book (the second is found in Judg 2:6–3:6). It provides a picture of the Israelite settlement in the land that differs from the idealized picture in Joshua and centers on the achievements and failures of individual tribes in dislocation of the Canaanites, working without a central leader or organization (see sidebar, "Joshua, Judges, and the Early History of Israel"). The passage adapts several texts from Joshua 14–19 (cf. 1:8 and Josh 15:63; cf. 1:10, 20 and Josh 15:13–14), organizing the traditions about separate groups into a south to north movement from the tribe of Judah in the south to Dan in the north. The introduction describes a gradual decline from the obedience and success of the southern tribes (1:1–21) to the limited success and ultimate failure of the northern tribes (1:22–34), ending with a divine statement of judgment (2:1–5). This increasing military failure is an example of the steady decline in success and obedience that will characterize the entire era (cf. Judg 2:6–3:6, which shows a gradual decline in religious faithfulness).

1:1–21 The victories of the southern tribes mark the positive beginning from which Israel's success and obedience will decline.

1:1 *go up*: The verb here and throughout the introduction expresses aggressive military activity. The opening question raises the issue of proper leadership, a question that

would have been particularly pressing for exiles reading the book while pondering their possible future.

1:5–7 The defeat of *Adoni-bezek* ("the lord of Bezek") is the first major victory in the book, and it confronts contemporary readers with brutal violence. Such actions, known from texts throughout the ancient Near East, served to disable and humiliate enemies, making them unable to attack again. Such actions also resemble the instruction about retaliation in Exodus 21:22–25. Here, a non-Israelite king is the first character to acknowledge God's authority. 1:8 *Jerusalem*: Joshua 12:10 reports that Joshua defeated Jerusalem's king, while here the tribe of Judah captures the city. But Judges 1:21 reports that the tribe of Benjamin failed to expel the Jebusites from the city while Joshua 15:63 says the same thing of Judah. 2 Samuel 5:6–9 credits David with conquering the city. This confusing history may reflect different memories about how Israel took Jerusalem.

1:9 *the southern plain, and the western foothills*: The Hebrew terms *Negeb* ("dry land") and *Shephelah* ("low land") are modern proper names for these geographic areas.

1:10 *Hebron, known before as Kiriath-arba*: the first of several folk explanations of ancient town names that appear in Judah's battle reports.

1:11–15 It's difficult to relate these Caleb traditions to those in Joshua 15:13–19. *Achsah* (see Josh 15:15–19) represents the full spectrum of female roles in the book: She is both a passive object given away under male control and an assertive actor who secures her own provision (see sidebar, "Women, Gender, and Violence in Judges" at Judg 11). *upper and lower springs*: Caleb gives Achsah double what she requests.



<sup>16</sup>The descendants of Moses' father-in-law the Kenite went up with the people of Judah from Palm City into the Judean desert, which was in the southern plain near Arad. They went and lived with the Amalekites.<sup>c</sup> <sup>17</sup>Then the Judahites went with the Simeonites, their brothers, and they defeated the Canaanites who lived in Zephath, and they completely destroyed it. So the city was called Hormah.<sup>d</sup> <sup>18</sup>Judah also captured Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, and all their territories. <sup>19</sup>Thus the LORD was with the tribe of Judah, and they took possession of the highlands. However, they didn't drive out those who lived in the plain because they had iron chariots. <sup>20</sup>They gave Hebron to Caleb, just as Moses had commanded, and they drove out from there the three sons of Anak. <sup>21</sup>But the people of Benjamin didn't drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem. So the Jebusites still live with the people of Benjamin in Jerusalem today.

<sup>22</sup>In the same way, Joseph's household went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them. <sup>23</sup>When they sent men to spy on Bethel, previously named Luz, <sup>24</sup>the spies saw a man coming out of the city, and they said to him, "Show us the way into the city, and we'll be loyal to you in return." <sup>25</sup>So he showed them the way into the city. They killed the city's people with their swords, but they let that man and all his relatives go. <sup>26</sup>The man went to the land of the Hittites and built a city. He named it Luz, which is still its name today.

<sup>27</sup>The tribe of Manasseh didn't drive out the people in Beth-shean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, or any of their villages. The Canaanites were determined to live in that land. <sup>28</sup>When Israel became stronger they forced the Canaanites to work for them, but they didn't completely drive them out. <sup>29</sup>The tribe of Ephraim didn't drive out the Canaanites living in Gezer, so the Canaanites kept on living there with them.

*Joshua, Judges, and the Early History of Israel* The book of Judges provides a picture of Israel's settlement in the land that differs from the idealized picture in Joshua. It describes a gradual process consisting of military victories and failures by individual tribes, who lived alongside the Canaanites and worked without a central leader or organization. Scholars throughout the 20th century tried to combine the stories of Joshua and Judges with archaeological data and non-biblical texts to describe Israel's emergence in the early Iron Age (ca. 1200 BCE). Numerous models for Israel's origins exist with varying degrees of relationship to the biblical accounts (e.g., conquest, infiltration, peasant's revolt from within the land, pioneer settlement or ruralization into the highlands). The tribal leaders' stories may reflect old traditions of local tribal leaders, but the book's complex editorial history and theological frame story make it impossible to connect the stories with precise historical realities. The book may describe accurately the social reality of early Israel as a segmented, tribal society, but current historians' descriptions of Israel's emergence in Canaan suggest a picture not reflected in either Joshua or Judges.

<sup>c</sup>LXX (cf 1 Sam 15:6); MT *people* <sup>d</sup>Or *destruction*

1:16 *Palm City*: likely Jericho, six miles north of the Dead Sea. *the Amalekites*: This is what some ancient Greek manuscripts say, to agree with 1 Samuel 15:6. The Hebrew manuscript says simply "the people," presumably the Judahites.

1:17 *completely destroyed it*: The Hebrew term ("devote to destruction") indicates the practice of so-called "holy war," killing all living things during the conquest of a city (see Deut 7:1-6). References to this practice appear in other texts from ancient Israel's environment, but the text presents contemporary readers with the troubling image of divinely approved slaughter of men, women, children, and animals that is memorialized in the city's name, *Hormah*, which means "destruction" (see sidebar, "Holy War and Violence" at Judg 21).

1:19-20 Although the tribes of Judah and Simeon represent the success from which the remainder of the tribes will decline, even these groups experience less than complete success. Judges 1-2 contain several different reasons for the tribes' failures (see 1:19; Judg 2:2-3, 22; 3:2). Here, it is the

Canaanites' iron chariots (see Judg 4:13), i.e., chariots made of wood but with iron fittings. The fact that Judah fails even though God is with them and they are not yet said to disobey raises a theological difficulty for the view stated elsewhere that obedience brings success (see Judg 2:6-3:6). Perhaps the text implies that God's plans can change due to human actions and circumstances (see 1 Sam 8).

1:22-36 The accounts of the central and northern tribes show increasing failure due to disobedience, represented by the recurring statement that they were unable to *drive out* the Canaanites but only *forced the Canaanites to work* for them (1:28, 30, 33, 35). The descriptions parallel Joshua 17:11-13, where the tribes "could not" drive out the Canaanites, but here they *didn't* (1:27). See sidebar, "Holy War and Violence" at Judges 21.

1:22-26 *Joseph's household*: typically refers to the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim; here it is a general term for all the northern tribes. The story of the taking of Bethel parallels the story of Rahab at Jericho in Joshua 2.

2:1 Gn 16:7,  
Gn 17:7,  
Gn 17:8,  
1v 26-42; Jgs 2:5  
2:3 Nm 33:55;  
Josh 23:13  
2:8 Ex 17:9,  
Ex 24:13,  
Ex 32:17,  
Josh 24:29  
2:9 Josh 17:15,  
Josh 19:50,  
Josh 24:30  
2:10 Ex 5:2

<sup>30</sup>The tribe of Zebulun didn't drive out the people living in Kitron or Nahalol. These Canaanites lived with them but were forced to work for them. <sup>31</sup>The tribe of Asher didn't drive out the people living in Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob. <sup>32</sup>The people of Asher settled among the Canaanites in the land because they couldn't drive them out. <sup>33</sup>The tribe of Naphtali didn't drive out the people living in Beth-shemesh or Beth-anath but settled among the Canaanites in the land. The people living in Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath were forced to work for them.

<sup>34</sup>The Amorites pushed the people of Dan back into the highlands because they wouldn't allow them to come down to the plain. <sup>35</sup>The Amorites were determined to live in Har-heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim, but Joseph's household became strong, and the Amorites were forced to work for them. <sup>36</sup>The border of the Amorites ran from the Akkrabbim pass, from Sela, and upward.

### *The LORD's messenger condemns*

**2** The LORD's messenger came up from Gilgal to Bochim and said, "I brought you up from Egypt and led you into the land that I had promised to your ancestors. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, <sup>2</sup>and you are not to make a covenant with those who live in this land. You should break down their altars.' But you didn't obey me. What have you done? <sup>3</sup>So now I tell you, I won't drive them out before you, but they'll be a problem<sup>e</sup> for you, and their gods will be a trap for you." <sup>4</sup>When the LORD's messenger spoke these words to all the Israelites, they raised their voices and cried out loud. <sup>5</sup>So they named that place Bochim,<sup>f</sup> and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD there.

### *Death of Joshua and his generation*

<sup>6</sup>When Joshua dismissed the people, the Israelites each went to settle on their own family property in order to take possession of the land. <sup>7</sup>The people served the LORD throughout the rest of Joshua's life and throughout the next generation of elders who outlived him, those who had seen all the great things that the LORD had done for Israel. <sup>8</sup>Joshua, Nun's son and the LORD's servant, died when he was 110 years old. <sup>9</sup>They buried him within the boundaries of his family property in Timnath-heres in the highlands of Ephraim north of Mount Gaash. <sup>10</sup>When that whole generation had passed away, another generation came after them who didn't know the LORD or the things that he had done for Israel.

<sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Or weepers or weeping

1:34 The complete failure of the tribe of Dan, which is actually moved by the Canaanites, provides the worst example of the struggles of the northern tribes and the low point of the decline of military success portrayed in 1:1–2:5 (see Judg 17–18 for the continuation of Dan's story).

1:36 It is ironic that the final statement reports Amorite borders rather than Israelite.

2:1–5 *The LORD's messenger* expresses the divine reaction to the tribes' declining obedience and success. The judgment is on all Israel and is cast in covenant terms: God has fulfilled the covenant, but Israel has not (see Exod 23:31–33; Deut 7:1–6).

2:2–3 The people's disobedience leads to a change in the Lord's operations that will provide the background for the remainder of the book: the people of the land not only will remain, but they will constitute an ongoing *problem* for Israel.

2:5 *Bochim*: "weepers" or "weeping"; emphasizes that here, at the beginning of the book, the people still listen to God's warnings.

2:6–3:6 The surprising reference to Joshua (cf. Judg 1:1) marks the beginning of a second introduction to the book, which begins the overarching story of a united, 12-tribe Israel with successive individual leaders, instead of

the individual activities of the specific tribes pictured in Judges 1:1–2:5. The flashback to the time before Joshua's death repeats Joshua 24:28–31. This second introduction contains Deuteronomistic language and themes (see intro.), including an emphasis on idolatry and the belief that obedience brings blessing while disobedience brings punishment. This "retribution theology" is challenged in other OT texts, such as Job and Ecclesiastes. The verses describe a cycle of disobedience and punishment (2:11–23) for the era, but the introduction as a whole shows Israel's gradual theological and religious decline. By taking the reader back to the very beginning of the judges' era, it reveals a steady erosion of the ideal faithfulness of Joshua's generation. Whereas Judges 1:1–2:5 portrayed a decline in the tribes' military success across the era, 2:6–3:6 describes a decline in the people's covenant faithfulness.

2:6–10 The faithfulness of Joshua's generation (cf. Judg 1:1; see Josh 24:1–31) is a high point from which the tribal leaders' generations will steadily decline.

2:10 *who didn't know the LORD*: This doesn't indicate a lack of information but, using covenant language, indicates a refusal to recognize the Lord's authority and to carefully obey all the covenant requirements (cf. Exod 29:45–46).

**Israel's pattern of sin and punishment**

<sup>11</sup>Then the Israelites did things that the LORD saw as evil. They served the Baals; <sup>12</sup>and they went away from the LORD, their ancestors' God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods from among the surrounding peoples, they worshipped them, and they angered the LORD. <sup>13</sup>They went away from the LORD and served Baal and the Astartes. <sup>14</sup>So the LORD became angry with Israel, and he handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He let them be defeated by their enemies around them, so that they were no longer able to stand up to them. <sup>15</sup>Whenever the Israelites marched out, the LORD's power worked against them, just as the LORD had warned them. And they were very distressed.

<sup>16</sup>Then the LORD raised up leaders<sup>e</sup> to rescue them from the power of these raiders. <sup>17</sup>But they wouldn't even obey their own leaders because they were unfaithful, following other gods and worshipping them. They quickly deviated from the way of their ancestors, who had obeyed the LORD's commands, and didn't follow their example.

<sup>18</sup>The LORD was moved by Israel's groaning under those who oppressed and crushed them. So the LORD would raise up leaders for them, and the LORD would be with the leader, and he would rescue Israel from the power of their enemies as long as that leader lived.

<sup>19</sup>But then when the leader died, they would once again act in ways that weren't as good as their ancestors', going after other gods, to serve them and to worship them. They wouldn't drop their bad practices or hardheaded ways. <sup>20</sup>So the LORD became angry with Israel and said, "Because this nation has violated my covenant that I required of their ancestors and hasn't obeyed me, <sup>21</sup>I in turn will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died." <sup>22</sup>As a test for Israel, to see whether they would carefully walk in the LORD's ways just as their ancestors had done, <sup>23</sup>the LORD left these nations instead of driving them out immediately or handing them over to Joshua.

**Nations remaining in the land**

**3**These are the nations that the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had no firsthand knowledge of the wars of Canaan. <sup>2</sup>They survived only to teach war to the generations of Israelites who had no firsthand knowledge of the earlier wars: <sup>3</sup>the five rulers of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, Sidonians, and Hivites who lived in the highlands of Lebanon from Mount Baal-hermon to Lebo-hamath. <sup>4</sup>They were to be the test for Israel, to find

2:11 Jgs 3:7,  
Jgs 4:1, Jgs 6:1,  
Jgs 10:6, Jgs 13:1  
2:12 Dt 4:25,  
Dt 6:14,  
Dt 31:16,  
Jgs 2:17  
2:13 Jgs 3:7,  
Jgs 10:6,  
1 Ki 11:33,  
2 Ki 23:13  
2:20 Josh 23:16;  
Jgs 2:14  
2:21 Josh 23:13  
2:22 Dt 8:2,  
Dt 13:3, Jgs 3:1,  
Jgs 3:4  
3:1 Jgs 1:1,  
Jgs 2:21-22  
3:3 Josh 13:2,  
Josh 13:3,  
Josh 13:5  
3:4 Jgs 2:22,  
Jgs 3:1

<sup>e</sup>Or judges

2:11-23 The repeating elements of the descending cycle of Israel's life in the land are peace, unfaithfulness, punishment through an enemy, changed hearts, deliverance through a divinely appointed tribal leader, and peace until the death of the leader. After the leader's death, the cycle begins again, often from a "lower" point (see 2:19). This indicates the gradual decline in Israel's social and religious life. These elements provide the outline for many of the individual stories in the book (e.g., Judg 6:1-10).

2:11 *did things that the LORD saw as evil*: This phrase will appear at the opening of several specific stories, and Judges 2:11-13 define the phrase as meaning unfaithfulness with other gods. *Baals*: The title ("master") refers to various forms of the storm god whom the Canaanites held responsible for the fertility of crops and animals. So Baal was a popular god among farmers and herders in ancient Syria-Palestine.

2:13 *Astartes*: Hebrew, "Ashtaroth". This is a plural reference to the Canaanite goddess of fertility and war (known in Mesopotamia as Ishtar), pictured in some nonbiblical texts as one of Baal's mates (along with Anat and Asherah). The connection of Baal and Astarte with fertility made their worship a significant temptation for the Israelite farmers and herders.

2:16-18 *leaders*: The Hebrew root has the basic meaning "settling disputes" and is often translated in other versions as "judges." However, with the exception of Deborah (Judg

4:4-5), the book uses this term for a military leader who rescues the people from their enemies (which Deborah ends up doing too). God's action to send leaders to deliver the people even in the midst of their disobedience reveals divine mercy and grace.

2:18 *the LORD was moved*: accounts for this mercy with the Lord's compassion rather than the people's merit.

2:19 *weren't as good as their ancestors*: Judges 2:11-19 is a descending cycle in which each succeeding generation's faithfulness begins at a lower point than the previous generation's.

2:22 Here, the reason for the people's failure to drive out the Canaanites is due to the Lord's decision to test Israel's faithfulness, rather than to the power of Canaanite military technology (cf. Judg 1:19; 2:2-3; 3:2).

3:1-6 A list of nations who will provide the test of obedience for Israel's life in the land (cf. Judg 2:22). Here the text says God did not let Israel drive out the Canaanites, so that new generations would learn the art of war (3:2). Previous explanations have included the enemy's possession of iron chariots (Judg 1:19), the people's disobedience (Judg 2:2-3), and the Lord's desire to test Israel (Judg 2:22).

3:3 *Philistines*: The statement that the Philistines were one of the remaining nations conflicts with the description of Judah's capture of the Philistine cities in 1:18, perhaps further indicating that Judges 2:6-3:6 originated independently from Judges 1:1-2:5.

3:6 Ex 34:16;  
Dt 7:3; Ezr 10:18;  
Neh 13:23

3:8 Jgs 2:14

3:9 Jgs 1:13;  
Jgs 3:15; Jgs 4:3;  
Jgs 10:10;  
Neh 9:27

3:10 Jgs 6:34;  
Jgs 11:29;  
Jgs 13:25;  
Jgs 14:6;  
Jgs 14:19

3:12 Jgs 2:11;  
Jgs 2:14; Jgs 3:13;  
1Sa 12:9

out whether they would obey the LORD's commands, which he had made to their ancestors through Moses. <sup>5</sup>So the Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. <sup>6</sup>But the Israelites intermarried with them and served their gods.

### **Othniel, the model judge**

<sup>7</sup>The Israelites did things that the LORD saw as evil, and they forgot the LORD their God. They served the Baals and the Asherahs. <sup>8</sup><sup>a</sup>The LORD became angry with Israel and gave them over to King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram-naharaim. The Israelites served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. <sup>9</sup>But then they cried out to the LORD. So the LORD raised up a deliverer for the Israelites, Othniel, Kenaz's son, Caleb's younger brother, who rescued them. <sup>10</sup>The LORD's spirit was in Othniel, and he led Israel. When he marched out for war, the LORD handed over Aram's King Cushan-rishathaim. Othniel overpowered Cushan-rishathaim, <sup>11</sup>and the land was peaceful for forty years, until Othniel, Kenaz's son, died.

### **Ehud**

<sup>12</sup>The Israelites again did things that the LORD saw as evil, and the LORD put Moab's King Eglon in power over them, because they did these things that the LORD saw as evil. <sup>13</sup>He convinced the Ammonites and Amalekites to join him, defeated Israel, and took possession of Palm City. <sup>14</sup>So the Israelites served Moab's King Eglon eighteen years.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *asherim*; perhaps objects or a pole devoted to the goddess Asherah

3:5 Compare with the seven nations in the land listed in Deuteronomy 7:1. *Hittites*: peoples descending from kingdoms in Anatolia. *Amorites*: a general term for "westerners" often connected with Canaanites in OT texts. *Perizzites*: the precise name remains unclear, but it is commonly linked with the Canaanites (see Gen 13:7). *Hivites*: groups originating from southeast Asia Minor. *Jebusites*: the inhabitants of Jerusalem (previously known as Jebus) in the pre-Israelite era.

3:6 *intermarried*: The Deuteronomistic History (Joshua to Kings) frequently links intermarriage with idolatry, in contrast to the neutral or even positive stance of some other biblical books (see Exod 2:16-22, Num 12:1-16, and the marriages of the main characters in Ruth and Esther).

3:7-5:31 The accounts of Othniel, Ehud, and Deborah begin the stories of the major leaders that make up the center of the book (Judg 3:7-16:31; see chart, "Overview of the Tribal Leaders" at Judg 9). Through the book of Judges, there is a steady decline in military success and religious faithfulness, and Othniel, Ehud, and Deborah are the highest point. The stories of Gideon and Abimelech (Judg 6-9) introduce elements of failure and unfaithfulness through personal revenge and selfish ambition, and the stories of Jephthah and Samson (Judg 10-16) end in failure and tragedy. The stories examine and evaluate negatively a variety of kinds of leadership, including kings (see Judg 8:22-23; 9:7-15), an exploration perhaps especially relevant to the book's exilic audience wrestling with the question of how to construct a future without a king. The book as a whole explores the possibilities and problems of different forms of leadership and community and to what extent they might produce a new future characterized by religious faithfulness and moral uprightness.

3:7-11 As the first of the major tribal leaders' stories, the narrative includes all of the elements of the recurring pattern of disobedience, oppression, and deliverance (see Judg 2:11-19). The story shows Othniel as an ideal leader who gets an immediately positive divine response and is completely successful in uniting and delivering Israel. His story provides the model from which all the later leaders steadily decline.

3:7 *Baals*... *Asherahs*: See notes on Judges 2:11, 13. *Asherahs* may refer to a fertility goddess associated with Yahweh and Baal in other ancient texts or to a type of pole devoted to the goddess (see Judg 6:26).

3:8 *Cushan-rishathaim*: "Cushan of the Double Wickedness," perhaps to emphasize the power of the enemy and so the greater power of God. *Aram-naharaim*: "Aram between the Two Rivers." The name suggests a Syrian territory between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, but there was no such historical location. Maybe the name is a wordplay on the king's name (double wickedness, double rivers).

3:9 *Othniel, Kenaz's son, Caleb's younger brother*: See Judges 1:13.

3:10 *The LORD's spirit* in Judges functions as a divine force that makes one capable of extraordinary acts. When it comes upon a leader, it serves as a type of guarantee of victory through God's help. But the only other tribal leaders who clearly receive the spirit (Gideon, Jephthah, Samson) are those associated with elements of failure and disobedience in Israel's downward slide (see Judg 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14). These associations may reflect the audience's struggle over the question of proper leadership for the future by emphasizing the negative aspects of spirit-led types of leadership. In that case, the pattern provides an implicit critique of nonroyal leaders.

3:12-30 The story of Ehud sits inside the recurring cycle of the overarching frame story (3:12-15), but by contrast is full of colorful elements that are humorous, ironic, and even grotesque (see 3:22-24). It makes fun of the enemy who oppresses God's people.

3:12-13 *Eglon*: meaning "young bull" or "fat calf," so the king's obesity (Judg 3:17, 21-22) not only adds to the story's mocking tone but also casts him as a sacrificial animal for slaughter.

3:13 Ammon was a kingdom just north of Moab and east of Israel across the Jordan River. The *Amalekites* are associated with Edom in Genesis 36:16, but are often presented in the OT as a roaming group. *Palm City*: probably Jericho (cf. Judg 1:16).

3:14 In keeping with Israel's worsening situation, the years of enemy oppression are significantly more than in the previous story (cf. Judg 3:8).

<sup>15</sup>Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD. So the LORD raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud, Gera's son, a Benjaminite, who was left-handed. The Israelites sent him to take their tribute payment to Moab's King Eglon. <sup>16</sup>Now Ehud made for himself a double-edged sword that was about a foot and a half long, and he strapped it on his right thigh under his clothes. <sup>17</sup>Then he presented the tribute payment to Moab's King Eglon, who was a very fat man. <sup>18</sup>When he had finished delivering the tribute payment, Ehud sent on their way the people who had carried it. <sup>19</sup>But he himself turned back at the carved stones near Gilgal, and he said, "I have a secret message for you, King."

So Eglon said, "Hush!" and all his attendants went out of his presence. <sup>20</sup>Ehud approached him while he was sitting alone in his cool second-story room, and he said, "I have a message from God for you." At that, Eglon got up from his throne. <sup>21</sup>Ehud reached with his left hand and grabbed the sword from his right thigh. He stabbed it into Eglon's stomach, <sup>22</sup>and even the handle went in after the blade. Since he did not pull the sword out of his stomach, the fat closed over the blade, and his guts spilled out.<sup>1</sup> <sup>23</sup>Ehud slipped out to the porch, and closed and locked the doors of the second-story room behind him.

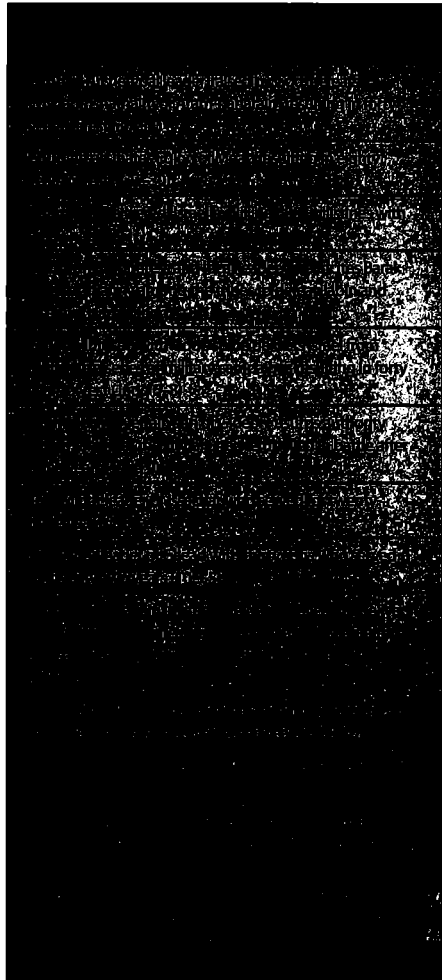
<sup>24</sup>After Ehud had slipped out, the king's servants came and found that the room's doors were locked. So they thought, He must be relieving himself in the cool chamber. <sup>25</sup>They waited so long that they were embarrassed, but he never opened the doors of the room. Then they used the key to open them, and there was their master lying dead on the ground!

<sup>26</sup>Ehud had gotten away while they were waiting and had passed the carved stones and escaped to Seirah. <sup>27</sup>When he arrived, he blew the ram's horn in the Ephraim highlands. So the Israelites went down from the highlands with Ehud leading them. <sup>28</sup>He told them, "Follow me, for the LORD has handed over your enemies the Moabites." So they followed him, and they took control of the crossing points of the Jordan in the direction of Moab, allowing no one to cross. <sup>29</sup>This time, they defeated the Moabites, about ten thousand big and strong men, and no one escaped. <sup>30</sup>Moab was brought down by the power of Israel on that day, and there was peace in the land for eighty years.

**Shamgar**

<sup>31</sup>After Ehud, Shamgar, Anath's son, struck down six hundred Philistines with an animal prod. He too rescued Israel.

3:15 Jgs 3:9,  
Jgs 20:16;  
1Ch 12:2  
3:30 Jgs 3:11,  
Jgs 8:28,  
Jgs 11:33



<sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain

3:15 *left-handed*: The Hebrew idiom indicates that Ehud's right hand was "bound" or "restricted," which may simply mean he was left-handed, or it may indicate a physical handicap. Left-handedness was unusual for ancient warriors, permitting Ehud to hide his weapon on the easily overlooked right thigh where his left hand would reach across to draw it. This makes him a trickster. Ironically, the name Benjamin means "son of a right hand." The Lord's use of unlikely persons (a left-handed Benjaminite) to accomplish divine purposes is a theme that appears elsewhere in the book (e.g., Judg 4:17-22).

3:21-25 The way Ehud kills King Eglon and the reaction of the king's servants features humorous and mocking elements, as well as sexual overtones that give Eglon certain feminine qualities.

3:22 *his guts spilled out*: unclear In Hebrew (the word appears only here in the OT) and omitted by some ancient and modern translations.

3:26-30 Ehud musters troops from the Ephraim highlands to subdue the Moabites and control crossing of the Jordan River.

3:31 *Shamgar*: first of six "minor leaders" who are briefly

4:1 Jgs 2:11,  
Jgs 2:19  
4:2 Josh 11:1,  
Josh 11:10;  
Jgs 4:13;  
1Sa 12:9; Ps 83:9  
4:4 Jgs 4:5,  
Jgs 5:1, Jgs 5:7  
4:6 Josh 21:32,  
Jgs 4:10, Jgs 4:14,  
Jgs 8:18;  
Heb 11:32  
4:7 Jgs 4:13,  
Jgs 5:21;  
1Ki 18:40;  
Ps 83:9  
4:11 Nm 10:29;  
Josh 19:33;  
Jdg 1:16  
4:14 Dt 9:3;  
2Sa 5:24; Ps 68:7

### Deborah, Barak, and Jael

**4** After Ehud had died, the Israelites again did things that the LORD saw as evil. <sup>2</sup>So the LORD gave them over to King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, and he was stationed in Harosheth-ha-goiim. <sup>3</sup>The Israelites cried out to the LORD because Sisera<sup>j</sup> had nine hundred iron chariots and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly for twenty years.

<sup>4</sup>Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth,<sup>k</sup> was a leader of Israel at that time. <sup>5</sup>She would sit under Deborah's palm tree between Ramah and Bethel in the Ephraim highlands, and the Israelites would come to her to settle disputes. <sup>6</sup>She sent word to Barak, Abinoam's son, from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "Hasn't the LORD, Israel's God, issued you a command? 'Go and assemble at Mount Tabor, taking ten thousand men from the people of Naphtali and Zebulun with you. <sup>7</sup>I'll lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, to assemble with his chariots and troops against you at the Kishon River, and then I'll help you overpower him.'"

<sup>8</sup>Barak replied to her, "If you'll go with me, I'll go; but if not, I won't go."

<sup>9</sup>Deborah answered, "I'll definitely go with you. However, the path you're taking won't bring honor to you, because the LORD will hand over Sisera to a woman." Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. <sup>10</sup>He summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh, and ten thousand men marched out behind him. Deborah marched out with him too.

<sup>11</sup>Now Heber the Kenite had moved away from the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' father-in-law, and had settled as far away as Elon-bezaananim, which is near Kedesh.

<sup>12</sup>When it was reported to Sisera that Barak, Abinoam's son, had marched up to Mount Tabor, <sup>13</sup>Sisera summoned all of his nine hundred iron chariots and all of the soldiers who were with him from Harosheth-ha-goiim to the Kishon River. <sup>14</sup>Then Deborah said to Barak,

<sup>j</sup>Or he <sup>k</sup>Or a woman of torches

mentioned among the longer narratives (see also Judg 10:1-5; 12:8-15). Deborah's Song also mentions him (Judg 5:6). Like the left-handed Ehud, Shamgar uses unconventional and unexpected means (*an animal prod*) to defeat the enemy.

4:1-5:31 The story of Deborah and Barak's campaign against a Canaanite enemy in the north concludes the first section of stories in which the tribal leaders win victories and are faithful to God. The account of these events appears in two versions: a prose story in Judges 4 and a likely older poem, "Deborah's Song," in Judges 5. Although there are differences between the two versions, they share the central message that Israel defeated a superior enemy because the Lord fought for Israel. This message is emphasized by the image of God as the divine warrior (4:15; 5:19-22) and parallels with the story of God's deliverance of Israel at the sea in Exodus 14 (4:15). Even so, the emphasis on the need for the people to unite and obey the Lord's commands (4:6-10; 5:11b-18) suggests that victory comes when divine power and human agency cooperate. The events unfold within the cycle of sin, oppression, and deliverance that constitutes the book's overarching story (see 4:1-3; cf. Judg 2:11-19; 5:31b). The story revolves around the attack of the Canaanite king Jabin (cf. Josh 11:1), on the northern territory of Naphtali and Zebulun, but focuses on the defeat and death of his general, Sisera. Deborah holds the prominent leadership position in the story, and the narrative turns on the unexpected actions of the woman Jael, whose cunning leads to Sisera's death (see sidebar, "Women, Gender, and Violence in Judges" at Judg 11). The NT writer of Hebrews praises Barak as a leader and doesn't mention Deborah or Jael (Heb 11:32) even though Barak seems to recognize

Deborah as the Lord's appointed leader who must personally lead the people.

4:1-24 The account of the defeat of King Jabin of Canaan and his general, Sisera.

4:2 *Jabin* is called "King of Hazor" in Joshua 11:1. *Hazor*: a significant city just north of the Sea of Galilee. *Harosheth-ha-goiim*: "Harosheth of the Nations" (i.e., non-Israelites).

4:3 *Sisera*: The Hebrew is just "he" and could refer to Jabin instead. *iron chariots*: the reason Judah and Benjamin had been defeated by the inhabitants of the plain (Judg 1:19). *twenty years*: In keeping with Israel's worsening situation, the years of enemy oppression are longer than in the previous story (cf. Judg 3:14).

4:4-5 Deborah is Israel's leader who also provides divine responses to questions (*prophet*). Deborah is one of only four women identified as prophets in the OT (see Exod 15:20; 2 Kgs 22:14; Neh 6:14). *wife of Lappidoth* can be translated "woman of torches" instead; this name does not appear anywhere else in the OT. Deborah is the only tribal leader in Judges who actually *settle[s] disputes*. The others, like Barak, function as tribal military leaders (Judg 4:10), but Barak insists that Deborah share this role too (Judg 4:8). The figure of Deborah offers a positive contrast to more male-oriented depictions of women in the book (cf. Judg 11:34-40; 19:1-30; see sidebar, "Women, Gender, and Violence in Judges" at Judg 11).

4:9 *hand over . . . woman*: The reader naturally expects the woman in question to be Deborah, but she turns out to be Jael (Judg 4:17-22).

4:10 *Zebulun and Naphtali*: tribes in the Galilee area. Compare with the six tribes mentioned in Judges 5:14-18.

4:11 See Judges 1:16, where other Kenites settled in the south with Judah.

“Get up! This is the day that the LORD has handed Sisera over to you. Hasn’t the LORD gone out before you?” So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men behind him. <sup>15</sup>The LORD threw Sisera and all the chariots and army into a panic<sup>d</sup> before Barak; Sisera himself got down from his chariot and fled on foot. <sup>16</sup>Barak pursued the chariots and the army all the way back to Harosheth-ha-goiim, killing Sisera’s entire army with the sword. No one survived.

<sup>17</sup>Meanwhile, Sisera had fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was peace between Hazor’s King Jabin and the family of Heber the Kenite. <sup>18</sup>Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, “Come in, sir, come in here. Don’t be afraid.” So he went with her into the tent, and she hid him under a blanket.

<sup>19</sup>Sisera said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink. I’m thirsty.” So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and hid him again. <sup>20</sup>Then he said to her, “Stand at the entrance to the tent. That way, if someone comes and asks you, ‘Is there a man here?’ you can say, ‘No.’”

<sup>21</sup>But Jael, Heber’s wife, picked up a tent stake and a hammer. While Sisera was sound asleep from exhaustion, she tiptoed to him. She drove the stake through his head and down into the ground, and he died. <sup>22</sup>Just then, Barak arrived after chasing Sisera. Jael went out to meet him and said, “Come and I’ll show you the man you’re after.” So he went in with her, and there was Sisera, lying dead, with the stake through his head.

<sup>23</sup>So on that day God brought down Canaan’s King Jabin before the Israelites. <sup>24</sup>And the power of the Israelites grew greater and greater over Canaan’s King Jabin until they defeated him completely.

**Deborah’s song**

**5** At that time, Deborah and Barak, Abinoam’s son, sang:

<sup>2</sup>When hair is long in Israel,  
when people willingly offer themselves—bless the LORD!

<sup>3</sup>Hear, kings! Listen, rulers!  
I, to the LORD, I will sing.  
I will make music to the LORD, Israel’s God.

<sup>4</sup>LORD, when you set out from Seir,  
when you marched out from Edom’s fields, the land shook,  
the sky poured down,  
the clouds poured down water.

<sup>5</sup>The mountains quaked  
before the LORD, the one from Sinai,  
before the LORD, the God of Israel.

<sup>6</sup>In the days of Shamgar, Anath’s son,  
in the days of Jael, caravans ceased.  
Those traveling by road kept to the backroads.

<sup>7</sup>Villagers disappeared; they disappeared in Israel,  
until you,<sup>m</sup> Deborah, arose, until you arose as a mother in Israel.

<sup>d</sup>MT adds *before the edge of the sword*. <sup>m</sup>Or I

4:15 The Hebrew text includes *before the edge of the sword*, but it has been omitted because it is probably an accidental doubling of the same phrase in Judges 4:16.  
4:17–22 In the history of interpretations of this story, Jael has been variously seen as faithful and heroic or lying and sinful. Her Kenite group wasn’t an ally of either the Israelites or Canaanites in the conflict. She is another trickster (see note on Judg 3:15) who uses the traditional practice of hospitality to kill Sisera.  
5:1–31 “Deborah’s Song” has elements of traditional oral literature, with old-fashioned Hebrew words and sentence

structure, and may be one of the oldest compositions in the OT. It takes the well-known ancient Near Eastern form of the “victory hymn” (cf. Exod 15), and offers a poetic testimony to the rulers of the earth (5:3) about the Lord’s rescue of Israel as presented in Judges 4.  
5:4–5 OT texts often associate earthquakes and storms with the appearance of the Lord’s presence (e.g. Exod 19:16–19).  
5:7 *you*: The Hebrew text says “I,” presenting Deborah both as speaker (Judg 5:1) and as the addressed. Hebrew poetry often changes voices suddenly for dramatic effect.

4:15 Josh 10:10;  
1Sa 12:9; Ps 83:9;  
Heb 11:32  
4:23 Neh 9:24;  
Ps 18:47  
5:3 Ex 15:1;  
Ps 22:23, Ps 27:6,  
Ps 68:26,  
Ps 71:22,  
Ps 106:48,  
Ps 135:19  
5:4 Nm 24:18;  
Dt 33:2;  
2Sa 22:8; Ps 68:8,  
Ps 18:7

5:8 Dt 32:17;

1Sa 13:19;

1Sa 13:22

5:10 1Sa 12:7;

Mic 6:5

5:20 Josh 10:11;

Jdg 4:15;

1Sa 12:9; Ps 83:9

5:21 Jgs 4:7;

Ps 83:9

<sup>a</sup>When they chose new gods,  
then war came to the city gates.<sup>a</sup>

Yet there wasn't a shield or spear to be seen among forty thousand in Israel!

<sup>b</sup>My heart is with Israel's commanders,  
who willingly offered themselves among the people—bless the LORD!

<sup>10</sup>You who ride white donkeys,  
who sit on saddle blankets,<sup>c</sup>  
who walk along the road: tell of it.

<sup>11</sup>To the sound of instruments<sup>d</sup> at the watering places,  
there they repeat the LORD's victories,  
his villagers' victories in Israel.

Then the LORD's people marched down to the city gates.

<sup>12</sup>"Wake up, wake up, Deborah! Wake up, wake up, sing a song!  
Arise, Barak! Capture your prisoners, Abinoam's son!"

<sup>13</sup>Then those who remained marched down against royalty;  
the LORD's people marched down<sup>e</sup> against warriors.

<sup>14</sup>From Ephraim they set out<sup>f</sup> into the valley,<sup>g</sup>  
after you, Benjamin, with your people!  
From Machir commanders marched down,  
and from Zebulun those carrying the official's staff.

<sup>15</sup>The leaders of Issachar came along with Deborah;  
Issachar was attached to Barak,  
and was sent into the valley behind him.  
Among the clans of Reuben  
there was deep soul-searching.

<sup>16</sup>"Why did you stay back among the sheep pens,  
listening to the music for the flocks?"  
For the clans of Reuben  
there was deep soul-searching.

<sup>17</sup>Gilead stayed on the other side of the Jordan,  
and Dan, why did he remain with the ships?  
Asher stayed by the seacoast,  
camping at his harbors.

<sup>18</sup>Zebulun is a people that readily risked death;  
Naphtali too in the high countryside.

<sup>19</sup>Kings came and made war;  
the kings of Canaan fought  
at Taanach by Megiddo's waters,  
but they captured no spoils of silver.

<sup>20</sup>The stars fought from the sky;  
from their orbits they fought against Sisera.

<sup>21</sup>The Kishon River swept them away;  
the advancing river, the Kishon River.  
March on, my life, with might!

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Heb adds for me. <sup>e</sup>Or From Ephraim their root <sup>f</sup>LXX; MT in Amalek

5:8 *then war came to the city gates* is a reasonable guess for translating an obscure Hebrew phrase.

5:10 *saddle blankets*: has also been translated "judges clothes," "Midian," or "clattering sounds."

5:11 *instruments*: The Hebrew word occurs only here in the OT and has sometimes been translated "archers" or "singers."

5:14-18 Compare with the reference to the participation of only two tribes in Judges 4:10.

5:15-17 The text may indicate that the tribes of Reuben,

Gad, Dan, and Asher refused to participate (see also Meroz in Judg 5:23), but the Hebrew is unclear.

5:20-21 The Lord is here presented as the divine warrior who uses stars and flash floods to defeat Israel's enemies. Using elements of nature as divine weapons is common in some of the divine warrior traditions in the OT (e.g., Ps 18:12-19; Ps 68:7-10). Such violent language (cf. Judg 5:31) stands in tension with other biblical perspectives (e.g., Lev 19:34; Isa 2:1-11; Matt 5:38-48).



- 22 Then the horses' hooves pounded  
with the galloping, galloping of their stallions.
- 23 "Curse Meroz," says the LORD's messenger,  
"curse its inhabitants bitterly,  
because they didn't come to the LORD's aid,  
to the LORD's aid against the warriors."
- 24 May Jael be blessed above all women;  
may the wife of Heber the Kenite  
be blessed above all tent-dwelling women.
- 25 He asked for water, and she provided milk;  
she presented him cream in a majestic bowl.
- 26 She reached out her hand for the stake,  
her strong hand for the worker's hammer.  
She struck Sisera;  
she crushed his head;  
she shattered and pierced his skull.
- 27 At her feet he sank, fell, and lay flat;  
at her feet he sank, he fell;  
where he sank, there he fell—dead.
- 28 Through the window she watched,  
Sisera's mother looked longingly<sup>4</sup> through the lattice.  
"Why is his chariot taking so long to come?  
Why are the hoofbeats of his chariot horses delayed?"
- 29 Her wisest attendants answer;  
indeed, she replies to herself:
- 30 "Wouldn't they be finding and dividing the loot?  
A girl or two for each warrior;  
loot of colored cloths for Sisera;  
loot of colored, embroidered cloths;  
two colored, embroidered cloths as loot for every neck."
- 31 May all your enemies perish like this, LORD!  
But may your allies be like the sun, rising in its strength.
- And the land was peaceful for forty years.

**Songs in Stories** Biblical stories sometimes include whole songs or poems: e.g. the Song of the Sea (Exod 15), the Song and Blessing of Moses (Deut 32, 33), the Song of Deborah (Judg 5), Hannah's Song (1 Sam 2), David's Thanksgiving and Last Words (2 Sam 22, 23), the Levites' medley of psalms (1 Chron 16:8-36), Hezekiah's Psalm (Isa 38), Daniel's Praise (Dan 2:20-23), Mary's Song of Praise (Luke 1:46-55), and Zechariah's Blessing (Luke 1:67-79). These songs show their speakers as devout worshippers of God. They emphasize God's control over the events narrated in the surrounding stories. Songs of victory tend to appear in the mouths of women characters (Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Mary) and may reflect a typical women's literary form in ancient Israel (see 1 Sam 18:6-9). So Deborah's Song not only emphasizes the role of Deborah and Jael, like the story in Judges 4, but also expresses ancient women's experiences, both positive ("a mother in Israel," 5:7) and negative ("a girl or two for each warrior," 5:30).

<sup>4</sup>LXX; MT *cried*

5:28-30 The scene of a woman looking out of a window is known from the art and literature of the ancient Near East and elsewhere in the OT (e.g., 2 Sam 6:16; 2 Kgs 9:30). It is used here in an ironic way: what Sisera's mother imagines him doing to other women has instead been done to him by a woman. The text reflects the terrible experience of the kidnap-

ping and raping of women in times of war (see Judg 21:15-24).

5:28 *looked longingly* follows the Greek translation of the OT (LXX) for a better parallel to *she watched* than the Hebrew text, which says, "she called" or "she cried."

5:30 *girl*: Hebrew "womb" ("a womb or two for each warrior"), a sexually explicit and crude statement.

6:1 Gn 25:2;  
Jgs 2:11  
6:2 1Sa 13:6;  
Heb 11:38  
6:11 Josh 17:2;  
Josh 18:23;  
Jgs 2:1, Jgs 8:13;  
Heb 11:32  
6:14 1Sa 12:11  
6:15 Ex 3:11;  
1Sa 9:21

### Oppression by the Midianites

**6** The Israelites did things that the LORD saw as evil, and the LORD handed them over to the Midianites for seven years. **2** The power of the Midianites prevailed over Israel, and because of the Midianites, the Israelites used crevices and caves in the mountains as hidden strongholds. **3** Whenever the Israelites planted seeds, the Midianites, Amalekites, and other easterners would invade. **4** They would set up camp against the Israelites and destroy the land's crops as far as Gaza, leaving nothing to keep Israel alive, not even sheep, oxen, or donkeys. **5** They would invade with their herds and tents, coming like a swarm of locusts, so that no one could count them or their camels. They came into the land to destroy it. **6** So Israel became very weak on account of Midian, and the Israelites cried out to the LORD.

**7** This time when the Israelites cried out to the LORD because of Midian, **8** the LORD sent them a prophet, who said to them, "The LORD, Israel's God, proclaims: I myself brought you up from Egypt, and I led you out of the house of slavery. **9** I delivered you from the power of the Egyptians and from the power of all your oppressors. I drove them out before you and gave you their land. **10** I told you, 'I am the LORD your God; you must not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living.' But you have not obeyed me."

### Gideon's commissioning

**11** Then the LORD's messenger came and sat under the oak at Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. His son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to hide it from the Midianites. **12** The LORD's messenger appeared to him and said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior!"

**13** But Gideon replied to him, "With all due respect, my Lord, if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his amazing works that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, 'Didn't the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and allowed Midian to overpower us."

**14** Then the LORD turned to him and said, "You have strength, so go and rescue Israel from the power of Midian. Am I not personally sending you?"

**15** But again Gideon said to him, "With all due respect, my Lord, how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I'm the youngest in my household."

6:1–9:57 The stories of Gideon and his son Abimelech form the second section of Israel's downward slide into disobedience, failure, and violence in the tribal leaders' era. The story describes the people's wrongdoing in more detail (6:10; 8:24–27, 33), introducing elements of idolatry, selfish ambition, and personal vengeance in the lives of the leaders themselves. Gideon is presented as a conflicted character who is often fearful, reluctant, and doubtful. Abimelech accomplishes nearly the exact opposite of the leaders who have gone before him by creating conflict and violence among his own people by making a grab for royal power. These two stories criticize royal leadership sharply but don't totally reject it (see the note on Judg 3:10; cf. Judg 11:4–40, 29; 16:28–31 for possible critiques of spirit-led, nonroyal leadership).

6:1–8:35 The story of Gideon's defeat of the Midianites and their allies contains a number of parallels with other biblical persons and events: the call of Moses (Exod 3–4), the exodus from Egypt (Exod 14), Israel's idolatry with the gold calf (Exod 32), God's visit to Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18), and Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:20–40). Yet these parallels cast Gideon in a negative light, almost as an antihero whose actions lead Israel further away from faithfulness to the Lord. The end of his story (8:22–35) is the book's first sustained exploration of the idea of rule by kings (see also Judg 9:7–15). As with other types of leadership examined in the book (e.g., spirit-led leadership; see Judg 11:4–40, 29; 16:28–31), it presents both positive and negative aspects of royal rule, perhaps for the reflections of the Judean

exiles about what kind of leadership God wanted for their future.

6:1–10 The passage begins with the familiar story line that describes the people's sin and resulting oppression by an enemy (see Judg 2:11–19) who destroys Israel's food supplies (crops and animals). The conflict involves Manasseh and the Galilean tribes against groups of raiders from the eastern desert region. Unlike the normal pattern up to this point, however, God does not respond immediately and positively to Israel's cry but first sends a prophet to condemn the people for their lack of loyalty to the Lord (6:7–10; cf. Judg 2:1–5). Like Judges 2:11–19, these verses resemble the language of Deuteronomy.

6:1 *Midianites*: from the desert region in northwestern Arabia. They often appear as Israel's enemies in the OT but also as closely related to Moses by family and marriage (Num 25: 31).

6:11–27 The call of Gideon contains a number of similarities to the call of Moses (Exod 3–4), which give the reader high expectations for this character. But some of the similarities contain satirical and ironic elements that already raise questions about Gideon. Overall, Gideon is reluctant to believe and self-centered in his concerns.

6:11–12 The messenger's address to Gideon as *mighty warrior* is ironic since we first meet him while he is hiding from the enemy. This tension between fear and courage will persist throughout Gideon's story (e.g., Judg 8:18–21). *Abiezrite*: one of the clans in the tribe of Manasseh (cf. Josh 17:2).

6:13 Although the messenger's statement had been singular (*you*), Gideon speaks instead of the whole people (*us*) and of the Lord's lack of action.

<sup>16</sup>The LORD replied, "Because I'm with you, you'll defeat the Midianites as if they were just one person."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Then Gideon said to him, "If I've gained your approval, please show me a sign that it's really you speaking with me. <sup>18</sup>Don't leave here until I return, bring out my offering, and set it in front of you."

The Lord replied, "I'll stay until you return."

<sup>19</sup>So Gideon went and prepared a young goat and used an ephah<sup>v</sup> of flour for unleavened bread. He put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot and brought them out to him under the oak and presented them. <sup>20</sup>Then God's messenger said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and set them on this rock, then pour out the broth." And he did so. <sup>21</sup>The LORD's messenger reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire came up from the rock and devoured the meat and the unleavened bread; and the LORD's messenger vanished before his eyes. <sup>22</sup>Then Gideon realized that it had been the LORD's messenger. Gideon exclaimed, "Oh no, LORD God! I have seen the LORD's messenger face-to-face!"

<sup>23</sup>But the LORD said to him, "Peace! Don't be afraid! You won't die."

<sup>24</sup>So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it "The LORD makes peace." It still stands today in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

<sup>25</sup>That night the LORD said to him, "Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old. Break down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah<sup>w</sup> that is beside it. <sup>26</sup>Build an altar to the LORD your God in the proper way on top of this high ground. Then take the second bull and offer it as an entirely burned offering with the wood of the Asherah that you cut down." <sup>27</sup>So Gideon took ten of his servants and did just as the LORD had told him. But because he was too afraid of his household and the townspeople to do it during the day, he did it at night.

<sup>28</sup>When the townspeople got up early in the morning, there was the altar to Baal broken down, with the asherah image that had been beside it cut down, and the second bull offered on the newly built altar! <sup>29</sup>They asked each other, "Who did this?" They searched and investigated, and finally they concluded, "Gideon, Joash's son, did this!" <sup>30</sup>The townspeople said to Joash, "Bring out your son for execution because he tore down the altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah that was beside it."

<sup>31</sup>But Joash replied to all who were lined up against him, "Will you make Baal's complaint for him? Will you come to his rescue? Anyone who argues for him will be killed before morning. If he is a god, let him argue for himself, because it was his altar that was torn down."

<sup>32</sup>So on that day Gideon became known as Jerubbaal, meaning, "Let Baal argue with him," because he tore down his altar.

**Gideon seeks a sign**

<sup>33</sup>Some time later, all the Midianites, Amalekites, and other easterners joined together, came over, and set up camp in the Jezreel Valley. <sup>34</sup>Then the LORD's spirit came over Gideon, and he sounded the horn and summoned the Abiezrites to follow him. <sup>35</sup>He sent messengers

6:16 Ex 3:12; Josh 1:5  
6:17 Ex 4:1; Jgs 6:36  
6:18 Gn 18:3; Jgs 13:15  
6:19 Gn 18:6; Lv 19:36  
6:20 Jgs 13:19  
6:21 Lv 9:24; 1Ki 18:38  
6:22 Gn 32:30; Ex 33:20; Jgs 13:21-13:22  
6:25 Ex 34:13  
6:26 Gn 8:20; Jgs 6:27; 2Sa 24:18  
6:27 Jgs 6:11; Jgs 6:26; Jgs 6:36; Jgs 7:5; Jgs 7:19  
6:28 Jgs 6:30; 1Ki 16:32; 2Ki 10:26; 2Ki 11:18; 2Ki 21:3  
6:29 Jgs 6:11  
6:30 Jgs 6:28; 1Ki 16:32; 2Ki 21:3  
6:31 Dt 17:2; Jgs 6:11; Jgs 6:29; Jgs 7:14; Jgs 8:13  
6:32 Jgs 7:1; 1Sa 12:11  
6:34 Josh 17:2; Jgs 3:10; Jgs 3:27; Jgs 13:25; 1Sa 13:3

<sup>a</sup>Or each and every one of them <sup>v</sup>An ephah is approximately twenty quarts. <sup>w</sup>Heb *asherim*; perhaps objects or a pole devoted to the goddess Asherah

6:16 *I'm with you*: Compare with the divine assurance at Moses's call in Exodus 3:12.  
6:17 Gideon has been assured of the Lord's presence and his own victory (Judg 6:16), but he asks for a sign to verify the message. This act furthers the reader's impression of Gideon's flaws as a leader, but the Lord provides a sign to reassure him anyway (Judg 6:19-24). Other biblical stories also describe divine-fire burning offerings to show God's approval (Lev 9:24; 1 Kgs 18:38; 1 Chron 21:26; 2 Chron 7:1).  
6:25-27 Gideon's first task is to destroy his father's altar to Baal. The story displays a further stage in Israel's religious decline, as the general statements about the people's unfaithfulness in previous stories now give way to showing a site for the worship of other gods in Israel. In an ironic

contrast to Elijah in 1 Kings 18:20-40, Gideon is too afraid to act alone or by day.  
6:25 *Asherah*: See note on Judges 3:7.  
6:28-35 The story of Gideon's destruction of the Baal altar uses a different name for Gideon: *Jerubbaal*, "let Baal argue" (6:32). In the present story, the name *Jerubbaal* typically occurs in references connecting Gideon to his family's home (e.g., Judg 6:32; 8:29; 9:16) and emerges from his destruction of its altar to Baal.  
6:33 *Jezreel Valley*: a fertile valley and important travel route located between Galilee and Samaria.  
6:34 *The Lord's spirit came over Gideon*: See Judges 3:10 and note.  
6:35 *Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali*: three northern tribes in the Galilee area.

6:36 Jgs 6:14,  
Jgs 6:17  
6:37 Gn 24:14,  
Gn 50:10;  
Dt 12:31;  
Ex 14:25; 2Sa 6:6  
6:39 Gn 18:32;  
Jgs 6:22, Jgs 6:36  
7:1 Gn 12:6;  
Dt 11:30;  
Jgs 6:11, Jgs 6:32  
7:2 Dt 8:17;  
Is 10:13; 2Co 4:7  
7:3 Dt 20:8  
7:4 Jgs 6:36,  
Jgs 7:7; 1Sa 14:6;  
Ps 66:10  
7:5 Jgs 6:11,  
Jgs 6:27,  
Jgs 6:36, Jgs 7:19,  
Jgs 7:25  
7:7 1Sa 14:6  
7:8 Gn 25:2;  
Ex 18:1;  
Lv 23:24;  
Nm 22:4;  
Nm 31:3  
7:9 Jgs 3:28

into all of Manasseh, and they were also summoned to follow him. Then he sent messengers into Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali too, and they marched up to meet them.

<sup>36</sup>But then Gideon said to God, "To see if you really intend to rescue Israel through me as you have declared, <sup>37</sup>I'm now putting a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece but all the ground is dry, then I'll know that you are going to rescue Israel through me, as you have declared." <sup>38</sup>And that is what happened. When he got up early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung out enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water.

<sup>39</sup>Then Gideon said to God, "Don't be angry with me, but let me speak just one more time. Please let me make just one more test with the fleece: now let only the fleece be dry and let dew be on all the ground." <sup>40</sup>And God did so that night. Only the fleece was dry, but there was dew on all the ground.

### Battle with Midian

**7**Then Jerubbaal, that is, Gideon, and all of the people with him rose early and set up camp beside the Harod spring; Midian's camp was north of theirs, in the valley by the Moreh hill. <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to Gideon: "You have too many people on your side. If I were to hand Midian over to them, the Israelites might claim credit for themselves rather than for me, thinking, We saved ourselves. <sup>3</sup>So now, announce in the people's hearing, 'Anyone who is afraid or unsteady may return home from Gideon's mountain.'"<sup>a</sup> At this, twenty-two thousand people went home, and ten thousand were left.

<sup>4</sup>The LORD said to Gideon, "There are still too many people. Take them down to the water, and I will weed them out for you there. Whenever I tell you, 'This one will go with you,' he should go with you; but whenever I tell you, 'This one won't go with you,' he should not go." <sup>5</sup>So he took the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Set aside those who lap the water with their tongues, as a dog laps, from those who bend down on their knees to drink." <sup>6</sup>The number of men who lapped was three hundred, and all the rest of the people bent down on their knees to drink water, with their hands to their mouths. <sup>7</sup>Then the LORD said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men who lapped I will rescue you and hand over the Midianites to you. Let everyone else go home." <sup>8</sup>So the people gathered their supplies and trumpets,<sup>a</sup> and Gideon sent all the Israelites home, but kept the three hundred.

Now Midian's camp was below Gideon in the valley. <sup>9</sup>That night the LORD said to him, "Get up and attack the camp, because I've handed it over to you." <sup>10</sup>But if you're afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah, <sup>11</sup>and you'll hear what they are saying. May you then get the courage to attack the camp." So he went down with his servant Purah to the outpost of the armies that were in the camp. <sup>12</sup>The Midianites, Amalekites, and other easterners were spread across the valley like a swarm of locusts; their camels were too many to count, like the grains of sand on the seashore.

<sup>13</sup>Just when Gideon arrived, there was a man telling his friend about a dream. He said,

<sup>a</sup>Or Mount Gilead <sup>7</sup>MT places the words *with their hands to their mouths* after the word *lapped*. <sup>a</sup>Or the ones who lapped took the people's supplies and trumpets for themselves.

6:36-40 The spirit had already come upon Gideon (Judg 6:34), an event that indicates in this book that victory is certain (see Othniel in Judg 3:10). Nevertheless, he asks for an additional sign that he will be successful. While sometimes read as a positive example of the need to seek God's will, the narrative's overall context presents this as another example of Gideon's lack of faith. The Hebrew in this text switches from the use of the personal divine name, Yahweh ("the LORD"), in the preceding verses to the general term for God, perhaps indicating distance between Gideon and Yahweh and hinting at divine disapproval.

7:1-25 The battle with Midian and its allies.

7:1-8 God reduces Gideon's forces so that the Israelites will not be tempted to claim credit for themselves (7:2). That concern anticipates the self-centeredness Gideon will show later in the story (Judg 8:4-28).

7:1 *Jerubbaal*: See Judges 6:32. The scene is the Jezreel Valley (see note on Judg 6:33).

7:2-3 The Lord provides Gideon with the reason for reducing his troops. The reduction begins by letting those who are afraid return home, leaving *ten thousand*. See the similar allowance in Deuteronomy 20:8. A unique Hebrew word leads some to emend and translate *from Gideon's mountain* as "from Mount Gilead" or "Gideon sifted them."

7:4-8 *lap the water with their tongues*: It's not clear whether the Lord chooses the more- or less-prepared soldiers, but the final number is reduced to *three hundred*.

7:8 It's not clear whether *the people* or the soldiers who lapped water are the subject of the verb.

7:9-14 An enemy soldier's dream foreshadows Gideon's victory.

7:10-11 *went down with his servant*: subtly indicates that Gideon remains afraid to attack (see 7:10), even after multiple divine assurances.

7:13 *loaf of barley bread*: represents Israel's agricultural society.

"Get this! I had a dream that a loaf of barley bread was rolling into the Midianite camp. It came to a tent and hit it, and the tent collapsed. In fact, it rolled the tent over upside down, so it fell flat."

<sup>14</sup>His friend replied, "Can this be anything other than the sword of the Israelite Gideon, Joash's son? God has handed over Midian and its entire camp to him!"

<sup>15</sup>When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its meaning, he worshipped. Then he returned to the Israelite camp and said, "Get up! The LORD has handed over the Midianite camp to you." <sup>16</sup>He divided the three hundred men into three units and equipped every man with a trumpet and an empty jar, with a torch inside each jar. <sup>17</sup>"Now watch me," he ordered them, "and do what I do. When I get to the outpost of the camp, do just what I do. <sup>18</sup>When I blow the trumpet, along with all who are with me, then you blow the trumpets, all of you surrounding the whole camp. And then shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon!'"

<sup>19</sup>Gideon and one hundred of his men moved to the outpost of the camp at the middle watch of the night, when they had just changed the guards. Then they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. <sup>20</sup>So the three units blew their trumpets and broke their jars, holding the torches with their left hands and blowing the trumpets in their right hands. And they called out, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" <sup>21</sup>Each man stood fast in his position around the camp, and the entire camp took off running, shouting, and fleeing. <sup>22</sup>When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD turned the swords of fellow soldiers against each other throughout the whole camp. The camp fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, to the border of Abel-meholah, beside Tabbath.

<sup>23</sup>The Israelites from Naphtali, Asher, and all of Manasseh were called out, and they chased after the Midianites. <sup>24</sup>Then Gideon sent messengers into all of the Ephraim highlands, saying, "Go down to meet the Midianites and take control of the Jordan's waters as far as Beth-barah." So all the Ephraimite men were called out, and they took control of the Jordan's waters as far as Beth-barah. <sup>25</sup>They also captured two Midianite officers, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at Oreb's Rock, and killed Zeeb at Zeeb's Winepress. Then they went on chasing the Midianites, and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

**Gideon's acts of vengeance**

**8** Then the Ephraimites said to him, "Why did you offend us this way by not calling us when you went to fight the Midianites?" And they argued with him fiercely.

<sup>2</sup>But he said to them, "What have I done now, compared to you? Aren't Ephraim's leftovers better than Abiezer's main harvest? <sup>3</sup>God handed you the Midianite officers Oreb and Zeeb. What have I been able to do compared to you?" When he said this, their anger against him passed.

<sup>4</sup>Then Gideon came to the Jordan. As he and the three hundred men with him crossed over, they were exhausted but still giving chase. <sup>5</sup>So he said to the people of Succoth, "Please give some loaves of bread to those who are on foot, because they're exhausted, but I'm chasing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

<sup>6</sup>But the officials of Succoth replied, "Haven't you already almost gotten your hands on Zebah and Zalmunna? Why should we give food to your army now?"

7:14 Once again, a non-Israelite makes a correct theological confession about the power of Israel's God (cf. Adonibezek in Judg 1:7).

7:15-25 The account of the battle features ritual behavior and trickery and banditry to achieve surprise.

7:18 Gideon's instruction for the people to shout *and for Gideon* is ironic in light of the Lord's previous concern that the people would claim credit for themselves (see Judg 7:2). Although this story parallels that of Joshua at Jericho, Joshua includes no such self-reference in his instructions (see Josh 6:16).

7:22-23 The victory comes as the Lord turns the Midianites against each other in panic—a common feature of the divine warrior fighting for Israel (cf. Judg 4:15). The Midianites flee into the Transjordan, and Gideon musters the tribes he had earlier alerted (see Judg 6:35) to pursue them.

7:24 Gideon only now asks the Ephraimites to help (cf. Judg 6:35), about which they complain in Judges 8:1.

8:1-3 Gideon addresses the Ephraimites' anger over not being called out earlier, most probably so that they could share fully in the victory spoils.

8:4-21 Crossing the Jordan marks an unexpected shift in Gideon's story. According to the typical pattern in Judges, Gideon's story should have ended in Judges 8:1-3 after his defeat of Midian and liberation of Israel. The Lord doesn't command the campaign to capture the two kings of Midian, and it has no clear relationship to Gideon's original commission to deliver Israel (Judg 6:11-18). Verses 18-19 ultimately reveal Gideon's motive to be personal vengeance.

8:5 *Succoth* is a town east of the Jordan near Shechem, but the precise location is debated (perhaps Tell Deir Alla).

8:6 *gotten your hands on*: The officials ask Gideon if he

7:16 Jgs 9:43;  
15a 11:11;  
2Sa 18:2  
7:18 Jgs 7:20  
7:19 Ex 14:24  
7:20 Dt 32:41;  
Jgs 7:18  
7:21 2Ki 7:7  
7:22 1Sa 14:20;  
1Ki 4:12;  
2Ch 20:23

8:19 Ru 3:13  
8:22 Jgs 8:23  
8:23 Jgs 8:22;  
1Sa 8:7;  
1Sa 10:19;  
1Sa 12:12

7“Just for that,” Gideon said, “when the LORD has handed over Zebah and Zalmunna to me, I’m going to beat your skin with desert thorns and briars!”<sup>a</sup> From there he went up to Penuel and made the same request. And the people of Penuel responded in the same way the people of Succoth had.<sup>b</sup> So he also told the people of Penuel, “When I return in victory,<sup>c</sup> I’ll break down this tower!”

<sup>10</sup>Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their camp, about fifteen thousand men, all the ones who were left from the easterners’ entire camp. One hundred twenty thousand armed men had fallen. <sup>11</sup>Gideon marched up the caravan road<sup>b</sup> east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked the camp while it was off-guard. <sup>12</sup>Zebah and Zalmunna fled, and he chased after them. He captured the two Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna and threw the entire army into panic.

<sup>13</sup>Then Gideon, Joash’s son, returned from the battle by the Heres Pass. <sup>14</sup>He captured a young man from the people of Succoth and interrogated him. He listed for Gideon the seventy-seven officials and elders of Succoth. <sup>15</sup>So Gideon went to the people of Succoth and said, “Here are Zebah and Zalmunna! You made fun of me because of them by saying, ‘Haven’t you already almost gotten your hands on Zebah and Zalmunna? Why should we give food to your exhausted men now?’” <sup>16</sup>Then he seized the city’s elders, and he beat<sup>c</sup> the people of Succoth with desert thorns and briars. <sup>17</sup>He also broke down Penuel’s tower, and killed the city’s people.

<sup>18</sup>Then he asked Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men were those whom you killed at Tabor?”

They replied, “They were just like you; each one looked like a king’s son.”

<sup>19</sup>“They were my brothers,” Gideon said, “my own mother’s sons. As surely as the LORD lives, I promise that if you had let them live, I wouldn’t kill you!” <sup>20</sup>So he ordered his oldest son Jether, “Stand up and kill them.” But the young man didn’t draw his sword because he was afraid, since he was still young.

<sup>21</sup>So Zebah and Zalmunna said, “You stand up and strike us yourself, because as they say, ‘A man is measured by his strength!’” So Gideon stood up and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescents that were on their camels’ necks.

### Gideon’s request

<sup>22</sup>Then the Israelites said to Gideon, “Rule over us, you and then your son and then your grandson, because you’ve rescued us from Midian’s power.”

<sup>23</sup>Gideon replied to them, “I’m not the one who will rule over you, and my son won’t rule over you either. The LORD rules over you.” <sup>24</sup>But Gideon said to them, “May I make one request of you? Everyone give me the earrings from their loot”; the Midianites had worn gold earrings because they were Ishmaelites.

<sup>25</sup>“We’ll gladly give them,” they replied. And they spread out a piece of cloth, and everyone pitched in the earrings from their loot. <sup>26</sup>The weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold, not counting the crescents, the pendants, and the purple robes worn by the Midianite kings, or the collars that were on their camels’ necks. <sup>27</sup>Gideon fashioned a priestly vest<sup>d</sup> out of it, and put it in his hometown of Ophrah. All Israel became unfaithful there because of it, and it became a trap for Gideon and his household.

<sup>a</sup>Or in peace <sup>b</sup>Or the road of the tent dwellers <sup>c</sup>Cf 8:7, cf LXX; MT he taught a lesson to <sup>d</sup>Heb ephod

possesses the cut-off “hands” of the Midianite kings as trophies of their capture (cf. Judg 1:6-7).

8:8 *Penuel* is a town further east of the Jordan from Succoth, but the exact location is uncertain.

8:9 *in victory*: Hebrew “in peace,” i.e., when Gideon has restored peace by winning the war. The irony is that his victory will bring destruction, not peace, to Penuel (Judg 8:17).

8:11 *caravan road*: or “road of the tent dwellers,” the main trade route.

8:20 Gideon’s attempt to have his son kill the kings may be another expression of the text’s hesitation about his character (see Judg 8:21).

8:22-28 Gideon’s response to the people’s invitation to become their ruler is a clear rejection of royal rule (see also Judg 9:7-15), which stands in tension with other parts of the book that seem to support the need for kings (cf. Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

8:22-23 Although the people’s language uses the Hebrew term for *rule* (rather than “reign as king”), they clearly expect a dynasty. The reason they give—that you’ve rescued us—is ironic in light of God’s concern in Judges 7:2.

8:24-28 Gideon seems to reject the people’s offer appropriately, yet he proceeds to make a *priestly vest* with which the people commit idolatry (8:27; cf. Aaron’s gold calf in Exod 32). *priestly vest* (Heb. “ephod”) appears elsewhere as

<sup>28</sup>So Midian was brought down before the Israelites and no longer raised its head. The land was peaceful for forty years during Gideon's time.

**Gideon's death**

<sup>29</sup>Jerubbaal, Joash's son, went home to live with his own household. <sup>30</sup>Gideon had seventy sons of his own because he had many wives. <sup>31</sup>His secondary wife who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech. <sup>32</sup>Gideon, Joash's son, died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

<sup>33</sup>Right after Gideon died, the Israelites once again acted unfaithfully by worshipping the Baals, setting up Baal-berith as their god. <sup>34</sup>The people of Israel didn't remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the power of all their enemies on every side. <sup>35</sup>Nor did they act loyally toward the household of Jerubbaal, that is, Gideon, in return for all the good that he had done on Israel's behalf.

**Abimelech becomes a king**

**G**Abimelech, Jerubbaal's son, went to his mother's brothers in Shechem. He spoke to them and to the entire clan of the household to which his mother belonged: <sup>2</sup>"Ask all the leaders of Shechem, 'Which do you think is better to have ruling over you: seventy men—all of Jerubbaal's sons—or one man?' And remember that I'm your flesh and blood!"

<sup>3</sup>So his mother's brothers spoke all these words on his behalf to all the leaders of Shechem. They decided to follow Abimelech because they said, "He's our relative." <sup>4</sup>They gave him seventy pieces of silver from the temple of Baal-berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men, who became his posse. <sup>5</sup>He went to his household in Ophrah and killed all seventy of his brothers, Jerubbaal's sons, on a single stone. Only Jotham the youngest of Jerubbaal's sons survived, because he had hidden himself. <sup>6</sup>Then all the leaders of Shechem and all Beth-millo assembled and proceeded to make Abimelech king by the oak at the stone pillar<sup>e</sup> in Shechem.

**Jotham's fable**

<sup>7</sup>When Jotham was told about this, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim. He raised his voice and called out, "Listen to me, you leaders of Shechem, so that God may listen to you!"

<sup>8</sup>"Once the trees went out to anoint a king over themselves. So they said to the olive tree, 'Be our king!'

<sup>9</sup>"But the olive tree replied to them, 'Should I stop producing my oil, which is how gods and humans are honored, so that I can go to sway over the trees?'

<sup>10</sup>"So the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come and be king over us!'

<sup>11</sup>"The fig tree replied to them, 'Should I stop producing my sweetness and my delicious fruit, so that I can go to sway over the trees?'

<sup>12</sup>"Then the trees said to the vine, 'You come and be king over us!'

<sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain

a garment worn by the high priest (see Exod 28:6-14; Exod 39:2-7), but here it appears to be some sort of statue or idol (cf. Judg 17:4-5). *became unfaithful*. The Hebrew word has sexual overtones and so is often translated "prostituted themselves."

8:29-32 Gideon amasses numerous wives for himself (8:30), one of the acts of kings condemned in Deuteronomy 17:17 (see 1 Kgs 11:3), and names his son *Abimelech*, which means "My father is a king" (8:31).

8:33-35 The final verses provide a partial version of the book's typical story line as an introduction to the story of Abimelech in Judges 9.

9:1-57 Abimelech, a son of Gideon by a secondary wife (see note on Judg 19:1), is first rejected by his relatives and then becomes king of the city-state of Shechem. This first attempt at kingship in Israel is the logical result of Gideon's story. Gideon operated like a king even though he clearly rejected an offer to rule (Judg 8:22-31). Abimelech declares himself king. This chapter is the most sustained

examination of the problems of kingship in Judges and contains the most direct critique of royal leadership, "Jotham's Fable" (9:7-15). The story is strikingly different from most in Judges, as it features no external enemies, contains no references to God, and describes the career of a leader that begins and ends in murder and tragedy (see 9:5-6, 52-54).

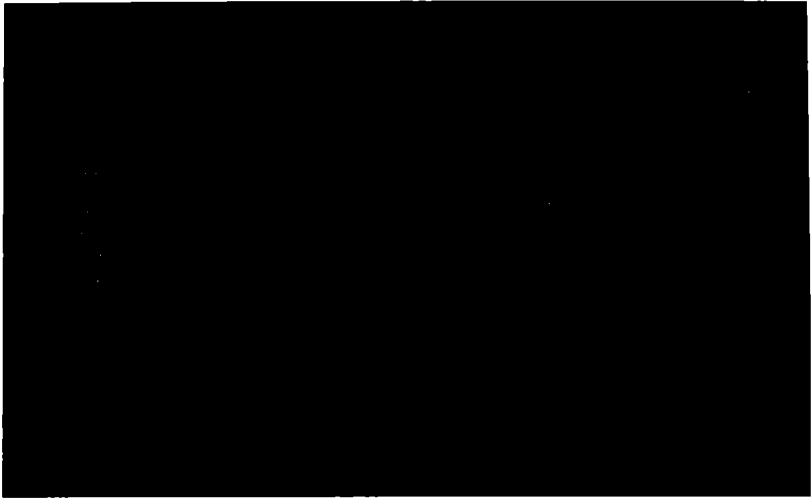
9:1-6 *Abimelech* ("my father is a king") becomes king of the city-state of Shechem (in the north-central highlands about 40 miles north of Jerusalem) by brutally eliminating rivals from his own family.

9:4 *Baal-berith*: See Judges 8:33.

9:7-15 Jotham, the only son of Gideon to escape Abimelech's massacre (Judg 9:5), uses a fable about trees to proclaim the low quality of those who seek to be king. He stands on Mount Gerizim, the location associated with the blessings of the covenant ceremony in Deuteronomy 27:12, but ironically proclaims a curse on Abimelech and his allies (see Judg 9:20). His speech is a satire that

8:30 Jgs 9:2;  
Jgs 9:5; 2Ki 10:1  
9:1 Jgs 6:32;  
Jgs 8:31  
9:2 Gn 29:14;  
Jgs 8:30  
9:8 2Ki 14:9  
9:9 Ro 11:17

9:13 Ps 104:15  
 9:14 2Kg 14:9  
 9:15 Is 2:13,  
 Is 30:2



<sup>13</sup>But the vine replied to them, 'Should I stop providing my wine that makes gods and humans happy, so that I can go to sway over the trees?'

<sup>14</sup>Finally, all the trees said to the thornbush, 'You come and be king over us!'

<sup>15</sup>And the thornbush replied to the trees, 'If you're acting faithfully in anointing me king over you, come and take shelter in my shade; but if not, let fire come out of the thornbush and burn up the cedars of Lebanon.'

<sup>16</sup>So now, if you acted faithfully and innocently when you made Abimelech king, and if you've done right by Jerubbaal and his household, and have treated him as his actions deserve—<sup>17</sup>my father fought for you and risked his life to rescue you from Midian's power, <sup>18</sup>but today you've risen up against my father's household, killed his seventy sons on a single stone, and made Abimelech, his female servant's son, king over the leaders of Shechem, because he's your relative—<sup>19</sup>so if you've acted faithfully and innocently toward Jerubbaal and his household today, then be happy with Abimelech and let him be happy with you. <sup>20</sup>But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and burn up the leaders of Shechem and Beth-millo; and let fire come out from the leaders of Shechem and Beth-millo and burn up Abimelech.'

<sup>21</sup>Then Jotham ran away. He fled to Beer and stayed there for fear of his brother Abimelech.

#### ***Abimelech's monarchy fails***

<sup>22</sup>Abimelech ruled over Israel for three years. <sup>23</sup>Then God stirred up ill will between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem, and they acted like traitors toward Abimelech. <sup>24</sup>This occurred because of the violence done to Jerubbaal's seventy sons. Their blood came back on their brother Abimelech, who killed them, and on the leaders of Shechem, who supported him when he killed his brothers. <sup>25</sup>As an act against him, the leaders of Shechem set ambushes on the hilltops that robbed everyone who passed by them on the road. This was reported to Abimelech.

<sup>26</sup>Then Gaal, Ebed's son, and his relatives came passing through Shechem, and the leaders of Shechem shifted their allegiance to him. <sup>27</sup>They went out into the field, cut off clusters from their vineyards, trampled them out, and had a celebration. They entered their god's temple and ate, drank, and made fun of Abimelech. <sup>28</sup>Gaal, Ebed's son, said, "Who is Abimelech, and who are we of Shechem that we ought to serve him? Didn't this son of Jerubbaal and his deputy Zebul once serve the men of Hamor, Shechem's father? Why should we of all people

describes the negative character and motives of those who want to be king. The *thornbush* is the only plant that yields no benefit to humans and yet is the only one that seeks power among the trees.

9:22-33 The story credits God with starting the trouble between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem (9:23) as punishment for Abimelech's violence against his own family (9:24).



serve him?<sup>29</sup>If only this people were under my command! I would push Abimelech aside! I would tell Abimelech, 'Build up your army and march out for battle.'

<sup>30</sup>When Zebul the city's ruler heard the words of Gaal, Ebed's son, he became angry. <sup>31</sup>He sent messengers to Abimelech at Arumah<sup>g</sup> to say, "Watch out! Gaal, Ebed's son, and his relatives have come to Shechem and are stirring up the city against you. <sup>32</sup>Now, you and the men who are with you: Get up tonight and set an ambush in the fields. <sup>33</sup>Then in the morning, at sunrise, rise early and rush on the city. Just as he and the men with him are marching out to face you, you can do to him whatever you wish."

<sup>34</sup>So Abimelech and all the men who were with him got up that night and set an ambush around Shechem in four companies. <sup>35</sup>When Gaal, Ebed's son, came out and stood in the entrance of the city's gate, Abimelech and the men with him sprang up from the ambush. <sup>36</sup>Gaal saw the men and said to Zebul, "Look! People are coming down from the hilltops."

Zebul replied to him, "The shadows on the hills just look like persons to you."

<sup>37</sup>But Gaal spoke up again, "Look! People are coming down from Tabbur-erez, and one company is coming from the direction of Elon-meonenim."<sup>h</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Then Zebul replied to him, "Where's all your talk now, you who said, 'Who is Abimelech that we ought to serve him?' Aren't these the men you despised? Now march out and fight them!" <sup>39</sup>So Gaal marched out at the head of the leaders of Shechem and fought with Abimelech. <sup>40</sup>Abimelech routed him, and he ran away. Many fell wounded, all the way up to the entrance of the gate. <sup>41</sup>Afterward, Abimelech stayed in Arumah, and Zebul drove away Gaal and his relatives so they couldn't stay in Shechem.

<sup>42</sup>The next day, the men of Shechem went out into the fields. When it was reported to Abimelech, <sup>43</sup>he took his men, divided them into three companies, and set an ambush in the fields. As soon as he saw the men coming from the city, he sprang upon them and attacked them. <sup>44</sup>Abimelech and his company charged forward and took a position at the entrance of the city's gate, while the other two companies charged at all those in the fields and attacked them. <sup>45</sup>Abimelech fought against the city that entire day. He captured the city and killed its people. Then he leveled the city and scattered salt over it.

<sup>46</sup>When all the leaders in the Tower of Shechem heard about this, they entered the side rooms in the El-berith temple. <sup>47</sup>It was reported to Abimelech that all the leaders from the Tower of Shechem had gathered in one place. <sup>48</sup>So Abimelech and all the men who were with him went up on Mount Zalmon. He grabbed an ax, cut off a bundle of branches, and hoisted them onto his shoulder. Then he ordered the men who were with him, "Hurry up and do what you've seen me do!" <sup>49</sup>Each one of the men cut off a bundle as well and followed Abimelech. They piled them up against the side rooms and set fire to the side rooms above them. So all the people in the Tower of Shechem died too, about one thousand men and women.

<sup>50</sup>Then Abimelech moved on to Thebez, set up camp against it, and captured it. <sup>51</sup>But there was a strong tower inside the city. All the men and women and all the city's leaders had fled there, shut themselves inside, and climbed to the tower's roof. <sup>52</sup>Abimelech came to the tower to storm it. But when he approached the tower's entrance to set it on fire, <sup>53</sup>a woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and cracked his skull. <sup>54</sup>He quickly cried out to the servant who carried his armor, "Draw your sword and kill me. Don't let it be said of me, 'A woman killed him.'" So his servant stabbed him, and he died. <sup>55</sup>When the Israelites saw that Abimelech was dead, they all went home.

<sup>56</sup>Thus God paid back Abimelech for the evil he had done to his father by killing his seventy brothers. <sup>57</sup>God also paid back the people of Shechem for their evil. The curse of Jotham, Jerubbaal's son, had come upon them.

<sup>f</sup>LXX; MT *he* <sup>g</sup>Cf 9:41; Heb *Tormah* <sup>h</sup>Or *the Diviners' Oak*

9:34-55 In response to rebellion, Abimelech attacks the town that made him king and massacres its inhabitants. The war ultimately leads to his own death.

9:45 *scattered salt over it*: to ruin the land's fertility, a practice associated with the destruction of agriculture in ancient siege warfare (cf. Deut 29:23).

9:46 *side rooms*: The Hebrew may refer to a bunker or a tunnel underneath the temple.

9:50-54 When Abimelech attacks a second city, another

of the book's female characters plays a key role: an anonymous woman kills the would-be king with a relatively small (handheld) household instrument (an upper millstone) used for grinding grain at home but deadly when dropped from a height (cf. Jael in Judg 4:21; Judg 5:26). The story of this shameful death (see 9:54) is a stinging critique of those who hunger for royal power.

9:56-57 The conclusion to Abimelech's story reflects the strong sense of divine justice in the books of the

9:46 Jgs 8:33;  
Jgs 9:4, Jgs 9:49  
9:53 Jgs 9:20;  
2Sa 11:21

10:1 Josh 15:48;  
Jgs 2:16

### Tola and Jair

**10** After Abimelech, Tola son of Puah and grandson of Dodo, a man of Issachar, arose to rescue Israel. He lived in Shamir in the Ephraim highlands. <sup>2</sup>For twenty-three years he led Israel; then he died and was buried in Shamir.

<sup>3</sup>After Tola, Jair from Gilead arose, and he led Israel for twenty-two years. <sup>4</sup>He had thirty sons who were mounted on thirty donkeys and controlled thirty towns in the land of Gilead—these are still known as Havvoth-jair today. <sup>5</sup>When Jair died, he was buried in Kamon.

### Israel's unfaithfulness and oppression by the Ammonites

<sup>6</sup>Then the Israelites again did things that the LORD saw as evil. They served the Baals and the Astartes, as well as the gods of Aram, Sidon, Moab, the Ammonites, and the Philistines. They went away from the LORD and didn't serve him. <sup>7</sup>The LORD became angry with Israel and handed them over to the Philistines and the Ammonites. <sup>8</sup>Starting that year and for the next eighteen years, they beat and bullied the Israelites, especially all the Israelites who lived on the east side of Jordan in the territory of the Ammonites in Gilead. <sup>9</sup>The Ammonites also crossed the Jordan to make raids into Judah, Benjamin, and the households of Ephraim. So Israel was greatly distressed.

<sup>10</sup>Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD, "We've sinned against you, for we went away from our God and served the Baals."

<sup>11</sup>The LORD replied to the Israelites, "When the Egyptians, Amorites, Ammonites, Philistines, <sup>12</sup>Sidonians, Amalekites, and Maonites oppressed you and you cried out to me, didn't I rescue you from their power? <sup>13</sup>But you have gone away from me and served other gods, so I won't rescue you anymore! <sup>14</sup>Go cry out to the gods you've chosen. Let them rescue you in the time of your distress."

<sup>15</sup>The Israelites responded to the LORD, "We've sinned. Do to us whatever you see as right, but please save us this time." <sup>16</sup>They put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And the LORD could no longer stand to see Israel suffer.

<sup>17</sup>The Ammonites called out their army and made camp in Gilead, while the Israelites gathered and set up their camp at Mizpah. <sup>18</sup>Gilead's rulers said to each other, "Whoever is willing to launch the attack against the Ammonites will become the leader over all those living in Gilead."

Deuteronomistic History (Joshua to Kings): God punishes disobedience. It identifies the judgment on Abimelech and Shechem as fulfilling Jotham's curse (Judg 9:7-20).

10:1-5 Summaries of five minor leaders in 10:1-5 and Judges 12:8-15 (cf. Judg 3:31) form a frame around the story of Jephthah. They show God's continued provision for the people and provide a contrast to the Lord's reluctant participation in the course of Jephthah's actions that follow (see Judg 10:13-16). The stability and peacefulness of the rule of the tribal leaders in 10:1-5 and Judges 12:8-15 may be intended as a contrast to the instability and violence in the stories of Jephthah and Samson.

10:1 *Shamir*: possibly Samaria in the central highlands.

10:3 *Gilead*: an important town in the northern Transjordan, but not a tribal name. *Jair*: See 1 Chronicles 2:22.

10:6-12:7 The story of Jephthah's defeat of the Ammonites in the area around Gilead. Although Jephthah secures deliverance for Israel, his story shows a further decline from the ideal of Othniel (see Judg 3:7-11) and another example of Israel's downward spiral into failure and unfaithfulness. At times Jephthah shows religious devotion and military success, and at other times he is doubtful and shrewd. Ultimately, his behavior leads to violence between Israelites and personal tragedy.

10:6-18 The reappearance of Israel's unfaithfulness leads to oppression by the Ammonites and Philistines. The story contains several elements of the typical pattern of sin, oppression, and changed hearts (see Judg 2:11-19). But here the storyline differs in key aspects from the typical pattern to highlight the ongoing decline of Israel's social

and religious life (see 10:6, 13-14) and set the stage for the story of Jephthah in Judges 11:1-12:7.

10:6 The verse specifies the people's unfaithfulness by stating that Israel worshipped the gods of five nations. The list reminds readers of the nations that the Lord promised to drive out before the Israelites (cf. Deut 7:1), but the kingdoms listed do not precisely match the historical realities of the early Iron Age. *Baals and the Astartes*: See notes on Judges 2:11-13.

10:7-8 *Ammonites*: See note on Judges 3:13. The events are set in the north-central Transjordan area of *Gilead* near Ammon, but the Ammonites also made raids across the Jordan into Israelite territory in the central highlands (Judg 10:8-9).

10:12 *Maonites*: See Joshua 15:55; 1 Samuel 23:24-25; 1 Samuel 25:2.

10:11-14 The hardening of God's position is a further sign of the people's failing relationship with the Lord (cf. Judg 3:9; Judg 6:7-10).

10:15-16 In response to the Lord's surprising rejection of their prayer, the people turn from their divided loyalties. The language and action resemble Joshua 24:23-24. Verse 16 gives a personal tone to the people's relationship with the Lord and may indicate that a change of heart and life moved God to soften the rejection. *could no longer stand to see Israel suffer*: This translation implies that Israel's sufferings stirred the Lord's deep compassion, but the Hebrew is unclear (or "the Lord's soul/life became short/impatient with Israel's trouble").

10:18 The Gileadites' search for one to *launch the attack*

11:1 Jgs 6:12;  
 Heb 11:32  
 11:5 Dt 25:7;  
 Jgs 10:9,  
 Jgs 10:17,  
 Jgs 11:1, Jgs 11:3

**Rise of Jephthah**

**11** Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior. Gilead was his father, but he was a prostitute's son. <sup>2</sup>Gilead's wife gave birth to other sons for him, and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah away. They told him, "You won't get an inheritance in our father's household because you're a different woman's son." <sup>3</sup>So Jephthah ran away from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob. Worthless men gathered around Jephthah and became his posse.

<sup>4</sup>Sometime afterward, the Ammonites made war against Israel. <sup>5</sup>And when the Ammonites attacked Israel, Gilead's elders went to bring Jephthah back from the land of Tob. <sup>6</sup>They said to him, "Come be our commander so we can fight against the Ammonites."

<sup>7</sup>But Jephthah replied to Gilead's elders, "Aren't you the ones who hated me and drove me away from my father's household? Why are you coming to me now when you're in trouble?"

<sup>8</sup>Gilead's elders answered Jephthah, "That may be, but now we're turning back to you, so come with us and fight the Ammonites. Then you'll become the leader over us and everyone who lives in Gilead."

<sup>9</sup>And Jephthah said to Gilead's elders, "If you bring me back to fight the Ammonites and the LORD gives them over to me, I alone will be your leader."

<sup>10</sup>Gilead's elders replied to him, "The LORD is our witness; we will surely do what you've said." <sup>11</sup>So Jephthah went with Gilead's elders, and the people made him leader and commander over them. At Mizpah before the LORD, Jephthah repeated everything he had said.

<sup>12</sup>Then Jephthah sent messengers to the Ammonite king, saying, "What is the problem between us that you've come against me to make war in my land?"

<sup>13</sup>The Ammonite king responded to Jephthah's messengers, "When the Israelites were coming up from Egypt, they seized my land from the Arnon to the Jabbok and all the way to the Jordan. Now give it back peacefully!"

<sup>14</sup>Then Jephthah again sent messengers to the Ammonite king <sup>15</sup>and said to him, "Jephthah states: Israel didn't seize the land of the Moabites or the land of the Ammonites.

<sup>16</sup>When they were coming up from Egypt, the Israelites went through the desert to the Reed Sea<sup>i</sup> and came to Kadesh. <sup>17</sup>Then the Israelites sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying,

<sup>i</sup>Or Red Sea

resembles the book's opening question in Judges 1:1. *leader* (Heb. "head"): The term is not the root for "leader" used elsewhere in Judges but has hints of royal rule.

11:1-12:7 Jephthah's defeat of the Ammonites ends in personal tragedy and civil war. The story of Jephthah focuses more on his personal life and ambition than on his defeat of Israel's oppressors, which is related in only two verses (11:32-33). Jephthah's ambition for personal status illustrates Israel's shift away from a focus on God's purposes as the tribal leaders' era unfolds. It results in tragic violence in his own family.

11:1-3 The book's theme that God calls and uses unexpected people (cf. the left-handed Ehud in Judg 3:12-30 and the women Deborah and Jael in Judg 4:4-22) continues by introducing Jephthah as a *prostitute's son*, a suspect parentage within Israel's social system. The book has used a verb from the same Hebrew root as "prostitute" to describe Israel's "unfaithfulness" to the Lord (Judg 8:27, 33), so it carries those overtones too. Several parallels with the introduction of Abimelech in Judges 9 create doubts about Jephthah's character: Abimelech was the son of a secondary wife (Judg 8:31), the chief of a band of outlaws (Judg 9:4), and he came to power through conflict with his brothers (Judg 9:5).

11:2 Jephthah's rejection by his half brothers over the issue of inheritance reflects concerns over lineage in kinship-based societies.

11:3 *Tob*: See 2 Samuel 10:6-8.

11:4-11 The first of three attempts by Jephthah to

promote or preserve himself by making deals (see Judg 11:12-28, 30-31). Unlike previous stories of tribal leaders, the text doesn't say that the Lord raised up Jephthah as a deliverer, and Jephthah's first move is to make a deal for his own position with the elders of Gilead. This tendency toward self-interest creates more doubt about Jephthah's character.

11:6 *commander*: The elders' first offer is to make Jephthah a leading officer (cf. Judg 11:8-9).

11:8-9 *leader* ("head," see Judg 10:18): The elders try to persuade Jephthah by offering a more powerful position than "commander" in Judges 11:6 (cf. Judg 10:18). Jephthah makes a deal for sole leadership in verse 9 (*alone*). The position is not designated by the Hebrew word for "king," but does indicate a more permanent office than "commander" in Judges 11:6. As with the Abimelech story in Judges 9, this one raises concerns about royal leadership (cf. Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

11:12-28 The dispute is over territory. Although negotiation may be a normal diplomatic procedure, this is the only place in the book where a leader tries to make a deal with a foreign oppressor. The text does not present Jephthah's negotiation as all bad, however, since he is then able to make a case for a just war.

11:12-13 First attempt at making a deal.

11:14-28 The second attempt at making a deal appeals to Israel's journey out of Egypt (cf. Num 20-22) and claims that the territory given to Israel was not taken from Moab or Ammon.

11:29 Jgs 3:10;  
Jgs 10:17  
11:30 Gn 28:20;  
Jgs 11:31;  
Jgs 11:34;  
1Sa 13:11  
11:31 Jgs 11:30  
11:34 Ex 15:20;  
Jgs 10:17;  
Jgs 11:11;  
1Sa 10:6;  
Jer 31:4  
11:35 Gn 37:29;  
Nm 30:2

'Please allow us to pass through your land'; but the Edomite king refused. They sent the same request to the king of Moab, and he was unwilling. So the Israelites stayed at Kadesh.

<sup>18</sup>Later they journeyed into the desert but went around the lands of Edom and Moab, arriving on the east side of the land of Moab and setting up camp on the other side of the Arnon. They never entered Moabite territory, because the Arnon was the boundary of Moab. <sup>19</sup>Then the Israelites sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites and king of Heshbon and said to him, 'Please allow us to pass through your land to our own place.' <sup>20</sup>Yet Sihon didn't trust the Israelites to pass through his territory. He assembled his entire army, set up camp at Jahaz, and went to war with the Israelites. <sup>21</sup>The LORD, Israel's God, handed over Sihon and his entire army to the Israelites, and they defeated Sihon. So the Israelites took possession of all the land of the Amorites who were living in that area. <sup>22</sup>They took possession of all the Amorite territory from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the desert to the Jordan.

<sup>23</sup>So now that the LORD, Israel's God, has driven out the Amorites before his people Israel, will you take possession of their land? <sup>24</sup>Shouldn't you possess what Chemosh your god has given you to possess? And shouldn't we possess everything that the LORD our God has given us to possess? <sup>25</sup>Do you now have a better case than Moab's King Balak, Zippor's son? Did he make an accusation against the Israelites or go to war with them? <sup>26</sup>Why didn't you take back this territory while the Israelites lived in Heshbon and its villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the towns along the branches of the Arnon for three hundred years? <sup>27</sup>I haven't sinned against you, but you're doing me wrong by making war against me. Let the LORD, who is the judge, decide today between the Israelites and the Ammonites!

<sup>28</sup>But the Ammonite king refused to listen to the message that Jephthah sent to him.

### *Jephthah's promise*

<sup>29</sup>Then the LORD's spirit came on Jephthah. He passed through Gilead and Manasseh, then through Mizpah in Gilead, and from there he crossed over to the Ammonites. <sup>30</sup>Jephthah made a solemn promise to the LORD: "If you will decisively hand over the Ammonites to me, <sup>31</sup>then whatever comes out the doors of my house to meet me when I return victorious from the Ammonites will be given over to the LORD. I will sacrifice it as an entirely burned offering." <sup>32</sup>Jephthah crossed over to fight the Ammonites, and the LORD handed them over to him. <sup>33</sup>It was an exceptionally great defeat; he defeated twenty towns from Aroer to the area of Minnith, and on as far as Abel-keramim. So the Ammonites were brought down before the Israelites.

<sup>34</sup>But when Jephthah came to his house in Mizpah, it was his daughter who came out to meet him with tambourines and dancing! She was an only child; he had no other son or daughter except her. <sup>35</sup>When he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, "Oh no! My daughter! You have brought me to my knees! You are my agony! For I opened my mouth to the LORD, and I can't take it back."

11:19 *Heshbon*: a town in the central Transjordan, but there is no archaeological evidence that the town was occupied in the 13th–12th centuries BCE.

11:20 *Jahaz*: precise location is unknown.

11:24 *Chemosh* was actually the chief god of the Moabites, not the Ammonites (cf. Num 21:29; 2 Kgs 23:13). Jephthah's "error" may be a deliberate attempt by the narrator to portray him as inept, even in his frequent attempts at deal-making.

11:25 *King Balak*: See Numbers 22–24.

11:29–40 Jephthah's rash promise and sacrifice of his daughter. When the time for battle arrives, the narrative focuses instead on Jephthah's solemn pledge and its tragic consequences.

11:29–30 In the context of the other tribal leaders' stories (see, e.g., Judg 3:7–11), the coming of the LORD's spirit on Jephthah guarantees victory. Jephthah's promise is unexpected and unnecessary, indicating a lack of faith and a desire to assure his own success.

11:31 The wording of Jephthah's solemn promise is unclear in Hebrew (*whatever* or *whoever*), and he may have

intended an animal. Typical houses in Iron Age Israel had animal stalls on the first level.

11:34 The fact that his daughter emerges first from the house, most probably to celebrate his victory, shows just how rash Jephthah was to make this unnecessary promise. Interpretations of this story have ranged from condemning Jephthah for male-centered violence to praising him and his daughter for being willing to fulfill their costly promise. Still, the unnamed daughter is one of the most tragic female characters in the book. She represents one way that women suffer increasing levels of violence at the hands of men as Israel's social and religious failure continues toward the end of the book. See sidebar, "Women, Gender, and Violence in Judges."

11:35 Jephthah even blames his daughter for causing him pain. Although OT instruction sees solemn promises as irrevocable (Num 30:3–5; Deut 23:21–23), child sacrifice is strongly prohibited (Lev 18:21). Jephthah's previous tendency toward deal-making might lead us to expect that he will try to negotiate with the Lord on his daughter's behalf, but he doesn't (cf. Abraham in Gen 18:23–33; Gen 22:1–19).

11:36 2Sa 18:19  
 11:37 Ps 78:63;  
 Is 4:1; Lk 1:25  
 11:39 Dt 12:31;  
 Jgs 11:31  
 11:40 Jgs 5:11,  
 Jgs 11:5, Jgs 11:5,  
 Jgs 11:14,  
 Jgs 11:30

*Women, Gender, and Violence in Judges* Judges features an unusually high percentage of women characters, nearly 20 in all—both named and unnamed, Israelite and non-Israelite (e.g., Achsah; Deborah; Jael; Jephthah's daughter; Samson's mother, fiancée, and prostitute; Delilah; and the Levite's secondary wife). The activity and fate of these women constitute major elements in the book's evaluation of the various tribal leaders as positive or negative, and women often appear as trophies of war or items of property. Readers have often admired the tribal leaders as heroes, but this view overlooks the book's disturbing instances of violence, rape, and killing, many of which happen to women. Such stories serve the writer's purpose of casting the tribal leaders' era as a time of gradual decline in Israel's social, moral, and religious life. As Israel's faithfulness declines from the beginning to the end of the book, the status and condition of women also declines, and they appear less and less as independent actors and more and more as victims of violence. In this way, women and the violence done to them represent Israelite social and religious life and the violence being done to it.

<sup>36</sup>But she replied to him, "My father, you've opened your mouth to the LORD, so you should do to me just what you've promised. After all, the LORD has carried out just punishment for you on your enemies the Ammonites." <sup>37</sup>Then she said to her father, "Let this one thing be done for me: hold off for two months and let me and my friends wander the hills in sadness, crying over the fact that I never had children."

<sup>38</sup>"Go," he responded, and he sent her away for two months. She and her friends walked on the hills and cried because she would never have children.

<sup>39</sup>When two months had passed, she returned to her father, and he did to her what he had promised. She had not known a man intimately. But she gave rise to a tradition in Israel where <sup>40</sup>for four days every year Israelite daughters would go away to recount the story of the Gileadite Jephthah's daughter.

**Jephthah defeats the Ephraimites**

**12**The Ephraimites were called up for battle and crossed over to Zaphon. They said to Jephthah, "Why did you cross over to fight the Ammonites and not call us to go with you? We're going to burn down your house over you!"

<sup>2</sup>Jephthah replied to them, "My people and I were in a great conflict with the Ammonites. But when I cried out to you, you didn't rescue me from their power. <sup>3</sup>When I saw that you weren't going to rescue me, I risked my own life and crossed over against the Ammonites, and the LORD handed them over to me. So why have you marched against me today to fight me?"

<sup>4</sup>So Jephthah gathered all the men of Gilead and fought the Ephraimites. The Gileadites defeated the Ephraimites, because they had said, "You are fugitives from Ephraim! Gilead stands within Ephraim and Manasseh."

<sup>5</sup>The Gileadites took control of the Jordan's crossing points into Ephraim. Whenever one of the Ephraimite fugitives said, "Let me cross," the Gileadites would ask him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If he said, "No," <sup>6</sup>they would tell him, "Then say *shibboleth*." But he would say, "*sibboleth*," because he couldn't pronounce it correctly. So they would seize him and kill him at the Jordan's crossing points. Forty-two thousand of the Ephraimites fell at that time.

<sup>7</sup>Jephthah led Israel for six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in one of the towns in Gilead.

11:36-37 Although she remains an anonymous and passive victim of male violence, Jephthah's daughter accepts her fate and so provides a sharp contrast with her self-promoting father.

12:1-7 Jephthah's independent leadership style results in conflict with the Ephraimites (see Gideon in Judg 8:1-3), this time resulting in civil war (cf. Judg 19-21).

12:1-4 As with Gideon (Judg 8:1-3), the Ephraimites complain that they were not called to participate in the first battle. Jephthah, however, doesn't appease them as Gideon did, but claims that they refused to respond to his call for aid. He then musters the Gileadites to attack them.  
 12:4 The Ephraimites' taunt against the Gileadites pro-

voked them, but its meaning is no longer clear. It may have to do with Gilead's not being a separate tribe in Israel.  
 12:5 *took control of the Jordan's crossing points*: a common battle strategy in the judges' stories (see Judg 3:28; Judg 7:24). Unlike previous instances, however, Jephthah takes this action not against foreigners but against fellow Israelites.

12:6 *shibboleth* . . . *sibboleth*: The difference in pronunciation reveals differences in regional dialects.

12:7 The conclusion of Jephthah's story in the style of the typical outline of these stories in Judges links the narrative in Judges 11:1-12:6 to the lists of minor leaders that follows in Judges 12:8-15 (see also Judg 10:1-5).

12:8 Mt 5:2

12:11 Jgs 12:12

13:1 Jgs 2:11

13:2 Gn 11:30;

Josh 19:41;

Jgs 13:25;

Jgs 16:31

13:3 Gn 16:7;

Jgs 2:1;

Jgs 6:11-12;

Lk 1:11

13:4 Nm 6:2,3;

Jgs 13:14;

Lk 1:15

13:5 Nm 6:2;

Nm 6:5;

Jgs 16:17;

1Sa 1:11;

1Sa 7:13

13:6 1Sa 2:27

**Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon**

<sup>8</sup>After Jephthah, Ibzan from Bethlehem led Israel. <sup>9</sup>He had thirty sons and thirty daughters. He married his thirty daughters to those outside his clan, and brought in thirty young women from outside for his sons. He led Israel for seven years. <sup>10</sup>Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.

<sup>11</sup>After Ibzan, Elon from Zebulun led Israel; he did so for ten years. <sup>12</sup>Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

<sup>13</sup>After Elon, Abdon, Hillel's son from Pirathon, led Israel. <sup>14</sup>He had forty sons and thirty grandsons mounted on seventy donkeys. He led Israel for eight years. <sup>15</sup>Then Abdon, Hillel's son from Pirathon, died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the Amalekite highlands.

**Samson's birth**

**13** The Israelites again did things that the LORD saw as evil, and he handed them over to the Philistines for forty years.

<sup>2</sup>Now there was a certain man from Zorah, from the Danite clan, whose name was Manoah. His wife was unable to become pregnant and had not given birth to any children.

<sup>3</sup>The LORD's messenger appeared to the woman and said to her, "Even though you've been unable to become pregnant and haven't given birth, you are now pregnant and will give birth to a son! <sup>4</sup>Now be careful not to drink wine or brandy or to eat anything that is ritually unclean, <sup>5</sup>because you are pregnant and will give birth to a son. Don't allow a razor to shave his head, because the boy is going to be a nazirite for God from birth. He'll be the one who begins Israel's rescue from the power of the Philistines."

<sup>6</sup>Then the woman went and told her husband, "A man of God came to me, and he looked like God's messenger—very scary! I didn't ask him where he was from, and he didn't tell me his name. <sup>7</sup>He said to me, 'You are pregnant and will give birth to a son, so don't drink wine or brandy or eat anything that is ritually unclean, because the boy is going to be a nazirite for God from birth until the day he dies.'"

12:8-15 The summaries of three minor leaders, which perhaps originally formed a single list with the two minor leaders in Judges 10:1-5. The text presents the view that they led all of Israel, and their high numbers of children and ability to provide marriages for them indicate their power and status. Yet these leaders also represent further decline for Israel, because they don't deliver the people from any enemies and their rule produces benefits only for themselves and their families.

12:8 *Bethlehem*: The name here may designate a northern town in lower Galilee (see Josh 19:15), not the town near Jerusalem, since the other leaders in the list are from the north.

13:1-16:31 The stories of Samson read like well-told folk narratives. They feature mostly personal conflicts, but Samson nevertheless unintentionally brings about Israel's deliverance from the Philistines. The book's overall plan depicting Israel's decline from ideal success and obedience reaches a low point in Samson, the last of the major tribal leaders. The failure and tragedy of his story will only be surpassed by the book's two appendixes (Judg 17-21). Samson represents the opposite of all of the book's ideals: he leads no Israelite tribes in battle, he breaks his solemn promises to the Lord, he intermarries with Israel's enemies, and finally he seeks personal vengeance. In these ways, the book uses Samson to represent Israel itself, with its religious disobedience, experience of capture and destruction, and then hope for God's rescue even in the midst of human failure.

13:1-25 Samson is the only leader in the book with a birth story (cf. Samuel in 1 Sam 1). The chapter recalls many other biblical texts (e.g., compare 13:17-18 with Gen 32:29), but focuses on Samson's unnamed mother. She is

one of the most positive female characters in Judges (see similar birth announcements to women in Gen 16:7-12; 18:9-15; 25:22-23). She represents qualities of trust and obedience that are lacking in her husband and many of the book's male characters. The Lord's messenger appears to her on both occasions, even when summoned by Manoah (13:3, 9), and her faith reassures her fearful husband (13:23). The key element in the story is the "nazirite promise" imposed on Samson (13:5; see Num 6:1-21). The remainder of the stories in Judges 14-16 show his unfaithfulness to this promise.

13:1 The typical story line (see Judg 2:11-19) introduces the *Philistines* as the primary enemy and indicate Israel's worsening condition by giving an exceptionally long period of oppression (40 years; cf. 18 years in Judg 10:8). *Philistines*: a group of the sea peoples who moved into the coastal area west of Israel in the 12th century BCE.

13:2 *Danite clan*: Dan is portrayed as a clan (rather than a tribe) located in the foothills south of Judah (see note on Judg 1:9 and Dan's movement northward in Judg 17-18).

13:4-5 *nazirite* means "consecrated or dedicated one" and designated a group of people who lived according to promises like those in Numbers 6:1-21. Samson violates these solemn promises by drinking wine or produce of vineyards (Judg 14:5), having contact with a corpse (Judg 14:8-9), and cutting his hair (Judg 16:19).

13:5 *begins Israel's rescue*: hints that Samson will not be as successful as Othniel, Ehud, and Deborah, who completed their tasks, and may point toward the coming of kingship, since only Saul and David will liberate Israel from the Philistines.

13:6 The woman immediately recognizes the messenger as divine, but her husband doesn't.

<sup>8</sup>Manoah asked the LORD, "Please, my Lord," he said, "let the man of God whom you sent come back to us once more, so he can teach us how we should treat the boy who is to be born."

<sup>9</sup>God listened to Manoah, and God's messenger came once more to the woman. She was sitting in the field, but her husband Manoah wasn't with her. <sup>10</sup>So the woman hurriedly ran and informed her husband. She said to him, "The man who came to me the other day has just appeared to me."

<sup>11</sup>Manoah got up and followed his wife. He came to the man and said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to this woman?"

"I am," he replied.

<sup>12</sup>Manoah said, "Now when your words come true, what should be the rules for the boy and how he should act?"

<sup>13</sup>The LORD's messenger answered Manoah, "The woman should be careful to do everything that I told her. <sup>14</sup>She must not consume anything that comes from the grapevine, drink wine or brandy, or eat anything that is ritually unclean. She must be careful to do everything I have commanded her."

<sup>15</sup>Manoah said to the LORD's messenger, "Please let us persuade you to stay so we can prepare a young goat for you."

<sup>16</sup>But the LORD's messenger replied to Manoah, "If you persuaded me to stay, I wouldn't eat your food. If you prepare an entirely burned offering, offer it to the LORD." Indeed, Manoah didn't know that he was the LORD's messenger. <sup>17</sup>Manoah said to the LORD's messenger, "What's your name, so that we may honor you when your words come true?"

<sup>18</sup>The LORD's messenger responded to him, "Why do you ask my name? You couldn't understand it."

<sup>19</sup>So Manoah took a young goat and a grain offering and offered them on a rock to the LORD. While Manoah and his wife were looking, an amazing thing happened: <sup>20</sup>as the flame from the altar went up toward the sky, the LORD's messenger went up in the altar's flame. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell facedown on the ground. <sup>21</sup>The LORD's messenger didn't reappear to Manoah or his wife, and Manoah then realized that it had been the LORD's messenger. <sup>22</sup>Manoah said to his wife, "We are certainly going to die, because we've seen God!"

<sup>23</sup>But his wife replied to him, "If the LORD wanted to kill us, he wouldn't have accepted the entirely burned offering and grain offering from our hands. He wouldn't have shown us all these things or told us all of this now."

<sup>24</sup>The woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson. The boy grew up, and the LORD blessed him. <sup>25</sup>The LORD's spirit began to move him when he was in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

**Samson's marriage to a Philistine woman**

**14** Samson traveled down to Timnah. While he was in Timnah, a Philistine woman caught his eye. <sup>2</sup>He went back home and told his father and mother, "A Philistine woman in Timnah caught my eye; now get her for me as a wife!"

13:8 Jgs 13:2, Jgs 13:9  
 13:9 Jgs 13:8  
 13:11 Jgs 13:8  
 13:12 Jgs 13:17  
 13:13 Jgs 2:1, Jgs 6:11, Jgs 13:3, Jgs 13:4, Jgs 13:9  
 13:14 Nm 6:4, Jgs 13:4  
 13:15 Jgs 6:19  
 13:16 2Ki 17:36  
 13:17 Gn 32:29  
 13:18 Gn 32:29; Is 9:6  
 13:19 Jgs 6:19-21, Jgs 13:20  
 13:20 Lv 9:24; Jgs 13:19; 1Ch 21:16; Eze 1:28  
 13:21 Jgs 6:22, Jgs 13:22  
 13:22 Gn 32:30; Dt 5:26; Jgs 6:22, Jgs 13:21  
 13:23 Ps 25:14  
 13:24 1Sa 2:21, 1Sa 3:19; Lk 1:80; Heb 11:32  
 13:25 Josh 15:33; Jgs 3:10, Jgs 13:2, Jgs 16:31, Jgs 18:12  
 14:1 Gn 38:12

13:8-14 Manoah asks for the messenger to appear once more, but he comes to *the woman* (13:9), reversing the expectations of a male-centered culture. Perhaps not believing his wife's report, Manoah asks to hear the instructions concerning the child.

13:13-14 See notes on Judges 13:4-5.

13:15-22 See Gideon's similar use of a meal offering in Judges 6:19-24.

13:23 The unnamed woman, not her husband, expresses faith rather than fear.

13:24 The name *Samson* is related to the Hebrew term for "sun."

13:25 The spirit's moving of Samson leads us to expect that his saving activities will start soon (cf. Judg 3:10; 11:29-33), but they are delayed by his personal conflicts that follow. *Zorah* and *Eshtaol* locate the story in the area south of Jerusalem and just east of the Philistines.

14:1-15:20 Samson's ill-fated marriage to a Philistine

woman and its violent consequences represent Israel's religious and social decline. The Lord remains active in unexpected and seemingly contradictory ways (see 14:4, 19), but the story focuses on Samson's hasty actions and personal revenge. Some interpreters see Samson as a foolish antihero, while others understand him as a traditional epic hero with typical flaws. Very little theological commentary appears in the story.

14:1-20 Samson marries a Philistine. Deuteronomy prohibits intermarriage with seven peoples living in Canaan (Deut 7:3-4), and Judges elsewhere says such intermarriage was the cause of Israel's unfaithfulness to God (Judg 3:5-6). The Philistines don't appear in either list, but they were Israel's most dangerous neighbor until King David contained their military power (2 Sam 5:17-25).

14:1 Samson's geographical movement (*traveled* down, instead of the expected "went up" to battle) represents Israel's "going down" from the ideals of the book's model

14:6 Jgs 3:10;  
 Jgs 14:19;  
 Jgs 16:30;  
 1Sa 17:34-35  
 14:7 Jgs 14:5  
 14:8 Ps 118:12;  
 Is 7:18  
 14:10 Gn 29:22  
 14:11 Jn 3:29  
 14:12 Gn 29:27;  
 Gn 45:22;  
 1Ki 10:1;  
 2Ki 5:22;  
 Eze 17:2  
 14:14 Jgs 14:18  
 14:15 Jgs 12:1;  
 Jgs 15:6, Jgs 16:5  
 14:16 Jgs 16:15  
 14:17 Jgs 16:16  
 14:18 Jgs 14:14;  
 Prv 30:30

<sup>3</sup>But his father and mother replied to him, "Is there no woman among your own relatives or among all our people that you have to go get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?"

Yet Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, because she's the one I want!" <sup>4</sup>His father and mother didn't know that the LORD was behind this. He was looking for an opening with the Philistines, because they were ruling over Israel at that time.

<sup>5</sup>Then Samson traveled down to Timnah with his father and mother. When he came to the vineyards in Timnah, suddenly a lone young lion came roaring to meet him. <sup>6</sup>The LORD's spirit rushed over him, and he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as one might tear apart a young goat. But he didn't tell his father or mother what he had done. <sup>7</sup>Then he traveled down and talked with the woman; she was the one Samson wanted.

<sup>8</sup>After a while, he came back again to marry her. He turned aside to look at the lion's remains, and there was a swarm of bees with honey inside the lion's skeleton. <sup>9</sup>He scooped the honey into his hands, eating it as he continued along. When he got to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they ate it too. But he didn't tell them that he had scooped the honey from the lion's skeleton.

<sup>10</sup>His father traveled down to the woman, and Samson put on a feast there, as was the custom for young men. <sup>11</sup>When the townspeople saw him, they selected thirty companions to be with him. <sup>12</sup>Then Samson said to them, "Let me tell you a riddle. If you can figure it out and tell me the answer within the seven days of the feast, I'll give you thirty linen robes and thirty sets of clothes. <sup>13</sup>But if you can't tell me the answer, then it's you who have to give me thirty linen robes and thirty sets of clothes."

So they replied to him, "Tell your riddle; let's hear it."

<sup>14</sup>He said to them,

"Out of the eater there came something to eat.

Out of the strong there came something sweet."

For three days they couldn't tell the answer to the riddle. <sup>15</sup>On the fourth<sup>1</sup> day they said to Samson's wife, "Seduce your husband so he'll tell us the answer to the riddle, or else we'll set fire to you and your household. Were we invited here just to become poor?"

<sup>16</sup>So Samson's wife cried on his shoulder and said, "You hate me! You don't love me! You told a riddle to my people but didn't tell me the answer."

He replied to her, "Look, I haven't even told the answer to my father and mother. Why should I tell it to you?" <sup>17</sup>But she cried on his shoulder for the rest of the seven days of the feast. Finally, on the seventh day, he told her the answer, for she had nagged him. And she told her people the answer to the riddle. <sup>18</sup>So on the seventh day, before the sun set, the townspeople said to him,

<sup>1</sup>LXX, Syr; MT seventh

leaders (see Judg 3:7-11). *Timnah*: The exact location is uncertain but likely a town north of Beth-shemesh on the border of Judah and Philistia (see Josh 15:10; Josh 19:43). Samson's desire to marry a Philistine woman is ironic in light of the statement in Judges 13:5 that the Lord has appointed him to begin Israel's rescue from the Philistines (cf. his parents' objection in Judg 14:3).

14:3 *she's the one I want*: "she is right in my eyes," is the language of the chorus that will be repeated throughout the final chapters as a symptom of the religious and social breakdown of the tribal leaders' era (see Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

14:4 This verse attributes Samson's desire to marry to divine direction. Throughout Samson's failures and tragedies, the Lord seems willing to work through the sinful actions of people for the sake of larger redemptive purposes (see Judg 16:28-31). Yet the verse's statement doesn't necessarily support Samson's actions, since it leaves open the possibility that God was *looking for an opening* to use the Philistines to bring judgment on Samson.

14:5-9 Samson violates two of the three primary nazirite promises, leaving only the solemn promise to let one's hair grow long (cf. Judg 13:4-5; Num 6:3-8). The setting in a vineyard alludes to the ban against drinking wine or

anything from the grapevine (see also Samson's "feast," which translates a Hebrew term that indicates a "drinking festival," in Judg 14:10). The eating of honey is positive in other contexts (1 Sam 14:24-30), but the honeycomb's position in the carcass leads Samson to disobey the nazirite ban on touching a corpse. Eating the honey from the lion also foreshadows the riddle in Judges 14:14.

14:5 *lone young lion*: The Hebrew phrase means a young male lion separated from its pride.

14:6 *The Lord's spirit*: See Judges 3:10 and notes.

14:9 Samson causes his parents to defile themselves by eating food that is ritually unclean because of contact with a dead animal (cf. Lev 11:24-25, 39).

14:10 *feast* ("drinking festival")... *as was the custom for young men*: This phrase suggests that a feast was a typical part of a marriage between two kinship groups.

14:14 Samson's riddle refers back to the scene with the lion carcass in the vineyard.

14:15-18 The motif of a woman who discovers and then reveals a secret foreshadows Delilah's role in Samson's downfall in Judges 16:4-22.

14:15 *Seduce*: "open up" (see also Judg 16:5).

14:18 *plowed with my heifer*: a sexually suggestive insult to the woman.



"What's sweeter than honey?  
What's stronger than a lion?"

He replied to them,

"If you hadn't plowed with my heifer,  
you wouldn't have figured out my riddle!"

<sup>19</sup>Then the LORD's spirit rushed over him, and he went down to Ashkelon. He killed thirty of their men, stripped them of their gear, and gave the sets of clothes to the ones who had told the answer to the riddle. In anger, he went back up to his father's household. <sup>20</sup>And Samson's wife married one of those who had been his companions.

**Samson attacks the Philistines**

**15** Later on, at the time of the wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife, bringing along a young goat. He said, "Let me go into my wife's bedroom."

But her father wouldn't allow him to go in. <sup>2</sup>Her father said, "I was so sure that you had completely rejected her that I gave her in marriage to one of your companions. Don't you think her younger sister is even better? Let her be your wife instead."

<sup>3</sup>Samson replied, "No one can blame me now for being ready to bring down trouble on the Philistines!"

<sup>4</sup>Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes. He took torches, turned the foxes tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. <sup>5</sup>He lit the torches and released the foxes into the Philistines' grain fields. So he burned the stacked grain, standing grain, vineyards, and olive orchards.

<sup>6</sup>The Philistines inquired, "Who did this?"

So it was reported, "Samson the Timnite's son-in-law did it, because his father-in-law gave his wife in marriage to one of his companions." So the Philistines went up and burned her and her father to death.

<sup>7</sup>Samson then responded to them, "If this is how you act, then I won't stop until I get revenge on you!" <sup>8</sup>He struck them hard, taking their legs right out from under them. <sup>8</sup> Then he traveled down and stayed in a cave in the rock at Etam.

<sup>9</sup>The Philistines marched up, made camp in Judah, and released their forces on Lehi. <sup>10</sup>The people of Judah asked, "Why have you marched up against us?"

<sup>8</sup>Or *struck them hip and thigh*

14:19 Jgs 1:18,  
Jgs 3:10,  
Jgs 13:25,  
Jgs 14:6;  
1Sa 11:6  
15:1 Gn 38:17;  
Jgs 16:1

14:19-20 Once again, the *spirit* is active (cf. Judg 14:6), but Samson uses the divine power for a purpose other than rescuing Israel. Verses 19-20 provide the battle report that the reader has been expecting since the divine statement in Judges 13:5, but the battle is only for Samson's personal benefit.

14:19 *Ashkelon*: one of the main Philistine cities west of Judah (cf. Judg 1:18).

14:20 Samson's abandonment of his new wife constitutes a technical divorce, although Samson fails to see it as such (cf. Judg 15:1).

15:1-20 The consequences of Samson's failed marriage is a cycle of violence and vengeance between Samson and the Philistines that unfolds in four main scenes: 15:4-5, 6, 7-8, 9-15.

15:1-3 Samson assumes the woman is still his wife and that he can return later as if he had not left her (cf. Judg 14:20).

15:2 *completely rejected*: appears in ancient Near Eastern marriage agreements as a technical term for a legal divorce without cause (see note on Judg 14:20). In response to her father's rejection and counteroffer (15:1-2), Samson's language ("no one can blame me now," Judg 15:3) implies that his previous slaughter of the Philistines at Ashkelon (Judg 14:19) was wrong.

15:4-5 Samson exacts personal vengeance for a perceived wrong, even though the father has acted legally and

appropriately. Similar use of animals as unusual weapons appears in traditional folk stories from the ancient Mediterranean world. The list of harvested grains, vineyards, and orchards represents a total destruction of the food crops in the area (cf. the Midianites' actions against Israel in Judg 6:1-6).

15:6 Although the Philistine woman's cunning saved herself and her family from the initial danger of being associated with Samson (Judg 14:15), she and her father meet that very fate (burning with fire) because of Samson's actions.

15:7 Samson's words are a solemn pledge.

15:8 *he struck them hard*: The Philistines' revenge was limited to those previously associated with Samson, but he increases the conflict with more extensive and severe violence. *legs right out from under them*: The Hebrew ("he struck them hip and thigh") indicates a complete defeat.

15:9-20 Samson's acts of personal revenge draw the people of Judah into his troubles and violence. The people of Judah give Samson over to the Philistines bound as a prisoner (15:9-13), and he defeats the Philistines like an epic warrior using a donkey's *jawbone* as a weapon (15:14-20).

15:9 *Lehi*: "jawbone." The chapter contains several etiologies (i.e., origin stories that give folk explanations of ancient place names; see also Judg 15:17, 19). *released their forces*: Compare with how Samson "released the foxes" against the Philistines in Judges 15:5.

15:11 Jgs 13:1,  
Jgs 14:4  
15:14 Jgs 3:10,  
Jgs 14:6,  
Jgs 14:19  
15:15 Lv 26:8,  
Josh 23:10;  
Jgs 3:31  
15:17 Jgs 15:9  
15:18 Jgs 14:3,  
Jgs 16:28  
15:19 Gn 45:27;  
Isa 30:12

"We've marched up to take Samson prisoner," they replied, "and to do to him just what he did to us."

<sup>11</sup>So three thousand people from Judah traveled down to the cave in the rock at Etam and said to Samson, "Don't you realize that the Philistines rule over us? What have you done to us?"

But he told them, "I did to them just what they did to me."

<sup>12</sup>Then the people of Judah said to him, "We've come down to take you prisoner so we can turn you over to the Philistines."

Samson responded to them, "Just promise that you won't attack me yourselves."

<sup>13</sup>"We won't," they said to him. "We'll only take you prisoner so we can turn you over to them. We won't kill you." Then they tied him up with two new ropes, and brought him up from the rock.

<sup>14</sup>When Samson arrived at Lehi, the Philistines met him and came out shouting. The LORD's spirit rushed over him, the ropes on his arms became like burned-up linen, and the ties melted right off his hands. <sup>15</sup>He found a donkey's fresh jawbone, picked it up, and used it to attack one thousand men. <sup>16</sup>Samson said,

"With a donkey's jawbone,  
stacks on stacks!  
With a donkey's jawbone,  
I've killed one thousand men."

<sup>17</sup>When he finished speaking, he tossed away the jawbone. So that place became known as Ramath-lehi.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Now Samson was very thirsty, so he called out to the LORD, "You are the one who allowed this great victory to be accomplished by your servant's hands. Am I now going to die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" <sup>19</sup>So God split open the hollow rock in Lehi, and water flowed out of it. When Samson drank, his energy returned and he was recharged. Thus that place is still called by the name En-hakkore<sup>m</sup> in Lehi today.

<sup>20</sup>Samson led Israel for twenty years during the time of the Philistines.

### **Samson and the prostitute**

**16** One day Samson traveled to Gaza. While there, he saw a prostitute and had sex with her. <sup>2</sup>The word spread<sup>a</sup> among the people of Gaza, "Samson has come here!" So they circled around and waited in ambush for him all night at the city gate. They kept quiet all night long, thinking, "We'll kill him at the first light in the morning." <sup>3</sup>But Samson slept only half the night. He got up in the middle of the night, grabbed the doors of the city gate and the two gateposts, and pulled them up with the bar still across them. He put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the hill that is beside Hebron.

<sup>1</sup>Or *Jawbone Hill* <sup>m</sup>Or *Caller's Spring* <sup>a</sup>LXX; MT lacks *spread*.

15:11 *just what they did to me*: Samson clearly identifies the basis of his actions as personal revenge.

15:13 *tied him up with two new ropes*: shadows Samson's dialogue with Delilah in Judges 16:10-12.

15:14 *The Lord's spirit rushed over him*: See Judges 14:6 and notes on Judges 3:10.

15:16 The poem features a play on the Hebrew root that can mean both *donkey* and *stack*. Samson's boast parallels that of Lamech in Genesis 4:23-24, who overreacts to personal injury with excessive violence. Unlike other victory songs (cf. Miriam's in Exod 15:21 and Deborah's in Judg 5), Samson's never mentions the Lord.

15:18-20 True to his character throughout the stories, Samson demands that his immediate desires be met. Despite Samson's disobedience and violence, the Lord responds to his cry. So Samson stands as a symbol of Israel itself, representing both the people's decline because of religious unfaithfulness and their hope for divine mercy.

16:1-31 The final chapter of Samson's story presents the

result of his disobedience, impulsiveness, and selfishness, but also shows the continued activity of divine grace in the midst of human failure. The story has three episodes: Samson and the Philistine prostitute (16:1-3), Samson and Delilah (16:4-22), and Samson's capture and death (16:23-31). As throughout Samson's story, his reckless behavior and desire for foreign women lead to his downfall, highlighting the recurring motif of the seductive foreign woman (see sidebar, "Women, Gender, and Violence in Judges" at Judg 11).

16:1-3 Samson again seeks out a woman from a Philistine city (cf. Judg 14:1-4). The reference to a *prostitute* recalls the introduction of Jephthah in Judges 11:1 as well as the Lord's condemnation of Israel for "prostituting" itself with other gods (Judg 8:2, 33).

16:1 *Gaza*: the southernmost of the main Philistine cities west of Judah (cf. Judg 1:18; 6:4). Samson appears as a type of traditional folk hero who performs an extraordinary display of strength, carrying the doors of Gaza's gate some 40 miles uphill to Hebron.

**Samson and Delilah**

<sup>4</sup>Some time after this, in the Sorek Valley, Samson fell in love with a woman whose name was Delilah. <sup>5</sup>The rulers of the Philistines confronted her and said to her, “Seduce him and find out what gives him such great strength and what we can do to overpower him, so that we can tie him up and make him weak. Then we’ll each pay you eleven hundred pieces of silver.”

<sup>6</sup>So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me what gives you such great strength and how you can be tied up and made weak.”

<sup>7</sup>Samson replied to her, “If someone ties me up with seven fresh bowstrings that aren’t dried out, I’ll become weak. I’ll be like any other person.” <sup>8</sup>So the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings that weren’t dried out, and she tied him up with them.

<sup>9</sup>While an ambush was waiting for her signal in an inner room, she called out to him, “Samson, the Philistines are on you!” And he snapped the bowstrings like a thread of fiber snaps when it touches a flame. So the secret of his strength remained unknown.

<sup>10</sup>Then Delilah said to Samson, “You made a fool out of me and lied to me. Now please tell me how you can really be tied up!”

<sup>11</sup>He replied to her, “If someone ties me up with new ropes that haven’t been used for work, I’ll become weak. I’ll be like any other person.”

<sup>12</sup>So Delilah took new ropes and tied him up with them. Then she called out to him, “Samson, the Philistines are on you!” Once again, an ambush was waiting in an inner room. Yet he snapped them from his arms like thread.

<sup>13</sup>And Delilah said to Samson, “Up to now, you’ve made a fool out of me and lied to me. Tell me how you can be tied up!”

He responded to her, “If you weave the seven braids of my hair into the fabric on a loom and pull it tight with a pin, then I’ll become weak. I’ll be like any other person.”<sup>o</sup>

<sup>14</sup>So she got him to fall asleep, wove the seven braids of his hair into the fabric on a loom,<sup>p</sup> and pulled it tight with a pin. Then she called out to him, “Samson, the Philistines are on you!” He woke up from his sleep and pulled loose the pin, the loom, and the fabric.

<sup>15</sup>Delilah said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when you won’t trust me? Three times now you’ve made a fool out of me and not told me what gives you such great strength!” <sup>16</sup>She nagged him with her words day after day and begged him until he became worn out to the point of death.

<sup>17</sup>So he told her his whole secret. He said to her, “No razor has ever touched my head, because I’ve been a nazirite for God from the time I was born. If my head is shaved, my strength will leave me, and I’ll become weak. I’ll be like every other person.”

<sup>18</sup>When Delilah realized that he had told her his whole secret, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, “Come one more time, for he has told me his whole secret.” The rulers of the Philistines came up to her and brought the silver with them.

<sup>19</sup>She got him to fall asleep with his head on her lap. Then she called a man and had him shave off the seven braids of Samson’s hair. He began to weaken,<sup>q</sup> and his strength left him.

<sup>20</sup>She called out, “Samson, the Philistines are on you!”

<sup>o</sup>LXX; MT lacks *and pull it . . . other person.* <sup>p</sup>LXX; MT lacks *so she got him . . . on a loom.* <sup>q</sup>LXX; MT *she began to torment him.*

16:4-22 The long story about Delilah resembles the one about Samson’s wife in Judges 14. It consists of four scenes in which Delilah persuades Samson to reveal the secret of his strength, each of which is introduced by a form of *then Delilah said* (16:6-9, 10-12, 13-14, 15-21). Suspense builds as Samson’s lies inch closer to the truth (see esp. 16:13-14). His trust in Delilah may be caused by lust or by an inflated sense of his own strength and failure to recognize danger. The story makes clear that the real danger is Samson’s careless attitude toward the signs of the Lord’s presence with him, especially as represented by his Nazirite vows (see 16:20).

16:4 *Delilah*: It isn’t clear whether she is a Philistine or Israelite. Her name has several possible meanings, including “small/light,” “night,” and “flirt.” *Sorek Valley*: The area between Judah and Philistia, southwest of Jerusalem. *Sorek*

means “vineyard,” again echoing Samson’s careless treatment of his nazirite promises (see Judg 13:4-5; 14:5-9; Num 6:3-8). *fell in love*: The text shows a greater emotional attachment than in Samson’s previous relationships with women, perhaps generating sympathy for him in this episode.

16:5 *Seduce him*: “open him up” (see also Judg 14:15).

16:11 *new ropes*: Compare with Judges 15:13.

16:13 Samson’s reference to braiding his hair moves close to the actual secret of his strength.

16:16 Compare with Judges 14:17.

16:17 On Samson’s nazirite status, see Judges 13:4-5 and notes. *whole secret*: “told her his heart” (see also Judg 16:18).

16:19 By revealing his secret, Samson breaks the last of his solemn nazirite promises not to cut his hair (see 14:5-9; Num 6:3-20).

16:20 *the Lord had left him*: the opposite of the statements

16:6 Jgs 16:3-4;  
Jgs 16:30  
16:7 Jgs 16:10  
16:11 Jgs 15:13  
16:15 Jgs 14:16  
16:17 Nm 6:5;  
Jgs 13:5; Mt 7:5  
16:19 Prv 7:26;  
Ecc 7:26  
16:20 Isa 16:14

He woke up from his sleep and thought, I'll escape just like the other times and shake myself free. But he didn't realize that the LORD had left him. <sup>21</sup>So the Philistines captured him, put out his eyes, and took him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze chains, and he worked the grinding mill in the prison.

<sup>22</sup>But the hair on his head began to grow again right after it had been shaved.

### *Samson's death*

<sup>23</sup>The rulers of the Philistines gathered together to make a great sacrifice to their god Dagon and to hold a celebration. They cheered, "Our god has handed us Samson our enemy!" <sup>24</sup>When the people saw him, they praised their god, for they said, "Our god has handed us our enemy, the very one who devastated our land and killed so many of our people." <sup>25</sup>At the height of the celebration, they said, "Call for Samson so he can perform for us!" So they called Samson from the prison, and he performed in front of them. Then they had him stand between the pillars.

<sup>26</sup>Samson said to the young man who led him by the hand, "Put me where I can feel the pillars that hold up the temple, so I can lean on them." <sup>27</sup>Now the temple was filled with men and women. All the rulers of the Philistines were there, and about three thousand more men and women were on the roof watching as Samson performed. <sup>28</sup>Then Samson called out to the LORD, "LORD God, please remember me! Make me strong just this once more, God, so I can have revenge on the Philistines, just one act of revenge for my two eyes." <sup>29</sup>Samson grabbed the two central pillars that held up the temple. He leaned against one with his right hand and the other with his left. <sup>30</sup>And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" He strained with all his might, and the temple collapsed on the rulers and all the people who were in it. So it turned out that he killed more people in his death than he did during his life.

<sup>31</sup>His brothers and his father's entire household traveled down, carried him back up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had led Israel for twenty years.

### *Micah's sanctuary and the Levite priest*

**17**Once there was a man named Micah who lived in the Ephraim highlands. <sup>2</sup>He said to his mother, "The eleven hundred pieces of silver that were taken from you led you to declare a curse and even to repeat it when I could hear. I have that silver. I'm the one who took it, and now I'll give it back to you."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Or *When their hearts were glad* <sup>b</sup>or *so I can have revenge on the Philistines for one of my two eyes* <sup>c</sup>The words and now I'll give it back to you are relocated from the end of 17:3 in Heb.

that the Lord's spirit had rushed on him to give him power (cf. Judg 13:25; 14:6; 15:14). The text claims that Samson's fall was God's doing.

16:21 Samson undergoes an ironic change from a mighty warrior to a domestic servant. Readers in the Babylonian exile would recognize their own experiences here: Judah's last king was blinded and put in *bronze chains* (2 Kgs 25:7), and exiled young men were forced to work the mill (Lam 5:13).

16:22 A subtle sign of hope in the midst of despair.

16:23-31 Samson's humiliation creates the opportunity for a final act of revenge against the Philistines.

16:23 *Dagon*: a god associated with grain and fertility. He is the father of Baal in some texts outside the Bible, but the OT associates him with the Philistines (e.g. 1 Sam 5:2-5, 7).

16:28-31 *so I can have revenge*: Samson's goal remains personal vengeance (16:28). Yet, just as the Lord responded to Samson's cry after numerous acts of vengeance in Judges 15:18-19, so the Lord grants Samson's prayer for strength and uses his act to rescue Israel from the Philistines.

17:1-21:25 Two appendices to the main deliverer stories (Judg 3:7-16:31) describe the tragic result of Israel's unfaithfulness (17:1-18:31) and social breakup (19:1-21:25). These chapters parallel the book's two-part introduction, which focuses on social and military failure (Judg 1:1-2:5) and

covenant disobedience (Judg 2:6-3:6), but they don't include any elements of the typical story line (cf. Judg 2:11-19). They focus instead on conflicts between Israelites, seemingly without God's involvement, and mark the low point of Israel's progressive decline that has unfolded throughout the book. References to the lack of a king (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) show the need for a monarchy. Yet the book's earlier critiques of attempts to be king (see Judg 8:22-27; 9:7-15), as well as the context of the whole Deuteronomistic History (Joshua to Kings) that shows the ultimate failure of royal rule, indicate that these chapters are part of a larger reflection on the possibilities and problems of *all* forms of human leadership for the people of God (see intro).

17:1-18:31 The establishment of an unlawful worship site in the northern territory (17:1-13) provides the context for the story of the northward movement of the tribe of Dan (18:1-31). Judges 17-18 likely served as an explanation for Dan's northern location and a criticism of sanctuaries outside of Jerusalem in the later northern kingdom. In a number of instances, Israelite persons and tribes twist and/or take advantage of their own sacred traditions, such as the priesthood and holy war, for personal gain.

17:1-5 Micah, an Ephraimite, after stealing from his mother, establishes for her a personal shrine to the Lord, containing idols of various sorts; and he installs one of

His mother replied, "May the LORD bless you, my son!"<sup>3</sup> When he gave the eleven hundred pieces of silver back to his mother, she said, "I wholeheartedly devote this silver to the LORD, to be made into a sculpted image and a molded image for my son." <sup>4</sup>So he gave the silver back to his mother, and she took two hundred pieces of silver and gave them to a silversmith, who used it for a sculpted image and a molded image. And they were placed in Micah's house. <sup>5</sup>This man Micah had his own sanctuary. <sup>6</sup>He made a priestly vest<sup>7</sup> and divine images<sup>8</sup> and appointed one of his sons to be his personal priest. <sup>9</sup>In those days there was no king in Israel; each person did what they thought to be right.

<sup>7</sup>Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, from the area of the Judahite clan. He was a Levite residing there as an immigrant. <sup>8</sup>The man left the town of Bethlehem in Judah to settle as an immigrant wherever he could find a place. He came to Micah's house in the Ephraim highlands while he was making his way.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>"Where are you from?" Micah asked him.

He replied, "I'm a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I'm looking to settle as an immigrant anywhere I can find a place."

<sup>10</sup>So Micah said to him, "Stay with me and be a father and a priest to me, and I'll give you ten pieces of silver a year, a set of clothes, and your basic needs."<sup>11</sup> The Levite agreed to stay with him; and the young man became like one of his own sons. <sup>12</sup>Micah appointed the Levite so that the young man became his personal priest and lived in Micah's sanctuary. <sup>13</sup>And Micah said to himself, Now I know that the LORD will give me good things, because a Levite has become my priest.

**Dan's search for a land**

**18** In those days there was no king in Israel. Also in those days the tribe of Dan was searching for a territory of their own to live in, since no permanent territory had

<sup>3</sup>Or god's house <sup>4</sup>Heb ephod <sup>5</sup>Heb terafim <sup>6</sup>Or to carry on his work <sup>7</sup>Heb adds and the Levite went.

his sons as a priest for the shrine. The text presents Micah as morally questionable from the beginning. He sees his actions as an attempt to worship Israel's God (17:3), but they violate prohibitions on making images (Exod 20:4-6; Deut 5:8-10), as well as God's appointment of Levites as the proper priests (Deut 18:1-8). So Micah's actions are wrong by Deuteronomistic standards, but may also show a growing concern for a connection with the Lord because of Israel's poor religious condition.

17:1 *The Ephraim highlands* are also the location for the activities of Ehud (Judg 3:27), Deborah (Judg 4:5), and Tola (Judg 10:1).

17:2 *eleven hundred pieces of silver*: the same amount that each Philistine ruler promised to Delilah in exchange for Samson's secret (Judg 16:5). *I'll give it back to you* stands in Hebrew at the end of Judges 17:3. In that case, the mother gives back the money in the form of the image to her son.

17:3 *sculpted image . . . molded image*: If there are two different images, the first appears to be carved in wood and the other cast in metal.

17:5 Gideon also made a *priestly vest*, which previously led Israel to be unfaithful toward the Lord (Judg 8:27). *divine images*: elsewhere described as figurines or household gods (see Gen 31:19; 1 Sam 19:13; 2 Kgs 23:24). Although keeping a divine image in a household shrine conflicts with Deuteronomistic theology (see intro.), it reflects common practices in popular religion throughout Israel's history as shown by the archaeological record.

17:6 *In those days there was no king in Israel*: the first appearance of a refrain that will be repeated three more times throughout the appendixes to show Israel's moral and social breakdown (Judg 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). The statement's immediate context, following Micah's unsuitable actions, gives the expression a negative undertone from

its first use. It implies that such chaos resulted from the lack of royal leadership (but cf. Judg 8:22-27; 9:7-15). The language of each person doing *what they thought to be right* (Heb., "what was right in their eyes") appears elsewhere as an indication of pride and rebellion against God (e.g., Deut 12:8). The appearance of this statement here and at the conclusion of the book (Judg 21:25) brackets the negative events of the two appendixes in Judges 17:1-21:25.

17:7-13 Micah replaces his son as the priest of his shrine (Judg 17:5) with a Levite from Judah. Levites were the divinely designated priestly tribe that received no territory of their own (Deut 18:1-8). Micah secures for his personal shrine a member of Israel's legitimate priestly line, but does so for his personal benefit (17:13). Although perhaps sincere in his desire to seek blessing from the Lord, Micah's actions show the fragmented and individualistic condition into which Israel's religious practice and devotion have fallen (cf. Judg 17:6). The Levite's intentions may have been just to stop on his journey or to find a patron for his priestly work.

17:13 *give me good things*: or, "cause me to prosper."

18:1-31 The tribe of Dan migrates to a northern territory (cf. Judg 1:34), continuing the story of Micah's priest and shrine from Judges 17. The Danites prey upon an unsuspecting town and establish their own shrine with a priest and worship-oriented items. Israel's downward slide continues as the episode ends with an opportunistic conquest and religious unfaithfulness.

18:1-10 The story of the Danite spies echoes that of the spies at Jericho in Joshua 2:1-24, but here failure to possess their allotted territory (see Judg 1:34) motivates the Danites' actions. They don't ask for the Lord's direction in the beginning (see 18:5).

18:1 The story of Dan's northward movement begins by

17:19 Gn 31:19; Jgs 8:27, Jgs 18:14  
18:1 Jgs 1:34, Jgs 17:6, Jgs 19:1, Jgs 21:25

18:2 Josh 2:1.

Jgs 13:25.

Jgs 17:1

18:14 Jgs 8:27.

Jgs 17:5

been assigned to them among the tribes of Israel up to that point. <sup>2</sup>The Danites sent five men from their whole clan, strong men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy on the land and explore it. They told them, "Go explore the land." So they went into the Ephraim highland as far as Micah's house, and they spent the night there. <sup>3</sup>When they were in the area of Micah's house, they recognized the accent of the young Levite. They turned in there and said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in these parts? What is there for you here?"

<sup>4</sup>"Micah has done a lot for me," he replied to them. "He hired me to be his personal priest."

<sup>5</sup>They said to him, "Ask for an answer from God so we can know whether we'll be successful on this trip we've taken."

<sup>6</sup>The priest replied to them, "Go in peace. The LORD is watching over you on this trip you've taken."

<sup>7</sup>So the five men journeyed on until they reached Laish. There they saw that its people were living without worry in the same way as the Sidonians, undisturbed and secure. Nobody held back anything in the land, so no one had to hoard.<sup>8</sup> Yet they lived far away from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone else.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>9</sup>When the men came back to their relatives at Zorah and Eshtaol, they asked them, "What did you find?"

<sup>9</sup>"Come on," they replied, "let's march up against them! Indeed, we've seen the land, and it's very good. Right now you're doing nothing! Don't hold back from going and taking possession of the land. <sup>10</sup>When you arrive, you'll come upon a secure people and a wide-open land, because God has given to you a place where nothing on earth is lacking." <sup>11</sup>At this, six hundred men from the Danite clan at Zorah and Eshtaol set out armed for battle. <sup>12</sup>They marched up and made camp at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. This is why the place west of Kiriath-jearim is still known as Dan's Camp today. <sup>13</sup>From there they crossed into the Ephraim highlands and came to Micah's house.

#### **Dan acquires a levitical priest**

<sup>14</sup>Then the five men who had gone to spy on the land around Laish reported to their relatives, "Did you know that there is a priestly vest, divine images, a sculpted image, and a molded image in these buildings? Now think about what you should do!" <sup>15</sup>So they turned in there and went to the young Levite's house in Micah's compound and greeted him. <sup>16</sup>While the six hundred Danites armed for battle stood at the entrance of the gate, <sup>17</sup>the five men who had gone to spy on the land moved up, went inside, and took the sculpted image, the priestly vest, the divine images, and the molded image. The priest was standing at the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men armed for battle <sup>18</sup>when these five entered Micah's sanctuary and took the sculpted image, the priestly vest, the divine images, and the molded image.

The priest said to them, "What are you doing?"

<sup>19</sup>"Shut up!" they said to him. "Put your hand over your mouth! Come with us and be a father and a priest for us. Would you rather be a priest for one man's household or a priest

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Or with Aram

repeating the theme verse of Judges 17–21 (see Judg 17:6; 19:1; 21:25). The refrain's association with idolatry in Judges 17:6 casts a warning shadow over the events that follow. *no permanent territory*: because of Dan's military failure (see Judg 1:34 and notes).

**18:2 Zorah and Eshtaol**: the southwestern location of the tribe of Dan in the Samson stories (cf. Judg 13:25 and notes).

**18:3–6** On their first visit to Micah's compound in the Ephraim highlands, the Danite spies recognize the Levite priest as one from the south (see Judg 17:7–8) and seek a prophetic word confirming their task.

**18:3 accent** Compare the differences in the pronunciation of "shibboleth" in Judges 12:6.

**18:7–13** In an act of senseless violence (see the reference to the Danites as "hotheaded men" in Judges 18:25; cf. Gen 49:17; Deut 33:22), the spies target the peaceful

people of Laish (see the parallel version of this story in Josh 19:47).

**18:7 Laish**: 25 miles north of the Galilee Sea. *Nobody held back . . . no one had to hoard*: The narrator portrays Laish as an ideal society of shared resources and cooperative well-being. The description of Laish as prosperous and secure from surrounding enemies is ironically similar to the Lord's desires for Israel (see Judg 2:18–22; Josh 23:1–16).

**18:12 Kiriath-jearim**: northwest of Jerusalem in the tribal areas of Judah and Benjamin.

**18:14–20** On their second visit to Micah's house, the spies take Micah's sacred objects and convince his priest to come with them and establish a new shrine.

**18:14** The descriptions of the items in Micah's shrine vary throughout Judges 17–18 (cf. Judg 17:4, 5; Judg 18:14, 17, 18, 20, 24, 30).

**18:19 be a father and a priest**: See Judges 17:10.

for a tribe and a clan in Israel?"<sup>20</sup>The priest was convinced, so he took the priestly vest, the divine images, and the sculpted image and went along with the people.

<sup>21</sup>They headed back on their way, but they put the children, the livestock, and the prized possessions in front of them. <sup>22</sup>After they had gone a good distance away from Micah's house, the men who were in the houses around Micah's home were summoned for battle and caught up to the Danites. <sup>23</sup>They called out to the Danites, who turned around and said to Micah, "Why have you summoned men for battle?"

<sup>24</sup>Micah replied, "You've taken my gods that I made, and the priest, and have gone off! What do I have left? How can you ask me what is wrong?"

<sup>25</sup>But the Danites said to him, "Don't raise your voice with us or else hotheaded men will attack you, and you and your household will lose your lives." <sup>26</sup>Then the Danites went on their way. When Micah realized that they were too strong for him, he turned around and went home.

### **The Danites take possession of Laish**

<sup>27</sup>The Danites took along the things that Micah had made, as well as the priest who had been with him, and came to Laish, to a people who were undisturbed and secure. They killed the people and burned down the city. <sup>28</sup>No one was there to rescue them because the city was far away from Sidon and had no dealings with anyone else.<sup>b</sup> It was in the Beth-rehob Valley.

They rebuilt the city and settled in it. <sup>29</sup>They renamed the city Dan, after their ancestor Dan who had been one of Israel's sons; but in fact, the original name of the city was Laish. <sup>30</sup>The Danites set up the sculpted image for themselves, and Jonathan son of Gershom and grandson of Moses,<sup>c</sup> and his sons became priests for the Danite tribe until the land went into exile. <sup>31</sup>They kept for themselves the sculpted image that Micah had made throughout the whole time that God's sanctuary was in Shiloh.

### **A Levite, a woman, and her father**

**19** In those days when there was no king in Israel, there was a certain Levite living as an immigrant in the far corners of the Ephraim highlands. He married a secondary wife

<sup>b</sup>Or with Aram <sup>c</sup>Or Manasseh

18:21-26 Micah's chase of the Danite army (see Judg 18:11) represents the social breakup of Israelite society. The Danites put their families and possessions at the front (cf. Jacob in Gen 32:13-21), anticipating an attack by Micah from behind.

18:27-29 Dan's conquest of Laish is an ironic misrepresentation of Israel's holy war pattern, which normally emphasizes Israel's weakness, the enemy's aggression, and the Lord's deliverance (see Deut 7:1-11; Josh 6:1-21). Here, the Danites prey upon a people living in peace in order to make up for their own failures (cf. Judg 1:34). Note that the text is silent about the Lord's involvement.

18:29 *but in fact, the original name of the city was Laish*: The narrator's desire to record the original name is a subtle criticism of the Danites' unprovoked attack.

18:30-31 *Jonathan son of Gershom and grandson of Moses*: The priest from Micah's household is identified as a Levite from Moses's family (cf. Exod 2:22; Exod 18:3), but some manuscripts include the later addition of a letter to read, *grandson of Manasseh*, to avoid associating these priests with Moses. The cities of Dan (formerly Laish) and Bethel later became the two major worship places for the northern kingdom of Israel, designed to rival the Jerusalem temple (1 Kgs 12:25-33). For the writer of Kings, these sanctuaries and their idols represent the great sin of the northern kingdom. *the land went into exile*: a clear indication that the book's intended audience had lived through the experience of the exile (see intro.). The reference to *Shiloh* and its sanctuary may be a critique of Dan's shrine, since the Deuteronomistic writers (Joshua to Kings)

accepted only Shiloh as a legitimate sanctuary before the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital (see 1 Sam 1:3). 19:1-30 The story of rape and murder committed by the Benjaminites in Gibeah leads to civil war among the Israelite tribes in Judges 20-21. The entire series of events reflects notions of honor, shame, and blood vengeance in ancient tribal societies. Actions by members of one tribe against a member of another demand a response to restore the honor of those who have been offended. Like the preceding two chapters, Judges 19 doesn't include a tribal leader or elements of the book's typical story line (cf. Judg 2:11-19). The story again features a Levite, this time moving from north to south (cf. Judg 17-18), and shows the worsening treatment of women characters that has been a symbol of Israel's decline throughout the book (see sidebar, "Women, Gender, and Violence in Judges" at Judg 11). That movement reaches its low point here in the rape and dismemberment of the Levite's *secondary wife*, who remains nameless and voiceless. The story is one of the most disturbing portrayals of physical and sexual violence against a woman in the OT; yet the woman's body, cut into 12 pieces, is a tragically appropriate symbol for the collapse of Israel's society.

19:1 *In those days when there was no king in Israel*: the primary refrain of the book's two appendixes (see Judg 17:6; 18:1; 21:25) highlights Israel's social and moral decline. The appearance of this refrain in the context of the negative events in Judges 17-18 cast a shadow over the present chapter. *secondary wife*: The Hebrew term is often translated "concubine," but in the ancient context the term

19:3 Gn 34:3  
 19:10 Josh 15:8;  
 Josh 18:28  
 19:12 Jgs 1:21  
 19:13 Jgs 20:13;  
 Hos 10:9  
 19:14 Josh 18:25;  
 Hos 5:8  
 19:14 1Sa 13:2  
 19:15 Gn 19:2;  
 Jgs 19:18  
 19:16 Jgs 19:1  
 19:17 Gn 16:8  
 19:18 Jgs 18:31  
 19:19 Gn 24:25;  
 Gn 42:27

from Bethlehem in Judah. <sup>2</sup>In an act of unfaithfulness toward him, his secondary wife left him and went back to her father's household at Bethlehem in Judah. She stayed there four full months. <sup>3</sup>Then her husband set out after her to convince her to come back. He had his servant and a couple of donkeys with him. She took him into her father's house, and when the young woman's father saw him, he was happy to welcome him. <sup>4</sup>Since his father-in-law, the young woman's father, insisted, he stayed with him three days, eating, drinking, and spending the night there.

<sup>5</sup>On the fourth day, they got up early in the morning, and he got ready to set out. But the young woman's father said to his son-in-law, "Eat a little food to give you strength, and then you can go." <sup>6</sup>So the two of them sat down and ate and drank together. The young woman's father said to the man, "Why not spend the night and enjoy yourself?" <sup>7</sup>When the man got ready to set out, his father-in-law persuaded him, and he spent the night there again. <sup>8</sup>On the fifth day, he got up early in the morning to set out, and the young woman's father said, "Have some food for strength." So the two of them ate, sitting around until late in the day. <sup>9</sup>When the man got ready to set out with his secondary wife and servant, his father-in-law, the young woman's father, said, "Look, the day has turned to evening, so spend the night. Seriously, the day is over. Spend the night here and enjoy yourself. Then you can get up early tomorrow for your journey, and you can head home."

<sup>10</sup>But the man was unwilling to spend another night. He got up, set out, and went as far as the area of Jebus, that is, Jerusalem. He had a couple of saddled donkeys and his secondary wife with him. <sup>11</sup>When they were near Jebus, the day was totally gone. The servant said to his master, "Come on, let's turn into this Jebusite city and spend the night in it."

<sup>12</sup>But his master replied to him, "We won't turn into a city of foreigners who aren't Israelites. We'll travel on to Gibeah. <sup>13</sup>"Come on," he said to his servant, "let's reach Gibeah or Ramah and spend the night in one of those places." <sup>14</sup>So they traveled on, and the sun set when they were near Gibeah in Benjamin. <sup>15</sup>They turned in to enter there, so they could spend the night in Gibeah, and he went and sat down in the city square. But no one offered to take them home to spend the night.

### Rape and murder at Gibeah

<sup>16</sup>Then in the evening, an old man was coming home from his daily work in the fields. This man was from the Ephraim highlands and was an immigrant in Gibeah, the people of that place being Benjaminites. <sup>17</sup>He looked up and saw the traveler in the city square. "Where are you heading and where have you come from?" the old man asked.

<sup>18</sup>"We're traveling from Bethlehem in Judah to the far corners of the Ephraim highlands," he replied to the old man. "That's where I'm from. I went to Bethlehem in Judah, and I'm heading to my home." <sup>4</sup> But no one has offered to take me in tonight. <sup>19</sup>We've got our own

<sup>4</sup>LXX; MT to the LORD's house

describes a wife of secondary rank below the primary wife who oversees the household (cf. Gen 22:24; 25:6; 36:12). 19:2 The text isn't clear about the reason for the secondary wife's departure. The Hebrew says "his secondary wife prostituted herself," suggesting adulterous behavior (see note on Judg 8:27), but other ancient versions say, "his secondary wife became angry with him" (LXX, Vulgate), suggesting the Levite had wronged her. The OT laws don't explicitly allow for a woman to initiate divorce, so the text may describe her as unfaithful for leaving her husband under any circumstances. 19:3-9 Both of the chapter's major scenes (Judg 19:4-21, 22-30) revolve around the ancient custom of hospitality, especially the duty to provide for strangers (see Exod 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:33-34; Deut 26:12). In 19:3-9, the husband travels south from the Ephraim highlands to Bethlehem in Judah to try to bring back his secondary wife. The woman's father models the proper practice of hospitality, even in excessive measure day after day (see 19:4, 6, 8), providing a contrast to the violations of hospitality by the citizens of Gibeah (Judg 19:22-26). The woman, however, doesn't participate and remains an object of male control and exchange.

19:10-21 After five days in Bethlehem, the Levite sets out to the north. The woman doesn't speak in the text, being merely an object taken along. The scene is ironic. The Levite resists stopping in Jebus because it is a *city of foreigners* (19:12) who are likely to withhold traditional hospitality and may attack strangers (cf. his treatment at the hands of fellow Israelites in Judg 19:15-25).

19:10 On *Jebus as Jerusalem*, see Judges 1:21. Other texts also identify Jerusalem as a Jebusite city until the time of David (2 Sam 5:6-9).

19:12 *Gibeah*: an Israelite town just north of Jerusalem that would later be Saul's royal residence (1 Sam 15:34).

19:16-21 The only one among the Levite's fellow Israelites in Gibeah who offers hospitality is himself an *immigrant* in the town (see the description of the Levite as an "immigrant" in Judg 19:1).

19:18 *my home*: This is what the Greek translation of the OT (the LXX) says. The Hebrew Bible (the MT) says, "the LORD's house," which could mean the sanctuary at Shiloh. 19:19 *the woman*: "your maidservant." The Levite portrays the woman as his host's property to be given away should he choose to do so (see Judg 19:24-25).



straw and feed for our donkeys, plus food and wine to provide for me, the woman, and my servant with us. We don't need anything."

<sup>20</sup>The old man answered, "You're welcome to stay with me,\* but let me take care of all your needs. Just don't spend the night in the square." <sup>21</sup>And he took him into his house. He mixed feed for the donkeys, and they washed their feet, ate, and drank.

<sup>22</sup>While they were relaxing, suddenly the men of the city, a perverse bunch, surrounded the house and started pounding on the door. They said to the old man, the owner of the house, "Send out the man who came to your house, so we can have sex with him!"

<sup>23</sup>The owner of the house went outside and said to them, "No, my friends, please don't commit such an evil act, given that this man has come to my home as a guest. Don't do this disgraceful thing! <sup>24</sup>Here's my daughter, the young woman, and his secondary wife. Let me send them out, and you can abuse them and do whatever you want to them. But don't do such a disgraceful thing to this man!" <sup>25</sup>But the men refused to listen to him.

So the Levite grabbed his secondary wife and sent her outside to them. They raped her and abused her all night long until morning. They finally let her go as dawn was breaking.

<sup>26</sup>At daybreak, the woman came and collapsed at the door of the man's house where her husband was staying, where she lay until it was daylight. <sup>27</sup>When her husband got up in the morning, he opened the doors of the house and went outside to set out on his journey. And there was his secondary wife, lying at the entrance of the house, with her hands clutching the doorframe. <sup>28</sup>"Get up," he said to her, "let's go." But there was no response. So he laid her across a donkey, and the man set out for home. <sup>29</sup>When he got home, he picked up a knife, took his secondary wife, and chopped her, limb by limb, into twelve pieces. Then he sent them into all the areas of Israel. <sup>30</sup>Everyone who saw it said, "Has such a thing ever happened or been seen since the time when the Israelites came up from the land of Egypt until today? Think about it, decide what to do, and speak out!"

*Civil war between the Benjaminites and the Israelites*

**20**Then all the Israelites from Dan to Beer-sheba, as well as from the area of Gilead, marched out, and the group assembled as one body in the LORD's presence at Mizpah. <sup>2</sup>The commanders of the people and of all the tribes of Israel took their place in the assembly of God's people, four hundred thousand foot soldiers armed with swords. <sup>3</sup>And the Benjaminites got word that the Israelites had marched up to Mizpah.

\*Or *Peace be with you*

19:22-26 What the Levite had feared from the non-Israelites in Jebus occurs at the hands of his fellow Israelites in Gibeah. This scene has several parallels with the story of Lot and his daughters in Sodom (Gen 19). The issue both here and in Genesis 19 doesn't seem to be homosexual behavior but the extreme violation of hospitality and mistreatment of the stranger that is represented by sexual assault (note that the men of Gibeah are willing to rape the wife). At Sodom, two divine messengers intervene to protect Lot's daughters from rape. The wife here receives neither divine nor human rescue.

19:22 *have sex with him*: Compare with Genesis 4:1, 17; 24:16. In the context of an honor-shame culture, sexual assault is a means of treating men as though they were women and asserting dominance over a male.

19:23 *as a guest*: The host makes his objection in terms of the expected practice of hospitality to strangers.

19:24-25 The old man offers both his own daughter and the Levite's secondary wife to satisfy the mob (see note on Judg 19:19). The Levite then forcibly (*grabbed... and sent*) throws his secondary wife to the men. Here, the worsening treatment of women in Israel reaches a low point: She is treated as disposable property.

19:27 The woman's grip on the doorframe recalls the image of grasping the horns of the altar in an appeal for sanctuary (see 1 Kgs 1:50-51; 2:28).

19:28 *Get up... let's go*: The only words that the Levite

speaks to his secondary wife in the story are uncaring. The Hebrew doesn't say whether the woman is already dead in 19:28, but the LXX adds "because she was dead."

19:29-30 The Levite's motive for calling for revenge isn't clear, since he gave his secondary wife to the mob. Cutting up the woman's body not only shows the increasing violence against women in the book but also represents the breakdown of Israel's society. *twelve pieces*: See similar actions with animals and clothing in 1 Samuel 11:7; 1 Kings 11:30-40.

20:1-21:25 Continuing the story of Judges 19, these chapters describe Israel's social collapse at the end of the tribal leaders' era. As with the preceding story, the events revolve around notions of honor, shame, and retribution in ancient tribal cultures (see notes on Judg 19:1-30).

20:1-48 Desire for retribution against the tribe of Benjamin for the violence of Judges 19 leads to civil war within Israel. The Israelites are driven to act by the Levite's misleading account of the events at Gibeah (see 20:4-5), and their actions ironically compound the tragedy by nearly destroying one of the tribes (see Judg 21:3).

20:1-11 For the first time since their assembly before the Lord at Bochim in Judges 2:1-5 and their unfaithfulness at Ophrah in Judges 8:27, *all the Israelites* are successfully united (*cf. as one* in 20:8, 11).

20:1 *Dan to Beer-sheba*: a phrase that designates the traditional northern and southern boundaries of Israel. *Gilead*:

19:20 Gn 19:2, Gn 43:23; Jgs 6:23

19:21 Gn 18:4, Gn 24:32, Gn 43:24; Lk 7:44; Jn 13:5

19:22 Gn 19:4-5; Dt 13:13

19:23 Gn 19:6, Gn 34:7; Josh 7:15; Jgs 20:6; 2Sa 13:12

19:24 Gn 19:8

19:25 Gn 4:1; Hos 9:9; Hos 10:9; Eph 4:19

19:26 Gn 18:12

19:29 Jgs 20:6; 1Sa 11:7

20:1 Jgs 21:5; 1Sa 3:20; 1Sa 7:5; 1Sa 11:7; 2Sa 3:10

20:16 Igs 3:15;  
1Ch 12:2;  
2Ch 26:14

The Israelites inquired, "Tell us how this evil act happened."

<sup>4</sup>So the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, answered, "My secondary wife and I came to Gibeah of Benjamin to spend the night, <sup>5</sup>and the leading citizens of Gibeah tried to attack me. They surrounded me in the house at night and were determined to kill me. They abused my secondary wife until she died. <sup>6</sup>I took her, chopped her up, and sent her pieces into every part of Israel's territory, because they had committed a disgraceful act in Israel. <sup>7</sup>All you Israelites, say what you think should be done here and now!"

<sup>8</sup>At this, all the people stood as one to say, "Not a single one of us is going home or returning to our house! <sup>9</sup>This is what we're now going to do to Gibeah: We'll march <sup>10</sup>against it as the lot determines. <sup>10</sup>From all the tribes of Israel, we'll get ten men for every hundred, one hundred for every thousand, and one thousand for every ten thousand to take supplies for the troops who are going to pay back <sup>11</sup>Gibeah of Benjamin for the disgraceful act they've done in Israel." <sup>11</sup>So all the Israelites joined together and were united as one against the city.

<sup>12</sup>The Israelite tribes sent men throughout the whole tribe of Benjamin with this message: "What about this evil act that happened among you? <sup>13</sup>Now hand over those perverse men in Gibeah so that we can execute them and remove the evil from Israel." But the Benjaminites refused to comply with the demand of their own relatives the Israelites. <sup>14</sup>Instead, the Benjaminites from all the cities came together at Gibeah to march out for battle against the Israelites. <sup>15</sup>On that day, the Benjaminites called up from their cities twenty-six thousand men armed with swords, not counting those living in Gibeah. <sup>16</sup>Out of this entire army, seven hundred specially chosen men were left-handed, and every one of them could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. <sup>17</sup>Not counting Benjamin, the Israelites called up four hundred thousand men armed with swords, and every one of them was a trained warrior.

<sup>18</sup>Then the Israelites marched up to Bethel to ask for direction from God. They inquired, "Who should go up first to fight against the Benjaminites for us?"

And the LORD said, "Let the tribe of Judah be first."

<sup>19</sup>So the next morning, the Israelites got up and camped near Gibeah. <sup>20</sup>They marched out to fight against the Benjaminites, lining up in battle formation against them at Gibeah. <sup>21</sup>But the Benjaminites marched out from Gibeah and cut down twenty-two thousand Israelite men that day.

<sup>22</sup>So the Israelites went back up and wept before the LORD until evening. They asked the LORD, "Should we move in again to fight our relatives the Benjaminites?"

And the LORD replied, "March out against them."

<sup>f</sup>LXX; MT lacks *We'll march up*. <sup>g</sup>Cf LXX; Heb uncertain <sup>h</sup>LXX, Vulg, Syr; MT adds *seven hundred specially chosen men were called up*. <sup>i</sup>20:22 and 20:23 are reversed.

Israelite territory east of the Jordan River. *Mizpah*: Tell en-Nasbeh, eight miles north of Jerusalem. Like Gibeah, *Mizpah* was an Israelite town in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin.

20:4-7 The Levite's description of the events of Judges 19 is not entirely accurate: The men of Gibeah did not say they would "kill" him (Judg 19:22) and he himself threw his secondary wife out to them (Judg 19:25).

20:5 *leading citizens*: This phrase also means "lords, masters, owners". The preceding chapter described the rapists simply as "men of the city" (Judg 19:22), but the Levite gives them a higher status to make their behavior more shameful.

20:8-11 Here and in 20:18, the Israelites don't ask God whether to attack Gibeah, but only in what order to fight (cf. Judg 1:1-4; 20:23, 28). Does the Lord's answer in Judges 20:18 simply allow them to follow the ill-conceived path they have chosen?

20:9 For similar use of the *lot* to assign groups and tasks, see Joshua 18:10; 1 Chronicles 24:5, 7; Nehemiah 11:1.

20:10 The text presents the people as wanting to avenge a shameful act in order to restore honor within their community (see notes on Judg 19:1-30).

20:11 *united as one*: Such unity last occurred at Ophrah in an act of religious unfaithfulness (Judg 8:27).

20:12-18 The Benjaminites refuse to turn over those who committed the crime in Gibeah to the larger tribal assembly. Instead, they draw up their own force for battle.

20:15 *twenty-six thousand men*: The Benjaminites force is very small compared with that of the rest of the tribes (four hundred thousand; cf. Judg 20:2, 17).

20:16 *left-handed*: See note on Judges 3:15.

20:18 *Bethel*: "house of God." The site would later be one of the main national sanctuaries of the northern kingdom (cf. 1 Kgs 12:25-33). *Who should go up first?*: repeats the question in Judges 1:1 that marked the beginning of Israel's conquest of the promised land. The question now marks the beginning of civil war.

20:19-35 After two failed attempts to defeat the much smaller Benjaminites force and capture Gibeah (20:19-21, 24-26), the tribes capture the city through trickery (cf. the ambush at Ai in Josh 8:1-29).

20:23 *"March out against them"*: The Lord's first answer is worryingly vague, with no promise of success (see notes on Judg 20:8-11).

<sup>22</sup>The Israelite troops regrouped and lined up in battle formation again in the same place they had lined up the first day. <sup>24</sup>The Israelites moved in against the Benjaminites the second day. <sup>25</sup>But the Benjaminites marched out of Gibeah to meet them on that second day and cut down another eighteen thousand Israelite men, all of whom were armed with swords.

<sup>26</sup>Then all the Israelite troops went back up to Bethel and wept, just sitting there in the LORD's presence. They fasted that whole day until evening. Then they offered entirely burned offerings and well-being sacrifices to the LORD. <sup>27</sup>Now in those days the chest containing God's covenant was there, <sup>28</sup>and Phinehas, Eleazar's son and Aaron's grandson, was in charge of ministering before it. The Israelites asked the LORD, "Should we march out once again to fight our relatives the Benjaminites or should we give up?"

And the LORD replied, "March up, for I'll hand them to you tomorrow."

<sup>29</sup>So the Israelites set ambushes around Gibeah. <sup>30</sup>Three days later, the Israelites marched out against the Benjaminites. They lined up for battle against Gibeah as before. <sup>31</sup>When the Benjaminites came out to meet them, they were drawn away from the city. They began to strike down some of the troops just like the last time, about thirty Israelites along the main roads, one of which goes up to Bethel and one to Gibeah, as well as in the open fields. <sup>32</sup>The Benjaminites thought, "They're being wiped out before us like the first time. But the Israelites had planned, 'We'll retreat and draw them away from the city toward the main roads.'" <sup>33</sup>The Israelites moved from their position and reformed their battle lines at Baal-tamar. Then the Israelites who had been set in ambush charged out from their positions west of Gibeah. <sup>34</sup>Ten thousand specially chosen men from all the Israelites came against Gibeah. The fighting was fierce, and the Benjaminites didn't realize that disaster was almost on them. <sup>35</sup>The LORD wiped out the Benjaminites before Israel. The Israelites slaughtered twenty-five thousand one hundred Benjaminites men that day, all of them armed with swords. <sup>36</sup>Then the Benjaminites saw that they had been defeated.

The Israelites had given ground to the Benjaminites because they relied on the ambush that they had set around Gibeah. <sup>37</sup>Indeed, those in the ambush had dashed swiftly into Gibeah and killed all the people in the city with their swords. <sup>38</sup>The plan between the main force of the Israelites and those in the ambush was that when they sent up a big cloud of smoke from the city, <sup>39</sup>the Israelites would turn around in battle. The Benjaminites had begun to defeat some of the Israelites and had killed about thirty men, thinking, "They are definitely going to be wiped out before us, as in the first battle!" <sup>40</sup>But then the column of smoke began to rise from the city. When the Benjaminites looked back, there was the entire city going up in smoke to the sky. <sup>41</sup>The main force of the Israelites turned around, and the Benjaminites lost heart, because they recognized that disaster had fallen on them. <sup>42</sup>They turned back before the Israelites in the direction of the desert, but the fighting caught up with them, and those from the towns were slaughtering them there. <sup>43</sup>They encircled the Benjaminites, chased them from Nohah,<sup>1</sup> and trampled them to the east of Gibeah. <sup>44</sup>Eighteen thousand Benjaminites fell, all of whom were strong warriors. <sup>45</sup>When they turned back and fled toward the desert to the rock of Rimmon, the Israelites picked off another five thousand men on the main roads. And when they caught up with them at Gidom, they struck down two thousand more.

<sup>46</sup>All in all, the total number of Benjaminites who fell that day was twenty-five thousand men, all of whom were armed with swords and were strong warriors. <sup>47</sup>Six hundred men turned back and fled toward the desert to the rock of Rimmon. They stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months. <sup>48</sup>But the Israelites turned their attention to the rest of the

20:28 Ex 6:25;  
Nm 25:7;  
Nm 31:6;  
Dt 18:5;  
Josh 24:33  
20:47 Jgs 20:45;  
Jgs 21:13  
20:48 Dt 13:15;  
Jgs 21:23

<sup>1</sup>Heb *Geba* <sup>2</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>3</sup>LXX; MT to a resting place

20:27 *chest containing God's covenant*: The only reference to the chest in Judges marks Bethel as an appropriate place to seek direction from the Lord.

20:28 *I'll hand them to you*: See notes on Judges 20:8-11.

20:33 The location of *Baal-tamar* is unknown, but the text assumes a location near Gibeah.

20:35 Despite the unforgiving nature of the Israelites' actions, the text credits their success to the Lord (see Judg 21:15), perhaps suggesting that God allowed them the freedom and ability to follow the ill-fated path that they had charted (see notes on Judg 20:8-11).

20:37 *killed all the people in the city*: The language of this verse (see also Judg 20:48) reflects the practice of holy war against the Canaanites, but the Israelites twist it into the destruction of one of their own cities (cf. Judg 18:27-28).

20:43 *Nohah*: See 1 Chronicles 8:2.

20:45 *Rimmon*: approximately five miles east of Bethel in the area of Gibeah.

20:46-48 The tribes kill all the Benjaminites, with the exception of 600 men who flee into hiding. The 600 male survivors present the problem that will lead the Israelites to further violence in the following story (Judg 21:1-25).

21:1 Jgs 20:1,  
Jgs 21:18  
21:5 Jgs 5:23,  
Jgs 20:4; 1Sa 11:7  
21:6 Jgs 21:15  
21:10 1Sa 11:1,  
1Sa 31:11  
21:19 Jgs 5:23,  
Jgs 21:5;  
1Sa 11:7,  
1Sa 15:3  
21:11 Nm 31:17

Benjaminites and massacred them entirely—the city, the people, even the animals, and everything else they found. They also burned down every city they came across.

### Wives for the Benjaminites

**21** The Israelites had made a pledge at Mizpah, declaring, “None of us will allow his daughter to marry a Benjaminite.”<sup>2</sup> But the people came to Bethel and sat there until evening before God, raising their voices and crying bitterly.<sup>3</sup> “LORD, God of Israel,” they said, “why has this happened among us that as of today one tribe will be missing from Israel?”<sup>4</sup> And the next day, the people got up early and built an altar there. They offered entirely burned offerings and well-being sacrifices.

<sup>5</sup> Then the Israelites asked, “Were there any out of all the tribes of Israel who didn’t march up to the assembly before the LORD?” Indeed, they had made a solemn pledge that anyone who didn’t march up before the LORD at Mizpah would be put to death.<sup>6</sup> The Israelites had a change of heart concerning their relatives the Benjaminites. They said, “Today one tribe has been cut off from Israel.<sup>7</sup> What can we do to provide wives for the ones who are left, since we ourselves have made a pledge before the LORD not to allow our daughters to marry them?”<sup>8</sup> So they asked, “Is there anyone from the tribes of Israel who didn’t march up before the LORD at Mizpah?” There was! No one from Jabesh-gilead had come to the assembly at the camp.<sup>9</sup> When the people’s attendance was taken, not one of those who lived in Jabesh-gilead had been there.

<sup>10</sup> The community dispatched twelve thousand warriors there with these orders: “Go kill all the people in Jabesh-gilead, including women and children.<sup>11</sup> Here’s what you should do: Exterminate every man and every woman who has slept with a man.”<sup>12</sup> Among the people of Jabesh-gilead, they found four hundred young women who had not known a man intimately or slept with one, and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh in the land of Canaan.<sup>13</sup> The whole community then sent word to the Benjaminites who were at the rock of Rimmon and offered them a truce.<sup>14</sup> So the Benjaminites returned at that time, and they gave them the women from Jabesh-gilead that they had allowed to live. Even so, there weren’t enough for them.

<sup>15</sup> Since the people had a change of heart concerning the Benjaminites because the LORD had caused a rupture in the tribes of Israel,<sup>16</sup> the community elders said, “What can we do to provide wives for the ones who are left, seeing that the Benjaminite women have been

<sup>m</sup> Or *peace*

21:1-25 The tribes’ vengeful actions against the Benjaminites in Judges 20 have compounded the violence of Judges 19 by leaving one tribe in danger of destruction (see 21:3, 6-7). Only 600 male Benjaminites survived (Judg 20:47), now with no way to repopulate the tribe (see 21:1). The tribes attempt to get wives for the surviving Benjaminites with an attack on Jabesh-gilead (21:1-14) and the kidnapping of women from Shiloh (21:15-24).

21:1-4 The rash promise made by the Israelites at Mizpah has not appeared previously and reminds readers of Jephthah’s solemn promise (Judg 11:29-40). Judges 21:18 will provide the content of the promise.

21:2-3 The Israelites return to Bethel, where they sought divine guidance before the attack against Gibeah (Judg 20:18). But now they go to show regret over the very victory they had requested.

21:4 *burned offerings and well-being sacrifices*: The same offerings were made at the beginning of the war against Gibeah in Judges 20:26.

21:5-9 The reference to another *pledge* not mentioned previously provides a solution to the need for wives for the Benjaminites. No divine role is mentioned. Ironically, although the Israelites mourn the possible end of the Benjaminite tribe, they reflect positively on their previous determination to eliminate any group that failed to participate in the war.

21:8 *Jabesh-gilead*: a town in the northern Transjordan

within the tribal area of Manasseh. Since this town later supports King Saul (see 1 Sam 11; 1 Sam 31:11-13), this story may serve as an argument against Saul’s rule.

21:10-14 In the first of two attempts to repopulate Benjamin (cf. Judg 21:15-24), the Israelites attack Jabesh-gilead to capture virgins for the 600 surviving Benjaminite men (see Judg 20:47). To make up for their holy war against the Benjaminites (Judg 20:37, 48), the Israelites fight holy war against Jabesh-gilead. See sidebar, “Holy War and Violence.”

21:11 *Exterminate*: another example of the Israelites twisting the institution of holy war into an act against their own relatives (see Judg 20:37; sidebar, “Holy War and Violence”).

21:12 *Shiloh*: approximately 10 miles north of Bethel (see Judg 21:19).

21:14 *there weren’t enough*: The 400 virgins leave 200 surviving Benjaminites without wives.

21:15-24 The second attempt to repopulate Benjamin involves kidnapping women during a religious festival to Israel’s own God at Shiloh. Representing the negative climax of Israel’s moral collapse, the tribes are less concerned about kidnapping and rape than they are about breaking their rash vow (see Judg 21:1, 18 and compare Jephthah’s vow in Judg 11:29-40). Here, the Israelites support the same taking of women for which they had condemned the Benjaminites in Judges 20:4-11.

21:15 *the LORD had caused*: See note on Judges 20:35.

destroyed? <sup>17</sup>There must be a surviving line for those who remain from Benjamin,” they continued, “so that a tribe won’t be erased from Israel. <sup>18</sup>But we can’t allow our daughters to marry them, for we Israelites have made this pledge: ‘Let anyone who provides a wife for Benjamin be cursed!’ <sup>19</sup>However,” they said, “the annual festival of the LORD is under way in Shiloh, which is north of Bethel, east of the main road that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah.” <sup>20</sup>So they instructed the Benjaminites, “Go and hide like an ambush in the vineyards <sup>21</sup>and watch. At the moment the women of Shiloh come out to participate in the dances, rush out from the vineyards. Each one of you, capture a wife for yourself from the women of Shiloh and go back to the land of Benjamin. <sup>22</sup>When their fathers or brothers come to us to object, we’ll tell them, ‘Do us a favor for their sake. We didn’t capture enough women for every man during the battle, and this way you are not guilty because you didn’t give them anything willingly.’” <sup>23</sup>And that is what the Benjaminites did. They took wives for their whole group from the dancers whom they abducted. They returned to their territory, rebuilt the cities, and lived in them. <sup>24</sup>Likewise, the Israelites set out from there at that time, heading home to their respective tribes and clans. They all left there for their own territories.

<sup>25</sup>In those days there was no king in Israel; each person did what they thought to be right.

<sup>21:19</sup> Josh 18:1;  
Jgs 18:31;  
1Sa 1:3  
<sup>21:21</sup> Ex 15:20;  
Jgs 11:34;  
Jer 31:13  
<sup>21:22</sup> Jgs 21:1;  
Jgs 21:18  
<sup>21:25</sup> Jgs 20:48

*Holy War and Violence* The book of Judges contains some stories of the type of “holy war” described in the book of Joshua (see Judg 1:25; Judg 21:5-11). This warfare involves wiping out all men, women, children, and animals in some cases of conquest. It represents the belief that God directs the war and demands the utter devotion of all spoils as an offering. Similar references in other ancient Near Eastern texts show that this idea was widespread in the region. Contemporary readers struggle with the moral and ethical dimensions of such divinely sanctioned violence, especially since the text doesn’t evaluate the morality of these actions. Even the writer of Judges, however, views such warfare as part of the distant past within an ancient culture, and doesn’t offer the practice as a model for the book’s readers. These ways of talking about holy war can develop among defenseless and oppressed groups (not unlike the 6th-century Judean exiles) whose expressions are shaped by severe trauma and who need an outlet for hope. Other biblical texts encourage readers to act out of concern and mutual support for other peoples (see, e.g., Lev 19:18, 34; Matt 5:38-48; Rom 12:14-21).

<sup>21:19</sup> *annual festival . . . in Shiloh*: Compare with 1 Samuel 1:3, 21.

<sup>21:22</sup> As with the Levite’s secondary wife in Judges 19 and the women of Jabesh-gilead in Judges 21:10-14, the women of Shiloh are treated as property to be exchanged in order to fix social relationships among groups of men.

<sup>21:25</sup> *did what they thought to be right*: The book ends with a haunting repetition of the refrain that has been repeated throughout Judges 17–21 (Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1) again signaling the low point of Israel’s social and moral

decline. Its claim that these tragic events were due to the absence of kings supports the need for royal leadership. In later sections of the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua to Kings), however, Israel’s first king, Saul, comes from the same tribe of Benjamin that was responsible for the violence of Judges 19 (1 Sam 9:1; 10:20-24) and establishes his capital at Gibeah (1 Sam 15:34). These later texts show the dangers of kingly leadership that the book of Judges also highlights in earlier critiques of kings in Judges 8:22-32 and Judges 9:1-57.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. This is essential for ensuring the integrity of the financial statements and for providing a clear audit trail.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze data. These methods include direct observation, interviews, and the use of specialized software tools.

3. The third part of the document describes the results of the data collection and analysis. It shows that there are significant differences in the way that different departments handle their data, which can lead to inconsistencies and errors.

4. The fourth part of the document provides recommendations for how to improve the data collection and analysis process. These recommendations include standardizing data collection procedures, providing training for staff, and using more advanced software tools.

5. The fifth part of the document discusses the challenges faced in implementing these recommendations. One of the main challenges is the resistance of some staff members to change. Another challenge is the limited resources available for training and software development.

6. The sixth part of the document provides a conclusion and a summary of the key findings. It emphasizes the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the improvements are sustained over time.

7. The seventh part of the document includes a list of references and a list of appendices. The references provide additional information on the topics discussed in the document, and the appendices provide detailed data and supporting information.

8. The eighth part of the document is a list of figures and tables. These figures and tables provide visual representations of the data collected and analyzed, making it easier to understand the results and trends.

9. The ninth part of the document is a list of abbreviations and acronyms. This list helps to clarify the meaning of the various terms used throughout the document.

10. The tenth part of the document is a list of contact information for the authors and the organization. This information is provided for those who may wish to contact the authors for more information or to request a copy of the document.

# RUTH

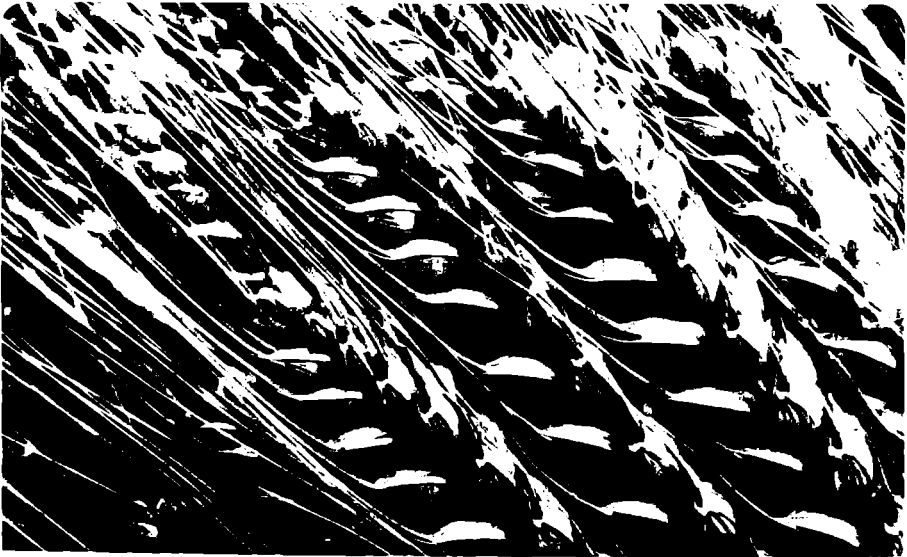
The book of Ruth is a beautiful story. Though only four chapters long, it's filled with dramatic moments, likable characters, and important themes. On the surface, Ruth seems simple. Yet a closer look reveals that the story is artistically crafted with repetition of key phrases, wordplay, meaningful dialogue, and careful organization.

The three main characters are Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. Other individuals and the local community also enter the story at key moments, reminding us how important the community was for people in the ancient world. Although the book is named for Ruth, it begins and ends with Naomi, a woman from Bethlehem. The story opens with Naomi and her small family traveling to Moab to escape famine. The men die off, and Naomi is left without her family in a foreign land. When Naomi decides to return home, her daughter-in-law Ruth insists on coming along. Back in Bethlehem, Ruth works to get food for the two of them by collecting leftover grain in what turns out to be Boaz's field. The two women think up a plan for their long-term

security. Boaz cooperates and marries Ruth. The story's final scene shows their newborn son in Naomi's arms.

Unlike much of the rest of the Bible, this isn't a story about national or international affairs. It is set in a village of farmers. Action revolves around family relationships. The book assumes certain customs mentioned elsewhere in the OT: permitting the poor to collect leftover grain at harvesttime (gleaning); requiring men to marry their brothers' widows in order to provide them children (levirate marriage); and giving a near relative (redeemer) the right to purchase land to keep it in the family. But here, things get done mainly through human decision and action rather than God's command. God is in the wings, and humans are on center stage in the story.

The story moves from emptiness to fullness, from barrenness to fertility, and from death to life. We see redemption on many levels. Famine and empty fields are replaced with grain harvests and enough food for everyone. Naomi, who has lost everything, gains a loving



A ripe wheat seed (Ruth 2:23)  
*iStockPhoto*

daughter-in-law and a grandson. Her emotions shift from bitterness and anger to fullness and joy. The primary characters fill each other's needs and become "family" for each other in important ways, and the baby Obed brings hope for the future.

The book raises significant ethnic, class, and gender issues. The storyteller often reminds us that Ruth is Moabite. The people of Moab were ancient enemies of the people of Israel, so Ruth's willingness to live in Bethlehem, and the Bethlehemites' acceptance of her, are unexpected and remarkable. It's also surprising that the narrator chooses to tell the story from the perspective of two widows rather than that of the wealthy Boaz. Ancient Israelite women were economically dependent on their husbands and sons, so Naomi and Ruth (both childless and widowed) are at the lowest level of poverty. They show great courage and resourcefulness by making their way in a man's world. This book pictures an ideal society where those who are different are welcomed and valued, where there is help for the poor so that no one goes hungry, and where the elderly are cared for. People act as they should toward each other.

We don't have a good sense of when the book was written or who might have written it. The story's final verse mentions King David,

so it may have been written during the time when David's family ruled Judah (10th to 7th centuries BCE). But the story also shows Israelites marrying foreigners, a practice that was much discussed during the post-exilic period (5th to 4th centuries BCE), so it is also possible, and probably more likely, that the story was written then.

There are two options about where the book of Ruth fits in the order of the books of the Bible. The Christian sequence, which is followed by the CEB, reflects ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts. It places the book between Judges and 1 Samuel. This locates the story at the end of the time of Israel's tribal leaders (see Ruth 1:1), and looking forward to the time of the kings (see Ruth 4:18-22). The Jewish tradition, going back to ancient Hebrew manuscripts, places Ruth with the five scrolls in the Writings section of the Hebrew Bible. This is because each scroll is read on a particular Jewish holiday. Ruth is read on Shavuot, also called the Festival of Weeks (Exod 34:22; Num 28:26; Deut 16:10-12), which occurs at the end of the harvest season. Both the Christian and Jewish ordering provide insight into the meaning of the book of Ruth and demonstrate its ongoing theological significance. They highlight the themes of royal covenant and divine providence that have been important in faith traditions throughout the centuries.

#### **I. Life in Moab (1:1-22)**

- A. A period of loss (1:1-5)
- B. Naomi's, Ruth's, and Orpah's decisions (1:6-18)
- C. Return to Bethlehem (1:19-22)

#### **II. Working to Obtain Food (2:1-23)**

- A. Ruth gleans in Boaz's field (2:1-7)
- B. Boaz's helpfulness (2:8-16)
- C. Ruth provides for Naomi (2:17-23)

#### **III. Arranging Long-Term Security (3:1-18)**

- A. Naomi's scheme (3:1-6)
- B. A surprise for Boaz (3:7-13)
- C. Ruth returns home at dawn (3:14-18)

#### **IV. The Formation of a New Family (4:1-22)**

- A. Arranging the marriage (4:1-8)
- B. The town's blessing (4:9-12)
- C. A new generation is begun (4:13-22)



### The family in Moab

**1** During the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. A man with his wife and two sons went from Bethlehem of Judah to dwell in the territory of Moab. <sup>2</sup>The name of that man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They entered the territory of Moab and settled there.

<sup>3</sup>But Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died. Then only she was left, along with her two sons. <sup>4</sup>They took wives for themselves, Moabite women; the name of the first was Orpah and the name of the second was Ruth. And they lived there for about ten years.

<sup>5</sup>But both of the sons, Mahlon and Chilion, also died. Only the woman was left, without her two children and without her husband.

<sup>6</sup>Then she arose along with her daughters-in-law to return from the field of Moab, because while in the territory of Moab she had heard that the LORD had paid attention to his people by providing food for them. <sup>7</sup>She left the place where she had been, and her two daughters-in-law went with her. They went along the road to return to the land of Judah.

<sup>8</sup>Naomi said to her daughters-in-law, "Go, turn back, each of you to the household of your mother. May the LORD deal faithfully with you, just as you have done with the dead and with me. <sup>9</sup>May the LORD provide for you so that you may find security, each woman in the household of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

<sup>10</sup>But they replied to her, "No, instead we will return with you, to your people."

<sup>11</sup>Naomi replied, "Turn back, my daughters. Why would you go with me? Will there again be sons in my womb, that they would be husbands for you? <sup>12</sup>Turn back, my daughters. Go. I am too old for a husband. If I were to say that I have hope, even if I had a husband tonight, and even more, if I were to bear sons—<sup>13</sup>would you wait until they grew up? Would you refrain from having a husband? No, my daughters. This is more bitter for me than for you, since the LORD's will has come out against me."

<sup>14</sup>Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth stayed with her. <sup>15</sup>Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law is returning to her people and to her gods. Turn back after your sister-in-law."

<sup>16</sup>But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to abandon you, to turn back from following after you. Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. <sup>17</sup>Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD do this to me and more so if even death separates me from you." <sup>18</sup>When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her about it.

1:1-2 Gn 31:28;  
Gn 31:55;  
Dt 10:20; Ru 1:4  
1:5-6 Ru 2:11;  
Ps 45:10

1:1-2 The story opens with a family migrating to a foreign land because of *famine*, recalling the journeys of Sarai and Abram (Gen 12:10) and Jacob's sons (Gen 42:1-2).

1:1 *when the judges ruled*: the time after Israel settled in Canaan and before it became a kingdom. *Moab*: a country east of the Dead Sea. It is often presented negatively, as an enemy of Israel (e.g., Deut 23:3-6; Isa 15-16).

1:2 Names are symbolic in the story. *Elimelech* means "my God is king," and *Naomi* means "pleasant." The names of *Mahlon* ("sickly") and *Chilion* ("frail") hint at their upcoming deaths (Ruth 1:5). It is ironic that in *Bethlehem*, which means "house of food," there is no food. *Ephrathites*: Ephrathah is another name for either Bethlehem or a nearby village and is associated with King David (see Ruth 4:11).

1:4 *Moabite women* were viewed as especially dangerous (see Num 25:1-3).

1:6-7 *return*: The theme of returning or turning back appears throughout Ruth (10 times in Ruth 1, all from the same Hebrew word). Here the word refers to physical movement but also hints at changing one's mind and loyalties.

1:6 Here is the first of two places in the book where God acts directly (the other is Ruth 4:13). God's providing food is a common image in the Bible (e.g., Ezek 47:8-12; Jer

31:12-14; Ps 104:13-15) and gives Naomi a reason to return home after the many years in Moab. Food and fertility are themes in the book.

1:8-9 The first of several blessings in the story (cf. Ruth 2:4, 12, 19-20; 3:10; 4:11-12, 14). Naomi shows concern for the well-being of her daughters-in-law and recognizes their loyalty to her and her sons. Their emotional response suggests the affection the women have for each other. *the household of your mother*: This is an unexpected phrase, since men were the traditional heads of households. The phrase adds to the focus on women in this story. Mothers' houses are mentioned only a few times in the OT, usually in connection with marriage (Gen 24:28; Song 3:4; 8:2). *the household of her husband*: In this male-focused ancient culture, young widows would be able to find financial security only by remarrying.

1:11-13 Naomi's speech reflects, though doesn't follow exactly, the rule that if a man dies, his brother is required to marry his widow to provide her a son (Deut 25:5-10). Her reply shows a bit of humor, but she also sounds frustrated and discouraged by what looks like a hopeless situation.

1:16-17 Ruth not only pledges to move to Bethlehem with Naomi but to join a new culture and take on a new identity.

1:20 Job 6:4  
2:2 Lv 19:9-10,  
Lv 23:22;  
Dt 24:19

<sup>19</sup>So both of them went along until they arrived at Bethlehem. When they arrived at Bethlehem, the whole town was excited on account of them, and the women of the town asked, "Can this be Naomi?"

<sup>20</sup>She replied to them, "Don't call me Naomi,<sup>a</sup> but call me Mara,<sup>b</sup> for the Almighty<sup>c</sup> has made me very bitter. <sup>21</sup>I went away full, but the LORD has returned me empty. Why would you call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has deemed me guilty?"

<sup>22</sup>Thus Naomi returned. And Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, returned with her from the territory of Moab. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

### Gleaning in Bethlehem

**2**Now Naomi had a respected relative, a man of worth, through her husband from the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz. <sup>2</sup>Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field so that I may glean among the ears of grain behind someone in whose eyes I might find favor."

Naomi replied to her, "Go, my daughter." <sup>3</sup>So she went; she arrived and she gleaned in the field behind the harvesters. By chance, it happened to be the portion of the field that belonged to Boaz, who was from the family of Elimelech.

<sup>4</sup>Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem. He said to the harvesters, "May the LORD be with you."

And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you."

<sup>5</sup>Boaz said to his young man, the one who was overseeing the harvesters, "To whom does this young woman belong?"

<sup>6</sup>The young man who was overseeing the harvesters answered, "She's a young Moabite woman, the one who returned with Naomi from the territory of Moab. <sup>7</sup>She said, 'Please let me glean so that I might gather up grain from among the bundles behind the harvesters.' She arrived and has been on her feet from the morning until now, and has sat down for only a moment."<sup>d</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Boaz said to Ruth, "Haven't you understood, my daughter? Don't go glean in another field; don't go anywhere else. Instead, stay here with my young women. <sup>9</sup>Keep your eyes on the field that they are harvesting and go along after them. I've ordered the young men not to assault you. Whenever you are thirsty, go to the jugs and drink from what the young men have filled."

<sup>10</sup>Then she bowed down, face to the ground, and replied to him, "How is it that I've found favor in your eyes, that you notice me? I'm an immigrant." <sup>11</sup>Boaz responded to her,

<sup>a</sup>Naomi means *pleasant*. <sup>b</sup>Mara means *bitter*. <sup>c</sup>Heb *El Shaddai* or *God of the Mountain* <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain

1:19 *the women of the town* haven't seen Naomi for so long that they barely recognize her and are most likely surprised to see her coming back. Later these women will celebrate with her (Ruth 4:14-15).

1:20-21 *Naomi* ("pleasant") argues that her name should be Mara ("bitter") because of her great loss. In keeping with the biblical tradition of lamenting and praying for help, she places responsibility for misfortune on God.

1:22 *The barley harvest* occurs in late spring (April and May). This detail hints that there will be relief from the famine. *Ruth the Moabite*: The roles of the two women are now reversed, and Ruth is the immigrant in a foreign land. 2:1 Boaz's name probably means "strength is in him," which is a hint of his ability to take decisive action. *of worth*: Boaz will later use these same words to describe Ruth (Ruth 3:11).

2:2 Landowners were required to leave part of the harvest in the fields for widows, immigrants, and the poor (Deut 24:19-22; Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; notice that Ruth fits all three categories). By suggesting that she go to *glean* (collect what is left in the fields), Ruth takes initiative to provide for the two women. *my daughter*: This reference shows Naomi's growing sense of connection with and responsibility for Ruth.

2:3 Is it sheer luck or God's direction that takes Ruth to Boaz's field? Notice the contrast between Boaz's wealth and status as a landowner and the poverty of the two widows.

2:4-5 The words of Boaz and his workers show their respect for God. Blessings occur also in Ruth 2:12, 20.

2:5 "*To whom does this young woman belong?*" In ancient male-focused societies, women were not full individuals in their own right but belonged to their fathers or husbands. Ruth, however, has neither!

2:6-7 Like Boaz (Ruth 2:11), the overseer has heard positive things about Ruth. Though the Hebrew phrase translated as *has been on her feet . . . sat down for only a moment* allows various understandings, it basically suggests Ruth's stamina and persistence.

2:8 *my daughter*: The same phrase used by Naomi in Ruth 2:2. The difference in age between Boaz and Ruth will become significant later (Ruth 3:10).

2:9 *assault*: Male harvesters might try to rape a single woman working in the fields, especially a poor foreign woman.

2:11-13 Like Abram (Gen 12:1-3), Ruth left her country and her family, but she has done it without any promise of blessing from God. Boaz has apparently heard good

"Everything that you did for your mother-in-law after your husband's death has been reported fully to me: how you left behind your father, your mother, and the land of your birth, and came to a people you hadn't known beforehand. <sup>12</sup>May the LORD reward you\* for your deed. May you receive a rich reward from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you've come to seek refuge." <sup>13</sup>She said, "May I continue to find favor in your eyes, sir, because you've comforted me and because you've spoken kindly to your female servant—even though I'm not one of your female servants."

<sup>14</sup>At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here, eat some of the bread, and dip your piece in the vinegar." She sat alongside the harvesters, and he served roasted grain to her. She ate, was satisfied, and had leftovers. <sup>15</sup>Then she got up to glean.

Boaz ordered his young men, "Let her glean between the bundles, and don't humiliate her. <sup>16</sup>Also, pull out some from the bales for her and leave them behind for her to glean. And don't scold her."

<sup>17</sup>So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed what she had gleaned; it was about an ephah<sup>f</sup> of barley. <sup>18</sup>She picked it up and went into town. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She brought out what she had left over after eating her fill and gave it to her. <sup>19</sup>Her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? May the one who noticed you be blessed."

She told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz."

<sup>20</sup>Naomi replied to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the LORD, who hasn't abandoned his faithfulness with the living or with the dead." Naomi said to her, "The man is one of our close relatives; he's one of our redeemers."

<sup>21</sup>Ruth the Moabite replied, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they've finished all of my harvest.'"

<sup>22</sup>Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It's good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, so that men don't assault you in another field."

<sup>23</sup>Thus she stayed with Boaz's young women, gleaning until the completion of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

### Encounter at the threshing floor

**3** Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shouldn't I seek security for you, so that things might go well for you? <sup>2</sup>Now isn't Boaz, whose young women you were with, our relative? Tonight he will be winnowing barley at the threshing floor. <sup>3</sup>You should bathe, put on some perfume, wear nice clothes, and then go down to the threshing floor. Don't make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. <sup>4</sup>When he lies

\*LXX <sup>f</sup>An ephah is approximately twenty quarts of grain.

things about Ruth's character. To his wish that she be treated well by God, she replies somewhat boldly that she also hopes to *find favor* from Boaz himself. She is calling on him to take responsibility (see sidebar, "Loyal Living").

2:14-16 Boaz shows his generosity by providing Ruth a big lunch and instructing his workers to pull out grain for her from the already-harvested bales. This goes beyond what was required and expected of landowners.

2:17 An *ephah*, about two-thirds of a bushel, is quite a large yield for one day's work.

2:18 At Ruth's return from the fields with food, Naomi starts to become more hopeful and engaged. She recognizes Boaz's faithfulness to her husband through his actions toward Ruth that day (see sidebar, "Loyal Living"). Naomi had apparently not told Ruth about the existence of Boaz, nor warned her of the possible dangers of gleaning in the fields (Ruth 2:22).

2:20 Boaz is one of Naomi's *redeemers*, a *close relative* who has special obligations to help a family keep or reclaim its property if hard times require that the property be sold (see Lev 25:25-28; Jer 32:6-15).

2:23 This verse sums up Ruth's weeks of working in the

fields through the *barley and wheat harvests* (April through June). She has become the provider for the two women.

3:1 Now Naomi takes the initiative (see note on Ruth 2:2). Gleaning has been a temporary fix for their situation. Long-term *security*, which Naomi has wanted for her daughters-in-law since they were still back in Moab (Ruth 1:9), could be achieved for a woman in their society only through marriage.

3:2-4 Naomi decides that for the women it is time for Boaz to take more responsibility than merely to give them leftovers grain. She hatches a bold and risky plan that requires Ruth to dress up and go into a group of drunken men during the middle of the night. *feet*: sometimes used as a polite term for the genitals (cf. Isa 6:2). *lie down*: sometimes used as a polite term for sexual intercourse. This language strongly suggests a sexual encounter but doesn't absolutely need to be read that way.

3:2 *winnowing barley at the threshing floor*: done late in the day, when evening breezes would blow away the chaff. It was apparently an activity carried out by only the men of the community, as Ruth's presence would cause suspicion and gossip (Ruth 3:14).

2:20 Lv 25:25;  
2Sa 2:5  
3:3 2Sa 14:2;  
Ecc 9:8

3:7 Jdg 19:6;  
2Sa 13:28;  
Est 1:10  
3:13 Dt 25:5;  
Jdg 8:19; Ru 4:5;  
Mt 22:24

down, notice the place where he is lying. Then go, uncover his feet, and lie down. And he will tell you what to do.”

<sup>5</sup>Ruth replied to her, “I’ll do everything you are telling me.”

<sup>6</sup>So she went down to the threshing floor, and she did everything just as her mother-in-law had ordered.

<sup>7</sup>Boaz ate and drank, and he was in a good mood. He went over to lie down by the edge of the grain pile. Then she quietly approached, uncovered his legs, and lay down. <sup>8</sup>During the middle of the night, the man shuddered and turned over—and there was a woman lying at his feet. <sup>9</sup>“Who are you?” he asked.

She replied, “I’m Ruth your servant. Spread out your robe<sup>6</sup> over your servant, because you are a redeemer.”

<sup>10</sup>He said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter! You have acted even more faithfully than you did at first. You haven’t gone after rich or poor young men. <sup>11</sup>And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I’ll do for you everything you are asking. Indeed, my people—all who are at the gate—know that you are a woman of worth. <sup>12</sup>Now, although it’s certainly true that I’m a redeemer, there’s a redeemer who is a closer relative than I am. <sup>13</sup>Stay the night. And in the morning, if he’ll redeem you—good, let him redeem. But if he doesn’t want to redeem you, then—as the LORD lives—I myself will redeem you. Lie down until the morning.”

<sup>14</sup>So she lay at his feet until morning. Then she got up before one person could recognize another, for he had said, “No one should know that the woman came to the threshing floor.”

<sup>15</sup>He said, “Bring the cloak that you have on and hold it out.” She held it out, and he measured out six measures of barley and placed it upon her. Then she<sup>h</sup> went into town.

*Loyal Living* In the book of Ruth, every character, major and minor, lives loyally (or “faithfully,” Ruth 1:8; 3:10) with each other. Careful readers see that characters act not just for their own personal benefit but to promote the well-being of others. This faithfulness is evident also in the positive comments about Ruth (see Ruth 2:11-12; 3:10-11; 4:15) and about Boaz (see Ruth 2:1, 19-20; 3:17). The OT most often speaks of such “faithfulness” in connection with God’s own care for the people (e.g., Ps 89). In the book of Ruth, however, humans behave in this God-inspired way toward each other. Through the various choices made—Ruth’s caring for a poor and elderly relative, Naomi’s planning for her daughters-in-law, Boaz’s taking a needy immigrant into his own family, the townspeople’s support of others in the community—we see love as not just an emotion but as an action. These persons do far more than they are obligated to do. The story shows what it’s like to live faithfully in community, to watch for someone else’s need and do whatever is possible to meet that need.

<sup>6</sup>Or wing; cf 2:12; Ps 91:4 <sup>h</sup>MT *he*; other Heb sources, Syr, Vulg *she*

3:7-8 *a good mood* could indicate that Boaz is drunk after the evening celebration or that he is simply relaxed and happy. *lay down... feet*: See note on Ruth 3:2-4. Boaz seems startled, and perhaps confused about what might have happened, when he wakes up during the middle of the night. Apparently he doesn’t recognize Ruth in the darkness.

3:9 Though Naomi told Ruth that Boaz would tell her what to do (Ruth 3:4), Ruth instead tells him what to do. *robe*: The same Hebrew word is translated as “wing” in Ruth 2:12. There, Boaz spoke of God’s care for Ruth; now she calls Boaz himself to provide for her, using the language of a marriage proposal (cf. Ezek 16:8). Because the situation in the story does not match the details of Deuteronomy 25:5-10, Boaz is not required to marry Ruth (see notes on Ruth 1:11-13; 2:20). He agrees out of kindness rather than obligation.

3:10 As before, Ruth’s loyalty has been noticed. Her first faithfulness to Naomi (Ruth 2:11) now extends to Boaz. Boaz doesn’t scold her for her bold action on the threshing floor but welcomes her.

3:11 *a woman of worth*: Compare with the description of Boaz in Ruth 2:1. This phrase, which is also used for the remarkable woman in Proverbs 31, is a strong compliment, especially considering that Boaz is a prominent leader in the community and Ruth is a poor, immigrant widow. Ruth is no longer a “servant” (Ruth 2:13; 3:9) but equal to Boaz in moral character.

3:12-13 We learn for the first time that there is a *closer relative* to Naomi than Boaz. This man would have first responsibility for acting as a *redeemer* (see note on Ruth 2:20) for the family. Boaz promises to do so if this other man refuses the responsibility.

3:14 Just as during the harvesting season, Boaz is concerned for both Ruth’s physical safety (Ruth 2:8-9) and her need for food (Ruth 2:14-16). If Ruth is seen on the threshing floor at dawn, it will look as if she came only to get some grain.

3:15 *six measures of barley* is a huge amount. The image of Ruth carrying the grain in her apron hints at her upcoming pregnancy (Ruth 4:12).

<sup>16</sup>She came to her mother-in-law, who said, "How are you, my daughter?"

So Ruth told her everything the man had done for her. <sup>17</sup>She said, "He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said to me, 'Don't go away empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'"

<sup>18</sup>"Sit tight, my daughter," Naomi replied, "until you know how it turns out. The man won't rest until he resolves the matter today."

4:5 Gn 38:8;  
Dt 25:5, Dt 25:6;  
Ru 3:13;  
Mt 22:24  
4:6 Lv 25:25;  
Dt 25:7; Ru 3:13  
4:7 Dt 25:7;  
Ru 4:8

### **A new family brings fulfillment**

**4** Meanwhile, Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there. Just then, the redeemer about whom Boaz had spoken was passing by. He said, "Sir, come over here and sit down." So he turned aside and sat down. <sup>2</sup>Then he took ten men from the town's elders and said, "Sit down here." And they sat down.

<sup>3</sup>Boaz said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has returned from the field of Moab, is selling the portion of the field that belonged to our brother Elimelech. <sup>4</sup>I thought that I should let you know and say, 'Buy it, in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you<sup>1</sup> won't redeem it, tell me so that I may know. There isn't anyone to redeem it except you, and I'm next in line after you."

He replied, "I will redeem it."

<sup>5</sup>Then Boaz said, "On the day when you buy the field from Naomi, you also buy<sup>1</sup> Ruth the Moabite, the wife of the dead man, in order to preserve the dead man's name for his inheritance."

<sup>6</sup>But the redeemer replied, "Then I can't redeem it for myself, without risking damage to my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself. You can have my right of redemption, because I'm unable to act as redeemer."

<sup>7</sup>In Israel, in former times, this was the practice regarding redemption and exchange to confirm any such matter: a man would take off his sandal and give it to the other person. This was the process of making a transaction binding in Israel. <sup>8</sup>Then the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," and he took off his sandal.

<sup>9</sup>Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I've bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. <sup>10</sup>And also Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, I've bought to be my wife, to preserve the dead man's name for his inheritance so that the name of the dead man might not be cut off from his brothers or from the gate of his hometown—today you are witnesses."

<sup>11</sup>Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD grant that the woman who is coming into your household be like Rachel and like Leah,

<sup>1</sup>MT he; LXX, Syr you <sup>1</sup>Vulg; MT On the day that you buy the field from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabite

3:17 *Don't go away empty-handed to your mother-in-law.* So far as we know, Boaz didn't mention Naomi at all. By placing these words in his mouth, Ruth extends his care and concern for herself to Naomi as well. Naomi's emptiness (Ruth 1:21) is now replaced by great physical abundance. Ruth has acted as her redeemer to bring about this change in circumstances.

3:18 After all the women's work and activity, their future is out of their hands. They can only wait.

4:1-2 A town's gate served as its legal, commercial, and judicial center. *elders* were important men in the community, called on here to witness the transaction.

4:3 This is the first mention of the fact that Naomi owns property. Apparently the field isn't currently being farmed and able to provide grain. A woman most likely wouldn't be able to sell family land on her own, and thus Boaz is representing her in this sale.

4:3-6 The concern is to keep the land in the family, which selling to a redeemer, a close relative, will do (see note on Ruth 2:20). Boaz doesn't tell the other man up front that marriage to Ruth, which would include supporting her and their future children, is part of the arrangement of the sale. In backing out, the other man isn't acting

irresponsibly or necessarily objecting to having a wife who is Moabite, but only acknowledging that he can't financially afford to help.

4:7 Taking off a sandal is also mentioned in Deuteronomy 25:9, though the details are different. The fact that the narrator explains this custom suggests that it was no longer practiced at the time of the writing of the book.

4:9-10 By beginning and ending his speech with the phrase *Today you are witnesses*, Boaz highlights how important the townspeople are to this new arrangement. The individuals in this story act with the support of the local community. *preserve the dead man's name*: In his speech to the men at the gate, Boaz emphasizes that the marriage will maintain the heritage of Ruth's dead husband. But it also, of course, meets the pressing needs of two women who are still alive. Ultimately, the child is remembered as Boaz's own child (Ruth 4:21).

4:11-12 The entire community offers a blessing for the marriage, repeating their hopes that there will be many children from it. *Rachel* and *Leah* were wives of Israel's ancestor Jacob (Gen 29-35). *Tamar*, daughter-in-law to Boaz's tribal ancestor Judah, was a foreigner and childless widow who took risky action to preserve herself and her

4:12 Gn 38:6.  
Gn 38:29.  
Gn 46:12.  
1Ch 2:4

both of whom built up the house of Israel. May you be fertile in Ephrathah and may you preserve a name in Bethlehem. <sup>12</sup>And may your household be like the household of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah—through the children that the LORD will give you from this young woman.”

<sup>13</sup>So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife.

He was intimate with her, the LORD let her become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. <sup>14</sup>The women said to Naomi, “May the LORD be blessed, who today hasn’t left you without a redeemer. May his name be proclaimed in Israel. <sup>15</sup>He will restore your life and sustain you in your old age. Your daughter-in-law who loves you has given birth to him. She’s better for you than seven sons.” <sup>16</sup>Naomi took the child and held him to her breast, and she became his guardian. <sup>17</sup>The neighborhood women gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They called his name Obed.<sup>k</sup> He became Jesse’s father and David’s grandfather.

<sup>18</sup>These are the generations of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron, <sup>19</sup>Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, <sup>20</sup>Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, <sup>21</sup>Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, <sup>22</sup>Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.

<sup>k</sup>Obed means *one who serves (God)*.

husband’s family line (Gen 38). All three of these biblical women, like Ruth, showed courage, resourcefulness, and persistence.

4:13 *the LORD let her become pregnant*: This is God’s second direct action in the story (cf. Ruth 1:6). The food and children provided by God solve the two problems with which the book began, famine and the death of a family.

4:14-16 The townswomen who greeted Naomi on her return home (Ruth 1:19) now bless her. To consider Ruth *better . . . than seven sons* is very high praise in a culture that values men and sons over women and daughters. The newborn Obed acts as Naomi’s *redeemer* who will restore her. He brings her back to life again. Naomi’s

loss and emptiness are reversed with the arrival of this grandson.

4:17 It is unusual for *neighborhood women* to name a child. This task is typically performed by parents or other family members. Referring to Obed as Naomi’s, and not Ruth’s, son emphasizes how he is replacing the family Naomi has lost.

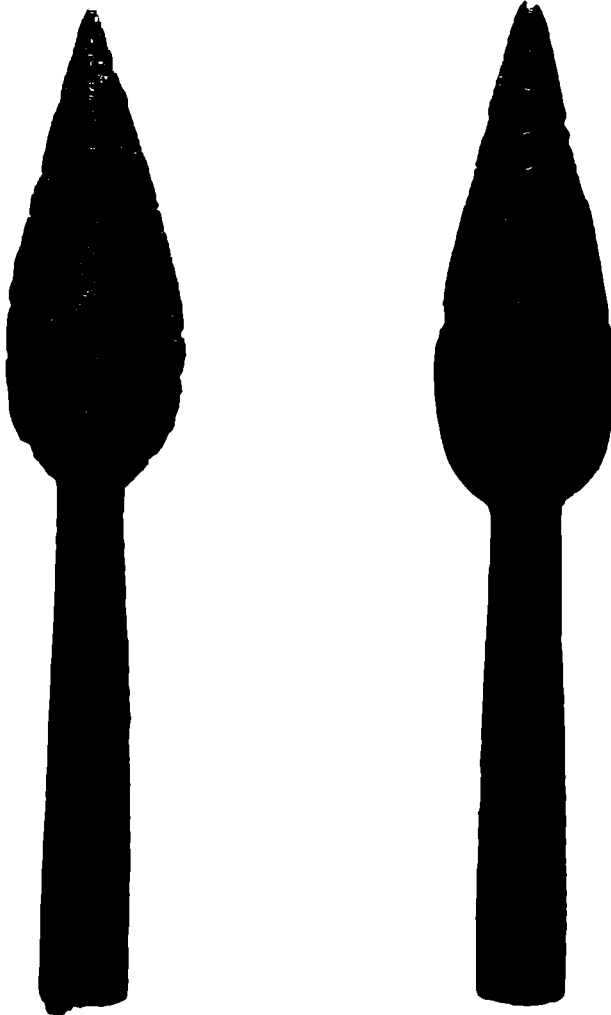
4:18-22 The book ends with a family history, or genealogy, that points forward to David. (This may be a later addition to the story.) How surprising that the future king of Israel has a Moabite great-grandmother! By pointing toward David, Israel’s ideal king, these verses link the story of this small family to the nation’s story.

# 1 SAMUEL

In the oldest Hebrew manuscripts, 1 and 2 Samuel were one book, often written on a single scroll. Greek translations, followed by Latin, divided 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings into four books called "1–4 Kingdoms," and this practice continued in Roman Catholic Bibles well into the 20th century. Protestant Bibles began

to divide the book of Samuel into two books in the 16th century.

The books of Samuel are part of a great history work stretching from Joshua through 2 Kings (Ruth wasn't a part of this, but was placed after Judges in English Bibles). This work was influenced by the book of Deuteronomy, and so the



Ancient spearheads (1 Sam 19:10)  
*iStockPhoto*

collection is usually called the Deuteronomistic History. Looking back from the experience of Babylonian exile, this history work tried to understand how Israel's story in the land of promise came to an end in destruction and exile.

This historian included in his large history many smaller pieces focused on events or persons important to Israel's story. In the books of Samuel, the focus is on a time of change when circumstances led to the establishment of kingship in Israel to replace the loose tribal alliance found in the book of Judges. This change began due to internal failures of the tribal system, including the corruption of the sons of Eli at the Shiloh sanctuary where the Lord's covenant chest was kept (1 Sam 2); and the external threat of a more sustained enemy pressure from the Philistines (1 Sam 4). In 1 Samuel 8 the elders of Israel insist that the prophet Samuel set a king over them. Almost every episode in the books of Samuel prepares us for and takes us through the challenges and opportunities that come from the transition to kingship. Three key persons dominate the events of this period: the prophet Samuel; Israel's first king, Saul; and Israel's second king, David. Through these persons and events in the stories of 1 and 2 Samuel, we also see the working of God's providence. In these books, God doesn't work around the leaders and events of the day but through them.

Some of the traditions reflected in the stories may originate near the time of these events (ca. 1020–960 BCE), and they don't have a single consistent point of view. Some stories clearly see the request for a king as sinful, while others see kingship as God's new gift to Israel. Saul's story is, in the end, a story of tragic failure, while David is considered a man following the Lord's own heart (1 Sam 13:14). Even David experiences a time of failure and judgment (2 Sam 11–12). The uncertainties of the time are no doubt reflected in the varied viewpoints of the stories. The historian may have found some parts of 1 and 2 Samuel already existing as smaller collections. Therefore, as we will see below, he may have simply included these smaller collections with a more focused viewpoint in his larger work.

While the literary history of 1 and 2 Samuel

may be complex, scholars generally agree that the books of Samuel fall into seven distinct segments:

1. *Samuel the prophet and the corruption of the House of Eli* (1 Sam 1–3; 7). The books of Samuel don't begin with dramatic events on a national stage, but with God's response to the prayer of a barren woman, Hannah. Her son becomes the prophet Samuel, through whom God will respond to the prayers of a troubled Israel. Samuel grows up at the sanctuary at Shiloh, where we are introduced to the corruption of the sons of Eli, the priest of Shiloh. Israel is in need of new leadership for a new future.
2. *The story of the Lord's covenant chest* (1 Sam 4–6). Israel also faces an external threat in the form of the Philistines, who desire to expand their influence and control into Israelite territory. The Philistines defeat Israel in a decisive battle, and the Lord's covenant chest (traditionally known as the "ark") is captured. This chest is the sacred sign of God's presence, which was thought to protect Israel. The Philistines occupy much of the land as Israelite human leaders disappear from the stories of these chapters. Nevertheless, the Lord's hand strikes the Philistines and their god, Dagon. The Philistines send the Lord's covenant chest back into Israel. Israel needs new leaders, but the power for change comes from God.
3. *The establishment of kingship and the choosing of Saul* (1 Sam 8–15). The elders of Israel demand from Samuel a king "like all the other nations," and Samuel considers this a sinful rejection of God's kingship (1 Sam 8). The very next story tells of God's choice of Saul as Israel's first king to deliver them from the Philistines. Samuel anoints Saul, who receives God's spirit (1 Sam 9:1–10:15). The viewpoint of these stories appears to be very favorable toward kingship. This section includes three stories of Saul becoming king and two stories of Saul's rejection as king by God through the prophet Samuel. The text presents both kingship and Saul ambiguously, perhaps reflecting varied opinions of kingship that arose throughout the history of Israel in light of later kings. Saul's story is one of promise and tragedy.



*The rise of David* (1 Sam 16:1–2 Sam 5:10). Many believe this material on David's early career shows the marks of an early collection of stories now included in the larger history work. The stories not only introduce David but present the traits that make him worthy to be God's anointed king. A recurring motif is "The LORD is with him" (1 Sam 16:18; 17:37; 18:12, 14, 28; 20:13; 2 Sam 5:10). As the story progresses, individuals and groups in Israel declare their love for David and acknowledge him as God's coming king for Israel. By contrast, Saul becomes increasingly driven by his own folly, jealousy, and anger. He commits senseless acts of violence, pursues David rather than opposing the Philistines, and finally takes his own life in the face of Philistine defeat. We come to know David as a great warrior, but also a man of prayer and a leader with wisdom and compassion. First, Judah makes him king. Later, the northern tribes of Israel will do so, but not before David sings the praises of Saul and his son Jonathan (2 Sam 1).

*David on the throne* (2 Sam 5:11–10:19). Unlike Saul, David brings the kingdom together and makes it stable. New royal realities displace tribal realities, but not without respecting earlier traditions of the tribal league. Jerusalem becomes David's new capital, located neither in northern nor southern tribal territory. David brings the Lord's covenant chest to Jerusalem, giving it a place of honor. The prophet Nathan declares a new covenant featuring God's eternal promise to David's dynasty. This new king defeats Israel's enemies, including the Philistines, drawing them into the wider Davidic kingdom. These stories picture movement from a loose tribal alliance to David's firm leadership over an infant royal state.

*The court history of David* (2 Sam 11–20). Recent interpreters see in this section a tragic family story illustrating David's use of power for his own self-centered ends, which leads to tragic consequences for his own family. David's adultery with Bathsheba, the killing of her husband, Uriah, and the confrontation and judgment by the prophet Nathan (2 Sam 11–12) mark the division of David's

story into two parts: blessing/curse or gift/grasp. A tragic story unfolds in David's family, one in which his own children use power in self-serving ways. Rape, murder, exile, rebellion, civil war, and grief dominate this narrative. Only in David's retreat from Jerusalem do we see again the David who trusts his future to God as he depends on divine mercy (2 Sam 15:25–26; 16:12). David nears the end of his kingship still on the throne but chastened by the consequences of his own sin.

7. *Final Davidic traditions* (2 Sam 21–24). Until recently these chapters were seen as miscellaneous materials added to the narrative, which interrupt the flow of David's story. Scholars now treat these chapters as a more purposeful ending to the books of Samuel. This group of symmetrically arranged units reminds us that God's sovereignty, even under kings, exceeds human sovereignty. Two great poetic songs stand together at the heart of this section, a thanksgiving by David for God's deliverance (2 Sam 22; paralleling Ps 18) and a hymn in celebration of God's promise to David (2 Sam 23:1–7). These songs are surrounded by notices concerning David's mighty men (2 Sam 21:15–22; 23:8–39). The section begins with a narrative focused on dealing with Saul's guilt (2 Sam 21:1–14) and ends with an episode dealing with David's guilt (2 Sam 24). Taken together, these closing sections remind readers of the tragic story of David's misuse of power, and that David was never the sole focus of Israel's future. At the heart of these events were always God's promise and direction, and God's willingness to look beyond human failures to find a future for Israel and its leadership. This section therefore identifies the heroes, warriors, and mighty men surrounding David as also part of God's plan.

The conclusion to the books of Samuel suggests an important observation. Even beyond the great figures of Samuel, Saul, and David, the stories of the books of Samuel present a lively cast of secondary characters who make unique contributions to the story of what God is doing in Israel at this time: Hannah, Eli, Jonathan, Michal, Joab, Abigail, Abner, Nathan, Mephibosheth, Bathsheba, Absalom, Tamar.

Clearly the books of Samuel present the contributions of distinctive leaders and personalities to the story of Israel's future in this time of change. The books of Samuel, however, also witness to the fact that power doesn't rise from the force of human personality alone. Behind and beyond human events and political power, God acts to create a future for Israel. Hannah's

song near the beginning (1 Sam 2:1-10) and David's song near the end (2 Sam 22:2-51) declare that God overturns the world's usual power arrangements. God can initiate, judge, renew, and empower, but chooses to do so through human leaders and their gifts. Nevertheless, in the end the books of Samuel remind us that God's providence will create the future.

### I. Samuel as God's Prophet (1:1–4:1a)

- A. Hannah's promise and Samuel's birth (1:1-28)
- B. Hannah's song (2:1-10)
- C. Samuel at Shiloh (2:11–4:1a)
  - 1. The corruption of Eli's sons (2:11-17)
  - 2. Samuel's childhood at Shiloh (2:18-21)
  - 3. Prophetic judgment against the house of Eli (2:22-36)
  - 4. The call of Samuel and his role as prophet (3:1–4:1a)

### II. The Philistines and God's Covenant Chest (4:1b–7:2)

- A. The Philistines capture God's covenant chest (4:1b-11)
- B. The death of Eli (4:12-22)
- C. God's covenant chest among the Philistines (5:1-12)
- D. God's covenant chest is returned to Israel (6:1–7:2)

### III. Samuel Leads Israel (7:2-17)

#### IV. Saul Becomes Israel's First King (8:1–12:25)

- A. Israel demands a king (8:1-22)
- B. Saul seeks lost donkeys and is anointed by Samuel (9:1–10:16)
  - 1. Saul seeks lost donkeys and encounters Samuel (9:1-26)
  - 2. Saul is anointed to deliver Israel (9:27–10:8)
  - 3. Saul is seized by the spirit and prophesies (10:9-13)
  - 4. Saul keeps secret his anointing to kingship (10:14-16)
- C. Saul chosen as king by lots (10:17-27a)
- D. Saul delivers Jabesh-gilead and is acclaimed king (10:27b–11:15)
- E. Samuel's farewell speech (12:1-25)

#### V. Saul's Battles and Rejections by Samuel (13:1–15:35)

- A. Saul's rejection from dynasty (13:1-18)
- B. Philistine monopoly on ironworking (13:19-22)

- C. Jonathan's victory and Saul's misjudgments (13:23–14:46)

- D. Saul's wars, family, and officers (14:47-52)

- E. Samuel rejects Saul as king (15:1-35)

- 1. Saul defeats the Amalekites and spares King Agag (15:1-9)
- 2. Samuel's rejection of Saul as king (15:10-35)

#### VI. David on the Path to Kingship (16:1–31:13)

- A. Samuel anoints David (16:1-13)
- B. David introduced to Saul (16:14-23)
- C. David defeats the Philistine champion, Goliath (17:1-58)
- D. David in the court of Saul (18:1–20:42)
  - 1. Jonathan and David (18:1-4)
  - 2. Saul's jealousy and David's success (18:5-30)
  - 3. David escapes from Saul (19:1-24)
  - 4. Jonathan and David's friendship (20:1-42)
- E. David as a fugitive from Saul (21:1–31:13)
  - 1. David helped at Nob (21:1-9)
  - 2. David plays a madman at Gath (21:10-15)
  - 3. David gathers family and supporters (22:1-5)
  - 4. Saul kills the priests at Nob (22:6-23)
  - 5. Saul chases David (23:1-29)
  - 6. David spares Saul's life (24:1-22)
  - 7. Abigail saves David (25:1-42)
  - 8. David's wives (25:42-44)
  - 9. David spares Saul's life a second time (26:1-25)
  - 10. David serves the Philistine Achish (27:1–28:2)
  - 11. Saul consults the woman of En-dor (28:3-25)
  - 12. David sent home from coming battle with Saul (29:1-11)
  - 13. The Amalekite raid on Ziklag (30:1-31)
  - 14. Saul's suicide on Mount Gilboa (31:1-13)

**Samuel's birth**

**1** Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite\* from the highlands of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah. He was from the tribe of Ephraim, and he was the son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph. **2**Elkanah had two wives, one named Hannah and the other named Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah didn't.

**3**Every year this man would leave his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of heavenly forces in Shiloh, where Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas were the LORD's priests. **4**Whenever he sacrificed, Elkanah would give parts of the sacrifice to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. **5**But he would give only one part of it to Hannah, though he loved her, because the LORD had kept her from conceiving.<sup>b</sup> **6**And because the LORD had kept Hannah from conceiving, her rival would make fun of her mercilessly, just to bother her. **7**So that is what took place year after year. Whenever Hannah went to the Lord's house, Peninnah would make fun of her. Then she would cry and wouldn't eat anything.

**8**"Hannah, why are you crying?" her husband Elkanah would say to her. "Why won't you eat? Why are you<sup>c</sup> so sad? Aren't I worth more to you than ten sons?"

**9**One time, after eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah got up and presented herself before the LORD.<sup>d</sup> (Now Eli the priest was sitting in the chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple.) **10**Hannah was very upset and couldn't stop crying as she prayed to the LORD. **11**Then she made this promise: "LORD of heavenly forces, just look at your servant's pain and remember me! Don't forget your servant! Give her a boy! Then I'll give him to the LORD for his entire life. No razor will ever touch his head."

**12**As she kept praying before the LORD, Eli watched her mouth. **13**Now Hannah was praying in her heart; her lips were moving, but her voice was silent, so Eli thought she was drunk.

**14**"How long will you act like a drunk? Sober up!" Eli told her.

**15**"No sir!" Hannah replied. "I'm just a very sad woman. I haven't had any wine or beer but have been pouring out my heart to the LORD. **16**Don't think your servant is some good-for-nothing woman. This whole time I've been praying out of my great worry and trouble!"

**17**Eli responded, "Then go in peace. And may the God of Israel give you what you've asked from him."

**18**"Please think well of me, your servant," Hannah said. Then the woman went on her way, ate some food, and wasn't sad any longer.<sup>e</sup>

**19**They got up early the next morning and worshipped the LORD. Then they went back home to Ramah. Elkanah had sex with his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her.

\*LXX; MT *Ramathaim-zophim* <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain; Syr *But he would give a double portion to Hannah, because he loved her, though the LORD had kept her from conceiving.* <sup>c</sup>Or *your heart* <sup>d</sup>LXX; MT *lacks presented herself before the LORD.*

<sup>e</sup>LXX; MT *lacks sad.*

1:1-4:1a The books of Samuel open in a time of crisis demanding change. These first chapters introduce the internal crisis caused by the corruption of the sons of Eli, the chief priest at the Israelite sanctuary at Shiloh. The story of the establishment of kingship in Israel begins with God's response to the prayer of a childless woman, Hannah, and the birth of her son, Samuel, destined to be God's prophet during this time of change.

1:1 *Ephraim . . . from the tribe of Ephraim:* Samuel and also Saul will come from the territory of the northern Israelite tribes. Later, David will arise from the southern tribe of Judah. Tensions between northern and southern tribes play a role in the events leading to kingship in Israel.

1:2 A barren woman, Hannah, ridiculed by her rival (1 Sam 1:6), is God's instrument to begin the transition to kingship in Israel. God's use of barren women to advance the story of Israel is also displayed in the stories of Sarah (Gen 18) and Samson's mother (Judg 13).

1:3 *Lord of heavenly forces in Shiloh:* The Israelite tribal league maintained a central sanctuary at Shiloh in the central highlands. God's presence was enthroned there above a gold-covered chest (see sidebar, "The Lord's

Covenant Chest" at 1 Sam 5). The "Lord of heavenly forces" is the most common title for Israel's God, present above the chest. It symbolized the hope that God would fight for them against their enemies. Pious Israelites would make pilgrimages to sacrifice at Shiloh, as seen here in the annual practice of Elkanah along with his two wives.

1:11 Hannah prays to the Lord for a son, making a solemn promise to dedicate any son to the Lord's service. Because this promise includes the sign of never cutting his hair, it is often identified with the promise taken by Samson's mother (Judg 13:7). Such a person is described in Numbers 6:1-21 as a nazirite, which means "one made holy or separate." The term "nazirite" actually appears as an addition in the Dead Sea Scrolls to 1 Samuel 1:22, when Hannah declares her intention for the boy Samuel.

1:12-18 The chief priest Eli mistakes Hannah's silent prayer for drunkenness. When Hannah corrects him, she pleads with him not to consider her a *good-for-nothing woman* (1:16). Ironically, this is the same word in Hebrew used to describe Eli's corrupt sons as "despicable" in 1 Samuel 2:12. After realizing his mistake, Eli adds his blessing to Hannah's prayer.

1:1 1Sa 1:19;

1Ch 6:27;

1Ch 6:34

1:2 Gn 4:19

1:3 Ex 23:14;

Dt 12:5;

Josh 18:1;

1Sa 1:21;

Lk 2:41

1:6 1Sa 1:7

1:7 1Sa 1:6

1:8 Ru 4:15

1:9 1Sa 3:3;

1Sa 4:13

1:10 1Sa 1:11;

Job 7:11;

Job 10:1

1:11 Nm 6:5;

Igs 11:30;

Igs 13:5;

1Sa 1:19

1:13 Gn 24:42;

Ps 27:8; Ac 2:13

1:14 1Sa 1:12

1:15 Job 30:16;

Ps 42:4; Ps 62:8;

Lam 2:19

1:16 1Sa 2:12

1:17 2Ki 5:19

1:18 Gn 33:15;

Ro 2:13;

Ro 15:13

1:19 1Sa 1:1;

1Sa 2:11

1:20 Gn 30:6;  
Ex 2:10; Jer 15:1;  
Mt 12:1;  
Heb 11:32

1:21 Gn 21:8;  
Nm 30:7;  
1Sa 1:1, 1Sa 1:4;  
2Sa 7:25

1:22 Josh 10:1

1:23 1Sa 17:55;  
2Kl 2:2, 2Kl 2:4,  
2Kl 2:6, 2Kl 4:30

1:27 1Sa 1:11;  
Ps 66:19

1:28 Gn 24:26,  
Gn 24:52;  
1Sa 1:11

2:1 Ps 9:14,  
Ps 13:5, Ps 35:9,  
Ps 89:17,  
Ps 89:24

2:1 Ex 15:11;  
Dt 32:31;  
2Sa 22:32

2:4 1Kl 8:39;  
Ps 94:4; Pvr 8:13

2:4 Ps 37:15,  
Ps 46:9, Ps 76:3;  
Is 40:31

2:5 Ru 4:15;  
Ps 113:9; Is 54:1;  
Jer 15:9

<sup>20</sup>So in the course of time, Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, which means “I asked the LORD for him.”<sup>f</sup>

### Samuel's dedication

<sup>21</sup>When Elkanah and all his household went up to make the annual sacrifice and keep his solemn promise, <sup>22</sup>Hannah didn't go.

“I'll bring the boy when he is weaned,” she told her husband, “so he can be presented to the LORD and stay there permanently. I will offer him as a nazirite forever.”<sup>g</sup>

<sup>23</sup>“Do what seems best to you,” said her husband Elkanah. “Stay here until you've weaned him. But may the LORD bring to pass what you've<sup>h</sup> promised.” So the woman stayed home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

<sup>24</sup>When he had been weaned and was still very young,<sup>i</sup> Hannah took him, along with a three-year-old bull,<sup>j</sup> an ephah<sup>k</sup> of flour, and a jar of wine, and brought him to the LORD's house at Shiloh. <sup>25</sup>They slaughtered the bull, then brought the boy to Eli.

<sup>26</sup>“Excuse me, sir!” Hannah said. “As surely as you live, sir, I am the woman who stood here next to you, praying to the LORD. <sup>27</sup>I prayed for this boy, and the LORD gave me what I asked from him. <sup>28</sup>So now I give this boy back to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is given to the LORD.”

Then they worshipped there before the LORD.<sup>l</sup>

### Hannah's song

**2** Then Hannah prayed:

My heart rejoices in the LORD.

My strength<sup>m</sup> rises up in the LORD!

My mouth mocks my enemies because I rejoice in your deliverance.

<sup>2</sup>No one is holy like the LORD—

no, no one except you!

There is no rock like our God!

<sup>3</sup>Don't go on and on, talking so proudly,  
spouting arrogance from your mouth,  
because the LORD is the God who knows,  
and he weighs every act.

<sup>4</sup>The bows of mighty warriors are shattered,  
but those who were stumbling now dress themselves in power!

<sup>5</sup>Those who were filled full now sell themselves for bread,  
but the ones who were starving are now fat from food!  
The woman who was barren has birthed seven children,  
but the mother with many sons has lost them all!

<sup>f</sup>Samuel means *God has heard* but here is connected to the Heb verb to *ask*. <sup>g</sup>DSS (4QSam<sup>a</sup>); MT lacks *I will offer . . . forever*. <sup>h</sup>LXX, DSS (4QSam<sup>a</sup>); MT *he*. <sup>i</sup>Or *and the boy was a boy*; Heb uncertain. <sup>j</sup>LXX, DSS (4QSam<sup>a</sup>), Syr; MT *three bulls*. <sup>k</sup>An ephah was approximately twenty quarts. <sup>l</sup>Some Heb manuscripts, Syr, Vulg; MT *he (Eli)? worshipped*; DSS (4QSam<sup>a</sup>) and *she (Hannah) left him there and worshipped the LORD*. <sup>m</sup>Or *my horn*; also in 2:10

1:20 *Samuel*: This name means “God has heard,” but the text relates it to the Hebrew verb for “to ask,” which appears seven times in this chapter. It is the name Saul that is closely related to “ask,” possibly pointing the reader to the close connection between the lives and fates of Samuel and Saul.

1:24-28 The boy Samuel is very young, only just weaned, when Hannah leaves him with Eli to serve the Lord at Shiloh in fulfillment of her promise. Israelites understood that one is obligated to give back from whatever the Lord gives to them (1:28).

2:1-10 Hannah's song: This poetic piece is both a prayer and a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. Its theme is that God can use the powerless to break the power of the mighty. Just as God has used Hannah, a barren woman, to give birth to Samuel, God is at work transforming Israel's

future. Hannah's song is similar in theme and language to Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1:46-55.

2:1 Hannah begins with a celebration of the reversal God brought to her own personal situation. The word translated *strength* here is the Hebrew word commonly translated “horn,” used often as an image for the *strength* of great leaders (Ps 132:17). Her song ends with this very same word (1 Sam 2:10), there used for the strength God will give “his king” and “his anointed one.” Hannah's song celebrates a work of God begun in her son Samuel that will end in the first kings of Israel, anointed by Samuel.

2:2-3 Hannah begins her song in general praise of the Lord. 2:4-9 The main body of Hannah's song celebrates how God reverses the fortunes of the weak, the poor, and the powerless while overturning the might of the powerful.

- <sup>6</sup>The LORD! He brings death, gives life,  
takes down to the grave,<sup>a</sup> and raises up!
- <sup>7</sup>The LORD! He makes poor, gives wealth,  
brings low, but also lifts up high!
- <sup>8</sup>God raises the poor from the dust,  
lifts up the needy from the garbage pile.  
God sits them with officials,  
gives them the seat of honor!  
The pillars of the earth belong to the LORD;  
he set the world on top of them!
- <sup>9</sup>God guards the feet of his faithful ones,  
but the wicked die in darkness because no one succeeds by strength alone.
- <sup>10</sup>The LORD! His enemies are terrified!  
God thunders against them from heaven!  
The LORD! He judges the far corners of the earth!

May God give strength to his king  
and raise high the strength of his anointed one.

<sup>11</sup>Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy served the LORD under Eli the priest.

### Corruption of Eli's sons

<sup>12</sup>Now Eli's sons were despicable men who didn't know the LORD. <sup>13</sup>This was how the priest was supposed to act with the people: Whenever anyone made a sacrifice, while the meat was boiling, the priest's assistant would come with a three-pronged fork in hand. <sup>14</sup>He would thrust it into the cauldron or the pot. <sup>15</sup>Whatever the fork brought up, the priest would take for himself. This is how it was done for all the Israelites who came to Shiloh.

<sup>15</sup>But with Eli's sons,<sup>f</sup> even before the fat was burned, the priest's assistant would come and say to the person offering the sacrifice, "Give the priest some meat to roast. He won't accept boiled meat from you."<sup>g</sup> <sup>16</sup>If anyone said, "Let the fat be burned off first, as usual, then take whatever you like for yourself," the assistant would reply, "No, hand it over now. If not, I'll take it by force." <sup>17</sup>The sin of these priestly assistants was very serious in the LORD's sight because they were disrespecting the Lord's own offering.

<sup>18</sup>Now Samuel was serving the LORD. He was a young boy, clothed in a linen priestly vest.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>19</sup>His mother would make a small robe for him and take it to him every year when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. <sup>20</sup>Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife: "May the LORD replace<sup>i</sup> the child of this woman that you gave back to the LORD." Then they would return home. <sup>21</sup>The LORD paid attention to Hannah, and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the LORD's service.

<sup>22</sup>Eli was very old, but he heard everything his sons were doing to the Israelites, and how they had sex with the women who served at the meeting tent's entrance. <sup>23</sup>Eli said to his sons, "Why are you doing these terrible things that I'm hearing about from everybody?" <sup>24</sup>No, my sons. Don't do this.<sup>k</sup> The report I hear spreading among God's people isn't good. <sup>25</sup>If someone sins against someone else, God can intercede; but if someone sins against the LORD, who will intercede then?" But they wouldn't obey their father because the LORD

2:6 Dt 32:39;  
2Ki 5:7; 1a 26:19;  
Rev 1:18

2:7 Dt 8:18;  
Job 1:21,  
Job 5:11; Ps 75:7

2:8 2Sa 7:8;  
Job 36:7,  
Job 38:4,  
Ps 104:5,  
Ps 113:7

2:9 Ps 33:16,  
Ps 121:3;  
Prv 2:8, Prv 3:26;  
Zec 4:6

2:10 1Sa 7:10;  
Ps 18:13,  
Ps 89:24,  
Ps 96:13, Ps 98:9

2:11 1Sa 1:19,  
1Sa 2:18, 1Sa 3:1

2:12 Dt 13:13;  
1Ki 21:10

2:13 Dt 18:3

2:14 Ex 29:27;  
Josh 18:1,  
Josh 19:51;

Jgs 18:31,  
Jgs 21:19

2:15 Lv 3:3,  
Lv 3:16

2:16 Ex 23:18,  
Ex 29:13; Lv 1:8,  
Lv 3:3, Lv 3:14

2:17 Gn 6:11;  
Mal 2:7, Mal 2:8

2:18 Ex 28:4;  
1Sa 2:11, 1Sa 3:1;  
2Sa 6:14

2:19 1Sa 1:3,  
1Sa 1:21

2:20 Gn 21:1;  
Jgs 13:24;  
1Sa 2:26,  
1Sa 3:19;  
Lk 1:80

2:22 Ex 38:8

2:24 Ex 32:21

2:25 Dt 25:1;  
Josh 11:20;  
1Sa 3:14;  
Heb 10:26

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Sheol*. <sup>c</sup>Cf DSS (4QSam\*); Heb has four different words for pots. <sup>f</sup>MT lacks *with Eli's sons*. <sup>g</sup>LXX; MT adds *only raw*. <sup>h</sup>Heb *ephod*. <sup>d</sup>DSS (4QSam\*); MT give <sup>e</sup>LXX, DSS (4QSam\*); MT lacks *Don't do this*.

2:10 Hannah's song ends by linking God's power to the strength and power of God's king, God's anointed one. Since Israel doesn't yet have kings, this song anticipates the story that will unfold in the books of Samuel. Kings will rule Israel, and they will be chosen and anointed through Hannah's son and God's prophet, Samuel.

2:11-17 Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam 1:3), are corrupt, and their misdeeds are recounted here in detail. Worshipers who came to offer sacrifices to the Lord were prescribed ritual practices that required meat offerings to be first boiled and then burned. Following the

entirely burned offering, roasted meat was eaten in communal meals, in which the priests might participate. Eli's sons were seizing raw meat before any sacrifice because it could, of course, be roasted in a more palatable manner. This greed, however, deprived worshippers of the ability to offer their best to the Lord.

2:18-21 In contrast to Eli's corrupt sons, the boy Samuel was growing up in harmony with God's purposes (2:21b). The Lord rewarded Hannah's faithfulness with additional children.

2:22-25 In addition to depriving worshippers of their

2:26 1Sa 2:21;  
Prv 3:4; Lk 2:52  
2:27 Dt 33:1;  
Jgs 13:6;  
1Ki 13:1  
2:28 Ex 28:1;  
Ex 30:7  
2:29 Dt 12:5  
2:30 Ex 29:9;  
Jer 18:10  
2:31 1Sa 4:11;  
1Ki 2:27  
2:32 Ps 78:59;  
Zec 8:4  
2:34 1Sa 1:3;  
1Sa 4:11;  
1Sa 4:17;  
1Ki 13:3  
2:35 1Sa 25:28;  
2Sa 7:11;  
2Sa 7:27;  
1Ki 2:35;  
1Ki 11:38  
2:36 1Ki 2:27;  
2Ki 23:9;  
Eze 44:10  
3:1 1Sa 2:11,  
1Sa 2:18,  
1Sa 3:21; Ps 74:9;  
Am 8:11  
3:3 Ex 25:31,  
Ex 27:20-21;  
Lv 24:2; 1Sa 1:9  
3:4 Gn 22:1;  
Ex 3:4; 1Sa 3:1,  
1Sa 3:20-21

wanted to kill them. <sup>26</sup>Meanwhile, the boy Samuel kept growing up and was more and more liked by both the LORD and the people.

<sup>27</sup>Now a man of God came to Eli and said, "This is what the LORD says: I revealed myself very clearly to your father's household when they were slaves<sup>a</sup> in Egypt to the house of Pharaoh. <sup>28</sup>I chose your father from all of Israel's tribes to be my priest, to go up onto my altar, to burn incense, and to wear the priestly vest<sup>b</sup> in my presence. I also gave all of the Israelites' food offerings to your father's household. <sup>29</sup>Why then do you kick my sacrifices and my offerings—the very ones I commanded for my dwelling place? Why do you respect your sons more than me, getting fat off the best parts of every offering from my people Israel? <sup>30</sup>Because of all that, this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: I had promised that your household and your father's household would serve me forever. But now—this is what the LORD declares: I'll do no such thing! No. I honor those who honor me, and whoever despises me will be cursed. <sup>31</sup>The days are coming soon when I will eliminate both your children<sup>c</sup> and the children of your father's household. There won't be an old person left in your family tree. <sup>32</sup>You'll see trouble in my dwelling place, though all will go well for Israel.<sup>d</sup> But there will never be an old person in your family tree. <sup>33</sup>One of your descendants whom I don't eliminate from serving at my altar will cry his<sup>e</sup> eyes out and be full of grief. Any descendants in your household will die by the sword.<sup>f</sup> <sup>34</sup>And what happens to your two sons Hophni and Phinehas will be a sign for you: they will both die on the same day. <sup>35</sup>Then I will establish for myself a trustworthy priest who will act in accordance with my thoughts and desires. I will build a trustworthy household for him, and he will serve before my anointed one forever. <sup>36</sup>Anyone left from your household will come and beg him for a bit of silver or a loaf of bread, saying: 'Please appoint me to some priestly duty so I can have a scrap of bread to eat.'"

### Samuel's call

**3** Now the boy Samuel was serving the LORD under Eli. The LORD's word was rare at that time, and visions weren't widely known. <sup>2</sup>One day Eli, whose eyes had grown so weak he was unable to see, was lying down in his room. <sup>3</sup>God's lamp hadn't gone out yet, and Samuel was lying down in the LORD's temple, where God's chest<sup>g</sup> was.

<sup>4</sup>The LORD called to Samuel. "I'm here," he said.

<sup>a</sup>DSS (4QSam\*), LXX; MT lacks slaves. <sup>b</sup>Heb *ephod*. <sup>c</sup>LXX; MT *arm or power*. <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain; LXX and DSS (4QSam\*) omit 2:31b-32a. <sup>e</sup>DSS (4QSam\*), LXX; MT *your*. <sup>f</sup>LXX, DSS (4QSam\*); MT *die by men or die as men*. <sup>g</sup>Traditionally *ark*

offerings, Eli's sons were engaging in illicit sexual practices, even with those women who served the sanctuary. Eli tried to plead with them, but to no avail.

2:26 Samuel, in further contrast to Eli's sons, continues to grow in God's favor.

2:27-36 A man of God comes to pronounce judgment on Eli, his sons, and his entire household. The text doesn't name this person as God's prophet, perhaps reserving that term for its first use for Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:20 (see also 1 Sam 9:9). This holy man, however, uses the patterns of prophetic speech and announces God's word of judgment on the house of Eli. The announcement of God's resolve to kill the sons at the end of 1 Samuel 2:25 foreshadows God's harsh judgment on Eli's household here in 2:27-36. The speech by this man of God judges Eli worthy to be cut off from the promise of God to Aaron that his descendants would serve forever as God's priests (2:28), because Eli's family members have used their office to exploit others (2:29). Eli and his descendants will die before their time (2:31); and the deaths of Hophni and Phinehas on the same day will be the sign that this judgment is beginning (2:34). This is fulfilled in the battle with the Philistines (1 Sam 4:11).

2:33, 35 There are two exceptions to the judgment against the house of Eli. Many translate 2:33 to indicate that "one" will be spared when all the remaining members of the house of Eli are slaughtered by the sword. This "one" would be Abiathar, who escapes when Saul massacres the

remaining priests of Eli's line at Nob (1 Sam 22:6-23). The trustworthy priest from whom an eternal line of priests will come is Zadok, whose family will become the hereditary priests for Solomon's temple. Both Abiathar and Zadok were trusted members of David's inner circle, but Solomon banished Abiathar when he took the throne (1 Kgs 2:27).

3:1-4:1a This chapter on the call of Samuel marks a dramatic new initiative by God to alter Israel's future. Although the chapter focuses on the boy Samuel, the larger issue is God's use of the prophet to act for God in the events that bring Israel through crisis to a new future with kings.

3:1 *The LORD's word was rare*: This chapter opens by noting the absence of God's word in Israel, and ends by revealing the Lord's "trustworthy" prophet (1 Sam 3:20). The subject of this development is Samuel, who is a boy at the beginning of the chapter and a fully recognized prophetic leader of Israel by the end.

3:3 *the LORD's temple*: not a building but a tent sanctuary. The boy Samuel may have had some duties of service in the sanctuary since he was sleeping there. *God's chest*: traditionally known as the "ark" (see sidebar, "The Lord's Covenant Chest" at 1 Sam 5), this was the most holy object in the temple and symbolized God's presence there.

3:4-9 Although God is calling Samuel, it is Eli, the elderly priest, who recognizes God's call and instructs the boy Samuel. The irony here is powerful, since Samuel's initial task will spell disaster for Eli and his family.

<sup>5</sup>Samuel hurried to Eli and said, "I'm here. You called me?"

"I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go lie down." So he did.

<sup>6</sup>Again the LORD called Samuel, so Samuel got up, went to Eli, and said, "I'm here. You called me?"

"I didn't call, my son," Eli replied. "Go and lie down."

(<sup>7</sup>Now Samuel didn't yet know the LORD, and the LORD's word hadn't yet been revealed to him.)

<sup>8</sup>A third time the LORD called Samuel. He got up, went to Eli, and said, "I'm here. You called me?"

Then Eli realized that it was the LORD who was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup>So Eli said to Samuel, "Go and lie down. If he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD. Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down where he'd been.

<sup>10</sup>Then the LORD came and stood there, calling just as before, "Samuel, Samuel!"

Samuel said, "Speak. Your servant is listening."

<sup>11</sup>The LORD said to Samuel, "I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of all who hear it tingle! <sup>12</sup>On that day, I will bring to pass against Eli everything I said about his household—every last bit of it!<sup>b</sup> <sup>13</sup>I told him that I would punish his family forever because of the wrongdoing he knew about—how his sons were cursing God,<sup>c</sup> but he wouldn't stop them. <sup>14</sup>Because of that I swore about Eli's household that his family's wrongdoing will never be reconciled by sacrifice or by offering."

<sup>15</sup>Samuel lay there until morning, then opened the doors of the LORD's house. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. <sup>16</sup>But Eli called Samuel, saying: "Samuel, my son!"

"I'm here," Samuel said.

<sup>17</sup>"What did he say to you?" Eli asked. "Don't hide anything from me. May God deal harshly with you and worse still if you hide from me a single word from everything he said to you." <sup>18</sup>So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him.

"He is the LORD," Eli said. "He will do as he pleases."

<sup>19</sup>So Samuel grew up, and the LORD was with him, not allowing any of his words to fail. <sup>20</sup>All Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was trustworthy as the LORD's prophet. <sup>21</sup>The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh because the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh through the LORD's own word. <sup>1</sup>And Samuel's word went out to all Israel.

### The Philistines capture God's chest

In those days the Philistines gathered for war against Israel,<sup>d</sup> so Israel went out to engage the Philistines in war. Israel camped at Ebenezer, while the Philistines camped at Aphek.

<sup>b</sup>Or *the beginning and the end* <sup>c</sup>LXX; MT *to themselves*, one of several intentional scribal corrections to avoid the phrase *cursing God* <sup>d</sup>LXX; MT lacks *In those days . . . against Israel*.

3:10-14 Samuel is called by God, not just as a general religious experience but so that he might hear and then announce the judgment God has for the corrupt house of Eli. Samuel is to play the role of God's prophet, a role he himself will help refine in Israel.

3:15-18 To his credit, Eli doesn't resist hearing the harsh words of God's judgment and accepts God's will.

3:19-4:1a This introduces Samuel in what will unfold as a fully developed portrait of a prophet as the bearer of God's word to the people. All of Israel seems to recognize Samuel in this role. We should note that it is God's word that comes to Samuel, but Samuel's word that goes out to all Israel. While the prophet declares God's word, he must boldly speak to the people in his own words.

4:1b-7:2 These chapters have long been recognized as a separate narrative focused not on any of the many strong characters in the stories of 1 Samuel but instead on the Lord's covenant chest (traditionally called the "ark"). The prophet Samuel doesn't appear in these chapters, and Eli appears only in the story of his death (4:12-18). These chapters seem to serve two purposes. First, they

document the external crisis that grips Israel in this time, namely, the threat that an enemy, the Philistines (see sidebar, "The Philistines"), will permanently conquer Israel and incorporate their tribal territories into a growing Philistine empire. Thus the books of Samuel open as Israel is struggling with internal and external crises that threaten Israel's very existence. Second, these narratives make clear that it is God's power that will determine Israel's future. The books of Samuel will be filled with stories of the dramatic deeds of men and women in this time of transition to kingship. The stories of God's covenant chest among the Philistines make clear that it is the hand of the Lord (5:6, 7, 9, 11) that makes the difference in Israel's future.

4:1b The *Philistines* (see sidebar) occupy the coastal plain to the southeast of Israelite tribal territory. They were the enemies of Samson and the tribe of Dan in Judges 13-16. The war that the Philistines begin here seems to be aimed at acquiring new territory. The Philistines are building a small empire at the expense of the weaker Israelite tribes on their eastern border.

4:1b-4 In an initial skirmish with a major Philistine army,

3:10 1Sa 2:26,  
1Sa 3:4, 15a 3:8  
3:11 2Ki 21:12;  
Jer 19:3  
3:12 1Sa 2:27  
3:13 1Sa 2:12,  
1Sa 2:17,  
1Sa 2:22,  
1Sa 2:27; 1Ki 1:6  
3:14 Is 22:14  
3:15 1Sa 1:9  
3:16 1Sa 3:4  
3:17 Ru 1:17  
3:18 Jgs 10:15;  
Job 1:21,  
Job 2:10; Ps 39:9;  
Is 39:8  
3:20 Jgs 20:1;  
2Sa 3:10  
4:1 1Sa 5:1,  
1Sa 7:12,  
1Sa 29:1

4:1-9 Dt 28:25;  
1Sa 4:2;  
2Kt 14:12  
4:1-13 1Sa 1:9;  
1Sa 4:18  
4:1-17 1Sa 4:11  
4:1-18 Josh 7:6;  
Jgs 16:31;  
Jgs 20:27;  
1Sa 2:31-32

<sup>2</sup>The Philistines readied themselves to fight Israel. When the battle was joined, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield. <sup>3</sup>When the troops returned to the camp, Israel's elders said, "Why did the LORD defeat us today before the Philistines? Let's bring the chest containing the LORD's covenant from Shiloh so it can go with us and save us from our enemies' power." <sup>4</sup>So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the chest containing the covenant of the LORD of heavenly forces, who sits enthroned on the winged heavenly creatures. <sup>5</sup>Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas were there with the chest containing God's covenant.

<sup>5</sup>When the chest containing the LORD's covenant entered the camp, all Israel let out such a loud shout that the ground shook. <sup>6</sup>When the Philistines heard the sound of that shout, they asked, "What is that loud shouting in the Hebrew camp about?" When they learned that the LORD's chest had come into the camp, <sup>7</sup>the Philistines were afraid and said, "A god has come into that camp! We're doomed," they said, "because nothing like this has ever happened before. <sup>8</sup>We're doomed! Who will deliver us from the grip of these powerful deities? They are the same gods who struck the Egyptians in the desert with every kind of wound. <sup>9</sup>Pull yourselves together and act like men, Philistines! Otherwise, you'll serve the Hebrews like they've been serving you. Act like men and fight!"

<sup>10</sup>So the Philistines fought. Israel was defeated, and everyone fled to their homes. It was a massive defeat: thirty thousand Israelite foot soldiers fell, <sup>11</sup>God's chest was taken, and Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas died.

<sup>12</sup>That very day, a Benjaminite ran from the battle to Shiloh. His clothes were torn, and dirt was on his head. <sup>13</sup>When he got there, Eli was sitting in a chair beside the road, waiting because he was nervous about God's chest. The man arrived and gave the news to the city, and the whole city cried out.

<sup>14</sup>Eli heard the sound of the cry and said, "What's all this noise about?"

The man hurriedly went and told Eli the news. (<sup>15</sup>Now Eli was 98 years old, and his eyes stared straight ahead, unable to see.) <sup>16</sup>The man told Eli, "I'm the one who just came from the battle. I fled from the battle today."

"What's the report, my son?" Eli asked.

<sup>17</sup>The messenger answered, "Israel has fled from the Philistines. The army has suffered a massive defeat. Also, your own two sons Hophni and Phinehas have died, and God's chest has been taken!" <sup>18</sup>At the mention of God's chest, Eli fell backward off the chair beside the gate. His neck broke, and he died because he was an old man and overweight. Eli had judged Israel for forty years.

<sup>19</sup>Now Eli's daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was pregnant and about to give birth. When she heard the news that God's chest had been captured and that her father-in-law and her

<sup>o</sup>Heb *cherubim*

the Israelites lose 4,000 men. To ensure future victory, the elders of Israel decide to bring *the chest containing the LORD's covenant* (4:3, traditionally called "the ark of the covenant") onto the field of battle. The sons of Eli carried the chest (4:4b). It may be that the initial battle was fought by local tribal groups in Israel, perhaps primarily Ephraim. To bring the chest into the field suggests a summons to all Israel to engage in war. Thus the coming battle will be with the largest army the federation of Israelite tribes can manage, facing the combined professional soldiers of the Philistine cities. The hope is that the presence of the Lord on the field of battle will make the difference. 4:4a *the chest containing the covenant of the LORD of heavenly forces, who sits enthroned on the winged heavenly creatures*: This is the fullest and most descriptive title used for God's chest in the OT (see sidebar, "The Lord's Covenant Chest" at 1 Sam 5). The winged heavenly creatures on top of the chest are traditionally known by the Hebrew word *cherubim* (which don't look like our contemporary images of angels) and are thought to support the invisibly enthroned Lord, the God of Israel who reigns as heavenly king over Israel.

4:5-9 The Philistines panic at the arrival of God's chest in Israel's camp, assuming that this means Israel's God will fight for them. They even seem to know of the Israelite tradition of deliverance from Egypt (4:8). In spite of this fear, they decide they must fight in a battle that results in the total defeat of Israel, who lose 30,000 men. The Philistines capture the chest and kill the two sons of Eli (1 Sam 4:10-11).

4:12-18 These verses narrate a dramatic scene in some detail as Eli waits for news of the battle. He receives word of the great defeat and of the deaths of his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, but it is the news that the covenant chest has been captured that shocks Eli so that he falls backward and dies of a broken neck.

4:19-22 The shock of the tragic news from the battlefield sends the pregnant wife of Phinehas into premature labor. As she is dying in childbirth, she ironically names her newborn son *Ichabod*, meaning "Where is the glory?" because with the capture of the chest, "*The glory has left Israel*" (4:22). This refers not to the chest as an object but to the enthroned presence of God it represents. The word "left" is from the Hebrew verb also used for going



*The Philistines* The Philistines established themselves in five cities on the southeastern coastal plain adjacent to central and southern Israel sometime in the 12th century BCE. The names of these cities were Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza. Most authorities agree that the origin of the Philistines lies in an immigration of people with Aegean cultural roots, evidenced by their pottery and other material remains. Rameses III (1184–1163) claims to have defeated them as they attempted to invade Egypt, and to have forced them to settle in fortresses in what came to be called Philistia in Canaan.

The Philistines emerge as a major enemy of Israel in the biblical story during the time of Samson (Judg 13–16). They are a terrifying enemy because they possess iron weapons and are organized, with kings and professional military forces. The books of Samuel present the Philistines and their desire to expand their territory eastward as a major factor in the people's desire to have a king to govern them and lead them into battle (1 Sam 8–9). The battle described in 1 Samuel 4 leads to the loss of the Lord's covenant chest (traditionally called the "ark") and the Philistine occupation of Israelite tribal territory west of the Jordan River. Tensions and conflicts with the Philistines form the backdrop of stories throughout 1 Samuel and into 2 Samuel, until David finally defeats them and forces them back into the territory of the five cities (2 Sam 8:1).

husband had died, she doubled over and gave birth because her labor pains overwhelmed her. <sup>20</sup>As she was about to die, the women standing by helping her said, "Don't be afraid. You've given birth to a son!" But she didn't answer or pay them any attention. <sup>21</sup>She named the boy Ichabod,<sup>f</sup> saying, "The glory has left Israel," referring to the capture of God's chest and the death of her father-in-law and her husband. <sup>22</sup>"The glory has left Israel because God's chest has been taken," she said.

#### God's chest among the Philistines

**5** After the Philistines took God's chest, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. <sup>2</sup>Then the Philistines took God's chest and brought it into Dagon's temple and set it next to Dagon. <sup>3</sup>But when the citizens of Ashdod got up early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen facedown on the ground before the LORD's chest! So they took Dagon and set him back up where he belonged. <sup>4</sup>But when they got up early the next morning, there was Dagon again, fallen facedown on the ground before the LORD's chest—and this time Dagon's head along with both his hands were cut off and lying on the doorstep! Only Dagon's body<sup>g</sup> was left intact. <sup>5</sup>That's why to this day Dagon's priests or anyone else who enters his temple in Ashdod doesn't step on the threshold.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD's hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod: God terrified them and struck them in Ashdod and its surroundings with tumors.<sup>h</sup> <sup>7</sup>When Ashdod's inhabitants saw what was happening, they said, "The chest of Israel's God must not stay here with us because his hand is hard against us and against our god Dagon."

<sup>8</sup>So they summoned all the Philistine rulers to a meeting and asked, "What should we do with the chest of Israel's God?" The people of Gath said, "Let the chest of Israel's God be moved to us." So they moved the chest of Israel's God to Gath.<sup>i</sup> <sup>9</sup>But once they moved it, the

<sup>f</sup>Meaning *Where is the glory?* <sup>g</sup>Cf LXX <sup>h</sup>Kethib; *Qere hemorrhoids* (cf Deut 28:27); also in 5:9, 12 <sup>i</sup>LXX

into exile (Jer 1:3). This is similar to the departure of God's glory from the temple in Ezekiel's vision at the time of the Babylonian exile (Ezek 10:18).

Victorious armies in the ancient world commonly paraded the sacred objects of a defeated enemy before their gods. Thus, the Lord's covenant chest was taken to the Philistine city of Ashdod and placed in the temple of the Philistines' chief god, Dagon, an act intended to humiliate Israel's God. But the next morning the idol of Dagon was humiliated, having fallen on its face. The following morning, Dagon had again fallen; his head and hands had broken off.

5:6, 7, 9, 11 *The LORD's hand*: Here is the major theological statement of these chapters on the adventures of the Lord's covenant chest. In human terms Israel is defeated, but in God's terms *the LORD's hand* is victorious. Israel

experiences divine judgment through defeat because of its corruption and unfaithfulness. But God's purposes still go forward. Dagon has no hands, and *the LORD's hand* strikes terror into the Philistines throughout this chapter. On the eve of the establishment of kingship in Israel, this story reminds the reader that even the greatest human (Philistine) or divine (Dagon) power will be secondary to the power of the Lord.

5:6–12 The Philistines experience the power of *The LORD's hand* in the form of a disease that plagues every Philistine city that hosts the Lord's covenant chest. The word translated *tumors* is uncertain (see Deut 28:27) and has received alternative translations, but the narrative makes clear that some sort of bodily plague breaks out among the Philistines in the cities where the covenant chest lies. The Philistines shuttle the chest from Ashdod to Ekron to

10:20 Gn 35:17  
10:21 1Sa 14:3;  
Ps 26:8; Jer 2:11  
10:22 1Sa 4:21  
10:23 Josh 11:22;  
Josh 13:3;  
1Sa 4:1; 1Sa 7:12  
10:24 Is 19:1;  
Is 46:1–2; Is 46:7  
10:25 Eze 6:4;  
Eze 6:6; Mi 1:7  
10:26 Ex 9:3;  
Dt 28:27;  
1Sa 6:5; Ps 32:4;  
Ac 13:11

6:1 Josh 4:11;  
1Sa 5:1

*The Lord's Covenant Chest* The Hebrew word translated here as “chest” (traditionally translated as “ark”) appears over 200 times in the Bible, and all but a handful refer to a gold-covered box symbolizing the presence of God in the midst of Israel. One-third of these references appear in the books of Samuel, where the Lord's chest containing the covenant plays an important role in the story.

Israelite tradition observed that the chest was built under the direction of Moses in the time of the wilderness. From that time throughout the biblical story, the chest symbolized the presence of Israel's God, Yahweh (translated as “LORD” in this and most translations). The chest is said to contain the tablets that record the commandments (Deut 10:1-5). Later Jewish tradition believed the chest also contained a jar of manna and the rod of Aaron (Heb 9:4). The chest has many extended titles, but the most complete is in 1 Samuel 4:4: “the chest containing the covenant of the LORD of heavenly forces, who sits enthroned on the winged heavenly creatures” (traditionally referred to by the Hebrew word *cherubim*). The concept here is that Yahweh (the LORD), who is Israel's king, sits invisibly enthroned above the winged heavenly creatures on the top of the gold chest. This enthroned God is also the commander of heavenly forces (traditionally translated as “hosts”). Thus, when the Israelites bring the covenant chest onto the field of battle, they carry the hope that heavenly forces will do battle with and for them. In 1 Samuel 4-6, the chest is captured by the Philistines as God's judgment on the sin of Israel, but the chest also brings trouble on the Philistines. David will eventually restore the chest to a place of honor (2 Sam 6). The Lord's covenant chest is lost and presumably destroyed in the Babylonian capture and destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.

LORD's hand came against the city, causing a huge panic. God struck the city's inhabitants, both young and old, and tumors broke out on them.

<sup>10</sup>Then they sent God's chest to Ekron, but as soon as God's chest entered Ekron, the inhabitants cried out, “Why have you moved the chest of Israel's God to us? In order to kill us and our people?”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>11</sup>So they summoned all the Philistine rulers to a meeting and said, “Send the chest of Israel's God away! Let it go back to its own home so it doesn't kill us and our people,” because there was a deadly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there.

<sup>12</sup>The people who didn't die were struck with tumors, and the screams of the city went all the way up to heaven.

### *God's chest is returned*

**6** THE LORD's chest was in Philistine territory for seven months. <sup>2</sup>The Philistines called for the priests and the diviners. “What should we do with the LORD's chest?” they asked. “Tell us how we should send it back to its own home.”

<sup>3</sup>They replied, “If you are returning the chest of Israel's God, don't send it back empty, but be sure to return a guilt offering to him.” <sup>4</sup>Then you will be healed, and it will become clear to you why God's hand hasn't left you alone.”

<sup>4</sup>“What compensation offering should we return to him?” they asked.

The priests and diviners replied: “Five gold tumors<sup>1</sup> and five gold mice,<sup>2</sup> matching the number of the Philistine rulers, because the same plague came on all of you and your rulers.

<sup>5</sup>You must make images of your tumors and the mice that have devastated the land. Honor Israel's God. Perhaps he will lighten the weight of his hand on you, your gods, and your land.

<sup>1</sup>DSS (4QSama), LXX <sup>1</sup>Or be sure to return it with a compensation offering. <sup>2</sup>Kethib; Qere hemorrhoids (cf Deut 28:27); also in 6:5; see note at 6:11. <sup>3</sup>LXX lacks and five gold mice.

Gath, three of the five great Philistine cities, before finally having had enough. The people cry to their rulers to return the chest to Israel. The Lord defeats the Philistines without any human battle.

6:1-12 The Philistines can no longer risk having the Lord's covenant chest in their territory and resolve to send it back to Israelite territory. They determine, however, that they must send with it an offering to appease Israel's God. The meaning of the words used to describe this offering in 6:4-5, 11 is uncertain. The objects are *tumors*, the same term used for the disease that afflicted the Philistines; and mice, perhaps suggesting the manner in

which the disease was spread, similar to bubonic plague. The number five corresponds to the five principal Philistine cities (1 Sam 6:17-18). It's clear that the objects for the offering were made of gold, a very valuable gift intended to appease an angry God. They place these objects with the chest of Israel's God in a cart pulled by two nursing cows and set it loose on the road. The cows pull the cart straight to Israelite territory near Beth-shemesh, confirming to the Philistines that it is Israel's God who has done this to them (6:9).

6:3, 5, 9 The Philistines now also acknowledge that it is God's hand that has afflicted them and won the final victory.

<sup>6</sup>Why be stubborn like the Egyptians and Pharaoh? After God had dealt harshly with them, didn't they send the Israelites on their way? <sup>7</sup>So get a new cart ready along with two nursing cows that have never been yoked before. Harness the cows to the cart, but take any of their calves that are following back home. <sup>8</sup>Next, take the LORD's chest and put it in the cart. Set the gold items that you are giving God as a compensation offering in a box next to the chest. Then send it on its way. <sup>9</sup>Then watch what happens: If the cart goes up the road to its own territory toward Beth-shemesh, then Israel's God has brought this great disaster on us. If the cart goes another way, then we'll know that it wasn't God's hand that struck us. It happened to us randomly."

<sup>10</sup>The rulers<sup>a</sup> did just that. They took two nursing cows and harnessed them to the cart, penning their calves up at home. <sup>11</sup>They put the LORD's chest on the cart along with the box containing the gold mice and the images of their tumors.<sup>o</sup> <sup>12</sup>The cows went straight ahead, following the road to Beth-shemesh. They kept to one route, mooing as they went, without turning right or left. The Philistine rulers followed them as far as the territory of Beth-shemesh.

<sup>13</sup>Now the people of Beth-shemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley. When they looked up and saw the chest, they were overjoyed at the sight. <sup>14</sup>The cart entered the field belonging to Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped right by a large stone. They chopped up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as an entirely burned offering to the LORD. <sup>15</sup>The Levites unloaded the LORD's chest and the box that was with it that contained all the gold items, and they set them on the large stone. That very day the people of Beth-shemesh offered entirely burned offerings and made sacrifices to the LORD. <sup>16</sup>When the five Philistine rulers witnessed this, they went straight back to Ekron.

<sup>17</sup>These are the gold tumors that the Philistines returned as a compensation offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, and one for Ekron. <sup>18</sup>The gold mice matched the number of Philistine cities belonging to the five rulers, from fortified cities to country villages. And the large stone<sup>p</sup> they set the LORD's chest on is a witness even now in the field that belongs to Joshua of Beth-shemesh.

<sup>19</sup>But God struck down some of the people from Beth-shemesh because they looked into the LORD's chest. God struck seventy people,<sup>q</sup> and the community grieved because the LORD had struck them so severely. <sup>20</sup>The people of Beth-shemesh said, "Who can stand before the LORD, this holy God? Where can he go that is away from us here?" <sup>21</sup>You sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim. "The Philistines returned the LORD's chest!" they said.

**7** "Come down and take it back with you." <sup>1</sup>So the people of Kiriath-jearim came and took the LORD's chest. They brought it to Abinadab's house, which was on the hill. Then they dedicated Eleazar, Abinadab's son, to care for the LORD's chest.

### Samuel leads Israel

<sup>2</sup>Now a long time passed—a total of twenty years—after the chest came to stay in Kiriath-jearim, and the whole house of Israel yearned for<sup>r</sup> the LORD.

<sup>3</sup>Then Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, "If you are turning to the LORD with all your heart, then get rid of all the foreign gods and the Astartes you have. Set your heart on

<sup>a</sup>See 6:12; MT *men*. <sup>o</sup>Or *hemorrhoids*; also in 6:17, the *Qere* form for the Hebrew written form of *tumors* used in 6:4-5. <sup>p</sup>LXX; MT adds *fifty thousand people*. <sup>q</sup>Heb uncertain; LXX *searched for*

6:6 Once again, the Philistines testify to the central Israelite story of deliverance out of Egypt (cf. 1 Sam 4:8). They are determined not to be as stubborn as the Egyptian pharaoh.

6:13-18 The people of Beth-shemesh recognize *the Lord's chest* and, in contrast to the Philistines, greet it with great joy. Levites among them handle it with the care due holy objects (6:15), and the two cows are sacrificed as entirely burned offerings to the Lord. The large stone used as the altar and support for *the Lord's chest* is said to remain there as a witness to these events (6:18).

6:19-7:2 The story takes a grim turn when God strikes down 70 people. A reading from the Greek OT (LXX) explains more fully that those people were the sons of Jeconiah, who treated God's covenant chest with disrespect.

From a Hebrew perspective, holiness is a dangerous thing and not to be treated lightly. Fearful of having this holy object in their midst, the people of Beth-shemesh ask the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, non-Israelite Gibeonites, to take the covenant chest into their keeping. The Lord's covenant chest won't return to the center of Israel's life until David finds it and brings it to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6). Much later the Gibeonites are rewarded for their faithfulness by becoming those who serve the needs of the priests in Solomon's temple.

7:3-17 In this chapter the prophet Samuel provides leadership for the people, guiding them in worship rituals and offering sacrifices, summoning the Lord's power to deliver them from an attack by the Philistines, and administering justice for a circuit of towns. It may be that

6:6 Ex 7:13, Ex 8:15, Ex 8:32, Ex 12:31, Ex 14:17

6:9 Josh 15:10, Josh 21:16, 1Sa 6:3

6:12 Nm 20:19, Josh 15:10, 1Sa 6:9

6:14 1Sa 6:18, 2Sa 24:22, 1Ki 19:21

7:4 Jgs 2:7;  
Jgs 2:10; Jgs 2:11;  
Jgs 2:13;  
Jgs 10:16

7:5 Jgs 20:1;  
1Sa 8:6;  
1Sa 10:17;  
Jer 15:1

7:7 1Sa 13:6;  
1Sa 17:11

7:9 Ps 99:6;  
Jer 15:1

7:10 Josh 10:10;  
1Sa 2:10

7:11 1Sa 4:1

7:12 Gn 28:18;  
Gn 31:45;  
Gn 35:14;  
Josh 4:9; 1Sa 4:1

7:13 Dt 16:18  
7:14 Gn 22:19;  
1K 1:19-3;  
1Ch 6:28

the LORD! Worship him only! Then he will deliver you from the Philistines' power." <sup>4</sup>So the Israelites got rid of the Baals and the Astartes and worshipped the LORD only.

<sup>5</sup>Next Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah. I will pray to the LORD for you."

<sup>6</sup>So they assembled at Mizpah, and they drew water and poured it out in the LORD's presence. They fasted that same day and confessed, "We have sinned against the LORD." Samuel served as judge of the Israelites at Mizpah.

<sup>7</sup>When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had assembled at Mizpah, the Philistine rulers went up to attack Israel. When the Israelites learned of this, they were afraid of the Philistines. <sup>8</sup>The Israelites said to Samuel, "Please don't stop praying to the LORD our God for us, so God will save us from the Philistines' power!" <sup>9</sup>So Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as an entirely burned offering to the LORD. Samuel cried out in prayer to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him.

<sup>10</sup>While Samuel was offering the entirely burned offering, the Philistines advanced to attack Israel. But the LORD thundered against the Philistines with a great blast on that very day, throwing the Philistines into such a panic that they were defeated by Israel. <sup>11</sup>The Israelite soldiers came out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines. They struck them down until they reached a place just below Beth-car. <sup>12</sup>Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah. <sup>13</sup>He named it Ebenezer,<sup>4</sup> explaining, "The LORD helped us to this very point."

<sup>13</sup>So the Philistines were defeated, and they stopped coming into Israelite territory. The LORD's hand was against the Philistines throughout Samuel's life. <sup>14</sup>The towns the Philistines had captured from Israel, from Ekron to Gath, were returned to Israel. Israel also recovered the territory around those two cities from the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

<sup>15</sup>Samuel served as Israel's judge his whole life. <sup>16</sup>Each year he traveled between Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, serving as Israel's judge in each of those locations. <sup>17</sup>Then he would return to Ramah because that's where his home was. In Ramah too he served as Israel's judge, and that is also where he built an altar to the LORD.

### Israel demands a king

**O** Now when Samuel got old, he appointed his sons to serve as Israel's judges. <sup>2</sup>The name of his oldest son was Joel; the name of the second was Abijah. They served as judges in

<sup>4</sup>LXX, Syr, MT *Ha-shen* (the tooth) <sup>5</sup>Meaning *stone of help*

this chapter is placed here, just before the demand of the Israelite elders for a king (1 Sam 8), to suggest that Israel doesn't really need a king. God raised up Samuel to give leadership. Indeed, 7:6 uses the same formula for Samuel's leadership as the book of Judges: *Samuel served as judge of the Israelites*.

7:3-4 Samuel directs the people to put away their foreign gods. The language here expresses the concern for idolatry used regularly in the large Deuteronomistic History (from Joshua to 2 Kings) in which the books of Samuel are found. 7:5-11 Samuel provides the leadership often given by priests: offering prayers and fasting, leading in confession of sin, sacrificing entirely burned offerings to the Lord. While Samuel and the people gather at Mizpah for these worship activities, the Philistines threaten them, and Samuel prays to the Lord on behalf of his people. The Lord incites panic in the Philistines with a blast of thunder, and the Israelites pursue them to win a victory. This is the language of holy war, strikingly similar to the way the Lord fought for Israel in the stories of the judges. Samuel erects a stone and names it *Ebenezer* ("stone of help") to commemorate the victory.

7:12-14 The claims of these verses are greatly exaggerated and immediately contradicted by the stories that follow in the books of Samuel. Until well into the reign of David as king, the land is occupied by the Philistines. Saul

and his son Jonathan fight many battles with the Philistines, and both finally lose their lives at the hands of the Philistines. David will be the one who finally recovers lost territory and removes the Philistines as a threat (2 Sam 8:1). These verses seem intended to undermine the claim of the people in 1 Samuel 8 that they need a king.

7:15-17 Samuel keeps Israelite traditions alive by traveling a circuit of small towns to serve as *Israel's judge*, perhaps to administer justice according to the Israelite covenant with God. All these towns, including his hometown of Ramah, lie in the central territory of the tribe of Benjamin, from which the first king, Saul, will also come.

8:1-22 The elders of Israel approach Samuel and demand a king. This chapter treats this demand as sinful and opposed to God's kingship over Israel, but God instructs Samuel to grant the request. There is some tension between this story and other stories about how Saul became king. The next chapter depicts Saul as one chosen by God to deliver Israel from the Philistines and anointed by God's prophet. These tensions may reflect differing theological perspectives on kingship at that time, giving the impression that Saul becomes king several times, with each story providing a slightly different theological view of kingship.

8:1-3 Unfortunately, Samuel's sons seem to be as corrupt as Eli's sons, taking bribes and perverting justice for their own gain. However, Samuel has apparently appointed

Beer-sheba. <sup>3</sup>But Samuel's sons didn't follow in his footsteps. They tried to turn a profit, they accepted bribes, and they perverted justice.

<sup>4</sup>So all the Israelite elders got together and went to Samuel at Ramah. <sup>5</sup>They said to him, "Listen. You are old now, and your sons don't follow in your footsteps. So appoint us a king to judge us like all the other nations have." <sup>6</sup>It seemed very bad to Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us," so he prayed to the LORD.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD answered Samuel, "Comply with the people's request—everything they ask of you—because they haven't rejected you. No, they've rejected me as king over them. <sup>8</sup>They are doing to you only what they've been doing to me" from the day I brought them out of Egypt to this very minute, abandoning me and worshipping other gods. <sup>9</sup>So comply with their request, but give them a clear warning, telling them how the king will rule over them."<sup>v</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Then Samuel explained everything the LORD had said to the people who were asking for a king. <sup>11</sup>"This is how the king will rule over you," Samuel said:

"He will take your sons, and will use them for his chariots and his cavalry and as runners for his chariot. <sup>12</sup>He will use them as his commanders of troops of one thousand and troops of fifty, or to do his plowing and his harvesting, or to make his weapons or parts for his chariots. <sup>13</sup>He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, or bakers. <sup>14</sup>He will take your best fields, vineyards, and olive groves and give them to his servants. <sup>15</sup>He will give one-tenth of your grain and your vineyards to his officials and servants. <sup>16</sup>He will take your male and female servants, along with the best of your cattle<sup>w</sup> and donkeys, and make them do his work. <sup>17</sup>He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and then you yourselves will become his slaves! <sup>18</sup>When that day comes, you will cry out because of the king you chose for yourselves, but on that day the LORD won't answer you."

<sup>19</sup>But the people refused to listen to Samuel and said, "No! There must be a king over us <sup>20</sup>so we can be like all the other nations. Our king will judge us and lead us and fight our battles."

<sup>21</sup>Samuel listened to everything the people said and repeated it directly to the LORD.

<sup>22</sup>Then the LORD said to Samuel, "Comply with their request. Give them a king."

Samuel then told the Israelite people, "Go back, each of you, to your own hometown."

<sup>v</sup>LXX; MT lacks to me. <sup>w</sup>Or telling them the lawful practice of the king; also in 8:11; cf 10:25. <sup>x</sup>LXX; MT young men

them as judges in Israel to succeed him since he has grown old.

8:4-5 The elders of Israel approach Samuel to complain that Samuel's sons are unacceptable. They demand that Samuel give them a king. The key phrase is that they want a king *like all the other nations* (8:5). Indeed, kings rule the small nations surrounding Israel. Israel itself is presently occupied by the Philistines, whose five cities each have a king, and all five are in an alliance. The people seem to treat kingship as a system of centralized political governance preferable to their present loose tribal organization. The word "judge" in 1 Samuel 8:5, 20 has the sense of "govern." While 8:5 focuses on the internal value of kingship (governance), 8:20 focuses on its external value as a system to enable the people to "fight our battles." This would seem to highlight the inability of the tribal coalition to meet the Philistine threat.

8:6-9 Samuel immediately reacts negatively and prays to the Lord. The people have ignored the theological issue, but God's response goes to the heart of the matter. God's response implies a rebuke of the people. The problem is that the people have rejected God, not that they have rejected the prophet (or his sons). This rejection is part of a rebellious pattern that has recurred since God brought them out of Egypt (8:8). God is the true ruler of Israel, so the main issue is how a king in Israel relates to the kingship

of God. This issue resonates throughout the books of Samuel. Nevertheless, God instructs Samuel to comply with the people's request while giving them a warning about how kings operate.

8:10-18 Samuel's speech on the ways of kings consists of a long list of privileges that kings will demand. Four times the speech uses the verb "take" and twice a verb that means "confiscate one-tenth." Kings are authorities who "take" from the people. The result is that *you yourselves will become his slaves* (8:17). This warning will come back to mind when King David "takes" Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:4) and later when Solomon's abusive policies lead to the division of the kingdom. Interestingly, the negative outcome foreseen by Samuel is linked to *the king you chose for yourselves* (8:18), foreshadowing the difficult fate of Saul as Israel's first king. In contrast, when God sends Samuel to anoint Jesse's son David as the next king, he tells Samuel, "I have found my next king" (1 Sam 16:1).

8:19-20 Even after Samuel's warning, the people still insist that they want a king *like all the other nations*.

8:21-22 God instructs Samuel to comply with the people's demands. Significantly, God instructs Samuel to *Give them a king*, but God doesn't agree that kingship in Israel should be "like all the other nations." The people disperse to their homes, and we are left to wonder how this will come to pass.

0:3 Ex 18:21, Ex 23:6, Ex 23:8, Dt 16:19; Prv 15:27

8:4 1Sa 7:17

8:5 Dt 17:14;

1Sa 8:19-20;

Hos 13:10

8:6 1Sa 7:5,

1Sa 12:17,

1Sa 15:11

8:7 Ex 16:8;

1Sa 10:19

8:11 1Sa 10:25,

1Sa 14:52;

2Sa 15:1; 1Ki 1:5

8:12 1Ch 27:1

8:13 Gn 40:1

8:14 1Ki 21:7;

Eze 46:18

8:15 Gn 41:34

8:18 Job 27:9;

Is 1:15; Mi 3:4

9:1 1Sa 10:1,  
15a 10:21,  
15a 14:51;  
2Sa 21:14;  
1Ch 8:33

9:2 1Sa 10:23;  
2Sa 14:25

9:3 1Sa 10:14

9:9 Gn 25:22;  
2Sa 24:11;  
2Ki 17:13;  
1Ch 29:29

### **Saul chosen to lead Israel**

**9** There was a wealthy man from the tribe of Benjamin named Kish. He was the son of Abiel son of Zeror son of Becorath son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite. <sup>2</sup>He had a son named Saul, who was a handsome young man. No one in Israel was more handsome than Saul, and he stood head and shoulders above everyone else.

<sup>3</sup>When the donkeys belonging to Saul's father Kish were lost, Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the servant boys with you and go look for the donkeys." <sup>4</sup>So he traveled through the highlands of Ephraim and the land of Shalishah, but they didn't find anything. They traveled through the land of Shaalim, but still found nothing, so they crossed back into the land of Benjamin, but they still couldn't find the donkeys. <sup>5</sup>When they came to the territory of Zuph, Saul said to the boy who was with him, "Let's go back before my father stops worrying about the donkeys and starts worrying about us."

<sup>6</sup>But the boy said to him, "Listen, there's a man of God in this town. He's famous—everything he says actually happens! So let's go there. Maybe he'll be able to tell us which way we should go."

<sup>7</sup>Saul said to his young boy, "But if we go, what should we bring to the man? The food in our bags is all gone. We don't have any gift to offer the man of God. Do we have anything?"

<sup>8</sup>"Here," the boy answered Saul, "I've got a quarter-shekel of silver. I'll give that to the man of God so he tells us which way to go." (<sup>9</sup>Earlier in Israel, someone going to consult with God would say, "Let's go to the seer," because the people who are called prophets today were previously called seers.)

<sup>10</sup>Saul said to the boy, "Great idea! Let's go." So they went into the town where the man of God lived. <sup>11</sup>They were going up the hill to the town when they met some young women coming out to draw water. "Is the seer here?" they asked them.

<sup>12</sup>"He's just ahead of you," they answered. "Hurry up! He has just come to town because there is a sacrifice today for the people at the shrine. <sup>13</sup>You'll find him as soon as you enter the town, before he goes up to the shrine to eat. The people won't eat until he gets there, because he must bless the sacrifice. Only after that can the invited guests eat. Now get going because you'll find him momentarily."

<sup>14</sup>So Saul and the boy went up to the town, and as they entered it, suddenly Samuel came toward them on his way up to the shrine. <sup>15</sup>Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed the following to Samuel: <sup>16</sup>"About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the Benjaminite territory. You will anoint him as leader of my people Israel. He will save my people from the Philistines' power because I have seen the suffering of<sup>a</sup> my people, and their

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT lacks *the suffering of*.

9:1–10:16 This passage is the first of three accounts of how Saul came to be Israel's first king. A later editor may have tried to smooth over the differences, but they still stand out as different descriptions of Saul's path to the throne. This first passage pictures Saul and his kingship positively, depicting how God raised up a leader to deliver them from the Philistines. Saul is selected by God, anointed by the prophet Samuel, and empowered by God's spirit (see sidebar, "Call and Anointing")

9:1–2 Saul is introduced to us as a handsome and physically imposing young man, perhaps a teenager, from a wealthy family in Benjamin, a northern Israelite tribe.

9:3–5 Saul and a young servant set out on an errand for Saul's father to find some donkeys that have strayed from their territory. They don't expect that anything out of the ordinary will happen to them.

9:6–14 The story proceeds at an almost leisurely pace, providing many small details. The narrative has all the marks of folk storytelling. The young men decide to consult a local holy man (*man of God*, 9:6, 7, 8, 10; see 1 Sam 2:27), who has a reputation for revealing unknown things. They debate what to bring him as a gift or payment (9:7–8). By asking directions of local girls, they learn that the man has just arrived in town for a sacrifice and banquet (9:11–13).

Then, much to the reader's surprise, the man who comes out to meet them is the prophet Samuel. Saul isn't surprised, because he doesn't yet know Samuel.

9:9 This verse appears to be an attempt by the editor to explain to the readers that in early Israel *prophets* were known as *seers*. Indeed, Saul later inquires of the holy man using the term "seer" (1 Sam 9:11), and Samuel calls himself a "seer" in 1 Samuel 9:19. We are dealing here with the earliest emergence of the role of prophet in ancient Israel. Prophets were perhaps less proclaimers of God's word in early times than those who were consulted for guidance in God's will. That is, they were more like guides than preachers. Later in this chapter we will have our first view of such prophets living in communities and engaging in ecstatic behavior (1 Sam 10:10–13).

9:15–17 The scene shifts backward to Samuel's experience on the previous day. God reveals that he is sending a Benjaminite man to him, and Samuel is to anoint him as the one who will deliver Israel from the Philistines and rule over them. *I have seen the suffering of my people, and their cry for help has reached me*: The language recalls the story of God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt through the hand of Moses (cf. Exod 3:7). As Saul approaches, the Lord indicates to Samuel that he is the one.

*Call and Anointing* The stories of God's call to important leaders in Israel follow a pattern that emphasizes their vocation as God's representatives. The pattern seen for Moses, Gideon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel can also be seen in the story of Saul. It is somewhat altered by the presence of a third party, the prophet Samuel, as a mediator of God's call.

This "divine call story" includes the following elements:

1. **The divine initiative.** Instead of contacting Saul directly, God speaks to the prophet Samuel (1 Sam 9:15).
2. **The need for a leader.** In this case, God wants to raise up someone to deliver Israel from the Philistines (1 Sam 9:16-17).
3. **The objection.** Saul objects that he is from an unimportant tribe and family, and is therefore unworthy of being singled out (1 Sam 9:21).
4. **The commission.** Saul's commission is delivered by the prophet Samuel, who announces it as a word from God (1 Sam 9:27). Saul is to deliver Israel from its enemies. Unlike other call stories, this one is accompanied by an act of commissioning reserved for kings. Samuel anoints Saul to this role as Israel's king (1 Sam 10:1). The Hebrew verb for "anoint" is closely associated with the word "messiah" (Gk. "Christ"), which refers to God's anointed one. David is also anointed by the prophet Samuel as God's future king, the "anointed" one (1 Sam 16:13).
5. **The sign.** Although Samuel speaks to Saul of signs (1 Sam 10:1, 7, 9-10) and speaks of three events, two of these relate to the lost donkeys and only the third to his call and anointing as king. God's spirit will come upon him, and this indeed takes place (1 Sam 10:6, 10). Likewise, David receives God's spirit after his anointing (1 Sam 16:13).
6. **The reassurance.** In some call stories this comes before mentioning the sign in the form of God's statement "I will be with you." Here Samuel mediates this by saying, "God is with you" (1 Sam 10:7b).

9:20 1Sa 8:5,  
1Sa 9:3,  
1Sa 12:13  
9:21 Jgs 6:15,  
Jgs 20:46,  
1Sa 15:17,  
1Sa 18:18;  
Ps 68:27

9:22 Gn 43:32;  
Lk 14:10  
9:23 1Sa 1:5

cry for help has reached me." <sup>17</sup>When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, "That's the man I told you about. That's the one who will rule<sup>y</sup> my people."

<sup>18</sup>Saul approached Samuel in the city gate and said, "Please tell me where the seer's house is."

<sup>19</sup>"I'm the seer," Samuel told Saul. "Go on ahead of me to the shrine. You can eat with me today. In the morning I'll send you on your way, and I will tell you everything you want to know. <sup>20</sup>As for the donkeys you lost three days ago, don't be worried about them because they've been found. Who owns all of Israel's treasures, anyway? Isn't it you and your whole family?"<sup>z</sup>

<sup>21</sup>"I'm a Benjamite," Saul responded, "from the smallest Israelite tribe, and my family is the littlest of the families in the tribe of Benjamin. Why would you say something like that to me?"

<sup>22</sup>Then Samuel took Saul and his young servant and brought them to the banquet room. He gave them an honored place among the invited guests. There were about thirty total.

<sup>23</sup>Samuel said to the cook, "Serve the portion I gave you—the one I told you to set aside."

<sup>24</sup>So the cook took the thigh and what was on it,<sup>a</sup> and put it in front of Saul. Samuel said, "Look, what had been reserved is now in front of you. Eat up, because it was set apart for you for this specific occasion, ever since I invited the guests."<sup>b</sup> So Saul ate with Samuel that day. <sup>25</sup>When they came back from the shrine to the town, a bed was made for Saul on the roof, and he slept.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Near dawn, Samuel called to Saul on the roof, "Wake up! I will send you on your way." So Saul got up, and the two of them, he and Samuel, went outside. <sup>27</sup>As they were nearing the edge of town Samuel said, "Tell the boy to go on ahead of us" (the servant did so) "but you stop for a bit so I can tell you God's word."

<sup>y</sup>LXX; Heb uncertain, perhaps *restrain* or *gather* (troops); cf 10:1 <sup>z</sup>Or *But for whom does all Israel yearn if not for you and your whole family?* <sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>LXX; MT *He* (Samuel?) *talked with Saul on the roof. Then they got up early.*

9:18-21 Samuel identifies himself to Saul as the *seer* and invites the young man to dine with him. He also declares that the lost donkeys have been found. The final phrase of 1 Samuel 9:20 is difficult to translate, but the reading in the translation note z indicates a larger destiny in store for Saul and his family. This makes sense of Saul's objection that he comes from a humble family in the smallest tribe

of Israel (9:21). Such objections are common in biblical call stories (see sidebar, "Call and Anointing").

9:22-27 The account provides some details of the meal that Saul shares with Samuel at the local shrine. Afterward, Saul is given accommodation for the night. Samuel rouses Saul early and sends Saul's servant on ahead. This sets the stage for Samuel to communicate *God's word* to Saul (9:27).

10:1 1Sa 9:16;  
1Sa 16:13;  
1Ki 1:39; 2Ki 9:3;  
Ps 78:71

10:3 Gn 35:1;  
Gn 35:3;  
Gn 35:7

10:5 1Sa 10:10;  
1Sa 13:3;  
1Sa 19:20;  
2Ki 3:15;  
1Ch 25:1

10:6 Nm 11:25;  
1Sa 10:10;  
1Sa 19:23-24

10:7  
1Sa 10:5-6;  
1Sa 11:6;  
1Sa 19:20

10:11 1Sa 19:24;  
Mt 13:54;  
Jn 7:15

### Samuel anoints Saul as king

**10** Samuel took a small jar of oil and poured it over Saul's head and kissed him. "The LORD hereby anoints you leader of his people Israel," Samuel said. "You will rule the LORD's people and save them from the power of the enemies who surround them. And this will be the sign for you that the LORD has anointed you as leader of his very own possession:<sup>4</sup> <sup>2</sup>When you leave me today, you will meet two men near Rachel's tomb at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin. They will tell you, "The donkeys you went looking for have been found. Now your father has stopped thinking about the donkeys and is worried about you. He's asking: What should I do about my son?" <sup>3</sup>Then, when you've gone on a bit farther, you will come to the oak at Tabor. Three men who are going to consult God at Bethel will meet up with you there, one carrying three young goats, one carrying three loaves of bread, and one carrying a jar of wine. <sup>4</sup>They will ask how you're doing and will offer you sacrificial bread,<sup>5</sup> which you should accept. <sup>5</sup>After that, you will come to Gibeath-elohim, which is a Philistine fort. When you enter the town, you will encounter a group of prophets coming down from the shrine preceded by harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres. They will be caught up in a prophetic frenzy. <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD's spirit will come over you, and you will be caught up in a prophetic frenzy right along with them; it will be like you've become a completely different person. <sup>7</sup>Once these signs have happened to you, do whatever you would like to do, because God is with you. <sup>8</sup>Then go down to Gilgal ahead of me. I'll come down to meet you to offer entirely burned offerings and to make well-being sacrifices. Wait seven days until I get to you, then I'll tell you what you should do next."

<sup>9</sup>And just as Saul turned to leave Samuel's side, God gave him a different heart, and all these signs happened that very same day. <sup>10</sup>When Saul and the boy got to Gibeah, there was a group of prophets coming to meet him. God's spirit came over Saul, and he was caught up in a prophetic frenzy right along with them. <sup>11</sup>When all the people who had known Saul saw him prophesying with the prophets, they said to each other, "What's happened to Kish's son? Is Saul also one of the prophets?" <sup>12</sup>One of the locals then asked, "And who is their leader?"<sup>6</sup> So it became a proverb: "Is Saul also one of the prophets?" <sup>13</sup>When the prophetic frenzy was over, Saul went home.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup>LXX; MT lacks *of his people Israel*. . . . *And this will be the sign for you that*. <sup>5</sup>LXX; DSS (4QSam\*) *uplifted bread* (see Num 18:11); MT *two of bread*. <sup>6</sup>*Or father* <sup>8</sup>Correction; MT *Saul entered the shrine*.

10:1 David is also anointed by Samuel (1 Sam 16:13). Anointing by a prophet is a standard practice for authorizing kings as the Lord's anointed. It becomes a way of referring to those God has chosen to rule God's people. The Hebrew verb for "anointed" shares common Hebrew letters with the word "messiah," a title that is closely associated with the later hope of the Jews in Jesus' time for a new king. Here Saul is commissioned both to *rule* and to *save*. Samuel promises him signs, a standard part of call narratives (see sidebar "Call and Anointing" at 1 Sam 9). 10:2-8 Samuel describes three events that will serve as signs to Saul, confirming the authenticity of his anointing. First, he will meet men who confirm that the donkeys have been found (10:2). Second, he will meet men who offer him bread (10:3-4). While the fulfillment of these events isn't narrated later in the chapter, the fulfillment of the third sign is told through his encounter with a band of prophets. In 10:8 Samuel tells Saul to go to Gilgal and wait seven days until the prophet arrives to offer sacrifices. In 1 Samuel 13:8-10, Saul waits at Gilgal for Samuel to make sacrifices before battle, and when Samuel is late he offers them himself. This creates Saul's first conflict with Samuel, leading to the rejection of Israel's first king. But these waiting periods at Gilgal can't refer to the same event. In 1 Samuel 10, Saul is a youth, while in 1 Samuel 13 he is a king with a grown son, and many events have taken place between the time of his anointing and the events

of chapter 13. Perhaps the symmetry is simply to suggest that Saul was expected always to wait for sacrifice and advice from Samuel.

10:9 As a prelude to the signs, we are told that Saul is given a *different heart*. The theme of the heart seems important to understanding God's actions. When David is chosen for anointing, Samuel is told that while some may look on outward appearances "the LORD sees into the heart" (1 Sam 16:7). David is anticipated in 1 Samuel 13:14 as "a man following the Lord's own heart." The suggestion is that the heart of God and the heart of God's king should be aligned.

10:10-13 Saul meets a group of prophets probably playing all the musical instruments foretold by Samuel in 1 Samuel 10:5 and caught up in an ecstatic frenzy. Saul receives *God's spirit* and is caught up with them in this ecstasy. In the Hebrew this *prophetic frenzy* is suggested merely by the verb "prophesying." This makes clear the connection between early prophetic activity in Israel and the ecstatic behavior of communities of prophets. We will later see the prophet Samuel leading such a community (1 Sam 19:18-24). This unusual scene prompts a saying about Saul among the Israelites: "Is Saul also one of the prophets?" When this happens to Saul again, the same saying is referenced (1 Sam 19:23-24). The element of God's spirit following anointing appears also in the appointment of David in 1 Samuel 16:13.



<sup>14</sup>Saul's uncle said to him and to his young servant, "Where did you go?"

"To look for the donkeys," Saul replied, "but when we couldn't find anything, we went to Samuel."

<sup>15</sup>"Please tell me what Samuel told you," Saul's uncle said.

<sup>16</sup>"He reassured us that the donkeys had been found," Saul answered. But Saul didn't tell his uncle what Samuel had said about the kingship.

### *Saul selected as king*

<sup>17</sup>Samuel summoned the people to the LORD at Mizpah. <sup>18</sup>Then he told the Israelites: "This is what the LORD God of Israel says: I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the Egyptians' power and from the power of all the kingdoms that oppressed you. <sup>19</sup>But today you've rejected your God who saved you from all your troubles and difficulties by saying, 'No! Appoint a king over us!' So now assemble yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans."

<sup>20</sup>Then Samuel brought all the Israelite tribes forward, and the tribe of Benjamin was selected. <sup>21</sup>Next Samuel brought the tribe of Benjamin forward by its families, and the family of Matri was selected. Samuel then brought the family of Matri forward, person by person,<sup>h</sup> and Saul, Kish's son, was selected. But when they looked for him, he wasn't to be found. <sup>22</sup>So they asked another question of the LORD: "Has the man come here yet?"

The LORD said, "Yes, he's hiding among the supplies."<sup>i</sup> <sup>23</sup>They ran and retrieved Saul from there, and when he stood up in the middle of the people, he was head and shoulders taller than anyone else.

<sup>24</sup>"Can you see the one the LORD has chosen?" Samuel asked all the people. "He has no equal among the people."

Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

<sup>25</sup>Samuel then explained to the people how the monarchy should operate<sup>1</sup> and wrote it in a scroll and placed it in the LORD's presence. Then Samuel sent every person back to their homes. <sup>26</sup>Saul also went back to his home in Gibeah. Along with him went courageous men whose hearts God had touched. <sup>27</sup>But some despicable people said, "How can this man save us?" They despised Saul and didn't bring him gifts, but Saul didn't say anything.

<sup>h</sup>LXX; MT lacks *Samuel then brought the family of Matri forward, person by person.* <sup>i</sup>Or *the lawful practices of the monarchy*

10:14-16 Saul's uncle questions his nephew about his meeting with Samuel. The purpose here is to let the reader know that Saul keeps his anointing as Israel's king a secret at first, even from his own family. This helps explain why he must be chosen again in the next episode.

10:17-27a This is the second story about how Saul became king, making no mention of the story of Saul's anointing by Samuel in the preceding chapter. In the present arrangement of the book of Samuel, this story serves as Saul's public debut.

10:17 Samuel also assembled the people at *Mizpah* in 1 Samuel 7.

10:18-19 Samuel's speech to the people is very similar in perspective to the one delivered by the prophet in 1 Samuel 8. The speech treats the people's request for a king as sinful and a rejection of the God who had delivered them out of bondage in Egypt. Samuel implies that God could have brought them through the present difficulties as well. The selection process that follows can only be described as reluctant on Samuel's part.

10:20-24 The process for choosing a king in this narrative is strange. This probably refers to a process of casting lots. Tribes, then families, and then individuals are *brought forward and selected* (or "taken") in a way that is very similar to Joshua 7:14-18, when Achan is identified as the offender who violated God's command. The drama has two parts because when the lots finally select Kish's son Saul, he is

nowhere to be found, requiring that the Lord reveal that Saul is *hiding among the supplies* (10:22), which is hardly a confident and auspicious beginning for a king. Yet when Saul finally arrives and stands among them he is taller than all others, and this is taken as a sign confirming God's choice (cf. 1 Sam 9:2). The people then acclaim him with their shouts, acknowledging him as king (10:24).

10:25 Samuel reads to them from a document placed as a scroll in a holy place before the Lord, probably a shrine or sanctuary. The alternative reading in the translation note i, "lawful practices of the monarchy," clarifies that this isn't simply Samuel's explanation but rather a formal document. The Hebrew phrase here includes the term for "justice," indicating legal or just practices expected of kings. The phrase is similar to the one used to describe Samuel's warning from God to the people in 1 Samuel 8:9, with the alternative translation in note v, "lawful practice of the king." At stake in this document about a king's behavior is something formal, to be kept for future reference.

10:26-27a As Saul returns to Gibeah, we are reminded that Israel remains divided. Some of the people were *courageous men whose hearts God had touched*, but Saul also has detractors who *despised Saul* and are characterized as *despicable*. For now, Saul holds his peace.

10:27b-11:15 This is the third account of how Saul became the first king of Israel. Saul is in the field with his oxen when word comes that the people of Jabesh-gilead are

10:21 1Sa 9:1.

1Sa 10:20;

2Sa 21:14

10:22 1Sa 23:2

10:23 1Sa 9:2

10:25 Dt 17:14;

1Sa 8:11

**Saul delivers Jabesh-gilead**

<sup>1</sup>Nahash the Ammonite king had been severely oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites. He gouged out everyone's right eye, thereby not allowing Israel to have a deliverer. There wasn't a single Israelite left across the Jordan River who hadn't had their right eye gouged out by the Ammonite king Nahash. But seven thousand people had escaped from the Ammonites' power and fled to Jabesh-gilead.

**11** About a month later,<sup>k</sup> Nahash the Ammonite went up and laid siege to Jabesh-gilead. All the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a treaty with us, and we'll be your servants."

<sup>2</sup>"I will make a treaty with you on one condition: that everyone's right eye be gouged out!" Nahash the Ammonite said to them. "That's how I bring humiliation on all Israel."

<sup>3</sup>The elders of Jabesh replied to him, "Leave us alone for seven days so we can send messengers throughout Israel's territory. If there's no one to save us, then we'll surrender to you."

<sup>4</sup>When the messengers reached Gibeah where Saul lived, they reported the news directly to the people there. Then they all wept aloud. <sup>5</sup>At just that moment, Saul was coming back from keeping the cattle in the fields. "What's wrong with everybody?" he asked. "Why are they crying?" Saul was then told what the men from Jabesh had said.

<sup>6</sup>God's spirit came over Saul when he heard those words, and he burned with anger. <sup>7</sup>He took two oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent them by messengers throughout Israel's territory. "This is exactly what will be done to the oxen of anyone who doesn't come to the aid of Saul and Samuel," he said. Great fear of the LORD came over the people, and they came to Saul completely unified. <sup>8</sup>When Saul counted them at Bezek, the soldiers from Israel totaled three hundred thousand and those from Judah thirty thousand.

<sup>9</sup>The messengers who had come were then told, "Say this to the people of Jabesh-gilead: Tomorrow by the time the sun is hot, you will be saved." When the messengers returned and reported this to the people of Jabesh, they were overjoyed.

<sup>k</sup>This paragraph is found in DSS (4QSam<sup>a</sup>) and is also attested in Josephus (*Ant.* 6.5.1 [68-71]), but is missing in MT. <sup>a</sup>DSS (4QSam<sup>a</sup>), LXX; MT lacks *About a month later.* <sup>1</sup>MT lacks to Saul.

besieged by the Ammonites. In much the same fashion as the charismatic leaders in the book of Judges, the Spirit comes upon Saul. He summons the tribes to war, and brings deliverance to the people of Jabesh-gilead. After this, "at Gilgal they made Saul king in the Lord's presence" (1 Sam 11:15).

**10:27b** None of this detailed material about the atrocities committed by Nahash, king of the Ammonites, is in the Masoretic Hebrew text. It appears, however, in the Dead Sea Scrolls texts, and the Jewish historian Josephus clearly knows about it. The recovery of this material gives us important details that explain the plight of the people in Jabesh-gilead, an important Israelite city in the Transjordan. Ammon is the small kingdom to the north and east of the Israelite tribes of Gad and Reuben. The Philistine occupation of Israelite territory didn't extend beyond the Jordan River. With most of Israel under the Philistines, the remaining Israelite tribes in the Transjordan were left vulnerable to kings like Nahash of the Ammonites, who sought to take advantage of Israel's weakened condition by co-opting Israelite territory for their own gain. Nahash's method of subjugating the Israelites in their region was particularly brutal, blinding them in one eye and thus marking them as slaves and limiting their ability to resist. Additional material from a Dead Sea Scroll manuscript explains that 7,000 Israelites had taken refuge in Jabesh-gilead in resistance to the cruelty of Nahash.

**11:1-3** Nahash lays siege to Jabesh-gilead, and the Israelites there offer to make a treaty to serve Nahash, but he insists he will do this only on the condition of gouging out everyone's right eye. The people of Jabesh-gilead ask for

seven days to consider, giving them time to send out urgent requests for help.

**11:4-5** When word of the plight of Jabesh-gilead reaches Saul in his hometown of Gibeah, he is simply coming in from the fields with his oxen. There is no suggestion that he is acting already as a king there.

**11:6-9** When Saul hears the news, the Lord's spirit comes upon him, and he grows angry. He summons the Israelites to war by cutting two oxen into pieces and sending these pieces throughout Israel, suggesting that a similar fate would befall the oxen of any who failed to respond. This method of summoning Israel echoes the actions of the Levite in Judges 19:29-30 who called for vengeance for the killing of his concubine. The raising up of a charismatic leader by the power of God's spirit recalls the stories of Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson in the book of Judges. Like them, Saul becomes the agent of God's deliverance. There is no suggestion in this chapter that Saul is regarded as king. However, in the present arrangement of chapters this episode serves as a public demonstration of the power of God's spirit that had already come upon him as a young man following his anointing by Samuel (1 Sam 10:10), which is a pattern similar to that found for David in 1 Samuel 16-17. The response to Saul's summons is overwhelming, and Saul leads a great force to rescue Jabesh-gilead. The numbers in 11:8 seem incredible, although it is helpful to remember that the Hebrew word for a "thousand" can also mean a "military unit," which would make the numbers more realistic.

**11:9-11** The people of Jabesh-gilead feign surrender to Nahash, but Saul and his force attack in three companies

<sup>10</sup>Then the people of Jabesh told the Ammonites, "We will surrender to you tomorrow. Then you can do whatever you want to us."

<sup>11</sup>The next day Saul organized his troops into three formations. They attacked the Ammonite camp during the morning watch and slaughtered them until the heat of the day. The survivors were so scattered that not even two of them could be found together.

<sup>12</sup>Then people asked Samuel, "Who was it who said, 'Will Saul rule over us?' Give us those people; we'll kill them!"

<sup>13</sup>But Saul said, "No one will be executed because today the LORD has saved Israel."

<sup>14</sup>"Let's go to Gilgal," Samuel told the people, "and renew the monarchy there." <sup>15</sup>So everyone went to Gilgal, and there at Gilgal they made Saul king in the LORD's presence. They offered well-being sacrifices in the LORD's presence, and Saul and all the Israelites held a great celebration there.

### Samuel's last speech

**12** Samuel said to all Israel: "Listen: I have done everything you asked of me and have placed a king over you. <sup>2</sup>The king will lead you now. I am old and gray, though my sons are still with you, and I've been your leader since I was young until now. <sup>3</sup>So I'm here: Tell the truth about me in the presence of the LORD and his anointed. Have I ever stolen someone's ox? Have I ever taken someone's donkey? Have I ever oppressed or mistreated anyone? Have I ever taken bribes from someone and looked the other way about something? Tell me the truth. <sup>4</sup>I will make it right."

"You haven't oppressed or mistreated us, and you've never taken anything from anyone," the people answered.

<sup>5</sup>Samuel replied, "The LORD and his anointed one are witnesses against you today that you haven't found anything in my possession."

"Agreed," they said.

<sup>6</sup>Then Samuel told the people: "The witness <sup>a</sup> is indeed the LORD, who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your ancestors up from the land of Egypt. <sup>7</sup>So now stand here, and I will judge you in the LORD's presence because of all the LORD's righteous acts that he has done for you and your ancestors:

<sup>a</sup>LXX <sup>b</sup>LXX; MT lacks *witness*.

early in the morning of the expected surrender. They win a great victory that includes the slaughter of the Ammonite force.

11:12-13 In an apparent reference back to those who questioned Saul's ability to rule (1 Sam 10:27a), some want to deal harshly with such doubters, but Saul responds with generosity and insists on no vengeance. In doing so, he gives complete credit for the deliverance of Israel to the Lord.

11:14-15 It seems clear that this account understands that *they made Saul king* in Gilgal after he was acclaimed king at Mizpah (1 Sam 10:24). Verse 14 may be an attempt to harmonize these separate accounts of Saul becoming king. Samuel reenters an episode in which he played no part in order to keep the prophet in the role of kingmaker, even though the following verse says the people made Saul king.

12:1-25 Samuel's farewell address to the people is widely considered to mark the end of the time of charismatic leaders in Israel and the beginning of the time of kings. The tone is one of warning as Samuel gets one last chance to emphasize the dangers ahead for an Israel led by kings. 12:1-5 Samuel seems willing to accept the passing of his leadership over to the new leadership of kings. He acknowledges his old age, but he doesn't acknowledge the unacceptability of his own sons (cf. 1 Sam 12:2; 8:2-3). Samuel does, however, seem greatly concerned that the people acknowledge his integrity as leader. He exacts

from the people a solemn pledge before *the Lord and his anointed one* (i.e., the king) that he has led the people without seeking personal gain or allowing his leadership to oppress others or accept bribes. The people respond that he hasn't engaged in such practices.

12:6-15 This part of Samuel's farewell speech is widely considered to show the concerns of the larger Deuteronomistic History in which the books of Samuel are found. Similar to Joshua 24, the speech focuses on God's demand for covenant obedience. A lengthy recital of God's acts of salvation toward Israel throughout their history to this point begins with Jacob (12:8a) and proceeds to Moses, Aaron, and deliverance out of Egypt (12:8b; cf. 12:6). Samuel continues by detailing God's deliverance in the time of the charismatic leaders, although using a somewhat strange order of events. Then, curiously, Samuel treats the threat of Nahash and the Ammonites as the immediate threat motivating the people's request for a king (12:12). This threat isn't at all the impression given by earlier chapters in 1 Samuel, where the Philistine threat is the most urgent and comprehensive. Samuel continues to view kingship as sinful and conflicting with God's rule over Israel (12:12-13, cf. 1 Sam 8:6-7; 10:19). Nevertheless, Samuel insists that the future of Israel and its king depends on covenant obedience: *If you will fear the Lord, worship him, obey him, and not rebel against the Lord's command... you and the king... follow the Lord... all will be well* (12:14). But *if you don't obey the Lord and rebel against the Lord's command,*

12:3 Ex 20:17;  
Nm 16:15;  
1Sa 10:1;  
1Sa 24:6;  
2Sa 1:14  
12:4 1Sa 12:3  
12:5 Gn 31:50;  
Ex 22:4; Ac 23:9;  
Ac 24:20

12:18 Ex 14:31;  
Ezr 10:9  
12:22 Dt 7:7;  
Dt 31:6;  
Josh 7:9;  
Ps 94:14;  
Ps 106:8  
12:23 1K 8:36;  
Ps 34:11;  
Pv 4:11;  
Jer 6:16; Ro 1:9

<sup>8</sup>"When Jacob entered Egypt, the Egyptians oppressed them.<sup>8</sup> So your ancestors cried out to the LORD. The LORD then sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your ancestors out of Egypt and settled them here. <sup>9</sup>But your ancestors forgot the LORD their God, so he handed them over to Sisera the commander of Hazor's army, and to the Philistines, and to the Moabite king, all of whom fought against them. <sup>10</sup>Then your ancestors cried out to the LORD and said: 'We have sinned because we have abandoned the LORD and have worshipped the Baals and the Astartes. But now deliver us from the power of our enemies, and we will worship you.' <sup>11</sup>So the LORD sent Jerubbaal, Barak,<sup>9</sup> Jephthah, and Samson,<sup>4</sup> and he delivered you from the power of your enemies on every side. And you lived safe and secure. <sup>12</sup>But when you saw that Nahash the Ammonite king was coming against you, you said to me, 'No! There must be a king to rule over us.' But the LORD your God was already your king!

<sup>13</sup>"So now, here is the king you chose, the one you asked for. Yes, the LORD has put a king over you! <sup>14</sup>If you will fear the LORD, worship him, obey him, and not rebel against the LORD's command, and if both you and the king who rules over you follow the LORD your God—all will be well. <sup>15</sup>But if you don't obey the LORD and rebel against the LORD's command, then the LORD's power will go against you and your king to destroy you.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>16</sup>"So now take a stand! Look at this awesome thing the LORD is doing. <sup>17</sup>Isn't the wheat harvest today? I will call upon the LORD to send thunder and rain. Then you will know and will see for yourselves what great evil you've done in the LORD's eyes by asking for a king."

<sup>18</sup>Samuel called upon the LORD, and God sent thunder and rain on that very day. Then all the people were in awe of the LORD and Samuel.

<sup>19</sup>All of them said to Samuel, "Please pray for us, your servants, to the LORD your God so we don't die because we have added to our many sins the evil of asking for a king."

<sup>20</sup>But Samuel answered the people, "Don't be afraid. Yes, you've done all this evil; just don't turn back from following the LORD. Serve the LORD with all your heart. <sup>21</sup>Don't turn aside to follow useless idols that can't help you or save you. They're absolutely useless! <sup>22</sup>For the sake of his reputation, the LORD won't abandon his people, because the LORD has decided to make you his very own people. <sup>23</sup>But me? I would never sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. I will teach you what is good and right. <sup>24</sup>Just fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. Look at what great things he has done for you! <sup>25</sup>But if you continue to do evil, then both you and your king will be destroyed."

### Samuel rejects Saul's dynasty

**13** Saul was 30 years old<sup>6</sup> when he became king, and he ruled over Israel forty-two years.<sup>7</sup> <sup>2</sup>Saul selected three thousand men from Israel. Two thousand of those were with Saul

<sup>8</sup>LXX; MT lacks the *Egyptians oppressed them*. <sup>9</sup>LXX, Syr; MT *Bedan* <sup>4</sup>Syr (cf Targ), LXX: *Samson*; MT, LXX<sup>48</sup> *Samuel*

<sup>5</sup>LXX; MT *against you and against your ancestors* <sup>6</sup>LXX; Syr *twenty-one*; MT lacks a number; 13:1 is omitted in LXX<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>7</sup>Part of the number is missing in MT (... and two years) and all ancient witnesses. Acts 13:21 says Saul ruled forty years, as does Josephus (*Ant.* 6.14.9 [378]), though Josephus also says Saul ruled twenty years (*Ant.* 10.8.4 [143]).

then the LORD's power will go against you and your king to destroy you (12:15). As is always the case with covenant, obedience or disobedience is the choice set before Israel, but now the fates of Israel and its kings are intertwined. *LORD's power*: or "the LORD's hand" is a phrase used frequently in the story of the capture of God's covenant chest (1 Sam 4-6) to show God's power against the Philistines.

12:16-18 Samuel calls on God to send a sign to Israel in the form of thunder and rain. When the sign takes place, the people are in awe of Samuel and the Lord.

12:19 The people ask Samuel to intercede for them with God, and confess that asking for a king was evil.

12:20-25 Samuel's final speech to the people is both encouraging and ominous. In themes and words that recall Deuteronomistic interests, the people are urged to *Serve the LORD with all your heart*. *Don't turn aside to follow useless idols* (12:20-21). Samuel affirms that God won't abandon Israel, and God has chosen them as God's people (12:22). Samuel himself pledges not to turn his back on Israel but to continue to pray for them and teach them. He may hand over leadership now to the king, but he will continue to pray and instruct (12:23). In a final word, the people can

choose faithfulness (12:24), but if they choose evil, then they and their king *will be destroyed* (12:25). Since these chapters in 1 Samuel are part of a larger history work that ends with Babylonian exile at the end of 2 Kings, it is hard not to imagine that this final word from Samuel shows the editor's knowledge of the disastrous end to Israel's experience with kingship.

13:1 This same formula appears frequently in the books of Kings to introduce the reigns of kings. The writer of Samuel also used it for the accounts of Ishbaal (2 Sam 2:10) and David (2 Sam 5:4). This formula usually states the king's age at accession and the number of years he reigned. In almost all manuscripts this formula is incomplete. Three manuscripts of the OT Greek translation (LXX) give Saul's age as 30, an impossibility given that he has a grown warrior son only two verses later. All Hebrew and Greek manuscripts have only the number two for the length of his reign, but many scholars think that an accompanying number has fallen out. This explains why the CEB supplies the number *forty-two*, borrowing from Acts 13:21 and the writings of Josephus. *Forty* is a common number in biblical texts to indicate a generation when the number is unknown.

at Michmash in the hills near Bethel, and one thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. He sent the remaining men home. <sup>3</sup>Jonathan attacked the Philistine fort at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it. So Saul sounded the alarm<sup>a</sup> throughout the land and said, "Hebrews! Listen up!" <sup>4</sup>When all Israel heard that Saul had attacked the Philistine fort and that Israel was hated by the Philistines, the troops were called to Saul's side at Gilgal. <sup>5</sup>The Philistines also were gathered to fight against Israel. They brought thirty thousand chariots with them, six thousand cavalry, and as many soldiers as there is sand on the seashore to fight Israel. <sup>6</sup>They marched up and camped at Michmash, east of Beth-aven. <sup>7</sup>When the Israelites saw that they were in trouble and that their troops were threatened, they hid in caves, in thickets, among rocks, in tunnels, and in cisterns. <sup>8</sup>Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan River, going into the land of Gad and Gilead.

Saul stayed at Gilgal, and the troops followed him anxiously. <sup>9</sup>He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel, but Samuel didn't come to Gilgal, and his troops began to desert. <sup>10</sup>So Saul ordered, "Bring me the entirely burned offering and the well-being sacrifices." Then he offered the entirely burned offering.

<sup>11</sup>The very moment Saul finished offering up the entirely burned offering, Samuel arrived. Saul went out to meet him and welcome him. <sup>12</sup>But Samuel said, "What have you done?"

"I saw that my troops were deserting," Saul replied. "You hadn't arrived by the appointed time, and the Philistines were gathering at Michmash. <sup>13</sup>I thought, The Philistines are about to march against me at Gilgal and I haven't yet sought the LORD's favor. So I took control of myself<sup>b</sup> and offered the entirely burned offering."

<sup>14</sup>"How stupid of you to have broken the commands the LORD your God gave you!" Samuel told Saul. "The LORD would have established your rule over Israel forever, <sup>15</sup>but now your rule won't last. The LORD will search for a man following the LORD's own heart,<sup>c</sup> and the LORD will commission him as leader over God's people, because you didn't keep the LORD's command."

<sup>16</sup>Samuel got up and went on his way from Gilgal, but the rest of the people followed Saul to join the army, and they went from Gilgal<sup>d</sup> to Gibeah in Benjamin. Saul counted about six hundred men still with him. <sup>17</sup>Saul, his son Jonathan, and the people who were with him were staying at Geba in Benjamin, while the Philistines camped at Michmash. <sup>18</sup>Three raiding parties left the Philistine camp. One took the road to Ophrah toward the territory of Shual. <sup>19</sup>Another took the road to Beth-horon, and the last took the border road that overlooks the Zeboim Valley toward the desert.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *shofar* <sup>b</sup>LXX; MT lacks *They brought, with them, and to fight Israel*. <sup>c</sup>Or *forced myself*; Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Or *a man loyal to the Lord* <sup>e</sup>LXX; MT lacks much of this verse.

13:2-7a These verses detail hostilities between the forces of Israel, led by Saul and his son Jonathan, and the Philistines. There is little story or character development. The account focuses on deployment of forces, strategic maneuvering, and strength of numbers. The skirmishes detailed take place near Saul's hometown and headquarters at Gibeah in the central highlands near Bethel. The Philistine opponents seem to be military patrols occupying the country rather than an organized army. Jonathan seems to initiate conflict (13:3), as he does in 1 Samuel 14. Then Saul sounds the *alarm* (or "blows the shofar"). The Philistines gather a larger regional force (13:5), and in the face of this show of strength, most of the Israelites retreat and hide (13:6). Saul and his military unit stand ready at Gilgal.

13:7b-14 Inserted into the details of Israelite confrontation with Philistines is an episode of conflict between Saul and Samuel, the first of two accounts that end in a rejection of Saul by the prophet (cf. 1 Sam 15).

13:8-9 Saul waits seven days for the arrival of Samuel to offer the sacrifices customary before battle. It's best not to identify this time of waiting with the seven days mentioned by Samuel when he instructed Saul to wait until he came to offer sacrifices (1 Sam 10:8). In 1 Samuel 10, Saul is still a boy. Now Saul has gone through a series of dramatic

events resulting in his coronation as king, and he has a grown son who proves to be a capable warrior. Here Saul becomes impatient. Hoping to seize a moment of military advantage by engaging the enemy, he rashly offers the entirely burned offerings himself.

13:10-14 As soon as Saul offers the sacrifice himself, the prophet Samuel appears and scolds the king. Saul tries to justify his action in military terms (13:11b-12), but for Samuel this isn't a matter of battle strategy. It's an issue of sacred authority, and it violates God's commandment. Saul has exerted political authority over religious authority in Samuel's eyes. His judgment is immediate and harsh. God won't establish Saul's rule. That is, God won't give him a dynasty with his sons succeeding him. Instead, God will search for a man suitable according to God's terms. This points forward to David, who is chosen from among Jesse's sons after God reminds Samuel that God looks not at externals but on the heart (1 Sam 16:7). God's own heart must align with the heart of any future anointed king. It won't be from the line of Saul.

13:15-18 Saul, Jonathan, and 600 men move from Gilgal to Gibeah to Geba, all close together in the central highlands near Bethel. The Philistines encamp at Michmash, and this sets the stage for the battle described in 1 Samuel 14.

13:9 Dt 12:5;  
1Sa 9:2;  
1Sa 9:26;  
1Sa 13:13;  
1Ki 3:4  
13:11 1Sa 13:2  
13:12 1Sa 13:11;  
1Sa 13:13  
13:13 1Sa 15:11;  
1Sa 15:28;  
2Ch 16:9  
13:14 1Sa 15:28;  
1Sa 16:1; 2Sa 5:2;  
Ac 13:22

13:20 2Sa 12:31

14:1 1gs 14:6;  
1Sa 13:1-3,  
1Sa 18:1**Philistine ironworking**

<sup>19</sup>No metalworker was to be found anywhere in Israelite territory because the Philistines had said, "The Hebrews must not make swords and spears."<sup>20</sup>So every Israelite had to go down to the Philistines to sharpen their plowshares, mattocks, axes, and sickles.<sup>21</sup>The cost was two-thirds of a shekel<sup>a</sup> for plowshares and mattocks, but one-third of a shekel for sharpening axes and for setting goads.<sup>22</sup>So on the day of the battle, no swords or spears were to be found in the possession of any of the troops with Saul and Jonathan, but Saul and his son Jonathan had them.

**Jonathan leads Israel to victory**

<sup>23</sup>Now a group of Philistine soldiers had marched out to the pass at Michmash.

**14** One day Jonathan, Saul's son, said to his young armor-bearer, "Come on! Let's go over to the Philistine fort on the opposite side." But he didn't tell his father.<sup>2</sup>Saul was sitting on the outskirts of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree at Migron. He had about six hundred men with him,<sup>3</sup>including Ahijah, the son of Ahitub, who was Ichabod's brother and the son of Phinehas the son of Eli, who was the LORD's priest at Shiloh. He was wearing a priestly vest.<sup>4</sup>None of the troops knew that Jonathan had gone.

<sup>4</sup>There were two stone outcroppings in the pass where Jonathan planned on crossing over to the Philistine fort—one on each side. One of these was named Bozez; the other was named Seneh.<sup>5</sup>One outcropping was on the north side, in front of Michmash, and the other was on the south side, in front of Geba.<sup>6</sup>Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, "Come on, let's go over to the fort of these uncircumcised men. Maybe the LORD will act on our behalf. After all, nothing can stop the LORD from saving, whether there are many soldiers<sup>b</sup> or few."

<sup>7</sup>"Go ahead with whatever you're planning," his armor-bearer replied. "I'm with you, whatever you decide."

<sup>8</sup>"All right then," Jonathan said. "We'll go over to the men and show ourselves.<sup>9</sup>If they say to us, 'Stay there until we get to you,' then we'll stay where we are and won't go up to them.<sup>10</sup>But if they say, 'Come on up,' then we'll go up because that will be the sign that the LORD has handed them over to us."

<sup>11</sup>So they showed themselves to the Philistine fort, and the Philistines said, "Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes they've been hiding in!"<sup>12</sup>Then the troops in the fort yelled to Jonathan and his armor-bearer, "Come on up! We'll teach you a lesson!"

So Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, "Follow me, because the LORD has handed them over to Israel!"<sup>13</sup>So Jonathan scrambled up on his hands and feet with his armor-bearer right behind him. The Philistines fell before Jonathan. His armor-bearer, coming behind him, would then finish them off.<sup>14</sup>In the first attack, Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed about twenty men in an area of about half an acre.<sup>15</sup>Panic broke out in the camp, in the field, and among all the troops. Even those in the fort and the raiders shook with fear. The very ground shook! It was a terror from God.

<sup>16</sup>Now Saul's lookouts at Gibeah in Benjamin saw the Philistine camp running all over the place.<sup>17</sup>Saul said to the troops with him, "Take a count and see who is missing." So they

<sup>a</sup>Heb *pim*, which is two-thirds of a shekel. <sup>b</sup>Heb *ephod*. <sup>c</sup>MT lacks *soldiers*. <sup>d</sup>Heb *lxxx*

13:19-22 A brief note intrudes into the flow of the narrative to inform us that the Philistines have established a monopoly on metalworking as a part of their occupation of Israelite territory. Hebrews aren't allowed to make swords or spears, and must even obtain and sharpen metal farm implements from the Philistines at a cost.

13:23-14:46 This story provides our most detailed account of an Israelite battle against the Philistines. It's also a story that contrasts the bold and confident initiative of Jonathan with the cautious and untrusting actions of his father, Saul, almost with disastrous results.

14:1-3 Jonathan and his friend set out alone to cross over the ravine at Michmash to the Philistine camp. Saul is encamped at Gibeah, sitting under a tree, surrounded by his troops, and consulting with a priest.

14:4-15 Jonathan enlists his armor-bearer for a surprise

attack on the Philistine garrison. He constantly bases his confidence in the Lord and then takes bold action. Three times he expresses this trust in the Lord's power to aid them against the Philistines (14:6, 10, 12). With Jonathan taking the lead, they advance into the Philistine camp, battling with such success that a panic ensues among the remaining Philistines (14:15). The phrase *terror from God* is similar to the panic from God in other accounts of holy war, and the belief that God aids the righteous in battle (see Gen 35:5; Exod 23:27; Isa 2:10, 19).

14:16-19 Saul and his camp see the confusion created by Jonathan's attack on the Philistine camp. Instead of rushing to aid Jonathan, Saul first calls on his priest Ahijah to bring the *priestly vest* (Hebrew *ephod*, the name of this priestly garment). The phrase "*Withdraw your hand*" (14:19) should be taken to indicate the withdrawal of the

counted, and Jonathan and his armor-bearer were gone. <sup>18</sup>Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the priestly vest!" because at that time, Ahijah wore the priestly vest in Israel's presence. <sup>f</sup><sup>19</sup>As Saul was talking to the priest, the confusion in the Philistine camp continued to grow. Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand."<sup>g</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Then Saul called all his troops together, and they went into battle. The Philistines were completely confused; every soldier's sword was turned against his fellow soldier. <sup>21</sup>Even those Hebrews who had earlier joined up with the Philistines and moved into their camp changed sides to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. <sup>22</sup>Similarly, when all the Israelites who had been hiding in the highlands of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were on the run, they also joined the battle in hot pursuit of the Philistines. <sup>23</sup>The LORD saved Israel that day, and the fighting carried on beyond Beth-aven.

<sup>24</sup>Now the Israelite soldiers were in a difficult situation that day because Saul had bound the troops by a solemn pledge: "Anyone who eats anything before evening when I have taken revenge on my enemies is doomed." So none of the army ate anything. <sup>25</sup>The troops<sup>h</sup> came across a honeycomb with honey on the ground. <sup>26</sup>But even when they came across the honeycomb with the honey still flowing, no one ate any of it because the troops were afraid of the solemn pledge. <sup>27</sup>But Jonathan hadn't heard his father make the people swear the pledge, so he dipped the end of the staff he was carrying into the honeycomb. When he ate some his eyes lit up. <sup>28</sup>Then one of the soldiers spoke up: "Your father bound the troops by a solemn pledge: 'Anyone who eats food today is doomed.' That's why the troops are exhausted."

<sup>29</sup>Jonathan said, "My father has brought trouble to the land. Look how my eyes lit up when I tasted just a bit of that honey! <sup>30</sup>It would have been even better if the troops had eaten some of their enemies' plunder today when they found it! But now the Philistine defeat isn't as thorough as it might have been."

<sup>31</sup>That day, after they had fought the Philistines from Michmash to Aijalon, the troops were completely exhausted. <sup>32</sup>So the troops tore into the plunder, taking sheep, cattle, and calves. They slaughtered them right on the ground and devoured them with the blood still in them. <sup>33</sup>When it was reported to Saul, "The troops are sinning against the LORD by eating meat with blood in it," Saul said, "All of you are traitors! Roll a large stone over here right now. <sup>34</sup>Go among the troops and say to them, 'Everyone must bring their ox or sheep, and slaughter them here with me. Don't sin against the LORD by eating meat with blood still in it.'" So everyone brought whatever they had and slaughtered it there. <sup>35</sup>And Saul built an altar to the LORD. It was the first altar he had built to the LORD.

<sup>36</sup>"Let's go after the Philistines tonight and plunder them until morning," Saul said. "We won't leave them a single survivor!"

"Do whatever you think is best," the troops replied.

But the priest said, "Let's ask God first."

<sup>37</sup>So Saul questioned God: "Should I go after the Philistines? Will you hand them over to Israel?" But God did not answer him that day.

<sup>g</sup>LXX *ephod* <sup>f</sup>LXX; MT "Bring out God's chest!" because at that time God's chest was with the Israelites; cf 14:3.

<sup>h</sup>That is, from the priestly vest (Heb *ephod*) or from the Urim and Thummim contained therein <sup>h</sup>MT *land*

<sup>i</sup>LXX; MT *brought their ox and slaughtered it there that night*.

Urim and Thummim, the sacred lots thrown to determine whether God's favor is with them. This caution on the part of Saul contrasts with Jonathan's boldness.

14:20-23 When Saul and his forces join the fray, great victory seems under way. The Philistines are confused and retreating. Hebrews who had hidden or even yielded to the Philistines come out of hiding and join the Israelite forces to pursue the retreating Philistines. The Lord is given credit for Israel's salvation on this day (14:23).

14:24-30 We now learn that at the beginning of the battle Saul has sworn an oath that anyone who eats food before the end of the battle will doom the revenge on the Philistines. This rash pledge places an unnecessary demand on troops in a protracted battle, a point voiced later by Jonathan (14:30). The Israelite troops become exhausted and famished to the point they can't continue the pursuit of

the Philistines, blunting the outcome of the victory. However, in an event with later terrible consequences, Jonathan, who wasn't present to hear Saul's solemn pledge, comes upon a honeycomb and immediately eats honey from it (14:26-27). The effect on him is energizing, until others inform him of his father's oath.

14:31-35 At the end of the day of battle, a second negative effect comes from Saul's rash pledge. The famished troops fall upon the livestock looted from the Philistines, and begin eating the bloody meat. Israelite teaching forbids eating meat with the blood, and Saul quickly acts to forestall this sinful feasting by creating an impromptu altar for properly sacrificing animals and draining their blood. This allows the troops to eat without sin.

14:36-46 In a dramatic episode, the result of Saul's ill-advised pledge comes to a near-tragic end. Saul wants to

14:24 Josh 6:26

14:27 1Sa 14:43; Prv 24:13

14:36 1Sa 14:18-19

14:37 1Sa 28:6, 1Sa 30:8

14:18 Josh 7:11  
 14:42 1Sa 14:41  
 15:18 Josh 7:19;  
 1Sa 14:27  
 15:18 Ru 1:17;  
 1Sa 14:39  
 15:18 2Sa 14:11;  
 1Ki 1:52  
 15:1 1Sa 9:16;  
 1Sa 10:1

<sup>38</sup>Then Saul said, "All you officers in the army, come forward! Let's find out what sin was committed today. <sup>39</sup>As surely as the LORD lives—the one who has saved Israel—even if it's my own son Jonathan, that person will be executed." Not one of the soldiers answered him. <sup>40</sup>So Saul said to all Israel, "You be on one side, and my son Jonathan and I will be on the other."

"Do whatever you think is best," the troops said.

<sup>41</sup>Then Saul asked the LORD God of Israel, "Why haven't you answered your servant today? If the wrongdoing is mine or my son Jonathan's, respond with Urim, but if the wrongdoing belongs to your people Israel, respond with Thummim."<sup>1</sup> Jonathan and Saul were taken by lot, and the troops were cleared.

<sup>42</sup>Then Saul said, "Decide between me and my son Jonathan."<sup>2</sup> And Jonathan was selected.

<sup>43</sup>"Tell me what you've done," Saul said to Jonathan.

So Jonathan told him. "I only took a very small taste of honey on the end of my staff," he said. "And now I'm supposed to die?"

<sup>44</sup>"May God deal harshly with me and worse still if you don't die today!"<sup>3</sup> Saul swore.

<sup>45</sup>But the troops said to Saul, "Why should Jonathan die when he has won this great victory for Israel? No way! As surely as the LORD lives, not one hair off his head will fall to the ground, because he did this today with God's help." So the troops rescued Jonathan, and he wasn't executed.

<sup>46</sup>Then Saul stopped chasing the Philistines, and the Philistines went back to their own country.

### **Saul's wars**

<sup>47</sup>Saul secured his kingship over Israel. He fought against his enemies on every side: against Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the king of Zobah,<sup>4</sup> and the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he was victorious.<sup>5</sup> <sup>48</sup>He acted heroically, defeating the Amalekites and rescuing Israel from the power of any who had plundered them.

<sup>49</sup>Saul's sons were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchishua. The names of his two daughters were Merab, the oldest, and Michal, the younger daughter. <sup>50</sup>The name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, Ahimaaz's daughter. The name of his general was Abner, Ner's son, Saul's uncle. <sup>51</sup>Kish, Saul's father, and Ner, Abner's father, were Abiel's sons.

<sup>52</sup>There was fierce warfare against the Philistines throughout Saul's lifetime. So whenever Saul saw any strong or heroic man, he would add him to his troops.

### **Samuel rejects Saul's kingship**

**15** Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel. Listen now to the LORD's words! <sup>2</sup>This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says: I am

<sup>1</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT *Saul asked the Lord God of Israel, "Give the right answer."* Urim and Thummim were sacred lots carried by the priest. <sup>2</sup>LXX adds *Whoever the Lord selects will die. The army said to Saul, "Don't do this!" But Saul forced them, so they decided between him and Jonathan his son.* <sup>3</sup>LXX; MT *if you don't die, Jonathan* <sup>4</sup>LXX, DSS (4QSam\*); MT *kings of Zobah* <sup>5</sup>LXX

follow up his battle advantage and pursue the Philistines, and his troops are willing, but his priest counsels inquiry of God (14:36). This and all of the following inquiries of God most likely involve the use of the *Urim* and the *Thummim*, especially since they are referenced in 14:41. These sacred lots (an implement like dice) can respond yes or no or have no result, so these attempts to discern the divine will are posed as yes and no questions or either/or choices (Num 27:21). The first result provides no direction for whether Saul should pursue his enemies, and this silence from God leads to the assumption that someone has sinned (14:37). The lots consulted separate out Saul and Jonathan from the rest, and finally single out Jonathan (14:42). When Jonathan confesses that he ate a bit of honey because he hadn't heard the pledge, Saul is ready to take the life of his son, the hero of the battle (14:44). Saul's own troops intervene to prevent this tragic outcome, but in the meantime the opportunity to pursue the Philistines slips away (14:45-46). An account that began in the bold heroism of Jonathan ends in the folly and caution of Saul.

14:47-48 This summary note gives Saul credit for military victory over many enemies that plagued Israel in this period. We should probably take this to mean that he succeeded in establishing a small area of temporary independence in the central highlands near Gibeah, his hometown.

14:49-52 We are given some family information on Saul. Three sons and two daughters are named. Not named is the son Ishbaal, who will later play a key role in the story, ruling the northern tribes of Israel after Saul's death (2 Sam 2:8). Saul's wife, Ahinoam, and his general Abner, as well as his uncle, are named. Abner plays a crucial role in events after Saul's death.

15:1-35 This second story of conflict between Samuel and Saul results in God's rejecting Saul as the legitimate king. This is a turning point in the story. The future of Israel can't lie with Saul. The next chapter will turn to David.

15:1-3 The prophet brings a command to Saul described as *the Lord's words*. He is to undertake a campaign against the *Amalekites*, one of Israel's frequent and traditional



going to punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel: how they attacked the Israelites as they came up from Egypt. <sup>3</sup>So go! Attack the Amalekites; put everything that belongs to them under the ban.<sup>o</sup> Spare no one. Kill men and women, children and infants, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys.”

<sup>4</sup>Saul called out the troops and counted them at Telaim: two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand more troops from Judah. <sup>5</sup>Then Saul advanced on the Amalekite city and laid an ambush in the valley. <sup>6</sup>Saul told the Kenites, “Get going! Leave the Amalekites immediately because you showed kindness to the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. Otherwise, I’ll destroy you right along with them.” So the Kenites left the Amalekites. <sup>7</sup>Then Saul attacked the Amalekites from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is near Egypt. <sup>8</sup>He captured Agag the Amalekite king alive, but Saul placed all the people under the ban, killing them with the sword. <sup>9</sup>Saul and the troops spared Agag along with the best sheep, cattle, fattened calves,<sup>p</sup> lambs, and everything of value. They weren’t willing to put them under the ban; but anything that was despised or of no value<sup>q</sup> they placed under the ban.

<sup>10</sup>Then the LORD’s word came to Samuel: <sup>11</sup>“I regret making Saul king because he has turned away from following me and hasn’t done what I said.” Samuel was upset at this, and he prayed to the LORD all night long.

<sup>12</sup>Samuel got up early in the morning to meet Saul, and was told, “Saul went to Carmel, where he is setting up a monument for himself. Then he left and went down to Gilgal.”

<sup>13</sup>When Samuel reached Saul,<sup>r</sup> Saul greeted him, “The LORD bless you! I have done what the LORD said.”

<sup>14</sup>“Then what,” Samuel asked, “is this bleating of sheep in my ears and mooing of cattle I hear?”

<sup>15</sup>“They were taken from the Amalekites,” Saul said, “because the troops spared the best sheep and cattle in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God. The rest was placed under the ban.”

<sup>16</sup>Samuel then said to Saul, “Enough! Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.” “Tell me,” Saul replied.

<sup>17</sup>Samuel said, “Even if you think you are insignificant, aren’t you the leader of Israel’s tribes? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. <sup>18</sup>The LORD sent you on a mission, instructing you, ‘Go, and put the sinful Amalekites under the ban. Fight against them until you’ve wiped them out.’ <sup>19</sup>Why didn’t you obey the LORD? You did evil in the LORD’s eyes when you tore into the plunder!”

<sup>20</sup>“But I did obey the LORD!” Saul protested to Samuel. “I went on the mission the LORD sent me on. I captured Agag the Amalekite king, and I put the Amalekites under the ban.

<sup>o</sup>A technique of holy war that often involves total destruction, in which everything that is destroyed is dedicated to the deity who helps in the battle; also in 15:8-9, 15, 18, 20-21. <sup>p</sup>LXX <sup>q</sup>LXX; Heb uncertain <sup>r</sup>LXX adds *he was offering entirely burned sacrifices to the LORD, the best of the plunder that he had taken from Amalek. As Samuel approached Saul.*

enemies. Samuel even references the Amalekite opposition against Israel as they came from bondage in Egypt (cf. Exod 17:8-16). God commands Saul to subject the Amalekites to the *ban*, a custom of holy war that dedicates all lives, human and animal, to God by destroying them. Such technique may well have been intended to limit the use of war as an instrument of gain, but the practice seems revolting to modern readers. It’s important to remember that Saul’s violation of this command isn’t related to his moral principles but to his desire for material gain for himself and his army.

15:4-9 Saul carries out a successful campaign against the Amalekites. He allows *Kenites*, a people friendly and possibly related to Israel, a chance to escape, and then attacks and pursues the Amalekites. Although fulfilling much of the command to place all people, animals, and plunder under the ban (see note on 1 Sam 15:1-3) and destroy them, Saul makes some exceptions. He captures the Amalekite king, Agag, alive and preserves all the choicest livestock (15:8-9).

15:10-11 The Lord reports to Samuel that Saul hasn’t done all that was commanded. God’s statement is remarkable: *I regret making Saul king*. Such an expression of divine regret is extremely rare in the Bible, appearing only one other time in the verses leading up to the flood in Genesis 6:6, where the same verb is used as in this statement.

15:12-26 Samuel travels to meet Saul at Gilgal, and finds him making entirely burned offerings. Saul first responds that he has obeyed God’s word (15:13), but Samuel notes the sound of livestock (15:14). In the back-and-forth confrontation, Saul insists that he has spared only the best of the livestock for sacrifice to the Lord, although he consistently says it was his troops who spared the choice livestock (15:15, 21), and later indicates that he was fearful of his troops and obeyed them (15:24). Samuel insists that the ban commanded by God was to be total (on the “ban,” see note on 1 Sam 15:1-3). In a rare glimpse of prophetic speech in these early stories, Samuel pronounces an oracle indicating that God prefers obedience to sacrifice (15:22-23). This oracle ends by announcing the

15:9 15a 15:3.

15a 15:15.

15a 15:19.

15a 20:18

15:11 Gn 6:6;

Ex 32:14;

Josh 22:16;

15a 8:6.

15a 15:35

15:17 15a 9:21

15:22 Prv 21:3;  
Is 1:11;  
Hos 6:6; Mt 6:6;  
Mk 12:33

15:23 Dt 18:10

15:24 Nm

22:34; Prv 29:25;  
Is 51:12

15:26 1Sa 13:14;  
1Sa 16:1

15:27 1Sa 28:14;  
1Ki 11:30-31

15:28 1Sa 13:14;  
1Sa 28:17-18;  
1Ki 11:31

15:29 Nm 23:19;  
Ti 1:2

<sup>21</sup>Yes, the troops took sheep and cattle from the plunder—the very best items placed under the ban—but in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal.”

<sup>22</sup>Then Samuel replied,

“Does the LORD want entirely burned offerings and sacrifices as much as obedience to the LORD?

Listen to this: obeying is better than sacrificing, paying attention is better than fat from rams,

<sup>23</sup>because rebellion is as bad as the sin of divination; arrogance is like the evil of idolatry.”

Because you have rejected what the LORD said, he has rejected you as king.”

<sup>24</sup>Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned because I disobeyed the LORD’s command and your instructions. I was afraid of the troops and obeyed them. <sup>25</sup>But now please forgive my sin! Come back with me, so I can worship the LORD.”

<sup>26</sup>But Samuel said to Saul, “I can’t<sup>t</sup> return with you because you have rejected what the LORD said, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.”

<sup>27</sup>Samuel turned to leave, but Saul grabbed at the edge of his robe, and it ripped. <sup>28</sup>Then Samuel told him, “The LORD has ripped the kingdom of Israel from you today. He will give it to a friend of yours, someone who is more worthy than you. <sup>29</sup>What’s more, the enduring one of Israel doesn’t take back what he says and doesn’t change his mind. He is not a human being who would change his mind.”

<sup>30</sup>“I have sinned,” Saul said, “but please honor me in front of my people’s elders and before Israel, and come back with me so I can worship the LORD your God.” <sup>31</sup>So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshipped the LORD.

<sup>32</sup>“Bring me Agag the Amalekite king,” Samuel said.

Agag came to him in chains, asking, “Would death have been as bitter as this is?”<sup>a</sup>

*The Rejection of Saul* Many readers find this moment in Saul’s story disturbing. First, how is the tradition of holy war described here morally defensible? There are no circumstances in which most modern readers can believe that God would require the deaths of men, women, and children for any cause. Second, we might wonder whether Saul has been given a fair chance before being utterly rejected as king.

Many would understand the ancient concept of holy war as an effort to keep war from being used as an instrument of gain: territory, slaves, and goods. If all is dedicated to God, then war should be used only in defense and not in efforts to profit. To modern moral sensibilities, though, this treats persons as merely disposable property, and we wouldn’t regard this as morally acceptable.

It is important in this story to note that Saul hasn’t spared King Agag and considerable livestock because he objected morally to Samuel’s statement of God’s demand, but because he desired honor and gain. If we set aside the difficult issue of holy war, Saul simply altered what God required to suit his own needs. It might be acceptable to seek fuller discernment of what God actually demands of us, but not to simply do as we please and hope it will be overlooked.

Saul doesn’t seem oriented to interaction and communication with God. Unlike his son Jonathan, and later his son-in-law David, Saul doesn’t pray or seek God’s will. Especially in 1 Samuel 18, qualities of anger, envy, and violence emerge in Saul. We haven’t seen all of this by the time Saul is rejected, but his disobedience in favor of his own needs may be pointing to flaws in his character, and God already regrets making Saul king (1 Sam 15:11, 35).

<sup>a</sup>Sym, LXX<sup>b</sup>; MT *evil and idolatry* <sup>c</sup>Or *won’t* <sup>d</sup>LXX; Heb uncertain

rejection of Saul as king (15:23b). Saul’s response turns to confession of sin (15:24-25); and he begs for forgiveness and a show of unity between prophet and king before the people. But Samuel only announces his rejection in harsher terms (15:26).

15:27-33 A series of symbolic actions underline Saul’s rejection. Saul tries to prevent Samuel’s departure and tears his robe, only to have Samuel use this symbolically to reinforce his rejection of Saul as king: *The Lord has ripped the kingdom of Israel from you today*. Further, the entry of David into the story is foreshadowed, because the one

to whom God will entrust the kingdom is identified as *a friend of yours . . . more worthy than you* (15:28). In the chapters that follow, Saul and David do indeed become close before Saul turns on him. Samuel seems to agree to Saul’s request to honor him before the people and join him in worship of the Lord, but it results in only a final symbolic act of rejection. Saul had preserved the life of the Amalekites’ King Agag. Saul couldn’t justify this act as he had with the livestock, which were preserved for sacrifice to the Lord. Such taking of kings is usually to parade them in triumph and gain honor before the people. Now Samuel

<sup>33</sup>Samuel said, "Just as your sword left women without their children, now your mother will be childless among women." Then Samuel cut Agag to pieces in the LORD's presence at Gilgal.

<sup>34</sup>Then Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah. <sup>35</sup>Samuel never saw Saul again before he died, but he grieved over Saul. However, the LORD regretted making Saul king over Israel.

### Samuel anoints David

**16** The LORD said to Samuel, "How long are you going to grieve over Saul? I have rejected him as king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and get going. I'm sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem because I have found<sup>v</sup> my next king among his sons."

<sup>2</sup>"How can I do that?" Samuel asked. "When Saul hears of it he'll kill me!"

"Take a heifer with you," the LORD replied, "and say, 'I have come to make a sacrifice to the LORD.' <sup>3</sup>Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will make clear to you what you should do. You will anoint for me the person I point out to you."

<sup>4</sup>Samuel did what the LORD instructed. When he came to Bethlehem, the city elders came to meet him. They were shaking with fear. "Do you come in peace?" they asked.

<sup>5</sup>"Yes," Samuel answered. "I've come to make a sacrifice to the LORD. Now make yourselves holy, then come with me to the sacrifice." Samuel made Jesse and his sons holy and invited them to the sacrifice as well.

<sup>6</sup>When they arrived, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, "That must be the LORD's anointed right in front."

<sup>7</sup>But the LORD said to Samuel, "Have no regard for his appearance or stature, because I haven't selected him. God<sup>w</sup> doesn't look at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the LORD sees into the heart."

<sup>8</sup>Next Jesse called for Abinadab, who presented himself to Samuel, but he said, "The LORD hasn't chosen this one either." <sup>9</sup>So Jesse presented Shammah, but Samuel said, "No, the LORD hasn't chosen this one." <sup>10</sup>Jesse presented seven of his sons to Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD hasn't picked any of these." <sup>11</sup>Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Is that all of your boys?"

"There is still the youngest one," Jesse answered, "but he's out keeping the sheep."

"Send for him," Samuel told Jesse, "because we can't proceed until he gets here."<sup>w</sup>

<sup>12</sup>So Jesse sent and brought him in. He was reddish brown, had beautiful eyes, and was good-looking. The LORD said, "That's the one. Go anoint him." <sup>13</sup>So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him right there in front of his brothers. The LORD's spirit came over David from that point forward.

Then Samuel left and went to Ramah.

<sup>v</sup>Or *seen* <sup>w</sup>LXX; MT lacks *God*. <sup>x</sup>MT; LXX *we won't sit down* (that is, to eat)

demands that Saul bring Agag forward. He announces that Agag is guilty of crimes against Israel, and executes him with a sword (15:33).

15:34-35 Samuel never sees Saul again in his life, although 1 Samuel 28 provides a remarkable account of Saul's encounter with Samuel's ghost. But Samuel does grieve over Saul (and continues to do so; see 1 Sam 16:1). Once more the text announces that the LORD regretted making Saul king (see note on 1 Sam 15:10-11).

16:1-13 David is introduced into the story, and becomes the main focus of the narrative, even while Saul is yet alive. He is the man following the Lord's own heart (see note on 1 Sam 13:14).

16:1-3 Given the harshness of the conflicts between Samuel and Saul, it is somewhat surprising to find Samuel so consumed with grief over Saul that God must urge him to move ahead. Saul's era is over; he is rejected. God now wants Samuel to anoint a new king from among the sons of Jesse. Clearly Samuel doesn't regard this as wise or safe. Saul may not tolerate the anointing of a rival. God agrees

to participate in Samuel's cover story by suggesting he just come to Jesse on the pretext of making a sacrifice. God will indicate the one chosen.

16:4-7 Samuel's arrival in Bethlehem clearly arouses some fear, but the prophet carries through with the pretext of his visit by sacrificing. Jesse's oldest son, Eliab, is so striking that Samuel assumes he must be the one. This affords a prime opportunity for God to instruct both Samuel and the reader. God doesn't look on appearance but on the heart. If the goal is a "man following the Lord's own heart" (1 Sam 13:14), then God's examination of the heart of those to be chosen becomes an alignment of the heart of God with the heart of God's anointed one.

16:8-11 Seven sons of Jesse are presented, but none are God's chosen. Samuel learns that an eighth son, the youngest, is away watching the sheep, and he sends for him.

16:12-13 When David arrives, God indicates he is the one. Samuel anoints him, and, just as happened following Saul's anointing (1 Sam 10:1, 10), God's spirit comes upon David. The Hebrew term for "anointed one" is the source of

15:35 Gn 6:6;  
15a 15:11,  
15a 15:29,  
15a 16:1,  
15a 19:24

16:1 Ru 4:17;  
15a 10:1,  
15a 13:14,  
15a 15:35,  
Ac 13:22

16:7 1Ki 8:39;  
1Ch 28:9;  
1er 17:10;  
Rev 2:23

16:10 1Ch 2:13  
16:11 1Sa 17:12;  
2Sa 7:8;  
Ps 78:70-71

16:12 Gn 39:6;  
15a 9:17,  
15a 17:42;  
Ac 7:20

16:13 1Sa 10:1,  
15a 10:6,  
15a 10:10,  
15a 16:1; 2Sa 2:4

16:14 Jgs 9:23;

15a 18:10;

15a 18:12;

15a 19:9;

15a 28:15

16:14 1Sa 10:5;

15a 16:23;

15a 18:10;

2Ki 3:15

16:18 1Sa 3:19;

15a 17:32

16:19 1Sa 16:11;

15a 17:15;

15a 17:34

16:23 1Sa 16:14;

15a 16:16

17:1

Josh 10:10-11;

Josh 15:35;

1Sa 13:5;

1Ch 11:13

**David Is Introduced to Saul**

<sup>14</sup>Now the LORD's spirit had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. <sup>15</sup>Saul's servants said to him, "Look, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. <sup>16</sup>If our master just says the word, your servants will search for someone who knows how to play the lyre. The musician can play whenever the evil spirit from God is affecting you, and then you'll feel better."

<sup>17</sup>Saul said to his servants, "Find me a good musician and bring him to me."

<sup>18</sup>One of the servants responded, "I know that one of Jesse's sons from Bethlehem is a good musician. He's a strong man and heroic, a warrior who speaks well and is good-looking too. The LORD is with him."

<sup>19</sup>So Saul sent messengers to Jesse to say, "Send me your son David, the one who keeps the sheep."

<sup>20</sup>Jesse then took a donkey and loaded it with a homer of bread,<sup>a</sup> a jar of wine, and a young goat, and he sent it along with his son David to Saul. <sup>21</sup>That is how David came to Saul and entered his service. Saul liked David very much,<sup>b</sup> and David became his armor-bearer. <sup>22</sup>Saul sent a message to Jesse: "Please allow David to remain in my service because I am pleased with him." <sup>23</sup>Whenever the evil spirit from God affected Saul, David would take the lyre and play it. Then Saul would relax and feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him alone.

**David defeats Goliath**

**17**The Philistines assembled their troops for war at Socoh of Judah. They camped between Socoh and Azekah at Ephes-dammim. <sup>2</sup>Saul and the Israelite army assembled and camped in the Elah Valley, where they got organized to fight the Philistines. <sup>3</sup>The Philistines took positions on one hill while Israel took positions on the opposite hill. There was a valley between them.

<sup>4</sup>A champion named Goliath from Gath came out from the Philistine camp. He was more than nine feet tall.<sup>a</sup> <sup>5</sup>He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore bronze scale-armor weighing one hundred twenty-five pounds.<sup>b</sup> <sup>6</sup>He had bronze plates on his shins, and a bronze

<sup>a</sup>LXX <sup>b</sup>Or David liked Saul very much. <sup>c</sup>LXX over six feet tall <sup>d</sup>Five thousand shekels

the title "Messiah" or, following Greek usage, "Christ." When Jesus is baptized by John, God's Spirit descends upon him in the same way.

16:14-23 Saul first encounters David as a young musician whose playing can calm his troubled moods.

16:14 While God's spirit has now come upon David as God's anointed, it departs from Saul. It would seem that Saul's rejection and David's anointing make it impossible for two persons to carry the simultaneous status of God's anointed king. Although Saul holds the human political office for some time yet, he is no longer the legitimate king. In fact, an *evil spirit from the LORD* plagues Saul, which explains why Saul will appear in the narratives ahead to be increasingly unbalanced and dangerous. Perhaps such an injurious spirit is intended as punishment to Saul. In any case, the biblical narrative views all events as originating from God, even the dangerous mental states of Saul. It wasn't what God desired; indeed, God regrets it (cf. 1 Sam 15:35). As will become clear in the stories that follow, the notion of an evil spirit possessing Saul isn't intended to relieve him of moral responsibility.

16:15-19 One of Saul's servants suggests that a musician skilled in the lyre might bring Saul comfort in times when he falls into his tormented states, and Saul agrees to send for one. Another servant seems to know David, the son of Jesse, as just such a skilled musician. Significantly, though, David is also described as a *strong man and heroic, a warrior who speaks well and is good-looking* (16:18). David brings qualities that will make him more valuable than a musician in the court of Saul, and more likely as Israel's future king. It's ironic that Saul is the first to utter the name

of David in the story. The declaration that *The LORD is with him* is the first of seven times that this testimony to God's presence with David is given in 1 and 2 Samuel (cf. 1 Sam 17:37; 18:12, 14, 28; 20:13; 2 Sam 5:10).

16:20-23 David arrives at Saul's court with gifts, and Saul immediately likes him. David is taken into Saul's service permanently (a request to his father, Jesse; 16:22) as Saul's armor-bearer. When Saul would become troubled and tormented, David would play the lyre to calm him (16:23). This entry into Saul's service creates problems for the flow of the story because in the next chapter David arrives in time to hear the challenge of Goliath, and Saul clearly doesn't know him (1 Sam 17:55-56).

17:1-58 This is a second story on how David was introduced to the court of Saul (cf. 1 Sam 16:18). David seems younger here, and he hasn't previously been a part of Saul's court or even known by him. These two introduction stories for David can't be completely harmonized or reconciled. This story of David's defeat of Goliath is one of the best-known stories of David, and defines him in the tradition down to the present (cf. Sir 47:4-5). In the present order of episodes, however, this story serves as the mighty deed that follows the anointing by a prophet and the receiving of God's spirit. This repeats the pattern seen for Saul (1 Sam 9-11). It's the pattern that legitimates God's anointed one as Israel's king.

17:1-3 The armies of Israel and the Philistines face each other on opposing hilltops with a valley between. A battle is expected.

17:4-11 A Philistine champion named Goliath comes out daily to challenge Israel to send their own champion to face

scimitar hung on his back. <sup>7</sup>His spear shaft<sup>c</sup> was as strong as the bar on a weaver's loom, and its iron head weighed fifteen pounds.<sup>d</sup> His shield-bearer walked in front of him.

<sup>8</sup>He stopped and shouted to the Israelite troops, "Why have you come and taken up battle formations? I am the Philistine champion,"<sup>e</sup> and you are Saul's servants. Isn't that right? Select one of your men, and let him come down against me. <sup>9</sup>If he is able to fight me and kill me, then we will become your slaves, but if I overcome him and kill him, then you will become our slaves and you will serve us. <sup>10</sup>I insult Israel's troops today!" the Philistine continued, "Give me an opponent, and we'll fight!" <sup>11</sup>When Saul and all Israel heard what the Philistine said, they were distressed and terrified.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Now David was Jesse's son, an Ephraimite from Bethlehem in Judah who had eight sons. By Saul's time, Jesse was already quite old and far along in age.<sup>g</sup> <sup>13</sup>Jesse's three oldest sons had gone with Saul to war. Their names were Eliab the oldest, Abinadab the second oldest, and Shammah the third oldest. <sup>14</sup>(David was the youngest.) These three older sons followed Saul, <sup>15</sup>but David went back and forth from Saul's side to shepherd his father's flock in Bethlehem.

<sup>16</sup>For forty days straight the Philistine came out and took his stand, both morning and evening. <sup>17</sup>Jesse said to his son David, "Please take your brothers an ephah<sup>h</sup> of this roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread. Deliver them quickly to your brothers in the camp. <sup>18</sup>And here, take these ten wedges of cheese to their unit commander. Find out how your brothers are doing and bring back some sign that they are okay. <sup>19</sup>They are with Saul and all the Israelite troops fighting the Philistines in the Elah Valley."

<sup>20</sup>So David got up early in the morning, left someone in charge of the flock, and loaded up and left, just as his father Jesse had instructed him. He reached the camp right when the army was taking up their battle formations and shouting the war cry. <sup>21</sup>Israel and the Philistines took up their battle formations opposite each other. <sup>22</sup>David left his things with an attendant and ran to the front line. When he arrived, he asked how his brothers were doing. <sup>23</sup>Right when David was speaking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, came forward from the Philistine ranks and said the same things he had said before. David listened. <sup>24</sup>When the Israelites saw Goliath, every one of them ran away terrified of him. (<sup>25</sup>Now the Israelite soldiers had been saying to each other: "Do you see this man who keeps coming out? How he comes to insult Israel? The king will reward with great riches whoever kills that man. The king will give his own daughter to him and make his household exempt from taxes<sup>i</sup> in Israel.")

<sup>26</sup>David asked the soldiers standing by him, "What will be done for the person who kills that Philistine over there and removes this insult from Israel? Who is that uncircumcised Philistine, anyway, that he can get away with insulting the army of the living God?"

<sup>27</sup>Then the troops repeated to him what they had been saying. "So that's what will be done for the man who kills him," they said.

<sup>28</sup>When David's oldest brother Eliab heard him talking to the soldiers, he got very mad at David. "Why did you come down here?" he said. "Who is watching those few sheep for you in the wilderness? I know how arrogant you are and your devious plan: you came down just to see the battle!"

<sup>29</sup>"What did I do wrong this time?" David replied. "It was just a question!"

<sup>30</sup>So David turned to someone else and asked the same thing, and the people said the

<sup>c</sup>Qere, LXX, Syr (cf 2 Sam 21:19); Kethib *the point of his spear* <sup>d</sup>Six hundred shekels <sup>e</sup>MT *the Philistine lacks champion*. <sup>f</sup>The following verses are absent from LXX<sup>g</sup>: 17:12-31, 41, 48b, 50, 55-58. <sup>h</sup>LXX, Syr <sup>i</sup>One ephah is approximately twenty quarts. <sup>j</sup>Heb uncertain

him in battle. The practice of deciding conflicts through individual combat is known elsewhere in the ancient world and might have served to stop more widespread loss of life. The description of Goliath is daunting: *nine feet tall ... armor weighing one hundred twenty-five pounds ... a bronze scimitar ... spear shaft ... its iron head weighed fifteen pounds* (17:4-7). Further, he taunted and insulted the men of Israel (17:10), but no one would face him.

17:12-19 David's three oldest brothers were serving in Saul's army. David's elderly father uses his youngest son to send provisions to them and bring back news of their welfare.

17:20-27 David arrives at Saul's camp just as Israelite and Philistine forces are taking their battle positions, and just as Goliath comes out to hurl his daily challenge to Israel. No one dared face him, but David hears talk of the rewards that would go to the man who could kill Goliath: riches, the king's daughter, and exemption from taxes (17:25). David eagerly seeks to confirm this while expressing shock that a Philistine can insult the army of God's people (17:26-27). 17:28-30 David and his older brother Eliab get into a typical family squabble as Eliab accuses David of coming down merely as a curious onlooker, instead of taking care of his father's sheep.

17:14 1Sa 16:11  
17:26 Dt 5:26;  
1Sa 11:2,  
1Sa 14:6,  
1Sa 17:36;  
2Ki 19:4

17:32 1Sa 16:18

17:34 1Sa 17:15;  
Am 3:12

17:35 Jgs 14:6;

Am 3:12

17:39 1Sa 13:22;

1Sa 17:38;

1Sa 17:45;

2Co 10:4

17:40 Jgs 20:16

17:41 1Sa 17:7

17:42 1Sa 16:12;

2Sa 6:16;

Ps 123:4;

Prv 16:18

17:43 1Sa 24:14;

2Sa 3:8, 2Sa 9:8;

2Sa 16:9;

2Ki 8:13

17:44 1Sa 17:46;

2Sa 21:10;

1Ki 20:10

17:45 2Ch 32:8;

Ps 124:8

17:46 Dt 28:26;

Josh 4:24;

1Ki 18:36

17:47 1Sa 14:6;

2Ch 14:11;

2Ch 20:15;

Ps 44:6, Hos 1:7

17:49 1Sa 17:50;

2Sa 21:15

17:50 Jgs 3:31;

Ru 4:22;

1Sa 16:13;

1Sa 17:14;

1Sa 17:39

17:51 1Sa 21:9;

2Sa 23:21;

Heb 11:34

same thing in reply. <sup>31</sup>The things David had said were overheard and reported to Saul, who sent for him.

<sup>32</sup>"Don't let anyone<sup>d</sup> lose courage because of this Philistine!" David told Saul. "I, your servant, will go out and fight him!"

<sup>33</sup>"You can't go out and fight this Philistine," Saul answered David. "You are still a boy. But he's been a warrior since he was a boy!"

<sup>34</sup>"Your servant has kept his father's sheep," David replied to Saul, "and if ever a lion or a bear came and carried off one of the flock, <sup>35</sup>I would go after it, strike it, and rescue the animal from its mouth. If it turned on me, I would grab it at its jaw, strike it, and kill it. <sup>36</sup>Your servant has fought both lions and bears. This uncircumcised Philistine will be just like one of them because he has insulted the army of the living God.

<sup>37</sup>"The LORD," David added, "who rescued me from the power of both lions and bears, will rescue me from the power of this Philistine."

"Go!" Saul replied to David. "And may the LORD be with you!"

<sup>38</sup>Then Saul dressed David in his own gear, putting a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. <sup>39</sup>David strapped his sword on over the armor, but he couldn't walk around well because he'd never tried it before. "I can't walk in this," David told Saul, "because I've never tried it before." So he took them off. <sup>40</sup>He then grabbed his staff and chose five smooth stones from the streambed. He put them in the pocket of his shepherd's bag and with sling in hand went out to the Philistine.

<sup>41</sup>The Philistine got closer and closer to David, and his shield-bearer was in front of him.

<sup>42</sup>When the Philistine looked David over, he sneered at David because he was just a boy; reddish brown and good-looking.

<sup>43</sup>The Philistine asked David, "Am I some sort of dog that you come at me with sticks?" And he cursed David by his gods. <sup>44</sup>"Come here," he said to David, "and I'll feed your flesh to the wild birds and the wild animals!"

<sup>45</sup>But David told the Philistine, "You are coming against me with sword, spear, and scimitar, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel's army, the one you've insulted. <sup>46</sup>Today the LORD will hand you over to me. I will strike you down and cut off your head! Today I will feed your dead body and the dead bodies of the entire Philistine camp<sup>a</sup> to the wild birds and the wild animals. Then the whole world will know that there is a God on Israel's side. <sup>47</sup>And all those gathered here will know that the LORD doesn't save by means of sword and spear. The LORD owns this war, and he will hand all of you over to us."

<sup>48</sup>The Philistine got up and moved closer to attack David, and David ran quickly to the front line to face him. <sup>49</sup>David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone. He slung it, and it hit the Philistine on his forehead. The stone penetrated his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground. <sup>50</sup>And that's how David triumphed over the Philistine with just a sling and a stone, striking the Philistine down and killing him—and David didn't even have a sword! <sup>51</sup>Then David ran and stood over the Philistine. He grabbed the Philistine's sword, drew it from its sheath, and finished him off. Then David cut off the Philistine's head with the sword.

<sup>d</sup>LXX *my master* (the king) <sup>a</sup>LXX; MT lacks *your dead body*.

17:31-37 David's inquiries are made known to Saul, and when brought before the king, David almost blurts out that he will go down and face the Philistine champion. Saul dismisses this, noting to David that *You are still a boy* (17:33). David boldly responds that in defending his father's sheep he has killed lions and bears, and so he can kill the Philistine. Further, David says that he did this through the Lord's power, and that same divine power will deliver him from the Philistine (17:37). Saul gives permission for him to go.

17:38-40 Saul tries to equip David with the traditional armor and weapons of a warrior by using his own gear, but it proves much too large and cumbersome. Instead, David goes out to meet Goliath with his shepherd staff, five stones, and a sling (17:40).

17:41-47 Goliath can't imagine that Israel has sent a

mere boy to meet him, and the two opponents exchange speeches. Goliath dismisses David and his paltry weapons, curses him, and promises to leave his body for birds and beasts (17:43-44). But David's speech is a testimony of faith. He sees the conflict as the Lord's response to Philistine insults, and suggests that the Lord's power is mightier than sword or spear. He makes a solemn promise to *strike you down and cut off your head* as a response to Philistine insults toward God (17:45-47).

17:48-54 The actual conflict is told briefly, offering few details. As the two figures advance toward each other, David takes a stone and hurls it with his sling, striking the Philistine in the forehead (17:48-49). He cuts off the Philistine's head with his own sword. The Philistine army is panicked, and Israel's army pursues them to win a great victory (17:51-53).

When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they fled. <sup>52</sup>The soldiers from Israel and Judah jumped up with a shout and chased the Philistines all the way to Gath<sup>1</sup> and the gates of Ekron. The dead Philistines were littered along the Shaarim road all the way to Gath and Ekron. <sup>53</sup>When the Israelites came back from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp. <sup>54</sup>David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put the Philistine's weapons in his own tent.

<sup>55</sup>Now when Saul saw David go out to meet the Philistine, he asked Abner the army general, "Abner, whose son is that boy?"

"As surely as you live, Your Majesty, I don't know," Abner answered.

<sup>56</sup>"Then find out whose son that young man is," the king replied.

<sup>57</sup>So when David came back from killing the Philistine, Abner sent for him and presented him to Saul. The Philistine's head was still in David's hand. <sup>58</sup>Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, my boy?"

"I'm the son of your servant Jesse from Bethlehem," David answered.

### Jonathan and David

**18** As soon as David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan's life<sup>m</sup> became bound up with David's life, and Jonathan loved David as much as himself.<sup>n</sup> <sup>2</sup>From that point forward, Saul kept David in his service<sup>o</sup> and wouldn't allow him to return to his father's household. <sup>3</sup>And Jonathan and David made a covenant together because Jonathan loved David as much as himself. <sup>4</sup>Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his armor, as well as his sword, his bow, and his belt. <sup>5</sup>David went out and was successful in every mission Saul sent him to do. So Saul placed him in charge of the soldiers, and this pleased all the troops as well as Saul's servants.

### Saul jealous of David

<sup>6</sup>After David came back from killing the Philistine, and as the troops returned home, women from all of Israel's towns came out to meet King Saul<sup>p</sup> with singing and dancing, with tambourines, rejoicing, and musical instruments. <sup>7</sup>The women sang in celebration:

"Saul has killed his thousands,  
but David has killed his tens of thousands!"

<sup>8</sup>Saul burned with anger. This song annoyed him. "They've credited David with tens of thousands," he said, "but only credit me with thousands. What's next for him—the kingdom itself?" <sup>9</sup>So Saul kept a close eye on David from that point on.

<sup>10</sup>The next day an evil spirit from God came over Saul,<sup>q</sup> and he acted like he was in a prophetic frenzy in his house. So David played the lyre as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his

<sup>1</sup>LXX; MT *Gai* or a valley <sup>m</sup>Or *soul*; also twice more in this verse and in 18:3 <sup>n</sup>The following verses are absent from LXX: 18:1-5, 10-11, 17-19, 29b-30. <sup>o</sup>MT lacks in his service. <sup>p</sup>MT; LXX to meet David <sup>q</sup>Or to Saul

17:55-58 In a curious epilogue, it becomes clear that in this story Saul has no idea who David is or what family he is from. The story ends with Saul's general Abner presenting David to Saul, and David introduces himself in a dramatic final line of the story: *I'm the son of your servant Jesse*. 18:1-30 This chapter is a story of contrasts. On the one hand, David seems to inspire love from all those around him. Six times the narrative speaks of love for David: from Saul's own children Jonathan (18:1, 3) and Michal (18:20, 28); from Saul's servants (18:22); and from all of Israel and Judah (18:16). Previously, we were told that Saul also loved David (1 Sam 16:21), but now Saul is possessed by darker emotions: anger (18:8); jealousy (18:9); and fear (18:12, 29). No wonder he is described as possessed by an evil spirit (18:10). These contrasts produce a dramatic story in which Saul rejects options that would have made David a powerful ally and member of his own family, in order to plot against David and seek to kill him. This rivalry between David and Saul dominates the remainder of 1 Samuel.

18:1-4 These verses begin the story of a great friendship between Jonathan and David that reaches its high point

in the touching dialogue of 1 Samuel 20, and even extends to David's generous treatment of Jonathan's son in 2 Samuel 9. Almost immediately following David's victory over the Philistine champion, Jonathan is drawn to David. Love for David is one of the central themes of this chapter. Jonathan makes a covenant with David, sealed by sharing tokens that represent the sharing of royal authority (robe, armor, sword, bow, and belt). This foreshadows David's ultimate rise to the throne instead of Jonathan. Jonathan, as we will see, is at peace with this.

18:5 David immediately becomes a successful military commander in Saul's army. This means that we should imagine the David who kills Goliath as a young man, not a boy.

18:6-9 David proves a successful military commander, but Saul can't celebrate this. When the women's song gives David greater credit than Saul, the king responds with jealousy and suspicion that David is after his kingdom (18:8).

18:10-11 Saul's first attempt to kill David comes at a time when David is playing music to calm him. Attributing this action to an *evil spirit from God*, the chapter suggests that

18:1 1Sa 19:1.

1Sa 20:16-17;

2Sa 1:26

18:6 Ex 15:20;

Jgs 11:34;

Ps 68:25

18:7 Ex 15:21;

1Sa 21:11.

1Sa 29:5

18:8 1Sa 15:28

18:9 1Sa 18:8

18:10 1Sa 16:14.

1Sa 16:16.

1Sa 19:9.

1Sa 19:24

13:18 Ex 3:11;  
1Sa 9:21,  
1Sa 18:23,  
1Sa 24:14;  
2Sa 7:18

18:29 1Sa 18:12

19:1 1Sa 18:1,  
1Sa 18:8

hand, <sup>11</sup>and he threw it, thinking, I'll pin David to the wall. But David escaped from him two different times.

<sup>12</sup>Saul was afraid of David because the LORD was with David but no longer with Saul. <sup>13</sup>So Saul removed David from his service, placing him in command of a unit of one thousand men. David led the men out to war and back. <sup>14</sup>David was successful in everything he did because the LORD was with him. <sup>15</sup>Saul saw that he was very successful, and he was afraid of him. <sup>16</sup>Everyone in Israel and Judah loved David because he led them out in war and back again.

<sup>17</sup>Saul said to David, "Look, here is my oldest daughter Merab. I will give her to you in marriage on this condition: you must be my warrior and fight the LORD's battles." I won't raise my hand against him, Saul thought; let the Philistines do that!

<sup>18</sup>"I'm not worthy," David replied to Saul, "and neither is my family or my father's clan in Israel, to become the king's son-in-law." <sup>19</sup>And so when the time came for Saul's daughter Merab to be married to David, she was given to Adriel from Meholah instead.

<sup>20</sup>Now Saul's younger daughter Michal loved David. When this was reported to Saul, he was happy about it. <sup>21</sup>I'll give her to him, Saul thought; she'll cause him problems, and the Philistines will be against him.

So Saul said to David a second time, "Become my son-in-law now."

<sup>22</sup>Saul instructed his servants, "Tell David in private: 'Look, the king likes you, and all his servants love you. You should become the king's son-in-law.'"

<sup>23</sup>Saul's servants whispered these things in David's ear. But David said, "Do you think it's a simple matter to become the king's son-in-law? I don't! I'm poor and insignificant."

<sup>24</sup>Saul's servants reported what David said, <sup>25</sup>and Saul replied, "Tell David this: 'The king doesn't want any bridal gift, just a hundred Philistine foreskins as vengeance on the king's enemies.'" (Saul was hoping that David would die at the hands of the Philistines.) <sup>26</sup>When the servants reported this to David, he was happy to become the king's son-in-law. Even before the allotted time had expired, <sup>27</sup>David got up and went with his soldiers and killed one hundred Philistines. <sup>28</sup>David brought their foreskins and counted them out for the king so he could become the king's son-in-law. Then Saul gave his daughter Michal to him in marriage.

<sup>29</sup>When Saul knew for certain that the LORD was with David and that his daughter Michal loved him, <sup>29</sup>then Saul was even more afraid of David. Saul was David's enemy for the rest of his life. <sup>30</sup>And whenever the Philistine commanders came out for battle, David would have more success than the rest of Saul's officers, so his fame spread widely.

### David escapes Saul

**19** Saul ordered his son Jonathan and all his servants to kill David, but Jonathan, Saul's son, liked David very much. <sup>2</sup>So Jonathan warned David, "My father Saul is trying

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>LXX, cf 2 Sam 3:14; MT *two hundred* <sup>h</sup>Or *Saul became David's constant enemy*.

Saul is becoming overpowered by envy, anger, and fear. Although gathered together in the notion of an evil spirit possessing Saul, this doesn't relieve him of responsibility for his own actions. That this is said to be *from God* reflects the narrative's understanding that all these events are encompassed in the divine will.

18:12-16 Israel loves David (18:16); while Saul fears him (18:12, 15). Saul distances himself from David by removing him from immediate service to the king to become a field commander. In light of later attempts by Saul to cause David to die in battle, this assignment should probably be understood as Saul's hope that the Philistines would eliminate his rival.

18:17-19 Saul had promised marriage to one of his daughters to any man who defeated the Philistine champion, Goliath (1 Sam 17:25). Although some time has passed, it appears that Saul here is following through on this promise by offering his daughter Merab. But Saul's condition is that David become a frontline commander, and the text is clear that Saul's hope is that the Philistines

would kill him (18:17). When the time comes, however, Saul offers Merab in marriage to another.

18:20-27 It is unusual for the text to report that Michal loved David (18:20, 28). In the ancient world, marriages were arranged and not based on love. Saul decides to use this to his advantage. Since David was from a poor family compared to Saul, he would be unable to provide a bride price (that is, a gift from the groom to the parents of the bride) and felt unworthy to be the king's son-in-law (18:23). So Saul sent word to David that he would not want a traditional bridal gift but 100 Philistine foreskins. Again, his hope was that David would die in battle (18:25). David not only went into battle and provided this unusual bridal gift, but some manuscripts report that he brought 200. Saul then had no choice but to marry his daughter Michal to David.

18:28-29 The chapter ends with a distressing note that highlights contrasting responses to David. While Michal loves him, Saul fears him and now considers him an enemy, even though David is his best commander.

19:1-8 This small passage represents Saul's changeable



*Early Prophets* Most people think of prophets as individual messengers from God and proclaimers of God's word, but the earliest appearances of prophets in the Bible associate them with communities or guilds of prophets. Samuel grows to adulthood at Shiloh and emerges as a recognized prophet and source of God's word in Israel (1 Sam 4:20). But in 1 Samuel 19:20 he clearly leads a community of prophets. We shouldn't be surprised. After all, he had sent Saul to encounter such a prophetic group (1 Sam 10:10). In both stories these bands of prophets play musical instruments and enter states of ecstatic frenzy. This state is associated with the Hebrew word for "prophesy" and is brought on by the charismatic behavior and the power of God's spirit. Such communities seem to live together. Persons may have come to consult them for guidance and a word from God. Great individual prophets like Samuel, and later Elijah and Elisha (cf. 2 Kgs 2:1-18), appear as leaders of such communities. In 1 Samuel a prophet anoints Israel's first kings, who then immediately receive God's spirit. This implies that they are then empowered by that spirit just as the prophets are empowered for their role in Israel.

19:9 Gn 42:22;  
1Sa 20:32;  
Psv 17:13;  
Psv 31:8;  
Jer 18:20  
19:9 Dt 19:10;  
Jgs 9:17;  
1Sa 11:13;  
1Sa 17:49;  
Mt 27:4  
19:10 1Sa 18:11;  
1Sa 19:6;  
1Sa 20:33  
19:11 Jgs 16:2;  
Ps 59:1  
19:12 Josh 2:15;  
Ac 9:25;  
2Co 11:33  
19:13 Gn 31:19;  
Jgs 18:14  
19:15 Josh 2:5  
19:16 1Sa 19:6  
19:17 1Sa 19:13  
19:17 2Sa 2:22  
19:18 1Sa 7:17;  
1Sa 20:1  
19:20 Nm 11:25;  
1Sa 10:5-6;  
1Sa 10:10;  
1Sa 19:14

to kill you. Be on guard tomorrow morning. Stay somewhere safe and hide. <sup>3</sup>I'll go out and stand by my father in the field where you'll be. I'll talk to my father about you, and I'll tell you whatever I find out."

<sup>4</sup>So Jonathan spoke highly about David to his father Saul, telling him, "The king shouldn't do anything wrong to his servant David, because he hasn't wronged you. In fact, his actions have helped you greatly. <sup>5</sup>He risked his own life when he killed that Philistine, and the LORD won a great victory for all Israel. You saw it and were happy about it. Why then would you do something wrong to an innocent person by killing David for no reason?"

<sup>6</sup>Saul listened to Jonathan and then swore, "As surely as the LORD lives, David won't be executed." <sup>7</sup>So Jonathan summoned David and told him everything they had talked about. Then Jonathan brought David back to Saul, and David served Saul as he had previously.

<sup>8</sup>War broke out again. When David went out to fight the Philistines, he struck them with such force that they ran from him.

<sup>9</sup>Then an evil spirit from the LORD came over Saul. <sup>10</sup>He was sitting in his house with his spear in hand while David was playing music. <sup>11</sup>Saul tried to pin David to the wall with his spear, but David escaped Saul. Saul drove the spear into the wall, but David fled and got away safely. That night <sup>12</sup>Saul sent messengers to David's house to keep watch on it and kill him in the morning. David's wife Michal warned him, "If you don't escape with your life tonight, you are a dead man tomorrow." <sup>13</sup>So Michal lowered David through a window. He took off and ran, and he got away. <sup>14</sup>Then Michal took the household's divine image and laid it in the bed, putting some goat's hair on its head and covering it with clothes.

<sup>15</sup>Saul sent messengers to arrest David, but she said, "He's sick."

<sup>16</sup>Saul sent the messengers back to check on David for themselves. "Bring him to me on his bed," he ordered, "so he can be executed." <sup>17</sup>When the messengers arrived, they found the idol in the bed with the goat's hair on its head. <sup>18</sup>Saul said to Michal, "Why could you betray me like this, letting my enemy go so that now he has escaped?"

Michal said to Saul, "David told me, 'Help me get away or I'll kill you!'"

<sup>19</sup>So David fled and escaped. When he reached Samuel at Ramah, he reported to him everything Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to stay in the camps. <sup>20</sup>

<sup>21</sup>When Saul was told that David was in the camps at Ramah, <sup>22</sup>he sent messengers to arrest David. They saw a group of prophets in a prophetic frenzy, with Samuel standing there as their leader. God's spirit came over Saul's messengers, and they also fell into a prophetic

<sup>a</sup>Or to Saul <sup>v</sup>Or Naioth, also in 19:19, 22-23

moods. It begins with Saul's order to everyone around him that they should kill David, but after the intervention of Jonathan with his father, the order is reversed and David returns to court. Jonathan's argument to his father shows how senseless Saul's anger and jealousy are (19:4-5). Saul has every reason to value David as his most effective warrior (19:8).

19:9-17 Saul's moods change without reason. While David is playing to calm him, Saul tries to kill him with a spear. Although David escapes, Saul sets a watch on his house to kill him. This time it is Saul's daughter Michal who

intervenes to save David. She warns him of the plan to kill him and lowers him out a window to escape (19:11-12). Then Michal goes through elaborate plans to buy David time. She puts a dummy in the bed and says David is sick. When Saul insists David be brought to his own execution while lying on his bed, Saul's messengers discover the plot. To protect herself, Michal claims David forced her to assist him (19:17). Saul's madness and obsession with David are becoming clear.

19:18-24 The chapter closes with a strange episode. David flees north to the hometown of the prophet Samuel

19:23 Nm 24:2;  
1Sa 10:10;  
1Sa 19:20  
19:24 1Sa 10:11;  
2Sa 6:20; 1s 20:2

frenzy. <sup>21</sup>This was reported to Saul, and he sent different messengers, but they also fell into a prophetic frenzy. So Saul sent a third group of messengers, and they did the very same thing.

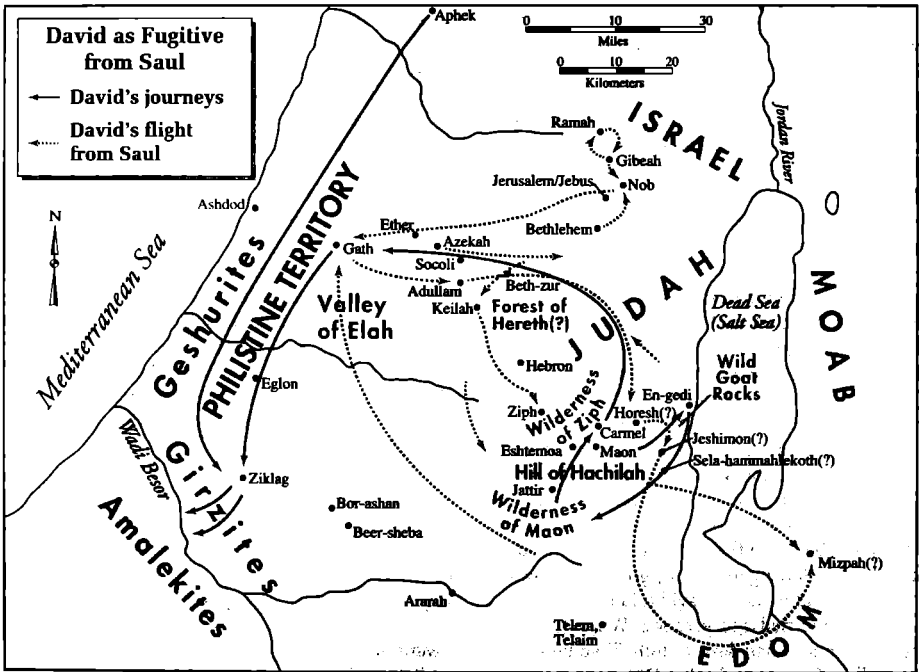
<sup>22</sup>At that point, Saul went to Ramah himself. He came to the well at the threshing floor that was on the bare hill there<sup>w</sup> and asked, "Where are Samuel and David?"

"In the camps at Ramah," he was told. <sup>23</sup>So Saul went to the camps at Ramah, and God's spirit came over him too. So as he traveled, he was in a prophetic frenzy until he reached the camps at Ramah. <sup>24</sup>He even took off all his clothes and fell into a prophetic frenzy in front of Samuel. He lay naked that whole day and night. That's why people say, "Is Saul also one of the prophets?"

*Jonathan and David's friendship*

**20** David fled from the camps at Ramah. He came to Jonathan and asked, "What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father that he wants me dead?"

<sup>2</sup>Jonathan said to him, "No! You are not going to die! Listen: My father doesn't do anything big or small without telling me first. Why would my father hide this from me? It isn't true!"



<sup>w</sup>LXX; MT the large well at Secu

in Ramah. This seems unlikely since David's home territory was south in Judah, and almost all the stories that follow take place in the south. It may have been important to the flow of the story to give David one more encounter with Samuel to show the approval of the prophets. When Saul's messengers arrive to arrest David, they encounter Samuel leading a group of prophets engaged in ecstatic frenzy, and they become seized by God's spirit as well (see sidebar, "The Early Prophets"). When Saul eventually comes himself, he, too, is seized in a prophetic frenzy, just as he was after Samuel anointed him (1 Sam 10:10). The repeated use of the proverbial question "Is Saul also one of

the prophets?" is now ironic (1 Sam 10:12). The divine spirit confirming Saul's place as God's anointed is now protecting David as God's anointed.

**20:1-42** This chapter is one of the great stories of friendship in all of literature. The commitment and loyalty of Jonathan and David to each other's well-being is inspiring and remarkable. The word often used to describe God's faithful love, or "covenant love," for Israel is here used between these two friends ("loyal"; 20:8, 14, 15). The word for "love" used to describe Jonathan's relationship to David is also used again here (20:17; cf. 1 Sam 18:1, 3). These testimonies of loyal friendship appear in the context of a

<sup>3</sup>But David solemnly promised in response, “Your father knows full well that you like me. He probably said, ‘Jonathan must not learn about this or he’ll be upset.’”<sup>3</sup> But I promise you—on the LORD’s life and yours!—that I am this close to death!”

<sup>4</sup>“What do you want me to do?” Jonathan said to David. “I’ll do it.”

<sup>5</sup>“Okay, listen,” David answered Jonathan. “Tomorrow is the new moon, and I’m supposed to sit with the king at the feast. Instead, let me go and I’ll hide in the field until nighttime.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>If your father takes note of my absence, tell him, ‘David begged my permission to run down to his hometown Bethlehem, because there is an annual sacrifice there for his whole family.’

<sup>7</sup>If Saul says ‘Fine,’ then I, your servant, am safe. But if he loses his temper, then you’ll know for certain that he intends to harm me. <sup>8</sup>So be loyal to your servant, because you’ve brought your servant into a sacred covenant<sup>a</sup> with you. If I’m guilty, then kill me yourself; just don’t take me back to your father.”

<sup>9</sup>“Enough!” Jonathan replied. “If I can determine for certain that my father intends to harm you, of course I’ll tell you!”

<sup>10</sup>“Who will tell me if your father responds harshly?” David asked Jonathan.

<sup>11</sup>“Come on,” Jonathan said to David. “Let’s go into the field.” So both of them went out into the field. <sup>12</sup>Then Jonathan told David, “I pledge by the LORD God of Israel that I will question my father by this time tomorrow or on the third day. If he seems favorable toward David, I will definitely send word and make sure you know. <sup>13</sup>But if my father intends to harm you, then may the LORD deal harshly with me, Jonathan, and worse still if I don’t tell you right away so that you can escape safely. May the LORD be with you as he once was with my father. <sup>14</sup>If I remain alive, be loyal to me. <sup>15</sup>But if I die, <sup>16</sup>don’t ever stop being loyal to my household. Once the LORD has eliminated all of David’s enemies from the earth, <sup>17</sup>if Jonathan’s name is also eliminated, then the LORD will seek retribution from David!”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>17</sup>So Jonathan again made a pledge to David<sup>c</sup> because he loved David as much as himself.

<sup>18</sup>“Tomorrow is the festival of the new moon,” Jonathan told David. “You will be missed because your seat will be empty. <sup>19</sup>The day after tomorrow, go all the way to the spot where you hid on the day of the incident, and stay close to that mound. <sup>20</sup>On the third day I will shoot an arrow to the side of the mound as if aiming at a target. <sup>21</sup>Then I’ll send the servant boy, saying, ‘Go retrieve the arrow.’ If I yell to the boy, ‘Hey! The arrow is on this side of you. Get it!’ then you can come out because it will be safe for you. There won’t be any trouble—I make a pledge on the LORD’s life. <sup>22</sup>But if I yell to the young man, ‘Hey! The arrow is past you,’ then run for it, because the LORD has sent you away. <sup>23</sup>Either way, the LORD is witness<sup>f</sup> between us forever regarding the promise we made to each other.” <sup>24</sup>So David hid himself in the field.

When the new moon came, the king sat at the feast to eat. <sup>25</sup>He took his customary seat by the wall. Jonathan sat opposite him<sup>g</sup> while Abner sat beside Saul. David’s seat was empty. <sup>26</sup>Saul didn’t say anything that day because he thought, Perhaps David became unclean somehow. That must be it. <sup>27</sup>But on the next day, the second of the new moon, David’s seat was still empty. Saul said to his son Jonathan, “Why hasn’t Jesse’s son come to the table,<sup>h</sup> either yesterday or today?”

<sup>28</sup>Jonathan answered Saul, “David begged my permission to go to Bethlehem. <sup>29</sup>He said, ‘Please let me go because we have a family sacrifice there in town, and my brother has ordered

<sup>a</sup>LXX or he’ll tell David; cf 20:34 <sup>b</sup>LXX; MT until the third evening; cf 20:12, 19-20 <sup>c</sup>MT the LORD’s covenant <sup>d</sup>LXX; MT show me the Lord’s faithful love <sup>e</sup>20:14-16 follows LXX. <sup>f</sup>LXX; MT Jonathan made David pledge. <sup>g</sup>LXX; MT to the stone Ezel; cf 20:41 <sup>h</sup>Correction; MT arrows (plural here and in 20:21-22, 36, 38 Qere) <sup>i</sup>LXX; MT lacks witness; also in 20:42. <sup>j</sup>LXX; MT Jonathan arose <sup>k</sup>LXX, DSS (4QSam<sup>1</sup>); MT to the feast

story depicting Saul’s resolve to kill David. This highlights Jonathan’s divided commitments to his friend David and his father, Saul.

20:1-4 When meeting David in secret, Jonathan has trouble believing that his father, Saul, is resolved to kill David.

20:5-17 The two friends agree on a plan to test Saul’s intentions toward David. Jonathan will return to Saul’s court to carry out this plan. The parting of these two friends occasions an exchange of pledges. Jonathan pledges to help David escape with his life, but in return seeks David’s

pledge to show loyalty even to Jonathan’s descendants after his death (20:14-16). Many years later David has the opportunity to make good on this pledge when he brings a surviving son of Jonathan, named Mephibosheth, into his household (2 Sam 9).

20:18-34 Jonathan’s plan involves raising the issue of David and his innocence before his father on a feast day. It doesn’t go well, as Saul becomes angry and reveals his fear that David is a threat to Jonathan’s succession and his own dynasty (20:31). The confrontation ends when Saul

20:4 1Sa 14:1.

1Sa 14:27.

1Sa 14:43.

1Sa 14:49.

1Sa 18:1

20:5 Nm 10:10.

Nm 28:11.

1Sa 19:2.

1Sa 20:18.

1Sa 20:24

20:23

1Sa 20:14-15.

1Sa 20:42

20:27 1Sa 9:2.

1Sa 9:26.

1Sa 13:9.

1Sa 15:11.

1Sa 18:11

20:30 1Sa 16:14,  
1Sa 18:8,  
1Sa 18:10,  
1Sa 19:1,  
1Sa 19:9  
20:34 1Sa 20:30;  
2Sa 1:12,  
2Sa 3:35,  
2Sa 12:16  
20:42 1Sa 1:17,  
1Sa 20:23  
21:1 1Sa 16:4,  
1Sa 22:9,  
1Sa 22:19;  
Neh 11:32;  
Is 10:32  
21:2 1Sa 22:22;  
1Ki 13:18  
21:4 Ex 19:15,  
Ex 25:30;  
Lv 24:5; 1Sa 21:6;  
Mt 12:4  
21:5 1Th 4:4  
21:6 Lv 24:5;  
1Sa 21:4;  
Mt 12:3-4;  
Mk 2:25

me to be present. Please do me a favor and let me slip away so I can see my family.' That's why David hasn't been at the king's table."

<sup>30</sup>At that, Saul got angry at Jonathan. "You son of a stubborn, rebellious woman!" he said. "Do you think I don't know how you've allied yourself with Jesse's son? Shame on you and on the mother who birthed you!" <sup>31</sup>As long as Jesse's son lives on this earth, neither you nor your dynasty will be secure. Now have him brought to me because he's a dead man!"

<sup>32</sup>But Jonathan answered his father Saul, "Why should David be executed? What has he done?"

<sup>33</sup>At that, Saul threw<sup>1</sup> his spear at Jonathan to strike him, and Jonathan realized that his father intended to kill David. <sup>34</sup>Jonathan got up from the table in a rage. He didn't eat anything on the second day of the new moon because he was worried about David and because his father had humiliated him.

<sup>35</sup>In the morning, Jonathan went out to the field for the meeting with David, and a young servant boy went with him. <sup>36</sup>He said to the boy, "Go quickly and retrieve the arrow that I shoot." So the boy ran off, and he shot an arrow beyond him. <sup>37</sup>When the boy got to the spot where Jonathan shot the arrow, Jonathan yelled to him, "Isn't the arrow past you?" <sup>38</sup>Jonathan yelled again to the boy, "Quick! Hurry up! Don't just stand there!" So Jonathan's servant boy gathered up the arrow and came back to his master. <sup>39</sup>The boy had no idea what had happened; only Jonathan and David knew. <sup>40</sup>Jonathan handed his weapons to the boy and told him, "Get going. Take these back to town."

<sup>41</sup>As soon as the boy was gone, David came out from behind the mound<sup>2</sup> and fell down, face on the ground, bowing low three times. The friends kissed each other, and cried with each other, but David cried hardest. <sup>42</sup>Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace because the two of us made a solemn pledge in the LORD's name when we said, 'The LORD is witness between us and between our descendants forever.'" Then David got up and left, but Jonathan went back to town.

#### David helped at Nob

**21**<sup>m</sup>David came to Nob where Ahimelech was priest. Ahimelech was shaking in fear when he met David. "Why are you alone? Why is no one with you?" he asked.

<sup>2</sup>David answered Ahimelech the priest, "The king has given me orders, but he instructed me, 'Don't let anyone know anything about the mission I'm sending you on or about your orders.' As for my troops, I told them to meet me at an undisclosed location. <sup>3</sup>Now what do you have here with you? Give me five loaves of bread or whatever you can find."

<sup>4</sup>"I don't have any regular bread on hand," the priest answered David, "just holy bread—but only if your troops have abstained from sexual activity."

<sup>5</sup>"Definitely," David answered the priest. "Whenever I go out to war, women are off-limits; that's our standard operating procedure. Even on regular missions, the men's gear is<sup>n</sup> kept holy. That's even more true today, with the mission holy along with the gear."<sup>o</sup> So the priest gave David holy bread, because there was no other bread except the bread of the presence, which is removed from the LORD's presence and replaced by warm bread as soon as it is taken away.

<sup>1</sup>Or and shame on your mother's nakedness. <sup>2</sup>MT; LXX pointed <sup>3</sup>LXX; MT beside the south <sup>4</sup>21:1 in Heb <sup>m</sup>21:2 in Heb <sup>n</sup>MT; LXX all the men are <sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain

"throws" his spear at Jonathan (*pointed* in Hebrew, and some Greek manuscripts read "threw"), repeating an earlier act directed at David (1 Sam 19:10).

20:35-42 The final episode in this story of friendship plays out in a complex plan to inform David of his peril from Saul. When the elaborate arrow signal tells David that he may not return to Saul's court without risk of his life, the two friends are allowed a farewell scene. They kiss each other and cry together (20:41). They make a final pledge in the name of the Lord and part in *peace* ("shalom," 20:42).

21:1-9 From this point forward to the end of 1 Samuel, David is a fugitive from Saul, and this will determine the course of events. Throughout these stories, more and more persons recognize and acknowledge David as the

future king of Israel, but he won't be able to claim this role until Saul has met his own tragic end. The first person to give assistance to David as a fugitive is Ahimelech, head of a community of priests at Nob. This is significant since these are the surviving descendants of the priests in the line of Eli who served the Lord and God's covenant chest at Shiloh. The fact that David's first helper ties him to the religious leadership of Israel is significant, since it will eventually be David who restores the covenant chest to a central role in Israel (see sidebar, "The Lord's Covenant Chest" at 1 Sam 5). David becomes bolder as a fugitive. Here he appears alone and asks for bread for himself and his men nearby. When Ahimelech says that only holy bread placed daily before the Lord is available, David boldly lays claim to it. He claims that his men are in a state of holy abstinence

*David and the Sacred Bread* Although this is the first episode in David's life as a fugitive, this account seems relatively minor. Yet it marks a turning point in recognition of what constitutes the holy, and Jesus refers to this in his own ministry. We don't know if David and his men have kept to a state of ritual holiness, but we do know that technically it isn't appropriate for anyone but priests to eat this bread. David boldly claims the bread for his purpose. He is God's anointed leader, and the future of God's kingdom, and he knows this. Thus holiness received in the sanctuary can make holy the wider struggles that serve God's purposes in the world.

In this vein, Jesus uses the story of David and the holy bread (Mark 2:23-28; cf. Luke 6:1-5; Matt 12:1-8). He is confronted by the Pharisees when he and his disciples pluck heads of grain passing through a field on the Sabbath. He is accused of breaking the sabbath teaching. Jesus, in response, appeals to the example of David using the holy bread for his own purposes. He concludes that human need can set aside ritual demand in the service of God's purposes: "The Sabbath was created for humans; humans weren't created for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

<sup>7</sup>Now one of Saul's servants was there that day, detained in the LORD's presence. His name was Doeg. He was an Edomite and Saul's head shepherd.

<sup>8</sup>David asked Ahimelech, "Do you have a spear or sword on hand? I didn't bring my sword or gear with me because the king's mission was urgent."

<sup>9</sup>The priest said, "The sword of Goliath, the Philistine you killed in the Elah Valley, is here wrapped in a cloth behind a priestly vest.<sup>a</sup> If you want it, take it, because there are no other swords here."

David said, "No sword is as good as that one! Give it to me!"

### *David pretends to be crazy*

<sup>10</sup>So David got up and continued running from Saul. He went to Achish, Gath's king. <sup>11</sup>Achish's servants said to him, "Isn't that David, king of the land? He's the one people sing about in their dances,

'Saul has killed his thousands,  
but David has killed his tens of thousands!'"

<sup>12</sup>David took these words very seriously and became very frightened of Achish, Gath's king. <sup>13</sup>So he changed the way he acted with them, pretending to be insane while he was with them.<sup>4</sup> He scratched marks on the doors of the city gates<sup>5</sup> and let spit run down his chin.

<sup>14</sup>"Can't you see he's crazy?" Achish asked his servants. "Why bring him to me? <sup>15</sup>Am I short on insane people that you've brought this person to go crazy right in front of me? Do you really think I'm going to let this man enter my house?"

### *David gathers support*

**22** David left Gath and escaped to Adullam's fortress.<sup>6</sup> When David's siblings and all his extended family learned of this, they went to join him there. <sup>2</sup>Everyone who was in trouble, in debt, or in desperate circumstances gathered around David, and he became their leader. Approximately four hundred men joined him.

<sup>3</sup>From there David went to Mizpeh in Moab. He said to the Moabite king, "Please let my father and mother stay with you until I know what God will do to me." <sup>4</sup>So David left his parents with the Moabite king, and they stayed with him the whole time David was in the fortress.

<sup>a</sup>DSS (4QSam<sup>b</sup>); MT *behind the priestly vest* (Heb *ephod*) <sup>4</sup>Or *in their hand*; Heb *uncertain* <sup>5</sup>Or with correction *he spit on the doors of the city gate or he fell down at the doors of the city gate* (cf. LXX). <sup>6</sup>Correction; cf. 22:4-5; MT *cave*

from sexual activity. We don't know if this is true or if David simply declares it (see sidebar, "David and the Sacred Bread"). When David asks for weapons, he learns Goliath's sword is kept there, and he claims it for himself. Then he is gone, on the run.

21:7 An ominous verse lies in the midst of this story. A servant of Saul, an Edomite named Doeg, observes David's presence there. He will report it to Saul with fateful consequences (1 Sam 22:6-23).

21:10-15 This strange story adds Achish, the king of the Philistine city of Gath, and his servants to the list of those who recognize David as the king of Israel. They refer to him as such when David, on the run from Saul, shows up in

their territory (21:11). This isn't a mistake by the editors but contributes to a key theme of the fugitive stories about David. Everywhere he goes, people acknowledge David as Israel's true king. In this instance, after realizing that he is recognized, David decides it is safest to pretend madness (21:13). In the ancient world, madmen were often considered holy, and many people were reluctant to harm them. Achish lets David go, saying he has enough madmen. Israel may have enjoyed this ironic story as witnessed by two references to it in the superscriptions to Psalms 34; 56. 22:1-5 David gathers his family to him in a safe location, and he places them in security with the king of Moab (22:3-4). Here we can see the beginnings of David's ability

21:7 Gn 13:7;  
1Sa 14:47;  
1Sa 22:9;  
1Sa 22:22;  
Ps 52:1  
21:10 1Sa 27:2;  
1Ki 2:39  
21:13 Ps 34:1  
22:2 1gs 11:3;  
1Sa 23:13;  
1Sa 25:13

22:7 1Sa 8:12,  
1Sa 8:14,  
1Sa 20:27,  
1Sa 20:30;  
2Sa 20:1

22:8 1Sa 18:3,  
1Sa 22:13,  
1Sa 23:21

22:9 1Sa 14:3,  
1Sa 21:1,  
1Sa 21:7; Ps 52:1

22:10 Nm 27:21;  
1Sa 21:6,  
1Sa 21:9,  
1Sa 23:2

22:16 1Sa 21:1,  
1Sa 22:9

22:17 Ex 1:17

22:18 1Sa 2:18,  
1Sa 2:31

22:19 1Sa 15:3,  
1Sa 21:1;  
Neh 11:32

<sup>5</sup>Then the prophet Gad told David, "Don't stay in the fortress any longer. Leave now and go to the land of Judah." So David left and went to Hereth forest.

### **Saul kills the priests of Nob**

<sup>6</sup>Saul learned that David and his soldiers had been located. Saul was sitting under the tamarisk tree on the hill at Gibeah, spear in hand, with all his servants waiting on him. <sup>7</sup>He said to them, "Listen up, Benjaminites! Will Jesse's son give fields and vineyards to each and every one of you? Will he make each one of you commanders of units of one thousand men or commanders of units of one hundred? <sup>8</sup>Is that why all of you have conspired against me? No one informed me when my son made a covenant with Jesse's son! Not one of you is concerned about me or informs me when my own son sets my servant against me in an ambush—but that's what has happened today!"

<sup>9</sup>Doeg the Edomite, who was standing with Saul's servants, responded, "I saw Jesse's son go to Ahimelech, Ahitub's son, at Nob. <sup>10</sup>Ahimelech questioned the LORD for David, and gave him provisions as well as the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

<sup>11</sup>The king then sent for the priest Ahimelech, Ahitub's son, and all his extended family, who were the priests at Nob. All of them came to the king.

<sup>12</sup>"Listen here, son of Ahitub," Saul said.

"Yes sir," he replied.

<sup>13</sup>Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me—you with Jesse's son—giving him food and a sword and questioning God for him so that he is now against me, waiting in ambush, which is what has happened today?"

<sup>14</sup>Ahimelech answered the king, "Out of all your servants, who is as trustworthy as David? He is the king's son-in-law, does whatever you ask, and is well respected in your house. <sup>15</sup>Was that the first time I questioned God for him? Of course not! But please, the king shouldn't accuse me, his servant, or anyone in my father's household of any wrongdoing, because your servant knew nothing whatsoever about this matter."

<sup>16</sup>But the king said, "You will be executed, Ahimelech—you and all of your father's household!"

<sup>17</sup>The king ordered the guards waiting on him: "Go ahead and kill the LORD's priests because they've joined up with David too. They knew he was on the run but didn't inform me."

But the king's servants were unwilling to lift a hand to attack the LORD's priests.

<sup>18</sup>The king then ordered Doeg, "Doeg! You go attack the priests." So Doeg the Edomite went and attacked the priests, killing eighty-five men who wore the linen priestly vest<sup>†</sup> that day. <sup>19</sup>He put the whole priestly city of Nob to the sword: men and women, children and infants, even oxen, donkeys, and sheep.

<sup>20</sup>But one of the sons of Ahimelech, Ahitub's son, escaped. His name was Abiathar, and he fled to David. <sup>21</sup>Abiathar reported to David that Saul had slaughtered the LORD's priests.

<sup>22</sup>David told Abiathar, "That day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, I knew that he would tell Saul everything. I am to blame<sup>a</sup> for the deaths in your father's family. <sup>23</sup>Stay with me, and don't be afraid. The one who seeks my life now seeks yours too. But you'll be safe with me."

<sup>†</sup>Heb *ephod* <sup>a</sup>LXX, Vulg; Heb uncertain

to draw even surrounding nations into alliance, a skill that will help build his kingdom later. Most surprising is that he draws the discontented people to him (22:2). This is the beginning of a personal military force that serves David through the rest of his life. God's anointed one is a magnet for the dispossessed, and they begin a new life with him. Here we also catch a first glimpse of the prophet *Gad* (22:5; cf. 1 Sam 24:11), who is apparently in David's company. Later in this chapter he will be joined by a priest (1 Sam 22:20). David seems always concerned to maintain channels for God's guidance.

22:6-8 When Saul learns David's location, he is apparently worried about the loyalty of his own troops. His speech here seems designed to gain their support in his pursuit of David by offering rewards, including both property and promotion.

22:9-19 Only a foreigner, Doeg the Edomite, is willing to betray David. Doeg had been present to see David's interaction with Ahimelech earlier (1 Sam 21:7). Doeg's betrayal of the priest leads to a great act of violence committed by Saul. When Saul questions Ahimelech, the priest tries to argue that David isn't a danger to Saul; he is known as the king's son-in-law. Why shouldn't the priest give him support (22:14-15)? Saul is beyond reason, and determines that Ahimelech and all his household should be executed, but his men won't slaughter priests (22:16-17). Only Doeg, the outsider, will do this tragic deed (22:18-19). Overall, this episode serves as evidence that Saul is increasingly out of control.

22:20-23 When Abiathar the priest escapes the slaughter at Nob, David invites him to become a part of his entourage. Abiathar is with David through all subsequent

**Saul chases David**

**23** David was told, “The Philistines are now attacking Keilah and looting the threshing floors!”

<sup>2</sup>David asked the LORD, “Should I go and fight these Philistines?”

“Go!” the LORD answered. “Fight the Philistines and save Keilah!”

<sup>3</sup>But David’s men said to him, “Look how frightened we are here in Judah. It’ll be worse if we go to Keilah against Philistine forces!”

<sup>4</sup>So David asked the LORD again, and the LORD reaffirmed, “Yes, go down to Keilah, because I will hand the Philistines over to you.”

<sup>5</sup>Then David and his soldiers went to Keilah and fought the Philistines, driving off their cattle and defeating them decisively. And that’s how David saved the residents of Keilah.

<sup>6</sup>Now after Abiathar, Ahimelech’s son, fled to David, he had accompanied David to Keilah,<sup>7</sup> bringing a priestly vest<sup>8</sup> with him. <sup>7</sup>When Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah, he said, “God has handed him over<sup>9</sup> to me now because he has trapped himself by entering a town with gates and bars!” <sup>8</sup>So Saul called up all his troops for war, to go down to Keilah and attack David and his soldiers.

<sup>9</sup>When David learned that Saul was planning to harm him, he told the priest Abiathar, “Bring the priestly vest now.”

<sup>10</sup>Then David said, “LORD God of Israel, I, your servant, have heard that Saul plans on coming to Keilah and will destroy the town because of me. <sup>11</sup>LORD God of Israel, will Saul come down as your servant has heard?” Please tell your servant.”

“Yes, he will come down,” the LORD answered.

<sup>12</sup>Next David asked, “Will the citizens of Keilah hand me and my soldiers over to Saul?”

“Yes, they will hand you over,” the LORD replied.

<sup>13</sup>So David and his troops—approximately six hundred men—got up and left Keilah. They kept moving, going from one place to the next. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he didn’t go there.

<sup>14</sup>David lived in the fortresses in the wilderness and in the hills of the Ziph wilderness. Saul searched for him constantly, but God did not hand David over to Saul. <sup>15</sup>While David was at Horesh in the Ziph wilderness he learned that Saul was looking to kill him. <sup>16</sup>Saul’s son Jonathan came to David at Horesh and encouraged him with God. <sup>17</sup>Jonathan said to him, “Don’t be afraid! My father Saul’s hand won’t touch you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be your second in command. Even my father Saul knows this.” <sup>18</sup>Then the two

<sup>7</sup>LXX; MT lacks *he had accompanied David to*. <sup>8</sup>Heb *ephod*. <sup>9</sup>LXX, Targ; MT *made a stranger of him*. <sup>10</sup>DSS (4QSam<sup>b</sup>), LXX; MT *LORD God of Israel, will the citizens of Keilah hand me over to him? Will Saul come down as your servant has heard?* Cf 23:12a.

events until David is on his deathbed. He then becomes a part of the intrigue related to the choice of a successor to David’s throne. Unfortunately, he backs Solomon’s rival and is banished to his home at Anathoth (1 Kgs 2:26–27). Anathoth is later mentioned as the home of the prophet Jeremiah, who is said to have a priestly family background. 23:1–29 This chapter could be seen merely as additional episodes of Saul chasing and David escaping. The ins and outs of the chase are clearly recounted, with Saul demonstrating his obsession with David, and David showing his resourcefulness at staying just out of Saul’s reach. But in the course of this chapter, additional elements of David’s character become clear. First, David insists on responding to the needs of others, even when it isn’t in his own interests and when his own men oppose getting involved (23:1, 3). Second, in the course of events as he goes to the rescue of Keilah, David consults the Lord three times (23:2, 4, 10–11; see sidebar, “David and Prayer”). The first two instances we should understand as prayer, but the third makes use of the priestly vest (Heb. *ephod*) worn by Abiathar and probably the priestly lots contained in the vest. The contrast is clear. Saul is driven entirely by self-interest

and jealousy, pursuing David when his real enemies, the Philistines, are attacking an Israelite community. It is David who comes to the aid of Keilah, at the risk of being trapped there by Saul, and even when the Lord makes clear that the citizens of Keilah would hand him over to Saul. David does this because it is the Lord’s will and the right thing to do.

**23:1** *Keilah* is a small town in the tribal territory of Judah near the border with the Philistines, and therefore vulnerable to Philistine harassment.

**23:10–13** David knows that if Saul comes after him at Keilah, he will be trapped there inside a walled city. Further, he suspects that if faced with the choice of the destruction of their town and giving David up to Saul, the citizens of Keilah will hand David over in spite of David’s aid for them against the Philistines. David confirms this information and the best plan of action in consultation with God through Abiathar the priest, resulting in his hasty retreat from Keilah.

**23:15–18** While David seeks refuge at Ziph, Jonathan comes to see David. This will be their last encounter before Jonathan’s death at Mount Gilboa. Here Jonathan

23:20 1Sa 23:12  
 23:17 1Sa 23:19,  
 1Sa 23:28-29  
 24:3 Jgs 3:24;  
 1Sa 22:1;  
 2Sa 7:8; Ps 57:1,  
 Ps 142:1  
 24:4 1Sa 26:8

**David and Prayer** It is characteristic of the books of Samuel that God doesn't intervene directly and dramatically in the course of events. Yet it is clear that human action alone isn't the determiner of outcomes. David has a strong sense of partnership with divine providence. Although an extremely capable warrior and leader, he constantly consults with God, seeking to determine the divine will as he chooses his course of action. David's sense of partnership with God's will (1 Sam 18) contrasts with Saul's self-serving obsession with his own ends. In 1 Samuel 23:2, 4, the Hebrew verb indicates prayer and petition ("ask" or "inquire"). David submits his own decisions in prayer to God. In 1 Samuel 23:10-11 David uses the mediation of Abiathar the priest to help discern God's will. By contrast, Saul is said to search for him constantly, but God didn't hand David over to Saul (1 Sam 23:14). Saul doesn't seek God's will, and divine providence is therefore not aligned with his purposes. David frequently prays to God in his early career. We will see, however, that prayer disappears from his story when he begins to act in self-serving and sinful ways, starting with the Bathsheba story in 2 Samuel 11.

of them made a covenant before the LORD. David stayed at Horesh, but Jonathan went back home.

<sup>19</sup>Some Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah. "David is hiding among us in the fortresses at Horesh on the hill of Hachilah, south of Jeshimon," they said. <sup>20</sup>"So whenever you want to come down, Your Majesty, do it! Leave it to us to hand him over to the king."

<sup>21</sup>"The LORD bless you because you have shown this kindness to me!" Saul said. <sup>22</sup>"Go now and get everything ready. Find out everything you can: where he stays, where he goes, who has seen him. I am told he is very shrewd. <sup>23</sup>Find out every hiding place he uses there and come back to me when you know for certain. I will then go with you. If David is in the area, I will hunt him down among any of Judah's clans!" <sup>24</sup>So they got up and left for Ziph ahead of Saul.

Meanwhile, David and his soldiers were in the Maon wilderness in the desert plain south of Jeshimon. <sup>25</sup>When Saul and his troops went looking for him, David was told about it, so he went down to a certain rock there and stayed in the Maon wilderness. When Saul heard that, he went into the Maon wilderness after David. <sup>26</sup>Saul was going around one side of a hill there while David and his soldiers were going around the other. David was hurrying to get away from Saul while Saul and his troops were trying to surround David and his soldiers in order to capture them. <sup>27</sup>But a messenger suddenly came to Saul. "Come quick!" he said. "The Philistines have invaded the land!" <sup>28</sup>So Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to fight the Philistines. That's why that place is called Escape Rock. <sup>29</sup>Then David went from there and lived at the En-gedi fortresses.

### David spares Saul's life

**24** <sup>1</sup>Even as Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was informed that David was in the En-gedi wilderness. <sup>2</sup>So Saul took three thousand men selected from all Israel and went to look for David and his soldiers near the rocks of the wild goats. <sup>3</sup>He came to the sheep pens beside the road where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to use the restroom. <sup>4</sup>Meanwhile, David and his soldiers were sitting in the very back of the cave.

<sup>4</sup>David's soldiers said to him, "This is the day the LORD spoke of when he promised you, 'I will hand your enemy over to you, and you can do to him whatever you think best.'" So David snuck up and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. <sup>5</sup>But immediately David felt horrible that he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>24:1 in Heb <sup>b</sup>24:2 in Heb <sup>c</sup>Or to cover his feet (a euphemism) <sup>d</sup>LXX, Syr, Targ; MT lacks robe.

definitively declares David's future kingship over Israel and his own willingness to give up that claim to David's leadership. Jonathan declares that his father, Saul, knows this as well.

23:19-24 Danger for David is growing. Even the inhabitants of Ziph in David's own tribal territory of Judah are willing to give him up to Saul.

23:25-29 The chapter ends with Saul and David (along with their men) narrowly missing each other. Only a greater danger from the Philistines causes Saul to break

off the game of pursuit. David does, however, leave the area to go down to En-gedi by the Dead Sea.

24:1-7 Although serious in its outcome, this story was surely also told with humorous intent. King Saul and all of his armed forces are pursuing David, and Saul simply pauses to enter a cave to relieve himself. Thus he is alone and quite vulnerable, and that very cave is one where David and some of his men are hiding (24:3). David's men want him to end their fugitive status by killing Saul, but David can't bring himself to do violence to God's anointed



<sup>6</sup>"The LORD forbid," he told his men, "that I should do something like that to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift my hand against him, because he's the LORD's anointed!" <sup>7</sup>So David held his soldiers in check by what he said,<sup>4</sup> and he wouldn't allow them to attack Saul. Saul then left the cave and went on his way.

<sup>8</sup>Then David also went out of the cave and yelled after Saul, "My master the king!" Saul looked back, and David bowed low out of respect, nose to the ground.

<sup>9</sup>David said to Saul, "Why do you listen when people say, 'David wants to ruin you'?"

<sup>10</sup>Look! Today your own eyes have seen that the LORD handed you over to me in the cave. But I refused<sup>a</sup> to kill you. I spared you, saying, 'I won't lift a hand against my master because he is the LORD's anointed.'<sup>11</sup>Look here, my protector! See the corner of your robe in my hand? I cut off the corner of your robe but didn't kill you. So know now that I am not guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I haven't wronged you, but you are hunting me down, trying to kill me.<sup>12</sup>May the LORD judge between me and you! May the LORD take vengeance on you for me, but I won't lift a hand against you.<sup>13</sup>As the old proverb goes, 'Evil deeds come from evildoers!' but I won't lift a hand against you.<sup>14</sup>So who is Israel's king coming after? Who are you chasing? A dead dog? A single flea? <sup>15</sup>May the LORD be the judge and decide between you and me. May he see what has happened, argue my case, and vindicate me against you!"

<sup>16</sup>As soon as David finished saying all this to Saul, Saul said, "David, my son, is that your voice?" Then he broke down in tears,<sup>17</sup>telling David, "You are more righteous than I am because you have treated me generously, but I have treated you terribly.<sup>18</sup>Today you've told me the good you have done for me—how the LORD handed me over to you, but how you didn't kill me.<sup>19</sup>When someone finds an enemy, do they send the enemy away in peace? May the LORD repay you with good for what you have done for me today.<sup>20</sup>Now even I know that you will definitely become king, and Israel's kingdom will flourish in your hands.<sup>21</sup>Because of that, make a solemn pledge to me by the LORD that you won't kill off my descendants after I'm gone and that you won't destroy my name from my family lineage."

<sup>22</sup>David made a solemn pledge to Saul. Then Saul went back home, but David and his soldiers went up to the fortress.

### Abigail saves David

**25** Now Samuel died, and all Israel gathered to mourn for him. They buried him at his home in Ramah. David then left and went down to the Maon wilderness.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>2</sup>There was a man in Maon who did business in Carmel. He was a very important man and owned three thousand sheep and one thousand goats. At that time, he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. <sup>3</sup>The man's name was Nabal, and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and attractive woman, but her husband was a hard man who did evil things. He was a Calebite.

<sup>4</sup>While in the wilderness, David heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep. <sup>5</sup>So David sent ten servants, telling them, "Go up to Carmel. When you get to Nabal, greet him for me.

<sup>4</sup>Heb uncertain \*LXX; MT Some said <sup>f</sup>LXX; MT Paran

king. Although Saul is his enemy, David must at least respect the office of God's anointed one (24:6). So David merely cuts off a corner of Saul's robe; he is that close.

24:8-15 When Saul leaves the cave, David follows after him to confront him with the piece of robe in his hand. Saul would kill David, but David has spared Saul (24:10-12). David argues that this is proof that David never intended ill for Saul. David ends by appealing to the Lord to judge between them in the matter (24:15).

24:16-22 Perhaps the most remarkable piece of this story is Saul's response. He tearfully acknowledges the truth of David's speech. David has been gracious when Saul intended only harm (24:17). Finally, at the end of his speech, Saul acknowledges that David will become king after him (24:20). Saul becomes the last in a growing list of those who acknowledge David as the next king of Israel. With a final pledge by David not to wipe out Saul's name after he is gone, Saul leaves his pursuit and returns home. We

may well treat David's eloquent song of lament after Saul's death as a fulfillment of this pledge (2 Sam 1:17-27).

25:1 Samuel's death is recorded. This means that, as king, David won't have to deal with the clash of authority that brought Saul to grief. Unfortunately, even death doesn't prevent Saul from having one more confrontation with Samuel (1 Sam 28).

25:1-3 We are introduced to two new persons in the story, and they are a contrast in character. Nabal is wealthy but prone to do evil. In fact, his name means "fool" (1 Sam 25:25). Nabal is also identified as a *Calebite*, the leading clan of Judah with its center in Hebron. His demise at the end of this story foreshadows David's assumption of leadership in Judah with his own capital eventually located in Hebron. Nabal's wife, Abigail, is both *intelligent and attractive*, and she will prove wise indeed.

25:4-13 When Nabal is shearing sheep in Carmel, David sends men to remind him that David had protected his

24:5 2Sa 24:10;

2Ki 22:19

24:6 1Sa 26:9,

1Sa 26:11;

2Sa 1:14

24:7 2Sa 16:11,

2Sa 19:22-23;

Ps 7:4

24:10 1Sa 24:4,

1Sa 26:9

24:13 Mt 7:16;

Mt 12:33

24:17 1Sa 26:21;

Mt 5:44

24:18 1Sa 26:23

25:1 Nm 20:29;

Dt 34:8;

1Sa 28:3;

1Ki 2:34

25:10 Igs 9:28  
 25:22 Ru 1:17;  
 1Sa 3:17;  
 1Ki 14:10  
 25:23  
 Josh 15:18;  
 Igs 1:14;  
 1Sa 20:41;  
 1Sa 24:8,  
 1Sa 25:41  
 25:24 2Sa 14:9  
 25:25 1Sa 25:17  
 25:26 1Sm 1:26,  
 1Sa 25:34;  
 2Sa 18:32;  
 Heb 10:30  
 25:27 Gn 33:11;  
 1Sa 30:26

<sup>6</sup>Say this to him: 'Peace to you,<sup>a</sup> your household, and all that is yours! <sup>7</sup>I've heard that you are now shearing sheep. As you know, your shepherds were with us in the wilderness.<sup>b</sup> <sup>8</sup>We didn't mistreat them. Moreover, the whole time they were at Carmel, nothing of theirs went missing. <sup>9</sup>Ask your servants; they will tell you the same. So please receive these young men favorably, because we've come on a special day. Please give whatever you have on hand to your servants and to your son David.'

<sup>9</sup>When David's young men arrived, they said all this to Nabal on David's behalf. Then they waited. <sup>10</sup>But Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is Jesse's son? There are all sorts of slaves running away from their masters these days. <sup>11</sup>Why should I take my bread, my water, and the meat I've butchered for my shearers and give it to people who came here from who knows where?" <sup>12</sup>So David's young servants turned around and went back the way they came. When they arrived, they reported every word of this to David.

<sup>13</sup>Then David said to his soldiers, "All of you, strap on your swords!" So each of them strapped on their swords, and David did the same. Nearly four hundred men went up with David. Two hundred men remained back with the supplies.

<sup>14</sup>One of Nabal's servants told his wife Abigail, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, but he just yelled at them. <sup>15</sup>But the men were very good to us and didn't mistreat us. Nothing of ours went missing the whole time we were out with them in the fields. <sup>16</sup>In fact, the whole time we were with them, watching our sheep, they were a protective wall around us both night and day. <sup>17</sup>Think about that and see what you can do, because trouble is coming for our master and his whole household. But he's such a despicable person no one can speak to him."

<sup>18</sup>Abigail quickly took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep ready for cooking, five seahs<sup>c</sup> of roasted grain, one hundred raisin cakes, and two hundred fig cakes. She loaded all this on donkeys <sup>19</sup>and told her servants, "Go on ahead of me. I'll be right behind you." But she didn't tell her husband Nabal.

<sup>20</sup>As she was riding her donkey, going down a trail on the hillside, David and his soldiers appeared, descending toward her, and she met up with them. <sup>21</sup>David had just been saying, "What a waste of time—guarding all this man's stuff in the wilderness so that nothing of his went missing! He has repaid me evil instead of good! <sup>22</sup>May God deal harshly with me, David,<sup>d</sup> and worse still if I leave alive even one single male<sup>e</sup> belonging to him come morning!"

<sup>23</sup>When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and fell facedown before him, bowing low to the ground. <sup>24</sup>She fell at his feet and said, "Put the blame on me, my master! But please let me, your servant, speak to you directly. Please listen to what your servant has to say. <sup>25</sup>Please, my master, pay no attention to this despicable man Nabal. He's exactly what his name says he is! His name means fool,<sup>f</sup> and he is foolish!<sup>g</sup> But I myself, your servant, didn't see the young men that you, my master, sent. <sup>26</sup>I pledge, my master, as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, that the LORD has held you back from bloodshed and taking vengeance into your own hands! But now let your enemies and those who seek to harm my master be exactly like Nabal! <sup>27</sup>Here is a gift, which your servant has brought to my master.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>LXX, Syr; MT lacks *in the wilderness*. <sup>c</sup>One seah is approximately seven and a half quarts. <sup>d</sup>LXX; MT with *David's enemies* <sup>e</sup>Or *who urinates on a wall*; also in 25:34 <sup>f</sup>Heb *nabal* <sup>g</sup>Heb *nebalah*

shepherds and flocks when they were in the desert near where David was hiding. This seems to be a legitimate request for aid in the form of supplies to David, since servants later confirm to Abigail that David did indeed help Nabal's shepherds and flocks (1 Sam 25:15-16). Nabal is a wealthy man, and at shearing time he would have supplies available for his own men and could have responded generously. But in keeping with his name, "fool," he not only refuses but insults David's men by referring to David as a runaway slave (25:10). The story takes a threatening turn as David and 400 men strap on weapons and head for a reckoning with Nabal (25:13).

25:14-35 When Nabal's wife, Abigail, hears of the coming disastrous confrontation with David and his men, she takes immediate and decisive action. While carrying ample supplies for David and his men, she meets him on the road.

The portraits of David and Abigail in this encounter are remarkable. The speech by David (25:21-22) portrays his inner turmoil as a man whose pride has been wounded and who simply wants to lash out in vengeance against his adversary. Abigail's lengthy speech (25:24-31) is a masterpiece of shrewd diplomacy to avert a disaster. She provides the supplies David has requested, and in the same breath exposes her husband for the "fool" his name suggests. At the same time she makes a shrewd argument for David's self-interest in withholding violence. She appeals to the Lord's own providence in keeping David's hands clean of innocent blood (25:26). Indeed, she appeals to the Lord's presence with David throughout her speech, reminding him of the higher purpose he serves. She expresses confidence that the Lord will bring David to his deserved place as Israel's king, and ends with a reminder of her strongest

*Power and Violence* One of the dangers of power is the temptation to act violently in order to hold on to power. Both Saul and David receive kingship and God's spirit as a gift. When David is introduced into Saul's court, it is Saul who holds the power. David is only a young man and in every way seems loyal to Saul. But as Saul experiences David's growing favor among the people and his own household, he begins to use violence. This is first directed toward David, but eventually he lashes out at his son Jonathan, his daughter Michal, his own servants, and eventually in deadly fashion at the community of priests at Nob (1 Sam 22). However, as Saul's violence increases, his hold on power decreases. David's star is rising.

In 1 Samuel 24–26, the balance of power suddenly shifts. David unexpectedly gains the ability to do violence to Saul. Twice (1 Sam 24; 26), Saul's life is in David's hands. He can rid himself of the threat of Saul and perhaps gain the throne. But twice David refuses to gain power by violence. He chooses to respect the office of God's anointed king even if Saul no longer seems to deserve it. In the episode between these stories of sparing Saul's life is an encounter with a remarkable woman named Abigail (1 Sam 25). When David is insulted by Abigail's husband he is tempted to take violent revenge, but he is met on his way by Abigail as peacemaker. She argues that David can't come to the throne with blood of personal gain on his hands (1 Sam 25:30-31).

Taken together, these chapters represent a path to power that doesn't use violence impulsively or for personal gain. David isn't like Saul. Unfortunately, a day will come when even David gives in to the temptation of violence made all too easy by power (2 Sam 11).

25:28 1Sa 2:35;  
1Sa 18:17;  
1Sa 24:11;  
1Sa 25:24;  
2Sa 7:11  
25:29 Jer 10:18  
25:30 1Sa 13:14  
25:31 Gn 40:14  
25:32 Gn 24:27;  
Ps 41:13, Ps 72:18;  
1 K 1:68  
25:33 1Sa 25:26  
25:34 1Sa 25:26  
25:35 Gn 19:21;  
1Sa 20:42;  
2Ki 5:19  
25:37 1Sa 25:34  
25:38 1Sa 26:10;  
2Sa 6:7

Please let it be given to the young men who follow you, my master. <sup>28</sup>Please forgive any offense by your servant. The LORD will definitely make an enduring dynasty for my master because my master fights the LORD's battles, and nothing evil will be found in you throughout your lifetime. <sup>29</sup>If someone chases after you and tries to kill you, my master, then your life will be bound up securely in the bundle of life<sup>a</sup> by the LORD your God, but he will fling away your enemies' lives as from the pouch of a sling. <sup>30</sup>When the LORD has done for my master all the good things he has promised you, and has installed you as Israel's leader, <sup>31</sup>don't let this be a blot or burden on my master's conscience, that you shed blood needlessly or that my master took vengeance into his own hands. When the LORD has done good things for my master, please remember your servant."

<sup>32</sup>David said to Abigail, "Bless the LORD God of Israel, who sent you to meet me today!

<sup>33</sup>And bless you and your good judgment for preventing me from shedding blood and taking vengeance into my own hands today! <sup>34</sup>Otherwise, as surely as the LORD God of Israel lives—the one who kept me from hurting you—if you hadn't come quickly and met up with me, there wouldn't be one single male left come morning." <sup>35</sup>Then David accepted everything she had brought for him. "Return home in peace," he told her. "Be assured that I've heard your request and have agreed to it."

<sup>36</sup>When Abigail got back home to Nabal, he was throwing a party fit for a king in his house. Nabal was in a great mood and very drunk, so Abigail didn't tell him anything until daybreak. <sup>37</sup>In the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him everything. Nabal's heart failed inside him, and he became like a stone. <sup>38</sup>About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.

<sup>39</sup>When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Bless the LORD, who has rendered a verdict regarding Nabal's insult to me and who kept me, his servant, from doing something evil! The LORD has brought Nabal's evil down on his own head." Then David sent word to Abigail, saying that he would take her as his wife.

<sup>40</sup>When David's servants reached Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, "David has sent us to you so you can become his wife."

<sup>a</sup>Or *bundle of the living*; Heb uncertain; perhaps a tied-up scroll (cf Exod 32:32-33; Ps 69:28; Isa 8:16)

argument that David must come to this place with hands clean of innocent bloodshed (25:31). This speech is widely regarded as one of the finest examples of effective argument in the Bible and secures Abigail's place as a wise woman in contrast to her foolish husband. On either side of this story David had resisted the opportunity to take Saul's life (1 Sam 24; 26); and this sequence of chapters is in effect arguing that David comes to the throne with clean hands (see sidebar, "Power and Violence").

25:32-35 David's response immediately focuses on Abigail's argument that he must not come to the throne with blood on his hands from personal vengeance. He accepts her request to take the offered supplies and return in peace. 25:36-42 When Abigail makes the course of events known to Nabal, his heart fails and he soon dies. The story treats this as the will of the Lord, both judging Nabal and restraining David through Abigail. David seeks Abigail as his wife, and she accepts.

26:2 1Sa 23:14,  
1Sa 24:2  
26:5 1Sa 14:50,  
1Sa 14:51,  
1Sa 17:20,  
1Sa 17:55;  
2Sa 2:8

26:6 2Sa 2:18,  
2Sa 16:9,  
2Sa 23:18,  
1Ch 2:16

26:7 1Sa 14:51,  
1Sa 17:20,  
1Sa 17:55,  
1Sa 18:10,  
1Sa 19:9

26:8 1Sa 24:4,  
1Sa 24:18

26:9 1Sa 24:6,  
1Sa 24:10,  
2Sa 1:14,  
2Sa 1:16,  
2Sa 19:21

26:10 Gn 47:29;  
Dt 31:14;  
1Sa 25:38,  
1Sa 31:6;  
Ps 37:13

26:11 1Sa 24:6

26:12 Gn 2:21,  
Gn 15:12;  
1Sa 26:7;  
Is 29:10

26:16 1Sa 26:11

26:19 Gn 8:21;  
2Sa 14:16,  
2Sa 16:11,  
2Sa 20:19

<sup>41</sup>She bowed low to the ground and said, "I am your servant, ready to serve and wash the feet of my master's helpers." <sup>42</sup>Then Abigail got up quickly and rode on her donkey, with five of her young women going with her. She followed David's messengers and became his wife.

<sup>43</sup>David also married Ahinoam from Jezreel, so both of them were his wives. <sup>44</sup>But Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Palti, Laish's son, from Gallim.

### David spares Saul's life a second time

**26** The Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah. "David is hiding on Hachilah's hill, which faces Jeshimon," they said. <sup>2</sup>So Saul got up and went down to the Ziph wilderness to look for David there. He had three thousand handpicked soldiers from Israel with him. <sup>3</sup>Saul camped on Hachilah's hill opposite Jeshimon beside the road, but David stayed in the wilderness. When David learned that Saul had come after him into the wilderness, <sup>4</sup>he sent spies and discovered that Saul had definitely arrived.

<sup>5</sup>So David got up and went to the place where Saul camped, and saw the place where Saul and Abner, Ner's son and Saul's general, were sleeping. Saul was sleeping inside the camp with the troops camped all around him. <sup>6</sup>David asked Ahimelech the Hittite and Joab's brother Abishai, Zeruiah's son, "Who will go down into the camp with me to Saul?"

"I'll go down with you," Abishai answered.

<sup>7</sup>So David and Abishai approached the troops at night and found Saul lying there, asleep in the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. Abner and the army were sleeping all around him.

<sup>8</sup>Abishai said to David, "God has handed your enemy over to you today! Let me pin him to the ground with my spear. One stroke is all I need! I won't need a second."

<sup>9</sup>But David said to Abishai, "Don't kill him! No one can lift a hand against the LORD's anointed and go unpunished. <sup>10</sup>As surely as the LORD lives," David continued, "it will be the LORD who will strike him down, or his day will come and he will die, or he'll fall in battle and be destroyed. <sup>11</sup>The LORD forbid that I lift my hand against the LORD's anointed! But go ahead and take the spear by Saul's head and the water jug and let's go!" <sup>12</sup>So David took the spear and the water jug that were by Saul's head, and he and Abishai left. No one saw them, no one knew they were there, and no one woke up. All of them remained asleep because a deep sleep from the LORD had come over them.

<sup>13</sup>David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of a hill with considerable distance between them. <sup>14</sup>Then David shouted to the army and to Abner, Ner's son, "Abner! Aren't you going to answer me?"

"Who are you to shout to the king?" Abner asked.

<sup>15</sup>David answered Abner, "You are a man, aren't you? And you have no equal in Israel, right? Then why haven't you kept watch over your master the king? One of the soldiers came to kill your master the king. <sup>16</sup>What you've done is terrible! As surely as the LORD lives, all of you are dead men because you didn't keep close watch over your master, the LORD's anointed. Have a look around! Where are the king's spear and the water jug that were by his head?"

<sup>17</sup>Saul recognized David's voice and said, "David, my son, is that your voice?"

David said, "Yes it is, my master the king. <sup>18</sup>Why," David continued, "is my master chasing me, his servant? What have I done and what wrong am I guilty of? <sup>19</sup>My master the king, please listen to what your servant has to say. If it is the LORD who has incited you against me, then let him accept an offering! But if human beings have done it, then let them be cursed before the LORD because they have now driven me off, keeping me from sharing in the LORD's inheritance. 'Go!' they tell me. 'Worship other gods!' <sup>20</sup>Don't let my blood spill on

25:43 A brief note reports Ahinoam as another wife taken by David, and the giving of David's first wife, the daughter of Saul, to another man.

26:1-25 This story looks like a parallel version of 1 Samuel 24, where David first spared the life of Saul. The basic event is the same with differences in details. Some of those differences can be highlighted. Upon discovering Saul and his camp asleep, David enlists a companion, Abishai, to go with him into Saul's camp. Even Saul's general Abner is lying there asleep. Once again David restrains Abishai

from killing Saul, because he won't lift a hand against God's anointed king. This time, however, David expresses the belief that when the time comes the LORD... will strike him down... or he'll fall in battle and be destroyed (26:10). This foreshadows Saul's death at the hand of the Philistines. In this account David takes Saul's spear and a water jug. After crossing to a nearby hill, David taunts Abner for failing to protect the king (26:14-16) and displays the king's spear. Saul's response to David seems even more regretful (26:21), and he pledges no further harm to David.

the ground apart from the LORD's presence, because the king of Israel has come out looking for a single flea<sup>o</sup> like someone hunting a partridge<sup>p</sup> in the mountains."

<sup>21</sup>Then Saul said, "I have sinned! David, my son, come back! Because you considered my life precious today, I won't harm you again. I have acted foolishly and have made a huge mistake."

<sup>22</sup>"Here is the king's spear," David answered. "Allow one of your servants to come over and get it." <sup>23</sup>Remember: The LORD rewards every person for their righteousness and loyalty, and I wasn't willing to lift a hand against the LORD's anointed, even though the LORD handed you over to me today. <sup>24</sup>And just as I considered your life valuable today, may the LORD consider my life valuable, and may he deliver me from all trouble."

<sup>25</sup>Then Saul said to David, "Bless you, David, my son! You will accomplish much and will certainly succeed." Then David went on his way, but Saul went back home.

### David serves the Philistine Achish

**27** David thought, One day I will be destroyed by Saul's power. The best thing for me to do is to escape to Philistine territory. Then Saul will give up looking for me in Israelite territory, and I will escape his power. <sup>2</sup>So David set out with his six hundred soldiers and went to Achish, Maoch's son and Gath's king. <sup>3</sup>David and his soldiers stayed there at Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives, Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, Nabal's widow from Carmel. <sup>4</sup>When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he didn't pursue him anymore.

<sup>5</sup>Then David said to Achish, "If you approve of me, please give me a place in one of the towns in the country so I can live there. Why should I, your servant, live in the capital city with you?" <sup>6</sup>So Achish gave the town of Ziklag to David at that time. That's why Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah until now. <sup>7</sup>David lived in the Philistine countryside for a total of one year and four months.

<sup>8</sup>David and his soldiers went out on raids against the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites. They were the people who lived in the land from Telam<sup>q</sup> to Shur all the way to the land of Egypt. <sup>9</sup>When David attacked an area, he wouldn't leave anyone alive, man or woman. He would take the sheep, the cattle, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothes and would then go back to Achish. <sup>10</sup>When Achish asked, "Where did you raid today?"<sup>r</sup> David would say, "The southern plain of Judah," or "The southern plain of the Jerahmeelites," or "The southern plain of the Kenites." <sup>11</sup>David never spared a man or woman so they could be brought back alive to Gath. "Otherwise," he said, "they might talk about us, and say, 'David did this or that.'" So this was David's practice during the entire time he lived in the Philistine countryside.

<sup>12</sup>Achish trusted David, thinking, David has alienated himself so badly from his own people in Israel that he'll serve me forever.

**28** At that time, the Philistines gathered their troops for war to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, "Count on you and your soldiers marching out with me in the army."

<sup>2</sup>"Excellent," David answered Achish. "Now you'll see for yourself what your servant can do." "Excellent," Achish replied. "I will make you my permanent bodyguard."

<sup>o</sup>Cf 24:14; LXX, my life <sup>p</sup>Or a caller, Heb sounds like verb to shout or call in 26:14. <sup>q</sup>LXX; MT from long ago <sup>r</sup>DSS (4QSam<sup>a</sup>), LXX

He even ends by blessing David (26:25). This is Saul's last real appearance in 1 Samuel apart from the details surrounding his death (1 Sam 28; 31). With Saul's acknowledgment and blessing of David as Israel's future king, the reign of Saul is effectively over.

<sup>27:1-7</sup> David is taking no chances. Despite Saul's pledge not to continue pursuing David, he decides it would be safer to take himself and his entourage over to Philistine territory. David offers himself and 600 men (with their families) for service as mercenaries to Achish, the Philistine king of Gath. David had earlier encountered Achish and played the madman to escape harm (1 Sam 21:10-15). This time Achish accepts David's service and assigns him

to the town of Ziklag on the border with the Israelite tribe of Judah, where he will serve for a year and four months. 27:8-28:2 David's shrewd policy while serving at Ziklag becomes clear. He raids and secures goods only from those who were the enemies of both the Philistines and the Israelite tribe of Judah. In reporting to Achish, David suggested he was extending Philistine authority over the entire area, including Judah. Thus Achish was certain that David had permanently alienated himself from his own people (27:12). Achish is so confident of David's loyalty that when the Philistines gather a major army to fight against Israel, Achish musters David and his men as his personal bodyguard in the battle (28:1-2).

26:21 En 9:27;  
1Sa 13:13,  
15a 15:24,  
15a 15:30,  
15a 24:17  
26:23 Ps 7:8,  
Ps 18:20  
28:1 15a 29:1

28:3 Ex 22:18;

Lv 19:31;

1Sa 25:1;

1Sa 28:9

28:6 Ex 28:30;

Nm 12:6;

Nm 27:21;

1Sa 14:37

28:7 Josh 17:11;

1Ch 10:13;

Ps 83:10; Is 8:19;

Ac 16:16

28:8 1Ki 20:38;

1Ki 22:30;

1Ch 10:13;

2Ch 18:29;

2Ch 35:22

28:9 1Sa 28:3

28:10 1Sa 19:6

28:11 1Sa 1:20;

1Sa 2:18;

1Sa 3:1, 1Sa 3:19;

1Sa 4:1

28:12 1Sa 28:3;

1Sa 28:11

28:13

1Sa 28:14-15

28:14 1Sa 15:27;

1Sa 24:8

28:15 1Sa 16:14;

1Sa 18:12;

1Sa 28:6

28:16 1Sa 28:15;

Lam 2:5

28:17 1Sa 15:28

28:18 1Sa 15:9

28:19 1Sa 31:2

**Saul and the woman of En-dor**

<sup>3</sup>Now Samuel had died, and all Israel mourned him and buried him in Ramah, his hometown. And Saul had banned all mediums and diviners from the land.

<sup>4</sup>The Philistines gathered their forces and advanced to camp at Shunem. Saul gathered all Israel, and they camped at Gilboa. <sup>5</sup>When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was so afraid that his heart beat wildly. <sup>6</sup>When Saul questioned the LORD, the LORD didn't answer him—not by dreams, not by the Urim, and not by the prophets. <sup>7</sup>So Saul said to his servants, "Find me a woman who communicates with ghosts! I'll then go to her and ask by using her techniques."

"There is such a medium in En-dor," his servants replied.

<sup>8</sup>So Saul disguised himself, dressing in different clothes. Then he and two men set out, going to the woman at nighttime.

"Please call up a ghost for me! Bring me the one I specify," Saul said.

<sup>9</sup>"Listen," the woman said to him, "you know what Saul has done, how he has banned all mediums and diviners from the land. What are you doing? Trying to get me killed?"

<sup>10</sup>But Saul promised to her by the LORD, "As surely as the LORD lives, you won't get into trouble for this."

<sup>11</sup>So the woman said, "Who do you want me to bring up for you?"

"Bring up Samuel," he said.

<sup>12</sup>When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed at Saul, "Why have you tricked me? You are Saul!"

<sup>13</sup>"Don't be afraid!" the king said to her. "What do you see?"

The woman said to Saul, "I see a god<sup>t</sup> coming up from the ground."

<sup>14</sup>"What does he look like?" Saul asked her.

"An old man is coming up," she said. "He's wrapped in a robe." Then Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed low out of respect, nose to the ground.

<sup>15</sup>"Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Samuel asked Saul.

"I'm in deep trouble!" Saul replied. "The Philistines are at war with me, and God has turned away from me and no longer answers me by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what I should do."

<sup>16</sup>"Why do you ask me," Samuel said, "since the LORD has turned away from you and has become your enemy?" <sup>17</sup>The LORD has done to you<sup>v</sup> exactly what he spoke through me: The LORD has ripped the kingdom out of your hands and has given it to your friend David. <sup>18</sup>The LORD has done this very thing to you today because you didn't listen to the LORD's voice and didn't carry out his fierce anger against the Amalekites. <sup>19</sup>The LORD will now hand over both you and Israel to the Philistines. And come tomorrow, you and your sons will be with me!<sup>w</sup> The LORD will hand Israel's army over to the Philistines."

<sup>20</sup>Saul immediately fell full length on the ground, utterly terrified at what Samuel had said. He was weak because he hadn't eaten anything all day or night. <sup>21</sup>The woman approached Saul, and after seeing how scared he was, she said, "Listen, your servant has obeyed you. I risked my life and did what you told me to do. <sup>22</sup>Now it's your turn to listen to me, your servant. Let me give you a bit of food. Eat it, then you'll have the strength to go on your way."

<sup>a</sup>Or through her or by her <sup>c</sup>Or I see gods or I see divine figures <sup>v</sup>LXX is with your neighbor; cf 15:28; 28:17 <sup>w</sup>LXX; MT The LORD himself has done just what <sup>w</sup>LXX you and your sons will fall in battle.

28:3-25 This story of Saul's consultation with a medium at En-dor provides our final look at Saul before his death. The portrait is of a tragic and depleted man grasping at straws for some sign of hope from the ghost of the prophet Samuel. What he receives is tragically only a further confirmation of his own judgment.

28:3-7 We are given the important information that Saul himself had *banned all mediums and diviners from the land* (28:3). This makes Saul look desperate and tragic when he seeks guidance from the Lord and, receiving none, seeks out *a woman who communicates with ghosts* (28:7).

28:8-19 Saul comes in disguise to the woman at En-dor, and she is suspicious from the beginning, although she doesn't recognize Saul until the ghost of Samuel appears (28:12). Although it is against the covenant teaching

and the command of the king, the text assumes that the ghosts of the dead can be summoned. In this case, it gives one more occasion for a dramatic encounter between Saul and the prophet Samuel. In death, as in life, Samuel has only a word of judgment and condemnation for Saul (28:16-19). Samuel confirms that Saul is experiencing what was announced in his rejection by the prophet (1 Sam 15), only this time Samuel makes clearer that the kingdom has been given to David (28:17). Samuel's ghost goes on to foresee Israel's loss in the coming battle with the Philistines and the death of Saul and his sons (28:19). 28:20-25 Ironically, the woman of En-dor, who had been deceived by Saul, becomes his strength and compassion. Saul seems completely undone, and he leaves to face his fate in the coming battle with the Philistines.

<sup>23</sup>But Saul refused. "I can't eat!" he said. But his servants and the woman urged him to do so, and so he did. He got up off the ground and sat on a couch. <sup>24</sup>The woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she quickly butchered it.<sup>a</sup> She took flour, kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread. <sup>25</sup>She served this to Saul and his servants, and they ate. They got up and left that very night.

30:1 1Sa 27:6.  
1Sa 27:8.  
1Sa 29:11  
30:4 Nm 14:1.  
1Sa 11:4

### David sent home from fighting Saul

**29** The Philistines assembled all their forces at Aphek, and the Israelites camped by the spring in Jezreel. <sup>2</sup>As the Philistine rulers went out marching in units of hundreds and thousands, David and his soldiers were in the rear with Achish.

<sup>3</sup>"Who are these Hebrews?" the Philistine commanders asked.

"That's David," Achish told them, "the servant of Israel's King Saul. He's been with me a year or so now. I haven't found anything wrong with him from the day he defected until now."

<sup>4</sup>But the Philistine commanders were angry with Achish. "Send the man home!" they told Achish. "He can go back to the place you gave him, but he won't go with us into battle. Couldn't he turn against us in the middle of the fight? How better to please his former master than by taking the heads of our soldiers?" <sup>5</sup>After all, this is the same David people sing about in their dances,

'Saul has killed his thousands,

but David has killed his tens of thousands!'"

<sup>6</sup>So Achish summoned David and told him, "As surely as the LORD lives, you are an upstanding individual. I would very much like you to serve with me in the army because I haven't found anything wrong with you from the day you came to me until now. But the rulers don't approve of you. <sup>7</sup>So go back home now, and go in peace. Don't do anything to upset the Philistine rulers."

<sup>8</sup>"But what have I done?" David asked Achish. "What wrong have you found in me, your servant, from the day I came to you until now? Why shouldn't I go and fight the enemies of my master the king?"

<sup>9</sup>"I agree," Achish answered David. "I think you're as good as one of God's own messengers. Despite that, the Philistine commanders have ordered, 'He can't go into battle with us.' <sup>10</sup>So get up early in the morning, both you and your master's servants who came with you, and return to the place I gave you. Don't worry about this negative report, because you've done well before me. <sup>7</sup> Now get up early in the morning and leave as soon as it is light."

<sup>11</sup>So David and his soldiers got up early in the morning to go back to Philistine territory, but the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

### The Amalekite raid on Ziklag

**30** Three days later, David and his soldiers reached Ziklag. The Amalekites had raided the arid southern plain and Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned it down, <sup>2</sup>taking the women and everyone in the city prisoner, whether young or old.<sup>a</sup> They hadn't killed anyone but carried them off and went on their way. <sup>3</sup>When David and his soldiers got to the town and found it burned down, and their wives, their sons, and their daughters taken prisoner, <sup>4</sup>David and the troops with him broke into tears and cried until they could cry

<sup>a</sup>Or sacrificed it <sup>7</sup>LXX; MT lacks and return to the place . . . done well before me. <sup>8</sup>LXX; MT lacks and everyone in the city.

29:1-11 *Aphek* is the same place where the Philistines gathered an army when they captured the Lord's covenant chest and destroyed Shiloh (29:4). David and his men gather as loyal retainers of Achish of Gath, but the Philistine commanders know him, and they even recall the song of the women of Israel celebrating David's prowess as a warrior (29:5). They don't want to risk David's becoming a traitor in the midst of battle. So Achish orders David to return to Ziklag. David either is willing to fight against Saul and Israel or plays the role very well, because his speech pleading to stay and fight sounds convincing (29:8). Nevertheless, Achish can't oppose the Philistine commanders. Before the battle David returns to Ziklag

and avoids the shame of going to battle against Israel. This surely serves him well when he is eventually invited to become king over all Israel.

30:1-5 After avoiding fighting against Israel for the Philistines, David returns to find deep trouble in his present hometown of Ziklag. As one of Israel's perennial enemies, the Amalekites have emerged from the southern desert to raid Ziklag, burning the town and taking all the inhabitants remaining there as prisoners. The intent was probably to sell them into slavery. The captives include the families of all David's men and his own two wives and their children. Initially, David and his men can respond only in deep grief and despair (30:4).

30:5 1Sa 25:43;  
1Sa 27:3; 2Sa 2:2;  
1Ch 3:1

30:6 Ex 17:4;  
Nu 14:10;  
Jn 8:59

30:11 1Sa 30:1;  
2Sa 8:18;  
1Ki 1:36; Zep 2:5

30:15 Dt 23:15;  
1Sa 29:6

30:22 Dt 13:13;  
1Sa 25:17;  
1Ki 21:10

no more. <sup>5</sup>David's two wives had been captured as well: Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, Nabal's widow from Carmel.

<sup>6</sup>David was in deep trouble because the troops were talking about stoning him. Each of the soldiers was deeply distressed about their sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God. <sup>7</sup>David said to the priest Abiathar, Ahimelech's son, "Bring the priestly vest\* to me." So Abiathar brought it to David.

<sup>8</sup>Then David asked the LORD, "Should I go after this raiding party? Will I catch them?"

"Yes, go after them!" God answered. "You will definitely catch them and will succeed in the rescue!"

<sup>9</sup>So David set off with six hundred men. They came to the Besor ravine, where some stayed behind. <sup>10</sup>David and four hundred men continued the pursuit, while two hundred men stayed there, too exhausted to cross the Besor ravine.

<sup>11</sup>They found an Egyptian in the countryside and brought him to David. They gave him bread, and he ate, and they gave him water to drink. <sup>12</sup>They also gave him a piece of fig cake and two raisin cakes. He ate and regained his strength because he hadn't eaten any food or drunk any water for three days and nights.

<sup>13</sup>Then David asked him, "Whose slave are you? Where do you come from?"

"I'm an Egyptian servant boy," he said, "and the slave of an Amalekite. My master abandoned me when I got sick three days ago. <sup>14</sup>We had raided the arid southern plain belonging to the Cherethites, the territory belonging to Judah, and the southern plain of Caleb. We also burned Ziklag down."

<sup>15</sup>"Can you guide me to this raiding party?" David asked him.

"Make a pledge to me by God that you won't kill me or hand me over to my master," the boy said, "and I will guide you to the raiding party."

<sup>16</sup>So the boy led David to them, and he found them scattered all over the countryside, eating, drinking, and celebrating over the large amount of plunder they had taken from Philistine and Judean territory.

<sup>17</sup>David attacked them from twilight until evening of the next day. He killed them all.<sup>b</sup> No one escaped except four hundred young men who got on camels and fled. <sup>18</sup>David rescued everything that the Amalekites had taken, including his own two wives. <sup>19</sup>Nothing was missing from the plunder or anything that they had taken, neither old nor young, son nor daughter. David brought everything back. <sup>20</sup>David also captured all the sheep and cattle, which were driven in front of the other livestock. The troops said, "This is David's plunder!"

<sup>21</sup>David reached the two hundred men who were too exhausted to follow him and had stayed behind at the Besor ravine. They came out to greet him and the troops who were with him. When David approached them, he asked how they were doing. <sup>22</sup>But then all the evil and despicable individuals who had accompanied David said, "We won't share any of the

\*Heb *ephod* <sup>b</sup>LXX; MT lacks *He killed them all*.

30:6-8 David faces a leadership challenge. His men actually turn on him, to the point of threatening to stone him in their distress, but David's character shows through once again. His first response is to find *strength in the Lord his God* (30:6), and then turn to Abiathar his priest to seek God's guidance (30:7-8). This recalls David's approach to leadership in earlier chapters (see sidebar, "David and Prayer" at 1 Sam 23). David has skills as a leader and a warrior, but he never relies on human powers alone. He seeks God's will and support. In this case, God supports the pursuit of the Amalekites.

30:9-10 By starting with 600 men, David reaches a point in the pursuit where he must leave 200 of the most exhausted behind. We learn later that they are also charged with guarding supplies left behind to allow faster pursuit, and this fact becomes significant in later events (cf. 1 Sam 30:24).

30:11-16 Although primarily a story of David's leadership as a warrior, this story demonstrates David's compassion, even in pursuit and battle. When David and his men find

an Egyptian boy near death in the wilderness, they could easily have passed him by in the urgency of their pursuit. Instead, David has the boy fed and cared for, only to discover that he was a slave of the Amalekites, abandoned because he became ill. The boy was actually with the Amalekites in their raiding of Ziklag and other southern settlements (30:13-14). The boy can guide them to the Amalekites' camp, where David finds them in drunken celebration of their accomplishments and looting. 30:17-20 David's surprise attack on the Amalekites is quick and effective. He kills all except 400, who escape on camels, and recovers all the families and goods taken from Ziklag. He also captures considerable livestock that the Amalekites left behind.

30:21-25 These verses once again showcase David's compassionate leadership. When David's men return to the 200 men left with the baggage, many in his force angrily refuse to share any of the gain from the raid or to include these men any longer in their number. They want them to take only their wives and children and go (30:22). David



plunder we rescued with them because they didn't go with us. Each of them can take his wife and children and go—but that's it."

<sup>23</sup>"Brothers!" David said. "Don't act that way with the things the LORD has given us. He has protected us and handed over to us the raiding party that had attacked us. <sup>24</sup>How could anyone agree with you on this plan? The share of those who went into battle and the share of those who stayed with the supplies will be divided equally." <sup>25</sup>So from that day forward, David made that a regulation and a law in Israel, which remains in place even now.

<sup>26</sup>When David returned to Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah and to his friends. "Here is a gift for you from the plunder of the LORD's enemies," he said. <sup>27</sup>It went to those in Bethel, Ramoth of the arid southern plain, Jattir, <sup>28</sup>Aroer, <sup>29</sup>Siphmoth, Eshtemoa, <sup>29</sup>Racal, the towns of the Jerahmeelites, the towns of the Kenites, <sup>30</sup>Hormah, Bor-ashan, Athach, <sup>31</sup>Hebron, and all the places where David and his soldiers had spent time.

### *Saul dies in the battle of Gilboa*

**31** When the Philistines attacked the Israelites, the Israelites ran away from the Philistines, and many fell dead on Mount Gilboa. <sup>2</sup>The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua. <sup>3</sup>The battle was fierce around Saul. When the archers located him, they wounded him badly.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and kill me with it! Otherwise, these uncircumcised men will come and kill me or torture me." But his armor-bearer refused because he was terrified. So Saul took the sword and impaled himself on it. <sup>5</sup>When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also impaled himself on his sword and died with Saul. <sup>6</sup>So Saul, his three sons, his armor-bearer, and all his soldiers died together that day.

<sup>7</sup>When the Israelites across the valley and across the Jordan learned that the Israelite army had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their towns and fled. So the Philistines came and occupied the towns.

<sup>8</sup>The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons lying dead on Mount Gilboa. <sup>9</sup>They cut off Saul's head and stripped off his armor, and then sent word throughout Philistine territory, carrying the good news to their gods' temples and to their people. <sup>10</sup>They put Saul's armor in the temple of Astarte, and hung his body on the wall of Beth-shan.

<sup>11</sup>But when all the people of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, <sup>12</sup>the bravest of their men set out, traveled all night long, and took the bodies of Saul and his sons off the wall of Beth-shan. Then they went back to Jabesh, where they burned them. <sup>13</sup>Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.

<sup>d</sup>LXX *Ararah* <sup>d</sup>Correction; LXX wounded in the belly

will have no part of this. He insists that all receive an equal share. Those who guard the supplies are as important as those on the forefront of battle. David even formalized this into policy during his kingship (30:24-25).

30:26-31 This story ends with an action that shows David's shrewd abilities as a politician. He chooses to share the goods taken in the Amalekite raid with the towns of Judah and the southern borderlands. He is making political allies, and so it isn't a surprise when, after Saul's death, it is Judah that first makes him king in Hebron (2 Sam 2:4). 31:1-7 After seeing his sons die on the field of battle at Mount Gilboa, a wounded Saul takes his own life. He falls on his own sword after failing to convince his armor-bearer to end his life. A variant account of Saul's death is recorded at 2 Samuel 1:1-16. Saul's death is technically a suicide, but he is wounded and facing immediate death or torture by the Philistines. He and his sons have discharged their duty to Israel honorably on the field of battle. He doesn't die in shame (as in another suicide recorded in the Bible, Judas; cf. Matt 27:5). It's fitting that the final words about Saul will be in the lament of David, honoring both Saul and Jonathan as mighty men who have fallen (2 Sam 1:17-27).

31:8-10 The Philistines don't treat Saul with respect. However, Saul's death has robbed them of the possibility of parading him in public humiliation. It doesn't seem that they knew he was dead, but came upon his body while stripping the dead on the battlefield. They mutilate his body and hang it in a public place as an act of scorn. But all know that they didn't capture him, and they didn't even kill him. *Beth-shan* is one of the largest cities under Philistine control outside Philistine home territory. Archaeologists recovered many Philistine artifacts from the site of the city near the northern stretch of the Jordan River. *Astarte* is one of the chief goddesses of the Canaanites, and Saul's armor is placed there to humiliate Israel's king and to indicate their power over him.

31:11-13 To the people of Jabesh-gilead, Saul was a hero. He rescued them when they were besieged by Nahash, the king of Ammon (1 Sam 11). In an act of courage and resolve, the men of Jabesh-gilead traveled through the night to take the bodies of Saul and his sons (the sons aren't mentioned as hung there earlier) from the walls of Beth-shan. In Jabesh they burn their bodies and give the bones a respectful burial under a tamarisk tree.



# 2 SAMUEL

Read the Bible at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) or [www.bible.com](http://www.bible.com). For more information, visit [www.bibleplaces.com](http://www.bibleplaces.com).

See the introduction to 1 and 2 Samuel at the beginning of 1 Samuel.

## I. David Becomes King (1:1–5:10)

- A. David learns of Saul's death (1:1-16)
- B. David mourns Saul and Jonathan (1:17-27)
- C. David made king in Hebron (2:1-11)
- D. Conflict between Judah and Israel (2:12–3:1)
- E. David's family (3:2-5)
- F. Joab kills Abner (3:6-39)
- G. Ishbosheth murdered (4:1-12)
- H. David made king by Israel (5:1-5)
- I. David captures Jerusalem (5:6-10)

## II. David Consolidates His Kingdom (5:11–8:18)

- A. David provides economic and political security (5:11-25)
  1. Trade with Hiram of Tyre (5:11-12)
  2. David's wives and sons (5:13-16)
  3. Defeat of the Philistines (5:17-25)
- B. David brings God's covenant chest to Jerusalem (6:1-23)
- C. Nathan brings God's promise to David (7:1-17)
- D. David's prayer (7:18-29)

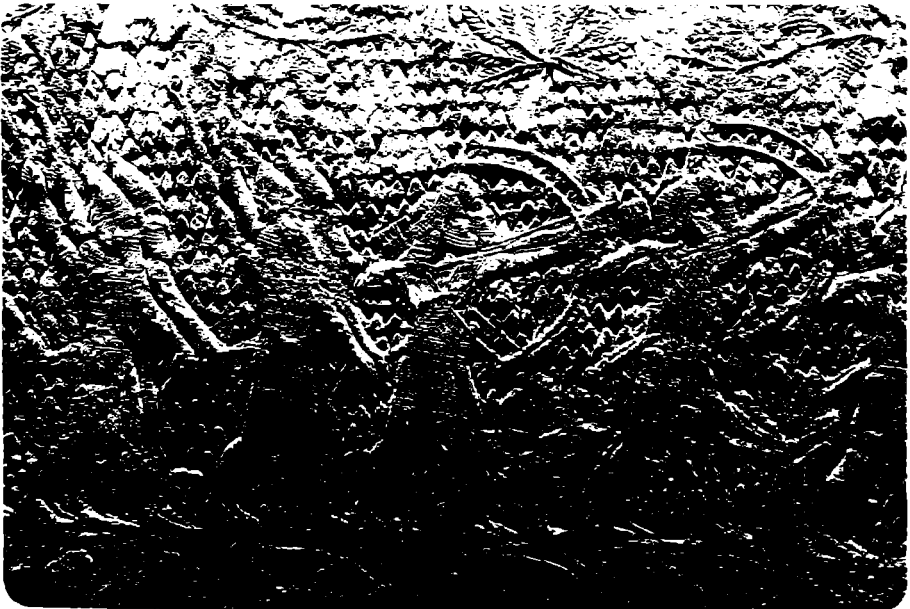
## E. David's wars (8:1-14)

1. Philistines (8:1)
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4. Hamath makes peace (8:9-12)
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## F. David's administration (8:15-18)

## III. David's Family and David's Sin (9:1–20:26)

- A. David and Mephibosheth (9:1-13)
- B. War with Ammonites and Arameans (10:1-19)
- C. David's adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah (11:1-27)
- D. Nathan pronounces God's judgment (12:1-15)
- E. Bathsheba's child dies; Solomon is born (12:16-25)
- F. Defeat of the Ammonites (12:26-31)
- G. Amnon rapes Tamar (13:1-22)
- H. Absalom kills Amnon (13:23-39)
- I. Absalom is restored (14:1-33)



Assyrian archers laying siege in 701 BCE to Lachish, about 25 miles from Jerusalem. This relief is from a period later than that described in 2 Samuel, but it shows organized warfare with archers (2 Sam 22:15).

*British Museum/BiblePlaces.com*

## J. Absalom's rebellion (15:1-19:43)

1. Absalom plots revolt (15:1-12)
2. David flees from Jerusalem (15:13-31)
3. Hushai sent as a spy (15:32-37)
4. David and Ziba (16:1-4)
5. Shimei curses David (16:5-14)
6. Ahithophel and Hushai (16:15-17:14)
7. Hushai warns David (17:15-29)
8. Absalom's defeat and death (18:1-18)
9. David's grief over Absalom (18:19-33)
10. Joab confronts David (19:1-8a)
11. David returns to Jerusalem (19:8b-43)

## K. Sheba's rebellion (20:1-22)

- L. David's officials (20:23-26)

**IV. Concluding Traditions about David (21:1-24:25)**

- A. Avenging the Gibeonites (21:1-14)
- B. David and his warriors (21:15-22)
- C. David's thanksgiving psalm (22:1-51)
- D. David's last words (23:1-7)
- E. David and his warriors (23:8-39)
- F. David's census (24:1-25)

*Bruce C. Birch*

**David learns of Saul's death**

**1** After Saul's death, when David had returned from defeating the Amalekites, he stayed in Ziklag two days. <sup>2</sup>On the third day, a man showed up from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. When he reached David, he fell to the ground, bowing low out of respect.

<sup>3</sup>"Where have you come from?" David asked him.

"I've escaped from the Israelite army!" he answered.

<sup>4</sup>"What's the report?" David asked him. "Tell me!"

The man answered, "The troops fled from the battle! Many of the soldiers have fallen and died. What's more, Saul and his son Jonathan have also died!"

<sup>5</sup>"How do you know," David asked the young man who brought the news, "that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?"

<sup>6</sup>The young man who brought the news replied, "I just happened to be on Mount Gilboa and Saul was there, leaning on his spear, with chariots and horsemen closing in on him. <sup>7</sup>He turned around and saw me, then he called to me. 'Yes, sir,' I answered. <sup>8</sup>'Who are you?' he asked, and I told him, 'I'm an Amalekite.' <sup>9</sup>He said to me, 'Please come over here and kill me, because convulsions have come over me but I'm still alive.' <sup>10</sup>So I went over to him and killed him, because I knew he couldn't survive after being wounded like that. I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm, and I've brought them here to you, my master."

<sup>11</sup>Then David grabbed his clothes and ripped them—and all his soldiers did the same.

<sup>12</sup>They mourned and cried and fasted until evening for Saul, his son Jonathan, the LORD's army, and the whole house of Israel, because they had died by the sword.

<sup>13</sup>"Where are you from?" David asked the young man who brought him the news.

"I'm the son of an immigrant," he answered. "An Amalekite."

<sup>14</sup>Then David said to him, "How is it that you weren't afraid to raise your hand and destroy the LORD's anointed?" <sup>15</sup>Then David called for one of the young servants. "Come here!" he said. "Strike him down!" So the servant struck the Amalekite down, and he died.

<sup>16</sup>"Your blood is on your own head," David said to the Amalekite, "because your own mouth testified against you when you admitted, 'I killed the LORD's anointed.'"

**David mourns Saul and Jonathan**

<sup>17</sup>Then David sang this funeral song<sup>b</sup> for Saul and his son Jonathan. <sup>18</sup>David ordered everyone in Judah to learn the Song of the Bow.<sup>c</sup> (In fact, it is written in the scroll from Jashar.)

<sup>19</sup>Oh, no, Israel! Your prince<sup>d</sup> lies dead on your heights.<sup>e</sup>

Look how the mighty warriors have fallen!

<sup>20</sup>Don't talk about it in Gath;

don't bring news of it to Ashkelon's streets,  
or else the Philistines' daughters will rejoice;  
the daughters of the uncircumcised will celebrate.

<sup>a</sup>Syr, Tg; Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Or lament <sup>c</sup>Heb lacks Song <sup>d</sup>Or gazelle or splendor or splendid one <sup>e</sup>Correction

1:17-18 We read an account of Saul's death in 1 Samuel 31. Now we hear a different version of that story through the testimony of an Amalekite. We are reminded in 1:1 that David has just returned from a deadly encounter with Amalekite raiders who nearly succeeded in kidnapping the families of David and his men (1 Sam 30). The Amalekite claims to have served as a soldier in the Israelite army (1:3). This is a credible claim since both Philistines and Israelites are known to have used mercenaries who weren't members of their own ethnic/cultural group (see the list of David's mighty men in 2 Sam 23:24-39, which includes many foreigners). He brings news that Saul and Jonathan are dead, but Saul is dead by the Amalekite's own hand at Saul's request when he was mortally wounded (1:6-10). The Amalekite brings Saul's crown and bracelet to David, who is overcome with grief (1:11-12). When David has the Amalekite killed for daring to raise your hand and destroy the LORD's anointed (1:14-15),

some believe the Amalekite has done nothing to deserve this, or that David is simply distancing himself politically from Saul's death. But David had himself refused to raise his hand against Saul because he was God's anointed king (1 Sam 24; 26). Moreover, as the lament that follows this episode shows, righteous anger and deep grief seem to dominate David's response more than calculating political advantage. David's response doesn't seem to be motivated by self-interest.

1:17-27 David's song of grief over the loss of Saul and Jonathan takes the form of a Hebrew funeral song or lament (1:17). This form honors those who have died and deserve to be remembered. There is no address to or mention of God. David names this funeral song *Song of the Bow*, and orders all to learn it (1:18). The title is fitting for the loss of warriors. The note that David's song is now preserved in the scroll [of] Jashar (1:18b) offers an interesting glimpse into how some biblical materials are preserved.

1:21 1Sa 31:1;  
2Sa 1:6; 1s 21:5  
1:22 1Sa 18:4  
1:23 Jgs 14:18;  
Jer 4:13;  
Lam 4:19  
1:24 Prov 31:21  
1:25 1Sa 14:13;  
1Sa 18:1;  
2Sa 1:19  
1:26 1Sa 18:1  
1:27 2Sa 1:25  
2:3 1Sa 27:2;  
1Sa 27:3;  
1Ch 12:1  
2:5 1Sa 23:21;  
Ps 115:15

**21** You hills of Gilboa!

Let there be no dew or rain on you,  
and no fields yielding grain offerings.<sup>f</sup>

Because it was there that the mighty warrior's<sup>g</sup> shield was defiled—  
the shield of Saul!—never again anointed with oil.

**22** Jonathan's bow never wavered from the blood of the slain,  
from the gore of the warriors.

Never did Saul's sword return empty.

**23** Saul and Jonathan! So well loved, so dearly cherished!

In their lives and in their deaths they were never separated.

They were faster than eagles,  
stronger than lions!

**24** Daughters of Israel, weep over Saul!

He dressed you in crimson with jewels;  
he decorated your clothes with gold jewelry.

**25** Look how the mighty warriors have fallen in the midst of battle!

Jonathan lies dead on your heights.

**26** I grieve for you, my brother Jonathan!

You were so dear to me!

Your love was more amazing to me<sup>h</sup> than the love of women.

**27** Look how the mighty warriors have fallen!

Look how the weapons of war have been destroyed!

### David made king in Hebron

**2** Some time later, David questioned the LORD, "Should I go to one of the towns in Judah?"  
"Yes, go," the LORD told him.

"Which one should I go to?" David asked.

"To Hebron," the LORD replied.

<sup>2</sup>So David went there, along with his two wives: Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, Nabal's widow, from Carmel. <sup>3</sup>David also took the soldiers who were with him, each with his family, and they lived in the towns around Hebron. <sup>4</sup>Then the people of Judah came to Hebron and anointed David king over the house of Judah.

When David was informed that it was the people of Jabesh-gilead who had buried Saul, <sup>5</sup>he sent messengers to the people of Jabesh-gilead. "The LORD bless you," he said to them, "for doing this loyal deed for your master Saul by burying him. <sup>6</sup>May the LORD now show you loyal love and faithfulness. I myself will also reward you because you did this. <sup>7</sup>So now take courage and be brave—yes, your master Saul is dead, but the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain, perhaps *bountiful fields*; alternatively, with LXX <sup>h</sup>, *fields of death*, or with correction and no springs from the deep <sup>g</sup>Or warriors' (plural) <sup>h</sup>Or your love (or care; cf 1 Sam 18:1, 3; 20:17) for me was more amazing

This ancient source is also mentioned in Joshua 10:12-13. *Jashar*, meaning "the upright" or "the just," may be a collection of poems (now lost to us) that celebrated heroic deeds in Israel's story. David models in his singing of grief the human experience common to all that rises above politics as usual. Saul had sought to kill him; Jonathan had loved him. But in this moment all have lost a king and a prince in battle with a deadly enemy. Political divisions will reappear soon enough in the story, but Saul and Jonathan are warriors lost in battle for a threatened people. Even David can lead in the singing of loss. His song celebrates not only their courage but the bond that tied them together as father and son (1:23) and caused Jonathan to stay by his father's side even in a losing cause. David gives expression to the deep friendship that bound him

to Jonathan, beyond even the love of women (1:26). In a time when marriages were formed by arrangement and not love, deep friendships were more common among men than between men and women.

2:1-7 Characteristically, David prays to the Lord for guidance before he decides what he must do following the death of Saul (2:1). He decides to go to Hebron with all of his family, his men, and their families. In Hebron, one of the chief cities of Judah, he is anointed as king over Judah (2:4a). The major Israelite tribe in the south takes this significant action without consultation or cooperation with the northern tribes of Israel. In his first act as king of Judah, David honors the people of Jabesh-gilead for their courageous act in removing the body of Saul and giving it an honorable burial (2:4b-7).

**Israel's King Ishbosheth**

<sup>8</sup>Meanwhile, Abner, Ner's son, the commander of Saul's army, had taken Ishbosheth,<sup>1</sup> Saul's son, and brought him over to Mahanaim. <sup>9</sup>There he made him king over Gilead, the Geshurites,<sup>7</sup> Jezreel, Ephraim, and Benjamin—over all Israel. <sup>10</sup>Saul's son Ishbosheth was 40 years old when he became king over Israel, and he ruled for two years. The house of Judah, however, followed David. <sup>11</sup>The amount of time David ruled in Hebron over the house of Judah totaled seven and a half years.

**Conflict between Judah and Israel**

<sup>12</sup>Abner, Ner's son, along with the soldiers of Ishbosheth, Saul's son, left Mahanaim to go to Gibeon. <sup>13</sup>Joab, Zeruiah's son, and David's soldiers also came out and confronted them at the pool of Gibeon. One group sat on one side of the pool; the other sat on the opposite side of the pool. <sup>14</sup>Abner said to Joab, "Let's have the young men fight in a contest<sup>4</sup> before us."

"All right," Joab said, "let's do it." <sup>15</sup>So the men came forward and were counted as they passed by: twelve for Benjamin and Ishbosheth, Saul's son; and twelve of David's soldiers. <sup>16</sup>Each man grabbed his opponent by the head and stuck<sup>1</sup> his sword into his opponent's side so that they both fell dead together. That's why that place is called The Field of Daggers,<sup>2</sup> which is located in Gibeon. <sup>17</sup>A fierce battle took place that day, and Abner and the Israelite troops were defeated by David's soldiers.

<sup>18</sup>Now Zeruiah's three sons were present at the battle: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Asahel was as fast as a gazelle in an open field. <sup>19</sup>Asahel went after Abner, staying completely focused in his pursuit of Abner.

<sup>20</sup>Abner looked behind him and said, "Is that you, Asahel?"

"Yes, it's me," Asahel answered.

<sup>21</sup>"Break off your pursuit!" Abner told him. "Fight one of the young warriors and take his gear for yourself!" But Asahel wouldn't stop chasing him.

<sup>22</sup>So Abner repeated himself to Asahel: "Stop chasing me. Why should I kill you? How could I look your brother Joab in the face?" <sup>23</sup>But Asahel wouldn't turn back, so Abner hit him in the stomach with the back end of his spear. But the spear went through Asahel's back. He fell down and died right there.

Everyone who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died just stood there, <sup>24</sup>but Joab and Abishai went after Abner. The sun was setting when they came to the hill of Ammah, which faces Giah on the road to the Gibeon wilderness. <sup>25</sup>The Benjaminites rallied behind Abner, forming a single unit. Then they took their positions on the top of a hill. <sup>26</sup>Abner yelled down to Joab, "Must the sword keep killing forever? Don't you realize that this will end bitterly? How long before you order the troops to stop chasing their brothers?"

<sup>1</sup>Ishbosheth means *man of shame*; *shame* (Heb *bosheth*) may be a deliberate alteration from *Baal* (cf Esh-baal, *man of Baal* in 1 Chron 8:33; 9:39; see also 2 Sam 4:4); one manuscript of LXX<sup>1</sup> reads *Ishbaal*. <sup>2</sup>Syr, Vulg; MT *Ashurites* or *Assyrians*; cf Tg, LXX<sup>1</sup>, Judg 1:32 *Asherites*. <sup>3</sup>Or *come forward and play or compete*. <sup>4</sup>Heb lacks *stuck*. <sup>5</sup>Heb *Helkath-hazzurim*.

2:8-10 The northern tribes make an effort to keep the house of Saul on the throne of Israel. Saul's General Abner survived the battle of Gilboa, and took a surviving son of Saul across the Jordan River for safety, where he is proclaimed king over all Israel (2:8-9). This son's name is recorded in the text of 2 Samuel as Ishbosheth, which means "man of shame." In 1 Chronicles 8:33; 9:39 this son's name is reported as Eshbaal, which means "Baal exists." Many regard this as more historically likely and believe that the editor of the large history work (Deuteronomy–2 Kings), which includes the books of Samuel, could not enter a name for a king of Israel that included the name of the Canaanite god Baal. They perhaps inserted the word for "shame" instead. Ishbosheth will rule for only two years, and David reigns from Hebron for seven and a half. This means that David's later move to Jerusalem doesn't take place immediately after the northern elders make him king. It is unlikely that Ishbosheth was 40 years old. This would make him older than Jonathan or David. David is only 30 years old in 2 Samuel 5:3.

2:12-32 This is a story about a minor border incident between men of Israel and men of Judah that got out of hand and led to a deadly blood feud with ongoing consequences. Abner, who was Saul's general, brings men into the area around Gibeon close to the border with the tribe of Judah, where David rules now as king. A group of soldiers from Judah, led by Joab, come into the same area, and the two groups end up facing each other across a pool (2:12-13). Joab is David's chief general, the commander of his personal guard, and he will play an important role in the events of 2 Samuel. Joab's two brothers, Abishai and Asahel, are with him. Abishai had gone with David into the camp of Saul in 1 Samuel 26. The commanders agree to an ill-advised contest between 12 men from each group, and the contest turns deadly, with the men killing each other and a full-scale battle breaking out (2:14-17). Asahel, one of the brothers of Joab, pursues Abner after the skirmish. Repeatedly, Abner urges him to give up the chase, implying that he doesn't want to hurt Asahel. When Asahel persists, Abner thrusts his spear backward and fatally impales

3:1 2Sa 2:17,  
2Sa 5:10,  
1Kj 14:30

<sup>27</sup>"As surely as God lives," Joab replied, "if you hadn't just said that, the soldiers would have continued after their brothers until morning." <sup>28</sup>Joab blew the trumpet,<sup>a</sup> and all the soldiers stopped. They didn't pursue Israel anymore, nor did they continue to fight.

<sup>29</sup>Abner and his men then marched all night through the wilderness, crossing the Jordan River and marching all morning<sup>b</sup> until they got to Mahanaim. <sup>30</sup>Joab, meanwhile, returned from pursuing Abner and assembled the troops. Nineteen of David's soldiers were counted missing in addition to Asahel. <sup>31</sup>But David's soldiers had defeated the Benjaminites, killing three hundred sixty of Abner's soldiers. <sup>32</sup>They took Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb in Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men marched all night. When daylight came, they were in Hebron.

**3** The war between Saul's house and David's house was long and drawn out. David kept getting stronger, while Saul's house kept getting weaker.

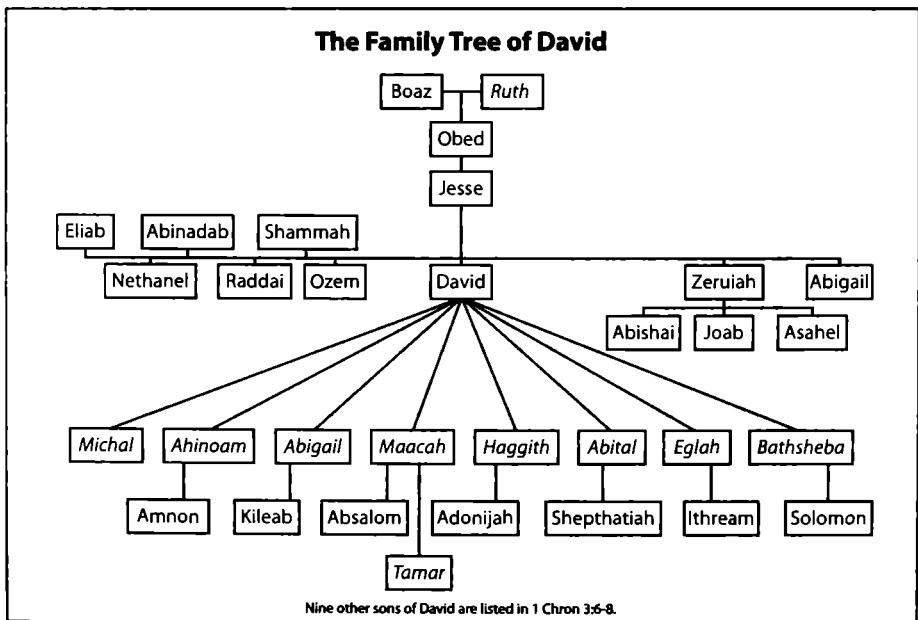
### David's family

<sup>2</sup>David's sons were born in Hebron. His oldest son was Amnon, by Ahinoam from Jezreel; <sup>3</sup>the second was Chileab, by Abigail, Nabal's widow from Carmel; the third was Absalom, by Maacah,<sup>c</sup> who was the daughter of Geshur's King Talmi; <sup>4</sup>the fourth was Adonijah, by Haggith; the fifth was Shephatiah, by Abital; <sup>5</sup>and the sixth was Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These are David's sons that were born in Hebron.

### Joab kills Abner

<sup>6</sup>Throughout the war between Saul's house and David's house, Abner was gaining power in Saul's house. <sup>7</sup>Now Saul had a secondary wife named Rizpah, Aiah's daughter. Ishbosheth<sup>d</sup> said to Abner, "Why have you had sex with my father's secondary wife?"

<sup>8</sup>Abner got very angry over what Ishbosheth had said.



<sup>a</sup>Heb shofar <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Or son of; also twice in 3:4 <sup>d</sup>Or he, supplied from 3:8; see note at 2:8 on Ishbosheth.

his pursuer (2:19-23). Joab and Abishai take up the chase after Abner, but Abner gathers a group of his own Benjaminites around him in a strong defensive position, forcing Joab to give up the pursuit (2:24-28). The men of Abner took the worst of the losses in this battle, but Joab won't forget the loss of his brother (cf. 2 Sam 3:6-29).

3:1 The conflict between Judah and the northern tribes of Israel is resolving itself in David's favor.

3:2-5 A brief genealogical note tells us that David now has six wives who have given him six sons.

3:6-11 Things aren't going well in the northern kingdom. Saul's son Ishbosheth may be the heir to Saul's throne, but



"Am I some sort of dog's head?" Abner asked. "I've been nothing but loyal to the house of your father Saul and to his brothers and his friends. I haven't handed you over to David, but today you accuse me of doing something wrong with this woman. <sup>9</sup>May God deal harshly with me, Abner, and worse still if I don't do for David exactly what the LORD swore to him— <sup>10</sup>removing the kingdom from Saul's house and securing David's throne over Israel and over Judah, from Dan all the way to Beer-sheba!"

<sup>11</sup>Ishbosheth couldn't say a single word in reply to Abner because he was afraid of him.

<sup>12</sup>Abner sent messengers to represent him to David and to say, "Who will own the land?" Make a covenant with me, then I'll help bring all Israel over to your side."

<sup>13</sup>"Good!" David replied. "I will make a covenant with you, but on one condition: don't show yourself in my presence unless you bring Saul's daughter Michal when you come to see me."

<sup>14</sup>Then David sent messengers to Saul's son Ishbosheth. "Give me my wife Michal," he demanded. "I became engaged to her at the cost of one hundred Philistine foreskins."

<sup>15</sup>Ishbosheth then sent for Michal and took her from her husband Paltiel, Laish's son.

<sup>16</sup>Her husband went with her all the way to Bahurim, crying as he followed her.

"Go home!" Abner told him. So he went home.

<sup>17</sup>Abner then sent word to Israel's elders. "You've wanted David to be your king for some time now," he said. <sup>18</sup>"It's time to act because the LORD has said about David: I will rescue my people Israel from the power of the Philistines and all their enemies through my servant David."

<sup>19</sup>Abner also spoke directly to the Benjaminites. He then went to inform David in person at Hebron regarding everything that all Israel and the house of Benjamin were willing to do.

<sup>20</sup>When Abner, along with twenty others, reached David at Hebron, David threw a celebration for Abner and his men. <sup>21</sup>Then Abner said to David, "Please let me get going so I can assemble all Israel for my master the king. Then they can make a covenant with you, and you will rule over everything your heart<sup>a</sup> desires." At that, David sent Abner off in peace.

<sup>22</sup>Right then, David's soldiers and Joab returned from a raid, bringing a great deal of loot with them. Abner was no longer with David in Hebron because David had sent him off in peace. <sup>23</sup>When Joab and all the troops with him returned, Joab was told that Abner, Ner's son, had come to the king and that David had sent him off in peace.

<sup>24</sup>Joab went to the king and asked, "What have you done? Abner came to you here! Why did you send him off? Now he's gotten away! <sup>25</sup>Don't you know the evil ways of Abner, Ner's son?" He came to trick you, to find out where you come and go, and to learn everything you do!"

<sup>26</sup>Joab left David and sent messengers after Abner. They brought him back from the well at Sirah, but David didn't know anything of this. <sup>27</sup>When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside next to<sup>v</sup> the gate to speak with him in private. But instead Joab stabbed Abner in the stomach, and he died for shedding the blood of Asahel, Joab's brother.

<sup>28</sup>When David heard about this later, he said, "I and my kingdom are forever innocent before the LORD concerning the shedding of the blood of Abner, Ner's son. <sup>29</sup>May it fall upon the head of Joab and his entire family tree! May Joab's family never be without someone with a discharge or a skin disease,<sup>w</sup> someone who uses a crutch,<sup>x</sup> someone who dies by the sword, or someone who is hungry!"

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT adds *that belongs to Judah*. <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain; LXX lacks *Who will own the land?* <sup>c</sup>Or *soul* <sup>d</sup>LXX; MT *You know Abner, Ner's son*. <sup>e</sup>LXX; MT *to the middle of* <sup>f</sup>Traditionally *leprosy*, a term used for several different skin diseases <sup>g</sup>Or *who holds a spindle*

3:20 Jgs 14:10;  
1Ch 12:39;  
Est 1:3

3:24 Nm 23:11;  
2Sa 3:8, 2Sa 19:5,  
2Sa 20:9-10

3:25 Gn 42:9,  
Gn 42:12,  
Dt 28:6;  
1Sa 29:6;  
2Sa 3:27

3:26 2Sa 3:27

3:27 2Sa 2:23,  
2Sa 20:9-10,  
2Sa 23:24;  
1Ki 2:5

3:28 Nm 35:33;  
2Sa 3:37; 1Ki 2:5

3:29 Lv 15:2;  
1Ki 2:31

it's clear that Abner is the power behind the throne, and Ishbosheth is afraid of him (3:6, 11). Ishbosheth accuses Abner of improperly engaging in sexual relations with one of Saul's wives (3:7-8). Such an act could indeed be interpreted as a violation of royal privilege. This is seen in the later account of Absalom, who used such sexual acts to lay claim to David's throne (2 Sam 16:20-22). In anger Abner threatens to deliver Saul's kingdom to David (3:9-10).

3:12-21 Abner opens negotiations with David to unify the kingdom under his rule, and he consults with the elders of Israel (3:12, 17). David has one condition: Saul's daughter Michal must be returned to him as his wife. Even Ishbosheth participates in ordering that Michal be taken

from Paltiel, the husband Saul had arranged for her in opposition to David (3:13-15). With an entourage of 20 men, Abner is welcomed into David's camp as an honored guest, and Abner leaves to arrange an assembly of Israel to form a relationship with David as king (3:20-21).

3:22-30 Three times it's mentioned that David sent Abner away in peace (3:21, 22, 23), and when Joab hears this news he can't believe that David has agreed to deal with Abner. He believes Abner to be evil and treacherous (3:24-25). Without David's knowledge, Joab sends messengers to bring Abner back to Hebron. He then takes Abner aside and kills him with a knife in his stomach as revenge for his brother Asahel (3:27; see 2 Sam 2:12-32). David's reaction

3:30 1Sa 26:6;  
2Sa 2:12,  
2Sa 2:18-19,  
2Sa 2:23  
4:8 1Sa 18:11,  
1Sa 19:2,  
1Sa 23:15,  
1Sa 24:4,  
1Sa 25:29

<sup>30</sup>So that is how Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner, because he killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.

<sup>31</sup>Then David ordered Joab and all the troops who were with him, "Tear your clothes and put on funeral clothes! Mourn for Abner!" King David himself walked behind the body. <sup>32</sup>They buried Abner in Hebron. The king wept loudly at Abner's grave. All the troops cried too. <sup>33</sup>Then the king sang this funeral song<sup>7</sup> for Abner:

"Should Abner have died like a fool dies?

<sup>34</sup>Your hands weren't bound,  
your feet weren't chained,  
but you have fallen  
like someone falls before the wicked."

Then the troops cried over Abner again.

<sup>35</sup>Then all the soldiers came to urge David to eat something while it was still day, but David swore, "May God deal harshly with me and worse still if I eat bread or anything else before the sun goes down." <sup>36</sup>All the troops took notice of this and were pleased by it. Indeed, everything that the king did pleased them. <sup>37</sup>So on that day all the troops and all Israel knew that it wasn't the king's idea to kill Abner, Ner's son.

<sup>38</sup>The king told his soldiers, "Don't you know that a prince and a great man in Israel has fallen today? <sup>39</sup>And today, though I am the anointed king, I am weak. These men, Zeruiah's sons, are too strong for me.\* May the LORD repay the one who does evil according to the evil they did!"

### *Ishbosheth murdered*

**4** When Ishbosheth,<sup>a</sup> Saul's son, heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost his courage,<sup>b</sup> and all Israel was alarmed. <sup>2</sup>Saul's son had two men who led the raiding parties—one was named Baanah and the other Rechab. Both were sons of Rimmon, a Benjaminite from Beeroth. (Beeroth was considered part of Benjamin. <sup>3</sup>The people of Beeroth had fled to Gittaim and even now live there as immigrants.)

<sup>4</sup>Now Saul's son Jonathan had a boy whose feet were crippled. He was only 5 years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and so his nurse snatched him up and fled. But as she hurried to get away, he fell and was injured. His name was Mephibosheth.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Rechab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon from Beeroth, set out and reached Ishbosheth's house at the heat of the day, right when he was lying down, taking an afternoon rest. <sup>6</sup>They went straight into his house, as if getting wheat,<sup>d</sup> and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and his brother Baanah escaped. <sup>7</sup>They had entered the house while Ishbosheth was lying on the bed in his bedroom. After they stabbed him and killed him, they cut off his head, took it, and traveled all night through the wilderness.

<sup>8</sup>They brought Ishbosheth's head to David at Hebron. "Here is the head of Ishbosheth," they told the king, "the son of Saul your enemy, who wanted you dead. Today the LORD has avenged our master<sup>e</sup> the king on Saul and his descendants."

<sup>7</sup>Or lament <sup>a</sup>Or more ruthless than me; DSS (4QSam<sup>a</sup>) lacks this clause. <sup>b</sup>Heb lacks *Ishbosheth*; LXX, DSS (4QSam<sup>a</sup>) *Mephibosheth*; cf 4:4 and the note at 2 Sam 2:8. <sup>c</sup>Or *his hands grew weak* <sup>d</sup>Called *Merib-baal* in 1 Chron 8:34; 9:40. See the note at 2 Sam 2:8. <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Or *my master*

is immediate. He declares his own innocence in Abner's death, and curses Joab and his family (3:28-29).

3:31-39 David clearly has a political problem. He must convince Israel that he is innocent in the death of Abner. David orders elaborate mourning rituals and burial rites, and he joins personally and visibly in the mourning. He even composes a funeral lament for Abner (3:33-34). David refuses to eat, expressing himself very publicly in his grief over and praise of Abner. He even laments his inability to control Joab and his brother (3:36-39). As we will see in later events, he seems to succeed in distancing himself from involvement in these events.

4:1-3, 5-12 Without Abner, Ishbosheth is ineffective in this rule of the northern kingdom. Two Benjaminites, Rechab and Baanah, take advantage of the situation by walking

into Ishbosheth's house and assassinating him (4:5-7). They bring Ishbosheth's head to David, hoping for favor from him (4:8), but they have misjudged David. David himself wouldn't take the life of Saul when he had the opportunity (1 Sam 24; 26), and he doesn't desire vengeance against Ishbosheth as a survivor of the house of Saul. David's justice is swift and harsh. They pay for Ishbosheth's life with their own lives (4:11-12).

4:4 In the middle of the story of Ishbosheth's death we find a small note about a son of Jonathan. His name was Mephibosheth, although his name is reported as Meribaal in 1 Chronicles 8:34; 9:40. This is probably another instance where the historian, offended by the element of Baal's name in an Israelite name, has substituted the word for "shame" (see note on 2 Sam 2:8). This brief note prepares

<sup>9</sup>David answered Rechab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon from Beeroth, "As surely as the LORD lives, who has rescued me<sup>f</sup> from all kinds of trouble," he told them, <sup>10</sup>"when someone told me Saul was dead back in Ziklag, thinking he was bringing good news, I grabbed him and killed him. That was the reward I gave him for his news! <sup>11</sup>What do you think I'll do when evil people kill a righteous person in his own house on his own bed? Why shouldn't I demand his blood from your hands and rid the earth of you both?"

<sup>12</sup>So David gave the order to his servants, and they killed Rechab and Baanah, cutting off their hands and feet and hanging them up by the pool at Hebron. But they took Ishbosheth's head and buried it in the grave of Abner at Hebron.

**David becomes king of Israel and Judah**

**5** All the Israelite tribes came to David at Hebron and said, "Listen: We are your very own flesh and bone. <sup>2</sup>In the past, when Saul ruled over us, you were the one who led Israel out to war and back. What's more, the LORD told you, You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will be Israel's leader.

<sup>3</sup>So all the Israelite elders came to the king at Hebron. King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.

<sup>4</sup>David was 30 years old when he became king, and he ruled for forty years. <sup>5</sup>He ruled over Judah for seven and a half years in Hebron. He ruled thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah in Jerusalem.

**Jerusalem is captured**

<sup>6</sup>The king and his troops marched on Jerusalem against the Jebusites, who inhabited the territory. The Jebusites said to David, "You'll never get us in here! Even the blind and the lame will beat you back!" "David will never enter here," they said to each other.<sup>g</sup> <sup>7</sup>But David did capture the fortress of Zion—which became David's City. <sup>8</sup>"On that day," David said, "whoever attacks the Jebusites should strike the windpipe because David hates the lame and the blind."<sup>b</sup> That is why people say, "The blind and the lame will not enter the temple."<sup>i</sup>

<sup>9</sup>David occupied the fortress, so it was renamed David's City. David built a city around it from the earthen terraces<sup>j</sup> inward.<sup>k</sup> <sup>10</sup>David grew increasingly powerful, and the LORD of heavenly forces was with him.

<sup>11</sup>Tyre's King Hiram sent messengers to David with cedar logs, bricklayers, and carpenters to build David a palace. <sup>12</sup>Then David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that his kingship was held in great honor for the sake of his people Israel. <sup>13</sup>After he left Hebron, David married more secondary wives in Jerusalem and fathered more sons

<sup>f</sup>Or my life or my soul <sup>g</sup>Or they thought; Heb lacks to each other. <sup>h</sup>Or take the water shaft against the lame and the blind who hate David; Heb uncertain <sup>i</sup>Or palace <sup>j</sup>Heb Millo <sup>k</sup>DSS (4QSam\*); MT lacks city.

us for a later encounter between David and Mephibosheth (2 Sam 9). The note informs us that as a five-year-old child Mephibosheth fell and was permanently injured.

5:1-5 The leaders of the tribes of Israel now come to David. They recall David's military leadership even under Saul, and acknowledge the Lord's intent that David should lead all Israel. In this light they make a covenant with David and anoint him as king. David is 30 years old and will rule for 40 years, seven and a half from Hebron, and 33 years from Jerusalem.

5:6-10 Jerusalem wasn't an Israelite city. It was the city of a Canaanite group known as the Jebusites. With no hint of motivation or preparation, David marches on Jerusalem. We can speculate, however, since Jerusalem isn't the possession of Israel or Judah, but on the border with both, that it makes an attractive neutral capital. The Jebusites are so confident, they boast that even the blind and the lame can defend the city (5:6). David doesn't really conquer the city. He takes it by stealth. Jerusalem becomes literally David's City (5:9), belonging to neither Israel nor Judah. David fortifies the city further, and most believe that David was able to incorporate the Jebusites with their skills in commercial trade into his administration without

having violently conquered them. In the last verse we find the final statement that God was with David, in a formula that most believe is the conclusion of a collection of traditions often called the Rise of David (5:10).

5:11-10:19 This section presents traditions from David's reign as king that show his actions and challenges as a ruler. Although David became king separately over north and south in Israel, he now consolidates his kingdom and provides security and prosperity.

5:11-12 Phoenicia's King Hiram, over Tyre, seems to send materials to build David a palace to honor him and establish a strong relationship. In fact, the relationship with the Phoenician kings functions as an important cornerstone of Israel's economic security for many generations to come. David regards this honor from Hiram as further evidence that the Lord is the true power that has established him as king of Israel.

5:13-16 secondary wives: Kings in David's time often had large numbers of wives and other women available to them. David is no exception. Secondary wives, called concubines in old English, are women available to the king sexually, but they aren't legal wives, and their sons would normally have no legal status (e.g., inheritance of

4:11 Gn 9:5-6; Ps 9:12  
5:1 Gn 29:14; 1Ch 11:1  
5:1-3 1Ch 11:1-3  
5:2 1Sa 13:14; 1Sa 18:13; 1Sa 18:16; 1Sa 25:30; 2Sa 7:7  
5:4-5 1Ki 2:11, 10; 1Ch 3:4; 1Ch 29:26-30  
5:6 Josh 15:63; Jgs 1:21; 1Ch 11:4  
5:6-10 1Ch 11:4-9  
5:7 2Sa 5:9; 2Sa 6:12; 2Sa 6:16; 1Ki 2:10; 1Ki 8:1  
5:8 1Ch 11:6; 2Ch 32:30; Mt 21:14  
5:9 2Sa 5:7; 1Ki 9:15; 1Ki 9:24; 1Ki 11:27  
5:11-12 1Ch 14:1-2  
5:13-16 1Ch 3:5-9; 1Ch 14:3-7

5:17 1Ch 14:8

5:18 Josh 15:8;

Josh 17:15;

Josh 18:16;

2Sa 23:13-17;

1Ch 11:15-19;

1Ch 14:9

5:19 1Sa 23:2;

1Sa 23:4;

1Sa 30:8; 2Sa 2:1;

2Sa 5:23

5:19 2:1

1Ch 14:10-12

5:22-25

1Ch 14:13-17

5:1 4:1

1Ch 13:1-14

5:1 1Ch 13:1;

1Ch 13:5

5:1 25:22;

Josh 15:9;

1Sa 4:4; 1Sa 7:1;

Ps 80:1

*Two Kingdoms* The transition from a cooperative alliance of tribes to a kingdom wasn't a smooth one. Even in the stories of Judges the tribes that responded to various military threats seldom included all of Israel's tribes. Saul, Israel's first king, was a Benjamite. His greatest influence and support came from the northern Israelite tribes. David was from the tribe of Judah, which possessed a very large tribal territory and was practically the only southern tribe. Although men from Judah supported and fought with Saul (David's brothers were in Saul's army, 1 Sam 17), when David became a fugitive from Saul he was able to hide and stay ahead of capture by Saul in part because he was on home territory in Judah. The challenge for both of Israel's first two kings was to cultivate a national identity beyond tribal loyalties.

After Saul's death it is clear that a division still exists between north and south. David is immediately proclaimed king in Judah and makes his capital in Hebron. It is only years later, and after some actual conflict, that the elders of the northern tribes of Israel make him king. They have few alternatives.

David simultaneously now rules over two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. By force of his leadership, he will hold Israel and Judah together in a growing Davidic empire that will also include some of the neighboring non-Israelite territories (2 Sam 8). His son Solomon will inherit this unified Israelite kingdom, but his son won't be able to hold it together and the kingdom will divide forever into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah (1 Kgs 12). The seeds for this division are already present in the separate kingships given to David.

and daughters. <sup>14</sup>The names of his children in Jerusalem were as follows: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, <sup>15</sup>Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, <sup>16</sup>Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

#### David defeats the Philistines

<sup>17</sup>When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they all marched up to find him, but David heard of it and went down to the fortress. <sup>18</sup>The Philistines arrived and spread out over the Rephaim Valley. <sup>19</sup>David asked the LORD, "Should I attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?"

"Attack them," the LORD replied, "because I will definitely hand the Philistines over to you."

<sup>20</sup>So David arrived at Baal-perazim and defeated the Philistines there. He said, "The LORD has burst out against my enemies, the way water bursts out!" That is why that place is called Baal-perazim. <sup>21</sup>The Philistines left their divine images behind, and David and his men carried them off.

<sup>22</sup>Once again the Philistines came up and spread out across the Rephaim Valley. <sup>23</sup>When David asked the LORD, God replied, "Don't attack them directly. Circle around behind them and come at them from in front of the balsam trees. <sup>24</sup>As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the trees, then attack, for God has attacked in front of you to defeat the Philistine army." <sup>25</sup>David followed God's orders exactly, and they defeated the Philistine army from Gibeon all the way to Gezer.

#### God's chest is brought to Jerusalem

**6** Once again David assembled the select warriors of Israel, thirty thousand strong. <sup>2</sup>David and all the troops who were with him set out for Baalah, which is Kiriath-jearim of

<sup>1</sup>Baal-perazim means *the lord* (Heb *baal*) of *breaking out*; see note at 2 Sam 6:8.

the throne). At least one of these sons, Solomon, is actually to become David's successor. The text doesn't bother to name these women, and the children named are sons only. Solomon is the only one of these sons who appears later in the story. Solomon, David's successor, will carry even further these practices of polygamy (1 Kgs 11:3).

5:17-21 David will finally give Israel release from the Philistine occupation that has continued for over a generation in Israel. David already had a reputation as an effective military commander for Saul against the Philistines. Upon hearing that he has become king over all Israel, and Saul's successor, the Philistines clearly decide to take the initiative and deal with him immediately (5:17). As is his custom, David prays to God for guidance (5:19), and the Lord approves of an attack on these enemies. David

wins a great victory, even capturing Philistine idols in their hasty retreat.

5:22-25 The Philistines don't give up easily. They have dominated this region for a generation. So they mount a second campaign to deal with David (5:22). Again David prays to God. By following God's guidance, he adopts a strategy to circle the Philistines and strike from an unexpected direction (5:23). This effective strategy drives the Philistines back into their home territory in Gezer. There is only one more brief note on David in conflict with the Philistines (2 Sam 8:1). While their territory is never conquered by him, he effectively limits their movements to the coastal plain around their original five cities. They never appear as a serious threat to Israel again.

6:1-19 David now turns his attention to the Lord's

Judah,<sup>m</sup> to bring God's chest up from there—the chest that is called by the name<sup>n</sup> of the LORD of heavenly forces, who sits enthroned on the winged creatures.<sup>3</sup> They loaded God's chest on a new cart and carried it from Abinadab's house, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's sons, were driving the new cart.<sup>4o</sup> Uzzah was beside God's chest while Ahio was walking in front of it.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, David and the entire house of Israel celebrated in the LORD's presence with all their strength, with songs,<sup>p</sup> zithers, harps, tambourines, rattles, and cymbals.

<sup>6</sup>When they approached Nacon's threshing floor, Uzzah reached out to God's chest and grabbed it because the oxen had stumbled.<sup>9</sup> <sup>7</sup>The LORD became angry at Uzzah, and God struck him there because of his mistake,<sup>r</sup> and he died there next to God's chest.<sup>8</sup> Then David got angry because the LORD's anger lashed out against Uzzah, and so that place is called Perez-uzzah today.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>David was frightened by the LORD that day. "How will I ever bring the LORD's chest to me?" he asked.<sup>10</sup> So David didn't take the chest away with him to David's City. Instead, he had it put in the house of Obed-edom, who was from Gath.<sup>11</sup> The LORD's chest stayed with Obed-edom's household in Gath for three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom's household and all that he had.

<sup>12</sup>King David was told, "The LORD has blessed Obed-edom's family and everything he has because of God's chest being there."<sup>14</sup> So David went and brought God's chest up from Obed-edom's house to David's City with celebration.<sup>13</sup> Whenever those bearing the chest advanced six steps, David sacrificed an ox and a fatling calf.<sup>14</sup> David, dressed in a linen priestly vest,<sup>15</sup> danced with all his strength before the LORD.<sup>15</sup> This is how David and the entire house of Israel brought up the LORD's chest with shouts and trumpet blasts.

<sup>16</sup>As the LORD's chest entered David's City, Saul's daughter Michal was watching from a window. She saw King David jumping and dancing before the LORD, and she lost all respect for him.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>The LORD's chest was brought in and put in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it. Then David offered entirely burned offerings in the LORD's presence in addition to well-being sacrifices.<sup>18</sup> When David finished offering the entirely burned offerings and the well-being sacrifices, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of heavenly forces.<sup>19</sup> He distributed food among all the people of Israel—to the whole crowd, male and female—each receiving a loaf of bread, a date cake, and a raisin cake. Then all the people went back to their homes.

<sup>20</sup>David went home to bless his household, but Saul's daughter Michal came out to meet

<sup>m</sup>DSS (4QSam<sup>1</sup>), 1 Chron 13:6; MT from *Baale-judah* <sup>n</sup>MT repeats *name*, but 1 Chron 13:6 omits one of these and LXX reads the first as *there*. <sup>o</sup>LXX, DSS (4QSam<sup>1</sup>), 1 Chron 13:7; MT repeats *they carried it from the house of Abinadab on the hill*; Uzzah has dropped out and must be restored. <sup>p</sup>LXX, DSS (4QSam<sup>1</sup>), 1 Chron 13:8; MT with *all sorts of pine instruments* <sup>q</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>r</sup>Heb uncertain; LXX lacks this phrase; cf Targ, Syr, 1 Chron 13:10 *because he had placed his hand on the chest*. <sup>s</sup>*Perez-uzzah* means *Uzzah-outbreak*; cf 2 Sam 5:20. <sup>t</sup>Heb lacks *being there*. <sup>u</sup>Heb *ephod* <sup>v</sup>Or *despised him for it*

covenant chest that was once lost to the Philistines, who then sent it back into Israelite territory on a cart (1 Sam 6; see sidebar, "The Lord's Covenant Chest" at 1 Sam 5). Although David seems to simply take a large group of men to retrieve the sacred chest, Psalm 132 tells us that he had to make a search for it, finding it in *Kiriath-jearim*, a Gibeonite town, in the household of Abinadab (6:1-3; 1 Sam 7:1). The longer name for the chest reminds us that it represents the enthroned presence of the Lord in the midst of Israel, with the power of God's heavenly armies (6:2). It is David's intent to bring the Lord's sacred chest to Jerusalem in a procession of honor, with music and dancing and properly accompanied by the priestly sons of Abinadab (6:4). One of these sons, Uzzah, reaches out to keep the chest steady when the oxen stumble, and he touches the chest. He is immediately struck dead (6:6-7). This sacred chest must not be defiled by human touch, which is why it was normally carried on poles. David responds initially with anger (6:8), but perhaps his more genuine response is reported a verse later: He is frightened (6:9).

How can he bring such a dangerous object into Jerusalem? David lodges the chest containing the covenant at the house of Obed-edom for three months. When he sees that Obed-edom's household prospers (6:10-11), David decides he can bring the chest to Jerusalem, but takes careful precautions, sacrificing to God with every advance of the chest. Furthermore, David himself, dressed only in a priestly undergarment, dances before the chest and the Lord as it makes its way into Jerusalem (6:13-15). In a shift of scene we are told that David's wife, Michal, Saul's daughter, observed this scene and disapproved (6:16). With offerings, sacrifices, ritual, and distribution of food to the crowd, David installs the chest in a tent sanctuary (6:17-19). This would be similar to its setting at Shiloh before the Philistine destruction, and is a reminder of its origins in the wilderness with Moses (see sidebar, "Jerusalem"). 6:20-25 The episode involving God's chest being brought to Jerusalem doesn't end with celebration. It ends with a confrontation between David and Michal, Saul's daughter. Her reported disapproval of David's dancing (2 Sam 6:16)

6:4 1Sa 7:1;  
1Ch 13:7  
6:5 1Sa 18:6;  
1Ch 13:8;  
Ps 150:3,  
Ps 150:5  
6:6 Nm 4:15;  
Nm 4:19;  
1Ch 13:9  
6:7 1Sa 6:19,  
1Sa 25:38  
6:10 1Ch 13:13,  
1Ch 15:18,  
1Ch 26:4  
6:12-19  
1Ch 15:1-16:3  
6:14 Ex 15:20;  
1Sa 2:18;  
Ps 150:4  
6:17 1Ki 8:62;  
1Ch 15:1,  
1Ch 16:1,  
2Ch 1:4  
6:18 Ex 39:43;  
Lv 9:22;  
1Ki 8:14,  
1Ki 8:55;  
1Ch 16:2  
6:19 1Ch 16:3;  
Hos 3:1  
6:19-22  
1Ch 16:37-43  
6:20 Jgs 9:4;  
1Sa 19:24;  
2Sa 6:14,  
2Sa 6:16

6:23 1Sa 14:49.

1Sa 15:35.

1Sa 18:20.

1Sa 18:27.

1Sa 19:12

7:1-3 1Ch 17:1-2

7:2 Ex 26:1;

2Sa 5:11.

2Sa 12:1;

1Ch 29:29

7:3 1Sa 10:7;

1Ki 8:17-18;

1Ch 22:7.

1Ch 28:2

7:4 2Sa 7:17;

1Ch 17:3

7:4-7

1Ch 17:3-15

7:5 1Ki 5:3;

1Ch 22:8

*Jerusalem* Jerusalem is universally regarded as the central city for the Israelite/Jewish tradition, but most forget that until the time of David, Jerusalem was a Jebusite city and doesn't figure much at all in the biblical tradition. It is perhaps to be identified with the city of Salem and its priestly king Melchizedek, who blesses Abram in Genesis 14:17-24 (cf. Heb 5:5-10). However, it is David who places Jerusalem in the center of Israel's tradition.

When David becomes king, first of Judah, then of Israel, he is faced with a strategic problem. If he keeps his capital in Hebron, he will seem to favor Judah, and geographically it isn't central to the kingdom. If he moves his capital north to Gibeah, which was Saul's capital, or anywhere in northern Israel, he risks alienating the leaders of Judah who first made him king.

Jerusalem is David's brilliant solution to this problem. It is located near the border between northern Israel and the territory of Judah. It already occupies important trading routes through the central highlands and has a population of tradespeople and merchants. By taking the city through stealth rather than violent conquest (2 Sam 5:6-9), David doesn't risk alienating the city. He replaces the Jebusite ruler and becomes himself the king of Jerusalem. It is now quite literally "David's City." There is every reason to believe that David allows, even needs, the life of the city as a trade center to continue relatively unchanged. Now he has available for the development of his kingdom a class of tradespeople, merchants, and scribes. Most important, he has a capital identified with neither northern Israel nor Judah.

Yet Jerusalem has no identification with Israelite history and tradition. In Genesis 14:18-20 a priestly king named Melchizedek of Salem comes out to bring Abram bread and wine and to bless him. Salem may well be Jerusalem, and in Psalm 110:4, in a royal psalm of David, God declares that the king who rules from Zion is "a priest forever in line with Melchizedek." David now takes a brilliant action. He brings Israelite tradition to Jerusalem by searching for the Lord's covenant chest, bringing it with great ceremony to Jerusalem, and installing the chest there in its own tent sanctuary (2 Sam 6). Jerusalem is now both the political and the religious center of the Israelite kingdom. David is king, but also the chief supporter of the religious tradition. He even wants to build a temple for the chest (2 Sam 7:2), but this won't happen until his son Solomon takes the throne. Nevertheless, a new tradition has begun, linking the throne of David and the presence of God on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

him. "How did Israel's king honor himself today?" she said. "By exposing himself in plain view of the female servants of his subjects like any indecent person would!"

<sup>21</sup>David replied to Michal, "I was celebrating before the LORD, who chose me over your father and his entire family, and who appointed me leader over the LORD's people, over Israel—and I will celebrate before the LORD again! <sup>22</sup>I may humiliate myself even more, and I may be humbled in my own eyes, but I will be honored by the female servants you are talking about!"

<sup>23</sup>Michal, Saul's daughter, had no children to the day she died.

### *God's promise to David*

**7**When the king was settled in his palace,<sup>1</sup> and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, <sup>2</sup>the king said to the prophet Nathan, "Look! I'm living in a cedar palace, but God's chest is housed in a tent!"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Nathan said to the king, "Go ahead and do whatever you are thinking, because the LORD is with you."

<sup>4</sup>But that very night the LORD's word came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup>Go to my servant David and tell him: This is what the LORD says: You are not the one to build the temple for me to live in. <sup>6</sup>In fact, I haven't lived in a temple from the day I brought Israel out of Egypt until now. Instead, I have been traveling around in a tent and in a dwelling. <sup>7</sup>Throughout my traveling around

<sup>1</sup>Or *house*; the same Heb word (*beth*) appears with different nuances (*house, temple, palace, dynasty, family*) in 7:2, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 25-26, 27, 29. <sup>2</sup>Or *among curtains*

is now made clear to David. She regards his dancing as a spectacle unseemly for a king, and indecent because it exposed his nakedness to even the serving women (6:20). David responds forcefully that he was honoring the Lord and will do so again. In passing he reminds her that the Lord chose him over her father and his entire family (6:21-22). The final report of the chapter is that Michal had no

children (6:23). This could mean that David set her aside as a wife or that God gave her no children. In any case, the purpose of this account may well be to make clear that Saul's line is ended, and even David won't father any of Saul's descendants who might claim the throne.

7:1-17 This is the most important theological passage in the books of Samuel. God announces through the

with the Israelites, did I ever ask any of Israel's tribal leaders I appointed to shepherd my people: Why haven't you built me a cedar temple?

<sup>9</sup>So then, say this to my servant David: This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be leader over my people Israel. <sup>9</sup>I've been with you wherever you've gone, and I've eliminated all your enemies before you. Now I will make your name great—like the name of the greatest people on earth. <sup>10</sup>I'm going to provide a place for my people Israel, and plant them so that they may live there and no longer be disturbed. Cruel people will no longer trouble them, as they had been earlier, <sup>11</sup>when I appointed leaders over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies.

And the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make a dynasty for you. <sup>12</sup>When the time comes for you to die and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your descendant—one of your very own children—to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup>He will build a temple for my name, and I will establish his royal throne forever. <sup>14</sup>I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to me. Whenever he does wrong, I will discipline him with a human rod, with blows from human beings. <sup>15</sup>But I will never take my faithful love away from him like I took it away from Saul, whom I set aside in favor of you. <sup>16</sup>Your dynasty and your kingdom will be secured forever before me.<sup>7</sup> Your throne will be established forever.

<sup>17</sup>Nathan reported all of these words and this entire vision to David.

7:8 1Sa 16:11;  
2Sa 6:21;  
Ps 78:70  
7:9 1Sa 18:14;  
2Sa 5:10;  
Ps 18:37  
7:10 Ps 89:22  
7:11 Jgs 2:14;  
1Sa 12:9; 2Sa 7:1;  
2Sa 7:27  
7:12 1Ki 2:1;  
1Ki 8:20;  
Ps 132:11;  
Ac 13:36  
7:13 1Ki 5:5;  
1Ki 6:12;  
1Ki 8:19  
7:14 Dt 8:5;  
Ps 89:26;  
Ps 89:30; Heb 1:5  
7:15 1Sa 15:28;  
1Sa 16:14;  
1Ki 11:13  
7:16 2Sa 7:13;  
Ps 89:36;  
Ps 89:37; Lk 1:33

*God's Covenant with David* In the unfolding biblical story, this promise to David stands alongside God's covenant promises to Noah, Abraham, and Moses. The covenants are key moments in the unfolding story of God's commitment to be engaged in the human historical experience. Like the covenants with Noah and Abraham, the form is of an eternal promise, unlike the conditional character of the covenant with Moses and Israel at Mount Sinai. Through the prophet Nathan, God promises David an everlasting dynasty. In Psalm 132:11-12 this promise to David seems to have a conditional element: "The LORD swore to David a true promise that God won't take back: 'I will put one of your own children on your throne. And if your children keep my covenant and the laws that I will teach them, then their children too will rule on your throne forever.'" But in 2 Samuel 7:14-15 God promises only to chastise unfaithful kings, but not to take the kingdom away from David's dynasty. This notion of an eternal dynasty for David clearly prevails during the time of the later prophets, such as Jeremiah. This is why the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of Davidic kings in Babylonian exile during the time of Jeremiah is such a theological shock.

The "Davidic royal theology" held the belief that God's grace in Israel was now known in the promise of eternal dynasty to David but also in the view that God would dwell forever on Mount Zion (see Ps 132:16-18). Exile not only ended the Davidic kingship but destroyed the temple. Hope in this Davidic theology was projected into the future when God would once again designate an anointed one (Heb. *Messiah*; Gk. *Christos*) and bring in his kingdom. Early Christians saw Jesus as born in the line of David and ushering in God's kingdom.

The promise to David highlights the risky commitment God makes to live with us in the tension between faith commitment and political engagement. The pressure is to resolve this tension in either direction: unengaged piety or co-opted ideological religion. We are tempted to hold religion aloof from engagement in the political world or to make religion the servant of ideologies that aren't grounded in faith values. The promise of God to David is now our promise that God will live with us in the tension between God's kingdom and our human kingdoms.

<sup>7</sup>LXX (cf 7:26, 29); MT you

prophet Nathan a covenant commitment to the dynasty of David (see sidebar, "God's Covenant with David"). The entire passage makes creative use of a play on the various possible uses for the Hebrew word meaning "house." David lives in a lavish house (palace) made out of cedar imported from Tyre (7:1; cf. 2 Sam 5:11). He expresses to the prophet Nathan his discomfort that the sacred covenant chest is housed in a tent (7:2). The implication, which Nathan later confirms, is that David wants to build a house (temple) for the Lord. Nathan's first response is that the Lord is with David, so he should go ahead (7:3), but the Lord speaks to Nathan, who returns to David with the word that he won't be the one to build a house (temple)

for the Lord (7:5). Nathan's speech to David defends the idea that God has never asked for a temple, but has been content to dwell in a tent sanctuary (7:6-7). This may seem at first like a rebuke to David, except for what follows. God reviews the divine involvement with David from the time he was a shepherd to the present. Through David, God is giving Israel rest from enemies and establishing a secure kingdom (7:8-10), but now God will establish the house (dynasty) of David (2 Sam 6:11). This dynasty and its kingdom will be forever (7:16). Further, God promises that David's son will build the house (temple) of the Lord (7:12-13). This will, of course, be Solomon. The sons who come later in the line of David may be chastised by God, but God

7:18 Ex 3:11;

1Sa 18:18;  
1Ch 17:167:18-29  
1Ch 17:16-271:10 1Ch 17:17;  
Is 55:87:27 2Sa 7:11;  
1Ki 11:38

7:27 1Ch 18:1

8:2 1Ch 18:2

7:27 1:7-8;  
1Ki 11:23-24;  
1Ch 18:3, 4; 7:88:5-6  
1Ch 18:5-6**David's prayer**

<sup>18</sup>Then King David went and sat in the LORD's presence. He asked:

Who am I, LORD God, and of what significance is my family that you have brought me this far? <sup>19</sup>But even this was too small in your eyes, LORD God! Now you have also spoken about your servant's dynasty in the future and the generation to come.<sup>a</sup> LORD God!

<sup>20</sup>What more can David say to you? You know your servant, LORD God. <sup>21</sup>For the sake of your word and according to your own will, you have done this great thing so that your servant would know it.

<sup>22</sup>That is why you are so great, LORD God! No one can compare to you, no god except you, just as we have always heard with our own ears.

<sup>23</sup>And who can compare to your people Israel? They are the one nation on earth that God redeemed as his own people, establishing his name by doing great and awesome things for them,<sup>a</sup> by driving out nations and their gods before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt.<sup>b</sup> <sup>24</sup>You established your people Israel as your own people forever, and you, LORD, became their God.

<sup>25</sup>Now, LORD God, confirm forever the promise you have made about your servant and his dynasty. Do just as you have promised <sup>26</sup>so that your name will be great forever when people say, "The LORD of heavenly forces is Israel's God!" May your servant David's household be established before you, <sup>27</sup>because you, LORD of heavenly forces, Israel's God, have revealed to your servant that you will build a dynasty for him. That is why your servant has found the courage to pray this prayer to you.

<sup>28</sup>LORD God, you are truly God! Your words are trustworthy, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. <sup>29</sup>So now willingly bless your servant's dynasty so that it might continue forever before you, because you, LORD God, have promised. Let your servant's dynasty be blessed forever by your blessing.

**David's wars**

**O** Some time later, David defeated the Philistines and subdued them. David captured **O**Metheg-ammah from Philistine control.

<sup>2</sup>David also defeated the Moabites and made them lie on the ground, measuring them with a rope. He measured two rope lengths for those who were to be killed and one rope length for those who were to be spared. The Moabites became David's subjects and brought him tribute.

<sup>3</sup>Next David defeated Zobah's King Hadadezer, Rehob's son, as Hadadezer was on his way to put<sup>c</sup> his monument along the Euphrates River.<sup>d</sup> <sup>4</sup>David captured one thousand chariots, seven hundred charioteers,<sup>e</sup> and twenty thousand foot soldiers. He cut the hamstrings of all but one hundred of the chariot horses. <sup>5</sup>When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Zobah's King Hadadezer, David killed twenty-two thousand of them. <sup>6</sup>David set up forts

<sup>a</sup>Correction; Heb uncertain *this is the law of humankind* <sup>b</sup>Or you (plural) <sup>c</sup>LXX, 1 Chron 17:21; MT *for your land before your people whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, the nations and their gods* <sup>d</sup>Or to restore <sup>e</sup>DSS(4QSam\*), 1 Chron 18:3 <sup>f</sup>LXX, DSS(4QSam\*), 1 Chron 18:4; MT *seventeen hundred chariots*

promises not to take either faithful love or the kingdom away as happened with Saul (7:14-15). This eternal promise to the line of David becomes the foundation of what is often referred to as the Davidic royal theology.

7:18-29 It is fitting that David's own prayer follows God's promise to David through Nathan. Many previous accounts portray David as a man who routinely takes matters to God in prayer (see sidebar, "David and Prayer" at 1 Sam 23). These verses constitute one of the longer actual prayers in scripture (apart from the Psalms). The prayer opens in praise of God, particularly in showing favor to David himself (7:18-22). David humbly expresses his own insignificance compared to God. But David also acknowledges what God has done for Israel, rescuing them from Egypt and establishing them as God's own people (7:23-24). This establishes the context for what could be seen as David's arrogant demand of God, because David prays

for the confirmation and fulfillment of the promise to establish his dynasty (7:25-28). But this now is understood as a continuation of the gracious work of God toward Israel from the exodus onward.

8:1 A description of David's defeat of the Philistines, reported more fully in 2 Samuel 5:17-25, begins a chapter detailing David's victories over Israel's enemies. The Philistine victory lays the foundation for further advancement in the region.

8:2 David defeats the Moabites to the east of Israel across the Dead Sea, and they become a subject kingdom.

8:3-8 David next encounters King Hadadezer of Zobah, an Aramean territory north of Damascus. This conflict widens into a general Aramean conflict when Damascus itself comes to Hadadezer's aid (8:5). David sets up outposts, exacts tribute, and incorporates Aramean territory into his growing empire (8:6-8). This is the beginning of



among the Arameans of Damascus. And the Arameans became David's subjects and brought him tribute. The LORD gave David victory wherever he went. <sup>7</sup>David took the gold shields carried by Hadadezer's servants and brought them to Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup>King David also took a large amount of bronze from Tebah<sup>f</sup> and Berothai, towns that belonged to Hadadezer.

<sup>9</sup>When Hamath's King Toi heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer, <sup>10</sup>he sent his son Joram to King David to wish him well and congratulate him on his battle and defeat of Hadadezer, because Toi was an enemy of Hadadezer. Joram brought silver, gold, and bronze objects with him. <sup>11</sup>King David dedicated these to the LORD, along with the silver and gold he had dedicated from all the nations that he had subdued: <sup>12</sup>Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and Amalek, including the plunder of Zobah's King Hadadezer, Rehob's son.

<sup>13</sup>So David made a name for himself.<sup>g</sup> When he returned, he killed eighteen thousand Edomites<sup>h</sup> in the Salt Valley. <sup>14</sup>He set up forts in Edom,<sup>i</sup> and all the Edomites became David's subjects. The LORD gave David victory wherever he went.

### David's administration

<sup>15</sup>David ruled over all Israel and maintained justice and righteousness for all his people. <sup>16</sup>Zeruah's son Joab was in command of the army; Ahilud's son Jehoshaphat was recorder; <sup>17</sup>Ahitub's son Zadok and Ahimelech's son<sup>l</sup> Abiathar were priests; Seraiah was secretary; <sup>18</sup>Jehoiada's son Benaiah was in command of<sup>k</sup> the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were priests.

### David and Mephibosheth

<sup>9</sup>David asked, "Is there anyone from Saul's family still alive that I could show faithful love for Jonathan's sake?" <sup>2</sup>There was a servant from Saul's household named Ziba, and he was summoned before David.

"Are you Ziba?" the king asked him.

"At your service!" he answered.

<sup>3</sup>The king asked, "Is there anyone left from Saul's family that I could show God's kindness to?"

"Yes," Ziba said to the king, "one of Jonathan's sons, whose feet are crippled."

<sup>4</sup>"Where is he?" the king asked.

<sup>f</sup>Some LXX manuscripts and 1 Chron 18:8; MT *Betah* <sup>g</sup>Or *built a monument* <sup>h</sup>LXX; MT *he returned from killing eighteen thousand Arameans* <sup>i</sup>Cf 1 Chron 18:13; MT repeats in *all Edom he set up forts*. <sup>j</sup>MT *Abiathar's son Ahimelech*; cf 1 Sam 22:20; 23:6; 30:7; 2 Sam 20:25 <sup>k</sup>Syr, Tg, Vulg, 1 Chron 18:17; MT lacks *in command of*.

ongoing hostility between Israel and the Aramean kingdoms centered in Damascus, which will continue for many generations.

<sup>2:9-11</sup> Word of David's success on the battlefield brings him diplomatic victories as well. King Toi of Hamath makes peace with David, and sends his son Joram to pay tribute and pledge loyalty to the growing Davidic kingdom.

<sup>2:13-14</sup> Edom, to the southeast of Judah, joins the list of those small kingdoms defeated by David and incorporated into his kingdom. David's small empire now stretches from the northern Euphrates River to the Gulf of Aqaba in the south and from the Mediterranean Sea to the desert past Transjordan (with the exception of the Philistine coastal plain).

<sup>8:15-18</sup> David's reign is characterized by the covenant qualities of justice and righteousness. He establishes leaders around him: military officers, scribes, and priests (including at least some of David's sons). It is noteworthy that while Joab commands David's regular army, David also maintains a personal mercenary force (*Cherethites* and *Pelethites*) commanded by Benaiah. This ensures a loyal force guarding the king's own person.

<sup>9:1-20:26</sup> These chapters are part of a continuous narrative now incorporated into a larger history work extending from Joshua through 2 Kings. The section on the consolidation of David's reign as king in 2 Samuel 5:11-8:18 has

come to a close, and a more personal narrative begins to unfold in 2 Samuel 9.

<sup>9:1-13</sup> This brief story provides evidence of David's faithfulness to the commitment he made to his friend Jonathan that he would care for Jonathan's descendants (1 Sam 20:14-17). The son of Jonathan in question is Mephibosheth. He is lame, unable to support himself (cf. 2 Sam 4:4), and hardly a threat to David's kingdom. Many have observed that the events of 2 Samuel 21 must precede the story of this chapter. There the surviving sons of Saul are executed to avenge Saul's treatment of the Gibeonites. Although Mephibosheth is Jonathan's son and not Saul's, this chronology would make sense of David's initial question whether anyone survived from the house of Saul (9:1).

<sup>9:1, 3, 7</sup> David uses the term translated in 9:1 and 9:7 as "faithful love" three times (it is translated as "kindness" in 9:3) to describe why he sought out Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth. The "faithful" quality indicates covenant love or committed love. This kind of love is prominent in the story of the friendship of David and Jonathan, and the commitments they make to each other (see notes on 1 Sam 20). That pledge of friendship included care for any of Jonathan's family in the future. Here David fulfills his pledge.

<sup>9:2-4</sup> David's inquiry first leads him to Saul's former

<sup>2:9-11</sup> 1Ch 18:9-11  
<sup>2:11-12</sup> 1Ch 18:11, 13  
<sup>2:13-14</sup> 1Ki 11:15-17; 1Ch 18:12-13  
<sup>2:13-25a 7:9</sup> 2Ki 14:7; 1Ch 18:12; Ps 60:1  
<sup>2:13-20</sup> Gn 27:37; Nm 24:18; 2Sa 8:6  
<sup>2:15-18</sup> 1Ch 18:14-17

*The Two Parts of David's Story* Before David was introduced into the story of the books of Samuel, God had looked ahead and named him "a man following the Lord's own heart" (1 Sam 13:14). For the first half of David's story he seems to be all that one could wish for in a gifted and faithful leader. He is frequently in prayer to God; he is a gifted warrior and leader but knows how to show compassion; he is loved by many in spite of Saul's jealousy and hostility.

But David's story takes a radical turn in 2 Samuel 11. He begins to follow the leading of his own desires and no longer consults with God in prayer. He uses his royal power to fulfill his human desires, and this leads to adultery with Bathsheba, an attempt to cover this up, and the murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. The story that unfolds from this point forward isn't of the David in line with God's own heart. It is the story of David living with the consequences of his own sin.

The story of David falls into two parts, and these have been given various names: for example, blessing/curse or gift/grasp. Eventually David makes his way back to God, but not without great suffering in his own family and in the kingdom over which he reigns. There is something to learn from both parts of David's story, and perhaps this makes him more human, more like those who read his story. When the historian who wrote 1 and 2 Chronicles used the books of Samuel to retell David's story, he omitted the negative parts, leaving an idealized David. Fortunately, the OT includes David's entire story in the books of Samuel. David is worthy of our admiration in many respects, but his entire story is a reminder that even the most worthy life can fall from the heights.

"He is at the house of Ammiel's son Machir at Lo-debar," Ziba told the king.

<sup>5</sup>So King David had him brought from the house of Ammiel's son Machir at Lo-debar. <sup>6</sup>Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son and Saul's grandson, came to David, and he fell to the ground, bowing low out of respect.

"Mephibosheth?" David said.

"Yes," he replied. "I am at your service!"

<sup>7</sup>"Don't be afraid," David told him, "because I will certainly show you faithful love for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the fields of your grandfather Saul, and you will eat at my table always."

<sup>8</sup>Mephibosheth bowed low out of respect and said, "Who am I, your servant, that you should care about a dead dog like me?"

<sup>9</sup>Then David summoned Saul's servant Ziba and said to him, "I have given your master's grandson everything belonging to Saul and his family. <sup>10</sup>You will work the land for him—you, your sons, and your servants—and you will bring food into your master's house for them to eat. <sup>1</sup>But Mephibosheth, your master's grandson, will always be at my table." (Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.)

<sup>11</sup>Then Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do whatever my master the king commands."

So Mephibosheth ate at David's <sup>m</sup>table, like one of the king's own sons. <sup>12</sup>Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica. All who lived in Ziba's household became Mephibosheth's servants. <sup>13</sup>Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king's table. He was crippled in both feet.

<sup>1</sup>LXX: MT *You will bring food for your master's son and he will eat it.* <sup>m</sup>LXX: MT *my*

servant Ziba, who knows that Jonathon's son has survived, although he is permanently injured.

9:5-8 Mephibosheth (see note at 2 Sam 4:4) is brought to David and can't believe that David would show any regard for him. David reassures him by repeating the pledge he made to Jonathan, and promising to restore land to him and to have him eat at the king's table from that time on.

9:9-13 Ziba reenters the story. He and his 15 sons and 20 servants are appointed by David to serve Mephibosheth and work the lands of Saul restored to Jonathan's son (9:10). Ziba appears to accept this role, but events during the time of Absalom's rebellion, and David's retreat from Jerusalem, will raise questions about the integrity

of Ziba's commitment to serve Mephibosheth (cf. 2 Sam 16:1-4; 19:24-30). There will be further chapters in Mephibosheth's story. For now, Mephibosheth and his son Mica come to live in Jerusalem and eat at the king's table. It is a touching acknowledgment of the commitment made by David to Jonathan.

10:1-19 This chapter relates in some detail how David becomes engaged in a difficult war with the Ammonites. Although the account gives us some insight into ancient conflicts, the campaign against the Ammonites becomes the context within which we will read of David's sin with Bathsheba while his men, including Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, are away at the siege of Ammon's capital city, Rabbah.

**War with the Ammonites and Arameans**

**10** Some time later, the king of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun succeeded him as king. <sup>2</sup>David said, "I'll be loyal to Nahash's son Hanun, just as his father was loyal to me." So David sent his servants with condolences concerning Hanun's father.

But when David's servants arrived in Ammonite territory, <sup>3</sup>the Ammonite officials asked their master Hanun, "Do you really believe David is honoring your father because he has sent you condolences? Of course not! David has sent his servants to you to search the city, spy it out, and overthrow it." <sup>4</sup>So Hanun seized David's servants and shaved off their beards, <sup>5</sup>cut off half their garments, from their buttocks down, and sent them off.

<sup>6</sup>When this was reported to David, he sent men to meet them because they were completely ashamed. The king said, "Stay in Jericho until your beards have grown. Then you can come back."

<sup>7</sup>When the Ammonites realized that they had offended David, they sent for and hired the Arameans of Beth-rehob and the Arameans of Zobah, totaling twenty thousand foot soldiers; the king of Maacah with one thousand soldiers; and twelve thousand soldiers from Tob. <sup>8</sup>When David heard this, he sent Joab with the entire army of warriors. <sup>9</sup>The Ammonites marched out and formed a battle line at the entrance to the city. The Arameans of Zobah and Rehob and the soldiers from Tob and Maacah remained in the countryside.

<sup>10</sup>When Joab saw that the battle would be fought on two fronts, he chose some of Israel's finest warriors and deployed them to meet the Arameans. <sup>11</sup>The rest of the army Joab placed under the command of his brother Abishai. When they took up their positions to meet the Ammonites, Joab said, <sup>12</sup>"If the Arameans prove too strong for me, you must help me, and if the Ammonites prove too strong for you, I'll help you. <sup>13</sup>Be brave! We must be courageous for the sake of our people and the cities of our God. The LORD will do what is good in his eyes."

<sup>14</sup>When Joab and the troops who were with him advanced into battle against the Arameans, they fled from him. <sup>15</sup>When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans had fled, they also fled from Abishai and retreated to the city. Then Joab returned from fighting the Ammonites and went to Jerusalem.

<sup>16</sup>The Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, so they regrouped. <sup>17</sup>Hadadezer sent for Arameans from beyond the Euphrates River. They came to Helam with Shobach leading them as commander of Hadadezer's army. <sup>18</sup>When this was reported to David he gathered all Israel, crossed the Jordan, and went to Helam. The Arameans formed battle lines against David and fought with him. <sup>19</sup>But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David destroyed seven hundred of their chariots and forty thousand horsemen. David wounded their army commander Shobach, and he died there. <sup>20</sup>When all the kings who served Hadadezer

<sup>20</sup>LXX; MT *half their beard*

10:1-5 When Ammon's King Nahash dies, David sends condolences to Nahash's son Hanun. David states his intention to be *loyal* as Nahash was *loyal* to him. This is the same word for faithful commitment used to describe David's commitment to Jonathan (2 Sam 9:1, 3, 7). Whether it is in personal relationship or in diplomatic relationship, David honors commitments. This loyalty to Nahash may surprise the reader, since this is the cruel king from whom Saul had rescued Jabesh-gilead (1 Sam 11). We can only guess how Ammon under Nahash has become an ally of David. Perhaps they shared a common opposition to Saul, or maybe Saul's defeat of Ammon forced the Ammonites into an inferior relationship. In any case, Hanun's advisors aren't inclined to accept David's condolences at face value. They claim that the servants sent to bring David's message are spies in advance of a campaign against Ammon (10:3). Hanun listens to them. He humiliates the messengers by shaving off half their beards and cutting off the lower half of their garments. David sends word to the messengers at Jericho, urging them to stay until their beards grow back (10:4-5). But he can't ignore such a grave insult from the Ammonites.

10:6-14 When the Ammonites realize that David won't ignore such an offense, they call on their Aramean allies, four kings with a total of 33,000 men (10:6). Perhaps they thought such a show of force would discourage David, but instead he mobilizes his entire army under the command of Joab (10:7). The enemy strategy is to have the Ammonites defending the city (probably their capital, Rabbah) and the Arameans gathered in the countryside, forcing Israel into a battle on two fronts. Joab shrewdly divides his own forces, placing half under the command of his brother Abishai. Joab quickly defeats the Arameans, and the Ammonites retreat into their city. For the moment Joab withdraws Israel's army (10:8-14).

10:15-19 The Arameans won't accept defeat. They call in allied Aramean forces even from beyond the Euphrates River. Hadadezer, of Damascus, places Shobach in command of a great Aramean army (10:15-16), and this time David himself leads his army into the field (10:17). This may be the last battle in which David himself served as a field commander. In the next chapter, David is at the palace while his army is at war (2 Sam 11:1). The Israelite victory is complete, and even the Aramean commander is

10:1-5  
1Ch 19:1-5  
10:6-14  
1Ch 19:6-15  
10:15-19  
1Ch 19:16-19

1:1 Dt 34:11;  
2Sa 12:26;  
1Kt 20:22;  
1Kt 20:26;  
1Ch 20:1

1:2 Dt 22:8;  
1Sa 9:25;  
Mt 5:28

1:3 1Sa 26:6;  
2Sa 23:34;  
2Sa 23:39;  
1Kt 11:1; 1Ch 3:5

1:4 Lv 15:19;  
Lv 18:19; Ps 51:1;  
Jas 1:14

1:5 Dt 22:22;  
2Sa 11:4;  
2Sa 11:27

1:6 2Sa 11:21;  
2Sa 12:9;  
2Sa 23:39;  
1Ch 11:41;  
Prov 28:13

1:7 1Sa 17:22;  
2Sa 8:10

1:8 Gn 18:4;  
Gn 19:2;  
Gn 49:24;  
Lk 7:44

1:9 2Sa 7:2;  
2Sa 7:6; 2Sa 20:6

1:10 Gn 19:33;  
2Sa 11:9;  
Hab 2:15

1:11 1Kt 21:6  
1:12 1Sa 18:17;  
2Sa 12:9

saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and became their subjects. Never again would the Arameans come to the aid of the Ammonites.

### David and Bathsheba

**11** In the spring,<sup>o</sup> when kings<sup>p</sup> go off to war, David sent Joab, along with his servants and all the Israelites, and they destroyed the Ammonites, attacking the city of Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup>One evening, David got up from his couch and was pacing back and forth on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. <sup>3</sup>David sent someone and inquired about the woman. The report came back: "Isn't this Eliam's daughter Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" <sup>4</sup>So David sent messengers to get her. When she came to him, he had sex with her. (Now she had been purifying herself after her monthly period.) Then she returned home. <sup>5</sup>The woman conceived and sent word to David.

"I'm pregnant," she said.

<sup>6</sup>Then David sent a message to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent Uriah to David. <sup>7</sup>When Uriah came to him, David asked about the welfare of Joab and the army and how the battle was going. <sup>8</sup>Then David told Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet."

Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. <sup>9</sup>However, Uriah slept at the palace entrance with all his master's servants. He didn't go down to his own house. <sup>10</sup>David was told, "Uriah didn't go down to his own house," so David asked Uriah, "Haven't you just returned from a journey? Why didn't you go home?"

<sup>11</sup>"The chest and Israel and Judah are all living in tents," Uriah told David. "And my master Joab and my master's troops are camping in the open field. How<sup>q</sup> could I go home and eat, drink, and have sex with my wife? I swear on your very life,<sup>r</sup> I will not do that!"

<sup>12</sup>Then David told Uriah, "Stay here one more day. Tomorrow I'll send you back." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day. The next day <sup>13</sup>David called for him, and he ate and drank, and David got him drunk. In the evening Uriah went out to sleep in the same place, alongside his master's servants, but he did not go down to his own home.

<sup>14</sup>The next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. <sup>15</sup>He wrote in the letter, "Place Uriah at the front of the fiercest battle, and then pull back from him so that he will be struck down and die."

<sup>o</sup>Or *At the turn of the year* <sup>p</sup>LXX, Tg, Vulg; MT *messengers* <sup>q</sup>LXX<sup>4</sup>; MT lacks *How*. <sup>r</sup>Or *I swear on your life and your soul's life*; cf. LXX

killed. The Aramean kings, led by Hadadzezer, make peace with David, effectively becoming part of his small empire. The Ammonites remain to be dealt with (10:18-19).

11:1 David sends Joab and his army to lay siege to Rabbah and end the Ammonite war. It is clear that David himself remains in Jerusalem. This location has unfortunate results.

11:2-5 David was pacing on the roof of his palace. Bathsheba was bathing on the roof of her house. Neither one of these activities was unusual in the crowded setting of a walled city. Bathing was often on the roof. There was no drainage system inside a house for bathing. Bathsheba may have been doing ritual cleansing related to her menstrual period (11:4). There is no suggestion that Bathsheba intended to attract David's attention. The text gives no support to the idea that she was a seductress. David's palace would command a view of the rooftops of most of the city, and many people might have been in his view while bathing. The text does tell us that he found her beautiful (11:2), and he inquired about her identity. The report came back that she was married to Uriah the Hittite, one of David's own officers (11:3). This doesn't discourage David, however. He sends messengers to *get her*, which can also be translated as "he took her" (11:4). The prophet Samuel used the same verb in his warning to the elders about kings who "take" from the people (see note on 1 Sam 8:10-18). David's sex with Bathsheba is adultery under the

menace of power. The narrative gives no indication that David would have seen this woman again, except that she sends word that she is pregnant (11:5).

11:6-13 This section of the story could be called "the cover-up" as David tries to escape responsibility for his actions. He sends for Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, to be returned from the front in the siege of Rabbah. He hopes that Uriah will go to his home, sleep with his wife, and the child Bathsheba is carrying can be passed off as Uriah's own. After meeting with Uriah for reports from the battlefield, David tells him to go home and *wash your feet*, probably a roundabout way of referring to having sex (11:7-8). But Uriah sleeps that night with the palace servants (11:9). Uriah explains to David that he would consider it disloyal to take his ease at home with his wife, when the army and even the sacred covenant chest were in the field. David makes one more effort by getting Uriah drunk, but the faithful soldier still sleeps with the servants at the palace (11:13).

11:14-27 A third and more deadly phase of the story begins. David conspires with his general Joab to murder Uriah. In a painful irony, David sends the order to Joab by Uriah's own hand. Joab should place Uriah in the most heated battle, and his fellow warriors are to leave him there. Joab follows these orders, and Uriah is killed according to plan (11:14-17). The narrative provides a detailed account of the messengers sent back and forth

<sup>16</sup>So as Joab was attacking the city, he put Uriah in the place where he knew there were strong warriors. <sup>17</sup>When the city's soldiers came out and attacked Joab, some of the people from David's army fell. Uriah the Hittite was also killed. <sup>18</sup>Joab sent a complete report of the battle to David.

<sup>19</sup>"When you have finished reporting all the news of the battle to the king," Joab instructed the messenger, <sup>20</sup>"if the king gets angry and asks you, 'Why did you go so close to the city to fight? didn't you know they would shoot from the wall?' <sup>21</sup>Who killed Jerubbaal's son Abimelech? <sup>22</sup>didn't a woman throw an upper millstone on top of him from the wall so that he died in Thebez? Why did you go so close to the wall?' then say: 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too.'"

<sup>23</sup>So the messenger set off, and when he arrived he reported to David everything Joab sent him to say.

<sup>24</sup>"The men overpowered us," the messenger told David. "They came out against us in the open field, but we fought against them<sup>t</sup> up to the entrance of the city gate. <sup>25</sup>Archers shot down on your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants died. And your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too."

<sup>26</sup>David said to the messenger, "Say this to Joab: 'Don't be upset about this because the sword is that way: taking the life of this person or that person. Continue attacking the city and destroy it!' Encourage Joab!"

<sup>27</sup>When Uriah's wife heard that her husband Uriah was dead, she mourned for her husband. <sup>28</sup>After the time of mourning was over, David sent for her and brought her back to his house. She became his wife and bore him a son.

But what David had done was evil in the LORD's eyes.

*Judgment and Confession* It is important to remember that in the confrontation between David and Nathan, both men have been called and claimed by God. Nathan, as God's prophet, has delivered the message of God's promise to the dynasty of David (2 Sam 7). It was said repeatedly of David that God was with him (e.g., 2 Sam 5:10), and he acknowledged this frequently in prayer. Now, what God demands of these two has shifted. Nathan must speak a word of judgment rather than the word of promise. David is confronted with his own sin by Nathan. What is now demanded of him?

David isn't in a position to petition God. Instead, he responds with confession and changing his heart and life. Nathan has the courage to speak the truth to someone in power, while David has the wisdom to confess his own sin. This opens the possibility of a changed heart and life. In Hebrew this notion of change involves turning in a new direction, away from sin and toward renewed faithfulness. Although David's confession is immediate in the story, his life change doesn't immediately become fully visible. He continues to make poor judgments in relation to his children, and we will see the consequences in the chapters ahead. But in the larger biblical tradition, David's change of heart and life and his willingness to turn from sin is seen most fully in Psalm 51. This remorseful psalm has a heading that relates it to the occasion of Nathan's confrontation over David's adultery with Bathsheba. This psalm has long been treated in Jewish and Christian communities of faith as the expression of the David who, even in his sin, is the "man following the Lord's own heart." David the sinner models a turning away from sin: "Have mercy on me, God, according to your faithful love! Wipe away my wrongdoings according to your great compassion . . . Create a clean heart for me, God; put a new, faithful spirit deep inside me!" (Ps 51:1, 10).

<sup>t</sup>LXX, Syr, Judg 7:1; MT *Jerub-besheth* <sup>e</sup>Or *we were upon them*

between David and Joab at this point. Apparently Joab is worried that David will be upset that the battle took place so close to the city wall, and men were lost. At this point the messenger is to report that Uriah was killed, and David will know this was part of the plan (11:18-21). The name *Abimelech* (11:21) refers to the son of Gideon (also called Jerub-besheth) who tried to make himself king but was killed when a woman dropped a millstone on him from

the wall (Judg 9:53-54). David seeks to comfort Joab. The phrase *Don't be upset* puts in English the Hebrew idiom "Don't let this be evil in your eyes" (11:25). David asks his general not to consider the deed evil, but the final word of this story makes the guilt clear: *what David had done was evil in the Lord's eyes* (11:27b). David wastes no time. After a brief period of mourning, he makes Bathsheba his wife, and she bears a son (11:26-27a).

11:16 2Sa 3:27,  
2Sa 11:21,  
2Sa 20:9,  
2Sa 20:10,  
1Ki 2:5  
11:17 2Sa 11:21,  
2Sa 12:9  
11:21 Jgs 8:31,  
Jgs 9:50, Jgs 9:53  
11:27 2Sa 12:9

12:1 2Sa 7:2,  
2Sa 14:5;  
1Ki 1:10; Ps 51:1  
12:3 Gn 40:11;  
2Sa 11:3  
12:5 1Sa 14:39;  
1Sa 20:31; Ro 2:1  
12:6 Ex 22:1;  
Lk 19:8  
12:7 1Sa 16:13;  
1Ki 18:18  
12:8 2Sa 5:5  
12:9 Nm 15:31;  
2Sa 11:14-15,  
2Sa 11:27  
12:10 2Sa 13:28,  
2Sa 18:14  
12:11 Dt 28:30;  
2Sa 16:21-22  
12:12 2Sa 11:4,  
2Sa 16:22  
12:13 Lv 20:10;  
1Sa 15:24,  
2Sa 24:10;  
Ps 32:1; Mi 7:18  
12:14 Neh 5:9;  
Is 52:5; Eze 36:20;  
Ro 2:24  
12:16 2Sa 13:31

### Nathan pronounces God's judgment

**12** So the LORD sent Nathan to David. When Nathan arrived he said, "There were two men in the same city, one rich, one poor. <sup>2</sup>The rich man had a lot of sheep and cattle, <sup>3</sup>but the poor man had nothing—just one small ewe lamb that he had bought. He raised that lamb, and it grew up with him and his children. It would eat from his food and drink from his cup—even sleep in his arms! It was like a daughter to him.

<sup>4</sup>"Now a traveler came to visit the rich man, but he wasn't willing to take anything from his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had arrived. Instead, he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the visitor."

<sup>5</sup>David got very angry at the man, and he said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the one who did this is demonic!" <sup>6</sup>He must restore the ewe lamb seven times over<sup>v</sup> because he did this and because he had no compassion."

<sup>7</sup>"You are that man!" Nathan told David. "This is what the LORD God of Israel says: I anointed you king over Israel and delivered you from Saul's power. <sup>8</sup>I gave your master's house<sup>w</sup> to you, and gave his wives into your embrace. I gave you the house<sup>x</sup> of Israel and Judah. If that was too little, I would have given even more. <sup>9</sup>Why have you despised the LORD's word by doing what is evil in his eyes? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and taken his wife as your own. You used the Ammonites to kill him. <sup>10</sup>Because of that, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite as your own, the sword will never leave your own house.

<sup>11</sup>"This is what the LORD says: I am making trouble come against you from inside your own family. Before your very eyes I will take your wives away and give them to your friend, and he will have sex with your wives in broad daylight. <sup>12</sup>You did what you did secretly, but I will do what I am doing before all Israel in the light of day."

<sup>13</sup>"I've sinned against the LORD!" David said to Nathan.

"The LORD has removed your sin," Nathan replied to David. "You won't die. <sup>14</sup>However, because you have utterly disrespected the LORD<sup>y</sup> by doing this, the son born to you will definitely die." <sup>15</sup>Then Nathan went home.

### Bathsheba's child dies

The LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne for David, and he became very sick. <sup>16</sup>David begged God for the boy. He fasted and spent the night sleeping on the ground.

<sup>v</sup>Or as good as dead; MT a son of death <sup>w</sup>LXX; MT fourfold (cf Exod 22:1) <sup>x</sup>Syr daughters <sup>y</sup>Syr daughters <sup>z</sup>MT the LORD's enemies—a euphemism or ancient scribal correction (cf note at 1 Sam 25:22)

12:1-6 God not only notices David's sin (2 Sam 11:27b) but sends the prophet Nathan to judge the king (12:1). Nathan pretends to lay a case before David for judgment. After all, this was one of the royal functions, to act as a court of last appeal. We soon learn that this isn't an actual case but a parable. In Nathan's account a rich man with many flocks has taken advantage of a poor man by serving the poor man's one ewe lamb as dinner to a guest (12:1-4). This is such an obvious injustice that David renders an immediate judgment (12:5). He responds first in terms of his feeling. The words rendered *demonic* can also be translated "he's as good as dead" (see translation note u). The same expression appears with this meaning when Saul says this of David in 1 Samuel 20:31-32. Nathan returns to this verdict of death in 2 Samuel 12:13. In what seems a more formal judicial verdict, David rules that the lamb must be restored sevenfold (12:6).

12:7-15a Nathan abruptly reveals the parable for what it is, a veiled reference to David's sin: "You are that man!" (12:7a). He then delivers a formal oracle of prophetic judgment from the Lord against David. Nathan's judgment is expressed in the first person as if God is speaking directly. It begins with God's review of all the blessings that have been given to David, beginning with his anointing (12:7b-8), and more would have come. The verdict

of 2 Samuel 11:27b is repeated (what David has done is evil in God's eyes; 12:9). Specifics are provided: David has killed Uriah, and taken his wife as his own. Then come the consequences: The sword will never leave David's family, trouble will come to David from within his own family, and his wives will be taken from him not in secret but in broad daylight (12:10-12). Indeed, the chapters that lie ahead in 2 Samuel recount the fulfillment of these tragic events in David's own family. In 12:13 David does respond, and it isn't with anger or efforts to escape blame. He confesses his sin against the Lord. Nathan then lifts the death sentence that David pronounced on himself (12:13b; cf. 2 Sam 12:5). But in a harsh final word, Nathan reveals that the son conceived by Bathsheba will die (12:14).

12:15b-25 This story may be difficult for modern readers who don't want to think that God exacts the death of a child in judgment on its father. The text, however, assumes that all things come from God, even the illness of this child, and God can use such circumstances to further the action of God's grace and judgment. There is no general claim here about the deaths of all children. The most important point of this story relates not to the child or to Bathsheba (who aren't even named), but to David. David is centrally important to the tradition of Israel, and here that tradition is honest enough to give us a picture of David

<sup>17</sup>The senior servants of his house approached<sup>a</sup> him to lift him up off the ground, but he refused, and he wouldn't eat with them either.

<sup>18</sup>On the seventh day, the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child had died. "David wouldn't listen to us when we talked to him while the child was still alive," they said. "How can we tell him the child has died? He'll do something terrible!"

<sup>19</sup>But when David saw his servants whispering, he realized the child had died.

"Is the child dead?" David asked his servants.

"Yes," they said, "he is dead."

<sup>20</sup>Then David rose from the ground, bathed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes. He entered the LORD's house and bowed down. Then he entered his own house. He requested food, which was brought to him, and he ate.

<sup>21</sup>"Why are you acting this way?" his servants asked. "When the child was alive, you fasted and cried and kept watch,<sup>b</sup> but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat food!"

<sup>22</sup>David replied, "While the child was alive I fasted and wept because I thought, Who knows? The LORD may have mercy on me and let the child live. <sup>23</sup>But he is dead now. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? No. I am going where he is, but he won't come back to me."

<sup>24</sup>Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba. He went to her and had sex with her. She gave birth to a son and named him Solomon.<sup>b</sup> The LORD loved him <sup>25</sup>and sent word by the prophet Nathan to name him Jedidiah<sup>c</sup> because of the LORD's grace.<sup>d</sup>

### Defeat of the Ammonites

<sup>26</sup>Meanwhile, Joab fought the Ammonites at Rabbah and captured the royal city. <sup>27</sup>Joab then sent messengers to David, saying, "I have fought against Rabbah and captured the city's water supply." <sup>28</sup>So gather the rest of the troops, attack the city, and capture it. Otherwise, I will capture the city myself, and it will be named after me."

<sup>29</sup>So David gathered all the troops, marched to Rabbah, fought against it, and captured it.

<sup>30</sup>David took Milcom's<sup>e</sup> crown off his head. It weighed one kikkar of gold and was set with a valuable stone. It was placed on David's head. The amount of loot David took from the city was huge. <sup>31</sup>He brought out the people who were in the city and put them to work making bricks. David demolished the city with saws, iron picks, and axes;<sup>g</sup> he did this to all the Ammonite cities. Then David and all the troops returned to Jerusalem.

<sup>a</sup>LXX<sup>1</sup>, DSS(4QSam<sup>1</sup>); MT *stood over* <sup>b</sup>LXX<sup>1</sup>, OL; MT lacks *kept watch*. <sup>b</sup>Qere; Kethib *he (David) named* <sup>c</sup>Jedidiah means *Loved by the LORD*. <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain; some Heb and LXX manuscripts *by the LORD's word* <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>LXX; MT *their king's crown* <sup>g</sup>Cf LXX<sup>1</sup>, OL, Tg, 1 Chron 20:3

in a moment when he learned that even royal power can't control human events. David thought he could manipulate life and death for his own benefit. Now he stands helpless at the death of his own child, whose life can't be controlled by David.

12:15b-17 David totally invested himself in the hope that his prayers and self-denial could influence the fate of his son.

12:18-19 When the child dies, David's servants fear that his grief will be inconsolable, and they are afraid to tell him. David, however, realizes that something has changed, and asks directly if the child has died.

12:20-23 These verses seem to be the focus of this tragic story. David reverses the usual patterns of grief in the ancient world and often in our own. He ends his fasting and outward evidences of grief. Although he seems to acknowledge God, he ceases petitioning (12:20), bathes, and anoints himself. His household is amazed and comments on this reversal of the usual behavior (12:21). David responds by accepting a circumstance he can't change. He himself will eventually die, but he can't reverse the child's death (12:23). Readers often find in David a model of the ability to accept even death as a reality in the midst

of life. It certainly fits with the boldness seen elsewhere in David's life. The story does little to prepare the reader, however, for the cautious and indecisive David we will see in the stories just ahead as additional tragedies unfold in David's family.

12:24-25 A second son is born to David and Bathsheba. He is named Solomon. Most significantly, the text reports that the Lord loves him and sends Nathan to give him a special name with the meaning "loved by the Lord." This, of course, foreshadows that it is Solomon who will eventually succeed David on the throne (1 Kgs 1-2).

12:26-31 The reader has almost forgotten that an uncompleted war with Ammon has been going on. This war started in the account of 2 Samuel 10 and was the background to David's listless time remaining in Jerusalem when he saw Bathsheba from the rooftop (2 Sam 11:1). Now, by contrast, when the victory seems assured, David does take the field himself to capture Rabbah and personally take the Ammonite king's crown for himself (12:29-30). The treatment of the Ammonites was harsh compared to other surrounding kingdoms incorporated into the Davidic kingdom (12:31). This is understandable in light of the extreme insult that began the war.

12:17-25a 3:35  
12:18-25a 12:16,  
25a 13:39  
12:20 Ru 3:3;  
25a 14:2; Job 1:20  
12:22 Is 38:1;  
Jon 3:9  
12:23 Gn 37:35;  
Job 7:8  
12:24 1Ch 22:9;  
Mt 1:6  
12:26-31  
1Ch 20:1-3

13:1 2Sa 3:2-3,  
2Sa 14:27;  
1Ch 3:2, 1Ch 3:9  
13:14 Gn 34:2;  
Dt 22:25;  
2Sa 12:11  
13:21 Gn 34:7

### Amnon rapes Tamar

**13** Some time later, David's son Amnon fell in love with Tamar the beautiful sister of Absalom, who was also David's son. <sup>2</sup>Amnon was so upset over his half sister that he made himself sick. She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible in Amnon's view to do anything to her. <sup>3</sup>But Amnon had a friend named Jonadab, Shimeah's son, David's brother, who was a very clever man.

<sup>4</sup>"Prince," Jonadab said to him, "why are you so down, morning after morning? Tell me about it."

So Amnon told him, "I'm in love with Tamar, the sister of my brother Absalom."

<sup>5</sup>"Lie down on your bed and pretend to be sick," Jonadab said to him. "When your father comes to see you, tell him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me some food to eat. Let her prepare the food in my sight so I can watch and eat from her own hand.'"

<sup>6</sup>So Amnon lay down and pretended to be sick. The king came to see him, and Amnon told the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of heart-shaped cakes in front of me so I can eat from her hand."

<sup>7</sup>David sent word to Tamar at the palace: "Please go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare some food for him."

<sup>8</sup>So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house where he was lying down. She took dough, kneaded it, made heart-shaped cakes in front of him, and then cooked them. <sup>9</sup>She took the pan and served Amnon, but he refused to eat.

"Everyone leave me," Amnon said. So everyone left him. <sup>10</sup>Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the bedroom so I can eat from your hand." So Tamar took the heart-shaped cakes she had made and brought them to her brother Amnon in the bedroom. <sup>11</sup>When she served him the food, he grabbed her and said, "Come have sex with me, my sister."

<sup>12</sup>But she said to him, "No, my brother! Don't rape me. Such a thing shouldn't be done in Israel. Don't do this horrible thing. <sup>13</sup>Think about me—where could I hide my shame? And you—you would become like some fool in Israel! Please, just talk to the king! He won't keep me from marrying you."

<sup>14</sup>But Amnon refused to listen to her. He was stronger than she was, and so he raped her.

<sup>15</sup>But then Amnon felt intense hatred for her. In fact, his hatred for her was greater than the love he had felt for her. So Amnon told her, "Get out of here!"

<sup>16</sup>"No, my brother!"<sup>b</sup> she said. "Sending me away would be worse than the wrong you've already done."

But Amnon wouldn't listen to her. <sup>17</sup>He summoned his young servant and said, "Get this woman out of my presence and lock the door after her." (<sup>18</sup>She was wearing a long-sleeved robe because that was what the virgin princesses wore as garments.)<sup>1</sup> So Amnon's servant put her out and locked the door after her.

<sup>19</sup>Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long-sleeved robe she was wearing. She put her hand on her head and walked away, crying as she went.

<sup>20</sup>Her brother Absalom said to her, "Has your brother Amnon been with you? Keep quiet about it for now, sister; he's your brother. Don't let it bother you." So Tamar, a broken woman, lived in her brother Absalom's house.

<sup>21</sup>When King David heard about all this he got very angry, but he refused to punish his son Amnon because he loved him as his oldest child.<sup>2</sup> <sup>22</sup>Absalom never spoke to Amnon, good word or bad, because he hated him for raping his sister Tamar.

<sup>b</sup>Correction; Heb uncertain; cf LXX, Vulg <sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>2</sup>LXX, DSS(4QSam<sup>a</sup>); MT lacks but he refused . . . oldest child.

13:1-22 This is a dark and tragic episode in David's story, and for that reason it isn't often read, studied, or preached. The story focuses on the unrestrained lust of David's oldest son, Amnon, for his half sister Tamar. This is certainly not a love story. Amnon and his friend Jonadab plot to isolate Tamar with Amnon in his bedroom by pretending to be sick. When David visits Amnon, he asks that Tamar be sent to him with food (13:5-6). When David agrees to this, Tamar prepares food and comes as a caring sister to Amnon, but he sends the servants out, seizes Tamar, and rapes her (13:11-14). She doesn't consent to this but protests, and even proposes that David might allow them

to marry instead of shaming her in this way. The account shows great insight into the psychology of such violence, because as soon as the deed is done Amnon's love turns to hatred and disgust, and he forcefully sends her away (13:15-18). In grief and shame, Amnon tears her garment and puts ashes on her head. She encounters her brother Absalom. Although he takes her into his house (permanently as it turns out), he counsels silence and even says, *Don't let it bother you* (13:20). This won't be Absalom's response. He will take revenge, and a cycle of deadly violence begins in David's house. But when David actually hears of this we don't see the decisive and courageous



13:29 2Sa 13:28,  
2Sa 14:30,  
2Sa 18:9,  
1Ki 1:33  
13:31 2Sa 1:11,  
2Sa 12:16

### **Absalom kills Amnon**

<sup>23</sup>Two years later, Absalom was shearing sheep at Baal-hazor near Ephraim, and he invited all the king's sons. <sup>24</sup>Absalom approached the king and said, "Your servant is shearing sheep. Would the king and his advisors please join me?"

<sup>25</sup>But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son. We shouldn't all go, or we would be a burden on you." Although Absalom urged him, the king wasn't willing to go, although he gave Absalom a blessing.

<sup>26</sup>Then Absalom said, "If you won't come, then let my brother Amnon go with us."

"Why should he go with you?" they asked him. <sup>27</sup>But Absalom urged him until he sent Amnon and all the other princes. Then Absalom made a banquet fit for a king.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Absalom commanded his servants, "Be on the lookout! When Amnon is happy with wine and I tell you to strike Amnon down, then kill him! Don't be afraid, because I myself am giving you the order. Be brave and strong men." <sup>29</sup>So Absalom's servants did to Amnon just what he had commanded. Then all the princes got up, jumped onto their mules, and fled.

<sup>30</sup>While they were on the way, the report came to David: "Absalom has killed all of the princes! Not one remains." <sup>31</sup>The king got up, tore his garments, and lay on the ground. All his servants stood near him, their garments torn as well. <sup>32</sup>But Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah, said, "My master shouldn't think that all the young princes have been killed—only Amnon is dead. This has been Absalom's plan ever since the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar. <sup>33</sup>So don't let this bother you, my master; don't think that all the princes are dead, because only Amnon is dead, <sup>34</sup>and Absalom has fled." Just then the young man on watch looked up and saw many people coming on the road behind him alongside the mountain. <sup>35</sup>Jonadab told the king, "Look, the princes are coming, just as I, your servant, said they would."

<sup>36</sup>When Jonadab finished speaking, the princes arrived. They broke into loud crying, and the king and his servants cried hard as well.

<sup>37</sup>Meanwhile, Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur's King Talmai, Ammihud's son. David mourned for his son a long time. <sup>38</sup>But Absalom, after fleeing to Geshur, stayed there for three years. <sup>39</sup>Then the king's desire to go out after Absalom faded away because he had gotten over Amnon's death.<sup>1</sup>

### **Absalom is restored**

**14** Now Joab, Zeruiah's son, could see that the king's mind was on Absalom. <sup>2</sup>So Joab sent someone to Tekoa and brought a wise woman from there. He said to her, "Pretend to be in mourning. Dress in mourning clothes. Don't anoint yourself with oil. Act like a woman who has spent a long time mourning over someone who has died. <sup>3</sup>Go to the king and speak to him as follows." Then Joab told her what to say.

<sup>4</sup>When the woman from Tekoa came to the king, she fell facedown, bowing low out of respect. "King, help me!" she said.

<sup>5</sup>"What is wrong?" the king asked her.

"It's terrible!" she said. "I am a widow; my husband is dead. <sup>6</sup>Your servant had two sons, but the two of them fought in the field. No one could separate them, and one struck the other and killed him. <sup>7</sup>Now the entire clan has turned against your servant. They say, 'Hand over the one who killed his brother so we can execute him for murdering his brother, even though we would destroy the heir as well.' So they would snuff out the one ember I have left, leaving my husband without name or descendant on the earth."

<sup>h</sup>LXX; MT lacks *Then Absalom . . . king*. <sup>1</sup>DSS(4QSam<sup>a</sup>); LXX; Heb uncertain

David we have come to know. He loves Amnon too much to punish him in any way, so the deed goes unchallenged for the moment (13:21).

<sup>1</sup>3:23-39 Absalom's revenge is calculated and cold-hearted. He doesn't act in impulsive anger. He waits two years and invites the royal court to a sheepshearing celebration some distance from Jerusalem (13:23-24). David refuses to go but allows all of the princes to go to Absalom. Absalom commands his servants to strike Amnon down when he is drunk with wine, and they do so, panicking the other royal sons, who flee back to Jerusalem (13:28-29). The calculated nature of the plot is clear as Absalom flees

in the opposite direction, already strategically some distance from David's wrath (13:37-39). He will remain far to the north in Geshur, the home of his mother (cf. 2 Sam 3:3), for three years. David receives a false report that all of his sons have been massacred, and he reacts in uncontrolled grief, only to learn that it is Amnon alone who has been killed by Absalom in revenge for Tamar's rape (13:30-36). 14:1-24 Joab, David's strongman, plays the central role in this story as he tries to reunite David and his son Absalom. He often seems to be looking out after David's interests, although this isn't always to David's benefit (as in the killing of Abner; 2 Sam 3:26-30). In this instance Joab seems

14:14 Nm 35:15;  
Nm 35:25;  
Job 30:23;  
Heb 9:27  
14:19 1Sa 1:26;  
2Sa 14:3  
14:25 1Sa 9:2

<sup>8</sup>The king said to the woman, "Return home, and I will issue an order in your behalf."

<sup>9</sup>The woman of Tekoa said to the king, "My master and king, let the guilt be on me and on my father's household. The king and his throne are innocent."

<sup>10</sup>"If anyone speaks against you, bring him to me, and he will never trouble you again," the king replied.

<sup>11</sup>She said, "Please let the king remember the LORD your God so that the one seeking revenge doesn't add to the destruction and doesn't kill my son."

"As surely as the LORD lives," David said, "not one of your son's hairs will fall to the ground."

<sup>12</sup>Then the woman said, "May your female servant say something to my master the king?"

"Speak!" he said.

<sup>13</sup>The woman said, "Why have you planned the very same thing against God's people? In giving this order, the king has become guilty because the king hasn't restored his own banished son. <sup>14</sup>We all have to die—we're like water spilled out on the ground that can't be gathered up again. But God doesn't take life away; instead, he makes plans so those banished from him don't stay that way."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>15</sup>"I have come to my master the king to talk about this because people have made me afraid. Your servant thought, I must speak with the king. Maybe the king will act on the request of his servant, <sup>16</sup>because the king will agree to deliver his servant from the power of anyone who would destroy both me and my son from the inheritance God gave. <sup>17</sup>Your servant thought, The word of my master the king will definitely comfort me, because my master the king is like one of God's messengers, understanding good and evil. May the LORD your God be with you!"

<sup>18</sup>The king answered the woman, "I must ask you something—don't hide anything from me!"

The woman said, "Please, my master and king, speak."

<sup>19</sup>So the king said, "Has Joab put you up to this?"

The woman answered, "As surely as you live, my master and king, no one can deviate a bit from whatever my master and king says. Yes, it was your servant Joab who directed me, and it was Joab who told your female servant to say all these things. <sup>20</sup>Your servant Joab did this to change the way things look.<sup>b</sup> But my master's wisdom is like the wisdom of one of God's own messengers—he knows everything that takes place in the land."

<sup>21</sup>So the king said to Joab, "All right then. I will do it. Go and bring back my boy Absalom."

<sup>22</sup>Joab fell facedown, bowing low out of respect, and he blessed the king.

"Today your servant knows that you think well of me, my master and king," Joab said, "because the king has followed up on his servant's recommendation."

<sup>23</sup>So Joab got up, went to Geshur, and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem.

<sup>24</sup>The king said, "He must go straight to his own house. He must not see my face." So Absalom went straight to his own house and did not see the king.

<sup>25</sup>No man throughout Israel was as praised for his good looks as Absalom. From the soles of his feet to the crown of his head there was nothing wrong with him. <sup>26</sup>When he shaved his head—he had to shave his head at the end of each year because his hair was so heavy that he had to shave it—the weight of the hair from his head was two hundred shekels by the royal weight. <sup>27</sup>Absalom had three sons and one daughter. The daughter's name was Tamar. She was a beautiful woman.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>14:15-17 may have originally followed 14:7. <sup>c</sup>14:18 may have originally followed 14:14.

<sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain

to believe that David can't be easily approached directly about Absalom, so he hires a wise woman from Tekoa to play a role before David. The strategy recalls Nathan's parable before David (2 Sam 12:1-4). The wise woman pretends to be a widow whose son has killed his brother in a quarrel. Now the people want to execute him for the murder, leaving her without support or heir. David hears her case and promises to intervene (14:5-7). After David responds positively to her request, she speaks plainly and asks David why he won't restore his own son who lives in exile (14:12-14). At this point David becomes suspicious and asks the woman if Joab put her up to this. She admits that he did (14:18-20). The king gives in and tells Joab that

he can bring back Absalom, but he must go straight to his house and can't see David (14:21-24). David misses the opportunity for genuine reconciliation. The restoration is in location only, not in relationship.

14:25-27 These verses help us understand the appeal of Absalom. He was a handsome young man, a quality noted for both Saul and David before they became king. Verse 26 might puzzle us for giving so much attention to the thickness of Absalom's hair, but this information is important knowledge for understanding the role his hair played in his undoing and death (cf. 2 Sam 18:9). Painfully ironic is the revelation that Absalom names his only daughter after his disgraced sister, Tamar (14:27).

<sup>28</sup>Absalom lived in Jerusalem two years without ever seeing the king's face. <sup>29</sup>Absalom called for Joab in order to send Joab to the king, but Joab refused to come. Absalom called for Joab a second time, but he still wouldn't come. <sup>30</sup>So Absalom said to his servants, "Look, Joab's property is next to mine. He has barley there. Go and set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set the property on fire. Then Joab's servants went to Joab with their clothes torn. "Absalom's servants set the property on fire," they said.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>31</sup>So Joab went straight to Absalom's house and said to him, "Why have your servants set my property on fire?"

<sup>32</sup>Absalom answered Joab, "Look, I sent you a message: Come here so I can send you to the king to ask, 'Why have I returned from Geshur? I would be better off if I were still there!' Please let me see the king's face. If I'm guilty, then the king can kill me."

<sup>33</sup>Joab went to the king and reported this to him. Then the king called for Absalom, and Absalom came to the king. He bowed low out of respect, nose to the ground before the king. Then the king kissed Absalom.

### Absalom plots rebellion

**15** Some time later, Absalom got a chariot and horses for his own use, along with fifty men to run ahead of him. <sup>2</sup>Absalom would get up early and stand by the side of the road that went through the city gate. Whenever anyone had a lawsuit to bring before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him, "What city are you from?" When the person said, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel," <sup>3</sup>then Absalom would say to him, "No doubt your claims are correct and valid, but the king won't listen to you. <sup>4</sup>If only I were made a judge in the land," Absalom would continue, "then anyone with a lawsuit could come to me, and I would give them justice."

<sup>5</sup>Whenever anyone came near to Absalom, bowing low out of respect, he would reach his hand out, grab them, and kiss them. <sup>6</sup>This is how Absalom treated every Israelite who came to the king seeking justice. This is how Absalom stole the hearts of the Israelites.

<sup>7</sup>At the end of four<sup>r</sup> years, Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go to Hebron so I can fulfill a promise I made to the LORD. <sup>8</sup>Your servant made this promise when I lived in Geshur, in Aram. I promised that if the LORD would bring me back to Jerusalem, then I would worship the LORD in Hebron."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>"Go in peace," the king said. So Absalom left and went to Hebron.

<sup>10</sup>But Absalom sent secret agents throughout the tribes of Israel with this message: "When you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, 'Absalom has become king in Hebron!'"

<sup>11</sup>Two hundred invited guests went with Absalom from Jerusalem. They were innocent and

<sup>4</sup>DSS (4QSam<sup>r</sup>) LXX; MT lacks *Then Joab's servants . . . said*. <sup>r</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg, Josephus; MT *forty* <sup>r</sup>LXX; MT lacks *in Hebron*.

14:28-33 Joab once again plays a central role between David and Absalom, although he seems to try to avoid it. Two years have passed since Absalom's return to Jerusalem, but he has not yet seen David face-to-face. In knowing Joab's close relationship to the king, Absalom tries to speak with Joab, but Joab won't respond to Absalom's requests to see him (14:28-29). So Absalom has his servants set Joab's field on fire. That gets his attention, and Joab agrees to speak to the king (14:30-32). Finally, David summons Absalom to him, and Absalom bows low in respect. The chapter ends simply by saying *the king kissed Absalom* (14:33). The kiss comes too late. The time for any genuine reconciliation between father and son has passed.

15:1-20:22 This extended narrative details the rebellion of Absalom against his father, David. It forms the focus of the drama that unfolds in David's family when his own sons become men who take what they want, a pattern David modeled in taking Bathsheba and ending the life of Uriah. The story is told with a lack of historical detail and a wealth of insight into the characters and personal dramas of these events. Much of the action is carried forward in conversations between characters. Even after Absalom's

death in 2 Samuel 18, the impact of the rebellion continues to affect David and all those around him.

15:1-12 Absalom tries to undermine loyalties to David in the kingdom. He presents himself as strong and capable, and he makes himself publicly available. Much business took place at the city gate in ancient times. Absalom sits there willing to hear disputes, which suggests that the people will receive no hearing from the king (15:2-4). He especially targets those from the northern tribes of Israel, connections he no doubt had cultivated during his three-year northern stay in Geshur (15:8). He treats everyone with a warmth and familiarity no one would expect of the king (15:5-6). While in Jerusalem, Absalom is still somewhat under David's watchful eye and close to David's loyal military forces as well. So it is a clever strategy when Absalom asks leave to worship God in Hebron, and David foolishly grants the request (15:8-9). After all, Hebron was David's first capital, his original power base and in the very south of the kingdom. But Absalom sends word through the tribes of Israel that when they hear the signal they are to declare that Absalom has become king in Hebron (15:10), the very place from which David first became

14:33 Gn 33:4;  
Lk 15:20  
15:1 1Sa 8:11;  
1Ki 1:5  
15:2 Ru 4:1  
15:3 2Sa 15:2;  
Prv 12:2  
15:4 Jgs 9:29  
15:5 2Sa 14:33  
15:6 Ro 16:18  
15:10 1Ki 1:34;  
2Ki 9:13

15:13 Jgs 9:3;  
2Sa 15:6  
15:25 Ex 15:13;  
Ps 43:3  
15:26 Nm 14:8;  
Jgs 10:15;  
1Sa 3:16;  
2Sa 22:20

knew nothing of this matter when they went. <sup>12</sup>While Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he summoned David's advisor Ahithophel, who was from Giloh, to come from his hometown. So the conspiracy grew stronger, and Absalom's following grew.

### *David flees from Jerusalem*

<sup>13</sup>A messenger came to David, reporting, "The hearts of the Israelites have gone over to Absalom." <sup>14</sup>Then David told all the servants who were with him in Jerusalem, "Come on! We have to run for it, or we won't be able to escape Absalom. Hurry, or he will catch up with us in no time, destroy us,<sup>4</sup> and attack the city with the sword."

<sup>15</sup>The king's servants said to him, "Your servants are ready to do whatever our master the king decides." <sup>16</sup>So the king left, with his entire household following him, but he left ten secondary wives behind to take care of the palace.

<sup>17</sup>So the king left, with all his people following him, and they stopped at the last house. <sup>18</sup>All the king's servants marched past him, as did all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites, and the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath. <sup>19</sup>The king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why are you coming with us too? Go back! Stay with King Absalom." You are a foreigner and an exile from your own country. <sup>20</sup>You just got here yesterday. So today should I make you wander around with us while I go wherever I have to go? No. Go back, and take your relatives with you. May the LORD show you loyal love and faithfulness.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>21</sup>But Ittai answered the king, "As surely as the LORD lives and as surely as my master the king lives, wherever my master the king may be, facing death or facing life, your servant will be there too."

<sup>22</sup>"Okay then," David replied to Ittai. "Keep marching!"

So Ittai the Gittite and all of his men and all the little children with him marched past. <sup>23</sup>The whole countryside cried loudly as all the troops marched past. The king crossed the Kidron Valley, and all the troops passed by on the Olive road<sup>6</sup> into the wilderness.

<sup>24</sup>Zadok was there too, along with all the Levites carrying the chest containing God's covenant. They set God's chest down, and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the troops had finished marching out of the city. <sup>25</sup>Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry God's chest back into the city. If the LORD thinks well of me, then he will bring me back and let me see it and its home again. <sup>26</sup>But if God says, 'I'm not pleased with you,' then I am ready. Let him do to me whatever pleases him."

<sup>27</sup>"Do you understand?" the king said to the priest Zadok. "Go back to the city in safety—you and Abiathar<sup>7</sup> with your two sons, your son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan. <sup>28</sup>I will be waiting in the desert plains until you send word telling me what to do." <sup>29</sup>So Zadok and Abiathar took God's chest back to Jerusalem and stayed there.

<sup>30</sup>But David, his head covered, walked barefoot up the slope of the Mount of Olives crying. All the people who were with him covered their heads too and cried as they went up. <sup>31</sup>David was told that Ahithophel was also among the conspirators with Absalom, so he prayed, "Please, LORD, make Ahithophel's advice foolish."

<sup>4</sup>Heb uncertain; LXX: *bring the city down on top of us* <sup>5</sup>Heb lacks *Absalom*. <sup>6</sup>LXX; MT lacks *may the Lord show you*.

<sup>7</sup>LXX; MT lacks *Olive*. <sup>8</sup>Correction; MT lacks *and Abiathar*.

king. Absalom is taking over David's story. In a significant aside, the text also tells us that a key advisor to David, Ahithophel, has been persuaded to join Absalom's plot (15:12). He will play an important role in the later phase of the story.

15:13-31 The report comes to David that Absalom is in open rebellion against him. David swiftly makes the decision that they must leave Jerusalem or be trapped there between Absalom in Hebron and his Israelite tribal allies to the north (15:13-14). This begins a remarkable journey of retreat from Jerusalem. David will have many encounters in this journey, but in the process we begin to see again something of the David we knew before his sin with Bathsheba (see sidebar, "Remorseful Journey"). David left behind 10 secondary wives (perhaps women available for the king's sexual pleasure; their status is unclear), but the rest of his household came with him.

*Cherethites, Pelethites* are part of David's personal military force, usually commanded by Benaiah. Some of the loyalties are touching. Ittai and his men from Gath march out with David, and David urges him to stay because as a foreigner he need not risk involvement. Ittai responds in loyalty to David, and leaves with his men and their families to share David's fate (15:18-22). The two priests, who have been with David since his wilderness days, come out with the Lord's covenant chest and offer sacrifices. They intend to come with him, but David doesn't believe the sacred chest should be taken from its place in Jerusalem, and he sends them back to the city. David's intention, however, has a political dimension, since he instructs the priests to use their sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, to send word to him on Absalom's movements in the city (15:24-29). David continues his journey out of the city, taking the route west over the Mount of Olives, walking barefoot

*Remorseful Journey* David's retreat from Jerusalem isn't just a strategic move to escape Absalom. In David's story it becomes a journey full of remorse and anguish, and a turning point to reclaim earlier elements of his character that made him the man following God's own heart. With David's sin and God's judgment, the David known from the stories of his early years becomes difficult to see. He takes Bathsheba; he kills Uriah; he deals weakly with his son Amnon; he changes his mind about reconciling with Absalom.

Now David walks barefoot out of Jerusalem, weeping and potentially about to lose everything he has and has become. But remarkably we begin to see qualities we have not seen for some time in David's story. He refuses to treat the covenant chest like a good-luck charm to take with him, but once again relies on trust in God's will. To Zadok he says, "If the Lord thinks well of me, then he will bring me back . . . But if God says, 'I'm not pleased with you,' then I am ready. Let him do to me whatever pleases him" (2 Sam 15:25-26). This expression is remarkably similar to Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives, "not my will but your will must be done" (Luke 22:42). In 2 Samuel 15:31 David prays to God for the first time since the death of his infant son. He puts the matter of Ahithophel in God's hands. He later expresses a similar willingness to trust God in the matter of Shimei (2 Sam 16:11-12).

As this journey continues, David still has the capacity to deal wisely and compassionately with others. He journeys away from the danger of his own death to reclaim his life with God. Many years later, Jesus—the son of David—journeys in the other direction over the Mount of Olives to face his own death, but also to claim his life with God.

### David and Hushai

<sup>32</sup>When David came to the summit where people used to worship God, Hushai from Erech met him. Hushai's clothes were ripped, and dirt was on his head. <sup>33</sup>David said to him, "If you come with me, you will be a burden to me. <sup>34</sup>But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, 'King, I am your servant!' Please spare my life! I was your father's servant in the past, but now I am your servant," then you can help me by countering Ahithophel's advice. <sup>35</sup>The priests Zadok and Abiathar will be with you there. So report everything you hear in the king's palace to the priests Zadok and Abiathar. <sup>36</sup>Their two sons, Zadok's son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan, are also there. Use them to report to me everything you hear." <sup>37</sup>So David's friend Hushai went into Jerusalem, just as Absalom was entering the city.

### David and Ziba

**16** When David had passed a short distance beyond the summit, Ziba, Mephibosheth's servant, met him with a pair of saddled donkeys loaded with two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred bunches of raisins, one hundred figs,<sup>a</sup> and a jar of wine.

<sup>2</sup>"What is all this for?" the king asked Ziba.

"The donkeys are for the royal family to ride," Ziba explained. "The bread and summer fruit are for the young people to eat, and the wine is for those who get exhausted in the wilderness."

<sup>3</sup>"Where is your master's grandson?" the king asked.

"He is still in Jerusalem," Ziba answered the king, "because he thinks that the Israelites are now going to give his grandfather's kingdom back to him."

<sup>4</sup>"Look here," the king said to Ziba. "Everything that belonged to Mephibosheth now belongs to you."

Ziba said, "I bow out of respect! Please think well of me, my master and king."

<sup>a</sup>Correction, LXX; MT King, I will be your servant. <sup>\*</sup>Or summer fruit

and weeping along with the people (15:30). Here he learns of Ahithophel's treason and prays to the Lord to make his advice foolish (15:31).

15:32-37 In a key encounter David's friend Hushai meets him, already in the trappings of mourning (15:32). But David has other plans for him by sending him back into the city to pledge loyalty to Absalom and, in effect, to become a double agent. David's hope is that Hushai can counter the advice of Ahithophel (15:33-34). David tells Hushai about his arrangements to smuggle word of Absalom's plan out through Ahimaaz and Jonathan (15:35-36),

and Hushai reenters Jerusalem just as Absalom enters it (15:37). David has barely escaped.

16:1-4 Suddenly Ziba presents himself to David with gifts of donkeys and provisions for the journey. This is the steward caring for the lands of Saul, which David restored to the lame son of Jonathan, Mephibosheth (2 Sam 9). When David asks about Mephibosheth, Ziba says he has stayed in Jerusalem, hoping the Israelites will restore Saul's kingdom to him (16:3). This seems highly unlikely since Absalom is claiming the kingdom for himself, but it slanders Mephibosheth, and David quickly awards to Ziba

15:34 2Sa 16:19  
15:35 2Sa 17:15,  
2Sa 17:16  
15:36 2Sa 15:27,  
2Sa 17:17,  
2Sa 18:19,  
1Ch 6:8  
15:37  
2Sa 16:15-16;  
1Ch 27:33  
16:1 1Sa 25:18;  
2Sa 9:2,  
2Sa 15:32  
16:2 Jgs 10:4;  
2Sa 16:1,  
2Sa 17:29  
16:3 2Sa 9:9-10,  
2Sa 19:27

16:5 1Sa 17:43;  
2Sa 3:16;  
2Sa 19:16;  
1Ki 2:8, 1Ki 2:36  
16:6 2Sa 10:7,  
2Sa 23:8  
16:7 Dt 13:13;  
1Sa 2:12,  
1Sa 25:17;  
2Sa 12:9,  
2Sa 16:5  
16:8 2Sa 1:16  
16:9 1Sa 26:6,  
2Sa 2:18, 2Sa 3:8,  
2Sa 3:39,  
2Sa 19:21  
16:10 2Sa 3:39,  
2Sa 16:11,  
2Sa 19:22;  
Job 9:12;  
Jn 18:11  
16:11 2Sa 12:11,  
2Sa 16:10  
16:12 Dt 23:5;  
Ro 8:28  
16:14 2Sa 17:2  
16:15 2Sa 15:37  
16:22 2Sa 11:2,  
2Sa 12:11,  
2Sa 12:12,  
2Sa 15:16

### Shimei curses David

<sup>5</sup>When King David came to Bahurim, a man from the same clan as Saul's family came out from there. His name was Shimei; he was Gera's son. He was cursing as he came out. <sup>6</sup>He threw rocks at David and at all of King David's servants, even though the entire army and all the warriors were on either side of him.

<sup>7</sup>This is what Shimei said as he cursed David: "Get out of here! Get out of here! You are a murderer! You are despicable! <sup>8</sup>The LORD has paid you back for all the blood of Saul's family, in whose place you rule, and the LORD has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. You are in this trouble because you are a murderer!"

<sup>9</sup>Zeruiah's son Abishai said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my master the king? Let me go over and cut his head off!"

<sup>10</sup>But the king said, "My problems aren't yours, you sons of Zeruiah. If he is cursing because the LORD told him to curse David, then who is to question, 'Why are you doing this?'"

<sup>11</sup>Then David addressed Abishai and all his servants: "Listen! My own son, one of my very own children, wants me dead. This Benjaminite can only feel the same—only more! Leave him alone. And let him curse, because the LORD told him to. <sup>12</sup>Perhaps the LORD will see my distress; perhaps the LORD will repay me with good for this cursing today."

<sup>13</sup>So David and his men kept walking, while Shimei went along on the hillside next to him, cursing as he went, throwing rocks and dirt at him. <sup>14</sup>The king and all the people who were with him reached the Jordan River<sup>a</sup> exhausted, and he rested there.

### Ahithophel's advice

<sup>15</sup>Now Absalom and all the Israelites entered Jerusalem, and Ahithophel was with him.

<sup>16</sup>Then David's friend Hushai, who was from Erek, approached Absalom and said to him, "Long live the king! Long live the king!"

<sup>17</sup>But Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this how you show loyal love to your friend? Why didn't you go with him?"

<sup>18</sup>"No," Hushai replied to Absalom, "I will belong to the one chosen by the LORD, by this people, and by all Israel, and I will stay with him. <sup>19</sup>What's more, whom should I serve if not David's son? I served your father, and so I will serve you in the same way."

<sup>20</sup>Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give your advice then. What should we do?"

<sup>21</sup>"Have sex with your father's secondary wives—the ones he left to take care of the palace," Ahithophel told Absalom. "Then all Israel will hear that you have alienated yourself from your father, and everyone who supports you will be encouraged."

<sup>22</sup>So they set up a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he had sex with his father's secondary wives in plain sight before all Israel. (<sup>23</sup>Now in those days, the advice Ahithophel gave was like asking for a word from God. That's why Ahithophel's advice was valued by both David and Absalom.)

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT lacks *at the Jordan River*.

everything that belonged to Mephibosheth (16:4). This isn't the last we will hear of this matter (cf. 2 Sam 19:24-30).

16:5-14 David's sad procession must have looked like defeat to many. So David was met by a man named Shimei, who clearly had been waiting for such a day. He was a Benjaminite from the same clan as Saul's family, and he clearly thought that the day of triumph for those who supported Saul had finally come. He came out throwing dirt and rocks at David and his warriors, and he cursed them, saying that they were getting what they deserved for the blood on their hands from the house of Saul (16:6-8). Naturally, Abishai, the hotheaded brother of Joab, wanted to go over and cut his head off, but David restrained him. Once again, the David of this journey places his trust in God to deal with Shimei. So they travel on to the Jordan River, with Shimei cursing and throwing debris at them (16:9-14).

16:15-23 The scene shifts back to Jerusalem. David's friend Hushai approaches Absalom, who is accompanied by Ahithophel. Absalom is clearly suspicious, but Hushai convincingly argues that he is casting his lot with Absalom as God's chosen one and can serve the son as well as the father. It is an argument designed to flatter Absalom, and he seems to accept it (16:16-19). Absalom then turns to Ahithophel for advice, which, we are told, is like a word from God (16:23). Ahithophel advises a first action by Absalom to make clear to Israel that he has broken with David. He tells him to have sex with all 10 of the secondary wives left behind by David. He does so, in a public manner in a tent set up on the roof of the palace (16:21-22). This brutal and flagrant act fulfills Nathan's judgment on David: What David did secretly (taking another man's wife) would be done to him before all Israel by one from his own family (2 Sam 12:11-12).

**17** Then Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Let me pick twelve thousand men, and I will go after David tonight. <sup>2</sup>I will attack him while he is tired and weak, and I will throw him into a panic. All the troops with him will run off. I promise to kill the king alone, <sup>3</sup>and I will bring all the people back to you like a bride comes back to her husband. <sup>4</sup>It's only one man's life you are seeking; everyone else can be at peace."

<sup>4</sup>This plan seemed excellent to Absalom and the Israelite elders.

### *Hushai's advice*

<sup>5</sup>But Absalom said, "Call Hushai from Erech. Let's hear what he has to say as well." <sup>6</sup>When Hushai from Erech arrived, Absalom said to him, "This is what Ahithophel has advised. Should we follow it or not? What do you say?"

<sup>7</sup>Hushai said to Absalom, "This time, the advice Ahithophel has given isn't right. <sup>8</sup>You know that your father and his men are warriors," he continued, "and they are as desperate as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Your father is a seasoned fighter. He won't spend the night with his troops. <sup>9</sup>Even now he has probably hidden himself in one of the caves or some other place. When some of the troops<sup>c</sup> fall in the first attack, whoever hears it will say, 'The soldiers who follow Absalom have been defeated!'" <sup>10</sup>Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like a lion's, will melt in fear because all Israel knows that your father is a warrior and that those who are with him are brave. <sup>11</sup>So I would advise that all the Israelites, from Dan to Beersheba—a group as countless as sand on the seashore—be summoned to join you, and that you yourself go into battle. <sup>12</sup>When we attack him wherever he might be, we will fall on him like dew that falls on the ground. No one will survive—not him and not one of the soldiers who are with him! <sup>13</sup>If he retreats into a city, all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it into a valley until not even a pebble of it will be found."

<sup>14</sup>Then Absalom and everyone in Israel agreed, "The advice of Hushai from Erech is better than Ahithophel's advice." This was because the LORD had decided to counter Ahithophel's good advice so that the LORD could bring disaster on Absalom.

### *Hushai warns David*

<sup>15</sup>Hushai told the priests Zadok and Abiathar, "Here is what Ahithophel advised Absalom and the Israelite elders, and here is what I advised. <sup>16</sup>Now send word immediately to David and tell him, 'Don't spend the night in the desert plains. You must cross over immediately. Otherwise, the king and all the troops who are with him will be swallowed up whole!'"

<sup>17</sup>Jonathan and Ahimaaz were standing by at En-rogel. A female servant would come and report to them, and they would then travel and report to King David because they couldn't risk being seen entering the city. <sup>18</sup>But a boy saw them and reported it to Absalom. So the two of them left immediately and came to a man's house at Bahurim. He had a well in his courtyard, and they climbed down into it. <sup>19</sup>The man's wife took a covering and spread it over the well's opening, then scattered grain over it so no one would notice. <sup>20</sup>When Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house they demanded, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?"

The woman told them, "They crossed over the stream."<sup>d</sup> They looked for them but found nothing, so they returned to Jerusalem.

<sup>b</sup>LXX; Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>LXX <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain

17:1-14 A tense drama unfolds here, with Ahithophel giving his best advice to Absalom, but with Hushai trying to counter that advice with a plan that will give David an advantage. Ahithophel plans to take 12,000 men and pursue David directly while he and his men are tired and disorganized. Most notably he proposes killing David alone, and allowing others to scatter or return to Jerusalem in peace. This plan would entail minimum bloodshed, and so the plan is well received by Absalom and his elders (17:1-4). But Absalom decides that he would hear Hushai's advice as well. Hushai's advice is shrewd. He plays on David's reputation as a warrior and the known fierceness of those warriors closest to him. He suggests that David is too seasoned a warrior to sleep exposed with his men and leave himself open to Ahithophel's plan. Thus when Absalom's men attack and suffer losses without killing David, the

troops would lose heart (17:7-10). Hushai advises assembling a much larger force from throughout Israel. This, of course, gives the hastily retreating David more time. He also advises that Absalom himself should lead this force into battle, no doubt appealing to Absalom's ego (17:11). He ends by grandly suggesting a mighty victory (17:12). Absalom chooses the grander scheme of Hushai, but the text makes an interesting comment. It identifies the Lord as the source of this second plan, and the Lord as the one who would defeat Absalom (17:14).

17:15-23 Hushai now makes use of the network of spies for communication that David had put in place through the priests Zadok and Abiathar. He sends word to David to cross the Jordan immediately so they aren't defenseless against Ahithophel's plan (17:15-16). A small drama is played out in 17:17-22 when Jonathan and Ahimaaz are

17:1 2Sa 3:3,  
2Sa 13:29,  
2Sa 15:31,  
2Sa 17:22;  
1Ch 27:33

17:2 Dt 25:18,  
2Sa 16:14;  
1Ki 22:31

17:4 2Sa 3:17

17:14 2Sa 15:31,  
2Sa 15:34,  
2Sa 16:23

18:1-2Sa 18:2  
18:5-2Sa 18:12

<sup>21</sup>After they had left, Jonathan and Ahimaaz climbed out of the well. They went and reported to King David, "Get up! Cross the water immediately because Ahithophel has made plans against you!" <sup>22</sup>So David and all the troops who were with him got up and crossed the Jordan River. By daybreak there was no one left who hadn't crossed the Jordan.

<sup>23</sup>Meanwhile, once Ahithophel saw that his advice hadn't been followed, he saddled his donkey and went home to his own town. He gave instructions to his household, then hanged himself and died. He was buried in his father's tomb.

<sup>24</sup>David had reached Mahanaim by the time Absalom and all the Israelites who were with him crossed the Jordan River. <sup>25</sup>Absalom had put Amasa in charge of the army instead of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra, an Ishmaelite\* who had married Abigail, who was Nahash's daughter and the sister of Zeruah, Joab's mother. <sup>26</sup>Israel and Absalom camped in the territory of Gilead.

<sup>27</sup>When David arrived in Mahanaim, Nahash's son Shobi, who was from Rabbah of the Ammonites; Ammiel's son Machir, who was from Lo-debar; and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim <sup>28</sup>brought couches, basins, and pottery, along with wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils, <sup>29</sup>honey, curds, sheep, and cheese from the herd so that David and the troops who were with him could eat. They said, "The troops have grown hungry, tired, and thirsty in the wilderness."

### *Absalom's death*

**18** Then David gathered the troops who were with him and appointed unit commanders over thousands and hundreds. <sup>2</sup>David sent out the army—a third under Joab's command, a third under the command of Abishai, Zeruah's son, and a third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. The king told the troops, "I will march out with you myself."

<sup>3</sup>But the troops replied, "No! You must not march out! If we flee, they won't care about us. Even if half of us die, they won't care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us. It is much better if you support us from the city."

<sup>4</sup>The king said to them, "I will do whatever you think is best." So the king stood beside the gate as all the troops marched out by hundreds and thousands. <sup>5</sup>The king gave orders to Joab, Abishai, and Ittai: "For my sake, protect my boy Absalom." All the troops heard what the king ordered regarding Absalom to all the commanders.

<sup>6</sup>So the troops marched into the field to meet the Israelites. The battle was fought in the Ephraim forest. <sup>7</sup>The army of Israel was defeated there by David's soldiers. A great slaughter of twenty thousand men took place that day. <sup>8</sup>The battle spread out over the entire countryside, and the forest devoured more soldiers than the sword that day.

\*LXX<sup>a</sup> and 1 Chron 2:17; MT *an Israelite*; LXX<sup>b</sup> *a Jezreelite*

discovered and almost captured as they try to take the message to David that he must immediately cross the Jordan River. When Ahithophel realized his advice had been rejected, he traveled to his home and hanged himself (17:23). It is impossible not to consider the parallel with Judas, who hanged himself after he had betrayed Jesus, the son of David. Both men had betrayed God's anointed one (cf. Matt 27:5).

17:24-29 Because of Hushai's advice, David and his men are well into the Transjordan at Mahanaim before Absalom and his force have even crossed the Jordan River. Absalom eventually camps in the area of Gilead (17:24, 26). Absalom places Joab's nephew Amasa in charge of his army, perhaps trying to gain favor with this warrior family (17:25). David is joined at Mahanaim by various allies who also bring provisions for him and his men (17:27-29). Hushai's plan has given him time to regroup and plan.

18:1-8 David has time and resources to organize for battle. He divides his force into thirds, two led by the loyal warrior brothers Joab and Abishai, who have been with David from the time of Saul onward. The final third

is commanded by Ittai the Gittite, whose loyalty was already seen in the retreat from Jerusalem (18:1-2; cf. 2 Sam 15:19-22). The troops won't let David risk himself in battle; he is the prize and if lost would make all efforts vain. David agrees to stay behind and stands at the gate as the troops march out (18:3-4). A crucial element of this story is the final command David gives publicly to his commanders: "For my sake, protect my boy Absalom" (18:5). The battle is joined, and David has had time to gather strength and pick the terrain. *Ephraim forest* is probably a wooded area in the Transjordan and likely indicates that David wisely avoided the meeting of forces on an open field. The text claims the forest took victims as well as David's men (18:6, 8). The report of the victory for David, and the slaughter of 20,000 men, is revealing: The *army of Israel* met *David's soldiers* (18:7). This might suggest that Absalom's forces were new recruits, a people's army, while David's men were professional soldiers serving the royal household. No matter how many men Absalom mustered, they would have been no match for a professional militia led by the seasoned warriors Joab, Abishai, and Ittai.



<sup>9</sup>Absalom came upon some of David's men. Absalom was riding on a mule, and the mule went under the tangled branches of a large oak tree. Absalom's head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair while the mule under him kept on going. <sup>10</sup>One of the men saw this and reported to Joab, "I just saw Absalom hanging from an oak tree."

<sup>11</sup>Joab said to the man who told him, "You saw this? Why didn't you kill him on the spot? I would have given you ten pieces of silver and a belt."

<sup>12</sup>But the man said to Joab, "Even if I had a thousand pieces of silver in my hand, I wouldn't touch the king's son! We heard what the king commanded you, Abishai, and Ittai—'For my sake, take care of my boy Absalom.'<sup>f</sup> <sup>13</sup>If I had taken Absalom's life behind the king's back then—though nothing is hidden from the king—you would have kept your distance from me."<sup>g</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Joab said, "I won't waste time like this with you!" He took three sticks in his hand and drove them into Absalom's chest while he was still alive in the oak. <sup>15</sup>Then ten young armor-bearers of Joab surrounded Absalom, struck him, and killed him. <sup>16</sup>Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops stopped chasing the Israelites, because Joab held them back.

<sup>17</sup>They took Absalom and threw him into a big pit in the forest. They piled over him a huge heap of stones. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes. <sup>18</sup>When he was alive, Absalom had raised a large pillar for himself in the King's Valley because he said, "I have no son to carry on the memory of my name." He named the pillar after himself. It is called Absalom's Monument to this day.

### David mourns for Absalom

<sup>19</sup>Then Zadok's son Ahimaaz said, "Please let me run and take the news to the king that the LORD has vindicated him against his enemies' power."

<sup>20</sup>Joab said to him, "You aren't the one to bring the news today. You can bring news on another day, but not today, because the king's son is dead." <sup>21</sup>Then Joab said to a Cushite, "Go tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed low before Joab, then ran off.

<sup>22</sup>But Zadok's son Ahimaaz again said to Joab, "I don't care what happens, just let me run after the Cushite too."

"Why do you want to go, son?" Joab asked. "You'll get no reward for going."<sup>h</sup>

<sup>23</sup>"I don't care what happens, I want to go," Ahimaaz said.<sup>i</sup>

So Joab said to him, "Run off then!"

Ahimaaz ran off, going by way of the plain, and passed the Cushite.

<sup>24</sup>Now David was sitting between the two gates. The watchman on duty went up on the roof of the gate by the wall. He looked out and saw a man running alone. <sup>25</sup>The watchman called out and reported this to the king. The king said, "If he's alone, it's good news."

The man got nearer and nearer, <sup>26</sup>and the watchman saw another man running and called down to the gatekeeper, "There's another man running alone."

The king said, "That one must be bringing good news too."

<sup>f</sup>LXX, Vulg, Syr; Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Or *Otherwise, I would have been dealing recklessly with my own life, because nothing is hidden from the king and you were stationed far from me*; Heb uncertain. <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>i</sup>LXX, MT lacks Ahimaaz said.

18:9-18 With the battle lost, Absalom tries to escape, but he is caught up in a tree by the lavish hair mentioned earlier in his story (18:9; cf. 2 Sam 14:26). He is discovered hanging there helplessly, and this is reported to Joab by a soldier. Joab demands to know why the soldier didn't kill Absalom, which becomes the occasion to remember David's command not to harm the young man (18:10-13). Joab, always direct, takes matters into his own hands and thrusts three spears through Absalom. His armor-bearers finish the job (18:14-15). They bury Absalom in the forest, and the Israelite army he raised flees home (18:16-17). An aside mentions a monument Absalom erected for himself in Jerusalem in the King's Valley (probably the Kidron Valley; 18:18). This notice undoubtedly contributed to the designation of a later tomb from the Greek period in the Kidron Valley as Absalom's tomb, which can be seen to this day. The mention that Absalom had no sons is puzzling,

since three were mentioned earlier (2 Sam 14:27). Perhaps they hadn't survived.

18:19-33 A small drama unfolds over bringing the news to David. Zadok's son Ahimaaz wants to be the runner, but Joab is fearful of what might happen when David hears Absalom is dead. The messenger bringing news of the death of Saul and Jonathan didn't fare so well (2 Sam 1:15-16). Joab sends a Cushite as messenger instead (18:19-21). But Ahimaaz still presses his case to run as well. It is clear that he thinks he has good news to bring of the victory over David's enemies. Joab allows him to run, and he passes the Cushite (18:22-23). The point of view shifts to David, who is waiting for news. The watchman sees first one and then a second runner. David believes it must be good news, and indeed Ahimaaz announces the victory (18:24-28). When David asks concerning Absalom, Ahimaaz claims he doesn't know

18:33 2Sa 19:4  
19:1 2Sa 18:5,  
2Sa 18:12,  
2Sa 18:14,  
2Sa 18:33

<sup>27</sup>The watchman said, "I can see that the first one runs like Zadok's son Ahimaaz."

"He's a good man," the king said, "and is coming with good news."

<sup>28</sup>Ahimaaz called out to the king, "Peace!" then bowed low before the king, his nose to the ground. He said, "Bless the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hands against my master the king."

<sup>29</sup>The king said, "Is my boy Absalom okay?"

Ahimaaz said, "I saw a large crowd right when Joab, the king's servant, sent your servant off, but I don't know what it was about."

<sup>30</sup>"Step aside and stand right here," the king said. So Ahimaaz stepped aside and waited.

<sup>31</sup>Then the Cushite arrived and said, "My master the king: Listen to this good news! The LORD has vindicated you this day against the power of all who rose up against you."

<sup>32</sup>The king said to the Cushite, "Is my boy Absalom okay?"

The Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my master the king and all who rise up against you to hurt you end up like that young man."

<sup>33</sup>The king trembled. He went up to the room over the gate and cried. As he went, he said, "Oh, my son Absalom! Oh, my son! My son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! Oh, Absalom, my son! My son!"<sup>k</sup>

**19**Joab was told that the king was crying and mourning Absalom.<sup>2</sup> So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the troops because they heard that day that the king was grieving for his son. <sup>3</sup>So that day the troops crept back into the city like soldiers creep back ashamed after they've fled from battle. <sup>4</sup>The king covered his face and cried out in a loud voice, "Oh, my son Absalom! Oh, Absalom, my son! My son!"

<sup>5</sup>Joab came to the king inside and said, "Today you have humiliated all your servants who have saved your life today, not to mention the lives of your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your secondary wives, <sup>6</sup>by loving those who hate you and hating those who love you! Today you have announced that the commanders and their soldiers are nothing to you, because I know that if Absalom were alive today and the rest of us dead, that would be perfectly fine with you! <sup>7</sup>Now get up! Go out and encourage your followers! I swear to the LORD that if you don't go out there, not one man will stick with you tonight—and that will be more trouble for you than all the trouble that you've faced from your youth until now."

<sup>8</sup>So the king went and sat down in the city gate. All the troops were told that the king was sitting in the gate, so they came before the king.

### David returns to Jerusalem

Meanwhile, the Israelites had fled to their homes. <sup>9</sup>Everyone was arguing throughout Israel's tribes, saying, "The king delivered us from our enemies' power, and he rescued us from the Philistines' power, but now he has fled from the land and from controlling his own kingdom. <sup>10</sup>And Absalom, the one we anointed over us, is dead in battle. So why do you say nothing about bringing the king back?"

<sup>11</sup>When the things that all the Israelites were saying reached the king,<sup>m</sup> David sent a message to the priests Zadok and Abiathar: "Say the following to the elders of Judah: 'Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace?'"<sup>n</sup> <sup>12</sup>You are my relatives! You are

<sup>h</sup>19:1 in Heb <sup>k</sup>19:2 in Heb <sup>l</sup>LXX; MT from over Absalom <sup>m</sup>LXX, OL; MT lacks When . . . the king, though a version of this clause appears in 19:12. <sup>n</sup>MT adds *The things that all the Israelites were saying reached the king in his home (or palace).*

(18:29). This is a clear falsehood, since Joab held him back to keep him from announcing Absalom's death. David turns to the Cushite, and when he is asked of Absalom, the Cushite expresses the hope that all of David's enemies might be as that young man, namely, dead (18:30-32). Verse 33 represents one of the most heart-wrenching expressions of grief in all literature. The love and loss of the father is clear and made more tragic because it came too late to save the son.

19:1-8 Absalom is dead, but his impact hasn't ended. David is so overcome by grief that his victorious troops come back into the city as if they are the defeated, and the king doesn't acknowledge them at all but continues to grieve in a loud voice (19:1-4). Joab must once again

take direct action. He confronts David, and says that he is acting as if he would rather all of his family and army were dead and Absalom alive. He is loving those who hate him and hating those who love him (19:5-6). He virtually threatens David that if he can't go out and acknowledge his men, then they will all desert him, and his tragedy will be even greater (19:7). So David finally rises and sits in the gate while his troops march through (19:8).

19:9-40 Now begins the difficult journey back home to Jerusalem. It would appear there was some question whether David would return. Finally David sends word to Zadok and Abiathar with a message for the elders of Judah, David's own tribe, to lead the effort to bring him back (19:9-12). In a remarkable gesture of conciliation,

my flesh and bones! Why should you be the last to bring the king back?' <sup>13</sup>And tell Amasa, 'Aren't you my flesh and bones too? May God deal harshly with me and worse still if you don't become commander of my army from now on instead of Joab!'"

<sup>14</sup>So he won over the hearts of everyone in Judah as though they were one person, and they sent word to the king: "Come back—you and all your servants." <sup>15</sup>So the king came back and arrived at the Jordan River. Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king and bring him across the Jordan.

<sup>16</sup>Gera's son Shimei, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, hurried down with the people of Judah to meet King David. <sup>17</sup>A thousand men from Benjamin were with him. Ziba too, the servant of Saul's house, along with his fifteen sons and twenty servants, rushed to the Jordan ahead of the king <sup>18</sup>to do the work of ferrying<sup>o</sup> over the king's household and to do whatever pleased him.

Gera's son Shimei fell down before the king when he crossed the Jordan. <sup>19</sup>He said to the king, "May my master not hold me guilty or remember your servant's wrongdoing that day my master the king left Jerusalem. Please forget about it, Your Majesty,<sup>p</sup> <sup>20</sup>because your servant knows that I have sinned. But look, I am the first person from the entire family of Joseph to come down today and meet my master the king."

<sup>21</sup>Zeruiah's son Abishai responded, "Shouldn't Shimei be put to death for that—for cursing the LORD's anointed?"

<sup>22</sup>But David said, "My problems aren't yours, you sons of Zeruiah. Why are you becoming my enemy today? Should anyone in Israel be put to death today? Don't I know that today I am again king over Israel?"

<sup>23</sup>Then the king told Shimei, "You will not die." And the king swore this to him.

<sup>24</sup>Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, also came down to meet the king. He hadn't taken care of his feet, trimmed his beard, or washed his clothes from the day the king left until the day he returned safely. <sup>25</sup>When he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king asked him, "Mephibosheth, why didn't you go with me?"

<sup>26</sup>"My master and king," Mephibosheth answered, "my servant abandoned me! Because your servant is lame, I asked my servant, 'Saddle a donkey for me<sup>q</sup> so I can ride and go to the king.' <sup>27</sup>So Ziba has slandered your servant to my master and king, but my master and king is a messenger of God. So do whatever seems best to you. <sup>28</sup>Even though all the members of my grandfather's family were nothing short of demonic<sup>r</sup> toward my master and king, you still put your servant with those who eat at your table. So what right do I have to beg for still more from the king?"

<sup>29</sup>"You don't need to talk any more about this," the king said to him. "I order you and Ziba to divide the property."

<sup>30</sup>Mephibosheth said to the king, "Let him take all of it, since my master and king has come home safely."

<sup>31</sup>Now Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim. He accompanied the king to the Jordan River to send him off there. <sup>32</sup>Barzillai was very old, 80 years of age. He had supported the king during his stay at Mahanaim because Barzillai was a very wealthy man.

<sup>o</sup>LXX; MT while the crossing was under way, to ferry <sup>p</sup>19:18-19 Heb uncertain <sup>q</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT your servant said, I will saddle a donkey for myself <sup>r</sup>Or were doomed to death by my master the king; MT men of death

David affirms his distant kinship to Amasa, who commanded Absalom's army, offering to make him commander of David's army in place of Joab (19:13). This may speak to the fragility of the political situation and perhaps to the possibility that David has heard of Joab's role in the death of Absalom. Amasa is persuasive, and the elders of Judah come down to meet David as he crosses the Jordan (19:14-15). There follows a parade of persons trying to win favor or mend fences with David. Shimei is mentioned first. He is eager to make things right for the cursing and stone-throwing with which he greeted David's retreat. He brings a thousand Benjaminites to assist David. Once again Abishai wants to kill him, but David will have no bloodshed on this day, and the king swears to Shimei that he won't die (19:16-17a, 18b-23). But political memories

are long. On his deathbed David tells Solomon to deal with Shimei in accordance with his offense (1 Kgs 2:8-9); and Solomon has Shimei put to death (1 Kgs 2:36-46). Ziba, the servant of Saul who met David in his retreat from Jerusalem, comes down with sons and servants to assist David (19:17b-18a); but this time Mephibosheth comes down to speak for himself (19:24-28). He claims that Ziba left him, even though he ordered a donkey saddled for himself to join the king. Since he was lame, he couldn't do this for himself and claims Ziba has slandered him. David won't argue the matter. He divides all the property (which he had given now to Ziba; 2 Sam 16:1-4) between the two (19:29). He won't try to determine innocence or guilt but generously provides for both. In his own act of generosity, Mephibosheth declares that Ziba can take it all, since the

19:21 Ex 22:28;  
15a 26:9;  
25a 16:9  
19:26 25a 9:3  
19:31 25a 17:27;  
1Ki 2:7; Ezr 2:61;  
Neh 7:63  
19:32 15a 25:2;  
25a 17:27

19:34 Gn 47:8,

Gn 47:9

19:35 2Sa 15:33;

Ps 90:10; Ecc 2:8

20:1 1Sa 22:7;

2Sa 19:43,

2Sa 20:2

<sup>33</sup>The king said to Barzillai, "Come over the Jordan with me. I will provide for you at my side in Jerusalem."

<sup>34</sup>But Barzillai said to the king, "How many years do I have left that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? <sup>35</sup>I am now 80 years old. Do I know what is good or bad anymore? Can your servant taste what I eat or drink? Can I even hear the voices of men or women singers? Why should your servant be a burden to my master and king? <sup>36</sup>Your servant will cross a short way over the Jordan with the king, but why should the king give me such a reward? <sup>37</sup>Let your servant return so I may die in my own town near the grave of my parents. But here is your servant Chimham. Let him cross over with my master and king, and treat him as you think best."

<sup>38</sup>The king said, "Okay. Chimham will cross over with me, and I will treat him as I<sup>a</sup> think best. And I will do for you anything you desire from me."

<sup>39</sup>So all the people crossed over the Jordan River, and the king stayed behind.<sup>†</sup> The king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and then Barzillai went back to his home. <sup>40</sup>When the king crossed over to Gilgal, Chimham went with him. All the troops of Judah and half the troops of Israel escorted the king across.

<sup>41</sup>Then everyone in Israel came and said to the king, "Why did our relatives the people of Judah steal you away, and bring the king and his household across the Jordan River, along with all of his soldiers?"

<sup>42</sup>Then all the people of Judah answered the Israelites, "Because the king is our relative! Why are you angry at us about this? Have we taken any of the king's food? Has he given us any gifts?"

<sup>43</sup>But the Israelites answered the people of Judah, "We have ten shares in the monarchy! What's more, we are the oldest offspring, not you!<sup>‡</sup> So why have you disrespected us? Weren't we the first to talk about bringing back our king?"

But the words of the people of Judah were even harsher than the words of the Israelites.<sup>¶</sup>

### Sheba's rebellion

**20** Now a despicable man named Sheba, Bichri's son, from Benjamin, was also there. He sounded the trumpet and said:

"We don't care about David!

We have no stake in Jesse's son!

Go back to your homes, Israel!"

<sup>2</sup>So all the Israelites left David to follow Bichri's son Sheba. But all the people of Judah stayed close to their king from the Jordan River all the way to Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>When David arrived at his palace in Jerusalem, the king took the ten secondary wives he had left to take care of the palace and put them in a house under guard. He provided for them, but he didn't have sex with them. They were confined until the day they died, and lived like widows.

<sup>4</sup>Then the king said to Amasa, "Call everyone in Judah here to me three days from now. You should be here too." <sup>5</sup>So Amasa went to call Judah together, but he took longer than the allotted time.

<sup>6</sup>David told Abishai, "Bichri's son Sheba will cause more trouble for us than Absalom did. Take your master's servants and chase after him before he finds fortified cities and escapes

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT you <sup>†</sup>LXX; MT *crossed over* <sup>‡</sup>LXX, OL; MT *we have a greater claim on David than you do.* <sup>¶</sup>19:39-43  
Heb uncertain

king has returned safely (19:30). This speaks well for him, and we don't know what happened in the matter. There is a lengthy farewell between David and Barzillai, an old friend and ally of David who aided and provisioned David in the Transjordan (19:31-38). Barzillai refuses David's offer to bring him into the court in Jerusalem and wishes to die in his hometown, but he begs a place with David for Chimham, probably his son.

19:41-43 As David and his escorts cross the Jordan headed for Jerusalem, a dispute breaks out between the men of Israel and the men of Judah. The Israelites dislike the initiative taken by the men of Judah. The men of Judah

claim the right of kinship to David. The men of Israel counter that they are 10 tribes, and older among the tribes. There is no result but many harsh words. We are seeing seeds of discord that will eventually divide the kingdom (see 1 Kg 12).

20:1-13 A man named Sheba, described as despicable, decides to take advantage of the discord between the men of Israel and Judah as they cross the Jordan River, and he declares no interest in David. Most of the men of Israel seem to have followed him, although the men of Judah stayed to escort David all the way to Jerusalem (20:1-2). When David arrives in Jerusalem, he sets aside

from us.”<sup>7</sup> So Joab’s men marched out after Sheba—this included the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the warriors. They marched out of Jerusalem to pursue Bichri’s son Sheba.

<sup>8</sup>When they got to the great stone in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Joab was dressed in his soldier’s uniform. Over the tunic at his waist he wore a sword in its sheath. As Joab went forward it slipped out.

<sup>9</sup>“How are you, my brother?” Joab asked Amasa, and with his right hand he took hold of Amasa’s beard as if to kiss him. <sup>10</sup>But Amasa didn’t notice the sword in Joab’s hand. Joab struck him in the stomach with it so that Amasa’s intestines spilled out on the ground. He died without Joab striking him a second time. Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba, Bichri’s son.

<sup>11</sup>One of Joab’s men stood by Amasa and said, “Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, follow Joab!” <sup>12</sup>Amasa was writhing in blood in the middle of the road, and the man saw that everyone was stopping. When he saw this, he dragged Amasa from the road into a field and threw a robe over him. <sup>13</sup>Once Amasa was moved out of the road, everyone who followed Joab marched past in pursuit of Bichri’s son Sheba.

<sup>14</sup>Sheba went through all the Israelite tribes up to Abel of Beth-maacah. All the Bichrites<sup>▼</sup> assembled and followed Sheba in. <sup>15</sup>Then Joab’s men arrived and attacked Sheba at Abel of Beth-maacah. They piled up a ramp against the city, and it stood against the outer wall.<sup>▲</sup> All of Joab’s troops were hammering the wall, trying to bring it down.

<sup>16</sup>Then a wise woman called from the city, “Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come over here, so I can talk to him.”

<sup>17</sup>So Joab approached her, and the woman said, “Are you Joab?”

“I am,” he answered.

“Pay close attention to the words of your female servant,” she said.

“I’m listening,” Joab replied.

<sup>18</sup>She said, “People used to say long ago: ‘Ask your question at Abel,’ and that settled the matter. <sup>19</sup>I am one of the peaceful and faithful in Israel, but you are trying to kill a city that is one of Israel’s mothers! Why would you annihilate the LORD’s inheritance?”

<sup>20</sup>Joab answered, “I would never, ever annihilate or destroy such a thing! <sup>21</sup>That’s not the issue. A man named Sheba, Bichri’s son, who is from the Ephraim highlands, has rebelled against King David. Just hand him over, and I’ll leave the city alone.”

The woman said to Joab, “His head will be thrown over the wall to you!”

<sup>22</sup>When the woman went to everyone with her wise counsel, they cut off the head of Sheba, Bichri’s son, and threw it out to Joab. Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and his troops left the city, returning to their homes. But Joab returned to the king in Jerusalem.

### David’s officials

<sup>23</sup>Now Joab was in command of Israel’s army; Jehoiada’s son Benaiah commanded the Cherethites and the Pelethites; <sup>24</sup>Adoram was in charge of the forced labor; Ahilud’s son Jehoshaphat was the recorder; <sup>25</sup>Sheva was secretary; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; <sup>26</sup>and Ira from Jair was also a priest for David.

<sup>▼</sup>Cf LXX, Vulg; MT *Berites* <sup>▲</sup>Heb uncertain

the 10 secondary wives with whom Absalom had sex, and although he provides for them, they live like widows for the rest of their days (20:3). But David now has another rebellion to put down, and as usual, Joab has his own scores to settle. David first asks Amasa (Absalom’s general) to assemble the men of Judah to pursue Sheba, but he is slow arriving with his men, so David sends Joab and his own personal warriors after him (20:4-7). At Gibeon, Amasa catches up with Joab and his men, and Joab goes forward to greet him but drops his sword. When he rises as if to embrace Amasa in greeting, he brings up the sword and slashes open Amasa’s abdomen (20:8-10). Clearly, Joab regards Amasa as a traitor to David, and his way of taking care of the matter parallels how he took care of Abner, Saul’s general (2 Sam 3:27). Amasa’s body in the road

distracts the passing troops until they move it and cover it with a robe (20:11-13).

20:14-22 Sheba’s end is shameful and disappointing. He takes refuge in a city called Abel of Beth-maacah, with a reputation as a place to seek wisdom. When Joab and his men begin to lay siege to the city, a wise woman asks to talk with Joab. She refers to the city as *one of Israel’s mothers*, and appeals to Joab not to destroy it (20:18-19). He in turn makes clear that he seeks only the rebel Sheba, and if Sheba is handed over, that will end the matter (20:20-21). The wise woman goes further and says that Sheba’s head will be thrown over the wall. This grotesque act indeed ends the matter (20:22).

20:23-26 This passage presents a list of David’s key officers for this final period of his reign.

20:10 2Sa 2:23,  
2Sa 3:27,  
2Sa 20:9; 1Ki 2:5  
20:22 2Sa 2:28,  
2Sa 18:16,  
2Sa 20:1,  
2Sa 20:16

21:1 Gn 12:10,  
Gn 26:1; Ru 1:1  
21:3 1Sa 26:19;  
2Sa 20:19  
21:5 2Sa 5:17;  
2Sa 8:1  
21:16 Gn 6:4;  
1Sa 17:4;  
2Sa 21:18;  
2Sa 21:20;  
2Sa 21:22

### Avenge the Gibeonites

**21** There was a famine for three years in a row during David's rule. David asked the LORD about this, and the LORD said, "It is caused by Saul and his household, who are guilty of bloodshed because he killed the people of Gibeon."<sup>2</sup> So the king called for the Gibeonites and spoke to them.

(Now the Gibeonites weren't Israelites but were survivors of the Amorites. The Israelites had sworn a solemn pledge to spare them, but Saul tried to eliminate them in his enthusiasm for the people of Israel and Judah.)

<sup>3</sup>David said to the Gibeonites, "What can I do for you? How can I fix matters so you can benefit from the LORD's inheritance?"

<sup>4</sup>The Gibeonites said to him, "We don't want any silver or gold from Saul or his family, and it isn't our right to have anyone in Israel killed."

"What do you want?"<sup>7</sup> David asked. "I'll do it for you."

<sup>5</sup>"Okay then," they said to the king. "That man who opposed and oppressed<sup>8</sup> us, who planned to destroy us, keeping us from having a place to live anywhere in Israel—<sup>6</sup>hand over seven of his sons to us, and we will hang them before the LORD at Gibeon<sup>9</sup> on the LORD's mountain."

"I will hand them over," the king said.

<sup>7</sup>But the king spared Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son and Saul's grandson, because of the LORD's solemn pledge that was between them—between David and Saul's son Jonathan. <sup>8</sup>So the king took the two sons of Aiah's daughter Rizpah, Armoni and Mephibosheth, whom she had birthed for Saul; and the five sons of Saul's daughter Merab,<sup>b</sup> whom she birthed for Adriel, Barzillai's son, who was from Meholah, <sup>9</sup>and he handed them over to the Gibeonites. They hanged them on the mountain before the LORD. The seven of them died at the same time. They were executed in the first days of the harvest, at the beginning of the barley harvest.

<sup>10</sup>Aiah's daughter Rizpah took funeral clothing and spread it out by herself on a rock. She stayed there from the beginning of the harvest until the rains poured down on the bodies from the sky, and she wouldn't let any birds of prey land on the bodies during the day or let wild animals come at nighttime. <sup>11</sup>When David was told what Aiah's daughter Rizpah, Saul's secondary wife, had done, <sup>12</sup>he went and retrieved the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan from the citizens of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen the bones from the public square in Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them on the day the Philistines killed Saul at Gilboa. <sup>13</sup>David brought the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan from there and collected the bones of the men who had been hanged by the Gibeonites. <sup>14</sup>The bones of Saul and his son Jonathan were then buried in Zela, in Benjaminite territory, in the tomb of Saul's father Kish. Once everything the king had commanded was done, God responded to prayers for the land.

### War with the Philistines

<sup>15</sup>Once again war broke out between the Philistines and Israel. David and the soldiers who were with him went down and fought the Philistines. When David grew tired, <sup>16</sup>Ishbi-benob,

<sup>7</sup>LXX<sup>a</sup>, OL; MT *What are you saying?* <sup>8</sup>LXX<sup>b</sup>; MT *annihilated us* <sup>9</sup>Correction; cf LXX and 21:9; MT *at Gibeah of Saul, the LORD's chosen one* <sup>b</sup>LXX<sup>c</sup>; MT *Michal* (but cf 2 Sam 6:23)

21:1-14 This narrative tells how a claim of bloodguilt against the house of Saul led to the execution of Saul's remaining sons. Readers are divided over whether this is a politically calculated act on the part of David or a series of events reflecting an ancient understanding of how guilt is purged. There is a famine in the land, and God reveals the cause of it to David as bloodguilt for Saul's attempt to wipe out the Gibeonites (21:1-2). The Gibeonites were non-Israelites who made a covenant with Joshua when Israel entered the land, and they later become temple servants from Solomon onward (Josh 9:3-27). We don't know anything of such an attempt by Saul against the Gibeonites, but the Gibeonites in this story seem to believe they have been wronged. To make things right, the Gibeonites demand the death of seven of Saul's offspring, actually his grandsons (21:5-9). David hands them over, and they are hanged. He spares Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, because of his solemn pledge to Jonathan (21:7). One of

Saul's daughters, and the mother of two of the hanged men, was named Rizpah. She maintained watch night and day, and wouldn't let birds or wild animals disturb the bodies (21:10). Her story shows the courage and resolve of a mother's love. When David hears of this, he takes sweeping action. He not only gathers the bodies of the hanged men but he brings the bones of Saul and Jonathan from Jabesh-gilead, where they had been buried after being rescued from the Philistine walls of Beth-shan (1 Sam 31). He gives all of these men from the house of Saul an honored burial in the tomb of Saul's father, Kish (21:11-14). After all this bloodshed, God gives relief from the famine. Is this a calculated act by David? These grandsons of Saul don't seem to have constituted much of a threat. Was it the Gibeonites who insisted on such bloody justice? We have no record of these events or of Saul's retaliation against the Gibeonites. 21:15-22 These verses tell of four of David's warriors who kill four Philistine giants in battle. After the first of these

a descendant of the Raphah,<sup>c</sup> planned on killing David.<sup>d</sup> The weight of his spear was three hundred shekels of bronze, and he was wearing new armor. <sup>17</sup>But Zeruiah's son Abishai came to David's aid, striking the Philistine down and killing him. Then David's men swore a solemn pledge to him: "You will never march out to battle with us again! You must not snuff out Israel's lamp!"

<sup>18</sup>Some time later, another battle with the Philistines took place at Gob. Then Sibbecai from Hushah killed Saph, a descendant of the Raphah. <sup>19</sup>There was yet another battle with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan, Jair's son<sup>e</sup> from Bethlehem, killed Goliath from Gath, whose spear shaft was as strong as the bar on a weaver's loom. <sup>20</sup>In another battle at Gath, there was a huge<sup>f</sup> man who had six fingers on his hands and six toes on his feet, twenty-four in all. He too was descended from the Raphah. <sup>21</sup>When he insulted Israel, Jonathan, who was the son of David's brother Shimei, killed him. <sup>22</sup>These four Philistines were descended from the Raphah in Gath, and they fell by the hands of David and his servants.

*David's thanksgiving psalm*

**22**<sup>g</sup>David spoke the words of this song to the LORD after the LORD delivered him from the power of all his enemies and from Saul.

<sup>2</sup>He said:

The LORD is my solid rock, my fortress, my rescuer.

<sup>3</sup>My God is my rock—I take refuge in him!—

he's my shield and my salvation's strength,  
my place of safety and my shelter.

My savior! Save me from violence!

<sup>4</sup>Because he is praiseworthy,<sup>h</sup>

I cried out to the LORD,  
and I was saved from my enemies.

<sup>5</sup>Death's waves were all around me;  
rivers of wickedness terrified me.

<sup>6</sup>The cords of the grave<sup>i</sup> surrounded me;  
death's traps held me tight.

<sup>7</sup>In my distress I cried out to the LORD;  
I cried out to my God.

God heard my voice from his temple;  
my cry for help reached his ears.

<sup>8</sup>The earth rocked and shook;  
the sky's foundations trembled  
and reeled because of God's anger.

<sup>9</sup>Smoke went up from God's nostrils;  
out of his mouth came a devouring fire;  
flaming coals blazed out in front of him!

<sup>c</sup>Or giants; also in 21:18, 20, 22 <sup>d</sup>LXX Joash's son Dodo, a descendant of the Raphah (see previous note), captured David. <sup>e</sup>See 1 Chron 20:5; LXX<sup>LMN</sup> (cf 2 Sam 23:24); Heb Jaare-oregim. <sup>f</sup>See 1 Chron 20:6; MT a Midianite or a combative man. <sup>g</sup>This poem also occurs in Psalm 18 with some variations. <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>i</sup>Heb Sheol

battles, the warriors insist that David is too valuable to come into the field with them, and he isn't involved in the other three heroic deeds (21:17). The only other noteworthy element here is that Elhanan from Bethlehem, David's town, is reported to have killed a giant named Goliath (21:19). Some readers have wondered if David's adventure against Goliath is really historically Elhanan's deed, or if Elhanan is another name by which David is known. The Chronicler even makes the giant killed by Elhanan a brother of Goliath (1 Chron 20:5).

22:1-51 This is a royal thanksgiving psalm attributed to David when God had given him rest from all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. It is a near duplicate of Psalm 18. By standing near the end of the books of Samuel, it serves with the Song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 as a

bracket around the story of kingship in Israel and David's story. Together these songs express the confidence that God's reality is the true source of Israel's life, and even the king depends on the sovereignty and grace of God to secure the future for Israel. This psalm falls into three parts. 22:1-20 The first part is a thanksgiving for deliverance. As a royal psalm, the voice behind the first person pronouns is the king. In this section of the psalm, the king appeals to God for help in times of distress: *I cried out... God heard*. What follows is a portrait of God powerful enough to face all chaotic forces and destructive powers. The appearance of God (called a theophany) is described using images of power in the natural world: earthquake, wind, fire, storm, lightning, and thunder (22:8-16). Then there is a rush of verbs indicating deliverance: *God*

21:17-25a 18:3;  
25a 20:6;  
1Ki 11:36;  
1Ki 15:4;  
Ps 132:17  
21:18 1Ch 20:4  
21:19 1Ch 20:5  
21:20-22  
1Ch 20:6-8  
22:1-57  
Ps 18:1-50  
22:2 Ps 18:2;  
Ps 31:3, Ps 71:3;  
Ps 91:2, Ps 144:2  
22:3 Gn 15:1;  
Dt 33:29; Ps 9:9;  
Jer 16:19; Lk 1:69  
22:4 Ps 48:1;  
Ps 96:4  
22:5 Ps 69:14;  
Ps 93:4;  
Jon 2:3  
22:6 Ps 116:3  
22:7 Ps 34:15;  
Ps 116:4;  
Ps 120:1  
22:8 lgs 5:4;  
Job 26:11;  
Ps 77:18, Ps 97:4  
22:9 Ps 97:3;  
Heb 12:29

22:10 Ex 20:21;  
Dt 4:11;  
1Kj 8:12; Ps 97:2;  
Ps 144:5

22:11 Gn 3:24;  
Ps 104:3

22:12 2Sa 22:10

22:13 2Sa 22:9

22:14 1Sa 21:0;  
Ps 29:3

22:15 Dt 32:23;  
Ps 7:13; Ps 144:6

22:16 Ex 15:8;  
Job 4:9; Ps 18:15;  
Na 1:4

22:17 Ps 144:7

22:18 2Sa 22:1

22:19 Ps 23:4

22:20 2Sa 15:26;  
Ps 31:8; Ps 118:5

22:21 1Sa 26:23;  
1Kj 8:32; Ps 7:8;  
Ps 24:4

22:22 Gn 18:19;  
Ps 128:1;  
Prv 8:32

22:23 Ps 119:30;  
Ps 119:102

22:24 Gn 6:9

22:25 2Sa 22:21

22:26 Mt 5:7

22:27 Lv 26:23;  
Mt 5:8

22:28 Ex 3:8;  
Ps 72:12

22:29 Job 29:3;  
Ps 27:1

22:30 2Sa 5:6

22:31 Dt 32:4;

Ps 12:6;  
Ps 119:140;  
Prv 30:5;  
Mt 5:48

- 10 God parted the skies and came down;  
thick darkness was beneath his feet.
- 11 God mounted the heavenly creatures and flew;  
he was seen on the wind's wings.
- 12 God made darkness his covering;  
water gathered in dense clouds!
- 13 Coals of fire blazed out of the brightness before him.
- 14 The LORD thundered from heaven;  
the Most High made his voice heard.
- 15 God shot arrows, scattering the enemy;  
he sent the lightning and whipped them into confusion.
- 16 The seabeds were exposed;  
the earth's foundations were laid bare at the LORD's rebuke,  
at the angry blast of air coming from his nostrils.
- 17 From on high God reached down and grabbed me;  
he took me out of deep waters.
- 18 God saved me from my powerful enemy,  
saved me from my foes, who were too much for me.
- 19 They came at me on the very day of my distress,  
but the LORD was my support.
- 20 He brought me out to wide-open spaces;  
he pulled me out, because he is pleased with me.
- 21 The LORD rewarded me for my righteousness;  
he restored me because my hands are clean,  
22 because I have kept the LORD's ways.  
I haven't acted wickedly against my God.
- 23 All his rules are right in front of me;  
I haven't turned away from any of his laws.
- 24 I have lived with integrity before him;  
I've kept myself from wrongdoing.
- 25 And so the LORD restored me for my righteousness,  
because I am clean in his eyes.
- 26 You deal faithfully with the faithful;  
you show integrity toward the one who has integrity.
- 27 You are pure toward the pure,  
but toward the crooked, you are tricky.
- 28 You are the one who saves people who suffer,  
but your eyes are against the proud.  
You bring them down!
- 29 You are my lamp, LORD;  
the LORD illumines my darkness.
- 30 With you I can charge into battle;  
with my God I can leap over a wall.
- 31 God! His way is perfect;  
the LORD's word is tried and true.  
He is a shield for all who take refuge in him.

reached down...grabbed me...took me out...saved me... brought me out... pulled me out (22:17-20).

22:21-28 The second part of this psalm suggests that God responds favorably to moral virtue, in this case the king's. *The LORD rewarded me for my righteousness; he restored me because my hands are clean:* This picture of David is a bit hard to reconcile with the king we have seen since 2 Samuel 11. The theme of the king's righteousness and obedience as the source of God's blessing doesn't ring true at this point in the books of Samuel. But it is expressing the desired ideal, and it implies a curse for disobedience.

22:29-51 In section three of this psalm, we may come closest to the truth of the David we have seen in the books of Samuel, both at his best and at his worst. Here statements by the king about his own gifts and skills are coupled with statements acknowledging God as the source and power behind those gifts (*With you I can charge into battle;* 22:30). The entire section is a mix of praise for God's power, guidance, direction, and empowerment, along with a genuine delight in the deeds that the king can do as leader, warrior, and king. The final section moves toward praise (22:47) and thanks (22:50) of God, to the conclusion of the entire



- 32 Now really, who is divine except the LORD?  
And who is a rock except our God?
- 33 Only God! My mighty fortress,  
who makes my way<sup>1</sup> perfect,  
34 who makes my step<sup>2</sup> as sure as the deer's,  
who lets me stand securely on the heights,  
35 who trains my hands for war  
so my arms can bend a bronze bow.
- 36 You've given me the shield of your salvation;  
your help has made me great.
- 37 You've let me walk fast and safe,  
without even twisting an ankle.
- 38 I chased my enemies and destroyed them!  
I didn't come home until I finished them off.
- 39 I ate them up! I struck them down!  
They couldn't get up;  
they fell under my feet.
- 40 You equipped me with strength for war;  
you brought my adversaries down underneath me.
- 41 You made my enemies turn tail from me;  
I destroyed my foes.
- 42 They looked around, but there was no one to save them.  
They looked to the LORD, but he wouldn't answer them.
- 43 I crushed them like dust on the ground;  
I stomped on them, trampled them like mud dumped in the streets.
- 44 You delivered me from struggles with many people;  
you appointed me the leader of many nations.  
Strangers come to serve me.
- 45 Foreigners grovel before me;  
after hearing about me, they obey me.
- 46 Foreigners lose their nerve;  
they come trembling out of their fortresses.<sup>1</sup>
- 47 The LORD lives! Bless God, my rock!  
Let my God, the rock of my salvation, be lifted high!
- 48 This is the God who avenges on my behalf,  
who subdues peoples before me,  
49 who rescues me from my enemies.  
You lifted me high above my adversaries;  
you delivered me from violent people.
- 50 That's why I thank you, LORD, in the presence of the nations.  
That's why I sing praises to your name.
- 51 You are the one who gives great victories to your king,  
who shows faithful love to your anointed one—  
to David and to his descendants forever.

### David's last words

**23** These are David's last words:  
This is the declaration of Jesse's son David,  
the declaration of a man raised high,  
a man anointed by the God of Jacob,  
a man favored by the strong one of Israel.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Qere; Kethib *his way* <sup>2</sup>Qere; Kethib *his step* <sup>1</sup>Or *prisons* <sup>2</sup>Or *Israel's favorite singer or the favorite of Israel's songs*

song in 22:51: *You are the one who gives great victories to your king, who shows faithful love to your anointed one—to David and to his descendants forever.*

23:1-7 This much shorter poetic piece is usually called the

Last Words of David. Here the king is portrayed as giving prophetic utterance. The word "declaration" in 23:1 is also translated as "oracle," and in verse 2 David is bold to speak *his word* though the power of *The Lord's spirit*. An idealized

23:2 Mt 22:43;  
Mk 12:36;  
2Pt 1:21  
23:3 2Sa 22:32;  
2Ch 19:7  
23:4 Jgs 5:31;  
Prv 4:18  
23:5 Gn 9:16;  
Is 55:3  
23:8  
1Ch 11:10-11  
23:9-10  
1Ch 11:12  
23:11-12  
1Ch 11:13-14  
23:13-17  
2Sa 5:18;  
1Ch 11:15-19;  
1Ch 14:9  
23:14 1Sa 14:1,  
1Sa 22:4,  
1Sa 22:5;  
2Sa 5:17, 2Sa 8:6  
23:15 1Ch 11:17  
23:16 Gn 35:14;  
1Sa 7:6,  
1Sa 19:5,  
1Sa 24:17;  
2Sa 23:9  
23:17 Lv 17:10  
23:18-19  
1Ch 11:20-21

- <sup>2</sup>The LORD's spirit speaks through me;  
his word is on my tongue.
- <sup>3</sup>Israel's God has spoken,  
Israel's rock said to me:  
"Whoever rules rightly over people,  
whoever rules in the fear of God,  
<sup>4</sup>is like the light of sunrise  
on a morning with no clouds,  
like the bright gleam after the rain  
that brings grass from the ground."  
<sup>5</sup>Yes, my house is this way with God!<sup>a</sup>  
He has made an eternal covenant with me,  
laid out and secure in every detail.  
Yes, he provides every one of my victories  
and brings my every desire to pass.
- <sup>6</sup>But despicable people are like thorns,  
all of them good for nothing,  
because they can't be carried by hand.
- <sup>7</sup>No one can touch them,  
except with iron bar or the shaft of a spear.  
They must be burned up with fire right on the spot!

### David's warriors

<sup>8</sup>These are the names of David's warriors: Jeshbaal<sup>o</sup> from Hachmon<sup>p</sup> was chief of the Three.<sup>q</sup> He raised his spear<sup>r</sup> against eight hundred, killing them on a single occasion.

<sup>9</sup>Next in command was Eleazar, Dodo's son and Ahohi's grandson. He was among the three warriors with David when they insulted the Philistines who had gathered there for battle. The Israelites retreated,<sup>10</sup> but he stood his ground and fought the Philistines until his hand was weary and stuck to the sword. But the LORD accomplished a great victory that day. The troops then returned to Eleazar, but only to plunder the dead.

<sup>11</sup>Next in command was Agee's son Shammah, who was from Harar. The Philistines had gathered at Lehi, where there was a plot of land full of lentils. The troops fled from the Philistines,<sup>12</sup> but Shammah took a position in the middle of the plot, defended it, and struck down the Philistines. The LORD accomplished a great victory.

<sup>13</sup>At harvesttime, three of the thirty chiefs went down and joined David at the fortress<sup>s</sup> of Adullam, while a force of Philistines were camped in the Rephaim Valley.<sup>14</sup> At that time, David was in the fortress, and a Philistine fort was in Bethlehem.<sup>15</sup> David had a craving and said, "If only someone could give me a drink of water from the well by the gate in Bethlehem."<sup>16</sup> So the three warriors broke through the Philistine camp and drew water from the well by the gate in Bethlehem and brought it back to David. But he refused to drink it and poured it out to the LORD.

<sup>17</sup>"The LORD forbid that I should do that," he said. "Isn't this the blood of men who risked their lives?" So he refused to drink it.

These were the kinds of things the three warriors did.

<sup>18</sup>Now Zeruiah's son Abishai, the brother of Joab, was chief of the Thirty.<sup>t</sup> He raised his spear against three hundred men, killed them, and made a name for himself along with the

<sup>a</sup>Or Yes, my house is surely with God! <sup>o</sup>LXX<sup>1</sup>, OL; MT *Josheb-bashebeth*; cf 1 Chron 11:11 <sup>p</sup>See 1 Chron 11:11.

<sup>q</sup>LXX<sup>1</sup>, Vulg; cf 1 Chron 11:11; MT *chief of the officers* <sup>r</sup>Cf 1 Chron 11:11; Heb uncertain <sup>s</sup>Or *cave*; cf 2 Sam 23:14

<sup>t</sup>Some Heb manuscripts, Syr; MT *third or three*

royal theology shines through this song. The king must rule rightly... in the fear of God (23:3). But then God's eternal covenant is affirmed (23:5), and God will empower the king to overcome enemies and overcome dangers (23:6-7). The covenant commitment of God here is firm but conditional. The king must rule justly and fear God. The covenant is never canceled, but the challenges and dangers facing the king can't be met with the full power of God if the king is out of harmony with God's intentions for

the king's moral rule. This seems like a concluding lesson from what David has learned in the final years of his life.

23:8-39 This section is a collection of small bits of information and memories of mighty feats by the men closest to David, especially in his earliest years. Most of the heroic deeds involve the Philistines as enemies. There seem to be two informal structures to these warriors surrounding David: the Three, mentioned in 23:8, 9, 13, 23; and the Thirty, mentioned in 23:18, 23, 24. The Three seem to be

Three. <sup>19</sup>He was the most famous of the Thirty.<sup>a</sup> He became their commander, but he wasn't among the Three.

<sup>20</sup>Jehoiada's son Benaiah was a hero from Kabzeel who performed great deeds. He killed the two sons<sup>b</sup> of Ariel from Moab. He once went down into a pit and killed a lion on a snowy day. <sup>21</sup>He also killed a giant<sup>c</sup> Egyptian who had a spear in his hand. Benaiah went against him armed with a staff. He grabbed the spear out of the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. <sup>22</sup>These were the kinds of things Jehoiada's son Benaiah did. He made a name for himself along with the three warriors. <sup>23</sup>He was famous among the Thirty, but he didn't become one of the Three. David placed him in command of his own bodyguard.

<sup>24</sup>Among the Thirty were:

Asahel, Joab's brother;  
Elhanan, Dodo's son from Bethlehem;

<sup>25</sup>Shammah from Harod;

Elika from Harod;

<sup>26</sup>Helez from Pelet;

Ira, Ikkesh's son from Tekoa;

<sup>27</sup>Abiezer from Anathoth;

Mebunnai the Hushathite;

<sup>28</sup>Zalmon from Ahoh;

Maharai from Netophah;

<sup>29</sup>Heleb, Baanah's son from Netophah;

Ittai, Ribai's son from Gibeah in Benjamin;

<sup>30</sup>Benaiah from Pirathon;

Hiddai from the Gaash ravines;

<sup>31</sup>Abi-albon from the desert plain;

Azmaveth from Bahurim;

<sup>32</sup>Eliabha from Shaalbon;

Jashen the Gizonite;<sup>d</sup>

Jonathan, <sup>33</sup>Shammah's son<sup>e</sup> from Harar;

Ahiam, Sharar's son from Harar;

<sup>34</sup>Eliphelet, Ahasbai's son from Maacah;

Eliam, Ahithophel's son from Giloh;

<sup>35</sup>Hezro from Carmel;

Paarai from Erab;

<sup>36</sup>Igal, Nathan's son from Zobah;

Bani the Gadite;

<sup>37</sup>Zelek the Ammonite;

Naharai from Beeroth, and the armor-bearer for Zeruiah's son Joab;

<sup>38</sup>Ira from Ither;

Gaeb from Ither;

<sup>39</sup>and Uriah the Hittite—

thirty-seven in all.

### David's census

**24** The LORD burned with anger against Israel again, and he incited David against them: Go and count the people of Israel and Judah.

<sup>a</sup>Syr; cf 1 Chron 11:25; MT *Wasn't he the most famous of the Three?* <sup>b</sup>LXX; MT lacks sons. <sup>c</sup>MT *handsome*; cf 1 Chron 11:23 <sup>d</sup>Cf 1 Chron 11:34; MT *Jashen's sons* <sup>e</sup>LXX; MT lacks son.

those who risked their lives to bring David a drink of water from the well in Philistine-occupied Bethlehem, but David then poured it on the ground as an offering too precious to drink because they had risked their own blood for it (23:14-17). Some of these figures have played significant roles in the earlier stories in 1 and 2 Samuel. Abishai is Joab's brother and appears often in David's story (23:18). Benaiah eventually becomes commander of David's own personal body guard (23:23) and will be one of Solomon's key supporters in 1 Kings 1-2. In the listing of the Thirty at

the end of this section, there are 37, because not all have survived. Indeed, the very first name in 23:24 is Asahel, the brother of Joab and Abishai, whose death at the hands of Abner was avenged by Joab in 2 Samuel 2:18-23. It is remarkable that Joab himself is never listed. And it is ironic that the final name listed is Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba's husband. These lists then remind the reader of both David's glory and David's folly.

24:1-10 This final story in the books of Samuel begins in a troubling way. God is already angry with Israel, and

23:20 1Ch 11:22  
23:20-23  
1Ch 11:22-25  
23:24-39  
1Ch 11:26-47  
23:30 1Sa 24:30;  
Jgs 2:9; Jgs 12:13;  
Jgs 12:15;  
1Ch 27:14  
24:1 2Sa 21:1;  
1Ch 21:1;  
1Ch 27:23-24  
24:1-9  
1Ch 21:1-6

24:10 1Sa 13:13,  
1Sa 24:5;  
2Sa 12:13;  
Ps 51:1

24:10-14  
1Ch 21:7-13

24:14 Ps 51:1,  
Ps 86:5

24:15-17  
1Ch 21:14-17

24:16 Gn 6:6;  
Ex 12:23;  
1Sa 15:11;  
2Ki 19:35;  
Ac 12:23

24:17 2Sa 24:10

<sup>2</sup>So the king said to Joab and the military commanders<sup>a</sup> who were with him, "Go throughout all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, and take a census of the people so I know how many people there are."

<sup>3</sup>Joab said to the king, "May the LORD your God increase the number of people a hundred times while the eyes of my master the king can still see it! But why does my master the king want to do this?"

<sup>4</sup>But the king's word overruled Joab and the military commanders. So Joab and the commanders left the king's presence to take a census of the Israelites. <sup>5</sup>They crossed the Jordan River and began from Aroer and from<sup>b</sup> the town that is in the middle of the valley of Gad, then on to Jazer. <sup>6</sup>They continued to Gilead and on to Kadesh in Hittite territory.<sup>b</sup> They came to Dan<sup>c</sup> and went around to Sidon. <sup>7</sup>They went to the fortress of Tyre and to all the towns of the Hivites and the Canaanites. They went out to Beer-sheba in the arid southern plain of Judah. <sup>8</sup>At the end of nine months and twenty days, after going through the entire country, they came back to Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup>Joab reported to the king the number of the people who had been counted: in Israel there were eight hundred thousand strong men who could handle a sword; in Judah the total was five hundred thousand men.

<sup>10</sup>But after this David felt terrible that he had counted the people. David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, LORD, please take away the guilt of your servant because I have done something very foolish."

<sup>11</sup>When David got up the next morning, the LORD's word came to the prophet Gad, David's seer: <sup>12</sup>Go and tell David, This is what the LORD says: I'm offering you three punishments. Choose one of them, and that is what I will do to you.

<sup>13</sup>So Gad went to David and said to him, "Will three<sup>d</sup> years of famine come on your land? Or will you run from your enemies for three months while they chase you? Or will there be three days of plague in your land? Decide now what answer I should take back to the one who sent me."

<sup>14</sup>"I'm in deep trouble," David said to Gad. "Let's fall into the LORD's hands because his mercy is great, but don't let me fall into human hands."

<sup>15</sup>So the LORD sent a plague on Israel from that very morning until the allotted time. Seventy thousand people died, from Dan to Beer-sheba. <sup>16</sup>But when the divine messenger stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD regretted doing this disaster and said to the messenger who was destroying the people, "That's enough! Withdraw your hand." At that time the LORD's messenger was by the threshing floor of Araunah from Jebus.

<sup>17</sup>When David saw the messenger who was striking down the people, he said, "I'm the one who sinned! I'm the one who has done wrong. But these sheep—what have they done wrong? Turn your hand against me and my household."

<sup>a</sup>LXX and 2 Sam 24:4; MT *commander* <sup>b</sup>LXX; MT *camped in Aroer south of the city* <sup>c</sup>Hebrew uncertain; correction on to the area beneath Hermon <sup>d</sup>LXX; MT *Dan-jaan* <sup>e</sup>LXX, 1 Chron 21:12; MT *seven*

we don't know the reason. Further, God causes David to do something that is later in the story regarded as sinful: namely, to take a census of the people in the kingdom (24:1). It isn't clear that David realizes that his desire to take this census comes from God; he simply orders Joab and his military commanders to carry it out. Later, David confesses this to be a sinful act for which he stands guilty (24:10). The Chronicler is later so concerned that God caused David to commit a sinful act that he associates the cause with the Adversary (the Satan, 1 Chron 21:1; cf. Job 1). Why would a census be a sinful act? Why would it require military power to carry it out? Indeed, Joab questions the wisdom of such a census but is overruled by David (24:3-4). It is carried out with great thoroughness throughout the land, and it requires *nine months and twenty days* (24:5-8). We begin to understand the gravity of such a census only when Joab makes his report to David: 800,000 men who can carry a sword in Israel and 500,000 in Judah (24:9). Such a census provides the basis for a military draft. Later, under Solomon, it provides the basis for a forced labor draft and for taxation. It is the

beginning of centralization and a move away from tribal autonomy. Israel is starting to behave "like the other nations," as Samuel had warned in 1 Samuel 8. To David's credit, he realizes that what he has done is sinful and confesses that sin in 24:10.

24:11-17 God responds to David's confession of guilt by sending a prophet, but it isn't Nathan. It's a new prophet in our story, Gad, and strangely, God sends him to offer David his choice of three punishments (24:11-13). They are the dreaded three: three years of famine, three months of war, or three days of disease. David says he would rather be at the mercy of God's hand than of human enemies, so that rules out the war option (24:14). Apparently God makes the final choice because a plague falls on Israel and 70,000 people die. Yet David seems to have wisely relied on the mercy of God, because as the divine messenger extends the hand of plague toward Jerusalem, God declares, "That's enough! Withdraw your hand" (24:15-16). David utters a second confession of sin, and offers that the plague should fall on him and his household rather than further on Israel (24:17).

<sup>18</sup>That same day Gad came to David and told him, "Go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah from Jebus." <sup>19</sup>So David went up, following Gad's instructions, just as the LORD had commanded.

<sup>20</sup>Araunah looked up and saw the king and his servants approaching him. Araunah rushed out and bowed low before the king, his nose to the ground. <sup>21</sup>Araunah said, "Why has my master and king come to his servant?"

David said, "To buy this threshing floor from you to build an altar to the LORD, so the plague among the people may come to an end."

<sup>22</sup>Then Araunah said to David, "Take it for yourself, and may my master the king do what he thinks is best. Here are oxen for the entirely burned offering, and here are threshing boards and oxen yokes for wood. <sup>23</sup>All this, Your Majesty, Araunah gives to the king." Then he added, "May the LORD your God respond favorably to you!"

<sup>24</sup>"No," the king said to Araunah. "I will buy them from you at a fair price. I won't offer up to the LORD my God entirely burned offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. <sup>25</sup>David built an altar there for the LORD and offered entirely burned offerings and well-being sacrifices. The LORD responded to the prayers for the land, and the plague against Israel came to an end.

24:18-25  
1Ch 21:18-30

24:18-25 The prophet Gad comes again to David and sends him to build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah, a Jebusite (24:18). This is where the messenger of the plague had stopped in heading for Jerusalem (24:16). As the king approaches, Araunah goes out to meet him in respect, and David offers to buy the threshing floor for an altar to the Lord, but Araunah wishes to give it and his oxen for the sacrifice as a gift (24:20-23). David refuses, saying he can't offer to God sacrifices that cost him nothing, so he pays 50 shekels of silver for it and makes the entirely burned offering to the Lord. The offering is accepted, and the plague comes to an end (24:24-25). David's confession is now achieved through worship, and the

gift of God's mercy is received. In 1 Chronicles 22:1, David declares the Jebusite threshing floor as the future site for a temple and even begins gathering materials, although it will be Solomon who builds it. It is fitting that the books of Samuel end with a prayerful petition in time of need that is met by God's merciful response, because that is the way 1 Samuel opened, with the prayerful petition of Hannah in a time of need that was met by God's merciful response. We have read many stories of human struggles, human gifts, human sin and confession, but beneath it all God's providence was consistently at work. The David who ends the story is the David of weakness, prayer, confession, and trust in God. This is the leadership God desires.

$f$  is a unit in  $R$  is equivalent to the condition that  $f$  is invertible. The inverse of  $f$  is given by  $f^{-1} = af + b$  if and only if  $af^2 + bf = 1$ . The same condition may be expressed as  $af + b = f^{-1}$  if and only if  $f$  divides  $1$ . This condition may be expressed in many different ways:  $f$  is a unit in  $R$  if and only if  $f$  is a nonzero element of  $R$  which divides  $1$ .

$f$ is a unit in $R$	$f$ divides $1$	$f^{-1}$ exists in $R$	$f$ is invertible in $R$
$af + b = 1$	$f^{-1} = af + b$	$f^{-1} \in R$	$f^{-1} \in R$
$af + b = f^{-1}$	$f^{-1} = af + b$	$f^{-1} \in R$	$f^{-1} \in R$
$f$ divides $1$	$f^{-1} = af + b$	$f^{-1} \in R$	$f^{-1} \in R$
$f$ divides $1$	$f^{-1} = af + b$	$f^{-1} \in R$	$f^{-1} \in R$
$f$ divides $1$	$f^{-1} = af + b$	$f^{-1} \in R$	$f^{-1} \in R$
$f$ divides $1$	$f^{-1} = af + b$	$f^{-1} \in R$	$f^{-1} \in R$
$f$ divides $1$	$f^{-1} = af + b$	$f^{-1} \in R$	$f^{-1} \in R$
$f$ divides $1$	$f^{-1} = af + b$	$f^{-1} \in R$	$f^{-1} \in R$

# 1 KINGS

The books of 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book. The division into two books probably occurred in the 2nd century BCE when the OT was translated into Greek. In the Jewish scriptures the books of Kings form a single narrative that begins with Israel's King David on his deathbed (approximately 971 BCE) and ends with Jehoiachin, Judah's last king, being released from prison in Babylon (560 BCE). These books present Israel's story from the greatness of David and his son Solomon to the tragic destruction of the two kingdoms formed after Solomon's death (Israel in the north and Judah in the south). The books of Kings fall into three main sections: the reign of Solomon (1 Kgs 1:1–11:43), the divided monarchy (1 Kgs 12:1–2 Kgs 17:41), and the kingdom of Judah from Hezekiah to the destruction of Jerusalem to the release of Jehoiachin from prison (2 Kgs 18:1–25:30).

The historian, who gathers material from ancient sources and creates a flowing narrative about Israel's past, also offers a theological

interpretation of that past based on the themes of the book of Deuteronomy. The books of Kings don't present an unbiased perspective on Israel's history. They are interested, rather, in presenting an account of the past that assigns responsibility for events.

On the one hand, 1 and 2 Kings may be classified as historical books. On the other hand, as reflected in the Jewish scriptures, they can be linked to the collection of books called the Prophets. The books of Kings present a prophetic view of Israel's history. The prophets Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah are prominent characters in the history. And the fulfillment of the prophetic word is a major theme that runs through both books.

The writer of Kings had access to written and oral sources. These included the "official records" of Solomon (1 Kgs 11:41), of Israel's kings (mentioned 18 times beginning with Jeroboam in 1 Kgs 14:19), and of Judah's kings (mentioned 15 times beginning with Rehoboam in



Jeroboam's shrine at the high place at Dan (1 Kgs 12:29-31)  
*Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com*

1 Kgs 14:29). The author also drew on stories about the royal court (David and Solomon in particular) and the prophets (Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah). The author ties these stories together by using formulaic introductions and conclusions to each king's reign and interspersing events with theological explanations and interpretations.

In many places the use of theological vocabulary in the books of Kings is similar to expressions found in the book of Deuteronomy. The historian's interpretation of Israel's past is based, in large part, on the theological vision of Deuteronomy. For example, David's final speech to Solomon (1 Kgs 2:1-4) echoes various texts in Deuteronomy (Deut 4:29; 6:2; 8:6; 9:5; 11:1). Similar echoes of Deuteronomy's wording and themes occur throughout the books of Kings (see the notes). Israel's and Judah's kings will be evaluated on their faithfulness to the Instruction (Torah) from God (Deut 17:14-20). The author criticizes kings and people alike for neglecting their exclusive loyalty to God, for worshipping other gods, and for not obeying God's Instruction. The consequence of exile, for Israel and Judah, is already anticipated in Deuteronomy (Deut 4:25-27; 29:20-21, 36, 49, 63-64; 29:24-28; 30:17-18).

Such connections reveal that the author was steeped in the thought world if not the actual text of Deuteronomy. Many modern interpreters of Kings hold the view that the historical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings belong to one tradition or school of historical writing, which has come to be called the Deuteronomistic History. The author of the books of Kings is unknown. Based on the latest events recorded in 2 Kings, the author must be living either in exile in Babylon or in Jerusalem in the post-exilic era. It could be that these books emerged over an extended period of time, during which court archivists and historians preserved and composed parts of the story. Some scholars think that the later kings Hezekiah and Josiah may have been responsible for sponsoring editions of the history. Writers during or immediately after their reigns would have been responsible for the glowing praise of these kings. Of Josiah, for example, the author affirms: "There's never been a king like Josiah,

whether before or after him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, all his being, and all his strength, in agreement with everything in the Instruction from Moses" (2 Kgs 23:25; cf. Deut 6:4-6; and on Hezekiah, see 2 Kgs 18:5).

The final edition of Kings most likely depends on earlier editions of the book. One such edition may end exactly at that point where the author praises Josiah. The next verses, however, affirm that, in the light of covenant violations prior to Josiah's time, Judah will experience exile just as Israel did (2 Kgs 23:26-27). The final edition wants to provide a reason for the exile not only of Israel but especially of Judah. In particular, the historian wants to account for the destruction of Jerusalem, a city that God has chosen (2 Kgs 23:27). The end of the books of Kings presents readers with the release from prison of Judah's last Davidic king. Perhaps the historian is suggesting that God hasn't forgotten the promises to David of a "dynasty" and a "throne" that will be "established forever" (2 Sam 7:16).

The historian provides several reasons for the downfall and exile of Israel: (1) idolatry, which was begun by Jeroboam I and committed by every king until Assyria conquered and exiled Israel (1 Kgs 12:26-33; 2 Kgs 17:7-41; see sidebar, "Idolatry" at 1 Kgs 11); (2) failure to listen to and obey the words of the prophets (2 Kgs 17:12-14); and (3) failure to live by the Instruction from Moses (see the summary in 2 Kgs 18:12). Judah's downfall occurred because Judah's kings, for the most part, failed to follow David's example. As seen in the reign of King Manasseh, they practiced idolatry, imitated the practices of the earlier inhabitants of the land, and committed excessive violence (2 Kgs 21:1-23). Only three kings of Judah are praised: Asa (1 Kgs 15:11-15), Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:5-6), and Josiah (2 Kgs 23:24-25). David is the standard for all the kings of Judah. He is the one who most fully obeyed God's Instruction (1 Kgs 3:3, 14; 9:4; 11:4, 6, 33; 15:3, 11; 2 Kgs 14:3; 16:2; 18:3; 22:2). Although Israel (the northern kingdom) takes up a good part of the story, the king named most often throughout both books is David. His name appears 90 times between 1 Kings 1:1 and the evaluation of King Josiah (2 Kgs 22:2). Although God acts with



patience and a measure of grace for Israelite kings, it is for the sake of David that God acts most decisively on Judah's behalf (1 Kgs 11:12-13, 32-34; 2 Kgs 8:19; 19:34).

The books of Kings are grounded in two convictions: (1) God is the chief actor in creation, among the nations, and in the life of God's people. God expressed God's intentions and expectations through Moses (in the divine instruction scroll) and through the prophets. (2) Israel's and Judah's kings, along with their people, are responsible for their subjugation by the empires and exile into foreign lands. God's people have violated their exclusive commitment to God, have worshipped other gods, have imitated the practices of the peoples around them, and have failed to attend to the words of Moses and the prophets.

By beginning with those assumptions, the books of Kings seem to be an extended answer to the rhetorical question posed by the nations and answered by the narrator in Deuteronomy: "Why did the LORD do this to this land?" (Deut 29:24). "It was because those people abandoned the covenant of the LORD, their ancestors' God" (Deut 29:25). Kings also makes explicit the destruction assumed in Deuteronomy (Deut 4:25-28). Yet it leaves open and ambiguous how hope might be imagined after destruction and exile. Perhaps readers of Kings must return to Deuteronomy to find the solution: "Return to the LORD your God and you will obey his voice, because the LORD your God is a compassionate God. He won't let you go, he won't destroy you, and he won't forget the covenant that he swore to your ancestors" (Deut 4:30-31; cf. Deut 30:1-10).

### I. The Transition from King David to Solomon (1:1-2:46)

- A. In David's old age (1:1-4)
- B. Adonijah, David's son, tries to seize power (1:5-53)
  1. Setting the stage for a coronation party (1:5-10)
  2. The other side conspires (1:11-40)
  3. The crisis averted (1:41-53)
- C. David's charge to Solomon (2:1-9)
- D. David's death (2:10-11)
- E. Solomon establishes his kingship (2:12-46)

### II. Solomon's Reign (3:1-11:43)

- A. Solomon and the gift of wisdom (3:1-29)
  1. Setting the stage (3:1-3)
  2. First encounter with God: the gift of wisdom (3:4-15)
  3. Remarkable demonstration of wisdom (3:16-29)
- B. Solomon's rule over "all Israel" (4:1-20)
- C. Solomon, the nations, and the kings of the earth (4:21-34)
- D. Temple and palace construction projects (5:1-7:51)
  1. Preparations for the construction of the temple (5:1-18)
  2. Building of the temple itself (6:1-38)
  3. Palace projects (7:1-12)
  4. Furnishing the temple (7:13-51)
- E. Dedication of the temple (8:1-66)
  1. Bringing the chest containing the covenant into the temple (8:1-21)
  2. Solomon's prayer of dedication (8:22-53)
  3. Blessing, petition, and feasting (8:54-66)

### F. Second meeting with God (9:1-9)

### G. Solomon's wealth, wisdom, and reputation (9:10-10:29)

1. Summary of Solomon's wealth and resources (9:10-28)
  2. Visit of the queen of Sheba (10:1-13)
  3. Solomon's global reputation (10:14-29)
- ### H. Solomon's story becomes tragic (11:1-43)
1. Third meeting with God (11:1-13)
  2. God raises up opponents (11:14-40)
  3. Solomon's death (11:41-43)

### III. Division of the Kingdom (12:1-14:31)

- A. The kingdom torn in two (12:1-33)
- B. A man of God and the word of the Lord (13:1-34)
- C. Jeroboam's rule comes to an end (14:1-20)
- D. Rehoboam's rule comes to an end (14:21-31)

### IV. Abijam and Asa Rule Judah (15:1-24)

### V. Transitions in Israel from Nadab to Ahab (15:25-16:34)

### VI. Elijah, the Prophets, the Lord's Word, and Ahab (17:1-22:40)

- A. Elijah and the drought (17:1-24)
- B. Elijah and the prophets of Baal (18:1-46)
- C. Elijah meets the Lord at Horeb (19:1-21)
- D. Ahab's war against Syria (20:1-43)
- E. Naboth's vineyard (21:1-29)
- F. The prophets and Ahab's death in battle (22:1-40)

### VII. Jehoshaphat of Judah and Ahaziah of Israel (22:41-53)

1:1 1Ch 23:1

1:2 2Sa 12:3;  
Mi 7:5

1:3 Josh 19:18;

1Sa 28:4;

1Ki 1:15;

1Ki 2:17;

1Ki 2:22

1:5 1Sa 8:11;

2Sa 3:4, 2Sa 15:1;

1Ki 2:13, 1Ch 3:2

**David and Abishag**

**1** King David had become very old. His servants covered him with blankets, but he couldn't stay warm. **2**They said to him, "Allow us to find a young woman for our master the king. She will serve the king and take care of him by lying beside our master the king and keeping him warm." **3**So they looked in every corner of Israel until they found Abishag from Shunem. They brought her to the king. **4**She was very beautiful. She cared for the king and served him, but the king didn't have sex with her.

**Adonijah's rebellion**

**5**Adonijah, Haggith's son, bragged about himself and said, "I'll rule as king myself." He got his own chariot and horses with fifty runners to go in front. **6**Now Adonijah's father had never given him direction; he never questioned why Adonijah did what he did. He was very handsome and was born after Absalom. **7**He took advice from Joab, Zeruiah's son, and from the priest Abiathar. They assisted Adonijah. **8**But Zadok the priest, Jehoiada's son Benaiah, the prophet Nathan, Shimei and his friends, and David's veterans didn't join Adonijah. **9**So Adonijah prepared lamb, oxen, and fattened cattle at the Stone of Zoheleth, next to Enrogel. He invited his brothers (the royal princes) and all the citizens of Judah who were the royal servants to come. **10**But he didn't invite the prophet Nathan, Benaiah, David's veterans, or his brother Solomon.

1:1–2:46 The narrator introduces the story of Solomon's rise to power with a comment about King David's old age. David ruled for 40 years, beginning at age 30 (2 Sam 5:3–4) and dying at 70 (either 1005–965 or 1000–960 BCE). But now David's power has diminished, which sets the stage for the power struggle that follows in these two chapters. Adonijah, one of David's sons, makes a bid for the throne. Through the intervention of Bathsheba, one of David's wives, Solomon ends up on the throne of Israel. Not only that, but Solomon makes sure there is no foothold left for rivals to challenge his rule. The story ends with a summary that confirms for the reader what these chapters aim to communicate: Solomon is heir to David's throne.

1:1–4 Although David is the main character, he is no longer the capable leader he once was. He is old, frail, and bedridden. He plays no role as a public figure. The story begins with a premonition of his impending death, which is reported in 1 Kings 2:10. The scene presented here symbolizes his political weakness. The problem is that David can't keep warm. The solution of finding a young woman attendant to lie beside him for warmth is likely a euphemism, a way of speaking about sexual arousal. Unfortunately, the beautiful young woman lying beside him doesn't arouse him sexually. His impotence (in more ways than one) opens the door to Adonijah's bid for the throne (1 Kgs 1:5).

1:2 *young woman*: The woman is of marriageable age, likely a virgin (cf. Judg 21:12; Esth 2:3). The request is odd. One of his several wives could have warmed him. *serve... lying beside*: Even though the Hebrew words translated here are used elsewhere in contexts of sexual intimacy (Lev 18:23; Gen 16:5; 2 Sam 12:8; Mic 7:5), it is possible to understand this young woman's role simply as an attendant. The ambiguity may be deliberate.

1:3 *every corner of Israel*: The exaggerated search highlights the comedy of the situation (cf. a similar extensive search in Esth 2:2–3). *Shunem*: in northern Israel at the western end of the Jezreel Valley (mentioned in 2 Kgs 4:8).

1:4 Words are repeated here from 1 Kings 1:2: *beautiful... cared for... served*. The Hebrew verb "to know" is translated here as *have sex*. It appears in Genesis 4:1, where it is translated "knew... intimately." That David *didn't have sex with her* suggests either that the young

woman was simply an attendant, or that David was impotent. This second option may be implied by Adonijah's political aspiration and his request for Abishag as his wife (see note on 1 Kgs 2:17).

1:5–53 The story of Adonijah's unsuccessful claim to the kingship ends with his bowing in submission to Solomon. 1:5–10 Adonijah plots to usurp the throne of his father David. He gathers his own trusted advisors and prepares a celebratory feast.

1:5 *Adonijah*: His name means "my lord is Jah," a reference to the divine name. He is the fourth of David's six sons born in Hebron (2 Sam 3:2–5). Amnon and Absalom have already died (2 Sam 13:28–29; 18:14–15). The third son, Chileab, is presumed to be dead. He isn't mentioned after 2 Samuel 3. Although there is no tradition of royal inheritance in the OT, Adonijah and his advisors act as though he is the rightful heir. *Haggith*: one of David's wives (2 Sam 3:4). The books of Kings often mention the name of the king's mother (e.g., 1 Kgs 14:21; 15:2). *chariot and horses*: an echo of Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam 15:1).

1:6 *Adonijah's father*: Referring to David this way may imply a distant or even neglectful relationship with his son (cf. 2 Sam 13:21; 14:24). From Absalom's story, it seems as though David also neglected his royal duties (2 Sam 15:4). *handsome*: Physical appearance is important in the descriptions of Joseph (Gen 39:6), Saul (1 Sam 9:2), David (1 Sam 16:12), and Absalom (2 Sam 14:25–26).

1:7 Adonijah's advisors (cf. 2 Sam 20:23–26). *Joab*: commander of David's army from David's early years as king (2 Sam 2–3). He killed Absalom and claimed that he was protecting David (2 Sam 18:9–18; 19:5–8). *Abiathar*: a priest who joined David's ranks after Saul's massacre of priests at Nob (1 Sam 22:20–23; 23:6, 9; 30:7). He was a descendant of Eli, who was priest at Shiloh (1 Sam 1:3). He was one of two prominent priests during David's reign (2 Sam 8:17; 20:25). See also 1 Kings 2:27.

1:8–10 Setting the stage for a coronation. These verses begin and end with a list of those not invited: David's loyal advisors. *Zadok*: Son of Ahitub and a descendant of Moses' brother Aaron (Num 20:28), he was a priest during David's reign (2 Sam 8:17; 20:25). *Zadok and Abiathar*: key figures in 2 Samuel 17–20. *Benaiah*: strongman and commander of David's special forces (2 Sam 20:20–23; see

<sup>11</sup>Nathan said to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, "Did you hear that Adonijah, Haggith's son, has become king, but our master David doesn't know about it? <sup>12</sup>Let me give you some advice on how you and your son Solomon can survive this. <sup>13</sup>Go to King David and say, 'Didn't my master the king swear to your servant, "Your son Solomon will certainly rule after me. He will sit on my throne"? Why then has Adonijah become king?' <sup>14</sup>While you are speaking there with the king, I'll come along and support your words."

<sup>15</sup>So Bathsheba went to the king in his bedroom. The king was very old, and Abishag from Shunem was serving the king. <sup>16</sup>Bathsheba bowed down on her face before the king.

The king asked, "What do you want?"

<sup>17</sup>She said to him, "Your Majesty, you swore by the LORD your God to your servant, 'Your son Solomon will certainly rule after me. He will sit on my throne.' <sup>18</sup>But now, look, Adonijah has become king, and my master the king doesn't know about it. <sup>19</sup>He has prepared large quantities of oxen, fattened cattle, and lamb. He has invited all the royal princes as well as Abiathar the priest and Joab the general. However, he didn't invite your servant Solomon. <sup>20</sup>As for you, my master the king, the eyes of all Israel are upon you to tell them who will follow you on the throne of my master the king. <sup>21</sup>When my master the king lies down with his ancestors, then I and my son Solomon will become outlaws."

<sup>22</sup>While she was still speaking with the king, the prophet Nathan arrived. <sup>23</sup>The king was informed, "The prophet Nathan is here." Then Nathan came in before the king and bowed his face to the ground. <sup>24</sup>He said, "My master the king, you must have said, 'Adonijah will become king after me and will sit on my throne.' <sup>25</sup>Indeed, today he went down and prepared oxen, fattened cattle, and lamb in large numbers. He invited all the royal princes, the generals, and Abiathar the priest. They are eating and drinking with him, and they said, 'Long live King Adonijah!' <sup>26</sup>Adonijah didn't invite me, your servant, Zadok the priest, Jehoiada's son Benaiah, or your servant Solomon. <sup>27</sup>If this message was from my master the king, you didn't make it known to your servant. Who should follow you on the throne of my master the king?"

<sup>28</sup>King David answered, "Bring me Bathsheba." She came and stood before the king. <sup>29</sup>The king made a solemn pledge and said, "As surely as the LORD lives, who rescued me from

1:11 2Sa 3:4,  
2Sa 12:24;  
1Ki 1:5, 1Ki 2:13  
1:19 1Ki 1:9

1 Kgs 1:38). *Nathan*: identified in 1 Kings 1:10 as a prophet. He first appears in David's story in 2 Samuel 7, where he announces that God will make David's "name great" and will found a "dynasty" for him (2 Sam 7:9, 11). He also promises that one of David's children will succeed him on the throne, one who will "build a temple for my name" (2 Sam 7:12-13). Although a supporter, he doesn't hesitate to challenge David about his affair with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12). *Shimei*: one of David's opponents (2 Sam 16:5-14). *veterans*: "fighting men" or "warriors." *En-roget*: *en* means "spring." The place is a short distance southeast of Jerusalem (2 Sam 17:17; cf. Josh 15:7; 18:16). The *Stone of Zoheleth*: was a sacred spot (*zoheleth*: meaning uncertain; perhaps "serpent"). *Solomon*: named for the first time in the book. This is telling, especially since *his brothers (the royal princes)*, along with the *royal servants*, were invited. The author clearly identifies Adonijah's rival.

1:11-40 The scene shifts. Nathan the prophet takes charge and together with Bathsheba foils the plot to put Adonijah on the throne.

1:11-12 *Bathsheba*: David took her as his wife after having sex with her and having her husband, Uriah, killed (2 Sam 11). *doesn't know*: The expression echoes the wordplay in 1 Kings 1:4, where the Hebrew expression "did not know" is translated "didn't have sex." David is unaware in more ways than one. His loss of power is the reason for the plot to take over the throne. The turn of events is tragic, since David's reputation was of one who "knows everything... in the land" (2 Sam 14:20). *advice... survive*: The prophet acts as a political advisor, since the situation is a matter of life and death. Both David and Bathsheba would likely be killed if Adonijah's plot were to succeed.

1:13-14 Nathan hatches his own plot. His advice to Bathsheba doesn't reflect anything David has said earlier in 2 Samuel. Later in the story, Nathan seems not to know about this promise (1 Kgs 1:24-27), yet David's words to Bathsheba appear to confirm an earlier promise to her (1 Kgs 1:29-30). In other words, Nathan is setting David up to confirm Solomon's succession to the throne.

1:15 Repetition of details from 1 Kings 1 reflects an age-old storytelling technique.

1:18 *doesn't know*: See note on 1 Kings 1:11.

1:19-21 Bathsheba speaks as though Adonijah's kingship has already been established. After repeating details from 1 Kings 1:8-10, Bathsheba appeals to David's popularity (*eyes of all Israel*) and to the danger that she and Solomon face should Adonijah become king. *lies down with his ancestors*: the ancient Israelite way of speaking about death that is used throughout Kings and Chronicles (e.g., 1 Kgs 2:10; 11:21).

1:22-27 The scene shifts. Bathsheba leaves as Nathan enters. After bowing down (an act of reverence; cf. 1 Kgs 1:16), Nathan plays a trick on David by suggesting that he must have authorized Adonijah's actions (cf. 1 Kgs 1:13, 17). "*Long live King Adonijah!*": For dramatic effect, he repeats details of the story (cf. 1 Kgs 1:10, 19) and reports the crowd's response. *your servant*: Nathan sets the stage for the main question by wondering out loud why David hasn't let Nathan know of his intentions. Nathan frames his question to assure a quick and decisive response.

1:28-31 Bathsheba returns. *as surely as the LORD lives*: a Hebrew solemn pledge that highlights the seriousness of what David is about to say. His clarity of expression and his decisive action (*today*, 1:30) imply that David hasn't lost his

1:36 Jer 28:6  
 1:38 1Sa 30:14;  
 2Sa 8:18;  
 2Sa 15:18;  
 1Ki 1:8, 1Ki 1:33  
 1:38 40  
 1Ch 29:22  
 1:39 1Sa 10:1;  
 1Sa 16:13;  
 1Ki 1:34;  
 2Ki 11:12;  
 1Ch 29:22

every trouble, <sup>30</sup>regarding what I swore to you by the LORD, Israel's God, 'Your son Solomon will certainly succeed me; he will sit on the throne after me'—I'll see that it happens today."

<sup>31</sup>Bathsheba bowed down with her face to the ground. She honored the king and said, "May my master King David live forever!"

<sup>32</sup>King David said, "Bring me Zadok the priest, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah, Jehoiada's son." They came to the king, <sup>33</sup>who said to them, "Take with you the servants of your masters. Put my son Solomon on my mule and bring him down to Gihon. <sup>34</sup>There Zadok the priest and the prophet Nathan will anoint him king over Israel. Blow the ram's horn and say, 'Long live King Solomon!' <sup>35</sup>You will follow him. He will enter and sit on my throne, and so he will succeed me as king. I have appointed him to become ruler over Israel and Judah."

<sup>36</sup>Benaiah, Jehoiada's son, responded to the king, "Yes, may it happen as the LORD, the God of my king, says. <sup>37</sup>Just as the LORD was with my master the king, so may he be with Solomon. May his throne be even greater than the throne of my master King David." <sup>38</sup>Zadok the priest, the prophet Nathan, Jehoiada's son Benaiah, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites went down and put Solomon on King David's mule. They led him to Gihon. <sup>39</sup>Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. They blew the ram's horn, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" <sup>40</sup>All the people followed him playing flutes and celebrating. The ground shook at their noise.

<sup>41</sup>Adonijah and all his invited guests heard this when they had finished eating. When Joab heard the sound of the ram's horn, he said, "What's that noise coming from the city?"

<sup>42</sup>While he was still speaking, Jonathan, Abiathar the priest's son, arrived.

Adonijah said, "Come on in! You are an honest man and will bring a good report."

<sup>43</sup>Jonathan replied to Adonijah, "No! Our master King David has made Solomon king! <sup>44</sup>To support him, the king sent along Zadok the priest; the prophet Nathan; Benaiah, Jehoiada's son; and the Cherethites and the Pelethites. They've put Solomon on the royal mule.

<sup>45</sup>Zadok the priest and the prophet Nathan have anointed him king at Gihon. They went up from there celebrating so that the city was thrown into a commotion. That is the sound you heard. <sup>46</sup>There's more: Solomon has taken over the throne of the kingdom. <sup>47</sup>The royal attendants blessed our master King David: 'May your God make Solomon's name better than your name. May God elevate his throne above your throne.'

The king then worshipped on his bed <sup>48</sup>and said, "Bless Israel's God, the LORD, who today has set my son\* on my throne, and has allowed my eyes to see it."

<sup>49</sup>Trembling with fear, all of Adonijah's guests got up and fled, each going a different way.

<sup>50</sup>Adonijah was afraid of Solomon, so he got up and went to grab hold of the horns of the

\*Heb lacks *my son*; other versions have it or something similar.

mind. Bathsheba's response is a traditional response to royalty; she isn't literally wishing him a long life.

1:32-40 David takes action immediately by calling together his advisors—those excluded by Adonijah—and declaring Solomon king.

1:33 *my mule*: By having Solomon ride David's mule the writer indicates that Solomon is David's chosen one (see 1 Kgs 1:44). The mule is a symbol of royalty (Zech 9:9; cf. Matt 21:1-11). *Gihon*: a spring just outside the city wall to the east in the Kidron Valley (also in 1 Kgs 1:38).

1:34-35 *anoint*: a symbolic action of pouring olive oil on the head of the person chosen as king (cf. 1 Sam 10:1; 16:12-13). *ram's horn*: a traditional instrument sounded for military or public announcements. A similar announcement was made at Absalom's attempted revolt (2 Sam 15:10). *as king*: These verses use two words for "king." Verse 35 uses a word for king that indicates God's special choice, selected by a prophet (cf. 1 Sam 13:14; 2 Sam 6:21; 7:8). The range of Solomon's authority will include *Israel and Judah* (cf. 1 Kgs 11:42), a significant note since David had first reigned from Hebron only over Judah (2 Sam 2:11; 1 Kgs 2:11). This may also be a premonition of a split in the future (cf. 1 Kgs 12).

1:38 *Cherethites*... *Pelethites*: David's special forces, possibly

a personal guard (2 Sam 8:18; 15:18; 20:7, 23). Their names suggest non-Israelite groups, perhaps originally from Crete (sometimes called *Sea Peoples*) and related to the Philistines. 1:39-40 *oil... horn... "Long live King Solomon!"*: typical events surrounding the rise to kingship (cf. 2 Kgs 9:13). *All the people*: The story makes it clear that this is a very public event affirmed by the entire population (cf. "all Israel" in 1 Kgs 11:42).

1:41-49 The scene changes to Adonijah's court at en-Rogel, from where they could hear the commotion in the city (see note on 1 Kgs 1:8-10).

1:42 *Jonathan*: the one who also reported Absalom's rebellion to David (2 Sam 15:36; 17:17-21). *good report*: In the spirit of the event, Adonijah can't imagine anything but good news.

1:43 *Our master King David*: Jonathan begins his report carefully, aligning himself publicly on David's side.

1:47-48 He ends his report by letting Adonijah know details of what was said in the ceremony for Solomon (cf. 1 Kgs 1:37), adding information about David's personal response to the proceedings.

1:49-50 The response from Adonijah and his guests is predictable. *horns of the altar*: raised stones at the four corners of an altar (Exod 27:2; 29:12; Ps 118:27; cf. Exod 21:12-14).

altar. <sup>51</sup>Solomon was told, "Look! Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon and has grabbed the horns of the altar. He's saying, 'King Solomon must swear to me first that he won't execute his servant with the sword.'"

<sup>52</sup>Solomon said, "If he shows himself to be an honorable person, then not a hair of his head will be harmed. But if any evil is found in him, he will die." <sup>53</sup>King Solomon sent word and had him brought down from the altar. He came and bowed down to King Solomon. Solomon said to him, "Go home!"

### David's last words

**2** David's time was coming to an end. So he commanded Solomon his son, <sup>2</sup>"I'm following the path that the whole earth takes. Be strong and be a man. <sup>3</sup>Guard what is owed to the LORD your God, walking in his ways and observing his laws, his commands, his judgments, and his testimonies, just as it is written in the Instruction from Moses. In this way you will succeed in whatever you do and wherever you go. <sup>4</sup>So also the LORD will confirm the word he spoke to me: 'If your children will take care to walk before me faithfully, with all their heart and all their being, then one of your own children will never fail to be on the throne of Israel.' <sup>5</sup>You should know what Joab, Zeruiah's son, has done to me and what he did to the two generals of Israel, Abner, Ner's son, and Amasa, Jether's son. He murdered them, spilling blood at peacetime and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist and on the sandals on his feet. <sup>6</sup>So act wisely: Don't allow him to die a peaceful death. <sup>7</sup>As for Barzillai's sons from Gilead, show them kindness. Let them eat with you. When I was running away from your brother Absalom, they came to me. <sup>8</sup>Now as for this Shimei, Gera's son—a Benjaminite from Bahurim—who is with you, he cursed me viciously when I went to Mahanaim. When he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD, 'Surely I won't execute you with the sword.' <sup>9</sup>But you don't need to excuse him. You are wise and know what to do to him. Give him a violent death."

<sup>10</sup>Then David lay down with his ancestors and was buried in David's City. <sup>11</sup>He ruled over Israel forty years—seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.

Those claiming innocence in criminal cases could claim sanctuary this way. It reflects a common ancient practice of seeking asylum at a shrine, a practice that continues today. 1:51-53 *his servant*: Adonijah gives in to David's authority; he has lost his bid for the kingship. But his ploy—asylum at the altar—provides him with an opportunity to ask for a pardon. Solomon grants it conditionally on good behavior. *not a hair . . . harmed*: a traditional saying expressing a guarantee of safety (1 Sam 14:45; 2 Sam 14:11). *evil*: a generic term used here to refer to political threat (cf. 1 Kgs 2:44).

2:1-9 David, on realizing his death is near, presents his charge to Solomon.

2:2 *Be strong and be a man*: David's words here and in the next verse echo God's words to Joshua at his commissioning to leadership after the death of Moses (Josh 1:6-9, 18; cf. Deut 31:7, 23). Both Joshua and Solomon are instructed in the same way to be faithful to God.

2:3 In naming the conditions of faithfulness to God, David provides a long list of terms used in the OT to refer to teachings that have their source in God: *laws, commands, judgments, and testimonies*. *walking*: a characteristic way of describing the moral life in God's presence (Gen 17:1; Deut 10:12; 11:1; 28:9; Josh 22:5; Ps 19:7-9). According to Deuteronomy, future kings were to read and obey the *Instruction from Moses* (Deut 17:9-10), which likely refers here to some form of the book of Deuteronomy (see also 2 Kgs 14:6; 22:8, 11; 23:25; cf. Deut 4:44; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26; 24:26; Josh 1:8; 8:31-32, 34; 23:6; 24:26). *succeed*: the same word as in Joshua 1:8. The requirement of faithfulness to God's instruction manual confirms the parallel between Joshua and Solomon. Where Joshua succeeds (Josh 24:15), Solomon, in spite of his great wisdom, fails (1 Kgs 11).

2:4 God's commitment to Solomon is also conditional for future generations of David's descendants. *walk*: See 1 Kings 2:3. *all their heart . . . being*: a combination that occurs nine times in the book of Deuteronomy (e.g. Deut 4:29; 6:5; 10:12) and in other places in the history (Josh 22:5; 1 Kgs 8:48; 2 Kgs 23:3, 25). The author of Kings draws on this traditional language, which is sometimes called "Deuteronomistic," because it is characteristic of the book of Deuteronomy. The conditional promise stands in some tension with God's unconditional promise (2 Sam 7:11-16; cf. 2 Sam 23:5; 1 Kgs 8:25; Ps 89:19-37; Jer 33:17).

2:5-9 Retributive justice, or getting even, is a prominent theme in the David story. Here, as in 2 Samuel, the theme highlights David's innocence in the violence that accompanies his rise to power. The verb "to know" appears again, this time implying clarity (1 Kgs 2:5; cf. 1 Kgs 1:11, 18). *Joab . . . Abner . . . Amasa*: Compare with 2 Samuel 3:26-39; 20:8-10; see note on 1 Kings 1:7. On the political intrigue surrounding *Abner*, see 2 Samuel 3:6-25. *Amasa*: See 2 Samuel 17:25; 19:11-15; 20:4-10. Joab's death will clear David's reputation (see 1 Kgs 2:31-34). *Barzillai* supported David (2 Sam 17:27-29; 19:31-40), whereas *Shimei* cursed David during Absalom's uprising (2 Sam 16:5-14; 19:21-23). *act wisely . . . You are wise*: 1 Kings 2:6, 9 imply political shrewdness and skill, a prominent theme in 1 Kings 3:1-28; 4:29-34; 10:1-13. *kindness*: a political word signifying loyalty. The instructions to Solomon have a political motivation: to smooth the way for successful transition to Solomon's kingship by eliminating opponents (cf. 1 Kgs 1:7) and partisan efforts that might hinder Solomon's rule over a united Israel (cf. 2 Sam 2:1-11; 1 Kgs 1:35).

2:10-11 *lay down with his ancestors*: See note on 1 Kings

2:5 2Sa 3:27.

2Sa 17:25.

2Sa 20:10.

1Ki 2:32.

2:6 Gn 42:38.

1Ki 2:9.

2:9 1Ki 2:6.

2:10 2Sa 5:7.

1Ki 1:21.

1Ki 3:1; Ac 2:29.

Ac 13:36.

2:11 2Sa 5:4-5;

1Ch 29:26-27.

2:12 1Ki 2:46;  
1Ch 29:23;  
2Ch 1:1  
2:13 1Sa 16:4;  
2Sa 3:4; 1Ki  
1:5, 1Ki 1:11;  
1Ch 3:2  
2:17 1Ki 1:3  
2:20 1Ki 2:16

### Solomon secures his throne

<sup>12</sup>Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his royal power was well established.  
<sup>13</sup>Adonijah, Haggith's son, went to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. She said, "Are you coming in peace?"  
He said, "Yes. <sup>14</sup>I have something to say to you."  
She said, "Say it."  
<sup>15</sup>He said, "You know how the kingdom was mine. All Israel had appointed me as their king. Then suddenly the kingdom went to my brother as the LORD willed. <sup>16</sup>Now I have just one request of you. Don't refuse me!"

She said to him, "Go on."  
<sup>17</sup>Adonijah continued, "Ask King Solomon to let me marry Abishag from Shunem—he won't refuse you."

<sup>18</sup>Bathsheba said, "Okay; I'll speak to the king for you."  
<sup>19</sup>So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to talk with him about Adonijah. The king stood up to meet her and bowed low to her. Then he returned to his throne and had a throne set up for the queen mother. She sat to his right. <sup>20</sup>She said, "I have just one small request for you. Don't refuse me."

The king said to her, "Mother, ask me. I won't refuse you."  
<sup>21</sup>"Let Abishag from Shunem be married to your brother Adonijah," she said.  
<sup>22</sup>King Solomon replied to his mother, "Why ask only for Abishag from Shunem for Adonijah? Why not ask for the entire kingdom for him? After all, he is my older brother and has the support of Abiathar the priest and Joab, Zeruiah's son." <sup>23</sup>King Solomon swore by the LORD, "May God do to me as he sees fit! Adonijah has made this request at the cost of his life! <sup>24</sup>Now, as surely as the LORD lives—the one who supported me, put me on the throne of my father David, and provided a royal house for me exactly as he promised—Adonijah will be executed today." <sup>25</sup>So King Solomon sent Benaiah, Jehoiada's son. He attacked Adonijah, and Adonijah died.

<sup>26</sup>The king said to the priest Abiathar, "Go to your fields at Anathoth, because you are a condemned man. However, I won't kill you today because you carried the LORD's chest in front of my father David and because you shared in all my father's sufferings." <sup>27</sup>So Solomon expelled Abiathar from the LORD's priesthood in order to fulfill the LORD's word that was spoken against Eli's family at Shiloh.

<sup>28</sup>Now the news reached Joab because he had supported Adonijah, though he hadn't supported Absalom. Joab ran to the LORD's tent and grabbed the horns of the altar. <sup>29</sup>King Solomon was told that Joab had fled to the LORD's tent and was now beside the altar. So Solomon sent Benaiah, Jehoiada's son, instructing him, "Go. Attack Joab!"

<sup>30</sup>Benaiah came to the LORD's tent and said to Joab, "The king says, 'Come out!'"  
Joab said, "No! I'd rather die here."

Benaiah sent a report back to the king: "This is what Joab said and how he answered me."  
<sup>31</sup>The king said to him, "Do as he said. Attack him and then bury him. In doing this, you

1:19-21. *David's City*: the small Jebusite fortress that David conquered (2 Sam 5:7, 9; 1 Kgs 3:1). *forty years*: Compare with 1 Kings 11:42; he died in approximately 960 BCE. The number sometimes reflects a round number representing a generation (cf. Israel's 40 years in the wilderness). *Hebron*: Compare with 2 Samuel 2:1-4, 11.

2:12-46 *well established*: This section is tied together by a common theme, marked by the repetition of the same Hebrew verb for "establish" in 2:24 (*supported*) and 2:45-46 (*be secure and handed over*). See also 2 Samuel 5:12; 7:12, 13, 16. The story that follows describes how Solomon asserted his power against ongoing threats.

2:13-17 Behind Adonijah's request for Abishag is a thinly disguised plot to grasp the throne. *Abishag* belongs to the king's harem (For Absalom's similar action, cf. 2 Sam 16:20-22).

2:22-25 Solomon sees through the request, sentences Adonijah to death, and simply assumes Abiathar's and Joab's involvement in the plot. *Benaiah*: See note on

1 Kings 1:8; 2:7. *royal house... promised*: Compare with 2 Samuel 7:11-16; 23:5; 1 Kings 1:48; 2:4.

2:26-27 *Abiathar*: See note on 1 Kings 1:7. *carried the LORD's chest*: See 2 Samuel 15:24; see note on 1 Kings 3:15. Because of Abiathar's loyalty to David, Solomon banishes Abiathar to Anathoth, a Levitical city north of Jerusalem (Josh 21:18). *the LORD's word*: According to the author, David's action fulfills the prophecy against Eli, the priest at Shiloh (1 Sam 2:27-36; 3:10-14). This is the first of many occurrences of the fulfillment theme in the books of Kings. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word."

2:28-35 Solomon begins to follow through on David's instructions for retributive justice (see 1 Kgs 2:5-6). *horns of the altar*: See note on 1 Kings 1:50. *guilt... innocent blood... bloodguilt*: Compare with 2 Samuel 3:28; 20:10. David didn't think of Joab as innocent, and the altar couldn't therefore protect him (cf. Exod 21:12-14). Verse 35 summarizes the new political arrangements, with Benaiah

*Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word* According to the historian, God is active in history through the word of the prophets. This theme, it is often said, is reflected in a prophecy-fulfillment pattern in Kings. The story as a whole, however, isn't so much interested in prophecy as *prediction* as it is in asserting that God, not the king or any other human being, is the primary actor in the life of God's people and the nations. Events occur because they have been directed by the Lord's word (cf. 2 Kgs 10:10). Yet the author isn't naive about how God directs human affairs. Human beings, especially kings, are responsible for their actions and suffer the consequences when they make choices opposed to the purposes of God given through Moses and the prophets (cf. 2 Kgs 17:13). The prophets desire for all people, Israel and the nations, to acknowledge and worship God alone (cf. 1 Kgs 8:43, 60; 18:37; 20:13, 28; 2 Kgs 5:15; 19:19).

Throughout the books of Kings, the historian shows how events are announced and then unfold at the initiative of the prophetic word:

Promise	Fulfillment
1 Sam 2:27-36; 3:10-14	1 Kgs 2:26-27
1 Kgs 11:29-40	1 Kgs 12:15
1 Kgs 13:3	2 Kgs 23:16-18
1 Kgs 14:6-16	1 Kgs 15:29
1 Kgs 14:12	1 Kgs 14:17-18
1 Kgs 16:1, 3, 7	1 Kgs 16:12
1 Kgs 17:1	1 Kgs 18:1-2
Josh 6:26	1 Kgs 16:34
1 Kgs 19:15-18	1 Kgs 19:19-21; 2 Kgs 8:13-15; 9:36
1 Kgs 21:21-29	2 Kgs 9:36; 10:10
2 Kgs 1:2, 16	2 Kgs 1:17
2 Kgs 7:1-3	2 Kgs 7:16-18
2 Kgs 10:30	2 Kgs 15:12
2 Kgs 21:10-16	2 Kgs 24:2
2 Kgs 22:15-20	2 Kgs 23:30; 25:9-10, 21

will remove from me and from my father's royal house the guilt over the innocent blood that Joab shed. <sup>32</sup>May the LORD return that bloodguilt back on his own head for attacking the two men who were better and more righteous than he was. He murdered those two with the sword: Abner, Ner's son and Israel's general, and Amasa, Jether's son and Judah's general. But my father David didn't know about it. <sup>33</sup>May the bloodguilt for their deaths return on Joab's head and on the head of his family line forever. But may the LORD's peace be on David, his family, and his royal house forever." <sup>34</sup>So Benaiah, Jehoiada's son, went and attacked Joab and killed him.

Joab was buried at his home in the wilderness. <sup>35</sup>In his place, the king gave leadership of the army to Benaiah, Jehoiada's son. The king put the priest Zadok in Abiathar's position. <sup>36</sup>Then he sent for Shimei and said, "Build a house for yourself in Jerusalem and stay in the city. Don't leave to go anywhere else. <sup>37</sup>If you try to leave, be advised that on the day you cross the Kidron Valley you will most certainly die. Your bloodguilt will be on your own head."

<sup>38</sup>Shimei said to the king, "This is a good idea. Your servant will do just what my master the king said." So Shimei stayed in Jerusalem for a long time.

<sup>39</sup>After three years, two of Shimei's servants fled to the king of Gath, Achish, Maacah's son. Shimei was informed, "Your servants are now in Gath." <sup>40</sup>Shimei saddled his donkey and went to Achish in Gath to look for his servants. Shimei then brought his servants back from Gath. <sup>41</sup>Solomon was told that Shimei had left Jerusalem for Gath and then returned.

<sup>42</sup>The king sent for Shimei and asked him, "Didn't I make you swear a solemn pledge by the LORD? And didn't I swear to you, 'If you try to leave and go anywhere, be advised that on

in charge of the army and Zadok over the religious affairs (making him the "trustworthy priest" of 1 Sam 2:35).

2:32 *David didn't know*: See 1 Kings 1:11, 18.

2:36-46 Solomon acts on David's second suggestion for retributive justice. *Shimei*: See note on 1 Kings 2:8-9. Solomon's solution is clever, and not particularly wise (see 1 Kgs 2:6, 9). He appears to spare Shimei's life, but makes

him agree to an almost impossible promise of never leaving Jerusalem (1 Kgs 2:36, 42).

2:37 *Kidron Valley*: to the east of Jerusalem between the city and the Mount of Olives. *bloodguilt*: Compare with 1 Kings 2:31-33.

2:39 *Gath*: one of the Philistine cities to which David had fled from Saul (1 Sam 21:10-15; 27:1-7).

3:1 1Ki 7:1,  
1Ki 7:8,  
1Ki 9:15-16,  
1Ki 9:24

3:2 Lv 17:3;  
Dt 12:2;  
1Sa 9:12;  
1Ki 22:43;  
2Ch 33:17

3:3 Dt 6:5;  
1Ki 3:14;  
Ps 31:23

3:5 1Ki 9:2,  
1Ki 11:9;  
2Ch 17: Mt 1:20

3:6 2Sa 7:8;  
1Ki 1:48, 1Ki 9:4;  
Ps 15:2

3:7 Nm 27:17;  
1Ch 29:1; Jer 1:6

3:8 Gn 15:5;  
Dt 7:6

3:9 2Sa 14:17;  
Ps 72:1-2;  
Heb 5:14; Jas 1:5

that very day you will most certainly die'? You said to me, "This is a good idea. I agree to it."<sup>43</sup>Why didn't you keep your solemn promise to the LORD and the command that I gave you?"<sup>44</sup>The king said further, "You know quite well all the evil that you did to my father David. May the LORD return your evil on your own head."<sup>45</sup>However, may King Solomon be blessed and David's throne be secure before the LORD forever."<sup>46</sup>Then the king commanded Benaiah, Jehoiada's son, who went and attacked Shimei, and he died.

In these ways royal power was handed over to Solomon.

### Solomon first meets God

**3** Solomon became the son-in-law of Pharaoh, Egypt's king, when he married Pharaoh's daughter. He brought her to David's City until he finished building his royal palace, the LORD's temple, and the wall around Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>Unfortunately, the people were sacrificing at the shrines because a temple hadn't yet been built for the LORD's name in those days.<sup>3</sup>Now Solomon loved the LORD by walking in the laws of his father David, with the exception that he also sacrificed and burned incense at the shrines.

<sup>4</sup>The king went to the great shrine at Gibeon in order to sacrifice there. He used to offer a thousand entirely burned offerings on that altar.<sup>5</sup>The LORD appeared to Solomon at Gibeon in a dream at night. God said, "Ask whatever you wish, and I'll give it to you."

<sup>6</sup>Solomon responded, "You showed so much kindness to your servant my father David when he walked before you in truth, righteousness, and with a heart true to you. You've kept this great loyalty and kindness for him and have now given him a son to sit on his throne.<sup>7</sup>And now, LORD my God, you have made me, your servant, king in my father David's place. But I'm young and inexperienced. I know next to nothing.<sup>8</sup>But I'm here, your servant, in the middle of the people you have chosen, a large population that can't be numbered or counted due to its vast size.<sup>9</sup>Please give your servant a discerning mind in order to govern your people and to distinguish good from evil, because no one is able to govern this important people of yours without your help."

2:44 *all the evil . . . your evil*: Solomon refers here to Shimei's political commitments. The word *evil* implies a political threat, a condition that Solomon had set out earlier concerning Adonijah (1 Kgs 1:52).

2:45 *blessed*: Solomon's final words counteract Shimei's original curse against David (2 Sam 16:5-14; 19:21-23).

2:46 In an echo of 1 Kings 2:12, 24, the author confirms that by killing or banishing opponents, Solomon has secured his hold on power. And by appealing to the principle of retributive justice (they got what they deserved), Solomon also appears innocent of wrongful action.

3:1-28 Two "firsts" for Solomon: the first encounter with God and the first demonstration of his extraordinary wisdom. This chapter begins a sequence of stories about Solomon's reign (1 Kgs 3:1-11:43) that demonstrate both his wisdom and his folly.

3:1-3 An introduction that sets the stage for topics that will be addressed later in the book: Solomon's strategic political alliances through marriage and the ambiguities of his worship practices (1 Kgs 11), as well as his building projects (1 Kgs 7-8). These verses seem to foreshadow Solomon's demise.

3:1 *Pharaoh's daughter*: Compare with Deuteronomy's warnings about relationships with Egypt and intermarriage (Deut 7:3-4; 17:16). This political marriage among others would be in the opinion of the author contribute to his ultimate failure as king of Israel (1 Kgs 11:3-4). *David's city*: Compare with 2 Samuel 5:7-9.

3:2-3 *shrines*: Before the construction of the temple, Israelites worshipped at many such raised or hilltop shrines (e.g., 1 Sam 9:12). Deuteronomy prohibits worship at those shrines because they represent worship practices of the indigenous peoples (Deut 12:2-7). Although 1

Kings 3:2 seems to account for such practices because the temple was not yet built, 1 Kings 3:3 implies a negative evaluation of Solomon for the same practice (yet the next verses describe the Lord appearing to Solomon in a dream at one such shrine). *temple . . . the LORD's name*: The temple as a place for God's name is a common theme in Deuteronomy (Deut 12:5; 14:23; 16:2, 11). See sidebar, "Temple and Name" at 1 Kings 8. *loved the LORD by walking in the laws*: The verb "walk" means "to live by" or "to follow." The sense here is that Solomon demonstrates his love for God by imitating David's faithfulness (cf. 1 Kgs 2:3). Even so, the author of the books of Kings notes many times that worship at such shrines was one of the main causes of the downfall not only of Solomon (1 Kgs 11:7-8) but also of Israel and Judah (1 Kgs 12:28-31; 22:43; 2 Kgs 12:3; 14:4; 15:4, 35; 16:4; 21:3-9).

3:4-15 Solomon's dream at Gibeon, a major worship site northwest of Jerusalem.

3:5 *dream*: God met others in their dreams (e.g., Gen 20:3; 28:10-22; 31:11, 24; 37:5).

3:6-9 *much kindness . . . great loyalty and kindness*: Solomon recognizes God's commitment to David, and now to him, by twice repeating a political idiom for covenant loyalty in 3:6. Compare with the same terms in God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:15, there translated "faithful love." Solomon recognizes his own limitations and asks for a discerning mind . . . to distinguish good from evil. Governance and administration are his concerns; God's help is his need. *good and evil*: Compare with similar expressions in Genesis 2:9, 17; 3:5, 22. Use of this language here implies that the author depicts Solomon symbolically as a "new Adam." A wise woman from Tekoa used these terms in appealing to David's capacity for making wise choices (2 Sam 14:17).



<sup>10</sup>It pleased the LORD that Solomon had made this request. <sup>11</sup>God said to him, “Because you have asked for this instead of requesting long life, wealth, or victory over your enemies—asking for discernment so as to acquire good judgment—<sup>12</sup>I will now do just what you said. Look, I hereby give you a wise and understanding mind. There has been no one like you before now, nor will there be anyone like you afterward. <sup>13</sup>I now also give you what you didn’t ask for: wealth and fame. There won’t be a king like you as long as you live. <sup>14</sup>And if you walk in my ways and obey my laws and commands, just as your father David did, then I will give you a very long life.”

<sup>15</sup>Solomon awoke and realized it was a dream. He went to Jerusalem and stood before the chest containing the LORD’s covenant. Then he offered entirely burned offerings and well-being sacrifices, and held a celebration for all his servants.

### Solomon and the prostitutes

<sup>16</sup>Sometime later, two prostitutes came and stood before the king. <sup>17</sup>One of them said, “Please, Your Majesty, listen: This woman and I have been living in the same house. I gave birth while she was there. <sup>18</sup>This woman gave birth three days after I did. We stayed together. Apart from the two of us, there was no one else in the house. <sup>19</sup>This woman’s son died one night when she rolled over him. <sup>20</sup>She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from my side while I was asleep. She laid him on her chest and laid her dead son on mine. <sup>21</sup>When I got up in the morning to nurse my son, he was dead! But when I looked more closely in the daylight, it turned out that it wasn’t my son—not the baby I had birthed.”

<sup>22</sup>The other woman said, “No! My son is alive! Your son is the dead one.”

But the first woman objected, “No! Your son is dead! My son is alive!” In this way they argued back and forth in front of the king.

<sup>23</sup>The king said, “This one says, ‘My son is alive and your son is dead.’ The other one says, ‘No! Your son is dead and my son is alive.’ <sup>24</sup>Get me a sword!” They brought a sword to the king. <sup>25</sup>Then the king said, “Cut the living child in two! Give half to one woman and half to the other woman.”

<sup>26</sup>Then the woman whose son was still alive said to the king, “Please, Your Majesty, give her the living child; please don’t kill him,” for she had great love for her son.

But the other woman said, “If I can’t have him, neither will you. Cut the child in half.”

<sup>27</sup>Then the king answered, “Give the first woman the living newborn. Don’t kill him. She is his mother.”

<sup>28</sup>All Israel heard about the judgment that the king made. Their respect for the king grew because they saw that God’s wisdom was in him so he could execute justice.

### Solomon’s administration

**4** King Solomon became king of all Israel.

<sup>1</sup>These were his officials: the priest Azariah, Zadok’s son; <sup>2</sup>the scribes Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha; Jehoshaphat, the recorder, Ahilud’s son; <sup>4</sup>the general Benaiah,

<sup>3:10-14</sup> In response, God grants Solomon four gifts, more than he asked for. *no one like you*: The author describes Hezekiah and Josiah similarly (2 Kgs 18:5; 23:25). Each of the three is exemplary in his own way: Solomon for wisdom, Hezekiah for profound trust in God, and Josiah for obedience to God’s Instruction scroll. *walk . . . your father David*: God echoes David’s words (1 Kgs 2:3). This is the first of many references in the books of Kings to David as a standard against which to evaluate future kings (e.g., 1 Kgs 15:3, 11; 2 Kgs 14:3; 22:2). See sidebar, “David as Example” at 1 Kings 9.

<sup>3:15</sup> *chest . . . covenant*: both the place of meeting God and the container holding the Ten Commandments, the covenant manifesto of Israel (Exod 25:16, 22). *burned offerings and well-being sacrifices*: Solomon does what he came to do (1 Kgs 3:4). For descriptions of such acts of worship in God’s presence, see Exodus 29:38-46; Leviticus 1-3. *celebration*: According to Deuteronomy, such offerings were to be enjoyed in feasting (Deut 12:12, 17-18).

<sup>3:16-28</sup> This first story after Solomon’s dream illustrates

his God-given ability to exercise his “wise and understanding mind” (1 Kgs 3:9, 12). The story highlights the great potential for good use of this gift. As the story unfolds from here, readers will discover how Solomon fares.

<sup>3:24-26</sup> Solomon’s solution is risky, but it forces the imposter to reveal herself in her foolish response. The real mother identifies herself in her willingness to give up her child that he might live. Earlier, Solomon’s use of the sword served his political ends; this time the sword represents appropriate discernment of good from evil.

<sup>3:28</sup> *All Israel*: In the light of the division of the kingdom in 722 BCE (2 Kgs 11-12), this expression of a united Israel is important for the author (see 1 Kgs 4:1). It occurs 23 times in 1 and 2 Samuel, 17 times in 1 Kings, and only once in 2 Kings. *wisdom . . . justice*: Recognition of Solomon’s ability aligns him with God’s desire for caring for the marginal and those needing wrongs set right (cf. Deut 10:18; 16:18-20, where “justice” is translated “righteousness”; Mic 6:8).

<sup>4:1-20</sup> Solomon’s rule over *all Israel*. This overview of the bureaucracy for the administration of Israel would have

3:11 Jas 4:3

3:12 1Ki 4:29,

1Ki 5:12,

1Ki 10:23-24;

Ecc 1:16

3:13 1Ki 4:21,

1Ki 10:23,

1Ki 10:27;

Prv 3:16,

Mt 6:33

3:14 1Ki 9:4;

Ps 91:16; Prv 3:2

3:16 Lv 19:29

3:17 Gn 43:20;

1Sa 1:26

3:21 1Sa 1:23

3:26 Gn 43:30;

Is 49:15;

Jer 31:20;

Hos 11:8

3:28 Josh 4:14;

2Sa 8:15; 1Ki 3:9;

Col 2:3

4:21 2Ch 9:26

Jehoiada's son; the priests Zadok and Abiathar; <sup>5</sup>Azariah, Nathan's son, who was in charge of the officials; Zabud, Nathan's son, a priest and royal friend; <sup>6</sup>Ahishar, who was in charge of the palace; and Adoniram, Abda's son, who was supervisor of the work gangs.

<sup>7</sup>Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel. They supplied the king and his palace with food. Each would provide the supplies for one month per year. <sup>8</sup>Here are their names:

Ben-hur in the highlands of Ephraim;

<sup>9</sup>Ben-deker in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth-shemesh, and Elon-bethhanan;

<sup>10</sup>Ben-hesed in Arubboth, who had Socoh and all the land of Hephher;

<sup>11</sup>Ben-abinadab in all of Naphath-dor (Taphath, Solomon's daughter, was his wife);

<sup>12</sup>Baana, Ahilud's son, in Taanach, Megiddo, and all Beth-shean beside Zarethan and below Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah and over to the region opposite Jokmeam;

<sup>13</sup>Ben-geber in Ramoth-gilead, who controlled the villages of Jair, Manasseh's son, which were in Gilead, and who had the Argob region that was in Bashan—sixty large walled cities with bronze bars;

<sup>14</sup>Ahinadab, Iddo's son, in Mahanaim;

<sup>15</sup>Ahimaaz in Naphtali, who also took Solomon's daughter Basemath as his wife;

<sup>16</sup>Baana, Hushai's son, in Asher and Bealoth;

<sup>17</sup>Jehoshaphat, Paruah's son, in Issachar;

<sup>18</sup>Shimei, Ela's son, in Benjamin;

<sup>19</sup>Geber, Uri's son, in the land of Gilead, the land of the Amorite king Sihon and of King Og of Bashan;

and there was a single officer who was in the land of Judah.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Judah and Israel grew numerous like the sand alongside the sea. They ate, drank, and celebrated.

<sup>21</sup>Solomon ruled over all the states from the Euphrates River through the Philistines' land and as far as the border of Egypt. These areas brought tribute to Solomon and served him all the days of his life. <sup>22</sup>Solomon's food requirements for a single day included thirty kors<sup>d</sup> of refined flour; sixty kors of flour; <sup>23</sup>ten head of grain-fattened cattle; twenty head

<sup>b</sup>LXX; MT lacks of Judah. <sup>c</sup>5:1 in Heb <sup>d</sup>One kor is possibly equal to fifty gallons.

been preserved in the royal archives (cf. 1 Kgs 11:41). Including them here illustrates both the grandeur and the expansiveness of Solomon's kingdom and highlights his administrative skill. On the other hand, they also invite the reader to reflect on how Solomon's reign runs the risk of violating Deuteronomy's restrictions on kings (Deut 17:14-20) and corresponds to Samuel's warnings (1 Sam 8:11-18). The lists are divided into court officials (4:2-6) and imperial administrators (4:7-19).

**4:2-6 officials:** These are administrators of the royal court. Three priests are mentioned. *Abiathar*: either (1) he was banished from Solomon's inner circle (1 Kgs 2:26-27), but he continued to serve as priest; or (2) the list originates from a time before his banishment. *son*: may also mean "descendant" (e.g., Azariah was the grandson of Zadok in 1 Chron 6:8). *scribes... recorder*: in charge of keeping official records (archivists) and writing letters or making public announcements (2 Sam 8:16; 20:24). *Benaiah*: See 1 Kings 1:8, 38; 2:25. *royal friend*: a personal advisor (2 Sam 15:37). *work gangs*: the term is used to describe Israel's slavery in Egypt (Exod 1:11; cf. Deut 20:11). It won't become clear until later who made up these work gangs (1 Kgs 5:13-16; 9:15, 20-21).

**4:7-19 Solomon's twelve officers** are responsible for "tax collection," here described as providing *food* and *supplies* for the royal court (see also 1 Kgs 4:27-28). The districts don't correspond to the 12 tribal areas identified in Joshua 13-19, even though some of those tribes are named in this list. Solomon may have wanted to impose his own organizational structure on his kingdom.

**4:19.** See translation note b. Four options: (1) It could be that the Greek translation of 1 Kings added *of Judah* because this area was conspicuously absent from the administrative districts. (2) The first word of 1 Kings 4:20 belongs to the end of 4:19. (3) The second occurrence of "Judah" was omitted because the eye of a copyist skipped to "and Israel" (1 Kgs 4:20) accidentally. (4) It could be that Solomon deliberately omitted Judah from his collection because it was his own tribe. This would solidify his power in Jerusalem, which was located in Judah.

**4:20** An idealistic and celebratory view of Solomon's empire. *Judah and Israel*: corresponds to the "all Israel" of 1 Kings 4:1 (cf. also 1 Kgs 4:25). Here, however, the reader is reminded that the unity of Israel and Judah under one king in Jerusalem ought not to be taken for granted (see note on 1 Kgs 1:34-35). *numerous... sand alongside the sea*: Although an idiom for "a great number," the words here may echo a fulfillment of the promises in the ancestral stories (Gen 22:17; 32:12).

**4:21-34 Solomon, the nations, and the kings of the earth.** This section presents an expansive, impressive, and extravagant picture of Solomon's kingdom and his reputation among world leaders.

**4:21-24 Euphrates... border of Egypt:** the range of Solomon's empire, territories to the northeast as far as the Euphrates River and to the southwest including the coastal areas as far as the Egyptian border (cf. 1 Kgs 4:24; Gen 15:18; Deut 1:7; 11:24; Josh 1:4). *Philistines*: peoples that originated in the area around the Aegean Sea.

pastured cattle; one hundred sheep; as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks, and the best of fowl. <sup>24</sup>He ruled over all the lands west of the Euphrates River, from Tiphshah to Gaza, and over all the kings west of the Euphrates. He had peace on all sides. <sup>25</sup>The people of Judah and Israel from Dan all the way to Beer-sheba lived securely under their vines and fig trees throughout the days of Solomon.

<sup>26</sup>Solomon had forty thousand horse stalls for his chariots and twelve thousand additional horses. <sup>27</sup>The officials provided King Solomon and all who joined him at the royal table with monthly food rations. They left out nothing. <sup>28</sup>Each brought their share of barley and straw for the horses and for the chariot horses, bringing it to its proper place. <sup>29</sup>And God gave Solomon wisdom and very great understanding—insight as long as the seashore itself. <sup>30</sup>Solomon's wisdom was greater than all the famous Easterners, greater even than all the wisdom of Egypt. <sup>31</sup>He was wiser than anyone, more wise than Ethan the Ezrahite or Mahol's sons: Heman, Calcol, and Darda. His reputation was known throughout the region. <sup>32</sup>Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs and one thousand five songs. <sup>33</sup>He described the botany of trees, whether the cedar in Lebanon or the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He also described cattle, birds, anything that crawls on the ground, and fish. <sup>34</sup>People came from everywhere to listen to Solomon's wisdom; even the earth's kings who had heard about his wisdom came!

### Wood and stone for the temple

**5**<sup>a</sup>Because King Hiram<sup>f</sup> of Tyre was loyal to David throughout his rule, Hiram sent his servants to Solomon when he heard that Solomon had become king after his father.

<sup>a</sup>5:15 in Heb <sup>f</sup>Chronicles spells the king's name *Huram*; for example, 2 Chron 2:3, 11-12; but cf 1 Chron 14:1 Kethib.

*tribute... served*: Solomon's empire included small vassal states that were subject to him and contributed to his imperial economy. *kors*: See translation note c. A *kor* was a dry measure. *Tiphshah*: on a major trade route between Assyria and Syria situated along the Euphrates River about 75 miles south of Carchemish. *peace*: Solomon's name includes the root consonants of the Hebrew word for "peace" (*shalom*).

4:25 *Judah and Israel*: The author takes pains to highlight how the "peace" (1 Kgs 4:24) affected those within the two political regions of Israel. *Dan to Beer-sheba*: a common expression indicating the northern and southern boundaries of traditional Israel (Judg 20:1; 1 Sam 3:20; 2 Sam 3:10; 24:2). *under their vines and fig trees*: a description of economic prosperity. The prophet Micah describes such times as peaceful, a result of nations' beating their swords into plows (cf. 1 Kgs 5:12; Mic 4:1-4).

4:26-28 *forty thousand*: 2 Chronicles 9:25 (and one Greek and one Hebrew manuscript) have "four thousand." This may be a copyist's error or a deliberate exaggeration to imply Solomon's excesses. The officials' responsibility included providing provisions for the royal court and military establishment (see 1 Kgs 4:22-23; cf. 1 Sam 8:10-18). *chariots... horses*: represent Solomon's military force. Here is a hint that not all will be well. Deuteronomy's instruction for kings prohibits the amassing of horses from Egypt (Deut 17:16), which 1 Kings 10:26-29 emphasizes again (cf. Isa 31:1). It reminds readers of Pharaoh's forces (Exod 14:9, 23; 15:19; Deut 11:4).

4:29-34 Summarizing the breadth and depth of Solomon's wisdom to correspond to the complexity and expansiveness of his empire. This description of Solomon's wisdom, achievements, and fame demonstrates that God's promise was fulfilled.

4:29-31 The author uses hyperbole effectively (4:29-31), which either leaves no doubt about Solomon's greatness, or invites a too-good-to-be-true response. *Easterners*:

Compare with Genesis 29:1; Job 1:3. Other great civilizations were well known for their wisdom, including Egypt with its famous wisdom literature (e.g., the wisdom of Amen-em-ope). The individuals named here must have been well-known figures. *Ethan* and the others: See Psalms 88:1; 89:1; compare with 1 Chronicles 2:6.

4:32-33 *proverbs... songs*: Besides exercising his wisdom in the administration of justice (1 Kgs 3:28), Solomon also was involved in literary production or collection and in scientific exploration. He came to be associated with the literature of wisdom, as several biblical books are associated with him (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs). Solomon is the patron of wisdom, as Moses is the mediator of God's Instruction and David comes to be associated with worship (Psalms). Since wisdom is both a gift from God and a quest for understanding, it makes sense that Solomon should be interested in the flora and fauna of the natural world (cf. the nature wisdom of Job 38-41; Prov 30:15-31). Solomon's wisdom can be likened to Adam's; both were involved in ordering and naming the creatures (Gen 2:19-20), a task that depended on the wisdom of observation.

4:34 The gift of wisdom (1 Kgs 3:12) bears fruit. *Solomon's wisdom* is world famous.

5:1-8:66 The temple construction project and its dedication to God. It was common in the ancient world for a new king to build temples in honor of their patron god(s).

5:1-18 An international trade agreement sets the stage for Solomon to build the temple. The story follows seamlessly from 1 Kings 4, since Hiram is the first of "the earth's kings" (1 Kgs 4:34) to respond to the news. Lebanon is part of Solomon's greater kingdom (cf. 1 Kgs 4:21; 9:19).

5:1 *Hiram of Tyre*: This Phoenician king is a treaty partner with David; he provided wood for David's palace (2 Sam 5:11-12). This story demonstrates that he was *loyal* in his allegiance to Solomon just as he had been to David. *Tyre* was a coastal Phoenician city in southern Lebanon.

4:25 1Sa 3:20;  
2Ki 18:31;  
Jer 23:6; Mi 4:4;  
Zec 3:10  
4:26 1Ki 10:26;  
2Ch 1:14;  
2Ch 9:25  
4:27 1Ki 4:7  
4:29 1Ki 3:12;  
1Ki 4:20  
4:30 Igs 6:3;  
Is 19:11; Ac 7:22  
4:31 1Ki 3:12;  
1Ch 2:6; Ps 89:1  
4:32 Prv 1:1;  
Ecc 12:9;  
Song 1:1  
4:33 Ec 12:22  
4:34 1Ki 10:1;  
2Ch 9:23  
5:1 2Sa 5:11;  
1Ki 9:11;  
1Ch 14:1;  
2Ch 2:3

5:3 2Sa 7:5;  
1Ch 22:8;  
1Ch 28:3

5:4 1Ki 4:24;  
1Ch 22:9

5:5 2Sa 7:13;  
1Ch 17:12;  
1Ch 22:10;  
1Ch 28:6

5:13 1a  
2Ch 2:2;  
2Ch 2:17, 18

5:15 1Ki 9:20;  
2Ch 2:17, 18

5:16 1Ki 9:23  
5:17 1Ki 6:7;  
1Ch 22:2

5:18 Josh 13:5;  
Eze 27:9

6:1 1Ki 6:37;  
2Ch 3:1-2;  
Ac 7:47

<sup>2</sup>Solomon sent the following message to Hiram: <sup>3</sup>"You know that my father David wasn't able to build a temple for the name of the LORD my God. This was because of the enemies that fought him on all sides until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. <sup>4</sup>Now the LORD my God has given me peace on every side, without enemies or misfortune. <sup>5</sup>So I'm planning to build a temple for the name of the LORD my God, just as the LORD indicated to my father David, 'I will give you a son to follow you on your throne. He will build the temple for my name.' <sup>6</sup>Now give the order and have the cedars of Lebanon cut down for me. My servants will work with your servants. I'll pay your servants whatever price you set, because you know we have no one here who is skilled in cutting wood like the Sidonians."

<sup>7</sup>Hiram was thrilled when he heard Solomon's message. He said, "Today the LORD is blessed because he has given David a wise son who is in charge of this great people." <sup>8</sup>Hiram sent word back to Solomon: "I have heard your message to me. I will do as you wish with the cedar and pinewood. <sup>9</sup>My servants will bring the wood down the Lebanon Mountains to the sea. I'll make rafts out of them and float them on the sea to the place you specify. There I'll dismantle them, and you can carry them away. Now, as for what you must do for me in return, I ask you to provide for my royal house."

<sup>10</sup>So Hiram gave Solomon all the cedar and pinewood that he wanted. <sup>11</sup>In return, Solomon gave an annual gift to Hiram of twenty thousand kors<sup>a</sup> of wheat to eat, and twenty thousand kors of pure oil for his palace use. <sup>12</sup>Now the LORD made Solomon wise, just as he had promised. Solomon and Hiram made a covenant and had peace.

<sup>13</sup>King Solomon called up a work gang of thirty thousand workers from all over Israel. <sup>14</sup>He sent ten thousand to work in Lebanon each month. Then they would spend two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of the work gang. <sup>15</sup>Solomon had 70,000 laborers and 80,000 stonemasons in the highlands. <sup>16</sup>This doesn't include Solomon's 3,300 supervisors in charge of the work, who had oversight over the laborers. <sup>17</sup>At the king's command, they quarried huge stones of the finest quality in order to lay the temple's foundation with carefully cut stone. <sup>18</sup>The craftsmen of Solomon and Hiram, along with those of Byblos, prepared the timber and the stones for the construction of the temple.

### Solomon builds the temple

**6** In the four hundred eightieth year after the Israelites left Egypt, in the month of Ziv, the second month,<sup>b</sup> in the fourth year of Solomon's rule over Israel, he built the LORD's

<sup>a</sup>One kor is possibly equal to fifty gallons. <sup>b</sup>April–May, Iyar; Ziv is a month from a Canaanite calendar.

5:3-6 *David wasn't able*: According to 2 Samuel 7:5-7, the Lord prohibited David from building. Here the reason given is his need to establish the security of his kingdom. 1 Chronicles, a later composition, elaborates on this inability, stating that it was because David had blood on his hands (1 Kgs 22:6-12; 28:3). *temple for the name* (5:3, 5): See sidebar, "Temple and Name" at 1 Kings 8. *put... under... feet*: an image of conquest (cf. Pss 8:6; 47:3). *to my father David*: Solomon applies to himself God's promise through the prophet Nathan (2 Sam 7:12-15). *Sidonians*: another name for the Phoenicians. Sidon was located north of Tyre. The Phoenicians were renowned for their sea trade, particularly for exporting lumber.

5:7-11 *Hiram's contribution to the building project*. *Today the Lord is blessed*: Hiram offers the appropriate political rhetoric: He recognizes the God of Solomon's kingdom, Solomon's wisdom, and the greatness of Israel. *do for me... my royal house*: Although Hiram is a vassal king, the arrangement is more like an international trade agreement. Hiram provides *cedar and pinewood* from his natural resources; Solomon provides *wheat and olive oil*, the main agricultural commodities of Israel. *annual gift*: The duration of this contribution isn't specified.

5:12 To underline the main point of the story, the *covenant*, a political treaty between Solomon and Hiram, is a fulfillment of God's gift of wisdom. *peace*: a key characteristic of Solomon's reign (see note on 1 Kgs 4:21-24).

5:13-18 Solomon is clearly in charge. He seems to reject Hiram's stipulation that Phoenician workers bring the lumber to the port (1 Kgs 5:9). Rather, Solomon sends his own conscripted laborers to Lebanon. *work gang*: It becomes clear later that Solomon conscripted indigenous Canaanites into the work gangs for Lebanon, and Israelite workers for the stone work within traditional Israelite territory (1 Kgs 5:13-16; 9:15-23). *each month... two months at home*: It is likely that during the two months *at home* they would work on Solomon's palaces (described in 1 Kgs 7).

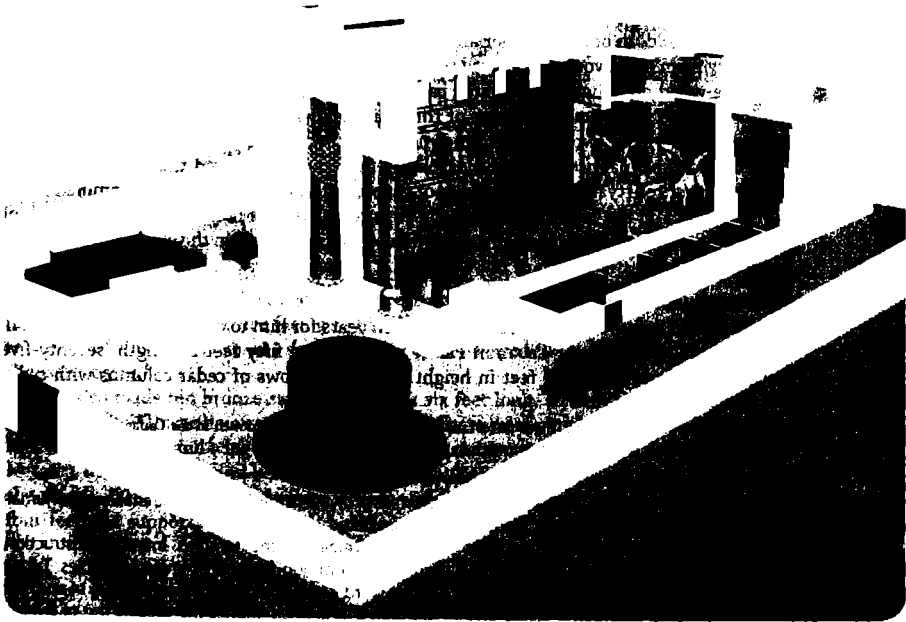
6:1-7:51 The description of the elaborate temple project emphasizes the grandeur of the temple, which was of special interest to the historian. The story highlights God's special communication to Solomon (6:11-13). The three-part rectangular design is common in ancient Near Eastern temples. *Ziv, Bul*: The use of Canaanite month names in the Solomon story, and nowhere else in Kings (see 1 Kgs 5:1, 37-38; 8:2), may imply a critique of Solomon's participation in Canaanite culture.

6:1-10 Overview and dimensions of the temple construction. *four hundred eightieth year... fourth year of Solomon's rule*: Solomon's *fourth year* was 966 or 968 BCE. Taking the number 480 at face value would make the date of the exodus from Egypt 1446 BCE (or 1448). If 480 represents a symbolic number representing 12 generations, and if a generation is approximately 25 years, then the date of the exodus would be approximately 1266 BCE (or 1268

temple. <sup>2</sup>The temple that King Solomon built for the LORD was ninety feet long, thirty feet wide, and forty-five feet high. <sup>3</sup>The porch in front of the temple's main hall was thirty feet long. It ran across the whole width of the temple and extended fifteen feet in front of the temple. <sup>4</sup>He made recessed and latticed windows<sup>1</sup> for the temple <sup>5</sup>and built side rooms against the temple walls around both the main hall and the most holy place. <sup>6</sup>The lower walls were seven and a half feet wide. At the second floor the walls were nine feet wide, and at the third floor they were ten and a half feet wide. He made niches around the outside of the temple so the beams wouldn't be inserted into the temple walls.<sup>1</sup> <sup>7</sup>When the temple was built, they did all the stoneworking at the quarry. No hammers, axes, or any iron tools were heard in the temple during its construction. <sup>8</sup>The door to the stairs was at the south side of the temple. Winding stairs went up to the second floor and from there to the third floor. <sup>9</sup>He completed the temple with a roof of cedar beams and cross-planks.<sup>2</sup> <sup>10</sup>Then he built the side rooms all around the temple. They were seven and a half feet high. He attached them to the temple with cedarwood.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD's word came to Solomon, <sup>12</sup>Regarding this temple that you are building: If you follow my laws, enact my regulations, and keep all my commands faithfully, then I will fulfill for you my promise that I made to your father David. <sup>13</sup>I will live among the Israelites. I won't abandon my people Israel.

6:2 2Ch 3:3  
6:3 2Ch 3:4  
6:4 Eze 40:16,  
Eze 41:16  
6:7 Dt 27:5,  
Dt 27:6,  
1Ki 5:18  
6:9a 1Ki 6:14,  
1Ki 6:37, 38  
6:9b 2Ch 3:6



Solomon's temple and palace complex

<sup>1</sup>Heb architectural and decorative terminology in 6:4-6 and elsewhere in chaps 6-7 is often uncertain.

<sup>2</sup>Heb uncertain; Heb lacks the beams. <sup>3</sup>Heb uncertain

BCE), which corresponds more closely to archaeological evidence. *most holy place*: This is the inmost part of the temple, translated elsewhere in this chapter as "inner sanctuary" (e.g., 1 Kgs 6:16, 19). It is popularly known as the "Holy of Holies," an expression found in 1 Kings 6:16 and translated there as "most holy place." *No hammers... tools*: emphasizing the exacting work of the artisans; perhaps drawing inspiration from Deuteronomy 27:5-6.

6:11-13 *The Lord's word came*: Although God had spoken to Solomon in a dream (1 Kgs 3:5), this is the first occurrence of this expression in the books of Kings. It occurs seven times in 1 Kings (earlier only in 1 Sam 15:10; 2 Sam 7:4) and many times in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The author of Kings is interested in God's words and the prophetic word. That is especially evident here: Verses 11-14 seem to have been added to an earlier edition of the story reflected in

6:14 1Ki 6:9a,  
1Ki 6:37, 38  
6:16  
Ex 26:33-34;  
1Ki 6:5, 1Ki 8:6;  
2Ch 3:8  
6:19 1Ki 8:6  
6:21 2Ch 3:7  
6:22 2Ch 3:7  
6:23 Ex 25:18,  
Ex 37:7;  
2Ch 3:10  
6:29 2Ch 3:7  
6:36 2Ch 4:9  
6:37 1Ki 6:9a,  
1Ki 6:14

<sup>14</sup>So Solomon constructed the temple and completed it. <sup>15</sup>He built the walls within the temple with cedar planks, paneled from the floor to the ceiling. He overlaid the floor of the temple with pine planks. <sup>16</sup>At the back of the temple he built thirty feet of cedar panels from the floor to the ceiling. Solomon built the inner sanctuary, the most holy place. <sup>17</sup>In front of this, the main hall was sixty feet. <sup>18</sup>The cedar inside the temple was carved with gourds and blossoming flowers. The whole thing was cedar. No stone was seen. <sup>19</sup>He set up the inner sanctuary inside the temple so that he could put the chest containing the LORD's covenant there. <sup>20</sup>The inner sanctuary was thirty feet in length, width, and height. Solomon overlaid it with pure gold and covered the altar with cedar. <sup>21</sup>Solomon covered the temple's interior with pure gold. He placed gold chains in front of the inner sanctuary and covered it with gold. <sup>22</sup>He overlaid the whole temple inside with gold until the temple was completely covered. He covered the whole altar that was in the inner sanctuary with gold. <sup>23</sup>He made two winged creatures of olive wood for the inner sanctuary, each fifteen feet high. <sup>24</sup>The wings of the first winged creature were each seven and a half feet long. It was fifteen feet from the end of one wing to the end of the other. <sup>25</sup>The second winged creature also measured fifteen feet. Both winged creatures had identical measurements and form. <sup>26</sup>The height of both winged creatures was fifteen feet. <sup>27</sup>Solomon placed the winged creatures inside the temple. Their wings spread out so that the wing of the one touched one wall and the wing of the other touched the other wall. In the middle of the temple, the wings of the two winged creatures touched each other. <sup>28</sup>He covered the winged creatures with gold.

<sup>29</sup>Solomon carved all the walls of the temple—inner and outer rooms—with engravings of winged creatures, palm trees, and blossoming flowers. <sup>30</sup>He also covered the floor of the temple with gold, in both the inner and the outer rooms. <sup>31</sup>He made the doors of the inner sanctuary from olive wood and carved the doorframes with five recesses.<sup>m</sup> <sup>32</sup>He overlaid the two olive-wood doors with gold-plated carvings of winged creatures, palm trees, and blossoming flowers. <sup>33</sup>He made the door of the main hall with doorframes of olive wood with four recesses.<sup>n</sup> <sup>34</sup>The two doors of pinewood each pivoted on a socket. <sup>35</sup>Solomon carved winged creatures, palm trees, and blossoming flowers, and covered them with gold. <sup>36</sup>He built the inner courtyard with three rows of cut stone followed by one row of trimmed cedar.

<sup>37</sup>Solomon laid the foundation of the LORD's temple in the fourth year in the month of Ziv.<sup>o</sup> <sup>38</sup>He finished the temple in all its details and measurements in the eleventh year during the eighth month, the month of Bul.<sup>p</sup> He built it in seven years.

### Solomon builds palaces

**7**Now as for Solomon's palace, it took thirteen years for him to complete its construction. <sup>2</sup>He built the Forest of Lebanon Palace one hundred fifty feet in length, seventy-five feet in width, and forty-five feet in height. It had four rows of cedar columns with cedar

<sup>l</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>n</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>o</sup>April–May, Iyar; Ziv is a month in the Canaanite calendar.  
<sup>p</sup>October–November, Heshvan; Bul is a month in the Canaanite calendar.

the Greek translation (Septuagint), where these verses are missing. See sidebar, “Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word” at 1 Kings 2. God introduces a conditional *if*, which is fully in keeping with both David's words in 1 Kings 2:3–4 and Nathan's prophecy of 2 Samuel 7:12–16. *I will live among . . . I won't abandon*: The relationship between 1 Kings 6:12 and 6:13 is ambiguous. Is Solomon's faithfulness (6:12) required for God to *live among the Israelites* (6:13)? Or does 6:13 reflect God's commitment stated unambiguously elsewhere (Exod 29:45–46; Lev 26:11–12)? Yet the story told by the books of Kings raises exactly this question: Has God abandoned *my people Israel* in Babylonian exile? If Deuteronomy is a prologue to the history presented in the books of Kings, the answer might be found there (e.g., Deut 4:9–31; 30:1–20) or in God's promise to Joshua at the beginning of the history, where God promises, “I won't desert you or leave you” (Josh 1:5; using the same Hebrew word as in 1 Kgs 6:13). As in 1 Kings 6:11–13, the promise to Joshua is also set in the context of faithfulness to God's Instruction (Josh 1:7–8). The historian preserves both the

promise of divine faithfulness and the challenge of human responsibility.

6:14–38 Details of the temple's interior construction, which are common features in ancient temples. Taking up the word “completed” from 1 Kings 6:9 in 6:14 and 6:38 (translated as *finished*) frames the spelling out of the details (see note on 1 Kgs 7:51). *inner sanctuary*: The author gives the most attention to this part of the temple, the focus of 6:19–32, since it is the place of the *chest containing the Lord's covenant* (6:19). *winged creatures* (6:23, 29, 32, 35): These are composite mythical creatures, often depicted in ancient Near Eastern art and monuments as part animal, bird, or human. As sculptures or in relief carvings they are guardians of a temple or palace. In the Bible they both guard God's holy presence and symbolize God's rule (Gen 3:24; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 22:11; Pss 80:1; 99:1). *one row of trimmed cedar*: a common ancient Near Eastern construction technique making for a resilient structure.

7:1–12 Building Solomon's palaces interrupts the larger story of building and furnishing the temple. Building both

engravings above the columns. <sup>3</sup>The palace's cedar roof stood above forty-five beams resting on the columns, fifteen beams to each row. <sup>4</sup>Three sets of window frames faced each other. <sup>5</sup>All the doorframes were rectangular, facing each other in three sets. <sup>6</sup>He made a porch with columns seventy-five feet long and forty-five feet wide. Another porch was in front of these with roofed columns in front of them. <sup>7</sup>He made the throne room the Hall of Justice, where he would judge. It was covered with cedar from the lower to the upper levels. <sup>8</sup>The royal residence where Solomon lived was behind this hall. It had a similar design. Solomon also made a similar palace for his wife, Pharaoh's daughter. <sup>9</sup>He built all these with the best stones cut to size, sawed with saws, back and front, from the foundation to the highest points and from the outer boundary to the great courtyard. <sup>10</sup>The foundation was laid with large stones of high quality, some of fifteen feet and some of twelve feet. <sup>11</sup>Above them were high-quality stones cut to measure, as well as cedar. <sup>12</sup>The surrounding great courtyard had three rows of cut stones and a row of trimmed cedar just like the inner courtyard of the LORD's temple and its porch.

7:13  
2Ch 2:13-14,  
2Ch 4:11

7:14 Ex 31:3,  
Ex 35:31,  
2Ch 2:14,  
2Ch 4:11,  
2Ch 4:16

7:15-22  
2Ch 3:15-17

7:23 2Ki 25:13,  
2Ch 4:2,  
Jer 52:17

### Solomon's temple equipment

<sup>13</sup>Then King Solomon sent a message and brought Hiram from Tyre. <sup>14</sup>Hiram's mother was a widow from the tribe of Naphtali. His father was a Tyrian skilled in bronze work. He was amazingly skillful in the techniques and knowledge for doing all kinds of work in bronze. He came to King Solomon and did all his work.

<sup>15</sup>He<sup>a</sup> cast two bronze pillars. Each one was twenty-seven feet high and required a cord of eighteen feet to reach around it. <sup>16</sup>He made two capitals of cast bronze for the tops of the columns. They were each seven and a half feet high. <sup>17</sup>He made an intricate network of chains for the capitals on top of the columns, seven for each capital. <sup>18</sup>He made the pillars and two rows of pomegranates for each network to adorn each of the capitals. <sup>19</sup>The capitals on top of the columns in the porch were made like lilies, each six feet high. <sup>20</sup>Above the round-shaped part and next to the network were two hundred pomegranates. These were placed in rows around both of the capitals on top of the columns. <sup>21</sup>He set up the columns at the temple's porch. He named the south column Jachin. The north column he named Boaz. <sup>22</sup>After putting the lily shapes on top of the columns, he was finished with the columns.

<sup>23</sup>He also made a tank of cast metal called the Sea. It was circular in shape, fifteen feet from rim to rim, seven and a half feet high, forty-five feet in circumference. <sup>24</sup>Under the rim were two rows of gourds completely encircling it, ten every eighteen inches, each cast in its mold. <sup>25</sup>The Sea rested on twelve oxen with their backs toward the center, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east. <sup>26</sup>The Sea was as thick as the width of a hand. Its rim was shaped like a cup or an open lily blossom. It could hold two thousand baths.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>27</sup>He also made ten bronze stands. Each was six feet long, six feet wide, and four and a half feet high. <sup>28</sup>This is how each stand was made: There were panels connected between the legs. <sup>29</sup>Lions, bulls, and winged otherworldly creatures appeared on the panels between the legs. On the legs above and below the lions and bulls were wreaths on panels hanging off the stands. <sup>30</sup>There were four bronze wheels with bronze axles for each stand. There were four feet and supports cast for each basin with wreaths on their sides. <sup>31</sup>Inside the bowl

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Or *he*, either Solomon or Hiram; this ambiguity continues in the following verses, but cf 1 Kgs 7:1, 8, 13; 1 Kgs 7:40. <sup>c</sup>Or *the second*; cf Jer 52:21 <sup>d</sup>One bath is approximately twenty quarts or five gallons.

<sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain

temple and palaces took 20 years (cf. 1 Kgs 9:10). *Forest of Lebanon Palace*: Twice as large and more complex than the temple, it included several wings, a *throne room* and a *Hall of Justice* (also used as an armory and treasury; cf. 1 Kgs 10:16-17, 21; Isa 22:8). *royal residence and palace for his wife*: Attached or nearby, these are not described in detail. Altogether these massive buildings take *thirteen years* to build, almost twice as long as the temple. The use of cedar in these projects is more extensive than in the temple, which suggests that the trade relationship described in 1 Kings 5:6-11 continued for many years. 7:13-51 Furnishing the temple.

7:13-14 *Hiram from Tyre*: not Hiram the king of Tyre. *skilled...knowledge*: expressions of practical wisdom sometimes said to be divinely inspired (cf. Exod 36:1; 35:30-35).

7:15-22 *bronze pillars...Jachin and Boaz*: perhaps free-standing or supporting a roof, placed at the temple entrance (cf. 2 Chron 3:17). Jachin means "He establishes" and Boaz may mean "In him is strength."

7:23-26 *tank...the Sea*: a large elevated bronze basin holding about 12,000 gallons of water, used for purification (cf. Exod 30:18-21). *fifteen...forty-five*: These round numbers (or using 3 as *pi*) don't give a scientifically exact

7:38, 39<sup>a</sup>  
2Ch 4:6a  
7:39b 2Ch 4:10  
7:40 2Ch 4:11;  
1K 5:2-18  
7:48, 50  
2Ch 4:7, 8;  
2Ch 4:19-22  
7:51 2Sa 8:11;  
2Ch 5:1  
8:1-11  
2Ch 5:2-14

was an opening eighteen inches deep. The opening was round, measuring twenty-seven inches, with engravings. The panels of the stands were square rather than round. <sup>32</sup>There were four wheels beneath the panels. The axles of the wheels were attached to the stand. Each wheel was twenty-seven inches in height. <sup>33</sup>The construction of the wheels resembled chariot wheels. The axles, rims, spokes, and hubs were all made of cast metal. <sup>34</sup>There was a handle on each of the four corners of every stand, projecting from the side of the stand. <sup>35</sup>The top of the stand had a band running around the perimeter that was nine inches deep. The stand had its own supports and panels. <sup>36</sup>On the surfaces of the supports and panels he carved winged otherworldly creatures, lions, and palm trees with wreaths everywhere. <sup>37</sup>In this manner he made ten stands, each one cast in a single mold of the same size and shape.

<sup>38</sup>He made ten bronze washbasins, each able to hold forty baths. <sup>39</sup>Every washbasin was six feet across, and there was one for each of the ten stands. <sup>39</sup>He placed five stands on the south of the temple and five on the north of the temple. He placed the Sea at the southeast corner of the temple.

<sup>40</sup>Hiram made the basins, shovels, and bowls.

And so Hiram finished his work on the LORD's temple for King Solomon:

<sup>41</sup>two columns;

two circular capitals on top of the columns;

two networks, adorning the two circular capitals on top of the columns;

<sup>42</sup>four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, with two rows of pomegranates for each network that adorned the two circular capitals on top of the columns;

<sup>43</sup>ten stands with ten basins on them;

<sup>44</sup>one Sea;

twelve oxen beneath the Sea;

<sup>45</sup>and the pots, shovels, and bowls.

All the equipment that Hiram made for King Solomon for the LORD's temple was made from polished bronze. <sup>46</sup>The king cast it in clay molds in the Jordan Valley between Succoth and Zarethan. <sup>47</sup>Due to the very large number of objects, Solomon didn't even try to weigh the bronze.

<sup>48</sup>Solomon also made all the equipment for the LORD's temple: the gold altar; the gold table for the bread of the presence; <sup>49</sup>the lampstands of pure gold, five on the right and five on the left in front of the inner sanctuary; the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs of gold; <sup>50</sup>the cups, wick trimmers, bowls, ladles, and censers of pure gold; and the gold sockets for the doors to the most holy place and for the doors to the main hall. <sup>51</sup>When all King Solomon's work on the LORD's temple was finished, he brought the silver, gold, and all the objects his father David had dedicated and put them in the treasuries of the LORD's temple.

### Solomon dedicates the temple

**8** Then Solomon assembled Israel's elders, all the tribal leaders, and the chiefs of Israel's clans at Jerusalem to bring up the chest containing the LORD's covenant from David's

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>37</sup>One bath is approximately twenty quarts or five gallons.

calculation of the circumference (47.12388 feet). *twelve oxen*: or bulls, representing the 12 tribes of Israel.

7:40b-47 *finished*: See note on 1 Kings 6:14; 7:51.

7:48-50 Although Hiram's expertise (1 Kgs 7:14) qualified him to make the bronze items (1 Kgs 7:13-47), the author highlights Solomon's even greater wisdom in making the gold items. *gold table... bread of the presence*: Compare with Exodus 25:30; Leviticus 24:5-9.

7:51 *work... was finished*: The word "finished" is the same as is used in chapter 6 (see note on 1 Kgs 6:14). It appears in the creation story about God's work (Gen 2:1-2) and in the exodus story about two kinds of work: slave work and tabernacle construction work (Exod 5:13-14; 39:32; 40:33). Solomon shares in this work; finishing it creates a "home" for God (see Exod 29:45-46; Lev 26:11-12; cf. 1 Kgs 8:27). The author includes a play on words by highlighting Solomon's completion of this work with a different verb for "to

complete" that contains the same Hebrew consonants as Solomon's name: *objects... David*: Compare with 2 Samuel 8:10-11. *treasuries... temple*: The treasury will become a vulnerable place and highly significant in the books of Kings (cf. 1 Kgs 14:26; 2 Kgs 12:18; 14:14; 16:8; 18:15; 20:13, 15; 24:13).

8:1-66 The dedication of the temple, Solomon's prayer, and a feast of celebration.

8:1-11 Solomon arranges to bring the chest containing the LORD's covenant to the new temple. *chest*: the box containing the Ten Commandments, which symbolized the throne of God (see 1 Kgs 8:9; cf. Exod 25:10-22; Deut 10:1-5; 1 Sam 4:4). Until now it had been kept in a tent (8:4) in David's City Zion, which was just south of the temple and palace area, which were built in the area around where the Dome of the Rock is now (2 Sam 6:16-17; 7:2; 1 Kgs 3:15).



City Zion. <sup>2</sup>Everyone in Israel assembled before King Solomon in the seventh month, the month of Ethanim,\* during the festival. <sup>3</sup>When all of Israel's elders had arrived, the priests picked up the chest. <sup>4</sup>They brought the LORD's chest, the meeting tent, and all the holy equipment that was in the tent. The priests and the Levites brought them up, <sup>5</sup>while King Solomon and the entire Israelite assembly that had joined him before the chest sacrificed countless sheep and oxen. <sup>6</sup>The priests brought the chest containing the LORD's covenant to its designated spot beneath the wings of the winged creatures in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the most holy place. <sup>7</sup>The winged creatures spread their wings over the place where the chest rested, covering the chest and its carrying poles. <sup>8</sup>The carrying poles were so long that their tips could be seen from the holy place in front of the inner sanctuary, though they weren't visible from outside. They are still there today. <sup>9</sup>Nothing was in the chest except the two stone tablets Moses had placed there while at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they left Egypt. <sup>10</sup>When the priests left the holy place, the cloud filled the LORD's temple, <sup>11</sup>and the priests were unable to carry out their duties due to the cloud because the LORD's glory filled the LORD's temple.

<sup>12</sup>Then Solomon said, "The LORD said that he would live in a dark cloud, <sup>13</sup>but I have indeed built you a lofty temple as a place where you can live forever." <sup>14</sup>The king turned around, and while the entire assembly of Israel was standing there, he blessed them, <sup>15</sup>saying, "Bless Israel's God, the LORD, who spoke directly to my father David and now has kept his promise: <sup>16</sup>'From the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt I haven't selected a city from any Israelite tribe as a site for the building of a temple for my name. But now I have chosen David to be over my people Israel.' <sup>17</sup>My father David wanted to build a temple for the name of the LORD, Israel's God.

<sup>18</sup>"But the LORD said to my father David, 'It is very good that you thought to build a temple for my name. <sup>19</sup>Nevertheless, you yourself won't build that temple. Instead, your very own son will build the temple for my name.' <sup>20</sup>The LORD has kept his promise—I have succeeded my father David on Israel's throne just as the LORD said, and I have built the temple for the name of the LORD, Israel's God. <sup>21</sup>There I've placed the chest that contains the covenant that the LORD made with our ancestors when he brought them out of Egypt."

<sup>22</sup>Solomon stood before the LORD's altar in front of the entire Israelite assembly and, spreading out his hands toward the sky, <sup>23</sup>he said:

\*September–October, Tishrei; Ethanim is a month from a Canaanite calendar.

8:2 *the festival*: Festival of Booths, a feast commemorating the exodus (Heb. *Sukkot*; cf. 1 Kgs 8:65–66; Lev 23:33–39).  
8:1–4 *elders . . . priests*: The assembly includes various leaders, including priests, who were the traditional bearers of the chest (Deut 31:9; 2 Sam 15:24). Solomon seems to be consolidating a unified Israel around the temple dedication.

8:6 *winged creatures*: See note on 1 Kings 6:14–38.

8:8 *still there today*: This comment reflects the time of the author of this chapter, which was written before the destruction of the temple (587 BCE). The books of Kings reached their final form during or after the exile and after the temple had been destroyed.

8:9 *two stone tablets*: the Ten Commandments (cf. Exod 25:16, 22). A later tradition held that the chest also contained a jar of manna and Aaron's staff (Heb 9:4; cf. Exod 16:32–34; Num 17:10–11). *Horeb*: the name of Mount Sinai that is used primarily in Deuteronomy (cf. Deut 4:10). In Exodus 3:1 it is called "God's mountain."

8:10–11 *cloud*: God's presence was often manifested in a cloud (cf. Exod 13:21–22; 16:10; 19:9; 33:9). The terms "cloud" and "glory" together remind readers of the completion of the meeting tent in the wilderness, and represent God's very presence in the temple (Exod 40:34–35). Solomon's temple becomes a replacement of that movable shrine.

8:12–61 Solomon's prayer and blessing of the people is one of the most densely packed theological texts in the

books of Kings, echoing words and phrases from the book of Deuteronomy.

8:12–13 *dark cloud*: in some texts, where God is said to live (cf. Exod 20:21; Deut 4:11; 5:22; 2 Sam 22:10; Ps 97:2). Solomon suggests that the inner sanctuary of the temple is either a replacement for the *dark cloud* that protects God from view, or a place where God, who enters the temple in that cloud, might *live forever* (cf. 1 Kgs 8:29). The words *I have . . . built* are repeated in 1 Kings 8:20, 27, 43, 44, 48.

8:14–21 *selected a city . . . temple for my name*: Deuteronomy mentions a place, but never identifies it as Jerusalem (cf. Deut 12:5, 11; 16:2). *name*: a way of speaking of the presence of God without making the claim that God actually lives there. The name represents the person and presence without limiting God to the location (cf. 1 Kgs 8:27). *The LORD . . . promise*: a theme drawn in part from 2 Samuel 7:12–16 that echoes in various ways throughout this chapter (cf. 1 Kgs 8:20, 24–26, 53, 56; 9:5). *chest*: See note on 1 Kings 8:1.

8:22–53 Solomon's prayer of dedication and petition. The prayer brings together reflection on the covenant with Israel at Horeb (cf. 1 Kgs 8:9) and the covenant with David (2 Sam 7). Israel is God's people as David is the one God chose to govern this people. After introductory reflections on those relationships and on God's presence (8:23–30), the prayer lists seven requests, each one including the phrase *listen from heaven* (or some variation

8:4 1K1 3:4;  
2Ch 1:3

8:6 Ex 26:33;  
2Sa 6:17;

1K1 6:19;  
1K1 6:27; 2Ch 5:7

8:7 1K1 8:6;  
2Ch 5:7–8

8:9 Ex 3:1;  
Ex 25:16;  
Ex 25:21;

2Ch 5:10;  
Heb 9:4

8:12–21  
2Ch 6:1–11

8:17 2Sa 7:2;  
1Ch 17:1–2;  
1Ch 28:2

8:18 2Sa 8:11;  
1K1 7:51;  
1K1 8:17;

1Ch 17:1;  
1Ch 21:24

8:19 2Sa 7:5;  
2Sa 7:12–13;  
1K1 5:3; 1K1 5:5

8:22–30  
2Ch 6:12–21

8:27 2Ch 2:6;  
Is 66:1; Jer 23:24;  
Ac 7:48;  
Ac 17:24;  
8:31, 32  
2Ch 6:22, 23

*The Lord's Chest* Solomon placed in the temple a chest containing the covenant, or Ten Commandments, which governs the relationship between God and people (1 Kgs 6:19; 8:21; cf. Exod 25:16, 21; Deut 10:1-5). It is therefore called "chest of the covenant" (Exod 25:16; 1 Kgs 3:15; 6:19; 8:1, 21). It was placed in the inner, and holiest, room of the temple (Exod 26:33-34). The chest represents God's presence. For Deuteronomy the chest functions as a repository of God's words. God is present in God's words, God's words give life, and God's words order Israel's life (Deut 4:10-12; 5:24; 8:3; 11:18). Although God's "words" are in the chest, the chest also represents the God who continues to speak and instruct the people. It is the place of meeting (Exod 25:22; Num 7:89), where the people receive God's guidance (Num 10:33-36). It stands for the divine character—the "ruler of the whole earth" (Josh 3:11, 13). It embodies a symbolic yet real presence greater even than the great gods of the Philistines (1 Sam 4-6). Some biblical texts present God as having a throne in the heavens with the chest as God's footstool, thereby confirming Solomon's affirmation that God can't be contained (cf. 1 Chron 28:2; Pss 11:4; 99:5; 103:19; 132:7-8). Other nations have images that represent their gods; Israel has a box carrying God's instructions—a box that represents God's presence through the words mediated by Moses and the prophets (2 Kgs 17:12-13).

LORD God of Israel, there's no god like you in heaven above or on earth below. You keep the covenant and show loyalty to your servants who walk before you with all their heart. <sup>24</sup>This is the covenant you kept with your servant David, my father, which you promised him. Today, you have fulfilled what you promised. <sup>25</sup>So now, LORD, Israel's God, keep what you promised my father David, your servant, when you said to him, "You will never fail to have a successor sitting on Israel's throne as long as your descendants carefully walk before me just as you walked before me." <sup>26</sup>So now, God of Israel, may your promise to your servant David, my father, come true.

<sup>27</sup>But how could God possibly live on earth? If heaven, even the highest heaven, can't contain you, how can this temple that I've built contain you? <sup>28</sup>LORD my God, listen to your servant's prayer and request, and hear the cry and prayer that your servant prays to you today. <sup>29</sup>Constantly watch over this temple, the place about which you said, "My name will be there," and listen to the prayer that your servant is praying toward<sup>†</sup> this place. <sup>30</sup>Listen to the request of your servant and your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Listen from your heavenly dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive!

<sup>31</sup>If someone wrongs another and must make a solemn pledge asserting innocence before your altar in this temple,<sup>‡</sup> <sup>32</sup>then listen from heaven, act, and decide which of your servants is right. Condemn the guilty party, repaying them for their conduct, but justify the innocent person, repaying them for their righteousness.

<sup>†</sup>Or for, regarding; also used in several verses that follow <sup>‡</sup>Heb uncertain

of it; 8:32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49). The main concern is for God to attend to Israel's dire situation, to forgive, and to set right what has gone wrong. The prayer even anticipates Israel's exile. The prayer includes many echoes of Deuteronomy.

8:23-26 *no god like you*: Solomon echoes Deuteronomy and David's prayer (cf. Deut 4:39; 2 Sam 7:22; Exod 15:11). *covenant... loyalty*: Compare with Deuteronomy 7:9, 12. *Today*: a motif common to Deuteronomy (Deut 4:20; 29:27). *David... promised*: Solomon reminds God of the covenant with David (2 Sam 7:1-17) and the promise concerning the temple and kingdom (2 Sam 7:13, 16). *never fail... successor*: a liberal paraphrase of 2 Samuel 7:13, 16. *carefully walk... as you walked*: The conditions of succession include imitation of David (see note on 1 Kgs 2:2, 3; 3:2-3).

8:27-30 *listen*: The word occurs 14 times in Solomon's prayer (1 Kgs 8:23-53), nine of those combined with *from heaven* or *in heaven* (1 Kgs 8:30, 32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49). A key purpose of Solomon's prayer is prayer itself. Although the temple is often thought of as a place of sacrifice, that isn't the focus here. The temple is a

structure that prompts prayer. This passage probably motivates the prayers in later exilic and post-exilic texts (Ezra 9; Neh 1; 9; Dan 9). A significant highlight of the prayer is the question in 8:27: How is it possible for God to live on earth? What, then, is the purpose of a temple? The prayer as a whole affirms that God lives in heaven and is symbolically present in the temple. There is a tension between God's immanence (nearness) and God's transcendence (distance). Compare with 1 Samuel 4:3-4; Isaiah 66:1-2. *My name... there*: See sidebar, "Temple and Name." *toward this place*: This may be the origin of the practice of building churches and synagogues that are oriented toward Jerusalem. *forgive*: one of the main themes of the prayer (also 1 Kgs 8:34, 36, 39, 50; cf. Dan 6:10; Pss 5:7; 138:2). *heavenly dwelling place*: See 1 Kings 8:30, 39, 43, 49; echoing Deuteronomy 26:15.

8:31-32 This request, the first of seven, is about a legal situation that can't be decided through regular channels (e.g., 1 Kgs 3:16-28). *wrongs another*: The verb "wrongs" occurs seven times in the prayer (1 Kgs 8:23-53), elsewhere translated "sinned" or "sins."

<sup>33</sup>If your people Israel are defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, but then they change their hearts and lives, give thanks to your name, and ask for mercy before you at this temple, <sup>34</sup>then listen from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel. Return them to the land you gave their ancestors.

<sup>35</sup>When the sky holds back its rain because Israel has sinned against you, but they then pray toward this place, give thanks to your name, and turn away from their sin because you have punished them for it, <sup>36</sup>then listen from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the best way for them to follow, and send rain on your land that you gave to your people as an inheritance.

<sup>37</sup>Whenever there is a famine or plague in the land; or whenever there is blight, mildew, locust, or grasshopper; or whenever someone's enemy attacks them in their cities,<sup>b</sup> or any plague or illness comes; <sup>38</sup>whatever prayer or petition is made by any individual or by all of your people Israel—because people will recognize their own pain and spread out their hands toward this temple—<sup>39</sup>then listen from heaven where you live. Forgive, act, and repay each person according to all their conduct, because you know their hearts. You alone know the human heart. <sup>40</sup>Do this so that they may revere you all the days they live on the land that you gave to our ancestors.

<sup>41</sup>Listen also to the immigrant who isn't from your people Israel but who comes from a distant country because of your reputation—<sup>42</sup>because they will hear of your great reputation, your great power, and your outstretched arm. When the immigrant comes and prays toward this temple, <sup>43</sup>then listen from heaven, where you live, and do everything the immigrant asks. Do this so that all the people of the earth may know your reputation and revere you, as your people Israel do, and recognize that this temple I have built bears your name.

*Anger of God* “Why are the gods angry?” In a 9th-century BCE inscription, Moab's King Mesha explains Moab's colonization under Israel's King Omri: “for Chemosh was angry at his land.” Deuteronomy suggests that other nations might ask why God was angry with Israel (Deut 29:24).

Although the OT characterizes God as patient (Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; Nah 1:3), that doesn't eliminate occurrences of divine anger in the Bible. The theme appears at least 21 times in Kings (1 Kgs 8:46; 11:9; 14:9, 15; 15:30; 16:2, 7, 13, 26, 33; 21:22; 22:53; 2 Kgs 13:3; 17:11, 17-18; 21:6, 15; 22:17; 23:19, 26). Anger reflects God's jealousy for Israel's exclusive loyalty as developed in the book of Deuteronomy. Anger expresses a concern for justice arising from violation of relationship (cf. Deut 1:37; 3:26; 4:21, 25; 6:15; 7:4; 9:8, 19-20; 11:17; 13:17; 19:6; 29:20, 23-24, 27-28; 31:17, 29; 32:22). God becomes angry when Israel forsakes the Lord, abandons its covenantal commitment, does evil, and serves other gods. The consequences of Israel's behavior include destruction and exile (cf. Deut 6:15; 29:27-28; 1 Kgs 14:15).

The hope of Deuteronomy is for God to turn from divine anger and show compassion (Deut 4:30-31; 13:17; 30:3; 32:36). Unfortunately, the books of Deuteronomy and Kings reveal that only on the other side of exile will that compassion again be evident (cf. Pss 30:5; 78:38; Isa 12:1; 48:9; Hos 11:9; 14:4; Jon 3:9; Mic 7:18; Zech 10:3).

<sup>a</sup>Or answered them <sup>b</sup>LXX one of. MT in the land of their gates

8:33-34 *your people Israel*: emphasized by repetition in 1 Kings 8:33, 34, 38, 43, 52; echoing Deuteronomy 21:8; 26:15. *sinned against you*: wrong done that violates a relationship (against others, 1 Kgs 8:31; against God, 1 Kgs 8:33, 35, 46, 47, 50). *change their hearts and lives*: The Hebrew verb with a rough meaning of “turn/return,” refers to a total reorientation of life, recurs throughout the prayer, and is translated in various ways (1 Kgs 8:35, 47, 48). A play on words appears in 8:34, where people *change* and God is asked to *Return them to the land . . . ancestors*. This prayer, like Deuteronomy, assumes the exile of God's people from their land (Deut 4:26-27, 30; 29:28; 30:2-5). Deuteronomy also anticipates “return” (Deut 30:4-5). 8:35-36 *rain*: According to Deuteronomy, rain is a blessing from God, and drought is a consequence of disloyalty to

8:33, 34  
2Ch 6:24, 25  
8:35, 36  
2Ch 6:26, 27  
8:37-40  
2Ch 6:28-31  
8:39 1Sa 16:7;  
1Ch 28:9;  
Jer 17:10;  
Ac 1:24;  
Rev 2:23  
8:41-43  
2Ch 6:32, 33

God (Deut 11:11, 14, 17; 28:12, 24). *Teach*: a verb related to the noun “instruction,” a prominent theme in Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 1:5; cf. “Instruction from Moses” in 1 Kgs 2:3). *land . . . inheritance*: echoing Deuteronomy (e.g. Deut 4:21; 15:4).

8:37-40 Both “rain” (1 Kgs 8:35-36) and *famine* provide the setting for the Elijah story (1 Kgs 18:1-2). *heart*: the seat of the will and of human intention or motivation. The word is used three times in 8:38-39, including verse 38, in a Hebrew expression, “pain of his heart.” The heart is a prominent theme in Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 6:5). *revere*: Compare with Deuteronomy 4:10; 5:26. See 1 Kings 8:58, 61.

8:41-43 *immigrant . . . distant country*: The Gibeonites are the parade example. They say they have heard of God's reputation (Josh 9:6, 9). *outstretched arm*: a common

8:44-45  
2Ch 6:34, 35  
8:46 Ps 130:3;  
Pv 20:9;  
Ecc 7:20; 1In 1:8  
8:46-53  
2Ch 6:36-39  
8:54 1Kj 8:22;  
2Ch 6:13,  
2Ch 7:1  
8:56 Josh 21:45;  
Josh 23:14;  
1Kj 8:15  
8:57 Dt 31:6;  
Josh 1:5;  
1Sa 12:22;  
Heb 13:5  
8:58 Ps 119:36;  
Jer 31:33

**Temple and Name** Solomon wants to build “a temple for the name of the LORD my God” (1 Kgs 5:5). The association of the name with the temple is a way of speaking about God’s presence without claiming that God actually lives there. God’s name represents all of God’s character, concern, and presence. Such language prevents God from being localized and assures a strong sense of God’s transcendence (distance), even while affirming God’s active presence. Solomon asks, in his prayer of dedication, how God can “live on earth,” when “heaven, even the highest heaven, can’t contain you” (1 Kgs 8:27). In other words, God can’t be limited to a temple, even though God is always present to it. Such affirmations are especially important in the light of the author’s concerns about the dangers of idolatry.

Deuteronomy assumes that God will choose a place “to put his name there, as his residence,” without ever naming the place (Deut 12:5; cf. 2 Sam 7:13). It is the place of “God’s presence” (Deut 12:7; cf. Deut 12:11-13, 18; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2). In the books of Kings, temple and name are associated primarily with the story of Solomon (1 Kgs 5:3-5 and nine times in 1 Kgs 8). God tells Solomon, “My eyes and my heart will always be there” (1 Kgs 9:3; cf. the warning of 1 Kgs 9:7). Jerusalem is named as that place only a few times, primarily in texts that anticipate the destruction of the city (1 Kgs 11:36; 2 Kgs 21:4, 7; 23:27).

<sup>44</sup>When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you may send them, and they pray to the LORD toward the city you have chosen and toward this temple that I have built for your name, <sup>45</sup>then listen from heaven to their prayer and request and do what is right for them.

<sup>46</sup>When they sin against you (for there is no one who doesn’t sin) and you become angry with them and hand them over to an enemy who takes them away as prisoners to enemy territory, whether distant or nearby, <sup>47</sup>if they change their heart in whatever land they are held captive, changing their lives and begging for your mercy,<sup>48</sup> saying, “We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly!” <sup>48</sup>and if they return to you with all their heart and all their being in the enemy territory where they’ve been taken captive, and pray to you, toward their land, which you gave their ancestors, toward the city you have chosen, and toward the temple I have built for your name, <sup>49</sup>then listen to their prayer and request from your heavenly dwelling place. Do what is right for them, <sup>50</sup>and forgive your people who have sinned against you. Forgive all their wrong that they have done against you. See to it that those who captured them show them mercy. <sup>51</sup>These are your people and your inheritance. You brought them out of Egypt, from the iron furnace.

<sup>52</sup>Open your eyes to your servant’s request and to the request of your people Israel. Hear them whenever they cry out to you. <sup>53</sup>You set them apart from all the earth’s peoples as your own inheritance, LORD, just as you promised through your servant Moses when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt.

<sup>54</sup>As soon as Solomon finished praying and making these requests to the LORD, he got up from before the LORD’s altar, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out to heaven. <sup>55</sup>He stood up and blessed the whole Israelite assembly in a loud voice: <sup>56</sup>“May the LORD be blessed! He has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. He hasn’t neglected any part of the good promise he made through his servant Moses. <sup>57</sup>May the LORD our God be with us, just as he was with our ancestors. May he never leave us or abandon us. <sup>58</sup>May he draw our hearts to him to walk in all his ways and observe his commands, his

<sup>48</sup>Heb adds *in the land they are held captive*.

expression in Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 4:34; 5:15). *all the people of the earth may know*... *revere*: These words echo those of Joshua 4:24.

8:46-51 This request echoes Deuteronomy 30:1-10 in many details. *angry*: the effect of Israel’s breaking the covenant relationship with God. See sidebar, “Anger of God.” Compare with Deuteronomy 29:14-28, which describes breaking covenant, God’s anger, and exile similarly. *change their heart*... *changing their lives*: See note on 1 Kings 8:33-34. *heart*... *being*: See note on 1 Kings 2:4. *city*... *chosen*: See note on 1 Kings 8:14-21. *your people*... *your inheritance*... *iron furnace*: echo of Deuteronomy 4:20 (cf. Deut 9:26, 29; 32:9; Mic 7:14; “your possession,” Ps 28:9).

8:52-53 *from all the earth’s peoples*: Compare with Deuteronomy 32:8-9.

8:54-61 *rest*... *as he promised*: These themes reverberate throughout Deuteronomy and Joshua, applied there particularly to entry into the land (cf. Deut 6:23; 12:10; 19:8; 26:18-19; Josh 1:13; etc.). *good promise*: Solomon echoes Joshua’s and David’s words (Josh 21:45; 23:15; 2 Sam 7:28). *never leave*... *abandon us*: This combination occurs twice in Deuteronomy 31:6, 8 to confirm God’s faithfulness (cf. Josh 1:5). *all the earth’s peoples may know*: See note on 1 Kings 8:41-43 (cf. Deut 4:35; 2 Kgs 19:15, 19). *draw our hearts* (8:58) and *all your heart* (8:61): The prayer draws on the theme of God’s initiative in restoring covenant loyalty

laws, and his judgments that he gave our ancestors. <sup>59</sup>And may these words of mine that I have cried out before the LORD remain near to the LORD our God day and night so that he may do right by his servant and his people Israel for each day's need, <sup>60</sup>and so that all the earth's peoples may know that the LORD is God. There is no other God! <sup>61</sup>Now may you be committed to the LORD our God with all your heart by following his laws and observing his commands, just as you are doing right now."

<sup>62</sup>Then the king and all Israel with him sacrificed to the LORD. <sup>63</sup>Solomon offered well-being sacrifices to the LORD: twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred twenty thousand sheep when the king and all Israel dedicated the LORD's temple. <sup>64</sup>On that day the king made holy the middle of the courtyard in front of the LORD's temple. He had to offer the entirely burned offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of well-being sacrifices there, because the bronze altar that was in the LORD's presence was too small to contain the entirely burned offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the well-being sacrifices. <sup>65</sup>At that time Solomon, together with all Israel, held a celebration. It was a large assembly from Lebo-hamath to the border of Egypt. They celebrated for seven days and then for another seven days in the presence of the LORD our God: fourteen days in all. <sup>66</sup>On the eighth day,<sup>d</sup> Solomon dismissed the people. They blessed the king and went back to their tents happy and pleased about all the good that the LORD had done for his servant David and for his people Israel.

### Solomon again meets God

Now once Solomon finished building the LORD's temple, the royal palace, and everything else he wanted to accomplish, <sup>2</sup>the LORD appeared to him a second time in the same way he had appeared to him at Gibeon. <sup>3</sup>The LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your cry to me. I have set apart this temple that you built, to put my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there. <sup>4</sup>As for you, if you walk before me just as your father David did, with complete dedication and honesty, and if you do all that I have commanded, and keep my regulations and case laws, <sup>5</sup>then I will establish your royal throne over

*David as Example* God promises Solomon a secure dynasty if he will "walk before me just as your father David did" (1 Kgs 9:4-5). This promise reflects God's covenant with David (cf. 2 Sam 7:11-16; 1 Kgs 8:19; 11:36; 15:4). Remarkably, God gives Jeroboam, the first king of northern Israel, the same promise (1 Kgs 11:38). Although God is committed to David in a special way, being faithful to God's instructions is even more important. Therefore, in spite of God's protective action for Jerusalem because of David (cf. 2 Kgs 19:34), Judah and Jerusalem suffer the consequences of exile because of the actions of the kings of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 21:1-15).

David provides the historian with a model for what it means to be fully devoted to God (cf. 1 Kgs 15:3). Only three kings of Judah are compared positively with David: Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah (1 Kgs 15:11; 2 Kgs 18:3; 22:2). Other kings are evaluated negatively, not having done "what was right in the LORD's eyes" as David had done (cf. 1 Kgs 14:8; 15:3; 2 Kgs 16:2). Others receive a mixed evaluation, having done right, but "not as well as . . . King David" (2 Kgs 14:3; cf. 2 Kgs 12:2-3; 15:3-4, 34-35). David speaks to his son Solomon about what such faithfulness entails (1 Kgs 2:3), and in doing so he mirrors God's words to Joshua (Josh 1:7-8). David, therefore, is the one who most clearly models for Israel, even in exile, the path by which salvation might come (1 Kgs 14:8; cf. Deut 30:1-10).

<sup>d</sup>The second seven-day celebration (see 2 Chron 7:8-9); but contrast LXX.

(cf. Deut 30:6; Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27; see note on 1 Kgs 2:4; 8:37-40).

8:62-64 *well-being sacrifices*: sacrifices to be eaten by the community; compare with Leviticus 7:11-21, 28-36. *made holy*: an act of ritual purification or consecration made necessary because of the large number of sacrifices that would not fit into the altar area. The hyperbole here seems designed to exaggerate Solomon's achievement. Over two weeks, each day's sacrifices would have included 1,571 oxen and 8,571 sheep.

8:65-66 *Lebo-hamath to the border of Egypt*: refers to the extent of Solomon's kingdom (see note on 1 Kgs 4:21-24). *Lebo-hamath* means "entrance to Hamath," a city on the Orontes River in Syria. *eighth day*: after the second

seven-day celebration (8:65; cf. 2 Chron 7:8-10). Similar to the description in 1 Kings 4, the report of the temple dedication celebration paints a picture of a contented people and reminds readers that *David* is the center of this writer's interest. See sidebar, "David as Example."

9:1-9 In a second dream, God sets out the terms of the relationship with Solomon more clearly and with more carefully worded consequences for Israel if Solomon should be unfaithful to the covenant. An ominous tone underlies these verses.

9:1-2 *at Gibeon*: Compare with 1 Kings 3:4-5.

9:3-5 The Lord's promise. *I have set apart this temple*: It is God's action, not Solomon's (cf. 1 Kgs 8). *my name there*: See 1 Kings 3:2-3; 8:16, 29; see sidebar, "Temple and Name"

8:59 Josh 7:8;  
1Ki 8:25-26,  
1Ki 8:33,  
1Ki 18:36  
8:62-66  
2Ch 7:4-10  
9:1-9  
2Ch 7:11-22

9:6 2Sa 7:14

9:7 Dt 4:26,

Dt 28:37;

2Ki 17:23;

Ps 44:14;

Jer 24:9

9:8 Dt 29:24;

Jer 22:8-9

9:9 Dt 29:25

9:10-14

2Ch 8:1, 2

9:17-19

2Ch 8:4-6

9:20-23

2Ch 8:7-10

Israel forever, just as I promised your father David, 'You will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.' <sup>6</sup>However, if you or your sons turn away from following me and don't observe the commands and regulations that I gave you, and go to serve other gods, and worship them, <sup>7</sup>then I will remove Israel from the land I gave them and I will reject the temple that I dedicated for my name. Israel will become a joke, insulted by everyone. <sup>8</sup>Everyone who passes by this temple, so lofty now, <sup>9</sup>will be shocked and will whistle, wondering, Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and this temple? <sup>10</sup>The answer will come: Because they deserted the LORD their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt's land. They embraced other gods, worshipping and serving them. That is why the LORD brought all this disaster on them."

### Solomon's buildings and prosperity

<sup>10</sup>It took twenty years for Solomon to build the two structures, the LORD's temple and the royal palace. <sup>11</sup>King Hiram of Tyre gave Solomon all the cedar, pinewood, and gold that he wanted. Then King Solomon gave Hiram twenty towns in the region of Galilee. <sup>12</sup>Hiram went from Tyre to inspect the towns Solomon had given him. They didn't seem adequate in his view. <sup>13</sup>So Hiram remarked, "My brother, are these towns you've given me good for anything?" The cities are thus called the land of Cabul to this very day. <sup>14</sup>But Hiram sent the king one hundred twenty gold kikkars, nevertheless.

<sup>15</sup>This is the story of the labor gang that King Solomon put together to build the LORD's temple and his own palace, as well as the stepped structure, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer: (<sup>16</sup>Pharaoh, Egypt's king, had attacked and captured Gezer, setting it on fire. He killed the Canaanites who lived in the city and gave it as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife.) <sup>17</sup>Solomon built Gezer, Lower Beth-horon, <sup>18</sup>Baalath, and Tamar in the wilderness (within the land), <sup>19</sup>along with all the storage cities that belonged to Solomon, as well as the cities used for storing chariots and cavalry and whatever he wanted to build in Jerusalem, Lebanon, and throughout his kingdom. <sup>20</sup>Any non-Israelite people who remained

<sup>a</sup>Or will become high; OL, Syr, Tg will become a ruin

at 1 Kings 8. *walk*... *David did*: The conditions of the relationship are the same as those stated by David (see 1 Kgs 2:3-4; cf. 3:14; 8:25; see sidebar, "David as Example"). *establish... throne... forever*: echoing 2 Samuel 7:13, 16; compare with 1 Kings 2:45; 6:12; 8:15, 20, 24-26.

**9:6-9** The Lord's warning goes further than the warning of "discipline" and seems to omit the divine commitment of "faithful love" in 2 Samuel 7:14-15. Failure to observe God's instructions focuses particularly on idolatry (see sidebar "Idolatry" at 1 Kgs 11). The *worship of other gods*, with the addition of *servng them*, is one of the main interests of the books of Kings. This is the first time the theme is mentioned in Kings. The authors draw this theme directly from the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:3-5; Deut 5:7-9), a theme that is a favorite of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut 6:13; 11:16; 17:3; 28:14). The warning here is a premonition of things to come (cf. 1 Sam 8:8-9; 1 Kgs 11:4, 10; 14:9; 2 Kgs 17:7, 33-40). *remove Israel from the land*: one of the consequences noted in Deuteronomy's warnings (Deut 29:25-28). *a joke, insulted*: These words echo Deuteronomy 28:37, which anticipates Israel's exile. Using the word "joke" here is ironic because the Hebrew word is translated as "proverb" in 1 Kings 4:32. Composing proverbs was the fruit of Solomon's wisdom. *Why has the Lord done such a thing*: Putting the question in the mouths of *everyone* echoes Deuteronomy 29:24. The answer there is the same as God's warning here, except for the addition here of *this temple*. The problem: *they deserted the Lord their God*: Deuteronomy uses the same verb in its warning of exile (Deut 28:20), in the answer of the nations (Deut 29:24), and in God's prediction to Moses (Deut 31:16-17). And

this in spite of Deuteronomy's insistence that God doesn't abandon (Deut 4:31; 31:6-8). *disaster*: Compare with Deuteronomy 29:20; 31:17, 21, 29.

**9:10-14** *twenty years*: 946 BCE. *Hiram*: These verses fill out the details of the trade agreement described in 1 Kings 5:1-18. *My brother*: indicates a treaty partner, even though Hiram gives Solomon *all... that he wanted* (cf. 1 Kgs 5:10). Solomon gives him *twenty towns* in northern Israel. *Cabul* perhaps means "good for nothing." Hiram's response suggests that the cities are worth nothing. Still, Hiram sends Solomon additional gold (not mentioned in 1 Kgs 5), perhaps making up the difference in value. Hiram has no real say in the arrangement (cf. note on 1 Kgs 5:13-18). *kikkars*: One *kikkar* is equivalent to approximately 76 pounds. (cf. 420 *kikkars* in 1 Kgs 9:28; 120 in 1 Kgs 10:10; 666 in 1 Kgs 10:14). Solomon's accumulation of gold, mentioned often in 1 Kings 9-10, is prohibited by Deuteronomy 17:17.

**9:15-25** The projects of the work gangs (cf. 1 Kgs 4:6; 5:13-14). In addition to the temple and palaces, Solomon fortified cities and built collection and storage capacity for his taxation system. *Amorites... Jebusites*: This list of peoples is almost identical to the one in Deuteronomy 7:1. Non-Israelites are conscripted, which isn't mentioned in 1 Kings 5:13 where the work gangs are chosen from "all over Israel" *weren't able wipe to them out*: Compare with Joshua 15:63. The story, with its mention of *Pharaoh and his daughter, Solomon's wife*, along with the non-Israelite peoples, reminds readers of the dangers of intermarriage and the worship of "other gods," all of which are mentioned in Deuteronomy 7:1-6. *offer... sacrifices*: See 1 Kings 3:4, 15;

of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites—<sup>21</sup>that is, the descendants of such people who were still in the land because the Israelites weren't able to wipe them out—Solomon forced into the labor gangs that are still in existence today. <sup>22</sup>However, Solomon didn't force the Israelites to work as slaves; instead, they became warriors, his servants, his leaders, his officers, and those in charge of his chariots and cavalry.

<sup>23</sup>These were the chief officers over Solomon's work: five hundred fifty had charge of the people who did the work. <sup>24</sup>When Pharaoh's daughter went up from David's City to the palace he had built for her, Solomon built the stepped structure. <sup>25</sup>Three times a year Solomon would offer entirely burned offerings and well-being sacrifices on the altar that he had built for the LORD. Along with this he would burn incense to the LORD. In this way, he completed the temple. <sup>26</sup>King Solomon built a fleet near Eloth in Ezion-geber, on the coast of the Reed Sea<sup>a</sup> in the land of Edom. <sup>27</sup>Hiram sent his expert sailors on the fleet along with Solomon's workers. <sup>28</sup>They went to Ophir for four hundred twenty kikkars of gold, which they brought back to King Solomon.

### Queen of Sheba

**10**When the queen of Sheba heard reports about Solomon, due to the LORD's name,<sup>b</sup> she came to test him with riddles. <sup>2</sup>Accompanying her to Jerusalem was a huge entourage with camels carrying spices, a large amount of gold, and precious stones. After she arrived, she told Solomon everything that was on her mind. <sup>3</sup>Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too difficult for him to answer. <sup>4</sup>When the queen of Sheba saw how wise Solomon was, the palace he had built, <sup>5</sup>the food on his table, the servants' quarters, the function and dress of his attendants, his cupbearers, and the entirely burned offerings that he offered at the LORD's temple, it took her breath away.

<sup>6</sup>"The report I heard about your deeds and wisdom when I was still at home is true," she said to the king. <sup>7</sup>"I didn't believe it until I came and saw it with my own eyes. In fact, the half of it wasn't even told to me! You have far more wisdom and wealth than I was told. <sup>8</sup>Your people and these servants who continually serve you and get to listen to your wisdom are truly happy! <sup>9</sup>Bless the LORD your God because he was pleased to place you on Israel's throne. Because the LORD loved Israel with an eternal love, the LORD made you king to uphold justice and righteousness."

<sup>10</sup>The queen gave the king one hundred twenty kikkars of gold, a great quantity of spice, and precious stones. Never again has so much spice come to Israel as when the queen of Sheba gave this gift to King Solomon. <sup>11</sup>Hiram's fleet went to Ophir and brought back gold, much almuq wood, and precious stones. <sup>12</sup>The king used the almuq wood to make parapets for the LORD's temple and for the royal palace as well as lyres and harps for the musicians. To this day, that much almuq wood hasn't come into or been seen in Israel. <sup>13</sup>King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba everything she wanted and all that she had asked for, in addition to what he had already given her from his own personal funds. Then she and her servants returned to her homeland.

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Traditionally Red Sea <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain

8:64 (cf. Lev 1:3). *Three times a year*: likely at the three great festivals, Unleavened Bread, Harvest, and Gathering or Booths (Exod 23:14-16). *completed the temple*: See note on 1 Kings 7:51.

9:26-28 *Eloth*: modern Eilat at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba. *Ezion-geber*: a port on the Gulf of Aqaba whose exact location isn't known. *Ophir*: location unknown; famous for its gold (cf. Job 22:24; 28:16; Ps 45:9; Isa 13:12). *kikkars*: One *kikkar* is approximately 76 pounds.

10:1-13 The visit of the queen of Sheba highlights Solomon's wealth and wisdom. *Sheba*: located in the south of the Arabian Peninsula (modern Yemen). This story is an example of the people mentioned in 1 Kings 4:34 who come to visit Solomon because they have heard about his (and the Lord's) reputation. *test him with riddles*: Compare with Samson in Judges 14; Proverbs 1:6.

Solomon's responses are encyclopedic (10:3), and his wisdom and resources overwhelming (10:4-5, 7). *Your people... truly happy*: The Psalms describe *truly happy* people as those who follow God's instructions (Pss 1:1; 119:1-2; 128:1; cf. Ps 144:15). This description is ironic, since Solomon's fall is looming (cf. 1 Kgs 11). *the LORD loved Israel*: a characteristic theme of Deuteronomy (Deut 4:37; 7:8-9, 13; 10:15); *uphold justice and righteousness*: a word pair that depicts the chief goal of wisdom (Prov. 1:3; 2:9; 8:20). These words describe God's intention for Abraham (Gen 18:19). They stand at the beginning of the psalmist's prayer for Solomon (Ps 72:1-2). And they characterize God's rule (Pss 33:5; 89:14; 97:2; 99:4). The psalmist describes people who practice *justice and righteousness as truly happy* (Ps 106:3). See also note on 1 Kings 3:28.

9:24a 2Ch 8:11  
9:24b  
1Ki 11:27b  
9:25  
2Ch 8:12-16  
9:26-28  
2Ch 8:17, 18  
10:1 Jgs 14:12;  
1Ki 4:34;  
2Ch 9:1;  
Mt 12:42;  
Lk 11:31  
10:1-13  
2Ch 9:1-12  
10:2 1Ki 10:10  
10:3 1Ki 3:12;  
1Ki 4:29;  
1Ki 10:1;  
1Ki 10:4; 2Ch 9:2  
10:4 1Ki 3:28;  
1Ki 4:29;  
1Ki 6:1; 1Ki 7:51;  
Mt 12:42  
10:5 2Ch 9:4  
10:8 Prv 8:34  
10:9 Dt 7:8;  
2Sa 8:15;  
2Sa 23:3; 1Ki 5:7;  
Ps 72:2

10:14-21  
2Ch 9:13-20

10:22  
1Ki 9:26-27,  
1Ki 22:48;  
2Ch 9:21  
2Ch 20:36;  
Is 2:16

10:23-25  
2Ch 9:22-24

10:26 1Ki 4:26;  
2Ch 1:14,  
2Ch 9:25

10:27 2Ch 1:15,  
2Ch 9:27

10:28, 29  
2Ch 1:16, 17,  
2Ch 9:28

11:1 Dt 17:17;  
1Ki 3:1;  
Neh 13:23

11:2 Ex 34:16;  
Dt 7:3; 1Ki 11:1

11:3 Dt 17:17;  
2Sa 9:13;  
1Ki 11:1

### Solomon's wealth

<sup>14</sup>Solomon received an annual income of six hundred sixty-six *kikkars* of gold, <sup>15</sup>not including income from the traders, the merchants and their profits, all the Arabian kings, and the officials of the land. <sup>16</sup>King Solomon made two hundred body-sized shields of hammered gold, using fifteen pounds<sup>d</sup> of gold in each shield, <sup>17</sup>and three hundred small shields of hammered gold, using sixty ounces<sup>f</sup> of gold in each shield. The king placed these in the Forest of Lebanon Palace.

<sup>18</sup>The king also made a large ivory throne and covered it with pure gold. <sup>19</sup>Six steps led up to the throne, and the back of the throne was rounded at the top. Two lions stood beside the armrests on both sides of the throne. <sup>20</sup>Another twelve lions stood on both sides of the six steps. No other kingdom had anything like this. <sup>21</sup>All of King Solomon's drinking cups were made of gold, and all the items in the Forest of Lebanon Palace were made of pure gold, not silver, since even silver wasn't considered good enough in Solomon's time! <sup>22</sup>The royal fleet of Tarshish-style ships was at sea with Hiram's fleet, returning once every three years with gold, silver, ivory, monkeys, and peacocks.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>23</sup>King Solomon far exceeded all the earth's kings in wealth and wisdom, <sup>24</sup>and so the whole earth wanted an audience with Solomon in order to hear his God-given wisdom. <sup>25</sup>Year after year they came with tribute: objects of silver and gold, clothing, weapons, spices, horses, and mules.

<sup>26</sup>Solomon acquired more and more chariots and horses until he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses that he kept in chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup>In Jerusalem, the king made silver as common as stones and cedar as plentiful as sycamore trees that grow in the foothills. <sup>28</sup>Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and Kue, purchased from Kue by the king's agents at the going price. <sup>29</sup>They would import a chariot from Egypt for six hundred pieces of silver and a horse for one hundred fifty, and then export them to all the Hittite and Aramean kings.

### Solomon meets God a third time

**11** In addition to Pharaoh's daughter, King Solomon loved many foreign women, including Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites. <sup>2</sup>These came from the nations that the LORD had commanded the Israelites about: "Don't intermarry with them. They will definitely turn your heart toward their gods." Solomon clung to these women in love. <sup>3</sup>He had seven hundred royal wives and three hundred secondary wives. They turned

<sup>i</sup>Or six hundred (shekels) <sup>j</sup>three manehs <sup>k</sup>Heb uncertain

10:14-29 A summary of Solomon's massive wealth. *kikkars*: One *kikkar* is approximately 76 pounds. The amount of *gold* seems astronomical (nearly 810,000 ounces), almost too good to be true. *gold...silver* (cf. 1 Kgs 9:14): The word *gold* appears 14 times in 1 Kings 10. The report is a subtle criticism of Solomon's excesses in accumulating gold and silver, prohibited by Deuteronomy 17:17. Similarly, Solomon's acquisition of *chariots and horses...from Egypt* (cf. 1 Kgs 4:28; 1 Sam 8:11) violates the instruction in Deuteronomy 17:16, where *Egypt* is specifically mentioned as the source for importing horses. Samuel warned that this would happen (1 Sam 8:4). The chapter is riddled with hyperbole, confirmed by expressions like these: *No other kingdom* (10:20); *far exceeded all the earth's kings* (10:23); and *the whole earth* (10:24). *Tarshish-style ships*: Seagoing vessels used for international trade (cf. 1 Kgs 22:48; Isa 2:16; 23:1; 60:9; Ezek 27:12-15; Jon 1:3). *Kue*: a city in southeastern Asia Minor, modern Turkey.

11:1-43 Solomon's story turns into a tragedy. The chapter doesn't follow chronologically from the previous chapter. It presents a summary explanation of why and how things turned bad for Solomon. The readers have already received clues to the tragedy that will unfold. These are all expressly forbidden by the instruction for kings in Deuteronomy 17:14-20: foreign wives (1 Kgs 3:1-3); accumulation of horses (1 Kgs 4:26, 28; 10:26-29); gold

and silver (1 Kgs 9:28; 10:14-17, 25). Solomon's prayer and God's response sound as though the future doesn't look bright.

11:1-4 *loved many foreign women*: Solomon participates in the ancient Near Eastern practice of establishing political alliances through marriage. This practice violates the instruction for kings (Deut 17:17) and the more general prohibition against marrying non-Israelites (cf. Exod 34:11-16; Deut 7:1-5). The danger is idolatry. See sidebar, "Idolatry." *turn your heart toward their gods*: The chapter highlights the *heart* (1 Kgs 11:2, 3, 4, 9) and *other gods* (1 Kgs 11:2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 33; cf. Deut 17:17). Worship is one of the main concerns of the author of the books of Kings (see note on 1 Kgs 9:6-9). *heart*: seat of deliberation, motivation, and decision. *loved* (11:1) and *clung* (11:2) are verbs used in Deuteronomy of love for God (Deut 6:5; 10:12, 20; 11:1, 22; 13:4; 30:20). In other words, Solomon is choosing other allegiances, both political and divine. *his father David*: Although 1 Kings 3:3 states that Solomon had followed David's example, readers learn here that such practice must have been short-lived or incomplete. Evaluation of Judean kings based on David's example runs throughout the books of Kings (e.g., 1 Kgs 15:3, 11; see sidebar, "David as Example" at 1 Kgs 9). David appears as promise or pattern six times in this chapter (1 Kgs 11:4, 6, 12, 33, 34, 36, 38).



**Moses and Joshua, David and Solomon** The similarity of language between Joshua's commissioning by God (Josh 1:2-9) and Solomon's commissioning by David (1 Kgs 2:1-3), suggests that the writers of Joshua and Kings see analogous relationships among the characters at the heart of Israel's story. Faithfulness to God's Instruction will bring promised success (Josh 1:7-8; 1 Kgs 2:3). Whereas Joshua is the faithful successor and keeper of God's Instruction, Solomon is the promising but unfaithful one. As Joshua follows in the footsteps of Moses in an exemplary way, Solomon's following of David is characterized as a failure. Only Josiah (2 Kgs 22-23) is an ideal follower and faithful leader who imitates Joshua by fulfilling David's instructions. Where Solomon fails to follow David's instructions (1 Kgs 2:1-3), Josiah succeeds. In particular, both Joshua and Josiah *read* the Instruction of God, exactly what was stipulated for the king in Deuteronomy 17:18-19. It becomes obvious from the way Solomon's story plays itself out that Solomon doesn't pay attention to David's advice.

11:4 1Ki 8:61,  
1Ki 9:4  
11:5 Jgs 2:13,  
Jgs 10:6,  
1Ki 11:7,  
1Ki 11:33,  
2Ki 23:13  
11:7 Lv 18:21,  
Lv 20:2,  
Nm 21:29,  
2Ki 23:10,  
2Ki 23:13  
11:11 1Ki 11:31,  
1Ki 12:15,  
1Ki 12:16  
11:12 1Ki 11:34,  
1Ki 15:4,  
1Ki 21:29,  
2Ki 8:19,  
Is 37:35  
11:13 2Sa 7:15,  
1Ki 11:32,  
1Ki 11:36,  
1Ki 12:20  
11:14 1Ki 5:4,  
1Ki 11:19,  
1Ki 11:23,  
1Ki 11:25,  
1Ki 12:15

his heart.<sup>4</sup> As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods. He wasn't committed to the LORD his God with all his heart as was his father David.<sup>5</sup> Solomon followed Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom the detestable god of the Ammonites.<sup>6</sup> Solomon did what was evil in the LORD's eyes and wasn't completely devoted to the LORD like his father David.<sup>7</sup> On the hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a shrine to Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and to Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites.<sup>8</sup> He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.<sup>9</sup> The LORD grew angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from being with the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.<sup>10</sup> The LORD had commanded Solomon about this very thing, that he shouldn't follow other gods. But Solomon didn't do what the LORD commanded.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done all this instead of keeping my covenant and my laws that I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant.<sup>12</sup> Even so, on account of your father David, I won't do it during your lifetime. I will tear the kingdom out of your son's hands.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, I won't tear away the entire kingdom. I will give one tribe to your son on account of my servant David and on account of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

#### **Solomon and Hadad**

<sup>14</sup>So the LORD raised up an opponent for Solomon: Hadad the Edomite from the royal line of Edom.<sup>15</sup> When David was fighting against Edom, Joab the general had gone up to bury the Israelite dead, and he had killed every male in Edom.<sup>16</sup> Joab and all the Israelites stayed there six months, until he had finished off every male in Edom.<sup>17</sup> While still a youth, Hadad escaped to Egypt along with his father's Edomite officials.<sup>18</sup> They set out from Midian and went to Paran. They took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt and to Pharaoh its king. Pharaoh assigned him a home, food, and land.<sup>19</sup> Pharaoh was so delighted with Hadad that he gave him one of his wife's sisters for marriage, a sister of Queen Tahpenes.<sup>20</sup> This sister of Tahpenes bore Hadad a son, Genubath. Tahpenes weaned him in Pharaoh's house. So it was that Genubath was raised in Pharaoh's house, among Pharaoh's children.<sup>21</sup> While in

11:5 *Astarte*: Hebrew *Ashtoreth*, which is a derogatory modification using the Hebrew vowels for the word "shame." This goddess of love and fertility is known elsewhere as Ishtar (and later as Aphrodite and Venus). In the Bible she is often the partner of Baal, the storm god (see sidebar, "Baal" at 1 Kgs 18). *Milcom*: also known as Molech (both based on the Semitic word for "king"), is associated with child sacrifice in the Bible (2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 32:35).

11:6 *evil in the LORD's eyes*: This is the first of 30 appearances of this phrase in the books of Kings (e.g., 1 Kgs 15:11, 26, 34). It is the evaluation of each king who didn't follow the Lord. In Deuteronomy 4:25 the phrase refers to idolatry, which is the main topic here.

11:7 *Chemosh*: Compare with Numbers 21:29. Chemosh is *Molech*: See 1 Kings 11:5. *shrine*: See note on 1 Kings 3:2.

11:9-13 *The Lord grew angry*: The consequence of Solomon's violation of his relationship with God follows

clearly from earlier instructions and warnings (1 Kgs 2:4; 8:25; 9:4-5). See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8. *appeared... twice*: Compare with 1 Kings 3:5; 9:2. *on account of your father David*: an allusion to God's promise to David (11:12-13), a major theme of the books of Kings (2 Sam 7:9-16; cf. 1 Kgs 2:45; 3:6; 6:12; 11:34; 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19; 19:34; 20:6). *on account of Jerusalem, which I have chosen*: Deuteronomy mentions a place chosen by God, but never identifies it as Jerusalem (cf. 1 Kgs 8:16; Deut 12:5, 11; 16:2). *one tribe*: Judah, plus Benjamin (cf. 1 Kgs 11:32, 36; 12:20-23).

11:14-25 Opponents raised up by God, including flashbacks to David's encounters with these figures. Although 1 Kings 5:4 reported that Solomon had "peace on every side, without enemies"; here readers learn that the situation was more complicated. *Hadad*: opposes Solomon from the east and south (Edom is east of the Dead Sea; see 2 Sam 8:12-14). *Rezon*: opposes Solomon from the north

11:29 2Sa 8:3;  
1Ki 11:14  
11:28 Psv 22:29  
11:29 1Ki 12:15,  
1Ki 14:2,  
1Ki 15:29;  
2Ch 9:29;  
2Ch 10:15

11:30 1Sa 15:27  
11:31 1Ki 11:11

11:32  
1Ki 11:12-13,  
1Ki 12:20-21,  
1Ki 14:21

11:33 Jgs 2:13,  
Jgs 10:6;  
1Ki 11:5,  
1Ki 11:7;  
2Ki 23:13

11:34  
1Ki 11:12-13

Egypt, Hadad heard that David had lain down with his ancestors and that Joab the general was also dead. Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Let me go to my homeland."

<sup>22</sup>Pharaoh said to him, "What do you lack here with me that would make you want to go back to your homeland?"

Hadad said, "Nothing, but please let me go!"

### Solomon and Rezon

<sup>23</sup>God raised up another opponent for Solomon: Rezon, Eliada's son, who had escaped from Zobah's King Hadadezer. <sup>24</sup>Rezon recruited men and became leader of a band when David was killing them. They went to Damascus, stayed there, and ruled it. <sup>25</sup>Throughout Solomon's lifetime, Rezon was Israel's opponent and added to the problems caused by Hadad. Rezon hated Israel while he ruled as king of Aram.

### Solomon and Jeroboam

<sup>26</sup>Now Nebat's son Jeroboam was an Ephraimite from Zeredah. His mother's name was Zeruah; she was a widow. Although he was one of Solomon's own officials, Jeroboam fought against the king. <sup>27</sup>This is the story of why Jeroboam fought against the king:

Solomon had built the stepped structure and repaired the broken wall in his father David's City. <sup>28</sup>Now Jeroboam was a strong and honorable man. Solomon saw how well this youth did his work. So he appointed him over all the work gang of Joseph's house.

<sup>29</sup>At that time, when Jeroboam left Jerusalem, Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh met him along the way. Ahijah was wearing a new garment. The two of them were alone in the country. <sup>30</sup>Ahijah tore his new garment into twelve pieces. <sup>31</sup>He said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces, because Israel's God, the LORD, has said, 'Look, I am about to tear the kingdom from Solomon's hand. I will give you ten tribes. <sup>32</sup>But I will leave him one tribe on account of my servant David and on account of Jerusalem, the city I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel. <sup>33</sup>I am doing this because they have abandoned me<sup>1</sup> and worshipped the Sidonian goddess Astarte, the Moabite god Chemosh, and the Ammonite god Milcom. They haven't walked in my ways by doing what is right in my eyes—keeping my laws and judgments—as Solomon's father David did. <sup>34</sup>But I won't take the whole kingdom from his hand. I will keep

*Idolatry* Keeping the land requires single-minded loyalty to God, which implies rejecting all other allegiances, whether political or divine (Exod 20:3-6; Deut 5:7-10). Other gods are the most significant threat to Israel's well-being (cf. Deut 6:14; 8:19; 11:16-17; 30:17-18; 31:16-18; Josh 24:14). God warns Solomon that idolatry will lead to exile and God's rejection of the temple (1 Kgs 9:6-9). Unfortunately, and with tragic consequences, Solomon succumbed to the lure of these gods (1 Kgs 11:2-13). King Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom, set up two gold calves, interpreted as an idolatrous and sinful act (1 Kgs 12:28-30; 13:34). Most of the kings of Israel are accused of imitating Jeroboam (cf. 1 Kgs 14:9; 15:34; 16:2). Assyria conquers Israel because of its worship of other gods (2 Kgs 17:7, 35-38).

Images of the divine are inappropriate because they don't adequately reflect the character of God and because they limit human experience and understanding of God. Because Israel's God is God of all creation and of all peoples, God can't be localized or made available in that way. Moreover, God is revealed primarily through the spoken (and written) word. Much is at stake. Idolatry threatens God's reputation not only as Israel's God, but as the only living and active God (1 Kgs 17:24; 18:21; 20:23; 2 Kgs 18:33-35). As Elijah prays, "Answer me so that this people will know that you, LORD, are the real God and that you can change their hearts" (1 Kgs 18:37-39; cf. 1 Kgs 8:60).

<sup>1</sup>LXX, Syt, Vulg *he has abandoned me*

and east (see 2 Sam 8:3-4). *Midian* . . . *Paran* (1 Kgs 11:18): regions south of Israel in modern Jordan or the Arabian Peninsula. *Damascus* . . . *Aram*: Damascus was the capital of the Aramean kingdom of Syria to the north.

11:26-33 *Jeroboam*: This is the first time he appears in the story. He is one of Solomon's appointed supervisors (11:27-28) whom the prophet *Ahijah* announces as the next king of Israel, now comprising only *ten tribes*. *Israel's God, the LORD, has said*: the most common introduction to a prophetic statement, called a messenger speech

because the expression is used in diplomatic communication (e.g., 2 Kgs 18:19-20). The words that follow are in the first person; the prophet speaks as God's ambassador, as though he speaks the very words of God (sometimes only "the LORD says"; cf. 1 Kgs 12:24; 13:2, 22; 14:7). See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2. *one tribe*: plus Benjamin. See note on 1 Kings 11:9-13. *abandoned me*: translated "deserted" in 1 Kings 9:9.

11:34-39 These verses restate the themes found in 1 Kings 11:1-13. *David*: mentioned six times in these verses. See

him as ruler throughout his lifetime on account of my servant David, who did keep my commands and my laws. <sup>35</sup>I will take the kingdom from the hand of Solomon's son, and I will give you ten tribes. <sup>36</sup>I will give his son a single tribe so that my servant David will always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city that I chose for myself to place my name. <sup>37</sup>But I will accept you, and you will rule over all that you could desire. You will be king of Israel. <sup>38</sup>If you listen to all that I command and walk in my ways, if you do what is right in my eyes, keeping my laws and my commands just as my servant David did, then I will be with you and I will build you a lasting dynasty just as I did for David. I will give you Israel. <sup>39</sup>I will humble David's descendants by means of all this, though not forever."

<sup>40</sup>Then Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam fled to Egypt and its king Shishak. Jeroboam remained in Egypt until Solomon died.

### Solomon's remaining days

<sup>41</sup>The rest of Solomon's deeds, including all that he did and all his wisdom, aren't they written in the official records of Solomon? <sup>42</sup>The amount of time Solomon ruled over all Israel in Jerusalem was forty years. <sup>43</sup>Then Solomon lay down with his ancestors. He was buried in his father David's City, and Rehoboam his son succeeded him as king.

### How Rehoboam lost the kingdom

**12** Rehoboam went to Shechem where all Israel had come to make him king. <sup>2</sup>When Jeroboam, Nebat's son, heard the news, he returned from Egypt where he had fled from King Solomon. <sup>3</sup>The people sent and called for Jeroboam, who along with the entire Israelite assembly went and said to Rehoboam, <sup>4</sup>"Your father made our workload<sup>m</sup> very hard for us. If you will lessen the demands your father made of us and lighten the heavy workload he demanded from us, then we will serve you."

<sup>5</sup>He answered them, "Come back in three days." So the people left.

<sup>6</sup>King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon when he was alive. "What do you advise?" Rehoboam asked. "How should I respond to these people?"

<sup>7</sup>"If you will be a servant to this people by answering them and speaking good words today," they replied, "then they will be your servants forever."

<sup>8</sup>But Rehoboam ignored the advice the elders gave him and instead sought the counsel of the young advisors who had grown up with him and now served him. <sup>9</sup>"What do you advise?" he asked them. "How should we respond to these people who have said to me, 'Lighten the workload your father demanded of us?'"

<sup>10</sup>The young people who had grown up with him said to him, "This people said to you, 'Your father made our workload heavy; lighten it for us!' Now this is what you should say to

<sup>m</sup>Or our yoke; also in the verses that follow

sidebar, "David as Example" at 1 Kings 9. *lamp*: a metaphor for a living descendant of David assuring continuity for the line of David (cf. 2 Sam 21:17; 1 Kgs 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19; Ps 132:17). *to place my name*: See sidebar, "Temple and Name" at 1 Kings 8. *lasting dynasty*: an echo of 2 Samuel 7:11, 16. The terms and conditions offered to Jeroboam are virtually the same as those spoken by David to Solomon and repeated throughout the previous chapters, including a *dynasty* (1 Kgs 2:3-4; 3:14; 8:25; 9:3-5), *humble... though not forever*: an allusion to 2 Samuel 7:14-15.

11:40 *Shishak*: Shoshenq I (945-924 BCE) is the first pharaoh named in the Bible (see note on 1 Kgs 14:25-31).

11:41-43 *the rest... official records*: This is the first of many similar summaries in the book. The authors of the books of Kings draw on court records and royal archives for Solomon and for other later kings of Israel and Judah. Such records are mentioned numerous times in the books of Kings (cf. 1 Kgs 14:19, 29; 15:7, 23, 31; 16:5, 14, 20, 27). The authors of the books of Kings drew from those records what suited their interests. Much has certainly been omitted. These archival materials no longer exist. *forty years*: a round number representing one generation. *lay down with his ancestors*: died and was buried (cf. 1 Kgs 1:21; 2:10).

12:1-33 As God (1 Kgs 11:11-13) and Ahijah had announced (1 Kgs 11:30-32), David's united kingdom is torn in two: Rehoboam takes Judah; Jeroboam takes Israel. Negotiations take place, and Rehoboam is rejected as king over the northern kingdom of Israel.

12:1 *Shechem*: a major city north of Jerusalem, significant because it was a place of covenant renewal (Josh 24:1-27). Israel's ancestors lived there for a time (Gen 12:6; 33:18; 37:12). *all Israel*: Unlike 1 Kings 11:42 and elsewhere (cf. 1 Kgs 4:1), 12:1 and 12:16 refer only to the northern tribes. 12:4 The people complain about their *workload*: The Hebrew metaphor is "yoke," for plowing with farm animals. It is used here as a metaphor (also five times in 12:9-14). *heavy workload*: the same expression as in Exodus 1:14. The implication is that conditions under Solomon had become like the slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt. This is a far cry from the hopeful sentiments of earlier descriptions (cf. 1 Kgs 4:25; 10:9).

12:10-11 *baby finger*: The Hebrew expression or euphemism is "little one," which likely refers to his sexual organ. Rehoboam connects sexuality and his oppressive power over the population. *scorpions*: perhaps a metaphor for a whip.

11:35 1Ki 12:16  
11:36 1Ki 15:4;  
2Ki 8:19  
11:37 2Sa 3:21  
11:38 2Sa 7:11,  
2Sa 7:27  
11:39 2Sa 12:13,  
2Sa 24:14;  
1Ki 11:36,  
1Ki 12:16,  
1Ki 14:8  
12:1 2Ch 10:1  
12:2 1Ki 11:26,  
1Ki 11:40  
12:8 1Ki 12:9;  
Prv 19:20  
12:9 1Ki 12:8  
12:10 2Ch 10:10

12:11 1Ki 12:4,  
1Ki 12:14;  
Prv 26:3; Na 3:2  
12:12 1Ki 11:28,  
1Ki 12:1-2,  
1Ki 12:5,  
1Ki 12:20

12:13 1Sa 20:10  
12:14 Ex 1:14;  
1Ki 12:11

12:15 Dt 2:30;  
1Ki 11:29,  
1Ki 11:31,  
1Ki 12:24;  
2Ch 10:15

12:25 Jgs 8:8,  
Jgs 8:17

12:26 1Sa 27:1;  
1Ki 11:28,  
1Ki 11:38,  
1Ki 13:1,  
1Ki 14:16

12:27 Dt 12:5

12:28 Ex 32:4,  
Ex 32:8;  
2Ki 10:29,  
2Ki 17:16;  
2Ch 11:15

them: 'My baby finger<sup>a</sup> is thicker than my father's entire waist! '11So if my father made your workload heavy, I'll make it even heavier! If my father disciplined you with whips, I'll do it with scorpions!'"

<sup>12</sup>Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam on the third day, just as the king had specified when he said, "Come back to me in three days." <sup>13</sup>The king then answered the people harshly. He ignored the elders' advice <sup>14</sup>and instead followed the young people's advice. He said, "My father made your workload heavy, but I'll make it even heavier! My father disciplined you with whips, but I'll do it with scorpions!"

<sup>15</sup>The king didn't listen to the people because this turn of events came from the LORD so that he might keep the promise he delivered through Ahijah from Shiloh concerning Jeroboam, Nebat's son. <sup>16</sup>When all Israel saw that the king wouldn't listen to them, the people answered the king:

"Why should we care about David?

We have no stake in Jesse's son!

Go back to your homes, Israel!

You better look after your own house now, David!"

Then the Israelites went back to their homes, <sup>17</sup>and Rehoboam ruled over only the Israelites who lived in the cities of Judah.

<sup>18</sup>When King Rehoboam sent Adoram to them (he was the leader of the work gang), all Israel stoned him to death. King Rehoboam quickly got into his chariot and fled to Jerusalem. <sup>19</sup>Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day. <sup>20</sup>When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent for him. They called him to the assembly and crowned him king of all Israel.

Nothing was left to the house of David except the tribe of Judah. <sup>21</sup>When Rehoboam arrived at Jerusalem, he assembled the whole house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin—one hundred eighty thousand select warriors—to fight against the house of Israel and restore the kingdom for Rehoboam, Solomon's son. <sup>22</sup>But God's word came to Shemaiah the man of God, <sup>23</sup>"Tell Judah's King Rehoboam, Solomon's son, and all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and the rest of the people, <sup>24</sup>"This is what the LORD says: Don't make war against your relatives the Israelites. Go home, every one of you, because this is my plan.'" When they heard the LORD's words, they went back home, just as the LORD had said.

### Jeroboam I and the shrines

<sup>25</sup>Jeroboam fortified Shechem at Mount Ephraim and lived there. From there he also fortified Penuel. <sup>26</sup>Jeroboam thought to himself, The kingdom is in danger of reverting to the house of David. <sup>27</sup>If these people continue to sacrifice at the LORD's temple in Jerusalem, they will again become loyal to their master Rehoboam, Judah's king, and they will kill me so they can return to Judah's King Rehoboam. <sup>28</sup>So the king asked for advice and then made two gold calves. He said to the people, "It's too far for you to go all the way up to Jerusalem.

<sup>a</sup>Or pinky finger, perhaps a euphemism

12:14 *even heavier*: Rehoboam speaks like Pharaoh (cf. Exod 5:1-21).

12:15 *came from the LORD*: a theological commentary that explains how, in the midst of the human negotiation, it might be possible to see God at work in the circumstances (also 1 Kgs 12:24; cf. Exod 4:21; 7:3-4, 13; Josh 11:20). *promise... Ahijah*: See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2, one of the main themes of the books of Kings.

12:16-17 The response of the northern tribes is to reject David's heir as Sheba did earlier (cf. 2 Sam 20:1). The effect was to break the alliance among the tribes, which had been established by David (2 Sam 5:3). *the Israelites*: probably Benjaminites who aligned themselves with Jerusalem. 12:18 *Adoram*: He may be the person named in 1 Kings 4:6 and 5:14. If so, he is assigned here to initiate Rehoboam's excessive measures (cf. 1 Kgs 9:15-23).

12:19 *to this day*: reflects a time prior to the exile of the northern kingdom (722 BCE).

12:22-24 The prophet seems to settle matters down. Although the conflict between Israel and Judah will continue (cf. 1 Kgs 14:30; 15:6, 16), they often cooperated in battles against enemies. *God's word... the LORD's words*: See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2. *my plan*: See note on 1 Kings 12:15.

12:25 *Shechem*: See note on 1 Kings 12:1. *Penuel*: east of the Jordan River (cf. Gen 32:22-32).

12:26-28 Jeroboam's religious strategy for consolidating his kingdom is motivated by fear that the people might be drawn to *the LORD's temple in Jerusalem*. *gold calves*: El, the high god of the Canaanite pantheon; and Baal are often depicted as bulls. The bull represents sexual fertility and political power (see note on 1 Kgs 12:10; see sidebar, "Baal" at 1 Kgs 18). The story reflects the incident of the gold calf of Exod 32. *Here are your gods... from the land of Egypt*: Jeroboam repeats almost exactly Aaron's words from that event (cf. Exod 32:4). In place of the chest (which was housed in the Jerusalem temple and represented God's

ca. 1020–1000 BCE	King Saul		
ca. 1000–960 BCE	King David		
ca. 960–930 BCE	King Solomon		
<b>Kingdom of Judah</b>			
922–915	Rehoboam	922–901	Jeroboam I
915–913	Abijam		
913–873	Asa		
		901–900	Nadab
		900–877	Baasha
		877–876	Elah
		876	Zimri
		876–872	Tibni
		876–869	Omri
873–849	Jehoshaphat		
		869–850	Ahab
849–843	Jehoram	850–849	Ahaziah
843–842	Ahaziah	843–815	Jehu
842–837	Athaliah		
837–800	Jehoash		
		815–802	Jehoahaz
800–783	Amaziah	802–786	Joash
		786–746	Jeroboam II
783–742	Azariah/Uzziah		
		746–745	Zechariah
		745	Shallum
		745–737	Menahme
742–735	Jotham		
		737–736	Pekahiah
735–715	Ahaz	736–732	Pekah
		732–724	Hoshea
		722 BCE	Fall of Samaria (the Northern Kingdom) to Assyrian
715–687	Hezekiah		
687–642	Manasseh		
642–640	Jehoiakim		
640–609	Jehoiachin		
609	Zedekiah		

12:29 2Ks 10:29;  
Am 8:14  
12:30 1Ks 13:34;  
2Ks 17:21  
12:31  
1Ks 13:32-33;  
2Ks 17:29;  
2Ks 17:32;  
2Ch 11:15  
12:32 Nm 29:12  
12:33 1Ks 12:32;  
1Ks 13:1  
13:1  
1Ks 12:32-33  
13:2  
2Ks 23:15-16  
13:6 Ex 8:8,  
Ex 9:28,  
Ex 10:17;  
Nm 21:7; Ac 8:24

Look, Israel! Here are your gods who brought you out from the land of Egypt.”<sup>29</sup>He put one calf in Bethel, and the other he placed in Dan.<sup>30</sup>This act was sinful. The people went to worship before the one calf at Bethel and before the other one as far as Dan.<sup>31</sup>Jeroboam made shrines on the high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, but none were Levites.<sup>32</sup>Jeroboam set a date for a celebration on the fifteenth day of the eighth month.<sup>33</sup>It was just like the celebration in Judah. He sacrificed on the altar. At Bethel he sacrificed to the calves he had made. There also he installed the priests for the shrines he had made.<sup>33</sup>On the fifteenth day of the eighth month—the time he alone had decided—Jeroboam went up<sup>34</sup> to the altar he had built in Bethel. He made a celebration for the Israelites and offered sacrifices on the altar by burning them up.<sup>35</sup>

### Jeroboam I and the man of God

**13** A man of God came from Judah by God’s command to Bethel. Jeroboam was standing at the altar burning incense.<sup>2</sup>By the LORD’s word, the man of God cried out to the altar: “Altar! Altar! The LORD says this: Look! A son will be born to the house of David. His name will be Josiah. He will sacrifice on you, Altar, the very priests of the shrines who offer incense on you. They will burn human bones on you.”<sup>3</sup>At that time the man of God gave a sign: “This is the sign that the LORD mentioned: ‘Look! The altar will be broken apart, and its ashes will spill out.’”

<sup>4</sup>When the king heard the word of the man of God and how he cried out to the altar at Bethel, Jeroboam stretched his hand from the altar and said, “Seize him!” But the hand that Jeroboam stretched out against the man of God grew stiff. Jeroboam wasn’t able to bend it back to himself.<sup>5</sup>The altar broke apart, and the ashes spilled out from the altar, just like the sign that the man of God gave by the LORD’s word.<sup>6</sup>The king said to the man of God, “Plead before the LORD your God and pray for me so that I can bend my hand back again.” So the man of God pleaded before the LORD, and the king’s hand returned to normal and was like it used to be.<sup>7</sup>The king spoke to the man of God: “Come with me to the palace and refresh yourself. Let me give you a gift.”

<sup>8</sup>The man of God said to the king, “Even if you gave me half your palace, I wouldn’t go with you, nor would I eat food or drink water in this place.<sup>9</sup>This is what God commanded me by the LORD’s word: Don’t eat food! Don’t drink water! Don’t return by the way you came!”

<sup>2</sup>Cf LXX; MT lacks *before the one at Bethel*. <sup>3</sup>October–November <sup>4</sup>Or *offered sacrifices* <sup>5</sup>Or *went up on the altar to burn incense*

presence), Jeroboam represents God with images of animals, an act prohibited by the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:4-5; Deut 5:8-9).

**12:29-33 Bethel... Dan:** Jeroboam’s political strategy for consolidating his kingdom involves situating worship sites at the southern and northern boundaries of the northern kingdom. This will prevent his people from traveling south to Jerusalem and being drawn into loyalty to Judah’s king. *This act was sinful:* 1 Kings 12:26-33 describes “Jeroboam’s sins,” a phrase repeated often throughout the books of Kings in the evaluation of the kings of Israel (e.g., 1 Kgs 14:16; 15:26, 30, 34; 2 Kgs 3:3; 10:29). According to the historian’s evaluation of Israel’s failures, this act leads Israel into exile (2 Kgs 17:20-23). *shrines:* See note on 1 Kings 3:2-3. *none were Levites:* Jeroboam bypasses the tradition of legitimate priesthood, thereby asserting his own management of the worship establishment. *eighth month... the time he alone had decided:* The festival in Jerusalem was held in the seventh month during Solomon’s reign (1 Kgs 8:2). As a further act of political control, Jeroboam changed the religious calendar, instituting his own feast one month later than the traditional date of the Festival of Booths (cf. Lev 23:39; Num 29:12). Perhaps he did this because of a slightly later harvest in the northern regions (e.g., Galilee).

**13:1-34** The word of the Lord confronts the power politics of Jeroboam. The king fails to follow through on

Ahijah’s hopeful prophetic invitation (1 Kgs 12:37-38) and is brought down by the prophetic word. Two stories about prophets illustrate one of the main themes of the books of Kings: the power of the prophetic word in history. See sidebar, “Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word” at 1 Kings 2.

**13:1-10 man of God:** a descriptive title for a prophet, used often in the books of Samuel and Kings (cf. 1 Sam 2:27; 9:6; 1 Kgs 12:22; 17:24; 2 Kgs 1:10; 4:9). In the Elijah story, a woman declares concerning him that “the Lord’s word is truly in your mouth” (1 Kgs 17:24). That is exactly what the stories in 1 Kings 13 are beginning to explore. In doing so, they set the stage for the explicit political theology of the books of Kings. *by God’s command:* This expression, repeated seven times in this chapter, identifies the power of the prophetic word as the chapter’s main theme. It is most often translated in this chapter as *the LORD’s word* (1 Kgs 13:1, 2, 5, 9, 17, 18, 32; cf. 20:35). *Josiah:* Naming this future king of Judah connects this prophetic event to the story in 2 Kings 22:1–23:30 (especially 23:15–16). By then the northern kingdom had come to an end. *sign:* Confirmed in 1 Kings 13:5, this immediate fulfillment is a confirmation that the announcement about Josiah will become reality. *Josiah’s “reform” occurred in approximately 620 BCE. I wouldn’t go with you:* The prophet refuses to be co-opted by the king. He is obedient to the Lord’s word, which Jeroboam is not, as readers are beginning to discover.

<sup>10</sup>So the man of God went by a different way. He didn't return by the way he came to Bethel. <sup>11</sup>Now there was an old prophet living in Bethel. His sons came and told him everything that the man of God had done that day at Bethel. They also told their father the words that he spoke to the king. <sup>12</sup>"Which way did he go?" their father asked them. His sons had seen the way the man of God went when he came from Judah. <sup>13</sup>The old prophet said to his sons, "Saddle my donkey." So they saddled his donkey, and he got on it. <sup>14</sup>He went after the man of God and found him sitting underneath a terebinth tree. He said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?"

"I am," he replied.

<sup>15</sup>The old prophet then said to him, "Come home with me and eat some food."

<sup>16</sup>But the man of God answered, "I can't return or go with you, and I can't eat food or drink water with you in this place <sup>17</sup>because of the message that came to me from the LORD's word: Don't eat food! Don't drink water! Don't return by the way you came!"

<sup>18</sup>The old prophet said to the man of God, "I'm also a prophet like you. A messenger spoke to me with the LORD's word, 'Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat food and drink water.'"

But the old prophet was lying to him. <sup>19</sup>So the man of God went back with the old prophet. He ate food in his home and drank water. <sup>20</sup>Then as they were sitting at the table, the LORD's word came to the prophet who had brought him back. <sup>21</sup>He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah:

"The LORD says this:

You rebelled against the LORD's word!

You didn't keep the command that the LORD your God gave you!

<sup>22</sup>You came back and ate food and drank water in this place.

"But he had commanded you: 'Don't eat food! Don't drink water!' Now your body won't go to the grave of your ancestors."

<sup>23</sup>After he ate food and drank, the old prophet saddled the donkey for the prophet he had brought back. <sup>24</sup>The man of God departed, and a lion found him on the road and killed him. His body was thrown down on the road. The donkey stood beside it, and the lion also stood beside the body. <sup>25</sup>Some people were traveling nearby, and they discovered the body thrown down on the road and the lion standing beside it. They entered the town where the old prophet lived and were talking about it. <sup>26</sup>The prophet who brought the man of God back from the road overheard. He thought: That's the man of God who rebelled against the LORD's command. The LORD has given him to that lion that tore him apart, killing him in agreement with the LORD's word that was spoken to him.

<sup>27</sup>The old prophet told his sons, "Saddle the donkey." They did so, <sup>28</sup>and he went and found the body thrown down on the road. The donkey and the lion were still standing beside the body. The lion hadn't eaten the body, nor had it torn the donkey apart. <sup>29</sup>The prophet lifted the body of the man of God and put it on the donkey. He brought it back, arriving in the old prophet's town to mourn and bury the man of God. <sup>30</sup>He placed the body in his own grave, and they mourned over him, "Oh, my brother!" <sup>31</sup>After the old prophet buried him, he said to his sons, "When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is. Put my bones beside his bones. <sup>32</sup>The message he gave by the LORD's word concerning the altar of Bethel and all the shrines in the towns of Samaria will most certainly come true."

13:11-32 Testing the prophetic word. This odd and tragic story underlines the theme of obedience to the Lord's word, introduced in the previous story. The motif *the Lord's word* continues to reverberate throughout the story. *You rebelled... didn't keep the command*: The punch line in 13:21-22, delivered by the *old prophet*, highlights disobedience. There is no compromising, no matter how questionable the circumstances. Yet this story also opens up an important question: How does one recognize when a word from the Lord is authentic? The story takes up the topic from Deuteronomy 18:15-22, which warns against not paying attention to the words of the prophets (the outcome is death), and which provides the criterion for recognizing a false prophet (if the prophetic announcement "doesn't happen"). Unfortunately for this *man of*

*God*, he had to choose obedience (the first principle) since he had no other way of evaluating the prophet's claim: *I'm also a prophet like you*. He can't know that *the old prophet was lying*. The story ultimately isn't about these two prophets. It concerns the power of *the Lord's word* to shape reality in general, and in particular to bring about the consequences of Jeremiah's actions. See 1 Kings 22 for another story about the complications surrounding true and false prophecy.

13:11 *His sons*: a term for a prophetic guild (cf. 1 Kgs 13:31; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7, 16). The *old prophet* is their leader.

13:32 *Samaria*: became the capital of the northern kingdom, Israel, under Omri, the father of Ahab (1 Kgs 16:24). It is used here for the first time in the books of Kings, where it often refers, as it does here, to the entire region.

13:21 1Sa 13:14  
13:22 1Ki 13:19  
13:24 1Ki 20:36  
13:26 1Ki 13:21

13:33 1Ki 12:31

14:8 1Ki 11:33,  
1Ki 11:38,  
1Ki 13:514:10 Dt 32:36;  
1Ki 15:29;  
1Ki 21:21;2Ki 9:8;  
2Ki 14:26

14:12 1Ki 14:17

<sup>33</sup>Even after this happened, Jeroboam didn't change his evil ways. Instead, he continued to appoint all sorts of people as priests of the shrines. Anyone who wanted to be a priest Jeroboam made a priest for the shrines. <sup>34</sup>In this way the house of Jeroboam acted sinfully, leading to its downfall and elimination from the earth.

### Abijah's Illness

**14** At that time, Jeroboam's son Abijah became sick. <sup>2</sup>Jeroboam said to his wife, "Please go with a disguise so no one will recognize you as Jeroboam's wife. Go to Shiloh where the prophet Ahijah is. He told me I would be king of this people. <sup>3</sup>Take ten loaves of bread, cakes, and a bottle of honey with you. Go to him. He will tell you what will happen to the boy." <sup>4</sup>Jeroboam's wife did precisely this. She left and went to Shiloh and came to Ahijah's house. Now Ahijah had become blind in his old age.

<sup>5</sup>The LORD said to Ahijah, "Look! Jeroboam's wife has come seeking a word from you about her son. He is sick. Say this and that to her. When she comes, she will be disguised."

<sup>6</sup>When Ahijah heard the sound of her feet coming through the doorway, he said, "Come in, Jeroboam's wife! Why have you disguised yourself? I have hard news for you. <sup>7</sup>Tell Jeroboam: This is what the LORD, Israel's God, says: When I lifted you up from among the people, I appointed you as a leader over my people Israel. <sup>8</sup>I tore the kingdom from David's house and gave it to you. But you haven't been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart by doing only what is right in my eyes. <sup>9</sup>Instead, you have done more evil than any who were before you. You have made other gods and metal images to anger me. You have turned your back on me. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, I'm going to bring disaster on Jeroboam's house! Because of Jeroboam, I will eliminate everyone who urinates on a wall, whether slave or free. Then I will set fire to the house of Jeroboam, as one burns dung until it is gone. <sup>11</sup>Dogs will eat any of Jeroboam's family who die in town. Birds will eat those who die in the field. The LORD has spoken!

<sup>12</sup>As for you, get up and go back home. When your feet enter the town, the boy will die. <sup>13</sup>All Israel will mourn for him and will bury him. Out of the whole line of Jeroboam, he alone will have a tomb, because only in him did Israel's God, the LORD, find something good. <sup>14</sup>For this reason the LORD will raise up a king over Israel who will eliminate the house of Jeroboam. This begins today. What's that? Even now! <sup>15</sup>The LORD will strike Israel so that it shakes like a reed in water. He will uproot Israel from this fertile land that he gave to their ancestors and their offspring, and he will scatter them across the Euphrates River, because

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

13:33-34 The conclusion to the stories in this chapter make it clear that Jeroboam's heart is set in its way. He doesn't respond to the Lord's warning but continues to do the same things (cf. 1 Kgs 12:31). *didn't change*: the Hebrew verb, often translated "to turn," "to return," or "to go/bring back," is used here in a play on words that highlights an important theme of the chapter (occurring 16 times to indicate the turning or returning of the prophet). In these last verses the author makes clear that Jeroboam didn't, literally, "turn back." In Deuteronomy Moses announces that Israel from exile might "return to the LORD . . . obeying his voice" (Deut 30:2; cf. 30:10). Jeroboam has done the opposite, has not "returned." As a result of his having *acted sinfully*, his house (dynasty) will meet its end.

14:1-20 Jeroboam's reign ends with a personal tragedy: the death of his son. Jeroboam discovers that consulting the prophet in the hope of a recovery (for his son and perhaps also for his kingdom) is of no use.

14:1-4 *disguise*: Jeroboam's attempt to manage the situation fails, since the prophet, as recipient of God's knowledge, sees through the ploy even though he is blind. The motif of royal disguise in other texts also emphasizes God's capacity to control the situation (cf. 1 Sam 28; 1 Kgs 20:35-48; 22:29-38). *Ahijah*: the prophet who announced that Jeroboam would become Israel's king (1 Kgs 11:29). It

was common to consult prophets regarding illness (2 Kgs 4:22; 5:3).

14:5 *seeking a word*: a common expression used for consulting prophets concerning God's will in various situations (cf. 1 Kgs 22:5; 7-8; 2 Kgs 22:18). See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

14:6-11 *This is what the LORD . . . says*: See note on 1 Kings 11:26-33. Ahijah's words allude to 1 Kings 11:37-38 and highlight Jeroboam's "sins" (cf. 1 Kgs 12:25-33). *like my servant David*: See sidebar, "David as Example" at 1 Kings 9. *anger*: See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8. His announcement of *disaster on Jeroboam's house* and its gruesome outworking come to fruition in 1 Kings 15:29. *eliminate*: The Hebrew expression is "cut off," which is a stark contrast to the promises concerning David, about whom it is said that his dynasty "will never fail" (David will "not be cut off"; 1 Kgs 2:4; 8:25; 9:5). *urinates on a wall . . . slave or free*: a graphic description indicating that all males will be killed (cf. 1 Kgs 16:11; 21:21; 2 Kgs 9:8). *as one burns dung*: The imagery continues with this simile. *Dogs . . . Birds will eat*: They will be dishonored by not being buried.

14:12-18 Ahijah's words to Jeroboam's wife include only slightly good news: Her son *will have a tomb* since God found something good in him. The prophet doesn't say



they made the LORD angry by making their sacred poles.<sup>16</sup> Because of the sins Jeroboam committed, and because he made Israel sin too, God will give Israel up.”

<sup>17</sup>Then Jeroboam’s wife left and went to Tirzah. When she stepped across the threshold of the house, the boy died. <sup>18</sup>All Israel buried him and mourned him in agreement with the LORD’s word spoken through his servant the prophet Ahijah. <sup>19</sup>The rest of Jeroboam’s deeds—how he fought and how he ruled—are written in the official records of Israel’s kings. <sup>20</sup>Jeroboam ruled twenty-two years and he lay down with his ancestors. His son Nadab succeeded him as king.

### Rehoboam rules Judah

<sup>21</sup>Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, ruled over Judah. Rehoboam was 41 years old when he became king. He ruled for seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD chose from among all the tribes of Israel to set his name. Rehoboam’s mother’s name was Naamah from Ammon. <sup>22</sup>Judah did evil in the LORD’s eyes. The sins they committed made the LORD angrier than anything their ancestors had done. <sup>23</sup>They also built shrines, standing stones, and sacred poles<sup>a</sup> on top of every high hill and under every green tree. <sup>24</sup>Moreover, the consecrated workers<sup>b</sup> in the land did detestable things, just like those nations that the LORD had removed among the Israelites.

<sup>25</sup>During King Rehoboam’s fifth year, King Shishak of Egypt attacked Jerusalem. <sup>26</sup>He seized the treasures of the LORD’s temple and the royal palace. He took everything, even all the gold shields that Solomon had made. <sup>27</sup>King Rehoboam replaced them with bronze shields and assigned them to the officers of the guard who protected the entrance to the royal palace. <sup>28</sup>Whenever the king entered the LORD’s temple, the guards would carry the shields and then return them to the guardroom. <sup>29</sup>The rest of Rehoboam’s deeds and all that he accomplished, aren’t they written in the official records of Judah’s kings? <sup>30</sup>There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. <sup>31</sup>When Rehoboam died, he was buried with his ancestors in David’s City. His mother’s name was Naamah from Ammon. His son Abijah<sup>c</sup> succeeded him as king.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah <sup>b</sup>Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah <sup>c</sup>Traditionally *cultic prostitutes* <sup>d</sup>Spelled *Abijah* in 2 Chron 12:16; LXX, Syr, Targ *Abijah* in 1 Kgs

what that might be. This announcement is fulfilled immediately. *raise up a king*: Baasha (1 Kgs 15:27-29). *strike Israel... uproot Israel... scatter them*: In the longer term God intends exile, which is fulfilled in Assyria’s conquest of Israel (2 Kgs 17:1-6, 21-23; cf. Deut 29:28; 1 Kgs 8:46). *fertile land*: The threat of being uprooted from the fertile land occurs in other texts (cf. Deut 11:17; Josh 23:13, 15-16). This is a favorite way of describing the land in Deuteronomy, where it is also translated “wonderful land” (Deut 1:25, 35; 3:25; 4:21-22; 6:18; 8:7, 10). *angry*: See sidebar, “Anger of God” at 1 Kings 8. *sacred poles*: a symbol of the fertility goddess Asherah. In various ancient texts, she is either the wife of El, head of the Canaanite pantheon, or the consort of Baal (cf. Deut 7:5; 16:21; 2 Kgs 17:10; 23:14). *Tirzah*: probably Tell el Farah, about seven miles northeast of Shechem. This was the capital of the northern kingdom from Jeroboam to Omri, who changed the capital to Samaria. *in agreement with the Lord’s word*: The announcement made in verse 12 has now been realized. See sidebar, “Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word” at 1 Kings 2.

14:19-20 *The rest... official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

14:21-31 At this point the story begins to alternate between kings of Judah and kings of Israel. *Rehoboam*: Solomon’s son. Rehoboam has already been introduced as the one who lost the 10 northern tribes (see 1 Kgs 12:1-24).

14:21 Each Judean king will be introduced this way: name, age, years of reign, mother’s name, and evaluation of the king. *Jerusalem... to set his name*: See sidebar, “Temple and Name” at 1 Kings 8.

14:22-24 *did evil in the Lord’s eyes*: a characteristic expression in the books of Kings. See note on 1 Kings 11:6. Here it is the whole people of Judah, not only the king, that violates God’s instructions regarding worshipping this God alone. *shrines, standing stones, and sacred poles*: See notes at 1 Kings 3:2-3; 14:12-18. According to Deuteronomy, the *standing stones* are prohibited and are to be destroyed (Deut 12:3; 16:22; see also 2 Kgs 3:2; 10:26-27; 17:10; 23:14). They are upright pillars dedicated to a deity. *consecrated workers*: Their responsibilities are unclear. As the translators’ footnote suggests, these have traditionally been understood as male prostitutes, though there is no evidence of ritual intercourse at holy places. They may have been foreigners, since Asa deported them (1 Kgs 15:12). *detestable things, just like those nations*: Imitation of the worship practices of other peoples was prohibited and led to the downfall of the northern kingdom, Israel. There is a premonition here that the same is likely to happen to Judah (cf. Deut 12:20; 18:9-14; 2 Kgs 17:15).

14:25-31 Rehoboam’s rule comes to an end with Shishak’s (Sheshonq I, 945-924 BCE) invasion. Canaan had been an Egyptian province. The walls of the temple at Karnak (Egypt) record 156 Israelite cities were captured, most of them from Jeroboam’s territory. *Shishak*: See note on 1 Kings 11:40. *treasures of the Lord’s temple... palace*: The stripping of Solomon’s wealth from the treasures (see note on 1 Kgs 7:51) is the first such event among many to follow that will ultimately spell the demise of Judah (cf. 1 Kgs 15:18; 2 Kgs 12:18; 14:14; 16:8; 18:15-16; 20:13; 24:13). Rehoboam may have used the wealth from the treasures

14:20a  
2Ch 13:20b  
14:21 2Ch 12:13  
14:22-24  
2Ch 12:1-14  
14:24 Dt 23:17;  
1Ki 15:12;  
1Ki 22:46;  
2Ki 23:7  
14:25 2Ch 12:2  
14:26-28  
2Ch 12:9-11  
14:28  
2Ch 12:15a  
14:30 1Ki 15:6;  
2Ch 12:15b  
14:31a  
2Ch 12:16a  
14:31b  
2Ch 12:16b

15:1 2Ch 13:1

15:4 1Ki 11:12;  
1Ki 11:36;  
2Ch 21:715:6 1Ki 14:30;  
2Ch 12:15b

15:7a 2Ch 13:22

15:7b  
2Ch 13:2b

15:8 2Ch 14:1

15:11 2Ch 14:2

15:12 1Ki 14:24;  
1Ki 22:46;  
2Ch 15:815:13 Ex 32:20;  
2Ki 23:6;  
2Ch 15:1615:14 1Ki 8:61;  
1Ki 15:3;  
1Ki 22:43;  
2Ki 12:3

15:15 1Ki 7:51

15:16 1Ki 15:32

15:17

Josh 18:25;  
1Ki 15:21-22;  
2Ch 16:115:17-22  
2Ch 16:1-6**Abijam rules Judah**

**15** Abijam<sup>a</sup> became king of Judah in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Nebat's son. <sup>2</sup>He ruled for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah, and she was Abishalom's daughter. <sup>3</sup>Abijam followed all the sinful ways of his father before him. He didn't follow the LORD his God with all his heart like his ancestor David. <sup>4</sup>Even so, on account of David, the LORD his God gave Abijam a lamp in Jerusalem by supporting his son who succeeded him and by preserving Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>This was because David did the right thing in the LORD's eyes. David didn't deviate from anything the LORD commanded him throughout his life—except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. <sup>6</sup>There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam as long as Abijam lived. <sup>7</sup>The rest of Abijam's deeds and all that he did, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? There was war between Abijam and Jeroboam. <sup>8</sup>Abijam lay down with his ancestors; he was buried in David's City. His son Asa succeeded him as king.

**Asa rules Judah**

<sup>9</sup>In the twentieth year of Israel's King Jeroboam, Asa became king of Judah. <sup>10</sup>He ruled in Jerusalem for forty-one years. His grandmother's<sup>7</sup> name was Maacah; she was Abishalom's daughter. <sup>11</sup>Asa did the right things in the LORD's eyes, just like his father David. <sup>12</sup>He removed the consecrated workers<sup>a</sup> from the land, and he did away with all the worthless idols that his predecessors had made. <sup>13</sup>He even removed his grandmother Maacah from the position of queen mother because she had made an image of Asherah. Asa cut down her image and burned it in the Kidron Valley. <sup>14</sup>Though the shrines weren't eliminated, nevertheless Asa remained committed with all his heart to the LORD throughout his life. <sup>15</sup>He brought into the LORD's temple the silver and gold equipment that he and his father had dedicated. <sup>16</sup>There was war between Asa and Israel's King Baasha throughout their lifetimes. <sup>17</sup>Israel's King Baasha attacked Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent Judah's King Asa from moving into that area.

<sup>a</sup>Spelled *Abijah* in 2 Chron 12 <sup>7</sup>Or *mother*; also in 15:13; cf 2 Chron 13:2 <sup>a</sup>Traditionally *cultic prostitutes*

to pay off Shishak and protect Jerusalem from being attacked, or to pay him for his invasion of Jeroboam's northern kingdom. *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43. The chapter ends on an ominous note about *continual warfare*. The future doesn't look hopeful.

**15:1-24** The reigns of Abijam (15:1-8) and Asa (15:9-24), kings of Judah. These two kings provide examples of Judean kings who either followed David's example (Asa) or who did not (Abijam).

**15:1-2** *eighteenth year of King Jeroboam*: Beginning with Abijam, the introduction to each of the kings of Judah includes a cross-reference to the kings of Israel. *Abishalom's daughter*: perhaps another form of the name Absalom, in which case *daughter* can mean "descendant."

**15:3-5** The description of Abijam's rule highlights God's participation in *supporting* an heir and in *preserving Jerusalem*. The evaluation is an example of the way the historian evaluates all Judean kings, whether "good" or "bad." *all his heart*: See note on 1 Kings 2:4 (cf. 1 Kgs 8:58, 61). *like . . . David*: See sidebar, "David as Example" at 1 Kings 9. *lamp*: See note on 1 Kings 11:36. *right . . . LORD's eyes*: used often in the books of Kings (cf. Deut 12:28; 13:18; 1 Kgs 5:11; 22:43; 2 Kgs 22:2), a counterpart to "evil in the LORD's eyes," which is applied to Solomon and others after him (cf. 1 Kgs 11:6; 15:26). *except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite*: Although David is an example of doing right (cf. 1 Kgs 14:8), this is the first time in the book where the author notes David's singular exception (cf. 1 Sam 11).

**15:6-8** The comments about *war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam* and between *Abijam and Jeroboam* highlight

the continuation of the same state of affairs as noted in 1 Kings 14:30. The summary of Abijam's reign in 1 Kings 15:7-8 includes the same features as other reports about Judean and Israelite kings found throughout the books of Kings (see note on 1 Kgs 11:41-43).

**15:10** *forty-one years*: from 910 to 869 BCE. His rule spanned the reigns of seven Israelite kings, from Jeroboam (1 Kgs 15:9) to Ahab (1 Kgs 16:29). *grandmother's . . . daughter*: The Hebrew word for "mother" can also be translated *grandmother*.

**15:11-15** The positive evaluation of Asa's rule is similar to other Judean kings who *did the right things* and who acted *like . . . David*: See sidebar, "David as Example" at 1 Kings 9. *consecrated workers*: See note on 1 Kings 14:22-24. *idols*: Compare with Deuteronomy 29:16; 1 Kings 21:26; 2 Kings 17:12; 21:11, 21; 23:24. *queen mother*: an important figure in the royal court (cf. 1 Kgs 2:19; 2 Kgs 10:13; Jer 13:18). The books of Kings often mention the mother or grandmother of the king in the introductions to Judean kings' reigns (e.g. 1 Kgs 15:2, 10). *Asherah*: See note on 1 Kings 14:12-18. *with all his heart*: See note on 1 Kings 2:3. *Kidron Valley*: between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. *shrines*: Although hilltop shrines were prohibited, the matter isn't held against him. See note on 1 Kings 3:2-3.

**15:16-17** *Baasha*: Compare with 1 Kings 15:33-16:7. *Ramah*: a few miles north of Jerusalem, was on a main transportation route into Jerusalem from the west and north. Like Jeroboam, Baasha wants to prevent people from worshipping in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Kgs 12:28).

<sup>18</sup>Asa took all the silver and gold that remained in the treasuries of the LORD's temple and the royal palace, and he gave them to his officials. Then King Asa sent them with the following message to Aram's King Ben-hadad, Tabrimmon's son and Hezion's grandson, who ruled from Damascus: <sup>19</sup>"Let's make a covenant similar to the one between our fathers. Since I have already sent you a gift of silver and gold, break your covenant with Israel's King Baasha so that he will leave me alone." <sup>20</sup>Ben-hadad agreed with King Asa and sent his army commanders against the cities of Israel, attacking Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinneroth, along with all the land of Naphtali. <sup>21</sup>As soon as Baasha learned this, he stopped building Ramah and stayed in Tirzah. <sup>22</sup>King Asa issued an order to every Judean without exception: all the people carried away the stone and timber that Baasha was using to build Ramah, and King Asa used it to build Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah. <sup>23</sup>The rest of Asa's deeds, his strength, and all that he did, as well as the towns that he built, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? When he was old, Asa developed a severe foot disease. <sup>24</sup>He died and was buried with his ancestors in David's City.<sup>a</sup> His son Jehoshaphat succeeded him as king.

15:23  
2Ch 16:11-12

15:24a  
2Ch 16:13, 14

15:24b  
2Ch 17:1a

15:30 1Ki 15:26

15:32 1Ki 15:16

### **Nadab rules Israel**

<sup>25</sup>Jeroboam's son Nadab became king of Israel in the second year of Judah's King Asa. He ruled over Israel for two years. <sup>26</sup>He did evil in the LORD's eyes by walking in the way of his father Jeroboam and the sin Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit. <sup>27</sup>Baasha, Ahijah's son from the house of Issachar, plotted against him and attacked him at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. Nadab and all Israel were laying siege against Gibbethon. <sup>28</sup>Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of Judah's King Asa and ruled in Nadab's place.

<sup>29</sup>When he became king, Baasha attacked the entire house of Jeroboam. He didn't allow any living person to survive in Jeroboam's family; he wiped them out according to the LORD's word spoken by the LORD's servant Ahijah of Shiloh. <sup>30</sup>This happened because of Jeroboam's sins that he committed and that he caused Israel to commit, and because he angered the LORD, Israel's God. <sup>31</sup>The rest of Nadab's deeds and all that he did, aren't they written in the official records of Israel's kings? <sup>32</sup>There was war between Asa and Israel's King Baasha throughout their lifetimes.

### **Baasha rules Israel**

<sup>33</sup>In the third year of Judah's King Asa, Baasha, Ahijah's son, became king over all Israel. He ruled in Tirzah for twenty-four years. <sup>34</sup>He did evil in the LORD's eyes by walking in Jeroboam's ways and the sin he had caused Israel to commit.

**16** The LORD's word came to Jehu, Hanani's son, against Baasha: <sup>1</sup>I raised you up from the dust and made you a leader over my people Israel, but you walked in Jeroboam's ways, making my people Israel sin, making me angry with their sins. <sup>2</sup>So look, I am about to set fire to Baasha and his household, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam, Nebat's son. <sup>4</sup>Dogs will eat any of Baasha's family who die in town. Birds will eat any who die in the country.

<sup>a</sup>Heb adds *his father*.

15:18-22 With *silver and gold* from the temple treasuries, Asa finances a *covenant* (treaty) with *Ben-hadad*, the Aramean king in *Damascus*, who made a serious military incursion into Israel. Much of the northern kingdom (tribes of Dan and Naphtali) are now under Aramean control. Asa's motivation is to keep Baasha at bay (cf. 1 Kgs 15:17). Plundering the treasuries for such purposes became common for Judean kings (cf. 2 Kgs 12:18; 16:8; 18:15; 20:13; 15; 24:13). The Syrian advance in the north allows Asa to move his border several miles north of *Ramah* to *Geba* and *Mizpah*.

15:23-24 *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

15:25-32 The evaluation of *Jeroboam's son Nadab* doesn't mention specifics. The summary notes simply that he *did evil* and imitated *the way of his father Jeroboam* (see note on 1 Kgs 12:29-33). The plot, along with the death of Jeroboam's family, intends to destroy any living heir to the throne (*house* means *dynasty*). The

author interprets this event as a fulfillment of the prophet's words (cf. 1 Kgs 14:10-11). See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2. *angered the LORD*: See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8. *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

15:33-16:7 Baasha comes under the criticism of both the narrator and the prophet *Jehu*, an otherwise unknown prophetic figure. Jehu's words echo those of Ahijah against Jeroboam (see 1 Kgs 14:7, 10-11). *making me angry*: The motif of God's anger occurs five times in this chapter (1 Kgs 15:2, 7, 13, 26, 33). See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8. *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43. The last sentence of 16:7 is difficult to translate. Either *the Lord attacked Baasha* or he (Baasha) attacked and wiped out Nadab's family (referring perhaps to 1 Kgs 15:29). The second option is an example of how the one who carries out God's intentions for judgment is also judged for doing so (cf. 1 Kgs 21:21-24 and Hos 1:4).

16:24 1Ki 13:32,  
1Ki 16:29

<sup>5</sup>Now the rest of Baasha's deeds, what he did, and his powerful acts, aren't they written in the official records of Israel's kings? <sup>6</sup>Baasha lay down with his ancestors and was buried in Tirzah. His son Elah succeeded him as king.

<sup>7</sup>But the LORD's word came through the prophet Jehu, Hanani's son, concerning Baasha and his house. It concerned everything evil in the LORD's eyes that Baasha had done, angering the Lord by his actions so that he would end up just like the house of Jeroboam. The message was also about how the Lord attacked Baasha.<sup>b</sup>

### **Elah rules Israel**

<sup>8</sup>In the twenty-sixth year of Judah's King Asa, Elah, Baasha's son, became king over Israel. He ruled in Tirzah for two years. <sup>9</sup>Zimri, his officer who led half the chariots, plotted against him. Elah was at Tirzah, getting drunk at the house of Arza, who had charge over the palace at Tirzah. <sup>10</sup>Zimri came, attacked, and killed Elah in the twenty-seventh year of Judah's King Asa. Zimri succeeded him as king.

<sup>11</sup>Once Zimri became king and sat on the throne, he attacked all of Baasha's house. He didn't spare anyone who urinates on a wall, whether relative or friend. <sup>12</sup>Zimri destroyed the entire house of Baasha in agreement with the LORD's word that had been spoken by the prophet Jehu to Baasha. <sup>13</sup>This happened because of all Baasha's sins, as well as the sins of his son Elah and because they caused Israel to sin. They angered Israel's God, the LORD, with their insignificant idols. <sup>14</sup>The rest of Elah's deeds and all that he did, aren't they written in the official records of Israel's kings?

### **Zimri rules Israel**

<sup>15</sup>In the twenty-seventh year of Judah's King Asa, Zimri became king. He ruled in Tirzah for seven days. The army was camped at Gibbethon in Philistia. <sup>16</sup>They heard the news: "Zimri has plotted against the king and killed him." Right then, in the camp, the whole Israelite army made their general Omri king of Israel. <sup>17</sup>Omri and the entire army then went up from Gibbethon and laid siege to Tirzah. <sup>18</sup>When Zimri saw that the city was captured, he went into the fort of the royal palace and burned it down on top of himself. So he died. <sup>19</sup>This happened because of the sins Zimri had committed by doing evil in the LORD's eyes and by walking in Jeroboam's ways and the sin he had done by causing Israel to sin. <sup>20</sup>The rest of Zimri's deeds and the plot he carried out, aren't they written in the official records of Israel's kings?

### **Omri rules Israel**

<sup>21</sup>At this time the people of Israel were split in two. One half of the people followed Tibni, Ginath's son, making him king; the other half followed Omri. <sup>22</sup>Omri's side was stronger than those who followed Tibni, Ginath's son. So Tibni died and Omri became king. <sup>23</sup>In the thirty-first year of Judah's King Asa, Omri became king of Israel. He ruled for twelve years, six of which were in Tirzah. <sup>24</sup>He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two kikkars of silver. He fortified the hill and named the town that he built there after Shemer, the previous owner of the hill of Samaria. <sup>25</sup>Omri did evil in the LORD's eyes, more evil than anyone

<sup>b</sup>Or *and also about how he attacked him or and because Baasha had attacked Jeroboam*

16:8-14 Baasha's dynasty is cut short when Zimri plots an attack on Baasha's house. *urinates... wall*: See note on 1 Kings 14:6-11. *the Lord's word*: See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2. *sins*: The elimination of dynastic heirs is accounted for by both Baasha's and Elah's idolatrous actions. *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

16:15-20 Although Zimri's accession to the throne is noted in 1 Kings 16:11, these verses take up the formal description of Zimri's reign, which lasted for only *seven days*. Zimri's plot against Baasha didn't get him the popular support he needed. *Omri*, on the other hand, had the support of his army. In spite of Zimri's very short reign (he hardly has time to move into the palace), the narrator's theological explanation for Zimri's downfall is the same as that of Baasha (1 Kgs 15:34) and other Israelite kings.

See note on 1 Kings 12:29-33. *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

16:21-27 *Omri* had already attacked Zimri at Tirzah (1 Kgs 16:17), and now must deal with another contender, *Tibni*. Omri emerges from civil war and moves the capital from Tirzah to Samaria. Omri is one of the few Israelite kings named in non-Israelite texts from the ancient Near East. King Mesha of Moab (cf. 2 Kgs 3:4) reports on a stele that Omri had conquered parts of Moab. Because of his reputation Israel was called "the house of Omri" in Assyrian inscriptions. *kikkars*: one *kikkar* is equivalent to approximately 76 pounds. The narrator notes that *Omri did... more evil than anyone* else. In spite of that, he founded a three- or four-member dynasty that lasted for more than 100 years and included Ahab and Ahaziah and possibly Jehoram, whose stories are told in 1 Kings

who preceded him. <sup>26</sup>He walked in all the ways and sins of Jeroboam, Nebat's son, because he caused Israel to sin. They angered Israel's God, the LORD, with their worthless idols. <sup>27</sup>The rest of Omri's deeds and his powerful acts, aren't they written in the official records of Israel's kings? <sup>28</sup>Omri lay down with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria. His son Ahab succeeded him as king.

### Ahab rules Israel

<sup>29</sup>In the thirty-eighth year of Judah's King Asa, Ahab, Omri's son, became king of Israel. He ruled over Israel in Samaria for twenty-two years <sup>30</sup>and did evil in the LORD's eyes, more than anyone who preceded him. <sup>31</sup>Ahab found it easy to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, Nebat's son. He married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, who was the king of the Sidonians. He served and worshipped Baal. <sup>32</sup>He made an altar for Baal in the Baal temple he had constructed in Samaria. <sup>33</sup>Ahab also made a sacred pole<sup>c</sup> and did more to anger the LORD, the God of Israel, than any of Israel's kings who preceded him. <sup>34</sup>During Ahab's time, Hiel from Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He set up its foundations at the cost of his oldest son Abiram. He hung its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub. This fulfilled the LORD's word spoken through Joshua, Nun's son.

### Elijah and the ravens

**17** Elijah with Tishbe, who was one of the settlers in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As surely as the LORD lives, Israel's God, the one I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain these years unless I say so."

<sup>c</sup>Heb *asherah*, perhaps an object devoted to the goddess Asherah

17–21; 2 Kings 8. Omri reigned from 886 to 875 BCE. *sins of Jeroboam*: See note on 1 Kings 12:29–33 (cf. 1 Kgs 14:16; 15:26, 34). *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41–43. 16:29–22:40 A large portion of 1 Kings concerns Ahab and the prophets Elijah and Elisha, who challenge his identification with the Canaanite god Baal and who call Israel back to faithfulness to Israel's God. The report specifically about Ahab's reign begins in 1 Kings 16:29–34 and ends with the summary in 1 Kings 22:39–40. In between, Elijah, Elisha, and various prophets take center stage. 16:29–34 The summary statements about Ahab's reign in these verses provide the narrator's overall evaluation. *Ahab... did evil... more than anyone*: The narrator highlights the problem facing the northern kingdom by repeating the formula from 1 Kings 16:25. The repetition of the comparative *more... than any of Israel's kings* in 16:33 underscores the matter even further. Ahab even *found it easy* to imitate Jeroboam (cf. 1 Kgs 12:29–33). The sense is that Ahab betrayed God deliberately. He *married Jezebel*, who was a partner in crime (cf. 1 Kgs 21; see note on 1 Kgs 11:1–4). In particular, he *served and worshipped Baal*: Baal is mentioned here for the first time in the books of Kings. Baal is the ancient Semitic storm god whose potency guarantees the fertility of the land. His name is shorthand for Baal-Hadad, meaning "lord Hadad." The name Baal often occurs as part of personal names, as it does in Ethbaal (16:31; cf. Judg 7:1; 2 Sam 2:10). According to Ugaritic mythology, Baal is married to Anat; he battles against Yam ("Sea") and Mot ("Death") in the creation narrative. A stele in the Louvre museum (Paris) depicts him with the weapon of lightning. He rides on chariots, and the clouds thunder. It isn't surprising, therefore, that rain (storm) and famine and fertility of the land are the preoccupation of the stories about Elijah and Ahab that follow (1 Kgs 17–18). *sacred pole*: See note on 1 Kings 14:12–18. 16:34 *Hiel... rebuilt Jericho... fulfilled the LORD's word*: The author assumes this terrible event is the outcome of Joshua's curse on the one who rebuilt Jericho (Josh 6:26). The

historian affirms that Joshua spoke a prophetic word, confirming the theological perspective of the books of Kings that the divine word is the primary active power in history. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2. *at the cost of*: The text doesn't say how Hiel's sons died. He may have offered them as sacrifices (a common interpretation), or they may have died during the construction project (interpreted simply as a judgment of God). 17:1–22:40 The settings of the following stories within Ahab's reign take up major themes from the lives of Elijah, Elisha, and other prophets. These stories focus on the challenge of monotheism (believing in one god) in a religious setting with cultures that have more than one god. Even more, they emphasize the power of the prophetic word. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2. 17:1–18:46 The drought takes Elijah to confront Baal on his territory in Phoenicia and on Mount Carmel. Since Baal is the god of storm and rain, and therefore of fertility, the drought poses a most serious practical and theological problem. Worship of Baal, the god of rain and fertility, challenges the prophets' exclusive monotheistic claims. The story teaches that it is Israel's God who provides rain, fertility, and life. Baal is truly a god of death. See sidebar, "Baal" at 1 Kings 18. 17:1 *Elijah*: His name means "God is the LORD (*Jah*)", a name confirmed by his confession, *the one I serve*. *Tishbe*: unknown location in *Gilead*, on the east side of the Jordan River. *as the LORD lives*: The Baal myth assumed the dying of the god during the summer season, during which rain doesn't fall in the land of Canaan. Life returns on his resuscitation. By contrast, Elijah claims that *Israel's God* lives even in the drought. *unless I say so*: The prophetic word is the only truly creative force in the world, a theme that ties these stories to the previous chapter (1 Kgs 16:34), and recurs later in the chapter (1 Kgs 17:16, 24). Elijah is its agent. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

16:30 1Ki 21:25  
16:32–33  
1Ki 21:26  
16:31 1Ki 18:4.  
1Ki 21:25.  
2Ki 10:18,  
2Ki 17:16  
16:34 Josh 6:26  
17:1 1Ki 18:1.  
1Ki 22:14  
2Ki 3:14  
Lk 4:25; Jas 5:17

17:3 Jer 36:19

17:4 1Ki 17:9

17:6 Ex 16:8

17:9 1Ki 17:4;

Obad 1:30;

1K 4:26

17:10 Jn 4:7

17:12 1Ki 17:1;

2Ki 4:2;

Eze 16:13

17:13 Mt 6:33

17:14 1Ki 17:1;

2Ki 9:6

17:15 1Ki 17:1;

1Ki 17:23;

1Ki 18:21;

1Ki 19:19;

1Ki 21:17

17:20 Ex 17:4;

Isa 7:9;

1Ki 18:36;

Jas 5:17

17:21 2Ki 4:34;

Ac 20:10

17:22 1Ki 17:23;

2Ki 13:21;

Heb 11:35

<sup>2</sup>Then the LORD's word came to Elijah: <sup>3</sup>Go from here and turn east. Hide by the Cherith Brook that faces the Jordan River. <sup>4</sup>You can drink from the brook. I have also ordered the ravens to provide for you there. <sup>5</sup>Elijah went and did just what the LORD said. He stayed by the Cherith Brook that faced the Jordan River. <sup>6</sup>The ravens brought bread and meat in the mornings and evenings. He drank from the Cherith Brook. <sup>7</sup>After a while the brook dried up because there was no rain in the land.

### *Elijah and the widow from Zarephath*

<sup>8</sup>The LORD's word came to Elijah: <sup>9</sup>Get up and go to Zarephath near Sidon and stay there. I have ordered a widow there to take care of you. <sup>10</sup>Elijah left and went to Zarephath. As he came to the town gate, he saw a widow collecting sticks. He called out to her, "Please get a little water for me in this cup so I can drink." <sup>11</sup>She went to get some water. He then said to her, "Please get me a piece of bread."

<sup>12</sup>"As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any food; only a handful of flour in a jar and a bit of oil in a bottle. Look at me. I'm collecting two sticks so that I can make some food for myself and my son. We'll eat the last of the food and then die."

<sup>13</sup>Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid! Go and do what you said. Only make a little loaf of bread for me first. Then bring it to me. You can make something for yourself and your son after that. <sup>14</sup>This is what Israel's God, the LORD, says: The jar of flour won't decrease and the bottle of oil won't run out until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth." <sup>15</sup>The widow went and did what Elijah said. So the widow, Elijah, and the widow's household ate for many days. <sup>16</sup>The jar of flour didn't decrease nor did the bottle of oil run out, just as the LORD spoke through Elijah.

<sup>17</sup>After these things, the son of the widow, who was the matriarch of the household, became ill. His sickness got steadily worse until he wasn't breathing anymore. <sup>18</sup>She said to Elijah, "What's gone wrong between us, man of God? Have you come to me to call attention to my sin and kill my son?"

<sup>19</sup>Elijah replied, "Give your son to me." He took her son from her and carried him to the upper room where he was staying. Elijah laid him on his bed. <sup>20</sup>Elijah cried out to the LORD, "LORD my God, why is it that you have brought such evil upon the widow that I am staying with by killing her son?" <sup>21</sup>Then he stretched himself over the boy three times and cried out to the LORD, "LORD my God, please give this boy's life back to him." <sup>22</sup>The LORD listened to Elijah's voice and gave the boy his life back. And he lived. <sup>23</sup>Elijah brought the boy down from the upper room of the house and gave him to his mother. Elijah said, "Look, your son is alive!"

17:2-7 *the Lord's word came*: This makes it clear that *Elijah . . . did just what the Lord said*: See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2. *Cherith Brook*: in a valley running into the east side of the Jordan River. The exact location is unknown. The area is semiarid and infertile. *ravens . . . mornings and evenings*: Like Israel in the wilderness (Exod 16:8, 12-13), Elijah receives nourishment from God; he receives *bread and meat* twice a day.

17:8-24 Elijah's encounter with the woman from Zarephath is the first demonstration that God provides, even in the drought. Even more, God provides for a marginal non-Israelite outside the traditional land of Israel (cf. Luke 4:26).

17:9 *Zarephath near Sidon*: The location along the Phoenician coast is strategic for demonstrating that Israel's God isn't geographically limited. This is the region where Baal worship is at home. See sidebar, "Baal" at 1 Kings 18. *I have ordered a widow*: The story doesn't provide God's words to this poor woman who, together with her son, is marginalized and at the point of death. The sense is that God is in charge of the situation; just as the ravens bring food to Elijah, so the widow, with God's help, feeds him.

17:12 *your God lives*: The widow's repetition of Elijah's confession (1 Kgs 17:1), emphasizing *your God*, continues the theme of life in the midst of drought.

17:13-16 *Don't be afraid*: a necessary consolation, especially when Elijah asks her to feed him before she feeds her son. Like Elijah, the widow does what she is told to do (cf. 1 Kgs 17:5). *just as the Lord spoke*: The word becomes reality immediately. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

17:17-23 A complication arises, as one might have expected. *call attention to my sin*: The woman assumes that her actions have in some way or other brought about this dire situation. The book of Job wrestles with the problem of whether human sinfulness brings unexpected disasters. Many of the psalms assume the same (cf. Ps 38). *why . . . you . . . brought such evil*: Elijah assumes the same thing: God is the source of the calamity. Yet his prayer may also be understood as a challenge to God. *stretched himself over the boy*: Elijah performs a symbolic action that would have been common in ancient Near Eastern healing practices. *The Lord listened to Elijah's voice*: The Hebrew verb meaning "to listen" may also mean "to obey." Now the roles are reversed. Normally human beings are instructed to attend to the Lord's voice. Here God listens and "obeys" Elijah. *your son is alive!*: The drama ends with a victory for life in a world permeated by death. Elijah's God brings life out of death.

<sup>24</sup>“Now I know that you really are a man of God,” the woman said to Elijah, “and that the LORD’s word is truly in your mouth.”

### *Elijah versus Baal’s prophets*

**18** After many days, the LORD’s word came to Elijah (it was the third year of the drought): **Go!** Appear before Ahab. I will then send rain on the earth. <sup>25</sup>So Elijah went to appear before Ahab.

Now the famine had become especially bad in Samaria. <sup>26</sup>Ahab had called Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace affairs. (Obadiah greatly feared the LORD. <sup>27</sup>When Jezebel killed the LORD’s prophets, Obadiah took one hundred of them and hid them, fifty each in two caves. He supplied them with food and water.) <sup>28</sup>Ahab said to Obadiah, “Go throughout the land and check every spring of water and every brook. Perhaps we can find some grass to keep our horses and mules alive so we don’t have to kill any of them.” <sup>29</sup>To search, they divided the land between themselves. Ahab went one way by himself, while Obadiah went a different way by himself.

<sup>30</sup>While Obadiah was out searching, suddenly Elijah met up with him. When Obadiah saw him, he fell on his face. “My master!” he said. “Are you Elijah?”

<sup>31</sup>Elijah replied, “I am. Go and say to your master, ‘Elijah is here!’”

<sup>32</sup>Then Obadiah said, “How have I sinned that you are handing me, your servant, over to Ahab so he can kill me? <sup>33</sup>As surely as the LORD your God lives, there’s no nation or kingdom where my master Ahab hasn’t looked for you. They would insist, ‘He’s not here,’ but Ahab would make them swear that they couldn’t find you. <sup>34</sup>And now you are commanding me: ‘Go and say to your master, “Elijah is here?”’ <sup>35</sup>But here’s what will happen: As soon as I leave you, the LORD’s spirit will carry you off somewhere—I don’t know where—then I’ll report to Ahab, but he won’t be able to find you. Then he will kill me! But your servant has feared the LORD from my youth. <sup>36</sup>Wasn’t my master told what I did when Jezebel killed the LORD’s prophets? I hid one hundred of the LORD’s prophets, fifty each in two caves. I also supplied them with food and water. <sup>37</sup>But even after all that, you tell me, ‘Say to your master, “Elijah is here!”’ Ahab will kill me!”

<sup>38</sup>Elijah said, “As surely as the LORD of heavenly forces lives, the one I serve, I will appear before Ahab today.”

<sup>39</sup>So Obadiah went to meet Ahab. He told him what had happened. Then Ahab went to meet Elijah. <sup>40</sup>When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is that you, the one who troubles Israel?”

<sup>41</sup>Elijah answered, “I haven’t troubled Israel; you and your father’s house have! You did as much when you deserted the LORD’s commands and followed the Baals. <sup>42</sup>Now send a

17:24 *Now I know... the LORD’s word is truly in your mouth:* The woman’s final words underline one of the main themes of the books of Kings. She affirms not only that Elijah is a prophet (*man of God*), but that God speaks through him. See sidebar, “Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word” at 1 Kings 2.

18:1-2 The scene shifts, but the theme remains the same as in 1 Kings 17:1. At the center are *the LORD’s word and drought*. While 1 Kings 17 presents the story of an apparently inconsequential individual, 1 Kings 18 moves Elijah into the political spotlight *before Ahab*.

18:3-4 *Obadiah... feared the LORD:* Obadiah is on the other side; he protects the prophets whom *Jezebel* considers threats to the regime. The *fear* is holy reverence and loyalty—and, highlighted along with loving and serving—is key to faithful response to the Lord in Deuteronomy (Deut 10:12, 20). *killed the LORD’s prophets:* Although the stories focus on Elijah, these verses confirm that Elijah wasn’t the only prophet in Israel.

18:9 *How have I sinned:* Obadiah’s response to Elijah’s presence is like that of the widow (1 Kings 17:18).

18:12-14 *the LORD’s spirit will carry you off:* It was thought that God moved prophets around suddenly (cf. 1 Kings 18:7; 2 Kgs 2:16; Ezek 3:12). Although Obadiah *feared the*

Lord (cf. 1 Kgs 18:3), he is truly afraid of Ahab, who, he says twice, *will kill me*.

18:15 *LORD of heavenly forces:* The prophets use this title five times in the books of Kings (cf. 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; 2 Kgs 3:14; 19:31). It refers metaphorically to God as the king in charge of the cosmic armies (cf. 1 Sam 1:1; 2 Sam 7:8; Pss 24:10; 82:1; 89:5-7; 103:21).

18:17-18 *troubles Israel... troubled Israel:* The wording echoes several other texts where the actions of individuals threaten the life of the community (Josh 6:18-19; 1 Sam 14:24-26). The word “trouble” (Heb. *akar*) is translated as “calamity” in Joshua 6:18 and “disaster” in Joshua 7:25. Achan’s name (Josh 7:1) even sounds like the Hebrew word for “trouble.” Comparison of these stories implies that much is at stake here. And the cause is clear: *you deserted the LORD’s commands and followed the Baals*, like Saul, who “rejected what the LORD said” (cf. 1 Sam 15:23; on Ahab’s sins, see 1 Kgs 16:31-33). Ahab is partly right. Elijah is a “troubler,” but the troubler of Ahab, not of Israel.

18:19 *all Israel:* Elijah has been with an unnamed foreign widow and the king of Israel. Now the scene shifts into a public setting. *Mount Carmel:* the mountain ridge to the south and east of modern Haifa. Actually a 13-mile-long

18:1 Dt 28:12;  
1Ki 17:1,  
1Ki 18:2;  
Lk 4:25; Jas 5:17  
18:3 1Ki 16:9;  
Neh 7:2  
18:4 1Ki 18:13;  
2Ki 9:7  
18:15 1Ki 17:1  
18:17 Josh 7:25;  
1Ki 21:20;  
Jer 38:4  
18:18 1Ki 16:31

18:21

Josh 24:15;  
2Ki 17:41;  
Mt 6:24

18:26 Ps 115:4

18:27 Jgs 10:14

**Baal** Baal is known in the Canaanite pantheon as the storm god. He is depicted on a stele (dated 15th to 13th centuries BCE, now located in the Louvre museum in Paris) holding a club in his raised right hand and thrusting a spear sprouting vegetation into the ground with his left hand. The spear looks very much like a lightning rod or thunderbolt. The sprouting spear suggests the fertility that followed the rains he brought in the fall and winter months.

In the Baal Epic, discovered at Ugarit in modern Lebanon, Baal wins a victory over Yam, the god of the sea. This mythic victory assures worshippers that Baal controlled the waters, including rain and storms. Baal would be sure to send rain after the dry summer months.

Although Baal makes an appearance in the book of Judges (Judg 6), it is in the reign of Ahab in Israel that he becomes a threat to Israel's exclusive worship of God (1 Kgs 16:31-32). Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal demonstrates that Yahweh, translated as "the LORD," is the true and only God. He alone controls the rain and ends the drought, the very things for which Baal was known (1 Kgs 18:37-39). But the story of Elijah suggests more. Even without rain, Israel's God is the source of nourishment and life (1 Kgs 17:8-24). The author states that worship of Baal is the main reason for the downfall of Israel and Judah (cf. 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3), in spite of occasional attempts to eliminate Baal worship (cf. 2 Kgs 10:27-28; 11:18; 23:4-5).

message and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel. Gather the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table."

<sup>20</sup>Ahab sent the message to all the Israelites. He gathered the prophets at Mount Carmel. <sup>21</sup>Elijah approached all the people and said, "How long will you hobble back and forth between two opinions? If the LORD<sup>d</sup> is God, follow God. If Baal is God, follow Baal." The people gave no answer.

<sup>22</sup>Elijah said to the people, "I am the last of the LORD's prophets, but Baal's prophets number four hundred fifty. <sup>23</sup>Give us two bulls. Let Baal's prophets choose one. Let them cut it apart and set it on the wood, but don't add fire. I'll prepare the other bull, put it on the wood, but won't add fire. <sup>24</sup>Then all of you will call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers with fire—that's the real God!"

All the people answered, "That's an excellent idea."

<sup>25</sup>So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one of these bulls. Prepare it first since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but don't add fire."

<sup>26</sup>So they took one of the bulls that had been brought to them. They prepared it and called on Baal's name from morning to midday. They said, "Great Baal, answer us!" But there was no sound or answer. They performed a hopping dance around the altar that had been set up.

<sup>27</sup>Around noon, Elijah started making fun of them: "Shout louder! Certainly he's a god! Perhaps he is lost in thought or wandering or traveling somewhere.<sup>e</sup> Or maybe he is asleep and must wake up!"

<sup>d</sup>The contrast between the LORD's divine name (YHWH) and Baal's name is crucial throughout this passage.

<sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain

mountain ridge, it rises near the sea to an elevation of nearly 1,600 feet. This range overlooks the Mediterranean Sea to the west (cf. 1 Kgs 18:43-44) and the Jezreel Valley to the northeast. At the other end of the Jezreel Valley was the palace of Ahab and Jezebel at Jezreel (cf. 1 Kgs 18:45-46; see note on 1 Kgs 21:1). *prophets of Baal*: The contest between God and Baal is also a contest between prophets (cf. 1 Kgs 18:36).

18:21 *hobble*... *two opinions*: Elijah presents only two options. Either *the Lord is God* or *Baal is God*. It isn't possible to worship two "lords" (see sidebar, "Baal"). The wordplay between *hobble* and "hopping dance" (1 Kgs 18:26, using the same verb) emphasizes the contrast of allegiances. *no answer*: The silence from the people speaks volumes. The same verb will be used by Elijah (1 Kgs 18:24) and to describe Baal's nonresponsiveness (1 Kgs 18:26, 29). The verb "to answer" occurs eight times in this story.

18:22 *I am the last... prophets*: Elijah's hyperbole that

stresses that he alone is facing the prophets of Baal (cf. other prophets, 1 Kgs 18:4, 13; 20:35-43; 22:1-18).

18:24 *call on the name*: to pray to the deity (cf. 1 Kgs 18:25-26). See sidebar, "Temple and Name" at 1 Kings 8. *The god who answers with fire... real God*: Fire in the form of lightning is one of Baal's weapons. See sidebar, "Baal": The "answer" from the gods is the central focus of this story (cf. 1 Kgs 18:26, 29).

18:26 *no sound or answer*: The verb "to answer" occurs eight times in this story. The people have no answer to Elijah's question (1 Kgs 18:21); nor is Baal able to respond (1 Kgs 18:26, 29).

18:27-28 Since this event is about life and death, Elijah's taunts are not polite interfaith dialogue. *cut themselves*: This ritualistic activity demonstrates the seriousness with which the participants are taking the challenge before them.

18:29 *went crazy*: The Egyptian writer and traveler Wen-Amon describes such ritual frenzy at a temple in Byblos,



<sup>28</sup>So the prophets of Baal cried with a louder voice and cut themselves with swords and knives as was their custom. Their blood flowed all over them. <sup>29</sup>As noon passed they went crazy with their ritual until it was time for the evening offering. Still there was no sound or answer, no response whatsoever.

<sup>30</sup>Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come here!" All the people closed in, and he repaired the LORD's altar that had been damaged. <sup>31</sup>Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob—to whom the LORD's word came: "Your name will be Israel." <sup>32</sup>He built the stones into an altar in the LORD's name, and he dug a trench around the altar big enough to hold two seahs<sup>f</sup> of dry grain. <sup>33</sup>He put the wood in order, butchered the bull, and placed the bull on the wood. "Fill four jars with water and pour it on the sacrifice and on the wood," he commanded. <sup>34</sup>"Do it a second time!" he said. So they did it a second time. "Do it a third time!" And so they did it a third time. <sup>35</sup>The water flowed around the altar, and even the trench filled with water. <sup>36</sup>At the time of the evening offering, the prophet Elijah drew near and prayed: "LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. I have done all these things at your instructions. <sup>37</sup>Answer me, LORD! Answer me so that this people will know that you, LORD, are the real God and that you can change their hearts."<sup>g</sup> <sup>38</sup>Then the LORD's fire fell; it consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up the water in the trench!

<sup>39</sup>All the people saw this and fell on their faces. "The LORD is the real God! The LORD is the real God!" they exclaimed.

<sup>40</sup>Elijah said to them, "Seize Baal's prophets! Don't let any escape!" The people seized the prophets, and Elijah brought them to the Kishon Brook and killed them there. <sup>41</sup>Elijah then said to Ahab, "Get up! Celebrate with food and drink because I hear the sound of a rainstorm coming." <sup>42</sup>So Ahab got up to celebrate with food and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel. He bowed down to the ground and put his face between his knees. <sup>43</sup>He said to his assistant, "Please get up and look toward the sea."

So the assistant did so. He said, "I don't see anything."

Seven times Elijah said, "Do it again."



Stele of Baal, the Canaanite storm god, 15th–13th century BCE  
British Museum/BiblePlaces.com

<sup>f</sup>One seah is approximately seven and a half quarts. <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain

north of Sidon (approximately 1100 BCE). *no sound or answer*: See note on 1 Kings 18:26.

**18:30–31 repaired the Lord's altar**: Breaking down altars was common in the ancient world. Followers of Baal would have destroyed this older Israelite altar, just as Israelites were commanded to destroy Canaanite altars (Deut 7:5; 12:3). *twelve stones*: Compare Exodus 24:4; Joshua 4:8. *Jacob... Israel*: The storyteller reminds readers not only of Israel's origins (cf. Gen 35:10), but also of the unity of Israel as a 12-tribe federation.

**18:33–35 water**: In a time of drought, such excessive use of water emphasizes the high stakes involved here. In Canaanite mythology, Baal is considered the source of water by means of rain.

**18:36–39 you are God... at your instructions**: Elijah's prophetic vocation is confirmed. The text doesn't report the instructions from God. The *Answer* he asks for comes

soon (cf. 1 Kgs 18:26, 29). The people respond, repeating Elijah's prayer by crying out, *The Lord is the real God!* Their words echo exactly Deuteronomy 4:35, 39 and, most significantly, Solomon's affirmation in 1 Kings 8:60. They also resemble Elijah's name, which means "God is the Lord." Elijah's contest between the gods has had its desired effect. But like Solomon's, will it last or bear fruit?

**18:40 Kishon Brook**: flows in the Jezreel Valley at the northern foot of the Carmel range. *Elijah... killed them*: Killing opponents isn't a practice of one side only (cf. 1 Kgs 18:4; Deut 13:1–18).

**18:42–44 face between his knees**: It could be that Elijah is praying. More likely it is another prophetic action (cf. 1 Kgs 17:21), since he deliberately doesn't look at the sky. He asks his assistant to look. At the *seventh time* the assistant sees a *small cloud*. Rain is on its way (cf. 1 Kgs 17:1); the drama between the gods has reached its end.

18:28 Lv 19:28;  
Dt 14:1  
18:31 Gn 32:28,  
Gn 35:10;  
2Ki 17:34  
18:33 Gn 22:9;  
Lv 1:7  
18:36 Ex 3:6;  
Nm 16:28;  
1Sa 17:46  
18:40 Dt 13:5;  
Jgs 4:7; Jgs 5:21;  
2Ki 10:25;  
2Ki 11:18  
18:42 Jas 5:18

18:44 Lk 12:54

18:45 Josh 17:16;  
1Sa 29:11;

1Ki 18:44;

1Ki 18:46;

1Ki 21:1;

18:46 2Ki 3:15;

2Ki 4:29; Eze 1:3;

Eze 3:14

19:1 1Kg 16:31;

1Ki 18:4;

1Ki 18:40;

1Ki 21:5

19:2 Ru 1:17;

1Ki 20:10;

2Ki 6:31

19:3 Gn 21:31;

1Ki 19:4

19:4 Nm 11:15;

1Ki 19:3;

Jon 4:3; Jon 4:8

19:5 Gn 16:7;

Ac 12:7;

Heb 11:14

19:6 In 21:9

19:7 1Ki 19:5

19:8 Ex 3:1;

Ex 24:18; Mt 4:2

19:9 Ex 33:22;

1Ki 19:13

19:10 Nm 25:13;

1Ki 18:4;

1Ki 18:22;

Ro 11:3

19:11 Eze 1:4

<sup>44</sup>The seventh time the assistant said, "I see a small cloud the size of a human hand coming up from the sea."

Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Pull yourself together, go down the mountain, and don't let the rain hold you back.'" <sup>45</sup>After a little while, the sky became dark with clouds, and a wind came up with a huge rainstorm. Ahab was already riding on his way to Jezreel, <sup>46</sup>but the LORD's power strengthened Elijah. He gathered up his clothes and ran in front of Ahab until he came to Jezreel.

### *Elijah runs to Mount Horeb*

**19** Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, how he had killed all Baal's prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup>Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah with this message: "May the gods do whatever they want to me if by this time tomorrow I haven't made your life like the life of one of them."

<sup>3</sup>Elijah was terrified. He got up and ran for his life. He arrived at Beer-sheba in Judah and left his assistant there. <sup>4</sup>He himself went farther on into the desert a day's journey. He finally sat down under a solitary broom bush. He longed for his own death: "It's more than enough, LORD! Take my life because I'm no better than my ancestors." <sup>5</sup>He lay down and slept under the solitary broom bush.

Then suddenly a messenger tapped him and said to him, "Get up! Eat something!" <sup>6</sup>Elijah opened his eyes and saw flatbread baked on glowing coals and a jar of water right by his head. He ate and drank, and then went back to sleep. <sup>7</sup>The LORD's messenger returned a second time and tapped him. "Get up!" the messenger said. "Eat something, because you have a difficult road ahead of you." <sup>8</sup>Elijah got up, ate and drank, and went refreshed by that food for forty days and nights until he arrived at Horeb, God's mountain. <sup>9</sup>There he went into a cave and spent the night.

The LORD's word came to him and said, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

<sup>10</sup>Elijah replied, "I've been very passionate for the LORD God of heavenly forces because the Israelites have abandoned your covenant. They have torn down your altars, and they have murdered your prophets with the sword. I'm the only one left, and now they want to take my life too!"

<sup>11</sup>The LORD said, "Go out and stand at the mountain before the LORD. The LORD is passing by." A very strong wind tore through the mountains and broke apart the stones before the LORD. But the LORD wasn't in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake. But

**18:45-46** *Jezreel*: This is where Jezebel was staying (1 Kgs 19:1) and where Ahab had a palace (1 Kgs 21:1). *the LORD's power... ran in front of Ahab*: Running alongside or in front of a chariot was not out of the ordinary (cf. 1 Sam 8:11; 1 Kgs 1:5). But it isn't clear why Elijah runs.

**19:1-21** Things turn bad for Elijah, who flees the wrath of Jezebel to meet the God who refuses to be identified with the traditional trappings of the gods.

**19:1-2** *May the gods do... to me*: She uses a traditional formula for a solemn pledge (cf. 1 Kgs 2:23; 20:10). Ahab only plays the role of reporter. Jezebel is the main actor in the Ahab and Elijah drama. She is out for revenge; she isn't interested in keeping rivals alive, especially the prophets (cf. 1 Kgs 18:4, 13).

**19:3** Elijah is *terrified*; he runs for his life. This time he acts on his own without instructions from God (cf. 1 Kgs 17:5; 8:10; 18:1-2). *Beer-sheba*: the most southern city of Israel, bordering the desert about 120 miles from Mount Carmel (cf. Gen 21:31; 26:33; 1 Sam 3:20; 2 Sam 3:10; 1 Kgs 4:25).

**19:4-5** *longed for his own death... lay down and slept*: More than exhausted, Elijah is also depressed. *messenger*: Jezebel had also sent a messenger (1 Kgs 19:2). The first brings a death sentence; this one, from God (1 Kgs 19:7), brings nourishment (1 Kgs 19:6, 8; cf. 1 Kgs 17:6).

**19:8** *forty days and nights*: a symbolic number (used often in the Bible) that recalls the 40 days Moses spent on the same mountain (Exod 24:18). *Horeb*: Deuteronomy's

favorite name for Mount Sinai. It is the place where Israel made a covenant with God (Deut 5:2). The name is used once more in the books of Kings 18:15 (1 Kgs 8:9). The book of Exodus calls it "God's mountain" (Exod 3:1). Depending on the location of the mountain and the route, the challenging hike from Beer-sheba to Mount Horeb could be as long as 250 miles.

**19:9-10** Mention of a *cave* is reminiscent of God's placing Moses into "a gap in the rock" (a crevice or a cave; Exod 33:21-23), where he glimpses God's "glorious presence." The parallel makes it possible to see Elijah as a new Moses figure (cf. Deut 18:15, 18). "*Why are you here, Elijah?*": God's question is neutral and nonjudgmental. Elijah's response includes a fine balance between the "I" and "my" of his own experience (rightly or wrongly) and the "your" of God's symbolic presence among the people. *LORD God of heavenly forces*: See note on 1 Kings 18:15. *abandoned your covenant*: an allusion to the Deuteronomist warning about idolatry (Deut 28:20; 29:24; 31:16; see sidebar, "idolatry" at 1 Kgs 11) and the consequences that God will abandon Israel (Deut 31:16-17).

**19:11-12** *The LORD is passing by*: The use of the verb confirms the parallel to the Moses story (Exod 33:19, 22; 34:6). The Exodus texts emphasize the compassion of God, which God displays toward Elijah in this story. *wasn't in the wind... earthquake... fire*: These manifestations are what one might expect of Baal (see sidebar, "Baal" at 1 Kgs 18)

the LORD wasn't in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup>After the earthquake, there was a fire. But the LORD wasn't in the fire. After the fire, there was a sound. Thin. Quiet. <sup>13</sup>When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his coat. He went out and stood at the cave's entrance. A voice came to him and said, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

<sup>14</sup>He said, "I've been very passionate for the LORD God of heavenly forces because the Israelites have abandoned your covenant. They have torn down your altars, and they have murdered your prophets with the sword. I'm the only one left, and now they want to take my life too."

<sup>15</sup>The LORD said to him, "Go back through the desert to Damascus and anoint Hazael as king of Aram. <sup>16</sup>Also anoint Jehu, Nimshi's son, as king of Israel; and anoint Elisha from Abel-meholah, Shaphat's son, to succeed you as prophet. <sup>17</sup>Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill. Whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. <sup>18</sup>But I have preserved those who remain in Israel, totaling seven thousand—all those whose knees haven't bowed down to Baal and whose mouths haven't kissed him."

<sup>19</sup>So Elijah departed from there and found Elisha, Shaphat's son. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him. Elisha was with the twelfth yoke. Elijah met up with him and threw his coat on him. <sup>20</sup>Elisha immediately left the oxen and ran after Elijah. "Let me kiss my father and my mother," Elisha said, "then I will follow you."

Elijah replied, "Go! I'm not holding you back!" <sup>21</sup>Elisha turned back from following Elijah, took the pair of oxen, and slaughtered them. Then with equipment from the oxen, Elisha boiled the meat, gave it to the people, and they ate it. Then he got up, followed Elijah, and served him.

### Ben-hadad's wars with Ahab

**20** King Ben-hadad of Aram brought together all his army along with thirty-two kings plus horses and chariots. He went up, surrounded Samaria, and made war against it.

<sup>2</sup>He sent messengers to Ahab, Israel's king, inside Samaria. <sup>3</sup>The message said, "This is what

or even of Israel's God (Judg 5:4-5; Pss 18:7-15; 68:8; Hab 3:15). But in this context, since fire on Mount Carmel was from the Lord, it could be expected that the third of these natural phenomena might symbolize God's presence. *a sound. Thin. Quiet:* On this occasion, however, God's comforting and empowering presence comes in the nearly imperceptible. Like Moses' opportunity to see God's "glorious presence" from the back, so Elijah hears God through the spaces between the mountain breezes.

19:13-14 *wrapped his face:* presuming, perhaps, as God says to Moses, that "no one can see me and live" (Exod 33:20; cf. Gen 32:30; Judg 6:22; 13:22). *A voice:* the same word translated "a sound" in 1 Kings 19:12. Elijah's answer to God's question is the same as he gives to the identical question earlier (cf. 1 Kgs 19:9-10). Perhaps it will take Elijah some time to process his experience. But God isn't bothered. God has other work for Elijah to do.

19:15-18 God's new instructions, not Elijah's anxieties about his vocation, are the main point. *anoint Hazael... Jehu... Elisha:* Prophets are agents of God's political will (cf. 1 Sam 10:1; 15:1; 2 Sam 12:7; 1 Kgs 1:45). *Elisha:* His name means "God saves" or "God is salvation." *Nimshi's son:* The word "son" may also mean grandson (see 2 Kgs 9:2). *I have preserved... seven thousand:* In other words, Elijah isn't "the only one left" (1 Kgs 19:10, 14). God will continue to govern and to bring about God's purposes with those who haven't bowed down to Baal. Not altogether surprisingly, God even has a hand in the political process of another nation (Aram, headquartered in Damascus). *kissed him:* a ritual action of kissing the image of a god (cf. Hos 13:2; contrast Elisha's kiss in 1 Kgs 19:20). 19:19-21 Although the story doesn't go on to tell of Elijah's completing the first two assignments, he does

commission Elisha as his successor. Later on, Elisha announces that Hazael will be king over Aram (2 Kgs 8:7-15) and anoints Jehu (2 Kgs 9:1-10), thereby demonstrating that he has taken over Elijah's role. The storyteller doesn't provide all the details, only enough to lead the reader know that God is in control of the political process. There are more important things to tell besides details like that. The coat represents the transfer of authority (cf. 1 Sam 18:4; 2 Kgs 2:13). Slaughtering the oxen and hosting a feast is Elisha's way of making a transition to his new vocation. *served him:* Elisha has become Elijah's attendant. Verse 20 doesn't describe Elisha's reluctance, nor does it reflect Elijah's disappointment. Elisha has made the transition and is now in Elijah's service. Elisha reappears in the story in 2 Kings 2:1.

20:1-43 The story of Ahab's war against Syria is spiced with political intrigue, but its main interest is theological. Its main characters, the prophets, announce not only that God is in charge, but that God's intention is for Ahab (and Israel) to acknowledge God as their only allegiance (20:13, 28). The prophets are the main actors in spite of the military action of kings. Neither Elijah nor Elisha appears in this story, which underlines the fact that Elijah isn't the only prophet left (1 Kgs 19:10, 14), and the shift to Elisha has begun. The story unfolds in two parts over the course of a year (20:1-22, 23-43).

20:1 *Ben-hadad of Aram:* king of the Syrian coalition headquartered in Damascus. *thirty-two kings plus horses and chariots:* an ominous note. Ben-hadad has vassal partners and a significant standing army.

20:2-9 *Your silver and your gold are mine... children are mine:* Ben-hadad offers terms of surrender, which include making Ahab his vassal king like the 32 who are already

19:12 Ex 3:2;  
Dt 4:11; Job 4:16;  
Zec 4:6

19:13 Ex 3:6;  
1 Ki 19:9

19:14 1 Ki 19:10

19:15 2 Ki 8:7-8;  
2 Ki 9:14

19:16 1 Ki 19:19;  
2 Ki 3:11; 2 Ki 9:1;  
2 Ki 9:6

19:18 Hos 13:2;  
Ro 11:4

19:20 1 Ki 19:21;  
Mt 8:21-22;  
Lk 9:61-62

19:21 2Sa 24:22;  
1 Ki 19:20

20:1 1 Ki 15:18;  
1 Ki 16:24;  
2 Ki 6:24; 2 Ki 8:7;  
2 Ki 17:5

20:11 Prv 27:1

Ben-hadad says: "Your silver and your gold are mine. Your good-looking wives and children are mine."

<sup>4</sup>Israel's king answered, "Whatever you say, my master, great king, I am yours and so is everything I have."

<sup>5</sup>The messengers came back again: "This is what Ben-hadad says: 'I sent you the message: Give me your silver and gold, your wives and your sons. <sup>6</sup>However, at this time tomorrow I will send my officers to you, and they will search your palace and the houses of your officers. Everything that you find valuable they will seize and take away.'"

<sup>7</sup>Then Israel's king called all the elders of the land and he said, "Please know and understand the evil this man wants to do! He demanded from me my wives and sons, and my silver and gold; and I didn't refuse him."

<sup>8</sup>All of the elders and the people said to him, "Don't obey and don't give in!"

<sup>9</sup>So the king said to Ben-hadad's messengers, "Say to my master the king: 'Everything that you first ordered your servant, I will do. But I can't comply with this new command.'"

The messengers took this response to Ben-hadad, <sup>10</sup>who sent back this reply: "May the gods do whatever they want to me if there is even a handful of dust left in Samaria for the armies under me!"

<sup>11</sup>Then Israel's king replied, "The one who prepares for battle shouldn't brag like one returning from battle."

<sup>12</sup>When Ben-hadad heard this message, he and the other kings were drinking in their tents. Ben-hadad said to his officers, "Take your positions!" So they took up their positions against the city.

<sup>13</sup>Suddenly a prophet approached Israel's King Ahab. He said, "This is what the LORD says: Do you see that great army? Today I am handing it over to you. Then you will know that I am the LORD."

<sup>14</sup>Ahab said, "Who will do it?"

The prophet answered, "This is what the LORD says: The servants of the district officials will do it."

"Who should start the battle?" Ahab asked.

"You should," the prophet replied.

<sup>15</sup>So Ahab assembled the servants of the district officials. There were two hundred thirty-two of them. Next he assembled the entire Israelite army, seven thousand total. <sup>16</sup>At noon they marched for battle. Meanwhile, Ben-hadad and the thirty-two kings allied with him were getting drunk in their tents. <sup>17</sup>The servants of the district officials were at the head of the march. Ben-hadad sent for information and was told, "Some men have marched out of Samaria."

<sup>18</sup>He said, "If they have come out in peace, take them alive; if they have come out for war, take them alive as well." <sup>19</sup>So the servants of the district governors with the army behind them marched out from the city. <sup>20</sup>Each one struck down his opponent, so that the Arameans fled. Israel chased after them. Ben-hadad, Aram's king, escaped with some horses and chariots. <sup>21</sup>Israel's king went out and attacked the horses and chariots. He attacked the Arameans with a fierce assault.

<sup>22</sup>The prophet came to Israel's king and said to him, "Maintain your strength! Know and understand that at the turn of the coming year, Aram's king will attack you again."

with him (on Ben-hadad's treaty with Judean king Asa, cf. 1 Kgs 15:18-22), *everything I have*: Ahab's response leads Ben-hadad to take Ahab literally by increasing his demands. After consultation, Ahab realizes the seriousness of Ben-hadad's search-and-plunder strategy. It's *evil*. This interchange offers a premonition of the kind of "seizing" and "taking away" that Ahab and Jezebel will do in the story of Naboth (1 Kgs 21).

20:10 *May the gods do*: a formula for making a solemn pledge (cf. 1 Kgs 2:23; 19:2).

20:13 *a prophet*: The presence of this unnamed prophet is proof that Elijah was wrong about being the only one in the Lord's service (cf. 1 Kgs 19:10, 14). *the LORD says... I am*

*the LORD*: The prophet is God's diplomatic agent announcing God's intentions. This prophetic saying is the theological center of the chapter (also in 1 Kgs 20:28). Israel's God is the one who superintends the historical process, no matter how many kings or horses and chariots are in play. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

20:22 *Know... Aram's king will attack you again*: By tying the two stories about Ahab and Ben-hadad together, this prophetic statement confirms that Israel's God isn't only the one who knows what's about to happen but also the one who controls the outcome. *turn... year*: clarified in 1 Kings 20:26 as "spring," which was the normal time for kings to go to war (cf. 2 Sam 11:1).

<sup>23</sup>The officers of Aram's king said to him, "Israel's god is a god of the mountains. That's why they were stronger than us. But if we fight them on the plains, we will certainly be stronger than they are. <sup>24</sup>This is what you need to do: Remove the kings from their military posts and appoint officials in their place. <sup>25</sup>Then raise another army like the one that was destroyed, with horses like those horses and chariots like those chariots. Then we will fight them on the plains, and we will certainly be stronger than they are." The king took their advice and followed it.

<sup>26</sup>So in the spring of the year, Ben-hadad assembled the Arameans and marched up to Aphek to fight with Israel. <sup>27</sup>Now the Israelites had already been assembled and provisioned, so they went to engage the Arameans. The Israelites camped before them like two small flocks of goats, but the Arameans filled the land.

<sup>28</sup>Then the man of God came forward and said to Israel's king, "This is what the LORD says: Because the Arameans said that the LORD is a god of the mountains but not a god of the valleys, I am handing this whole great army over to you. Then you will know that I am the LORD."

<sup>29</sup>The two armies camped opposite each other for seven days. On the seventh day, the battle began. The Israelites attacked and destroyed one hundred thousand Aramean foot soldiers in a single day. <sup>30</sup>Those who were left fled to Aphek, into the city where a wall fell on twenty-seven thousand more of them. But Ben-hadad escaped and hid in an inner room within the city.

<sup>31</sup>Ben-hadad's officers said to him, "Listen, we have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings. Allow us to put mourning clothes on our bodies and cords around our heads. We will then go to Israel's king. Perhaps he will let you live." <sup>32</sup>So they put mourning clothes on their bodies and cords around their heads. They went to Israel's king and said, "Ben-hadad is your slave. He begs, 'Please let me live!'"

Israel's king said, "Is he still alive? He is my brother."

<sup>33</sup>Taking this as a good sign, Ben-hadad's men quickly accepted this statement. <sup>b</sup> "Yes, Ben-hadad is your brother!" they said.

"Go and get him," the king ordered. So Ben-hadad came to him, and the king received him into his chariot.

<sup>34</sup>Ben-hadad said to the king, "I will return the towns that my father took from your father. Furthermore, you can set up markets for yourself in Damascus just as my father did in Samaria."

The king replied, <sup>1</sup> "On the basis of this covenant, I will let you go." So he made a covenant with Ben-hadad and set him free.

<sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>1</sup>Heb lacks *The king replied*.

20:23-25 *god of the mountains*: Like the prophets, the Aramean officers understand the war to be a matter of theological interpretation: The outcome will be determined by the strength of the gods. Just as 1 Kings 17 asserted that Israel's God isn't limited by geography or ethnicity and 1 Kings 18 that God (not Baal) is the source of fertility and rain, this story says that God isn't constrained by topography or to one or another kind of military strategy or equipment. Neither mountains nor plains, chariots nor horses, will hinder God's purposes as announced by the prophets.

20:26 *Aphek*: located near the Galilee Sea, perhaps a few miles to the east. The earlier battle engagement had occurred at Ahab's capital, Samaria (1 Kgs 20:1).

20:28 *man of God*: one of the prophets. See note on 1 Kings 13:1. *The LORD says ... I am the LORD*: See note on 1 Kings 20:13. The Lord is the chief actor in the story, and the prophets are God's messengers. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

20:29-30 *one hundred thousand ... single day ... twenty-*

*seven thousand*: The hyperbole is typical of biblical and ancient Near Eastern battle reports.

20:31-32 *mourning clothes ... cords*: symbols of submission to Ahab, as though they were coming to Ahab as prisoners led by ropes around their necks. *my brother*: Ahab immediately assumes the upper hand by naming him an equal-status vassal. In doing so he demonstrates not only his mercy but a strategic purpose that will be realized in Ben-hadad's response (1 Kgs 20:34).

20:34 *towns ... markets*: The real strength of empire is economic viability, here secured by access to (and perhaps control of) international trade. *your father*: The word "father" can mean "grandfather" or "ancestor." Baasha is the "father" in view here (cf. 1 Kgs 15:19-20). *covenant*: Ahab's equal partnership covenant (treaty) assures Ahab, for now at least, that he can regain a semblance of control over territories that had been lost under Baasha. Although the books of Kings tell readers little about how this covenant plays itself out, ancient Assyrian texts from Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE) report that Ahab and Ben-hadad, along

20:35 2Ki 2:3,  
2Ki 2:5, 2Ki 2:7,  
2Ki 2:15  
20:36 1Ki 13:24  
20:41 1Ki 20:38  
20:42 1Ki 20:39,  
1Ki 22:31  
21:1 1Ki 18:45,  
1Ki 18:46,  
2Ki 9:21  
21:3 Lv 25:23;  
Nm 36:7;  
Eze 46:18  
21:5 1Ki 16:31,  
1Ki 18:4,  
1Ki 19:1

<sup>35</sup>At the LORD's command a certain man who belonged to a prophetic group said to his friend: "Please strike me." But his friend refused to hit him. <sup>36</sup>So he said to his friend, "Because you didn't obey the LORD's voice, a lion will attack you as soon as you leave me." And as the friend left the prophet, a lion found him and attacked him. <sup>37</sup>Then the prophet found another man and said, "Please strike me." He hit the prophet, and the attack left a wound. <sup>38</sup>The prophet went and stood before the king by the road. He disguised himself by putting a bandage over his eyes. <sup>39</sup>When the king passed by, the prophet called out to the king, "Your servant was in the middle of the battle when someone brought a prisoner. 'Guard this man,' he said. 'If he escapes it will be your life for his—that, or you will owe me a *kikkar* of silver.' <sup>40</sup>Your servant got busy doing this and that, and the prisoner disappeared."

Israel's king replied, "It appears you have decided your own fate."

<sup>41</sup>The prophet quickly tore the bandage from over his eyes, and Israel's king recognized him as one of the prophets. <sup>42</sup>Then the prophet said to the king, "This is what the LORD says: Because you freed a man I condemned to die, it will be your life for his life, and your people for his people."

<sup>43</sup>So Israel's king went to his palace at Samaria, irritated and upset.

### *Naboth's vineyard*

**21** Now it happened sometime later that Naboth from Jezreel had a vineyard in Jezreel that was next to the palace of King Ahab of Samaria. <sup>2</sup>Ahab ordered Naboth, "Give me your vineyard so it can become my vegetable garden, because it is right next to my palace. In exchange for it, I'll give you an even better vineyard. Or if you prefer, I'll pay you the price in silver."

<sup>3</sup>Naboth responded to Ahab, "LORD forbid that I give you my family inheritance!"

<sup>4</sup>So Ahab went to his palace, irritated and upset at what Naboth<sup>1</sup> had said to him—because Naboth had said, "I won't give you my family inheritance!" Ahab lay down on his bed and turned his face away. He wouldn't eat anything.

<sup>5</sup>His wife Jezebel came to him. "Why are you upset and not eating any food?" she asked.

<sup>1</sup>Heb adds *from Jezreel*; also in 21:6-7, 15-16.

with other treaty partners, prevented Shalmaneser from advancing westward.

20:35-42 Through a series of events, the story emphasizes the power of the prophetic word and the failure of King Ahab to do the necessary thing.

20:35 *a prophetic group*: communities of prophets under the leadership and direction of a master (cf. 2 Kgs 2:3; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1). *obey the Lord's voice*: This apparently arbitrary event, which leads to the man's death, demonstrates that ignoring the commands of the prophets leads to disastrous results (and reminds readers of the story in 1 Kgs 13:11-32). See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

20:37-42 The prophet plays a trick on Ahab, catching him unawares by disguising himself in a living parable. Such actions were typical of prophets' interactions with kings. Compare Nathan's trick on David in the affair with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah (2 Sam 12:1-4).

20:39 *kikkar*: about 76 pounds.

20:42 *I condemned to die*: God had defeated Ben-hadad (1 Kgs 20:28). Now God, through the prophet, says that the death sentence had already been declared. The prophet assumes that Ahab should have killed Ben-hadad. His reasoning reflects Deuteronomic instructions, using the same Hebrew verb in Deuteronomy for "[to] place under the ban" (Deut 7:2; 20:16-17; cf. 1 Sam 15:17-24).

21:1-29 The story about how Ahab (and Jezebel) take Naboth's vineyard is the occasion for another prophetic critique, this time by Elijah. Like Ben-hadad's, (cf. 1 Kgs 20:3-6),

Ahab's story depicts the king as a taker. And like David, Ahab murders and takes (cf. 2 Sam 11).

21:1 *Jezreel*: a secondary residence of the king of Israel located on the edge of the fertile Jezreel Valley to the northeast of the capital, Samaria.

21:2 *Give me your vineyard*: Ahab uses the same verb, "to give," as Ben-hadad does (cf. 1 Kgs 20:5). But Ahab offers more than fair market value. If Naboth's vineyard falls inside the walls of the city, Ahab's offer falls within the scope of the law (cf. Lev 25:29-30). Based on archaeological discoveries at Jezreel, Ahab's palace lies inside a walled city. But if the property falls outside the walls, there may be some ambiguity (cf. Lev 25:23-28, 31). *vegetable garden*: A vineyard takes many years to nurture into productivity, whereas a vegetable garden in that location will immediately produce several crops per year (cf. Deut 11:10, the only other occurrence of "vegetable garden" in the OT, and where such a place is compared to "Egypt"). Vegetable gardens require much water (the topic of previous chapters; cf. Gen 13:10), whereas Israel is a land watered by the Lord (cf. Deut 11:11).

21:3 *Lord forbid . . . my family inheritance*: the nub of the matter. Naboth isn't willing to sacrifice his responsibility to his descendants. He isn't willing to forfeit the land that is theirs in trust from God, who is the true owner of the land (Lev 25:23; cf. Gen 17:8).

21:4 *irritated and upset*: Ahab is consistently out of sorts (cf. 1 Kgs 20:43).

21:5-7 *Jezebel*: As in previous stories, Jezebel takes over for the ineffective Ahab, who isn't ruling as the despot she

<sup>6</sup>He answered her, "I was talking to Naboth. I said, 'Sell me your vineyard. Or if you prefer, I'll give you another vineyard for it.' But he said, 'I won't give you my vineyard!'"

<sup>7</sup>Then his wife Jezebel said to him, "Aren't you the one who rules Israel? Get up! Eat some food and cheer up. I'll get Naboth's vineyard for you myself." <sup>8</sup>So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, putting his seal on them. She sent them to the elders and officials who lived in the same town as Naboth. <sup>9</sup>This is what she wrote in the letters: "Announce a fast and place Naboth at the head of the people. <sup>10</sup>Then bring in two liars in front of him and have them testify as follows: 'You cursed God and king!' Then take Naboth outside and stone him so he dies."

<sup>11</sup>The elders and the officials who lived in Naboth's town did exactly as Jezebel specified in the letters that she had sent. <sup>12</sup>They announced a fast and placed Naboth at the head of the people. <sup>13</sup>Then the two liars came and sat in front of him. They testified against Naboth in front of the people, "Naboth cursed God and king!" So the people took Naboth outside the town and stoned him so that he died.

<sup>14</sup>It was then reported to Jezebel, "Naboth was stoned. He's dead." <sup>15</sup>As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Get up and take ownership of the vineyard of Naboth, which he had refused to sell to you. Naboth is no longer alive; he's dead." <sup>16</sup>When Ahab heard that Naboth had died, he got up and went down to Naboth's vineyard to take ownership of it.

<sup>17</sup>The LORD's word came to Elijah from Tishbe: <sup>18</sup>Get up and go down to meet Israel's King Ahab in Samaria. He is in Naboth's vineyard. He has gone down to take ownership of it. <sup>19</sup>Say the following to him: This is what the LORD says: So, you've murdered and are now taking ownership, are you? Then tell him: This is what the LORD says: In the same place where the dogs licked up Naboth's blood, they will lick up your own blood.

<sup>20</sup>Ahab said to Elijah, "So you've found me, my old enemy!"

"I found you," Elijah said, "because you've enslaved yourself by doing evil in the LORD's eyes. <sup>21</sup>So I am now bringing evil on you! I will burn until you are consumed, and I will eliminate everyone who urinates on a wall that belongs to Ahab, whether slave or free. <sup>22</sup>I will make your household like that of Jeroboam, Nebat's son, and like the household of Baasha, Ahijah's son, because of the way you've angered me and because you've made Israel sin. <sup>23</sup>As for Jezebel, the LORD says this: Dogs will devour Jezebel in the area of Jezreel. <sup>24</sup>Dogs will eat anyone of Ahab's family who dies in town, and birds will eat anyone who dies in the country."

(<sup>25</sup>Truly there has never been anyone like Ahab who sold out by doing evil in the LORD's eyes—evil that his wife Jezebel led him to do. <sup>26</sup>Ahab's actions were deplorable. He followed

thinks he should be (cf. 1 Kgs 18:4; 19:2). *Aren't you the one who rules Israel?*: Jezebel assumes that those who govern have absolute right over the property of their subjects. The irony here is that the stories about the prophets set in Ahab's time all intend to depict God as the real ruler, not only of Israel but of the nations.

**21:8-14** Jezebel's plot to kill Naboth assumes a corrupt court system controlled by royalty. This act is a clear violation of instructions to act justly in all legal situations. Instead, Jezebel rigged the process, violating the instruction about justice in the courts (cf. Deut 16:18-20), and forced the corruption of the witnesses (cf. Deut 17:6; 19:15; on false witness, cf. Exod 20:16; Deut 5:20; 19:16-21). *cursed God and king*: On the trumped-up charge and the sentence (21:10, 13), see the instructions of Exodus 22:28; Leviticus 24:14-16.

**21:15** *take ownership*: The verb highlights the royal couple's grasping for land, which, in other biblical texts, only God is able to permit the people "to possess" or "to take" (see also 1 Kgs 21:18-19; cf. Deut 1:8, 21).

**21:17** *The LORD's word came*: Elijah appears again as the one who receives God's instructions to communicate judgment on Ahab and Jezebel. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

**21:18-19** *murdered . . . taking ownership*: The Lord takes up

Jezebel's words (1 Kgs 21:15). But the allusion to David's affair with Bathsheba, and Nathan's criticism, is clear (2 Sam 11-12; especially 2 Sam 12:9). *In the same place . . . your own blood*: Ahab was killed in battle (1 Kgs 22:34-36) and was buried in Samaria (1 Kgs 22:37-38). This is an inexact fulfillment of Elijah's words. It is Ahab's son Joram whose body ends up in Naboth's vineyard (2 Kgs 9:25-26). The point is that both died according to the Lord's word (1 Kgs 22:38; 2 Kgs 9:26), which reinforces one of the main themes of the books of Kings. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

**21:20-24** *my old enemy*: These two have had a history together (cf. 1 Kgs 17-18). *enslaved . . . evil in the Lord's eyes*: See note on 1 Kings 11:6. Elijah now names Ahab's evil just as Ahab identified Ben-hadad as evil (1 Kgs 20:7). According to the prophets, evil rebounds to harm the one who does it (cf. 1 Sam 25:39; 1 Kgs 2:32; Ezek 16:43; Obad 1:15). *urinates . . . slave or free*: See note on 1 Kings 14:6-11. Jeroboam and Baasha suffered a similar fate, preceded by similar prophetic pronouncements (cf. 1 Kgs 14:10-11; 16:3-4). Like them, Jezebel will become food for dogs and birds (cf. 2 Kgs 9:34-37). All of them die without an honorable burial (cf. Deut 28:25-26; Jer 16:4). *you've angered me*: See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8.

**21:25-26** The summary of Ahab's character is scathing.

**21:10** Ex 22:28;  
Lv 24:15-16;  
Dt 13:13;  
1Sa 2:12

**21:13** 2Ki 9:26

**21:18** 2Sa 12:7;

1Ki 16:29;

1Ki 21:19;

1Ki 22:31;

2Ki 1:3

**21:19** 1Ki 22:38;

2Ki 9:25-26

**21:20** 1Ki 18:17;

1Ki 21:25;

2Ki 17:17;

Ro 7:14

**21:21** 1Ki 14:10;

2Ki 9:8

**21:22** 1Ki 14:16;

1Ki 15:29;

1Ki 16:3;

1Ki 16:11

**21:23** 2Ki 9:10;

2Ki 9:30;

2Ki 9:36

**21:24** 1Ki 14:11;

1Ki 16:4

**21:25** 1Ki 16:30;

1Ki 21:7

21:27 Gn 37:34;  
2Ki 6:30  
21:28 1Ki 21:17  
21:29 Ex 10:3;  
2Ki 9:25-26  
22:2-4  
2Ch 18:2, 3  
22:5, 6  
2Ch 18:4, 5  
22:7-9  
2Ch 18:6-8

after the worthless idols exactly like the Amorites had done—the very ones the LORD had removed before the Israelites.)

<sup>27</sup>When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes and put mourning clothes on his body. He fasted, even slept in mourning clothes, and walked around depressed. <sup>28</sup>The LORD's word then came to Elijah from Tishbe: <sup>29</sup>Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has done so, I won't bring the evil during his lifetime. Instead, I will bring the evil on his household in the days of his son.

### Jehoshaphat and Ahab

**22** For three years there was no war between Aram and the Israelites. <sup>2</sup>In the third year, Judah's King Jehoshaphat visited Israel's king. <sup>3</sup>Israel's king said to his servants, "You know, don't you, that Ramoth-gilead is ours? But we aren't doing anything to take it back from the king of Aram." <sup>4</sup>He said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me into battle at Ramoth-gilead?"

Jehoshaphat said to Israel's king, "I am with you, and my troops and my horses are united with yours. <sup>5</sup>But," Jehoshaphat said to Israel's king, "first let's see what the LORD has to say."

<sup>6</sup>So Israel's king gathered about four hundred prophets, and he asked them, "Should I go to war with Ramoth-gilead or not?"

"Attack!" the prophets answered. "The LORD will hand it over to the king."

<sup>7</sup>But Jehoshaphat said, "Isn't there any other prophet of the LORD whom we could ask?"

<sup>8</sup>"There is one other man who could ask the LORD for us," Israel's king told Jehoshaphat, "but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, only bad. His name is Micaiah, Imlah's son."

"The king shouldn't speak like that!" Jehoshaphat said.

<sup>9</sup>So Israel's king called an officer and ordered, "Bring Micaiah, Imlah's son, right away."

*never been anyone... sold out by doing evil in the LORD's eyes:* The verb "sold out" is translated "enslaved" in 1 Kings 21:20. For the second time in the Ahab story, he is said to have done more evil than anyone else, even more than Jeroboam, since he introduced the worship of Baal (cf. 1 Kings 16:30-33). The story as a whole emphasizes Ahab's incorrigibility. Like a hardened criminal he seems irredeemable. Implicated along with Jezebel, Ahab is responsible for the violence against Naboth and for idolatrous imitation of the Amorites (cf. Exod 23:23-24, 33; Deut 8:19; and especially Deut 12:30; Josh 24:15; Judg 6:10). See notes on 1 Kings 9:6-9 and 11:1-5.

**21:27-29** In spite of Elijah's prediction, and the impression about Ahab's evil provided in the previous verses, Ahab's remorse leads God (through Elijah) to postpone the divine judgment (*the evil during his lifetime*). This explains the rather ordinary report about Ahab's death (1 Kgs 22:40).

**22:1-40** On the surface, the story tells how Ahab died in another war against the Arameans. The main theme, however, concerns the problem of recognizing the truly prophetic word when more than one interpretation is being offered.

**22:1-5** *three years:* After the battle of Aphek (1 Kgs 20:26-34), Ahab and Ben-hadad became covenant partners (1 Kgs 20:34). They were allies in a successful attempt to stop the Assyrians from moving westward (Battle of Qarqar in 853 BCE). According to the records of Assyria's King Shalmaneser III, Ahab provided the 13 coalition partners with 2,000 chariots and 10,000 soldiers. That partnership, however, wasn't enough to prevent this new initiative against Israelite territory held by Aram.

*Israel's king:* Ahab remains unnamed in the story, which emphasizes the role of the prophets and Judah's good King Jehoshaphat. The partnership between these two kings is the first to break the ongoing conflict between

Israel and Judah (cf. 1 Kgs 14:30; 15:7, 16, 32). *Ramoth-gilead is ours:* Ahab and Jehoshaphat conspire to take back this Israelite levitical city east of the Jordan River (cf. 1 Kgs 4:13; Deut 4:43; Josh 20:8; 21:38). The way Ahab speaks and Jehoshaphat responds (22:3-4) makes it appear as though Ahab is in charge. Since Ramoth-gilead is on a north-south transportation corridor, this action will help recover control of territory for Judah east of the Jordan and for Israel in the northern Galilee region. *But... what the LORD has to say:* Jehoshaphat's words indicate that there is yet another power to take into account. The writer positions him as over against Ahab in his use of the word "But." See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

**22:6-7** *gathered about four hundred prophets:* It was common practice in the ancient Near East for kings to consult prophets or diviners concerning the possible outcomes of their military endeavors. They ask directly for "the LORD's word." See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2. The number of prophets raises suspicions, since that was the same number of prophets of Asherah (1 Kgs 18:19). *The LORD will hand it over:* Repeated two more times in the chapter (1 Kgs 22:12, 15), this is a common expression intended to inspire confidence. Since it was spoken by a prophet to Ahab in an earlier confrontation with Aram, the affirmation by the 400 prophets doesn't appear surprising (cf. 1 Kgs 20:13, 28). *But... any other prophet of the LORD:* Jehoshaphat interjects a second time, nicely introduced with the word "But" (cf. 1 Kgs 22:5). Jehoshaphat stands for an alternative governance, not his own but the Lord's.

**22:8** *Micaiah:* a prophet, not identified earlier in 1 Kings, who has a history of unfavorable encounters with Ahab. *"The king shouldn't speak like that!":* Jehoshaphat continues his role as challenger of Ahab.



<sup>10</sup>Now Israel's king and Judah's King Jehoshaphat were sitting on their thrones, dressed in their royal robes at the threshing floor beside the entrance to the gate of Samaria. All the prophets were prophesying in front of them. <sup>11</sup>Zedekiah, Chenaanah's son, made iron horns for himself and said, "This is what the LORD says: With these horns you will gore the Arameans until there's nothing left of them!"

<sup>12</sup>All the other prophets agreed: "Attack Ramoth-gilead and win! The LORD will hand it over to the king!"

<sup>13</sup>Meanwhile, the messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Listen, the prophets all agree that the king will succeed. You should say the same thing they say and prophesy success."

<sup>14</sup>But Micaiah answered, "As surely as the LORD lives, I will say only what the LORD tells me to say."

<sup>15</sup>When Micaiah arrived, the king asked him, "Micaiah, should we go to war with Ramoth-gilead or not?"

"Attack and win!" Micaiah answered. "The LORD will hand it over to the king!"

<sup>16</sup>But the king said, "How many times must I demand that you tell me the truth when you speak in the name of the LORD?"

<sup>17</sup>Then Micaiah replied, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd! And then the LORD said: They have no master. Let them return safely to their own homes."

<sup>18</sup>Then Israel's king said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you? He never prophesies anything good about me, only bad."

<sup>19</sup>Then Micaiah said, "Listen now to the LORD's word: I saw the LORD enthroned with all the heavenly forces stationed beside him, at his right and at his left. <sup>20</sup>The LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab so that he attacks Ramoth-gilead and dies there?' There were many suggestions <sup>21</sup>until one particular spirit approached the LORD and said, 'I'll persuade him.' 'How?' the LORD asked. <sup>22</sup>'I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets,' he said. The LORD agreed, 'You will succeed in persuading him! Go ahead!' <sup>23</sup>So now, since the LORD has placed a lying spirit in the mouths of every one of these prophets of yours, it is the LORD who has pronounced disaster against you!"

<sup>24</sup>Zedekiah, Chenaanah's son, approached Micaiah and slapped him on the cheek. "Just how did the LORD's spirit leave me to speak to you?" he asked.

<sup>25</sup>Micaiah answered, "You will find out on the day you try to hide in an inner room."

<sup>26</sup>"Arrest him," ordered Israel's king, "and turn him over to Amon the city official and to Joash the king's son. <sup>27</sup>Tell them, 'The king says: Put this man in prison and feed him minimum rations of bread and water until I return safely.'"

<sup>28</sup>"If you ever return safely," Micaiah replied, "then the LORD wasn't speaking through me." Then he added, "Pay attention, every last one of you!"

22:10 *threshing floor*: Part of the process of harvesting grains included beating the grain on a large open area, and then throwing it up in the air to allow the wind to remove the straw and chaff. *gate*: The large open area was often the place where royalty consulted the people and where the courts were held (cf. 2 Sam 15:2; Amos 5:10-15).

22:11-12 *Zedekiah . . . iron horns*: By using a symbolic action, a common technique of prophets (e.g., Isa 20; Jer 13; Ezek 5), one of the 400 prophets tries to confirm the word spoken earlier, and which all the other prophets repeat word for word (1 Kgs 22:6).

22:13-14 *say the same thing . . . say only what the LORD tells me*: By trusting God's words, Micaiah willingly risks fueling further royal outrage.

12:15-17 *Attack . . . hand it over to the king*: Micaiah repeats the words of the 400. Ahab sees through Micaiah's mocking irony and challenges Micaiah to speak the truth. *shepherd*: a metaphor for the king (cf. 2 Sam 5:2; Zech 13:7).

22:19-23 Micaiah tells of a scene in the heavenly court, somewhat different from the one in Job 1-2, but similar to that found in Isaiah 6:1-3. Here God is on a throne and those *stationed beside him* belong to the heavenly forces

(see note on 1 Kgs 18:15). They are God's advisors and agents in governing the nations. These are God's cosmic army. And the prophet is their messenger (cf. Jer 23:18). See note on 1 Kings 18:15. *lying spirit*: The effect of this deception is for Ahab to hear what he wanted to hear in order to expose the true intention of God. *it is the LORD*: Viewed that way, the 400 prophets aren't so much false prophets as they are agents of God's purposeful interaction with a rebellious and idolatrous king. Although Jehoshaphat's question in 1 Kings 22:7 undermines their status as authentic prophets, Ahab doesn't get it. The narrator wants to undermine Ahab through exposing his mistrust of Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:8).

22:24-25 *Just how . . . leave me to speak to you?*: an understandable reaction, since Zedekiah also claimed to be speaking the Lord's words. Given the insight provided by 1 Kings 22:19-23, Zedekiah is rightfully shocked. *You will find out*: There is no way of knowing the outcome ahead of time. Only the outcome of the prophetic word will tell. And Zedekiah will discover that when the disaster actually arrives (cf. 1 Kgs 20:30).

22:28 *If you ever return . . . the LORD wasn't speaking through*

22:10-12  
2Ch 18:9-11  
22:13-28  
2Ch 18:12-27  
22:19 Job 1:6;  
Is 6:1; Dn 7:9-10  
22:22 Jgs 9:23;  
2Th 2:11  
22:23 Eze 14:9  
22:28  
Nm 16:29;  
Dt 18:22;  
2Ch 18:27;  
Mi 1:2

22:29-35  
2Ch 18:28-25  
22:41, 42  
2Ch 20:31  
22:43  
2Ch 20:32, 33  
22:44 2Ch  
18:1b  
22:45 2Ch 20:34  
22:48 2Ch 20:36  
22:50 2Ch 21:1

<sup>29</sup>So Israel's king and Judah's King Jehoshaphat attacked Ramoth-gilead. <sup>30</sup>Israel's king said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself when we go into battle,<sup>k</sup> but you should wear your royal attire." When Israel's king had disguised himself, they entered the battle.

<sup>31</sup>Meanwhile, Aram's king had commanded his thirty-two chariot officers, "Don't bother with anyone big or small. Fight only with Israel's king."

<sup>32</sup>As soon as the chariot officers saw Jehoshaphat, they assumed that he must be Israel's king, so they turned to attack him. But Jehoshaphat cried out for help. <sup>33</sup>When the chariot officers realized that he wasn't Israel's king, they stopped chasing him. <sup>34</sup>But someone randomly shot an arrow that struck Israel's king between the joints in his armor.<sup>l</sup>

"Turn around and get me out of the battle," the king told his chariot driver. "I've been hit!"

<sup>35</sup>While the battle raged all that day, the king stood propped up in the chariot facing the Arameans. But that evening he died after his blood had poured from his wound into the chariot. <sup>36</sup>When the sun set, a shout spread throughout the camp: "Retreat to your towns! Retreat to your land!" <sup>37</sup>Once the king had died, people came from Samaria and buried the king there. <sup>38</sup>They cleaned the chariot at the pool of Samaria. The dogs licked up the king's blood and the prostitutes bathed in it, just as the LORD had spoken.

### *Ahab's last days*

<sup>39</sup>The rest of Ahab's deeds and all that he did—including the ivory palace he built and all the towns he constructed—aren't they written in the official records of Israel's kings? <sup>40</sup>Ahab lay down with his ancestors. His son Ahaziah succeeded him as king.

### *Jehoshaphat rules Judah*

<sup>41</sup>Jehoshaphat, Asa's son, became king over Judah in the fourth year of Israel's King Ahab. <sup>42</sup>Jehoshaphat was 35 years old when he became king, and he ruled for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah; she was Shilhi's daughter. <sup>43</sup>Jehoshaphat walked in all the ways of his father Asa, not deviating from it. He did the right things in the LORD's eyes, with the exception that he didn't remove the shrines. The people continued to sacrifice and offer incense at them. <sup>44</sup>Jehoshaphat made peace with Israel's king. <sup>45</sup>The rest of Jehoshaphat's deeds, the great acts he did, and how he fought in battle, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? <sup>46</sup>Additionally, Jehoshaphat purged the land of the consecrated workers<sup>m</sup> who remained from the days of Asa.

<sup>47</sup>Now Edom had no king; only a deputy was ruler. <sup>48</sup>Jehoshaphat built Tarshish-styled ships to go to Ophir for gold. But the fleet didn't go because it was wrecked at Ezion-geber. <sup>49</sup>Then Ahaziah, Ahab's son, said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my sailors go with your sailors on the ships." But Jehoshaphat didn't agree to this. <sup>50</sup>Jehoshaphat died and was buried with his ancestors in his ancestor David's City. His son Jehoram succeeded him as king.

<sup>k</sup>LXX, Tg; MT *Disguise yourself and go* <sup>l</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>m</sup>Traditionally *cultic prostitutes*

*me*: Micaiah may be confident that he has spoken God's authentic word. But he isn't saying any more than the instruction in Deuteronomy about recognizing a true prophet (Deut 17:20-22): The prophecy is authentic if the prophet's words become reality.

**22:30-34** *disguise myself*: Ahab reveals his own lack of understanding of how the prophetic word plays itself out. There is a touch of dark humor here, since as it turns out Ahab was *randomly shot*. *Fight only with Israel's king*: confirms the inequality in the relationship between Ahab and Jehoshaphat. Although Ahab is the real power broker, he can't prevent the fulfillment of the prophetic word.

**22:38** *as the Lord had spoken*: The story ends by reminding readers of the real actor in the historical drama. *dogs... prostitutes*: Events have unfolded as announced (cf. 1 Kgs 21:19). *Dogs* may be a euphemism for male prostitutes, as the word is translated in Deuteronomy 23:18. Using these words together here both demonstrates how the prophet's words have been fulfilled and adds a subtle

critique of the idolatrous practices that Ahab supported during his reign.

**22:39-40** The summary of Ahab's reign is typical of the historian's style. See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43. *ivory palace*: Ivory inlays were common in palaces and houses, as confirmed by excavations in Samaria, Ahab's capital (cf. Amos 3:15; 6:4).

**22:41-50** Although Jehoshaphat is already mentioned in 1 Kings 15:24, and is one of the main characters in the immediately preceding story (1 Kgs 22:2), this short summary describes him as one who acted in keeping with God's standards. See note on 1 Kings 15:3-5 (cf. 1 Kgs 15:5, 11). In various ways, this description draws attention to Jehoshaphat's similarity to Solomon (cf. 1 Kgs 3:2-3; 4:24; 5:12; 9:26-28; 10:11). *shrines*: See note on 1 Kings 3:2-3 (cf. 1 Kgs 15:14). *made peace with Israel's king*: Compare 1 Kings 22:1. *consecrated workers*: See note on 1 Kings 14:22-24. *Tarshish-styled ships*: See note on 1 Kings 10:14-27. *Ophir*: See note on 1 Kings 9:26-28. *Ezion-geber*: an Edomite port on the Gulf of Aqaba (cf. 1 Kgs 9:26).

**Ahaziah rules Israel**

<sup>51</sup>In the seventeenth year of Judah's King Jehoshaphat, Ahaziah, Ahab's son, became king over Israel in Samaria. He ruled over Israel for two years. <sup>52</sup>He did evil in the LORD's eyes. He walked in his father's ways and his mother's ways—that is, in the ways of Jeroboam, Nebat's son, who had caused Israel to sin. <sup>53</sup>Ahaziah served Baal and worshipped him. He angered the LORD, Israel's God, by doing all the same things his father had done.

22:51-53 The summary of Ahaziah's reign over Israel echoes other similar descriptions rooted in the ways of Jeroboam (cf. 1 Kgs 12:28-31), especially that of Ahab, who initiated the worship of Baal (cf. 1 Kgs 16:31-33). *seventeenth year . . . two years*: Based on information in 2 Kings 3:1, Ahaziah probably reigned for a portion of

two separate calendar years, from 850 to 849 BCE. *his mother's ways*: referring to Jezebel. Of all the negative summaries in the books of Kings, this is the only one to mention the king's mother. *angered the Lord*: See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8. Ahaziah's story continues in 2 Kings 1.

over the past few years, the number of people who are using the Internet has increased significantly. This is due to the fact that the Internet has become an essential part of our lives. We use it for work, school, and entertainment. It has also become a major source of information. The Internet has changed the way we live and work. It has made it easier to communicate and share information. It has also made it easier to find what we need. The Internet is a powerful tool that has changed the world. It has made life easier and more convenient. It has also made it easier to stay connected to our loved ones. The Internet is a great thing and we should all use it to our advantage.

# 2 KINGS

The two books of Kings were originally one book. For a fuller summary of the historian's interests and major themes, see the introduction to 1 Kings.

Although the narrative of the books of Kings continues without interruption between 1 and 2 Kings, 2 Kings offers a theological explanation for the destruction and exile of Israel and of Judah. The writer highlights the role of the prophets, and the significance of the Lord's word, by painting a picture of God's perspective on Israel's and Judah's history. The historian's chief concern is the violation of the covenant relationship between God and God's people. Two features of that violation are abandoning exclusive loyalty to God by worshipping other gods, and disregarding the words of the prophets. The consequences of that covenant violation are drawn from the warnings of Deuteronomy (Deut 28:15, 20, 25, 36-37, 47-52, 63-65). Although other nations feature prominently in the story—from relatively small kingdoms (Moab, Edom, Philistia, and Aram)

to superpowers with massive military capacity (Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon)—their power and might don't dominate the historian's perspective. Rather, Israel's God, who is sovereign over nature and all nations, governs both gods and peoples. Israel's God, speaking through the prophets, brings about the warned consequences of human actions.

2 Kings takes up the story of Israel, beginning with the death of Ahab and the reign of Ahaziah. God's announcements to Elijah in 1 Kings 19:15-17 give structure to the first part of 2 Kings: Elisha takes over the role of Elijah; and over the course of time Hazael becomes king of Aram, and Jehu becomes king of Israel. After Elisha's death, the story reveals the slow death of Israel, and then of Judah. The historian criticizes king after king, and in the end the people as well, for failing to "do what was right in the Lord's eyes." Israelite kings consistently imitate the sin of Jeroboam, which involved setting up two gold calves at Bethel and Dan (1 Kgs 12:26-33). According to the historian, Israel



Moabite Stone, Victory stele of Mesha, King of Moab. Mesha thanks the god Chemosh for his victory over King Omri of Israel. *Musée du Louvre/BiblePlaces.com*

succumbs to the Assyrians (721 BCE) because of serious covenant violations (2 Kgs 17:7-41). Only three kings of Judah in all of Kings receive praise: Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah (1 Kgs 15:11; 2 Kgs 18:3-4; 22:2). Unfortunately, neither their positive actions nor Josiah's great reform of worship practices can rescue Judah from its own demise. Manasseh's actions are the nails in Judah's coffin. Because Judah didn't learn from what happened to Israel, so says the writer (2 Kgs 17:19; 21:13-16),

Judah fell to the Babylonians, and Jerusalem was destroyed (587/586 BCE).

After noting the exile of Judah (2 Kgs 25:23b), the historian's final paragraph tells of King Jehoiachin's release from prison after 37 years of captivity in Babylon. This may be a thinly disguised vision of hope. A Davidic king still lives. Perhaps God still has something good in store for Judah. But the historian is cautious. That hope remains implicit, if it is there at all.

### I. Elijah and the Reign of Israel's King Ahaziah (continued) (1:1-18)

### II. Elisha, Israel's Kings, and the Lord's Word (2:1-10:36)

- A. Elisha succeeds Elijah (2:1-25)
- B. Elisha's first political engagement: Joram, Jehoshaphat, and Moab (3:1-27)
- C. Elisha's prophetic powers (4:1-6:7)
  1. A poor widow receives provisions (4:1-7)
  2. A rich woman receives the gift of life (4:8-37)
  3. Hungry people receive provisions (4:38-44)
  4. The healing of Naaman the Syrian (5:1-27)
  5. An ax head recovered (6:1-7)
- D. Elisha's second political engagement: Israel and the Arameans (6:8-7:20)
  1. Elisha's intervention during Israel's Aramean war (6:8-23)
  2. Aram's siege of Samaria (6:24-7:20)
- E. A poor widow receives justice (8:1-6)
- F. Elisha's prophecy about Ben-hadad fulfilled (8:7-15)
- G. Jehoram and Ahaziah (8:16-29)
  1. Jehoram from Judah (8:16-24)
  2. Ahaziah from Judah (8:25-29)
- H. Elisha's prophecy about Ahab's dynasty fulfilled by Jehu (9:1-10:17)
- I. Jehu's final acts: destruction of the Baal worship (10:18-36)

### III. Jehoash from Judah (11:1-12:21)

### IV. Jehoahaz, Joash, and the Last Days of Elisha (13:1-25)

- A. Jehoahaz from Israel (13:1-9)
- B. Joash from Israel (13:10-13)
- C. Elisha's last days (13:14-25)

### V. Amaziah from Judah (14:1-22)

### VI. Jeroboam II from Israel (14:23-29)

### VII. Azariah from Judah (15:1-7)

### VIII. Last Days of Israel (15:8-31)

- A. Zechariah and the predicted end of Jehu's dynasty (15:8-12)
- B. Shallum (15:13-16)
- C. Menahem (15:16-22)
- D. Pekahiah (15:23-26)
- E. Pekah, Assyrian conquest, and the beginning of Israel's exile (15:27-31)

### IX. Jotham from Judah (15:32-38)

### X. Ahaz from Judah (16:1-20)

### XI. The End of Israel (17:1-41)

- A. Hoshea and Assyria's capture of Samaria (17:1-6)
- B. Looking back on the fall of Israel (17:7-41)

### XII. Hezekiah from Judah (18:1-20:21)

- A. Hezekiah and Assyria (18:1-37)
- B. Hezekiah and Isaiah (19:1-13)
- C. Hezekiah's prayer and God's response (19:14-37)
- D. Hezekiah's illness and Isaiah's word concerning Babylon (20:1-21)

### XIII. Manasseh From Judah (21:1-18)

### XIV. Amon From Judah (21:19-26)

### XV. Josiah Rules Judah (22:1-23:30)

- A. Josiah and the instruction scroll (22:1-20)
- B. Reform of the worship establishment (23:1-25)
- C. Prophetic announcement of Judah's demise (23:26-30)

### XVI. Judah's Last Days (23:31-25:21)

- A. Jehoahaz (23:31-33)
- B. Jehoiakim (23:34-24:7)
- C. Jehoiachin (24:8-17)
- D. Zedekiah and the fall of Judah and Jerusalem (24:18-25:21)

### XVII. Two Appendixes (25:22-30)

- A. Gedaliah governs Judah (25:22-26)
- B. Jehoiachin released from prison (25:27-30)

**Ahaziah's death**

**1** After Ahab died, Moab rebelled against Israel.

<sup>2</sup>Ahaziah fell out the window of his second-story room in Samaria and was hurt. He sent messengers, telling them, "Go to Ekron's god Baal-zebul, and ask if I will recover from this injury."

<sup>3</sup>But the LORD's messenger said to Elijah from Tishbe, "Go, intercept the messengers of Samaria's king, and ask them, 'Is it because there's no God in Israel that you are going to question Ekron's god Baal-zebul?' <sup>4</sup>This is what the LORD says: You will never get out of the bed you are lying in; you will die for sure!" So Elijah set off.

<sup>5</sup>The messengers returned to Ahaziah. He said to them, "Why have you come back?"

<sup>6</sup>They said to him, "A man met us and said, 'Go back to the king who sent you. Say to him, This is what the LORD says: Is it because there's no God in Israel that you've come to question Ekron's god Baal-zebul? Because of this, you will never get out of the bed you are lying in; you will die for sure!'"

<sup>7</sup>Ahaziah said to them, "Describe the man who met you and said these things."

<sup>8</sup>They said to him, "He wore clothes made of hair<sup>a</sup> with a leather belt around his waist."

Ahaziah said, "That was Elijah from Tishbe."

<sup>9</sup>So Ahaziah sent out a commander with fifty soldiers. The commander met up with Elijah while he was sitting on a hilltop. The commander said, "Man of God, the king says, 'Come down!'"

<sup>10</sup>Elijah replied to the commander of the fifty soldiers, "If I really am a man of God, may fire come down from the sky and burn up you and your fifty soldiers." Then fire came down from the sky and burned up the commander and his fifty soldiers.

<sup>11</sup>Ahaziah then sent another commander with fifty soldiers. The commander said to Elijah, "Man of God, this is what the king says: 'Hurry and come down!'"

<sup>12</sup>Elijah said to them, "If I really am a man of God, may fire come down from the sky and burn up you and your fifty soldiers." Then God's fire came down from the sky and burned up the commander and his fifty soldiers.

<sup>13</sup>For a third time Ahaziah sent a commander with fifty soldiers. So the third commander arrived. He kneeled before Elijah and begged him, "Man of God! Please have some regard for my life and the lives of these fifty soldiers who are your servants. <sup>14</sup>Look, fire came from the sky and burned up the two earlier commanders and their troops of fifty soldiers. Please have regard for my life."

<sup>15</sup>Then the LORD's messenger said to Elijah, "Go down with him. Don't be afraid of him." So Elijah set out to go with him to the king.

<sup>16</sup>Elijah said to the king: "This is what the LORD says: Why did you send messengers to question Ekron's god Baal-zebul? Is there no God in Israel whose word you could seek? Because of this, you won't ever get out of the bed you are lying in; you'll die for sure!" <sup>17</sup>So Ahaziah died in agreement with the LORD's word that Elijah had spoken.

<sup>a</sup>Or *He was a hairy man.*

1:1-18 The description of Ahaziah's reign in Israel continues after the summary of 1 Kings 22:51-53. Elijah returns as a key prophetic figure in this story.

1:1 *Moab rebelled:* This event, which describes a treaty violation, is told in more detail in 2 Kings 3. Ahaziah died (1 Kgs 22:51) and Joram took his place (2 Kgs 3:1) in the same year as the Moabite rebellion.

1:2 *Samaria:* the capital city of the northern kingdom Israel from the time of Omri (1 Kgs 16:24). *Ekron:* a Philistine city about 22 miles west of Jerusalem; part of Judah during David's time (1 Sam 7:14). *Baal-zebul:* The name means "lord of the flies." The word *zebul* may poke fun at the actual name of the god, Baal-zebul, which means something like "lord of glory/height/majesty." *Zebul* is part of Ahaziah's mother Jezebel's name (1 Kgs 16:31). The word is also used to describe the temple as a "lofty temple" (1 Kgs 8:13; or "house of zebul"). On Jesus and Baal-zebul, see Matthew 10:25; 12:24-27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15.

1:3 the LORD's messenger: most likely a heavenly

messenger who provides guidance for the prophet (cf. 2 Kgs 1:15). *no God in Israel:* The sentence, repeated three times in the chapter (cf. 2 Kgs 1:6, 16), recalls Elijah's contest with the god Baal (1 Kgs 18) with its contrasting saying "The LORD is the real God!" (1 Kgs 18:39).

1:9-15 The story bears marks of oral storytelling, with its clear repetitions and dynamic transformation in the third of its three parts. *Man of God:* See note on 2 Kings 13:1-10. Two delegations call on the *Man of God* to *come down*. Instead, Elijah causes fire to *come down* and destroy the men. Fire is associated with both Baal and Israel's God (cf. 1 Kgs 18:24, 38; contra 1 Kgs 19:11-12). Only Israel's God is the one whose words have the power to effect change. A lack of respect for that power (in this case represented in the person of the prophet) brings judgment. The leader of the third delegation not only has the proper respect for God's representative but also rightly protests the violence displayed in God's name.

1:17 Even though Ahaziah died of his injuries from having

1:1 2Sa 8:2;  
2Ki 3:5  
1:2 1Ki 22:40;  
2Ki 1:16;  
Mk 3:22  
1:3 1Ki 17:1,  
1Ki 21:17;  
2Ki 1:15  
1:4 2Ki 1:6,  
2Ki 1:16  
1:6 2Ki 1:2-3  
1:8 Zec 13:4;  
Mt 3:4; Mk 1:6  
1:9 2Ki 6:14  
1:10 1k 9:54  
1:12 2Ki 1:10

2:1 Gn 5:24;

1Ki 19:16;

2Ki 2:11;

2Ki 4:38

2:8 Ex 14:21-22;

1Ki 19:13;

1Ki 19:19;

2Ki 2:14

2:9 Nm 11:17;

Dt 12:17

2:10 Ac 1:10

Because Ahaziah had no son, Joram<sup>b</sup> became king after him in the second year of Judah's King Jehoram, who was Jehoshaphat's son. <sup>18</sup>The rest of Ahaziah's deeds, aren't they written in the official records of Israel's kings?

### **Elijah goes to heaven**

**2** Now the LORD was going to take Elijah up to heaven in a windstorm, and Elijah and Elisha were leaving Gilgal. <sup>2</sup>Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, because the LORD has sent me to Bethel."

But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you live, I won't leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

<sup>3</sup>The group of prophets from Bethel came out to Elisha. These prophets said to Elisha, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master away from you today?"

Elisha said, "Yes, I know. Don't talk about it!"

<sup>4</sup>Elijah said, "Elisha, stay here, because the LORD has sent me to Jericho."

But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you live, I won't leave you." So they went to Jericho.

<sup>5</sup>The group of prophets from Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master away from you today?"

He said, "Yes, I know. Don't talk about it!"

<sup>6</sup>Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, because the LORD has sent me to the Jordan."

But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you live, I won't leave you." So both of them went on together. <sup>7</sup>Fifty members from the group of prophets also went along, but they stood at a distance. Both Elijah and Elisha stood beside the Jordan River. <sup>8</sup>Elijah then took his coat, rolled it up, and hit the water. Then the water was divided in two! Both of them crossed over on dry ground. <sup>9</sup>When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "What do you want me to do for you before I'm taken away from you?"

Elisha said, "Let me have twice your spirit."

<sup>10</sup>Elijah said, "You've made a difficult request. If you can see me when I'm taken from you, then it will be yours. If you don't see me, it won't happen."

<sup>b</sup>Heb *Jehoram*; the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoram* or short *Joram* form.

fall out of the window, the author associates Ahaziah's death with Elijah's prophetic pronouncement. The narrator doesn't deny the effects of natural causes but associates them with the divine purpose. *in agreement with the LORD's word*: See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2. *Joram*: Ahaziah's brother and Ahab's son (cf. 2 Kgs 3:1). *because Ahaziah had no son*: Like the inheritance of property, the throne could pass to the brother.

1:18 *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

2:1-10:36 Events announced by Elijah (1 Kgs 19:15-18) are now about to take place. Elisha will succeed Elijah as prophet, Hazael will become king of Aram, and Jehu will take the throne of Israel. According to the historian, all of that occurs because of the power of the prophets' words. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2. Although Elisha is at the center of those events, his influence continues. The last story about him reports his death during the reign of Israel's King Joash (2 Kgs 13:14-25). The stories about Elisha are interspersed with material from the royal archives.

2:1-18 Elijah ascends in a windstorm, and Elisha becomes his successor.

2:1 *up to heaven in a windstorm*: The phrase is repeated in 2 Kings 2:11. Windstorms are often associated with God's powerful presence (cf. Job 38:1; 40:6; Ps 83:15; Isa 29:6; Nah 1:3; Zech 9:14). This event reports the transport of Elijah into God's presence. Enoch is the only other OT character who was "taken" by God (Gen 5:24). Much later, the story of Elijah's disappearance gave rise to the idea that he might return one day (cf. Mal 4:5-6; in the NT, see, e.g., Matt

17:10; Luke 1:17) *Gilgal*: perhaps the same place where Joshua and the Israelites first set up camp in the land (Josh 4:19-20). Gilgal became a prominent worship site in Israel under Samuel's leadership (cf. 1 Sam 10:8). King Saul was crowned there (1 Sam 11:15).

2:2-7 The story develops through three repetitions of Elijah's command *Stay here* and by Elisha's three solemn pledges that culminate in his promise *I won't leave you* (2:2, 4, 6). In each case, it is *the LORD* who sends Elijah to Bethel, Jericho, and the Jordan. *Jericho*: in the Jordan Valley about 10 miles north of the Dead Sea. *Bethel*: See 1 Kings 12:29-33. Between each of those exchanges, *The group of prophets* questions Elisha, and in each case Elisha silences them, for reasons not explained in the story itself (2:3, 5). See note on 2 Kings 6:1-7.

2:8 *water was divided... on dry ground*: Elijah's final act echoes two earlier events under Moses' and Joshua's leadership, where the sea or river parted and people crossed on dry ground (Exod 14:21-22; Josh 3:15-17). Just as Elijah mirrors Moses, Elisha will mirror Joshua (2 Kgs 2:14). The story emphasizes continuity of leadership and implies that God continues to be at work through these delegates. 2:9-10 *twice your spirit*: According to an analogy with inheritance instructions, Elisha is asking for the larger portion that rightfully belongs to the oldest male child (cf. Deut 21:15-17). He is asking for a spiritual inheritance; he has already left his earthly inheritance behind (1 Kgs 19:19-21). He isn't asking for twice Elijah's power but a larger share than the other prophets. *difficult request*: Elijah knows that Elisha will take on his prophetic role.



<sup>11</sup>They were walking along, talking, when suddenly a fiery chariot and fiery horses appeared and separated the two of them. Then Elijah went to heaven in a windstorm.

<sup>12</sup>Elisha was watching, and he cried out, "Oh, my father, my father! Israel's chariots and its riders!" When he could no longer see him, Elisha took hold of his clothes and ripped them in two.

### **Elisha succeeds Elijah**

<sup>13</sup>Then Elisha picked up the coat that had fallen from Elijah. He went back and stood beside the banks of the Jordan River. <sup>14</sup>He took the coat that had fallen from Elijah and hit the water. He said, "Where is the LORD, Elijah's God?" And when he hit the water, it divided in two! Then Elisha crossed over.

<sup>15</sup>The group of prophets from Jericho saw him from a distance. They said, "Elijah's spirit has settled on Elisha!" So they came out to meet him, bowing down before him. <sup>16</sup>"Look," they told him, "there are fifty strong men among us, your servants. Please let them go and search for your master. Perhaps the LORD's spirit has picked him up and put him down on some mountain or in some valley."

Elisha said, "Don't send them." <sup>17</sup>They insisted until he became embarrassed and said, "Okay, send them." So they sent fifty men who searched for three days. But they couldn't find Elijah. <sup>18</sup>When these men returned to Elisha, who was staying in Jericho, he said to them, "Didn't I tell you not to go?"

<sup>19</sup>The citizens said to Elisha, "As you can see, sir, this city is in a good location, but the water is bad, and the land causes miscarriages."

<sup>20</sup>He said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put some salt in it." They did so. <sup>21</sup>Elisha then went out and threw salt into the spring. He said, "This is what the LORD has said: I have purified this water. It will no longer cause death and miscarriage." <sup>22</sup>The water has stayed pure right up to this very day, in agreement with the word that Elisha spoke.

### **Elisha and the bears**

<sup>23</sup>Elisha went up from there to Bethel. As he was going up the road, some young people came out of the city. They mocked him: "Get going, Baldy! Get going, Baldy!" <sup>24</sup>Turning around, Elisha looked at them and cursed them in the LORD's name. Then two bears came out of the woods and mangled forty-two of the youths. <sup>25</sup>From there Elisha went to Mount Carmel and then back to Samaria.

The difficulty arises because the request isn't Elijah's to grant. His response indicates that it is the Lord who must provide the answer, though Elijah confirms that *it will be yours*.

2:11-12 *my father*: indicates the prophetic mentoring relationship of a disciple to a master. It also refers back to his request for a prophetic inheritance (2 Kgs 2:9). *chariot... horses... windstorm... chariots... riders*: These images depict God's cosmic army. This army appeared in God's battle against Ahab (1 Kgs 22:19), and appears later again in God's battle against the Arameans (2 Kgs 6:15-17). Horses, chariots, fire, and storms are often associated with God's appearance (which is called a "theophany": cf. Ezek 1; Hab 3:8, 11; Pss 18:14; 104:3). *clothes... ripped*: a gesture normally associated with mourning (cf. 1 Sam 4:12; 2 Sam 1:2).

2:13-14 *the coat... hit the water*: Elisha imitates Elijah's action (2 Kgs 2:8) with the same effect. The coat that he picks up replaces the one he ripped in two (2 Kgs 2:12), and symbolizes his taking up Elijah's prophetic authority and role. "Where is the Lord, Elijah's God?": With this question Elisha calls on God to take action, which will serve as a public demonstration of Elisha as Elijah's successor. On the parallel between Elijah/Elisha and Moses/Joshua, see note on 2 Kings 2:8.

2:15-18 *search for your master*: Having seen the event from a distance, the prophets affirm Elisha's prophetic

succession, but they think God has simply taken Elijah elsewhere (cf. 1 Kgs 18:12). "Didn't I tell you not to go?": The incident is the first confirmation that Elisha's word is dependable, which affirms his prophetic authority.

2:19-22 The pure water of Jericho's spring and the surrounding fertile land are here ascribed to this act by Elisha. Although the story may be a folkloric way of explaining the remarkable fertility of the place, it clearly emphasizes the power of the divine word. *what the Lord has said*: In verse 21 the Lord's word, the divine *I*, is the cause, which is a keynote in the historian's presentation of the prophets. *to this very day*: In verse 22 Elisha's word confirms the life-sustaining power of the prophetic word through time. 2:23-25 *Baldy*: Perhaps the young people are insulting Elisha by comparing him to Elijah, who may have been hairy (cf. translation note a at 2 Kgs 1:8). *cursed them in the Lord's name*: This gruesome story illustrates that no one may act disrespectfully toward the prophets without expecting terrible consequences. Including this story here contributes to establishing Elisha as Elijah's legitimate successor. *forty-two*: a symbolic number whose meaning is unclear (cf. 2 Kgs 10:14). Some think it is associated with evil (the multiplication of, or conflict between six, the human number, and seven, the divine number). *Mount Carmel... Samaria*: These two sites remind readers of Elijah's contests with the prophets of Baal and his opposition to Ahab's worship of Baal.

2:11 Gn 5:24;  
2Ki 2:1, 2Ki 6:17  
2:12 2Ki 13:14;  
Job 1:20  
2:13 1Ki 19:19;  
2Ki 2:8, 2Ki 2:14  
2:14 1Ki 19:19;  
2Ki 2:8, 2Ki 2:13  
2:15 Nm 11:17,  
Nm 11:25;  
2Ki 2:3, 2Ki 2:7,  
2Ki 4:1  
2:16 1Ki 18:12;  
Ac 8:39  
2:17 2Ki 8:11  
2:19 Ex 15:23  
2:20 Nm 18:19;  
1Sa 26:11;  
1Ki 14:3  
2:21 Ex 15:25;  
2Ki 4:41, 2Ki 6:6  
2:23 2Ch 30:10,  
2Ch 36:16;  
Job 19:18  
2:24 Prv 17:12

3:1 2KI 1:17b  
 3:5 2KI 1:1  
 3:11 1KI 19:21,  
 1KI 22:7

### Moab's rebellion

**3** Joram,<sup>c</sup> Ahab's son, became king of Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, Judah's king. He ruled for twelve years. <sup>2</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes, but he wasn't as bad as his father and mother. He removed the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had made. <sup>3</sup>But he nevertheless clung to the sins that Jeroboam, Nebat's son, had caused Israel to commit. He didn't deviate from them.

<sup>4</sup>Now Moab's King Mesha kept sheep. He would pay Israel's king one hundred thousand lambs and the wool from one hundred thousand rams. <sup>5</sup>But when Ahab died, Moab's king rebelled against Israel's king. <sup>6</sup>So King Joram set out from Samaria at once. He prepared all Israel for war. <sup>7</sup>He sent word to Judah's King Jehoshaphat, "Moab's king has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?"

Jehoshaphat responded, "Yes, I'll go. We'll fight as one: you and I, our troops and our horses."  
<sup>8</sup>"Which road should we take?" Joram asked.

Jehoshaphat responded, "The road that goes through the Edomite wilderness."

<sup>9</sup>So Israel's and Judah's kings set out with the king of Edom. They marched around for seven days until there was no water left for the army or for the animals with them. <sup>10</sup>Israel's king said, "This is terrible! Has the LORD brought us three kings together only to hand us over to Moab?"

<sup>11</sup>Jehoshaphat said, "Isn't there any prophet of the LORD around, so we could question the LORD through him?"

One of the servants of Israel's king answered, "Elisha, Shaphat's son, is here. He used to pour water on Elijah's hands."

<sup>12</sup>Jehoshaphat said, "He has the LORD's word!" So Israel's king and Jehoshaphat and Edom's king went down to see Elisha.

<sup>13</sup>Elisha said to Israel's king, "What do we have to do with each other? Go to your father's or mother's prophets."

Then Israel's king said to him, "Don't say that, because it is the LORD who has brought us three kings together—but only to hand us over to Moab!"

<sup>14</sup>Elisha said, "I swear by the life of the LORD of heavenly forces, the one I stand before

<sup>c</sup>Heb *Jehoram* (also in 3:6); the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoram* or short *Joram* form.

**3:1-27** Joram's alignment with Jehoshaphat and the Edomite king to wage war against treaty-breaking. Moab provides the setting for Elisha's first political engagement.

**3:1-3** *evil in the LORD's eyes*: This is the first of many occurrences of this evaluative statement in 2 Kings. See note on 1 Kings 11:6. *sacred pillar of Baal*: See note on 1 Kings 14:22-24 (cf. 2 Kgs 10:26-27; 17:10; 23:14). *sins*... *Jeroboam*: See note on 1 Kings 12:29-33.

**3:4-27** The story reports the consequences of a treaty violation by King Mesha of Moab. The Moabite Stone, discovered in 1868 and now in the Louvre museum in Paris, records Mesha's victory in a war against Israel. Mesha's account describes Omri's and Ahab's occupation of Moabite lands and reports Mesha's victory against Israel (850 BCE). This story is told from an Israelite point of view, but without a clear victory in the conflict.

**3:4-5** *pay Israel's king*: Certain types of treaty relationships required payment, perhaps for protection against military incursion (see note on 1 Kgs 14:25-31). Such payments were the ancient equivalent of modern occupation in which a more powerful country extracts resources from the occupied country. *rebelled*: a term that indicates violation of the treaty obligations (cf. 1 Kgs 12:19; 2 Kgs 1:1; 8:20). As verse 5 implies, Mesha may have sensed Israelite weakness and an opportunity for independence after Ahab's death.

**3:7** *Jehoshaphat responded*: His response is like the one he offered to Ahab (1 Kgs 22:4). According to 1 Kings 22:47, Edom depended on Judah and was under its

control. Jehoshaphat may have willingly participated in order to protect Judah's strategic interests east of the Jordan. In addition, Judah and Israel had an official marriage alliance: Jehoshaphat's son had married Ahab's daughter (2 Kgs 8:18).

**3:8** *Which road... Edomite wilderness*: Israel controlled the territory east of the Jordan River and north of Moab. Instead of approaching from the north, as might be expected, Joram and Jehoshaphat move up from the south through Edom.

**3:9-10** *Has the LORD... hand us over to Moab?*: Joram interprets the lack of water as the Lord's doing.

**3:11-12** As in the campaign of Ahab and Jehoshaphat against the Arameans, Jehoshaphat is interested in what the Lord has to say through the prophets (2 Kgs 22:5, 7). In 2 Kings 22, however, Jehoshaphat makes the suggestion before marching off to war rather than after, as he does here. The difference doesn't seem to have an impact on the outcome, since God is the main actor in any case. *He has the LORD's word!*: This is one of the most prominent themes in the books of Kings, which depict God's action through the prophets as the energizing power in the story of Israel and Judah. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

**3:13-14** Elisha has little respect for Joram, and participates in the endeavor only reluctantly because of Jehoshaphat (reflecting the larger prophetic interest of the narrator in Judah and the dynasty of David). *your father's or mother's prophets*: the prophets of the northern kingdom who

and serve, if I didn't care about Judah's King Jehoshaphat, I wouldn't notice you or even look at you! <sup>15</sup>Now bring me a musician." While the musician played, the LORD's power came over Elisha. <sup>16</sup>He said, "This is what the LORD says: This valley will be filled with pools." <sup>17</sup>This is what the LORD says: You won't see any wind or rain, but that valley will be full of water. Then you'll be able to drink—you, your cattle, and your animals. <sup>18</sup>This is easy for the LORD to do. He will also hand Moab over to you. <sup>19</sup>You will then attack every fort and every grand city, cutting down all the good trees, stopping up all the springs, and ruining the good fields with stones."

<sup>20</sup>The next morning, at the time to offer the grain offering, water came flowing from the direction of Edom. The land filled up with water.

<sup>21</sup>Now all the Moabites had heard how these kings had come to fight against them. So all who were able to fight were summoned, and they took up positions along the border. <sup>22</sup>They got up early in the morning as the sun's rays shone on the water. The Moabites saw the water from a distance. It looked as red as blood. <sup>23</sup>They said, "It's blood! The kings must have fought each other and killed themselves! Now get the plunder, Moab!"

<sup>24</sup>But when they entered Israel's camp, the Israelites rose up and attacked the Moabites. The Moabites fled from them. Israel moved forward, striking the Moabites down as they went. <sup>25</sup>Then the Israelites destroyed the Moabite cities. Each Israelite threw a stone on every piece of good land until it was covered. They stopped up every spring and cut down every good tree. Only Kir-hareseth remained with its stone wall intact,<sup>f</sup> but then stone throwers<sup>g</sup> surrounded it and attacked it.

<sup>26</sup>Moab's king saw that he was losing the battle. So he took seven hundred soldiers with him, each with sword in hand, to break through to Edom's king. But they failed. <sup>27</sup>Then he took his oldest son, who was to succeed him as king, and he offered him on the wall as an

3:15 1Sa 10:5;  
1Ki 18:46;  
Eze 1:3  
3:16 2Ki 3:17;  
2Ki 4:3  
3:17 Ps 107:35

*The Mesha Inscription* This is an inscription from the 9th century BCE that tells of King Mesha, who, with the help of his god Chemosh, conquers part of the Transjordan area, thereby recovering it from Israelite control. The inscription illustrates the story in 2 Kings 3. It depicts an intimate relationship between people, land, and gods. The Assyrian diplomat who negotiates with Hezekiah holds a similar view. He assumes that the god of empire is greater than all the gods of the petty kingdoms Nebuchadnezzar's army had defeated (2 Kgs 18:33-35).

"Omri was the king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab for many days, for Chemosh was angry at his land. . . . And Omri took possession of the whole land of Medeba, and he lived there . . . forty years. But Chemosh restored it in my days. . . . And the men of Gad lived in the land of Atarot from ancient times; and the king of Israel built Atarot for himself, and I fought against the city and captured it. And I killed all the people of the city as a sacrifice for Chemosh and for Moab. . . . And Chemosh said to me, "Go, take Nebo from Israel." And I went in the night and fought against it . . . and I took it and I killed the whole population. . . . For I had put it to the ban for Ashtar Chemosh."

Later in the inscription, we read of Mesha's restoration of towns, cisterns, and even "flocks of the land," a reference that resonates with 2 Kings 3:4, which notes that "Moab's King Mesha kept sheep" and that he paid tribute to Israel's king with "one hundred thousand lambs."

<sup>d</sup>LXX, Vulg *Fill this valley with ditches.* <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain

supported the imperial interests (cf. 1 Kgs 18:19; 22:1-12). The unexpected mention of *mother's* invites the reader to recall Jezebel's influence in the northern Israelite court (e.g., 1 Kgs 21). *heavenly forces*: See note on 1 Kings 18:15. 3:15 *musician*: Sometimes music induced prophetic trances (1 Sam 10:5-6; cf. 1 Sam 19:20). 3:16-19 Elisha announces a double message: water in the dry season and a victory over Moab. *cutting down . . . trees . . . fields with stones*: Elisha's prediction seems excessive, especially in the light of Deuteronomy's interest in protecting trees (Deut 20:19-20). 3:20-25 Elisha's words become a reality. *water . . . from the direction of Edom*: The phrase *red as blood* (Heb. *'adummim dam*) reflects a play on words with "Edom" (Heb. *'Edom*), *red as blood*: In the pools of red and pink limestone of the

region, the water remaining after the flash flood might look like blood. *Kir-hareseth*: identified as Kerak, now the site of a ruined crusader castle situated on a high hill surrounded by deep valleys. It is situated about 11 miles east of the Dead Sea and 17 miles south of the Arnon Gorge. 3:26-27 *took his oldest son . . . burned offering*: In a desperate move, King Mesha sacrifices his son. Deuteronomy appears to prohibit such behavior (cf. Deut 18:10), but the historian criticizes Israel and Judah for similar actions (cf. 2 Kgs 16:3; 17:17; 21:6). *outrage . . . by Israel*: Interpreters differ about the meaning here, depending on whether the preposition is translated *by* or *against*. Either Israel was outraged and left or the sacrifice sparked a kind of deadly anger unleashed by the Moabite army against Israel, which caused the Israelites to retreat. In either case,

4:1 Lv 25:39;  
2Ki 2:3;  
Mt 18:25

4:8 Josh 19:18

4:9 1Ki 17:24;  
2Ki 4:7

4:10 Mt 10:41;  
Ro 12:13

4:13 2Sa 19:13

4:17 1Sa 1:20;  
2Ki 4:16;  
Ps 113:9

entirely burned offering. As a result, outrage was expressed by Israel. So they pulled back from Moab's king and returned to their own country.

### A poor widow

**4** Now there was a woman who had been married to a member of a group of prophets. She appealed to Elisha, saying, "My husband, your servant, is dead. You know how he feared the LORD. But now someone he owed money to has come to take my two children away as slaves."

<sup>2</sup>Elisha said to her, "What can I do for you? Tell me what you still have left in the house."

She said, "Your servant has nothing at all in the house except a small jar of oil."

<sup>3</sup>He said, "Go out and borrow containers from all your neighbors. Get as many empty containers as possible. <sup>4</sup>Then go in and close the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all those containers. Set each one aside when it's full."

<sup>5</sup>She left Elisha and closed the door behind her and her sons. They brought her containers as she kept on pouring. <sup>6</sup>When she had filled the containers, she said to her son, "Bring me another container."

He said to her, "There aren't any more." Then the oil stopped flowing, <sup>7</sup>and she reported this to the man of God.

He said, "Go! Sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what remains."

### A rich woman

<sup>8</sup>One day Elisha went to Shunem. A rich woman lived there. She urged him to eat something, so whenever he passed by, he would stop in to eat some food. <sup>9</sup>She said to her husband, "Look, I know that he is a holy man of God and he passes by regularly. <sup>10</sup>Let's make a small room on the roof. We'll set up a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp for him there. Then when he comes to us, he can stay there."

<sup>11</sup>So one day Elisha came there, headed to the room on the roof, and lay down. <sup>12</sup>He said to his servant Gehazi, "Call this Shunammite woman." Gehazi called her, and she stood before him. <sup>13</sup>Elisha then said to Gehazi, "Say to her, 'Look, you've gone to all this trouble for us. What can I do for you? Is there anything I can say on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?'"

She said, "I'm content to live at home with my own people."

<sup>14</sup>Elisha asked, "So what can be done for her?"

Gehazi said, "Well, she doesn't have a son, and her husband is old."

<sup>15</sup>Elisha said, "Call her." So Gehazi called her, and she stood at the door. <sup>16</sup>Elisha said, "About this time next year, you will be holding a son in your arms."

But she said, "No, man of God, sir; don't lie to your servant."

<sup>17</sup>But the woman conceived and gave birth to a son at about the same time the next year. This was what Elisha had promised her.

although Israel inflicted serious damage, they didn't get the decisive victory predicted by Elisha (2 Kgs 3:18).

**4:1–6:23** A series of stories about Elisha focuses on his prophetic powers. Elisha provides life-giving provisions and healing in the face of scarcity, illness, and death. These stories not only confirm Elisha as an authentic prophet but also demonstrate that his God is the true and only source of life and of whatever sustains life.

**4:1–7** Like Elijah (1 Kgs 17:8–16), Elisha provides resources to meet the need of a destitute widow. *feared the LORD*: a common way of speaking about reverence for and loyalty to God. *take my two children away as slaves*: The story is rooted in the danger of debt-slavery, a common problem in the ancient world (cf. Exod 21:2–11; Lev 25:39–55; Deut 15:12–15; Amos 2:6; 8:6; Neh 5:1–5). The story illustrates how Elisha acts on God's behalf as one who cares for widows and orphans (Deut 10:18), by providing essential and staple food ingredients (oil and flour).

**4:8–37** The situation of a wealthy woman, one of Elisha's supporters, becomes an opportunity for him to offer the gift of life itself, once through a miraculous

birth, and again through a restoration from death. This story parallels another of the Elijah stories (1 Kgs 17:17–24). The story spans approximately five years, with each of three parts beginning with the words *one day* (4:8, 11, 18).

**4:8** *Shunem*: in northern Israel at the western end of the Jezreel Valley to the southeast of Mount Carmel (mentioned also in 1 Kgs 1:3).

**4:9–10** *passes by regularly*: Elisha probably traveled through on a circuit visiting various communities and groups of prophets along the way (cf. 1 Sam 7:15–17). *holy man of God*: See note on 2 Kings 13:1–10.

**4:13** *What can I do for you?*: This is the same question Elisha asks the widow (2 Kgs 4:2). The prophet doesn't discriminate between the poor and the rich but meets their needs according to their predicament.

**4:14–16** *doesn't have a son*: Although this wealthy woman (2 Kgs 4:8) isn't vulnerable in the same way as the widow in the previous story, without a son she has no practical means of support in her old age. Here the story emphasizes the power of the prophetic word to bring about

<sup>18</sup>The child grew up. One day he ran to his father, who was with the harvest workers. <sup>19</sup>He said to his father, "Oh, my head! My head!"

The father said to a young man, "Carry him to his mother." <sup>20</sup>So he picked up the boy and brought him to his mother.

The boy sat on her lap until noon. Then he died. <sup>21</sup>She went up and laid him down on the bed for the man of God. Then she went out and closed the door. <sup>22</sup>She called her husband and said, "Send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys so that I can hurry to the man of God and come back."

<sup>23</sup>Her husband said, "Why are you going to him today? It's not a new moon or sabbath."

She said, "Don't worry about it." <sup>24</sup>She saddled the donkey, then said to her young servant, "Drive the donkey hard. Don't let me slow down unless I tell you." <sup>25</sup>So she went off and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

As soon as the man of God saw her from a distance, he said to Gehazi his servant, "Look, it's the Shunammite woman!" <sup>26</sup>Run out to meet her and ask her, "Are things okay with you, your husband, and your child?"

She said, "Things are okay."

<sup>27</sup>When she got to the man of God at the mountain, she grabbed his feet. Gehazi came up to push her away, but the man of God said, "Leave her alone! She is distraught, but the LORD has hidden the reason from me and hasn't told me why."

<sup>28</sup>She said, "Did I ask you for a son, sir? Didn't I say, 'Don't raise my hopes'?"

<sup>29</sup>Elisha said to Gehazi, "Get ready, take my staff, and go! If you encounter anyone, don't stop to greet them. If anyone greets you, don't reply. Put my staff on the boy's face."

<sup>30</sup>But the boy's mother said, "I swear by your life and by the LORD's life, I won't leave you!" So Elisha got up and followed her.

<sup>31</sup>Gehazi went on ahead of them. He set the staff on the young boy's face, but there was no sound or response. So he went back to meet Elisha and told him, "The boy didn't wake up."

<sup>32</sup>Elisha came into the house and saw the boy lying dead on his bed. <sup>33</sup>He went in and closed the door behind the two of them. Then he prayed to the LORD. <sup>34</sup>He got up on the bed and lay down on top of the child, putting his mouth on the boy's mouth, his eyes on the boy's eyes, his hands on the boy's hands. And as he bent over him, the child's skin grew warm.

<sup>35</sup>Then Elisha got down and paced back and forth in the house. Once again he got up on the bed and bent over the boy, at which point the boy sneezed<sup>b</sup> seven times and opened his eyes.

<sup>36</sup>Elisha called for Gehazi and said, "Call the Shunammite woman." Gehazi called her, and she came to Elisha. He told her, "Pick up your son." <sup>37</sup>She came and fell at his feet, facedown on the ground. Then she picked up her son and left.

**Miracles with food**

<sup>38</sup>When Elisha returned to Gilgal, there was a famine in the land. A group of prophets was sitting before him. He said to his servant, "Put on the big pot and cook some stew for the

<sup>b</sup>Or *gasped*; Heb uncertain

whatever the prophet announced. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

4:23 *new moon or sabbath*: It was customary to visit the prophets on festival days, like the beginning of the month or the Sabbath day. *Don't worry about it*: The woman appears to be single-minded about what needs to be done, as the following verses make clear. She acts because of her husband's lack of attention to his son's injury, and he seems not to care that his wife would want to go to a holy man in the midst of crisis (cf. Noah with his wife in Judg 13 and Eli with his wife Hannah in 1 Sam 1).

4:26-28 *Are things okay...okay*: Both Elisha and the woman use the Hebrew word *shalom*, which, in this context, implies well-being. Yet all is not well. In her distress the woman exhibits extraordinary trust in the ability of the prophet to address her new situation of need. *The LORD has hidden the reason*: It seems as though Elisha doesn't

4:18 Ru 2:4; Is 49:10  
 4:19 2Ki 4:20  
 4:20 1Ki 17:17; 2Ki 4:19; Is 49:15  
 4:21 2Ki 4:32  
 4:23 Nm 10:10; Nm 28:11; 1Ch 23:31  
 4:25 2Ki 2:25  
 4:26 1Sa 3:18; Job 1:21-22; Ps 39:9  
 4:27 2Ki 4:25  
 4:28 2Ki 4:16  
 4:29 Ex 14:16; 1Ki 18:46; Lk 10:4  
 4:30 2Ki 2:2  
 4:31 2Ki 4:12; Jn 11:11  
 4:32 1Ki 19:16; 1Ki 19:19; 2Ki 2:2, 2Ki 2:12; 2Ki 3:13  
 4:33 1Ki 17:20; 2Ki 4:4; Mt 6:6; Lk 8:51  
 4:34 1Ki 17:21; Ac 20:10  
 4:35 2Ki 4:34; 2Ki 8:5; 2Ki 13:21  
 4:36 2Ki 4:12; Heb 11:35  
 4:37 2Ki 2:15; Heb 11:35  
 4:38 2Ki 2:1; 2Ki 2:3, 2Ki 2:5; 2Ki 8:1

understand the problem. The woman's reply in 4:28 recalls her earlier plea (2 Kgs 4:16) and evokes Elisha's personal involvement.

4:29-31 *my staff*: In spite of having Elisha's staff, Gehazi isn't able to revive the boy. *I swear... the LORD's life*: a traditional Hebrew formula when making a solemn pledge. The woman expresses with determination that only the prophet can solve her problem.

4:32-37 *mouth... eyes... hands*: Elijah's prayer (4:33), accompanied by a symbolic action, gives breath, light, and strength. *sneezed seven times*: The number seven is symbolic; it represents the presence and power of God in the situation (cf. 2 Kgs 5:14).

4:38-44 In two feeding stories, Elisha demonstrates that he is God's agent of provision.

4:38 *famine*: a characteristic feature of the Elisha stories (cf. 2 Kgs 6:25; 7:4; 8:1). *group of prophets*: See note on 2 Kings 6:1-7.

4:40 Ex 10:17

4:41 Ex 15:25;  
2Ki 2:21

4:42 1Sa 9:4;

1Sa 9:7

4:43 Mt 14:17;  
Lk 9:13

4:44 Mt 14:20

5:1 Lv 13:2;

Nm 12:10;

2Ki 5:27;

Lk 4:27

prophets.”<sup>39</sup> So one of them went out to the field to gather plants; he found a wild vine and gathered wild gourds from it, filling his garment. He came and cut them up into the pot of stew, but no one knew what they were.

<sup>40</sup>The stew was served to the men, but as they started to eat it, they cried out and said, “There is death in that pot, man of God!” They couldn’t eat it.

<sup>41</sup>Elisha said, “Get some flour.” He threw it into the pot and said, “Serve the people so they can eat.” At that point, there was nothing bad left in the pot.

<sup>42</sup>A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing the man of God some bread from the early produce—twenty loaves of barley bread and fresh grain from his bag.<sup>1</sup> Elisha said, “Give it to the people so they can eat.”

<sup>43</sup>His servant said, “How can I feed one hundred men with this?”

Elisha said, “Give it to the people so they can eat! This is what the LORD says: ‘Eat and there will be leftovers.’”<sup>44</sup> So the servant gave the food to them. They ate and had leftovers, in agreement with the LORD’s word.

### Naaman is healed

**5** Naaman, a general for the king of Aram, was a great man and highly regarded by his master, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. This man was a mighty warrior, but he had a skin disease.<sup>2</sup> Now Aramean raiding parties had gone out and captured a young girl from the land of Israel. She served Naaman’s wife.

<sup>3</sup>She said to her mistress, “I wish that my master could come before the prophet who lives in Samaria. He would cure him of his skin disease.”<sup>4</sup> So Naaman went and told his master what the young girl from the land of Israel had said.

<sup>5</sup>Then Aram’s king said, “Go ahead. I will send a letter to Israel’s king.”

So Naaman left. He took along ten kikkars of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing.<sup>6</sup> He brought the letter to Israel’s king. It read, “Along with this letter I’m sending you my servant Naaman so you can cure him of his skin disease.”

<sup>7</sup>When the king of Israel read the letter, he ripped his clothes. He said, “What? Am I God to hand out death and life? But this king writes me, asking me to cure someone of his skin disease! You must realize that he wants to start a fight with me.”

<sup>1</sup>Or still on its stem <sup>2</sup>Traditionally leprosy, a kind of scale skin disease

4:39-41 *wild gourds*: The servant has gathered a plant that has poisonous seeds (citrus colocynthis). *flour*: The remedy isn’t a prescribed antidote but an ordinary cooking ingredient. The story, like that of the purification of bad water (2 Kgs 2:19-22), demonstrates that the prophet is God’s agent of transformation. The ordinary means (salt or flour) suggests that magic isn’t involved.

4:42-44 *Baal-shalishah*: in the highlands southwest of Shechem. *bringing . . . early produce*: It was the practice to offer priests some of the first harvest. The story assumes that prophets also benefited from this practice (cf. Num 18:13; Deut 18:4). *what the LORD says . . . in agreement with the LORD’s word*: As in the story in 2 Kings 4:1-7, the prophet here multiplies the food to serve a crowd. The story shows that God (by means of a divine word through the prophets) is the one who provides, who heals, and who gives life. See sidebar, “Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word” at 1 Kings 2. This story may have served as a model for the NT feeding stories (cf. Matt 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-42; Luke 9:13-17; John 6:12-13).

5:1-27 The healing of Naaman the Syrian continues several themes introduced in the Elijah stories: Elijah’s God may also be worshipped by foreigners (1 Kgs 17:17-24), and this God is the only living and active God (1 Kgs 18:20-40). In addition, this story demonstrates that Israel’s God is active in the affairs of all nations, not only Israel or Judah. 5:1 *Naaman*: is the only person named in the story. Both the king of Aram (Syria) and the king of Israel remain

anonymous. The key characters are Naaman and Elisha. *the LORD had given victory to Aram*: Several earlier battles with Aram are reported in 1 Kings 20:1-34; 22:1-40. It was common throughout the ancient Near East to assume that a country’s gods were able to give victory to their people in battle (cf. Judg 11:24). In this case, however, the narrator states that Israel’s God has given victory to a foreign country (1 Kgs 22:19-36). *skin disease*: The ailment isn’t specified. It’s not associated with the disease known today as leprosy (Hansen’s disease). Any skin disease was cause for ritual impurity (cf. Lev 13).

5:5 *ten kikkars*: equivalent to approximately 750–760 pounds, plus about 150 pounds of silver. The sum of money is massive, the equivalent of the annual wages of hundreds of workers.

5:6-7 *ripped his clothes*: a symbolic act signifying grief (cf. 2 Kgs 2:11-12) or anger (cf. 1 Kgs 21:27; 2 Kgs 2:11-12; 6:30; 11:14; 19:1-2; 22:11-13). *letter to Israel’s king*: The king of Aram wrongly assumes that Israel’s king and the prophet are on friendly terms. *Am I God to hand out death and life? . . . start a fight with me*: The irony of the situation is evident. The *you* of verse 6 must be the prophet, not the king. Yet part of the king’s answer in verse 7 is more true than he realizes. Although the Israelite king has no power to give life, kings were certainly known to deal in death (cf. 1 Kgs 21). The second part of his answer may be more to the point. Given several wars between Israel and Aram, this letter could well imply a subversive plot.

<sup>8</sup>When Elisha the man of God heard that Israel's king had ripped his clothes, he sent word to the king: "Why did you rip your clothes? Let the man come to me. Then he'll know that there's a prophet in Israel."

<sup>9</sup>Naaman arrived with his horses and chariots. He stopped at the door of Elisha's house.

<sup>10</sup>Elisha sent out a messenger who said, "Go and wash seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will be restored and become clean."

<sup>11</sup>But Naaman went away in anger. He said, "I thought for sure that he'd come out, stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the bad spot, and cure the skin disease. <sup>12</sup>Aren't the rivers in Damascus, the Abana<sup>k</sup> and the Pharpar, better than all Israel's waters? Couldn't I wash in them and get clean?" So he turned away and proceeded to leave in anger.

<sup>13</sup>Naaman's servants came up to him and spoke to him: "Our father, if the prophet had told you to do something difficult, wouldn't you have done it? All he said to you was, 'Wash and become clean.'" <sup>14</sup>So Naaman went down and bathed in the Jordan seven times, just as the man of God had said. His skin was restored like that of a young boy, and he became clean.

<sup>15</sup>He returned to the man of God with all his attendants. He came and stood before Elisha, saying, "Now I know for certain that there's no God anywhere on earth except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant."

<sup>16</sup>But Elisha said, "I swear by the life of the LORD I serve that I won't accept anything."

Naaman urged Elisha to accept something, but he still refused. <sup>17</sup>Then Naaman said, "If not, then let me, your servant, have two mule loads of earth. Your servant will never again offer entirely burned offerings or sacrifices to any other gods except the LORD. <sup>18</sup>But may the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master comes into Rimmon's temple to bow down there and is leaning on my arm, I must also bow down in Rimmon's temple. When I bow down in Rimmon's temple, may the LORD forgive your servant for doing that."

<sup>k</sup>Or *Amana*

5:8 *know that there's a prophet in Israel*: This is the second most important point in the story, and it comes first in the sequence (cf. 2 Kgs 5:15 for the most important point). Yet these two are actually inseparable. The prophet acts as God's agent of healing.

5:10 *wash seven times . . . Jordan River*: The number seven often appears in ritual acts that symbolized perfection. In this case it represents healing. The number seven also appears in the particular rituals involved when skin disease is present (Lev 14:7, 16, 27, 51). The instructions to wash in the *Jordan River* are unusual. As on other occasions, when the prophet used salt and flour in actions that resulted in miraculous effects, this instruction is incomprehensible to Naaman. Why this river? (See 2 Kgs 5:12.) The more important point of the story concerns obedience to the prophetic word, not the physical means by which the healing comes. *wash . . . become clean*: The verbs used here also appear in the healing rituals of Leviticus (cf. Lev 14:8-9; also Lev 13:7, 35; 14:2, 23, 32).

5:12 *Abana . . . Pharpar*: rivers flowing just north of Damascus, the capital of Aram.

5:14 *young boy*: The words here stand as a parallel to "young girl" (2 Kgs 5:2-3), suggesting a transformation. Like the young girl who knows about the prophet, now Naaman, as though beginning again, will make a confession about his own knowing in 2 Kings 5:15.

5:15 *Now I know . . . no God anywhere on earth except in Israel*: Although 2 Kings 5:8 anticipates Naaman's knowledge of Elisha's prophetic role, here readers discover the heart of the matter. Naaman's confession echoes Solomon's confession at the beginning of his prayer at the

dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 8:23). Naaman is a textbook example of the foreigner (translated "immigrant" in 1 Kgs 8:41) who "comes from a distant country because of your reputation." The hope, prays Solomon, is "so that all the people of the earth may know your reputation and revere you" (1 Kgs 8:43). Similarly, Solomon's blessing on the people also includes the hope "that all the earth's peoples may know that the LORD is God. There is no other God!" (1 Kgs 8:60). Naaman has demonstrated the fulfillment (perhaps as a representative of all foreigners) of Solomon's hopes. 2 Kings begins with Ahaziah going to inquire of the foreign god. This is a problem because, as Elijah puts it, "Is it because there's no God in Israel" (2 Kgs 1:3) that Ahaziah is consulting Baal-zebub? Naaman puts that question to rest. Not only is the LORD (Yahweh) actually Israel's God, but the LORD is the only God on earth. Perhaps this is the grandest confessional statement in the books of Kings, and that from the mouth of an outsider.

5:17 *two mule loads of earth*: Although Elisha refuses payment, Naaman asks for earth. Some suggest that he wishes to make a mud-brick altar when he arrives at home (cf. Exod 20:24-25). Others think the earth represents the sacred land of Israel, the land of Israel's God; and the Lord's power is limited to that territory. The more important point is that Naaman's worship won't be directed toward *any other gods except the Lord*.

5:18 *may the Lord forgive*: Naaman's request echoes Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 8:30, 34, 36, 39, 50). He represents the foreigner who prays toward the temple (see note on 2 Kgs 5:15). *Rimmon*: another name for the Aramean storm god Hadad (cf. 1 Kgs 16:31-33; Zech 12:11).

5:8 Gn 37:29;  
Gn 37:34;  
1Ki 18:36;  
2Ki 2:12; Eze 2:5  
5:9 Gn 41:43;  
2Ki 5:21;  
2Ki 6:32;  
Jer 17:25  
5:10 Jn 9:7  
5:11 2Ki 5:12  
5:12 1Ki 11:24;  
2Ki 5:11;  
Pv 14:17;  
Pv 19:11  
5:13 2Ki 2:12;  
2Ki 6:21  
5:14 2Ki 5:10;  
Job 33:25;  
1k 4:27  
5:15 1Sa 17:46

5:19 Ex 4:18;

1Sa 11:17;

Mk 5:34

5:20 Ex 20:7;

2Ki 4:12,

2Ki 4:31,

2Ki 4:36,

2Ki 6:31

5:21 2Ki 4:26,

2Ki 5:9

5:25 2Ki 5:22

5:26 2Ki 5:16,

2Ki 6:12;

Neh 5:11

6:1 2Ki 2:3

6:3 Jgs 19:6;

2Ki 5:23

6:5 Ex 22:14;

2Ki 6:6, Ps 37:21

6:6 Ex 15:25;

2Ki 2:21

6:8 Ex 3:14-15,

Ex 6:13, Ex 7:2,

Ex 19:3

6:9 2Ki 6:12

6:10 Dt 33:1;

1Ki 20:15,

1Ki 20:28;

2Ki 2:12,

2Ki 5:14

6:12 2Ki 6:9

<sup>19</sup>Elisha said to him, "Go in peace."

But when Naaman had gone some distance from Elisha, <sup>20</sup>Gehazi (who was the servant of Elisha the man of God) thought, My master let this Aramean Naaman off the hook by not accepting the gift he brought! As surely as the LORD lives, I'll go after him and accept something from him. <sup>21</sup>So Gehazi pursued Naaman.

Naaman saw him running after him, so he got down off his chariot to meet him. He said, "Is everything okay?"

<sup>22</sup>Gehazi answered, "Yes, but my master sent me to say, 'Two young men who are members of a group of prophets have just now come to me from the hills of Ephraim. Give them a kikkar of silver and two changes of clothing.'"

<sup>23</sup>Naaman said, "By all means, take two kikkars!" He encouraged Gehazi to accept them. He tied two kikkars of silver up in two bags, along with two changes of clothes. Naaman gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them in front of Gehazi. <sup>24</sup>When Gehazi arrived at the elevated fortress,<sup>1</sup> he took the items from them and stored them in his house. Then he sent the servants away, and they left. <sup>25</sup>Gehazi then went and stood before his master.

Elisha said to Gehazi, "Where did you come from, Gehazi?"

"Your servant didn't go anywhere," Gehazi replied.

<sup>26</sup>Elisha said to him, "Wasn't my heart going along with you<sup>m</sup> when the man got off his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to accept silver, clothes, olive trees, vineyards, sheep, cattle, or male and female servants?<sup>27</sup> Naaman's skin disease will now cling to you and to your descendants forever!" And Gehazi left Elisha's presence, flaky like snow with skin disease.

### An ax head floats

**6** The members of the group of prophets said to Elisha, "Look, the place where we now live under your authority is too small for us. <sup>2</sup>Let's go to the Jordan River and each get a log from there. Then we can make a place to live there."

Elisha said, "Do it!"

<sup>3</sup>One of them said, "Please come with us, your servants."

Elisha said, "Okay, I'll go." <sup>4</sup>So he went with them. They came to the Jordan River and began cutting down trees. <sup>5</sup>One of them was cutting down a tree when his ax head fell into the water. He cried out, "Oh, no! Master, it was a borrowed ax!"

<sup>6</sup>The man of God said, "Where did it fall?" He showed Elisha the place. Elisha then cut a piece of wood, threw it into the river there, and the ax head floated up. <sup>7</sup>"Lift it out," Elisha said. So the man then reached out and grabbed it.

### Aramean attacks are stopped

<sup>8</sup>Aram's king was fighting against Israel. He took counsel with his officers, saying, "I'll camp at such-and-such a place."

<sup>9</sup>The man of God sent word to Israel's king: "Beware of passing by this place because the Arameans are going down there." <sup>10</sup>Then Israel's king sent word to the place the man of God had mentioned to him. Time after time, Elisha warned the king, and the king stayed on the alert.

<sup>11</sup>Aram's king was extremely upset about this. He called his officers and said to them, "Tell me! Who among us is siding with Israel's king?"

<sup>12</sup>One of his officers said, "No one, Your Majesty! It's Elisha the Israelite prophet who tells Israel's king the words that you speak in the privacy of your bedroom."

<sup>1</sup>Or hillside; Heb uncertain <sup>m</sup>LXX; MT lacks *along with you*.

5:19-27 Gehazi, Elisha's servant, seizes an opportunity to grasp for wealth and suffers the consequences.

5:26 *Wasn't my heart going along*: In this case Elisha is aware of Gehazi's involvement (cf. 2 Kgs 4:27, where he doesn't know the situation). *Is this the time to accept silver*: Except for the silver, the list of items doesn't correspond to what Gehazi was given. The additional items are similar to the list of items Samuel warned would be taken from the people by Israel's kings (cf. 1 Sam 8:14-17). This addition to the story reminds the people about royal greed, and it provides a contrast to the selflessness of both Naaman and the prophet (cf. 2 Kgs 5:16).

6:1-7 This story provides another example of Elisha's prophetic power. *group of prophets*: communities of prophets living together under Elisha's leadership and direction (cf. 1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3; 4:1, 38; 5:22).

6:8-23 Unlike the episode in 2 Kings 5, which depicts friendly relations between Israel and Syria, this story belongs to the time of the Aramean wars (cf. 1 Kgs 20:1-34; 22:1-40). The kings remain anonymous.

6:9-12 *man of God sent word... Elisha the Israelite prophet*: It wasn't unusual in the ancient world for prophets or diviners to comment on political affairs. In this case the story highlights Elisha's, and therefore the Lord's



<sup>13</sup>He said, "Go and find out where he is. Then I will send men to capture him."

They told him, "He is in Dothan." <sup>14</sup>So the king sent horses and chariots there with a strong army. They came at night and surrounded the city.

<sup>15</sup>Elisha's servant got up early and went out. He saw an army with horses and chariots surrounding the city. His servant said to Elisha, "Oh, no! Master, what will we do?"

<sup>16</sup>"Don't be afraid," Elisha said, "because there are more of us than there are of them."

<sup>17</sup>Then Elisha prayed, "LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he saw that the mountain was full of horses and fiery chariots surrounding Elisha. <sup>18</sup>The Arameans came toward him, so Elisha prayed to the LORD, "Strike this nation with blindness." And the LORD struck them blind, just as Elisha asked. <sup>19</sup>Elisha said to them, "This isn't the right road or the right city. Follow me, and I'll lead you to the man you are looking for." But he took them to Samaria!

<sup>20</sup>When they arrived in Samaria, Elisha said, "LORD, open the eyes of these men so they can see." The LORD opened their eyes, and they saw that they were right in the middle of Samaria! <sup>21</sup>When he saw them, Israel's king said to Elisha, "Should I kill them, my father? Should I?"

<sup>22</sup>He said, "No, don't kill them. Did you capture them with your own sword or bow? Do you have the right to kill them?" Put food and water in front of them so they can eat and drink and return to their master." <sup>23</sup>So the king gave them a great feast, and they ate and drank. Then the king let them go, and they returned to their master. After that, Aramean raiding parties didn't come into Israel anymore.

### ***Ben-hadad attacks Samaria***

<sup>24</sup>Now it happened later that Aram's King Ben-hadad gathered all his forces and went up to attack Samaria. <sup>25</sup>The siege lasted so long that there was a great famine in Samaria. A donkey's head sold for eighty shekels of silver and a quarter kab of doves' dung<sup>a</sup> for five shekels. <sup>26</sup>Israel's king was passing by on the city wall when a woman appealed to him, "Help me, Your Majesty!"

<sup>27</sup>The king said, "No! May the LORD help you! Where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor or the winepress?" <sup>28</sup>But then the king asked her, "What's troubling you?"

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>o</sup>Or wild onions or carob pods

direction in the political affairs of the nations (cf. 2 Kgs 3:11-12).

6:13 *Dothan*: about 10 miles north of Samaria, Israel's capital city. This suggests that Aramean raiders were able to penetrate deep into Israelite territory south of the Jezreel Valley.

6:15-17 *Don't be afraid*: a common prophetic announcement of salvation (cf. Isa 41:10; Jer 1:8). *mountain was full of horses and fiery chariots*: See notes at 2 Kings 2:11-12. This army is part of God's "heavenly forces" (see notes at 1 Kgs 18:15; cf. 1 Kgs 19:10; 22:19; 2 Kgs 3:13-14). Wordplay and repetition emphasize God's miraculous protection. Although the Aramean army is *surrounding the city* (Heb. *sabab*), God's troops are *surrounding Elisha* (Heb. *sabib*).

6:21-22 *Should I kill them... No, don't kill them*: The prophet introduces an alternative to retributive violence (that is, punishment as a form of seeking revenge), so common throughout the political stories in the books of Kings. *my father*: the traditional address of a disciple to a master (cf. 2 Kgs 2:12). The story demonstrates the submission of king to prophet and therefore also to God. *your own sword or bow*: These words echo Joshua 24:12. The appearance of the words here emphasizes the divine character of the event. God is the chief actor in the story. 6:23 *raiding parties... anymore*: The narrator's summary outcome of the story underlines the point of the story: God's ways, as mediated through the prophets, shape the story of Israel's relationships with her neighbors more

significantly than the political might of kings and their armies.

6:24-7:20 The story of the Aramean siege of Samaria continues the theme of divine management of Israel's and Syria's political affairs through the word of the prophet.

6:24 *Now it happened later*: The stories of Aramean raids into Israelite territory can't be arranged chronologically. The stories have been included to illustrate the main theme of the God's supervision of political affairs. *Ben-hadad*: Several Syrian kings had this name. This is likely Ben-hadad III, not the king mentioned in 1 Kings 15:18; 20:1.

6:25 *donkey's head*: Because of the severity of the famine, people had to eat ritually unclean food and even scraps (cf. Lev 11:26). *eighty shekels... quarter kab*: approximately one quart. Inflation is out of control. In 1 Kings 10:29 a live horse is said to cost 150 shekels of silver. *doves' dung*: See translation note o. Although animal dung was used for fuel, this may be a special name for an unknown product or a plant.

6:26 *Israel's king*: As in other stories, this king remains anonymous as though to make the point that these are prophetic, not political stories.

6:27 *threshing floor*: See note on 1 Kings 22:10. *winepress*: a flat surface on which grapes were pressed with the feet. The juice would run off into collection basins from where it could be collected into jars. The king implies that these places of food production are inactive.

6:28-29 Cannibalism may be an unfortunate consequence of siege warfare (cf. Deut 28:53-57; Ezek 5:10; Lam 2:20; 4:10).

6:13 Gn 37:17

6:14 2Ki 1:9

6:16 2Ch 32:7;

Ps 55:18;

Ro 8:31

6:17 2Ki 2:11;

Ps 34:7; Ps 68:17

6:18 Gn 19:11;

Ac 13:11

6:20 2Ki 6:17

6:21 2Ki 2:12;

2Ki 5:13

6:22 Dt 20:11;

2Ch 28:8;

Ro 12:20

6:23 2Ki 5:2;

2Ki 6:8; 2Ki 6:9;

2Ki 24:2

6:28 Lv 26:29;

Dt 28:53;

Lam 4:10;

Eze 5:10

6:30 Gn 37:34;  
1Ks 21:27;  
2Ks 19:1  
6:32 1Ks 18:4;  
Eze 8:1, Eze 14:1,  
Eze 20:1  
7:2 Gn 7:11;  
2Ks 7:19;  
Mal 3:10  
7:3 Lv 13:46  
7:7 2Ks 7:6;  
Prv 28:1

She answered, "A woman said to me, 'Give up your son so we can eat him today; we'll eat my son tomorrow.'"<sup>29</sup> So we cooked and ate my son. The next day I said to her, "Hand over your son so we can eat him." But she had hidden her son."

<sup>30</sup>When the king heard the woman's story, he ripped his clothes. And as he passed by along the wall, the people could see that he was wearing mourning clothes underneath. <sup>31</sup>He said, "So may God do to me, and more, if the head of Elisha, Shaphat's son, remains on his shoulders today!"

<sup>32</sup>Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. The king sent a messenger on ahead, but before the man arrived, Elisha said to the elders, "Do you see that this murderer has sent someone to cut off my head? Watch for when the messenger comes, then close the door and hold it shut against him. The sound of his master's feet is right behind him, isn't it?"

<sup>33</sup>While Elisha was still speaking with them, the messenger<sup>q</sup> arrived and said, "Look, this disaster is the LORD's doing. Why should I trust the LORD any longer?"

**7**Elisha said, "Hear the LORD's word! This is what the LORD says: At this time tomorrow a seah<sup>a</sup> of wheat flour will sell for a shekel at Samaria's gate, and two seahs of barley will sell for a shekel."

<sup>2</sup>Then the officer, the one the king leaned on for support, spoke to the man of God: "Come on! Even if the LORD should make windows in the sky, how could that happen?"

Elisha said, "You will see it with your own eyes, but you won't eat from it."

### *The siege is broken*

<sup>3</sup>Now there were four men with skin disease<sup>r</sup> at the entrance to the city. They said to each other, "What are we doing sitting here until we die? <sup>4</sup>If we decide, 'Let's go into the city,' the famine is there, and we'll die in the city. But if we stay here, we'll die just the same. So let's go and surrender to the Aramean camp. If they let us live, we'll live. If they kill us, we'll die."

<sup>5</sup>So they set out in the evening to the Aramean camp, and they came to the edge of the camp. But there was no one there because <sup>6</sup>the Lord had made the Aramean camp hear the sound of chariots, horses, and a strong army. They had said to each other, "Listen! Israel's king has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to come against us!" <sup>7</sup>So they had got up and fled in the evening, leaving their tents, horses, and donkeys. They left the camp exactly as it was and ran for their lives.

<sup>8</sup>So these men with skin disease came to the edge of the camp. They entered a tent where they ate and drank. They carried off some silver, gold, and garments, and they hid them. Then they returned and went into another tent. They took more things from there, went away, and hid them. <sup>9</sup>But then they said to each other, "What we're doing isn't right. Today is a day of good news, but we're keeping quiet about it. If we wait until dawn, something bad will happen to us. Come on! Let's go and tell the palace." <sup>10</sup>So they went and called out to the gatekeepers, telling them, "We went to the Aramean camp, and listen to this: No one was there, not even the sound of anyone! The only things there were tied-up horses and donkeys,

<sup>q</sup>Or perhaps the king; cf 7:2 <sup>a</sup>One seah is approximately seven and a half quarts. <sup>r</sup>Traditionally *leprosy*, a term used for several different skin diseases

6:30 *ripped his clothes*: See note on 2 Kings 5:6-7.

6:31 *So may God do to me*: The saying indicates a serious promise or solemn pledge. The king assumes Elisha is the cause of the siege, even though nothing so far in the story indicates that to be true.

6:33-7:1 *this disaster... trust the LORD*: Given the overall theme of the prophet stories—the Lord's supervision of Israel's history—this question is the heart of the matter. Doesn't the siege contradict the Lord's presence and power? *Hear the LORD's word!*: The prophet's immediate response indicates that the prophetic word continues to shape Israel's story. His answer indicates that the economy will again flourish and that the inflation reported in 2 Kings 6:25 will end. Salvation is on its way. *Samaria's gate*: The open area inside the gate of the city was the place of commerce and judicial activity.

7:2 *the one the king leaned on*: very likely the king's chief advisor or armor-bearer. *windows in the sky*: the source of rain. The officer uses this phrase in order to question God's capacity to provide food (cf. Ps 78:23; Mal 3:10). *You will see it... but you won't eat*: Because of his cynical response, Elisha predicts his death (cf. 2 Kgs 7:20).

7:3-4 *skin disease*: See note on 2 Kings 5:1. People classified as ritually unclean had to live outside the community (cf. Lev 13:46; Num 5:1-4). Their decision to defect to the Arameans was based on a practical consideration: At least there they would find food.

7:6 *hear the sound of chariots... army*: The motif of God's heavenly forces appears again (see notes at 2 Kgs 2:11-12; 6:16-17; cf. 2 Sam 5:24). *Hittite and Egyptian kings*: two traditional imperial powers representing dangers from the north and the south (with the Hittites from eastern Turkey).

and the tents left just as they were.”<sup>11</sup>The gatekeepers shouted out the news, and it was reported within the palace.

<sup>12</sup>The king got up in the night. He said to his servants, “Let me tell you what the Arameans are doing to us. They know we are starving, so they’ve left the camp to hide in the fields. They are thinking, The Israelites will come out from the city, and then we’ll capture them alive and invade the city.”

<sup>13</sup>But one of his servants answered, “Please let some men take five of the horses that are left, and let’s send them out to see what happens. They are in the same situation as the large number of Israelites who are left here; they are no better off than the large number of Israelites who’ve already perished.”<sup>14</sup>So they chose two chariots with their horses.

The king sent them after the Aramean army, saying, “Go and see!”<sup>15</sup>So they went after the Arameans as far as the Jordan River. The road was filled the whole way with garments and equipment that the Arameans had thrown away in their rush. The messengers returned and reported this to the king.

<sup>16</sup>Then the people went out and looted the Aramean camp. And so it happened that a seah of wheat flour did sell for a shekel, and two seahs of barley sold for a shekel, in agreement with the LORD’s word.<sup>17</sup>But the king had put the officer whom he leaned on for support in charge of the city gate. The people trampled the officer at the gate, and he died. This was just what the man of God said when the king had come down to him.<sup>18</sup>Because when the man of God said to the king, “At this time tomorrow two seahs of barley will sell for a shekel at Samaria’s gate, and one seah of wheat flour will sell for a shekel,”<sup>19</sup>the officer had answered the man of God, “Come on! Even if the LORD should make windows in the sky, how could that happen?” Then Elisha had said, “You will see it with your own eyes, but you won’t eat from it.”<sup>20</sup>That’s exactly what happened to him. The people trampled him at the city gate, and he died.

### The woman from Shunem

**G**lisha spoke to the woman whose son he had brought back to life: “You and your household must go away and live wherever you can, because the LORD has called for a famine. It is coming to the land and will last seven years.”

<sup>2</sup>So the woman went and did what the man of God asked. She and her household moved away, living in Philistia seven years.<sup>3</sup>When seven years had passed, the woman returned from Philistia. She went to appeal to the king for her house and her farmland.<sup>4</sup>The king was speaking to Gehazi, the man of God’s servant, asking him, “Tell me about all the great things Elisha has done.”<sup>5</sup>So Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had brought the dead to life. At that very moment, the woman whose son he had brought back to life began to appeal to the king for her house and her farmland.

Gehazi said, “Your Majesty, this is the woman herself! And this is her son, the one Elisha brought to life!”

<sup>6</sup>The king questioned the woman, and she told him her story. Then the king appointed an official to help her, saying, “Return everything that belongs to her, as well as everything that the farmland has produced, starting from the day she left the country until right now.”

<sup>4</sup>Heb uncertain

7:12 The king is fully aware of a common battle tactic (cf. Josh 8:3-23).

7:16-20 in agreement with the LORD’s word . . . what the man of God said . . . exactly what happened: As is characteristic of many of these stories, this conclusion takes pains to emphasize the power of the prophetic word to bring about what the prophet had foretold concerning the siege and the officer’s death (2 Kgs 7:1-2). The narrator emphasizes again the power of the prophetic word (cf. 1 Kgs 12:24; 13:26; 14:18; 2 Kgs 1:17; 10:17; 14:25). See sidebar, “Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word” at 1 Kings 2.

8:1-6 The story of the Shunammite woman’s land claim is a sequel to the story in 2 Kings 4:8-37.

8:1 *famine* . . . seven years: perhaps related to the famine reported in 2 Kings 4:38. It’s not the same as the famine

of the previous story, which was caused by the siege of Samaria (2 Kgs 6:24–7:20).

8:2 *Philistia*: along the Mediterranean coast to the west of Judah and north of Egypt.

8:3 *appeal* . . . *her farmland*: For some unstated reason, the woman’s house and land had been confiscated by the crown or taken over by others. It could be that her husband has died. The king dispenses justice (cf. Ps 72), which his decision confirms (2 Kgs 8:6).

8:4 *Gehazi*: Elisha’s servant (2 Kgs 5:27). *great things Elisha has done*: Unlike the previous story, the king here seems interested in Elisha’s reputation. But his motivation isn’t clear.

8:6 *everything that the farmland has produced*: The king dispenses justice liberally, going far beyond what might

8:13 1Sa 17:43;  
2Sa 9:8;  
1Ki 19:15

8:17 2Ch 21:5;  
2Ch 21:20a

8:18, 19  
2Ch 21:6, 7

### **Hazael becomes king**

<sup>7</sup>Now Elisha had gone to Damascus when Aram's King Ben-hadad became sick. The king was told, "The man of God has come all this way."

<sup>8</sup>So the king said to Hazael, "Take a gift with you and go to meet the man of God. Question the LORD through him: 'Will I recover from this sickness?'"

<sup>9</sup>So Hazael went out to meet Elisha. He took along forty camel-loads of Damascus' finest goods as a gift. He came and stood before Elisha and said, "Your son Ben-hadad, the king of Aram, sent me to you to ask, 'Will I recover from this sickness?'"

<sup>10</sup>Elisha said to him, "Go and tell him, 'You will definitely recover,' but actually the LORD has shown me that he will die."<sup>11</sup>Elisha stared straight at Hazael until he felt uneasy.<sup>12</sup> Then the man of God began to cry.

<sup>12</sup>Hazael said, "Master, why are you crying?"

"Because I know what violence you will do to the Israelites," Elisha said. "You will drive them from their forts with fire. You will kill their young men with the sword. You will smash their children and rip open their pregnant women."

<sup>13</sup>Hazael replied, "How could your servant, who is nothing but a dog, do such mighty things?"

Elisha said, "The LORD has shown me that you will be king over Aram."<sup>14</sup>Then Hazael left Elisha and returned to his master.

"What did Elisha say to you?" Ben-hadad asked.

"He told me that you will certainly live," Hazael replied.<sup>15</sup>But the next day he took a blanket, soaked it in water, and put it over Ben-hadad's face until he died. Hazael succeeded him as king.

### **Jehoram rules Judah**

<sup>16</sup>In the fifth year of Israel's King Joram, Ahab's son Jehoram, the son of Judah's King Jehoshaphat, became king.<sup>17</sup>He was 32 years old when he became king, and he ruled for eight years in Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup>He walked in the ways of Israel's kings, just as Ahab's dynasty had done, because he married Ahab's daughter. He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes.

<sup>16</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>17</sup>LXX, Syr; MT includes *Jehoshaphat had been Judah's king.*

be expected. In doing so, he follows the pattern of an ideal king who exhibits God's character (cf. Deut 10:17-18; 1 Kgs 10:9; Pss 72:1-2, 12-13; 99:4).

8:7-15 After a long wait, readers begin to discover that Elijah's prophecies of 1 Kings 19:15-18 are about to be fulfilled. The stories about the prophets demonstrate that prophetic announcements play themselves out, sometimes immediately, and often in due time. This story and the ones that follow show that God is still at work, fulfilling Elijah's words even though now Elisha is God's agent. Hazael becomes king of Aram (Syria) and Jehu becomes king of Israel (2 Kgs 9:1-7).

8:7-8 to *Damascus*: the capital of the Aramean kingdom. This story seems to be a sequel to the story about Naaman, which would have elevated Elisha's reputation (2 Kgs 5:1-27). *Ben-hadad*: Ben-hadad II, who consults Elisha for a prognosis about his health (cf. 2 Kgs 1:2; 1 Kgs 14:1-16).

8:9 The extravagant gifts recall Naaman's generosity (2 Kgs 5:5).

8:10 *Go and tell him, "You will definitely recover... will die"*: Elisha's words hide the full truth slightly. Elisha himself doesn't lie, but he tells Hazael to do so. The truth is, he will be murdered (2 Kgs 8:15).

8:11 *stared straight at Hazael... began to cry*: Elisha's actions indicate that he knows what is about to occur. It's as though Elisha's look sends a silent message to Hazael. His tears demonstrate his grief at what the future holds for Hazael as king (cf. 2 Kgs 10:32; 13:7).

8:13 *your servant... a dog*: Hazael responds with words

traditionally used to identify one's lowly position in relationship to one's superiors (cf. 2 Sam 9:8; 16:9).

8:15 *Hazael succeeded him as king*: a deliberately unremarkable ending after a graphically described murder. Based on the Assyrian inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, Hazael took the throne in Damascus after 845 BCE and before 841 BCE. He reigned for approximately 40 years.

8:16-29 Two brief stories about Judah's kings set the stage for the ongoing saga of Elisha's encounter with Israel. Judah's kings were last mentioned in 1 Kings 22:41-50, and Jehoshaphat appears again in 2 Kings 3. The focus, here, however, isn't simply on Judah but on the relationship of the next two Judean kings to Israelite kings Omri and Ahab.

8:16 *Jehoram*: He's introduced in 1 Kings 22:50 and mentioned again in 2 Kings 1:17. In 2 Kings 8:21, 23-24 his alternate name *Joram* appears in the Hebrew (see translation note u). *Joram* also happens to be the name of the Israelite king mentioned here (8:16; cf. 2 Kgs 8:25, 29). Yet that Israelite king is also called *Jehoram* (2 Kgs 1:17; 3:1). These similarities may be the result of traditions developed because of intermarriages between the royal dynasties of Israel and Judah. Or they reflect a symbolic merger; Judah is becoming more like Israel, as these two reports about Judah's kings suggest (cf. 2 Kgs 8:18, 27).

8:18 *walked in the ways of Israel's kings... evil in the LORD's eyes*: The historian assumes that intermarriage caused Jehoram's failure to live up to the standards set for Judean kings by David. Jehoram's close association

<sup>19</sup>Nevertheless, because of his servant David, the LORD wasn't willing to destroy Judah. The LORD had promised to preserve a lamp for David and his sons forever. <sup>20</sup>During Jehoram's rule Edom rebelled against Judah's power and appointed their own king. <sup>21</sup>Jehoram<sup>v</sup> along with all his chariots crossed over to Zair. He got up at night to attack the Edomites who had surrounded him and his chariot commanders,<sup>w</sup> but his army fled back home. <sup>22</sup>So Edom has been independent of Judah to this day. Libnah rebelled at the same time. <sup>23</sup>The rest of Jehoram's deeds and all that he accomplished, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? <sup>24</sup>Jehoram died and was buried with his ancestors in David's City. His son Ahaziah succeeded him as king.

#### Ahaziah rules Judah

<sup>25</sup>Ahaziah, the son of Judah's king Jehoram, became king in the twelfth year of Israel's King Joram,<sup>x</sup> Ahab's son. <sup>26</sup>Ahaziah was 22 years old when he became king, and he ruled for one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah; she was the granddaughter of Israel's King Omri. <sup>27</sup>He walked in the ways of Ahab's dynasty, doing what was evil in the LORD's eyes, just as Ahab's dynasty had done, because he had married into Ahab's family. <sup>28</sup>Ahaziah went with Joram, Ahab's son, to fight against Aram's King Hazael at Ramoth-gilead, where the Arameans wounded Joram. <sup>29</sup>King Joram returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds the Arameans had given him at Ramah in his battle with Aram's King Hazael. Then Judah's King Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram, went down to visit Joram, Ahab's son, at Jezreel because he had been wounded.

#### Jehu rules Israel

**9** The prophet Elisha called to a member of the group of prophets, "Get ready, take this jug of oil with you, and go to Ramoth-gilead. <sup>2</sup>When you arrive there, look for Jehu, Jehoshaphat's son and Nimshi's grandson. Go to him, then pull him away from his associates, taking him to a private room. <sup>3</sup>Take the jug of oil and pour it on his head. Then say, "This is what the LORD has said: I anoint you king of Israel." Then open the door, and run out of there without stopping."

<sup>v</sup>Heb *Joram* (also in 8:23-24); the king's name is usually spelled in its long form *Jehoram* (cf 2 Chron 21:9).

<sup>w</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>x</sup>Heb *Jehoram* (also in 8:29); the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoram* or short *Joram* form.

with Israel follows Jehoshaphat's alliance with Israel (1 Kgs 22:44), which ended the antagonism that followed the division of the united kingdom after Solomon's death (1 Kgs 14:30; 15:8, 16, 32). Israel's worship of Baal, although only implied here, becomes the great danger also for Judah.

8:19 *his servant David... his sons forever*: a reference to God's covenantal promise to David (2 Sam 7:1-17). *lamp*: a metaphor for a living descendant of David (cf. 2 Sam 21:17; 1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4; Ps 132:17). Because of God's promise to David, Judah receives special treatment in spite of the behavior of its kings.

8:20 *Edom*: a state that, until now, depended on Judah and was under its control (cf. 1 Kgs 22:47). The Edomite king mentioned in 2 Kings 3:9 was a servant of Judah. This act of rebellion against the treaty imposed on Edom severely diminished Judah's control of north-south trade routes between Egypt and Mesopotamia.

8:22 *to this day*: to the time of the historian. *Libnah*: a levitical city southeast of Jerusalem about five miles from Lachish (cf. Josh 10:29; 21:13; 2 Kgs 19:8). The move of Edom toward independence and this mention of Libnah's rebellion suggests political weakness at the heart of the Judean monarchy (cf. more extensive explanations in 2 Chron 21:16-17).

8:23-24 *official records*: See note on 2 Kings 11:41-43.

8:25 *Ahaziah*: not to be confused with his dead uncle Ahaziah, who was king of Israel (1 Kgs 22:51-53). *Joram*: See note on 2 Kings 8:16.

8:26-27 *Athaliah... Ahab's dynasty... family*: The note

about Athaliah being related to Omri ties Ahaziah to the northern kingdom (cf. 2 Kgs 8:18) and spells disaster to come (cf. 2 Kgs 11). The behavior of Israel's kings is now the pattern against which the historian evaluates these Judean kings. Gone is any comparison to the example of David (cf. 1 Kgs 15:3).

8:28-29 The ill-fated alliance between Judah and Israel continues (for a fuller description of the events surrounding the visit, see 2 Kgs 9:14-16). *Ramah*: a short form of Ramoth-gilead, a town east of the Jordan River (cf. 2 Kgs 9:14). *Jezreel*: Although Ahab is mentioned twice in these stories of Judean kings (2 Kgs 8:19, 27), the mention of Jezreel ties these stories about Judean kings even more explicitly to the Ahab story (cf. 1 Kgs 21:1, 23) and will feature again in the next chapter (cf. 2 Kgs 9:10).

9:1-10:17 Elijah's three-part prophecy now reaches its final outcome in the anointing of Jehu (cf. 1 Kgs 19:15-18). Two other fulfillments—establishing Hazael as king of Aram and Elisha as Elijah's successor—are reported earlier (1 Kgs 19:19-21; 2 Kgs 8:7-15). The fulfillment of the prophetic word is one of the major themes running through the books of Kings. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

9:1-3 *Ramoth-gilead*: Elisha tells the young prophet (2 Kgs 9:4) to visit the battlefield east of the Jordan River (cf. 2 Kgs 8:28-29; 9:14). Although the king has already left (2 Kgs 8:29), the commanders and the army are still there. *jug of oil... on his head... anoint*: Anointing with oil was a ritual act associated with appointing kings (cf. 1 Sam 16:13; 1 Kgs 1:34).

8:20-22  
2Ch 21:8-10  
8:24a 2Ch 21:19  
8:25 2Ki 9:29;  
2Ch 22:1  
8:26 2Ch 22:2  
8:27 2Ch 22:3-4  
8:28 2Ch 22:5b  
8:29a 2Ki 9:15a;  
2Ch 22:6a  
8:29b 2Ki 9:16b;  
2Ch 22:6b  
9:1 1Sa 10:1;  
2Ki 2:3, 2Ki 4:29,  
2Ki 8:28  
9:3 1Sa 10:1,  
1Sa 16:13;  
1Ki 19:16

9:11 2Ki 5:21,  
2Ki 9:17;  
Jer 29:26;  
Hos 9:7;  
Isa 10:20

9:15a 2Ki 8:29a;  
2Ch 22:6a  
9:16b 2Ki 8:29b;  
2Ch 22:6b

<sup>4</sup>So the young prophet went to Ramoth-gilead. <sup>5</sup>He came in, and the military commanders were sitting right there. He said, "Commander, I have a word for you."

"For which one of us?" Jehu asked.

The young prophet said, "For you, Commander."

<sup>6</sup>So Jehu got up and went inside. The prophet then poured oil on his head and said to him, "This is what the LORD, Israel's God, says: I anoint you king over the LORD's people, over Israel. <sup>7</sup>You will strike down your master Ahab's family. In this way I will take revenge for the violence done by Jezebel to my servants the prophets and to all the LORD's servants. <sup>8</sup>Ahab's whole family will die. I will eliminate from Ahab everyone who urinates on a wall, whether slave or free, in Israel. <sup>9</sup>I will make Ahab's dynasty like the dynasty of Jeroboam, Nebat's son, and like the dynasty of Baasha, Ahijah's son. <sup>10</sup>And as for Jezebel: The dogs will devour her in the area of Jezreel. No one will bury her." Then the young prophet opened the door and ran.

<sup>11</sup>Jehu went out to his master's officers. They said to him, "Is everything okay? Why did this fanatic come to you?"

Jehu said to them, "You know the man and the nonsense he talks."

<sup>12</sup>"That's a lie!" they said. "Come on, tell us!"

Jehu replied, "This is what he said to me: 'This is what the LORD says: I anoint you king of Israel.'"

<sup>13</sup>Then each man quickly took his cloak and put it beneath Jehu on the paved steps. <sup>7</sup>They blew a trumpet and said, "Jehu has become king!"

### *Jehu kills his enemies*

<sup>14</sup>Then Jehu, Jehoshaphat's son and Nimshi's grandson, plotted against Joram. Now Joram along with all of Israel had been guarding Ramoth-gilead against Aram's King Hazael, <sup>15</sup>but King Joram<sup>8</sup> had gone back to Jezreel to recover from wounds that the Arameans had given him when he fought Hazael. So Jehu said, "If this is the way you feel, then don't let anyone escape from the city to talk about it in Jezreel." <sup>16</sup>Then Jehu got on a chariot and drove to Jezreel because Joram was resting there. Judah's King Ahaziah had also come to visit Joram.

<sup>17</sup>The guard standing on the tower at Jezreel saw a crowd of people coming with Jehu. He said, "I see a crowd of people."

Joram said, "Take a chariot driver. Send him out to meet them to ask, 'Do you come in peace?'"

<sup>18</sup>So the driver went to meet him and said, "The king asks, 'Do you come in peace?'"

Jehu replied, "What do you care about peace? Come around and follow me."

Meanwhile, the tower guard reported, "The messenger met them, but he isn't returning."

<sup>19</sup>The king sent a second driver. He came to them and said, "The king asks, 'Do you come in peace?'"

<sup>7</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>8</sup>Heb *Jehoram* (also in 9:17, 21-24); the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoram* or short *Joram* form.

9:4 *young prophet*: one of the members of the prophetic guild (cf. 2 Kgs 9:1; see note on 2 Kgs 6:1-7).

9:6-10 The actual words of the young prophet expand the instructions of Elisha considerably (cf. 2 Kgs 9:3). His words fill out Elijah's mention of Jehu's killing those who escape from Hazael (cf. 1 Kgs 19:17; 21:21-24), the *LORD's people*: These additional words imply there are also "Baal's people," and open a window into a later story about the eradication of Baal worship (2 Kgs 10:18-27). *revenge for... my servants the prophets*: a reference to Jezebel's actions against the prophets (cf. 1 Kgs 18:4, 13, 22; 19:14-18). *urinates on a wall*: See note on 1 Kings 14:6-11. *dogs*: a reference to Elijah's prediction of 1 Kings 21:23 and an anticipation of its conclusion in 2 Kings 9:37-38. For literary purposes, perhaps, the wording varies among these three texts, even though they are all said to be the Lord's word. 9:11 *fanatic*: The word is sometimes translated "madman."

It describes the behavior of the prophets (cf. Jer 29:26; Hos 9:7). A related noun form appears in 2 Kings 9:20, where it is translated "madman."

9:13 *trumpet... Jehu has become king!*: typical of coronation celebrations (cf. 1 Kgs 1:39-40).

9:16 *Ahaziah*: Joram's brother-in-law (cf. 2 Kgs 8:25-29).

9:17-22 *Do you come in peace?*: The question likely means "Is everything okay?" (cf. 2 Kgs 4:26; 5:21; 9:11). In other words, is all well on the battlefield? Here, however, the translators have provided a more direct translation of the question because the Hebrew word *shalom* in the question makes the wordplay in this section more visible. The word for "peace," *shalom*, is used seven times in this short section (and again in 2 Kings 9:31). The punch line in the wordplay occurs at the end of 9:22. No, not all is well, and it won't be well (according to Jehu) until Ahab's dynasty is erased.

Jehu said, "What do you care about peace? Come around and follow me."

<sup>20</sup>The tower guard reported, "The messenger met them, but he isn't returning. And the style of chariot driving is like Jehu, Nimshi's son. Jehu drives like a madman."

<sup>21</sup>Joram said, "Hitch up the chariot!" So they hitched up his chariot. Then Israel's King Joram and Judah's King Ahaziah—each in his own chariot—went out to meet Jehu. They happened to meet him at the plot of ground that belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite.

<sup>22</sup>When Joram saw Jehu, he said, "Do you come in peace, Jehu?"

He said, "How can there be peace as long as the immoralities of your mother Jezebel and her many acts of sorcery continue?"

<sup>23</sup>Then Joram turned his chariot around and fled. He shouted to Ahaziah, "It's a trap, Ahaziah!"

<sup>24</sup>Jehu took his bow and shot Joram in the back. The arrow went through his heart, and he fell down in his chariot. <sup>25</sup>Jehu said to Bidkar his chariot officer, "Pick him up, and throw him on the plot of ground belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. Remember how you and I were driving chariot teams behind his father Ahab when the LORD spoke this prophecy about him: <sup>26</sup>Yesterday I saw Naboth's blood and his sons' blood, declares the LORD. I swear that I will pay you back on this very plot of ground, declares the LORD. Now pick him up, and throw him on that plot of ground, in agreement with the LORD's word."

<sup>27</sup>Judah's King Ahaziah saw this and fled on the road to Beth-haggan. Jehu chased after him. "Do the same to him!" he commanded. They shot him<sup>a</sup> in his chariot on the way up to Gur, near Ibleam. Ahaziah fled to Megiddo and died there. <sup>28</sup>His servants carried him back in a chariot to Jerusalem. He was buried in his tomb with his ancestors in David's City. <sup>29</sup>Ahaziah had become Judah's king in the eleventh year of Ahab's son Joram.

<sup>30</sup>Jehu then went to Jezreel. When Jezebel heard of it, she put on her eye shadow and arranged her hair. She looked down out of the window. <sup>31</sup>When Jehu came through the gate, she said, "Do you come in peace, Zimri, you master murderer?"

<sup>32</sup>Jehu looked up to the window and said, "Who's on my side? Anyone?" Two or three high officials looked down at him. <sup>33</sup>Then he said, "Throw her out!" So they threw her out of the window. Some of her blood splattered against the wall and on the horses, and they trampled her. <sup>34</sup>Jehu then went in to eat and drink. He said, "Deal with this cursed woman and bury her. She was, after all, a king's daughter." <sup>35</sup>They went to bury her, but they couldn't find her body. Only her skull was left, along with her hands and feet. <sup>36</sup>They went back and reported this to Jehu. He said, "This is the LORD's word spoken through his servant Elijah from Tishbe: Dogs will devour Jezebel's flesh in the area of Jezreel. <sup>37</sup>Jezebel's corpse will be like dung spread out in a field in that plot of land in Jezreel, so no one will be able to say, This was Jezebel."

<sup>a</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT lacks *They shot him*.

9:20 *madman*: Jehu's chariot driving associates him with Elisha, where a related Hebrew word is used (2 Kgs 9:11).

9:21 *plot of ground*... *Naboth*: This meeting place is significant because it was there where Ahab stole Naboth's land and killed him (1 Kgs 21:1-16), and where Elijah prophesied against Ahab and his dynasty (1 Kgs 21:19, 21-22).

9:22 *immoralities*... *sorcery*: These words are used together in Nahum 3:4, where they are translated "whorings" and "sorceries." The word translated *immoralities* is used often in Hosea to refer to worship of other gods or participation in Canaanite religion (e.g., Hos 1:2; 2:2, 4; 4:12; 5:4). Jezebel, the enemy of Elijah (see 1 Kgs 19:2), represents a worship practice that is an abomination to the historian (1 Kgs 16:31; 18:4, 19).

9:25-26 *plot of ground*... *in agreement with the LORD's word*: The story confirms the main theme of the historian. The prophets are the real agents of God in history; what they say becomes reality. Elisha had spoken against Ahab and against his dynasty (cf. 1 Kgs 21:19, 21-22, 29).

9:27-29 The reign of Ahaziah (see 2 Kings 8:25-29) now

comes to an end. *Beth-haggan*... *Ibleam*... *Megiddo*: Ahaziah fled south from Jezreel toward Samaria, but after he was shot he turned west and then north toward Megiddo, where he died. His death isn't part of the prediction of Elijah or the young prophet. *eleventh year*: In 2 Kings 8:25 Ahaziah is said to have begun to reign in the twelfth year. The apparent discrepancy probably arises from different ways of counting the beginning of the king's reign in Israel or Judah. If Joram ruled for 12 years (2 Kgs 3:1), and if Ahaziah reigned for less than one year, he could have become king in Joram's eleventh year or twelfth year.

9:31 *Do you come in peace, Zimri*...?: The question anticipates bad things to come (see note on 2 Kgs 9:17-22), especially since Jezebel calls Jehu by the name of the man who killed King Elah and all of Baasha's descendants (1 Kgs 16:8-20).

9:36-37 *This is the LORD's word*: These verses depicting Jezebel's gruesome death show that events are unfolding as predicted by Elijah, including the disgrace of not having an honorable burial (cf. 1 Kgs 21:23).

9:22 2Ch 22:7

9:27 2Ch 22:9

9:29 2Ki 8:25;

2Ch 22:1

9:30 1Ki 19:1;

Jer 4:30;

Eze 23:40

9:31 1Ki 16:9-

10; 2Ki 9:18

9:34 1Ki 16:31

9:35 Ecc 6:3;

Is 14:18

9:36 1Ki 21:23

**Jehu kills Ahab's family**

**10** Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria, to the senior officers of the city,<sup>b</sup> the elders, and the guardians of Ahab's sons.<sup>c</sup> <sup>2</sup>The letters said: "Your master's sons are in your possession, along with horses and chariots, a fortified city, and weapons. Now when this letter reaches you, <sup>3</sup>look for the best and most capable of your master's sons. Place him on his father's throne. Then fight for your master's family."

<sup>4</sup>But they were frozen with fear. They said, "Not even two kings could resist him! How can we?" <sup>5</sup>So the palace administrator, the mayor, the elders, and the guardians sent a letter back to Jehu that read, "We are your servants. We will do whatever you tell us. We won't make anyone king. Do whatever seems right to you."

<sup>6</sup>Jehu wrote them a second letter: "If you are loyal to me and ready to obey me, take the heads of your master's sons and bring them to me at Jezreel at this time tomorrow."

Now the king's seventy sons were with the city leaders who were raising them. <sup>7</sup>So when the letter came to them, they took the king's sons and slaughtered all seventy of them. They placed their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu at Jezreel.

<sup>8</sup>A messenger came and told Jehu, "They have brought the heads of the king's sons."

He responded, "Pile them in two stacks at the entrance of the gate where they will stay until morning." <sup>9</sup>In the morning he went out and stood there to address all the people. "You are innocent. I'm the one who plotted against my master and killed him, but who killed all these people? <sup>10</sup>Know this: Nothing that the LORD has said against Ahab's dynasty will fail to come true. The LORD has done what he said he would do, speaking through his servant Elijah." <sup>11</sup>Then Jehu struck down all those belonging to Ahab's family who were left in Jezreel, so that not one of his leaders, close acquaintances, or priests remained.



Jehu paying tribute to Shalmaneser; British Museum, London  
British Museum/BiblePlaces.com

<sup>b</sup>Vulg, LXX; MT Jezreel <sup>c</sup>LXX; MT lacks sons.

10:1-17 The story of Jehu's elimination of any potential claimants to the throne completes the fulfillment of Elijah's and the young prophet's predictions (1 Kgs 21:21-22; 2 Kgs 9:7-9). It was common in the ancient world to kill potential rivals (1 Kgs 15:29; 16:11). But Jehu's extermination goes well beyond Ahab's family members (2 Kgs 9:11).

10:1 *seventy sons*: a round number representing Ahab's entire extended family (cf. Judg 8:30; 9:2, 5, 24; 12:14). The book of Judges records Abimelech's killing of 70 of his brothers before taking the throne (Judg 9:5).

10:3 *fight for your master's family*: In the exchange of letters that takes place, Jehu taunts the caretakers of Ahab's royal establishment to take sides, knowing that he will have the upper hand.

10:5-7 *We are your servants*: This reply indicates that they have switched allegiance to Jehu. Yet Jehu, by writing a *second letter*, tests their decision severely. He demands

loyalty and obedience in the harshest terms. *slaughtered all seventy of them*: The prophets' predictions seem now to have been fulfilled (cf. 1 Kgs 21:20-24, 29; 2 Kgs 9:7-9; but see also 2 Kgs 10:11, 14, 17).

10:9-10 *You are innocent... but who killed all these people?*: Jehu appears to position himself as innocent of the blood-bath. Yet he interprets the recent killings as having come about because of what *the Lord has said* and what *The Lord has done*. All that has happened goes back to words spoken by Elijah (1 Kgs 21:21-22, 24). The historian's inclusion of these words confirms the conviction that runs throughout the books of Kings that God's word through the prophets is the force that drives history. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

10:11 *not one... remained*: Jehu's subsequent action goes far beyond what the prophets announced (cf. 2 Kgs 9:7-9). Jehu is intent on a complete sweep of the royal



<sup>12</sup>Next Jehu set out for Samaria. Beth-eked of the Shepherds was on his way. <sup>13</sup>There Jehu met up with the brothers of Judah's King Ahaziah. "Who are you?" he asked.

"We're Ahaziah's relatives," they replied. "We've come down for a visit with the king's sons and the queen mother's sons."

<sup>14</sup>Jehu then commanded, "Take them alive!" His soldiers took them alive, then slaughtered them at the well of Beth-eked. There were forty-two of them, but not one was left.

### **Jehu kills Baal worshippers**

<sup>15</sup>Jehu departed from there and encountered Rechab's son Jehonadab. Jehu greeted him, and asked, "Are you as committed to me as I am to you?"

Jehonadab responded, "Yes, I am."

"If so," said Jehu, "then give me your hand." So Jehonadab put out his hand, and Jehu pulled him up into the chariot.

<sup>16</sup>Jehu said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD." So Jehu had Jehonadab ride with him in his chariot. <sup>17</sup>When Jehu arrived in Samaria, he killed all those belonging to Ahab who were left in Samaria until they were completely wiped out, in agreement with the LORD's word that was spoken to Elijah.

<sup>18</sup>Then Jehu gathered all the people, saying to them, "Ahab served Baal a little. Jehu will serve him a great deal! <sup>19</sup>So invite all of Baal's prophets, all his worshippers, and all his priests to come to me. Don't leave anyone out, because I have a great sacrifice planned for Baal. Anyone who doesn't show up won't survive." But Jehu was lying so that he could wipe out Baal's worshippers. <sup>20</sup>Jehu called for a holy assembly for Baal, and it was done. <sup>21</sup>Jehu then sent word throughout Israel. All Baal's worshippers came. No one stayed away. They entered Baal's temple until it was packed from one end to the other. <sup>22</sup>Then Jehu said to the person in charge of the vestments, "Bring out the special clothes for all Baal's worshippers." So he brought out robes for them. <sup>23</sup>Then Jehu and Jehonadab, Rechab's son, entered Baal's temple. They said to Baal's worshippers, "Make sure there are no worshippers of the LORD here with you. There should be only Baal worshippers." <sup>24</sup>Then they went in to offer sacrifices and entirely burned offerings. But Jehu had stationed eighty soldiers outside and told them, "I'm handing these people over to you. Whoever lets even one of them escape will pay for it with his life." <sup>25</sup>So when Jehu finished offering the entirely burned offering, he said to the guards and the officers, "Go in and kill everyone! Don't let anyone escape!" They killed the Baal worshippers without mercy. The guards and the officers then disposed of the bodies and entered the inner part of Baal's temple. <sup>26</sup>They brought the sacred pillar<sup>4</sup> out of Baal's temple and burned it. <sup>27</sup>They tore down Baal's sacred pillar and destroyed Baal's temple, turning it into a public restroom, which is what it still is today.

<sup>4</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT *pillars*

administration. His aim, as will be seen, is complete political mastery, but it will be disguised as religious fanaticism (confirming the premonition signaled in 2 Kgs 9:11).

10:12-14 *Ahaziah's relatives . . . not one was left*: Jehu demonstrates his cruelty by slaughtering Judeans who are connected through Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, to Ahab through intermarriage (cf. 2 Kgs 8:26; on Ahaziah's death, see 2 Kgs 9:27). This murderous act will reap consequences (cf. 2 Kgs 11:1). *forty-two*: See note on 2 Kings 2:24.

10:15-17 Jehu continues his rampage. *Rechab's son Jehonadab*: Rechabites lived a simple life, devoted to the Lord (Jer 35:1-11). They avoided the corruption of Canaanite culture and religion; they didn't cultivate land, grow vineyards, or drink wine. Jehonadab is an ideal but unwitting partner in Jehu's final exploits. *zeal for the Lord*: Jehu appeals to Jehonadab's radical monotheism, which resonated with Elijah's own convictions (a related word is used of Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:10, 14, there translated "passionate"). *he killed all . . . completely wiped out, in agreement with the Lord's word*: As though it hadn't been clear

earlier (see note on 2 Kgs 10:9-10), the narrator interprets this final brutal assault as the last thing needed for the prophetic predictions to be realized. The sequence of killings has been unrelenting (cf. 2 Kgs 10:7, 11, 14). Yet it is only the beginning as Jehu continues his zealotry in the next story.

10:18-27 Jehu's final murderous action takes him one step further than the prophecy of Elijah and the young prophet (2 Kgs 9:7-9). Jehu's killing of the worshippers of Baal resonates with the historian's concerns about idolatry. It also makes Jehu an accomplice of Elijah, who in his time killed the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:40). See sidebar, "Idolatry" at 1 Kings 11.

10:20 *holy assembly*: This was held in the temple to Baal that Ahab built in Samaria (1 Kgs 16:32).

10:26-27 *sacred pillar*: See note on 1 Kings 14:22-24 (cf. 2 Kgs 3:2; 17:10; 23:14). The actions reported here are in keeping with Deuteronomy's insistence that Israel destroy remaining aspects of Canaanite religion (cf. Deut 7:5; 12:3). *still is today*: at the time of the writer.

10:12-14  
2Ch 22:8  
10:15 1Ch 2:55;  
Ezr 10:19;  
Jer 35:6,  
Jer 35:14;  
Eze 17:18  
10:16 1Ki 19:10

10:29  
1Ks 12:28-29;  
1Ks 14:16

10:30 2Ks 10:35;  
2Ks 13:1;  
2Ks 13:10;  
2Ks 14:23;  
2Ks 15:12

10:31 2Ks 10:29

11:1 2Ch 22:10

11:2 2Ch 22:11

11:3 2Ks 11:2;  
2Ch 22:12

<sup>28</sup>This is how Jehu eliminated Baal from Israel. <sup>29</sup>However, Jehu didn't deviate from the sins that Jeroboam, Nebat's son, had caused Israel to commit—specifically, the gold calves that were in Bethel and Dan.

### *Jehu rules Israel*

<sup>30</sup>The LORD said to Jehu: Because you've done well by doing what is right in my eyes, treating Ahab's family as I wished, your descendants will sit on Israel's throne for four generations. <sup>31</sup>But Jehu wasn't careful to keep the LORD God of Israel's Instruction with all his heart. He didn't deviate from the sins that Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit.

<sup>32</sup>In those days the LORD began to reduce Israel's size. Hazael struck them down in every region of Israel: <sup>33</sup>from the Jordan River eastward, throughout the land of Gilead (Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh), and from Areroe by the Arnon Valley (that is, Gilead) and Bashan.

<sup>34</sup>The rest of Jehu's deeds, all that he accomplished, and all his powerful acts, aren't they written in the official records of Israel's kings? <sup>35</sup>Jehu lay down with his ancestors. He was buried in Samaria. His son Jehoahaz succeeded him as king. <sup>36</sup>Jehu had ruled over Israel for twenty-eight years in Samaria.

### *Queen Athaliah rules Judah*

**11** When Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, learned of her son's death, she immediately destroyed the entire royal family. <sup>2</sup>But Jehosheba, King Jehoram's\* daughter and Ahaziah's sister, secretly took Ahaziah's son Jehoash<sup>f</sup> from the rest of the royal children who were about to be murdered and hid<sup>g</sup> him in a bedroom along with his nurse. In this way Jehoash was hidden from Athaliah and wasn't murdered. <sup>3</sup>He remained hidden with his nurse in the LORD's temple for six years while Athaliah ruled the country.

\*Heb *Joram*; the king's name is usually spelled in its long form *Jehoram* (cf 2 Chron 22:11). <sup>f</sup>Heb *Joash*; the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoash* or short *Joash* forms. The latter is the form used in 2 Chron.

<sup>g</sup>See 2 Chron 22:11; Heb lacks *hid*.

**10:28-29** *eliminated Baal*: This verse appears to be a summary of Jehu's primary accomplishment. *However... gold calves*: According to the historian, Jehu fails in one thing, Jeroboam's actions continue to be a standard against which to measure the kings of Israel (cf. 1 Kgs 12:26-33). Baal worship, with its bull or calf representation, reflects the religious establishment of the official sanctuaries of the kingdom. It appears that the gold calves are a prohibited representation of "the LORD" (Yahweh) by many of the Israelite kings, which ultimately becomes Israel's downfall (cf. 2 Kgs 17:21-23).

**10:30-31** *doing what is right in my eyes... four generations*: The historian includes this prophetic word, which affirms Jehu's actions against Ahab's family and provides him with the promise of the longest-lasting dynasty in Israel—almost 100 years in all. The historian uses the word "right" positively like this in other places only about David (1 Kgs 15:5) and some of the kings of Judah (1 Kgs 15:11; 22:43; 2 Kgs 12:2; 14:3; 15:3, 34; 18:3; 22:2). Jeroboam was promised a dynasty like David's if he did what was right in God's eyes (1 Kgs 11:38). Jehu comes as close as anyone to living up to that ideal. Still, other prophets viewed Jehu's actions as excessive (cf. Hos 1:4-5). *the LORD God of Israel's Instruction with all his heart*: The wording reflects motifs of God's Instruction and the heart (desires and expectations) that reverberate throughout the books of Kings (cf. 1 Kgs 2:3-4; 14:8; 2 Kgs 17:13, 37; 23:3, 25). Deuteronomy's instruction for kings to attend to God's Instruction applies appropriately to Jehu's situation (Deut 17:18-20). *sins... Jeroboam*: As though it hasn't been made clear enough in 10:29, the historian repeats Jehu's fatal flaw.

**10:32-36** Returning to the affairs of state, the historian documents the beginning of Israel's demise. God's motive for diminishing Israel's control of territory isn't clearly stated. Perhaps Hosea's prophecy can be heard in the

background (Hos 1:4-5). *Hazael*: This king of Aram (Syria) conquered Israelite territory east of the Jordan River as far south as the Arnon Valley (on Hazael, see 1 Kgs 19:15-18; 2 Kgs 8:7-15). *Gad... Manasseh*: According to the book of Joshua, two and a half tribes were given territory east of the Jordan River (Josh 13:8-33). Hazael made incursions westward during brief reprieves from Assyrian imperial expansion in the mid-9th century BCE. Stories that follow report on Hazael's ongoing military ventures into Israel and neighboring territories (cf. 2 Kgs 12:17-18; 13:3-7, 22-23). But Assyria remains the dominant player on the imperial landscape from the beginning to the end of Jehu's reign. On the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, Jehu is depicted as a vassal of the Assyrian king, giving gifts of precious objects in gold and silver. *all his powerful acts*: Perhaps because of Israel's relative weakness on the international scene, the historian wants to paint a realistic yet more or less positive portrait of Jehu. *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

**11:1-12:21** Although chapter 11 begins with a focus on Athaliah, her story provides an introduction to Jehoash, the character of interest to the historian. This is the first story in 2 Kings to focus entirely on political matters in Judah.

**11:1** *Athaliah*: not a legitimate successor to the throne, after she attempts to secure her own position by killing all the male heirs to the throne (previously mentioned in 2 Kgs 8:26).

**11:2** *Jehosheba*: half sister of Ahaziah, not likely the daughter of Athaliah. According to 2 Chronicles 22:11, she is the wife of Jehoaiada the priest (see 2 Kgs 12:4, 9). *Jehoash*: called by this long form of his Hebrew name in 2 Kings 11:21; 12:1 and through most of chapter 12, and the short form *Joash* in 2 Kings 11:2; 12:19, 20; 13:1. Jehoash was seven years old at the time (cf. 2 Kgs 11:21).

<sup>4</sup>But in the seventh year Jehoiada sent for the commanders of the Carites and of the guards and had them come to him at the LORD's temple. He made a covenant with them, and made them swear a solemn pledge in the LORD's temple. Then he showed them the king's son. <sup>5</sup>He commanded them, "This is what you must do: A third of you coming on sabbath duty will guard the palace, <sup>6</sup>a second third will be at the Sur Gate, and the final third will be at the gate behind the guards. You will take turns guarding the temple. <sup>7</sup>You who are in the first two groups that usually go off duty on the Sabbath should also guard the LORD's temple to protect the king. <sup>8</sup>Surround the king completely, each of you with your weapons drawn. Whoever comes near your ranks must be killed. Stay near the king wherever he goes."

<sup>9</sup>The unit commanders did everything that Jehoiada the priest ordered. They each took charge of those men reporting for duty on the Sabbath as well as those going off duty on the Sabbath. They came to the priest Jehoiada. <sup>10</sup>Then the priest gave the unit commanders King David's spears and shields, which were kept in the LORD's temple. <sup>11</sup>The guards, each with their weapons drawn, then took up positions near the temple and the altar, stretching from the south side of the temple to the north side to protect the king. Everyone was holding his weapons, surrounding the king. <sup>12</sup>Jehoiada then brought out the king's son, crowned him, gave him the royal law,<sup>1</sup> and made him king and anointed him, as everyone applauded and cried out, "Long live the king!"

<sup>13</sup>When Athaliah heard the noise made by the guard and the people, she went to the people at the LORD's temple <sup>14</sup>and saw the king standing by the royal pillar, as was the custom, with the commanders and trumpeters beside the king. All the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Athaliah ripped her clothes and screamed, "Treason! Treason!"

<sup>15</sup>Then the priest Jehoiada ordered the unit commanders who were in charge of the army: "Take her out under guard,"<sup>2</sup> he told them, "and kill anyone who follows her." This was because the priest had said, "She must not be executed in the LORD's temple." <sup>16</sup>They arrested her when she reached the entrance of the Horse Gate at the royal palace. She was executed there.

<sup>17</sup>Jehoiada then made a covenant between the LORD, the king, and the people, that the people would belong to the LORD. The king and the people also made a covenant. <sup>18</sup>Then all the people of the land went to Baal's temple and tore it down, smashing its altars and images into pieces. They executed Mattan, Baal's priest, in front of the altars. The priest Jehoiada posted guards at the LORD's temple. <sup>19</sup>Then he took the unit commanders, the Carites, the guards, and all the people of the land, and they led the king down from the LORD's temple, processing through the Guards' Gate to the palace, where the king sat upon the royal throne.

<sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>1</sup>Heb lacks royal. <sup>2</sup>Heb uncertain

11:4 *Jehoiada*: the priest (2 Kgs 11:9, 15). *Carites*: soldiers for hire who served as guards of the temple. Although their origin isn't known, some scholars think that the Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 20:23 suggests that they may be related to the Cherethites, part of David's foreign mercenary army (cf. 2 Sam 8:18; 1 Kgs 1:38).

11:5-8 *sabbath duty*: The day masks the plot under way. No one will suspect, since the guards are being changed anyway. *palace... temple... the Lord's temple*: These verses refer to guarding the royal palace and the temple of the Lord. The entire palace-temple complex is to be put under guard so as to protect the king. The words "the king" appear many times in the rest of the chapter, which suggests the narrator's interest in restoring the legitimate Davidic monarchy in Judah.

11:10 *King David's spears and shields*: This unique feature of the story emphasizes the alignment of the commanders and the guards with the Davidic tradition in Jerusalem.

11:12 This verse provides a description of royal appointment and anointing. The coronation report includes mention of the traditional anointing with oil (cf. 1 Sam 10:1; 1 Kgs 1:25, 34, 39; 2 Kgs 9:3, 13). *royal law*: A document was provided to the king that set forth the duties and obligations of the king. It might have been a scroll such as the

one mentioned in the instruction governing kingship (Deut 17:18; cf. 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 23:3).

11:14 *royal pillar*: The word "pillar" has appeared previously only in reference to Solomon's palace and temple (1 Kgs 7). The word "royal" doesn't actually appear in the Hebrew text. The pillar mentioned here may be one of the two pillars mentioned in 1 Kings 7:21. Perhaps Jachin, the pillar whose name means "establishes," is in fact a "royal" pillar associated with the place of coronation (see note on 1 Kgs 7:15-22). *people of the land*: not simply the general population, but citizens and landowners who were seen to have political influence (cf. 2 Kgs 11:18-19; 2 Kgs 14:21-22; 21:24; 25:19).

11:17 *covenant*: This is the first covenant renewal ceremony mentioned in the books of Kings. This ceremony brings together not only Jehoash's reign but the people and the Davidic kingship itself as belonging to the Lord. The second mention of covenant in this verse suggests, perhaps, that a solemn promise or commitment of the people's loyalty to the king is also necessary (cf. 2 Sam 5:1-3).

11:18 *Baal's temple*: Although Ahab built a temple to Baal in Samaria (cf. 1 Kgs 16:32; 2 Kgs 10:21-27), this is the first mention of such a temple in Jerusalem. Shrines to other gods were known since Solomon's time (cf. 1 Kgs 11:7).

11:19 *Carites*: See note on 2 Kings 11:4. *people of the land*: See note on 2 Kings 11:14.

11:4 2Ki 11:9;  
2Ch 23:1  
11:13-16  
2Ch 23:12-15  
11:17-18  
2Ch 23:16-18  
11:19-20a  
2Ch 23:20-21a

11:20b  
2Ch 23:21b  
11:21 2Ch 24:1  
12:2 2Ch 24:2  
12:4, 5  
2Ch 24:4, 5  
12:6-16  
2Ch 24:6-14  
12:9 Mk 12:41

<sup>20</sup>All the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was at peace now that Athaliah had been executed at the palace.

### Jehoash rules Judah

**12**<sup>21k</sup>Jehoash was 7 years old when he became king. <sup>1</sup>He<sup>l</sup> became king in Jehu's seventh year, and he ruled for forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah; she was from Beer-sheba. <sup>2</sup>Jehoash always did what was right in the LORD's eyes, because the priest Jehoiada was his teacher. <sup>3</sup>However, the shrines were not removed. People kept sacrificing and burning incense at them. <sup>4</sup>Jehoash said to the priests, "Collect all the currently available money relating to holy things that is brought to the temple—some is money people pay to redeem persons according to their assessed value. Collect all the money brought to the LORD's temple that people offer voluntarily.<sup>m</sup> <sup>5</sup>The priests should take the money from their donors and use it to repair the temple wherever such a need for repair is discovered."

<sup>6</sup>But by the twenty-third year of King Jehoash, the priests still hadn't repaired the temple. <sup>7</sup>So King Jehoash summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests together. "Why haven't you repaired the temple?" he asked them. "Stop taking money from your donors; instead, give it directly for temple repairs." <sup>8</sup>The priests agreed that they wouldn't take any more money from the people nor be responsible for temple repairs. <sup>9</sup>Then the priest Jehoiada took a box, made a hole in its lid, and placed it beside the altar, to the right as one enters the LORD's temple. The priests who stood watch at the door put all the money brought to the LORD's temple in the box. <sup>10</sup>As soon as they saw that a large amount of money was in the box, the royal scribe and the high priest would come, count the money that was in the temple, and put it in a bag. <sup>11</sup>They would then hand over the money that had been counted<sup>n</sup> to those who supervised the work on the temple. These supervisors then paid money to those who worked on the LORD's temple: carpenters, builders, <sup>12</sup>masons, and stonecutters. The money was used to purchase wood and quarried stone to repair the LORD's temple and for every other cost involved in repairing it. <sup>13</sup>But the money that was brought to the LORD's temple was not used to make silver basins, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, trumpets, or any gold or silver object for the LORD's temple. <sup>14</sup>Instead, it was given directly to those who did the repair work; they used it to repair the LORD's temple. <sup>15</sup>There was no need to check on those who received the money and paid the workers, because they acted honestly. <sup>16</sup>Now as for the money for compensation and purification offerings, it wasn't brought to the LORD's temple. It belonged to the priests.

<sup>17</sup>About this same time, Aram's King Hazael came up, attacked Gath, and captured it. Next Hazael decided to march against Jerusalem. <sup>18</sup>Judah's King Jehoash took all the holy objects that had been dedicated by his ancestors—Judah's kings Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah—along with the holy objects he himself had dedicated, as well as all the gold in the treasure rooms of the LORD's temple and the palace, and he sent them to Aram's King Hazael. Hazael then pulled back from Jerusalem.

<sup>k</sup>12:1 in Heb <sup>l</sup>12:2 in Heb <sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>n</sup>Heb uncertain

12:2-3 *shrines*: Although the historian evaluates Jehoash's behavior favorably, he fails in this one matter. See note on 1 Kings 3:2-3 (cf. 1 Kgs 15:14; 22:43).

12:4 *redeem persons . . . assessed value . . . offer voluntarily*: Money will come from several sources, including the census tax (Exod 30:11-16); money received from persons who have provided money in exchange for objects and persons dedicated to the Lord (Lev 27:1-8); and voluntary donations of any kind (the Hebrew may also be translated as "from the heart"; cf. Exod 35:5, 21-22, 26, 29).

12:5 *repair the temple*: Solomon's temple had been built over 140 years earlier. Jehoash's initiative will serve to solidify his claim to the throne, since he will be seen as acting as patron of the temple and as loyal to its God.

12:6-16 This detailed scenario implies that over the past 23 years the priests have taken all donations to the temple for themselves, failing to carry out the instructions to repair the temple. Offerings given by the people were legitimately to be used by the priests for their own support

(cf. Num 5:9-10; 18:19). But for some reason they weren't able to follow through on Jehoash's order (2 Kgs 12:5). He therefore establishes a system that divides the gifts to the temple into two types: those for the materials and labor for the repairs (12:9-15), and those deriving from sacrificial offerings for the support of the priests (2 Kgs 12:16). Nevertheless, none of the gifts could be used to improve the special instruments and equipment used in temple worship (12:13).

12:17-18 *Hazael . . . attacked Gath*: Gath is a Philistine city in the coastal plain between Judah and the Mediterranean Sea. On Hazael's military actions against Israel during the reigns of Jehu and Jehoahaz, see 2 Kings 8:28-29; 10:32-33; 13:1-7, 22-23. *Jehoash took all the holy objects . . . to Aram's King Hazael*: Handing over tribute money and gifts effectively puts Judah under the control of Syria (cf. 1 Kgs 15:18-24; 2 Kgs 18:15). This allows Jehoash to keep his small kingdom intact without loss of territory.

<sup>19</sup>The rest of Jehoash's<sup>a</sup> deeds and all that he accomplished, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? <sup>20</sup>Jehoash's officials plotted a conspiracy and killed him at Beth-millo on the road that goes down to Silla. <sup>21</sup>It was Jozacar son of Shimeath and Jehoabad son of Shomer, his officials, who struck him so that he died. He was buried with his ancestors in David's City. His son Amaziah succeeded him as king.

### Jehoahaz rules Israel

**13** Jehoahaz, Jehu's son, became king of Israel in Samaria in the twenty-third year of Judah's King Jehoash,<sup>b</sup> who was Ahaziah's son. He ruled for seventeen years. <sup>2</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes. He walked in the sins that Jeroboam, Nebat's son, had caused Israel to commit. He didn't deviate from them. <sup>3</sup>So the LORD was angry at Israel. Time after time God handed them over to Aram's king Hazael, and to Hazael's son Ben-hadad.

<sup>4</sup>But Jehoahaz sought the LORD's presence, and the LORD listened to him because he saw how badly Aram's king was oppressing Israel. <sup>5</sup>The LORD sent Israel a savior, and they escaped from Aram's power. Then the Israelites lived peacefully at home, just as they had in the past. <sup>6</sup>But they didn't deviate from the sins that Jeroboam's dynasty had caused Israel to commit; they walked in them! Moreover, a sacred pole<sup>c</sup> stood in Samaria. <sup>7</sup>No, nothing was left of Jehoahaz's army except fifty chariot riders, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers, because Aram's king had decimated them, trampling them as if they were dirt. <sup>8</sup>The rest of Jehoahaz's deeds, all that he accomplished, and all his powerful acts, aren't they written in the official records of Israel's kings? <sup>9</sup>Jehoahaz lay down with his ancestors. He was buried in Samaria. His son Joash succeeded him as king.

### Joash rules Israel

<sup>10</sup>Joash,<sup>e</sup> Jehoahaz's son, became king of Israel in Samaria in the thirty-seventh year of Judah's King Jehoash. He ruled for sixteen years. <sup>11</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes. He didn't deviate from all the sins that Jeroboam, Nebat's son, had caused Israel to commit, but he walked in them! <sup>12</sup>The rest of Joash's deeds, all that he accomplished, and his powerful acts—how he fought against Judah's King Amaziah—aren't they written in the official

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Joash* (also in 13:20); the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoash* or short *Joash* form. The latter is the form used in 2 Chron. <sup>b</sup>Heb *Joash* (also in 13:10); the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoash* or short *Joash* form. The latter is the form used in 2 Chron. <sup>c</sup>Heb *asherah*, perhaps an object devoted to the goddess Asherah. <sup>d</sup>Heb *Jehoash* (also in 13:25); the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoash* or short *Joash* form. The latter is the form used in 2 Chron.

12:19-21 *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43. *conspiracy*: The author doesn't provide a reason for the murder of Jehoash. Chronicles provides a different account (cf. 2 Chron 24:23-27). *Beth-millo*: The word "millo" occurs elsewhere (2 Sam 5:9; 1 Kgs 9:15), where it is translated "earthen terraces" and "stepped structure." *Beth-millo*, or "house of millo," could be a house on or near the terraces on the way to *Silla*, an unknown place in or near Jerusalem. 13:1-25 The next three short stories return to Israel and to events that have been taking place during Jehoash's reign in Judah. The reigns of Jehoahaz and Joash provide a setting from which to get a glimpse into Elisha's final days.

13:1-3 *sins... Jeroboam*: Like other Israelite kings, Jehoahaz is compared to Jeroboam (13:2; cf. 1 Kgs 12:26-33). *the LORD was angry at Israel*: Although God's anger is a common theme in the books of Kings, it occurs here for the first time in 2 Kings. See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8. *God handed them over*: This motif, along with the oppression of Hazael and God's sending a savior (2 Kgs 13:3-5), recalls the repetitive cycle of events in the book of Judges (cf. Judg 2:12-23). God's response reflects divine discipline in the light of God's promise to Jehu (cf. 2 Kgs 10:30), and which looks very much like the discipline God announced as a consequence to David's descendants (2 Sam 7:14).

13:4-5 *sought the LORD's presence... savior*: The language throughout these verses sounds much like the pattern presented in the book of Judges, where God is said to respond to the people's cry, which comes from their situation of oppression, by sending a *savior* (cf. Judg 3:9, 15 where the Hebrew word for "savior" is translated "deliverer"). In this case, the savior might well be Assyria's King Adad-nirari III, who led a campaign against Damascus. When the Arameans yielded to the Assyrian advance, Israel was given a window of freedom.

13:6-7 *Jeroboam*: By underlining the point made in 2 Kings 13:2, the historian suggests that the "savior" wasn't able to prevent a devastating blow to Jehoahaz's military capacity. *sacred pole*: See note on 1 Kings 14:12-18.

13:8 *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

13:10-13 *Joash*: This king of Israel isn't to be confused with Israel's King Joash (2 Kgs 12). Like him, the name of this Joash is also spelled in short or long form (Jehoash) in Hebrew. His reign receives a summary report that is typical of Israelite kings, including mention of Jeroboam's sins (1 Kgs 12:26-33). *fought against... Amaziah*: See 2 Kings 14:14-25 for a description of this conflict. The summary statement of 13:12-13 is repeated in 2 Kings 14:15-16, perhaps to make explicit the intersecting events during these two kings' reigns.

12:19  
2Ch 24:27a  
12:20, 21a  
2Ch 24:25  
12:21b  
2Ch 24:27b  
13:1 2K1 10:35  
13:2 1K1 12:26  
13:5 2K1 14:25  
13:12, 13  
2K1 14:15, 16

13:21 1Ks 19:16;  
1Ks 19:19;  
2Ks 2:2, 2Ks 2:12;  
Mt 27:52

records of Israel's kings? <sup>13</sup>Joash lay down with his ancestors, and Jeroboam followed him on the throne. Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

### *Elisha's last days*

<sup>14</sup>Now Elisha became sick with the illness that would kill him. So Israel's King Joash went down to see him. Joash cried over Elisha, saying, "Oh, my father, my father! Israel's chariots and its riders!"

<sup>15</sup>Elisha told Joash, "Get a bow and some arrows." So he brought Elisha a bow and some arrows. <sup>16</sup>Elisha then said to Israel's king, "Put your hand on the bow." So Joash put his hand on the bow. Elisha then put his hands over the king's hands <sup>17</sup>and said, "Open the window to the east." The king did so. "Now shoot!" Elisha told him. Joash shot, then Elisha announced, "That's the LORD's rescue arrow! The rescue arrow against the Arameans! You will finish the Arameans off at Aphek." <sup>18</sup>Then Elisha said, "Take the arrows!" so Joash took them. Elisha then said to Israel's king, "Hit the ground with them!" Joash hit the ground three times and stopped. <sup>19</sup>The man of God became angry with him. He said, "If only you had struck five or six times, you would have finished the Arameans off. As it is, you will defeat them only three times."

<sup>20</sup>So Elisha died, and he was buried.

Sometimes Moabite raiding parties used to come into the land each spring. <sup>21</sup>Now it happened once that while a man was being buried, the people at the funeral suddenly saw a raiding party. They threw the body into Elisha's tomb and ran off. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet!

<sup>22</sup>Aram's King Hazael had oppressed Israel throughout Jehoahaz's rule. <sup>23</sup>But the LORD was gracious to Israel and had compassion on them, turning back to them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; he didn't want to destroy them or throw them out of his presence until now. <sup>24</sup>Aram's King Hazael died. His son Ben-hadad succeeded him as king. <sup>25</sup>Then Jehoahaz's son Joash recaptured from Hazael's son Ben-hadad those cities that Hazael had won in battle from Joash's father Jehoahaz. Joash attacked Ben-hadad three times and took back these Israelite cities.

13:14-20a Even in Elisha's final days, which are framed by the mention of his sickness (13:14) and his death (13:20a), he continues to be God's agent in Israel's military engagements. Elisha, with a prophetic career of 50 to 60 years, first appeared in the story in 1 Kings 19:19-21.

13:14 *went down*: Elisha may be living with other prophets below sea level in the Jordan Valley (cf. 2 Kgs 6:1-2). *Oh, my father... chariots and its riders*: These are the same words Elisha used when Elijah was taken up by God (see note on 2 Kgs 2:11-12). Joash's use of the words carries a double meaning. He is mourning the devastating loss of Israel's chariots and riders to Aram's forces (2 Kgs 13:7). Yet Elisha understands that God's involvement, expressed in the imagery of heavenly forces, shapes Israel's history more than Israel's military capacity (cf. 2 Kgs 2:11-12; 6:8-17).

13:16 *his hands over the king's hands*: the prophet's, and therefore God's, symbolic identification with the king.

13:17-19 *the Lord's rescue arrow*: Elisha's announcement asserts victory with God's help. *Arameans*: a neighboring nation to the northeast, hostile to Israel since Solomon's time (cf. 1 Kgs 11:25). *Aphek*: where Ahab had once defeated the Arameans (1 Kgs 20:26-30). *finish... off*: The expression, used twice in these verses, once in Elisha's prediction, suggests thorough defeat of the Arameans. *defeat them only three times*: Joash's action, however, limits the defeat (cf. 2 Kgs 13:25). The combination of prophetic announcement and human action suggests that the word of God through the prophet isn't always fulfilled in a literal way. The story implies that other human factors must also be taken into account.

13:20-21 *Moabite*: Moab is located to the east of the Dead Sea. *touched Elisha's bones*: Elisha was buried in a traditional cave tomb. His body would have been laid out on a

stone slab. *threw*: Some interpreters suggest that this action, which is the same verb as is used in 2 Kings 17:20 of Israel's being thrown into Assyrian exile, implies that for Israel to receive new life after exile, they must stay "in touch" with the prophets by being faithful to God's word as mediated through the prophets (cf. 2 Kgs 17:13). It's also significant that two stories about resuscitation begin and end the long narrative in which the two great prophets Elijah and Elisha are the primary characters (see also 1 Kgs 17:17-24). The first of those stories confirms that the prophet is the one who speaks "the Lord's word" (1 Kgs 17:24). This last one confirms that even in death, the prophet has the capacity to restore life.

13:22 *Hazael... oppressed Israel*: This king of Aram (Syria) has been a character in the story since the Lord's word to Elisha in 1 Kings 19:15. Elisha's announcement to Hazael indicates that this king would do great violence to Israel (cf. 2 Kgs 8:12-13).

13:23 *gracious to Israel... covenant with Abraham*: This is the only reference in the books of Kings to God's *covenant* with Israel's ancestors (cf. 1 Kgs 18:36; on this covenant, see Gen 15:1-21; 17:1-27; 26:23-25; 28:10-22). This basis for God's *compassion* suggests that Israel's survival in the face of ongoing conflict with the Arameans has more to do with God's larger project with Israel than with the "right" actions of individual Israelite kings like Jehu (cf. 2 Kgs 10:30). *until now*: If the writers of 1 and 2 Kings are located in Babylonian exile, they may be suggesting that God continues to be present to them even into that desperate time. Still, the writer notes later in 2 Kings 17:18, using the same expression as here, that the fall of Israel to Assyria marked a removal "from his presence." Only Judah was spared.

13:25 *three times*: Compare with 2 Kings 13:19.

## Amaziah rules Judah

**14** Amaziah, the son of Judah's King Jehoash,<sup>a</sup> became king in the second year of Israel's King Joash, who was Jehoahaz's son. <sup>2</sup>Amaziah was 25 years old when he became king, and he ruled for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddin; she was from Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>He did what was right in the LORD's eyes, but not as well as his ancestor King David. He did everything his father Jehoash did. <sup>4</sup>However, the shrines weren't removed. People kept sacrificing and burning incense at them. <sup>5</sup>Once he had secured control over his kingdom, he executed the officials who had assassinated his father the king. <sup>6</sup>However, he didn't kill the children of the murderers, because of what is written in the Instruction scroll from Moses, where the LORD commanded, *Parents shouldn't be executed because of what their children have done; neither should children be executed because of what their parents have done. Each person should be executed for their own guilty acts.*<sup>b</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Next Amaziah struck down ten thousand Edomites in the Salt Valley and captured Sela in battle. He renamed it Jokthe-el, which is what it is still called today. <sup>8</sup>Then Amaziah sent messengers to Israel's King Joash<sup>c</sup> son of Jehoahaz son of Israel's King Jehu, saying, "Come on! Let's go head-to-head."

<sup>9</sup>But Israel's King Joash responded to Judah's King Amaziah, "Once upon a time, a thistle in Lebanon sent a message to a cedar, 'Give your daughter to my son as a wife.' But then a wild beast in Lebanon came along and trampled the thistle. <sup>10</sup>You have definitely defeated Edom and have now become conceited. Enjoy the honor, but stay home. Why invite disaster when both you and Judah will fall?"

<sup>11</sup>But Amaziah wouldn't listen, so Israel's King Joash moved against him, and he and Judah's King Amaziah went head-to-head in battle at Beth-shemesh in Judah. <sup>12</sup>Judah was defeated by Israel, and everyone ran home. <sup>13</sup>At Beth-shemesh, Israel's King Joash captured Judah's King Amaziah, Jehoash's son and Ahaziah's grandson. Joash then marched to Jerusalem and broke down six hundred feet of the Jerusalem wall from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. <sup>14</sup>Joash took all the gold and silver, and all the objects he could find in the LORD's temple and the treasuries of the palace, along with some hostages and returned to Samaria. <sup>15</sup>The rest of Joash's deeds and his powerful acts—how he fought against Judah's King Amaziah—aren't they written in the official records of Israel's kings? <sup>16</sup>Joash lay down

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Joash* (also in 14:3, 17, 23); the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoash* or short *Joash* form. The latter is the form used in 2 Chron. <sup>b</sup>Deut 24:16 <sup>c</sup>Heb *Jehoash* (also in 14:9, 11, 13, 15, 16-17); the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoash* or short *Joash* form. The latter is the form used in 2 Chron.

14:1-22 This story about King Amaziah from Judah continues a sequence of stories (2 Kgs 14:1-17:41) about the intersecting reigns of Judah's and Israel's kings that ends with the fall of Samaria in 722 BCE.

14:1-2 Amaziah probably reigned alongside his father for part of his 29-year reign.

14:3-4 *right in the LORD's eyes... shrines weren't removed*: The historian provides a qualified approval by comparing Amaziah to David and by highlighting the failure to remove the *shrines* (see note on 1 Kgs 3:2-3). On evaluating the kings of Judah, compare 1 Kings 3:3; 15:11; 22:43; 2 Kings 12:2; 14:3; 15:3, 34.

14:5-6 *assassinated his father*: On Jehoash's murder, see 2 Kings 12:19-21. *because of what is written in the Instruction scroll from Moses*: The narrator ascribes Amaziah's restraint to his obedience to the instruction of Deuteronomy 24:16 (cf. Jer 31:29-30; Ezek 18:2-4, 20). The full and exact expression *Instruction scroll from Moses* occurs elsewhere in the larger history of Joshua through Kings only in Joshua 8:31; 23:6 (cf. similar expressions highlighting Moses as mediator of God's instruction in Deut 31:24-26; 2 Kgs 21:8; 23:25). Since Moses is the best example of a prophet, this motif defines the historian's interest in the dominance of the prophetic word.

14:7 *Salt Valley... Sela*: Edom broke away from Judah's

control during Jehoram's reign (2 Kgs 8:20-22). Now Amaziah brings a measure of control over Judah's southern region, although he isn't able to recover control of Edom itself (cf. 2 Kgs 14:22). For a different and fuller description of Amaziah's war against Edom, see 2 Chronicles 25:5-16. *still called today*: at the time of the writer.

14:9 *thistle... cedar*: Judah and Israel. Amaziah is being overly confident in the face of Israel's superior strength. For another similar fable, see Judges 9:7-15.

14:11 *Beth-shemesh*: about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Amaziah is completely unprepared, since Joash is able to move directly up the valley that runs from the coastal plain to Jerusalem. *Ephraim Gate*: a gate along the northern wall where the city is most vulnerable. Here, unlike the city's other three sides, the wall isn't bordered by a steep valley.

14:14 *took all the gold... treasuries of the palace*: Robbing from the treasury was the same thing as making Judah a dependent state. Even more, the vulnerability of Judah's treasury represents and symbolically foreshadows Judah's own vulnerability to the powers (cf. 1 Kgs 14:26; 15:18; 2 Kgs 12:18; 15:19; 16:8; 18:15; 20:13, 15; 24:13).

14:15-16 These verses echo 2 Kings 13:12-13, perhaps to make explicit the intersecting events during these two kings' reigns and to highlight the fact that Amaziah lived longer than Joash (cf. 2 Kgs 14:17).

14:1, 2 2Ch 25:1

14:3-6

2Ch 25:2-4

14:6 Dt 24:16;

Jer 31:30;

Ezek 18:4;

Ezek 18:20

14:7 2Ch 25:11

14:8-14

2Ch 25:17-24

14:9 Jgs 9:8

14:10 2Ki 14:7;

2Ch 26:16

14:15, 16

2Ki 13:12, 13

14:17 2Ch 25:25  
 14:18 20  
 2Ch 25:26-28  
 14:21 2Ch 26:1  
 14:22 2Ch 26:2  
 14:25 2Ki 13:5

with his ancestors. He was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. His son Jeroboam succeeded him as king.

<sup>17</sup>Judah's King Amaziah, Jehoash's son, lived fifteen years after the death of Israel's King Joash, Jehoahaz's son. <sup>18</sup>The rest of Amaziah's deeds, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? <sup>19</sup>Some people in Jerusalem plotted against him. When Amaziah fled to Lachish, they sent men after him to Lachish, and they murdered him there. <sup>20</sup>They carried him back on horses, and he was buried in Jerusalem with his ancestors in David's City.

<sup>21</sup>Then all the people of Judah took Azariah and made him king after his father Amaziah. He was 16 years old. <sup>22</sup>He rebuilt Elath, restoring it to Judah after King Amaziah had lain down with his ancestors.

### *Jeroboam II rules Israel*

<sup>23</sup>Jeroboam, the son of Israel's King Joash, became king in Samaria in the fifteenth year of Judah's King Amaziah, Jehoash's son. He ruled for forty-one years. <sup>24</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes. He didn't deviate from all the sins that Jeroboam, Nebat's son, had caused Israel to commit. <sup>25</sup>He reestablished Israel's border from Lebo-hamath to the Dead Sea. This was in agreement with the word that the LORD, the God of Israel, spoke through his servant the prophet Jonah, Amittai's son, who was from Gath-hepher. <sup>26</sup>The LORD saw how brutally Israel suffered, whether slave or free, with no one to help Israel. <sup>27</sup>But the LORD hadn't said he would erase Israel's name from under heaven, so he saved them through Jeroboam, Joash's son. <sup>28</sup>The rest of Jeroboam's deeds, all that he accomplished, and his powerful acts—how he fought and how he restored Damascus and Hamath to Judah in Israel<sup>v</sup>—aren't they written in the official records of Israel's kings? <sup>29</sup>Jeroboam lay down with his ancestors the kings of Israel. His son Zechariah succeeded him as king.

<sup>v</sup>Heb uncertain

14:18 *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

14:19 *people in Jerusalem*: perhaps similar to "people of the land" (see note on 2 Kgs 11:14). The assassination was likely initiated by Amaziah's foolish loss in battle against Joash. *Lachish*: an important city 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem and not far from Beth-shemesh in the foothills between the coastal plain and the Judean highlands (cf. 2 Kgs 14:11). It's the second-most-important city in Judah after Jerusalem. This fortified city guards access to Jerusalem. The Assyrian armies approach Jerusalem from Lachish (cf. 2 Kgs 18:14, 17).

14:21 *Azariah*: See 2 Kings 15:1-7 for a description of his reign.

14:22 *after King Amaziah . . . with his ancestors*: The Hebrew of this verse doesn't include the name of a king, and Amaziah is one possibility. The king who "lay down with his ancestors" could as well be Joash (cf. 2 Kgs 14:16, where the phrase occurs), the Israelite king who defeated Amaziah and effectively controlled all of Judah until his death. *Azariah*, in that case, could have restored Elath to Judah after Joash's death. *Elath*: the seaport at the southern end of the rift valley at the north end of the Gulf of Aqaba. The port was important for trade, since it connected to the north-south trade route between Mesopotamia and Arabia and Egypt. This action was a follow-up to Amaziah's capture of territory controlled by Edom (cf. 2 Kgs 8:20-22; 9:26).

14:23-29 *Jeroboam*: the second king of Israel named Jeroboam, who is described here in typical language as having done *evil in the Lord's eyes* and having imitated the first Jeroboam's sins (cf. 1 Kgs 12:26-33; 14:16; 15:30; 16:31; etc.). The prophets Amos and Hosea were engaged with Israel's religious and political affairs during his reign. Jeroboam's reign ushers in an era of prosperity, which the prophets criticized as fueled by injustice and violence.

14:25 *Lebo-hamath*: the northern border of the promised land and the northern border of the kingdom of David and Solomon (cf. Num 13:21; 34:8; 1 Kgs 8:65). Syria's invasion by the Assyrians (the "savior" of 2 Kgs 13:5) gave Israel some breathing room and allowed Jeroboam II to expand his territory to the northern extent of Solomon's empire. *in agreement with the word . . . the Lord . . . Jonah*: We have no record of this prophecy by Jonah, even though there is a biblical book named after him, in which he is a central character.

14:26-27 *no one to help . . . saved them through Jeroboam*: As God did during Jehoahaz's reign, God acts to preserve Israel (cf. 2 Kgs 13:3-5, 23; 14:27). The historian seems to be asserting that God isn't in the business of giving up on Israel, in spite of the behavior of Israel's kings. Though we don't know what Jonah prophesied, the theme of grace that echoes through the stories of Jehoahaz and Jeroboam II resonates with the main theme of the book of Jonah.

14:28 *Damascus and Hamath*: Damascus was the Aramean (Syrian) capital. Hamath is situated on the Orontes River between Damascus and Aleppo. Jeroboam II was able to move that far north because the Assyrians had already weakened the Aramean military capacity (see note on 2 Kgs 13:4-5). *to Judah in Israel*: The phrase is oddly constructed. It might be shorthand for a united Israel restored to the glory of the Solomon era, since territory is being recovered in both Judah and Israel (cf. 2 Kgs 14:22). Or it might allude to the historian's bias toward Judah as the rightful heir of David's kingdom (cf. 1 Kgs 11:39). *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

14:29 *Zechariah*: Jeroboam's death and Zechariah's accession to the throne signaled the fulfillment of the prophecy of four generations in Jehu's dynasty (cf. 2 Kgs 10:30; 15:12).



**Azariah rules Judah**

**15** Azariah, Amaziah's son, became king of Judah in the twenty-seventh year of Israel's King Jeroboam. <sup>2</sup>He was 16 years old when he became king, and he ruled for fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah; she was from Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>He did what was right in the LORD's eyes, just as his father Amaziah had done. <sup>4</sup>However, the shrines weren't removed. People kept sacrificing and burning incense at them. <sup>5</sup>Now the LORD afflicted the king with a skin disease that he had until his dying day, so he lived in a separate house. <sup>6</sup>The king's son Jotham supervised the palace administration and governed the people of the land. <sup>7</sup>The rest of Azariah's deeds and all he accomplished, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? <sup>8</sup>Azariah died and was buried with his ancestors in David's City. His son Jotham succeeded him as king.

15:2 2Ch 26:3  
15:3 2Ch 26:4  
15:5 2Ch 26:21  
15:6, 7  
2Ch 26:22, 23  
15:14 1Ki 14:17  
15:19 1Ch 5:26a

**Zechariah rules Israel**

<sup>9</sup>Zechariah, Jeroboam's son, became king of Israel in Samaria in the thirty-eighth year of Judah's King Azariah. He ruled for six months. <sup>10</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes, just as his ancestors had done. He didn't deviate from the sins that Jeroboam, Nebat's son, had caused Israel to commit. <sup>11</sup>Shallum, Jabesh's son, plotted against Zechariah. He struck him down in public, <sup>12</sup>murdering him. Shallum then succeeded him as king. <sup>13</sup>The rest of Zechariah's deeds are written in the official records of Israel's kings. <sup>14</sup>This was exactly what the LORD spoke to Jehu: Your descendants will sit on Israel's throne for four generations. And that's exactly what happened.

**Shallum rules Israel**

<sup>15</sup>Shallum, Jabesh's son, became king in the thirty-ninth year of Judah's King Uzziah. He ruled for one month in Samaria. <sup>16</sup>Menahem, Gadi's son, went up from Tirzah and came to Samaria. He struck down Jabesh's son Shallum in Samaria, murdering him. Menahem then succeeded him as king. <sup>17</sup>The rest of Shallum's deeds and the conspiracy he plotted are written in the official records of Israel's kings.

**Menahem rules Israel**

<sup>18</sup>Menahem then moved from Tirzah and attacked Tiphshah, all its citizens, and its neighboring areas. Because they wouldn't surrender, he attacked and ripped open all its pregnant women. <sup>19</sup>Menahem, Gadi's son, became king of Israel in the thirty-ninth year of Judah's King Azariah. He ruled for ten years in Samaria. <sup>20</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes. Throughout his life, he didn't deviate from the sins that Jeroboam, Nebat's son, had caused Israel to commit. <sup>21</sup>When Assyria's King Tiglath-pileser<sup>y</sup> marched against the land,

<sup>y</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>z</sup>LXX in *Keblaam*; Heb uncertain <sup>3</sup>Heb *Pul*

15:1-38 This chapter tells of seven kings who rule Judah and Israel. Although interesting details emerge throughout these descriptions, the stories imply a growing sense of inevitable disaster to come. In Israel a series of assassinations suggests internal unrest, which may have been fueled by political divisions associated with Israel's alignment with Assyria, a power broker in the region led by Tiglath-pileser III (cf. 2 Kgs 15:19-20).

15:1 *Azariah*: also called *Uzziah* (2 Kgs 15:13, 30, 32, 34; 2 Chron 26-27; Isa 1:1; 6:1). During his long reign he expanded Judah's territory to that of Solomon's empire (cf. 2 Kgs 14:22 and the more elaborate description of his reign in 2 Chron 26:3-15).

15:3-4 *right in the LORD's eyes... shrines*: a typical summary of Judean kings who are good, but fail in one critical matter (cf. 2 Kgs 14:3-4). On *shrines*, see note on 1 Kings 3:2-3.

15:5 *skin disease*: This ailment kept the king at a distance from the affairs of state. See note on 2 Kings 5:1.

15:6-7 *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43. *Jotham*: His reign is described in 2 Kings 15:32-38.

15:9 *evil in the LORD's eyes... sins that Jeroboam*: a typical description of the reign of kings, occurring 31 times in the books of Kings (cf. 1 Kgs 11: 6-33; 14:22; 15:26; 16:30).

15:10 *Shallum*: See 2 Kings 15:13-15 for a description of his reign.

15:11 *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

15:12 *what the LORD spoke to Jehu... four generations*: By highlighting the common theme in the books of Kings of the power of the prophets' words, the narrator points out the fulfillment of 2 Kings 10:30.

15:13-15 *Shallum... in Samaria*: He was king of Israel. *Uzziah*: another name for Azariah. See note on 2 Kings 15:1. *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

15:16 *Tiphshah*: a city on the Euphrates River that was once within Solomon's empire (1 Kgs 5:4). The description of Menahem's brutal violence makes him a pretender to Solomon's greatness. The prophets expose such brutality, whether practiced by foreign or Israelite kings (cf. 2 Kgs 8:4; Amos 1:13). Hosea's judgment speech against Samaria assumes such violence will be done against Israel, perhaps as poetic justice for Menahem's behavior (Hos 13:16).

15:18 *evil in the LORD's eyes... sins that Jeroboam*: a typical description of the reign of an Israelite king (cf. 1 Kgs 12:26-33).

15:19-20 *Tiglath-pileser*: Pul (see translation note y) is a short name for Tiglath-pileser III, who ruled Assyria from

15:29 1Ki 15:20;  
2Ki 16:7;  
2Ki 17:6;  
1Ch 5:26; Is 9:1  
15:30 2Ki 15:25;  
2Ki 16:1;  
2Ki 16:5;  
2Ki 17:1; Is 7:1  
15:33 2Ch 27:1;  
2Ch 27:8  
15:34-35  
2Ch 27:2-3

Menahem gave Tiglath-pileser one thousand silver kikkars in order to become his ally and to strengthen his hold on the kingdom. <sup>20</sup>Menahem taxed Israel for this money. All the wealthy people had to give fifty silver shekels each to Assyria's king. So Assyria's king went home and didn't stay there in the land. <sup>21</sup>The rest of Menahem's deeds and all that he accomplished, aren't they written in the official records of Israel's kings? <sup>22</sup>Menahem lay down with his ancestors. His son Pekahiah succeeded him as king.

### **Pekahiah rules Israel**

<sup>23</sup>Pekahiah, Menahem's son, became king of Israel in the fiftieth year of Judah's King Azariah. He ruled for two years in Samaria. <sup>24</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes. He didn't deviate from the sins that Jeroboam, Nebat's son, had caused Israel to commit. <sup>25</sup>Pekah, Remaliah's son and Pekahiah's officer, plotted against him. Pekah struck Pekahiah in Samaria at the palace fortress, along with Argob and Arie<sup>h</sup>.<sup>a</sup> Pekah had fifty Gileadites with him. He murdered Pekahiah and succeeded him as king. <sup>26</sup>The rest of Pekahiah's deeds and all that he accomplished are written in the official records of Israel's kings.

### **Pekah rules Israel**

<sup>27</sup>Pekah, Remaliah's son, became king of Israel in the fifty-second year of Judah's King Azariah. Pekah ruled for twenty years in Samaria. <sup>28</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes. He didn't deviate from the sins that Jeroboam, Nebat's son, had caused Israel to commit. <sup>29</sup>In the days of Israel's King Pekah, Assyria's King Tiglath-pileser came and captured Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, and Hazor. He also captured Gilead, Galilee, and all the land of Naphtali. He sent the people into exile to Assyria. <sup>30</sup>Then Hoshea, Elah's son, plotted against Pekah, Remaliah's son. He struck Pekah down, murdering him. Hoshea became king after Pekah in the twentieth year of Uzziah's son Jotham. <sup>31</sup>The rest of Pekah's kingship and all that he accomplished are written in the official records of Israel's kings.

### **Jotham rules Judah**

<sup>32</sup>Jotham, Uzziah's son, became king of Judah in the second year of Israel's King Pekah, Remaliah's son. <sup>33</sup>Jotham was 25 years old when he became king, and he ruled for sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerusha; she was Zadok's daughter. <sup>34</sup>Jotham did

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

745 to 727 BCE. He campaigned westward, probably to enhance trade between Assyria and Egypt and thereby to advance Assyrian imperial power in the region. Along the way he needed to subdue small kingdoms like Israel and Judah. *Menahem gave . . . hold on the kingdom:* Menahem's payment, funded by taxation, was protection money. Tiglath-pileser left him alone, but Israel effectively became an Assyrian vassal state. See note on 2 Kings 14:14. Menahem is mentioned in Assyrian texts documenting Tiglath-pileser's military campaigns in the west in 738 BCE. This new arrangement meant that Israel lost control of any territory gained from the Arameans by Jeroboam II (2 Kgs 14:28). *kikkars:* One kikkar is approximately 76 pounds. *fifty silver shekels:* The monetary value of a human male adult (cf. Lev 27:3).

15:21 *official records:* See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

15:23-26 *evil in the Lord's eyes . . . sins . . . Jeroboam:* a typical description of the reign of Israelite kings (cf. 1 Kgs 12:26-33; cf. 1 Kgs 14:16; 15:30; 16:31). *Pekah . . . plotted against him:* Pekah was probably opposed to Pekahiah's pro-Assyrian policy, which was a continuation of the policy of his father, Menahem. *fifty Gileadites:* Details like this shed light on the political situation. The coconspirators from east of the Jordan River are probably among those who lost control of their region to Assyria and became disenfranchised from the central government in Samaria. *official records:* See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

15:28 *evil in the Lord's eyes . . . sins . . . Jeroboam:* a typical

description of the reign of Israelite kings (cf. 1 Kgs 12:26-33; 14:16; 15:30; 16:31; etc.).

15:29 *Tiglath-pileser:* See note on 2 Kings 15:19-20. The Assyrian king campaigned westward in 733-732 BCE, conquering most of the Galilee region as well as Gilead east of the Jordan River—some of the same areas Baasha lost to the Arameans (1 Kgs 15:20). This Assyrian invasion came at the same time that Israel and Syria joined forces to attack Judah. Judah's King Ahaz invited Tiglath-pileser to come to his aid against both Israel and the Arameans (2 Kgs 16:5-9). *exile to Assyria:* It was standard imperial practice to transfer populations, which terrorized the population in the conquered lands. Tiglath-pileser's annals mention 13,520 exiles to Assyria. This is the beginning of Israel's demise (cf. 2 Kgs 17:5-6, 24).

15:30-31 *Hoshea:* This last Israelite king's reign is described in 2 Kings 17:1-6. *official records:* See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

15:32-38 *Jotham . . . right in the Lord's eyes . . . didn't remove the shrines:* The historian's evaluation of Jotham's reign is like that of other kings of Judah who don't meet expectations (cf. 2 Kgs 14:3; 15:3). *shrines:* See the note on 1 Kings 3:2-3. *official records:* See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43. *the Lord began to send . . . Rezin and Pekah:* The Aramean and Israelite kings, in an anti-Assyrian coalition, attempt to force Jotham into a common cause with them. This threat becomes all-out war during the reign of Jotham's son Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:5-9; cf. Isa 7:1-8:10). The historian makes sure the

what was right in the LORD's eyes, just as his father Uzziah had done. <sup>35</sup>However, he didn't remove the shrines. The people continued to sacrifice and burn incense at them. Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the LORD's temple. <sup>36</sup>The rest of Jotham's deeds, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? <sup>37</sup>It was in those days that the LORD began to send Aram's King Rezin and Pekah, Remaliah's son, against Judah. <sup>38</sup>Jotham died and was buried with his ancestors in David's City.<sup>a</sup> His son Ahaz succeeded him as king.

### Ahaz rules Judah

**16** Ahaz, Jotham's son, became king of Judah in the seventeenth year of Pekah, Remaliah's son. <sup>2</sup>Ahaz was 20 years old when he became king, and he ruled for sixteen years in Jerusalem. He didn't do what was right in the LORD's eyes, unlike his ancestor David. <sup>3</sup>Instead, he walked in the ways of Israel's kings. He even burned his own son alive, imitating the detestable practices of the nations that the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. <sup>4</sup>He also sacrificed and burned incense at the shrines on every hill and beneath every shady tree. <sup>5</sup>Then Aram's King Rezin and Israel's King Pekah, Remaliah's son, came up to Jerusalem to fight. They surrounded Ahaz, but they weren't able to defeat him. <sup>6</sup>At that time Aram's King Rezin recovered Elath for the Arameans, driving the Judeans out of Elath. The Edomites<sup>b</sup> came to Elath and settled there, and that's still the case now.

<sup>7</sup>Ahaz sent messengers to Assyria's King Tiglath-pileser, saying, "I'm your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the power of the kings of Aram and Israel. Both of them are attacking me!" <sup>8</sup>And Ahaz took the silver and the gold that was in the LORD's temple and in the palace treasuries, and sent a gift to Assyria's king. <sup>9</sup>The Assyrian king heard the request and marched against Damascus. He captured it and sent its citizens into exile to Kir. He also killed Rezin.

<sup>10</sup>Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet up with Assyria's King Tiglath-pileser. King Ahaz noticed the altar that was in Damascus, and he sent the altar's plan and details for its construction to the priest Uriah. <sup>11</sup>Uriah built the altar, following the plans that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus; he had it finished before King Ahaz returned from Damascus.

<sup>12</sup>When the king arrived from Damascus, he inspected the altar. He came close to it, then went up on it, <sup>13</sup>burning his entirely burned offering and grain offering, pouring out his drink offering, and sprinkling the blood of his well-being sacrifices on the altar. <sup>14</sup>As for the bronze altar that used to stand before the LORD, Ahaz moved it away from the front of the

<sup>a</sup>Heb adds *his ancestor*. <sup>b</sup>Qere; Kethib *Arameans*

reader knows that this is nothing other than God's doing. The Lord directs even Israel's and Judah's enemies. This theological statement is the first indication in the books of Kings that not all will be well for Judah. Micah begins his prophetic ministry during Jotham's reign (Mic 1:1).

**16:1-4** *didn't do what was right . . . Israel's kings*: The historian's evaluation of Jotham's reign introduces a double criticism for the first time (cf. other negative comparisons to David: 1 Kgs 14:8; 2 Kgs 14:3). *detestable practices*: A return to Canaanite practices includes prohibited worship objects and may include child sacrifice (cf. 1 Kgs 11:7; 14:23-24; 16:34; 2 Kgs 3:26-27; 23:10). These practices were prohibited by the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 18:9-14; cf. Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:35). *the Lord had driven out*: The historian assumes that the practices of the peoples of the land were grounds for their exile. The same practices will later become grounds for the exile of both Israel and Judah (cf. 2 Kgs 17:8, 15; 21:2-6). *shrines*: See note on 1 Kings 3:2-3.

**16:5-6** *Rezin . . . Pekah*: The assault implied in 2 Kings 15:37 begins. *recovered Elath*: Azariah had recaptured Elath (2 Kgs 14:22), but it now reverts to Aramean control, with the help of Edomites who settle the region and become allies in managing the major trade route from Damascus down the eastern side of the Dead Sea. *still the case now*: at the time of the author. The Chronicles history tells a fuller

and different story in which Ahaz is thoroughly defeated by the Aramean-Israelite coalition, and the Assyrians don't help Ahaz (2 Chron 28). This war (733–732 BCE) is also described in Isaiah 7–8.

**16:7-8** *I'm your servant . . . gift to Assyria's king*: With Rezin (Aram) and Pekah (Israel) rallying against him, Ahaz becomes a vassal to Tiglath-pileser III. On the payment from the temple and palace treasuries, see note on 2 Kings 14:14. **16:9** Assyrian help arrived in the form of military campaigns in the years 733–732 BCE. *Kir*: Amos considers this the original home of the Arameans (Amos 9:7).

**16:10-18** *altar . . . in Damascus*: Ahaz seems to have been so enamored by the altar to the god Hadad that he incorporates its design into a renovated temple courtyard in Jerusalem. *because of the Assyrian king*: Although this section seems not to criticize Ahaz for these actions (contrast the perspective of 2 Chron 28:23), this brief aside in 16:18 implies that Ahaz's actions were done for political reasons. The items removed (16:17-18) may have been part of the tribute. Although the author implies that standard Israelite worship practices continued (16:15), the reality is nothing other than syncretism—that is, a blending of pagan and Israelite worship. The removal of the original altar (16:14; 1 Kgs 8:64), now to be used for *seeking guidance* (16:15) or divination (a practice prohibited by Deut 18:10), also implies a subtle criticism.

15:36 2Ch 27:7  
15:38 2Ch 27:9  
16:2-4  
2Ch 28:1-4  
16:5 2Ki 15:37;  
2Ch 28:5-6;  
Is 7:1  
16:7 2Ch 28:16  
16:10 2Ch 28:20  
16:12, 13  
2Ch 28:22, 23

16:17  
2Ch 28:24a  
16:19, 20  
2Ch 28:26, 27  
17:3 2Ki 18:9;  
Hos 10:14  
17:4 Jgs 16:21;  
Is 30:1; Jer 52:11;  
Hos 12:4  
17:5 2Ki 18:9  
17:6  
2Ki 18:10, 11  
17:7 Ex 14:15  
17:8 Lv 18:3;  
2Ki 16:3

temple where it had stood between the main altar and the LORD's temple. He put it on the north side of the new altar. <sup>15</sup>Then King Ahaz ordered the priest Uriah, saying, "Burn the following sacrifices on the main altar:

in the morning, the entirely burned offering;

in the evening, the grain offering;

the king's entirely burned offering and his grain offering;

the entirely burned offering for all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offerings.

"Sprinkle all the blood of the entirely burned offerings and all the blood of the sacrifices on it. I will use the bronze altar for seeking guidance."<sup>c</sup> <sup>16</sup>Uriah the priest did everything that King Ahaz commanded. <sup>17</sup>King Ahaz cut off the side panels from the stands and removed the basins from them. He took the Sea down from the bronze bulls that were under it and put it on a stone pavement. <sup>18</sup>He also took away the sabbath canopy that had been built in the temple. He removed the royal entrance outside the LORD's temple. This was done because of the Assyrian king.

<sup>19</sup>The rest of Ahaz's deeds, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings?

<sup>20</sup>Ahaz died and was buried with his ancestors in David's City. His son Hezekiah succeeded him as king.

### *Hoshea rules Israel*

**17** Hoshea, Elah's son, became king in Samaria in the twelfth year of Judah's king Ahaz. He ruled over Israel for nine years. <sup>2</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes, but he wasn't as bad as the Israelite kings who preceded him. <sup>3</sup>Assyria's King Shalmaneser marched against Hoshea, and Hoshea became Shalmaneser's servant, paying him tribute. <sup>4</sup>But the Assyrian king discovered that Hoshea was a traitor, because Hoshea sent messengers to Egypt's King So. Hoshea stopped paying tribute to the Assyrian king as he had in previous years, so the Assyrian king arrested him and put him in prison. <sup>5</sup>Then the Assyrian king invaded the whole country. He marched against Samaria and attacked it for three years. <sup>6</sup>In Hoshea's ninth year, the Assyrian king captured Samaria. He sent Israel into exile to Assyria, resettling them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River, and in the cities of the Medes.

### *The northern kingdom falls*

<sup>7</sup>All this happened because the Israelites sinned against the LORD their God, who brought them up from the land of Egypt, out from under the power of Pharaoh, Egypt's king. They worshipped other gods. <sup>8</sup>They followed the practices of the nations that the LORD had removed before the Israelites, as well as the practices that the Israelite kings had done.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain

16:19-20 *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43. *David's City*: Jerusalem. *Hezekiah*: His reign is described in 2 Kings 18-20.

17:1-41 The story of Israel now comes to its end. Hoshea (see 2 Kgs 15:30), the last king of Israel, succumbs to the Assyrian forces, and Israel is exiled to Assyria. Hoshea is mentioned in an Assyrian inscription in which Tiglath-pileser III is said to have "placed Hoshea as king over them." The biblical historian goes on to provide the reasons for this abrupt end, which had been announced earlier (2 Kgs 14:15-16) but was delayed until now because of God's commitment, compassion, and covenant with Israel's ancestors (cf. 2 Kgs 10:30; 13:3-5, 23; 14:27).

17:2 *evil in the LORD's eyes... wasn't as bad*: A typical critique of Israelite kings is modified only slightly in comparison to previous kings. It doesn't seem to matter that Jeroboam's sins aren't mentioned here (cf. 1 Kgs 12:25-33; 2 Kgs 15:28).

17:3 *Shalmaneser*: Tiglath-pileser's son. *paying him tribute*: Hoshea becomes a vassal of Shalmaneser V, as indicated by the word "servant" (cf. 1 Kgs 20:9; 2 Kgs 16:7).

17:4-6 *Hoshea was a traitor*: The word "traitor" is the same

word as is used in contexts of political scheming throughout the books of Kings (cf. 1 Kgs 15:27; 2 Kgs 11:14; 15:30). Hoshea changes sides by requesting an alliance with Egypt. *Egypt's King So*: It isn't possible to identify this Egyptian king; all suggestions are speculative. *the Assyrian king captured Samaria*: The historian names Shalmaneser V (2 Kgs 17:3) as the Assyrian king who conquered the city in 722 BCE. *into exile... resettling them*: Assyrian political policy involved transferring populations within its empire. *Halah* is northeast of Nineveh; *cities of the Medes* are located in Persia. Jewish populations continued to live in these regions until the late 20th century CE.

17:7-23 *this happened because the Israelites sinned*: This section elaborates on what the writer considers the cause of Israel's demise. No mention is made of the superior power of the Assyrian military. Rather, the chapter offers a theological explanation. On the one hand, the people are responsible (17:7); on the other hand Jeroboam is responsible (17:21). But the underlying cause is similar.

17:7-8 *worshipped other gods*: God allowed Israel to be deported into exile because Israel persistently violated its covenant with God (17:7; cf. Exod 20:3-6; Deut 5:7-10).

<sup>9</sup>The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that weren't right. They built shrines in all their towns, from watchtowers to fortified cities. <sup>10</sup>They set up sacred pillars and sacred poles\* on every high hill and beneath every green tree. <sup>11</sup>At every shrine they burned incense, just as the nations did that the LORD sent into exile before them. They did evil things that made the LORD angry. <sup>12</sup>They worshipped images about which the LORD had said, Don't do such things! <sup>13</sup>The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all the prophets and seers, telling them, Turn from your evil ways. Keep my commandments and my regulations in agreement with the entire Instruction that I commanded your ancestors and sent through my servants the prophets.

<sup>14</sup>But they wouldn't listen. They were stubborn like their ancestors who didn't trust the LORD their God. <sup>15</sup>They rejected his regulations and the covenant he had made with their ancestors, along with the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless images so that they too became worthless. And they imitated the neighboring nations that the LORD had forbidden them to imitate. <sup>16</sup>They deserted all the commandments of the LORD their God. They made themselves two metal idols cast in the shape of calves and made a sacred pole.<sup>f</sup> They bowed down to all the heavenly bodies. They served Baal. <sup>17</sup>They burned their sons and daughters alive. They practiced divination and sought omens. They gave themselves over to doing what was evil in the LORD's eyes and made him angry.

<sup>18</sup>So the LORD was very angry at Israel. He removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was spared. <sup>19</sup>But Judah didn't keep the commands of the LORD their God either. They followed the practices of Israel. <sup>20</sup>So the LORD rejected all of Israel's descendants.

\*Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah <sup>f</sup>Heb *asherah*, perhaps an object devoted to the goddess Asherah

17:9 2Ki 18:8;  
Eze 8:12  
17:10 Dt 12:2;  
1Ki 14:23;  
Mi 5:14  
17:11 1Ki 14:15;  
1Ki 16:33;  
2Ki 21:6;  
2Ki 23:19;  
2Ch 28:25  
17:12 Ex 20:4  
17:13 1Sa 9:9;  
Neh 9:30;  
Jer 18:11;  
Jer 25:5  
17:14 Neh 9:16;  
Jer 7:26; Ac 7:51  
17:15 Dt 29:25;  
Dt 32:21; Jer 2:5;  
Ro 1:21  
17:16 Dt 4:19;  
1Ki 12:28;  
1Ki 14:15;  
1Ki 16:31;  
2Ki 21:3  
17:17 Lv 19:26;  
Dt 18:10;  
1Ki 21:20;  
2Ki 16:3;  
2Ki 21:6  
17:20 2Ki 15:29

Instead of beginning this summary by blaming the kings of Israel (as in previous chapters), this explanation places the responsibility on the people (17:8), *practices of the nations*: This motif recurs in 2 Kings 17:11, 15 (cf. Deut 18:9-14; 1 Kgs 11:2; 14:24; 2 Kgs 16:3).

17:9-11 *shrines... beneath every green tree*: The combination of terms here indicates adoption of Canaanite religious practices (see notes at 1 Kgs 3:2-3; 14:12-18; cf. 1 Kgs 14:23; 2 Kgs 16:4). *made the LORD angry*: This motif occurs three times in this chapter (cf. 2 Kgs 17:17-18) and many times throughout the books of Kings. See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8.

17:12-13 *worshipped images*: "Images" is sometimes translated "idols" (cf. Deut 29:16; 1 Kgs 15:12; 21:26; 2 Kgs 21:11, 21; 23:24). The appeal here is to the Ten Commandments, among other texts (cf. Exod 20:3-6; Deut 5:7-10). *prophets... the entire Instruction... my servants the prophets*: Here for the first time the historian specifies what has been stated throughout the books of Kings: The Lord's word, as mediated by the prophets, is God's primary means of involvement in the life of God's people. In addition, responsiveness to that word is embodied in the written Instruction scroll (see note on 1 Kgs 2:3 and sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kgs 2; cf. 2 Kgs 14:5-6). *Turn from your evil ways*: This expression is characteristic of the prophetic vocation (e.g., Jer 7:3, 5; 18:11; Ezek 33:11), but no prophets in the books of Kings actually use these words.

17:14-17 *they wouldn't listen*: The Hebrew word translated here as "listen" also has the sense "obey." Given the criticism leveled against the people in 2 Kings 17:12-13, it's possible to say here that the people wouldn't obey. They didn't listen to the prophets, nor did they obey God's Instruction. The author is so insistent on this point that the following verses repeat and add to what's already stated in 2 Kings 17:7-11. *ancestors... ancestors*: The two uses of the

word may refer to two groups: the traditional ancestors of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were inclined toward stubbornness (17:14); and those who made the covenant with God at Mount Sinai (17:15). *two metal idols*: the gold calves set up by Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12:26-33). *heavenly bodies*: an allusion to the prohibition of Deuteronomy (Deut 4:19; 17:13). The common expression "LORD of heavenly forces" (cf. 2 Sam 7:26; 2 Kgs 19:31) uses the same words to express God's rule over all deities. *served Baal*: After Ahab (1 Kgs 16:31), this Canaanite god is mentioned many times in the books of Kings. See note on 1 Kings 16:29-34.

17:18-20 *removed them from his presence*: Earlier God is said not to have acted in such a manner because of God's compassion and covenant commitment (2 Kgs 13:23). The situation now, however, has become impossible to sustain. God's patience, it seems, has come to an end. *Judah was spared*: Verse 19, however, doesn't let Judah off the hook. *rejected all of Israel's descendants*: Verse 20 could be understood as applying to both Israel and Judah, at least from the vantage point of the later author, who is writing after the fall of Judah. The verb "to reject" is used often in the Bible of Israel's rejection of God. It's never used in Deuteronomy or in the books of Kings in that way. In 2 Kings it appears only three times, each time referring to God's rejection of Israel or Jerusalem (2 Kgs 17:15, 20; 23:27). The verb "reject" is a stark notice of the seriousness with which the historian understands this moment in time. The people may wish instead to hear words of assurance that God will never abandon God's people, as found, for example, in Deuteronomy 4:31. Yet the author's intent is to shock, and thereby to invite people who have experienced this devastating loss to return, pay attention, trust, and obey. That is exactly what Deuteronomy imagines when it anticipates that Israel will "disappear—and quickly—from the land" (see the larger context of Deut 4:25-32).

17:21 1Ki 11:11,  
1Ki 11:31,  
1Ki 12:30,  
1Ki 14:16

He punished them, and he handed them over to enemies who plundered them until he finally threw them out of his sight.

<sup>21</sup>When Israel broke away<sup>a</sup> from David's dynasty, they made Nebat's son Jeroboam the king. Jeroboam drove Israel away from the LORD. He caused them to commit great sin. <sup>22</sup>And the Israelites continued walking in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They didn't deviate from them, <sup>23</sup>and the LORD finally removed Israel from his presence. That was exactly what he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from its land to Assyria. And that's still how it is today.

### ***New settlers in Samaria***

<sup>24</sup>The Assyrian king brought people from Babylon, Cuth, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, resettling them in the cities of Samaria in place of the Israelites. These people took control of Samaria and settled in its cities. <sup>25</sup>But when they began to live there, they didn't worship the LORD, so the LORD sent lions against them, and the lions began to kill them. <sup>26</sup>Assyria's king was told about this: "The nations you sent into exile and resettled in the cities of Samaria don't know the religious practices of the local god. He's sent lions against them, and the lions are killing them because none of them know the religious practices of the local god."

<sup>27</sup>So Assyria's king commanded, "Return one of the priests that you exiled from there. He<sup>b</sup> should go back and live there. He should teach them the religious practices of the local god." <sup>28</sup>So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria went back. He lived in Bethel and taught the people how to worship the LORD.

<sup>29</sup>But each nationality still made its own gods. They set them up in the houses that the people of Samaria had made at the shrines. Each nationality did this in whichever cities

### ***Covenant and Treaty*** The Hebrew word for "covenant" (*berit*) can also be translated "treaty."

In 1 and 2 Kings it's a political and a theological word. Politically it refers to a treaty relationship between two kings, while theologically it refers to a committed relationship between Israel and God. Both uses of the word are political in that a *berit* sets out the expectations of a mutual relationship (e.g., Gen 21:27; 1 Sam 18:3; 2 Sam 5:3; Josh 9:15). When a king conquered a territory, he would set the terms of the new relationship with a treaty. Such treaties are mentioned explicitly in Kings (1 Kgs 15:19; 20:34). Other treaties are implied by references to loyalty or to the "rebellions," which indicate that the king has decided no longer to honor the treaty obligations (e.g., 1 Kgs 5:1, 12; 2 Kgs 1:1; 3:5-7; 17:4; 18:7; 24:1; 24:20).

Israel's relationship with God is also based on a binding agreement called the Instruction scroll (cf. 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 23:2-3). According to Deuteronomy, Israel must keep and teach their relational obligations in good faith with a loving God (Deut 4:23), because the Lord is a faithful God who keeps promises (Deut 4:31; 7:9, 12; 2 Kgs 13:23). Abandoning or rebelling against the covenant with God will lead to Israel's demise (Deut 29:25). Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple puts the tension clearly: God keeps covenant commitments to those who are faithful (1 Kgs 8:23). But Solomon hasn't kept the covenant obligations (1 Kgs 11:11), nor has Israel (2 Kgs 17:15; 18:12).

<sup>a</sup>Or *When he (God) tore Israel away* <sup>b</sup>LXX, Vulg, Syr; MT *They*

17:21-23 A further explanation summarizes the story of the northern kingdom of Israel and returns to the theme of Jeroboam's responsibility and the warnings given by the prophets (cf. 1 Kgs 12:26-33; 2 Kgs 17:13). *how it is today*: during the writer's time, probably after the defeat and exile of Judah.

17:24-41 Assyrian imperial policy was not only to exile a portion of the conquered population but also to repopulate the area with people from other places in the empire. Such practice destabilized the region and fragmented loyalties. The historian here is interested primarily in the religious syncretism—that is, the combination of religious practices that resulted from this movement of peoples. This concern builds on the historian's criticism of Israelite worship of other gods prior to the Assyrian invasion and the exile of the population.

17:24 This verse seems to flow directly from 2 Kings

17:1-6, with 17:7-23 serving as a theological insertion or aside. *Samaria*: After Assyrian conquest of the city named Samaria, the entire region came to be called by the same name.

17:25-28 *lions*: These represent the ongoing involvement of God in the land even after the devastation of exile. The lion is an image of divine discipline or judgment (cf. 1 Kgs 13:23-26; 20:36; Jer 49:19). *the local god*: In the ancient world, gods, peoples, and lands were intimately related. To claim a god with universal sovereignty, as does the historian, was unusual (but cf. Deut 32:8-9). The solution devised by the Assyrian king is to teach the newly arrived people how to worship the god of that particular land. Although that may solve the problem of the lions, yet as the author explains, that isn't the real problem.

17:29-31 *people of Samaria*: Later the people of this region

they lived. <sup>30</sup>The Babylonian people made the god Succoth-benoth, the Cuthean people made Nergal, and the people from Hamath made Ashima. <sup>31</sup>The Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak. The Sepharvites burned their children alive as a sacrifice to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the Sepharvite gods. <sup>32</sup>They also worshipped the LORD, but they appointed priests for the shrines from their whole population. These priests worked in the houses at the shrines. <sup>33</sup>So they worshipped the LORD, but they also served their own gods according to the religious practices of the nations from which they had been exiled.

<sup>34</sup>They are still following their former religious practices to this very day. They don't really worship the LORD. Nor do they follow the regulations, the case laws, the Instruction, or the commandment that the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he renamed Israel.

<sup>35</sup>The LORD had made a covenant with them, commanding them, Don't worship other gods. Don't bow down to them or serve them. Don't sacrifice to them. <sup>36</sup>Instead, worship only the LORD. He's the one who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great strength and an outstretched arm. Bow down to him! Sacrifice to him! <sup>37</sup>You must carefully keep the regulations and case laws, the Instruction, and the commandment that he wrote for you. Don't worship other gods. <sup>38</sup>Don't forget the covenant that I made with you. Don't worship other gods. <sup>39</sup>Instead, worship only the LORD your God. He will rescue you from your enemies' power.

<sup>40</sup>But they wouldn't listen. Instead, they continued doing their former religious practices. <sup>41</sup>So these nations worship the LORD, but they also serve their idols. The children and the grandchildren are doing the very same thing their parents did. And that's how things still are today.

### Hezekiah rules Judah

**18** Hezekiah, Ahaz's son, became king of Judah in the third year of Israel's King Hoshea, Elah's son. <sup>2</sup>He was 25 years old when he became king, and he ruled twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi;<sup>1</sup> she was Zechariah's daughter. <sup>3</sup>Hezekiah did what was right in the LORD's eyes, just as his ancestor David had done. <sup>4</sup>He removed the shrines. He smashed the sacred pillars and cut down the sacred pole.<sup>1</sup> He crushed the bronze snake that Moses made, because up to that point the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (The snake was named Nehushtan.)

<sup>1</sup>Cf 2 Chron 29:1 *Abijah* <sup>1</sup>Heb *asherah*, perhaps an object devoted to the goddess Asherah

will be called "Samaritans." *Succoth-benoth*: a Babylonian god, possibly the god mentioned in Amos 5:26. *Nergal*: god of the underworld who was responsible for famine, war, and flood. *Ashima*: possibly mentioned in Amos 8:14. *Nibhaz and Tartak* as well as *Adrammelech* aren't named in ancient Near Eastern literature. **17:32-39** These verses move from observations about the peoples to exhortations to Israelites (cf. the *you* of 17:36), both of which are repeated several times. The observations: *They also worshipped the LORD... but they also served their own gods*: This is a concise definition of syncretism, the blending of two forms of worship and the bringing together of the worship of multiple deities. It isn't exactly polytheism; it's more like a blend of both worldviews. The point of the matter: *They don't really worship the LORD* (2 Kgs 17:34). And what's more, they don't live according to the Instruction that God gave Israel. Here the author appeals to God's *covenant with them* and echoes instructions from Deuteronomy and Joshua about not worshipping, bowing down, or serving other gods (cf. Deut 4:19; 30:17; Josh 23:7). As if not to allow the reader to miss it, the author, in a preaching tone, remarks twice *worship only the LORD* (17:36, 39) and three times *Don't worship other gods* (2 Kgs 17:35, 37, 38). And in an obvious recollection of Deuteronomy, the author urges, *Don't forget the covenant* (17:38; cf. Deut 4:23). In that same chapter of Deuteronomy, the writer anticipates that God won't forget the covenant (Deut 4:31).

**17:40-41** *they wouldn't listen... how things still are today*: Recapping the motif from 2 Kings 17:14, the author characterizes the situation as crossing the generations until the writer's own time.

**18:1-20:21** Hezekiah's reign takes up a long section of 2 Kings, marking a high point in Judah's story. Although the description of Hezekiah appears positive, his story ends with a surprising twist. In shaping the story that way, the historian paints a realistic picture of the king, but it's colored by a larger theological agenda: God's supervision of the historical process and the impact and power of the prophetic word. All of 2 Kings 18:1-20:19 appears in a parallel account in Isaiah 36:1-39:8. Of the parallel in Isaiah, only 38:9-20 doesn't appear in 2 Kings. It is probable that the author of the book of Isaiah borrowed the material from 2 Kings in order to round out the context of Isaiah's prophetic ministry. 2 Chronicles 29-32 offers a fuller and different description of Hezekiah's accomplishments.

**18:3-4** *did... right in the LORD's eyes... ancestor David*: Hezekiah is presented as similar to David, as are Asa and Josiah (1 Kgs 15:11; 2 Kgs 22:2; cf. Jehoshaphat, 1 Kgs 22:43). *removed the shrines... sacred pole*: Hezekiah did what none of the other kings were able to do (see notes on 1 Kings 3:2-3; 14:12-18; 14:22-24). *bronze snake*: Moses made this bronze replica in the wilderness (Num 21:4-9), which, over time, was honored as a symbol of healing. *Nehushtan*: The name is a form of the word "snake."

18:1 2Ki 16:20,  
2Ki 17:1,  
2Ch 28:27,  
2Ch 29:1  
18:2 2Ch 29:1  
18:3 2Ki 20:3,  
2Ch 31:20  
18:4 Nm 21:8-9,  
2Ch 31:1

18:7 Gn 39:3;  
 1Sa 18:14;  
 2Ks 18:7  
 18:9 2Ki 17:3,  
 2Ki 17:5,  
 2Ki 17:6  
 18:10, 11  
 2Ki 17:6  
 18:12 2Ki 17:7  
 18:13 2Ch 32:1;  
 Is 36:1  
 18:17-22  
 2Ch 32:9-15;  
 Is 36:2-10

<sup>5</sup>Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, Israel's God. There was no one like him among all of Judah's kings—not before him and not after him. <sup>6</sup>He clung to the LORD and never deviated from him. He kept the commandments that the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>7</sup>The LORD was with Hezekiah; he succeeded at everything he tried. He rebelled against Assyria's king and wouldn't serve him. <sup>8</sup>He struck down the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territories, from watchtower to fortified city.

<sup>9</sup>Assyria's King Sennacherib marched against Samaria and attacked it in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Israel's King Hoshea, Elah's son. <sup>10</sup>After three years the Assyrians captured the city. Samaria was captured in Hezekiah's sixth year, which was Hoshea's ninth year. <sup>11</sup>Assyria's king sent Israel into exile to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River, and in the cities of the Medes. <sup>12</sup>All this happened because they wouldn't listen to the LORD their God. They broke his covenant—all that the LORD's servant Moses had commanded them. They didn't listen, and they didn't do it.

<sup>13</sup>Assyria's King Sennacherib marched against all of Judah's fortified cities and captured them in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah. <sup>14</sup>Judah's King Hezekiah sent a message to the Assyrian king at Lachish, saying, "I admit wrongdoing. Please withdraw from me, and I'll agree to whatever you demand from me." Assyria's king required Judah's King Hezekiah to pay him three hundred kikkars of silver and thirty kikkars of gold. <sup>15</sup>So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was in the LORD's temple and in the palace treasuries. <sup>16</sup>At that time King Hezekiah had to strip down the doors and doorposts of the LORD's temple, which he had covered with gold. He gave all of it to the Assyrian king.

<sup>17</sup>Assyria's king sent his general, his chief officer, and his field commander from Lachish, together with a large army, to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They went up and arrived at Jerusalem. They stood at the water channel of the Upper Pool, which is on the road to the field where clothes are washed. <sup>18</sup>Then they called for the king. Hilkiah's son Eliakim, who was the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Asaph's son Joah the recorder went out to them.

18:5-6 *trusted...clung...kept the commandments*: Hezekiah is the first of all the Judean kings who is afforded such high praise. *trusted*: The word is used nine times in the Hezekiah story between this verse and 2 Kings 19:10. The story of Hezekiah's engagement with the Assyrians defines the word fully. He stands in contrast to Solomon, who "clung" to his foreign women (1 Kgs 11:2). Hezekiah is a fine example of Deuteronomy's hope that God's people would cling, or hold fast, to the Lord (Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20). *no [king] like him...not before him and not after him*: Either this is hyperbole, or the historian who writes this section is not yet aware of Josiah (cf. 2 Kgs 23:25). More likely, both Hezekiah and Josiah are models that the historian wants to elevate as examples of faithfulness. The language here expresses that most clearly. Like David, *He kept the commandments*, which, according to the historian, is the greatest virtue of all.

18:7-8 *The Lord was with Hezekiah*: Of Israel's and Judah's kings, the historian speaks about only David in this way (1 Sam 18:12, 14, 28; 2 Sam 5:10). *succeeded*: In addition, this verb is used only to describe the life and work of David (1 Sam 18:5, 14, 15, 30). Both Joshua and Solomon are promised such success, if only they obey the Instruction from the Lord (Josh 1:7-8; 1 Kgs 2:3). Where Joshua and Hezekiah succeed, Solomon failed. *He rebelled*: In this respect, Hezekiah was different from Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:7-8).

18:9-12 The author offers a summary flashback of events described earlier (2 Kgs 17:3-6). This summary points out what happens when violating treaty obligations to an imperial power like Assyria, as Hezekiah has done (2 Kgs 18:7). Verse 12 restates the longer theological explanation made in 2 Kings 17:7-17.

18:13-16 What readers know about Assyria's past imperial practices suggests that these verses describe the expected result of Hezekiah's "rebellion" (2 Kgs 18:7). Whether Sennacherib marches on Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18:17) before Hezekiah's offer of submission, or after it, is open to debate (see note on 2 Kgs 18:17). Sennacherib marched on Judah in 701 BCE. Sennacherib's own records (the Taylor Prism at the British Museum) state that he conquered 46 cities and forts, captured over 200,156 people, and made Hezekiah "a prisoner in Jerusalem...like a bird in a cage." He also notes that Hezekiah paid him a large tribute, including his daughters, other women, and male and female singers. A relief sculpture discovered at Nineveh (now in the British Museum) depicts Sennacherib's capture of Lachish, one of the key Judean towns about 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Hezekiah's preemptive offer of submission is a strategic move to prevent a similar all-out attack on and destruction of Jerusalem. Assyrian accounts don't mention a conquest of Jerusalem. *temple...palace treasuries*: See note on 2 Kings 14:14. *kikkars*: One kikkar is approximately 76 pounds.

18:17 Does Sennacherib's march on Jerusalem imply that he rejects Hezekiah's payment of tribute? Or is the payment of tribute actually the event that signals the outcome of the diplomatic conversation that follows in 2 Kings 18:18-37? The use of the word "rebel" by the Assyrian emissary in 2 Kings 18:20 (echoing 2 Kgs 18:7) suggests the latter. *water channel of the Upper Pool*: conduit for water into the city (cf. Isa 7:3). The location is uncertain. 18:18 *Eliakim...Shebna...Joah*: Hezekiah sends out three administrative officials to meet Sennacherib's three military officials. For Eliakim, see 1 Kings 4:6; for Shebna, see 1 Kings 4:3.



<sup>19</sup>Then the field commander said to them, “Say to Hezekiah: This is what Assyria’s Great King says: Why do you feel so confident? <sup>20</sup>Do you think that empty words are the same as good strategy and the strength to fight? Who are you trusting in that you now rebel against me? <sup>21</sup>It appears that you are trusting in a staff—Egypt—that’s nothing but a broken reed! It will stab the hand of anyone who leans on it! That’s all that Pharaoh, Egypt’s king, is to anyone who trusts in him. <sup>22</sup>Now suppose you say to me, ‘We trust in the LORD our God.’ Isn’t he the one whose shrines and altars Hezekiah removed, telling Judah and Jerusalem, ‘You must worship before this altar in Jerusalem?’

<sup>23</sup>“So now make a wager with my master, Assyria’s king. I’ll give you two thousand horses if you can supply the riders! <sup>24</sup>How will you drive back even the least important official among my master’s servants when you are relying on Egypt for chariots and riders? <sup>25</sup>What’s more, do you think I’ve marched against this place to destroy it without the LORD’s support? It was the LORD who told me, March against this land and destroy it!”

<sup>26</sup>Hilkiah’s son Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the field commander, “Please speak to your servants in Aramaic because we understand it. Don’t speak with us in Hebrew, because the people on the wall will hear it.”

<sup>27</sup>The field commander said to them, “Did my master send me to speak these words just to you and your master and not also to the men on the wall? They are the ones who will have to eat their dung and drink their urine along with you.” <sup>28</sup>Then the field commander stood up and shouted in Hebrew at the top of his voice, saying, “Listen to the message of the great king, Assyria’s king. <sup>29</sup>This is what the king says: Don’t let Hezekiah lie to you. He won’t be able to rescue you from the power of Assyria’s king. <sup>30</sup>Don’t let Hezekiah persuade you to trust the LORD by saying, ‘The LORD will certainly rescue us. This city won’t be handed over to Assyria’s king.’

<sup>31</sup>“Don’t listen to Hezekiah, because this is what Assyria’s king says: Surrender to me and come out. Then each of you will eat from your own vine and fig tree, and drink water from your own well <sup>32</sup>until I come to take you to a land just like your land. It will be a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and honey. Then you will live and not die! Don’t listen to Hezekiah, because he will mislead you by saying, ‘The LORD will rescue us.’ <sup>33</sup>Were any of the gods of the other nations able to rescue their lands from the power of Assyria’s king? <sup>34</sup>Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they rescued Samaria from my power? <sup>35</sup>Which one of any of the gods of those lands has rescued their country from my power? Why should the LORD rescue Jerusalem from my power?”

<sup>36</sup>But the people kept quiet and didn’t answer him with a single word, because King Hezekiah’s command was, “Don’t answer him!” <sup>37</sup>Hilkiah’s son Eliakim, who was the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Asaph’s son Joah the recorder, came to Hezekiah with ripped clothes. They told him what the field commander had said.

18:19-25 The Assyrian diplomat uses a rhetorical device called a *messenger speech*, since he reports in first-person speech what Sennacherib said. This is the same kind of speech form used by the prophets when they say, “This is what the LORD says: *Assyria’s Great King*: a title also used in Assyrian documents. *trust*: Hezekiah’s trust (2 Kgs 18:5) is the theological and political key to the episode (see also 2 Kgs 18:20, 21, 22, 30; 19:10). *Egypt*: the other major power during this period of history, controlled by Cushite kings; see Isaiah 31:1-3 and 2 Kings 19:9. *It was the LORD who told me*: After asserting that trusting Egypt for help is useless, the diplomat offers a shocking assertion (cf. Isa 10:5-6). This is the most important theological question in the entire history: Is Israel’s God controlling the history of the nations or not?

18:26-28 *in Aramaic*... *in Hebrew*: Aramaic, a Semitic language that was the diplomatic language of empire. Hebrew is the local dialect. Aramaic was understood by the educated elite. Over time it became the main language of the entire region, and it continues to be a liturgical language among some Eastern churches. The Assyrians

don’t comply with the request, since they want to bring pressure on the king from the entire population. *eat their dung... urine*: an allusion to a very long siege.

18:29-32 *lie to you*: The diplomat asserts that the possibility of a divine rescue is a lie. Instead, he offers an ironic promise of a better place. He uses language similar to Deuteronomy’s description of Israel’s own land (Deut 8:7-9). *until I come to take you*: This shouldn’t be misheard; it’s nothing but a veiled threat. *live and not die!*: The choice of life and death also echoes God’s offer to Israel (cf. Deut 30:15-20).

18:33-35 *gods of the other nations able to rescue... rescue Jerusalem from my power?*: The question offers an alternative theological claim from the one offered in 2 Kings 18:25. The Assyrian diplomat compares Israel’s God to the powerless gods of the conquered nations. If other gods couldn’t rescue their people, it’s equally unlikely that Israel’s God could do so.

18:37-19:1 *ripped clothes... mourning clothes*: See note on 2 Kings 5:6-7 (cf. Jehoram’s response following Benhadad’s attack on Samaria, 2 Kgs 6:30-31).

18:26 Is 36:11

18:27-35

Is 36:12-20

18:35 Dn 3:15

18:36, 37

Is 36:21, 22

19:1 Gn 37:34;

Is 37:1

19:6, 7 Is 37:6, 7

19:8 Is 37:8

19:9 Is 37:9

19:9-13

2Ch 32:17;

Is 37:9-13

19:12 Gn 11:31;

2Ki 17:6,

2Ki 18:33;

Is 37:12;

Eze 27:23

19:14

2Ch 32:17;

Is 37:14

19:16 1Ki 8:29;

2Ki 19:4; Ps 31:2

**Hezekiah and Isaiah**

**19** When King Hezekiah heard this, he ripped his clothes, covered himself with mourning clothes, and went to the LORD's temple. <sup>2</sup>He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests to the prophet Isaiah, Amoz's son. They were all wearing mourning clothes. <sup>3</sup>They said to him, "This is what Hezekiah says: Today is a day of distress, punishment, and humiliation. It's as if children are ready to be born, but there's no strength to see it through. <sup>4</sup>Perhaps the LORD your God has heard all the words of the field commander who was sent by his master, Assyria's king—how he insulted the living God—perhaps God will punish him for the words the LORD your God heard. Send up a prayer for those few people who still survive."

<sup>5</sup>When King Hezekiah's servants got to Isaiah, <sup>6</sup>Isaiah said to them, "Say this to your master: 'This is what the LORD says: Don't be afraid at the words you heard, which the officers of Assyria's king have used to insult me. <sup>7</sup>I'm about to put a spirit in him, so when he hears a rumor, he'll go back to his own country. Then I'll have him cut down by the sword in his own land.'"

<sup>8</sup>The field commander heard that the Assyrian king had left Lachish. So he went back to the king and found him attacking Libnah. <sup>9</sup>Then the Assyrian king learned that Cush's King Tirhakah was on his way to fight against him. So he sent messengers to Hezekiah again, saying, <sup>10</sup>"Say this to Judah's King Hezekiah: Don't let the God you trust in persuade you by saying, 'Jerusalem won't be handed over to the Assyrian king.' <sup>11</sup>You yourself have heard what Assyrian kings do to other countries, wiping them out. Is it likely that you will be saved? <sup>12</sup>Did the gods of the nations destroyed by my fathers—Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, or the people of Eden in Telassar—save them? <sup>13</sup>Where now is Hamath's king, Arpad's king, or the kings of Lair, Sepharvaim, Hena, or Ivvah?"<sup>k</sup>

**Hezekiah's prayer**

<sup>14</sup>Hezekiah took the letters from the messengers and read them. Then he went to the temple and spread them out before the LORD. <sup>15</sup>Hezekiah prayed to the LORD, saying, "LORD God of Israel, you sit enthroned on the winged creatures. You alone are God over all the earth's kingdoms. You made both heaven and earth. <sup>16</sup>LORD, turn your ear this way and hear! LORD, open your eyes and see! Listen to Sennacherib's words. He sent them to insult the living God! <sup>17</sup>It's true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have destroyed many nations and their lands. <sup>18</sup>The Assyrians burned the gods of those nations with fire because they aren't real gods. They are only man-made creations of wood and stone. That's how the Assyrians could destroy them. <sup>19</sup>So now, LORD our God, please save us from Sennacherib's power! Then all the earth's kingdoms will know that you, LORD, are the only true God."

<sup>k</sup>Or the king of the city of Sepharvaim or the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah

19:2-4 *Eliakim and Shebna*: See note on 2 Kings 18:18. *Isaiah*: See note on 2 Kings 18:1-20:21. *Send up a prayer*: Seeking a word from the prophet was common (cf. 1 Kgs 22:5). Hezekiah is the first king who approaches a prophet asking him to intercede with God on behalf of the people. *few people who still survive*: Sennacherib's destruction of Judah's towns must have brought a throng of refugees into the city.

19:5-7 *This is what the Lord says*: By using the form of a diplomatic messenger speech, the same rhetorical device as the Assyrian emissary uses (2 Kgs 19:19, 29), the prophet becomes God's political agent. No longer is the argument between Sennacherib and Hezekiah, but between Sennacherib and Israel's God (through their respective envoys). The prophetic announcement spells doom for the Assyrian king. *put a spirit in him*: Compare 1 Kings 22:22. The fulfillment of these words is reported in 2 Kings 19:36-37.

19:8 *Libnah*: See note on 2 Kings 8:22.

19:9 *Cush's King Tirhakah*: commanded the Egyptian army that moved into Palestine, perhaps coming to Judah's aid (hence the Assyrian diplomat's advice not to trust Egypt,

the other superpower in the region). As the diplomat understood, Tirhakah was defeated in his battle with Sennacherib's army. He later became pharaoh in 690 BCE. The writer, reflecting a later time than the events described here, calls him by his royal title. *Cush*: Tirhakah was the last pharaoh over Egypt in the Nubian dynasty from the region of ancient Ethiopia.

19:10-13 A restatement of the argument in 2 Kings 18:19-35, but with a twist. Here the Assyrian diplomat claims that God, rather than Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:29-30), is the liar seeking to persuade the people.

19:14-19 Now Hezekiah himself prays to God for help (2 Kgs 19:4). *winged creatures*: See note on 1 Kings 6:14-38 (cf. 1 Sam 4:3-4; 1 Kgs 8:6-7). *You alone are God... the earth's kingdoms*: Hezekiah's affirmation reflects the basic conviction of the historian concerning the universal scope of God's sovereignty. *they aren't real gods*: Israel's God, unlike the gods of the nations, isn't a tribal god. *save us... all the earth's kingdoms... only true God*: Hezekiah's prayer seems to draw on the hope of Solomon's prayer that "all the people of the earth" will come to recognize that "there is no other God" (cf. 1 Kgs 8:43, 60).

<sup>20</sup>Then Isaiah, Amoz's son, sent a message to Hezekiah: "This is what the LORD, Israel's God, says: I have heard your prayer about Assyria's King Sennacherib. <sup>21</sup>This is the message that the LORD has spoken against him:

The young woman, Daughter Zion, despises you and mocks you;

Daughter Jerusalem shakes her head behind your back.

<sup>22</sup>Whom did you insult and ridicule?

Against whom did you raise your voice  
and pridefully lift your eyes?

It was against the holy one of Israel!

<sup>23</sup>You've insulted the Lord with your messengers;

you said, 'I, with my many chariots,  
have gone up to the highest mountains,  
to the farthest reaches of Lebanon.

I have cut down its tallest cedars, the best of its pine trees.

I have reached its most remote lodging place, its best forest.

<sup>24</sup>I have dug wells, have drunk waters in foreign lands.<sup>1</sup>

With my own feet, I dried up all of Egypt's streams.'

<sup>25</sup>Haven't you heard?

I set this up long ago;

I planned it in the distant past!

Now I have made it happen,

making fortified cities collapse into piles of rubble.

<sup>26</sup>Their citizens have lost their power.

They are frightened and ashamed.

They've become like plants in a field,

tender green shoots,

the grass on rooftops,

burned up before it matures.

<sup>27</sup>I know where you live,

how you go out and come in,

and how you rage against me.

<sup>28</sup>And because you rage against me

and because your pride has reached my ears,

I will put my hook in your nose,

and my bit in your mouth.

I will make you go back the same way you came.

<sup>29</sup>"Now this will be the sign for you, Hezekiah: This year you will eat what grows by itself. Next year you will eat what grows from that. But in the third year, sow seed and harvest it; plant vineyards and eat their fruit. <sup>30</sup>The survivors of the house of Judah who have escaped will take root below and bear fruit above. <sup>31</sup>Those who remain will go out from Jerusalem, and those who survive will go out from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of heavenly forces<sup>m</sup> will do this.

<sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>m</sup>Qere, some Heb sources, and the parallel in Isa 32; Kethib lacks of heavenly forces.

19:20 2Ki 20:5

19:20-34

Is 37:21-35

19:21 Ps 109:25;

Lam 2:13;

Mt 27:39

19:22 Ps 71:22;

Is 5:24

19:23 2Ki 18:17;

Ps 20:7; Is 10:18

19:24 Is 19:6

19:27 Ps 139:1

19:28 2Ki 19:33;

2Ki 19:36;

Ezek 29:4.

Ezek 38:4; Am 4:2

19:20-28 Isaiah's response from the Lord is similar to other judgment speeches against the Assyrian king in the book of Isaiah (Isa 10:12-19; 14:24-27). This poem in 2 Kings shares themes common to the book of Isaiah: imperial pride over against the long-established plan of God (see notes following and in Isa 37:22-35).

19:21 *Daughter Zion*: often used in the OT to represent Jerusalem (e.g., Isa 52:2; Lam 1:6; Zeph 3:14; Zech 2:10; 9:9). 19:22 *pridefully lift your eyes*: Imperial pride (cf. 2 Kgs 19:28) is a common theme in Isaiah (Isa 2:11-12, 17; 10:12; 13:11; etc.). *holy one of Israel*: Compare Isaiah 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20. 19:23-24 A poetic mocking of Assyrian military conquests. 19:25 *I set this up . . . I planned it*: God's response takes up

a common theme in the book of Isaiah (cf. Isa 14:24-27; 19:12, 17; 22:11; 23:8-9; 25:1; 46:11). Sennacherib's conquest has been at God's bidding.

19:28 *you rage against me*: The irony is profound. On the contrary, God's words through Isaiah suggest that Sennacherib is the "rod of my anger" (Isa 10:5). *your pride*: See note on 2 Kings 19:22. *hook . . . bit*: Ancient Assyrian armies led people into exile with hooks (cf. Ezek 19:4, 9; 38:4; Amos 4:2; Hab 1:15). Isaiah's words suggest a poetic justice.

19:29-31 *sign*: This word may also be translated "pledge." In other words, God intends full recovery from the Assyrian invasion, which devastated the countryside. But that will take at least two years. *survivors*: Compare Isaiah 4:2; 10:20.

19:34  
1Ki 11:12-13;  
1Ki 15:4;  
2Ki 20:6; 1s 31:5

19:35 2Sa 24:16;  
2Ch 32:21;  
Ps 35:5-6;  
Ac 12:23

19:37 Gn 8:4;  
2Ki 19:7;  
2Ch 32:21;  
Is 37:38;  
Jer 51:27

20:1 2Sa 17:23;  
2Ki 19:2;  
2Ch 32:24;  
Is 38:1

20:3 1Ki 2:4;  
2Ki 18:3;  
2Ch 31:20;  
Neh 5:19;  
Neh 13:14

20:5 1Sa 9:16;  
2Ki 19:20;  
Ps 39:12; Ps 56:8

20:6 2Ki 19:34

20:7 Ex 9:9;  
Is 38:21

20:12  
2Ch 32:31;  
Is 39:1

20:12-19  
2Ch 32:31;  
Is 39:1-9

20:13  
2Ch 32:27;  
Is 39:2

<sup>32</sup>"Therefore, this is what the LORD says about Assyria's king: He won't enter this city. He won't shoot a single arrow there. He won't come near the city with a shield. He won't build a ramp to besiege it. <sup>33</sup>He will go back by the same way he came. He won't enter this city, declares the LORD. <sup>34</sup>I will defend this city and save it for my sake and for the sake of my servant David."

<sup>35</sup>That night the LORD's messenger went out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand soldiers in the Assyrian camp. When people got up the next morning, there were dead bodies everywhere. <sup>36</sup>So Assyria's King Sennacherib departed, returning to Nineveh, where he stayed. <sup>37</sup>Later, while he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with a sword. They then escaped to the land of Ararat. His son Esarhaddon succeeded him as king.

### Hezekiah's illness

**20** Around that same time, Hezekiah became deathly ill. The prophet Isaiah, Amoz's son, came to him and said, "This is what the LORD says: Put your affairs in order because you are about to die. You won't survive this."

<sup>2</sup>Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying, <sup>3</sup>"Please, LORD, remember how I have walked before you in truth and sincerity. I have done what is right in your eyes." Then Hezekiah cried and cried.

<sup>4</sup>Isaiah hadn't even left the middle courtyard of the palace when the LORD's word came to him: <sup>5</sup>Turn around. Say to Hezekiah, my people's leader: This is what the LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and have seen your tears. So now I'm going to heal you. Three days from now you will be able to go up to the LORD's temple. <sup>6</sup>I will add fifteen years to your life. I will rescue you and this city from the power of the Assyrian king. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.

<sup>7</sup>Then Isaiah said, "Prepare a bandage made of figs." They did so and put it on the swelling, at which point Hezekiah started getting better.

<sup>8</sup>Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What is the sign that the LORD will heal me and that I'll be able to go up to the LORD's temple in three days?"

<sup>9</sup>Isaiah said, "This will be your sign from the LORD that he will make his promise come true: Should the shadow go forward ten steps or back ten steps?"

<sup>10</sup>"It's easy for the shadow to go forward ten steps," Hezekiah said, "but not for the shadow to go back ten steps." <sup>11</sup>So the prophet Isaiah called on the LORD, who made the shadow go back ten steps, down the flight of stairs built by Ahaz.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>12</sup>At that time Merodach-baladan, son of Babylon's King Baladan, sent messengers to Hezekiah with letters and a gift. This was because he had heard that Hezekiah was sick. <sup>13</sup>Hezekiah granted them an audience and showed them everything in his treasury—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the fine oil. He also showed them his stock of weaponry and

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

19:32-34 *I will defend this city... my servant David*: The protection of Jerusalem, based on God's desire to preserve the divine reputation (cf. 2 Kgs 18:20-35; 19:10-13), along with God's commitments to David (1 Kgs 11:13, 32; 2 Kgs 8:19), resonates with other poetic and prophetic texts (cf. Ps 2; 46:4-7; 76; Isa 33:20; Zech 12:8).

19:35-37 *the Lord's messenger*: as in other texts, God's agent of death (cf. Exod 12:23; 2 Sam 24:9-16). Assyrian sources suggest that Sennacherib was assassinated in 681 BCE, some 10 to 20 years after his campaign against Judah. They indicate that he was killed by Arda-Mullissu, who may be the *Adrammelech* of the biblical text. *Nisroch*: an unknown deity not mentioned in Assyrian sources. Assyrian reports about the siege of Jerusalem don't report a massive casualty count. They assert that the Assyrian army left victoriously, but without capturing Jerusalem. *Ararat*: in eastern Turkey. *Esarhaddon*: A younger son of Sennacherib takes the throne.

20:1-11 *Around that same time*: This chapter provide a "backstory" to the events told in 2 Kings 18-19. It takes up

the theme of the protection of Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kgs 19:34). The story of Hezekiah's illness and healing also reflects on a weakness in Hezekiah that hasn't been noted before—a slight self-assurance reflected in his characterization of himself (20:3), in his opening up of the treasury (2 Kgs 20:13-15), and in his smugness about security in his lifetime (2 Kgs 20:19).

20:12 *Merodach-baladan*: a self-appointed Babylonian king who ruled for 11 years after the death of Shalmaneser V (721 BCE) and again for nine months in 703 after the death of Sargon II. This visit to Hezekiah occurs around the time that Hezekiah was making plans for independence from Assyria around 705 BCE (and therefore before the events described in 2 Kgs 18-19). The Babylonian king is probably looking for allies in the west as he plots his own revolt in the east.

20:13-15 *showed...everything in his treasury...They have seen everything*: Hezekiah's exposure of the temple treasury (before he had stripped it to pay tribute to Sennacherib, cf. 2 Kgs 18:14-16) is itself a concern. Perhaps

everything in his storehouses. There wasn't a single thing in his palace or his whole kingdom that Hezekiah didn't show them. <sup>14</sup>Then the prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah and said to him, "What did these men say? Where have they come from?"

Hezekiah said, "They came from a distant country: Babylon."

<sup>15</sup>"What have they seen in your palace?" Isaiah asked.

"They have seen everything in my palace," Hezekiah answered. "There's not a single thing in my storehouses that I haven't shown them."

<sup>16</sup>Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Listen to the LORD's word: <sup>17</sup>The days are nearly here when everything in your palace and all that your ancestors collected up to now will be carried off to Babylon. Not a single thing will be left, says the LORD. <sup>18</sup>Some of your children, your very own offspring, will be taken away. They will become eunuchs in the palace of Babylon's king."

<sup>19</sup>Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The LORD's word that you've spoken is good," because he thought: There will be peace and security in my lifetime.

<sup>20</sup>The rest of Hezekiah's deeds and all his powerful acts—how he made the pool and the channel and brought water inside the city—aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? <sup>21</sup>Hezekiah lay down with his ancestors. His son Manasseh succeeded him as king.

### Manasseh rules Judah

**21** Manasseh was 12 years old when he became king, and he ruled for fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. <sup>2</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes, imitating the detestable practices of the nations that the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. <sup>3</sup>He rebuilt the shrines that his father Hezekiah had destroyed, set up altars for Baal, and made a sacred pole,<sup>o</sup> just as Israel's King Ahab had done. He bowed down to all the stars in the sky and worshipped them. <sup>4</sup>He even built altars in the two courtyards of the LORD's temple—the very place the LORD was speaking of when he said: "I will put my name in Jerusalem." <sup>5</sup>Manasseh built altars for all the stars in the sky in both courtyards of the LORD's temple. <sup>6</sup>He burned his own son alive, consulted sign readers and fortune-tellers, and used mediums and diviners. He did much evil in the LORD's eyes and made him angry.

<sup>7</sup>Manasseh set up the carved Asherah image he had made in the temple—the very temple the LORD had spoken about to David and his son Solomon, saying, In this temple and in

<sup>o</sup>Heb *asherah*, perhaps a pole devoted to the goddess Asherah

he exposes his treasures to convince Merodach-Baladan that he would be a worthy and capable ally against Assyria. But it is a fateful showing, since it foreshadows Judah's end (cf. other earlier and unfavorable references to the treasuries, 1 Kgs 14:26; 15:18; 2 Kgs 12:18; 14:14; 16:8; 18:15). See note on 2 Kings 21:1-6 for an additional cause of the exile, which is King Manasseh's behavior, according to the historian.

20:17-18 The prophet announces that Hezekiah's exposure of the treasury will result in its loss (2 Kgs 24:13). Set in the context of the Assyrian invasion, the mention of Babylon's invasion nearly 100 years later confirms the historian's interest in demonstrating that history unfolds by the power and effectiveness of the prophetic word. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

20:19 *peace... in my lifetime*: Hezekiah's interest in his own well-being shows up again in his final words. This realistic picture of Hezekiah doesn't diminish his stature in the historian's eyes. It simply explains that Judah's end is yet to come.

20:20-21 *pool... water inside the city*: Hezekiah cut a quarter-mile-long rock tunnel from the Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley. This tunnel, discovered in 1880, offered a secure water supply for the city during times of siege. An inscription from inside the tunnel commemorating the construction of the tunnel is now in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum. *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43. 21:1-18 Manasseh enjoyed a long reign (687-642 BCE) in

spite of his reputation as the worst king in Judah's history. Assyria's dominance in the entire region (during the reigns of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal) gave Judah a measure of security as a vassal state.

21:1-6 *Manasseh... did what was evil... much evil in the LORD's eyes*: The historian depicts Manasseh as the worst king of Judah, highlighting his pagan worship practices and desecrating the temple. Manasseh's practices are prohibited in Israel (cf. Lev 18:24-25; 19:26, 31; 20:2-6; Deut 12:29-31; 18:9-14; Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:35). Such practices are cited often in the books of Kings as reasons for the demise of Israelite kings (cf. 2 Kgs 17:7-18). *as Israel's King Ahab had done*: Manasseh is compared to Ahab, a notorious Israelite king, as are two other Judean kings (1 Kgs 16:30-34; cf. Jehoram, 2 Kgs 8:18; Ahaziah, 2 Kgs 8:27). *stars in the sky... worshipped*: an allusion to the prohibition of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut 4:19; 17:13). Another common expression, "LORD of heavenly forces" (cf. 2 Sam 7:26; 2 Kgs 19:31), uses the same word as "stars" to indicate that Israel's God alone is God, without rivals and without sexual partners. *my name in Jerusalem*: Compare 2 Samuel 7:12-13; 1 Kings 3:2-3; 8:16, 29; 9:3; 11:36 and sidebar, "Temple and Name" at 1 Kings 8. *burned his own son alive*: Deuteronomy 18:10 appears to prohibit such behavior. The historian criticizes Israel and Judah for such actions (cf. 1 Kgs 16:3-4; 2 Kgs 16:3; 17:17; 23:10). *made him angry*: See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8.

21:7 *Asherah image*: See note on 1 Kings 14:12-18. The

20:18 2Kgs 24:12;  
2Ch 33:11;  
Dn 1:3

20:19 1Sa 3:18;  
Job 1:21; Ps 39:9

20:20, 21  
2Ch 32:32, 33

21:1 2Ch 33:1;  
Is 62:4

21:2 2Kgs 16:3

21:2-9  
2Ch 33:2-9

21:3 Dt 4:19;  
1Kgs 16:33;

2Kgs 17:16,  
2Kgs 18:4,  
2Kgs 23:5

21:4 2Sa 7:13;  
1Kgs 8:29;  
Jer 32:34

21:5 1Kgs 7:12;  
2Kgs 23:12

21:6 Lv 18:21,  
Lv 19:31;  
Dt 18:10;

2Kgs 16:3,  
2Kgs 17:17

21:7 1Kgs 9:3;  
2Kgs 23:6

21:8 2Sa 7:10  
 21:9 1Ki 14:16;  
 1Ki 15:25-26;  
 2Ch 33:9;  
 Prv 29:12  
 21:10 2Ki 17:23  
 21:11 Gn 15:16;  
 1Ki 21:26;  
 2Ki 21:16;  
 2Ki 23:26;  
 2Ki 24:3  
 21:12 Isa 3:11;  
 2Ki 22:16;  
 Jer 19:3  
 21:13 Is 28:17;  
 Is 34:11;  
 Lam 2:8;  
 Am 7:7-8  
 21:14 Jer 12:7;  
 Jer 23:33  
 21:16 2Ki 21:11;  
 2Ki 24:4  
 21:17 2Ch 33:11  
 21:18 2Ki 21:26;  
 2Ch 33:20

Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all Israel's tribes, I will put my name forever. <sup>8</sup>I will never again remove Israel from the land I gave to their ancestors, provided they carefully do everything I have commanded them—keeping all the Instruction my servant Moses commanded them. <sup>9</sup>But they wouldn't listen. Manasseh led them into doing even more evil than the nations the LORD had wiped out before the Israelites.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD spoke through his servants the prophets: <sup>11</sup>Judah's King Manasseh has done detestable things, things more evil than the Amorites had done before his time. He has caused Judah to sin with his images. <sup>12</sup>Because of this, the LORD, Israel's God, has said: I'm about to bring on Jerusalem and Judah such a great disaster that the ears of anyone who hears about it will ring. <sup>13</sup>I will stretch out over Jerusalem the same line that I used to measure Samaria and the same mason's level that I used on Ahab's family. I will wipe Jerusalem clean the same way someone wipes a plate clean, wiping it clean then turning it facedown. <sup>14</sup>Whatever survives of my inheritance, I'll leave behind, handing them over to their enemies. They will be nothing but plunder and loot for every one of their enemies. <sup>15</sup>This will happen because they have done what is evil in my eyes, making me angry from the day their ancestors left Egypt until this very moment.

<sup>16</sup>Manasseh spilled so much innocent blood that he filled up every corner of Jerusalem with it. And this doesn't include the sins he caused Judah to commit so that they did what was evil in the LORD's eyes. <sup>17</sup>The rest of Manasseh's deeds, all that he accomplished, and the sin he committed, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? <sup>18</sup>Manasseh lay down with his ancestors. He was buried in his palace garden, the Uzza Garden. His son Amon succeeded him as king.

#### Amon rules Judah

<sup>19</sup>Amon was 22 years old when he became king, and he ruled for two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshullemeth; she was Haruz's daughter and was from Jobah. <sup>20</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes, just as his father Manasseh had done. <sup>21</sup>He walked in all the ways his father had walked. He worshipped the same worthless idols his father had worshipped, bowing down to them. <sup>22</sup>He deserted his ancestors' God, the LORD—he didn't walk in the LORD's way.

<sup>23</sup>Amon's officials plotted against him and assassinated the king in his palace. <sup>24</sup>The people of the land then executed all those who had plotted against King Amon and made his son Josiah the next king. <sup>25</sup>The rest of Amon's deeds, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? <sup>26</sup>He was buried in his tomb in the Uzza Garden. His son Josiah succeeded him as king.

author emphasizes Manasseh's special action by adding the word "image" (the combination occurring in the OT only here). In that way, an allusion to the Ten Commandments becomes explicit (Exod 20:4; Deut 5:8). *In this temple... my name forever.* That he set up the image at this sacred site makes the act so much more scandalous.

**21:8-9** *never again remove... keeping all the Instruction:* The historian adds an aside that reflects a perspective from the point of view of exile. It provides the rationale for the judgment about to be leveled against Manasseh. God's commitment is conditional upon human faithfulness. *wouldn't listen:* See note on 2 Kings 17:14-17. *led them... even more evil... wiped out before the Israelites:* Although the evil done by other kings is often compared to that done by other nations, no other king is said to have gone beyond them in doing evil. The addition of the destruction of the native inhabitants of the land foreshadows the same fate that awaits Judah in the near future (cf. 2 Kgs 14:24; 16:3; 17:8; 21:2).

**21:10-15** *the prophets:* What follows isn't an exact quotation from any particular prophet. These verses announce the prophetic perspective of the author. Manasseh and

his people will be wiped out, as were the land's previous inhabitants (cf. 2 Kgs 21:9). *Amorites:* among the original inhabitants of the land (cf. 1 Kgs 21:25-26). *images:* Compare Deuteronomy 29:17; 1 Kings 21:6; 2 Kings 17:12. *line... mason's level:* By comparing Judah to a building about to be demolished, construction tools symbolize moral measuring instruments (cf. Isa 34:11; Lam 2:8; Amos 7:7-9). *making me angry from the day... this very moment:* a stinging indictment on over 500 years of history. At this point the historian appears to have nothing good left to say. See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8.

**21:16** *much innocent blood... every corner of Jerusalem:* So as to emphasize again how much evil Manasseh had done, the author itemizes one more thing that goes, as it were, beyond evil (cf. Deut 19:10; 2 Kgs 24:4; Ps 106:38).

**21:17-18** *official records:* See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43. **21:19-26** *idols:* Compare Deuteronomy 29:17; 2 Kings 17:12; 21:11. *deserted his ancestors' God:* an allusion to destruction and exile in Deuteronomy 28:20, where the word "deserted" is translated "abandoned." *people of the land:* See note on 2 Kings 11:14. *official records:* See note on 1 Kings 11:41-43.

*Josiah rules Judah*

**22** Josiah was 8 years old when he became king, and he ruled for thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah; she was Aaliah's daughter and was from Bozkath. <sup>2</sup>He did what was right in the LORD's eyes, and walked in the ways of his ancestor David—not deviating from it even a bit to the right or left.

<sup>3</sup>In the eighteenth year of King Josiah's rule, he sent the secretary Shaphan, Azaliah's son and Meshullam's grandson, to the LORD's temple with the following orders: <sup>4</sup>"Go to the high priest Hilkiah. Have him carefully count<sup>p</sup> the money that has been brought to the LORD's temple and that has been collected from the people by the doorkeepers. <sup>5</sup>It should be given to the supervisors in charge of the LORD's temple, who in turn should pay it to those who are in the LORD's temple, repairing the temple—<sup>6</sup>the carpenters, the builders, and the masons. It should be used to pay for lumber and quarried stone to repair the temple. <sup>7</sup>But there's no need to check on them regarding the money they receive, because they are honest workers."

<sup>8</sup>The high priest Hilkiah told Shaphan the secretary: "I have found the Instruction scroll in the LORD's temple." Then Hilkiah turned the scroll over to Shaphan, who read it.

<sup>9</sup>Shaphan the secretary then went to the king and reported this to him: "Your officials have released the money that was found in the temple and have handed it over to those who supervise the work in the LORD's temple." <sup>10</sup>Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a scroll," and he read it out loud before the king.

<sup>11</sup>As soon as the king heard what the Instruction scroll said, he ripped his clothes. <sup>12</sup>The king ordered the priest Hilkiah, Shaphan's son Ahikam, Micaiah's son Achbor, Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the royal officer as follows: <sup>13</sup>"Go and ask the LORD on my behalf, and on behalf of the people, and on behalf of all Judah concerning the contents of this scroll that has been found. The LORD must be furious with us because our ancestors failed to obey the words of this scroll and do everything written in it about us."

<sup>14</sup>So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the prophetess Huldah. She was married to Shallum, Tikvah's son and Harhas' grandson, who was in charge of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem in the second district. When they spoke to her, <sup>15</sup>she replied, "This is what the LORD, Israel's God, says: Tell this to the man who sent you to me:

<sup>p</sup>Heb uncertain

22:1–23:30 The historian gives Josiah (640–609 BCE) the highest praise of all the kings of Judah. Josiah's workers discover God's Instruction scroll while renovating the temple. Upon reading the scroll, Josiah initiates a thorough reform of the entire worship establishment. There are at least two ways of interpreting Josiah's actions: (1) Unfortunately, even his piety and his reforms weren't enough to avert the disaster that was set in motion by Manasseh, the previous king, who, according to the author, surpassed all others (including other nations) in doing evil. (2) Even after hearing the prophet's word about the impending disaster to come on his land, Josiah enacts a thorough reform of the entire worship establishment. In doing so he demonstrates his obedience to the Instruction scroll, even though disaster is around the corner.

22:2 *right in the Lord's eyes... his ancestor David:* The historian's description begins like introductions to Asa and Hezekiah (1 Kgs 15:11; 2 Kgs 18:3). *not deviating... right or left:* This remarkable addition mirrors God's instructions to Joshua (Josh 1:7) and the instructions for kings in the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 17:20; cf. Deut 28:14; Josh 23:6). It could be that the historian is deliberately comparing Josiah to Joshua, for whom the Instruction scroll is also central (see note on 2 Kgs 22:8).

22:3–7 *he sent... Shaphan... honest workers:* Josiah's purpose is to repair the temple (22:5), which he undertakes when he is 26 years old (622 BCE). Josiah's instructions for the renovation resemble those of Jehoash about 200 years

earlier (2 Kgs 12:11–16). *collected... by the doorkeepers:* The system of collection that Jehoash had put in place must have been functioning, since Josiah seems already to have access to money collected (cf. 2 Kgs 12:8–11).

22:8 *the Instruction scroll:* Of the first five books of the Bible, only Deuteronomy uses this expression (cf. Deut 28:61; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26). It becomes a hallmark of the book of Joshua (Josh 1:8; 8:31, 34; 23:6; 24:26). Josiah's story mentions this scroll often. It is also called "the covenant scroll" (2 Kgs 23:2) and "the Instruction from Moses" (2 Kgs 23:24–25). The books of Kings mention that the Instruction scroll had been accessible in the past (1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 10:31; 11:12; 14:6; 18:6). It's never mentioned in the books of Judges and Samuel. It seems as though the books of Joshua and Kings draw attention to Joshua and Josiah as bookends in a larger story. Because the reforms Josiah implemented resemble instructions in the book of Deuteronomy, it's likely that the scroll mentioned here is some form of Deuteronomy.

22:11 *ripped his clothes:* See note on 2 Kings 5:6–7.

22:14 *prophetess Huldah:* Other OT women prophets included Miriam (Exod 15:20); Deborah (Judg 4:4); Isaiah's wife (Isa 8:3); and Noadiah (Neh 6:14). Huldah's prophecy is more or less fulfilled by events described in 2 Kings 25:9–11, 18–21. Her words continue to confirm an overarching theme in the books of Kings: the power and effectiveness of the prophetic word. See sidebar, "Fulfillment of the Prophetic Word" at 1 Kings 2.

22:1 Josh 15:39;  
2Ki 21:24;  
2Ch 34:1–2;  
Jer 1:2

22:2 Dt 5:32;  
1Ki 14:8;  
1Ki 15:5;  
2Ks 12:2;  
2Ki 18:3

22:8 Dt 31:24;  
2Ch 34:14–15

22:9–13  
2Ch 34:16–21

22:11 Jer 36:24

22:13 Dt 31:17

22:14 Ex 15:20;  
2Ch 34:22

22:18  
2Ch 34:26;  
Jer 37:7  
22:19 Lv 26:31;  
Isa 24:5;  
1Kj 21:29;  
Ps 51:17;  
Jer 26:6  
22:20 Ps 37:37;  
Is 57:1-2  
23:1 2Ch 34:29  
23:3 2Ch 34:31

**Instruction Scroll** The instruction scroll is the most concrete expression of one central theme in Kings. It appears prominently in the story about Josiah's renovation of the temple (2 Kgs 22:8, 11, 24). The scroll that was found during that renovation was probably some form of the book of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut 30:10; 31:24, 26). The only explicit quotation of the instruction scroll is from Deuteronomy (2 Kgs 14:6; Deut 24:16). And Josiah's reform of the worship establishment reflects the interests of Deuteronomy.

Josiah is said to have "fulfilled the words of the instruction written in the scroll . . . found in the LORD's temple" (2 Kgs 23:24). The author is probably alluding to the instructions for kings in Deuteronomy, where the king is commanded to write, to read, and to obey the instruction from God (Deut 17:18-19; cf. 2 Kgs 23:3). The written "instruction from Moses" appears prominently elsewhere in Kings, in David's last words to Solomon (1 Kgs 2:3), which echo God's words to Joshua (Josh 1:7-8; cf. 8:34; 23:6). The similarity suggests that, of all the kings of Israel and Judah, only Josiah fully met the expectations of Deuteronomy and of David.

Failure to obey the words of God's instruction mediated by Moses and the prophets leads to the downfall of Israel (2 Kgs 17:13). Israel's only hope after exile will be to return to God by obeying God's instruction scroll (cf. Deut 30:1-10). Only in attending to God's instruction will Israel find "life" (Deut 8:3; 30:19).

<sup>16</sup>This is what the LORD says: I am about to bring disaster on this place and its citizens—all the words in the scroll that Judah's king has read! <sup>17</sup>My anger burns against this place, never to be quenched, because they've deserted me and have burned incense to other gods, angering me by everything they have done. <sup>18</sup>But also say this to the king of Judah, who sent you to question the LORD: This is what the LORD, Israel's God, says about the message you've just heard: <sup>19</sup>Because your heart was broken and you submitted before the LORD when you heard what I said about this place and its citizens—that they will become a horror and a curse—and because you ripped your clothes and cried before me, I have listened to you, declares the LORD. <sup>20</sup>That's why I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will go to your grave in peace. You won't experience the disaster I am about to bring on this place."

### Josiah's reform

**23** When they reported Huldah's words to the king, <sup>1</sup>the king sent a message, and all of Judah's and Jerusalem's elders gathered before him. <sup>2</sup>Then the king went up to the LORD's temple, together with all the people of Judah and all the citizens of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets, and all the people, young and old alike. There the king read out loud all the words of the covenant scroll that had been found in the LORD's temple. <sup>3</sup>The king stood beside the pillar and made a covenant with the LORD that he would follow the LORD by keeping his commandments, his laws, and his regulations with all his heart and all his being in order to fulfill the words of this covenant that were written in this scroll. All of the people accepted the covenant.

<sup>9</sup>Or *made*

22:16 *all the words in the scroll*: Huldah confirms the consequences for covenant disloyalty. *disaster*: Deuteronomy includes a significant number of references to destruction and exile (Deut 4:25-27; 29:20-21, 36, 49, 63-64; 29:24-28; 30:17-18). See sidebar, "Instruction Scroll."

22:17 *My anger burns . . . angering me by everything they have done*: See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8.

22:19-20 *go to your grave in peace*: Josiah's remorse means he is allowed to die before the disaster strikes. God is as strangely gracious to Josiah as to Ahab (1 Kgs 21:27-29) and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:2-6).

23:2-3 *the king read . . . the covenant scroll*: Josiah follows the instruction for kings to read the scroll (cf. Deut 17:18-19). Joshua is the only other character in the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings to read the scroll to the people (Josh 8:34-35). See also note on 2 Kings 22:8. *made a covenant . . . accepted the covenant*: Only

Joshua and Jehoiada make covenants similar to the one mentioned here (Josh 24:25; 2 Kgs 11:17). Broken covenant, according to the historian, was the main reason for the fall of the northern kingdom. That's what makes the people's accepting the covenant with Josiah (23:3) a tragically ironic episode in the sequence of events leading to the fall of Judah. In spite of Josiah's mirroring the faithfulness of Joshua, and in spite of the renewed covenant, Judah didn't stand. *all his heart and all his being*: These words echo the book of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut 6:5; 10:12; 11:13, 18; 26:16). Josiah is the first king of whom these words are used since David used them in his last words to his son Solomon (see note on 1 Kgs 2:4; see also Josh 22:5; 2 Kgs 23:25). These clues suggest that the historian depicts Josiah as an ideal king who stands in the tradition of Deuteronomy and Joshua, Israel's first truly faithful leader in the land.



<sup>4</sup>The king then commanded the high priest Hilkiah, the second-order priests, and the doorkeepers to remove from the LORD's temple all the religious objects made for Baal, Asherah, and all the heavenly bodies. The king burned them outside Jerusalem in the Kidron fields and took the ashes to Bethel. <sup>5</sup>He got rid of the pagan priests that the Judean kings had appointed to burn incense at the shrines in Judah's cities and the areas around Jerusalem. He did the same to those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the heavenly bodies. <sup>6</sup>He removed the Asherah image<sup>a</sup> from the LORD's temple, taking it to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem. There he burned it, ground it to dust, and threw the dust on the public graveyard. <sup>7</sup>The king tore down the shrines for the consecrated workers<sup>a</sup> that were in the LORD's temple, where women made woven coverings<sup>a</sup> for Asherah.

23:4 2Ki 21:3,  
2Ki 22:4,  
2Ki 23:15  
23:5 2Ki 21:3,  
Jer 8:2

<sup>8</sup>Then Josiah brought all the priests out of Judah's cities. From Geba to Beer-sheba, he defiled the shrines where the priests had been burning incense. He also tore down the shrines at the gates at the entrance to the gate of Joshua the city's governor, which were on the left as one entered the city gate. <sup>9</sup>Although the priests of these shrines didn't go up on the LORD's altar in Jerusalem, they did eat unleavened bread with their fellow priests.

<sup>10</sup>Josiah defiled the Topheth in the Ben-hinnom Valley so no one could burn their child alive in honor of the god Molech. <sup>11</sup>He did away with the horses that Judah's kings had dedicated to the sun. They were kept at the entrance to the LORD's temple near a room in the annex<sup>a</sup> that belonged to an official named Nathan-melech. Josiah set fire to the chariots

*The Reform of Josiah* Josiah's worship reform is based on a scroll discovered during the renovation of the temple (2 Kgs 22:8). Josiah recognizes that failure "to obey the words of this scroll" (2 Kgs 22:13) has awful consequences (2 Kgs 18:16-17). Josiah not only reads the scroll (as mandated by Deut 17:18-19), but also makes a commitment to abide by the terms of the covenant with God as written in the scroll (2 Kgs 23:2-3).

In carrying out his reforms, he "fulfilled the words of the Instruction written in the scroll" (2 Kgs 23:24). Josiah celebrates a Passover Festival (2 Kgs 23:21) as instructed in Deuteronomy (Deut 16:1-6). He also removes all pagan worship objects, shrines, and the worship of foreign gods from Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:4-14) and from the hills of Samaria to the north (2 Kgs 23:19). He even tears down the altar in Bethel, in the former northern kingdom (2 Kgs 23:15-17; cf. 1 Kgs 13:2, 32). In doing so Josiah reverses the practices initiated by both Solomon (1 Kgs 11:5-10) and Jeroboam (2 Kgs 12:26-33).

Josiah's "cleansing" of the temple and the worship establishment reflects Deuteronomy's interests in purity of worship in one place, and in making sure that no pagan elements remain (Deut 7:5; 12:2-7). According to the historian, impurity and improper worship are key causes of Israel's and Judah's demise (1 Kgs 14:15, 23; 2 Kgs 17:10).

Even though "the people accepted the covenant" (2 Kgs 23:3), Judah's fate had been sealed by the actions of Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:13-15; 23:26-27). The author depicts Josiah as a faithful king whose "heart was broken" and who "submitted before the LORD" (2 Kgs 22:19). He is a model of one who "turned to the LORD with all his heart, all his being, and all his strength," which is exactly what Deuteronomy counseled in case God's people ever found themselves exiled to a foreign land (2 Kgs 23:25; Deut 30:1-10). Perhaps Jehoiachin and the exiles with him (2 Kgs 25) will follow Josiah's example.

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks *image*; perhaps a pole dedicated to the goddess. <sup>b</sup>Traditionally *cultic prostitutes* <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

23:4-9 Josiah cleanses the temple and destroys the shrines. He removes any evidence of worship of Canaanite deities. He expels the priestly support staff. *shrines*: See note on 1 Kings 3:2-3. Josiah's removal of the shrines centralizes worship in Jerusalem in line with Deuteronomy 12:4-7. *Baal*: See note on 1 Kings 16:29-34. *heavenly bodies*: See note on 2 Kings 17:14-17. *Asherah image*: See note on 1 Kings 14:12-18. *consecrated workers*: See note on 1 Kings 14:22-24. *Geba... Beer-sheba*: the northern and southern boundaries of Judah. *priests... didn't go up on the Lord's altar in Jerusalem*: This action seems to contradict Deuteronomy 18:6-8, which allows such priests to sacrifice in the Jerusalem

temple (cf. Ezekiel's perspective about 50 years later in Ezek 44:10-14). Apart from this matter of the priests, Josiah's reform reflects Deuteronomy's emphasis on centralization and purity of the worship establishment in Jerusalem.

23:10 *Topheth in the Benhinnom Valley*: Topheth is the place in the Hinnom Valley (along the western and southern sides of the city) where children were sacrificed to Molech (cf. 1 Kgs 11:7; 2 Kgs 3:26-27; 16:3; 17:17, 31; 21:6; Jer 7:31-32; 19:6-13).

23:11 *horses... chariots... the sun*: images used in worship of the sun. They probably represent the vehicle on which the sun was carried across the sky.

23:13 Nm 21:29;  
Jgs 10:6;  
1Ks 11:5;  
1Ks 11:7;  
1Ks 11:33

23:15 1Ks 12:28;  
1Ks 12:33;  
1Ks 13:1;  
1Ks 14:16;  
2Ks 23:6

23:16 1Ks 13:2;  
1Ks 13:32

23:17 1Ks 13:1;  
1Ks 13:30

23:21 2Ch 35:1

23:22-23  
2Ch 35:18, 19

23:22 2Ch 35:1;  
2Ch 35:18-19

that were dedicated to the sun. <sup>12</sup>The king also tore down the altars that were on the roof of Ahaz's upper story, which had been made by the Judean kings, and he did the same with the altars that Manasseh had built in the two courtyards of the LORD's temple. He broke them up there<sup>v</sup> and threw their dust into the Kidron Valley. <sup>13</sup>The king then defiled the shrines facing Jerusalem, south of the Mountain of Destruction. Solomon the king of Israel had built these for Ashtoreth, the monstrous Sidonian god, for Chemosh, the monstrous Moabite god, and for Milcom, the detestable Ammonite god. <sup>14</sup>He smashed the sacred pillars and cut down the sacred poles,<sup>w</sup> filling the places where they had been with human bones.

<sup>15</sup>Josiah also tore down the altar that was in Bethel. That was the shrine made by Jeroboam, Nebat's son, who caused Israel to sin. Josiah tore down that altar and its shrine. He burned the shrine, grinding it into dust. Then he burned its sacred pole. <sup>16</sup>When Josiah turned around, he noticed tombs up on the hillside. So he ordered the bones to be taken out of the tombs. He then burned them on the altar, desecrating it. (This was in agreement with the word that the LORD announced by the man of God when Jeroboam stood by the altar at the festival.) Josiah then turned and saw the tomb of the man of God<sup>y</sup> who had predicted these things. <sup>17</sup>"What's this gravestone I see?" Josiah asked.

The people of the city replied, "That tomb belongs to the man of God who came from Judah and announced what you would do to the altar of Bethel."

<sup>18</sup>"Let it be," Josiah said. "No one should disturb his bones." So they left his bones untouched, along with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria.

<sup>19</sup>Moreover, Josiah removed all the shrines on the high hills that the Israelite kings had constructed throughout the cities of Samaria. These had made the LORD angry. Josiah did to them just what he did at Bethel. <sup>20</sup>He actually slaughtered on those altars all the priests of the shrines who were there, and he burned human bones on them. Then Josiah returned to Jerusalem.

<sup>21</sup>The king commanded all the people, "Celebrate a Passover to the LORD your God following what is instructed in this scroll containing the covenant." <sup>22</sup>A Passover like this hadn't been celebrated since the days when the judges judged Israel; neither had it been celebrated during all the days of the Israelite and Judean kings. <sup>23</sup>But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah's rule, this Passover was celebrated to the LORD in Jerusalem.

<sup>24</sup>Josiah burned those who consulted dead spirits and the mediums, the household gods and the worthless idols—all the monstrous things that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem. In this way Josiah fulfilled the words of the Instruction written in the scroll that the priest Hilkiah found in the LORD's temple. <sup>25</sup>There's never been a king like Josiah,

<sup>v</sup>Correction; MT removed them quickly or ran from there. <sup>w</sup>Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah. <sup>y</sup>Heb *asherah*, perhaps an object devoted to the goddess Asherah. <sup>z</sup>LXX; MT lacks when Jeroboam stood by the altar at the festival. Josiah then turned and saw the tomb of the man of God.

23:13-14 Josiah is the first king to destroy the shrines built by Solomon (cf. 1 Kgs 11:5-7, 33).

23:15-20 *altar... Bethel... altar of Bethel*: Josiah desecrates and destroys the altar at Bethel that had been built by Jeroboam. The author's parenthetical comment (23:16) sees this action as a fulfillment of the word announced by the prophet (cf. 1 Kgs 13:1-2). For the background on 2 Kings 23:17-18 see 1 Kings 13:11-32.

23:19-20 *shrines... cities of Samaria*: Josiah takes the opportunity to move into the former area of Israel (called Samaria here), which seems to indicate a fulfillment of the prophetic word (1 Kgs 13:32). Yet this is also a political move, since Assyrian control in the region had diminished after Ashurbanipal's death and after Assyria became preoccupied with the new superpowers, Babylon to the south and the Medes to the east (about 630 BCE). *made the Lord angry*: See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8. *slaughtered... priests*: These priests worked at the northern Israelite shrines (cf. 2 Kgs 23:8-9). These may have been the priests appointed by Jeroboam (cf. 1 Kgs 12:31).

23:21-23 *Passover*: a commemoration of the exodus (Exod 12). The Passover is celebrated according to the

instructions of Deuteronomy 16:1-8. It was celebrated in Jerusalem rather than, as in earlier times, in homes. Prior to Josiah, Joshua is the only one who celebrates a Passover in the story (Josh 5:10-12). In this action, Josiah demonstrates that his faithfulness is like that of Joshua, even greater than that of David and Hezekiah. 2 Chronicles 30:12-27 describes a Passover celebrated by Hezekiah, not mentioned by the author of Kings. Perhaps Josiah's Passover is unique in that it involves *all the people* (23:21) as Hezekiah's didn't (2 Chron 30:10-11). The author of Kings probably omits Hezekiah's Passover in order to elevate Josiah as the greatest king ever.

23:24-25 *consulted... mediums*: prohibited by Deuteronomy 18:9-14 (cf. Lev 19:26, 31; 20:27). *household gods*: Compare Genesis 31:19, 34-35; Judges 17:5; Hosea 3:4; Zechariah 10:2. *fulfilled the words of the Instruction... scroll... Instruction from Moses*: In other words, Josiah has been shown to be the only king who obeyed what the Instruction scroll commanded (cf. 2 Kgs 23:3). See notes at 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:5-6; and 2 Kings 22:8. *never been a king... turned to the Lord*: In spite of the same high praise of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:5-6), Josiah has done even better.

*Joshua and Josiah* Joshua is the prototype of King Josiah in 2 Kings 22–23. (1) Josiah's obedience is described in the same terms as Joshua's (2 Kgs 22:2; cf. Josh 1:7; 23:6; Deut 17:20). (2) The Instruction from God is mentioned many times in 2 Kings 22–23. In the larger history (Joshua through Kings), a similar emphasis is found only in the book of Joshua (Josh 1:8; 8:31, 34; 23:6; 24:26; cf. Josh 22:5; 2 Kgs 22:8, 11). (3) Both Joshua and Josiah are mediators of the covenant (cf. Josh 8:30–35; Josh 24; 2 Kgs 23:1–3). The covenantal language of both texts is almost identical. (4) Both Joshua and Josiah are the only ones in the larger historical narrative of Israel who celebrate the Passover (Josh 5:10–12; 2 Kgs 23:21–23; cf. 2 Chron 30).

In drawing the analogy between Joshua and Josiah, the historian has presented a typology of obedience rooted in faithfulness to God, mediated through the Instructions from God to Moses, and embodied in characteristic royal figures (Joshua, David, and Josiah). The tragedy of the history is that it ends in Babylonian exile. The hope of the historian is for a turning away from all other ultimate loyalties (cf. Josh 23:16; 2 Kgs 22:17) and for embracing again the hope of returning to the Lord “with all your heart and all your being” (cf. Deut 4:27–29; 6:5; 30:1–10, especially Deut 30:2, 6, 10; Josh 22:5; 1 Kgs 2:4; 8:46–53; 2 Kgs 23:25).

whether before or after him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, all his being, and all his strength, in agreement with everything in the Instruction from Moses.

<sup>26</sup>Even so, the LORD didn't turn away from the great rage that burned against Judah on account of all that Manasseh had done to make him angry. <sup>27</sup>The LORD said, “I will remove Judah from my presence just as I removed Israel. I will reject this city, Jerusalem, which I chose, and this temple where I promised my name would reside.”

<sup>28</sup>The rest of Josiah's deeds and all that he accomplished, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? <sup>29</sup>In his days, the Egyptian king Pharaoh Neco marched against the Assyrian king at the Euphrates River. King Josiah marched out to intercept him. But when Neco encountered Josiah in Megiddo, he killed the king. <sup>30</sup>Josiah's servants took his body from Megiddo in a chariot. They brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. The people of the land took Jehoahaz, Josiah's son, anointed him, and made him king after his father.

### *Jehoahaz rules Judah*

<sup>31</sup>Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became king, and he ruled for three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal; she was Jeremiah's daughter and was from Libnah. <sup>32</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes, just as all his ancestors had done. <sup>33</sup>Pharaoh Neco made Jehoahaz a prisoner at Riblah in the land of Hamath, ending his rule in Jerusalem. Pharaoh Neco imposed a fine on the land totaling one hundred kikkars of silver and one kikkar of gold.

The author uses the word “turned,” which is a favorite word of Deuteronomy for encouraging the people who, after the disaster of exile, might be encouraged to “turn” to the Lord (cf. Deut 4:30; 30:2–3, 10). Josiah, therefore, is a perfect example of one who did just that. Furthermore, he turns to the Lord before the disaster, even though he knows destruction is on its way (2 Kgs 22:15–17). *heart... being... strength*: See notes at 1 Kings 2:4 and 2 Kings 23:2–3.

**23:26–27** *Even so*: These may be the most tragic words in the books of Kings. The author repeats the prophetic perspective already announced in 2 Kings 21:10–15 and 22:16–17. Judah's downfall is inevitable, in spite of the author's praise of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:25). From the vantage point of exile, the location of the narrator, the *even so* is a necessary explanation. *Manasseh's* actions were the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. *great rage... make him angry*: See sidebar, “Anger of God” at 1 Kings 8. *my name would reside*: See sidebar, “Temple and Name” at 1 Kings 8.

**23:28–30** *official records*: See note on 1 Kings 11:41–43. *Pharaoh Neco*: After the death of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (about 630 BCE), this Egyptian pharaoh aligned

himself with Assyria to push back the encroaching power of Babylon. The Assyrian capital Nineveh had already succumbed to the Babylonians in 612 BCE. This battle took place in 609 BCE. It isn't clear why Josiah engaged Neco in the battle. Perhaps he was joining the Babylonian side as a way of shrugging off Judah's status as vassal to Assyria. Josiah may have made some moves in that direction by moving into Israelite territory to the north. (For more details, see 2 Chron 35:20–24.) *Megiddo*: a strategic site on the edge of the Jezreel Valley that controlled the coastal travel route between Egypt and Mesopotamia. *people of the land*: See note on 2 Kings 11:14.

**23:31–25:30** Judah's story from this point spins out of control. Unthinkable things happen. Babylon becomes the imperial superpower in the region, sets up puppet kings in Judah, and eventually reduces Jerusalem to rubble and exiles much of Judah's population.

**23:31–33** *Jehoahaz*: known as Shallum in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 22:11). *Riblah*: in northern Syria on the bank of the Orontes River. It's not clear why Jehoahaz traveled there or why Neco arrested him. Perhaps Neco wanted to keep Judah in line and not risk an alliance with Babylon.

23:28  
2Ch 35:26, 27  
23:29 Jgs 5:19;  
2Ch 35:20;  
Jer 46:2  
23:31 2Ki 24:18;  
1Ch 3:15;  
2Ch 36:1;  
Jer 22:11;  
Jer 52:1  
23:33 2Ch 36:3

23:34 2Ch 36:4

23:36, 37

2Ch 36:5

24:1 2Ch 36:6;

Jer 25:1; Dn 1:1

24:5, 6 2Ch 36:8

24:7 Gn 15:18;

Nm 34:5;

Jer 37:5; Jer 46:2

24:8, 9 2Ch 36:9

24:10 2Ki 24:11;

2Ki 25:1; Dn 1:1

24:11 2Ki 24:10;

2Ki 25:1

**Jehoiakim rules Judah**

<sup>34</sup>Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim, Josiah's son, king after his father Josiah. Neco changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. Neco took Jehoahaz away; he later died in Egypt. <sup>35</sup>Jehoiakim gave Pharaoh the silver and gold, but he taxed the land in order to meet Pharaoh's financial demands. Each person was taxed appropriately. Jehoiakim exacted silver and the gold from the land's people in order to give it to Pharaoh Neco. <sup>36</sup>Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became king, and he ruled for eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebidah; she was Pedaiah's daughter and was from Rumah. <sup>37</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes, just as all his ancestors had done.

**24** In Jehoiakim's days, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked. Jehoiakim had submitted to him for three years, but then Jehoiakim changed his mind and rebelled against him. <sup>2</sup>The LORD sent Chaldean, Aramean, Moabite, and Ammonite raiding parties against Jehoiakim, sending them against Judah in order to destroy it. This was in agreement with the word that the LORD had spoken through his servants the prophets. <sup>3</sup>Indeed, this happened to Judah because the LORD commanded them to be removed from his presence on account of all the sins that Manasseh had committed <sup>4</sup>and because of the innocent blood that he had spilled. Manasseh had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD didn't want to forgive that.

<sup>5</sup>The rest of Jehoiakim's deeds and all that he accomplished, aren't they written in the official records of Judah's kings? <sup>6</sup>Jehoiakim lay down with his ancestors. His son Jehoiachin succeeded him as king.

<sup>7</sup>The Egyptian king never left his country again because the Babylonian king had taken over all the territory that had previously belonged to him—from the border of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

**Jehoiachin rules Judah**

<sup>8</sup>Jehoiachin was 18 years old when he became king, and he ruled for three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta; she was Elnathan's daughter and was from Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes, just as all his ancestors had done. <sup>10</sup>At that time, the officers of Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and laid siege to the city. <sup>11</sup>Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar himself arrived at the city while his officers were blockading it. <sup>12</sup>Judah's King Jehoiachin, along with his mother, his servants, his officers, and his officials, came out to surrender to the Babylonian king. The Babylonian king took Jehoiachin prisoner in the eighth year of Jehoiachin's rule.

*evil in the Lord's eyes... ancestors had done:* a standard criticism of most of the kings of Israel and Judah. *kikkars:* One kikkar is approximately 76 pounds.

23:34–24:7 The reign of Jehoiakim (a throne name) spells the end of Judah as it finds itself pressed in a vise between the superpowers Egypt and Babylon. Neco has made some headway in the region, but not enough to prevent an even greater power, Babylon under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar, from taking control of the region.

23:37 *evil in the Lord's eyes... ancestors had done:* a criticism leveled against many of the kings from Israel and Judah.

24:1 *Jehoiakim... rebelled:* Judah survives by strategic alliances. Jehoiakim, a ruler who served under Pharaoh Neco from 609 to 605 BCE (cf. 2 Kgs 23:34), made himself a subordinate of Nebuchadnezzar (604 BCE); but when Nebuchadnezzar wasn't able to defeat Egypt decisively (601 BCE) and had to stay in Babylon the next year, Jehoiakim changed sides again (cf. Jer 26:22).

24:2–4 *in agreement with the word... the prophets:* The historian doesn't report any such words. The point, however, is that the author believes all such actions by Judah's neighbors are ordained by the Lord. *the Lord commanded:* The author repeats that conviction, so that the point isn't missed. *Manasseh... innocent blood:* See note on 2 Kings 21:16. *forgive:* Apart from Naaman's request for special

favor (2 Kgs 5:18), this verb appears in the books of Kings only in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 8:30, 34, 36, 39, 50). Its deliberate use here, therefore, evokes a shocking awareness of the tragedy of the current situation.

24:5–6: *official records:* See note on 1 Kings 11:41–43. This is the last reference to these sources in Kings. No other sources are mentioned after this. Jeremiah offered a poetic reflection on Jehoiakim's death in Egypt (Jer 22:10–12).

24:7 *border of Egypt... Euphrates River:* The only other mention of this range of imperial control is in the description of Solomon's empire (cf. 1 Kgs 4:21–24). The mention of it here is a telling reminder of what has been truly lost. 24:8–17 *Jehoiachin:* also known as Jeconiah (Jer 24:1; 27:20) and Coniah (Jer 22:24–28; 37:1). He takes the throne just as the Babylonians are about to destroy Jerusalem. His surrender in 597 BCE saved the city for the time being, but led to the first exile of citizens to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar reports the capture, plunder, and exile in what is now known as the Babylonian Chronicle.

24:9 *evil in the Lord's eyes... ancestors had done:* a criticism leveled against many of the kings of Israel and Judah (see note on 2 Kgs 15:9).

24:10–12 Nebuchadnezzar's attack and capture of Jehoiachin was probably a response to Jehoiakim's earlier rebellion against Babylon (2 Kgs 24:1).

<sup>13</sup>Nebuchadnezzar also took away all the treasures of the LORD's temple and of the royal palace. He cut into pieces all the gold objects that Israel's King Solomon had made for the LORD's temple, which is exactly what the LORD said would happen. <sup>14</sup>Then Nebuchadnezzar exiled all of Jerusalem: all the officials, all the military leaders—ten thousand exiles—as well as all the skilled workers and metalworkers. No one was left behind except the poorest of the land's people. <sup>15</sup>Nebuchadnezzar exiled Jehoiachin to Babylon; he also exiled the queen mother, the king's wives, the officials, and the land's elite leaders from Jerusalem to Babylon. <sup>16</sup>The Babylonian king also exiled seven thousand warriors—each one a hero trained for battle—as well as a thousand skilled workers and metalworkers to Babylon. <sup>17</sup>Then the Babylonian king made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, succeed Jehoiachin as king. Nebuchadnezzar changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah.

### Zedekiah rules Judah

<sup>18</sup>Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king, and he ruled for eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal; she was Jeremiah's daughter and was from Libnah. <sup>19</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes, just as Jehoiakim had done. <sup>20</sup>It was precisely because the LORD was angry with Jerusalem and Judah that he thrust them out of his presence.

### The southern kingdom falls

**25** Now Zedekiah rebelled against the Babylonian king. <sup>1</sup>So in the ninth year of Zedekiah's rule, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem with his entire army. He camped beside the city and built a siege wall all around it. <sup>2</sup>The city was under attack until King Zedekiah's eleventh year. <sup>3</sup>On the ninth day of the month, the famine in the city got so bad that no food remained for the common people. <sup>4</sup>Then the enemy broke into the city. All the soldiers fled<sup>a</sup> by night using the gate between the two walls near the King's Garden. The Chaldeans were surrounding the city, so the soldiers ran toward the desert plain. <sup>5</sup>But the Chaldean army chased King Zedekiah and caught up with him in the Jericho plains. His entire army deserted him. <sup>6</sup>So the Chaldeans captured the king and brought him back to the Babylonian king, who was at Riblah. There his punishment was determined. <sup>7</sup>Zedekiah's sons were slaughtered right before his eyes. Then he was blinded, put in bronze chains, and taken off to Babylon.

<sup>8</sup>On the seventh day of the fifth month in the nineteenth year of Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan arrived at Jerusalem. He was the commander of the guard and an official of the Babylonian king. <sup>9</sup>He burned down the LORD's temple, the royal palace, and all of Jerusalem's houses. He burned down every important building. <sup>10</sup>The whole Chaldean

<sup>a</sup>LXX, cf. Jer 52:7; MT lacks *fled*.

24:13-16 *Nebuchadnezzar... treasures of the LORD's temple... what the LORD said would happen*: Hezekiah's exposure of the temple and palace treasures to Babylon's King Merodach-baladin offered readers a premonition of this event. Hezekiah's action occasioned a prophetic announcement that now becomes a reality (cf. 2 Kgs 20:12-18). *Nebuchadnezzar exiled... to Babylon*: The deportation didn't include all of Jerusalem but only the elites along with administrative and military personnel. The purpose was to leave the land incapable of further military responses. Unlike the Assyrians, the Babylonians didn't disperse and transfer entire populations (cf. 2 Kgs 17:4-6, 17). The prophet Ezekiel was deported along with this group of exiles (cf. Ezek 1:2-3).

24:17 *Mattaniah... Zedekiah*: Josiah's third son.

24:18-25:21 The historian reports about the reign of Zedekiah, the destruction of the city and temple, and the second exile of the population in 587 BCE. Other biblical texts fill out the background and provide parallels to this story (cf. Jer 39:1-4; 27-29; 52; 2 Chron 36).

24:19-20a *evil in the LORD's eyes*: a standard criticism of most of the kings of Israel and Judah (see note at 2 Kgs 15:9). *because the LORD was angry... out of his presence*: The

historian takes another opportunity to remind readers that the sequence of events being reported isn't simply the result of superpower domination of the region. See sidebar, "Anger of God" at 1 Kings 8.

24:20b-25:7 *Zedekiah rebelled... ninth year... eleventh year*: After a 17-month siege, the city fell to the Babylonian army in 587/586 BCE. Jeremiah 27-29 tells the story of Zedekiah's plot, including Jeremiah's responses, in more detail. As is true of almost every other attack on Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar approaches the city at its most vulnerable point, its northern wall (cf. 2 Kgs 14:11). Zedekiah escapes and flees toward the Jordan Valley. *Riblah*: the Babylonian headquarters in northern Syria on the bank of the Orontes River (cf. 2 Kgs 23:33). Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel made prophetic pronouncements about Zedekiah's capture and deportation (Jer 34:3; Ezek 12:13).

25:8-12 *seventh day of the fifth month*: Jewish tradition commemorates the destruction of the first temple by the Babylonians and the second temple by the Romans in a 25-hour fast on the ninth of Av, the fifth month (cf. Zech 7:3; 8:19). *burned down... tore down the walls*: One month after the fall of Jerusalem, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem (587 BCE).

24:13 1Kg 7:48;  
2Ki 20:17;  
Ezr 1:7; Is 39:6;  
Dn 5:2

24:14 2Ki 25:12;  
Jer 24:1, Jer 29:2,  
Jer 52:28

24:17 2Ki 23:34;  
1Ch 3:15;  
2Ch 36:10-11;  
Jer 37:1

24:19 2Ch 36:12  
24:20 2Ch 36:13;  
Jer 52:3

25:1 2Ki 24:1,  
2Ki 24:10;  
Jer 34:1, Jer 39:1;  
Eze 21:22

25:2 2Ki 24:17;  
2Ch 36:11;  
Jer 32:3, Jer 37:1,  
Jer 39:5

25:3 Lam 4:9;  
25:4 Neh 3:15;  
Eze 33:21

25:5 Jer 52:8

25:6 2Ki 23:33;  
Jer 52:9

25:7 Jgs 16:21

25:9 1Ki 9:8;  
2Ch 36:19;  
Ps 79:1; Is 64:11;  
Am 2:5

25:10 Neh 1:3

25:11 2Ch 36:20  
 25:13 1Ki 7:15,  
 1Ki 7:23,  
 1Ki 7:27;  
 2Ch 36:18;  
 Jer 52:17  
 25:14 Ex 27:3;  
 1Ki 7:50  
 25:15 1Ki 7:48;  
 Eze 1:9; Dn 5:3  
 25:16 1Ki 7:47  
 25:17 1Ki 7:15  
 25:18 1Ch 6:14;  
 Eze 7:1; Jer 21:1,  
 Jer 29:25,  
 Jer 52:24  
 25:19 Est 1:14  
 25:20 2Ki 23:33;  
 Jer 52:26  
 25:27 Gn 40:13,  
 Gn 40:20;  
 2Ki 24:12,  
 2Ki 24:15;  
 Jer 52:31

army under the commander of the guard tore down the walls surrounding Jerusalem. <sup>11</sup>Then Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard exiled the people who were left in the city, those who had already surrendered to Babylon's king, and the rest of the population. <sup>12</sup>The commander of the guard left some of the land's poor people behind to work the vineyards and be farmers. <sup>13</sup>The Chaldeans shattered the bronze columns, the stands, and the bronze Sea that were in the LORD's temple. They carried the bronze off to Babylon. <sup>14</sup>They also took the pots, the shovels, the wick trimmers, the dishes, and all the bronze items that had been used in the temple. <sup>15</sup>The commander of the guard took the fire pans and the sprinkling bowls, which were made of pure gold and pure silver. <sup>16</sup>The bronze in all these objects—the two pillars, the Sea, and the stands that Solomon had made for the LORD's temple—was too heavy to weigh. <sup>17</sup>Each pillar was twenty-seven feet high. The bronze capital on top of the first pillar was four and a half feet high. Decorative lattices and pomegranates, all made from bronze, were around the capital. And the second pillar was decorated with lattices just like the first.

<sup>18</sup>The commander of the guard also took away Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest next in rank, and the three doorkeepers. <sup>19</sup>Of those still left in the city, Nebuzaradan took away an officer who was in charge of the army and five royal advisors who were discovered in the city. He also took away the secretary of the officer responsible for drafting the land's people to fight, as well as sixty people who were discovered in the city. <sup>20</sup>Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard took all of these people and brought them to the Babylonian king at Riblah. <sup>21</sup>The king of Babylon struck them down, killing them in Riblah in the land of Hamath.

So Judah was exiled from its land.

### **Gedaliah governs Judah**

<sup>22</sup>Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar put Gedaliah, Ahikam's son and Shaphan's grandson, in charge of the people he had left behind in the land of Judah. <sup>23</sup>All the army officers and their soldiers heard that the Babylonian king had appointed Gedaliah as governor, so they came with their men to Gedaliah at Mizpah. The officers were Ishmael, Nethaniah's son; Johanan, Kareah's son; Seraiah, Tanhumeth's son who was a Netophathite; and Jaazaniah, Maacathite's son. <sup>24</sup>Gedaliah made a solemn pledge to them and their soldiers, telling them, "Don't be afraid of the Chaldean officials. Stay in the land and serve the Babylonian king, and things will go well for you."

<sup>25</sup>But in the seventh month, Ishmael, Nethaniah's son and Elishama's grandson, who was from the royal family, came with ten soldiers, and they struck Gedaliah, and he died. They also killed the Judeans and the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. <sup>26</sup>Then all the people, young and old, along with the army officers, departed for Egypt because they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

### **Jehoiachin in Babylon**

<sup>27</sup>In the year that Awil-merodach<sup>a</sup> became king of Babylon, he released Judah's King Jehoiachin from prison. This happened in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of King

<sup>a</sup>*Awil-merodach* means Man of Marduk in Akkadian.

**25:13-17** On the temple furnishings mentioned here, see 1 Kings 7:15-50.

**25:18-21** *Judah was exiled from its land:* A final tragic declaration by the historian leaves the reader wondering whether there might be any hope for Judah. Given the theological investment of the historian in the land, the temple, and the Davidic monarchy, this seems like a final punctuation mark on a long and grueling downhill slide. See map 10.

**25:22-26** A first appendix continues the story of the Judeans who remained in the land. *Gedaliah:* related to high officials in Josiah's court (cf. 2 Kgs 22:3, 12). His father, along with Jeremiah, supported submission to the Babylonians (25:24; Jer 26:24). *Mizpah:* This new administrative center, about eight miles north of Jerusalem (cf. 1 Kgs 15:22), was once the place where Saul was chosen as Israel's first king (1 Sam 10:17). It's ironic that this new administrative center

to the north of Jerusalem, the same place where Saul, Israel's first king, was chosen (1 Sam 10:17), is now the seat of Judah's rump government. *Gedaliah . . . died:* The author doesn't elaborate on the reasons for his assassination. The pro-Babylonian political counsel he provides (25:24) may have something to do with it (cf. the fuller description of events in Jer 40:13-41:18).

**25:27-30** *Awil-merodach . . . released . . . Jehoiachin from prison:* A second appendix raises questions about whether the historian sees any special relevance in the events reported here. Does the story simply come to an end by stating, as it were, "And that's that"? Or does the release of Jehoiachin from prison imply a new hope for the Judean monarchy? Are the prophetic promises now ended, or is there still hope for the future (cf. 2 Sam 7:15-16)? In spite of holding a strong conviction that history unfolds at the initiative of the prophetic word, the author, living in exile,

Jehoiachin, on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month. <sup>28</sup>Awil-merodach spoke kindly to Jehoiachin and seated him above the other kings who were with him in Babylon. <sup>29</sup>So Jehoiachin took off his prisoner clothes and ate regularly in the king's presence for the rest of his life. <sup>30</sup>At the king's command, a regular food allowance was given to him every day for the rest of his life.

*The Ending of Kings* The books of Kings end in the catastrophe of exile, against expectations shaped by God's promise to David (2 Sam 7). Yet the references to that promise in Kings are more conditional than Nathan's words to David (1 Kgs 2:2-4; 9:1-9). Solomon begins with much promise, but in the end is on a path toward tragedy (1 Kgs 9:6-9).

A large "if" lies beneath the hopeful promise of Solomon's story (cf. 1 Kgs 2:4; 3:14; 9:6). Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple includes hints at how the story will end (1 Kgs 8:33, 46-49). Similar anticipation is already evident in Deuteronomy's warnings (Deut 4:25-28; 28:62-64; 29:22-28).

Yet even those hints of tragedy offer insight into the salvation to be revealed on the other side of exile. Solomon implies the possibility of returning to God. He affirms the compassion and covenantal commitment of God. His prescription for hope after exile continues to be valid as readers come to the end of 2 Kings.

Both Deuteronomy and Kings endorse a double affirmation: the possibility of returning to God and God's compassionate commitment (Deut 4:30-31; cf. Deut 31:6, 8). Josiah, not Solomon, is the model for the exiles (2 Kgs 23:24-25). Attentiveness like his to God's Instruction will result in exclusive loyalty to God, and rejection of other loyalties and other gods "beyond the Euphrates" (Josh 24:2, 15). And that location is exactly where King Jehoiachin and his fellow exiles are sitting at the end of the books of Kings.

might not have had any way of knowing what the future might hold. Jeremiah's book, however, offers another perspective (cf. Jer 29). *thirty-seventh year of the exile*: 560 BCE. The new Babylonian king is the son of Nebuchadnezzar. He reigned from 562 to 560 BCE. *spoke kindly*: Some interpreters think that this idiom, similar to a Babylonian

expression, represents a formal agreement that changed Jehoiachin's status and may have had an impact on the exiles as well. *ate regularly in the king's presence . . . regular food allowance*: The last verses of the book may imply a positive outlook not only for Jehoiachin, but also for the exilic community.

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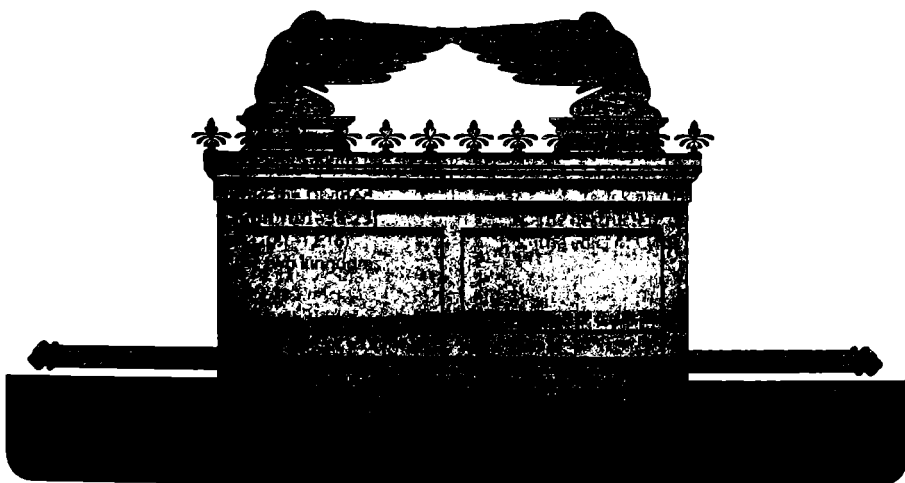
# 1 CHRONICLES

Beginning with Adam and ending in the reign of Persia's King Cyrus, the two books of Chronicles retell the national history of Israel. As with all retellings, the author of these books (called the Chronicler) shapes the story to fit particular concerns. These concerns reflect a Jerusalem context during the late Persian period (approximately 400–325 BCE), a time when the city was relatively small and the author's fellow followers of the Lord were scattered throughout the Near East.

The Chronicler carefully defines the community of Israel in the Persian period. In this time, the people were spread throughout the Persian Empire: some in Egypt and some remaining in Babylon, others back in the land but in the provinces of Samaria or Idumea, and still others settling around the city of Jerusalem in the traditional area of Judah. According to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, God's people are most properly understood as those from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah who returned from exile and resettled in their

traditional tribal allotments. The Chronicler considers this perspective too narrow so includes the northern tribes, united with the southern ones, as the ideal picture of the kingdom: *all Israel*. The ideal religious posture of *all Israel* is united worship at the temple in Jerusalem, the site chosen by God and linked to Solomon, David, and Moses.

The Chronicler establishes the authority of the Jerusalem temple by repeatedly saying that it is the place God has chosen over any other worship site. When David sacrifices at the threshing floor of Ornan, God marks the altar as the site of the future temple with fire from heaven (1 Chron 21:26). When Solomon later completes and dedicates the temple at the same site, God again sends the heavenly fire and fills the sanctuary with the "LORD's glory" (2 Chron 7:1-3). Soon after, God repeats the divine choice in a dream to Solomon: "I have chosen this temple and declared it holy so that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there" (2 Chron 7:16).



The chest containing the covenant (1 Chron 15)

The temple's special authority also comes from its links to the nation's ancient religious practices. Throughout the book the author points to the many parallels between the temple and the meeting tent that was carried through the desert by the people. Most notably, both are the house for the sacred chest (Exod 25:10-16; 2 Chron 5:7). In addition, both temple and meeting tent are cared for by priests and Levites who can trace their lineage back to the time of Moses. So those who worship at the temple in Jerusalem—or, if they are outside the land, pray towards it (2 Chron 6:34)—continue religious practices that can be traced back to the founding traditions of the nation.

David was key to the construction of this temple. Although he was ultimately prevented from building the temple because he was a "military man" who "shed blood," he provided his son Solomon with the necessary materials and building plan (1 Chron 28:2–29:9). This emphasis may represent a plea for the restoration of the Davidic monarchy in the Persian period (or even in the distant future). A more straightforward interpretation is that this simply stakes a claim on the Jerusalem temple that predates current politics. During a time when the rebuilding and upkeep of the present sanctuary, the second temple, was associated with the Persian emperor (as seen especially in the book of Ezra), the Chronicler reclaims the temple for Israel. Cyrus may have initiated the construction (2 Chron 36:22-23 = Ezra 1:1-4), and his successors may have been credited with offering financial assistance (Ezra 6:4; 7:15, 20-22, etc.),

but Chronicles emphasizes the temple's link to earlier leaders of Israel. Even though Solomon's temple was rebuilt with Persian support, the building site and organization of the religious personnel can still claim Davidic roots.

The author's particular emphases are communicated by a retelling of the nation's history that makes use of preexisting sources. Most of this material is from Samuel and Kings, but other texts such as Genesis are included as well. Although it is tempting for readers to place a special value on what is unique in Chronicles, it is important to consider the material that the author chose to retain from earlier sources.

The Chronicler's work has been assessed and characterized in a variety of ways throughout history. The various titles given to this book (which had no title originally) by ancient translators and commentators reveal differences of opinion over the worth of the book. In rabbinic circles, the book is designated, "The book of the daily events." This title links it together with the official records of the royal court referred to throughout the book of Kings (see 1 Kgs 14:19; 15:7, 23). In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT), the title "The things left out" highlights the material not repeated from the parallel sources in Samuel and Kings. The current English title derives from what the Christian theologian Jerome (ca. 347–420) called it: "Chronicle of the entire divine history." This title points to the long chronological scope of the work and its concern to see God's interaction throughout the retelling of past events.

**I. Genealogies (1 Chron 1:1–9:44)**

- A. From Adam to Esau and the 12 sons of Israel (1:1–2:2)
- B. The twelve tribes of Israel (2:3–9:44)
  - 1. Tribe of Judah (2:3–4:23)
  - 2. Tribe of Simeon (4:24–43)
  - 3. Tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh (5:1–26)
  - 4. Tribe of Levi (6:1–81)
  - 5. Tribes of Issachar, Benjamin and Naphtali, West Manasseh, Ephraim, and Asher (7:1–40)
  - 6. Tribe of Benjamin (8:1–40)
  - 7. The exile and return (9:1–34)
  - 8. The line of Saul (9:35–44)

**II. The History of Israel under David and Solomon (1 Chron 10:1–2 Chron 9:31)**

- A. The rule of David (10:1–29:30)
  - 1. The fall of Saul (10:1–14)
  - 2. David becomes king (11:1–12:40)
  - 3. David brings the chest to Jerusalem (13:1–16:43)
  - 4. God promises David a dynasty, and his successor will build the temple (17:1–27)
  - 5. David's success in wars against the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and Arameans (18:1–20:8)
  - 6. David's census and purchase of the temple site (21:1–22:1)
  - 7. David prepares materials, artisans, Solomon, and the leaders to work on the temple (22:2–19)
  - 8. Organization of the worship personnel (Levites, priests, musicians) (23:1–26:32)
  - 9. Organization of non-worship personnel (military leaders, overseers of the treasuries, vineyards, cattle pasturing, etc.) (27:1–34)
  - 10. David's final address and Solomon's anointing as king (28:1–29:30)
- B. The rule of Solomon (2 Chron 1:1–9:31)
  - 1. God appears to Solomon at Gibeon and grants wisdom, fame, and wealth (1:1–17)
  - 2. Building the temple (2:1–5:1)
  - 3. Installing the sacred chest and dedicating the temple (5:2–7:22)
  - 4. Solomon's other achievements (8:1–9:31)

**III. The History of Judah During the Divided Monarchy and Exile (2 Chron 10:1–36:23)**

- A. The rule of Rehoboam (10:1–12:16)
  - 1. The division of the two kingdoms (10:1–11:4)

- 2. Rehoboam's reign (11:5–12:1)
- 3. Shishak's invasion (12:2–12)
- 4. Conclusion of Rehoboam's reign (12:13–16)
- B. The rule of Abijah (13:1–14:1a)
- C. The rule of Asa (14:1b–16:14)
  - 1. Asa's reforms (14:1b–7)
  - 2. Victory over Cush and Azariah's message (14:8–15:7)
  - 3. Asa's reforms (15:8–19)
  - 4. War with Baasha and Hanani's message (16:1–10)
  - 5. Conclusion of Asa's reign (16:11–14)
- D. The rule of Jehoshaphat (17:1–21:1)
  - 1. Jehoshaphat's reign (17:1–19)
  - 2. Jehoshaphat and Ahab (18:1–19:3)
  - 3. Jehoshaphat's reforms (19:4–11)
  - 4. Jehoshaphat's victory (20:1–30)
  - 5. Conclusion of Jehoshaphat's reign (20:31–21:1)
- E. The rule of Jehoram (21:2–20)
- F. The rule of Amaziah (22:1–9)
- G. The rule of Athaliah (22:10–12)
- H. The rule of Joash (23:1–24:27)
- I. The rule of Amaziah (25:1–28)
- J. The rule of Uzziah (26:1–23)
- K. The rule of Jotham (27:1–9)
- L. The rule of Ahaz (28:1–27)
- M. The rule of Hezekiah (29:1–32:33)
  - 1. Cleansing and purifying the temple (29:1–19)
  - 2. Rededicating the temple (29:20–36)
  - 3. Celebrating Passover (30:1–31:1)
  - 4. Hezekiah's reforms (31:2–21)
  - 5. The invasion of Sennacherib (32:1–23)
  - 6. Hezekiah's illness and death (32:24–33)
- N. The rule of Manasseh (33:1–20)
- O. The rule of Amon (33:21–25)
- P. The rule of Josiah (34:1–35:27)
  - 1. Religious reforms and repairing the temple (34:1–13)
  - 2. Finding the Instruction scroll (34:14–33)
  - 3. Celebrating Passover (35:1–19)
  - 4. Josiah's death (35:20–27)
- Q. The rules of the last kings of Judah (36:1–38)
  - 1. Jehoahaz (36:1–4)
  - 2. Jehoikim (36:5–8)
  - 3. Jehoiakim (36:9–10)
  - 4. Zedekiah (36:11–16)
- R. The destruction of Jerusalem (36:17–21)
- S. The edict of Cyrus (36:22–23)

1:1-4 Gn 5:1-32;  
Lk 3:36-38  
1:5-23  
Gn 10:1-32  
1:19 Gn 10:21;  
Gn 10:25;  
Gn 11:16;  
1Ch 1:25  
1:24-27  
Gn 11:10-26;  
Lk 3:34-36  
1:28-31  
Gn 25:12-16  
1:32, 33  
Gn 25:1-4

### Adam to Israel

**1** Adam, Seth, Enosh; <sup>2</sup>Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared; <sup>3</sup>Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech; <sup>4</sup>Noah; Noah's family:<sup>a</sup> Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

<sup>5</sup>Japheth's family: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

<sup>6</sup>Gomer's family: Ashkenaz, Riphath,<sup>b</sup> and Togarmah.

<sup>7</sup>Javan's family: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.

<sup>8</sup>Ham's family: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan.

<sup>9</sup>Cush's family: Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raama, and Sabteca.

Raamah's family: Sheba and Dedan.

<sup>10</sup>Cush was the father of Nimrod, the first warrior in the land.

<sup>11</sup>Egypt was the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, <sup>12</sup>Pathrusim, Casluhim, from whom the Philistines came, and Caphtorim.

<sup>13</sup>Canaan was the father of Sidon his oldest son, Heth, <sup>14</sup>the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, <sup>15</sup>the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, <sup>16</sup>the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites.

<sup>17</sup>Shem's family: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram.

Aram's family:<sup>c</sup> Uz, Hul, Gether, and Meshech.

<sup>18</sup>Arpachshad was Shelah's father, and Shelah was Eber's father. <sup>19</sup>Two sons were born to Eber: one was named Peleg,<sup>d</sup> because in his days the land was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan.

<sup>20</sup>Joktan was the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, <sup>21</sup>Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, <sup>22</sup>Ebal, Abimael, Sheba, <sup>23</sup>Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were Joktan's family.

<sup>24</sup>Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah; <sup>25</sup>Eber, Peleg, Reu; <sup>26</sup>Serug, Nahor, Terah; <sup>27</sup>and Abram, that is, Abraham.

<sup>28</sup>Abraham's family: Isaac and Ishmael. <sup>29</sup>These were their descendants. Ishmael's oldest son was Nebaioth, then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, <sup>30</sup>Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema,

<sup>31</sup>Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. This was Ishmael's family. <sup>32</sup>Abraham's secondary wife Keturah's family: she gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT lacks Noah's family. <sup>b</sup>LXX; MT *Diphath* <sup>c</sup>LXX; MT lacks Aram's family. <sup>d</sup>Or *division*

1:1-2:2 The first chapter of the book establishes the family line of Israel, beginning with Adam (and the family tree continues through the first nine chapters of the book). These verses are an extremely condensed version of the genealogical material found in the book of Genesis, told in a way that highlights the connection of the nation of Israel to the other nations of the earth. (See sidebar, "Genealogy for a Purpose" at 1 Chron 3)

1:1-4 Consisting of 10 names, these verses function as an abbreviation of Genesis 5:1-39 that omits mention of other descendants, their age at death, and more.

1:4 *Shem, Ham, and Japheth*: This notice of Noah's three sons is the first time in the genealogy that more than one person per generation is named, pointing to the flourishing of different cultural and geographic identities in the world after the flood. Each son is associated with a different region: Shem with the lands and people east of Israel, Ham with those to the south and southwest, and Japheth with those to the north and west.

1:5-27 The presentation of Japheth's line (1:5-7) before that of his older brothers Ham (1:8-16) and Shem (1:17-27) starts a pattern of reversing the chronology followed throughout the chapter. Once the genealogies of the younger sons are briefly given, the author continues the story of the family line through a more complete presentation of the more significant branch. For a similar "table of nations" (so named because of its concern to relate the seventy nations of the earth to each other through their common father Noah), see Genesis 10:1-29.

1:5-7 Japheth's sons represent the areas north and west

of Israel, and include the regions of Asia Minor (*Javan*), Anatolia (*Tubal and Togarmah*), and islands in the Mediterranean such as Cyprus (*Elishah*), and Rhodes (*Rodanim*).

1:8-16 Ham's sons represent peoples and areas south and southwest of Israel, traditionally related to Egypt. This region includes *Cush* to the south (Sudan and Nubia), *Put* to the west (Libya), and *Canaan* far to the north (probably included here on account of its longstanding political connection with Egypt).

1:13-16 Canaan's sons include the geographical regions of the Phoenician coast (*Sidon*), the inhabitants of Canaan (*Heth*, i.e., the Hittites; the Jebusites, the traditional inhabitants of Jerusalem; the Amorites; the Girgashites and the Hivites), as well as the inhabitants of Syria.

1:17-27 Shem's family represents areas and peoples to the west of Israel, including regions in Mesopotamia (*Elam, Assur, and Arpachshad*), Asia Minor (*Lud and Meshech*), and Syria (*Aram*). See also Genesis 10:21-31 and sidebar, "Genealogy for a Purpose" at 1 Chronicles 3.

1:18-19 *Eber*: the one from whom the Hebrew people take their name. *Peleg*: Perhaps the use of this name (from the Hebrew, "to divide," "split") represents a playful allusion to the dispersion of the peoples after their attempt to build the tower of Babel (Gen 11).

1:24-27 For an expanded version of *Shem's* family through *Peleg's* line, see Genesis 11:10-26.

1:27 *Abram, that is, Abraham*: For the change of Abram's name, see Genesis 17:5.

1:28-2:2 Although the text here names only one woman, Abraham's line continues through three different women:

Jokshan's family: Sheba and Dedan.

<sup>33</sup>Midian's family: Ephah, Ephraim, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were members of Keturah's family.

<sup>34</sup>Abraham was Isaac's father. Isaac's family: Esau and Israel.

<sup>35</sup>Esau's family: Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

<sup>36</sup>Eliphaz's family: Teman, Omar, Zephi, Gatam, Kenaz, Timna, and Amalek.

<sup>37</sup>Reuel's family: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

<sup>38</sup>Seir's family: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.

<sup>39</sup>Lotan's family: Hori and Homam; Lotan's sister was Timna.

<sup>40</sup>Shobal's family: Alian, Manahath, Ebal, Shephi, and Onam.

Zibeon's family: Aiah and Anah.

<sup>41</sup>Anah's family: Dishon.

Dishon's family: Hamran, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.

<sup>42</sup>Ezer's family: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Jaakan.

Dishan's family:<sup>o</sup> Uz and Aran.

<sup>43</sup>These were the kings who ruled in the land of Edom before any king ruled over the Israelites: Bela, Beor's son, whose city was called Dinhabah. <sup>44</sup>When Bela died, Jobab, Zerah's son from Bozrah, succeeded him. <sup>45</sup>When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites succeeded him. <sup>46</sup>When Husham died, Hadad, Bedad's son who defeated Midian in the Moabite countryside, succeeded him; his city was called Avith. <sup>47</sup>When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah succeeded him. <sup>48</sup>When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the river succeeded him. <sup>49</sup>When Shaul died, Baal-hanan, Achbor's son, succeeded him. <sup>50</sup>When Baal-hanan died, Hadad succeeded him; his city was called Pai. His wife's name was Mehetabel, Matred's daughter and Me-zahab's granddaughter. <sup>51</sup>When Hadad died, Edom's tribal chiefs were: Chief Timna, Chief Aliah, Chief Jetheth, <sup>52</sup>Chief Oholibamah, Chief Elah, Chief Pinon, <sup>53</sup>Chief Kenaz, Chief Teman, Chief Mibzar, <sup>54</sup>Chief Magdiel, and Chief Iram. These were Edom's tribal chiefs.

**2** This was Israel's family: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, <sup>2</sup>Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

### Judah's line

<sup>3</sup>Judah's family: Er, Onan, and Shelah. These three were born to him with Bath-shua the Canaanite. Although Er was Judah's oldest, the LORD considered him wicked and put

<sup>o</sup>Cf 1:38; or *Dishon's family*

Sarah (the mother of Isaac), Hagar (the mother of Ishmael), and *Keturah* (the mother of the children listed in 1:32-33). Following the usual style in this chapter, the secondary lines are presented before continuing with what the author considers to be the main genealogical branch, *Isaac* (1:34-2:2). For a fuller account of the lines of Ishmael and the sons of *Keturah*, see Genesis 25:1-4, 12-18.

1:34-2:2 Abraham's family through Isaac's sons *Esau* and *Israel*. Throughout the books of Chronicles, the author never uses the name Jacob. Instead, the name *Israel* is used, emphasizing his identity as the father of a people. See Genesis 32:28; 35:10.

1:36 Since it isn't stated in this verse, perhaps the author assumes that the readers will remember that *Timna* was *Eliphaz's* secondary wife (concubine) and the mother of Amalek according to Genesis 36:12.

1:38 *Seir*: The connection of Esau and Edom with mountainous region is made in Genesis 36:8.

1:43-54 *the land of Edom*: a list of the kings and chiefs of Edom, the nation descending from Isaac's son Esau. See also Genesis 36:31-43.

2:1-2 This record of Abraham's family through Isaac and his son Israel concludes the first section of the book and introduces the next tribal genealogies in 1 Chronicles 2-9. Except for Dan, Israel's sons are listed according to their mothers: Leah (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar,

and Zebulun); Rachel (Joseph and Benjamin); Bilhah (Dan and Naphtali); and Zilpah (Gad and Asher). For a genealogy that names the sons with their mothers, see Genesis 35:23-26.

2:3-4:23 Although the material bears some stylistic similarities to 1 Chronicles 1, the focus in the next several chapters now narrows from the nations of the earth to the nation of Israel itself. Beginning with the tribe of Judah, 1 Chronicles 2-8 presents the family records of most of the twelve sons of Israel (Zebulun and Dan aren't accounted for, and Naphtali is given only passing mention in 1 Chron 7:13). The length and prominence of Judah's genealogy in 1 Chronicles 2:3-4:23 indicate the tribe's significance to the author's story of the nation. Much of the material can be found in other parts of the Bible, but in this context the author presents it in a new perspective.

2:3-4 Stories of Judah and his five sons are also found in Genesis 38.

2:3 *Bath-shua, the Canaanite*: The author mentions Bath-shua's non-Israelite ethnic identity without critique. This is in contrast to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah in which foreign women and their children were cast out of the community as a way to preserve the "holy descendants" of Israel (Ezra 9:2; Neh 10:30; 13:23-29; see sidebar, "Ethnic Outsiders in the Chronicler's Genealogies" at 1 Chron 6). Er's offense isn't given here or in Genesis 38:7.

1:35-42

Gn 36:1-30

1:43-54

Gn 36:31-43

2:1, 2

Gn 29:31-30:24

Gn 35:16-18

2:3-17, 21-41

1Ch 4:1-23

2:6 1Ki 4:31;  
1Ch 2:4, 1Ch 2:8

him to death. <sup>4</sup>His daughter-in-law Tamar bore him Perez and Zerah. Judah had five sons in all.

<sup>5</sup>Perez's family: Hezron and Hamul.

<sup>6</sup>Zerah's family: Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Darda<sup>f</sup>—five in all.

<sup>7</sup>Carmi's family: Achar, who made trouble for Israel by disobeying the law dedicating war spoils to God.

<sup>8</sup>Ethan's family: Azariah.

<sup>9</sup>Hezron's family, who were born to him: Jerahmeel, Ram, and Chelubai. <sup>10</sup>Ram was the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab was the father of Nahshon, tribal chief of the Judeans. <sup>11</sup>Nahshon was the father of Salma, Salma was the father of Boaz. <sup>12</sup>Boaz was the father of Obed, and Obed was the father of Jesse. <sup>13</sup>Jesse was the father of Eliab his oldest son, Abinadab his second, Shimea his third, <sup>14</sup>Nethanel his fourth, Raddai his fifth, <sup>15</sup>Ozem his sixth, and David his seventh. <sup>16</sup>Their sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail.

Zeruiah's family: Abishai, Joab, and Asahel—three in all. <sup>17</sup>Abigail gave birth to Amasa, whose father was Jether the Ishmaelite.

<sup>18</sup>Caleb, Hezron's son, had children with his wife Azubah, and with Jerioth. These were her sons: Jeshur, Shobab, and Ardon. <sup>19</sup>After Azubah died, Caleb married Ephrath, who gave birth to Hur for him. <sup>20</sup>Hur was the father of Uri, and Uri was the father of Bezalel. <sup>21</sup>Later, Hezron had sexual relations with the daughter of Machir, Gilead's father, whom he married when he was 60 years old, and she gave birth to Segub for him. <sup>22</sup>Segub was the father of Jair, who owned twenty-three towns in the land of Gilead, <sup>23</sup>but Geshur and Aram took Havvoth-jair from them, as well as Kenath and its villages, sixty towns.

All these were descendants of Machir, Gilead's father. <sup>24</sup>After Hezron's death, Caleb went to Ephrath. <sup>25</sup>Abijah, Hezron's wife, bore him Ashhur, Tekoa's father.

<sup>25</sup>The family of Jerahmeel, Hezron's oldest son: Ram his oldest, Bunah, Oren, Ozem, and Ahijah. <sup>26</sup>Jerahmeel had another wife named Atarah; she was the mother of Onam.

<sup>27</sup>The family of Ram, Jerahmeel's oldest son: Maaz, Jamin, and Eker.

<sup>28</sup>Onam's family: Shammai and Jada.

Shammai's family: Nadab and Abishur. <sup>29</sup>Abishur's wife's name was Abihail, and she gave birth to Ahban and Molid for him.

<sup>30</sup>Nadab's family: Seled and Appaim, but Seled died without children.

<sup>31</sup>Appaim's family: Ishi.

Ishi's family: Sheshan.

Sheshan's family: Ahlai.

<sup>f</sup>LXX, Syr; MT *Dara* <sup>g</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT in *Caleb-ephraathah*

2:4 *daughter-in-law*: With this straightforward title, the author alludes to Judah's misdeeds recorded in Genesis 38:12-26.

2:7 *Achar*: In Hebrew, this name is based on the verb "to trouble, ruin." Joshua 7 tells the longer story of when Achan (an alternative name for Achar) brought "trouble" to the nation of Israel in the form of military destruction by the Amorites. The story is preserved in the name given to the place of Achan's own destruction by the Israelites as the Achor Valley (i.e., the valley of trouble).

2:9-16 *Hezron's family*: The line of David, beginning with his ancestor Hezron through his son Ram, receives long and detailed treatment. A similar list of Judah's line through Tamar's son Perez concludes the book of Ruth (Ruth 4:18-22).

2:15 *seventh*: Here David is recorded as Jesse's seventh son, although 1 Samuel 16:10-11 and 17:12-14 name him as the eighth. Jesse was in the seventh position within the family line of Ram. The seventh position, meaning complete or even perfect, is symbolically significant. (See sidebar, "Genealogy for a Purpose" at 1 Chron 3.)

2:16 *sisters*: Sisters and/or daughters aren't often mentioned in the author's genealogies, and although Zeruiah

and Abigail are named in other biblical texts (see 2 Sam 17:25), they are designated as David's sisters only here. The three sons of Zeruiah were known as leaders in David's army, fighting with the tribe of Judah to bring the northern part of Israel under David's leadership (2 Sam 2:8-32). In the author's account, Joab also captured Jerusalem from Jebusite control (1 Chron 11:4-6). By linking the three warriors to the king through family ties, their military victories now also transfer to the credit of their uncle, David.

2:18-20 *Caleb, Hezron's son*: The line of Hezron (begun in 1 Chron 2:9) continues through his son Caleb. Record of Caleb's family is also given in 1 Chronicles 2:42-55, incorporating different names. Although Caleb is primarily known for his role in spying out the land and encouraging the people to enter in (Num 13-14), here he is just a fruitful member of the family who would live in the land.

2:21 The line of Hezron (begun in 1 Chron 2:9) multiplies with the birth of another son, Segub. Machir: a name preserved in some of the oldest poetry of the Bible (Judg 5:14); the man is usually understood to be Manasseh's son (Gen 50:23; Num 32:39-40; 1 Chron 7:14).

2:25-41 *The family of Jerahmeel*: The line of Hezron (begun

<sup>32</sup>The family of Jada, Shammai's brother: Jether and Jonathan, but Jether died without children.

<sup>33</sup>Jonathan's family: Peleth and Zaza. These were Jerahmeel's descendants.

<sup>34</sup>Sheshan had no sons, only daughters; but Sheshan had an Egyptian servant whose name was Jarha. <sup>35</sup>Sheshan gave his daughter in marriage to Jarha his servant, and she gave birth to Attai for him.

<sup>36</sup>Attai was the father of Nathan, Nathan was the father of Zabad, <sup>37</sup>Zabad was the father of Ephlal, Ephlal was the father of Obed, <sup>38</sup>Obed was the father of Jehu, Jehu was the father of Azariah, <sup>39</sup>Azariah was the father of Helez, Helez was the father of Eleasah, <sup>40</sup>Eleasah was the father of Sismai, Sismai was the father of Shallum, <sup>41</sup>Shallum was the father of Jekamiah, and Jekamiah was the father of Elishama.

<sup>42</sup>The family of Caleb, Jerahmeel's brother: Mesha his oldest son and Ziph's father; and his second son<sup>h</sup> Maresah, Hebron's father.

<sup>43</sup>Hebron's family: Korah, Tappuah, Rekem, and Shema. <sup>44</sup>Shema was the father of Raham, Jorkeam's father; and Rekem was the father of Shammai.

<sup>45</sup>Shammai's son: Maon; Maon was Beth-zur's father. <sup>46</sup>Ephah, Caleb's secondary wife, gave birth to Haran, Moza, and Gazez. Haran was the father of Gazez.

<sup>47</sup>Jahdai's family: Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah, and Shaaph. <sup>48</sup>Maacah, Caleb's secondary wife, gave birth to Sheber and Tirhanah. <sup>49</sup>She also gave birth to Shaaph, Madmannah's father; and to Sheva, Machbenah and Gibeas's father. Caleb's daughter was Achsah. <sup>50</sup>These were Caleb's descendants.

The family of Hur, Ephrathah's oldest son: Shobal, Kiriath-jearim's father; <sup>51</sup>Salma, Bethlehem's father; and Hareph, Beth-gader's father.

<sup>52</sup>Shobal, Kiriath-jearim's father, had a family: Haroeh, and the ancestor of half of the Menuhoth. <sup>53</sup>Kiriath-jearim's clans: the Ithrites, the Puthites, the Shumathites, and the Mishraitites. From these came the Zorathites and the Eshtaolites.

<sup>54</sup>The family of Salma, Bethlehem's father:<sup>j</sup> the Netophathites, Atroth-beth-joab, half of the Manahathites, and the Zoritites.

<sup>55</sup>The clans of the scribes who lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and the Sucathites. They were Kenites who descended from Hammath, Beth-rechab's father.

### David's line

**3** This is David's family born to him in Hebron: the oldest Amnon, with Ahinoam the Jezreelite; the second Daniel, with Abigail the Carmelite; <sup>2</sup>the third Absalom son of Maacah, the daughter of Geshur's King Talmai; the fourth Adonijah, Haggith's son; <sup>3</sup>the fifth Shephatiah, with Abital; the sixth Ithream, with his wife Eglah. <sup>4</sup>Six were born to him in Hebron, where he reigned for seven and a half years. He also reigned in Jerusalem for thirty-three years. <sup>5</sup>These were born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon—four from Bath-shua, Ammiel's daughter; <sup>6</sup>Ibhar, Eli-shama, Eliphelet, <sup>7</sup>Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, <sup>8</sup>Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet—nine in all. <sup>9</sup>This was all of David's family, except for his secondary wives' children. Tamar was their sister.

<sup>h</sup>Or the family of <sup>i</sup>Heb lacks the ancestor of. <sup>j</sup>Cf 2:51; Heb lacks father.

in 1 Chron 2:9) continues through his son Jerahmeel. Much of this material has no parallel in other texts.

2:34-35 *Sheshan had no sons*: The continuation of Sheshan's family line through his daughter and a slave has affinities with the story of the barren Sarah seeking to obtain children via her servant Hagar in Genesis 16:2. See sidebar, "Ethnic Outsiders in the Chronicler's Genealogies" at 1 Chronicles 6.

2:42-55 The line of Hebron (begun in 1 Chron 2:9) picks up again with his son Caleb, a genealogy already partially outlined in 1 Chronicles 2:18-20.

2:50b-55 *Hur*: Caleb's son and grandson of Hebron (1 Chron 2:18-19).

3:1-24 Due to its significance to the author, the house of David is recorded in great length in this chapter. The lineage extends in unbroken succession through the 4th

century BCE and covers more generations than any other genealogical passage in the Bible.

3:1-4 A record of *David's family born* during his seven years in Hebron, before he was acclaimed king of Israel as well as Judah and moved to his new capital city, Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:1-10). *Daniel*: called Chileab in the parallel passage in 2 Samuel 3:2-6. Since he isn't mentioned outside of these two lists, perhaps he didn't survive past childhood.

3:5-9 David's family born in Jerusalem, after he took the city and was acclaimed king over all Israel and Judah. *Bath-shua*: known as Bathsheba in the books of Samuel and Kings. Although these sons are known from other lists in the Bible (1 Chron 14:3-7; 2 Sam 5:13-16), this is the only time Bathsheba is acknowledged to be the mother of children other than Solomon and her first son with David who died in infancy (2 Sam 12:24). Given that Solomon

2:32 1Ch 2:28  
2:43 Josh 15:34;  
1Ch 2:44  
2:55 Jgs 1:16,  
Jgs 4:11;  
2Ki 10:15;  
Jer. 35:2,  
Jer. 35:6  
3:4 2Sa 5:4, 5;  
1Ki 2:10, 11;  
1Ch 29:26-30  
3:5-9  
2Sa 5:13, 16;  
1Ch 14:3-7

3:1-5 2Ki 23:30,  
2Ki 23:34,  
2Ki 24:17,  
2Ch 36:10;  
Jer 37:1  
3:1-23  
1Ch 2:3-17,  
21-41

**Genealogy for a Purpose** Although the long genealogical table that begins the books of Chronicles may seem overly dry and factual, the careful reader will notice a certain artistic shaping of the story in chapters 1-9. Through this shaping, the author makes several theological and social points about the identity of the nation and its neighbors. For example, by relating the history of the nation back to Adam (1 Chron 1:1), the author asserts that Israel isn't simply a minor player in global politics but an equal player on the world stage. It also reminds the reader that all of the nations of the earth are related to each other with ties that go deeper than current political loyalties. Moreover, tracing the various lines of succession through many generations highlights the fact that apparently rigid social rules, such as the primacy of the oldest male child, aren't set in stone. The line of Shem continues through the third son Arpachshad rather than Elam (1 Chron 1:17-18), and David had many other older brothers (1 Chron 2:15). Finally, depiction of family lines such as that of Levi, traced over six hundred years in unbroken succession, emphasizes continuity in the religious leadership of the nation that points to God's special favor.

<sup>10</sup>The descendants<sup>4</sup> of Solomon: Rehoboam, his son Abijah, his son Asa, his son Jehoshaphat, <sup>11</sup>his son Joram, his son Ahaziah, his son Joash, <sup>12</sup>his son Amaziah, his son Azariah, his son Jotham, <sup>13</sup>his son Ahaz, his son Hezekiah, his son Manasseh, <sup>14</sup>his son Amon, and his son Josiah.

<sup>15</sup>Josiah's family: the oldest Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, and the fourth Shallum.

<sup>16</sup>Jehoiakim's family: his son Jeconiah and his son Zedekiah.

<sup>17</sup>The family of Jeconiah the prisoner: Shealtiel his son; <sup>18</sup>Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah.

<sup>19</sup>Pedaiah's family: Zerubbabel and Shimei.

Zerubbabel's family:<sup>1</sup> Meshullam, Hananiah, and their sister Shelomith; <sup>20</sup>Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Jushab-hesed—these five also.

<sup>21</sup>Hananiah's family:<sup>21</sup> Pelatiah, Jeshaiah, Rephaiah's family, Arnan's family, Obadiah's family, and Shecaniah's family.

<sup>22</sup>Shecaniah's family: Shemaiah and his family, Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat—six in all.

<sup>23</sup>Neariah's family: Elioenai, Hizkiah, and Azrikam—three in all.

<sup>24</sup>Elioenai's family: Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pedaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani—seven in all.

### Judah's line

**4** Judah's family: Perez, Hezron, Caleb,<sup>a</sup> Hur, and Shobal.

<sup>2</sup>Shobal's son Reaiah was Jahath's father, and Jahath was the father of Ahumai and Lahad. These were the Zorathite clans.

<sup>3</sup>This was Etam's family:<sup>6</sup> Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash. Their sister's name was Hazzelponi. <sup>4</sup>Penuel was Gedor's father, and Ezer was Hushah's father.

<sup>1</sup>LXX, Syr; MT son <sup>1</sup>LXX, Syr; MT son <sup>2</sup>LXX, Syr, Tg; MT son <sup>3</sup>Cf 1 Chron 2:19; MT Carmi <sup>6</sup>LXX; MT father

will become king after David, it's especially curious that Solomon is named as their fourth son. Nathan is the one through whom the genealogy in Luke traces Jesus back to David (Luke 3:31; cf. Zech 12:12), whereas the book of Matthew establishes this link through Solomon (Matt 1:6).

3:10-24 This version of David's line, continuing via his son Solomon, lists the kings of Judah through the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and continues through the exilic and post-exilic periods. At points the list uses names that appear differently in the rest of the book and other passages in the Bible (Azariah in 3:12, but Uziah in 2 Chron 26 and 2 Kgs 15:13; and Jeconiah in 3:16-17, but Jehoiachin in 2 Chron 36:8-9 and 2 Kgs 26:27, 29).

3:17 *Jeconiah the prisoner.* This designation hints at the political events that this genealogical list doesn't make explicit, namely, the exile of the people to Babylon. For the account of this king's release from Babylonian imprisonment, see 2 Kings 25:27-30.

3:19-24 This list of David's family from Pedaiah through the family of Elioenai is found only in Chronicles. By including it in this chapter, the author can extend the line of David through the time when the exiled community is restored again to the land.

3:19 *Zerubbabel*, a leader of the post-exilic community associated with the initial return to the land and the preliminary restoration of the temple, is usually considered the son of Shealtiel (Ezra 3:2; 5:2; Neh 12:1).

3:22 *Hattush*: appears on a list of those who returned from exile in Babylon in Ezra 8:2.

4:1-23 After an entire chapter devoted to David and his family, the book returns to the other descendants of Judah's line, first begun in 1 Chronicles 2:3-4. The line first descends through Judah's son Perez (beginning in 1 Chron 2:1) and then his son Shelah (1 Chron 2:21-23).

4:1 As in 1 Chronicles 1:1-4, each name in this verse represents an entire generation.



This was the family of Hur the oldest son of Ephrathah, Bethlehem's father: <sup>5</sup>Ashhur, Tekoa's father, had two wives, Helah and Naarah. <sup>6</sup>Naarah gave birth to Ahuzzam, Hepher, Temeni, and Haahashtari for him. This was Naarah's family.

<sup>7</sup>Helah's family: Zereth, Zohar,<sup>f</sup> and Ethnan. <sup>8</sup>Koz was the father of Anub, Hazzobebah, and the clans of Aharhel, Harum's son.

<sup>9</sup>Jabez was more honored than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, "I bore him in pain."<sup>g</sup> <sup>10</sup>Jabez called on Israel's God: "If only you would greatly bless me and increase my territory. May your power go with me to keep me from trouble, so as not to cause me pain." And God granted his request.

<sup>11</sup>Chelub, Shuhah's brother, was the father of Mehir, who was Eshton's father. <sup>12</sup>Eshton was the father of Beth-rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah, Ir-nahash's father. These are the men of Recah.

<sup>13</sup>Kenaz's family: Othniel and Seraiah. Othniel's family: Hathath and Meonothai.<sup>h</sup> <sup>14</sup>Meonothai was the father of Ophrah. Seraiah was the father of Joab the father of Gedarashim,<sup>i</sup> so-called because they were skilled workers. <sup>15</sup>The family of Caleb, Jephunneh's son: Iru, Elah, and Naam. This was Kenaz's family.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Jehallelel's family: Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel.

<sup>17</sup>Ezrah's family:<sup>o</sup> Jether, Mered, Epher, and Jalon. Jether was the father of<sup>r</sup> Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah, Eshtemoa's father. <sup>18</sup>His Judean wife gave birth to Jered, Gedor's father; Heber, Soco's father; and Jekuthiel, Zanoah's father.

This is the family of Bithiah, Pharaoh's daughter, whom Mered married. <sup>19</sup>The family of his Judean wife,<sup>u</sup> the sister of Naham, Keilah's father the Garmite and Eshtemoa the Maacathite.

<sup>20</sup>Shimon's family: Amnon, Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon.

Ishi's family: Zoheth and Ben-zoheth.

<sup>21</sup>The family of Shelah, Judah's son: Er, Lecah's father; Laadah, Mareshah's father; the clans of the linen workers at Beth-ashbea; <sup>22</sup>Jokim; the men of Cozeba; Joash; and Saraph, who married into<sup>v</sup> Moab but returned to Bethlehem<sup>w</sup> (the records are ancient). <sup>23</sup>They were the potters who lived in Netaim and Gederah; they lived there with the king in his service.

### Simeon's line

<sup>24</sup>Simeon's family: Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, Shaul, <sup>25</sup>his son Shallum, his son Mibsam, and his son Mishma. <sup>26</sup>Mishma's family: his son Hammuel, his son Zaccur, and his son Shimei. <sup>27</sup>Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brothers didn't have many children, and none of their clans became as numerous as the Judeans.

<sup>28</sup>They lived in Beer-sheba, Moladah, Hazar-shual, <sup>29</sup>Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, <sup>30</sup>Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag, <sup>31</sup>Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susim, Beth-biri, and Shaaraim. These were their towns until David became king. <sup>32</sup>Their villages were Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Tochen, and Ashan—five towns—<sup>33</sup>as well as all their villages around these towns as far as Baal. These were their settlements, and they kept their own family records:

<sup>34</sup>Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah son of Amaziah, <sup>35</sup>Joel, Jehu son of Joshibiah son of Seraiah son of Asiel, <sup>36</sup>Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah,

<sup>37</sup>and Ziza son of Shiphi son of Allon son of Jedaiah son of Shimri son of Shemaiah.

<sup>f</sup>Qere, LXX; Kethib *Izhar* <sup>g</sup>Heb sounds like *Jabez*. <sup>h</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT lacks *Meonothai*. <sup>i</sup>Or *the valley of skilled workers* <sup>o</sup>Cf 4:13; MT *the family of Elah and Kenaz* <sup>u</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT son <sup>v</sup>LXX; MT *and she conceived* <sup>w</sup>LXX; MT *the wife of Hodiah* <sup>x</sup>Or *ruled over* <sup>y</sup>Cf Tg, Vulg; MT *Lehem returned*

4:9-10 *His mother had named him Jabez*: The name Jabez is a wordplay on his mother's labor pains during his birth, a situation reminiscent of the curse on Eve in Genesis 3:16. He employs this same wordplay when he prays that God would keep him from *pain*. God's favorable answer terminates the threat of pain to Jabez, and highlights the Chronicler's theme of the effectiveness of prayer (see 1 Chron 5:20-22; 2 Chron 15:11-15, see sidebar "God's Response to Prayer in Chronicles" at 1 Chron 17).  
4:18 *Bithiah, Pharaoh's daughter*: In keeping with the rest of the genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1-9, the author here offers

no criticism of those who intermarry with other nations and tribes (see, for example, 1 Chron 2:3, 17, 34). This contrasts with the punishments for intermarriage recorded in Ezra 9-10; Nehemiah 10:30; 13:23-29.

4:21-23 *The family of Shelah*: The clan descending from Judah and Bathshua's oldest son Shelah (first mentioned in 1 Chron 2:3) is also referred to in a list of those who resettled in Jerusalem after the exile (Neh 11:5).

4:24-43 After the detailed treatment of Judah's line (1 Chron 2:3-4:23), the genealogy continues with a brief account of the family descending from another son

5:1-10  
Gn 46:8, 9  
5:11-17  
Gn 46:16

<sup>38</sup>These mentioned by name were leaders in their clans, and their households increased greatly.

<sup>39</sup>They went to the entrance of Gedor, as far as the east side of the valley, to find pasture for their flocks. <sup>40</sup>They found fertile pasture, and the land was spacious, quiet, and peaceful; the people of Ham used to live there. <sup>41</sup>These whose names were recorded, however, came in the days of Judah's King Hezekiah, attacked their tents and the Meunim<sup>a</sup> found there, and completely destroyed them, as can be seen today. They settled in their place, because there was pasture there for their flocks. <sup>42</sup>Some of them, five hundred Simeonites, went to Mount Seir, led by Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, Ishi's sons. <sup>43</sup>They struck down those who were left of the Amalekites and have lived there ever since.

### *Lines of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh*

**5** The family of Reuben, Israel's oldest son: he was actually the oldest, but when he dishonored his father's bed his birthright<sup>a</sup> was given to the family of Joseph, Israel's son, so Reuben isn't listed as the oldest in the records. <sup>2</sup>Although Judah became the strongest among his brothers and a leader came from him, the birthright belonged to Joseph.

<sup>3</sup>The family of Reuben, Israel's oldest son: Hanoth, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

<sup>4</sup>Joel's family: his son Shemaiah, his son Gog, his son Shimei, <sup>5</sup>his son Micah, his son Reaiah, his son Baal, <sup>6</sup>and his son Beerah, whom Assyria's King Tilgath-pilneser carried away into exile. He was a chief of the Reubenites. <sup>7</sup>His relatives, by their<sup>b</sup> clans when their genealogy was listed in the records, were: Jeiel the first; Zechariah; <sup>8</sup>and Bela, Azaz's son, Shema's grandson, and Joel's great-grandson.

They lived in Aroer, as far as Nebo and Baal-meon. <sup>9</sup>They also settled in the east as far as the edge of the desert that stretches to the Euphrates River, because their livestock had increased in the land of Gilead. <sup>10</sup>In Saul's days they waged war on the Hagrites, whom they defeated. So they lived in their tents throughout the entire region east of Gilead.

<sup>11</sup>Gad's family lived opposite them in the land of Bashan as far as Salecah: <sup>12</sup>Joel was the first, Shapham the second, and Janai governed<sup>c</sup> Bashan.

<sup>13</sup>Their relatives according to their households: Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia, and Eber—seven in all.

<sup>14</sup>This was the family of Abihail son of Huri son of Jaroah son of Gilead son of Michael son of Jeshishai son of Jahdo son of Buz. <sup>15</sup>Ahi, Abdiel's son and Guni's grandson, was the head of their household.

<sup>16</sup>They lived in Gilead, in Bashan and in its towns, and as far as the boundaries of all the open lands of Sharon. <sup>17</sup>They were all listed in the records in the days of Judah's King Jotham and Israel's King Jeroboam. <sup>18</sup>The Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh were warriors who carried shield and sword, drew the bow, and were trained for war—44,760 ready for military service. <sup>19</sup>When they waged war on the Hagrites (the Jeturites,

<sup>a</sup>Qere; Kethib *Meinim* <sup>b</sup>Or *oldest son's rights* <sup>c</sup>LXX<sup>s</sup>, Syr; MT *his* <sup>d</sup>LXX, Tg; MT *Shaphatin*

of Israel, Simeon (1 Chron 2:1). Early Israelite tradition places the tribe of Simeon within the orbit of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:5-7; Josh 15:26-32; Judg 1:1-3); and so the tribe's genealogies are placed here in the transition between the southern tribe of Judah and the tribes east of the Jordan River.

5:1-26 The relatively brief account of the tribes that settled east of the Jordan River (Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh; see Num 32:33-42) continues the genealogy of Israel's sons first begun in 1 Chronicles 2:1-2.

5:1-10 *when he dishonored his father's bed*: The line of Reuben begins with an explanation of why Israel's oldest male child wasn't granted the usual status. For a fuller story of Reuben's demotion in the family line because he had sex with his father's secondary wife Bilhah, see Genesis 35:22; 49:4. Due to this misdeed, the distinctions associated with being the *oldest son* moved from the eldest of Leah's sons (Reuben) to the eldest of Rebecca's (Joseph).

5:2 *leader*: a reference to David, the king from the tribe of Judah who ruled over the twelve tribes of Israel.

5:6 *carried away into exile*: In the book of Kings, Assyria's King Tiglath-Pileser III (known here as Tilgath-pilneser) deports tribes of Israel from both sides of the Jordan River (2 Kgs 15:29). In the Chronicler's version of this story, however (5:6, 22), the exile is limited to those tribes who settled on the east of the Jordan River. By neglecting to mention any deportation of the western tribes, the author suggests that the exile was limited and that most of the land continued to be occupied by Israelite tribes.

5:11-17 The line of Israel (first begun in 1 Chron 2:1-2) continues with the tribe of Gad who, with Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh, settled on the east side of the Jordan River (Num 33:33-42).

5:18-22 The lineage of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh is interrupted with an account of their wars against various enemies.

the Naphishites, and the Nodabites),<sup>20</sup> they received help against them. The Hagrites and all who were with them were handed over to them, because they cried out to God in battle. God granted their prayer because they trusted in him.<sup>21</sup> They seized their livestock: 50,000 of their camels, 250,000 sheep and goats, 2,000 donkeys, and 100,000 captives.<sup>22</sup> Many died, because God fought the battle. They lived there in place of the inhabitants until the exile.

<sup>23</sup>The members of half the tribe of Manasseh lived in the land from Bashan to Baalhermon, Senir, and Mount Hermon. They were very numerous.

<sup>24</sup>These were the heads of their households:

Epher, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel—mighty warriors, famous men, heads of their households.

<sup>25</sup>But they were unfaithful to the God of their ancestors and faithlessly followed the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them.<sup>26</sup> As a result, Israel's God stirred up the spirit of Assyria's King Pul, otherwise known as Assyria's King Tilgath-pilneser, who led the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh into exile, and brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the Gozan River, where they remain to this day.

### High priests

**6**<sup>d</sup>Levi's family: Gershom, Kohath, and Merari.

<sup>e</sup>Kohath's family: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

<sup>f</sup>Amram's family: Aaron, Moses, and Miriam.

<sup>g</sup>Aaron's family: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

<sup>h</sup>Eleazar was the father of Phinehas, Phinehas of Abishua, <sup>i</sup>Abishua of Bukki, Bukki of Uzzi, <sup>j</sup>Uzzi of Zerariah, Zerariah of Meraioth, <sup>k</sup>Meraioth of Amariah, Amariah of Ahitub, <sup>l</sup>Ahitub of Zadok, Zadok of Ahimaaz, <sup>m</sup>Ahimaaz of Azariah, Azariah of Johanan,

*Ethnic Outsiders in the Chronicler's Genealogies* As a genre, genealogies might look like objective presentations of the past that rise above any contemporary concern. However, the Chronicler's genealogies can be read as responding to the issues of the day. An example of this is the treatment of non-Israelites within the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1–9. According to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah (writings close in time to the books of Chronicles), marriage with foreign women brings great risk to the nation by polluting the “holy descendants” (the Hebrew expression is “holy seed”; Ezra 9:2; see also Neh 10:30). Such intermarriage isn't nearly as troubling for the author of Chronicles, however, as shown by the integration of different ethnicities in the genealogical record of the nation of Israel. For instance, the author records without criticism six instances of marriage with non-Israelites within Judah's line alone (including Judah's Canaanite wife, Bathshua, in 1 Chron 2:3; the marriage of David's sister Abigail to Jether the Ishmaelite in 1 Chron 2:17; and the marriage of Sheshan's daughter to Jarha the Egyptian in 1 Chron 2:34–35). This openness toward ethnic outsiders continues after the first nine chapters of genealogies with, for instance, the notation that David's fighting forces were strengthened by Ahohites, Hittites, and Moabites (1 Chron 11:12, 41, 46). In the Chronicler's presentation of Israel's history, intermarriage isn't a problem demanding a harsh response but an opportunity for the nation to grow and become stronger.

<sup>d</sup>5:27 in Heb

5:20 *he granted their prayer*: As in the account of Jabez's petition (1 Chron 4:9–10), the author emphasizes the power of prayer to God. See also 2 Chronicles 15:11–15 and sidebar, “God's Response to Prayer in Chronicles” at 1 Chron 17.

5:22 *until the exile*: For this version of the deportation by the Assyrians, see 1 Chronicles 5:6.

5:23–26 Alongside Gad and Reuben, part of the tribe of Manasseh settled east of the Jordan River (Num 32:33–42). For the genealogy of the part of Manasseh that settled west of the Jordan, see 1 Chronicles 7:14–19.

5:26 A reference back to the notice of exile in 1 Chronicles 5:6. These two notices to the tribe's deportation frame the account of their effective prayer to God in the midst of battle (1 Chron 5:18–22). In this presentation, God rewards the request of the faithful and punishes misdeeds.

6:1–81 Israel's family line, begun in 1 Chronicles 2:1–2, continues with a detailed account of Levi and the lineage of

his three sons. In terms of length, Levi's genealogy is second only to that of Judah, which extends from 1 Chronicles 2:3–4:23. As an additional indication of the high status in which the Chronicler holds the tribe, Levi is presented center stage, right in the middle of the other accounts of the tribes of Israel. For other accounts of the family line of Levi, see Exodus 6:16–25 and Numbers 3:17–37.

6:1–15 This section traces the line of Levi through that of Kohath, the middle son and forefather of Aaron. The descendants of Aaron through the line of his grandson Phinehas were the high priests of Israel (1 Chron 6:49–53; cf. 6:18, 22–28, 33–38; 23:12–20).

6:3 *Aaron, Moses, and Miriam*: For additional mention of Moses and Miriam along with Aaron in biblical texts, see Numbers 12:1; 26:59; and Micah 6:4.

6:8–9 *Zadok*: the main priest in the court of David throughout the books of Chronicles and Samuel. Although

6:22 Ex 6:24

6:34 [1Sa 1:1;  
1Ch 6:276:35 [1Sa 1:1;  
1Ch 6:25-26

6:36 1Ch 6:25

6:37 Ex 6:24;  
1Ch 6:236:38 Ex 6:18;  
Ex 6:21

<sup>10</sup>and Johanan of Azariah. He was the one who served as priest in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem.

<sup>11</sup>Azariah was the father of Amariah, Amariah of Ahitub, <sup>12</sup>Ahitub of Zadok, Zadok of Shallum, <sup>13</sup>Shallum of Hilkiah, Hilkiah of Azariah, <sup>14</sup>Azariah of Seraiah, and Seraiah of Jehozadak. <sup>15</sup>Jehozadak went away when the LORD caused Judah and Jerusalem to be exiled by Nebuchadnezzar.

### Levites

<sup>16</sup>Levi's family: Gershom, Kohath, and Merari.

<sup>17</sup>These are the names of Gershom's family: Libni and Shimei.

<sup>18</sup>Kohath's family: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

<sup>19</sup>Merari's family: Mahli and Mushi.

These are the Levites' clans according to their fathers:

<sup>20</sup>Of Gershom: his son Libni, his son Jahath, his son Zimmah, <sup>21</sup>his son Joah, his son Iddo, his son Zerah, and his son Jeatherai.

<sup>22</sup>Kohath's family: his son Amminadab, his son Korah, his son Assir, <sup>23</sup>his son Elkanah, his son Ebiasaph, his son Assir, <sup>24</sup>his son Tahath, his son Uriel, his son Uzziath, and his son Shaul.

<sup>25</sup>Elkanah's family: Amasai and Ahimoth, <sup>26</sup>his son Elkanah,<sup>f</sup> his son Zophai, his son Nahath, <sup>27</sup>his son Eliab, his son Jeroham, and his son Elkanah.

<sup>28</sup>Samuel's family: the oldest Joel,<sup>g</sup> and the second Abijah.

<sup>29</sup>Merari's family: Mahli, his son Libni, his son Shimei, his son Uzzah, <sup>30</sup>his son Shimea, his son Haggiah, and his son Asaiah.

### Levitical singers

<sup>31</sup>David put the following in charge of the music in the LORD's house after the chest was placed there. <sup>32</sup>They ministered with song before the dwelling of the meeting tent, until Solomon built the LORD's temple in Jerusalem. They carried out their usual duties. <sup>33</sup>Those who served and their families were:

Kohath's family: Heman the singer, son of Joel son of Samuel <sup>34</sup>son of Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Eliel son of Toah <sup>35</sup>son of Zuph son of Elkanah son of Mahath son of Amasai <sup>36</sup>son of Elkanah son of Joel son of Azariah son of Zephaniah <sup>37</sup>son of Tahath son of Assir son of Ebiasaph son of Korah <sup>38</sup>son of Izhar son of Kohath son of Levi son of Israel. <sup>39</sup>His relative was Asaph, who stood on his right, that is, Asaph son of Berechiah son of Shimea <sup>40</sup>son of Michael son of Baaseiah son of Malchijah <sup>41</sup>son of Ethni son of

<sup>a</sup>6:1 in Heb <sup>f</sup>LXX; MT repeats *Elkanah*. <sup>g</sup>LXX, Syr; MT lacks *Joel*.

Zadok's lineage isn't as clear in other biblical accounts, the author of Chronicles makes his linkage to Aaron explicit in this family tree.

6:10-15 *Johanan* (6:10) . . . *Jehozadak* (6:15): By including mention of the historical circumstances associated with Johanan and Jehozadak, the author charts the changing fortunes of the community from its highpoint (Solomon's temple in Jerusalem) through its low point (deportation to Babylon).

6:16-30 The line of regular Levites descending from Gershom, Kohath, and Merari (as distinct from that of the high priestly family descending from Kohath through Aaron's grandson Phinehas, given above in 1 Chron 6:1-15). For similar lists, see Exodus 6:16-29 and Numbers 3:17-20.

6:17 *Gershom's family*: For Levi's line through his oldest son Gershom, see also 1 Chronicles 6:20-21, 39-43, 23:7-11.

6:18 *Kohath's family*: For Levi's line through his middle son Kohath, see note on 1 Chronicles 6:1-15.

6:19 *Merari's family*: For Levi's line through his youngest son, Merari, see also 1 Chronicles 6:29-30, 44-47; 23:21-23. 6:20-21 *Gershom*: See note on 1 Chronicles 6:17.

6:22-28 For Levi's line through his middle son Kohath, see note on 1 Chronicles 6:1-15. *Amminadab*: not mentioned in the list of Kohath's sons in 1 Chronicles 6:2 or 18.

6:28 *Samuel's family*: With the incorporation of Samuel's line into the family of the Kohathites, the prophet associated with the reigns of Saul and David is given levitical status (this position isn't clear in other presentations of Samuel's lineage such as in 1 Sam 1:1 or 1 Sam 8:2). Clarification of Samuel's status is significant because it means that the leadership at the Shiloh temple conforms to appropriate instruction (Num 18 states that all priests must be Levites). In addition, it gives added authority to Samuel's role in anointing the future kings of Israel.

6:29-30 For Levi's line through his youngest son, Merari, see note on 1 Chronicles 6:19.

6:31-49 The institution of the levitical singers is here attributed to David. This connection with David isn't found in Samuel or Kings. For the author's version of David assigning this task after the sacred chest was placed in Jerusalem, see 1 Chronicles 16:4-6, 41.

6:32 *the meeting tent*: the temporary structure built by Moses for use in the wilderness (Exod 39:32; 40:2, 6, 29).

6:33-38 For the line of Kohath, see note on 1 Chronicles 6:1-15.

6:39-43 For Levi's line through his oldest son, Gershom, see note on 1 Chronicles 6:16-30.

6:39-47 Strategically, the physical placement of these

Zerah son of Adaiah <sup>42</sup>son of Ethan son of Zimmah son of Shimei <sup>43</sup>son of Jahath son of Gershom son of Levi.

<sup>44</sup>On the left were their relatives, Merari's family: Ethan son of Kishi son of Abdi son of Malluch <sup>45</sup>son of Hashabiah son of Amaziah son of Hilkiah <sup>46</sup>son of Amzi son of Bani son of Shemer <sup>47</sup>son of Mahli son of Mushi son of Merari son of Levi. <sup>48</sup>Their relatives the Levites were dedicated to all the services of the dwelling for God's house.

### Priests from Aaron's line

<sup>49</sup>Aaron and his sons sacrificed on the altar for entirely burned offerings and on the altar for incense, doing all the work of the holiest place, to make reconciliation for Israel, just as Moses, God's servant, had commanded.

<sup>50</sup>This was Aaron's family: his son Eleazar, his son Phinehas, his son Abishua, <sup>51</sup>his son Bukki, his son Uzzi, his son Zerariah, <sup>52</sup>his son Meraioth, his son Amariah, his son Ahitub, <sup>53</sup>his son Zadok, and his son Ahimaaz.

### Levitical cities

<sup>54</sup>These are the places they lived by their camps within their territory. To Aaron's family from the Kohathite clan, as chosen by lot, <sup>55</sup>they gave Hebron in the land of Judah with its surrounding pasturelands. <sup>56</sup>But the city's fields and its settlements they gave to Caleb, Jehunneh's son. <sup>57</sup>To Aaron's family they gave the refuge cities: Hebron, Libnah with its pasturelands, Jattir, Eshtemoa with its pasturelands, <sup>58</sup>Hilen<sup>h</sup> with its pasturelands, Debir with its pasturelands, <sup>59</sup>Ashan with its pasturelands, Juttah with its pasturelands,<sup>1</sup> and Bethshemesh with its pasturelands. <sup>60</sup>From Benjamin's tribe: Gibeon with its pasturelands,<sup>1</sup> Geba with its pasturelands, Alemeth with its pasturelands, and Anathoth with its pasturelands. They had thirteen towns within their clan.

<sup>61</sup>The remaining Kohathites were given ten towns by lot from the clan of half the tribe of Manasseh. <sup>62</sup>The Gershomites received by lot according to their clans thirteen towns from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh in Bashan. <sup>63</sup>The Merarites received by lot according to their clans twelve towns from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun. <sup>64</sup>In this way the Israelites gave the Levites the towns with their pasturelands. <sup>65</sup>They gave these towns, which they designated by name, by lot from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.

<sup>66</sup>Some of the Kohathite clans had towns of their territory from the tribe of Ephraim. <sup>67</sup>They gave them refuge cities: Shechem with its pasturelands in the Ephraimite highlands, Gezer with its pasturelands, <sup>68</sup>Jokmeam with its pasturelands, Beth-horon with its pasturelands, <sup>69</sup>Aijalon with its pasturelands, Gath-rimmon with its pasturelands; <sup>70</sup>and from half the tribe of Manasseh, Taanach<sup>h</sup> with its pasturelands, and Bileam with its pasturelands, for the Kohathite clans who remained.

<sup>71</sup>To the Gershomites from the clan of half the tribe of Manasseh: Golan in Bashan with its pasturelands and Ashtaroth with its pasturelands; <sup>72</sup>from the tribe of Issachar: Kedesh with its pasturelands and Daberath with its pasturelands, <sup>73</sup>Ramoth with its pasturelands and Anem with its pasturelands; <sup>74</sup>from the tribe of Asher: Mashal with its pasturelands, Abdon with its pasturelands, and <sup>75</sup>Helkath<sup>1</sup> with its pasturelands and Rehob with its pasturelands; <sup>76</sup>and from the tribe of Naphtali: Kedesh in Galilee with its pasturelands, Hammon with its

<sup>1</sup>LXX, cf Josh 15:51; MT *Hilez* <sup>1</sup>LXX, Syr, cf Josh 21:16; MT lacks *Juttah*. <sup>1</sup>Cf Josh 21:17; MT lacks *Gibeon*.

<sup>1</sup>Cf Josh 21:25; MT *Aner* <sup>1</sup>Cf Josh 21:31; MT *Hukkok*

men represents the relative significance of their families in the workings of the worship institution. Heman from the line of Kohath (the second son of Levi and father of the high priests) is in focus in the middle. On either side of him are representatives from the two other sons of Levi: Asaph from the line of the eldest, Gershom, on the right, and Ethan from the line of the youngest, Merari, on the left.

6:44-47 For Levi's line through his youngest son, Merari, see note on 1 Chronicles 6:19.

6:48 *the Levites were dedicated to all the services*: This statement amounts to a brief summary of the function of the Levites (with a brief summary of the priests' role to follow in the next verse). *the dwelling for God's house*: With this

simple phrase, the author links the wilderness tent stories with the Jerusalem temple stories.

6:49 *sacrificed on the altar... to make reconciliation for Israel*: Like the brief summary of the role of the Levites in the previous verse, this lays out a short description of the function of the priests.

6:50-53 Aaron's line continues that of his grandfather, the middle son of Levi (1 Chron 6:1). The descendants of Aaron, through the line of his grandson Phinehas, were the high priests of Israel (1 Chron 6:3-15).

6:54-81 According to tradition, the Levites weren't given ownership of a particular territory as were the other tribes. Rather, they lived in levitical cities (*refuge cities*,

7:1-5 Gn 46:13

7:6-12 Gn 46:21;  
1Ch 8:1-28

7:13 Gn 46:24

pasturelands, and Kiriathaim with its pasturelands. <sup>77</sup>To the remaining Merarites from the tribe of Zebulun: Jokneam with its pasturelands, <sup>m</sup>Rimmon<sup>n</sup> with its pasturelands, Tabor with its pasturelands, and Nahalal with its pasturelands;<sup>o</sup> <sup>78</sup>on the other side of the Jordan at Jericho, on the east side of the Jordan, from the tribe of Reuben: Bezer in the desert with its pasturelands, Jahzah with its pasturelands, <sup>79</sup>Kedemoth with its pasturelands, and Mephaath with its pasturelands; <sup>80</sup>and from the tribe of Gad: Ramoth in Gilead with its pasturelands, Mahanaim with its pasturelands, <sup>81</sup>Heshbon with its pasturelands, and Jazer with its pasturelands.

### Issachar's line

**7** Issachar's family: Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron—four in all.

<sup>2</sup>Tola's family: Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam, and Shemuel—the heads of their households in Tola's line, mighty warriors of their generations. In David's time they numbered 22,600.

<sup>3</sup>Uzzi's family: Izrahiah; and Izrahiah's family—Michael, Obadiah, Joel, and Isshiah—five in all, and all of them leaders. <sup>4</sup>According to the family records of their households, they had 36,000 troops in the units of their fighting force, since they had many wives and children. <sup>5</sup>Their relatives from all of Issachar's clans were 87,000 mighty warriors, all listed in the family records.

### Lines of Benjamin and Naphtali

<sup>6</sup>Benjamin's family:<sup>p</sup> Bela, Becher, and Jediael—three in all.

<sup>7</sup>Bela's family: Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri—five heads of households, mighty warriors; 22,034 were listed in their family records.

<sup>8</sup>Becher's family: Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah, Anathoth, and Alemeth. These were all Becher's family. <sup>9</sup>As listed in their family records by generation, as heads of their households, mighty warriors, there were 22,200.

<sup>10</sup>Jediael's family: Bilhan.

Bilhan's family: Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Chenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish, and Ahishahar. <sup>11</sup>All these were Jediael's family, heads of their households, and mighty warriors. There were 17,200 ready for battle. <sup>12</sup>The Shuppites and Huppites were Ir's family, and the Hushites were Aher's family.

<sup>13</sup>Naphtali's family: Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shallum. These were Bilhan's family.

### Manasseh's line

<sup>14</sup>Manasseh's family: Asriel, to whom his Aramean secondary wife gave birth. She gave birth to Machir, Gilead's father. <sup>15</sup>Machir married Huppites and Shuppites women. His sister's name was Maacah. The second descendant's name was Zelophehad, who had only daughters. <sup>16</sup>Machir's wife Maacah gave birth to a son and named him Peresh. His brother's name was Sheresh, and his sons were Ulam and Rekem.

<sup>17</sup>Ulam's family: Bedan.

<sup>m</sup>Cf Josh 21:34; MT lacks *Jokneam*. <sup>n</sup>LXX; MT *Rimmono* <sup>o</sup>Cf Josh 21:35; MT lacks *Nahalal*. <sup>p</sup>LXX; MT lacks *family*.

6:57, 66). These were settlements scattered throughout the geographical holdings of the other tribes (Josh 21:1-42).

7:1-40 Israel's family line continues with the northern tribes on the west side of the Jordan River: Issachar, Benjamin and Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Asher.

7:1-5 *Issachar's family*: The account of Issachar's line emphasizes the tribe's military might. The genealogies of other tribes such as Benjamin and Asher are treated similarly in 1 Chronicles 7:6-12 and 30, perhaps indicating that these records originated as a military census.

7:6-12 The lineage of the tribe of Benjamin is dealt with more fully in 1 Chronicles 8 (and parts of it will be repeated in 1 Chron 9:25-44). These genealogies are very different from the accounts given in Numbers 26:38-39 and Genesis 46:21.

7:13 The description of Naphtali's line is extremely short in comparison with the other tribes. In addition to Naphtali,

Israel and Bilhan (Leah's servant) had another son, Dan, but information on his line is missing in 1 Chronicles.

7:14-19 *Manasseh's family*: This genealogy details the part of Joseph's line through his son Manasseh that settled on the west side of the Jordan River. (For the part that settled on the east of the Jordan River, see 1 Chron 5:23-24.) As with the account of Benjamin given above (1 Chron 7:6-12), this version of Manasseh's family is very different from those given in other biblical accounts such as Numbers 26:29-34 and Joshua 17:1-3.

7:14 *his Aramean secondary wife*: As in other genealogical summaries (1 Chron 2:3, 17, 34), the integration of non-Israelite spouses is recorded without critique, in stark contrast to the attitude adopted in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

7:15 *Zelophehad, who had only daughters*: For the story of how Zelophehad's line continued through his daughters, see Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-12; Joshua 17:3.

This was the family of Gilead, Machir's son and Manasseh's grandson. <sup>18</sup>His sister Hammolecheth gave birth to Ishhod, Abiezer, Mahlah, and Shemida. <sup>9</sup> <sup>19</sup>The members of Shemida's family were Ahian, Shechem, Likhi, and Aniam.

7:19 Josh 17:2

7:20 Gn 41:52;  
Nm 26:35-367:22 Gn 37:34;  
Iob 2:117:30-40  
Gn 46:17

### Ephraim's line

<sup>20</sup>Ephraim's family: Shuthelah, his son Bered, his son Tahath, his son Eleadah, his son Tahath, <sup>21</sup>his son Zabab, his son Shuthelah, and Ezer and Elead. The men of Gath, who were born in the land, killed them when they came down to take their cattle. <sup>22</sup>Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brothers came to comfort him.

<sup>23</sup>Ephraim had sex with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. He named him Beriah, because misfortune had come to his house. <sup>24</sup>His daughter was Sheerah. She built both Lower and Upper Beth-horon and Uzzen-sheerah. <sup>25</sup>His son was Rephah, his son<sup>r</sup> Resheph, his son Telah, his son Tahan, <sup>26</sup>his son Ladan, his son Ammihud, his son Elishama, <sup>27</sup>his son Nun, and his son Joshua. <sup>28</sup>Their possessions and settlements were Bethel and its towns, to the east Naaran, and to the west Gezer and its towns, and Shechem and its towns as far as Ayyah and its towns. <sup>29</sup>Beth-shean and its towns, Taanach and its towns, Megiddo and its towns, and Dor and its towns were under Manassite authority. The family of Joseph, Israel's son, lived in them.

### Asher's line

<sup>30</sup>Asher's family: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah.

<sup>31</sup>Beriah's family: Heber and Malchiel, who was Birzaith's father. <sup>32</sup>Heber was the father of Japhlet, Shomer, Hotham, and their sister Shua.

<sup>33</sup>Japhlet's family: Pasach, Bimhal, and Ashvath. This is Japhlet's family.

<sup>34</sup>Shemer's family: Ahi, Rohgah, Jehubbah, and Aram.

<sup>35</sup>His brother Helem's family: Zophah, Imna, Shelesh, and Amal.

<sup>36</sup>Zophah's family: Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah, <sup>37</sup>Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran, and Beera.

<sup>38</sup>Jether's family: Jephunneh, Pispah, and Ara.

<sup>39</sup>Ulla's family: Arah, Hanniel, and Rizia.

<sup>40</sup>All these were Asher's family, heads of households, select mighty warriors, the heads of the princes. Those ready for battle listed in the records numbered 26,000.

### Benjamin's line

**O** Benjamin was the father of Bela his oldest son, Ashbel his second son, Aharah the third, <sup>2</sup>Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth.

<sup>3</sup>Bela had a family: Addar, Gera, Abihud, <sup>4</sup>Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah, <sup>5</sup>Gera, Shephuphan, and Huram.

<sup>9</sup>Cf 7:19, Josh 17:2; MT lacks *and Shemida*. <sup>r</sup>MT lacks *his son*.

7:20-29 Joseph's line through his son Ephraim.

7:21-23 In this story of the theft of cattle from Gath, there is the implication that Ephraim lived in the land of Israel and that his sons were born there. In other biblical accounts, however, Ephraim and his sons are born in Egypt (Gen 41:50-52; 48:5; 50:23). Such a presentation of Ephraim's family fits with the Chronicler's emphasis on the continued presence of the nation of Israel in the land.

7:23 *Beriah*: In Hebrew, this name is related to the noun "evil." Similar to Jabez (1 Chron 4:9-10), Beriah possesses a name that memorializes unfortunate events.

7:24 This remarkable achievement of Sheerah is unrecorded in other biblical texts. Although her name is preserved in one of the cities that she founded, its current identity is unknown. For a record of other people constructing cities, see Genesis 4:17 (where Enoch builds the city of Enoch); Genesis 10:11-12 (Nimrod builds Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Caleh, and Resen); Judges 1:26 (the refugee from Bethel-Luz builds a city in the land of the Hittites); 1 Kings 16:34 (Hiel of Bethel builds Jericho);

and 1 Chronicles 8:12 (the sons of Elpaal build Ono and Lod).

7:27 *Nun, and his son Joshua*: In line with the Chronicler's emphasis on the nation's long-standing connection to the land, reference to Joshua's role in the conquest of the land isn't mentioned here (see Josh 1).

7:30-40 The line of Asher's family is found in different versions in Genesis 46:17 and Numbers 26:44-47.

8:1-40 The line of Benjamin was also set out in a briefer form in 1 Chronicles 7:6-12 and parts of it will be repeated in 1 Chronicles 9:35-44 (for other versions, see Gen 46:21 and Num 26:38-39). Given the favorable emphasis on David by the Chronicler, this focus on the line Saul and Jonathan came from might surprise the reader (only Judah and Levi have longer genealogical presentations). Indeed, by continuing the lineage up until the exile (1 Chron 8:35-38), the author preserves a tradition unknown in other sources. Maybe this prominence of the line of Benjamin in the text reflects their relative influence during the time of the Chronicler. The relative strength of the house also defends David

8:34 2Sa 4:4.  
2Sa 9:12  
9:1b 2Ki 25:21b  
9:2 34  
Neh 11:1-19

<sup>6</sup>This was Ehud's family. They were heads of households of the inhabitants of Geba, who were sent into exile to Manahath. <sup>7</sup>Gera<sup>a</sup> sent them into exile and was the father of Uzza and Ahihud.

<sup>8</sup>Shaharaim had children in the country of Moab after he divorced his wives Hushim and Baara. <sup>9</sup>He had children with his wife Hodesh: Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, <sup>10</sup>Jeuz, Sachia, and Mirmah. These were his sons, heads of households. <sup>11</sup>He also had children with Hushim: Abitub and Elpaal.

<sup>12</sup>Elpaal's family: Eber, Misham, Shemed, who built Ono and Lod with its towns, <sup>13</sup>Beriah, and Shema. They were heads of households of the inhabitants of Aijalon, who drove out the inhabitants of Gath. <sup>14</sup>Their brothers<sup>c</sup> were Shashak and Jeremoth.

<sup>15</sup>Beriah's family: Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, <sup>16</sup>Michael, Ishpah, and Joha.

<sup>17</sup>Elpaal's family: Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber, <sup>18</sup>Ishmerai, Izliah, and Jobab.

<sup>19</sup>Shimei's family: Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi, <sup>20</sup>Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel, <sup>21</sup>Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath.

<sup>22</sup>Shashak's family: Ishpan, Eber, Eliel, <sup>23</sup>Abdon, Zichri, Hanan, <sup>24</sup>Hananiah, Omri,<sup>d</sup> Elam, Anthothijah, <sup>25</sup>Iphdeiah, and Penuel.

<sup>26</sup>Jeroham's family: Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah, <sup>27</sup>Jareshiah, Elijah, and Zichri.

<sup>28</sup>These were the heads of households, in their generations. They were leaders who lived in Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup>Jeiel,<sup>e</sup> Gibeon's father, lived in Gibeon. His wife's name was Maacah; <sup>30</sup>his oldest son was Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner,<sup>f</sup> Nadab, <sup>31</sup>Gedor, Ahio, Zecher, and Mikloth.

<sup>32</sup>Mikloth was the father of Shimeah. These also lived near their relatives in Jerusalem.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Ner was the father of Kish, Kish was the father of Saul, and Saul was the father of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-baal.

<sup>34</sup>Jonathan's son was Merib-baal, and Merib-baal was Micah's father.

<sup>35</sup>Micah's family: Pithon, Melech, Tarea, and Ahaz.

<sup>36</sup>Ahaz was the father of Jehoaddah; Jehoaddah was the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri was the father of Moza. <sup>37</sup>Moza was the father of Binea; his son was Raphah, his son Eleasah, and his son Azel. <sup>38</sup>Azel had six sons, named Azrikam, his oldest,<sup>h</sup> Ishmael, Sheariah, Azariah,<sup>i</sup> Obadiah, and Hanan. All these were in Azel's family.

<sup>39</sup>His brother Eshek's family: Ulam his oldest, Jeush the second, and Eliphelet the third. <sup>40</sup>Ulam's family were mighty warriors and archers, having many children and grandchildren—150 in all and all were Benjaminites.

**9** So all Israel was listed in the official records of Israel's kings.

### Restored Jerusalem community

Judah was carried into exile in Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. <sup>2</sup>The first to resettle their property in their towns were the Israelite people, the priests, the Levites, and

<sup>a</sup>MT Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera <sup>b</sup>LXX; MT Ahio <sup>c</sup>LXX; MT lacks Omri. <sup>d</sup>LXX; MT lacks Jeiel. <sup>e</sup>LXX; MT lacks Ner. <sup>f</sup>Syr; MT adds with their relatives. <sup>g</sup>LXX, Tg; MT Bocheru <sup>h</sup>LXX; MT lacks Azariah.

from claims that he and his family cut short the line of Saul.

8:6-7 *exile*: here means deportation to another city within Israel.

8:28, 32 *Jerusalem*: on the border of Benjamin and Judah, and inhabited by members of several tribes (e.g., 1 Chron 9:3).

8:33-40 Saul's family is traced over 12 generations.

8:33-34 The author preserves what is probably the original name of *Esh-baal* ("man of Baal"), presented as "Ishbosheth" ("man of shame") in 2 Samuel 2:8, 4:1-12; as well as *Merib-baal* ("Baal contends"), presented as "Mephibosheth" ("one who spreads shame") in 2 Samuel 4:4; 9; 16:1-4. The versions of the names in the book of Samuel may reflect a desire to suppress any mention of Baal worship within Israel and to pass judgment on the line of Saul.

9:1-3 Although the exile lasted over 40 years, the Chronicler never dwells on this period, mentioning the event only a few times in the entire book (1 Chron 6:15; 2 Chron 36:20-21). In 9:1, the period is summarized very briefly and the focus quickly turns to the story of return and resettlement. Strikingly, in this account only Judah goes into exile, although mention is made of the exile of three other tribes (Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh) during the days of Pul (Tiglath-Pileser) in 1 Chronicles 5:22, 25-26. *unfaithfulness*: This term is a central concept for the Chronicler, identified as the basis for divine punishments such as the exile (here and in 2 Chron 36:14) and the downfall of Saul (1 Chron 10:13).

9:2 *resettle*: With this strategic term, the author emphasizes that the post-exilic period is in strict continuity with earlier times.



the temple servants. <sup>3</sup>Those settling in Jerusalem included some from Judah, some from Benjamin, and some from Ephraim and Manasseh:

9:22 1Sa 9:9

### Judah and Benjamin

<sup>4</sup>Uthai son of Ammihud son of Omri son of Imri son of Bani from the family of Perez, Judah's son.

<sup>5</sup>From the Shilonites: Asaiah the oldest son and his family.

<sup>6</sup>From Zerah's family: Jeuel and their relatives—690 in all.

<sup>7</sup>From Benjamin's family: Sallu son of Meshullam son of Hodaviah son of Senaah;<sup>a</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Ibneiah, Jeroham's son; Elah son of Uzzi son of Michri; Meshullam son of Shephatiah son of Reuel son of Ibnijah; <sup>9</sup>and their relatives in their line of descent—956 in all. All of these were heads of their households.

### Priests and Levites

<sup>10</sup>From the priests: Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jachin, <sup>11</sup>and Azariah son of Hilkiah son of Meshullam son of Zadok son of Meraioth son of Ahitub the leader of God's house; <sup>12</sup>Adaiah son of Jeroham son of Pashhur son of Malchijah; Maasai son of Adiel son of Jahzerah son of Meshullam son of Meshillemith son of Immer; <sup>13</sup>and their relatives, heads of their households, 1,760 capable men for the religious work of God's house.

<sup>14</sup>From the Levites: Shemaiah son of Hasshub son of Azrikam son of Hashabiah, from Merari's family; <sup>15</sup>Bakbakkar, Heresh, Galal, and Mattaniah son of Mica son of Zichri son of Asaph; <sup>16</sup>Obadiah son of Shemaiah son of Galal son of Jeduthun; and Berechiah son of Asa son of Elkanah, who lived in the settlements of the Netophathites.

### Gatekeepers

<sup>17</sup>The gatekeepers: Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, and Ahiman. Their brother Shallum was the leader, <sup>18</sup>stationed until now in the King's Gate on the east side. These were the gatekeepers belonging to the Levites' camp.

<sup>19</sup>Shallum, Kore's son, Ebiasaph's grandson, and Korah's great-grandson, and his relatives belonging to his household, the Korahites, served as gatekeepers at the tent's entrances, as their ancestors had been gatekeepers at the entrance to the LORD's camp.

<sup>20</sup>Phinehas, Eleazar's son, the LORD be with him, was their leader in former times.

<sup>21</sup>Zechariah, Meshelemiah's son, was gatekeeper at the meeting tent's entrance.

<sup>22</sup>All those selected as gatekeepers at the entrances were two hundred twelve. They were listed in the family records by their settlements. David and Samuel the seer assigned them to their trusted position. <sup>23</sup>So they and their descendants were the gatekeepers guarding the LORD's house, that is, the tent. <sup>b</sup> <sup>24</sup>The gatekeepers were on the four sides: east, west, north, and south. <sup>25</sup>Their relatives came in from their settlements, from time to time, to assist them for a period of seven days. <sup>26</sup>Due to their trustworthiness, the four master gatekeepers, who were Levites, were in charge of the rooms and the treasuries of God's house. <sup>27</sup>They would spend the night patrolling God's house since they had guard duty and were responsible for unlocking it every morning. <sup>28</sup>Some of them were responsible for the worship objects; they counted them when they were brought in and taken out. <sup>29</sup>Others were appointed over the furniture, the holy equipment, the flour, wine, oil, incense, and spices. <sup>30</sup>Some of the priests

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT *Hassenuah* <sup>b</sup>Or *house of the tent*

9:3 Those settling in Jerusalem: The Chronicler's emphasis on Jerusalem as the central place for all Israel is seen in this mention of the destination of portions from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh upon their return from exile in Babylon. The city's role as the center for the nation is shown by its immediate reoccupation, and by its population consisting of tribes from both the south and the north. The author names four tribes here, and includes the Levites as well in 1 Chronicles 9:34 (note that a similar list in Neh 11:3-24 doesn't include Ephraim and Manasseh).

9:10-34 Along with a return of the northern and southern tribes to Jerusalem, the author emphasizes that the proper personnel, both priests and Levites, are also present to ensure the correct functioning of worship practices.

9:11 *the leader of God's house*: seems to be another way of speaking about the high priest, whose lineage was given in 1 Chronicles 6:12-15.

9:17-26 In Chronicles, gatekeepers are Levites. In other texts, however, priests also guard the temple (2 Kgs 12:9; 23:4; 25:18; Jer 35:4).

9:22 *David and Samuel the seer*: According to 1 Samuel 25:1; 28:3, Samuel had died before David came to rule as king, so the appearance of his name is surprising here. Since the Chronicler presents him as a member of the family of Levites (1 Chron 6:28, 33), perhaps he is mentioned as a model of dedicated service to God.

9:30 Within a section detailing the tasks of the Levites, the Chronicler reserves the role of preparing the spices to the priests (see Exod 30:22-33).

10:1-14  
1Sa 31:1-13

blended the ointment for the spices;<sup>31</sup> and Mattithiah, one of the Levites, the oldest son of Shallum the Korahite, was entrusted with baking the flat cakes.<sup>32</sup> Also some of their Kohathite relatives were responsible for preparing the stacks of bread for each Sabbath.<sup>33</sup> The singers were the heads of the households of the Levites. They lived in temple rooms and were free from other service because they were on duty day and night.<sup>34</sup> These were the heads of the households of the Levites, according to descent. They lived in Jerusalem.

### Saul's family

<sup>35</sup>Jeiel, Gibeon's father, lived in Gibeon. His wife's name was Maacah.<sup>36</sup> His oldest son was Abdon, followed by Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab,<sup>37</sup> Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah, and Mikloth.<sup>38</sup> Mikloth was the father of Shimeam. They too lived near their relatives in Jerusalem.<sup>c</sup> <sup>39</sup>Ner was the father of Kish, Kish of Saul, Saul of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-baal.

<sup>40</sup>Jonathan's son was Merib-baal, and Merib-baal was the father of Micah.

<sup>41</sup>Micah's family were Pithon, Melech, Tahrea, and Ahaz.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Ahaz was the father of Jarah; and Jarah of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri.

Zimri was the father of Moza.<sup>43</sup> Moza was the father of Binea; Rephaiah was his son, Eleasah was his son, and Azel was his son.<sup>44</sup> Azel had six sons whose names were Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan. This was Azel's family.

### Saul's death

**10** When the Philistines attacked the Israelites, the Israelites ran away from the Philistines, and many fell dead on Mount Gilboa.<sup>2</sup> The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua.<sup>3</sup> The battle was fierce around Saul, and when the archers located him, he trembled in fear.<sup>4</sup> Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and kill me with it! Otherwise, these uncircumcised men will come and kill me or torture me." But his armor-bearer refused because he was terrified. So Saul took the sword and impaled himself on it.<sup>5</sup> When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also impaled himself on his sword and died with Saul.<sup>6</sup> So Saul and his three sons died; his whole household died together.<sup>7</sup> When all the Israelites who were in the valley saw that the army had run away and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their towns and fled. So the Philistines came to live in them.

<sup>c</sup>Heb adds *with their relatives*. <sup>d</sup>Cf 8:35; MT lacks *Ahaz*.

**9:31 flat cakes:** This term is unique within the OT, used nowhere else. It is likely that they were made from the flour named in 1 Chronicles 9:29, and may be similar to the cakes made from the grain offering and baked on the griddle by priests (Lev 6:19-21).

**9:32 stacks of bread for each Sabbath:** In other biblical texts, the high priest is to replace the 12 loaves of bread placed before God in two rows on the altar every Sabbath. The old bread is then eaten by the priests within the holy place (Lev 24:5-9). Here the Chronicler assigns this duty to the Levites.

**9:34 They lived in Jerusalem:** In keeping with the focus on Jerusalem throughout the book, the Chronicler emphasizes that the Levites lived in Jerusalem. This closing of the section detailing the tasks of the priests and Levites links back to the beginning of the chapter where members of four additional tribes are said to have settled in Jerusalem: Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh (see 1 Chron 9:3).

**9:35-44 Beginning with the ancestor Jeiel from the tribe of Benjamin, the line of Saul is traced through his eldest son, Jonathan, to the post-exilic period. Positioning Saul's line at the end of chapter 9 anticipates his story in the next chapter. A similar genealogical record is found in 1 Chronicles 8:29-38.**

**10:1-14** Having just restated the genealogy of Saul's family (1 Chron 9:35-44; cf. 8:29-38), the author proceeds

to tell of his death in battle. Much of this material is also found in 1 Samuel 31, although it appears in that text only after a very lengthy description of Saul's rule as king. In 1 Chronicles, the life of Saul is collapsed into a brief report about his final hours—by the fourth verse, the king has died. Significantly, more than twice as many verses relating his life are concerned with the report of his death and that of his family line, the desecration of his body, and the theological justification for his punishment (1 Chron 10:6-14). By beginning the long narrative section of Chronicles with this short story of Saul's death, the author sets the scene for the very favorable presentation of the long and fruitful reign of David.

**10:1** The Philistines were traditional rivals of the Israelites, living close by in the area between Israel's western border and the Mediterranean Sea.

**10:6 his whole household died:** Much of the story of Saul's final battle on Mount Gilboa is taken from the account in 1 Samuel 31, but the Chronicler makes a key change by adding that his entire family died on that day. Technically, this addition is contradicted by other parts of 1 Chronicles. The genealogy of Saul continues another twelve generations in 1 Chronicles 9:39-44, and his daughter Michal is associated with David's court in 1 Chronicles 15:29. But in the death of Saul the author emphasizes that his royal dynasty has come to an end and that there is now no legitimate rival to David's monarchy.

<sup>8</sup>The next day when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his sons lying dead on Mount Gilboa. <sup>9</sup>They stripped him, carried off his head and armor, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to spread the news to their idols and to the people. <sup>10</sup>They placed his armor in their god's temple and displayed his skull on a pole in the temple of Dagon.

<sup>11</sup>When all the people of Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul, <sup>12</sup>all their warriors arose and recovered the corpses of Saul and his sons. They brought them back to Jabesh, buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted for seven days.

<sup>13</sup>Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD and hadn't followed the LORD's word. He even consulted a medium for guidance. <sup>14</sup>He didn't consult the LORD, so the LORD killed him and gave the kingdom to David, Jesse's son.

### All Israel makes David king

**11** All the Israelites gathered around David at Hebron. "We're your own flesh and blood," they said. <sup>2</sup>"In the past, even when Saul ruled over us, you were the one who led Israel. The LORD your God told you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become a leader over my people Israel.'" <sup>3</sup>So all of Israel's elders came to the king at Hebron, and David made a covenant with them before the LORD. They anointed David to make him king over Israel, just as the LORD had promised through Samuel.

### David captures Jerusalem

<sup>4</sup>Then David and all Israel marched to Jerusalem, that is, Jebus, where the Jebusites lived. <sup>5</sup>The people who lived in Jebus told David, "You'll never get in here!"

But David captured the mountain fortress of Zion, which became David's City. <sup>6</sup>David had said, "The first one to kill a Jebusite will become commander in chief!" Joab, Zeruiah's son, was the first to attack and so became commander in chief. <sup>7</sup>David occupied the fortress, so

10:9-10 The treatment of Saul's body by the Philistines mirrors the story of David and Goliath as retold in the Samuel narratives. When the young boy killed the Philistine champion, he cut off his head, brought it to Jerusalem, and placed the armor in his own tent (1 Sam 17:51, 54). Now in the Chronicler's work, the assertion of triumph through physical disrespect comes to Israel from the Philistines. This story in 1 Chronicles 10 also calls to mind another account from 1 Samuel, which relates the capture of the Lord's sacred chest by the Philistines. As a sign of triumph, the Philistines placed the chest in the temple of their god Dagon. However, as a sign of the ultimate power of God, the statue of Dagon was repeatedly found fallen on its face in the presence of the chest (1 Sam 5:1-5).

10:11-12 *all the people of Jabesh-gilead*: Their involvement signals the complete reversal of Saul's fate. Although the Chronicler doesn't include the story, 1 Samuel 11 relates when Nahash the Ammonite threatened to gouge out the right eye of all of the townspeople if they didn't enter into a treaty with him. Saul organized Israel and Judah to defend the city, and after they won, the people made Saul king. Now after his death, those saved by Saul retrieve and tend to his broken body and those of his sons.

10:13-14 *Saul died because*: The Chronicler gives the reason for Saul's death: His disobedience resulted in God's punishment. According to the author, Saul's wrongdoing included both a particular deed as well as a persistent attitude. In being *unfaithful* and not having *followed the Lord's word*, he showed repeated disobedience to God. Although the full story is only implied here, consulting the medium at Endor is named as a specific incident of sin (1 Sam 28:6-14). According to the strict requirements of the author, Saul is guilty and his sins require divine punishment. In this account, it comes by the hand of God: *the Lord killed him*. And in this same act of

destruction God moves to rebuild: *and gave the kingdom to David*.

11:1-3 In their speech immediately before they anoint him king, the Israelites provide two reasons for their choice of David, one political and one theological. First, David has been functioning as the people's leader even when Saul was king. They give no direct evidence for this, but the Chronicler will soon provide flashbacks by illustrating David's military leadership during the time of Saul (1 Chron 11:13-14; 12:1-2, 15). Second, they quote a divine oracle indicating God's choice of David to be Israel's leader and shepherd.

11:4-9 As in the source material from 2 Samuel 5, the Chronicler follows the declaration of David as king over the nation with an account of the capture of Jerusalem. This allows the author to link David with the city at the very beginning of his reign. The strong bond between the king and Jerusalem will be highlighted throughout the book. The particular emphases of the author are also seen in some small but crucial changes made to the source material. In 2 Samuel 5:6, it's the king and his troops who take the city. According to 11:4, however, David leads all Israel in the charge. This dramatically changes the import of the account: The victory over the Jebusites is now not a private act of David's personal fighting force but rather a national victory in which the entire nation participates. With such a conquest, Jerusalem takes its place as a city connected to all the tribes. (See sidebar, "Comparing Two Versions of David Becoming King.")

11:4 *Jebus*: Within the Bible, this is the name for the city of Jerusalem before it came under Israelite control (Judg 19:10-11). Because it wasn't claimed as part of the territory of any of the 12 tribes, it's a politically neutral geography over which no tribe has greater or lesser power.

11:6 *Joab, Zeruiah's son*: According to 1 Chronicles 2:16, Joab is David's nephew (the son of his sister Zeruiah). Thus

11:1-3 2Sa 5:1-3

11:4 Josh 15:8;  
Jgs 1:21; 2Sa 5:6;  
1Ch 11:5

11:4-9  
2Sa 5:6-10

11:5 2Sa 5:9,

2Sa 6:12;

1Ki 8:1;

1Ch 11:7;

2Ch 5:2

11:6 2Sa 8:16

11:9 2Sa 3:1,  
2Sa 5:10  
11:10, 11  
2Sa 23:8  
11:12  
2Sa 23:9, 10  
11:13, 14  
2Sa 23:11, 12  
11:15-19  
2Sa 5:18,  
2Sa 23:13-17;  
1Ch 14:9  
11:16 1Sa 10:5  
11:20, 21  
1Sa 23:18, 19  
11:22-25  
2Sa 23:20-23

**Comparing Two Versions of David Becoming King** In the Samuel narrative, David achieves his kingship over the nation in two steps separated by a power struggle with other rivals to the throne. After the death of Saul, he settles in the southern town of Hebron and is acclaimed king over Judah (2 Sam 2:1-4). Then, after a long war between the house of David and the remaining house of Saul, the northern tribes journey to Hebron and anoint him king over Israel (2 Sam 5:1-5). Following this, David and his men conquer Jerusalem and set it up as the capital for both Israel and Judah. The Chronicler presents a significantly different version of David's ascension in 1 Chronicles 11:1-3, making key changes that put the king in better light. The changes are primarily in the form of deletions. Absent from Chronicles is the story of Judah's acclamation of David as king, as well as the fighting between the heirs of David and Saul. In the Chronicler's version, Saul and his house die, and then "all the Israelites" acclaim David king at Hebron (1 Chron 11:1-3, 9). By omitting the events between the death of Saul and David's anointing by Israel, the transition to his kingship seems immediate and straightforward. The shortened version effectively shores up David's reputation. He engages in no messy power struggles with potential rivals but rather is immediately recognized by the entire people as the proper king.

it was renamed David's City. <sup>8</sup>He also built up the city on all sides, including its own foundations and the surrounding areas, while Joab restored the rest of the city. <sup>9</sup>David grew increasingly powerful, and the LORD of heavenly forces was with him.

### David and his warriors

<sup>10</sup>These are the commanders of David's warriors who continued to support him while he was king. Together with all Israel, they made him king, as the LORD had promised Israel. <sup>11</sup>This is the list of David's warriors:

Jashobeam, a Hacmonite, was commander of the Thirty. He raised his spear against eight hundred, killing them on a single occasion.

<sup>12</sup>Next in command came Eleazar, Dodo's son the Ahohite, who was one of the three warriors. <sup>13</sup>He was with David at Pas-dammim. The Philistines were gathered there for battle, where part of a field was full of barley. When the people ran away from the Philistines, <sup>14</sup>he and David stood in the middle of the field, held their ground, and defeated the Philistines. So the LORD achieved a great victory.

<sup>15</sup>Three of the thirty commanders went down from the rock to David at the fortress\* of Adullam, while the army of the Philistines camped in the Rephaim Valley. <sup>16</sup>At that time David was in the fortress, and a Philistine fort was in Bethlehem. <sup>17</sup>David had a craving and said, "If only someone could give me a drink of water from the well by the gate in Bethlehem." <sup>18</sup>So the three warriors broke through the Philistine camp and drew water from the well by the gate in Bethlehem and brought it back to David. But he refused to drink it and poured it out to the LORD.

<sup>19</sup>"God forbid that I should do that," he said. "Isn't this the blood of men who risked their lives?" So he refused to drink it. Since they had brought it at the risk of their lives, David refused to drink it.

These were the kinds of things the three warriors did.

<sup>20</sup>Abishai, Joab's brother, was chief of the Thirty.<sup>f</sup> He raised his spear against the three hundred men he had slain, but he wasn't considered one of the Three. <sup>21</sup>He was the most famous of the Thirty. He became their commander, but he wasn't among the Three.

<sup>22</sup>Benaiah, Jehoiada's son from Kabzeel, was a hero who performed great deeds. He killed two of Moab's leaders,<sup>g</sup> and on a snowy day went down into a pit where he killed a lion.

\*Or cave; cf 2 Sam 23:14 <sup>f</sup>Syr; MT three <sup>g</sup>Heb Ariel

Joab's attack on Jerusalem provides another close link between David (and his family) and the city.

11:8 He also built up the city. David's connection with Jerusalem includes not only military victory but also architectural projects that strengthen the city.

11:10-47 Following the account of the capture of Jerusalem, the Chronicler provides a list of David's fighting men. The material comes from 2 Samuel 23:8-39, where it appears as an appendix to the story of David's reign. In its new context, the list now indicates the widespread

support for David, not as something gained throughout time but as present from the very beginning of his reign. The list also gives the narrator a way to include stories about David before his ascension to the throne without clouding the straightforward presentation at the beginning of the chapter.

11:15-19 This story, taken from 2 Samuel 23:13-17, shines a light on the characters of both David and his soldiers. By risking everything to go behind enemy lines and return with water for their leader, the three warriors demonstrate

<sup>23</sup>He also killed an Egyptian seven and a half feet tall, who was holding a spear like a weaver's beam. Benaiah went down to him with a club, grabbed the spear from the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with it. <sup>24</sup>These were the exploits of Benaiah, Jehoiada's son; he wasn't considered one of the three warriors. <sup>25</sup>He was famous among the Thirty, but didn't become one of the Three. David placed him in command of his own bodyguard.

<sup>26</sup>The mighty warriors:

Asahel, Joab's brother;  
Elhanan, Dodo's son from Bethlehem;

<sup>27</sup>Shammoth from Haror;  
Helez from Pelon;

<sup>28</sup>Ira, Ikkesh's son from Tekoa;  
Abiezer from Anathoth;

<sup>29</sup>Sibbecai the Hushathite;  
Ilai from Ahoh;

<sup>30</sup>Maharai from Netophah;  
Heled, Baanah's son from Netophah;

<sup>31</sup>Ithai, Ribai's son from Gibeah of the Benjaminites;  
Benaiah from Pirathon;

<sup>32</sup>Hurai from the Gaash ravines;  
Abiel the Arbathite;

<sup>33</sup>Azmaveth from Baharum;  
Eliabha from Shaalbon;

<sup>34</sup>Hashem<sup>b</sup> the Gizonite;  
Jonathan, Shagee's son from Harar;

<sup>35</sup>Ahiam, Sachar's son from Harar;  
Eliphai, Ur's son;

<sup>36</sup>Hepher the Mecherathite;  
Ahijah the Pelonite;

<sup>37</sup>Hezro from Carmel;  
Naarai, Ezbai's son;

<sup>38</sup>Joel, Nathan's brother;  
Mibhar, Hagri's son;

<sup>39</sup>Zelek the Ammonite;  
Naharai from Beeroth, Zeruiah's son and the armor-bearer for Joab;

<sup>40</sup>Ira from Ither;  
Gareb from Ither;

<sup>41</sup>Uriah the Hittite;  
Zabad, Ahlai's son;

<sup>42</sup>Adina son of Shiza the Reubenite, a leader of the Reubenites, and thirty with him;

<sup>43</sup>Hanan, Maacah's son;  
Joshaphat the Mithnite;

<sup>44</sup>Uzzia the Ashterathite;  
Shama and Jeiel the sons of Hotham the Aroerite;

<sup>45</sup>Jediael, Shimri's son, and his brother Joha the Tizite;

<sup>46</sup>Eliel the Mahavite;  
Jeribai and Joshaviah, Elnaam's sons;

Ithmah the Moabite;  
<sup>47</sup>Eliel, Obed, and Jaasiel the Mezobaite.

### David's desert army

**12** The following persons came to David at Ziklag while he was banished from the presence of Saul, Kish's son. They were some of the warriors who helped him in battle,

<sup>b</sup>MT the family of Hashem

their bravery, skill, and devotion to their leader. David demonstrates that his loyalty to his army and devotion to God come ahead of his own personal desires.

11:41a *Uriah the Hittite*: Although the Chronicler mentions

David's wife Bathsheba ("Bath-shua" in 1 Chron 2:3), this is the sole mention of her former husband.

12:1-23 David was crowned king over all Israel at Hebron in 1 Chronicles 11. Thus chapter 12 is a flashback to

12:2 Jgs 3:15;  
Jgs 20:16;  
1Ch 8:40;  
1Ch 12:1,  
1Ch 12:16

12:17 1Sa 18:1,  
1Sa 18:3,  
1Sa 24:11;  
2Sa 3:20

12:18 Jgs 3:10,  
Jgs 6:34;  
1Sa 25:5-6;  
2Sa 17:25

<sup>2</sup>armed with bows, and they could use either hand to shoot arrows or sling stones. They were Saul's relatives from Benjamin:

<sup>3</sup>Ahiezer was the leader, then Joash, both Shemaah's sons from Gibeah; Jeziel and Pelet, Azmaveth's sons; Beracah; Jehu of Anathoth; <sup>4</sup>Ishmaiah from Gibeon, a warrior in the Thirty and a leader over the Thirty; <sup>5</sup>Jeremiah; Jahaziel; Johanan; Jozabad from Gederah; <sup>6</sup>Eluzai; Jerimoth; Bealiah; Shemariah; Shephatiah the Haruphite; <sup>7</sup>Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer, and Jashobeam the Korahites; <sup>8</sup>Joelah; and Zebadiah, Jeroham's son from Gedor.

<sup>9</sup>Some left Gad to join David at the desert fortress, brave warriors trained for battle, armed with shield and spear, who looked like lions and who were swift as gazelles on the mountains: <sup>9</sup>Ezer the leader, Obadiah second, Eliab third, <sup>10</sup>Mishmannah fourth, Jeremiah fifth, <sup>11</sup>Attai sixth, Eliel seventh, <sup>12</sup>Johanan eighth, Elzabad ninth, <sup>13</sup>Jeremiah tenth, Machbannai eleventh.

<sup>14</sup>These Gadites were military officers, the least of them ready to fight a hundred and the greatest a thousand. <sup>15</sup>These are the ones who crossed the Jordan in the first month, when it was overflowing all its banks, and chased away everyone living in the valleys to the east and the west.

<sup>16</sup>Some Benjaminites and Judahites also came to David at the fortress. <sup>17</sup>David went out to meet them and said to them, "If you've come to me with good intentions in order to help me, then we will join forces. But if you've come to betray me to my enemies, though I've done no wrong, then may our ancestors' God see it and punish you."

<sup>18</sup>Then a spirit took hold of Amasai, the leader of the Thirty:

David, we are yours;

and on your side, Jesse's son!

May it go very well for you,

and may it go well for whoever helps you!

Yes, your God has helped you.

Then David received them, and put them at the head of his troops.

<sup>19</sup>Some of the Manassites also joined David when he came with the Philistines for the battle against Saul. But he<sup>a</sup> didn't help them, because after considering the matter, the Philistine rulers sent him away. "He'll rejoin his master Saul," they said, "and it will cost us our heads." <sup>20</sup>When he went to Ziklag some joined him from Manasseh: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediahel, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai, leaders of units of a thousand in Manasseh.

<sup>a</sup>12:5 in Heb <sup>b</sup>12:6 in Heb <sup>c</sup>LXX; MT *they*

the time when Saul still reigned and David was amassing more and more support from the different tribes. With this positioning, the author is able to convey several ideas that put David in a positive light. These include the claim that David's kingship was part of God's plan and not the result of the political maneuvers, power struggles, and intrigues presented in the Samuel narratives. In addition, David's kingship was based on the long-standing support of the people, arising not in a power vacuum after the death of Saul but begun even while Saul was still reigning as king. Finally, because the author presents David on the run from King Saul in a flashback only after he was hailed as king by all the people, the reader is given a perspective by which to evaluate the evidence. The readers see David at his political weakest only after they know that the story will end with success, so any potential that these stories might damage David's reputation is effectively minimized.

**12:1-2 Ziklag:** According to the account in Samuel, the town of Ziklag was given to David by Gath's King Achish as a place of refuge from King Saul (1 Sam 27:1-7). Because the town was in the territory of the Philistines, the situation is ironic—David finds safety and amasses support only after he has left Israel and fled into enemy territory. The irony is increased with the news that Saul's own relatives came to support David. For other

notices of the archery skills of the Benjaminites, see Judges 3:15; 20:16.

**12:3-7 Gibeah...Gibeon:** Although not all of the geographical names in this list can be identified, some such as Gibeah and Gibeon are in Benjaminite territory. Gibeah was closely associated with Saul (1 Sam 11:4; 15:34).

**12:8-18** Having moved back in time from David's ascension to the throne in Hebron (1 Chron 11) to his earlier residence at Ziklag (1 Chron 12:1-7), the narrator shifts back even earlier to describe David's stint in the desert. *desert fortress:* This stronghold is probably the one near Adullam, described in 1 Samuel 22:1, 4-5 and 1 Chronicles 11:15, but David also lived at other sites in the wilderness (1 Sam 23:14-18; 24:1). After telling of David's growing support from the tribes of Gad, Benjamin, and Judah, the narrator will move forward in time again, returning first to David's period at Ziklag (1 Chron 12:19-22) and ending back again at Hebron with David's coronation feast (1 Chron 12:23-40).

**12:18 Then a spirit took hold:** In the Hebrew idiom, a spirit "clothed" Amasai, and the term is used in Chronicles when people other than professional prophets receive God's word (2 Chron 24:20, see also Judg 6:34). By indicating that their solemn pledge of support has a heavenly source, the military leader asserts both human and divine support for David.

<sup>21</sup>They helped David against the raiding bands because they were all warriors and officers in the army. <sup>22</sup>Reinforcements came to David daily until there was an army as mighty as God's army.

<sup>23</sup>These are the numbers of the commanders of those armed for battle who came to David in Hebron to make sure he took over Saul's kingdom, according to the LORD's word:

<sup>24</sup>from Judah, carrying shield and spear, 6,800 troops armed for battle;

<sup>25</sup>from Simeon, mighty warriors, 7,100;

<sup>26</sup>from Levi, 4,600;

<sup>27</sup>also Jehoiada, leader of Aaron's line, and with him 3,700;

<sup>28</sup>and Zadok, a young man, a mighty warrior, and 22 officers from his household;

<sup>29</sup>from Benjamin, Saul's relatives, 3,000, most of whom had been loyal to Saul's household;

<sup>30</sup>from Ephraim, 20,800, mighty warriors, famous in their households;

<sup>31</sup>from half the tribe of Manasseh, 18,000, designated by name to come and make David king;

<sup>32</sup>from Issachar, those who understood the times and what Israel should do, 200 chiefs, with all their relatives under their command;

<sup>33</sup>from Zebulun, 50,000 experienced troops, armed for battle with all the weapons of war, to help with undivided loyalty;

<sup>34</sup>from Naphtali, 1,000 officers, as well as 37,000 armed with shield and spear;

<sup>35</sup>from Dan, 28,600 armed for battle;

<sup>36</sup>from Asher, 40,000 experienced troops armed for battle;

<sup>37</sup>from the other side of the Jordan, the Reubenites, Gadites, and the other half of the tribe of Manasseh, 120,000 armed with all the weapons of war.

<sup>38</sup>All these men of war, armed<sup>1</sup> for battle, came to Hebron determined to make David king over all Israel, and all the rest of Israel were fully agreed to make David king. <sup>39</sup>They were there with David for three days, eating and drinking, while their relatives provided food for them. <sup>40</sup>Even their neighbors from as far away as Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali were bringing food by donkeys, camels, mules, and oxen. There was an abundance of flour, fig cakes, clusters of raisins, wine, oil, oxen, and sheep, because Israel was joyful.

### David's first attempt to move the chest

**13** After consulting with the captains of the units of a thousand and a hundred, in fact with every leader, <sup>2</sup>David said to the entire Israelite assembly: "If you approve, and if the LORD our God agrees, let's spread the word to the rest of our relatives in all the regions of Israel, including the priests and Levites in their cities with pasturelands. Let's ask them to join us <sup>3</sup>so that we may bring the chest of our God back to us, because we didn't look for

<sup>1</sup>LXX; MT *helpers*

12:21 *against the raiding bands*: may refer to the struggle against the Amalekites who fought Ziklag when David was absent (1 Sam 30).

12:23-37 *who came to David in Hebron*: This list of David's supporters names all of the tribes of Israel, indicating that David's kingship was supported and celebrated by the entire nation. The list is organized geographically: beginning with the southern tribes (Judah, Simeon, Levi), it moves to the north (Benjamin, Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun, Naphtali, Dan, Asher), then crosses the Jordan River and moves southward (Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh). By asserting that the tribes *came to David*, the author indicates that their defection from Saul was due not to being conquered by military action but rather to David's growing attractiveness among the people.

12:38-40 *came to Hebron determined to make David king*: After a series of flashbacks, the chapter ends by returning to the scene in 1 Chronicles 11:1-3. The coronation is a joyful time of food and fellowship for the entire nation.

13:1-14 The account of David's initial effort to transfer the sacred chest from Kiriath-jearim is a retelling of 2 Samuel 6,

here put into a different historical context and told with different emphases. In the Samuel narrative, David first becomes king, then captures Jerusalem and fights against the Philistines before he turns his attention to the chest in an effort to consolidate his authority (2 Sam 5). In Chronicles, however, the transfer of the chest is the first priority for the newly anointed king, coming even before military defense. Although he won't be able to build the temple, David is nevertheless presented as a king who considers the task of tending to Israel's worship rituals to be of primary importance.

13:1-2 *After consulting with*: Although the initial motivation to relocate the sacred chest comes from David, the narrative emphasizes the direct involvement of the larger community, including *every leader*, and *the entire Israelite assembly*.

13:3 *back to us*: For the Chronicler, geography usually has religious implications. Here the chest isn't simply moving to a new locale but reclaiming its central position in the spiritual life of the people. *We didn't look for it in Saul's days*: another negative comparison between the time of

12:38  
Josh 10:36,  
Josh 14:14;  
2Sa 2:1, 2Sa 5:1,  
1Ch 12:33  
13:1-14  
2Sa 6:1-11

13:6 Ex 25:22;  
Josh 15:9;  
2Sa 6:2;  
2Ki 19:15

13:8 2Sa 6:5;  
1Ch 15:16;  
1Ch 15:28;  
1Ch 16:5;  
1Ch 25:1

14:1, 2  
2Sa 5:11, 12

14:3-7  
2Sa 5:13-16;  
1Ch 3:5-9

it in Saul's days." <sup>4</sup>The whole assembly agreed to do so, because all the people thought it was the right thing to do.

<sup>5</sup>So David assembled all Israel, from the border<sup>m</sup> of Egypt to Lebo-hamath in order to bring up God's chest from Kiriath-jearim. <sup>6</sup>Then David and all Israel went up toward Baalah, to Kiriath-jearim, which belongs to Judah, to bring up from there the chest of God, the LORD, who sits enthroned on the winged creatures, where he is called by name.<sup>n</sup> <sup>7</sup>They moved God's chest on a new cart from Abinadab's house. Uzzah and Ahio were guiding the cart, <sup>8</sup>while David and all Israel celebrated in God's presence with all their strength, accompanied by songs, zithers, harps, tambourines, cymbals, and trumpets. <sup>9</sup>When they came to Chidon's threshing floor, Uzzah reached out to the chest and grabbed it because the oxen had stumbled. <sup>10</sup>But the LORD became angry with Uzzah and struck him because he had placed his hand on the chest. He died right there before God. <sup>11</sup>David was angry that the LORD lashed out at Uzzah; and so that place is still called Perez-uzzah today. <sup>12</sup>David was frightened by God that day. "How will I ever bring God's chest home to me?" he asked. <sup>13</sup>So David didn't take the chest away with him to David's City. Instead, he had it put in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. <sup>14</sup>God's chest stayed with Obed-edom's household for three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom's household and all that he had.

### David's kingship established in Jerusalem

**14** Tyre's King Hiram sent messengers to David with cedar logs, bricklayers, and carpenters to build David a palace. <sup>2</sup>Then David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that his kingship was held in great honor for the sake of his people Israel. <sup>3</sup>David married more secondary wives in Jerusalem and fathered more sons and daughters. <sup>4</sup>The names of his children in Jerusalem were as follows: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, <sup>5</sup>Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet, <sup>6</sup>Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, <sup>7</sup>Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet.

<sup>m</sup>Heb *Shikhor, river*; cf Josh 15:4; 1 Kgs 8:65; 2 Chron 7:8 <sup>n</sup>Heb uncertain

David and the time of Israel's earlier king, highlighting the new day of religious faithfulness that David's leadership brought. The statement also connects back to the account of Saul's death in 1 Chronicles 10:14 where he is condemned because he didn't consult the Lord.

13:5 *from the border of Egypt to Lebo-hamath*: By designating this large amount of territory, the author highlights the sheer scope of the people involved in the transfer of God's chest. Unlike the account in 2 Samuel 6 where David is the main actor, this version emphasizes the involvement of all of the people, representing an impressive geographic reach. *Kiriath-jearim*: a town located within the territory of Judah, close to the border of Benjamin, and about six miles west-northwest of Jerusalem (Josh 15:9, 10, 60; 18:14; 1 Chron 2:50-51).

13:6 *sits enthroned on the winged creatures*: In the Bible the sacred chest is described as a box made of acacia wood, covered with gold, and either sitting upon or adorned with gold creatures (Heb *kerubim*) that have animal bodies and bird's wings. For the people of Israel, this object represented the presence of God in their midst, the place where God could meet with chosen human representatives such as Moses (Exod 25:10-22).

13:8 *in God's presence*: This short phrase establishes the intimate connection between God and the sacred chest.

13:9 *because the oxen had stumbled*: The author clearly points out that Uzzah's act involved no premeditated plan to violate the holiness of the divine chest.

13:10-11 *He died right there before God*: Because of the chest's connection with the presence of a holy God, any removal of the holiness (even if accidental) provokes punishment. *Perez-uzzah* means "Uzzah's lashing" or "outburst against Uzzah" and helps remember God's act against the man (see also 1 Chron 14:11).

13:12-14 Unsure if the death of Uzzah implies that God is unhappy with the plans to relocate the chest in Jerusalem, David decides to end the procession and install the sacred object with Obed-edom the Gittite. The divine blessing that comes to enrich the household suggests that the divine wrath concerned only Uzzah's action. Later in the book, the Chronicler records that God truly blessed Obed-edom with a large family (1 Chron 26:4-11).

14:1-17 While the sacred chest waits in the house of Obed-edom (1 Chron 13:13-14), the reader can't help but reflect on God's estimation of David. Does the disaster at Perez-uzzah (1 Chron 13:10-11) imply divine displeasure for Israel's newest king? Will God turn from David as from Saul? By inserting material from 2 Samuel 5:11-25 at this point in the narrative, the author reassures the audience that David is still divinely favored (King Hiram sends valuable gifts, David has many children and defeats the Philistines). It also sets up 1 Chronicles 15, where David and the nation again seek to move the chest into Jerusalem.

14:2 *Then David knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel*: The material gifts that Hiram brings indicate to David that God hasn't rejected him for any potential missteps in moving the chest from Kiriath-jearim (1 Chron 13). In a skillful parallel between architecture and authority, the Chronicler indicates that along with the building materials for a palace comes the reassurance that God indeed still recognizes David as king.

14:3-7 The sense of divine blessing associated with Hiram's supplies for a physical house (1 Chron 14:1-2) is augmented with this list of David's own growing biological house (for other records of the king's family, see 1 Chron 3:1-9 and 2 Sam 5:13-16). David's situation contrasts with that of his predecessor Saul, who died with "his whole household" in the battle on Mount Gilboa



**David defeats the Philistines**

<sup>8</sup>When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, they all marched up to find him. David heard this and went out to confront them. <sup>9</sup>The Philistines had invaded and were plundering the Rephaim Valley. <sup>10</sup>David asked God for advice: "Should I attack the Philistines, and will you hand them over to me?"

The LORD answered, "Attack them, and I'll definitely hand them over to you."

<sup>11</sup>So they marched up to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. "By my strength," David exclaimed, "God has burst out against my enemies, the way water bursts out." That's why the place is called Baal-perazim. <sup>12</sup>The Philistines left their divine images behind, and David ordered them burned.

<sup>13</sup>When the Philistines plundered the valley a second time, <sup>14</sup>David again asked God's advice, but God answered, "Don't attack them directly. Circle around behind them and come at them from in front of the balsam trees. <sup>15</sup>As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the trees, then attack, for God has attacked in front of you to defeat the Philistine army." <sup>16</sup>David followed God's orders exactly, and they defeated the Philistine army from Gibeon all the way to Gezer. <sup>17</sup>David's fame spread throughout all lands, and the LORD made all the nations fear him.

**David prepares to bring the chest to Jerusalem**

**15** After he had built houses for himself in David's City, David prepared a place for God's chest and pitched a tent for it. <sup>2</sup>David said, "Only the Levites may carry God's chest, because the LORD has chosen them to carry the LORD's chest and to minister to him forever."

<sup>3</sup>David assembled all Israel in Jerusalem to bring the LORD's chest to the place he had prepared for it. <sup>4</sup>David also gathered Aaron's family and the Levites:

<sup>5</sup>Uriel, the leader of Kohath's family, and 120 of his relatives;

<sup>6</sup>Asaiah, the leader of Merari's family, and 220 of his relatives;

<sup>7</sup>Joel, the leader of Gershon's family, and 130 of his relatives;

<sup>8</sup>Shemaiah, the leader of Elizaphan's family, and 200 of his relatives;

<sup>9</sup>Or master of outbursts

(1 Chron 10:6). The list of David's children functions not simply as a standard family tree but as a sign that God still supports the new king at a time when he may have felt particularly vulnerable.

14:8-17 After the reader hears of David's growing strength in Jerusalem, the focus shifts to the reaction of the Philistines. For the neighboring nation, David's newly consolidated power (*king over all Israel* in 14:8) is a threat that must be curtailed by military action.

14:9 *Rephaim Valley*: runs southwest from Jerusalem.

14:10 *David asked God for advice*: Besides David's flourishing family and assurance of God's support (1 Chron 14:1-4), another contrast to Saul is revealed by David's request for advice. According to the author, Saul died because he consulted a medium rather than God (1 Chron 10:13). The negative comparison between the two kings is made even stronger by the repetition of the same verb in 1 Chronicles 14:14 when David again "asked God's advice."

14:11 *By my strength... God has burst out*: David's response in victory shows his ultimate allegiance to God. *Baal-perazim*: means "master of outbursts." This reference to the explosive power of God is reminiscent of 1 Chronicles 13:10-11, where God struck Uzzah, and the area was re-named Perez-uzzah (which means "outburst against Uzzah").

14:12 *David ordered them burned*: The king's treatment of the Philistines' divine images is in contrast to the parallel account in 2 Samuel 5:21 where they are only carried off. David's more extreme reaction here is in keeping with the Chronicler's strong opposition to the worship of gods

other than the Lord, and the removal of the images by burning follows Deuteronomy 7:5, 25.

14:13-17 David's second war with the Philistines enhances his reputation even more.

14:14 *David again asked God's advice*: See the note on 1 Chronicles 14:10.

14:16 *from Gibeon all the way to Gezer*: David's army fought them back from the area just north of Jerusalem (Gibeon) closer to the edge of the Philistines' traditional territory.

15:1-29 The divine blessing shown both to Obed-edom (1 Chron 13:14) and David (1 Chron 14) signals again that God's anger was directed only against Uzzah (1 Chron 13:10). Thus moving the sacred chest into Jerusalem can proceed, although with strategic changes in personnel to avoid any more mishaps.

15:1 *After he had built houses for himself*: The installation of the chest in Jerusalem is the highpoint among several building projects, including David's houses and the city's foundations (1 Chron 11:8).

15:2 *Only the Levites may carry God's chest*: David carefully designates the Levites as the only ones who might come in physical contact with the chest. This limitation is consistent with how Moses regulated transportation of the chest by the Levites (Deut 10:8).

15:3 *all Israel in Jerusalem*: Although David changed the procession to Jerusalem by allowing only the Levites to carry the chest, the emphasis on the full participation of the nation is retained (1 Chron 13:5).

15:5-10 This careful counting of the participating priests and Levites corresponds on a literary level with the care

14:8 25a 5:17

14:9 25a 5:18,  
25a 23:13-17;  
1Ch 11:15-19

14:10-12  
25a 5:19-21

14:13-17  
2Sam 5:22-25

15:1-16:3  
2Sa 6:12-19

15:21  
1Ch 15:18;  
1Ch 16:5; Ps 6:1  
15:27 1Sa 2:18;  
1Sa 18:6-7;  
2Sa 6:14;  
1Ch 15:22  
15:28 2Sa 6:5;  
2Sa 6:15;  
1Ch 13:8;  
1Ch 15:16;  
Ezr 3:11

<sup>9</sup>Eliel, the leader of Hebron's family, and 80 of his relatives;

<sup>10</sup>and Amminadab, the leader of Uzziel's family, and 112 of his relatives.

<sup>11</sup>David called for the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and the Levites Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab. <sup>12</sup>He said to them, "You are the household heads of the Levites. Make yourselves holy, you and your brothers, and then bring the chest of the LORD, Israel's God, to the place I've prepared for it. <sup>13</sup>When you weren't with us the first time, the LORD our God burst out against us because we didn't ask his advice properly." <sup>14</sup>So the priests and the Levites made themselves holy to bring up the chest of the LORD, Israel's God. <sup>15</sup>The Levites carried God's chest with poles on their shoulders, just as Moses had commanded according to the LORD's word.

<sup>16</sup>Then David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint some of their relatives as singers to raise their voices joyfully, accompanied by musical instruments, including harps, lyres, and cymbals.

<sup>17</sup>So the Levites appointed Heman, Joel's son; and from his relatives, Asaph, Berechiah's son; and from their Merarite relatives, Ethan, Kushaiah's son; <sup>18</sup>and second in rank with them their relatives: Zechariah, Jaaziel,<sup>p</sup> Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, and Obed-edom and Jeiel the gatekeepers.

<sup>19</sup>The singers Heman, Asaph, and Ethan were to make music with bronze cymbals.

<sup>20</sup>Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and Benaiah were to play harps tuned to the Alamoth.

<sup>21</sup>Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-edom, Jeiel, and Azaziah were to lead with lyres tuned to the Sheminitah.

<sup>22</sup>Chenaniah was leader of the Levites who provided transportation,<sup>q</sup> because he was skilled at it.

<sup>23</sup>Berechiah and Elkanah were gatekeepers for the chest.

<sup>24</sup>The priests Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer were to blow the trumpets before God's chest. Obed-edom and Jehiah also were to be gatekeepers for the chest.

### **David brings the chest to Jerusalem**

<sup>25</sup>Then David, along with Israel's elders and the captains of the thousands, went with rejoicing to bring up the chest containing the LORD's covenant from Obed-edom's house. <sup>26</sup>Since God had helped the Levites who were carrying the chest containing the LORD's covenant, they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams. <sup>27</sup>David wore a fine-linen robe, as did the singers, all the Levites who were carrying the chest, and Chenaniah, the leader of transportation.<sup>r</sup> David also wore a linen priestly vest.<sup>s</sup> <sup>28</sup>So all Israel brought up the chest containing the LORD's covenant with shouts of joy, accompanied by the blast of the ram's

<sup>p</sup>LXX; MT Jaaziel's son <sup>q</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>r</sup>MT adds the singers. <sup>s</sup>Heb ephod

taken on the physical level to limit those permitted to carry the chest.

15:12-24 Stress on the careful deliberation that marked this journey of the sacred chest is indicated by two sets of instructions that are immediately carried out. David instructs the priests and the Levites to *Make yourselves holy*, which they directly proceed to do (15:14-15). Then David instructs the Levites to choose musicians from their number to accompany the procession, and again they immediately follow the royal command (15:17-24).

15:12 *Make yourselves holy*: The appropriate people must also undergo appropriate preparation. (For a similar emphasis on the holiness of those who transport the chest, see Josh 3:5-6 and 2 Chron 5:11.) No details are given here about what specific requirements made one holy, but other biblical texts specify that this can include the washing of clothes and abstinence from sex (Exod 19:10-15).

15:13 *the LORD our God burst out against us*: an explicit reminder of the death of Uzzah when he touched the chest during the last procession (1 Chron 13:10). A similar fear accompanies the appearance of God on Mount Sinai: The

priests must maintain their purity lest God "break loose against them" (Exod 19:22).

15:15 *just as Moses had commanded*: See Numbers 7:9 for the Levites transporting the chest on their shoulders and Exodus 25:13-15 for the specifications about the poles.

15:16-24 As with the list of those who are to carry the chest (1 Chron 15:5-10), there is a similar carefulness regarding the musicians and gatekeepers. The attention to music in public worship is a theme throughout the books of Chronicles (1 Chron 15:28; 16:42; 2 Chron 5:13; 7:6; 23:13).

15:20 *Alamoth*: may be a technical term whose meaning is now unknown, or it may refer to a group of young women who had a role in the music of the temple (as in Ps 68:25).

15:25 *went with rejoicing*: Along with music (see 1 Chron 15:16-24), the author also frequently emphasizes joy in large worship events.

15:26 *Since God had helped the Levites*: In contrast to the source text of 2 Samuel 6:13, which doesn't explicitly mention any divine aid, the Chronicler emphasizes that

horn, by trumpets and cymbals, and playing on harps and lyres. <sup>29</sup>As the chest containing the LORD's covenant entered David's City, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked out the window. When she saw King David leaping and dancing, she lost all respect for him.

**16** They brought in God's chest and placed it inside the tent David had pitched for it. <sup>1</sup>Then they brought entirely burned offerings and well-being sacrifices before God. <sup>2</sup>When David had finished offering the entirely burned offerings and the well-being sacrifices, he blessed the people in the LORD's name <sup>3</sup>and distributed a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, <sup>4</sup>and a raisin cake to every Israelite man and woman.

16:5 1Ch 25:1  
16:8 2Ki 19:19;  
Ps 105:1; Is 12:4  
16:8-22  
Ps 105:1-15

### David establishes worship

<sup>4</sup>David appointed some of the Levites to serve before the LORD's chest in order to remember, to give thanks, and to praise the LORD, Israel's God: <sup>5</sup>Asaph was the leader, and Zechariah his assistant; also Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel with harps and lyres; Asaph sounding the cymbals; <sup>6</sup>and the priests Benaiah and Jahaziel blowing trumpets regularly before the chest containing God's covenant. <sup>7</sup>On the same day, for the first time, David ordered Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the LORD.

### David's song of praise

- <sup>8</sup>Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name;  
make his deeds known to all people!
- <sup>9</sup>Sing to God, sing praises to him;  
dwell on all his wondrous works!
- <sup>10</sup>Give praise to God's holy name!  
Let the hearts rejoice of all those seeking the LORD!
- <sup>11</sup>Pursue the LORD and his strength;  
seek his face always!
- <sup>12</sup>Remember the wondrous works he has done,  
all his marvelous works, and the justice he declared—

<sup>c</sup>Cf LXX, Syr, Vulg; Heb uncertain

even correct protocols must be supplemented with the help of God.

**15:29 Michal, Saul's daughter:** Although the books of Chronicles have included extensive genealogies of the families of Saul and David (1 Chron 8:29-38; 9:35-44; 3:1-9; 14:3-7), this is the first mention of Saul's daughter Michal who became David's wife (1 Sam 18:20-29). Also absent in the Chronicler's account is any reason for Michal's contempt beyond David's enthusiastic dancing. According to the 2 Samuel 6 source, she is partially offended because, when he danced wearing only a linen priestly vest, he revealed his nakedness to the serving women (2 Sam 6:14, 20). But in this account, David protects his decency by wearing the vest and a robe (1 Chron 15:27). Thus her disregard for David here doesn't stem from neglect of public decency. With the narrator omitting any specific reason for her attitude, the reader is led to associate her position with that of Saul—a father and daughter who fail to properly appreciate God's sacred chest (1 Chron 13:3).

**16:1-3** After a delay of at least three months (1 Chron 13:14), the chest is brought to Jerusalem and placed inside its temporary dwelling, the tent.

**16:4-7** In the parallel story of 2 Samuel about the installation of the chest in Jerusalem, the celebrations end with David blessing the people and distributing the special food (2 Sam 6:18-19). The Chronicler extends this story by adding this description of David setting up the various religious functionaries who lead worship by the sacred chest. Inserting these verses highlights two features that are important to the author: the correct functioning of the worship practices (that is, the chest must be attended by

the proper personnel) and its Davidic source (that is, the job descriptions of the priests and Levites were set by Israel's ancient king).

**16:4** *to remember, to give thanks, and to praise the LORD:* The musical service of the Levites before the sacred chest includes singing about God's deeds (remembrance and thanksgiving) and God's attributes (praise). These are all reflected in the long prayer that follows (1 Chron 16:8-36).

**16:5** *Asaph was the leader:* The name Asaph is closely linked with Israelite worship and appears in several supercriptions to the Psalms (Pss 50, 73-83).

**16:8-36** David's extended prayer is a medley of texts from three Psalms (Pss 96, 105, 106), arranged to highlight the particular interests of the Chronicler and to address the occasion when the chest entered into the tent.

**16:8-22** The prayer begins with an extended quotation from Psalm 105:1-15, a long thanksgiving psalm for what God has done for the people throughout their history. It's a hopeful recitation of Israel's past that encourages the people to praise and trust in God.

**16:11** *Pursue the LORD and his strength:* In the context of celebrating the installation of the sacred chest in Jerusalem, this command isn't simply metaphorical. Within the Bible, the Hebrew term here translated as *strength* (also could be "might" or "power") is associated with the chest (Pss 78:61; 132:8 = 2 Chron 6:41). In addition, the Chronicler associates the act of seeking or looking for God with care of the divine chest (1 Chron 13:3; 15:13). So in this context, the verse is a specific call to worship regularly at the sanctuary where the chest is housed in Jerusalem.

**16:12** *Remember the wondrous works he has done:* This

16:22 Gn 20:7  
16:23-33  
Ps 96:1-13

- <sup>13</sup>you who are the offspring of Israel, his servant,  
and the children of Jacob, his chosen ones.
- <sup>14</sup>The LORD—he is our God.  
His justice is everywhere throughout the whole world.
- <sup>15</sup>God remembers<sup>a</sup> his covenant forever,  
the word he commanded to a thousand generations,  
<sup>16</sup>which he made with Abraham,  
the solemn pledge he swore to Isaac.
- <sup>17</sup>God set it up as binding law for Jacob,  
as an eternal covenant for Israel,  
<sup>18</sup>promising, “I hereby give you the land of Canaan  
as your allotted inheritance.”
- <sup>19</sup>When they<sup>v</sup> were few in number—  
insignificant, just immigrants—  
<sup>20</sup>wandering from nation to nation,  
from one kingdom to the next,  
<sup>21</sup>God didn’t let anyone oppress them.  
God punished kings for their sake:
- <sup>22</sup>“Don’t touch my anointed ones;  
don’t harm my prophets!”
- <sup>23</sup>Sing to the LORD, all the earth!  
Share the news of his saving work every single day!
- <sup>24</sup>Declare God’s glory among the nations;  
declare his wondrous works among all people  
<sup>25</sup>because the LORD is great and so worthy of praise.  
He is awesome beyond all other gods  
<sup>26</sup>because all the gods of the nations are just idols,  
but it is the LORD who created heaven!
- <sup>27</sup>Greatness and grandeur are in front of him;  
strength and joy are in his place.
- <sup>28</sup>Give to the LORD, all families of the nations—  
give to the LORD glory and power!
- <sup>29</sup>Give to the LORD the glory due his name!  
Bring gifts! Enter his presence!  
Bow down to the LORD in his holy splendor!
- <sup>30</sup>Tremble before him, all the earth!  
Yes, he set the world firmly in place;<sup>w</sup>  
it won’t be shaken.
- <sup>31</sup>Let heaven celebrate!  
Let the earth rejoice!  
Let the nations say, “The LORD rules!”
- <sup>32</sup>Let the sea and everything in it roar!  
Let the countryside and everything in it celebrate!

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT *Remember* <sup>v</sup>LXX; Vulg; MT *when you were* <sup>w</sup>LXX; MT *the world is firmly established*

injunction to “remember” is frequent in the Psalms, often occurring just before the text relates events from history (Pss 74:2; 77:11; 132:1; 137:7). In this context, the command to *remember* is given a particular content taken from the nation’s past (e.g., the Abrahamic covenant, the wilderness wandering). Significantly, this past is usually too distant to actually have been experienced by the worshipping community that is reading the text in the present. So part of remembering includes experiencing aspects of the past that were not personally witnessed. Another part of remembering in this prayer includes a striking link between the divine and human realms, when the text also reminds the reader that “God remembers his covenant forever” (1 Chron 16:15). In this prayer the

human community is commanded to remember the acts of a God who simultaneously remembers them.

16:13 *the offspring of Israel:* The text of Psalm 105:6 reads “the offspring of Abraham.”

16:19-22 The memory of a time when God protected the small and vulnerable nation from the power of kings would have particular resonance in the time of the Chronicler. Their province of Yehud (Judea) was an insignificant part of the powerful Persian Empire, susceptible to the emperors and administrators who ruled over them. Calling to mind the time when *God didn’t let anyone oppress their ancestors* is a message of encouragement in the present circumstances.

16:23-33 After an extended thanksgiving that focused on

<sup>33</sup>Then the trees of the forest will shout out joyfully before the LORD,  
because he is coming to establish justice on earth!

<sup>34</sup>Give thanks to the LORD because he is good,  
because his faithful love endures forever.

<sup>35</sup>Say: "Save us, God, our savior!  
Gather us! Deliver us from among the nations  
so we can give thanks to your holy name  
and rejoice in your praise."

<sup>36</sup>Bless the LORD, Israel's God,  
from forever in the past to forever always.  
And let all the people say, "Amen!"  
Praise the LORD!

<sup>37</sup>Then David placed Asaph and his relatives, together with Obed-edom and sixty-eight of his relatives, to minister there continually before the chest containing the LORD's covenant, following the routines required on each day. <sup>38</sup>Obed-edom, Jeduthun's son, and Hosah served as gatekeepers. <sup>39</sup>David also placed the priest Zadok and his other priestly relatives at the LORD's dwelling at the shrine in Gibeon. <sup>40</sup>They were to offer continually, both morning and evening, entirely burned offerings to the LORD on the altar for entirely burned offerings, following the written requirements in the LORD's Instruction, which he had given Israel. <sup>41</sup>With them were Heman and Jeduthun and the rest of those chosen by name to give thanks to the LORD, because his faithful love lasts forever. <sup>42</sup>With them were also\* the trumpets and the cymbals for the musicians and the instruments for God's songs. Jeduthun's family was at the gate. <sup>43</sup>Then all of the people left for their homes. And David returned to bless his household.

### God's promise to David

**17**When David was settled into his palace,<sup>†</sup> he said to the prophet Nathan, "I'm living in a cedar palace while the chest containing the LORD's covenant is under curtains."

<sup>2</sup>Nathan replied, "Go ahead and do whatever you are thinking, because God is with you."

<sup>3</sup>But that very night God's word came to Nathan: <sup>4</sup>Go to my servant David and tell him, This is what the LORD says: You are not the one to build the temple<sup>‡</sup> for me to live in. <sup>5</sup>In fact, I haven't lived in a temple from the day I brought Israel out until this very day. I've been

\*LXX; MT adds *Heman and Jeduthun*. <sup>†</sup>Or, here and elsewhere in this chapter, *house* <sup>‡</sup>Or, here and elsewhere in this chapter, *house*

God's deeds in Israel's past, the prayer takes up the words of Psalm 96:1-13 and praises God in the context of the entire cosmos.

16:34-36 At the end of a great prayer of thanksgiving and praise using texts from Psalms 105 and 96, the author uses Psalm 106:1, 47-48 to voice the main petition: *Deliver us from among the nations*.

16:37-42 After his long prayer, David continues in his act of installing the Levites to serve in the presence of God's sacred chest.

16:38 *Obed-edom*: presumably the same person who appears in 1 Chronicles 13:13-14 and who houses the chest for three months.

16:39 *the shrine in Gibeon*: Although this isn't clear in other biblical texts, the books of Chronicles have the shrine at Gibeon in operation even after the sacred chest has been installed in Jerusalem (1 Chron 21:29).

17:1-27 This is a central chapter in the books of Chronicles, containing God's promise to David and his house as related through Nathan's oracle. The author carries forward the significance of the promise in the rest of the book. The following chapters present David as: a warrior (establishing the military security for the nation in 1 Chron 18-20), the one who acquired the site and prepared the materials and personnel for the temple (1 Chron 21-22:5; 22:17-27:34), and selected Solomon as his successor (1 Chron

22:6-16). The chapter itself has three basic parts: David's proposal (17:1-2), God's promise (17:3-15), and David's prayer (17:16-27). (See sidebar, "God's Response to Prayer in Chronicles.")

17:1-15 When the king expresses his desire to build a temple for the sacred chest (17:1-2), God responds with an extended plan and promise for the reigns of David and his successor (17:3-15). This material is drawn from 2 Samuel 7:1-16 and retains the same play on the Hebrew term for *house*, a word that can have architectural and sociological significance. When David is settled in *his palace* (or "his house," 17:1), he contemplates building something more permanent for God's sacred chest. God responds by saying that David isn't the one to build *the temple* (or "the house," 17:4). Rather, God will establish a *dynasty* for David (or "a house," 17:10), and one from these descendants will build a *temple* (or "a house," 17:12).

17:1 *cedar palace*: David compares his own grand dwelling with the current residence of the chest (a tent). Although this is the traditional architecture for the sacred object, the king suggests that perhaps the time has come to move to something more permanent and lavish.

17:4-6 *my servant David*: God reassures the king of his favored status even as while rejecting the idea of a Davidic temple. The two reasons given are based on precedent (*I haven't lived in a temple*) and the absence of a prior request

16:34 Ps 106:1,  
Ps 107:1,  
Ps 118:1,  
Ps 136:1

16:35, 36  
Ps 106:47, 48

16:36 1Ki 8:15;  
Neh 8:6;  
Ps 72:18

16:37-43  
2Sa 6:19-23

17:1, 2 2Sa 7:1-3

17:3-15  
2Sa 7:4-17

17:12 1Ch 22:10  
17:16 2Sa 7:18  
17:16-27  
2Sa 7:18-29

traveling from tent to tent and from dwelling to dwelling.<sup>a</sup> <sup>6</sup>Throughout my traveling with the Israelites, did I ever ask one of Israel's tribal leaders, whom I appointed to shepherd my people, Why haven't you built me a cedar temple?

<sup>7</sup>So then, say this to my servant David: This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says: I myself took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be leader over my people Israel. <sup>8</sup>I've been with you wherever you've gone. I've eliminated all your enemies before you. Now I will make your name great—like the name of the greatest people on earth. <sup>9</sup>I'm going to provide a place for my people Israel, and plant them so that they may live there and no longer be disturbed. Cruel people will no longer trouble them as they did earlier, <sup>10</sup>when I appointed judges over my people Israel. I'll subdue all your enemies and make you great. As for a dynasty,<sup>b</sup> the LORD will build one for you! <sup>11</sup>When the time comes for you to die, I will raise up a descendant of yours after you, one of your own sons, to succeed you, and I will establish his kingship. <sup>12</sup>He is the one who will build me a temple, and I will establish his throne forever. <sup>13</sup>I will become his father and he will become my son, and I'll never withdraw my faithful love from him as I did from the one before you. <sup>14</sup>I'll install him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne will be established forever.

<sup>15</sup>Nathan faithfully reported all that he had seen and heard to David.

### David's prayer

<sup>16</sup>Then King David went and sat in the LORD's presence. He asked:

Who am I, LORD God, and of what significance is my family that you have brought me this far? <sup>17</sup>But even this was too small in your eyes, God. You have spoken about the future of your servant's dynasty and have chosen me as an important person, LORD God.

<sup>18</sup>What more can I say to you for honoring your servant? You yourself know your servant. <sup>19</sup>LORD, for your servant's sake and according to your will, you have done this great thing in order to make all these great things known.

<sup>20</sup>LORD, no one can compare to you, no God except you, just as we have heard with our own ears.

<sup>21</sup>Who is like your people Israel, a unique nation on the earth, that God redeemed as his own people, establishing a name for yourself by doing great and awesome things, by driving out nations before your people whom you saved from Egypt? <sup>22</sup>You established your people Israel as your own people forever, and you, LORD, became their God.

<sup>23</sup>Now, LORD, confirm forever the promise you have made about your servant and his dynasty. Do as you have promised <sup>24</sup>so that it may be established and so that your name may be made great forever when people say, "The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, is Israel's God." May your servant David's household be established before you. <sup>25</sup>You, my God, have revealed to your servant that you will build him a dynasty. That is why your servant has found the courage to pray this prayer to you. <sup>26</sup>LORD, you are truly God, and you promised this good thing to your servant. <sup>27</sup>So now willingly bless your servant's dynasty so that it might continue forever before you, because you, LORD God, have promised. Let your servant's dynasty be blessed forever by your blessing.

<sup>a</sup>MT lacks to dwelling. <sup>b</sup>Or, here and elsewhere in this chapter, house

(did I ever ask... Why haven't you built me a cedar temple?).

Explicitly, God also questions the suitability of David to be the builder. Although no reason for this is given here, the guilt on David's hands, stained by the blood of those he has killed, will be mentioned in 1 Chronicles 22:8; 28:3.

17:7-14 The second part of God's response to David encompasses the past (*I myself took you*), while also looking toward David's future (*I'll subdue all your enemies*) and the future of his son (*I will raise up a descendant of yours after you*).

17:10, 12 *dynasty... temple*: For the wordplay involved with these two terms, see the note on 1 Chronicles 17:1-15. 17:13-14 *I will become his father*: The Chronicler emphasizes that God's promise to Solomon is eternal. The language of family is employed (*father... son*), the term *forever* is repeated twice, a negative comparison is made between Solomon and Saul (described as *the one before*

*you*), and the conditional clause from 2 Samuel 7:14 is omitted ("whenever he does wrong, I will discipline him with a human rod"). *in my house and in my kingdom*: another strategic change from the source material in 2 Samuel 7:16 which reads "Your dynasty, and your kingdom." For the Chronicler, although the throne may be occupied by a member of the house of David, it ultimately belongs to God alone, and the king acts as God's vice-regent.

17:16-27 David's response to God's promise is a two-part prayer, consisting of thanksgiving for God's promise (17:16-22) and a petition that the promise be confirmed (17:23-27).

17:17-27 *your servant*: David echoes God's own title for the king (1 Chron 17:4) and refers to himself as God's servant four times in the first three verses. At the end of the prayer he uses the same title five more times (17:25-27).

18:1 2Sa 8:1  
 18:2 2Sa 8:2  
 18:3, 4, 7, 8  
 2Sa 8:3, 4, 7, 8;  
 1Ki 11:23, 24  
 18:5, 6  
 2Sa 8:5, 6

*God's Response to Prayer in Chronicles* Throughout the books of Chronicles, God listens and responds to humankind. When Jabez prayed for God's blessing (1 Chron 4:10) and warriors cried for help in battle (1 Chron 5:20), God answered immediately and brought assistance. This portrait of God helps with interpreting the interchange between David and God in chapter 17. The scene begins with David pointing out the relative inequality between the buildings that house the king and the sacred chest: a cedar palace for David vs. an enclosure made of curtains for the chest (1 Chron 17:1). God then responds through Nathan the prophet and promises a dynasty to David and a son who will build a temple for God (1 Chron 17:4-14). Although it is surely significant that David himself isn't allowed to build the temple, it is also significant that God's promises to David don't come simply out of the blue but as a response to David's own observation.

The Chronicler does assert that God is free from any type of manipulation or rigid calculation on the part of humanity. The divine world can also bring about fortune or disaster unmerited by prior human activity, such as the 70,000 citizens who died when David commanded the census in 1 Chronicles 21:4 and God's acceptance of Solomon as son in 1 Chronicles 22:10; 28:6. But within this divine freedom, the author also stresses that God is influenced by the prayers and expressions of humanity.

### David's wars

**18** Some time later, David defeated the Philistines, subdued them, and took Gath and its villages from Philistine control. <sup>2</sup>He also defeated Moab, enslaving them and requiring payment. <sup>3</sup>David defeated Zobah's King Hadadezer at Hamath, as he continued to establish his control along the Euphrates River. <sup>4</sup>David captured one thousand chariots from him, seven thousand cavalry, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. Then David cut the hamstrings of all but one hundred of the chariot horses. <sup>5</sup>When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Zobah's King Hadadezer, David killed twenty-two thousand of the Arameans. <sup>6</sup>David stationed soldiers<sup>c</sup> in Aram of Damascus, enslaved them, and required payment. The LORD gave David victory wherever he went.

<sup>7</sup>David took the gold shields carried by Hadadezer's servants and brought them to Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup>From Tibhath and Cun, Hadadezer's cities, David took large amounts of bronze, with which Solomon made the bronze basin,<sup>d</sup> the pillars, and the bronze equipment.

<sup>9</sup>When Hamath's King Tou heard that David had defeated the entire army of Zobah's King Hadadezer, <sup>10</sup>he sent his son Hadoram to King David to wish him well and to congratulate him over his battle and defeat of Hadadezer, because Tou was an enemy of Hadadezer.

<sup>c</sup>Cf 2 Sam 8:6; Heb lacks *soldiers*. <sup>d</sup>Or *sea*

18:1-17 This is part of a longer section that presents David's victories over neighboring tribes and territories (1 Chron 18-20). The material comes from the book of Samuel (1 Chron 18:1-17 = 2 Sam 8:1-18; 1 Chron 19:1-20:3 = 2 Sam 10:1-11:1; 12:26, 30, 31; 1 Chron 20:4-8 = 2 Sam 21:18-22). However, instead of interspersing the military accounts throughout the narrative, the Chronicler combines them and presents them in a single block. This arrangement highlights the fulfillment of God's promise to "subdue" David's enemies and provide a place for the nation to live in peace (1 Chron 17:9-10). The section is framed by the assertion that various enemies were "subdued" (1 Chron 18:1; 20:4). The chapters also highlight the territorial expansion of the nation in all directions: the Philistines to the west (18:1), Moab and Ammon to the east (18:2; 19), Zobah and the Arameans to the north (18:3-6; 19), and Edom to the south (18:12-13). Finally, the extended account of David's wars also explains why, as someone who had caused so much blood to be shed, the king wasn't allowed to build the temple (1 Chron 22:8; 28:3).

18:1 *the Philistines*: a neighboring tribe situated between Israel and the Mediterranean coast and an ongoing threat to the nation during the time of Saul and David. David's

victory here dramatically contrasts with Saul's fatal defeat in 1 Chronicles 10:1-7. *subdued*: For the strategic use of this term as an unfolding of the divine promise in 1 Chronicles 17:10, see the note on 1 Chronicles 18:1-17.

18:2 *Moab*: This nation was located on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, across the Jordan River. In the parallel account in 2 Samuel 8:2, David orders that two-thirds of the Moabites be killed.

18:3 *Zobah*: one of the Aramean states in the north. *continued to establish his control*: In the Hebrew idiom the phrase read, "set up his monument," which reflects the ancient practice of marking territorial boundaries and declaring sovereignty.

18:6 *The Lord gave David victory*: David is the immediate actor in these military accounts, but the author emphasizes that his success is due to God's promise, "I'll subdue all your enemies" (1 Chron 17:4).

18:7-11 With the mention of loot acquired in war, the author once again points to the future temple building. David's victories not only achieve the peace necessary for pursuing his building program, they also provide the material to build the temple.

18:8 *with which Solomon made the bronze basin*: See 2 Chronicles 4:2-6.

19:11, 13  
 2Sa 8:11, 12  
 18:12, 13  
 2Sa 8:13, 14;  
 1Ki 11:15-17  
 19:14, 17  
 2Sa 8:15-18  
 19:1-5  
 2Sa 10:1-5  
 19:6-15  
 2Sa 10:6-14

Hadoram brought with him all kinds of gold, silver, and bronze objects. <sup>11</sup>King David dedicated these to the LORD along with the silver and the gold he had taken from all these nations: Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and Amalek. <sup>12</sup>Abishai, Zeruiah's son, struck down eighteen thousand Edomites in the Salt Valley. <sup>13</sup>He stationed soldiers in Edom, and all the Edomites became David's slaves. The LORD gave David victory wherever he went.

### David's administration

<sup>14</sup>David ruled over all Israel and maintained justice and righteousness for all his people. <sup>15</sup>Zeruiah's son Joab was in command of the army; Ahilud's son Jehoshaphat was recorder; <sup>16</sup>Ahitub's son Zadok and Abiathar's son Ahimelech<sup>a</sup> were priests; Shavsha was secretary; <sup>17</sup>Jehoiada's son Benaiah was in command of the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were the king's chief personal advisors.

### War with the Ammonites and Arameans

**19** Some time later, the Ammonite King Nahash died, and his son succeeded him as king. <sup>2</sup>"I'll be loyal to Nahash's son Hanun," David said, "because his father was loyal to me." So David sent messengers with condolences about his father's death.

But when David's servants arrived in the Ammonite territory to express his sympathy to Hanun, <sup>3</sup>the Ammonite leaders asked Hanun, "Do you really believe David is honoring your father because he has sent you condolences? Of course not! His servants have come to search the city, spy it out, and overthrow it!" <sup>4</sup>So Hanun took David's servants, shaved them, cut off half their garments from their buttocks down, and sent them off.

<sup>5</sup>When this was reported to David, he sent messengers to the men because they were completely ashamed. The king said, "Stay in Jericho until your beards have grown. Then you can come back."

<sup>6</sup>When the Ammonites realized that they had offended David, Hanun and the Ammonites sent one thousand kikkars of silver to hire chariots and cavalry for themselves from Aram-naharaim, Aram-maacah, and Zobah. <sup>7</sup>They hired thirty-two thousand chariots, as well as King Maacah and his army, who came and camped in front of Medeba, while the Ammonites left their cities and came together ready for battle. <sup>8</sup>When David heard this, he sent Joab and the entire army of warriors. <sup>9</sup>The Ammonites marched out and formed a battle line at the entrance to the city, while the kings who had come remained in the countryside.

<sup>a</sup>LXX, Syr; MT *Abimelech*

18:12-13 With this account of victory over Edom in the south, the narrator completes the circle of Israel's military triumphs to the west and east (Philistia and Moab, 1 Chron 18:1-2) and to the north and south (Aram and Edom, 1 Chron 18:3-13).

18:14-17 The administrative organization of David's kingdom combined military and religious leadership (cf. 2 Sam 8:15-18).

18:17 *the Cherethites and the Pelethites*: mercenary troops, probably from the area around the Aegean Sea.

19:1-19 This story of David's military victory over Ammon continues the series recounting the king's wars begun in the previous chapter. Much of this chapter is taken from the parallel account in 2 Samuel 10. See the note on 1 Chronicles 18:1-17.

19:2 *I'll be loyal... because his father was loyal to me*: The Bible contains no clear record of any past allegiance made between David and Nahash, king of the large territory east of the Jordan River. It may be that the two men entered into an agreement when David was on the run from Saul. (Nahash appears as an enemy of Saul in 1 Sam 11:1-13.) Regardless of the specifics of the historical background, David's solemn promise of loyalty to Hanun provides the lens through which the reader now interprets the unfolding story.

19:3 *Do you really believe*: Although the narrator has just assured the reader of David's honorable intentions,

Hanun's advisors don't have access to this information, and they are right to be wary. Political treaties in the ancient world were usually made between heads of state, and so the death of one ruler presented new opportunities to adjust the balance of power. In addition, David has recently gone to war with neighboring peoples such as the Philistines, Moabites, Aram and the Edomites (1 Chron 18:1-2, 12-13), and a continuation of military activity into Ammon is a possibility that can't be ruled out. However, the leaders aren't simply wary but overly confident in their expectation that David is seeking an advantage over Ammon. With their assured pronouncement to Hanun (*Of course not!*) the advisors move from their proper role in offering sage advice to goading the new king into expecting the worst: David and his servants seek to overthrow the city.

19:4 *shaved... cut off... sent them off*: Though expecting the hospitality shown to visiting dignitaries, David's men are instead humiliated.

19:6 *When the Ammonites realized that they had offended David*: Without the necessary force already assembled, the prior advice of the Ammonite leaders seems exceptionally rash. In order to fight the impending war with Israel, Ammon prepares by hiring chariots and cavalry from territories in Aram that lay to the north.

19:7 *Medeba*: a Moabite city, approximately 20 miles south-southwest of Rabbah.



<sup>10</sup>When Joab saw that the battle would be fought on two fronts, he chose some of Israel's finest warriors and deployed them to meet the Arameans. <sup>11</sup>The rest of the army Joab placed under the command of his brother Abishai. When they took up their positions to meet the Arameans, <sup>12</sup>Joab said, "If the Arameans prove too strong for me, you must help me, and if the Ammonites prove too strong for you, I'll help you. <sup>13</sup>Be brave! We must be courageous for the sake of our people and the cities of our God. The LORD will do what is good in his eyes."

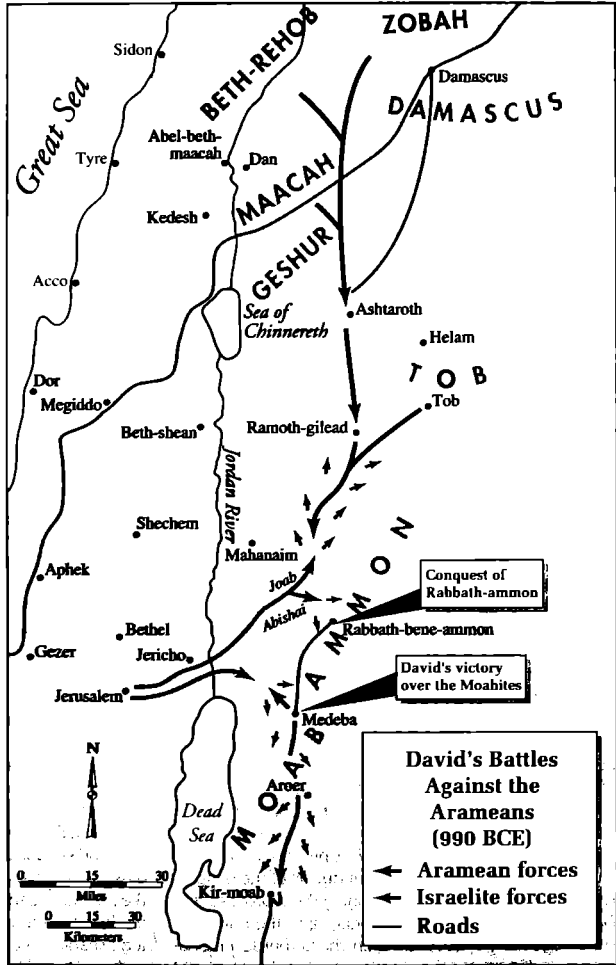
19:16-19  
25a 10:15-19  
20:1-3  
25a 12:26:31

<sup>14</sup>When Joab and the troops who were with him advanced into battle against the Arameans, they fled from him. <sup>15</sup>When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans had fled, they also fled from his brother Abishai and retreated into the city. So Joab returned to Jerusalem.

<sup>16</sup>The Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel. They sent out messengers to bring Aramean reinforcements from the other side of the river, with Shophach the commander of Hadadezer's army at their head. <sup>17</sup>Upon hearing this, David gathered all Israel and crossed the Jordan. David advanced and took up positions against the Arameans to meet them in battle. After initiating the battle, <sup>18</sup>the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed seven thousand Aramean chariot drivers and forty thousand foot soldiers. Shophach the commander of their army was killed too. <sup>19</sup>When the servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with David and served him. Never again would the Arameans come to the aid of the Ammonites.

**Defeat of the Ammonites**

**20** In the spring, the time when kings go to war,



<sup>19:10</sup> *Israel's finest warriors*: Joab recognizes that the mercenary force of the Arameans is the strongest, and thus sends his best fighters to battle them under his command. *fought on two fronts*: Joab turns an obvious tactical disadvantage into an advantage. Whereas the forces of the opposing armies are divided, he lines up the army so that Israel remains connected in battle.

<sup>19:13</sup> *The LORD will do what is good in his eyes*: Joab is a military commander who realizes that victory is ultimately in the hands of God. He is a leader who mixes military strategy with a trust in the divine will.

<sup>19:19</sup> *Never again would the Arameans come to the aid*

*of the Ammonites*: At the conclusion of the story, Hanun from Ammon is in a much weaker position than he was at the beginning of his reign in 1 Chronicles 19:1. By acting on his suspicion that David was trying to undermine his kingdom, he effectively strengthened Israel's hand. Aram moved from the side of Ammon to the side of Israel, effectively fortifying Israel's eastern front.

<sup>20:1-8</sup> The brevity of this chapter highlights the large amount of text that the Chronicler edited out of the source material found in 2 Samuel 11-12, much of it unflattering to David. For example, in the 2 Samuel account, David appears in the Ammonite city of Rabbah only after Joab tells

20:4 2Sa 21:18  
 20:5 2Sa 21:19  
 20:6-8  
 2Sa 21:20-22  
 21:1 2Sa 24:1;  
 Job 1:6;  
 Zec 3:1-2;  
 Lk 22:31  
 21:1-6  
 2Sa 24:1-9

Joab marched out with the army, destroyed the land of the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. David stayed in Jerusalem while Joab attacked Rabbah and overthrew it. <sup>2</sup>David took Milcom's<sup>f</sup> crown from his head. He found that it weighed one kikkar of gold and was set with a valuable stone. It was placed on David's head. The amount of loot David took from the city was huge. <sup>3</sup>After removing the people who were in the city, David demolished the city with saws, iron picks, and axes,<sup>g</sup> as he did to all the Ammonite cities. Then David and all his troops returned to Jerusalem.

### War with the Philistines

<sup>4</sup>Once again war broke out at Gezer with the Philistines. At that time Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Sippai, one of the descendants of the Rephah,<sup>h</sup> and the Philistines were subdued. <sup>5</sup>In another war with the Philistines, Jair's son Elhanan killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam. <sup>6</sup>At another war in Gath there was a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in all, who was also descended from Raphah. <sup>7</sup>When he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of David's brother Shimea killed him. <sup>8</sup>These were descended from the Raphah in Gath, and they fell by the hands of David and his servants.

### David's census

**21** A heavenly Adversary<sup>i</sup> arose against Israel and incited David to count Israel. <sup>2</sup>So David told Joab and the leaders of the people, "Go throughout all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, and take a census of the people so I know how many people there are."

<sup>3</sup>But Joab replied, "May the LORD increase his people a hundred times! Sir, aren't you the king, and aren't they all your servants? Why do you want to do this? Why bring guilt on Israel?"

<sup>f</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT *their king* <sup>g</sup>Cf 2 Sam 12:31; MT *saws* <sup>h</sup>Or *giants*; also in 20:6-7 <sup>i</sup>Heb *satan*

him that glory for the victory will accrue to the military leader and not the king (2 Sam 12:26-31). Even more notable is the deletion of the Bathsheba story, where David, seeing the bathing wife of Uriah from his rooftop, has his servants bring her to him for sex. His cover-up of the crime rapidly devolves until he arranges to have Uriah murdered (2 Sam 11:1-25). By adapting the sources with strategic omissions, the Chronicler presents a David less violent and more admirable than he appears in Samuel-Kings. The omission of the people's support of Absalom, leading to an attempted revolt against David as well as David's execution of the remaining descendants of Saul, are other examples of the Chronicler's adaptation of the source material. In addition to providing a flattering portrait of David, the adaptation in 20:1-8 also allows the reader to see part of Nathan's oracle come to pass. As well as promising a dynasty to David, God also promised to subdue all of the people's enemies (1 Chron 17:10). By arranging the sources so that David's victories over the Ammonites and the Philistines come together in quick succession, the Chronicler emphasizes the fulfillment of the promise.

**20:2** *Milcom*: the god of the Ammonites (1 Kgs 11:5, 33; 2 Kgs 23:13), presented here as a statue housed in the city. *one kikkar of gold*: about 75 pounds, the crown is astonishingly heavy.

**20:3** *David demolished the city with saws, iron picks, and axes*: overtones of the procedure for holy war, in which the city is absolutely destroyed and the precious metals taken for use in the Lord's sacred area (see, e.g., the destruction of Jericho in Josh 6). *as he did to all the Ammonite cities*: Although the author only relates the destruction of Rabbah in 1 Chronicles 19, this concluding phrase joins together with the introduction to the section ("destroyed the land of the Ammonites," 1 Chron 20:1) to frame the account as only one example of the devastation of Ammon.

**20:4** *subdued*: See the note on 1 Chronicles 18:1-17.

**20:5** *Elhanan killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite*: In the middle of accounts of war with the Philistines, the author attempts to clear up some details that are confusing in the Samuel narratives. In 1 Samuel 17 David kills the very tall warrior, Goliath from Gath. In 2 Samuel 21:19, however, it is Jair's son Elhanan from Bethlehem who kills Goliath from Gath. With the small insertion of *Lahmi the brother of*, the Chronicler provides for a correction of the accounts. **21:1-30** By winning treasure and peace through battle, the divine oracle to David is being fulfilled (1 Chron 17:3-14). Chapter 21 opens a new section of Chronicles that gives the final preparations for building the temple. Although Solomon will complete the structure, these next chapters show that David acquired the site and the building materials, and set qualified personnel in place. The section begins with an account of David's attempt to take a census of the nation, and the account includes several key changes made to the source text (2 Sam 24). This includes the strategic shaping of the story's context. The Samuel account is gathered together with several other accounts and told at the end of David's reign. For the Chronicler, however, the census is a central feature of David's time as king, leading to the choice of the temple site.

**21:1** *A heavenly Adversary*: replaces "The LORD who burned with anger" in 2 Samuel 24:1. (See sidebar, "Satan.")

**21:2** *from Dan to Beer-sheba*: the two cities that traditionally mark the northern and southern borders of Israel (e.g., Judg 20:1). David is emphasizing that the entire nation is to be counted.

**21:3** *Why bring guilt on Israel?*: Joab is giving voice to the tradition that national counts were associated with great risk (Exod 30:11-16). The reason for this isn't clearly given in the Bible, but it may have to do with a connection between a census and the collection of taxes or forced labor.

21:7-13  
 2Sa 24:10-14  
 21:14-17  
 2Sa 24:15-17  
 21:15 Gn 6:6;  
 Ex 32:14  
 21:18 2Sa 24:18;  
 1Ch 21:15;  
 2Ch 3:1  
 21:18-30  
 2Sa 24:18-25

*Satan* The Hebrew word for “Adversary” in 1 Chronicles 21:1 is *satan*. The use and meaning of this term develops through the centuries of the writing of the OT, and the purpose of this adversary develops further in NT times. Thus it is important to avoid the application of later meanings into earlier texts. In texts such as Zechariah 3:1-2 and Job 1-2, the term appears as “the satan” with the definite article, describing someone who is one of the “sons of God” with access to the heavenly court. This adversary functions as a divine accuser inciting God against a human. In 1 Chronicles 21:1, however, the term occurs without the definite article, and it isn’t God but rather David who is incited to count the people. For other occurrences of the term without the definite article, see Psalm 109:6; Numbers 22:23; 1 Samuel 29:4; 2 Samuel 19:22; 1 Kings 5:4; 11:14, 23, 25. Over time, of course, the figure of Satan develops into an incarnation of evil, an entity independent from God, devoted to undermining the divine will. By the 4th century CE, the figure of Satan was associated with the fallen angel of Isaiah 14:12.

<sup>4</sup>But the king overruled Joab, who left and traveled throughout all Israel. When he returned to Jerusalem, <sup>5</sup>he reported to David the total number: there were 1,100,000 men available for military service in all Israel, while Judah alone had 470,000. <sup>6</sup>He didn’t include Levi and Benjamin among them, because Joab disagreed with the king’s order.

<sup>7</sup>God was offended by this census and punished Israel. <sup>8</sup>Then David said to God, “I have sinned greatly in what I have done! Now please take away the guilt of your servant because I have done something very foolish.”

<sup>9</sup>The LORD told Gad, David’s seer: <sup>10</sup>Go and tell David, This is what the LORD says: I’m offering you three punishments. Choose one of them, and that is what I will do to you.

<sup>11</sup>When Gad came to David, he said to him, “This is what the LORD says: Take your choice: <sup>12</sup>three years of famine, three months of fleeing<sup>1</sup> from your enemies while your enemies’ sword overtakes you, or three days of the LORD’s sword, that is, plague in the land and the LORD’s messenger bringing disaster in every part of Israel. Decide now what answer I should take back to the one who sent me.”

<sup>13</sup>“I’m in deep trouble,” David said to Gad. “I’d rather fall into the hands of the LORD, who is very merciful; don’t let me fall into human hands.” <sup>14</sup>So the LORD sent a plague throughout Israel, and seventy thousand Israelites fell dead.

<sup>15</sup>Then God sent a messenger to Jerusalem to destroy it. But just as the messenger was about to destroy it, the LORD looked and changed his mind about the destruction. He said to the messenger who was destroying it, “That’s enough! Withdraw your hand!” At that time the LORD’s messenger was standing near the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

<sup>16</sup>When David looked up, he saw the LORD’s messenger stationed between the earth and the sky with a drawn sword in his hand stretched out against Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, dressed in mourning clothes, fell on their faces; <sup>17</sup>and David said to God, “Wasn’t it I who ordered the numbering of the people? I’m the sinner, the one responsible for this evil. But these sheep—what have they done? LORD, my God, turn your hand against me and my household, but spare your people from the plague.”

<sup>18</sup>The LORD’s messenger ordered Gad to tell David that he should go up to the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite in order to set up an altar for the LORD. <sup>19</sup>So David went up, following the instructions Gad had delivered in the LORD’s name.

<sup>20</sup>Ornan turned around and saw the king.<sup>21</sup> His four sons who were with him hid themselves, but Ornan continued threshing wheat. <sup>21</sup>When David approached Ornan, Ornan looked up, recognized David, left the threshing floor, and bowed to David with his face to

<sup>1</sup>LXX, cf 2 Sam 24:13; MT *being swept away* <sup>2</sup>LXX, cf 2 Sam 24:20; MT *messenger*

Or maybe the accurate calculation of military fighting units implied that victory in war depended less on God’s power and more on the size of the fighting force. A later text in Chronicles relates the friction between obtaining an accurate count of the entire nation and God’s promise to Abraham that they would be “as numerous as the stars in the sky” (1 Chron 27:23; cf. Gen 22:17).

21:6 In distinction from the source in Samuel (2 Sam 24:4-9), and in defiance of David’s instruction that the entire nation be counted (1 Chron 21:1), Joab refuses to include

the tribes of Levi and Benjamin in the census. The Chronicler includes no reason for Joab’s decision. Although the book of Numbers declares that Levi is to be excluded from a military census because the tribe does not fight in battle (Num 1:49; 2:33), they can be included in a national count (Num 3:15).

21:16 *dressed in mourning clothes*: indicates in a public and physical way David’s sense of responsibility and a changed life.

21:18 *the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite*: In

the ground. <sup>22</sup>David said to Ornan, "Give me the site of the threshing floor, charging me full price, so that I may build an altar to the LORD, and the plague among the people may come to an end."

<sup>23</sup>Ornan replied to David, "Take it for yourself, and may my master the king do what he thinks is best. I'll even provide the oxen for the entirely burned offerings, the threshing boards for wood, and the wheat for the grain offering—I'll provide everything!"

<sup>24</sup>But King David said to Ornan, "No, I will buy them from you at a fair price. I won't offer to the LORD what belongs to you nor offer an entirely burned offering that costs me nothing." <sup>25</sup>Then David gave Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the site. <sup>26</sup>David built an altar there for the LORD and offered entirely burned offerings and well-being sacrifices. He called on the LORD, who answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of the entirely burned offering, consuming the entirely burned offering.<sup>1</sup> <sup>27</sup>Then the LORD commanded the messenger to return his sword to its sheath.

#### *Location of the future temple*

<sup>28</sup>At that time, after David saw that the LORD had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there. <sup>29</sup>The LORD's dwelling that Moses had made in the desert and the altar for entirely burned offerings were then at the shrine in Gibeon, <sup>30</sup>but David couldn't go there to seek God because he feared the sword of the LORD's messenger.

**22** Then David said, "This is where the LORD God's temple will be, along with Israel's altar for entirely burned offerings."

#### *David prepares to build the temple*

<sup>1</sup>David gave orders to gather the immigrants living in the land of Israel, and he appointed masons who would cut stones for building God's temple. <sup>3</sup>David also provided a huge amount of iron for nails for the doors of the gates and for the braces, so much bronze that it couldn't be weighed, <sup>4</sup>and innumerable cedar logs from the Sidonians and the Tyrians, who gave them to David. <sup>5</sup>David thought, My son Solomon is too inexperienced to build the LORD's temple. It must be great beyond compare in order to win fame and glory throughout all lands, so I myself will prepare things for him. So David made extensive preparations before his death.

<sup>1</sup>LXX; MT lacks *consuming the entirely burned offering*.

2 Chronicles 3:1, the author relates that this site is Mount Moriah where Abraham was diverted from sacrificing his son Isaac (Gen 22).

21:24 *at a fair price*: David's insistence on buying the property even after the owner has offered it for free is similar to Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah from Ephron in Genesis 23. In both stories, a commitment to financial expenditure implies that the land is significant, that it has been honestly purchased, and that the prior owner will have no subsequent claim on the property.

21:25 *six hundred shekels of gold*: In both weight and quality of metal, this amount is a dramatic increase over what David paid in the parallel account (fifty shekels of silver in 2 Sam 24:24) and also what Abraham paid for the cave of Machpelah (four hundred shekels of silver in Gen 23:16). By increasing the purchase price named in the source material, the Chronicler highlights the great significance of the land and David's commitment to fulfilling what God has asked in order to avert the plague.

21:26 *fire from heaven*: signals God's acceptance of the site in a public and dramatic sign. This divine action also represents a key link back to the Mosaic meeting tent and forward to Solomon's temple: The dedication of all three sacred spaces were marked by fire descending from heaven (Lev 9:24; 1 Kgs 18:38; 2 Chron 7:1).

22:1 *This is where the LORD God's temple will be*: David's recognition of the future temple site helps to clarify the issue

of Gibeon's religious significance. Although it is currently functioning as a legitimate place of worship, it is only temporary and will be replaced by the temple as a central place of worship. David's recognition also closes the account of the census and its consequences, and opens the next large part of the book, in which the king will prepare the materials and workers for the task of building the temple on this site.

22:2-19 The final eight chapters of the book of 1 Chronicles have no parallel in Samuel-Kings. Together they present an image of David in which the temple is central. Although he doesn't build the sanctuary, he assembles the proper materials, prepares the workers, and guides Solomon. Throughout these chapters the author presents David and Solomon in tandem, as they jointly build the temple, the first preparing and the second completing the construction.

22:2 *immigrants living in the land of Israel*: The books of Chronicles display an aversion to using Israelite labor to work on the temple at several points (see also 2 Chron 2:17-18; 8:8-9).

22:3-4 *a huge amount of iron... innumerable cedar logs*: Cataloging the large amounts of materials for building signals both David's hard work and the future magnificence of the temple (see 1 Chron 22:14-15 for comparable descriptions of additional materials and workers). Such magnificence would stand in sharp contrast to the second temple. According to the tradition related in Ezra 3:12,

**Instructions to Solomon**

<sup>6</sup>David sent for his son Solomon and instructed him to build a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel. <sup>7</sup>David said to Solomon, "My son,<sup>m</sup> I had intended to build a temple for the name of the LORD my God. <sup>8</sup>But the LORD told me: You've shed much blood and waged great wars. You won't build a temple for my name because you've spilled so much blood on the ground before me. <sup>9</sup>A son has just been born to you. He'll be a man of peace, and I'll give him peace with all his surrounding enemies. In fact, his name will be Solomon,<sup>n</sup> and I'll give Israel peace and quiet during his reign. <sup>10</sup>He will be the one to build a temple for my name. He'll become my son, and I'll become his father, and I'll establish his royal throne over Israel forever.

<sup>11</sup>"Now, my son, may the LORD be with you so that you may successfully build the temple of the LORD your God, as he promised you. <sup>12</sup>May the LORD be sure to give you insight and understanding so that when he appoints you over Israel, you will observe the Instruction from the LORD your God.<sup>o</sup> <sup>13</sup>Then, if you carefully follow the regulations and case laws that the LORD commanded Moses concerning Israel, you'll prosper. Be strong and brave. Don't be afraid or lose heart! <sup>14</sup>With great effort I've now provided for the LORD's temple one hundred thousand kikkars of gold, one million kikkars of silver, and so much bronze and iron that it can't be weighed, as well as wood and stone, though you may add to these. <sup>15</sup>You also have innumerable people to do the work: stonemasons, masons, and carpenters with every skill required for any task, <sup>16</sup>whether in gold, silver, bronze, or iron. So get to work, and may the LORD be with you."

**Instructions to Israel's leaders**

<sup>17</sup>Then David ordered all of Israel's leaders to help his son Solomon: <sup>18</sup>"The LORD your God is with you! He's given you peace on every side. He's placed under my power the land's people, so that the land is under the control of the LORD and his people. <sup>19</sup>Now then, dedicate yourselves to seeking the LORD your God. Get to work and build the sanctuary of the LORD God, so that the chest containing the LORD's covenant together with God's holy equipment may be brought into the temple built for the LORD's name."

**David appoints the Levites**

**23** When David had grown old after a long life, he made his son Solomon king over Israel. <sup>2</sup>He then gathered together all Israel's leaders along with the priests and the

<sup>m</sup>LXX, DSS; MT *his son* <sup>n</sup>Solomon sounds like *peace* in Heb. <sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain

those who had seen Solomon's temple "wept aloud" when they rebuilt the foundations after the exile.

22:6 *David... his son Solomon*: The narrative presents the choice of Solomon to be the successor of David as something obvious and straightforward. This isn't so clear in the Samuel and Kings material, however, which tells of attempted takeovers by rivals such as his brothers Absalom and Adonijah (2 Sam 15; 1 Kgs 1–2), and no certain clarity as to David's own choice (he is finally prompted by Bathsheba and Nathan just before he dies in 1 Kgs 1–2). In Chronicles, however, there are no stories of rivals to the throne, and David makes several public professions that Solomon is to succeed him.

22:8 *You've shed much blood*: In the Chronicler's version of the divine oracle, God prohibits David's building plans with the assertion, "You are not the one to build the temple for me to live in" (1 Chron 17:4). However, no explicit reason is given. When he speaks here to Solomon, David reveals that he is disqualified due to the blood that he has shed, presumably through the many wars that he waged (1 Chron 18:1–20:8). David repeats this reason at the public assembly in 1 Chronicles 28:3.

22:9 *a man of peace*: Like other names that contain wordplays in the books of Chronicles (e.g., Jabez in 1 Chron 4:7), here the divine word associates the Hebrew pronunciation with Solomon (*Shelomoh*) with the word for peace (*shalom*). This marks a stark contrast between Solomon

and his father David who is presented as one who shed blood in military battles (see note on 1 Chron 22:8; cf. 28:3).  
22:10 *He'll become my son, and I'll become his father*: See note on 1 Chronicles 28:6.

22:12 *May the LORD be sure to give you insight and understanding*: For the Chronicler's perspective on the role of God in encouraging humanity's faithfulness, see the note on 1 Chronicles 29:18–19.

22:13 *carefully follow the regulations*: David's preparations for the temple include more than assembling the material resources for building. In his speech David is presented as also preparing his son Solomon to take on his responsibilities.

22:14–16 *one hundred thousand kikkars of gold, one million kikkars of silver*: This is a very large amount, in excess of 3,750 tons of gold and 37,500 tons of silver, along with the additional amounts of bronze and iron so vast that *it can't be weighed*. The very generous supply of building materials points to the future magnificence of the temple and the greatness of the God to whom it will be dedicated. It also reveals that Solomon has no financial need to go to war.

23:1–32 *When David had grown old*: With an introduction that speaks of the king's advancing age, the author sets the stage for the consideration of his ongoing influence even after death. Unlike the Samuel–Kings narratives, the succession of Solomon is here clearly announced by David

22:8 1Ki 5:3;  
1Ch 28:3  
22:9 2Sa 12:24;  
1Ki 4:20,  
1Ki 4:25, 1Ki 5:4  
22:14 1Ch 22:3,  
1Ch 29:2,  
1Ch 29:4

23:6-23  
1Ch 24:20-30  
23:14 Dt 33:1

Levites. <sup>3</sup>When the Levites were counted, the head count of every male 30 and older totaled 38,000. <sup>4</sup>Of these, there were 24,000 to supervise the work on the LORD's temple, 6,000 officers and judges, <sup>5</sup>4,000 gatekeepers, and 4,000 praising the LORD with instruments made<sup>P</sup> for offering praise. <sup>6</sup>Then David divided them into three groups named after Levi's family members: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

### Gershonites

<sup>7</sup>The Gershonites included Ladan and Shimei.

<sup>8</sup>Ladan's family: Jehiel the first, Zetham, and Joel—three in all. <sup>9</sup>Jehiel's<sup>Q</sup> family: Shelomith, Haziël, and Haran—three in all. These were the heads of the households of Ladan.

<sup>10</sup>Shimei's family: Jahath, Ziza,<sup>R</sup> Jeush, and Beriah. These four were Shimei's family:

<sup>11</sup>Jahath was the first, and Ziza the second; since Jeush and Beriah didn't have many children, they became a single household.

### Kohathites

<sup>12</sup>Kohath's family: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel—four in all.

<sup>13</sup>Amram's family: Aaron and Moses. Aaron, together with his sons, was set apart to make the holiest objects holy, to make offerings before the LORD, to serve him, and to give blessings in his name forever.

<sup>14</sup>As for Moses the man of God, his sons were considered to be Levites. <sup>15</sup>Moses' family: Gershom and Eliezer.

<sup>16</sup>Gershom's family: Shebuel the first.

<sup>17</sup>Eliezer's family: Rehabiah the first; Eliezer had no other sons, but Rehabiah had many children.

<sup>18</sup>Izhar's family: Shelomoth<sup>R</sup> the first.

<sup>19</sup>Hebron's family: Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth.

<sup>20</sup>Uzziel's family: Micah the first and Isshiah the second.

### Merarites

<sup>21</sup>Merari's family: Mahli and Mushi.

Mahli's family: Eleazar and Kish.

<sup>22</sup>Eleazar died without sons, but he did have daughters who married their relatives from Kish's family.

<sup>23</sup>Mushi's family: Mahli, Eder, and Jeremoth—three in all.

<sup>P</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT *I made* <sup>Q</sup>Cf 23:8, 10; MT *Shimei's* <sup>R</sup>LXX; MT *Ziza* <sup>S</sup>LXX, Syr, Aram; MT *Shelomith*

himself from an early time (*he made his son Solomon king over Israel*). With the immediate successor in place, attention turns to establishing the duties of the religious leadership who will tend to the temple and lead the nation in their worship. (See sidebar, "David's Organization of the Temple Personnel" at 1 Chron 25.)

**23:2** *Israel's leaders along with the priests and the Levites:* The focus on the priests and Levites in this chapter is signaled at the beginning by the description of the ones attending David's gathering.

**23:3** *When the Levites were counted:* Joab neglected to include the Levites in his count in 1 Chronicles 21:6, perhaps because of the tradition that the tribe wasn't to fight in battle (Num 1:49; 2:33). But here the count relates to temple service. David is preparing the administration of the Jerusalem temple to be followed in Solomon's time. *every male 30 and older:* The Bible names several different age requirements for inclusion in the active Levitical workforce and/or inclusion in the head count. It is 25 in Numbers 8:24, and 20 in Ezra 3:8. Even in the books of Chronicles the relevant number changes (20 years also in 1 Chron 23:24, 27 and 2 Chron 31:17). The flexibility might be related to the different needs of the temple personnel in terms of work force at different times. When

the nation needed more Levites to perform their duties, it lowered the age so that they could be included in an official count.

**23:4-5** *officers...judges...gatekeepers...praising:* The four groups of Levites are given in order from the largest group to the smallest: supervisors of the temple building project, officers and judges, followed by the gatekeepers and musicians. In this chapter and those to follow (1 Chron 23-27), the author will detail the composition and duties of each group.

**23:7-11** The family tree of Gershon (the oldest son of Levi) is also presented in 1 Chronicles 6:17, 20-21, 39-43. The lists contain some differences, such as listing Libni as the first son of Gershon (1 Chron 6:17).

**23:12-20** The family tree of Kohath (the second and middle son of Levi) is also presented in 1 Chronicles 6:1-15, 18, 22-28, 33-38.

**23:13** *set apart to make the holiest objects holy:* Although biologically Aaron and his sons are part of the tribe of Levi, this verse sets out their special and particular job description that distinguishes them from the rest of the family.

**23:21-23** The family line of Merari (the third and youngest son of Levi) is also given in 1 Chronicles 6:19, 29-30, 44-47.

<sup>24</sup>These were the members of Levi's family according to their households. The household heads were registered, along with a listing of the names of each person 20 years old and above who carried out assigned tasks in the LORD's temple.

23:24-32  
1Ch 24:30, 31

### Levites' duties

<sup>25</sup>David said, "Since the LORD, Israel's God, has given his people peace and has made his home in Jerusalem forever, <sup>26</sup>the Levites need no longer carry the dwelling or any of the equipment used in its service." <sup>27</sup>David's last instructions were to count the Levites 20 years old and above. <sup>28</sup>Their assignment was to be at the side of the Aaronites to serve in the LORD's temple, maintaining the courtyards and side rooms and cleansing all of the holy objects and doing whatever was needed in the service of God's temple. <sup>29</sup>They were responsible for the stacks of bread, the fine flour for grain offerings, the wafers of unleavened bread, the cakes made on the griddle, the offering mixed with oil, as well as all the measuring. <sup>30</sup>They were to be present every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and to do the same every evening. <sup>31</sup>Whenever entirely burned offerings were offered to the LORD for the sabbaths, the new moons, and festivals, a designated number were to serve in the LORD's presence continuously. <sup>32</sup>In this way they were to observe the instructions for the meeting tent, the instructions for the sanctuary, and the instructions for Aaron's family and relatives about serving in the LORD's temple.

### Divisions of the priests

**24** The divisions of the Aaronites:

Aaron's family: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

<sup>2</sup>Nadab and Abihu died before their father did, without having sons, and so Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests. <sup>3</sup>David, with the help of Zadok from Eleazar's family and Ahimelech from Ithamar's family, divided them according to their appointed duties. <sup>4</sup>Since Eleazar's family was found to have more male heads than Ithamar's family, they divided them so that Eleazar's family had sixteen household heads and Ithamar's family had eight. <sup>5</sup>They divided both groups by lots because there were holy leaders, even outstanding leaders, among

23:25 *and has made his home in Jerusalem forever*: This key phrase marks a new age in the understanding of the relationship between God, the people, and the city. The temporary nature of God's presence with the people was earlier seen in the use of a tent, carried by the Levites as the nation traveled through the desert. But now, with the chest present in Jerusalem, the site of the future temple marked by a bolt of lightning from heaven (1 Chron 21:26; 22:1), and with God's promise that one of David's sons would construct the temple (1 Chron 17:12), the author emphasizes that a different era has begun. By using ancient traditions (such as the image of God making a home) even in the announcement of a new age, the author links the past together with the present.

23:25-32 The rationale for the new tasks of the Levites relates to the changed worship situation outlined in the note preceding. The duties fall into three major groups: cleaning the sacred area and the holy objects, maintaining and measuring the flour products, and giving thanks and praise.

23:27 *20 years old and above*: For more on the age for active service and inclusion in the count of the Levites, see the note on 1 Chronicles 23:3.

23:29 For more details on the offerings, see Leviticus 1-7. 24:1-31 Having presented the families of the Levites in the previous chapter (1 Chron 23:7-23), the author now sets out the divisions of priests (24:1-19), followed by a roster of the remaining descendants of Levi (24:20-31).

24:1-6 Before the divisions of the priests are given, the chapter devotes six preliminary verses to detailing some of the organizational procedures, specifying who was responsible for the division (David, Zadok, and Ahimelech)

and announcing the method of dividing (including the use of lots).

24:2 *Nadab and Abihu*: The story of the early death of Aaron's sons is told with more detail in Numbers 3:4. According to that account, the two men offered "an unauthorized offering to the LORD" when the nation was wandering in the desert. They were then killed. The Chronicler records their early death but avoids hinting at any improper worship practices by making one slight but strategic change. The phrase from Numbers "before the LORD" (indicating the location of their act and thus improper religious behavior) is altered to the less offensive *before their father* (now indicating simply the time frame of their death).

24:3 *Zadok ... Ahimelech*: representing two of the major families descended from Aaron.

24:3 *David ... divided them*: Although the king is assisted by Zadok and Ahimelech, the author emphasizes the role of David in the administrative setup of the temple (overseeing the organization of the priests in this chapter, and also the roles of the Levites in 1 Chron 23, musicians in 1 Chron 25, gatekeepers in 1 Chron 26). By associating David with the organization of the temple that is presumably in operation during the author's own day, the current structure is given the authority that comes from ancient tradition.

24:5 *They divided both groups by lots*: The use of lots to make decisions enabled the community to divide up groups of different sizes without privileging the larger group. Within the books of Chronicles, lots were also used to organize the Levites (1 Chron 24:31), singers (1 Chron 25:8), and gatekeepers (1 Chron 26:13). The method is also seen in Nehemiah 10:34; 11:1; Esther 3:7; 9:24.

24:20-30  
1Ch 23:6-23  
24:30, 31  
1Ch 23:24-32

both Eleazar's and Ithamar's descendants. <sup>6</sup>Shemaiah, Nethanel's son, the levitical scribe, recorded their names in the presence of the king; the leaders; Zadok the priest; Ahimelech, Abiathar's son; and the household heads of the priests and Levites. One household was taken from Eleazar followed by one from Ithamar.

<sup>7</sup>The first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah,

<sup>8</sup>the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim,

<sup>9</sup>the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin,

<sup>10</sup>the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah,

<sup>11</sup>the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah,

<sup>12</sup>the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim,

<sup>13</sup>the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab,

<sup>14</sup>the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer,

<sup>15</sup>the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizzez,

<sup>16</sup>the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel,

<sup>17</sup>the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul,

<sup>18</sup>the twenty-third to Delaiah, and the twenty-fourth to Maaziah.

<sup>19</sup>These were to enter the LORD's temple according to their appointed duty and by the procedure established for them by their ancestor Aaron, just as the LORD God of Israel had instructed him.

### Rest of the Levites

<sup>20</sup>The rest of the Levites included:

from Amram's family: Shubael;

from Shubael's family: Jehdeiah;

<sup>21</sup>from Rehabiah and his family: Isshiah the first;

<sup>22</sup>from the Izharites: Shelomoth;

from Shelomoth's family: Jahath;

<sup>23</sup>Hebron's family: <sup>a</sup>Jeriah the first, <sup>b</sup>Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth;

<sup>24</sup>Uzziel's family: Micah;

from Micah's family: Shamir;

<sup>25</sup>Micah's brother Isshiah;

from Isshiah's family: Zechariah;

<sup>26</sup>Merari's family: Mahli, Mushi and his son Jaaziah's family;

<sup>27</sup>Merari's family by his son Jaaziah: Shoham, Zaccur, and Ibri;

<sup>28</sup>from Mahli: Eleazar, who had no sons;

<sup>29</sup>from Kish and his family: Jerahmeel;

<sup>30</sup>and Mushi's family: Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth.

These were the Levites according to their households. <sup>31</sup>Both the household head and his youngest brother cast lots, just as their relatives, Aaron's descendants, had done in the presence of King David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of the priestly and levitical households.

### Temple musicians

**25** David and the army officers\* set apart Asaph's family, Heman and Jeduthun, for service to prophesy<sup>†</sup> accompanied by lyres, harps, and cymbals.

This is the list of those who performed this special service:

<sup>a</sup>LXX, MT *my sons* <sup>b</sup>Cf 1 Chron 23:19; MT lacks *Jeriah*. <sup>†</sup>Or *liturgical officers* <sup>‡</sup>DSS, LXX, Vulg; MT *the prophets*

24:7-18 Combining the lot system with divisions based on family lines resulted in a permanent rotation of the priests who could serve the temple well into the future. The system ensured that the temple was adequately staffed at all times. It also allowed a fairly equal share of responsibility for each group.

24:19 *just as the LORD God of Israel had instructed him*: In the Chronicler's presentation, David could arrange for the scheduling of the priests, but the protocol for their entrance into the temple was established by God and communicated by Aaron.

24:20-31 This list of Levites repeats and enhances the one preserved in 1 Chronicles 23:7-23.

24:31 *cast lots*: See the note on 1 Chronicles 24:5.

25:1-31 The list of the Levites in 1 Chronicles 24:20-31 is followed by the organization of the musicians, a link that reflects the related roles of both groups. As in the previous chapter, the actual list is preceded by several verses of introductory matter specifying some of the tasks and setting out the names of the founders.

25:1 *David and the army officers*: As with almost everything else in the temple architecture and administration, the



<sup>2</sup>From Asaph's family: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asarelah. Asaph's family was under Asaph's direction and prophesied by order of the king.

<sup>3</sup>From Jeduthun and his family: Gedaliah, Izri,<sup>\*</sup> Jeshaiiah, Shimei,<sup>7</sup> Hashabiah, and Mattithiah—six in all. They were under their father Jeduthun's direction, prophesying with the lyre and giving thanks and praise to the LORD.

<sup>4</sup>From Heman and his family: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth.

<sup>5</sup>All these were the family of Heman the king's seer, according to God's promise to honor him. God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. <sup>6</sup>They were all under their father's direction when singing in the LORD's temple with cymbals, harps, and lyres to provide service in God's temple, by order of the king.

As for Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman, <sup>7</sup>the number of themselves and their relatives, who were trained in singing to the LORD and who were all skillful, was 288.

<sup>8</sup>They cast lots for their assigned duties, small as well as great, teacher and pupil alike.

<sup>9</sup>The first lot fell for Asaph to Joseph; the second to Gedaliah, his relatives, and his family, 12;

<sup>10</sup>the third to Zaccur, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>11</sup>the fourth to Izri, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>12</sup>the fifth to Nethaniah, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>13</sup>the sixth to Bukkiah, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>14</sup>the seventh to Jesarelah, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>15</sup>the eighth to Jeshaiiah, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>16</sup>the ninth to Mattaniah, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>17</sup>the tenth to Shimei, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>18</sup>the eleventh to Uzziel,<sup>\*</sup> his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>19</sup>the twelfth to Hashabiah, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>20</sup>the thirteenth to Shubael, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>21</sup>the fourteenth to Mattithiah, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>22</sup>the fifteenth to Jerimoth,<sup>\*</sup> his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>23</sup>the sixteenth to Hananiah, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>24</sup>the seventeenth to Joshbekashah, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>25</sup>the eighteenth to Hanani, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>26</sup>the nineteenth to Mallothi, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>27</sup>the twentieth to Eliathah, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>28</sup>the twenty-first to Hothir, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>29</sup>the twenty-second to Giddalti, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>30</sup>the twenty-third to Mahazioth, his family, and his relatives, 12;

<sup>31</sup>and the twenty-fourth to Romamti-ezer, his family, and his relatives, 12.

<sup>\*</sup>Cf 25:11: MT *Zeri* <sup>7</sup>LXX, cf 25:17; MT lacks *Jeriah*. <sup>\*</sup>LXX, Syr; MT *Azrael* <sup>\*</sup>Cf 25:4; MT *Jeremoth*

author attributes the institution of the temple musicians to David. *set apart*: a significant term that links the role of the temple musicians with that of the priests and Levites who are also "set apart" or "separated for their service" (1 Chron 23:13; Deut 10:8; Num 8:14; 16:9). By using the term here, the author is indicating that the role of the musicians is key to the functioning of the temple worship, as necessary as the priests and Levites. *for service to prophesy accompanied by lyres, harps, and cymbals*: At several points, the Bible assumes a link between musical production and prophecy (e.g., 1 Sam 10:5; 2 Kgs 3:15). In addition, there is also evidence that prophets were associated with the royal court (Nathan in 2 Sam 7:1-17 = 1 Chron 17:1-15; 1 Kgs 22:1-23 = 2 Chron 18:1-22). However, the association between prophetic musicians at the temple appointed by the king is found only in this chapter. Unfortunately, the information provided here isn't sufficient to understand the nature of such prophesying. Perhaps the prophecy is inspired by music, or maybe the music is the result of prophetic inspiration. Perhaps the prophetic task involves the composition

or performance of temple music, or both. It's striking that Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (the last sometimes called Ethan) are named in the headings of Psalms 50, 88, 39.

25:5-6 *Heman the king's seer*: As in 1 Chronicles 25:1, music is linked together with prophecy. *fourteen sons and three daughters*: Throughout Chronicles, large families are a sign of divine blessing (1 Chron 26:4-5; 2 Chron 13:21). *all under their father's direction when singing in the LORD's temple*: If the daughters mentioned in the previous verse are included in this "all," this text indicates that women were part of the musical and prophetic ministry of the temple. For mention of other women singers in post-exilic texts, see Ezra 2:65 and Nehemiah 7:67.

25:7 *288*: This number of specially trained singers is the total of 24 choirs made up of 12 members. It represents approximately 1/16th of the total number of 4,000 levitical singers named in 1 Chronicles 23:5.

25:8 *cast lots*: See the note on 1 Chronicles 24:5.

25:9-31 Corresponding to the division of the priests into 24 courses listed in 1 Chronicles 24:7-18 are 24 choirs.

26:1 1Ch 9:17,  
1Ch 9:19,  
1Ch 9:21

**David's Organization of the Temple Personnel** In 1 Chronicles 9:22 and throughout the book the author specifies that the post-exilic shape of the temple administration goes back to the time of David. This theme is developed in particular in 1 Chronicles 23:1–26:32, where David organizes the Levites, priests, and temple musicians. In the Chronicler's telling, such organization makes links backward and forward in time: It has many similarities to the setup of the personnel who first cared for the portable meeting tent in the time of Moses and would only be fully activated once the temple was completed in Solomon's reign. This emphasis on David's role serves three purposes. (1) It elevates David's stature to that of Moses, in that both men are responsible for setting up the administration that will tend to the Lord's place of worship. (2) It elevates the status of the temple personnel so that they can claim an ancient heritage and association with David. (3) It asserts to those living in the Chronicler's post-exilic context that they maintain a link with the nation's formative years. When they can set up their temple's administration to mirror David's instructions, they embody and assert a heritage that existed long before their Persian overlords came to rule. The heritage will survive after the empire has moved off the world stage.

### Gatekeepers

**26** The divisions of the gatekeepers: from the Korahites: Meshelemiah, Kore's son, one of Ebiasaph's<sup>b</sup> family.

<sup>2</sup>Meshelemiah's family: Zechariah the oldest, Jedaiel the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth, <sup>3</sup>Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, and Eliehoenai the seventh.

<sup>4</sup>Obed-edom's family: Shemaiah the oldest, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sathar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth, <sup>5</sup>Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, and Peulethai the eighth. God truly blessed him. <sup>6</sup>To his son Shemaiah were born sons who ruled over their household, and because they were valiant men. <sup>7</sup>Shemaiah's family: Othni, Rephael, Obed, Elzabad, and his relatives, Elihu and Semachiah, who were valiant men. <sup>8</sup>All these were members of Obed-edom's family, they, their sons, and their relatives. They were valiant and strong in their service, 62 men belonging to Obed-edom. <sup>9</sup>Meshelemiah's family and relatives, valiant men, numbered 18.

<sup>10</sup>Hosah, one of Merari's family, also had a family: Shimri the first (though he wasn't the oldest, his father gave him that status), <sup>11</sup>Hilkiah the second, Tebaliah the third, and Zechariah the fourth. All of Hosah's family and relatives numbered 13.

<sup>12</sup>These were the divisions of the gatekeepers with their leaders, who were responsible to minister in the LORD's temple, along with their relatives. <sup>13</sup>They cast lots for each gate in the same way, whether their household was small or large. <sup>14</sup>The lot for the East Gate fell to Shelemiah. They then cast lots for his son Zechariah, a wise counselor, and his lot indicated the North Gate. <sup>15</sup>Obed-edom was assigned the South Gate, and his sons were assigned the storehouses. <sup>16</sup>Hosah<sup>c</sup> was assigned the West Gate, that is, the chamber<sup>d</sup> gate on the upper road.

<sup>b</sup>LXX; MT *Asaph* <sup>c</sup>MT *Shuppim and Hosah* <sup>d</sup>LXX; MT *Shallecheth*

26:1-32 Having listed the divisions of the Levites in chapter 23, the priests in chapter 24, and the musicians in chapter 25, the author turns to the divisions of the temple's gatekeepers (26:1-19) as well as treasurers and officials (26:20-32). The gatekeepers come from several families deriving from Levi: Meshelemiah (from the line of Korah, a descendant of Levi's second son Kohath; 1 Chron 6:22-23), and Hosah (through the line of Levi's third son Merari; 1 Chron 6:1). Obed-edom, head of the largest and most influential branch, isn't given an explicit familial connection to Levi. It was in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite that the divine chest rested after the tragic Uzzah incident (1 Chron 13:13-14). *gatekeepers*: the security force that guarded both religious holiness and material treasure. Within the books of Chronicles, they guard the divine chest (1 Chron 15:23), as well as the treasures and worship objects of God's house (1 Chron 9:17-32). They also prevented unclean people from entering the temple

and contaminating the holy space (2 Chron 23:19). According to Nehemiah 11:19, gatekeepers aren't Levites, and the difference in status reflects a development throughout time.

**26:5** *God truly blessed him*: Within the books of Chronicles, God's blessing is often demonstrated through fertility (see note on 1 Chron 25:5-6). For the divine blessing on Obed-edom's household, see 1 Chronicles 13:14.

**26:12** *responsible to minister in the Lord's temple, along with their relatives*: The role of a security guard for the temple has much more than secular implications.

**26:13-16** As with the priests, the allocation of the guard posts to the levitical families is by lot. See the note on 1 Chronicles 24:5.

**26:14** *the East Gate*: requiring six gatekeepers instead of the regular four (1 Chron 26:17), this gate seems more significant, as the extra guards and title "King's Gate" (1 Chron 9:18) indicate.

The guards had the same task: <sup>17</sup>each day<sup>e</sup> the East had six, the North four, and the South four, with two at each of the storehouses. <sup>18</sup>At the courtyard on the West, there were four at the road and two at the courtyard. <sup>19</sup>These were the divisions of the gatekeepers from Korah's family and Merari's family.

<sup>20</sup>Their fellow<sup>f</sup> Levites were in charge of the treasuries of God's temple and the treasuries of the dedicated gifts: <sup>21</sup>from Ladan's family, the family of the Gershonites belonging to Ladan, and the heads of the households belonging to Ladan the Gershonite: Jehieli. <sup>22</sup>Jehieli's family: Zetham and Joel his brother were in charge of the treasuries of the LORD's temple. <sup>23</sup>From the Amramites, Izharites, Hebronites, and Uzzielites: <sup>24</sup>Shebuel, a descendant of Gershom, Moses' son, was the chief officer in charge of the treasuries. <sup>25</sup>His relatives through Eliezer included his son Rehabiah, his son Jeshaiah, his son Joram, his son Zichri, and his son Shelomoth. <sup>26</sup>This Shelomoth and his relatives were in charge of all the treasuries of the gifts dedicated by King David, by the household leaders, by the commanders<sup>g</sup> of the units of a thousand and a hundred, and by the army officers. <sup>27</sup>They had dedicated some of the valuable objects won in battle to repair the LORD's temple. <sup>28</sup>Everything that was dedicated by Samuel the seer, as well as by Saul, Kish's son; Abner, Ner's son; and Joab, Zeruah's son—in fact, anything that had been dedicated—was under the supervision of Shelomoth<sup>h</sup> and his relatives.

<sup>29</sup>From the Izharites: Chenaniah and his family had responsibilities over Israel outside the temple as officials and judges. <sup>30</sup>From the Hebronites: Hashabiah and his relatives, 1,700 capable men, were put in charge of Israel west of the Jordan concerning all of the LORD's affairs and the king's service. <sup>31</sup>From the Hebronites: Jerijah was the head of the Hebronites according to the family records of their households. In the fortieth year of David's rule, a search was made and capable men were found among them in Jazer in Gilead. <sup>32</sup>Jerijah's relatives, capable men, were 2,700 heads of households. King David put them in charge of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh concerning all of God's and the king's affairs.

### Divisions of the military

**27** This is the list of the Israelites, the heads of households, the commanders of units of a thousand and a hundred, and their officers. They served the king in every way their divisions required, and they were on duty for a month at a time through all the months of the year. Each division numbered 24,000.

<sup>2</sup>In charge of the first division for the first month was Jashobeam, Zabdiel's son. His division numbered 24,000. <sup>3</sup>He was a Perezite and the head of all the army officers for the first month.

<sup>4</sup>In charge of the division for the second month was Dodai the Ahohite.<sup>i</sup> His division numbered 24,000.

<sup>e</sup>LXX; MT *Levites* <sup>f</sup>LXX; MT *Ahijah* <sup>g</sup>LXX; MT *to the commanders* <sup>h</sup>LXX; MT *Shelomith* <sup>i</sup>LXX; MT *adds and his division, and Mikloth the leader.*

**26:20** *the treasuries of God's temple and the treasuries of the dedicated gifts:* The difference between the two treasuries isn't clear in this verse or the following passage (26:20-28). These treasuries probably stored material items used in the temple worship, such as sacred equipment and materials for sacrifice such as flour, wine, and oil (1 Chron 9:29). *treasuries of the dedicated gifts:* probably stored gifts secured in war, presented to showcase God's power over Israel's enemies and their gods.

**26:28** *Abner:* led Saul's army. *Joab:* led David's army (2 Sam 2:8, 13).

**26:29-32** *responsibilities over Israel outside the temple:* The duties of the Levites in Chronicles include responsibilities outside of the temple area (see Neh 11:16). Such a setup presupposes that the entire nation, even those areas relatively far away from the temple itself, would feel the temple's influence through these officers.

**26:31** *fortieth year of David's rule:* his last year (1 Chron 29:27). The author frames David's reign as one totally concerned to prepare for Solomon's temple building in every aspect and until the very end. He secures significant

building materials throughout his reign, and spends his last years setting up the administrative structures that will ensure the temple's upkeep and security. Reports of kings plundering the treasuries after the death of Solomon highlight the misfortunes that a poorly run and poorly guarded temple could face (2 Chron 12:9; 16:2; 25:24; 28:21).

**27:1-34** The end of the previous chapter, concluding as it did with a list of officials tending to duties outside the temple proper (1 Chron 26:29-32), creates a bridge to chapter 27 where non-worship personnel and arrangements come into focus. Within the narrative line of the entire book, these details conclude the larger account of David's preparation for the temple and the kingdom when his death is in view (1 Chron 23:1). As such, they bolster the depiction of stability and orderliness—this is a centralized kingdom that has been well-planned and will provide the kind of administrative structure that can support the temple far into the future.

**27:1** *on duty for a month at a time:* The administrative structure attributed to David in the books of Chronicles employs the rhythm of twelve monthly shifts for a variety

**26:23** Nu 3:27; 1Ch 23:12  
**26:24** Ex 2:22; Ex 18:3  
**26:25** Ex 18:4; 1Ch 23:17  
**26:26** 2Sa 8:11; 1Ki 7:51  
**26:28** 1Sa 14:51; 1Ki 2:5  
**27:1** 1Sa 13:2; 1Ki 4:7; 2Ch 17:12  
**27:3** Nm 26:20

27:22 Gn 49:16;  
1Ch 28:1  
27:23 Gn 15:5;  
Nu 1:3; 2Sa 24:1;  
1Ch 21:2  
27:24 2Sa 24:1;  
1Ch 21:1

<sup>5</sup>The third army commander for the third month was Benaiah the chief priest Jehoia-da's son. His division numbered 24,000. <sup>6</sup>This Benaiah was a warrior of the Thirty and in command of the Thirty. In command of his division was his son Ammizabad.

<sup>7</sup>The fourth for the fourth month was Asahel, Joab's brother, and after him his son Zebadiah. His division numbered 24,000.

<sup>8</sup>The fifth for the fifth month was the commander Shammoth the Zerahite.<sup>1</sup> His division numbered 24,000.

<sup>9</sup>The sixth for the sixth month was Ira the Tekoite Ikkesh's son. His division numbered 24,000.

<sup>10</sup>The seventh for the seventh month was Helez the Pelonite from Ephraim's family. His division numbered 24,000.

<sup>11</sup>The eighth for the eighth month was Sibbecai the Hushathite from the Zerahites. His division numbered 24,000.

<sup>12</sup>The ninth for the ninth month was Abiezer of Annathoth from the Benjaminites. His division numbered 24,000.

<sup>13</sup>The tenth for the tenth month was Maharai the Netophathite from the Zerahites. His division numbered 24,000.

<sup>14</sup>The eleventh for the eleventh month was Benaiah the Pirathonite from Ephraim's family. His division numbered 24,000.

<sup>15</sup>The twelfth for the twelfth month was Heldai the Netophathite from Othniel. His division numbered 24,000.

### Tribal leaders

<sup>16</sup>In charge of the tribes of Israel:

for the Reubenites—the leader was Eliezer, Zichri's son;

for the Simeonites—Shephatiah, Maacah's son;

<sup>17</sup>for the Levites—Hashabiah, Kemuel's son;

for Aaron—Zadok;

<sup>18</sup>for Judah—Eliab,<sup>h</sup> one of David's relatives;

for Issachar—Omri, Michael's son;

<sup>19</sup>for Zebulun—Ishmaiah, Obadiah's son;

for Naphtali—Jerimoth, Azriel's son;

<sup>20</sup>for the Ephraimites—Hoshea, Azaziah's son;

for half the tribe of Manasseh—Joel, Pedaiah's son;

<sup>21</sup>for half the tribe<sup>l</sup> of Manasseh in Gilead—Iddo, Zechariah's son;

for Benjamin—Jaasiel, Abner's son;

<sup>22</sup>for Dan—Azarel, Jeroham's son.

These were the leaders of the tribes of Israel. <sup>23</sup>But David didn't count those younger than 20 years of age, because the LORD had promised to make Israel as numerous as the stars in the sky. <sup>24</sup>Joab, Zeruiah's son, began to count them, but he never finished. Since Israel experienced wrath because of this, the number wasn't entered into the official records of King David.

<sup>1</sup>Cf 27:11, 13; MT *Izrahite* <sup>h</sup>LXX; MT *Elihu* <sup>l</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT lacks *for half the tribe*.

of personnel, including priests, musicians, and gatekeepers (1 Chron 24:1-19; 25:1-31; 26:1-12). This chapter divides the military forces into 12 sections as well, and comprises 288,000 troops in 12 divisions of 24,000, all headed by a single commander (27:1-15). This military preparation ensured that the king and the temple would be guaranteed steady and unbroken service.

27:16-24 *In charge of the tribes of Israel*: the various tribal officers who represent their families. Although the two tribes of Asher and Gad are missing from this list, the total number is increased with the inclusion of Ephraim and the two halves of the tribe of Manasseh (27:20, 21).

27:23-24 This summary of the census first related in 1 Chronicles 21 clears David from guilt by two key

assertions: The king *didn't count those younger than 20 years of age*, and the count *wasn't entered into the official records*. The summary here also implies that Joab intended to complete the count, although in 1 Chronicles 21:6 he deliberately didn't include the tribes of Benjamin and Levi. According to the author, a census would effectively put a number on the nation that God promised Abraham would be *as numerous as the stars in the sky* (Gen 12:2; 15:5-4; 17:2-7). *official records of King David*: The Bible includes no other reference to this record specifically, but does mention "the official records of Israel's kings" (1 Kgs 14:19; 2 Kgs 13:8, 12; 14:15, 28) and "the official records of Judah's kings" (1 Kgs 14:29; 15:7, 23; 2 Kgs 12:19; 14:18).

**Civil servants**

- <sup>25</sup>in charge of the king's treasuries—Azmaveth, Adiel's son;  
in charge of the treasuries in the country, cities, villages, and towers—Jonathan, Uz-  
ziah's son;
- <sup>26</sup>in charge of agricultural workers cultivating the fertile land—Ezri, Chelub's son;
- <sup>27</sup>in charge of the vineyards—Shimei the Ramathite;  
in charge of the vineyard's produce for the wine cellars—Zabdi the Shiphmite;
- <sup>28</sup>in charge of the olive and sycamore trees in the western foothills—Baal-hanan the  
Gederite;
- in charge of the stores of oil—Joash;
- <sup>29</sup>in charge of the cattle that grazed in Sharon—Shitrai the Sharonite;
- in charge of the cattle in the valleys—Shaphat, Adlai's son;
- <sup>30</sup>in charge of the camels—Obil the Ishmaelite;
- in charge of the female donkeys—Jehdeiah the Meronothite;
- <sup>31</sup>in charge of the flocks of sheep and goats—Jaziz the Hagrite.
- All these were stewards of King David's property.

**Royal advisors**

<sup>32</sup>Jonathan, David's uncle, was a counselor, a man of understanding, and a scribe. Jehiel, Hachmoni's son, took care of the king's sons. <sup>33</sup>Ahithophel was the king's counselor, and Hushai the Archite was the king's political advisor.<sup>m</sup> <sup>34</sup>After Ahithophel came Benaiah's son Jehoiada, and Abiathar. Joab was commander of the king's army.

**David addresses Israel's leaders**

**28** David assembled all of Israel's leaders in Jerusalem, the leaders of the tribes, the lead-  
ers of the divisions that served the king, the commanders of units of a thousand and  
a hundred, the officials in charge of all the property and livestock of the king and his sons,  
as well as the officers, warriors, and all the valiant men. <sup>2</sup>Then King David stood up and said:

Listen to me, my relatives and my people. I wanted to build a temple as the permanent  
home for the chest containing the LORD's covenant, our God's footrest. But when I pre-  
pared to build it, <sup>3</sup>God said to me, You must not build a temple for my name, because you  
are a military man and you've shed blood. <sup>4</sup>The LORD, the God of Israel, chose me from  
my whole household to become king over Israel forever. He chose Judah as leader, and

<sup>m</sup>Or friend

27:25-31 This list of the stewards of the royal holdings displays a kingdom whose resources are diversified and well-ordered.

27:32-34 The final list in the chapter is of influential people in the king's court, complementing the list of other administrators in 1 Chronicles 18:15-17.

27:32 *Jonathan, David's uncle*: unknown outside of this list, although a nephew with the same name is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 20:7.

27:33 *Ahithophel*: a priest and an advisor to David before he supported Absalom's unsuccessful rebellion (2 Sam 15:12). In the midst of the rebellion, David encouraged Hushai to convince Absalom that Ahithophel's solid military advice wouldn't meet with success (2 Sam 15:32-35). When Ahithophel realized that his counsel hadn't been followed, he committed suicide (2 Sam 17:23).

28:1-21 In 1 Kings 1, the feeble and dying David, lying in his room, finally announces his successor only after Adonijah stages a rebellion and Bathsheba reminds David of his earlier promise that Solomon will be the next king. In contrast, in 1 Chronicles David repeatedly announces that Solomon will succeed him, and there are no rivals to the throne. Earlier in the narrative, David told Solomon privately that God had chosen him to reign and to build the temple (1 Chron 22:7-16). In chapter 28, David now stands in front of the leaders of Israel to give an extended

and public address to remind everyone of God's choice of Solomon and to give his son the written plan for building the temple. (See sidebar, "David and Moses.")

28:1 *all of Israel's leaders*: The previous chapter outlined the responsibilities for various officials (1 Chron 27). David here is speaking before all of these same officers, emphasizing the significance that the community had to the Chronicler.

28:2 *the permanent home for the chest containing the LORD's covenant*: The description of the temple in this way is unique within the Bible. It points to the new era that the temple represents in terms of God's presence with the people in Jerusalem. Once carried in the wilderness, then accompanying the people into war, the roving divine chest will now come to rest in Solomon's temple.

28:3 *you are a military man*: In his prior speech to Solomon, David supplied a similar reason for why he couldn't build the temple (see note on 1 Chron 22:8).

28:4 *chose me from my whole household*: In David's presentation, God's choice can occasionally undermine the traditional social structure that favors the oldest male child. This point is also made in the nine chapters of genealogies that open the book—Judah wasn't the oldest son (1 Chron 5:1-2), and David had older brothers (1 Chron 2:15), yet God chose them both. Likewise, David repeatedly asserts here that God chose Solomon

28:9 1Sa 16:7;  
1Ki 8:61;  
2Ch 15:2;  
Jer 17:10;  
Jer 29:13

within Judah's family, my household, and among my father's family he was pleased with me, making me king over all Israel. <sup>5</sup>And from all the many sons the LORD has given me, he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the LORD's kingdom over Israel. <sup>6</sup>He said to me: Your son Solomon will build my temple and my courtyards, for I've chosen him to become my son even as I myself will become his father. <sup>7</sup>I'll establish his kingdom forever if he remains committed to keeping my commands and case laws as he does now.

<sup>8</sup>So now, in the presence of all the LORD's assembly<sup>a</sup> and with God as our witness, carefully observe all the commands of the LORD your God, so that you may hold on to this good land and pass it on to your children forever. <sup>9</sup>As for you, Solomon, my son, acknowledge your father's God and serve him with enthusiastic devotion, because the LORD searches every mind and understands the motive behind every thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you abandon him, he will reject you forever. <sup>10</sup>Now then, since the LORD has chosen you to build a temple for him<sup>b</sup> as the sanctuary, work hard.

<sup>11</sup>Then David gave his son Solomon the plan for the entrance hall, its buildings, treasuries, upper and inner rooms, and the room for the cover.<sup>c</sup> <sup>12</sup>He provided all of the plans he had in mind: for the courtyards of the LORD's temple, and for all its surrounding rooms where the treasures of God's temple and the dedicated gifts would be stored; <sup>13</sup>for the divisions of the priests and Levites, for all their responsibilities within the LORD's temple, and for all the equipment used in its service; <sup>14</sup>for the weight of all the gold equipment used for every kind of service, and the weight of all the silver equipment used for every kind of service; <sup>15</sup>for the weight of the gold lampstands and their gold lamps—the weight of gold for each lampstand with its lamps—and for the weight of each silver lampstand and its lamps depending on how each would be used; <sup>16</sup>for the weight of gold for each table with the stacks of bread, and the silver for the silver tables; <sup>17</sup>for the forks, bowls, and cups of pure gold; for the weight of each gold dish and the weight of each silver dish; <sup>18</sup>for the weight of the incense altar made of refined gold; and for the construction of the chariot—with the gold winged creatures spreading their wings and covering the chest containing the LORD's covenant. <sup>19</sup>All of this the LORD made clear to David<sup>d</sup> directly in a document, including the plan for all of the work.

<sup>20</sup>"Be strong and courageous," David said to his son Solomon. "Get to work. Don't be afraid or discouraged, because the LORD God, my God, is with you. He'll neither let you down nor leave you before all the work for the service of the LORD's temple is done. <sup>21</sup>Here are the

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT all Israel, the assembly of the LORD <sup>b</sup>LXX; MT lacks for him. <sup>c</sup>Or mercy seat or perhaps reconciliation cover (Heb *kapporet*) <sup>d</sup>LXX; MT to me

(1 Chron 28:5, 6, 10; 29:1) to succeed David as king and to build the temple.

**28:5** *many sons*: David's mention of his offspring reminds the reader of the accounts in Samuel-Kings, where Solomon's fraternal rivals such as Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah each attempt to take the throne. The Chronicler includes none of these stories, preferring to emphasize the divine election of Solomon (see note on 1 Chron 28:4).

**28:6** *my son . . . his father*: This strikingly intimate imagery for God's relationship with Solomon is also found in 1 Chronicles 17:13 and 1 Chronicles 22:10. Other texts also employ father-son language to speak of God's relationship to David (2 Sam 7:14; Pss 2:7-8; 89:26) and Israel (Exod 4:22; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1).

**28:7** *forever if*: The requirement of continued obedience to the covenant tempers the father-son language in the previous verse. The Chronicler maintains that the divine-human relationship is marked by a certain mutuality of faithfulness.

**28:8** *So now . . . carefully observe*: As he begins to address his son directly, the plural verbs throughout this verse indicate that David's instructions to Solomon also pertain to the community: The nation's possession of the land depends on their faithfulness to God's commands.

**28:9** *If you seek him, he will be found by you*: Throughout

Chronicles, the language of faithfulness to God is often that of seeking (2 Chron 14:7; 19:3; 20:3). As this verse indicates, God responds to this seeking.

**28:11-19** In the middle of his long speech, David entrusts his plan of the temple to his son. Given the care that the Chronicler devoted to identifying the amassed building materials and administrative setup throughout the book, it comes as no surprise to the reader that David's plans are also detailed here. They include information about the architecture of the temple and its courts, the ordering and responsibilities of the priests and Levites, and even the weight and composition of various types of temple equipment. The existence of David's plan for the temple is an echo of Moses' plan for the meeting tent (Exod 25:9, 40).

**28:18** *the chariot—with the gold winged creatures spreading their wings and covering the chest*. This description of the apparatus that surrounded the sacred chest is unique to Chronicles. *winged creatures*: The presence of these creatures around the chest is indicated in the ancient title for God: "the Lord of heavenly forces, who sits enthroned on the winged creatures" (2 Sam 6:2). *chariot*: This imagery doesn't appear frequently in the Bible, and was possibly influenced by Ezekiel's vision where the Lord is enthroned on a wheeled chariot (Ezek 1:15-28).

**28:20-21** *Be strong and courageous*: David's final advice

*David and Moses* At many points, the Chronicler emphasizes the continuity between David and his successor, Solomon. The temple that Solomon builds is made out of the material that David assembled and is governed by the administrative structure that he set up (1 Chron 22:2-5; 23-28). The well-being that will mark Solomon's reign as "a man of peace" (1 Chron 22:9) was first promised by God to David (1 Chron 17:9-10). In many ways, this continuity builds upon the connection that the text makes between David and Moses, as well as their successors. Just as David prepares for the temple that he doesn't build, so Moses lays the foundation for Israel's future life in the promised land that he never enters. Just as Moses receives a generous outpouring of financial support from the people to build the meeting tent, David's request for a voluntary offering for the temple results in an overwhelmingly generous response from the people (Exod 25:1-9; 1 Chron 29:6-9). It is fitting then that David's last words to Solomon echo those of Moses to Joshua: "Be strong and courageous" (compare 1 Chron 28:20-21 with Deut 31:6, 8).

29:1 1Ki 3:7;  
1Ch 22:5,  
1Ch 28:1,  
1Ch 28:5,  
1Ch 29:19  
29:2 1Ch 22:3  
29:3 Ps 26:8,  
Ps 27:4, Ps 84:1-2  
29:4 1Ki 9:28,  
1Ki 10:11,  
1Ch 22:14;  
2Ch 8:18;  
Job 28:16  
29:5 Ex 35:4-5

divisions of the priests and the Levites who will perform all the service of God's temple. For all this work you will have willing and able workers with you to do it. The officials and all the people are ready to follow your instructions."

### Offerings for building the temple

29 Then King David said to the whole assembly:

My son Solomon, the one whom God chose, is too inexperienced for this great task, since this temple won't be for humans but for the LORD God. <sup>2</sup>Using every resource at my disposal, I've provided everything for my God's temple: gold for gold objects, silver for silver objects, bronze for bronze objects, iron for iron objects, lumber for wooden objects, carnelian stones for settings, antimony, colorful stones, every kind of precious stone, and a large amount of marble. <sup>3</sup>What's more, because of my delight in my God's temple, I have dedicated my own private treasure of gold and silver to my God's temple, in addition to all that I've provided for the holy temple: <sup>4</sup>three thousand kikkars of gold from the gold of Ophir, seven thousand kikkars of refined silver for covering the walls of the rooms, <sup>5</sup>gold for gold objects, and silver for silver objects, to be used for everything the skilled workers will make. Who else, then, will volunteer, dedicating themselves to the LORD today?

<sup>6</sup>Then the leaders of the households, the leaders of the tribes of Israel, and the commanders of the units of a thousand and a hundred, and the supervisors of the king's work volunteered <sup>7</sup>to give five thousand kikkars and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand kikkars of silver, eighteen thousand kikkars of bronze, and one hundred thousand kikkars of iron for the work on God's temple. <sup>8</sup>Anyone who had precious stones donated them to the treasury of the LORD's temple under the care of Jehiel the Gershonite. <sup>9</sup>The people rejoiced at this response, because they had presented their offerings to the LORD so willingly and wholeheartedly. King David also rejoiced greatly.

<sup>10</sup>Then David blessed the LORD before the whole assembly:

Blessed are you, LORD, God of our ancestor Israel, forever and always.

\*Or houses

to Solomon employs language very similar to Moses' final charge to Joshua (Deut 31:7-8), repeated by God as the people prepare to enter into the land (Josh 1:6-9).

29:1-30 In the final chapter, David makes his final address to the people (29:1-5) and his final prayer to God (29:10-19). The king's words are met by stirring and powerful responses by the people. They first give very generous offerings for the temple (29:6-9), and then participate in a joyous worship celebration, during which they anoint Solomon as David's successor (29:21-25). The author concludes the chapter with a summary of David's reign (29:26-30).

29:4 *three thousand kikkars of gold... seven thousand kikkars of refined silver*: a colossal amount of silver and gold that indicates both the king's generosity and God's greatness.

29:5 *Who else, then, will volunteer*: Having demonstrated his own commitment to the cause of the temple, not simply with words but with a very generous financial

contribution, David asks the congregation to respond in kind.

29:6 *Then the leaders... volunteered*: The repeated use of the verb "volunteer" in verses 5-6 indicates the people's devotion to David and the temple. They immediately do exactly what the king requests. Their response is also similar to the voluntary offering that Moses collects from the people to fund the meeting tent in the desert (Exod 25:1-9; 35:4-29). Both temple and meeting tent are funded not solely by a single leader or from the spoils of war, but from a generous outpouring of wealth from the people.

29:7 *five thousand kikkars*: Like David's, the people's offering is exceedingly large. *darics of gold*: Darics are coins first issued by the Persian emperor Darius in the 6th century BCE, weighing approximately one third of an ounce, and mentioned in later texts such as Ezra 8:27.

29:10-19 As his final act, David prays a prayer of praise

29:11 Mt 6:13  
 29:22  
 1Ki 1:38-40  
 29:23-25  
 1Ki 2:12; 2Ch 1:1  
 29:26-30  
 2Sa 5:4, 5;  
 1Ki 2:10, 11;  
 1Ch 3:4

- <sup>11</sup>To you, LORD, belong greatness and power, honor, splendor, and majesty, because everything in heaven and on earth belongs to you.  
 Yours, LORD, is the kingship, and you are honored as head of all.  
<sup>12</sup>You are the source of wealth and honor, and you rule over all.  
 In your hand are strength and might, and it is in your power to magnify and strengthen all.  
<sup>13</sup>And now, our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name.  
<sup>14</sup>Who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly?  
 Since everything comes from you, we have given you that which comes from your own hand.  
<sup>15</sup>To be sure, we are like all our ancestors, immigrants without permanent homes. Our days are like a shadow on the ground, and there's no hope.

<sup>16</sup>LORD, our God, all this abundance that we have provided to build you a temple for your holy name comes from your hand and belongs to you. <sup>17</sup>Since I know, my God, that you examine the mind and take delight in honesty, I have freely given all these things with the highest of motives. And now I've been delighted to see your people here offering so willingly to you. <sup>18</sup>LORD, God of our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, keep these thoughts in the mind of your people forever, and direct their hearts toward you. <sup>19</sup>As for Solomon my son, give him the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, laws, and regulations—observing all of them—and to build the temple that I have prepared.

<sup>20</sup>Then David said to the whole assembly, "Bless the LORD your God," and the whole assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their ancestors, bowed down, and worshipped before the LORD and the king. <sup>21</sup>On the very next day they offered sacrifices and entirely burned offerings to the LORD—a thousand bulls, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, along with their drink offerings—and many other sacrifices for all Israel's sake. <sup>22</sup>They ate and drank with great joy before the LORD that day and made David's son Solomon the king.<sup>a</sup> They anointed him<sup>b</sup> in the LORD's presence as prince, and Zadok as priest. <sup>23</sup>Thus Solomon sat on the LORD's throne as king, succeeding his father David, and he prospered. All Israel obeyed him, <sup>24</sup>and all the commanders and warriors, as well as all of King David's sons, submitted to King Solomon's authority. <sup>25</sup>Moreover, the LORD magnified Solomon before all Israel, giving him such royal majesty as no king before him<sup>c</sup> had enjoyed.

### Summary of David's reign

<sup>26</sup>David, Jesse's son, was king over all Israel. <sup>27</sup>He reigned over Israel for forty years: seven years in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. <sup>28</sup>He died at a good old age, having enjoyed a full life, wealth, and honor; and his son Solomon followed him as king. <sup>29</sup>The account of King David from beginning to end is written in the records of Samuel the seer, Nathan the prophet, and Gad the visionary, <sup>30</sup>including everything concerning his powerful rule, and what happened to him, to Israel, and to all the kingdoms in other lands.

<sup>a</sup>LXX, Syr; MT adds for the second time. <sup>b</sup>LXX; MT lacks him. <sup>c</sup>LXX; MT adds in Israel.

and thanks, which ends with a final petition. Much of the structure and content of this prayer is similar to his longer prayer in 1 Chronicles 16:8-36 when the divine chest was placed in the tent in Jerusalem. These words look back to David's initial preparations for the temple. Thus the opening prayer (1 Chron 16) and the closing prayer (1 Chron 29) form an envelope around his life's work.

29:15 *Our days are like a shadow*: Given David's approaching death, these general words about the shortness of life take on a particular poignancy (cf. Ps 90).

29:18-19 *direct their hearts toward you... give him the wholehearted devotion*: In the Chronicler's portrait, God often responds to the good or evil deeds of humanity with immediate and just rewards. For example, Asa gains victory in battle when he calls on God for help (2 Chron 14:11-12), and Saul's reign ends because of his unfaithfulness (1 Chron 10:13-14). Yet there isn't always a strict or

predictable connection between the actions of humans and the response of God. The author maintains God's freedom to intervene and direct the human heart towards faithfulness. In the petition that ends the prayer, David pleads that God cause devotion to flourish in the hearts both of the people and of his son Solomon. For a similar perspective, see 1 Chronicles 22:12; 28:9; 2 Chronicles 30:12. 29:22 *and made David's son Solomon the king*: In contrast to the story told in Samuel-Kings, the royal transition here is very smooth. After David announces several times that Solomon is the divinely chosen successor (1 Chron 22:9-10; 28:5-7), the people anoint him as king. In addition, the author stresses that his brothers all submitted to his authority (1 Chron 29:24) and God *magnified* the new king (1 Chron 29:25).

29:26-30 A summary and evaluation of David's reign concludes the book. (See also 1 Kings 2:10-11.)



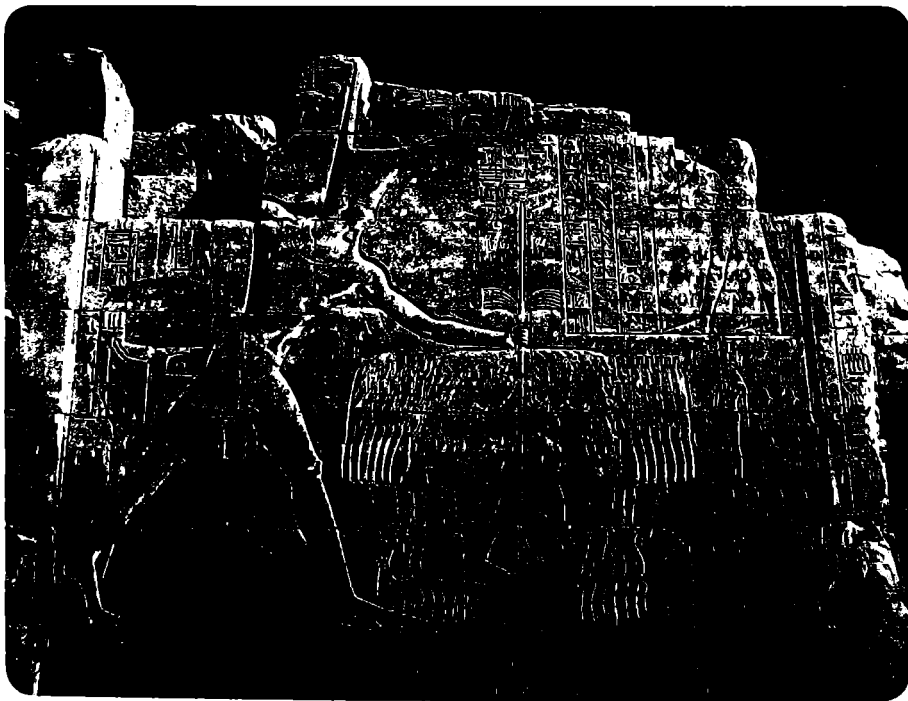
# 2 CHRONICLES

2 Chronicles continues the story about the nation, which began in 1 Chronicles. The plot opens with Solomon ruling Jerusalem and concludes with Cyrus announcing the end of the people's exile in Babylon. The stories at the end of 1 Chronicles and the beginning of 2 Chronicles focus on the concerns of the combined work: the ideal unity of the nation and construction of the temple. (For a basic introduction to the entire work, see the introduction to 1 Chronicles.)

The book begins with Solomon worshipping at Gibeon, a site that will soon be replaced by the Jerusalem temple. The new King Solomon will build the Lord's house after his father David spent many years preparing the way (in 1 Chronicles). In the long prayer that marks the temple's completion, largely adapted from

1 Kings 8, Solomon sets up a protocol for how it will operate: Whenever the people pray "and spread out their hands toward this temple," then God will "listen from heaven," and "act" and "forgive" (2 Chron 6:29-30).

Significantly, the prayer looks forward to the final chapters of the book when the people go into exile. It provides a model for prayer in an exilic context: "When they sin . . . and [you] hand them over to an enemy who takes them away as prisoners to enemy territory." Solomon sets the agenda for this future time by referring to turning away from sin, pleading for divine mercy, and praying "concerning this temple," which will prompt God to forgive and restore the people (2 Chron 6:36-39). Even when they have been driven from the land, Solomon's prayer emphasizes that the temple will still



The Shishak Relief in the Karnak temple in Egypt records Pharaoh Shishak's Invasion of Israel and Judah (2 Chron 12).  
*iStockPhoto*

continue to function as a place that draws God's special attention.

Before the exile comes the split of the kingdom into the north and the south during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam (2 Chron 10). In this context also the temple functions to bring the people together as God's people gathered in worship. The author greatly expands the account in 1 and 2 Kings to detail the Passover celebrations during the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah (2 Chron 30:1–31:1 = no parallel in 1–2 Kgs; 35:1–19 = 2 Kgs 23:21–23). In this expansion, the author highlights the presence of northerners celebrating in Jerusalem (2 Chron 30:11; 35:18). For the Chronicler, the north made the wrong choice

in rejecting the Davidic dynasty. The possibility of forgiveness remains, however, when they "return" and worship at the temple that David and Solomon built in Jerusalem. As Hezekiah puts it in his call to Israel: "yield yourselves to the LORD and come to his temple" (2 Chron 30:8).

The final verses of the book glance back at the beginning, when the story ends with another attempt to build the Jerusalem temple. While the people are in exile in Babylon, the Persian emperor Cyrus calls the people to rebuild God's house once again in Jerusalem: "Whoever among you belong to God's people, let them go up, and may the LORD their God be with them!" (2 Chron 36:23).

### I. Genealogies (1 Chron 1:1–9:44)

- A. From Adam to Esau and the 12 sons of Israel (1:1–2:2)
- B. The twelve tribes of Israel (2:3–9:44)
  1. Tribe of Judah (2:3–4:23)
  2. Tribe of Simeon (4:24–43)
  3. Tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh (5:1–26)
  4. Tribe of Levi (6:1–81)
  5. Tribes of Issachar, Benjamin and Naphtali, West Manasseh, Ephraim, and Asher (7:1–40)
  6. Tribe of Benjamin (8:1–40)
  7. The exile and return (9:1–34)
  8. The line of Saul (9:35–44)

### II. The History of Israel under David and Solomon (1 Chron 10:1–2 Chron 9:31)

- A. The rule of David (10:1–29:30)
  1. The fall of Saul (10:1–14)
  2. David becomes king (11:1–12:40)
  3. David brings the chest to Jerusalem (13:1–16:43)
  4. God promises David a dynasty, and his successor will build the temple (17:1–27)
  5. David's success in wars against the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and Arameans (18:1–20:8)
  6. David's census and purchase of the temple site (21:1–22:1)
  7. David prepares materials, artisans, Solomon, and the leaders to work on the temple (22:2–19)
  8. Organization of the worship personnel (Levites, priests, musicians) (23:1–26:32)
  9. Organization of non-worship personnel (military leaders, overseers of the treasuries, vineyards, cattle pasturing, etc.) (27:1–34)

### III. The History of Judah during the Divided Monarchy and Exile (2 Chron 10:1–36:23)

10. David's final address and Solomon's anointing as king (28:1–29:30)
- B. The rule of Solomon (2 Chron 1:1–9:31)
  1. God appears to Solomon at Gibeon and grants wisdom, fame, and wealth (1:1–17)
  2. Building the temple (2:1–5:1)
  3. Installing the sacred chest and dedicating the temple (5:2–7:22)
  4. Solomon's other achievements (8:1–9:31)
- A. The rule of Rehoboam (10:1–12:16)
  1. The division of the two kingdoms (10:1–11:4)
  2. Rehoboam's reign (11:5–12:1)
  3. Shishak's invasion (12:2–12)
  4. Conclusion of Rehoboam's reign (12:13–16)
- B. The rule of Abijah (13:1–14:1a)
- C. The rule of Asa (14:1b–16:14)
  1. Asa's reforms (14:1b–7)
  2. Victory over Cush and Azariah's message (14:8–15:7)
  3. Asa's reforms (15:8–19)
  4. War with Baasha and Hanani's message (16:1–10)
  5. Conclusion of Asa's reign (16:11–14)
- D. The rule of Jehoshaphat (17:1–21:1)
  1. Jehoshaphat's reign (17:1–19)
  2. Jehoshaphat and Ahab (18:1–19:3)
  3. Jehoshaphat's reforms (19:4–11)
  4. Jehoshaphat's victory (20:1–30)
  5. Conclusion of Jehoshaphat's reign (20:31–21:1)
- E. The rule of Jehoram (21:2–20)
- F. The rule of Ahaziah (22:1–9)
- G. The rule of Athaliah (22:10–12)
- H. The rule of Jehoash (23:1–24:27)

- I. The rule of Amaziah (25:1-28)
- J. The rule of Uzziah (26:1-23)
- K. The rule of Jotham (27:1-9)
- L. The rule of Ahaz (28:1-27)
- M. The rule of Hezekiah (29:1-32:33)
  - 1. Cleansing and purifying the temple (29:1-19)
  - 2. Rededicating the temple (29:20-36)
  - 3. Celebrating Passover (30:1-31:1)
  - 4. Hezekiah's reforms (31:2-21)
  - 5. The invasion of Sennacherib (32:1-23)
  - 6. Hezekiah's illness and death (32:24-33)
- N. The rule of Manasseh (33:1-20)
- O. The rule of Amon (33:21-25)
- P. The rule of Josiah (34:1-35:27)
  - 1. Religious reforms and repairing the temple (34:1-13)
  - 2. Finding the Instruction scroll (34:14-33)
  - 3. Celebrating Passover (35:1-19)
  - 4. Josiah's death (35:20-27)
- Q. The rules of the last kings of Judah (36:1-16)
  - 1. Jehoahaz (36:1-4)
  - 2. Jehoiakim (36:5-8)
  - 3. Jehoiachin (36:9-10)
  - 4. Zedekiah (36:11-16)
- R. The destruction of Jerusalem (36:17-21)
- S. The edict of Cyrus (36:22-23)

*Melody D. Knowles*

1:1 1Ks 2:12;  
1Ch 29:23-25  
1:2 6 1Ks 3:4  
1:7-13  
1Ks 3:5-15  
1:10 Nm 27:17;  
2Sa 5:2; 1Ks 3:9;  
Jas 1:5  
1:11 1Ks 3:11  
1:12 1Ch 29:25;  
2Ch 9:22  
1:14 1Ks 4:26;  
1Ks 10:26;  
2Ch 9:25  
1:15 1Ks 10:27;  
2Ch 9:27  
1:16, 17  
1Ks 10:28, 29;  
2Ch 9:28

### Solomon first meets God

**1** Solomon, David's son, was securely established over his kingdom because the LORD his God was with him and made him very great. <sup>2</sup>Solomon summoned all Israel, including the officers of the army,<sup>3</sup> the judges, and every Israelite leader who was the head of a family. <sup>3</sup>Then Solomon, accompanied by the whole assembly, went to the shrine at Gibeon because that is where God's meeting tent was, the tent that the LORD's servant Moses had made in the wilderness. <sup>4</sup>Now David had already brought God's chest from Kiriath-jearim to the place he had prepared for it because he had pitched a tent for the chest in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>But the bronze altar that Bezalel, Uri's son and Hur's grandson, had made was there in front of the LORD's dwelling, so that is where Solomon and the assembly worshipped. <sup>6</sup>Solomon went there to the bronze altar in the LORD's presence at the meeting tent and offered a thousand entirely burned offerings upon it.

<sup>7</sup>That night God appeared to Solomon and said, "Ask whatever you wish, and I will give it to you."

<sup>8</sup>"You showed so much kindness to my father David," Solomon replied to God, "and you have made me king in his place. <sup>9</sup>Now, LORD God, let your promise to my father David be fulfilled because you have made me king over a people as numerous as the earth's dust. <sup>10</sup>Give me wisdom and knowledge so I can lead this people, because no one can govern this great people of yours without your help."

<sup>11</sup>God said to Solomon, "Since this is what you wish, and because you've asked for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I've made you king—rather than asking for wealth, riches, fame, victory over those who hate you, or even a long life—<sup>12</sup>your request for wisdom and knowledge is granted. But I will also give you wealth, riches, and fame beyond that of any king before you or after you." <sup>13</sup>Then Solomon went from<sup>b</sup> the shrine in Gibeon, from the meeting tent to Jerusalem where he ruled over Israel.

### Solomon's wealth

<sup>14</sup>Solomon acquired more and more chariots and horses until he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he stationed in chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. <sup>15</sup>In Jerusalem, the king made silver and gold as common as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore trees that grow in the foothills. <sup>16</sup>Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and Kue, purchased from Kue by the king's agents at the going price. <sup>17</sup>They would import a chariot from Egypt for six hundred pieces of silver and a horse for one hundred fifty, and then export them to all the Hittite and Aramean kings.

<sup>a</sup>Or *officers over thousands and hundreds* <sup>b</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT to

1:1-13 In the book of 2 Chronicles, the reign of Solomon extends from 1:1 to 9:31. Throughout the account, the author emphasizes the king's attention to the temple and religious ritual. In this way, the portrait of Solomon bears a striking resemblance to his father, David. The son brings to realization all of his father's preparations for the temple. In addition, the Chronicler emphasizes Solomon's wisdom and the prosperity of his reign, and shows how these qualities were used to build the temple and establish its services. Like his father, who at the outset of his reign gathered all Israel to bring the divine covenant chest into Jerusalem (1 Chron 13), so also Solomon's first act as king is to lead a national pilgrimage. The destination of the large group is Gibeon, the worship site that the Chronicler presents as a "stand-in" until the temple is in operation.

1:1 *the Lord his God was with him and made him very great*: For the Chronicler, fame, prosperity, a large family, and success are all gifts from God and signs of divine blessing. They also come with some risk, as the stories will show for successful kings who place their trust in anyone or anything but God (e.g., 2 Chron 18:34). But in the eyes of the author, Solomon's greatness involved material success and a continued reliance on God.

1:2 *Solomon summoned all Israel*: In the source that the

Chronicler uses, Solomon's visit to Gibeon was a private visit (1 Kgs 3:4-14). Here, however, the visit is a national pilgrimage.

1:3 *the shrine at Gibeon*: This site is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 16:39-42; 21:29-30. It is the legitimate sanctuary that housed the Lord's dwelling and altar and functions in Chronicles as a transitional sacred site prior to the dedication of the temple.

1:4 *Now David had already brought*: In this aside, the author makes the parallel between Solomon and his father explicit. Just as David gathered all Israel to bring the chest into Jerusalem in his first major act as king (1 Chron 13:3; 15:13), so now King Solomon's first act is to go with the nation to God's meeting tent in Gibeon.

1:5 *altar*: See Exodus 38:1-8. Solomon and Hiram-abi (see 2 Chron 2:13) function creatively like Bezalel and Oholiab in Exodus 38:22-23.

1:9 *as numerous as the earth's dust*: an allusion to the promises to Abraham (Gen 13:16; 22:17) and Jacob (Gen 28:14). 1:14-17 *Solomon acquired more and more chariots and horses*: A description of the increasing wealth of Solomon (including horses, chariots, and silver) brackets the account of the king's reign (here and again in 2 Chron 9:24-28 = 1 Kgs 10:23-29). This bracket indicates the continual economic growth in Solomon's reign.

**Solomon prepares to build the temple**

**2**“Solomon gave orders to build a temple for the LORD’s name and to build a royal palace for himself. <sup>2a</sup>To work in the highlands, Solomon drafted 70,000 laborers, 80,000 stonecutters, and 3,600 supervisors. <sup>3</sup>Solomon sent the following message to King Hiram<sup>c</sup> of Tyre:

When my father David was building his palace, you sent him cedar logs. <sup>4</sup>Now as his son<sup>f</sup> I am about to build a temple in the name of the LORD my God. I will dedicate it to him to burn fragrant incense before him, to set out the bread that is regularly displayed, and to offer entirely burned offerings every morning and evening, on the sabbaths, the first of every month, and the festivals of the LORD our God, as Israel has been commanded to do forever. <sup>5</sup>The temple I am about to build must be magnificent, because our God is greater than all other gods. <sup>6</sup>But who is able to build such a temple when even the highest heaven can’t contain God? And who am I that I should build this temple for God, except as a place to burn incense in his presence? <sup>7</sup>So now send me a craftsman skilled in gold, silver, bronze, and iron, as well as in purple, crimson, and violet yarn—someone also experienced as an engraver. He will work with my craftsmen in Judah and Jerusalem who were provided by my father David. <sup>8</sup>Also send me cedar, cypress, and sandalwood logs from Lebanon. I know your servants know how to cut Lebanese timber, so my servants will work with your servants <sup>9</sup>to prepare plenty of timber for me, because the temple that I am about to build will be magnificent and amazing. <sup>10</sup>I will pay the woodcutters twenty thousand kors<sup>g</sup> of crushed wheat, twenty thousand kors of barley, twenty thousand baths<sup>h</sup> of wine, and twenty thousand baths of olive oil.

<sup>11</sup>Tyre’s King Hiram replied in a letter that he sent to Solomon:

The LORD must love his people Israel because he has made you their king! <sup>12</sup>Bless the LORD, Israel’s God, who made heaven and earth. He gave King David a wise son who possesses the knowledge and understanding to build a temple for the LORD and a royal palace for himself. <sup>13</sup>I’m sending you a skilled and experienced craftsman, Hiram-abi, <sup>14</sup>whose mother is from the tribe of Dan and whose father is from Tyre. He’s skilled in working with gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone, and wood, as well as purple, violet, and crimson yarn, and fine linen. He can do any kind of engraving and make any design given to him

<sup>c</sup>1:18 in Heb <sup>d</sup>2:1 in Heb <sup>e</sup>1 Kings spells the king’s name as Hiram. <sup>f</sup>LXX; MT lacks his son. <sup>g</sup>One kor is equivalent to a homer and is possibly equal to fifty gallons of grain. <sup>h</sup>One bath is approximately twenty quarts or five gallons.

2:1-18 After securing wisdom, wealth, and God’s blessing in the previous chapter, Solomon now secures the workers and the timber he will need to build the temple. As in the presentation of David, the Chronicler portrays Solomon’s interest in the temple and related religious matters as the primary concern after he becomes king. The first job of both kings is to tend to God’s temple. Solomon’s task of temple building extends from 2 Chronicles 2:1-5:1.

2:2 Building projects in the ancient world needed a very large workforce. The listing of the various workers frames the chapter, as this information is repeated again in 2 Chronicles 2:18.

2:3-10 Solomon’s letter to King Hiram is based on the text of 1 Kings 5:3-6. In his version, the Chronicler expands the source text with a lengthy description of the function of the temple that links it back to the Lord’s wilderness sanctuary (Exod 25-40). The source is also adapted to emphasize Solomon’s paramount commitment to the temple: In 1 Kings, Solomon secures the lumber only after he secures his throne and organizes the administration of his kingdom (1 Kgs 2-4), but in 2 Chronicles, assembling the building material is one of the very first tasks which the new king accomplishes. In addition, in 1 Kings it is the foreign king who takes the initiative to secure the relationship (1 Kgs 5:1), but 2 Chronicles has Solomon sending the initial request for timber to the king of Tyre.

2:3 you sent him cedar logs: See 1 Chronicles 14:1 = 2 Samuel 5:11.

2:4-6 In this section, not present in 1 Kings 5:3-6, Solomon sets out three purposes for the temple, purposes that parallel the Lord’s wilderness sanctuary in the Instruction from Moses: (1) The temple is to be a place to burn fragrant incense in God’s presence (cf. Exod 25:6; 30:1-8), (2) a place to set out the bread that is regularly displayed (cf. Exod 25:30; 40:23; Lev 24:5-9), and (3) a place to offer entirely burned offerings (cf. Num 28-29). Later in Chronicles, once the temple is built and dedicated, God will appear to Solomon and declare “I have . . . chosen this place as my house of sacrifice” (2 Chron 7:12).

2:7, 14 gold, silver, bronze, and iron . . . purple, crimson, and violet yarn: These are the same materials used in the Lord’s wilderness sanctuary, and thus point to continuity in purpose for the two structures (Exod 25:3-4; 35:5-6).

2:8 cedar, cypress, and sandalwood logs: David has already amassed an extensive supply of timber (1 Chron 22:4, 14; 29:2), but Solomon’s “magnificent and amazing” temple (2 Chron 2:9, cf. 2 Chron 2:5) will need even more.

2:13-16 Hiram-abi: This same artisan is mentioned in 1 Kings 7:13-14, although his name is spelled slightly differently (“Hiram”), and his mother is from the tribe of Naphtali. His heritage in 2 Chronicles, descending from Dan, links him back to Oholiab, the chief artisan of the

2:17-18 2Ch 2:2

3:1 Gn 22:2;

2Sa 24:18;

1Ki 6:1;

1Ch 21:15;

1Ch 21:18

3:3 1Ki 6:2;

1Ch 28:11

3:4 1Ki 6:3

3:5 1Ki 6:15;

1Ki 6:29;

1Ki 6:32

3:6 1Ki 6:9

3:7 1Ki 6:15, 29

3:8-9

1Ki 6:16-21

3:10-13

1Ki 6:23-28

3:15-17

1Ki 7:15-22

with the assistance of your craftsmen and the craftsmen of my master, your father David.

<sup>15</sup>So once my master sends the wheat, barley, olive oil, and wine he has promised, <sup>16</sup>we will cut as much timber as you need from Lebanon and bring it by raft on the sea to you at Joppa, where you can take it up to Jerusalem.

<sup>17</sup>Then Solomon counted all the immigrants in the land of Israel, as his father David had done, and the total was 153,600. <sup>18</sup>He made 70,000 of these immigrants laborers, 80,000 of them stonemasons in the highlands, and 3,600 of them supervisors to keep the people working.

### Solomon builds the temple

**3** Solomon began to build the LORD's temple in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD<sup>1</sup> had appeared to his father David, on the place David had prepared at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. <sup>2</sup>He began building in the second month<sup>1</sup> of the fourth year of his rule. <sup>3</sup>Solomon laid the foundations<sup>k</sup> for these structures in order to build the temple of God. The length according to the old standard of measurement was ninety feet and the width thirty feet. <sup>4</sup>Across the front of the temple<sup>1</sup> was a porch as long as the temple was and thirty feet wide, and thirty feet<sup>m</sup> high. He covered the inside walls with pure gold. <sup>5</sup>He paneled the walls of the main room with pine, covered them with fine gold, and decorated them with palm trees and chains. <sup>6</sup>He studded the room with precious stones for beauty; the gold was from Parvaim. <sup>7</sup>He covered the room, its beams, doorframes, walls, and doors with gold, and carved images of winged creatures on the walls. <sup>8</sup>Then he made the most holy place. It was as long as the temple was wide, thirty feet long and thirty feet wide. He covered it with six hundred kikkar of fine gold. <sup>9</sup>The gold nails weighed fifty shekels.<sup>n</sup> He also covered the upper rooms with gold.

<sup>10</sup>In the most holy place he formed two statues of winged creatures and covered them with gold. <sup>11</sup>Together the wingspan of these creatures was thirty feet. One of the first creature's wings was seven and a half feet long and touched the temple wall, while the other wing was seven and a half feet long, touching the wing of the other creature. <sup>12</sup>Similarly, one wing of the other creature was seven and a half feet long and touched the temple wall, while the other wing was seven and a half feet long and touched the other creature. <sup>13</sup>The wings of these creatures extended thirty feet. They stood on their feet facing the main room.

<sup>14</sup>Then he made the curtain out of fine linen and violet, purple, and crimson yarn, weaving winged creatures into it. <sup>15</sup>Then he made two columns in front of the temple, fifty-two and

<sup>1</sup>LXX; MT lacks the LORD. <sup>1</sup>LXX; MT adds on the second (day). <sup>k</sup>Syr the measurements <sup>1</sup>LXX; cf 1 Kgs 6:3 <sup>m</sup>LXX, Syr; MT one hundred eighty feet <sup>n</sup>Or approximately thirty ounces

Lord's wilderness sanctuary, who also came from the tribe of Dan (Exod 31:6). He is mentioned again in 2 Chronicles 4:11-16.

2:17 as his father David had done: See 1 Chronicles 22:2.

2:18 This list of workers forms a bracket with 2 Chronicles 2:2 around this chapter.

3:1-14 This section is part of the longer description of the temple in 2 Chronicles 2:1-5:1, drawn from the source text in 1 Kings 6-7. Continuing with the themes of the last chapter, chapter 3 emphasizes the links of the new temple with the Lord's wilderness sanctuary and Solomon's role in completing the task that his father David had begun.

3:1 *Solomon began to build*: To emphasize the king's active role in the building of the temple, he is the implied subject of the verbs of construction throughout this chapter and much of the next (i.e., "he covered," "he paneled," "he made;"), on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David: For 2 Chronicles, the temple was located where Abraham bound Isaac (Gen 22), the same place where the plague was stopped and David built an altar to God (2 Sam 24:16-25 = 1 Chron 21:15-22:1; note that the connection with Mount Moriah is an addition to the source text of 1 Kgs 6-7). Highlighting these earlier events that took place at the site reminds the reader that the area

has physical links to the ancestors and is chosen by God as a place of divine revelation.

3:3 *laid the foundations*: In ancient Near Eastern building rituals the foundation laying was one of the most important milestones in the construction of a temple (see also Hag 2:15-19; Zech 4:6-10; 8:9-13). See also 2 Chronicles 8:16.

3:6 *Parvaim*: This difficult term is probably an unknown geographical name, although it may also indicate a certain quality of gold.

3:7 *carved images of winged creatures on the walls*: Composite animal images, complete with wings, were associated with divinity in the ancient world. In Solomon's temple, they are carved into the gold-covered walls of the main room, woven into the curtains that surround the most holy place (2 Chron 3:14), and fashioned as two gold-covered statues in the holy place itself (2 Chron 3:10). 3:8 *the most holy place*: the room where the divine covenant chest would be placed. It was at the rear of the temple, the place farthest from the entrance, and entered by passing through ever increasing gradations of holy space. 3:10 *two statues of winged creatures*: See note on 2 Chronicles 3:7.

3:14 *the curtain*: There is no mention of a curtain in the description of Solomon's temple in the 1 Kings source, where

a half feet high, with a seven and a half foot cap on top of each. <sup>16</sup>Then he made chains like a necklace<sup>o</sup> and placed them on the tops of the columns. He made a hundred pomegranates and placed them into the chains. <sup>17</sup>Then he set up the pillars in front of the sanctuary, one on the south, the other on the north. The one on the south he named Jachin, and the one on the north he named Boaz.

### Solomon's temple equipment

**4** He<sup>p</sup> also made a bronze altar thirty feet long, thirty feet wide, and fifteen feet high. <sup>2</sup>Then he made a tank of cast metal called the Sea. It was circular in shape, fifteen feet from rim to rim, seven and a half feet high, and forty-five feet in circumference. <sup>3</sup>Under the rim were two rows of oxlike figures completely encircling it, ten every eighteen inches, each cast in its mold. <sup>4</sup>The Sea rested on twelve oxen with their backs toward the center, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east. <sup>5</sup>The Sea was as thick as the width of a hand. Its rim was shaped like a cup or an open lily blossom. It could hold three thousand baths. <sup>6</sup>He also made ten washbasins and put five on the south and five on the north. The items used for the entirely burned offerings were rinsed in these. The priests washed in the Sea. <sup>7</sup>He made ten gold lampstands as prescribed and put them in the sanctuary, five on the south and five on the north. <sup>8</sup>He also made ten tables and put them in the sanctuary, five on the south and five on the north, as well as a hundred gold bowls. <sup>9</sup>He made the courtyard of the priests and the great courtyard, with doors covered with bronze for the courtyard. <sup>10</sup>He placed the Sea at the southeast corner.

<sup>11</sup>Huram made the pots, the shovels, and the bowls. So Hiram finished all his work on God's temple for King Solomon:

<sup>12</sup>two columns;

two circular capitals on top of the columns;

two networks adorning the two circular capitals on top of the columns;

<sup>o</sup>Heb adds *in the inner room*. <sup>p</sup>*Solomon or Hiram*; this ambiguity with the pronoun continues in the following verses, but compare 2 Chron 3:1, 3; 4:11. If Hiram is meant, this is a worker whose name is spelled Hiram in 1 Kgs 7:13-14. <sup>q</sup>One bath is approximately twenty quarts or five gallons.

the holy space there is divided from the larger court by doors (1 Kgs 6:31-32; 7:50; but cf. 2 Chron 4:22). The curtain in 3:14, embroidered with violet, purple, and crimson yarn and decorated with winged creatures is reminiscent of the curtain in the Lord's wilderness sanctuary (Exod 26:31-33). 3:17 *Jachin, and . . . Boaz*: The significance of these names isn't clear.

4:1-5:1 This section completes the description of the building of Solomon's temple, begun in chapter 2. The amount of gold and intricacy of design indicates that this temple was built on the grandest scale. It was also closely related to Solomon himself—although the work of the chief artisan, Hiram-abi, is described in 4:11-16, the verbs of construction in rest of the chapter (“he made,” “he placed”) implicitly present Solomon as the fabricator. As source material, the author drew on 1 Kings 7:23-26, 38-39 for the material in 2 Chronicles 4:2-6a, and 1 Kings 7:39-51 for the material in 2 Chronicles 4:10-5:1.

4:1 *thirty feet long, thirty feet wide*: These measurements

may refer to the altar itself or the stepped base upon which it stood (cf. Ezek 43:13-17).

4:2-5 *tank of cast metal called the Sea*: The description here follows 1 Kings 7:23-26, although in the Kings source the rim is decorated with two rows of gourds.

4:7 *ten gold lampstands* also appear in 1 Kings 7:49, although the Lord's wilderness sanctuary had only one (Exod 25:31-39; 37:17-24 and cf. 2 Chron 13:11). The lampstands are also mentioned in 2 Chronicles 4:20.

4:9 *courtyard of the priests and the great courtyard*: The temple area had distinct areas of graduated holiness, with specific rules about who could enter each area. The larger courtyard was for the laity, and the smaller inner courtyard was for priests (see the design of the temple in Ezek 40-47. For more on the temple courts, see 1 Kgs 6:36; 7:12).

4:11 *Huram*, called “Hiram-abi” below in 2 Chronicles 4:16, was the chief artisan who came from Tyre (see note on 2 Chron 2:13-16).



The “Sea” in Solomon’s temple (2 Chron 4:2-5)

3:22 1Ki 3:7

4:2-5

1Ki 7:23-26

4:6a 1Ki 7:38,

39a

4:7, 8

1Ki 7:48-50;

2Ch 4:19-22

4:9 1Ki 6:36

4:10 1Ki 7:39b

4:11-18

1Ki 7:40-47

4:19-22  
1Ki 7:48-50;  
1Ch 4:7,8  
5:1 1Ki 7:51  
5:2-14  
1Ki 8:1-11

<sup>13</sup>four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, with two rows of pomegranates for each network that adorned the two circular capitals on top of the columns;

<sup>14</sup>ten<sup>a</sup> stands with ten<sup>a</sup> basins on them;

<sup>15</sup>one Sea;

twelve oxen beneath the Sea;

<sup>16</sup>and the pots, the shovels, and the meat forks.

All the things that Hiram-abi made for King Solomon for the LORD's temple were made of polished bronze. <sup>17</sup>The king cast them in clay molds in the Jordan Valley between Succoth and Zarethan. <sup>18</sup>Due to the very large number of objects, Solomon didn't even try to weigh the bronze. <sup>19</sup>Solomon also made all the equipment for God's temple: the gold altar; the tables for the bread of the presence; <sup>20</sup>the lampstands with their lamps, all of pure gold, to burn before the inner sanctuary as prescribed; <sup>21</sup>the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs of pure gold; <sup>22</sup>and the wick trimmers, bowls, ladles, and censers of pure gold. As for the temple entrance, the inner doors to the most holy place as well as the doors to the main hall were made of gold.

**5** When all of Solomon's work on the LORD's temple was finished, he brought the silver, gold, and all the objects his father David had dedicated and put them in the treasuries of God's temple.

### *Solomon dedicates the temple*

<sup>2</sup>Then Solomon assembled Israel's elders, all the tribal leaders, and the clan chieftains of Israel at Jerusalem to bring up the chest containing the LORD's covenant from Zion, David's City. <sup>3</sup>Everyone in Israel assembled before the king in the seventh month, <sup>a</sup>during the festival. <sup>4</sup>When all Israel's elders had arrived, the Levites picked up the chest. <sup>5</sup>They brought the chest, the meeting tent, and all the holy objects that were in the tent. The priests and <sup>v</sup>the Levites brought them up, <sup>6</sup>while King Solomon and the entire Israelite assembly that had joined him before the chest sacrificed countless sheep and oxen. <sup>7</sup>The priests brought

<sup>a</sup>LXX and 1 Kgs 7:43; MT *he made* <sup>a</sup>1 Kgs 7:43; MT *he made* <sup>b</sup>With 1 Kgs 7:46; Heb *Zeredah* <sup>c</sup>September–October, Tishrei <sup>v</sup>LXX; MT *the levitical priests*

4:16 *Hiram-abi*: See note on 2 Chronicles 2:13-16.

4:18 *Solomon didn't even try to weigh the bronze*: The wealth of the temple's building material points to the grandeur of the edifice, and the preparations of David who amassed so much bronze that it "couldn't be weighed" (1 Chron 22:3; 29:7). According to 1 Chronicles 18:8, David acquired the bronze that Solomon used for the Sea (2 Chron 4:2) as war booty from Hadadezer's cities, Tibhath and Cun.

4:20 *to burn before the inner sanctuary as prescribed*: The fabrication and placement of the gold lampstands was mentioned earlier (2 Chron 4:7). Now the author envisions their actual use and highlights that this will be in line with the past legitimate tradition as enacted in the Lord's wilderness sanctuary. See Exodus 25:31-39; 37:13-24.

4:22 *inner doors to the most holy place*: In 2 Chronicles 3:14, the holy place is enclosed behind a curtain.

5:1 In parallel with the source text in 1 Kings 7:51, Solomon completes his work of the temple by bringing the treasure and furnishings assembled by David out of storage and into their true home. While making sense on a purely functional level, the move functions on other levels as well. For instance, it further solidifies the link between David and Solomon in their shared concern to build the temple. And, although he was prevented from participating in the actual construction, assembling and dedicating materials for the temple before his death speaks of David's dedication to the project. Finally, the filling up of the newly-built treasuries marks the completion of the building and provides a logical transition to the dedication ceremonies that follow in 2 Chronicles 5:2-7:22. For earlier notices of David's acquisition of

gold, silver, and bronze as war booty, tribute, and voluntary offerings see 1 Chronicles 18:8, 10-11; 22:3, 14-16; 26:26-27; 29:2-9.

5:2-7:22 The newly built temple is now dedicated to God by Solomon and the gathered community of Israel. The subsection in 5:2-14 tells of the initial act of dedication: installing the divine covenant chest beneath the wings of the winged creatures that stood in the most holy place. The material in these chapters closely follows its source found in 1 Kings 8:1-11.

5:2 *from Zion, David's City*: Solomon's procession thus completes David's transfer of the divine covenant chest from Kiriath-jearim to its temporary resting place in a tent in Zion, and finally to its permanent dwelling a short distance away in the Jerusalem temple (1 Chron 13; 15:1-16:43).

5:3 *during the festival*: that is, the Festival of Booths in September–October (Lev 23:34-36).

5:4 *the Levites picked up the chest*: According to 1 Kings 8:3, 6, the priests carry the object, but 1 Chronicles assigns this task to the Levites (1 Chron 15:2). This links back to the wilderness period when Moses instructed the Levites to carry the chest (Deut 10:8). Significantly, because the temple is the covenant chest's final destination, this journey would be the last time that the Levites perform this service. Because only priests can enter into the most holy place, they are the ones to place the chest in its final resting place (2 Chron 5:7).

5:7 *beneath the wings of the winged creatures in the inner sanctuary*: In the ancient world, divinities were sometimes represented by composite animal images, complete with wings. For a longer description of the temple's most



5:13 1Ki 8:10;  
1Ch 16:34;  
2Ch 7:3,  
2Ch 20:21;  
Ezr 3:11  
6:1-11  
1Ki 8:12-21

*Worship and Music* In Chronicles, worship isn't fully complete without joy and music. The author describes such worship twice during the temple dedication (2 Chron 5:12-13 and 2 Chron 7:6) and mentions it repeatedly throughout the book. Examples include the journey of the chest into Jerusalem (1 Chron 15:16, 25-29), the coronation of Jehoiada (2 Chron 23:13), and Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chron 29:30; 30:21-22). Often these notices are additions to the source material from 1 and 2 Kings, indicating the integral place music had in the author's understanding of worship. They are also often reported in great detail—at times the accounts include the lyrics (i.e., "Yes, God is good!" in 2 Chron 5:13) as well as notes on the instrumentation ("cymbals, harps, and zithers" played by the Levites, and "trumpets" played by the priests in 2 Chron 5:12; cf. 1 Chron 15:16, 28). As the community directs its worship toward heaven in prayer, it takes its place alongside the tradition dating back to David, and the Chronicler emphasizes this link. According to the author, David appointed Levites "to remember, to give thanks, and to praise the LORD" with singing and instruments (1 Chron 16:4-7) and manufactured instruments (1 Chron 7:6), and, along with Asaph, wrote lyrics (2 Chron 29:30).

the chest containing the LORD's covenant to its designated spot beneath the wings of the winged creatures in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the most holy place. <sup>8</sup>The winged creatures spread their wings over the place where the chest rested, covering the chest and its carrying poles. <sup>9</sup>The carrying poles were so long that their tips could be seen from the holy place<sup>w</sup> in front of the inner sanctuary, though they weren't visible from outside. They are still there today. <sup>10</sup>Nothing was in the chest except the two stone tablets Moses placed there while at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they left Egypt.

<sup>11</sup>Then the priests left the holy place. All the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, regardless of their divisions. <sup>12</sup>All the levitical musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their families and relatives—were dressed in fine linen and stood east of the altar with cymbals, harps, and zithers, along with one hundred twenty priests blowing trumpets. <sup>13</sup>The trumpeters and singers joined together to praise and thank the LORD as one. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and other musical instruments, they began to sing, praising the LORD:

Yes, God is good!

Yes, God's faithful love lasts forever!

Then a cloud filled the LORD's temple. <sup>14</sup>The priests were unable to carry out their duties on account of the cloud because the LORD's glory filled God's temple.

**6** Then Solomon said, "The LORD said that he would live in a dark cloud; <sup>2</sup>but God, I have built you a lofty temple—a place where you can live forever."

<sup>3</sup>The king turned around, and while the entire assembly of Israel was standing there, he blessed them, <sup>4</sup>saying:

<sup>w</sup>LXX; MT *the chest* <sup>2</sup>Cf LXX; MT *the temple, the LORD's temple*

holy place and the statues of the winged creatures, see 2 Chronicles 3:8-13.

5:9 *They are still there today:* With the chest permanently installed, the carrying poles were no longer needed. However, 1 Chronicles description expresses the continuation of the command that the poles "should stay" with the chest in the rings (Exod 25:15).

5:12 *All the levitical musicians:* Musicians from the tribe of Levi also performed when David moved the covenant chest into the tent (1 Chron 15:16-25), marking another parallel between the two processions. See sidebar, "Worship and Music."

5:13 *Yes, God is good!:* The lyrics that the Levites sing are from Psalm 106:1. They were sung earlier in 1 Chronicles as part of a longer medley at the installation of the chest in the tent (1 Chron 16:34). *God's faithful love lasts forever!:* At a moment of worship innovation, namely, the dedication of a new temple, the community points to the ongoing love of God.

5:14 *the LORD's glory filled God's temple:* After the installation

of the chest in the most holy place and the praise of the levitical musicians, God marks the divine approval by filling the temple with a cloud-like "glory." A thick cloud also marked the presence of God in the Mosaic meeting tent (Exod 40:34-35).

6:1-2 *a place where you can live forever.* With these words, Solomon announces that the physical installment of the chest in the temple has concluded and officially offers the temple to God as a permanent home. After his declaration, the dedication continues through 2 Chronicles 7:22 with various prayers, sacrifices, and celebrations.

6:3-11 Before he leads the gathered community in prayer (2 Chron 6:12-42), Solomon recounts the key events that led to this moment. He begins with God's choice of Jerusalem and David (6:4-6), moves to God's promise that David's son will build the temple (6:7-9), and ends with what has just happened: the installation of the chest in the temple (6:10-11). The speech closely follows the source text in 1 Kings 8:12-22.

6:4 *and now has kept his promise:* While presiding over the

6:12-21  
1Ki 8:22-30  
6:18 2Ch 2:6;  
Ps 113:5;  
Is 66:1; Ac 7:49

Bless the LORD, the God of Israel, who spoke directly to my father David and now has kept his promise: "From the day I brought my people out of the land of Egypt, I haven't selected a city from any Israelite tribe as a site for the building of a temple for my name. Neither have I chosen anyone as prince over my people Israel. <sup>6</sup>But now I have chosen Jerusalem as a place for my name, and David as prince over my people Israel."

<sup>7</sup>My father David wanted to build a temple for the name of the LORD, Israel's God. <sup>8</sup>But the LORD said to my father David: "It is very good that you thought to build a temple for my name. Nevertheless, <sup>9</sup>you yourself won't build that temple. Instead, your very own son will build the temple for my name." <sup>10</sup>The LORD has kept his promise—I have succeeded my father David on Israel's throne, just as the LORD said, and I have built the temple for the name of the LORD, Israel's God. <sup>11</sup>There I've placed the chest that contains the covenant that the LORD made with the Israelites. <sup>12</sup>Solomon stood before the LORD's altar in front of the entire Israelite assembly and spread out his hands. <sup>13</sup>Now Solomon had made a bronze platform seven and a half feet long, seven and a half feet wide, and four and a half feet high, and he set it in the middle of the enclosure. He stood on it. Then, kneeling before the whole assembly of Israel and spreading his hands toward the sky, <sup>14</sup>he said:

LORD God of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven or on the earth. You keep the covenant and show loyalty to your servants who walk before you with all their heart. <sup>15</sup>This is the covenant you kept with your servant David my father, which you promised him. Today you have fulfilled what you promised.

<sup>16</sup>So now, LORD God of Israel, keep what you promised my father David your servant when you said to him, "You will never fail to have a successor sitting on Israel's throne as long as your descendants carefully walk according to my Instruction, just as you have walked before me." <sup>17</sup>So now, LORD God of Israel, may your promise to your servant David come true.

<sup>18</sup>But how could God possibly live on earth with people? If heaven, even the highest heaven, can't contain you, how can this temple that I have built contain you? <sup>19</sup>LORD, my God, listen to your servant's prayer and request, and hear the cry and prayer that I your servant pray to you. <sup>20</sup>Constantly watch over this temple, the place where you promised to put your name, and listen to the prayer your servant is praying concerning this place. <sup>21</sup>Listen to the request of your servant and your people Israel when they pray concerning this place. Listen from your heavenly dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive!

dedication of what will be his greatest accomplishment, Solomon's speech emphasizes that the construction of the temple was grounded on God's own pledge.

**6:9** *you yourself won't build that temple*: Like the oracle to David in 1 Chronicles 17, no explicit reason is given for this prohibition. In other texts, David's involvement in wars disqualifies him as "a man of blood" (1 Chron 22:8; 28:3).

**6:11** *There I've placed the chest that contains the covenant*: The placement of the chest in the temple represents a culmination of David's original observation that, while he now lives in a sumptuous palace made of cedar, "the chest containing the Lord's covenant is under curtains" (1 Chron 17:1). In addition to finally rectifying this situation, Solomon's placement of the chest together with the covenant in the temple links key aspects of the nation's tradition together in Jerusalem.

**6:12-42** Like his previous speech (2 Chron 6:3-11), Solomon's prayer closely follows the source of 1 Kings 8:22-53, with the major editorial changes occurring at the beginning and the end. The majority of the prayer concerns the ongoing function of the temple, divided into several major sections, each introducing a different future scenario when prayer in or toward the temple would be appropriate. The temple is primarily depicted

as a place of prayer. After notes on Solomon's position (6:12-13), the king gives thanks to God (6:14-17) and begs God to hear and forgive the prayer of the nation or an individual when they are in the temple or praying toward it (6:18-39).

**6:13** This verse is an addition to the text in 1 Kings 8, inserted to clarify some potential difficulties in the interpretation of the source text. Since Solomon is a layperson, he takes his place not directly "before the LORD's altar" (2 Chron 6:12 = 1 Kgs 8:22), but farther back in the enclosure. To ensure that his voice projects as far as possible (the text notes that it is heard by "the entire Israelite assembly"), he makes use of a platform.

**6:14-17** The beginning part of the prayer gives thanks for God's faithfulness to David and asks that the Davidic line continue to receive divine support.

**6:18-21** *how can this temple that I have built contain you?*: Solomon continues the prayer with a reflection on God's ongoing relationship to the temple. God maintains a *heavenly dwelling place*, a point noted in 6:21 and emphasized throughout the prayer (2 Chron 6:30, 33, 39). Yet God also *promised to put the divine name in the temple* (6:20), and prayers are to be said by the faithful when they are either in the temple or facing toward the temple (2 Chron 6:22, 24, 29, 34). As such, the temple manifests

<sup>22</sup>If someone wrongs another and must take a solemn pledge asserting his innocence before your altar in this temple, <sup>23</sup>then listen from heaven, act, and decide which of your servants is right. Condemn the guilty party, repaying them for their conduct, but justify the innocent person, repaying them for their righteousness.

<sup>24</sup>If your people Israel are defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, but then they change their hearts, give thanks to your name, and ask for mercy in your presence at this temple, <sup>25</sup>then listen from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel. Return them to the land you gave to them and their ancestors.

<sup>26</sup>When the sky holds back its rain because Israel has sinned against you, but they then pray concerning this place, give thanks to your name, and turn away from their sin because you have punished them for it, <sup>27</sup>then listen from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the best way for them to follow, and send rain on your land that you gave to your people as an inheritance.

<sup>28</sup>Whenever there is a famine or plague in the land, or whenever there is blight, mildew, locusts, or grasshoppers, or whenever someone's enemies attack them in their cities, or any plague or illness comes, <sup>29</sup>whatever prayer or petition is made by any individual or by all of your people Israel—because people will recognize their own pain and suffering and spread out their hands toward this temple—<sup>30</sup>then listen from heaven where you live. Forgive, act, and repay each person according to all their conduct because you know their hearts. You alone know the human heart! <sup>31</sup>Do this that they may revere you by following your ways all the days they live on the fertile land that you gave to our ancestors.

<sup>32</sup>Listen also to the foreigner who isn't from your people Israel, but who comes from a distant country because of your great reputation, your great power, and your outstretched arm. When they come and pray toward this temple, <sup>33</sup>then listen from heaven where you live, and do everything the foreigner asks. Do this so that all the people of the earth may know your reputation and revere you, as your people Israel do, and recognize that this temple I have built bears your name.

<sup>34</sup>When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you may send them, and they pray to you toward this city that you have chosen and concerning this temple that I have built for your name, <sup>35</sup>then listen from heaven to their prayer and request and do what is right for them.

<sup>36</sup>When they sin against you, for there is no one who doesn't sin, and you become angry with them and hand them over to an enemy who takes them away as prisoners to enemy territory, whether distant or nearby, <sup>37</sup>if they change their heart in whatever land they are held captive, turning back and begging for your mercy,<sup>a</sup> saying, "We have sinned, we have done wrong, and we have acted wickedly!" <sup>38</sup>and if they return to you with all their heart and all their being in the enemy territory where they've been taken captive, and pray concerning their land, which you gave to their ancestors, concerning the city you have chosen, and concerning this temple I have built for your name, <sup>39</sup>then listen to their prayer and request from your heavenly dwelling place. Do what is right for them, and forgive your people who have sinned against you.

<sup>40</sup>Now, my God, may your eyes be open and your ears attentive to the prayers of this place. <sup>41</sup>And now go, LORD God, to your resting place, you and your mighty chest. May your priests, LORD God, be clothed with salvation; may those loyal to you rejoice in what is good. <sup>42</sup>LORD God, don't reject your anointed one.<sup>a</sup> Remember your faithful loyalty to your servant David.

6:22, 23  
1Ki 8:31, 32  
6:24, 25  
1Ki 8:33, 34  
6:26, 27  
1Ki 8:35, 36  
6:28-31  
1Ki 8:37-40  
6:30 1Ch 28:9  
6:32, 33  
1Ki 8:41-43  
6:34, 35  
1Ki 8:44, 45  
6:36 Job 15:14;  
Ecc 7:20;  
Isa 5:2; 1Jn 1:8  
6:36-39  
1Ki 8:46-53  
6:42 Ps 132:1;  
Ps 132:10;  
Is 55:3

<sup>a</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT *you have answered them* <sup>a</sup>MT adds *in the land they are held captive*. <sup>a</sup>LXX; MT *anointed ones*

a particular geographical expression of the divine. *when you hear, forgive!* This short line can serve as a summary of the entire prayer.

6:22-23 For similar protocols to decide disputed cases where the evidence is difficult to judge according to human analysis, see Exodus 22:7-11.

6:29 *and spread out their hands toward this temple*: Solomon provides only the gesture of prayer, but no words for prayer in a time of crisis.

6:41-42 At the end of his prayer, Solomon returns to the immediate context of the temple's dedication with a paraphrase of Psalm 132:8-10 that isn't found in the parallel text of 1 Kings 8. The verses call upon God to inhabit the temple as a *resting place*, and highlight God's *faithful loyalty* to David and his lineage. For a similar reuse of several psalms when the chest is transferred to Jerusalem under David's leadership, see 1 Chronicles 16:7-36.

7:4-10  
1Ki 8:62-66  
7:9 Lv 23:36  
7:11-22  
1Ki 9:1-9  
7:12 Dt 12:5-6,  
Dt 12:11;  
1Ki 9:1; 2Ch 1:7

**7**As soon as Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the entirely burned offering and the sacrifices, while the LORD's glory filled the temple. **2**The priests were unable to enter the LORD's temple because the LORD's glory had filled the LORD's temple. **3**All the Israelites were watching when the fire fell. As the LORD's glory filled the temple, they knelt down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, worshipping and giving thanks to the LORD, saying, "Yes, God is good! Yes, God's faithful love lasts forever!"

**4**Then the king and all the people sacrificed to the LORD. **5**King Solomon sacrificed twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred twenty thousand sheep when the king and all the people dedicated God's temple. **6**The priests stood at their posts, as did the Levites with the LORD's musical instruments, which King David had made for giving thanks to the LORD, saying, "Yes, God's faithful love lasts forever!" and which David had used when he gave praise. Across from them, the priests were blowing trumpets while all Israel was standing.

**7**Solomon also dedicated the middle of the courtyard in front of the LORD's temple. He had to offer the entirely burned offerings and the fat of the well-being sacrifices there because the bronze altar Solomon had made was too small to contain the entirely burned offerings, the grain offerings, and the pieces of fat.

**8**At that time Solomon, together with all Israel, celebrated the festival for seven days. It was a very large assembly that came from Lebo-hamath to the border<sup>b</sup> of Egypt. **9**On the eighth day there was a gathering. They had dedicated the altar for seven days and celebrated the festival for another seven days. **10**On the twenty-third day of the seventh month,<sup>c</sup> Solomon dismissed the people to their tents, happy and content because of the goodness the LORD had shown to David, to Solomon, and to his people Israel. **11**In this way, Solomon finished the LORD's temple and the royal palace. He successfully accomplished everything he intended for the LORD's temple and his own palace.

### **Solomon again meets God**

**12**Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said to him: I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place as my house of sacrifice. **13**When I close the sky so that there is no rain or I order the locusts to consume the land or I send a plague against my people, **14**if my people who belong to me will humbly pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land. **15**From now on my eyes will be open and my ears will pay attention to the prayers offered in this place, **16**because I have chosen this temple and declared it holy so that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there. **17**As for you, if you will walk before me just as your father David did, doing all that I have commanded you and keeping my regulations and case laws, **18**then I will establish your royal throne, just as I promised your father David: You will never fail to have a successor ruling in Israel. **19**But if any of you ever turn away from and abandon the regulations and commands that I have given you, and go to serve other gods and worship them, **20**then I will uproot you<sup>d</sup> from my land that I gave you, and I will reject this temple

<sup>b</sup>Or *Wadi*, traditionally *Brook* <sup>c</sup>September–October, Tishrei <sup>d</sup>Or *Israel* (or *them*)

7:1-11 After Solomon's long prayer in the previous chapter, the temple's dedication concludes with a dramatic sign of divine approval (7:1-3) and the people's celebration (7:4-11). The account is based on the material in 1 Kings 8:62-9:1, with the significant additions of 2 Chronicles 7:1-3, 6, 11.

7:1 *fire came down from heaven*: In an addition to the parallel account in 1 Kings 8, God sends a dramatic sign of commitment to Solomon's temple. This is similar to earlier occasions where God also has fire descend from heaven to indicate the divine endorsement of the temple site (1 Chron 21:26) and the Lord's wilderness sanctuary (Lev 9:24).

7:3 *All the Israelites were watching*: When God's glory filled the temple earlier in the dedication ceremonies, the cloud was so thick that it affected the ability of the priests to carry out their duties (2 Chron 5:14). Now God's physical endorsement of the temple in the form of fire coming

from heaven is visible to the people as well: Everyone present has witnessed God's approval of the new temple. 7:6 This verse is another addition to the source in 1 Kings 8, and reflects the ongoing prominence that the Chronicler gives to music and praise in worship. See sidebar, "Worship and Music" at 2 Chronicles 5. For David's establishment of the temple's musical leadership, see 1 Chronicles 6:31-32; 23:5; 25:1-6.

7:8-10 *At that time Solomon...celebrated the festival*: The author associates the dedication of the temple with the Festival of Booths in 2 Chronicles 5:3 (see also Deut 16:13-15).

7:12-22 God's revelation to Solomon at night affirms the divine choice of the temple as a *house of sacrifice* (7:12) and a place where prayers will be heard (7:13-16). The conditional promises to the Davidic monarchy are also confirmed, with a particularly vivid warning about the consequences of abandoning God's commands (7:17-22).

that I made holy for my name. I will make it a joke, insulted by everyone. <sup>21</sup>Everyone who passes by this temple—so lofty now—will be shocked and will wonder, Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and temple? <sup>22</sup>The answer will come, Because they abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who brought them out of Egypt. They embraced other gods, worshipping and serving them. This is why God brought all this disaster on them.

### *Solomon's buildings and prosperity*

**O**After twenty years of building the LORD's temple and his royal palace, <sup>2</sup>Solomon next rebuilt the cities Hiram had given him, and he settled Israelites there.

<sup>3</sup>Solomon went to Hamath-zobah and seized it. <sup>4</sup>He fortified Tadmor in the wilderness, along with all the storage cities he had built in Hamath. <sup>5</sup>Solomon also built Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon as fortress cities with walls, gates, and crossbars; <sup>6</sup>Baalath; all the cities he used for storage; and all the cities used for chariots and cavalry—along with everything else he wanted to build in Jerusalem, Lebanon, and throughout his kingdom.

<sup>7</sup>Any non-Israelite people who remained of the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites—<sup>8</sup>that is, the descendants of such people who were still in the land because the Israelites weren't able to destroy them—Solomon forced into the labor gangs that are still in existence today. <sup>9</sup>However, Solomon didn't force the Israelites to work as slaves; instead, they became warriors, chief officers, and the commanders of his chariots and cavalry. <sup>10</sup>And Solomon had two hundred fifty chief officers\* who were in charge of the people.

<sup>11</sup>Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter from David's City to a palace he had built for her, because he said, "My wife mustn't live in the palace of Israel's King David, because the places where the LORD's chest has been are holy."

<sup>12</sup>Then Solomon offered entirely burned offerings to the LORD on the LORD's altar that Solomon had built in front of the porch, <sup>13</sup>as each day required, according to the commandment of Moses for sabbaths, new moon festivals, and the three annual festivals—Unleavened Bread, Weeks, and Booths. <sup>14</sup>Just as his father David had ordered, Solomon set up the divisions of the priests for their services and the Levites to their posts for offering praise and ministering in front of the priests, doing what needed to be done each day; as well as the gatekeepers in their divisions at each gate, because this was what David the man of God had commanded. <sup>15</sup>They didn't deviate in any way from the king's commands

\**Qere*: Kethib *officers of the troops*

See sidebar, "Acceptable Temple Worship" at 2 Chronicles 29. This warning foreshadows the judgment that eventually falls on the nation in 2 Chronicles 36. The parallel account of 2 Chronicles 7:12-22 is 1 Kings 9:2-9.

8:1-18 Like the next chapter, this account of Solomon's various building projects (8:1-6), faithfulness in worship and the administration of the sanctuary (8:12-16), and collection of gold from Ophir (8:17-18) manifests the king's ongoing success and power. The material in this chapter is taken from 1 Kings 9:10-28, with some alteration.

8:2 *rebuilt the cities Hiram had given him*: For earlier correspondence between Solomon and Tyre's King Hiram, see 2 Chronicles 2:3-16. In 1 Kings 9:11 Solomon gave the king (referred to as Hiram) 20 cities.

8:3 *and seized it*: Throughout the tradition, Solomon is generally regarded as "a man of peace" (e.g., 1 Chron 22:9). This account of his campaign against Hamath-zobah, unrecorded elsewhere, puts the king in a different perspective.

8:4 *Tadmor in the wilderness*: a site 140 miles northeast of Damascus. According to this verse, Solomon's kingdom extends north into Syria.

8:5 *Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon*: towns northwest of Jerusalem.

8:7-8 *Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites*: the traditional names of the Canaanite people groups in the land when the ancestors of Israel arrived in the land (Gen 15:18-21). *Solomon forced into the labor gangs*: The use of

foreign workers for laborers is also seen in 1 Chronicles 22:2 and 2 Chronicles 2:17-18.

8:9 *Solomon didn't force the Israelites to work as slaves*: Nevertheless, when his son succeeded him on the throne, the people complained to Rehoboam that "Your father made our workload very heavy" (2 Chron 10:4).

8:11 *Pharaoh's daughter*: The books of 1 and 2 Kings attributes many foreign wives to Solomon, and mentions Pharaoh's daughter several times (1 Kgs 3:1; 7:8; 9:16, 24; 11:1-8). Chronicles, however, names only two of Solomon's wives, and they both appear only once in the narrative: *Pharaoh's daughter* here in 8:11, and "Naamah from Ammon," the mother of Rehoboam in 2 Chronicles 12:13. Although the Chronicler includes several foreign women in the genealogy of the nation without any censure (including 1 Chron 2:3, 17), Solomon's connection to non-Israelite women and their unorthodox religious practices is decidedly underplayed.

8:12-16 This section is a sizable expansion of 1 Kings 9:25, reflecting the Chronicler's interest in ritual.

8:13 The ritual calendar outlined here consists of sacrifices made every day (*as each day required*), with additional ones at the weekly celebration of the Sabbath, the monthly new moon festival, and the three annual pilgrimage festivals.

8:14 *Just as his father David had ordered*: For more on this, see 1 Chronicles 23-27.

8:15 *the king's commands concerning the priests*: For more on the details of this verse, see 1 Chronicles 25-26.

8:1, 2  
1Ki 9:10-14  
8:4-6  
1Ki 9:17-19  
8:5 Josh 16:3;  
1Ch 7:24  
8:7 1Ki 9:20  
8:7-10  
1Ki 9:20-23  
8:8 1Ki 9:21  
8:9 Ex 19:6;  
1Ki 4:1;  
2Ch 8:10  
8:11 1Ki 9:24a  
8:12-16  
1Ki 9:25

8:17, 18  
1K: 9:26-28  
9:1-12  
1K: 10:1-13  
9:13-20  
1K: 10:14-21

concerning the priests, the Levites, or the treasuries. <sup>16</sup>All Solomon's work was carried out from the day the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid until its completion. Then the LORD's temple was completely finished.

<sup>17</sup>Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber and Eloth on the coast in the land of Edom. <sup>18</sup>Huram had his servants bring ships to Solomon, along with crews of expert sailors. They went with Solomon's servants to Ophir and imported four hundred fifty kikkars of gold, which they brought back to King Solomon.

### Queen of Sheba

**9**When the queen of Sheba heard reports about Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to test Solomon with riddles. Accompanying her was a huge entourage, with camels carrying spices, large amounts of gold, and precious stones. After she arrived, she told Solomon everything that was on her mind. <sup>2</sup>Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too difficult for him to answer. <sup>3</sup>When the queen of Sheba saw how wise Solomon was, the palace he had built, <sup>4</sup>the food on his table, his servants' quarters, the function and dress of his attendants, his cupbearers and their dress, and the entirely burned offerings he offered at the LORD's temple, <sup>5</sup>it took her breath away.

<sup>5</sup>"The report I heard about your deeds and wisdom when I was still at home is true," she said to the king. <sup>6</sup>"I didn't believe it until I came and saw it with my own eyes. In fact, the half of it wasn't told to me! You have far more than I was told. <sup>7</sup>Your people and these servants who continually serve you and get to listen to your wisdom are truly happy! <sup>8</sup>Bless the LORD your God because he was pleased to put you on the throne as king for the LORD your God. Because your God loved Israel and wanted to establish them forever, he has made you their king to uphold justice and righteousness."

<sup>9</sup>Then she gave the king one hundred twenty kikkars of gold, a great quantity of spices, and precious stones. Never again has such a quantity of spice come to Israel as when the queen of Sheba gave this gift to King Solomon.

<sup>10</sup>In addition, Huram's servants and the servants of Solomon, who had brought gold back from Ophir, also brought al gum wood and precious stones. <sup>11</sup>The king made steps <sup>8</sup> for the LORD's temple and for the royal palace with the al gum wood, as well as lyres and harps for the musicians. Never before had anything like them been seen in the land of Judah. <sup>12</sup>King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba everything she wanted, even more than she had brought the king. Then she and her servants returned to her homeland.

### Solomon's wealth

<sup>13</sup>Solomon received an annual income of six hundred sixty-six kikkars of gold, <sup>14</sup>not including income from the traders and merchants. All the Arabian kings and the governors of

<sup>8</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg, 1 Kgs 10:5; MT *how he processed (or went up) to the LORD's temple*. <sup>8</sup>LXX, Vulg; Heb uncertain

**8:16** *from the day the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid:* The building begins in 2 Chronicles 3:1 (see note on 2 Chron 3:3).

**8:17-18** *Huram:* See 2 Chronicles 2:3-16 and 1 Kings 9:26-28.

**9:1-31** The account of Solomon's prosperity and success continues from the last chapter into chapter 9. The material points to the fulfillment of David's charge to his son: "if you carefully follow the regulations and case laws that the LORD commanded Moses concerning Israel, you'll prosper" (1 Chron 22:13). In this chapter the author first describes the visit of the queen of Sheba (9:1-12), then Solomon's great wealth (9:13-28), and concludes with a summary of his reign (9:29-32). The material closely parallels 1 Kings 10:1-29.

**9:1-12** *When the queen of Sheba heard reports about Solomon:* When he set out to build the temple, Solomon received a letter from Tyre's King Hiram, complimenting his wisdom and understanding: "The LORD must love his people Israel because he has made you their king!" (2 Chron 2:12). Now with the temple completed, the author indicates that Solomon's fame has also extended to the south and into the royal court of Sheba in Arabia.

**9:8** *and wanted to establish them forever:* The queen's summary of God's purpose for Israel is an addition to the text of 1 Kings 10 and fits the Chronicler's hopes for the post-exilic community.

**9:9** *Never again has such a quality of spice come to Israel:* The great generosity of the queen's gift, of a size never to be matched, is a fitting physical representation of the literary account of her visit. Throughout the story, she appears as the active partner to Solomon's more passive character. Although the two rulers are presented as evenly matched (she tells the king "everything that was on her mind" and he "answered all her questions"; 2 Chron 9:1-2), she is the more dynamic participant. She is the subject of most of the verbs (she "heard," "came," "told," "gave," and more), and it is only her speech that is quoted (2 Chron 9:5-8). Although the author writes that Solomon was also generous in his gifts (2 Chron 9:12), her present of gold and spices of an amount that were never again imported into the country is a fitting representation of her prominent place in this story. **9:10** For more on King Hiram, see 2 Chronicles 2:3-16; 8:18. **9:13-28** The numerous references to huge amounts of gold and silver throughout this section points to the king's

the land also brought Solomon gold and silver. <sup>15</sup>King Solomon made two hundred body-sized shields of hammered gold, using fifteen pounds<sup>b</sup> of hammered gold in each shield; <sup>16</sup>and three hundred small shields of hammered gold, using seven and a half pounds<sup>d</sup> of hammered gold in each shield. The king placed these in the Forest of Lebanon Palace.

<sup>17</sup>The king also made a large ivory throne and covered it with pure gold. <sup>18</sup>Six steps led up to the throne, which had a gold footrest attached. Two lions stood beside the armrests on both sides of the throne. <sup>19</sup>Another twelve lions stood on both sides of the six steps. No other kingdom had anything like this.

<sup>20</sup>All King Solomon's drinking cups were made of gold, and all the items in the Forest of Lebanon Palace were made of pure gold, not silver, since even silver wasn't considered good enough in Solomon's time! <sup>21</sup>The royal fleet sailed to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram, returning once every three years with gold, silver, ivory, monkeys, and peacocks.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>22</sup>King Solomon far exceeded all the earth's kings in wealth and wisdom, <sup>23</sup>and kings of every nation wanted an audience with Solomon in order to hear his God-given wisdom. <sup>24</sup>Year after year they came with tribute: objects of silver and gold, clothing, weapons, spices, horses, and mules.

<sup>25</sup>Solomon also had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, together with twelve thousand horsemen that he kept in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. <sup>26</sup>He ruled all the kings from the Euphrates<sup>b</sup> to the Philistines' land and the border of Egypt. <sup>27</sup>In Jerusalem, the king made silver as common as stones and cedar as common as sycamore trees that grow in the foothills. <sup>28</sup>Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and every land.

### Solomon's remaining days

<sup>29</sup>The rest of Solomon's deeds, from beginning to end, aren't they written in the records of the prophet Nathan, the prophecies of Ahijah from Shiloh, and the visions of the seer Iddo concerning Jeroboam, Nebat's son? <sup>30</sup>Solomon ruled over all Israel in Jerusalem for forty years. <sup>31</sup>Solomon lay down with his ancestors and was buried in David's City with his father. His son Rehoboam succeeded him as king.

### How Rehoboam lost the kingdom

**10** Rehoboam went to Shechem, where all Israel had come to make him king. <sup>2</sup>When Jeroboam, Nebat's son, heard the news, he returned from Egypt where he had fled

<sup>b</sup>Or six hundred shekels <sup>1</sup>Or three hundred shekels <sup>1</sup>Or possibly apes; Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Or the river

great wealth. For the Chronicler, wealth is a sign of God's blessing, and an indication that Solomon is fulfilling the covenant regulations (see note at 2 Chron 9:1-12).

9:15-16 *two hundred body-sized shields of hammered gold... three hundred small shields of hammered gold*: Given the relative expense and softness of gold, as well as the weight of each shield (15 and 7.5 pounds respectively), these items would appear to be purely ceremonial. Later in the narrative, King Shishak of Egypt takes them as booty when he attacks Jerusalem (2 Chron 12:9). *the Forest of Lebanon Palace*: For a fuller description of this building, see 1 Kings 7:1-12.

9:26 *from the Euphrates to the Philistines' land and the border of Egypt*: These expansive borders of Solomon's kingdom are reminiscent of those of David, his father (1 Chron 13:5). The large geographical extent is a sign of God's blessing. See also 1 Kings 4:21.

9:29-31 In the Chronicler's version of Solomon's reign, the king dies as a paragon of virtue, completing the temple and strengthening the kingdom during his 40-year reign. In order to hone this presentation, the Chronicler omits retelling 1 Kings 11, where, because Solomon worshipped the gods of his foreign wives, God decided to "tear the kingdom" out of the hands of his son (1 Chron 11:12). *the records of the prophet Nathan*: As sources for the account, the Chronicler names the records of prophets associated with Solomon's reign: Nathan (1 Kgs 1:11-40) and

Ahijah from Shiloh (1 Kgs 11:29-39). For the seer Iddo, see 2 Chronicles 12:15; 13:22.

10:1-12:16 After his death, Solomon is succeeded by his son Rehoboam. The united kingdom that lasted for 80 years under David and Solomon quickly fragments when the north doesn't choose to support the new king (1 Chron 29:27; 2 Chron 9:30; 10:16-17). From this point, the kingdom is divided and will remain so until the fall of the north in 722 BCE. For the Chronicler, the north still remains part of the nation of Israel, but its people can't be fully restored until they again support the Davidic king and worship at the Jerusalem temple. (See sidebar, "God's People, North or South" at 2 Chron 10.) For the rest of the narrative, the author keeps the literary focus on the southern kingdom, retelling the events about the north from the books of 1 and 2 Kings only when they also involve Judah. The story of Rehoboam, the first king of the south in the divided kingdom, begins in 10:1 and continues through 12:16. Although it parallels the source material in 1 Kings 12 and 14, the Chronicler makes some strategic additions. 10:1 *Shechem*: a traditional religious center for Israel in the north (Josh 24:1-27), and the future capital of Jeroboam's kingdom (1 Kgs 12:25).

10:2 *he returned from Egypt*: The Chronicler's version of Solomon's reign omits the fuller story of when Jeroboam, a royal official, received a prophecy from Ahijah that the people's worship of foreign gods would result in the

9:21 1Ki 10:22

9:22-24

1Ki 10:23-25

9:25 1Ki 4:26,

1Ki 10:26;

2Ch 1:14

9:26 1Ki 4:21

9:27 1Ki 10:27;

2Ch 1:15

9:28

1Ki 10:28, 29;

2Ch 1:16, 17

9:29 1Ki 11:29,

1Ki 11:41;

1Ch 29:29;

2Ch 12:15,

2Ch 13:22

10:1-19

1Ki 12:1-19

from King Solomon. <sup>3</sup>The people sent and called for Jeroboam, who along with all Israel came and said to Rehoboam, <sup>4</sup>"Your father made our workload<sup>1</sup> very heavy; if you will lessen the demands your father made of us and lighten the heavy workload he demanded from us, then we will serve you."

<sup>5</sup>He answered them, "Come back in three days." So the people left.

<sup>6</sup>King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon when he was alive. "What do you advise?" Rehoboam asked. "How should I respond to these people?"

<sup>7</sup>"If you are kind to these people and try to please them by speaking gently with them," they replied, "they will be your servants forever."

<sup>8</sup>But Rehoboam ignored the advice the elders gave him and instead sought the counsel of the young advisors who had grown up with him and now served him. <sup>9</sup>"What do you advise?" he asked them. "How should we respond to these people who said to me, 'Lighten the workload your father demanded from us?'"

<sup>10</sup>The young people who had grown up with Rehoboam said to him, "This people said to you, 'Your father made our workload heavy. Lighten it for us!' Now this is what you should say to them, 'My baby<sup>m</sup> finger is thicker than my father's waist! <sup>11</sup>So if my father made your workload heavy, I'll make it even heavier! If my father disciplined you with whips, I'll do it with scorpions!'"

<sup>12</sup>Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam on the third day, just as the king had specified when he said, "Come back in three days." <sup>13</sup>The king then answered the people harshly. He ignored the elders' advice, <sup>14</sup>and instead followed the young people's advice. He said, "My father made your workload heavy, but I'll make it even heavier; my father disciplined you with whips, but I'll do it with scorpions!"

<sup>15</sup>The king didn't listen to the people because this turn of events came from God so that the LORD might keep his promise concerning Jeroboam, Nebat's son, which God delivered through Ahijah from Shiloh. <sup>16</sup>When all Israel saw<sup>m</sup> that the king wouldn't listen to them, the people answered the king,

"Why should we care about David?

We have no stake in Jesse's son!

Go back to your homes, Israel!

You better look after your own house now, David!"

Then all Israel went back to their homes, <sup>17</sup>and Rehoboam ruled over only the Israelites who lived in the cities of Judah.

<sup>18</sup>When King Rehoboam sent Hadoram to them (he was the leader of the work gang), the Israelites stoned him to death. King Rehoboam quickly got into his chariot and fled to Jerusalem. <sup>19</sup>And so Israel has been in rebellion against David's dynasty to this day.

<sup>1</sup>Or our yoke <sup>m</sup>Or pinky; perhaps a euphemism <sup>m</sup>Syr, OL, Tg; MT lacks saw.

division of the kingdom. According to the account in Kings, Jeroboam fled to Egypt when Solomon heard that the royal official would be the king of the 10 northern tribes (1 Kgs 11:26-40). The Chronicler also alludes to the story in 2 Chronicles 10:15.

10:5 *Come back in three days*: Rehoboam seems to think, incorrectly as it turns out, that his options are open and that he can choose not to lessen the workload that his father laid upon the people (2 Chron 10:4).

10:7 *If you are kind to these people*: Solomon's advisors present a policy that is both relevant to the specific situation and a rational ongoing policy for all rulers. The source found in 1 Kings 12:7 includes the term "today" after this phrase. With the omission, the Chronicler indicates that royal benevolence shouldn't be temporarily adopted simply to gain power and then abandoned, but it is an enduring way of life in a strong kingdom.

10:11 *If my father disciplined you with whips, I'll do it with scorpions!* The advice of Rehoboam's younger colleagues (which he himself repeats to the people in 2 Chron 10:14) is reminiscent of Pharaoh's unsympathetic position expressed in Exodus 5:6-9: When the

people complain that they want to stop making bricks for a time in order to worship God in the wilderness, the Pharaoh increases their burden by making them "gather straw for themselves."

10:15 *this turn of events came from God*: This verse, repeating the source in 1 Kings 11:4, gives a retrospective theological claim about the account of Rehoboam's foolishness. Although the story has unfolded via human action, at the conclusion the author attributes its impetus to divine initiative. The move is reminiscent of Joseph's words when he is reunited with his family in Pharaoh's court. Even though the brothers intended to harm him by selling him into slavery, Joseph maintains that "God sent me before you to save lives" (Gen 45:5). *keep his promise concerning Jeroboam*: For the longer story, see 1 Kings 11:26-40, and the note on 2 Chronicles 10:2.

10:16 *Why should we care about David?*: Given the story so far, the north's reaction to Rehoboam isn't entirely unexpected. The poetic fragment that marks the division of the kingdom is reminiscent of that which marked its very beginning (1 Chron 12:18).



11:1-4  
1Ki 12:21-24  
11:15 Lv 17:7;  
Dt 32:17;  
1Ki 12:28;  
1Ki 12:31;  
1Ki 13:33

*God's People, North or South* After Solomon's death, the northern tribes revolt against Solomon's successor Rehoboam and split from the southern kingdom. For the Chronicler, this is a "rebellion against David's dynasty" (2 Chron 10:19). For the remainder of the narrative, the focus will be on the southern kingdom, with the author omitting the accounts of the northern kingdom preserved in 1 and 2 Kings, except when they involve the south. But the lack of focus on the north doesn't mean that they are without hope. The author asserts that the northern tribes are still the people of God and can turn away from sin to rejoin the south. Although the genealogical links aren't highlighted to the extent seen in 1 Chronicles, the two nations are still called "relatives" several times (2 Chron 11:4; 28:8, 11). In addition, as in 1 Chronicles, the second part of the book emphasizes the joint acts of the two nations at key points, such as the dedication of the temple (2 Chron 12; 7:8) and the Passovers celebrated during the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah (2 Chron 30; 35:1-19).

**11** When Rehoboam arrived at Jerusalem, he assembled the house of Judah and Benjamin, one hundred eighty thousand select warriors, to fight against Israel and to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam. <sup>2</sup>But the LORD's word came to Shemaiah the man of God: <sup>3</sup>Tell Judah's King Rehoboam, Solomon's son, and all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, <sup>4</sup>This is what the LORD says: Don't make war against your relatives. Go home, every one of you, because this is my plan. When they heard the LORD's words, they abandoned their attack against Jeroboam.

<sup>5</sup>Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem, but he built cities for Judah's defense <sup>6</sup>in Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, <sup>7</sup>Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam, <sup>8</sup>Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, <sup>9</sup>Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, <sup>10</sup>Zorah, Ajjalon, and Hebron. These were the fortified cities in Judah and Benjamin. <sup>11</sup>He made the fortifications stronger, placed commanders in them, and supplied them with food, oil, and wine. <sup>12</sup>He also stored shields and spears in each of the cities, making them very strong. This is how Judah and Benjamin remained under his control.

<sup>13</sup>The priests and the Levites from every region throughout all Israel sided with Rehoboam. <sup>14</sup>The Levites left their pastures and property to come to Judah and Jerusalem because Jeroboam and his sons had refused to let them serve as the LORD's priests, <sup>15</sup>having appointed his own priests for the shrines and the goat and calf idols he had made. <sup>16</sup>People from every tribe of Israel who had made up their minds to seek the LORD, Israel's God, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD, the God of their ancestors. <sup>17</sup>They strengthened the kingdom of Judah and supported Rehoboam, Solomon's son, for three years by following the way of David and Solomon those three years.

<sup>18</sup>Rehoboam married Mahalath daughter of Jerimoth, David's son, and Abihail daughter of Eliab, Jesse's son. <sup>19</sup>The sons she bore him were Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham. <sup>20</sup>Later he married Maacah, Absalom's daughter, who bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith. <sup>21</sup>Rehoboam loved Absalom's daughter Maacah more than all his wives and secondary wives. In all, he had eighteen wives and sixty secondary wives, twenty-eight sons, and sixty daughters. <sup>22</sup>Rehoboam named Abijah, Maacah's son, as his successor in order to make him king.

11:1-12:1 The story of Rehoboam's reign, extending from 10:1 to 12:16, continues in this chapter. The account begins with material largely dependent on 1 Kings 12:21-24, and then, after Shemaiah's prophecy in 11:4, the Chronicler adds additional material in 11:5-12:1.

11:1 Comparison with the parallel account in Kings reveals a typical editorial move of the Chronicler—the notice that Jeroboam has been crowned king over the northern tribes has been omitted (1 Kgs 12:20). The narrative in 2 Chronicles will continue to leave out information about the northern kingdom except when it explicitly touches upon events in the southern kingdom.

11:2 *But the LORD's word came to Shemaiah the man of God:* Throughout the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, God sends messages to various prophets or people of God who relay them to the king. The divine oracles are often tests, and the king's obedience or disregard indicates the nature of their faith in God and of their ultimate success as

leaders (see also 2 Chron 20:15-23; 25:7-16). Shemaiah also appears in 2 Chronicles 12:5, 7, and 15.

11:4 *When they heard the LORD's words, they abandoned their attack:* Rehoboam's obedience to the oracle delivered by Shemaiah in 2 Chronicles 11:3-4 will be rewarded with a flourishing kingdom and large family (2 Chron 11:5-23).

11:5-12:1 With material not found in the Kings account, 2 Chronicles relates how Rehoboam's obedience to God's word spoken through Shemaiah (2 Chron 11:3-4) is first rewarded with the successful fortification of cities in the south (11:5-12), then with the support of the priests and Levites from the north (11:13-17), and finally with a large family (11:18-23).

11:15 *the shrines and the goat and calf idols he had made:* As king of the northern kingdom, Jeroboam establishes religious practices that are independent of the Jerusalem temple in the south. The exodus of the priests and Levites publically indicates that these innovations are considered

12:1 1Ki 14:22  
 12:2 1Ki 14:25  
 12:9-11  
 1Ki 14:26-28  
 12:13 1Ki 14:21  
 12:15 1Ki 12:22,  
 1Ki 14:29;  
 2Ch 9:29;  
 2Ch 12:5,  
 2Ch 13:22  
 12:15b  
 1Ki 14:30,  
 1Ki 15:6

<sup>23</sup>He wisely placed some of his sons in every region of Judah and Benjamin, in every fortified city, and gave them plenty of food and sought many wives for them.

**12** But as soon as Rehoboam had secured his royal power, he, along with all Israel, abandoned the LORD's Instruction.

### Rehoboam rules

<sup>2</sup>Egypt's King Shishak attacked Jerusalem in the fifth year of King Rehoboam because Israel had been unfaithful to the LORD. <sup>3</sup>Accompanying Shishak from Egypt were twelve hundred chariots, sixty thousand horses, and countless Libyan, Sukkite, and Cushite warriors. <sup>4</sup>He captured the fortified cities of Judah and came toward Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>Then the prophet Shemaiah went to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and told them, This is what the LORD says: Since you have abandoned me, now I am abandoning you to Shishak's power.

<sup>6</sup>Then the leaders of Israel and the king submitted. "The LORD is right," they said.

<sup>7</sup>When the LORD saw that they had submitted, the LORD's word came to Shemaiah: Since they have submitted, I won't destroy them. I will deliver them in a little while, and I won't use Shishak to pour out my anger against Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup>Nevertheless, they will be subject to him so that they learn the difference between serving me and serving other nations.

<sup>9</sup>Egypt's King Shishak attacked Jerusalem and seized the treasures of the LORD's temple and the royal palace. He took everything, even the gold shields Solomon had made. <sup>10</sup>King Rehoboam replaced them with bronze shields and assigned them to the officers of the guard who protected the entrance to the royal palace. (<sup>11</sup>Whenever the king entered the LORD's temple, the guards would carry the shields and then return them to the guardroom.) <sup>12</sup>When Rehoboam submitted, the LORD was no longer angry with him, and total destruction was avoided. There were, after all, some good things still in Judah.

<sup>13</sup>So King Rehoboam was securely established in Jerusalem. Rehoboam was 41 years old when he became king, and he ruled seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put his name. His mother's name was Naamah from Ammon. <sup>14</sup>But Rehoboam did what was evil because he didn't set his heart on seeking the LORD. <sup>15</sup>The deeds of Rehoboam, from beginning to end, aren't they written in the records

corrupt. For additional references to worship in the north, see 2 Chronicles 13:8-9; 1 Kings 12:26-33; 13:33; 14:9.

**12:1** *But as soon as Rehoboam had secured his royal power.* In the Chronicler's perspective, obedience to God brings about blessings such as military security, material wealth, and large families. And such blessings themselves bring their own dangers. Here Rehoboam's success is the context for his subsequent fall: *he, along with all Israel, abandoned the LORD's Instruction.* No explicit details are given regarding what exactly this abandonment entailed, but the author uses the term elsewhere to speak of unsanctioned worship (2 Chron 13:10, 11) or the worship of other gods outside of the Jerusalem temple (2 Chron 7:19, 22; 24:18; 34:25). When the next scene opens with Shishak's attack on Judah, the reader who is familiar with the Chronicler's perspective isn't surprised: Success is achieved and maintained only through a continued reliance upon God. **12:2-16** In this final chapter of Rehoboam's reign, the 2 Chronicles reworks and expands the briefer report in 1 Kings 14:21-31 to emphasize that unfaithfulness to God will be punished, and turning away from sin will be rewarded. In the context of 2 Chronicles 12:1, the reader is led to understand that Shishak's invasion is a punishment for unfaithfulness.

**12:2** *Egypt's King Shishak.* This ruler is known elsewhere as Shoshenq I, and reigned from 945 to 925 BCE. An inscription at Kamak records Shoshenq's capture of 150 localities, including sites in northern Israel. *Israel had been unfaithful to the LORD.* For the use of this strategic term, see also 1 Chronicles 10:13; 2 Chronicles 26:16, 18; 28:19, 22; 29:19.

**12:4** *He captured the fortified cities of Judah:* This seems to be a reference to the defensive cities that Rehoboam built in Benjamin and Judah, listed in 2 Chronicles 11:6-10.

**12:5** *Since you have abandoned me, now I am abandoning you:* For other messages from God delivered through Shemaiah, see 2 Chronicles 11:3-4; 12:7-8.

**12:6-7** *submitted:* The humble attitude of Israel's leaders and their king enacts the first part of God's pledge to Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7:14. Exactly as God promised, such submission to God brings forth an immediate expression of divine forgiveness: *I will deliver them in a little while* (see also the repetition of the term in 2 Chron 12:12).

**12:9** *the gold shields Solomon had made:* See 2 Chronicles 9:15-16.

**12:12** *When Rehoboam submitted:* This verse isn't in the source for 2 Chronicles. The addition is consistent with the Chronicler's understanding that people generally get what they deserve (see, e.g., 2 Chron 19:3).

**12:13-14** This material is based on 1 Kings 14:21-22. *Naamah from Ammon:* The mention of Rehoboam's mother is just one of two acknowledgements by the Chronicler that Solomon had foreign wives (see 2 Chron 8:11, and compare 1 Kgs 11:1-10).

**12:14** *But Rehoboam did what was evil:* This is a slight but strategic variant on the parallel text in 1 Kings 14:22, which asserts that "Judah did evil in the LORD's eyes."

**12:15** For additional references to *Shemaiah* and *Iddo* see 2 Chronicles 9:29; 11:2; 12:5, 7; 13:22. The Chronicler here cites different sources for the record of Rehoboam's reign than are cited in 1 Kings 14:29. *continual warfare:* Military

of the prophet Shemaiah and the seer Iddo, including the genealogical records? There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. <sup>16</sup>Rehoboam lay down with his ancestors and was buried in David's City. His son Abijah<sup>o</sup> succeeded him as king.

### Abijah rules Judah

**13** Abijah<sup>p</sup> became king over Judah in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam. <sup>2</sup>He ruled for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Micaiah; she was Uriel's daughter from Gibeah. When war broke out between Abijah and Jeroboam, <sup>3</sup>Abijah went to fight with an army of four hundred thousand select troops against Jeroboam's select forces numbering eight hundred thousand, who were arrayed in battle formation.

<sup>4</sup>Abijah stood on the heights of Mount Zemaraim in Ephraim's highlands and said:

<sup>5</sup>Listen to me, Jeroboam and all Israel! <sup>5</sup>Surely you know that the LORD, Israel's God, made an unbreakable covenant<sup>q</sup> with David and his descendants that they would rule Israel forever. <sup>6</sup>It was Jeroboam, Nebat's son, the servant of Solomon, David's son, who rebelled against his master. <sup>7</sup>When some useless, worthless people joined his cause, they overpowered Rehoboam, Solomon's son, who was too young and timid to resist them. <sup>8</sup>And now do you intend to challenge the LORD's royal rule, entrusted to David's descendants? You may have a numerical advantage, as well as the gold calves Jeroboam made for you as gods. <sup>9</sup>But you've banished the LORD's priests, Aaron's sons, along with the Levites, so that you could appoint your own priests as other countries do. Now anyone who shows up with a young bull and seven rams can become a priest of these phony gods!

<sup>10</sup>But us? The LORD is our God, and we haven't abandoned him. Aaron's descendants serve as the LORD's priests, assisted in the work by the Levites. <sup>11</sup>Every morning and every evening they offer entirely burned offerings and fragrant incense to the LORD, and set out bread in stacks upon a clean table. At night they light the lamps on the gold lampstand. Yes, while you are abandoning the LORD our God, we are doing what he requires.

<sup>12</sup>Listen! God is on our side, at our head, along with his priests, who are ready to sound the battle trumpets against you. So, Israelites, don't fight against the LORD, the God of your ancestors, for you won't succeed!"

<sup>13</sup>Meanwhile, Jeroboam had sent troops around behind them for an ambush so that the main force was in front of Judah while the ambush was behind. <sup>14</sup>When Judah looked around and suddenly realized that they were surrounded, they cried out to the LORD while the priests sounded the trumpets <sup>15</sup>and raised the battle cry. When they raised the battle cry,

<sup>o</sup>Spelled Abijam in 1 Kgs 14:31 <sup>p</sup>Spelled Abijam in 1 Kgs 15:1, 7-8 <sup>q</sup>Or a covenant of salt

engagement between the north and the south continued through the reigns of Abijah and Asa (2 Chron 13:2-19, 16:1-5), ceasing only under Jehoshaphat.

**13:1-14:1a** The Chronicler's glowing version of Abijah's reign is very different than the briefer parallel account in 1 Kings 15:1-8. In Kings he is named Abijam and described as a king who "didn't follow the Lord his God with all his heart" (1 Kgs 15:3).

**13:2** *His mother's name was Micaiah:* Abijah's mother is named "Maacah" in 2 Chronicles 11:20-22 and 1 Kings 15:2.

**13:4** *on the heights of Mount Zemaraim:* This site was on the northern border of the southern kingdom.

**13:4-12** *Listen to me:* Abijah's speech to the northern king and his troops reiterates two significant themes that are repeated throughout the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles: The Davidic dynasty is the only legitimate monarchy, and worship in the Jerusalem temple, led by the Aaronic priesthood, is the only legitimate form of religious practice. Abandoning both David and the temple means, in the Chronicler's view, that the north is *abandoning the Lord* (13:11).

**13:5** *an unbreakable covenant with David:* The Hebrew expression is a "covenant of salt." The Hebrew idiom is unclear to us in English, but the emphasis is probably on preserving the eternal nature of the covenant (Lev 2:13; Num 18:19). The everlasting nature of the Davidic covenant is

also emphasized in 1 Chronicles 17:14; 28:7; 2 Chronicles 6:42. According to the Chronicler, God wants David's sons to rule. Thus to reject the Davidic king is to reject God.

**13:6** *Jeroboam . . . servant of Solomon:* For the longer story of Jeroboam, not retold in 1 and 2 Chronicles, see 1 Kings 11:26-40.

**13:7** *useless, worthless people:* See the version of this story in 2 Chronicles 10:1-19.

**13:8** *You may have a numerical advantage:* In 2 Chronicles 13:3, the large army from the south outnumbered the north by a ratio of two to one.

**13:8-9** *the gold calves Jeroboam made for you as gods. But you've banished the Lord's priests:* For more details on Jeroboam's development of worship practices in the north, see 2 Chronicles 11:14-15; 1 Kings 12:26-33.

**13:10-12** *Aaron's descendants serve as the Lord's priests:* Abijah's description of religious practice in the south is similar to the Chronicler's presentation of the worship during the time of David and Solomon (1 Chron 15-16; 23-29; 2 Chron 2-4), with links back to Moses' time as well (Exod 25:30-40; 29:1-9, 38-42; 30:7-10; Lev 24:3-9; Num 8:2-4; 28:3-8).

**13:12** *who are ready to sound the battle trumpets against you:* For more of the priests' use of trumpets in warfare and at festivals, see Numbers 10:1-10; 31:6; 1 Chronicles 16:6.

12:16a

1Ki 14:31a

12:16b

1Ki 14:31b

13:1 1Ki 15:1

13:2b 1Ki 15:7b

13:5 Lv 2:13;

Num 18:19

13:11 Lv 24:5;

2Ch 2:4

13:20b  
1Ki 14:20a  
13:22 1Ki 15:7a  
2Ch 9:29,  
2Ch 12:15,  
2Ch 24:27  
14:1 1Ki 15:8  
14:2 1Ki 15:11

God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. <sup>16</sup>So the Israelites fled before Judah, and God gave Judah the victory. <sup>17</sup>Abijah and his people struck them severely: five hundred thousand select warriors were killed. <sup>18</sup>Israel was subdued on that occasion, and Judah succeeded because they relied on the LORD, the God of their ancestors. <sup>19</sup>Abijah pursued Jeroboam and took these cities away from him: Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephron,<sup>2</sup> along with their villages. <sup>20</sup>Jeroboam failed to regain power during the time of Abijah. The LORD finally struck him down, and he died. <sup>21</sup>Abijah, however, grew strong. He married fourteen wives; he had twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. <sup>22</sup>The rest of Abijah's deeds, what he did and what he said, are written in the account of the prophet Iddo. <sup>1</sup>Abijah lay down with his ancestors and was buried in David's City. His son Asa succeeded him as king.

### Asa rules Judah

<sup>1</sup>In Asa's time, the land had peace for ten years. <sup>2</sup>Asa did what was right and good in the LORD his God's eyes. <sup>3</sup>He removed the foreign altars and shrines, smashed the sacred pillars, cut down the sacred poles,<sup>4</sup> and urged Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, by doing what the Instruction and the commandments required. <sup>5</sup>He also removed the shrines and incense altars from all the cities of Judah so that the kingdom was at peace under him. <sup>6</sup>When the land was at peace, he built fortified cities in Judah; there was no war in those years because the LORD had given him rest.

<sup>7</sup>"Let's build up these cities," Asa told Judah. "We'll surround them with walls, towers, gates, and crossbars while the land is still ours, because we sought the LORD our God and he sought us" and surrounded us with rest." As a result, the people successfully completed their building projects.

### Judah defeats Cush

<sup>8</sup>Asa had an army of three hundred thousand Judeans armed with body-sized shields and spears and another two hundred eighty thousand from Benjamin armed with small shields and bows. All were brave warriors. <sup>9</sup>Zerah the Cushite marched against him with an

<sup>1</sup>Qere, LXX; Kethib *Ephraim* <sup>2</sup>13:23 in Heb <sup>3</sup>14:1 in Heb <sup>4</sup>Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah; cf 1 Kgs 15:13 <sup>5</sup>LXX; MT lacks *and* and repeats *we sought*.

13:17 *five hundred thousand select warriors were killed*: This represents over half of the north's army, and a considerable feat for the much smaller southern force fighting with a tactical disadvantage (2 Chron 13:3, 13).

13:18 *Judah succeeded because they relied on the Lord*: Throughout the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, military victory comes not from overwhelming force or shrewd strategy but through trust in God. See also 2 Chronicles 14:11-12.

13:19 *Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephron*: These were all north of Mount Zemaraim (2 Chron 13:2), and thus the battle extended the territory of the southern kingdom.

13:21 *Abijah, however, grew strong*: As is typical in the Chronicler's presentation, a sign of a king's strength and blessedness is a large family (see also 2 Chron 11:18-23).

13:22 *the account of the prophet Iddo*: The records of Iddo relating to the reigns of Jeroboam and Rehoboam are mentioned in 2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15.

14:1a A similar summary of Abijah's reign concludes the account in 1 Kings 15:8.

14:1b-16:14 As in Rehoboam's reign, the Chronicler's presentation of the kingship of Asa demonstrates that reliance on God will bring blessing, while disobedience will result in disaster. The story is told in two major parts. The first consists of a long period of faithfulness, which is rewarded with military victory, peace, and prosperity (14:1b-15:19). Then comes a short period of disobedience that ends with a crippling foot disease (16:1-14). The account is an expansion of the much shorter report of Asa's reign found in 1 Kings 15:9-24.

14:1b *the land had peace*: The absence of war is a divine reward for faithfulness throughout the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles (see 1 Chron 22:9; 2 Chron 20:30).

14:3 *foreign altars and shrines... sacred pillars... sacred poles*: With all the focus on the temple, this is the first time the Chronicler mentions worship in Judah outside Jerusalem. For prohibitions against such practices, see Deuteronomy 7:5; 12:3; 16:21-22. For another account of similar reforms in Jerusalem, see 2 Chronicles 31:1.

14:4 *to seek the Lord*: For the Chronicler, this is the main duty of humanity and the key to a king's successful reign (1 Chron 28:9; 2 Chron 14:7; 19:3; 20:3; 26:5).

14:6-7 *he built fortified cities... there was no war... the people successfully completed their building projects*: In Chronicles, building programs and the lack of war are God-given rewards for faithfulness (2 Chron 11:5-12). See also the note on 2 Chronicles 14:1.

14:8-15 Outside the Bible, there is no additional evidence for this military engagement, and the account supplies no reason for Cush's offensive attack on Judah. As in the story of Judah's fight against Israel in the previous chapter (2 Chron 13:14-16), the narrative is an example of the Chronicler's belief that reliance on God can bring about surprising victories.

14:8-9 *body-sized shields and spears... small shields and bows*: The two different sizes of shields and weapons represent two different types of fighting. The larger and bulkier body-sized shields along with the stronger and heavier spears were best suited for defensive maneuvers. The lighter small shields, in concert with the bows, were much

army of one million men and three hundred chariots. When he got as far as Mareshah, <sup>10</sup>Asa marched against him, setting up for battle in a valley north<sup>m</sup> of Mareshah.

<sup>11</sup>Then Asa cried out to the LORD his God, "LORD, only you can help the weak against the powerful.<sup>a</sup> Help us, LORD our God, because we rely on you and we have marched against this multitude in your name. You are the LORD our God. Don't let a mere human stand against you!"

<sup>12</sup>So the LORD struck the Cushites before Asa and Judah, and the Cushites fled. <sup>13</sup>Asa and his troops chased them as far as Gerar. The Cushites fell until there were no survivors. They were completely crushed by the LORD and his army, who carried off a huge amount of loot, <sup>14</sup>and attacked all the cities surrounding Gerar who were terrified of the LORD. They plundered all these cities as well because there was a great amount of loot in them. <sup>15</sup>They also attacked the herdsman's camps, taking many sheep and camels before returning to Jerusalem.

**15** When God's spirit came upon Azariah, Oded's son, <sup>2</sup>he confronted Asa: "Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin," he said. "The LORD is with you as long as you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you abandon him, he will abandon you. <sup>3</sup>For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach them, and without the Instruction. <sup>4</sup>But in their time of trouble they turned to the LORD, Israel's God. They sought him and found him! <sup>5</sup>At that time, it wasn't safe to travel because great turmoil affected all the inhabitants of the area. <sup>6</sup>Nation was crushed by nation and city by city, as God troubled them with every kind of problem. <sup>7</sup>But as for you, be brave and don't lose heart, because your work will be rewarded!"

#### Asa's reforms

<sup>8</sup>As soon as Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Azariah, Oded's son,<sup>7</sup> he felt brave and removed the detestable idols from all of Judah and Benjamin, as well as from the cities he had captured in Ephraim's highlands, and he repaired the LORD's altar that stood before

<sup>m</sup>LXX; MT an otherwise unknown *Zephathah Valley* <sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain; or it is not with you to help between the many and the powerless. <sup>7</sup>CE Syr, Vulg; MT and the prophecy of the prophet Oded

more maneuverable and better in offensive operations. However, even though Asa led a large army capable of taking advantage of several different fighting strategies, his troops were greatly outnumbered by Zerah's army of one million men and three hundred chariots.

14:9-10 *Mareshah*: This city was fortified by Jeroboam, according to 2 Chronicles 11:8.

14:11 *Help us, LORD our God, because we rely on you*: Asa prays on behalf of himself and the people for God's help in a dire military situation. This event will be retold in 2 Chronicles 16:7-9 in a dramatically different context. Given that they are about to face each other in battle, Asa's portrayal of Zerah along with his force of one million men and three hundred chariots as a mere human is striking.

14:12 *So the LORD struck the Cushites*: God's response to Asa's prayer is immediate and powerful. Greatly outnumbered and without any clear military strategy, Israel's victory over Zerah's army seems clearly sent from God. The steadfast reliance on God and God's swift response here is similar to the account of the war between the forces of Abijah and Rehoboam in 2 Chronicles 13:3-18.

15:1-7 By bridging the victory over Zerah (2 Chron 14:9-15) and the later work of Asa (2 Chron 15:8-19), God relays a message through Azariah that the people should continue in their faithfulness. Azariah's address, not present in the 1 Kings material, highlights the Chronicler's ongoing emphasis on God's responsiveness: *If you seek him, he will be found by you*. See sidebar, "Only God Brings Security."

15:1 *God's spirit came upon*: The Chronicler employs this expression several times to describe the overpowering force associated with divine inspiration (1 Chron 12:18; 2

Chron 20:14; 24:20). It is reserved to describe the experience of nonprofessional prophets.

15:2 *If you seek him, he will be found by you*: This is a general theme sounded throughout the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles (e.g., 1 Chron 28:9), and also the particular lesson that can be learned from the recent experience of Judah (2 Chron 14:4, 7). Fittingly, it will also be repeated in 2 Chronicles 15:15. Although the Chronicler ultimately maintains that God is free from human calculation, there is also a sense in the book that the fate of humanity is influenced by their conduct (2 Chron 12:5; 24:20).

15:4 *But in their time of trouble they turned to the LORD*: This cycle of distress and deliverance is a recurrent theme in the book of Judges (e.g., Judg 3:9).

15:8-19 *As soon as Asa heard these words... he... removed the detestable idols*: The king's response to Azariah's oracle is immediate and includes worship reform (15:8, 16) and the handing over of war booty to God's temple (15:11). Divine oracles occur throughout the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, and the kings' responses to them will largely determine the success or failure of their reign (e.g., 2 Chron 16:10; 20:15-30; 25:15-24). In the context of the story of Asa, the oracle and his response cause the reader to re-evaluate the account of his prior victory in war (2 Chron 14:8-15). Winning the battle over Zerah and the Cushites is now not the conclusion of the narrative but rather more of a trial that has been passed with success. Having fully trusted God, Asa and the nation must now faithfully tend to their post-war lives.

15:8 *the cities he had captured in Ephraim's highlands*: The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles includes no earlier reference to this territorial expansion. *he repaired the LORD's altar*: As

15:1 Nm 24:2;  
Jgs 3:10;  
2Ch 15:8;  
2Ch 20:14,  
2Ch 24:20  
15:2 1Ch 28:9;  
2Ch 20:17;  
Is 55:6  
15:8 1Ki 15:12

15:16 1Ki 15:13  
 15:17-18  
 1Ki 15:14-15  
 16:1-6  
 1Ki 15:17-22

*Only God Brings Security* In Chronicles, prophecy reminds the human community that God honors their reliance upon God alone, warning against any attempt to find security elsewhere. For example, Azariah tells King Asa and the people that “If you seek [God], he will be found by you” (2 Chron 15:2). The divinely sent message comes just after the nation’s victorious battle with Cush, brought about by God because Asa trusted in God (2 Chron 14:8-15). The king and the people heed Azariah’s message and reform their worship by removing idols throughout the land, repairing the Lord’s altar, and renewing their commitment “to seek the LORD . . . with all their heart and all their being” (2 Chron 15:8-18). Later, Asa is warned by Hanani the seer that relying on political agreements with other kings will only bring insecurity: “Your foolishness means that you will have war on your hands from now on” (2 Chron 16:7-9). Instead of changing his ways, however, Asa greets this message with anger and throws the prophet in jail (2 Chron 16:10). For this, the king is rewarded with a “severe foot disease” (2 Chron 16:11-12). Other examples abound in Chronicles, and the repetition emphasizes the author’s firm view: When people heed the voice of the prophet, God brings victory and/or prosperity (i.e., 2 Chron 20:15-23). But ignoring God’s word spoken by a prophet is always punished, either by sickness, military defeat, or finally exile (2 Chron 24:20-22; 25:15-16; 36:12, 15-17).

the LORD’s entrance hall. <sup>9</sup>Then Asa gathered all Judah and Benjamin, along with those who were living among them as immigrants from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, because many people from Israel had joined up with him when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. <sup>10</sup>They gathered in Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa’s rule. <sup>11</sup>On that day they sacrificed to the LORD part of the loot they had taken: seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. <sup>12</sup>They made a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and all their being. <sup>13</sup>They agreed that anyone who refused to seek the LORD, Israel’s God, would be put to death, whether young or old, male or female. <sup>14</sup>They swore this to the LORD with a loud voice, shouts of joy, and blasts from trumpets and horns. <sup>15</sup>All Judah was delighted with the solemn pledge because they had sworn it with all their hearts. When they enthusiastically sought God, he was found by them, and the LORD gave them peace on every side. <sup>16</sup>Asa the king even removed his grandmother Maacah from the position of queen mother because she had made an image of Asherah. Asa cut down her image, pulverized it, and burned it in the Kidron Valley. <sup>17</sup>Although the shrines weren’t removed from Israel, Asa nevertheless remained committed with all his heart throughout his life. <sup>18</sup>He brought into God’s temple the various silver and gold objects that he and his father had dedicated. <sup>19</sup>There was no war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa’s rule.

#### *Aram invades Judah*

**16** In the thirty-sixth year of Asa’s rule, Israel’s King Baasha attacked Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent Judah’s King Asa from moving into that area. <sup>2</sup>Asa took silver

with the withholding of the news that Judah engaged in nonsanctioned worship with pillar and poles until the notice that Asa abolished it, the reader is informed of the damage to the Lord’s altar only after the king made the repairs.

15:9 The king’s inclusion of representatives from both the south and the north in a religious event celebrated in Jerusalem is a theme highlighted throughout the book (1 Chron 13:1-5; 2 Chron 11:13-17). The emphasis reflects the belief that the nation in its ideal state consists of both the northern and the southern tribes.

15:10 *They gathered in Jerusalem in the third month:* The occasion may have been related to the Festival of Weeks (Exod 23:16; Lev 23:15-21; Num 28:26; Deut 16:9-10), or the commemoration of God’s appearance at Sinai (Exod 19:1).

15:13 *Anyone who refused to seek the LORD . . . would be put to death:* This harsh agreement reflects the severity of penalty clauses in ancient covenants (see Deut 13:6-10; 17:2-7), and points to the radical solidarity of the community in their religious fervor. Other Persian period texts speak of penalties that were similarly extreme (Ezra 7:26; 10:8).

15:15 *When they enthusiastically sought God, he was found by them:* See note on 2 Chronicles 15:2.

15:16-18 This material is taken from 1 Kings 15:13-15 and points to the fulfillment of the covenant made earlier in 2 Chronicles 15:12-14.

15:16 *queen mother:* In line with some of Israel’s neighbors, the queen mother may have fulfilled an official position of great power (perhaps with influence concerning worship), that was second in authority only to the king.

16:1-14 The final chapter in Asa’s reign brings the story of the king’s longstanding faithfulness (2 Chron 14:1b-15:19) to a relatively swift and unhappy demise. It adopts much of the material from 1 Kings 15:17-24, and expands this source with the story about Hanani’s oracle and Asa’s response (2 Chron 16:7-10). See sidebar, “Only God Brings Security” at 2 Chronicles 15.

16:1 *In the thirty-sixth year of Asa’s rule:* There is some confusion here as 1 Kings 16:6, 8 has Baasha dying as early as the 26th year of Asa. *fortified Ramah:* This site lay about eight miles from Jerusalem, so Baasha’s building program poses a significant threat to the south.

16:2 *Asa took silver and gold from the treasuries:* In the Chronicler’s retelling, the king’s plundering of the treasuries isn’t as extreme as in the account in 1 Kings where he

and gold from the treasuries of the LORD's temple and the royal palace and sent them to Aram's King Ben-hadad, who ruled in Damascus, with the following message: <sup>3</sup>"Let's make a covenant similar to the one between our fathers. Since I have already sent you silver and gold, break your covenant with Israel's King Baasha so that he will leave me alone." <sup>4</sup>Ben-hadad agreed with King Asa and sent his army commanders against the cities of Israel, attacking Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store-cities of Naphtali. <sup>5</sup>As soon as Baasha learned of this, he stopped building Ramah and abandoned his work. <sup>6</sup>Then King Asa had all Judah carry away the stone and timber that Baasha was using to build Ramah, and King Asa used it to build Geba and Mizpah. <sup>7</sup>At that time Hanani the seer came to Judah's King Asa and said to him, "Because you relied on Aram's king and not on the LORD your God, the army of Aram's king has slipped out of your grasp. <sup>8</sup>Weren't the Cushites and the Libyans a vast army with chariots and horsemen to spare? Still, when you relied on the LORD, he delivered them into your power, <sup>9</sup>because the LORD's eyes scan the whole world to strengthen those who are committed to him with all their hearts. Your foolishness means that you will have war on your hands from now on." <sup>10</sup>Asa was angry with the seer. Asa was so mad he threw Hanani in jail and took his anger out on some of the people.

16:9 1Sa 13:13;  
Prv 15:3;  
1cr 16:17;  
Zec 4:10  
16:11  
1Ki 15:23a  
16:12  
1Ki 15:23b  
16:13, 14  
1Ki 15:24a  
17:1a  
1Ki 15:24b

### Asa's disease and death

<sup>11</sup>The rest of Asa's deeds, from beginning to end, are written in the official records of Israel's and Judah's kings. <sup>12</sup>In the thirty-ninth year of his rule, Asa developed a severe foot disease. But even in his illness he refused to seek the LORD and consulted doctors instead. <sup>13</sup>In the forty-first year of his rule, Asa lay down with his ancestors <sup>14</sup>He was buried in the tomb he had prepared for himself in David's City, and was laid on a bed filled with sweet spices and various kinds of perfume, with a huge fire made in his honor.

### Jehoshaphat rules Judah

**17** Asa's son Jehoshaphat succeeded him as king. Jehoshaphat strengthened his position against Israel <sup>2</sup>by stationing troops in the fortified cities of Judah and placing soldiers

"took all the silver and gold that remained in the treasuries" (1 Kgs 15:18). *Aram's King Ben-hadad*: Aram was a nation that lay to the north of Israel. It had been increasing in strength since the days of Solomon (1 Kgs 11:23-25), and would come to occupy Samaria (1 Kgs 20).

16:3-5 *Let's make a covenant*: Asa's strategy doesn't involve a direct military encounter with Israel but rather diplomatic agreements with a third party. Ben-hadad would go on to attack several major sites in Israel (Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store-cities of Naphtali), causing Baasha to retreat from Ramah.

16:6 and *King Asa used it to build Geba and Mizpah*: Strategically, Asa rerouted the building material assembled by Baasha to sites in Benjaminite territory, thus strengthening the defenses of the south.

16:7-9 *At that time, Hanani the seer came to Judah's King Asa*: Right when Asa's diplomatic ingenuity has saved Judah from certain war, God sends him a message through the words of Hanani. In many ways, this encounter is a direct reversal of the time when Asa was confronted with another divine message in the previous chapter (2 Chron 15:1-7). At that point in the narrative, Asa had just won an improbable victory over the much larger forces of Cush because he relied on God's help (2 Chron 14:11). When Azariah reminded the king that he must remain faithful to God, Asa instituted a thorough religious reform (15:8-18). Now the divine word again comes to Asa, but with a very different message. Hanani declares that the king's reliance on Aram rather than God to defeat Israel was *foolishness* and will be punished with more military encounters: *you will have war on your hands from now on* (16:9).

16:7 *the army of Aram's king has slipped out of your grasp*: This message is somewhat unexpected, given that Judah

and Aram have just set up a successful political alliance, and there is no military engagement between them on the horizon (2 Chron 16:3-4). The oracle places Asa's recent success in the context of its long-range consequences, where Aram will become a real threat to Israel and Judah. 16:10 *Asa was angry with the seer*: The king who had been so faithful throughout his 35-year reign now disregards God's invitation to turn away from sin. Throughout the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, divine oracles function as warnings to kings, and the royal response prompts a reciprocal action on the part of God. The emphasis placed in this verse on Asa's furious response to the oracle (*angry... so mad... anger*) leads the reader to expect that the king will soon be punished. For more on the response to divine oracles throughout the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, see note on 2 Chronicles 15:8-19.

16:11 *the official records of Israel's and Judah's kings*: Previously, the Chronicler has referred to sources associated with the prophets (2 Chron 9:29; 12:15; 13:22).

16:12 *even in his illness he refused to seek the LORD*: For the biblical author, Asa's ailment functions as a punishment for not heeding God's word spoken through Hanani (2 Chron 16:7-9) and brings another opportunity to seek God. Parallel with his stubborn response to the prophet, however (2 Chron 16:10), Asa continues to seek guidance elsewhere.

16:14 *He was buried in the tomb he had prepared*: In this lengthy and detailed description of the king's funeral service (the longest recorded for any king in the Bible), Asa's final fate reflects the long years of faithfulness to God.

17:1-21:1 The Chronicler's version of the reign of Jehoshaphat, extending over four chapters, represents a considerable expansion of the source material. In 1 and

17:3 Jgs 2:11,  
Jgs 8:33,  
2Sa 5:10,  
2Sa 8:15,  
2Ch 20:32  
18:1b 1Ki 22:44  
18:2, 3  
1Ki 22:2-4

throughout the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim that his father Asa had captured. <sup>3</sup>The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the earlier ways of his father<sup>a</sup> by not seeking Baal. <sup>4</sup>Instead, he sought the God of his father, and unlike Israel, he followed God's commandments. <sup>5</sup>The LORD gave him firm control over the kingdom, and all Judah brought Jehoshaphat tribute, so that he had abundant riches and honor. <sup>6</sup>Jehoshaphat took pride in the LORD's ways and again removed the shrines and the sacred poles<sup>a</sup> from Judah.

<sup>7</sup>In the third year of his rule, Jehoshaphat sent his officials Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah to teach in the cities of Judah. <sup>8</sup>They were accompanied by the Levites Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah, and by the priests Elishama and Jehoram. <sup>9</sup>They taught throughout Judah. They brought with them the LORD's Instruction scroll as they made their rounds to all the cities of Judah, teaching the people.

<sup>10</sup>All the kingdoms surrounding Judah were afraid of the LORD and didn't wage war against Jehoshaphat. <sup>11</sup>Some of the Philistines brought a load of silver as tribute to Jehoshaphat. The Arabians also brought flocks to Jehoshaphat: seventy-seven hundred rams and seventy-seven hundred goats. <sup>12</sup>As Jehoshaphat grew increasingly powerful, he built fortresses and storage cities in Judah <sup>13</sup>and had many supplies in the cities of Judah. He also had an army of mighty warriors in Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup>registered by their clans as follows: Judah's officers over units of a thousand included Commander Adnah with three hundred thousand soldiers; <sup>15</sup>next to him was Commander Jehohanan with two hundred eighty thousand soldiers; <sup>16</sup>at his side was Amasiah, Zichri's son, who volunteered for the LORD with two hundred thousand soldiers. <sup>17</sup>From Benjamin came a valiant warrior: Eliada, together with two hundred thousand armed with bow and shield; <sup>18</sup>next to him was Jehozabab, together with one hundred eighty thousand soldiers. <sup>19</sup>These were the individuals who served the king in addition to those the king placed in the fortified cities throughout Judah.

### Jehoshaphat and Ahab

**18** Even though Jehoshaphat already had great wealth and honor, he allied himself with Ahab through marriage. <sup>2</sup>A few years later, while Jehoshaphat was visiting Ahab in

<sup>a</sup>LXX, MT in the ways of his father David <sup>a</sup>Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah

2 Kings, accounts of the southern king are mostly linked to his involvement with the military strategy of the north (i.e., 1 Kgs 22:1-38 concerns Jehoshaphat's coalition with Ahab against Aram, and 2 Kgs 3:4-27 relates the coalition with Joram against Moab). In the Chronicler's expansion, Jehoshaphat emerges as a figure in his own right and institutes several significant reforms in the religious and legal life of the southern kingdom.

17:5 *all Judah brought Jehoshaphat tribute*: Although the bringing of tribute was a standard practice between foreign states, this is the only time in the Bible where a king receives such payment from his own people. The Chronicler also mentions that the Philistines and Arabians brought to the king tribute in 2 Chronicles 17:11. *he had abundant riches and honor*: This presentation of Jehoshaphat, combined with the later notices of his concern for proper worship and his maintenance of peace (2 Chron 17:6, 10), is reminiscent of the author's portrayal of Solomon (see 2 Chron 9:13-28).

17:6 *again removed the shrines and the sacred poles from Judah*: This text stands in tension with 2 Chronicles 20:33, which claims that Jehoshaphat "didn't remove the shrines." The eradication or refurbishment of such objects will be a standard feature in 2 Chronicles' description and evaluation of the southern kings (2 Chron 28:2; 33:3; 34:3-4, 33).

17:7-9 Jehoshaphat's initiative to have the people taught *the LORD's Instruction scroll* is striking, as is the composition of the teaching groups (two priests, thirteen Levites, as well as lay members). The closest biblical parallel is in the book of Ezra when King Artaxerxes commanded Ezra to

"appoint supervisors and judges to adjudicate among all the people" and to teach God's laws to "those who did not know them" (Ezra 7:25). There is no other parallel text that describes the king's first reform. For other references to "the instruction scroll," see 2 Kings 14:6; 22:8 = 2 Chronicles 34:15; Deuteronomy 17:18-20; 28:61; Nehemiah 9:3.

17:10-19 As with the rest of the chapter, there is no biblical parallel for this material. In the Chronicler's view, Jehoshaphat's prosperity is a sign of divine blessing.

17:10 *were afraid of the Lord*: A similar summary is found at the end of Jehoshaphat's reign in 2 Chronicles 20:29.

18:1-19:3 In the first war of his reign, Jehoshaphat joins forces with Ahab against Aram at Ramoth-gilead. Most of this material is adopted from 1 Kings 22:1-36, but given a new introduction (18:1-2) and conclusion (19:1-3).

18:1 *Even though Jehoshaphat already had great wealth and honor*: In the Chronicler's own introduction, Jehoshaphat's material prosperity is highlighted, and given an ominous presentation. *he allied himself with Ahab through marriage*: Ahab was the king in the north, and his daughter Athaliah married Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram (2 Chron 21:6; 2 Kgs 8:18, 26). Kings would often marry for political reasons or to acquire a sizable dowry, but here the Chronicler clearly doesn't approve of such calculations.

18:2 *to persuade him to attack Ramoth-gilead*: Given the subtle negative judgment in 18:1 ("Even though"), the reader notes the use of the term *to persuade* with some amount of dread. Even without a clear sense of the military context (might this be a good move for Judah?), the legitimacy of the engagement is cast in doubt by the



Samaria, Ahab slaughtered many sheep and oxen for Jehoshaphat and those who were with him in order to persuade him to attack Ramoth-gilead. <sup>3</sup>“Will you go with me to Ramoth-gilead?” Israel’s King Ahab asked Judah’s King Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat replied, “I and my people will be united with you and your people in battle. <sup>4</sup>But,” Jehoshaphat said to Israel’s king, “first, let’s see what the LORD has to say.” <sup>5</sup>So Israel’s king gathered four hundred prophets and asked them, “Should we go to war with Ramoth-gilead or not?”

“Attack!” the prophets answered. “God will hand it over to the king.”

<sup>6</sup>But Jehoshaphat said, “Isn’t there any other prophet of the LORD around whom we could ask?”

<sup>7</sup>“There’s one other man who could ask the LORD for us,” Israel’s king told Jehoshaphat, “but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, only bad. His name is Micaiah, Imlah’s son.”

“The king shouldn’t speak like that!” Jehoshaphat said.

<sup>8</sup>So Israel’s king called an officer and ordered, “Bring Micaiah, Imlah’s son, right away.”

<sup>9</sup>Now Israel’s king and Judah’s King Jehoshaphat were sitting on their thrones dressed in their royal robes at the threshing floor beside the entrance to the gate of Samaria. All the prophets were prophesying in front of them. <sup>10</sup>Zedekiah, Chenaanah’s son, made iron horns for himself and said, “This is what the LORD says: With these horns you will gore the Arameans until there’s nothing left of them!”

<sup>11</sup>The other prophets agreed: “Attack Ramoth-gilead and win! The LORD will hand it over to the king!”

<sup>12</sup>Meanwhile, the messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, “Listen, the prophets all agree that the king will succeed. You should say the same thing they say and prophesy success.”

<sup>13</sup>But Micaiah answered, “As surely as the LORD lives, I will say only what God tells me to say.”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>14</sup>When Micaiah arrived, the king asked him, “Micaiah, should we go to war with Ramoth-gilead or not?”

“Attack and win!” Micaiah answered. “The LORD will hand it over to the king.”

<sup>15</sup>But the king said, “How many times must I demand that you tell me the truth when you speak in the LORD’s name?”

<sup>16</sup>Then Micaiah replied, “I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd! And then the LORD said: ‘They have no master. Let them return safely to their own homes.’”

<sup>17</sup>Then Israel’s king said to Jehoshaphat, “Didn’t I tell you? He never prophesies anything good about me, only bad.”

<sup>b</sup>LXX, 1 Kgs 22:14; MT omits *me*.

alliance with the northern king and his need to convince Jehoshaphat. *Ramoth-gilead*, or “Heights of Gilead,” was a border town on the eastern bank of the Jordan River.

18:4 In answering Ahab’s request to join in the military engagement, it is significant that Jehoshaphat first promises his support (“I and my people will be united with you and your people,” 2 Chron 18:3), and only then asks for prophetic guidance: *let’s see what the Lord has to say*. Inquiring of God with the help of the prophets before deciding on military action was standard practice in the ancient world (e.g., 1 Chron 14:10).

18:5 *Israel’s king gathered four hundred prophets*: Because of the ongoing need to seek God’s advice, large royal courts could engage a significant number of prophets.

18:6 *Isn’t there any other prophet?*: Given the immediate context (having already heard from 400 prophets), Jehoshaphat’s request points to his distrust of the diviners associated with the northern royal courts.

18:9 *dressed in their royal robes*: The biblical text rarely makes note of apparel, but this detail will set up the ironic reversal later in the story where Ahab vainly attempts to use clothing to subvert prophecy.

18:10 *With these horns you will gore the Arameans*: This is an example of sign prophecy, where the diviners enact the future with symbolic signs or actions (see also 1 Kgs 18:28; Jer 51:59-61).

18:14 *Attack and win!*: Micaiah’s immediate response to the king is an echo of what the king’s prophets have already declared: “Attack!... God will hand it over to the king” (2 Chron 18:5). In the 2 Kings source, his answer is even closer to that of the court prophets (“Attack Ramoth-gilead and win!” 2 Kgs 22:12, 15). Perhaps the small changes in 2 Chronicles reflect the author’s unease with God’s prophet being totally aligned with what will turn out to be false prophecy.

18:16 *They have no master. Let them return safely*: The prophet’s response to the king’s demand that he speak the truth as to whether the nation should go to war is indirect and ironic. The safe return of the sheep seems to be a positive sign, but the absence of a shepherd implies something dire.

18:17 *Didn’t I tell you?*: Throughout the rest of the narrative, Ahab no longer talks to Micaiah directly. In addition, Jehoshaphat will remain silent and, by not supporting

18:4, 5  
1 Ki 22:5, 6  
18:6-8  
1 Ki 22:7-9  
18:9-11  
1 Ki 22:10-12  
18:12-27  
1 Ki 22:13-28

18:19 1Ki 22:20;  
Eze 14:9  
18:28-34  
1Ki 22:29-35  
19:2 1Ki 16:1;  
2Ch 16:7;  
2Ch 18:3;  
2Ch 20:34;  
2Ch 32:25  
19:3 1Ki 14:13;  
2Ch 12:12;  
2Ch 12:14;  
2Ch 17:6;  
Ezr 7:10

<sup>18</sup>Then Micaiah said, "Listen now to the LORD's word: I saw the LORD enthroned with all the heavenly forces stationed at his right and at his left. <sup>19</sup>The LORD said, 'Who will persuade Israel's King Ahab so that he attacks Ramoth-gilead and dies there?' There were several suggestions, <sup>20</sup>until one particular spirit approached the LORD and said, 'I will persuade him.' 'How?' the LORD asked. <sup>21</sup>'I will be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said. The LORD agreed: 'You will succeed in persuading him! Go ahead!' <sup>22</sup>So now, since the LORD placed a lying spirit in the mouths of these prophets of yours, it is the LORD who has pronounced disaster against you!"

<sup>23</sup>Zedekiah, Chenaanah's son, approached Micaiah and slapped him on the cheek. "Just how did the LORD's spirit leave me to speak to you?" he asked.

<sup>24</sup>Micaiah answered, "You will find out on the day you try to hide in an inner room."

<sup>25</sup>"Arrest him," ordered Israel's king, "and turn him over to Amon the city governor and to Joash the king's son. <sup>26</sup>Tell them, 'The king says: Put this man in prison and feed him minimum rations of bread and water until I return safely.'"

<sup>27</sup>"If you ever return safely," Micaiah replied, "then the LORD wasn't speaking through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, every last one of you!"

<sup>28</sup>So Israel's king and Judah's King Jehoshaphat attacked Ramoth-gilead. <sup>29</sup>Israel's king said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself when we go into battle, but you should wear your royal attire." When the king of Israel had disguised himself, they entered the battle.

<sup>30</sup>Meanwhile, Aram's king had commanded his chariot officers, "Don't bother with anyone big or small. Fight only with Israel's king." <sup>31</sup>When the chariot officers saw Jehoshaphat, they assumed that he must be Israel's king, so they turned to attack him. But when Jehoshaphat cried out, the LORD helped him, and God lured them away from him. <sup>32</sup>When the chariot officers realized that he wasn't Israel's king, they stopped chasing him.

<sup>33</sup>Someone, however, randomly shot an arrow that struck Israel's king between the joints in his armor. "Turn around and get me out of the battle," the king told his chariot driver. "I've been hit!" <sup>34</sup>While the battle raged all that day, Israel's king stood propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. But that evening he died, just as the sun was going down.

**19** Upon the safe arrival of Judah's King Jehoshaphat to his palace in Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>Jehu son of Hanani the seer came out to meet him and said, "Why did you help the wicked? Why have you loved those who hate the LORD? This is why the LORD is angry with you. <sup>3</sup>Nevertheless, there is some good to be found in you, in that you have removed the sacred poles<sup>c</sup> from the land and set your mind to seek God."

<sup>c</sup>Heb *asherot*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah

God's prophet or his message, implicitly indicate his allegiance with the northern king.

**18:18** *I saw the LORD enthroned:* Micaiah's vision is a heavenly mirror of the royal court on earth, with the king sitting in a throne encircled by servants. For a similar vision of the divine world, see Isaiah 6:1-2.

**18:21** God's declaration that the *lying spirit in the mouths of all [Ahab's] prophets* would certainly work in "persuading" the king to go to war and thus cause his own death is a poignant echo of Ahab's own attempt to "persuade" Jehoshaphat to attack Ramoth-gilead (2 Chron 18:2).

**18:22** *So now:* In the interpretation of his heavenly vision, Micaiah pronounces that, although the prophet's vision came from God, it nevertheless represents the words of a *lying spirit*.

**18:27** *Mark my words:* As he goes off to prison to await the time until Ahab returns "safely" (2 Chron 18:26), Micaiah's command to remember his words is more than a little ironic.

**18:28-19:3** *So Israel's king and Judah's King Jehoshaphat attacked:* The rather slow-moving narrative now speeds quickly to its tragic end. In spite of all that transpired in the previous verses, the two kings pursue the same policy that was set out in 2 Chronicles 18:3.

**18:29** *I will disguise myself:* Although his attack on

Ramoth-gilead represents Ahab's disregard of Micaiah's prophecy, adopting a disguise indicates some lingering doubt.

**18:30** *Fight only with Israel's king:* The command of Aram's leader extends the sense that Ahab's ruse may work.

**18:31** *the LORD helped him:* Even in the most impossible of situations (that is, elite soldiers meeting up with the one person with whom they believe they are to fight), God intervenes and saves. This verse is an addition to the account in 1 Kings 22 and reflects the Chronicler's emphasis on the efficacy of prayer even in desperate military contexts (e.g., 2 Chron 14:11-12).

**18:33-34** *I've been hit!* Believing that the threat came from an army that could be deceived by a disguise, Ahab's final words emphasize the author's belief that any attempt to outmaneuver God is a shallow conceit. As the king slowly dies, propped up in his chariot facing the battle, the reader sees Micaiah's prophecy coming true (2 Chron 18:16).

**19:2** *Why have you loved those who hate the LORD?:* Although he has made a safe arrival back to his palace, Jehu provides a critical theological commentary on Jehoshaphat's allegiance with the northern king. In the ancient world, the terms *love* and *hate* related to both political as well as emotional spheres.

**19:3** *Nevertheless, there is some good to be found in you:*

**Jehoshaphat's reforms**

<sup>4</sup>Though Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, he regularly went out among the people between Beer-sheba and Ephraim's highlands, and encouraged them to return to the LORD, the God of their ancestors. <sup>5</sup>He appointed judges throughout the land in each of the fortified cities of Judah, <sup>6</sup>instructing them, "Be careful when you pass judgment. You aren't dispensing justice by merely human standards but for the LORD, who is with you. <sup>7</sup>Therefore, respect the LORD and act accordingly, because there can be no injustice, playing favorites, or taking bribes when it comes to the LORD our God."

<sup>8</sup>Jehoshaphat also appointed judges in Jerusalem from among the Levites, the priests, and the family heads of Israel to administer the LORD's Instruction and to settle disputes among those living<sup>d</sup> in Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup>He instructed them, "You must respect the LORD at all times, in truth, and with complete integrity. <sup>10</sup>In any case that comes before you from a fellow citizen in an outlying town, whether it involves bloodshed or is an issue of instruction, commandment, regulations, or case laws, you must warn them not to sin against the LORD, consequently making him angry with both you and your fellow citizen. Do this, and you won't sin. <sup>11</sup>Amariah the chief priest will be in charge of all religious matters, and Zebadiah, Ishmael's son, the leader of Judah's house, will be in charge of all civil matters. The Levites will serve as your officers of the court. Carry out your duties with confidence, and may the LORD be with those who do good."

**Jehoshaphat's victory**

**20**Some time later, the Moabites and the Ammonites, along with some of the Meunites,<sup>e</sup> attacked Jehoshaphat. <sup>2</sup>Jehoshaphat was told, "A large army from beyond the sea, from Edom,<sup>f</sup> is coming to attack you. They are already at Hazazon-tamar!" (that is, En-gedi). <sup>3</sup>Frightened, Jehoshaphat decided to seek the LORD's help and proclaimed a fast for all Judah. <sup>4</sup>People from all of Judah's cities came to ask the LORD for help. <sup>5</sup>Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem in the LORD's temple in front of the new courtyard. <sup>6</sup>"LORD, the God of our ancestors, you alone are God in heaven. You rule all the kingdoms of the nations. You are so powerful that no one can oppose you. <sup>7</sup>You, our God, drove out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and gave this land to the descendants of your friend Abraham forever. <sup>8</sup>They have lived in it and have built a

<sup>d</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT they returned to Jerusalem <sup>e</sup>LXX; MT Ammonites <sup>f</sup>OL; MT Aram

Just as Jehu's pronouncement criticizes any action that indicates a lack of trust in God, so also his words highlight the significance of faithful deeds.

19:4-11 The king who has forged international alliances, achieved military victories, and instituted religious renewal, now turns again to restructuring the legal system. It consists of a basic two-pronged strategy, with judges in the outlying cities tending to local cases (19:5-7) and judges in Jerusalem tending not only to local matters but also to more complicated cases that come up from the fortified centers (19:8-11). This account of the establishment of the judicial system has certain links with Deuteronomy 1:13-17; 16:18; 17:8-12.

19:4 *between Beer-sheba and Ephraim's highlands*: This represents an extensive scope of the territory under Jehoshaphat's control.

19:5 *fortified cities of Judah*: These were the administrative and economic centers of the kingdom.

19:11 *religious matters . . . civil matters*: This distinction is absent outside the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles and Ezra. For a similar perspective, see 1 Chronicles 26:30, 32; Ezra 7:26.

20:1-30 This account of Jehoshaphat's victory over the eastern coalition of the Moabites and Ammonites (20:1-30) is the second recorded military conflict in his reign (for the first one, see 2 Chron 18:1-19:3) and represents the longest and most detailed account of a war in the books

of 1 and 2 Chronicles. The story has no parallel in the book of 1 and 2 Kings.

20:1 *the Moabites and the Ammonites*: These were tribes dwelling to the east. The identity of the *Meunites* isn't certain.

20:2 *En-gedi*: a site near the middle of the Dead Sea's western shore.

20:3 *to seek the LORD's help*: In a time of crisis, with a large army close to Jerusalem, the king's immediate response isn't to consider military action but to turn to God. Throughout the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, military crises function as a test of a king's faithfulness to God (2 Chron 14:11-12, etc.). The news here, that Jehoshaphat chose to seek the LORD's help instead of considering military or diplomatic strategies, reveals his loyalty to God. It also allows the author to reduce the importance of the account of Jehoshaphat's earlier attempt to strengthen his position via a marriage alliance with the north (2 Chron 18:1).

20:5 *stood up . . . in the LORD's temple*: The king's recourse to the temple for prayer during a time of crisis echoes what Solomon envisioned in his dedicatory prayer (2 Chron 6:14-42; cf. 2 Chron 7:12-16). *the new courtyard*: This was either a third outer court or a newly formed area within the second court where the laity were admitted.

20:6-12 Jehoshaphat's prayer appeals to God's power over the nations as well as God's mercy and past acts of salvation.

19:7 Gn 18:25;  
Dt 10:17;  
Dt 32:4  
20:6 Dt 4:39;  
1Ch 29:11-12  
20:7 Is 41:8;  
Jas 2:23

20:9 1Kj 8:37;  
2Ch 6:20,  
2Ch 6:28

20:10 Dt 2:4,  
Dt 2:9, Dt 2:19

20:11 Ps 83:12

20:12 Jgs 11:27;  
Ps 25:15,  
Ps 121:2,  
Ps 123:2,  
Ps 141:8

20:13 Josh 8:35;  
Ex 8:21;  
Neh 12:43;  
Mt 21:15

20:14 2Ch 15:1,  
2Ch 24:20

20:15 Ex 14:13;  
1Sa 17:47;  
2Ch 32:7

20:17 Ex 14:13;  
2Ch 15:2

20:18 Gn 24:26;  
Ex 4:31;  
2Ch 29:30

20:19 Ex 15:1;  
1Sa 18:6;

1Ch 15:16,  
1Ch 15:28,  
1Ch 16:4

20:20  
2Ch 20:15; Is 7:9

20:21  
1Ch 16:29,  
1Ch 16:34;  
2Ch 5:13

20:22 2Ch 13:13

20:23 Jgs 7:22;  
1Sa 14:20

20:25 Ex 12:36;  
2Ch 14:13

sanctuary in honor of your name in it, saying, <sup>a</sup>"If calamity, sword, flood,<sup>b</sup> plague, or famine comes upon us, we will stand before this temple, before you, because your name is in this temple. We will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us." <sup>c</sup>"So look here! The Ammonites, the Moabites, and those from Mount Seir—the people you wouldn't let Israel invade when they came out of Egypt's land, so Israel avoided them and didn't destroy them— <sup>d</sup>"here they are, returning the favor by coming to drive us out of your possession that you gave to us! <sup>e</sup>"Our God, won't you punish them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us. We don't know what to do, and so we are looking to you for help."

<sup>f</sup>"All Judah was standing before the LORD, even their little ones, wives, and children. <sup>g</sup>"Then the LORD's spirit came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah son of Benaiah son of Jeiel son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the line of Asaph, as he stood in the middle of the assembly.

<sup>h</sup>"Pay attention, all of Judah, every inhabitant of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat," Jahaziel said. <sup>i</sup>"This is what the LORD says to you: Don't be afraid or discouraged by this great army because the battle isn't yours. It belongs to God! <sup>j</sup>"March out against them tomorrow. Since they will be coming through the Ziz pass, meet them at the end of the valley that opens into the Jeruel wilderness. <sup>k</sup>"You don't need to fight this battle. Just take your places, stand ready, and watch how the LORD, who is with you, will deliver you, Judah and Jerusalem. Don't be afraid or discouraged! Go out tomorrow and face them. The LORD will be with you."

<sup>l</sup>"Then Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD in worship. <sup>m</sup>"Levites from the lines of Kohath and Korah stood up to loudly praise the LORD, the God of Israel.

<sup>n</sup>"Early the next morning they went into the Tekoa wilderness. When they were about to go out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and every inhabitant of Jerusalem! Trust the LORD your God, and you will stand firm; trust his prophets and succeed!"

<sup>o</sup>"After consulting with the people, Jehoshaphat appointed musicians to play for the LORD, praising his majestic holiness. They were to march out before the warriors, saying, "Give thanks to the LORD because his faithful love lasts forever!" <sup>p</sup>"As they broke into joyful song and praise, the LORD launched a surprise attack against the Ammonites, the Moabites, and those from Mount Seir who were invading Judah, so that they were defeated. <sup>q</sup>"The Ammonites and the Moabites turned on those from Mount Seir, completely destroying them. Once they had finished off the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy each other!

<sup>r</sup>"When Judah arrived at the point overlooking the wilderness, all they could see were corpses lying all over the ground. There were no survivors. <sup>s</sup>"When Jehoshaphat and his army came to take the loot, they found a great amount of cattle,<sup>b</sup> goods, clothing,<sup>1</sup> and other

<sup>b</sup>LXX; MT *judgment* <sup>b</sup>LXX; MT *among them* <sup>h</sup>Vulg; MT *corpses*

20:9 *If calamity, sword, flood:* This is what Solomon envisioned in his prayer of dedication (2 Chron 6:14-42) and what God promised to answer (2 Chron 7:12-16).

20:10 *wouldn't let Israel invade:* See Numbers 20:14-21; Deuteronomy 2:26-30; Judges 11:12-21.

20:11 *to drive us out of your possession:* In his characterization of the looming attack of the eastern coalition, Jehoshaphat envisions not simply a small grab of territory but the total extinction of Israel's land and heritage.

20:12 *We are powerless:* At the close of his prayer, the king's assertion of the people's lack of power alludes to the opening when he acknowledged the overwhelming power of God (2 Chron 20:6). Given that Jehoshaphat has taken care to build fortresses and storage cities throughout Judah and has recruited a very large army (2 Chron 17:12-19), this claim of weakness points to more than a straightforward lack of military defenses. Rather, in the Chronicler's presentation, the king knows that strength can't succeed if it isn't supported by God.

20:14-17 God's response to the king's prayer consists of an oracle of salvation through Jahaziel the Levite.

20:15 *Don't be afraid:* Jahaziel's words echo those of Moses as the people awaited God's miracle on the shores of the Reed Sea (Exod 14:13-14), *by this great army:* The people's confidence doesn't come from the underestimation of danger but rather in their confidence that the battle *belongs to God!*

20:16 *Jeruel wilderness:* This site is otherwise unknown, but the plan seems to represent an excellent military strategy: Israel will march a short distance to a place where they will be situated above the invading troops who will be tired from their long march.

20:20-28 The description of the battle doesn't describe the size of Judah's forces but rather their participation in a religious procession led by musicians praising God.

20:21 *Give thanks to the Lord:* The lyrics are reminiscent of the citation of Psalm 106:1 in 1 Chronicles 16:34 and 2 Chronicles 5:13.

20:22-24 The invading forces are felled by a *surprise attack* of God, and they kill each other in an act of self-destruction. Judah's utter lack of participation in the fighting is emphasized by describing their arrival at their station when all they see are *corpses lying all over the ground.*

valuables—much more than they could carry. In fact, there was so much it took three days to haul it away. <sup>26</sup>On the fourth day they assembled in Blessing Valley, where they blessed the LORD. That's why it is called Blessing Valley to this day. <sup>27</sup>Then everyone from Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat at their head, joyfully returned home to Jerusalem because the LORD had given them reason to rejoice over their enemies. <sup>28</sup>They entered Jerusalem accompanied by harps, lutes, and trumpets, and they went to the LORD's temple.

<sup>29</sup>The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the LORD had fought against Israel's enemies. <sup>30</sup>As a result, Jehoshaphat's rule was peaceful because his God gave him rest on all sides.

### *Jehoshaphat's last days*

<sup>31</sup>Jehoshaphat ruled over Judah. He was 35 years old when he became king, and he ruled for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah; she was Shilhi's daughter. <sup>32</sup>Jehoshaphat walked in the way of his father Asa and didn't turn aside from it, doing what was right in the LORD's eyes, <sup>33</sup>with the exception that he didn't remove the shrines. The people were still not committed with all their hearts to the God of their ancestors. <sup>34</sup>The rest of Jehoshaphat's deeds, from beginning to end, are written in the records of Jehu, Hanani's son, which are included in the records of Israel's kings.

<sup>35</sup>Sometime later, Judah's King Jehoshaphat formed an alliance with Israel's King Ahaziah, which caused him to sin. <sup>36</sup>They agreed to build a fleet of Tarshish-styled ships, and they built them in Ezion-geber. <sup>37</sup>Eliezer, Dodavahu's son from Mareshah, prophesied against Jehoshaphat: "Because you have formed an alliance with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made." The ships were wrecked and couldn't sail to Tarshish.

**21** Jehoshaphat died and was buried with his ancestors in David's City. His son Jehoram succeeded him as king.

### *Jehoram rules*

<sup>1</sup>Jehoram's brothers, the other sons of Jehoshaphat, were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah. All of these were the sons of Israel's King Jehoshaphat. <sup>2</sup>Their father had given them many gifts of silver, gold, and other valuables, along with fortified cities in Judah, but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram because he was the oldest son.

<sup>3</sup>When Jehoram had taken control of his father's kingdom, he established his rule by killing all his brothers, along with some other leaders of Israel. <sup>4</sup>Jehoram was 32 years old when he became king, and he ruled for eight years in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>He walked in the ways of Israel's kings, just as Ahab's dynasty had done, because he married Ahab's daughter. He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes. <sup>6</sup>Nevertheless, because of the covenant he had made with David, the LORD wasn't willing to destroy David's dynasty. He had promised to preserve a lamp for David and his sons forever. <sup>7</sup>During Jehoram's rule, Edom rebelled against Judah's power and appointed its own king. <sup>8</sup>Jehoram, along with all his chariots, crossed

20:28 *they went to the Lord's temple*: Given that their first response to the news of the attack was to pray in the temple (2 Chron 20:5), their return at the end of the successful battle makes a fitting conclusion.

20:30 *God gave him rest*: The absence of war in a king's reign is a sign of blessing throughout the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles (see 2 Chron 14:1b; 1 Chron 22:9).

20:31–21:1 In the conclusion of Jehoshaphat's reign, the author returns to the source material in 1 Kings 22:42–50, making some changes.

20:37 *Because you have formed an alliance*: As is typical in the narratives in 1 and 2 Chronicles, faithful kings don't rely on military strategy or political alliances but rather on the help of God alone. Jehoshaphat, of course, had followed this strategy of faithfulness in his last battle (2 Chron 20:12), but he had also brokered a marriage alliance with the northern kingdom (2 Chron 18:1). The parallel text in 1 Kings 22:47–49 preserves a different version of Judah's coalition with Israel to build ships.

21:2–22:1 The final assessment of Jehoshaphat, a king who exhibited faithfulness throughout much of his reign,

is followed by an account of his faithless son Jehoram. This is the first Davidic ruler to be judged entirely negatively by the Chronicler. The account is an expansion of 2 Kings 8:16–24, with new material added at the beginning and the end (21:2–4, 10b–22:1).

21:4 *killing all his brothers, along with some other leaders of Israel*: Fratricide secures Jehoram's grip on the throne, but at the same time makes the Davidic monarchy vulnerable to extinction. His extreme violence will be matched by his wife Athaliah after his death (2 Chron 22:10).

21:6 *Ahab's daughter*: The marriage of Jehoram to Athaliah was already mentioned with a sense of foreboding in 2 Chronicles 18:1.

21:7 *because of the covenant he had made with David*: See 1 Chronicles 17:10–14; 2 Chronicles 6:16. See sidebar, "Surprised By Mercy" at 2 Chronicles 22. *David's dynasty*: This is a change from "Judah" in the source text of 2 Kings 8:19. *promised to preserve a lamp for David and his sons forever*: For the language of *lamp* in connection with an unbroken line of rulers from David's family on the throne, see also Psalm 132:17.

20:31  
1Ki 22:41, 42  
20:32, 33  
1Ki 22:43  
20:34 1Ki 22:45  
20:36 1Ki 22:48  
20:37 2Ch 19:2  
21:1 1Ki 22:50  
21:5 2Ki 8:17;  
2Ch 21:20a  
21:6, 7  
2Ki 8:18, 19  
21:8–10  
2Ki 8:20–22

21:16  
 2Ch 17:11,  
 2Ch 22:1,  
 2Ch 26:7  
 21:17 2Ch 22:1,  
 2Ch 25:23  
 21:19 2Ki 8:24a  
 21:20a 2Ki 8:17,  
 2Ch 21:5  
 22:1 2Ki 8:25,  
 2Ki 9:29  
 22:2 1Ki 8:26  
 22:3-4 2Ki 8:27  
 22:5b 2Ki 8:28

over to Zair.<sup>1</sup> The Edomites, who had surrounded him, attacked at night, defeating him<sup>b</sup> and his chariot officers. <sup>10</sup>So Edom has been independent of Judah to this day. Libnah rebelled against Jehoram's rule at the same time because he had abandoned the LORD, the God of his ancestors. <sup>11</sup>As if that wasn't enough, Jehoram constructed shrines throughout Judah's highlands, encouraged Jerusalem's citizens to be unfaithful, and led Judah astray.

<sup>12</sup>A letter from the prophet Elijah came to Jehoram that read, "This is what the LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says: Because you haven't walked in the ways of your father Jehoshaphat or the ways of Judah's King Asa, <sup>13</sup>but have walked in the ways of Israel's kings and have encouraged Judah and Jerusalem's citizens to be unfaithful, just as the house of Ahab did, and because you have even murdered your own brothers, your father's family, who were better than you, <sup>14</sup>the LORD will now strike your family, your children, your wives, and all your possessions with a heavy blow. <sup>15</sup>You yourself will become deathly ill with a chronic disease that will cause your intestines to fall out."

<sup>16</sup>Then the LORD made the Philistines and the Arabs, who lived near the Cushites, angry with Jehoram. <sup>17</sup>They attacked Judah, broke down its defenses, and hauled off all the goods that were found in the royal palace, along with the king's children and wives. Only Jehoahaz, Jehoram's youngest son, was spared. <sup>18</sup>After all this, the LORD struck Jehoram with an incurable intestinal disease. <sup>19</sup>For almost two years he grew steadily worse, until two days before his death, when his intestines fell out, causing him to die in horrible pain. His people didn't make a fire in his honor as they had done for his ancestors. <sup>20</sup>He was 32 years old when he became king, and he ruled for eight years in Jerusalem. No one was sorry he died. He was buried in David's City but not in the royal cemetery.

**22** The inhabitants of Jerusalem made his youngest son Ahaziah succeed him as king because the raiding party that had invaded the camp with the Arabs had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah, Jehoram's son, became king of Judah.

### Ahaziah rules

<sup>2</sup>Ahaziah was 22 years old<sup>1</sup> when he became king, and he ruled for one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah; she was the granddaughter of Omri. <sup>3</sup>Ahaziah walked in the ways of Ahab's dynasty, encouraged in this wickedness by his mother. <sup>4</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes, just as Ahab's dynasty had done, because after his father's death they gave him advice that led to his downfall. <sup>5</sup>Ahaziah was following their advice when he

<sup>1</sup>Correction with 2 Kgs 8:21; MT with his officers <sup>b</sup>Or he defeated Edom <sup>1</sup>LXX, Syr, 2 Kgs 8:26; MT 42

21:10 *because he had abandoned the LORD*: The first part of this verse is taken from the source in 2 Kings 8:22, but the Chronicler adds a theological cause for the loss of territory. 21:11 *encouraged Jerusalem's citizens to be unfaithful*: This material isn't found in the Chronicler's source, and the enthusiasm that it attributes to the king in the encouragement of sin is particularly striking.

21:12-15 The prophet Elijah is associated with the northern kingdom, where he spent his time railing against the worship of Baal (for more, see 1 Kgs 17-19; 21; 2 Kgs 1-2). In this account, the significance of Jehoram's sins is so great that they occasioned a written oracle of judgment from the great prophet.

21:14 *the LORD will now strike your family*: According to the divine oracle, the king's sins concerning worship practices, as well as killing his brothers, won't stand without penalty. Jehoram's sins will be punished with an attack on Judah, the kidnapping of his family, and his own painful death (2 Chron 21:16-19).

21:19-20 *His people didn't make a fire in his honor*: The Chronicler often uses funerary rites to signal an assessment of the king's reign. In this account, Jehoram wasn't given a fire, the people didn't mourn, and he wasn't buried in the royal cemetery. In addition, the author omits the usual notice found in 1 and 2 Kings that the rest of Jehoram's deeds are "written in the official records of Judah's

kings" (1 Kgs 8:23; see for other kings, 2 Chron 9:29; 12:15; 13:22). Such an omission implies that the wicked reign is best left unremembered.

22:1 *his youngest son Ahaziah*: In the announcement of his successor, the author reminds the reader of the violent punishment inflicted on Jehoram's house, which left only the youngest boy to live. The story was initially told in 2 Chronicles 21:16-17, where the son's name is given as Jehoahaz.

22:2-9 The Chronicler considers the rule of Ahaziah (named Jehoahaz in 2 Chron 21:17) to be a time of extreme wickedness, in which the corrupt northern influence on the south continues from the reign of Jehoram. At the end of his reign, Ahaziah had no biological relatives left who were *strong enough to rule the kingdom* (22:9). The account in 2 Chronicles includes additions to the parallel text of 2 Kings 8:26-29 (= 2 Chron 22:2-6), and a summary of 2 Kings 9 (= 2 Chron 22:7-9).

22:4 *they gave him advice that led to his downfall*: As with the young advisors who encouraged Rehoboam to increase the people's workload (2 Chron 10:10-11), the counselors here present ill-considered advice that is followed by the king.

22:5 *he went with Israel's King Joram... to fight against Aram's King Hazael*: In the perspective of the Chronicler, working with the northern kingdom brings destruction.

*Surprised by Mercy* For the Chronicler, life is generally fair—retribution for good or evil deeds usually comes quickly, and people usually get what they deserve. David, Solomon, and Hezekiah were devout kings rewarded with long rules, large families, and prosperity. And when Ahaz refused to heed God's instruction, and engaged in nonsanctioned worship such as child sacrifice, he met with military defeat (2 Chron 28:1-5).

Occasionally this tidy schema is disrupted by acts of mercy. Although Ahaziah had lived his life doing "what was evil in the Lord's eyes," the people give him a decent burial in honor of his grandfather: "He was the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart" (22:9). The people's kindness here mirrors God's own acts of mercy that sometimes surface within the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles. For example, even though Jehoram killed all of his brothers and other leaders in Israel in order to secure the throne, God refused to bring about the final end to the dynasty "because of the covenant he had made with David" (2 Chron 21:7). And when notorious evildoers such as Manasseh pray for forgiveness, God hears and restores them again (2 Chron 33:10-13). Although the Chronicler generally presents a moral universe in which justice prevails, there is still room for surprising acts of grace. The divine and human communities are free to violate the strict standards of "fairness" to extend mercy.

went with Israel's King Joram,<sup>m</sup> Ahab's son, to fight against Aram's King Hazael at Ramoth-gilead, where the Arameans wounded Joram. <sup>n</sup>Joram returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds he suffered at Ramah in his battle with Aram's King Hazael. Then Judah's King Ahaziah,<sup>n</sup> Jehoram's son, went down to visit Joram, Ahab's son, at Jezreel because he had been wounded. <sup>7</sup>But God used this visit to Joram to bring about Ahaziah's downfall. After his arrival, Ahaziah went with Joram to meet Jehu, Nimshi's son, whom the LORD had anointed to destroy Ahab's dynasty. <sup>8</sup>While Jehu was executing judgment on Ahab's dynasty, he discovered the princes of Judah, Ahaziah's nephews, serving Ahaziah, and Jehu killed them. <sup>9</sup>Jehu went looking for Ahaziah, who was captured while hiding in Samaria. He was then brought to Jehu and executed. He was given a decent burial, however, because people said, "He was the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart."

There were now no members of Ahaziah's dynasty strong enough to rule the kingdom.

### Queen Athaliah rules Judah

<sup>10</sup>When Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, learned of her son's death, she immediately destroyed the entire royal family of Judah's dynasty. <sup>11</sup>But Jehoshabeath the king's daughter secretly took Ahaziah's son Jehoash<sup>o</sup> from the rest of the royal children who were about to be murdered, and hid him in a bedroom, along with his nurse. In this way Jehoshabeath, the

<sup>m</sup>Or *Jehoram* (also in 22:6-7); the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoram* or short *Joram* form.

<sup>n</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT *Azariah* <sup>o</sup>Or *Joash*; the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoash* or short *Joash* form in 2 Kgs.

See, for example, Jehoshaphat's experience in 2 Chronicles 18:1-19:3. *at Ramoth-gilead, where the Arameans wounded Joram*: The story of Jehoshaphat's coalition with the north finds additional parallels in this account: Ahab fell in the battle at Ramoth-gilead (2 Chron 18:33-34), and now Ahab's son is injured there as well.

22:7 *But God used this visit*: In an addition to the source text in 2 Kings 9, the Chronicler emphasizes that it is God alone who controls events. *Jehu, Nimshi's son*: This figure hasn't been introduced previously in Chronicles. For more information, see the account of the prophet Elisha anointing Jehu as king over Israel and instructing him to kill Ahab's house in 2 Kings 9:1-28.

22:8 *Jehu killed them*: Because of the tragically close allegiance between both houses, Jehu's instruction to kill the house of Ahab now results in the killing of Ahaziah's nephews as well.

22:9 *He was given a decent burial*: It is quite typical for the Chronicler to highlight the close relationship between one's behavior and fate: Ahab's corruption results in defeat and death (2 Chron 18:33-34), and Asa's faithful prayer is immediately answered with God sending military victory

(2 Chron 14:11-12). There are points, however, where the author preserves a certain freedom from such precise moral calculation. Although Ahaziah "did what was evil in the Lord's eyes" throughout his reign and aligned himself with the northern kingdom (2 Chron 22:4-5), his burial was *decent* thanks to the faithfulness of his grandfather Jehoshaphat (2 Chron 17:1-21:1). See sidebar, "Surprised by Mercy." It is fitting however that in place of the formula that usually concludes the accounts of Judah's kings ("the rest of \_\_\_\_'s deeds are written in the official records of Israel's and Judah's kings"), the author includes the startling pronouncement: *There were now no members of Ahaziah's dynasty strong enough to rule the kingdom.*

22:10-12 The account of Athaliah's six-year rule in Judah is intricately linked to the rule of the next king and Davidic heir, Jehoash. The queen receives none of the standard opening or closing formulae (i.e., "So \_\_\_\_ became ruler over Judah"), and her reign is presented as the time in which the very existence of the next legitimate king of Judah is first threatened and then preserved. The story closely follows the parallel in 2 Kings 11:1-3.

22:11 *But Jehoshabeath the king's daughter secretly took*

22:6a 2Ki 8:29a,

2Ki 9:15a

22:7 2Ki 9:22

22:8

2Ki 10:12-14

22:9 2Ki 9:27

22:10 2Ki 11:1

22:11 2Ki 11:2

23:3-25a 5:3,  
25a 7:12;  
2Ch 6:16,  
2Ch 7:18,  
2Ch 21:7  
23:3-11  
2Ki 11:4-12  
23:12-15  
2Ki 11:13-16

daughter of King Jehoram, the wife of the priest Jehoiada and the sister of Ahaziah, hid Jehoash from Athaliah so she couldn't murder him. <sup>12</sup>He remained hidden with them in God's temple for six years while Athaliah ruled the country.

**23** But in the seventh year Jehoiada boldly formed a conspiracy with the following unit commanders: Jeroham's son Azariah, Jehohanan's son Ishmael, Obed's son Azariah, Adaiah's son Maaseiah, and Zichri's son Elishaphat. <sup>2</sup>They went throughout Judah recruiting the Levites from all the cities of Judah, as well as the family heads of Israel, who then came to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>The entire assembly made a covenant with the king in God's temple. Jehoiada said, "Look! Here is the king's son. He must be king, just as the LORD promised about David's descendants. <sup>4</sup>This is what you must do: A third of you priests and Levites coming on sabbath duty will guard the gates, <sup>5</sup>another third will be at the royal palace, and another third will be at the Foundation Gate. Meanwhile, all the people will be in the courtyards of the LORD's temple. <sup>6</sup>Don't enter the LORD's temple, because only the priests or Levites on duty can do that. They are allowed to enter because they are holy, but the rest of the people must follow the LORD's requirements. <sup>7</sup>The Levites must surround the king, each with his weapons drawn. Whoever comes near your ranks must be killed; stay near the king wherever he goes."

<sup>8</sup>The Levites and all Judah did everything that the priest Jehoiada ordered. They each took charge of those men reporting for duty on the Sabbath, as well as those going off duty, since Jehoiada hadn't released any divisions from duty. <sup>9</sup>Then the priest Jehoiada gave the unit commanders King David's spears and large and small shields that were kept in God's temple. <sup>10</sup>He positioned all the people, each with their weapons drawn, near the altar and the temple, stretching from the south side of the temple to the north side, so as to protect the king. <sup>11</sup>Then they brought out the king's son, crowned him, gave him the royal law,<sup>P</sup> and made him king. Jehoiada and his sons anointed him as everyone cried out, "Long live the king!"

<sup>12</sup>When Athaliah heard the noise made by the people running and cheering the king, she went to the people at the LORD's temple <sup>13</sup>and saw the king standing by the royal pillar at the entrance, with the commanders and trumpeters beside the king. All the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and singers accompanied by musical instruments were leading the praise. Athaliah ripped her clothes and screamed, "Treason! Treason!"

<sup>14</sup>Then the priest Jehoiada brought out the unit commanders who were in charge of the army. "Take her out under guard,"<sup>Q</sup> he told them, "and kill anyone who follows her." This was because the priest had said, "She must not be executed in the LORD's temple." <sup>15</sup>They arrested her when she reached the entrance of the Horse Gate at the royal palace. She was executed there.

<sup>P</sup>Or *testimony*; MT lacks *royal*. <sup>Q</sup>Heb uncertain

**Ahaziah's son:** Ironically, Jehoshabeath probably survived Athaliah's purge because she was a woman and thus not a threat to Athaliah's own claim upon the throne. Now she uses her liberty to save the ruling queen's greatest threat: Ahaziah's heir.

23:1-24:27 *But in the seventh year.* The attention of the narrative moves from Athaliah's rule to Jehoiada's attempt to gain the throne for Jehoash, following this with an account of Jehoash's reign. The story in 2 Chronicles parallels the account in 2 Kings 11:4-12:21, although with a greater emphasis on the role of the people and the specification that the military force consists of Levites.

23:3 *The entire assembly made a covenant with the king:* Although the boy isn't yet crowned, the author asserts his authority over Athaliah by calling him "king." Also, in contrast to the source in 2 Kings 11, the Chronicler emphasizes the central role of the people in the overthrow of Athaliah. In 2 Kings, the coup is largely the work of Jehoiada and the military, and the civilian people are mentioned only after the boy is crowned (2 Kgs 11:13). In Chronicles, however, the family heads from Judah and Israel are also involved from the very beginning and join with the military in making a solemn agreement with Jehoash (23:2-3), just

as the LORD promised about David's descendants: The preservation of the Davidic monarchy, assured by God in texts such as 1 Chronicles 22:10 and 28:4-7, is highlighted here by the author.

23:5 *all the people:* For the emphasis on the involvement of the people in Jehoash's coronation, see the note on 2 Chronicles 23:3.

23:9 *King David's spears and large and small shields that were kept in God's temple:* If these are the gold votive gifts referred to in 1 Chronicles 18:7, the symbolism is fitting: David's weapons acquired in war and dedicated to the temple are used to secure his dynasty. Weapons made of gold, however, are probably too soft to be very practical.

23:13 *rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and singers accompanied by musical instruments:* The Chronicler has added additional musicians to the account in 1 Kings (1 Kgs 11:14), reflecting the author's emphasis on joyous music at ceremonies. See sidebar, "Worship and Music" at 2 Chronicles 5. *Athaliah ripped her clothes:* This is usually a sign of mourning or turning away from sin (2 Kgs 19:1). *and screamed, "Treason! Treason!":* Because of the music, it isn't clear that her cries could even be heard.



<sup>16</sup>Jehoiada then made a covenant between himself, all the people, and the king, that they would be the LORD's people. <sup>17</sup>Then all the people went to Baal's temple and tore it down, smashing its altars and images into pieces. They executed Baal's priest Mattan in front of the altars. <sup>18</sup>Jehoiada appointed the priests and<sup>d</sup> Levites in charge of the LORD's temple, and then appointed the divisions of the priests and Levites<sup>e</sup> that David had assigned to the LORD's temple to offer entirely burned sacrifices to the LORD, as written in the Instruction from Moses, with rejoicing and singing, just as David had ordered. <sup>19</sup>He posted guards at the gates of the LORD's temple so that no one who was unclean in any way could enter. <sup>20</sup>Then he took the unit commanders, the officials, the rulers of the people, and all the people of the land, and they led the king down from the LORD's temple, processing through the Upper Gate to the palace, where the king sat upon the royal throne. <sup>21</sup>All the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was at peace now that Athaliah had been executed at the palace.

### Jehoash rules

**24** Jehoash<sup>f</sup> was 7 years old when he became king, and he ruled for forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah; she was from Beer-sheba. <sup>2</sup>Jehoash did what was right in the LORD's eyes as long as Jehoiada the priest was alive. <sup>3</sup>Jehoiada had him marry two wives, and Jehoash fathered sons and daughters.

<sup>4</sup>Sometime later, Jehoash wanted to renovate the LORD's temple. <sup>5</sup>He gathered the priests and the Levites and said, "Go to the cities of Judah and collect the annual tax of silver due from all Israel for the upkeep of God's temple. Do it right away."

But the Levites procrastinated. <sup>6</sup>So the king summoned the chief priest Jehoiada and asked him, "Why haven't you required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax imposed by the LORD's servant Moses and the Israelite assembly for the covenant tent?" (<sup>7</sup>Now wicked Athaliah and her followers had broken into God's temple and used all the holy objects of the LORD's temple in their worship of the Baals.) <sup>8</sup>So at the king's command a box was made and placed outside the gate of the LORD's temple. <sup>9</sup>Then a proclamation was issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem requiring the people to bring to the LORD the tax that God's servant Moses had imposed on Israel in the wilderness. <sup>10</sup>This so pleased all the leaders and all the people that they gladly dropped their money in the box until it was full. <sup>11</sup>Whenever the box was brought by the Levites to the royal accountants, as soon as they saw that a large amount of money was in the box, the royal scribe and the representative of the high priest would come, empty the box, and return it to its place. This took place day after day, and a large amount of money was collected. <sup>12</sup>The king and Jehoiada would give it to those in

<sup>f</sup>LXX; MT *levitical priests* <sup>e</sup>LXX; MT lacks and then appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites. <sup>f</sup>Heb *Joash* (see 24:2, 4, 22, 24); the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoash* or short *Joash* form in 2 Kgs

23:16-21 *Jehoiada then made a covenant*: The earlier agreement to enthrone the Davidic monarch (2 Chron 23:3) now results in renewal of the community to *be the LORD's people*. This renewed identity leads to the destruction of the Baal cult and restoration of the worship prescribed by Moses and David (23:17-20). The *peace* that the city enjoys (23:21) is a mark of God's blessing (as in 2 Chron 14:6; 15:15; 20:30).

24:1-27 The reign of Jehoash begins a pattern of faithful kings who subsequently turn away from God (Jehoash is followed by Amaziah and Uzziah). While the priest Jehoiada was alive, Jehoash *did what was right in the LORD's eyes* (24:2). But after he dies, Jehoash abandons proper worship upon the advice of the *leaders of Judah* (24:17). His military defeat and death at the hands of his own officials brings his reign to a dismal end (24:23-27). The account is a close parallel to 2 Kings 12:1-21, although at times the Chronicler makes some strategic alterations.

24:2 *as long as Jehoiada the priest was alive*: This comment sets up the two-part division with which the Chronicler presents the king's reign: faithfulness during Jehoiada's lifetime (24:2-16), and unfaithfulness after his death (24:17-27). A similar comment occurs in 24:14. The schema is

strengthened by the displacement of 2 Kings 12:3, which relates that worship continued at the shrines even at this point in the narrative—the Chronicler will add it back into the narrative after Jehoiada dies (2 Chron 24:18).

24:5 *collect the annual tax of silver*: In Exodus 30:13, Moses sets out a stipulation that the people should pay half a shekel at the time of the census as "a gift offering to the LORD." In Nehemiah 10:32, the people agree to pay an annual tax of one-third a shekel "for all the work of our God's house." See also 2 Chronicles 24:9.

24:7 *Athaliah and her followers had broken into God's temple*: This aside about Athaliah's reign, told to motivate the need for financial contributions, is an addition to the account in 2 Kings 12.

24:9 *the tax that God's servant Moses had imposed*: See note on 2 Chronicles 24:5.

24:10 *they gladly dropped their money in the box*: Changes to the structure and geography of collection (a box outside the temple for the offering replaces the Levites going throughout Judah) results in an enthusiastic response. This scene is reminiscent of the joyful and generous outpouring of the leaders when David called for a voluntary offering to support the temple in 1 Chronicles 29:6-9.

23:16-18  
2Ki 11:17-18  
23:20-21a  
2Ki 11:19-20a  
23:21b  
2Ki 11:20b  
24:1 2Ki 11:21,  
2Ki 12:1  
24:2 2Ki 12:2  
24:4, 5  
2Ki 12:4, 5  
24:6 14  
2Ki 12:6-16  
24:8 2Ki 12:9

24:17 2Ch 24:2

24:18 2Ch 19:2,  
2Ch 29:8,  
2Ch 32:25

24:20

Nm 14:41;  
2Ch 15:1-2,  
2Ch 20:14;  
Mt 23:35

24:21 Mt 23:35

24:22 Gn 9:5;  
2Ch 24:2

24:23

2Ki 12:17-18

24:24 Lv 26:8,  
Lv 26:37;

Dt 28:25;

Dt 32:30;

2Ch 16:8

24:25

2Ki 12:20-21;

2Ch 21:20;

2Ch 24:16;

2Ch 24:22

charge of the work on the LORD's temple who in turn hired masons and carpenters to renovate the LORD's temple, as well as metalworkers for the iron and bronze to repair the LORD's temple. <sup>13</sup>The workers labored hard, and the restoration progressed smoothly under their control until they had brought God's temple back to its original state and reinforced it. <sup>14</sup>As soon as they finished, they brought the remaining money to the king and Jehoiada. They used it to make equipment for the LORD's temple, including what was used for the service and the entirely burned offerings, pans, and other objects made of gold and silver. As long as Jehoiada lived, the entirely burned offerings were regularly offered in the LORD's temple.

<sup>15</sup>Jehoiada grew old, and when he reached the age of 130, he died. <sup>16</sup>He was buried among the kings in David's City because of his exemplary service to Israel, God, and God's temple.

<sup>17</sup>After Jehoiada's death, however, the leaders of Judah came and bowed before the king, and the king listened to them. <sup>18</sup>They abandoned the temple of the LORD, their ancestors' God, and worshipped sacred poles<sup>a</sup> and idols. Anger came upon Judah and Jerusalem as a consequence of their sin, <sup>19</sup>and though God sent prophets to them to bring them back to the LORD and to warn them, they refused to listen. <sup>20</sup>Then the spirit of God enwrapped Zechariah the son of the priest Jehoiada. Standing before the people, he told them, "This is what God says: Why do you defy the LORD's commands and keep yourselves from prospering? Because you have abandoned the LORD, he has abandoned you!" <sup>21</sup>But the people plotted against Zechariah, and at the king's command stoned him to death in the courtyard of the LORD's temple. <sup>22</sup>King Jehoash failed to remember the loyalty that Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had shown him and murdered Jehoiada's son, who cried out as he lay dying, "May the LORD see and seek vengeance!"

<sup>23</sup>That spring the Aramean army marched against Jehoash. They attacked Judah and Jerusalem, destroyed all the people's leaders, and sent all the loot to the king of Damascus. <sup>24</sup>Although the Aramean forces were relatively small, the LORD handed over to them a very large army, because the people of Judah had abandoned the LORD, their ancestors' God. Jehoash was justly punished. <sup>25</sup>The Arameans left him badly wounded, but his own officials

<sup>a</sup>Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah

24:14 *They used it to make equipment for the LORD's temple:* This notice stands in tension with 2 Kings 12:13-14, which specifies that the people's offering "was not used to make . . . any gold or silver object for the LORD's temple" but rather given to those making repairs. The change points to the Chronicler's overwhelming concern to rectify all of the possible damage made to the temple and its proper operation during Athaliah's reign (2 Chron 24:7). 24:14 *As long as Jehoiada lived:* The ominous asides to Jehoash's reign after the death of Jehoiada bookends the first part of his reign (see note on 2 Chron 24:2).

24:16 *buried among the kings in David's City:* The significance of Jehoiada to the Chronicler is such that the literary account of the priest's life concludes with an adapted regnal formula, with his age replacing the standard account of the length of the king's reign. In addition, his burial rites and interment are similar to other kings whose faithfulness received God's blessing (see, e.g., 2 Chron 9:30-31). 24:17-22 The Chronicler adds this material to the account in 2 Kings as a way to explain the military failure and sad death of Jehoash.

24:17 *and the king listened to them:* The influence of the counselors over the king to ill effect has parallels in the reign of Rehoboam (2 Chron 10:14). 24:18 *They abandoned the temple of the LORD:* This is an ironic state of affairs since Jehoash's life was preserved by being hidden in the temple (2 Chron 22:12), and the king spent some effort restoring it after the reign of Athaliah (24:12-14). The drastic consequences for such "abandoning" will be spelled out explicitly in 2 Chronicles 24:20, 24.

24:19 *God sent prophets to them to bring them back to the LORD:* Messages from God encouraging the people to

return occur throughout the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles. Sometimes they are acknowledged (2 Chron 12:5-8; 15:1-8; 20:14-18), but often the warnings are ignored and disaster ensues (2 Chron 16:7-10; 36:12-17).

24:20 *the spirit of God enwrapped Zechariah:* For similar scenarios see 2 Chronicles 15:1 and note on 1 Chronicles 12:18. *defy the LORD's commands:* The people's defiance of God's commands stands in stark opposition to their obedience to those of the king, which are obeyed in the next verse as they put Zechariah to death (24:21). *keep yourselves from prospering?:* For the Chronicler, obedience to God often brings blessing. See 1 Chronicles 22:13; 2 Chronicles 20:20; 26:5. See sidebar, "Only God Brings Security" at 2 Chronicles 15. *Because you have abandoned:* This is a standard pattern; see 2 Chronicles 15:2; 24:18, 24.

24:21 *in the courtyard:* Ironically, Zechariah's death desecrates the sacred space that his father had attempted to keep free from a similar pollution when Athaliah died (2 Chron 23:14).

24:23-27 Jehoash's end comes in two dismal parts. First, God intervenes to have his forces lose a war with the Arameans (24:23-24), and then his officials kill him in revenge for the death of Zechariah (24:25).

24:24 *Although the Aramean forces were relatively small:* The victory of the Arameans represents an inverse of the usual turn of events. Typically, God saves Israel when they are greatly outnumbered (2 Chron 13:3, 13-18; 14:8-13; 20:2, 20-23). Here God works against their numerically superior forces. *because the people of Judah had abandoned:* See note on 2 Chronicles 24:20.

24:25-26 The Chronicler inserts a motivation for Jehoash's officials that isn't found in 2 Kings 12:20-21: They take

plotted against him for murdering the son<sup>7</sup> of the priest Jehoiada. So they killed him in his bed. He died and was buried in David's City but not in the royal cemetery. <sup>26</sup>Those who plotted against him were the Ammonite Zabad, Shimeath's son, and the Moabite Jehozabad, Shimrith's son. <sup>27</sup>The list of Jehoash's sons, the many prophecies against him, and the account of his restoration of God's temple are written in the comments on the records of the kings. His son Amaziah succeeded him as king.

### Amaziah rules

**25** Amaziah was 25 years old when he became king, and he ruled for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan; she was from Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>He did what was right in the LORD's eyes but not with all his heart. <sup>3</sup>Once he had secured control over his kingdom, he executed the officials who had assassinated his father the king. <sup>4</sup>However, he didn't kill their children because of what is written in the Instruction scroll from Moses, where the LORD commanded, *Parents shouldn't be executed because of what their children have done; neither should children be executed because of what their parents have done. Each person should be executed for their own guilty acts.*<sup>w</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Amaziah gathered the people of Judah, organizing them into family units under captains of thousands and hundreds for all Judah and Benjamin. He summoned everyone 20 years old and older and found that there were three hundred thousand select troops, ready for service and able to handle spears and body-sized shields. <sup>6</sup>He also hired one hundred thousand warriors from Israel for one hundred kikkars of silver.

<sup>7</sup>But a man of God confronted him. "King," he said, "the troops from Israel must not go with you, because the LORD isn't on the side of Israel or any Ephraimite. <sup>8</sup>Should you go with them anyway, even if you fight fiercely, God will make you stumble before the enemy, because God has the ability to either help or make someone stumble."

<sup>9</sup>Amaziah asked the man of God, "What about the hundred kikkars I paid for the Israelite troops?"

"God can give you much more than that," the man of God replied.

<sup>10</sup>Amaziah released the Ephraimite troops who had joined him so they could go home, but this only infuriated them against Judah, and they left in a rage. <sup>11</sup>Amaziah courageously led his people to the Salt Valley, where they killed ten thousand people from Seir. <sup>12</sup>The Judean forces captured another ten thousand alive, brought them to the top of a cliff, and threw them off so that all were dashed to pieces. <sup>13</sup>Meanwhile, the troops Amaziah had released from fighting alongside him raided cities in Judah from Samaria to Beth-horon, killing three thousand people and carrying off a large amount of loot. <sup>14</sup>When Amaziah returned after

24:27a  
2Ki 12:19  
24:27b  
2Ki 12:21b  
25:1 2Ki 14:1, 2  
25:2-4  
2Ki 14:3-6  
25:7 Dt 33:1;  
1Ki 12:28;  
2Ch 13:12;  
2Ch 15:9;  
2Ch 17:2  
25:8 2Ch 14:11;  
2Ch 20:6;  
Ps 62:11  
25:11 2Ki 14:7

<sup>w</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT sons <sup>w</sup>Deut 24:16

revenge on the king's command to stone Zechariah (2 Chron 24:21), but not in the royal cemetery. Compare the fate of the priest Jehoiada in 2 Chronicles 24:16.

24:27 in the comments on the records of the kings: This is the only mention of this source in the Bible.

25:1-28 The story of Amaziah presents another king of Judah who started out in faithfulness to the LORD, but then practiced unsanctioned worship and rejected God's warning sent through the prophets. Like the reigns of Jehoash before him and Uzziah after (2 Chron 24:1-27; 26:1-23), Amaziah's reign ends with military defeat and tragedy. The Chronicler's version closely follows the parallel in 2 Kings 14:1-22, but includes additional material here in 25:5-16.

25:2 but not with all his heart: This small alteration to 2 Kings 14:3 helps to make theological sense of the arc of Amaziah's reign—the king's eventual downfall is attributed to his half-hearted faithfulness to the Lord.

25:4 The quotation from Deuteronomy 24:16 sets out a basic tenant of the Chronicler: justice means having people suffer for their own sins. Unfortunately, this will rebound to Ahaziah's detriment, as he will suffer for his sins at the end of his life (see also Ezek 18:20). The independence of each generation in terms of payment for its own

sins isn't a strict principle throughout the book, however, as the generous burial of Ahaziah in honor of his grandfather's legacy exemplifies (2 Chron 22:9).

25:5-16 In this material, an expansion of the single verse 2 Kings 2:14, Amaziah prepares for war using conscripted troops from Judah and mercenary troops from Israel.

25:6 also hired one hundred thousand warriors from Israel: Although Amaziah already had a strong army from Judah and Benjamin consisting of "three hundred thousand select troops" (25:5), he makes a fatal mistake by relying on additional military strength and the support of the north.

25:7-8 a man of God confronted him: As is typical in Chronicles, God gives a misguided king an opportunity to change course by sending a message from the heavenly realm (see note on 2 Chron 11:2). In his short speech the man gives two reasons for not taking the southern troops into war: the LORD isn't on the side of Israel or any Ephraimite, and regardless of the number of troops, God has the ability to either help or make someone stumble. The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles contain many stories to indicate that numbers don't matter in war (e.g., 2 Chron 13:3-16; 14:8-15).

25:14 He set them up as his own gods: The worship of gods whose people have just lost a military battle is unusual.

25:17-24  
2Ki 14:8-14  
25:20  
2Ch 25:14-15  
25:25 2Ki 14:17  
25:26-28  
2Ki 14:18-20  
26:1 2Ki 14:21,  
2Ki 15:1  
26:2 2Ki 14:22

defeating the Edomites, he brought the gods of the people of Seir. He set them up as his own gods, bowed down before them, and burned incense to them. <sup>15</sup>As a result, the LORD was angry with Amaziah and sent a prophet to him.

"Why do you seek the gods of this people?" the prophet asked. "They couldn't even deliver their own people from you!"

<sup>16</sup>"Since when do you give me advice?" Amaziah interrupted. "You better quit before you end up dead!"

So the prophet stopped, but not until he said, "I know God plans to destroy you because you've done this and because you've refused to listen to my advice."

<sup>17</sup>After Judah's King Amaziah consulted with his advisors, he sent a challenge to Israel's King Joash, Jehoahaz's son and Jehu's grandson. "Come on," he said, "let's go head-to-head!"

<sup>18</sup>Israel's King Joash sent the following reply to Judah's King Amaziah: "Once upon a time, a thistle in Lebanon sent a message to a cedar: 'Give your daughter to my son as a wife.' But then a wild beast in Lebanon came along and trampled the thistle. <sup>19</sup>Do you think that because you've defeated Edom, you can arrogantly seek even more? Stay home! Why invite disaster when both you and Judah will fall?" <sup>20</sup>But Amaziah wouldn't listen, because God intended to use this to destroy them since they had sought Edom's gods. <sup>21</sup>So Israel's King Joash moved against Judah's King Amaziah and went head-to-head in battle at Beth-shemesh in Judah. <sup>22</sup>Judah was defeated by Israel, and everyone ran home. <sup>23</sup>At Beth-shemesh, Israel's King Joash captured Judah's King Amaziah, Jehoash's<sup>a</sup> son and Ahaziah's<sup>7</sup> grandson. Joash brought him to Jerusalem and broke down six hundred feet of the Jerusalem wall from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. <sup>24</sup>Joash took<sup>k</sup> all the gold and silver, and all the objects he could find in God's temple in the care of Obed-edom, and in the treasuries of the palace, along with some hostages. Then he returned to Samaria.

<sup>25</sup>Judah's King Amaziah, Jehoash's son, lived fifteen years after the death of Israel's King Joash, Jehoahaz's son. <sup>26</sup>The rest of Amaziah's deeds, from beginning to end, aren't they written in the official records of Israel's and Judah's kings? <sup>27</sup>From the time Amaziah turned away from the LORD, some people conspired against him in Jerusalem. When Amaziah fled to Lachish, they sent men after him, and they murdered him in Lachish. <sup>28</sup>They carried him back on horses and he was buried with his ancestors in David's City.<sup>a</sup>

### Uzziah rules Judah

**26** Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah,<sup>b</sup> who was 16 years old, and made him king after his father Amaziah. <sup>2</sup>He rebuilt Eloth, restoring it to Judah after King Amaziah had lain down with his ancestors.

<sup>a</sup>Or *Joash* (see also 25:25); the king's name is variously spelled in either long *Jehoash* or short *Joash* form in 2 Kgs. <sup>7</sup>See 2 Kgs 14:13; MT *Jehoahaz*. <sup>k</sup>See 2 Kgs 14:14; Heb omits *took*. <sup>6</sup>LXX; MT *Judah* <sup>b</sup>Uzziah is usually named Azariah in 2 Kgs 14:21; 15:1, 6-7.

Not only does Amaziah turn away from the Lord, he worships the gods his army has just defeated.

**25:16** *Amaziah interrupted*: The king's disdain for God's prophet is such that the prophet wasn't even allowed to complete his speech.

**25:17** *consulted with his advisors*: Ironically, the king refuses to hear the advice of God delivered through the prophet (2 Chron 25:16), turning instead to the royal counselors.

**25:18** *Once upon a time*: Joash's reply is in the form of a fable that doesn't seem exactly to respond to Amaziah's proposal of war. Instead, Joash teases Amaziah for acting presumptuously, like a thistle who proposes a marriage alliance with a cedar.

**25:20** *because God intended to use this to destroy them*: This is a strategic insertion by the Chronicler into the narrative in 2 Kings 24:8-14, and it clearly shows the author's theology.

**25:23** *and broke down six hundred feet of the Jerusalem wall*: With the battle already won, and the king and royal heirs captured, this additional destruction seems useless.

Perhaps the city mounted an additional defense, or Joash wanted simply to inflict some additional punishment.

**25:25** *after the death of Israel's King Joash*: See the notice in 2 Kings 14:15-16.

**25:27** *From the time Amaziah turned away from the Lord*: As is typical in Chronicles, continued disobedience brings punishment. When kings like Amaziah refuse to listen to the messages sent from God (2 Chron 25:16), they suffer defeat in war, physical illness, or other maladies. Here Amaziah is frightened by *some people* conspiring against him in Jerusalem. When he seeks safety in another city, they murder him in Lachish, a fortified royal city 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem in the western foothills (also called the Shephelah).

**26:1-23** The reign of Uzziah is marked with great success at the beginning. He restored the strategic Red Sea port of Eloth to Judah, achieved many military victories, tended to livestock and crops, and reigned for 52 years (26:2-15). But when he spurns proper worship behaviors, God afflicts him with a disabling skin disease (26:16-21). His reign marks the third in a row of kings who begin with

<sup>3</sup>Uzziah was 16 years old when he became king, and he ruled for fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah; she was from Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>He did what was right in the LORD's eyes, just as his father Amaziah had done. <sup>5</sup>He sought God as long as Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear<sup>c</sup> of God, was alive. And as long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success. <sup>6</sup>He marched against the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod. Then he rebuilt towns near Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines. <sup>7</sup>God helped him against the Philistines, the Arabs who inhabited Gur,<sup>d</sup> and the Meunites. <sup>8</sup>The Meunites<sup>e</sup> paid taxes to Uzziah, whose fame spread even to Egypt because he had grown so powerful. <sup>9</sup>He built towers in Jerusalem, at the Corner Gate, the Valley Gate, and at the Angle, and reinforced them. <sup>10</sup>He also built towers in the wilderness and dug many wells for his large herds in the lowlands and the plain. He had many workers who tended his farms and vineyards, because he loved the soil. <sup>11</sup>Uzziah had a standing army equipped for combat whose units went to war according to the number determined by the scribe Jeiel and Maa-seiah, an officer under the authority of Hananiah, one of the king's officials. <sup>12</sup>The grand total of family heads in charge of these courageous warriors was twenty-six hundred. <sup>13</sup>They commanded an army of three hundred seven thousand five hundred. They formed a powerful force that could support the king against the enemy. <sup>14</sup>Uzziah supplied the entire force with shields, spears, helmets, armor, bows, and sling stones. <sup>15</sup>He set up clever devices in Jerusalem on the towers and corners of the wall designed to shoot arrows and large stones. And so Uzziah's fame spread far and wide, because he had received wonderful help until he became powerful.

<sup>16</sup>But as soon as he became powerful, he grew so arrogant that he acted corruptly. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God by entering the LORD's sanctuary to burn incense upon the

<sup>c</sup>LXX; MT *visions* <sup>d</sup>Tg; MT *Gur-baal* <sup>e</sup>LXX; MT *Ammonites*

faithfulness and triumph, but ultimately meet with disaster (i.e., Jehoash and Amaziah in 2 Chron 24–25). The Chronicler's account of Uzziah follows the parallel in Kings at the beginning and end (26: 1–4 = 2 Kgs 14:21–22; 15:2–3; and most of 26:20b–23 = 2 Kgs 15:5–7). The king's name appears as the variant form of Azariah in the 2 Kings material, as well as 1 Chronicles 3:12.

26:2 *He rebuilt Eloth*: This was a strategic port on the Red Sea (also called "Elath" in Deut 2:8 and 2 Kgs 14:22), lost to the Edomites in the reign of Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:6). Given that the Chronicler often highlights the relationship between faithfulness and success, this early achievement is a good sign for the rest of his kingship.

26:3 *he ruled for fifty-two years*: Like the reference to the rebuilding of Eloth in 26:2, the narrator begins the account of his reign with signs of success. In terms of the length of reign, Uzziah is surpassed only by Manasseh (2 Chron 33:1).

26:4 *He did what was right in the LORD's eyes*: Given the previous notices of his success (rebuilding Eloth in 26:2 and reigning for 52 years in 26:3), the news of King Uzziah's faithfulness to God isn't surprising.

26:5–20a This long stretch of 15 verses isn't in Kings (see note on 2 Chron 26:1–23). Although it adds additional information about the king's success, it also provides a motivation for his affliction at the end.

26:5 *He sought God as long as Zechariah... was alive*: This initial notice about Uzziah's faithfulness during the lifetime of Zechariah is particularly ominous, and reminiscent of the presentation of his grandfather Jehoash in 2 Chronicles 24:2. For the use of the significant phrase *sought God* to describe the life of the righteous, see 2 Chronicles 14:7; 19:3; 20:3.

26:7 *the Philistines, the Arabs who inhabited Gur, and the Meunites*: After the territorial losses suffered by Jehoram

(2 Chron 21:8–10, 16–17), Uzziah now resecures the land to the west and east.

26:8 *whose fame spread even to Egypt*: Uzziah's conquests, noted in 26:7–8, result in far-reaching renown. The description, repeated in 2 Chronicles 26:15, is significant, because typically *fame* is only used to describe the achievements of David (1 Chron 14:17, a text with no parallel in the 2 Samuel source).

26:9 *He built towers in Jerusalem*: Just as Uzziah restored the territorial losses sustained by Jehoram (2 Chron 21:8–10, 16–17; 26:7–8), the king now tends to the damage inflicted by Joash of Israel during the reign of Amaziah (2 Chron 25:23).

26:10 *he loved the soil*: the only instance of this desire in the Bible.

26:11–15 Uzziah's military victories are supported by a large, well-ordered, and well-supplied army. In addition, the king himself is credited with designing innovative defensive machinery in Jerusalem.

26:15 *fame*: See note on 2 Chronicles 26:8. *he had received wonderful help*: The assertion that Uzziah's success was based on divine help frames the account of his early success (26:7, 15).

26:16–21 The Chronicler's own material continues in this next section that sets out Uzziah's pride and eventual downfall. The author returns to the Kings material at the end of 16:20 (2 Chron 26:20b–23 = 2 Kgs 15:5–7).

26:16 *But as soon as he became powerful*: This observation links back to the beginning of Uzziah's reign, when the author notes that the king encountered success "as long as he sought the LORD" (2 Chron 26:5). It is also reminiscent of the reigns of kings such as Rehoboam, who, as soon as he secured his power, "abandoned the LORD's instruction" (2 Chron 12:1). Although the Chronicler associates blessing with faithfulness throughout the narrative, the text

26:3 2Ki 15:2

26:4 2Ki 15:3

26:8b  
2Ch 26:15b

26:15  
1Ch 14:17;  
Ezr 26:9;  
Mt 4:24

26:15b  
2Ch 26:8b

26:16 Dt 32:15;  
2Ch 12:1,  
2Ch 25:19,  
2Ch 32:25

26:18 Ex 30:7-8;  
Nmi 3:10,  
Nm 16:40,  
Nm 18:7

26:20 2Ki 15:5

26:21 2Ki 15:5

26:22, 23

2Ki 15:6, 7

27:1 2Ki 15:33;

2Ch 27:8

27:2-3

2Ki 15:34-35

27:3 2Ch 33:14;

Neh 3:26-27

incense altar. <sup>17</sup>The priest Azariah, accompanied by eighty other of the LORD's courageous priests, went in after him <sup>18</sup>and confronted King Uzziah.

"You have no right, Uzziah," he said, "to burn incense to the LORD! That privilege belongs to the priests, Aaron's descendants, who have been ordained to burn incense. Get out of this holy place because you have been unfaithful! The LORD God won't honor you for this."

<sup>19</sup>Then Uzziah, who already had a censer in his hand ready to burn the incense, became angry. While he was fuming at the priests, skin disease<sup>f</sup> erupted on his forehead in the presence of the priests before the incense altar in the LORD's temple. <sup>20</sup>When Azariah the chief priest and all the other priests turned and saw the skin disease on his forehead, they rushed him out of there. Uzziah also was anxious to leave because the LORD had afflicted him.

<sup>21</sup>King Uzziah had skin disease until the day he died. He lived in a separate house,<sup>g</sup> diseased in his skin, because he was barred from the LORD's temple. His son Jotham supervised the palace administration and governed the people of the land. <sup>22</sup>The rest of Uzziah's deeds, from beginning to end, were written down by the prophet Isaiah, Amoz's son. <sup>23</sup>Uzziah died and was buried with his ancestors in a field belonging to the kings, because people said, "He had skin disease." His son Jotham succeeded him as king.

### Jotham rules

**27** Jotham was 25 years old when he became king, and he ruled for sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerushah; she was Zadok's daughter. <sup>2</sup>Jotham did what was right in the LORD's eyes, just as his father Uzziah had done. Unlike Uzziah, Jotham didn't enter the LORD's temple. But the people continued their crooked practices. <sup>3</sup>Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the LORD's temple and did extensive work on the wall of the elevated fortress. <sup>4</sup>He built towns in Judah's highlands and fortresses and towers in the wooded areas. <sup>5</sup>He fought against the king of the Ammonites and defeated the Ammonites. They paid him one hundred kikkars of silver, ten thousand kors<sup>1</sup> of wheat, and ten thousand kors of barley that year and for the next two years. <sup>6</sup>Jotham was securely established because

<sup>f</sup>The precise meaning is uncertain; traditionally *leprosy*—a term used for several different skin diseases. Also in 26:21-20, 23. <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>h</sup>Or *hillside*; Heb uncertain <sup>1</sup>One kor is equivalent to a homer and is possibly equal to fifty gallons of grain.

also points to the risk of an ill-conceived self-reliance that it may bring.

26:18 "You have no right, Uzziah": In the eyes of Azariah and the other priests, the king is violating God's Instruction by being in a place where he isn't allowed (the Lord's sanctuary), and conducting acts that he isn't allowed to do (burning incense on the incense altar). For more on the proper use of incense, see Exodus 30:7-9. *you have been unfaithful!*: The priest announces what the narrator has already asserted in 26:16. The two-part emphasis is ominous, and the reader is reminded of the evaluation of Saul: "Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD" (1 Chron 10:13). See also the use of the term in 2 Chronicles 28:19.

26:19 *skin disease erupted on his forehead*: While manifesting several signs of his own sense of entitlement (standing in the holy place, holding a censer, and fuming at the priests), the king is suddenly marked with a highly visible sign of God's displeasure and ritual uncleanness (see Lev 13:42-46).

26:20 *Uzziah also was anxious to leave*: Although previously he was ready to stand his ground even against the objections of the priests, the king now quickly aligns himself with their goal and rushes out of the temple.

26:22 *written down by the prophet Isaiah*: See also 2 Chronicles 32:32.

26:23 *in a field belonging to the kings*: Uzziah's burial may reflect an extension of the rule that unclean people with skin disease were excluded from the community until they were healed (Lev 13:42-46; 14:1-32).

27:1-9 The brief account of Jotham's 16-year reign tells

of a time of prosperity when building projects were completed and military engagements won, and thus stands in contrast to the next story of Ahaz's reign (1 Chron 28). The narrative is adopted from 2 Kings 15:32-38, elaborated with the material in 2 Chronicles 27:3b-6. Strategically, the Chronicler omits the notice that it was in Jotham's reign that Aram's King Rezin and Israel's King Pekah began their offensive against Judah (2 Kgs 15:37).

27:2 *didn't enter the LORD's temple*: For this story, see 2 Chronicles 26:16-20. *But the people continued their crooked practices*: This is the only negative note in the account of Jotham's reign.

27:3b-6 This account, added to the narrative of 2 Kings 15:32-38, highlights the king's successful building and military campaigns. Both are signs of God's blessing throughout the book of Chronicles (e.g., 2 Chron 11:5-12; 13:18).

27:5 *defeated the Ammonites*: After the territorial losses suffered by Jehoram (2 Chron 21:8-10, 16-17), Uzziah re-secured lands mainly to the west (2 Chron 26:7). Now Uzziah's son secures eastern territory.

27:6 *securely established*: In the account of Uzziah's reign, the narrator follows the assertion of the king's power with an ominous glance to the future: as soon as he became powerful, "he grew so arrogant that he acted corruptly" (2 Chron 26:16). The reign of Jotham follows a much different course because, as the narrator emphasizes *he maintained a faithful life before the LORD his God*: For other kings who became too self-reliant, see 2 Chronicles 12:1; 32:25, as well as the warning in Deuteronomy 8:11-18.

he maintained a faithful life before the LORD his God. <sup>7</sup>The rest of Jotham's deeds, including all his wars and accomplishments, are written in the official records of Israel's and Judah's kings. <sup>8</sup>He was 25 years old when he became king, and he ruled for sixteen years in Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup>Jotham lay down with his ancestors and was buried in David's City. His son Ahaz succeeded him as king.

### Ahaz rules

**28** Ahaz was 20 years old when he became king, and he ruled for sixteen years in Jerusalem. He didn't do what was right in the LORD's eyes, unlike his ancestor David. <sup>2</sup>Instead, he walked in the ways of Israel's kings, making images of the Baals <sup>3</sup>and burning incense in the Ben-hinnom Valley. He even burned his own sons alive, imitating the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. <sup>4</sup>He also sacrificed and burned incense at the shrines on every hill and beneath every shady tree. <sup>5</sup>So the LORD his God handed him over to Aram's king, who defeated him and carried off many prisoners, bringing them to Damascus. Ahaz was also handed over to Israel's king, who defeated him with a severe beating. <sup>6</sup>In Judah, Pekah, Remaliah's son, killed one hundred twenty thousand warriors in the course of a single day because they had abandoned the LORD, God of their ancestors. <sup>7</sup>An Ephraimite warrior named Zichri killed the king's son Maaseiah, the palace administrator Azrikam, and Elkanah, the king's second in command. <sup>8</sup>The Israelites took captive two hundred thousand women, boys, and girls from their Judean relatives and seized enormous amounts of plunder, which they took back to Samaria.

<sup>9</sup>One of the LORD's prophets named Oded lived in Samaria. When the army arrived there, he went to meet them and said, "Don't you see that the LORD God of your ancestors was angry with Judah and let you defeat them? But look what you've done! Your merciless slaughter of them stinks to high heaven! <sup>10</sup>And now you think you can enslave the men and women of Judah and Jerusalem? What about your own guilt before the LORD your God? <sup>11</sup>Listen to me! Send back the captives you took from your relatives, because the LORD is furious with you."

**27:7** *the official records of Israel's and Judah's kings*: a source named in other accounts throughout Chronicles (e.g., 2 Chron 28:26).

**28:1-27** In between the reigns of two good kings (Jotham in 2 Chron 28 and Hezekiah in 2 Chron 29-32), the reign of Ahaz is a story of unmitigated disaster. As the kingdom comes under threat from all sides, the king's unfaithfulness causes God to become *very angry* (28:25). The chapter is based on 2 Kings 16, following the source text most closely in 2 Chronicles 27:1-4, 26-27.

**28:1** *He didn't do what was right in the LORD's eyes*: In the Chronicler's presentation, a few kings such as David and Solomon are exemplars of faithfulness to God. Most, however, present a mixed record of faithfulness and failing (e.g., Uzziah, Amaziah, and Jehoshaphat). But Ahaz is presented as thoroughly bad, and during his reign Judah suffers sharp decline.

**28:2** *walked in the ways of Israel's kings*: For a similar description of Jehoram and Ahaziah, see 2 Chronicles 21:6; 22:3-4.

**28:3** *burned his own sons alive*: Even though the Chronicler has linked other kings with the corrupt practices of the northern kingdom before (see note on 2 Chron 28:2), this charge is new. It makes a connection between Ahaz and the worship of Molech as represented in 1 Kings 11:7; Leviticus 18:21; Jeremiah 32:35. With the change to the plural *sons* (it appears as a singular in 2 Kgs 16:3), the Chronicler intensifies Ahaz's deeds. A similar charge of child sacrifice will be levied against Manasseh in 2 Chronicles 33:6.

**28:4** *shrines on every hill and beneath every shady tree*: A similar type of religious practice was also mentioned for the reign of Jeroboam in 2 Chronicles 21:11.

**28:5-7** In a strategy aimed to strengthen their defense against Assyria, Israel and Aram formed a coalition. When Judah refused their "invitation" to join, the northern alliance attacked Jerusalem. The Bible contains several different accounts of this complicated conflict, all with their own theological and political emphases. See, for example, 2 Kings 15:37; 16:5; Isaiah 7; and Hosea 5:8-6:6. In the retelling here, the attack of the enemies is described separately (Aram in 28:5a, then Israel in 28:5b-7), but attributed to the same cause: Ahaz was "handed . . . over" by God as punishment for his sins.

**28:6** *because they had abandoned the LORD*: The high number of casualties in Judah isn't attributed to the enemies' superior might or to the sin of Ahaz but to the religious impropriety of the people themselves. Ironically, the Chronicler describes the north in similar terms in 2 Chronicles 13:11-12.

**28:9** *the LORD God of your ancestors*: Because they rejected the Davidic monarchy and the Jerusalem temple, the Chronicler understands that the north is under judgment. But the author also insists that the northern kingdom is still part of God's people. The same sense is indicated with the designation of the southern prisoners as "relatives" in 2 Chronicles 28:8, 11. See sidebar, "God's People, North or South" at 2 Chronicles 10.

**28:11** *Send back the captives you took*: The request to repatriate the prisoners of war is a dubious military strategy, but, as is typical in Chronicles, theological reasoning must be considered. Although it might strengthen their position, Oded insists that Israel's punishment of Judah was far in excess of their crime before God (2 Chron 28:9). In addition, the north must consider its own guilt before God (2 Chron 28:10).

27:7 2Ki 15:36

27:8 2Ki 15:33;  
2Ch 27:1

27:9 2Ki 15:38

28:1-4  
2Ki 16:2-4

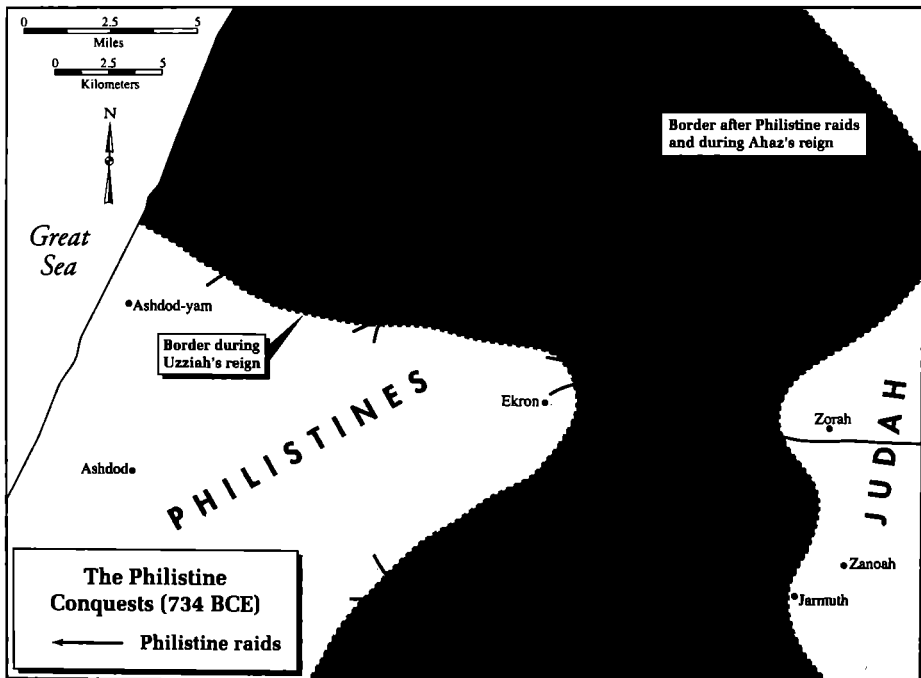
28:2 Ex 34:17;  
2Ch 33:3

28:5 2Ki 16:5;  
Is 7:1, 2

28:16 2Ki 16:7  
 28:20 2Ki 16:10  
 28:22, 23  
 2Ki 16:12, 13  
 28:24a  
 2Ki 16:17  
 28:26, 27  
 2Ki 16:19, 20

<sup>12</sup>At this, some of the Ephraimite leaders—Johanan's son Azariah, Meshillemoth's son Berechiah, Shallum's son Jehizkiah, and Hadlai's son Amasa—confronted those returning from battle. <sup>13</sup>"Don't bring the captives here," they told them. "Your plan will only add to our sin and guilt before the LORD. We're already guilty enough, and great anger is already directed at Israel." <sup>14</sup>So the warriors released the captives and brought the loot before the officers and the whole assembly. <sup>15</sup>Then people named for this task took charge of the captives and dressed everyone who was naked with items taken from the loot. They gave them clothing, sandals, food and drink, and bandaged their wounds. Everyone who couldn't walk they placed on donkeys, and they brought them to Jericho, Palm City, near their Judean relatives. Then they returned to Samaria.

<sup>16</sup>At that time King Ahaz sent for help from the king<sup>1</sup> of Assyria. <sup>17</sup>Once again, the Edomites had invaded Judah, defeating Judah and carrying off captives. <sup>18</sup>The Philistines had raided the towns in the lowlands and the arid southern plain of Judah, capturing Bethshemesh, Aijalon, and Gederoth, along with Soco and its surrounding villages, Timnah and its surrounding villages, and Gimzo and its surrounding villages, and occupying all of these cities. <sup>19</sup>The LORD was humiliating Judah on account of Israel's King Ahaz, because he had exercised no restraint in Judah and had been utterly unfaithful to the LORD. <sup>20</sup>Assyria's King Tiglath-pileser<sup>2</sup> came to Ahaz, but he brought trouble, not support. <sup>21</sup>Even though Ahaz



<sup>1</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT kings <sup>2</sup>MT Tilgath-pileser

28:13-15 *Don't bring the captives here:* Remarkably, Oded's argument convinces the Ephraimite leaders, and the prisoners are returned to the south.

28:16-21 In a time of great crisis, when Judah is being invaded by Edom from the southeast (28:17) and the Philistines from the west (28:18), Ahaz appeals for help from the strongest power currently on the world stage: Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria.

28:18 *Beth-shemesh, Aijalon:* Considered together, this collection of sites represents a considerable amount of

territory, from *Gimzo* in the north to *Soco* in the south. In addition, several of the sites are particularly strategic: *Timnah* guards the valley of *Sorek*, and *Soco* is in the *Elah* valley.

28:19 *utterly unfaithful:* Ahaz's great defeat is attributed to the same cause as the earlier downfalls of Saul and Uzziah: "unfaithfulness" (1 Chron 10:13; 2 Chron 26:16, 18; and see 2 Chron 28:22; 29:19).

28:21 *it was of no help:* Although appealing to the ruler of Assyria may have represented sound strategy (2 Chron



took items from the LORD's temple, the royal palace, and the officials to buy off the king of Assyria, it was of no help.

<sup>22</sup>It was during this troubled time that King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the LORD <sup>23</sup>by sacrificing to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him.

"Since the gods of Aram's kings are helping them," he said, "I'll sacrifice to them too, so that they will help me."

But they became the ruin of both him and all Israel. <sup>24</sup>Ahaz gathered the objects from God's temple, cut them up, shut the doors of the LORD's temple, and made himself altars on every corner in Jerusalem. <sup>25</sup>He made shrines in all the towns of Judah for burning incense to other gods. This made the LORD, the God of his ancestors, very angry.

<sup>26</sup>The rest of Ahaz's deeds, from beginning to end, are written in the official records of Israel's and Judah's kings. <sup>27</sup>Ahaz lay down with his ancestors and was buried in the city, in Jerusalem, but not in the royal cemetery of Israel's kings. His son Hezekiah succeeded him as king.

### Hezekiah rules

**29** Hezekiah became king when he was 25 years old, and he ruled for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah; she was Zechariah's daughter. <sup>2</sup>He did what was right in the LORD's eyes, just as his ancestor David had done. <sup>3</sup>In the very first year of his rule, during the first month, Hezekiah reopened the doors of the LORD's temple, having repaired them. <sup>4</sup>Then he brought in the priests and Levites and assembled them in the eastern square.

<sup>5</sup>"Listen to me, you Levites!" he said. "Make yourselves holy so you can make holy the temple of the LORD God of your ancestors by removing from the sanctuary any impure thing. <sup>6</sup>Our ancestors were unfaithful and did what was evil in the LORD our God's eyes. They abandoned him, they ignored the LORD's dwelling, and they defied him. <sup>7</sup>They even closed the doors of the entrance hall, snuffed out the lamps, and stopped burning incense and offering entirely burned offerings in the sanctuary of the God of Israel. <sup>8</sup>This angered the LORD so much that he made Judah and Jerusalem an object of terror and horror, something people hiss at, as you can see with your own eyes. <sup>9</sup>That's why our ancestors died violent deaths, while our sons, daughters, and wives were taken captive. <sup>10</sup>But now I intend to make a covenant with the LORD, Israel's God, so God will no longer be angry with us. <sup>11</sup>Don't be careless, my sons! The LORD has chosen you to stand in his presence to serve him, so that you can be his servants and burn incense to him."

28:16), the Chronicler has repeatedly emphasized that such "help" must come from God alone (1 Chron 5:20; 2 Chron 14:11; 18:31; 25:8; 26:7; 32:8). It comes as no great surprise, then, to read that Ahaz's strategy didn't work.

28:23-25 *Since the gods of Aram's kings are helping them:* In a time of national disaster, Ahaz changes from his diplomatic strategy of seeking support from Assyria to a religious strategy that seeks support from the *gods of Damascus*. Yet his zeal is misplaced. In his frantic destruction of the Jerusalem temple and simultaneous institution of incense altars for the worship of *other gods* throughout Judah, Ahaz ends his reign by spurning his only chance for true help and making God *very angry* (28:25).

28:27 *but not in the royal cemetery of Israel's kings:* In addition to military defeat and loss of territory, Ahaz's sins are punished by keeping his body out of the royal cemetery. See the similar fate of Jehoram, Jehoash, and Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 21:20; 24:25; 26:23.

29:1-32:33 The book of Chronicles devotes more space to describing Hezekiah's reign over Judah—four chapters—than any other king, with the exception of David and Solomon. The relative length signals his significance to the author as the king who most closely measured up to the nation's two greatest kings. With the exception of the deletion of 2 Kings 18:9-12, the Chronicler reuses much of the material in the Kings source (2 Kgs 18-20). The

author also makes significant additions in 2 Chronicles 29:3-30:27; 31:2-19; 32:27-30.

29:2 *He did what was right . . . just as his ancestor David had done:* At the very beginning of the account, the narrator sets out two major themes that animate the presentation of Hezekiah: The king stands in marked contrast to his father Ahaz, and reigns instead like another David or Solomon. After the fall of the north during Ahaz's reign (not mentioned in 2 Chron 28), the Davidic dynasty has no rival reigning, and Hezekiah is able to reassemble the nation in worship at Jerusalem.

29:3-36 *reopened the doors of the Lord's temple:* Hezekiah's physical act in 29:3 announces the literary focus of the section: the restoration of the temple. In reopening the doors he effectively reverses his father's acts of destruction and desecration (2 Chron 28:24; cf. 29:7, 19). See sidebar, "Acceptable Temple Worship."

29:5-11 *Make yourselves holy:* Hezekiah instructs the Levites to undo the desecration brought on in the days of Ahaz (2 Chron 28:24-25).

29:6-9 *Our ancestors were unfaithful:* After his initial command to purify the temple, Hezekiah motivates the follow through with a recitation of past history. First he tells of the unfaithfulness of the past generation (29:6-7), and God's angry response (29:8-9).

29:10 *But now:* Having reminded the Levites of the sins

29:1 2Ki 18:1-2;  
1Ch 3:13

29:2 2Ki 18:3

29:15 1Ch 23:28;  
2Ch 29:5,  
2Ch 30:12

29:16 2Sa 15:23;  
1Ki 15:13;  
2Ki 23:6; In 18:1

29:21 Lv 4:3;  
Nu 8:19;  
Nm 18:1;

2Ch 26:18;  
Ezr 8:35

29:22 Lv 4:18  
29:23 Lv 4:15;  
Lv 4:24

29:24 Lv 4:26;  
Nm 15:25;  
1Ch 6:49

29:25 2Sa 24:11;  
1Ch 25:1

29:27 1Sa 18:6;  
2Sa 6:5;  
1Ch 22:6;

2Ch 23:18;  
Ezr 3:10

<sup>12</sup>Then the following Levites got up:

from the descendants of the Kohathites: Mahath, Amasai's son, and Joel, Azariah's son;  
from the descendants of Merari: Kish, Abdi's son, and Azariah, Jehallelel's son;  
from the Gershonites: Joah, Zimmah's son, and Eden, Joah's son;

<sup>13</sup>from the descendants of Elizaphan: Shimri and Jeuel;

from the descendants of Asaph: Zechariah and Mattaniah;

<sup>14</sup>from the descendants of Heman: Jehuel and Shimei;

and from the descendants of Jeduthun: Shemaiah and Uzziel.

<sup>15</sup>These men gathered their relatives, made themselves holy, and went in to purify the LORD's temple by obeying the king's command as the LORD had told him. <sup>16</sup>The priests went in to purify the inner portion of the LORD's temple. They brought out to the courtyard of the LORD's temple all the impurities they discovered inside. Then the Levites took them out to the Kidron Valley. <sup>17</sup>They began to make things holy on the first day of the first month.<sup>1</sup> On the eighth day of the month they reached the LORD's entrance hall. They made holy the LORD's temple for eight days, finishing on the sixteenth day of the first month.

<sup>18</sup>Then they went before King Hezekiah. "We have purified the LORD's entire temple," they said, "and the altar for the entirely burned offering together with all its equipment, and the table for the stacks of bread together with all its equipment. <sup>19</sup>We have also restored and made holy all the items King Ahaz threw out during his rule in his unfaithfulness. They are now before the LORD's altar."

### *Hezekiah rededicates the temple*

<sup>20</sup>Early the next morning Hezekiah gathered the city leaders and went to the LORD's temple. <sup>21</sup>They brought seven bulls, seven rams, and seven lambs, along with seven male goats, for a purification offering on behalf of the kingdom, the sanctuary, and Judah. Hezekiah ordered the priests, Aaron's sons, to offer them up on the LORD's altar. <sup>22</sup>When they slaughtered the bulls, the priests took the blood and splashed it against the altar. Next they slaughtered the rams and splashed their blood against the altar, and also slaughtered the lambs, splashing their blood against the altar as well. <sup>23</sup>Finally, they brought the goats for the purification offering before the king and the assembly. After laying their hands on them, <sup>24</sup>the priests slaughtered them and smeared the blood on the altar as a purification offering to take away the sin of all Israel, because the king had specifically ordered that the entirely burned sacrifice and the purification offering should be on behalf of all Israel. <sup>25</sup>Hezekiah had the Levites stand in the LORD's temple with cymbals, harps, and zithers, just as the LORD had ordered through David, the king's seer Gad, and the prophet Nathan. <sup>26</sup>While the Levites took their places holding David's instruments, and the priests their trumpets, <sup>27</sup>Hezekiah ordered the entirely burned offering to be offered up on the altar. As they began to offer the entirely burned offering, the LORD's song also began, accompanied by the trumpets and the other instruments of Israel's King David. <sup>28</sup>The whole congregation worshipped with singing choirs and blaring trumpets until the end of the entirely burned offering. <sup>29</sup>After the entirely burned offering was complete, the king and all who were with

<sup>1</sup>March–April, Nisan

and punishments suffered by the ancestors, Hezekiah sets out a new course of action: making a *covenant with the LORD* that he hopes will assuage God's anger. For other covenants, see 2 Chronicles 15:12, 23:16; 34:31.

**29:12–14** Then the following Levites got up: In response to Hezekiah's speech (2 Chron 29:5–11), the Levites act. The list of Levites represents the main branches of their tribe, along with the choral families (see 1 Chron 15:5–9).

**29:15–19** made themselves holy: The theme of holiness announced at the beginning of Hezekiah's speech (29:5) is emphasized by the repeated use of the verbs "to make holy" and "to purify" throughout the description of the priest's and Levite's response.

**29:19** all the items King Ahaz threw out: See 2 Chronicles 28:24; 29:7; 2 Kings 16:14–15.

**29:20–30** After the eight-day purification of the temple

area, the king and the leaders gather at the temple to reinstitute the sacrificial practices and bring animals for a purification offering on behalf of the kingdom, the sanctuary, and Judah.

**29:22** In the first part of the rite, bulls, rams, and lambs are slaughtered and the blood splashed on the altar to purify it. For more on this ritual, see Leviticus 1:3–13.

**29:23** After laying their hands on them: This is an act of self-identification with the victim.

**29:24** The goats are then slaughtered, with the blood smeared on the altar to take away the sin of all Israel. For more on this ritual, see Leviticus 4:1–5:13.

**29:25–30** Then the animals are offered up as an entirely burned offering upon the altar to the sound of joyous music. Throughout this section, the emphasis on Hezekiah's faithful reconstruction of David's plans for Heze-

30:1 Gn 41:52;  
Ex 12:3;  
Josh 5:10;  
2Ki 18:1,  
2Ki 20:1

**Acceptable Temple Worship** In the extended account of Hezekiah's reign, the Chronicler includes many details concerning the ancient practice of religion in Judah, engaged in by both the priests and laypeople. Central to the author's portrayal of religious practice is the role of the temple. This was the unique place God chose as "my house of sacrifice," and where God placed the divine name "forever" (2 Chron 7:12, 16). Given this special relationship between God and the temple, it follows that the Chronicler places particular emphasis on Jerusalem as a place for worship. In Jerusalem the priests and Levites offer incense and entirely burned sacrifices (2 Chron 29:7, 11, 22-24, 27, 31-35; 30:16-17; 31:2), and the nation gathers to celebrate the festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread (2 Chron 30:6-9, 13). The worship itself was marked by Levites making music (2 Chron 29:25-28; 30:21) and blessing the people (2 Chron 30:27). Both the clergy and the laypeople "bow" in worship (2 Chron 29:29-30). In addition, the author makes note of several of the prayers of the king, including his intercessions for the gathered community, the safety of the nation under military threat, and his own sickness (2 Chron 30:18; 32:20, 24). Finally, the account also mentions several practices in which the nation engaged, but that the author considered illegitimate, including the abandonment of the temple (2 Chron 29:6), the use of alternative altars and incense altars in Jerusalem (2 Chron 30:14; 32:12), as well as the use of sacred pillars, poles, shrines, and altars throughout the countryside (2 Chron 31:1).

him bowed down in worship. <sup>30</sup>Then King Hezekiah and the leaders ordered the Levites to praise the LORD by using the words of David and the seer Asaph. They did so joyously; then they bowed down in worship too.

<sup>31</sup>"Now that you have dedicated yourselves to the LORD," King Hezekiah told them, "bring sacrificial thank offerings to the LORD's temple." So the assembly brought sacrificial thank offerings, with some people volunteering to provide entirely burned offerings. <sup>32</sup>All in all, the congregation brought seventy bulls, a hundred rams, and two hundred lambs as entirely burned offerings for the LORD. <sup>33</sup>as well as six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep as holy offerings. <sup>34</sup>Unfortunately, there weren't enough priests to skin all these entirely burned offerings. So their relatives the Levites (who had been more conscientious about preparing themselves than the priests) stepped in and helped them until the work was done or additional priests had made themselves holy. <sup>35</sup>In addition to the wealth of entirely burned offerings, there was the fat of the well-being sacrifices and drink offerings accompanying the entirely burned offerings. In this way, the service of the LORD's temple was restored, <sup>36</sup>and Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had done for them, since it had happened so quickly.

### Hezekiah's Passover

**30** Then Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh as well, inviting them to the LORD's temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover of the LORD God of Israel. <sup>2</sup>The king, his officials, and the entire Jerusalem congregation had decided to celebrate Passover in the second month.<sup>m</sup> <sup>3</sup>They had been unable to celebrate it at the usual time because the priests had failed to make themselves holy in

<sup>m</sup>April–May, Iyar

music provides additional links between the two kings (1 Chron 15:16-21; 23:5; 25:1-7; 2 Chron 7:6; see sidebar, "Worship and Music" at 2 Chron 5).

**29:31-36** bring sacrificial thank offerings: In the final act of worship, the people present voluntary offerings as an expression of their personal devotion. Their enthusiastic generosity is reminiscent of their voluntary contributions when Moses asked the community to donate to the sacred dwelling and when David asked for contributions for the temple (Exod 25:1-9; 35:4-29; 1 Chron 29:5-9).

**30:1-31:1** The celebration of Passover in Jerusalem by the northern and southern tribes is a continuation of Hezekiah's restoration of the temple worship rituals. See sidebar, "God's People, North or South" at 2 Chronicles 10. The chapter breaks into two halves: 30:1-14 describes the preparation for the event, including the decision to celebrate it, and the invitation throughout Israel and

Judah; and 30:15-27 relates the joyous event itself. None of this material is included in the account about Hezekiah in Kings.

**30:1** sent word to all Israel and Judah: The narrative repeatedly emphasizes the inclusion of the northern tribes along with the south. At this point in history, the northern kingdom had fallen to the Assyrian invaders in 722 BCE, and so the vision of both kingdoms joined together in worship is especially significant. The fall of the north is alluded to in 2 Chronicles 30:6 (see the note there).

**30:3** at the usual time: The traditions surrounding the celebration of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread show some amount of change and development within the Pentateuch. The description in 2 Chronicles 30 best fits the rulings about the date and location given in Leviticus 23:5-8 and Deuteronomy 16:1-8, where the celebrations are to take place at the central sanctuary instead of in the

30:9 Ex 34:6-7;  
Dt 30:2; Is 55:7;  
Mi 7:18  
30:12 Jer 32:39;  
Phi 2:13

sufficient numbers, and the people hadn't gathered at Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>Since the plan seemed good to the king and the entire congregation, <sup>5</sup>they made arrangements to circulate an announcement throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba to Dan, to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover of the LORD God of Israel, because they hadn't often kept it as written. <sup>6</sup>Under the authority of the king, runners took letters from the king and his officials throughout all Israel and Judah, which read:

People of Israel! Return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so that he may return to those of you who remain, who have escaped capture by the Assyrian kings. <sup>7</sup>Don't be like your ancestors and relatives, who were unfaithful to the LORD, the God of their ancestors, so that he made them an object of horror as you can see for yourselves. <sup>8</sup>So don't be stubborn like your ancestors. Surrender to the LORD! Come to God's sanctuary, which he has made holy forever, and serve the LORD your God so that he won't be angry with you any longer. <sup>9</sup>When you return to the LORD, your relatives and your children will receive mercy from their captors and be allowed to return to this land. The LORD your God is merciful and compassionate. He won't withdraw his presence from you if you return to him.

<sup>10</sup>So the runners went from town to town in Ephraim and Manasseh, all the way to Zebulun. But they were laughed at and made fun of. <sup>11</sup>Even so, some people from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun were submissive and came to Jerusalem. <sup>12</sup>Moreover, God's power was at work in Judah, unifying them to do what the king and his officials had ordered by the LORD's command.

<sup>13</sup>A huge crowd gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the second month. A very large congregation gathered. <sup>14</sup>First, they removed the altars in Jerusalem, and hauled off the incense altars and dumped them in the Kidron Valley. <sup>15</sup>They slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the second month. Ashamed of themselves, the priests and the Levites made themselves holy and brought entirely burned offerings to the LORD's temple. <sup>16</sup>They now took their places as laid out in the instruction from Moses the man of God, and the priests splashed the blood they received from the Levites against the altar. <sup>17</sup>Since many in the congregation hadn't made themselves holy, the Levites slaughtered the Passover lambs, making them holy to the LORD for all who weren't

home (as in Exod 12:1-27). Also, Numbers 9:1-12 allows for a delay in the celebration until the second month if the people are away on a journey or ritually impure.

30:5 *from Beer-sheba to Dan*: Again the narrative emphasizes the inclusion of all Israel in the celebration. Here the two cities represent the traditional southern and northern borders of Israel at the nation's maximum geographic reach (1 Chron 21:2). For more, see note on 2 Chronicles 30:1.

30:6b-10 Hezekiah's letter emphasizes the need for turning away from sin and the certainty of divine forgiveness: *Return to the LORD . . . so that he may return to . . . you* (30:6, 9). Given the occasion, the call to return implies more than a spiritual attitude—the king is calling for a physical journey to Jerusalem.

30:6 *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel*: The last term deviates from the more typical biblical expression, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (see, e.g., Exod 3:6, 15). Referring to the patriarch "Jacob" as "Israel" is typical for the Chronicler and emphasizes the unity of the north and south through their shared ancestor. *who have escaped capture by the Assyrian kings*: The northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians in 722 BCE. Although the Chronicler doesn't provide details of this event, more information is given in 2 Kings 15:29; 18:9-12.

30:8 *Come to God's sanctuary*: In the actual invitation to celebrate Passover, the letter emphasizes the geographic connotations of returning to God: The people must refrain from sin and must worship in Jerusalem.

30:11 *some people from Asher*: Later in the account,

Issachar is also included in the list of participants (2 Chron 30:18), indicating a sizable inclusion of the northern tribes.

30:12 *God's power was at work in Judah, unifying them*: In divine human relations, the Chronicler often shows how God will respond favorably to the right human behavior: "Return to the LORD . . . so that he may return to . . . you" (30:6, 9). Yet the author also asserts that God can intervene and encourage faithfulness. See also 1 Chronicles 22:12; and note on 1 Chronicles 29:18-19.

30:14 *removed the altars*: The people's purification of the city, desecrated when Ahaz installed altars "on every corner" (2 Chron 28:24-25), parallels the earlier purification of the temple area by the priests and Levites (2 Chron 29:5-19).

30:16 *splashed the blood . . . against the altar*: For more on this act of the priests, see Leviticus 1:5; 11; 3:2, 8, 13.

30:17 *the Levites slaughtered the Passover lambs*: According to the instruction in Exodus 12:6, it is the laity who are to slaughter the Passover lamb. But here, because not enough people had sanctified themselves, the Levites take on this act as an emergency measure. The Chronicler clearly indicates that this is a unique predicament, much like when the Levites skinned the sacrificial animals in 2 Chronicles 29:34 when there weren't enough priests. But by 2 Chronicles 35:6, Josiah instructs the Levites to slaughter the Passover lambs in a nonemergency situation and includes no explanatory comment, a situation which may indicate that the Chronicler is claiming new roles for the Levites in the practice of sacrifice.

ceremonially clean. <sup>16</sup>This included most of those who had come from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun—people who hadn't purified themselves and so hadn't eaten the Passover meal in the prescribed way. But Hezekiah prayed for them: "May the good LORD forgive <sup>19</sup>everyone who has decided to seek the true God, the LORD, the God of their ancestors, even though they aren't ceremonially clean by sanctuary standards." <sup>20</sup>The LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people. <sup>21</sup>So the Israelites in Jerusalem joyfully celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days, with the Levites and the priests praising the LORD every day, accompanied by the LORD's mighty instruments. <sup>22</sup>Hezekiah congratulated all the Levites who had performed so skillfully for the LORD. They feasted throughout the seven days of the festival, sacrificing well-being offerings and praising the LORD, the God of their ancestors.

<sup>23</sup>Then the whole congregation agreed to celebrate another seven days, which they joyfully did. <sup>24</sup>Judah's King Hezekiah contributed one thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep for the congregation, while the officials provided another thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep, and great numbers of priests made themselves holy. <sup>25</sup>Then the whole congregation of Judah rejoiced, as did the priests and the Levites, the whole congregation from Israel, the immigrants who had come from the land of Israel, and those who lived in Judah. <sup>26</sup>There was great joy in Jerusalem. Nothing like this had taken place in Jerusalem since the days of Israel's King Solomon, David's son. <sup>27</sup>Then the levitical priests blessed the people, and their voice was heard when their prayer reached God's holy dwelling in heaven.

**31** When all of these things were finished, all of the Israelites who were present went out to the cities of Judah, smashed the sacred pillars, cut down the sacred poles,<sup>a</sup> and completely destroyed the shrines and altars throughout Judah as well as Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Then all the Israelites returned to their individual homes in their own cities.

### Hezekiah's reform

<sup>1</sup>Hezekiah reappointed the priests and the Levites, each to their divisions and their tasks, to make entirely burned offerings and well-being sacrifices, to serve, to give thanks, and to offer praise in the gates of the LORD's camp. <sup>2</sup>As his portion, the king personally contributed the entirely burned offerings for the morning and evening sacrifices, as well as the entirely burned offerings for the Sabbaths, new moons, and festivals, as written in the LORD's instruction. <sup>3</sup>He ordered the people living in Jerusalem to provide the required portion for the priests and the Levites so they could devote themselves to the LORD's instruction. <sup>4</sup>As soon as the order was issued, the Israelites generously gave the best of their grain, new wine, oil, honey, and all their crops—a tenth of everything, a huge amount. <sup>5</sup>The people of Israel and Judah, living in the cities of Judah, also brought in a tenth of their herds and flocks and a tenth of the items that had been dedicated to the LORD their God, stacking it up in piles. <sup>6</sup>They began stacking up the piles in the third month<sup>b</sup> and finished them in the seventh.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>7</sup>When Hezekiah and the officials saw the piles, they blessed the LORD and his people Israel. <sup>8</sup>When Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the piles, <sup>9</sup>the chief priest Azariah, who was from Zadok's family, answered, "Ever since the people started bringing

<sup>a</sup>Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah <sup>b</sup>May–June, Sivan <sup>c</sup>September–October, Tishrei

30:18–20 *even though they aren't ceremonially clean by sanctuary standards*: The rule for uncleanness is set out in Leviticus 7:19–21: Any unclean person who eats the sacrifice will be "cut off from their people." From a theological perspective, Hezekiah's plea involves great risk, as the tragic story of Uzzah indicates (1 Chron 13:9–10). But over against ritual protocol and historical precedent, God relented and "healed" the gathered community in order to avert deadly threat.

30:26 *since the days of Israel's King Solomon*: The spontaneous enthusiasm that lengthened the celebration by an additional seven days (2 Chron 30:23), the great number of sacrifices presented by the king and the leaders (30:24), along with the great joy that permeated the festivities, is reminiscent of Solomon's temple dedication (2 Chron 7:8–10).

31:2–21 *After the death of Ahaz, Hezekiah implemented a series of reforms to undo the damage to the temple that*

his father had done (2 Chron 28:4). In 2 Chronicles 31, the king's temple restoration continues with reforms to ensure the funding of temple worship and personnel with the offerings of the king and the people.

31:3–4 *the king personally contributed the entirely burned offerings*: In the Chronicler's schema, the king provides the sacrifices for the temple rituals, while the people support the priests and Levites with *the required portion*. For a similar provision by the national leader, see 2 Chronicles 8:12–13; Ezekiel 45:17; Ezra 6:9–10. In Nehemiah 10:32–39, however, the laity pledge to provide for various offerings. See also Numbers 18:8–32.

31:7 *in the third month... in the seventh*: The ingathering of offerings relates to the agricultural calendar and the religious festivals. The Harvest Festival is celebrated in the third month at the beginning of the harvest, during which portions of the new grain are offered. In the seventh month, the community celebrates the harvest of grapes

30:21 Ex 12:15,  
Ex 13:6,  
2Ch 30:26;  
Ezr 6:22;  
Neh 8:17  
30:26 1Ki 8:1;  
2Ki 21:7;  
2Ch 7:8,  
2Ch 7:10  
31:1 2Ki 18:4  
31:3 Nm 10:10,  
Nm 28:11,  
Nm 29:40;  
1Ch 23:31  
31:4 Nm 18:8;  
Neh 13:10  
31:5 Nm 18:12,  
Nm 18:21,  
Nm 18:24;  
Dt 18:4;  
Neh 12:44,  
Neh 13:12  
31:6 Lv 27:30;  
Dt 14:28  
31:10 Ex 12:16,  
Ex 23:22;  
Lv 26:4; Dt 4:40;  
Mal 3:10

31:14 Nm 28:39;  
Dt 12:6;  
Ezr 3:5, Ezr 7:16;  
Ps 119:108

31:19 Nm 35:2;  
2Ch 31:12

31:21 Dt 29:9;  
2Ki 18:6;  
1Ch 22:13;  
2Ch 26:5

32:1 2Ki 18:13;  
Is 36:1, Is 37:1

contributions to the LORD's temple we've had enough to eat with plenty to spare. The LORD has definitely blessed his people! There's a lot left over."

<sup>11</sup>So Hezekiah ordered them to prepare storerooms in the LORD's temple. When they finished preparing them, <sup>12</sup>the priests conscientiously brought in the contributions, the tenth-part gifts, and the dedicated things. Conaniah, a Levite, was put in charge, assisted by his brother Shimei, <sup>13</sup>while Jehiel, Azariah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah served as supervisors under them, as appointed by King Hezekiah and Azariah the official in charge of God's temple. <sup>14</sup>The Levite Kore, Imnah's son, who was keeper of the east gate, was in charge of the spontaneous gifts to God. He was responsible for distributing the contribution reserved for the LORD and the dedicated gifts. <sup>15</sup>Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah faithfully assisted him regarding<sup>a</sup> the priests by distributing the portions to their relatives, old and young alike, by divisions. <sup>16</sup>Additionally, they also distributed daily rations to those males, registered by genealogy, three years old and older, all who entered the LORD's temple to carry out their daily duties as their divisions required. <sup>17</sup>They also distributed to those priests registered by their families, and to Levites 20 years of age and older according to their divisional responsibilities. <sup>18</sup>The official genealogy included all their small children, their wives, their sons, and their daughters—the entire congregation—for they had faithfully made themselves holy. <sup>19</sup>As for Aaron's descendants, the priests who lived in the outskirts of the cities, men were assigned to distribute portions to every male among the priests and to every Levite listed in the genealogical records. <sup>20</sup>This is what Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, doing what the LORD his God considered good, right, and true. <sup>21</sup>Everything that Hezekiah began to do for the service of God's temple, whether by the Instruction or the commands, in order to seek his God, he did successfully and with all his heart.

### *Sennacherib's invasion*

**32** After these things and these faithful acts, Assyria's King Sennacherib invaded Judah and attacked its fortified cities, intending to capture them. <sup>2</sup>When Hezekiah realized that Sennacherib also planned on fighting Jerusalem, <sup>3</sup>he consulted with his officials and soldiers about stopping up the springs outside the city, and they supported him. <sup>4</sup>A large force gathered to stop up all the springs and the streams that flowed through the land. "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?" they asked. <sup>5</sup>Hezekiah vigorously rebuilt all the broken sections of the wall, erected towers, constructed another wall

<sup>a</sup>Or with the assistance of cf LXX; MT in the cities of

and fruits with a Festival of Gathering (also called the Festival of Booths), and offers a portion of the crop to God (Exod 23:16; Lev 23:15-21, 33-36).

31:11-13 *ordered them to prepare storerooms*: The enthusiastic response to Hezekiah's reform of the offering system (2 Chron 31:2-10) necessitates a supplementary reform of building space and personnel. See sidebar, "Acceptable Temple Worship" at 2 Chronicles 29.

31:13 *as appointed by King Hezekiah*: The king's arrangement of Levites to oversee the temple storerooms is reminiscent of the earlier organization of clerical duties set up by David and implemented by Solomon (1 Chron 16:37-42; 23:5; 28:21; 2 Chron 8:14).

31:14 *keeper of the east gate*: See 1 Chronicles 26:14, 17.

31:16 *three years old and older*: At the traditional age of weaning, the provisions for boys in priestly families are supplemented by the larger community.

31:20-21 For the evaluation of Hezekiah's reign, the Chronicler moves to 2 Kings 18:5-6. The repetition of "did" and "do" throughout these verses gestures toward the king's many accomplishments recounted in 2 Chronicles 29-31.

32:1-23 The Chronicler's version of the invasion of Sennacherib, king of the Assyrians, is a highly reworked version of 2 Kings 18:13-20:21 (see also Isa 36-39). Consistently, the author portrays Hezekiah in a good light by

omitting references to the king's questionable behavior (i.e., plundering the temple in the hopes of appeasing the Assyrians; 2 Kgs 18:13-16) and adding passages that showcase his abilities (i.e., strategically preparing for the siege in 32:3-8).

32:1 *After . . . these faithful acts*: With this small addition reminding the reader of Hezekiah's prior obedience to God, the Chronicler strategically frames the account of the Assyrian invasion not as a punishment for sin but as a test by which the king can exhibit even more faithfulness. *intending to capture them*: According to 2 Kings 18:13 and Sennacherib's own inscriptions, the Assyrians conquered all of the fortified cities in Judah. The Chronicler's subtle presentation here blunts an explicit parallel with Shishak's capture of these cities during Rehoboam's reign (2 Chron 12:2-4).

32:3 *stopping up the springs*: Assuming that the Assyrian forces would lay siege to the city, Hezekiah's defense plan includes obstructing the enemy's water supply. This act is somewhat related to 2 Chronicles 32:30, where Hezekiah supplies water to Jerusalem.

32:5 *constructed another wall outside the first*: In addition to other military defenses, Hezekiah also creates a new wall. See Isaiah 22:11 for a mention of two walls around Jerusalem.

outside the first, reinforced the terrace of David's City, and made a large supply of weapons and shields. <sup>6</sup>He appointed military officers over the troops, assembled them in the square of the city gate, and spoke these words of encouragement: <sup>7</sup>"Be brave and be strong! Don't let the king of Assyria and all those warriors he brings with him scare you or cause you dismay, because our forces are greater than his." <sup>8</sup>All he has is human strength, but we have the LORD our God, who will help us fight our battles!"

The troops trusted Judah's King Hezekiah.

<sup>9</sup>After this Assyria's King Sennacherib, who was attacking Lachish with all his forces, sent his servants to Jerusalem with the following message for Judah's King Hezekiah and all the people of Judah who were in Jerusalem:

<sup>10</sup>This is what Assyria's King Sennacherib says: What makes you so confident that you stay put in Jerusalem while it is being attacked? <sup>11</sup>Obviously, Hezekiah has fooled you into surrendering yourselves to death by hunger and thirst when he says, "The LORD our God will rescue us from Assyria's king." <sup>12</sup>Isn't this the same Hezekiah who got rid of his shrines and altars, and then demanded of Judah and Jerusalem, "You must worship and burn incense before only one altar"? <sup>13</sup>Don't you know what I and my predecessors have done to the people of other nations? Were any of the gods of these other nations able to rescue their lands from my power? <sup>14</sup>Which one of any of the gods of these nations that my predecessors destroyed was able to rescue them from my power? So why should your god be able to rescue you from my power? <sup>15</sup>Don't let Hezekiah seduce you like fools. Don't believe him! No god of any other nation or kingdom has been able to rescue their people from me or from my predecessors. No, your gods won't rescue you from my power.

<sup>16</sup>The Assyrian king's servants continued to make fun of the LORD God and his servant Hezekiah. <sup>17</sup>He wrote other letters insulting the LORD God of Israel, defying him by saying, "Just as the gods of the nations in other countries couldn't rescue their people from my power, Hezekiah's god won't be able to rescue his people from my power." <sup>18</sup>Then they shouted loudly in Hebrew<sup>a</sup> at the people of Jerusalem gathered on the wall, in an attempt to frighten and demoralize them, in order to capture the city. <sup>19</sup>They spoke about the God of Jerusalem as though he were the work of human hands, like the gods of the other peoples of the earth. <sup>20</sup>King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, Amoz's son, prayed about this, crying out to heaven. <sup>21</sup>Then the LORD sent a messenger who destroyed every warrior, leader, and officer in the camp of the Assyrian king. When Sennacherib went home in disgrace, he entered the temple of his god, and his own sons killed him with a sword. <sup>22</sup>This is how the LORD rescued Hezekiah and the citizens of Jerusalem from the power of Assyria's King Sennacherib, and all others, giving them rest<sup>b</sup> on all sides. <sup>23</sup>Many people brought offerings to the LORD in Jerusalem and costly gifts to Judah's King Hezekiah, who was highly regarded by all the nations from then on.

### Hezekiah's illness

<sup>24</sup>Around that same time, Hezekiah became deathly ill and prayed to the LORD, who answered him with a miraculous sign. <sup>25</sup>But Hezekiah was too proud to respond appropriately to the kindness he had received, and he, along with Judah and Jerusalem, experienced anger.

<sup>a</sup>Or there is greater power with us than with him <sup>b</sup>Or the language of Judah <sup>c</sup>LXX; MT he led them

**32:7-8 Be brave and be strong!** In his speech to the military, Hezekiah echoes the encouraging speeches of David and Solomon (1 Chron 22:13), the LORD our God, who will help us fight our battles!: The Chronicler emphasizes that the king's military strategy is combined with a firm trust in God.

**32:9 Lachish:** This was a royal fortified city 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem, so the danger was close at hand.

**32:10-19** In the presentation of Assyria's attempts to have Jerusalem surrender (a compression of 2 Kgs 18:17-35), the Chronicler emphasizes the enemy's faith in the historical precedent of subduing other nations and their gods: *No god of any other nation or kingdom has been able to rescue their people from me or my predecessors* (32:15).

**32:20 Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, Amoz's son, prayed about this:** Although the Chronicler doesn't include any of

the content of this prayer, the king's words and God's reply are presented in 2 Kings 19:14-34 = Isaiah 37:14-35.

**32:21** *Then the Lord sent a messenger who destroyed every warrior.* Without respect for the Assyrians' prior experience with other nations and their gods (2 Chron 32:10-19), here the Lord responds with quick and decisive action, *he entered the temple of his god, and his own sons killed him with a sword.* Given his misconceived confidence that Israel's God couldn't save the nation, Sennacherib's death at the hands of his sons in his own god's temple is tragic and ironic.

**32:24-33** The final section on Hezekiah's reign describes his illness (32:24-26), ongoing success (32:27-31), and the notice of his death and burial (32:32-33). For more, see 2 Kings 20:1-21.

32:9-15  
2Ki 18:17-25;  
Is 36:2-10

32:17  
2Ki 19:9-13;  
Is 37:9-13

32:20 2Ki 19:14;  
Is 37:14-20

32:21a, 22  
2Ki 19:35, 36;  
Is 37:36, 37

32:21b  
2Ki 19:37a;  
Is 37:38a

32:24 2Ki 20:1;  
Is 38:1

32:25  
2Ch 24:18,  
2Ch 26:16

32:26  
2Ch 32:25;  
Jer 26:16-19  
32:30 1Kings 13:33;  
2Kings 18:17;  
2Kings 20:20;  
Is 22:9  
32:31  
2Kings 20:12-19;  
Is 39:1-9  
32:32-33  
2Kings 20:20, 21  
33:1 2Kings 21:1;  
1Ch 3:13  
33:2 2Kings 21:2;  
2Ch 28:3  
33:3 Dt 16:21;  
2Kings 21:3;  
2Ch 28:2;  
2Ch 31:1  
33:4 2Kings 21:4;  
2Ch 6:6,  
2Ch 7:16  
33:5 2Ch 4:9  
33:6 Dt 18:10;  
2Kings 23:10;  
2Ch 28:3;  
Jer 7:32  
33:7 Igs 20:18,  
Igs 20:26;  
1Kings 11:13;  
2Ch 6:6,  
2Ch 33:4  
33:8 2Sa 7:10

<sup>26</sup>However, Hezekiah and the citizens of Jerusalem humbled themselves in their pride, and so they didn't experience the LORD's anger for the rest of Hezekiah's reign.

<sup>27</sup>Hezekiah became very wealthy and greatly respected. He made storehouses for his silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields, and other valuables. <sup>28</sup>He made barns to store the harvest of grain, wine, and olive oil; stalls for all kinds of cattle; and pens for flocks. <sup>29</sup>He acquired towns for himself and many flocks and herds because God had given him great wealth. <sup>30</sup>Hezekiah was the one who blocked the upper outlet of the waters of the Gihon Spring, channeling them down to the west side of David's City. Hezekiah succeeded in all that he did, <sup>31</sup>even in the matter of the ambassadors sent from Babylonian officials to find out about the miraculous sign that occurred in the land, when God had abandoned him in order to test him and to discover what was in his heart.

<sup>32</sup>The rest of Hezekiah's deeds, including his faithfulness, are written in the vision of the prophet Isaiah, Amoz's son, in the records of Israel's and Judah's kings. <sup>33</sup>Hezekiah lay down with his ancestors and was buried in the upper area of the tombs of David's sons. All Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. His son Manasseh succeeded him as king.

### Manasseh rules

**33** Manasseh was 12 years old when he became king, and he ruled for fifty-five years in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes, imitating the detestable practices of the nations that the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. <sup>3</sup>He rebuilt the shrines that his father Hezekiah had destroyed, set up altars for the Baals, and made sacred poles. <sup>4</sup>He bowed down to all the stars in the sky and worshipped them. <sup>5</sup>He even built altars in the LORD's temple, the very place the LORD was speaking about when he said, "My name will remain in Jerusalem forever." <sup>6</sup>Manasseh built altars for all the stars in the sky in both courtyards of the LORD's temple. <sup>7</sup>He burned his own sons alive in the Ben-hinnom Valley, consulted sign readers, fortune-tellers, and sorcerers, and used mediums and diviners. He did much evil in the LORD's eyes and made him angry.

<sup>8</sup>Manasseh set up the carved image he had made in God's temple, the very temple God had spoken about to David and his son Solomon, saying: In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have selected out of all Israel's tribes, I will put my name forever. <sup>9</sup>I will never again remove Israel from the fertile land I gave to your ancestors, provided they carefully do everything

<sup>8</sup>Heb *asherot*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah

32:27 *became very wealthy and greatly respected*: The detailed listing of luxury products (*silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields*) is reminiscent of the description of Solomon in 2 Chronicles 9:9, 15-16, 24.

32:30 *channeling them down to the west side*: The supply of a constant water supply during the time of Hezekiah is probably related to the construction of the Siloam tunnel in Jerusalem. *Hezekiah succeeded in all that he did*: This summary of Hezekiah's economic and building programs echoes that of his success in his various religious reforms in 2 Chronicles 31:21. It also makes another link between the king and Solomon (see 1 Chron 22:11; 29:23; 2 Chron 7:11).

33:1-20 The 55-year reign of Manasseh is the longest in the history of Judah. In the presentation in Kings, Manasseh is notorious as the most wicked of kings, whose idolatry ushered in the exile of a subsequent generation (2 Kgs 21:1-18; 24:3). The Chronicler tempers this presentation, however, by following a description of Manasseh's apostasy (33:2-9) with a depiction of his reformation (33:10-17). By including an account of the king's changed heart and life, the author makes more straightforward sense of the king's longevity and more firmly identifies the cause of the exile as the sin of those who experienced it. See sidebar, "Responsibility for Sin."

33:2-9 *He did what was evil*: Like his grandfather Ahaz,

Manasseh's early reign is marked by religious transgression, including the rebuilding of shrines (2 Chron 28:2-4). In addition, although both kings engage in the detestable practices of the nations that Deuteronomy 18:9-14 prohibits, namely child sacrifice, Manasseh's sin escalates to include divination as well.

33:3 *that his father Hezekiah had destroyed*: See 2 Chronicles 30:14, *bowed down to all the stars in the sky*: This is the first time that the Chronicler attributes any king with this kind of worship, but it is mentioned in other texts such as Zephaniah 1:5 and Jeremiah 8:2.

33:4 *He even built altars in the LORD's temple*: As with the practice of divination and star worship, Manasseh's religious aberrations outdo those of Ahaz. Whereas the earlier king built altars on "every corner in Jerusalem" (2 Chron 28:24), Manasseh moves the polluting objects into the temple itself. Later in the chapter Manasseh will remove such objects (2 Chron 33:15), although in 2 Kings this worship purification doesn't occur until the reign of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:12). *My name will remain*: God made this promise in response to Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (2 Chron 7:16).

33:6 *He burned his own sons alive*: See the similar act of Ahaz in 2 Chronicles 28:3, and see note there.

33:7-8 As in 2 Chronicles 33:4, Manasseh's sin involves setting up unacceptable objects within the temple itself.



**Responsibility for Sin** For the author of 1 and 2 Kings, Manasseh is Judah's absolute worst king: He committed many and grievous sins concerning the practice of religion, led the nation in the same, and died without changing his ways (2 Kgs 21). Indeed, the Lord was so angry about the king's deeds that they form the grounds for the exile years later: God had Nebuchadnezzar invade Judah "on account of all the sins that Manasseh had committed and because of the innocent blood that he had spilled" (2 Kgs 24:3-4; cf. 2 Kgs 23:26-27).

The presentation in 2 Chronicles is different (2 Chron 33:1-20). To be sure, Manasseh commits the same kind of ritual sins attributed to him in 2 Kings, such as setting up altars for foreign gods and practicing child sacrifice. But while being punished in exile, he seeks and receives God's forgiveness. After he is restored to the land, he spends the rest of his reign removing the foreign altars.

In such a presentation, the Chronicler makes several key points that are sounded throughout the book. The first has to do with the immediacy of retribution: The generation who went into exile are themselves to blame and shouldn't blame the past deeds of a long-dead king (see more on 2 Chron 36:6, 14, 15). The second has to do with hope: If even such an evil king as Manasseh can be forgiven and restored to the land, then those after him who languish in exile can certainly expect that their prayers will likewise be favorably received.

I have commanded them—keeping all the Instruction, the regulations, and the case laws given through Moses. <sup>9</sup>In this way Manasseh led Judah and the residents of Jerusalem into doing even more evil than the nations that the LORD had wiped out before the Israelites.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they wouldn't listen. <sup>11</sup>So the LORD brought the army commanders of Assyria's king against them. They captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze chains, and carried him off to Babylon. <sup>12</sup>During his distress, Manasseh made peace with the LORD his God, truly submitting himself to the God of his ancestors. <sup>13</sup>He prayed, and God was moved by his request. God listened to Manasseh's prayer and restored him to his rule in Jerusalem. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was the true God.

<sup>14</sup>After this, Manasseh rebuilt the outer wall of David's City, west of the Gihon Spring in the valley, extending as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate, enclosing the elevated fortress<sup>v</sup> and greatly increasing its height. He also installed military commanders in all the fortified cities of Judah. <sup>15</sup>He removed the foreign gods and the idol from the LORD's temple, as well as all the altars he had built on the hill of the LORD's temple and in Jerusalem, dumping them outside the city. <sup>16</sup>He restored the LORD's altar, offered well-being sacrifices and thank offerings on it, and ordered the people of Judah to worship the LORD, Israel's God. <sup>17</sup>The people, however, still sacrificed at the shrines, but only to the LORD their God. <sup>18</sup>The rest of Manasseh's deeds, including his prayer to God and what the seers told him in the name of the LORD, Israel's God, are found in the records of Israel's kings. <sup>19</sup>Manasseh's prayer and its answer, all his sin and unfaithfulness, and the locations of the shrines, sacred poles,<sup>w</sup> and idols he set up before he submitted are written in the records of Hozai. <sup>20</sup>Manasseh lay down with his ancestors and was buried in his palace. His son Amon succeeded him as king.

### Amon rules

<sup>21</sup>Amon was 22 years old when he became king, and he ruled for two years in Jerusalem.

<sup>22</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes, just as his father Manasseh had done. He sacrificed

<sup>v</sup>Or *hillside*; Heb uncertain <sup>w</sup>Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah <sup>x</sup>LXX *the seers*

33:11 *carried him off to Babylon*: Manasseh's exile isn't included in the parallel account in Kings, nor in any currently known Assyrian records. Although the author indicates that the people joined the king in his ritual sins and didn't heed the Lord's warning (2 Chron 33:9-10), only the king is punished here.

33:12-13 *During his distress, Manasseh made peace with the Lord*: The Chronicler includes two possible responses to divine punishment: Kings such as Ahaz and Amon are stubborn and refuse to heed (2 Chron 28:22; 33:23), while kings such as Rehoboam turn away from sin (2 Chron 12:12). For the author's audience that is living in exile, the significance of a changed heart and life in Babylon, and

God's immediate forgiveness and restoration to the land, would be particularly poignant. See sidebar, "Surprised By Mercy" at 2 Chronicles 22.

33:14 By prefacing the account of Manasseh's successful building and religious reforms with the phrase *After this*, the Chronicler presents his work as a response to God's forgiveness. As with the account of his exile, the parallel account in 2 Kings 21:1-18 makes no mention of these good deeds. *rebuild the outer wall of David's City*: This continues his father's acts as described in 2 Chronicles 32:5.

33:21-25 Unlike the reign of his father, Manasseh (2 Chron 33:1-2), the reign of Amon is short and absent of spiritual reform. The source material is from 2 Kings 21:19-25.

33:9 1Ki 14:16,  
1Ki 15:25-26,  
1Ki 22:51;  
2Ki 21:9

33:10  
Neh 9:29;  
Jer 25:4; Zec 1:4

33:11 Dt 28:36;  
2Ch 36:6

33:12 2Ch 32:26

33:13 1Ch 5:20;  
Ezr 6:23

33:14 1Ki 1:33;  
2Ch 27:3;  
2Ch 32:30;  
Neh 3:3;  
Zep 1:10

33:15 2Ch 33:3,  
2Ch 33:7

33:16  
Lv 7:11-12;  
2Ch 4:1,  
2Ch 14:4,  
2Ch 29:18

33:17 2Ch 32:12

33:18 2Ch 33:19

33:19 2Ch 33:13

33:20 2Ki 21:18

33:22, 23  
2Ki 21:20-22

33:24 2Ki 21:25

33:25 2Ki 21:24;  
2Ki 21:26b

34:1 2Ki 22:1

34:2 2Ki 22:2

34:8-12

2Ki 22:3-7

34:14 2Ch 34:9

34:15 2Ki 22:8

to all the idols his father had made and worshipped them. <sup>23</sup>But unlike his father Manasseh, Amon didn't submit before the LORD; instead, Amon increased his guilt. <sup>24</sup>His own officials plotted against him and killed him in his palace. <sup>25</sup>The people of the land then executed all those who had plotted against King Amon and made his son Josiah the next king.

### Josiah rules

**34** Josiah was 8 years old when he became king, and he ruled for thirty-one years in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>He did what was right in the LORD's eyes and walked in the ways of his ancestor David, not deviating from it even a bit to the right or left. <sup>3</sup>In the eighth year of his rule, while he was just a boy, he began to seek the God of his ancestor David, and in the twelfth year he began purifying Judah and Jerusalem of the shrines, the sacred poles,<sup>†</sup> idols, and images. <sup>4</sup>Under his supervision, the altars for the Baals were torn down, and the incense altars that were above them were smashed. He broke up the sacred poles, idols, and images, grinding them to dust and scattering them over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. <sup>5</sup>He burned the bones of the priests on their altars, purifying Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>In the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, all the way up to Naphtali, he removed their temples,<sup>‡</sup> <sup>7</sup>tore down the altars and sacred poles, ground the idols to dust, and smashed all the incense altars throughout the land of Israel. Then Josiah returned to Jerusalem.

### Josiah repairs the temple

<sup>8</sup>In the eighteenth year of his rule, after he had purified the land and the temple, Josiah sent Azaliah's son Shaphan, Maaseiah the mayor of the city, and Joahaz's son Joah the secretary to repair the LORD his God's temple. <sup>9</sup>When they came to the high priest Hilkiah, they delivered the money that had been collected in God's temple by the levitical gatekeepers from Manasseh, Ephraim, and the rest of Israel, as well as from Judah, Benjamin, and the residents of Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup>They handed it over to the supervisors<sup>\*</sup> in charge of the LORD's temple, who in turn paid it to those working on, repairing, and restoring the LORD's temple. <sup>11</sup>They then gave it to the carpenters and the builders to pay for quarried stone and lumber for rafters and beams in the buildings the kings of Judah had neglected. <sup>12</sup>The men worked conscientiously under the supervision of Jahath and Obadiah, who were Levites descended from Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam from the Kohathites. The Levites, all of whom were accomplished musicians, <sup>13</sup>were also in charge of the laborers and all the workers, no matter what their jobs, while some of the Levites served as scribes, officials, and guards.

### The Instruction scroll

<sup>14</sup>While they were bringing out the money that had been brought into the LORD's temple, Hilkiah the priest found the Instruction scroll that the LORD had given through Moses. <sup>15</sup>Hilkiah told the secretary Shaphan, "I have found the Instruction scroll in the LORD's temple."

<sup>†</sup>Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah; also in 34:4, 7 <sup>‡</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>\*</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT *supervisor*

33:25 and made his son Josiah the next king: The revolution attempted by Amon's commanders is reversed by the people when they put the slain king's eight-year-old son on the throne.

34:1–35:26 Following that of the unforgiven Amon, the reign of Josiah is marked by restoration and religious renewal. The text is a major reworking of the material in Kings, with changes in the timing and scope of Josiah's reform (34:1-2 = 2 Kgs 22:1-2; 34:3-7 = no parallel; 34:8-33 = 2 Kgs 22:3-23:23), and a dramatic expansion of the Passover celebration (35:1-19 = 2 Kgs 23:21-23).

34:3b-7 In the twelfth year he began purifying Judah and Jerusalem of the shrines: This material outlining Josiah's ritual reforms prior to his 18th year has no parallel in the Kings material. By including it, the Chronicler highlights the reforming work of the king throughout his reign. The author puts in context the later finding of the Instruction scroll as a result of these reforms, rather than as their cause.

34:3-4 shrines, the sacred poles, idols, and images: Josiah's destruction of these objects is similar to the earlier reforms

of Asa, Hezekiah, and Manasseh (2 Chron 14:3-5; 30:14; 33:19).

34:4-5 scattering them over the graves... burned the bones: By associating the religious objects with dead bodies, Josiah causes their ultimate defilement.

34:6 In the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon... Naphtali: Throughout the account of Josiah, the Chronicler emphasizes the geographic scope of the king's reforms (see also 2 Chron 4:7, 9, 21).

34:8-13 after he had purified the land and the temple: Six years after he began purifying the worship behaviors, Josiah begins to repair the temple.

34:14-21 The Chronicler's account of the discovery of the Instruction scroll closely follows the account in 2 Kings 22:8-13, although see note on 2 Chronicles 34:3b-7 for how the Chronicler's context reframes its significance.

34:14 Both accounts in 2 Chronicles and 2 Kings refer to the newly discovered scroll as the *Instruction scroll* (2 Chron 34:14, 15; 2 Kgs 22:8, 11) or "the covenant scroll" (2 Chron 34:30; 2 Kgs 23:2). The additional description that explicitly connects the text containing the covenant to Moses (*that*

Then Hilkiah turned the scroll over to Shaphan, <sup>16</sup>who brought it to the king with this report: "Your servants are doing everything you've asked them to do. <sup>17</sup>They have released the money that was found in the LORD's temple and have handed it over to the supervisors and the workers." <sup>18</sup>Then the secretary Shaphan told the king, "The priest Hilkiah has given me a scroll," and he read it out loud before the king.

<sup>19</sup>As soon as the king heard what the Instruction scroll said, he ripped his clothes. <sup>20</sup>The king ordered Hilkiah, Shaphan's son Ahikam, Micah's son Abdon, the secretary Shaphan, and the royal officer Asaiah as follows: <sup>21</sup>"Go and ask the LORD on my behalf, and on behalf of those who still remain in Israel and Judah, concerning the contents of this scroll that has been found. The LORD must be furious with us because our ancestors failed to obey the LORD's word and do everything written in this scroll."

<sup>22</sup>So Hilkiah and the royal officials went to the prophetess Huldah. She was married to Shallum, Tokhath's son and Hasrah's grandson, who was in charge of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem in the second district. When they spoke to her, <sup>23</sup>she replied, "This is what the LORD, Israel's God, says: Tell this to the man who sent you to me: <sup>24</sup>This is what the LORD says: I am about to bring disaster on this place and its citizens—all the curses written in the scroll that they have read to Judah's king. <sup>25</sup>My anger burns against this place, never to be quenched, because they've deserted me and have burned incense to other gods, angering me by everything they have done.<sup>b</sup> <sup>26</sup>But also say this to the king of Judah, who sent you to question the LORD: This is what the LORD, Israel's God, says about the message you've just heard: <sup>27</sup>Because your heart was broken and you submitted before the LORD when you heard what he said against this place and its citizens,<sup>c</sup> and because you ripped your clothes and cried before me, I have listened to you, declares the LORD. <sup>28</sup>I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will go to your grave in peace. You won't experience the disaster I am about to bring on this place and its citizens."

When they reported Huldah's words to the king, <sup>29</sup>the king sent a message and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>30</sup>Then the king went up to the LORD's temple, together with all the people of Judah and all the citizens of Jerusalem, the priests and the Levites, and all the people, young and old alike. There the king read out loud all the words of the covenant scroll that had been found in the LORD's temple. <sup>31</sup>The king stood in his place and made a covenant with the LORD that he would follow the LORD by keeping his commandments, his instructions, and his regulations with all his heart and all his being, in order to fulfill the words of the covenant that were written in this scroll. <sup>32</sup>Then he made everyone found in Jerusalem and Benjamin join in a similar promise. The citizens of Jerusalem lived according to the covenant made with God, the God of their ancestors. <sup>33</sup>Josiah got rid of all the detestable idols from all the regions that belonged to the Israelites, and he made everyone who lived in Israel serve the LORD their God. As long as Josiah lived, they didn't turn away from following the LORD God of their ancestors.

### Josiah's Passover

**35** Then Josiah celebrated the LORD's Passover in Jerusalem. They slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the first month.<sup>d</sup> <sup>2</sup>He assigned the priests to their posts, encouraging them to fulfill their responsibilities in the LORD's temple.

<sup>b</sup>Or made; perhaps a reference to idols <sup>c</sup>MT repeats and because you humbled yourself before me. <sup>d</sup>March–April, Nisan

the LORD had given through Moses) is only found here. The scroll is either a version of the book of Deuteronomy or the entire Pentateuch (Genesis–Deuteronomy).

34:21 those who still remain in Israel and Judah: The account in Kings only mentions "Judah" here (2 Kgs 22:13). The addition of Israel highlights the Chronicler's ongoing emphasis on the geographic scope of the Josiah's reforms. See note on 2 Chronicles 34:6.

34:22–28 Instructed by the king to determine the scroll's authority ("ask the LORD . . . concerning the contents of this scroll," 2 Chron 34:21), Hilkiah and the royal advisors consult the prophetess Huldah. The oracle she presents anticipates a coming time of disaster in which God will enact the scroll's curses (cf. Deut 27–28) upon those who have deserted God and burned incense to other gods. In

recompense for the king's own acts of contrition, he will go to his grave in peace and avoid the calamity (but see further on 2 Chron 35:24).

34:29 the king sent a message: Huldah's prophecy asks nothing of the king or the people—the coming disaster is assured. Nevertheless, Josiah gathers the people and makes a covenant to obey the words of the scroll.

34:33 from all the regions that belonged to the Israelites: Josiah's reforms affect the nation's maximum reach and, as such, show the extent of his devotion.

35:1–19 Following on his earlier religious reforms throughout the land (2 Chron 34), Josiah now celebrates the Passover in Jerusalem. The text is a major expansion of 2 Kings 23:21–23, highlighting the prominence of the Levites and the focus on authoritative tradition.

34:16–21  
2Ki 22:9–13  
34:22–28  
2Ki 22:14–20  
34:29, 30  
2Ki 23:1, 2  
34:31 2Ki 23:3  
34:33 2Ki 23:4  
35:1 2Ki 23:21

35:18-19  
2Ki 23:22-23

<sup>3</sup>Next Josiah ordered the Levites, who were holy to the LORD and who instructed all Israel: "Put the holy chest in the temple built by Israel's King Solomon, David's son. You don't need to carry it around on your shoulders anymore. Now serve the LORD your God and his people Israel. <sup>4</sup>Organize yourselves by families according to your divisions, as directed by Israel's King David and his son Solomon. <sup>5</sup>Stand in the sanctuary, according to the family divisions of your relatives the laypeople, so that there can be Levites for each family division." <sup>6</sup>Slaughter the Passover lambs and prepare the holy sacrifices<sup>f</sup> for your relatives in order to celebrate according to the LORD's word through Moses."

<sup>7</sup>On behalf of the laypeople, Josiah donated from his personal holdings thirty thousand lambs and young goats, and three thousand bulls, all for the Passover offerings. <sup>8</sup>His officials also provided spontaneous gift offerings for the people, the priests, and the Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the ones in charge of God's temple, gave two thousand six hundred Passover lambs and three hundred bulls for the priests. <sup>9</sup>Conaniah and his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, along with Hashabiah, Jeiel, and Jozabab, the leaders of the Levites, provided the Levites with five thousand lambs and five hundred bulls as Passover sacrifices. <sup>10</sup>When everything was ready, the priests and the Levites took their places as the king had ordered. <sup>11</sup>Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs, and the priests splashed the blood<sup>g</sup> while the Levites skinned the animals. <sup>12</sup>Next they divided the entirely burned offerings among the laypeople by their families to sacrifice to the LORD as written in the scroll from Moses, and they did the same with the bulls. <sup>13</sup>They roasted the Passover lambs in the fire as instructed, cooked the holy offerings in pots, kettles, and pans, and brought them quickly to all the laypeople. <sup>14</sup>Next they prepared food for themselves and for the priests. Since the priests, Aaron's descendants, were busy offering up the entirely burned offerings and fat pieces until nighttime, the Levites prepared food for themselves and for the priests, Aaron's descendants. <sup>15</sup>The Asaphite singers also remained at their stations as ordered by David, Asaph, Heman, and the king's seer Jeduthun, as did the guards at the various gates. They didn't need to leave their tasks because their fellow Levites prepared food for them. <sup>16</sup>So on that day all of the LORD's service was prepared for celebrating Passover and offering up entirely burned offerings on the LORD's altar, just as King Josiah had ordered. <sup>17</sup>The Israelites who were present celebrated the Passover at that time, and observed the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. <sup>18</sup>Not since the days of the prophet Samuel had such a Passover been celebrated in Israel. And no other king of Israel had celebrated a Passover like the one Josiah celebrated with the priests, the Levites, all the people of Judah and Israel who were present, and the residents of Jerusalem. <sup>19</sup>This Passover was celebrated in the eighteenth year of Josiah's rule.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Correction; cf 1 Esdr 1:6; MT *and sanctify yourselves* <sup>g</sup>LXX; MT *from their hand*

35:1 in *Jerusalem*: The celebration of Passover at the central sanctuary conforms to Deuteronomy 16:5-6 and parallels Hezekiah's earlier celebration narrated in 2 Chronicles 30. However, the venue differs from that in the tradition found in Exodus 12:14-28, which stipulates that Passover is to be celebrated by the family at home.

35:3-6 *Now serve the Lord your God and his people Israel*: Josiah employs David's precedent of assigning new roles to the Levites once the chest containing the covenant was installed (1 Chron 16:4) to expand their role in the Passover festival. Additionally, in the account of Hezekiah, the Levites slaughtered the Passover lambs when not enough lay people "made themselves holy" (2 Chron 30:17). Now Josiah institutes an earlier response to a unique occasion as standard behavior.

35:4 *as directed by Israel's King David and his son Solomon*: See 1 Chronicles 23-27 and 2 Chronicles 8:14. Throughout the account of Josiah's Passover, the Chronicler emphasizes that the protocol is rooted in the commands of the nation's authorities, including David and Solomon (2 Chron 35:4, 15), Moses (2 Chron 35:6, 12), and Josiah himself (2 Chron 35:10, 16).

35:5 *Levites for each family division*: This allocation of the

Levites gestures to a family context for celebrating the Passover in Exodus 12:3-4.

35:7-9 In Exodus 12:5, the Passover sacrifice is taken either "from the sheep or from the goats." Deuteronomy 16:2 expands the options, allowing a sacrifice "from the flock or from the herd." Including bulls along with lambs and goats in 2 Chronicles 35:7-9 reflects either the Deuteronomy legislation or an additional sacrifice to supplement the Passover offering.

35:11 *they slaughtered the Passover lambs*: For the expanded role of the Levites in this Passover sacrifice, see note on 2 Chronicles 35:3-6.

35:15 *as ordered by David*: Compare 1 Chronicles 16:37-42; 2 Chronicles 5:12; and the note on 2 Chronicles 35:4.

35:17-18 For the Chronicler's emphasis on the geographic scope of Josiah's reforms, see the note on 2 Chronicles 34:6.

35:18 *Not since the days of the prophet Samuel had such a Passover been celebrated in Israel*: The Chronicler's account of Hezekiah's Passover in 2 Chronicles 30 has many similar features to that of Josiah's, so perhaps this assertion of novelty refers to the expanded role of the Levites and/or the participation of more people ("the priests, the Levites,

**Josiah's death**

<sup>20</sup>After all of these things, when Josiah had finished restoring the temple, Egypt's King Neco marched against Carchemish by the Euphrates, and Josiah marched out against him.

<sup>21</sup>But Neco sent messengers to Josiah. "What do you want with me, king of Judah?" he asked. "I haven't come to attack you today. I'm after the dynasty that wars with me. God told me to hurry, and he is on my side. Get out of God's way, or he will destroy you."

<sup>22</sup>But Josiah wouldn't turn back. Instead, he camouflaged himself in preparation for battle, refusing to listen to Neco's words from God's own mouth, and went to fight Neco on the plain of Megiddo. <sup>23</sup>When archers shot King Josiah, he said to his servants, "Take me away; I'm badly wounded!" <sup>24</sup>So his servants took him out of his chariot, placed him in another one, and brought him to Jerusalem, where he died and was buried in the tombs of his ancestors. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. <sup>25</sup>Jeremiah composed a funeral song<sup>b</sup> for Josiah, and to this day every singer, man or woman, continues to remember Josiah in their funeral songs. They are now traditional in Israel and are written down among the funeral songs.

<sup>26</sup>The rest of Josiah's deeds, including his faithfulness in acting according to what is written in the LORD's Instruction, <sup>27</sup>and everything else he did, from beginning to end, are written in the official records of Israel's and Judah's kings.

**Jehoahaz rules**

**36** The people of the land took Jehoahaz, Josiah's son, and made him the next king in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became king, and he ruled for three months in Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>The king of Egypt removed him from office in Jerusalem. The Egyptian king imposed a fine on the land totaling one hundred kikkar of silver and one kikkar of gold. <sup>4</sup>Then the king of Egypt made Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim king of Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoikim. Neco took his brother Jehoahaz prisoner and carried him off to Egypt.

**Jehoiakim rules**

<sup>5</sup>Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became king, and he ruled for eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes. <sup>6</sup>Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar attacked him, bound him with bronze chains, and took him to Babylon. <sup>7</sup>Nebuchadnezzar also took

<sup>b</sup> Or *lament*, twice more in this verse

all the people of Judah and Israel who were present, and the residents of Jerusalem"; cf. 2 Chron 30:10-11).

35:20-25 The account of Josiah's death is an expanded version of 2 Kings 23:29-30a, and the additions highlight the king's refusal to heed the divinely sent warning as a contributing cause of his untimely death.

35:20 *Egypt's King Neco marched against Carchemish*: The details not entirely clear, but he was likely going to reinforce Assyrian allies who were fighting the Babylonians. 2 Kings 23:29, in contrast, says that Neco was going to fight against the king of Assyria.

35:21 *God told me to hurry*: In the account of Josiah's untimely death in 2 Kings 23:29-30, Neco's link with God's will is much less explicit than it is in 2 Chronicles.

35:22 *Instead, he camouflaged himself*: Given the assertion of Neco's association with God and God's will, it comes as no great surprise that Josiah's disobedience to Neco's warning is subject to divine punishment. In addition, the fact that the doomed king Ahab also went into battle wearing a "disguise" doesn't bode well (2 Chron 18:29).

35:24 *and brought him to Jerusalem, where he died*: By changing the place of death from the battlefield at Megiddo in 2 Kings 23:29 to Jerusalem, the Chronicler aligns the fate of Josiah more closely with Huldah's prophecy: "you will go to your grave in peace" (2 Chron 34:28).

36:1-21 In the final chapter of the book, the Chronicler gives a quick recounting of the last four kings of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. In addition,

even as it tells of the exile of the kings and the people, it simultaneously presents the hope of return. The material is an abbreviation of 2 Kings 23-24, with some strategic alterations and additions (esp. in 36:12b-21).

36:3 *The Egyptian king imposed a fine*: The imposition of a fine during the reign of Jehoahaz is reminiscent of Shishak's looting of Jerusalem and the temple in 2 Chronicles 12:1-12.

36:4 *carried him off to Egypt*: All four of the last kings in Judah will be deported either to Egypt or to Babylon (2 Chron 36:6, 10, 20).

36:6 *Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar attacked him*: By retaining the notice of Jehoiakim's evil deeds from the account in 2 Kings (2 Kgs 23:37 = 2 Chron 34:5), the Chronicler provides a cause for this punishment. But the Chronicler also omits an additional cause presented in 2 Kings: "this happened to Judah . . . on account of all the sins Manasseh had committed" (2 Kgs 24:4). This selective use of the material from 2 Kings manifests the Chronicler's tendency to locate judgment on the offender rather than an earlier or later generation. See sidebar, "Responsibility for Sin" at 2 Chronicles 33.

36:6 *Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar*: This powerful king reigned in Babylon from 605 to 562 BCE and invaded a great swath of territory, including Tyre and Egypt (see Ezek 27:12; 29:19-21).

36:7 *Nebuchadnezzar also took some equipment from the LORD's temple to Babylon and placed them in his own temple*:

35:20  
2Ki 23:29-30;  
Is 10:9; Jer 46:2

35:21 2Ki 18:25;  
2Ch 25:19

35:22 Jgs 5:19;  
1Ki 22:30;  
2Ki 23:30;  
2Ch 18:29

35:23 1Ki 22:34;  
2Ch 18:33

35:24 Zec 12:11

35:25 Mt 9:23

35:26, 27  
2Ki 23:28

36:1, 2  
2Ki 23:30, 31

36:3 2Ki 23:33

36:4 2Ki 23:4

36:5

2Ki 23:36, 37

36:6 2Ki 24:1

36:7 2Ki 24:13;

2Ch 36:10,

2Ch 36:18;

Ezr 1:7, Dn 1:2

36:8 2Ki 24:5, 6  
 36:9 2Ki 24:8, 9  
 36:10a  
 2Ki 24:13  
 36:10b, 11  
 2Ki 24:17, 18;  
 Jer 37:1, Jer 52:1  
 36:12 2Ki 24:19;  
 Jer 37:2, Jer 52:2  
 36:13 2Ki 24:20;  
 Jer 52:3  
 36:18  
 2Ki 25:13-17;  
 Jer 52:17-23  
 36:19  
 2Ki 25:9-10  
 36:20a  
 2Ki 25:11;  
 Jer 52:15

some equipment from the LORD's temple to Babylon and placed them in his own temple there. <sup>8</sup>The rest of Jehoiakim's deeds, including his detestable practices and all that was charged against him, are written in the official records of Israel's and Judah's kings. His son Jehoiachin succeeded him as king.

### Jehoiachin rules

<sup>9</sup>Jehoiachin was 18<sup>l</sup> years old when he became king, and he ruled for three months<sup>j</sup> in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the LORD's eyes. <sup>10</sup>In the springtime, King Nebuchadnezzar sent for him to be brought to Babylon, along with valuable equipment from the LORD's temple. Then he made Zedekiah his uncle the next king of Judah and Jerusalem.

### Zedekiah rules

<sup>11</sup>Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king, and he ruled for eleven years in Jerusalem. <sup>12</sup>He did what was evil in the LORD his God's eyes and didn't submit before the prophet Jeremiah, who spoke for the LORD. <sup>13</sup>Moreover, he rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, despite the solemn pledge Nebuchadnezzar had forced him to swear in God's name. He became stubborn and refused to turn back to the LORD, Israel's God. <sup>14</sup>All the leaders of the priests and the people also grew increasingly unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations. They polluted the LORD's temple that God had dedicated in Jerusalem. <sup>15</sup>Time and time again, the LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers because he had compassion on his people and his dwelling. <sup>16</sup>But they made fun of God's messengers, treating God's words with contempt and ridiculing God's prophets to such an extent that there was no hope of warding off the LORD's rising anger against his people.

### Jerusalem destroyed

<sup>17</sup>So God brought the Babylonian<sup>k</sup> king against them. The king killed their young men with the sword in their temple's sanctuary, and showed no pity for young men or for virgins, for the old or for the feeble. God handed all of them over to him. <sup>18</sup>Then the king hauled everything off to Babylon, every item from God's temple, both large and small, including the treasures of the LORD's temple and those of the king and his officials. <sup>19</sup>Next the Babylonians burned God's temple down, demolished the walls of Jerusalem, and set fire to all its palaces, destroying everything of value. <sup>20</sup>Finally, he exiled to Babylon anyone who survived the killing so that they could be his slaves and the slaves of his children until Persia

<sup>l</sup>LXX, 2 Kgs 24:8; MT *eight* <sup>j</sup>2 Kgs 24:8; MT adds *and ten days*. <sup>k</sup>Heb *Chaldean*

This loss of vessels corresponds to God's withdrawal from the temple as well as to the growing power of the foreign king. More temple items are taken in 2 Chronicles 36:10, 18. For more on Nebuchadnezzar and the temple equipment, see Daniel 1:1-2.

36:9-10 With his *evil* deeds and deportation, as well as the loss of temple property to the invaders, the reign of Jehoiachin is reminiscent of his father's (2 Chron 36:5-8).

36:10 *sent for him to be brought to Babylon*: The book of 2 Kings relates that the elites of Jerusalem were also exiled along with Jehoiachin in 597 BCE (2 Kgs 24:14-16).

36:11-21 The comparatively lengthy description of Zedekiah's rule highlights the growing unfaithfulness in Judah, which finally results in destruction and exile.

36:12 *didn't submit before the prophet Jeremiah*: The king's refusal to listen to the words of God's prophet is a repeated scene throughout the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, and always ushers in disaster. See sidebar, "Only God Brings Security" at 2 Chronicles 15. For a fuller description of Zedekiah's interactions with Jeremiah, see Jeremiah 37:1-38:28.

36:13 *despite the solemn pledge... in God's name... refused to turn back to the Lord*: In addition to disregarding the words of Jeremiah, the king is also accused of two additional offenses.

36:15 *sent word to them through his messengers*: As is usual throughout 1 and 2 Chronicles, warning precedes punishment (see note on 2 Chron 36:12).

36:16 *treating God's words with contempt and ridiculing God's prophets*: The people's choice to persist in sin is emphasized by the several forceful verbs that describe their reception to the divinely sent warnings.

36:15-17 *So*: In the parallel account in the book of 2 Kings, God sends the exile partially because of the sins of Manasseh (2 Kgs 23:26-27; 24:3-4). By omitting any reference to this long-dead king, and by preceding the description of the exile with a description of the people's sins (2 Chron 36:12-16), the Chronicler more clearly associates the punishment with those who offended (see also note on 2 Chron 36:6). *God brought the Babylonian king against them*: As opposed to exiling only the king (2 Chron 36:4, 6, 10), the punishment now comes upon the people as well. 36:17 The extent of God's rejection is revealed both by brutal violence as well as the poignant use of possessive suffixes: The place that God had called "my house of sacrifice" is now *their temple's sanctuary*, and the nation God had called "my people" is now represented by *their young men* (see 2 Chron 7:12-13).

36:20 *until Persia came to power*: Cyrus the Great of Persia defeated the major players on the world stage (including

came to power. <sup>21</sup>This is how the LORD's word spoken by Jeremiah was carried out. The land finally enjoyed its sabbath rest. For as long as it lay empty, it rested, until seventy years were completed.

36:21 Lv 25:4,  
Lv 26:34-35;  
Jer 1:1; Dn 9:2  
36:22, 23  
Ezr 1:1-4

### Cyrus' decree

<sup>22</sup>In the first year of Persia's King Cyrus, to carry out the LORD's promise spoken through Jeremiah, the LORD moved Persia's King Cyrus to issue the following proclamation throughout his kingdom, along with a written decree:

<sup>23</sup>This is what Persia's King Cyrus says: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the earth's kingdoms and has instructed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Whoever among you belong to God's people, let them go up, and may the LORD their God be with them!

*God Ends the Exile* The book of 2 Chronicles ends the same way that the book of Ezra begins: King Cyrus of Persia announces that the people can leave their exile in Babylon and return to their homeland. Specifically, the emperor associates his rise to power with the Lord's activity and allows God's people to go up to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the temple. It isn't clear whether this portion of 2 Chronicles was original to the work or was a secondary addition. Perhaps the author of 2 Chronicles wanted explicitly to link the literary presentation of Israel's history that begins with Adam (1 Chron 1:1) to the ongoing story of the post-exilic nation in the book of Ezra. Or maybe a later editor, dismayed by the overly pessimistic tone conveyed with the people lingering in Babylon, decided to inject a sense of hope with an official announcement of the exile's end. At any rate, the conclusion of Chronicles deftly reiterates the author's ongoing emphasis on the possibility of God's forgiveness and enduring concern for Jerusalem and its temple. With the announcement of Cyrus, the people can return along with the holy temple equipment and rebuild God's temple in Jerusalem.

Babylon and Media) in the middle of the 6th century BCE. The strategic use of *until* within this announcement of exile provides an element of hope alongside the dire news.

36:21 *the Lord's word spoken by Jeremiah*: The glimmer of hope seen in 36:20 continues with two implications that the exile will be of limited duration. The book of Jeremiah prophesies that the people will return, and Babylon will be punished after 70 years (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10-14). In

addition, the reference to the land enjoying *its sabbath rest* (see Lev 26:34-45) points to the hope that the people will return after a season.

36:22-23 *In the first year of Persia's King Cyrus*: The final two verses of the book overlaps with Ezra 1:1-3a and tells of the official declaration that the people can return from Babylon back to the land of Judah. See sidebar, "God Ends the Exile."

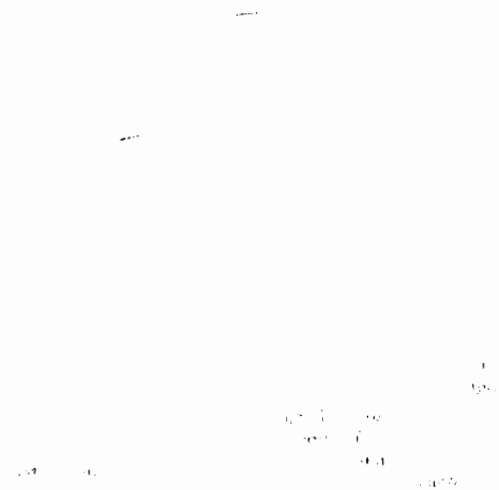


Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1 shows a four-bar linkage mechanism. The ground is pivoted to Link 2 at point A. Link 2 is the crank, the shortest link, pivoted to the ground at point A and to Link 3 at point B. Link 3 is the coupler link, pivoted to Link 2 at point B and to Link 4 at point C. Link 4 is the rocker, pivoted to Link 3 at point C and to the ground at point D.

Figure 1.1



Ezra–Nehemiah was originally a single book in the Hebrew scriptures, though it's now two books in Christian Bibles. It was written around 400 BCE and is a narrative account of the restoration of the temple and community in Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon. The return from Babylon happened in stages, and scholars have found it difficult to determine the exact chronology in Ezra–Nehemiah. However, the book of Ezra likely covers the history of Judah between 538 and 457 BCE. Nehemiah's account begins around 445 BCE, when Nehemiah became governor of Judah.

Together, Ezra and Nehemiah see the universal scope of God's power in how God uses the world's most powerful rulers for God's own purpose. The Babylonian exile and the fall of Jerusalem happened because the people of Judah didn't follow God's Instruction (see Neh 9:29–31). After giving many warnings through the prophets, God finally used the Babylonian Empire to judge Judah for sins like idolatry. Yet, prophets like Jeremiah also gave signs of hope

that God's mercy and faithfulness would persist on the other side of exile (see Ezra 1:1; Jer 29:10).

A new era dawned for the people of Judah when Persia's leader, Cyrus the Great, took over a vast territory from the hands of the Babylonians in 539 BCE. The territories Cyrus inherited from the Babylonian regime included the small western province of Judah, among many others. Between 538 and 515 BCE, a couple of waves of exiles from Babylon returned to the ancestral land of Judah. They attempted to rebuild the Jerusalem temple, which had been lying in ruins since 587 BCE. Finally, with the encouragement of the prophets—such as Haggai and Zechariah—and also thanks to the support of the Persian imperial administration, the Judean community rebuilt the temple in 515 BCE (Ezra 6:15).

Ezra and Nehemiah came back from Babylon—most likely in 458 and 445 BCE respectively. They carried out a series of reforms and policies geared toward reestablishing regular worship practices in the Jerusalem temple. They also undertook some measures that were



The Cyrus Cylinder, an ancient clay cylinder with a proclamation in which Cyrus presents himself as a liberator of the Babylonians (Ezra 1:1)  
*British Museum/William L. Krewson*

aimed at the physical, spiritual, and social rebuilding of the community of Judah. Ezra and Nehemiah returned to Judah under the sponsorship of the Persian imperial administration. The Persian emperors provided financial and legislative support to the Jerusalem temple (Ezra 6–7).

Ezra and Nehemiah themselves resided in Judah only temporarily, because they came to Judah as royal envoys. However, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the long list of those who returned and became permanent residents of Judah (Ezra 2; Neh 7). Despite high enthusiasm and the best of intentions, life in Judah was filled with challenges. The political tensions recorded here attest to the obstacles that these community leaders faced from inside and outside of Judah.

Those who returned from the exile were the new Israel. They held the view that Judah must renew her allegiance to the Lord in order to continue her existence in the land God had promised to their ancestors. God's faithfulness to God's people is demonstrated in the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Jeremiah concerning the restoration of the exiles' fortune. God had promised that the people would be allowed to return to the land of their ancestors

after 70 years in captivity (Jer 25:11; 29:10). This understanding of history sees God's Instruction as authoritative over communal and individual Jewish life.

In order to avoid another catastrophe (the loss of homes and temple), leaders in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah believed they needed to set the Jewish people apart for the Lord. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple. Ezra built a spiritual wall around the people when he taught them the Lord's Instruction. Nehemiah focused on repairing the literal wall around Jerusalem, as well as increasing its population. The separation of the Judean community from her non-Jewish neighbors was intended to protect and maintain a distinctive spiritual, cultural, and ethnic identity.

Ezra is known as a sort of second Moses because of his commitment to teaching and obeying "the Instruction from Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given" (Ezra 7:6; see also 7:10). Moses had mediated the covenantal relationship between God and Israel on Mount Sinai. In the post-exilic age, the renewal of the covenantal relationship between God and the people is facilitated through the divine Instruction in Ezra's hand.

## I. First Return and Rebuilding of the Temple

### (1:1–6:22)

- A. First return to Jerusalem (1:1-11)
  - 1. Cyrus' permission to return to Jerusalem (1:1-4)
  - 2. Preparations for the return (1:5-11)
- B. List of the returnees (2:1–70)
  - 1. List recorded (2:1-58)
  - 2. Exclusions (2:59-63)
  - 3. Total (2:64-67)
  - 4. Arrival in Jerusalem (2:68-70)
- C. Rebuilding of the temple (3:1-13)
  - 1. Rebuilding the altar (3:1-7)
  - 2. Laying the foundations of the temple (3:8-13)
- D. Opposition to rebuilding (4:1-24)
  - 1. Facing opposition (4:1-5)
  - 2. Writing to King Artaxerxes (4:6-16)
  - 3. Artaxerxes' response (4:17-24)

### E. Completion of the temple (5:1–6:22)

- 1. Work on the temple continues (5:1-5)
- 2. Writing to King Darius (5:6-17)
- 3. Darius' response (6:1-12)
- 4. The temple is completed and dedicated (6:13-22)

## II. Second Return and Ezra's Reform (7:1–10:44)

- A. Ezra's return to Jerusalem (7:1–8:36)
  - 1. Introduction to Ezra (7:1-10)
  - 2. Letter from Artaxerxes (7:11-26)
  - 3. Ezra's preparation for the journey (7:27-28)
  - 4. List of the returnees (8:1-14)
  - 5. Voyage to Jerusalem (8:15-31)
  - 6. Conclusion of the journey (8:32-36)
- B. Ezra's reform (9:1–10:44)
  - 1. Facing a communal problem (9:1-4)
  - 2. Ezra's prayer (9:5-15)
  - 3. The community responds (10:1-5)
  - 4. The assembly decides (10:6-15)
  - 5. Resolving the issue (10:16-44)

**Permission to return to Jerusalem**

**1** In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia's rule, to fulfill the LORD's word spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Persia's King Cyrus. The king issued a proclamation throughout his kingdom (it was also in writing) that stated:

<sup>2</sup>Persia's King Cyrus says: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has commanded me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. <sup>3</sup>If there are any of you who are from his people, may their God be with them! They may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>And as for all those who remain in the various places where they are living, let the people of those places supply them with silver and gold, and with goods and livestock, together with spontaneous gifts for God's house in Jerusalem.<sup>a</sup>

1:2 Ezr 6:3;  
1s: 44:28, 1s: 45:1,  
1s: 45:13  
1:5 Ezr 1:1;  
Phi 2:13

**Preparing to return**

<sup>5</sup>Then the heads of the families of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites—everyone whose spirit God had stirred up—got ready to go up and build God's house in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>All their neighbors assisted them with silver equipment, with gold, with goods, livestock, and valuable gifts, in addition to all that was freely offered. <sup>7</sup>King Cyrus brought out the equipment of the LORD's house—those items that Nebuchadnezzar brought from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods. <sup>8</sup>Persia's King Cyrus handed them over to Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. <sup>9</sup>This was the count: thirty gold dishes, one thousand silver dishes, twenty-nine knives,<sup>b</sup> <sup>10</sup>thirty gold bowls, four hundred ten larger<sup>c</sup> silver bowls, and one thousand other objects. <sup>11</sup>The total of the gold and silver objects numbered five thousand four hundred. Sheshbazzar brought up all of these when the exiles went up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.

*Support from Persia* The Persian rulers' support of the restoration of the temple was accompanied by royal permission for the Judean exiles to return to Judah. Thus Cyrus' and Darius' attention toward this province was channeled toward rebuilding the ruined infrastructure of the sanctuary and repopulating Jerusalem. Three waves of exiles returned over several generations—under the leadership of Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, and Ezra. Cyrus delivered to Sheshbazzar the temple equipment that the Babylonians had carried away in 587 BCE (Ezra 1:7; 5:14; 6:5). This statement conflicts with 2 Kings 24:13, which says that the king of Babylon "cut into pieces" all the gold objects from the temple. Assuming that the Persian king returned any of the objects that had been taken away by the Babylonians, such a gesture would have created a sense of continuity. Given that the temple had occupied a vital place in Judah, the royal action would have restored hope for glorious times to return. Cyrus seemingly understood that reestablishing regular worship activities at the temple included the return of the traditional sacred equipment. The Persian imperial government provided financial support by permitting the returning exiles to raise funds for the maintenance of the worship center in Judah.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Vulg; Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb double

1:1-11 *King Cyrus*: Cyrus the Great was the first Persian emperor (580–529 BCE) of the Achaemenid dynasty. He gave permission to the exiled Jews in Babylonia to return to their ancestral land, Judah. In Ezra, this Gentile king is depicted as giving enthusiastic support for the Jewish cult in Jerusalem. Cyrus authorizes the rebuilding of the Lord's temple and he even animates the fund-raising efforts by encouraging the exiles to make donations to the reconstruction project. The Persian king also returns the Jerusalem temple equipment, which had been taken away by the Babylonians.

1:1 to fulfill the LORD's word spoken by Jeremiah: Jeremiah prophesied concerning the judgment against the Babylonian Empire, the return of the exiles, and the restoration of God's people after seventy years of desolation (see Jer 25:12; 29:10). *the LORD stirred up the spirit*: The Gentile king's benevolent acts on behalf of the Jews are attributed to divine favor.

1:2-3 *The LORD, the God of heaven*: According to the writer,

Cyrus acknowledges that the Lord is ruler over all people and nations. The Lord's authority is not limited to the small province of Judah. Cyrus proclaims that it was the Lord who entrusted him with all the kingdoms of the earth. This statement provides political legitimacy to Cyrus' claim to Judah and the rest of the subjects and territories across the empire. The Cyrus Cylinder, a famous Persian document (today housed at the British Museum), records Cyrus' announcement to the Babylonians assuring them that his conquest of their country was authorized by none other than their own god Marduk.

1:4 Cyrus encourages the exiles remaining in Babylon to contribute financially.

1:7-11 *King Cyrus brought out the equipment of the LORD's house*: The book of Chronicles reports that Nebuchadnezzar took the precious equipment of the temple to Babylon (2 Chron 36:7, 10, 18). However, 2 Kings 24:13 indicates that Nebuchadnezzar cut in pieces all the gold temple equipment. See 2 Chronicles 36:19.

2:1 2Ki 24:14;  
2Ch 36:20;  
Neh 7:6

2:2 Neh 7:7;  
Hg 1:1, Hg 1:12,  
Hg 2:4; Ezc 3:8

### List of the returnees

**2** These were the people of the province who went up from there—from among those captive exiles whom Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar had deported to Babylonia. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, all to their own towns. **2** They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

### The number of the people of Israel

<sup>3</sup> The family of Parosh	2,172
<sup>4</sup> of Shephatiah	372
<sup>5</sup> of Arah	775
<sup>6</sup> of Pahath-moab, namely the family of Jeshua and Joab	2,812
<sup>7</sup> of Elam	1,254
<sup>8</sup> of Zattu	945
<sup>9</sup> of Zaccai	760
<sup>10</sup> of Bani	642
<sup>11</sup> of Bebai	623
<sup>12</sup> of Azgad	1,222
<sup>13</sup> of Adonikam	666
<sup>14</sup> of Bigvai	2,056
<sup>15</sup> of Adin	454
<sup>16</sup> of Ater, namely of Hezekiah	98
<sup>17</sup> of Bezai	323
<sup>18</sup> of Jorah	112
<sup>19</sup> of Hashum	223
<sup>20</sup> of Gibbar	95
<sup>21</sup> of Bethlehem	123
<sup>22</sup> The people of Netophah	56
<sup>23</sup> of Anathoth	128
<sup>24</sup> The family of Azmaveth	42
<sup>25</sup> of Kiriatharim, Chephirah, and Beeroth	743
<sup>26</sup> of Ramah and Geba	621
<sup>27</sup> The people of Michmash	122
<sup>28</sup> of Bethel and Ai	223
<sup>29</sup> The family of Nebo	52
<sup>30</sup> of Magbish	156
<sup>31</sup> of the other Elam	1,254
<sup>32</sup> of Harim	320
<sup>33</sup> of Lod, Hadid, and Ono	725
<sup>34</sup> of Jericho	345
<sup>35</sup> of Senaah	3,630
<b>36</b> The priests	
The family of Jedaiah, namely the house of Jeshua	973
<sup>37</sup> of Immer	1,052
<sup>38</sup> of Pashhur	1,247
<sup>39</sup> of Harim	1,017
<sup>40</sup> The Levites: the family of Jeshua and Kadmiel—the family of Hodaviah	74
<b>41</b> The singers	
The family of Asaph	128
<b>42</b> The family of the gatekeepers	
of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai	139 in all
<b>43</b> The temple servants	
The family of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, <sup>44</sup> Keros, Siaha, Padon, <sup>45</sup> Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub, <sup>46</sup> Hagai, Shamlai, Hanan, <sup>47</sup> Giddel,	

**2:1-58** The same list of the returnees is found in Nehemiah 7:6-60 with few modifications. The names are classified by family, place of origin, and function at the Jerusalem temple as David had organized. The total is 24,141.

**2:2** This preface of the list of returnees contains the names of individuals in leadership from different periods. The book of Haggai envision the post-exilic community of Judah being led by both Zerubbabel, the governor of the

Gahar, Reaiah, <sup>48</sup>Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, <sup>49</sup>Uzza, Paseah, Besai, <sup>50</sup>Asnah, Meunim, Nephisim, <sup>51</sup>Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, <sup>52</sup>Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, <sup>53</sup>Barkos, Sisera, Temah, <sup>54</sup>Neziah, and Hatipha

### <sup>55</sup>The family of Solomon's servants

Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda, <sup>56</sup>Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel, <sup>57</sup>Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth-hazzebaim, and Ami.

<sup>58</sup>All of the temple servants and the family of Solomon's servants

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### Exclusions

<sup>59</sup>The following came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, but they were unable to demonstrate that their family or their descent was from Israel:

<sup>60</sup>the family of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda,

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<sup>61</sup>and of the family of the priests: the family of Habaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai (who had married one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name).

<sup>62</sup>They looked for their entries in the genealogical records, but they were not found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. <sup>63</sup>The governor ordered them not to eat of the most holy food until a priest arose who could consult Urim and Thummim.

### Total

<sup>64</sup>The whole assembly together totaled 42,360, <sup>65</sup>not including their 7,337 male and female servants; they also had 200 male and female singers, <sup>66</sup>736 horses, 245 mules, <sup>67</sup>435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

### Arrival in Jerusalem

<sup>68</sup>When they arrived at the LORD's house in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the families brought spontaneous gifts for the rebuilding of God's house on its site. <sup>69</sup>According to their means, they gave to the building fund 61,000 drachmen of gold, 5,000 manehs of silver, and 100 priestly robes.

<sup>70</sup>The priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants settled in their own towns, and all Israel in their towns.

### Rebuilding the altar

**3** When the seventh month<sup>d</sup> came and the Israelites were in their towns, the people gathered together as one in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>Then Jeshua, Jozadak's son along with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel, Shealtiel's son along with his kin, started to rebuild the altar of Israel's God so that they might offer entirely burned offerings upon it as prescribed in the Instruction from Moses the man of God. <sup>3</sup>They set up the altar on its foundations,<sup>e</sup> because they were afraid of the neighboring peoples,<sup>f</sup> and they offered entirely burned offerings upon it to the LORD, both the morning and the evening offerings.

<sup>4</sup>They celebrated the Festival of Booths, as prescribed. Every day they presented the number of entirely burned offerings required by ordinance for that day. <sup>5</sup>After this, they presented the continual burned offerings, the offerings at the new moons, and at all the sacred

<sup>d</sup>September–October, Tishrei <sup>e</sup>A technical word meaning *pedestals* <sup>f</sup>Or *peoples of the lands*

province, and Jeshua the high priest. Also Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zechariah record the prominent role this duo played in the restoration period.

2:68-70 The reconstruction and refurbishing of the temple was funded by the generous and voluntary gift of the community members. The first time the temple was built, King Solomon was mainly responsible for funding and carrying out the building project (1 Kgs 6-7). When the meeting tent was built, gift offerings were brought by the people in the community (Exod 25:2-9; 35:21-29).

3:1-7 After a long hiatus, worship resumes in Jerusalem.

3:1 *seventh month*: In the month of Tishri (September/October) of 538 BCE, the people assemble in unity in Jerusalem.

3:2 The leaders of the community, headed by Jeshua and Zerubbabel, rebuild the altar in order to resume offering

sacrifices, as prescribed in the Instruction from Moses the man of God: The Instruction stipulated that the altar must be built of stones that hadn't been cut with iron tools (Exod 20:25; Deut 27:5-6).

3:3 *They set up the altar on its foundations*: In order for the altar and the worship to be legitimate, the continuation of the tradition was essential. The maintenance of spiritual well-being was considered to be important in order to ensure the divine protection against the threat posed by the hostile forces.

3:4 *They celebrated the Festival of Booths*: This is one of the three major Jewish festivals (along with Passover and Weeks). It commemorates the temporary shelters the Israelites lived in during their 40-year wandering in the wilderness. It is a reminder of the Lord's faithfulness and provision. The seven-day celebration is appropriate here

2:59 Neh 7:61

2:62 Nm 3:10, Nm 16:40

2:63 Ex 28:30; Lv 7:65; Dt 33:8; Neh 7:65; Neh 8:9

2:69 Ezr 8:25; Neh 7:70

2:70 1Ch 9:2;

Ezr 7:7;

Neh 7:73;

Neh 11:3

3:1 Lv 23:24;

Ezr 4:1, Ezr 5:1;

Neh 7:73

3:2 Dt 12:5;

Dt 33:1;

1Ch 3:17;

Ezr 2:2; Hg 1:1

3:3 Ex 29:38;

Nm 28:3; Ezr 4:4

3:4 Ezr 23:16;

Lv 23:34;

Nm 29:12;

Neh 8:14;

Zec 14:16

3:5 Nm 28:11;

Dt 12:6

3:7 1Ki 5:6;  
2Ch 2:16,  
2Ch 36:22;  
Ezr 6:3; Is 44:28  
3:8 1Ch 23:24;  
Ezr 3:2; Neh 12:1;  
Hg 1:1, Hg 1:12  
3:12 Hg 2:3

feasts of the LORD, and the offerings of everyone who brought a spontaneous gift to the LORD. <sup>6</sup>From the first day of the seventh month, they began to present entirely burned offerings to the LORD.

However, the foundation of the LORD's temple had not yet been laid. <sup>7</sup>So they gave money to the masons and carpenters; and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedarwood by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, according to the authorization given them by Persia's King Cyrus.

### Laying the foundations of God's house

<sup>8</sup>In the second month of the second year after their arrival at God's house in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel, Shealtiel's son, and Jeshua, Jozadak's son and the rest of their kin—the priests and the Levites and all who had come from the captivity to Jerusalem—made a beginning. They appointed Levites 20 years old and above to oversee the work on the LORD's house. <sup>9</sup>Then Jeshua with his sons and his kin, Kadmiel and his sons, Binnui and his sons, the sons of Judah, along with the sons of Henadad, the Levites, and their sons and kin, collaborated to supervise the workers in God's house.

<sup>10</sup>When the builders laid the foundation of the LORD's temple, the priests clothed in their vests and carrying their trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, arose to praise the LORD according to the directions of Israel's King David. <sup>11</sup>They praised and gave thanks to the LORD, singing responsively, "He is good, his graciousness for Israel lasts forever."

All of the people shouted with praise to the LORD because the foundation of the LORD's house had been laid. <sup>12</sup>But many of the older priests and Levites and heads of families, who had seen the first house, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this house, although many others shouted loudly with joy. <sup>13</sup>No one could distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, because the people rejoiced very loudly. The sound was heard at a great distance.

### Facing opposition

**4** When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel, <sup>2</sup>they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the families and said to them, "Let's build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we've been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Assyria's King Esarhaddon, who brought us here."

<sup>3</sup>But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of the families in Israel replied, "You'll have no part with us in building a house for our God. We alone will build because the LORD, the God of Israel, and Persia's King Cyrus commanded us."

<sup>4</sup>The neighboring peoples<sup>b</sup> discouraged the people of Judah, made them afraid to build, <sup>5</sup>and bribed officials to frustrate their plan. They did this throughout the rule of Persia's King Cyrus until the rule of Persia's King Darius.

<sup>b</sup>Or *peoples of the lands*

because it symbolizes new beginnings. The requirement of the holy gathering and entirely burned offerings are detailed in Leviticus 23:34-36. It is a joyous festival (Deut 16:13-15). The voluntary spirit is emphasized. The offering is stipulated by Deuteronomy: "They must not appear before the LORD's presence empty-handed. Each one should have his gift in hand, in precise measure with the blessing the LORD your God gives you" (Deut 16:16b-17). After the completion of the temple, Solomon celebrated the Festival of Booths (2 Chron 5).

**3:8-13** Preparations are made for the work in God's house.  
**3:8** *In the second month of the second year.* In 537 BCE, Zerubbabel and Jeshua, along with other Jews who had returned from the captivity, start the reconstruction work. There is no mention of the Jews (actually a majority) who had been allowed by the Babylonians to remain in Judah. *Levites 20 years old and above.* See 1 Chronicles 23:24, 27; 2 Chronicles 31:17.

**3:10** *according to the directions of Israel's King David.* See 2 Chronicles 29:25-26.

**3:11** "He is good, his graciousness for Israel lasts forever":

This doxology is found in Psalms 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1. This verse is chanted in response by a choir consisting of two parts. This is one of the favorite refrains of the author of 1 and 2 Chronicles (1 Chron 16:34; 2 Chron 5:13; 2 Chron 7:3).

**3:12** *the first house:* The first temple was destroyed in 587 BCE, 50 years before.

**4:1-5** The rebuilding of the temple stops because of the opposition from the neighboring peoples (who are considered enemies).

**4:1** *the enemies:* the northern neighbors (Ezra 4:4).

**4:2** *King Esarhaddon:* The people who asked to participate in the rebuilding of the temple are the descendants of the captives whom the Assyrian king had brought from the various territories across the empire and settled in Samaria, northern Israel, after 721 BCE. These people's worship combined the worship of Yahweh with that of other gods from their native lands. See 2 Kings 17:24-34.

**4:4** *discouraged:* In devious ways the people of Samaria attempt to demoralize the community of Judah.

### Writing to King Artaxerxes

<sup>6</sup>In the rule of Ahasuerus, at the beginning of his rule, they composed an indictment against those who lived in Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>7</sup>In the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their associates wrote to Persia's King Artaxerxes. The letter was written in Aramaic and translated.<sup>b</sup> <sup>8</sup>Rehum the royal deputy and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter concerning Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes as follows:

<sup>9</sup>From Rehum the royal deputy and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their colleagues, the judges, the administrators, the officials, the Persians, the people of Erech, the Babylonians, the people of Susa (that is, the Elamites), <sup>10</sup>and the rest of the nations whom the great and famous Osnappar deported and settled in the cities of Samaria and in the rest of the province Beyond the River.

(<sup>11</sup>This is a copy of the letter they sent to him.)

To King Artaxerxes from your servants, the people of the province Beyond the River. <sup>12</sup>May it be known to the king that the Jews who left you and came to us have arrived in Jerusalem. They are rebuilding the rebellious and wicked city; they are completing the walls and repairing the foundations. <sup>13</sup>May it be known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and the walls completed, they will not pay tribute or tax or dues, and the royal revenue will be reduced.

<sup>14</sup>Since we receive our salary from the palace,<sup>i</sup> and since it is not fitting for us to witness the king's dishonor, we now send this letter<sup>j</sup> and inform the king <sup>15</sup>so that you may search the records of your ancestors. You will discover in the records that this is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that it has been in revolt over a long period of time. As a result, this city was laid waste. <sup>16</sup>We tell the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls completed, you will then have no possession in the province Beyond the River.

### Artaxerxes responds

<sup>17</sup>The king sent this answer:

Greetings to Rehum the royal deputy and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their colleagues who live in Samaria and elsewhere in the province Beyond the River. <sup>18</sup>The entire letter that you sent to us has been read in translation for me. <sup>19</sup>I issued an order; they searched and discovered that this city has revolted against kings over a long period of time. There has been much rebellion and revolt there. <sup>20</sup>However, there have been mighty kings over Jerusalem who also ruled over the whole province Beyond the River. Tribute and taxes and dues were paid to them.

<sup>21</sup>Therefore, issue an order to stop these people: this city is not to be rebuilt until I make a decree. <sup>22</sup>Be sure to carry out this order! Why should danger grow and threaten the king?

<sup>23</sup>When the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their colleagues, they hurried to Jerusalem to oppose the Jews and made them stop by force of arms.<sup>k</sup> <sup>24</sup>At that time the work on God's house in Jerusalem stopped and was suspended until the second year of the rule of Persia's King Darius.

### Work on God's house continues

**5** Then the prophet Haggai and the prophet Zechariah, Iddo's son, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of Israel's God who was over them.

<sup>b</sup>Heb adds in Aramaic, reporting that 4:8–6:18 is written in Aramaic. <sup>i</sup>Or since we have salted the salt of the palace

<sup>j</sup>Heb lacks this letter. <sup>k</sup>Or power and force

4:6–16 The rebuilding of Jerusalem is opposed. This account further explains why the restoration work took such a long time. The neighboring peoples sought to undermine the returnees' effort to revitalize Judah by sending a slanderous letter to the Persian emperor.

4:6 *Ahasuerus*: Persian King Xerxes I, 486–465 BCE.

4:7 *Artaxerxes*: 465–424 BCE.

4:8–6:18 This section was written in Aramaic. Several official documents are embedded here and cited in Aramaic.

4:8–16 The leaders of Samaria make false accusations against the Jews who left Babylon and came to Judah.

4:8–10 The introduction of the letter, addressed to the Persian king, is repeated. The duplication makes sense if 4:8 is

a short preface to the actual document. The enemies cite the names of several prominent Persian officials in an attempt to strengthen their case against the Jews.

4:10 *the province Beyond the River*: the Persian province that included Samaria and Judah.

4:15 See Ezra 6:1–2; Esther 6:1.

4:17–24 King Artaxerxes responds.

4:24 The account of the rebuilding of the temple, which was interrupted in Ezra 4:5, starts up again. What transpired in between—that is, from the earlier reign of Cyrus, the tenure of Cambyses, to the second year of Darius—remains unexplained.

5:1–5 Work on the temple continues.

4:6 Est 1:1;

Dn 9:1;

4:10 2Ks 17:24;  
Ezr 4:17

4:20 Gn 15:18;

Josh 1:4;

1Ks 4:21;

1Ch 18:3;

Ps 72:8

4:23 Ezr 4:8;

Ezr 4:17

4:24 Ezr 6:1;

Hg 1:15; Zec 1:1

5:1 Hg 1:1;

Zec 1:1; Zec 1:7;

Zec 7:3

5:2 Neh 12:1;  
Hg 1:12;  
Hg 1:14; Zec 4:6  
5:13 2Ch 36:22;  
Ezr 1:1; Is 44:28,  
Is 45:1  
5:16 Ezr 1:7;  
Dn 5:2  
6:1 Ezr 4:15;  
Ezr 5:17; Hg 1:1;  
Zec 1:1

<sup>2</sup>Subsequently, Zerubbabel, Shealtiel's son, and Jeshua, Jozadak's son, began to rebuild God's house in Jerusalem. God's prophets were with them, helping them.

<sup>3</sup>At the same time, Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, and Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues came to them and spoke to them, asking, "Who authorized you to build this house and finish preparing<sup>1</sup> this building material?"<sup>m</sup> <sup>4</sup>They<sup>n</sup> also asked them, "What are the names of the people who are building this building?" <sup>5</sup>But their God looked after the elders of the Jews, and they didn't stop them until a report reached Darius and a letter with his response had arrived.

### Writing to King Darius

<sup>6</sup>This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, and Shethar-bozenai and his colleagues the officials who were in the province Beyond the River sent to King Darius. <sup>7</sup>In the message they sent him, the following was written:

To King Darius, all peace! <sup>8</sup>Let the king know that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built with dressed stone and with timber set into the walls. This work makes good progress and prospers in their hands. <sup>9</sup>We asked those elders, "Who authorized you to build this house and to complete the preparation of this material?" <sup>10</sup>We also asked them their names so that we could write down the names of the leaders for your information.

<sup>11</sup>This was their reply to us: "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth. We are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and completed. <sup>12</sup>But because our ancestors angered the God of heaven, he gave them over into the power of Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house and deported the people to Babylonia. <sup>13</sup>However, in the first year of his rule, Babylon's King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God. <sup>14</sup>King Cyrus also took the gold and silver equipment from God's house out of the temple in Babylon (the ones that Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and placed in the temple in Babylon) and gave them to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor. <sup>15</sup>Cyrus said to him, "Take this equipment and go and put it in Jerusalem's temple, and let God's house be rebuilt on its original site." <sup>16</sup>Then Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of God's house in Jerusalem. From then until now the rebuilding work has continued but is not yet complete."

<sup>17</sup>And now, if it seems good to the king, may a search be made in the royal archives in Babylon to see if King Cyrus had issued a decree to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem. Then may the king be pleased to send us his decision about this matter.

### Darius responds

**G**Then King Darius made a decree, and they searched the archives where the documents were stored in Babylon. <sup>2</sup>But a scroll was found in Ecbatana, the capital of the province of Media, on which was written the following:

<sup>1</sup>Heb lacks *preparing*. <sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain; so also 5:9 <sup>n</sup>LXX, Syr, Aram *We*

5:1 *Haggai and Zechariah*: These two prophets were particularly concerned about the rebuilding of the temple and regularization of the worship in the temple. See the books of Haggai and Zechariah.

5:2 *God's prophets were with them*: Prophetic support is crucial for the work on the temple to resume.

5:5 *Their God looked after the elders of the Jews*: Divine favor is over the building project. Despite an intimidating inspection from the ruling authorities, the Jews continue their work unafraid.

5:6-17 The authorities ruling a region called Beyond the River write a letter to King Darius requesting an inquiry into the building permission. A response from the elders of Judah is quoted within this letter addressed to the imperial administration (5:11-16).

5:11 *a great king of Israel*: Solomon.

5:12 *But because our ancestors angered the God of heaven*: The destruction of the temple and the exile of the people happened because of the sinful ways of God's people. This theological interpretation is consistent with the

perspective of the book of Deuteronomy, which says that disobedience to the instruction from God results in judgment and punishment, particularly expulsion from the God-given land. *Nebuchadnezzar* ruled over the Babylonian Empire between 605 and 562 BCE. He captured Jerusalem in 597 and again in 587 BCE. See 1 Kings 24–25.

5:13 *a decree*: See Ezra 1:1; 6:3.

5:16 *Sheshbazzar*: It was Zerubbabel who laid the foundations of the temple (see Ezra 3:10). Governor Zerubbabel, along with the high priest Jeshua, is consistently named as the leader of the building project (Ezra 3:2; 4:3; 5:2; Hag 1:14; Zech 4:9). Sheshbazzar was the one who was entrusted by Cyrus with transporting and delivering the temple equipment back to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:7-11). With Sheshbazzar returned a group of compatriots to Jerusalem. Later, another wave of exiled Jews came back with Zerubbabel. A prolonged period of time elapsed since the initial effort to restore the temple. Zerubbabel continued the work Sheshbazzar had begun.

6:1-12 King Darius responds. The Persian ruler issues a



A memorandum—<sup>3</sup>In the first year of his rule, King Cyrus made a decree: Concerning God's house in Jerusalem: Let the house at the place where they offered sacrifices be rebuilt and let its foundations be retained. Its height will be ninety feet and its width ninety feet, <sup>4</sup>with three layers of dressed stones and one<sup>e</sup> layer of timber. The cost will be paid from the royal treasury. <sup>5</sup>In addition, the gold and silver equipment from God's house, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, is to be restored, that is, brought back to Jerusalem and put in their proper place in God's house.

<sup>6</sup>Now you, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and you, their colleagues, the officials in the province Beyond the River, keep away! <sup>7</sup>Leave the work on this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its original site.

<sup>8</sup>I also issue a decree about what you should do to help these elders of the Jews as they rebuild this house of God: The total cost is to be paid to these people, and without delay, from the royal revenue that is made up of the tribute of the province Beyond the River. <sup>9</sup>And whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, or sheep for entirely burned offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem—let that be given to them day by day without fail <sup>10</sup>so that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the lives of the king and his sons.

<sup>11</sup>I also decree that if anyone disobeys this edict, a beam is to be pulled out of the house of the guilty party, and the guilty party will then be impaled upon it. The house will be turned into a trash heap.

<sup>12</sup>May the God who has established his name there overthrow any king or people who try to change this order or to destroy God's house in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have decreed it; let it be done with all diligence.

### **God's house is completed and dedicated**

<sup>13</sup>Then Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and their colleagues carried out the order of King Darius with all diligence. <sup>14</sup>So the elders of the Jews built and prospered because of the prophesying of the prophet Haggai and Zechariah, Iddo's son. They finished building by the command of Israel's God and of Cyrus, Darius, and King Artaxerxes of Persia. <sup>15</sup>This house was completed on the third day of the month of Adar,<sup>f</sup> in the sixth year of the rule of King Darius.

<sup>16</sup>Then the Israelites, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles joyfully celebrated the dedication of this house of God. <sup>17</sup>At the dedication of this house of God,

<sup>g</sup>LXX; Heb *new* <sup>h</sup>February–March

decree making allowance for a generous support on behalf of the Jerusalem temple. The decree not only grants permission for the work to continue but it also specifies the material support for the construction from the royal coffer as well as provisions for the regular sacrificial worship at the temple.

6:2-5 Darius' letter quotes an earlier decree of Cyrus. In this letter, unlike the one in Ezra 1:2-4, Cyrus doesn't command the Jewish community to raise funds for building the temple.

6:4 *The cost*: Cyrus declares that the Persian government will pay for the construction of the Jerusalem temple.

6:5 *the gold and silver equipment*: The holy objects used at the temple are returned to their original place.

6:6-7 *keep away*: Based on the older decree of Cyrus, Darius orders the top officials of the region to leave the Jews alone so they may go about their own business.

6:8 *tribute of the province Beyond the River*: The financial provision for the Jerusalem temple is not from the central Persian government, but specifically from the revenue collected within governor Tattenai's province.

6:9 *whatever is needed*: The Persian king commands that the daily sacrificial offerings that are made in the Jerusalem temple be supplied with a generous and regular

contribution. This familiarity with the Jewish worship indicates that the letter was drafted by a Jewish scribe.

6:10 *pray for the lives*: The Jews are expected to pray for the Persian king and his sons.

6:12 *the God who has established his name there*: This is a central theological notion concerning the Jerusalem temple from Deuteronomy 12:11.

6:13-22 The temple is finally completed and dedicated.

6:14 *because of the prophesying*: Haggai and Zechariah persuaded the people to build the house of God. *by the command of*: With the sanction of both the divine and earthly authorities, the Jerusalem temple project prospered.

6:16 *the Israelites*: Technically, by this time the northern kingdom had long ceased to exist. With the Assyrian capture of Samaria, 10 tribes disappeared. However, the biblical writer refers to the community of Judah as Israel to emphasize the unity of God's people. *and the rest of the returned exiles*: The society of Judah consisted of only three tribes: Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. The constituents of the community considered themselves proudly as the genuine Israel. See note on Ezra 3:8. *joyfully celebrated*: Also at the inauguration of the first temple, Solomon and the people rejoiced greatly and praised the Lord. See 2 Chronicles 7:10.

6:17 *At the dedication*: The dedication ceremony of this

6:3 1Ki 6:36

6:9 Lv 1:3,

Lv 2:13

6:15 Ezr 6:14;

Est 3:7

6:18 Nm 3:6,  
Nm 8:9;  
1Ch 24:1;  
2Ch 35:5  
6:21 Ezr 6:22;  
Ezr 9:11; Neh 9:2  
6:22 Ex 12:15;  
2Ch 30:21;  
Ps 42:4; Psv 21:1  
7:1 2Ki 22:4;  
1Ch 6:13;  
1Ch 9:11;  
Ezr 7:21; Neh 2:1  
7:2 2Sa 8:17;  
1Ki 2:35; 1Ch 6:8  
7:5 Ex 6:25;  
Lv 10:6, 1v 10:12;  
Nm 25:7;  
Josh 24:33;  
Jdg 20:28  
7:6 Ezr 7:9;  
Ezr 7:11;  
Ezr 7:21;  
Ezr 7:28;  
Neh 12:36

they offered one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a purification offering for all Israel, twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. <sup>18</sup>They set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their sections for the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the scroll from Moses.

<sup>19</sup>On the fourteenth day of the first month,<sup>\*</sup> the returned exiles celebrated the Passover. <sup>20</sup>All of the priests and the Levites had purified themselves; all of them were clean. They slaughtered the Passover animals for all the returned exiles, their fellow priests, and themselves. <sup>21</sup>The Israelites who had returned from exile, together with all those who had joined them by separating themselves from the pollutions of the nations of the land to worship the LORD, the God of Israel, ate the Passover meal.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>22</sup>They also joyfully celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days, because the LORD had made them joyful by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria toward them so that he assisted them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.

### Introduction to Ezra

**7**After this, in the rule of Persia's King Artaxerxes, Ezra son of Seraiah son of Azariah son of Hilkiah <sup>2</sup>son of Shallum son of Zadok son of Ahitub <sup>3</sup>son of Amariah son of Azariah son of Meraioth <sup>4</sup>son of Zerariah son of Uzzi son of Bukki <sup>5</sup>son of Abishua son of Phinehas son of Eleazar son of Aaron the chief priest—<sup>6</sup>this Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a scribe skilled in the Instruction from Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given. Moreover, the king gave him everything he requested because the LORD his God's power was with him.

<sup>7</sup>Some of the Israelites and some of the priests and the Levites, the singers and gatekeepers and the temple servants also came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. <sup>8</sup>They reached Jerusalem in the fifth month, in the seventh year of the king. <sup>9</sup>The journey from Babylon began on the first day of the first month, and they came to Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was upon him. <sup>10</sup>Ezra had determined to study and perform the LORD's Instruction, and to teach law and justice in Israel.

### Letter from Artaxerxes

<sup>11</sup>This is a copy of the letter that Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest and scribe, a scholar of the text of the LORD's commandments and his requirements for Israel:

<sup>12</sup>Artaxerxes, king of kings,

to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Instruction from the God of heaven. Peace!<sup>‡</sup>

And now <sup>13</sup>I decree that any of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom who volunteer to go to Jerusalem with you may go. <sup>14</sup>You are sent by the king and

<sup>¶</sup>Heb resumes with this verse. <sup>\*</sup>March–April, Nisan <sup>†</sup>Heb lacks *Passover meal*. <sup>‡</sup>7:12–26 is written in Aramaic.

<sup>§</sup>Syr, Vulg 1 Esdr 8:9; Aram *Perfect*

second temple resembles the celebration of the first temple built by Solomon. However, the offering is noticeably modest in comparison to Solomon's (1 Kgs 8; 2 Chron 7:4–7).

**6:18 the priests... and the Levites:** Moses established the office of the priests and Levites (Exod 29; Lev 8; Num 3; 4; 8). David assigned the division of the temple officials according to their functions (1 Chron 23–26).

**6:19–22** After the completion and dedication of the temple, the people celebrate the *Passover* and the *Festival of Unleavened Bread*. Two earlier purifications and reforms of the temple, those of King Hezekiah (739–687 BCE) and King Josiah (648–609 BCE), were completed with the observance of the Passover (see 2 Chron 30; 35).

**6:22 Unleavened Bread:** Bread that symbolizes misery. It is a reminder that the Israelites fled Egypt in a great hurry (Deut 16:3).

**7:1–10** Ezra and his work are introduced. Ezra is viewed as a second great teacher (like Moses) of God's Instruction. He brought the Instruction from Babylon. Thus he reintroduces God's word to the people of Judah and reorients them to the covenant with the Lord. His visit to Judah is of great significance. Ezra is an expert on the Instruction from Moses. He is an authority on matters

concerning the customs and beliefs that characterize Jewish life and faith.

**7:1–5** Ezra's genealogy shows that he belonged to a high-priestly family.

**7:1 After this:** The author introduces a new narrative with this connecting phrase, giving the impression that not much time elapsed between them. In fact, some 60 years between the completion of the temple and Ezra's return are not accounted for in the narrative.

**7:6 scribe:** an expert in writing and copying the Instruction from Moses. See Ezra 7:11.

**7:7 seventh year of King Artaxerxes:** Artaxerxes I, 458 BCE.

**7:11–26** The letter from Artaxerxes authorizes Ezra's return to Judah. The Persian king gives permission to Ezra and any Jews in Babylon who wish to return to Jerusalem. Given Ezra's particular expertise on the Judean teaching, he is expected to teach and safeguard the Instruction and order in the province. Ezra's trip also entails the delivery of some royal donations to the Jerusalem temple to ensure a regular sacrificial worship.

**7:13 the people of Israel or their priests or Levites:** the division by which the community members are identified—the lay people and two categories of the clergy.

**7:14 seven counselors:** The ancient Greek historian

his seven counselors to investigate Judah and Jerusalem according to the instruction from your God, which is in your hand.

<sup>15</sup>You should bring the silver and gold that the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, <sup>16</sup>together with any of the silver and gold that you find in the entire province of Babylonia. You should also bring the spontaneous gifts of the people and the priests, given freely for God's house in Jerusalem. <sup>17</sup>With this money you will be careful to buy bulls, rams, and lambs, as well as their grain offerings and their drink offerings. And you will offer them on the altar of God's house in Jerusalem. <sup>18</sup>As long as it is God's will, you and your colleagues may do what you think best with the rest of the silver and gold. <sup>19</sup>You will deliver the equipment that has been given to you for the service of God's house to the God of Jerusalem. <sup>20</sup>If anything else is required for God's house that you are responsible to provide, you may provide it from the royal treasury.

<sup>21</sup>I, King Artaxerxes, decree to all of the treasurers in the province Beyond the River: Whatever Ezra the priest and scribe of the Instruction from the God of heaven requires of you, it must be provided precisely, <sup>22</sup>even up to one hundred kikkars of silver, one hundred kors of wheat, one hundred baths<sup>a</sup> of wine, one hundred baths of oil, and unlimited salt. <sup>23</sup>Whatever the God of heaven commands will be done carefully for the house of the God of heaven, or wrath will come upon the realm of the king and his heirs. <sup>24</sup>You must also know that it is illegal for you to charge tribute, custom, or dues on any of the priests and Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God.

<sup>25</sup>And you, Ezra, based on the divine wisdom that you have, appoint supervisors and judges to adjudicate among all the people in the province Beyond the River who know the laws of your God. You will also teach those who do not know them. <sup>26</sup>Let judgment be strictly carried out upon anyone who does not obey the Instruction from your God and the law of your king, including death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment.

### ***Ezra prepares to leave***

<sup>27</sup>Bless the LORD, the God of our ancestors, who has moved the king to glorify the LORD's house in Jerusalem, <sup>28</sup>and who has demonstrated his graciousness for me before the king and his counselors and all the king's mighty officers. I took courage because the LORD my God's power was with me. I gathered leaders from Israel to go up with me.

<sup>a</sup>One bath is approximately twenty quarts or five gallons.

Herodotus explains that the Persian king entered into marriage only with seven leading royal families. Also see Esther 1:14. *to investigate*: Ezra is commissioned to investigate whether the inhabitants of Judah are abiding by their traditional set of norms—the Instruction, *which is in your hand*: Ezra brought the Instruction with him from Babylon. This Instruction is possibly the Pentateuch (the first five books of the OT).

7:15-16 Artaxerxes and his government offer financial contribution to the Jerusalem temple. They also give permission to Ezra to collect donations from the Babylonian Jewish community.

7:20 The king authorizes an unrestricted amount of provision for the Jerusalem temple to be disbursed from the imperial coffers.

7:21-24 Artaxerxes also gives Ezra a letter for the authorities in Beyond the River. They are commanded to provide Ezra with anything he requests for the sacrifice at the Jerusalem temple.

7:23 *the God of heaven*: The Persian king refers to the God of the Jews as a deity whose sovereignty extends beyond

*Free to Worship the Lord* The Persians understood that one of the most effective ways to gain the approval and loyalty of the native people was to show deference to their traditions. The imperial administration also recognized that temples were centers of communal life. Temples united and organized various segments of society, and the priests provided guidance and leadership to the community. Houses of worship possessed human, technical, and infrastructural resources. The restoration of a temple meant injecting life into virtually all aspects of the community.

the small confines of the Judean province. The Persians typically called their own god, Ahura Mazda, the Creator of Heaven and Earth. *wrath*: Artaxerxes' grandfather Darius supported the worship in Jerusalem so prayers on behalf of the imperial family might be offered. Artaxerxes makes generous contributions to the God of the Jews in order to avert any divine wrath.

7:24 *illegal for you to charge tribute, custom, or dues . . . servants of this house of God*: The Persian king grants tax-exempt status to the Jerusalem temple functionaries.

7:25 Ezra, as a priest and scribe, is commanded to organize the judicial system and teach the Instruction from the Lord to the Jews in Beyond the River. Priests were responsible for teaching the instructions from the Lord to the people (see 2 Kgs 17:26-28; 2 Chron 15:3; Mic 3:11).

7:27-28 Ezra prepares for the journey to Jerusalem. He praises the Lord for granting him favor with the Persian imperial government. He sets out to his ancestral land with confidence, knowing that God's hand was over the expedition to Judah. The people who volunteered to join Ezra were prominent members of the exiled community.

8:15 Ezr 7:7,  
Ezr 8:21,  
Ezr 8:31

8:18 1 Ch 6:19;  
Neh 8:7, Neh 9:4  
8:21 Lv 16:29;  
2Ch 20:3, 15:58:3

**8** These are the heads of the families, and this is the genealogy of those who went up with me during the rule of King Artaxerxes:

<sup>2</sup>of the family of Phinehas, Gershom; of Ithamar, Daniel; of David, Hattush, <sup>3</sup>Shecaniah's son;<sup>4</sup> of Parosh, Zechariah and with him were registered 150 men;

<sup>4</sup>of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai, Zerahiah's son and with him 200 men;

<sup>5</sup>of Zattu,<sup>6</sup> Shecaniah, Jahaziel's son and with him 300 men;

<sup>6</sup>of Adin, Ebed, Jonathan's son and with him 50 men;

<sup>7</sup>of Elam, Jeshaiiah, Athaliah's son and with him 70 men;

<sup>8</sup>of Shephatiah, Zebadiah, Michael's son and with him 80 men;

<sup>9</sup>of Joab, Obadiah, Jehiel's son and with him 218 men;

<sup>10</sup>of Bani,<sup>7</sup> Shelomith, Josphiah's son and with him 160 men;

<sup>11</sup>of Bebai, Zechariah, Bebai's son and with him 28 men;

<sup>12</sup>of Azgad, Johanan, Hakkatan's son and with him 110 men;

<sup>13</sup>of the last of Adonikam, namely Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah and with them 60 men;

<sup>14</sup>of Bigvai, Uthai and Zaccur and with them were 70 men.

### Voyage to Jerusalem

<sup>15</sup>I gathered them by the river that runs to Ahava, and there we camped for three days.

As I reviewed the people and the priests, I found no Levites there. <sup>16</sup>So I called for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, all leaders, together with Joiarib and Elnathan, who were wise. <sup>17</sup>I sent them<sup>8</sup> to Iddo, the leader at the place named Casiphia, telling them what to say to Iddo and his colleagues the temple servants at Casiphia, namely, to send us ministers for God's house. <sup>18</sup>Because we were favored by God, they brought us Sherebiah, a skillful man of the family of Mahli, Levi's son and Israel's grandson, together with his sons and relatives so that there were eighteen in total. <sup>19</sup>They also brought us Hashabiah and with him Jeshaiiah of the family of Merari, together with his relatives and their sons so that there were twenty in total. <sup>20</sup>In addition, there were two hundred twenty temple servants whom David and the princes had appointed to serve the Levites. These were all recorded by name.

<sup>21</sup>Then I called for a fast there at the Ahava River so that we might submit before our God and ask of him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our possessions. <sup>22</sup>I had been ashamed to ask the king for a group of soldiers and cavalry to help us in facing enemies on the way, because we had told the king, "The power of God favors all who seek him, but his fierce wrath is against all who abandon him." <sup>23</sup>So we fasted and prayed to our God for this, and he responded to us.

<sup>24</sup>Then I selected twelve of the leading priests, Sherebiah and Hashabiah and ten of their relatives with them. <sup>25</sup>I weighed out to them the silver and the gold and the equipment, the offering for the house of our God that the king, his counselors, his officials, and all Israel

<sup>7</sup>LXX and 1 Esdr 8:29; Heb of the descendants of Shecaniah <sup>8</sup>LXX and 1 Esdr 8:32; Heb lacks of Zattu. <sup>9</sup>LXX and 1 Esdr 8:36; Heb lacks of Bani. <sup>10</sup>Kethib I ordered them

8:1-14 Ezra returns to Judah with a sizeable company of volunteers—around 1,500. These people must have been highly motivated and zealous for Jerusalem and its temple, given the political and economic vulnerability they would experience in the backwater country.

8:1 *went up*: To go up means to go to Jerusalem, the holiest city of all. Jerusalem is the Lord's sacred earthly home (1 Kgs 8:1-13).

8:15-31 Voyage to Jerusalem.

8:15-20 Ezra finds no Levites among the recruits. The situation is quickly remedied when Mahli and his extended family members join Ezra and his company.

8:17 *to send us ministers for God's house*: The presence of the Levites is very important. The right personnel attending to the sacrificial worship at the temple authenticates the worship affairs at the holy place.

8:21 *fast*: to make oneself vulnerable, in supplication for divine mercy and help. Ezra proclaims a collective fast before setting out on a pivotal journey, in order to seek

divine protection for the long road ahead. Fasting may also be motivated by the desire to purify oneself by the act of depriving one of the most elementary human pleasures. According to Deuteronomy 23:14, in order for the Lord to travel with the Israelites, the camp must be holy. The journey from east to west posed potential safety challenges. Ezra was nervous about the possibility that the caravan might encounter marauding bandits on the prolonged journey. Especially, since Ezra and his company were transporting gold, silver, and other valuable goods, they were mindful of the possible attacks from robbers on the road. See Ezra 8:31. A similar reasoning for fasting may be found also in 2 Chronicles 20:3, "Frightened, Jehoshaphat decided to seek the Lord's help and proclaimed a fast for all Judah."

8:24 *twelve of the leading priests*: symbolic of the 12 tribes of Israel.

8:25-30 The priests and Levites are entrusted with guarding the gift offerings that had been donated by the

present there had offered. <sup>26</sup>I weighed out into their keeping six hundred fifty kikkars of silver, one hundred silver containers weighing a certain number of kikkars, one hundred kikkars of gold, <sup>27</sup>twenty gold bowls worth one thousand darics, and two containers of highly polished copper, which were as precious as gold. <sup>28</sup>I said to them, “You are holy to the LORD, and the equipment is holy; the silver and the gold are a spontaneous gift to the LORD, the God of your ancestors. <sup>29</sup>Guard them carefully until you weigh them out in Jerusalem before the officials of the priests, the Levites, and the heads of the families of Israel, within the rooms of the LORD’s house.” <sup>30</sup>So the priests and the Levites received the silver and the gold and the utensils as they were weighed out, in order to bring them to Jerusalem, to our God’s house.

<sup>31</sup>Then we left the Ahava River on the twelfth day of the first month<sup>a</sup> to go to Jerusalem. The power of our God was with us; he saved us from the power of the enemy and ambushes along the way.

**Finishing the journey**

<sup>32</sup>After arriving in Jerusalem, we rested there three days. <sup>33</sup>On the fourth day, the silver and the gold and the equipment were weighed out in our God’s house into the care of the priest named Meremoth, Uriah’s son, together with Eleazar, Phinehas’ son; and the Levites, Jozabad, Jeshua’s son, and Noadiah, Binnui’s son. <sup>34</sup>Everything was counted and weighed, and the total weight was recorded.

<sup>35</sup>At that time, those who had come from the captivity, the returned exiles, offered as entirely burned offerings to the God of Israel twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and twelve male goats as a purification offering. All this was an entirely burned offering to the LORD. <sup>36</sup>They also delivered the king’s orders to the royal chief administrators and governors of the province Beyond the River, who supported the people and God’s house.

**Facing a communal problem**

**9** When these tasks were finished, the officials approached me and said, “The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites haven’t kept themselves separate from the peoples of

8:27 1Ki 7:50;  
1Ch 28:17;  
2Ch 4:8;  
Ezr 1:10  
8:28 Lv 21:6  
8:32 Neh 2:11  
9:1 Nm 25:1;  
Jdg 3:5; 1Ki 11:1;  
Ezr 9:2

<sup>a</sup>March–April, Nisan

Persian king, his officials, and the Jewish community in Babylon.

8:28 *holy*: The objects that had been donated were destined for a sacred purpose. Therefore, Ezra commissions the priests and Levites, people who are dedicated to a sacred office, to take charge of the goods set apart for God’s house.

8:31 *we left... on the twelfth day of the first month*: The journey from Babylon to Judah took about four months. They departed two days before the Passover. The timing is significant. The departure from Babylon, the land of captivity, parallels the exodus from Egypt, the land of slavery. Ezra and his company reached Jerusalem in the fifth month, in the seventh year of the king (Ezra 7:8). Despite the lack of military escort, they arrived safely in Jerusalem with the treasures (see Ezra 8:22). The account of the journey concludes with Ezra’s declaration of God’s power and salvation—a testimony of divine favor upon the trip.

8:32-36 The treasures collected from Babylon are delivered to the Jerusalem temple.

8:35 *those who had come from the captivity, the returned exiles*: This parallel description of the group that arrived from Babylon seems redundant. It stresses that the life they left behind was one in captivity. They have now arrived to embrace permanent home and freedom. At the same time, this sentence underscores that only the returnees celebrated the sacrifice of entirely burned offerings to the Lord. No local Judean participated in this symbolic event.

8:36 *the royal chief administrators and governors... supported the people and God’s house*: The divine favor also

manifested through the supportive approval from the regional officials.

9:1-15 The joy of arrival and celebration doesn’t last long. Some of the officials bring to Ezra’s attention a matter that causes him great concern and distress. Jewish men had been marrying foreign women from the surrounding nations. Perhaps the mixed marriages occurred due to the gender imbalance in Judah. The returnees from Babylon were not accompanied by females. The leaders of the community led the way in this behavior. The Instruction sternly warned against entering into marriage alliances with the local peoples. People from other cultures worshipped their respective gods, and their religious practices would steer Jews from their own faith. The Instruction compared falling in such idolatrous behavior to prostitution (Exod 34:16). Apparently, the foreign women who married these Jewish men maintained their religious practice in Judah. From Ezra’s perspective, these women endangered the religious and cultural identity of Judah, and their idolatry wasn’t to be tolerated. Especially after returning from exile, from Ezra and Nehemiah’s perspective, the Judean community needed to set itself apart from other cultures and religious practices and solidify its covenantal commitment with the Lord. These men thought that the future of the Jewish identity must not be compromised by lax attitudes toward assimilation. Ezra and Nehemiah’s priority was to instruct, exhort, and persuade the people to comply with the Instruction.

9:1-4 Officials of Judah inform Ezra that Israelite men are marrying outside the Jewish community. The violation of

9:2 Ezr 9:1.  
Ezr 10:18;  
Neh 13:23

9:3 Nm 14:6;  
Josh 7:6;  
Neh 1:4;  
Job 1:20,  
Job 2:12

the neighboring lands with their detestable practices; namely, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. <sup>2</sup>They've taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and the holy descendants have become mixed with the neighboring peoples. <sup>b</sup>Moreover, the officials and leaders have led the way in this unfaithfulness."

<sup>3</sup>When I heard this, I tore my clothes and cloak, pulled out hair from my head and beard, and sat down in shock. <sup>4</sup>Then all those who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me on account of the transgression of the returned exiles while I remained sitting in shock until the evening sacrifice.

### *Ezra prays*

<sup>5</sup>At the time of the evening sacrifice, I ended my penitential acts. While still wearing<sup>c</sup> my torn clothes and cloak, I fell upon my knees, spread out my hands to the LORD my God, <sup>6</sup>and said,

"My God, I'm too ashamed to lift up my face to you. Our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown to the heavens.

<sup>7</sup>"From the days of our ancestors to this day, we've been deep in guilt. On account of our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been handed over to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as is now the case.

<sup>8</sup>"But now, for a brief while the LORD our God has shown favor in leaving us survivors and in giving us a stake in his holy place. Our God cheered us<sup>d</sup> and revived us for a little while in our slavery. <sup>9</sup>Even though we are slaves, our God hasn't abandoned us in our slavery. Instead, he's shown us his graciousness before Persia's kings by reviving us to set up our God's house, to repair its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judea and Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup>"And now, our God, what will we say after this? We have abandoned your commandments, <sup>11</sup>which you commanded through your servants the prophets, saying: 'The land which you are about to enter to possess is a land polluted by the impurity of the neighboring peoples.'<sup>e</sup> Their detestable practices have filled it with uncleanness from end to end.

<sup>b</sup>Or *peoples of the lands* <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Or *brightened our eyes* <sup>e</sup>Or *peoples of the lands*

the Instruction has been committed particularly by some of the prominent citizens of Judah. Ezra laments that the covenant has been broken. Ezra rejects mixed marriages because assimilation to other cultures poses a challenge to a cohesive Jewish identity.

9:1 *When these tasks were finished:* Ezra and his companions successfully deliver the temple treasures and money. They also present to the regional authorities the Persian imperial decree, which certifies that Ezra's work in Judah is backed by the central government's support. *the officials:* the lay rulers of the community, the chief administrators. *detestable practices:* abhorrent acts that are particularly related to idolatry. *the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites:* The Israelites had been instructed by God to utterly destroy the seven Canaanite nations. These seven nations were seen as the source of idolatry and constant threat to engage Jews in the same practice. Deuteronomy 7:1-4 explicitly prohibits marriage with the seven nations. The Ammonites and Moabites might have been added to the list by Ezra, based on Deuteronomy 23:3. There these two ethnic groups are banned from being admitted to the Lord's presence. The inclusion of the Egyptians and Edomites in the ban may be due to Deuteronomy 23:7-8. Entering into marriage alliances with these foreign nations had political and economic implications. During the exilic and post-exilic time, there was a power vacuum in the province of Judah. Ezra might have felt that the political vulnerability of Judah was further compromised by a political and cultural encroachment from the neighboring nations.

9:3 *I tore my clothes and cloak, pulled out hair from my head*

*and beard:* signs of great mourning. Plucking the hair expresses great anguish and pain.

9:4 *I remained sitting in shock until the evening sacrifice:* Ezra takes the transgression so seriously that he is speechless. Judah had been dealt with harshly by the Lord due to their transgression of the Instruction in the first place. Ezra had returned to his ancestral land purposefully to restore Judah's commitment to God's commandments. Yet the heads of the community were committing egregious violations of the Instruction.

9:6-15 *Ezra's penitential prayer intercedes on behalf of the community.* In his prayer of corporate confession of sin, Ezra identifies himself with the community. He doesn't remove himself from the guilty party. His intercessory prayer is similar to that of Moses (Exod 32:30-33), Jeremiah (Jer 3:25; 9:1), Nehemiah (Neh 1:6-7), and Daniel (Dan 9:5-14). Ezra acknowledges the wrongs committed by the community as well as God's justice and mercy. Ezra emphasizes that the Lord's mercy outweighs the severity of the iniquity. As a righteous God, God allows a few survivors to remain despite the guilt.

9:8 *Our God cheered us and revived us:* See Psalm 30:5.

9:11 Ezra is an expert in the Instruction from God. His prayer demonstrates his intimate knowledge of God's word, quoting from the Instruction and the prophets. *through your servants the prophets:* The Lord warned about the temptation of idolatry through the prophet Moses ahead of Israel's entry to the promised land. Moses is the quintessential prophet of the Lord (Deut 18:15; 34:10). Moses' successors repeated the divine injunctions (Mal 2:11). *The land which you are about to enter to possess:* See Deuteronomy 4:5. *a land polluted:* See Leviticus 18:25;

<sup>12</sup>So now, do not give your daughters to their sons in marriage, do not take their sons for your daughters to marry, and never seek their peace or prosperity. This is so you may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.'

<sup>13</sup>After all that has happened to us because of our evil deeds and our great guilt—although you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserve and have allowed us to survive as we do—<sup>14</sup>will we once again break your commandments and intermarry with the peoples who practice these detestable things? Would you not be so angry with us that you leave us without remnant or survivor? <sup>15</sup>LORD, God of Israel, you are righteous, for we have survived and a few remain until now. Here we are before you in our guilt, though no one can face you because of this guilt."<sup>f</sup>

### The community responds

**10**While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and bowing down before God's house, a very large crowd of men, women, and children of Israel gathered around him. The people also wept in distress. <sup>2</sup>Then Shecaniah, Jehiel's son, from the family of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We've been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the neighboring peoples.<sup>g</sup> But even now, there is hope for Israel in spite of this. <sup>3</sup>Let's now make a covenant with our God to send away all these wives and their children, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God. Let it be done according to the Instruction. <sup>4</sup>Get up, for it is your duty to deal with this matter; we will support you. Be strong and act."<sup>h</sup> So Ezra got up and made the leading priests, the Levites, and all Israel take a solemn pledge that they would do as had been said. So they took a solemn pledge.

### The assembly decides

<sup>6</sup>Then Ezra got up from the area in front of God's house and went to the room of Jehohanan, Eliashib's son, where he spent<sup>h</sup> the night. He didn't eat food or drink water, for he was mourning because of the unfaithfulness of the exiles.

<sup>7</sup>An order was then circulated throughout Judah and Jerusalem that all the returned exiles should gather in Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup>All those who failed to appear within three days, as mandated by the officials and elders, would have all their property taken away. They would be separated from the congregation of the exiles. <sup>9</sup>So within three days, all the people of Judah and Benjamin gathered in Jerusalem. It was the twentieth day of the ninth month.<sup>i</sup> All of the people sat in the area in front of God's house, trembling because of this order and because of the heavy rain.

<sup>10</sup>Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have been unfaithful by marrying foreign women and adding to Israel's guilt. <sup>11</sup>But now, make a confession to the LORD God of

10:1 2Ch 20:9; Ezr 7:10, Ezr 9:1; Dn 9:20

10:3 Dt 7:2; 2Ki 11:17; 2Ch 34:31; Ezr 9:4; Neh 9:38

10:5 Neh 5:12; Neh 13:25

10:6 Dt 9:18; Ezr 10:1; Neh 12:22

10:10 Nm 32:14; Josh 22:18; 2Ch 28:13

10:11 Lv 26:40; Ezr 9:1; Prv 28:13

<sup>f</sup>Heb lacks *guilt*. <sup>g</sup>Or *peoples of the lands*. <sup>h</sup>LXX, 1 Esdr 9:2; Heb *where he went*. <sup>i</sup>November–December, Kislev

20:22; Lamentations 1:17. *the impurity of the neighboring peoples*: See Deuteronomy 18:9.

9:12 *do not give your daughters*: See Deuteronomy 7:3. *never seek their peace or prosperity*: See Deuteronomy 23:6. *so you may be strong*: See Deuteronomy 11:8. *eat the good of the land*: See Isaiah 1:19.

9:13 *After all that has happened to us because of our evil deeds*: The people knew of the dire consequences of disobedience. God's judgment came in the form of the destruction of Jerusalem and exile to Babylon. *allowed us to survive as we do*: God's mercy and faithfulness left a remaining few to start over.

9:14–15 God's mercy surpasses God's justice. Sinners don't receive the judgment they deserve. See Exodus 20:5–6.

10:1 Ezra's genuine distress and affliction move the community. The whole community joins him in a prayer reflecting a desire to turn away from sin.

10:2 One of the leaders steps forward and acknowledges that the mixed marriages between Jewish men and foreign women are a sin.

10:3 *Let's now make a covenant with our God to send away all these wives and their children*: The official makes a

radical proposition to expel from the community all the foreign wives and the children produced from mixed marriages. *according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God*: Perhaps, the officials approached Ezra about the mixed marriages because they had been convicted by Ezra's teaching of the Instruction (Ezra 9:1).

10:4 *we will support you. Be strong and act*: These words of encouragement echo God's commission to Joshua and the people's ensuing affirmation of Joshua's new leadership. See Joshua 1:16–18.

10:7–8 *taken away*: The property would be confiscated and transferred over to the community. When Ezra was dispatched by the Persian King Artaxerxes, he had been issued authorization to confiscate the goods of those who disobeyed the Lord's Instruction, as well as to execute judgment in the form of death, banishment, or imprisonment.

10:9 *the ninth month*: November/December, a season of heavy rain. *all of the people*: The entire community is summoned to participate in deciding on the issue of intermarriage.

10:14 Nm 25:4;  
2Ch 29:10,  
2Ch 30:8

your ancestors and do his will. Separate yourselves from the neighboring peoples<sup>1</sup> and from the foreign wives.”

<sup>12</sup>The whole assembly shouted in reply, “Yes. We must do as you have said. <sup>13</sup>But there are many people, and it’s the rainy season; we can’t continue to stand outside. Nor can this task be completed in a day or two because many of us have sinned in this matter. <sup>14</sup>Let our leaders represent the entire assembly. Let all in our towns who have taken foreign wives come at appointed times, along with the elders and judges of every town, until God’s great anger at us on account of this matter be averted.” <sup>15</sup>Only Jonathan, Asahel’s son, and Jahzeiah, Tikvah’s son, opposed this; Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levites supported them.

### Resolving the issue

<sup>16</sup>Then the returned exiles did so. Ezra the priest chose<sup>a</sup> certain men, heads of families, each representing their family houses. Each of them was designated by name. On the first day of the tenth month<sup>1</sup> they sat down to examine the matter. <sup>17</sup>By the first day of the first month,<sup>2</sup> they had come to the end of all the men who had married foreign women.

<sup>18</sup>Of the family of priests, there were found the following who had married foreign women—of the family of Jeshua, Jozadak’s son and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. <sup>19</sup>They promised to send their wives away, and their compensation offering was a ram of the flock for their guilt.

<sup>20</sup>Of the family of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah.

<sup>21</sup>Of the family of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uzziash.

<sup>22</sup>Of the family of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elashah.

<sup>23</sup>Of the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is, Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

<sup>24</sup>Of the singers: Eliashib. Of the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

<sup>25</sup>Of Israel: of the family of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Hashabiah,<sup>3</sup> and Benaiah.

<sup>26</sup>Of the family of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah.

<sup>27</sup>Of the family of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza.

<sup>28</sup>Of the family of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai.

<sup>29</sup>Of the family of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiash, Jashub, Sheal, and Jeremoth.

<sup>30</sup>Of the family of Pahath-moab: Adna, Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh.

<sup>31</sup>Of the family of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, <sup>32</sup>Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah.

<sup>33</sup>Of the family of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei.

<sup>34</sup>Of the family of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel, <sup>35</sup>Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhai, <sup>36</sup>Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, <sup>37</sup>Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu.

<sup>38</sup>Of the family of Binnui:<sup>4</sup> Shimei, <sup>39</sup>Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiash, <sup>40</sup>Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, <sup>41</sup>Azareel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, <sup>42</sup>Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph.

<sup>43</sup>Of the family of Nebu: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah.

<sup>44</sup>All these men<sup>5</sup> had married foreign women, some of whom had borne children.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Or peoples of the lands <sup>1</sup>1 Esdr 9:16; Syr; Heb *And there were separated* <sup>1</sup>December–January, Tevet <sup>2</sup>March–April, Nisan <sup>2</sup>1 Esdr 9:26; LXX, Heb *Malchijah* <sup>3</sup>LXX, Heb *Bani, Binnui* <sup>4</sup>Heb lacks *men*. <sup>5</sup>Heb uncertain; 1 Esdr 9:36 *they sent them away with their children*.

10:10–11 *marrying*: Ezra publicly denounces the sin of intermarriage. He exhorts the community to divorce their foreign wives.

10:12 The community assents in unison.

10:16–44 Intermarriage must have been widespread

in Judah. The investigation runs for three months. The commission identifies 113 men who had married foreign women.

10:19 *compensation offering*: See Leviticus 5:15–19. The guilt offering must be followed by full restitution.



# NEHEMIAH

See the introduction to Ezra and Nehemiah at the beginning of Ezra.

## **I. Return of Nehemiah and Restoring Jerusalem's Walls (1:1–7:73a)**

- A. Loss of Jerusalem (1:1-3)
- B. Nehemiah's confession (1:4-11b)
- C. Cupbearer's plea (1:11c–2:8)
- D. Inspecting Jerusalem (2:9-15)
- E. The project begins (2:16–5:19)
  - 1. Let's rebuild (2:16-20)
  - 2. Rebuilding the gates and walls (3:1-31)
  - 3. Opposition mounts (4:1-12)
  - 4. Armed guards protect the builders (4:13-23)
  - 5. Internal unrest (5:1-13)
  - 6. Generous Governor Nehemiah (5:14-19)
- F. Nehemiah avoids his enemies (6:1-19)
- G. The wall is complete (7:1-3)
- H. Nehemiah registers the families (7:4-73a)

## **II. Ezra Reads the Instruction Aloud (7:73b–10:39)**

- A. The first day of the reading (7:73b–8:12)
- B. The people celebrate the Festival of Booths (8:13-18)
- C. Remembering the Lord's mighty deeds (9:1-37)
- D. Commitment to follow the Instruction (9:38–10:39)

## **III. Nehemiah Completes the Restoration Work (11:1–13:31)**

- A. Inhabitants of Jerusalem (11:1–12:26)
- B. Dedication of the wall (12:27-39)
- C. In God's house (12:40-47)
- D. Restoring the temple (13:1-14)
- E. Keeping the Sabbath (13:15-22)
- F. Marrying foreign women (13:23-31)

*Kyong-Jin Lee*



The western wall of the temple in Jerusalem  
*iStockPhoto*

1:1 Neh 10:1;  
Est 1:2; Dn 8:2  
1:3 2Ki 25:10;  
Neh 2:3,  
Neh 2:17,  
Neh 7:6  
1:4 Est 9:3  
1:5 Dn 9:4

### Loss of Jerusalem

**1** These are the words of Nehemiah, Hachaliah's son.  
In the month of Kislev,<sup>a</sup> in the twentieth year,<sup>b</sup> while I was in the fortress city of Susa,<sup>c</sup> Hanani, one of my brothers, came with some other men from Judah. He talked them about the Jews who had escaped and survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>They told me, "Those in the province who survived the captivity are in great trouble and shame! The wall around Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire!"

### Confession

<sup>4</sup>When I heard this news, I sat down and wept. I mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup>I said:

"LORD God of heaven, great and awesome God, you are the one who keeps covenant and is truly faithful to those who love you and keep your commandments. <sup>6</sup>Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant, which I now pray before you night and day for your servants, the people of Israel.

"I confess the sins of the people of Israel, which we have committed against you. Both I and my family have sinned. <sup>7</sup>We have wronged you greatly. We haven't kept the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances that you commanded your servant Moses.

<sup>8</sup>"Remember the word that you gave to your servant Moses when you said, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples. <sup>9</sup>But if you return to me and keep my commandments by really doing them, then, even though your outcasts live<sup>e</sup> under distant skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place that I have chosen as a dwelling for my name.' <sup>10</sup>They are your servants and your people. They are the ones whom you have redeemed by your great power and your strong hand.

<sup>11</sup>"LORD, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in honoring your name. Please give success to your servant today and grant him favor in the presence of this man!"

<sup>a</sup>November–December <sup>b</sup>Of Artaxerxes <sup>c</sup>Heb lacks *live*.

1:1 *Nehemiah*: The name has two components, "console" and the shortened form "yah" from the divine name Yahweh. *Kislev*: the ninth month of the Jewish year (November/December). *in the twentieth year*: of Artaxerxes I, 445 BCE. *fortress city of Susa*: The winter palace of the Persian kings was located in Susa, the ancient capital city of the Elamites. Cyrus the Great made the city his seat of government when he assumed power from the Babylonians. Susa is also where King Ahasuerus held his extravagant drinking feast (Esth 1). Daniel has his vision regarding the Persian Empire while in Susa (Dan 8).

1:2 *the Jews who had escaped and survived the captivity*: In 587 BCE, Judah was conquered by the Babylonians. In the eleventh year of King Zedekiah, after an 18-month revolt and siege, Jerusalem fell, and the temple was destroyed. Judah's last king was removed from the throne. At this time, many of the Judean leaders were deported to Babylon. Most of the residents of Judah, who were peasants, were left behind to go about their regular business. The state of the province was markedly diminished. However, outside of Jerusalem regular life mostly continued. It's not clear here if Nehemiah is inquiring about the dejected state of Judah brought about by this Babylonian destruction, or if a more recent devastation is affecting the neighboring peoples of Judah.

1:3 Hanani and his associates bring Nehemiah a report of the distressing state of affairs back in Judah. *The wall around Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire!*: Thanks to the edict of Cyrus the Great, some of the exiled Jews started returning to Judah in 538 BCE. Yet the wall remained in disrepair since its destruction in 587 BCE. It's highly possible that this state of

neglect continued in part because of the Samaritan interference with the restoration efforts. The Samaritan officials persuaded the Persian government that the rebuilding efforts in Judah under Zerubbabel's leadership were for the purpose of rebelling against the imperial power (see Ezra 4). It's also possible that some surrounding nations had recently taken advantage of the vulnerable condition of Judah. Thus the damages mentioned here are fresh. According to 1 Kings 9:15, it was King Solomon who built the wall of Jerusalem.

1:4 *I mourned for days, fasting and praying*: Compare with Joel 1:14; Isaiah 58:1-14; Daniel 9:3. *God of heaven*: a common way to refer to God in the post-exilic documents (cf. 2 Chron 36:23; Ezra 1:2; 5:11-12; 6:9-10; 7:12, 21, 23).

1:5-11 Nehemiah's prayer echoes language typically found in the book of Deuteronomy.

1:5 *who keeps covenant*: See Deuteronomy 7:9; 29:8. *truly faithful to those who love you and keep your commandments*: See Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9.

1:7 *commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances*: Permanent occupancy of the new land was attached to the observance of God's word (Deut 4:1, 5, 8, 14; 5:31; 6:1; 12:1). Moses charged the Israelites to always teach and observe God's commandments (Deut 6:20; 8:11).

1:8-9 *If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples*: a summary of Deuteronomy 4:30.

1:10 *redeemed by your great power and your strong hand*: from the life of slavery in Egypt (cf. Deut 9:26).

2:1 Nehemiah is a *cupbearer*, a favored official in the court of the Persian King Artaxerxes (464–424 BCE). Royal court positions in the ancient world required a great deal of intimacy and confidentiality. Court physicians, emissaries,

*Cupbearer's plea*

2 At that time, I was a cupbearer to the king. <sup>1</sup>In the month of Nisan, <sup>d</sup> in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, the king was about to be served wine. I took the wine and gave it to the king. Since I had never seemed sad in his presence, <sup>2</sup>the king asked me, "Why do you seem sad? Since you aren't sick, you must have a broken heart!"

I was very afraid <sup>3</sup>and replied, "May the king live forever! Why shouldn't I seem sad when the city, the place of my family's graves, is in ruins and its gates destroyed by fire?"

<sup>4</sup>The king asked, "What is it that you need?"

I prayed to the God of heaven <sup>5</sup>and replied, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor with you, please send me to Judah, to the city of my family's graves so that I may rebuild it."

<sup>6</sup>With the queen sitting beside him, the king asked me, "How long will you be away and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and I told him how long I would be gone.

<sup>7</sup>I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may letters be given me addressed to the governors of the province Beyond the River to allow me to travel to Judah. <sup>8</sup>May the king also issue a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, directing him to supply me with timber for the beams of the temple fortress gates, for the city wall, and for the house in which I will live."

The king gave me what I asked, for the gracious power of my God was with me.

*Inspecting Jerusalem*

<sup>9</sup>So I went to the governors of the province <sup>e</sup>Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. The king had sent officers of the army and cavalry with me.

<sup>10</sup>When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard this, they were very angry that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

<sup>11</sup>When I reached Jerusalem and had been there for three days, <sup>12</sup>I set out at night, taking only a few people with me. I didn't tell anyone what my God was prompting me to do for

<sup>d</sup>March–April <sup>e</sup>Heb lacks of the province.

and cupbearers were often foreign individuals who had gained the ruler's trust (cf. Gen 40 and the story of Joseph, who served in Pharaoh's court).

2:2 *I was very afraid*: Nehemiah's sadness over the desolate condition of his ancestral province was genuine. But his sadness in the presence of the king could have been seen as offensive. Nehemiah is afraid that he might have upset the king.

2:3 *Why shouldn't I seem sad*: See Isaiah 61:3, which expressed sadness over the same conditions in Judah, the city, the place of my family's graves: Nehemiah doesn't identify Jerusalem by name. His reservation may be due to the reputation Jerusalem had gained as a city of sedition and rebellion. Apparently this information could be found in the royal annals of the Persian administration (Ezra 4:12, 15).

2:5 *send me to Judah . . . so that I may rebuild it*: Nehemiah's request isn't merely a nostalgic desire to see his ancestors' city back in its former state. A restored Jerusalem would signify the continuation of the Jewish identity and selfhood. Security and pride would be restored. The inhabitants who stayed would regain their confidence. Politically and culturally, the removal of the marks of the devastation would also signal removal of the shame and humiliation suffered at the hand of the conquerors. Reinstated worship practices in the temple would announce the Lord's restoration of Judah's fortunes. A monumental project such as the rebuilding of Jerusalem, a subjugated city, required imperial authorization. The rebuilding efforts could certainly be viewed as a political statement—an attempt for insurrection against the imperial power. A newly vibrant city could also pose a threat to the neighboring nations. See Ezra 4.

2:6 *I told him how long I would be gone*: Nehemiah remained in Judah for 13 years (Neh 5:14; 13:6).

2:7 *letters*: imperial authorization for Nehemiah's safe conduct through the Persian provinces between Susa and Jerusalem. The news of Nehemiah's visit to Judah may not be well received by the officials in the surrounding provinces. Some of them had tried to foil Judah's attempt to rebuild Jerusalem. Thus Nehemiah is reasonably concerned about his personal safety.

2:8 *the gracious power of my God was with me*: Nehemiah's prayers have been answered (Ezra 7:9; 8:18, 22; Neh 2:8, 18).

2:9 *province Beyond the River*: Darius the Great (521–486 BCE) was an astute statesman. He divided the vast Persian Empire into 20 satrapies, or provinces. Beyond the River (Euphrates) was the fifth province, and it included Palestine, Syria, Phoenicia, and Transjordan.

2:10 *Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite*: The Elephantine Papyri (407 BCE) from Egypt identify Sanballat as the governor of Samaria. There were two more Sanballats who served as governors of Samaria. We don't know whether Samaria exercised authority over Judah, but this passage shows clearly that there were rivalry and animosity between the two provinces. Samaritan officials raised suspicion about Judeans plotting rebellion against the imperial administration. Sanballat is an Akkadian name, which means, "Sin [the god] has healed." Though the text identifies Tobiah as an Ammonite, his name suggests that he was a Jew. His name means "Yahweh is good." *someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel*: See Nehemiah 4:1, 8; 6:2, 13. The imperial backing might have been perceived as a threat by the Samaritan officials.

2:12 *I set out at night*: Nehemiah's night survey of the Jerusalem walls is intended to avoid stirring jealousy among

2:1 Ezr 4:7,  
Ezr 7:11;  
Neh 1:11,  
Neh 1:1,  
Neh 5:14  
2:1 Est 3:7  
2:3 1Ki 1:31  
2:7 Ezr 8:36  
2:8 Neh 7:2  
2:10 Neh 4:1;  
Is 15:5; Jer 48:3,  
Jer 48:5  
2:11 Ezr 8:32

2:13 2Ch 26:9;  
Neh 3:13  
2:14 2Ki 20:20;  
Neh 3:15,  
Neh 12:37  
2:15 2Sa 15:23  
2:16 Ezr 9:2  
2:17 Neh 1:3;  
Ps 44:13, Ps 79:4  
2:20 Ezr 4:3  
3:1 Ezr 10:6

Jerusalem, and the only animal I took was the one I rode. <sup>13</sup>I went out by night through the Valley Gate past the Dragon's Spring to the Dung Gate so that I could inspect the walls of Jerusalem that had been broken down, as well as its gates, which had been destroyed by fire.

<sup>14</sup>Then I went on to the Spring Gate and to the King's Pool. Since there was no room for the animal on which I was riding to pass, <sup>15</sup>I went up by way of the valley by night and inspected the wall. Then I turned back and returned by entering through the Valley Gate.

### Let's rebuild

<sup>16</sup>The officials didn't know where I had gone or what I was doing. I hadn't yet told the Jews, the priests, the officials, the officers, or the rest who were to do the work. <sup>17</sup>So I said to them, "You see the trouble that we're in: Jerusalem is in ruins, and its gates are destroyed by fire! Come, let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we won't continue to be in disgrace." <sup>18</sup>I told them that my God had taken care of me, and also told them what the king had said to me.

"Let's start rebuilding!" they said, and they eagerly began the work.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>19</sup>But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and made fun of us. "What are you doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?"

<sup>20</sup>"The God of heaven will give us success!" I replied. "As God's servants, we will start building. But you will have no share, right, or claim in Jerusalem."

### Rebuilding the gates and walls

**3**Then Eliashib the high priest set to work with his fellow priests and built<sup>g</sup> the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set up its doors, then dedicated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred and as far as the Tower of Hananel.

<sup>f</sup>Or they strengthened their hands for the good. <sup>g</sup>Or rebuilt

those who don't want Judah to benefit from imperial attention. Judah's neighbors are hostile to Nehemiah's intention to refortify the walls of Jerusalem.

2:13 *Valley Gate past the Dragon's Spring to the Dung Gate:* Nehemiah's inspection starts at the western wall. Then he proceeds counterclockwise to the southernmost Dung Gate. *Dragon's Spring* is unknown.

2:14 *Spring Gate:* located in the Kidron valley. *King's Pool:* also known as the Pool of Siloam.

2:15 *the valley:* The Kidron valley runs north to south between the Mount of Olives and the eastern hill of the temple mount and David's City.

2:16 *The officials didn't know:* Nehemiah keeps his plan a secret, at least until he has a well-formulated plan to rally the community's full support. Nehemiah's initiative to repair and fortify Jerusalem faced challenges internally and externally. Neighboring peoples saw the repair of Jerusalem as Judah's intention to revamp its security efforts and thus harboring aspirations to become an independent state (see Ezra 4:4). There were social, economic, and political differences among the Judean residents. The local Judeans and the returnees from the exile disagreed over several issues, including who were the true Jewish people, and thus the legitimate possessors of the land.

2:17 *so that we won't continue to be in disgrace:* Nehemiah's speech appeals to the sense of dignity and duty of the Judeans. A presentable and secure city would restore people's confidence and pride in their nation. See Psalm 44. 2:18 *I told them:* Nehemiah's speech rallying the Judean residents to join his cause is compelling. He assures people that God approves of the project he is about to launch. Nehemiah also informs them that the work has already gained the imperial approval.

2:19 *Geshem the Arab:* possibly the king of Qedar, a nomadic people from northern Arabia. *Are you rebelling*

*against the king?* Such accusations of revolt were sensitive charges. The Persians were constantly involved in countering real or imaginary conspiracies among the subject nations. Indeed, around Nehemiah's time the imperial power had brutally quashed several revolts in various parts of the empire.

2:20 *The God of heaven will give us success!* Nehemiah is confident that the divine favor bestowed upon his trip would continue accompanying the reconstruction effort. *you will have no share, right, or claim in Jerusalem:* Just like Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra 4:3), Nehemiah is determined not to allow anyone from outside the community to participate in the rebuilding. Nehemiah might have been equally distrustful of outsiders, especially given the open hostility he had encountered at his arrival to Judah. 3:1-32 The list of builders and their respective assignments may originate from an independent source. Perhaps this record was preserved in the temple archives, and later inserted into the Nehemiah memoir. Nehemiah's fortification of the wall covers the entire perimeter. It starts and ends at the Sheep Gate. It proceeds counterclockwise. Some gates aren't mentioned: that is, the Gate of Ephraim (Neh 8:16) and the Prison Gate (Neh 12:38). Such omission may owe to a simple scribal error or an indication that there were originally two independent records. The fact that 41 groups enlisted shows that everyone in the community took part in the project. Each group works on the assigned post. The unity and solidarity of diverse social groups may explain how the vast wall around the city was completed in a mere 52 days (Neh 6:15). Among the builders are priests (3:1, 22, 28), goldsmiths, perfumers, merchants (3:8, 32), rulers of districts (3:14-19), temple servants (3:26), and keepers of the gate (3:29). Both men and women participate in the building endeavor (3:12).

<sup>2</sup>The people of Jericho built next to them, and Zaccur, Imri's son, built next to them. <sup>3</sup>The children of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and set up its doors, bolts, and bars. <sup>4</sup>Next to them Meremoth, Uriah's son and Hakkoz's grandson, made repairs. Meshullam, Berechiah's son and Meshezabel's grandson, made repairs next to them, and Zadok, Baana's son, made repairs next to them. <sup>5</sup>Next to them the people from Tekoa made repairs, but their officials wouldn't help with the work<sup>b</sup> of their supervisors.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Joiada, Paseah's son, and Meshullam, Besodeiah's son, repaired the Mishneh Gate;<sup>j</sup> they laid its beams and set up its doors, bolts, and bars. <sup>7</sup>Next to them repairs were made by Melatiah the Gibeonite, Jadon the Meronothite, and<sup>k</sup> the people of Gibeon and of Mizpah, who were ruled by the governor of the province Beyond the River.

<sup>8</sup>Uzziel, Harhaiah's son, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs next to them; and Haniah, one of the perfumers, made repairs next to him. They restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. <sup>9</sup>Next to them Rephaiah, Hur's son, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs. <sup>10</sup>Next to them Jedaiah, Harumaph's son, made repairs opposite his house, and Hat-tush, Hashabneiah's son, made repairs next to him.

<sup>11</sup>Malchijah, Harim's son, and Hasshub, Pahath-moab's son, repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. <sup>12</sup>Next to them Shallum, Hallohesh's son, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs, along with his daughters.

<sup>13</sup>Hanun and the people of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate; they built it and set up its doors, bolts, and bars. They also repaired fifteen hundred feet of the wall, as far as the Dung Gate.

<sup>14</sup>Malchiah, Rechab's son, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem, repaired the Dung Gate. He rebuilt it and set up its doors, bolts, and bars.

<sup>15</sup>And Shallum, Col-hozeh's son, ruler of the Mizpah district, repaired the Spring Gate. He rebuilt and covered it, and set up its doors, bolts, and bars. He also built the wall of the Pool of Shelah of the King's Garden, as far as the stairs that go down from David's City.

<sup>16</sup>After him, Nehemiah, Azbuk's son, ruler of half the Beth-zur district, repaired from the point opposite David's tombs as far as the artificial pool and the Warriors' House. <sup>17</sup>After him, the Levites made repairs: Rehun, Bani's son, and next to him Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, made repairs for his district. <sup>18</sup>After him, their relatives made repairs: Binnui,<sup>1</sup> Henadad's son, ruler of half the district of Keilah.

<sup>19</sup>Next to him, Ezer, Jeshua's son, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the Angle. <sup>20</sup>After him, Baruch, Zabbai's son, thoroughly repaired

3:3 2Ch 33:14  
3:5 Jdg 5:23  
3:13 2Ch 26:9;  
Neh 2:13;  
Neh 12:31  
3:15 Neh 2:14;  
Is 8:6  
3:16 2Ki 20:20;  
Josh 15:58;  
Neh 3:9, 12;  
Is 7:3; 2:29  
3:17 Josh 15:44;  
Isa 23:1;  
Neh 3:18  
3:18 Neh 3:9;  
Neh 3:12;  
Neh 3:17  
3:19 2Ch 26:9;  
Neh 3:15

<sup>b</sup>Or didn't bring their neck into the service of <sup>1</sup>Or lords <sup>3</sup>Or Old Gate <sup>4</sup>Syr; Heb lacks and. <sup>1</sup>Lxx, Syr; Heb Bvavi

3:1 *Eliashib the high priest*: a priest related to Tobiah the Ammonite with whom Nehemiah had an ongoing animosity (Neh 13:4, 7-8). Eliashib's grandson was married to Sanballat's daughter (Neh 13:28; see note on Neh 2:10). *Sheep Gate*: on the northeast wall facing toward Moab. *Tower of Hananel*: northernmost portion of the wall (Zech 14:10; Jer 31:38).

3:2 *people of Jericho*: 345 of them returned with Zerubbabel (Neh 7:36; Ezra 2:34).

3:3 *children of Hassenaah*: also called Senaah, and numbers 3,930 descendants (Neh 7:38; Ezra 2:35 counts 3630 descendants). *the Fish Gate*: western wall, facing Tyre and the Mediterranean Sea.

3:4 *Meremoth*: returned with Zerubbabel (Neh 12:3). "the silver and the gold and the equipment were weighed out in our God's house into the care of the priest named Meremoth" (Ezra 8:33). At a later date when a public ceremony was carried out according to God's Instruction, Meremoth the priest was one of the signatories (Neh 9:38). *Meshullam*: He repaired two sections of the wall. His daughter was married to Tobiah's son (Neh 6:18). He was an advocate for Tobiah (Neh 6:17-19). He stood alongside Ezra when the latter stood on a platform for a public reading of God's word (Neh 8:4).

3:5 *Tekoa*: Amos' home town (Amos 1:1).

3:6 *Mishneh Gate*: The double gate led to the valley.

3:7 *Gibeonite*: "woodcutters and water haulers for the community and for the LORD's altar" (Josh 9:27). *Mizpah*: six miles north of Jerusalem in Benjaminite territory.

3:8 *as far as the Broad Wall*: on the north side, a defensive wall built by King Hezekiah during the expansion of Jerusalem (2 Chron 32:3-5; 2 Kgs 20:20).

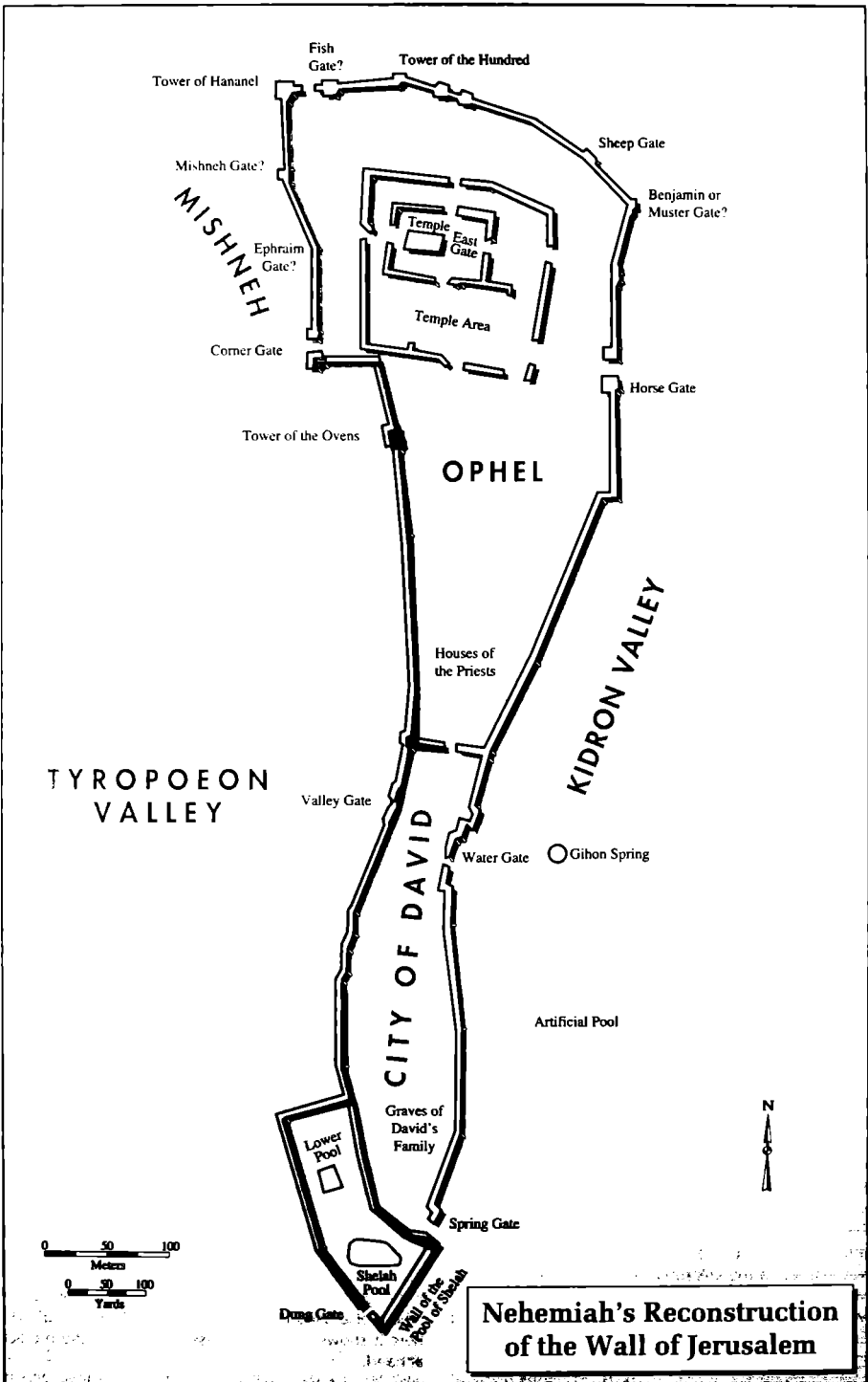
3:13 *Valley Gate*: on the southwest corner, King Uzziiah built towers here (2 Chron 26:9).

3:15 *Pool of Shelah*: the Siloam Pool, built by King Hezekiah in preparation for the siege conducted by Assyria's King Sennacherib (2 Chron 32:2-4; Isa 8:6). *stairs that go down from David's City*: east side of the city.

3:16 *opposite David's tombs*: We don't know the exact location because kings would not have been buried within the city walls. This may be a reference to the opposite side of the Kidron Valley, on the Mount of Olives.

3:17 *Hashabiah*: one of the leaders of the Levites (Neh 12:24) who also signed on to the commitment to follow the commandments (Neh 10:11).

3:20 *thoroughly*: The Hebrew idiom is based in a "burning anger" or a passion for something. This idiom is nowhere else used in relation to the verb "to build," and here it shows the earnestness and zeal for the project at hand.



**Nehemiah's Reconstruction of the Wall of Jerusalem**

another section from the Angle to the door of the house of the high priest Eliashib. <sup>21</sup>After him, Meremoth, Uriah's son and Hakkoz's grandson, repaired another section from the door to the back of Eliashib's house.

<sup>22</sup>After him, the priests from the surrounding area made repairs. <sup>23</sup>After them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs opposite their house. After them, Azariah, Maaseiah's son and Ananiah's grandson, repaired beside his house. <sup>24</sup>After him, Binnui, Henadad's son, repaired another section from the house of Azariah to the Angle and to the corner. <sup>25</sup>Palal, Uzai's son, repaired<sup>m</sup> from the point opposite the Angle and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king at the court of the guard. After him, Pedaiah, Parosh's son, <sup>26</sup>and the temple servants living on Ophel made repairs<sup>n</sup> up to the point opposite the Water Gate to the east and the projecting tower. <sup>27</sup>After them, the people of Tekoa repaired another section opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel. <sup>28</sup>From the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each one opposite his own house.

<sup>29</sup>After them, Zadok, Immer's son, made repairs opposite his own house. After him, She-maiah, Shecaniah's son, the keeper of the East Gate, made repairs. <sup>30</sup>After him, Hananiah, Shelemiah's son, and Hanun, Zalaph's sixth son, repaired another section. After them, Meshullam, Berechiah's son, made repairs opposite his own room.

<sup>31</sup>After him, Malchiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Parade Gate,<sup>o</sup> and as far as the upper room at the corner. <sup>32</sup>And between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs.

**Opposition mounts**

**4**<sup>p</sup>When Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he became angry and raged. He mocked the Jews, <sup>2</sup>saying in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria: "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore things themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the piles of rubble, even though they are burned?"

<sup>3</sup>Tobiah the Ammonite, who was beside him, added: "If even a fox climbs on whatever they build, their wall of stones will crumble."

<sup>4</sup>Listen, God; we are despised! Turn their insults to us<sup>q</sup> back on their heads and make them like plunder in a captive land. <sup>5</sup>Don't forgive their iniquity or blot out their sins from your sight. They have thrown insults at the builders!

<sup>6</sup>We continued to build the wall. All of it was joined together, and it reached half of its intended height because the people were eager to work. <sup>7</sup>But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the people of Ashdod heard that the work on the walls was progressing and the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. <sup>8</sup>They plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to create a disturbance in it.

<sup>m</sup>Heb lacks repaired. <sup>n</sup>Heb lacks made repairs. <sup>o</sup>Or Hammiphkad Gate <sup>p</sup>3:33 in Heb <sup>q</sup>Heb lacks to us. <sup>r</sup>4:1 in Heb

3:25 *court of the guard*: near the palace of the king (Jer 32:2).

3:26 *temple servants*: In Hebrew idiom these are the *Nethinim*, "the given ones." These were individuals given to the service of the temple, and with a levitical heritage. According to Ezra and Nehemiah, in the post-exilic period, some of the Nethinim were descendants of the slaves that David had subordinated to the service of the temple (Ezra 8:20). Originally these were the Gibeonites who were woodcutters and water carriers for the service of the temple (Josh 9:27). They shared the work with the Levites, and were included in the tax exemption extended to all the temple personnel (Ezra 7:24). *Ophel*: a fortified hill or elevated settlement in the wider Jerusalem. The elevated part is called David's City.

3:28 *Horse Gate*: southeast of the temple (Jer 31:40).

3:32 *Sheep Gate*: The list of the designated locations for the repair comes full circle.

4:2 *in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria*: Sanballat's insult was accompanied with a threat

of violence. *revive the stones from the piles of rubble*: The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar and his army "burned God's temple down, demolished the walls of Jerusalem, and set fire to all its palaces" (2 Chron 36:19). Nehemiah and his associates use the rubble from that destruction for their repair.

4:4 Nehemiah's prayer implies that mocking and insulting the Jews is also an affront to Israel's God.

4:5 *blot out*: Nehemiah's prayer for God's justice against the enemies is the reversal of the psalmist's request for God's mercy: "Hide your face from my sins; wipe away all my guilty deeds!" (Ps 51:9). Nehemiah feels powerless against the pressure and insult from those who wish ill against Judah. He cries out to God to take vengeance against his opponents.

4:6 *We continued to build the wall*: Despite the threats and distractions from the Samaritans, the Jews continue the work.

4:7 *the people of Ashdod*: Some of the Jewish men had married women of Ashdod (Neh 13:23-24).

4:8 *They plotted together*: Verbal threats and intimidation

3:21 Eze 2:61.  
Eze 8:33; Neh 3:4  
3:24 Eze 3:9;  
Neh 10:9  
3:25 Eze 2:3;  
Neh 12:39;  
Jer 37:21;  
Jer 32:2  
3:26 2Ch 27:3.  
2Ch 33:14;  
Eze 2:43;  
Neh 11:21  
3:28 2Ki 11:14;  
2Ch 23:15;  
Jer 31:40  
3:32 Neh 3:1,  
Neh 12:39; Jn 5:2  
4:1 Eze 4:1;  
Neh 2:10  
4:2 Jdg 9:31;  
Eze 4:9  
4:3 Neh 2:10,  
Neh 4:7  
4:4 Neh 4:5;  
Ps 123:3,  
Ps 79:12,  
Ps 123:4;  
5:4 Neh 4:4;  
Ps 69:27,  
Ps 69:28,  
Ps 109:14;  
Jer 18:23  
4:7 Neh 2:10  
4:8 Neh 4:7;  
Ps 83:3

4:9 Neh 4:4-5;  
Ps 50:15;  
Mt 24:42  
4:13 Neh 2:12,  
Neh 4:17-18  
4:14 Nm 14:9;  
Dt 1:29;  
2Sa 10:12;  
Neh 1:5  
4:15 2Sa 17:14;  
Job 5:12  
4:16 Neh 4:23  
4:18 2Sa 20:8;  
Neh 4:20  
4:20 Ex 14:14;  
Dt 1:30, Dt 3:22,  
Dt 20:4  
5:1 Ex 22:25;  
Lv 25:35;  
Dt 15:7; Neh 4:1

<sup>9</sup>So we prayed to our God and set a guard as protection against them day and night.

<sup>10</sup>But in Judah it was said,

"The carrier's strength is failing,  
for there is too much rubble.

We are unable to rebuild the wall!"

<sup>11</sup>Meanwhile, our enemies were saying: "Before they know or see anything, we can be in their midst and start to kill them. We'll stop the work!"

<sup>12</sup>Now the Jews who were living near them came and said to us again and again, "You must return to us!"<sup>a</sup>

### **Armed guards protect the builders**

<sup>13</sup>So I took up a position in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall in an open area.<sup>b</sup> Then I stationed the people by families, and they had their swords, spears, and bows. <sup>14</sup>After reviewing this, I stood up and said to the officials, the officers, and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them! Remember that the LORD is great and awesome! Fight for your families, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses!"

<sup>15</sup>Then our enemies heard that we had found out and that God had spoiled their plans. So we all returned to doing our own work on the wall. <sup>16</sup>But from that day on, only half of my workers continued in the construction, while the other half held the spears, shields, bows, and body armor. Meanwhile, the leaders positioned themselves<sup>c</sup> behind the whole house of Judah, <sup>17</sup>who were building the wall. The carriers did their work with a load in one hand and a weapon in the other. <sup>18</sup>The builders built with swords fastened in their belts, and the trumpeter stayed by my side.

<sup>19</sup>Then I said to the officials, the officers, and the rest of the people, "The work is very spread out, and we are far apart from each other along the wall. <sup>20</sup>When you hear the trumpet sound, come and gather where we are. Our God will fight for us!" <sup>21</sup>So we continued the work, with half of them holding spears from dawn until dusk.

<sup>22</sup>I also said to the people at that time, "Let every man and his servant spend the night in Jerusalem so that we can guard during the night and work during the day."<sup>d</sup> <sup>23</sup>Neither I nor my relatives, nor my servants, nor my bodyguards took off our clothes, even when they sent for water.<sup>e</sup>

### **Internal unrest**

**5** Then there was a great protest of the people and their wives against their fellow Jews. <sup>2</sup>Some said, "With our sons and daughters we are many, and we all need grain to eat and stay alive."

<sup>a</sup>Or *ten times from all sides* <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Heb lacks *positioned themselves*. <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain

had been ineffective. The Samaritan opposition and their collaborators decide to provoke a physical confrontation with the Jews in order to halt the construction and cause damage to the city.

4:9 *we prayed to our God and set a guard*: Nehemiah and his people double up on their work—laboring on the wall by day and remaining vigilant by night (Neh 4:22). They trust God with the protection of the city, but they also remain alert against a possible disturbance by Sanballat and his cronies. Nehemiah responded to the challenge with spiritual wisdom matched only by his practical thinking.

4:14 *I stood up and said to the officials*: Nehemiah's words of leadership are concise and to the point. He exhorts the community by reminding them that God is on their side and that the welfare of their families is at stake. They must not cave in to the military and verbal threat from Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the people of Ashdod.

4:17 *The carriers did their work with a load in one hand and a weapon in the other*: Nehemiah's builders show the same vigilant and responsible attitude that Gideon's 300 soldiers showed (Judg 7:4-7).

4:18 *the trumpeter stayed by my side*: See Isaiah 62:6; Ezekiel 33:6.

4:20 *Our God will fight for us*: Compare with Exodus 14:14 ("The Lord will fight for you. You just keep still").

5:1-19 In this chapter, the reader is introduced to another side of Nehemiah's leadership. Members of the community approach Nehemiah and call his attention to the injustices committed by the officials in the city. Nehemiah is asked to redress serious social and financial grievances. His debt reform is aimed at not only relieving the burden of the oppressed in a temporary manner, but he succeeds in reforming the hardened attitude of the oppressors toward the poor. Nehemiah's compassionate approach to social inequality is based in changing the system that enabled the abuse. Nehemiah's first-person account changes topics abruptly. His attention to the reconstruction of the Jerusalem wall shifts to the prolonged social problem that had plagued the majority of the community. 5:1 *a great protest*: The building project had been carried out by the various segments of the society working side by side. Under Nehemiah's leadership, people of different social classes worked together for a common cause. In reality, however, the community was separated by different



<sup>3</sup>Others said, "We have to mortgage our fields, our vineyards, and our houses in order to get grain during the famine."

<sup>4</sup>Still others said, "We have had to borrow money against our fields and vineyards in order to pay the king's tax."

<sup>5</sup>"We are of the same flesh and blood as our kin, and our children are the same as theirs. Yet we are just about to force our sons and daughters into slavery, and some of our daughters are already slaves! There is nothing we can do since our fields and vineyards now belong to others."

<sup>6</sup>I was very angry when I heard their protest and these complaints. <sup>7</sup>After thinking it over, I brought charges against the officials and the officers. I told them, "You are all taking interest from your own people!" I also called for a large assembly in order to deal with them. <sup>8</sup>"To the best of our ability," I said to them, "we have bought back our Jewish kin who had been sold to other nations. But now you are selling your own kin, who must then be bought back by us!" At this they were silent, unable to offer a response.

<sup>9</sup>So I continued, "What you are doing isn't good! Why don't you walk in the fear of our God? This will prevent the taunts of the nations that are our enemies! <sup>10</sup>I myself, along with my family and my servants, am lending them money and grain. But let's stop charging this interest! <sup>11</sup>Give it back to them, right now. Return their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses. And give back the interest on money, grain, wine, and oil that you are charging them."

<sup>12</sup>They replied, "We'll return everything, and we won't charge anything else.\* We'll do what you've asked."

So I called the priests and made them swear to do what they had promised. <sup>13</sup>I also shook out the fold of my robe, saying, "So may God shake out everyone from their house and property if they don't keep this promise. So may they be shaken out and emptied!"

The whole assembly said, "Amen," and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

**Generous Governor Nehemiah**

<sup>14</sup>In addition, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah (that is, from the twentieth to the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes for a total of twelve

\*Heb lacks *everything . . . anything else*.

levels of wealth, influence, and status. They didn't live in unity or solidarity. These differences and the oppression of the poor caused a serious strain among the residents of Judah.

<sup>5:2</sup> *we all need grain to eat and stay alive*: Destitute parents cry out for help. They describe the dire situation in terms of the most basic needs for mere survival.

<sup>5:3</sup> *We have to mortgage our fields, our vineyards, and our houses*: In exchange for the food farmers had borrowed during the famine, creditors took away their land, their source of subsistence, food, and income. When a crop failed, farmers needed to borrow seed, supplies, and funds for the following year's planting. In this manner, the vicious cycle of poverty, destitution, and vulnerability repeated itself. The poor were exposed to the greed of the wealthy. Opportunists were eager to exploit the misfortune of their fellow citizens. Just for basic survival, people pledged their property as well as the lives of their children to the creditors.

<sup>5:5</sup> *There is nothing we can do*: Taking out loans was a big gamble. When a farmer couldn't repay the loan, the family would lose everything. They would first lose the land that had been passed down in the family for generations. Then the farmer's wife and children would be sold as slaves.

<sup>5:6</sup> *I was very angry*: Nehemiah was a compassionate man. When he saw the injustice and inhumanity, he didn't remain calm or apathetic. He was genuinely moved by the despair of the victims. Nehemiah here exemplifies righteous indignation. "God is a righteous judge, a God who is angry at evil every single day" (Ps 7:11).

<sup>5:4</sup> Ex 22:25; Eze 4:13; Neh 5:3  
<sup>5:5</sup> Lv 25:39; 2Ki 4:1; Mt 18:25

<sup>5:6</sup> Ex 11:8; Nm 16:15; Neh 13:8

<sup>5:7</sup> Ex 22:25; Lv 25:36; Dt 23:19; Ps 15:5; Is 1:23; Eze 22:12

<sup>5:8</sup> Lv 25:47-48; Jer 34:8

<sup>5:11</sup> 1Sa 8:14; 2Ki 5:26; Neh 5:3-4; Is 58:6

<sup>5:12</sup> 2Ch 28:15; Eze 10:5; Neh 10:29

<sup>5:13</sup> Dt 27:15; 1Ch 16:36; Neh 8:6; Acs 18:6

<sup>5:14</sup> Eze 7:1; Neh 2:1

<sup>5:7</sup> *taking interest from your own people*: prohibited by the instruction from Moses (Exod 22:25; Lev 25:36, Deut 15:2,3; 23:19,20; 24:10-13, Ps 15:1, 5; Ezek 22:12; 45:9).

<sup>5:8</sup> *now you are selling your own kin, who must then be bought back by us*: Apparently, Nehemiah and his associates had bought the freedom of some of the Hebrew slaves, who were owned by foreigners. The practice of usury at the time in Judah allowed Jews to enslave other Jews.

<sup>5:9</sup> *Why don't you walk in the fear of our God?*: The awareness of divine existence should lead to ethical behavior. Nehemiah tells the Jews who had enslaved their own people that they should do the right thing.

<sup>5:12</sup> *We'll return everything*: Nehemiah's preaching produces an immediate change of hearts and minds. Compare with the words of a prophet who was preaching during the Babylonian exile at about the same time: "Turn, turn away from all your sins. Don't let them be sinful obstacles for you. Abandon all of your repeated sins. Make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. Why should you die, house of Israel?" (Ezek 18:30-31).

<sup>5:13</sup> *So may God shake out*: People used to carry some of their personal belongings in the folds of their robes. Nehemiah's symbolic act effectively conveys the message that disobedience to God's commandments would cause them to be emptied out as objects are shaken out of one's pocket.

<sup>5:14</sup> *neither I nor my family ate from the governor's food allowance*: Nehemiah, as a governor, had the right to be supported by the community. But he decided not to

5:17 2Sa 9:7;  
1Ki 18:19  
5:18 1Ki 4:23, 22  
6:1 Neh 2:10,  
Neh 4:1  
6:2 2Sa 3:27;  
1Ch 8:12;  
Neh 11:35

years), neither I nor my family ate from the governor's food allowance. <sup>15</sup>The earlier governors who had come before me laid heavy burdens on the people. They took food and wine from them as well as <sup>17</sup>forty shekels of silver. Even their servants oppressed the people. But because I was God-fearing, I didn't behave in this way.

<sup>16</sup>Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall. We acquired no land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work. <sup>17</sup>One hundred fifty Jews and officials, along with those who came to us from the surrounding nations, gathered around my table. <sup>18</sup>One ox, six choice sheep, and birds were prepared each day. Every ten days there was a large amount of wine. Yet even with this I didn't ask for the governor's food allowance because of the heavy burden the people had to carry.

<sup>19</sup>Remember in my favor, my God, all that I've done for this people!

### *Nehemiah avoids his enemies*

**6** Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall and that there were no gaps left in it (although I hadn't yet hung the doors in the gates), <sup>2</sup>Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let's meet together in one of the villages" in the plain of Ono."

But they wanted to harm me, <sup>3</sup>so I sent messengers to tell them, "I'm doing important work, so I can't come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you?"

<sup>4</sup>They sent me a message like this four times, and every time I gave them a similar reply. <sup>5</sup>But the fifth time, Sanballat sent his servant to me in the same way, except that now he carried an open letter. <sup>6</sup>It stated:

It is reported among the nations and confirmed by Geshem<sup>a</sup> that you and the Jews intend to rebel. This is why you are rebuilding the wall. According to these reports, you intend to become their king. <sup>7</sup>You have also appointed prophets to make this announcement about you in Jerusalem: There is a king in Judah! Now, the king will hear of these reports, so come; let's talk together.

<sup>†</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>a</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT at *Hakkephirim* <sup>b</sup>Or *Gashmu*

burden the financially vulnerable province with further expenses. He might have been sensitive and considerate to the ongoing financial contribution of the community toward the repair of the wall (Neh 5:18).

5:15 *because I was God-fearing, I didn't behave in this way*: Nehemiah didn't abuse his position of authority in the manner of his predecessors. His basic decency and awareness of ethical principles came from his knowledge of God and the commandments.

5:16 *We acquired no land*: Because of the famine and destitution in the province, Nehemiah could have taken advantage of the circumstances to make himself rich. Instead, he volunteered himself and his servants to the work that would benefit the province.

5:19 *Remember in my favor, my God, all that I've done for this people!*: Nehemiah appeals to the God who rewards for faithful obedience (see Deut 11:13-21; Isa 40:10; Jer 25:14).

6:1-19 Nehemiah's leadership was effective. Despite the political pressure from inside and outside of Judah, the repair of the Jerusalem wall was near to its completion. Nehemiah's faith and determination paid off. The opposition group, headed by Sanballat, continued to try to thwart the project by spreading false rumors and resorting to intimidation. When Nehemiah's enemies saw that the neglected province was prospering under Nehemiah's forward thinking and organization, they decided to eliminate him. Sanballat and his opposition group devised a plan to assassinate Nehemiah. They resorted to various means to intercept Nehemiah in order to harm him. Knowing that he was a devout man, his enemies hired Shemaiah to pose as a prophet delivering counsel from God. Nehemiah didn't cave to pressure. He remained

resilient in prayer and discernment. His unbending will and courage showed that he was a man of integrity and faith. The wall was finished after 52 days.

6:1-2 *plain of Ono*: the valley of artisans (Neh 11:35), approximately a two-day journey from Jerusalem. Along with the descendants of Lod and Hadid, there were about 725 Jewish residents there (Ezra 2:33; Neh 7:37). Had Nehemiah traveled to this location, he would have been removed from the security and safety of Jerusalem.

6:4 *four times*: Nehemiah's enemies were persistent. Their wicked plan against Nehemiah wasn't going to collapse easily. His sense of duty isn't swayed by distraction or threat. Nehemiah fends off the threat every time. Compare with Deuteronomy 1:21, 20:4; Psalm 44:6-8; Isaiah 26:3.

6:5-7 *the fifth time*: a second scheme. Sanballat's plot escalates.

6:6 *you and the Jews intend to rebel*: The enemies fabricate rumors of a Jewish conspiracy. They claim that the Jews are carrying out the fortification of the wall with the intention of throwing off imperial rule. Such reports to the Persians could have brought down the wrath of the imperial government in the form of military action against the province and brutal punishment upon its leaders.

6:7 *You have also appointed prophets*: The enemies accuse Nehemiah of using prophets to legitimize his ambition to become the king of Judah. They might have been familiar with the tradition that prophets lent their support to Nehemiah's predecessor Zerubbabel, when he and the high priest Jeshua led the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple (Ezra 5:1-2). *There is a king in Judah*: The enemies make up charges of rebellion and treason against Nehemiah (Ezra

<sup>8</sup>So I sent him this reply: "Nothing that you say has happened. You are simply inventing this."

<sup>9</sup>All of them were trying to make us afraid, saying, "They will be discouraged, and the work won't get finished." But now, God, strengthen me!

<sup>10</sup>Later I went to see Shemaiah, Delaiah's son and Mehetabel's grandson, who was confined to his house, and he said:

"Let's meet together in God's house,  
inside the temple itself.

Let's shut the doors of the temple,  
for they are coming to kill you;  
they are coming to kill you tonight!"

<sup>11</sup>But I replied, "Should someone like me run away? Who like me would go into the temple to save his life? I won't go in!" <sup>12</sup>Then I realized that God hadn't sent him at all but that he spoke this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. <sup>13</sup>He was hired to frighten me and to make me sin by acting in this way. Then they could give me a bad name and discredit me. <sup>14</sup>My God, remember these deeds of Tobiah and Sanballat! Also remember Noadiah the prophetess and the rest of the prophets who have been trying to frighten me.

<sup>15</sup>So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Elul. <sup>b</sup>It took fifty-two days. <sup>16</sup>When our enemies heard about this, all of the nations around us were afraid and their confidence was greatly shaken. They knew that this work was completed with the help of our God.

<sup>17</sup>In addition, in those days the officials of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters were coming to them. <sup>18</sup>Many in Judah were bound to him by solemn pledge because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah, Arah's son, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam, Berechiah's son. <sup>19</sup>They also kept talking about his good deeds in my presence and then reported back to him what I said. In addition, Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.

<sup>b</sup>August–September

4:12-16) They accuse him and his supporters of planning to rid themselves of the Persian imperial yoke and proclaim Nehemiah king over the province of Judah. Such an accusation could have had fatal consequences. *the king will hear of these reports, so come*: Sanballat thought he could use the bogus allegation to make Nehemiah leave his base.

6:9 *But now, God, strengthen me!*: Nehemiah appeals to God for stamina to succeed. He finds strength and solace in his God (cf. Ps 73:26; Isa 49:4; Hab 3:19; Zech 12:5).

6:10-11 A false prophet counsels Nehemiah to seek refuge in the temple from an imminent assassination plot. Nehemiah doesn't cower in fear. Instead, he stands his ground. Nehemiah's refusal to hide in the sanctuary is informed by his faith in God's protection and his commitment to serve as a positive example to his community. In fact, his code of conduct and integrity save his life from the evil scam. *Who like me would go into the temple to save his life?*: Only the priests were allowed to enter the inner sanctum (Num 1:51; 3:10; 18:7). A true prophet of God wouldn't advise Nehemiah to break the holy ordinances.

6:12 *Then I realized that God hadn't sent him at all*: As a man who maintained communion with God in habitual prayer, Nehemiah was equipped with discernment. He sees through the various conspiracies and spiritual deceptions. 6:13 *make me sin by acting in this way*: Nehemiah's violation of the sacred space would have been a sin. His cowardly action would have also caused him to lose credibility in the eyes of his people.

6:14 *My God, remember*: Nehemiah's prayer is like a curse that asks God to enact justice against those who tried to intimidate him through repeated threats of violence.

6:15 *Elul*: In the Jewish tradition, the sixth month of the Jewish year (August/September) is a time of turning away from sin, examining oneself, and reconciling with God and others. The physical work took 52 days. Nehemiah and his workers had labored in the hottest season of the year.

6:16 The successful and speedy completion of the Jerusalem wall caused great dismay among the enemies in the neighboring nations. All the scare tactics and deceitful plans had failed. The triumphant outcome despite the adverse circumstances bore testimony of God's power and favor. It was the Lord who had made the work of Nehemiah and his people prosper (Pss 46:10; 100:3; Isa 37:20). Nehemiah is quick to acknowledge God's assistance.

6:18 *Many in Judah were bound to him by solemn pledge*: Some members of the community kept a close relationship with those who had wished ill of Judah. They were in alliance by marriage. These were the channels through which Nehemiah's opponents were able to keep close tabs on Nehemiah's affairs.

6:19 *talking about his good deeds in my presence and then reported back to him what I said*: Nehemiah deplored the actions of these men who risked the welfare of their own province and people by helping his opponents. Tobiah continued to torment Nehemiah, and Tobiah's defenders were simply traitors to their own city and people. They cared more about their personal political ties and interests than the community's.

6:8 Job 13:4;  
Ps 52:2  
6:9 Neh 6:14;  
Ps 71:1, Ps 138:3  
6:10 Neh 6:11;  
Jer 36:5  
6:12 Neh 2:10;  
Eze 13:22  
6:13 Neh 6:6;  
Jer 20:10  
6:14 Neh 13:29;  
Eze 13:17  
6:18 Eze 2:5;  
Neh 3:4

7:2 Ex 18:21;  
Neh 1:2, Neh 2:8  
7:5 1Ch 9:3;  
2Ch 12:15  
7:7 Est 2:2;  
Neh 12:1

### The wall is complete

**7**When the wall had been built and I had hung the doors, the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites were appointed. **2**Then I put my brother Hanani and Hananiah the commander of the fortress in charge of Jerusalem. Hananiah was a faithful man who revered God more than many.

**3**I said to them, "The gates of Jerusalem aren't to be opened during the hottest time of the day. While the gatekeepers<sup>d</sup> are still on duty, have them shut and bar the doors. Also, appoint guards from among those who live in Jerusalem. Station some at their watch posts and some in front of their own houses."

### Nehemiah registers the families

**4**Now although the city was wide and large, only a few people were living within it, and no<sup>e</sup> houses had been rebuilt. **5**My God then prompted me to assemble the officials, the officers, and the people so that they could be registered by families. I found the record of the families who were the first to return, and I found the following written in it:

**6**These are the people of the province who returned from the captivity of those exiles whom Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile. They all returned to Jerusalem and Judah, everyone to their own town.

**7**They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

The number of the people of Israel:

<b>8</b> The family of Parosh	2,172
<b>9</b> of Shephatiah	372
<b>10</b> of Arah	652
<b>11</b> of Pahath-moab, that is, of the descendants of Jeshua and Joab	2,818
<b>12</b> of Elam	1,254
<b>13</b> of Zattu	845
<b>14</b> of Zaccai	760
<b>15</b> of Binnui	648
<b>16</b> of Bebai	628
<b>17</b> of Azgad	2,322
<b>18</b> of Adonikam	667
<b>19</b> of Bigvai	2,067
<b>20</b> of Adin	655

<sup>c</sup>Or He <sup>d</sup>Or while they <sup>e</sup>Or not enough

7:1-7:3 Nehemiah's leadership didn't end with his successful mobilization of the Judean community in the rebuilding of the wall. According to his initial request to the Persian emperor, Nehemiah's goal for coming to the province had been accomplished. However, the second half of the book shows that Nehemiah was concerned for the long-term interest of his people. The narrative changes from Nehemiah's attention to the physical structure of Jerusalem to his efforts toward building the community's identity and morality. Instead of returning to Susa, he launched a rigorous religious reform. In Nehemiah's view, the existence and survival of the Jewish people wasn't simply compromised by the broken walls. The continuity of the Jewish identity was endangered by the community's neglectful attitude toward the Instruction from the Lord. He turned his attention to the neglected festivals and the Sabbath, violations of sacrificial rituals, and overall negligence toward God's teachings.

7:1 *singers, and Levites were appointed:* In addition to ensuring the security and safety of Jerusalem, Nehemiah launches a reform of worship practices by summoning the Levites and temple singers to perform their roles. His organization of the temple personnel is aimed at guaranteeing a regular and functional set of worship practices in Jerusalem.

7:2 *Hanani and Hananiah:* possibly the same individual, because the two names seem to be alternate ways to spell the name, and because *brother* is singular.

7:3 Nehemiah makes arrangements for proper maintenance and security for the city. Jerusalem continues to be threatened and watchmen are set to guard the walls.

7:4 Nehemiah was a visionary. He saw that increasing the population in Jerusalem was the necessary next step for boosting the security and prosperity of the province.

7:5 *I found the record of the families who were the first to return:* Occupational and genealogical lists boost the credibility of the leadership. In the ancient world, public records of genealogies were kept in royal archives. Ezra-Nehemiah contains numerous decrees, edicts, diplomatic correspondence, lists, and genealogies. The author seems to draw material from an archive. He makes reference to "the official records" in Nehemiah 12:23. Nehemiah carries out a census of those who returned from Babylon to Judah. He credits God with the idea to keep track of the population growth in Judah. Contrast with the consequences in 2 Samuel 24 when David organized a census. 7:6-60 Nehemiah reviews the old records. The list contains the names of the families that had returned to their ancestral land since the days of Zerubbabel. The list is arranged according to the family name, place of origin, and function

21 of Ater, that is, of the descendants of Hezekiah	98
22 of Hashum	328
23 of Bezai	324
24 of Hariph	112
25 of Gibeon	95
26 The people of Bethlehem and Netophah	188
27 of Anathoth	128
28 of Beth-azmaveth	42
29 of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth	743
30 of Ramah and Geba	621
31 of Michmas	122
32 of Bethel and Ai	123
33 of the other Nebo	52
34 the inhabitants of the other Elam	1,254
35 of Harim	320
36 of Jericho	345
37 of Lod, Hadid, and Ono	721
38 of Senaah	3,930
39 The priests: the descendants of Jedaiah, that is, of the house of Jeshua	973
40 of Immer	1,052
41 of Pashhur	1,247
42 of Harim	1,017
43 The Levites: the descendants of Jeshua, that is, of Kadmiel, of the descendants of Hodaviah	74
44 The singers: the descendants of Asaph	148
45 The descendants of gatekeepers: of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai	138
46 The temple servants: the descendants of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,	
47 Keros, Sia, Padon,	
48 Lebanah, Hagabah, Shalmal,	
49 Hanan, Giddel, Gahar,	
50 Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda,	
51 Gazzam, Uzza, Paseah,	
52 Besai, Meunim, Nephushesim,	
53 Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,	
54 Bazlith, Mehida, Harsha,	
55 Barkos, Sisera, Temah,	
56 Neziah, and Hatipha.	
57 The descendants of Solomon's servants: Sotai, Sophereth, Perida,	
58 Jaala, Darkon, Giddel, 59 Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth-hazzebaim, and Amon.	
60 All of the temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants totaled 392.	
61 The following came up from Tel-Melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but were unable to prove that their family or their descent was from Israel:	
62 the descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda, 642.	
63 And of the priests: the descendants of Hobaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai (who had mar- ried one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by his <sup>f</sup> name) 64 looked for their entries in the genealogical records, but they weren't found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean.	
65 The governor ordered that they shouldn't eat of the most holy food until a priest arose who could consult Urim and Thummim.	
66 The whole assembly together totaled 42,360. 67 This number doesn't include their 7,337 male and female servants; they also had 245 male and female singers, 68 736 horses, 245 mules, 69 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.	

<sup>f</sup>Or their <sup>g</sup>Ezra 2:66; MT lacks *they also . . . mules*. <sup>h</sup>7:68 in Heb

at the temple. King David is said to have created the organization of the proper worship at the temple. He separated the Levites into divisions and functions. He instituted the

musicians, gatekeepers, and treasurers (1 Chron 23–26). The list here is similar to the one found in Ezra 2. 7:66–67 The total number of the returnees reported here is

7:73 1Ch 9:2;  
Ezr 3:1,  
Ezr 2:70;  
8:1 Ex 34:27;  
Lv 26:46; Dt 5:1;  
Josh 8:33;  
Ezr 7:6;  
Neh 3:26;  
Mal 4:4

8:2 Lv 23:24;  
Nm 29:1;  
Dt 31:11;  
Neh 8:9

8:3 Dt 31:11;  
Josh 8:35;  
Neh 8:1; Jer 36:6;  
Acs 13:15

8:6 Neh 5:13;  
1 Tim. 2:8

8:7 Dt 33:10;  
Ezr 10:23;  
Neh 9:4

<sup>70</sup>Some of the heads of families made a donation for the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 darics of gold, 50 bowls, and 530 priestly robes. <sup>71</sup>Some of the heads of families gave 20,000 darics of gold and 2,200 manehs of silver to the treasury for the work. <sup>72</sup>The rest of the people gave 20,000 darics of gold, 2,000 manehs of silver, and 67 priestly robes.

<sup>73</sup>So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel settled in their towns.

### *Ezra reads the Instruction aloud*

**8** When the seventh month<sup>1</sup> came and the people of Israel were settled in their towns, <sup>1</sup>all the people gathered together in the area in front of the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Instruction<sup>2</sup> scroll from Moses, according to which the LORD had instructed Israel.

<sup>2</sup>So on the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Instruction before the assembly. This assembly was made up of both men and women and anyone who could understand what they heard. <sup>3</sup>Facing the area in front of the Water Gate, he read it aloud, from early morning until the middle of the day. He read it in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand, and everyone listened attentively to the Instruction scroll.

<sup>4</sup>Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that had been made for this purpose. And standing beside him were Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiyah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his righthand side; while Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hash-baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam stood on his lefthand side.

<sup>5</sup>Standing above all of the people, Ezra the scribe opened the scroll in the sight of all of the people. And as he opened it, all of the people stood up. <sup>6</sup>Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all of the people answered, "Amen! Amen!" while raising their hands. Then they bowed down and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

<sup>7</sup>The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiiah<sup>1</sup>—helped the people to understand the

<sup>1</sup>7:69 in Heb <sup>2</sup>September–October, Tishrei <sup>3</sup>Heb *Torah* <sup>4</sup>Vulg 1 Esdr 9:48; MT *and the Levites*

49,942 (42,360 + 7,337 + 245). But the sum of the numbers given in this chapter is actually 31,089 (29,818 in Ezra 2).

8:1–18 Ezra along with Nehemiah led the Judean community in a covenant renewal ceremony. In a solemn and public gathering, the Instruction from the Lord was read in front of all the people who were assembled. Ezra (the priest and scribe) and Nehemiah (the governor) deemed it a priority to turn people's hearts toward the Lord's commandments. In order to prevent another catastrophe such as the Babylonian exile, Ezra and Nehemiah believed that God's people had to abandon idolatry and devote their allegiance to the Lord. When the people heard God's word, they changed their hearts and lives. The community celebrated the Festival of Booths.

8:1 *all the people gathered together*: The Hebrew idiom is "as one person." The whole community gathered in unity to hear the Lord's word. They came willingly. *Ezra*: In his dual capacity as a scribe and priest, he had come to Jerusalem 13 years prior to Nehemiah. The description of Ezra's public reading of the Instruction is reminiscent of Moses' role as a mediator of the Instruction between God and Israel. *the Instruction scroll from Moses*: The exact contents of Ezra's scroll are uncertain. It's possible that he brought with him from Babylon a copy of the Pentateuch or a collection of legal material or the Deuteronomic teachings or the Priestly code.

8:2 *on the first day of the seventh month*: The Instruction from Moses commanded that every seventh year, during the Festival of Booths, the whole congregation of Israel were to gather for a public reading of the Instruction. This

was an occasion that flattened social hierarchy because "everyone—men, women, children, and the immigrants who live in your cities" were to gather to "hear it, learn it, and revere the LORD your God, carefully doing all the words of this Instruction" (Deut 31:10–12). The Lord's word belonged to every member of the community, without discrimination. Joshua too had assembled all the people of Israel for a public reading of the Instruction and communal commitment to the Lord (Josh 8:30–35).

8:3 *from early morning until the middle of the day*: Ezra reads the Lord's word for five or six hours. The length of time devoted to the reading reveals the seriousness and attentiveness of the general audience.

8:5 *all of the people stood up*: Inward and outward reverence is shown for God's word (1 Kgs 8:14), a practice still experienced in our times during worship.

8:6 *raising their hands*: an expression of awe at God's majesty (cf. Pss 134:2; 141:2; Lam 3:41). *They bowed down and worshipped the Lord*: an act of humility and surrender, shown by bowing down (Deut 26:10; Ps 86:9).

8:7 *helped the people to understand the Instruction*: The Levites help the people make sense out of the Lord's word. Presumably it had been a long time since the community heard the Lord's Instruction. It isn't clear here whether the Levites provide a translation, explain the meaning of obscure passages in the scripture, or both. It's possible that the Levites translated the Instruction from Hebrew to Aramaic, which had become the common language for most Jews. Therefore, it's probable that the Hebrew language and the content of the

Instruction while the people remained in their places. <sup>8</sup>They read aloud from the scroll, the instruction from God, explaining and interpreting it so the people could understand what they heard.

<sup>9</sup>Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all of the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God. Don't mourn or weep." They said this<sup>m</sup> because all the people wept when they heard the words of the Instruction.

<sup>10</sup>"Go, eat rich food, and drink something sweet," he said to them, "and send portions of this to any who have nothing ready! This day is holy to our LORD. Don't be sad, because the joy from the LORD is your strength!"

<sup>11</sup>The Levites also calmed all of the people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy. Don't be sad!" <sup>12</sup>Then all of the people went to eat and to drink, to send portions, and to have a great celebration, because they understood what had been said to them.

**The people celebrate the Festival of Booths**

<sup>13</sup>On the second day, the heads of the families of all the people, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered together around Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Instruction. <sup>14</sup>And they found written in the Instruction that the LORD had commanded through Moses that the Israelites should live in booths during the festival of the seventh month.<sup>n</sup>

<sup>15</sup>They also found that they should make the following proclamation and announce it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: "Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written."

<sup>16</sup>So the people went out and brought them, and made booths for themselves, each on the roofs of their houses or<sup>o</sup> their courtyards, in the courtyards of God's house, in the area by the Water Gate, or in the area by the Gate of Ephraim.

<sup>17</sup>The whole assembly of those who had returned from captivity made booths and lived in them. This was something that the people of Israel hadn't done since the days of Joshua,<sup>p</sup> Nun's son, and there was very great rejoicing.

<sup>m</sup>Heb lacks *They said this.* <sup>n</sup>September–October, Tishrei <sup>o</sup>Or and <sup>p</sup>Heb *Jeshua*

Instruction might have seemed somewhat foreign to many in the assembly.

8:8 *explaining and interpreting it so the people could understand what they heard:* The Levites facilitated the knowledge and interpretation of the Instruction. They translated and interpreted this early scripture into the common language, to make clear how the community would apply God's teaching.

8:9 *This day is holy to the LORD your God. Don't mourn or weep:* the day of the blowing of the trumpets (Neh 8:2). While listening to Lord's word, people felt convicted of their sin. They realized that they hadn't kept the commandments. They had been living in disobedience and ignorance. The Lord's word gave them insight to their spiritual condition. It helped them to understand God's will. The Levites announce to the people that it is a day of joy and celebration, and it ought not to be marked by expressions of sorrow (Ps 126:5).

8:10 *eat rich food:* The Hebrew idiom is "eat the fat." The Instruction prohibited eating fat (Lev 7:23-25). Nehemiah probably meant that people should eat, drink, and be merry, as they celebrated such a joyous occasion (cf. Eccl 9:7). *send portions of this to any who have nothing ready:* The communal celebration includes acts of charity. Those who have the means are encouraged to share gifts of food with poor members of the community. *the joy from the LORD is your strength:* God's word is made clear to them. The exuberant joy stems from rediscovering God's mighty acts of salvation and sustained love of God for the people.

8:13-14 *gathered together around Ezra the scribe in order to study:* After the public reading of the Instruction and

celebration, the people went back to their towns. However, the following day, the leaders of the community come back to study the Instruction with Ezra. During the study, they learn about the teaching for the Festival of Booths.

8:14 *the Israelites should live in booths:* The celebration lasts seven days. This holiday was in remembrance of the Israelites' dwelling in tents in the wilderness, during the time of exodus. God then dwelled in a meeting tent, while the people lodged in booths, which are temporary huts (Lev 23:43; Hos 12:9). The festival was to be accompanied by the reading of the Instruction (Deut 31:10-13). This was a joyous occasion, when people celebrated with thanksgiving the produce from the threshing floor and wine press (Deut 16:13). It was originally a local agricultural festival. The writer of Deuteronomy prescribed it to be one of the three pilgrimage festivals when each year "every male among you must appear before the presence of the LORD your God in the location he will select" (Deut 16:16). The Festival of Unleavened Bread and the Festival of Weeks were the other two annual pilgrimage festivals celebrated in Jerusalem. According to the humanitarian and charitable instructions of Deuteronomy, individual piety and communal attention were to turn to the needs of the poor and destitute. While thanking God for the bountiful gifts, this was a season for sharing. In addition to the ethical dimension of this festival, living in temporary shelters ought to remind people of the fleeting nature of life (Pss 90:12; 102:11-12; Eccl 12:1-6). This was a time of self examination and thanksgiving.

8:17 *This was something that the people of Israel hadn't done since the days of Joshua:* The Israelites in the wilderness,

8:10 Est. 9:22, 19; Ps 89:16; Joel 2:23  
8:12 Neh 8:10; Jer 15:16  
8:14 Gn 33:17; Ex 3:11; Lv 23:34  
8:15 Lv 23:40; Dt 16:16; Is 41:19  
8:16 2Ki 14:13; 2Ch 25:23; Neh 12:39  
8:17 Josh 1:1; 1Ki 8:2; 2Ch 30:21

8:18 Lv 23:36;

Nm 29:35;  
Dt 31:10-11;9:1 Josh 7:6;  
1Sa 7:6;  
Neh 8:1-29:2 Lv 26:40;  
Ezr 10:11;  
Neh 13:3;  
Ps 106:69:5 Dt 28:58;  
1Ch 16:363:6 Gn 1:1;  
Dt 6:4;  
2Ki 19:15;  
Is 37:16;  
Ps 146:69:7 Gn 11:31;  
Josh 24:3;  
2Ch 20:79:8 Gn 15:18;  
Dt 7:1;  
Josh 23:14;  
Neh 9:7

**The Lord's Instruction** Ezra reads the Instruction from the Lord in front of the whole community of Judah. The people ask the priest and scribe Ezra to bring out "the Instruction scroll from Moses" (Neh 8:1). Here Ezra presents God's word before men, women, and anyone who has the ability to understand (Neh 8:2). Ezra becomes a second mediator between God and Israel, compared to Moses. As Ezra stands on a wooden platform to read the instruction in front of the people, the text includes his scribal title (Neh 8:4). The next day, "the heads of the families of all the people, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered together around Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Instruction" (Neh 8:13). The assembled leaders are determined to devote themselves to the study and application of God's expectations. The survival and success of the people of God depends on the commitment to this teaching by the entire community. According to Ezra 7:25-26, the Persian government had given Ezra full imperial support to implement the observance of the Instruction in Judah.

<sup>10</sup>He read from God's Instruction scroll every day, from the first until the last day of the festival.<sup>9</sup> They kept the festival for seven days and held a solemn assembly on the eighth day, just as the Instruction required.

### Remembering the Lord's mighty deeds

**9** On the twenty-fourth day of this month, the people of Israel were assembled. They fasted, wore funeral clothing,<sup>f</sup> and had dirt on their heads.<sup>g</sup> <sup>2</sup>After the Israelites separated themselves from all of the foreigners, they stood to confess their sins and the terrible behavior of their ancestors. <sup>3</sup>They stood in their place and read the Instruction scroll from the LORD their God for a quarter of the day. For another quarter of the day, they confessed and worshipped the LORD their God.

<sup>4</sup>On the stairs of the Levites stood Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani. They cried out with a loud voice to the LORD their God. <sup>5</sup>Then the Levites—Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah—said:

Stand up and bless the LORD your God.

From everlasting to everlasting bless your glorious name,  
which is high above all blessing and praise.

<sup>6</sup>You alone are the LORD.

You alone made heaven, even the heaven of heavens, with all their forces.

You made the earth and all that is on it,  
and the seas and all that is in them.

You preserve them all, and the heavenly forces worship you.

<sup>7</sup>LORD God, you are the one who chose Abram.

You brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans  
and gave him the name Abraham.

<sup>8</sup>You found him to be faithful before you,  
and you made a covenant with him.

<sup>9</sup>Heb lacks of the festival. <sup>f</sup>Or sackcloth <sup>g</sup>Or on them

while dwelling in temporary huts, had looked forward to their permanent residence in the promised land. The exiles who had now returned from Babylon could look forward to a fresh new start. They had just recommitted themselves to the covenant and restored their relationship with God.

8:18 *just as the instruction required*: On the eighth day, a solemn assembly was summoned. Regular activities were banned (Num 29:35-39).

9:1 *They fasted, wore funeral clothing, and had dirt on their heads*: After the hearing of the Instruction, the people continued to purge their sins. They denied themselves all self-gratifying pleasures. They expressed their changed hearts and lives in genuine acts of remorse, humility, and self-denial (Ps 51:17).

9:2 *terrible behavior of their ancestors*: See Leviticus 26:40; Isaiah 43:27; Lamentations 5:7.

9:4 *They cried out with a loud voice to the Lord*: The people prayed with deep passion. They sought the Lord with genuine earnestness.

9:5 *Stand up and bless the Lord your God*: Their devotion to God was expressed physically. The people felt so moved that they couldn't worship God by sitting still. *bless your glorious name*: See Psalm 72:19.

9:6-37 Nehemiah's prayer falls in line with other prayers seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, which arose following the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem (e.g., Ezra 9; Neh 1; Ps 106; Dan 9:5-14). This prayerful psalm highlights God's mighty acts of salvation and hope after God's judgment. The psalm draws on many traditions and sayings throughout the OT.

9:6 See 2 Kings 19:15; Isaiah 37:16; Psalm 148:4.

9:7 See Genesis 15:7; 17:5.

9:8 See Genesis 15.



You promised to give to his descendants  
the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites,  
the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites.  
And you have kept your promise because you are righteous.

9:10; Ex 3:20;  
Jer 32:20;  
Dn. 9:15  
9:11 Ex 14:21;  
Ps 78:13  
9:12 Ex 13:21-22;  
Dt 1:33;  
Neh 9:19  
9:13 Ex 20:1  
9:14 Gn 2:3;  
Ex 20:8;  
Eze 20:12  
9:15 Ex 16:15;  
Nm 20:7;  
Dt 18; Ps 78:24  
9:17 Ex 34:6;  
Nm 14:4;  
Ps 86:15  
9:18 Ex 32:4;  
Ps 106:19;  
Acs 7:41  
9:19 Ex 13:21;  
Neh 9:12, 27;  
Ex 13:22  
9:20; Ex 16:15;  
Nm 11:17;  
Josh 5:12;  
Ps 143:10;  
Is 63:11  
9:21 Dt 8:4

- <sup>9</sup>You saw the affliction of our ancestors in Egypt  
and heard their cry at the Reed Sea.<sup>t</sup>
- <sup>10</sup>You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh,  
all his servants, and the people of his land.  
You knew that they had acted arrogantly against our ancestors.  
You made a name for yourself, a name that is famous even today.
- <sup>11</sup>You divided the sea before them so that they went through it on dry land.  
But you cast their pursuers into the depths,  
as a stone into the mighty waters.
- <sup>12</sup>With a pillar of cloud you led them by day  
and with a column of lightning by night;  
they lit the way in which the people should go.
- <sup>13</sup>You came down upon Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven.  
You gave them proper judgments and true Instruction,  
good statutes and commandments.
- <sup>14</sup>You made known to them your holy Sabbath,  
and gave them commandments, statutes, and Instruction  
through your servant Moses.
- <sup>15</sup>When they were hungry, you gave them bread from heaven;  
when they were thirsty, you brought water out of the rock for them.  
You told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them.
- <sup>16</sup>But our ancestors acted arrogantly.  
They were stubborn and wouldn't obey your commandments.
- <sup>17</sup>They refused to obey,  
and didn't remember the wonders that you accomplished in their midst.  
They acted arrogantly and decided to return to their slavery in Egypt.  
But you are a God ready to forgive, merciful and compassionate,  
very patient, and truly faithful.  
You didn't forsake them.
- <sup>18</sup>Even when they had cast an image of a calf for themselves,  
saying, "This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,"  
and holding you in great contempt,
- <sup>19</sup>you, in your great mercy, didn't abandon them in the wilderness.  
The column of cloud continued to guide them on their journey during the day,  
and the column of lightning lit their path during the night.
- <sup>20</sup>You gave your good spirit to teach them.  
You didn't withhold your manna from them,  
and you gave them water for their thirst.
- <sup>21</sup>You kept them alive for forty years—  
they lacked nothing in the wilderness!  
Their clothes didn't wear out,  
and their feet didn't swell.

<sup>t</sup>Or *Red Sea*

9:9 See Exodus 3:7, 4:31.  
9:10 See Deuteronomy 4:34; Isaiah 20:3; Jeremiah 32:20-21; Psalm 135:9.  
9:11 See Isaiah 63:12; Psalm 78:13; Exodus 15:5.  
9:12 See Exodus 13:21; 20:22; Numbers 14:14; 2 Chronicles 6:27.  
9:13 See Exodus 19:11; 20:22; Malachi 2:6.  
9:15 See Exodus 6:8; 16:4; Numbers 14:30; 20:8; Deuter-

onomy 11:31; Psalm 105:40; Ezekiel 20:6, 15, 28, 42.  
9:16 See Deuteronomy 10:16; 11:28; 2 Kings 17:14; Jeremiah 7:26; 17:23; 19:15.  
9:17 See 1 Samuel 8:19; Jeremiah 11:10; Joel 2:13.  
9:18 See Exodus 32:4, 8; Deuteronomy 9:16.  
9:19 See Daniel 9:18; Isaiah 54:7.  
9:20 See Exodus 15:22-27; 16:1-36; Pss 78:15; 143:10.  
9:21 See Deuteronomy 2:7; 8:4; 29:4.

9:22 Nm 21:21;  
Dt 2:26  
9:23 Gn 22:17  
9:26 Jdg 2:12;  
1Ki 14:9;  
Neh 9:27  
9:29 Lv 18:5;  
Neh 9:16;  
Zech. 7:11  
9:30 2Ki 17:13;  
1Pt 1:11;  
2Pt 1:21  
9:32 Dt 7:9, 21;  
1Ki 8:23;  
2Ki 17:3; Dn. 9:4

- 22** You gave them kingdoms and peoples,  
and assigned to them every side.<sup>a</sup>  
They took possession of the land of King Sihon of Heshbon  
and the land of King Og of Bashan.
- 23** You multiplied their descendants as the stars of heaven.  
You brought them into the land that you had told their ancestors to enter and possess.
- 24** So the descendants went in and possessed the land.  
Before them, you subdued the Canaanites who inhabited the land.  
You also handed over to them their kings and the neighboring peoples,  
to do with as they wished.
- 25** They captured fortified cities and productive land,  
and took possession of houses filled with all kinds of good things:  
Excavated cisterns, vineyards, olive orchards, and a great many fruit trees.  
They ate until they were satisfied and grew fat,  
and delighted themselves in your great goodness.
- 26** But they were disobedient, rebelled against you,  
and turned their back on your Instruction.  
They killed your prophets who had warned them  
so that they might return to you.  
They held you in great contempt.
- 27** Therefore, you handed them over to the power of their enemies  
who made them suffer.  
But when they cried out to you in their suffering,  
you heard them from heaven.  
Because you are merciful,  
you gave them saviors who saved them from the power of their enemies.
- 28** But after they had rest from this, they again started doing evil against you.  
So you gave them over to the power of their enemies who ruled over them.  
Yet when they turned and cried to you,  
you heard from heaven and rescued them many times  
because of your great mercy.
- 29** You also warned them to return to your Instruction,  
but they acted arrogantly and didn't obey your commands.  
They sinned against your judgments,  
even though life comes by keeping them.<sup>b</sup>  
They turned a stubborn shoulder, became headstrong, and wouldn't obey.
- 30** You were patient with them for many years  
and warned them by your spirit through the prophets.  
But they wouldn't listen,  
so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples.
- 31** In your great mercy, however, you didn't make an end of them.  
Neither did you forsake them,  
because you are a merciful and compassionate God.
- 32** Now, our God, great and mighty and awesome God,  
you are the one who faithfully keeps the covenant.  
Don't treat lightly all of the hardship that has come upon us,  
upon our kings, our officials, our priests, our prophets, our ancestors,  
and all your people,  
from the time of the kings of Assyria until today.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Them refers to judgments.

9:22 See Numbers 21; 32:33; Deuteronomy 2-3; Psalm 135:11.

9:23 See Genesis 22:17; 24:4; Exodus 32:13; Judges 2:1.

9:24 See Deuteronomy 4:1; 8:1; 10:11; 1 Chronicles 17:10.

9:25 See Deuteronomy 3:5; 6:11; 8:7; Joshua 14:12.

9:26 See 1 Kings 14:9; 18:4; Ezekiel 23:35; Ps 1:17; Amos 3:13; 2 Chronicles 24:19.

9:27 The people remember God's forgiving nature. See Exodus 14:10; Joshua 24:7; Ezekiel 39:23.

9:30 See Zechariah 7:12; 1 Samuel 8:19; Amos 3:13.

9:33 Gn 18:25;  
 Job 2:10;  
 Ps 106:6;  
 Lam. 1:18;  
 Dn. 9:14  
 9:34 2Ch 23:16;  
 Neh 10:1  
 9:38 2Ch 23:16;  
 Ezz 10:3;  
 Neh 10:1

- <sup>33</sup>You have been just in all that has happened to us;  
 you have acted faithfully, and we have done wrong.
- <sup>34</sup>Our kings, our officials, our priests, and our ancestors  
 haven't kept your Instruction.  
 They haven't heeded your commandments  
 and the warnings that you gave them.
- <sup>35</sup>Even in their own kingdom, surrounded by the great goodness  
 that you gave to them,  
 even in the wide and rich land that you gave them,  
 they didn't serve you or turn from their wicked works.
- <sup>36</sup>So now today we are slaves,  
 slaves in the land that you gave to our ancestors  
 to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts.
- <sup>37</sup>Its produce profits the kings whom you have placed over us  
 because of our sins.  
 They have power over our bodies and do as they please with our livestock.  
 We are in great distress.

**Commitment to follow the Instruction**

<sup>38</sup>Because of all this,<sup>w</sup> we are making a firm agreement in writing, with the names of our officials, our Levites, and our priests on the seal.

**10**<sup>v</sup>Upon the seals are the names of Governor Nehemiah, Hachaliah's son, and Zedekiah;  
<sup>2</sup>Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,  
<sup>3</sup>Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah,  
<sup>4</sup>Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,  
<sup>5</sup>Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,  
<sup>6</sup>Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,  
<sup>7</sup>Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,  
<sup>8</sup>Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah; these are the priests.

<sup>9</sup>The Levites: Jeshua, Azaniah's son; Binnui of the descendants of Henadad; Kadmiel;

<sup>10</sup>and their associates:  
 Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita,  
 Pelaiah, Hanan,  
<sup>11</sup>Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,  
<sup>12</sup>Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,  
<sup>13</sup>Hodiah, Bani, Beninu.

<sup>14</sup>The leaders of the people: Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,  
<sup>15</sup>Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,  
<sup>16</sup>Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,  
<sup>17</sup>Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,  
<sup>18</sup>Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,  
<sup>19</sup>Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,  
<sup>20</sup>Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,  
<sup>21</sup>Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,  
<sup>22</sup>Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,  
<sup>23</sup>Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,

<sup>w</sup>10:1 in Heb <sup>v</sup>This refers to great distress in 9:37. <sup>v</sup>10:2 in Heb

9:32 See Exodus 18:8; Numbers 20:14; Deuteronomy 7:9; 10:17.  
 9:33 See Jeremiah 12:1; Psalm 119:137.  
 9:34 See 2 Kings 17:15.  
 9:36 See Jeremiah 2:7.  
 9:37 See 1 Samuel 8:11-18.  
 9:38 *making a firm agreement*: The Hebrew idiom is "cut a covenant." People make a pledge to keep the Lord's Instruction.

10:1-27 Following the prayer of the community in which they profess their faith and agree to change their hearts and lives, the people are ready to seal their covenant with God. The pledge to obedience is sealed by four distinctive groups of the community's religious and political leaders—Nehemiah the governor (10:1), the priests (10:2-8), the Levites (10:9-13), and the leaders of the people (10:14-27).  
 10:1 *Upon the seals*: This is an official document.

10:28 1Ch 9:2;  
Ezr 2:36; Neh 9:2  
10:29 2Ki 23:3;  
Neh 5:12;  
Ps 119:106  
10:30 Ex 34:16;  
Dt 7:3; Ezr 9:12

<sup>24</sup>Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,

<sup>25</sup>Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,

<sup>26</sup>Ahiah, Hanan, Anan,

<sup>27</sup>Malluch, Harim, Baanah.

<sup>28</sup>The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the neighboring peoples to follow the Instruction from God, together with their wives, their sons, their daughters, and all who have knowledge and understanding. <sup>29</sup>They join with their officials and relatives, and make a solemn pledge to live by God's Instruction, which was given by Moses, God's servant, and to observe faithfully all the commandments, judgments, and statutes of our LORD God.

<sup>30</sup>We won't give our daughters in marriage to the neighboring peoples, nor take their daughters in marriage for our sons.

<sup>31</sup>If the neighboring peoples bring merchandise or any grain to sell on the Sabbath, we won't buy it from them on the Sabbath or on any holy day.

Every seventh year we won't plant crops, and we will return anything held in debt.

<sup>32</sup>We pledge ourselves to keep the commandment and pay one-third of a shekel each year for the service of our God's house, <sup>33</sup>for the stacks of bread and the regular grain offering and the regular entirely burned offering, for the sabbaths and the new moons and the appointed festivals, for the holy offerings and the purification offerings to make reconciliation for Israel, and for all the work of our God's house.

<sup>34</sup>We have also cast lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people so that we bring the wood offering into our God's house by families at the appointed times every year, to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the Instruction.

<sup>35</sup>We will also bring the early produce of our soil and the early fruit from all trees every year to the LORD's house.

<sup>36</sup>We will also bring the oldest offspring of our children and our cattle, as it is written in the Instruction, and the oldest males of our herds and flocks to our God's house, to the priests who serve in our God's house.

<sup>37</sup>We will also bring the first of our dough, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the wine, and the oil to the priests at the storerooms of our God's house. We will also bring one-tenth of the produce of our soil to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tenth-part gifts in all the towns where we work.

<sup>38</sup>A priest from the family of Aaron must be with the Levites when they collect the tenth-part gifts. Then the Levites must bring up one-tenth of the tenth-part gifts to our God's house, to the storerooms of the treasury. <sup>39</sup>The Israelites and the Levites must bring the contribution of grain, wine, and oil to the storerooms where the sanctuary equipment is kept, and where the priests on duty, the gatekeepers, and the singers reside. We won't neglect our God's house!

**10:28-39** A covenant commitment ceremony. The community takes upon itself the covenantal obligations voluntarily. Some of the expectations noted here are not found in the Instruction (that is, Genesis through Deuteronomy) in its current form.

**10:28-29** Those who were determined to obey the Lord's Instruction pledge their allegiance with their entire household (cf. Josh 24:15).

**10:28** *all who have separated themselves*: See Ezra 6:21.

**10:30** See Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-4; Ezra 9:1-10:44.

**10:31** *to sell on the Sabbath*: The Sabbath Instruction taught in Exodus 20:8-11 doesn't say that buying food is a form of work. However, Leviticus 25:2-7 and Isaiah 58:13-14 show that the Sabbath teachings did evolve. *Every seventh year we won't plant crops, and we will return anything held in debt*: Ezra combines the Instruction about the seventh fallow year (Exod 23:10-11) with the Instruction about the year of remission (Deut 15:1-8).

**10:32** *pay one-third of a shekel each year for the service of our God's house*: The Instruction stipulated half a shekel (Exod 30:11-16). The annual offering for the upkeep of the

temple might have been reduced due to the impoverished condition of Judah in post-exilic times.

**10:33** *for all the work of our God's house*: for the regular working of the Jerusalem temple.

**10:34** *cast lots*: See 1 Chronicles 24:5, 7; 25:8-9; 26:13; Proverbs 18:18; Joshua 14:1-2. *the wood offering*: The Lord instructed Aaron and his sons that the fire on the altar must burn continually (Lev 6:8-13). The prescription for donations of the wood isn't found in the Instruction.

**10:35-39** The Instruction prescribes offerings for the priests and Levites.

**10:35** *the early fruit*: See Numbers 18:12-13.

**10:36** *the oldest offspring of our children and our cattle*: See Exodus 22:29-30; Numbers 18:15-17.

**10:37** *one tenth of the produce of our soil*: See Numbers 18:26-32.

**10:38** The priests received a tenth of the Levites' income (Num 18:26-28).

**10:39** *We won't neglect our God's house*: The regular functioning of the temple and the livelihood of its personnel were provided for by the prescribed donations given by the community. At the conclusion of the covenantal

**Inhabitants of Jerusalem**

**11** The leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. The rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in the holy city of Jerusalem, while the remaining nine stayed in the other towns. <sup>2</sup>The people blessed those who agreed to live in Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>These are the leaders of the province who lived in Jerusalem; while the Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon's servants lived in the towns of Judah on their own property in their towns. <sup>4</sup>Some of the descendants of Judah and Benjamin settled in Jerusalem.

From the family of Judah: Athaiah son of Uzziiah son of Zechariah son of Amariah son of Shephatiah son of Mahalalel of the family of Perez; <sup>5</sup>and Maaseiah son of Baruch son of Colhozeh son of Hazaiah son of Adaiah son of Joiarib son of Zechariah son of the Shilonite. <sup>6</sup>All of the family of Perez who lived in Jerusalem totaled 468 courageous people.

<sup>7</sup>From the family of Benjamin: Sallu son of Meshullam son of Joed son of Pedaiiah son of Koliaih son of Maaseiah son of Ithiel son of Jeshaiiah. <sup>8</sup>And after him were Gabbai and Sallai: 928. <sup>9</sup>Joel son of Zichri was their supervisor, and Judah son of Hassenuah was second in charge of the city.

<sup>10</sup>Of the priests: Jedaiah son of Joiarib, Jachin, <sup>11</sup>Seraiah son of Hilkiah son of Meshullam son of Zadok son of Meraioth son of Ahitub the officer of God's house, <sup>12</sup>and their associates who carried out the work in the temple: <sup>8</sup> 222. There was also Adaiah son of Jeroham son of Pelaliah son of Amzi son of Zechariah son of Pashhur son of Malchijah, <sup>13</sup>and his associates, heads of families: 242. There was also Amashsai son of Azarel son of Ahzai son of Meshillemoth son of Immer <sup>14</sup>and their associates, for a total of 128 courageous people. Their supervisor was Zabdiel, Haggedolim's son.

<sup>15</sup>Of the Levites: Shemaiah son of Hasshub son of Azrikam son of Hashabiah son of Bunni; <sup>16</sup>as well as Shabbethai and Jozabad, who were some of the leaders of the Levites in charge of the outside work on God's house; <sup>17</sup>also Mattaniah son of Mica son of Zabdi son of Asaph the leader who began the thanksgiving with prayer, and Bakbukiah, who was the second among his associates; and Abda son of Shammua son of Galal son of Jeduthun. <sup>18</sup>All the Levites in the holy city totaled 284. <sup>19</sup>The gatekeepers: Akkub, Talmon, and their associates who guarded the gates totaled 172. <sup>20</sup>The rest of Israel, the priests, and the Levites were in all the towns of Judah, each of them in their own property. <sup>21</sup>But the temple servants lived in Ophel, with Ziha and Gishpa in charge of them. <sup>22</sup>The supervisor of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani son of Hashabiah son of Mattaniah

<sup>\*</sup>Or house

ceremony, the people proclaim the solemn pledge. They firmly declare their devotion and service to the Lord's house. *neglect*: Following the Babylonian conquest, the Jerusalem temple lay in ruins for many years. The despair, in part, owed to the negligence of the Judean community. Whether because of external political pressure, internal discord, or economic hardship, the community had let the house of God remain in dilapidated condition for a very long time. Now that the people had recommitted themselves to God and God's commandments, they were intent on making sure that the temple would be fully functional and supplied regularly with all the basic necessities.

11:1-2 *the holy city*: This expression about Jerusalem is found in Isaiah 48:2; 52:1; Daniel 9:24. Initially, Jerusalem wasn't a desirable place for the returnees to settle. The marks of devastation were still visible. Nehemiah was a visionary. Continuing with his plan to restore the city to its previous vitality, after the reconstruction of the wall, he encouraged people to reside in Judah's capital city. The words in the post-exilic chapters of Isaiah were fulfilled. The ancient ruins were built up, the former devastations raised up, the ruined cities—the devastations of many generations—repaired (Isa 61:4). The community cooperated and heeded Nehemiah's appeal. Those selected

by lot as well as others who volunteered resettled to Jerusalem. The community praised these individuals' spirit of volunteerism. The surviving population in Judah during the Persian period was probably about a thousand people. 11:3-36 Nehemiah's census of those who settled in Jerusalem.

11:3 *Israelites*: This designation originally referred to the 12 tribes who descended from Jacob. After Solomon's death, David's united kingdom split into Israel and Judah. The 10 northern tribes, Israel, revolted against Rehoboam's rule and proclaimed Jeroboam king. The southern kingdom of Judah consisted of two tribes—Judah and Benjamin. Those who returned from the Babylonian exile to Judah frequently employed the term "Israel" for strategic reasons. The designation served to stress continuity with the past while looking forward to the fulfillment of God's promises for a restored nation in the future. The Lord's covenant with all Israel carried on with the restoration of Judah. *the Levites*: settled in the cities allotted to them. *temple servants*: See note on Nehemiah 3:26.

11:11 *the officer of God's house*: See Numbers 3:32; 1 Chronicles 9:11; 2 Chronicles 19:11.

11:17 *son of Asaph*: The descendants of Asaph were appointed as temple singers by the command of David. (2 Chron 35:15; Neh 11:22).

11:1 Is 48:2;  
Matt. 4:5  
11:3 1Ch 9:2;  
Ezr 2:43;  
Neh 7:57  
11:4 Gn 38:29;  
1Ch 9:3  
11:10 1Ch 9:10;  
Neh 12:6,  
Neh 12:19

11:24 Gn 38:30;  
Nm 26:20  
12:1 Ezr 2:2;  
Neh 7:7;  
Hg 1:1, 12  
12:7 Ezr 3:2;  
Neh 12:20-21  
12:12 Ezr 2:2;  
Neh 12:1  
12:22 Ezr 10:6;  
Neh 12:11  
12:23 1Ch 9:14;  
Ezr 10:6;  
Neh 12:22  
12:27 2Sa 6:5;  
1Ch 15:16, 28;  
2Ch 5:13

son of Mica, from the family of Asaph, who were the singers in charge of the work of God's house.

<sup>23</sup>There was a command from the king setting out the daily requirements of the singers.

<sup>24</sup>Advising the king in all matters concerning the people was Pethahiah, Meshezabel's son, from the family of Zerah, Judah's son.

<sup>25</sup>As for the villages with their fields, some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba and its villages, in Dibon and its villages, in Jekabzeel and its villages, <sup>26</sup>in Jeshua, in Moladah and Beth-pelet, <sup>27</sup>in Hazar-shual, in Beer-sheba and its villages, <sup>28</sup>in Ziklag, in Meconah and its villages, <sup>29</sup>in En-rimmon, Zorah, Jarmuth, <sup>30</sup>Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its fields, and Azekah and its villages. So they settled from Beer-sheba to the Hinnom Valley.

<sup>31</sup>The people of Benjamin also lived from beyond Geba, at Michmash, Aija, Bethel and its villages, <sup>32</sup>Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, <sup>33</sup>Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, <sup>34</sup>Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, <sup>35</sup>Lod, and Ono, the valley of artisans. <sup>36</sup>Some divisions of the Levites in Judah were joined to Benjamin.

**12** These are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, <sup>2</sup>Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, <sup>3</sup>Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, <sup>4</sup>Iddo, Ginnethon, <sup>5</sup>Abijah, <sup>6</sup>Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, <sup>7</sup>Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, <sup>8</sup>Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah.

These were the leaders of the priests and of their associates in the days of Jeshua. <sup>9</sup>The Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and also Mattaniah, who was in charge of the thanksgiving songs along with his associates. <sup>10</sup>Bakbukiah and Unn and their associates stood opposite them in the service.

<sup>11</sup>Jeshua was the father of Joiakim, Joiakim the father of Eliashib, Eliashib the father of Joiada, <sup>12</sup>Joiada the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan the father of Jaddua.

<sup>13</sup>These were the heads of the priestly families in the days of Joiakim: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; <sup>14</sup>of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; <sup>15</sup>of Malluch, <sup>16</sup>Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; <sup>17</sup>of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; <sup>18</sup>of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; <sup>19</sup>of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moaddiah, Piltai; <sup>20</sup>of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; <sup>21</sup>of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; <sup>22</sup>of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; <sup>23</sup>of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel.

<sup>24</sup>In the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua, the Levites and the priests were recorded as heads of families in the rule of <sup>25</sup>Darius the Persian.

<sup>26</sup>The Levites who were heads of families were recorded in the official records until the time of Johanan, Eliashib's son. <sup>27</sup>These were the leaders of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua, Kadmiel's son, and their associates who stood opposite them to praise and give thanks in turn according to the commandment of David, the man of God, namely, <sup>28</sup>Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, and Obadiah.

Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers standing guard by the storerooms of the gates. <sup>29</sup>These served in the days of Joiakim, Jeshua's son and Jozadak's grandson, and in the days of Governor Nehemiah and of Ezra the priest and scribe.

### Dedication of the wall

<sup>27</sup>When it was time for the dedication of Jerusalem's wall, they sought out the Levites in all the places where they lived in order to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with joy, with thanks and singing, and with cymbals, harps, and lyres.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Ginnethoi* <sup>b</sup>LXX; MT *Malluchi* <sup>c</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT *upon*

11:36 *Some divisions of the Levites in Judah were joined to Benjamin:* Those Levites who were not residing in Jerusalem were distributed throughout the regions of Judah and Benjamin.

12:1 The writer compiles the list of the priests and Levites who returned from Babylon. The list goes as far back as the time of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, 537 BCE. Priests and Levites played a pivotal role in restoring the regular worship at the Jerusalem temple.

12:10 *Jeshua* was a high priest who shared leadership with Zerubbabel. The names of the succeeding five

generations of high priests are given here. Jeshua is a son of Jehozadak (See Hag 1:1; 2:2; Zech 6:11, where *Jeshua* is translated "Joshua"). This list resumes where 1 Chronicles 6:3-15 left off, at the beginning of the Babylonian exile in 587 BCE.

12:12-21 In his reform of worship practices, David instituted 24 divisions of priests (1 Chron 24:1-18).

12:22 *Darius the Persian:* probably Darius I who ruled 550-486 BCE; Darius II ruled 423-404 BCE.

12:27-39 The author picks up where he left off at the end of Nehemiah 7. The wall has been built, and Nehemiah

<sup>28</sup>The singers also gathered together both from the region around Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites, <sup>29</sup>also from Beth-hagilgal and from the region of Geba and Azmaveth, because the singers had built themselves villages around Jerusalem. <sup>30</sup>After the priests and the Levites purified themselves, they purified the people, the gates, and the wall.

<sup>31</sup>Then I<sup>d</sup> brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and organized two large groups to give thanks. The first group went in procession on the wall toward the right, in the direction of the Dung Gate. <sup>32</sup>Following them went Hoshaiiah and half the officials of Judah, <sup>33</sup>along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, <sup>34</sup>Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah. <sup>35</sup>There were also some young priests with trumpets—Zechariah son of Jonathan son of Shemaiah son of Mattaniah son of Micaiah son of Zaccur son of Asaph—<sup>36</sup>along with his associates Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani. They brought<sup>e</sup> the musical instruments of David the man of God. Ezra the scribe went in front of them.

<sup>37</sup>When they reached the Fountain Gate they went straight up by the stairs of David's City, on the ascent to the wall, past the house of David to the Water Gate on the east. <sup>38</sup>The second group went in procession to the left.<sup>f</sup> I followed them with half of the people along the wall past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall, <sup>39</sup>past the Gate of Ephraim and over the Mishneh Gate,<sup>g</sup> the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, and the Tower of the Hundred as far as the Sheep Gate. They came to stop at the Gate of the Guard.

**In God's house**

<sup>40</sup>Then both groups of those who gave thanks stood in God's house. I was there too along with the half of the officials who were with me. <sup>41</sup>Also there were the priests Eliakim, Maa-seiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah with trumpets. <sup>42</sup>Also there were Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang with Jezrahiah as their leader.

<sup>43</sup>They offered great sacrifices on that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy. The women and children also rejoiced, and the sound of the joy in Jerusalem could be heard from far away.

<sup>44</sup>On that day, people were appointed over the rooms for the things to be stored, the contributions, the early produce, and the tenth-part gifts. They were to gather into them the portions required by the Instruction for the priests and for the Levites from the fields belonging to the towns, for the people of Judah were delighted with the ministry of the priests and the Levites.

<sup>45</sup>They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and his son Solomon.

<sup>d</sup>Or I, Nehemiah <sup>e</sup>Heb lacks they brought. <sup>f</sup>Or opposite <sup>g</sup>Or Old Gate

has set up the doors. The gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites have been appointed. Now the much anticipated moment of celebration has arrived. The community gathers as a unit to give thanks and dedicate the walls before God. Nehemiah organizes two groups of musicians for the thanksgiving procession. The first group marches on the wall toward the right—counterclockwise (12:31-37). The second group marches clockwise (12:38-39). The building of the wall was the community's joint effort (Neh 3). Nehemiah stresses that the celebration event is a communal achievement when continuity of the old tradition and the announcement of a new age came together. Musicians and temple officials installed by David march alongside Ezra who had led the community in reconciling and re-committing to the Lord (12:36).

12:27-29 Temple singers and Levites are summoned from their respective settlements to Jerusalem in order to lead the people in the celebration.

12:30 *I they purified the people:* The purification ceremony most likely involved water (see Exod 19:19; 2 Chron 29:5-19).

12:31 *I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall:* This is a triumphant day. Nehemiah's adversary, Tobiah the

Ammonite, had mockingly announced: "If even a fox climbs on whatever they build, their wall of stones will crumble" (Neh 4:3). But the wall stood strong and mighty against any possible threat from the surrounding nations. The Judean community stands together and their morale is high. The wall is a testimony that the Lord is with them.

12:43 *The women and children also rejoiced:* The occasion is marked by egalitarian and free spirit. Just like at the public reading of the Instruction, also at the dedication of the wall, everyone in the Judean community unites their hearts and minds as one people of the Lord.

12:44 *the contributions, the early produce, and the tenth-part gifts:* People's enthusiasm and anticipation for a spiritually and morally restored community of God also translates into their voluntary and generous financial contributions to God's house. *the people of Judah were delighted with the ministry of the priests and the Levites:* Now that the officials of the temple were properly reinstalled, the people could look forward to the return of regular worship.

12:45-47 The temple service and other regular functions that David had instituted are finally reinstated.

12:37 Neh 2:14  
12:39 2Ki 14:13;  
2Ch 25:23;  
Neh 3:1  
12:43 Josh 8:35;  
2Ch 20:13;  
Matt. 21:15  
12:44 1Ch 9:26;  
2Ch 31:11;  
Neh 13:13

12:47 Nm 18:21;  
Neh 10:38

13:1 Dt 23:3,  
Dt 31:11;  
2Ki 23:2; Neh 9:3

13:2 Nm 22:3;  
Dt 23:4;  
Josh 24:9

13:10 Dt 12:19;  
Neh 12:29;  
Mal 3:8

13:12 2Ch 31:5;  
Neh 12:44;  
Mal 3:10

13:13  
2Ch 31:12;  
Neh 12:44;  
Ac 6:1

13:14 Neh 5:19;  
Heb. 6:10

13:15  
Ex 20:8; 34:21;  
Dt 5:12;  
Neh 10:31;  
Is 63:3

<sup>46</sup>Long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there was a leader of the singers, and there were songs of praise and thanks to God.

<sup>47</sup>In the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah all Israel gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers. They also set aside the portion for the Levites, and the Levites set aside the portion for the Aaronites.

### Restoring the temple

**13** On that day, when the scroll from Moses was being read to the people, they found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter God's assembly. <sup>2</sup>This is because they hadn't met the Israelites with food and water but instead hired Balaam against them to curse them. Yet our God turned the curse into a blessing. <sup>3</sup>When the people heard this law, they separated out from Israel all those of mixed descent.

<sup>4</sup>Now before this, however, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed to be in charge of the storerooms of our God's house and who was related to Tobiah, <sup>5</sup>prepared a large room for Tobiah to use. This was the room where they had previously kept the grain offering, the incense, and the equipment, together with the tenth-part gifts of grain, wine, and oil. These items were for the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers as well as the portions for the priests.

<sup>6</sup>I wasn't in Jerusalem while this was happening because I had gone to Babylon's King Artaxerxes in the thirty-second year of the king. After some time, I asked the king's permission <sup>7</sup>and returned to Jerusalem. That was when I saw the wrong that Eliashib had done on behalf of Tobiah by preparing him a room in the courtyards of God's house. <sup>8</sup>I was very angry and threw all of Tobiah's household furniture out of the room. <sup>9</sup>Then I gave orders that the rooms be purified, and I put back the temple equipment, along with the grain offering and the incense.

<sup>10</sup>I also found out that the Levites hadn't been given their portions, so they and the singers who did the work had gone back to their fields. <sup>11</sup>So I scolded the officials, asking, "Why is God's house being neglected?" I gathered them together and set them in their stations.

<sup>12</sup>Then all Judah brought the tenth-part gifts of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses. <sup>13</sup>I appointed the priest Shelemiah, the scribe Zadok, and Pedaiah of the Levites to be in charge over the storehouses. I also appointed Hanan, Zaccur's son and Mattaniah's grandson, as their assistant. These men were considered trustworthy, and their task was to hand out shares to their colleagues.

<sup>14</sup>Remember me, my God, concerning this. Don't erase my good deeds that I have done for my God's house and for its services.

### Keeping the Sabbath

<sup>15</sup>In those days I saw people in Judah using the winepresses on the Sabbath. They were also collecting piles of grain and loading them on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs, and

13:1 *no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter God's assembly:* See Deuteronomy 23:3-5.

13:2 *Yet our God turned the curse into a blessing:* See Numbers 22-24.

13:4-5 The high priest *Eliashib* was closely related to Sanballat the Horonite through marriage (Neh 3:1, 20). Eliashib's grandson married Sanballat's daughter (Neh 13:28). While Nehemiah was away, Eliashib had converted one of the temple storerooms into an accommodation for Tobiah the Ammonite, a close associate of Sanballat's. A high priest emptied a large storeroom in the temple to house an archenemy of the community. Tobiah and Sanballat had fiercely opposed Judah's reconstruction of the Jerusalem wall. They had threatened the community and falsely accused Nehemiah and his company of rebellion. Eliashib was a close friend to the adversary of Judah. From the perspective of Nehemiah, Eliashib was not conducting himself in the manner of a high priest, who ought to be guarding the interests of God's house and God's people. Instead, Eliashib had acted sacrilegiously by installing in the temple an Ammonite (Tobiah), whom the Lord's instruction had banned.

13:6 *Babylon's King Artaxerxes:* Artaxerxes was a Persian king. He also ruled Babylon.

13:10 *the Levites hadn't been given their portions:* See Numbers 18:24. During Nehemiah's absence, the community stopped bringing their offerings to the temple. The Levites had to return to their old source of livelihood, and the temple service was interrupted.

13:11 *I gathered them together and set them in their stations:* Nehemiah summons the Levites back to Jerusalem and reinstates the worship in Jerusalem. The temple officials return to their assignments.

13:12 Residents of Judah resumed their contributions to the temple. Once again, the Levites and the priests could count on a regular income in order to go about the temple activities without being occupied with financial worries.

13:13 *trustworthy:* One of God's distinctive characteristics is faithfulness (see Deut 7:9; 32:4; 2 Chron 31:20; Neh 7:2; Ps 31:5). Nehemiah appoints treasurers to be responsible for collecting the tenth part of the people's produce and proper distribution among the temple officials.

13:15-16 Nehemiah notices the violation of the sabbath instructions. God had strictly charged the



every kind of load, and then bringing them to Jerusalem on the Sabbath. I warned them at that time against selling food.

<sup>16</sup>In addition, people from Tyre who lived in the city were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them to the people of Judah on the Sabbath. This happened in Jerusalem itself!

<sup>17</sup>So I scolded the officials of Judah: "What is this evil thing that you are doing?" I asked. "You are making the Sabbath impure!" <sup>18</sup>This is just what your ancestors did, and God brought all this evil upon us and upon this city. And now you are bringing more wrath upon Israel by making the Sabbath impure!"

<sup>19</sup>So when it began to grow dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I gave orders that the doors should be shut. I also ordered that they shouldn't be reopened until after the Sabbath. To make sure that no load would come into the city<sup>b</sup> on the Sabbath, I stationed some of my own men at the gates. <sup>20</sup>Once or twice the traders and sellers of all kinds of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem. <sup>21</sup>But I warned them: "Why are you spending the night by the wall? If you do that again, I will lay hands on you!" At that point, they stopped coming on the Sabbath. <sup>22</sup>I also commanded the Levites to purify themselves and to come and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Remember this also in my favor, my God, and spare me according to the greatness of your mercy.

**Marrying foreign women**

<sup>23</sup>Also in those days I saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.

<sup>24</sup>Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of various peoples; they couldn't speak the language of Judah.

<sup>25</sup>So I scolded them and cursed them, and beat some of them, and pulled out their hair. I also made them swear a solemn pledge in the name of God, saying, "You won't give your daughters to their sons in marriage, or take their daughters in marriage for your sons or yourselves. <sup>26</sup>Didn't Israel's King Solomon sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was well loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Yet foreign wives led even him into sin!" <sup>27</sup>Should we then listen to you and do all this great evil, acting unfaithfully toward our God by marrying foreign women?"

<sup>b</sup>Heb lacks *the city*.

Israelites to remember (Exod 20:8) and observe the seventh-day Sabbath (Exod 31:12-17; Isa 58:13-14). Despite the prohibition of work, residents of Judah were engaging in field labor (contrary to Exod 34:21; Num15:32-36), treading winepresses, loading donkeys, and carrying out business transactions (cf. Amos 8:5; Jer 17:21-27). The instruction also prohibited traveling (Exod 16:29-30) and kindling fire (Exod 35:2-3) on the Sabbath. After the exile, the observance of the Sabbath as well as the dietary laws became particularly important markers of Jewish identity and faith. God's blessings are attached to faithful observance of the Sabbath (Isa 56:1-7).

13:19 *So when it began to grow dark*: In the Jewish calendar, the Sabbath and other holidays begin at sunset.

13:23-31 *Identity was one of the primary concerns for post-exilic Judah*. The Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and ensuing exile were traumatic experiences for the Jewish people. Ezra and Nehemiah viewed the catastrophic events as God's punishment for Israel's failure to live by the teachings expected from a covenantal relationship with the Lord. These two men were determined to prevent history from repeating itself. They took issue with intermarriage. Union between Jewish men and non-Jewish women entailed social and economic ties with the surrounding tribal alliances that could compromise Judah's self-interest. We don't know if the women from other tribes renounced their native

cultures or religions. They may have taught their children in their own language, customs, and religious traditions. Ezra and Nehemiah saw the foreign spouses as potential cause for the Jewish men to worship idols and abandon their faith, which could sweep throughout the restored covenantal community. In the view of the priest Ezra and the governor Nehemiah, the syncretistic practices of their Jewish ancestors (e.g., worshipping other gods) had incurred the judgment of God, after repeated warnings by the prophets. So in the view of the leaders, the non-Jewish women posed a threat to the survival of the Jewish community and its covenant with the Lord. Nehemiah condemned intermarriage in the strongest terms, and he firmly demanded that Jewish men marry only Jewish women. But, in contrast to Ezra, he stopped short of insisting on divorce for men who married outside the Jewish community.

13:25 *You won't give your daughters*: See Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-6.

13:26 *Didn't Israel's King Solomon sin on account of such women?*: Solomon loved many foreign women (1 Kgs 11:1). He entered into marriage alliances with women from the list of nations which the Lord had forbidden. Solomon accumulated 700 wives and 300 concubines. In Nehemiah's view, Solomon's foreign wives led the king to separate from the covenantal relationship with the Lord. These alliances with the wives (and their tribes) initiated Solomon into their respective idolatrous practices. This

13:18 Nm 32:14;  
Josh 22:18;  
Ezr 9:13;  
Jer 17:21, 27;  
Ezr 20:13  
13:23 Ru 1:4;  
1Ki 11:1; Ezr 9:1;  
Neh 13:1;  
13:25 Dt 7:3;  
Neh 13:17;  
Is 50:6

<sup>28</sup>Now one of the sons of Joiada son of the high priest Eliashib was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. So I chased him away from me.

<sup>29</sup>Remember them, my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priests and the Levites!

<sup>30</sup>So I purified them of everything foreign and established the services of the priests and Levites with specific duties for each person. <sup>31</sup>I also provided for the wood offering at appointed times as well as for the early produce.

Remember me, my God, for good.

was the basis of God's warning about royalty in 1 Kings 11:1-13.

13:28 *So I chased him away from me:* According to the Instruction, a priest was to marry of his own kind (Lev 21:14).

# ESTHER

The book of Esther was written to help Jewish believers live faithfully in an unfaithful—and sometimes openly hostile—world. Its themes of human courage and God's protection continue to inspire Christians and Jews to this day, especially as they struggle with the relationship between faith and culture.

The story is set during the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), a Persian king who ruled from 486 to 465 BCE. The first verse of the book ("This is what happened back when Ahasuerus lived") says that the story was written at a later date. Most scholars think it was written about 80 years after the events it describes. This gap is important, because it keeps us from getting too caught up in historical uncertainties. For example, we have no record of a Persian queen named Esther, and the Greek historian Herodotus places Ahasuerus at the famous Battle of Salamis, though the book of Esther describes him crowning his new queen in Susa. Unlikely details also aren't surprising for this type of

story. For example, the 180-day drinking binge for the entire army described in Esther 1:3-4, or the 75-foot-tall stake for impaling a person that Haman sets up in Esther 5:14.

While Esther is listed among the Historical Books in Christian Bibles, Jews place it with the Wisdom books. The author's goal was to tell a story set in Israel's past to make important points for the author's audience. Readers should remember that Esther's author is a master of using humor to make serious points.

Three major themes deserve special mention. The first is the *importance of proportion*. Ahasuerus and Haman provide examples of actions that are out of all proportion. (Ahasuerus' famous drinking binge is one example; Haman's decision to wipe out an entire people because he was insulted is another.) But Esther shows remarkable restraint in the face of horrible danger for herself and her people. The second theme is *the challenge of living a faithful life in an unfaithful world*. The Jews in the book



The Esther scroll in a silver container  
*iStockPhoto*

of Esther demonstrate courage and creativity in the face of difficulty and danger. The third theme is *the importance of the written word*. There are at least 63 references to writing or written texts in the book of Esther. This, when combined with the power of particular texts to determine either life or death (see Esth 3:12-14; 8:9-14), suggests that the entire book may be a meditation on this theme.

God is never mentioned in the book of Esther. Nevertheless, God is a powerful character who operates "behind the scenes," directing one fantastic coincidence after another. The

author may also be trying to protect readers from any accidental pronunciation of the divine name during the Jewish Festival of Purim, which traditionally requires the scroll of Esther to be read aloud in a carnival-like atmosphere.

Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Bibles contain six additional passages (104 verses in all) that don't appear in Jewish or Protestant Bibles. These verses are based on the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible and are often labeled as "Additions to Esther." The additions tend to be more pious in tone and make liberal use of the name for God.

#### **I. Chapter One**

- A. Ahasuerus displays his power and wealth (1:1-9)
- B. Vashti sparks a state crisis (1:10-12)
- C. The king and his advisors react (1:13-22)

#### **II. Chapter Two**

- A. The king decides to seek a new queen (2:1-4)
- B. Esther is caught in the royal dragnet (2:5-11)
- C. Esther is chosen as queen (2:12-18)
- D. Mordecai saves the king's life (2:19-23)

#### **III. Chapter Three**

- A. Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman (3:1-4)
- B. Haman seeks to destroy the Jews (3:5-15)

#### **IV. Chapter Four**

- A. Mordecai and Esther learn about the deadly edict (4:1-8)
- B. Mordecai and Esther confer (4:9-14)
- C. Esther commits herself to plead for her people (4:15-17)

#### **V. Chapter Five**

- A. Esther throws a banquet for the king and Haman (5:1-8)
- B. Haman plots to impale Mordecai (5:9-14)

#### **VI. Chapter Six**

- A. The king is reminded of Mordecai's loyalty (6:1-3)
- B. Haman is forced to honor Mordecai (6:4-13)

#### **VII. Chapter Seven**

- A. Esther pleads for her people (7:1-6)
- B. Haman's wicked plan is exposed and punished (7:7-10)

#### **VIII. Chapter Eight**

- A. Esther pleads for her people again (8:1-6)
- B. A counter-edict is crafted and celebrated (8:7-17)

#### **IX. Chapters Nine and Ten**

- A. The Jews defend themselves against their attackers (9:1-19)
- B. The Feast of Purim is established (9:20-32)
- C. Mordecai's power and authority (10:1-3)

### Queen Vashti

**1** This is what happened back when Ahasuerus lived, the very Ahasuerus who ruled from India to Cush—one hundred twenty-seven provinces in all. <sup>2</sup>At that time, Ahasuerus ruled the kingdom from his royal throne in the fortified part of Susa. <sup>3</sup>In the third year of his rule he hosted a feast for all his officials and courtiers. The leaders of Persia and Media attended, along with his provincial officials and officers. <sup>4</sup>He showed off the awesome riches of his kingdom and beautiful treasures as mirrors of how very great he was. The event lasted a long time—six whole months, to be exact! <sup>5</sup>After that the king held a seven-day feast for everyone in the fortified part of Susa. Whether they were important people in the town or not, they all met in the walled garden of the royal palace. <sup>6</sup>White linen curtains and purple hangings were held up by shining white and red-purple ropes tied to silver rings and marble posts. Gold and silver couches sat on a mosaic floor made of gleaming purple crystal, marble, and mother-of-pearl. <sup>7</sup>They served the drinks in cups made of gold, and each cup was different. The king made sure there was plenty of royal wine. <sup>8</sup>The rule about the drinks was “No limits!” The king had ordered everyone serving wine in the palace to offer as much as each guest wanted. <sup>9</sup>At the same time, Queen Vashti held a feast for women in King Ahasuerus’ palace.

<sup>10</sup>On the seventh day, when wine had put the king in high spirits, he gave an order to Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven eunuchs who served King Ahasuerus personally. <sup>11</sup>They were to bring Queen Vashti before him wearing the royal crown. She was gorgeous, and he wanted to show off her beauty both to the general public and to his important guests. <sup>12</sup>But Queen Vashti refused to come as the king had ordered through the eunuchs. The king was furious, his anger boiling inside. <sup>13</sup>Now, when a need arose, the king would often talk with certain very smart people about the best way to handle it. They were people who knew both the kingdom’s written laws and what judges had decided about cases in the past. <sup>14</sup>The ones he talked with most often were Carshena, She-thar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan. They were seven very important people in Persia and Media who, as the kingdom’s highest leaders, were in the king’s inner circle. So the king said to them, <sup>15</sup>“According to the law, what should I do with Queen Vashti since she didn’t do what King Ahasuerus ordered her through the eunuchs?”

<sup>16</sup>Then Memucan spoke up in front of the king and the officials. “Queen Vashti,” he said, “has done something wrong not just to the king himself. She has also done wrong to all the officials and the peoples in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. <sup>17</sup>This is the reason: News of what the queen did will reach all women, making them look down on their husbands. They will say, ‘King Ahasuerus ordered servants to bring Queen Vashti before him, but she refused to come.’ <sup>18</sup>This very day, the important women of Persia and Media who hear about the queen will tell the royal officials the same thing. There will be no end of put-downs and arguments. <sup>19</sup>Now, if the king wishes, let him send out a royal order and have it written into the laws of Persia and Media, laws no one can ever change. It should say that Vashti will never again come before King Ahasuerus. It should also say that the king will give her royal place to someone better than she. <sup>20</sup>When the order becomes public through the whole empire,

1:1 *Ahasuerus*: the Hebrew name for a Persian emperor (Xerxes I), who reigned from India to Ethiopia from 486 to 465 BCE. *one hundred twenty-seven provinces*: the first of many details that demonstrate the king’s immense power.

1:2 *Susa*: one of four historical Persian capitals.

1:3-4 *six whole months*: an absurdly long party. The storyteller uses the details to tell readers that the king’s actions are out of proportion.

1:5-8 After 180 days, the king throws another banquet that lasts an additional seven days. The description of this banquet adds local character and highlights the king’s “more is better” philosophy.

1:9-15 Queen Vashti sparks a state crisis when she refuses to obey the king’s command to attend his banquet *wearing the royal crown* (1:11). This may mean that she was to appear wearing *only* the royal crown. It’s understandable why she would refuse to parade in front of drunken men.

Her act of defiance (or modesty) sets up the chapter’s ultimate irony: The king who commands wealth and power can’t even control his wife.

1:13-20 Seven *eunuchs* (Esth 1:10, see sidebar, “Eunuchs” at Esth 2) were unable to bring the queen to the king’s banquet, and now seven *very important people* (1:14) are called to advise Ahasuerus on how to deal with his wife’s disobedience. The outrageous response resembles Haman’s reaction to Mordecai’s disobedience in Esther 3:6, which also results in a law. The fact that all of this also happens on the seventh day of the feast (Esth 1:10) reflects the Bible’s use of the number seven to represent completeness or perfection.

1:19 No sources outside of the Bible say that the laws of Persia and Media couldn’t be changed, but this detail is important for the plot of the book of Esther (see Esth 8:8).

1:1 Est 4:6;  
Est 8:9; Est 9:30;  
Dn 6:1

2:1 Est 1:19,  
Est 7:10  
2:2 1Ki 1:2  
2:3 Est 2:8,  
Est 2:12,  
Est 2:15  
2:4 Est 1:9,  
Est 2:1, Est 2:17  
2:8 Neh 1:1;  
Est 2:3  
2:12 Ps 45:8;  
Prov 27:9; Is 57:9

vast as it is, all women will treat their husbands properly. The rule should touch everyone, whether from an important family or not.”

<sup>21</sup>The king liked the plan, as did the other men, and he did just what Memucan said. <sup>22</sup>He sent written orders to all the king’s provinces. Each province received it written in its own alphabet and each people received it in its own language. It said that each husband should rule over his own house.

### Finding a new queen

**2** Sometime later when King Ahasuerus was less angry, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what he had decided about her. <sup>2</sup>So his young male servants said, “Let the king have a search made for beautiful young women who haven’t yet married. <sup>3</sup>And let the king choose certain people in all the royal provinces to lead the search. Have them bring all the beautiful young women together to the fortified part of Susa, to the women’s house, to the care of Hegai the king’s eunuch in charge of the women so that he might provide beauty treatments for them. <sup>4</sup>Let the young woman who pleases you the most take Vashti’s place as queen.” The king liked the plan and implemented it.

<sup>5</sup>Now there was a Jew in the fortified part of Susa whose name was Mordecai, Jair’s son. He came from the family line of Shimei and Kish; he was a Benjaminite. (<sup>6</sup>Benjaminites had been taken into exile away from Jerusalem along with the group, which included Judah’s King Jeconiah, whom Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar exiled to Babylon.) <sup>7</sup>Mordecai had been a father to Hadassah (that is, Esther), though she was really his cousin, because she had neither father nor mother. The girl had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at. When her parents died, Mordecai had taken her to be his daughter. <sup>8</sup>When the king’s order and his new law became public, many young women were gathered into the fortified part of Susa under the care of Hegai. Esther was also taken to the palace to the care of Hegai, the one in charge of the women. <sup>9</sup>The young woman pleased him and won his kindness. He quickly began her beauty treatments and gave her carefully chosen foods. He also gave her seven servants selected from among the palace servants and moved her and her servants into the nicest rooms in the women’s house. (<sup>10</sup>Esther hadn’t told anyone her race and family background because Mordecai had ordered her not to.) <sup>11</sup>Each day found Mordecai pacing back and forth along the wall in front of the women’s house to learn how Esther was doing and what they were doing with her. <sup>12</sup>According to the rules for women, the moment for each young woman to go to King Ahasuerus came at the end of twelve months. (She had six months of treatment with pleasant-smelling creams and six months with fragrant oils and other treatments for women.) <sup>13</sup>So this is how the young woman would go to the king: They gave her anything that she asked to take with her from the women’s house to the palace. <sup>14</sup>In the evening she would go in, and the next morning she would return to the second women’s

1:22 The law will be translated and published in multiple languages so that residents couldn’t claim that they didn’t understand the will of the king.

2:1 Sometime later: enough time for the king to clear his head and get rid of his anger. remembered Vashti... decided about her: The king appears to have regrets.

2:2-4 Even though taking advice from his advisors got him into this situation, Ahasuerus is ready to sign up for more of the same. This time he agrees to the plan his young male servants have for finding a new queen.

2:5-7 The narrative shifts away from the palace and introduces us to two little-known Jewish subjects of the king: Mordecai and his cousin/adopted daughter, Esther. Mordecai’s family line is particularly important because it links him to the tribe of Benjamin and the house of Saul (see 1 Sam 9:1-2). This connection is important background to the rivalry that develops between Mordecai and Haman the “Agagite” (see note on Esth 3:1). Esther is triply disadvantaged in this story: She is a woman, an exile, and an orphan. The fact that she is beautiful is—considering the king’s plan to find a queen—a troubling detail.

2:8 were gathered: a reminder that the search for a new

queen has little in common with a modern beauty contest. Esther and her fellow contestants don’t choose to compete, and they don’t get to go home when it’s over (Esth 2:12-14).

2:9 Esther’s inner qualities are hinted at here as she wins the favor of Hegai.

2:10-11 These verses reveal much about Esther, Mordecai, and their situation. Esther hides her Jewish identity, not out of embarrassment, ambition, or fear but because Mordecai orders her to do so. Mordecai’s anxiety shows his deep concern. His cousin/adopted daughter is in danger, as a woman and as a Jew.

2:12 Esther’s Hebrew name, Hadassah, means “myrtle”—a plant whose leaves have a beautiful fragrance. Her Hebrew name suggests that she smells just fine without the 12-month treatments! The extensive length of the treatments reflects the king’s lack of proportion, and it also guarantees that none of the young women are pregnant. 2:13-14 The rules of the contest make it clear that the young women don’t get to return home, but instead go to a second women’s house under the care of another eunuch (see sidebar, “Eunuchs”).

house under the care of Shaashgaz. He was the king's eunuch in charge of the secondary wives. She would never go to the king again unless he was so pleased that he called for her by name. <sup>15</sup>Soon the moment came for Esther daughter of Mordecai's uncle Abihail, whom Mordecai had taken as his own daughter, to go to the king. But she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch in charge of the women told her. (Esther kept winning the favor of everyone who saw her.)

<sup>16</sup>Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, to his own palace, in the tenth month (that is, the month of Tevet)<sup>a</sup> in the seventh year of his rule. <sup>17</sup>The king loved Esther more than all the other women; she had won his love and his favor more than all the others. He placed the royal crown on her head and made her ruler in place of Vashti. <sup>18</sup>The king held a magnificent, lavish feast, "the feast of Esther," for all his officials and courtiers. He declared a public holiday<sup>b</sup> for the provinces and gave out gifts with royal generosity. <sup>19</sup>When they gathered the young women to the second women's house,<sup>c</sup> Mordecai was working for the king at the King's Gate. <sup>20</sup>Esther still wasn't telling anyone her family background and race, just as Mordecai had ordered her. She continued to do what Mordecai said, just as she did when she was in his care.

### Mordecai saves the king

<sup>21</sup>At that time, as Mordecai continued to work at the King's Gate, two royal eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, became angry with King Ahasuerus. They were among the guards protecting the doorway to the king, but they secretly planned to kill him. <sup>22</sup>When Mordecai got wind of it, he reported it to Queen Esther. She spoke to the king about it, saying the information came from Mordecai. <sup>23</sup>The matter was investigated and found to be true, so the two men were impaled on pointed poles.<sup>d</sup> A report about the event was written in the royal record with the king present.

### Haman plans to destroy Mordecai

**3** Sometime later, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, Hammedatha the Agagite's son,<sup>e</sup> by promoting him above all the officials who worked with him. <sup>2</sup>All the royal workers at the

<sup>a</sup>December–January <sup>b</sup>Or remission of taxes <sup>c</sup>Or to the women's house a second time <sup>d</sup>Or hanged the two men on gallows <sup>e</sup>Or the braggart

2:15 What Esther chooses isn't as important as the fact that she's wise enough to ask Hegai for advice about it. 2:16–18 Ahasuerus' decision to make Esther his queen puts her in Vashti's "place" (Esth 1:19; 2:4). The parallel is made even more complete by the banquet he throws in her honor. These references to Vashti remind us that Esther is in a dangerous position. 2:19–23 Mordecai is in the right place at the right time to uncover the conspiracy. This is a real stroke of providence, as is his secret relationship with the queen. (Note that this is the first time Esther is referred to by that title.)

**Eunuchs** Eunuchs play an important role in the book of Esther. A eunuch is a boy or a man who has been castrated (usually without his consent) so that he might be usefully employed or enslaved as a palace servant with reduced threat to those he serves. This practice has been known since ancient times. For obvious reasons, eunuchs were the guardians of choice for the women of a royal household, but were also put in charge of other domestic duties.

Eunuchs are depicted in a variety of roles in the book of Esther:

- 1:10–12 Seven eunuchs are named in order to accompany Vashti.
- 2:3, 8–9, 15 Hegai is the eunuch in charge of the women gathered to be "contestants"; he grants Esther special favors and advice.
- 2:21–23; 6:2 Bigthan and Teresh plot unsuccessfully to kill the king and are executed.
- 4:4–17 Eunuchs (especially Hathach) serve as trusted messengers between Esther and Mordecai.
- 7:9 Harbona points out the huge stake in Haman's backyard, cleverly suggesting it as an appropriate fate for Haman.

Bigthan and Teresh illustrate that not all of the eunuchs in this book are positive characters, but even their foiled assassination plot plays a role in the story's happy ending. Hegai, Hathach, and Harbona each play a crucial role in supporting Esther and Mordecai's cause. Like the Jewish people in this story, they demonstrate courage and creativity in the face of limited power and dangerous circumstances.

2:17 Est 1:11  
2:16 Gn 29:22;  
Est 1:3  
2:21 Est 6:2  
2:23 Dt 21:22;  
Est 6:1, Est 10:2  
3:1 Nm 24:77;  
Est 5:11

Impalement—thrusting a living human body onto a sharp stake, usually between the legs—was a common form of execution in ancient Persia.

3:1 Readers expect a reward for Mordecai after he saves the king's life at the end of Esther 2, but the promotion goes to a new character, Haman. *the Agagite's son*: Haman is a descendant of the Amalekites' King Agag. Saul failed to execute Agag, and this disobedience (1 Sam 15:3) resulted in Saul's losing his kingship (1 Sam 15:28–29). Haman's family history intersects with Mordecai's, who is a descendant of Saul (see note on Esth 2:5–7).

3:5 Est 5:9;

Est 7:10

3:6 Ps 83:4

3:7 Lv 16:8;

Est 6:15;

Est 9:24;

Prv 16:33

3:8 Lv 26:33;

Ac 16:21

3:10 Gn 41:42;

Est 8:2

3:12 2Sa 8:17;

1Ki 21:8; Est 8:8

4:1 2Sa 13:19;

Est 7:1; Dn 9:3;

Jon 3:6

King's Gate would kneel and bow facedown to Haman because the king had so ordered. But Mordecai didn't kneel or bow down.<sup>3</sup> So the royal workers at the King's Gate said to Mordecai, "Why don't you obey the king's order?"<sup>4</sup> Day after day they questioned him, but he paid no attention to them. So they let Haman know about it just to see whether or not Mordecai's words would hold true.<sup>5</sup> (He had told them that he was a Jew.)<sup>6</sup> When Haman himself saw that Mordecai didn't kneel or bow down to him, he became very angry.<sup>7</sup> But he decided not to kill only Mordecai, for people had told him Mordecai's race. Instead, he planned to wipe out all the Jews, Mordecai's people, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.<sup>8</sup> In the first month (that is, the month of Nisan)<sup>9</sup> in the twelfth year of the rule of King Ahasuerus, servants threw pur, namely, dice, in front of Haman to find the best day for his plan. They tried every day and every month, and the dice chose the thirteenth<sup>10</sup> day of the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar).

<sup>8</sup>Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "A certain group of people exist in pockets among the other peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of everyone else, and they refuse to obey the king's laws. There's no good reason for the king to put up with them any longer. <sup>9</sup>If the king wishes, let a written order be sent out to destroy them, and I will hand over ten thousand kikkar of silver<sup>11</sup> to those in charge of the king's business. The silver can go into the king's treasuries."

<sup>10</sup>The king removed his royal ring from his finger and handed it to Haman, Hammedatha the Agagite's son, enemy of the Jews. <sup>11</sup>The king said to Haman, "Both the money and the people are under your power. Do as you like with them." <sup>12</sup>So in the first month, on the thirteenth day, royal scribes were summoned to write down everything that Haman ordered. The orders were for the king's rulers and the governors in charge of each province, as well as for the officials of each people. They wrote in the alphabet of each province and in the language of each people. They wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed the order with the king's royal ring. <sup>13</sup>Fast runners were to take the order to all the provinces of the king. The order commanded people to wipe out, kill, and destroy all the Jews, both young and old, even women and little children. This was to happen on a single day—the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar).<sup>14</sup> They were also to seize their property. <sup>14</sup>A copy of the order was to become law in each province and to be posted in public for all peoples to read. The people were to be ready for this day to do as the order commanded. <sup>15</sup>Driven by the king's order, the runners left Susa just as the law became public in the fortified part of Susa. While the king and Haman sat down to have a drink, the city of Susa was in total shock.

### A crisis for the Jews

**4** When Mordecai learned what had been done, he tore his clothes, dressed in mourning clothes, and put ashes on his head. Then he went out into the heart of the city and cried

<sup>6</sup>Or stand <sup>8</sup>March–April <sup>10</sup>See LXX and 3:13. <sup>11</sup>A kikkar weighed approximately seventy-five pounds.

<sup>12</sup>February–March

3:2-3 Mordecai's refusal to bow down to Haman may not be rooted in his concern about idolatry or worshipping Haman. Bowing down to another human being was a common custom of respect (see 2 Sam 14:4; Ruth 2:10). The story provides only two clues about Mordecai's behavior. The first is that Mordecai saves the king's life, but Haman gets the promotion. So Mordecai may have had personal reasons for resenting Haman. The second and more likely clue, however, is the bad blood between their two families (see note on Esth 3:1). More important than why he refuses to bow down are the results of that refusal. 3:4 Mordecai has publicly identified himself as a Jew. The workers seem to want to test Mordecai's power (or the power of his God) against that of Haman. The issue of whose words would hold true turns out to be one of the most important questions in the book when the king and Haman's edict (Esth 3:12) is pitted against Esther and Mordecai's edict (Esth 8:9). The words of Haman's wife and friends in Esther 6:13 about his inability to win against Mordecai may indicate that there were rumors about Jewish invincibility.

3:5-7 Haman's reaction is wildly out of proportion to the insult. (His arrogance makes Ahasuerus look like an amateur.) His use of dice to choose the best day for killing a whole people is perverse. The irony is that Mordecai's God controls this game of chance.

3:10-11 *royal ring*: the keys to Ahasuerus' kingdom.

3:12 *royal ring*: Putting the king's name on the law and sealing it with his ring (the ancient version of notarizing it) signal the king's knowledge and approval, and make the law irrevocable.

3:13 *wipe out, kill, and destroy*: Haman used only the word "destroy" in his proposal to Ahasuerus (Esth 3:9). The words for "destroy" and "enslave" sound similar in Hebrew. It is possible that the storyteller is suggesting that Ahasuerus may have been agreeing only to the enslavement of his subjects. This wordplay makes sense of Esther's argument in Esther 7:4 where she says, "If we simply had been sold as male and female slaves, I would have said nothing."

4:1-3 Tearing garments, wearing mourning clothes, and



out loudly and bitterly. <sup>2</sup>He went only as far as the King's Gate because it was against the law for anyone to pass through it wearing mourning clothes. <sup>3</sup>At the same time, in every province and place where the king's order and his new law arrived, a very great sadness came over the Jews. They gave up eating and spent whole days weeping and crying out loudly in pain. Many Jews lay on the ground in mourning clothes and ashes. <sup>4</sup>When Esther's female servants and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, the queen's whole body showed how upset she was. She sent everyday clothes for Mordecai to wear instead of mourning clothes, but he rejected them.

<sup>5</sup>Esther then sent for Hathach, one of the royal eunuchs whose job it was to wait on her. She ordered him to go to Mordecai and find out what was going on and why he was acting this way. <sup>6</sup>Hathach went out to Mordecai, to the city square in front of the King's Gate. <sup>7</sup>Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him. He spelled out the exact amount of silver that Haman promised to pay into the royal treasury. It was in exchange for the destruction of the Jews. <sup>8</sup>He also gave Hathach a copy of the law made public in Susa concerning the Jews' destruction so that Hathach could show it to Esther and report it to her. Through him Mordecai ordered her to go to the king to seek his kindness and his help for her people. <sup>9</sup>Hathach came back and told Esther what Mordecai had said.

<sup>10</sup>In reply Esther ordered Hathach to tell Mordecai: <sup>11</sup>"All the king's officials and the people in his provinces know that there's a single law in a case like this. Any man or woman who comes to the king in the inner courtyard without being called is to be put to death. Only the person to whom the king holds out the gold scepter may live. In my case, I haven't been called to come to the king for the past thirty days."

<sup>12</sup>When they told Mordecai Esther's words, <sup>13</sup>he had them respond to Esther: "Don't think for one minute that, unlike all the other Jews, you'll come out of this alive simply because you are in the palace. <sup>14</sup>In fact, if you don't speak up at this very important time, relief and rescue will appear for the Jews from another place, but you and your family will die. But who knows? Maybe it was for a moment like this that you came to be part of the royal family."

<sup>15</sup>Esther sent back this word to Mordecai: <sup>16</sup>"Go, gather all the Jews who are in Susa and tell them to give up eating to help me be brave. They aren't to eat or drink anything for three whole days, and I myself will do the same, along with my female servants. Then, even though it's against the law, I will go to the king; and if I am to die, then die I will." <sup>17</sup>So Mordecai left where he was and did exactly what Esther had ordered him.

### Esther acts

**5** Three days later, Esther put on royal clothes and stood in the inner courtyard of the palace, facing the palace itself. At that moment the king was inside sitting on his royal throne and facing the palace doorway. <sup>2</sup>When the king noticed Queen Esther standing in the entry court, he was pleased. The king held out to Esther the gold scepter in his hand, and she came forward and touched the scepter's tip.

rubbing ashes on one's head are all traditional signs of mourning, along with loud weeping and wailing (see Joel 1:5; 2:13; Jon 3:6-8; Job 1:20).

4:4 The fact that *Esther's female servants and eunuchs* come to tell her about Mordecai's appearance and behavior signals that they are aware of at least some sort of relationship between them. This increases our sense of her danger. Esther's reaction is profound, but she may not have known the reason for Mordecai's grief (see Esth 4:5).

4:5-9 Esther risks revealing her Jewish identity by sending her eunuch, Hathach, to speak with Mordecai. The fact that Mordecai knows the exact amount of Haman's bribe suggests that he has inside information about the conversation that took place between Haman and Ahasuerus. This level of knowledge contrasts with Esther's relative isolation. Her isolation ends abruptly when Mordecai sends her—through Hathach—an actual copy of the law. His order to *go to the king to seek his kindness* contradicts his earlier order to keep her true identity a secret (Esth 2:10).

4:12-13 Mordecai seems to assume that Esther's message

reflects a lack of courage. Yet her reply clarifies her reasons for hesitating (Esth 4:10-11).

4:14 *another place*: Mordecai doesn't specify the source of the Jews' rescue. His words reflect his general faith in God's providence and protection.

4:15-16 Esther's words make it clear that she isn't a coward. (Her earlier hesitation could be because of caution, an effort to make sure Mordecai's command was based on full information.) By declaring a general fast—in which she and her female servants will participate—she signals her piety, her humility, and the extent to which she openly identifies with her people. Through fasting and prayer, Esther seeks to enlist God's blessing and aid when she goes to the king to plead for their lives.

4:17 Mordecai is now taking orders from Esther.

5:1 *Three days later*: refers to the three-day fast by Esther at the end of Esther 4. Providence is Esther's ally: Ahasuerus just happens to be sitting on his throne, looking her way, as she stands in the forbidden inner courtyard.

5:2-3 *scepter*: a symbol of authority and power. *half the*

4:11 Est 5:2,  
Est 8:4

4:16 Gn 43:14;  
2Ch 20:3;  
Ezr 8:21; Est 5:1

5:1 Est 4:11,  
Est 4:16, Est 6:4

5:2 Est 4:11,  
Est 8:4

5:3 Est 7:2,  
Est 9:12; Mk 6:23  
6:1 Est 2:23;  
Dn 6:18  
6:2 Est 2:21-22  
6:3 Gn 40:23;  
Est 2:5, Est 2:21,  
Est 3:2, Est 4:1  
6:4 Est 4:11,  
Est 5:14, Est 7:9  
6:6 Est 5:11,  
Est 6:7, Est 6:11

<sup>3</sup>Then the king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What do you want? I'll give you anything—even half the kingdom."

<sup>4</sup>Esther answered, "If the king wishes, please come today with Haman for the feast that I have prepared for him."

<sup>5</sup>"Hurry, get Haman," the king ordered, "so we can do what Esther says." So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared. <sup>6</sup>As they sipped wine, the king asked, "Now what is it you wish? I'll give it to you. What do you want? I'll do anything—even give you half the kingdom."

<sup>7</sup>Esther answered, "This is my wish and this is what I want: <sup>8</sup>If I please the king, and if the king wishes to grant my wish and my desire, I'd like the king and Haman to come to another feast that I will prepare for them. Tomorrow I will answer the king's questions."

#### ***Haman boasts, complains, and acts***

<sup>9</sup>That day Haman left Esther's place happy, his spirits high, but then he saw Mordecai in the King's Gate. Mordecai neither stood up nor seemed the least bit nervous around him, so Haman suddenly felt great rage toward Mordecai. <sup>10</sup>But Haman held himself back and went on home. He sent word that his friends and his wife Zeresh should join him there. <sup>11</sup>Haman boasted to them about his great wealth and his many sons. He told all about how the king had honored him by promoting him over the officials and high royal workers. <sup>12</sup>"Best of all," Haman said, "Queen Esther has invited no one else but me to join the king for food and drinks that she has prepared. In fact, I've been called to join the king at her place tomorrow!" <sup>13</sup>But all this loses its meaning every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's Gate."

<sup>14</sup>So his wife Zeresh and all his friends told him: "Have people prepare a pointed pole seventy-five feet high. In the morning, tell the king to have Mordecai impaled on it. Then you can go with the king to the feast in a happy mood." Haman liked the idea and had the pole prepared.

#### ***Honor for Mordecai***

**6** That same night, the king simply couldn't sleep. He had the official royal records brought in, and his young male servants began reading them to the king. <sup>2</sup>They came to the report about Mordecai informing on Bigthan and Teresh. (They were the two royal eunuchs among the guards protecting the king's doorway, who secretly planned to kill King Ahasuerus.)

<sup>3</sup>"What was done to honor and reward Mordecai for this?" the king asked.

His young male servants replied, "Nothing was done for him, sir."

<sup>4</sup>"Who is that out in the courtyard?" the king asked. (Haman had just entered the outer courtyard of the palace. He had come to tell the king to impale Mordecai on the pole that he had set up for him.)

<sup>5</sup>The king's servants answered, "That's Haman standing out in the courtyard, sir." So the king said, "Have him come in."

<sup>6</sup>When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man whom the king really wants to honor?"

Haman thought to himself, Whom would the king really want to honor more than me?

<sup>7</sup>So Haman said to the king, "Here's what should be done for the man the king really wants

*kingdom:* This may be an overstatement, or another instance of Ahasuerus' excessive behavior (see Esth 3:10-11).

*5:4* The wording of the invitation suggests that the dinner is a carefully considered plan. In Hebrew, Haman's invitation comes across as an afterthought. Esther is careful to flatter Ahasuerus; she is trying to soften him up.

*5:5-6* Notice how eager the king is to take orders from his queen. This contrasts with his failure to get Vashti to take an order from him (Esth 1:10-12).

*5:7-8* Why does Esther issue this second invitation? The author keeps us guessing. The fact that we can't be sure she hasn't lost her nerve creates dramatic tension. When she promises that she will answer the king's questions tomorrow, readers are as eager as the king must be for this matter to be resolved.

*5:9-13* Whatever Esther's reasons are, the delay between the two dinners sets up a meeting between Haman and

Mordecai. (Those who recognize God's presence behind the scenes may see this as evidence of divine providence at work.) Haman announces his accomplishments to his family and friends. His insecurity is larger than his arrogance. Even with all his wealth and status, one insult sends him into a meltdown.

*5:14* Nothing cheers up Haman like the prospect of impaling his enemy before the dinner (see Esth 2:23). Further irony derives from the fact that Mordecai is already sentenced to death as a result of Haman's law. *seventy-five feet:* roughly the height of a six-story building.

*6:1-2* Providence is at work again, first in the fact of the king's insomnia, and second in the precise passage from the royal records selected to put him back to sleep. The selection may also reflect the will of the young male servants who chose it.

*6:6-9* The speed and detail of Haman's proposal suggests

to honor. <sup>8</sup>Have servants bring out a royal robe that the king himself has worn and a horse on which the king himself has ridden. It should have a royal crest on its head. <sup>9</sup>Then hand over the robe and the horse to another man, one of the king's officials. Have him personally robe<sup>k</sup> the man whom the king really wants to honor and lead him on the horse through the city square. As he goes, have him shout, "This is what the king does for the man he really wants to honor!"

<sup>10</sup>Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry, take the robe and the horse just as you've said and do exactly that for Mordecai the Jew, who works at the King's Gate. Don't leave out a single thing you've said!"

<sup>11</sup>So Haman took the robe and the horse and put the robe on Mordecai. He led him on horseback through the city square, shouting as he went, "This is what the king does for the man he really wants to honor!" <sup>12</sup>Afterward, Mordecai returned to the King's Gate, while Haman hurried home feeling great shame, his head covered.

<sup>13</sup>Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Both his friends<sup>l</sup> and his wife said to him, "You've already begun to lose out to Mordecai. If he is of Jewish birth, you'll not be able to win against him. You are surely going to lose out to him."

### **Haman's demise**

<sup>14</sup>They were still discussing this with him when several royal eunuchs arrived. They quickly hurried Haman off to the feast that Esther had prepared. <sup>1</sup>When the king and Haman came in for the banquet with Queen Esther, <sup>2</sup>the king said to her, "This is the second day we've met for wine. What is your wish, Queen Esther? I'll give it to you. And what do you want? I'll do anything—even give you half the kingdom."

<sup>3</sup>Queen Esther answered, "If I please the king, and if the king wishes, give me my life—that's my wish—and the lives of my people too. That's my desire. <sup>4</sup>We have been sold—I and

6:8 1Kl 1:33  
6:9 Gn 41:43  
6:10 Est 2:19  
6:11 Est 8:15  
6:13 Est 5:10,  
Est 5:14  
7:1 Est 5:8

### **The Banquets in Esther**

1. Xerxes' banquet for the nobility (1:2-4)
2. Xerxes' banquet for all the men in Susa (1:5-8)
3. Vashti's banquet for the women (1:9)
4. Esther's enthronement banquet (2:18)
5. Haman and Xerxes' banquet (3:15)
6. Esther's first banquet (5:4-8)
7. Esther's second banquet (7:1-9)
8. The Jews' feasting in celebration of Mordecai's glory and the counterdecree (8:17)
9. The first feast of Purim: Adar 14 (9:17, 19)
10. The second feast of Purim: Adar 15 (9:18)

<sup>k</sup>LXX sing robe and lead, cf Heb plural verbs <sup>l</sup>LXX; Heb wise ones

that he has fantasized about being honored in such a way before. Wearing the king's clothing and riding the king's horse are signs that one has the power of the king (see 1 Kgs 1:33). Since Haman already has the king's signet ring, the only thing Haman lacks is the queen. The humor of this scene derives from the fact that we know more than either of the characters do. Haman and Ahasuerus are having a conversation that only the readers really understand.

6:10-11 Haman's fantasy turns into a nightmare when he is ordered to honor Mordecai in just the ways he had hoped to be honored himself. Ahasuerus seems unaware of the "mixed message" of honoring someone who is sentenced to death.

6:13 Haman's wife and friends are quick to distance themselves from him when they hear what has happened. (Note their use of the second person *you*.) Their emphasis

on Mordecai's Jewish faith seems to reflect their sense that the Jews have some secret weapon that will give them the advantage (see also Esth 3:4).

7:1-2 The setting, the guest list, and the king's words are the same as the feast in Esther 5:6.

7:3 *give me my life—that's my wish—and the lives of my people too*: Esther takes advantage of the king's two-part question to craft a two-part request that links her life with the lives of her people. The king doesn't yet know who Esther's *people* are. This request must come as quite a shock. Someone has threatened the life of the queen and the lives of her people! Esther has certainly gotten his attention.

7:4 *We have been sold—I and my people*: This statement is difficult to understand without reference to the possible wordplay in Haman's original request (see note on Esth

7:9 Est 1:10,  
Est 5:14  
7:10 Est 9:25  
8:1 Est 2:7

my people—to be wiped out, killed, and destroyed. If we simply had been sold as male and female slaves, I would have said nothing. But no enemy can compensate the king for this kind of damage.”

<sup>5</sup>King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, “Who is this person, and where is he? Who would dare do such a thing?”

<sup>6</sup>Esther replied, “A man who hates, an enemy—this wicked Haman!” Haman was overcome with terror in the presence of the king and queen. <sup>7</sup>Furious, the king got up and left the banquet for the palace garden. But Haman stood up to beg Queen Esther for his life. He saw clearly that the king’s mood meant a bad end for him.

<sup>8</sup>The king returned from the palace garden to the banquet room just as Haman was kneeling on the couch where Esther was reclining. “Will you even molest the queen while I am in the house?” the king said. The words had barely left the king’s mouth before covering Haman’s face with dread.<sup>m</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Harbona, one of the eunuchs serving the king, said, “Sir, look! There’s the stake that Haman made for Mordecai, the man who spoke up and did something good for the king. It’s standing at Haman’s house—seventy-five feet high.”

“Impale him on it!” the king ordered. <sup>10</sup>So they impaled Haman on the very pole that he had set up for Mordecai, and the king’s anger went away.

### *Esther acts again*

**8** That same day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther what Haman the enemy of the Jews owned. Mordecai himself came before the king because Esther had told the king that he was family to her. <sup>2</sup>The king took off his royal ring, the one he had removed from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. Esther put Mordecai in charge of what Haman had owned.

<sup>3</sup>Esther again spoke before the king. She bowed at his feet, wept, and begged him to treat her kindly. She wanted him to overturn the evil plot of Haman the Agagite—his secret plan directed against the Jews. <sup>4</sup>The king held out the gold scepter to Esther, and she got up and stood before him. <sup>5</sup>She said, “If the king wishes, and if I please him—that is, if the idea seems right to the king, and if he still sees me as a good person—then have people write something to call back the order—the order that put into effect the plan of Haman, Hammedatha the Agagite’s son, that he wrote to destroy the Jews in all the royal provinces. <sup>6</sup>How can I bear to watch the terrible evil about to sweep over my people? And how can I bear to watch others destroy my own family?”

<sup>m</sup>Or the face of Haman was covered.

3:13). If Ahasuerus thought that Haman was suggesting that he “enslave” the people in question rather than “destroy” them, then this makes sense.

7:6-7 This may seem like an odd moment for the king to storm outside, but he has been indecisive in the past (see Esth 1:13-15; 2:2-4). His absence sets the scene for Haman’s last mistake.

7:8-10 Several signs indicate that God is working in this scene, even though God is never mentioned. First, Ahasuerus returns from the garden just in time to see Haman throwing himself on the queen’s couch. Second, a handy eunuch is nearby, ready with a suggestion on how the king might handle this dilemma. Third, the huge stake on which Haman had hoped to impale Mordecai is visible from the palace window. (Note that if Haman’s ego hadn’t been so large, then his stake wouldn’t have been so high, and he might have saved himself from this horrible and shameful death.)

8:1-2 A false finale. With Haman dead, Mordecai is out of immediate danger. He has both power and property, thanks to Esther’s gift of Haman’s house (she shuns any reward for herself) and Ahasuerus’ gift of his signet ring. But Mordecai isn’t going to have long to enjoy these

rewards. Haman may be dead, but his law is still very much alive.

8:3-4 The text is unclear about how much time has passed between Esther 8:2 and 8:3. Since Esther 8:4 indicates that the king extends the gold scepter again, this scene isn’t simply a continuation of the previous one.

8:5-6 After using even more flattery and palace protocol than she did in Esther 5:8 and 7:3, Esther makes an impassioned plea for the king to call back the order. The fact that she specifies precisely which order may seem strange. Does she think Ahasuerus has forgotten? Perhaps she has noticed that her husband isn’t very smart. In any case, he has done nothing to address the situation and seems to consider the case closed. Her description carefully avoids blaming Ahasuerus and puts all the emphasis on Haman. Her closing outburst signals her complete identification with her people and a total lack of self-concern (contrast Mordecai’s remark in Esth 4:13).

8:7-8 The king’s reminder that the royal laws are irrevocable (see notes on Esth 1:19; 3:12) highlights his lack of imagination. Once again, the most powerful man in the empire is portrayed as helpless (see Esth 1:12). The best

**Mordecai writes a new law**

<sup>7</sup>King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Look, I've given Esther everything Haman owned. And Haman himself my servants have impaled on the pole because he planned to attack the Jews. <sup>8</sup>So you yourselves write to the Jews whatever you like in the name of the king and seal the letters with the king's royal ring. Anything written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's royal ring can't be called back." <sup>9</sup>So that was when the royal scribes were summoned—on the twenty-third day of the third month (that is, the month of Sivan).<sup>a</sup> They wrote exactly what Mordecai ordered to the Jews, rulers, governors, and officials of the provinces from India to Cush—one hundred twenty-seven in all. They wrote in the alphabet of each province and in the language of each people. <sup>10</sup>They wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed the order with the king's royal ring. He sent letters with riders mounted on royal horses bred from mares known to run fast.<sup>b</sup> <sup>11</sup>The order allowed Jews in each town to join together and defend their lives. The Jews were free to wipe out, kill, and destroy every army of any people and province that attacked them, along with their women and children. They could also take and keep anything their attackers owned. <sup>12</sup>The one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus on which they could do so was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar). <sup>13</sup>A copy of the writing was to become law in each province and be on public display for all its peoples to read. The Jews were to be ready on this day to get back at their enemies. <sup>14</sup>The riders mounted on royal horses left Susa, spurred on by the king's order, and the law also became public in the fortified part of Susa.

<sup>15</sup>Mordecai went out from the king's presence in a blue and white royal robe wearing a large gold crown and a white and red-purple coat. The city of Susa greeted him with shouts of joy. <sup>16</sup>For the Jews it was a day of light, happiness, joy, and honor. <sup>17</sup>In every province and in every town—wherever the king's order and his law arrived—for the Jews it was a day of happiness and joy. For them it meant feasts and a holiday. Many people in the land became Jews themselves, out of fear of the Jews.

**The fateful day**

**9**It was on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar)<sup>c</sup> that the king's order and his law were to be enforced. On the very day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to overpower them, the tables were turned against them. The Jews overpowered their enemies instead. <sup>2</sup>The Jews joined together in their towns in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to defend themselves against those who tried to harm them. No one was able to stand in their way because everyone was afraid of the Jews. <sup>3</sup>All the leaders of the provinces, rulers, governors, and those in charge of the king's business helped the Jews because they were afraid of Mordecai. <sup>4</sup>Because Mordecai was very important in the palace, news about him was sweeping through the provinces. Indeed, Mordecai was becoming more and more important every day. <sup>5</sup>The Jews put down all their enemies with sword blows, killing, and destruction. They did whatever they wanted with those who hated them. <sup>6</sup>In the fortified part

<sup>a</sup>May–June <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>February–March

he can do is to tell Esther and Mordecai to write whatever they like in his name (see Esth 3:12-15).

8:9-14 Mordecai attempts to counter the specifics of Haman's original edict in Esther 3:12-15. There are important differences, however. Mordecai's law gives permission to wipe out, kill, destroy, and plunder under certain circumstances; Haman's law gives orders for the same under any circumstances. Mordecai's edict is for self-defense; Haman's encourages undisguised aggression. Mordecai's law specifies that violence be used in response to *every army... that attacked them* (8:11), while Haman's law directs violence against the general Jewish population (Esth 3:13). *along with their women and children* could mean that Mordecai's law also targets the attackers' women and children. But the Hebrew could also mean that the Jews had permission to defend themselves against any army that attacked the Jews' women and children.

8:17 *fear of the Jews*: The fear that the Jewish people can't be defeated (see Esth 3:4; 6:13; and perhaps Esth 9:2) may well fuel the sudden conversions.

9:1 *the king's order and his law*: This description contrasts with Esther's diplomatic emphasis in Esther 8:5 that the law was Haman's. Eleven months have passed since the publication of the king's/Haman's law (Esth 3:12) and nine months since the publication of the counter-law (Esth 8:9). The central question in the book—"whether or not Mordecai's words would hold true" (Esth 3:4)—is about to be settled. Another theme—the reversal of expectations and fortunes—is emphasized as well.

9:2-4 Working behind the scenes, God has been busy during these nine months. Both Mordecai's power and Persian fears have grown significantly, though the name for God is never mentioned in this book. God's influence may be detected off-stage and in the book's numerous

9:10 Gn 14:23;  
Est 3:1,  
Est 3:10,  
Est 5:11,  
Est 8:11

9:20 Est 2:5,  
Est 2:21, Est 3:2,  
Est 4:1, Est 5:14  
9:22 Ps 30:11

of Susa, the Jews killed five hundred people. <sup>7</sup>They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, <sup>8</sup>Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, <sup>9</sup>Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha. <sup>10</sup>These were the ten sons of Haman, Hammedatha's son, the enemy of the Jews. But the Jews didn't lay a hand on anything their enemies owned. <sup>11</sup>That same day, a report concerning the number killed in the fortified part of Susa reached the king.

<sup>12</sup>So the king said to Queen Esther in the fortified part of Susa, "The Jews have killed five hundred people as well as the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the royal provinces? What do you wish now? I'll give it to you. What is your desire? I'll do it this time too."

<sup>13</sup>Esther answered, "If the king wishes, let the Jews who are in Susa also have tomorrow to do what the law allows for today. And let them also impale the ten sons of Haman on pointed poles." <sup>14</sup>The king ordered that this be done, and the law became public in Susa. They impaled the ten sons of Haman just as she said. <sup>15</sup>The Jews in Susa joined together again, this time on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar. In Susa, they killed three hundred people, but they didn't lay a hand on anything the people owned.

<sup>16</sup>The Jews out in the royal provinces also joined together to defend their lives. They put to rest the troubles with their enemies and killed those who hated them. The total was seventy-five thousand dead, but the Jews didn't lay a hand on anything their enemies owned. <sup>17</sup>They acted on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. Then on the fourteenth day they rested, making it a day of feasts and rejoicing. (<sup>18</sup>The Jews in Susa joined together for self-defense on the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the month. But they rested on the fifteenth day of the month and made it a day of feasts and joyous events.) <sup>19</sup>That is why Jews who live in villages make the fourteenth day of the month of Adar a day of rejoicing and feasts, a holiday. It is a day on which they send gifts of food to each other.

### **The new holiday of Purim**

<sup>20</sup>Mordecai wrote these things down and sent letters to all the Jews in all the provinces, both near and far, of King Ahasuerus. <sup>21</sup>He made it a rule that Jews keep the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar as special days each and every year. <sup>22</sup>They are the days on which the Jews finally put to rest the troubles with their enemies. The month is the one

"coincidences." Perhaps this is part of the "relief and rescue... from another place" that Mordecai refers to in Esther 4:14.

9:10 *the Jews didn't lay a hand on anything their enemies owned:* This restraint is remarkable (see also Esth 9:5, 16), especially since the counter-law allowed them to plunder their enemies' goods (Esth 8:11). The explanation for this restraint may lie in the story in 1 Samuel 15 about Mordecai's ancestor Saul, and Haman's ancestor Agag (see notes on Esth 2:5-7; 3:1). By the Jews' refusal to take the property of their enemies and with the killing of Haman's 10 sons, Mordecai and the Jews may at last be able to close this unhappy chapter in Israel's history. Note that the sons of Haman are "killed" and not executed, which implies that they are among the Persian attackers.

9:13-15 Esther's response may seem bloodthirsty. But the rules for the second day will be the same as for the first: The Jews will be allowed to defend themselves against those who attack them. If no one attacks, then no one will

*Reversals in the Book of Esther* The book of Esther is famous for its reversals—that is, the number of times we expect one thing and the opposite occurs. One example of this is the royal procession in chapter 6. Haman clearly expects to be the one being honored (Esth 6:6), but Mordecai turns out to be the man of the hour (Esth 6:10-11). Another example is when Haman is executed on the very stake he has erected for Mordecai's execution. Sometimes these reversals seem to be built into the structure of the book. The two banquets of the Jews in Esther 9:20-32 are the mirror image of the two Persian banquets in Esther 1:1-8. In Esther 2:10-20 Esther identifies as a Gentile, while in Esther 8:17 the Gentiles identify as Jews. The anti-Jewish edict of Esther 3:12-15 corresponds to the pro-Jewish edict of Esther 8:9-14.

die. The fact that 300 attackers are killed on the second day makes her request seem more wise than ruthless. The impalement of Haman's sons may seem excessive, but we could see it as an attempt at prevention. It should also be noted that the sons were already dead, which eliminates the element of torture.

9:16-19 *seventy-five thousand:* emphasizes the importance of the threat and the miraculous nature of the people's deliverance. The two-day defense explains the celebrations held on different days. The detail about the custom of sending gifts of food is important because it recognizes that those who are saved by grace are called to respond with acts of grace toward others.

9:20-32 This section summarizes Mordecai's role in establishing these Purim celebrations (named for Haman's use of *pur*, or dice, in Esth 3:7) as annual reminders of their providential deliverance. Oddly, the retelling of the Purim story in Esther 9:24-25 changes important details. Verse 25 makes it sound as if Ahasuerus simply dashed off a memo,

when everything turned around for them from sadness to joy, and from sad, loud crying to a holiday. They are to make them days of feasts and joyous events, days to send food gifts to each other and money gifts to the poor. <sup>23</sup>The Jews agreed to continue what they had already begun to do—just what Mordecai had written to them. <sup>24</sup>Indeed, Haman, Hammedatha the Agagite's son, the enemy of all the Jews, had planned to destroy the Jews. He had servants throw *pur* (that is, the dice) to find the best month and day to trouble greatly and destroy them. <sup>25</sup>But when Esther came before the king, his written order said: The wicked plan that Haman made against the Jews should turn back on him instead. So they impaled him and his sons on pointed poles. <sup>26</sup>That is why people call these days Purim, by using the ancient word *pur*. It all fit with what this letter said, with what they saw happen, and with what they themselves went through. <sup>27</sup>The Jews agreed that they, their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, as well as all non-Jews who become Jews, should always keep these two days. They agreed to follow the written rules—and at the proper time too—every year. <sup>28</sup>So forever every family, province, and town remembers to keep these days. These days of Purim won't die out among the Jews. They will remember to keep them forever. <sup>29</sup>Queen Esther daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with her full royal power to show that this second letter about Purim was correct. <sup>9</sup> <sup>30</sup>Letters conveying good wishes and words of friendship were sent to all the Jews throughout the one hundred twenty-seven provinces in the kingdom of Ahasuerus. <sup>31</sup>Their aim was to make sure that the Jews kept these days of Purim at the proper time, following the rule that Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had made. The rule fit well with what they themselves had agreed to do forever and with other things they did—like fasting and lamenting. <sup>32</sup>Esther's order made these features of Purim part of the law, so it was written down.

### The fame of Mordecai

**10** King Ahasuerus taxed the entire kingdom, including the islands of the Mediterranean. <sup>2</sup>Now some may want to know about all the king's mighty, great deeds. They may also want a full report about how important Mordecai became after the king honored him. Are they not written in the official records of the kings of Media and Persia? <sup>3</sup>Certainly, Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus in importance. The Jews also admired him greatly, and his many brothers and sisters were proud of him. He always wanted to do good things for his Jewish people and to speak up for all his family whenever they needed help.

<sup>9</sup>Or wrote a second time to show that this letter

single-handedly dispatching both Haman and his sons. Many scholars think that the material in Esther 9:20–10:3 was added later.

10:1–3 Esther's complete absence from the book's conclusion is puzzling. It is even more ironic that Mordecai is applauded for *speaking up for all his family whenever they needed help* (10:3). This is precisely what Esther did to save her people! At the end of the book he is a changed man. Instead of endangering his people's

lives through ill-considered acts of rebellion (Esth 3:2; 5:9), he wants to *do good things for his Jewish people and to speak up for all his family whenever they [need] help* (10:3). We might hear this description as a tribute to what Mordecai has learned from Esther. Perhaps it is fitting that Esther, like God, isn't mentioned here at the end of her own story. Even if she is not named, she is there behind the scenes working tirelessly for her people's welfare.

9:24 Est 3:6–7.

Est 3:10,  
Est 9:10

9:25 Est 7:10,  
Est 9:13; Ps 7:16

9:26 Est 9:20

9:27 Est 8:17;  
Is 56:3, Is 56:6;  
Zec 2:11

9:29 Est 2:15,  
Est 9:20

9:30 Est 1:1,  
Est 8:9

9:31 Est 4:1,  
Est 4:3, Est 4:16

9:32 Est 2:20,  
Est 9:26

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The book receives the name Job from the central character, who is a “person of absolute integrity” (Job 1:1), but who experiences great suffering. Job’s distress isn’t caused by something he did—though his friends think it is. Rather, Job’s suffering results from his experience of natural evil, from the ill effects of natural events (windstorm, lightning and related fires, disease), and moral evil (the intruding activities of the Sabeans and Chaldeans). The book focuses on issues about nature and God’s care of creation. Following Job 1–2, the 3rd chapter raises issues about creation. The dialogue between Job and his friends focuses on how to interpret the natural order (Job 4–37). Then the focus of God’s response in Job 38–41 is to understand how creation works; to that end, it has largely to do with meteorology, zoology, and cosmology.

The book has more than one key issue, but at the top of the list is the problem of suffering. The book of Job shows that suffering may occur because of the nature of the world that

God created *and* because God *allows* the natural order to be what it was created to be. God permits but doesn’t manage what happens in creation. God created a world filled with risks to human well-being, including water, the law of gravity, and wild animals. While these are resources that can enhance human well-being, God doesn’t provide danger-free zones to keep people like Job from the harm they can cause. Much suffering is creation-based. Human beings are finite, with limited strength, intelligence, and quickness. No individual can control every creature or end all the wickedness (Job 40:10-14).

The book of Job looks at evil and suffering from several points of view: Job’s, Job’s friends’, Elihu’s, God’s, and those of the writers of the prologue (Job 1–2) and the epilogue (Job 42). Life after death is an open question (see Job 14:14) and isn’t an answer to the problem of suffering (see Job 19:25-26, “I know that my redeemer is alive”). God’s negative critique of the friends’ views and positive critique of Job’s



The heavens (Job 38:33-34)  
*iStockPhoto*

view (Job 42:7-8) invite questions and close attention to who is speaking (see Job's point of view in Job 1:21; 2:10). Believers are invited to "revere God" (Job 1:9) no matter what they face in life. Job's response to suffering needs greater knowledge of the world in which he lives (Job 38-41). Even so, God's critique of Job's view reveals God's openness to Job's hard questions. God's speeches seem to carry the most basic view on suffering that the book offers, and readers are invited to follow God's example in critiquing the several points of view in the book.

Most readers understand that Job is a tale or a story, set in an unknown period of time in an unidentifiable land called Uz (Job 1:1). The book is neither historical literature nor biography nor autobiography. Job reminds us of literature that begins with the phrase "once upon a time," and some readers recognize it as "dramatic fiction." However, the writers of Job are steeped in the biblical tradition, and they occasionally provide a parody of older biblical texts, such as Psalm 8 or Psalm 139.

The portrait of Job reflects an experience of deep suffering, with Job as a fictional pious man. The book isn't a report about a literal transaction between God and an Adversary (or Satan) that could have been caught on a heavenly camera. The book's strategy is to take the reader into the world of the story and away from the reader's time and place (and familiar ideas) to provide a neutral space to consider these important issues.

The book of Job is part of the wisdom literature tradition. The purpose is to teach by posing key questions about suffering. The reader should open the book of Job and think, "what if" or "let's suppose for the sake of argument." Like other wisdom literature, the book offers

a framework for understanding by working through different points of view. This type of literature was found elsewhere in the ancient Near East (e.g., "The Babylonian Theodicy" or the "Sumerian Job"). The character Job is mentioned elsewhere in the OT as a model character from an ancient time (see Ezek 14:14, 20).

The "lament" or "complaint" is prominent in Job's speeches. The lament is a common human response to suffering (see the intro. to the book of Psalms and Pss 3-7). The lament also serves the broader purpose of a dispute between Job and his friends and between Job and God. Job keeps his faith in God throughout the dialogue. He understands that his relationship with God allows him to speak his mind without having to worry about God ending the relationship. Job's understanding of the relationship is one of the reasons for God's positive response to what Job says (see Job 42:7-8). Job will come to see (Job 42:1-6) that, in spite of appearances, God was and is faithful. Job 38-41 shows God's faithfulness in letting the creation be what it is, even with all the suffering that creation may bring.

The present form of the book is the result of a complex process of editing over many years. The Hebrew is also very difficult to translate, with many unique or rare words. The introduction (prologue; Job 1:1-2:13) and conclusion (epilogue; Job 42:7-17) take the form of a story, frame the book, and may reflect an ancient tale about suffering. To this narrative are added poetic texts from various sources (Job 3:1-42:6). The date of the book is uncertain, but a reasonable suggestion is 6th to 4th century BCE. The one NT reference to Job occurs in James 5:11 and highlights Job's "endurance" or "persistence" (not his patience, as is often thought).

### **I. Prologue (1:1-2:13)**

#### **II. Dialogue between Job and Friends (3:1-37:24)**

- A. Job and friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (3:1-27:23)
- B. Reflections on wisdom (28:1-28)
- C. Job's defense (29:1-31:40)
- D. Disputes from Elihu (32:1-37:24)

#### **III. Dialogue between Job and God (38:1-42:6)**

- A. God's first response to Job (38:1-39:30)
- B. Job's first response to God (40:1-5)
- C. God's second response to Job (40:6-41:34)
- D. Job's second response to God (42:1-6)

#### **IV. Epilogue (42:7-17)**

**Job's piety and life of bliss**

**1** A man in the land of Uz was named Job. That man was honest, a person of absolute integrity; he feared God and avoided evil. **2**He had seven sons and three daughters, **3**and owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred pairs of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a vast number of servants, so that he was greater than all the people of the east. **4**Each of his sons hosted a feast in his own house on his birthday. They invited their three sisters to eat and drink with them. **5**When the days of the feast had been completed, Job would send word<sup>a</sup> and purify his children.<sup>b</sup> Getting up early in the morning, he prepared entirely burned offerings for each one of them, for Job thought, Perhaps my children have sinned and then cursed<sup>c</sup> God in their hearts. Job did this regularly.

**Job's motives questioned**

**6**One day the divine beings<sup>d</sup> came to present themselves before the LORD, and the Adversary<sup>e</sup> also came among them. **7**The LORD said to the Adversary, "Where did you come from?"

The Adversary answered the LORD, "From wandering throughout the earth."

**8**The LORD said to the Adversary, "Have you thought about my servant Job; surely there is no one like him on earth, a man who is honest, who is of absolute integrity, who reveres God and avoids evil?"

**9**The Adversary answered the LORD, "Does Job revere God for nothing? **10**Haven't you fenced him in—his house and all he has—and blessed the work of his hands so that his possessions extend throughout the earth? **11**But stretch out your hand and strike all he has. He will certainly curse you to your face."

**12**The LORD said to the Adversary, "Look, all he has is within your power; only don't stretch out your hand against him." So the Adversary left the LORD's presence.

**Job passes the test**

**13**One day Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. **14**A messenger came to Job and said: "The oxen were plowing, and the donkeys

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks word. <sup>b</sup>Or them <sup>c</sup>Or blessed. The verb for *bless* is a euphemism for *curse* in 1:11; 2:5, 9; whereas in 1:10, 2:1 and 42:12 it has its usual meaning. <sup>d</sup>Or children of God <sup>e</sup>Heb *hassatan*

1:1-2:13 Five scenes set the stage for the drama of Job's suffering. The episodes alternate between Job's situation on earth (1:1-5, 13-22; 2:7-13) and the meeting between God and the Adversary in heaven (1:6-12; 2:1-6). Finally, Job's friends appear on the scene to comfort him, and they discern that he's in *excruciating pain* (2:13). The prologue is set up to raise questions for the readers. Does God send suffering directly into the lives of individuals *for no reason* (2:3)? Or does God have a reason, for example, to test Job's faith? Is God responsible for everything that happens—good and evil (1:21)? Does God make bets with the Adversary? Note that without the bet there would have been no "test." Given the "wager," the test is for God's sake, not Job's, so that God can show that the Adversary is wrong and that God is right about Job. The storyteller poses a challenge to the reader: whether to accept or reject the picture of God in the prologue.

1:1-5 Job is a person of integrity who has wealth and status. He honors his children, and at the end of their festival celebrations, he makes sure that any sins his family may have committed have been forgiven by God.

1:1 Uz: Location uncertain, perhaps between Arabia and Edom (see Lam 4:21). *person of absolute integrity*: in relationship with God and with people, removing any suggestion that sin caused Job's suffering (see Job 1:11; 2:3).

1:5 *purify his children . . . entirely burned offerings*: acts that took away all negative effects of the sin. Job acts as a priest in a traditional sense. *Job did this regularly*: Faithfulness is a key description of Job's identity and relationships.

1:6-12 God meets with the divine beings (often called the

heavenly council, see Jer 23:18-22; Ps 29:1), questioning a member named Adversary.

1:6-12 *the Adversary*: or the Accuser. In Hebrew this investigator is called "the satan," and this is not the same being that is later referred to as the devil (see 2 Cor 2:11). This accusing voice is like that of a prosecuting attorney, who raises questions about Job's integrity. See 1 Chronicles 21:1.

1:9-10 Would Job *revere God* if he wasn't fenced in (protected) and blessed?

1:11 *strike all he has*: The Adversary figure may essentially be typical of how God lets the creation work. In effect, God gives the Adversary permission to let moral and natural evil loose on Job, an example of God letting the natural creation be what it often becomes.

1:12 *power*: God permits but doesn't manage the Adversary's actions. This exchange between God and the Adversary likely shows that God offers no special protection to creatures from whatever life throws their way. The divine "wager" is unparalleled in the Bible, as is the idea that God would be manipulated or incited by the Adversary (see Job 2:3). Job never finds out about the wager or the Adversary, who isn't mentioned in the book after Job 2:3. The sufferings that Job experiences are not direct wounds from God or the Adversary but are mediated by everyday realities in a complex created order (lightning and associated fires, windstorms, diseases) and a sinful world (violent robbers). Note that the "test" is for God's sake, not Job's, so that God can show that the Adversary is wrong and that God is right about Job.

1:13-22 Job and his family experience natural disasters and human evil.

1:1 Job 1:8;

Jer 25:20;

Eze 14:14;

Eze 14:20;

Jas 5:11

1:2 Job 42:13

1:3 Gn 12:16;

Gn 13:2;

Gn 30:43;

Job 29:25;

Job 42:12

1:5 Gn 8:20;

Job 42:8

1:6 1Ch 21:1;

Job 2:1; Zec 3:1;

Rev 12:9

1:7 1Pt 5:8

1:8 Nm 12:7;

Job 1:1; Job 2:3

1:9 1Ch 21:1;

Job 1:6-7;

Job 1:10; Job 2:4

1:10 Job 42:12;

Ps 34:7

1:11 Job 2:5;

Job 19:21

1:12 Job 2:4

1:13 Job 1:4

1:14 1Ki 19:19;

Jer 51:31

1:15 Gn 10:7  
 1:16 Gn 19:24;  
 1Ki 18:38;  
 2Ki 1:12  
 1:17 Gn 11:26,  
 Gn 11:31  
 1:18 Job 1:4,  
 Job 1:19  
 1:19 Job 1:18;  
 Jer 4:11;  
 Hos 13:15;  
 Mt 7:27  
 1:20 Gn 37:29,  
 Gn 37:34;  
 Exr 9:3  
 1:21 1Sa 2:7,  
 1Sa 3:18;  
 Job 2:10;  
 Ecc 5:15; 1Ti 6:7  
 1:22 Job 2:10  
 2:3 Job 1:1,  
 Job 1:8, Job 27:6  
 2:4 Job 1:9  
 2:5 Job 1:11,  
 Job 19:20  
 2:6 Job 1:12  
 2:7 Ex 9:9;  
 Dt 28:35  
 2:8 Job 42:6;  
 Jer 6:26;  
 Eze 27:30;  
 Jon 3:6;  
 Mt 11:21  
 2:9 2Ki 6:33;  
 Job 2:3, Job 2:10  
 2:10 Job  
 1:21-22; Ps 39:1;  
 Jas 5:11

were grazing nearby <sup>15</sup>when the Sabeans took them and killed the young men with swords. I alone escaped to tell you.”

<sup>16</sup>While this messenger was speaking, another arrived and said: “A raging fire fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and devoured the young men. I alone escaped to tell you.”

<sup>17</sup>While this messenger was speaking, another arrived and said: “Chaldeans set up three companies, raided the camels and took them, killing the young men with swords. I alone escaped to tell you.”

<sup>18</sup>While this messenger was speaking, another arrived and said: “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, <sup>19</sup>when a strong wind came from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It fell upon the young people, and they died. I alone escaped to tell you.”

<sup>20</sup>Job arose, tore his clothes, shaved his head, fell to the ground, and worshipped. <sup>21</sup>He said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb; naked I will return there. The LORD has given; the LORD has taken; bless the LORD’s name.”

<sup>22</sup>In all this, Job didn’t sin or blame God.

### *Job’s Adversary refuses to give up*

**2**One day the divine beings came to present themselves before the LORD. The Adversary **2**also came among them to present himself before the LORD. **2**The LORD said to the Adversary, “Where have you come from?”

The Adversary answered the LORD, “From wandering throughout the earth.”

<sup>3</sup>The LORD said to the Adversary, “Have you thought about my servant Job, for there is no one like him on earth, a man who is honest, who is of absolute integrity, who reveres God and avoids evil? He still holds on to his integrity, even though you incited me to ruin him for no reason.”

<sup>4</sup>The Adversary responded to the LORD, “Skin for skin—people will give up everything they have in exchange for their lives. <sup>5</sup>But stretch out your hand and strike his bones and flesh. Then he will definitely curse<sup>f</sup> you to your face.”

<sup>6</sup>The LORD answered the Adversary, “There he is—within your power; only preserve his life.”

### *The test intensifies*

<sup>7</sup>The Adversary departed from the LORD’s presence and struck Job with severe sores from the sole of his foot to the top of his head. <sup>8</sup>Job took a piece of broken pottery to scratch himself and sat down on a mound of ashes. <sup>9</sup>Job’s wife said to him, “Are you still clinging to your integrity? Curse<sup>g</sup> God, and die.”

<sup>10</sup>Job said to her, “You’re talking like a foolish woman. Will we receive good from God but not also receive bad?” In all this, Job didn’t sin with his lips.

<sup>f</sup>Or *bless* <sup>g</sup>Or *bless*

1:15-17 *Sabeans... Chaldeans*: raiding tribal groups from Arabia and Mesopotamia.

1:16 *fire... from the sky*: lightning.

1:19 *a strong wind*: See Job 27:20b-23.

1:20 *tore his clothes... worshipped*: traditional rituals of mourning (see Job 2:12; 2 Sam 13:31; Jer 16:6).

1:21 *Naked I came from my mother’s womb... naked I will return there*: a saying about the limits and weaknesses of human life—from birth to death (see Eccl 5:15). In the midst of his suffering Job continues to trust God and doesn’t sin. See sidebar, “The Lord Has Given; the Lord Has Taken.”

2:1-6 Returning to the heavenly scene, the divine beings, including the Adversary, interact with God about what they have observed during their travels to earth.

### *The Lord Has Given; the Lord Has Taken*

This claim of Job regarding God’s role in human life needs careful consideration. Recall that Job’s point of view comes from great suffering. Is this confession about God being recommended to readers, or might it be a conventional viewpoint that the book ends up criticizing? (See Job’s change in understanding in Job 42:3.) Notice how Job’s view evolves from Job 1:21 to Job 2:10. Job’s words shift from statement to question, from the personal name “LORD” to “God,” from first person singular to the more impersonal plural. Beginning in the next chapter and throughout much of the book, Job sharply criticizes God’s ways.

2:3 *incited me to ruin him for no reason*: God repeats the question voiced in Job 1:8 and notes that the Adversary is provoking God. This is God’s memory of what the Adversary said in Job 1:9-11.

2:4 *Skin for skin*: People will do anything to save their skin. God should strike Job and watch: Job will strike back. Once again, God gives the Adversary permission (see Job 1:12).

2:7-10 The Adversary strikes Job with disease.

2:8 *scratch himself... mound of ashes*: rituals of mourning (see Job 1:20).

2:9 *Curse God, and die*: Job’s wife challenges Job, setting up a key issue for the rest of the book: Can a person remain righteous without concern for his or her own self-interest?

2:10 *foolish woman*: Job speaks strong words to his wife

**Job's three friends come to comfort him**

<sup>11</sup>When Job's three friends heard about all this disaster that had happened to him, they came, each one from his home—Eliphaz from Teman, Bildad from Shuah, and Zophar from Naamah. They agreed to come so they could console and comfort him. <sup>12</sup>When they looked up from a distance and didn't recognize him, they wept loudly. Each one tore his garment and scattered dust above his head toward the sky. <sup>13</sup>They sat with Job on the ground seven days and seven nights, not speaking a word to him, for they saw that he was in excruciating pain.

2:11 Gn 25:2;  
Job 4:1, Job 8:1,  
Job 11:1,  
Job 18:1  
2:12 Gn 37:29;  
Josh 7:6;  
Job 1:20;  
Lam 2:10;  
Eze 27:30  
2:13 Gn 50:10;  
Is 47:1  
3:1 Job 1:22,  
Job 2:10,  
Job 6:1, Job 9:1;  
Jer 20:14  
3:3 Job 10:18;  
Jer 20:14  
3:6 Job 23:17,  
Job 30:26  
3:8 Job 41:1,  
Job 41:10,  
Job 41:25;  
Ps 74:14  
3:9 Job 41:18

**Job responds differently**

**3** Afterward, Job spoke up and cursed the day he was born.

<sup>2</sup>Job said:

- <sup>3</sup>Perish the day I was born,  
the night someone said,  
“A boy has been conceived.”
- <sup>4</sup>That day—let it be darkness;  
may God above ignore it,  
and light not shine on it.
- <sup>5</sup>May deepest darkness claim it  
and a cloud linger over it;  
may all that darkens the day terrify it.
- <sup>6</sup>May gloom seize that night;  
may it not be counted in the days of a year;  
may it not appear in the months.
- <sup>7</sup>May that night be childless;  
may no happy singing come in it.
- <sup>8</sup>May those who curse the day curse it,  
those with enough skill to awaken Leviathan.
- <sup>9</sup>May its evening stars stay dark;  
may it wait in vain for light;  
may it not see dawn's gleam,

in response to her advice to curse God. *receive good from God... also receive bad?* See sidebar, “The Lord Has Given; the Lord Has Taken” at Job 1. Also compare the softer *didn't sin with his lips* with the stronger statement in Job 1:22.

2:11-13 Three friends visit Job from nearby villages (precise location unknown) to comfort him. When they see him, they engage in cultural rituals for grieving (see Job 1:20; 2:8) and sit in silence for a week.

2:12 *scattered dust above his head toward the sky*; probably a negative act, thought to induce boils (see Exod 9:8). The friends continue to critique Job throughout the dialogue. 2:13 *excruciating pain*: The phrase summarizes Job's situation at this point and introduces a shift in Job's way of looking at suffering.

3:1-37:24 These disputes are started by Job's angry lament (Job 3). Job argues with his friends (and God) about the reasons for his suffering and the nature of God's creation. The friends believe that the orders of creation are fixed, strictly rewarding people according to their deeds. So because Job is suffering, he must have done something to deserve that pain. Job holds a similar understanding of the created order, but he believes, in view of his integrity, that God isn't taking care of the world very well (see 9:20-24).

3:1-27:33 The interaction between Job and his friends consists of three cycles of four speeches each (3-14; 15-21; 22-27). Generally, the friends' speeches end without completing the normal cycle. Bildad's response in Job 25 is brief, and Zophar's is missing. Job's speeches, however, get longer or more intense, as he leaves the

friends' disapproving responses behind and challenges God directly. Job's argument with both friends and God is about the nature of God's created order, and the presence or absence of God's activity in that order. For the friends, that created moral order is rigidly fixed. Justice is a guaranteed system of reward and punishment. In effect, the world runs like a machine, so God doesn't act freely but only reacts within a tightly woven system. This view of creation will be challenged and corrected. For God, as the divine speeches will make clear, the creation is not so rigidly fixed, and God doesn't manage the details of what God created. God's relationship to creation is limited by the nature of creation itself, so that (innocent) suffering can happen.

3:1-26 Job laments his suffering situation.

3:1-10 Job draws correlations between his own creation (birth) and the creation as a whole (see Gen 1:1-2:4; Jer 20:14-18).

3:3 *Perish the day I was born*: Job doesn't try to place a curse on his birthday or somehow undo creation. Rather, he thinks that all days in such a creation are actually like the day of his birth. His very birth shows that this world isn't a just order. God's creation is involved in what Job has become: one who suffers. Because this created order makes such suffering possible, its very status should be seen as cursed. He declares his own life to be like that world, having the ongoing status of being cursed, filled with darkness and death, like the chaotic situation prior to creation in Genesis 1:2.

3:8 *May those who curse the day curse it*: Professionals

3:18 Job 39:7

3:19 Job 30:23;  
Ecc 12:53:23 Job 19:8;  
Ps 88:8; Lam 3:73:25 Job 9:28,  
Job 30:15

<sup>10</sup>because it didn't close the doors of my mother's womb,<sup>h</sup>  
didn't hide trouble from my eyes.

### **Job laments his misfortune**

- <sup>11</sup>Why didn't I die at birth,  
come forth from the womb and die?
- <sup>12</sup>Why did knees receive me  
and breasts let me nurse?
- <sup>13</sup>For now I would be lying down quietly;  
I'd sleep; rest would be mine
- <sup>14</sup>with kings and earth's advisors,  
who rebuild ruins for themselves,
- <sup>15</sup>or with princes who have gold,  
who fill their houses with silver.
- <sup>16</sup>Or why wasn't I like a buried miscarried infant,  
like babies who never see light?
- <sup>17</sup>There the wicked rage no more;  
there the weak rest.
- <sup>18</sup>Prisoners are entirely at ease;  
they don't hear a boss's voice.
- <sup>19</sup>Both small and great are there;  
a servant is free from his masters.
- <sup>20</sup>Why is light given to the hard worker,  
life to those bitter of soul,
- <sup>21</sup>those waiting in vain for death,  
who search for it more than for treasure,
- <sup>22</sup>who rejoice excitedly,  
who are thrilled when they find a grave?
- <sup>23</sup>Why is light given<sup>i</sup> to the person whose way is hidden,  
whom God has fenced in?
- <sup>24</sup>My groans become my bread;  
my roars pour out like water.
- <sup>25</sup>Because I was afraid of something awful,  
and it arrived;  
what I dreaded came to me.
- <sup>26</sup>I had no ease, quiet, or rest,  
and trembling came.

### **Eliphaz tries to comfort Job**

- 4** Then Eliphaz, a native of Teman, responded:  
<sup>2</sup>If one tries to answer you, will you be annoyed?  
But who can hold words back?
- <sup>3</sup>Look, you've instructed many  
and given strength to drooping hands.
- <sup>4</sup>Your words have raised up the falling;  
you've steadied failing knees.

<sup>h</sup>Heb lacks *mother's*. <sup>i</sup>Heb lacks *is light given*.

were hired to speak curses. These curses can create a chaotic situation, symbolized by Leviathan—a sea monster, dragon, or large animal (e.g., a crocodile). The creature is described more fully by God in Job 41:1-34.

3:11-26 Job laments.

3:24-26 *groans . . . roars . . . trembling*: repeatedly voicing the question, *Why?* (Job 3:11-12, 16, 20, 23). Job wishes he had died at birth and could be with others who have died. He would then be at *rest* (Job 3:13, 17, 26). Death is better than the suffering he has had to endure. For Job, God's creation is out of whack, a disorderly place where

nothing of importance can be trusted. God will respond (Job 38-41) and claim that disorderly elements and random events are an important part of the framework of the world God created (e.g., darkness, unruly waters, Leviathan). But Job's viewpoint must be openly and thoroughly voiced before the divine response can be appreciated.

4:1-5:25 Eliphaz's first response.

4:1-6 Eliphaz is a caring voice initially, reminding Job of his own comforting words to other sufferers. In like manner, Job's *religion* (faith in God) should be *the source of your confidence . . . your hope* in such a time. Beginning with

- <sup>5</sup>But now it comes to you, and you are dismayed;  
it has struck you, and you are frightened.  
<sup>6</sup>Isn't your religion the source of your confidence;  
the integrity of your conduct, the source of your hope?

4:16 1Ki 19:12  
4:17 Job 9:2,  
Job 14:4,  
Job 15:14,  
Job 25:4  
4:18 Job 15:15  
4:19 Job 10:9,  
Job 13:28,  
Job 33:6,  
2Co 4:7, 2Co 5:1  
4:20 Job 20:7  
4:21 Job 36:12;  
Prv 5:23

### **Sinners don't live long**

- <sup>7</sup>Think! What innocent person has ever perished?  
When have those who do the right thing been destroyed?  
<sup>8</sup>As I've observed, those who plow sin  
and sow trouble will harvest it.  
<sup>9</sup>When God breathes deeply, they perish;  
by a breath of his nostril they are annihilated.  
<sup>10</sup>The roar of a lion and snarl of the king of beasts—  
yet the teeth of lions are shattered;  
<sup>11</sup>the lion perishes without prey,  
and its cubs are scattered.

### **A frightening dream**

- <sup>12</sup>But a word sneaked up on me;  
my ears caught a hint of it.  
<sup>13</sup>In profound thoughts, visions of night,  
when deep sleep falls on people,  
<sup>14</sup>fear and dread struck me;  
all of my bones shook.  
<sup>15</sup>A breeze swept by my face;  
the hair of my skin bristled.  
<sup>16</sup>It stopped. I didn't recognize its visible form,  
although a figure was in front of my eyes.  
Silence! Then I heard a voice:  
<sup>17</sup>"Can a human be more righteous than God,  
a person purer than their maker?"

### **Its interpretation**

- <sup>18</sup>If he doesn't trust his servants  
and levels a charge against his messengers,  
<sup>19</sup>how much less those who dwell in houses of clay,  
whose foundations are in dust,  
and who are crushed like a moth?  
<sup>20</sup>They are smashed between morning and evening;  
they perish forever without anyone knowing.  
<sup>21</sup>Isn't their tent cord pulled up?  
They die without wisdom.<sup>k</sup>



<sup>j</sup>Heb lacks *the source*. <sup>k</sup>Some interpreters end the quotation here rather than 4:17.

showing respect for Job and his *integrity*, Eliphaz's words to Job will become harsher over the course of the dialogue (see Job 22:1-11).

4:7-11 From Eliphaz's point of view, the creation is wonderfully ordered by God, and contrary to what Job thinks, it can be trusted. The *innocent* finally don't perish, but those who *sow trouble will harvest it* (see Job 5:1-16; Eccl 8:12-13; Hos 10:13). This pattern of action connected to its consequence is consistent, even among the strongest of

creatures (*lion*, 4:10-11). This must be the explanation for Job's suffering. Therefore, what has Job done to deserve these consequences?

4:12-17 Eliphaz believes that God gave him knowledge. In *visions of night*, he saw a *visible form* and *heard a voice* speaking (4:13-16). The basic claim he heard is that human beings aren't *righteous* and pure before God (4:17).

4:18-21 This difference is true even of *servants* and *messengers* (divine beings), and is certainly the case with

5:1 Job 15:15  
 5:2 Prv 12:16  
 5:3 Ps 37:35-36;  
 Jer 12:1-2  
 5:4 Job 4:11;  
 Ps 127:5  
 5:5 Job 1:15  
 5:7 Gn 3:17;  
 Job 14:1;  
 Ecc 2:22-23  
 5:8 Job 8:5;  
 Ps 50:15  
 5:9 Job 9:10,  
 Job 11:7,  
 Job 37:5; Ps 40:5;  
 Is 40:28  
 5:11 1Sa 2:7  
 5:12 Neh 4:15;  
 Ps 33:10; Is 8:10  
 5:13 Job 37:24;  
 1Co 3:19  
 5:14 Dt 28:29;  
 Job 12:25,  
 Job 18:18;  
 Is 59:10; Am 8:9  
 5:17 Ps 94:12;  
 Prv 3:11;  
 Heb 12:5;  
 Jas 1:12; Jas 5:11  
 5:18 Dt 32:39;  
 1Sa 2:6; Ps 147:3;  
 Is 30:26; Hos 6:1  
 5:19 Ps 34:19,  
 Ps 91:3, Ps 91:10;  
 Prv 24:16;  
 1Co 10:13  
 5:20 Ps 33:19,  
 Ps 37:19, Ps 91:7,  
 Ps 144:10

### Life's problems

- 5** Call out. Will anyone answer you?  
 To which holy one will you turn?  
<sup>2</sup>Surely anger can kill the foolish;  
 fury can kill the simple.  
<sup>3</sup>I've seen the foolish take root  
 and promptly curse their house.  
<sup>4</sup>Their children are far<sup>1</sup> from safety,  
 crushed in the gate without a deliverer.  
<sup>5</sup>The hungry devour<sup>2a</sup> their crops;  
 it's taken even from the thorns,<sup>2b</sup>  
 and the thirsty pant after their yield.  
<sup>6</sup>Surely trouble doesn't come from dust,  
 nor does distress sprout from the ground.  
<sup>7</sup>Surely humans are born to distress,  
 just as sparks rise up.

### The answer is God

- <sup>8</sup>But I would seek God,  
 put my case to God,  
<sup>9</sup>who does great things beyond comprehension,  
 wonderful things without number;  
<sup>10</sup>who provides rain over the earth's surface,  
 sends water to the open country,  
<sup>11</sup>exalts the lowly,  
 raises mourners to victory;  
<sup>12</sup>who frustrates the schemes of the clever  
 so that their hands achieve no success,  
<sup>13</sup>trapping the wise in their cleverness  
 so that the plans of the devious don't succeed.  
<sup>14</sup>They encounter darkness during the day,  
 and at noon they fumble about as at night.  
<sup>15</sup>Yet he rescues the orphan<sup>o</sup> from the sword of their mouth,  
 the needy from the grip of the strong;  
<sup>16</sup>so the poor have hope  
 and violence shuts its mouth.

### Divine favor

- <sup>17</sup>Look, happy is the person whom God corrects;  
 so don't reject the Almighty's instruction.  
<sup>18</sup>He injures, but he binds up;  
 he strikes, but his hands heal.  
<sup>19</sup>From six adversities he will deliver you;  
 from seven harm won't touch you.  
<sup>20</sup>In famine he will ransom you from death;  
 in war, from the power of the sword.

<sup>1</sup>Or *May their children be far from safety.* <sup>2a</sup>Or *May the hungry devour their crops.* <sup>2b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>o</sup>Heb lacks orphan.

human beings, who  *dwell in houses of clay* (bodies). They live for a short time, and then like a  *tent cord*  pitched for the night, they are  *pulled up*  and forgotten (see Job 15:14-16).

5:1-7 Eliphaz points out that no one will respond to Job's angry cries, even a  *holy one* , or angel (see Job 4:18).

5:2  *anger can kill* : It will have widespread ill effects on homes, children, and crops.

5:6-7 Such troubles don't  *come from ... the ground* . Human beings are responsible for any troubles they experience.

5:8-16 In such a time, Eliphaz commends that Job seek

God, who is then described as creator, one who  *exalts the lowly*  (5:11) and  *rescues ... the needy from the grip of the strong*  (5:15), yet  *frustrates the schemes of the clever*  (5:12). These are strong prophetic themes (see Amos 5:12; 8:4-6). Because of God's saving activity,  *the poor have hope, and violence*  has no power (5:16). For Job, this way of thinking is much too tidy.

5:17-27 For Eliphaz, God  *corrects ... injures ... strikes*  Job in and through his experience of suffering (5:17-18). If Job turns his life around and accepts God's  *instruction*  (or discipline), he will be healed and live long, with many



- 21 You will be hidden from the tongue's sting,  
and you won't fear destruction when it comes.
- 22 You will laugh at destruction and hunger;  
you won't be afraid of wild beasts;  
23 for you will make an agreement with the stones of the field;  
and the beasts of the field will be at peace with you.
- 24 You will know that your tent is secure.  
You will examine your home and miss nothing.
- 25 You will know that you'll have many children.  
Your offspring will be like the grass of the earth.
- 26 You will come to your grave in old age  
as bundles of grain stacked up at harvesttime.
- 27 Look, we've searched this out, and so it is;  
listen and find out for yourself.

5:21 Ps 31:20,  
Ps 91:5  
5:22 Is 35:9,  
Is 65:25;  
Eze 34:25;  
Hos 2:18  
5:23 Hos 2:18  
5:24 Job 8:6  
5:25 Ps 72:16,  
Ps 112:2  
5:26 Gn 15:15,  
Gn 25:8;  
Job 42:17;  
Prv 9:11,  
Prv 10:27  
6:2 Job 31:6  
6:3 Prv 27:3  
6:4 Job 30:15,  
Ps 38:2  
6:7 Job 3:24;  
Eze 4:14;  
Dn 10:3

**Job defends his anger**

- 6 Job responded:  
6<sup>a</sup> Oh, that my grief were actually weighed,  
all of it were lifted up in scales;  
7 for now it's heavier than the sands of the sea;  
therefore, my words are rash.<sup>b</sup>
- 8 The Almighty's arrows are in me;  
my spirit drinks their poison,  
and God's terrors are arrayed against me.
- 9 Does a donkey bray over grass  
or an ox bellow over its fodder?  
10 Is tasteless food eaten without salt,  
or does egg white<sup>c</sup> have taste?  
11 I refuse to touch them;  
they resemble food for the sick.

**He wishes to die**

- 12<sup>a</sup> Oh, that what I've requested would come  
and God grant my hope;  
13 that God be willing to crush me,  
release his hand and cut me off.
- 14 I'd still take comfort,  
relieved<sup>d</sup> even though in persistent pain;  
for I've not denied the words of the holy one.
- 15 What is my strength, that I should hope;  
my end, that my life should drag on?  
16 Is my strength that of rocks,  
my flesh bronze?  
17 I don't have a helper for myself;  
success has been taken from me.

**He accuses his friends**

- 18 Are friends loyal to the one who despairs,<sup>e</sup>  
or do they stop fearing the Almighty?

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain

descendants and a peaceful relationship with all of nature (cf. Elihu's word in Job 36:10-12; see Hos 2:18; Ezek 34:25; 37:26).  
6:1-7:21 Job's response to Eliphaz. His thinking moves from indicting his friends and God (Job 6) to complaining to God (Job 7).  
6:1-7 Job's words are *rash* (6:2-3) because the *grief* he suffered is so heavy—at the hands of a God who has hunted

him down! Such *food* (6:6-7) is obviously not what he deserves or needs (see Ps 69:20-21).  
6:8-13 Job again wishes for death at the hands of God, and he would die in *comfort*, knowing that he hadn't *denied* God or done anything to deserve such *persistent pain* (6:10). He has no *strength* (6:11-12) in himself to endure such suffering.  
6:14-21 Job accuses his *friends* of not being *loyal* and

7:1 Job 14:5-6,  
Job 14:14  
7:2 Lv 19:13;  
Job 14:6

- 15** My companions are treacherous like a stream in the desert,  
like channels that overrun their streambeds,  
**16** like those darkened by thawing ice,  
in which snow is obscured  
**17** but that stop flowing in dry times  
and vanish from their channels in heat.  
**18** Caravans turn aside from their paths;  
they go up into untamed areas and perish.  
**19** Caravans from Tema look;  
merchants from Sheba hope for it.  
**20** They are ashamed that they trusted;  
they arrive and are dismayed.  
**21** That's what you are like;<sup>†</sup>  
you see something awful and are afraid.

### *He appeals to his friends*

- 22** Have I said, "Give me something?  
Offer a bribe from your wealth for me?  
**23** Rescue me from the hand of my enemy?  
Ransom me from the grip of the ruthless?"  
**24** Instruct me and I'll be quiet;  
inform me how I've erred.  
**25** How painful are truthful words,  
but what do your condemnations accomplish?  
**26** Do you intend to correct my words,  
to treat the words of a hopeless man as wind?  
**27** Would you even gamble over an orphan,  
barter away your friend?  
**28** Now look at me—  
would I lie to your face?  
**29** Turn! Don't be faithless.  
Turn now! I am righteous.  
**30** Is there wrong on my tongue,  
or can my mouth not recognize disaster?

### *The human condition*

- 7** Isn't slavery everyone's condition on earth,  
our days like those of a hired worker?  
<sup>2</sup> Like a slave we pant for a shadow,  
await our task like a hired worker.  
<sup>3</sup> So I have inherited months of emptiness;  
nights of toil have been measured out for me.  
<sup>4</sup> If I lie down and think—When will I get up?—  
night drags on,<sup>‡</sup> and restless thoughts fill me until dawn.  
<sup>5</sup> My flesh is covered with worms and crusted earth;  
my skin hardens and oozes.  
<sup>6</sup> My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle;  
they reach their end without hope.<sup>¶</sup>

<sup>†</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>‡</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>¶</sup>Or *thread*

being *treacherous* in their behavior toward him (6:14-15). They are like a *stream in the desert* that runs full when it rains, but dries up when the *heat* comes (6:15, 17; see Jer 15:18).

6:18-21 They are like *Caravans* that look for water, but when they don't find it, they are *dismayed and afraid*.

6:22-30 Job pleads with his friends to show that what he has said or done deserves such a response. Rather than

condemn him and treat him like property, they should see that he is a *righteous* man who doesn't *lie* but discerns the truth in his suffering (6:28-30).

7:1-10 Job compares the human condition to slavery. Describing his own suffering, he speaks of his *emptiness*... the *night [that] drags on*, and *restless thoughts* (7:3-4), and a body that is *covered with sores and dry skin* (7:5). He is *without hope* and *pleasure* (7:6-7).

- 7 Remember that my life is wind;  
my eyes won't see pleasure again.
- 8 The eye that sees me now will no longer look on me;  
your eyes will be on me, and I won't exist.
- 9 A cloud breaks apart and moves on—  
like the one who descends to the grave<sup>▼</sup> and won't rise,  
10 won't return home again,  
won't be recognized in town anymore.

7:4 Dt 28:67;  
Job 7:13  
7:5 Job 2:7,  
Job 17:14,  
Job 24:20;  
Is 14:11  
7:9 2Sa 12:23;  
Job 14:13  
7:14 Gn 41:8  
7:15 1Ki 19:4;  
Jon 4:3; Rev 9:6  
7:16 Job 6:9,  
Job 9:21,  
Job 10:1,  
Job 10:20;  
Ps 39:13  
7:18 Job 14:3;  
Ps 17:3

### Job wants to be left alone

- 11 But I won't keep quiet;  
I will speak in the adversity of my spirit,  
groan in the bitterness of my life.
- 12 Am I Sea<sup>✳</sup> or the Sea Monster<sup>7</sup>  
that you place me under guard?
- 13 If I say, "My couch will comfort me,"  
my bed will diminish my murmuring.
- 14 You scare me with dreams,  
frighten me with visions.
- 15 I would choose strangling  
and death instead of my bones.
- 16 I reject life;<sup>✳</sup> I don't want to live long;  
leave me alone, for my days are empty.

### A parody of Psalm 8

- 17 What are human beings, that you exalt them,  
that you take note of them,  
18 visit them each morning,  
test them every moment?
- 19 Why not look away from me;  
let me alone until I swallow my spit?
- 20 If I sinned, what did I do to you,  
guardian of people?  
Why have you made me your target  
so that I'm a burden to myself?
- 21 Why not forgive my sin,  
overlook my iniquity?  
Then I would lie down in the dust;  
you would search hard for me,  
and I would not exist.

### Bildad defends God

- 8 Bildad from Shuah responded:  
8<sup>2</sup> How long will you mouth such things  
such that your utterances become a strong wind?

<sup>✳</sup>Heb *Sheol*   <sup>✳</sup>Heb *Yam*, a sea god   <sup>7</sup>Heb *Tannin*, a sea dragon   <sup>✳</sup>Heb lacks *life*.

Like thread on a weaver's shuttle (7:6) and a vanishing cloud (7:9) he is on his way to the grave (called "Sheol" in Hebrew).

7:8 Job addresses God directly for the first time (*your* is singular), as he does from time to time in the dialogue.

7:11-16 Job speaks to God in especially harsh terms, accusing God of watching over him as if he were *Sea* or a *Sea Monster* (7:12; Leviathan, see Job 3:8) or chaos embodied. He is being treated as a disorderly element in creation. He seeks *comfort* (7:13), but God harasses him with terrifying *dreams* and *visions* (7:14). *leave me alone*: Death is better than life with such a God!

7:17-21 Job parodies Psalm 8, which speaks of *human*

*beings* (7:17) as "only slightly less than divine" and filled "with glory and grandeur" and "putting everything under their feet." For Job, however, humans aren't actually called to such a vocation in God's world, but to be the object of God's relentless control, that is, God's *target* (7:20). If God would only let me alone long enough to *swallow my spit!* (7:19) Job speaks in mocking terms: *If I sinned . . . forgive it and move on!* I'm done with this life and done with you! (7:20-21).

8:1-22 Bildad's first response. Bildad responds that if Job would turn to God, he would experience creation as good—unlike the wicked, who experience it as a threat.

8:1-7 Bildad is appalled by what Job had to say about God

8:9 Gn 47:9;  
1Ch 29:15;  
Job 7:6, Job 14:2;  
Ps 102:11

- <sup>3</sup> Does God pervert justice,  
or does the Almighty distort what is right?  
<sup>4</sup> If your children sinned against him,  
then he delivered them into the power of their rebellion.  
<sup>5</sup> If you will search eagerly for God,  
plead with the Almighty.  
<sup>6</sup> If you are pure and do the right thing,  
then surely he will become active on your behalf  
and reward your innocent dwelling.  
<sup>7</sup> Although your former state was ordinary,  
your future will be extraordinary.

#### **Tradition**

- <sup>8</sup> Ask a previous generation  
and verify the findings of your ancestors,  
<sup>9</sup> for we are only recently here and don't know  
because our days on earth are a shadow.  
<sup>10</sup> Won't they instruct you and tell you;  
will words not<sup>a</sup> proceed from their hearts?

#### **Examples from nature**

- <sup>11</sup> Does papyrus grow apart from a marsh?  
Does a reed flourish without water?  
<sup>12</sup> While still tender, uncut,  
it will wither before every other grass.  
<sup>13</sup> So are the paths of all who forget God.  
Hope perishes for the godless,  
<sup>14</sup> whose confidence is a fragile thing,<sup>b</sup>  
their trust, a spider's web.  
<sup>15</sup> He leans on its web, and it doesn't stand;  
grasps it, and it can't remain in place.  
<sup>16</sup> It's like a well-watered plant in the sun;  
its runners spread over its gardens.  
<sup>17</sup> Its roots are entwined over a pile of rocks,  
for it sees a home among stones.  
<sup>18</sup> If it's uprooted from its place,  
it lies, saying, "I can't see you."  
<sup>19</sup> Surely its way is a joy,  
for from the dust other plants<sup>c</sup> sprout.

#### **God's faithfulness**

- <sup>20</sup> Surely God won't reject integrity,  
won't strengthen the hand of the wicked.  
<sup>21</sup> He will still fill your mouth with joy,  
your lips with a victorious shout.

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks *not*. <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb lacks *plants*.

and God's justice. He even suggests that Job's *children* suffered as they did because of their sin (8:4). If Job would *plead* with God (8:5-6), and does what is *right* (ironically, as in Job 1:1, 8), God will *become active on [Job's] behalf*, and his *future will be extraordinary* (8:6-7).

8:8-10 If Job were to inquire of his *ancestors*, they would *instruct* him in the truth. And, it is implied, he would agree with his friends' point of view on these matters.

8:11-19 Using imagery from the plant world, two plants (representing the wicked and the righteous) seem to be contrasted. Bildad asserts regarding *all who forget God*

that their *Hope perishes* like plants without water (8:13). Their future is no firmer than a *spider's web* (8:14). Another plant comes into view (8:16), a *well-watered plant in the sun* (which therefore doesn't wither). Its roots are grounded in a *home among stones* (not a fragile spider's web), and even if it is *uprooted*, it can ignore that, for *other plants sprout* from it, making life a *joy* (8:17-19).

8:20-22 A word of assurance for Job. Because God won't *reject integrity* (a term used for Job in Job 1:1, 8), Job still has a chance for a positive future, while his foes will *vanish*.

22 Those who hate you will be clothed with shame,  
and the tent of the wicked will vanish.

*Hymnic praise*

9 Job responded:

- 21 I know for certain that this is so;  
and how can anyone be innocent before God?
- 3 If one wants to contend with him,  
he won't answer one in a thousand.
- 4 He is wise<sup>d</sup> and powerful;  
who can resist him and prosper?
- 5 Who removes mountains, and they are unaware;  
who overthrows them in anger?
- 6 Who shakes the earth from its place,  
and its pillars shudder?
- 7 Who commands the sun, and it does not rise,  
even seals up the stars;  
8 stretched out the heavens alone  
and trod on the waves of the Sea;<sup>e</sup>  
9 made the Bear and Orion, Pleiades  
and the southern constellations;
- 10 does great and unsearchable things,  
wonders beyond number?

*A mismatch*

- 11 If God goes by me, I can't see him;  
he glides past, and I can't perceive him.
- 12 If he seizes, who can bring back?  
Who can say to him, "What are you doing?"
- 13 God won't retract his anger;  
the helpers of Rahab bow beneath him.
- 14 Yet I myself will answer him;  
I'll choose my words in a contest<sup>f</sup> with him.
- 15 Even if I'm innocent, I can't answer;  
I must plead for justice.
- 16 If I were to call and he answered me,  
I couldn't believe that he heard my voice.
- 17 Who bruises me with a tempest  
and multiplies my wounds for no reason?
- 18 He doesn't let me catch my breath,  
for he fills me with bitterness.
- 19 If the issue is strength—behold power!  
If justice—who calls God to meet me?

<sup>d</sup>Or wise in heart; cf 37:24 <sup>e</sup>Heb Yam, a sea god <sup>f</sup>Heb lacks in a contest.

9:1–10:22 Job's response to Bildad. Job's is a painful reply, with sharp questions about God's justice and purpose in creation. Job challenges any claims that justice is integral to the created order. Strikingly, Job is basically right about the creational order. As God's speeches will later show (Job 38–41), God hasn't created a machine. 9:1–10 Job agrees with Bildad that no one is *innocent before God* (9:2); but given who humans are and who God is, that's no news. To *contend with God* about these matters is futile (9:3). God has every advantage, and no one can *resist him* successfully (9:4). Look at what God does in the world of nature! God controls every creature, including the monsters of chaos (*Sea*; see Job 7:12) and the *southern constellations* of the heavens (9:9; see Job 38:31–33; Amos 5:8–9).

9:10 *wonders beyond number*: But, in fact, God's world is a mess, so disorderly that one's innocence has no relationship to whether they suffer. 9:11–19 But Job claims, God's power in nature isn't matched by a gracious divine interaction with human beings. Job 9:19 summarizes these points well by agreeing with the friends: God is in control. Regardless of the ill effects God's action may produce in human life, God can't be called to account. Mocking God's control over creation, even the forces of chaos like *Rahab* (=Sea, 9:13; see Job 26:12; 7:12) *bow beneath* this God. Still Job will take God on. An *innocent* one shouldn't have to *plead for justice* (9:15). Even then, God wouldn't listen. God would continue the attack, including storms and disease. God's actions fill Job *with bitterness* (9:18).

9:2 Job 4:17,  
Job 25:4;  
Ps 130:3,  
Ps 143:2;  
Ro 3:20  
9:3 Job 10:2,  
Job 40:2  
9:7 Is 13:10;  
Jl 2:10, Jl 3:15  
9:8 Ps 104:2;  
Is 40:22  
9:9 Gn 1:16;  
Job 37:9,  
Job 38:31–32;  
Am 5:8  
9:10 Job 5:9  
9:17 Job 2:3,  
Job 16:14,  
Job 34:6  
9:19 Job 9:4;  
Jer 49:19

9:20 Job 15:6;

Phi 3:12

9:23 Job 24:12;

Heb 11:36

9:24 Job 10:3.

Job 12:6;

Job 12:17;

Job 16:11;

Jer 12:1

9:25 Job 7:6-7;

Jer 51:31

9:30 Jer 2:22

9:31 Jer 2:22

9:33 1Sa 2:25;

Job 9:19;

Job 16:21

**There is no justice**

- <sup>20</sup>If I'm innocent, my mouth condemns me;  
I have integrity; but God declares me perverse.
- <sup>21</sup>I'm blameless, yet don't know myself;  
I reject my life.
- <sup>22</sup>It's all the same;  
therefore, I say God destroys the blameless and the sinners.
- <sup>23</sup>If calamity suddenly kills,  
he mocks at the slaying<sup>a</sup> of innocents.
- <sup>24</sup>The earth is handed over to the wicked;  
he covers the faces of its judges.  
If not God, then who does?

**Job wants an arbitrator**

- <sup>25</sup>My days are swifter than a runner;  
they flee and don't experience good.
- <sup>26</sup>They sweep by like ships made of reeds,  
as an eagle swoops on prey.
- <sup>27</sup>If I say, "I'll forget my lament,  
put on a different face so I can smile,"
- <sup>28</sup>I'm still afraid of all my suffering;  
I know that you won't declare me innocent.
- <sup>29</sup>I myself am thought guilty;  
why have I tried so hard in vain?
- <sup>30</sup>If I wash myself with snow,  
purify my hands with soap,
- <sup>31</sup>then you'll hurl me into a slimy pit  
so that my clothes detest me.
- <sup>32</sup>God is not a man like me—someone I could answer—  
so that we could come together in court.
- <sup>33</sup>Oh, that<sup>b</sup> there were a mediator between us;  
he would lay his hand on both of us,  
<sup>34</sup>remove his rod from me,  
so his fury wouldn't frighten me.
- <sup>35</sup>Then I would speak—unafraid—  
for I'm not that way.

**Complaint to God**

- 10** I loathe my life; I will let loose my complaint;  
I will speak out of my own bitterness.
- <sup>2</sup>I will say to God, Don't declare me guilty;  
tell me what you are accusing me of doing.
- <sup>3</sup>Does it seem good to you that you oppress me,  
that you reject the work of your hands  
and cause the purpose of sinners to shine?

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Or *There is no*

9:20-24 Job believes that he is *innocent* and has *integrity* in these matters, but once he opens his mouth in defense, God declares him *perverse* (9:20). God treats the *blameless and the sinners* alike (9:22). They are *all the same* to God. Any *judges* that may be around are fired (9:24). Finally, it's the *wicked* who rule the day. Job blames God for not creating an order that connects to actual human behaviors.

9:25-35 Given this terrible and unjust situation, Job realizes that he can't resolve the situation. I can't *forget my lament* and *put on a different face* (9:27). But God can't resolve it either: God won't *declare me innocent* (9:28). Even if I change my life and seek to *purify* myself (9:30), God will

respond by *hurl[ing] me into a slimy pit* (9:31). Because God is *not a man like me* (9:32), he can't be brought into court. Job wishes for a *mediator* (9:33), a third party, who would arbitrate between God and himself. In such a court, Job could *speak—unafraid* (9:35), knowing that he is innocent. 10:1-7 Job's lament deepens regarding God's treatment of him. *I loathe my life*. God, don't just *declare me guilty* (10:2), tell me why. Why do you *oppress me*, one of your faithful ones, and let the obvious *sinners* thrive (10:3)? Does that *seem good to you*? If you were a human being, your accusing me of *sin* would be understandable (10:6). But you are God, and *You know that I'm not guilty* (10:7).

- <sup>4</sup>Do you have physical eyes;  
do you see like a human?  
<sup>5</sup>Are your days like those of a human,  
your years like years of a human,  
<sup>6</sup>that you search for my wrongdoing  
and seek my sin?  
<sup>7</sup>You know that I'm not guilty,  
yet no one delivers me from your power.

### Creator

- <sup>8</sup>Your hands fashioned and made me;  
yet you want to destroy me utterly.  
<sup>9</sup>Remember that you made me from<sup>i</sup> clay,  
and you will return me to dust.  
<sup>10</sup>Didn't you pour me out like milk,  
curdle me like cheese?  
<sup>11</sup>You clothed me with skin and flesh,  
wove me from bones and sinews.  
<sup>12</sup>Life and kindness you gave me,  
and you oversaw and preserved my breath.

### No hiding place

- <sup>13</sup>These things you hid in your heart;  
I know this is the case with you.  
<sup>14</sup>If I sin and you observe me,  
you won't consider me innocent of wrongdoing.  
<sup>15</sup>If I were guilty, doom to me;  
I'm innocent, but can't lift my head,  
full of shame and facing my misery.  
<sup>16</sup>I could boast like a lion, and you would hunt me;  
you would do awesome things to me again.  
<sup>17</sup>You continue to send your witnesses against me  
and increase your anger toward me,  
a swift army against me.<sup>j</sup>

### Death wish

- <sup>18</sup>Why did you let me emerge from the womb?  
I wish I had died without any eye seeing me.  
<sup>19</sup>Then I would be just as if I hadn't existed,  
taken from the belly to the grave.  
<sup>20</sup>Aren't my few days coming to an end?  
Look away from me so I can brighten up a little  
<sup>21</sup>before I go and don't return  
to a land of deepest darkness,  
<sup>22</sup>a land whose light is like gloom,  
utter darkness and confusion,  
such that light shines like gloom.

<sup>i</sup>Or like <sup>j</sup>Heb uncertain

10:8 Job 10:3;  
Ps 119:73  
10:9 Gn 2:7;  
Gn 3:19;  
Job 4:19;  
Ecc 12:7  
10:10 1Sa 17:18  
10:11 Ps 139:13  
10:12 Gn 2:7;  
Job 33:4;  
Ac 17:28  
10:13 Job 23:13  
10:15 Job 9:15;  
Job 10:7;  
Ps 23:18; Is 3:11  
10:22 1Sa 2:9;  
Job 3:13;  
Job 10:21

10:8-12 These verses are a parody of Psalm 139:13-16. Job speaks of himself as an individual whom God created, but created for trouble.

10:10 *pour me out like milk, curdle me like cheese*: probably a metaphor for the initial stages of formation in the womb. God's knowledge of Job, indeed participation in his development and birth, should tell God that he is innocent.

10:13-17 God must have hidden all the positive evidence! If I were a sinner and *guilty*, then the divine behavior would be understandable (10:14-15). But *I'm innocent!* I

shouldn't be *full of shame and misery*. If Job were to *boast like a lion* regarding his integrity, God would still *hunt* him down and repeat the attack (10:16). God's *anger* at him would *continue*, even *increase*; God would even bring a *swift army* against him (10:17).

10:18-22 *Why . . . ? I wish I had died*: in the womb. See Jeremiah 20:14-18.

10:20-22 *I've got few days . . . before I disappear in the darkness and gloom*: Perhaps there is no expectation of an afterlife.

11:2 Psv 10:19

11:3 Job 17:2

11:6 Ezz 9:13

11:7 Job 5:9;

Job 37:23;

Ps 145:3;

Ecc 3:11;

Ro 11:33

11:12 2Ch 6:36;

Job 5:13;

Job 12:2-3;

Job 39:5

**Zophar's rebuke**

- 11** Zophar from Naamah responded:  
**1** Should all these words go unanswered  
 or a wordy man be justified?  
**2** Will your idle talk silence everyone;  
 will you mock and not be put to shame?  
**3** You've said, "My teaching is pure,  
 and I'm clean in God's<sup>k</sup> eyes."

**Divine secrecy**

- 4** But oh, that God would speak,  
 open his lips against you  
**5** and tell you secrets of wisdom;  
 for sound insight has two sides.  
 Know that God lets some of your sin be forgotten.  
**6** Can you find the secret of God  
 or find the extent of the Almighty?  
**7** They are higher than the heavens—what can you do?  
 Deeper than the underworld<sup>l</sup>—what can you know?  
**8** Its measurement is longer than the earth  
 and broader than the sea.  
**9** If God passes by, imprisons someone, and calls a trial,  
 who can stop him?  
**10** He knows worthless people,  
 sees sin, and certainly<sup>m</sup> takes note.  
**11** A stupid person becomes intelligent  
 when a wild ass of a person is born tame.<sup>n</sup>

**Abiding hope**

- 12** If you make your mind resolute  
 and spread your palms to him,  
**13** if you throw out the sin in your hands  
 and don't let injustice dwell in your tents,  
**14** then you will lift up your face without blemish;  
 you will be secure and not fear.  
**15** You will forget trouble;  
 you will remember it as water that flows past.  
**16** A life span will rise brighter than noon;  
 darkness will be like morning.  
**17** You will be secure, for there is hope;  
 you will look around and rest safely.  
**18** You will lie down without anyone to scare you;  
 many will beg for your favor.  
**19** The eyes of the wicked will grow faint;  
 flight has vanished from them;  
 their hope is a dying gasp.

<sup>k</sup>Or your <sup>l</sup>Heb Sheol <sup>m</sup>Or does not <sup>n</sup>Or a wild ass's colt can be born a man

11:1-20 Zophar's first response. Zophar claims that God's ways are beyond questions and hence Job is wrong to challenge God about the created world.

11:1-4 Zophar scolds Job for his lack of self-control and for being so wordy (11:2). For him, Job's claim that his teaching is pure is simply idle talk (11:3-4). Job should be put to shame for what he has been saying.

11:5-12 Zophar desires that God would speak to Job the wisdom needed for such a time. Job should realize that God's ways are higher and Deeper than he is aware. what can you know?: God is like a traveling judge who sees

everything. who can stop him from passing judgment God knows the sinners and takes note. Job is like a stupid person who has as much chance of becoming intelligent: a wild ass of a person does of becoming tame.

11:13-20 If Job would spread [his] palms in prayer to God and turn away from his sin, he would be secure and not fear. All of his trouble will be a distant memory and a life. brighter than noon will replace the darkness of his morning. On the other hand, if Job continues in his ways, his eyes will fail like those of the wicked. There will be no escape (flight from his suffering, and hope will be a dying gasp.



**A living joke**

- 12 Job responded:  
 1<sup>2</sup> Surely you are the people,  
 and wisdom will die with you.  
 3<sup>1</sup> I am also intelligent;  
 I'm not inferior to you.  
 Who isn't like these people?<sup>o</sup>  
 4<sup>1</sup> I'm a joke to friends  
 who called to God and he answered;  
 the innocent and blameless one is a joke,  
 5<sup>a</sup> a torch<sup>p</sup> of contempt to one who is idle,  
 a fixed point for slipping feet.

**Proverbial wisdom**

- 6<sup>1</sup> Raiders' tents are prosperous  
 and God's provokers secure,  
 who carry God in their hands.<sup>q</sup>  
 7<sup>1</sup> But ask Behemoth, and he will teach you,  
 the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;  
 8<sup>1</sup> or talk to earth, and it will teach you;  
 the fish of the sea will recount it for you.  
 9<sup>1</sup> Among all these, who hasn't known  
 that the LORD's hand did this?  
 10<sup>1</sup> In whose grasp is the life of every thing,  
 the breath of every person?  
 11<sup>1</sup> Doesn't the ear test words  
 and the palate taste food?  
 12<sup>1</sup> "In old age is wisdom;  
 understanding in a long life."

**God's majesty**

- 13<sup>1</sup> With him are wisdom and power;  
 counsel and understanding are his.  
 14<sup>1</sup> If he tears down, it can't be rebuilt;  
 if he ties a person up, he can't be set free.  
 15<sup>1</sup> If he restricts water, they have drought;  
 if he lets it loose, it overturns the land.  
 16<sup>1</sup> With him are might and success;  
 the deceiver and the deceived are his.

<sup>o</sup>Heb lacks *people*. <sup>p</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>q</sup>Heb uncertain

12:1–14:22 Job's response to Zophar. Job's long speech first addresses the friends (12:1–13:17) and then moves to God (13:18–14:22).

12:1–5 Job opens with sarcastic comments about his friends. They think that they are such *special people* that when they die, *wisdom will die*. Job is *not inferior* to them (12:3). Nobody is. Job is *a joke to friends* who have called upon God and whose prayers have been *answered*, unlike Job's (12:4–5). Job claims that he is *innocent and blameless*, but to those who are *idle* (and not suffering) that claim is a *joke*, indeed a matter of obvious *contempt*, a *point* from which one is bound to fall.

12:6–12 Life is unfair, and God is responsible. Those who steal from others are *prosperous*, and those who provoke God, who claim to have God within their control, are *secure*. 12:6–9 *ask* any beast you can imagine (including *Behemoth*, one of the mightiest of animals; see Job 40:15), or the *birds*, or the *earth* itself, or the *fish* and they'll *teach* you the truth that is obvious to every creature: *the Lord*

has done this to me. The world of nature is an important source of knowledge about God and world. The natural world is imagined as a teacher of human beings (12:7–9, which is the only use of the Lord's name in the dialogue). But in this context nature is a teacher with respect to God's abuse of the suffering Job.

12:10–11 *life of every thing*: Even human *breath* is in God's control. Such knowledge is as obvious as *words to the ear* and the *taste of food* to the *palate*.

12:12 Quoting a proverb, such *wisdom* is available to anyone who has lived a *long life*.

12:13–25 A mocking closing word about God's control of the world. See sidebar, "A Cruel World."

12:13 God has all *wisdom and power*. But Job calls into question God's mostly negative use of these attributes (cf. Prov 8:14–16). The list of divine actions claims that God controls all matters, in both history and nature, among both individuals and nations. Everything that happens, with special attention to the negative actions of religious,

12:4 Job 16:10,  
 Job 17:2,  
 Job 17:6,  
 Job 30:11,  
 Ps 91:15  
 12:8 Job 12:9  
 12:14 Job 11:10;  
 Is 22:22; Rev 3:7

12:24 Job 12:20;  
Ps 107:40

- 17 He leads advisors away barefoot;  
makes madmen of judges;  
18 unties the belt of kings,  
binds a garment around their loins;  
19 leads priests away barefoot;  
overthrows the well-established;  
20 silences the talk of trusted people;  
takes away elders' discernment;  
21 pours contempt on royalty;  
loosens the belt of kings;  
22 discloses deep secrets of darkness,  
makes utter darkness enter the light;  
23 makes nations prominent  
and destroys them,  
expands nations and leads them astray;  
24 takes away the power to think  
from earth's leaders,  
making them wander in untraveled wastelands.  
25 They feel their way in the dark without light;  
he makes them stumble like drunks.

#### Self-defense

- 13 Look, my eye has seen it all;  
my ear has heard and understood it.  
2 Just as you know, I also know;  
I'm not inferior to you.  
3 But I want to speak to the Almighty;  
I would gladly present my case to God.

#### Friends attacked

- 4 You, however, are plasterers of lies;  
ineffective healers, all of you.  
5 Would that you were completely quiet;  
that would be your wisdom.  
6 Hear my teaching  
and pay attention to the arguments of my lips.  
7 Will you speak injustice for God,  
speak deceit on his behalf?  
8 Will you be partial  
or contend for God?  
9 Will it go well when he searches you,  
or can you fool him as you fool people?  
10 He will certainly correct you  
if you've been secretly partial.  
11 Wouldn't his majesty scare you  
and dread of him fall on you?  
12 Your old sayings are proverbs made of ashes,  
your sayings defenses made of clay.

*A Cruel World* In Job 12:13-25, Job launches into a defense against the accusations of the friends and the actions of God. He claims that God's governance is entirely random and doesn't have Job's and the creatures' best interest at heart. He admits to God's wisdom as a creator, and to God's power, but says that they are used in randomly and negatively against people like him. From Job's point of view, God's creation is poorly designed. This is because the system of reward and punishment doesn't work very well, with the result that justice is skewed and creation is chaotic. God is finally responsible for this descent of the creation into chaos.

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judicial and political leaders, is because God has done it, not because of human failure. And look at the chaos that results. The resulting claim is an example: God even "takes away the power to think from earth's leaders . . . makes them stumble like drunks" (Job 12:24-25).

13:1-3 The friends can't add to Job's knowledge (see Job 12:2), so Job demands to speak directly to the all-powerful one in court.

13:4-12 Job sharply attacks the friends, accusing them of being *plasterers of lies* (see Ps 119:69) and *ineffective healers*. The best *wisdom* they could offer him would be to shut up and listen to his own *arguments*. They are false witnesses for God in this court case, and God will certainly *correct* any biases they have (as in Job 42:7-8). They will be filled with *dread*. What they say is worthless, best described as *ashes* and *clay*.

**Job will speak out**

- <sup>13</sup> Be quiet and I will speak,  
come what may.
- <sup>14</sup> For what reason will I take my flesh in my teeth,  
put my life in jeopardy?
- <sup>15</sup> He will slay me; I'm without hope;<sup>a</sup>  
I will surely prove my way to his face.
- <sup>16</sup> Also this will be my vindication,  
that a godless person won't come before him.
- <sup>17</sup> Listen closely to my words  
so that my remarks will be in your ears.

13:18 Job 23:4  
13:26 Job 20:11;  
Ps 29:7  
14:1 Job 5:7;  
Ecc 2:23  
14:2 Job 8:9;  
Ps 103:15;  
Is 40:6; Jas 1:10;  
1Pt 1:24  
14:3 Job 7:18;  
Ps 8:4; Ps 143:2;  
Ps 144:3

**Against God**

- <sup>18</sup> Look, I have laid out my case;  
I know that I'm innocent.
- <sup>19</sup> Who would dare contend with me,  
for then I would be quiet and die.
- <sup>20</sup> Only don't do two things to me,  
then I won't hide from your face.
- <sup>21</sup> Remove your hand far from me  
and don't terrify me with your anger.
- <sup>22</sup> Then call and I'll answer,  
or I'll speak and you can reply.
- <sup>23</sup> How many are my offenses and sins?  
Inform me about my rebellions and sins.
- <sup>24</sup> Why hide your face from me  
and consider me your enemy?
- <sup>25</sup> Will you cause a wind-tossed leaf to tremble, or will you pursue dry straw?
- <sup>26</sup> You even write bitter things about me,  
make me inherit my youthful indiscretions.
- <sup>27</sup> You tie up my feet and restrict all actions;  
you stamp marks on the bottom of my feet.

**Human destiny**

- <sup>28</sup> Surely a person wastes away like refuse,  
like clothing that a moth eats.
- 14** All of us<sup>a</sup> are born of women,  
have few days, and are full of turmoil.
- <sup>2</sup> Like a flower, we<sup>b</sup> bloom, then wither,  
flee like a shadow, and don't last.
- <sup>(3)</sup> Yes, you open your eyes on this one;  
you bring me into trial against you.)

<sup>a</sup>Or *Though he slay me, yet I will trust him.* <sup>b</sup>Heb *adam* <sup>c</sup>Or *he*; also *he* in 14:5-6

13:13-17 Job promises to speak out, even though he will be putting his *life in jeopardy*, like prey in a beast's mouth. He believes that he has no *hope*. God will *slay* him, if he tries to show that he is right before the *face* of God (see Exod 33:20). But Job finds *vindication* in coming before God, because a *godless person* wouldn't dare to do such a thing.

13:18-27 Job speaks directly to God (though possibly not until 13:20). Confident that he is *innocent*, he lays out his *case* before God. If God should challenge him, he is ready to *die*. He specifies *two* conditions for this face-to-face encounter: (1) don't threaten me with your *hand* (see Job 1:11; 2:5); and, (2) don't *terrify me with your anger*. If you don't do these things, then we can *speak* with each other. Job challenges God: Name my *sins*! Assuming that

God won't be able to do so, Job asks *Why?* (see Job 10:18). God turns his *face* (presence) away and treats Job like an *enemy*. Given that Job is no more than a *leaf* or *dry straw* compared to God, why such a threat? God has even written down *bitter things* against Job (as in a court procedure) and remembered some of Job's *youthful indiscretions*. God *restrict[s]* Job's movements and even *marks the bottoms of [his] feet* so that his steps can be traced.

13:28-14:6 Human beings, like *refuse* and *moth-eaten clothing* (13:28), are here one minute and gone the next. *We're* alive but only for a *few turmoil-filled days* (14:1), and *Like a flower* or a *shadow* (14:2), *we don't last long* (see Pss 102:11; 103:15). Why should God bother to *bring* such a short-lived one *into trial* (14:3)? *Nobody* can make the guilty innocent (14:4). The number of *our days [is] fixed*

14:4 Job 15:14;

Ps 51:5; Jn 3:6

14:5 Job 7:1;

Job 21:21;

Ps 39:4

14:7 Job 19:10

14:8 Is 11:1

14:9 Job 29:19

14:10 Job 14:12;

Job 14:14

14:11 Is 19:5

14:12 Ps 102:26

14:13 Gn 8:11;

Job 6:6; Is 26:20

14:14 Job 7:1;

Job 13:15

14:15 Job 10:3;

Job 13:22

14:16 Job 10:6;

Job 10:14;

Job 31:4;

Job 34:21;

Ps 139:1

14:17 Dt 32:34;

Hos 13:12

**4**Who can make pure from impure?

Nobody.

**5**If our days are fixed, the number of our months with you, you set a statute and we can't exceed it.

**6**Look away from us that we may rest, until we are satisfied like a worker at day's end.

### Trees versus humans

**7**Indeed there is hope for a tree.

If it's cut down and still sprouting and its shoots don't fail,

**8**if its roots age in the ground and its stump dies in the dust,

**9**at the scent of water, it will bud and produce sprouts like a plant.

**10**But a human dies and lies there; a person expires, and where is he?

**11**Water vanishes from the sea; a river dries up completely.

**12**But a human lies down and doesn't rise until the heavens cease; they don't get up and awaken from sleep.

### Momentary hope

**13**I wish you would hide me in the underworld,<sup>a</sup> conceal me until your anger passes, set a time for me, and remember me.

**14**If people die, will they live again? All the days of my service I would wait until my restoration took place.

**15**You would call, and I would answer you; you would long for your handiwork.

**16**Though you now number my steps, you would not keep a record of my sin.

**17**My rebellion is sealed in a bag; you would cover my sin.

### God crushes hope

**18**But an eroding mountain breaks up, and rock is displaced.

**19**Water wears away boulders; floods carry away soil; you destroy a people's hope.

**20**You overpower them relentlessly, and they die; you change their appearance and send them away.

**21**Their children achieve honor, and they don't know it; their children become insignificant, and they don't see it.

<sup>a</sup>Heb Sheol

by God and we can't exceed that time limit (14:5). So God, leave us alone so that we may rest until our limited days are done (14:6).

14:7-12 There is hope for a tree, even when cut down, to return to life, but not for human beings (14:7-10). They are like water that dries up. When they die, they are gone for good (that is, until the heavens cease) (14:11-12).

14:13-17 Job pleads with God: hide me in the underworld (Sheol, the home of the dead) until your anger passes (14:13). He wonders whether people will live again after they die (14:14). If it were so, Job would wait long for such a restored relationship. Such a time would be different from

the present (14:15). God would no longer keep a record of [Job's] sin, but it would be sealed in a bag and thrown away forever (14:16-17).

14:18-22 But Job's hope is only momentary. By using destructive images (earthquake, flood), Job speaks of God as one who destroy[s] a people's hope (14:18-19). God overpower[s] them relentlessly until they die, never to be seen again (14:20). They won't see how the lives of their children turn out, whether for good or evil (14:21). Job concludes with an image of their negative end in Sheol, the realm of the dead: in bodily pain and mourn[ing] for themselves (14:22).

<sup>22</sup>They only feel the pain of their body,  
and they mourn for themselves.

### *Job's intelligence questioned*

- 15** Eliphaz answered:  
<sup>2</sup>Will the wise respond with windy knowledge  
and fill their belly with the east wind?  
<sup>3</sup>Will they argue with a word that has no benefit  
and with unprofitable words?  
<sup>4</sup>You are truly making religion ineffective  
and restraining meditation before God.  
<sup>5</sup>Your mouth multiplies your sins a thousand times;  
you opt for a clever tongue.  
<sup>6</sup>Your mouth condemns you, not I;  
your lips argue against you.  
<sup>7</sup>Were you born the first Adam,  
brought forth before the hills?  
<sup>8</sup>Did you listen in God's council;  
is wisdom limited to you?  
<sup>9</sup>What do you know that we don't know;  
what do you understand that isn't among us?  
<sup>10</sup>Both the graybeard and the aged are with us;  
those much older than your father.  
<sup>11</sup>Are God's comforts not enough for you,  
a word spoken gently with you?  
<sup>12</sup>Why has your mind seized you,  
why have your eyes flashed,  
<sup>13</sup>so that you return your breath to God  
and utter such words from your mouth?  
<sup>14</sup>What are humans that they might be pure,  
and those born of woman that they might be innocent?  
<sup>15</sup>If he doesn't trust his holy ones  
and the heavens aren't pure in his eyes,  
<sup>16</sup>how much less those who are abominable and corrupt,  
for they drink sin like water.

### *The wicked's downfall*

- <sup>17</sup>Listen to me; I will argue with you;  
what I've seen, I will declare to you;  
<sup>18</sup>what the wise have told and have not concealed from their family,  
<sup>19</sup>to whom alone the earth was given  
and no stranger passed in their midst.  
<sup>20</sup>All the days of the wicked are painful;  
the number of years reserved for the hateful;  
<sup>21</sup>a sound of terror pierces<sup>v</sup> their ears;  
when safe, raiders overtake them.

<sup>v</sup>Heb lacks *pierces*.

15:1-35 Eliphaz's second response. In this second round of speeches the anger of Job and friends is intensified.

15:1-16 Eliphaz responds sharply, accusing Job of a *windy... word that has no benefit* (15:2-3). It's just talk! Hot air! In so doing, Job, you are undervaluing the importance of religion and its practices (15:4). Your own speaking *condemns you, not I*. Your own words *argue against you* (15:5-6). You act as if you were present at creation and listened to *God's council* (15:7-8; see Jer 23:18, 22). Job doesn't know any more about these matters than his friends. In fact, they're surrounded by the learned *aged* in a way that Job isn't (15:9-10). Eliphaz asks: *why are God's comforts not*

*enough for you or a word that your friends have spoken gently* (15:11; see Job 2:11)? *Why has your mind so hardened, and why is your anger so evident in those flashing eyes and sharp words?* Have you returned your good spirit (*breath*) to God (15:12-13; see Gen 2:7)? Human beings aren't *innocent!* If even God's angels *aren't pure* (see Job 4:18-19), *how much less* humans (like Job) who *drink sin* as if it were life-giving water (15:14-16).

15:17-35 Eliphaz challenges Job to *Listen* to his arguments, drawn from the traditions of the *wise*, early in human life on the *earth* (15:17-19). A catalog of negatives about the future of the *wicked and hateful* (or ruthless)

15:8 Jer 23:18  
 15:13 Job 15:25;  
 Mal 3:13  
 15:14 Job 14:4,  
 Job 25:4;  
 Prv 20:9;  
 Ecc 7:20  
 15:15 Job 4:18,  
 Job 5:1, Job 25:5

15:26 Job 15:25;  
Job 16:14;  
Ps 75:5  
16:2 Job 13:4  
16:4 2Ki 19:21;  
Ps 22:7,  
Ps 109:25;  
Lam 2:15;  
Mt 27:39  
16:5 Job 29:25

- 22** They can't count on turning away from darkness;  
they are destined for a sword.
- 23** They wander about for bread. "Where is it?"  
They know that their day of darkness is fixed.
- 24** Adversity and stress scare them,  
master them like a king ready to strike;
- 25** for they raise a fist against God  
and try to overpower the Almighty.
- 26** They run toward him aggressively,  
with a massive and strong shield.
- 27** They cover their face with grease  
and make their loins gross.
- 28** They lived in ruined cities,  
unoccupied houses that turn to rubble.
- 29** They won't get rich; their wealth won't last;  
their property won't extend over the earth.
- 30** They can't turn away from darkness;  
a flame will dry out their shoots,  
and they will be taken away by the wind from his mouth.
- 31** They shouldn't trust in what has no worth,  
for their reward will be worthless.
- 32** Before their branch is formed,  
before it is green,
- 33** like the vine, they will drop early grapes  
and cast off their blossoms like the olive.
- 34** The ruthless gang is barren,  
and fire consumes the tents of bribers.
- 35** They conceive toil and give birth to sorrow;  
their belly establishes deceit.

### Job's response

- 16** Then Job answered:  
**2** I've heard many things like these.  
All of you are sorry comforters.
- 3** Will windy talk ever cease;  
what bothers you that you must argue?
- 4** In your situation I could speak like you;  
I could put words together to oppose you,  
shake my head over you.
- 5** I could heap up words, strengthen you with my speech;  
my trembling lips would be held in check.
- 6** If I speak, my pain is not eased;  
if I hold back, what have I lost?

### The innocent are God's targets

- 7** Now God has surely worn me out.  
You have destroyed my entire group,

follows (15:20). Their entire lives will be *painful*. They will live with the *sound of terror* and *raiders* will overtake them when they think they are *safe* (15:21). They will be unable to escape from pervasive *darkness* and death. They will search for food, knowing that their end is near (15:22-23). They are faced with *Adversity... ready to strike*, because they are challenging the Almighty God (15:24-27; Shaddai means Almighty: "the mountain God" or "mountain one"). Dressed up like warriors, they engage God in battle, but their prosperity (*grease, fatness*) won't save them. But they will *live in ruined cities and houses* that have become *rubble*. Their *wealth won't last* nor will their *property* endure. Their crops will *dry out* and be blown *away* (15:28-30).

Their *reward will be worthless*, and they will die young (15:31-33). These *ruthless* ones are *barren* and *fire* will *consume* their ill-gotten homes. Pregnant with *deceit*, they will *give birth* only to *sorrow* (15:34-35). Such is Job's future. 16:1-17:16 Job's response to Eliphaz. Job responds in kind. 16:1-6 Job's criticism of the three friends is sharp indeed: *sorry comforters, windy talk[ers]* (16:2-3). If Job were to do to them what they're doing to him, he *could speak* words that *oppose* them and *shake [his] head over* them. But he would do a better job than they do, speaking in a way that would *strengthen* them and his anger *would be held in check*. Whether he speaks or not, his *pain* continues (16:4-6). 16:7-17 Job challenges God for the attacks made on him,

- <sup>8</sup> seized me, which became grounds for an accusation.<sup>¶</sup>  
My leanness rises to bear witness against me.
- <sup>9</sup> His anger tears me and afflicts me;  
he slashes at me with his teeth.  
My enemy pierces me with his eyes.
- <sup>10</sup> They open their mouths at me  
and strike my cheek in a taunt;  
they gang up on me.
- <sup>11</sup> God delivers me to a criminal  
and forces me into the hands of the wicked.
- <sup>12</sup> I was at rest, but he shattered me,  
seized me by the back of my neck,  
dashed me into pieces;  
he raised me up for his target.
- <sup>13</sup> His archers surround me;  
he cuts my kidneys open without pity and doesn't care,  
pours my gall on the ground,
- <sup>14</sup> bursts me open over and over,  
runs against me like a strong man.
- <sup>15</sup> I've sewed rough cloth over my skin  
and buried my dignity in the dust.
- <sup>16</sup> My face is red from crying,  
and dark gloom hangs on my eyelids.
- <sup>17</sup> But there is no violence in my hands,  
and my prayer is pure.

16:14 Job 9:17  
16:18 Gn 4:10;  
Is 26:21;  
Eze 24:7  
16:19 Gn 31:50;  
Job 31:2;  
Ps 113:5; Ro 1:9;  
Phi 1:8  
16:20 Job 12:5;  
Ps 88:9; Ps 142:2;  
Lam 2:19  
16:21 Job 31:35

### Lingering hope

- <sup>18</sup> Earth, don't cover my blood;  
let my outcry never cease.
- <sup>19</sup> Surely now my witness stands in heaven;  
my advocate is on high;
- <sup>20</sup> my go-between, my friend.<sup>¶</sup>  
While my eyes drip tears to God,  
<sup>21</sup> let him plead with God for a human being,  
like a person pleads for a friend.
- <sup>22</sup> A number of years will surely pass,  
and then I'll walk a path that I won't return.

### Another lament

- 17** My spirit is broken,  
my days extinguished,  
the grave,<sup>¶</sup> mine.
- <sup>2</sup> Surely mockers are with me,  
and my eye looks on their rebellion.

<sup>¶</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>¶</sup>Go-between and friend are plural in Heb. <sup>¶</sup>Or graves

using both second (“you”) and third (“they”) person references, and concluding with a claim of innocence (16:7-8, 17). God, *You have destroyed my entire social world and my leanness has become grounds for an accusation on the part of others.* God’s anger is compared to a starving beast, baring its *teeth* and *with eyes* focused on him (16:7-9). *I was at rest*, but God made me a *target for His archers*, throwing me down like a rock, *dash[ing] me into pieces*, slashing my innards *open* with weapons. God has acted *without pity and doesn’t care* for me at all (16:10-14). I have been reduced to a shameful existence, forever covered with rags; my *dignity* is gone, and I can’t stop *crying* (16:15-16). God: Look closely, there is *no blood on my hands* and my *prayer* to you is sincere (16:17).

16:18–22 Job addresses the earth: *don’t cover my blood* so that it can continue to provide evidence of my innocence (16:18; see Gen 4:10-11 regarding Abel’s blood). The identity of the *witness/advocate/friend* to which Job appeals in *tears* is uncertain. But Job identifies the *witness* as a being *in heaven* (see Job 5:1; 9:33; 19:25; 33:23), probably a divine messenger who could act as a *go-between* and *plead with God* on Job’s behalf (16:19-21). In but a few years, Job will be no more (16:22).

17:1-16 Job voices another lament, with his friends especially in view. *My spirit is broken* and I am near death. I am surrounded by *mockers* (his “friends”; 17:1-2). God, take me up on my integrity in this matter. *Who* among the friends would be *willing* to do likewise (17:3)? God, *You’ve closed*

17:8 Job 15:34,  
Job 34:30,  
Is 52:14  
17:16 Job 3:17,  
Job 21:26  
18:5 Job 21:17;  
Prv 13:9,  
Prv 20:20,  
Prv 24:20

- <sup>3</sup>Take my guarantee.  
Who else is willing to make an agreement?
- <sup>4</sup>You've closed their mind to insight;  
therefore, you won't be exalted.
- <sup>5</sup>He denounces his friends for gain,  
and his children's eyes fail.
- <sup>6</sup>He makes me a popular proverb;  
I'm like spit in people's faces.
- <sup>7</sup>My eye is weak from grief;  
my limbs like a shadow—all of them.
- <sup>8</sup>Those who do the right thing are amazed at this;  
the guiltless become troubled about the goddess.
- <sup>9</sup>The innocent clings to his way;  
the one whose hands are clean grows stronger.
- <sup>10</sup>But you can bring all of them again,  
and I won't find a wise one among you.
- <sup>11</sup>My days have passed;  
my goals are destroyed, my heart's desires.
- <sup>12</sup>They turn night into day;  
light is near because of the darkness.
- <sup>13</sup>If I hope for the underworld<sup>a</sup> as my dwelling,  
lay out my bed in darkness,
- <sup>14</sup>I've called corruption "my father,"  
the worm, "my mother and sister."
- <sup>15</sup>Where then is my hope?  
My hope—who can see it?
- <sup>16</sup>Will they go down with me to the underworld;<sup>a</sup>  
will we descend together to the dust?

#### Attack from a friend

- 18**<sup>2</sup>Bildad from Shuah answered:  
<sup>2</sup>How long? Would you all stop talking.  
Try to understand and then we can speak.
- <sup>3</sup>Why are we considered beasts,  
ignorant in your sight?
- <sup>4</sup>To you who tear yourself in rage—  
will earth be forsaken for your sake,  
a rock be dislodged from its place?

#### Evil people's fate

- <sup>5</sup>To be sure, the light of the wicked goes out;  
the blaze of their fire doesn't shine.

<sup>a</sup>Heb Sheol <sup>b</sup>Heb Sheol

the friends' *mind to insight* into my situation, so you won't be exalted by what they do (17:4). Recall this proverb: If you betray your friends, your children will die (17:5). Job complains about his reputation in his community (see Job 16:7); he is thought of no more highly than spit in the face (17:6). Job continues: Because of my grief, I don't see well, and my arms and legs don't function very well (17:7). Upright people in the community are amazed at what is happening to me and they are troubled by what the goddess (i.e., the friends) are doing. But these people who do the right thing remain committed to their way and grow stronger in support of me (17:8-9). One could gather all three friends, and I would not find a wise one among them (17:10). my goals and my heart's desires are at an end. Yet, Job expresses hope that his night will turn into day and that darkness means that light will soon dawn for

him (17:11-12). hope becomes a repeated theme in these verses. Returning to the theme of the underworld, also called "darkness," "corruption," "worm," and "dust" to refer to the home of the dead (Sheol), Job wonders where he can find hope (17:13-16). Can hope be found in the underworld (see Job 14:13-17)?

18:1-21 Bildad's Second Response. He focuses on the dismal end of the wicked, among whom Job would be included if he continues on his present course.

18:1-4 When will you (Job) stop talking like this? If you would Try to understand, then we might be able to speak. Why do you treat us like animals (18:2)? Why are you so angry? You only tear yourself up and you should know that the very order of the earth won't be affected by what you are doing (18:4).

18:5-21 Various images depict the fate of the wicked:



- <sup>6</sup>The light in their tent becomes dark,  
and their lamp above doesn't shine.
- <sup>7</sup>Their strong strides slow down;  
their plans trip themselves.
- <sup>8</sup>They are caught by their feet in a net;  
they walk on mesh.
- <sup>9</sup>A trap grabs them by the heel;  
a snare tightens on them.
- <sup>10</sup>A rope is hidden on the ground for them;  
a trap for them along the path.
- <sup>11</sup>Terrors round about scare them;  
they follow their steps.
- <sup>12</sup>Their offspring hunger;  
calamity is ready for their spouses.
- <sup>13</sup>It eats some of their skin.  
Death's firstborn consumes their limbs.
- <sup>14</sup>They are snatched from the safety of their tent;  
it parades them before the king of terrors.
- <sup>15</sup>Nothing they own remains in their tent;  
sulfur is scattered over their home.
- <sup>16</sup>Their roots dry out below;  
their branches wither above.
- <sup>17</sup>The memory of them will perish from the earth;  
they will achieve no recognition abroad.
- <sup>18</sup>They are thrust from light into darkness,  
banished from the world.
- <sup>19</sup>They have no offspring or descendants among their people,  
no survivor in their dwelling place.
- <sup>20</sup>Their successors are appalled at what happens to them;  
their predecessors pull their hair.
- <sup>21</sup>These are surely the dwelling places of the evil;  
this is the place of the one who doesn't know God.

18:14 Job 8:22;  
Prv 14:32  
18:15 Gn 19:24;  
Ps 11:6;  
Eze 38:22  
19:4 Prv 9:12;  
Ga 6:5  
19:5 Ps 35:26;  
Ps 38:16;  
Ps 55:12

### Failed friendship

- 19** Then Job responded:  
<sup>2</sup>How long will you harass me  
and crush me with words?  
<sup>3</sup>These ten times you've humiliated me;  
shamelessly you insult me.  
<sup>4</sup>Have I really gone astray?  
If so, my error remains hidden inside me.  
<sup>5</sup>If you look down on me  
and use my disgrace to criticize me,  
<sup>6</sup>know then that God has wronged me  
and enclosed his net over me.

### God's treatment of Job

- <sup>7</sup>If I cry "Violence!" I'm not answered;  
I shout—but there is no justice.

from light to dark, from strong strides to stumbling, being caught in a net or a trap. Terrors are round about and follow their steps (18:5-11). Their offspring and spouses will suffer calamity. Disease and Death itself consumes their bodies. The safety of their homes will disappear in the face of death and their possessions will be lost in fires. Like a tree, their roots and branches will die out, and they won't be remembered. Their children will die, banished from the world (18:12-19). Those who remain will be appalled at what has happened to them. This is the fate of those who don't know God (Job included; 18:20-21).

19:1-29 Job's response to Bildad. Job's complaint against his friends and God reaches a new level, though he expresses hope that he won't be blamed.

19:1-6 Job condemns the friends who harass and crush him with words. Again and again, the friends humiliated and insult[ed] Job (19:2-4). Job argues that if he has gone astray, that is between him and God. If the friends use Job's suffering as a basis to criticize him for something he has done, they should know that God is the problem (19:5-6).

19:7-12 Job goes on to detail God's treatment of him

19:9 Job 29:14;  
Ps 89:39,  
89:44;  
Lam 5:16

19:10 Job 14:7  
19:14 Job 19:19;  
Ps 38:11;  
Jer 20:10

19:16 Job 19:15  
19:21 Job 1:11;  
Ps 38:2

19:23 Is 30:8

19:25 Psv 23:11;  
Is 43:14; Is 59:20

- <sup>8</sup>He walled up my path so I can't pass  
and put darkness on my trail,  
<sup>9</sup>stripped my honor from me,  
removed the crown from my head,  
<sup>10</sup>tore me down completely so that I'll die,  
and uprooted my hope like a tree.  
<sup>11</sup>His anger burns against me;  
he considers me his enemy.  
<sup>12</sup>His troops come as one  
and construct their siege ramp<sup>b</sup> against me;  
they camp around my tent.

### Social ostracism

- <sup>13</sup>He has distanced my family from me;  
my acquaintances are also alienated from me.  
<sup>14</sup>My visitors have ceased;  
those who know me have forgotten me.  
<sup>15</sup>My guests and female servants think me a stranger;  
I'm a foreigner in their sight.  
<sup>16</sup>I call my servant, and he doesn't answer;  
I myself must beg him.  
<sup>17</sup>My breath stinks to my wife;  
I am odious to my children.  
<sup>18</sup>Even the young despise me;  
I get up, and they rail against me.  
<sup>19</sup>All my closest friends despise me;  
the ones I have loved turn against me.

### Misery

- <sup>20</sup>My bones cling to my skin and flesh;  
I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.  
<sup>21</sup>Pity me. Pity me. You're my friends.  
God's hand has truly struck me.  
<sup>22</sup>Why do you pursue me like God does,  
always hungry for my flesh?

### Brief hope

- <sup>23</sup>Oh, that my words were written down,  
inscribed on a scroll  
<sup>24</sup>with an iron instrument and lead,  
forever engraved on stone.  
<sup>25</sup>But I know that my redeemer<sup>c</sup> is alive  
and afterward he'll rise upon the dust.

<sup>b</sup>Or their road <sup>c</sup>Or avenger

*Redeemer* The best known words in the book of Job are found in Job 19:25 (see especially the music and lyrics for Handel's *Messiah*). This language isn't used in the NT, though Christians commonly link it to the person and work of Jesus. This absence may in part be due to the fact that the text is difficult to translate and interpret. The identity of the redeemer (Heb. *go'el*) is uncertain. The word could refer to God as the liberator of God's people (see Isa 41:14; 43:14). But most likely an "avenger" or "vindicator" is in view (see Num 35:12-28)—one who rights a wrong that has been committed against someone. Job believes that his friends and God wronged him, and that he needs a third party (probably a divine messenger) to speak on his behalf.

(see Job 16:7-14). Job says: When I cry out that I am being abused, God doesn't respond with justice—as a just God should. God blocked my path to a just hearing of my cause and keeps that avenue full of darkness (19:7-8). He has stripped me of my honor, removed my dignity as a human being (crown; see Ps 8:5). My hope is gone, uprooted . . . like a tree (see Job 14:7-12). I will die (19:9-10). God's anger burns against me; God considers me his enemy and sends his troops against . . . my tent to kill me (19:11-12).

19:13-19 God's action has cut me off from everyone: my family, acquaintances, visitors, those who know me, servants, wife and children, the young, and All my closest friends. All those I have loved—they have turned against me (19:19). Job has even become a servant to his servants; he is isolated and alone.

19:20-22 Job is skin and bones, and has escaped death by the skin of [his] teeth. Job repeatedly calls on his friends to pity him (19:21). He asks them, "Why do you pursue me like God does?" (see Job 13:25). God and friends seem to be acting together (19:22).

19:23-27 Job voices some hope in the darkness of his life. He expresses a desire that, in case he dies, his words about his innocence will be inscribed in a form that lasts forever (19:23-24; see Job 13:18). He confesses: I know that my redeemer is alive, echoing earlier statements about his hope for a mediator (Job 9:33; 16:19-21; see Job 5:1; 33:23; see sidebar, "Redeemer"). Job claims that his friends and God have wronged him. He wants that action reversed, probably by a divine messenger, a mediator who has direct access to God and can rise up for him (as in a courtroom)

<sup>26</sup>After my skin has been torn apart this way—  
then from my flesh<sup>d</sup> I'll see God,  
<sup>27</sup>whom I'll see myself—  
my eyes see,<sup>e</sup> and not a stranger's.  
I am utterly dejected.

19:26 Ps 17:15;  
Mt 5:8;  
1Co 13:12;  
Phi 3:21; 1Jn 3:2  
19:27 Ps 73:26  
20:8 Ps 73:20,  
Ps 90:5; Is 29:7-8  
20:15 Job 20:10;  
Prv 23:8;  
Is 57:17;  
Jer 22:17; Mt 2:2

### Warning

<sup>28</sup>You say, "How will we pursue him  
so that the root of the matter can be found in him?"<sup>f</sup>  
<sup>29</sup>You ought to fear the sword yourselves,  
for wrath brings punishment by the sword.  
You should know that there is judgment.

### Traditional belief

**20** Zophar from Naamah said:  
<sup>2</sup>Therefore, my troubled thoughts make me turn back—  
because of my inner turmoil.  
<sup>3</sup>I hear teaching that insults me,  
but I am forced to answer based on my own understanding.<sup>g</sup>  
<sup>4</sup>Do you know this from long ago—  
from when humans were placed on earth—  
<sup>5</sup>that the rejoicing of the wicked is short,  
the joy of the godless, brief?  
<sup>6</sup>Though their height reaches heaven  
and their heads touch the clouds,  
<sup>7</sup>they will perish forever like their dung;  
those who saw them will say, "Where are they?"  
<sup>8</sup>They will disappear like a dream,  
and none will find them,  
carried away like a nighttime vision.  
<sup>9</sup>The eye that saw them will do so no more;  
they won't be seen again at home.  
<sup>10</sup>Their children will repay the poor;  
their hands will give back their wealth.  
<sup>11</sup>Vigor filled their bones  
and now sleeps with them in the dust.  
<sup>12</sup>Though wickedness is sweet in their mouths,  
they hide it under their tongues;  
<sup>13</sup>they like it, won't let it go;  
they hold it in their cheeks.  
<sup>14</sup>Food turns their stomachs,  
becoming a cobra's poison inside.  
<sup>15</sup>They swallow wealth and vomit it;  
God dislodges it from their belly.

<sup>d</sup>Or *without my flesh or in my flesh* <sup>e</sup>Or *have seen* <sup>f</sup>Heb manuscripts; MT *in me* <sup>g</sup>Heb *uncertain*

on the earth (*dust*) and plead his case, using his inscribed words. This defense would best happen before his death (perhaps after his death in Sheol, but probably not a reference to his resurrection; cf. Dan 12:2), though he would be near death, with his *skin . . . torn apart*. Then, Job's *eyes* (and not another's) will actually *see God* (Job 13:15-16; see Job 42:5). But, even with this hope, he is *utterly dejected*, doubting that this will happen.

19:28-29 Job recognizes that his friends want to *pursue* his case and get to the *root of the matter*. But he says that they ought to *fear* death themselves, because what they have done to him deserves *judgment*.

20:1-29 Zophar's second response. Zophar raises the issue of the fate of the wicked, and Job responds. Zophar

is *troubled* and in *turmoil* over what Job has been saying. He is insulted in view of his *own understanding*, which is deeply rooted in his culture (20:2-4). A list of what will happen to the wicked follows. He has Job in mind. Though the *wicked* seem to be joyful and on a "high," they will soon *perish forever like their dung*. They will *disappear* and not be *seen again*; *Their children* will suffer because of parents' misdeeds—their mistreatment of the *poor* is highlighted (20:10, 19; see Job's defense, Job 29:12-16; 31:13-23)—and their *Vigor* will die away (20:5-11). On the surface, things may be *sweet*, but their *wickedness* will eat away at them from within like bad food and the *poison* of snakes. They will *vomit* it all up at God's prompting and it *kills* them (20:12-16). In the end, they won't *experience* the good

20:18 Job 20:10,  
Job 20:15  
20:20 Ecc 5:13  
21:2 Job 21:34  
21:3 Job 11:3,  
Job 16:10,  
Job 16:20,  
Job 17:2  
21:4 Job 7:11  
21:7 Job 12:6,  
Ps 37:35,  
Ps 73:3; Jer 12:1;  
Hab 1:13

- <sup>16</sup>They suck cobra's poison;  
a viper's tongue kills them.
- <sup>17</sup>They won't experience streams,  
rivers of honey, and brooks of cream.
- <sup>18</sup>They won't receive the reward for their labor;  
they won't enjoy the wealth from their business.
- <sup>19</sup>They crushed and abandoned the poor;  
stole a house they didn't build;
- <sup>20</sup>didn't know contentment in their belly;  
couldn't escape with their treasure.
- <sup>21</sup>Nothing remained of their food,  
so their riches will not endure.
- <sup>22</sup>Even in their plenty, they are hard-pressed;  
all sorts of trouble come on them.
- <sup>23</sup>Let God<sup>b</sup> fill their belly,  
unleash his burning anger on them,  
rain punishing blows on them.
- <sup>24</sup>If they flee an iron weapon,  
a bronze bow pierces them.
- <sup>25</sup>They pull it out, but it sticks out from their backs;  
its shaft in their liver brings terror.
- <sup>26</sup>Complete darkness waits for their treasured possessions;  
fire that no one stoked consumes them;  
what's left in their tent is ruined.
- <sup>27</sup>Heaven exposes their guilt;  
earth opposes them.
- <sup>28</sup>Their household wealth will be carried off  
by rushing streams on the day of his anger.
- <sup>29</sup>This is a wicked person's lot from God,  
their heritage decreed by God.

### Grant me a hearing

- 21** Then Job answered:  
<sup>2</sup>Listen carefully to my remarks  
and let that comfort you.
- <sup>3</sup>Bear with me so I can speak, I myself;  
and after my reply you can mock.
- <sup>4</sup>Are my complaints against another human;  
why is my patience short?
- <sup>5</sup>Turn to me and be appalled;  
lay your hand over your mouth.
- <sup>6</sup>If I recall it, I'm scared;  
shaking seizes my body.

### The success of the wicked

- <sup>7</sup>Why do the wicked live,  
grow old, and even become strong?

<sup>b</sup>Or him

things of life, *receive the reward* for their work, *know contentment* or have *riches that endure* (20:17-21). Even now, *all sorts of trouble come* their way (20:22). God will punish them. They won't be able to escape his *burning anger*. It will bring *terror* to them, fire will *consume* their *treasured possessions*, God will *expose their guilt*, and their *wealth will be carried off* (20:23-28). These ill effects of wickedness will be God's doing, for God's world works this way and Job's wickedness is "coming home" (20:29).  
21:1-34 Job's response to Zophar. Job disputes Zophar's claims.

21:1-6 Job asks: *Listen carefully* to what I have to say. My impatience is because my *complaints* have been directed to God, not to other humans. His friends should be *appalled* at his suffering. When he *recall[s]* what has happened to him and what he has said about God (see Job 19:7-12), he is *scared*.

21:7-16 Job counters Zophar's claims by pointing to the success of the wicked in life and health.

21:7-12 *Their children thrive, their houses are safe, their herds multiply, and they enjoy life.* God isn't *punishing* them.

- <sup>8</sup>Their children are always with them,  
their offspring in their sight,  
<sup>9</sup>their houses safe from dread,  
God's punishing stick not upon them.  
<sup>10</sup>Their bull always breeds successfully;  
their cows give birth and never miscarry.  
<sup>11</sup>They send forth their little ones like sheep;  
their infants bounce around.  
<sup>12</sup>They raise drum and lyre,  
rejoice at the sound of a flute.  
<sup>13</sup>They spend their days contentedly,  
go down to the grave<sup>1</sup> peacefully.  
<sup>14</sup>They say to God, "Turn away from us;  
we take no pleasure in knowing your ways;  
<sup>15</sup>who is the Almighty<sup>1</sup> that we should serve him,  
and what can we gain if we meet him?"  
<sup>16</sup>Look, isn't their well-being the work of their own hands?  
A sinner's logic is beyond me.

21:8 Ps 17:14  
21:9 Job 9:34  
21:13 Job 7:9,  
Job 14:13,  
Job 21:23,  
Job 24:19,  
Job 36:11  
21:14 Job 22:17  
21:17 Job 18:5,  
Job 18:6; Ps 90:7;  
Prv 13:9  
21:18 Job 13:25;  
Ps 1:4, Ps 35:5, Ps  
83:13;  
Is 17:13  
21:22 Job 4:18;  
Is 40:13, Is 40:14;  
Ro 11:34  
21:24 Prv 3:8  
21:28 Job 8:22

### Desired vindication

- <sup>17</sup>How often does the lamp of the wicked flicker  
or disaster come upon them,  
with its fury inflicting pain on them?  
<sup>18</sup>Let them be like straw in the wind,  
like dry grass stolen by a storm.  
<sup>19</sup>God stores up his punishment for his children.  
Let him destroy them so they know.  
<sup>20</sup>Let their own eyes witness their doom.  
Let them drink from the Almighty's wrath.  
<sup>21</sup>What do they care about their household after they die,  
when their numbered days are cut off?

### A common fate

- <sup>22</sup>Will they instruct God—  
he who judges the most powerful?  
<sup>23</sup>Someone dies in wonderful health,  
completely comfortable and well,  
<sup>24</sup>their buckets full of milk,  
their bones marrow-filled and sound.  
<sup>25</sup>Another dies in bitter spirit,  
never having tasted the good things.  
<sup>26</sup>They lie together in the dust  
and worms cover them.

### Further disagreement

- <sup>27</sup>Look, I know your thoughts;  
your plans harm me.  
<sup>28</sup>You say, "Where is the official's house?  
Where is the tent, the dwelling of the wicked?"  
<sup>29</sup>Haven't you asked travelers  
or paid attention to their reports?

<sup>1</sup>Heb Sheol <sup>1</sup>Heb Shaddai or Mountain One

21:13-16 The wicked live *contentedly* and die *peacefully*. At the same time, they are vocal in saying that they don't serve God (21:15). Isn't *their well-being the work of their own hands* rather than God's? Their *logic* makes no sense to Job (21:16).

21:17-21 The *wicked* don't often suffer *pain* (21:17; cf. Job 18:5-21). Let them be *carried away by the wind!* May God *destroy* them with the *punishment* and *wrath* he *stores up!* They don't *care* what happens to them or their families.

21:22-26 Will the friends *instruct* God in matters of judgment? Who can make any sense of the way that human beings experience life and death? There's no direct relationship between the way they live and the way they die. Death and *worms* are the future of everyone.

21:27-34 Job knows the friends' *plans* will *harm* him (21:27). They claim that *wicked* rulers get what they *deserve*, but in truth, the wicked are *spared* from *disaster* and *rescued* from the *fury* of others. Their *behavior* isn't

22:2 Job 35:7;  
Lk 17:10  
22:3 Job 35:7  
22:17  
Job 21:14-15;  
Ps 4:6

- <sup>30</sup> On the day of disaster the wicked are spared;  
on the day of fury they are rescued.
- <sup>31</sup> Who can criticize their behavior to their faces;  
they act, and who can avenge them?
- <sup>32</sup> They are carried to their graves;  
someone keeps guard over their tombs.
- <sup>33</sup> The soil near the desert streambed is sweet to them;  
everyone marches after them—  
those before them, beyond counting.
- <sup>34</sup> How empty is your comfort to me;  
only deceit remains in your responses.

### Job's sins

- 22** Then Eliphaz from Teman answered:  
<sup>2</sup> Can a human being be useful to God?  
Can an intelligent person bring profit?
- <sup>3</sup> Does the Almighty delight in your innocence?  
Does he gain when you perfect your ways?
- <sup>4</sup> Does he rebuke you for your piety,  
bring you in for judgment?
- <sup>5</sup> Isn't your wickedness massive,  
your iniquity endless?
- <sup>6</sup> You have taken payments from your family for no reason;  
stripped the naked, leaving no clothes;  
<sup>7</sup> denied water to the thirsty,  
withheld bread from the starving.
- <sup>8</sup> (The powerful own land;  
the favored live in it.)
- <sup>9</sup> You have sent widows away empty;  
crushed orphans' resources.
- <sup>10</sup> For this reason, snares surround you;  
sudden dread brings panic to you  
<sup>11</sup> or a darkness that you can't see;  
rushing water will cover you.

### God's activity

- <sup>12</sup> Isn't God in the heights of heaven;  
see how high the topmost stars are?
- <sup>13</sup> You say: "What does God know?  
Can he judge through thick clouds?"
- <sup>14</sup> Clouds conceal him so he can't see  
while he walks on heaven's rim."
- <sup>15</sup> Will you keep the ancient way traveled by sinful persons,  
<sup>16</sup> who were snatched prematurely when a river flooded their foundations,  
<sup>17</sup> who say to God, "Turn away from us;  
what can the Almighty do to us?"
- <sup>18</sup> Yet he filled their houses with good things;  
a sinner's logic is beyond me.

*criticiz[ed]* nor are their *act[s]* condemned. Even their *graves* are *guard[ed]* closely, and the *soil* in which they are buried is *sweet*, and many follow in their train. Everything the friends say is without *comfort* to Job and full of *deceit*. **22:1-30** Eliphaz's third response. Eliphaz begins the third cycle of the dialogue, sharpening his critique of Job. **22:1-11** Eliphaz begins with a series of rhetorical questions. *Can a human being be useful to God? Does God gain anything from your behavior? Is God moved one way or another by your piety? Of course not. God can't be affected by what people do (22:2-4). Your wickedness is massive, Job (22:5). You take payments from your family*

and mistreat the less fortunate: the *naked, thirsty, starving, widows, and orphans* (22:6-7, 9). But you favor the *powerful* (22:8). And you will pay for it (22:10-11).

**22:12-20** Eliphaz makes distinctions between his *high, all-seeing God* and Job's God, who is removed from the world (22:12). Job is like the *sinful* who question: *what can the Almighty do to us?* (22:17). At the same time, the *sinners* believe God is the one responsible for the *good things* they do have (22:18). What kind of *logic* is that (see Job 21:16)? The *righteous* laugh at this view and *mock them*, knowing that their *enemies* will be destroyed (22:19-20).

- <sup>19</sup>The righteous see and rejoice;  
the innocent mock them:  
<sup>20</sup>our enemies are certainly cut off;  
fire will devour what's left of them.

### Turn to God

- <sup>21</sup>Get along well with God and be at peace;  
from this something good will come to you.  
<sup>22</sup>Receive instruction from his mouth;  
put his words in your mind.  
<sup>23</sup>If you return to the Almighty,<sup>a</sup> you will be restored;  
if you keep wrongdoing out of your tent.  
<sup>24</sup>Lay your prized possession in the dust,  
your gold from Ophir on a rock in a desert streambed.  
<sup>25</sup>The Almighty will be your prized possession,  
silver piled up for you.  
<sup>26</sup>Then you will take pleasure in the Almighty;  
lift up your face to God.  
<sup>27</sup>You will pray to him, and he will hear you;  
you will fulfill your solemn promises.  
<sup>28</sup>If you decree something, it will stand;  
light will shine on your ways.  
<sup>29</sup>When they're humbled, you will say: "Cheer up;  
God will rescue the lowly.  
<sup>30</sup>He will deliver the guilty;  
they will be saved by your pure hands."

### Grant me a trial

- 23** Job answered:  
<sup>2</sup>Today my complaint is again bitter;<sup>1</sup>  
my strength is weighed down because of my groaning.  
<sup>3</sup>Oh, that I could know how to find him—  
come to his dwelling place;  
<sup>4</sup>I would lay out my case before him,  
fill my mouth with arguments,  
<sup>5</sup>know the words with which he would answer,  
understand what he would say to me.  
<sup>6</sup>Would he contend with me through brute force?  
No, he would surely listen to me.  
<sup>7</sup>There those who do the right thing can argue with him;  
I could escape from my judge forever.

### God's hiddenness

- <sup>8</sup>Look, I go east; he's not there,  
west, and don't discover him;  
<sup>9</sup>north in his activity, and I don't grasp him;  
he turns south, and I don't see.  
<sup>10</sup>Surely he knows my way;  
when he tests me, I will emerge as gold.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Shaddai* or *Mountain One*; also in 22:25 and 24:1 <sup>1</sup>Vulg, Syr, Tg; MT *my complaint is rebellious*.

22:21-30 Eliphaz tells Job: *Get along well with God . . . Receive instruction, and turn away from your sin* (Job couldn't admit that sin is his problem). Then *you will be restored* (22:23). Give up your valuables and make God *your prized possession* (22:25). Then your relationship with God will be filled with *pleasure*. *You will pray to God and God will hear you*. Your word will be good and *light will shine on your ways* (2:28). If the righteous experience trouble, you will give them a gracious word: God will come to *deliver* them because of who you are (22:30).

23:1-17 Job's response to Eliphaz. Job hopes for a hearing with God.

23:1-7 Job's reply is filled with *complaint*: I wish that I could *find* God. I would *lay out my case* for my innocence in God's presence (23:1-4) and *understand* God's response to me. God would *surely listen* to me and would not reply with sheer force (23:6). *those who do the right thing can argue with God*. If I could do that, I would be able to prove my innocence.

23:8-12 In vain Job has looked for God in every direction

23:11 Ps 17:5,

Ps 44:18,

Ps 125:5

23:12 Job 22:22;

Ps 119:11,

Ps 119:103;

Jer 15:16; Mt 4:4

24:1 Is 2:12;

Ac 1:7

**11** My feet have stayed right in his tracks.

I have kept his way and not left it,

**12** kept the commandments from his lips and not departed,  
valued the words from his mouth more than my food.

### Dread

**13** He is of one mind; who can reverse it?  
What he desires, he does.

**14** He carries out what is decreed for me  
and can do many similar things with me.

**15** Therefore, I am scared by his presence;  
I think and become afraid of him.

**16** God has weakened my mind;  
the Almighty has frightened me.

**17** Still I'm not annihilated by darkness;  
he has hidden deep darkness from me.

### Absence of justice

**24** Why doesn't the Almighty establish times for punishment?<sup>m</sup>  
Why can't those who know him see his days?

**2** People move boundary stones,  
herd flocks they've stolen,

**3** drive off an orphan's donkey,  
take a widow's ox as collateral,

**4** thrust the poor out of the way,  
make the land's needy hide together.

**5** They are like the wild donkeys in the desert;  
they go forth at dawn searching for prey;  
the wasteland is food for their young.

**6** They gather their food in the field,  
glean in unproductive vineyards,

**7** spend the night naked, unclothed,  
in the cold without a cover,

**8** wet from mountain rains,  
with no refuge, huddled against a rock.

**9** The orphan is stolen from the breast;  
the infant<sup>n</sup> of the poor is taken as collateral.

**10** The poor go around naked, without clothes,  
carry bundles of grain while hungry,

**11** crush olives between millstones,<sup>o</sup>  
tread winepresses, but remain thirsty.

**12** From the city, the dying cry out;  
the throat of the mortally wounded screams, but God assigns no blame.

<sup>m</sup>Heb lacks for punishment. <sup>n</sup>Reading Heb *we'ul* (infant) for *we'al* (against) <sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain

to present his case. If God tests me, he would find that I have *not departed from his way* (see Ps 17:3-5). I have *valued God's word . . . more than my life*.

23:13-17 Job thinks that whatever God wills, God gets done. Hence, Job is *scared* by what God might do. Yet *darkness* hasn't overcome him. Job is still alive.

24:1-25 The identity of the speaker of this section is unclear. It's difficult to know its relationship to Job's speech in Job 21:7-13, because the speaker seems to agree with the friends about the fate of the wicked (24:18-25; see Job 27:13-23; cf. Zophar in Job 20).

24:1-12 The "Why?" question returns. The world is out of order. God doesn't assign the wicked their *times for*

*punishment* and the righteous never see such times. continues to be everywhere in the world. Property stolen by moving *boundary stones* (see Deut 19:14); animals are taken by force from the *needy*, who then have to huddle together in order to survive (24:2-4). Difficulties of the needy are described: like *wild anir* they have to forage for *food for their young* in *wasteland* and *unproductive vineyards* (see Deut 24:19-22); *spend night . . . in the cold* with little clothing; and huddle in rain among the rocks. Their children are enslaved (Deut 24:7), used as *collateral* for payment of debts. *poor* are *hungry* and *thirsty*, though they work with fit and drink. They *cry out*, but God pays no attention.



**Sinners' conduct**

- <sup>13</sup>They rebel against light,  
don't acknowledge its direction,  
don't dwell in its paths.
- <sup>14</sup>The murderer rises at twilight,  
kills the poor and needy;  
at night, they are like a thief.
- <sup>15</sup>The adulterer's eye watches for twilight,  
thinking, No eye can see me,  
and puts a mask over his face.
- <sup>16</sup>In the dark they break into houses;  
they shut themselves in by day;  
they don't know the light.
- <sup>17</sup>Deep darkness is morning to them  
because they recognize the horror of darkness.
- <sup>18</sup>They are scum on the water's surface;  
their portion of the land is cursed;  
no one walks down a path in the vineyards.
- <sup>19</sup>Drought and heat steal melted snow,  
just as the underworld<sup>p</sup> steals sinners.
- <sup>20</sup>The womb forgets them;  
the worm consumes them;  
they aren't remembered,  
and so wickedness is shattered like a tree.
- <sup>21</sup>They prey on the barren, the childless,  
do nothing good for the widow.
- <sup>22</sup>They drag away the strong by force;  
they may get up but without guarantee of survival.
- <sup>23</sup>They make themselves secure;  
they are at ease.  
His<sup>q</sup> eyes are on their ways.
- <sup>24</sup>They are exalted for a short time, but no longer.  
They are humbled then gathered in like everyone else;  
cut off like heads of grain.
- <sup>25</sup>If this isn't so, who can prove me a liar  
and make my words disappear?

**Inferior humans**

- 25** Bildad from Shuah replied:  
<sup>2</sup>Supreme power and awe belong to God;  
he establishes peace on his heights.  
<sup>3</sup>Can his troops be counted?  
On whom does his light not rise?

<sup>p</sup>Heb *Sheol* <sup>q</sup>Or *God's*

24:13-25 Rather than *light*, the wicked choose *darkness*, a theme associated with sins of murder, burglary, and adultery (24:13-17). They are at home in the darkness. These verses seem to agree with the ideas of Job's friends: The wicked will suffer the ill effects of their sins (see Job's view in Job 21:7-13)—at least over time. They are *scum*, their *land is cursed*, and many customers won't come to their *vineyards*. They will be carried off to the *underworld* as quickly as *snow* by the *heat*. Their mothers will forget them, the *grave consumes* them, and they will soon be forgotten, *shattered like a tree* (24:18-20). Job returns to themes of 24:1-12: the wicked continue to *prey* on the less fortunate. Though they continue to exercise such power, there is no *guarantee of survival*. They may be *at ease*, but

God's eyes keep track of them. They may be *exalted*, but in time—*like everyone else*—they will be harvested like *grain*. *prove to me that this isn't so!*

25:1-6 Bildad's third response. The brevity of this response, and the absence of a concluding speech from Zophar, may testify that text has been damaged and parts have been lost. At the same time, it could mean that the friends have run out of arguments.

25:1-3 Bildad is awed by God's *power* and his *peacemaking*, the numbers of his divine messengers, and the range of *his light* that illumines the world and everything in it (see Job 26:14). A person can't be righteous (innocent) before such a God (Job 25:4-6). The heavenly bodies aren't perfect, so how much less a human being, who is but a

25:4 Job 4:17,  
Job 9:2, Job 14:4,  
Job 15:14;  
Ps 143:2

25:5 Job 15:15  
25:6 Ps 22:6;  
Is 41:14

26:5 Ps 88:10  
26:7 Job 9:8

26:8 Job 36:27,  
Job 37:11,  
Prv 30:4

26:10 Job 38:8;  
Ps 33:7;  
Prv 8:27,  
Prv 8:29;  
Jer 5:22

26:14 Job 4:12

27:2 Ru 1:20;  
Job 34:5

- <sup>4</sup>How can a person be innocent before God;  
one born of a woman be pure?  
<sup>5</sup>If even the moon is not bright  
and the stars not pure in his eyes,  
<sup>6</sup>how much less a human, a worm,  
a person's child, a grub.

### Sarcasm

- 26**<sup>1</sup>Then Job said:  
<sup>2</sup>How well you have helped the weak,  
saved those with frail arms,  
<sup>3</sup>advised one lacking wisdom,  
informed many with insight!  
<sup>4</sup>With whom have you spoken;<sup>\*</sup>  
whose breath was expelled from you?

### Truth about God

- <sup>5</sup>The dead writhe,  
the inhabitants beneath the waters as well.  
<sup>6</sup>The grave<sup>a</sup> is naked before God;  
the underworld<sup>c</sup> lacks covering.  
<sup>7</sup>He stretched the North<sup>a</sup> over chaos,  
hung earth over nothing;  
<sup>8</sup>wrapped up water in his clouds,  
yet they didn't burst out below;  
<sup>9</sup>hid the face of the full moon,<sup>v</sup>  
spreading his cloud over it;  
<sup>10</sup>traced a circle on the water's surface,  
at the limit of light and darkness.  
<sup>11</sup>Heaven's pillars shook,  
terrified by his blast.  
<sup>12</sup>By his power he stilled the Sea;  
split Rahab with his cleverness.  
<sup>13</sup>Due to his wind, heaven became clear;  
his hand split the fleeing serpent.  
<sup>14</sup>Look, these are only the outer fringe of his ways;  
we hear only a whispered word about him.  
Who can understand his thunderous power?

### Job rejects Bildad's argument

- 27**<sup>1</sup>Then Job took up his topic again:  
<sup>2</sup>As God lives, who rejected my legal claim,  
the Almighty, who made me bitter,

<sup>\*</sup>Or *told words* <sup>a</sup>Heb *Sheol* <sup>b</sup>Heb *Abaddon* <sup>c</sup>Heb *Zaphon* <sup>v</sup>Or *throne*; Heb uncertain

worm and a grub (maggot), bound for death and decay? This theme is articulated both by Job's friends (Job 4:17; 15:14-16) and Job himself (Job 9:2).

**26:1-14** This text may continue Bildad's speech (or it may be Zophar's missing speech; see note on Job 25:1-6). Or Job may be interrupting Bildad. The outline is similar to Genesis 1 and Psalm 104.

**26:1-4** Some scholars attach these verses to Job 27. Job responds mockingly. How have the friends *helped the weak* or given *insight* to the ignorant? Have they even *spoken* to others or voiced their concerns (*breath*)?

**26:5-14** These words are similar to Job's in Job 9:1-13. God is present and active even among *The dead... beneath the waters*, in *The grave* (Sheol) or *underworld* (Abaddon). God's work is now rehearsed in difficult images. The *North* (Zaphon, the home of the gods, the sky) is *stretched* out (Isa 42:5; 45:12) *over chaos* (26:7)—not

literally *nothing*, but without form (see Gen 1:2). God then created the *clouds*, which hold *water* without *burst[ing]* open and hide the *moon* (see translation note). God also created the distant horizon (a *circle* or boundary when observed across the sea). In the creation of the world, God's powerful word *stilled the Sea* (chaos, also called *Rahab* and *fleeing serpent*; see Job 3:8; Isa 27:1) and the *pillars* (mountains) that hold up the sky heaved up from the sea, as if *terrified* by that creative word (see Ps 104:6-9). And God's *wind* (see Gen 1:2) cleared the skies (26:11-13). This description of God's creative work is only a *whispered word* regarding God's much more complete and powerful ways (26:14).

**27:1-23** Job continues his defense. All or part of this speech may be Zophar's missing speech. Job's friends, however, may be especially in mind.

**27:1-6** The phrase, *As God lives* (27:2), introduces a solemn

27:3 Gn 2:7;  
 Job 33:4;  
 Ac 17:25  
 27:5 Job 2:9  
 27:6 Job 2:3;  
 Ac 23:1,  
 Ac 24:16

- <sup>3</sup>as long as breath is in me  
 and God's breath is in my nostrils—  
<sup>4</sup>my lips will utter no wickedness;  
 my tongue will mumble no deceit.  
<sup>5</sup>I will not agree that you are right.  
 Until my dying day, I won't give up my integrity.  
<sup>6</sup>I will insist on my innocence, never surrendering it;  
 my conscience will never blame me for what I have done.<sup>w</sup>

### **Job curses his enemies**

- <sup>7</sup>Let my enemy be like the wicked,  
 my opposition like the vicious.  
<sup>8</sup>For what hope has the godless when God cuts them off,  
 when he takes them away.  
<sup>9</sup>Will God hear their cries  
 when distress comes to them;  
<sup>10</sup>will they delight in the Almighty,  
 call God at any time?

### **Job's view of his enemies' fate**

- <sup>11</sup>I will teach you God's power,  
 not hide what pertains to the Almighty.  
<sup>12</sup>Look, those of you who recognize this—  
 why then this empty talk?  
<sup>13</sup>This is the wicked's portion with God,  
 the inheritance that the ruthless receive from the Almighty.  
<sup>14</sup>If their children increase, they belong to the sword;  
 their offspring won't have enough bread.  
<sup>15</sup>Their survivors will be buried with the dead;  
 their widows won't weep.  
<sup>16</sup>If they store up silver like dust,  
 amass clothing like clay,  
<sup>17</sup>they may amass, but the righteous will wear it;  
 the innocent will divide the silver.  
<sup>18</sup>They built their houses like nests,  
 like a hut made by a watchman.  
<sup>19</sup>They lie down rich, but no longer;  
 open their eyes, but it's missing.  
<sup>20</sup>Terrors overtake them like waters;  
 a tempest snatches them by night;  
<sup>21</sup>an east wind lifts them, and they are gone,  
 removes them from their places,  
<sup>22</sup>throws itself on them without mercy;  
 they flee desperately from its force.  
<sup>23</sup>It claps its hands over them,  
 hisses at them from their place.

<sup>w</sup>Or for my days

pledge to God, whom Job then blames. God is responsible for *reject[ing]* Job's *claim* that he is innocent. I will not *agree* that God is *right* about me (27:5). I will never speak words of *wickedness* or *deceit* (27:4). I am a person of *integrity* and have a clear *conscience* (see Job 29:1-25).

27:7-10 Job curses his *enemy* (27:7), probably the friend who has just spoken (but each of the friends is in mind). They have no *hope* (27:8) in the wake of God's judgment. God won't *hear their cries of distress* (27:9-10). Will they even *call* upon God in such a time?

27:11-23 Job will *teach* his friends about God's power in

view of all of their *empty talk* (27:11-12). He then describes the future that these *wicked* will receive from God. Many of *their children* will die young and not have *enough* to eat. Those who survive will only live to be *buried with the dead* and their *widows won't weep* for them (27:14-15). Any fortune they save (money and clothing) will be given to the *righteous*. The many *houses* they build are only flimsy *hut[s]*. They go to sleep *rich*, but when they awake, their treasures will be *missing* (27:16-19). They will experience the *Terrors* associated with storms and their displacing effects, which will afflict *them without mercy*.

28:1 Mal 3:3

28:8 Job 41:34

28:15

Pv 3:13-14,

Pv 8:10,

Pv 8:19,

Pv 16:16

28:19 Ex 28:17;

Pv 8:19;

Eze 28:13;

Rev 21:20

28:22 Job 26:6

*Expertise in mining*

**28** There is a sure source of silver,  
a place where gold is refined.

<sup>2</sup>Iron is taken from the earth;  
rock is smelted into copper.

<sup>3</sup>Humans<sup>a</sup> put an end to darkness,  
dig for ore to the farthest depths,  
into stone in utter darkness,

<sup>4</sup>open a shaft away from any inhabitant,  
places forgotten by those on foot,  
apart from any human they hang and sway.

<sup>5</sup>Earth—from it comes food—  
is turned over below ground as by fire.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Its rocks are the source for lapis lazuli;  
there is gold dust in it.

<sup>7</sup>A path—  
no bird of prey knows it;  
a hawk's eye hasn't seen it;

<sup>8</sup>proud beasts haven't trodden on it;  
a lion hasn't crossed over it.

<sup>9</sup>Humans thrust their hands into flint,  
pull up mountains from their roots,

<sup>10</sup>cut channels into rocks;  
their eyes see everything precious.

<sup>11</sup>They dam up the sources of rivers;  
hidden things come to light.

*Wisdom's value*

<sup>12</sup>But wisdom, where can it be found;  
where is the place of understanding?

<sup>13</sup>Humankind doesn't know its value;  
it isn't found in the land of the living.

<sup>14</sup>The Deep<sup>a</sup> says, "It's not with me";  
the Sea<sup>a</sup> says, "Not alongside me!"

<sup>15</sup>It can't be bought with gold;  
its price can't be measured in silver,

<sup>16</sup>can't be weighed against gold from Ophir,  
with precious onyx or lapis lazuli.

<sup>17</sup>Neither gold nor glass can compare with it;  
she can't be acquired with gold jewelry.

<sup>18</sup>Coral and jasper shouldn't be mentioned;  
the price of wisdom is more than rubies.

<sup>19</sup>Cushite topaz won't compare with her;  
she can't be set alongside pure gold.

<sup>20</sup>But wisdom, where does she come from?  
Where is the place of understanding?

<sup>21</sup>She's hidden from the eyes of all the living,  
concealed from birds of the sky.

<sup>22</sup>Destruction<sup>b</sup> and Death have said,  
"We've heard a report of her."

<sup>a</sup>Or *they* <sup>7</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>8</sup>Heb *Tehom*, a reference to a divine being in the grave or underworld <sup>a</sup>Heb *Yam*, a sea god <sup>b</sup>Heb *Abaddon*

28:1-28 Reflections on wisdom. How this chapter fits in the book is uncertain. See sidebar, "Wisdom."

28:1-11 Precious stones and metals, such as *silver, gold, iron, copper*, and *lapis lazuli*, though deeply hidden in the earth, are accessible to human beings (28:1-6). Such treasures aren't available to animals and birds (28:7-8), but

through the excavating work of *Humans* they can *come to light* (28:9-11).

28:12-28 But such human work Isn't able to reveal wisdom. *Where* then can *wisdom* . . . be found (see 28:20)? Unlike precious metals, humans can't discover it or purchase it. Wisdom doesn't have a humanly identifiable "place" in

- <sup>23</sup> God understands her way;  
he knows her place;  
<sup>24</sup> for he looks to the ends of the earth  
and surveys everything beneath  
the heavens.  
<sup>25</sup> In order to weigh the wind,  
to prepare a measure for waters,  
<sup>26</sup> when he made a decree for the rain,  
a path for thunderbolts,  
<sup>27</sup> then he observed it, spoke of it,  
established it, searched it out,  
<sup>28</sup> and said to humankind: "Look,  
the fear of the LORD is wisdom;  
turning from evil is understanding."

### Job's previous blessing

- 29** Job took up his subject again:  
<sup>2</sup> Oh, that life was like it used to be,  
like days when God watched over me;  
<sup>3</sup> when his lamp shone on my head,  
I walked by his light in the dark;  
<sup>4</sup> when I was in my prime;  
when God's counsel was in my tent;  
<sup>5</sup> when the Almighty was with me,  
my children around me;  
<sup>6</sup> when my steps were washed with cream  
and a rock poured out pools of oil for me.

### Previous honor

- <sup>7</sup> When I went out to the city gate,  
took my seat in the square,  
<sup>8</sup> the young saw me and drew back;  
the old rose and stood;  
<sup>9</sup> princes restrained speech,  
put their hand on their mouth;  
<sup>10</sup> the voices of officials were hushed,  
their tongue stuck to their palate.

### Job's implementation of justice

- <sup>11</sup> Indeed, the ear that heard blessed me;  
the eye that looked commended me,  
<sup>12</sup> because I rescued the weak who cried out,  
the orphans who lacked help.  
<sup>13</sup> The blessing of the perishing reached me;  
I made the widow's heart sing;  
<sup>14</sup> I put on justice, and it clothed me,  
righteousness as my coat and turban;

the world. Wisdom is *hidden* from every eye, both human and nonhuman, dead in Sheol (Abaddon, see Job 26:6) or alive. But God *understands and knows*, for the knowledge of everything in the world (*wind, waters, weather*) is available to the one who has created them (28:23-27). *wisdom and understanding* are made available to humans by God, but only through *the fear of the Lord* (the reference is to awe, not terror) and *turning from evil*.

29:1-31:40 Job's final defense. Job brings the dialogue to a climax by building a case for his own innocence in the face of God's irresponsible work as creator. Job's response highlights the missing link between the sound and worthy ways in which he has lived and how God has treated him. Job seeks to bring God into court to answer the

*Wisdom* Job 28 may be a separate look at the conversation, focusing on the depth and breadth of wisdom. It could also continue Job's speech in chapter 27, challenging the friends' conviction that they are the wise ones in this conversation (though Job's anger isn't evident) and claiming that he's the one who has wisdom. A key verse is Job 28:28: "the fear of the LORD is wisdom; turning from evil is understanding." The opening verses of the book identify Job in these terms (Job 1:1, 8; see Prov 9:10), and this provides a key point in Job's defense that he presents before God (Job 29-31), saying in essence "I have such wisdom!" A key question is raised in Job 28:12: "But wisdom, where can it be found"? Only God knows the way and place of wisdom (Job 28:23). Yet wisdom is available to human beings, that is, to those who fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Job is such a person.

28:28 Ps 111:10;  
Prov 1:7, Prov 3:7,  
Prov 9:10,  
Ecc 12:13  
29:2 Jer 31:28  
29:12 Ps 72:12;  
Prov 21:13  
29:13 Job 22:9  
29:14 Job 19:9;  
Ps 132:9;  
Is 59:17, Is 61:10;  
Eph 6:14

charges regarding the poor divine design and ways of taking care of the created order (see Job 31:35). Job contrasts his life prior to suffering (Job 29) with his present difficulties (Job 30) and ends with a series of curses aimed internally toward himself, with which he should be visited if he has spoken wrongly (Job 31).

29:1-6 Job wishes *that life was like it used to be . . . when I was in my prime*. God was close, *my children around*, and life was easy. God isn't mentioned in the balance of the chapter.

29:7-10 Job had a key role in city life and was respected by all levels of society (for the *city gate*, see Ruth 4:1-12).

29:11-17 Job's respect from others is related to his life of *justice*, with special leadership offered by care for the less fortunate and against their enemies.

29:15 Nm 10:31;  
Job 29:16  
29:16 Job 29:15;  
Prv 29:7  
29:17 Ps 3:7  
29:18 Ps 30:6  
29:22 Dt 32:2  
29:23 Zec 10:1  
30:1 Job 30:9  
30:3 Job 24:5;  
Job 38:27;  
Zep 1:15  
30:4 1Ki 19:4

- <sup>15</sup> I was eyes to the blind,  
feet to the lame.  
<sup>16</sup> I was a father to the needy;  
the case I didn't know, I examined.  
<sup>17</sup> I shattered the fangs of the wicked,  
rescued prey from their teeth.

#### **Job's expected blessing**

- <sup>18</sup> I thought, I'll die in my nest,  
multiply days like sand,<sup>c</sup>  
<sup>19</sup> my roots opening to water,  
dew lingering on my branches,  
<sup>20</sup> my honor newly with me,  
my bow ever successful in my hand.

#### **Previous honor**

- <sup>21</sup> People listened to me and waited,  
were silent for my advice.  
<sup>22</sup> After my speech, they didn't respond.  
My words fell gently on them;  
<sup>23</sup> they waited for me as for rain,  
opened their mouth as for spring rain.  
<sup>24</sup> I smiled<sup>d</sup> on them; they couldn't believe it.  
They never showed me disfavor.  
<sup>25</sup> I decided their path, sat as chief.  
I lived like a king with his troops,  
like one who comforts mourners.

#### **Mockers**

- 30** But now those younger than I mock me,  
whose fathers I refused to put beside my sheepdogs.  
<sup>2</sup> Their strength, what's it to me,  
their energy having perished?  
<sup>3</sup> Stiff from want and hunger,  
those who gnaw dry ground,  
yesterday's desolate waste,  
<sup>4</sup> who pluck off the leaves on a bush,  
the root of the broom—  
a shrub is their food.  
<sup>5</sup> People banish them from society,  
shout at them as if to a thief;  
<sup>6</sup> so they live in scary ravines,  
holes in the ground and rocks.  
<sup>7</sup> Among shrubs, they make sounds like donkeys;  
they are huddled together under a bush,  
<sup>8</sup> children of fools and the nameless, whipped out of the land.

#### **Specific mocking behavior**

- <sup>9</sup> And now I'm their song;  
I'm their cliché!  
<sup>10</sup> They detest me, keep their distance,  
don't withhold spit from my face.

<sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Or laughed at

29:18-20 Job thought he would have a very positive future, filled with blessings and honor.

29:21-25 At that time, people *listened* carefully to Job as their leader, and he was to them like a *spring rain*, never regarded with *disfavor*.

30:1-8 *But now*: Job voices a deep lament regarding his

present distress. I am *mock[ed]* by the lowliest of peoples, the outcasts of society, whose *fathers* couldn't be compared well with *sheepdogs*. Their *strength* is gone; they are desperate for *food*. They are *banish[ed]* from their communities, living like animals.

30:9-15 Yet these lowly people mock me, *detest* me,

- <sup>11</sup> Because he loosened my bowstring and afflicted me,  
they throw off restraint in my presence.
- <sup>12</sup> On the right, upstarts\* rise and target my feet,  
build their siege ramps against me,
- <sup>13</sup> destroy my road, profit from my fall, with no help.
- <sup>14</sup> They advance as if through a destroyed wall;<sup>f</sup>  
they roll along beneath the ruin.
- <sup>15</sup> Terrors crash upon me;  
they sweep away my honor like wind;  
my safety disappears like a cloud.

30:19 Gn 18:27;  
Job 2:8, Job 42:6;  
Ps 69:2

30:25  
Ps 35:13-14;  
Ro 12:15

30:29 Ps 44:19;  
Is 13:21, Is 34:13;  
Jer 9:11; Mi 1:8

31:1 Prv 4:25;  
Mt 5:20

### Accusation against God

- <sup>16</sup> Now my life is poured out on me;  
days of misery have seized me.
- <sup>17</sup> At night he bores my bones;  
my gnawing pain won't rest.
- <sup>18</sup> With great force he grasps<sup>g</sup> my clothing;<sup>h</sup>  
it binds me like the neck of my shirt.
- <sup>19</sup> He hurls me into mud;  
I'm a cliché, like dust and ashes.
- <sup>20</sup> I cry to you, and you don't answer;  
I stand up, but you just look at me.
- <sup>21</sup> You are cruel to me,  
attack me with the strength of your hand.
- <sup>22</sup> You lift me to the wind and make me ride;  
you melt me in its roar.
- <sup>23</sup> I know you will return me to death,  
the house appointed for all the living.

### Job's agony

- <sup>24</sup> Surely he won't strike someone in ruins  
if in distress he cries out to him,
- <sup>25</sup> if I didn't weep for those who have a difficult day  
or my soul grieve for the needy;
- <sup>26</sup> for I awaited good, but evil came;  
I expected light, but gloom arrived.
- <sup>27</sup> My insides, churning, are never quiet;  
days of affliction confront me.
- <sup>28</sup> I walk in the dark, lacking sunshine;  
I rise in the assembly and cry out.
- <sup>29</sup> I have become a brother to jackals,  
a companion to young ostriches.
- <sup>30</sup> My skin is charred;  
my bones are scorched by the heat.
- <sup>31</sup> My lyre is for mourning,  
my flute, a weeping sound.

### Lust

**31** I've made a covenant with my eyes;  
how could I look at a virgin?

\*Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Or a wide opening <sup>g</sup>LXX <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain

humiliate me (*spit in my face*). God has taken away my power and so they *target* me as if I were a city under *siege*—with no help available. My honor is swept away, *Terrors* reign, and my safety disappears.

30:16-23 *days of misery!* And *gnawing pain!* God throws me in the *mud* (see Job 9:31). I've become *like dust and ashes* (see Job 2:8)! I cry to God for justice, but there is no answer; God just *look[s] at me*. Indeed, God is *cruel to me, attack[ing]* me, tossing me about in the *wind*. *death* is near!

30:24-31 One would think that God would not *strike* one in *distress*. I would *weep* for those who are *needy!* But though I waited for *good* or *light*, *gloom* or *evil* came. My *insides* are *churning* and I'm distressed. I *walk in the dark*, but my cries aren't heard. I'm like an animal among animals, especially those that live in desolate places. My body wastes away and I weep like *my flute*.

31:1-40 By stating at least nine solemn pledges, Job recites a series of sins he has *not* committed. The pledges

31:5 Job 15:31;  
Ps 12:2  
31:6 Job 6:2;  
Is 40:12;  
Dn 5:27  
31:7-8 Dt 24:14  
31:14 Job 31:13  
31:15 Job 10:3;  
Job 34:19;  
Prv 14:31;  
Mal 2:2;  
Mal 2:10

- <sup>2</sup>What is God's portion for me<sup>1</sup> from above,  
the Almighty's inheritance from on high?  
<sup>3</sup>Isn't it disaster for the wicked,  
destruction for workers of iniquity?  
<sup>4</sup>Doesn't he see my ways,  
count all my steps?

### Deceit

- <sup>5</sup>If I have walked with frauds  
or my feet have hurried to deceit,  
<sup>6</sup>let him weigh me on accurate scales;  
let God know my integrity.  
<sup>7</sup>If my step has turned from the way,  
if my heart has followed my eyes  
or a blemish has clung to my hands,  
<sup>8</sup>then let me sow and another reap;  
let my offspring be uprooted.

### Adultery

- <sup>9</sup>If my heart has been drawn to a woman  
and I have lurked at my neighbor's door,  
<sup>10</sup>then may my wife grind for another  
and others kneel over her;  
<sup>11</sup>for that's a crime;  
it's a punishable offense;  
<sup>12</sup>indeed, it's a fire that consumes to the underworld,<sup>1</sup>  
uprooting all my harvest.

### Slaves

- <sup>13</sup>If I've rejected the just cause of my male or female servant  
when they contended with me,  
<sup>14</sup>what could I do when God rises;  
when he requires an account, what could I answer?  
<sup>15</sup>Didn't the one who made me in the belly make them;  
didn't the same one fashion us in the womb?

### The defenseless

- <sup>16</sup>If I have denied what the poor wanted,  
made a widow's eyes tired,  
<sup>17</sup>eaten my morsel alone,  
and not shared any with an orphan  
(<sup>18</sup>for from my youth I raised the orphan as a father,  
and from my mother's womb I led the widow),<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>19</sup>if I ever saw someone dying without clothes, the needy naked;  
<sup>20</sup>if they haven't blessed me fervently,<sup>1</sup>  
or if they weren't warmed by the wool from my sheep;  
<sup>21</sup>if I have lifted my hand against the orphans,  
when I saw that I had help in the city gate—

<sup>1</sup>Heb lacks for me. <sup>2</sup>Heb *Abaddon*. <sup>3</sup>Heb lacks orphan . . . widow. <sup>4</sup>Or his loins

usually begin with "if" (e.g., 31:5, 9), with consequences then often specified. If he has committed any of these sins, he deserves his suffering. The pledges range from "lust" (31:1-4) to "abuse of the land" (31:38-40). Job 31:1-4 may state the theme with an illustration. Making a *covenant* (a pledge) with *my eyes* is followed by a statement of the effects (*portion*) of any sin if the covenant is violated (31:2-3). Job speaks generally about his situation: If God see[s] my ways and count[s] all my steps, he should know I'm innocent (31:4)! Note Job's hope for a mediator and a written indictment (31:35).

31:5-8 If God were to weigh me . . . my integrity in these matters would become evident. If my heart has followed my eyes, then let me pay the penalty. A new solemn pledge may occur with the "if" in 31:7.

31:9-12 If my heart has been drawn to a woman other than my wife, then let her (and me) suffer for it. The effects of this crime are likened to an all-consuming fire.

31:13-15 If I have mistreated my servant, I couldn't defend myself when God requires an account. After all, the servant was fashion[ed] by God as I was.

31:16-23 If I have mistreated the poor and needy (and my



- <sup>22</sup> may my arm fall from my shoulder,  
my forearm be broken at the elbow—  
<sup>23</sup> for God's calamity is terror to me;  
I couldn't endure his splendor.

#### False worship

- <sup>24</sup> If I've made gold my trust,  
said to fine gold: "My security!"  
<sup>25</sup> if I've rejoiced because my wealth was great,  
when my hand found plenty;  
<sup>26</sup> if I've looked at the sun when it shone,  
the moon, splendid as it moved;  
<sup>27</sup> and my mind has been secretly enticed,  
and threw a kiss with my hand,  
<sup>28</sup> that also is a punishable offense,  
because I would then be disloyal to God above.

#### Other's misfortune

- <sup>29</sup> If I have rejoiced over my foes' ruin  
or was excited when evil found them,  
<sup>30</sup> I didn't let my mouth sin  
by asking for their life with a curse.  
<sup>31</sup> Surely those in my tent never said:  
"Who has been filled by Job's food?"  
<sup>32</sup> A stranger didn't spend the night in the street;  
I opened my doors to the road.

#### Concealing sin

- <sup>33</sup> If I have hidden my transgressions like Adam,<sup>m</sup>  
concealing my offenses inside me  
<sup>34</sup> because I feared the large crowd;  
the clan's contempt frightened me;  
I was quiet and didn't venture outside.

#### Sealing the solemn pledge

- <sup>35</sup> Oh, that I had someone to hear me!  
Here's my signature;<sup>n</sup>  
let the Almighty respond,  
and let my accuser write an indictment.  
<sup>36</sup> Surely I would bear it on my shoulder,  
tie it around me like a wreath.  
<sup>37</sup> I would give him an account of my steps,  
approach him like a prince.

#### Abuse of the land

- <sup>38</sup> If my land has cried out against me,  
its rows wept together;  
<sup>39</sup> if I have eaten its yield without payment  
and caused its owners grief,

<sup>m</sup>Or like a human <sup>n</sup>Heb tau, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet

story shows I haven't; 31:18), then let my body suffer the calamity of God.

31:24-28 If I have placed my trust in money/possessions or worshipped the sun and moon, then let me be punished for being disloyal to God above.

31:29-32 If I have rejoiced over others' misfortune, then I would have cursed them. But my story shows I haven't done so. No one has questioned my generosity, and I've opened my doors to those in need.

31:24 Ps 52:7;  
Lk 12:15;  
1Ti 6:17

31:25 Dt 8:17;  
Est 5:11;  
Job 31:28;  
Ps 62:10;  
Eze 28:5

31:26 Dt 4:19,  
Dt 17:3; Jer 8:2,  
Jer 44:17;  
Eze 8:16

31:27 Dt 11:16;  
1Ki 19:18;  
Hos 13:2

31:28 Dt 17:2;  
Josh 24:27;  
Job 31:11,  
Job 31:24-25

31:31 Job 22:7

31:32 Gn 19:2;  
Jgs 19:20-21;  
Mt 25:35;  
Heb 13:2

31:33 Gn 3:8;  
Prv 28:13

31:34 Ec 23:2

31:35 Job 13:22,  
Job 19:23,  
Job 23:3,  
Job 27:7,  
Job 30:28

31:33-34 If I have tried to hide my sins like Adam (see Gen 3:8-13), I would have avoided the crowd. But I haven't done so.

31:35-37 Is anybody listening? I present a written case with my signature. Let me see a written indictment from God, my accuser! I would bear it publicly as a badge of honor and give God a precise account of my unselfish behavior. In Job 42:6, Job retracts his case.

31:38-40 If I have abused my land or its owners, may it yield poisonous weeds.

32:7 Job 12:12  
 32:8 Job 33:4,  
 Job 35:11,  
 Job 38:36;  
 Prv 2:6; Ecc 2:26  
 32:9 Job 12:20;  
 1Co 1:26

<sup>40</sup> may briars grow instead of wheat,  
 poisonous weeds instead of barley.

Job's words are complete.

### Introduction of Elihu

**32** These three men stopped answering Job because he thought he was righteous.<sup>o</sup> <sup>2</sup>Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite from the clan of Ram was angry, angry with Job because he considered himself more righteous than God. <sup>3</sup>He was also angry with his three friends because they hadn't found an answer but nevertheless thought Job wicked. <sup>4</sup>Elihu had waited while Job spoke, for they were older than he. <sup>5</sup>When Elihu saw that there had been no response in the speeches of the three men, he became very angry.

### Elihu's justification for speaking

<sup>6</sup>Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite said:

I'm young and you're old,  
 so I held back, afraid to express my opinion to you.

<sup>7</sup>I thought, Let days speak;  
 let multiple years make wisdom known.

<sup>8</sup>But the spirit in a person,  
 the Almighty's breath, gives understanding.

<sup>9</sup>The advanced in days aren't wise;  
 the old don't understand what's right.

<sup>10</sup>Therefore, I say: "Listen to me;  
 I'll state my view, even I."

<sup>11</sup>Look, I waited while you spoke,  
 listened while you reasoned,  
 while you searched for words.

<sup>12</sup>I was attentive to you,  
 but you offered no rebuke to Job,  
 no answer from you for his words.

<sup>13</sup>Be careful you don't say, "We've found wisdom;  
 God, not a person, will defeat him."

<sup>14</sup>Now Job<sup>p</sup> hasn't addressed me,  
 and I won't quote you to him.

<sup>15</sup>They are troubled, no longer answer;  
 words now escape them.

<sup>16</sup>I waited, but they didn't speak,  
 for they stood but answered no more.

<sup>17</sup>I will answer. Indeed, I will state<sup>q</sup> my piece;  
 I too will declare my view,

<sup>18</sup> for I'm full of words.  
 The spirit in my belly compels me.

<sup>o</sup>Or was righteous in his own eyes <sup>p</sup>Or he <sup>q</sup>Heb lacks will state.

32:1–37:24 The speeches of Elihu. Little is known about Elihu (though more than is known about the friends). His name means "he is my God." While listening to the dialogue, he sees that an impasse is reached, and is angry with Job and his friends. He enters the conversation as a self-selected mediator (see Job 9:33; 16:19–21) and is perhaps prompted to speak by Job's cry in Job 31:35 (see 32:12; 33:23). Elihu is younger than the friends (32:4, 6), which may explain his silence to this point and his high opinion of himself. It's disputed whether these chapters were added late. Elihu's words often repeat what comes before and after, but his speeches conclude on a creational theme (36:24–37:24) and hence introduce the divine speeches.

32:1–5 Elihu's identification as a *Buzite* (32:2) links him to Abraham (Gen 22:20–21), and the *clan of Ram* links him to David (Ruth 4:19). Job may also be related to Elihu through Uz (see Job 1:1), the brother of Buz. Both Elihu and the friends react negatively to Job because *he thought he was righteous, even more righteous than God* (32:1–2). But Job's suffering is evidence that God punishes the wicked (see Job 36:6). The multiple uses of the word *angry* (32:2–3, 5) for Elihu set the tone for what follows. The friends haven't been successful in their defense of God. Elihu angrily comes to the rescue.

32:6–22 Elihu makes a case for his silence to this point. He is *afraid* and the friends are older, hence having more *wisdom* (32:7). But he argues that being older doesn't

- <sup>19</sup> Look, my belly is like unopened wine;  
like new wineskins it will burst.
- <sup>20</sup> I will speak and get relief;  
I will open my lips and respond.
- <sup>21</sup> I won't be partial to anyone,  
won't flatter a person;
- <sup>22</sup> for I don't know flattery;  
otherwise my maker would quickly whisk me away.

32:21 Lv 19:15;  
Prv 29:5

33:4 Gn 1:2,  
Gn 2:7; Job 27:3,  
Job 32:8

33:16 Gn 2:7;  
Job 4:19,  
Job 10:9

### Elihu's appeal to be heard

- 33** But now, listen to me, Job;  
pay attention to all my words.
- <sup>2</sup> Notice that I am opening my mouth;  
my tongue is speaking in my mouth.<sup>f</sup>
- <sup>3</sup> My words come from a virtuous heart;  
my lips speak knowledge clearly.
- <sup>4</sup> God's spirit made me;  
the Almighty's breath enlivens me.
- <sup>5</sup> If you are able, answer me;  
lay out your case<sup>g</sup> before me and take a stand.
- <sup>6</sup> Notice that I'm just like you to God;  
I also was pinched from clay.
- <sup>7</sup> Surely fear of me shouldn't scare you;  
my pressure on you shouldn't be heavy.

### The argument

- <sup>8</sup> You certainly said in my hearing;  
I heard the sound of your words:
- <sup>9</sup> "I'm pure, without sin;  
I'm innocent, without offense.
- <sup>10</sup> Notice that he invents arguments against me;  
he considers me his enemy,  
<sup>11</sup> ties up my feet, watches all my paths."
- <sup>12</sup> Now you're wrong about this; I'll answer you,  
for God is greater than anybody.
- <sup>13</sup> Why do you contend with him,  
saying that he doesn't answer all your words?<sup>h</sup>
- <sup>14</sup> God speaks in one way,  
in two ways, but no one perceives it.
- <sup>15</sup> In the dream, a vision of the night,  
when deep sleep falls upon humans,  
during their slumber on a bed,

<sup>f</sup>Or *palate* <sup>g</sup>Heb lacks *your case*. <sup>h</sup>Or *his words*

necessarily mean wiser. Rather than age, it is God's creating *breath* (32:8; see Job 33:4-6; Gen 2:7) that gives *understanding*. Elihu urges the friends: *Listen to my point of view* (32:10)! I have *waited* and been *attentive* to what you have had to say. Elihu joins the dialogue because the friends didn't *rebuke* Job for *his words* (32:11-12). He warns them: *Be careful* about claiming *wisdom*; you are human beings, not God (32:13). Job *hasn't addressed me* (32:14), and Job's *troubled* friends have been reduced to silence (32:15-16). And so Elihu asserts: I will now *answer*; I'm full of words which compel me to speak (32:17-18). If I don't speak, *my belly will burst like new wineskins* (32:19). And so Elihu will *speak and get relief*, without partiality or flattery, lest God silence him (32:20-22).

33:1-7 Elihu addresses Job directly, urging him: *pay attention* (33:1)! I have a *virtuous heart* and can articulate

*knowledge clearly* (33:3). Indeed, God's *breath enlivens me* like it does you (see Job 32:8; 10:8). *answer me!* State your *case* (33:5; on Job's dispute; see Job 13:18; 23:4)! Don't be afraid!

33:8-33 Elihu doesn't give Job a chance to respond and goes on to argue his case with Job and to defend God. I *heard* you say: "*I'm innocent!* God's *arguments against me* have been *invent[ed]*, and he treats me as if I were *his enemy*" (33:8-11; see parallels in Job 13:18-27). Elihu responds sharply: *you're wrong about this!* God isn't a mortal (33:12). Why do you claim that God *doesn't answer* you (33:13)? *God speaks* in several possible ways. First, God speaks in a *dream* or *vision* that people don't often understand to be from God (33:14-15). Then God *opens people's ears* to hear *warnings* about deeds of *pride* and keeps them from dying (in the *pit*) (33:16-18). Second, God

34:3 Job 12:11

- 16 then he opens people's ears,  
 scares them with warnings,  
 17 to turn them from a deed  
 and to smother human pride.  
 18 He keeps one from the pit,  
 a life from perishing by the sword.  
 19 Or a person may be disciplined by pain  
 while in bed, bones ever aching  
 20 until a person loathes food,  
 an appetite rejects a delicacy;  
 21 the flesh wastes away, no longer visible;  
 the bones, once hidden, protrude.  
 22 A life approaches the pit;  
 its very being draws near the death dealers.  
 23 Surely there's a messenger for this person,  
 a mediator, one out of a thousand  
 to declare one's integrity to another  
 24 so that God has compassion on that person and says,  
 "Rescue this one from going down to the pit;  
 I have found a ransom."  
 25 That person's flesh is renewed like a child's;  
 they regain their youth.  
 26 They pray to God, and God is pleased with them;  
 they behold God's presence with a joyful shout.  
 God rewards a person's righteousness.  
 27 They sing before people and say:  
 "I have sinned, perverted justice,  
 but didn't experience the consequences.  
 28 He ransomed me from crossing into the pit;  
 my life beholds light."  
 29 Look, God does all this,  
 twice, three times with persons  
 30 to bring them back from the pit,  
 to shine with life's light.  
 31 Listen, Job; hear me;  
 be quiet, and I will speak.  
 32 If you have words, answer me;  
 speak, for I want to be innocent.  
 33 If not, you must hear me;  
 be quiet, and I will teach you wisdom.

- 34** Elihu continued:  
 1 Hear my words, wise ones;  
 knowledgeable ones, listen to me,  
 2 for the ear tests words  
 like the palate tastes food.  
 3 Let's choose for us what's right;  
 let's determine among ourselves what's good;

speaks by allowing people to be *disciplined* through sickness, with ill effects that bring *death (the pit)* near (33:19-22). But certainly a *messenger* (a divine mediator; see Job 16:19-21) is made available (even if rarely, once in a *thousand* times, see Job 9:3) to intercede on behalf of a person of *integrity* (33:23-25). Then God will have *compassion*, will be *pleased* with these prayers, and the one who has been sick experiences God's presence and responds with *joy (they in 33:26-27 is, apparently, any such person)*. God *rewards the righteousness* of such a person (or, restores his righteousness). And they *sing*: Even though "I have sinned,

I *didn't experience the consequences*. God rescued me from death (*the pit*) and I see the *light of life*." God does these things often (=twice, three times), but not always (33:27-30). Elihu's point is that people don't necessarily suffer the effects of their sins, and if they are prayed for and are righteous, God rescues them. Listen to me, Job! *speak* if you can; *if not . . . be quiet and I will teach you* what is wise in this matter (33:31-33).

34:1-37 Elihu addresses the wise, defending God's exercise of justice. Like you taste *food*, so test my words (34:1-4; see Job 12:11). *choose* what is *right* and *good*. Job has said,

- <sup>5</sup> for Job has said, "I'm innocent;  
God has denied my just cause;
- <sup>6</sup> because of my cause I'm thought a liar;  
my wound from an arrow is incurable, even though I didn't rebel."
- <sup>7</sup> Who is a man like Job?  
He drinks mockery like water  
<sup>8</sup> and travels a path with wrongdoers,  
walking with evil persons.
- <sup>9</sup> Indeed he said, "No one is rewarded  
for delighting in God."
- <sup>10</sup> Therefore, intelligent ones, hear me;  
far be it from God to do evil  
and the Almighty to sin,
- <sup>11</sup> for he repays people based on what they do,  
paying back everyone according to their ways.
- <sup>12</sup> Surely God doesn't act wickedly;  
the Almighty doesn't distort justice.
- <sup>13</sup> Who placed earth in his care,  
and who gave him dominion over the entire world?
- <sup>14</sup> If he were to decide to do it—  
to gather his spirit and breath back to himself—  
<sup>15</sup> all flesh would die together,  
and humans would return to dust.
- <sup>16</sup> But if you have understanding, hear this;  
pay attention to the sound of my words.
- <sup>17</sup> Will one who hates justice rule;  
will you condemn the most righteous one?
- <sup>18</sup> Will you say to a king, "Worthless!"  
to royalty, "Evil!"
- <sup>19</sup> Who shows no favor to princes  
nor regards the rich over the poor,  
for they are all the work of God's hands?
- <sup>20</sup> In the middle of the night they suddenly die;  
people are shaken and pass away.  
The mighty are removed, not by a human hand.
- <sup>21</sup> God's eyes are on human ways,  
and he sees all their steps.
- <sup>22</sup> There's no darkness, no deep darkness,  
where evildoers can hide themselves;
- <sup>23</sup> surely no time is set for a person  
to appear before God in judgment.
- <sup>24</sup> He shatters the mighty without examining them;  
makes others take their place.
- <sup>25</sup> Thus he regards their deeds,  
overturns them at night, and they are crushed.
- <sup>26</sup> He strikes them because of their wickedness  
at a place where people can see it.
- <sup>27</sup> Because they turned from following him  
and didn't value all his ways,

34:10 Gn 18:25;  
Dt 32:4;  
Job 8:3;  
Job 36:23;  
Ro 9:14  
34:11 Ps 62:12;  
Prv 24:12;  
Jer 17:10;  
Jer 32:19;  
Mt 16:27

*"I'm innocent (see Job 27:2-6; 33:9) and God has denied me justice. I'm thought a liar and have been deeply wound[ed] by God's arrow, even though I've not deserved it" (34:5-6). But, to Job, mocking others and traveling with evil persons are like drinking water! Job has said that it doesn't pay to delight in God (34:9; see Job 29:18-20; 1:9). Wise ones, hear me out! A highly repetitive essay follows. God doesn't sin, do evil or distort justice, but stands in judgment over those*

*who do (34:10-12). No human being gave God dominion over the earth. If God were to gather his . . . breath back to himself (see Gen 2:7), all living things would die (34:13-15). pay attention to me! Would God rule if he hate[d] justice? God is righteous and shouldn't be condemn[ed]; nor should the divine rule be considered Evil. God doesn't grant special favors to the rich—all are God's creatures. All will die suddenly, even the powerful (34:16-20). Evildoers can't*

34:30 Job 8:13;  
Job 34:17;  
Prv 29:2  
35:7 Job 22:2-3;  
Prv 9:12;  
Lk 17:10;  
Ro 11:35

- 28 causing the cry of the poor to reach him,  
he hears the cry of the afflicted.
- 29 Still, if he remains quiet, who can condemn;  
if he hides his face, who can see him?
- 30 He prevents a lawless person from ruling,  
from capturing people.
- 31 Has Job said to God,  
“I have borne punishment; I won’t sin again?”
- 32 You teach me what I can’t see;  
if I’ve sinned, I won’t do it again.”
- 33 Will he repay you because you reject sin,  
for you must choose, not I;  
declare what you know.
- 34 Smart people say to me,  
the wise who hear me,  
35 “Job speaks without knowledge;  
his words aren’t astute.”
- 36 I wish Job would be tested to the limit  
because he responds like evil people.
- 37 He adds rebellion to his sin;  
mocks us openly and adds to his words against God.

### Sin’s impact

- 35 Elihu continued:  
3 Do you think it right?  
You say, “I’m more just than God.”
- 3 Yet you ask, “What does it benefit you?  
What have I gained by avoiding sin?”
- 4 I’ll answer you,  
and your friends along with you.
- 5 Look at the heavens and see;  
scan the clouds high over you.
- 6 If you’ve sinned, how have you affected God?  
Your offenses have multiplied;  
what have you done to him?
- 7 If you are righteous,  
what do you give to him?  
Or what does he receive from your hand?
- 8 Your evil affects others like you,  
and your righteousness affects fellow human beings.
- 9 People cry out because of heavy oppression;  
shout under the power of the mighty.
- 10 But no one says, “Where is God my maker;  
who gives songs in the night;  
11 who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth,  
makes us wiser than the birds in the sky?”
- 12 Then they cry out; but he doesn’t answer,  
because of the pride of the wicked.

hide from God because there’s no deep darkness to God (34:21-22). There’s no “it wasn’t my time” in God’s world. In the right time God shatters the mighty, overturns, crush[es], and strikes them—because of their wickedness, their failure to follow God’s value[s], and their mistreatment of the poor and the needy (34:23-28). God’s silence or lack of explanation doesn’t mean indifference. God does act against such lawless people. who can condemn God (34:29-30)? Job must choose to reject sin—God won’t punish him for that (Job 34:31-33). Smart people see that Job’s speaking lacks

insight (34:34-35). In view of that, Elihu concludes with a wish that Job would be tested to the limit (34:36-37).

35:1-16 Elihu responds to Job’s claim to be righteous. He argues that God is free to do what God wills, that human beings have no effect on God (see Job 22:2-4). Doesn’t Elihu end up contradicting himself (see God’s “anger” in 35:15)? Elihu begins by quoting Job: “I’m more just than God” (or, “I am righteous before God”). Moreover, avoiding sin hasn’t carried any benefit (35:2-3). Elihu answers both Job and the friends. Look how distant the sky is (see Job

- <sup>13</sup>God certainly doesn't respond to a deceitful cry;  
the Almighty doesn't pay attention to it.
- <sup>14</sup>Although you say that you don't see him,  
the case is before him;  
so wait anxiously for him.
- <sup>15</sup>Even though his anger is now held back,  
a person doesn't know it's only delayed.<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>16</sup>So Job mouths emptiness;  
he piles up ignorant words.

### Reason for continuing

- 36** Continuing, Elihu said,  
<sup>2</sup>Wait a little while so I can demonstrate for you  
that there is still something more to say about God.
- <sup>3</sup>I will draw from my broad knowledge,  
attribute justice to my maker.
- <sup>4</sup>My words are certainly truthful;  
one with total knowledge is present with you.

### Divine discipline

- <sup>5</sup>Look, God is mighty and doesn't reject anyone;  
he is mighty in strength and mind.
- <sup>6</sup>He doesn't let the wicked live,  
but grants justice to the poor.
- <sup>7</sup>He doesn't avert his eyes from the righteous;  
he seats kings on thrones forever,  
and they are lifted up.
- <sup>8</sup>If they are tied with ropes,  
caught in cords of affliction,  
<sup>9</sup>he informs them about their offenses and their grave sins.
- <sup>10</sup>He opens their ears with discipline  
and commands them to turn from wrong.
- <sup>11</sup>If they listen and serve,  
they spend their days in plenty,  
their years contentedly.
- <sup>12</sup>But if they don't listen,  
they perish by the sword,  
breathe their last without understanding.
- <sup>13</sup>Those with impious hearts become furious;  
they don't cry out even though he binds them.
- <sup>14</sup>They die young;  
they are among the holy ones.
- <sup>15</sup>He saves the weak in their affliction,  
opens their ears through oppression.
- <sup>16</sup>Surely he draws you up from the brink of trouble  
to a wide place without distress;  
your table is set with rich food.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

22:12). Hence, whether you've sinned or been righteous, you haven't affect[ed] God. What you do affects other human beings, not God (35:4-8). People may cry out because of being oppressed, but they don't confess God as their maker and teacher who gives songs to sing in the night and wisdom (35:9-11). If they do, God doesn't answer because of their pride and deceitfulness (35:12-13). Job, your case is before God even though you don't see God, so wait for him with fear and anxiety. That's because his anger is only delayed. All of your arguments are but empty and ignorant words (35:14-16).

36:1-4 By continuing his defense of God's justice and power, Elihu has a prideful claim about his own complete knowledge of God. God the creator is just, and I know all about it (see Job 37:16).

36:5-25 Elihu makes basic claims about the nature of God. God is mighty in strength and mind and, in principle, doesn't reject anyone. Regarding God's treatment of the wicked and the righteous, life and death are at stake for everyone from the poor to kings (36:6-7). If they experience affliction, they are informed of the reasons (their sins) and God disciplines them, command[ing] them to turn away

36:27 Gn 2:5-6;  
Job 5:9, Job 26:8;  
Ps 147:8

- 17 You are overly concerned about the case of the wicked;  
justice will be upheld in it.
- 18 Don't let them lure you with wealth;  
don't let a huge bribe mislead you.
- 19 Will he arrange your rescue from distress  
or from all your exertions of strength?
- 20 Don't wish for the night  
when people vanish from their place.
- 21 Take care; don't turn to evil  
because you've chosen it over affliction.
- 22 Look, God is inaccessible due to his power;  
who is a teacher like him?
- 23 Who has repaid him for his action,  
and who would ever say, "You've done wrong"?
- 24 Remember to praise his work  
that all of us have seen.
- 25 Every person has seen him;  
people can observe at great distance.

#### God's control of the storm

- 26 Look, God is exalted and unknowable;  
the number of his years is beyond counting.
- 27 He draws up drops of water  
that distill rain from his flood;  
28 the clouds pour moisture  
and drip continually on humans.
- 29 Even if one perceives a spreading cloud  
and the thunder of his pavilion,<sup>▼</sup>
- 30 look how he spreads lightning across it  
and covers the seabed;  
31 for by water<sup>▼</sup> he judges peoples  
and gives food in abundance.
- 32 He conceals lightning in his palms  
and orders it to its target.
- 33 His thunder announces it;  
even cattle proclaim its rising.

37 Oh, my mind is disturbed by this  
and is more troubled than usual.

▼ Or canopy    ▼ Or them

from sin. *If they listen*, it will go well for them. *If they don't*, they will *perish* (36:8-12). The wicked *don't cry out* to God, even when they suffer greatly at his hands. *They die young* and join the community of the dead. God saves the *weak* and *opens their ears through oppression* (36:13-15; see Job 33:28-30). This is a positive angle from which to think about suffering. Addressing Job directly, Elihu speaks of God's past positive action in his life, freeing him from *distress* and hunger. But Job is *overly concerned* about issues of *justice* (36:16-17). He is warned that the *wealth* of the wicked may *mislead* him in his thinking about justice. God would *rescue* him, not his own *strength* (36:18-19). When people die, *Don't wish* for the same end. *Take care!* Just because you are suffering, *don't turn to evil* (36:20-21). God's *power* and *knowledge* make God *inaccessible*. God can't be *repaid* for what God has done, and it can't be said to God: *You've done wrong* (36:22-23). *praise* God's work; it can be *observe[d]* by everyone if they would but look (36:24-25).

36:26-37:20 Elihu urges Job to praise God for the creation

and its generosity. In hymnic rhythms, he moves from autumn with its rains (36:27-33), to winter with its snow and ice (37:1-13), to summer with its heat and wind (37:14-22). This theme introduces God's speeches in Job 38-41. The high God is eternal and is *unknowable* (36:26). God's creative acts in providing rains with its effects are listed in detail. God gathers *drops* of water from here and there to produce *rain*, which falls from the *clouds* and waters the earth and its creatures (36:27-28). We may not understand how the weather works, with its *clouds*, *thunder*, *lightning*, and its creation of seas. But by the provision of such *water*, people's lives are governed and *food* is produced in *abundance* (36:29-31). God's *lightning*, announced by *thunder*, emerges from *conceal[ed]* places (behind clouds) to hit its *target*. *even cattle proclaim* such wonders (36:32-33)!

37:1-20 Creation themes continue. Elihu is *troubled* by these sounds in creation (37:1). Just *listen* to the *rumble* and the *raar*. They come from God (37:2). The *whole sky* lights up across the horizon from the *lightning* strikes,



37:9 Job 9:9;  
Ps 147:17;  
Is 21:1  
37:10  
Job 38:29-30;  
Ps 147:17  
37:15 Job 36:30  
37:16 Job 36:4

- <sup>2</sup> Listen closely to the rumble of his voice,  
the roar issuing from his mouth.
- <sup>3</sup> He looses it under the whole sky,  
his lightning on earth's edges.
- <sup>4</sup> After it, a voice roars;  
he thunders with a mighty voice,  
and no one can stop it when his voice is heard.
- <sup>5</sup> God roars with his wondrous voice;  
he does great things we can't know.
- <sup>6</sup> He says to the snow, "Fall to earth,"  
and to the downpour of rain, "Be a mighty shower."
- <sup>7</sup> He stamps the hand of every person  
so all can know his work.<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>8</sup> The wild beast enters its lair,  
lies down in its den.
- <sup>9</sup> The storm comes from its chamber,  
the cold from the north wind.
- <sup>10</sup> By God's breath ice forms;  
water's expanse becomes solid.
- <sup>11</sup> He also fills clouds with moisture;  
his lightning scatters clouds.
- <sup>12</sup> He overturns the circling clouds;<sup>b</sup>  
by his guidance they do<sup>c</sup> their work,  
doing everything he commands over the entire earth.
- <sup>13</sup> Whether for punishment, for his world, or for kindness,  
God makes it all happen.
- <sup>14</sup> Hear this, Job;  
stop and ponder God's mighty deeds.
- <sup>15</sup> Do you realize that when God commands them,  
his clouds produce lightning?
- <sup>16</sup> Do you understand the positioning of the clouds,  
the amazing deeds of one with perfect knowledge,  
<sup>17</sup> you whose clothes are hot  
when earth is calmed by the south wind?
- <sup>18</sup> Can you form the sky with him,  
hard like a mirror made of metal?
- <sup>19</sup> Tell us what we should say to him;  
we can't present our case due to darkness.
- <sup>20</sup> Should someone inform him that I wish to speak,  
or would anyone say he wants to be devoured?

### **Divine splendor**

- <sup>21</sup> For now, no one can look at the sun;  
it is bright in the sky;  
the wind has passed and cleared away the clouds.

<sup>a</sup>Or that everyone he has made can know it <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb lacks they do.

followed by the thunder—the voice of God. No human being can stop God's roar, God's wondrous voice, we can't know all that God does. God causes the snow and the rain to fall. Indeed, it falls so that all can experience the work of God. It causes even the wild beast to go to its den (37:3-8). The storm and the cold from the north wind come from their sources (probably, from God's chamber). God's breath forms ice, and water freezes over. The clouds are filled with rain and scatter[ed] by lightning. God overturns them so that the rain falls; they do the work that God commands them to do across the world (37:9-12). God makes it all happen for a purpose: for judgment, for the land, or for

kindness (37:13). Elihu concludes by speaking more personally: Job, stop and ponder these things. These natural events occur at God's commands. Job, do you understand these amazing deeds of a God with perfect knowledge? Can you understand the warming effects of the south wind? Can you participate with God in form[ing] the hard-surfaced sky? The implied answer is that Job can't understand (37:14-18). Job, can you Tell us what we should say to God? We can't write up our case because of the darkness. Perhaps someone should inform God that I wish to speak. Yet, why would anyone want to be devoured (37:19-20)? 37:21-24 This conclusion is basically a negative response

37:22 Ps 93:1,  
Ps 104:1; Is 2:10

37:23 Job 8:3,  
Job 11:7,  
Job 36:5;  
Lam 3:33;  
Ro 11:33

38:1 Job 40:6;  
Eze 1:4; Na 1:3

38:2 Job 34:35,  
Job 35:16,  
Job 42:3

38:3 Job 40:7,  
Job 42:4

38:4 Ps 104:5;  
Prv 30:4

38:5 Is 40:12

38:6 Job 26:7

38:7 Job 1:6;  
Ps 148:2;

Lk 2:13-14;  
Rev 22:16

38:10 Job 26:10;  
Ps 104:9

38:11 Job 38:8;  
Ps 65:7; Ps 89:9,  
Ps 93:4

38:12 Ps 74:16

<sup>22</sup>From the north comes golden light,  
the awesome splendor of God.

<sup>23</sup>As for the Almighty, we can't find him—  
he is powerful and just, abundantly righteous—  
he won't respond.

<sup>24</sup>Therefore, people fear him;  
none of the wise<sup>a</sup> can see him.

#### *The Lord answers from a whirlwind*

**38** Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind:

<sup>2</sup>Who is this darkening counsel  
with words lacking knowledge?

<sup>3</sup>Prepare yourself like a man;  
I will interrogate you, and you will respond to me.

#### *The establishing of order*

<sup>4</sup>Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?  
Tell me if you know.

<sup>5</sup>Who set its measurements? Surely you know.  
Who stretched a measuring tape on it?

<sup>6</sup>On what were its footings sunk;  
who laid its cornerstone,  
<sup>7</sup>while the morning stars sang in unison  
and all the divine beings shouted?

<sup>8</sup>Who enclosed the Sea<sup>b</sup> behind doors  
when it burst forth from the womb,  
<sup>9</sup>when I made the clouds its garment,  
the dense clouds its wrap,

<sup>10</sup>when I imposed<sup>c</sup> my limit for it,  
put on a bar and doors

<sup>11</sup>and said, "You may come this far, no farther;  
here your proud waves stop?"

<sup>12</sup>In your lifetime have you commanded the morning,  
informed the dawn of its place

<sup>13</sup>so it would take hold of earth by its edges  
and shake the wicked out of it?

<sup>a</sup>Or wise in heart; cf 9:4 <sup>b</sup>Heb Yam, a sea god <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

to Job's plea for a hearing (Job 31:35). For now, the light in the sky is blinding, a sign of the awesome splendor of God, one who is powerful, just, and righteous. We can't find him... he won't respond to us... no one can see him. Therefore, fear him! Job must wait for God to answer (see Job 38:1).

**38:1-42:6** The dialogue between Job and God.

**38:1-39:30** God's first response to Job focuses on the "design" of creation. The range of interest in creation is remarkable. Some insight into suffering is thereby made available to Job (and the reader).

**38:1-3** The Lord appears in a whirlwind (38:1). This storm is a means of divine revelation (see Ezek 1:4). It's an example of creation's chaotic elements, to which God now gives major attention. Job should understand that creation reveals God's ways in the world, including issues of suffering. Inviting response, God interrogate[s] Job, not because he has sinned but because he has interpreted his suffering in terms of wrongheaded knowledge (darkening counsel) of the way in which God's world works. God's numerous questions to Job are designed to challenge Job's

understanding and to increase knowledge, not shut it down. Job, get to work on these questions (Prepare yourself) (38:2-3).

**38:4-15** God created the world according to a certain design (measurements), using the image of a building. God laid its foundations, accompanied by joyful singing from both heavenly bodies and divine beings (messengers, sometimes call angels)—but not human beings (38:4-7; see Prov 8:30-31). God's creation of the chaotic Sea (see Job 3:8; 7:12) and its cloud-cover is imaged in female terms as birth from the womb and wrapping a newborn child in blankets. God established a limit for the sea's activity through fixed shorelines, imagined in terms of a house or room (38:8-11). And God sees to the ongoing workings of this creation, not Job. The light of the morning and dawn exposes the wicked, described as being shake[en] out from under a blanket thought to cover them. Also, like a seal changes the appearance of the clay, so the Light reveals the wicked like a colorful garment. Light is taken away from them, and their strength (upraised arm) disappears (38:12-15).

*God and Creation* God's response to Job (and, indirectly, to Job's friends) is a verbal re-creation of an amazingly diverse universe. It's as though the reader is taken up into a literary space-ship and shown a splendid creation. God doesn't take Job into the temple or into the depths of his whole being. God takes him out where the wild things are. God gives Job a nature lesson, introducing him to a wide range of matters about forms of life, the heavenly bodies, and the universe itself. This world is well-ordered and basically logical, with images of care and nurture, especially for animals, whose freedom is celebrated. At the same time, images of wildness and strangeness are present: wild seas; wild animals; wild weather (rain, hail, ice, snow, lightning); and Behemoth and Leviathan, the inhabitants of an ancient prehistoric park. For all the world's order and logic, it doesn't run like a machine—there are randomness and unclear patterns, and unpredictable elements and play characterize its complex life. Lifting up these dimensions of God's speeches is crucial, if only because natural evil is a basic factor in Job's suffering.

By appearing in the whirlwind, God is disclosed as the God of creation, not the God of Israel or the God of redemption or the God who intervenes to make sure nothing goes wrong. God highlights Job's limited knowledge and ability and the dynamic "nature of nature." Human sin may also come into play in thinking about suffering (Job 40:11-14), perhaps recalling the intruders in Job 1:13-17. But God's focus remains on nature, raising issues more of creational design than personal justice.

The issue is not so much what Job couldn't know or do, but that he doesn't know or act with enough vision regarding God's "design" (Job 38:2; 42:3). God's questions (Who are you? Where are you? What do you know? Are you able?) challenge Job to probe the creation more deeply, with a greater appreciation for its design. They also challenge him to engage more deeply in his vocation on behalf of God's creatures of great worth and value. This focus on vocation relative to the nonhuman creation best explains the lack of attention to human beings in the speeches from God.

<sup>14</sup>Do you turn it over like clay for a seal,  
so it stands out like a colorful garment?

<sup>15</sup>Light is withheld from the wicked,  
the uplifted arm broken.

### *The vast beyond*

<sup>16</sup>Have you gone to the sea's sources,  
walked in the chamber of the deep?

<sup>17</sup>Have death's gates been revealed to you;  
can you see the gates of deep darkness?

<sup>18</sup>Have you surveyed earth's expanses?  
Tell me if you know everything about it.

<sup>19</sup>Where's the road to the place where light dwells;  
darkness, where's it located?

<sup>20</sup>Can you take it to its territory;  
do you know the paths to its house?

<sup>21</sup>You know, for you were born then;  
you have lived such a long time!<sup>d</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Have you gone to snow's storehouses,  
seen the storehouses of hail

<sup>23</sup>that I have reserved for a time of distress,  
for a day of battle and war?

<sup>24</sup>What is the way to the place where light is divided up;  
the east wind scattered over earth?

<sup>d</sup>Or *the number of your days is many*

38:16-24 Job hasn't been to the *sources* of the sea or to the chaos waters of the *deep* (see Gen 1:2). The dark underworld and its *gates* to the realm of the dead are unknown to Job (see Job 14:13-14; 17:13-16). He doesn't know how big the earth is, or *everything about it* (38:16-18). Job doesn't know the sources of *light* and *darkness*, or how to get there

(38:19-20). In probably the only sarcastic point, Job should *know* these things, for he was *born* way back *then* (38:21)! Moving to heavenly places (through Job 38:38), Job hasn't been to the *storehouses of snow* and *hail* that God has *reserved* for difficult times (see Josh 10:11). Nor has Job been to the sources of *light* and *wind* (38:22-24).

38:28 Jer 14:22  
 38:29 Job 6:16,  
 Job 37:10;  
 Ps 147:16-17  
 38:31 Job 9:9;  
 Am 5:8  
 38:32 Job 9:9  
 38:36 Job 32:8;  
 Ps 51:6; Ecc 2:26

### **Meteorological facts**

- 25** Who cut a channel for the downpours  
 and a way for blasts of thunder  
**26** to bring water to uninhabited land,  
 a desert with no human  
**27** to saturate dry wasteland  
 and make grass sprout?  
**28** Has the rain a father  
 who brought forth drops of dew?  
**29** From whose belly does ice come;  
 who gave birth to heaven's frost?  
**30** Water hardens like stone;  
 the surface of the deep thickens.  
**31** Can you bind Pleiades' chains  
 or loosen the reins of Orion?  
**32** Can you guide the stars at their proper times,  
 lead the Bear with her cubs?  
**33** Do you know heaven's laws,  
 or can you impose its rule on earth?  
**34** Can you issue an order to the clouds  
 so their abundant waters cover you?  
**35** Can you send lightning so that it goes  
 and then says to you, "I'm here"?  
**36** Who put wisdom in remote places,  
 or who gave understanding to a rooster?<sup>a</sup>  
**37** Who is wise enough to count the clouds,  
 and who can tilt heaven's water containers  
**38** so that dust becomes mud  
 and clods of dirt adhere?

### **Lion and raven**

- 39** Can you hunt prey for the lion  
 or fill the cravings of lion cubs?  
**40** They lie in their den,  
 lie in ambush in their lair.  
**41** Who provides food for the raven  
 when its young cry to God,  
 move about without food?

### **Mountain goat and doe**

- 39** Do you know when mountain goats give birth;  
 do you observe the birthing of does?  
**2** Can you count the months of pregnancy;  
 do you know when they give birth?  
**3** They crouch, split open for their young,  
 send forth their offspring.  
**4** Their young are healthy; they grow up in the open country,  
 leave and never return.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

**38:25-38** Job doesn't know how the weather works, including the *downpours* that bring water to desolate lands and make the *grass sprout*—even where no humans live!—and *dew* and *frost* and *ice*, using images of father and mother (38:25-30). Job can't control the movements of the *stars* and the heavenly bodies or the *laws* that bring rain and *lightning* (38:31-35). Counting or controlling the *clouds* and the effects of rain aren't in his power (38:36-38; cf. Job 36:26-37:20).

**38:39-41** Considering animals and birds (through Job

39:30), Job can't provide for them. Rather, the *young ravens* are said to *cry to God* for their *food*! If God so cares for the animals, how much more does God care for human beings? Most of the animals are wild and have no special relationship to human beings.

**39:1-4** The text continues the focus on animals and birds. The world of animals is amazingly complex and continues to thrive apart from any human activity. Such a world is a wondrous creation of God, without human input. With our increased knowledge of the animal world, we today

**Wild donkey**

- <sup>5</sup>Who freed the wild donkey,  
loosed the ropes of the onager  
<sup>6</sup>to whom I gave the desert as home,  
his dwelling place in the salt flats?  
<sup>7</sup>He laughs at the clamor of the town,  
doesn't hear the driver's shout,  
<sup>8</sup>searches the hills for food  
and seeks any green sprout.

39:5 Gn 16:12;  
Job 6:5,  
Job 11:12,  
Job 24:5;  
Ps 104:11  
39:6 Job 24:5;  
Ps 107:34;  
Jer 2:24, Jer 17:6  
39:7 Job 3:18  
39:16 Lam 4:3

**Wild ox**

- <sup>9</sup>Will the wild ox agree to be your slave,  
or will it spend the night in your crib?  
<sup>10</sup>Can you bind it with a rope to a plowed row;  
will it plow the valley behind you?  
<sup>11</sup>Will you trust it because its strength is great  
so that you can leave your work to it?  
<sup>12</sup>Can you rely on it to bring back your grain  
to gather into your threshing floor?

**Ostrich**

- <sup>13</sup>The ostrich's wings flap joyously,  
but her wings and plumage are like a stork.  
<sup>14</sup>She leaves her eggs on the earth,  
lets them warm in the dust,  
<sup>15</sup>then forgets that a foot may crush them  
or a wild animal trample them.  
<sup>16</sup>She treats her young harshly as if they were not hers,  
without worrying that her labor might be in vain;  
<sup>17</sup>God didn't endow her with sense,  
didn't give her some good sense.  
<sup>18</sup>When she flaps her wings high,  
she laughs at horse and rider.

**Horse**

- <sup>19</sup>Did you give strength to the horse,  
clothe his neck with a mane,  
<sup>20</sup>cause him to leap like a locust,  
his majestic snorting, a fright?  
<sup>21</sup>He<sup>f</sup> paws in the valley, prances proudly,  
charges at battle weapons,  
<sup>22</sup>laughs at fear, unafraid.  
He doesn't turn away from the sword;  
<sup>23</sup>a quiver of arrows flies by him,  
flashing spear and dagger.  
<sup>24</sup>Excitedly, trembling, he swallows the ground;  
can't stand still at a trumpet's blast.  
<sup>25</sup>At a trumpet's sound, he says, "Aha!"  
smells the battle from afar,  
hears<sup>g</sup> officers' shouting and the battle cry.

<sup>f</sup>Or they <sup>g</sup>Heb lacks *hears*.

know more about these animals than the author of Job did. So, for example, we can *know* when *goats* and *does* give birth, and we can *observe* such activity.

39:5-8 The freedom of the *wild donkey* and *onager* to roam in the desert is emphasized. God gave them the unfriendly wilderness areas as a home and voices that sound like *laughs*.

39:9-12 The freedom and *strength* of the *wild ox* are

stressed, along with Job's inability to control it to do his work.

39:13-18 The *ostrich* is known for its unusual appearance and was thought to be uncaring toward its *young*. At the same time, it can outrun a swift *horse* with its  *rider*. 39:19-25 God, not Job, created the *horse* to be strong, fast (*swallows the ground*), and *unafraid* in warfare; horses are even eager to engage in *battle*.

39:26 Lv 11:16;  
Dt 14:15; Jer 8:7  
40:1 Job 38:1  
40:2 Job 9:3,  
Job 33:13;  
Is 45:9  
40:3 Job 42:1  
40:4 Job 21:5,  
Job 29:9,  
Job 42:6  
40:5 Job 9:15  
40:6 Job 38:1  
40:8 Job 27:2  
40:9 Ps 89:13  
40:14 Ps 20:6;  
Is 63:5

### Hawk and eagle

- <sup>26</sup>Is it due to your understanding that the hawk flies,  
spreading its wings to the south?  
<sup>27</sup>Or at your command does the eagle soar,  
the vulture build a nest on high?  
<sup>28</sup>They dwell on an outcropping of rock,  
their fortress on rock's edge.  
<sup>29</sup>From there they search for food;  
their eyes notice it from afar,  
<sup>30</sup>and their young lap up blood;  
where carcasses lie, there they are.

### The LORD speaks and Job answers

- 40** The LORD continued to respond to Job:  
<sup>2</sup>Will the one who disputes with the Almighty correct him?  
God's instructor must answer him.  
<sup>3</sup>Job responded to the LORD:  
<sup>4</sup>Look, I'm of little worth. What can I answer you?  
I'll put my hand over my mouth.  
<sup>5</sup>I have spoken once, I won't answer;  
twice, I won't do it again.

### A challenge from the LORD

- <sup>6</sup>The LORD answered Job from the whirlwind:  
<sup>7</sup>Prepare yourself like a man;  
I will interrogate you, and you will respond to me.  
<sup>8</sup>Would you question my justice,  
deem me guilty so you can be innocent?  
<sup>9</sup>Or do you have an arm like God;  
can you thunder with a voice like him?  
<sup>10</sup>Adorn yourself with splendor and majesty;  
clothe yourself with honor and esteem.  
<sup>11</sup>Unleash your raging anger;  
look on all the proud and humble them.  
<sup>12</sup>Look on all the proud and debase them;  
trample the wicked in their place.  
<sup>13</sup>Hide them together in the dust;  
bind their faces in a hidden place.  
<sup>14</sup>Then I, even I, will praise you,  
for your strong hand has delivered you.

### Behemoth

- <sup>15</sup>Look at Behemoth, whom I made along with you;  
he eats grass like cattle.

39:26-30 That the *hawk and eagle* and *vulture* fly and *soar* has nothing to do with human efforts or *understanding*. They are experts in the *search for food*.

40:1-5 Job's first response to God. God continues to question Job and he *must answer*, inasmuch as he engaged in an argument with God (40:2). The reference to Job as *God's instructor* would be ironic (but the translation is difficult). Humbled (of *little worth*) in the presence of God (though not confessing wrongdoing), Job promises to keep his *mouth shut* and not *answer God again*. God speaks in such a way that Job isn't silenced (40:3-5). God may even consider Job's initial response too self-effacing, so God continues to speak until Job responds in less self-negating ways (Job 42:1-6).

40:6-41:34 God's second response to Job.

40:6-14 God begins the second response (still from the whirlwind) by repeating the call that began the first

speech (Job 38:3), but not the initial question (Job 38:2). God continues with questions to Job, focusing initially on *justice* (40:8; the only time God does this). Why does Job raise issues of God's *justice* (see Job 27:5)? Does God need to be found *guilty* so that Job might be *innocent*? Is this an either/or situation? Does Job have power (*arm*) that compares to God's power? Or "*voice*" (see Job 37:1-7)? If so, act like it! Take on all the trappings of a king and *Unleash your raging anger* against the *wicked*, pass judgment on the *proud* (the only time that moral evil is addressed by God). Make them disappear into the *dust* of death (where Job himself wished to go; Job 14:13)! If you do this (and both of them know he can't), *I will praise you* as victorious against your foes (40:9-14).

40:15-24 God introduces a creature called *Behemoth* (paired with *Leviathan*, Job 41:1). The interpretation of these figures varies, from animals (hippopotamus and

*God Speaks* God's speeches are disputes. They challenge Job's accusations. At the same time, they affirm key parts of Job's claim about the creation. God's world has significant chaotic elements, but Job's negative interpretation of that disorder needs to be challenged. Why did God create a natural world that produces so much suffering? A basic reason is that such a creation is necessary if it would be other than a drab, dull, ever-the-same world. God sustains such a world because of its creative potential. Only in such a world is there genuine possibility for growth, creativity, novelty, and surprise. Suffering from the ill effects of the workings of nature is the cost of living in such a creative place. In the end, God takes responsibility for these forms of Job's suffering. The book is filled with questions, from Job and God, encouraging readers to ask their deepest questions about suffering. The dialogue in the book of Job suggests that responding to questions with questions is an excellent strategy for understanding the problems of suffering, evil, and self-interest.

40:19 Job 41:33  
40:20 Ps 104:14,  
Ps 104:26  
40:21 Ps 68:30;  
Is 19:6, Is 35:7  
40:22 Lv 23:40;  
Is 44:4  
40:23 Gn 13:10  
40:24 Job 41:2  
41:1 Job 3:8;  
Ps 74:14,  
Ps 104:26,  
Is 27:1  
41:4 Ex 21:6

- <sup>16</sup>Look, his strength is in his thighs,  
his power in stomach muscles.  
<sup>17</sup>He stiffens his tail like a cedar;  
the tendons in his thighs are tightly woven.  
<sup>18</sup>His bones are like bronze tubes,  
his limbs like iron bars.  
<sup>19</sup>He is the first of God's acts;  
only his maker can come near him with a sword.  
<sup>20</sup>Indeed, the hills bring him tribute,  
places where all the wild animals play.  
<sup>21</sup>He lies under the lotuses,  
under the cover of reed and marsh.  
<sup>22</sup>The lotuses screen him with shade;  
poplars of the stream surround him.  
<sup>23</sup>If the river surges, he doesn't hurry;  
he is confident even though the Jordan gushes into his mouth.  
<sup>24</sup>Can he be seized by his eyes?  
Can anyone pierce his nose by hooks?

### Leviathan

- 41**<sup>a</sup>Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook,  
restrain his tongue with a rope?  
<sup>2</sup>Can you put a cord through his nose,  
pierce his jaw with a barb?  
<sup>3</sup>Will he beg you at length  
or speak gentle words to you?  
<sup>4</sup>Will he make a pact with you  
so that you will take him as a permanent slave?  
<sup>5</sup>Can you play with him like a bird,  
put a leash on him for your girls?  
<sup>6</sup>Will merchants sell him;  
will they divide him among traders?

<sup>a</sup>40:25 in Heb

crocodile) to mythic figures to symbolic forces of evil. These creatures may be animals (see Job 12:7). They *eat grass like cattle*, though their reputation in that world has drawn them into the realm of fantasy and myth (like the dragon in our culture). It is doubtful that these figures are an evil force, as any links they have to ancient Near Eastern themes are literary, not substantive. If one does think of these creatures in terms of "chaos," that doesn't make them evil (cf. Gen 1:2). They are the *first* creatures made by God, with remarkable *strength*. They eat food (*tribute*) and seem to *play with wild animals* among the trees and plants (40:15-22). They are comfortable in and around *the river*

(40:23). This means they are good creatures, part of God's diverse and wonderful world. At the same time, these creatures reveal the kind of good creation wherein human beings can be hurt, because these creatures are beyond human control and can't be *seized* or *pierce[d]*. These creatures aren't even fully within divine control (40:24). God has set limits for the creatures (e.g., Job 38:8-11), but within those limits no sense of direct divine management seems to be in view.

41:1-34 The same basic points may be stated about *Leviathan* (41:1-2; see Job 3:8; Pss 74:14; 104:26; Isa 27:1). It's probably to be identified with the crocodile (with its

41:10 Job 3:8  
 41:11 Ex 19:5;  
 Dt 10:14;  
 Ps 24:1;  
 Ro 11:35;  
 1Co 10:26  
 41:18 Job 3:9

- 7 Can you fill his hide with darts,  
 his head with a fishing spear?  
 8 Should you lay your hand on him,  
 you would never remember the battle.  
 9 Such hopes<sup>1</sup> would be delusional;  
 surely the sight of him makes one stumble.  
 10 Nobody is fierce enough to rouse him;  
 who then can stand before me?  
 11 Who opposes me that I must repay?  
 Everything under heaven is mine.  
 12 I'm not awed by his limbs,  
 his strength, and impressive form.  
 13 Who can remove his outer garment;  
 who can come with a bridle for him?  
 14 Who can open the doors of his mouth,  
 surrounded by frightening teeth?  
 15 His matching scales are his pride,  
 closely locked and sealed.  
 16 One touches another;  
 even air can't come between them.  
 17 Each clings to its pair;  
 joined, they can't be separated.  
 18 His sneezes emit flashes of light;  
 his eyes are like dawn's rays.  
 19 Shafts of fire shoot from his mouth;  
 like fiery sparks they fly out.  
 20 Smoke pours from his nostrils  
 like a boiling pot over reeds.  
 21 His breath lights coals;  
 a flame shoots from his mouth.  
 22 Power resides in his neck;  
 violence dances before him.  
 23 The folds of his flesh stick together;  
 on him they are tough and unyielding.  
 24 His heart is solid like a rock,  
 hard like a lower millstone.  
 25 The divine beings dread his rising;  
 they withdraw before his thrashing.  
 26 The sword that touches him won't prevail;  
 neither will the dart, spear, nor javelin.  
 27 He treats iron as straw,  
 bronze as rotten wood.  
 28 Arrows can't make him flee;  
 slingstones he turns to straw.  
 29 He treats a club like straw;  
 he laughs at the lance's rattle.  
 30 His abdomen is like jagged pottery shards;  
 its sharp edges leave a trail in the mud.

<sup>1</sup>Or *his hopes*

reputation enhanced and imagery exaggerated). It's one of God's good creations, though dangerous to human life. Job can't *restrain* or capture it. Job won't be able to *spea*k or *make a pact* or *play* with it. It can't be killed or sold. Any effort to do so would be *delusional* (41:3-9). Given that Leviathan is a creature of God's making, who can stand before God and oppose him? Not Job. *Everything under*

*heaven* is God's! Leviathan's maker isn't awed by his form and *strength* (41:10-12). Job, however, can't control him, given his *teeth* and *closely knit scales* and other ominous features (41:12-17). *Shafts of fire shoot from his mouth*, and *Smoke pours from his nostrils* (41:19-20). Even the divine messengers *dread* his presence (41:25)! Nothing in all creation can *prevail* against him (41:26-30). The "trail" he



- <sup>31</sup>He causes the depths to churn like a boiling pot,  
stirs up the sea like a pot of scented oils,  
<sup>32</sup>leaves a bright wake behind him;  
the frothy deep seems white-haired.  
<sup>33</sup>None on earth can compare to him;  
he is made to be without fear.  
<sup>34</sup>He looks on all the proud;  
he is king over all proud beasts.

### Job's second response

42 Job answered the LORD:

- <sup>1</sup>I know you can do anything;  
no plan of yours can be opposed successfully.  
<sup>3</sup>You said, "Who is this darkening counsel without knowledge?"  
I have indeed spoken about things I didn't understand,  
wonders beyond my comprehension.  
<sup>4</sup>You said, "Listen and I will speak;  
I will question you and you will inform me."  
<sup>5</sup>My ears had heard about you,  
but now my eyes have seen you.  
<sup>6</sup>Therefore, I relent<sup>l</sup> and find comfort  
on dust and ashes.

### Epilogue

<sup>7</sup>After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, he said to Eliphaz from Teman, "I'm angry at you and your two friends because you haven't spoken about me correctly as did my servant Job. <sup>8</sup>So now, take seven bulls and seven rams, go to my servant Job, and prepare an entirely burned offering for yourselves. Job my servant will pray for you, and I will act favorably by not making fools of you because you didn't speak correctly, as did my servant Job."

<sup>9</sup>Eliphaz from Teman, Bildad from Shuah, and Zophar from Naamah did what the LORD told them; and the LORD acted favorably toward Job. <sup>10</sup>Then the LORD changed Job's fortune when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD doubled all Job's earlier possessions. <sup>11</sup>All his brothers, sisters, and acquaintances came to him and ate food with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him concerning all the disaster the LORD had brought on him, and each one gave him a qesitah<sup>m</sup> and a gold ring. <sup>12</sup>Then the LORD blessed Job's latter days more than his former ones. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels,

<sup>l</sup>Heb lacks *You said*. <sup>k</sup>Heb lacks *You said*. <sup>l</sup>The verse is capable of several translations: *I despise or relent*, no direct object; *repent of or concerning dust and ashes*. <sup>m</sup>A monetary unit

leaves when moving through the sea is remarkable (41:31-32). *None on earth can compare to him*. He is *king over all proud beasts* (41:33-34).

42:1-6 Job's second response to God. Job confesses that no divine *plan* can be *opposed* in any final way (42:2). Responding to two of God's questions (Job 38:2; 40:7), Job admits to speaking *about things [he] didn't understand*. Job has moved from simply hearing about God to seeing God (hoped for in Job 19:26-27) and the nature of God's creation (and his place within it; 42:3-5). See sidebar, "God Speaks" at Job 40.

42:6 A difficult text to interpret (see translation note). Job doesn't confess his sins. Rather, Job *relent[s]* by turning away from his earlier convictions about God, and *find[s]* *comfort* even while sitting *on dust and ashes* (see Job 2:8)—or, he sets aside his remorse in order to return to normal life (see Job 30:19).

42:7-17 Epilogue. The prose literary style returns to that of Job 1-2. God's evaluation of the words of Job and his friends is strategically placed at the beginning

(42:7-8). The friends thought that Job had insulted God and therefore would be punished further. God, by pronouncing the rightness of Job's words and condemning theirs in a public way, affirms that Job's suffering, contrary to their way of thinking, was innocent and that his complaints didn't risk his standing with God (which is shown by God restoring Job's fortunes). Even more, God provides a sacrificial means by which the wrongs of the friends can be forgiven. Contrary to their own view of reward and punishment, the friends won't suffer the consequences of their "folly."

42:7-8 God speaks to the friends in anger with a repeated negative evaluation of their words (probably both words *about* God and the absence of words to God; see Job 13:7-10) and a positive evaluation of Job's words (though not necessarily all his words; Job 38:2). Yet God provides for a positive future for the friends through Job's prayers.

42:9-12 The end of the book is bittersweet. *when [Job] prayed*, God responded and *doubled* his lost possessions.

41:34 Job 28:8

42:2 Gn 18:14;  
Mt 19:26

42:3 Job 38:2;  
Ps 40:5, Ps 131:1,  
Ps 139:6

42:5 Is 6:5;  
Ro 10:17

42:6 Job 2:8,  
Job 30:19,  
Job 40:4

42:7 Job 2:11,  
Job 4:1, Job 32:3,  
Job 42:8

42:8 Nm 23:1;  
Job 1:5; 1Jn 5:16

42:10 Dt 30:3;  
Ps 14:7

one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. <sup>13</sup>He also had seven sons and three daughters. <sup>14</sup>He named one Jemimah,<sup>q</sup> a second Keziah,<sup>o</sup> and the third Kerenhappuch.<sup>p</sup> <sup>15</sup>No women in all the land were as beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave an inheritance to them along with their brothers. <sup>16</sup>After this, Job lived 140 years and saw four generations of his children. <sup>17</sup>Then Job died, old and satisfied.

<sup>q</sup>Dove <sup>o</sup>Cinnamon <sup>p</sup>Jar for Dark Cosmetic

God also provided Job with 10 children, though his oldest children are dead.  
42:13-16 In this new world, only Job's *daughters* are given

names. Their beauty is noted and they share *an inheritance* with their brothers (cf. Num 27:1-8).  
42:17 Job, finally, is *satisfied* to live in such a world.

# PSALMS

The book of Psalms, also called the Psalter, is a collection of 150 poems. Originally, leaders wrote and used psalms in worship. Most of the poems are either songs of praise (hymns) or prayers (often for help) that were sung or spoken. The writers tell about going into God's house (the temple) and performing acts of worship, including playing music and singing, shouting joyfully, lifting up hands in prayer, making sacrifices, and fulfilling promises to God.

Later communities passed along the psalms as sacred text or scripture. Human words to God became understood as God's word to humans. As the Psalms were accepted as scripture, their

value for instruction became more important. Communities saw that the Psalms could teach people about God, God's will, and faithful living.

## *The Psalms and Worship*

To appreciate how to use the Psalms in worship, it helps to know that there are different types of psalms. The psalms in the book of Psalms often combine elements from more than one type of psalm and arrange these elements in different ways. The major types are as follows:

**Prayers for help:** Individuals and communities in distress pray to God and ask for help. These prayers are known as *laments*, *complaints*,



Tambourine  
Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

or *protests*. The main elements include a description of the trouble (the complaint itself), petition for God's help, and expressions of trust and/or praise. These prayers were probably offered in the temple, and later in synagogues, or perhaps even in small religious meetings that would have taken place in homes. These prayers for help are called *individual laments* when it is a person who is in distress (sometimes because of problems with enemies) and who asks God for help.

**Communal prayers for help:** When the community is in distress and someone speaks for the community, these prayers are called *communal* or *community laments* (see Pss 44; 74).

**Songs of praise:** Also known as *hymns*, these psalms invite other people to praise God and provide reasons for praise. The songs of praise were sung to music in worship (see Pss 33; 100). Several songs of praise announce that God rules or address God as king. Because they celebrate God's coming to the throne as king, these psalms are called *coronation* or *enthronement psalms* (Pss 29; 47; 93; 95–99).

**Psalms of thanks:** Like the songs of praise, these psalms look back at the past and offer or invite thankfulness to God for God's help in getting out of trouble (see Pss 30; 116).

**Psalms of trust:** These psalms confess faith in God's guidance, provision, and care. Though they are usually spoken about God, sometimes parts of the psalm are prayers to God (see Pss 16; 23).

**Wisdom psalms:** Some psalms offer direct instruction to the faithful, and are usually called *wisdom psalms*. Such instruction may be like a religious teaching, spoken in a place of worship (see Pss 37; 49; 73). Some of these psalms (or portions of them) are spoken as God's speech to the people (see Pss 50; 81), and are called *prophetic exhortations* since they offer warnings and encouragement.

**Instruction psalms:** Three psalms, each placed at a key position in the Psalter, feature the concept of *torah*, "instruction" (see Pss 1; 19; 119).

**Royal psalms:** These psalms feature the earthly king, either as subject or speaker or both (see Pss 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 101; 110; 132; 144; see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2).

**Songs of Zion:** These psalms focus attention on Jerusalem (see Pss 46; 48; 76; 84; 87; 122;

132; 137; see sidebar, "Psalms 46–48: Jerusalem, Zion, and God's Kingship" at Ps 48).

**Entranceliturgies:** Two psalms appear to have been used originally as part of ceremonies when people came to the temple (see Pss 15; 24).

**Historical psalms:** Several psalms focus on reciting major events in the history of the people (see Pss 78; 105; 106; 136).

Several dimensions shaped the development of the Psalms from worship materials into scripture. Editors included titles for many psalms—for example, proper names, information, worship instructions such as "For the music leader," references to musical instruments, or names of melodies to which certain psalms were sung. David is the name that is mentioned the most in the psalm titles, appearing 73 times (see Ps 3). It is unlikely that David wrote any of these psalms, so the phrase "of David" could also be translated "dedicated to David" or "for David" or "in honor of David." The phrase seems to be a way of honoring David's memory and influence. The poets who likely wrote the psalms were members of levitical guilds, such as those of Korah (see Pss 42–43; 1 Chron 9:19; 2 Chron 20:19) and Asaph (see Ps 50; 1 Chron 16:5, 7; 25:1–2; Ezra 3:10).

The patterns of psalm titles also indicate collections that were shaped into five books or divisions. Each "book" ends with a short hymn of praise to God (see Pss 41:13; 72:18–19; 89:52; 106:48). The planned shaping took place over time to form what is now the Psalter (see sidebars, "Books II–III and the Elohistc Psalter" at Ps 42; "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89; "Book V" at Ps 107). This shaping draws attention to the concept of *torah*, or "instruction," since the five-book arrangement recalls the five books of Moses (Genesis–Deuteronomy) that are called "The Torah." In addition, Psalm 1 uses God's "Instruction" (Ps 1:2) to introduce the Psalms, and the central placement of Psalms 19 and 119 in Books I and V calls attention to God's "Instruction" (see sidebars, "Torah [Instruction]: Psalms 15–24"; "Book V" at Ps 107). The arrangement invites readers to use the Psalms to learn about God and God's will. In other words, readers are able to see the Psalms in the context of worship in ancient Israel and Judah and to hear the Psalms as expressions of faith. Devotion to God and God's

will for the world is the center of that faith, and the major dimensions of that faith form the central components of the Psalter's "Instruction."

**God rules the world:** God is often addressed as king (see Ps 5:2), and the shape of the Psalter highlights Psalms 93 and 95–99, a collection of songs of praise that proclaim God's rule (see sidebars, "Psalms 46–48: Jerusalem, Zion, and God's Kingship"; "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89).

**God wants worldwide justice, righteousness, and peace:** The placement of Psalms 96 and 98 suggests that God comes into the world to establish justice and righteousness, which are the foundations for peace (see Pss 9:8; 10:18; 72:1–7, 12–14; 82:1–4; 97:2; 99:4; 146:7; see sidebars, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89; "The Poor and Needy" at Ps 82).

**The role of God's "anointed" and God's people:** Psalm 2 highlights the role of the earthly king, God's "anointed one." The king is responsible for ensuring that God's will for justice, righteousness, and peace become reality

in the world (Ps 72:1–7); but Psalm 89 tells about rejecting David's kingship. So these psalms seem to suggest that God's people inherited the responsibility to do God's will in the world (see Pss 105:15; 144:11–14; 149:6–9; see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2).

**The nature of true happiness:** The Hebrew word translated "truly happy" occurs more than twenty times in the Psalms. A portrait of happiness involves constant attention to God's "instruction" and dependence on God for life, protection, and future (see Pss 1:1–2; 2:12; see sidebar, "True Happiness" at Ps 1).

**Waiting for God:** Because God rules amid the reality of constant opposition to God, God's will, God's "anointed one," and God's people, the life of faith involves deep trust in God and hope in the completion of God's purposes (see Pss 5:3; 25:3, 5, 21; 27:14; 31:24; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). The claim that God rules in the middle of widespread opposition also suggests that God exercises power not as force but as love (see sidebar, "God's Faithful Love" at Ps 6).

*J. Clinton McCann Jr.*

1:1 Ps 26:4-5;  
 Prov 1:22;  
 Prov 4:14;  
 Jer 15:17

1:2 Josh 1:8;  
 Ps 112:1;  
 Ps 119:1;  
 Ps 119:16;  
 Ps 119:35

1:3 Gn 39:3;  
 Nm 24:6;  
 Ps 92:12;  
 Jer 17:8;  
 Eze 47:12

1:4 Job 21:18;  
 Ps 35:5; Is 17:13;  
 Hos 13:3;  
 Mt 3:12

1:5 Ps 5:5

1:6 Ps 37:18;  
 Na 1:7; 2Ti 2:19

## BOOK I (Psalms 1–41)

### Psalm 1

- <sup>1</sup>The truly happy person  
 doesn't follow wicked advice,  
 doesn't stand on the road of sinners,  
 and doesn't sit with the disrespectful.
- <sup>2</sup>Instead of doing those things,  
 these persons love the LORD's Instruction,  
 and they recite God's Instruction day and night!
- <sup>3</sup>They are like a tree replanted by streams of water,  
 which bears fruit at just the right time  
 and whose leaves don't fade.  
 Whatever they do succeeds.
- <sup>4</sup>That's not true for the wicked!  
 They are like dust that the wind blows away.
- <sup>5</sup>And that's why the wicked will have no standing in the court of justice—  
 neither will sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
- <sup>6</sup>The LORD is intimately acquainted with the way of the righteous,  
 but the way of the wicked is destroyed.

**True Happiness** The first word in the Psalms (in Hebrew) is translated “truly happy” (Ps 1:1). This word occurs more than twenty times, for example in the final psalms of Books I–IV (see Pss 41:1; 72:17; 89:15; 106:3) and in the collection that concludes the Psalter (see Ps 146:5). In the Psalms, true happiness is God-centered. It means constantly focusing on God's will (see Pss 1:1; 94:12; 119:1), which means doing justice and righteousness (see Pss 106:3; 112:1; 128:1). Justice involves caring for the poor (see Pss 41:1; 72:1-7, 12-14, 17). Being righteous doesn't mean doing everything right but relying on God for forgiveness and grace (see Ps 32:1-2). True happiness also means depending upon God rather than self, trusting and hoping in God (see Pss 40:4; 84:12; 146:5), seeking God's presence in worship and elsewhere (see Pss 84:4; 89:15; 119:2), and always relying on God for strength and protection (including taking “refuge” in God; see Pss 2:12; 34:8; 84:5). The “truly happy” are called “the righteous” (see Ps 1).

1:1-6 Psalm 1 introduces the book of Psalms and invites readers to hear the psalms as sources of teaching about God and God's will for the world. Psalm 1 is a “torah psalm” (see also Pss 19; 119) emphasizing the concept of Instruction. The Hebrew term *torah* occurs twice in Psalm 1:2.

1:1 *The truly happy person*: True happiness refers to learning from God's teaching, and always doing what God wants (see Pss 2:12; 41:1; Josh 1:8; see sidebar, “True Happiness” at Ps 1). *wicked*: The word names those who oppose God, God's will, and God's faithful people. It occurs in Psalm 1:4-6 and elsewhere in the Psalms too (see sidebar, “The Enemies” at Ps 3). *sinners*: In the larger point of view of the Bible, everyone is sinful (see Pss 14:2-3; 143:2), and the writers of the psalms sometimes confess their own sin (see Pss 32:1-2; 51:1-5). Here and in Psalm 1:5, “sinners” are those who don't listen to God or even try to follow God's Instruction. *disrespectful*: The word occurs most often in Proverbs to describe persons who refuse to be taught (Prov 1:22; 9:7-8; 13:1).

1:2 *Instruction*: The books of Genesis–Deuteronomy were known as The Torah, or The Instruction. These books contain many specific commandments. The psalmist may

have had The Torah in mind; but the Hebrew word *torah* can mean God's will in the broadest sense—that is, it can refer to what the Psalms call God's justice, righteousness, and peace (see Pss 72:1-7; 96:10-13; 98:9).

1:3 *tree*: The faithful are like trees, and their soil is in the temple (see Pss 52:8; 92:12-15; see also Jer 17:7-8). The picture of the tree suggests that following God's Instruction gives an experience of God's presence (see sidebar, “Psalms 46–48: Jerusalem and God's Kingship”; “Book V” at Ps 107). *succeeds*: The success of the faithful isn't outward or visible (see Pss 3:1-2; 5:8; 6:2-3; 13:2). It comes from being connected to God and being protected there (see Ps 2:12). The wicked always appear to be doing well (see Pss 10:6, 10-11; 11:2-3; 73:3-12).

1:4-6 Even if the wicked appear to prosper, the faithful always give themselves to God and trust that God and God's ways will finally win.

1:5 *neither . . . the righteous*: The punishment of the wicked results from their choice to cut themselves off from God and God's people by failing to follow God's Instruction. The faithful will be known as “the righteous.” The term doesn't imply sinlessness (see Ps 32:1-2), but devotion to and reliance on God rather than on oneself.

## Psalm 2

- <sup>1</sup>Why do the nations rant?  
Why do the peoples rave uselessly?
- <sup>2</sup>The earth's rulers take their stand;  
the leaders scheme together against the LORD  
and against his anointed one.  
<sup>3</sup>"Come!" they say.  
"We will tear off their ropes and throw off their chains!"
- <sup>4</sup>The one who rules in heaven laughs;  
my Lord makes fun of them.
- <sup>5</sup>But then God speaks to them angrily;  
then he terrifies them with his fury:  
<sup>6</sup>"I hereby appoint my king on Zion, my holy mountain!"
- <sup>7</sup>I will announce the LORD's decision:  
He said to me, "You are my son,  
today I have become your father.
- <sup>8</sup>Just ask me, and I will make the nations your possession;  
the far corners of the earth will be your property.
- <sup>9</sup>You will smash them with an iron rod;  
you will shatter them like a pottery jar."
- <sup>10</sup>So kings, wise up!  
Be warned, you rulers of the earth!
- <sup>11</sup>Serve the LORD reverently—  
trembling, <sup>12</sup>kiss his feet<sup>a</sup>

2:1 Ps 46:6;  
Ac 4:25-26  
2:2 In 1:41  
2:3 Jer 5:5  
2:4 Ps 11:4;  
Ps 37:13;  
Ps 59:8; Prv 1:26;  
Is 40:22  
2:5 Ps 21:9;  
Ps 76:7  
2:6 Ps 48:2;  
Ps 110:2; Is 9:7  
2:7 2Sa 7:14;  
Mt 3:17;  
Ac 13:33;  
Heb 1:5; Heb 5:5  
2:8 Ps 22:27;  
Ps 72:8  
2:9 Rev 2:27;  
Rev 12:5;  
Rev 19:15  
2:10 2Sa 23:3;  
Ps 2:11; Ps 72:11;  
Prv 8:15;  
Prv 16:12  
2:11 Phi 2:12;  
Heb 12:28  
2:12 Ps 5:11;  
Ps 34:8; Ps 84:12;  
Jer 17:7; Rev 6:16

*God's Anointed One* The "anointed one" (Hebrew *meshiakh* or "messiah") is a human king (see 1 Sam 9:16). Psalms that feature the king are royal psalms (Pss 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144) and appear many times in the book of Psalms. Some royal psalms occur at key places—as part of the introduction to the Psalter (Ps 2) and at the end of Books II and III (Pss 72 and 89). The king (messiah) is important in the Psalms as one who represents God's rule and God's will (see Pss 2, 72; Deut 17:14-20).

David, the greatest king, receives credit for 73 psalms. The titles of 13 of these psalms mention specific events in David's life (see Pss 3; 7; 18; 34; 51; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59; 60; 63; 142). The editors of the book of Psalms used the titles to invite readers to identify with David's struggles and faith. It's revealing that most of the psalms assigned to David are prayers for help. These psalms picture David as one who suffers (see sidebar, "The Psalms and Jesus" at Ps 22). Psalm 89 speaks about rejecting the political rule of David's descendants. The royal psalms in Books IV and V may express hope for rebuilding a political rule (see Ps 101). Most likely they affirm that God will use human agents to complete God's will in the world (see Pss 105; 144; 149).

<sup>a</sup>Correction; Heb uncertain; MT *rejoice with trembling, kiss the son* (but with *son* in Aram, not Heb)

2:1-12 Psalm 2 is a royal psalm. It features the earthly king (see Pss 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144). The king was responsible for putting God's will into action in the world (see Ps 72). So Psalm 2 is a good fit with Psalm 1 to introduce the book of Psalms.

2:1 *nations...peoples*: Like the wicked in Psalm 1, they reject God and God's ways (Ps 2:2-3). Opposing God continues throughout the Psalter (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

2:2 *anointed one*: Kings were anointed with oil when they took office. The Hebrew term is *meshiakh* or *messiah* (see Pss 18:50; 20:6; 89:38, 51; 132:10; see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2).

2:4 *who rules in heaven*: This phrase expresses an important theme in the Psalter: God's rule (see Pss 5:2; 93; 95-99). *laughs...makes fun*: Even when it's challenged, God's claim on the world and its people is secure (see Pss 37:13; 59:8).

2:6-9 It's likely that the give-and-take between God and

the king was part of a ceremony for new kings. The ceremony usually took place in the temple area.

2:6 *Zion, my holy mountain*: the location of the temple. The term *Zion* often refers to the city of Jerusalem (see sidebar, "Psalms 46-48: Jerusalem and God's Kingship"). Something *holy* is something "set apart" or special (see Ps 93:5). 2:7 *my son*: Kings were known as God's sons (see Ps 89:26-27; 2 Sam 7:14; Mark 1:11; Heb 1:5).

2:8-9 *Just ask...pottery jar*: The language is forceful and violent, but it communicates God's universal claim that the world's rulers must recognize in Psalm 2:10-12.

2:11 *Serve the LORD*: The rebellious rulers of Psalm 2:2 are now given a chance to submit to God. The only other occurrence of this invitation is Psalm 100:2, immediately after a collection that clearly affirms God's universal rule of the world (see Pss 93; 95-99).

2:12 *refuge*: This derives from entrusting life and future

3:1 2Sa 15:12,  
2Sa 15:14  
3:3 Gn 15:1;  
Ps 27:6, Ps 28:7,  
Ps 119:114  
3:4 Ps 2:6,  
Ps 34:4, Ps 43:3,  
Ps 77:1, Ps 142:1  
3:5 Lv 26:6;  
Ps 4:8; Pvr 3:24  
3:6 Ps 23:4,  
Ps 27:3,  
Ps 118:10  
3:7 Job 16:10,  
Job 29:17;  
Ps 58:6

or else he will become angry,  
and your way will be destroyed because his anger ignites in an instant.

But all who take refuge in the LORD are truly happy!

### Psalm 3

*A psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom.*

<sup>1</sup> LORD, I have so many enemies!

So many are standing against me.

<sup>2</sup> So many are talking about me:

“Even God won’t help him.”

<sup>3</sup> But you, LORD, are my shield!

You are my glory!

You are the one who restores me.

<sup>4</sup> I cry out loud to the LORD,

and he answers me from his holy mountain.

<sup>5</sup> I lie down, sleep, and wake up because the LORD helps me.

<sup>6</sup> I won’t be afraid of thousands of people surrounding me on all sides.

<sup>7</sup> Stand up, LORD!

Save me, my God!

In fact, hit all my enemies on the jaw;

shatter the teeth of the wicked!

*Selah*<sup>b</sup>

*Selah*

**The Enemies** The first line of the first prayer for help in the Psalms introduces what will be a constant feature of the psalmists’ experiences: “LORD, I have so many enemies!” (Ps 3:1). Even before Psalm 3, Psalms 1–2 make it clear that there’s opposition to God and God’s will, to God’s “anointed one,” and to God’s people. The exact identity of the enemies is unknown. It’s clear that they have no use for God and God’s will (see Pss 3:2; 10:4, 6, 11, 13), and that their behavior is misleading, destructive, violent, and sometimes deadly (see Pss 4:2; 5:6; 7:2; 17:9–12; 35:4). The enemies may be anything or anybody that opposes God’s will for justice, righteousness, and peace in the world. This invites present-day readers of the Psalms to identify their own enemies. The enemies are named with a variety of terms, including the wicked, foes, fools, evildoers, the arrogant, and the proud.

Precisely because the enemies are always present, the psalmists frequently request God to deal with the enemies. These requests often sound vengeful and violent (see Pss 3:7; 10:15; 17:13), but these are prayers of people who have been severely mistreated. The real point of these prayers isn’t personal payback but rather a deep desire that God set things right for those whose lives are threatened. In short, the vengeful-sounding requests for God to act are acts of hope as well as prayers for justice. They prepare us to hear the Lord’s Prayer, “Bring in your kingdom so that your will is done on earth as it’s done in heaven” (Matt 6:10).

<sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain; probably a musical term

to God. In the midst of adversity, the psalmists constantly look to God for protection (see Pss 5:11; 7:1; 11:2; 14:6; 16:1; 25:20; 31:1, 19; 62:7–8). *truly happy*: The necessity of taking refuge in God shows that true happiness doesn’t mean the absence of threat or suffering (see Ps 1:1; see sidebar, “True Happiness” at Ps 1). The repetition of this phrase in Psalm 1:1 and Psalm 2:12 suggests that Psalms 1 and 2 serve together to introduce the Psalter.

3:1–8 This is the first prayer for help in the book of Psalms, the first of 73 psalms to mention David in the title, and the first of 13 psalms to be associated with a particular event in David’s life (see Pss 7; 18; 34; 51; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59; 60; 63; 142; see sidebar, “God’s Anointed One” at Ps 2). In this case, the title recalls David’s situation after the rebellion by his son Absalom (2 Sam 15–18). The editors of the Psalter probably added the titles well after the time of David in order to honor David. The titles may also invite readers to identify with David’s struggles and

with his faith in the midst of them. As in several other prayers for help, the element of trust is prominent (see Pss 3:3–6, 8; 4; 31).

3:1 *so many enemies*: See sidebar, “The Enemies.” The repeated use of “so many” tells the extent of the opposition and the urgency of the situation.

3:2 The enemies disagree with the claim that concludes Psalm 2.

3:3 *shield*: This is a frequent image for God’s protection (see Pss 7:10; 18:2, 30; 28:7; 33:20; 59:11; 84:11; 115:9–11; 119:114; 144:2).

3:4 *holy mountain*: See Psalm 2:6.

3:6 *thousands*: Comes from the same Hebrew term as “so many” in Psalm 3:1–2, and emphasizes the extent of the opposition and the depth of God’s protecting presence (see Ps 27:3).

3:7–8 *Save . . . Rescue*: These two words translate the same Hebrew root translated as “help” in Psalm 3:2. So the writer



<sup>8</sup>Rescue comes from the LORD!  
May your blessing be on your people!

### Psalm 4

For the music leader. With stringed instruments.

A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup>Answer me when I cry out, my righteous God!  
Set me free from my troubles!  
Have mercy on me!  
Listen to my prayer!

<sup>2</sup>How long, you people, will my reputation be insulted?  
How long will you continue to love what is worthless  
and go after lies?

<sup>3</sup>Know this: the LORD takes personal care of the faithful.  
The LORD will hear me when I cry out to him.

<sup>4</sup>So be afraid, and don't sin!  
Think hard about it in your bed and weep over it!

<sup>5</sup>Bring righteous offerings, and trust the LORD!

<sup>6</sup>Many people say,  
"We can't find goodness anywhere.  
The light of your face has left us, LORD!"<sup>c</sup>

<sup>7</sup>But you have filled my heart with more joy  
than when their wheat and wine are everywhere!

<sup>8</sup>I will lie down and fall asleep in peace  
because you alone, LORD, let me live in safety.

### Psalm 5

For the music leader. For the flutes. A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup>Hear my words, LORD!  
Consider my groans!

<sup>c</sup>Correction; MT *Shine the light of your face on us, LORD!*

affirms and depends on the divine help that the enemies say isn't possible. *hit...shatter...the wicked*: This is the first of many requests for God to take action against the enemies. The language is violent, but the issue isn't personal payback. Rather, the suffering psalmists, here and elsewhere, ask God to set things right for victims. In short, this and similar requests are essentially prayers for justice (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

4:1-8 Like Psalm 3, Psalm 4 is a prayer for help that features the element of trust (Ps 4:3-5, 7-8). As in many psalm titles, the mention of "the music leader" and a musical instrument suggest that people sang the psalms (see Ps 33:2; see sidebar, "Music and Singing" at Ps 33).

4:1 These requests for help are frequent. *Answer me*: See Psalms 13:3; 27:7; 55:2; 69:13, 16, 17; 86:1; 108:6; 143:7. *Have mercy*: See Psalms 6:2; 9:13; 25:16; 26:11; 27:7; 30:10; 31:9. The underlying Hebrew root is used as a fundamental characteristic of God in Exodus 34:6. *Listen...prayer*: See Psalms 39:12; 54:2; 84:8; 102:1; 143:1.

4:2-5 The writer talks to other people, probably his or her opponents, questions their behavior (4:2), and advises them to turn to God (4:3-5). As is often the case, the writer is a victim of slander (see Pss 5:6, 9; 7:14; 27:12; 31:13; 35:20; 36:3; 38:12; 52:2-4; 58:3-5; 140:1-5; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

4:5 *trust*: As a frequent and important word in the Psalms, "trust" is a synonym for taking "refuge in the Lord" (Ps 2:12). 4:6 *The light of your face*: God's presence, which offers security and help (see Pss 27:1; 31:16; 36:9; 44:3; 67:1; 80:3, 7, 19; 89:15; 119:135; Num 6:25). Here that presence seems to be missing.

4:7-8 In response to the complaint of Psalm 4:6, the writer affirms an experience of God's presence and provision. As in Psalm 3:5, the writer can rest securely. *peace*: The Hebrew term is *shalom*, and it means complete well-being, a kind of peace the writer credits only to God. In Hebrew, the term "peace" is the first word of Psalm 4:8, and the final word is "safety," as if to say that God's providing and protecting presence cover the writer. Psalm 4:8 is often used as an evening prayer.

5:1-12 In this prayer for help, the psalmist's attention moves back and forth between the appeal to God in the midst of crisis (5:1-3, 7-8, 10) and descriptions of the opponents and how God views them (5:4-6, 9). Verses 11-12 combine appeal and celebration of God's protecting presence. As in Psalm 4:2-5, the writer may have been a victim of slander. In any case, the enemies' speech is misleading, hurtful, and destructive (5:5-6, 9; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). The writer stands with God (5:7-8), trusting that God would stand for what is true and right and with

Selah

3:8 Ps 37:39;  
Is 43:11, Is 45:21;  
Jon 2:9; Rev 7:10

4:1 Job 36:16;  
Ps 3:4, Ps 6:1,  
Ps 17:6;  
Hab 3:19

4:2 Ps 3:3,  
Ps 5:6, Ps 31:6,  
Ps 57:4, Is 59:4

4:3 Ps 6:8

4:4 Ps 77:6;

Eph 4:26

4:5 Dt 33:19;  
Ps 37:3, Ps 51:19,  
Ps 62:8, Ps 115:9

4:6 Nm 6:25-26;  
Ps 31:16, Ps 67:1,  
Ps 119:135

4:7 Is 9:3

4:8 Ps 3:5;

Prv 3:24

5:1 Ps 17:1

Selah

Selah

5:2 Ps 44:4,  
Ps 84:3  
5:3 Ps 88:13,  
Ps 119:147,  
Ps 130:6; Is 26:9  
5:4 Ps 11:5  
5:5 Ps 1:5,  
Ps 45:7  
5:6 Ps 55:23;  
Rev 21:8  
5:7 Ps 138:2  
5:8 Ps 25:4-5,  
Ps 27:11  
5:9 Ps 12:2,  
Ps 52:2,  
Ps 55:21;  
Piv 29:5;  
Ro 3:13  
5:10 2Sa 15:31,  
2Sa 17:14,  
2Sa 17:23;  
Ps 9:15-16  
5:11 Ps 2:12,  
Ps 64:10,  
Ps 69:36  
5:12 Ps 29:11,  
Ps 32:10,  
Ps 115:13  
6:1 Ps 38:1

- <sup>2</sup> Pay attention to the sound of my cries, my king and my God,  
because I am praying to you!
- <sup>3</sup> LORD, in the morning you hear my voice.  
In the morning I lay it all out before you.  
Then I wait expectantly.
- <sup>4</sup> Because you aren't a God who enjoys wickedness;  
evil doesn't live with you.
- <sup>5</sup> Arrogant people won't last long in your sight;  
you hate all evildoers; <sup>6</sup> you destroy liars.  
The LORD despises people who are violent and dishonest.
- <sup>7</sup> But me? I will enter your house because of your abundant, faithful love;  
I will bow down at your holy temple, honoring you.
- <sup>8</sup> LORD, because of many enemies,  
please lead me in your righteousness.  
Make your way clear, right in front of me.
- <sup>9</sup> Because there's no truth in my enemies' mouths,  
all they have inside them is destruction.  
Their throats are open graves;  
their tongues slick with talk.
- <sup>10</sup> Condemn them, God!  
Let them fail by their own plans.  
Throw them out for their many sins because they've rebelled against you.
- <sup>11</sup> But let all who take refuge in you celebrate.  
Let them sing out loud forever!  
Protect them so that all who love your name can rejoice in you.
- <sup>12</sup> Because you, LORD, bless the righteous.  
You cover them with favor like a shield.

## Psalm 6

For the music leader. On stringed instruments.  
According to the eighth.<sup>d</sup> A psalm of David.

- <sup>1</sup> Please, LORD,  
don't punish me when you are angry;  
don't discipline me when you are furious.

<sup>d</sup> Perhaps a reference to an eight-string instrument; also in Ps 12

persons hurt by vicious and violent lies (5:4-6, 10-12; see Ps 9:18).

**5:2 my king:** This is the first mention of God as king; but God's claim on the world appears throughout the book of Psalms (see Pss 2:4, 10-12; 24:1-2, 7-10; 145:11-13; 146:10; 149:2; see sidebars, "Psalms 46-48: Jerusalem and God's Kingship"; "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89). The mention of God as king occurs often in Psalms 93; 95-99.

**5:3 morning:** An appointed time for prayer (see Pss 55:17; 59:16; 88:13; 92:2). *wait expectantly:* Because they often experience crisis, the writers wait expectantly. Their trust in God gives them hope.

**5:7 your house... your holy temple:** Victims of violent speech may have come to the temple, described here as God's house, to ask for priestly action and/or to seek protection. The speaker claims God's help against the opponents and commits to depend on God. *faithful love:* This is the first occurrence in the Psalms of this important word. It describes the core of God's character (see Exod 34:6), and it establishes the basis for a covenant with God in a committed relationship. It is often the reason to rejoice and give thanks, as well as the foundation for trusting God

with one's life and asking God for help (see sidebar, "God's Faithful Love" at Ps 7).

**5:8 your righteousness:** A basic characteristic of God and God's Instruction or will (see Ps 72:1-3; see "rightly" in Ps 96:13; 98:9).

**5:10** See Psalms 3:7-8; 7:6; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Psalm 3.

**5:11 refuge:** See Psalm 2:12.

**5:12 shield:** See Psalm 3:3, although the Hebrew word differs here and is less frequent (see Pss 35:2; 91:4).

**6:1-10** While the enemies are present in this prayer for help (6:7-8, 10; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3), the real problem appears to be divine wrath (6:1). The language of 6:2-3 suggests that the speaker was ill, and the psalm seems to reflect the belief that sickness is punishment (see Pss 38:1; 41:4; Mark 2:1-12). But finally, the Psalmist views God as a healer, and so prays to God for help (6:2, 4). Psalm 6 is one of the church's seven Penitential Psalms (see Pss 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). It doesn't mention any of the words for sin, but the speaker models penitence (or sorrow for sin) by depending on God's mercy to sustain life (6:2).

- <sup>2</sup> Have mercy on me, LORD, because I'm frail.  
 Heal me, LORD, because my bones are shaking in terror!
- <sup>3</sup> My whole body\* is completely terrified!  
 But you, LORD! How long will this last?
- <sup>4</sup> Come back to me, LORD! Deliver me!  
 Save me for the sake of your faithful love!
- <sup>5</sup> No one is going to praise you when they are dead.  
 Who gives you thanks from the grave?<sup>†</sup>
- <sup>6</sup> I'm worn out from groaning.  
 Every night, I drench my bed with tears;  
 I soak my couch all the way through.
- <sup>7</sup> My vision fails because of my grief;  
 it's weak because of all my distress.
- <sup>8</sup> Get away from me, all you evildoers,  
 because the LORD has heard me crying!
- <sup>9</sup> The LORD has listened to my request.  
 The LORD accepts my prayer.
- <sup>10</sup> All my enemies will be ashamed  
 and completely terrified;  
 they will be defeated  
 and ashamed instantly.

6:2 Ps 41:4  
 6:3 Ps 13:1,  
 Ps 90:13;  
 Jn 12:27  
 6:4 Ps 17:13,  
 Ps 31:16,  
 Ps 69:16,  
 Ps 80:14  
 6:5 Ps 30:9,  
 Ps 88:10,  
 Ps 115:17;  
 Ecc 9:10;  
 Is 38:18  
 6:6 Ps 42:3  
 6:7 Job 17:7;  
 Ps 31:9, Ps 38:10,  
 Ps 88:9;  
 Lam 5:17  
 6:8 Ps 3:4,  
 Ps 119:115,  
 Ps 139:19;  
 Mt 7:23  
 6:9 Ps 116:1  
 7:1 Ps 11:1,  
 Ps 31:1, Ps 31:15;  
 Hab 3:1

## Psalm 7

A *shiggayon*<sup>‡</sup> of David,

which he sang to the LORD about Cush, a Benjaminite.

- <sup>1</sup> I take refuge in you, LORD, my God.  
 Save me from all who chase me! Rescue me!

**God's Faithful Love** One of the most important words in the OT, including the Psalms, is a Hebrew word translated as "faithful love" (or sometimes "loyal love" when it is paired with "faithfulness"). "Faithful love" occurs often in all types of psalms. The word occurs twice in God's self-revelation to Moses (see "loyalty" in Exod 34:6-7). It's a one-word summary of God's character; and it isn't surprising that Exodus 34:6-7 is a brief statement of faith for Israel (see Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2) that's echoed in Psalms 86:15; 103:8; and 145:8.

God's "faithful love" is a basic reason for praising God. Some songs of praise or thanks include "faithful love" in the first verse (see Pss 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1), or elsewhere in the psalm (see Pss 33:5, 18, 22; 98:3; 100:5; 103:4, 8, 11, 17; 117:2; 147:11). Many of the prayers for help use "faithful love" as the basis of appeal (see Pss 6:4; 25:6-7; 31:7, 16, 21; 44:26; 51:1; 57:3; 63:3); and the psalmists often speak about their hope and trust in God's "faithful love" (see Pss 5:7; 13:5; 23:6). The speakers affirm that God's "faithful love fills the whole earth" (Ps 33:5; see 36:5), and that it "is better than life itself" (Ps 63:3).

\*Or soul; also in 6:4 †Heb Sheol ‡Perhaps lament

6:2 *Have mercy*: See Psalm 4:1. *Heal me*: The speaker affirms that God is a healer (Pss 30:2; 41:4; 103:3; 147:3; see also Exod 15:26; Isa 57:18-19; Jer 3:22; 33:6; Hos 7:1; 14:4). God heals both physical illness and things like "rebellion" (Jer 3:22) and "faithlessness" (Hos 14:4), suggesting that the language of sickness may be a metaphor.

6:4 *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7.

6:5 This and similar passages (Pss 30:9; 88:10-12) may be the speakers' attempts to bargain with God. The speakers remind God that if they die, God will have one less worshipper. This makes sense, but these verses also state the speakers' deep desire to live. *grave*: See translation note. Sheol is the realm of the dead, where everyone went, and where God couldn't go (contrast Ps 139:8).

6:8-10 Why are these verses more upbeat? Perhaps

because the speaker is responding positively to private words with the priest. Or perhaps these verses came after the speaker recovered from distress (later than Ps 6:1-7). But it is more likely that the speaker continued to suffer and to "wait expectantly" (Ps 5:3) and found comfort and hope in trusting life and future to God (see Ps 13:5-6).

7:1-17 Even more so than in most prayers for help, the speaker's opponents are present and powerful (7:1-2, 6, 9, 14-16; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). The psalmist's sincere pledge of innocence (7:3-5; see Pss 17, 26) suggests that he or she may have been falsely accused (see Ps 4:2-5). The reference to *Cush* is unclear because no one named Cush appears in the stories about David.

7:1 *refuge*: See Psalm 2:12.

7:3 1Sa 24:11;  
Job 16:17  
7:4 1Sa 24:7;  
1Sa 26:9;  
Ps 109:5  
7:5 2Sa 22:43;  
2Ki 9:33; Ps 7:4;  
Is 10:6  
7:6 Ps 3:7;  
Ps 35:23;  
Ps 44:23, Ps 94:2  
7:8 Ps 18:20;  
Ps 26:1, Ps 35:24,  
Ps 43:1  
7:9 1Ch 28:9;  
Ps 11:5; Ps 26:2;  
Jer 11:20;  
Rev 2:23  
7:10 Ps 3:3  
7:11 Gn 18:25;  
Nm 11:1; Ps 9:4,  
Ps 50:6; Na 1:2  
7:12 Dt 32:41  
7:14 Job 15:35;  
Is 33:11, Is 59:4;  
Jas 1:15  
7:15 Ps 9:15,  
Ps 35:7, Ps 57:6;  
Prov 26:27;  
Ecc 10:8  
7:16 Est 9:25

- <sup>2</sup>Otherwise, they will rip me apart,  
dragging me off with no chance of rescue.
- <sup>3</sup>LORD, my God, if I have done this—  
if my hands have done anything wrong,  
<sup>4</sup>if I have repaid a friend with evil  
or oppressed a foe for no reason—  
<sup>5</sup>then let my enemy not only chase but catch me,  
trampling my life into the ground,  
laying my reputation in the dirt.
- <sup>6</sup>Get up, LORD; get angry!  
Stand up against the fury of my foes!  
Wake up, my God;<sup>b</sup>  
you command that justice be done!
- <sup>7</sup>Let the assembled peoples surround you.  
Rule them from on high!<sup>1</sup>
- <sup>8</sup>The LORD will judge the peoples.  
Establish justice for me, LORD,  
according to my righteousness  
and according to my integrity.
- <sup>9</sup>Please let the evil of the wicked be over,  
but set the righteous firmly in place  
because you, the righteous God,  
are the one who examines hearts and minds.

- <sup>10</sup>God is my shield;  
he saves those whose heart is right.
- <sup>11</sup>God is a righteous judge,  
a God who is angry<sup>1</sup> every single day.
- <sup>12</sup>If someone doesn't change their ways,  
God will sharpen his sword,  
will bend his bow,  
will string an arrow.
- <sup>13</sup>God has deadly weapons in store  
for those who won't change;  
he gets his flaming arrows ready!
- <sup>14</sup>But look how the wicked hatch evil,  
conceive trouble, give birth to lies!
- <sup>15</sup>They make a pit, dig it all out,  
and then fall right into the hole that they've made!
- <sup>16</sup>The trouble they cause  
will come back on their own heads;

<sup>b</sup>Or for my sake <sup>1</sup>Correction; MT *Come back to be exalted over them.* <sup>1</sup>Heb lacks at evil.

**7:6** *get angry... that justice be done!* This verse makes it clear that God's anger shows divine displeasure with wrongdoing and serves the purpose of establishing justice (see Pss 7:11; 3:7-8; 9:4; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). *Wake up:* Psalm 121:3 suggests that God never sleeps, but several prayers include the plea for God to awaken (see Pss 35:23; 44:23; 59:5). In both cases the psalmist is expecting God's attention.

**7:8** *my righteousness... my integrity:* The psalmist doesn't claim sinlessness in general but innocence in this particular situation, and faithfulness in the relationship with God (see Ps 18:25).

**7:11** *righteous judge:* Righteousness is the key concept

in this psalm (see Ps 7:8, 9, 17). In the midst of being mistreated, the psalmist trusts God to set things right (see Ps 5:8; 1 Pet 2:23).

**7:12-13** The image is violent, but the issue isn't simply payback. Rather, it is God's purpose and power to set things right (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

**7:14-17** The birth image in 7:14 communicates the total wickedness of the psalmist's enemies (see Job 15:35; Isa 59:4). The psalmist trusts that wickedness will finally self-destruct (see Pss 9:15; 35:7-8; 57:6; 141:10; Prov 26:27), a process in which she or he detects the divine work of "righteousness" (7:17), and for which God is to be praised.

the violence they commit  
will come down on their own skulls.

- 17 But I will thank the LORD for his righteousness;  
I will sing praises to the name of the LORD Most High.

## Psalm 8

For the music leader. According to the Gittith.<sup>k</sup> A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup> LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name throughout the earth!

You made your glory higher than heaven!<sup>l</sup>

<sup>2</sup> From the mouths of nursing babies you have laid a strong foundation  
because of your foes, in order to stop vengeful enemies.

<sup>3</sup> When I look up at your skies, at what your fingers made—  
the moon and the stars  
that you set firmly in place—

<sup>4</sup> what are human beings that you think about them;  
what are human beings that you pay attention to them?

<sup>5</sup> You've made them only slightly less than divine,  
crowning them with glory and grandeur.

<sup>6</sup> You've let them rule over your handiwork,  
putting everything under their feet—

<sup>7</sup> all sheep and all cattle, the wild animals too,

<sup>8</sup> the birds in the sky, the fish of the ocean,  
everything that travels the pathways of the sea.

<sup>9</sup> LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name throughout the earth!

7:17 Ps 9:2  
8:1 Ps 81:1,  
Ps 84:1, Ps 113:4,  
Ps 148:13  
8:2 Ps 44:16;  
Mt 11:25,  
Mt 21:16;  
1Co 1:27  
8:3 Gn 1:16;  
Ex 8:19; Ps 19:1,  
Ps 102:25,  
Ps 111:2  
8:4 Job 7:17;  
Ps 8:3, Ps 144:3;  
Heb 2:6  
8:5 Gn 1:26;  
Ps 21:5  
8:6 Gn 1:26,  
Gn 1:28;  
1Co 15:27;  
Eph 1:22  
8:8 Gn 1:26

*God the Creator* It's probably not an accident that the first *hallelu-yah* in the Psalter comes at the end of a psalm that celebrates God's creation of the world (see Ps 104:35; see sidebar, "Hallelu-yah ["Praise the Lord!"] Collections" at Ps 104). And in this regard, again it's probably no accident that the first song of praise in the Psalter, Psalm 8, is also a celebration of God as creator. Psalms 8 and 104 are sometimes called creation hymns. This is helpful, but other psalms also offer important points of view on creation and its relationship to God. For instance, at God's "coming to establish justice on the earth" (Pss 96:13; 98:9), the whole creation responds, including "the sea and everything in it" (Pss 96:11; 98:7), "all the trees of the forest" (Ps 96:12), "the rivers" (Ps 98:8), and "the mountains" (Ps 98:8). This response affirms that God claims, values, and loves the whole creation (see also Ps 24:1). This shouldn't be surprising, since the first covenant in the Bible involves not only God and human beings but also "every living being" (Gen 9:10) and "the earth" itself (Gen 9:13). Accordingly, the Psalter moves toward a conclusion by inviting the whole creation—living and nonliving—to praise God (Pss 148:1-13; 150:6).

<sup>k</sup> Perhaps the name of an instrument (Tg) or melody. LXX *About the winepresses*; or *About the Gittite*; also in Pss 81 and 84 <sup>l</sup>Correction; Heb uncertain

8:1-9 This is the first song of praise in the Psalter. As if to follow through on the promise that "I will sing praises to the name of the LORD Most High" (Ps 7:17), the psalmist begins with a focus on God's name (8:1), which suggests reputation or character. Psalm 8 is unique among the songs of praise because it addresses God directly; that is, it is actually a prayer of praise. Following the prayers for help in Psalms 3-7, in which the psalmist is consistently opposed and harassed, the affirmation of the high status of human beings is particularly striking and important (8:5-8). Psalm 8, along with Psalm 104, is sometimes identified as a creation hymn (see sidebar, "God the Creator").

8:1 The psalm begins and ends with a declaration of God's universal rule. *Lord, our Lord, how majestic*: The first "LORD" is the personal divine name (Yahweh), while the second "Lord" is used elsewhere in relation to a king (see "master" in 1 Kgs 1:11, 43, 47). "Majestic" is an attribute of royalty (see "powerful" in Ps 136:18).

8:2 The pairing of military images and children is striking.

God is so powerful that God can use babies as the first line of defense; that is, God turns weakness into strength (see 2 Cor 12:9). This looks forward to the message of Psalm 8:3-8, in which small and helpless human beings are made "only slightly less than divine" (Ps 8:5).

8:3-4 Impressed by the vastness of the universe, the psalmist cannot help but be overcome by the apparent insignificance of humans.

8:5 God is described in royal terms (Ps 8:1, 9), and now so are human beings. *Crowning . . . glory . . . grandeur*: The vocabulary is associated elsewhere with kings (see Pss 21:5; 24:7-10; 29:1-3, 9).

8:6-8 *You've let them rule*: Ruling elsewhere is the role of kings. The human lordship involves *everything* (8:6). These verses recall Genesis 1:26-28. Human responsibility becomes key, as God shares God's power over creation with the human creature.

8:9 This verse is identical with Psalm 8:1. Because the psalm is bounded by praise for divine rule, it suggests that

9:1 Ps 26:7.

Ps 86:12.

Ps 111:1.

Ps 119:10.

Ps 138:1

9:6 Ps 34:16;

Is 14:22

9:7 Ps 93:2;

Lam 5:19

9:9 Ps 10:18;

Ps 74:21

9:11 Ps 105:1

9:12 Gn 9:5;

Ps 9:18, Ps 10:17

9:13 1Sa 1:11;

2Ki 19:16;

Job 38:17; Ps 4:1;

Mt 16:18

9:14 Ps 13:5;

Ps 20:5, Ps 21:1,

Ps 35:9, Ps 51:12

**Psalm 9<sup>m</sup>***For the music leader. According to Muth-labben.<sup>a</sup> A psalm of David.***1** I will thank you, LORD, with all my heart;

I will talk about all your wonderful acts.

**2** I will celebrate and rejoice in you;

I will sing praises to your name, Most High.

**3** When my enemies turn and retreat,

they fall down and die right in front of you

**4** because you have established justice for me and my claim,  
because you rule from the throne, establishing justice rightly.**5** You've denounced the nations, destroyed the wicked.

You've erased their names for all time.

**6** Every enemy is wiped out, like something ruined forever.

You've torn down their cities—even the memory of them is dead.

**7** But the LORD rules forever!

He assumes his throne for the sake of justice.

**8** He will establish justice in the world rightly;

he will judge all people fairly.

**9** The LORD is a safe place for the oppressed—

a safe place in difficult times.

**10** Those who know your name trust you

because you have not abandoned any who seek you, LORD.

**11** Sing praises to the LORD, who lives in Zion!

Proclaim his mighty acts among all people!

**12** Because the one who avenges bloodshed remembers those who suffer;

the LORD hasn't forgotten their cries for help.

**13** Have mercy on me, LORD!

Just look how I suffer because of those who hate me.

But you are the one who brings me back from the very gates of death

**14** so I can declare all your praises,

so I can rejoice in your salvation in the gates of Daughter Zion.

<sup>m</sup>Ps 9 is an alphabetic acrostic poem (cf Ps 119) in Heb, with successive letters of the alphabet beginning every few lines, with only a few exceptions. Only ten letters are found in Ps 9; the sequence may be continued in Ps 10, suggesting that Pss 9–10 are a single poem. <sup>a</sup>Or *Almuth labben*; Heb uncertain, perhaps a reference to the melody; cf Pss 46:1; 48:14

human rule is properly exercised in submission to God and God's will for the whole creation.

**9:1–10:18** Although the acrostic pattern isn't very clear in Psalm 10, it is likely that Psalms 9–10 belong together (see translation note m, and note that Ps 10 lacks a title). But there are differences between them. Psalm 9 starts with thanks and praise (9:1-2), because God has dealt with the opponents (9:3-6) and protected the mistreated (9:7-10). These dimensions are emphasized in Psalm 9:11-12, 15-16, 18, but the petitions in Psalm 9:13-14, 17, 19-20 look forward to Psalm 10. Psalm 10 contains extended complaints about the proud and effective power of the wicked (10:3-11, 13), accompanied by requests for God's help (10:1-2, 12, 15) and expressions of trust in God (10:14, 16-18), all of which are characteristic of a prayer for help.

**9:1** *wonderful acts*: These could include major events like

the exodus (see Exod 3:12; 15:11; Pss 77:11, 14; 78:12) or individual experiences of being rescued, such as the one the poet describes in Psalm 9:3 (see Ps 88:10, 12).

**9:4** *justice*: A key word in this psalm (Pss 9:7-8, 16, 19; 10:18) and in the entire Psalter. It is regularly associated with God's rule, as here and in Psalm 9:7-8 (see also Ps 10:16-19), as well as in Psalms 96–99 (see especially Pss 96:13; 98:9; see sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89).

**9:5-6** See Psalms 3:7-8; 7:6.

**9:7-8** See Psalm 9:4.

**9:9** *safe place*: a synonym of the more frequent "refuge" (see Ps 2:12).

**9:11** *Zion*: See Psalm 2:6.

**9:12** *who avenges bloodshed*: The point isn't payback but rather divine action to value human life (see Gen 9:5; Ezek 33:6; Pss 3:7-8; 7:6). Because God values human life, God doesn't forget those who need help (see Ps 9:18).

- ☞ <sup>15</sup>The nations have fallen into the hole they themselves made!  
 Their feet are caught in the very net they themselves hid!  
<sup>16</sup>The LORD is famous for the justice he has done;  
 it's his own doing that the wicked are trapped.
- <sup>17</sup>Let the wicked go straight to the grave,<sup>¶</sup>  
 the same for every nation that forgets God.
- ☞ <sup>18</sup>Because the poor won't be forgotten forever,  
 the hope of those who suffer won't be lost for all time.
- <sup>19</sup>Get up, LORD! Don't let people prevail!  
 Let the nations be judged before you.
- <sup>20</sup>Strike them with fear, LORD.  
 Let the nations know they are only human.

Higgayon. ° Selah

9:15 Job 18:8;  
 Ps 7:15, Ps 57:6  
 9:16 Ex 7:5  
 9:17 Job 8:13;  
 Ps 50:22  
 9:18 Ps 9:12,  
 Ps 12:5, Ps 71:5;  
 Prv 23:18,  
 Prv 24:14  
 9:19 2Ch 14:11;  
 Ps 3:7  
 9:20 Is 31:3;  
 Eze 28:2  
 10:1 Ps 13:1,  
 Ps 22:1, Ps 35:22  
 10:2 Ex 18:11;  
 Ps 7:16, Ps 9:16,  
 Ps 73:6; Prv 5:22  
 10:3 Ps 10:13,  
 Ps 49:6, Ps 94:4

Selah

10:4 Ps 14:1,  
 Ps 36:1, Ps 53:1;  
 Eph 2:12  
 10:5 Is 26:11  
 10:6 Ps 14:1;  
 Rev 18:7  
 10:7 Job 20:12;  
 Ps 12:2, Ps 36:3,  
 Ro 3:14  
 10:8 Ps 94:6;  
 Prv 1:11;  
 Hab 3:14  
 10:9 Ps 17:12,  
 Ps 59:3; Mt 7:2

Psalm 10<sup>a</sup>

- ☞ <sup>1</sup>Why do you stand so far away, LORD,  
 hiding yourself in troubling times?  
<sup>2</sup>Meanwhile, the wicked are proudly in hot pursuit of those who suffer.  
 Let them get caught in the very same schemes they've thought up!
- <sup>3</sup>The wicked brag about their body's<sup>¶</sup> cravings;  
 the greedy reject the LORD, cursing.
- <sup>4</sup>At the peak of their wrath, the wicked don't seek God:  
 There's no God—that's what they are always thinking.
- <sup>5</sup>Their ways are always twisted.  
 Your rules are too lofty for them.  
 They snort at all their foes.
- <sup>6</sup>They think to themselves,  
 We'll never stumble.  
 We'll never encounter any resistance.
- ☞ <sup>7</sup>Their mouths are filled with curses, dishonesty, violence.  
 Under their tongues lie troublemaking and wrongdoing.
- <sup>8</sup>They wait in a place perfect for ambush;<sup>¶</sup>  
 from their hiding places they kill innocent people;
- ☞ <sup>9</sup>their eyes spot those who are helpless.  
<sup>9</sup>They lie in ambush in secret places, like a lion in its lair.  
 They lie in ambush so they can seize those who suffer!  
 They seize the poor, all right, dragging them off in their nets.
- <sup>10</sup>Their helpless victims are crushed;  
 they collapse, falling prey to the strength of the wicked.
- <sup>11</sup>The wicked think to themselves:  
 God has forgotten.  
 God has hidden his face.  
 God never sees anything!

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain; or *recitation* (see Pss 1:2; 19:14) or *melody* (see Ps 92:3). <sup>¶</sup>Heb *Sheol* <sup>¶</sup>Pss 9 and 10 contain part of an acrostic poem and might originally be one poem in Heb. <sup>¶</sup>Or *soul's* <sup>¶</sup>Heb uncertain

9:15 See Psalm 7:14-17.

9:18 *the poor won't be forgotten*: God's special concern for the helpless and mistreated is seen throughout the Psalter (see Pss 9:12; 10:14, 17-18; 12:5; 14:6; 35:9-10; 40:17; 68:5-6; 70:5; 72:1-7, 12-14; 74:21; 76:9; 82:1-4; 86:1; 102:17; 103:6; 109:22, 31; 113:7-9; 140:12; 146:7-9; 147:6; 149:4; see sidebar, "The Poor and Needy" at Ps 82).

9:19-20 See Psalms 3:7-8; 7:6.

10:1-2 Although God seems to have dealt with the opponents in Psalm 9:3-6, here they are alive, well, and threatening.

10:3-11 This extended description of the wicked (see Ps 73:4-12) includes a look at their thought processes—that is, their denying God and any accountability to God (Ps 10:4, 6, 11; see Pss 10:13; 3:1-2; 12:4; 14:1; 36:1-2; 64:5-6; 73:9-11; 94:7).

10:9 *like a lion*: The enemies are often described as hungry

10:13 Ps 10:3

10:14 Dt 10:18;  
Ps 68:5, Ps 146:9;  
Hos 14:310:16 Ex 15:18;  
Ps 29:10,  
Ps 93:1;  
Jer 10:10;  
JTi 1:1710:17  
1Ch 29:18;  
Ps 9:12, Ps 9:18,  
Ps 145:19;  
Prv 10:2410:18 Dt 10:18;  
Ps 9:911:1 Ps 7:1,  
Ps 16:1, Ps 31:1411:2 Ps 7:10,  
Ps 7:12, Ps 21:12,  
Ps 37:14, Ps 58:7

11:3 Ps 82:5

11:4 Ps 2:4,  
Ps 18:6, Is 66:1;  
Hab 2:20;  
Mt 5:34

11:5 Ps 5:5

**12** Get up, LORD!Get your fist ready, God!  
Don't forget the ones who suffer!**13** Why do the wicked reject God?

Why do they think to themselves that you won't find out?

**14** But you do see!You do see troublemaking and grief, and you do something about it!  
The helpless leave it all to you.  
You are the orphan's helper.**15** Break the arms of those who are wicked and evil.

Seek out their wickedness until there's no more to find.

**16** The LORD rules forever and always!

The nations will vanish from his land.

**17** LORD, you listen to the desires of those who suffer.You steady their hearts;  
you listen closely to them, <sup>18</sup>to establish justice for the orphan  
and the oppressed,  
so that people of the land will never again be terrified.**Psalm 11***For the music leader. Of David.***1** I have taken refuge in the LORD.So how can you say to me,<sup>t</sup>"Flee to the hills like a bird <sup>2</sup>because the wicked

have already bent their bows;

they've already strung their arrows;

they are ready to secretly shoot those whose heart is right?"

**3** When the very bottom of things falls out,

what can a righteous person possibly accomplish?

**4** But the LORD is in his holy temple.

The LORD! His throne is in heaven.

His eyes see—his vision examines all of humanity.

**5** The LORD examines both the righteous and the wicked;his very being<sup>g</sup> hates anyone who loves violence.<sup>t</sup>Or my soul <sup>g</sup>Or soul

beasts (see Pss 7:2; 17:12; 22:12-13, 16, 21-22; 34:10; 35:17; 57:4; 58:6; 59:6-7, 14-15; 68:30; 91:13).

10:12 See Psalm 9:5, 19-20.

10:14 *But you do see*: The psalmist clearly affirms what the wicked have denied in Psalm 10:11. In the midst of trouble, the psalmist trusts God to see and act. *the orphan's helper*: God regularly is a helper (see Pss 22:17; 33:20; 54:4; 70:5; 115:9-11; 146:5), especially for helpless ones like orphans (see Pss 10:18; 68:5; 94:6; 146:9; Exod 22:22-23; Deut 24:17-20).

10:15 See Psalm 10:12.

10:16-18 See Psalm 9:7-10. The trust expressed in Psalm 10:14 is supported here. God's rule and establishment of justice come in the midst of wickedness that is real and powerful (Ps 10:3-11). As always, the faithful psalmists "wait expectantly" (Ps 5:3; see Ps 13:5-6).

11:1-7 Because the psalmist addresses other people (11:1-2) rather than God, Psalm 11 has the characteristics of a statement of faith. It is usually categorized as a psalm of trust.

11:1 *refuge*: See Psalm 2:12. Because the psalmist has trusted life and future to God, she or he questions the advice of those who say to flee in the presence of threat.

11:2 As is often the case, the opponents have weapons ready to attack (see Pss 37:14; 57:4; 91:5; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

11:3 The situation seems hopeless. Violence threatens to prevail. In response to the question here, the psalmist affirms faith in God (Ps 11:4-7).

11:4-5 *holy temple... throne... in heaven*: See Psalm 5:7. The holiest space (Exod 26:33; Heb 9:3) in the temple contained the sacred chest, which was viewed as God's earthly throne. But the psalmists realize that God's rule extends throughout the universe (see Ps 104:3). *His eyes see*: Here again, as in Psalm 10:14, the psalmist affirms what the wicked have denied in Psalm 10:11. *examines... examines*: The ultimate purpose of God's examining is to set things right (see Pss 11:7; 7:9). *hates... violence*: The strong language makes the point that God utterly opposes injustice and its destructive effects (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).



- <sup>6</sup>God will rain fiery coals and sulfur on the wicked;  
 their cups will be filled with nothing but a scorching hot wind  
<sup>7</sup>because the LORD is righteous! He loves righteous deeds.  
 Those whose heart is right will see God's face.<sup>▼</sup>

### Psalm 12

*For the music leader. According to the Sheminith.<sup>▼</sup> A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>Help, LORD, because the godly are all gone;  
 the faithful have completely disappeared from the human race!  
<sup>2</sup>Everyone tells lies to everyone else;  
 they talk with slick speech and divided hearts.  
<sup>3</sup>Let the LORD cut off all slick-talking lips  
 and every tongue that brags and brags,  
<sup>4</sup>that says, "We're unbeatable with our tongues!  
 Who could get the best of us with lips like ours?"
- <sup>5</sup>But the LORD says,  
 "Because the poor are oppressed,  
 because of the groans of the needy,  
 I'm now standing up.  
 I will provide the help they are gasping for."<sup>✠</sup>
- <sup>6</sup>The LORD's promises are pure,  
 like silver that's been refined in an oven,  
 purified seven times over!  
<sup>7</sup>You, LORD, will keep us,<sup>▼</sup> protecting us from this generation forever.  
<sup>8</sup>The wicked roam all over the place,  
 while depravity is praised by human beings.

### Psalm 13

*For the music leader. A song of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>How long will you forget me, LORD? Forever?  
 How long will you hide your face from me?  
<sup>2</sup>How long will I be left to my own wits, agony filling my heart? Daily?  
 How long will my enemy keep defeating me?

<sup>▼</sup>Heb lacks *heart*, but see 11:2 and Pss 7:10; 32:11; 36:10. <sup>✠</sup>Perhaps a reference to an eight-string instrument; also in Ps 6 <sup>▼</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>▼</sup>LXX; MT *keep them*

11:6 *fiery coals and sulfur*: symbols of God's judgment (see Gen 19:24). *cups*: another symbol of divine judgment (see Ps 75:8; Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15).

11:7 *righteous! . . . righteous deeds*: The repetition suggests that God's wrath in Psalm 11:6 is intended not so much to punish as to set things right (see Ps 7:6). *see God's face*: A visit to the temple may have afforded this opportunity (see Pss 1:3; 24:6; 27:8). In any case, the image suggests a direct experience of God's protecting presence (see Num 12:8). Other traditions suggest that God's face shouldn't be seen (cf. Exod 33:23).

12:1-8 There are three speeches in this psalm. The psalmist offers a prayer for help (12:1-4). Included within the prayer is the boastful exclamation of the wicked (12:4). And finally, God announces help for the victims of the wicked (12:5). The psalmist responds with a statement of trust (12:6-7), but a final complaint (12:8) recalls verse 1, surrounding the psalm with observations about the effective power of the wicked. So while trusting the divine promise the psalmist must still "wait expectantly" (Ps 5:3; see Ps 13:5-6).

12:1-4 Given the situation described in Psalm 11:3, the prayer here seems very fitting (see 1 Kgs 19:14). Self-important, dishonest, threatening speech is characteristic

of the wicked (see Pss 4:2-5; 5:9; 41:6; 144:8; Isa 59:4; Ezek 13:8). The repetition of "lips" and "tongue[s]" reinforces the point, as does the psalmist's quotation of the wicked in verse 4 (see Ps 10:4, 6, 10, 13).

12:5 In its original setting in worship, the word from God may have been delivered by a priest or temple prophet (see Pss 50:5, 7-23; 81:11-16; 95:8-11). In any case, concern for and action on behalf of the poor and needy are at the heart of the justice and righteousness that God wills (see Ps 9:18; see sidebar, "The Poor and Needy" at Ps 82).

13:1-6 This psalm consists of the typical elements of a prayer for help: complaint (13:1-2), petition (13:3-4), and expression of trust/praise (13:5-6).

13:1 *How long*: The fourfold repetition that extends into Psalm 13:2 communicates urgency and desperation. With each line, the situation gets worse. *forget me*: See Psalm 9:12, 18, where God hasn't forgotten or won't forget. *hide your face*: often an indication of divine displeasure, from which the psalmist prays to be delivered (see Pss 22:24; 27:8-9; 30:7; 69:17; 88:14; 102:2; 143:7).

13:2 *my enemy*: It isn't clear who the enemy is or what the enemy is doing. As always in the prayers for help, however, the enemy is present (see Ps 13:4; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

11:6 Gn 19:24;  
 Job 18:15;  
 Ps 75:8;  
 Ezek 36:22  
 11:7 Ps 33:5  
 12:1 Is 57:1;  
 Mi 7:2  
 12:2 1Ch 12:33;  
 Ps 5:9; Ps 41:6;  
 Jer 9:8; Ro 16:18  
 12:3 Dn 7:8;  
 Rev 13:5  
 12:4 Ex 5:2;  
 1Sa 2:3;  
 Job 21:14-15;  
 Jas 3:6  
 12:5 Ecc 5:8;  
 Is 33:10  
 12:6 2Sa 22:31;  
 Ps 18:30;  
 Ps 19:8;  
 Ps 119:140;  
 Prv 30:5  
 12:7 1Sa 2:9;  
 Ps 16:1; Ps 37:28  
 12:8 Ps 55:10;  
 Prv 29:12  
 13:1 Ps 89:46  
 13:2 Ps 42:4;  
 Ps 116:3;  
 Jer 8:18

13:3 1Sa 14:29;  
Ezr 9:8;  
Ps 119:153;  
Jer 31:39  
13:4 Ps 25:2,  
Ps 38:16  
13:6 Ps 9:14  
14:1 Ps 10:4,  
Ps 53:1, Ro 3:10  
14:2 Ps 102:19  
14:3 Job 15:16;  
Ecc 7:20;  
Ro 3:10  
14:4 Ps 79:6,  
Ps 82:5; Is 64:7;  
Jer 10:25; Mi 3:3  
14:5 Ps 73:15,  
Ps 112:2  
14:6 Ps 46:1  
14:7 Ps 53:6,  
Ps 85:1, Ps 126:1

**3** Look at me!

Answer me, LORD my God!  
Restore sight to my eyes!  
Otherwise, I'll sleep the sleep of death,  
**4**and my enemy will say, "I won!"  
My foes will rejoice over my downfall.

**5** But I have trusted in your faithful love.

My heart will rejoice in your salvation.

**6** Yes, I will sing to the LORD because he has been good to me.**Psalm 14**

*For the music leader. Of David.*

**1** Fools say in their hearts, There is no God.

They are corrupt and do evil things;  
not one of them does anything good.

**2** The LORD looks down from heaven on humans

to see if anyone is wise,  
to see if anyone seeks God,

**3**but all of them have turned bad.

Everyone is corrupt.

No one does good—not even one person!

**4** Are they dumb, all these evildoers,  
devouring my people like they are eating bread  
but never calling on the LORD?**5** Count on it:<sup>a</sup> they will be in utter panic  
because God is with the righteous generation.**6** You evildoers may humiliate the plans of those who suffer,  
but the LORD is their refuge.**7** Let Israel's salvation come out of Zion!

When the LORD changes his people's circumstances for the better,  
Jacob will rejoice; Israel will celebrate!

<sup>a</sup>Or *There they will be*; cf 53:5

13:3-4 *Look at me!*: An appropriate request, given that God seems to be hiding. *Answer me*: See Psalm 4:1. *Restore sight*: See Psalm 6:7. *Otherwise... downfall*: The three petitions are accompanied by three reasons for God to act, increasing the impression of urgency.

13:5-6 The movement from complaint and petition to trust/praise is typical, but here it seems more abrupt than usual. Verses 5-6 may have been added later, in which case the psalmist looks back on divine deliverance. Or the psalmist may be looking forward in faith to a future divine rescue, perhaps in response to a priestly action in a worship setting (see Ps 6:8-10). The effect of the psalm in its present form is to place pain next to praise, suffering next to glory, hurt next to hope, suggesting that they are simultaneous realities in the life of the faithful, and leaving the psalmist to "wait expectantly" (Ps 5:3). *trusted*: See Psalms 4:5; 9:10. *faithful love*: See note at Psalm 5:7. *salvation*: God's saving help makes life possible even when the psalmist is threatened with death (see Pss 7:10; 9:13-14).

14:1-7 Like several previous psalms, Psalm 14:1-4 describes the self-centered, destructive behavior of the wicked. Psalm 14:5-7 responds with a profession of trust in God's

protective presence. Psalms 14 and 53 are nearly identical. 14:1 *Fools*: Foolishness here isn't a lack of intelligence but rather a failure to pay attention to God and God's purposes. It is synonymous with wickedness. *There is no God*: What the fools say recalls the speech and thoughts of the wicked in Psalms 3:2; 10:4, 6, 11, 13; 12:4.

14:2 *wise*: Wisdom comes from submitting to God (see Ps 2:10-11), but the foolish defend themselves against God.

14:3 *not even one person*: The accusation here seems to include all human beings (see Pss 12:1, 8; 143:2). This is how the apostle Paul understands Psalm 14:1-3 in Romans 3:9 (see also Luke 18:9-14), although the next verse of the psalm seems to exclude "my people" from the company of fools.

14:4 *these evildoers*: Here the wicked are defined as those who ignore God and oppose God's people. As always, their behavior is violent and destructive (see Pss 4:2-5; 5:6, 9; 7:14; 10:2, 7-11; 11:2; 12:2-4; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

14:5-6 As always in the midst of trouble, the psalmist trusts God to set things right (see Pss 3:8; 4:8; 5:12; 6:10; 7:16-17; 9:8-10; 10:17-18; 11:5-6; 12:2-4; 13:5-6). *refuge*: See Psalm 2:12.

14:7 The expression of trust continues, but it is stated in

**Psalm 15***A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>Who can live in your tent, LORD?  
Who can dwell on your holy mountain?
- <sup>2</sup>The person who lives free of blame, does what is right,  
and speaks the truth sincerely;
- <sup>3</sup>who does no damage with their talk,  
does no harm to a friend, doesn't insult a neighbor;
- <sup>4</sup>someone who despises those who act wickedly,  
but who honors those who honor the LORD;  
someone who keeps their promise even when it hurts;
- <sup>5</sup>someone who doesn't lend money with interest,  
who won't accept a bribe against any innocent person.  
Whoever does these things will never stumble.

15:1 Ps 2:6,  
Ps 23:6, Ps 24:3,  
Ps 27:4, Ps 61:4

15:2 Zec 8:16;  
Eph 4:25

15:3 Ex 23:1;  
Lv 19:16;  
Ro 1:30

15:4 Gn 49:6;  
Dt 4:10;  
Jgs 11:35;  
Ps 101:4;  
Mt 5:33

15:5 Ex 22:25;  
Lv 25:36;  
Dt 23:19;  
Ps 55:22;  
Eze 18:8

16:1 Ps 7:1,  
Ps 17:8, Ps 25:20,  
Ps 56:1, Ps 60:1

16:2 Ps 31:14,  
Ps 73:25,  
Ps 140:6

16:3 Ps 101:6,  
Ps 119:63;  
Pv 12:26;  
Ac 9:13;  
Ro 12:10

16:4 Ex 23:13;  
Josh 23:7;  
Ps 32:10

16:5 Ps 23:5,  
Ps 73:26,  
Ps 119:57,  
Ps 142:5;  
Lam 3:24

16:6 Job 22:26;  
Ps 21:1, Ps 78:55;  
Jer 3:19

**Psalm 16***A miktam<sup>a</sup> of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>Protect me, God, because I take refuge in you.
- <sup>2</sup>I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord.  
Apart from you, I have nothing good."
- <sup>3</sup>Now as for the "holy ones" in the land,  
the "magnificent ones" that I was so happy about;
- <sup>4</sup>let their suffering increase because they hurried after a different god.<sup>b</sup>  
I won't participate in their blood offerings;  
I won't let their names cross my lips.
- <sup>5</sup>You, LORD, are my portion, my cup; you control my destiny.
- <sup>6</sup>The property lines have fallen beautifully for me;  
yes, I have a lovely home.

<sup>a</sup>Perhaps inscription <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain in 16:3-4; Heb lacks *because* and *god* in 16:4.

community terms. *changes his people's circumstances for the better*: The phrase occurs frequently in material written after the exile to indicate return from life in Babylon (Jer 29:14; 30:3, 18; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7, 11; see Pss 85:1; 126:1).

15:1-5 Worshipers probably used this psalm as a liturgy for persons as they entered the temple (see Ps 24). In its present literary context, it shows the behavior and lifestyle of those who depend on God and have been shaped by God's Instruction (Pss 1:2; 19:7; see sidebar, "Torah [Instruction]": Psalms 15-24").

15:1 *your tent* . . . *your holy mountain*: A meeting tent was the place of worship in the wilderness (Exod 33:7-11; Num 12:5, 10). The temple was referred to as God's tent (see Pss 27:5-6; 61:4); and Zion, the "holy hill" or "holy mountain," was the site of the temple (see Pss 2:6; 3:4; 43:3). The temple is a symbol of God's presence, so the question may inquire about the shape of life as lived in the presence of God—that is, as God intends.

15:2-5 The list of behaviors covers attitude, speech, and action. The items in the list aren't requirements but rather descriptions of the faithful life that God intends.

15:2 *free of blame*: The Hebrew word means a wholeness derived from complete devotion to God and God's will. *right*: As God is righteous (see Pss 5:8; 9:7-8), so God's followers will pursue what is right.

15:5 *who doesn't lend money with interest*: As God helps the poor and needy (see Ps 9:18), so God's followers won't exploit those in poverty and need (see Deut 23:19-20; Ezek 18:8, 13, 17). *won't accept a bribe*: Bribes pervert the justice God desires (see Exod 23:7-8; Deut 16:19-20; 1 Sam 8:3). *Whoever . . . stumble*: In the Psalms those who follow

God's ways are constantly and frequently opposed, but relying on God provides a stable and enduring foundation for life as God intends it (see Pss 1:3; 2:12; 16:8; 17:5; 21:7; 62:2, 6; 112:6).

16:1-11 Psalm 16 starts with a petition in verse 1 and quickly becomes an eloquent profession of faith that readers usually call a psalm of trust. The psalmist speaks initially and finally to God (16:2-6, 9-11). In between, the psalmist speaks about God, perhaps as testimony to other worshippers. While Psalm 15 displays the shape of life lived in God's presence, Psalm 16 communicates the joy and confidence of living in the presence of and depending on God.

16:1 The opening request shows that the psalmist's confidence exists in the midst of threat. For identical or similar requests, see Psalms 17:8; 25:20; 86:2; 140:4; 141:9. *refuge*: See Psalm 2:12.

16:2 *Lord*: See Psalm 8:1. The psalmist expresses submission to God and reliance on God's provision. This recalls Exodus 20:3, the first of the Ten Commandments.

16:3-4 The psalmist distances himself or herself from the idol worshippers, despite their seeming success (see Ps 73:2-12; Exod 20:4).

16:5 *my portion*: See "portion" in Joshua 19:9. *my cup*: The image affirms that God has provided (see Pss 23:6; 116:13). *my destiny*: The allusion is to casting lots (see Josh 18:6, 8, 10; 19:51).

16:6 *property lines*: See "parcels" in Joshua 17:5. *home*: See "legacy" in Joshua 14:3; 17:6. In numerous ways, this psalm recalls the book of Joshua, in which God gives Israel a land as their new home, and so affirms that God is the

16:7 Ps 42:8,  
Ps 73:24, Ps 77:6;  
Is 11:2

16:8 Ps 15:5,  
Ps 73:23,  
Ps 110:5,  
Ps 121:5;  
Ac 2:25

16:9 Ps 4:7,  
Ps 30:12

16:10 Ps 49:15,  
Ps 86:13;  
Ac 2:31,  
Ac 13:35

16:11 Ps 21:6,  
Ps 36:8; Mt 7:14

17:1 Ps 61:1,  
Ps 86:1, Ps 142:1,  
Ps 142:6

17:2 Ps 26:1,  
Ps 99:4

17:3 Job 23:10;  
Ps 139:1

17:4 Ps 119:9

17:5 Job 23:11;  
Ps 44:18,  
Ps 119:133

17:6 Ps 86:7,  
Ps 116:2

17:8 Dt 32:10;  
Ru 2:12; Ps 36:7,  
Ps 63:7, Ps 91:4

<sup>7</sup>I will bless the LORD who advises me;  
even at night I am instructed in the depths of my mind.

<sup>8</sup>I always put the LORD in front of me;  
I will not stumble because he is on my right side.

<sup>9</sup>That's why my heart celebrates and my mood is joyous;  
yes, my whole body will rest in safety

<sup>10</sup>because you won't abandon my life<sup>c</sup> to the grave;<sup>d</sup>  
you won't let your faithful follower see the pit.

<sup>11</sup>You teach me the way of life.  
In your presence is total celebration.  
Beautiful things are always in your right hand.

## Psalm 17

*A prayer of David.*

<sup>1</sup>Listen to what's right, LORD; pay attention to my cry!  
Listen closely to my prayer; it's spoken by lips that don't lie!

<sup>2</sup>My justice comes from you; let your eyes see what is right!

<sup>3</sup>You have examined my heart, testing me at night.  
You've looked me over closely, but haven't found anything wrong.  
My mouth doesn't sin.

<sup>4</sup>But these other people's deeds?  
I have avoided such violent ways by the command from your lips.

<sup>5</sup>My steps are set firmly on your paths;  
my feet haven't slipped.

<sup>6</sup>I cry out to you because you answer me.  
So tilt your ears toward me now—listen to what I'm saying!

<sup>7</sup>Manifest your faithful love in amazing ways  
because you are the one who saves those who take refuge in you,  
saving them from their attackers by your strong hand.

<sup>8</sup>Watch me with the very pupil of your eye!  
Hide me in the protection of your wings,

<sup>c</sup>Or *my soul* <sup>d</sup>Heb *Sheol*

psalmist's true and enduring home, and the source of the psalmist's life.

16:7 *bless*: The Hebrew word translated "bless" essentially meant "to kneel," as in a gesture of submission to a master or king. In speaking about God in Psalm 16:8, the psalmist expresses loyalty to and reliance on God, including the willingness to be taught by God (see Ps 1:1-2; see sidebar, "Torah [Instruction]: Psalms 15-24").

16:8 *I will not stumble*: See Psalm 15:5, *on my right side*: God is available and accessible (see Pss 73:23; 109:31), a source of security and steadiness.

16:9 *celebrates* . . . *safety*: The psalmist does exactly what Israel does in Psalm 14:7 when it experiences God's saving help. The whole self participates—"heart," "mood," and "body."

16:10-11 *grave* . . . *pit*: These words indicate the threat of death from which the psalmist has been delivered (see Pss 6:5; 30:3, 9). *teach me the way of life* . . . *celebration*: God desires fullness of life, which is what the psalmist celebrates. As in Psalm 16:7, the psalmist receives instruction from God.

17:1-15 Like Psalm 7, Psalm 17 is a prayer for help by a person who seems to have been falsely accused, or somehow harmed by violent opponents (17:4, 9-12). In addition to the psalmist's solemn promise of innocence (17:3-5; see

Pss 7:3-5; 26:1-7), the psalm consists of petition (17:1-2, 6-9, 13-14), complaint (17:10-12), and a statement of trust (17:15; note also the affirmations accompanying the petitions in 17:2, 6, 7).

17:1 *lips that don't lie*: The psalmist's speech contrasts sharply with the dishonest and violent speech of the wicked (see Pss 4:2-5; 5:6; 7:14; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

17:2 *justice*: The psalmist's petitions here and in Psalm 17:13 are motivated not by payback but rather by the desire for God to set things right (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

17:3-5 The sincere pledge of innocence draws a sharp contrast between the psalmist's behavior and that of the violent opponents (see Ps 17:1). The claim isn't sinlessness in general but rather innocence in this particular case (see Ps 7:3-5, 8).

17:7-8 The petitions here lie at the heart of the psalm. *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7. *refuge*: As always, the psalmist entrusts life and future to God (see Ps 2:12). *strong hand*: See Psalm 16:11. *pupil of your eye*: This image symbolizes care and protection (see Deut 32:10; Prov 7:2). *the protection of your wings*: See Deuteronomy 32:11, where God is likened to an eagle protecting its young by "spread[ing] out his wings" (see also Pss 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7). In Psalms 36:7 and 63:7 the protection of God's "wings" seems to

17:13 Ps 3:7  
 17:14 Lk 16:8,  
 Lk 16:25  
 17:15 Job 19:26;  
 Ps 16:11; 1Jn 3:2

*Torah (Instruction): Psalms 15–24* Because Book I has so many prayers for help, the sequence that begins with Psalm 15 is noticeable. Of the next nine psalms, only two are prayers for help; and Psalm 24 is an entrance liturgy like Psalm 15. Between Psalms 15 and 24, the psalms are arranged in a pattern known as a *chiasm*, as follows:

Psalm 15	entrance liturgy
Psalm 16	psalm of trust
Psalm 17	prayer for help
Psalm 18	royal psalm
Psalm 19	torah psalm
Psalms 20–21	royal psalms
Psalm 22	prayer for help
Psalm 23	psalm of trust
Psalm 24	entrance liturgy

A chiasm focuses on the first, last, and middle elements. In this case, Psalms 15, 19, and 24. Psalms 15 and 24 involve entering the temple, or living in God's presence as God intends. Neither psalm uses the word *torah*, but the pattern in the psalms suggests that life in God's presence will center on following God's Instruction. At the heart of Book I, Psalms 15 and 24 (in relationship with Ps 19) emphasize God's Instruction that is present at the beginning of the Psalter (Ps 1:1-2; see Ps 119). This focus on *torah* invites readers of the Psalms to look at the ways that the Psalms show the importance of commitment to live as God intends.

The pattern of Psalms 15–24 combines "Instruction" and kingship, since royal psalms surround Psalm 19. This pattern looks like the beginning of the Psalter where Psalm 1, which features Instruction, comes before Psalm 2, which highlights the importance of God's "anointed one" (see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2). The pairing is appropriate, since the king was given the task of doing God's will in the world (see Ps 72; Deut 17:14-20).

<sup>9</sup>away from the wicked who are out to get me,  
 away from my deadly enemies who are all around me!

<sup>10</sup>They have no pity;<sup>e</sup> their mouths speak arrogantly.

<sup>11</sup>They track me down—suddenly, they surround me!  
 They make their plans to put me in the dirt.

<sup>12</sup>They are like a lion eager to rip its prey;  
 they are like a strong young lion lying in wait.

<sup>13</sup>Get up, LORD! Confront them! Bring them down!  
 Rescue my life from the wicked—use your sword!

<sup>14</sup>Rescue me from these people—use your own hands, LORD!  
 Rescue me from these people whose only possession is their fleeting life.<sup>f</sup>  
 But fill the stomachs of your cherished ones;  
 let their children be filled full  
 so that they have leftovers enough for their babies.

<sup>15</sup>But me? I will see your face in righteousness;  
 when I awake, I will be filled full by seeing your image.

<sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain

happen in the temple, and it's possible that the reference to God's "wings" reminds worshippers of the winged creatures (seraphim) that adorned the sacred chest in the temple (see Pss 80:1; 99:1).

17:9-12 As always, the enemies are threatening (see Pss 3:1-2; 5:8-9; 7:14; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). *lion*: See Psalm 10:9.

17:13-14 Because the enemies are always present, so are

the psalmists' requests that God set things right (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

17:15 *I will see your face*: See Psalms 11:7; 24:6; 27:8. *in righteousness*: The psalmists regularly trust God to set things right (see Ps 5:8). *when I awake*: It's possible that those seeking help spent the night in the temple, praying for help. This affirmation may suggest that trust in God makes it possible to rest securely (see Pss 3:5; 4:8).

18:1 2Sa 22:1  
 18:2 Ps 9:9,  
 Ps 31:3, Ps 91:2,  
 Ps 144:2, Lk 1:69  
 18:3 Ps 48:1,  
 Ps 96:4, Ps 145:3  
 18:4 Ps 116:3  
 18:5 2Sa 22:6;  
 Job 11:8,  
 Job 26:6, Ps 9:17,  
 Ps 116:3  
 18:6 Ps 120:1  
 18:7 Jgs 5:4;  
 Ac 4:31  
 18:8 Ps 50:3,  
 Ps 97:3  
 18:9 Ps 144:5  
 18:10 Ps 99:1,  
 Ps 104:3  
 18:11 Dt 4:11;  
 Ps 97:2  
 18:12 Josh  
 10:11  
 18:13 1Sa 2:10;  
 Ps 29:3, Ps 104:7  
 18:14 Ps 144:6  
 18:15 Ex 15:8;  
 2Sa 22:16;  
 Ps 106:9

### Psalm 18<sup>a</sup>

*For the music leader. Of David the LORD's servant, who spoke the words of this song to the LORD after the LORD delivered him from the power of all his enemies and from Saul.*

<sup>1</sup>He said: I love you, LORD, my strength.

<sup>2</sup>The LORD is my solid rock,  
 my fortress, my rescuer.

My God is my rock—

I take refuge in him!—

he's my shield,

my salvation's strength,

my place of safety.

<sup>3</sup>Because he is praiseworthy,<sup>b</sup>

I cried out to the LORD,

and I was saved from my enemies.

<sup>4</sup>Death's cords were wrapped around me;

rivers of wickedness terrified me.

<sup>5</sup>The cords of the grave<sup>i</sup> surrounded me;

death's traps held me tight.

<sup>6</sup>In my distress I cried out to the LORD;

I called to my God for help.

God heard my voice from his temple;

I called to him for help, and my call reached his ears.

<sup>7</sup>The earth rocked and shook;

the bases of the mountains trembled and reeled because of God's anger.

<sup>8</sup>Smoke went up from God's nostrils;

out of his mouth came a devouring fire;

flaming coals blazed out in front of him!

<sup>9</sup>God parted the skies and came down;

thick darkness was beneath his feet.

<sup>10</sup>God mounted the heavenly creatures and flew;

he soared on the wings of the wind.

<sup>11</sup>God made darkness cloak him;

his covering was dark water and dense cloud.

<sup>12</sup>God's clouds went ahead of the brightness before him;

hail and coals of fire went too.

<sup>13</sup>The LORD thundered in heaven;

the Most High made his voice heard with hail and coals of fire.

<sup>14</sup>God shot his arrows, scattering the enemy;

he sent the lightning and threw them into confusion.

<sup>15</sup>The seabeds were exposed;

the earth's foundations were laid bare at your rebuke, LORD,

at the angry blast of air coming from your nostrils.

<sup>a</sup>This poem also occurs in 2 Sam 22 with some variations. <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>i</sup>Heb *Sheol*

18:1-50 Psalm 18 is nearly identical to 2 Samuel 22, where David prays this prayer for help. This fact, plus the mention of David and *anointed one* in 18:50, means that Psalm 18 recalls Psalm 2 and other royal psalms that feature the earthly king (see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2). Verses 3-6 summarize the basic content of Psalm 18. As in Psalm 2, the king is opposed and threatened (18:4-5), but he appeals to God, who hears (18:6) and helps (18:7-19). The king responds with grateful praise that rehearses details of his rescue (18:31-50). Between the account of God's help and the king's response, verses 20-30 focus on the character of the king (18:20-24) and God (18:25-30).

Because the king was viewed as the earthly agent of God's rule and was given the task of doing God's will (see Pss 2; 72), Psalm 18 is ultimately testimony to God's claim on the world. Psalm 144 offers a rereading of portions of Psalm 18.

18:1-6 Psalm 18:1 doesn't appear in 2 Samuel 22. The images of God communicate strength and safety. *refuge*: See Psalm 2:12. *shield*: See Psalm 3:3. Verses 4-5 describe the king's distress in cosmic terms, anticipating Psalm 18:7-15. *his temple*: see Psalms 2:6; 3:4.

18:7-15 The description of God's response to the king's cry for help begins with a theophany—that is, an appearance

- 16 From on high God reached down and grabbed me;  
he took me out of all that water.
- 17 God saved me from my powerful enemy,  
saved me from my foes, who were too much for me.
- 18 They came at me on the very day of my distress,  
but the LORD was my support.
- 19 He brought me out to wide-open spaces;  
he pulled me out safe because he is pleased with me.
- 20 The LORD rewarded me for my righteousness;  
he restored me because my hands are clean,  
21 because I have kept the LORD's ways.  
I haven't acted wickedly against my God.
- 22 All his rules are right in front of me;  
I haven't turned away from any of his laws.
- 23 I have lived with integrity before him;  
I've kept myself from wrongdoing.
- 24 And so the LORD restored me for my righteousness  
because my hands are clean in his eyes.
- 25 You deal faithfully with the faithful;  
you show integrity toward the one who has integrity.
- 26 You are pure toward the pure,  
but toward the crooked, you are tricky.
- 27 You are the one who saves people who suffer  
and brings down those with proud eyes.
- 28 You are the one who lights my lamp—  
the LORD my God illumines my darkness.
- 29 With you I can charge into battle;  
with my God I can leap over a wall.
- 30 God! His way is perfect;  
the LORD's word is tried and true.  
He is a shield for all who take refuge in him.
- 31 Now really, who is divine except the LORD?  
And who is a rock but our God?
- 32 Only God! The God who equips me with strength  
and makes my way perfect,  
33 who makes my step as sure as the deer's,  
who lets me stand securely on the heights,  
34 who trains my hands for war  
so my arms can bend a bronze bow.
- 35 You've given me the shield of your salvation;  
your strong hand has supported me;  
your help has made me great.

of God (see 18:9)—that uses typical language and images (see Pss 29:3-9; 50:2-3; 68:7-8; 77:17-18; 97:1-5; Exod 15:5-12; 19:14-16; Judg 5:4-5). The impressive cosmic phenomena—earthquake, clouds, lightning, thunder, wind—communicate God's universal power and claim on the whole world. God's anger (18:7, 15) derives from the reality of opposition to the king, the earthly agent of God's will.

**18:16-19** The victory results from God's power, not the king's. *all that water*: Water often symbolizes mass disorder and threat (see Pss 32:6; 69:1-2). Just as the king's distress is described in cosmic terms, so is God's deliverance.

**18:20-24** The king isn't bragging but rather stating that he is in the proper relationship to God (see Ps 72:1-7). Verse 22 is the central verse in this section, and it clearly

- 18:16 Ps 144:7  
18:17 Ps 18:40,  
Ps 34:4, Ps 34:19,  
Ps 35:10,  
Ps 38:19  
18:24 1Sa 26:23  
18:25 Ps 62:12;  
Mt 5:7  
18:26  
Lv 26:23-24;  
Prv 3:34  
18:27 Ps 101:5;  
Prv 6:17  
18:28 1Ki 11:36;  
Job 18:6,  
Job 29:3;  
Ps 132:17  
18:29 Ps 118:10,  
Ps 144:10  
18:31 Dt 32:31,  
Dt 32:39;  
1Sa 2:2; Ps 86:8;  
Is 45:5  
18:32 Is 45:5  
18:33 Dt 32:13;  
Hab 3:19  
18:35 Dt 33:27;  
2Sa 22:36;  
Ps 37:17;  
Is 40:11, Is 41:10

suggests that God's guidance has been the reason for the king's *righteousness* (18:20, 24; see Deut 17:14-20, which says that the king is expected to read God's instruction every day). *my hands are clean*: See Psalms 24:4; 73:1.

**18:25-30** The focus on God supports the conclusion that the king depends on God. *deal faithfully*: This is the verbal form of "faithful love" that occurs in Psalm 18:50, so this verse looks forward to the end of the psalm. *integrity*: The Hebrew root has the sense of "full, complete." The one who is fully focused on God will experience the fullness of God's presence (see Ps 15:2). *shield . . . refuge*: See Psalm 18:2.

**18:31-50** These verses are the king's grateful response to the rescue described in Psalm 18:3, 16-19. The training and equipment for war (18:34, 39) should be understood as a function of the king's role to challenge those who oppose

18:39 Ps 18:32  
 18:41 Jer 11:11  
 19:42 2Ki 13:7;  
 Ps 83:13; Is 10:6;  
 Zec 10:5  
 18:43 2Sa 3:1,  
 2Sa 8:1; Is 55:5  
 18:44 Ps 66:3  
 18:45 Mi 7:17  
 18:46 Ps 18:2  
 18:50 Ps 89:20;  
 Ps 144:10  
 19:1 Gn 1:6;  
 Ps 8:1; Ps 50:6;  
 Ro 1:19-20  
 19:2 Ps 74:16  
 19:4 Ps 104:2;  
 Ro 10:18

- <sup>36</sup>You've let me walk fast and safe,  
 without even twisting an ankle.
- <sup>37</sup>I chased my enemies and caught them!  
 I didn't come home until I finished them off.
- <sup>38</sup>I struck them down;  
 they couldn't get up again;  
 they fell under my feet.
- <sup>39</sup>You equipped me with strength for war;  
 you brought my adversaries down underneath me.
- <sup>40</sup>You made my enemies turn tail from me;  
 I destroyed my foes.
- <sup>41</sup>They cried for help,  
 but there was no one to save them.  
 They cried for help to the LORD,  
 but he wouldn't answer them.
- <sup>42</sup>I crushed them like dust blown away by the wind;  
 I threw them out like mud dumped in the streets.
- <sup>43</sup>You delivered me from struggles with many people;  
 you appointed me the leader of many nations.  
 Strangers come to serve me.
- <sup>44</sup>After hearing about me, they obey me;  
 foreigners grovel before me.
- <sup>45</sup>Foreigners lose their nerve;  
 they come trembling out of their fortresses.<sup>1</sup>
- <sup>46</sup>The LORD lives! Bless God, my rock!  
 Let the God of my salvation be lifted high!
- <sup>47</sup>This is the God who avenges on my behalf,  
 who subdues people before me,  
<sup>48</sup>who delivers me from my enemies.  
 Yes, you lifted me high above my adversaries;  
 you delivered me from violent people.
- <sup>49</sup>That's why I thank you, LORD, in the presence of the nations.  
 That's why I sing praises to your name.
- <sup>50</sup>You are the one who gives great victories to your king,  
 who shows faithful love to your anointed one—  
 to David and to his descendants forever.

### Psalm 19

*For the music leader. A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>Heaven is declaring God's glory;  
 the sky is proclaiming his handiwork.
- <sup>2</sup>One day gushes the news to the next,  
 and one night informs another what needs to be known.
- <sup>3</sup>Of course, there's no speech, no words—  
 their voices can't be heard—  
<sup>4</sup>but their sound<sup>h</sup> extends throughout the world;  
 their words reach the ends of the earth.

<sup>1</sup>Or *prisons* <sup>h</sup>LXX, Vulg, Sym; MT *line or string*

God's will and to "crush oppressors" (Ps 72:4; see Ps 21:8-12). The victory over cruelty is testimony to God's rule over *peoples and nations* (18:43), as well as to God's *faithful love* (18:50; see Ps 5:7; 2 Sam 7:15).

19:1-14 Because 19:1-6 focuses on creation and 19:7-14 focuses on instruction, Psalm 19 is often viewed as two separate psalms. But the two sections clearly belong together, and together they suggest that God's Instruction

(or Torah) is built into the very structure of the created order. Because it features God's Instruction, Psalm 19 is a torah psalm (see Pss 1; 119; see sidebar, "Torah [Instruction]: Psalms 15-24").

19:1-6 The creation itself testifies to God, silently but eloquently (see Pss 8:1, 9; 97:6). Many ancient cultures worshipped the sun (see 19:4-6) because of its life-giving light and heat.



God has made a tent in heaven for the sun.

<sup>5</sup>The sun is like a groom coming out of his honeymoon suite;  
like a warrior, it thrills at running its course.

<sup>6</sup>It rises in one end of the sky;  
its circuit is complete at the other.  
Nothing escapes its heat.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD's Instruction is perfect, reviving one's very being.<sup>1</sup>  
The LORD's laws are faithful, making naive people wise.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD's regulations are right, gladdening the heart.  
The LORD's commands are pure, giving light to the eyes.

<sup>9</sup>Honoring the LORD is correct, lasting forever.  
The LORD's judgments are true.

All of these are righteous!

<sup>10</sup>They are more desirable than gold—than tons of pure gold!  
They are sweeter than honey—even dripping off the honeycomb!

<sup>11</sup>No doubt about it:  
your servant is enlightened by them;  
there is great reward in keeping them.

<sup>12</sup>But can anyone know what they've accidentally done wrong?

Clear me of any unknown sin  
<sup>13</sup>and save your servant from willful sins.  
Don't let them rule me.

Then I'll be completely blameless;  
I'll be innocent of great wrongdoing.

<sup>14</sup>Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart  
be pleasing to you, LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

## Psalm 20

*For the music leader. A psalm of David.*

<sup>1</sup>I pray that the LORD answers you whenever you are in trouble.  
Let the name of Jacob's God protect you.

<sup>2</sup>Let God send help to you from the sanctuary  
and support you from Zion.

<sup>1</sup>Or *soul*

19:7-14 In this section, what the sun does for the earth—energizing it and making life possible—will be claimed by the psalmist for God's Instruction. The various synonyms for Instruction look forward to Psalm 119.

19:7 *perfect... being*: "Perfect" has the sense of being complete or comprehensive. As nothing escapes the sun's heat (Ps 19:6), so God's Instruction touches everything, making life possible. *wise*: God intends wisdom that produces obedience (see Ps 2:10; Deut 4:6).

19:8 *giving light*: This is another way that Instruction functions like the sun, giving life (see Ps 13:3).

19:9 *judgments... righteous!*: This verse pairs these two concepts that are basic to life as God intends it (see Pss 5:8; 9:4; 96:13; 98:9).

19:11-14 The psalm has moved from the vastness of the heavens (Ps 19:1-6) to the individual worshipper, whose words (19:14) will be in harmony with creation's speech, because of God's life-giving Instruction (Ps 19:7-10) and God's willingness to forgive (19:12-13).

19:11 *enlightened*: The sense of this word fits the sun images, but the word can also mean "instructed," which fits with the focus on Instruction. *reward*: The psalm isn't commending a system of retribution, since the psalmist finally depends on God's forgiveness (Ps 19:12-13).

Rather, God's Instruction offers a path to a truly valuable and rewarding life.

19:13 *blameless*: The word doesn't mean sinless. It means "completion, wholeness," and is sometimes translated "integrity" (see Ps 18:25). Listening to God's Instruction and being forgiven by God, the psalmist will be fully in relationship to God.

19:14 *redeemer*: The term is grounded in the obligation of family members to help each other in times of trouble and loss (see Ruth 3:10-4:10). The cosmic God (Ps 19:1-6) is now pictured as a close relative who proves to be the ultimate helper.

20:1-9 Psalm 20 is a royal psalm that features God's *anointed one* (20:6), *the king* (20:8; see Pss 2; 18; 21). It may have been used in a public ceremony to offer prayer for the king as he prepared for battle (see Ps 18:34, 39; 1 Kgs 8:44-45). After the disappearance of the monarchy that came with the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile, Psalm 20 would have been heard as an affirmation of God's power to continue to provide for the life of God's people (see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2).

20:1-5 The people want God to help the king.

20:2 *sanctuary... Zion*: See Psalms 2:6; 18:6. Public

19:5 J1 2:16;

1Co 9:24;

Heb 12:1-2

19:6 Ps 113:3;

Ecc 1:5

19:7 Ps 23:3;

Ps 93:5, Ps 111:7;

Ps 119:130

19:8 Ps 12:6;

Ps 119:14

19:9 Ps 119:142

19:10 Ps 119:72;

Ps 119:103;

Ps 119:127;

Prv 8:10;

Prv 8:19

19:11 Prv 29:18

19:12 Ps 90:8

19:13 Nm 15:30;

Isa 25:39;

Ps 119:133;

Ro 6:12

19:14 Ex 6:6;

Ps 18:2;

Ps 104:34;

Is 43:14, Is 47:4

20:1 Ps 46:7;

Ps 46:11

20:4 Ps 21:2,  
Ps 37:4,  
Ps 145:19  
20:7 2Ch 32:8;  
Ps 33:17;  
Prov 21:31;  
Is 31:1  
20:8 Mi 7:8  
21:1 Ps 9:14,  
Ps 28:7  
21:3 2Sa 12:30;  
1Ch 20:2  
21:4 Ps 61:6,  
Ps 91:16,  
Ps 133:3  
21:5 Ps 8:5,  
Ps 45:3, Ps 96:6

- <sup>3</sup> Let God recall your many grain offerings;  
let him savor your entirely burned offerings. Selah
- <sup>4</sup> Let God grant what is in your heart and fulfill all your plans.
- <sup>5</sup> Then we will rejoice that you've been helped.  
We will fly our flags in the name of our God.  
Let the LORD fulfill all your requests!
- <sup>6</sup> Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed one;  
God answers his anointed one from his heavenly sanctuary,  
answering with mighty acts of salvation  
achieved by his strong hand.
- <sup>7</sup> Some people trust in chariots, others in horses;  
but we praise the LORD's name.
- <sup>8</sup> They will collapse and fall,  
but we will stand up straight and strong.
- <sup>9</sup> LORD, save the king!  
Let him answer us when we cry out!

### Psalm 21

For the music leader. A psalm of David.

- <sup>1</sup> The king celebrates your strength, LORD;  
look how happy he is about your saving help!
- <sup>2</sup> You've given him what his heart desires;  
you haven't denied what his lips requested. Selah
- <sup>3</sup> You bring rich blessings right to him;  
you put a crown of pure gold on his head.
- <sup>4</sup> He asked you for life, and you gave it to him, all right—  
long days, forever and always!
- <sup>5</sup> The king's reputation is great because of your saving help;  
you've conferred on him glory and grandeur.
- <sup>6</sup> You grant him blessings forever;  
you make him happy with the joy of your presence.
- <sup>7</sup> Because the king trusts the LORD,  
and because of the Most High's faithful love,  
he will not stumble.
- <sup>8</sup> Your hand will catch all your enemies;  
your strong hand will catch all who hate you.
- <sup>9</sup> When you appear, LORD,  
you will light them up like an oven on fire.

ceremonies would have taken place in and around the temple, which was viewed as God's earthly residence.

**20:5** *your requests*: See Psalm 18:6 where the king requests help in a moment of crisis.

**20:6-8** The people profess their faith that God saves and helps the king.

**20:6** *anointed one*: See Psalms 2:2; 18:50. *heavenly sanctuary*: This phrase may refer to the temple (see Ps 20:2), which was viewed as the meeting point of heaven and earth. It also suggests that the people understood that God's presence was not limited to Zion (see Pss 29:9; 104:3; 150:1).

**20:7** Deliverance will be God's achievement, not the king's (see Pss 18:25-30; 33:16-17; Prov 21:31). In short, king and people submit to God, rather than simply claiming that God is on their side.

**20:9** *save*: the fourth occurrence of this Hebrew root in the psalm—see “helped” (Ps 20:5) and “saves” and “salvation” (Ps 20:6). Security is grounded in God's life-giving help (see Ps 13:5).

21:1-13 a royal psalm that features the earthly king. It celebrates the divine help that was requested for the king in Psalm 20 (see Pss 2; 18; 72; see sidebar, “God's Anointed One” at Ps 2).

21:1-7 The divine help prayed for in Psalm 20 has arrived.

21:1 *your strength*: This phrase, repeated in Psalm 21:13, indicates the king's submission to God (see Ps 20:7). *your saving help*: This phrase, repeated in Psalm 21:5 and also the keyword in Psalm 20 (see Ps 20:5, 6, 9), puts the focus on God.

21:3-6 See Psalm 72:5-11, 15-17.

21:7 *trusts*: The king was supposed to be the model Israelite (see Deut 17:14-20), including obedience and trust (see Pss 4:5; 9:10; 22:4-5; 31:6; 32:10). *faithful love*: See Psalms 5:7; 18:50. *not stumble*: See Psalm 15:5.

21:8-12 From the beginning of the Psalter, it's clear that God and the king's will are opposed (Ps 21:1-3); and it was the king's task to challenge oppressors (Ps 72:4). This section shows such a challenge (see Ps 18:31-50). The

- God will eat them whole in his anger;  
fire will devour them.
- <sup>10</sup>You will destroy their offspring from the land;  
destroy their descendants from the human race.
- <sup>11</sup>Because they sought to do you harm,  
they devised a wicked plan—but they will fail!
- <sup>12</sup>Because you will make them turn and run  
when you aim your bow straight at their faces!
- <sup>13</sup>Be exalted, LORD, in your strength!  
We will sing and praise your power!

## Psalm 22

*For the music leader. According to the "Doe of Dawn." A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>My God! My God,  
why have you left me all alone?  
Why are you so far from saving me—  
so far from my anguished groans?
- <sup>2</sup>My God, I cry out during the day,  
but you don't answer;  
even at nighttime I don't stop.
- <sup>3</sup>You are the holy one, enthroned.  
You are Israel's praise.
- <sup>4</sup>Our ancestors trusted you—  
they trusted you and you rescued them;  
<sup>5</sup>they cried out to you and they were saved;  
they trusted you and they weren't ashamed.
- <sup>6</sup>But I'm just a worm, less than human;  
insulted by one person, despised by another.
- <sup>7</sup>All who see me make fun of me—  
they gape, shaking their heads:  
<sup>8</sup>"He committed himself to the LORD,  
so let God rescue him;  
let God deliver him  
because God likes him so much."
- <sup>9</sup>But you are the one who pulled me from the womb,  
placing me safely at my mother's breasts.
- <sup>10</sup>I was thrown on you from birth;  
you've been my God since I was in my mother's womb.
- <sup>11</sup>Please don't be far from me,  
because trouble is near and there's no one to help.

21:12 Ps 7:13  
22:1 Job 3:24;  
Mt 27:46;  
Mk 15:34  
22:2 Ps 42:3,  
Ps 88:1; Lk 18:7  
22:3 Lv 19:2;  
2Ki 19:22;  
Ps 99:9,  
Ps 148:14; Is 6:3  
22:4 Ps 78:53,  
Ps 107:6  
22:5 Ps 25:2,  
Ps 71:1; Is 49:23  
22:6 Job 25:6;  
Is 41:14, Is 49:7,  
Is 53:3  
22:7 Ps 35:16,  
Ps 109:25;  
Mt 27:39;  
Mk 15:29;  
Lk 23:35  
22:8 Ps 18:19,  
Ps 91:14;  
Mt 3:17,  
Mt 27:43  
22:9 Ps 71:6  
22:10 Is 46:3,  
Is 49:1  
22:11 2Ki 14:26;  
Ps 10:1, Ps 22:1,  
Ps 71:12; Is 63:5

language is brutal, but it realistically describes the violence that victims experience when oppressors are challenged in an attempt to set things right (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6). 21:10 This verse reflects the horrible violence of war, ancient and modern (see Ps 137:8-9; 2 Kgs 8:12; Isa 13:16; Hos 10:14; 13:6; Nah 3:10). For this reason, God's intent is for war to end (see Ps 46:8-9). 22:1-31 Psalm 22 is one of the longest and most intense of the prayers for help. Two sections of complaint and petition (22:1-11, 12-21a) are followed by two longer-than-usual sections of praise and affirmation of faith (22:21b-24, 25-31). The psalm offers an eloquent affirmation of God's presence in the midst of bitter suffering (22:21b-24). It also imagines a worldwide congregation in which even the dead will take part (22:27-30). Thus the psalm was an ideal resource for the Gospel writers as they told the story of Jesus, especially his suffering, death, and resurrection

(see notes following; see sidebar, "The Psalms and Jesus" at Ps 22).

22:1-11 The word *far* in 22:1 and 11 marks the boundaries of this first section. The complaint is all the more bitter following the confidence expressed in Psalm 21.

22:1 *My God... alone?* The opening phrase is relatively rare, but does occur elsewhere (see Pss 63:1; 89:26; 102:24; 118:28; 140:6). These words became Jesus' cry from the cross in Matthew and Mark (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34).

22:3-8 The praise and trust expressed in Psalm 22:3-5 emphasize the psalmist's failure to experience any rescue or help, so the complaint resumes in 22:6-8.

22:7 See Matthew 27:34; Mark 15:29.

22:8 See Matthew 27:43.

22:9-10 Again, as in Psalm 22:3-5, the affirmation draws attention to the current distress.

22:11 *no one to help:* The Psalms often affirm that God is a

22:12 Dt 32:14;  
Ps 68:30;  
Eze 39:18;  
Am 4:1.  
22:13 Job 16:10;  
Ps 17:12;  
Lam 2:16;  
Lam 3:46.  
22:15 Job 7:21;  
Ps 104:29;  
Jn 19:28.  
22:16 Zec 12:10;  
Mt 27:35;  
Lk 23:33;  
Jn 19:23;  
Jn 20:25.  
22:17 Lk 23:35.  
22:18 Mt 27:35;  
Mk 15:24;  
Lk 23:34;  
Jn 19:23-24.  
22:19 Ps 18:1;  
Ps 22:11;  
Ps 38:22;  
Ps 40:13, Ps 70:5.  
22:20 Ps 35:17.  
22:21 Nm 23:22;  
2Ti 4:17.  
22:22 Ps 35:18;  
Ps 40:9;  
Heb 2:12.  
22:23 Ps 33:8;  
Ps 50:23;  
Ps 135:19-20.  
22:24 Ps 13:1;  
Ps 31:22; Heb 5:7.  
22:25 Ps 35:18;  
Ps 40:9, Ps 50:14;  
Ps 61:8, Ps 66:13.

- 12** Many bulls surround me;  
mighty bulls from Bashan encircle me.
- 13** They open their mouths at me like a lion ripping and roaring!
- 14** I'm poured out like water.  
All my bones have fallen apart.  
My heart is like wax; it melts inside me.
- 15** My strength is dried up like a piece of broken pottery.  
My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;  
you've set me down in the dirt of death.
- 16** Dogs surround me;  
a pack of evil people circle me like a lion—  
oh, my poor hands and feet!
- 17** I can count all my bones!  
Meanwhile, they just stare at me, watching me.
- 18** They divvy up my garments among themselves;  
they cast lots for my clothes.
- 19** But you, LORD! Don't be far away!  
You are my strength!  
Come quick and help me!
- 20** Deliver me<sup>m</sup> from the sword.  
Deliver my life from the power of the dog.
- 21** Save me from the mouth of the lion.  
From the horns of the wild oxen you have answered me!
- 22** I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters;  
I will praise you in the very center of the congregation!
- 23** All of you who revere the LORD—praise him!  
All of you who are Jacob's descendants—honor him!  
All of you who are all Israel's offspring—stand in awe of him!
- 24** Because he didn't despise or detest  
the suffering of the one who suffered—  
he didn't hide his face from me.  
No, he listened when I cried out to him for help.
- 25** I offer praise in the great congregation because of you;  
I will fulfill my promises in the presence of those who honor God.

<sup>m</sup>Or *my soul*; also in 22:29

helper (see Ps 10:14). The psalmist's petition in Psalm 22:11 is grounded in such trust, even though things look bleak in the moment.

**22:12-21a** The second section of complaint and petition is characterized by animal images (22:12-13, 16, 20-21; see Ps 10:9), and by frequent mention of parts of the body that are in distress (22:14-17). The threat is deadly (22:15), so the opponents can already claim the psalmist's belongings (22:18).

**22:12** *bulls from Bashan*: Bashan was known for its moisture and lush pastureland, so the bulls from there would be particularly strong and menacing (see Amos 4:1).

**22:15** See John 19:28.

**22:18** See Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:23-24.

**22:19-21a** The final petition recalls the earlier one in Psalm 22:11 (see "far" and "help" in Ps 22:11, 19). The psalmist seems more confident, and the final appeal is followed immediately by the affirmation in Psalm 22:21b.

**22:21b** *From... answered me!*: There was no "answer" in

Psalm 22:2, but now there is. It seems to come, however, in the midst of the threat, suggesting that the psalmist understands that God is present in the midst of suffering. In any case, Psalm 22:21b marks the shift to praise and affirmation (see Pss 6:8-10; 13:5-6).

**22:22-24** The psalmist becomes a witness to God's presence, inviting others to join the celebration. Verse 24 suggests that suffering hasn't separated the speaker from God, and perhaps even that God somehow shares the speaker's suffering (see Pss 9:12; 34:6; 35:10; 40:17; 140:12).

**22:24** *didn't hide his face*: See Psalm 13:1.

**22:25-31** The praise continues. The psalmist's expansive vision takes the form of a thanksgiving meal that includes not only sufferers like the psalmist (22:26) but also *all the nations* (22:27), the dead (22:29), and future generations (22:30).

**22:25** *... promises*: The fulfillment of promises was part of a thanksgiving sacrifice (see Pss 56:12; 61:8; 65:1; 66:13; 116:14, 17-18).

*The Psalms and Jesus* The Gospel writers couldn't tell the story of Jesus' suffering and death without using the Psalms. Like the psalmists in many of the prayers for help, Jesus was a righteous sufferer who was surrounded by enemies. The clearest link between the Psalms and Jesus is Psalm 22, one of the longest and most intense prayers for help. In the books of Matthew and Mark, Psalm 22:1 becomes Jesus' words from the cross (see Matt 27:46; Mark 15:43). Other experiences of the psalmist also fit with details of the passion stories (see Pss 22:6-8, 15; 69:21). While Jesus didn't want to suffer and die, he gave his life fully to God, as the suffering psalmists regularly do. In the book of Luke, Jesus' words from the cross come out of trust (see Ps 31:5; Luke 23:46).

Jesus' life and teaching also show links to the Psalms. Jesus' basic message announces God's reign (kingdom), and this message is also at the heart of the book of Psalms (see sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God"). The Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes (see Matt 5:3-11), so both the Psalms and Jesus' teaching begin with a lesson about happiness (see Ps 1:1-2; sidebar, "True Happiness" at Ps 1). Jesus says that sufferers who pray for help are truly happy. These sufferers are afflicted and mistreated for doing what's right: They are humbled and shamed (compare Matt 5:5 with Ps 37:11) and are pure in heart (compare Matt 5:8 with Ps 24:4-6).

22:26 Ps 69:32  
 22:27 Ps 2:8,  
 Ps 86:9; Is 45:22  
 22:28 Ps 47:7-8;  
 Zec 14:9  
 22:29 Ps 45:12,  
 Ps 89:48;  
 Is 26:19  
 22:30 Ps 102:18  
 22:31 Ps 78:6,  
 Ps 102:18  
 23:1 Ps 34:9-10,  
 Ps 80:1; Is 40:11;  
 Jn 10:11  
 23:2 Ps 23:1,  
 Ps 46:4,  
 Eze 34:14;  
 Jn 10:9; Rev 7:17  
 23:3 Ps 5:8,  
 Ps 19:7, Ps 31:3;  
 Prv 8:20

- <sup>26</sup> Let all those who are suffering eat and be full!  
 Let all who seek the LORD praise him!  
 I pray your hearts live forever!
- <sup>27</sup> Every part of the earth  
 will remember and come back to the LORD;  
 every family among all the nations will worship you.
- <sup>28</sup> Because the right to rule belongs to the LORD,  
 he rules all nations.
- <sup>29</sup> Indeed, all the earth's powerful will worship him;<sup>a</sup>  
 all who are descending to the dust will kneel before him;  
 my being also lives for him.<sup>b</sup>
- <sup>30</sup> Future descendants will serve him;  
 generations to come will be told about my Lord.
- <sup>31</sup> They will proclaim God's righteousness to those not yet born,  
 telling them what God has done.

## Psalm 23

*A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> The LORD is my shepherd.  
 I lack nothing.  
<sup>2</sup> He lets me rest in grassy meadows;  
 he leads me to restful waters;  
<sup>3</sup> he keeps me<sup>p</sup> alive.

<sup>a</sup>Correction; MT *All the earth's powerful have eaten and will worship.* <sup>b</sup>Correction with LXX; Heb uncertain  
<sup>p</sup>Or *my soul*

22:26 *eat*: The worshippers ate portions of a thanksgiving sacrifice (see Lev 7:11-18; translation note n in Ps 22:29).

22:27 The expansive vision seems to point to Genesis 12:3 and God's will that blessing extend to "all the families of earth" (see Pss 47:9; 72:17).

22:28 The Psalms regularly affirm God's claim on the whole world (see Pss 2:4; 47; 93; 95-99; sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89).

22:29 *all... dust*: The psalmist imagines that even the dead, who normally would have no ability to relate to God (see Ps 6:5), will join the worldwide company of those who recognize God's rule and gather for worship (see Ps 49:15). The Gospel writers may have heard in this verse an expectation of Jesus' resurrection (see Matt 27:46).

22:31 *God's righteousness*: See Psalm 5:8.

23:1-6 This eloquent psalm of trust (see Ps 16) celebrates God's gift of and provision for life, both in times of crisis (23:4) and on a daily basis (23:1-3, 5-6). It is particularly

appropriate following the bitter complaints of Psalm 22:1-21a, and it builds upon the praise and thanks offered in Psalm 22:21b-31 (for instance, both Pss 22 and 23 conclude with eating). Psalm 23:1-4 feature sheep and shepherd as the main images, while Psalm 23:5-6 speak of God as a generous host.

23:1 *my shepherd*: Psalm 22:28 proclaims God's rule; and rulers in the ancient world were known as shepherds, which basically means "feeders." Rulers were responsible to provide for their people, and this starts with food. Rulers, including Israel's kings, often failed to do so (see Ezek 34:1-10); and here God is proclaimed as the genuine and never-failing shepherd (see Pss 28:9; 74:1; 79:13; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3; Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10; Ezek 34:11-16). *lack nothing*: God will provide the food and other basic necessities that make life possible (see Deut 2:7; Neh 9:21).

23:2 *grassy meadows... waters*: For sheep, these locations mean food and water, the daily necessities of life.

23:3 *keeps me alive*: God wills life, and God makes it

23:4 Ps 3:6,  
Ps 27:1; Is 43:2  
23:5 Ps 16:5,  
Ps 45:7; Ps 92:10,  
Ps 104:15;  
Lk 7:46  
23:6 Ps 21:4,  
Ps 27:4  
24:1 Ex 9:29,  
Ex 19:5,  
Ps 50:12,  
Ps 89:11;  
1Co 10:26  
24:2 Ps 104:5,  
Ps 136:6  
24:3 Ps 2:6,  
Ps 15:1  
24:4 Ps 73:1;  
Mt 5:8

He guides me in proper paths  
for the sake of his good name.

<sup>4</sup>Even when I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no danger because you are with me.  
Your rod and your staff—they protect me.

<sup>5</sup>You set a table for me right in front of my enemies.  
You bathe my head in oil;  
my cup is so full it spills over!

<sup>6</sup>Yes, goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life,  
and I will live<sup>a</sup> in the LORD's house as long as I live.

## Psalm 24

*A psalm of David.*

<sup>1</sup>The earth is the LORD's and everything in it,  
the world and its inhabitants too.

<sup>2</sup>Because God is the one who established it on the seas;  
God set it firmly on the waters.

<sup>3</sup>Who can ascend the LORD's mountain?  
Who can stand in his holy sanctuary?

<sup>4</sup>Only the one with clean hands and a pure heart;  
the one who hasn't made false promises,  
the one who hasn't sworn dishonestly.

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT *I will return*

possible by daily provision (see John 10:1-18, especially v. 10). *proper paths*: For sheep, this is the difference between life and death. *for... name*: "Name" suggests nature or character; it is God's very nature to give the gift of life and the resources that sustain life.

23:4 *darkest valley*: The Hebrew word appears to be a combination of two shorter words that mean "shadow" and "death," and it is elsewhere related to distress and darkness (see Pss 44:19; 107:10; Job 3:5; 10:22; 16:16). *you are with me*: In this central line of the psalm, the speaker addresses God directly, emphasizing closeness with God. *rod*: a shepherd's tool for protecting the sheep, but also a symbol of royal rule (see Pss 23:1; 45:6; Gen 49:10).

23:5 Like the good shepherd, the generous host provides the daily necessities of life. *table*: food to eat. *You... oil*: a gesture of hospitality, communicating safety, shelter, and protection. This would be similar to the "proper paths" of Psalm 23:3. *my cup... over!*: There's plenty to drink.

23:6 *goodness... love*: Recalling Psalm 23:3, this pair of words describes the heart of God's character (see Ps 5:7; Exod 33:19; 34:6). The words "good" and "love" are paired in Psalms 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1. *pursue me*: It's usually the enemies who pursue or chase the psalmist (see Pss 7:5; 71:11; 109:16). Here the enemies are present; but they aren't a threat, and they may even be at the table (Ps 23:5). To be pursued or chased daily by God's "goodness and faithful love" is the best promise. *I... live*: A symbol of always being in God's presence.

24:1-10 Perhaps more than any other psalm, Psalm 24 clearly describes an original worship setting—more specifically, a worshippers' procession, involving entering into the temple area (24:3-6; see Ps 15) by bringing in

the sacred chest that was viewed as the earthly throne of God, the heavenly king (24:7-10). In its present setting as a piece of literature, Psalm 24 joins Psalm 15 in portraying what it means to live under God's supreme claim and in line with God's Instruction (see sidebar, "Torah [Instruction]: Psalms 15–24").

24:1-2 As is appropriate for a worship setting, the psalm begins with a profession of faith in the God who claims the whole universe. It clearly suggests God's supreme power, which is communicated in Psalm 24:7-10 by the repeated references to God as king.

24:2 *established... waters*: The seas and waters symbolize the unruly forces (see Ps 18:6) that God formed into an ordered universe (see Pss 89:11; 102:25; 104:5-9; see sidebar, "God the Creator" at Ps 8).

24:3-6 Psalm 24:3 could have been spoken originally by an approaching worshipper, in which case 24:4-6 would have been the priestly response. Verses 4-6 aren't requirements, but rather they describe those who are willing to submit to God's claim and to be shaped by God's Instruction (see Ps 15:2-5).

24:3 See the similar question in Psalm 15:1.

24:4 *clean hands*: perhaps a reference to a ceremonial washing, but more likely a symbol of faithful behaviors like those mentioned later in 24:4 and in Psalm 15:2-5 (see Pss 18:20, 24; 73:13). *pure heart*: describes those who honor God and God's will (see Ps 73:1; Matt 5:8). *the one... false promises*: This formulation points to Exodus 20:7, the third of the Ten Commandments. Breaking a promise to God would mean treating God's name as something trivial or unimportant. *the one... sworn dishonestly*: The allusion here is to Exodus 20:16, the ninth of the Ten Commandments, which prohibits false testimony against neighbors.

- 5 That kind of person receives blessings from the LORD  
and righteousness from the God who saves.
- 6 And that's how things are  
with the generation that seeks him—  
that seeks the face of Jacob's God.<sup>f</sup>
- 7 Mighty gates: lift up your heads!  
Ancient doors: rise up high!  
So the glorious king can enter!
- 8 Who is this glorious king?  
The LORD—strong and powerful!  
The LORD—powerful in battle!
- 9 Mighty gates: lift up your heads!  
Ancient doors: rise up high!  
So the glorious king can enter!
- 10 Who is this glorious king?  
The LORD of heavenly forces—  
he is the glorious king!

Selah

Selah

24:5 Ps 115:13  
24:6 Ps 27:8,  
Ps 105:4  
24:7  
Ps 118:19-20;  
Is 26:2; 1Co 2:8  
24:8 Ex 15:3  
24:10 Ex 15:18;  
2Ch 20:6;  
Neh 9:6; Ps 2:6,  
Ps 10:16  
25:1 Ps 86:4,  
Ps 143:8  
25:4 Ex 33:13;  
Ps 5:8; Ps 27:11,  
Ps 86:11,  
Ps 143:8  
25:5 Ps 43:3

**Psalm 25<sup>a</sup>**

*Of David.*

- 1 I offer my life<sup>e</sup> to you, LORD.
- 2 My God, I trust you.  
Please don't let me be put to shame!  
Don't let my enemies rejoice over me!
- 3 For that matter, don't let anyone who hopes in you be put to shame;  
instead, let those who are treacherous without excuse be put to shame.
- 4 Make your ways known to me, LORD;  
teach me your paths.
- 5 Lead me in your truth—teach it to me—  
because you are the God who saves me.
- 6 I put my hope in you all day long.

<sup>a</sup>LXX, Syr; MT *seek your face, Jacob* <sup>b</sup>Ps 25 is an alphabetic acrostic poem; see the note at Pss 9–10. <sup>c</sup>Or *soul*; also in 25:13, 20

24:5 *blessings . . . righteousness*: Indicators of being in right relationship with God.

24:6 *seeks . . . God*: See Psalms 11:7; 27:8. The temple would have been understood to offer a direct experience of God's presence; and later, the study of and obedience to God's Instruction would also be understood to offer a direct experience of God (see Ps 1:3; see sidebar, "Book V" at Ps 107). 24:7-10 The *gates* and *doors* of the temple come to life in this processional exchange that probably involved the entrance of the sacred chest, symbolizing God's throne and God's presence, into the temple.

24:7 *the glorious king*: Repeated four times in this section, this phrase clearly affirms the divine power suggested in Psalm 24:1-2 (see Ps 5:2).

24:8 *powerful in battle*: Because of constant opposition, God fights and also enables the earthly king to resist oppression (see Pss 2:2-3, 8-11; 18:31-50; 21:8-12). But the *battle* here may be God's defeat of chaos (Ps 24:2), resulting in an ordered world (see Ps 24:1-2). Creation stories in other ancient cultures involved the gods defeating a being that embodied chaos.

24:10 *Lord of heavenly forces*: Translated in the King James Version as "Lord of hosts;" this phrase clearly refers to

armies, and the *heavenly forces* may be the heavenly beings that were at God's command (see Ps 29:1).

25:1-22 Perhaps because of the acrostic pattern (see translation note s), the structure of Psalm 25 is irregular. Even so, it contains the typical elements of a prayer for help—sections of complaint and petition (25:2b-3, 4-7, 11, 16-18, 19-22), along with sections of praise and trust (25:8-10, 12-15).

25:1 *offer my life*: The verb here is sometimes used for making a sacrifice. Here, in effect, the psalmist offers her or his whole self to God (see Rom 12:1-2). See Psalms 86:4; 143:8 where trust also occurs in the context of the psalmist offering his or her life to God.

25:2 *trust*: See Psalm 4:5. *put to shame*: The first petition (Ps 25:2b-3) features a threefold occurrence of this phrase, which occurs again in the final petition (Ps 25:20). The enemies, who are present here as always in the prayers for help, constantly seek to exploit the psalmists (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

25:4-7 The enemies are absent from this second petition, and the focus is on the speaker and God.

25:4-5 *teach*: To trust God means to want to do God's will, so the speaker prays to be taught (see Ps 25:9, 12). *hope*: A

25:7 Job 13:26,  
Job 20:11;  
Ps 51:1;  
Ps 109:26;  
Ps 119:124

25:8 Ps 32:8,  
Ps 92:15,  
Ps 119:68;  
Is 26:7

25:9 Ps 23:3,  
Ps 27:11

25:10 Ps 103:18

25:11 Ex 34:9;  
Ps 31:3, Ps 79:9

25:14 Prov 3:32;  
Mt 13:11;  
Jn 7:17, Jn 15:15

25:15  
2Ch 20:12;  
Ps 31:4, Ps 121:1,  
Ps 123:2,  
Ps 141:8

25:17 1 Ki 1:29;  
Ps 34:6, Ps 34:17,  
Ps 40:12,  
Ps 107:6

25:18 2Sa 16:12

25:19 Ps 3:1,

Ps 35:19,  
Ps 38:19

25:22 Ps 130:8

† **6** LORD, remember your compassion and faithful love—  
they are forever!

† **7** But don't remember the sins of my youth or my wrongdoing.  
Remember me only according to your faithful love  
for the sake of your goodness, LORD.

‡ **8** The LORD is good and does the right thing;  
he teaches sinners which way they should go.

• **9** God guides the weak to justice,  
teaching them his way.

▷ **10** All the LORD's paths are loving and faithful  
for those who keep his covenant and laws.

↳ **11** Please, for the sake of your good name, LORD, forgive my sins,  
which are many!

◻ **12** Where are the ones who honor the LORD?  
God will teach them which path to take.

↳ **13** They will live a good life,  
and their descendants will possess the land.

◻ **14** The LORD counsels those who honor him;  
he makes his covenant known to them.

↳ **15** My eyes are always looking to the LORD  
because he will free my feet from the net.

◻ **16** Turn to me, God, and have mercy on me  
because I'm alone and suffering.

↳ **17** My heart's troubles keep getting bigger—  
set me free from my distress!

• **18** Look at my suffering and trouble—  
forgive all my sins!

↳ **19** Look at how many enemies I have  
and how violently they hate me!

↳ **20** Please protect my life! Deliver me!  
Don't let me be put to shame  
because I take refuge in you.

† **21** Let integrity and virtue guard me  
because I hope in you.

• **22** Please, God, save Israel from all its troubles!

keyword in the psalm (see Ps 25:3, 21). Trust and hope are inseparable (see Ps 27:14; Heb 11:1).

**25:6** *remember*. The word occurs three times in Psalm 25:6-7. The psalmist is honest about sinfulness (Ps 25:7, 11, 18), but trusts that God will *remember* God's forgiving nature that is described in the rest of verse 6 and in verse 7. *your compassion*: This is a basic quality of God (see Exod 34:6). The Hebrew noun means a "womb," so God's *compassion* suggests God's motherly love. *faithful love*: Another basic quality of God (see Pss 25:7, 10; 5:7; Exod 34:6; sidebar, "God's Faithful Love" at Ps 7).

**25:7** *goodness*: As in Psalm 25:6, another basic quality of God is mentioned (see Ps 23:6).

**25:9** *justice*: a summary of God's typical purpose (see Ps 9:4).

**25:10** *loving and faithful*: "Loving" repeats the word translated "faithful love" in Psalm 25:6-7. Faithfulness is yet another basic quality of God, often paired with "faithful love," as here (see Exod 34:6). *who keep his covenant*: It may seem here that God's love is restricted to those who obey (see

also Ps 25:14), but the speaker hasn't been fully obedient, and so is finally dependent on God's kind and loving willingness to forgive (see Ps 25:7, 11, 18).

**25:11** This third section of petition is the central line of the psalm, featuring again God's forgiveness.

**25:12-15** Like Psalm 25:8-10, this is a section of affirmation. Note that the two sections of affirmation surround the central petition.

**25:16-18** As in the second and third sections of petition (Ps 25:4-7, 11), the psalmist's sinfulness is clearly in view.

**25:19-22** As in the first section of petition (Ps 25:2b-3), the enemies are present. The repetition of *put to shame* (25:20) and *hope* (25:21) also recall the beginning of the psalm.

**25:20** *refuge*: See Psalm 2:12.

**25:21** *integrity*: See Psalm 18:25.

**25:22** This verse stands outside the acrostic structure, and it may have been added to give a clearly communal conclusion to a psalm that has featured mainly the voice of an individual.



**Psalm 26***Of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> Establish justice for me, LORD,  
because I have walked with integrity.  
I've trusted the LORD without wavering.
- <sup>2</sup> Examine me, LORD; put me to the test!  
Purify<sup>a</sup> my mind<sup>b</sup> and my heart.
- <sup>3</sup> Because your faithful love is right in front of me—  
I walk in your truth!
- <sup>4</sup> I don't spend time with people up to no good;  
I don't keep company with liars.
- <sup>5</sup> I detest the company of evildoers,  
and I don't sit with wicked people.
- <sup>6</sup> I wash my hands—they are innocent!  
I walk all around your altar, LORD,  
<sup>7</sup> proclaiming out loud my thanks,  
declaring all your wonderful deeds!
- <sup>8</sup> I love the beauty<sup>c</sup> of your house, LORD;  
I love the place where your glory resides.
- <sup>9</sup> Don't gather me<sup>d</sup> up with the sinners,  
taking my life along with violent people
- <sup>10</sup> in whose hands are evil schemes,  
whose strong hands are full of bribes.
- <sup>11</sup> But me? I walk with integrity.  
Save me! Have mercy on me!
- <sup>12</sup> My feet now stand on level ground.  
I will bless the LORD in the great congregation.

**Psalm 27***Of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> The LORD is my light and my salvation.  
Should I fear anyone?

<sup>a</sup>LXX or investigate <sup>b</sup>Or kidneys <sup>c</sup>LXX, MT *the dwelling of your house* <sup>d</sup>Or *my soul*

26:1-12 As in Psalms 7 and 17, the speaker seems to have been falsely accused, and so prays for help (26:1-2, 9-10) at the same time that she or he proclaims innocence and loyalty to God (26:3-8, 11). An expression of trust concludes the psalm (26:12).

26:1 *Establish justice*: See Psalms 7:8; 9:4, 10:18; 17:1-2. As the rest of the verse indicates, the request for God to set things right is grounded in trust (see Ps 4:5). *walked with integrity*: This claim, repeated in Psalm 26:11, indicates right relationship with God (see Pss 7:8; 18:25; 19:13; 25:21).

26:2 *Examine . . . test!*: See Psalms 7:9; 11:4-5; 17:3; 139:23.

26:3-8 For similar declarations of innocence, see Psalms 7:3-5; 17:4-5.

26:3 *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7.

26:4-5 Avoiding the opponents of God is a way of demonstrating loyalty to God and to God's will (see Ps 1:1-2).

26:6 *wash my hands*: See Psalms 24:4; 73:13. *innocent*: Not a claim of sinlessness, but of innocence in a particular case. *walk . . . altar*: Priests were required to wash before going to the altar (see Exod 30:17-21). A priest may have written the psalm, but the community certainly would have used it.

26:7-8 Having avoided God's opponents (Ps 26:4-5), the psalmist comes gratefully to God's house, the temple (see Ps 5:7), along with God's people (see Ps 26:12).

26:9 *sinners*: The psalmist here again and in Psalm 26:10 emphasizes avoidance of the opponents of God. (See Ps 1:1.)

26:10 *bribes*: An unfair and illegal way to victimize others (see Ps 15:5; Exod 23:8; Isa 1:23; Mic 3:11).

26:11 *Save me!*: See Psalm 13:5.

26:12 *level ground*: Symbolizes the security that comes when things are set right. The Hebrew root is associated elsewhere with right behavior (see Pss 7:10; 25:8). *bless*: See Psalm 16:7. The prayers for help typically end with expressions of assurance and/or praise (see Pss 6:8-10; 13:5-6).

27:1-14 Psalm 27 contains typical elements of a prayer for help—affirmation of trust or praise (27:1-6, 13-14), along with a section of complaint and petition (27:7-12). It is unusual that an extended expression of trust comes first, but the result is that the psalmist's complaints and pleas are surrounded by sections of assurance.

27:1-6 That the opening statement of confidence comes before the prayer in Psalm 27:7-12 suggests that faith doesn't prevent difficulty or opposition. The psalmists constantly affirm their trust in the midst of widespread opposition.

27:1 *my light*: God's presence or "face" (Ps 27:8-9) is often

26:1 Ps 7:8;  
Prv 20:7  
26:2 Ps 7:9,  
Ps 17:3, Ps 66:10,  
Ps 139:23-24  
26:3 2Ki 20:3;  
Ps 86:11; 2Jn 1:4  
26:4 Ps 1:1,  
Ps 28:3  
26:5 Ps 31:6,  
Ps 139:21-22  
26:6 Ex 30:19;  
Dt 21:6; Ps 43:4,  
Ps 73:13;  
Mt 27:24  
26:7 Ps 9:1  
26:8 1Ch 29:3;  
Ps 27:4, Ps  
84:1-2  
26:9 Ps 28:3,  
Ps 55:23,  
Ps 139:19  
26:10 Ex 23:8  
26:12 Ps 22:22,  
Ps 22:25,  
Ps 27:11, Ps 40:2,  
Ps 107:32  
27:1 Ex 15:2;  
Ps 118:6,  
Ps 118:14;  
Is 12:2; Mt 7:8

27:2 Ps 14:4  
 27:3 Ps 3:6  
 27:4 Ps 23:6,  
 Ps 26:8, Ps 63:2,  
 Ps 65:4, Ps 84:2  
 27:7 Ps 4:1  
 27:8 Ps 24:6,  
 Ps 105:4  
 27:9 Ps 40:17,  
 Ps 69:17,  
 Ps 71:18,  
 Ps 102:2,  
 Ps 143:7  
 27:10 Is 40:11,  
 Is 49:15  
 27:11 Ps 5:8,  
 Ps 25:4-5,  
 Ps 86:11,  
 Ps 143:10  
 27:12 Dt 19:16;  
 Ps 35:11;  
 Mt 26:59-60;  
 Ac 9:1  
 27:13 Job 28:13,  
 Ps 52:5, Ps 116:9,  
 Ps 142:5,  
 Is 38:11  
 27:14 Ps 31:24,  
 Ps 62:5, Ps 130:5,  
 Is 8:17  
 28:1 Ps 18:2,  
 Ps 35:22,  
 Ps 83:1, Ps 88:4,  
 Ps 143:7

The LORD is a fortress protecting my life.

Should I be frightened of anything?

- <sup>2</sup>When evildoers come at me trying to eat me up—  
 it's they, my foes and my enemies, who stumble and fall!
- <sup>3</sup>If an army camps against me, my heart won't be afraid.  
 If war comes up against me, I will continue to trust in this:
- <sup>4</sup>I have asked one thing from the LORD—it's all I seek:  
 to live in the LORD's house all the days of my life,  
 seeing the LORD's beauty and constantly adoring his temple.
- <sup>5</sup>Because he will shelter me in his own dwelling during troubling times;  
 he will hide me in a secret place in his own tent;  
 he will set me up high, safe on a rock.
- <sup>6</sup>Now my head is higher than the enemies surrounding me,  
 and I will offer sacrifices in God's tent—sacrifices with shouts of joy!  
 I will sing and praise the LORD.
- <sup>7</sup>LORD, listen to my voice when I cry out—  
 have mercy on me and answer me!
- <sup>8</sup>Come, my heart says, seek God's face.<sup>7</sup>  
 LORD, I do seek your face!
- <sup>9</sup>Please don't hide it from me!  
 Don't push your servant aside angrily—  
 you have been my help!  
 God who saves me, don't neglect me!  
 Don't leave me all alone!
- <sup>10</sup>Even if my father and mother left me all alone,  
 the LORD would take me in.
- <sup>11</sup>LORD, teach me your way;  
 because of my opponents, lead me on a good path.
- <sup>12</sup>Don't give me over to the desires of my enemies,  
 because false witnesses and violent accusers  
 have taken their stand against me.
- <sup>13</sup>But I have sure faith  
 that I will experience the LORD's goodness in the land of the living!
- <sup>14</sup>Hope in the LORD!  
 Be strong! Let your heart take courage!  
 Hope in the LORD!

## Psalm 28

Of David.

- <sup>1</sup>I cry out to you, LORD.  
 You are my rock; don't refuse to hear me.  
 If you won't talk to me,

<sup>7</sup>Correction; MT *My heart says to/of you . . . see my face!*

associated with light (see Ps 4:6). *Should I fear anyone?* Faith gets rid of fear (see Pss 23:6; 118:6; Mark 5:36).

27:3 *an army*: See Psalm 3:6.

27:4-6 It is possible that harassed persons sought refuge or asylum in the temple (see Pss 5:7; 17:15), but the language is probably metaphorical (see Pss 26:6-8; 84:1-4, 10). In any case, the psalmist finds security in God's presence (see Pss 23:6).

27:7-12 As always, the requests for help are made in the presence of powerful opposition (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

27:7 See Psalm 4:1.

27:8 *God's face . . . your face*: See Psalms 11:7; 24:6.

27:9 *don't hide it*: See Psalm 13:1. *Don't . . . alone!*: See Psalm 22:1.

27:10 Especially in the ancient world, being abandoned by family would put a person at great risk.

27:11 *teach . . . path*: See Psalm 25:4-5, 9, 12.

27:12 *false witnesses . . . accusers*: The psalmists are often the victims of deceitful and destructive speech (see Pss 4:2-5; 7; 17; 26).

27:13-14 The final statement of confidence comes with an invitation (27:14). Faith and hope are inseparable. *the LORD's goodness*: See Psalms 23:6; 25:7. *Hope . . . Hope*: See Psalms 5:3; 25:3, 5, 21.

28:1-9 Unlike Psalm 27, Psalm 28 contains the

- I'll be just like those going down to the pit.
- <sup>2</sup> Listen to my request for mercy when I cry out to you,  
when I lift up my hands to your holy inner sanctuary.
- <sup>3</sup> Don't drag me off with the wicked and those who do evil;  
the type who talk nice to their friends  
while evil thoughts are in their hearts!
- <sup>4</sup> Pay them back for what they've done!  
Pay them back for their evil deeds!  
Pay them back for their handiwork!  
Give back to them exactly what they deserve!
- <sup>5</sup> Because they have no regard for what the LORD has done,  
no regard for his handiwork,  
God will tear them down and never rebuild!
- <sup>6</sup> Bless the LORD because he has listened to my request for mercy!
- <sup>7</sup> The LORD is my strength and my shield.  
My heart trusts him.  
I was helped, my heart rejoiced, and I thank him with my song.
- <sup>8</sup> The LORD is his people's strength;  
he is a fortress of protection for his anointed one.
- <sup>9</sup> Save your people, God!  
Bless your possession!  
Shepherd them and carry them for all time!

28:2 Ps 5:7;  
Ps 134:2;  
Ps 141:2;  
Lam 2:19;  
1Ti 2:8

28:4 Ps 62:12;  
Lam 3:64;  
2Ti 4:14;  
Rev 18:6;  
Rev 22:12

28:5 Is 5:12

28:7 Ps 3:3;  
Ps 13:5; Ps 16:9;  
Ps 40:3; Ps 69:30

28:8 Ex 15:2;  
Ps 20:6; Ps 27:1

28:9 Dt 9:29;  
Ps 78:71; Ps 80:1;  
Is 40:11; Is 63:9

29:1 1Ch 16:28;  
Ps 96:7

## Psalm 29

*A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> You, divine beings! Give to the LORD—  
give to the LORD glory and power!
- <sup>2</sup> Give to the LORD the glory due his name!  
Bow down to the LORD in holy splendor!

typical elements of a prayer for help in the usual order—complaint and petition (28:1-5) followed by a section of praise and affirmation of faith (28:6-8). It seems that the *request for mercy* (28:2) has been answered, in which case Psalm 28 might be read as a psalm of thanks (28:6); but this isn't entirely clear, since the prayers for help regularly place complaint/petition and praise/affirmation together (see Pss 6:8-10; 13:5-6). In any case, and less typically, the psalmist returns to petition in 28:9.

28:1 *If . . . me*: God's silence is often an issue (see Pss 35:22; 83:1; 109:1). *the pit*: God's continuing silence will mean death (see Pss 16:10; 30:3, 9).

28:2 *I . . . hands*: The posture of prayer (see Pss 63:4; 88:9; 141:2), offered perhaps facing the inner portion of the temple that contained the sacred chest (see Ps 134:2).

28:3-5 The psalmist suggests his or her innocence (see Pss 7:3-5; 17:3-5) and seems to be a victim of deceitful and malicious speech (see Ps 4:2-5). The request concerning *the wicked* in 28:4 isn't simply a matter of payback but rather a request for God to set things right (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6; sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). *their handiwork . . . his handiwork*: By focusing on what they have done rather than on God's deeds, *the wicked* invite negative consequences (see Ps 1:6).

28:6 *Bless*: See Psalms 16:7; 26:12.

28:7 *shield*: See Psalm 3:3. *trusts*: See Psalm 4:5. *heart rejoiced*: Note the contrast between the psalmist's trusting

and joyful heart and the "hearts" of "the wicked" that are filled with evil (Ps 28:3).

28:8 *people's strength*: What the psalmist claimed for him or herself (Ps 28:7), he or she now claims for the whole people. *anointed one*: See Psalm 2:2; the king also shares in God's strength.

28:9 Some psalms that focus primarily on an individual have a communal ending (see Pss 3:8; 5:11-12; 14:7; 25:22; 31:23-24; 51:18-19; 130:7-8). The appearance of further petition after the trust expressed in Psalm 28:6-8 suggests that God's people will always need to pray for help (see Ps 118:25).

29:1-11 Because it clearly describes God as *enthroned* and refers to God as "king" (29:10), Psalm 29 is usually included among the enthronement psalms, which are songs of praise that proclaim God rules or is king (see Pss 47; 93; 95-99; see sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89). This makes sense, even though Psalm 29 is unique within this grouping.

29:1-2 Songs of praise typically include invitations to praise that are usually addressed to a human audience (cf. 29:1-2 with Ps 96:7-8). Psalm 29 has in view polytheism (belief in many gods; see Pss 58:1; 82:1) and/or the concept of a divine council that attends God (see Pss 24:10; 89:7; 103:20-21; 148:1-2; 1 Kgs 22:19). *glory and power*: Traits of kingship (see Pss 24:7-10; 96:3, 7-8), so looking forward to Psalm 29:9-10. *glory due his name*: "Glory" is due, because

29:3 Job 37:4-5;  
Ps 18:13,  
Ps 104:7  
29:4 Ps 68:33  
29:5 Jgs 9:15;  
Ps 104:16;  
Is 2:13, Is 14:8  
29:6 Nm 23:22;  
Dt 3:9; Ps 114:4,  
Ps 114:6  
29:8 Nm 13:26  
29:9 Job 39:1  
29:10 Gn 6:17;  
Ps 10:16, Ps 93:1  
30:1 Dt 20:5;  
Ps 25:2, Ps 35:19,  
Ps 35:24  
30:2 Ps 6:2,  
Ps 88:13,  
Ps 103:3  
30:3 1Sa 2:6;  
Ps 16:10, Ps 28:1,  
Ps 56:13,  
Ps 86:13  
30:4 Ps 97:12  
30:5 Ps 103:9,  
Ps 126:5;  
Is 54:7-8;  
2Co 4:17

- <sup>3</sup>The LORD's voice is over the waters;  
the glorious God thunders;  
the LORD is over the mighty waters.
- <sup>4</sup>The LORD's voice is strong;  
the LORD's voice is majestic.
- <sup>5</sup>The LORD's voice breaks cedar trees—  
yes, the LORD shatters the cedars of Lebanon.
- <sup>6</sup>He makes Lebanon jump around like a young bull,  
makes Sirion jump around like a young wild ox.
- <sup>7</sup>The LORD's voice unleashes fiery flames;  
<sup>a</sup>the LORD's voice shakes the wilderness—  
yes, the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
- <sup>9</sup>The LORD's voice convulses the oaks,  
strips the forests bare,  
but in his temple everyone shouts, "Glory!"
- <sup>10</sup>The LORD sits enthroned over the floodwaters;  
the LORD sits enthroned—king forever!
- <sup>11</sup>Let the LORD give strength to his people!  
Let the LORD bless his people with peace!

### Psalm 30

*A psalm. A song for the temple dedication. Of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>I exalt you, LORD, because you pulled me up;  
you didn't let my enemies celebrate over me.
- <sup>2</sup>LORD, my God, I cried out to you for help, and you healed me.
- <sup>3</sup>LORD, you brought me<sup>a</sup> up from the grave,<sup>a</sup>  
brought me back to life from among those going down to the pit.
- <sup>4</sup>You who are faithful to the LORD,  
sing praises to him;  
give thanks to his holy name!
- <sup>5</sup>His anger lasts for only a second,  
but his favor lasts a lifetime.

<sup>a</sup>Or *my soul* <sup>a</sup>Heb *Sheol*

God is king (see "Glory!" in Ps 29:9). *holy splendor*: Splendor is also an attribute of kingship, and "holy splendor" may suggest God's unique power.

29:3-9 This section is a description of a powerful storm moving over the Mediterranean Sea onto the coast, with thunder (29:3-4), wind (29:5-6, 8-9), and lightning (29:7). *The LORD's voice*: In the thunder, the poet detects God's voice, not the work of Baal, who was the Canaanite god of the storm. Some suggest Psalm 29 was a Canaanite hymn that was reworked to be a song of praise to the Lord of Israel. *The LORD's voice* occurs seven times. Because seven is the number of wholeness, the repetition suggests the totality of God's power and claim on the world. *in his temple*: The phrase probably refers to the Lord's heavenly home (see Ps 20:6) and to the earthly temple where human worshippers gathered (see Ps 150:1, where the same ambiguity is present).

29:10 *floodwaters*: The unruly waters (see Ps 18:16) that God has ordered into a universe (see Pss 24:2; 93:3-4; 104:3), over which God now rules. *king forever*: See Psalm 5:2.

29:11 The responsibility of a king was to provide for his people (see Ps 23:1). *strength*: See Psalm 28:8. *peace*: See Psalm 4:8. In Psalm 72, the earthly king is God's agent for

achieving "shalom" (see Ps 72:3, 7), which means complete well-being that results from establishing the justice and righteousness that God wills (see Pss 96:13; 98:9).

30:1-12 Psalm 30 gives thanks for the rescue described in 30:1-3, and described again as a sort of flashback in 30:6-10. The grateful celebration is the subject of 30:4-5, 11-12. Psalm 30 is one of a few psalms linked in its title to a specific occasion. A prayer of thanks would have been appropriate for the rededication of the temple in 515 BCE after it was rebuilt following the exile (see Ezra 6:16), or in 165 BCE after it was recovered following the defilement by Antiochus IV (see 2 Macc 10:7), or for the ongoing Festival of Dedication (Hanukkah), which originated in the 2nd century BCE and with which Psalm 30 is associated in rabbinic sources. Psalm 30, however, doesn't seem to have originated in conjunction with such occasions.

30:1-3 A summary of the psalmist's experience of deliverance.

30:2 *healed me*: The psalmist may have been healed from a life-threatening illness, but the language could be metaphorical (see Ps 6:2).

30:3 *grave . . . pit*: See Psalms 30:9; 6:5; 16:10; 28:1.

30:4 As is sometimes the case in the prayers for help, the psalmist invites others to share in the grateful celebration

Weeping may stay all night,  
but by morning, joy!

- <sup>6</sup>When I was comfortable, I said, "I will never stumble."  
<sup>7</sup>Because it pleased you, LORD, you made me a strong mountain.  
But then you hid your presence.  
I was terrified.  
<sup>8</sup>I cried out to you, LORD.  
I begged my Lord for mercy:  
<sup>9</sup>"What is to be gained by my spilled blood,  
by my going down into the pit?  
Does dust thank you?  
Does it proclaim your faithfulness?  
<sup>10</sup>LORD, listen and have mercy on me!  
LORD, be my helper!"  
<sup>11</sup>You changed my mourning into dancing.  
You took off my funeral clothes and dressed me up in joy  
<sup>12</sup>so that my whole being might sing praises to you and never stop.  
LORD, my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

30:6 Job 29:18;  
Ps 10:6  
30:7 Dt 31:17;  
Ps 5:12,  
Ps 104:29,  
Ps 143:7  
30:8 Ps 142:1  
30:9 Ps 6:5,  
Ps 28:1, 18; 38:18  
30:10 Ps 4:1,  
Ps 17:1  
30:11 Ps 149:3;  
Jer 31:4,  
Jer 31:13  
30:12 Ps 16:9,  
Ps 44:8  
31:1 Ps 25:2,  
Ps 71:1-2,  
Ps 143:1  
31:2 Ps 18:2,  
Ps 71:2, Ps 86:1  
31:3 Ps 18:2,  
Ps 23:3  
31:5 Dt 32:4;  
Lk 23:46;  
Ac 7:59  
31:6 Dt 32:21;  
Ps 26:5, Jer 10:8;  
Jon 2:8  
31:7 Ps 1:6,  
Ps 9:2, Ps 9:13,  
Ps 10:14,  
Ps 31:21  
31:8 Dt 32:30

### Psalms 31

For the music leader. A psalm of David.

- <sup>1</sup>I take refuge in you, LORD.  
Please never let me be put to shame.  
Rescue me by your righteousness!  
<sup>2</sup>Listen closely to me!  
Deliver me quickly;  
be a rock that protects me;  
be a strong fortress that saves me!  
<sup>3</sup>You are definitely my rock and my fortress.  
Guide me and lead me for the sake of your good name!  
<sup>4</sup>Get me out of this net that's been set for me  
because you are my protective fortress.  
<sup>5</sup>I entrust my spirit into your hands;  
you, LORD, God of faithfulness—you have saved me.  
<sup>6</sup>I hate those who embrace what is completely worthless.  
I myself trust the LORD.  
<sup>7</sup>I rejoice and celebrate in your faithful love because you saw my suffering—  
you were intimately acquainted with my deep distress.  
<sup>8</sup>You didn't hand me over to the enemy,  
but set my feet in wide-open spaces.

(see Pss 5:11; 22:23). *sing praises... give thanks*: These verbs occur again in Psalm 30:12, so the psalmist models what she or he invites others to do.

30:6-10 This flashback gives further details of the rescue summarized in Psalm 30:1-3. The psalmist moves from self-reliance (Ps 30:6) to dependence upon God (Ps 30:10). 30:9 See Psalms 6:5; 88:10-12; 115:17.

30:10 *my helper*. See Psalms 10:14; 22:11.

30:11-12 In contrast to the false confidence of Psalm 30:6, the psalmist is now committed to lifelong praise and never-ending thankfulness as a way of life. *dancing*: an expression of grateful praise (see Pss 149:3; 150:4; Exod 15:20; cf. Lam 5:15).

31:1-24 Psalm 31 is a prayer for help with the typical elements: complaint and petition (31:1b-2, 3b-4, 9-13, 15b-18) along with affirmations of trust and praise (31:1a, 3a, 5-8, 14-15a, 19-24). Psalm 31 is unique because the

expressions of praise/trust begin, end, and pervade the psalm, giving it a character similar to the psalms of trust.

31:1a *refuge*: See Psalms 31:19; 2:12.

31:1b-2 The petitions contain several synonyms for "refuge" (Ps 31:1a). *put to shame*: See Psalms 31:17; 25:2, 20.

31:3b See Psalm 23:3. *good name!*: Name suggests character, and prepares for the psalmist's mention of God's traits in Psalm 31:5-8.

31:5 *I... hands*: The psalmist entrusts life fully to God (see Ps 31:15). In the Gospel of Luke, these become Jesus' words from the cross (see Luke 23:46; see sidebar, "The Psalms and Jesus" at Ps 22). *faithfulness*: a primary attribute of God (see Ps 25:10; Exod 34:6).

31:6 *I hate*: The strong language emphasizes the psalmist's loyalty to God (see Pss 26:4-5; 139:21-22).

31:7 *faithful love*: a basic quality of God, often paired with "faithfulness" that is mentioned in Psalm 31:5. The word

31:9 Ps 6:7

31:10 Ps 6:2,  
Ps 32:3, Ps 102:331:11 Ps 38:11,  
Ps 88:18

31:14 Ps 140:6

31:15 Job 24:1,  
Ps 7:131:16 Nm 6:25;  
Ps 4:6, Ps 6:4,  
Ps 67:1, Ps 80:331:18 1Sa 2:3,  
Ps 120:2;  
Jud 1:1531:19 Ps 23:5;  
Is 64:431:20 Ps 27:5,  
Ps 32:7, Ps 64:231:21 1Sa 23:7;  
Ps 17:7, Ps 28:6

<sup>9</sup>Have mercy on me, LORD, because I'm depressed.

My vision fails because of my grief,  
as do my spirit and my body.

<sup>10</sup>My life is consumed with sadness;  
my years are consumed with groaning.  
Strength fails me because of my suffering,<sup>b</sup>  
my bones dry up.

<sup>11</sup>I'm a joke to all my enemies,  
still worse to my neighbors.  
I scare my friends,

and whoever sees me in the street runs away!

<sup>12</sup>I am forgotten, like I'm dead, completely out of mind;  
I am like a piece of pottery, destroyed.

<sup>13</sup>Yes, I've heard all the gossiping, terror all around;  
so many gang up together against me,  
they plan to take my life!

<sup>14</sup>But me? I trust you, LORD!  
I affirm, "You are my God."

<sup>15</sup>My future is in your hands.  
Don't hand me over to my enemies,  
to all who are out to get me!

<sup>16</sup>Shine your face on your servant;  
save me by your faithful love!

<sup>17</sup>LORD, don't let me be put to shame  
because I have cried out to you.  
Let the wicked be put to shame;  
let them be silenced in death's domain!<sup>c</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Let their lying lips be shut up whenever they speak arrogantly  
against the righteous with pride and contempt!

<sup>19</sup>How great is the goodness  
that you've reserved for those who honor you,  
that you commit to those who take refuge in you—  
in the sight of everyone!

<sup>20</sup>You hide them in the shelter of your wings,<sup>d</sup>  
safe from human scheming.  
You conceal them in a shelter,  
safe from accusing tongues.

<sup>21</sup>Bless the LORD,  
because he has wondrously revealed his faithful love to me  
when I was like a city under siege!

<sup>b</sup>LXX, Syr; MT *my sin* <sup>c</sup>Heb *Sheol* <sup>d</sup>Correction; see Ps 61:5; MT *in the hiding place of your face*.

becomes a keyword in the psalm, occurring again in Psalm 31:16, 21 (see Ps 5:7; Exod 34:6; sidebar, "God's Faithful Love" at Ps 7).

**31:9-13** The exact nature of the distress isn't clear, but it may have involved both physical and emotional suffering, as well as oppression, as in the other prayers for help (see Ps 4:2-5; sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

**31:9** *vision fails*: See Psalms 6:7; 13:3.

**31:10** *bones*: See Psalm 22:14, 17.

**31:11** The suffering psalmists often are doubly mistreated by the responses of others, who shun or seek to take advantage. It isn't only the enemies who behave this way, but sometimes also the psalmist's family and friends. (See Pss 22:7; 38:11; 39:8; 41:9; 55:12-13; 69:7-12; 88:8, 18; Jer 20:8.)

**31:13** *terror all around*: See Jeremiah 20:3, where the phrase is translated "Panic Lurks Everywhere." There are several parallels between Psalm 31 and Jeremiah 20, a reminder that in the case of the psalmists, the prophets, and Jesus, faithfulness led to suffering and opposition. *they plan . . . my life*: See Psalm 35:4.

**31:14-15a** The affirmation of trust here recalls Psalm 31:5.

**31:16** *shine your face*: See Psalm 4:6.

**31:17-18** The petitions against the wicked are motivated by the desire that things be set right for the mistreated (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6). *lying lips*: See Psalm 4:2-5.

**31:19-24** The psalm ends, as it began, with confidence.

**31:21** *Bless*: See Psalm 16:7.

**31:23** *pays the proud back*: See Psalm 28:4.

22 When I was panicked, I said, "I'm cut off from your eyes!"  
But you heard my request for mercy when I cried out to you for help.

23 All you who are faithful, love the LORD!  
The LORD protects those who are loyal,  
but he pays the proud back to the fullest degree.

24 All you who wait for the LORD,  
be strong and let your heart take courage.

31:22 Ps 6:9,  
Ps 66:19,  
Ps 116:11,  
Is 38:11,  
Lam 3:54  
31:24 Ps 27:14  
32:1 Ps 1:1,  
Ps 85:2; Ro 4:7  
32:2 Jn 1:47;  
Ro 4:7; 2Co 5:19;  
Rev 14:5  
32:4 1Sa 5:6;  
Ps 22:15; Ps 38:2,  
Ps 39:10  
32:5 Lv 26:40;  
Ps 38:18,  
Ps 51:3;  
Prv 28:13;  
1Jn 1:9  
32:6 Ps 4:3,  
Ps 69:1, Ps 69:13;  
Is 43:2, Is 55:6  
32:7 Ex 15:1;  
Jgs 5:1; Ps 9:9,  
Ps 27:5,  
Ps 119:114  
32:8 Ps 25:8,  
Ps 25:12,  
Ps 33:18  
32:9 Prv 26:3;  
Jer 31:18; Jas 3:3  
32:10 Prv 13:21,  
Prv 16:20,  
Jer 17:7; Ro 2:9  
32:11 Ps 7:10,  
Ps 33:1, Ps 64:10,  
Ps 68:3, Ps 97:12

## Psalm 32

A *maskil*\* of David.

1 The one whose wrongdoing is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered over, is truly happy!

2 The one the LORD doesn't consider guilty—  
in whose spirit there is no dishonesty—  
that one is truly happy!

3 When I kept quiet, my bones wore out;  
I was groaning all day long—every day, every night!—  
4 because your hand was heavy upon me.

My energy was sapped as if in a summer drought.

5 So I admitted my sin to you;  
I didn't conceal my guilt.  
"I'll confess my sins to the LORD," is what I said.  
Then you removed the guilt of my sin.

6 That's why all the faithful should pray to you during troubled times,<sup>f</sup>  
so that a great flood of water won't reach them.

7 You are my secret hideout!  
You protect me from trouble.  
You surround me with songs of rescue!

*Selah*

*Selah*

*Selah*

8 I will instruct you and teach you about the direction you should go.  
I'll advise you and keep my eye on you.

9 Don't be like some senseless horse or mule,  
whose movement must be controlled with a bit and a bridle.<sup>g</sup>  
Don't be anything like that!<sup>h</sup>

10 The pain of the wicked is severe,  
but faithful love surrounds the one who trusts the LORD.

11 You who are righteous, rejoice in the LORD and be glad!  
All you whose hearts are right, sing out in joy!

\*Perhaps instruction; it also appears in Pss 42, 44–45, 52–55, 74, 78, 88–89, 142; cf 47:7; the root is used in Ps 32:8. <sup>f</sup>Correction; MT at a time of finding only <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain

31:24 See Psalms 5:3; 27:14.

32:1–11 Psalm 32 is a prayer (32:3–7) that intends to teach (32:1–2, 8–10), especially about the benefits of confessing sin and being forgiven. For this reason, it is the second of the church's seven Penitential Psalms (see Ps 6).

32:1–2 *truly happy*: The repetition recalls Psalm 1:1, making it clear that true happiness derives not from being sinless but rather from being forgiven (see sidebar, "True Happiness" at Ps 1). *dishonesty*: This seems to describe the psalmist's attempt to hide his or her sinfulness (see Ps 32:3).

32:3–5 Testimony gives way to prayer. The psalmist's problems (32:3–4) result not from divine wrath but rather from the failure to confess sin, and perhaps from the energy expended in pretending to be perfect (the "dishonesty" of Ps 32:2). While there is no description of the actual confession of sin, the psalmist reports that he or she has

confessed and received forgiveness. Verse 5 proves to be a turning point. The words "sin[s]" (Ps 32:1, 5), "wrongdoing" (Ps 32:1), and "guilt" (Ps 32:2, 5) don't occur again after verse 5.

32:6–7 The psalmist addresses God, but clearly intends the faithful to overhear and learn from the prayer. *great flood of water*. See Psalm 18:16.

32:8–10 It isn't clear who the speaker is here. It could be God addressing the psalmist, but it is more likely the psalmist addressing others, as he or she more clearly does in Psalm 32:11. See Psalm 51:13 where the psalmist, anticipating forgiveness, promises to teach others.

32:10 *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7 and sidebar, "God's Faithful Love" at Psalm 7.

32:11 As is often the case, the psalm ends with an invitation (see Pss 5:11–12; 22:26; 27:14; 31:23–24). *whose hearts are right*: The psalm makes it clear that to be righteous

33:1 Ps 32:11,  
Ps 147:1  
33:2 2Sa 6:5;  
Ps 71:22, Ps 92:3,  
Ps 144:9  
33:3 Ps 40:3,  
Ps 96:1, Ps 98:1,  
Ps 144:9;  
Is 42:10  
33:4 Dt 32:4;  
Ps 19:8  
33:5 Ps 11:7,  
Ps 119:64  
33:6 Gn 1:1,  
Gn 2:1; Heb 11:3  
33:7 Ex 15:8;  
Josh 3:16;  
Job 38:8; Jer 5:22  
33:8 Ps 96:9  
33:9 Gn 1:3;  
Ps 148:5-6;  
Heb 11:3  
33:10 2Sa 17:14;  
Job 5:12; Ps 2:1;  
Is 8:10, Is 19:3  
33:11 Prv 19:21;  
Is 46:10;  
Heb 6:17  
33:12 Ex 19:5;  
Dt 7:6, Dt 33:29;  
Ps 65:4;  
Ps 144:15  
33:15 Jer 32:19  
33:16 Ps 44:6,  
Ps 60:11

### Psalm 33

- 1 All you who are righteous, shout joyfully to the LORD!  
It's right for those who do right to praise God.
- 2 Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre!  
Sing praises to him with the ten-stringed harp!
- 3 Sing to him a new song!  
Play your best with joyful shouts!
- 4 Because the LORD's word is right,  
his every act is done in good faith.
- 5 He loves righteousness and justice;  
the LORD's faithful love fills the whole earth.
- 6 The skies were made by the LORD's word,  
all their starry multitude by the breath of his mouth.
- 7 He gathered the ocean waters into a heap;  
he put the deep seas into storerooms.
- 8 All the earth honors the LORD;  
all the earth's inhabitants stand in awe of him.
- 9 Because when he spoke, it happened!  
When he commanded, there it was!
- 10 The LORD overrules what the nations plan;  
he frustrates what the peoples intend to do.
- 11 But the LORD's plan stands forever;  
what he intends to do lasts from one generation to the next.
- 12 The nation whose God is the LORD,  
the people whom God has chosen as his possession, is truly happy!
- 13 The LORD looks down from heaven;  
he sees every human being.
- 14 From his dwelling place God observes all who live on earth.
- 15 God is the one who made all their hearts,  
the one who knows everything they do.
- 16 Kings aren't saved by the strength of their armies;  
warriors aren't rescued by how much power they have.

means to depend upon God's grace (see Ps 1:5-6 and often in the prayers for help), not to do everything right. This is why the apostle Paul quotes Psalm 32:1-2 when he writes about righteousness in Romans 4 (see Rom 4:6-8). 33:1-22 Whether intended or not, the first verse of Psalm 33 is a very appropriate response to the invitation of Psalm 32:11. Psalm 33 is a song of praise; and following further invitations to praise in 33:1-2, later sections offer reasons for praise (33:4-19). The psalm concludes with an affirmation of faith (33:20-22). Although it isn't an acrostic poem (cf. Ps 34), the twenty-two verses match the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, suggesting God's total claim on the world and the full reach of God's *faithful love* (33:5, 18, 22).

33:1-3 Songs of praise typically begin with invitations to praise, as here (see Pss 29; 47; 95; 96-98; 113; 117; 146-150). 33:2 This is the first reference to musical instruments in the body of a psalm. Many of the Psalms would have been sung publicly to music, especially the songs of praise (see Pss 43:4; 57:8; 71:22; 81:2-3; 92:3; 98:5; 137:2; 144:9; 147:7; 149:3; 150:3-5; 2 Sam 6:5; 1 Chron 13:8; 25:1, 6; see sidebar, "Music and Singing" at Ps 33).

33:3 *new song*: elsewhere associated directly with the celebration of God's rule (see Pss 96:1; 98:1; 149:1; see also Pss 40:3; 144:9; Isa 42:10; Rev 5:9; 14:3). God's worldwide claim is also in view in Psalm 33.

33:4-5 The reasons for praise are summarized here with several important words that describe God's character and purposes.

33:4 *right*: See Psalms 5:8; 25:8; 92:15. *good faith*: Faithfulness is a basic quality of God (see Pss 25:10; 31:5; 36:5; 98:3; 100:5; Exod 34:6).

33:5 *righteousness and justice*: These words, often paired as here, summarize the content of God's will for the world (see Pss 5:8; 94; 72:1-7; 96:13; 98:9; 99:4; Isa 5:7; Amos 5:24). *faithful love*: Psalm 33:5b suggests that God's will for justice and righteousness is motivated by God's worldwide love (see Pss 33:18, 22; 5:7; 36:5).

33:6-9 God loves the world that God made (see Pss 8:1-5; 24:1-2; 104:1-24; 147:8-9; Gen 1:1-31; sidebar, "God the Creator" at Ps 8).

33:10-12 Every people and nation is subject to God, and God's will prevails (see Neh 4:15; Prov 19:21; 21:30-31; Isa 14:26-27; 25:1; 46:10-11).

33:13-15 God sees every person and his or her actions (see Pss 11:4; 14:2; 102:19).

33:14 *dwelling place*: The underlying Hebrew word sometimes has the sense of "enthroned" (see "rules" in Pss 2:4; 9:7; 99:1), and it is the clearest statement of the divine rule suggested throughout the psalm.

33:16-19 Even the most powerful human beings are subject to God (33:16-17; see Pss 2:8-11; 20:7; 146:3-4; Prov



- <sup>17</sup>A warhorse is a bad bet for victory;  
it can't save despite its great strength.
- <sup>18</sup>But look here: the LORD's eyes watch all  
who honor him,  
all who wait for his faithful love,  
<sup>19</sup>to deliver their lives<sup>1</sup> from death  
and keep them alive during a famine.
- <sup>20</sup>We put our hope in the LORD.  
He is our help and our shield.
- <sup>21</sup>Our heart rejoices in God  
because we trust his holy name.
- <sup>22</sup>LORD, let your faithful love surround us  
because we wait for you.

### Psalm 34<sup>1</sup>

*Of David, when he pretended to be crazy  
before Abimelech, who banished him  
so that he left.*

- N** <sup>1</sup>I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise will always be in my mouth.
- 2** <sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup> praise the LORD—  
let the suffering listen and rejoice.
- 3** <sup>3</sup> Magnify the LORD with me!  
Together let us lift his name up high!
- 7** <sup>4</sup>I sought the LORD and he answered me.  
He delivered me from all my fears.
- 7** <sup>5</sup>Those who look to God will shine;  
their faces are never ashamed.
- 1** <sup>6</sup>This suffering person cried out:  
the LORD listened and saved him from every trouble.
- 7** <sup>7</sup>On every side, the LORD's messenger protects those who honor God;  
and he delivers them.
- 8** <sup>8</sup>Taste and see how good the LORD is!  
The one who takes refuge in him is truly happy!
- 9** <sup>9</sup>You who are the LORD's holy ones, honor him,  
because those who honor him don't lack a thing.
- 10** <sup>10</sup>Even strong young lions go without and get hungry,  
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

<sup>1</sup>Or *souls*; also in 33:20 <sup>1</sup>Ps 34 is an alphabetic acrostic poem; see the note at Pss 9–10 or Ps 111. <sup>2</sup>Or *my soul*; also in 34:22

21:30–31), which means that they should look to God and God's love to secure their lives.

33:20–22 In keeping with Psalm 33:18–19 (note the occurrences of “wait” and “faithful love” in both verses 18 and 22), the psalmist and the worshipping congregation affirm that they depend upon God (see Pss 5:3; 27:14; 31:24).

34:1–22 Because of the opening praise (34:1–3) and the deliverance mentioned in verses 4 and 6, this acrostic psalm (see translation note j) is usually considered a psalm of thanks (see Ps 30). It also has a clear teaching purpose (34:11–14). The title seems to refer to David's experience in 1 Samuel 21:13; but the king in 1 Samuel 21 is Achish, not Abimelech.

*Music and Singing* The practice of singing and chanting in Jewish and Christian worship goes back to the origins of the Psalms. It is certain that the songs of praise were sung to music, and perhaps the prayers and other types were sung as well. The songs of praise often invite people to sing or speak about people singing (see Pss 33:2; 47:6–7; 66:2; 95:1; 96:1–2; 98:1, 5; 108:1; 138:1; 147:1, 7; 149:1). The Psalms are testimony to the beauty of music, as well as to the power of music to take us beyond ourselves so that we are more fully in touch with the presence and purposes of God. In this way, music helps praise, which involves the submission of the self to God in worship and in life.

The book of Psalms often refers to musical instruments (see Ps 33:2) and concludes with praise that involves instruments (Ps 150:3–5). Skilled musicians led music and singing (see 1 Chron 6:31–33; 16:5–6; 25:1–7) and worshippers joined in (see Pss 68:24–27; 118:2–4; 124:1; 129:1; 136:2–26, where the refrain is like a group response).

33:17 Ps 20:7;  
Ps 147:10;  
Pv 21:31;  
Is 31:1

33:18 Job 36:7;  
Ps 34:15;  
Ps 147:11;  
1 Pt 3:12

33:19 Job 5:20;  
Ps 37:19;  
Ac 12:11

33:20 Ps 62:1;  
Ps 115:9;  
Ps 130:6; Is 8:17

34:1  
1Sa 21:12–13;  
Eph 5:20;  
1 Th 5:18

34:2 Ps 44:8;  
Ps 119:74;  
Is 45:25; Jer 9:24;  
1 Co 1:31

34:3 Ps 35:27;  
Ps 69:30;  
Lk 1:46; Ro 15:6

34:4 Ps 77:2;  
Mt 7:7

34:5 Is 60:5

34:7 Gn 32:1;  
2 Ks 6:17;  
Ps 91:11;  
Dn 6:22;  
Mt 18:10

34:8 Ps 2:12;  
Heb 6:5; 1 Pt 2:3

34:9 Ps 23:1

34:10 Ps 23:1;  
Ps 84:11

34:1–3 Even before Psalm 34:11–14, the teaching purpose is clear, since *the suffering* are to overhear the psalmist's praise (34:2), and to follow the psalmist's example (34:3).

34:1 *bless*: See Psalm 16:7.

34:4–10 Here again, the teaching purpose is clear. The psalmist's experience of rescue (34:4, 6) is to be an example, so that others will *look to God* (34:5). In 34:8–9, the psalmist directly invites others to depend on God for sustenance.

34:7 *messenger*: See Psalms 35:5–6; 91:11. The word seems to refer to members of God's heavenly court (see Ps 29:1–2).

34:8 *Taste and see*: If taste is taken literally, it could point to participation in a thanksgiving meal (see Ps 22:25–31);

34:11 Ps 32:8,  
Ps 66:16,  
Ps 111:10,  
2Ti 3:15

34:12 Ecc 3:13;  
1Pt 3:10-11

34:13 Prv 13:3;  
Jas 1:26; 1Pt 2:1,  
1Pt 2:22

34:14 Job 28:28;  
Ps 37:27; Is 1:16;  
Ro 14:19;  
Heb 12:14

34:15 Job 36:7;  
Ps 33:18;  
1Pt 3:12

34:16 Job 18:17;  
Ps 109:15;  
Prv 10:7

34:17 Ps 34:15,  
Ps 145:19;  
Prv 15:29

34:18 Ps 51:17,  
Ps 145:18,  
Ps 147:3;  
Is 57:15, Is 61:1

34:19 Ps 34:4,  
Ps 34:17;  
Prv 24:16;  
2Ti 3:11

34:20 Ex 12:46;  
Ps 34:19;  
Jn 19:36

34:21 Ps 94:23

34:22 Gn 48:16;  
Ex 6:6, Ex 15:13;  
2Sa 22:31,  
1Ki 1:29

35:1 Ex 14:25;  
Ps 119:154;  
Is 49:25

35:2 Ps 3:7,  
Ps 44:26, Ps 91:4

- ↳ **11** Come, children, listen to me.  
Let me teach you how to honor the LORD:
- ▢ **12** Do you love life;  
do you relish the chance to enjoy good things?
- ⌋ **13** Then you must keep your tongue from evil  
and keep your lips from speaking lies!
- **14** Turn away from evil! Do good!  
Seek peace and go after it!
- ⌋ **15** The LORD's eyes watch the righteous,  
his ears listen to their cries for help.
- ▢ **16** But the LORD's face is set against those who do evil,  
to eliminate even the memory of them from the earth.
- ⌋ **17** When the righteous cry out, the LORD listens;  
he delivers them from all their troubles.
- ⌋ **18** The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;  
he saves those whose spirits are crushed.

- ⌋ **19** The righteous have many problems,  
but the LORD delivers them from every one.
- ⌋ **20** He protects all their bones;  
not even one will be broken.
- ▢ **21** But just one problem will kill the wicked,  
and those who hate the righteous will be held responsible.
- 22** The LORD saves his servants' lives;  
all those who take refuge in him won't be held responsible for anything.

## Psalm 35

Of David.

- 1** LORD, argue with those who argue with me;  
fight with those who fight against me!
- 2** Grab a shield and armor;  
stand up and help me!
- 3** Use your spear and ax<sup>1</sup> against those who are out to get me!

<sup>1</sup>Correction

but it means something like, "Experience it for yourself" *how good*: See Psalms 23:6; 25:8. *refuge . . . truly happy*: See Psalms 34:22; 2:12.

**34:11-14** This is the most obvious teaching section.

**34:11 children**: See Proverbs 1:8; 3:1; 4:1. *to honor*: In Psalm 34:9, honoring God meant depending on God. The additional element of obedience is in view in this section, especially Psalm 34:13-14.

**34:13** The enemies in the Psalms often engage in deceitful and malicious speech (see Ps 4:2-5; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3), which those who honor God are to avoid (see Prov 4:24; 6:17, 19; 10:18).

**34:14 Do good!** This is the fourth occurrence of "good" (see Ps 34:8, 10, 12). Goodness isn't only something to be experienced but a course of action to pursue (see Isa 1:16-17; Amos 5:14-15). *Seek peace*: Peace, too, is something to be actively pursued as well as experienced (see Pss 4:8; 29:11).

**34:15-22** The psalmist recognizes that *the righteous* (34:15, 19) have *troubles* (34:17), can be *brokenhearted* and *crushed* (34:18), and *have many problems* (34:19). The deliverance they experience doesn't prevent suffering (Ps 34:2, 6), but rather it involves the strength and resources to endure it (see Pss 13:5-6; 22:21b-24).

**34:16** God opposes evil in order to set things right for the mistreated (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

**34:21-22 will be held responsible . . . won't be held responsible**: The wicked refuse to turn to God, and so they cut themselves off from the forgiveness that God offers. In this sense, they "will be held responsible."

**35:1-28** Psalm 35 contains the typical elements of a prayer for help: petition, both for help (35:1-3, 17, 22-25) and against the enemies (35:4-6, 8, 19, 26); complaint (35:7, 11-12, 15-16); and expression of praise and trust (35:9-10, 18, 27-28). More uniquely, it also contains a description of a faithful response to the suffering of others (35:13-14). These elements seem to be in no particular order, perhaps reflecting the random conditions in the psalmist's life. If the psalm is divided into three sections (35:1-10; 11-18; 19-28), an expression of praise and trust would conclude each of the sections.

**35:1-10** The military language and images (35:1-3) make this section particularly violent, but the psalmist is challenging violent opposition (35:4). The requests for help need not be heard as vengeful but rather as genuine appeals for God to set things right (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6; sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

**35:1 fight . . . fight**: It is always a struggle to set things right in the face of violent and powerful opposition, so God must *fight* (see Pss 7:10-3; 18:31-50; 21:8-12; 46:8-9).

**35:3 "I'm your salvation!"**: God's imagined speech gets

Say to me:<sup>m</sup> "I'm your salvation!"

- 4 Let those who want me dead be humiliated and put to shame.  
Let those who intend to hurt me be thoroughly frustrated and disgraced.
- 5 Let them be like dust on the wind—  
and let the LORD's messenger be the one who does the blowing!
- 6 Let their path be dark and slippery—  
and let the LORD's messenger be the one who does the chasing!
- 7 Because they hid their net for me for no reason,  
they dug a pit for me for no reason.
- 8 Let disaster come to them when they don't suspect it.  
Let the net they hid catch them instead!  
Let them fall into it—to their disaster!
- 9 But I will rejoice in the LORD;  
I will celebrate his salvation.
- 10 All my bones will say, "LORD, who could compare to you?  
You rescue the weak from those who overpower them;  
you rescue the weak and the needy from those who plunder them."
- 11 Violent witnesses stand up.  
They question me about things I know nothing about.
- 12 They pay me back evil for good,  
leaving me stricken with grief.
- 13 But when they were sick, I wore clothes for grieving,  
and I kept a strict fast.  
When my prayer came back unanswered,<sup>n</sup>
- 14 I would wander around like I was grieving a friend or a brother.  
I was weighed down, sad, like I was a mother in mourning.
- 15 But when I stumbled, they celebrated and gathered together—  
they gathered together against me!  
Strangers<sup>o</sup> I didn't know tore me to pieces and wouldn't quit.
- 16 They ridiculed me over and over again,  
like godless people would do, grinding their teeth at me.
- 17 How long, my Lord, will you watch this happen?  
Rescue me from their attacks;  
rescue my precious life from these predatory lions!
- 18 Then I will thank you in the great assembly;  
I will praise you in a huge crowd of people.
- 19 Don't let those who are my enemies without cause celebrate over me;  
don't let those who hate me for no reason wink at my demise.
- 20 They don't speak the truth;  
instead, they plot false accusations against innocent people in the land.
- 21 They speak out against me,  
saying, "Yes! Oh, yes! We've seen it with our own eyes!"

<sup>m</sup>Or *my soul*; also in 35:4, 7, 9, 12, 13, 17, 24 <sup>n</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>o</sup>Correction

35:8 Ps 7:15,  
Ps 141:10;  
Is 47:11; 1Th 5:3  
35:9 Ps 9:14,  
Ps 13:5; Is 61:10;  
Lk 1:47  
35:10 Ps 86:8  
35:12 Ps 38:20,  
Ps 109:5;  
Prv 17:13;  
Jer 18:20;  
Jn 10:32  
35:13 Job 30:25;  
Ps 69:10-11  
35:14 Ps 38:6  
35:15 Job 30:1,  
Job 30:8,  
Job 30:12,  
Job 31:29; Ps 7:2  
35:16 Job 16:9;  
Ps 22:7; Ps 37:12;  
Lam 2:16;  
Ac 7:54  
35:17 Ps 6:3,  
Ps 13:1,  
Ps 22:20-21;  
Hab 1:13  
35:18 Ps 22:22,  
Ps 22:25  
35:19 Ps 38:19,  
Ps 69:4; Prv 6:13,  
Prv 10:10,  
Jn 15:25  
35:20 Ps 38:12;  
Jer 9:8

to the point—that is, the psalmist's life is in danger and needs to be saved (see Ps 13:5).

35:4 *want me dead*: See Psalms 31:13; 37:12; 38:12; 40:14; 54:3; 63:9; 70:2; 86:14; 119:95; 1 Samuel 23:15; 1 Kings 19:10; Jeremiah 38:16. As this list suggests, the faithful are often threatened with death.

35:5-6 *messenger*: See Psalm 34:7.

35:7-8 See Psalms 35:19; 7:15-16.

35:9-10 The psalmist locates God with the mistreated (see Ps 9:18).

35:11-18 The psalmist's violent situation is seen again

(35:11-12, 15-16). The enemies may be using the psalmist's illness or setback (35:15) as an excuse to falsely accuse (35:11, 20) or to take advantage (see Pss 7; 17; 26).

35:13-14 In sharp contrast to the enemies, the psalmist models empathy in response to the suffering of others. In short, the psalmist doesn't assume that suffering is a sign of alienation from God, nor does the poet blame or seek to take advantage of those who are suffering.

35:17-18 See Psalm 22:21-22.

35:19 *for no reason*: See Psalms 35:7; 38:19; 69:4; John 15:25.

35:20 See Psalm 27:12.

35:25 Ps 35:21,  
Ps 56:1, Ps 124:3;  
Prv 1:12;  
Lam 2:16

35:27 Ps 40:16,  
Ps 70:4, Ps 149:4

35:28  
Ps 51:14-15,  
Ps 71:15,  
Ps 71:24

36:1 Ps 18:1;  
Ro 3:18

36:2 Dt 29:19;  
Ps 49:18

36:3 Ps 5:9,  
Ps 10:7, Ps 12:2

36:4 Prv 4:16;  
Is 65:2, Mi 2:1;  
Ro 12:9

36:5 Ps 57:10,  
Ps 103:11,  
Ps 108:4

36:6 Neh 9:6,  
Ps 71:19;  
Ps 104:14,  
Ps 145:16;  
Ro 11:33

**22** But you've seen it too, LORD.

Don't keep quiet about it.

Please don't be far from me, my Lord.

**23** Wake up! Get up and do justice for me;  
argue my case, my Lord and my God!

**24** Establish justice for me according to your righteousness, LORD, my God.

Don't let them celebrate over me.

**25** Don't let them say to themselves,

Yes! Exactly what we wanted!

Don't let them say, "We ate him up!"

**26** Let all those who celebrate my misfortune be disgraced and put to shame!

Let those who exalt themselves over me

be dressed up in shame and dishonor!

**27** But let those who want things to be set right for me  
shout for joy and celebrate!

Let them constantly say, "The LORD is great—

God wants his servant to be at peace."

**28** Then my tongue will talk all about your righteousness;  
it will talk about your praise all day long.

### Psalm 36

*For the music leader. Of the LORD's servant David.*

**1** I know the sinful utterance of the wicked:<sup>P</sup>

No fear of God confronts their own eyes,

**2** because in their own eyes they are slick with talk  
about their guilt ever being found out and despised.<sup>Q</sup>

**3** The words of their mouths are evil and dishonest.

They have stopped being wise and stopped doing good.

**4** They plot evil even while resting in bed!

They commit themselves to a path that is no good.

They don't reject what is evil.

**5** But your loyal love, LORD, extends to the skies;

your faithfulness reaches the clouds.

**6** Your righteousness is like the strongest mountains;

your justice is like the deepest sea.

<sup>P</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>Q</sup>Heb uncertain

35:22 *you've seen it too, LORD:* See Psalm 10:14. *don't be far.* See Psalm 22:19.

35:23 *Wake up!* See Psalm 7:6.

35:24 *Establish justice . . . righteousness:* The purpose of divine opposition to the enemies is to do justice and to set things right (see Pss 35:23, 27-28; 3:7-8; 7:6; 26:1).

35:27 It is unusual that the psalmist prays for her or his supporters, but perhaps not surprising in view of the psalmist's attention to others in Psalm 35:13-14 (see Ps 40:16). *at peace:* "Shalom" names the reality that exists when justice and righteousness prevail (see Pss 4:8; 29:11; 34:14; 72:1-7).

36:1-12 Psalm 36 is usually categorized as a prayer for help. It contains complaint about the wicked (36:1-4) and petition for rescue from them (36:11). In between there is an eloquent profession of faith (36:5-9). This structure signals the normal reality of the psalmists; that is, they profess and practice their faith in the midst of opposition. Psalm 36:12 seems to be a prayerful look at the future of the wicked, not an actual description (see Ps 1:5-6).

36:1-4 As usual, the wicked are deceitful and destructive (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

36:1 *I . . . wicked:* The first word in Hebrew is usually translated "says" and followed by "the LORD." Here it is followed by the word *rebellion*, and the statement seems to be a satirical comment—that is, "rebellion," rather than God, speaks to the wicked. So they don't honor God.

36:2 The wicked regularly deny any accountability to God or others (see Ps 10:3-14, and especially 36:4, 6, 11, 13).

36:3 The speech of the wicked is always deceitful and destructive (see Ps 4:2-5).

36:4 See Micah 2:1.

36:5-9 This affirmation features several of the most important words in the OT, including *faithful love/loyal love* twice (36:5, 7, 10; sidebar, "God's Faithful Love" at Ps 6).

36:5-6 *loyal love:* See Psalms 36:7, 10; 5:7. *faithfulness:* See Psalms 25:10; 33:4. *righteousness . . . justice:* See Psalms 5:8; 9:4. The words "loyal love" and "faithfulness" summarize who God is, while the words "righteousness" and "justice" summarize God's will. The psalmist affirms that God's character and God's purposes fill the universe from top to bottom—that is, from the skies to the seas (see the similar affirmation in Ps 33:5). *humans and animals:* God wills life for all creatures (see Ps 150:6).

LORD, you save both humans and animals.

<sup>7</sup>Your faithful love is priceless, God!

Humanity finds refuge in the shadow of your wings.

<sup>8</sup>They feast on the bounty of your house;  
you let them drink from your river of pure joy.

<sup>9</sup>Within you is the spring of life.  
In your light, we see light.

<sup>10</sup>Extend your faithful love to those who know you;  
extend your righteousness to those whose heart is right.

<sup>11</sup>Don't let the feet of arrogant people walk all over me;  
don't let the hands of the wicked drive me off.

<sup>12</sup>Look—right there is where the evildoers have fallen,  
pushed down, unable to get up!

### Psalm 37\*

Of David.

✠ <sup>1</sup>Don't get upset over evildoers;

don't be jealous of those who do wrong,  
<sup>2</sup>because they will fade fast, like grass;  
they will wither like green vegetables.

☐ <sup>3</sup>Trust the LORD and do good;  
live in the land, and farm faithfulness.

<sup>4</sup>Enjoy the LORD, and he will give what your heart asks.

☐ <sup>5</sup>Commit your way to the LORD! Trust him!  
He will act <sup>a</sup>and will make your righteousness shine like the dawn,  
your justice like high noon.

☐ <sup>7</sup>Be still before the LORD, and wait<sup>d</sup> for him.  
Don't get upset when someone gets ahead—  
someone who invents evil schemes.

☐ <sup>8</sup>Let go of anger and leave rage behind!  
Don't get upset—it will only lead to evil.

<sup>9</sup>Because evildoers will be eliminated,  
but those who hope in the LORD—they will possess the land.

☐ <sup>10</sup>In just a little while the wicked won't exist!  
If you go looking around their place, they won't be there.

\*Ps 37 is an alphabetic acrostic poem; see the note at Pss 9–10 or Ps 111. <sup>a</sup>Correction with LXX, Vulg

36:7 *shadow . . . wings*: See Psalm 17:8.

36:8-9 The food and drink provided by God make life possible (see Pss 23:2-3; 85:10, 12; 104:27-28). *your light . . . light*: Light symbolizes God's presence, which brightens and enlivens human beings (see Pss 4:6; 27:1; John 1:5).

37:1-40 Psalm 37 is usually identified as a wisdom psalm, and may have been what we might call today a teaching sermon. The topic is the apparent prosperity of the wicked (37:7), which raises the issue of God's justice when dealing with evil (see Pss 49; 73; and the book of Job). Because it is an acrostic (see translation note r), Psalm 37 shows no clear structure, although repeated words, phrases, and ideas are noticeable.

37:1-2 *Don't get upset over evildoers*: This is one of the main pieces of advice to the righteous (see Ps 37:7-8; Matt 6:25). *will fade fast*: The righteous don't need to worry, because the wicked will soon be gone. This is a major theme (see Ps 37:9, 10, 15, 17, 20, 22, 28, 36, 38).

37:3 *Trust*: This is the positive statement of the advice not to be upset (see Pss 37:5; 4:5). *do good*: See Psalms 37:27; 34:14.

37:6 *your righteousness . . . your justice*: God will set things right for the threatened and mistreated (see Pss 5:8; 9:4, 18). Verses 12, 14, and 32 indicate how the faithful are being mistreated.

37:7 *wait for him . . . gets ahead*: For now, the wicked prosper, so the righteous must "wait" (see Ps 5:3) and live with trust (Ps 37:3, 5) and hope (Ps 37:9, 34; see Ps 27:14; 31:24).

37:9 *will possess the land*: Since land meant access to life in ancient Israel, this phrase may just mean something like "will live fully and securely." This may be correct, but it is possible that the psalm arose in a context in which poor farmers were oppressed, including being removed from their land, by a ruthless wealthy class (see advice to "farm faithfulness" in Ps 37:3, and prophetic texts like Isa 5:8; Amos 8:4-6; Mic 2:2, 9). In this case, the promise is that the people would get back their land that had been taken from them. In either case, the promise of the land is a theme throughout the psalm (see Ps 37:11, 22, 27, 29, 34), and it is the positive parallel to the destruction of the wicked.

36:7 Ru 2:12;  
Ps 17:8, Ps 57:1,  
Ps 91:4,  
Ps 139:17

36:8 Ps 46:4,  
Ps 63:5, Ps 65:4,  
Is 25:6; Rev 22:1

36:9 Ps 27:1,  
Jer 2:13; Jn 4:14;  
1Pt 2:9

36:10 Ps 7:10;  
Jer 22:16

36:12 Ps 1:5,  
Ps 18:38,  
Ps 28:3, Ps 55:23,  
Ps 64:7

37:1 Ps 73:3,  
Prv 3:31,  
Prv 23:17,  
Prv 24:1,  
Prv 24:19

37:2 Ps 90:6,  
Ps 92:7

37:3 Prv 3:5;  
Is 26:4

37:4 Job 22:26;  
Ps 21:2,  
Ps 145:19;  
Is 58:14; Mt 6:33

37:5 Ps 55:22;  
Prv 16:3; 1Pt 5:7

37:6 Job 11:17;  
Is 58:8, Is 58:10;  
Mi 7:9

37:7 Ps 27:14,  
Ps 37:1, Ps 40:1,  
Ps 62:1; Jer 12:1

37:8 Eph 4:26,  
Eph 4:31;  
Col 3:8

37:9 Ps 25:13,  
Ps 37:22;  
Prv 2:21-22;  
Is 57:13

37:10 Job 7:10,  
Job 24:24

- 37:11  
Ps 119:165;  
Mt 5:5
- 37:12 Job 16:9;  
Ps 35:16
- 37:13 1Sa 26:10;  
Ps 2:4; Prv 1:26
- 37:14 Ps 11:2;  
Ps 35:10
- 37:15 1Sa 2:4;  
Ps 46:9
- 37:16 Prv 15:16;  
Prv 16:8; 1Ti 6:6
- 37:20 Ps 68:2;  
Ps 102:3
- 37:22 Ps 37:9
- 37:23 1Sa 2:9;  
Ps 40:2,  
Ps 147:11;  
Prv 16:9,  
Prv 20:24
- 37:24 Ps 37:17;  
Ps 145:14;  
Prv 24:16;  
Mt 7:8
- 37:25 Ps 37:28,  
Ps 109:10;  
Heb 13:5
- 37:26 Dt 15:8;  
Ps 37:21,  
Ps 112:5; Lk 6:35
- 37:27 Ps 34:14
- 37:28 Ex 20:5;  
Ps 21:10,  
Ps 97:10;  
Prv 2:22;  
Is 14:20
- 37:29 Ps 37:9;  
Prv 2:21
- 37:30 Prv 10:13,  
Prv 10:31,  
Prv 15:7;  
Eph 4:29;  
Col 4:6
- 37:31 Dt 6:6;  
Ps 40:8,  
Ps 119:11,  
Is 51:7; Jer 31:33
- 11 But the weak will inherit the land;  
they will enjoy a surplus of peace.
- † 12 The wicked plot against the righteous,  
grinding their teeth at them.
- 13 But my Lord just laughs at them because he knows that their day is coming.
- † 14 The wicked draw their swords and bend their bows  
to bring down the weak and the needy,  
to slaughter those whose way is right.
- 15 But the sword of the wicked will enter their own hearts!  
Their bows will be broken!
- ‡ 16 Better is the little that the righteous have  
than the overabundant wealth of the wicked.<sup>†</sup>
- 17 The arms of the wicked will be broken,  
but the LORD supports the righteous.
- 18 The LORD is intimately acquainted with the lives of the blameless;  
their heritage will last forever.
- 19 They won't be ashamed in troubling times,  
and in a period of famine they will eat their fill.
- ‡ 20 But the wicked will die, the LORD's enemies will disappear—  
disappear like the beauty of a meadow—in smoke.
- ↳ 21 The wicked borrow and don't pay it back,  
but the righteous are generous and giving.
- 22 Those blessed by God will possess the land,  
but those cursed by God will be cut off.
- ‡ 23 A person's steps are made secure by the LORD  
when they delight in his way.
- 24 Though they trip up, they won't be thrown down,  
because the LORD holds their hand.
- ‡ 25 I was young and now I'm old,  
but I have never seen the righteous left all alone,  
have never seen their children begging for bread.
- 26 They are always gracious and generous.  
Their children are a blessing.
- ‡ 27 Turn away from evil! Do good!  
Then you will live in the land forever.
- 28 The LORD loves justice.  
He will never leave his faithful all alone.
- ↳ They are guarded forever, but the children of the wicked are eliminated.
- 29 The righteous will possess the land;  
they will live on it forever.
- ‡ 30 The mouths of the righteous recite wisdom;  
their tongues discuss justice.
- 31 The Instruction of their God is in their hearts;  
they don't miss a step.
- ‡ 32 The wicked, on the other hand, target the righteous,  
seeking to kill them.

<sup>†</sup>LXX, Vulg, Syr; MT *abundant wealth of many wicked*

37:11 See Matthew 5:5. *peace*: See Psalms 37:37; 4:8; 29:11; 34:14.  
37:13 See Psalm 2:4.  
37:14–15 See Psalm 7:15–16.  
37:18 See Psalm 1:6.

37:19 See Matthew 5:6.  
37:21 See Psalms 37:26; 112:5; Acts 20:35.  
37:23 See Psalm 15:5.  
37:28 *justice*: See Psalms 37:6, 30; 9:4; 33:5.  
37:31 *Instruction*: See Psalm 1:2.

<sup>33</sup>But the LORD won't leave the righteous to the power of the wicked,  
and won't let the righteous be found guilty when they are judged.

**Ps** <sup>34</sup>Hope in the LORD and keep his way!

He will lift you up so you can possess the land.

When the wicked are eliminated, you will see it for yourself!

<sup>35</sup>I myself have seen wicked powerful people,  
exalting themselves like a stately cedar.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>36</sup>But when I<sup>r</sup> came back, they were gone!

I looked all over for them, but they couldn't be found!

**Ob** <sup>37</sup>Observe those who have integrity  
and watch those whose heart is right  
because the future belongs to persons of peace.

<sup>38</sup>But wrongdoers will be destroyed all together;  
the future of the wicked will be cut short.

**Ps** <sup>39</sup>The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD;  
he is their refuge in times of trouble.

<sup>40</sup>The LORD will help them and rescue them—  
rescue them from the wicked—  
and he will save them  
because they have taken refuge in him.

### Psalm 38

*A psalm of David. For the memorial offering.*

<sup>1</sup>Please, LORD, don't punish me when you are mad;  
don't discipline me when you are furious.

<sup>2</sup>Your arrows have pierced me;  
your fist has come down hard on me.

<sup>3</sup>There's nothing in my body that isn't broken because of your rage;  
there's no health in my bones because of my sin.

<sup>4</sup>My wrongdoings are stacked higher than my head;  
they are a weight that's way too heavy for me.

<sup>5</sup>My wounds reek; they are all infected because of my stupidity.

<sup>6</sup>I am hunched over, completely down;  
I wander around all day long, sad.

<sup>7</sup>My insides are burning up;  
there's nothing in my body that isn't broken.

<sup>8</sup>I'm worn out, completely crushed;  
I groan because of my miserable heart.

<sup>9</sup>Everything I long for is laid out before you, my Lord;  
my sighs aren't hidden from you.

<sup>10</sup>My heart pounds; my strength abandons me.  
Even the light of my eyes is gone.

<sup>11</sup>My loved ones and friends keep their distance from me in my sickness;  
those who were near me now stay far away.

<sup>a</sup>LXX <sup>v</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg

37:32 See Psalm 35:4.

37:36 See Psalm 36:12.

37:39-40 *refuge*: See Psalm 2:12.

38:1-22 Psalm 38 is a prayer for help. Because *sin* is involved in the psalmist's plight (38:3), and because the psalmist clearly confesses *wrongdoing* (38:18), Psalm 38 is the third of the church's seven Penitential Psalms (see Ps 6). The title's "memorial offering" means "to cause to remember," but the Hebrew root occurs in descriptions of grain offerings (see "token portion" in Lev 2:2, 9, 16).

38:1-10 After the first petition (38:1; see Ps 6:1), the psalmist's complaint includes an extended and graphic description of the physical effects of sin (38:3-10; see Pss 6:2-3; 32:3-4). Although the imagery may be metaphorical, Psalm 38 (like Ps 6) seems to reflect the belief that suffering is punishment for sin; but the psalmist also undercuts this belief by appealing to and entrusting the self to God. 38:11-14 Others, including those closest to the psalmist, use suffering as an excuse to shun (38:11; see Ps 31:11), as well as an opportunity to blame and harass the psalmist (38:12; see Pss 31:13; 35:4).

37:34 Ps 27:14,  
Ps 37:9, Ps 52:5, 6,  
Ps 91:8

37:35 Job 5:3,  
Job 21:7,  
Ps 37:36, Ps 73:3

37:36 Job 20:5,  
Ps 37:10,  
Ps 37:35

37:37 Is 57:2

37:40 1Ch 5:20,  
Is 31:5, Dn 3:17,  
Dn 6:23

38:1 Ps 6:1,  
Ps 70:1

38:2 Job 6:4;  
Ps 32:4;  
Lam 3:12

38:3 Job 33:19;  
Ps 6:2; Is 1:6

38:4 Ezz 9:6;  
Ps 40:12

38:5 Job 19:17;  
Ps 69:5

38:6 Job 30:28;  
Ps 35:14, Ps 42:9,  
Ps 43:2

38:7 Ps 38:3

38:8 Ps 22:1

38:9 Ps 6:6

38:10 Ps 6:7,  
Ps 31:10, Ps 88:9

38:11 Job 19:13;  
Ps 31:11,  
Ps 88:18;  
Lk 23:49

38:12 Ps 35:20  
 38:13 Ps 39:2,  
 Ps 39:9  
 38:14 Job 23:4  
 38:17 Ps 35:15  
 39:1 1Ki 2:4;  
 1Ch 16:41;  
 Ps 62:1, Ps 77:1,  
 Ps 119:9  
 39:2 Ps 38:13  
 39:3 Ps 1:2,  
 Ps 119:15;  
 Jer 20:9; Lk 24:32  
 39:4 Ps 90:12  
 39:5 Job 14:2;  
 Ps 39:11,  
 Ps 62:9, Ps 89:47,  
 Ps 90:9

- <sup>12</sup>Those who want me dead lay traps;  
 those who want me harmed utter threats, muttering lies all day long.
- <sup>13</sup>But I'm like someone who is deaf, who can't hear;  
 like someone who can't speak, whose mouth won't open.
- <sup>14</sup>I've become like a person who doesn't hear what is being said,  
 whose mouth has no good comeback.
- <sup>15</sup>But I wait for you, LORD!  
 You will answer, my Lord, my God!
- <sup>16</sup>Because I prayed:  
 "Don't let them celebrate over me  
 or exalt themselves over me when my foot slips,"
- <sup>17</sup>because I'm very close to falling,  
 and my pain is always with me.
- <sup>18</sup>Yes, I confess my wrongdoing;  
 I'm worried about my sin.
- <sup>19</sup>But my mortal enemies are so strong;  
 those who hate me for no reason seem countless.
- <sup>20</sup>Those who give, repay good with evil;  
 they oppose me for pursuing good.
- <sup>21</sup>Don't leave me all alone, LORD!  
 Please, my God, don't be far from me!
- <sup>22</sup>Come quickly and help me, my Lord, my salvation!

### Psalm 39

*For the music leader. To Jeduthun. A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>I promised I would watch my steps so as not to sin with my tongue;  
 promised to keep my mouth shut as long as the wicked were in my presence.
- <sup>2</sup>So I was completely quiet, silent.  
 I kept my peace, but it did no good.  
 My pain got worse.
- <sup>3</sup>My heart got hot inside me;  
 while stewing over it, the fire burned.  
 Then I spoke out with my tongue:
- <sup>4</sup>"Let me know my end, LORD.  
 How many days do I have left?  
 I want to know how brief my time is."
- <sup>5</sup>You've made my days so short;  
 my lifetime is like nothing in your eyes.  
 Yes, a human life is nothing but a puff of air!

*Selah*

38:15-17 The psalmist's expression of trust (38:15; see Pss 31:24; 33:2) is followed by his or her prayer (38:16; see Ps 35:26) and a reminder to God of the urgency of the situation (38:17).

38:18-20 Repeating "sin" and "wrongdoing" from Psalm 38:3-4, the psalmist confesses (38:18) and is intent upon *pursuing good* (38:20; see Ps 34:14). Even so, the enemies continue to oppose others (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3), *for no reason*: See Psalm 35:19.

38:21-22 It's unusual that the psalm concludes with a petition, the language of which recalls Psalms 22:1, 11, 19; 35:22. *my salvation*: The final phrase returns briefly to trust (see Ps 13:5).

39:1-13 Psalm 39 is a prayer for help. It has the typical elements: two sections of petition combined with complaint (39:4-6, 8-11) that surround an affirmation of trust (39:7), along with a final section of petition (39:12-13). Even so, Psalm 39 is unique. The opening description of the psalmist's silence (39:1-3) is unusual. So is much of the content of the complaints. Verses 8 and 10 are fairly typical, but

it is unusual for a prayer for help to focus on the brevity of human life in general rather than a specific problem (see the final lines of Ps 39:5, 11; and see Ps 90, which also deals with human transience). Most surprising is 39:13. Instead of a petition for God's help or a final affirmation of trust or praise, there is the shocking request that God not care for the psalmist. The title mentions Jeduthun, who, according to 1 Chronicles, was appointed by David to serve in the temple (see Pss 62, 77; 1 Chron 16:41-42; 25:1-8).

39:1-3 The psalmist apparently tries to remain silent to avoid offending God (39:1a) or opening himself or herself to criticism by opponents (39:1b; see Ps 38:11-14). The strategy doesn't work.

39:4-6 This section of petition and complaint is more touching than offensive.

39:5-6 *puff of air . . . pointlessly*: See Psalms 39:11; 144:4. The same Hebrew word underlies *puff of air* and *pointlessly*. It occurs over thirty times in the book of Ecclesiastes (see Eccl 1:2, 14; 2:1, 15, 18), which identifies as "pointless"



- <sup>6</sup>Yes, people wander around like shadows;  
yes, they hustle and bustle, but pointlessly;  
they don't even know who will get the wealth they've amassed.
- <sup>7</sup>So now, Lord, what should I be waiting for?  
My hope is set on you.
- <sup>8</sup>Deliver me from all my sins;  
don't make me some foolish person's joke.
- <sup>9</sup>I am completely silent; I won't open my mouth because you have acted.
- <sup>10</sup>Get this plague of yours off me!  
I'm being destroyed by the blows from your fist.
- <sup>11</sup>You discipline people for their sin, punishing them;  
like a moth, you ruin what they treasure.  
Yes, a human life is just a puff of air!
- <sup>12</sup>Hear my prayer, LORD!  
Listen closely to my cry for help!  
Please don't ignore my tears!  
I'm just a foreigner—  
an immigrant staying with you,  
just like all my ancestors were.
- <sup>13</sup>Look away from me so I can be happy again  
before I pass away and am gone.

### Psalm 40

*For the music leader. Of David. A psalm.*

- <sup>1</sup>I put all my hope in the LORD.  
He leaned down to me;  
he listened to my cry for help.
- <sup>2</sup>He lifted me out of the pit of death,  
out of the mud and filth,  
and set my feet on solid rock.  
He steadied my legs.
- <sup>3</sup>He put a new song in my mouth,  
a song of praise for our God.  
Many people will learn of this and be amazed;  
they will trust the LORD.
- <sup>4</sup>Those who put their trust in the LORD,

the very same situation described in Psalm 39:6 (see Ecc 2:18-21).

39:7 This expression of trust is like several others in the prayers for help (see Pss 38:15; 40:1).

39:8-11 The psalmist mentions *sin* in 39:8 and 39:11, seemingly to suggest a connection between sin and suffering (see Pss 6; 38), and perhaps a connection between sin and the shortness of human life (see Ps 90:7-11).

39:8 *joke*: See Psalm 31:11.

39:12 The psalmist's petitions are typical in the prayers for help (see Ps 4:1). *foreigner...immigrant...were*: By identifying as an outcast and needy person, the psalmist gives God a reason to hear and to help (see Pss 94:6; 146:9; Lev 19:10; 25:35). The mention of the ancestors recalls Leviticus 25:23 and 1 Chronicles 29:15, which characterize the people of God as immigrants who reside in a land owned by God. 1 Chronicles 29:15 also links this status to the brevity of human life and apparent hopelessness.

39:13 The surprising final request recalls Job 7:17-21; 10:20-22; 14:1-6, where Job asks God to "look away." The despair of 39:13 seems to go against the hope of Psalm 39:7. However, placing despair and hope alongside each

other captures what is often the reality of the life of faith (see Ps 13:5-6). The harmony of Psalm 39 with Ecclesiastes and Job also suggests that, like these two books, Psalm 39 is a protest not so much against God, but rather against a too-limited understanding of God.

40:1-17 Verses 11-17 are clearly a prayer for help, featuring primarily the typical elements of petition (40:11, 13-15, and parts of 17) and complaint (40:12, and parts of 40:17). The affirmation of trust and praise is also typical of prayers for help, but it isn't usually this long. Neither does it usually come first, although there are other such cases (see Pss 9-10; 27; 41; 44; 89; 125).

40:1-10 This long section of trust and praise may be viewed as a separate psalm, but the description of a previous rescue (40:1-3) and the praise-oriented prayer serve as a solid foundation for petition in a new situation of distress as described in Psalm 40:11-17.

40:1 *I put all my hope*: The psalmist has done what previous psalmists have invited or done (see Pss 27:14; 33:20; 37:34; 39:7).

40:2 *pit of death*: See Psalms 16:10; 30:3, 9.

40:3 *new song*: See Psalms 33:3; 96:1.

40:4 *trust...truly happy*: See Psalms 1:1-2; 2:12; 4:5; 34:8.

39:6  
Job 27:16-17;  
Ps 127:2;  
Ecc 2:26;  
Lk 12:20

39:7 Ps 38:15

39:9 1Sa 3:18;  
2Sa 16:10;  
Job 1:21,  
Job 2:10; Ps 39:2

39:10 Job 9:34,  
Job 13:21

39:11 Job 13:28;  
Ps 39:5; Is 50:9

39:12 Gn 47:9;  
Lv 25:23;  
1Ch 29:15;  
Ps 119:19;  
Heb 11:13

39:13 Job 7:19,  
Job 10:20-21,  
Job 14:6

40:1 Ps 27:14,  
Ps 37:7

40:2 Ps 27:5,  
Ps 37:23,  
Ps 69:2, Ps 69:14;  
Jer 38:6

40:3 Ps 33:3,  
Ps 52:6, Ps 64:9

40:4 Ps 2:12,  
Ps 34:8, Ps 84:12;  
Jer 17:7

*Selah*

40:5 Ps 71:15,  
Ps 92:5,  
Ps 139:17-18  
40:6 1Sa 15:22;  
Ps 50:8, Ps 51:16;  
Is 1:11; Heb 10:5  
40:7 Gn 3:15;  
Ps 40:8;  
Lk 24:44; Ac 6:4;  
1Co 15:3  
40:8 Ps 37:31;  
Jer 31:33; Jn 4:34  
40:9 Josh 22:22;  
Ps 22:22,  
Ps 22:25,  
Ps 119:13  
40:10 Ps 89:1;  
Ac 20:20  
40:11 Ps 57:3,  
Ps 61:7,  
Prv 20:28  
40:14 Ps 35:4,  
Ps 35:26, Ps 70:2,  
Ps 71:13  
40:15 Ps 35:21,  
Ps 70:3

who pay no attention to the proud  
or to those who follow lies,  
are truly happy!

<sup>5</sup>You, LORD my God!

You've done so many things—  
your wonderful deeds and your plans for us—  
no one can compare with you!

If I were to proclaim and talk about all of them,  
they would be too numerous to count!

<sup>6</sup>You don't relish sacrifices or offerings;  
you don't require entirely burned offerings or compensation offerings—  
but you have given me ears!

<sup>7</sup>So I said, "Here I come!

I'm inscribed in the written scroll.

<sup>8</sup>I want to do your will, my God.

Your Instruction is deep within me."

<sup>9</sup>I've told the good news of your righteousness in the great assembly.

I didn't hold anything back—as you well know, LORD!

<sup>10</sup>I didn't keep your righteousness only to myself.

I declared your faithfulness and your salvation.

I didn't hide your loyal love and trustworthiness from the great assembly.

<sup>11</sup>So now you, LORD—

don't hold back any of your compassion from me.

Let your loyal love and faithfulness always protect me,

<sup>12</sup>because countless evils surround me.

My wrongdoings have caught up with me—

I can't see a thing!

There's more of them than hairs on my head—  
my courage leaves me.

<sup>13</sup>Favor me, LORD, and deliver me!

LORD, come quickly and help me!

<sup>14</sup>Let those who seek my life, who want me dead,

be disgraced and put to shame.

Let those who want to do me harm

be thoroughly frustrated and humiliated.

<sup>15</sup>Let those who say to me, "Yes! Oh, yes!"<sup>w</sup>

be destroyed by their shame.

<sup>16</sup>But let all who seek you celebrate and rejoice in you.

Let those who love your salvation always say, "The LORD is great!"

<sup>w</sup>See Ps 35:21, 25.

**40:5** The psalmist addresses God directly, and verse 5 could be viewed as the beginning of the "new song" of verse 3. *No one can compare*: See Psalm 97:9; Isaiah 40:18. *wonderful deeds*: This recalls the exodus out of Egypt (see Exod 3:20) and other historic deliverances of the whole people (see Ps 9:1).

**40:6** Instead of sacrifice (see Pss 50:14, 23; 51:15-16; 1 Sam 15:22; Isa 1:12-17; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21-24), the psalmist has ears to hear and to respond to God's will.

**40:7** *written scroll*: This seems to be the psalmist's way of affirming that he or she belongs to God (see Pss 56:8; 69:28; 139:16).

**40:8** *will... Instruction... me*: The psalmist has internalized God's will, and so is living out what Psalm 1:1-2 describe as true happiness.

**40:9-10** As witness to God's deeds and God's will (see Pss 22:22, 26; 35:18), the psalmist mentions very important words that describe God's character and purposes. *your righteousness*: See Psalms 5:8; 33:5; 36:6. *faithfulness*: See Psalms 40:11; 25:10; 33:4. *salvation*: See Psalms 40:16; 13:5. *loyal love*: See Psalms 40:11; 5:7; 33:5; 36:6.

**40:11-17** Psalm 40:11 makes the shift to petition and complaint. Psalm 40:12 seems to suggest that the psalmist's own sinfulness is involved (see Pss 6; 38; 39). If so, the psalmist claims God's forgiving love (40:11), and then suggests that it isn't justified that the opponents seek to take advantage (40:14-15). Ps 40:13-17 are nearly identical to Psalm 70.

**40:13** *come quickly*: See Psalm 38:22.

**40:14** *seek my life*: See Psalm 35:4.

**40:16** See Psalm 35:27.

17 But me? I'm weak and needy.  
Let my Lord think of me.  
You are my help and my rescuer.  
My God, don't wait any longer!

### Psalm 41

*For the music leader. A psalm of David.*

- 1 Those who pay close attention to the poor are truly happy!  
The LORD rescues them during troubling times.
- 2 The LORD protects them and keeps them alive;  
they are widely regarded throughout the land as happy people.  
You\* won't hand them over to the will of their enemies.
- 3 The LORD will strengthen them when they are lying in bed, sick.  
You will completely transform the place where they lie ill.
- 4 But me? I said, "LORD, have mercy on me!  
Heal me because I have sinned against you."
- 5 My enemies speak maliciously about me:  
"When will he die and his name disappear?"
- 6 Whenever they come to visit, they say nothing of value.  
Their hearts collect evil gossip;  
once they leave, they tell it to everybody.
- 7 All of those who hate me talk about me, whispering to each other,  
plotting evil against me:
- 8 "Some horrible thing has been poured into him;  
the next time he lies down, he won't get up.
- 9 Even my good friend, the one I trusted, who shared my food,  
has kicked me with his heel—a betrayer!
- 10 But you, LORD, please have mercy on me and lift me up  
so I can pay them back!
- 11 Then I'll know you are pleased with me  
because my enemy won't be shouting in triumph over me.
- 12 You support me in my integrity;  
you put me in your presence forever.
- 13 Bless the LORD, the God of Israel,  
from forever to forever!  
Amen and Amen!

\*LXX, Syr; Vulg God won't

40:17 *weak and needy*: See Psalm 9:18. *my help*: See Psalm 10:14.

41:1-13 Psalm 41 contains a central section of petition and complaint (41:4-10) as in a typical prayer for help. Like Psalms 27 and 40, Psalm 41 begins with an affirmation of trust (41:1-3). Because it returns to trust in 40:11-12, the structure of Psalm 41 represents literally the normal situation of those who pray the prayers for help. They are confronted by opposition, but they surround themselves with trust in God's protecting and providing presence.

41:1-3 As Psalm 41:3 suggests, sickness seems to be involved in the psalmist's plight; and as is often the case, the enemies are out to take advantage of the situation (41:2; see Pss 41:5-8; 38:11-14; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

41:1 *Those... truly happy!*: See Psalm 1:1-2, where true happiness derives from following God's Instruction or will. Because God wills the well-being of the poor (see Ps 9:18; see sidebar, "The Poor and Needy" at Ps 82), those who

follow God's Instruction will also pursue happiness by helping the poor.

41:2 *happy people*: See Psalm 2:12, where happiness comes from taking refuge in God. It is significant that this final psalm in Book I clearly recalls Psalms 1-2.

41:4-10 *have mercy on me*: This identical plea frames this section of petition and complaint.

41:4 *Heal me*: See Psalm 6:2. *I have sinned*: Sin and sickness are connected (see Pss 6; 32; 38; 39). Even so, the psalmist hopes that the trouble doesn't mean divine displeasure; and it's clear that the enemies aren't justified in blaming the psalmist or in seeking to take advantage (see Pss 35:13-14; 40:14-15).

41:7 See Psalm 31:13.

41:9 See Psalm 31:11; John 13:26.

41:10 *pay them back*: See Psalms 3:7-8; 7:6; 28:4.

41:12 *my integrity*: See Psalms 18:25, 26:1. *in your presence*: more literally, "in your face" (see Ps 11:7).

41:13 This doxology marks the conclusion of Book I, and

40:17 Ps 70:5,  
Ps 86:1,  
Ps 109:22

41:1 Prv 14:21

41:2 Ps 27:12

41:3 2Ki 1:16;

Ps 50:15,

Ps 73:26,

Ps 138:7;

Is 58:10

41:4 Ps 6:2,

Ps 51:4, Ps 147:3;

Hos 6:1

41:5 Job 18:17;

Ps 38:12,

Ps 102:8

41:6 Ps 12:2;

Prv 26:24

41:7 Ps 56:5;

Prv 16:28;

Mt 22:15;

Ro 1:29;

2Co 12:20

41:8 Ps 71:11

41:9 2Sa 15:12;

Job 19:19;

Ps 55:12,

Ps 55:20;

Is 13:18

41:10 Ps 3:3

41:11 Ps 25:2,

Ps 37:23,

Ps 147:11

42:1 Ps 84:1-2

42:2 Josh 3:10;  
Ps 63:1, Ps 84:2,  
Ps 143:642:3 Ps 42:10,  
Ps 79:10,  
Ps 102:9,  
Ps 115:2,  
Mt 7:1042:4 1Sa 1:15;  
Ps 55:14,  
Ps 122:1;  
Is 30:2942:5 Ps 42:11,  
Ps 43:5, Ps 71:14;  
Lam 3:24;  
Mt 26:38

## BOOK II

(Psalms 42–72)

Psalm 42<sup>y</sup>*For the music leader. A maskil<sup>a</sup> of the Korahites.*

- <sup>1</sup> Just like a deer that craves streams of water,  
my whole being<sup>a</sup> craves you, God.
- <sup>2</sup> My whole being thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When will I come and see God's face?<sup>b</sup>
- <sup>3</sup> My tears have been my food both day and night,  
as people constantly questioned me,  
"Where's your God now?"

- <sup>4</sup> But I remember these things as I bare my soul:  
how I made my way to the mighty one's abode,<sup>c</sup>  
to God's own house,  
with joyous shouts and thanksgiving songs—  
a huge crowd celebrating the festival!
- <sup>5</sup> Why, I ask myself, are you so depressed?  
Why are you so upset inside?  
Hope in God!

*Books II–III and the Elohist Psalter* Psalms 42–83 are called the Elohist Psalter because they rarely use the name for God that is translated "LORD," preferring instead another Hebrew word, *elohim*, "God." The Elohist Psalter with 42 psalms probably arose and was passed on as one collection. At some point, the Elohist Psalter was joined to Pss 1–41 (Book I), after a few more psalms were added (Pss 84–89) to form the current Books II and III. It isn't by chance that Pss 42–83 starts with a Korah collection (see Pss 42–49) and ends with the final psalm of the Asaph collection (Pss 50, 73–83).

The Elohist Psalter would have had a Davidic flavor because of the Davidic collection at its core (Pss 51–72). Books II–III continue the Davidic theme in the concluding royal psalms (Pss 72; 89). But the Davidic focus proves to be tragic. Psalm 89 tells about the rejection of the Davidic covenant, reflecting the exile that began with the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. Both Books II and III begin with individual prayers for help (Pss 42–43; 73) and continue with community prayers for help (Pss 44; 74). Almost all the community prayers for help in the Psalter are found in Book III (see Pss 74; 79; 80; 83; and perhaps 85), where there is less Davidic presence (Ps 86 is the only Davidic psalm in Book III). All this seems to look forward to the bad news of Psalm 89, to which Books IV and V will offer a response (see sidebars, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89; "Book V" at Ps 107).

<sup>y</sup>Pss 42–43 form one single poem; cf the note at Pss 9–10. <sup>a</sup>Perhaps *instruction* <sup>b</sup>Or *soul*; also in 42:2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 43:5 <sup>c</sup>Syr, Tg; MT and appear before God? <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

similar doxologies mark the ends of Books II–IV (see Pss 72:18–19; 89:52; 106:48). *Bless*: See Psalm 16:7.

42:1–43:5 Psalms 42 and 43 belong together. Psalm 43 lacks a title; and more importantly, the shared refrain (42:5, 11; 43:5) indicates a literary unity. The refrain also divides the prayer for help into three sections, all of which include the psalmist's deep desire to experience God's presence. The title mentions the Korahites (see Pss 42–49; 84–85; 87–88; see sidebar, "Books II–III and the Elohist Psalter"). Korah is mentioned in 1 Chronicles among the Levites who were responsible for music (see 1 Chron 6:22, 37), and the Korahites are identified as temple gatekeepers (1 Chron 9:19).

42:1–5 The first section is a complaint, a typical element of a prayer for help.

42:2 *thirsts*: Water is a necessity of life (see Ps 23:2). The psalmist professes that God is a necessity of life, and that

his or her life depends on God (see Ps 63:1). *When . . . face?* The question seems to indicate a desire to visit the temple, especially since "God's own house" is mentioned in Psalm 42:4 (see also Pss 43:3–4; 5:7). The temple offered a direct experience of God's presence, which is described by the image of seeing God's face (see Pss 11:7; 24:6; 27:8).

42:3 "*Where . . . now?*" The question is a way of taunting the psalmist (see Pss 42:10; 79:10; 115:2; Joel 2:17; Mic 7:10).

42:4 Remembering former visits to the temple in more joyful times increases the psalmist's despair, as the refrain also suggests.

42:5 The refrain expresses trust, another typical element of a prayer for help. *Hope in God!*: See Psalms 5:3; 27:14; 31:24; 33:18, 20, 22; 37:34; 38:15; 39:7. The psalmist looks forward to the renewed experience of God's life-giving presence.

Because I will again give him thanks,  
my saving presence and my God.

42:6 Dt 3:8;  
2Sa 17:22;  
Ps 61:2

<sup>6</sup>My whole being is depressed.  
That's why I remember you  
from the land of Jordan and Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

42:7 Ps 69:1-2,  
Ps 88:7; Jon 2:3

<sup>7</sup>Deep called to deep at the noise of your waterfalls;  
all your massive waves surged over me.

42:8 Job 35:10;  
Ps 63:6, Ps 77:6,  
Ps 133:3,  
Ps 149:5

<sup>8</sup>By day the LORD commands his faithful love;  
by night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life.

42:9 Ps 13:1,  
Ps 18:2, Ps 38:6,  
Ps 43:2

<sup>9</sup>I will say to God, my solid rock, "Why have you forgotten me?  
Why do I have to walk around, sad, oppressed by enemies?"

42:10 Ps 42:3

<sup>10</sup>With my bones crushed, my foes make fun of me,  
constantly questioning me: "Where's your God now?"

42:11 Ps 42:5,  
Ps 43:5

<sup>11</sup>Why, I ask myself, are you so depressed?  
Why are you so upset inside?  
Hope in God!  
Because I will again give him thanks,  
my saving presence and my God.

43:1 1Sa 24:15;  
Ps 7:8, Ps 26:1,  
Ps 35:1

43:3 Ps 2:6,  
Ps 57:3, Ps 84:1

43:4 Ps 21:6  
43:5 Ps 42:5,  
Ps 42:11

### Psalm 43

- <sup>1</sup>Establish justice for me, God!  
Argue my case against ungodly people!  
Rescue me from the dishonest and unjust!
- <sup>2</sup>Because you are my God, my protective fortress!  
Why have you rejected me?  
Why do I have to walk around, sad, oppressed by enemies?
- <sup>3</sup>Send your light and truth—those will guide me!  
Let them bring me to your holy mountain, to your dwelling place.
- <sup>4</sup>Let me come to God's altar—  
let me come to God, my joy, my delight—  
then I will give you thanks with the lyre, God, my God!
- <sup>5</sup>Why, I ask myself, are you so depressed?  
Why are you so upset inside?  
Hope in God!  
Because I will again give him thanks,  
my saving presence and my God.

42:6-11 This second section focuses on complaint, although Psalm 42:8 claims God's love amid God's apparent absence.

42:6 *I remember you*: The psalmist continues to remember (see Ps 42:4), and memory now seems to be contributing to the emerging sense of hope. *Jordan* . . . *Mizar*: The place names may indicate that the psalmist is outside of Israel or Judah. The locations seem to be in the region where the Jordan River begins, perhaps leading into the water images in Psalm 42:7 (see map 6, C1).

42:7-8 The water image communicates disorder and confusion (see Ps 18:16). Even so, the psalmist doesn't lose sight of God. *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7. *his song*: Giving the desire to visit the temple and the likelihood of being far away from it, the psalmist might naturally recall the songs that focus on Jerusalem as God's place (see Ps 46; see sidebar, "Psalms 46–48: Jerusalem and God's Kingship" at Ps 48).

42:9 *forgotten me*: See Psalm 13:1. As always in the prayers

for help, the enemies are an oppressive presence (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

43:1-5 This final section suggests further complaint, but it also includes many petitions.

43:1 *Establish justice*: This and the other petitions in verse 1 grow out of faith and hope that God will set things right for the mistreated (see Pss 9:4, 18; 26:1).

43:3 *light*: See Psalms 4:6; 27:1. *holy mountain*: See Psalms 2:6; 3:4; 15:1. The psalmist looks forward to being led to the temple, as the desire has been from the beginning of the psalm (see Ps 42:1-2).

43:4 *God's altar*: See Psalm 26:6. *thanks . . . lyre*: See Psalm 33:2.

43:5 The final occurrence of the refrain is almost the same as the previous two, but following Psalm 43:3-4, the note of hope sounds more loudly than the depression and turmoil. The refrain itself, along with the entire poem, places hurt and hope together, as the prayers for help regularly do (see Ps 13:5-6).

44:1

Ex 12:26-27;  
Jgs 6:13; Ps 42:1,  
Ps 78:3

44:2 Ex 15:17;

Josh 3:10;  
2Sa 7:10;  
Ps 78:55, Ps 80:8

44:3 Dt 4:37;

Dt 7:8;  
Josh 24:12;  
Ps 4:6

44:4 Ps 5:2;

Ps 42:8, Ps 74:12

44:5 Dt 33:17;

Ps 60:12,

Ps 108:13;

Dn 8:4; Zec 10:5

44:6 Ps 20:7,

Ps 33:16; Hos 1:7

44:8 Ps 30:12,

Ps 34:2; Jer 9:24;

Ro 2:17

44:9 Ps 43:2,

Ps 60:1, Ps 60:10,

Ps 89:38,

Ps 108:11

44:11 Lv 26:33;

Dt 4:27,

Dt 28:64;

Ps 44:22,

Ps 106:27

44:13 Ps 79:4,

Ps 80:6, Ps 89:41

**Psalm 44***For the music leader. A maskil<sup>d</sup> of the Korahites.*

- <sup>1</sup>We have heard it, God, with our own ears;  
our ancestors told us about it:  
about the deeds you did in their days, in days long past.
- <sup>2</sup>You, by your own hand, removed all the nations,  
but you planted our ancestors.  
You crushed all the peoples,  
but you set our ancestors free.
- <sup>3</sup>No, not by their own swords did they take possession of the land—  
their own arms didn't save them.  
No, it was your strong hand, your arm,  
and the light of your face because you were pleased with them.
- <sup>4</sup>It's you, God! You who are my king,  
the one who orders salvation for Jacob.
- <sup>5</sup>We've pushed our foes away by your help;  
we've trampled our enemies by your name.
- <sup>6</sup>No, I won't trust in my bow;  
my sword won't save me  
<sup>7</sup>because it's you who saved us from our foes,  
you who put those who hate us to shame.
- <sup>8</sup>So we glory in God at all times  
and give thanks to your name forever.

*Selah*

- <sup>9</sup>But now you've rejected and humiliated us.  
You no longer accompany our armies.
- <sup>10</sup>You make us retreat from the enemy;  
our adversaries plunder us.
- <sup>11</sup>You've handed us over like sheep for butchering;  
you've scattered us among the nations.
- <sup>12</sup>You've sold your people for nothing,  
not even bothering to set a decent price.
- <sup>13</sup>You've made us a joke to all our neighbors;  
we're mocked and ridiculed by everyone around us.
- <sup>14</sup>You've made us a bad joke to the nations,  
something to be laughed at by all peoples.
- <sup>15</sup>All day long my disgrace confronts me,  
and shame covers my face  
<sup>16</sup>because of the voices of those  
who make fun of me and bad-mouth me,  
because of the enemy who is out for revenge.

<sup>d</sup>Perhaps instruction

**44:1-26** The first communal prayer for help in the Psalter, Psalm 44 must have arisen in response to a severe national setback. The fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the following Babylonian exile could account for the origin of Psalm 44, although the people's profession of innocence in verses 17-22 doesn't seem to fit with the prophetic view that the exile was a deserved punishment. If Psalm 44 was composed before the exile, it would have spoken in a new way in light of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.

**44:1-8** The first section is a review of God's historic deeds on Israel's behalf, pointing to the exodus out of Egypt (44:1) and even more clearly to the possession of the land (44:2-3, 5, 7). For these past life-giving actions, God is to be glorified and thanked (44:4, 6, 8).

**44:1** See Psalm 78:4; Deuteronomy 6:20-25, which is a brief recital of God's deeds.

**44:2-3** See Joshua 8-12. *planted*: See Exodus 15:17. *light of your face*: See Psalm 11:7.

**44:4** *my king*: The historic deliverances are taken as evidence of God's rule (see Ps 5:2; Exod 15:18). The alternation between first person singular and plural voices is probably to be explained by the use of Psalm 44 in worship.

**44:6** See Psalms 20:7; 33:16-17.

**44:9-16** The thankful, trusting tone of verses 1-8 makes the complaint of verses 9-16 sound all the more painful.

**44:13-16** See Psalms 42:3, 10; 79:4. The whole people are taunted as the individual psalmists often are as well (see Ps 31:11). The enemies are also present here (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

- 17 All this has come upon us,  
but we haven't forgotten you or broken your covenant.
- 18 Our hearts haven't turned away,  
neither have our steps strayed from your way.
- 19 But you've crushed us in the place where jackals<sup>a</sup> live,  
covering us with deepest darkness.
- 20 If we had forgotten the name of our God  
or spread out our hands to some strange deity,  
21 wouldn't God have discovered it?  
After all, God knows every secret of the heart.
- 22 No, God, it's because of you that we are getting killed every day—  
it's because of you that we are considered sheep ready for slaughter.
- 23 Wake up! Why are you sleeping, Lord?  
Get up! Don't reject us forever!
- 24 Why are you hiding your face,  
forgetting our suffering and oppression?
- 25 Look: we're going down to the dust;  
our stomachs are flat on the ground!
- 26 Stand up! Help us!  
Save us for the sake of your faithful love.

### Psalm 45

For the music leader. According to "The Lilies."  
Of the Korahites. A maskil.<sup>b</sup> A love song.

- 1 A marvelous word has stirred my heart  
as I mention my works to the king.  
My tongue is the pen of a skillful scribe.
- 2 You are the most handsome of men;  
grace has been poured out on your lips.  
No wonder God has blessed you forever!
- 3 Strap on your sword, great warrior,  
with your glory and grandeur.
- 4 Go and succeed in your grandeur!  
Ride out on behalf of truth, humility, and righteousness!  
Let your strong hand perform awesome deeds.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Or the sea monster(s) <sup>b</sup>Perhaps instruction <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

44:17-22 Unlike many psalms in which the psalmists suggest that their suffering results from their sin (see Pss 6; 32; 38; 39; 40; 41), the people here affirm their innocence (see Pss 7; 17; 26).

44:17 *your covenant*: The suggestion is that God has broken the covenant, which was established at Sinai (see Exod 24:1-8) and renewed when the people entered the land (see Josh 24:14-28).

44:22 See Romans 8:36, where the apostle Paul quotes this verse. Along with texts like Isaiah 53 and the book of Job, Psalm 44 and the entire tendency to express lamentation led to changes about the meaning of suffering in the post-exilic era and beyond. In particular, people were aware that suffering isn't always evidence of punishment, nor of separation from God.

44:23-26 As is regularly the case in the prayers for help, God is the solution, even when God is also seen as the problem.

44:23 *Wake up!*: See Psalm 7:6.

44:24 *hiding your face*: See Psalm 13:1.

44:26 *Help us!*: See Psalm 10:14. *Save us*: See Psalm 13:5. *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7. As is often the case in the prayers for help, the appeal for help is based on God's character.

45:1-17 Psalm 45 belongs with other royal psalms that deal openly with the earthly king (see 45:1, 5, 11, 14-16; Ps 2; see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2); but it is unique in several ways. For instance, the speaker introduces himself or herself in verse 1; and praise isn't offered directly to God, but rather to the king at his wedding (see "love song" in the title). The psalm shows the close relationship between God and God's *anointed* (45:7), and it would remind the king of his responsibilities in that relationship (see 45:4, 6-7).

45:2-9 The focus is on the king. The wedding setting is in view in 45:8-9.

45:3 *glory and grandeur*: See Psalm 21:5.

45:4, 7 *righteousness*: This repeated word makes it clear that the king has been blessed (Ps 45:2) and given power to do God's will (see Pss 5:8; 72:1-7). *anointed*: See Psalm 2:2.

44:17 Dt 6:12  
44:18 Job 23:11;  
Ps 78:57,  
Ps 119:51,  
Ps 119:157  
44:19 Job 3:5,  
Job 30:29;  
Ps 23:4, Ps 51:8  
44:20 Ps 61:9  
44:21 Ps 139:1,  
Jer 17:10  
44:22 Is 53:7;  
Jer 12:3; Ro 8:36  
44:23 Ps 7:6,  
Ps 35:23,  
Ps 74:1, Ps 77:7,  
Ps 78:65  
44:24 Job 13:24;  
Ps 13:1;  
Lam 5:20  
44:25 Ps 119:25  
45:1 Jgs 5:14;  
Ecc 7:6; Ps 2:6,  
Ps 42:1, Ps 44:1  
45:2 Ps 21:6,  
Lk 4:22; Jn 1:14  
45:3 Ps 21:5;  
Is 9:6; Heb 4:12;  
Rev 1:16,  
Rev 19:15  
45:4 Ps 21:8,  
Ps 65:5;  
Mt 11:29;  
2Co 10:1;  
Rev 6:2

45:5 Nm 24:8;  
Dt 32:23;  
Ps 21:12,  
Ps 120:4  
45:6 Heb 1:8-9  
45:7 Ps 22;  
Ps 33:5, Ps 89:20;  
Is 61:1; Lk 4:18  
45:8 1Ki 22:39;  
Song 4:14;  
Am 3:15;  
Mt 2:11;  
Jn 19:39  
45:9 1Ki 2:19,  
1Ki 9:28;  
Job 22:24,  
Job 28:16;  
Is 13:12  
45:10 Dt 21:13;  
Ru 1:16  
45:11 Ps 95:6;  
Song 4:1; Is 54:5;  
Lk 24:52;  
Eph 5:33  
45:12 Ps 22:29,  
Ps 72:10  
45:13 Ps 45:9;  
Is 61:10;  
Rev 19:7-8  
45:14 Jgs 5:30;  
Song 1:4;  
Eze 16:18  
45:15 Ps 4:7;  
Is 35:10,  
Is 51:11-12,  
Is 61:10  
45:16 Ps 68:27,  
Ps 113:8;  
1Pt 2:9; Rev 1:6,  
Rev 5:10  
45:17 Ps 138:4;  
Mal 1:11  
46:1 Ps 9:9

- <sup>5</sup>Let the peoples fall beneath you.  
May your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies.
- <sup>6</sup>Your divine throne is eternal and everlasting.  
Your royal scepter is a scepter of justice.
- <sup>7</sup>You love righteousness and hate wickedness.  
No wonder God, your God, has anointed you  
with the oil of joy more than all your companions!
- <sup>8</sup>All your clothes have the pleasing scent of myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.  
The music of stringed instruments coming from ivory palaces entertains you.
- <sup>9</sup>The royal princess is standing in your precious jewels;<sup>a</sup>  
the queen stands at your right, dressed in the gold of Ophir.
- <sup>10</sup>Listen, daughter; pay attention, and listen closely!  
Forget your people and your father's house.
- <sup>11</sup>Let the king desire your beauty.  
Because he is your master, bow down to him now.
- <sup>12</sup>The city of Tyre, the wealthiest of all,  
will seek your favor with gifts, <sup>13</sup>with riches of every sort  
for the royal princess, dressed in pearls,<sup>4</sup>  
her robe embroidered with gold.
- <sup>14</sup>In robes of many colors, she is led to the king.  
Her attendants, the young women servants following her,  
are presented to you as well.
- <sup>15</sup>As they enter the king's palace,  
they are led in with celebration and joy.
- <sup>16</sup>Your sons, great king, will succeed your fathers;<sup>5</sup>  
you will appoint them as princes throughout the land.
- <sup>17</sup>I will perpetuate your name from one generation to the next  
so the peoples will praise you forever and always.

## Psalm 46

*For the music leader. Of the Korahites. According to Alamothe.*<sup>a</sup> A song.

- <sup>1</sup>God is our refuge and strength,  
a help always near in times of great trouble.
- <sup>2</sup>That's why we won't be afraid when the world falls apart,  
when the mountains crumble into the center of the sea,  
<sup>3</sup>when its waters roar and rage,  
when the mountains shake because of its surging waves.

*Selah*

<sup>a</sup>Syr; MT *royal princess is among your precious ones*. <sup>1</sup>Correction; Heb lacks *for*; Heb uncertain in 45:12-13  
<sup>4</sup>Heb lacks *great king*. <sup>5</sup>Heb uncertain; see note at Pss 9-10 or Ps 111.

45:6-7 These verses were understood in late Judaism to refer to a coming messiah, and they were applied to Jesus by the early Christians to support their belief that Jesus was the Messiah (which in Greek is *christos*; see Heb 1:8-9). 45:10-15 The focus shifts to the bride and queen-to-be; and as in Psalm 45:8-9, sensuality and wealth are the order of the day. The "humility and righteousness" of verse 4 seem to have been lost in the shuffle of wedding-day activities, perhaps a realistic anticipation of the actual behavior of the Israelite and Judean kings, who often pursued their own self-promoting agendas rather than doing the will of God as they were supposed to do (see Pss 45:15-16; 72).

45:16-17 It isn't clear whether the speaker should be identified as the poet of Psalm 45:1 or God. In any case, the promise of 45:16-17 fits with the promises made elsewhere to the house of David (see Pss 72:15-17; 89:3-4, 28-29, 35-37; 2 Sam 7:12-16). The disappearance of the monarchy at the beginning of the exile in 587 BCE called

these promises into question, and the Psalter reflects this (see Ps 89:38-51; see sidebar, "Books II-III and the Elohist Psalter" at Ps 42).

46:1-11 Because of the focus on Jerusalem, *God's city* in verses 4-5, Psalm 46 is classified as a Song of Zion (see Pss 48; 76; 84; 87; 122; 132; 137). Zion was a symbol of God's power and protecting presence, so to affirm the city was really to profess faith in God (see sidebar, "Psalms 46-48: Jerusalem and God's Kingship"). Therefore, Psalm 46 could also be considered a psalm of trust (see Pss 16; 23). The three occurrences of *Selah* mark the three sections of the poem.

46:1-3 Trust in God is expressed directly in this opening section.

46:1 *refuge*: See Psalm 2:12. *strength*: This word occurs elsewhere in contexts that clearly affirm God's rule, which Psalm 46 also asserts in verse 10 (see "power," "strength," or "strong" in Psalms 29:1; 93:1; 96:7; 99:4).

46:2-3 *mountains crumble... mountains shake*: In the



- 4 There is a river whose streams gladden God's city,  
the holiest dwelling of the Most High.
- 5 God is in that city. It will never crumble.  
God will help it when morning dawns.
- 6 Nations roar; kingdoms crumble.  
God utters his voice; the earth melts.
- 7 The LORD of heavenly forces is with us!  
The God of Jacob is our place of safety.

46:4 Ps 36:8,  
Ps 48:1, Ps 87:3,  
Rev 22:1  
46:5 Dt 23:14;  
Ps 125:1; Is 12:6;  
Jl 2:27; Zec 2:5  
46:7 Nm 14:9;  
2Ch 13:12;  
Ps 9:9, Ps 46:11;  
Is 8:10

*Selah*

- 8 Come, see the LORD's deeds,  
what devastation he has imposed on the earth—  
9 bringing wars to an end in every corner of the world,  
breaking the bow and shattering the spear,  
burning chariots with fire.
- 10 "That's enough! Now know that I am God!  
I am exalted among all nations; I am exalted throughout the world!"

46:8 Ps 66:5  
46:9 1Sa 2:4;  
Ps 76:3; Is 2:4;  
Eze 39:9; Mi 4:3  
46:10 Is 2:11,  
Is 2:17  
46:11 Ps 46:7  
47:1 2Ki 11:12  
47:3 Ps 18:47  
47:4 Am 6:8,  
Am 8:7; Na 2:2;  
1Pt 1:4

*Selah*

- 11 The LORD of heavenly forces is with us!  
The God of Jacob is our place of safety.

**Psalm 47**

*For the music leader. A psalm of the Korahites.*

- 1 Clap your hands, all you people!  
Shout joyfully to God with a joyous shout!
- 2 Because the LORD Most High is awesome,  
he is the great king of the whole world.
- 3 He subdues the nations under us,  
subdues all people beneath our feet.
- 4 He chooses our inheritance for us:  
the heights of Jacob, which he loves.

*Selah*

ancient view of the world, the mountains held the dry land in place and held up the sky. The worst possible event would be for the mountains to *crumble* or *shake*. But the psalmist affirms that even if the worst were to happen, God can still be trusted, and so there is no reason to be afraid (see Ps 23:4).

46:4-7 The central section turns attention to Zion.  
46:4 *river*. There is no river in Jerusalem. The river here is a symbol of life-giving power, in contrast to the threatening waters and waves of Psalm 46:3 (see the river in Ezek 47:1-12 and Rev. 22:1-12), *holiest*... *High*: Jerusalem was the site of God's earthly house, the temple (see Pss 2:6; 5:7).  
46:5-6 *never crumble*... *crumble*: Note that "crumble" appears three times (see Ps 46:2). In the midst of natural and political turmoil, God's place is safe. *the earth melts*: a sign of submission, not destruction (see Ps 97:5).  
46:7 The refrain (see Ps 46:11) emphasizes the good news of God's protecting presence. *heavenly forces*: See note at Psalm 24:10.  
46:8-11 The focus returns to God in this final section.  
46:8 *devastation*... *earth*: As it turns out, God's "devastation" is actually restoration, because what God destroys in Psalm 46:9 are the tools of war (see Isa 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-3). Given the violent and militaristic images for God and the fulfillment of God's purposes elsewhere in the Psalter (see Pss 2:8-11; 18:31-50; 21:8-12; 144:1-2; 149:6-9), it is especially important to note that here God ultimately "fights" for peace.

46:10 *That's enough!*... *God!*: This is essentially God's call for a cease-fire, an end to fighting that results from recognizing God's claim to rule all the nations and the world itself. *I am exalted*... *throughout the world!*: Elsewhere in the Psalter, exaltation is linked with proclaiming God's rule or respecting God as king (see "magnify" in Ps 99:5, 9; and "lift you up high" in Ps 145:1). The repetition emphasizes God's absolute claim on the world, and it suggests that war results from the self-assertion of human beings over against God and God's purposes for the world.

47:1-9 Psalm 47 is an enthronement psalm, a song of praise that affirms God's rule (see Pss 29; 93; 95-99). Verses 1-4 and 6-9 demonstrate the typical form of a song of praise: invitations to praise (47:1, 6) followed by reasons for praise (47:2-4, 7-9) that begin in both cases by proclaiming God as *king of the whole world* (47:2, 7). Verse 5 occupies the center of the psalm between the two sections of praise. The placement of Psalm 47 between two Songs of Zion is significant (see sidebar, "Psalms 46-48: Jerusalem and God's Kingship" at Ps 48).  
47:1 *clap*: See Psalm 98:8; Nahum 3:19. *all you people!*: The songs of praise regularly invite a worldwide response (see Pss 66:1; 117:1). *Shout joyfully!*: The appropriate greeting for a king (see Pss 95:1-2; 98:4, 6).  
47:3-4 *He subdues*... *our inheritance*: God's universal rule is illustrated by the gift of land for the people, their *inheritance* (see "legacy" in Josh 11:23), *which he loves*: See Psalm 78:68; Deuteronomy 7:8; Isaiah 43:4.

47:5 2Sa 6:15;  
Ps 68:18, Ps 98:6;  
Eph 4:8

47:6 Ps 68:4,  
Ps 96:1, Ps 117:1,  
Ps 145:1,  
Ps 149:1

47:7 Zec 14:9;  
1Co 14:15

47:8 1Ch 16:31

47:9 Ps 89:18

48:1 Ps 2:6,  
Ps 46:4, Ps 87:1;  
Is 2:3; Zec 8:3

48:2 Ps 50:2;  
Lam 2:15;  
Mt 5:35

48:3 Zec 2:5

48:7 1Kj 10:22,

1Kj 22:48;  
Jer 18:17;  
Eze 27:25

48:8 Ps 48:1,  
Ps 87:5

<sup>5</sup>God has gone up with a joyous shout—  
the LORD with the blast of the ram's horn.

<sup>6</sup>Sing praises to God! Sing praises!  
Sing praises to our king! Sing praises  
<sup>7</sup>because God is king of the whole world!  
Sing praises with a song of instruction!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>8</sup>God is king over the nations.  
God sits on his holy throne.

<sup>9</sup>The leaders of all people are gathered with the people of Abraham's God  
because the earth's guardians belong to God;  
God is exalted beyond all.

### Psalm 48

*A song. A psalm of the Korahites.*

<sup>1</sup>In the city belonging to our God,  
the LORD is great and so worthy of praise!  
His holy mountain <sup>2</sup>is a beautiful summit, the joy of the whole world.  
Mount Zion, in the far north, is the city of the great king.  
<sup>3</sup>God is in its fortifications, revealing himself as a place of safety.

<sup>4</sup>Look: the kings assembled themselves,  
advancing all together—

<sup>5</sup>when they saw it, they were stunned;  
they panicked and ran away frightened.

<sup>6</sup>Trembling took hold of them right there—  
like a woman giving birth,

<sup>7</sup>or like the east wind when it smashes the ships of Tarshish.

<sup>8</sup>Just like we had heard, now we've seen it for ourselves  
in the city of the LORD of heavenly forces, in the city of our God.  
May God make it secure forever!

*Selah*

<sup>1</sup>Or *Sing praises with understanding or wisely* (cf LXX, Vulg); Heb *maskil*; see the note at Ps 32.

47:5 *God has gone up*: In the original use of the psalm, verse 5 could have accompanied the symbolic act of God's enthronement, perhaps at the conclusion of a festal procession (see Ps 24:7-10). The Hebrew root translated "gone up" occurs again as "exalted" in verse 9, linking the center and the end of the psalm. *blast... ram's horn*: The blast of a ram's horn accompanies Solomon's enthronement (1 Kgs 1:34, 39).

47:7 *song of instruction!*: See translation note. The same Hebrew root is used in the command "Wise up!" in Psalm 2:10, where earthly kings are told to recognize God's rule.

47:8-9 Because God is "king of the whole world" (Ps 47:2, 7), the gathering of God's people must include all world leaders, along with the Israelites. This worldwide point of view, along with the mention of Abraham, recalls Genesis 12:3, where Abraham is promised that "all the families of earth will be blessed because of you" (see Ps 46:10 and Isa 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-3, where all nations are gathered so that God can "settle disputes" and end warfare).

48:1-14 Psalm 48 is a Song of Zion (see Ps 46), mentioning either *the city* or Zion (or both) in each of its three sections: verses 1-3, 4-8, 9-14. While Zion itself is praised, the real significance of the city is its ability to reveal God (48:3, 9-14; see sidebar, "Psalms 46-48: Jerusalem and God's Kingship"). Psalm 48 may have originated as a pilgrimage psalm (see Pss 120-134; see sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs" at Ps 120), inviting visitors to *Look*

(48:4). *Walk around* (48:12), *Examine* (48:13), and finally to *tell* (48:13).

48:1-3 As this first section suggests, praise of Zion and praise of God are inseparable.

48:1 *holy mountain*: See Psalm 2:6.

48:2 *beautiful... whole world*: Zion is seen through the eyes of faith. Psalm 47 pictures God as "king of the whole world" (Ps 47:2, 7), and the one who presides over a gathering of all the nations that would have been held on Mount Zion (see Isa 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-3). *far north*: The underlying Hebrew, if taken as a proper noun, would be Zaphon, the mountain where the Canaanite gods and goddesses lived. The claim seems to be that the God of Israel has replaced the Canaanite gods as the true ruler of the world (see Ps 82). *great king*: See Psalms 5:2; 47:2, 7.

48:3 *place of safety*: See Psalm 46:7, 11.

48:4 As pilgrims approach Jerusalem, they are invited to view the city, imagining how it appeared to attacking armies and their leaders. As in Psalm 48:1-3, the city is seen through the eyes of faith. The sight of Jerusalem didn't really repel foreign invaders (see Ps 48:5-7); but to the eye of faith, the view of Jerusalem in the distance made a powerful impact. Verse 8 seems to signal the arrival of the pilgrims to Jerusalem.

48:7 *east wind*: The mention of the "east wind" may be meant to recall that it was a force during the sea crossing and the defeat of Pharaoh's armies (see Exod 14:21).

*Psalms 46–48: Jerusalem and God's Kingship* Psalms 46 and 48 are the first two of the several songs of Zion, all of which focus attention on Jerusalem (Zion) (see also Pss 76; 84; 87; 122; 132; 137). The intentional placement of Psalms 46 and 48 around Psalm 47 helps the reader or person praying the Psalms to understand and appreciate the importance of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a particular place, the location of the temple in ancient times (see map 18). The temple was viewed as God's "house," that is, a place to experience God's presence. On the one hand, God's presence in this particular place declares God's claim on a particular people. On the other hand, Jerusalem reminds this particular people that their God is a God who claims all places and all people as God's own.

Psalm 47 appears between the first two songs of Zion to proclaim that "God is king over the nations" (Ps 47:8) and that God gathers all people as one, not just Israel (Ps 47:9; see Ps 87; Isa 2:2–4; Mic 4:1–3). While the particular place, Zion, is centrally important, a place to be treasured and visited by pilgrims (see Pss 48:1–3, 9–14; 84:10; 87:1–2; 122:1–2; 132:13–18), its fundamental importance is to testify to God's universal reign and to God's plan to establish justice, righteousness, and peace everywhere (see Pss 46:8–9; 48:9–11; 76:7–9; see sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs" at Ps 120).

48:9 Ps 26:3,  
Ps 40:10  
48:10 Mal 1:11  
48:11 Ps 97:8  
48:12 Neh 3:1  
48:13 Ps 71:18  
48:14 Ps 23:3;  
Is 58:11  
49:1 Ps 78:1,  
Is 1:2  
49:3 Ps 19:14,  
Ps 37:30,  
Ps 104:34,  
Ps 119:130  
49:4 Nm 12:8;  
Ps 78:2; Prv 1:6

<sup>9</sup>We dwell on your faithful love, God, in your temple.

<sup>10</sup>Your praise, God, just like your reputation,  
extends to the far corners of the earth.  
Your strong hand is filled with righteousness.

<sup>11</sup>Let Mount Zion be glad;  
let the towns of Judah rejoice because of your acts of justice!

<sup>12</sup>Walk around Zion; go all the way around it; count its towers.

<sup>13</sup>Examine its defenses closely;  
tour its fortifications so that you may tell future generations:

<sup>14</sup>"This is God, our God, forever and always!  
He is the one who will lead us even to the very end."<sup>m</sup>

## Psalm 49

*For the music leader. A psalm of the Korahites.*

<sup>1</sup>Listen to this, all you people!  
Listen closely, all you citizens of the world—  
<sup>2</sup>people of every kind,  
rich and poor alike!

<sup>3</sup>My mouth speaks wisdom;  
my heart's meditation is full of insight.

<sup>4</sup>I will pay close attention to a proverb;  
I will explain my riddle on the lyre.

<sup>m</sup>LXX; Heb uncertain; Heb *al muth* (unto death or against death), but see the notes at Pss 9–10, 46—the words might belong in the heading of Ps 49.

*Tarshish:* Probably in Spain (see Ps 72:10; Gen 10:4; 1 Kgs 10:22; Jer 10:9; Jon 1:3).

48:9–14 In this final section, the pilgrims are *in your temple* (48:9) and positioned to make their way around the city.

48:9 *faithful love:* The place itself is revelatory, putting pilgrims in touch with God's essential character (see Ps 5:7; Exod 34:6).

48:10–11 *far corners... earth:* The specific place has universal significance. *righteousness... acts of justice:* As in Psalm 48:9, the city itself reveals something about God—in this case, putting pilgrims in touch with God's basic will, which can be summarized as justice and righteousness (see Pss 5:8; 9:4; 33:5; 36:6; 96:13).

48:13 *so that you may tell:* The architectural tour of the city has a purpose: to prepare the pilgrims to be witnesses to God's character and will (see Ps 48:14). This mission is

emphasized by a Hebrew play on words: "count" (Ps 48:12) and "tell," which translate the same Hebrew root. Again, the city itself reveals God's enduring claim on the people and the world.

49:1–20 The vocabulary of Israel's wisdom literature dominates the introduction of Psalm 49 (49:1–4), which is generally classified as a wisdom psalm. Its teaching about wealth (49:7–8, 12, 20) possibly was presented musically (see 49:4). The two main sections end with an identical refrain (49:12b, 20b).

49:1 *all you people... all you citizens:* Given the worldwide point of view of Psalms 46–48, it is appropriate that the psalmist addresses everyone.

49:3–4 *wisdom... insight... proverb... riddle:* These words appear often in the wisdom literature (see Prov 1:1–7). From the refrain, it's possible to guess what the psalmist may have had in mind as the riddle: How are people and animals alike?

49:6 Ps 10:3.

Ps 52:7;

Prov 11:28;

Jer 48:7;

Mk 10:24

49:7 Mt 16:26

49:8 Job 36:18;

Mt 16:26

49:9 Ps 16:10;

Ps 89:48

49:10 Ps 92:6;

Ps 94:8; Ecc 2:16;

Ecc 2:18;

Lk 12:20

49:11 Gn 4:17;

Ps 64:6

49:12 Ps 49:20;

Ecc 3:19;

2Pt 2:12

49:13 Lk 12:20

49:14

Job 24:19;

Ps 39:11; 1Co 6:2

49:15 Gn 5:24;

Ps 16:10;

Ps 73:24;

Hos 13:14

49:16 Ps 37:7

49:17 Job 27:19;

Lk 12:20; 1Ti 6:7

49:18 Dt 29:19;

Lk 12:19

49:20 Ps 49:12

- <sup>5</sup>Why should I be afraid in times of trouble,  
when the wrongdoing of my bullies engulfs me—  
<sup>6</sup>those people who trust in their fortunes  
and boast of their fantastic wealth?  
<sup>7</sup>Wealth? It can't save a single person!  
It can't pay a life's ransom-price to God.  
<sup>8</sup>The price to save someone's life is too high—  
wealth will never be enough—  
<sup>9</sup>no one can live forever without experiencing the pit.

<sup>10</sup>Everyone knows that the wise die too,  
just like foolish and stupid people do,  
all of them leaving their fortunes to others.

<sup>11</sup>Their graves<sup>a</sup> are their eternal homes,  
the place they live for all generations,  
even if they had counties named after them!

<sup>12</sup>People won't live any longer because of wealth;  
they're just like the animals that pass away.

<sup>13</sup>That's how it goes for those who are foolish,  
as well as for those who follow their lead, pleased with their talk.

<sup>14</sup>Like sheep, they're headed straight for the grave.<sup>o</sup>

Death will be their shepherd—  
but those who do right in their hearts will rule over them come morning!—  
their forms wasting away in the grave  
rather than having some dignified residence.<sup>p</sup>

<sup>15</sup>But God will save my life from the power of the grave,  
because he will take me.

<sup>16</sup>Don't be overly impressed when someone becomes rich,  
their house swelling to fantastic proportions,

<sup>17</sup>because when they die, they won't take any of it with them.  
Their fantastic things won't accompany them down under.

<sup>18</sup>Though they consider themselves blessed during their lives,  
and even thank you when you deal well with them,<sup>q</sup>

<sup>19</sup>they too will join the ancestors who've gone ahead;  
they too will never see the light again.

<sup>20</sup>Wealthy people? They just don't understand;  
they're just like the animals that pass away.

Selah

Selah

<sup>a</sup>Correction with LXX <sup>o</sup>Heb *Sheol*; also again in 49:7, 15 <sup>p</sup>Heb uncertain in 49:13-14 <sup>q</sup>LXX, Syr

49:6 *trust*: The issue of trust is central in the Psalms; but trust is supposed to be directed to God, not to money and possessions (see Ps 4:5; 40:4; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 12:15).

49:7-9 These verses begin to answer the question of Ps 49:5-6—that is, life can't be bought. The answer may point to Exodus 13:11-16; 21:28-32 (see also Prov 13:8), which allow payment for human life in certain cases, but finally life is beyond purchase. *Wealth?*: See Psalms 52:7; 62:10. *the pit*: An image for death (see Ps 16:10).

49:10-12 Death destroys the false idea of human total power, and this is another reason that the wealthy aren't to be feared (see Pss 49:5-6; 39:4-6; Ecc 2:12-26).

49:13-14 As the translation note indicates, the Hebrew is difficult; but the psalmist does seem to distinguish

between the final destinies of the foolish and *those who do right* (49:14). Verse 15 continues with this point of view.

49:15 *But . . . grave*: The unusual affirmation here is that God's power prevails over the power of "the grave" (see Ps 49:13-14; translation note), which was normally understood to mean that everyone went to Sheol, the realm of the dead, to which even God had no access (see Ps 6:5, but contrast Ps 139:8). *he will take me*: It isn't clear exactly what the psalmist means, but this affirmation again seems to push beyond the usual Israelite view of death (see Pss 22:29; 73:24; Gen 5:24; 2 Kgs 2:11-12; Rom 8:38-39; 14:7-8).

49:20 The refrain sounds more hopeful the second time, at least for those who trust God instead of their wealth.

**Psalm 50***A psalm of Asaph.*

- 1 From the rising of the sun to where it sets,  
God, the LORD God, speaks, calling out to the earth.
- 2 From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines brightly.
- 3 Our God is coming; he won't keep quiet.  
A devouring fire is before him; a storm rages all around him.
- 4 God calls out to the skies above  
and to the earth in order to judge his people:
- 5 "Bring my faithful to me,  
those who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."
- 6 The skies proclaim his righteousness  
because God himself is the judge.
- 7 "Listen, my people, I will now speak;  
Israel, I will now testify against you.  
I am God—your God!
- 8 I'm not punishing you for your sacrifices  
or for your entirely burned offerings,  
which are always before me.
- 9 I won't accept bulls from your house  
or goats from your corrals
- 10 because every forest animal already belongs to me,  
as do the cattle on a thousand hills.
- 11 I know every mountain bird;  
even the insects in the fields are mine.
- 12 Even if I were hungry, I wouldn't tell you  
because the whole world and everything in it already belong to me.
- 13 Do I eat bulls' meat?  
Do I drink goats' blood?
- 14 Offer God a sacrifice of thanksgiving!  
Fulfill the promises you made to the Most High!
- 15 Cry out to me whenever you are in trouble;  
I will deliver you, then you will honor me."
- 16 But to the wicked God says,  
"Why do you talk about my laws?  
Why do you even mention my covenant?"

50:1 Josh 22:22;  
1Ch 15:17;  
2Ch 29:30;  
Ps 113:3  
50:2 Dt 33:2;  
Ps 48:2, Ps 80:1,  
Ps 94:1;  
Lam 2:15  
50:3 Lv 10:2;  
Nm 16:35;  
Ps 97:3; Dn 7:10  
50:4 Dt 4:26,  
Dt 31:28,  
Dt 32:1; Is 1:2;  
Mi 6:2  
50:5 Ex 24:7  
50:6 Ps 19:1,  
Ps 75:7, Ps 97:6  
50:7 Ex 20:2;  
Ps 48:14, Ps 81:8  
50:8 Ps 40:6,  
Ps 51:16; Is 1:11,  
Hos 6:6  
50:9 Is 1:1  
50:10 Ps 104:24  
50:11 Mt 6:26  
50:12 Ex 19:5;  
Dt 10:14;  
Ps 24:1;  
1Co 10:26  
50:14 Nm 30:2;  
Dt 23:21;  
Ps 22:25,  
Ps 76:11,  
Ps 107:22  
50:15 Ps 22:23,  
Ps 81:7, Ps 91:15,  
Ps 107:6;  
Zec 13:9  
50:16 Is 29:13

*Selah*

50:1-23 Psalm 50 is neither prayer nor praise. Rather, for most of the psalm (50:5, 7-22), God speaks. So Psalm 50 is often seen as a prophetic preaching and instruction, and it may have been used like a levitical sermon. Asaph is mentioned in the title; and according to 1 Chronicles, he was among the Levites assigned by David to provide music in the temple (see 1 Chron 6:39; 16:7, where Asaph is associated with giving thanks; and see also 1 Chron 25:1-8, where Asaph is associated with prophecy, which may explain why the psalmist can deliver God's word in Ps 50).

50:1-3 These verses introduce the psalm by establishing God's authority to speak. *From Zion... beauty*: See Psalms 2:6; 48:1-2. Psalm 50:3 uses the traditional language of theophany (a description of God's appearance), communicating God's universal rule (see Pss 18:7-15; 97:1-5).

50:4-6 Continuing the introduction, these verses describe a dispute where *the skies* and *the earth* will serve as witnesses before a judge (see Deut 32:1; Isa 1:3; Mic 6:1-2). *covenant... sacrifice*: This recalls Exodus 24:1-8, the covenant ceremony in which the people promise twice to

obey God (see Exod 24:3, 7); but Psalm 50 suggests that they haven't obeyed. *The skies... righteousness*: See Psalm 97:6, where a similar formulation also follows a theophany (appearance of God) and occurs in the context of affirming God's justice and righteousness (Ps 97:2, 8; see Pss 5:8; 9:4).

50:7-15 In this section, God's speech focuses on the people's worship. The people were apparently quite dutiful in offering sacrifices to God (50:8), but they seem to have misunderstood the purpose. God reminds them that God doesn't need their animal offerings.

50:7 God's opening line echoes the Shema (a prayer later used in Jewish worship) in Deuteronomy 6:4.

50:14 *a sacrifice of thanksgiving! Fulfill the promises*: Thanksgiving sacrifices would have normally involved animals (see Lev 7:11-18), but the point here is that thankfulness to God is the most important thing. Thankfulness should include the obedience to God that the people have promised (see Pss 22:25; 40:6; 51:16-17).

50:16-22 This section continues to address the same audience as Psalm 50:7-15. The suggestion is that by their

obey God (see Exod 24:3, 7); but Psalm 50 suggests that they haven't obeyed. *The skies... righteousness*: See Psalm 97:6, where a similar formulation also follows a theophany (appearance of God) and occurs in the context of affirming God's justice and righteousness (Ps 97:2, 8; see Pss 5:8; 9:4).

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50:17 1Ki 14:9;  
Neh 9:26;  
Prv 5:12  
50:18 Ro 1:32;  
1Ti 5:22  
50:19 Ps 10:7;  
Ps 36:3, Ps 52:2  
50:20 Jer 9:4;  
Mt 10:21  
50:21 Ecc 8:11;  
Is 57:11  
50:22 Job 8:13;  
Ps 7:2, Ps 9:17;  
Is 17:10; Mi 5:8  
50:23 Ps 50:14;  
Ps 91:16  
51:1 2Sa 12:1,  
2Sa 24:10;  
Ac 3:19  
51:2 Ps 51:7;  
Ac 22:16;  
Heb 9:14;  
1Jn 1:7, 1Jn 1:9  
51:3 Ps 32:5;  
Prv 28:13;  
Is 59:12  
51:4 Gn 20:6,  
Gn 39:9;  
2Sa 12:13;  
Lk 15:21; Ro 3:4  
51:5 Job 14:4,  
Job 15:14;  
Ps 58:3; Eph 2:3  
51:6 Job 38:36;  
Prv 2:6; Ecc 2:26

- 17 You hate discipline, and you toss my words behind your back.  
18 You make friends with thieves whenever you see one;  
you spend your time with adulterers.  
19 You set your mouth free to do evil,  
then harness your tongue to tell lies.  
20 You sit around, talking about your own siblings;  
you find fault with the children of your very own mother.  
21 You've done these things and I've kept quiet.  
You thought I was just like you!  
But now I'm punishing you;  
I'm laying it all out, right in front of your face.  
22 So consider this carefully, all you who forget God,  
or I'll rip you to pieces with no one to deliver you:  
23 The one who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving is the one who honors me.  
And it is to the one who charts the correct path  
that I will show divine salvation."

### Psalm 51

*For the music leader. A psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him just after he had been with Bathsheba.*

- 1 Have mercy on me, God, according to your faithful love!  
Wipe away my wrongdoings according to your great compassion!  
2 Wash me completely clean of my guilt;  
purify me from my sin!  
3 Because I know my wrongdoings,  
my sin is always right in front of me.  
4 I've sinned against you—you alone.  
I've committed evil in your sight.  
That's why you are justified when you render your verdict,  
completely correct when you issue your judgment.  
5 Yes, I was born in guilt, in sin,  
from the moment my mother conceived me.  
6 And yes, you want truth in the most hidden places;  
you teach me wisdom in the most secret space.\*

\*Heb uncertain

misunderstanding and abuse of the sacrificial system, "my people" (Ps 50:7) have become *the wicked* (50:16). Verse 16 assumes an audience that knows God's *laws* and is in covenant relationship with God. Insofar as worship and ethics can be separated, verses 7-15 focus on worship, and verses 16-22 focus on ethics.

50:18 The references here are to the Ten Commandments (see Exod 20:14-16).

50:21-23 Although divine punishment is mentioned (50:21) and described (50:22), verse 23 shows that God's real purpose is to set things right and have the people live as God intends.

50:23 *sacrifice of thanksgiving*: See Psalm 50:14. It isn't clear whether the psalmist meant to say that animal sacrifices were neither necessary nor legitimate. Clearly, however, they aren't sufficient. God will thankfulness expressed in obedience, as the prophets often proclaim (see Isa 1:10-20; 58:1-14; Jer 7:1-15; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21-24.) *divine salvation*: This means life as God intends it (see Ps 13:5).

51:1-19 Like other prayers for help, Psalm 51 includes complaint (51:3-5), petition (51:1-2, 6-12, 14a, 15a), and expressions of trust and praise (51:14b, 15b-17). Because the complaint involves the psalmist's own sin, Psalm 51 is the fourth of the church's Penitential Psalms (see Ps 6).

The title invites the reading of Psalm 51 in conversation with 2 Samuel 11:1-12:14 (see Ps 3), the story of David and Bathsheba, in which David broke at least half of the Ten Commandments. In this way, the story makes an appropriate context for hearing Psalm 51, even if the psalm didn't originate in this historical context.

51:1 The opening petitions invite more attention to God's character than to the psalmist's sin. *Have mercy*: See Psalm 4:1. *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7. *compassion*: See Psalm 25:6. All three of these basic qualities of God occur in God's self-revelation to Moses in Exodus 34:6, which comes at the conclusion of the gold calf incident that involved grievous sin on Israel's part. The firm belief about God's merciful character is apparently what enables the psalmist to confess sin so honestly and openly.

51:2-4 Similar to Psalm 32:1-5, Israel's basic words for sin occur here: *guilt* (51:2; see Ps 51:5), *sin[ned]* (51:2-4; see Ps 51:5), *wrongdoings* (51:3), and *evil* (51:4). The word translated *wrongdoings* suggests purposeful rebellion.

51:5 This verse has often been interpreted to mean that sexuality transmits "original sin," but it is better understood as a poetic expression of the widespread and unavoidable sin in the human situation.

- 7 Purify me with hyssop and I will be clean;  
wash me and I will be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and celebration again;  
let the bones you crushed rejoice once more.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins;  
wipe away all my guilty deeds!
- 10 Create a clean heart for me, God;  
put a new, faithful spirit deep inside me!
- 11 Please don't throw me out of your presence;  
please don't take your holy spirit away from me.
- 12 Return the joy of your salvation to me  
and sustain me with a willing spirit.
- 13 Then I will teach wrongdoers your ways,  
and sinners will come back to you.

- 14 Deliver me from violence, God, God of my salvation,  
so that my tongue can sing of your righteousness.
- 15 Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will proclaim your praise.
- 16 You don't want sacrifices.  
If I gave an entirely burned offering, you wouldn't be pleased.
- 17 A broken spirit is my sacrifice, God.\*  
You won't despise a heart, God, that is broken and crushed.
- 18 Do good things for Zion by your favor.  
Rebuild Jerusalem's walls.
- 19 Then you will again want sacrifices of righteousness—  
entirely burned offerings and complete offerings.  
Then bulls will again be sacrificed on your altar.

51:7 Ex 12:22;  
Nm 19:18;  
Ps 51:2; Is 1:18;  
Heb 9:19

51:8 Is 35:10

51:9 Ps 51:1;  
Jer 16:17

51:10 Eze 11:19;  
Eze 18:31;  
Eze 36:26;  
Mt 5:8; Ac 15:9

51:11 2Ki 13:23;  
Is 63:10;  
Eph 4:30

51:12 Ps 85:6

51:13 Ps 37:38;  
Is 2:3; Lk 22:32;  
Ac 9:21

51:14 2Sa 12:9;  
Ps 35:28;  
Ps 71:15

51:15 Ex 4:15;  
Ps 35:28; Ps 63:3;  
Ps 119:164;  
Ps 119:175

51:16 1Sa 15:22;  
Ps 40:6

51:17 Ps 34:18

51:18 Ps 69:35;  
Ps 102:16;  
Ps 122:6;  
Ps 147:2

51:19 Dt 33:19;  
Ps 4:5; Ps 66:13;  
Ps 66:15; Mal 3:3

52:1 1Sa 21:7;  
1Sa 22:9; Ps 103:  
Ps 94:4

## Psalm 52

*For the music leader. A maskil\* of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, "David has gone to Ahimelech's house."*

- 1 Hey, powerful person!  
Why do you brag about evil?  
God's faithful love lasts all day long.

\*Correction <sup>†</sup>Perhaps *instruction*; it also appears in Pss 42, 44–45, 52–55, 74, 78, 88–89, 142; cf 47:7; the root is used in Ps 32:8.

51:7 Purify... hyssop: See Leviticus 14:49, 52; Numbers 19:18, where hyssop is used in cleansing rituals.

51:10-12 Create... God: God has the ability to create and re-create, activities associated elsewhere with God's spirit (see Gen 1:2). The threefold repetition of *spirit* suggests that new life is possible for the forgiven sinner. *holy spirit*: Isaiah 63:10-11 is the only other occurrence of this formulation in the OT. It seems here to designate the living and life-giving presence of God.

51:13-15 The forgiven sinner becomes a grateful witness to God's merciful character (see Ps 32:8-11). Every organ of speech is involved: *tongue* (51:14), *lips* (51:15), and *mouth* (51:15). *Deliver me from violence*: In the Psalms, those who pray are often victims of violence, often precisely because they are attempting to represent God's ways (see Ps 4:2-5; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). *my salvation*: See Psalm 13:5. *your righteousness*: See Psalm 5:8. In this context, God uses forgiveness to set things right.

51:16-17 Humble thankfulness and obedient praise are what God desires, as the previous psalm has also suggested (see Ps 50:14, 23; see also Ps 40:6; Rom 12:1-2).

51:18-19 These verses were possibly added to the psalm by someone who wanted to suggest that Psalm 51:16-17 (and perhaps 50:23) shouldn't be understood as a prohibition of sacrificial offerings when made in the proper spirit. 52:1-9 Like Psalm 49, Psalm 52 addresses other people, until the concluding verse 9. So it has a teaching tone; and like Psalm 49, the lesson involves the temptation to trust wealth (52:7). The title suggests that Psalm 52 be read in light of 1 Samuel 21–22, in which case the *powerful person* (52:1) would be Doeg, whose message to Saul is quoted in the title (see 1 Sam 22:9; see Ps 3). After the words to the "powerful person" (52:1-5), the focus shifts to the *righteous* (52:6), who are quoted in 52:7. Verse 8 is the speaker's profession of faith, which continues in verse 9 in promises directed to God.

52:1 *powerful person!*: The person addressed here and then characterized in Psalm 52:2-4 sounds very much like the typical enemy, whose behavior is always deceitful, violent, and destructive (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). *evil*: The word occurs again in Psalm 52:3, and verses 2-4 describe "evil" in detail. *faithful love*: Psalm 52:1 already suggests that God's faithful love will prevail over

52:2 Ps 5:9,  
Ps 50:19, Ps 57:4,  
Ps 101:7

52:3 Jer 9:5;  
Mi 3:2

52:4 Ps 120:3

52:6 Job 22:19;  
Ps 40:3

52:8 Ps 1:3,  
Ps 13:5, Ps 92:12;  
Jer 11:16;  
Hos 14:6

53:1 Ps 10:4,  
Ps 14:1

53:2 2Ch 15:2;  
Ps 33:13

53:3 Ps 14:3;  
Ecc 7:20; Is 53:6;  
Is 64:6; Ro 3:12

53:4 Hos 7:7

53:5 Lv 26:17;  
Ps 141:7;

Prv 28:1; Jer 8:1;  
Eze 6:5

<sup>2</sup>Your tongue devises destruction:  
it's like a sharpened razor, causing deception.

<sup>3</sup>You love evil more than good;  
you love lying more than speaking what is right.

<sup>4</sup>You love all destructive words;  
you love the deceiving tongue.

<sup>5</sup>But God will take you down permanently;  
he will snatch you up, tear you out of your tent,  
and uproot you from the land of the living!

<sup>6</sup>The righteous will see and be in awe;  
they will laugh at those people:

<sup>7</sup>"Look at them! They didn't make God their refuge.

Instead, they trusted in their own great wealth.  
They sought refuge in it—to their own destruction!"

<sup>8</sup>But I am like a green olive tree in God's house;  
I trust in God's faithful love forever and always.

<sup>9</sup>I will give thanks to you, God, forever, because you have acted.  
In the presence of your faithful people,  
I will hope in your name because it's so good.

### Psalm 53

*For the music leader, according to the mahalath. A maskil<sup>a</sup> of David.*

<sup>1</sup>Fools say in their hearts, There's no God.  
They are corrupt and do horrible deeds;  
not one of them does anything good.

<sup>2</sup>God looks down from heaven on humans  
to see if anyone is wise,  
to see if anyone seeks God.

<sup>3</sup>But all have turned away.  
Everyone is corrupt.  
No one does good—not even one person!

<sup>4</sup>Are they dumb—these evildoers—  
devouring my people like they are eating bread  
but never calling on God?

<sup>5</sup>There, where there was nothing to fear, they will be in utter panic  
because God will scatter the bones of those who attacked you.  
You will put them to shame because God has rejected them.

<sup>a</sup>Perhaps instruction

evil, and looks forward to Psalm 52:5. The concept of "faithful love" occurs again in Psalm 52:8, and so brackets the psalm; see Ps 5:7.)

52:2-4 The hurtful speech of the wicked is often highlighted in the prayers for help (see Ps 42:5).

52:5 God's response isn't merely retributive but rather aims to set things right for the mistreated (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

52:6 See Psalm 40:3, where God's act of setting things right has a positive impact on other people.

52:7 See Psalms 49:5-6; 62:10.

52:8 In contrast to those who will be uprooted (Ps 52:5), the psalmist is securely rooted and flourishing in the presence of God (see Pss 1:3; 92:13-14). *God's house*: The temple, representing God's presence (see Ps 5:7). *I*

*trust... faithful love*: Note the direct contrast between the psalmist, who trusts God's "faithful love," and those who "trusted in their own great wealth" (Ps 52:7; see Ps 49:6; Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13).

52:9 *I will give thanks... forever*: As expected, the psalm concludes with thanks (cf. Ps 30:12). *I will hope*: See Psalms 5:3; 25:3, 5, 21; 27:14; 42:5, 11; 43:5. *so good*: See Psalm 23:6.

53:1-6 Psalm 53 is nearly identical to Psalm 14. Most likely the psalm was included in the Psalter twice because it appeared in two separate collections that were eventually brought together in the process of the Psalter's formation (see sidebar, "Books II-III and the Elohist's Psalter" at Ps 42). 53:5 This verse differs from Psalm 14:5-6. It recalls Psalm 52:5 and its description of the future of evildoers.

*Selah*

*Selah*



<sup>6</sup>Let Israel's salvation come out of Zion!  
When God changes his people's circumstances for the better,  
Jacob will rejoice; Israel will celebrate!

### Psalm 54

*For the music leader. With stringed instruments. A maskil<sup>▼</sup> of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, "Isn't David hiding among us?"*

- <sup>1</sup>God! Save me by your name;  
defend me by your might!
- <sup>2</sup>God! Hear my prayer;  
listen to the words of my mouth!
- <sup>3</sup>The proud have come up against me;  
violent people want me dead.  
They pay no attention to God.
- <sup>4</sup>But look here: God is my helper;  
my Lord sustains my life.
- <sup>5</sup>He will bring disaster on my opponents.  
By your faithfulness, God, destroy them!
- <sup>6</sup>I will sacrifice to you freely;  
I will give thanks to your name, LORD, because it's so good,  
<sup>7</sup>and because God has delivered me from every distress.  
My eyes have seen my enemies' defeat.<sup>▼</sup>

### Psalm 55

*For the music leader. With stringed instruments. A maskil<sup>▼</sup> of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>God, listen to my prayer;  
don't avoid my request!
- <sup>2</sup>Pay attention! Answer me!  
I can't sit still while complaining.  
I'm beside myself <sup>3</sup>over the enemy's noise,  
at the wicked person's racket,  
because they bring disaster on me and harass me furiously.
- <sup>4</sup>My heart pounds in my chest  
because death's terrors have reached me.
- <sup>5</sup>Fear and trembling have come upon me;  
I'm shaking all over.
- <sup>6</sup>I say to myself,  
I wish I had wings like a dove!  
I'd fly away and rest.

<sup>▼</sup>Perhaps instruction; it also appears in Pss 42, 44–45, 52–55, 74, 78, 88–89, 142; cf 47:7; the root is used in Ps 32:8. <sup>▼</sup>Heb lacks defeat. <sup>▼</sup>Perhaps instruction

54:1–7 Psalm 54 consists of the typical elements of a prayer for help: petition (54:1–2), complaint (54:3), and expressions of trust (54:4–5) and praise (54:6–7). The title refers to a situation in David's life when "Saul was looking to kill him" (1 Sam 23:15), anticipating verse 3 of the psalm (see Ps 3).

54:1 *by your name*: The appeal is to God's merciful and life-giving character (see Ps 23:3).

54:3 *The proud . . . want me dead*: See Psalms 35:4; 86:14.

54:4 *my helper*: See Psalm 10:14.

54:5 *bring disaster . . . faithfulness . . . destroy them*: The point isn't payback but setting things right for one whose life is threatened (Ps 54:3; see Pss 3:7–8; 7:6). This is why God's action is a matter of God's "faithfulness" (see Ps 25:10).

54:6 *sacrifice . . . thanks*: Certain sacrifices were meant to express thankfulness (see Ps 50:14, 23).

54:7 *has delivered . . . enemies' defeat*: The psalmist seems to be recalling past deliverances. In any case, the prayers for help regularly place together complaint/petition and expressions of trust and praise (see Pss 6:8–10; 13:5–6).

55:1–23 The typical elements of a prayer for help are present: petition (55:1–2a, 9a, 15, 23ab), complaint (55:2b–8, 9b–11, 12–14, 20–21), and expression of trust (55:16–19, 22–24). Their rather irregular arrangement seems to reflect the chaos that the psalmist was experiencing.

55:1–2a The opening petitions are familiar ones (see Pss 4:1; 5:1).

55:3 As usual in the prayers for help, the enemies threaten destruction (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

55:6–8 See Psalm 11:1, where the psalmist is advised to flee because of the threat of the wicked. See also Jeremiah 9:2–4, where the prophet wants to flee to escape

53:6 Ps 14:7

54:1 1Sa 23:19,  
1Sa 26:1; Ps 20:1

54:5 Ps 89:49,  
Ps 94:23,  
Ps 143:12

54:6 Ps 44:8,

Ps 52:9,

Ps 116:17

54:7 Ps 59:10,

Ps 92:11,

Ps 112:8,

Ps 118:7

55:1 Ps 61:1

55:2 Ps 77:3,

Ps 86:6, Ps 142:2;

Is 38:14

55:4 Ps 18:4,

Ps 116:3

*Selah*

55:5 Is 21:4;

Eze 7:18

55:7 1Sa 23:14;

Jer 9:2

55:8 Is 4:6,

Is 25:4, Is 29:6

55:9 Gn 11:9;

Ps 11:5; Jer 6:7;

Hab 1:3

55:11 Ps 10:7

55:12 Ps 41:9

55:13 2Sa 15:12

55:14 Ps 42:4

55:15 Nm 16:30;

Nm 16:33;

Neh 4:5; Ps 9:17;

Ps 10:15

55:17 Ps 5:3,

Ps 88:13,

Ps 92:2, Ps 141:2;

Dn 6:10

55:18 Ps 56:2

55:19 Dt 33:27;

Ps 36:1

55:21 Ps 5:9;

Ps 12:2, Ps 28:3,

Ps 57:4; Psv 5:3

55:22 Ps 15:5,

Ps 37:5, Ps 37:24,

Ps 112:6; 1Pt 5:7

55:23 Job 15:32;

Ps 5:6, Ps 25:2;

Psv 10:27;

Ecc 7:17

7 I'd run so far away!

I'd live in the desert.

8 I'd hurry to my hideout, far from the rushing wind and storm.

9 Baffle them, my Lord!

Confuse their language because I see violence and conflict in the city.

10 Day and night they make their rounds on its walls,  
and evil and misery live inside it.11 Disaster lives inside it;  
oppression and fraud never leave the town square.

12 It's not an enemy that is insulting me—

I could handle that.

It's not someone who hates me who is exalted over me—

I could hide from them.

13 No. It's you, my equal, my close companion, my good friend!

14 It was so pleasant when together we entered God's house with the crowd.

15 Let death devastate my enemies;

let them go to the grave<sup>7</sup> alive

because evil lives with them—

even inside them!

16 But I call out to God, and the LORD will rescue me.

17 At evening, morning, and midday I complain and moan

so that God will hear my voice.

18 He saves me,<sup>8</sup> unharmed, from my struggle,

though there are many who are out to get me.

19 God, who is enthroned from ancient days, will hear and humble them

because they don't change and they don't worship God.

20 My friend attacked his allies, breaking his covenant.

21 Though his talk is smoother than butter,

war is in his heart;

though his words are more silky than oil,

they are really drawn swords:

22 "Cast your burden on the LORD—he will support you!

God will never let the righteous be shaken!"

23 But you, God, bring the wicked down to the deepest pit.

Let bloodthirsty and treacherous people not live out even half their days.

But me? I trust in you!

<sup>7</sup>Heb *Sheol* <sup>8</sup>Or *my life or soul*

harassment, including insults from those closest to him, as here (Ps 55:12-14).

55:10-11 The behaviors described here are often associated with the wicked (see Ps 10:7). The geographical references suggest a general breakdown of civility in the psalmist's setting.

55:12-14 The complaint becomes much more personal here. Complaints about close associates occur in other prayers for help (see Pss 31:11; 41:9), but it's unusual that the psalmist directly addresses the betrayer. Psalm 55:14 leads to the sad conclusion that the betrayer has been a fellow worshipper (see Ps 42:4).

55:15 Such petitions against the enemies (see also Ps 55:23) are frequent, since the enemies are always threatening. The point is setting things right for victims (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

55:16-19 The trust expressed in this section anticipates the invitation to others in Psalm 55:22, as well as the final

line of the psalm. Verse 17 may refer to appointed times for prayer.

55:18 *unharmed*: Or "in peace" or "in well-being" (Heb. *shalom*; see Ps 4:8), which is the goal of God's acting to set things right.

55:19 *God... enthroned*: The psalmist's trust is grounded in the belief that, despite appearances, God rules the world (see Pss 2:4; 5:2; 96-99). So the psalmist can "wait expectantly" (Ps 5:3).

55:20-21 These verses recall Psalm 55:12-14.

55:22 Demonstrating the Psalms' ability to speak in various situations, the author of 1 Peter quotes the first line of this verse to address an audience of sufferers (see 1 Pet 5:7). The second line of this verse recalls Psalm 34:19.

55:23 *trust*: See Psalm 4:5. The abrupt placement of complaint/petition with a statement of trust is characteristic of the prayers for help (see Pss 6:8-10; 13:5-6).

Selah

Selah

**Psalm 56**

*For the music leader. According to "The Silent Dove of Distant Places." A miktam<sup>a</sup> of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.*

- <sup>1</sup> God, have mercy on me because I'm being trampled.  
All day long the enemy oppresses me.
- <sup>2</sup> My attackers trample me all day long because I have so many enemies.  
Exalted one, <sup>3</sup>whenever I'm afraid,  
I put my trust in you—<sup>4</sup>in God, whose word I praise.  
I trust in God; I won't be afraid.  
What can mere flesh do to me?
- <sup>5</sup> All day long they frustrate my pursuits;  
all their thoughts are evil against me.
- <sup>6</sup> They get together and set an ambush—  
they are watching my steps, hoping for my death.
- <sup>7</sup> Don't rescue them for any reason!  
In wrath bring down the people, God!
- <sup>8</sup> You yourself have kept track of my misery.  
Put my tears into your bottle—  
aren't they on your scroll already?
- <sup>9</sup> Then my enemies will retreat when I cry out.  
I know this because God is mine.
- <sup>10</sup> God: whose word I praise.  
The LORD: whose word I praise.
- <sup>11</sup> I trust in God; I won't be afraid.  
What can anyone do to me?
- <sup>12</sup> I will fulfill my promises to you, God.  
I will present thanksgiving offerings to you
- <sup>13</sup> because you have saved my life from death,  
saved my feet from stumbling  
so that I can walk before God in the light of life.

**Psalm 57**

*For the music leader. Do not destroy. A miktam<sup>b</sup> of David, when he fled from Saul into the cave.*

- <sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, God;  
have mercy on me because I<sup>c</sup> have taken refuge in you.

<sup>a</sup>Perhaps inscription <sup>b</sup>Perhaps inscription <sup>c</sup>Or my soul

56:1-13 Like other prayers for help, Psalm 56 contains petition and complaint (56:1-2, 5-7), along with expressions of trust and praise (56:3-4, 8-11, 12-13). As in some other prayers for help, the element of trust is prominent (see Ps 31), occurring after both sections of complaint/petition, and given further emphasis by the nearly identical verses 4 and 10-11. The title suggests a link between Psalm 56 and 1 Samuel 21:10-14, which tells about David's difficulties in Gath (see Ps 3).

56:1 *have mercy*: See Psalm 4:1.

56:2 *trample*: Note the occurrence of the word in both verses 1 and 2, giving emphasis to the psalmist's suffering, so *many enemies*: See Psalm 3:1. As usual, the opposition is widespread (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

56:3 *trust*: This is the key word in the psalm (see Pss 56:4, 11; 4:5; 55:23).

56:4 *whose word I praise*: A unique statement (see Ps 56:10), it seems to communicate trust in God's promise of presence and protection. *I won't be afraid*: See Psalms 23:4; 27:1. *What ... me?*: See Psalm 118:6, where this question also comes right after the statement that the psalmist won't be afraid.

56:6 *hoping for my death*: See Psalm 35:4. Hope is properly grounded in God (see Ps 27:14), but the wicked pin their future on oppressing others.

56:7 *In wrath ... God!*: Such requests assume that God is angered by injustice, and that God plans to set things right (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

56:8 *Put ... bottle*: A request that the psalmist's grief and tears not be in vain (see Ps 6:6). *your scroll*: See Psalm 40:7.

56:9 *God is mine*: Not in the sense of being owned, but rather that God is my advocate (see "for me" in Ps 118:6-7).

56:11 See Ps 56:4. The refrain means that the concept of trust runs throughout the psalm, communicating the reality that trust is everywhere in the life of the psalmist.

56:12 *fulfill my promises ... thanksgiving offerings*: See Psalms 22:25; 50:14, 23.

56:13 As is often the case, the psalmist seems to suggest that deliverance has already happened (see Pss 6:8-10; 13:5-6; 54:7). *light of life*: See Psalms 4:6; 27:1; 36:9; John 1:4.

57:1-11 Like other prayers for help, Psalm 57 contains petition (57:1a, 5) and complaint (57:4, 6); but unlike Psalm 56, the expression of trust and praise is prominent

56:1  
1Sa 21:10-11;  
Ps 57:1

56:3 Ps 11:1,  
Ps 25:2, Ps 55:4,  
Ps 55:23

56:4 Ps 27:1,  
Ps 56:10-11,  
Ps 118:6;  
Heb 13:6

56:7 Ps 36:12,  
Ps 55:23

56:8 2Ki 20:5;  
Ps 39:12,  
Ps 139:16;  
Mal 3:16

56:10 Ps 56:4

56:11 Ps 56:4,  
Ps 118:6

56:12 Ps 50:14

57:1 1Sa 22:1,  
1Sa 24:3;  
Ps 56:1, Ps 59:1,  
Ps 142:1

57:3 Ps 18:16,  
Ps 25:10,  
Ps 40:11, Ps 43:3,  
Ps 144:5

57:4 Ps 55:21,  
Ps 59:7, Ps 64:3,  
Pv 12:18,  
Pv 30:14

57:5 Ps 57:11,  
Ps 108:5,  
Ps 113:4

57:6 Ps 7:15,  
Ps 140:5,  
Ecc 10:8

57:7 Ps 108:1,  
Ps 112:7

57:8 Ps 16:9,  
Ps 150:3

57:9 Ps 18:49

57:10 Ps 36:5,  
Ps 108:4

57:11 Ps 57:5

58:1 Ps 57:1,  
Ps 82:2

58:3 Ps 51:5,  
Is 48:8, Eph 4:18

I take refuge in the shadow of your wings until destruction passes by.

<sup>2</sup>I call out to God Most High—  
to God, who comes through for me.

<sup>3</sup>He sends orders from heaven and saves me,  
rebukes the one who tramples me.  
God sends his loyal love and faithfulness.

*Selah*

<sup>4</sup>My life is in the middle of a pack of lions.  
I lie down among those who devour humans.  
Their teeth are spears and arrows;  
their tongues are sharpened swords.

<sup>5</sup>Exalt yourself, God, higher than heaven!  
Let your glory be over all the earth!

<sup>6</sup>They laid a net for my feet to bring me down;  
they dug a pit for me, but they fell into it instead!

*Selah*

<sup>7</sup>My heart is unwavering, God—my heart is unwavering.  
I will sing and make music.

<sup>8</sup>Wake up, my glory!  
Wake up, harp and lyre!  
I will wake the dawn itself!

<sup>9</sup>I will give thanks to you, my Lord, among all the peoples;  
I will make music to you among the nations

<sup>10</sup>because your faithful love is as high as heaven;  
your faithfulness reaches the clouds.

<sup>11</sup>Exalt yourself, God, higher than heaven!  
Let your glory be over all the earth!

## Psalm 58

*For the music leader. Do not destroy. A psalm of David, a miktam.<sup>d</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Do you really speak what is right, you gods?  
Do you really judge humans fairly?

<sup>2</sup>No: in your hearts you plan injustice;  
your hands do violence on the earth.

<sup>3</sup>The wicked backslide from the womb;  
liars go astray from birth.

<sup>d</sup>Perhaps inscription

(Ps 57:1b-3, 7-10) and the title points to 1 Samuel 22:1 and 24:3, both of which locate David in a cave (see Ps 3).

57:1 *Have mercy*: See Psalm 56:1. For good balance, it seems, the two identical petitions are matched later in the verse by two occurrences of “refuge.” *refuge in you*: See Psalm 2:12. *refuge . . . wings*: See Psalm 17:8

57:3 *saves me*: See Psalm 13:5. *loyal love*: See Psalm 5:7. *faithfulness*: Like “loyal love,” with which it is often paired, “faithfulness” is a basic quality of God (see Ps 25:10; cf. Rom 3:22-25; Gal 2:16). The two words occur again in Psalm 57:10.

57:4 The enemies are often described as threatening animals (see Pss 7:2; 10:9; see sidebar, “The Enemies” at Ps 3).

57:5 This verse is repeated in Psalm 57:11, forming a refrain. This first occurrence interrupts the complaint of verses 4 and 6, communicating the reality that God’s absolute claim on the world always exists amid opposition. *your glory*: See Psalm 29:1-2, 9, where “glory” is associated with God’s rule of the universe.

57:6 See Psalms 7:15-16; 9:15.

57:7-11 These verses occur in nearly identical form as Psalm 108:1-5. In the midst of opposition, the psalmist will trust and praise.

57:8 *harp and lyre*: See Psalm 33:2. *wake the dawn*: This memorable phrase suggests that the psalmist intends to start each day with praise (see Ps 55:17), and it indicates also the intensity of the praise.

57:9 The psalmist’s praise serves also as a testimony to others.

57:10 See Psalms 33:5; 36:5.

58:1-11 Because it contains complaint (58:3-5), petition (58:6-8), and expressions of assurance (58:9-11), Psalm 58 is usually understood as a prayer for help. But verses 1-2 are unusual, since they address not God but the gods.

58:1-2 Some readers suggest that Psalm 58:1-2 are addressed to powerful human rulers (see Ps 52:1) rather than *you gods*; but Psalm 82:2-4 also addresses the gods, accusing them of injustice, just as here.

58:3-5 As is often the case, the speech of the wicked is

<sup>4</sup>Their venom is like a snake's venom—  
like a deaf cobra's—one that shuts its ears  
<sup>5</sup>so it can't hear the snake charmer's voice  
or the spells of a skillful enchanter.

<sup>6</sup>God, break their teeth out of their mouths!  
Tear out the lions' jawbones, LORD!

<sup>7</sup>Let them dissolve like water flowing away.  
When they bend the bow,  
let their arrows be like headless shafts.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Like the snail that dissolves into slime,  
like a woman's stillborn child,  
let them never see the sun.

<sup>9</sup>Before your pots feel the thorns,  
whether green or burned up,  
God will sweep them away!<sup>f</sup>

<sup>10</sup>But the righteous will rejoice when they see vengeance done,  
when they wash their feet in the blood of the wicked.

<sup>11</sup>Then it will be said:  
"Yes, there is a reward for the righteous!  
Yes, there is a God who judges people on the earth."

**Psalm 59**

*For the music leader. Do not destroy. A miktam<sup>g</sup> of David,  
when Saul sent men to watch the house in order to kill him.*

<sup>1</sup>Oh, my God, deliver me from my enemies;  
put me out of reach from those who rise up against me.

<sup>2</sup>Deliver me from evildoers;  
save me from the bloodthirsty.

<sup>3</sup>Look at how they lie in ambush for my life!  
Powerful people are attacking me, LORD—  
but not because of any error or sin of mine.

<sup>4</sup>They run and take their stand—  
but not because of any fault of mine.

Get up when I cry out to you!  
Look at what's happening!

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Perhaps inscription

deceitful and destructive (see Ps 4:2-5; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). The juxtaposition of 58:3-5 with 58:1-2 suggests that the wicked are allies of the unjust gods, as is the case in Psalm 82:2.

58:6-8 The prayer isn't for payback but rather for divine opposition to the "injustice" and "violence" mentioned in Ps 58:2 (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6). Verse 6 is similar to Psalm 3:7, and the enemies are often described as ravenous beasts (see Ps 10:9).

58:10 *vengeance done*: This is the triumph of God's will for justice over the "injustice" of the gods (Ps 58:2). *wash ... the wicked*: This particularly violent image was a standard one for defeat in the ancient world (see Ps 68:23; Deut 32:42-43).

58:11 *a reward for the righteous*: Given the widespread presence of the enemies and the suffering they inflict on the righteous who pray for help, the *reward* mentioned here is the promise of being connected to God who offers provision and protection (see the comment on "success" in Ps 1:3). *a God who judges people on the earth*: This verse

recalls Psalm 58:1-2, repeating "judge" from verse 1 and "on the earth" from verse 2. The phrase, "God who judges," could be translated "God who establishes justice." That is, the psalmist trusts that God's will for the world and its people will finally prevail over the corrupt will of the gods (see Pss 9:4; 96:13; 98:9).

59:1-17 The typical elements of a prayer for help are present. The two sections of the psalm are composed in a similar way: a first section of petition and complaint (59:1-5, 11-13) is followed by a refrain (59:6, 14) that introduces further complaint (59: 7, 15). Each section concludes with assurance (59:8-10, 16-17) that features reference to *my loving God* (59:10, 17). The title associates Psalm 59 with Saul's threats to David's life (see 1 Sam 19:11; Ps 3).

59:3 *ambush for my life*: See Psalm 35:4. As always, the enemies are present and threatening destruction (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). *not because ... sin of mine*: The declaration of innocence here and in 59:4 suggests that the psalmist is a victim of false accusation (see Pss 59:12; 4:2-5; 27:12; 35:20; 7; 17; 26).

58:4 Dt 32:24,  
Dt 32:33;  
Job 20:16;  
Ps 140:3;  
Mt 23:33  
58:5 Ecc 10:11;  
Jer 8:17  
58:6 Job 4:10,  
Job 29:17; Ps 3:7,  
Ps 10:15  
58:7 Josh 7:5;  
Ps 57:4, Ps 64:3,  
Ps 112:10  
58:8 Job 3:16;  
Ecc 6:3  
58:10 Dt 32:43;  
Job 22:19;  
Ps 32:11;  
Ps 68:23, Ps 91:8  
58:11 Gn 18:25,  
Ps 67:4  
59:1 1Sa 19:11,  
Ps 20:1, Ps 57:1  
59:3 1Sa 24:11;  
Ps 7:3, Ps 56:6,  
Ps 69:4

59:6 Ps 22:16,  
Ps 59:14  
59:7 Job 22:13;  
Ps 57:4; Prv 15:2  
59:9 Ps 9:9  
59:10 Ps 21:3,  
Ps 54:7, Ps 59:17  
59:11 Dt 4:9;  
Ps 3:3, Ps 84:9,  
Ps 144:6  
59:14 Ps 59:6  
59:15 Job 15:23  
59:17 Ps 59:9-10  
60:1 2Sa 5:20,  
2Sa 8:3,  
2Sa 8:13;  
1Ch 18:3;  
Ps 44:9

**5**You are the LORD God of heavenly forces, the God of Israel!  
Wake up and punish all the nations!  
Grant no mercy to any wicked traitor!

Selah

**6**They come back every evening,  
growling like dogs, prowling around the city.

**7**See what they belch out with their mouths:  
swords are between their lips!  
Who can listen to them?<sup>b</sup>

**8**But you, LORD, laugh at them.  
You mock all the nations.

**9**I keep looking for you, my strength,  
because God is my stronghold.

**10**My loving God will come to meet me.  
God will allow me to look down on my enemies.

**11**Don't kill them, or my people might forget;  
instead, by your power shake them up and bring them down,  
you who are our shield and my Lord.

**12**For the sin of their mouths, the words that they speak,  
let them be captured in their pride.  
For the curses and lies they repeat,

**13**finish them off in anger;  
finish them off until they are gone!  
Then let it be known to the ends of the earth  
that God rules over Jacob.

Selah

**14**They come back every evening, growling like dogs,  
prowling around the city.

**15**They roam about for food,  
and if they don't get their fill, they stay all night.

**16**But me? I will sing of your strength!  
In the morning I will shout out loud about your faithful love  
because you have been my stronghold,  
my shelter when I was distraught.

**17**I will sing praises to you, my strength,  
because God is my stronghold, my loving God.

### Psalm 60

*For the music leader. According to "Lily." A testimony.  
A miktam<sup>1</sup> of David. For instruction, when he went to war  
with Aram-naharaim and Aram-sobah, and when Joab returned  
and defeated Edom, killing twelve thousand in the Salt Valley.*

<sup>1</sup>God, you have rejected us—  
shattered us.

<sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>1</sup>Perhaps inscription

**59:5** *God of heavenly forces:* See Psalm 24:10. *Wake up:* See Psalm 7:6. *punish . . . grant no mercy:* The pleas for God to deal with the enemies are frequent (see Ps 59:11-13), and they amount to prayers for justice (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6). The mention of *the nations* suggests the suitability of Psalm 59 as a community prayer during the exile or some period of national setback.

**59:6** *dogs:* See Psalms 59:14; 10:9; 22:16, 20. *the city:* See Psalm 55:9-11.

**59:8** See Psalm 2:4.

**59:9** *my strength . . . stronghold:* The assurance here anticipates Psalm 59:17.

**59:10** *my loving God:* See Psalm 59:17. The word translated "loving" is a form of the word regularly translated as "faithful love" (see Ps 59:16). So the psalmist associates God's faithful love with the affirmation that God is a source of strength (Ps 59:9-10, 16-17). Divine love is an effective power in the world.

**59:16-17** The pairing of complaint (Ps 59:14-15) and praise is typical of the prayers for help (see Pss 6:8-10; 13:5-6).

**60:1-12** Psalm 60 is a communal prayer for help. It begins with a section that contains complaint and petition (60:1-5), the final one being *answer us* in 60:5. Verses 6-9 offer a divine answer, but it doesn't seem to solve the problem.

You've been so angry.  
Now restore us!

<sup>2</sup>You've made the ground quake, splitting it open.  
Now repair its cracks because it's shaking apart!

<sup>3</sup>You've made your people suffer hardship;  
you've given us wine and we stagger.

<sup>4</sup>Give a flag to those who honor you,  
so they can rally around it, safe from attack.<sup>j</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Save us by your power and answer us  
so that the people you love might be rescued.

<sup>6</sup>God has spoken in his sanctuary:  
"I will celebrate as I divide up Shechem  
and portion out the Succoth Valley.

<sup>7</sup>Gilead is mine;  
Manasseh is mine;  
Ephraim is my helmet;  
Judah is my scepter.

<sup>8</sup>But Moab is my washbowl;  
I'll throw my shoe at Edom.

I shout in triumph over Philistia!<sup>k</sup>

<sup>9</sup>I wish someone would bring me to a fortified city!  
I wish someone would lead me to Edom!"

<sup>10</sup>But you have rejected us, God, haven't you?  
God, you no longer accompany our armies.

<sup>11</sup>Give us help against the enemy;  
human help is worthless.

<sup>12</sup>With God we will triumph;  
he's the one who will trample our adversaries.

### Psalm 61

*For the music leader, with stringed instruments. Of David.*

<sup>1</sup>God, listen to my cry;  
pay attention to my prayer!

<sup>2</sup>When my heart is weak,

<sup>j</sup>Or *the bow*; Heb uncertain <sup>k</sup>Syr, Ps 108:9; MT *Celebrate over me, Philistia!*

Verses 10-11 return to complaint and petition. An expression of trust concludes the psalm. Verse 9 mentions Edom, as does the title. The editors of the Psalter seem to be pointing to 2 Samuel 8 (see especially Ps 60:13-14), although the victories of David recorded there don't seem to fit with the distress of Psalm 60 (see Ps 3). Verses 5-12 are nearly identical to Psalm 108:6-13.

60:1 *rejected us*: a frequent complaint in the communal prayers (see Pss 60:10; 44:9, 23; 74:1; 77:7; 89:38).

60:2 The picture of an earthquake communicates the seriousness of the situation.

60:3 *hardship*: This word describes what the Israelites experienced in Egypt, so here God seems to reverse the exodus, according to the psalmist.

60:5 In light of Psalm 60:3, it is understandable that the people ask, in effect, for a new exodus.

60:6-9 The divine response to the people's petition suggests that God claims both Israel and Judah (60:7), as well as their enemies (60:8). In view of the exodus allusion in Psalm 60:3, 5, it is important to realize that Exodus 15:14-15 mentions the three nations named in verse 8; and their

defeat leads to the people's secure settlement in the land. Verse 9 seems to suggest a situation in which Edom was a particular problem for God's people (see Ps 137:7; Isa 63:1-6; Obad).

60:10-12 God's claim upon the nations doesn't provide an immediate solution, so the people continue to complain and ask for help (see Pss 85; 126). The final verse affirms trust in God amid ongoing distress, as is typical of the prayers for help (see Pss 6:8-10; 13:5-6).

61:1-8 The presence of petition (61:1-2c, 4), complaint (61:2ab), and expressions of trust and praise (61:3, 5, 8) are typical of a prayer for help. As in several other prayers, the element of trust is prominent (see Pss 31; 56), perhaps anticipating Psalm 62. Verses 6-7 are less typical; but having prayed for self, the psalmist prays for the king as well. The mention of the king could imply that the king was the speaker, but not necessarily (especially since the king seems to be referred to by someone else).

61:1 See Psalms 4:1; 5:2.

61:2 *from the very ends of the earth*: If taken geographically, this would suggest that the psalmist is outside the land

60:2 2Ch 7:14;  
Ps 18:7  
60:3 Ps 71:20,  
Ps 75:8; Is 51:17;  
Is 51:22;  
Jer 25:15  
60:5 Dt 33:12;  
Ps 17:7; Ps 108:6  
60:6 Gn 12:6,  
Gn 33:17;  
Josh 13:27;  
Ps 89:35  
*Selah*  
60:7 Gn 49:10;  
Dt 33:17;  
Josh 13:31  
60:8 2Sa 8:1-2;  
Ps 108:9  
60:10 Josh 7:12;  
Ps 44:9; Ps 60:1  
60:11 Ps 146:3;  
Lam 4:17  
60:12 Nm 24:18;  
Ps 44:5; Is 63:3  
61:1 Ps 4:1;  
Ps 17:1,  
Ps 55:1-2; Ps 64:1  
61:2 Ex 17:4;  
Ps 18:2; Ps 42:6,  
Ps 77:3; Ps 94:22

61:3 Ps 14:6,  
Ps 18:2, Ps 46:1,  
Ps 59:9,  
Prov 18:10

62:1 Ps 33:20,  
Ps 39:1, Ps 62:5

62:2 Ps 18:2,  
Ps 62:6

62:3 Is 30:13

62:4 Ps 4:2,  
Ps 28:3, Ps 55:21

62:5 Ps 62:1

62:6 Ps 62:2

62:8 Isa 1:15,  
Ps 37:3, Ps 37:5,  
Ps 42:4, Is 26:4

I cry out to you from the very ends of the earth.

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I am

<sup>3</sup>because you have been my refuge,  
a tower of strength in the face of the enemy.

<sup>4</sup>Please let me live in your tent forever!

Please let me take refuge in the shelter of your wings!

<sup>5</sup>Because you, God, have heard my promises;  
you've given me<sup>1</sup> the same possession as those who honor your name.

*Selah*

<sup>6</sup>Add days to the king's life!

Let his years extend for many generations!

<sup>7</sup>Let him be enthroned forever before God!

Make it so love and faithfulness watch over him!

<sup>8</sup>Then I will sing praises to your name forever,  
and I will do what I promised every single day.

### Psalm 62

*For the music leader. According to Jeduthun. A psalm of David.*

<sup>1</sup>Only in God do I<sup>m</sup> find rest;

my salvation comes from him.

<sup>2</sup>Only God is my rock and my salvation—  
my stronghold!—I won't be shaken anymore.

<sup>3</sup>How long will all of you attack others;  
how long will you tear them down<sup>n</sup>  
as if they were leaning walls or broken-down fences?

<sup>4</sup>The only desire of this people is to bring others down low;  
they delight in deception.

With their mouths they bless,  
but inside they are cursing.

*Selah*

<sup>5</sup>Oh, I<sup>o</sup> must find rest in God only,  
because my hope comes from him!

<sup>6</sup>Only God is my rock and my salvation—  
my stronghold!—I will not be shaken.

<sup>7</sup>My deliverance and glory depend on God.  
God is my strong rock.

My refuge is in God.

<sup>8</sup>All you people: Trust in him at all times!

<sup>1</sup>Heb lacks *me*. <sup>m</sup>Or *my soul* <sup>n</sup>Correction; MT *kill them* <sup>o</sup>Or *my soul*

(see Ps 42:6); but the phrase can also be understood as describing an experience of God's absence, *the rock that is higher than I am*: The rock could be God (see Pss 61:3; 31:2; 62:2, 6-7); or perhaps the temple, which represents God's presence (see Ps 61:4); or perhaps any safe place (see Ps 27:5). God is regularly perceived to be high or higher than people (see Pss 113:4; 138:6).

61:3 *refuge*: See Psalms 61:4; 2:12; 62:7-8.

61:4 *your tent*: See Psalm 15:1. *refuge... shelter of your wings*: See Psalm 17:8.

61:5 The juxtaposition of assurance/praise (see Ps 61:8) with petition and complaint is typical of the prayers for help (see Pss 6:8-10; 13:5-6).

61:6-7 Having prayed for his or her own safety and security, the psalmist now apparently prays for the security of the nation, which is represented by the king (see Ps 21:4; 72:15, 17; 89:29, 36-37). *love and faithfulness*: These two qualities of God are prominent in the promises to the Davidic line (see Ps 89:24, 33; see also Pss 5:7; 25:10).

61:8 *do what I promised*: See Psalm 22:25.

62:1-12 The element of trust in Psalm 61 anticipates the trust in Psalm 62 (see Ps 16) and the prominent trust in Psalm 63. So Psalms 61-63 form a triad of trust. Complaint appears in 62:3-4; but God is addressed directly only in 62:12, which contains neither complaint nor petition but rather a further profession of faith. On Jeduthun in the title, see Psalm 39.

62:1-2 *Only in God*: The word "only" occurs also in Psalm 62:2, 5-6. The effect is to intensify the profession of faith in God alone. The fact that verses 1-2 and 5-6 are almost the same further heightens this effect. *my salvation*: God is the source and ground of the psalmist's life (see Ps 3:5). *my rock*: See Psalm 61:2.

62:3-4 As usual, the enemies engage in deceitful and destructive behavior (see Pss 3:1-2; 42:5; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). As in Psalm 4:2, the psalmist addresses the enemies directly here.

62:5 *my hope*: See Psalm 27:14.

62:7 *refuge*: See Psalms 62:8; 2:12; 61:3-4.

62:8 Having addressed the enemies in Psalm 62:3, the



Pour out your hearts before him!  
 God is our refuge!

*Selah*

62:10 Job 31:25;  
 Is 61:8;  
 Eze 22:29;  
 Lk 12:15;  
 1Ti 6:17  
 62:11 Rev 19:1  
 62:12 Job 34:11;  
 Ps 86:5, Ps 103:8;  
 Mt 16:27; Ro 2:6  
 63:1 1Sa 23:14;  
 Ps 42:2, Ps 84:2,  
 Ps 143:6; Is 26:9  
 63:2 Ps 27:4,  
 Ps 68:24  
 63:3 Ps 51:15,  
 Ps 69:16,  
 Ps 119:171  
 63:6 Ps 42:8,  
 Ps 119:55,  
 Ps 119:148  
 63:7 Ps 17:8,  
 Ps 54:4, Ps 57:1  
 63:8 Ps 18:35,  
 Ps 37:24,  
 Ps 41:12;  
 Is 41:10; Hos 6:3

- 9 Human beings are nothing but a breath.  
 Human beings are nothing but lies.  
 They don't even register on a scale;  
 taken all together they are lighter than a breath!
- 10 Don't trust in violence;  
 don't set false hopes in robbery.  
 When wealth bears fruit,  
 don't set your heart on it.
- 11 God has spoken one thing—make it two things—that I myself have heard:  
 that strength belongs to God, <sup>12</sup>and faithful love comes from you, my Lord—  
 and that you will repay everyone according to their deeds.

**Psalm 63**

*A psalm of David, when he was in the Judean desert.*

- 1 God! My God! It's you—  
 I search for you!  
 My whole being<sup>p</sup> thirsts for you!  
 My body desires you in a dry and tired land, no water anywhere.
- 2 Yes, I've seen you in the sanctuary;  
 I've seen your power and glory.
- 3 My lips praise you because your faithful love is better than life itself!
- 4 So I will bless you as long as I'm alive;  
 I will lift up my hands in your name.
- 5 I'm fully satisfied—as with a rich dinner.  
 My mouth speaks praise with joy on my lips—
- 6 whenever I ponder you on my bed,  
 whenever I meditate on you in the middle of the night—
- 7 because you've been a help to me  
 and I shout for joy in the protection of your wings.
- 8 My whole being clings to you;  
 your strong hand upholds me.
- 9 But what about those people who want to destroy me?  
 Let them go into the bowels of the earth!

<sup>p</sup>Or *my soul*; also in 63:5, 8

psalmist now addresses the faithful (unless he or she is trying to change the wayward ones of verse 3). *Trust*: See Psalm 4:5.  
 62:9 *a breath... a breath*: See Psalms 39:5, 11; 144:4. The transience of human beings makes them unsuitable as objects of trust (see Pss 118:8-9; 146:3-4).  
 62:10 Wealth, especially when it is gotten dishonestly, isn't to be trusted either (see Pss 49:6-7; 52:7).  
 62:12 *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7. *repay... deeds*: See Psalms 7:15-16; 28:4.  
 63:1-11 Because of the complaint voiced in 63:9a, followed by petition in 63:9b-10, Psalm 63 is often classified as a prayer for help. But like Psalm 61 and several others (see Pss 3; 4; 31), the element of trust is prominent; and verse 3 is one of the most eloquent statements of faith in the whole Bible. The title seems to point to 1 Samuel 23:14; 24:2, where Saul tries to kill David.  
 63:1 *my whole being*: The underlying Hebrew word occurs also in Psalm 63:5 (translated "I"); 63:8; 63:9 (translated "me"). Its basic meaning is "vitality" or "life-force," and

its fourfold occurrence reinforces the message that the psalmist's life is grounded completely in God. *thirsts*: See Psalm 42:1.  
 63:2 *in the sanctuary*: The psalmist seems to have in mind past visits to the temple (see Ps 42:4).  
 63:3 *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7, where the word also occurs in association with visiting the temple. *better than life itself*: This memorable phrase emphasizes the depth of the psalmist's dependence upon God for life (see Ps 63:1).  
 63:4 *bless*: See Psalm 16:7. *lift up my hands*: See Psalm 28:2.  
 63:5 The language shifts from thirst to hunger, which God also satisfies. *mouth... lips*: No longer involved in eating because God has fully satisfied, mouth and lips are free to praise God (see Pss 63:3; 51:15).  
 63:6 *meditate... night*: See Psalm 1:1-2, where thinking of God is to be constant.  
 63:7 *protection... wings*: See Psalm 17:8.  
 63:9 *destroy me*: See Psalm 35:4. The request involving the destroyers isn't a matter of payback but rather of justice for one whose life is threatened (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

63:10 Song 2:15;  
Jer 18:21;  
Lam 5:18;  
Eze 35:5

63:11 Dt 6:13;  
Job 5:16; Ps 21:1;  
Is 65:16; Ro 3:19

64:1 Ps 55:2,  
Ps 140:1

64:3 Ps 57:4

64:5 Job 22:13;  
Ps 10:11, Ps 94:7,  
Ps 140:5

64:6 Ps 49:11;  
Jer 17:9

64:7 Ps 7:12-13,  
Prv 29:1

64:8 Prv 12:13,  
Prv 18:7

64:10 Ps 32:11

65:1 Dt 23:21;  
Ps 2:6, Ps 21:13,  
Ps 50:14,  
Ps 56:12

65:2 Ps 86:9;  
Is 66:23

65:3 Ps 79:9;  
Heb 9:14

- <sup>10</sup> Let their blood flow by the sword!  
Let them be food for wild jackals!  
<sup>11</sup> But the king should rejoice in God;  
everyone who swears by God should give praise  
when the mouths of liars are shut for good.

### Psalm 64

*For the music leader. A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> Listen to me when I complain, God!  
Protect my life from the enemy's terror!  
<sup>2</sup> Hide me from the secret plots of wicked people;  
hide me from the schemes of evildoers  
<sup>3</sup> who sharpen their tongues like swords.  
They aim their arrow—a cruel word—  
<sup>4</sup> from their hiding places so as to shoot an innocent person.  
They shoot without warning and without fear.  
<sup>5</sup> They encourage themselves with evil words.  
They plan on laying traps in secret.  
“Who will be able to see them?” they ask.  
<sup>6</sup> “Let someone try to expose our crimes!  
We’ve devised a perfect plot!  
It’s deep within the human mind and heart.”<sup>9</sup>

- <sup>7</sup> But God will shoot them with an arrow!  
Without warning, they will be wounded!  
<sup>8</sup> The LORD will make them trip over their own tongues;  
everyone who sees them will just shake their heads.  
<sup>9</sup> Then all people will honor God,  
will announce the act of God,  
will understand it was God’s work.  
<sup>10</sup> Let the righteous rejoice in the LORD;  
let them take refuge in him;  
let everyone whose heart is in the right place give praise!

### Psalm 65

*For the music leader. A psalm of David. A song.*

- <sup>1</sup> God of Zion, to you even silence is praise.  
Promises made to you are kept—  
<sup>2</sup> you listen to prayer—and all living things come to you.  
<sup>3</sup> When wrongdoings become too much for me,  
you forgive our sins.

<sup>9</sup>Heb uncertain

63:10 See Psalm 58:10 for a similarly violent picture that communicates the defeat of those who are out to oppress and kill.

63:11 *the king*: Here, as in Psalm 61:6-7, the mention of “the king” doesn’t mean that the king originally spoke the psalm. *mouths . . . shut*: Lying mouths are closed, in contrast to the speaker’s mouth that is open to praise God (Ps 63:5).

64:1-10 In this prayer for help, petition and complaint are intertwined (64:1-2) before giving way to pure complaint (64:3-6). Expressions of confidence and celebration (64:7-10) conclude the psalm.

64:1-6 As usual, the wicked are characterized by misleading and destructive activity, including their speech (64:3, 5; see Pss 4:2-5; 10:7-10; see sidebar, “The Enemies” at Ps 3). The wicked are quoted in 64:5-6; as elsewhere, they deny any accountability (see Ps 10:4, 6, 11, 13).

64:7-8 *with an arrow*: The arrow of the wicked (Ps 64:3) is

matched by God’s arrow (see Ps 7:12-13). As in Psalm 7:15-16, the wicked are caught in their own schemes. The point isn’t payback nor even punishment but rather God’s determination to set things right for an “innocent person” (Ps 64:4) like the speaker (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

64:9-10 To our surprise, the life of the wicked turns out to be testimony to God and *God’s work*, eliciting joyful trust and praise (see Pss 7:17; 52:6-7; 58:10-11). *refuge*: See Psalm 2:12.

65:1-13 Psalm 65 is a psalm of thanks, not for a particular rescue as in Psalm 30 but rather for God’s being willing to listen (65:2), forgive (65:3), and secure the lives of God’s people and the world (65:4-5). God’s creative power is in view in verses 6-8, and verses 9-13 celebrate God’s provision of rain that makes the earth fruitful.

65:1 *Zion*: See Psalm 2:6. *Promises . . . kept*: See Psalm 22:25. 65:3 *forgive*: The underlying Hebrew word is rare in the book of Psalms (see Pss 78:38; 79:90), occurring much

- 4 How happy is the one you choose to bring close,  
the one who lives in your courtyards!  
We are filled full by the goodness of your house,  
by the holiness of your temple.
- 5 In righteousness you answer us,  
by your awesome deeds, God of our salvation—  
you, who are the security of all the far edges of the earth,  
even the distant seas.
- 6 You establish the mountains by your strength;  
you are dressed in raw power.
- 7 You calm the roaring seas;  
calm the roaring waves,  
calm the noise of the nations.
- 8 Those who dwell on the far edges stand in awe of your acts.  
You make the gateways of morning and evening sing for joy.
- 9 You visit the earth and make it abundant,  
enriching it greatly by God's stream, full of water.  
You provide people with grain because that is what you've decided.
- 10 Drenching the earth's furrows, leveling its ridges,  
you soften it with rain showers;  
you bless its growth.
- 11 You crown the year with your goodness;  
your paths overflow with rich food.
- 12 Even the desert pastures drip with it,  
and the hills are dressed in pure joy.
- 13 The meadowlands are covered with flocks,  
the valleys decked out in grain—  
they shout for joy;  
they break out in song!

65:4 Ps 23:6,  
Ps 27:4, Ps 33:12,  
Ps 36:8, Ps 84:4  
65:8 Gn 8:22;  
Ps 2:8, Ps 104:20,  
Ps 126:2,  
Is 24:16  
65:9 Lv 26:4;  
Ps 46:4, Ps 68:9,  
Ps 147:8  
65:10 Dt 32:2  
65:11 Job 36:28  
65:13 Ps 98:8;  
Is 30:23, Is 44:23,  
Is 55:12  
66:1 Ps 81:1,  
Ps 95:1, Ps 98:4,  
Ps 100:1

**Psalm 66**

*For the music leader. A song. A psalm.*

- 1 Shout joyfully to God, all the earth!
- 2 Sing praises to the glory of God's name!  
Make glorious his praise!
- 3 Say to God:  
"How awesome are your works!  
Because of your great strength,  
your enemies cringe before you.

more frequently in Exodus and Leviticus in conjunction with rituals for reconciling the people to God. Here God takes the lead to reconcile, and God's plan is also suggested in Psalm 65:4.

65:4 *filled full*: This may point to the meal that could accompany a thanksgiving sacrifice, especially since the temple is mentioned later in the verse (see Ps 22:26). *goodness*: See Psalm 23:6. *holiness... temple*: Holiness is associated with Mount Zion, site of the temple in Psalms 2:6; 3:4; 48:2.

65:5 *righteousness*: See Psalm 5:8. *awesome deeds*: This recalls the exodus out of Egypt, the purpose of which was to reveal God's character throughout the world (see Exod 9:16). A worldwide point of view is clear here as well. *our salvation*: See Psalm 13:5.

65:7 See Psalm 46:3, 6, which also claims that God deals with the unruly waters and the nations.

65:9-13 God's creative power is clear in the provision of rain (see Ps 29) that means sustenance for human beings

(see *grain* in 65:9, 13, and *food* in 65:11). *crown... goodness*: God treats the earth royally, and the "goodness" of God's house (Ps 65:4) is now extended into the whole world (65:11), which is sometimes viewed as God's home (see Ps 104:3). Fittingly, the creation itself offers joyful praise (65:13; see Pss 96:11-12; 98:7-8; 148:1-12; see sidebar, "God the Creator" at Ps 8).

66:1-20 Psalm 66 starts out like a psalm of thanks or song of praise (66:1-9) with invitations to praise extended in verses 1, 3, and 8. It becomes a prayer in verse 10, and the speaker continues to address God through verse 15. Verses 16-20 again address other people, and this section is bracketed by the invitations in verses 16 and 20.

66:1 *Shout joyfully... all the earth!*: See Psalm 65:13. The songs of praise regularly invite a worldwide response (see Pss 47:1; 96:1; 97:1; 100:1; 103:20-22; 117:1; 148:1-12; 150:6).

66:3 *awesome*: See Psalms 66:5; 65:5.

66:4 Ps 22:27

66:6  
Ex 14:21-22;  
Josh 3:16

66:7 Ps 11:4

66:9 Ps 30:3,  
Ps 55:22,  
Ps 94:18,  
Ps 121:366:10 Job 23:10;  
Pv 17:3;  
Is 48:10;

Zec 13:9; Mal 3:3

66:11 Lam 1:13

66:12 Is 43:2,  
Is 51:23;  
Rev 7:1466:13 Ps 22:25.  
Ps 116:14;  
Ecc 5:466:14 Gn 28:20,  
Gn 35:3; Ps 18:666:16 Ps 22:23,  
Ps 34:11,  
Ps 71:15,  
Ps 71:24

66:20 Ps 22:24

**4**All the earth worships you,  
sings praises to you, sings praises to your name!

Selah

**5**Come and see God's deeds;  
his works for human beings are awesome:

**6**He turned the sea into dry land  
so they could cross the river on foot.

Right there we rejoiced in him!

**7**God rules with power forever;  
keeps a good eye on the nations.

So don't let the rebellious exalt themselves.

Selah

**8**All you nations, bless our God!  
Let the sound of his praise be heard!

**9**God preserved us among the living;  
he didn't let our feet slip a bit.

**10**But you, God, have tested us—  
you've refined us like silver,

**11**trapped us in a net,  
laid burdens on our backs,

**12**let other people run right over our heads—  
we've been through fire and water.

But you brought us out to freedom!

**13**So I'll enter your house with entirely burned offerings.

I'll keep the promises I made to you,

**14**the ones my lips uttered,  
the ones my mouth spoke when I was in deep trouble.

**15**I will offer the best burned offerings to you  
along with the smoke of sacrificed rams.

I will offer both bulls and goats.

Selah

**16**Come close and listen, all you who honor God;  
I will tell you what God has done for me:

**17**My mouth cried out to him with praise on my tongue.

**18**If I had cherished evil in my heart, my Lord would not have listened.

**19**But God definitely listened.  
He heard the sound of my prayer.

**20**Bless God! He didn't reject my prayer;  
he didn't withhold his faithful love from me.

66:4 *All the earth*: This verse reports that "all the earth" responds as invited in Psalm 66:1 (see Ps 65:13).

66:5-6 *Come*: See Psalm 66:16. *awesome*: See Psalm 66:3; the word itself recalls the exodus out of Egypt, which is described briefly here (see Exod 14:1-21). *Right there... in him!*: Immediately following the crossing of the sea, the people celebrated Moses' victory song, which is also known as the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1-21).

66:8 *All you nations*: As in Psalm 66:1, the invitation is expansive (see Ps 47). *Bless*: See Psalm 16:7.

66:10-12 The setbacks and hardships described here may refer to being captive in Egypt and/or the difficulties the people experienced in the wilderness. In any case, the description of the difficulties is framed by

positive statements that the people have been set free (66:9, 12c).

66:13-15 The speaker responds with thanks for the divine rescue. *keep the promises*: See Psalm 22:25. *burned offerings... bulls and goats*: See Psalm 51:19. Sacrifices could be involved in the expression of thanks (see Ps 50:14, 23).

66:16 *Come... listen*: The invitation echoes Psalm 66:5, but now the focus has narrowed. *what God has done for me*: The speaker suggests that he or she has experienced something like a personal exodus (see Ps 66:5), to which he or she responds appropriately with praise (Ps 66:17; see Ps 66:6) and a positive expression of faith (Ps 66:18-20).

66:20 *Bless God!*: See Psalm 66:8. *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7.

**Psalm 67**

*For the music leader, with stringed instruments. A psalm. A song.*

- 1 Let God grant us grace and bless us;  
let God make his face shine on us,  
2 so that your way becomes known on earth,  
so that your salvation becomes known among all the nations.

- 3 Let the people thank you, God!  
Let all the people thank you!  
4 Let the people celebrate and shout with joy  
because you judge the nations fairly  
and guide all nations on the earth.  
5 Let the people thank you, God!  
Let all the people thank you!  
6 The earth has yielded its harvest.  
God blesses us—our God blesses us!  
7 Let God continue to bless us;  
let the far ends of the earth honor him.

**Psalm 68**

*For the music leader. Of David. A psalm. A song.*

- 1 Let God rise up; let his enemies scatter;  
let those who hate him run scared before him!  
2 Like smoke is driven away, drive them away!  
Like wax melting before fire, let the wicked perish before God!  
3 But let the righteous be glad and celebrate before God.  
Let them rejoice with gladness!  
4 Sing to God! Sing praises to his name!  
Exalt the one who rides the clouds!  
The LORD is his name. Celebrate before him!  
  
5 Father of orphans and defender of widows is God in his holy habitation.  
6 God settles the lonely in their homes;

67:1-7 Except for verses 6-7, Psalm 67 is addressed to God, so it is usually identified as a prayer of thanks (see especially 67:3-5) and/or a prayer for blessing (see 67:1, 7). It may have been offered at harvesttime (see 67:6; Ps 65).  
67:1 *bless us... face shine on us*: This verse recalls the Aaronic closing prayer (Num 6:22-27, especially 6:23-24), which features grace, blessing, and the light of God's face (see Pss 4:6; 31:16; 80:3, 7, 19). The language of blessing occurs also in 67:6-7, framing the psalm.  
67:2 *your way... on earth*: See Psalm 119:135, where the light of God's face is related to the knowledge of God's will, *your salvation... all the nations*: See Psalm 80:3, 7, 19, where God's face effects salvation (see Ps 13:5). This verse makes it clear that God's blessing isn't just for "us" (Ps 67:1) but for the world (see Gen 12:1-3, where the promise of blessing to Abram is to extend to "all the families of earth"; Ps 47).  
67:3-5 The identical verses 67:3 and 5 surround 67:4, which can be viewed as the central verse. The word *people* or *nations* occurs in every line of this section, supporting the worldwide reach of God's blessing. *you judge the nations*: This phrase could also be translated, "you establish justice among the nations," and justice is at the heart of God's will for the world (see Pss 9:4; 96:13; 98:9).  
67:6 *The earth... its harvest*: This line may indicate that the psalm was originally used at harvest time; but beyond this possibility, it isn't coincidental that the positive statements about God's establishment of justice (Ps 67:4) is followed

by the mention of food production. Setting the world right begins with the provision of food (see notes on Ps 72:3, 16; 85:12; 147:14).  
67:7 Like the rest of the psalm, 67:7 includes *us* and the rest of the world in relationship to God.  
68:1-35 One of the most difficult psalms to interpret, Psalm 68 seems to describe God's journey, leading God's people along the way (see 68:7), to Jerusalem (68:17), where God's presence is then celebrated in worship (68:24-27). Although God has won all along the way, 68:28-31 are petitions that give way to a final song of praise (68:32-35) that recalls 68:4.  
68:1 This verse is very similar to Numbers 10:35, which records the short prayer that Moses said when the sacred chest containing the covenant was moved. Later worship processions may have utilized the chest, and Psalm 68 may have been used in such celebrations (see Ps 24).  
68:2-3 Petitions for God to deal with the wicked are frequent in the prayers for help (see Ps 3:7-8; 7:6). When God sets things right, it is an occasion for God's people to rejoice (68:3; see Ps 64:10).  
68:4 *who... clouds*: The Canaanite god Baal was known as the cloud-rider, and so the giver of rain and fruitfulness; but here it is Israel's God who fulfills this role and who deserves to be praised (see Pss 68:33-34; 65:9-13; 104:3; 29).  
68:5 *Father... widows*: God attends especially to those who need the most help, and orphans and widows were

67:1 Nm 6:25;  
Ps 4:1, Ps 4:6,  
Ps 31:16,  
Ps 119:135  
  
67:2 Ps 98:2;  
Lk 2:30;  
Ac 18:25;  
Ti 2:11  
  
67:4 Ps 9:8,  
Ps 96:10  
  
67:6 Lv 26:4;  
Ps 85:12;  
Eze 34:27;  
Hos 2:21;  
Zec 8:12  
  
68:1 Nm 10:35;  
Ps 89:10, Ps 92:9,  
Ps 132:8; Is 33:3  
  
68:2 Ps 22:14,  
Ps 37:20, Ps 97:5;  
Mi 1:4  
  
68:3 Ps 32:11,  
Ps 64:10,  
Ps 97:12  
  
68:4 Ps 18:10,  
Ps 68:33  
  
68:5 Dt 10:18;  
Ps 10:14,  
Ps 146:9  
  
68:6 Ps 69:33,  
Ps 107:10,  
Ps 107:14,  
Ps 113:9,  
Ps 146:7

Selah

Selah

68:7 Ex 13:21;  
Jgs 5:4; Hab 3:13

68:8 Ex 19:18;  
Jgs 5:4; Ps 77:18

68:9 Ps 65:9;  
Eze 34:26

68:11 Ex 15:20

68:12  
Josh 10:16;  
Jgs 5:19; Jgs 5:30

68:13 Gn 49:14;  
Jgs 5:16

68:14 Jgs 9:48

68:15 Nm  
21:33; Ps 36:6,  
Ps 68:22

68:16 Dt 12:5;  
Ps 132:13-14

68:17 2Ki 6:17;  
Is 66:15;  
Dn 7:10; Hab 3:8

68:18 Jgs 5:12;  
Ps 47:5; Ac 1:9;  
Eph 4:8

68:19 Ps 65:5

68:20 Dt 32:39;  
Rev 1:18

68:21 Ps 110:6;  
Hab 3:13

he sets prisoners free with happiness,<sup>f</sup>  
but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.

<sup>7</sup>When you went forth before your people, God,  
when you marched through the wasteland, <sup>g</sup>the earth shook!  
Yes, heaven poured down before God, the one from Sinai—  
before God, the God of Israel!

<sup>9</sup>You showered down abundant rain, God;  
when your inheritance grew weary, you restored it yourself,  
<sup>10</sup>and your creatures settled in it.

In your goodness, God, you provided for the poor.

<sup>11</sup>My Lord gives the command—  
many messengers are bringing good news:

<sup>12</sup>“The kings of armies are on the run!  
The women back home divide the spoil.

<sup>13</sup>Even if you lie down among the sheepfolds,  
there are wings of a dove covered with silver;  
its pinions covered in precious gold.”<sup>h</sup>

<sup>14</sup>When the Almighty<sup>i</sup> scattered the kings there,  
snow fell on Mount Zalmon.

<sup>15</sup>Mighty mountain, Mount Bashan;  
many-peaked mountain, Mount Bashan!

<sup>16</sup>You many-peaked mountain:  
Why do you look with envy at the mountain God desired for his dwelling,  
the mountain where the LORD dwells forever?

<sup>17</sup>God’s chariots are twice ten thousand—countless thousands!  
My Lord came from Sinai<sup>j</sup> into the sanctuary.

<sup>18</sup>You ascended the heights, leading away your captives,  
receiving tribute from people,  
even from those who rebel against the LORD God’s dwelling there.

<sup>19</sup>Bless the Lord!  
The God of our salvation supports us day after day!

<sup>20</sup>Our God is the God of salvation,  
and escape from certain death comes through God my LORD.

<sup>21</sup>Yes, God will shatter the heads of his enemies—  
the very skulls of those who walk in guilt.

<sup>f</sup>Or skillfully; LXX, Vulg with strength; Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>h</sup>Heb Shaddai <sup>i</sup>Correction; MT My Lord was among them, the one from Sinai, in holiness.

among the most helpless people in ancient societies (see Pss 9:18; 10:14, 18; 94:6; 113:7-9; 146:9).

**68:6-8** sets prisoners free: The Hebrew verb here is used frequently of the exodus, and an allusion to the exodus makes sense here, since later verses point to the wilderness wanderings and also mention Sinai (Ps 68:8, 17), where the people went shortly after leaving Egypt. *went forth*: God’s journey, it seems, began in Egypt. Like Psalm 68, Moses’ victory song or Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1-21; see Ps 66:6) moves from exodus to Jerusalem. Psalm 68:7-8 are very similar to Judges 5:4-5, which report about an event early in the people’s settlement of the land.

**68:9** You . . . rain: God, not Baal, provides what the newly landed people need (see Ps 68:4).

**68:10** your goodness: See Psalm 23:6. *provided for the poor*. See Psalm 9:18.

**68:11-14** These verses are particularly difficult, but they seem to describe the military successes God gave the people as they moved toward, entered, and settled in Canaan in the books of Numbers through Judges. The location of *Zalmon* is unknown.

**68:15-16** *Mount Bashan*: One of the desirable locations that God passed over in preference to Mount Zion (see Ps 22:12).

**68:17-18** *into the sanctuary*: God and the people reach the destination of their journey as they approach the temple in Jerusalem. *those who rebel . . . God’s dwelling there*: Israel’s entry into the land was challenged, and Jerusalem was originally a Jebusite stronghold.

**68:19** Bless: See Psalm 16:7; the invitation occurs again in Psalm 68:26, 35.

**68:21-23** Similarly violent language occurs elsewhere to describe the defeat of enemies (see Pss 58:10; 137:8-9).

Selah

Selah

- 22 My Lord has spoken:  
 "From Bashan I will bring those people back.  
 I will bring them back from the ocean's depths  
 23 so that you can wash your feet in their blood,  
 so that your dogs' tongues can lap up their share of your enemies."
- 24 They saw your procession, God—  
 the procession of my God,  
 my king, into the sanctuary.
- 25 First came the singers, then the musicians;  
 between them the young women were playing hand drums:
- 26 "Bless God in the great congregation;  
 bless the LORD from Israel's fountain!"
- 27 There's Benjamin leading them, though he's little;  
 then the princes of Judah, their speaker;  
 then the princes of Zebulun and the princes of Naphtali.
- 28 Summon your strength, God!  
 Show how strong you are, God, just as you've done for us before,  
 29 from your temple above Jerusalem, where kings bring you gifts.
- 30 Rebuke the wild animals of the marshland,  
 the herd of bulls among the calves of the peoples.  
 Trample those who delight in money;  
 scatter the peoples who take pleasure in battles.
- 31 Let ambassadors come from Egypt;  
 let Cush stretch out its hands to God.
- 32 Sing to God, all kingdoms of the earth!  
 Sing praises to my Lord.
- 33 Sing to the one who rides through heaven,  
 the most ancient heaven.  
 Look! God sends forth his voice, his mighty voice.
- 34 Recognize how strong God is!  
 His majesty extends over Israel;  
 his strength is in the clouds.
- 35 You are awesome, God, in your sanctuaries—  
 the God of Israel who gives strength and power to his people!

Bless God!

**Psalm 69**

*For the music leader. According to "The Lilies." Of David.*

- 1 Save me, God, because the waters have reached my neck!  
 2 I have sunk into deep mud. My feet can't touch the bottom!

68:24 *your procession*: See Psalm 42:4, where God's presence is celebrated joyfully. Psalm 24 also seems to describe a worship celebration. *my king*: See Psalms 5:2 and 24:7-10, including the recognition of God's reign as king, *into the sanctuary*: See Psalm 68:17.

68:25 See Psalm 33:2; see sidebar, "Music and Singing" at Psalm 33.

68:27 *Benjamin... Naphtali*: Four of the twelve tribes (sons) of Israel (Jacob) are named. See Judges 5:14, where Benjamin also leads the tribes. Benjamin and Judah were the tribes that formed the southern kingdom, Judah, when the kingdoms split, so the point of view seems Judean.

68:28-31 The shift to petition is somewhat unexpected, given the triumphs already described and the celebration of Psalm 68:24-27; but it indicates the reality that God's claim on the world never goes unopposed (see Pss 1-2).

*wild animals*: probably a symbol of human enemies (see Ps 10:9). *who delight in money*: See Psalms 49:5-9; 52:7; 62:10. *who... in battles*: See Psalm 46:8-10. *Egypt... Cush*: These two African countries (*Cush* is Ethiopia) are mentioned illustratively in the vision of a world reconciled to God and God's purposes (see Ps 67). Note the worldwide viewpoint reflected in Psalm 68:32.

68:32-35 The concluding invitations and positive statement emphasize God's strength (see Ps 59:9-10, 16-17), as well as God's claim upon Israel (68:35), the whole world (68:32), and indeed the whole universe (68:33-34). *Bless God!*: an appropriate concluding invitation that suggests submission to God's all-inclusive claim (see Ps 16:7).

69:1-36 Like Psalm 22, Psalm 69 is one of the longest of the prayers for help; and it derives its intensity from double rounds of combined petition and complaint

68:23 1Ki 21:19;  
Ps 58:10  
68:24 Ps 63:2  
68:25 Ex 15:20;  
Jgs 11:34  
68:26 Dt 33:28;  
Ps 26:12; Is 48:1  
68:27 Jgs 5:18;  
1Sa 9:21  
68:28 Ps 29:11;  
Is 26:12  
68:29 1Ki 10:10;  
1Ki 10:25;  
2Ch 32:23;  
Ps 72:10,  
Ps 76:11  
68:30 Job 40:21;  
Ps 22:12,  
Ps 120:7;  
Eze 29:3  
68:31 Is 45:14;  
Zep 3:10  
68:32 Ps 67:4  
68:33 Dt 33:26;  
Ps 18:10,  
Ps 29:3-4, Ps 46:6  
68:34 Ps 29:1  
68:35 Ps 29:11;  
Is 40:29  
69:1 Ps 42:7  
69:2 Ps 40:2,  
Ps 69:14

*Selah*

69:3 Dt 28:32;  
Ps 6:6, Ps 119:82,  
Ps 119:123;  
Is 38:14

69:4 Ps 35:19,  
Ps 38:19,  
Ps 40:12;  
Jn 15:25

69:5 Ps 38:5,  
Ps 44:21;  
Jer 16:17

69:6 Gn 15:2;  
Dt 3:24;  
Josh 7:8;  
2Sa 23:3;  
1Ki 8:25

69:9 Ps 89:50,  
Ps 119:139;  
Jn 2:17; Ro 15:3

69:10 Ps 35:13

69:11 1Ki 9:7;  
Ps 35:13;  
Jer 24:9

69:12 Gn 19:1;  
Job 30:9

69:15 Nm 16:33

69:16 Ps 25:16,  
Ps 51:1, Ps 63:3,  
Ps 69:13,  
Ps 109:21

I have entered deep water; the flood has swept me up.

<sup>3</sup> I am tired of crying. My throat is hoarse.

My eyes are exhausted with waiting for my God.

<sup>4</sup> More numerous than the hairs on my head  
are those who hate me for no reason.

My treacherous enemies, those who would destroy me, are countless.

Must I now give back what I didn't steal in the first place?

<sup>5</sup> God, you know my foolishness;

my wrongdoings aren't hidden from you.

<sup>6</sup> LORD God of heavenly forces!—

don't let those who hope in you be put to shame because of me.

God of Israel!—

don't let those who seek you be disgraced because of me.

<sup>7</sup> I am insulted because of you.

Shame covers my face.

<sup>8</sup> I have become a stranger to my own brothers,  
an immigrant to my mother's children.

<sup>9</sup> Because passion for your house has consumed me,  
the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me!

<sup>10</sup> I wept while I fasted—even for that I was insulted.

<sup>11</sup> When I wore funeral clothes, people made fun of me.

<sup>12</sup> Those who sit at the city gate muttered things about me;  
drunkards made up rude songs.

<sup>13</sup> But me? My prayer reaches you, LORD, at just the right time.

God, in your great and faithful love,  
answer me with your certain salvation!

<sup>14</sup> Save me from the mud! Don't let me drown!

Let me be saved from those who hate me and from these watery depths!

<sup>15</sup> Don't let me be swept away by the floodwaters!

Don't let the abyss swallow me up!

Don't let the pit close its mouth over me!

<sup>16</sup> Answer me, LORD, for your faithful love is good!

Turn to me in your great compassion!

(69:1-12; 13-29). These two sections roughly parallel each other: for example, see *Save me* (69:1, 14), *mud* (69:2, 14), *insulted/insults* and *shame* (69:7, 19). They are followed by two sections that speak praise and trust (69:30-33, 34-36). Like Psalm 22, Psalm 69 was a resource for the Gospel writers as they told the story of Jesus (see references following; see sidebar, "The Psalms and Jesus" at Ps 22).

69:1-2 *Save me*: See Psalm 13:5. *waters... deep water*: Water symbolizes disorder and threat (see Ps 18:16).

69:3 *tired of crying... eyes are exhausted*: See Psalms 6:6-7; 13:3.

69:4-5 *hate... no reason*: See Psalms 35:7, 19; 38:19; 109:3; John 15:25. Later in the psalm, it becomes clear that the speaker is opposed because of faithfulness to God (see Ps 69:9). Whatever troubles the speaker had are made worse by those who blame and seek to take advantage (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). *destroy me*: See Psalm 35:4. *Must... place?*: The speaker may have been falsely accused of stealing (see Pss 27:12; 35:20; 7; 17; 26), but the question here may be a way of stating more generally that the speaker can't confess to any wrong that he or she didn't do. Even so, the speaker doesn't claim to be sinless, as 69:5 shows.

69:6 *heavenly forces*: See Psalm 24:10. *don't... me*: The two

similar requests suggest that the psalmist doesn't want his or her suffering to discourage others from being faithful to God.

69:7 *insulted because of you*: The psalmist's suffering results not from sinfulness but from faithfulness (see Ps 69:9). This is the first occurrence of *insulted*, which becomes a keyword (see Ps 69:9-10, 19-20). See Psalm 22:7-8; Matthew 27:34; Mark 15:29.

69:8 See Psalms 31:11; 38:11; 88:8, 18; Jeremiah 12:6. The psalmist is unjustly blamed for the suffering, and so is shunned, even by the psalmist's own family.

69:9 See Psalm 69:7; John 2:7.

69:10-12 Even when the psalmist displays faithful humility and signs of penitence, he or she is mocked (see Ps 35:13-14). Even so, the psalmist remains faithful, as the immediately following petitions demonstrate.

69:13 *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7. *certain salvation*: In the midst of deadly threat (Ps 69:4), the psalmist trusts that God will give life (see Ps 13:5).

69:14-15 The water image recalls Psalm 69:1-2. *the pit*: a symbol for deadly threat (see Ps 16:10).

69:16 *faithful love*: See Psalm 69:13. *compassion*: See Psalm 25:6. These are fundamental qualities of God (see Exod 34:6), upon which the psalmist grounds the plea for life.



17 Don't hide your face from me, your servant, because I'm in deep trouble.

Answer me quickly!

18 Come close to me!

Redeem me!

Save me because of my enemies!

19 You know full well the insults I've received;

you know my shame and my disgrace.

All my adversaries are right there in front of you.

20 Insults have broken my heart. I'm sick about it.

I hoped for sympathy, but there wasn't any;

I hoped for comforters, but couldn't find any.

21 They gave me poison for food.

To quench my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

22 Let the table before them become a trap,  
their offerings a snare.

23 Let their eyes grow too dim to see;  
make their insides tremble constantly.

24 Pour out your anger on them—  
let your burning fury catch them.

25 Let their camp be devastated;  
let no one dwell in their tents.

26 Because they go after those you've already struck;  
they talk about the pain of those you've already pierced.

27 Pile guilt on top of their guilt!  
Don't let them come into your righteousness!

28 Let them be wiped out of the scroll of life!  
Let them not be recorded along with the righteous!

29 And me? I'm afflicted.  
I'm full of pain.  
Let your salvation keep me safe, God!

30 I will praise God's name with song;  
I will magnify him with thanks

31 because that is more pleasing to the LORD than an ox,  
more pleasing than a young bull with full horns and hooves.

32 Let the afflicted see it and be glad!  
You who seek God—let your hearts beat strong again

33 because the LORD listens to the needy and doesn't despise his captives.

34 Let heaven and earth praise God,  
the oceans too, and all that moves within them!

35 God will most certainly save Zion and will rebuild Judah's cities  
so that God's servants can live there and possess it.

36 The offspring of God's servants will inherit Zion,  
and those who love God's name will dwell there.

69:17 *hide your face*: See Psalm 13:1.

69:18 *Redeem me!*: When a person was in trouble, a close relative was supposed to redeem him, so the word is sometimes translated as "next-of-kin." In view of Psalm 69:8, the psalmist relies on God in the midst of abandonment by family.

69:21 See Matthew 27:34; Mark 15:23; Luke 23:36; John 19:29-30.

69:22-29 The extended petitions against the enemies have no parallel in Psalm 69:1-12. The point isn't personal payback but rather setting things right for one

who is afflicted (69:29; see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6). *scroll of life*: See Psalm 40:7.

69:30-36 The prayers for help regularly pair praise with complaint/petition (see Pss 6:8-10; 13:5-6).

69:30-31 *with thanks*: Thanks could involve sacrifice, but not necessarily, and apparently not here (see Pss 50:14, 23; 51:16-17).

69:32-33 See Psalm 22:24, 26.

69:34 See the universal praise of God in Psalms 65:13; 148:12.

69:35-36 These verses may have been added to make the

69:17 Ps 27:9,  
Ps 102:2,  
Ps 143:7

69:19 Ps 22:6;  
Heb 12:2

69:20 Job 16:2;  
Ps 142:4; Is 63:5

69:21 Mt 27:34,  
Mt 27:48,  
Mk 15:23;  
Lk 23:36;  
Jn 19:28

69:22 Ro  
11:9-10

69:23 Is 6:10,  
Is 29:16; Dn 5:6;  
Mt 13:14;  
Jn 12:40

69:24 Ps 78:49,  
Ps 79:6;  
Jer 10:25;  
Hos 5:10

69:25 Mt 23:38;  
Lk 13:35;  
Ac 1:20

69:26 Ps 109:16;  
Is 53:4; Zec 1:15

69:27 Neh 4:5

69:28  
Ex 32:32-33;  
Lk 10:20;  
Phi 4:3; Rev 3:5

69:31 Ps 50:9,  
Ps 51:16

69:32 Ps 22:26,  
Ps 34:2

70:2 Ps 6:10,  
Ps 35:4, Ps 35:26,  
Ps 71:13

70:4 Ps 35:27,  
Ps 40:16

70:5 Ps 35:10,  
Ps 40:17,  
Ps 109:22,  
Ps 141:1

71:1 Ps 22:5,  
Ps 25:2, Ps 31:1

71:3 Ps 16:2

71:4 Ps 43:1,  
Ps 140:1,  
Ps 140:4

71:5 Ps 39:7;  
Jer 17:7

71:6 Ps 22:9,  
Ps 22:10, Ps 34:1,  
Is 46:3

71:7 Is 8:18;  
1Co 4:9

71:8 Ps 35:28,  
Ps 51:15,  
Ps 71:15

71:10 Ps 31:13,  
Ps 56:6, Ps 83:3

## Psalm 70

*For the music leader. Of David. For the memorial offering.*

- <sup>1</sup> Hurry, God, to deliver me;  
hurry, LORD, to help me!
- <sup>2</sup> Let those who seek my life be ashamed and humiliated!  
Let them fall back and be disgraced—  
those people who delight in my downfall!
- <sup>3</sup> Let those who say, "Aha! Aha!"  
stop because of their shameful behavior.
- <sup>4</sup> But let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you,  
and let those who love your saving help say again and again:  
"God is great!"
- <sup>5</sup> But me? I'm poor and needy.  
Hurry to me, God!  
You are my helper and my deliverer.  
Oh, LORD, don't delay!

## Psalm 71

- <sup>1</sup> I've taken refuge in you, LORD.  
Don't let me ever be put to shame!
- <sup>2</sup> Deliver me and rescue me by your righteousness!  
Bend your ear toward me and save me!
- <sup>3</sup> Be my rock of refuge where I can always escape.  
You commanded that my life be saved  
because you are my rock and my fortress.
- <sup>4</sup> My God, rescue me from the power of the wicked;  
rescue me from the grip of the wrongdoer and the oppressor  
<sup>5</sup> because you are my hope, Lord.  
You, LORD, are the one I've trusted since childhood.
- <sup>6</sup> I've depended on you from birth—  
you cut the cord when I came from my mother's womb.  
My praise is always about you.
- <sup>7</sup> I've become an example to many people because you are my strong refuge.
- <sup>8</sup> My mouth is filled with your praise, glorifying you all day long.
- <sup>9</sup> Don't cast me off in old age.  
Don't abandon me when my strength is used up!
- <sup>10</sup> Yes, my enemies have been talking about me;  
those who stalk me plot together:

psalm address more directly the situation of the people after the exile (see Ps 51:18-19). *Zion*: See Psalm 2:6.

70:1-5 Psalm 70 is almost identical to Psalm 40:13-17, and this repetition suggests the existence of originally separate collections that were brought together to form the Psalter (see sidebar, "Books II-III and the Elohistic Psalter" at Ps 42). There is a difference between Psalm 40:17b and 70:5b, which repeats the word *hurry* from 70:1.

70:3 *Aha! Aha!*: Particularly following Psalm 69, the taunts here are recognizably similar to those directed at Jesus (see Ps 69:7).

71:1-24 Psalm 71 is a prayer for help, in which the typical elements are arranged in an alternating sequence: trust (71:1a), petition (71:1b-4), trust/praise (71:5-8), petition/complaint (71:9-13), trust/praise (71:14-17), petition (71:18), trust/praise (71:19-24). This pattern, plus the prominence of trust/praise in 71:14-24, makes Psalm 71 akin to the psalms of trust (see Pss 16; 31). The language of Psalm 71 is similar at several points to that

found in other prayers for help, especially Psalms 22 and 31.

71:1 *refuge*: See Psalms 71:7; 2:12; 31:1.

71:2 *by your righteousness*: See Psalm 5:8. The psalmist's appeal is grounded in God's will and activity to set things right for those who need help (see Ps 9:18). "Righteousness" becomes a keyword (see Ps 71:15, 16, 19, 24).

71:3 See Psalm 31:2-3.

71:5 *my hope*: See Psalms 71:14; 9:18; 27:14. *trusted*: See Psalms 4:5; 31:6, 14.

71:6 See Psalm 22:9-10.

71:7 *example*: As in Psalm 69:6, the psalmist is aware that his or her life can be an example to others.

71:8 See Psalm 51:15.

71:9 *old age*: See Psalm 71:18. The psalmist seems to be advanced in years, although the language may be metaphorical.

71:10-11 As usual, the enemies are threatening and conspiring (see Pss 3:1-2; 4:2-5; 31:13; 35:15; 41:6-8; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

- 11 "God has abandoned him!  
Pursue him!  
Grab him because no one will deliver him!"
- 12 Don't be far from me, God!  
My God, hurry to help me!
- 13 Let my accusers be put to shame,  
completely finished off!  
Let those who seek my downfall  
be dressed in insults and disgrace!
- 14 But me? I will hope. Always.  
I will add to all your praise.
- 15 My mouth will repeat your righteous acts  
and your saving deeds all day long.  
I don't even know how many of those there are!
- 16 I will dwell on your mighty acts, my Lord.  
LORD, I will help others remember nothing but your righteous deeds.
- 17 You've taught me since my youth, God,  
and I'm still proclaiming your wondrous deeds!
- 18 So, even in my old age with gray hair, don't abandon me, God!  
Not until I tell generations about your mighty arm,  
tell all who are yet to come about your strength,  
19 and about your ultimate righteousness, God,  
because you've done awesome things!  
Who can compare to you, God?
- 20 You, who have shown me many troubles and calamities,  
will revive me once more.<sup>v</sup>  
From the depths of the earth, you will raise me up one more time.
- 21 Please increase my honor and comfort me all around.
- 22 Then I'll give you thanks with a harp—  
I will thank you for your faithfulness, my God.  
I will make music for you with the lyre, holy one of Israel.
- 23 My lips will rejoice aloud when I make music for you;  
my whole being,<sup>w</sup> which you saved, will do the same.
- 24 My tongue, also, will tell of your righteousness all day long,  
because those who seek my downfall have been put to shame and disgraced.

71:1-1 Ps 7:2;  
Mt 27:46

71:14 Ps 130:7

71:15 Ps 35:28;  
Ps 40:5, Ps 66:16,  
Ps 71:8, Ps 71:24

71:17 Dt 4:5,  
Ps 26:7, Ps 71:5

71:18 Ps 22:31,  
Ps 71:9, Ps 78:4;  
Is 46:4

71:19 Ps 35:10,  
Ps 36:5-6,  
Ps 126:2; Lk 1:49

71:22 2Ki 19:22;  
Ps 33:2, Ps 78:41,  
Ps 89:18; Is 60:9

71:23 Ps 34:22,  
Ps 103:4

72:1 1Ki 3:9

## Psalm 72

Of Solomon.

- <sup>1</sup> God, give your judgments to the king.  
Give your righteousness to the king's son.

<sup>v</sup>Qere; Kethib who have shown us . . . will revive us <sup>w</sup>Or soul

71:12 See Psalms 22:11, 19; 70:1.

71:13 Prayers against the enemies are frequent and tell of the psalmists' desire for things to be set right (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

71:14-19 The hope spoken about in 71:14 (see Pss 5:3; 27:14) is the basis for the psalmist's testimony to God's activity. The psalmist has been committed to the educational task of passing on the faith to future generations (71:18; see Ps 78:4-8, where teaching children aims at instilling hope that will issue in obedience).

71:20 Even though the psalmist seems to link suffering to God (see Pss 6; 38), she or he doesn't view the suffering as punishment, and maintains hope in God's life-giving power. *depths of the earth*: An allusion to Sheol, the realm of the dead (see Ps 6:5).

71:22 *faithfulness*: See Psalm 25:10. In Psalm 92:2-3, God's

faithfulness is also celebrated with harp and lyre (see Ps 33:2).

71:23-24 These verses suggest that rescue has already happened, but it is probably still expected. On this uncertainty and the regular pairing of complaint and praise in the prayers for help, see Psalms 6:8-10; 13:5-6.

72:1-20 a royal psalm (see Ps 2). It's clear from the first line that it's a prayer for the king; and it was probably used regularly when a new king was crowned or perhaps on the anniversary of a king's reign. Psalm 72 is one of two psalms credited to Solomon (see also Ps 127), and it's possible that it originated in Solomon's time. Psalm 72 concludes Book II; and Psalm 89, another royal psalm, concludes Book III. On the significance of this arrangement, see sidebar, "Books II-III and the Elohist Psalter" at Psalm 42.

72:1 *your judgments . . . righteousness*: The Hebrew root

72:2 Is 9:7;  
Is 11:4; Is 32:1  
72:3 Is 52:7  
72:4 Is 11:4  
72:5 Ps 72:17;  
Ps 89:36-37  
72:6 Dt 32:2;  
2Sa 23:4;  
Hos 6:3; Am 7:1  
72:7 Ps 92:12;  
Is 2:4  
72:8 Ex 23:31;  
1Ki 4:21; Ps 2:8;  
Zec 9:10;  
Rev 11:15  
72:9 Is 49:23;  
Mi 7:17  
72:10 Gn 10:7;  
1Ki 10:1;  
Ps 45:12;  
Ps 68:29; Is 43:3  
72:11 Ps 86:9;  
Ps 138:4;  
Is 49:23  
72:12 Job 29:12  
72:13 Ps 109:31  
72:14 1Sa 26:21;  
Ps 69:18;  
Ps 116:15  
72:15 1Ki 10:10

- <sup>2</sup>Let him judge your people with righteousness  
and your poor ones with justice.
- <sup>3</sup>Let the mountains bring peace to the people;  
let the hills bring righteousness.
- <sup>4</sup>Let the king bring justice to people who are poor;  
let him save the children of those who are needy,  
but let him crush oppressors!
- <sup>5</sup>Let the king live<sup>a</sup> as long as the sun,  
as long as the moon, generation to generation.
- <sup>6</sup>Let him fall like rain upon fresh-cut grass,  
like showers that water the earth.
- <sup>7</sup>Let the righteous flourish throughout their lives,  
and let peace prosper until the moon is no more.
- <sup>8</sup>Let the king rule from sea to sea,  
from the river to the ends of the earth.
- <sup>9</sup>Let the desert dwellers bow low before him;  
let his enemies lick the dust.
- <sup>10</sup>Let the kings of Tarshish and the islands bring tribute;  
let the kings of Sheba and Seba present gifts.
- <sup>11</sup>Let all the kings bow down before him;  
let all the nations serve him.
- <sup>12</sup>Let it be so, because he delivers the needy who cry out,  
the poor, and those who have no helper.
- <sup>13</sup>He has compassion on the weak and the needy;  
he saves the lives of those who are in need.
- <sup>14</sup>He redeems their lives from oppression and violence;  
their blood is precious in his eyes.
- <sup>15</sup>Let the king live long!  
Let Sheba's gold be given to him!

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT *May they fear you.*

underlying *judgments* occurs again as “justice” in Psalm 72:2 and 72:4 (“judge” in verse 2 is a different but synonymous root), and *righteousness* occurs again in verses 2-3. The repetition indicates that these words are keywords, and they are also very important throughout the Psalter. Together, they summarize God’s will for the world (see Pss 5:8; 9:4; 96:13; 98:9; see sidebar, “Book IV and the Rule of God” at Ps 89). The king’s role is to be the earthly agent who does God’s will (see sidebar, “God’s Anointed One” at Ps 2).  
72:3 *peace*: The familiar Hebrew is *shalom*, the total well-being that exists when justice and righteousness are done. The word occurs again in Psalm 72. That *the mountains bring peace* suggests that sufficient food is a basic minimum for measuring whether or not “shalom” exists (see Ps 72:16).  
72:4 *poor . . . needy*: The king had a special responsibility to care for those who were the most helpless in the community (see Ps 72:12-14). This responsibility suggests that the king is the earthly agent of God’s will, since God shows special concern for the weak and mistreated (see Ps 9:18; see sidebar, “The Poor and Needy” at Ps 82). *crush oppressors*: See Psalm 72:14. This responsibility explains why the king is often cast in the role of fighting—that is, the king is responsible for confronting those who oppose God’s will for justice and righteousness, and such opposition is widespread in the Psalter (see Pss 2:8-9; 18:31-50; 21:8-12; see

sidebar, “God’s Anointed One” at Ps 2). In reality, the kings of Israel and Judah became oppressors themselves, and so evoked opposition from the prophets, who accused them of failing to take care of the poor and needy (see Isa 3:13-15; Amos 5:11; 8:4) and who demanded justice and righteousness (see Isa 1:27; 5:7; Amos 5:24).

72:5-7 *sun . . . moon . . . rain . . . showers*: The psalmist thinks that the king’s reign of justice and righteousness will endure (Ps 72:5, 7, 15, 17), and that it will contribute to the productivity of the land (Ps 72:6, 16). In short, justice and righteousness will have positive effects for the earth.

72:8-12 Having thought about the extent of the king’s reign in time (Ps 72: 5-7), the psalmist now turns to geographical space, imagining a worldwide sphere (see Ps 2:8-9).

72:8 *the river*: Probably the Euphrates (see map 8).

72:10 *Tarshish*: probably in Spain (see Ps 48:7). *the islands*: probably meant to be a symbol of very faraway places. *Sheba*: the region of the southern Arabian peninsula (see 1 Kgs 10:1; Isa 60:6). *Seba*: southern Arabia again (see Gen 10:7; Isa 43:3; 45:14).

72:11 What may sound like propaganda is the psalmist’s way of wishing that God’s purposes be universally honored, ultimately for the benefit of all (see Ps 72:17).

72:12-14 Insofar as the king deserves honor, it will be because he attends to the needs of the poor and needy (see Pss 72:4; 82:3-4).

Let him be prayed for always!  
 Let him be blessed all day long!

- 16 Let there be abundant grain in the land.  
 Let it wave on the mountaintops.  
 Let its fruit flourish like Lebanon.  
 Let it thrive like grass on the land.
- 17 Let the king's name last forever.  
 Let his name endure as long as the sun.  
 Let all the nations be blessed through him and call him happy.

- 18 Bless the LORD God, the God of Israel—  
 the only one who does wondrous things!
- 19 Bless God's glorious name forever; let his glory fill all the earth!  
 Amen and Amen!

20 The prayers of David, Jesse's son, are ended.

72:17 Gn 12:3,  
 Gn 22:18;  
 Ps 89:36; Lk 1:48  
 72:18 Ex 15:11;  
 1Ch 29:10;  
 Ps 41:13,  
 Ps 77:14,  
 Ps 136:4  
 72:19 Nm 14:21;  
 Neh 9:5;  
 Ps 41:13  
 72:20 2Sa 23:1  
 73:1 Ps 24:4,  
 Ps 51:10; Mt 5:8  
 73:2 Ps 94:18  
 73:3 Job 21:7;  
 Ps 37:1; Ps 37:7;  
 Prv 23:17;  
 Jer 12:1  
 73:4 Ps 17:14  
 73:5 Ps 73:12  
 73:6 Ps 109:18;  
 Prv 1:9  
 73:7 Job 15:27;  
 Ps 17:10;  
 Jer 5:28  
 73:8 Jud 1:16  
 73:9 Rev 13:6

BOOK III  
 (Psalms 73–89)

**Psalm 73**  
 A psalm of Asaph.

- 1 Truly God is good to Israel,  
 to those who have a pure heart.
- 2 But me? My feet had almost stumbled;  
 my steps had nearly slipped
- 3 because I envied the arrogant;  
 I observed how the wicked are well off:
- 4 They suffer no pain;  
 their bodies are fit and strong.
- 5 They are never in trouble;  
 they aren't weighed down like other people.
- 6 That's why they wear arrogance like a necklace,  
 why violence covers them like clothes.
- 7 Their eyes bulge out from eating so well;  
 their hearts overflow with delusions.
- 8 They scoff and talk so cruel;  
 from their privileged positions they plan oppression.
- 9 Their mouths dare to speak against heaven!  
 Their tongues roam the earth!

72:16 *abundant grain*: This means sufficient food, especially for the poor and needy. Sufficient food is the basic foundation for peace (see Ps 72:3, 6).

72:17 *Let all the nations . . . blessed through him*: An echo of the promise and mission assigned to Abram in Gen 12:1–3 (see Ps 47). *happy*: See Psalm 1:1–2, where happiness derives from doing God's Instruction or will; and this is precisely the king's task (see Deut 17:14–20).

72:18–19 This doxology is an appropriate conclusion to Psalm 72, since the king is supposed to do God's work. These verses also mark the end of Book II (see Ps 41:13).

72:20 probably meant to mark the conclusion of the Davidic collection that began with Psalm 51 (see sidebar, "Books II–III and the Elohistic Psalter" at Ps 42).

73:1–28 At the beginning of Book III and an extended collection of Asaph psalms (Pss 73–83; see Ps 50), Psalm 73 recalls Psalm 1. Like Psalm 1, it focuses on *the wicked* (73:3–13; see Ps 1:1, 4–6) and discerns their ultimate failure (73:27; see Ps 1:6). Psalm 73 is often identified as a wisdom

psalm; but at verse 15 it becomes a prayer that functions like a profession of faith. The psalmist moves from doubt (73:2–3; 21–22) to trust (73:23–28).

73:1 *good*: The word brackets the psalm, occurring again in Psalm 73:28, which defines the core of goodness as the psalmist has come to understand it. *pure heart*: See Pss 73:13; 24:4.

73:2–3 *well off*: The underlying Hebrew word *shalom* is often translated "peace." This is the psalmist's problem: The wicked seem to be enjoying peace (see Ps 73:4–12), while the psalmist is suffering (see Ps 73:14). Faithfulness doesn't seem to pay, so the psalmist envies the wicked.

73:4–12 An extended description of how well the wicked are doing (see Ps 10:3–6). They are healthy, well-fed, care-free, and can get away with anything.

73:6 *arrogance . . . violence*: The self-important and destructive behavior of the wicked has been very clear throughout the prayers in Books I–II (see Ps 4:2–5; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

- 73:11 Job 22:13  
73:12 Ps 49:6,  
Ps 73:3; Jer 12:1
- 73:13 Job 21:15,  
Job 34:9; Ps 26:6;  
Mal 3:14
- 73:14 Job 33:19;  
Ps 73:5; Ps 94:12;  
Ps 118:18;  
Heb 12:5
- 73:15 Ps 14:5
- 73:16 Ecc 8:17
- 73:17 Ps 37:38,  
Ps 77:13
- 73:18 Ps 35:6
- 73:20 Job 20:8;  
Ps 78:65
- 73:21 Ac 2:37
- 73:22 Job 18:3;  
Ps 49:10; Ps 92:6;  
Ecc 3:18
- 73:23 Ps 16:8,  
Ps 37:24; Ps 63:8;  
Is 41:13
- 73:24 Ps 32:8,  
Ps 48:14,  
Ps 49:15
- 73:25 Ps 16:2,  
Ps 42:1; Phi 3:8
- 73:26 Ps 16:5,  
Ps 18:2; Ps 84:2;  
Lam 3:24
- 73:27 Ex 34:15;  
Nm 15:39;  
Ps 119:155
- <sup>10</sup>That's why people keep going back to them,  
keep approving what they say.<sup>†</sup>
- <sup>11</sup>And what they say is this: "How could God possibly know!  
Does the Most High know anything at all!"
- <sup>12</sup>Look at these wicked ones, always relaxed, piling up the wealth!
- <sup>13</sup>Meanwhile, I've kept my heart pure for no good reason;  
I've washed my hands to stay innocent for nothing.
- <sup>14</sup>I'm weighed down all day long.  
I'm punished every morning.
- <sup>15</sup>If I said, "I will talk about all this,"  
I would have been unfaithful to your children.
- <sup>16</sup>But when I tried to understand these things,  
it just seemed like hard work
- <sup>17</sup>until I entered God's sanctuary  
and understood what would happen to the wicked.
- <sup>18</sup>You will definitely put them on a slippery path;  
you will make them fall into ruin!
- <sup>19</sup>How quickly they are devastated,  
utterly destroyed by terrors!
- <sup>20</sup>As quickly as a dream departs from someone waking up, my Lord,  
when you are stirred up, you make them disappear.<sup>‡</sup>
- <sup>21</sup>When my heart was bitter,  
when I was all cut up inside,
- <sup>22</sup>I was stupid and ignorant.  
I acted like nothing but an animal toward you.
- <sup>23</sup>But I was still always with you!  
You held my strong hand!
- <sup>24</sup>You have guided me with your advice;  
later you will receive me with glory.
- <sup>25</sup>Do I have anyone else in heaven?  
There's nothing on earth I desire except you.
- <sup>26</sup>My body and my heart fail,  
but God is my heart's rock and my share forever.
- <sup>27</sup>Look! Those far from you die;  
you annihilate all those who are unfaithful to you.

<sup>†</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>‡</sup>Heb uncertain

**73:10** The wicked attract a following. Even the psalmist seems tempted to join them (see Ps 73:2-3).

**73:11** One of several instances where the wicked deny any accountability to God and others (see Ps 10:4, 6, 11, 13).

**73:13-14** See Psalm 24:4. The psalmist can see no benefit to faithfulness (see Ps 73:2-3). Faithful behavior has brought nothing but suffering (see Ps 69).

**73:15** This verse marks the beginning of a change, when the psalmist recalls an identity as one of God's children. *talk*: See Psalm 73:28, where doubting talk has been replaced by faithful praise-talk, marking the conclusion of the psalmist's change.

**73:16-17** The psalmist's turning point continues, involving some kind of life-changing experience that seems to take place in the temple, suggesting that worship was transformative.

**73:18-20** The psalmist, who had almost slipped (Ps 73:2), now understands that the wicked are really the ones on a *slippery path* (Ps 73:18). Their well-being (Ps 73:3-12) is an illusion (73:19-20).

**73:21-22** The psalmist recalls the former doubt (Ps 73:2-3, 13-14).

**73:23** *with you*: The psalmist realizes that suffering (Ps 73:14) doesn't mean separation from God.

**73:24** *guided me*: See Psalm 23:3. *receive . . . glory*: perhaps an allusion to Genesis 5:24 and 2 Kings 2:11, where Enoch and Elijah are received by God. This verse seems to push the boundaries of the usual Israelite understanding of death (see Pss 22:29; 49:15).

**73:25** An eloquent profession of fundamental, deep trust in God for life and future (see Pss 31:5, 15; 63:3; 142:5).

**73:26** *heart . . . my heart's rock*: The word *heart* is a key-word in the psalm, occurring also in verses 1, 13, and 21. The repetition emphasizes the psalmist's change of heart. On God as "rock," see Psalms 19:14; 31:2; 61:2; 62:2, 6-7.

**73:27-28** *near God*: The psalmist now knows true goodness, which is nearness to God (see Ps 73:1). *refuge*: See Psalm 2:12. *talk*: See Psalm 73:15.

<sup>28</sup>But me? It's good for me to be near God.  
I have taken my refuge in you, my LORD God,  
so I can talk all about your works!

### Psalm 74

#### A *maskil*<sup>a</sup> of Asaph.

- <sup>1</sup>God, why have you abandoned us forever?  
Why does your anger smolder at the sheep of your own pasture?
- <sup>2</sup>Remember your congregation that you took as your own long ago,  
that you redeemed to be the tribe of your own possession—  
remember Mount Zion, where you dwell.
- <sup>3</sup>March to the unending ruins, to all that the enemy destroyed in the sanctuary.
- <sup>4</sup>Your enemies roared in your own meeting place;  
they set up their own signs there!
- <sup>5</sup>It looked like axes raised against a thicket of trees.<sup>b</sup>
- <sup>6</sup>And then all its carvings they hacked down with hatchet and pick.
- <sup>7</sup>They set fire to your sanctuary, burned it to the ground;  
they defiled the dwelling place of your name.
- <sup>8</sup>They said in their hearts, We'll kill all of them together!  
They burned all of God's meeting places in the land.
- <sup>9</sup>We don't see our own signs anymore.  
No prophet is left.  
And none of us know how long it will last.
- <sup>10</sup>How long, God, will foes insult you?  
Are enemies going to abuse your name forever?
- <sup>11</sup>Why do you pull your hand back?  
Why do you hold your strong hand close to your chest?
- <sup>12</sup>Yet God has been my king from ancient days—  
God, who makes salvation happen in the heart of the earth!
- <sup>13</sup>You split the sea with your power.  
You shattered the heads of the sea monsters on the water.
- <sup>14</sup>You crushed Leviathan's heads.  
You gave it to the desert dwellers for food!
- <sup>15</sup>You split open springs and streams;  
you made strong-flowing rivers dry right up.
- <sup>16</sup>The day belongs to you! The night too!  
You established both the moon and the sun.
- <sup>17</sup>You set all the boundaries of the earth in place.  
Summer and winter? You made them!

<sup>a</sup>Perhaps *instruction*; the root is used in Ps 32:8. <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain

74:1-23 Psalm 74 is a communal prayer for help, which probably originated with the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE (see Ps 44). A first section of complaint and petition (74:1-11) is followed by a celebration of God's control and creative power (74:12-17). A series of petitions concludes the prayer (74:18-23).

74:1 *abandoned us*: See Psalm 44:9.

74:2 *you redeemed*: See Psalm 69:18 *Mount Zion*: See Psalm 2:6.

74:3 *unending ruins... sanctuary*: The temple on Mount Zion has apparently been ransacked and destroyed, as 74:4-9 also suggests.

74:9 *our own signs*: perhaps a reference to a banner or some physical symbol (see Num 2:2), or maybe a way of saying that nothing recognizable is left. *No prophet*: See Lamentations 2:9.

74:10 *How long*: a frequent question in the prayers for help (see Ps 13:1).

74:12-17 *As is regularly the case in the prayers of individuals, complaint and celebration are placed side by side* (see Ps 13:5-6).

74:12 *my king*: See Psalm 5:2. *makes salvation happen*: a positive statement of God's life-giving power.

74:13-14 *split the sea*: probably an allusion to the exodus, the perfect example that God "makes salvation happen" (Ps 74:12). *sea monsters... Leviathan's heads*: The sea and its creatures often symbolize the disorder that God tamed by divine creative power. Leviathan was the ultimate chaos monster (see Ps 104:26; Job 3:8; 41:1).

74:15 *God makes water life-serving instead of life-threatening* (see Ps 104:6-9)

73:28 Ps 118:17;  
Heb 10:22;  
Jas 4:8

74:2 Ex 15:16;  
Ps 9:11;  
Jer 10:16,  
Jer 51:19

74:3 Ps 79:1

74:4 Nm 2:2;  
Lam 2:7

74:5 Jer 46:22

74:6 1Ki 6:18,  
1Ki 6:29,  
1Ki 6:32,  
1Ki 6:35

74:7 2Ki 25:9;  
Ps 89:39;  
Is 64:11

74:9 1Sa 3:1;  
Lam 2:9;  
Eze 7:26;  
Am 8:11

74:11 Lam 2:3

74:12 Ps 44:4;  
Is 33:22

74:13 Ex 14:21;  
Is 27:1, Is 51:9,  
Is 51:10,  
Eze 29:3

74:14 Job 41:1;  
Ps 104:26

74:15 Ex 17:6;  
Nm 20:11;  
Josh 3:13;  
Ps 105:41

74:16 Gn 1:14;  
Ps 8:3, Ps 104:19,  
Ps 136:7

74:17 Gn 8:22;  
Dt 32:8; Ac 17:26

74:19 Ps 68:10;  
Song 2:14  
74:21 Ps 9:9,  
Ps 10:18,  
Ps 35:10, Ps 86:1,  
Ps 103:6  
74:23 Ps 65:7  
75:1 Ps 57:1,  
Ps 145:18  
75:2 Ps 102:13;  
Is 11:4; Ac 17:31  
75:3 1Sa 2:8;  
Is 24:19  
75:5 2Ch 30:8  
75:6 Ps 3:3,  
Ps 75:7  
75:7 1Sa 2:7;  
Ps 50:6, Ps 58:11,  
Ps 147:6;  
Dn 2:21  
75:8 Job 21:20;  
Ps 11:6, Ps 60:3;  
Prv 23:30;  
Jer 25:15

- 18** So remember this, LORD:  
how enemies have insulted you,  
how unbelieving fools have abused your name.
- 19** Don't deliver the life of your dove to wild animals!  
Don't forget the lives of your afflicted people forever!
- 20** Consider the covenant!  
Because the land's dark places are full of violence.
- 21** Don't let the oppressed live in shame.  
No, let the poor and needy praise your name!
- 22** God, rise up! Make your case!  
Remember how unbelieving fools insult you all day long.
- 23** Don't forget the voices of your enemies,  
the racket of your adversaries that never quits.

### Psalm 75

*For the music leader. Do not destroy. A psalm of Asaph. A song.*

- 1** We give thanks to you, God. Yes, we give thanks!  
Your name is near. Your marvelous deeds are declared.
- 2** God says,<sup>c</sup> "When I decide the time is right,  
I will establish justice just so.  
**3** The earth and all its inhabitants will melt,  
but I will keep its pillars steady."
- 4** I said to the arrogant,  
"Don't be arrogant!"  
To the wicked I said,  
"Don't exalt your strength!  
**5** Don't exalt your strength so highly.  
Don't speak so arrogantly against the rock."<sup>d</sup>
- 6** Because what exalts someone doesn't come from the east or west;  
it's not from the south either.
- 7** Rather it is God who is the judge.  
He brings this person down,  
but that person he lifts up.
- 8** Indeed, there's a cup in the LORD's hand  
full of foaming wine, mixed with spice.

*Selah*

<sup>c</sup>Heb lacks *God says*. <sup>d</sup>LXX against *God*; MT *speak with an arrogant neck*

74:18 *insulted you*: See Psalm 74:22. God experiences the same abuse that the righteous experience in the prayers for help (see Ps 69:7, 9, 19-20).

74:19 *your dove*: a name for God's defenseless people. *afflicted*: Here and in Psalm 74:21 by mentioning "the oppressed . . . poor and needy," the psalmist appeals to God's special concern for the mistreated and defenseless (see Ps 9:18).

74:20 *the covenant*: See Psalm 44:17.

75:1-10 In Psalm 75, two expressions of praise (75:1, 9) elicit a divine response (75:2-3, 10). In between, the psalmist professes faith in God's intent to establish justice (75:7-8), daring even to challenge the wicked and call them to account (75:4-6).

75:1 This verse recalls Psalm 73:28; and as elsewhere, thanks and testimony to God's work go together (see Ps 9:1; 26:7).

75:2-3 The divine speech offers an appropriate response to the petitions of Psalm 74:18-23, as well as to the psalmist's words in Psalm 75:1.

75:2 *time is right*: See "appointed time" in Habakkuk 2:3,

where the prophet also awaits God's acting to set things right. *establish justice*: See Psalms 9:4; 96:13; 98:9.

75:3 *the earth . . . melt*: an indication of submission (see Ps 46:6). *pillars steady*: God's establishment of justice will put the world on a stable and secure foundation (see Ps 46:5; 93:1; 96:10 compared to 82:5).

75:4 The wicked typically are haughty as well as deceitful and violent (see Ps 5:5; 73:6; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). The psalmists don't usually address their enemies, as here, but it happens occasionally (see Ps 4:2-5; 62:3-4).

75:7 *the judge*: This could be translated "the one who establishes justice," so recalling Psalm 75:2. The psalmist trusts that God's justice will be done. *down . . . up*: This directional language is important in the psalm. The word "exalt" in Psalm 75:4-6 suggests "up," and "lifted up" occurs in Psalm 75:10. This image is drawn into Jesus' teaching about being exalted or humbled (see Matt 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14; see also Ps 113:7-9).

75:8 *a cup*: For a similar image of being called to account, see Psalm 11:6.



He will pour it out,  
and all of the earth's wicked people must drink it;  
they must drink every last drop!

75:9 Ps 40:10,  
Ps 76:6  
75:10 Ps 89:17,  
Ps 92:10,  
Ps 101:8,  
Ps 112:9;  
Jer 48:25

<sup>9</sup>But I will rejoice<sup>e</sup> always;  
I will sing praises to Jacob's God!

<sup>10</sup>God says:<sup>f</sup>  
"I will demolish every bit of the wicked's power,  
but the strength of the righteous will be lifted up."

76:1 1Ch 29:10;  
Ps 4:1, Ps 48:1,  
Ps 48:3, Ps 50:1  
76:2 Gn 14:18;  
Ps 9:11,  
Ps 132:13

### Psalm 76

*For the music leader. With stringed instruments. A psalm of Asaph. A song.*

76:3 Ps 46:9;  
Eze 39:9  
76:7 Ps 89:7;  
Na 1:6; Rev 6:17  
76:9 Ps 9:7,  
Ps 9:8

- <sup>1</sup>God is known in Judah;  
his name is great in Israel.  
<sup>2</sup>His dwelling place became Salem;  
his habitation was Zion.  
<sup>3</sup>It was there that he broke the fiery shafts of the bow,  
the shield, the sword—even the battle itself!

76:10 Ex 9:16  
76:11 2Ch  
32:23; Ps 50:14,  
Ps 68:29; Ecc 5:4

*Selah*

77:1 1Ch 16:41;  
Ps 3:4, Ps 39:1, Ps  
50:1, Ps 62:1

- <sup>4</sup>You are ablaze with light,  
mightier than the mountains that give food.  
<sup>5</sup>The bravehearted lie plundered.  
They sank into deep lethargy.  
All the strong troops couldn't even lift their hands!  
<sup>6</sup>At your rebuke, Jacob's God, both chariot and horse were stopped dead-still.

<sup>7</sup>You! You are awesome!  
Who can stand before you when you are angry?

- <sup>8</sup>You have announced judgment from heaven.  
The earth grew afraid and fell silent  
<sup>9</sup>when God rose up to establish justice,  
when God rose up to save all of the earth's poor.

*Selah*

- <sup>10</sup>Even human rage will turn to your praise  
when you dress yourself with whatever remains of your wrath.<sup>g</sup>  
<sup>11</sup>Make promises to the LORD your God and keep them!  
Let all around him bring gifts to the awesome one.  
<sup>12</sup>He breaks the spirit of princes.  
He is terrifying to all the kings of the earth.

### Psalm 77

*For the music leader. According to Jeduthun. Of Asaph. A psalm.*

<sup>1</sup>I cry out loud to God—  
out loud to God so that he can hear me!

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT I will declare <sup>b</sup>Heb lacks God says. <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

76:1-12 Because of the focus on Zion in 76:1-3, Psalm 76 is usually classified as a song of Zion. As in other songs of Zion, Jerusalem is a symbol that testifies to God's rule, God's will, and God's protecting presence (see Pss 46, 48; see sidebar, "Psalms 46-48: Jerusalem and God's Kingship" at Ps 48).

76:1 Jerusalem itself has the ability to reveal God (see Ps 48:3). Greatness is associated elsewhere with God's rule (see Ps 95:3) and God's residence in Jerusalem (see Pss 48:2-3; 99:2-3).

76:2 *Salem*: The name is the same Hebrew root as *shalom*, "peace," and is a part of the name Jerusalem, which possibly means "gate of peace" (see Gen 14:18). *Zion*: See Psalm 2:6.

76:3 God wages peace, destroying all military hardware (see Ps 46:9).

76:4 *ablaze with light*: God's presence is often associated with light (see Ps 46). *mountains that give food*: See Psalm 72:3, 16.

76:5-6 Another view of God waging peace (see Ps 48:4-7).  
76:7-9 God is angered by injustice (see also Ps 76:10), and God acts to *establish justice* (76:9), which means action on behalf of the poor (see Pss 9:4, 18; 72:2, 4; 82:3-4; 96:13; 98:9).

76:11 *Make promises... bring gifts*: Elements of a thanksgiving sacrifice (see Ps 22:25).

76:12 In order "to establish justice" (Ps 76:9), God must oppose powerful forces that stand for injustice (see Pss 2:2, 8-11; 18:31-50; 21:8-12; 149:6-9).

77:1-20 Verses 1-10 report the psalmist's trouble and distress; but God is addressed directly only in verse 4,

77:2 Gn 37:35;  
Ps 50:15

77:3 Ps 42:5;  
Ps 142:2

77:4 Gn 41:8

77:7 Ps 74:1,  
Ps 85:1, Ps 85:5

77:9 Ps 25:6,  
Ps 40:11;  
Is 49:15

77:10 Ex 15:6

77:13 Ex 15:11;  
Ps 63:2, Ps 73:17

77:14 Ps 72:18,  
Ps 106:8

77:16 Ex 14:21;  
Ps 114:3;  
Hab 3:8,  
Hab 3:10

77:19 Hab 3:15;  
Ro 11:33

<sup>2</sup>During the day when I'm in trouble I look for my Lord.

At night my hands are still outstretched and don't grow numb;  
my whole being<sup>b</sup> refuses to be comforted.

<sup>3</sup>I remember God and I moan.

I complain, and my spirit grows tired.

*Selah* ;

<sup>4</sup>You've kept my eyelids from closing.

I'm so upset I can't even speak.

<sup>5</sup>I think about days long past;

I remember years that seem an eternity in the past.

<sup>6</sup>I meditate with my heart at night;<sup>1</sup>

I complain, and my spirit keeps searching:

<sup>7</sup>"Will my Lord reject me forever?

Will he never be pleased again?"

<sup>8</sup>Has his faithful love come to a complete end?

Is his promise over for future generations?

<sup>9</sup>Has God forgotten how to be gracious?

Has he angrily stopped up his compassion?"

*Selah*

<sup>10</sup>It's my misfortune, I thought,

that the strong hand of the Most High is different now.

<sup>11</sup>But I will remember the LORD's deeds;

yes, I will remember your wondrous acts from times long past.

<sup>12</sup>I will meditate on all your works;

I will ponder your deeds.

<sup>13</sup>God, your way is holiness!

Who is as great a god as you, God?

<sup>14</sup>You are the God who works wonders;

you have demonstrated your strength among all peoples.

<sup>15</sup>With your mighty arm you redeemed your people;

redeemed the children of Jacob and Joseph.

*Selah* ;

<sup>16</sup>The waters saw you, God—the waters saw you and reeled!

Even the deep depths shook!

<sup>17</sup>The clouds poured water, the skies cracked thunder;

your arrows were flying all around!

<sup>18</sup>The crash of your thunder was in the swirling storm;

lightning lit up the whole world;

the earth shook and quaked.

<sup>19</sup>Your way went straight through the sea;

your pathways went right through the mighty waters.

<sup>b</sup>Or soul <sup>1</sup>LXX, MT I remember my song in the night.

and there is no petition. It seems that the psalmist is too depressed or distracted to pray, even though verses 1-2 suggest that the psalmist had prayed at some point. Even so, like the prayers for help, Psalm 77 accompanies the reported complaint with trust and praise (77:11-20).

77:2 *hands... outstretched*: The posture of prayer (see Ps 28:2).

77:7-10 God's essential character consists of the very things the speaker mentions in these verses: *faithful love* (77:8; see Ps 5:7), being *gracious* (77:9), showing *compassion* (77:9; see Ps 25:6). By way of the questions asked, the psalmist wonders whether God is really God anymore. The poet fears that God is *different now* (77:10). See Psalm 88:11-12 for a similar line of questioning.

77:11-14 Memory and thought had led to distress in Psalm 77:3-6, but no longer. Despite the poignant and

painful questions of Psalm 77:7-9, the speaker now professes faith in what God has done: *deeds* and *wondrous acts* (77:11), *works* and *deeds* (77:12), and *wonders* (77:14). The psalmist is clearly in touch with God's incomparable greatness (77:13).

77:15-20 The most outstanding example of what God has done is the exodus out of Egypt, and it is clearly in view in these verses, along with hints about Sinai as well. The mention of *waters* (77:16, 19) and *way... through the sea* (77:19), along with Moses and Aaron (77:20), recalls the exodus (see Exod 14-15). The theophany (appearance of God) imagery in 77:17-18 (see Ps 18:7-15) recalls the people's arrival at Sinai (see Exod 19).

77:19 *footprints left no trace*: The psalmist affirms faith in God's life-giving work, even when visible evidence is lacking.

But your footprints left no trace!

<sup>20</sup>You led your people like sheep under the care of Moses and Aaron.

### Psalm 78

*A maskil<sup>1</sup> of Asaph.*

- <sup>1</sup>Listen, my people, to my teaching;  
tilt your ears toward the words of my mouth.
- <sup>2</sup>I will open my mouth with a proverb.  
I'll declare riddles from days long gone—  
<sup>3</sup>ones that we've heard and learned about,  
ones that our ancestors told us.
- <sup>4</sup>We won't hide them from their descendants;  
we'll tell the next generation  
all about the praise due the LORD and his strength—  
the wondrous works God has done.
- <sup>5</sup>He established a law for Jacob  
and set up Instruction for Israel,  
ordering our ancestors to teach them to their children.
- <sup>6</sup>This is so that the next generation and children not yet born  
will know these things, and so they can rise up and tell their children  
<sup>7</sup>to put their hope in God—never forgetting God's deeds,  
but keeping God's commandments—  
<sup>8</sup>and so that they won't become like their ancestors:  
a rebellious, stubborn generation,  
a generation whose heart wasn't set firm  
and whose spirit wasn't faithful to God.
- <sup>9</sup>The children of Ephraim, armed with bows,  
retreated on the day of battle.
- <sup>10</sup>They didn't keep God's covenant;  
they refused to walk in his Instruction.
- <sup>11</sup>They forgot God's deeds  
as well as the wondrous works he showed them.
- <sup>12</sup>But God performed wonders in their ancestors' presence—  
in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.
- <sup>13</sup>God split the sea and led them through,  
making the waters stand up like a wall.
- <sup>14</sup>God led them with the cloud by day;  
by the lightning all through the night.
- <sup>15</sup>God split rocks open in the wilderness,  
gave them plenty to drink—  
as if from the deep itself!
- <sup>16</sup>God made streams flow from the rock,  
made water run like rivers.

<sup>1</sup>Perhaps *instruction*; the root is used in Ps 32:8.

77:20 *sheep*: See Psalms 78:71; 79:13; 80:1.  
78:1-72 Psalm 78 is usually classified as a historical psalm (see Pss 105; 106; 136), since it relates major events in Israel's history. The *teaching* (78:1) isn't intended primarily to share information but rather to invite *hope* and obedience (78:7). Following the introduction (78:1-8), the historical recital is characterized by the people's disobedience, which evokes God's anger. But the divine anger is followed by God's being willing to forgive and restore (see Ps 106).

78:2 *proverb*: The Hebrew suggests a comparison: in this case, an invitation to compare one's behavior with that of

the ancestors. *riddles*: If a riddle can be inferred from the content of the psalm (see Ps 49:4), it might be this: How can reciting a history of failure inspire a future of hope?

78:5 *Instruction*: See Psalms 78:10; 1:2. *teach... children*: See Deuteronomy 6:20-25.

78:7 *put their hope*: This seems to be the ultimate goal of the "teaching" (Ps 78:1), and it is something encouraged by the psalmists elsewhere as well (see Ps 27:14; 42:5).

78:9-11 These verses seem to look forward to Israel's typical response to God: disobedience and forgetfulness.

78:12-13 See Exodus 14:21-29; 15:8.

78:14-16 See Exodus 13:21-22; 17:1-7; Numbers 20:9-11.

77:20 Ex 13:21;  
Ps 78:52, Ps 80:1;  
Is 63:11

78:1 Ps 49:1;  
Is 51:4, Is 55:3

78:2 Ps 49:4;  
Prv 1:6;  
Mt 13:35

78:3 Ps 44:1

78:5 Dt 4:9,  
Dt 6:7, Ps 81:5,  
Ps 147:19

78:6 Ps 22:31,  
Ps 102:18

78:8 Ex 32:9;  
Dt 31:27;  
2K 17:14;  
2Ch 30:7;  
Ps 78:37

78:10 2K 17:15

78:12 Ex 7:1,  
Ex 12:1;  
Nm 13:22;  
Ps 78:43;  
Is 19:11

78:15 Ex 17:6;  
Nm 20:11;  
Ps 105:41,  
Ps 114:8;  
Is 48:21

78:20 Nm 20:11;  
Ps 78:15,  
78:16  
78:24 Ex 16:4;  
Neh 9:15;  
Ps 105:40;  
Jn 6:31  
78:25 Ps 103:20  
78:30 Nm 11:33  
78:31 Nm 11:33;  
Is 10:16  
78:32 Nm 14:11;  
Ps 78:22  
78:33 Nm 14:29;  
Nm 14:35  
78:34 Nm 21:7;  
Ps 63:1; Is 26:16;  
Hos 5:15  
78:35 Ex 15:13;  
Dt 32:4  
78:36 Is 29:13,  
Is 57:11;  
Eze 33:31  
78:37 Ps 78:8;  
Ac 8:21  
78:38 Ex 34:6;  
Ps 85:2,  
Ps 106:43;  
Is 30:18; Is 48:9  
78:39 Gn 6:3;  
Job 7:7;  
Ps 103:14;  
Jas 4:14  
78:40 Ps 106:14;  
Eph 4:30

- 17 But they continued to sin against God,  
rebelling against the Most High in the desert.
- 18 They tested God in their hearts,  
demanded food for their stomachs.
- 19 They spoke against God!  
“Can God set a dinner table in the wilderness?” they asked.
- 20 “True, God struck the rock and water gushed and streams flowed,  
but can he give bread too?  
Can he provide meat for his people?”
- 21 When the LORD heard this, he became furious.  
A fire was ignited against Jacob;  
wrath also burned against Israel
- 22 because they had no faith in God,  
because they didn’t trust his saving power.
- 23 God gave orders to the skies above, opened heaven’s doors,  
24 and rained manna on them so they could eat.  
He gave them the very grain of heaven!
- 25 Each person ate the bread of the powerful ones;<sup>k</sup>  
God sent provisions to satisfy them.
- 26 God set the east wind moving across the skies  
and drove the south wind by his strength.
- 27 He rained meat on them as if it were dust in the air;  
he rained as many birds as the sand on the seashore!
- 28 God brought the birds down in the center of their camp,  
all around their dwellings.
- 29 So they ate and were completely satisfied;  
God gave them exactly what they had craved.
- 30 But they didn’t stop craving—  
even with the food still in their mouths!
- 31 So God’s anger came up against them:  
he killed the most hearty of them;  
he cut down Israel’s youth in their prime.
- 32 But in spite of all that, they kept sinning  
and had no faith in God’s wondrous works.
- 33 So God brought their days to an end, like a puff of air,  
and their years in total ruin.
- 34 But whenever God killed them, they went after him!  
They would turn and earnestly search for God.
- 35 They would remember that God was their rock,  
that the Most High was their redeemer.
- 36 But they were just flattering him with lip service.  
They were lying to him with their tongues.
- 37 Their hearts weren’t firmly set on him;  
they weren’t faithful to his covenant.
- 38 But God, being compassionate,  
kept forgiving their sins, kept avoiding destruction;  
he took back his anger so many times,  
wouldn’t stir up all his wrath!
- 39 God kept remembering that they were just flesh,  
just breath that passes and doesn’t come back.
- 40 How often they rebelled against God in the wilderness  
and distressed him in the desert!

<sup>k</sup>Or everyone ate the bread from heaven; Heb uncertain

78:17-39 See Exodus 17:1-7; 16:1-36; Numbers 11:33-34; Psalm 95:8-9. Psalm 78:38 recalls the gold calf incident, where God changes God’s mind about destroying the people (Exod 32:1-14), ultimately revealing the divine self

as faithfully loving, merciful, and kind (Exod 34:6-7; see Ps 25:6-7).

78:40-41 These verses summarize the disobedience of the people in the wilderness.

- 41 Time and time again they tested God,  
provoking the holy one of Israel.
- 42 They didn't remember God's power—  
the day when he saved them from the enemy;
- 43 how God performed his signs in Egypt,  
his marvelous works in the field of Zoan.
- 44 God turned their rivers into blood;  
they couldn't drink from their own streams.
- 45 God sent swarms against them to eat them up,  
frogs to destroy them.
- 46 God handed over their crops to caterpillars,  
their land's produce to locusts.
- 47 God killed their vines with hail,  
their sycamore trees with frost.
- 48 God delivered their cattle over to disease,<sup>1</sup>  
their herds to plagues.
- 49 God unleashed his burning anger against them—  
fury, indignation, distress,  
a troop of evil messengers.
- 50 God blazed a path for his wrath.  
He didn't save them from death,  
but delivered their lives over to disease.
- 51 God struck down all of Egypt's oldest males;  
in Ham's tents, he struck their pride and joy.
- 52 God led his own people out like sheep,  
guiding them like a flock in the wilderness.
- 53 God led them in safety—they were not afraid!  
But the sea engulfed their enemies!
- 54 God brought them to his holy territory,  
to the mountain that his own strong hand had acquired.
- 55 God drove out the nations before them and apportioned property for them;  
he settled Israel's tribes in their tents.
- 56 But they tested and defied the Most High God;  
they didn't pay attention to his warnings.
- 57 They turned away, became faithless just like their ancestors;  
they twisted away like a defective bow.
- 58 They angered God with their many shrines;  
they angered him with their idols.
- 59 God heard and became enraged;  
he rejected Israel utterly.
- 60 God abandoned the sanctuary at Shiloh,  
the tent where he had lived with humans.
- 61 God let his power be held captive,  
let his glory go to the enemy's hand.
- 62 God delivered his people up to the sword;  
he was enraged at his own possession.
- 63 Fire devoured his young men,  
and his young women had no wedding songs.

<sup>1</sup>Correction; MT to *hailstones*

78:42-53 Psalm 78:42 recalls the whole exodus experience, and later verses focus on the plagues against Egypt (see Exod 7-10), including the death of the Egyptian oldest male child (Ps 78:51; see Exod 11:1-12:30) that immediately preceded the way toward the sea and the sea-crossing (Ps 78:52-53; see Exod 13:17-14:31). 78:54-55 These verses focus briefly on Sinai (Exod 19-24) and entry into the land (Josh 1-12).

78:56-59 The behavior described here seems to have in view the book of Judges, in which the people constantly disobey.

78:60-72 See 1 Samuel 4-6; Jeremiah 7:12-14. The sacred chest resided at Shiloh for a time. The Philistines captured it, moved it around, and eventually returned it. Its return made it available for David to move it to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6). The prominence of David and Zion (see Ps 2:6)

78:46 Ex 10:12,  
Ex 10:14;  
1Ki 8:37;  
Ps 105:34; Jl 1:4  
78:49 Ex 15:7;  
Nm 25:4;  
2S 24:16;  
Ps 69:24;  
Lam 4:11  
78:50 Ex 9:3  
78:53 Ex 14:19,  
Ex 14:20,  
Ex 14:27,  
Ex 14:28;  
Heb 11:29  
78:54 Ex 15:17;  
Ps 44:3  
78:55 Ps 44:2,  
Ps 135:12  
78:57 Eze 20:27;  
Hos 7:16

78:65 Ps 44:23,  
Ps 73:20  
78:67 Ps 78:60,  
Ps 80:1, Ps 81:5,  
Ps 105:17;  
Jer 7:15  
78:68  
2Ch 6:6; Ps 87:2,  
Ps 132:13  
78:69 Ps 119:90;  
Is 48:13  
78:70 (Sa 16:11,  
1Sa 16:12,  
1Sa 16:13;  
2Sa 7:8; Ps 89:20  
78:72 1Ki 9:4  
79:1 2Ki 25:9;  
Jer 26:18;  
Lam 1:10;  
Mi 3:12  
79:2 Dt 28:26;  
Jer 7:33, Jer 16:4,  
Jer 34:20  
79:3 Jer 14:16,  
Jer 16:4  
79:4 Ps 44:13,  
Ps 80:6; Dn 9:16  
79:5 Ps 13:1,  
Ps 74:1, Ps 74:10,  
Ps 85:5, Ps 89:46  
79:6 Ps 14:4,  
Ps 69:24;  
Jer 10:25;  
2Th 1:8  
79:8 Ps 116:6,  
Ps 142:6; Is 64:9  
79:9 2Ch 14:11;  
Ps 25:11, Ps 65:3;  
Jer 14:7

**64** God's priests were killed by the sword,  
and his widows couldn't even cry.

**65** But then my Lord woke up—  
as if he'd been sleeping!  
Like a warrior shaking off wine,

**66** God beat back his foes;  
he made them an everlasting disgrace.

**67** God rejected the tent of Joseph  
and didn't choose the tribe of Ephraim.

**68** Instead, he chose the tribe of Judah,  
the mountain of Zion, which he loves.

**69** God built his sanctuary like the highest heaven  
and like the earth, which he established forever.

**70** And God chose David, his servant,  
taking him from the sheepfolds.

**71** God brought him from shepherding nursing ewes  
to shepherd his people Jacob,  
to shepherd his inheritance, Israel.

**72** David shepherded them with a heart of integrity;  
he led them with the skill of his hands.

## Psalm 79

### A psalm of Asaph.

**1** The nations have come into your inheritance, God!  
They've defiled your holy temple.

**2** They've left your servants' bodies as food for the birds;  
they've left the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth.

**3** They've poured out the blood of the faithful like water all around Jerusalem,  
and there's no one left to bury them.

**4** We've become a joke to our neighbors,  
nothing but objects of ridicule and disapproval to those around us.

**5** How long will you rage, LORD? Forever?  
How long will your anger burn like fire?

**6** Pour out your wrath on the nations who don't know you,  
on the kingdoms that haven't called on your name.

**7** They've devoured Jacob and demolished his pasture.

**8** Don't remember the iniquities of past generations;  
let your compassion hurry to meet us because we've been brought so low.

**9** God of our salvation, help us for the glory of your name!  
Deliver us and cover our sins for the sake of your name!

are featured in Psalm 78:67-72 (see 1 Sam 16). Psalm 78:67 may reflect the destruction of the northern kingdom in 722 BCE, or at least demonstrates a Judean origin for the psalm.

**79:1-13** Psalm 79 is a communal prayer for help that probably originated when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BCE (see Pss 44; 74). The contrast with Psalm 78:67-72 is especially striking. Both sections of complaint and petition (79:1-5, 6-12) begin by focusing upon the nations (79:1-3, 6-7), and then they shift attention to the people (79:4, 8) and to God (79:5, 9-12). The psalm concludes with the people's promise to praise (79:13).

**79:1** See Psalm 74:4-7; Lamentations 1:10. The prophets had warned that Jerusalem would be destroyed (see Mic 3:12; Jer 26:18).

**79:2** Unburied bodies add to the defilement and unclean-

ness of the scene, and suggest divine punishment (see Deut 28:26).

**79:3** See Ezekiel 22:1-12, where the people themselves shed blood in Jerusalem.

**79:4** This verse looks forward to Psalm 79:12, where God is the object of insult. (See Ps 44:13).

**79:5** See Psalm 74:1.

**79:6** The petition (see also Ps 79:10) isn't simply a matter of payback but rather a request for God to set things right in a desperately bad situation (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

**79:8-9** The admission of sin isn't typical of the communal prayers (cf. Ps 44:17-18), but it fits well with the prophetic view that the exile was a deserved punishment. *compassion*: See Psalm 25:6-7. The appeal is to God's characteristic concern for the mistreated (see Ps 79:11; 9:18).

- 10 Why should the nations say, "Where's their God now?"  
 Let vengeance for the spilled blood of your servants  
 be known among the nations before our very eyes!
- 11 Let the prisoners' groaning reach you.  
 With your powerful arm spare those who are destined to die.
- 12 Pay back our neighbors seven times over, right where it hurts,  
 for the insults they used on you, Lord.
- 13 We are, after all, your people and the sheep of your very own pasture.  
 We will give you thanks forever;  
 we will proclaim your praises from one generation to the next.

79:10 Ps 42:3,  
 Ps 42:10, Ps 94:1,  
 Ps 115:2; II 2:17

79:11 Ps 102:20;  
 Mt 6:13

79:12 Gn 4:15;  
 Lv 26:21,  
 Lv 26:28; Is 65:6;  
 Jer 32:18

79:13 Ps 44:8,  
 Ps 74:1, Ps 95:7,  
 Ps 100:3,  
 Is 43:21

80:1 Ex 25:22;  
 1Sa 4:4;  
 2Sa 6:2;  
 2Ki 19:15;  
 Ps 99:1

80:2 Nm 2:18;  
 Ps 35:23

80:3 Nm 6:25;  
 Ps 4:6, Ps 80:19,  
 Ps 85:4;  
 Lam 5:21

80:4 Ps 59:5,  
 Ps 79:5

80:5 Ps 42:3,  
 Ps 102:9;  
 Is 30:20

80:7 Ps 80:3

80:8 Ps 44:2;  
 Is 5:1, Is 5:2;  
 Jer 2:21;  
 Eze 17:6

80:9 Josh 24:12

**Psalm 80**

*For the music leader. According to "Lotus Blossoms."*

*A testimony of Asaph. A psalm.*

- 1 Shepherd of Israel, listen!  
 You, the one who leads Joseph as if he were a sheep.  
 You, who are enthroned upon the winged heavenly creatures.  
 Show yourself <sup>2</sup>before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh!  
 Wake up your power!  
 Come to save us!
- 3 Restore us, God!  
 Make your face shine so that we can be saved!
- 4 LORD God of heavenly forces,  
 how long will you fume against your people's prayer?
- 5 You've fed them bread made of tears;  
 you've given them tears to drink three times over!
- 6 You've put us at odds with our neighbors;  
 our enemies make fun of us.
- 7 Restore us, God of heavenly forces!  
 Make your face shine so that we can be saved!
- 8 You brought a vine out of Egypt.  
 You drove out the nations and planted it.
- 9 You cleared the ground for it;  
 then it planted its roots deep, filling the land.
- 10 The mountains were covered by its shade;  
 the mighty cedars were covered by its branches.

79:10 "Where's their God now?": See Psalms 42:3, 10; 115:2. *vengeance*: As in Psalm 79:6, the ultimate goal is to set things right.

79:12 *Pay back*: As in Psalm 79:6, 10, the goal is to correct a situation in which both people and God were wronged and insulted (see Pss 79:4; 74:10).

79:13 This verse is evidence that the people continue to have faith during the worst of circumstances. *sheep*: See Psalms 77:20; 78:71; 80:1.

80:1-19 Like Psalm 79, Psalm 80 is a communal prayer for help (see also Pss 44; 74). The mention of Ephraim and Manasseh (80:2) may suggest that Psalm 80 originated in the northern kingdom; but if so, its present literary context suggests that it would have been understood in relation to the exile that began with the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE (see sidebar, "Books II-III and the Elohistic Psalter" at Ps 42).

80:1 *Shepherd... sheep*: See image of the sheep/shepherd in Psalms 77:20; 78:70-72; 79:13; 23:1. *enthroned... creatures*: "Shepherd" was a royal title (see 2 Sam 7:7; Ezek

34:1-16), so enthronement fits the context. The winged creatures were carved decorations on the sacred chest that served as the earthly throne of God (see 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; Ps 99:1). *Show yourself*: a request for God to make an appearance.

80:2 *Wake up*: See Psalm 44:23.

80:3 This refrain occurs again in Psalm 80:7, 19. *Restore us*: The underlying Hebrew root is sometimes used in reference to the return from exile (see 1 Kgs 8:34; Jer 27:22), but it may also involve restoring life in a death-filled situation (see "Revive us" in Ps 80:18). *Make... shine*: another request for God to be present (see Pss 4:6; 67:1).

80:4 *God of heavenly forces*: See Psalm 24:10. *fume*: See Psalm 79:5.

80:5 *bread made of tears*: "Shepherd" (Ps 80:1) means "one who feeds," so this complaint is especially poignant.

80:6 See Psalms 44:13; 79:4.

80:8-11 The allegory about a vine tells about the people's experience from the exodus to entry into the land, and eventually growth into the Davidic kingdom that

80:12 Ps 89:40;  
Is 5:5

80:13 Jer 5:6

80:16 Ps 39:11,  
Ps 76:6

80:17 Ps 80:15,  
Ps 89:21

80:18 Ps 71:20

80:19 Ps 80:3,  
Ps 80:7

81:1 Ps 46:1,  
Ps 66:1

81:3 Lv 23:24;  
Nm 10:10

81:5 Ex 11:4;  
Dt 28:49;

Ps 80:1, Ps 114:1;  
Jer 5:15

81:6 Ex 1:14,  
Ex 6:6; Is 9:4;  
Is 10:27

81:7 Ex 2:23,  
Ex 17:7,

Ex 19:19;  
Nm 20:13;  
Ps 50:15

- 11** It sent its branches all the way to the sea;  
its shoots went all the way to the Euphrates River.<sup>m</sup>
- 12** So why have you now torn down its walls  
so that all who come along can pluck its fruit,  
**13** so that any boar from the forest can tear it up,  
so that the bugs can feed on it?
- 14** Please come back, God of heavenly forces!  
Look down from heaven and perceive it!  
Attend to this vine,  
**15** this root that you planted with your strong hand,  
this son whom you secured as your very own.
- 16** It is burned with fire. It is chopped down.  
They die at the rebuke coming from you.
- 17** Let your hand be with the one on your right side—  
with the one whom you secured as your own—  
**18** then we will not turn away from you!  
Revive us so that we can call on your name.
- 19** Restore us, LORD God of heavenly forces!  
Make your face shine so that we can be saved!

### Psalm 81

*For the music leader. According to the Gittith. Of Asaph.*

- 1** Rejoice out loud to God, our strength!  
Shout for joy to Jacob's God!
- 2** Take up a song and strike the drum!  
Sweet lyre along with harp!
- 3** Blow the horn on the new moon,  
at the full moon, for our day of celebration!
- 4** Because this is the law for Israel;  
this is a rule of Jacob's God.
- 5** He made it a decree for Joseph  
when he went out against the land of Egypt,  
when I heard a language I did not yet know:
- 6** "I lifted the burden off your shoulders;  
your hands are free of the brick basket!"
- 7** In distress you cried out, so I rescued you.  
I answered you in the secret of thunder.  
I tested you at the waters of Meribah.

*Selah*

<sup>m</sup>Or the Great River

extended all the way to the Euphrates River (see map 8). The vine image confirms God's care and commitment, which now seem lacking (see Isa 5:1-7).

80:12-13 The destruction of the vine symbolizes the exile that began with the destruction of Jerusalem.

80:14 *come back*: This is a variation of the refrain in Psalm 80:3, 7, 19, since "come back" is the same Hebrew root as "restore."

80:15 *this son*: a reference to the people. See Hosea 11:1, where the people are described as God's son.

80:17 *the one on your right side*: This is sometimes interpreted to mean a Davidic descendant who might someday restore the monarchy, but it more likely refers to the people whom the vine symbolizes, that is, the vine that now needs to be restored as Psalm 80:15-16 suggest.

81:1-16 Psalm 81 started out like a song of praise (Ps 81:1-2); but because God speaks in verses 6-16, it is usually

identified as a prophetic exhortation or a religious talk (see Ps 50).

81:2 Musical instruments were used in praising God (see Pss 33:2; 149:3; 150:3-5; and sidebar, "Music and Singing" at Ps 33).

81:3-4 Israel used a lunar calendar; and trumpet blasts marked the first day of the seventh month, an especially holy season (see Ps 81:9-11). Keeping the ceremony is demanded in Leviticus 23:23-24; Numbers 29:1-6.

81:5 The allusion is to God's actions against Egypt, leading up to the exodus. *When I . . . know*: The "I" seems to be the speaker, and what he or she hears apparently turns out to be the divine speech that begins in Psalm 81:6.

81:6 The exodus was Israel's freedom from enslavement in Egypt, including brick-making (see Exod 1:14).

81:7 The first line of this verse points to the exodus itself. After leaving Egypt, the people went to Sinai, which



- 8 Listen, my people, I'm warning you!  
If only you would listen to me, Israel.
- 9 There must be no foreign god among you.  
You must not bow down to any strange deity.
- 10 I am the LORD your God,  
who brought you up from Egypt's land.  
Open your mouth wide—I will fill it up!
- 11 But my people wouldn't listen to my voice.  
Israel simply wasn't agreeable toward me.
- 12 So I sent them off to follow their willful hearts;  
they followed their own advice.
- 13 How I wish my people would listen to me!  
How I wish Israel would walk in my ways!
- 14 Then I would subdue their enemies in a second;  
I would turn my hand against their foes.
- 15 Those who hate the LORD would grovel before me,  
and their doom would last forever!
- 16 But I would feed you with the finest wheat.  
I would satisfy you with honey from the rock."

81:8 Ps 50:7  
81:9 Ex 20:3;  
Dt 5:7; Dt 32:12;  
Ps 44:20  
81:10 Ex 20:2;  
Ps 37:3, Ps 37:4  
81:11 Ex 32:1;  
Dt 32:15;  
Dt 32:18;  
Ps 81:12;  
Ps 106:25  
81:13 Dt 5:29;  
Is 48:18  
81:14 Am 1:8  
81:16 Dt 32:13,  
Dt 32:14;  
Ps 147:14  
82:1 2Ch 19:6;  
Ps 58:11, Is 3:13  
82:2 Dt 1:17;  
Ps 58:1; Prv 18:5  
82:3 Ps 10:18;  
Is 1:17; Jer 22:3,  
Jer 22:16  
82:4 Job 29:12  
82:5 Ps 11:3,  
Ps 14:4; Prv 21:13

**Psalm 82**

*A psalm of Asaph.*

- 1 God takes his stand in the divine council;  
he gives judgment among the gods:
- 2 "How long will you judge unjustly by granting favor to the wicked? *Selah*
- 3 Give justice to the lowly and the orphan;  
maintain the right of the poor and the destitute!
- 4 Rescue the lowly and the needy.  
Deliver them from the power of the wicked!
- 5 They don't know; they don't understand;  
they wander around in the dark.  
All the earth's foundations shake.

seems to be what is meant by the mention of *the secret of thunder* (see Exod 19:16). On the way to Sinai, the people had stopped at Meribah (see Exod 17:1-7; Ps 95:8-9).

81:8 See Psalm 95:7.

81:9-10 Psalm 81:9 recalls the first of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:3), and 81:10 quotes the introduction to the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:2). Sinai was recalled and celebrated at the Festival of Booths, which occurred in the seventh month (see Ps 81:3-4).

81:11 The description of the people's sin (see also Ps 81:8, 13) would fit well with the Day of Reconciliation, another ceremony in the seventh month (see Ps 81:3-4; Lev 16).

81:13 *How... listen to me!* This is the fourth occurrence of "listen" (see Ps 81:8, 11). God's frustration is clear, but God still wants the best for the people, as Psalm 81:14-16 suggests.

81:16 *finest wheat*: See Psalms 81:10; 147:14; Deuteronomy 32:14. *honey*: See Deuteronomy 32:13.

82:1-8 Unique in the Psalter, Psalm 82 is a description of a controversy in heaven, in which the God of Israel de-thrones all other gods. It amounts, therefore, to a statement about what defines true holiness. The basic requirement is justice, which is the keyword in the psalm (see *Judgment In 82:1; judge in 82:2; justice in 82:3; and Judge in 82:8*, all from the same Hebrew root).

82:1 *the divine council... the gods*: The Canaanite group of gods is in view (see Ps 58:1-2; cf. "divine beings" in Ps 29:1), and God has interrupted a meeting to pursue justice.

82:2 The question that God asks the gods amounts to an indictment. In Leviticus 19:15, God says that the people must not act unjustly or show favoritism. Compared to humans, the gods should demonstrate an even higher standard, but they have not.

82:3 *Give justice... maintain the right*: Justice and righteousness are a summary of God's will (see Pss 5:18; 9:4; 96:13; 98:9). The existence of justice and righteousness is measured by the well-being of the most helpless, which is why God always demonstrates special concern for the poor and needy (see Pss 9:18; 72:1-7, 12-14; see sidebar, "The Poor and Needy" at Ps 82).

82:4 See Psalm 72:12-14, where the earthly king is given the task of doing what God wills, and it's exactly what this verse says to do.

82:5 *They... in the dark*: The gods don't comprehend what God intends, or at least they don't grasp the significance of it. *All... shake*: The foundations of the earth are the mountains. When they shake, the whole world becomes unstable; and the way is open for mass disorder (see Ps 46:1-3; Isa 24:18-20; cf. Pss 93:1; 96:10). In short, the injustice of the gods is destroying the world.

82:6 Ps 82:1;  
Jn 10:34  
82:7 Job 21:32;  
Ps 49:12;  
Eze 31:14  
82:8 Ps 2:8,  
Ps 12:5, Ps 96:13;  
Rev 11:15  
83:1 Ps 28:1,  
Ps 35:22,  
Ps 109:1  
83:3 Ps 27:5,  
Ps 31:20  
83:6 Gn 25:12;  
1Ch 5:10;  
2Ch 20:1,  
2Ch 20:10;  
Ps 137:7  
83:7 Josh 13:5;  
Eze 27:3; Am 1:9  
83:8 Dt 2:9

*The Poor and Needy* The Psalms regularly locate God on the side of the helpless and the mistreated. This group of people includes the poor, the needy, the lowly, the destitute, the weak, the helpless, the orphan, the widow, and the immigrant. In fact, Psalm 82 suggests that the basic characteristic of divinity is advocating for the poor and needy (Ps 82:3-4); and this is why many readers consider Psalm 82 and its cry for justice and righteousness to be so important.

Such justice and righteousness are what the Psalms say that God “is coming” to do (see Pss 96:13; 98:9; see sidebar, “Book IV and the Rule of God” at Ps 89). In terms of practical performance, the earthly king was given the responsibility of establishing justice and righteousness (see Ps 72:1-7), which meant that the king was to seek the best for the poor and needy (see Ps 72:2, 4, 12-14). At a minimum, this responsibility meant the king was to pursue “peace,” which was to begin with the provision of food (see Pss 72:3, 16; 85:10, 12; 147:14).

Because the righteous are regularly mistreated by enemies (see sidebar, “The Enemies” at 3) and stand in need of help, it isn’t surprising that the psalmists often affirm that God defends and is with the poor and needy (see note on Ps 9:18).

<sup>6</sup>I hereby declare, “You are gods,  
children of the Most High—all of you!

<sup>7</sup>But you will die like mortals;  
you will fall down like any prince.”

<sup>8</sup>Rise up, God! Judge the earth  
because you hold all nations in your possession!

### Psalm 83

*A song. A psalm of Asaph.*

<sup>1</sup>God, don’t be silent!

Don’t be quiet or sit still, God,

<sup>2</sup>because—look!—your enemies are growling;  
those who hate you are acting arrogantly.

<sup>3</sup>They concoct crafty plans against your own people;  
they plot against the people you favor.

<sup>4</sup>“Come on,” they say, “let’s wipe them out as a nation!  
Let the name Israel be remembered no more!”

<sup>5</sup>They plot with a single-minded heart;  
they make a covenant against you.

<sup>6</sup>They are the clans of Edom and the Ishmaelites,  
Moab and the Hagrites,

<sup>7</sup>Gebal, Ammon, Amalek,  
Philistia along with the citizens of Tyre.

<sup>8</sup>Assyria too has joined them—  
they are the strong arm for Lot’s children.

*Selah*

**82:6-7** Because their behavior threatens to destroy the world, the gods are sentenced to death. This sounds harsh; but the point is to emphasize God’s commitment to justice and righteousness. In Psalm 89, God’s own “anointed” (Ps 89:38) has *fall[en] down like any prince*. When the king, God’s own “son” (Ps 2:7), fails to do justice and righteousness (see Ps 72), he, too, is dethroned (see Ps 89:38-51). The message is clear: God’s commitment to justice and righteousness is uncompromising.

**82:8** *Judge the earth*: This could be translated “Establish justice on earth” (see Pss 96:13; 98:9). *all nations . . . your possession!*: See Psalms 24:1; 47:8-9; 67:2-7. God wills justice and righteousness for the whole world.

**83:1-18** In this communal prayer for help, petition (83:1), and complaint (83:2-5) are followed by the naming of the enemies (83:6-8). Petitions against the enemies, supported by the memory of past divine actions, conclude

the psalm (83:9-18). If Psalm 83 wasn’t written in response to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, it would certainly have taken on new meaning at that time in history (see Pss 44, 74, 79, 80).

**83:1** *Don’t be quiet*: See Psalm 35:22.

**83:2-5** As in Psalm 2:1-3, the enemies oppose God and those who belong to God.

**83:6-8** *Edom*: See Psalms 60:8-9; 137:7; Isaiah 34:5-6. *Ishmaelites*: See Genesis 17:20; 25:18; 37:25-28. *Moab*: See Psalm 60:8; Judges 3:12-20; 1 Samuel 14:47; 2 Kings 3:4-24. *the Hagrites*: See 1 Chronicles 5:10, 19-20; *Gebal*: See Ezekiel 27:9. *Ammon, Amalek*: See Judges 3:13. *Philistia*: See Psalm 60:8; Exodus 15:14; 1 Samuel 4-6; *Tyre*: See Isaiah 23; Ezekiel 27-28; *Assyria*: a major power that destroyed the northern kingdom in 722 BCE (see Nah 1-3). It’s unlikely that all of these nations would have been involved in any single crisis. The suggestion may be widespread opposition to God and God’s people.

- 9 Do to them what you did to Midian,  
to Sisera, and to Jabin at the Kishon River.
- 10 They were destroyed at Endor;  
they become fertilizer for the ground.
- 11 Make their officials like Oreb and Zeeb,  
all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna—
- 12 those who said, “Let’s take God’s pastures for ourselves.”
- 13 My God, make them like tumbleweeds,  
like chaff blown by wind.
- 14 Just like a fire consumes a forest,  
just like flames set mountains ablaze,  
15 pursue them with your storm,  
terrify them with your hurricane.
- 16 Cover their faces with shame, LORD,  
so that they might seek your name.
- 17 Let them be shamed and terrified forever.  
Let them die in disgrace.
- 18 Let them know that you—your name is the LORD!—  
you alone are Most High over all the earth.

83:9 Jgs 4:2,  
Jgs 4:7, Jgs 4:15,  
Jgs 5:21; 1s 9:4  
83:10 Josh  
17:11; 1Sa 28:7;  
2Ki 9:37; Jer 8:2;  
Zep 1:17  
83:12 2Ch 20:11  
83:13 Job 21:18  
83:16 Ps 34:5  
83:18 Ps 59:13,  
Ps 97:9  
84:1 Ps 27:4,  
Ps 42:1, Ps 43:3  
84:2 Ps 42:1,  
Ps 42:2, Ps 63:1,  
Ps 65:4, Ps 143:6  
84:3 Ps 5:2  
84:4 Ps 27:4,  
Ps 65:4  
84:5 Ps 28:8,  
Ps 81:1

**Psalms 84**

*For the music leader. According to the Gittith. Of the Korahites. A psalm.*

- 1 How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD of heavenly forces!
- 2 My very being<sup>a</sup> longs, even yearns, for the LORD’s courtyards.  
My heart and my body will rejoice out loud to the living God!

- 3 Yes, the sparrow too has found a home there;  
the swallow has found herself a nest  
where she can lay her young beside your altars,  
LORD of heavenly forces, my king, my God!

- 4 Those who live in your house are truly happy;  
they praise you constantly.

- 5 Those who put their strength in you are truly happy;  
pilgrimage is in their hearts.

*Selah*

<sup>a</sup>Or *soul*

83:9 *Midian*: See Judges 6–8. *Sisera... Kishon River*: See Judges 4–5.  
83:10 *Endor*: Not mentioned in Judges 4–5 (see Josh 17:11).  
83:11–12 *Oreb and Zeeb*: See Judges 7:25; 8:15. *Zebah and Zalmunna*: See Judges 8:5–21. The stories from the book of Judges are used to recall past examples of God dealing with the enemies of the people. The book of Judges doesn’t include the quotation credited to Zebah and Zalmunna in Psalm 83:12.  
83:13–18 The petitions against the enemies aren’t simply a matter of payback but rather setting things right (see Pss 3:7–8; 7:6; see sidebar, “The Enemies” at Ps 3). As Psalm 83:18 suggests, the ultimate desire is that God’s worldwide claim be recognized. When this would happen, the result would be justice for all (see Pss 82:8; 96:13; 98:9).  
84:1–12 Like the other songs of Zion (see Pss 46; 48; 76; 87; sidebar, “Psalms 46–48: Jerusalem and God’s Kingship” at Ps 48), Psalm 84 demonstrates how the particular place—the temple on Zion—was able to put people in touch with God (see 84:2, 4–5, 11–12). The psalm probably originated in a pilgrim’s experience (see Pss 48; 122; sidebar, “The Pilgrimage Songs” at Ps 120).

84:1 The exclamation seems to come from a pilgrim’s first sight of the temple or the city of Jerusalem. *Lord of heavenly forces*: See Psalm 24:10.  
84:2 See Psalms 42:1; 63:1.  
84:3 *my king*: See Psalm 5:2. In Psalm 5, the psalmist is also going to visit the temple (see Ps 5:7).  
84:4 *truly happy*: See Psalms 1:1–2; 2:12. Birds, and probably priests, actually lived in the temple areas (Ps 84:3). By extension, the psalmist suggests that life in God’s presence is the source of genuine contentment. “Truly happy” occurs again in Psalm 84:8, 12, supporting the conclusion that true happiness involves constantly seeking God and trusting God at all times. The connection to Psalm 1 probably suggests that at some point, study of and obedience to God’s Instruction was understood as a suitable substitute for actually visiting the temple—that is, God’s Instruction was a means of directly experiencing God (see Ps 1:3).  
84:5 *pilgrimage*: Since the origin of the psalm probably lies in a traveler’s experience, it isn’t surprising that Psalm 84:6–7 describe a journey that ends at Zion. But this verse, along with the rest of the psalm, suggests also that the faithful life becomes a perpetual journey.

84:6 1J 2:23  
 84:7 Dt 16:16;  
 Job 17:9;  
 Prv 4:18;  
 Is 40:31;  
 2Co 3:18  
 84:8 Ps 20:1,  
 Ps 59:5, Ps 76:6,  
 Ps 81:1  
 84:9 Gn 15:1;  
 Ps 2:2, Ps 59:11  
 84:10 Ps 27:4,  
 Ps 84:2  
 84:11 Gn 15:1;  
 Ps 15:2, Ps 34:9,  
 Ps 34:10;  
 Is 60:19  
 84:12 Ps 2:12,  
 Ps 40:4; Jer 17:7  
 85:1 Ps 14:7,  
 Ps 77:7, Ps 126:1;  
 Jer 30:18;  
 Eze 39:25  
 85:4 Ps 80:3,  
 Ps 80:7  
 85:5 Ps 74:1,  
 Ps 79:5  
 85:6 Ps 51:12,  
 Ps 71:20,  
 Ps 80:18,  
 Ps 149:2; Hos 6:2  
 85:7 Ps 50:23,  
 Ps 106:4  
 85:8 Ps 29:11

<sup>6</sup>As they pass through the Baca Valley,<sup>o</sup>  
 they make it a spring of water.

Yes, the early rain covers it with blessings.

<sup>7</sup>They go from strength to strength,  
 until they see the supreme God in Zion.<sup>p</sup>

<sup>8</sup>LORD God of heavenly forces, hear my prayer;  
 listen closely, Jacob's God!

<sup>9</sup>Look at our shield, God;  
 pay close attention to the face of your anointed one!

<sup>10</sup>Better is a single day in your courtyards than a thousand days anywhere else!  
 I would prefer to stand outside the entrance of my God's house  
 than live comfortably in the tents of the wicked!

<sup>11</sup>The LORD is a sun and shield;  
 God is favor and glory.  
 The LORD gives—doesn't withhold!—good things  
 to those who walk with integrity.

<sup>12</sup>LORD of heavenly forces, those who trust in you are truly happy!

### Psalm 85

*For the music leader. Of the Korahites. A psalm.*

<sup>1</sup>LORD, you've been kind to your land;  
 you've changed Jacob's circumstances for the better.

<sup>2</sup>You've forgiven your people's wrongdoing;  
 you've covered all their sins.

<sup>3</sup>You've stopped being furious;  
 you've turned away from your burning anger.

<sup>4</sup>You, the God who can save us, restore us!  
 Stop being angry with us!

<sup>5</sup>Will you be mad at us forever?  
 Will you prolong your anger from one generation to the next?

<sup>6</sup>Won't you bring us back to life again  
 so that your people can rejoice in you?

<sup>7</sup>Show us your faithful love, LORD!  
 Give us your salvation!

<sup>8</sup>Let me hear what the LORD God says,  
 because he speaks peace to his people and to his faithful ones.

<sup>o</sup>LXX; Vulg Valley of Tears <sup>p</sup>Correction; MT the God of gods will be seen in Zion

84:6 *Baca*: If an actual place (see translation note), the location is unknown.

84:7 *see . . . Zion*: Zion gives an experience of God's presence (see Pss 24:3-6; 48:3).

84:9 *shield . . . anointed one*: References to the earthly king (see Ps 2:2). It would have been natural for a pilgrim to Jerusalem to pray for the leader of the nation.

84:11 *who walk with integrity*: See Psalm 15:2, where integrity is associated with entrance to the temple (see also Ps 18:20). *good things*: See Psalm 23:6, where "goodness" pursues the one who has come to God's house; and the goodness consists of the provision of daily necessities, including food.

84:12 *those who trust . . . truly happy*: The move from Psalm 84:4 to 84:11-12 is important. Trusting God (Ps 84:12) becomes just as much a direct experience of God as living in God's house (Ps 84:4); it yields true happiness (see Ps 2:12; see note on Ps 84:4).

85:1-13 Psalm 85 begins like a psalm of thanks (85:1-3); but verses 4-7 consist of petitions and questions that suggest a national crisis. So Psalm 85 is often classified as a communal

prayer for help (see Pss 44; 74; 79; 80; 83). The structural pattern of the psalm fits well the time after the return from Babylon when the people experienced renewed difficulties and conflicts. Verses 8-13 offer a lovely description of what God wants for people in all times and places. The pattern found in Psalm 85 also occurs in Psalm 126.

85:1 *changed . . . better*: The phrase usually describes the return from life in Babylon (see Pss 14:7; 126:1).

85:2 The opportunity to return from exile was grounded in God's forgiveness (see Isa 40:1-2).

85:3 *burning anger*: See Psalms 74:1; 79:5.

85:4-7 Somewhat unexpectedly, in view of Psalm 85:1-3, God is angry again.

85:7 *faithful love*: See Psalms 85:10; 5:7. *your salvation*: This means life as God intends it to be (see Pss 85:9; 13:5).

85:8-13 In this section, major qualities of God's character and God's will come alive to construct a picture of life as God intends it.

85:8 *peace*: The Hebrew *shalom* means complete well-being in line with God's will for human life (see Pss 85:10; 4:6; 29:11; 72:3, 7).

*Selah*

*Selah*

Don't let them return to foolish ways.

<sup>9</sup>God's salvation is very close to those who honor him  
so that his glory can live in our land.

<sup>10</sup>Faithful love and truth have met;  
righteousness and peace have kissed.

<sup>11</sup>Truth springs up from the ground;  
righteousness gazes down from heaven.

<sup>12</sup>Yes, the LORD gives what is good, and our land yields its produce.

<sup>13</sup>Righteousness walks before God, making a road for his steps.

## Psalm 86

*A prayer of David.*

<sup>1</sup>LORD, listen closely to me and answer me,  
because I am poor and in need.

<sup>2</sup>Guard my life because I am faithful.  
Save your servant who trusts in you—you! My God!

<sup>3</sup>Have mercy on me, Lord,  
because I cry out to you all day long.

<sup>4</sup>Make your servant's life<sup>a</sup> happy again  
because, my Lord, I offer my life to you,  
<sup>5</sup>because, my Lord, you are good and forgiving,  
full of faithful love for all those who cry out to you.

<sup>6</sup>Listen closely to my prayer, LORD;  
pay close attention to the sound of my requests for mercy.

<sup>7</sup>Whenever I am in trouble, I cry out to you,  
because you will answer me.

<sup>8</sup>My Lord! There is no one like you among the gods!  
There is nothing that can compare to your works!

<sup>9</sup>All the nations that you've made will come and bow down before you, Lord;  
they will glorify your name,

<sup>10</sup>because you are awesome and a wonder-worker.  
You are God. Just you.

<sup>11</sup>Teach me your way, LORD, so that I can walk in your truth.  
Make my heart focused only on honoring your name.

<sup>a</sup>Or *soul*; also in 86:4b, 13

85:9 *his glory*: signals God's presence. Honoring God and living as God intends offer a real experience of God's presence.

85:10 *Faithful love and truth*: These two words often occur together and describe God's fundamental character (see Exod 34:6, "great loyalty and faithfulness"; Pss 5:7; 25:10). *righteousness*: another basic characteristic of God and God's will (see Ps 5:8). "Righteousness" becomes a keyword in the psalm (see Ps 85:11, 13). This is appropriate, since verses 8-13 are a picture of things being completely right. The word that names the condition of things being completely right is *shalom*, so it is appropriate in this verse that *righteousness and peace have kissed*.

85:12 *what is good*: See Psalm 84:11. *our land yields its produce*: God's gift of "what is good" suggests sufficient food (see Ps 65:11), so the mention of the land's produce is appropriate here. An adequate supply of food is characteristic of the *shalom* that God wills (see Pss 67:6; 72:3, 16; 76:4). 86:1-17 Psalm 86 is one of only two prayers for help in Book III (see Ps 88), and the only psalm in Book III credited to David (see Ps 3). The fact that it interrupts a series of Korah psalms suggests that it may have been added to

Book III so that all five books include a title about David. The elements of petition, complaint, and praise are typical; but the arrangement is somewhat unusual, since sections of petition and complaint (Ps 86:1-7, 14-17) surround a central section of praise. This structure symbolizes the reality that the psalmists regularly offer praise in the midst of widespread opposition.

86:1 *poor and in need*: See Psalms 9:18; 40:17; sidebar, "The Poor and Needy" at Psalm 82.

86:2 *trusts*: See Psalm 4:5.

86:4 *I offer my life to you*: See Psalms 25:1; 143:8.

86:5 *good . . . forgiving . . . faithful love*: As is often the case in the prayers for help, the focus here and throughout the psalm is on the character and typical activity of God (see Pss 86:2, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17; 5:7; 23:6; 85:8-13).

86:10-11 These two verses, which lie at the heart of the central section of the psalm, focus on God's activity. Just as God is the only God, the psalmist wants to pay attention only to this God. *Teach me*: Psalm 25 also features a focus on God's character, along with the psalmist's offering of life to God and the request to be taught. (See Ps 25:4-5.)

85:9 Is 46:13;  
Zec 2:5; Jn 1:14  
85:10 Ps 72:3,  
Ps 89:14; Prv 3:3;  
Ro 3:26

85:11 Is 45:8  
85:12 Lv 26:4;  
Ps 67:6,  
Ps 84:11;  
Zec 8:12;  
Jas 1:17

85:13 Ps 89:14;  
Is 58:8

86:1 Ps 31:2,  
Ps 40:17

86:2 Ps 4:3,  
Ps 16:1, Ps 25:2,  
Ps 31:14

86:3 Ps 4:1,  
Ps 57:1, Ps 88:9

86:4 Ps 25:1,  
Ps 143:8

86:8 Ex 15:11;  
Dt 3:24; Ps 89:6;  
Jer 10:6

86:9 Ps 22:27,  
Ps 66:4; Rev 15:4

86:10 Dt 6:4,  
Dt 32:39;  
Ps 72:18;  
Is 37:16; 1Co 8:4

86:11 Ps 25:4,  
Ps 25:5, Ps 25:12,  
Ps 26:3;  
Jer 32:39

86:13 Dt 32:22;  
Ps 16:10, Ps 30:3,  
Ps 56:13,  
Ps 57:10

86:15 Ex 34:6;  
Nm 14:18;  
Neh 9:17;  
Ps 86:5, Ps 111:4

86:16 Ps 25:16,  
Ps 116:16

86:17 Is 6:17;  
Ps 71:21; Is 12:1

87:1 Ps 48:1;  
Is 28:16

87:2 Ps 78:67,  
Ps 78:68

87:3 Ps 46:4;  
Is 60:1

87:4 Ps 45:12,  
Ps 68:31,  
Ps 89:10

87:5 Ps 48:8

87:6 Ps 69:28;  
Is 4:3; Eze 13:9

87:7 Ps 36:9,  
Ps 68:25; Is 12:3

<sup>12</sup>I give thanks to you, my Lord, my God, with all my heart,  
and I will glorify your name forever,

<sup>13</sup>because your faithful love toward me is awesome  
and because you've rescued my life from the lowest part of hell.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>14</sup>The arrogant rise up against me, God.  
A gang of violent people want me dead.  
They don't give a thought for you.

<sup>15</sup>But you, my Lord, are a God of compassion and mercy;  
you are very patient and full of faithful love.

<sup>16</sup>Come back to me! Have mercy on me!  
Give your servant your strength;  
save this child of your servant!

<sup>17</sup>Show me a sign of your goodness  
so that those who hate me will see it and be put to shame—  
show a sign that you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

### Psalm 87

*A psalm of the Korahites. A song.*

<sup>1</sup>God's foundation is set on the holy mountains.

<sup>2</sup>The LORD loves Zion's gates more than all of Jacob's houses combined.

<sup>3</sup>Glorious things are said about you, the city of God!

<sup>4</sup>I count Rahab and Babel among those who know me;  
also Philistia and Tyre, along with Cush—each of these was born there.

<sup>5</sup>And of Zion it is said:

"Each person was born in it,  
but the one who will establish it is the Most High."

<sup>6</sup>The LORD makes a record as he registers the peoples:

"Each one was born there."

<sup>7</sup>And while they dance, people sing:

"The source of my life comes from you."

*Selah*

*Selah*

<sup>†</sup>Heb *Sheol*

86:14-17 The placement of praise (Ps 86:8-13) and complaint is typical of the prayers for help (see Pss 6:8-10; 13:5-6), as is the following doubt about whether rescue has occurred (see Ps 86:13) or is still awaited (see 86:16-17).

86:13 *help*: See translation note; Psalm 6:5.

86:14 As is always the case in the prayers for help, the enemies are present and threatening (see Pss 3:1-2; 4:2-5; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). *want me dead*: See Psalm 35:4.

86:15 Given the persistent focus on God's character (see Ps 86:5), the citation of Exodus 34:6 isn't surprising (see Pss 25:6; 103:8).

86:16 *child of your servant*: The psalmist is "a servant" (Ps 86:2, 16), and this phrase may suggest that he or she comes from a long line of servants (see Ps 116:16).

87:1-7 Like the other songs of Zion, Psalm 87 celebrates not only Jerusalem's glory but also the ability of the city to reveal God and God's life-giving claim on the world (see Pss 46; 48; 76; 84; 122; sidebar, "Psalms 46-48: Jerusalem and God's Kingship" at Ps 48).

87:1 *holy mountains*: See Psalms 2:6; 48:1.

87:2 *Zion's gates*: Even the architectural features of the city are important (see Pss 48:12-14; 2:6; 24:7-10).

87:3-7 Even though 87:3 follows well from Psalm 87:1-2, it seems to belong more clearly with 87:4-7. Verse 7 illustrates

the *Glorious things... said* about Zion (Ps 87:3). Verses 4 and 6 mention the peoples, and both include *Each... was born there*. The effect is to focus attention on verse 5, which again affirms that Zion is the true hometown of everyone in the world (see Pss 24:1-2; 47:8-9; 67:2-7; 82:8).

87:3 *Glorious things*: In addition to Psalm 87:7, see the things said about Zion in Psalms 48:1-2; 84:14; 122:3-5. *city of God*: See Psalms 46:4; 48:1-2.

87:4 *Rahab*: Refers to Egypt (see Isa 30:7). *Babel*: A shortened form of Babylon, the empire that destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BCE. *Philistia and Tyre*: See Psalm 83:7. *Cush*: Refers to Ethiopia (see Ps 68:31; Isa 20:3-5). All of these cities or nations are traditional enemies. *each... was born there*: See also Psalm 87:5-6. This positive statement establishes God's claim upon all peoples, and it is in keeping with Genesis 12:3, where God wills a blessing for "all the families of earth" (see Isa 2:2-4; 19:23-25; Jer 1:10; Mic 4:1-3; Zeph 3:9-13; Zech 9:10).

87:6 *makes a record*: On the image of record-keeping, see Psalms 69:28; 139:16; Revelation 20:12. As in Psalm 87:4, the point is that all people belong to God.

87:7 *source*: or "springs," which would yield life-giving water (see Pss 104:10-11; 114:8). Jerusalem communicates God's life-giving will and power for all the world (see Ps 48:9-10).

**Psalm 88**

A song. A psalm of the Korahites. For the music leader.  
According to "Mahalath Leannoth." A maskil<sup>a</sup> of Heman the Ezrahite.

- <sup>1</sup> LORD, God of my salvation, by day I cry out,  
even at night, before you—<sup>2</sup>let my prayer reach you!  
Turn your ear to my outcry  
<sup>3</sup>because my whole being<sup>b</sup> is filled with distress;  
my life is at the very brink of hell.<sup>c</sup>
- <sup>4</sup>I am considered as one of those plummeting into the pit.  
I am like those who are beyond help,  
<sup>5</sup>drifting among the dead, lying in the grave, like dead bodies—  
those you don't remember anymore,  
those who are cut off from your power.
- <sup>6</sup>You placed me down in the deepest pit, in places dark and deep.
- <sup>7</sup>Your anger smothers me;  
you subdue me with it, wave after wave.
- <sup>8</sup>You've made my friends distant.  
You've made me disgusting to them.  
I can't escape. I'm trapped!
- <sup>9</sup>My eyes are tired of looking at my suffering.  
I've been calling out to you every day, LORD—  
I've had my hands outstretched to you!
- <sup>10</sup>Do you work wonders for the dead?  
Do ghosts rise up and give you thanks?
- <sup>11</sup>Is your faithful love proclaimed in the grave,  
your faithfulness in the underworld?<sup>d</sup>
- <sup>12</sup>Are your wonders known in the land of darkness,  
your righteousness in the land of oblivion?
- <sup>13</sup>But I cry out to you, LORD!  
My prayer meets you first thing in the morning!
- <sup>14</sup>Why do you reject my very being, LORD?  
Why do you hide your face from me?

Selah

Selah

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Perhaps instruction; the root is used in Ps 32:8.

<sup>c</sup>Heb *Abaddon*

<sup>d</sup>Or *soul*, also in 88:14 <sup>e</sup>Heb *Sheol*

**88:1-18** Although Psalm 88 is a prayer for help, it is unique in the book of Psalms. It petitions God only once (88:2), and there is no direct expression of praise or trust. In short, Psalm 88 is clearly focused on complaint. The three reports of crying or calling out mark the beginning of three sections (88:1-8, 9-12, 13-18). Each section contains the keyword *dark[ness]* (88:6, 12, 18). On Heman, see 1 Kings 4:32; 1 Chronicles 16:41; 25:1, 4-6.

**88:1** *God... salvation*: This address of God suggests ongoing trust in God's life-giving power amid the darkness and complaining (see Ps 13:5). Although the trust is never directly affirmed, the psalmist is at least continuing to look to and talk to God. *day... night*: The outcry is constant (see Ps 55:17).

**88:2** The only petition is a request to be heard rather than a clear request to be helped.

**88:3** *hell*: See translation note v; Psalms 6:5; 86:13.

**88:4** *pit*: See Psalm 16:10. The repetition of "pit" in Psalm 88:6 is accompanied by several other words and phrases that reveal death (see Ps 88:11-12).

**88:8** See Psalms 88:18; 31:11; 38:11. Note that the psalmist accuses God directly in Psalm 88:6-8 and again in 88:14-18.

**88:9** *calling out... every day*: See Psalm 88:1. Psalm 88:9 emphasizes the constancy of the outcry and so the urgency of the situation, which is already clear from all the hints about death (Ps 88:4-6, 11-12, 15-17).

**88:10** See Psalm 30:9. *ghosts*: Residents of Sheol (see Ps 6:5), the realm of the dead, were thought to have a ghostlike existence that made them shadows of their former selves.

**88:11** As in Psalm 88:4-6, several words and phrases in Ps 88:11-12 serve as synonyms for the realm of the dead. *faithful love... faithfulness*: fundamental qualities of God (see Pss 5:7; 25:6; Exod 34:6). The questions in Psalm 88:11-12 remind God of God's essentially life-giving character, and point out to God the contrast between the life God wills and the deathly realities surrounding the psalmist. See Psalm 77:7-9, where the speaker's questions have the same effect.

**88:12** *righteousness*: Another fundamental attribute of God and God's will (see Pss 88:11; 5:8).

**88:13** *first... morning*: Another time-centered note (see Ps 88:1, 9, 17), communicating the constancy and urgency of the outcry.

**88:14** *hide your face*: See Psalm 13:1.

88:1 1Ki 4:31;  
1Ch 2:6; Ps 22:2,  
Ps 53:1; Lk 16:7  
88:4 Ps 28:1,  
Ps 143:7  
88:5 Ps 31:22;  
Is 53:8  
88:6 Ps 69:15,  
Ps 143:3;  
Lam 3:55  
88:7 Ps 32:4,  
Ps 42:7; Jon 2:3  
88:8 Job 19:13;  
Ps 31:11,  
Ps 88:18;  
Jer 32:2  
88:9 Job 11:13,  
Job 16:20; Ps 6:7,  
Ps 31:9; Ps 86:3  
88:10 Ps 6:5,  
Ps 30:9  
88:12 Job 10:21

89:1 1Kg 4:31;  
Ps 36:5, Ps 40:10,  
Ps 89:5, Ps 89:8

89:2 Ps 36:5,  
Ps 103:17

89:3 [Kj 8:16;  
Ps 89:35,  
Ps 132:11,  
Is 55:3

89:4 2Sa 7:12;  
Ps 89:29,  
Ps 89:36; Is 9:7;  
Lk 1:33

89:6 Ps 86:8,  
Ps 113:5

89:7 Ex 3:5;  
Lv 10:3; Ps 5:7,  
Ps 47:2, Ps 76:7

89:8 Ps 35:10,  
Ps 71:19

89:11 Gn 1:1;  
1Ch 29:11;  
Ps 24:1

- 15 Since I was young I've been afflicted, I've been dying.  
I've endured your terrors. I'm lifeless.
- 16 Your fiery anger has overwhelmed me;  
your terrors have destroyed me.
- 17 They surround me all day long like water;  
they engulf me completely.
- 18 You've made my loved ones and companions distant.  
My only friend is darkness.

### Psalm 89

*A maskil<sup>m</sup> of Ethan the Ezrahite.*

- 1 I will sing of the LORD's loyal love forever.  
I will proclaim your faithfulness with my own mouth  
from one generation to the next.
- 2 That's why I say, "Your<sup>7</sup> loyal love is rightly built—forever!  
You establish your faithfulness in heaven."
- 3 You said,<sup>8</sup> "I made a covenant with my chosen one;  
I promised my servant David:  
4 "I will establish your offspring forever;  
I will build up your throne from one generation to the next."<sup>9</sup>

*Selah*

- 5 Heaven thanks you for your wondrous acts, LORD—  
for your faithfulness too—in the assembly of the holy ones.
- 6 Is there any in the sky who could compare to the LORD?  
Who among the gods is equal to the LORD?
- 7 God is respected in the council of the holy ones;  
God is awesome and revered more than all those around him.
- 8 Who is like you, LORD God of heavenly forces?  
Mighty LORD, your faithfulness surrounds you!
- 9 You rule over the surging sea:  
When its waves rise up, it's you who makes them still.
- 10 It's you who crushed Rahab like a dead body;  
you scattered your enemies with your strong arm.
- 11 Heaven is yours! The earth too!  
The world and all that fills it—  
you made all of it!  
North and south—you created them!

<sup>m</sup>Perhaps instruction; the root is used in Ps 32:8.

<sup>7</sup>Heb lacks Your. <sup>8</sup>Heb lacks You said.

88:18 See verse 8. *darkness*: Given the content and tone of the whole psalm, it is fitting that its final word (in both English and Hebrew) is "darkness."

89:1-52 Because it rehearses at length the promises to David and his empire, Psalm 89 is usually identified as a royal psalm (see Ps 2; see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2). It's also a statement of God's rule in the form of a hymn (89:5-14), and verses 15-18 clearly connect the reign of the earthly king and the reign of God (see Pss 2; 72). But the unexpected and remarkable shift at verse 38 sets Psalm 89 apart from all the other royal psalms. Verses 38-45 communicate the rejection of the monarchy and the end of the Davidic covenant, and verses 46-51 offer the complaint of an imagined Davidic survivor of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. There is no divine response, and verse 52 is the doxology that concludes Book III (see sidebar, "Books II-III and the Elohistc Psalter" at Ps 42).

89:1 The psalm starts like a song of praise, making its conclusion all the more unexpected. *loyal love*... *faithfulness*: See Psalms 5:7; 25:10. These are fundamental qualities of God, and each occurs six more times, making them

keywords in the psalms (see Ps 89:2, 5, 8, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49) and making the conclusion of the psalm all the more surprising.

89:3 *covenant*... *David*: God is the speaker here, articulating the special relationship between God and the house of David. The word *covenant* is also a keyword in the psalm, occurring again in Psalm 89:28, 34, 39.

89:4 This verse recalls 2 Samuel 7:13-16, where the prophet Nathan relates God's promises to David and his descendants. The promises will be described in more detail in Psalm 89:19-37 with more connections to 2 Samuel 7.

89:5 *assembly*... *holy ones*: reflects the notion of God the king attended by a heavenly court (see Pss 89:7; 29:1-2; 1 Kgs 22:19).

89:8 *LORD*... *heavenly forces*: See Psalm 24:10.

89:10 *Rahab* can refer to Egypt (see Ps 87:4), but here refers to a mythic chaos monster that God subdued to order the creation (see Ps 89:11; Job 26:12; Isa 51:19).

89:11 See Psalm 24:1; Psalm 24 mentions a "battle" (Ps 24:8) that may point to God's conquest of unruly forces (see Ps 24:10).



- 12 The mountains Tabor and Hermon shout praises to your name.
- 13 You have a powerful arm; your hand is strong;  
your strong hand is raised high!
- 14 Your throne is built on righteousness and justice;  
loyal love and faithfulness stand in front of you.
- 15 The people who know the celebratory shout are truly happy!  
They walk in the light of your presence, LORD!
- 16 They rejoice in your name all day long  
and are uplifted by your righteousness
- 17 because you are the splendor of their strength.  
By your favor you make us strong
- 18 because our shield is the LORD's own;  
our king belongs to the holy one of Israel!
- 19 Once you spoke in a vision to your faithful servants:  
I placed a crown on a strong man.  
I raised up someone specially chosen from the people.
- 20 I discovered my servant David.  
I anointed him with my holy oil.
- 21 My hand will sustain him—  
yes, my arm will strengthen him!
- 22 No enemy will oppress him;  
no wicked person will make him suffer.
- 23 I will crush all his foes in front of him.  
I will strike down all those who hate him.
- 24 My faithfulness and my loyal love will be with him.  
He will be strengthened by my name.
- 25 I will set his hand on the sea.  
I will set his strong hand on the rivers.
- 26 He will cry out to me:  
"You are my father, my God, the rock of my salvation."
- 27 Yes, I'll make him the one born first—  
I'll make him the high king of all earth's kings.
- 28 I will always guard my loyal love toward him.  
My covenant with him will last forever.
- 29 I will establish his dynasty for all time.  
His throne will last as long as heaven does.
- 30 But if his children ever abandon my Instruction,  
stop following my rules—
- 31 if they treat my statutes like dirt,  
stop keeping my commandments—
- 32 then I will punish their sin with a stick,  
and I will punish their wrongdoing with a severe beating.
- 33 But even then I won't withdraw my loyal love from him.  
I won't betray my faithfulness.
- 34 I won't break my covenant.  
I won't renege on what crossed my lips.

89:12 Dt 3:8;  
Josh 19:22;  
Jgs 4:6; Job 26:7;  
Jer 46:18

89:14 Ps 85:10,  
Ps 85:13, Ps 89:2,  
Ps 97:2

89:15 Ps 1:1,  
Ps 4:6, Ps 44:3

89:16 Neh 8:10;  
Ps 16:11,  
Ps 20:5, Ps 30:5,  
Ps 105:3

89:17 Ps 75:10,  
Ps 89:24,  
Ps 92:10,  
Ps 112:9,  
Ps 148:14

89:18 Ps 47:9,  
Ps 71:22

89:19 1Sa 16:1;  
2Sa 8:15,  
2Sa 17:10;  
1Ki 11:34;  
Ps 89:3

89:20 1Sa 16:13;  
Ac 13:22

89:21 Ps 80:17,  
Ps 89:13

89:22 2Sa 7:10

89:23 2Sa 7:9

89:24 Ps 89:1,  
Ps 89:17,  
Ps 92:10,  
Ps 132:17

89:25 Ps 72:8

89:26 2Sa 7:14;  
Heb 1:5

89:27 Ex 4:22;  
Nm 24:7;  
Col 1:18;  
Rev 1:5,  
Rev 19:16

89:28 Ps 89:34;  
Is 55:3; Jer 33:21

89:29 Dt 11:21;  
Ps 89:4, Ps 89:36;  
Is 9:7; Jer 33:17

89:30 2Sa 7:14;  
Ps 119:53

89:31 2Sa 7:14

89:32 2Sa 7:14;  
Job 9:34; Lam 3:1

89:33 2Sa 7:15

89:34 Nm 23:19;  
Jer 33:20

89:12 *Tabor and Hermon*: important mountains, sometimes associated with the gods (see Judg 3:3; Hos 5:1).

89:14 *righteousness and justice*: The pair of words summarizes the content of God's will for the world (see Pss 5:8; 9:4; 72:1-4; 82:3; 96:13; 98:9; 97:2). See Psalm 36:5-6, where they are mentioned with "loyal love and faithfulness" (see Ps 89:1).

89:15 *truly happy*: See Psalms 1:1-2; 2:12; see sidebar, "True Happiness" at Psalm 1.

89:18 This verse signals the move to the focus on the earthly king in Psalm 89:19-37.

89:19 *vision*: recalls the word God spoke to Nathan to deliver to David in 2 Samuel 7:4-17.

89:20 *anointed*: See Psalms 89:38, 51; 2:2; 1 Samuel 16:3, 12-13; 2 Samuel 7:8; see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Psalm 2.

89:21-27 See 2 Samuel 7:9-11, 14-15.

89:28 *forever*: See Psalm 89:36-37. Verses 28-37 emphasize the eternity of the covenant with David. Like 2 Samuel 7:14-15, allowance is made for punishment, but not for the kind of outright rejection that is described in Psalm 89:38-45.

89:35 Ps 132:11  
 89:36 Ps 72:5,  
 Ps 72:17,  
 Ps 89:4, Ps 89:29;  
 Lk 1:33  
 89:37 Job 16:19;  
 Ps 72:5  
 89:38 Dt 32:19;  
 1Ch 28:9;  
 Ps 44:9, Ps 89:20,  
 Ps 89:51  
 89:39 Ps 74:7;  
 Lam 2:7,  
 Lam 5:16  
 89:40 Ps 80:12;  
 Lam 2:2  
 89:41 Ps 44:13,  
 Ps 79:4  
 89:42 Ps 132  
 89:43 Ps 44:10  
 89:45 Ps 44:15,  
 Ps 102:23,  
 Ps 109:29  
 89:46 Ps 13:1,  
 Ps 79:5, Ps 80:4,  
 Ps 90:13  
 89:47 Job 7:7,  
 Job 10:9,  
 Job 14:1; Ps 39:5  
 89:48 Ps 49:9,  
 Ps 49:15  
 89:49 Ps 89:3

- 35 By my own holiness I've sworn one thing:  
 I will not lie to David.  
 36 His dynasty will last forever.  
 His throne will be like the sun, always before me.  
 37 It will be securely established forever;  
 like the moon, a faithful witness in the sky.  
 38 But you, God, have rejected and despised him.  
 You've become infuriated with your anointed one.  
 39 You've canceled the covenant with your servant.  
 You've thrown his crown in the dirt.  
 40 You've broken through all his walls.  
 You've made his strongholds a pile of ruins.  
 41 All those who pass by plunder him.  
 He's nothing but a joke to his neighbors.  
 42 You lifted high his foes' strong hand.  
 You gave all his enemies reason to celebrate.  
 43 Yes, you dulled the edge of his sword  
 and didn't support him in battle.  
 44 You've put an end to his splendor.  
 You've thrown his throne to the ground.  
 45 You've shortened the prime of his life.  
 You've wrapped him up in shame.

Selah

Selah

- 46 How long will it last, LORD?  
 Will you hide yourself forever?  
 How long will your wrath burn like fire?  
 47 Remember how short my life is!  
 Have you created humans for no good reason?  
 48 Who lives their life without seeing death?  
 Who is ever rescued from the grip of the grave?<sup>a</sup>  
 49 Where now are your loving acts from long ago, my Lord—  
 the same ones you promised to David by your own faithfulness?

Selah

*Book IV and the Rule of God* Psalm 89 concludes Book III by reporting that the Davidic monarchy was rejected (Ps 89:38-51; see sidebars, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2; "Books II-III and the Elohistc Psalter" at Ps 42). This tragic conclusion invites a response, which comes right away in Book IV (Pss 90-106) and continues in Book V (Pss 107-150; see sidebar, "Book V" at Ps 107). Psalm 90 offers a point of view from before Israel had a monarchy. It is the only psalm attributed to Moses in the Psalter; and Moses led the people of God before they had a king, a land, or a temple, all of which were lost when the Babylonians defeated Judah and destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BCE. So Moses' prayer suggests that, in spite of the losses, a relationship with God is possible.

A hallmark of Moses' time and the later period before the monarchy was the idea that only God rules as king of the people (see Exod 15:18; Judg 8:22-23; 1 Sam 8:1-9). Not surprisingly, this idea lies at the heart of Book IV. In the enthronement collection (Pss 93; 95-99), each psalm either calls God "king" (Pss 95:3; 98:6) or affirms that God "rules" (Pss 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1). This affirmation responds well to the tragic conclusion of Book III, and God's reign may be the central statement of Book IV, as well as the primary theological claim of the entire Psalter (see Ps 5:2). In support of this claim, Psalms 96 and 98 say God "is coming to establish justice . . . in the world rightly" (Pss 96:13; 98:9). This summary of God's will recalls the importance of Instruction seen at the beginning of the Psalter (see Ps 1:1-2), and it connects with the royal psalms that feature God's "anointed one," who was given the task of doing justice and righteousness in the world (see Ps 72:1-7).

<sup>a</sup>Heb Sheol

89:41 joke . . . neighbors: See Psalm 79:4.

89:42 Compare this verse with Psalm 89:22 to see the extent of the reversal.

89:43-45 Compare with Psalm 18:34-39.

89:46-51 The complaint of an imaginary Davidic survivor is full of poignant questions, along with the petition, *Remember* (89:47, 50), which recalls Psalm 74:18, 22 near the beginning of Book III. The effect is to link

- <sup>50</sup> Remember your servant's abuse, my Lord!  
Remember how I bear in my heart all the insults of the nations,<sup>b</sup>  
<sup>51</sup> the ones your enemies, LORD, use—  
the ones they use to abuse every step your anointed one takes.
- <sup>52</sup> Bless the LORD forever!  
Amen and Amen!

BOOK IV  
(Psalms 90–106)

**Psalm 90**

*A prayer of Moses, the man of God.*

- <sup>1</sup> Lord, you have been our help, generation after generation.  
<sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were born,  
before you birthed the earth and the inhabited world—  
from forever in the past to forever in the future, you are God.
- <sup>3</sup> You return people to dust,  
saying, "Go back, humans,"  
<sup>4</sup> because in your perspective a thousand years are like yesterday past,  
like a short period during the night watch.  
<sup>5</sup> You sweep humans away like a dream,  
like grass that is renewed in the morning.  
<sup>6</sup> True, in the morning it thrives, renewed,  
but come evening it withers, all dried up.  
<sup>7</sup> Yes, we are wasting away because of your wrath;  
we are paralyzed with fear on account of your rage.  
<sup>8</sup> You put our sins right in front of you,  
set our hidden faults in the light from your face.  
<sup>9</sup> Yes, all our days slip away because of your fury;  
we finish up our years with a whimper.  
<sup>10</sup> We live at best to be seventy years old, maybe eighty, if we're strong.  
But their duration brings hard work and trouble because they go by so quickly.  
And then we fly off.  
<sup>11</sup> Who can comprehend the power of your anger?  
The honor that is due you corresponds to your wrath.  
<sup>12</sup> Teach us to number our days so we can have a wise heart.

<sup>b</sup>Correction; MT *all of many peoples*

the destruction of Jerusalem with the rejection of the Davidic rule.

89:52 See Psalm 41:13; see sidebar, "Books II–III and the Elohist Psalter" at Psalm 42.

90:1–17 After the painful conclusion of Book III in Psalm 89:38–51, it's significant that Book IV opens with the only psalm credited to Moses, who led the people of God before they had all the things that they lost in 587 BCE: land, temple, and monarchy. Psalm 90 is often identified as a wisdom psalm (90:12) that reflects on the shortness of human life (90:3–12). This makes sense, but Psalm 90 also serves as response to the crisis that is described at the end of Book III. The editors of the Psalter imagine Moses praying for the people in exile as Moses had interceded for the people in the presence of God's anger over their making of the gold calf (see Exod 32:1–14). Just as the gold calf incident ended with the covenant relationship in place (see Exod 33:12–34:27), so 90:13–17 clearly look

toward a hopeful future, not a future of uselessness or hopelessness (see sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89).

90:1–2 *birthed the earth*: a feminine image of God creating the world (see sidebar, "God the Creator" at Ps 8). *forever... forever*: The psalm begins with a focus on God's time, which is eternal, in contrast to human time (Ps 90:3–12).

90:3 *dust*: See Genesis 3:19.

90:4 *the night watch*: a period of three hours. Note again the contrast between God's time and human time (see Ps 90:1), a contrast that's also clear in Psalm 90:5–6.

90:7–11 Verses 7, 9, and 11 contain several words that describe God's displeasure (*wrath, anger, fury*). Divine wrath isn't only God's response to sin (90:8), but it is also God's opposition to the human pretense to be something other than mortal.

90:12 This verse marks a move from the discouraging

89:50 Ps 69:9,  
Ps 74:18,  
Ps 74:22  
89:51 Ps 56:6,  
Ps 74:10,  
Ps 89:38  
89:52 Ps 41:13,  
Ps 72:19,  
Ps 106:48  
90:1 Dt 33:1,  
Dt 33:27;  
Ps 71:3, Ps 91:1,  
Ps 91:9  
90:2 Job 15:7  
90:3 Gn 3:19;  
Job 34:14,  
Job 34:15,  
Ps 104:29;  
Ecc 12:7  
90:4 Ex 14:24;  
Jgs 7:19; 2Pt 3:8  
90:8 Ps 19:12;  
Ecc 12:14;  
Jer 16:17;  
Heb 4:13  
90:9 Ps 39:5,  
Ps 78:33  
90:10 Ps 78:39  
90:11 Neh 5:9;  
Ps 76:7  
90:12 Dt 32:29;  
Ps 39:4

90:14 Ps 36:8,  
Ps 65:4, Ps 85:6,  
Ps 103:5,  
Ps 143:8  
90:15 Dt 2:14;  
Ps 86:4, Ps 90:14;  
Mt 5:4  
90:17 Ps 27:4;  
Is 26:12  
91:1 Ps 27:5,  
Ps 31:20, Ps 32:7,  
Ps 121:5  
91:2 Ps 18:2,  
Ps 91:9, Ps 142:5  
91:4 Ps 17:8,  
Ps 35:2  
91:5 Ps 27:1  
91:6 2Ki 19:35  
91:7 Gn 7:23;  
Ex 12:13;  
Josh 14:10  
91:8 Ps 37:34,  
Ps 58:10; Is 3:11;  
Heb 2:2  
91:9 Ps 71:3,  
Ps 90:1, Ps 91:2  
91:10 Prv 12:21  
91:11 Ps 34:7;  
Mt 4:6; Lk 4:10,  
Lk 4:11;  
Heb 1:14

- 13** Come back to us, LORD!  
Please, quick!  
Have some compassion for your servants!  
**14** Fill us full every morning with your faithful love  
so we can rejoice and celebrate our whole life long.  
**15** Make us happy for the same amount of time that you afflicted us—  
for the same number of years that we saw only trouble.  
**16** Let your acts be seen by your servants;  
let your glory be seen by their children.  
**17** Let the kindness of the Lord our God be over us.  
Make the work of our hands last.  
Make the work of our hands last!

### Psalm 91

- 1** Living in the Most High's shelter,  
camping in the Almighty's<sup>c</sup> shade,  
**2** I say to the LORD, "You are my refuge, my stronghold!  
You are my God—the one I trust!"  
**3** God will save you from the hunter's trap  
and from deadly sickness.  
**4** God will protect you with his pinions;  
you'll find refuge under his wings.  
His faithfulness is a protective shield.  
**5** Don't be afraid of terrors at night,  
arrows that fly in daylight,  
**6** or sickness that prowls in the dark,  
destruction that ravages at noontime.  
**7** Even if one thousand people fall dead next to you,  
ten thousand right beside you—it won't happen to you.  
**8** Just look with your eyes, and you will see the wicked punished.  
**9** Because you've made the LORD my refuge,  
the Most High, your place of residence—  
**10** no evil will happen to you;  
no disease will come close to your tent.  
**11** Because he will order his messengers to help you,  
to protect you wherever you go.

<sup>c</sup>Heb *Shaddai*

point of view of Psalm 90:7-11 to the more hopeful outlook of 90:13-17. *Teach... wise heart*: The sense seems to be this, "Teach us to live day by day depending upon God." Daily trust in God is true wisdom.

90:13 *Come back*: The same Hebrew verb underlies "return" in Psalm 90:3. God's "return" in this verse is much more positive. This verse also echoes Exodus 32:12, where Moses intercedes for the people, telling God to "calm down" (or "return," the same Hebrew verb) from divine anger for the sake of the people and their future.

90:14 *morning*: In Psalm 90:5-6, "morning" occurs in the context of human transience. Here, "morning" holds the possibility of joy and being fulfilled. *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7. "Faithful love" is precisely what is lacking in Psalm 89:49.

90:15 *happy*: Time still passes, but it now holds new possibility.

90:16-17 *Make... last*: With God's help, there is the possibility of something enduring amid the reality of the shortness of human life.

91:1-16 Psalm 91 is an eloquent poem about trust (see

Pss 16; 23). After 91:1-2, which contain the psalmist's expression of trust directed to God, there follows an extended statement of faith that is spoken to an unnamed *you* (91:3-13). The psalm concludes with a divine word that explains why trust in God is well founded (91:14-16).

91:1 *shade*: See "protection" in Psalms 17:8; 63:7; and "shadow" in Psalms 36:7; 57:1.

91:2 *refuge*: See Psalms 91:4, 9; 2:12. *trust*: See Psalm 4:5.

91:4 *under his wings*: See Psalms 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 63:7. *faithfulness*: See Psalm 25:10.

91:5-6 Notice that the various threats can come at all hours of the day and night.

91:7 See Psalm 3:6.

91:8 The psalmists often ask for and/or express confidence in God's disposal of the wicked and their threats. The ultimate issue is the setting of things right (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

91:9 *place of residence*: The same Hebrew word is translated "help" in Psalm 90:1.

91:11-12 *messengers*: God is often pictured as

- <sup>12</sup>They will carry you with their own hands  
so you don't bruise your foot on a stone.
- <sup>13</sup>You'll march on top of lions and vipers;  
you'll trample young lions and serpents underfoot.
- <sup>14</sup>God says,<sup>d</sup> "Because you are devoted to me, I'll rescue you.  
I'll protect you because you know my name.
- <sup>15</sup>Whenever you cry out to me, I'll answer.  
I'll be with you in troubling times.  
I'll save you and glorify you.
- <sup>16</sup>I'll fill you full with old age.  
I'll show you my salvation."

91:13 Ps 58:4;  
Lk 10:19  
91:14 Ps 9:10,  
Ps 59:1  
91:15 1Sa 2:30;  
Ps 50:15;  
Jn 12:26  
91:16 Ps 21:4,  
Ps 50:23; Prv 3:2  
92:1 Ps 135:3,  
Ps 147:1  
92:5 Ps 40:5,  
Ps 111:2,  
Ps 139:17;  
Ro 11:33;  
Rev 15:3  
92:6 Ps 49:10,  
Ps 73:22, Ps 94:8  
92:7 Ps 37:2

**Psalm 92**

*A psalm. A song for the Sabbath day.*

- <sup>1</sup>It is good to give thanks to the LORD,  
to sing praises to your name, Most High;
- <sup>2</sup>to proclaim your loyal love in the morning,  
your faithfulness at nighttime
- <sup>3</sup>with the ten-stringed harp,  
with the melody of the lyre
- <sup>4</sup>because you've made me happy, LORD, by your acts.  
I sing with joy because of your handiwork.
- <sup>5</sup>How awesome are your works, LORD!  
Your thoughts are so deep!
- <sup>6</sup>Ignorant people don't know—  
fools don't understand this:
- <sup>7</sup>though the wicked spring up like grass  
and all evildoers seem to blossom,  
they do so only to be destroyed forever.
- <sup>8</sup>But you, LORD, are exalted forever!
- <sup>9</sup>Look at your enemies, LORD!  
Look at how your enemies die,  
how all evildoers are scattered abroad!
- <sup>10</sup>But you've made me as strong as a wild ox.  
I'm soaked in precious ointment.
- <sup>11</sup>My eyes have seen my enemies' defeat;  
my ears have heard the downfall of my evil foes.

<sup>d</sup>Heb lacks *God says*.

attended by a heavenly court, members of which can act on God's behalf (see Pss 29:1-2; 34:7). See Matthew 4:6 and Luke 4:10, where the devil quotes these verses to tempt Jesus to throw himself down from the top of the temple. Jesus refuses, because the promise of divine protection isn't intended to be used for personal advantage. Jesus does claim God's promise of protection from the cross (see Ps 31:5; see sidebar, "The Psalms and Jesus" at Ps 22).

91:13 The enemies are often described as dangerous animals (see Ps 10:9). In any case, the language is symbolic and not meant to be taken literally.

91:14-16 The subject "I"—that is, God—is accompanied by seven verbs. Seven is the number of completeness, so the effect is to affirm that God's promise of help is completely reliable. In the middle of this list is the promise *I'll be with you*, which summarizes the assuring message of the psalm (see Ps 23:4). *my salvation*: The word describes

life as God intends it, and is especially meaningful in the midst of deadly threats (see Pss 91:3-7; 13:5).

92:1-15 Psalm 92 is usually identified as a psalm of thanks (see Ps 30) for what God has done for the psalmist (92:4, 10-11) and in the world (92:5-9). It also has a teaching dimension, especially 92:12-15. Psalm 92 is the only psalm assigned for *the Sabbath day*, although the origin of and reason for this label are unclear.

92:2 *loyal love*: See Psalm 5:7. *faithfulness*: See Psalm 25:10. Thankfulness begins with an appreciation of God's fundamental character (see Exod 34:6).

92:3 *harp . . . lyre*: See Psalm 33:2.

92:5 *thoughts . . . deep*: See Psalm 139:17-18.

92:6 *fools*: See Psalm 14:1.

92:7 *the wicked*: The mention of the flourishing of the wicked, followed by the certainty of their destruction (see also Ps 92:9, 11), recalls especially Psalms 1; 37; 73. The intent of God's defeat of the enemies isn't *payback* but

92:12 Ps 1:3,  
Ps 52:8, Ps 72:7;  
Hos 14:5,  
Hos 14:6  
92:13 Ps 100:4,  
Ps 116:19,  
Ps 135:2;  
Is 60:21

92:14 Ps 1:3,  
Ps 71:18; Jn 15:2  
92:15 Dt 32:4;  
Job 34:10;  
Ps 18:2, Ps 25:8;  
Ro 9:14

93:1 Ps 65:6,  
Ps 96:10,  
Ps 97:1, Ps 99:1,  
Ps 104:1

93:2 Ps 9:7,  
Ps 45:6, Ps 90:2  
93:5 Ps 29:2

94:1 Dt 32:35;  
Ps 50:2, Ps 80:1;  
Na 1:2; Ro 12:19

94:7 Gn 18:25;  
Ps 7:6, Ps 31:23,  
Ps 50:6

- <sup>12</sup>The righteous will spring up like a palm tree.  
They will grow strong like a cedar of Lebanon.  
<sup>13</sup>Those who have been replanted in the LORD's house  
will spring up in the courtyards of our God.  
<sup>14</sup>They will bear fruit even when old and gray;  
they will remain lush and fresh <sup>15</sup>in order to proclaim:  
"The LORD is righteous.  
He's my rock.  
There's nothing unrighteous in him."

### Psalm 93

- <sup>1</sup>The LORD rules! He is robed in majesty—  
the LORD is robed, clothed with strength.  
Yes, he set the world firmly in place;<sup>a</sup>  
it won't be shaken.  
<sup>2</sup>Your throne is set firm for a very long time.  
You are eternal!  
<sup>3</sup>LORD, the floods have raised up—  
the floods have raised up their voices;  
the floods raise up a roar!  
<sup>4</sup>But mightier than the sound of much water,  
mightier than the sea's waves,  
mighty on high is the LORD!  
<sup>5</sup>Your laws are so faithful.  
Holiness decorates your house, LORD, for all time.

### Psalm 94

- <sup>1</sup>LORD, avenging God—  
avenging God, show yourself!  
<sup>2</sup>Rise up, judge of the earth!  
Pay back the arrogant exactly what they deserve!

<sup>a</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT *the world is set firmly in place*; cf Ps 96:10

rather setting things right in the world (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

92:12 *The righteous . . . like a palm tree*: This description recalls Psalm 1:3.

92:13 *replanted . . . house*: In Psalm 52:8-9, the psalmist is also like a tree in God's house, the temple, which symbolizes direct and constant access to God's presence. The direct experience of God's presence was understood in relation to paying attention to and obeying God's Instruction (see Pss 1:3; 84:4, 12).

92:14 *old and gray*: See Psalm 71:18-19, where the aged psalmist prays for God's help so that he or she can tell about God's righteousness, as the psalmist does here (Ps 92:15; see Ps 5:8).

93:1-5 Psalm 93 is the first in a collection of songs of praise that is known as the enthronement psalms (Pss 93; 95-99), since they affirm that "The LORD rules" (Ps 93:1, or translated "The LORD is king"; see Pss 96:10; 97:1; 99:1), or they refer to God as "king" (Pss 95:3; 98:6; see sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89).

93:1 *majesty*: This word is used of God in Psalm 68:34. Elsewhere, it is used of unruly waters (see Ps 46:3, "surging") that God has subdued, as here (Ps 93:3-4). *Strength*: associated with God's rule in Psalms 29:1; 96:6-7. *Yes . . . shaken*: In the background is God's conquest of the forces of chaos in order to create a stable world (see Pss 93:3-4; 96:10; cf. the threat of disorder in Pss 46:2-3; 82:5).

93:3 *floods*: Represents the forces of chaos. The repetition emphasizes their power, but God's power is greater (Ps 93:4; see Ps 29:10 where God is "enthroned over the floodwaters"). The mention of God taming unruly waters also recalls the exodus out of Egypt.

93:5 *Your laws*: It was the responsibility of a ruler to govern, so this verse follows logically from the affirmation of God's rule. *Holiness*: God's residence, the temple on Zion, is often described elsewhere as holy (see Ps 2:6; 3:4). The concept of holiness also appears in the final enthronement psalm, bracketing the collection (see Ps 99:3, 5, 9). The fundamental meaning of holiness is "set apart," so the effect is to affirm the incomparability of God's ruling power.

94:1-23 Psalm 94 begins like a communal prayer for help (94:1-7), but then the speaker addresses the wicked (94:8-11), God (94:12-13), and the righteous (94:14-15). Verses 16-23 consist of a prayer of trust, surrounded by verses 16-17 and 22-23, which have the characteristics of a profession of faith. The ultimate intent may be to teach (see *Instruction* in 94:12). Psalm 94 appears to interrupt the enthronement collection (Pss 93; 95-99). It has similarities to Psalms 90-92 (see "refuge" in Pss 91:2, 4, 9; 94:22) and to Pss 93; 95-99 (see "justice" and "righteousness"/"rightly" in Pss 94:15; 96:13; 97:2; 98:9; 99:4), and it may serve to bind the enthronement collection more clearly to the opening psalms of Book IV (see sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89).

- <sup>3</sup>How long will the wicked—oh, LORD!—  
how long will the wicked win?  
<sup>4</sup>They spew arrogant words;  
all the evildoers are bragging.  
<sup>5</sup>They crush your own people, LORD!  
They abuse your very own possession.  
<sup>6</sup>They kill widows and immigrants;  
they murder orphans,  
<sup>7</sup>saying all the while, “The LORD can’t see it;  
Jacob’s God doesn’t know what’s going on!”
- <sup>8</sup>You ignorant people better learn quickly.  
You fools—when will you get some sense?  
<sup>9</sup>The one who made the ear, can’t he hear?  
The one who formed the eye, can’t he see?  
<sup>10</sup>The one who disciplines nations, can’t he punish?  
The one who teaches humans, doesn’t he know?<sup>f</sup>  
<sup>11</sup>The LORD does indeed know human thoughts,  
knows that they are nothing but a puff of air.
- <sup>12</sup>The people you discipline, LORD, are truly happy—  
the ones you teach from your Instruction—  
<sup>13</sup>giving them relief from troubling times  
until a pit is dug for the wicked.  
<sup>14</sup>The LORD will not reject his people;  
he will not abandon his very own possession.  
<sup>15</sup>No, but justice will once again meet up with righteousness,  
and all whose heart is right will follow after.
- <sup>16</sup>Who will stand up for me against the wicked?  
Who will help me against evildoers?  
<sup>17</sup>If the LORD hadn’t helped me,  
I<sup>g</sup> would live instantly in total silence.  
<sup>18</sup>Whenever I feel my foot slipping,  
your faithful love steadies me, LORD.  
<sup>19</sup>When my anxieties multiply,  
your comforting calms me down.
- <sup>20</sup>Can a wicked ruler be your ally;  
one who wreaks havoc by means of the law?  
<sup>21</sup>The wicked gang up against the lives of the righteous.  
They condemn innocent blood.  
<sup>22</sup>But the LORD is my fortress;  
my God is my rock of refuge.

<sup>f</sup>Correction; MT *the one who teaches humans knowledge* <sup>g</sup>Or *soul*; also in 94:19, 21

94:1 *avenging God*: God’s vengeance isn’t simply a matter of payback but rather of setting things right—that is, justice (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6; 9:4, 12, 18; 58:10; 79:10).

94:2 *judge*: This could be translated “establisher of justice,” which is the goal of God’s avenging action (Ps 94:1; see Ps 94:15). *Pay back*: See Psalms 94:23; 28:4.

94:3-7 As usual, the wicked are violent and destructive in speech and action (see Pss 94:20-21; 4:2-5; see sidebar, “The Enemies” at Ps 3).

94:6 *widows*: See Psalm 68:5. *immigrants*: God’s Instruction provides special care for immigrants (see Lev 19:10; 25:35). *orphans*: See Psalm 10:14. Widows, immigrants, and orphans were particularly helpless because they had no family and no access to land; and God shows special concern for the most helpless and mistreated (see Pss 9:18; 146:9, which also mention all three categories of people).

94:7 The wicked regularly deny any accountability to God or to others (see Ps 10:4, 6, 11, 13).

94:8 *fools*: See Psalm 14:1. The psalmist addresses the wicked in Psalm 94:8-11 (see Ps 62:3-4), trying to tell them what they need to know.

94:11 *The LORD does indeed know*: The psalmist directly counters what the wicked have said about God in Psalm 94:7 (see Ps 10:14).

94:12 *truly happy... Instruction*: See Psalm 1:1-2, where these concepts are also related.

94:13 *pit... wicked*: See Psalm 7:15.

94:15 *justice... righteousness*: See Psalms 94:2; 5:8; 9:4.

94:17 *helped me*: See Psalm 10:14. *total silence*: indicates death. God is the giver of life.

94:18 *slipping*: See Psalm 73:2. *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7.

94:22 *refuge*: See Psalms 2:12; 62:7.

94:3 Job 20:5

94:4 Ps 31:18;

Ps 52:1, Ps 75:5

94:7 Job 22:13;

Ps 10:11

94:8 Ps 73:22;

Ps 92:6

94:9 Ex 4:11;

Prv 20:12

94:10 Job 35:11;

Is 28:26

94:11 Job 11:11;

1Co 3:20

94:12 Job 5:17;

Prv 3:11;

Prv 3:12;

1Co 11:32;

Heb 12:5

94:13 Ps 49:5;

Ps 55:23

94:14 1Sa 12:22;

Ps 37:28;

Ro 11:2

94:15 Ps 7:10

94:16 Nm 10:35;

Ps 17:13, Ps 59:2

94:17 Ps 31:17;

Ps 115:17;

Ps 124:1;

Ps 124:2

94:18 Ps 38:16;

Ps 73:2, Ps 121:3

94:19 2Co 1:4

94:20 Ps 58:2;

Is 10:1; Am 6:3

94:21 Ex 23:7;

Prv 17:15;

Mt 27:4

94:22 Ps 18:2;

Ps 59:9

95:1 Dt 32:15;  
Ps 66:1, Ps 81:1,  
Ps 89:26

95:2 Ps 100:2;  
Mt 6:6; Eph 5:19;  
Jas 5:13

95:3 Ps 47:2,  
Ps 96:4, Ps 97:9,  
Ps 135:5,  
Ps 145:3

95:4 Ps 135:6

95:5 Gn 1:9,  
Gn 1:10

95:6 2Ch 6:13;  
Ps 100:3,  
Ps 149:2;  
Dn 6:10

95:7 Ps 74:1,  
Ps 79:13,  
Ps 100:3;  
Heb 3:7; Heb 4:7

95:8 Ex 17:7;  
Nm 20:13;  
Dt 6:16; Heb 3:8

95:9 Nm 14:22;  
Ps 78:18,  
Ps 78:56;  
1Co 10:9

95:10 Heb 3:17

95:11 Nm 14:23;

Dt 1:35,  
Dt 12:9;  
Heb 3:11,  
Heb 4:3

96:1 1Ch 16:23;  
Ps 33:3, Ps 98:1,  
Ps 149:1; Rev 5:9

96:2 Ps 71:15

- 23** He will repay them for their wickedness,  
completely destroy them because of their evil.  
Yes, the LORD our God will completely destroy them.

### Psalm 95

- 1** Come, let's sing out loud to the LORD!  
Let's raise a joyful shout to the rock of our salvation!  
**2** Let's come before him with thanks!  
Let's shout songs of joy to him!  
**3** The LORD is a great God,  
the great king over all other gods.  
**4** The earth's depths are in his hands;  
the mountain heights belong to him;  
**5** the sea, which he made, is his  
along with the dry ground, which his own hands formed.  
**6** Come, let's worship and bow down!  
Let's kneel before the LORD, our maker!  
**7** He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture,  
the sheep in his hands.

If only you would listen to his voice right now!

- 8** "Don't harden your hearts like you did at Meribah,  
like you did when you were at Massah, in the wilderness,  
**9** when your ancestors tested me and scrutinized me,  
even though they had already seen my acts.  
**10** For forty years I despised that generation;  
I said, "These people have twisted hearts.  
They don't know my ways."  
**11** So in anger I swore: "They will never enter my place of rest!"

### Psalm 96

- 1** Sing to the LORD a new song!  
Sing to the LORD, all the earth!  
**2** Sing to the LORD! Bless his name!  
Share the news of his saving work every single day!

95:1-11 Another song of praise in the enthronement collection (see Ps 93), Psalm 95 issues multiple invitations to praise (Ps 95:1-2, 6), along with supporting reasons (95:3-5, 7ab). Verses 7c-11 are less typical. It seems that a congregation has gathered in response to the call to worship in verse 6, and verses 7c-11 offer a divine word (see Pss 50; 81).

95:1-2 *joyful shout... shout songs of joy*: An appropriate way to greet a king (see Ps 47:1-2). *thanks*: See Psalm 50:14. 95:3 *great God... great king... gods*: Greatness is often associated with royalty (see Ps 47:2). This verse assumes the ancient context of multiple gods (see Pss 82:1; 96:4; 97:7), over whom God reigns.

95:4-5 As in Psalm 93:1, 3-4, God is a powerful creator (see Pss 24:1-2; 8; 104; see sidebar, "God the Creator" at Ps 8).

95:6-7 *maker*: This may be another reminder of God's creative power; but in view of verse 7, "maker" also suggests that God "made" Israel by way of the exodus and other acts of rescue that are suggested in Psalm 95:9 (see Ps 100:3; Deut 32:6).

95:7ab See Psalms 79:13; 80:1; 100:3. It's possible that the sheep images here and in Psalm 100:3 mean that Psalms 95 and 100 bracket the core of the enthronement collection.

95:7c-11 God's creative and saving work invites a response; and the worshippers/readers are challenged to

respond obediently, unlike the people of the wilderness generation, for whom their behavior at *Meribah* (based on a root that means "to contend") and *Massah* (based on a root that means "to test") proved to be the norm (see Exod 17:1-7; Num 14:26-35). The author of the book of Hebrews used Psalm 95:7c-11 as the text for a Christian sermon (Heb 3:7-4:16).

96:1-13 As a song of praise, Psalm 96 is part of the enthronement collection (see Ps 93). As is typical, invitations to praise (Ps 96:1-3, 7-10a, 11-12a) are followed by reasons for praise (Ps 96:4-6, 10b, 12b-13). Most of Psalm 96 appears in 1 Chronicles 16:23-33, when David moved the sacred chest to Jerusalem.

96:1 *Sing... new song*: The enthronement psalms, especially Psalm 96, are similar in several ways to Isaiah 40-55, which proclaims the return from life in Babylon as a new exodus, and which also invites the singing of a new song (Isa 42:10). Psalm 96 may have been used to celebrate the return from exile and/or other experiences of divine rescue. The singing of a new song may also suggest that God's presence is regularly experienced anew in worship, and that God's presence invites the expectation of God's ongoing activity in the world (see Ps 33:3), *all the earth*: See Psalms 66:1; 98:1; 100:1.

96:2 *the news*: The Greek word that translates the



- <sup>3</sup>Declare God's glory among the nations;  
 declare his wondrous works among all people  
<sup>4</sup>because the LORD is great and so worthy of praise.  
 He is awesome beyond all other gods  
<sup>5</sup>because all the gods of the nations are just idols,  
 but it is the LORD who created heaven!  
<sup>6</sup>Greatness and grandeur are in front of him;  
 strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
- <sup>7</sup>Give to the LORD, all families of the nations—  
 give to the LORD glory and power!  
<sup>8</sup>Give to the LORD the glory due his name!  
 Bring gifts!  
 Enter his courtyards!  
<sup>9</sup>Bow down to the LORD in his holy splendor!  
 Tremble before him, all the earth!
- <sup>10</sup>Tell the nations, "The LORD rules!  
 Yes, he set the world firmly in place;<sup>b</sup>  
 it won't be shaken.  
 He will judge all people fairly."  
<sup>11</sup>Let heaven celebrate! Let the earth rejoice!  
 Let the sea and everything in it roar!  
<sup>12</sup>Let the countryside and everything in it celebrate!  
 Then all the trees of the forest too will shout out joyfully  
<sup>13</sup>before the LORD because he is coming!  
 He is coming to establish justice on the earth!  
 He will establish justice in the world rightly.  
 He will establish justice among all people fairly.

96:3 1Ch 16:24;  
 Ps 22:27;  
 Mt 28:19;  
 Lk 24:47;  
 Rev 14:6

96:4 Ps 18:3,  
 Ps 48:1, Ps 89:7,  
 Ps 95:3, Ps 145:3

96:5 Is 42:5

96:6 Ps 104:1

96:7 Ps 22:27,  
 Ps 29:1

96:8 Ps 72:10,  
 Ps 100:4

96:9 Ps 29:2,  
 Ps 33:8, Ps 99:5,  
 Ps 114:7

96:10 Ps 9:8,  
 Ps 67:4, Ps 93:1,  
 Ps 97:1, Ps 98:9

96:11 Ps 69:34,  
 Ps 97:1, Ps 98:7;  
 Is 49:13

96:12 Ps 65:13;  
 Is 55:12

96:13 Ps 98:9;  
 Rev 19:11

97:1 Ps 93:1,  
 Ps 96:10,  
 Ps 96:11

**Psalm 97**

- <sup>1</sup>The LORD rules! Let the earth rejoice!  
 Let all the islands celebrate!

<sup>b</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT *the world is firmly established*; cf Ps 93:1

underlying Hebrew is usually translated as "good news" or "gospel." See Isaiah 52:7, where "good news" is also associated with the proclamation of God's rule.

96:4 *great*... *beyond all other gods*: See Psalm 95:3.

96:5 *idols*: See Psalms 97:7; 115:4-8. Isaiah 40-55 also criticizes the worship of idols (see Isa 44:9-20). *The LORD who created heaven!*: See the creation theme in Psalms 93:1, 3-4; 95:4-6; Isaiah 40:12-25.

96:7 *Give... families of the nations*: The invitation is the same as in Psalm 29:1, but it isn't addressed to "divine beings" here. When Psalms 29:1-2 and 96:7-9 are heard together, the result is an invitation for the recognition of God and God's will on earth as in heaven. Psalm 96:7-9 seem to imagine a gathering of all nations in Jerusalem (see Pss 47; 87; Isa 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-3).

96:9 *holy splendor*: See Psalm 29:2.

96:10 The "news" (Ps 96:2) of God's rule is to be shared worldwide (see Ps 96:7-9). *the world firmly in place*: See Psalm 93:1. In contrast to the unjust rule of the gods, which threatens the world with destruction (see Ps 82:5), God's rule of justice and righteousness (see Ps 96:13) promises a stable and secure foundation.

96:11-13 As in Psalm 98:7-9, a creation-wide congregation greets God's coming (Ps 96:13), which should be understood not simply as a future event but rather as a

present and enduring event. The Hebrew translated "is coming" is a participle, and participles indicate continuous action.

96:13 *to establish justice... rightly... establish justice... fairly*: The repetition, along with the pairing of justice and righteousness ("rightly"), means that God's will for the world and all its people can be summarized as justice and righteousness (see Pss 5:8; 9:4, 7-8; 82:3; 98:9, as well as prophetic texts like Isa 1:27; 5:7; Jer 22:5; Hos 2:19; Amos 5:24). It's important that the earthly king, God's chosen agent, was given the task of doing justice and righteousness (see Ps 72:1-7). As suggested above (see Ps 96:10), there is a clear contrast between God, who establishes justice "fairly," and the gods, whose bad management of justice (Ps 82:2-4) threatened the future of the world (Ps 82:5). The relationship among Psalms 72; 82; 96 also make it clear that the basic requirement for discerning the presence of justice and righteousness is whether the poor, weak, and needy are being attended to and provided for (see especially Pss 72:12-14; 82:3-4; see sidebar, "The Poor and Needy" at Ps 82).

97:1-12 Another song of praise in the enthronement collection (see Ps 93), Psalm 97 opens with a section (97:1-5) that seems to picture God's "coming" that is mentioned in Psalm 96:13. In verse 1, *the earth* is invited to praise; and in

97:2 Dt 4:11;  
1Ki 8:12;  
Ps 18:11,  
Ps 89:14  
97:3 Ps 18:8,  
Ps 21:9, Ps 50:3,  
Dn 7:10; Mal 4:1  
97:5 Josh 3:11;  
Jgs 5:5; Ps 68:2;  
Mi 1:4; Na 1:5  
97:7 Lv 26:1;  
Ps 96:5; Is 42:17,  
Is 44:9; Heb 1:6  
97:8 Ps 48:11  
97:9 Ex 18:11;  
Ps 83:18,  
Ps 95:3; Ps 96:4,  
Ps 135:5  
97:10 Ps 37:28,  
Ps 145:20;  
Prv 2:8;  
Am 5:15; Ro 12:9  
97:11 Job 22:28;  
Ps 112:4;  
Prv 4:18  
98:1 Ex 15:6;  
Ps 33:3, Ps 96:1;  
Is 52:10, Is 59:16  
98:2 Is 52:10

- <sup>2</sup>Clouds and thick darkness surround God.  
His throne is built on righteousness and justice.
- <sup>3</sup>Fire proceeds before him,  
burning up his enemies on every side.
- <sup>4</sup>His lightning lights up the world;  
the earth sees it and trembles!
- <sup>5</sup>The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,  
before the Lord of the whole world!
- <sup>6</sup>Heaven has proclaimed God's righteousness,  
and all nations have seen his glory.
- <sup>7</sup>All those who worship images,  
those who are proud of idols, are put to shame.  
All gods bow down to the Lord!
- <sup>8</sup>Zion has heard and celebrates,  
the towns<sup>1</sup> of Judah rejoice,  
because of your acts of justice, LORD,
- <sup>9</sup>because you, LORD, are the Most High over all the earth,  
because you are so superior to all other gods.
- <sup>10</sup>Those of you who love the LORD, hate evil!  
God guards the lives of his faithful ones,  
delivering them from the power of the wicked.
- <sup>11</sup>Light is planted like seed for the righteous person;  
joy too for those whose heart is right.
- <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in the LORD, righteous ones!  
Give thanks to his holy name!

## Psalm 98

### A psalm.

- <sup>1</sup>Sing to the LORD a new song  
because he has done wonderful things!  
His own strong hand and his own holy arm have won the victory!
- <sup>2</sup>The LORD has made his salvation widely known;  
he has revealed his righteousness in the eyes of all the nations.

<sup>1</sup>Or daughters

verse 6, *Heaven* offers its praise as well. Heaven is joined by *gods* (97:7) and by God's people (97:8). The direct address of God in verses 8-9 isn't typical of the songs of praise. Verses 10 and 12 again extend the invitation to praise, and these verses surround the expression of confidence in verse 11.

**97:1** *The LORD rules!* See Psalms 93:1; 96:10; 99:1. *rejoice*: Joy becomes thematic (see Ps 97:8, 11-12), and appropriately so in conjunction with the proclamation of God's rule. *the islands*: these symbolize the farthest reaches of the earth; in short, the invitation is worldwide (see Ps 96:10).

**97:2-5** The language and images are typical of a theophany (God's appearance) or in this context, a picture of God's "coming" (Ps 96:13; see Ps 18:7-15).

**97:2** *righteousness and justice*: See Psalms 89:14; 96:13. God's cosmic claim aims at the just and right ordering of the world (see Pss 97:5; 93:1; 96:10).

**97:5** *melt like wax*: Indicates submission, not destruction (see Ps 46:6).

**97:6** *God's righteousness*: See Psalms 97:2; 5:8; 96:13. For heaven's witness to God, see Psalm 19:1.

**97:7** See Psalms 97:9; 95:3; 96:5; 115:4-8.

**97:8** *Zion*: See Psalm 2:6. *your acts of justice*: See Psalms 97:2; 96:13.

**97:10** *hate evil!*: The prophets associate hating evil with doing justice (see Amos 5:15; Mic 3:2). *delivering . . . wicked*: God's activity is in marked contrast to that of the gods, who favor the wicked (see Ps 82:2-4).

**97:11** *light*: Signals God's presence (see Ps 4:6).

**98:1-9** Psalm 98 continues the series of songs of praise that compose the enthronement collection (see Ps 93). Similarities to other enthronement psalms are obvious (especially Ps 96), but Psalm 98 has unique features as well.

**98:1-3** This opening section recalls the exodus out of Egypt. Every verse includes the Hebrew root usually translated "salvation" (it appears as *victory* in 98:1; see Exod 15:1). Several other words in this section also appear in Exodus 15: "song" (Exod 15:1), "wonderful things" (Exod 15:11, "awesome deeds"), and "strong hand" (or "right hand"; Exod 15:6, 12). This section also resembles Isaiah 52:7-10, which celebrates the return from life in Babylon as a new exodus (see Ps 96:1-2).

**98:1** *new song*: See Psalm 96:1.

**98:2** *righteousness*: See Psalms 5:8; 96:13; 97:2, 6.

- <sup>3</sup> God has remembered his loyal love and faithfulness to the house of Israel; every corner of the earth has seen our God's salvation.
- <sup>4</sup> Shout triumphantly to the LORD, all the earth!  
Be happy!  
Rejoice out loud!  
Sing your praises!
- <sup>5</sup> Sing your praises to the LORD with the lyre—  
with the lyre and the sound of music.
- <sup>6</sup> With trumpets and a horn blast,  
shout triumphantly before the LORD, the king!
- <sup>7</sup> Let the sea and everything in it roar;  
the world and all its inhabitants too.
- <sup>8</sup> Let all the rivers clap their hands;  
let the mountains rejoice out loud altogether <sup>9</sup>before the LORD  
because he is coming to establish justice on the earth!  
He will establish justice in the world rightly;  
he will establish justice among all people fairly.

98:3 Lk 1:54;  
Lk 1:72  
98:6 Ps 47:7  
99:1 Ex 25:22;  
Ps 80:1, Ps 93:1,  
Ps 97:1  
99:2 Ps 2:6,  
Ps 48:1, Ps 97:9,  
Ps 113:4; Is 12:6  
99:3 Dt 28:58;  
Josh 24:19;  
Ps 111:9; Is 6:3;  
Rev 15:4  
99:4 Ps 98:9  
99:5 Ex 15:2;  
Ps 99:3,  
Ps 118:28,  
Ps 132:7; Is 25:1

### Psalm 99

- <sup>1</sup> The LORD rules—the nations shake!  
He sits enthroned on the winged heavenly creatures—the earth quakes!
- <sup>2</sup> The LORD is great in Zion;  
he is exalted over all the nations.
- <sup>3</sup> Let them thank your great and awesome name.  
He is holy!
- <sup>4</sup> Strong king<sup>j</sup> who loves justice,  
you are the one who established what is fair.  
You worked justice and righteousness in Jacob.
- <sup>5</sup> Magnify the LORD, our God!  
Bow low at his footstool!  
He is holy!

<sup>j</sup>Correction: MT *A king's strength*

98:3 *loyal love and faithfulness*: See Psalms 5:7; 25:10. See also Psalm 36:5-6, which features these fundamental qualities of God, along with justice and righteousness, which also appear here (Ps 98:2, 9). *Every corner... salvation*: As in the other enthronement psalms (and the other songs of praise), God's life-giving work includes the whole world (see Pss 93:1; 95:4-5; 96:1, 3, 7-13; 97:1, 6, 9).

98:4 *shout triumphantly*: See Psalms 98:6; 47:1; 95:1-2. *all the earth*: See Psalms 66:1; 96:1.

98:5-6 *lyre... trumpets... horn blast*: See Psalms 33:2; 81:3. *king*: See Psalms 5:2; 95:3; 99:4.

98:7-8 See Psalm 96:11-12. The natural elements are a bit different in Psalms 96 and 98, but the effect is the same: The whole creation joins in praising God.

98:9 See Psalm 96:13.

99:1-9 Psalm 99 is the final song of praise in the enthronement collection (see Ps 93). Like Psalm 98, it recalls Exodus 15. It isn't coincidental that this concluding enthronement psalm clearly mentions Moses, who was featured at the beginning of Book IV (see Ps 90; see sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89). While Psalm 99 has much in common with the other enthronement psalms, it conforms less to the typical structure of a song of praise (although see the invitations to praise in 99:5, 8), containing instead more direct address of God (99:3-4, 8) and more

descriptions of God that serve as professions of faith (99:1-2, 6-7). The theme of holiness occurs in other enthronement psalms (see Pss 93:5; 96:9; 97:12; 98:1), but it is featured here by way of the refrain (99:3, 5, 9) that divides the psalm into three sections.

99:1 *The LORD rules*: See Psalms 93:1; 96:7; 97:1; Exodus 15:18. *shake*: Like *quakes*, later in the verse, this is an indication of God's presence (see Ps 97:3-5; Exodus 15:14). *enthroned... creatures*: See Psalm 80:1.

99:2 *great*: Often associated with God's rule (see Pss 47:2; 95:3; Exodus 15:16). *Zion*: See Psalm 2:6.

99:3 *He is holy!*: See Psalm 99:5, 9. Holiness in its basic sense suggests separation and even inapproachability (see Ps 93:5); but God's commitment to justice and righteousness (Ps 99:4), along with God's willingness to answer and forgive the people (Ps 99:6, 8), suggest that God's holiness finally takes the form of love (see Hos 11:9, where God is "the holy one in your midst").

99:4 *king*: See Psalms 5:2; 95:3; 98:6. *fair*: See Psalms 96:13; 98:9. *justice and righteousness*: See Psalms 5:8; 9:4; 96:13; 97:2; 98:9.

99:5 *footstool*: A poetic name for the sacred chest containing the covenant, which was viewed as God's earthly throne (see Pss 99:1; 80:1; 132:7, "the place God rests his feet").

99:6 Ex 24:6;  
1Sa 7:9;  
1Sa 12:18;  
Jer 15:1  
99:7 Ex 33:9;  
Nm 12:5  
99:8 Nm 14:20;  
Nm 20:12;  
Jer 46:28  
99:9 Is 6:3  
100:1 Ps 66:1,  
Ps 98:4  
100:3 Job 10:3,  
Job 10:8; Ps 74:1,  
Ps 95:6, Ps 95:7  
100:4 Ps 66:13,  
Ps 96:2, Ps 96:8,  
Ps 116:17  
101:1 Ps 71:22,  
Ps 89:1

- <sup>6</sup> Moses and Aaron were among his priests,  
Samuel too among those who called on his name.  
They cried out to the LORD, and he himself answered them—  
<sup>7</sup> he spoke to them from a pillar of cloud.  
They kept the laws and the rules God gave to them.  
<sup>8</sup> LORD our God, you answered them.  
To them you were a God who forgives  
but also the one who avenged their wrong deeds.  
<sup>9</sup> Magnify the LORD our God!  
Bow low at his holy mountain because the LORD our God is holy!

### Psalm 100

*A psalm of thanks.*

- <sup>1</sup> Shout triumphantly to the LORD, all the earth!  
<sup>2</sup> Serve the LORD with celebration!  
Come before him with shouts of joy!  
<sup>3</sup> Know that the LORD is God—he made us; we belong to him.<sup>h</sup>  
We are his people, the sheep of his own pasture.  
<sup>4</sup> Enter his gates with thanks; enter his courtyards with praise!  
Thank him! Bless his name!  
<sup>5</sup> Because the LORD is good, his loyal love lasts forever;  
his faithfulness lasts generation after generation.

### Psalm 101

*Of David. A psalm.*

- <sup>1</sup> Oh, let me sing about faithful love and justice!  
I want to sing my praises to you, LORD!

<sup>h</sup>Qere; Kethib and not we ourselves

99:6 *Moses and Aaron... Samuel*: The first two of these names recall the exodus out of Egypt, Sinai, and the wilderness wanderings, as well as the beginning of Book IV (See Ps 90). Moses' victory song and the people's song of the sea conclude by proclaiming God's rule (Exod 15:18), and Samuel was a strong defender of God's sole reign as king (see 1 Sam 8:1-8).

99:7 *pillar of cloud*: One of the symbols of God's presence in the exodus and wilderness eras (see Exod 13:21-22; 14:9, 24; Num 12:15).

99:8 *God who forgives*: Moses and Samuel interceded for the sinful people (see Exod 32:7-14; Num 16:20-22; 1 Sam 7:11-15), and God forgave. *avenged... deeds*: The apparent tension between forgiveness and avenging is present in Exodus 34:6-7, where God reveals the divine self to Moses as essentially loving, faithful, merciful, and kind, "yet by no means clearing the guilty." As the prophets warned, there were consequences for disobedience (so the guilty weren't cleared). But God ultimately proved to be gracious, merciful, and forgiving.

99:9 *holy mountain*: See Psalm 2:6.

100:1-5 Psalm 100 is a song of praise consisting of seven invitations to praise (100:1-4) followed by reasons for praise (100:5). While it isn't usually considered to be part of the enthronement collection (see Ps 93), it provides a fitting response to the previous psalms that proclaim God's rule. The word *thanks* in the title can mean a thanksgiving sacrifice, but it can more generally describe an expression of gratitude (see Pss 100:4; 50:14, 23).

100:1 *Shout triumphantly*: an appropriate way to greet a king (see Ps 98:4, 6). *all the earth*: See Psalms 66:1; 96:1, 9; 98:6.

100:2 *Serve*: The appropriate response to a master or king.

The only other invitation in the book of Psalms to serve God is Psalm 2:11. This repetition links the introduction of the Psalter to the significant enthronement collection (see sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89)

100:3 *Know*: Of the seven imperative invitations, this is the central one; and it isn't coincidental that it's focused on teaching. *made us*: This could refer to God's creation of human beings (see Ps 104:24), or to God's making of Israel (see Ps 95:6; Deut 32:6), or to both. *We... him*: Awareness of not being self-made and of belonging to God is the foundation for genuine thankfulness. *We... pasture*: See Psalms 23:1-4; 95:7.

100:4 *Enter... thanks... Thank him!*: The words "thanks" and "Thank" repeat the Hebrew root from the title. The mention of *gates* and *courtyards* suggests a setting in temple worship. Thankfulness is at the heart of worship. *Bless*: The essential meaning of "bless"—that is, to kneel in homage to a powerful master—is particularly appropriate here; and it reinforces the invitation to "serve" in Psalm 100:2 (see Ps 16:7).

100:5 a frequently stated reason for praising God, with some differences (see Pss 107:1; 117:2; 118:1, 29. *good*: See Ps 23:6. *loyal love... faithfulness*: See Psalms 5:7; 25:10; Exodus 34:6. These are fundamental qualities of God, suggesting that God is to be praised because of who God is.

101:1-8 Even though it doesn't mention the king, Psalm 101 is categorized as a royal psalm (see Ps 2; see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2), largely because of its similarity to Psalm 18:25-30 and partly because the speaker seems to be an important person (see 101:7-8). Since Psalm 89 tells about rejecting the Davidic rule, one can imagine a surviving Davidic descendant promising to act more faithfully if the monarchy is restored.

- <sup>2</sup>I want to study the way of integrity—  
how long before it gets here?  
I will walk with a heart of integrity in my own house.
- <sup>3</sup>I won't set my eyes on anything worthless.  
I hate wrongdoing;  
none of that will stick to me.
- <sup>4</sup>A corrupt heart will be far from me.  
I won't be familiar with evil.
- <sup>5</sup>I will destroy anyone who secretly tells lies about a neighbor.  
I can't stomach anyone who has proud eyes or an arrogant heart.
- <sup>6</sup>My eyes focus on those who are faithful in the land,  
to have them close to me.  
The person who walks without blame will work for me.
- <sup>7</sup>But the person who acts deceitfully won't stay in my house.  
The person who tells lies won't last for long before me.
- <sup>8</sup>Every morning I will destroy all those who are wicked in the land  
in order to eliminate all evildoers from the LORD's city.

101:2 Gn 17:1;  
Gn 18:19;  
Josh 24:15;  
1Sa 18:14;  
1Kj 9:4

101:5 Ps 15:3;  
Ps 18:27;  
Ps 50:20;  
Prrv 21:4

101:6 Ps 119:1

101:7 Ps 52:2

101:8 Ps 75:10;  
Jer 21:12

102:1 Ex 2:23;  
Ps 142:2

102:3 Job 30:30;  
Ps 31:10,  
Ps 37:20;  
Lam 1:13;  
Jas 4:14

102:4 1Sa 1:7;  
Ezr 10:6;  
Job 33:20;  
Ps 37:2, Ps 90:5

102:5 Job 19:20

102:6 Lv 11:18;  
Job 30:29;  
Is 34:11;  
Zep 2:14

102:7 Ps 38:11,  
Ps 77:4

102:8 Ps 31:11;  
Is 65:15

102:9 Ps 42:3,  
Ps 80:5

## Psalm 102

*A prayer of an oppressed person,  
when weak and pouring out grief to the LORD.*

- <sup>1</sup>LORD, hear my prayer!  
Let my cry reach you!
- <sup>2</sup>Don't hide your face from me in my time of trouble!  
Listen to me! Answer me quickly as I cry out!
- <sup>3</sup>Because my days disappear like smoke,  
my bones are burned up as if in an oven;  
<sup>4</sup>my heart is smashed like dried-up grass.  
I even forget to eat my food <sup>5</sup>because of my intense groans.  
My bones are protruding from my skin.
- <sup>6</sup>I'm like some wild owl—  
like some screech owl in the desert.
- <sup>7</sup>I lie awake all night.  
I'm all alone like a bird on a roof.
- <sup>8</sup>All day long my enemies make fun of me;  
those who mock me curse using my name!
- <sup>9</sup>I've been eating ashes instead of bread.  
I've been mixing tears into my drinks

101:1 *faithful love and justice*: An admirable summary of God's character and God's will (see Pss 5:7; 9:4; 36:5-6; 89:14; 98:3, 9).

101:2 *way of integrity... heart of integrity*: The Hebrew root underlying "integrity" means "fullness, completeness" (see Pss 15:2; 18:25). The desire is to know God's character and will completely (see Ps 101:1), and to internalize it so that it influences every behavior. *my own house*: If this is the king speaking (at least imaginatively), he promises to get his own house in order in a way that it usually was not, as the prophets proclaimed (see Isa 1:21-26; Jer 22:11-19; Ezek 34:1-16; Mic 3:1-4, 9-12). *How long... here?*: A more literal reading would be, "How long before you [God] get here?" This might fit with the message of Psalm 89 that the Davidic rule has been rejected (see especially the "How long" of Ps 89:46).

101:3-8 The promise of faithful behavior continues, with a particular emphasis on telling and showing the truth (101:6). The monarchy was never restored, but Psalm 101 shows faithful behavior for the people of God in all times and places. In this regard, 101:3-8 recalls Psalm 15:2-5, which also shows what it means to live as God intends (see Ps 15:2, as well as the importance of truth in Ps 15:2-4). See

also Proverbs 6:16-19 for a similar list of things God hates (see "I hate" in 101:3).

102:1-28 The title of Psalm 102 describes well the content of verses 1-11, 23-28. These verses contain the typical elements of a prayer for help: petition (102:1-2, 24, 28), complaint (102:3-11, 23), and assurance (102:25-27). But the prayer for help seems to be interrupted by verses 12-22, which celebrate God's rule (102:12, 15, 22), as well as the restoration of Zion (102:13-17) and apparently the return of the exiles (102:18-21). The effect is to give a community dimension to the prayer, and this fits well the purpose of Book IV to respond to the crisis described in Psalm 89:38-51 (see sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89). Psalm 102 is one of the church's seven Penitential Psalms (see Ps 6). It contains no confession of sin, but it describes well the humble dependence on God that is the foundation for penitence, and sinfulness may be suggested in verse 10.

102:1-2 Typical petitions open the prayer (see Pss 4:11; 69:17).

102:3 *bones*: See Psalms 102:5; 22:14.

102:8 *make fun*: See Psalms 31:11; 42:10.

102:9 *tears*: See Psalms 6:6; 80:5.

102:10 Ps 38:3,  
Ps 90:7  
102:11 Job 14:2;  
Ps 102:4,  
Ps 109:23,  
Ps 144:4;  
Ecc 6:12

102:12 Ex 3:15;  
Ps 9:7, Ps 90:1,  
Ps 102:24,  
Ps 135:13  
102:13 Ps 44:26;  
Is 60:10; Zec 1:12  
102:14 Neh 4:2;  
Ps 137:5; Is 52:2;  
Jer 51:50

102:15 |K|  
8:43; Ps 67:7,  
Ps 138:4;  
Is 59:19, Is 60:3

102:18 Dt  
31:19; Ps 22:30,  
Ps 22:31;  
Ro 15:4;  
1Co 10:11  
102:19 Dt  
26:15; Ps 11:4,  
Ps 14:2, Ps 33:13

102:20 Ps 79:11,  
Ps 146:7

102:23 Ps 89:45

102:24  
Job 36:26;  
Ps 90:2;  
Hab 1:12

102:25 Gn 1:1;  
Ps 8:3; Heb 1:10

102:26 Is 34:4,  
Is 51:6; Mt 24:35;  
2Pt 3:10;  
Rev 20:11

102:27  
Mal 3:6;  
Heb 13:8;  
Jas 1:17

102:28 Ps 69:36,  
Ps 112:2

103:1 Ps 103:22,  
Ps 104:1,  
Ps 104:35

- <sup>10</sup>because of your anger and wrath,  
because you picked me up and threw me away.
- <sup>11</sup>My days are like a shadow soon gone.  
I'm dried up like dead grass.
- <sup>12</sup>But you, LORD, rule forever!  
Your fame lasts from one generation to the next!
- <sup>13</sup>You will stand up—you'll have compassion on Zion  
because it is time to have mercy on her—  
the time set for that has now come!
- <sup>14</sup>Your servants cherish Zion's stones;  
they show mercy even to her dirt.
- <sup>15</sup>The nations will honor the LORD's name;  
all the earth's rulers will honor your glory
- <sup>16</sup>because the LORD will rebuild Zion;  
he will be seen there in his glory.
- <sup>17</sup>God will turn to the prayer of the impoverished;  
he won't despise their prayers.
- <sup>18</sup>Let this be written down for the next generation  
so that people not yet created will praise the LORD:
- <sup>19</sup>The LORD looked down from his holy summit,  
surveyed the earth from heaven,  
<sup>20</sup>to hear the prisoners' groans,  
to set free those condemned to death,  
<sup>21</sup>that the LORD's name may be declared in Zion  
and his praise declared in Jerusalem,  
<sup>22</sup>when all people are gathered together—  
all kingdoms—to serve the LORD.
- <sup>23</sup>God broke my strength in midstride, cutting my days short.
- <sup>24</sup>I said, "My God, don't take me away in the prime of life—  
your years go on from one generation to the next!"
- <sup>25</sup>You laid the earth's foundations long ago;  
the skies are your handiwork.
- <sup>26</sup>These things will pass away, but you will last.  
All of these things will wear out like clothing;  
you change them like clothes, and they pass on.
- <sup>27</sup>But you are the one! Your years never end!
- <sup>28</sup>Let your servants' children live safe;  
let your servants' descendants live secure in your presence."

## Psalm 103

*Of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>Let my whole being<sup>1</sup> bless the LORD!  
Let everything inside me bless his holy name!

<sup>1</sup>Or *soul*; also in 103:2, 22

102:10 *anger and wrath*: See Psalms 6:1; 38:1; 88:7, 16; 90:7-11. Psalms 6 and 38 are also Penitential Psalms.

102:11 See Psalm 90:5-6, 11.

102:12 *rule forever!*: This positive statement follows well upon the enthronement collection (Pss 93; 95-99).

102:13 *compassion*: See Psalm 25:6. *Zion*: See Psalm 2:6. This verse seems to assume Jerusalem's destruction in 587 BCE, as does Psalm 102:16.

102:14 *cherish Zion's stones*: See Psalm 48:12-13.

102:19 *his holy summit*: Mount Zion, the temple mount in Jerusalem (see Pss 102:21; 2:6).

102:20 *prisoners'... death*: The references seem to be

to those exiled following the destruction of Jerusalem. The verse seems to suggest that the exiles can return to Jerusalem.

102:22 See Psalm 96:10, which also suggests a gathering of all people in Jerusalem to honor God.

102:23-28 The concluding section pairs complaint and petition (102:23-24, 28) with assurance (102:25-27) in a way that is typical of the prayers for help (see Pss 6:8-10; 13:5-6). Verses 26-28 recall Psalm 90, the first book of Book IV, which also contrasts human transience with God's eternity. Psalm 102:28, for instance, is similar to Psalm 90:16-17.

103:1-22 Psalm 103 is a song of praise that begins and

- <sup>2</sup>Let my whole being bless the LORD  
and never forget all his good deeds:
- <sup>3</sup>how God forgives all your sins,  
heals all your sickness,
- <sup>4</sup>saves your life from the pit,  
crowns you with faithful love and compassion,
- <sup>5</sup>and satisfies you with plenty of good things  
so that your youth is made fresh like an eagle's.
- <sup>6</sup>The LORD works righteousness;  
does justice for all who are oppressed.
- <sup>7</sup>God made his ways known to Moses;  
made his deeds known to the Israelites.
- <sup>8</sup>The LORD is compassionate and merciful,  
very patient, and full of faithful love.
- <sup>9</sup>God won't always play the judge;  
he won't be angry forever.
- <sup>10</sup>He doesn't deal with us according to our sin  
or repay us according to our wrongdoing,
- <sup>11</sup>because as high as heaven is above the earth,  
that's how large God's faithful love is for those who honor him.
- <sup>12</sup>As far as east is from west—  
that's how far God has removed our sin from us.
- <sup>13</sup>Like a parent feels compassion for their children—  
that's how the LORD feels compassion for those who honor him.
- <sup>14</sup>Because God knows how we're made,  
God remembers we're just dust.
- <sup>15</sup>The days of a human life are like grass:  
they bloom like a wildflower;
- <sup>16</sup>but when the wind blows through it, it's gone;  
even the ground where it stood doesn't remember it.
- <sup>17</sup>But the LORD's faithful love is from forever ago to forever from now  
for those who honor him.  
And God's righteousness reaches to the grandchildren
- <sup>18</sup>of those who keep his covenant and remember to keep his commands.

103:2 Dt 6:12,  
Dt 8:11;  
Ps 106:7

103:3 Ex 15:26,  
Ex 34:7;  
Ps 130:4; 1Jn 1:9

103:4 Ps 6:5,  
Ps 21:3; Ps 56:13;  
Is 43:1

103:5 Ps 107:9;  
Is 40:31

103:6 Ps 146:7

103:7 Ex 33:13;  
Ps 147:19

103:8 Ex 34:6;  
Ps 86:15,  
Ps 145:8; II 2:13;  
Jon 4:2

103:10 Est 9:13

103:11 Ps 36:5,  
Ps 103:17;  
Lk 1:50

103:12  
2Sa 12:13;  
Is 43:25;  
Jer 31:34

103:13 Mal 3:17

103:14 Gn 2:7,  
Gn 3:19;  
Job 10:9;  
Ps 78:39;  
Ecc 12:7

103:15  
Job 14:2; Ps 90:5;  
Is 40:6; Jas 1:10;  
1Pt 1:24

103:16 Is 40:7

103:18 Ex 19:5;  
Dt 7:9; Ps 25:10

ends with invitations to praise (103:1-2, 20-22) that surround reasons for praise in verses 3-19. Verses 3-6 focus on God's deeds, while verses 7-19 focus on God's love and compassion. The identical opening and concluding invitations in Psalms 103 and 104 suggest that they belong together.

103:1 It's unusual but not entirely unique that the invitation to praise is extended to the psalmist's own self (see Ps 146:1). *Bless*: See Psalms 103:2, 20-22; 16:7; 100:4.

103:2 *all*: a frequent word in the psalm (see Ps 103:3, 6, 19, 21, 22). The effect of the repetition is to communicate the comprehensiveness of God's claim and God's work.

103:3 *heals*: See Psalm 6:2.

103:4 *the pit*: indicates death (see Ps 16:10). God wills and works for life. *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7. This becomes a keyword in the psalm (see Ps 103:8, 11, 17). *compassion*: See Psalm 25:6. This, too, becomes a keyword in the psalm (see Ps 103:8, 13).

103:5 *satisfies . . . good things*: See Psalm 85:12. *youth . . . eagle's*: See Isaiah 40:31.

103:6 Although Psalm 103:6 may start a new section, it also summarizes God's deeds that are mentioned in

Psalm 103:3-5—that is, all of God's life-giving work can be summed up by the words *righteousness* and *justice* (see Pss 5:8; 9:4; 96:13).

103:7 *Moses*: See Psalm 90. The mention of Moses points to the book of Exodus in the following verses. *his deeds*: Probably an allusion to the exodus itself, along with other life-saving actions God did for the people as they journeyed from Egypt to the land of Canaan (see map 4).

103:8 See Exodus 34:6, where God reveals the divine self to Moses (see Pss 103:4; 86:15).

103:9-14 This entire section may be poetic reflection on the character of God revealed in Exodus 34:6. The words *faithful love* occur again in verse 11, and *compassion* occurs twice in verse 13.

103:11 *for those who honor him*: The same phrase occurs again in Psalm 103:13, 17. The intent isn't to restrict God's love and compassion but rather to suggest that people must be open to accept and receive grace and forgiveness.

103:14 *dust*: See Psalm 90:3; Genesis 3:19 ("soil").

103:15 *like grass*: See Psalm 90:5.

103:18 *covenant*: See Psalm 25:10. This is another reference to the book of Exodus (see Exod 24:1-8).

103:20 Ps 78:25,  
Ps 148:2;  
Mt 6:10; Lk 2:13;  
Heb 1:14

103:21  
1Ki 22:19;  
Neh 9:6;  
Ps 104:4; Lk 2:13  
103:22 Ps 103:1,  
Ps 104:1,  
Ps 145:10

104:1 Ps 93:1,  
Ps 103:1,  
Ps 103:22

104:2 Job 9:8;  
Is 40:22; Is 44:24;  
1Ti 6:16

104:3 Ps 18:10,  
Ps 104:13;  
Is 19:1; Am 9:6;  
Na 1:3

104:4 2Ki 2:11,  
2Ki 6:17;  
Ps 148:6;  
Heb 1:7,  
Heb 1:14

104:5 Job 26:7,  
Job 38:4; Ps 24:2

104:6 Gn 1:2,  
Gn 7:19

104:9 Job 26:10,  
Job 38:10,  
Job 38:11;  
Ps 33:7; Jer 5:22

**19**The LORD has established his throne in heaven,  
and his kingdom rules over all.

**20**You divine messengers, bless the LORD!  
You who are mighty in power and keep his word,  
who obey everything he says, bless him!

**21**All you heavenly forces, bless the LORD!  
All you who serve him and do his will, bless him!

**22**All God's creatures, bless the LORD!  
Everywhere, throughout his kingdom, let my whole being bless the LORD!

### Psalm 104

**1** Let my whole being<sup>m</sup> bless the LORD!

LORD my God, how fantastic you are!  
You are clothed in glory and grandeur!

**2** You wear light like a robe;  
you open the skies like a curtain.

**3** You build your lofty house on the waters;  
you make the clouds your chariot,  
going around on the wings of the wind.

**4** You make the winds your messengers;  
you make fire and flame your ministers.

**5** You established the earth on its foundations  
so that it will never ever fall.

**6** You covered it with the watery deep like a piece of clothing;  
the waters were higher than the mountains!

**7** But at your rebuke they ran away;  
they fled in fear at the sound of your thunder.

**8** They flowed over the mountains, streaming down the valleys  
to the place you established for them.

**9** You set a boundary they cannot cross  
so they'll never again cover the earth.

**10** You put gushing springs into dry riverbeds.  
They flow between the mountains,

**11** providing water for every wild animal—  
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

**12** Overhead, the birds in the sky make their home,  
chirping loudly in the trees.

**13** From your lofty house, you water the mountains.  
The earth is filled full by the fruit of what you've done.

<sup>m</sup>Or *soul*; also in 104:35

103:19 Like Psalm 102:12 and the enthronement collection (Pss 93; 95–99) at the heart of Book IV, this verse proclaims God's universal rule, preparing for the concluding invitations in Psalm 103:20–22 (see Ps 93:2).

103:20 *divine messengers*: See Psalms 91:11; 148:2. *You who are mighty in power*: Like the messengers, these seem to be members of God's heavenly court (see Ps 29:1–2).

103:21 *heavenly forces*: See Psalm 24:10.

103:22 *All God's creatures . . . my whole being*: By blessing God (see also Ps 103:1–2), the psalmist is placed in harmony with the whole universe as part of a congregation (see Pss 148:1–12; 150:6).

104:1–35 Identical opening and closing verses link Psalms 104 and 103, which are songs of praise that have a creation-wide focus. Like Psalm 8, portions of Psalm 104 address praise directly to God; and both Psalms are sometimes identified as creation hymns (see sidebar, “God the

Creator” at Ps 8). The psalmist's attention is always upon God, and different realms of creation come into view in relation to God: the heavens (104:1–4), the earth (104:5–13), people and creatures (104:14–23), and all God's works (104:24–30). Verses 31–35 provide a joyful conclusion.

104:1 See Psalm 103:1. *glory and grandeur*: qualities of royalty, which affirm God's rule over all (see Ps 8:5).

104:2 *light*: See Psalm 4:6; Genesis 1:3–4.

104:3 *You build . . . waters*: God's house isn't just the temple (see Ps 5:7) but also the whole universe. Water symbolizes chaos (see Ps 18:16), which is tamed for God's purposes (see Ps 93:3). *clouds . . . wind*: The Canaanite god Baal was known as the cloud-rider, who caused the rain to fall; but God now assumes this position (see Pss 29, 65, 82).

104:5–13 The focus shifts to the earth. As in Psalm 104:3, waters have been ordered to serve God's life-giving purposes (104:6–10), including sustaining animals (104:11)



- 14 You make grass grow for cattle;  
you make plants for human farming  
in order to get food from the ground,  
15 and wine, which cheers people's hearts,  
along with oil, which makes the face shine,  
and bread, which sustains the human heart.
- 16 The LORD's trees are well watered—  
the cedars of Lebanon, which God planted,  
17 where the birds make their nests,  
where the stork has a home in the cypresses.
- 18 The high mountains belong to the mountain goats;  
the ridges are the refuge of badgers.
- 19 God made the moon for the seasons,  
and the sun too, which knows when to set.
- 20 You bring on the darkness and it is night,  
when every forest animal prowls.
- 21 The young lions roar for their prey,  
seeking their food from God.
- 22 When the sun rises, they gather together  
and lie down in their dens.
- 23 Then people go off to their work,  
to do their work until evening.
- 24 LORD, you have done so many things!  
You made them all so wisely!  
The earth is full of your creations!
- 25 And then there's the sea, wide and deep,  
with its countless creatures—  
living things both small and large.
- 26 There go the ships on it,  
and Leviathan, which you made, plays in it!
- 27 All your creations wait for you  
to give them their food on time.
- 28 When you give it to them, they gather it up;  
when you open your hand, they are filled completely full!
- 29 But when you hide your face, they are terrified;  
when you take away their breath,  
they die and return to dust.
- 30 When you let loose your breath, they are created,  
and you make the surface of the ground brand-new again.
- 31 Let the LORD's glory last forever!  
Let the LORD rejoice in all he has made!

and supporting agriculture (104:13). The world is secure (104:5; see Pss 93:1; 96:10; and note the contrast to Ps 82:5).

104:14-23 While the earth and its creatures remain in view, humans are mentioned for the first time in 104:14 (see also 104:23). The focus is on the creatures and features of the world. God provides food, drink, and shelter for people (104:14-15, 23), animals (104:14, 17-18, 22), and plants (104:16)

104:16 *The LORD's trees*: It's noteworthy that God claims to own trees, not just people.

104:19 *God made the moon... sun*: Often considered gods by ancient people, the sun and moon are products of God's work. The Hebrew root underlying "made" is a keyword in the psalm (see Ps 104:4; "done" in Ps 104:13; "done" and "made" in Ps 104:24, 31).

104:24-30 Psalm 104:24 summarizes all that came before, and introduces a section that has "All your creations" (104:27) in view.

104:24 *so wisely*: See Proverbs 3:19.

104:26 *Leviathan... in it!*: See Psalm 74:14. The chaos monster has become harmless. The line could also be translated, "Leviathan, which you made to play with him," in which case the chaos monster has become God's plaything.

104:30 *breath*: The underlying Hebrew word can also be translated "wind, spirit"; and according to Genesis 1:2 was the animating force for creation (see also Job 34:14-15). *brand-new again*: suggests that God's creating is an ongoing activity.

104:31 *rejoice*: God's joy in creation will be matched by the psalmist's joy in God (Ps 104:34).

104:14 Gn 1:29;  
Gn 1:30, Gn 9:3;  
Ps 136:25,  
Ps 147:8

104:15 Gn 18:5;  
Jgs 9:13;  
Ps 23:5, Ps 92:10;  
Prv 31:6

104:16 Ps 29:5

104:18 Lv 11:5;  
1Sa 24:2;  
Job 39:1;  
Prv 30:26

104:19 Gn 1:14

104:20 Ps 50:10,  
Ps 74:16; Is 45:7,  
Is 56:9

104:21  
Job 38:39;  
Ps 147:9; Jl 1:20

104:23 Gn 3:19

104:24 Gn 1:31;  
Ps 40:5, Ps 136:5;  
Prv 3:19;  
Jer 10:12

104:25 Ps 69:34

104:26 Job 3:8,  
Job 41:1;  
Ps 74:14,  
Ps 107:23;  
Is 27:1

104:27  
Job 36:31;  
Ps 136:25,  
Ps 145:15,  
Ps 145:16,  
Ps 147:9

104:29 Gn 3:19;  
Job 34:14;  
Ps 30:7, Ps 90:3,  
Ps 146:4

104:30 Gn 1:2,  
Gn 2:7;  
Job 26:13,  
Job 33:4,  
Eze 37:9

104:31 Gn 1:31;  
Ro 11:36

104:32

Ex 19:18;

Ps 144:5

104:34 Ps 9:2

104:35 Ps 104:1

105:1

1Ch 16:8;

1Ch 16:34;

Is 12:4

105:3 Ps 33:21

105:4 Ps 24:6;

Ps 27:8; Am 5:4;

Zep 2:3

*Hallelu-yah* ("Praise the LORD!") Collections The Hebrew name for the book of Psalms is "Praises," and the Hebrew root involved is used in the invitation *hallelu-yah*, "Praise the LORD!" The first instance of *hallelu-yah* doesn't occur until Psalm 104:35. It occurs several times thereafter, always at the beginning or end (or both) of a psalm. It seems to mark small collections or at least to indicate relationship among certain psalms. For instance, *hallelu-yah* occurs again in Psalms 105:45 and 106:48, so that Psalms 104–106 conclude the same way; and this little collection concludes Book IV.

Psalms 111–113 all begin with *hallelu-yah*, and Psalms 115–117 all end with it. Although not each of its psalms contains *hallelu-yah*, Psalms 113–118 became known as the Egyptian Hallel; and it is still used in the Jewish celebration of Passover. The Psalter is known as "Praises," so it's appropriate that the longest *hallelu-yah* collection concludes the book. Each of Psalms 146–150 begins and ends with *hallelu-yah*. Immediately after the first *hallelu-yah* the psalmist invites the self or whole being to praise God (Ps 146:1), and immediately before the final *hallelu-yah* the psalmist invites "every living thing" to praise God (Ps 150:6). The effect is to imagine and create a worldwide community of praise, which involves submitting to God. This submitting includes trusting in and relying upon God alone (Pss 146:3-5; 147:11) and participating in establishing the justice that God intends (Ps 149:6-9).

<sup>32</sup>He has only to look at the earth, and it shakes.

God just touches the mountains, and they erupt in smoke.

<sup>33</sup>I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God while I'm still alive.

<sup>34</sup>Let my praise be pleasing to him;

I'm rejoicing in the LORD!

<sup>35</sup>Let sinners be wiped clean from the earth;

let the wicked be no more.

But let my whole being bless the LORD!

Praise the LORD!

### Psalm 105

<sup>1</sup>Give thanks to the LORD;

call upon his name;

make his deeds known to all people!

<sup>2</sup>Sing to God;

sing praises to the Lord;

dwelt on all his wondrous works!

<sup>3</sup>Give praise to God's holy name!

Let the hearts rejoice of all those seeking the LORD!

<sup>4</sup>Pursue the LORD and his strength;

seek his face always!

<sup>5</sup>Remember the wondrous works he has done,

all his marvelous works, and the justice he declared—

<sup>6</sup>you who are the offspring of Abraham, his servant,

and the children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

104:32 This is the language of theophany (God's appearance). It may suggest that God has the power to destroy as well as to create. The psalmist certainly hopes for the latter (Ps 104:31). The hope is well-founded, since theophanies regularly support God's power to give life and set things right (see Pss 18:7-15; 97:1-5).

104:35 *Let sinners . . . be no more*: This concluding petition is motivated not by any desire for payback but rather by the deep desire that the fullness of God's creation be preserved, for God's sake (Ps 104:31) as well as for the sake of all God's "creations" (Ps 104:24, 27).

105:1-45 Psalm 105 is usually categorized as a historical psalm (see Ps 78); but because it begins like a song of praise (105:1-6), it's sometimes identified as a didactic

hymn. In this case, the historical recital (105:7-45) is understood as providing the reasons for praise. Psalm 106 is also a historical psalm, and it begins with the same invitation as Psalm 105. The two psalms belong together. Psalm 105 recites God's *wondrous works* (105:2, 4), while Psalm 106 recalls the *people's* repeated rebellion, even after which "God remembered his covenant" (Ps 106:45; see Ps 105:8, 10).

105:2 *wondrous works*: See Psalms 105:4-5; 9:1.

105:4 *seek his face*: See Psalms 11:7; 24:6.

105:5 *justice*: See Psalm 9:4. The word serves as admirable summary of the intent of God's work (see Ps 96:13), and God at least intends for it to be clear "everywhere throughout the whole world" (Ps 105:7).

- <sup>7</sup>The LORD—he is our God.  
His justice is everywhere throughout the whole world.
- <sup>8</sup>God remembers his covenant forever,  
the word he commanded to a thousand generations,  
<sup>9</sup>which he made with Abraham,  
the solemn pledge he swore to Isaac.
- <sup>10</sup>God set it up as binding law for Jacob,  
as an eternal covenant for Israel,  
<sup>11</sup>promising, “I hereby give you the land of Canaan as your allotted inheritance.”
- <sup>12</sup>When they were few in number—insignificant, just immigrants—  
<sup>13</sup>wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to the next,  
<sup>14</sup>God didn't let anyone oppress them.  
God punished kings for their sake:
- <sup>15</sup>“Don't touch my anointed ones;  
don't harm my prophets!”
- <sup>16</sup>When God called for a famine in the land,  
destroying every source of food,  
<sup>17</sup>he sent a man ahead of them,  
who was sold as a slave: it was Joseph.
- <sup>18</sup>Joseph's feet hurt in his shackles;  
his neck was in an iron collar,  
<sup>19</sup>until what he predicted actually happened,  
until what the LORD had said proved him true.<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>20</sup>The king sent for Joseph and set him free;  
the ruler of many people released him.
- <sup>21</sup>The king made Joseph master of his house  
and ruler over everything he owned,  
<sup>22</sup>to make sure his princes acted according to his will,  
and to teach wisdom to his advisors.
- <sup>23</sup>That's how Israel came to Egypt,  
how Jacob became an immigrant in the land of Ham.
- <sup>24</sup>God made his people very fruitful,  
more powerful than their enemies,  
<sup>25</sup>whose hearts God changed so they hated his people  
and dealt shrewdly with his servants.
- <sup>26</sup>God sent Moses his servant  
and the one he chose, Aaron.
- <sup>27</sup>They put God's signs on Egypt,<sup>o</sup>  
his marvelous works on the land of Ham.
- <sup>28</sup>God sent darkness, and it became dark,  
but the Egyptians rejected his word.
- <sup>29</sup>God turned their waters into blood  
and killed their fish.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>o</sup>Correction; MT they put on them the words of God's signs

105:8-9 *covenant... with Abraham*: See Psalms 105:10; 25:10; 106:45. For the covenant with Abraham, see Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-27.

105:10-11 *eternal covenant*: This may refer to the covenant at Sinai (see Exod 24:1-8). *Promising... inheritance*: The covenant with Abraham included the promise of land (see Gen 15:18-19), and Sinai was on the way to the land.

105:12-23 This section recalls the stories of the patriarchs and matriarchs who lived as *immigrants* (105:12;

see Gen 19:9; 26:3; 35:27), including Joseph and eventually his father (Jacob/Israel) and brothers in Egypt (105:16-23).

105:15 *anointed ones*: usually a term reserved for kings (see Ps 2:2). Its use here may suggest that the whole people became earthly agents of God's will after the monarchy disappeared (see Pss 89, 144, 149; see sidebar, “God's Anointed One” at Ps 2).

105:24-38 The historical recital moves from Genesis to

105:8 Dt 7:9;  
Ps 105:42,  
Ps 106:45;  
Ps 111:5; Lk 1:72  
105:11  
Gn 13:15,  
Gn 15:18;  
Ps 78:55  
105:15 Gn 20:7,  
Gn 26:11  
105:16 Gn  
41:54; Lv 26:26;  
2Ki 8:1; Is 3:1;  
Eze 4:16  
105:18 Gn  
39:20, Gn 40:15  
105:25 Ex 1:8,  
Ex 1:10, Ex 4:21;  
Ac 7:19

105:32 Ex 9:18,  
Ex 9:23;  
Ps 78:47  
105:34  
Ex 10:12;  
1Ki 8:37;  
Ps 78:46; Jl 1:4,  
Jl 2:25  
105:37  
Ex 12:35,  
Ex 12:36  
105:40 Ex 16:13;  
Nm 11:31;  
Ps 78:18,  
Ps 78:24; In 6:31  
105:44 Dt 6:10;  
Ps 78:55

106:1  
1Ch 16:34;  
Ps 100:5,  
Ps 107:1,  
Ps 118:1,  
Ps 136:1

106:2 Ps 71:16,  
Ps 145:4,  
Ps 145:12,  
Ps 150:2

106:3 Ps 15:2;  
Is 56:1

- <sup>30</sup> God made their land swarm with frogs<sup>P</sup>—  
even in the bedrooms of their king!
- <sup>31</sup> God spoke, and the insects came—  
gnats throughout their whole country!
- <sup>32</sup> God turned their rain into hail  
along with lightning flashes throughout their land.
- <sup>33</sup> God destroyed their vines and their fig trees;  
shattered the trees of their countryside.
- <sup>34</sup> God spoke, and the locusts came—  
countless grasshoppers came!
- <sup>35</sup> They devoured all the plants in their land;  
they devoured the fruit of their soil.
- <sup>36</sup> God struck down all the oldest sons throughout their land;  
struck down their very pride and joy.
- <sup>37</sup> Then God brought Israel out, filled with silver and gold;  
not one of its tribes stumbled.
- <sup>38</sup> Egypt celebrated when they left,  
because the dread of Israel had come upon them.
- <sup>39</sup> God spread out clouds as a covering;  
gave lightning to provide light at night.
- <sup>40</sup> The people asked, and God brought quail;  
God filled them full with food from heaven.
- <sup>41</sup> God opened the rock and out gushed water—  
flowing like a river through the desert!
- <sup>42</sup> Because God remembered his holy promise to Abraham his servant,  
<sup>43</sup> God brought his people out with rejoicing,  
his chosen ones with songs of joy.
- <sup>44</sup> God gave them the lands of other nations;  
they inherited the wealth of many peoples—  
<sup>45</sup> all so that they would keep his laws  
and observe his instructions.

Praise the LORD!

### Psalm 106

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD!

Give thanks to the LORD because he is good,  
because his faithful love endures forever.

<sup>2</sup> Who could possibly repeat all of the LORD's mighty acts  
or publicly recount all his praise?

<sup>3</sup> The people who uphold justice,  
who always do what is right, are truly happy!

<sup>P</sup>Correction; DSS (11QP<sup>s</sup>) *their land swarmed with frogs*

Exodus, recalling the oppression of the people, the call of Moses and Aaron, the plagues against Egypt, and the exodus itself (see Exod 1-15).

105:39-45 The recital moves quickly, covering God's guidance of the people in the wilderness (105:39; see Exod 13:21-22; 14:24; Num 9:15-16; 14:4); God's provision of food and water (105:40-41; see Exod 16:13; 17:1-7; Num 11:31-32; 20:2-13); and the whole journey from the exodus out of Egypt (105:43) into the promised land (105:44; see Ps 105:11; Josh 1-24). As the people were preparing to enter the land, they promised that they would obey God (see Josh 24:16-18, 21, 24); but as Psalm 106 points out, they didn't.

106:1-48 A companion to Psalm 105, Psalm 106 is also

usually identified as a historical psalm (see Ps 78), although it begins like a song of praise (106:1) and contains elements of instruction (106:3) and prayer (106:4-5). As Psalm 106:6 suggests in introducing the historical recital (106:7-39), the emphasis differs from that of Psalm 105, which focuses on God's "wondrous works" (Ps 105:2, 5). The focus in Psalm 106 is on Israel's sin, the divine response to which is described in verses 40-46 before the concluding prayer (106:47) and doxology that concludes Book IV (106:48).

106:1 See Psalms 107:1; 118:1. *good*: See Psalm 23:6. *faithful love*: See Psalms 106:7, 45; 5:7.

106:3 *truly happy*: See Psalm 1:1-2. God's "instruction" can be summarized as justice and righteousness (see Pss 5:8; 9:4; 96:13; Isa 56:1-2).

- <sup>4</sup>Remember me, LORD, with the favor you show your people.  
Visit me with your saving help  
<sup>5</sup>so I can experience the good things your chosen ones experience,  
so I can rejoice in the joy of your nation,  
so I can praise along with your possession.
- <sup>6</sup>We have sinned—right along with our ancestors.  
We've done what is wrong.  
We've acted wickedly.
- <sup>7</sup>Our ancestors in Egypt didn't understand your wondrous works.  
They didn't remember how much faithful love you have.  
So they rebelled by the sea—at the Reed Sea.<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>8</sup>But God saved them for the sake of his good name,  
to make known his mighty power.
- <sup>9</sup>God scolded the Reed Sea, and it dried right up;  
he led them through the deeps like they were a dry desert.
- <sup>10</sup>God saved them from hostile powers;  
he redeemed them from the power of the enemy.
- <sup>11</sup>But the waters covered over their foes—  
not one of them survived!
- <sup>12</sup>So our ancestors trusted God's words;  
they sang God's praise.
- <sup>13</sup>But how quickly they forgot what he had done!  
They wouldn't wait for his advice.
- <sup>14</sup>They were overcome with craving in the desert;  
they tested God in the wastelands.
- <sup>15</sup>God gave them what they asked for;  
he sent food<sup>r</sup> to satisfy their appetites.
- <sup>16</sup>But then they were jealous of Moses in the camp,  
jealous too of Aaron, the LORD's holy one.
- <sup>17</sup>So the earth opened up, swallowing Dathan,  
and covering over Abiram's crowd.
- <sup>18</sup>Fire blazed throughout that whole group;  
flames burned up the wicked.
- <sup>19</sup>They made a calf at Horeb,  
bowing down to a metal idol.
- <sup>20</sup>They traded their glorious God<sup>a</sup>  
for an image of a bull that eats grass.
- <sup>21</sup>They forgot the God who saved them—  
the one who had done great things in Egypt,  
<sup>22</sup>wondrous works in the land of Ham,  
awesome deeds at the Reed Sea.
- <sup>23</sup>So God determined that he would destroy them—  
except for the fact that Moses, his chosen one,  
stood in the way, right in front of him,  
and turned God's destructive anger away.
- <sup>24</sup>But then they rejected the land that was so desirable.  
They didn't trust God's promise.

<sup>a</sup>Or *Red Sea*; also in 106:9, 22 <sup>r</sup>LXX <sup>a</sup>Or *their Glory*

106:4 *Remember*: See Psalms 106:45; 105:42.

106:7 *wondrous works*: See Psalm 105:2, 5. *they rebelled*: See Exodus 14:10-12.

106:8-12 See Exodus 14:21-31; 15:1-21.

106:13-14 See Exodus 15:22-25; 17:1-7; Numbers 11:4-34.

106:15 See Exodus 16.

106:16-18 See Numbers 16:1-35.

106:19-23 See Exodus 32:1-14.

106:9 Ex 14:21;  
Ps 18:15;  
Ps 78:13; Is 50:2;  
Na 1:4

106:12 Ex 14:31,  
Ex 15:1

106:19 Ex 32:4;  
Dt 9:8; Ac 7:41

106:20 Jer 2:11;  
Ro 1:23

106:21 Dt 10:21,  
Dt 32:16;  
Ps 78:11,  
Ps 106:7,  
Ps 106:13

106:22 Ps 78:51,  
Ps 105:23,  
Ps 105:27

106:23 Ex 32:10,  
Ex 32:11;  
Dt 9:14, Dt 9:25

106:24 Dt 8:7;  
Jer 3:19

106:30 Nm 25:7;

Nm 25:8;  
Nm 25:11

106:31 Gn 15:6;

Nm 25:11

106:32

Nm 20:2;

Nm 20:12;

Ps 81:7

106:33

Nm 20:10;

Ps 107:11

106:37 Lv 17:7;

Dt 32:17;

2Ki 16:3;

Eze 16:20;

1Co 10:20

106:39

Nm 15:39;

Jgs 2:17;

Eze 20:18;

Eze 20:30;

Eze 20:31

106:40 Dt 9:29;

Dt 32:19;

Jgs 2:14;

Ps 78:59

106:47

1Ch 16:35;

1Ch 16:36;

Ps 107:3

- 25 They muttered in their tents  
and wouldn't listen to the LORD's voice.
- 26 So God raised his hand against them,  
making them fall in the desert,  
27 scattering their offspring among the nations,  
casting them across many lands.
- 28 They joined themselves to Baal-peor  
and ate sacrifices offered to the dead.
- 29 They made God angry by what they did,  
so a plague broke out against them.
- 30 Then Phinehas stood up and prayed,  
and the plague was contained.
- 31 That's why Phinehas is considered righteous,  
generation after generation, forever.
- 32 But they angered God at Meribah's waters,  
and things went badly for Moses because of them,  
33 because they made him bitter  
so that he spoke rashly with his lips.
- 34 They didn't destroy the nations as the LORD had ordered them to do.  
35 Instead, they got mixed up with the nations, learning what they did  
36 and serving those false gods, which became a trap for them.
- 37 They sacrificed their own sons and daughters to demons!  
38 They shed innocent blood,  
the blood of their own sons and daughters—  
the ones they sacrificed to Canaan's false gods—  
so the land was defiled by the bloodshed.
- 39 They made themselves unclean by what they did;  
they prostituted themselves by their actions.
- 40 So the LORD's anger burned against his people;  
he despised his own possession.
- 41 God handed them over to the nations;  
people who hated them ruled over them.
- 42 Their enemies oppressed them,  
and they were humbled under their power.
- 43 God delivered them numerous times,  
but they were determined to rebel,  
and so they were brought down by their own sin.
- 44 But God saw their distress when he heard their loud cries.
- 45 God remembered his covenant for their sake,  
and because of how much faithful love he has,  
God changed his mind.
- 46 God allowed them to receive compassion from all their captors.
- 47 LORD our God, save us!  
Gather us back together from among all the nations  
so we can give thanks to your holy name  
and rejoice in your praise!

106:14-27 See Numbers 14:1-25.

106:28-33 See Numbers 25:1-13; Exodus 17:1-7.

106:34-39 These verses summarize the people's sinfulness after they entered the land.

106:34-36 See Judges 2:1-6.

106:37-38 See 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; 23:10.

106:39 See Jeremiah 2:20; 3:1; Hosea 4:10; 5:3.

106:40-46 Psalm 106:40-43 recalls the pattern in Judges

2:11-23. Verse 43 suggests that the people's sin eventually resulted in the exile, but even the exile didn't mean that God had rejected them completely.

106:47 Like Psalm 106:43, the concluding prayer seems to assume the exile; and it looks forward to the apparent response in Psalm 107:1-3 and beyond (see sidebar, "Book V" at Ps 107). Psalm 106:47-48 appear in 1 Chronicles 16:35-36.

**48** Bless the LORD, the God of Israel,  
from forever ago to forever from now!  
And let all the people say, "Amen!"

Praise the LORD!

## BOOK V

(*Psalms 107–150*)

### Psalm 107

**1** "Give thanks to the LORD because he is good,  
because his faithful love lasts forever!"

**2** That's what those who are redeemed by the LORD say,  
the ones God redeemed from the power of their enemies,

**3** the ones God gathered from various countries,  
from east and west, north and south.

**4** Some of the redeemed had wandered into the desert, into the wasteland.  
They couldn't find their way to a city or town.

**5** They were hungry and thirsty; their lives were slipping away.

**6** So they cried out to the LORD in their distress,  
and God delivered them from their desperate circumstances.

**7** God led them straight to human habitation.

**8** Let them thank the LORD for his faithful love  
and his wondrous works for all people,

**9** because God satisfied the one who was parched with thirst,  
and he filled up the hungry with good things!

**10** Some of the redeemed had been sitting in darkness and deep gloom;  
they were prisoners suffering in chains

**11** because they had disobeyed God's instructions  
and rejected the Most High's plans.

**12** So God humbled them with hard work.

They stumbled, and there was no one to help them.

**13** So they cried out to the LORD in their distress,  
and God saved them from their desperate circumstances.

**14** God brought them out from the darkness and deep gloom;  
he shattered their chains.

**15** Let them thank the LORD for his faithful love  
and his wondrous works for all people,

**106:48** This is the concluding doxology for Book IV (see Ps 41:13).

**107:1-43** Psalm 107 is usually considered a psalm of thanks (see Ps 30), but it's like a sermon on the subject of God's faithful love. After the opening invitation and introduction of the *redeemed* (107:1-3), the psalm consists of four illustrations of God's redemptive work (107:4-9, 10-16, 17-22, 23-32), followed by a summary description of God's activity (107:33-41) and a suggested invitation to depend upon God's faithful love (107:42-43). Each of the four illustrative sections contains identical descriptions of the request for divine help (107:6, 13, 19, 28) and the invitation to give thanks for God's faithful love and redeeming work (107:8, 15, 21, 31). Psalm 107 opens Book V, which continues the response to the crisis articulated at the end of Book III (see sidebar, "Book V" at Ps 107).

**107:1** See Psalms 106:1; 118:1. Even though they are in different books of the Psalter, the identical beginnings of Psalms 106 and 107 suggest that they are related. Psalm

107 shows what Psalm 106:44-46 affirms. *faithful love*: See Psalms 107:8, 15, 21, 31, 43; 5:7; 106:45. This fundamental quality of God is the keyword in the psalm and one of the most important words in the Psalter and the entire OT (see sidebar, "God's Faithful Love" at Ps 6).

**107:2-3** *redeemed*: See Psalm 19:14. *gathered*: See Psalm 106:47. Psalm 107 and Book V continue the response to the crisis seen in Psalm 89:38-51, suggesting that God has already been at work gathering the exiles (see sidebar, "Book V" at Ps 107).

**107:4-9** The language and image of the first illustration recalls Israel's wilderness wandering (see Psalms 105:40; 106:15), as well as the return from life in Babylon.

**107:6** *cried out*: This word especially recalls Israel's distress in Egypt (see Exod 3:7, 9; 14:10; Deut 26:7), but people also cry out in other situations of need and distress (see Ps 142:5; Judg 3:9, 15; 6:6-7; Neh 9:4, 28).

**107:9** See Luke 1:53.

**107:10-16** The distress in this case results from the

**107:1**  
1Ch 16:34;  
2Ch 5:13;  
2Ch 7:3;  
Ps 106:1;  
Ps 136:1

**107:7** Ezr 8:21;  
Ps 107:4;  
Ps 107:36;  
Jer 31:9

**107:8** Ps 107:15;  
Ps 107:21;  
Ps 107:31

**107:9** Ps 34:10;  
Ps 63:5; Ps 146:7;  
Lk 1:53

**107:13** Ps 107:6;  
Ps 107:19

**107:14**  
Ps 107:10

**107:15** Ps 107:8;  
Ps 107:21;  
Ps 107:31

107:16 Is 45:2

107:17

Lv 26:16;

Job 15:20;

Prv 1:7;

Jer 30:14;

Jer 30:15

107:20

Ps 30:2, Ps 30:3;

Ps 147:15;

Ps 147:18;

Mt 8:8

107:25 Ps 93:3;

Ps 105:31;

Ps 148:8;

Jon 1:4

107:26 Ps 22:14;

Ps 119:28

107:27

Job 12:25;

Is 24:20

107:32 Ps 22:22;

Ps 22:25, Ps 99:5;

Is 25:1

107:40

Dt 32:10;

Job 12:21;

Job 12:24

**16** because God has shattered bronze doors  
and split iron bars in two!

**17** Some of the redeemed were fools because of their sinful ways.  
They suffered because of their wickedness.

**18** They had absolutely no appetite for food;  
they had arrived at death's gates.

**19** So they cried out to the LORD in their distress,  
and God saved them from their desperate circumstances.

**20** God gave the order and healed them;  
he rescued them from their pit.

**21** Let them thank the LORD for his faithful love  
and his wondrous works for all people.

**22** Let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices  
and declare what God has done in songs of joy!

**23** Some of the redeemed had gone out on the ocean in ships,  
making their living on the high seas.

**24** They saw what the LORD had made;  
they saw his wondrous works in the depths of the sea.

**25** God spoke and stirred up a storm that brought the waves up high.

**26** The waves went as high as the sky;  
they crashed down to the depths.  
The sailors' courage melted at this terrible situation.

**27** They staggered and stumbled around like they were drunk.  
None of their skill was of any help.

**28** So they cried out to the LORD in their distress,  
and God brought them out safe from their desperate circumstances.

**29** God quieted the storm to a whisper;  
the sea's waves were hushed.

**30** So they rejoiced because the waves had calmed down;  
then God led them to the harbor they were hoping for.

**31** Let them thank the LORD for his faithful love  
and his wondrous works for all people.

**32** Let them exalt God in the congregation of the people  
and praise God in the assembly of the elders.

**33** God turns rivers into desert,  
watery springs into thirsty ground,

**34** fruitful land into unproductive dirt,  
when its inhabitants are wicked.

**35** But God can also turn the desert into watery pools,  
thirsty ground into watery springs,

**36** where he settles the hungry.  
They even build a city and live there!

**37** They plant fields and vineyards  
and obtain a fruitful harvest.

**38** God blesses them, and they become many.  
God won't even let their cattle diminish.

**39** But when they do diminish—  
when they're brought down by oppression, trouble, and grief—

**40** God pours contempt on their leaders,  
making them wander aimlessly in the wastelands.

people's disobedience, but God still hears and delivers (see Ps 106:40-46). This pattern fits well the prophetic understanding of the exile as a deserved punishment. 107:17-22. As in Psalm 107:10-16, the suffering results from sinfulness.

107:20 *healed*: See Psalm 6:2.

107:22 *thanksgiving sacrifices*: See Psalm 50:14, 23.

107:23-32 The final illustration is similar to Jonah 1:13-16 (see also Matt 8:23-27; Mark 4:31-35).

107:33-35 See Isaiah 41:18; 50:2.



*Book V* The response to the tragic conclusion of Book III begins in Book IV (see sidebar, “Book IV and the Rule of God” at Ps 89), but Book IV ends with the request to gather the exiles “from among all the nations” (Ps 106:47). Book V provides a needed response to the bad news of Psalm 89, as well as to the request that ends Book IV. Responding directly to Psalm 106:47, Psalm 107 is a psalm of thanks that celebrates God’s redemption of people who sound like the exiles (see Ps 107:4-9, 10-16). The rest of Book V suggests how the post-exilic community might refocus itself. Book V features several collections that have to do with major aspects of the people’s life together. These collections are arranged in a chiasmic pattern, as follows:

Psalms 108–110	psalms of David (monarchy)
Psalms 113–118	the Egyptian Hallel (exodus)
Psalm 119	a torah psalm (Instruction)
Psalms 120–134	the pilgrimage songs (Zion)
Psalms 138–145	psalms of David (monarchy)

This pattern draws attention to the central element, the massive Psalm 119. It seems that the editors of the Psalter wanted to suggest that monarchy (David), exodus, and Zion now revolve around God’s Instruction. (see sidebar, “Torah [Instruction]: Psalms 15–24” for the description of a similar centering of Instruction in Book I). To a recently defeated and increasingly conquered and scattered people, the focus on God’s Instruction would be good news. God’s gift of Instruction is a new form of deliverance (beyond the exodus); God’s Instruction points the way to living God’s will (the former role of the monarchy); and obedience to God’s Instruction affords a direct experience of God (just as visiting Zion would give an experience of God; see Pss 1:3; 84:4; 92:13).

- <sup>41</sup> But God raises the needy from their suffering;  
he makes their families as numerous as sheep!
- <sup>42</sup> Those who do right see it and celebrate,  
but every wicked person shuts their mouth.
- <sup>43</sup> Whoever is wise will pay attention to these things,  
carefully considering the LORD’s faithful love.

### Psalm 108<sup>c</sup>

*A song. A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> My heart is unwavering, God.  
I will sing and make music—yes, with my whole being!
- <sup>2</sup> Wake up, harp and lyre!  
I will wake the dawn itself!
- <sup>3</sup> I will give thanks to you, LORD, among all the peoples;  
I will make music to you among the nations,  
<sup>4</sup> because your faithful love is higher than heaven;  
your faithfulness reaches the clouds.
- <sup>5</sup> Exalt yourself, God, higher than heaven!  
Let your glory be over all the earth!
- <sup>6</sup> Save me by your power and answer me  
so that the people you love might be rescued.
- <sup>7</sup> God has spoken in his sanctuary:  
“I will celebrate as I divide up Shechem  
and portion out the Succoth Valley.

<sup>c</sup>Ps 108:1-5 parallels Ps 57:7-11; Ps 108:6-13 parallels Ps 60:5-12.

107:41 See Psalms 113:7; 146:8; 1 Samuel 2:8.

107:42 Elsewhere, too, the righteous celebrate when things are set right (see Psalms 52:6-7; 58:10-11; 63:11).

107:43 wise: See Psalm 90:12. Wisdom derives from being attentive to God and relying upon God’s faithful love (cf. Ps 14:1).

108:1-13 Verses 1-5 of Psalm 108 are nearly the same as Psalm 57:7-11, and verses 6-13 are nearly the same as Psalm 60:5-12. It’s unclear why parts of Psalms 57 and 60 were used to form Psalm 108, but verses 1-5 do seem to provide the thanks that Psalm 107 invites again and again (Ps 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31). The reason is the same in

107:42 Job 5:16,  
Job 22:19;  
Ps 63:11;  
Ro 3:19

108:1 Ps 57:7

108:4  
Nm 14:18;  
Ps 36:5; Mt 7:18

108:5 Ps 57:5

108:6 Ps 60:5

108:7 Ps 89:35

108:8 Gn 49:10

108:9 Ps 60:8

108:10 Ps 60:9

108:13 Ps 44:5;  
Is 63:3

109:1 Dt 10:21;

Ps 28:1, Ps 35:22;

Ps 83:1;

Jer 17:14

109:2 Ps 52:4

109:3 Ps 35:7;

Ps 69:4; Jn 15:25

109:4 Ps 38:20;

Ps 69:13

109:5 Ps 35:12;

Ps 38:20;

Prv 17:13

109:6 1Ch 21:1;

Zec 3:1

109:7 Prv 28:9

109:8 Ps 55:23;

Ac 1:16, Ac 1:20

109:9 Ex 22:24;

Jer 18:21

- <sup>8</sup>Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine;  
Ephraim is my helmet, Judah is my scepter.
- <sup>9</sup>But Moab is my washbowl;  
I'll throw my shoe at Edom.  
I shout in triumph over Philistia!
- <sup>10</sup>I wish someone would bring me to a fortified city!  
I wish someone would lead me to Edom!"
- <sup>11</sup>But you have rejected us, God, haven't you?  
You, God, no longer accompany our armies.
- <sup>12</sup>Give us help against the enemy—  
human help is worthless.
- <sup>13</sup>With God we will triumph:  
God is the one who will trample our adversaries.

### Psalm 109

*To the leader. Of David. A psalm.*

- <sup>1</sup>God of my praise, don't keep quiet,  
<sup>2</sup>because the mouths of wicked liars have opened up against me,  
talking about me with lying tongues.
- <sup>3</sup>Hateful words surround me;  
they attack me for no reason.
- <sup>4</sup>Instead of returning my love, they accuse me—  
but I am at prayer.
- <sup>5</sup>They repay me evil for good,  
hatred in return for my love.
- <sup>6</sup>"Appoint a wicked person to be against this person," they say,  
"an accuser to stand right next to him.
- <sup>7</sup>When the sentence is passed, let him be found guilty—  
let his prayer be found sinful!
- <sup>8</sup>Let his days be few;  
let someone else assume his position.
- <sup>9</sup>Let his children become orphans;  
let his wife turn into a widow.
- <sup>10</sup>Let his children wander aimlessly, begging,  
driven out of their ruined homes.
- <sup>11</sup>Let a creditor seize everything he owns;  
let strangers plunder his wealth.
- <sup>12</sup>Let no one extend faithful love to him;  
let no one have mercy on his orphans.
- <sup>13</sup>Let his descendants be eliminated;  
let their names be wiped out in just one generation!

both psalms: God's *faithful love* (see 108:4). The move from thanks to complaint and petition (108:11-12) would make sense in a post-exilic setting, in which celebration for release from exile was followed by a new set of difficulties for the restored nation (see Pss 85; 126). See notes on Psalms 57 and 60.

109:1-31 Psalm 109 contains the typical elements of a prayer for help: petition (109:1a, 20-21, 26-29), complaint (109:1b-5, 22-25), and expressions of praise and trust (109:30-31). The extended request for punishment in verses 6-19 (see note on Ps 109:6-19) makes Psalm 109 unique. Verses 1-5 indicate that the psalmist was the victim of false accusation (see Pss 4; 5; 7; 17; 26).

109:1 *don't keep quiet*: See Psalm 35:22.

109:2-3 See Psalms 4:2; 5:6, 9; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Psalm 3. *for no reason*: See Psalm 69:4.

109:4-5 See Psalm 35:11-16, where the complaint

involves being harassed by persons that the psalmist had treated well.

109:6-19 Note that these verses are an extended quotation. In verse 6, *they say* suggests that this request for destruction is spoken by the psalmist's opponents. But "they say" isn't in the Hebrew text, so some translations present this speech as the psalmist's request for the destruction of one of the accusers or attackers (see Ps 109:1-5). Such a request isn't unusual (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6), although the length and intensity of the request are uncommon. The speech requests misfortune not only for the opponent (or the psalmist; see 109:6-8, 11), but also for his family (109:9-10, 12-15). Psalm 109:8 is quoted in Acts 1:20, which suggests that Judas deserved to be cursed for falsely accusing Jesus. 109:12, 16 *faithful love*: In a psalm so full of accusation and curses, the keyword is "faithful love." It will be the grounds for the speaker's appeal to God for help (Ps 109:21, 26).

- 14 Let his father's wrongdoing be remembered before the LORD;  
let his mother's sin never be wiped out.
- 15 Let them be before the LORD always,  
and let God eliminate the very memory of them from the land.
- 16 All because this person didn't remember to demonstrate faithful love,  
but chased after the poor and needy—  
even the brokenhearted—with deadly intent!
- 17 Since he loved to curse, let it come back on him!  
Since he didn't care much for blessing, let it be far away from him!
- 18 Since he wore curses like a coat,  
let them seep inside him like water,  
seep into his bones like oil!
- 19 Let them be like the clothes he wears,  
like a belt that is always around him."

109:18  
Nm 5:22; Ps 73:6

109:19  
Ps 109:29

109:21 Ps 23:3,  
Ps 69:16

109:22 Ps 40:17,  
Ps 86:1

109:24 Ps 35:13;  
Heb 12:12

109:25 Ps 22:6,  
Ps 22:7;  
Mt 27:39

110:1 Mt 22:44;  
Mk 12:36;  
Ac 2:34;  
1Co 15:25;  
Heb 1:13

110:2 Ps 72:8

- 20 But let all that be the reward my accusers get from the LORD,  
the reward for those who speak evil against me!
- 21 But you, LORD, my Lord!—act on my behalf for the sake of your name;  
deliver me because your faithful love is so good;  
22 because I am poor and needy, and my heart is broken.
- 23 Like a lengthening shadow, I'm passing away;  
I'm shaken off, like some locust.
- 24 My legs are weak from fasting;  
my body is skin and bones.
- 25 I've become a joke to my accusers;  
when they see me, they just shake their heads.
- 26 Help me, LORD my God!  
Save me according to your faithful love!
- 27 And let them know that this is by your hand—  
that you have done it, LORD!
- 28 Let them curse—but you, bless me!  
If they rise up, let them be disgraced,  
but let your servant celebrate!
- 29 Let my accusers be dressed in shame;  
let them wear their disgrace like a coat.
- 30 But I will give great thanks to the LORD with my mouth;  
among a great crowd I will praise God!
- 31 Because God stands right next to the needy,  
to save them from any who would condemn them.

## Psalm 110

*Of David. A psalm.*

- 1 What the LORD says to my master:  
"Sit right beside me until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet!"
- 2 May the LORD make your mighty scepter reach far from Zion!  
Rule over your enemies!

109:20 Even if the psalmist's opponents voiced the request for destruction, the psalmist claims their words here. The point need not be understood as personal payback but rather justice for the mistreated (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

109:22 *poor and needy*: The psalmist's appeal for help is grounded in God's "faithful love" (Ps 109:21, 26), which involves God's special concern for the most helpless and mistreated (see Pss 109:16, 31; 9:18).

109:25 *a joke*: See Psalms 31:11; 44:13.

109:30 *I... thanks*: Looking forward to being rescued (see

Ps 13:5-6), the psalmist will do what Psalm 107 frequently invites.

109:31 *right next to the needy*: This verse very clearly shows what is often more assumed in the Psalms—that is, God has special concern for and is on the side of "the needy" (see Pss 9:18; 72:12-14; 82:2-4; see sidebar, "The Poor and Needy" at Ps 82).

110:1-7 Psalm 110 is almost universally categorized as a royal psalm that preserves divine promises to the king in verses 1 and 4 (and perhaps in verse 3, although verse 3 can be understood as spoken by the people). The

110:3 Jgs 5:2;  
1Ch 16:29;  
Neh 11:2

110:4 Gn 14:18;  
Nm 23:19;  
Heb 5:6;  
Heb 6:20;  
Heb 7:17

110:7 Jgs 7:5;  
Jgs 7:6; Ps 3:3;  
Ps 27:6

111:1 Ps 9:1;  
Ps 35:18, Ps 89:7;  
Ps 138:1;  
Ps 149:1

111:2 Ps 92:5;  
Ps 139:14;  
Ps 143:5;  
Rev 15:3

<sup>3</sup>Your people stand ready on your day of battle.

“In holy grandeur, from the dawn’s womb, fight!<sup>a</sup>  
Your youthful strength is like the dew itself.”

<sup>4</sup>The LORD has sworn a solemn pledge and won’t change his mind:

“You are a priest forever in line with Melchizedek.”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>5</sup>My master, by your strong hand,

God has crushed kings on his day of wrath.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>6</sup>God brings the nations to justice,

piling the dead bodies, crushing heads throughout the earth.

<sup>7</sup>God drinks from a stream along the way,

then holds his head up high.<sup>d</sup>

### Psalm 111<sup>e</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD!

℣ I thank the LORD with all my heart

⊃ in the company of those who do right, in the congregation.

⊃ <sup>2</sup>The works of the LORD are magnificent;

⊃ they are treasured by all who desire them.

⊃ <sup>3</sup>God’s deeds are majestic and glorious.

⊃ God’s righteousness stands forever.

⊃ <sup>4</sup>God is famous for his wondrous works.

⊃ The LORD is full of mercy and compassion.

⊃ <sup>5</sup>God gives food to those who honor him.

⊃ God remembers his covenant forever.

<sup>a</sup>Correction; or *Go!*; MT to you <sup>b</sup>Or a rightful king by my decree <sup>c</sup>Or My Lord (God), because of your (the king’s) strong hand, has crushed or The LORD is above your strong hand, crushing kings <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>e</sup>Ps 111 is an alphabetic acrostic poem; see the note at Pss 9–10.

appearance of a royal psalm in Book V, which clearly reflects the reality of life in Babylon and the beginnings of life after the return to Jerusalem (see Ps 107; see sidebar, “Book V” at Ps 107), may indicate post-exilic hope for restoring the Davidic monarchy (see Ps 101). Or the concept of kingship may have been used to express the belief that God would give power to an earthly agent to do God’s will, perhaps the whole people (see Pss 105:15; 144:11–14; 149:5–9; see sidebar, “God’s Anointed One” at Ps 2). The early church affirmed that the promises of verses 1 and 4 were fulfilled in Jesus (see Acts 2:34–35; 7:55–56; Rom 8:34; Heb 1:13; 7:17; 10:12–13; see sidebar, “The Psalms and Jesus” at Ps 22).

110:1 *my master*: A reference to the earthly king (see Ps 110:5). *footstool*: See Psalm 99:5, where “footstool” indicates God’s earthly throne. Here, the king will be enthroned upon his defeated enemies.

110:2 *Zion*: See Psalm 2:6. The vision of the king’s victories recalls Psalm 2:8–11.

110:3 Apparently, the people have gathered to wish the king well and encourage him as he prepares for a battle (see Pss 20–21). *battle... fight!*: Because the king was trusted with the mission to “crush oppressors” (Ps 72:4) and because the opposition to God was widespread (see Ps 2:1–3), the king was often in for a fight (see Pss 18:31–34, 39; 21:8–12).

110:4 *You... Melchizedek*: See Genesis 14:18, where Melchizedek is the king of pre-Israelite Jerusalem, as well as a priest.

110:5–6 The actor here is God, who works through the king. The violent language again recalls Psalm 2:8–11, although God’s activity here is called *justice* (see “justice” in Ps 149:9, although the Hebrew roots differ). The brutal

image is a standard way of describing victory (see Pss 137:9; 2 Kgs 8:12; Hos 10:14; Nah 3:30).

110:7 As the translation note indicates, the Hebrew is uncertain. See Psalm 27:6, where a raised head seems to indicate security in the middle of opposition.

111:1–10 Psalms 111 and 112 belong together. Both are acrostic poems (see translation notes y and z), and they share many of the same words. While Psalm 111 focuses on God and God’s *works/deeds* (111:2–4, 6), Psalm 112 features those “who honor the LORD” (Ps 112:1; “honor” is the same Hebrew root as *Fear* in 111:10). Such people mirror God’s character and values. So what is true of God—God’s *righteousness stands forever* (111:3)—is also true of those who honor God—“Their righteousness stands forever” (Ps 112:3, 9). Because of its teaching tone, Psalm 111 is often categorized as a wisdom psalm. In terms of form, Psalm 111 is usually classified as a song of praise. Invitation to praise (111:1a) is followed by the stated intent to praise (111:1bc), and Psalm 111:2–10 offer reasons for praise.

111:1 *Praise*: See Psalm 111:10; praise surrounds the psalm.

111:3 *righteousness*: a fundamental trait of God and God’s will (see Psalms 5:8; 96:13).

111:4–7 The sequence recalls the basic narrative line of the books of Exodus through Joshua: the exodus out of Egypt itself (111:4a; see Exod 1–15); God’s revelation of God’s essential grace and mercy (111:4b; see Exod 34:6); God’s provision of food in the wilderness (111:5a; see Exod 16; Num 11:4–9); the making and remaking of covenant (111:5b; see Exod 24 and Josh 24); and the gift of land (111:6; see Josh 1–24).

111:5 *covenant*: See Psalms 111:9; 25:10; 105:8, 10; 106:45.

6 God proclaimed his powerful deeds to his people  
 and gave them what had belonged to other nations.  
 7 God's handiwork is honesty and justice;  
 all God's rules are trustworthy—  
 8 they are established always and forever:  
 they are fulfilled with truth and right doing.  
 9 God sent redemption for his people;  
 God commanded that his covenant last forever.  
 Holy and awesome is God's name!  
 10 Fear of the LORD is where wisdom begins;  
 sure knowledge is for all who keep God's laws.  
 God's praise lasts forever!

111:7 Ps 19:7,  
 Ps 93:5; Rev 15:3  
 111:9 Ps 99:3;  
 Lk 1:49, Lk 1:68  
 111:10  
 Job 28:28;  
 Prv 1:7, Prv 9:10  
 112:1 Ps 1:1,  
 Ps 1:2, Ps 115:13,  
 Ps 119:16,  
 Ps 128:1  
 112:2 Ps 25:13,  
 Ps 37:26,  
 Ps 102:28;  
 Prv 11:21,  
 Prv 20:7  
 112:4 Ps 97:11  
 112:5 Ps 37:21,  
 Ps 37:26; Lk 6:35  
 112:6 Ps 15:5,  
 Ps 55:22,  
 Ps 125:1;  
 Prv 10:7  
 112:7 Ps 56:4,  
 Ps 57:7, Ps 64:10,  
 Ps 108:1;  
 Prv 1:33  
 112:8 Ps 27:1,  
 Ps 59:10;  
 Prv 1:33; Is 12:2;  
 Heb 13:9  
 112:9 Ps 75:10,  
 Ps 89:17,  
 Ps 92:10;  
 Prv 11:25;  
 2Co 9:9  
 112:10 Ps 37:12;  
 Mt 8:12;  
 Lk 13:28

**Psalm 112\***

1 Praise the LORD! Those who honor the LORD,  
 who adore God's commandments, are truly happy!  
 2 Their descendants will be strong throughout the land.  
 The offspring of those who do right will be blessed;  
 3 wealth and riches will be in their houses.  
 Their righteousness stands forever.  
 4 They shine in the dark for others who do right.  
 They are merciful, compassionate, and righteous.  
 5 Those who lend generously are good people—  
 as are those who conduct their affairs with justice.  
 6 Yes, these sorts of people will never be shaken;  
 the righteous will be remembered forever!  
 7 They won't be frightened at bad news.  
 Their hearts are steady, trusting in the LORD.  
 8 Their hearts are firm; they aren't afraid.  
 In the end, they will witness their enemies' defeat.  
 9 They give freely to those in need.  
 Their righteousness stands forever.  
 Their strength increases gloriously.  
 10 The wicked see all this and fume;  
 they grind their teeth, but disappear to nothing.  
 What the wicked want to see happen comes to nothing!

\*Ps 112 is an alphabetic acrostic poem; see the note at Pss 9–10.

111:7 *justice*: The basic characteristic of God's will for the world (see Pss 9:4; 96:13).

111:10 *Fear... wisdom begins*: Fear means not fright but rather awe and respect that include commitment and obedience, as the remainder of the verse suggests (see Prov 1:7; 9:10; Job 28:28). This Hebrew word is usually translated "honor" (see Ps 112:1)

112:1–10 Psalm 112 is a poetic elaboration on Psalm 111:10, focusing on those *who honor* [or "fear"; see Psalm 111:10] *the LORD* (112:1). Therefore, it has a teaching tone, and is usually categorized as a wisdom psalm. It recalls Psalm 1 in several ways (see notes on Ps 112:1 and Ps 112:10).

112:1 *adore*: The same Hebrew word is translated "love" in Psalm 1:2. There, as here, God's will is honored. *truly happy*: See Psalms 1:1–2; 41:1. Happiness derives from doing what God wants done (see sidebar, "True Happiness" at Ps 1).

112:3 The wealth isn't necessarily material or monetary. As Psalm 112:8 suggests and as the whole Psalter demonstrates, those who honor God are often opposed and

afflicted. See the warnings against material wealth in Psalms 49:7–9; 52:7; 62:10.

112:4 Like God, those who honor God are a source of illumination for others (see Ps 4:6; Matt 5:14–16). *merciful, compassionate, and righteous*: See Psalm 111:4. These fundamental qualities of God also characterize those who honor God—in short, they will be like God (see Ps 5:8; Exod 34:6).

112:5 *lend generously*: See Psalm 15:5. *with justice*: another way of being like God (see Pss 112:4; 111:7; 9:4; 96:13).

112:6 *never be shaken*: See Psalm 15:5.

112:7 *trusting*: See Psalm 4:5.

112:8 *witness... defeat*: not as a matter of personal pay-back but rather of justice (see Pss 112:5; 111:7) done and things set right (see Pss 3:7–8; 7:6).

112:9 *give freely... need*: This is another way that those who honor God will be like God (see Ps 112:4–5), since God stands with the needy (see Ps 109:31; see sidebar, "The Poor and Needy" at Ps 82).

112:10 See Psalm 1:4–6. In Hebrew, the first and last words

113:1 Ps 34:22;  
Ps 134:1,  
Ps 135:1

### Psalm 113

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD!

You who serve the LORD—praise!

Praise the LORD's name!

<sup>2</sup> Let the LORD's name be blessed from now until forever from now!

<sup>3</sup> From sunrise to sunset, let the LORD's name be praised!

<sup>4</sup> The LORD is high over all the nations;  
God's glory is higher than the skies!

<sup>5</sup> Who could possibly compare to the LORD our God?  
God rules from on high;

<sup>6</sup> he has to come down to even see heaven and earth!

<sup>7</sup> God lifts up the poor from the dirt  
and raises up the needy from the garbage pile

<sup>8</sup> to seat them with leaders—  
with the leaders of his own people!

<sup>9</sup> God nests the once barren woman at home—  
now a joyful mother with children!

Praise the LORD!

### Psalm 114

<sup>1</sup> When Israel came out of Egypt—  
when the house of Jacob came out  
from a people who spoke a different language—

<sup>2</sup> Judah was God's sanctuary;  
Israel was God's territory.

<sup>3</sup> The sea saw it happen and ran away;  
the Jordan River retreated!

<sup>4</sup> The mountains leaped away like rams;  
the hills leaped away like lambs!

of Psalms 1 and 112 are the same (not counting the opening "Praise the Lord!" in Ps 112).

113:1-9 Psalm 113 is a song of praise that begins a collection known traditionally as the "Egyptian Hallel" (Pss 113–118), which is used in the Jewish celebration of Passover. The Hebrew root *hll* means "praise" and is found in "Praise the Lord!" It appears in Pss 113:1, 9; 115:18; 116:19; 117:2. See sidebar, "Hallelu-yah ('Praise the Lord!') Collections" at Psalm 104. Psalm 113 also serves as a fitting follow-up to the paired Psalms 111–112 (see "Praise the Lord!" in Pss 111:1 and 112:1), supplying further examples of the "works" of God that are mentioned in Psalm 111:2.

113:1 *serve... praise!*: See Psalms 2:11; 100:2. Service suggests submission to God, and praise is a worshipful expression of such submission. *The Lord's name*: See "name" also in Psalm 113:2-3. The word suggests reputation or character, and Psalm 113:5-9 describes how God's activity shows God's character.

113:2 *blessed*: See Psalms 16:7; 100:4.

113:4 *high... nations*: The universal claim of God on all peoples and nations is seen in many of the songs of praise (see Pss 47; 67; 96; 117).

113:5 *Who... God?* This question lies at the center of the psalm, and the remaining verses offer an answer by portraying God's incomparable activity (see Pss 77:13; 89:6; 96:4; 97:9).

113:6-7 The movement is important: God who "rules from on high" (Ps 113:5) is the one who has *come down* to see and then to act (113:6). In short, God humbles the

divine self (113:6), and the result is that the humbled on earth are raised up (113:7; see 1 Sam 2:7-8; Luke 1:52-53; Luke 18:14). *the poor... the needy*: God is always especially concerned for the poor and needy (see Pss 9:18; 72:12-14; 82:3-4; 109:22, 31; see sidebar, "The Poor and Needy" at Ps 82).

113:9 See 1 Samuel 2:5.

114:1-8 Psalm 114 is usually categorized as a song of praise, but it's rather unique. The only invitation to praise comes in the final section, and it's addressed to *Earth* (114:7). Major moments in Israel's story are in view, especially the exodus out of Egypt (114:1-2, 3a, 5a), which fits with the use of the Hallel collection at Passover (see Ps 113).

114:1 *came out*: The verb is often used of the exodus (see Exodus 3:10-12; 14:11). *people... different language*: This is the Egyptians.

114:2 *sanctuary*: See Exodus 15:1-18, which moves from celebrating the sea-crossing to the bringing of God's people to God's "sanctuary" (Exod 15:17), which means the temple in Jerusalem.

114:3 *The sea... ran away*: A poetic description of the parting of the sea as part of the exodus (see Ps 114:5). *the Jordan River retreated*: The exodus and entry into the land are conflated here. When the people crossed the Jordan River to enter Canaan, the water of the river parted, as at the exodus (see Josh 3:17; 4:23-24).

114:4 A poetic description of God's appearing, perhaps intended to recall Sinai (see Ps 114:6; Exod 19).

- <sup>5</sup>Sea, why did you run away?  
Jordan, why did you retreat?
- <sup>6</sup>Mountains, why did you leap away like rams?  
Hills, why did you leap away like lambs?
- <sup>7</sup>Earth: Tremble before the Lord!  
Tremble before the God of Jacob,  
<sup>8</sup>the one who turned that rock into a pool of water,  
that flint stone into a spring of water!

114:5 Hab 3:8  
114:8 Ex 17:6;  
Nm 20:11;  
Dt 8:15;  
Ps 78:15;  
Ps 107:35  
115:1 Is 48:11;  
Ro 15:9  
115:2 Ps 42:3;  
Ps 42:10;  
Ps 79:10; || 2:17  
115:3 Ps 135:6;  
Dn 4:35  
115:4 Dt 4:28;  
2Kt 19:18;  
Ps 135:15;  
Jer 10:3  
115:5 Dt 4:28;  
Ps 115:4; Is 46:7;  
Jer 10:3, Jer 10:5  
115:8 Ps 135:18;  
Is 44:9; Hab 2:18  
115:9 Ps 33:20;  
Ps 37:3, Ps 62:8,  
Ps 118:2,  
Ps 135:19  
115:11 Ps 22:23,  
Ps 103:11  
115:12 Gn 8:1,  
Gn 12:2,  
Gn 32:28,  
Gn 48:21;  
Ex 2:25  
115:13 Ps 112:1;  
Rev 11:18,  
Rev 19:5

## Psalm 115

- <sup>1</sup>Not to us, LORD, not to us—  
no, but to your own name give glory  
because of your loyal love and faithfulness!
- <sup>2</sup>Why do the nations say,  
“Where’s their God now?”
- <sup>3</sup>Our God is in heaven—  
he can do whatever he wants!
- <sup>4</sup>Their idols are just silver and gold—  
things made by human hands.
- <sup>5</sup>They have mouths, but they can’t speak.  
They have eyes, but they can’t see.
- <sup>6</sup>They have ears, but they can’t hear.  
They have noses, but they can’t smell.
- <sup>7</sup>They have hands, but they can’t feel.  
They have feet, but they can’t walk.  
They can’t even make a noise in their throats!
- <sup>8</sup>Let the people who made these idols  
and all who trust in them become just like them!
- <sup>9</sup>But you, Israel, trust in the LORD!  
God is their help and shield.
- <sup>10</sup>Trust in the LORD, house of Aaron!  
God is their help and shield.
- <sup>11</sup>You who honor the LORD, trust in the LORD!  
God is their help and shield.
- <sup>12</sup>The LORD remembers us and will bless us:  
God will bless the house of Israel;  
God will bless the house of Aaron;
- <sup>13</sup>God will bless those who honor the LORD—  
from the smallest to the greatest.

114:7 *tremble*: See Psalm 97:4. This is the appropriate response to God’s appearing. *before*: This could also be translated “in the presence of,” suggesting that the events described in Psalm 114:1–4, 8 resulted from God making the divine presence known in the world.

114:8 A poetic description of God’s provision for the people after they left Egypt and were in the wilderness (see Exod 17:1–7; Num 20:2–13).

115:1–18 Psalm 115 is difficult to classify, because it contains a variety of elements: prayerful praise (115:1), complaint (115:2), affirmation of faith (115:3–8, 12–13), a call to faithfulness (115:9–12), petition (115:14–15), and praise (115:16–18).

115:1 *glory*: See Psalm 29:1–2. *loyal love*: See Psalm 5:7. *faithfulness*: See Psalm 25:10. These are fundamental qualities of God, often paired (see Exod 34:6). God’s fundamental character provides the reasons for praising God (see Ps 100:5).

115:2 See Psalms 42:3, 10; 79:10.

115:3 *whatever he wants*: not a claim that God is capricious but rather that God has the power to create love and faithfulness (see Ps 115:1) in the world.

115:4–8 The criticism of idols was one way of responding to the exile and to the claim that the Babylonian God Marduk had defeated the LORD (see Ps 115:2; see also Pss 96:5; 97:7; Isa 40:18–20; 44:9–20; 45:16). Both Books IV and V of the Psalter have been shaped in response to life in Babylon (see sidebars, “Book IV and the Rule of God” at Ps 89; “Book V” at Ps 107).

115:9–13 The repeated invitation to trust God lies at the center of the psalm (see Ps 4:5). In contrast to idols (see “trust in” idols in Ps 115:8), God can help, protect, and bless. *Israel . . . house of Aaron . . . who honor the LORD*: These designations may be references to the whole people, although “house of Aaron” may single out the priests.

115:14 Dt 1:11  
 115:16 Gn 1:28;  
 Ps 89:11  
 115:17 Ps 6:5,  
 Ps 31:17,  
 Ps 88:10;  
 Is 38:18  
 115:18 Ps 113:2;  
 Dn 2:20  
 116:1 Ps 18:1,  
 Ps 66:19  
 116:2 Ps 31:2  
 116:3 Ps 18:4,  
 Ps 18:5  
 116:4 Ps 118:5  
 116:5 Ex 34:6;  
 Ezr 9:15;  
 Ps 86:15,  
 Ps 119:137,  
 Ps 145:17  
 116:6 Ps 19:7,  
 Ps 79:8, Ps 142:6  
 116:7 Ps 13:5,  
 Ps 142:7;  
 Jer 6:16;  
 Mt 11:29  
 116:8 Ps 56:13,  
 Ps 86:13  
 116:9 Ps 27:13,  
 Ps 56:13  
 116:10 2Co 4:13  
 116:11 Ps 31:22;  
 Jer 9:5; Ro 3:4  
 116:12 Ps 103:2

<sup>14</sup>May the LORD add to your numbers—  
 both you and your children.

<sup>15</sup>May you be blessed by the LORD,  
 the maker of heaven and earth!

<sup>16</sup>The highest heaven belongs to the LORD,  
 but he gave the earth to all people.

<sup>17</sup>The dead don't praise the LORD,  
 nor do those who go down to silence.

<sup>18</sup>But us? We will bless the LORD from now until forever from now!

Praise the LORD!

### Psalm 116

<sup>1</sup>I love the LORD because he hears  
 my requests for mercy.

<sup>2</sup>I'll call out to him as long as I live,  
 because he listens closely to me.

<sup>3</sup>Death's ropes bound me;  
 the distress of the grave<sup>a</sup> found me—  
 I came face-to-face with trouble and grief.

<sup>4</sup>So I called on the LORD's name:  
 "LORD, please save me!"<sup>b</sup>

<sup>5</sup>The LORD is merciful and righteous;  
 our God is compassionate.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD protects simple folk;  
 he saves me whenever I am brought down.

<sup>7</sup>I tell myself, You can be at peace again,  
 because the LORD has been good to you.

<sup>8</sup>You, God, have delivered me from death,  
 my eyes from tears,  
 and my foot from stumbling,

<sup>9</sup>so I'll walk before the LORD  
 in the land of the living.

<sup>10</sup>I have remained faithful, even when I said,  
 "I am suffering so badly!"

<sup>11</sup>even when I said, out of fear,  
 "Everyone is a liar!"

<sup>12</sup>What can I give back to the LORD  
 for all the good things he has done for me?

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Sheol* <sup>b</sup>Or *my soul*; also in 116:7-8

115:15 *maker of heaven and earth*: See Psalms 121:2; 124:8; 134:3. Criticisms of idol worship (see Ps 115:4-8) are often accompanied by statements of God's creative power (see Isa 40:12-31; 45:16-18).

115:16 *The highest...LORD*: See Psalm 115:3. *gave the earth to all people*: See Genesis 1:26-28, where God gives humans the task to "Take charge." As Psalm 115:18 suggests, the proper exercise of human power is submission to God, which is the heart of praise.

115:17 See Psalms 6:5; 30:9; 88:10-12.

115:18 *bless*: The word suggests submission (see Pss 115:16; 16:7; 100:4.)

116:1-19 Psalm 116 is a psalm of thanks (see Ps 30). The psalmist has been rescued (116:7-9, 16). She or he recalls the past threat (116:3-4, 8, 10-11, 15), while also rehearsing devotion to God (116:1-2, 9, 16) and testifying to God's

character and typical activity (116:5-6). Verses 12-14, 17-19 suggest that the psalmist's thankfulness was publicly expressed in the temple.

116:3 *the grave*: See Psalm 6:5.

116:5 *merciful and righteous...compassionate*: Fundamental qualities of God that are often celebrated in praise or recalled in prayer (see Pss 5:8; 25:6; Exod 34:6).

116:8 *tears*: See Psalm 6:6.

116:9 *I'll walk...land of the living*: This is the psalmist's poetic and memorable way of saying that she or he will remain alive instead of dying, due to God's help.

116:10-11 The psalmist's review of the past suggests that she or he had been the victim of false and destructive speech, as is often the case in the prayers for help (see Pss 4:2-5; 27:12; 35:11, 20; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).



- 13 I'll lift up the cup of salvation.  
I'll call on the LORD's name.
- 14 I'll keep the promises I made to the LORD  
in the presence of all God's people.
- 15 The death of the LORD's faithful is a costly loss in his eyes.
- 16 Oh yes, LORD, I am definitely your servant!  
I am your servant and the son of your female servant—  
you've freed me from my chains.
- 17 So I'll offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to you,  
and I'll call on the LORD's name.
- 18 I'll keep the promises I made to the LORD  
in the presence of all God's people,
- 19 in the courtyards of the LORD's house,  
which is in the center of Jerusalem.

Praise the LORD!

### Psalm 117

- 1 Praise the LORD, all you nations!  
Worship him, all you peoples!
- 2 Because God's faithful love toward us is strong,  
the LORD's faithfulness lasts forever!  
Praise the LORD!

### Psalm 118

- 1 Give thanks to the LORD because he is good,  
because his faithful love lasts forever.
- 2 Let Israel say it:  
"God's faithful love lasts forever!"
- 3 Let the house of Aaron say it:  
"God's faithful love lasts forever!"
- 4 Let those who honor the LORD say it:  
"God's faithful love lasts forever!"

116:13 *cup of salvation*: A cup may have been part of the sacrifice (Ps 116:17), some of which involved pouring and drinking (see Exod 29:40; Num 28:7). In any case, the psalmist sees the uplifted cup as a grateful celebration of the fact that he or she continues to live, which is what salvation means (see Ps 13:5).

116:14 *keep the promises*: See Psalm 116:18. Promises could be part of a thanksgiving sacrifice (see Pss 116:17-18; 22:25; 50:14; 61:5, 8; 65:1).

116:17 *sacrifice of thanksgiving*: See Psalm 50:14, 23.

116:18-19 The temple setting is clearest here, given the mention of a gathered congregation near God's house (see Ps 5:7).

117:1-2 This shortest of the Psalms demonstrates the typical structure of a song of praise: invitation to praise (117:1) followed by reasons for praise (117:2).

117:1 *all you nations... all you peoples*: The invitation typically includes the whole world (see Pss 47:1; 66:1). The apostle Paul quotes this verse in support of his opening of the church to all the nations—that is, the Gentiles (see Rom 15:11).

117:2 *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7. *is strong*: The Hebrew root often describes military might, so the suggestion is that God conquers the world by loving it faithfully. *faithfulness*: See Psalm 25:10. These fundamental qualities of God are often paired (see Ps 100:5).

116:13 Ps 16:5,  
Ps 105:1

116:14 Ps 22:25,  
Ps 50:14,  
Ps 66:13,  
Ps 116:18

116:15 Ps 72:14

116:16 Ps 86:16,  
Ps 119:125,  
Ps 143:12

116:17  
Lv 7:12; Ps 50:14,  
Ps 107:22,

Ps 116:13;  
Heb 13:15

117:1 Ps 67:3;  
Ro 15:11

117:2 Ps 100:5,  
Ps 103:11

118:1 1Ch 16:8,  
1Ch 16:34;

Ps 106:1,  
Ps 118:29;  
Jer 33:11

118:2 Ps 115:9

118:4 Ps 115:11

118:1-29 Psalm 118 is a psalm of thanks (see Pss 30, 116) that concludes the Egyptian Hallel (see note on Ps 113). Like Psalm 114, it clearly recalls the exodus out of Egypt (see 118:14); but it was probably used to celebrate the return from life in Babylon, as well as both to look forward to and celebrate other deliverances. The rescue described in 118:5-18 seems to be publicly acknowledged and celebrated in 118:19-28, and this would account for the shift to first-person plural speech in 118:23-27. Because the rescue seems to involve a national crisis, and because it is celebrated publicly in the temple, many readers conclude that the original speaker was the king. This is possible, but there's no clear indication of this; and this specific possibility hasn't prevented the ability of Psalm 118 to be useful in a variety of situations. The Gospel writers, for instance, quote Psalm 118 in relation to Jesus and his ministry (see notes on Ps 118:22-24, 25, 26; see sidebar, "The Psalms and Jesus" at Ps 22).

118:1 See Psalms 118:29; 106:1; 107:1. Psalm 118 adds another account of rescue to the four incidents that are described in Psalm 107.

118:2-4 See Psalm 115:9-11, where the same parties are invited to take part. *God's faithful love lasts forever*: Picked up from Psalm 118:1, this line apparently becomes the congregation's responsive refrain. See Psalm 136, where this line occurs as a refrain in every verse.

118:6 Ps 27:1;  
Ps 56:4; Ps 56:9;  
Ps 56:11;  
Heb 13:6

118:7 Ps 54:4;  
Ps 54:7; Ps 59:10

118:8 Ps 40:4;  
Jer 17:5

118:9 Ps 118:8;  
Ps 146:3

118:10  
1Sa 17:45; Ps 3:6;  
Ps 88:17

118:12 Dt 1:44;  
Jgs 14:8; Ps 58:9;  
Ecc 7:6; Is 7:18

118:13 Ps 86:17

118:14 Ex 15:2;  
Ps 27:1; Is 12:2

118:15  
Ex 15:6;  
Ps 89:13; Lk 1:51

118:16 Ex 15:6;  
Ps 89:13

118:17 Ps 6:5;  
Ps 73:28;  
Ps 107:22;  
Hab 1:12

118:18 2Co 6:9

118:19 Ps 24:7;  
Ps 100:4; Is 26:2

118:20 Ps 24:3;  
Ps 24:7; Is 35:8;  
Rev 22:14

118:21 Ps 116:1;  
Ps 118:5;  
Ps 118:14

118:22 Is 28:16;  
Mt 21:42;  
Mk 12:10;  
Lk 20:17;  
Ac 4:11

<sup>5</sup>In tight circumstances, I cried out to the LORD.

The LORD answered me with wide-open spaces.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD is for me<sup>c</sup>—I won't be afraid.

What can anyone do to me?

<sup>7</sup>The LORD is for me—as my helper.

I look in victory on those who hate me.

<sup>8</sup>It's far better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust any human.

<sup>9</sup>It's far better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust any human leader.

<sup>10</sup>All the nations surrounded me,  
but I cut them down<sup>d</sup> in the LORD's name.

<sup>11</sup>Yes, they surrounded me on every single side,  
but I cut them down in the LORD's name.

<sup>12</sup>They surrounded me like bees,  
but they were extinguished like burning thorns.

I cut them down in the LORD's name!

<sup>13</sup>I was pushed so hard<sup>e</sup> I nearly died,  
but the LORD helped me.

<sup>14</sup>The LORD was my strength and protection;  
he was my saving help!

<sup>15</sup>The sounds of joyful songs and deliverance  
are heard in the tents of the righteous:

"The LORD's strong hand is victorious!

<sup>16</sup>The LORD's strong hand is ready to strike!  
The LORD's strong hand is victorious!"

<sup>17</sup>I won't die—no, I will live  
and declare what the LORD has done.

<sup>18</sup>Yes, the LORD definitely disciplined me,  
but he didn't hand me over to death.

<sup>19</sup>Open the gates of righteousness for me  
so I can come in and give thanks to the LORD!

<sup>20</sup>This is the LORD's gate;  
those who are righteous enter through it.

<sup>21</sup>I thank you because you answered me,  
because you were my saving help.

<sup>22</sup>The stone rejected by the builders  
is now the main foundation stone!

<sup>c</sup>LXX with *me or mine*; also in 118:7 <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain; LXX, Vulg *drove or warded off*; also in 118:11-12 <sup>e</sup>LXX, Vulg, Syr, MT *you pushed me*

118:6 *for me*: See Psalms 118:7; 56:9; 124:1-2; Romans 8:31.

118:7 *my helper*: See Psalms 118:13; 10:14.

118:8-9 *take refuge*: See Psalm 2:12. *than to trust any human... human leader*: See Psalm 146:3. Only God is worthy of trust (see Ps 4:5).

118:10-12 *surrounded me*: The threefold repetition emphasizes the extent of the opposition (see Ps 3:6). *I cut them down*: Similarly, the repetition in this case emphasizes the magnitude of the rescue. The image is violent, but the point is that one threatened with death is now able to live (see Pss 118:17; 116:8-9).

118:14 This verse is an echo of Moses' victory song (see Exod 15:2); it recalls the exodus, which is the Bible's primary example of rescue from death to life. The psalmist

suggests that his or her rescue, and any future deliverances (see Ps 118:25), are extensions of God's life-giving work that was demonstrated in the exodus out of Egypt.

118:17-18 A summary of the psalmist's experience of rescue. As is often the case, thankfulness is accompanied by witness to others (see Ps 9:1).

118:18-24 The "I" continues to speak in 118:18-21, but there are indications of a public celebration, perhaps a procession into the temple (see *gates* in 118:19, and *gate* in 118:20; see Ps 24:7-10). In keeping with verses 1 and 29, the speaker enters to give thanks (118:19, 21).

118:22-24 Psalm 118:22 seems to begin the worshiping community's response to the psalmist's rescue, and the response continues in verses 23-24. The early church

- <sup>23</sup>This has happened because of the LORD;  
it is astounding in our sight!  
<sup>24</sup>This is the day the LORD acted;  
we will rejoice and celebrate in it!

<sup>25</sup>LORD, please save us!  
LORD, please let us succeed!

<sup>26</sup>The one who enters in the LORD's name is blessed;  
we bless all of you from the LORD's house.

<sup>27</sup>The LORD is God!  
He has shined a light on us!  
So lead the festival offering with ropes  
all the way to the horns of the altar.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>28</sup>You are my God—I will give thanks to you!  
You are my God—I will lift you up high!

<sup>29</sup>Give thanks to the LORD because he is good,  
because his faithful love lasts forever.

118:23 Mt 21:42

118:24 Is 58:13

118:25

Neh 1:11;

Ps 116:4;

Mt 21:9

118:26 Mt 21:9;

Mt 23:39;

Mk 11:9;

Lk 13:35;

Jn 12:13

118:27 Ex 27:2;

1Ki 18:39;

Est 8:16; Ps 27:11;

1Pt 2:9

119:1 Ps 101:2;

Ps 128:1;

Prv 11:20

119:2 Dt 4:29;

Ps 119:10;

Ps 119:22

119:4 Dt 6:17;

Ps 103:18;

Ps 119:56;

Jer 7:23;

Jn 14:15

119:6 Ps 119:80

119:7 Ps 119:62

## Psalm 119<sup>g</sup>

### N ALEF

- <sup>1</sup>Those whose way is blameless—  
who walk in the LORD's Instruction—are truly happy!  
<sup>2</sup>Those who guard God's laws are truly happy!  
They seek God with all their hearts.  
<sup>3</sup>They don't even do anything wrong!  
They walk in God's ways.  
<sup>4</sup>God, you have ordered that your decrees should be kept most carefully.  
<sup>5</sup>How I wish my ways were strong when it comes to keeping your statutes!  
<sup>6</sup>Then I wouldn't be ashamed when I examine all your commandments.  
<sup>7</sup>I will give thanks to you with a heart that does right  
as I learn your righteous rules.  
<sup>8</sup>I will keep your statutes.  
Please don't leave me all alone!

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Ps 119 is an alphabetic acrostic poem (cf Pss 9–10, 111) in Heb, with each line of Heb within the marked sections beginning with the same letter of the alphabet.

understood Jesus to be the “main foundation stone” (Matt 21:42; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11–12). In other words, Jesus and his work were extensions of God's life-giving work in the exodus (see note on Ps 118:14). *the day . . . acted*: The congregation recalls God's life-giving activity done for the psalmist, and they join the celebration.

118:25 The sudden shift to petition is surprising. Apparently, the psalmist's rescue inspires the congregation to ask for deliverance as well. In any case, this petition makes the psalm useful for the people of God in all times, as new threats to life arise. The Hebrew behind *please save us* (“Hosanna”; see Ps 118:26) became the celebratory cry of the crowds that greeted Jesus as he entered Jerusalem. 118:26 The psalmist, perhaps followed by other worshippers, has now entered the temple, and the congregation greets him (see Ps 118:19–20). Psalm 118:25a, along with 118:26a, became the words used by the crowds as Jesus entered Jerusalem (see Matt 21:9; Mark 11:9; Luke 19:38; John 12:13).

118:27 *shined a light*: See Psalm 4:6. *So . . . altar*: The Hebrew is difficult, but it may suggest a sacrificial offering that could be part of giving thanks (see Pss 50:14, 23; 51:18–19).

119:1–176 Because it's so long, Psalm 119 contains elements of every type of psalm: petition, complaint, expressions of praise and trust, and teaching material. It's usually classified as a *torah*-psalm, due to the 25 occurrences of this Hebrew word, which is translated *Instruction* (119:1; see Pss 1, 19). In addition, there are repeated uses of seven more Hebrew words that are basically synonyms of “Instruction.” They generally appear in the translation as “laws,” “decrees,” “statutes,” “commandments,” “[righteous] rules,” “word,” “precepts,” “promises,” and “what you've said/” “what you say.” Multiplying 8 times 22, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, equals 176, the number of verses in Psalm 119 (see translation note g). Even so, the eight primary words don't occur in a regular pattern, and not even in every verse (the exceptions are 119:3, 37, 90, 122). Obviously, Psalm 119 is repetitive; but the repetition emphatically makes the point that God's *Instruction*—that is, God's will—is pervasively and extremely important in the lives of the faithful and the life of the world.

119:1 *blameless*: This doesn't mean sinless but rather complete devotion. It's sometimes translated “integrity” (see Ps 119:80; 19:13). *Instruction . . . truly happy*: See Psalm

119:9 Jn 15:3

119:11 Dt 6:6;  
Ps 37:31, Ps 40:8;  
Lk 2:51119:18  
Ps 119:96;  
Is 29:10, Is 42:7;  
Mt 13:13;  
Ac 26:18119:20 Ps 42:1,  
Ps 63:1, Ps 84:2,  
Ps 119:40,  
Ps 119:131119:21  
Dt 27:26;  
Ps 119:10119:24  
Ps 119:16119:25 Ps 44:25,  
Ps 119:40,  
Ps 119:88,  
Ps 119:107,  
Ps 143:11119:28 Ps 20:2,  
Ps 22:14119:30  
Ps 119:173119:31  
Dt 10:20;  
Ps 19:7, Ps 25:10,  
Ps 119:6,  
Ps 119:111119:32 1Ki 4:29;  
Is 60:5; 2Co 6:11

## BET

<sup>9</sup>How can young people keep their paths pure?By guarding them according to what you've said.<sup>a</sup><sup>10</sup>I have sought you with all my heart.

Don't let me stray from any of your commandments!

<sup>11</sup>I keep your word close, in my heart, so that I won't sin against you.<sup>12</sup>You, LORD, are to be blessed!

Teach me your statutes.

<sup>13</sup>I will declare out loud all the rules you have spoken.<sup>14</sup>I rejoice in the content of your laws as if I were rejoicing over great wealth.<sup>15</sup>I will think about your precepts and examine all your paths.<sup>16</sup>I will delight in your statutes;

I will not forget what you have said.

## GIMEL

<sup>17</sup>Be good to your servant so I can go on living and keeping your word.<sup>18</sup>Open my eyes so I can examine the wonders of your Instruction!<sup>19</sup>I'm an immigrant in the land.

Don't hide your commandments from me!

<sup>20</sup>I'm worn out by longing every minute for your rules!<sup>21</sup>You rebuke the arrogant, accursed people

who stray from your commandments.

<sup>22</sup>Take all their insults and contempt away from me

because I've kept your laws!

<sup>23</sup>Even if rulers gather and scheme against me,

your servant will contemplate your statutes!

<sup>24</sup>Yes, your laws are my joy—they are my most trusted advisors!

## DALET

<sup>25</sup>My life is stuck in the dirt.

Now make me live again according to your promise!

<sup>26</sup>I confessed my ways and you answered me.

Now teach me your statutes!

<sup>27</sup>Help me understand what your precepts are about

so I can contemplate your wondrous works!

<sup>28</sup>My spirit sags because of grief.

Now raise me up according to your promise!

<sup>29</sup>Remove all false ways from me;

show mercy to me by means of your Instruction.

<sup>30</sup>I've chosen the way of faithfulness;

I'm set on your rules.

<sup>31</sup>I'm holding tight to your laws, LORD.

Please don't let me be put to shame.

<sup>32</sup>I run the same path as your commandments

because you give my heart insight.

## HE

<sup>33</sup>LORD, teach me what your statutes are about,  
and I will guard every part of them.

## LXX

1:1-2, where happiness derives from constant attention to God's Instruction.

119:17 *your servant*: The psalmist often refers to himself or herself with this phrase (see Ps 119:23, 38, 49, 65, 76, 84, 122, 124, 125, 135), which suggests submission to God and God's will.119:19 *immigrant*: See Psalms 119:54; 94:6. The term

suggests that the psalmist recognizes her or his neediness, vulnerability, and reliance upon God.

119:22 Psalm 119 is often associated with a theology of retribution, but the obedient psalmist is often opposed and harassed (see Ps 119:23, 39, 42, 51, 61, 69, 78, 84, 87, 95, 109, 110, 121, 134, 141, 150, 157, 161), leading to grief and affliction (see Ps 119:28, 50, 71, 75, 92, 107, 143, 153).

- 34 Help me understand so I can guard your Instruction  
and keep it with all my heart.
- 35 Lead me on the trail of your commandments because that is what I want.
- 36 Turn my heart to your laws, not to greedy gain.
- 37 Turn my eyes away from looking at worthless things.  
Make me live by your way.
- 38 Confirm your promise to your servant—  
the promise that is for all those who honor you.
- 39 Remove the insults that I dread because your rules are good.
- 40 Look how I desire your precepts!  
Make me live by your righteousness.

119:36 1Ki 8:58;  
Eze 33:31;  
Lk 12:15;  
Heb 13:5  
119:37  
Ps 119:25;  
Is 33:15  
119:42  
Prv 27:11  
119:43  
Ps 119:49,  
Ps 119:74,  
Ps 119:81,  
Ps 119:114,  
Ps 119:147  
119:44  
Ps 119:33,  
Ps 119:55  
119:46  
Mt 10:18;  
Ac 26:1, Ac 26:2  
119:49 Gn 32:9;  
Ps 119:43  
119:53  
Ps 119:158  
119:59  
Lam 3:40;  
Lk 15:17  
119:62 Ps 119:7,  
Ps 119:55;  
Ac 16:25

**WAW**

- 41 LORD, let your faithful love come to me—  
let your salvation come to me according to your promise—
- 42 so I can have a response for those who mock me  
because I have trusted in your word!
- 43 Please don't take your true word out of my mouth,  
because I have waited for your rules.
- 44 I will always keep your Instruction, always and forever!
- 45 I will walk around in wide-open spaces,  
because I have pursued your precepts.
- 46 I will talk about your laws before rulers with no shame whatsoever.
- 47 I will rejoice in your commandments because I love them.
- 48 I will lift up my hands to your commandments because I love them,  
and I will contemplate all your statutes.

**ZAYIN**

- 49 Remember your promise to your servant,  
for which you made me wait.
- 50 My comfort during my suffering is this:  
your word gives me new life.
- 51 The arrogant make fun of me to no end,  
but I haven't deviated from your Instruction.
- 52 When I remember your ancient rules, I'm comforted, LORD.
- 53 But I'm seized with anger because of the wicked—  
because of those who abandon your Instruction.
- 54 Your statutes have been my songs of praise wherever I lived as an immigrant.
- 55 LORD, I remember your name at nighttime, and I keep your Instruction.
- 56 This has been my practice because I guard your precepts.

**KHET**

- 57 The LORD is my possession.  
I promise to do what you have said.
- 58 I've sought your favor with all my heart;  
have mercy on me according to your word.
- 59 I've considered my ways and turned my feet back to your laws.
- 60 I hurry to keep your commandments—  
I never put it off!
- 61 Though the wicked have surrounded me with their ropes,  
I haven't forgotten your Instruction.
- 62 I get up in the middle of the night to give thanks to you  
because of your righteous rules.
- 63 I'm a friend to everyone who honors you  
and to all who keep your precepts.

This situation of opposition is the norm for those who pray the prayers for help (see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). 119:41 *faithful love*: See Psalms 119:64, 76, 88, 124, 149, 159; 5:7.

119:66  
Ps 119:12;  
Phi 1:9

**64** LORD, the world is full of your faithful love!  
Teach me your statutes!

119:67 Job 5:17;  
Ps 119:71,  
Ps 119:75;  
Jer 31:18,  
Jer 31:19

**Ⲛ TET**

**65** You have treated your servant well, LORD, according to your promise.

119:68 Ps 25:8,  
Ps 86:5, Ps 106:1,  
Ps 119:12;  
Mt 19:17

**66** Teach me knowledge and good judgment  
because I've put my trust in your commandments.

119:71  
Ps 119:67,  
Ps 119:75

**67** Before I suffered, I took the wrong way, but now I do what you say.

**68** You are good and you do good.

Teach me your statutes!

119:73 Job 10:8;  
Ps 100:3,  
Ps 138:8

**69** The arrogant cover me with their lies,  
but I guard your precepts with all my heart.

119:80 Ps 119:1,  
Ps 119:6

**70** Their hearts are unfeeling, like blubber,

but I rejoice in your Instruction.

119:81 Ps 84:2,  
Ps 119:43,  
Ps 119:74,  
Ps 119:114

**71** My suffering was good for me,  
because through it I learned your statutes.

119:83  
Job 30:30;  
Ps 119:61

**72** The Instruction you've given to me is better  
than thousands of pieces of gold and silver!

119:84 Ps 39:4;  
Rev 6:10

**Ⲛ YOD**

119:85 Ps 7:15,  
Ps 35:7, Ps 57:6,  
Ps 119:51;  
Jer 18:22

**73** Your hands have made me and set me in place.

Help me understand so I can learn your commandments.

119:86 Ps 7:1,  
Ps 35:19,  
Ps 109:26,  
Ps 119:78,  
Ps 119:138

**74** Then those who honor you will see me and be glad  
because I have waited for your promise.

**75** LORD, I know that your rules are right  
and that you rightly made me suffer.

119:87 Is 58:2  
119:88 Ps 119:2,  
Ps 119:25,  
Ps 119:40

**76** Please let your faithful love comfort me,  
according to what you've said to your servant.

**77** Let your compassion come to me so I can live again,  
because your Instruction is my joy!

**78** But let the arrogant be ashamed because they oppressed me with lies—  
meanwhile, I will be contemplating your precepts!

**79** Let the people who honor you come back to me;  
let those who know your precepts return to me.

**80** Let my heart be blameless in your statutes  
so that I am not put to shame.

**Ⲛ KAF**

**81** My whole being yearns for your saving help!  
I wait for your promise.

**82** My eyes are worn out looking for your word.  
"When will you comfort me?" I ask,

**83** because I've become like a bottle dried up by smoke,  
though I haven't forgotten your statutes.

**84** How much more time does your servant have?  
When will you bring my oppressors to justice?

**85** The arrogant have dug pits for me—  
those people who act against your Instruction.

**86** All your commandments are true,  
but people harass me for no reason.

Help me!

**87** They've almost wiped me off the face of the earth!  
Meanwhile, I haven't abandoned your precepts!

**88** Make me live again according to your faithful love  
so I can keep the law you've given!

## ↳ LAMED

- 89** Your word, LORD, stands firm in heaven forever!  
**90** Your faithfulness extends from one generation to the next!  
 You set the earth firmly in place, and it is still there.  
**91** Your rules endure to this day because everything serves you.  
**92** If your Instruction hadn't been my delight,  
 I would have died because of my suffering.  
**93** I will never forget your precepts because through them you gave me life again.  
**94** I'm yours—save me because I've pursued your precepts!  
**95** The wicked wait for me, wanting to kill me, but I'm studying your laws.  
**96** I've seen that everything, no matter how perfect, has a limit,<sup>1</sup>  
 but your commandment is boundless.

119:89 Ps 89:2;  
 Is 40:8; Mt 5:18;  
 Mk 24:35;  
 1Pt 1:25  
 119:90 Ps 36:5;  
 Ps 148:6  
 119:91 Ps 104:2;  
 Jer 31:35;  
 Jer 33:25  
 119:96 Ps 19:7  
 119:97 Ps 1:2;  
 Ps 119:15;  
 Ps 119:47;  
 Ps 119:113  
 119:99  
 Ps 119:15  
 119:100  
 Job 32:7;  
 Ps 119:56  
 119:101  
 Prv 1:15  
 119:103  
 Ps 19:10  
 119:104  
 Ps 101:3;  
 Ps 119:128  
 119:105  
 Ps 19:8;  
 Ps 119:130;  
 Prv 6:23; Jn 8:12;  
 2Pt 1:19  
 119:106  
 Neh 10:29;  
 Ps 119:7  
 119:107  
 Ps 119:25  
 119:108  
 Ps 119:12;  
 Heb 13:15

## ▢ MEM

- 97** I love your Instruction!  
 I think about it constantly.  
**98** Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies  
 because it is always with me.  
**99** I have greater insight than all my teachers  
 because I contemplate your laws.  
**100** I have more understanding than the elders  
 because I guard your precepts.  
**101** I haven't set my feet on any evil path  
 so I can make sure to keep your word.  
**102** I haven't deviated from any of your rules  
 because you are the one who has taught me.  
**103** Your word is so pleasing to my taste buds—  
 it's sweeter than honey in my mouth!  
**104** I'm studying your precepts—  
 that's why I hate every false path.

## ] NUN

- 105** Your word is a lamp before my feet  
 and a light for my journey.  
**106** I have sworn, and I fully mean it:  
 I will keep your righteous rules.  
**107** I have been suffering so much—  
 LORD, make me live again according to your promise.  
**108** Please, LORD, accept my spontaneous gifts of praise.  
 Teach me your rules!  
**109** Though my life is constantly in danger,  
 I won't forget your Instruction.  
**110** Though the wicked have set a trap for me,  
 I won't stray from your precepts.  
**111** Your laws are my possession forever  
 because they are my heart's joy.  
**112** I have decided to keep your statutes forever, every last one.

## ○ SAMEK

- 113** I hate fickle people, but I love your Instruction.  
**114** You are my shelter and my shield—I wait for your promise.  
**115** Get away from me, you evildoers;  
 I want to guard my God's commandments!  
**116** Sustain me according to your word so I can live!  
 Don't let me be put to shame because of hope.

<sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain

119:119 Is 1:22;

Eze 22:18,  
Eze 22:19

119:120

Job 4:14;  
Hab 3:16

119:122

Job 17:3;  
Ps 119:21

119:123

Ps 119:82

119:125

Ps 116:16,  
Ps 119:27

119:127

Ps 19:10,  
Ps 119:47,  
Ps 119:72

119:130

Ps 19:7,  
Ps 119:105;Pv 6:23;  
2Pt 1:19

119:131

Job 29:23;  
Ps 42:1, Ps 81:10,  
Ps 119:20

119:132

Ps 25:16

119:133

Ps 17:5, Ps 19:13;  
Ro 6:12

119:136

Ps 119:158;  
Jer 9:1,  
Jer 9:18,  
Jer 14:17; Eze 9:4

119:137

Eze 9:15;  
Neh 9:33;  
Ps 116:5,  
Ps 145:17

119:140

Ps 12:6,  
Ps 18:30,  
Ps 19:8,  
Ps 119:47;  
Pv 30:5

- 117 Support me so I can be saved  
and so I can focus constantly on your statutes.
- 118 You discard everyone who strays from your statutes  
because they are dishonest and false.
- 119 You dispose of all the wicked people on earth like waste—  
that's why I love your laws.
- 120 My body shudders because I fear you;  
I'm in awe of your rules.

### U AYIN

- 121 I've done what is just and right.  
Don't just hand me over to my oppressors.
- 122 Guarantee good things for your servant.  
Please don't let the arrogant oppress me.
- 123 My eyes are worn out looking for your saving help—  
looking for your word that will set things right.
- 124 Act toward your servant according to your faithful love.  
Teach me your statutes!
- 125 I'm your servant!  
Help me understand so I can know your laws.
- 126 It is time for the LORD to do something!  
Your Instruction has been broken.
- 127 But I love your commandments more than gold,  
even more than pure gold.
- 128 That's why I walk straight by every single one of your precepts.  
That's why I hate every false path.

### D PE

- 129 Your laws are wonderful!  
That's why I guard them.
- 130 Access to your words<sup>1</sup> gives light,  
giving simple folk understanding.
- 131 I open my mouth up wide, panting,  
because I long for your commandments.
- 132 Come back to me and have mercy on me;  
that's only right for those who love your name.
- 133 Keep my steps steady by your word;  
don't let any sin rule me.
- 134 Redeem me from the people who oppress me  
so I can keep your precepts.
- 135 Shine your face on your servant,  
and teach me your statutes.
- 136 Rivers of tears stream from my eyes  
because your Instruction isn't being kept.

### Y TSADE

- 137 LORD, you are righteous, and your rules are right.
- 138 The laws you commanded are righteous, completely trustworthy.
- 139 Anger consumes me  
because my enemies have forgotten what you've said.
- 140 Your word has been tried and tested;  
your servant loves your word!
- 141 I'm insignificant and unpopular,  
but I don't forget your precepts.

<sup>1</sup>Vulg, Sym



- 142 Your righteousness lasts forever!  
Your Instruction is true!
- 143 Stress and strain have caught up with me,  
but your commandments are my joy!
- 144 Your laws are righteous forever.  
Help me understand so I can live!

119:142  
Ps 119:144,  
Ps 119:151,  
Ps 119:160;  
Jn 17:17  
119:143  
Ps 119:24  
119:144  
Ps 119:27,  
Ps 119:34

**Q OF**

- 145 I cry out with all my heart:  
“LORD, answer me so I can guard your statutes!”
- 146 I cry out to you,  
“Save me so I can keep your laws!”
- 147 I meet the predawn light and cry for help.  
I wait for your promise.
- 148 My eyes encounter each hour of the night as I think about your word.
- 149 Listen to my voice, according to your faithful love.  
LORD, make me live again, according to your justice.
- 150 The people who love to plot wicked schemes are nearby,  
but they are so far from your Instruction!
- 151 But you, LORD, are nearby too,  
and all your commandments are true.
- 152 Long ago I learned from your laws that you had established them forever.

119:148  
Ps 1:2, Ps 63:6,  
Ps 119:15;  
Lam 2:19  
119:155 Job 5:4  
119:164  
Ps 119:7,  
Ps 119:62,  
Ps 119:160  
119:165  
Ps 37:11; Prov 3:2;  
Is 32:17  
119:167  
Ps 119:47,  
Ps 119:97

**RESH**

- 153 Look at my suffering and deliver me  
because I haven't forgotten your Instruction.
- 154 Argue my case and redeem me.  
Make me live again by your word.
- 155 Salvation is far from the wicked  
because they haven't pursued your statutes.
- 156 You have so much compassion, LORD—  
make me live again, according to your rules.
- 157 My oppressors and enemies are many,  
but I haven't turned away from your laws.
- 158 I look on the faithless, and I am disgusted  
because they haven't kept your word.
- 159 Look at how much I love your precepts.  
Make me live again, LORD, according to your faithful love!
- 160 The first thing to know about your word is that it is true  
and that all your righteous rules last forever.

**SIN AND SHIN**

- 161 Rulers oppress me without cause,  
but my heart honors what you've said.
- 162 I'm overjoyed at your word,  
like someone who finds great treasure.
- 163 I hate, I absolutely despise, what is false,  
but I'm in love with your Instruction.
- 164 I praise you seven times a day for your righteous rules.
- 165 The people who love your Instruction enjoy peace—and lots of it.  
There's no stumbling for them!
- 166 LORD, I wait for your saving help.  
I do what you've commanded.
- 167 I keep your laws;  
I love them so much!

119:164 *seven times a day*: Since seven signals wholeness, the psalmist praises God constantly.  
119:165 *peace*: Hebrew *shalom*, which is what God wills

for human beings and the world (see Pss 4:8; 72:3, 7; 85:10, 12). *no stumbling*: See Psalm 15:5.

119:176 *lost*: Just as Psalm 119:1 recalls Psalm 1:1, so this

119:175  
Ps 51:15  
119:176 Is 53:6;  
Jer 50:6;  
Hos 4:6; Lk 15:4;  
1Pt 2:25

168 I keep your precepts and your laws  
because all my ways are seen by you.

### TAV

120:1 Ps 18:6,  
Ps 118:5; Jon 2:2  
120:2 Ps 31:18,  
Ps 109:2;  
Prv 12:22

169 Let my cry reach you, LORD;  
help me understand according to what you've said.  
170 Let my request for grace come before you;  
deliver me according to your promise!  
171 Let my lips overflow with praise  
because you've taught me your statutes.  
172 Let my tongue declare your word,  
because all your commandments are righteous.  
173 Let your power help me  
because I have chosen your precepts.  
174 LORD, I long for your saving help!  
Your Instruction is my joy!  
175 Let me live again so I can praise you!  
Let your rules help me!  
176 I've wandered off like a sheep, lost. Find your servant  
because I haven't forgotten your commandments!

### Psalm 120

A pilgrimage song.<sup>k</sup>

<sup>1</sup>I cried out to the LORD when I was in trouble  
(and he answered me):  
<sup>2</sup>"LORD, deliver me<sup>l</sup> from lying lips and a dishonest tongue!"  
<sup>3</sup>What more will be given to you,  
what more will be done to you,  
you dishonest tongue?

*The Pilgrimage Songs* Each of Psalms 120–134 has as (or in) its title, "A pilgrimage song." The phrase in a Hebrew idiom would sound like "song for the going up." The "going up" is almost certainly a reference to pilgrimage to Jerusalem (see "go up" in Ps 122:4). The "law for Israel" in Psalm 122:4 points to Deuteronomy 16:6, which demands that males visit Jerusalem three times a year. Almost certainly, the males would have taken other members of the family. So it isn't surprising that the pilgrimage songs reflect the daily realities, activities, and concerns of family life (see Pss 121:8; 122:8; 127:1–5; 128:3–4; 133:1). Psalm 131 was apparently written by a woman, drawing upon her experience with her children.

With the exception of Psalm 132, the pilgrimage songs are short and easy to memorize. Various types of psalms are included. Most likely Psalms 120–134 were collected as a songbook or prayer book for travelers on the journey to and from Jerusalem, as well as for their stay in Jerusalem. For example, Psalm 134 would do well as a farewell liturgy and benediction said in preparing for the journey home. As expected, the pilgrimage songs reflect daily matters as well as national concerns, especially the significance of Jerusalem (see Pss 122–126; 130–132; 134). The sequence of songs seems important, since Psalms 120–122 move the psalmist from outside the land (Ps 120) by way of a journey (Ps 121) to Jerusalem (Ps 122).

<sup>k</sup>Or *song of ascents* or *song of going up* (that is, to Jerusalem); cf Ps 122:4. The heading is found in every psalm from Ps 120 to Ps 134. <sup>l</sup>Or *my soul*; also in 120:6

verse recalls Psalm 1:6, where "destroyed" is the same Hebrew word as *lost* here. But here the psalmist confesses to being *lost*, suggesting that obedience to God's Instruction is finally grounded in God's saving grace (see note on Ps 119:22; see also the psalmist's requests for grace, mercy, or compassion in Ps 119:29, 77, 132, 156, 170).

120:1–7 Psalm 120:1–2 suggest that the psalmist's prayer for help has been answered, but 120:3–4, 5–7 seem to indicate that threat and trouble still exist. Accounts of rescue

followed by continuing petition and expressions of need exist elsewhere as well (see Pss 40; 85; 118; 126). This is the first of a series of "pilgrimage songs" (Pss 120–134; see sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs" at Ps 120).

120:2 *lying lips . . . tongue*: The complaint accompanying the petition is a frequent one in the prayers for help (see Pss 42:5; 31:18; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

120:3–4 The psalmist desires that the threat be removed, expressing trust that God will set things right (see Pss 3:7–8; 7:6).

- 4 Just this:<sup>m</sup> a warrior's sharpened arrows,  
coupled with burning coals from a wood<sup>n</sup> fire!
- 5 Oh, I'm doomed  
because I have been an immigrant in Meshech,  
because I've made my home among Kedar's tents.
- 6 I've lived far too long with people who hate peace.
- 7 I'm for peace, but when I speak, they are for war.

120:4 Dt 32:23;  
Ps 45:5; Ps 57:4;  
Ps 140:10;  
Prv 25:18

120:5 Gn 25:13;  
Song 1:5; Is 60:7;  
Jer 49:28

120:6 Ps 35:20;  
Ps 57:4

120:7 Ps 34:14;  
Ps 109:4;  
Ps 140:2; Mt 5:9;  
Ro 12:18

121:1 Ps 87:1;  
Ps 123:1;  
Is 40:26; Jer 3:23

121:2 Ps 115:15;  
Ps 124:8;  
Ps 146:5;  
Ps 146:6

121:3 Isa 2:9;  
Ps 66:9; Prv 3:23

121:4 Gn 49:24;  
Ex 3:9; Ex 6:5;  
Ps 127:1; Is 27:3

121:6 Is 49:10;  
Jon 4:8; Rev 7:16

121:8 Dt 28:6;  
Ps 113:2

122:1 Ps 42:4;  
Is 2:3; Mt 4:2;  
Zec 8:21

**Psalm 121**

*A pilgrimage song.*

- 1 I raise my eyes toward the mountains.  
Where will my help come from?
- 2 My help comes from the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth.
- 3 God won't let your foot slip.  
Your protector won't fall asleep on the job.
- 4 No! Israel's protector never sleeps or rests!
- 5 The LORD is your protector;  
the LORD is your shade right beside you.
- 6 The sun won't strike you during the day;  
neither will the moon at night.
- 7 The LORD will protect you from all evil;  
God will protect your very life.<sup>o</sup>
- 8 The LORD will protect you on your journeys—  
whether going or coming—  
from now until forever from now.

**Psalm 122**

*A pilgrimage song. Of David.*

- 1 I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let's go to the LORD's house!"
- 2 Now our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem!

<sup>m</sup>Heb lacks this. <sup>n</sup>Or the gorse or broom tree <sup>o</sup>Or your soul

120:5 *immigrant*: See Psalm 94:6. *Meshech*: See Ezekiel 32:26; 38:2-4; 39:1-3. *Kedar*: See Isaiah 21:16-17. The exact locations of these two places are unknown, but they are outside the land and are associated elsewhere with hostile powers. So the places may signal "people who hate peace" (Ps 120:6). That the first of the pilgrimage songs locates the psalmist outside the land may be significant (see sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs").

120:6-7 *peace*: See Psalms 4:8; 72:3. *war*: See Psalm 46:10; Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3. The use of *peace* here looks forward to Psalms 122:6-8; 125:5.

121:1-8 Psalm 121 is an eloquent psalm of trust (see Pss 16, 23) that uses the image of a journey, perhaps to be understood as a journey that takes the psalmist from a conflicted life outside the land (Ps 120:5-7) to the peace of Jerusalem (Ps 122:6-8). See sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs."

121:1-2 These verses can be understood as the words of a person who is about to leave on a journey. The question (121:1b) suggests some anxiety, but it's accompanied by trust (Ps 121:2). *Help*: See Psalm 10:14. The repetition in Psalm 121:1b, 2a is a steplike pattern that is appropriate for a journey that was made on foot. This type of repetition occurs often in Psalms 120-134. *maker... earth*: This phrase is repeated in Psalm 134:3, which might be a spoken prayer as pilgrims prepared to leave Jerusalem for the trip home (see also Pss 115:15; 124:8).

121:3 *God... slip*: This is an important promise for a

journey on foot (see Pss 66:9; 73:2). *protector*: This is the first of six uses of this keyword (see Ps 121:4, 5, 7a, 7b, 8), providing another instance of steplike repetition.

121:4 *never sleeps*: See Psalm 121:3. This is an assuring statement, especially for travelers who would be away from home day and night, and especially since people sometimes thought God was sleeping (see Ps 44:23).

121:6 *sun... moon*: The hot sun was a real problem for travelers on foot (see Isa 49:10), and the moon's light was thought to be dangerous (see Matt 4:24; 17:15, where "those with epilepsy"/"epileptic" is more literally "moonstruck").

121:7-8 The conclusion broadens God's protection to cover *all evil* (121:7) on any and all *journeys... from now until forever* (121:8). God is one's protector for the entire journey of life (see Ps 23:6).

122:1-9 Because the psalmist is in Jerusalem (122:2), celebrates Jerusalem (122:3-5), and prays for Jerusalem (122:6-9), Ps 122 is categorized as a song of Zion (see Ps 46; 48; 84; 87; see sidebar, "Psalms 46-48: Jerusalem and the Kingship of God" at Ps 48). The sequence of Psalms 120-122 reproduces a pilgrim's journey from outside the land to Jerusalem (see sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs").

122:1 See similar invitations in 1 Samuel 14:11; Isaiah 2:3; Jeremiah 31:6. *LORD's house*: See Psalm 5:7. God's "house" is mentioned again in Psalm 122:9, so references to the temple bracket the psalm.

122:3 2Sa 5:9;  
Neh 4:6;  
Ps 48:13,  
Ps 147:2  
122:4 Ex 23:17;  
Ex 34:23;  
Dt 16:16  
122:7 Ps 48:3,  
Ps 48:13  
123:1 Ps 2:4,  
Ps 25:15,  
Ps 121:1  
123:2 Ps 25:15  
123:3 Neh 4:4;  
Ps 4:1, Ps 119:22  
123:4 Job 12:5;  
Is 32:9; Am 6:1  
124:1 Ps 129:1  
124:2 Nm 16:2;  
Ps 3:1  
124:3 Nm 16:30;  
Ps 35:25, Ps 56:1;  
Prv 1:12

- <sup>3</sup> Jerusalem is built like a city joined together in unity.  
<sup>4</sup> That is where the tribes go up—the LORD's tribes!  
 It is the law for Israel to give thanks there to the LORD's name,  
<sup>5</sup> because the thrones of justice are there—  
 the thrones of the house of David!  
<sup>6</sup> Pray that Jerusalem has peace:  
 "Let those who love you have rest.  
<sup>7</sup> Let there be peace on your walls;  
 let there be rest on your fortifications."  
<sup>8</sup> For the sake of my family and friends,  
 I say, "Peace be with you, Jerusalem."  
<sup>9</sup> For the sake of the LORD our God's house  
 I will pray for your good.

### Psalm 123

*A pilgrimage song.*

- <sup>1</sup> I raise my eyes to you—you who rule heaven.  
<sup>2</sup> Just as the eyes of servants attend to their masters' hand,  
 just as the eyes of a female servant attends to her mistress' hand—  
 that's how our eyes attend to the LORD our God until he has mercy on us.  
<sup>3</sup> Have mercy on us, LORD! Have mercy  
 because we've had more than enough shame.  
<sup>4</sup> We've had more than enough mockery from the self-confident,  
 more than enough shame from the proud.

### Psalm 124

*A pilgrimage song. Of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> If the LORD hadn't been for us—  
 let Israel now repeat!—  
<sup>2</sup> if the LORD hadn't been for us, when those people attacked us  
<sup>3</sup> then they would have swallowed us up whole  
 with their rage burning against us!

122:3 Pilgrims to Jerusalem celebrated its architecture (see Ps 48:12-13), but also in view here is Jerusalem's ability to bring people together (see Ps 122:4).

122:4 *the tribes go up... tribes*: The Hebrew root involved in *go up* also appears in the titles of Psalms 120-134 (see "pilgrimage," which is more literally "going up"). The repetition of *tribes* illustrates the frequent steplike pattern (see Ps 121). *the law... there*: Males were expected to visit Jerusalem three times per year (see Exod 23:14-17; Deut 16:16).  
 122:5 *thrones of justice... thrones... David*: The steplike repetition (see Ps 122:4) emphasizes that Jerusalem is to be celebrated both as God's city and the home of the Davidic line, whose God-given responsibility was to do the justice that God wants for the world (see Pss 9:4; 72:1-7; 96:13; see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2).

122:6-8 *Justice* (see Ps 122:5) is required for the creation of *shalom*, "peace," which occurs in verses 6, 7, and 8, and which forms the last two syllables of the name "Jerusalem." (see Pss 4:8; 72:3, 7; 85:10, 12; 120:6-7).

123:1-4 Because it starts with a single voice (123:1) that quickly becomes a plural voice (123:2), Psalm 123 is usually categorized as a communal prayer for help (see Pss 44; 74). The complaint in verses 3-4 recalls the situation described in Psalm 120, so it may be that Psalm 123 continues the sequence that involves Psalms 120-122 (see sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs" at Ps 120).

123:1 *raise my eyes*: Elsewhere this is often a sign of

arrogance, but here the psalmist looks to God for help (see Ps 141:8). *who rule heaven*: See Psalm 2:4.

123:2 *servants... servant... mistress' hand*: Given the affirmation of God's rule in Psalm 123:1, the congregation appropriately takes the posture of servants (see Ps 119:117). The simile pictures God in feminine as well as masculine terms (see Ps 131:2-3). The word *eyes* occurs four times in verses 1-2, continuing the pattern of steplike repetition (see Pss 121-122).

123:3 *Have mercy... Have mercy*: Repeating "mercy" from Psalm 123:2, the steplike pattern continues. The repeated petition within verse 3 has the literary effect of surrounding God with cries for help.

123:4 Similar complaints occur often elsewhere (see Pss 42:3, 10; 44:13; 79:4).

124:1-8 Psalm 124 is a psalm of thanks (see Ps 30); and whether intended or not, it provides a fitting response to the communal prayer for help in Psalm 123 (see sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs" at Ps 120).

124:1-2 *for us... for us*: See Psalm 118:6-7. The invitation to repeat this affirmation suggests the setting of public worship, and this fits well with the probability that Psalms 120-134 were used by gathered pilgrims in Jerusalem.

124:3-5 The three uses of *then* at the beginning of each verse introduce the deadly consequences that would have happened without God's help. *swallowed*: See the destruction described in Jeremiah 51:34. *over our*

<sup>4</sup>Then the waters would have drowned us;  
the torrent would have come over our necks;<sup>¶</sup>  
<sup>5</sup>then the raging waters would have come over our necks!

<sup>6</sup>Bless the LORD because he didn't hand us over  
like food for our enemies' teeth!

<sup>7</sup>We escaped like a bird from the hunters' trap;  
the trap was broken so we escaped!

<sup>8</sup>Our help is in the name of the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth.

### Psalm 125

*A pilgrimage song.*

<sup>1</sup>The people who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion:  
never shaken, lasting forever.

<sup>2</sup>Mountains surround Jerusalem.  
That's how the LORD surrounds his people  
from now until forever from now!

<sup>3</sup>The wicked rod won't remain in the land given to the righteous  
so that they don't use their hands to do anything wrong.<sup>¶</sup>

<sup>4</sup>LORD, do good to people who are good,  
to people whose hearts are right.

<sup>5</sup>But as for those people who turn to their own twisted ways—  
may the LORD march them off with other evildoers!

Peace be on Israel!

### Psalm 126

*A pilgrimage song.*

<sup>1</sup>When the LORD changed Zion's circumstances for the better,  
it was like we had been dreaming.

<sup>2</sup>Our mouths were suddenly filled with laughter;  
our tongues were filled with joyful shouts.

<sup>¶</sup>Or *soul*; also in 124:5, 7 <sup>¶</sup>Heb uncertain

*necks ... over our necks:* Steplike repetition continues (see Pss 121–122). See Psalm 69:1 for a similar complaint.

124:6 *Bless:* See Psalms 16:7; 100:4.

124:8 See Psalm 121:2. As Psalm 123 recalled Psalm 120, so Psalm 124 recalls Psalm 121, suggesting the possibility of a planned sequence (see sidebar, “The Pilgrimage Songs” at Ps 120).

125:1–5 Because of the complaint suggested in verse 3 and the petitions in verses 4–5, Psalm 125 is usually categorized as a prayer for help. Expressions of trust (125:1–2) are also typical; and as here, they sometimes come before the complaint and petition (see Ps 40). Because Psalm 123 recalls Psalm 120, and Psalm 124 recalls Psalm 121, it's noticeable that Psalm 125 recalls Psalm 122. Both psalms feature the importance of Zion, and both end with a focus on peace (see sidebar, “The Pilgrimage Songs” at Ps 120).

125:1 *trust:* See Psalms 4:5; 115:9–11. *Mount Zion:* See Psalm 2:6. *never shaken:* Jerusalem was viewed as an anchor of stability, even amid threats of all kinds (see Ps 46:1–7, especially verse 5).

125:2 *surround ... surrounds:* The steplike repetition continues (see Pss 121–122). It's easy to imagine that pilgrims in Jerusalem would look out from the city to the surrounding hills, and be reminded of God's protecting presence (see Ps 121:2).

125:3 Although the Hebrew is unclear, the verse seems

to recognize that evil is capable of tempting God's people (see Ps 73:10). This realization leads to the petitions in Psalm 125:4–5.

125:4 *do good ... good:* The line continues the steplike repetition, and it offers a motive for resisting temptation (see Pss 23:6; 84:11; 85:12).

125:5 Such requests are frequent. The motivation isn't personal payback but rather the desire that God set things right (see Pss 3:7–8; 7:6). *Peace:* See Psalms 4:8; 85:10; 120:6–7; 122:6–8.

126:1–6 Psalm 126 is usually identified as a communal prayer for help because of the petitions and suggested complaints in verses 4–6. It fits well within the post-exilic era, when joy over the return from life in Babylon (126:1–3) was followed by new difficulties that challenged the community in its effort to rebuild (126:4–6; see Ps 85). See sidebar, “The Pilgrimage Songs” at Psalm 120.

126:1 *changed ... better:* See Psalms 126:4; 14:7; 85:1. *dreaming:* See Joel 2:28, where dreams accompany the promise of rescue.

126:2 *joyful shouts:* An appropriate way to celebrate the return from life in Babylon (see Isa 49:13). Psalm 126:5–6 will pray for the return of such joy. *It ... them:* See Psalms 79:10 and 115:2 for the negative things that the nations often said.

124:4 Ps 42:7

124:5 Job 38:11

124:6 Ex 15:9

124:7 Ps 91:3;  
Prv 6:5

124:8 Gn 1:1;

Ps 115:15;

Ps 121:2;

Ps 134:3;

Ps 146:5

125:1 Ps 46:5;

Prv 10:30

125:2 Ps 34:7;

Zec 2:5

125:3 Prv 22:8;

Is 14:5

125:4 Ps 7:10;

Ps 36:10;

Ps 51:18;

Ps 119:68

125:5 Ps 128:6;

Prv 2:15; Is 59:8;

Ga 6:16

126:1 Ps 14:7;

Ps 85:1;

Hos 6:11;

Ac 12:9

126:2 Isa 12:24;

Job 8:21;

Ps 71:19; Lk 1:49

126:3 Ps 9:2;  
Is 25:9; Lk 1:49  
126:5 Ps 30:5;  
Is 35:10, Is 51:11;  
Jer 31:9; Mt 5:4  
126:6 Ps 30:5  
127:1 Ps 33:16,  
Ps 121:3,  
Ps 121:4;  
Prv 21:31;  
Song 5:7  
127:2 Gn 3:17  
127:3 Gn 33:5;  
Josh 24:3;  
Ps 113:9  
127:4 Prv 17:6  
127:5 Job 5:4  
128:1 Ps 112:1,  
Ps 119:1  
128:2 Is 3:10

It was even said, at that time, among the nations,  
“The LORD has done great things for them!”

<sup>3</sup>Yes, the LORD has done great things for us,  
and we are overjoyed.

<sup>4</sup>LORD, change our circumstances for the better,  
like dry streams in the desert waste!

<sup>5</sup>Let those who plant with tears reap the harvest with joyful shouts.

<sup>6</sup>Let those who go out, crying and carrying their seed,  
come home with joyful shouts, carrying bales of grain!

### Psalm 127

*A pilgrimage song. Of Solomon.*

<sup>1</sup>Unless it is the LORD who builds the house,  
the builders' work is pointless.

Unless it is the LORD who protects the city,  
the guard on duty is pointless.

<sup>2</sup>It is pointless that you get up early and stay up late,  
eating the bread of hard labor  
because God gives sleep to those he loves.

<sup>3</sup>No doubt about it: children are a gift from the LORD;  
the fruit of the womb is a divine reward.

<sup>4</sup>The children born when one is young  
are like arrows in the hand of a warrior.

<sup>5</sup>The person who fills a quiver full with them is truly happy!  
They won't be ashamed when arguing with their enemies in the gate.

### Psalm 128

*A pilgrimage song.*

<sup>1</sup>Everyone who honors the LORD,  
who walks in God's ways, is truly happy!

<sup>2</sup>You will definitely enjoy what you've worked hard for—  
you'll be happy; and things will go well for you.

126:3 *great things*: See Psalm 126:2; the steplike repetition continues (see Pss 121–122).

126:4 The pairing of celebration and petition occurs elsewhere (see Pss 85:4–7; 118:21–25). While this pattern fits the post-exilic era, it also suggests that God's people will always need to pray for restoration. *dry streams*: In the rainy season, dry streams could suddenly become raging torrents (see Amos 5:24).

126:5–6 *tears . . . crying*: Planting season always involves a degree of anxiety, as well as hope. Tears may also communicate the deep desire for help (see Joel 2:17).

127:1–5 Psalm 127 has a teaching tone. It focuses on several daily activities, and it teaches that these routine realities are matters that should be understood and carried out in relationship to God. In short, normal things like shelter and protection (127:1), food and rest (127:2), and family (127:3–5) are gifts to be received from God, not merely achieved by human effort. The credit to Solomon may come from the fact that he was responsible for several building projects, including the temple that would have been the ultimate destination of pilgrims to Jerusalem (see sidebar, “The Pilgrimage Songs” at Ps 120).

127:1 *builds the house*: The phrase can refer to physical construction and to establishing a dynasty. In the latter sense, it would be more clearly related to the subject

of children in Psalm 127:3–5. Perhaps the vagueness is purposeful.

127:2 *bread*: The verse may point to Genesis 3:17–19, which suggests that human beings will have to work hard for their bread. If so, this verse affirms God's provision of food for humans, despite their disobedience (see Matt 6:25–34).

127:3 *gift . . . reward*: See 1 Samuel 1:3–20 for an illustration of this view.

127:5 *truly happy*: See Psalms 1:1–2; 128:1. *They . . . gate*: Local matters were settled at the city gate, so this verse may suggest that a large family would be an advantage in settling disputes.

128:1–5 The uses of “truly happy” in Psalms 127:5 and 128:1 suggest that the two psalms form a pair. Both also have a teaching goal, and share an emphasis on the importance of children (Pss 127:3–5; 128:3; see sidebar, “The Pilgrimage Songs” at Ps 120).

128:1 See Psalms 1:1–2; 112:1; 119:1.

128:2 *happy . . . go well*: Like Psalms 1 and 112, this verse seems to suggest that those who honor and obey God will have a care-free life; however, the book of Psalms makes it clear that the righteous are persistently and pervasively opposed. This means that happiness or blessedness (see Ps 128:4–5) can't finally mean superficial cheeriness but

- <sup>3</sup>In your house, your wife will be like a vine full of fruit.  
 All around your table, your children will be like olive trees, freshly planted.
- <sup>4</sup>That's how it goes for anyone who honors the LORD:  
 they will be blessed!
- <sup>5</sup>May the LORD bless you from Zion.  
 May you experience Jerusalem's goodness your whole life long.
- <sup>6</sup>And may you see your grandchildren.

Peace be on Israel!

**Psalm 129**

*A pilgrimage song.*

- <sup>1</sup>From youth, people have constantly attacked me—  
 let Israel now repeat!—
- <sup>2</sup>from youth people have constantly attacked me—  
 but they haven't beaten me!
- <sup>3</sup>They plowed my back like farmers;  
 they made their furrows deep.
- <sup>4</sup>But the LORD is righteous—  
 God cut me free from the ropes of the wicked!

- <sup>5</sup>Let everyone who hates Zion be ashamed, thoroughly frustrated.
- <sup>6</sup>Let them be like grass on a roof that dies before it can be pulled up,  
<sup>7</sup>which won't fill the reaper's hand or fill the harvester's arms.
- <sup>8</sup>Let no one who passes by say to them:  
 "May the LORD's blessing be on you!  
 We bless you in the LORD's name!"

**Psalm 130**

*A pilgrimage song.*

- <sup>1</sup>I cry out to you from the depths, LORD—<sup>2</sup>my Lord, listen to my voice!  
 Let your ears pay close attention to my request for mercy!
- <sup>3</sup>If you kept track of sins, LORD—  
 my Lord, who would stand a chance?
- <sup>4</sup>But forgiveness is with you—  
 that's why you are honored.

rather the profound contentment that comes from being connected to God and relying upon God (see Ps 1:3).  
**128:3** *like olive trees, freshly planted:* An image of thriving (see Ps 52:8).

**128:5** *May... Zion:* See Psalms 2:6; 134:3. This petition seems to reflect the experience of gathered pilgrims in Jerusalem. *May... long:* See Psalm 122:9. *Peace... Israel!*: See Psalms 120:6-7; 122:6-8; 125:5.

**129:1-8** Because of the rescue related in verses 2b and 4b, Psalm 129 is usually categorized as a psalm of thanks (see Pss 30, 124). See sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs" at Psalm 120.

**129:1** *Let Israel now repeat!*: See Psalm 124:1.

**129:2** *attacked me... beaten me!*: See Psalm 124:2. Some readers view the "me" as a personified Jerusalem. The attack and rescue are described symbolically in Psalm 129:3-4b.

**129:4** *The LORD is righteous:* See Psalm 5:8. The rescue of the psalmist (or Jerusalem) is an example of God's setting things right.

**129:5** *Zion:* See Psalm 2:6. As would be expected, the pilgrimage songs often feature Zion (see Pss 122:1-9; 125:1; 126:1; 128:5; 132:13-18; 133:3; 134:3). *ashamed... frustrated:* This petition, which is stated symbolically in Psalm

129:6-7, assumes that opponents of Zion are opponents of God and God's will (see sidebar "Psalms 46-48: Jerusalem and the Kingship of God" at Ps 48).

**129:8** The motivation for this and the petitions in Psalm 129:5-7 isn't necessarily vindictiveness but rather the desire that evil and destructive behavior not be given any sort of approval. See Psalms 3:7-8; 7:6; compare with Psalms 128:5; 133:3; 134:3.

**130:1-8** Psalm 130 begins like a prayer for help. Petitions (130:1-2) are followed by an expression of confidence that is still addressed to God (130:3-4). Verses 5-6 continue the assurance (but not primarily addressed to God), and verses 7-8 combine an invitation to Israel with further affirmation of faith. Psalm 130 is the sixth of the church's Penitential Psalms (see Ps 6). It makes clear that opposition to God can come from God's own people, not just from external enemies as in Psalm 129.

**130:1** *the depths:* See Psalm 69:2, 14 ("deep water," "watery depths"). The term describes the destructive forces that diminish life and confront people with deadly threats, often symbolized by water.

**130:2-4** These verses make it clear that the psalmist's own sin has contributed to the threat. But the emphasis is on forgiveness.

**128:3** Gn 49:22;  
 Ps 52:8,  
 Ps 144:12;  
 Eze 19:10

**128:4** Ps 112:1

**128:6** Gn 48:11,  
 Gn 50:23;  
 Job 42:16;  
 Ps 125:5;  
 Prv 17:6

**129:1** Ps 124:1;  
 Jer 2:2; Hos 2:15

**129:3** Is 51:23

**129:6** 2Ki 19:26;  
 Ps 37:2; Is 37:27

**129:7** Am 7:1

**130:1** Ps 42:7,  
 Ps 69:2;  
 Lam 3:55

**130:2** 2Ch 6:40;  
 Neh 1:6; Ps 28:2,  
 Ps 86:6; Ps 140:6

**130:3** Job 9:2;  
 Ps 143:2;  
 Na 1:6; Mal 3:2;  
 Rev 6:17

**130:4** 1Ki 8:40;  
 Ps 86:5; Ps 103:3;  
 Jer 33:8; Dn 9:9

130:7 Ps 111:9,  
Ps 131:3; Eph 1:7  
130:8 Mt 1:21;  
Lk 1:68; Ti 2:14  
131:1 Job 42:3;  
Ps 101:5;  
Ps 139:6;  
Jer 45:5;  
Ro 12:16

131:2 Ps 62:1;  
Mt 18:3;  
1Co 14:20

132:1 1Sa 18:1,  
1Sa 18:11,  
1Sa 19:1,  
1Sa 20:1,  
1Sa 21:1

132:2 Gn 49:24;  
Ps 132:5;  
Is 49:26, Is 60:16

132:3 2Sa 7:2  
132:4 Prv 6:4

132:5  
1Ch 22:7;  
Ps 132:2;  
Ac 7:46

132:6 Gn 35:19;  
Ru 4:11,  
1Sa 7:1,  
1Sa 17:12;  
Mi 5:2

- <sup>5</sup>I hope, LORD. My whole being<sup>a</sup> hopes,  
and I wait for God's promise.  
<sup>6</sup>My whole being waits for my Lord—  
more than the night watch waits for morning;  
yes, more than the night watch waits for morning!
- <sup>7</sup>Israel, wait for the LORD!  
Because faithful love is with the LORD;  
because great redemption is with our God!
- <sup>8</sup>He is the one who will redeem Israel from all its sin.

### Psalm 131

*A pilgrimage song. Of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>LORD, my heart isn't proud;  
my eyes aren't conceited.  
I don't get involved with things too great or wonderful for me.  
<sup>2</sup>No. But I have calmed and quieted myself<sup>b</sup>  
like a weaned child on its mother;  
I'm like the weaned child that is with me.
- <sup>3</sup>Israel, wait for the LORD—  
from now until forever from now!

### Psalm 132

*A pilgrimage song.*

- <sup>1</sup>LORD, remember David—all the ways he suffered  
<sup>2</sup>and how he swore to the LORD,  
how he promised the strong one of Jacob:  
<sup>3</sup>"I won't enter my house, won't get into my bed.  
<sup>4</sup>I won't let my eyes close, won't let my eyelids sleep,  
<sup>5</sup>until I find a place for the LORD,  
a dwelling place for the strong one of Jacob."  
<sup>6</sup>Yes, we heard about it in Ephrathah;  
we found it<sup>c</sup> in the fields of Jaar.

<sup>a</sup>Or soul; also in 132:6 <sup>b</sup>Or my soul <sup>c</sup>It may refer to the covenant chest (132:8 b).

130:5-6 *hope... hopes... wait*: See Psalms 25:3, 5, 20; 27:14; 131:3. This is another instance of step-like repetition (see Pss 121–122), *for morning... for morning!*: More step-like repetition communicates urgency.

130:7 *Israel, wait... LORD!*: The psalmist invites the whole people to do as he or she is doing in Psalm 130:5-6 (see Ps 131:3). *faithful love*: See Psalm 5:7. This is one of the fundamental qualities of God revealed shortly after God had forgiven Israel for the sin of the gold calf (see Exod 34:6). This was indeed a *great redemption*, and serves as the foundation for the confidence stated in Psalm 130:8.

131:1-3 Psalm 131 is a brief but powerful psalm of trust. The humility expressed is appropriate following Psalm 130 and its recognition of God's forgiveness of sin. The parallel between *its mother* and *on me* in 131:2 makes it likely that the psalmist is a woman, and women almost certainly were participants in pilgrimages to Jerusalem (see sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs" at Ps 120).

131:1 *things... for me*: Elsewhere "great" and "wonderful" things describe God's saving deeds, which should be a focus of attention (see Ps 105:2). If the psalmist is a woman, perhaps social, cultural, or religious customs prevented her from being involved with such things.

131:2 Even if the psalmist's humility was forced upon her

(Ps 131:1), she has found a source of balance and comfort, just as a young child often does in her mother's arms.

131:3 The striking image of a comforting mother in Psalm 131:2 serves as the basis for the invitation to Israel (see Ps 130:7). God can be trusted as a comforting mother (see Ps 123:2).

132:1-18 Psalm 132 is noticeably longer than the other pilgrimage songs, and its length is based on the two main reasons for making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem: Jerusalem is God's place (132:7-8, 13-16), and Jerusalem is (or was) the home of the Davidic line that God chose (132:10-12, 17-18; see Ps 122:5; see sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs" at Ps 120). Because of this dual focus, Psalm 132 is often categorized as a royal psalm (see Ps 2) or a song of Zion (see Ps 46), or both. Because of the petition for David in verse 1, and because verses 10 and 17 imply that the house of David needs help, it is likely that Psalm 132 reflects the circumstances of the post-exilic era when the kings no longer ruled (see note on Ps 132:17-18)

132:1 *David... suffered*: See Psalm 89:38-51, especially verse 50.

132:2-5 David's promise isn't recorded elsewhere, but it's similar to what David desires in 2 Samuel 7:1-2.

132:6-8 It isn't clear what "it" refers to in verse 6, and the



- <sup>7</sup>Let's enter God's dwelling place;  
let's worship at the place God rests his feet!
- <sup>8</sup>Get up, LORD, go to your residence—  
you and your powerful covenant chest!
- <sup>9</sup>Let your priests be dressed in righteousness;  
let your faithful shout out with joy!
- <sup>10</sup>And for the sake of your servant David,  
do not reject your anointed one.
- <sup>11</sup>The LORD swore to David a true promise that God won't take back:  
"I will put one of your own children on your throne.
- <sup>12</sup>And if your children keep my covenant and the laws that I will teach them,  
then their children too will rule on your throne forever."
- <sup>13</sup>Because the LORD chose Zion;  
he wanted it for his home.
- <sup>14</sup>"This is my residence forever.  
I will live here because I wanted it for myself."<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>15</sup>I will most certainly bless its food supply;  
I will fill its needy full of food!
- <sup>16</sup>I will dress its priests in salvation,  
and its faithful will shout out loud with joy!
- <sup>17</sup>It is there that I will make David's strength thrive.<sup>v</sup>  
I will prepare a lamp for my anointed one there.
- <sup>18</sup>I will dress his enemies in shame,  
but the crown he wears will shine."

### Psalm 133

*A pilgrimage song. Of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>Look at how good and pleasing it is  
when families<sup>w</sup> live together as one!
- <sup>2</sup>It is like expensive oil poured over the head,  
running down onto the beard—

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks for myself. <sup>v</sup>Or make a horn sprout. <sup>w</sup>Or brothers (and sisters); the term often encompasses extended family relationships.

location of the places isn't certain. So, the exact sense of these verses is unclear; but they involve David moving the sacred chest (132:8; see Ps 80:1) to Jerusalem (see 2 Sam 6:1-19). The "we" in verse 6, who seem to offer the petitions in verses 7-10, may be pilgrims whose journey retraced the journey of the sacred chest to Jerusalem.

132:7 *the place . . . his feet!*: This is a reference to the sacred chest (see Ps 132:8), which was known as God's "footstool" (see Ps 99:5).

132:9 See Psalm 132:16.

132:10 *anointed one*: See Psalms 132:17; 2:2; 89:20.

132:11-12 See Psalm 132:17-18; 2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89, especially verses 3-4, 28-37.

132:13-16 The focus is on Zion in these verses (see Pss 2:6; 46:4; 76:2; 84:1). As Psalm 122:3-5 also makes clear, Zion and David are inseparable; and this is exactly why the end of Psalm 89 (verses 38-51) is so shocking, and why Books IV and V of the Psalter seem to have been shaped to respond to the crisis of exile and the disappearance of the Davidic line (see sidebars, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89; "Book V" at Ps 107).

132:17-18 See Psalm 89:19-24. These verses imply that the house of David has suffered a setback (see Ps 89:38-51), and they may express the hope for the restoration of

the monarchy at a later time. If so, it never happened (see Ps 101:3-8), and the role of the kings—that is, to be the earthly agents of God's will—seems to have passed to the whole people (see Pss 105:15; 144:11-14; 149:6-9; see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2).

133:1-3 A focus on families and family life is typical in Psalms 120-134 (see Pss 122:8; 127:3-5; 128:3, 6; 131:2); but what starts out as an observation about family life (133:1) concludes with the affirmation that God's family consists of the whole gathered people of God in Jerusalem (133:3; see sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs" at Ps 120).

133:1 *good and pleasing*: The same two Hebrew words occur in Psalm 147:1 to describe what it is like to praise God. *when families live together*: The only other occurrence of this phrase is in Deuteronomy 25:5, which says that male extended family members have a duty to continue the family line when a brother has died. As Deuteronomy 25 makes clear, failure to fulfill such duties created an unpleasant public controversy.

133:2 *Aaron's beard*: The mention of Aaron, the ancestor of a major priestly line, isn't surprising in the pilgrimage setting where priests would have been prominent (see Ps 132:9, 16).

132:7 Ps 5:7,  
Ps 99:5

132:8 Nm 10:35,  
Nm 10:36;  
2Ch 6:41;  
Ps 68:1, Ps 78:61

132:9 Job 29:14;  
Ps 132:16,  
Ps 149:5;  
Is 61:10

132:11 2Sa 7:12;  
2Ch 6:16;  
Ps 89:3, Ps 89:35,  
Ps 110:4

132:12 Lk 1:32

132:13 Ps 48:1,  
Ps 68:16,  
Ps 78:68

132:14 Ps 68:16,  
Ps 132:8; Is 66:1

132:15 Ps 107:9,  
Ps 147:14

132:16  
2Ch 6:41;  
Ps 132:9;  
Is 61:10

132:17  
1Ki 11:36,  
1Ki 15:4,  
2Ki 8:19;  
Eze 29:21;  
Lk 1:69

132:18 Job 8:22;  
Ps 109:29

133:1 Gn 13:8;  
Heb 13:1

133:2 Ex 29:7,  
Ex 30:25,  
Ex 30:30,  
Lv 8:12

134:1 1Ch 9:33,  
1Ch 23:30;  
Ps 113:1,  
Ps 135:1,  
Ps 135:2  
134:2 Ps 28:2,  
Ps 63:4, Ps 141:2,  
1Ti 2:8  
135:1 Ps 113:1,  
Ps 134:1  
135:5 Ex 18:11;  
Ps 48:1, Ps 95:3,  
Ps 97:9, Ps 145:3

Aaron's beard!—  
which extended  
over the collar  
of his robes.

- <sup>2</sup>It is like the dew  
on Mount Hermon  
streaming down  
onto the  
mountains  
of Zion,  
because it is there  
that the LORD  
has commanded  
the blessing:  
everlasting life.

### Psalm 134

*A pilgrimage song.*

- <sup>1</sup>All you who serve  
the LORD: bless the  
LORD right now!  
All you who  
minister in the  
LORD's house at night: bless God!  
<sup>2</sup>Lift up your hands to the sanctuary and bless the LORD!  
<sup>3</sup>May the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion.

### Psalm 135

- <sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD's name!  
All you who serve the LORD, praise God!  
<sup>2</sup>All you who stand in the LORD's house—  
who stand in the courtyards of our God's temple—  
<sup>3</sup>praise the LORD, because the LORD is good!  
Sing praises to God's name because it is beautiful!  
<sup>4</sup>Because the LORD chose Jacob as his own,  
God chose Israel as his treasured possession.  
  
<sup>5</sup>Yes, I know for certain that the LORD is great—  
I know our Lord is greater than all other gods.



Mount Hermon  
David Bivin/LifeintheHolyLand.com

133:3 *dew*... *Zion*: Mount Hermon was known for its abundant moisture. The point seems to be that the resources of outlying areas flow to Zion (see Pss 2:6; 132:13), and the effect is to shift the focus of attention away from biological family lines (see Ps 133:1) to the gathered family of God in Jerusalem. *there*... *life*: The word *blessing* recalls "good and pleasing" in Psalm 133:1; but goodness is now experienced *there*—that is, in Jerusalem—where the gathered pilgrims form the true family of God (see Pss 128:5; 134:3).

134:1-3 Psalm 133 ends by suggesting that God's gathered people experience God's blessing in Jerusalem, and *bless* becomes the keyword in Psalm 134, the final pilgrimage song. Psalm 134 also shows the gathered people, perhaps on the night before pilgrims were to depart for home (Ps 134:1; see sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs" at Ps 120).

134:1 *bless*: See Psalms 16:7; 100:4. Three more uses of "bless" continue the steplike pattern of repetition (see Pss 121-122). *the Lord's house*: the temple on Zion (see Pss 2:6; 5:7).

134:2 *Lift*... *hands*: the posture of prayer, seemingly offered facing the main temple building (see Ps 28:2).

134:3 *maker*... *earth*: See Psalms 115:15; 121:2; 124:8. If Psalm 134 shows the scene shortly before pilgrims depart, it is appropriate that they prepare to leave by praying (Ps 134:2) and confessing their faith. *bless you from Zion*: This line gives Psalm 134:3 the character of a prayer spoken before leaving, which also was appropriate for a departure scene. This last line means that the blessing is mutual—that is, the people bless God (Ps 134:1-2), and God blesses the people (Ps 134:3).

135:1-21 The pilgrimage songs end with Psalm 134, but it seems that the editors of the book of Psalms placed Psalms 135-136 after Psalm 134 to illustrate the congregation's blessing of God with songs of praise (see "All you who serve" in Pss 134:1 and 135:1, and note that the invitation to praise in 135:2 is extended to people who are in the temple area). Psalms 135-136 are similar to the historical psalms, and are sometimes categorized as such (see Ps 78).

135:3 *because*... *good*: See Psalms 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29.

135:5 *greater*... *gods*: See Psalms 95:3; 97:7, 9; Exodus 18:11.

- <sup>6</sup>The LORD can do whatever he wants in heaven or on earth,  
in the seas and in every ocean depth.
- <sup>7</sup>God forms clouds at the far corners of the earth.  
God makes lightning for the rain.  
God releases the wind from its storeroom.
- <sup>8</sup>God struck down the Egyptians' oldest offspring—  
both human and animal!
- <sup>9</sup>God sent signs and wonders into the very center of Egypt—  
against Pharaoh and all his servants.
- <sup>10</sup>God struck down many nations and killed mighty kings:
- <sup>11</sup>Sihon the Amorite king, Og the king of Bashan, and all the Canaanite kings.
- <sup>12</sup>Then God handed their land over as an inheritance—  
as an inheritance to Israel, his own people.

- <sup>13</sup>LORD, your name is forever!  
LORD, your fame extends from one generation to the next!
- <sup>14</sup>The LORD gives justice to his people  
and has compassion on those who serve him.

- <sup>15</sup>The nations' idols are just silver and gold—  
things made by human hands.
- <sup>16</sup>They have mouths, but they can't speak.  
They have eyes, but they can't see.
- <sup>17</sup>They have ears, but they can't listen.  
No, there's no breath in their lungs!
- <sup>18</sup>Let the people who made these idols  
and all who trust in them become just like them!

- <sup>19</sup>House of Israel, bless the LORD!  
House of Aaron, bless the LORD!
- <sup>20</sup>House of Levi, bless the LORD!  
You who honor the LORD, bless the LORD!
- <sup>21</sup>Bless the LORD from Zion—  
bless the one who lives in Jerusalem!

Praise the LORD!

### Psalm 136

- <sup>1</sup>Give thanks to the LORD because he is good.  
God's faithful love lasts forever!
- <sup>2</sup>Give thanks to the God of all gods—  
God's faithful love lasts forever.

135:6 See Psalm 115:3.

135:8 See Psalms 78:51; 105:36; 136:10; Exodus 12:29-32.

135:9 See Psalms 78:43; 105:27; Exodus 7-10.

135:10-12 See Psalm 136:17-22; Numbers 21:21-35; Joshua 21:43-45.

135:15-18 See Psalm 115:4-8.

135:19-20 *Israel... Aaron... Levi*: These labels may all be names for the entire worshipping congregation; but *House of Aaron* may refer to priests (see Ps 133:2), and *House of Levi* to other workers in the temple (see Pss 115:9-11; 118:2-4).

135:21 *Bless*: See Psalms 135:19-20; 16:7; 100:4. *from Zion*: See Psalms 2:6; 134:3.

136:1-26 Like Psalm 135, to which it is related, Psalm 136 is a song of praise. It also contains a historical recital, and is often classified as a historical psalm (see Ps 78).

136:1 See Psalms 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29. *Give thanks*: The invitation is repeated in Hebrew only at the beginning of verses 2-3 and 26; but it's suggested at the beginning of almost every line, and so it's included more often in the translation. *God's faithful love lasts forever*: See Psalm 5:7. This line completes every poetic line in the entire psalm, suggesting that it served as a response sung by a choir or the congregation (see 2 Chron 5:13; 7:3; 20:21; Ezra 3:11). This refrain also affirms that God's love is responsible for creation (136:5-9), the exodus (136:10-15), guidance in the wilderness (136:16-20), the gift of the land (136:21-22), the return from life in Babylon (136:23-24), and the daily bread that sustains life for the world (136:25).

136:2-3 See Psalm 135:5.

136:4 *great wonders*: See Psalms 78:4, 11-12; 105:2; 106:7. This phrase looks forward to all that follows.

135:6 Ps 115:3;  
Dn 4:35  
135:7 Job 28:26,  
Job 38:25;  
Jer 10:13,  
Jer 51:16;  
Zec 10:1  
135:13 Ex 3:15;  
Ps 102:12  
135:15 Ps 115:4  
136:1 1Ch 16:34;  
Ps 106:1,  
Ps 107:1,  
Ps 118:1;  
Jer 33:11  
136:2 Dt 10:17

136:4 Ps 72:18

136:5 Gn 1:1;

Ps 104:24;

Pv 3:19;

Jer 10:12;

Jer 51:15

136:6 Gn 1:9;

Ps 24:2; Is 42:5;

Is 44:24;

Jer 10:12

136:8 Gn 1:16

136:9 Gn 1:16

136:12 Ex 6:6;

Dt 4:34; Dt 5:15;

Dt 9:29; Dt 11:2

136:23 Gn 8:1;

Ps 103:14

136:24 Ps 107:2

136:25

Ps 104:14;

Ps 104:27;

Ps 145:15;

Ps 145:16;

Ps 147:9

136:26 Neh 1:4

**3** Give thanks to the Lord of all lords—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**4** Give thanks to the only one who makes great wonders—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**5** Give thanks to the one who made the skies with skill—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**6** Give thanks to the one who shaped the earth on the water—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**7** Give thanks to the one who made the great lights—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**8** The sun to rule the day—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**9** The moon and the stars to rule the night—

God's faithful love lasts forever!

**10** Give thanks to the one who struck down the Egyptians' oldest offspring—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**11** Give thanks to the one who brought Israel out of there—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**12** With a strong hand and outstretched arm—

God's faithful love lasts forever!

**13** Give thanks to the one who split the Reed Sea<sup>a</sup> in two—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**14** Give thanks to the one who brought Israel through—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**15** And tossed Pharaoh and his army into the Reed Sea—

God's faithful love lasts forever!

**16** Give thanks to the one who led his people through the desert—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**17** Give thanks to the one who struck down great kings—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**18** And killed powerful kings—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**19** Sihon, the Amorite king—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**20** Og, king of Bashan—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**21** Handing their land over as an inheritance—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**22** As an inheritance to Israel, his servant—

God's faithful love lasts forever!

**23** God remembered us when we were humiliated—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**24** God rescued us from our enemies—

God's faithful love lasts forever.

**25** God is the one who provides food for all living things—

God's faithful love lasts forever!

**26** Give thanks to the God of heaven—

God's faithful love lasts forever!

<sup>a</sup>Or *Red Sea*; also in 136:15

136:5-9 See Genesis 1:1-31.

136:10-15 See Psalm 135:8-9; Exodus 12:29-15:21.

136:16-22 See Psalm 135:10-12; Numbers 21:21-35; Joshua 21:43-45.

136:23-24 These verses could be summarizing the

sections that came before, but they probably extend the story to include release from life in Babylon.

136:25 God's loving activity ultimately extends to the whole creation (see Pss 104:14-15, 27-28; 145:15-16; 146:7; 147:9; see sidebar, "God the Creator" at Ps 8).

**Psalm 137**

- <sup>1</sup>Alongside Babylon's streams, there we sat down,  
crying because we remembered Zion.
- <sup>2</sup>We hung our lyres up in the trees there
- <sup>3</sup>because that's where our captors asked us to sing;  
our tormentors requested songs of joy:  
"Sing us a song about Zion!" they said.
- <sup>4</sup>But how could we possibly sing the LORD's song on foreign soil?
- <sup>5</sup>Jerusalem! If I forget you,  
let my strong hand wither!
- <sup>6</sup>Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I don't remember you,  
if I don't make Jerusalem my greatest joy.
- <sup>7</sup>LORD, remember what the Edomites did on Jerusalem's dark day:  
"Rip it down, rip it down!  
All the way to its foundations!" they yelled.
- <sup>8</sup>Daughter Babylon, you destroyer,<sup>7</sup>  
a blessing on the one who pays you back the very deed you did to us!
- <sup>9</sup>A blessing on the one who seizes your children  
and smashes them against the rock!

137:1 Neh 1:4;  
Eze 1:1

137:2 Lv 23:40;  
Job 30:31;  
Is 24:8;  
Eze 26:13

137:3 Ps 79:1;  
Ps 80:6

137:4 Neh 12:46

137:5 Ps 102:14;  
Is 65:11;  
Jer 51:50

137:6 Ps 22:15;  
Eze 3:26

137:8 Is 13:1,  
Is 47:1; Jer 25:12,  
Jer 50:1; Jer 51:1

137:9 2Ks 8:12;  
Is 13:16;  
Hos 10:14;  
Hos 13:16;  
Na 3:10

138:1 Ps 9:1,  
Ps 86:12, Ps 95:3,  
Ps 111:1

138:3 Ps 118:5

**Psalm 138***Of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>I give thanks to you with all my heart, LORD.<sup>a</sup>  
I sing your praise before all other gods.
- <sup>2</sup>I bow toward your holy temple and thank your name  
for your loyal love and faithfulness  
because you have made your name and word greater than everything else.<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>3</sup>On the day I cried out, you answered me.  
You encouraged me with inner strength.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Sym, Tg, Syr; MT *the devastated* <sup>a</sup>LXX, Syr, Tg, DSS (11QP<sup>s</sup>); MT lacks *Lord*. <sup>a</sup>Correction; Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain

137:1-9 The date and setting of Psalm 137 are more clearly in view than in any other psalm. It is a communal prayer for help that looks back with grief (137:1-4) and anger (137:7-9) upon the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. It possibly was written in Babylon (137:1-4), but it may have been written later by someone who returned to Jerusalem after living in Babylon.

137:1 *Babylon's streams*: The rivers and canals of Babylon were very different to the exiles, who were accustomed to the dry terrain of Judah and Jerusalem. *crying . . . Zion*: See Psalms 2:6; 134:3. Psalm 137 appears in the Psalter soon after the pilgrimage songs, and it would have added a note of realism to the pictures of joyful experiences in Jerusalem (see especially Pss 122; 132–134; see sidebar, "The Pilgrimage Songs" at Ps 120).

137:2 *lyres*: See Psalm 33:2.

137:3 *a song about Zion*: See Psalm 137:1. The Psalter contains several songs about Zion (see Pss 46; 48; 84; 87; 122; and the sidebar, "Psalms 46–48: Jerusalem and the Kingship of God").

137:5-6 It was painful to remember Jerusalem (see Ps 137:1-4), but it was necessary in order to resist Babylonian ways and to sustain hope for a time when singing would be possible again. The importance of memory is indicated by the appearance of "remember(ed)" in each section (Ps 137:1, 6, 7).

137:7 *the Edomites*: The Edomites either assisted the Babylonians or welcomed their defeat of Judah and Jerusalem (see Ezek 35; Obad 10-16; Ps 60:6-12).

137:8-9 This is almost certainly the most brutal of many requests for God to deal with enemies (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6). The anger derives from the fact that the people of Judah and Jerusalem had seen their own children killed. These verses graphically show the horrors of war, then and now (see 2 Kgs 8:12; Isa 13:16; Hos 10:14; Nah 3:10).

138:1-8 Psalm 138 is usually understood as a psalm of thanks (see Ps 30) that was possibly offered originally in the temple area (138:2) by someone who has been delivered from some distress (138:3). In verses 4-6, the psalmist wishes that other people join the celebration. Verses 7-8 return the focus to the psalmist and God. Psalm 138 begins a collection of psalms credited to David, recalling the Davidic collections of Books I and II (see sidebar, "Book V" at Ps 107).

138:1 *all other gods*: This line is unusual. The effect is to deny authority to anyone other than the Lord (see Pss 58:1-2; 82:1-7; 97:7, 9).

138:2 *I bow . . . loyal love*: See Psalms 138:8; 5:7. *faithfulness*: See Psalm 25:10. These words are often paired; and as is often the case, God's essential character is in view as the reasons for worshipping God (see Ps 100:5).

138:6 Ps 113:6;  
Prv 3:34;  
Is 57:15; Is 66:2;  
Jas 4:6

138:7 Ps 23:4,  
Ps 60:5, Ps 71:20

138:8 Job 10:3,  
Job 10:8,  
Job 14:15;  
Phi 1:6

139:1 Ps 17:3,  
Ps 44:21;  
Jer 12:3

139:2 2Ki 19:27;  
Ps 94:11; Mt 9:4

139:4 Heb 4:13

139:5 Job 9:33;  
Ps 34:7, Ps 125:2;  
Rev 1:17

139:6 Job 42:3;  
Ro 11:33

139:7 Jer 23:23,  
Jer 23:24; Jon 1:3

139:8 Job 26:6;  
Prv 15:11;  
Am 9:2

139:9 Ps 139:10

139:10 Ps 23:3

<sup>4</sup>Let all the earth's rulers give thanks to you, LORD,  
when they hear what you say.

<sup>5</sup>Let them sing about the LORD's ways  
because the LORD's glory is so great!

<sup>6</sup>Even though the LORD is high, he can still see the lowly,  
but God keeps his distance from the arrogant.

<sup>7</sup>Whenever I am in deep trouble,  
you make me live again;  
you send your power against my enemies' wrath;  
you save me with your strong hand.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD will do all this for my sake.

Your faithful love lasts forever, LORD!  
Don't let go of what your hands have made.

### Psalm 139

*For the music leader. Of David. A song.*

<sup>1</sup>LORD, you have examined me.

You know me.

<sup>2</sup>You know when I sit down and when I stand up.  
Even from far away, you comprehend my plans.

<sup>3</sup>You study my traveling and resting.  
You are thoroughly familiar with all my ways.

<sup>4</sup>There isn't a word on my tongue, LORD,  
that you don't already know completely.

<sup>5</sup>You surround me—front and back.  
You put your hand on me.

<sup>6</sup>That kind of knowledge is too much for me;  
it's so high above me that I can't fathom it.

<sup>7</sup>Where could I go to get away from your spirit?  
Where could I go to escape your presence?

<sup>8</sup>If I went up to heaven, you would be there.  
If I went down to the grave,<sup>c</sup> you would be there too!

<sup>9</sup>If I could fly on the wings of dawn,  
stopping to rest only on the far side of the ocean—

<sup>10</sup>even there your hand would guide me;  
even there your strong hand would hold me tight!

<sup>11</sup>If I said, "The darkness will definitely hide me;  
the light will become night around me,"

<sup>c</sup>Heb Sheol

138:4-5 The psalmist's desire is in keeping with what Psalm 2:10-11 command the rulers of the world to do: Submit to God and God's claim on the world.

138:6 See Psalm 113:5-7.

138:8 *Don't...made*: Thanksgiving for rescue is often followed by petition (see Pss 118:25; 126:4). This pattern would be especially appropriate for the post-exilic community (see Pss 85, 126; see sidebar, "Book V" at Ps 107).

139:1-24 Psalm 139 is a prayer, and it includes petitions in verses 19, 23-24. It's sometimes considered a prayer for help; but most of the prayer talks about and celebrates the reality of being known by God, so it can also be considered a psalm of trust (see Pss 16; 23).

139:1 *examined...known*: Both of these words occur again in Psalm 139:23-24. The word *know* becomes the keyword in the psalm, occurring again in verses 2, 4, 6, 14, and 23. "Look" in verse 23 is the same Hebrew root, which

means that "know"/"knowledge" occurs seven times. Seven signals wholeness or completeness, so the repetition reinforces the psalmist's belief of being fully known by God. Verses 1-6 aren't meant to be a formal statement about God's all-knowingness but rather a poetic affirmation that God knows "me" (139:1).

139:5 *surround me*: To be surrounded is sometimes a threat, and some doubt may be present here; but the psalm as a whole affirms that being completely known by God is a comfort, not a problem.

139:8 *the grave*: The usual understanding was that even God had no access to Sheol (see translation note d; Pss 6:5; 88:4-5), but here the psalmist affirms God's presence even there.

139:11-12 The word for *dark/darkness* occurs four times, as if to emphasize its widespread threat. But God's light overcomes the darkness (see Pss 4:6; 36:9; John 1:5).

- <sup>12</sup> even then the darkness isn't too dark for you!  
Nighttime would shine bright as day,  
because darkness is the same as light to you!
- <sup>13</sup> You are the one who created my innermost parts;  
you knit me together while I was still in my mother's womb.
- <sup>14</sup> I give thanks to you that I was marvelously set apart.  
Your works are wonderful—I know that very well.
- <sup>15</sup> My bones weren't hidden from you  
when I was being put together in a secret place,  
when I was being woven together in the deep parts of the earth.
- <sup>16</sup> Your eyes saw my embryo,  
and on your scroll every day was written that was being formed for me,<sup>d</sup>  
before any one of them had yet happened.\*
- <sup>17</sup> God, your plans are incomprehensible to me!  
Their total number is countless!
- <sup>18</sup> If I tried to count them—they outnumber grains of sand!  
If I came to the very end—I'd still be with you.<sup>f</sup>
- <sup>19</sup> If only, God, you would kill the wicked!  
If only murderers would get away from me—
- <sup>20</sup> the people who talk about you, but only for wicked schemes;  
the people who are your enemies,  
who use your name as if it were of no significance.<sup>g</sup>
- <sup>21</sup> Don't I hate everyone who hates you?  
Don't I despise those who attack you?
- <sup>22</sup> Yes, I hate them—through and through!  
They've become my enemies too.
- <sup>23</sup> Examine me, God! Look at my heart!  
Put me to the test! Know my anxious thoughts!
- <sup>24</sup> Look to see if there is any idolatrous way<sup>h</sup> in me,  
then lead me on the eternal path!

139:12  
Job 34:22;  
Dn 2:22

139:13 Dt 32:6;  
Job 10:11;  
Ps 119:73;  
Is 44:2, Is 44:24

139:14 Ps 40:5

139:15 Ps 63:9;  
Ecc 11:5

139:16 Ps 56:8

139:17 Ps 40:5,  
Ps 92:5

139:21  
2Ch 19:2;  
Ps 26:5, Ps 31:6,  
Ps 119:158

139:22 Ps 101:3,  
Ps 139:21

139:23 Job 31:6;  
Ps 26:2; Prv 17:3

139:24 Ps 5:8,  
Ps 143:10

140:1 Ps 71:4

140:3 Ps 58:4,  
Ps 64:3; Ro 3:13;  
Jas 3:8

## Psalm 140

*For the music leader. A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> Rescue me from evil people, LORD!  
Guard me from violent people
- <sup>2</sup> who plot evil things in their hearts,  
who pick fights every single day!
- <sup>3</sup> They sharpen their tongues like a snake's;  
spider poison<sup>i</sup> is on their lips.

*Selah*

<sup>d</sup>Correction; Heb lacks *for me*. <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Correction <sup>g</sup>Heb lacks *your name*. <sup>h</sup>Correction; cf Tg; LXX, Syr.  
Vulg *painful or wicked or hurtful way* <sup>i</sup>LXX *snake poison*

139:13-15 The image of God as weaver is rare (see Job 10:11). The fact that the process seems to take place underground is even more mysterious, unless this region is a symbol for the womb.

139:16-18 *embryo*: The Hebrew word occurs only here in the OT, and its meaning isn't entirely clear. *scroll*: See Psalm 40:7. As translation notes e, f, and g indicate, the exact meaning here is hard to determine; but the basic idea is that the psalmist's life has come from and belongs to God in every way (see Ps 100:3), and that it is secure in God's care.

139:19-22 The language is shocking and violent, but the real violence starts with the enemies of the poet and God (Ps 139:20). The enemies are called *murderers* (Ps 139:19; see Ps 35:4; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3). In the strongest possible terms, the psalmist professes loyalty to God

and God's will, and the basic desire and hope is that God will act to set things right (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).

139:23-24 See Psalm 139:1. These petitions also effectively profess loyalty to God, and they may indicate that the psalmist had been falsely accused (see Pss 27:12; 35:10, 19-20; 7; 17; 26).

140:1-13 Psalm 140 is a prayer for help that contains the typical elements of the petition (140:1, 4, 6, 8-11), complaint (140:2-3, 5), and expressions of trust and confidence (140:6-7, 12-13).

140:1 *Guard... violent people*: This petition occurs again in Psalm 140:4. The psalmists are regularly the victims of destructive activity (Ps 140:2, 4-5) and speech (Ps 140:3; see Ps 4:2-5; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

140:2 See Psalms 35:4, 10, 19-20; 56:5-6; 59:3; 120:7.

140:3 *sharpen... tongues*: See Psalms 57:4; 64:3.

140:5 Ps 31:4,  
Ps 35:7, Ps 57:6,  
Ps 141:9,  
Ps 142:3  
140:6 Ps 16:2,  
Ps 28:2, Ps 31:14,  
Ps 142:5  
140:8 Dt 32:27;  
Ps 10:2  
140:11 Ps 34:21;  
Prv 17:20  
141:1 Ps 5:1,  
Ps 22:19,  
Ps 40:13, Ps 70:5,  
Ps 143:1  
141:2 Ex 29:41;  
Ps 28:2, 1Ti 2:8;  
Rev 5:8, Rev 8:3  
141:3 Ps 34:13,  
Ps 39:1,  
Prv 13:3,  
Prv 21:23;  
Mt 7:5  
141:4 Ps 119:36;  
Prv 23:1,  
Prv 23:6  
141:5 Prv 9:8,  
Prv 19:25,  
Prv 25:12,  
Prv 27:6; Ecc 7:5

- <sup>4</sup>Protect me from the power of the wicked, LORD!  
Guard me from violent people who plot to trip me up!  
<sup>5</sup>Arrogant people have laid a trap for me with ropes.  
They've spread out a net alongside the road.  
They've set snares for me.

Selah

- <sup>6</sup>I tell the LORD, "You are my God!  
Listen to my request for mercy, LORD!"  
<sup>7</sup>My LORD God, my strong saving help—  
you've protected my head on the day of battle.  
<sup>8</sup>LORD, don't give the wicked what they want!  
Don't allow their plans to succeed,  
or they'll exalt themselves even more!

Selah

- <sup>9</sup>Let the heads of the people surrounding me  
be covered with the trouble their own lips caused!<sup>a</sup>  
<sup>10</sup>Let burning coals fall on them!  
Let them fall into deep pits and never get out again!  
<sup>11</sup>Let no slanderer be safe in the land.  
Let calamity hunt down violent people—and quickly!<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>12</sup>I know that the LORD will take up the case of the poor  
and will do what is right for the needy.  
<sup>13</sup>Yes, the righteous will give thanks to your name,  
and those who do right will live in your presence.

### Psalm 141

*A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup>I cry out to you, LORD: Come to me—quickly!  
Listen to my voice when I cry out to you!  
<sup>2</sup>Let my prayer stand before you like incense;  
let my uplifted hands be like the evening offering.  
<sup>3</sup>Set a guard over my mouth, LORD;  
keep close watch over the door that is my lips.  
<sup>4</sup>Don't let my heart turn aside to evil things  
so that I don't do wicked things with evildoers,  
so I don't taste their delicacies.  
<sup>5</sup>Instead, let the righteous discipline me;  
let the faithful correct me!  
Let my head never reject that kind of fine oil,  
because my prayers are always against the deeds of the wicked.<sup>2b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>2a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>2b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>2b</sup>Heb uncertain

140:5 *net*... *snares*: See Psalms 10:9; 31:4; 64:5; 141:9; 142:3.  
140:7 The assurance here focuses on the psalmist and personal rescue, while Psalm 140:12-13 more generally affirm God's help for all victims.  
140:8-11 The petitions against the victimizers are motivated not by personal payback but by the desire for the violence to end (see Ps 140:1, 4, 11) and for things to be just and right (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).  
140:12 *the poor... do what is right... the needy*: God typically sides with those who need help (see Pss 9:18; 109:31; see sidebar, "The Poor and Needy" at Ps 82). The phrase, *do what is right*, is often translated "do justice" (see Pss 9:4; 96:13).  
140:13 *give thanks*: Being rescued is a gift, and the appropriate response is thankfulness (see Ps 107). Like other

prayers for help, Psalm 140 holds together complaint and praise, hurt and hope, turmoil and trust. It thereby shows how life in general is often experienced, but especially the shape of the lives of the faithful (see Pss 6:8-10; 13:5-6).  
141:1-10 Psalm 141 contains the typical elements of a prayer for help: petition and complaint (141:1-5, 7, 9-10), along with expression of confidence and trust.  
141:2 *my uplifted hands*: See Psalm 28:2. *evening offering*: See 2 Kings 16:5; Daniel 9:21.  
141:3-5 The request is for help to resist temptation (see Pss 73:10; 125:3; Matt 6:3). The psalmist is willing to accept guidance and correction from others (141:5). The last line of verse 4 recalls Daniel 1:8-18, where Daniel and his friends resist the temptation to eat the king's fancy food.  
141:5-7 As the translation notes indicate, the text is



141:6 2Ch 25:12  
 141:8 Ps 11:1,  
 Ps 25:15  
 141:10 Ps 7:15,  
 Ps 35:8, Ps 57:6  
 142:1 1Sa 22:1,  
 1Sa 24:3; Ps 57:1  
 142:2 3 Ps 102:1  
 142:3 Ps 77:3,  
 Ps 140:5,  
 Ps 143:4  
 142:4 Ps 31:11,  
 Ps 68:18;  
 Jer 25:35  
 142:5 Ps 16:5,  
 Ps 27:13,  
 Ps 73:26; Ps 91:2,  
 Ps 119:57  
 142:6 Ps 17:1,  
 Ps 18:17, Ps 79:8,  
 Ps 116:6  
 142:7 Ps 13:5,  
 Ps 143:11  
 143:1 Ps 31:1,  
 Ps 71:2, Ps 89:1,  
 Ps 140:6

- 6 Their leaders will fall from jagged cliffs,  
 but my words will be heard because they are pleasing.<sup>a</sup>
- 7 Our bones<sup>b</sup> have been scattered at the mouth of the grave,<sup>c</sup>  
 just like when the ground is broken up and plowed.<sup>d</sup>
- 8 But my eyes are on you, my LORD God.  
 I take refuge in you; don't let me die!
- 9 Protect me from the trap they've set for me;  
 protect me from the snares of the evildoers.
- 10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets—all together!—  
 but let me make it through safely.

**Psalm 142**

*A maskil<sup>e</sup> of David, when he was in the cave. A prayer.*

- 1 I cry out loud for help from the LORD.  
 I beg out loud for mercy from the LORD.
- 2 I pour out my concerns before God;  
 I announce my distress to him.
- 3 When my spirit is weak inside me, you still know my way.  
 But they've hidden a trap for me in the path I'm taking.
- 4 Look right beside me: See?  
 No one pays attention to me.  
 There's no escape for me.  
 No one cares about my life.
- 5 I cry to you, LORD, for help.  
 "You are my refuge," I say.  
 "You are all I have in the land of the living."
- 6 Pay close attention to my shouting,  
 because I've been brought down so low!  
 Deliver me from my oppressors  
 because they're stronger than me.
- 7 Get me out of this prison  
 so I can give thanks to your name.  
 Then the righteous will gather all around me  
 because of your good deeds to me.

**Psalm 143**

*A psalm of David.*

- 1 Listen to my prayer, LORD!  
 Because of your faithfulness, hear my requests for mercy!  
 Because of your righteousness, answer me!

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>LXX manuscripts, Syr *their bones*; DSS (11QPs) *my bones* <sup>c</sup>Heb *Sheol* <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>e</sup>Perhaps instruction; it also appears in Pss 42, 44–45, 52–55, 74, 78, 88–89, 142; cf 47:7; the root is used in Ps 32:8.

unclear. Verse 6 seems to express confidence that evil won't endure. Even so, verse 7 seems to complain that wickedness prevails for now.  
 141:8 *my eyes... God*: See Psalm 123:1-2. *refuge*: See Psalms 2:12; 142:5. Petition and trust are especially close together in 141:8b (see Ps 13:5-6).  
 141:9 *trap... snares*: See Psalm 140:5.  
 141:10 *Let... together!*: See Psalms 7:15; 9:15, where the wicked are victims of their own plans. The request is motivated not by personal payback but rather by the desire that God set things right (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6).  
 142:1-7 In this prayer for help, there are three cycles of petition and complaint (142:1-3a, 3c-4, 6-7ab), each followed by expressions of trust (142:3b, 5, 7cd). The title recalls David's situation in 1 Samuel 22:1; 24:3-4 (see Pss 3; 57).  
 142:1 *cry out*: See Psalm 107:6; Nehemiah 9:28.

142:3 *trap*: See Psalms 140:5; 141:9.  
 142:5 Precisely when all hope is lost, and there's no one to help, the psalmist trusts God. *refuge*: See Psalms 2:12; 141:8. *all I have*: See Psalm 73:25.  
 142:7 *give thanks*: the appropriate response to rescue (see Psalms 107:8; 140:13). *Then... me*: Gatherings of the righteous appear elsewhere in conjunction with the giving of thanks (see Pss 22:22-26; 116:14, 17-19).  
 143:1-12 The first section of this prayer for help moves from petition (143:1-2) to complaint (143:3-4) to a profession of loyalty to and reliance upon God (143:5-6). The second section (143:7-12) is mostly petition, but with embedded complaint (143:7, 9, 11-12) and trust (143:8, 10-12). Psalm 143 is the final of the church's seven Penitential Psalms (see Ps 6). It contains no direct confession of sin, but it recognizes universal sinfulness (Ps 143:2). The

143:2 Job 9:2;  
Job 25:4;  
Ps 130:3;  
Ecc 7:20;  
Ro 3:20

143:4 Ps 77:3;  
Ps 142:3

143:5 Ps 1:2;  
Ps 77:5; Ps 77:10;  
Ps 77:12

143:6 Job 11:13;  
Ps 42:1; Ps 42:2;  
Ps 63:1

143:7 Ps 27:9;  
Ps 28:1; Ps 69:17;  
Ps 88:4; Ps 102:2

143:8 Ps 25:1;  
Ps 25:4; Ps 32:8;  
Ps 46:5; Ps 90:14

143:10  
Neh 9:20;  
Ps 27:11;  
Ps 119:12

143:11 Ps 25:11;  
Ps 31:1; Ps 71:2;  
Ps 119:25;  
Ps 119:88

143:12 Ps 54:5;  
Ps 116:16

144:1 Ps 18:2;  
Ps 18:34

144:2 Ps 18:2;  
Ps 18:47; Ps 59:9;  
Ps 91:2

<sup>2</sup>Please don't bring your servant to judgment,  
because no living thing is righteous before you.

<sup>3</sup>The enemy is chasing me,<sup>a</sup> crushing my life in the dirt,  
forcing me to live in the dark like those who've been dead forever.

<sup>4</sup>My spirit is weak inside me—  
inside, my mind is numb.

<sup>5</sup>I remember the days long past;  
I meditate on all your deeds;  
I contemplate your handiwork.

<sup>6</sup>I stretch out my hands to you;  
my whole being is like dry dirt, thirsting for you.<sup>†</sup>

*Selah*

<sup>7</sup>Answer me, LORD—and quickly! My breath is fading.  
Don't hide your face from me  
or I'll be like those going down to the pit!

<sup>8</sup>Tell me all about your faithful love come morning time,  
because I trust you.

Show me the way I should go,  
because I offer my life up to you.

<sup>9</sup>Deliver me from my enemies, LORD!  
I seek protection from you.<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Teach me to do what pleases you,  
because you are my God.  
Guide me by your good spirit into good land.

<sup>11</sup>Make me live again, LORD, for your name's sake.  
Bring me out of distress because of your righteousness.

<sup>12</sup>Wipe out my enemies because of your faithful love.  
Destroy everyone who attacks me,  
because I am your servant.

## Psalm 144

*Of David.*

<sup>1</sup>Bless the LORD, my rock,  
who taught my hands how to fight,  
who taught my fingers how to do battle!

<sup>2</sup>God is my loyal one, my fortress,  
my place of safety, my rescuer,

<sup>a</sup>Or *my soul*; also in 143:6, 8, 11-12 <sup>†</sup>Heb lacks *thirsting*. <sup>‡</sup>Heb uncertain; MT to *you I have hidden*

psalmist's servant-posture (Ps 143:2, 12) and dependence upon God's faithful love form the basis for penitence.

143:1 *faithfulness*: a fundamental quality of God (see Pss 25:10; 100:5), as are "righteousness" (143:1, 11) and "faithful love" (Ps 143:8, 12). *righteousness*: See Psalm 5:8.

143:2 *judgment*: What the psalmist wants and needs is mercy, as the rest of the verse explains. *because . . . you*: See Romans 3:20, where the apostle Paul points to this verse in making his case that all have sinned (see Pss 14:3; 130:3).

143:5-6 *stretch out my hands*: See Psalms 28:2; 140:2. The language and image recall Psalm 77:2-3.

143:7 *My breath*: In short, the psalmist is about to die. *Don't hide your face*: See Psalm 13:1. *the pit*: See Psalm 16:10.

143:8 *faithful love*: See Psalms 143:12; 5:7. *trust*: See Psalm 4:5. *offer my life*: See Psalms 25:1; 86:4.

143:10 *into good land*: In a society focused on the land, land meant the opportunity for life, which is what the psalmist needs (see Pss 143:7, 11; 37:9).

143:12 Such requests are frequent, and they are best understood as expressions of the psalmist's deep desire that God set things right for victims of injustice (see Pss 3:7-8; 7:6; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3).

144:1-15 Because Psalm 144:10 mentions David, and because it seems to be a rereading of the royal Psalm 18 for a new time (see notes on Ps 144:1-2, 5-8, 9-10), Psalm 144 is usually categorized as a royal psalm. But this royal psalm was recast, since it seems to assume the defeat of Jerusalem, the exile, and the disappearance of the kings as rulers (see 144:7-8, 11; Ps 89). It also suggests that the former role of kings—that is, to do God's will in the world (see Ps 72)—was transferred to the whole people (see Pss 105:15; 149:6-9; see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2). 144:1-2 See Psalm 18:1-2, 34, 39, 46-47. *taught . . . fight . . . battle*: Such lessons (see especially Ps 18:34, 39) should be understood in relation to the king's responsibility to "crush oppressors" (Ps 72:4). *refuge*: See Psalms 2:12; 18:2. *subdues . . . me*: See Psalms 2:8-9; 18:47.

my shield, in whom I take refuge,  
and the one who subdues people before me.

<sup>3</sup>What are human beings, LORD, that you know them at all?  
What are human beings that you even consider them?

<sup>4</sup>Humans are like a puff of air;  
their days go by like a shadow.

<sup>5</sup>LORD, part your skies and come down!  
Touch the mountains so they smoke!

<sup>6</sup>Flash lightning and scatter the enemy!  
Shoot your arrows and defeat them!

<sup>7</sup>Stretch out your hand from above!  
Rescue me and deliver me from deep water,  
from the power of strangers, whose mouths speak lies,  
<sup>8</sup>and whose strong hand is a strong hand of deception!

<sup>9</sup>I will sing a new song to you, God.

I will sing praises to you on a ten-stringed harp,  
<sup>10</sup>to you—the one who gives saving help to rulers,  
and who rescues his servant David from the evil sword.

<sup>11</sup>Rescue me and deliver me from the power of strangers,  
whose mouths speak lies,  
and whose strong hand is a strong hand of deception,  
<sup>12</sup>so that<sup>v</sup> our sons can grow up fully, in their youth, like plants;  
so that our daughters can be like pillars carved to decorate a palace;  
<sup>13</sup>so that our barns can be full, providing all kinds of food;  
so that our flocks can be in the thousands—  
even tens of thousands—in our fields;  
<sup>14</sup>so that our cattle can be loaded with calves;  
so that there won't be any breach in the walls,  
no exile, no outcries in our streets!

<sup>15</sup>The people who have it like this are truly happy!  
The people whose God is the LORD are truly happy!

<sup>v</sup>Heb uncertain

144:4 Job 8:9,  
Job 14:2,  
Ps 102:11,  
Ps 109:23

144:5 Ps 18:9,  
Ps 104:32;  
Is 63:19

144:7 Ps 18:16,  
Ps 18:44, Ps 69:1,  
Ps 69:14

144:9 Ps 33:2,  
Ps 33:3

144:11 Ps 12:2,  
Ps 144:7,  
Ps 144:8;  
Is 44:20

144:12 Ps 128:3  
144:13 Prv 3:10

144:14 Prv 14:4;  
Is 24:11; Jer 14:2

144:15 Dt 33:29;  
Ps 33:12,  
Ps 146:5

Like Psalm 18, Psalm 2 is a royal psalm. The problem with recalling the promises of Psalms 2 and 18 is that the royal fighting has led to a crushing defeat (see Ps 144:7-8, 11).

144:3-4 The question in Psalm 144:3 recalls Psalm 8:4, but the answer here is very different from the answer in Psalm 8:5. The answer here recalls another royal psalm (see Ps 89:47, where the lament of the imagined Davidic survivor involves human transience).

144:5-8 See Psalm 18:9, 14, 16-17, 44-45. What Psalm 18 affirms that God has done, these verses pray for God to do. The switch from affirmation to petition suggests that Psalm 144 was written after the defeat of Jerusalem and the loss of the monarchy.

144:9-10 Like Psalm 89:46-51, these verses seem to be the words of an imagined Davidic survivor. He describes the praise that he will offer if God will deliver the people (and perhaps restore the monarchy; see Ps 101), as God had earlier delivered David from his enemies, according to Psalm 18. *new song*: This would be an appropriate

response to the new act of rescue that is needed (see Ps 96:1). *harp*: See Psalm 33:2.

144:11-14 The imagined Davidic survivor continues to speak, now requesting the new act of rescue that is needed and anticipated in Psalm 144:9-10. This act of deliverance never came, and the Davidic rule was never restored. So Psalm 144 seems to suggest that the former role of the monarchy has become the role of the whole people of God. It isn't surprising that the remainder of the psalm, including its conclusion in verse 15, focuses on the people and not the king.

144:13 *our barns . . . food*: It was the responsibility of kings to provide for their people, beginning with food (see Ps 72:3, 16; Ezek 34:1-16).

144:14 *no exile . . . street!* The experience of life away from the land and what happened afterward are particularly in view here.

144:15 *truly happy*: See Psalms 1:1-2; 2:12; 33:12; see sidebar, "True Happiness" at Psalm 1. Amid the setbacks of exile and the discouraging realities of the post-exilic era

145:1 Ps 5:2,  
Ps 30:1

145:3 Job 5:9,  
Job 11:7; Ps 48:1;  
Is 40:28;  
Ro 11:33

145:8 Ps 86:5,  
Ps 86:15,  
Ps 103:8

145:9 Na 1:7

145:13 Ps 10:16;  
1Ti 1:17

145:14 Ps 37:17,  
Ps 37:24,  
Ps 146:8

145:15

Ps 104:27;

Ps 136:25;

Ps 147:9;

Mt 6:26

## Psalm 145<sup>m</sup>

*Praise of David.*

- ✠ <sup>1</sup> I will lift you up high, my God, the true king.  
I will bless your name forever and always.
- ✎ <sup>2</sup> I will bless you every day.  
I will praise your name forever and always.
- ✎ <sup>3</sup> The LORD is great and so worthy of praise!  
God's greatness can't be grasped.
- ✎ <sup>4</sup> One generation will praise your works to the next one,  
proclaiming your mighty acts.
- ✎ <sup>5</sup> They will talk all about<sup>a</sup> the glorious splendor of your majesty;  
I will contemplate your wondrous works.
- ✎ <sup>6</sup> They will speak of the power of your awesome deeds;  
I will declare your great accomplishments.
- ✎ <sup>7</sup> They will rave in celebration of your abundant goodness;  
they will shout joyfully about your righteousness:
- ✎ <sup>8</sup> "The LORD is merciful and compassionate,  
very patient, and full of faithful love.
- ✎ <sup>9</sup> The LORD is good to everyone and everything;  
God's compassion extends, to all his handiwork!"
- ✎ <sup>10</sup> All that you have made gives thanks to you, LORD;  
all your faithful ones bless you!
- ✎ <sup>11</sup> They speak of the glory of your kingdom;  
they talk all about your power,  
✎ <sup>12</sup> to inform all human beings about God's power  
and the majestic glory of God's kingdom.
- ✎ <sup>13</sup> Your kingdom is a kingship that lasts forever;  
your rule endures for all generations.
- ✎ The LORD is trustworthy in all that he says,  
faithful in all that he does.<sup>7</sup>
- ✎ <sup>14</sup> The LORD supports all who fall down,  
straightens up all who are bent low.
- ✎ <sup>15</sup> All eyes look to you, hoping,  
and you give them their food right on time,

<sup>m</sup>Ps 145 is an alphabetic acrostic poem; see the note at Pss 9–10, 111, 119. <sup>a</sup>LXX, Syr, DSS (11QPs<sup>a</sup>): MT and words of <sup>f</sup>LXX, DSS (11QPs<sup>a</sup>), Syr; MT lacks these lines, but they correspond to the *nun* line in the alphabetic acrostic poem.

(see Pss 85; 126), genuine happiness will be experienced by those who look to God for help.

145:1-21 Psalm 145 is the only psalm to mention "Praise" in its title. It seems especially appropriate here, since Psalm 145 is also the final Davidic psalm in the Psalter; and David's name has been widely used in the titles of the psalms that are part of a collection known in Hebrew as "Praises." Most of the psalms associated with David are prayers for help, including those in the final Davidic collection (Pss 138–145); so again, it's appropriate that Psalm 145 shifts the mood to praise to look forward to the Psalter's concluding collection of songs (Pss 146–150).

145:1 *the true king*: See Psalms 5:2; 93; 95–99. *bless*: See Psalms 145:2, 21; 16:7; 100:4.

145:3 *great*: a word often associated with kingship (see Ps 47:2).

145:5 *glorious splendor . . . majesty*: These words also occur often in association with kingship (see Pss 145:11-12; 96:6-7, where the same words are translated as "glory," "grandeur," and "greatness").

145:7 *your abundant goodness*: See Psalm 23:6. *righteousness*: See Psalms 145:17; 5:8; 96:13.

145:8-9 The first verse of this quotation recalls Exodus 34:6-7 (see Pss 86:15; 103:8, 5:7; 25:6-7), and the quote as a whole provides details of God's goodness and righteousness (Ps 145:7). *to all his handiwork*: This line looks forward to the praise that will come from all creation in Psalm 145:10 and 145:21, and later in the Psalter in Psalms 148 and 150 (see Ps 103:20-22). The word *all* will occur again numerous times in Psalm 145:10-21, emphasizing the completeness of God's claim on the world.

145:11-13 Recalling Psalm 145:1, the word *kingdom* occurs in each of verses 11-13. This section lies very near the center of the psalm, as if the structure affirms that God's rule is central in and to the universe. The acrostic structure (see translation note x) calls attention to the first letter of each line; and reading from bottom to top (that is, from verse 13 to verse 11), the first letters of each line spell the Hebrew word that means "king," further drawing attention to God's kingship.

145:15-16 See Psalm 104:27-28. It was the responsibility of kings to provide for their people. Since God is the universal king, God provides food for every living thing (145:16; see Pss 72:3, 16; 144:13).

- Ⓓ 16 opening your hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing.
- Ⓔ 17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways,  
faithful in all his deeds.
- Ⓕ 18 The LORD is close to everyone who calls out to him,  
to all who call out to him sincerely.
- Ⓖ 19 God shows favor to those who honor him,  
listening to their cries for help and saving them.
- Ⓗ 20 The LORD protects all who love him,  
but he destroys every wicked person.
- Ⓜ 21 My mouth will proclaim the LORD's praise,  
and every living thing will bless God's holy name forever and always.

145:16  
Ps 104:28  
145:17 Dt 32:4;  
Ezr 9:15;  
Ps 116:5  
145:18 Dt 4:7;  
Ps 34:18,  
119:151;  
Jn 4:24  
145:19 Ps 10:17,  
Ps 15:4, Ps 20:4,  
Ps 31:22, Ps 37:4  
145:21 Ps 65:2,  
Ps 71:8, Ps 145:1,  
Ps 150:6  
146:1 Ps 103:1,  
Ps 104:1  
146:3 Ps 60:11,  
Ps 118:8,  
Ps 118:9; Is 2:22;  
Jer 17:5  
146:4 Gn 3:19;  
Ps 104:29;  
Ecc 12:7  
146:6 Ps 115:15,  
Ps 117:2  
146:7 Ps 68:6,  
Ps 103:6,  
Ps 107:9,  
Ps 145:15;  
Is 61:1  
146:8 Ps 11:7,  
Ps 145:14;  
Mt 9:30; Jn 9:7,  
Jn 16:27

**Psalm 146**

1 Praise the LORD!

Let my whole being<sup>a</sup> praise the LORD!

2 I will praise the LORD with all my life;  
I will sing praises to my God as long as I live.

3 Don't trust leaders; don't trust any human beings—  
there's no saving help with them!

4 Their breath leaves them, then they go back to the ground.  
On that very same day, their plans die too.

5 The person whose help is the God of Jacob—  
the person whose hope rests on the LORD their God—is truly happy!

6 God: the maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,  
God: who is faithful forever,

7 who gives justice to people who are oppressed,  
who gives bread to people who are starving!  
The LORD: who frees prisoners.

8 The LORD: who makes the blind see.  
The LORD: who straightens up those who are bent low.  
The LORD: who loves the righteous.

<sup>a</sup>Or *soul*

145:19 See Psalm 107:6.

145:20 *destroys every wicked person*: This line doesn't seem to fit well with the universalistic view of Psalm 145:9-10; but the destruction of the wicked can be understood not as God's will but rather the consequence of a person's choice to cut him- or herself off from God (see Ps 1:6).

145:21 This verse looks forward to Psalms 146–150 (see note on Ps 145:8-9). Psalm 146 begins with an individual voice praising God, and Psalm 150 ends with all creatures being invited to praise God.

146:1-10 Psalm 146 is the first song of praise in a collection that concludes the Psalter. Each psalm begins and ends with "Praise the LORD!" (see sidebar, "Hallelu-yah ['Praise the LORD!'] Collections" at Ps 113). Psalm 146 is intentionally instructional (especially 146:4-5; see Ps 100:3). Reasons for praise appear in verses 6-9, and verse 10 affirms clearly what all the songs of praise imply: God rules. Psalm 146 begins the Psalter's concluding collection, and it recalls Psalms 1–2, which introduce the Psalter (see note on Ps 146:5), as well as Psalms 96–99, which form the Psalter's theological center (see sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89).

146:1 *whole being... LORD*: The invitation to the self isn't

typical, but it does occur elsewhere (see Pss 103:1-2, 22; 104:1, 35).

146:3 See Psalm 118:8-9. To praise with one's whole being and life suggests trust, and such trust should be placed only in God.

146:5 *help*: See Psalm 10:14. *truly happy*: See Psalms 1:1-2; 2:12. As Psalms 1 and 2 also suggest, genuine happiness comes from depending upon God.

146:6 *maker... earth*: See Psalms 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; see sidebar, "God the Creator" at Psalm 8. *faithful*: See Psalm 25:10.

146:7 *justice*: See Psalms 9:4; 96:13, which associate justice with God's rule (see Ps 146:10). *oppressed*: God's work of justice is aimed particularly at setting things right for the mistreated (see Pss 9:18; 72:12-14). *gives bread*: The needy and the oppressed need food (see Pss 72:3, 16; 144:13; 145:15). *frees prisoners*: See Psalm 107:10; Isaiah 42:7; 61:1.

146:8 *the blind see*: See Isaiah 42:7, which is part of a poem about a servant trusted to do God's mission of establishing justice (see Isa 42:1, 3, 4). *the righteous*: It might seem that the righteous don't belong in this list of needy people, but the righteous in the Psalms are regularly opposed and afflicted.

146:9 Dt 10:18;  
Ps 10:14, Ps 68:5,  
Ps 147:6

147:1 Ps 33:1,  
Ps 92:1, Ps 135:3

147:2 Ps 51:18;  
Is 11:12, Is 56:8

147:4 Gn 15:5;  
Is 40:26

147:5 Ps 48:1,  
Ps 145:3,  
Is 40:28; Na 1:3

147:6 Ps 146:8,  
Ps 146:9

147:7 Ps 33:2,  
Ps 95:1, Ps 95:2,  
Ps 98:5

147:8 Job 5:10,  
Job 26:8;  
Ps 104:13,  
Ps 104:14

147:9 Job 38:41;  
Ps 104:27,  
Ps 145:15;

Mt 6:26;  
Lk 12:24

147:11 Ps 33:18,  
Ps 149:4

147:13 Neh 3:3,  
Neh 7:3;  
Ps 107:16,  
Ps 115:14,  
Ps 128:3

147:14 Lv 26:6;  
Dt 32:14,  
1Ch 22:9;  
Ps 81:16;  
Is 60:17

<sup>9</sup>The LORD: who protects immigrants,  
who helps orphans and widows,  
but who makes the way of the wicked twist and turn!

<sup>10</sup>The LORD will rule forever!  
Zion, your God will rule from one generation to the next!

Praise the LORD!

### Psalm 147

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD!

Because it is good to sing praise to our God!  
Because it is a pleasure to make beautiful praise!

<sup>2</sup>The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem, gathering up Israel's exiles.

<sup>3</sup>God heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds.

<sup>4</sup>God counts the stars by number, giving each one a name.

<sup>5</sup>Our Lord is great and so strong!  
God's knowledge can't be grasped!

<sup>6</sup>The LORD helps the poor,  
but throws the wicked down on the dirt!

<sup>7</sup>Sing to the LORD with thanks;  
sing praises to our God with a lyre!

<sup>8</sup>God covers the skies with clouds;  
God makes rain for the earth;  
God makes the mountains sprout green grass.

<sup>9</sup>God gives food to the animals—  
even to the baby ravens when they cry out.

<sup>10</sup>God doesn't prize the strength of a horse;  
God doesn't treasure the legs of a runner.

<sup>11</sup>No. The LORD treasures the people who honor him,  
the people who wait for his faithful love.

<sup>12</sup>Worship the LORD, Jerusalem!  
Praise your God, Zion!

<sup>13</sup>Because God secures the bars on your gates,  
God blesses the children you have there.

<sup>14</sup>God establishes your borders peacefully.  
God fills you full with the very best wheat.

**146:9** *immigrants . . . orphans . . . widows:* See Psalm 94:6. *way of the wicked . . . turn!* See Psalm 1:6.

**146:10** *will rule:* See Psalms 5:2; 93; 95–99; see sidebar, “Book IV and the Rule of God” at Psalm 89. *Zion:* See Psalm 2:6.

**147:1–20** Psalm 147 is the second song of praise in the Psalter's concluding collection (see sidebar, “Hallelu-yah [Praise the Lord!] Collections” at Ps 113). Invitations to praise in verses 1, 7, 12 are followed by reasons for praise that alternate between a focus on God's activity done for God's people (147:2–3, 6, 10–11, 13–14, 19–20) and God's activity in creation (147:4–5, 8–9, 15–18).

**147:1** *it is good:* See Psalm 92:1.

**147:2** *rebuilds Jerusalem:* See Psalm 51:18; Nehemiah 12:27. *gathering . . . exiles:* See Deuteronomy 30:4; Nehemiah 1:9; Isaiah 56:8. This verse suggests that Psalm 147 was written during the post-exilic period, and Book V has

been shaped to respond to the crisis of exile (see sidebar, “Book V” at Ps 107).

**147:3** *heals the brokenhearted:* See Isaiah 61:1.

**147:4** *stars:* See Psalm 8:3; Isaiah 40:26. The picture of God as creator and redeemer (Ps 147:2–3) is characteristic of Isaiah 40–66, which originated in the exilic and post-exilic eras. **147:6** *the poor:* See Psalms 9:18; 146:7; see sidebar, “The Poor and Needy” at Psalm 82.

**147:7** *lyre:* See Psalm 33:2.

**147:8–9** See Psalms 104:14, 27; 145:15–16.

**147:10–11** See Psalm 33:17–18. *faithful love:* See Psalm 5:7.

**147:12** *Zion:* See Psalm 2:6.

**147:14** *peacefully:* See Psalms 4:8; 72:3, 7. *God fills . . . wheat:* The pairing of peace and food is important; because biblically speaking, peace is grounded in provision of sufficient food for the people (see notes on Pss 67:6; 72:3, 16; 85:10, 12)

- 15 God issues his command to the earth—  
God's word speeds off fast!
- 16 God spreads snow like it was wool;  
God scatters frost like it was ashes;
- 17 God throws his hail down like crumbs—  
who can endure God's freezing cold?
- 18 Then God issues his word and melts it all away!  
God makes his winds blow; the water flows again.
- 19 God proclaims his word to Jacob;  
his statutes and rules to Israel.
- 20 God hasn't done that with any other nation;  
those nations have no knowledge of God's rules.<sup>a</sup>

Praise the LORD!

### Psalm 148

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD from heaven!

Praise God on the heights!

2 Praise God, all of you who are his messengers!  
Praise God, all of you who comprise his heavenly forces!

3 Sun and moon, praise God!  
All of you bright stars, praise God!

4 You highest heaven, praise God!  
Do the same, you waters that are above the sky!

5 Let all of these praise the LORD's name  
because God gave the command and they were created!

6 God set them in place always and forever.  
God made a law that will not be broken.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth,  
you sea monsters and all you ocean depths!

8 Do the same, fire and hail, snow and smoke,  
stormy wind that does what God says!

9 Do the same, you mountains, every single hill,  
fruit trees, and every single cedar!

<sup>a</sup>LXX, Tg, DSS (11QPs) *God hasn't let those nations know his rules.*

147:15-20 God's *word* is mentioned in Psalm 147:15, 18, and 19 (see Ps 33:4-9). It's the effective force in the operation of the universe (147:15-18), but it's also addressed personally to God's people. *rules to Israel... God's rules*: The "rules" translate the plural of a Hebrew word usually translated "justice" (see Pss 9:4; 96:13). The repetition of "word" and "rules" suggests that God's word is intended to set things right in the world, both for God's people and for all creation. Appropriately, all creation is invited to praise God in Psalm 148.

148:1-14 Psalm 148 is a song of praise that occupies the central position in the Psalter's concluding collection (see sidebar, "Hallelu-yah ["Praise the Lord!"] Collections" at Ps 113). Perhaps because of this central location, Psalm 148 offers the most complete invitation to praise in the whole Psalter, surpassing even Psalm 150:6, the final verse of the Psalms. The first section (148:1-6) invites praise from *heaven* (148:1), and the second section (148:7-14) invites praise from *the earth* (Ps 148:7). The statement, as verse 13 makes clear, is that God claims both *earth and heaven*.

148:1-6 The word *praise* occurs nine times in this section,

as compared to verses 7-14, where it occurs only four times.

148:2 *his messengers*: See Psalms 91:11; 103:20, where they also take part in praising God. *heavenly forces*: See Psalms 24:10; 103:21.

148:3 *sun and moon... stars*: See Psalms 8:3; 19:4-6; 136:8-9; 147:4; Genesis 1:16. These entities praise God by doing what they were created to do (see Ps 148:6).

148:4 *waters... above the sky*: See Genesis 1:7.

148:5 This verse summarizes the repeated invitations; and it looks forward to Psalm 148:13, which begins the same way. *God gave... they were created*: As with several of the things called to praise, this statement recalls Genesis 1:1-2:4.

148:7-14 While the word *praise* occurs often in Psalm 148:1-6, it occurs less frequently here (148:7, 13, 14). Many more things are invited to praise God in the earthly realm. The list again recalls Genesis 1:1-2:4 (see notes on Ps 148:9, 10, 13).

148:8 See Psalm 147:15-18.

148:9 *fruit trees*: See Genesis 1:11.

147:15  
2Sa 22:31;  
Job 37:12;  
Ps 12:6; Ps 33:9;  
Ps 107:20  
147:16 Job 37:6;  
Job 38:29;  
Ps 148:8  
147:20 Dt 4:7;  
Dt 4:8, Dt 4:32;  
Ro 3:1, Ro 3:2  
148:1 Ps 69:34;  
Rev 19:1  
148:2 Ps 103:20;  
Ps 103:21  
148:3 Ps 19:1;  
Jer 33:20  
148:4 Gn 1:7;  
Dt 10:14;  
1Ki 8:27;  
Neh 9:6  
148:5 Gn 1:1;  
Ps 33:6, Ps 33:9;  
Rev 4:11  
148:6 Ps 119:90;  
Ps 119:91;  
Jer 31:35;  
Jer 31:36;  
Jer 33:25  
148:7 Gn 1:21;  
Ps 74:13  
148:8 Ps 107:25;  
Ps 147:15;  
Ps 147:16  
148:9 Is 44:23;  
Is 49:13, Is 55:12

148:10 Is 43:20

148:11

Ps 102:15

148:12 Ps 8:2,

Ps 148:13;

Prv 10:1,

Prv 23:22;

Ecc 12:1

148:13 Ps 8:1,

Ps 113:4; Is 12:4

149:1 Ps 33:3,

Ps 89:5, Ps 96:1

149:2 Ps 95:6;

Jl 2:23; Zec 9:9

149:3 Ex 15:20;

2Sa 6:14;

Ps 81:2, Ps 150:3,

Ps 150:4

149:5 Job 35:10;

Ps 42:8,

Ps 132:16

- <sup>10</sup>Do the same, you animals—wild or tame—  
you creatures that creep along and you birds that fly!
- <sup>11</sup>Do the same, you kings of the earth and every single person,  
you princes and every single ruler on earth!
- <sup>12</sup>Do the same, you young men—young women too!—  
you who are old together with you who are young!
- <sup>13</sup>Let all of these praise the LORD's name  
because only God's name is high over all.  
Only God's majesty is over earth and heaven.
- <sup>14</sup>God raised the strength<sup>b</sup> of his people,  
the praise of all his faithful ones—  
that's the Israelites,  
the people who are close to him.

Praise the LORD!

**Psalm 149**<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD!

- Sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing God's praise in the assembly of the faithful!
- <sup>2</sup>Let Israel celebrate its maker;  
let Zion's children rejoice in their king!
- <sup>3</sup>Let them praise God's name with dance;  
let them sing God's praise with the drum and lyre!
- <sup>4</sup>Because the LORD is pleased with his people,  
God will beautify the poor with saving help.
- <sup>5</sup>Let the faithful celebrate with glory;  
let them shout for joy on their beds.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Or horn <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

148:10 See Genesis 1:21, 24-25.

148:11 *every single person*: The expansiveness of the invitation to praise is seen as humans are addressed. *every single ruler*: The most powerful people on earth are called upon to admit God's greater claim (see Ps 2:11-12).

148:12 *men... women... old... young*: The specific categories illustrate that the invitation to praise God is inclusive. 148:13 *majesty*: associated elsewhere with God's rule (see "greatness" in Pss 96:6; 145:5). *earth and heaven*: This phrase (that is, with earth mentioned before heaven) occurs only here and in Genesis 2:4. God claims the whole universe.

148:14 The focus on Israel in this verse shouldn't be taken as a contradiction of the universal point of view of Psalm 148:1-13. Rather, it suggests that God works through the people of Israel to achieve God's purposes for all the world (see Gen 12:3; Isa 42:6-7; 49:6; see also Pss 47; 67; 87). *the praise... faithful ones*: This could mean that Israel is to be praised, but it more likely means that Israel is to join, and perhaps lead, the rest of creation in praising God.

149:1-9 As if to develop further the role of God's "faithful ones" who are mentioned in the final verse of Psalm 148, Psalm 149 features *the faithful/God's faithful people* (149:1, 5, 9). It is the fourth song of praise in the Psalter's concluding collection (see sidebar, "Hallelu-yah ['Praise the Lord!'] Collections" at Ps 113). Verses 1-4 show a typical structure, in which invitations to praise (149:1-3) are followed by reasons for praise (149:4). Invitation to praise resumes in verse 5, but verses 6-9 are more like a call to

action, or a description of the mission of God's faithful ones. This unusual element of Psalm 149 recalls Psalm 2 and its description of the role of the earthly king (see Ps 2:8-9). In Psalm 149, the role of the king is transferred to the whole people, almost certainly reflecting the disappearance of the monarchy after 587 BCE (see Pss 89:38-51; 105:15; 144:11-14; see sidebar, "God's Anointed One" at Ps 2).

149:1 *new song*: See Psalms 33:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9. As in Psalms 96:1 and 98:1, a new song is associated with God's kingship (Ps 149:2). Given the people's new role as earthly agents of God's will (see Ps 149:6-9; see note on Ps 149:1-9), it's possible that the new song points to this new situation (see Ps 144:9, where a new song was promised to celebrate God's future action).

149:2 *Zion*: See Psalm 2:6. *their king*: See Psalms 5:2; 93; 95-99.

149:3 *with dance*: See Psalms 30:11; 150:4. *drum and lyre*: See Psalms 33:2; 150:3-4.

149:4 *the LORD... his people*: See Psalm 147:11. The pleasure God finds in God's faithful people may explain why the people are trusted with the mission described in Psalm 149:6-9. *will beautify the poor*: God characteristically cares for the poor (see Ps 9:18; see sidebar, "The Poor and Needy" at Ps 82). This verse may imply the agency of the people in beautifying the poor, a task formerly assigned to the earthly king (see Ps 72:1-7, 12-14).

149:5 *Let... with glory*: This invitation may suggest that



- <sup>6</sup>Let the high praises of God be in their mouths  
and a double-edged sword in their hands,  
<sup>7</sup>to get revenge against the nations  
and punishment on the peoples,  
<sup>8</sup>binding their rulers in chains  
and their officials in iron shackles,  
<sup>9</sup>achieving the justice written against them.  
That will be an honor for all God's faithful people.

Praise the LORD!

### Psalm 150

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD!

- Praise God in his sanctuary!  
Praise God in his fortress, the sky!  
<sup>2</sup>Praise God in his mighty acts!  
Praise God as suits his incredible greatness!  
<sup>3</sup>Praise God with the blast of the ram's horn!  
Praise God with lute and lyre!  
<sup>4</sup>Praise God with drum and dance!  
Praise God with strings and pipe!  
<sup>5</sup>Praise God with loud cymbals!  
Praise God with clashing cymbals!  
<sup>6</sup>Let every living thing praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD!

149:6 Ps 66:17;  
Heb 4:12;  
Rev 1:16  
150:1 Ps 73:17,  
Ps 134:2  
150:3 Ps 33:2,  
Ps 98:6  
150:4 Gn 4:21;  
Ex 15:20;  
Job 21:12;  
Ps 45:8, Ps 149:3  
150:5 2Sa 6:5;  
1Ch 15:16,  
1Ch 16:5,  
1Ch 25:1,  
1Ch 25:6  
150:6 Ps 103:22

the people are to glorify God (see Ps 29:1-2), but it could also suggest that the people themselves share the glory of being pleasing to God (149:4) and being given the task of doing God's will (Ps 149:6-9). *shout for joy*: An appropriate way to celebrate God's rule as king (see Pss 96:12; 98:8). *on their beds*: See translation note d. The uncertain Hebrew may suggest that worshippers sometimes spent the night in the temple (see Ps 17:15), or it may suggest that praise is to be a round-the-clock activity (see "day and night" in Ps 1:2).

149:6-9 These verses recall Psalm 2:8-9; but here the role formerly assigned to the king belongs to the faithful people. Psalm 2:8-9 and these verses are troubling, because they are so violent; but they should be heard in the context of the widespread opposition to God and God's will. Given this opposition (see Ps 2:1-3; see sidebar, "The Enemies" at Ps 3), the king's responsibility was to "crush oppressors" (Ps 72:4). This almost never happens without a struggle. To put it more positively, the king's responsibility was to establish justice (see Ps 72:1-7), and *achieving the justice* (149:9) is now the people's responsibility. In short, the people will be honored (149:9) by doing what God wants.

150:1-6 Psalm 150 concludes the Psalter's final collection (see sidebar, "Hallelu-yah ['Praise the Lord!'] Collections" at Ps 113) that in turn concludes the Psalter. It's a song of praise, consisting almost entirely of invitations to praise. Its uniqueness in this regard is appropriate for its final position. Psalm 150 serves as a doxology for Book V (see Ps

41:13), and it fittingly provides a climax of praise that concludes a book that in Hebrew is known as "Praises."

150:1 *in his sanctuary*: This could refer to the temple, God's earthly dwelling, although the next line suggests the possibility that the reference is to God's heavenly home (see Pss 29:9; 104:3). The lack of clarity may be purposeful.

150:2 Although they are part of invitations to praise, this verse also contains reasons for praise. *mighty acts*: The underlying Hebrew occurs in Psalm 24:8 (translated "powerful") in the context of the proclamation of God as king. *greatness*: also a word associated with God's reign as king (see Ps 47:2). In short, God is to be praised, because God rules the world (see Pss 5:2; 145:1; 146:10; 149:2; 93; 95-99; see sidebar, "Book IV and the Rule of God" at Ps 89).

150:3-5 Each invitation in this section includes a musical instrument, and the whole temple orchestra seems to be involved (see Pss 33:2; 149:3), as if to suggest that every possible instrument needs to be used to praise God properly. *ram's horn*: See Psalm 47:5, where God's reign as king is being celebrated. *dance*: See Psalms 30:11; 149:3.

150:6 *Let every living thing praise the Lord*: The expansive musical response of Psalm 150:3-5 isn't sufficient. The God who rules the universe (Ps 150:1-2) must ultimately be praised by a worldwide choir (see Pss 145:21; 148:1-13). The phrase *every living thing* can also be translated "everything that has breath." It recalls Genesis 2:7, and this allusion suggests that human purpose and destiny are fulfilled in praising God in community with all creatures and all creation (Ps 148:1-10).

### Figure 10.10



### 10.1

1. The auditor's report is a key document in the financial statements. It provides an independent opinion on the company's financial statements.

### 10.2 Auditor's Report

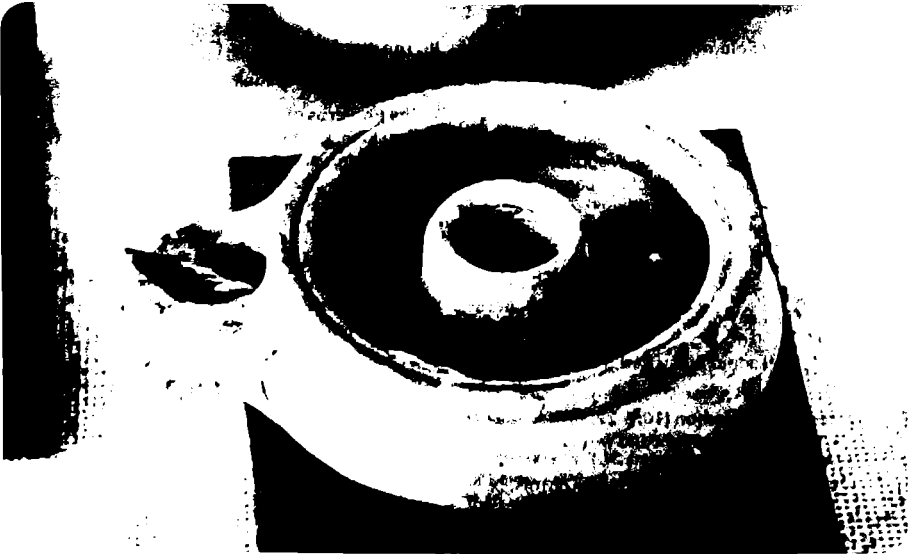
The auditor's report is a key document in the financial statements. It provides an independent opinion on the company's financial statements. The auditor's report is a key document in the financial statements. It provides an independent opinion on the company's financial statements. The auditor's report is a key document in the financial statements. It provides an independent opinion on the company's financial statements.

# PROVERBS

Proverbs 1:1 credits the book to “Solomon, King David’s son, from Israel.” Solomon was famous for his great wisdom (see 1 Kgs 3–4; 10); and according to 1 Kings 4:32, he “spoke three thousand proverbs, and one thousand five songs.” Did Solomon write some proverbs? According to the book itself, he did. Did Solomon write the book of Proverbs? The words of Proverbs 1:1 are not the only reference to an author’s words in Proverbs. In addition to Proverbs 1:1, consider the following: “The proverbs of Solomon” (Prov 10:1); “the words of the wise” (Prov 22:17); “These are also the sayings of the wise” (Prov 24:23); “These are also proverbs of Solomon, copied by the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah” (Prov 25:1); “The words of Agur, Jakeh’s son, from Massa” (Prov 30:1); and “The words of King Lemuel of Massa, which his mother taught him” (Prov 31:1). The works of many authors and editors appear in the collection. It’s likely Solomon’s proverbs are also in the collection, but the book was assembled long after Solomon’s reign.

“Proverb” is the translation of the Hebrew word *mashal*, which means “a saying,” which is often but not always based in a comparison or contrast. It appears about 50 times in the OT and can be translated in a variety of ways. When Balaam speaks to Israel in Numbers 23–24, his speeches are called *mashal* (Num 23:7, 18; 24:3, 15, 20, 21, 23—translated as “address”). The prophet Ezekiel’s riddles are also called *mashal* (Ezek 17:2). Psalm 78:2 offers a parallel for *mashal* with “riddles from days long gone.” In addition, Job states that God has made him a *mashal* of the peoples, and “like spit in people’s faces” (Job 17:6). The Greek word for proverb is *parabolē*, often translated as “parable.”

When we think of proverbs, we usually think of short, two-line sayings such as “Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only for a moment” (Prov 12:19). While a large part of the book of Proverbs consists of such sayings, there are other literary types of “saying” called “proverb” in the book as well: oracles, riddles, allegories, dark sayings, and bywords.



Clay lamp, 7th to 6th century BCE (Prov 6:23)  
Samos Museum/BiblePlaces.com

The book of Proverbs is part of the wisdom literature in the OT (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs). Most of the books in the OT relate the history of God's relationship with our ancestors in the faith. The wisdom literature, however, has a different theme and focus, one shared by all societies in all places and all times. The concern is with the human struggle to find answers to the age-old questions of life: What is the place of each of us within the greater scheme of life? How do we handle the countless relationships that we experience in life? How do we understand what appears to us to be unjust suffering?

In the ancient setting, "wisdom" refers to the human quest to understand and to organize reality, including finding answers to questions about the meaning of life, and passing on that information from one generation to another. Wisdom's roots are in families, where each generation shared insights with the other about how to live well. As societies became more structured, wisdom made its way through families and family groups to national and religious systems. Over the centuries people saw countless patterns of cause and effect. For example, one natural event usually came before another;

a particular consequence typically came after human action; the stars, moon and sun moved in set ways that affected the earth.

These observations led to the belief that the gods had set up a basic order that controls everything. Humans have to understand and maintain the order or else there will be chaos. Wisdom is the ability to wrestle with the chaos and return the world to its basic order. So the wisdom in the ancient Near East tried to define the good created order, to look at the times in history when human actions or circumstances conflicted with that order, and to tell humans how to keep or restore the order.

Wisdom is a way of thinking about and shaping reality; it includes ideas that people in a society share and what they expect from life. Wisdom writers tried to put the world into categories or groups, to measure human actions, to evaluate the status of life events and trends, and to recommend ways of living. Their literature became a particular view of reality used to structure human society. The book of Proverbs presents a common view of the way to wisdom; the path to a good life: Act wisely, live in harmony with others, obey God's commandments, and be sensitive and caring to the less fortunate.

### **I. The Proverbs of Solomon, King David's Son, from Israel (1:1–9:18)**

- A. Introduction (1:1–7)
- B. Listen, my son (1:8–9:18)
  - 1. The admonitions of the parent (1:8–19)
  - 2. The words of Woman Wisdom (1:20–33)
  - 3. More admonitions of the parent (2:1–4:27)
  - 4. The wiles of the Mysterious Woman (5:1–23)
  - 5. Further admonitions of the parent (6:1–7:27)
  - 6. Further words of Woman Wisdom (8:1–9:6)
  - 7. Final admonitions of the the parent (9:7–18)

### **II. The Proverbs of Solomon (10:1–22:16)**

- A. Words contrasting right and wrong (10:1–15:33)
- B. Words about right conduct (16:1–22:16)

### **III. The Words of the Wise (22:17–24:22)**

### **IV. More Sayings of the Wise (24:23–34)**

### **V. The Proverbs of Solomon, Copied by the Men of Hezekiah, King of Judah (25:1–29:27)**

- A. Words about right conduct in society (25:1–27:27)
- B. Words about justice and instruction (28:1–29:27)

### **VI. The Words of Agur (30:1–33)**

- A. I am too stupid to be human (30:1–3)
- B. Riddles (30:4–9)
- C. Beware the arrogant (30:10–17)
- D. Numerical sayings (30:18–33)

### **VII. The Words of King Lemuel (31:1–31)**

- A. Admonitions of the mother (31:1–9)
- B. The competent wife (31:10–31)

**Purpose of Proverbs**

- 1 The proverbs of Solomon, King David's son, from Israel:
  - 2 Their purpose is to teach wisdom and discipline, to help one understand wise sayings.
  - 3 They provide insightful instruction, which is righteous, just, and full of integrity.
  - 4 They make the naive mature, the young knowledgeable and discreet.
  - 5 The wise hear them and grow in wisdom; those with understanding gain guidance.
  - 6 They help one understand proverbs and difficult sayings, the words of the wise, and their puzzles.
  - 7 Wisdom begins with the fear of the LORD, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

1:1 1Ki 4:32;  
 Prv 10:1,  
 Prv 25:1; Ecc 1:1,  
 Ecc 12:9  
 1:3 Prv 2:9  
 1:4 Prv 8:5  
 1:5 Prv 9:9  
 1:6 Ps 49:4,  
 Ps 78:2,  
 Prv 22:17  
 1:7 Job 28:28;  
 Prv 11:10;  
 Prv 9:10,  
 Prv 15:33  
 1:8 Prv 4:1,  
 Prv 6:20  
 1:9 Gn 41:42;  
 Prv 3:22, Prv 4:9;  
 Dn 5:29  
 1:10 Prv 16:29;  
 Eph 5:11  
 1:11 Ps 10:8;  
 Prv 1:18,  
 Prv 12:6;  
 Jer 5:26  
 1:12 Ps 28:1,  
 Ps 124:3

**Avoid evil associations**

- 8 Listen, my son, to your father's instruction; don't neglect your mother's teaching;
  - 9 for they are a graceful wreath on your head, and beads for your neck.
- 10 My son, don't let sinners entice you.
  - Don't go <sup>11</sup>when they say: "Come with us. Let's set up a deadly ambush. Let's secretly wait for the innocent just for fun.
  - 12 Let's swallow up the living like the grave<sup>a</sup>—whole, like those who go down into the pit.

*Sheol* The Hebrew noun *sheol* occurs nine times in the book of Proverbs (Prov 1:12; 5:5; 7:27; 9:18; 15:11, 24; 23:14; 27:20; 30:16) and may be translated as "the grave." The noun comes from the word meaning "to be extinguished." The Bible identifies Sheol as the home of the dead, and generally locates it in the depths of the earth (see Gen 37:35; 1 Kgs 2:6; Isa 38:10; Ps 86:13). Readers in the 21st century often think of Sheol as "hell"—full of shadows, dark existence, cut off from the presence of God. But the idea of Sheol is very different from the idea of hell.

In ancient Israelite thought, all who died went to Sheol—whether they were righteous or wicked. But God wasn't in Sheol, because God is the god of the living. For the ancient Israelites, life was the time to be in God's presence, to be righteous and just, to find joy and purpose. Death, and the sure descent into Sheol, marked the end of the possibilities of life. Sheol was the opposite of life, the opposite of living in the presence of God.

"Sheol" occurs with "Abaddon" twice in the book of Proverbs (Prov 15:11; 27:20). The root of "Abaddon" means "to perish." It occurs rarely in the OT (see Ps 88:11; Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12) and is a poetic synonym for "Sheol."

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Sheol*

1:1-9:18 *The proverbs of Solomon, King David's son, from Israel:* The first of six sections of the book of Proverbs.

1:1 *The proverbs of Solomon:* For a discussion of "proverbs" and "Solomon," see the introduction.

1:2-6 *teach wisdom and discipline . . . help one understand wise sayings . . . provide insightful instruction . . . make the naive mature . . . help one understand proverbs and difficult sayings, the words of the wise, and their puzzles:* The first verses of the book of Proverbs state its purpose. Its subject matter is the ins and outs of everyday living—with humans and God. The person who follows the instructions in the book will *grow in wisdom and gain guidance* (1:5).

1:7 *Wisdom:* The Hebrew word *hokhmah* occurs in the book more than 100 times. For a discussion of "wisdom," see the introduction. *the fear of the Lord:* This phrase is a prominent feature of the book of Proverbs, occurring no less than 17 times (e.g., Prov 2:5; 3:7; 8:13; 10:27; 14:2, 26; 15:16; 19:23; 23:17; 24:21). While we tend to associate the word "fear" with a "hair standing on end" or "fight or flight"

feeling, "the fear of the Lord" is better understood as reverent awe. Indeed, the Lord is "fearsome," but not in the sense that some want to run away from or escape from God's presence. Rather, we are called to approach the Lord with a sense of awe while in the presence of the holy.

1:8 *my son:* Many of the instructions in the book are for young men who are entering adulthood (see Prov 2:1; 3:1; 4:20; 6:1; 7:1). While the admonitions of Proverbs are applicable to all humanity, "my son" reflects the original audience of the instructions.

1:10 *don't let sinners entice you:* In Hebrew, the word "sin" which occurs in 1:10, means "to miss the mark." Sin is doing or being less than we are called to, doing or being more than we are called to, and doing or being what we are called to in a misguided way (Prov 1:18; 5:22; 10:16; 11:31; 13:6, 21, 22; 14:21, 34; 19:2; 20:9; 23:17; 24:9; 29:6). In many instances in Proverbs, "sin" is directly related to "wickedness" (Prov 5:22; 10:16; 11:31; 13:6; 29:6).

1:12-15 The parent says to the child, *don't go on the path*

1:13 Prv 1:19;  
1Ti 6:10  
1:15 Ps 1:1,  
Ps 119:101;  
Prv 4:14  
1:16 Prv 6:18;  
Is 59:7; Ro 3:15  
1:17 Is 1:3  
1:18 Prv 1:11  
1:19 Prv 15:27  
1:20 Prv 8:1,  
Prv 9:3; Jn 7:37  
1:21 Prv 8:3  
1:22 Ps 1:1;  
Prv 1:29,  
Prv 3:34,  
Prv 5:12, Prv 7:7  
1:23 Is 55:7;  
Eze 33:11;  
Jl 2:28; Ac 3:19,  
Ac 26:20  
1:24 Is 65:12,  
Is 66:4; Jer 7:13;  
Ro 10:21  
1:25 2Ch 36:16;  
Ps 107:11;  
Lk 7:30  
1:26 Ps 2:4,  
Ps 37:13, Ps 59:8  
1:27 Prv 10:25;  
Is 17:13  
1:28 Job 27:9  
1:29 Job 21:14;  
Prv 1:7, Prv 1:22  
1:30 Prv 1:25  
1:31 Job 4:8;  
Prv 14:14;  
Is 3:11; Jer 6:19  
1:32 Jer 2:19

- 13** We'll find all sorts of precious wealth;  
we'll fill our houses with plunder.  
**14** Throw in your lot with us;  
we'll share our money."  
**15** My son, don't go on the path with them;  
keep your feet from their way,  
**16** because their feet run to evil;  
they hurry to spill blood.  
**17** It's useless to cast a net  
in the sight of a bird.  
**18** But these sinners set up a deadly ambush;  
they lie in wait for their own lives.  
**19** These are the ways of all who seek unjust gain;  
it costs them their lives.

### Listen to "Woman Wisdom"

- 20** Wisdom shouts in the street;  
in the public square she raises her voice.  
**21** Above the noisy crowd, she calls out.  
At the entrances of the city gates, she has her say:  
**22** "How long will you clueless people  
love your naiveté,  
mockers hold their mocking dear,  
and fools hate knowledge?  
**23** You should respond when I correct you.  
Look, I'll pour out my spirit on you.  
I'll reveal my words to you.  
**24** I invited you, but you rejected me;  
I stretched out my hand to you,  
but you paid no attention.  
**25** You ignored all my advice,  
and you didn't want me to correct you.  
**26** So I'll laugh at your disaster;  
I'll make fun of you when dread comes over you,  
**27** when terror hits you like a hurricane,  
and your disaster comes in like a tornado,  
when distress and oppression overcome you.  
**28** Then they will call me, but I won't answer;  
they will seek me, but won't find me  
**29** because they hated knowledge  
and didn't choose the fear of the LORD.  
**30** They didn't want my advice;  
they rejected all my corrections.  
**31** They will eat from the fruit of their way,  
and they'll be full of their own schemes.  
**32** The immature will die because they turn away;  
smugness will destroy fools.

with those who sin, *because their feet run to evil*. And the goal of the sinner is to *swallow up the living like the grave* (Sheol).

1:20-33 *Wisdom shouts in the street*: We hear the voice of wisdom presented as a person—as a woman. She cries out in the *public square* and at the *entrances of the city gates*, inviting the passersby to listen and embrace her words (1:23; see Prov 8:1-3; 9:3). Those who don't listen will face *disaster, dread, terror*, and even death (1:26-27, 32). Those who listen will *dwell securely* and be *untroubled by the dread of harm* (1:33). Wisdom belongs to the public and is available to all. She speaks in the most populated

areas of the city—the public square and the city gates—and calls all to heed her words. See sidebar, "Woman Wisdom and the Mysterious Woman" at Proverbs 9.

1:22 *mockers hold their mocking dear*: "Mocker" and "mocking" come from a Hebrew word that means "to scorn, scoff, brag, boast." The writer of Proverbs compares those who *hold their mocking dear* to clueless people and fools. Those who mock and scoff don't listen to others and hold their own ideas in greater regard than even the wisest person's (see Prov 3:34; 13:1; 14:6, 9; 15:12; 17:5; 19:28; 20:1; 22:24).  
1:31 *They will eat*: See note on Proverbs 13:2-4. References to eating and food occur no less than 40 times in the book

<sup>33</sup>Those who obey me will dwell securely,  
untroubled by the dread of harm.”

**Benefits of wisdom**

- 2** My son, accept my words  
and store up my commands.  
<sup>2</sup> Turn your ear toward wisdom,  
and stretch your mind toward understanding.  
<sup>3</sup> Call out for insight,  
and cry aloud for understanding.  
<sup>4</sup> Seek it like silver;  
search for it like hidden treasure.  
<sup>5</sup> Then you will understand the fear of the LORD,  
and discover the knowledge of God.  
<sup>6</sup> The LORD gives wisdom;  
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.  
<sup>7</sup> He reserves ability for those with integrity.  
He is a shield for those who live a blameless life.  
<sup>8</sup> He protects the paths of justice  
and guards the way of those who are loyal to him.  
<sup>9</sup> Then you will understand righteousness and justice,  
as well as integrity, every good course.  
<sup>10</sup> Wisdom will enter your mind,  
and knowledge will fill you with delight.  
<sup>11</sup> Discretion will guard you;  
understanding will protect you.  
<sup>12</sup> Wisdom will rescue you from the evil path,  
from people who twist their words.  
<sup>13</sup> They forsake the way of integrity  
and go on obscure paths.  
<sup>14</sup> They enjoy doing evil,  
rejoicing in their twisted evil.  
<sup>15</sup> Their paths are confused;  
they get lost on their way.  
<sup>16</sup> Wisdom will rescue you from the mysterious woman,  
from the foreign woman with her slick words.  
<sup>17</sup> She leaves behind the partner of her youth;  
she even forgets her covenant with God.  
<sup>18</sup> Her house sinks down to death,  
and her paths go down to the shadowy dead.  
<sup>19</sup> All those who go to her will never return;  
they will never again reach the ways of the living.  
<sup>20</sup> So you should stay on the path of good people,  
guarding the road of the righteous.  
<sup>21</sup> Those who have integrity will dwell in the land;  
the innocent will remain in it.

1:33 Ps 25:12,  
Ps 25:13,  
Ps 81:13,  
Ps 112:7,  
Ps 112:8  
2:1 Prv 3:1,  
Prv 4:1, Prv 7:1  
2:2 Ps 90:12,  
Ps 119:112;  
Prv 22:17  
2:3 Jas 1:5  
2:4 Job 3:21;  
Prv 3:14;  
Mt 13:44  
2:5 Prv 1:7  
2:6 Job 32:8;  
Jas 1:5  
2:13 Ps 82:5;  
Prv 4:19; Jn 3:19;  
Jn 3:20  
2:14 Prv 10:23;  
Jer 1:15;  
Ro 1:32  
2:19 Ecc 7:26  
2:20 Ps 119:63;  
Prv 13:20;  
Heb 6:12  
2:21 Ps 37:9,  
Ps 37:29,  
Ps 37:37;  
Prv 28:10

of Proverbs and are usually images for what we choose as our source of spiritual sustenance (Prov 6:8; 7:17; 9:5, 17; 12:5, 11; 13:2-4; 22:9; 25:27; 27:27).  
2:1-15 *My son*: Proverbs 2 continues the parent’s instructions to the child. Three words characterize the instructions: *wisdom*, *knowledge*, and *understanding*. In verse 4, the child is told to seek wisdom as one would a hidden treasure (see Job 28). Getting wisdom isn’t just an intellectual exercise but an ability to use what one has learned about wisdom (see intro). “Knowledge” and “understanding” reflect these two elements of wisdom.  
2:5 *fear of the LORD*: See Proverbs 1:7.  
2:16-22 *the mysterious woman... the foreign woman*:

another major character in the book of Proverbs, the opposite of Woman Wisdom (see sidebar, “Woman Wisdom and the Mysterious Woman” at Prov 9). The Hebrew word translated “mysterious” in 2:16 suggests “forbidden, strange, outside the bounds” (see Prov 5:3, 20; 7:5; 22:14). The Hebrew word translated “foreign” means “someone you don’t recognize” (see Prov 5:20; 6:24; 7:5). These are two ways of referring to the kind of woman the student should avoid. Therefore, we shouldn’t understand *the mysterious woman* and *the foreign woman* as two separate characters. We encounter this woman in Proverbs under other names as well: “Woman Folly” (Prov 9:13) and “the evil woman” (Prov 6:24). Woman Wisdom, the

2:22 Ps 52:5  
 3:1 Dt 30:16;  
 Prv 1:8  
 3:3 Prv 6:21,  
 Prv 7:3,  
 Prv 20:28;  
 Jer 17:1; 2Co 3:3  
 3:4 1Sa 2:26;  
 Ps 111:10;  
 Prv 8:35;  
 Lk 2:52  
 3:5 Ps 37:3,  
 Ps 37:5; Jer 9:23  
 3:6 1Ch 28:9;  
 Prv 16:3  
 3:7 Job 1:1,  
 Job 28:28;  
 Prv 26:12;  
 Is 5:21; Ro 12:16  
 3:8 Job 21:24;  
 Prv 4:22  
 3:9 Ex 22:29;  
 Dt 26:2  
 3:10 Dt 28:8  
 3:11 Job 5:17;  
 Heb 12:5,  
 Heb 12:6  
 3:12 Dt 8:5;  
 1Co 11:32;  
 Heb 12:5;  
 Rev 3:19  
 3:13 Prv 8:32,  
 Prv 8:34  
 3:14 Job 28:15;  
 Ps 19:10;  
 Prv 8:10,  
 Prv 8:19,  
 Prv 16:16  
 3:15 Job 28:18;  
 Prv 8:11  
 3:16 1Ki 3:13;  
 Prv 3:2, Prv 8:18,  
 Prv 22:4  
 3:18 Gn 2:9,  
 Gn 3:22;  
 Prv 11:30,  
 Prv 13:12;  
 Rev 2:7

22 But the wicked will be cut off from the land,  
 and the treacherous will be ripped up.

### Trust in the Lord

3 My son, don't forget my instruction.

Let your heart guard my commands,  
 2 because they will help you live a long time  
 and provide you with well-being.

3 Don't let loyalty and faithfulness leave you.  
 Bind them on your neck;  
 write them on the tablet of your heart.

4 Then you will find favor and approval  
 in the eyes of God and humanity.

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart;  
 don't rely on your own intelligence.

6 Know him in all your paths,  
 and he will keep your ways straight.

7 Don't consider yourself wise.  
 Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

8 Then your body<sup>b</sup> will be healthy  
 and your bones strengthened.

9 Honor the LORD with your wealth  
 and with the first of all your crops.

10 Then your barns will be filled with plenty,  
 and your vats will burst with wine.

11 Don't reject the instruction of the LORD, my son;  
 don't despise his correction.

12 The LORD loves those he corrects,  
 just like a father who treats his son with favor.

### Value of wisdom

13 Happy are those who find wisdom  
 and those who gain understanding.

14 Her profit is better than silver,  
 and her gain better than gold.

15 Her value exceeds pearls;  
 all you desire can't compare with her.

16 In her right hand is a long life;  
 in her left are wealth and honor.

17 Her ways are pleasant;  
 all her paths are peaceful.

18 She is a tree of life to those who embrace her;  
 those who hold her tight are happy.

<sup>b</sup>Heb *navel*

embodiment of knowledge and understanding, is contrasted with the mysterious woman, who speaks *slick words* (2:16) and *forgets her covenant with God* (2:17).

3:1-12 *My son*: Proverbs 3 continues the parent's instructions to the child. In contrast to Proverbs 2, where Woman Wisdom and the Mysterious Woman are the major characters, the first 11 verses of Proverbs 3 focus on the Lord and the concept of the fear of the Lord (3:7; see Prov 1:7). The child should *trust, know, fear, and honor* the Lord. The child should bind *loyalty and faithfulness* on the neck and *write them on the tablet of the heart* (3:3; cf. Deut 6:4-9). The words themselves aren't "magic," but their presence is a constant reminder of who God is and what God expects from each of us.

3:13 The focus returns to Woman Wisdom. *Happy*: The

*The Fool* The Hebrew noun translated "fool" occurs in the OT most often in the wisdom literature—some 50 times in the book of Proverbs (see Prov 3:35; 8:5; 9:13; 13:16,19; 14:7,8; 17:10,12; 19:10, 13; 23:9; 26:8-12; 29:20). The word "fool" comes from a word that means "to be slow, sluggish, or clumsy." In most cases in the OT, a "fool" is person who is easily persuaded, one who is too quick to trust another or believe that something is true. Being a "fool" isn't about being stupid but about being gullible.

Hebrew word here conveys the idea of "walking in a straight path," of "going the right way." Those who find wisdom and gain understanding know that they have "stayed the path." This is a deep-seated contentment that comes from knowing that you've done the right thing (see Prov 8:32, 34; 14:21; 15:15; 29:7; 22:9; 28:14; 29:18).

3:14-16 Woman Wisdom's value is celebrated. She is better than *silver, gold, pearls, or any desire* (3:14-15; see Prov 2:4; 8:18; 16:16; 20:15; Job 28). "Better than" sayings are common in the wisdom literature of the ancient Near East and occur 26 times in Proverbs (e.g., Prov 8:11, 19; 12:9; 16:8, 19; 17:1; 21:9, 19; 25:7, 24; 28:6). These sayings often emphasize that owning less with integrity and/or peace is better than owning much but having dishonesty and/or strife.

3:17-18 *tree of life*: See Proverbs 11:30; 13:12; 15:4. The tree



- 19 The LORD laid the foundations of the earth with wisdom,  
establishing the heavens with understanding.  
20 With his knowledge, the watery depths burst open,  
and the skies drop dew.

**Integrity of wisdom**

- 21 My son, don't let them slip from your eyes;  
hold on to sound judgment and discretion.  
22 They will be life for your whole being,  
and an ornament for your neck.  
23 Then you will walk safely on your path,  
and your foot won't stumble.  
24 If you lie down, you won't be terrified.  
When you lie down, your sleep will be pleasant.  
25 Don't fear sudden terror  
or the ruin that comes to the wicked.  
26 The LORD will be your confidence;  
he will guard your feet from being snared.  
27 Don't withhold good from someone who deserves it,  
when it is in your power to do so.  
28 Don't say to your neighbor, "Go and come back;  
I'll give it to you tomorrow," when you have it.  
29 Don't plan to harm your neighbor  
who trusts and lives near you.  
30 Don't accuse anyone without reason,  
when they haven't harmed you.  
31 Don't envy violent people  
or choose any of their ways.  
32 Devious people are detestable to the LORD,  
but the virtuous are his close friends.  
33 The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked,  
but he blesses the home of the righteous.  
34 He mocks mockers,  
but he shows favor to the humble.  
35 The wise gain respect,  
but fools receive shame.

**Love wisdom**

- 4 Hear, children, fatherly instruction;  
pay attention to gain understanding.  
2 I'll teach you well.  
Don't abandon my instruction.  
3 When I was a son to my father,  
tender and my mother's favorite,  
4 he taught me and said to me:  
"Let your heart hold on to my words:  
Keep my commands and live.

3:19 Ps 104:24,  
Ps 136:5,  
Prov 8:27;  
Jer 10:12  
3:20 Gn 7:11;  
Dt 33:28;  
Job 36:27,  
Job 36:28  
3:21 Prv 4:21  
3:23 Ps 37:24,  
Ps 91:12,  
Ps 121:3;  
Prv 4:12,  
Prv 10:9  
3:24 Ps 3:5,  
Ps 4:8; Prv 6:22;  
Jer 31:26  
3:27 Ga 6:10  
3:28 Lv 19:13;  
Dt 24:15  
3:29 Prv 6:14  
3:30 Prv 25:8;  
Ro 12:18  
3:32 Job 29:4;  
Ps 25:14;  
Prv 11:20  
3:34 Jas 4:6;  
1Pt 5:5  
3:35 Ps 73:24;  
Dn 12:3  
4:1 Ps 34:11;  
Prv 1:8  
4:2 Dt 32:2

is a common image for life and fertility in the literature and art of the ancient Near East, and "the tree of life" appears in many biblical texts (Gen 2:9; 3:22, 24; Dan 4:10-12; Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19).

3:19 The very *foundations of the earth* were established with wisdom (see Prov 8:22-31).

3:21-31 *My son, don't*: The parent's admonition to the child focuses on actions and feelings that the child should avoid. The word "don't" occurs in Proverbs 111 times (e.g., Prov 1:10; 3:5; 6:25; 20:13; 22:26; 23:4; 24:1; 26:4; 30:10). Wisdom is as much a matter of knowing what not to do as it is knowing what to do.

3:33, 35 *the wicked* and *the righteous*; *fools* and *the wise*: Proverbs uses contrasting images, primarily those of "the wicked and the righteous" and "the foolish and the wise" (see especially Prov 10-15; 21; 24). There's no middle ground. The reader must choose one path or the other.

3:34 *He mocks mockers*: See Proverbs 1:22.

4:1-9 *Hear, children*: The focus of the parent's admonitions shifts from one "son" (see Prov 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21) to "children." The subject matter, however, remains the same as in the previous chapters: *instruction, understanding, and wisdom*. The children are told to *love, esteem, and embrace* wisdom and she will *protect, exalt, and honor* (4:6, 8) them.

4:5 Prv 3:13,

Prv 23:23

4:6 Prv 2:11;

2Th 2:10

4:7 Prv 1:7,

Prv 4:1,

Prv 23:23;

Mt 13:44

4:8 1Sa 2:30

4:9 Prv 1:9

4:10 Prv 3:2

4:11 1Sa 12:23

4:14 Ps 1:1;

Prv 1:10,

Prv 1:15

4:18 2Sa 23:4;

Ps 84:7; Dn 12:3;

Phi 2:15

4:21 Prv 3:21

4:23 Dt 4:9;

Prv 3:21,

Prv 28:26;

MK 7:21; Lk 6:45

4:25 Job 31:1

4:26 Heb 12:13

4:27 Dt 5:32,

Dt 28:14;

Josh 1:7

<sup>5</sup>Get wisdom; get understanding.

Don't forget and don't turn away from my words.

<sup>6</sup>Don't abandon her, and she will guard you.

Love her, and she will protect you.

<sup>7</sup>The beginning of wisdom:

Get wisdom!

Get understanding before anything else.

<sup>8</sup>Highly esteem her, and she will exalt you.

She will honor you if you embrace her.

<sup>9</sup>She will place a graceful wreath on your head;  
she will give you a glorious crown."

### **Stay on the path of wisdom**

<sup>10</sup>Listen, my son, and take in my speech,  
then the years of your life will be many.

<sup>11</sup>I teach you the path of wisdom.

I lead you in straight courses.

<sup>12</sup>When you walk, you won't be hindered;

when you run, you won't stumble.

<sup>13</sup>Hold on to instruction; don't slack off;  
protect it, for it is your life.

<sup>14</sup>Don't go on the way of the wicked;  
don't walk on the path of evil people.

<sup>15</sup>Avoid it! Don't turn onto it;  
stay off of it and keep going!

<sup>16</sup>They don't sleep unless they do evil;  
they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble.

<sup>17</sup>They eat the bread of evil,  
and they drink the wine of violence.

<sup>18</sup>The way of the righteous is like morning light  
that gets brighter and brighter till it is full day.

<sup>19</sup>The path of the wicked is like deep darkness;  
they don't know where they will stumble.

### **Be careful about what you say**

<sup>20</sup>My son, pay attention to my words.  
Bend your ear to my speech.

<sup>21</sup>Don't let them slip from your sight.  
Guard them in your mind.

<sup>22</sup>They are life to those who find them,  
and healing for their entire body.

<sup>23</sup>More than anything you guard,  
protect your mind, for life flows from it.

<sup>24</sup>Have nothing to do with a corrupt mouth;  
keep devious lips far from you.

<sup>25</sup>Focus your eyes straight ahead;  
keep your gaze on what is in front of you.

<sup>26</sup>Watch your feet on the way,  
and all your paths will be secure.

<sup>27</sup>Don't deviate a bit to the right or the left;  
turn your feet away from evil.

**4:10-19** Listen, my son: The parent's words to an individual child continue with instruction about the *path of wisdom* (4:11) that leads to righteousness and wisdom (see Prov 3:33-35). Learning wisdom is a journey full of twists and turns, obstacles and open doors, and good and bad choices. Wisdom is found in *straight courses* (4:11); the way of the righteous is like *morning light* (4:18). The way of the wicked, on the other hand, is full of stumbling (4:16) and is like *deep darkness* (4:19).

**4:17** They eat: See note on Proverbs 1:31.

**4:18** like morning light: See note on Proverbs 13:9.

**4:20-27** My son, pay attention: The focus of these verses shifts from wisdom's journey to wisdom's speech. The child is told to hear and embrace words of wisdom and to have nothing to do with a *corrupt mouth* or *devious lips* (4:24). The words translated "corrupt" and "devious" come from Hebrew words that mean "twisted" and "crooked." We sometimes refer to a person whose words can't be

**Avoid the mysterious woman**

**5** My son, pay attention to my wisdom.  
Bend your ear to what I know,

<sup>2</sup>so you might remain discreet,  
and your lips might guard knowledge.

<sup>3</sup>The lips of a mysterious woman drip honey,  
and her tongue is smoother than oil,

<sup>4</sup>but in the end she is bitter as gall,  
sharp as a double-edged sword.

<sup>5</sup>Her feet go down to death;  
her steps lead to the grave.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>6</sup>She doesn't stay on the way of life.  
Her paths wander, but she doesn't know it.

<sup>7</sup>Now children, listen to me,  
and don't deviate from the words of my mouth.

<sup>8</sup>Stay on a path that is far from her;  
don't approach the entrance to her house.

<sup>9</sup>Otherwise, you will give your strength to others,  
your years to a cruel person.

<sup>10</sup>Otherwise, strangers will sap your strength,  
and your hard work will end up in a foreigner's house.

<sup>11</sup>You will groan at the end  
when your body and flesh are exhausted,

<sup>12</sup>and you say, "How I hated instruction!  
How my heart despised correction!

<sup>13</sup>I didn't listen to the voice of my instructor.  
I didn't obey my teacher.

<sup>14</sup>I'm on the brink of utter ruin  
in the assembled community."

<sup>15</sup>Drink water from your own cistern,  
gushing water from your own well.

<sup>16</sup>Should your fountains flood outside,  
streams of water in the public squares?

<sup>17</sup>They are yours alone,  
not for you as well as strangers.

<sup>18</sup>May your spring be blessed.

Rejoice in the wife of your youth.

<sup>19</sup>She is a lovely deer, a graceful doe.  
Let her breasts intoxicate you all the time;  
always be drunk on her love.

<sup>20</sup>Why, my son, should you lose your senses with a mysterious woman  
and embrace the breasts of a foreign female?

<sup>21</sup>The LORD's eyes watch over every person's path,  
observing all their ways.

<sup>c</sup>Heb *Sheol*

believed or trusted as someone who "talks out of both sides of their mouth," giving a picture of a mouth that is "twisted" (see Prov 6:12; 8:8; 22:5).

5:1-14 *My son, pay attention to my wisdom*: The previous chapter's advice to stay on the straight course (Prov 4:1, 27) and have nothing to do with "twisted" lips (Prov 4:24) is now tied to a specific example. We meet the mysterious woman once again (see Prov 2:16-22). Her lips *drip honey* (5:3), and she *doesn't stay on the way of life* (5:6). Walking

in her path leads to despairing words (5:12-14) and *utter ruin* (5:14).

5:5 to *death . . . to the grave*: See Proverbs 1:12-15.

5:15-19 *Drink water from your own cistern*: Giving in to the wiles of the mysterious woman is like allowing the water from one's private well to run freely in the streets. Water was, in ancient times, a precious life source and is used here as a metaphor for the enticement of sexual pleasure. As one should not waste water, so one should not allow

5:1 Prv 2:1,  
Prv 4:1, Prv 4:20,  
Prv 22:17  
5:2 Mal 2:7  
5:3 Ps 55:21;  
Prv 2:16,  
Prv 6:24, Prv 7:5  
5:4 Dt 29:18;  
Ecc 7:26;  
Jer 9:15  
5:5 Prv 7:27  
5:6 Prv 4:26  
5:8 Prv 1:15,  
Prv 2:16,  
Prv 4:15  
5:12 Prv 1:7,  
Prv 1:22,  
Prv 1:25,  
Prv 1:29,  
Prv 12:1  
5:15 Prv 5:18;  
1Co 7:2  
5:16 Ps 68:26  
5:18 Ecc 9:9;  
Mal 2:14  
5:19 Song 2:9,  
Song 4:5  
5:20 Prv 2:16

5:22 Ps 7:15;

Prv 1:31

6:1 Job 17:3;

Prv 11:15;

Prv 17:18;

Prv 20:16;

Prv 22:26

6:2 Prv 6:1;

Prv 17:18;

Prv 20:16;

Prv 22:26

6:5 2Sa 2:18;

Ps 91:3, Ps 124:7

6:6 Prv 6:9;

Prv 10:26;

Prv 13:4;

Prv 20:4;

Prv 30:25

6:7 Prv 30:27

6:8 Prv 10:5;

Prv 30:25

6:9 Prv 6:6;

Prv 6:10;

Prv 24:33;

Prv 24:34

6:11 Prv 20:13;

Prv 24:34

6:12 Prv 2:12;

Prv 4:24;

Prv 16:27

6:13 Ps 35:19;

Prv 10:10

6:14 Prv 16:28;

Mi 2:1

**22** The wicked will be caught by their own evil acts,  
grabbed by the ropes of their own sin.

**23** Those without instruction will die,  
misled by their own stupidity.

### Wise advice

**6** My son, if you guarantee a loan for your neighbor  
or shake hands in agreement with a stranger,

**2** you will be trapped by your words;  
you will be caught by your words.

**3** Do this, my son, to get out of it,  
for you have come under the control of your neighbor.  
So go, humble yourself,<sup>d</sup> and pester your neighbor.

**4** Don't give sleep to your eyes  
or slumber to your eyelids.

**5** Get yourself free like a gazelle from a hunter,  
like a bird from the hand of a fowler.

**6** Go to the ant, you lazy person;  
observe its ways and grow wise.

**7** The ant has no commander, officer, or ruler.

**8** Even so, it gets its food in summer;  
gathers its provisions at harvest.

**9** How long, lazy person, will you lie down?  
When will you rise from your sleep?

**10** A little sleep, a little slumber,  
a little folding of the arms to lie down—

**11** and poverty will come on you like a prowler,  
destitution like a warrior.

**12** Worthless people and guilty people  
go around with crooked talk.

**13** They wink their eyes, gesture with their feet,  
and point with their fingers.

**14** Their hearts are corrupt and determined to do evil;  
they create controversies all the time.

**15** Therefore, sudden disaster will come upon them;  
they will be quickly broken beyond healing.

**16** There are six things that the LORD hates,  
seven things detestable to him:

**17** snobbish eyes,  
a lying tongue,  
hands that spill innocent blood,

**18** a heart set on wicked plans,  
feet that run quickly to evil,

<sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain

their own life source to “run freely in the streets.” Thus promiscuity is to be shunned, and the student is advised to *Rejoice in the wife of your youth* (5:18).

**5:22** *The wicked . . . the ropes of their own sin:* See note on Proverbs 1:10. The phrase evokes a picture of a spider's web. The wicked spin their webs to catch others, but wickedness turns the tables on them, and they end up tangled in their own sticky mess.

**6:1-19** These verses contain four brief poems.

**6:1-5** *My son, if you guarantee a loan:* The teacher urges the student not to underwrite another's financial obligations. Such an arrangement places a person *under the control* of another and may limit one's ability to act with wisdom (see Prov 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13).

**6:6-11** *Go to the ant:* The ant is an example of the virtues

of diligent hard work. Images from nature are common in wisdom sayings (see Prov 27:8; 30:15-19; Job 6:5; 14:11-12). **6:8** *food . . . provisions:* See note on Proverbs 1:31.

**6:10** The words *sleep* and *slumber* tie this poem to the one in Proverbs 6:1-5.

**6:12-15** *Worthless people . . . guilty people:* The kind of people the student of wisdom should avoid. The Hebrew word translated *crooked* in 6:12 is the same word that was translated as “corrupt” in Proverbs 4:24. Here we learn more about the person with *crooked talk*. It seems their whole body—indeed, their very being—is caught up in the evil that they devise (6:13-14).

**6:16-19** Numerical sayings are a common literary device in the ancient Near East (see Prov 30:15-31; Amos 1:3-2:8). *six things . . . seven things* is like saying, “not only this, but

<sup>19</sup>a false witness who breathes lies,  
and one who causes conflicts among relatives.

**Danger of adultery**

- <sup>20</sup> My son, keep your father's command;  
don't abandon your mother's instruction.
- <sup>21</sup> Bind them on your heart for all time;  
fasten them around your neck.
- <sup>22</sup> When you walk around, they will lead you;  
when you lie down, they will protect you;  
when you awake, they will occupy your attention.
- <sup>23</sup> The commandment is a lamp and instruction a light;  
corrective teaching is the path of life.
- <sup>24</sup> They guard you from the evil woman,  
from the flattering tongue of the foreign woman.
- <sup>25</sup> Don't desire her beauty in secret;  
don't let her take you in with her eyelashes,  
<sup>26</sup> for a prostitute costs a loaf of bread,<sup>a</sup>  
but a married woman hunts for a man's very life.
- <sup>27</sup> Can a man scoop fire into his lap  
and his clothes not get burned?
- <sup>28</sup> If a man walks on hot coals,  
don't his feet get burned?
- <sup>29</sup> So is the man who approaches his neighbor's wife;  
anyone who touches her will be punished.
- <sup>30</sup> People don't despise a thief if he steals  
to fill his starving stomach.
- <sup>31</sup> But if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold;  
he must give all the riches of his house.
- <sup>32</sup> He who commits adultery is senseless.  
Doing so, he destroys himself.
- <sup>33</sup> He is wounded and disgraced.  
His shame will never be wiped away.
- <sup>34</sup> Jealousy makes a man rage;  
he'll show no mercy on his day of revenge.
- <sup>35</sup> He won't accept compensation;  
he'll refuse even a large bribe.

**Avoid loose women**

- 7** My son, keep my words;  
store up my commands within you.
- <sup>2</sup> Keep my commands and live,  
and my instruction like the pupil of your eye.
- <sup>3</sup> Bind them on your fingers;  
write them on the tablet of your heart.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

6:20 Prv 1:8,  
Prv 7:1,  
Prv 23:22;  
Eph 6:1  
6:22 Prv 3:23,  
Prv 3:24  
6:23 Ps 19:8,  
Ps 119:105,  
2Pt 1:19  
6:25 2Kj 9:30,  
Mt 5:28; Jas 1:15  
6:26 Prv 29:3  
6:27 Job 31:9,  
Job 31:12;  
Prv 6:28  
6:28 Prv 6:27  
6:29 Prv 16:5  
6:30 Job 38:39  
6:32 Prv 7:7,  
Prv 9:16;  
Hos 4:11  
6:33 Prv 5:9  
6:34 Prv 27:4;  
Song 8:6  
7:1 Prv 1:8,  
Prv 2:1, Prv 6:20  
7:2 Dt 32:10;  
Ps 17:8; Prv 4:4  
7:3 Dt 6:8;  
Prv 3:3

this even more . . . . The word *detestable* (6:16) is used elsewhere in the OT to speak about worship practices that are unacceptable to God. Here body parts that are used improperly are "detestable" to God (the same word is translated as "humble" in Prov 26:25).  
6:20-35 *My son, keep your father's command*: The words of 6:20-23 echo those of Proverbs 3:1-3 (see also Deut 6:4-9). The *evil woman* and the *foreign woman* in verse 24 are poetic synonyms for the mysterious woman (see Prov 2:16-22), but an additional attribute of the mysterious woman is revealed in 6:24-35. A relationship with a married woman, the wife of one's neighbor, is absolutely forbidden. The outcome of such a relationship is like being

burned by getting too close to a fire: *Can a man scoop fire into his lap . . . If a man walks on hot coals* (6:27-28).  
6:23 *a lamp . . . a light*: See note on Proverbs 13:9.  
7:1-6 *My son, keep my words*: Advice concerning the mysterious woman/the foreign woman continues (see Prov 2:16-22). As in Proverbs 3:1-6; 6:20-23, the path to wisdom rather than the path to foolishness is to *store up . . . commands and instruction . . . Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart* (7:1-3). The student is told in verse 4 to consider wisdom as a *sister* and to call understanding *friend*. "Sister" is a term of endearment sometimes used in the ancient Near East to talk about a lover rather than a biological relation (see Prov 4:6; Song 4:9). The word

7:22 Job 13:27;  
Ac 16:24  
7:23 Ecc 9:12  
7:31 Prv 4:15,  
Prv 5:8  
7:26 Neh 13:26

- <sup>4</sup> Say to wisdom, "You are my sister";  
call understanding "friend,"  
<sup>5</sup> so she might guard you against the mysterious woman,  
from the foreign woman who flatters you.
- <sup>6</sup> When from the window of my house,  
from behind the screen, I gazed down,  
<sup>7</sup> I looked among the naive young men  
and noticed among the youth, one who had no sense.
- <sup>8</sup> He was crossing the street at her corner  
and walked down the path to her house <sup>a</sup>in the early evening,  
at the onset of night and darkness.
- <sup>10</sup> All of a sudden a woman approaches him,  
dressed like a prostitute and with a cunning mind.
- <sup>11</sup> She is noisy and defiant;  
her feet don't stay long in her own house.
- <sup>12</sup> She has one foot in the street, one foot in the public square.  
She lies in wait at every corner.
- <sup>13</sup> She grabs him and kisses him.  
Her face is brazen as she speaks to him:
- <sup>14</sup> "I've made a sacrifice of well-being;  
today I fulfilled my solemn promises.
- <sup>15</sup> So I've come out to meet you,  
seeking you, and I have found you.
- <sup>16</sup> I've spread my bed with luxurious covers,  
with colored linens from Egypt.
- <sup>17</sup> I've sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.
- <sup>18</sup> Come, let's drink deep of love until morning;  
let's savor our lovemaking.
- <sup>19</sup> For my husband isn't home;  
he's gone far away.
- <sup>20</sup> He took a pouch of money with him;  
he won't come home till full moon."
- <sup>21</sup> She seduces him with all her talk.  
She entices him with her flattery.
- <sup>22</sup> He goes headlong after her,  
like an ox to the slaughter,  
like a deer leaping into a trap,<sup>f</sup>
- <sup>23</sup> until an arrow pierces his liver,  
like a bird hurrying to the snare,  
not aware that it will cost him his life.
- <sup>24</sup> Now children, listen to me,  
and pay attention to my speech.
- <sup>25</sup> Don't turn your heart to her ways;  
don't wander down her paths.
- <sup>26</sup> She has caused many corpses to fall;  
she has killed many people.

<sup>f</sup> Heb uncertain

"friend" comes from the Hebrew word "to know" and is a term comparable to "sister." Thus wisdom and understanding, both attributes of Woman Wisdom, are to be desired over any knowledge of the *mysterious woman* (7:5).

7:7-23 The parent tells about a scene observed while looking out the window of the family house. A woman, whose *feet don't stay long in her own house* (7:11), approaches a young man and attempts to persuade him to come home with her. The words of verse 19, *For my husband isn't home;*

*he's gone far away*, remind the reader of the admonitions of Proverbs 6:24-35. The young man here is about to be burned for getting too close to the fire of desire.

7:14 *I've made a sacrifice*: See note on Proverbs 21:3.

7:24-27 The parent's words, not just to an individual child, but to "children" in general, return (see Prov 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21). These verses summarize the dangers of the "mysterious woman," but she hasn't yet had her last word; the reader will encounter her again in Proverbs 9.

27 Her house is a path to the grave,<sup>g</sup>  
going down to the chambers of death.

**Wisdom's autobiography**

8 Doesn't Wisdom cry out  
and Understanding shout?

2 Atop the heights along the path,  
at the crossroads she takes her stand.

3 By the gate before the city, at the entrances she shouts:

4 I cry out to you, people;  
my voice goes out to all of humanity.

5 Understand skill, you who are naive.  
Take this to heart, you fools.

6 Listen, for I speak things that are correct;  
from my lips comes what is right.

7 My mouth utters the truth;  
my lips despise wickedness.

8 All the words of my mouth are righteous;  
nothing in them is twisted or crooked.

9 All of them are straightforward to those who understand,  
and upright for the knowledgeable.

10 Take my instruction rather than silver,  
knowledge rather than choice gold.

11 Wisdom is better than pearls;  
nothing is more delightful than she.

12 I, Wisdom, dwell with prudence;  
I have found knowledge and discretion.

13 To fear the LORD is to hate evil.  
I hate pride and arrogance,  
the path of evil and corrupt speech.

14 I have advice and ability,  
as well as understanding and strength.

15 By me kings rule,  
and princes issue righteous decrees.

16 By me rulers govern,  
and officials judge righteously.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>g</sup>Heb *Sheol* <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain

7:27 Prv 2:18,  
Prv 5:5, Prv 9:18  
8:1 Job 28:12;  
Prv 1:20,  
Prv 1:21  
8:2 Prv 9:3  
8:3 Prv 1:21  
8:4 Ps 49:1  
8:5 Prv 1:4,  
Prv 1:22  
8:6 Prv 22:20  
8:8 Dt 32:5  
8:9 Prv 14:6  
8:10 Prv 3:14,  
Prv 8:19,  
Prv 16:16  
8:11 Prv 3:15  
8:12 Prv 1:4  
8:13 1Sa 2:3;  
Ps 97:10;  
Prv 4:24,  
Prv 16:6  
8:14 Prv 2:7;  
Ecc 7:19  
8:15 Dn 2:21;  
Ro 13:1

7:27 *to the grave... to the chambers of death:* See Proverbs 1:12-15.

8:1 *Doesn't Wisdom cry out:* Proverbs 8 contains the most detailed description of Woman Wisdom in the Bible. See sidebar, "Woman Wisdom and the Mysterious Woman" at Proverbs 9. More sayings about Woman Wisdom are found in the OT Apocrypha—for example, in Sirach 1:4 and Wisdom of Solomon 1:4; 6:12.

8:2-11 *I cry out to you:* Wisdom speaks in the first person, with the words "I" and "me" repeated no less than 23 times in 8:4-21. As in Proverbs 1:20-33, Wisdom cries out *Atop the heights, at the crossroads, By the gate, at the entrances* (8:2-3) for all humans to listen, particularly the *naive and fools* (8:5). Her words, *from my lips come what is right* (8:6) ... *All the words of my mouth are righteous; nothing in them is twisted or crooked* (8:8; see Prov 4:24), warn against those with corrupt (or crooked) mouths and crooked talk. Verses 10 and 11 are reminders of the great value of wisdom as

compared to *silver, gold, and pearls* (see Prov 2:4; 3:14-15; 8:18-19; 16:16).

8:11, 19 *better than... better than:* See note on Proverbs 3:14-16.

8:12 *Wisdom states that she dwell[s] with prudence and has found discretion.* While the words "prudence" and "discretion" may suggest conservative caution, their basic meaning is "cunning" or "shrewdness." Woman Wisdom thinks carefully and examines all options before speaking or acting, but she isn't reluctant to speak or act. The Hebrew, translated as "prudence" here (see also Prov 13:16; 14:8, 15, 18; 22:3; 27:12) is translated in two other places in Proverbs as "shrewd" (see Prov 12:16, 23).

8:13 *To fear the Lord:* See note on Proverbs 1:7.

8:15-16 *kings rule and officials judge righteously* with the help of wisdom, her prudence and discretion; so these leaders ensure right order in the world and avert chaos (see intro).

8:17 Dt 4:29;  
 1Sa 2:30;  
 Prv 1:28;  
 Jer 29:13;  
 Jn 14:21  
 8:19 Job 28:15;  
 Prv 3:14,  
 Prv 8:10,  
 Prv 10:20  
 8:20 Ps 5:8,  
 Ps 23:3, Ps 25:5,  
 Ps 32:8, Is 55:4  
 8:21 Prv 24:4  
 8:22 Ps 104:24,  
 Prv 3:19; Jn 1:1  
 8:23 Ps 2:6;  
 Mi 5:2; Jn 17:5  
 8:24 Gn 1:2;  
 Prv 3:20  
 8:25 Job 15:7;  
 Ps 90:2  
 8:26 Gn 1:1;  
 Ps 90:2;  
 Jer 10:12,  
 Jer 51:15  
 8:27 Job 26:10  
 8:29 Gn 1:9,  
 Gn 1:10;  
 Job 26:10,  
 Job 38:8;  
 Ps 104:9  
 8:30 Mt 3:17;  
 Jn 1:1, Jn 1:2  
 8:31 Jn 13:1  
 8:32 Ps 119:1,  
 Ps 119:2,  
 Ps 128:1;  
 Prv 7:24;  
 Lk 11:28  
 8:34 Prv 3:13  
 8:35 Prv 12:2  
 8:36 Prv 1:31,  
 Prv 12:1,  
 Prv 15:32; Is 3:9

- 17 I love those who love me;  
 those who seek me will find me.
- 18 Riches and honor are with me,  
 as well as enduring wealth and righteousness.
- 19 My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold;  
 my crops are better than choice silver.
- 20 I walk on the way of righteousness,  
 on the paths of justice,
- 21 to provide for those who love me  
 and to fill up their treasuries.
- 22 The LORD created me at the beginning of his way,  
 before his deeds long in the past.
- 23 I was formed in ancient times,  
 at the beginning, before the earth was.
- 24 When there were no watery depths, I was brought forth,  
 when there were no springs flowing with water.
- 25 Before the mountains were settled,  
 before the hills, I was brought forth;
- 26 before God<sup>f</sup> made the earth and the fields  
 or the first of the dry land.
- 27 I was there when he established the heavens,  
 when he marked out the horizon on the deep sea,
- 28 when he thickened the clouds above,  
 when he secured the fountains of the deep,
- 29 when he set a limit for the sea,  
 so the water couldn't go beyond his command,  
 when he marked out the earth's foundations.
- 30 I was beside him as a master of crafts.<sup>h</sup>  
 I was having fun,  
 smiling before him all the time,
- 31 frolicking with his inhabited earth  
 and delighting in the human race.
- 32 Now children, listen to me:  
 Happy are those who keep to my ways!
- 33 Listen to instruction, and be wise;  
 don't avoid it.
- 34 Happy are those who listen to me,  
 watching daily at my doors,  
 waiting at my doorposts.
- 35 Those who find me find life;  
 they gain favor from the LORD.
- 36 Those who offend me injure themselves;  
 all those who hate me love death.

<sup>h</sup>Heb lacks God. <sup>j</sup>Heb uncertain

8:17 *I love those who love me*: In Proverbs 4:6, the hearer is called to "love" wisdom and in Proverbs 7:4 to "Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister.'" In this verse, Wisdom returns the love given.

8:22-31 *The LORD created me*: In one of the most beautiful poems in the Bible, Woman Wisdom describes her role in creation. She was created by God at the beginning (8:22). The word translated "created" has many meanings in Hebrew, including the ideas of "acquiring" and "possessing." Did God create wisdom, acquire wisdom, or possess wisdom? The text doesn't clearly state the relationship between God and Wisdom, allowing readers to form their own opinion. While the meaning of the Hebrew words in

8:22, 30 may be unclear, Woman Wisdom apparently had a unique and close relationship with God at creation. *I was beside him as a master of crafts*: Humans weren't there, but Wisdom was an active presence in the creation of the universe (see Sir 1:4; cf. Job 38:4, 16, 31; John 1:1-18). She *was having fun, smiling, frolicking, and delighting in the human race* (8:30-31). All of creation, including humans, fills Woman Wisdom with utter joy.

8:32-36 *Now children, listen to me*: In the closing verses of Proverbs 8, Woman Wisdom calls readers once again to listen in order to find happiness (8:32, 34; see Prov 3:13). *all those who hate me* (8:36) contrasts with the advice in Proverbs 4:6 and Proverbs 8:17 to "love" wisdom.



**Woman Wisdom and the Mysterious Woman** The female language about Woman Wisdom and the mysterious woman comes from cultural contexts that are different from those of the 21st century. The book of Proverbs may have been composed to instruct young men. The instruction would prepare the young men for life in a world of endless options and temptations. Images of “Woman Wisdom” and the “mysterious woman” as rivals for their attention and affection were effective, attention-grabbing ways to show what young men would face in the world. The book of Proverbs shows the “mysterious woman” as one who seduces, and it shows innocent young men being drawn into her corrupt ways. If we read the text for its main message, we can move beyond the picture of woman as a seducer, focusing instead on the choice between wisdom and folly, between wickedness and righteousness.

9:1 Eph 2:20;  
1 Pt 2:5  
9:2 Prv 9:5,  
Prv 23:30;  
Song 8:2;  
Mt 22:4;  
Lk 14:17  
9:3 Prv 1:20,  
Prv 8:1,  
Prv 8:2, Prv 9:14;  
Mt 22:3  
9:4 Prv 6:32,  
Prv 9:16  
9:5 Prv 9:2;  
Song 5:1; Is 55:1;  
Jn 6:27  
9:6 Prv 4:14;  
2Co 6:17  
9:8 Ps 141:5;  
Prv 15:12;  
Mt 7:6  
9:9 Prv 1:5  
9:10 Job 28:28;  
Ps 111:10;  
Prv 1:7, Prv 30:3  
9:11 Prv 3:2,  
Prv 3:16,  
Prv 10:27  
9:12 Job 22:2  
9:13 Prv 5:6,  
Prv 7:11  
9:14 Prv 9:3  
9:15 Prv 9:6  
9:16 Prv 9:4

**“Woman Wisdom’s” invitation**

- 9 Wisdom built her house;  
she has carved out her seven pillars.
- <sup>2</sup> She slaughtered her animals, mixed her wine, and set her table.
- <sup>3</sup> She sends out her female servants;  
she issues an invitation from the top of the city heights:
- <sup>4</sup> “Whoever is naïve turn aside here,”  
she says to those who lack sense.
- <sup>5</sup> “Come, eat my food,  
and drink the wine I have mixed.
- <sup>6</sup> Abandon your simplistic ways and live;  
walk in the way of understanding.”

**Wise advice**

- <sup>7</sup> Whoever instructs the cynic gets insulted;  
whoever corrects the wicked gets hurt.
- <sup>8</sup> Don’t correct the impudent, or they will hate you;  
correct the wise, and they will love you.
- <sup>9</sup> Teach the wise, and they will become wiser;  
inform the righteous, and their learning will increase.
- <sup>10</sup> The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the LORD;  
the knowledge of the holy one is understanding.
- <sup>11</sup> Through me your days will be many;  
years will be added to your life.
- <sup>12</sup> If you are wise, it is to your benefit;  
if you are cynical, you will bear it all alone.

**“Woman Folly’s” invitation**

- <sup>13</sup> Woman Folly is noisy;  
she’s stupid and doesn’t even know it.
- <sup>14</sup> She sits at the doorway of her house,  
on a seat at the city heights.
- <sup>15</sup> She invites those who pass by on the path,  
those going straight on their way.
- <sup>16</sup> “Whoever is naïve, come in here,”  
she says to those who lack sense.

9:1-6 Chapter 9 concludes the first collection of the book of Proverbs (see intro). *Wisdom built her house*: Woman Wisdom sends out her female servants to issue an invitation to the naïve and those who lack sense (9:3-4; see Prov 9:15-16) to come to her house and eat my food, and drink the wine I have mixed (9:5; see Prov 1:31). *seven pillars*: The number seven suggests that the foundation of Wisdom’s house, like the foundation of the universe, is secure and unmovable. How a person builds their “house” is an image for how to live one’s life (see Prov 14:1; 24:3; 31:26-27).  
9:7-12 *The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the LORD*: Compare with Proverbs 1:7 (see also Prov 2:5; 3:7; 8:13).

9:13-18 *Woman Folly is noisy*: The mysterious woman reappears, this time called *Woman Folly* (see Prov 2:16-22). She is described as *stupid* (9:13), a translation of a Hebrew word that suggests a gullible, easily persuaded person. In contrast to Woman Wisdom, who in Proverbs 8:12, “dwell[s] with prudence” and “discretion” and therefore thinks carefully and examines all options before speaking or acting, the mysterious woman believes every word she hears and acts impulsively. *Woman Folly sits at the city heights* and invites the naïve and those who lack sense into her house to drink stolen water and eat food in secret (9:14, 16-17; see Prov 1:31). The beginning and end of Proverbs 9

9:17 Prv 20:17

9:18 Prv 5:5,  
Prv 7:2710:1 Prv 1:1,  
Prv 15:20,  
Prv 17:21,  
Prv 17:25,  
Prv 19:1310:2 Prv 11:4,  
Prv 11:6,  
Prv 12:28,  
Prv 21:610:3 Ps 34:9,  
Ps 34:1010:4 Prv 12:24,  
Prv 13:4,  
Prv 21:510:5 Gn 2:15;  
Prv 6:6, Prv 6:8,  
Prv 12:11,  
Prv 19:26

10:6 Prv 10:11

10:7 Job 18:17;  
Ps 9:5, Ps 9:6,  
Ps 109:13,  
Ps 112:6

10:8 Mt 7:24

10:9 Prv 28:18;  
Is 33:15, Is 33:1610:10 Ps 35:19;  
Prv 6:13,  
Prv 10:8

17 "Stolen water is sweet;  
food eaten in secret is pleasant."

18 But they don't know that the dead are there;  
her guests are in the depths of the grave.<sup>a</sup>

### Proverbs of Solomon

**10** The proverbs of Solomon:  
A wise child makes a father glad,  
but a foolish child brings sorrow to his mother.

<sup>2</sup> The treasure of the wicked won't profit them,  
but righteousness rescues people from death.

<sup>3</sup> The LORD doesn't let the righteous starve,  
but he rejects the desires of the wicked.

<sup>4</sup> Laziness brings poverty;  
hard work makes one rich.

<sup>5</sup> A wise son harvests in the summer;  
a disgraceful son sleeps right through the harvest.

<sup>6</sup> Blessings cover the head of the righteous,  
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

<sup>7</sup> The memory of the righteous is a blessing,  
but the name of the wicked rots.

<sup>8</sup> The skilled mind accepts commands,  
but a foolish talker is ruined.

<sup>9</sup> Those who walk in innocence walk with confidence,  
but those on crooked paths will be found out.

<sup>10</sup> Those who wink an eye bring trouble;  
those who speak foolishly are ruined.

<sup>11</sup> The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,  
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

<sup>a</sup>Heb Sheol

paint a clear contrast between Woman Wisdom and Woman Folly (the mysterious woman). Both cry out in the public places of the city, inviting the naïve and "those who lack sense" to eat with them. But Woman Wisdom offers "food" and "wine that she has mixed" (that is, understanding), while the mysterious woman offers "stolen water" and "food eaten in secret" (that is, deception).

9:18 *the depths of the grave*: See Proverbs 1:12-15.

10:1-22:16 *The proverbs of Solomon*: Chapter 10 begins the second section of the book of Proverbs, which carries a title that attributes the sayings to King Solomon (see intro.). The focus shifts from Woman Wisdom and the dangers of the mysterious woman to two-line wisdom sayings that are sometimes called "aphorisms." The ancient sages believed that the world was created to become a good, orderly place (Gen 1:31), and that humans are responsible for maintaining that order.

10:1-15:33 Most of the wisdom sayings in the first half of this section are contrasting statements, such as *Hate stirs up conflict, but love covers all offenses* (10:12); *The wages of the righteous lead to life; the earnings of the wicked lead to sin* (10:16). The major characters in these sayings are the wise and the foolish, on the one hand, and the wicked and righteous, on the other (see Prov 3:33-35). Thirteen of these sayings contrast the wise and foolish (see 10:1, 14; 12:15; 14:7), while 36 contrast the righteous and the wicked (see 10:2, 20, 28; 11:10; 12:3; 15:8). A number of sayings mix and match the contrasts. In 10:21, for example, the righteous person is contrasted with the fool, and in 10:32, the wise person is contrasted with the wicked.

10:1 *A wise child makes a father glad*: This saying ties the second section of Solomon's proverbs to the first section by continuing the theme of relationship between child as student and father and mother as instructors (see Prov 1:8, 10, 21; 3:11; 6:1). The two themes, wisdom and foolishness, appear as characters in other sayings.

10:2-3 *The treasure of the wicked*: The righteous and the wicked are introduced.

10:4-5 *Laziness brings poverty*: The virtue of hard work is another major theme of Proverbs 10-15 (see Prov 10:26; 12:11, 24; 14:23; 18:9; 19:15; 20:4; 21:25-26; 24:30; 26:13-16).

10:6, 11 *the mouth of the wicked . . . The mouth of the righteous*: References to the mouth, lips, and tongue occur in the book of Proverbs 90 times, 23 times in chapters 10-15 (see Prov 10:31; 12:19; 13:3; 14:3; 15:7). In addition, references to words and various types of speech occur 21 times in these chapters (see Prov 10:19; 11:9, 12, 18; 15:1). Words are a powerful commodity in human relationships—the source of much good and much harm, and the organs of speech are the targets of many proverbs. The mouth of the righteous one is a *fountain of life* (Prov 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22; see also Jer 2:13; 17:13; Rev 21:6), while the mouth of the wicked one *conceals violence* (10:6, 11).

10:9 *Those who walk in innocence*: The path one chooses in life is a prominent theme in Proverbs (10:10; see Prov 2:15; 4:26; 6:23; 8:2; 9:15; 11:5; 13:6; 16:17; 21:2; 28:10). In Proverbs 1:15, the son is warned to avoid the path of sinners, in 2:8 advised to stay on "the paths of justice," and in 4:11-12 told that if one stays on the path of wisdom, his walk won't be hindered.

*The Wealthy and the Poor* The words “wealth,” “wealthy,” “riches,” and “rich” occur 45 times in the book of Proverbs (see Prov 3:9; 6:31; 10:4; 13:7, 11; 14:24; 18:23; 21:17; 23:5; 28:8; 29:3; 30:8), and the words “poor” and “poverty” occur the same number of times (see Prov 10:4, 15; 14:31; 19:17; 22:9, 16; 28:27; 30:8; 31:20). Proverbs presents a mixed picture of the relationship between the two. According to Proverbs 10:15, the riches of the wealthy protect them, while the poverty of the poor ruins them (see also Prov 14:20; 19:4, 7; 22:7). But Proverbs 19:17 praises those who are gracious to the poor (see also Prov 14:31; 21:13; 22:9, 16). In Proverbs 22:2, the teacher states, “The rich and the poor have this in common: the LORD made them both.” And in Proverbs 28:8, we read, “Those who become rich through high interest rates gather money for those who are generous to the poor.” Such sayings reflect the changing nature of human relationships and proverbial wisdom (see Prov 26:4-5). Is wealth always to be celebrated and poverty criticized? Are some folks poor through no fault of their own? Is a lack of generosity to be praised or criticized? One’s place in the journey of life determines the answers to such questions. A single proverb isn’t appropriate for every circumstance. According to the book of Proverbs, neither poverty nor wealth is given high status in God’s eyes, except as they have to do with one’s pursuit of wisdom.

10:12 Prv 17:9;  
1 Pt 4:8  
10:14 Prv 10:8;  
Prv 18:3;  
Prv 18:7  
10:15 Ps 52:7;  
Prv 18:11;  
Prv 19:7  
10:17 Prv 6:23;  
Prv 12:1;  
Prv 15:10  
10:18 Ps 101:5;  
Prv 26:24  
10:19 Prv 17:27;  
Prv 17:28;  
Jas 1:19, Jas 3:2  
10:20 Prv 8:19  
10:21 Hos 4:6  
10:24 Ps 37:4;  
Ps 145:19;  
Is 66:4; 1 Jn 5:14,  
1 Jn 5:15  
10:25 Ps 58:9;  
Prv 1:27;  
Prv 12:3,  
Prv 12:7;  
Mt 7:24  
10:26 Is 65:5  
10:27 Job 15:32;  
Ps 55:23; Prv 3:2,  
Prv 9:11

- 12 Hate stirs up conflict,  
but love covers all offenses.
- 13 Wisdom is found on the lips of those who have understanding,  
but there is a rod for the back of those with no sense.
- 14 The wise store up knowledge,  
but the mouth of a fool brings on ruin.
- 15 The riches of the wealthy are their strong city;  
the ruin of the poor is their poverty.
- 16 The wages of the righteous lead to life;  
the earnings of the wicked lead to sin.
- 17 Those who heed instruction are on the way to life,  
but those who ignore correction lose their way.
- 18 Lying lips conceal hate,  
and those who spread slander are fools.
- 19 With lots of words comes wrongdoing,  
but the wise restrain their lips.
- 20 The tongue of the righteous is choice silver,  
but the heart of the wicked lacks value.
- 21 The lips of the righteous nourish many people,  
but fools who lack sense will die.
- 22 The LORD’s blessing makes a person rich,  
and no trouble is added to it.
- 23 Fools enjoy vile deeds,  
but those with understanding take pleasure in wisdom.
- 24 What the wicked dread will come on them,  
but what the righteous desire will be given to them.
- 25 After a whirlwind passes by, the wicked are no more,  
but the righteous stand firm forever.
- 26 Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes,  
so are lazy people to those who authorize them.
- 27 The fear of the LORD increases one’s life,  
but the years of the wicked will be cut short.
- 28 The expectations of the righteous result in joy,  
but the hopes of the wicked will perish.
- 29 The path of the LORD is a refuge for the innocent  
and ruin for those who do evil.

10:15 *the wealthy... the poor*: The wealthy and the poor are recurring characters.

10:16 *the earnings of the wicked lead to sin*: See note on Proverbs 1:10.

10:18 *Lying lips*: See note on Proverbs 10:6, 11.

10:26 *Like vinegar to the teeth*: a vivid picture of irritation to the senses. Images from everyday life and nature are used in the wisdom sayings.

10:27 *The fear of the LORD increases one’s life*: A prominent theme in Proverbs 1–9 (Prov 1:7; 2:5; 3:7; 8:13; 9:10) is also

10:31 Ps 37:30;  
Prv 10:13

11:1 Lv 19:35,  
Lv 19:36;  
Prv 16:11,  
Prv 20:10,  
Prv 20:23

11:3 Prv 11:5,  
Prv 13:6

11:4 Gn 7:1;  
Prv 10:2;  
Eze 7:19;  
Zep 1:18

11:5 Prv 13:6

11:13 Lv 19:16;  
Prv 20:19,  
Prv 25:9,  
Prv 26:20

11:14 Prv 15:22,  
Prv 20:18,  
Prv 24:6

11:15 Prv 6:1,  
Prv 17:18,  
Prv 22:26,  
Prv 22:27

11:17 Mt 5:7,  
Mt 25:34;  
Jas 2:13

11:18 Ps 126:5;  
Hos 10:12;  
Ga 6:8, Ga 6:9;  
Jas 3:18

11:20 1 Ch  
29:17; Prv 6:16,  
Prv 12:22

11:21 Ps 112:2;  
Prv 16:5

- 30** The righteous will never be shaken,  
but the wicked won't dwell in the land.
- 31** The mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom,  
but the twisted tongue will be cut off.
- 32** The lips of the wise know what is acceptable,  
but the mouth of the wicked knows only what is perverse.
- 11** The LORD detests dishonest scales,  
but delights in an accurate weight.
- 1** When pride comes, so does shame,  
but wisdom brings humility.
- 3** Integrity guides the virtuous,  
but dishonesty ruins the treacherous.
- 4** Riches don't help in the day of wrath,  
but righteousness rescues from death.
- 5** The righteousness of the innocent makes their path straight,  
but the wicked fall in their wickedness.
- 6** Those who do right are saved by their righteousness,  
but the untrustworthy are caught by their own desires.
- 7** When the wicked die, their hope perishes.  
Yes, any hope based on money perishes.
- 8** The righteous are saved from distress,  
and the wicked take their place.
- 9** The godless destroy their neighbors by their words,  
but the righteous are saved by their knowledge.
- 10** When the righteous succeed, a city rejoices;  
when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.
- 11** A city is honored by the blessing of the virtuous;  
it is destroyed by the words of the wicked.
- 12** Whoever despises their neighbor lacks sense;  
a sensible person keeps quiet.
- 13** A slanderer walks around revealing secrets,  
but a trustworthy person keeps a confidence.
- 14** Without guidance, a people will fall,  
but there is victory with many counselors.
- 15** Guaranteeing the debt of a stranger brings big trouble,  
but the one who refuses to shake hands will be secure.
- 16** A gracious woman gains honor;  
violent men gain only wealth.
- 17** Kind persons benefit themselves,  
but cruel people harm themselves.
- 18** The wicked earn false wages,  
but those who sow righteousness receive a true reward.
- 19** The righteous are headed toward life,  
but those who pursue evil, toward death.
- 20** The LORD detests a crooked heart,  
but he favors those whose path is innocent.
- 21** The evil person will surely not go unpunished,  
but the children of the righteous will escape.

found in Proverbs 10–15. Fear or reverence also leads to a “fountain of life” (Prov 10:11; 13:14) and “is wise instruction” (Prov 15:33).

10:31–32 *The mouth of the righteous...the twisted tongue... The lips of the wise...the mouth of the wicked.* See Proverbs 4:20–27; 10:6, 11.

11:1, 3 *The Lord detests dishonest scales:* Integrity in everyday matters is a mark of the wise and righteous person. Corrupt merchants sometimes used *scales* and *weight* to cheat customers. In the teaching of Leviticus called the “Holiness Code,” the people are instructed, “You must have

accurate scales and accurate weights” (Lev 19:36). People who are in awe of the Lord (because “I am the Lord your God”) won’t cheat each other. See also Proverbs 16:11; 20:23; 21:2.

11:9, 12 *The godless destroy their neighbors:* Destroying or despising one’s neighbor isn’t sensible for a person with integrity (see Prov 3:28–29; 12:26; 16:29; 21:10; 25:8–9, 17–18).

11:15 *Guaranteeing the debt of a stranger:* See note on Proverbs 6:1–5.

11:16 *A gracious woman gains honor:* Four sayings about women occur in Proverbs 10–15 (cf. Prov 11: 22; 12:4; 14:1).

- <sup>22</sup> Like a gold ring in a pig's nose  
is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion.
- <sup>23</sup> The desires of the righteous end up well,  
but the expectations of the wicked bring wrath.
- <sup>24</sup> Those who give generously receive more,  
but those who are stingy with what is appropriate will grow needy.
- <sup>25</sup> Generous persons will prosper;  
those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.
- <sup>26</sup> People curse those who hoard grain,  
but they bless those<sup>1</sup> who sell it.
- <sup>27</sup> Those who look for good find favor,  
but those who seek evil—it will come to them.
- <sup>28</sup> Those who trust in their wealth will wither,  
but the righteous will thrive like leafy trees.
- <sup>29</sup> Those who trouble their family will inherit the wind.  
The fool will be servant to the wise.
- <sup>30</sup> The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,  
and the wise gather lives.<sup>m</sup>
- <sup>31</sup> If the righteous receive their due on earth,  
how much more the wicked and sinners?

11:22 Prv 31:30;  
Is 3:21

11:23 Prv 10:28,  
Prv 11:7,  
Prv 12:5; Ro 2:8,  
Ro 2:9

11:24 Ps 112:9;  
Prv 19:17;  
Lk 6:38

11:25 Prv 28:27;  
Is 32:8, Is 58:10;  
2Co 9:6

11:26 Job 29:13

11:30 Prv 3:18;  
Dn 12:3;  
1Co 9:19;  
Jas 5:20

11:31 2Sa 22:25;  
Prv 13:21;  
Jer 25:29;  
1Pl 4:18

12:2 Prv 8:35

12:4 Prv 14:30,  
Prv 18:22,  
Prv 19:14,  
Prv 31:10

12:5 Prv 11:23

12:6 Prv 1:11,  
Prv 14:3

12:7 Prv 10:25

**12** Those who love discipline love knowledge,  
and those who hate correction are stupid.

- <sup>2</sup> The LORD favors good people,  
but he condemns schemers.
- <sup>3</sup> No one is established by wicked acts,  
but the roots of the righteous can't be disturbed.
- <sup>4</sup> A strong woman is a crown to her husband,  
but a disgraceful woman is like rot in his bones.
- <sup>5</sup> The plans of the righteous are just,  
but the guidance of the wicked is deceptive.
- <sup>6</sup> The words of the wicked are a deathtrap,  
but the speech of those who do right rescues them.
- <sup>7</sup> The wicked are destroyed and are no more,  
but the family of the righteous will endure.
- <sup>8</sup> A person is praised for his insight,  
but a warped mind leads to contempt.
- <sup>9</sup> Better to be held in low regard and have a servant  
than to be conceited and lack food.

<sup>1</sup>Or the heads of those <sup>m</sup>Or LXX, Syr violence takes lives away

11:24-26 *Those who give generously*: In addition to integrity in everyday matters (Prov 11:1, 3) and relationships with neighbors (Prov 11:9, 12), generosity is a mark of wise and righteous persons. Such persons will be *refreshed* (11:25) and blessed (11:26).

11:28 *Those who trust in their wealth*: This verse continues the nearby themes of dealing with integrity and acting generously. Those who *trust in their wealth* feel totally secure. They think they don't need the support of their communities, and they certainly don't concern themselves with those less well off than themselves (see Prov 10:15). Such people *will wither*. They have no roots in their larger society. They don't stay connected. *the righteous*, however, understand the importance of community relationships. They are rooted in their communities, interconnected to the goings-on, and so they *will thrive like leafy trees* (see Ps 1).

11:30 *a tree of life*: See note on Proverbs 3:17-18.

11:31 *the wicked and sinners*: See note on Proverbs 1:10.

12:4 *A strong woman*: The Hebrew words translated *strong*

*woman* in 12:4 are the same words that are translated in Proverbs 31:10 as "competent wife." Why such different translations? First, the Hebrew word for "woman" is the same as the Hebrew word for "wife," just as Hebrew uses one word for "man" and "husband." Second, the word translated in Proverbs 12:4 and 31:10 as "strong" and "competent" has a basic meaning of "strength" and "power," often military power (Deut 3:18; Judg 21:10; 2 Sam 2:7). The *strong woman* in 12:4 is contrasted with the *disgraceful woman*, that is, one who acts shamefully. According to Proverbs 11:16, "honor" comes to "A gracious woman," in contrast to "only wealth" that comes to "violent men" (see Prov 11:28). Being gracious may not be the most immediately rewarding financial move, but dealing with integrity with others shows more wisdom than does gaining wealth at any expense.

12:6 *words . . . speech*: See note on Proverbs 10:6, 11.

12:9 *Better . . . than*: See note on Proverbs 3:14-16. *lack food*: See note on Proverbs 1:31.

12:10 Dt 25:4

12:11 Prv 20:13,  
Prv 28:19

12:15 Prv 3:7,

Prv 14:12,

Prv 16:2,

Prv 21:2

12:16 Prv 27:3,

Prv 29:11

12:20 Prv 26:24;

Mt 5:9; Ro 14:19

12:22 Prv 6:17,

Prv 11:1,

Prv 11:20,

Rev 22:15

12:23 Prv 10:14,

Prv 10:19,

Prv 11:13,

Prv 13:16,

Prv 15:2

12:28 Prv 10:2,

Prv 11:19

13:1 Prv 1:22

13:3 Prv 18:7,

Prv 18:21,

Prv 21:23;

Jas 3:2

13:4 Prv 10:4,

Prv 21:25

- <sup>10</sup>The righteous care about their livestock's needs,  
but even the compassion of the wicked is cruel.
- <sup>11</sup>Those who work their land will have plenty to eat,  
but those who engage in empty pursuits have no sense.
- <sup>12</sup>Desiring evil is a trap for the wicked,  
but the root of the righteous endures.<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>13</sup>The wicked are trapped by the transgressions of their lips,  
but the righteous escape from distress.
- <sup>14</sup>From the fruit of their speech, people are well satisfied;  
their work results in reward.
- <sup>15</sup>Fools see their own way as right,  
but the wise listen to advice.
- <sup>16</sup>Fools reveal their anger right away,  
but the shrewd hide their contempt.
- <sup>17</sup>Those who state the truth speak justly,  
but a false witness deceives.
- <sup>18</sup>Some chatter on like a stabbing sword,  
but a wise tongue heals.
- <sup>19</sup>Truthful lips endure forever,  
but a lying tongue lasts only for a moment.
- <sup>20</sup>Deceit is in the heart of those who plan evil,  
but there is joy for those who advise peace.
- <sup>21</sup>No harm happens to the righteous,  
but the wicked receive their fill of trouble.
- <sup>22</sup>The LORD detests false lips;  
he favors those who do what is true.
- <sup>23</sup>The shrewd conceal their knowledge,  
but the heart of fools proclaims their stupidity.
- <sup>24</sup>A hard worker is in charge,  
while a lazy one will be sentenced to hard labor.
- <sup>25</sup>Anxiety leads to depression,  
but a good word encourages.
- <sup>26</sup>The righteous offer guidance to their neighbors,<sup>b</sup>  
but the path of the wicked makes them wander.
- <sup>27</sup>The lazy don't roast<sup>c</sup> their prey,  
but hard workers receive precious riches.
- <sup>28</sup>The way of the righteous leads to life,  
but the detestable<sup>d</sup> path leads to death.
- 13** A wise son listens to<sup>e</sup> the discipline of his father,  
but a mocker doesn't listen to correction.
- <sup>2</sup>People eat well from the fruit of their words,  
but the treacherous have an appetite only for violence.
- <sup>3</sup>People who watch their mouths guard their lives,  
but those who open their lips are ruined.
- <sup>4</sup>The lazy have strong desires but receive nothing;  
the appetite of the diligent is satisfied.

<sup>a</sup>Or gives <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>LXX; MT the path of the trail <sup>e</sup>Heb lacks listens to.

12:10 *their livestock's needs*: Humans are part of God's good creation and are given the task of caring for it (see Gen 1:28; Prov 27:23-27).

12:11 *plenty to eat*: See note on Proverbs 1:31. *those who engage in empty pursuits*: This verse is similar to Proverbs 28:19, except for the last line. Here worthless pursuits come from a lack of sense, while in 28:19 such pursuits result in "poverty."

12:16, 23 *the shrewd*: See note on Proverbs 8:12.

12:18 *like a stabbing sword*: The power of the tongue is a recurring theme in Proverbs. It can be choice silver (Prov

10:20); it can lie (Prov 10:19); it can enhance knowledge (Prov 15:2); it can be like a stabbing sword (12:18); and it can heal (12:18). In many instances in human relationships, words have greater effects than actions. See note on Proverbs 10:6, 11.

12:26, 28 *the path of the wicked . . . the detestable path*: See note on Proverbs 10:9.

13:1 *but a mocker*: See note on Proverbs 1:22.

13:2-4 *People eat well . . . the treacherous have an appetite*: References to eating (Prov 13:2; see note on Prov 13:1) and the appetite (Prov 13:2, 4; see Prov 16:26; 23:2) connect to

- <sup>5</sup>The righteous hate false words,  
but the wicked create disgust and scorn.
- <sup>6</sup>Righteousness guards the innocent on the path,  
but wickedness misleads sinners.
- <sup>7</sup>Some pretend to be rich but have nothing,  
while others pretend to be poor, but have great riches.
- <sup>8</sup>Wealth can ransom a person's life,  
but the poor don't even receive threats.
- <sup>9</sup>The light of the righteous rejoices,  
but the lamp of the wicked goes out.
- <sup>10</sup>The empty-headed cause conflict out of pride;  
those who take advice are wise.
- <sup>11</sup>Riches gotten quickly<sup>a</sup> will dwindle,  
but those who acquire them gradually become wealthy.
- <sup>12</sup>Hope delayed makes the heart sick;  
longing fulfilled is a tree of life.
- <sup>13</sup>Trouble will come on those who despise a word,  
but those who respect the commandment will be rewarded.
- <sup>14</sup>The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life,  
turning a person away from deathtraps.
- <sup>15</sup>Good insight brings favor,  
but the way of the faithless is their ruin.<sup>b</sup>
- <sup>16</sup>The prudent all act intelligently,  
but fools display their stupidity.
- <sup>17</sup>Wicked messengers fall into trouble,  
but a reliable one brings healing.
- <sup>18</sup>Poverty and shame come to those who don't care about instruction;  
honor belongs to those who heed correction.
- <sup>19</sup>A desire fulfilled is pleasant,  
but fools find deviating from evil disgusting.
- <sup>20</sup>Walk with wise people and become wise;  
befriend fools and get in trouble.
- <sup>21</sup>Trouble pursues sinners,  
but good things reward the righteous.
- <sup>22</sup>Good people leave their grandchildren an inheritance,  
but the wealth of sinners is stored up for the righteous.
- <sup>23</sup>A poor person's land might produce much food,  
but it is unjustly swept away.
- <sup>24</sup>Those who withhold the rod hate their children,  
but the one who loves them applies discipline.

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT from meaninglessness. <sup>b</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT endures

the theme of the power of the mouth, lips, and tongue (see Prov 10:6, 11; 11:31; 12:19; 15:7). One should only open one's mouth to give or receive good words (nourishment). 13:6 *wickedness misleads sinners*: See note on Proverbs 1:10. 13:7 *Some pretend*: One shouldn't be influenced by another's outward appearance and demeanor. 13:9 *The light... the lamp*: Light vs. darkness is a common theme in the Bible, presented in the creation story in Genesis 1. God creates light in the middle of the darkness (Gen 1:3) and sees that the light is good (Gen 1:4). Light is commonly linked with goodness, while darkness is tied to the absence of goodness (see Job 18:5-6; 29:2-3; Ps 119:105; Prov 6:23; 20:20, 27; 21:4; 24:20; 29:13; 31:18). 13:12 *a tree of life*: See note on Proverbs 3:17-18. 13:14 *a fountain of life*: See note on Proverbs 10:6, 11. 13:16 *The prudent*: See note on Proverbs 8:12. 13:21-22 *sinners*: See note on Proverbs 1:10.

13:5 Ps 119:163; Prv 3:35; Col 3:9  
13:6 Prv 11:3; Prv 11:5; Prv 11:6  
13:7 Prv 11:24; Lk 12:33; 2Co 6:10; Rev 3:17  
13:8 Ex 21:30; Prv 6:35; Prv 15:16  
13:9 Job 18:5; Prv 4:18; Prv 20:20; Prv 24:20  
13:11 Gn 2:15; Prv 10:2; Prv 10:5; Prv 21:6; Prv 28:20  
13:12 Prv 3:18; Prv 13:19  
13:13 Nm 15:31; 2Ch 36:16; Prv 13:21; Prv 16:20  
13:17 Prv 25:13  
13:20 2Ch 19:2; Eze 9:14; Ps 119:63; Prv 2:20; 1Co 15:33  
13:22 Job 27:16; Job 27:17; Ps 112:2; Prv 28:8; Ecc 2:26  
13:24 Prv 19:18; Prv 22:15; Prv 23:13; Prv 29:15; Prv 29:17

13:22 *grandchildren an inheritance*: Is it wise to leave one's grandchildren an inheritance? See Proverbs 17:6; compare with Ecclesiastes 2:18-19.

13:24 *Those who withhold the rod*: Many readers know this verse better as "Spare the rod and spoil the child," but these words don't occur in the Bible. Proverbs 13:24 and other verses in the book use the term "rod" (Prov 22:15; 23:13, 14; 29:15). The Hebrew word translated "rod" is *shevet*. It occurs 190 times in the OT and can mean "stick, staff, rod, scepter, tribe, division, lance, spear." In this verse *rod* occurs with another Hebrew term, *musar*, which can mean the idea of physical or oral reproof and the idea of a body of knowledge to be mastered. Together the two words may refer to physical punishment; they may refer to verbal correction; and they may have to do with sharing knowledge with a young student (see Prov 19:27; 20:30).

13:25 Ps 34:10;  
Prv 10:3

14:1 Ru 4:11;  
Prv 24:3,  
Prv 31:10

14:3 Prv 12:6,  
Prv 18:7

14:4 Ps 144:14;  
Prv 13:23

14:5 Ex 23:1;  
Prv 6:19,  
Prv 12:17,

Prv 14:25,  
Prv 19:5

14:6 Prv 1:22,  
Prv 3:34,  
Prv 8:9, Prv 9:9,  
Prv 17:24

14:7 Prv 9:6

14:8 Prv 14:15;  
Ecc 10:1;  
2Ti 3:13

14:9 Prv 10:23

14:12 Prv 12:15,  
Prv 16:25;  
Mt 7:13; Ro 6:21

14:15 Prv 14:8,  
Prv 22:3

14:16 Job 28:28;  
Prv 3:7, Prv 22:3

14:17 Prv 14:29

<sup>25</sup>The righteous eat their fill,  
but the wicked have empty stomachs.

**14** A wise woman builds her house,  
while a foolish woman tears hers down with her own hands.

<sup>2</sup>Those who walk with integrity fear the LORD,  
but those who take a crooked path despise him.

<sup>3</sup>Pride sprouts in the mouth of a fool,<sup>a</sup>  
but the lips of the wise protect them.

<sup>4</sup>When there are no oxen, the stall is clean,  
but when there is a strong bull, there is abundant produce.

<sup>5</sup>A truthful witness doesn't lie,  
but a false witness spews lies.

<sup>6</sup>A mocker searches for wisdom and gets none,  
but knowledge comes quickly to the intelligent.

<sup>7</sup>Stay away from fools,  
for you won't learn wise speech there.

<sup>8</sup>By their wisdom the prudent understand their way,  
but the stupidity of fools deceives them.

<sup>9</sup>Fools mock a compensation offering,  
but favor is with those who do right.

<sup>10</sup>The heart knows its own distress;  
another person can't share its joy.

<sup>11</sup>The house of the wicked is destroyed,  
but the tent flourishes for those who do right.

<sup>12</sup>There is a path that may seem straight to someone,  
but in the end it is a path to death.

<sup>13</sup>The heart feels pain even in laughter,  
and in the end, joy turns to sorrow.

<sup>14</sup>Rebellious hearts receive satisfaction from their ways;  
the good receive the due reward for their deeds.

<sup>15</sup>The naive believe anything,  
but the prudent give thought to their steps.

<sup>16</sup>The wise are careful and avoid evil,  
but fools become excited and overconfident.

<sup>17</sup>Short-tempered people make stupid mistakes,  
and schemers are hated.

<sup>18</sup>Stupidity is the lot of the naive,  
but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

<sup>19</sup>Evil people will bow down before the good;  
wicked people are at the gates of the righteous.

<sup>20</sup>Even their neighbors hate the poor,  
but many love the wealthy.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

13:25 *The righteous eat their fill*: See note on Proverbs 1:31.  
14:1 *A wise woman builds her house*: The Wise Woman reappears in the text, tying Proverbs 10–15 with Proverbs 1–9. But Wisdom in 14:1 is plural, “wise women,” introducing the idea that wisdom is an option available to all who embrace her words. How a person builds a “house” is an image for how one chooses to live life (see Prov 9:1-6; 24:3; 31:26-27).

14:2 *fear the Lord*: See note on Proverbs 1:7.

14:3 *mouth . . . lips*: See note on Proverbs 10:6, 11.

14:6 *mocker*: See note on Proverbs 1:22.

14:8, 15, 18 *the prudent*: See note on Proverbs 8:12.

14:9 *a compensation offering*: In the OT, compensation offerings were given by those who realized that they were guilty of an offense against another person or against God. To mock the offering denies forgiveness and healing

to the one attempting to repair the relationship (see note on Prov 1:22).

14:13 *The heart feels pain even in laughter . . . joy turns to sorrow*: See Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. We are called to embrace all that life brings to us, knowing that laughter will turn to pain, and joy will turn to sorrow; but in time pain will turn to laughter, and sorrow will turn to joy.

14:20 *Even their neighbors hate the poor, but many love the wealthy*: In the OT, health, wealth, and children were considered blessings from God, rewards for faithfulness. Faithfulness to God meant following God's instructions to care for those who were unable to care for themselves: the widows, the orphans, and the poor (see Exod 22:22; Deut 10; 18; 24:19-21; 26:12). While the book of Proverbs praises those who have acquired wealth (Prov 10:15; 13:8; 14:24;



- 21 Those who despise their neighbors are sinners,  
but happy are those who are kind to the needy.
- 22 Don't those who plan evil go astray?  
Those who plan good receive loyalty and faithfulness.
- 23 There is profit in hard work,  
but mere talk leads to poverty.
- 24 Wealth is the crown of the wise,  
and the folly of fools is folly.
- 25 A truthful witness saves lives,  
but a deceiver proclaims lies.
- 26 In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence  
and refuge for one's children.
- 27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,  
turning people away from deathtraps.
- 28 A king's glory is a large population,  
but a dwindling people is a ruler's ruin.
- 29 Patience leads to abundant understanding,  
but impatience leads to stupid mistakes.
- 30 A peaceful mind gives life to the body,  
but jealousy rots the bones.
- 31 Those who exploit the powerless anger their maker,  
while those who are kind to the poor honor God.
- 32 The wicked are thrown down by their own evil,  
but the righteous find refuge even in death.
- 33 Wisdom resides in an understanding heart,  
but it's not<sup>a</sup> known in fools.
- 34 Righteousness dignifies a nation,  
but sin disgraces a people.
- 35 The king favors an insightful servant,  
but is furious at a shameful one.
- 15 A sensitive answer turns back wrath,  
but an offensive word stirs up anger.
- 2 The tongue of the wise enhances knowledge,  
but the mouth of a fool gushes with stupidity.
- 3 The LORD's eyes are everywhere,  
keeping watch on evil and good people.
- 4 Wholesome speech is a tree of life,  
but dishonest talk breaks the spirit.
- 5 A fool doesn't like a father's instruction,  
but those who heed correction are mature.
- 6 Great treasure is in the house of the righteous,  
but the gain of the wicked brings trouble.
- 7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge,  
but the hearts of fools have none.
- 8 The LORD detests the sacrifices of the wicked,  
but favors the prayers of those who do right.
- 9 The LORD detests the path of the wicked,  
but loves those who pursue righteousness.
- 10 Discipline is severe for those who abandon the way;  
those who hate correction will die.

14:23 Gn 2:15;  
Prv 12:24,  
Prv 13:11,  
Prv 21:5,  
Prv 28:19  
14:25 Prv 12:17,  
Prv 14:5  
14:26 Prv 18:10  
14:27 Prv 10:11,  
Prv 13:14  
14:28 1Ki 4:20  
14:29 Prv 14:17,  
Prv 16:32,  
Prv 19:11;  
Ecc 7:9; Jas 1:19  
14:30 Prv 12:4  
14:31 Prv 17:5,  
Prv 22:2;  
Mt 25:40  
14:32 2Co 1:9,  
2Co 5:8  
14:33 Prv 10:8,  
Prv 12:16,  
Prv 15:2,  
Prv 23:15,  
Prv 29:11  
14:34 Prv 11:11  
15:1 Jgs 8:1;  
1Sa 25:10,  
Prv 15:18,  
Prv 25:15  
15:3 2Ch 16:9;  
Job 31:4,  
Job 34:21;  
Prv 5:21;  
Heb 4:13  
15:7 Ps 37:30,  
Ps 119:13;  
Prv 10:13,  
Prv 10:21;  
Eph 4:29  
15:8 Prv 15:29,  
Prv 21:27,  
Prv 28:9; 1s 1:11;  
Jer 6:20  
15:10 Prv 10:17,  
Prv 12:1,  
Prv 29:1; Jn 7:7

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT lacks *not*.

22:4, 7), and Woman Wisdom promises wealth to those who embrace her (Prov 3:16; 8:18), greed is criticized (Prov 11:16, 24-25, 28; 14:31; 22:1, 16; 23:4, 5; 28:6). 14:21 *neighbors*: See Proverbs 11:9, 12. *sinners*: See note on Proverbs 1:10. *happy are those*: See note on Proverbs 3:13. 14:26-27 *the fear of the LORD*: See note on Proverbs 1:7.

14:27 *a fountain of life*: See Proverbs 10:11.  
14:34 *but sin disgraces*: See note on Proverbs 1:10.  
15:1, 2, 4 *answer, word, tongue, mouth, speech, talk*: See note on Proverbs 10:6, 11.  
15:4 *a tree of life*: See note on Proverbs 3:17-18.  
15:8 *the sacrifices of the wicked*: See Proverbs 21:3.

- 15:12 Prv 9:8,  
Prv 15:10,  
Am 5:10
- 15:13 Prv 12:25,  
Prv 15:15,  
Prv 17:22,  
Prv 18:14
- 15:14 Prv 18:15
- 15:17 Prv 17:1
- 15:18 Gn 13:8,  
Prv 14:29,  
Prv 26:21,  
Prv 28:25,  
Prv 29:22
- 15:19 Prv 19:24,  
Prv 22:5
- 15:27 Ex 23:8;  
1Sa 8:3; Prv 1:19;  
Is 33:15
- 15:28 Prv 15:2;  
1Pt 3:15
- 15:33 Prv 1:7,  
Prv 18:12,  
Prv 29:23
- 16:1 Prv 16:9,  
Prv 19:21
- 11 The grave<sup>☞</sup> and the underworld<sup>☞</sup> lie open before the LORD;  
how much more the hearts of human beings!
- 12 Mockers don't like those who correct them.  
They won't go to the wise.
- 13 A joyful heart brightens one's face,  
but a troubled heart breaks the spirit.
- 14 An understanding heart seeks knowledge;  
but fools feed on folly.
- 15 All the days of the needy are hard,  
but a happy heart has a continual feast.
- 16 Better a little with fear of the LORD  
than a great treasure with turmoil.
- 17 Better a meal of greens with love  
than a plump calf with hate.
- 18 Hotheads stir up conflict,  
but patient people calm down strife.
- 19 The path of the lazy is like a hedge of thorns,  
but the way of those who do right is a clear road.
- 20 A wise child brings joy to a father,  
but fools despise their mothers.
- 21 Folly is joy to those who lack sense,  
but those with understanding walk straight ahead.
- 22 Plans fail with no counsel,  
but with many counselors they succeed.
- 23 To give an appropriate answer is a joy;  
how good is a word at the right time!
- 24 For those with insight, life is an upward path,  
avoiding the grave<sup>☞</sup> below.
- 25 The LORD snatches away the arrogant one's house,  
but he preserves the widow's boundaries.
- 26 The LORD detests evil plans,  
but gracious words are pure.
- 27 Those who acquire things unjustly gain trouble for their house,  
but those who hate bribes will live.
- 28 The righteous heart reflects before answering,  
but the wicked mouth blurts out evil.
- 29 The LORD is far from the wicked,  
but he listens to the prayers of the righteous.
- 30 Bright eyes give joy to the heart;  
good news strengthens the bones.
- 31 The ear that listens to life-giving correction  
dwells among the wise.
- 32 Those who refuse discipline despise themselves,  
but those who listen to correction gain understanding.
- 33 The fear of the LORD is wise instruction,  
and humility comes before respect.

**16** To people belong the plans of the heart,  
but the answer of the tongue comes from the LORD.

<sup>☞</sup>Heb Sheol <sup>☞</sup>Heb Abaddon <sup>☞</sup>Heb Sheol

15:11 *The grave and the underworld*: See Proverbs 1:12-15.

15:12 *Mockers don't like*: See note on Proverbs 1:22.

15:15 *a happy heart*: See note on Proverbs 3:13.

15:16-17 *Better... than*: See note on Proverbs 3:14-16.  
*fear of the LORD*: See note on Proverbs 1:7. *meal*: See note on Proverbs 1:31.

15:22 *no counsel... many counselors*: Inviting collaboration and asking for advice are often to be favored over forging ahead on one's own.

15:24 *the grave below*: See Proverbs 1:12-15.

15:26 *gracious words*: See note on Proverbs 12:4.

15:33 *fear of the LORD*: See note on Proverbs 1:7.

16:1-22:16 The second section of the second collection of sayings from Solomon (Prov 10:1-22:16) shifts from wisdom sayings that contrast the wise and the foolish (see Prov 10:1, 14; 12:15; 14:7) and the wicked and righteous (see Prov 10:2, 20, 28; 11:10; 12:3; 15:8) to those contrasting God's wisdom with the limited wisdom of human

- <sup>2</sup>All the ways of people are pure in their eyes,  
but the LORD tests the motives.
- <sup>3</sup>Commit your work to the LORD,  
and your plans will succeed.
- <sup>4</sup>The LORD made everything for a purpose,  
even the wicked for an evil day.
- <sup>5</sup>The LORD detests all who are arrogant;  
they surely won't go unpunished.
- <sup>6</sup>Love and faithfulness reconcile guilt;  
the fear of the LORD turns away evil.
- <sup>7</sup>When people draw favor from the LORD,  
even their enemies are at peace with them.
- <sup>8</sup>Better a little with righteousness  
than great profits without justice.
- <sup>9</sup>People plan their path,  
but the LORD secures their steps.
- <sup>10</sup>A king's speech is like an oracle;  
in a judgment, one can't go against his words.
- <sup>11</sup>Honest balances and scales are the LORD's;  
all the weights in the bag are his doing.
- <sup>12</sup>Kings detest wicked deeds,  
for their thrones are founded on righteousness.
- <sup>13</sup>Kings favor those with righteous lips;  
they love words of integrity.
- <sup>14</sup>The king's anger is a messenger of death;  
the wise will calm him.
- <sup>15</sup>There's life in the light of the king's face.  
His favor is like a cloud that brings spring rain.
- <sup>16</sup>Acquiring wisdom is much better than gold,  
and acquiring understanding is better than silver.
- <sup>17</sup>The road of those who do right turns away from evil;  
those who protect their path guard their lives.
- <sup>18</sup>Pride comes before disaster,  
and arrogance before a fall.
- <sup>19</sup>Better to be humble with the needy  
than to divide plunder with the proud.
- <sup>20</sup>Those with insight find prosperity;  
those who trust the LORD are blessed.
- <sup>21</sup>The skilled mind is called discerning,  
and pleasant speech enhances teaching.
- <sup>22</sup>One who has insight is a fountain of life,  
but the instruction of the foolish is folly.
- <sup>23</sup>The mind of the wise makes their speech insightful  
and enhances the teaching of their lips.
- <sup>24</sup>Pleasant words are flowing honey,  
sweet to the taste and healing to the bones.

16:3 Ps 37:5,  
Ps 55:22; 1Pt 5:7  
16:4 Gn 1:31;  
Ex 9:16; Ro 9:22,  
Ro 11:36;  
Rev 4:11  
16:5 Prv 6:16,  
Prv 6:17,  
Prv 11:21  
16:6 Prv 14:16  
16:9 Ps 37:23;  
Prv 16:1,  
Prv 19:21,  
Prv 20:24;  
Jer 10:23  
16:13 Prv 14:35,  
Prv 22:11  
16:18 Prv 11:2,  
Prv 18:12  
16:21 Prv 16:23  
16:22 Prv 10:11  
16:23 Ps 37:30;  
Mt 12:34

rulers. "The LORD" is the subject of 35 proverbs in these chapters (see 16:4, 11; 17:3; 18:22; 19:17, 21; 20:10, 12; 21:2, 27; 22:2). But many of the themes of the two sections are the same.

16:1 *the answer of the tongue*: References to the tongue, lips, and speech continue (Prov 10:6, 11; 12:18; 16:13, 24, 27).

16:3 *Commit your work to the LORD*: See Proverbs 10:4-5. The theme of the virtue of hard work continues in Proverbs 16-22 (see 18:9; 19:15)

16:6 *the fear of the LORD*: See note on Proverbs 1:7.

16:8 *Better . . . than*: See note on Proverbs 3:14-16.

16:9, 17 *path*: See note on Proverbs 10:9.

16:10, 12-15 *A king's speech*: In many cultures in the ancient Near East, the king was considered to be the son of a god. So the king represented the god, and was the mediator between the people and their god. In Israel, the king, while not the physical son of the Lord, was still to be the hands and feet of the Lord in the world (see Pss 72; 145). Not many kings acted on behalf of the Lord. But the word of a good king was as good as the Lord's word.

16:11 *Honest balances and scales*: See note on Proverbs 11:1, 3.

16:16, 19, 32 *better . . . than*: See note on Proverbs 3:14-16.

16:22 *fountain of life*: See note on Proverbs 10:6, 11.

16:25 Prv 14:12  
 16:26 Ecc 6:7  
 16:27 Prv 6:12,  
 Prv 6:14; Jas 3:6  
 16:31 Prv 17:6,  
 Prv 20:29  
 16:32 Prv 14:29,  
 Prv 15:18,  
 Prv 19:11,  
 Prv 25:28;  
 Jas 1:19  
 17:1 Prv 15:17;  
 Ecc 4:6  
 17:3 1Ch 29:17;  
 Ps 26:2, Ps 66:10;  
 Prv 27:21;  
 Jer 17:10  
 17:6 Ps 127:3;  
 Prv 16:31

- 25 There is a path that may seem straight to someone,  
 but in the end it is the path of death.
- 26 The appetite of workers labors for them,  
 for their hunger presses them on.
- 27 Worthless people dig up trouble;  
 their lips are like a scorching fire.
- 28 Destructive people produce conflict;  
 gossips alienate close friends.
- 29 Violent people entice their neighbors  
 and walk them down a path that isn't good.
- 30 Those who wink their eye plot destruction;  
 those who purse their lips plan evil.
- 31 Gray hair is a crown of glory;  
 it is found on the path of righteousness.
- 32 Better to be patient than a warrior,  
 and better to have self-control than to capture a city.
- 33 The dice are cast into the lap;  
 all decisions are from the LORD.
- 17** Better a dry crust with quiet  
 than a house full of feasting with quarrels.
- 2 An insightful servant rules over a disgraceful son  
 and will divide an inheritance with the brothers.
- 3 A crucible is for silver and a furnace for gold,  
 but the LORD tests the heart.
- 4 An evildoer pays attention to guilty lips;  
 a liar listens to a destructive tongue.
- 5 Those who mock the poor insult their maker;  
 those who rejoice in disaster won't go unpunished.
- 6 Grandchildren are the crown of the elderly,  
 and the glory of children is their parents.
- 7 Too much talking isn't right for a fool;  
 even less so false speech for an honorable person.
- 8 A bribe seems magical in the eyes of those who give it,  
 granting success to all who use it.
- 9 One who seeks love conceals an offense,  
 but one who repeats it divides friends.
- 10 A rebuke goes deeper to an understanding person  
 than a hundred lashes to a fool.
- 11 Evil people seek only rebellion;  
 a cruel messenger will be sent against them.
- 12 Safer to meet a bear robbed of her cubs  
 than fools in their folly.

16:26 *The appetite of workers:* See Proverbs 13:2-4.

16:29 *neighbors:* See Proverbs 11:9, 12.

16:30 *wink their eye... purse their lips:* Here we find another proverb concerning deceit with a vivid facial image. The one-eyed wink, the pressing together of the lips, and the nod of the head says to the observer, "Trust me, I know what I'm doing." The proverb reminds us, though, that the wink, the pursed lips, and the nod often lead to destructive paths.

16:31 *Gray hair:* The value of taking the advice of the aged is a recurring theme in the book of Proverbs.

16:33 *The dice are cast:* The practice of casting implements, like dice (or "lots" in older English) to determine the will of God is widespread in the OT, occurring 70 times. The "dice" are most likely the "urim" and "thummim" (items of an unknown shape) placed in the vest of the priestly garments (Lev 8:8) and were used only by the priests to

find God's will (see Exod 28:30; Num 27:21). In the book of Joshua, "dice" were used to decide how to divide the land among the tribes of Israel (Josh 14-21). Instructions for using the "dice" for this practice are found in Numbers 33:54; 34:13. See also Proverbs 18:18.

17:1 *Better... than:* See note on Proverbs 3:14-16.

17:4 *guilty lips... destructive tongue:* See note on Proverbs 10:6, 11.

17:5 *Those who mock the poor:* See Proverbs 1:22; 13:23.

17:6 *Grandchildren... children:* In the OT, the concept of an eternal afterlife wasn't fully developed. When a person died, they went to *sheol*, a shadowy afterlife to which all persons went (see sidebar, "Sheol" at Prov 1). The way to a true ongoing life or legacy was through one's offspring, through the carrying on of one's name.

17:12 *Safer to meet... than:* An interesting twist on a "better than" saying (see Prov 12:9).

- <sup>13</sup> Evil will never depart from the house  
of those who return evil for good.
- <sup>14</sup> The start of a quarrel is like letting out water,  
so drop the dispute before it breaks out.
- <sup>15</sup> Judging the righteous wicked and the wicked righteous—  
the LORD detests both of these.
- <sup>16</sup> Why should a fool have money  
to pay for wisdom? He has no mind.
- <sup>17</sup> Friends love all the time,  
and kinsfolk are born for times of trouble.
- <sup>18</sup> One with no sense shakes hands on a deal,  
securing a loan for a friend.
- <sup>19</sup> Those who love an offense love a quarrel;  
those who build a high doorway invite a collapse.
- <sup>20</sup> Those with crooked hearts won't prosper,  
and those with twisted tongues will fall into trouble.
- <sup>21</sup> Having a fool for a son brings grief;  
there's no joy for a scoundrel's father.
- <sup>22</sup> A joyful heart helps healing,  
but a broken spirit dries up the bones.
- <sup>23</sup> The wicked take secret bribes  
to twist the way of justice.
- <sup>24</sup> Wisdom is right in front of those with understanding,  
but the eyes of fools are off to the edges of the earth.
- <sup>25</sup> A foolish son is irritating to his father  
and bitter to her who gave birth to him.
- <sup>26</sup> It isn't good to punish the righteous,  
to strike the honorable for their integrity.
- <sup>27</sup> Wise are those who restrain their talking;  
people with understanding are coolheaded.
- <sup>28</sup> Fools who keep quiet are deemed wise;  
those who shut their lips are smart.
- 18** Unfriendly people look out for themselves;  
they bicker with sensible people.
- <sup>2</sup> Fools find no pleasure in understanding,  
but only in expressing their opinion.
- <sup>3</sup> When the wicked arrive, so does contempt;  
with shame comes insult.
- <sup>4</sup> The words of a person's mouth are deep waters,  
a bubbling stream, a fountain of wisdom.
- <sup>5</sup> Favoring the wicked isn't good;  
it denies justice to the righteous.
- <sup>6</sup> The lips of fools make accusations;  
their mouths elicit beatings.
- <sup>7</sup> The mouth of fools is their ruin;  
their lips are a trap for their lives.

17:14 Prv 20:3,  
Prv 25:8  
17:15 Ex 23:7;  
Prv 18:5,  
Prv 24:24;  
Is 5:23  
17:16 Prv 23:23  
17:27 Prv 10:19,  
Prv 14:29;  
Jas 1:19, Jas 3:2  
17:28 Job 13:5;  
Prv 10:19  
18:1 Jud 1:19  
18:2 Prv 12:23;  
Ecc 10:3  
18:3 Prv 11:2,  
Prv 13:5,  
Prv 22:10,  
Prv 29:16,  
Is 5:24  
18:4 Prv 20:5  
18:6 Prv 10:14,  
Prv 13:10,  
Prv 14:3,  
Prv 15:18,  
Prv 16:28

17:15 *the righteous ... the wicked*: See note on Proverbs 3:33-35.

17:18 *a deal ... a loan for a friend*: See note on Proverbs 6:1-5.

17:21, 25 *a fool for a son ... A foolish son*: These verses return to the theme of father/son, parent/child. See Proverbs 1:8.

17:24 *Wisdom is right in front*: See Proverbs 1:7.

18:1 *Unfriendly*: People who choose to live in isolation often find themselves at odds with the community from which they separate. In ancient Israel, a person's identity, well-being, and future hope depended on their place in a specific community. In our society, many people move away from their hometown and settle in new and

different places. It's important for newcomers to become part of the communities in which they find themselves as well as for those who are well connected in their communities to welcome the newcomers.

18:4 *deep waters, a bubbling stream*: Water imagery is a recurring theme in the Bible. Water can be either life-giving or life-threatening. For example, Psalm 42:1 says, "Just like a deer that craves streams of water, my whole being craves you, God"; but Psalm 42:7 says "all your massive waves surged over me." In the same way, *The words of a person's mouth* can be nourishing or hurtful—a *fountain of wisdom* or a well of despair (see Prov 20:5; 21:2).

18:6-7 *lips ... mouths*: See note on Proverbs 10:6, 11.

18:9 Prv 10:4,

Prv 28:24

18:10 2Sa 22:3;

Ps 18:2, Ps 61:3,

Ps 91:2, Ps 144:2

18:12 Prv 11:2,

Prv 15:33,

Prv 16:18,

Prv 29:23

18:18 Prv 16:33

18:19 Gn 27:41;

Prv 17:14,

Prv 19:13,

Prv 21:9,

Prv 21:19

18:21 Prv 12:13,

Prv 13:3;

Mt 12:37

*Name as Identity* "Name" is an important concept in the Bible. First, a person's name says something about the essence of their very being to others. "Abraham" means "father of a multitude"; "David" means "dearly loved"; "Bethlehem" means "house of bread," probably in reference to its abundant production of grain (see the book of Ruth). When Moses asked God's name at the burning bush in Exodus 3:14, God replied with words that can be translated into English as "I am who I am," "I will be who I will be," or "I am the one who is." Thus Yahweh, the name of God in the OT, reveals a timeless being who is stable and also able to adapt—a powerful message to our ancestors-in-the-faith and to the faithful today. The Lord God has been for all time and will continue to be for all time, and the Lord God meets and provides for humanity in the moment.

Second, to know someone's name is to have a greater knowledge of that person, and in some way to possess a part of that person. When we meet people for the first time we usually ask their names. In getting that information, we feel we know them in a way different from before we knew their name. Moses asked for God's name in Exodus 3 mostly for a sense of assurance that this voice talking to him from a burning bush was a tangible reality, one that Moses could in some way "possess" as he carried out the command given to him by the voice.

Third, the second of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:4) forbids us to make any images of God—no rendering of what God might look like. The core of the being of the Lord God can't be captured by the limited ability of human artists. God isn't limited to gender, ethnic, cultural, economic, or age categories. Lord God simply is, will be, and is the one who is.

- <sup>8</sup>The words of gossips are like choice snacks;  
they go down to the inmost parts.
- <sup>9</sup>Those who are lazy in their work  
are brothers to thugs.
- <sup>10</sup>The LORD's name is a strong tower;  
the righteous run to it and find refuge.
- <sup>11</sup>The riches of the wealthy are a strong city  
and like a high wall in their imagination.
- <sup>12</sup>Pride comes before a disaster,  
but humility comes before respect.
- <sup>13</sup>Those who answer before they listen  
are foolish and disgraceful.
- <sup>14</sup>The human spirit sustains a sick person,  
but who can bear a broken spirit?
- <sup>15</sup>An understanding mind gains knowledge;  
the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.
- <sup>16</sup>A gift opens the way  
for access to important people.
- <sup>17</sup>The first person to testify seems innocent,  
until the other comes and cross-examines him.
- <sup>18</sup>The dice settle conflicts  
and keep strong opponents apart.
- <sup>19</sup>An offended ally is more formidable than a city;  
such quarreling is like the bars of a castle.
- <sup>20</sup>The stomach is satisfied by the fruit of the mouth;  
one's lips can earn a satisfying income.
- <sup>21</sup>Death and life are in the power of the tongue;  
those who love it will eat its fruit.

18:9 *Those who are lazy:* See Proverbs 10:4-5; 16:3; 19:15.

18:10 *The LORD's name is a strong tower:* See sidebar, "Name as Identity." In this name, "the LORD," and all that the name entails, one can find strength.

18:11 *The riches of the wealthy:* See sidebar, "The Wealthy and the Poor" at Proverbs 10.

18:14 *The human spirit... a sick person... a broken spirit:* The word *spirit* is related to a Hebrew word for "throat," that is, the body part through which one draws in life-giving breath.

18:16-17 *A gift... cross-examines:* The juxtaposition of these two verses suggests that 18:16 must be understood in connection with 18:17. Buying favor (a gift) can take a person only so far. In the end, the truth will come out (see Prov 19:6, 9).

18:18 *dice:* See Proverbs 16:33.

18:20-21 *stomach... mouth... lips... tongue:* See Proverbs 10:6, 11; 1:31.

18:23 *poor... wealthy:* See sidebar, "The Wealthy and the Poor" at Proverbs 10.

- 22 He who finds a wife finds what is good,  
gaining favor from the LORD.
- 23 The poor plead for help,  
but the wealthy answer harshly.
- 24 There are persons for companionship,  
but then there are friends who are more loyal than family.
- 19 Better to be poor and walk in innocence  
than to have dishonest lips and be a fool.
- 1 Ignorant desire isn't good;  
rushing feet make mistakes.
- 3 People's own folly corrupts their way,  
but their hearts rage against the LORD.
- 4 Riches increase one's friends,  
but the poor lose their friends.
- 5 A false witness won't go unpunished,  
and a liar won't escape.
- 6 Many seek favor from rulers;  
everyone befriends a gift giver.
- 7 All the relatives of the poor hate them;  
even more, their friends stay far from them.  
When they pursue them with words, they aren't there.
- 8 Those who acquire good sense love themselves;  
those who keep understanding find success.
- 9 False witnesses won't go unpunished,  
and liars will perish.
- 10 Luxury isn't fitting for a fool;  
even less so for a servant to rule over princes.
- 11 Insightful people restrain their anger;  
their glory is to ignore an offense.
- 12 A raging king roars like a lion;  
his favor is like the dew on the grass.
- 13 A foolish son is a disaster to his father;  
a contentious wife is like constant dripping.
- 14 House and riches are an inheritance from one's ancestors,  
but an insightful wife is from the LORD.
- 15 Laziness brings on deep sleep;  
a slacker goes hungry.
- 16 Those who keep the commandment preserve their lives;  
those who disregard their ways will die.
- 17 Those who are gracious to the poor lend to the LORD,  
and the Lord will fully repay them.

18:22 Gn 2:18;  
Prv 8:35,  
Prv 12:4,  
Prv 19:14,  
Prv 31:10  
19:3 Is 8:21  
19:5 Ex 23:1;  
Prv 6:19,  
Prv 19:9,  
Prv 21:28  
19:7 Ps 38:11;  
Prv 14:20,  
Prv 18:23,  
Prv 19:4;  
Ecc 9:16  
19:9 Prv 19:5  
19:10 Prv 17:7,  
Prv 26:1,  
Prv 30:21,  
Prv 30:22;  
Ecc 10:7  
19:11 Prv 14:29,  
Prv 15:18,  
Prv 16:32;  
Jas 1:19  
19:12 Ps 133:3;  
Prv 16:14,  
Prv 16:15,  
Prv 20:2;  
Hos 14:5  
19:13 Prv 10:1,  
Prv 17:21,  
Prv 17:25,  
Prv 21:9,  
Prv 27:15  
19:14 Prv 12:4,  
Prv 18:22;  
2Co 12:14  
19:15 Prv 6:9,  
Prv 10:4,  
Prv 20:13,  
Prv 23:21  
19:17 Dt 15:7;  
Prv 14:21,  
Prv 22:9,  
Prv 28:27;  
Mt 10:42

19:1 *Better to be poor.* See note on Proverbs 3:14-16.  
19:2 *Ignorant desire . . . rushing feet.* If you don't know the true good deep down in the very core of your being, then you're prone to rush off and end up making many mistakes. The word translated *mistake* here is the same word that is translated as "sin" or "sinner" elsewhere in Proverbs. See Proverbs 1:10.  
19:4 *Riches . . . poor.* See sidebar, "The Wealthy and the Poor" at Proverbs 10.  
19:6 *Gift.* See note on Proverbs 18:16-17.  
19:9 *False witnesses . . . liars.* See note on Proverbs 18:16-17.  
19:10 *a fool . . . a servant to rule over princes:* For "fool" see sidebar, "The Fool" at Proverbs 3. The second half of the verse seems harsh. It states that servants shouldn't rule over princes—hard words for many to hear, but its intent is one of proper order. Sometimes in our lives we occupy a position higher than others. If I am a parent, my responsibility is to "rule over" my children to lead them in right paths. If I am a teacher, my students need guidance and direction. If I

am a child with responsibility for my frail parents, I must act in their best interest, sometimes regardless of their protests and denials. As an employee, I am required to adhere to the business practices that my employer requires. As a citizen, I must obey the laws of the land. And, as a child of God, I must submit to what God requires of me. Sometimes we are princes (we are required to take charge), and sometimes we are servants (others are in charge over us).  
19:13 *A foolish son . . . a contentious wife:* For "foolish," see sidebar, "The Fool" at Proverbs 3. In the male-oriented world of the book of Proverbs (see Prov 1:8), men desired a peaceful household, where neither children nor wives caused difficulties. In twenty-first century society, the message of this verse is that all should strive to have peace in their homes (e.g., Prov 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:25; 29:19, 21).  
19:15, 24 *Laziness . . . a slacker:* See Proverbs 10:4-5; 16:3; 18:9; 20:4.  
19:17 *gracious:* See note on Proverbs 12:4. *the poor:* See sidebar, "The Wealthy and the Poor" at Proverbs 10.

19:18 Prv 13:24,  
Prv 22:15,  
Prv 23:13,  
Prv 29:15,  
Prv 29:17

19:21 Ps 33:10,  
Ps 33:11,  
Prv 16:9,  
Is 14:27, Is 46:10

19:23 Prv 10:27,  
Prv 14:27

19:24 Prv 6:6,  
Prv 15:19,  
Prv 20:4,  
Prv 26:15

19:25 Prv 9:8,  
Prv 17:10,  
Prv 21:11

19:27 Dt 13:1,  
Prv 2:10,  
Mt 7:15; Jn 10:5;  
Eph 4:14

19:28 Job 15:16,  
Job 34:7,  
Prv 15:28

19:29 Prv 10:13

20:1 Prv 23:29,  
Prv 31:4; Is 28:7;  
Hos 4:11

20:4 Prv 13:4,  
Prv 19:15,  
Prv 19:24,  
Prv 21:25

20:5 Prv 18:4

20:6 Ps 12:1,  
Prv 25:14

20:7 Ps 26:1,  
Ps 37:26,  
Ps 112:2,  
Prv 19:1

20:8 Prv 20:26,  
Prv 25:5

20:9 1 Ki 8:46;  
Job 14:4;  
Ecc 7:20; 1 Jn 1:8

20:10 Prv 11:1,  
Prv 20:23

20:11 Mt 7:16

20:13 Prv 6:11,  
Prv 12:11,  
Prv 19:15;  
Ro 12:11

18 Discipline your children while there is hope,  
but don't plan to kill them.  
19 Angry people must pay the penalty;  
if you rescue them, then you will have to do it again.

20 Listen to advice and accept instruction,  
so you might grow wise in the future.

21 Many plans are in a person's mind,  
but the LORD's purpose will succeed.

22 People long for trustworthiness;  
it is better to be poor than a liar.

23 The fear of the LORD leads to life;  
then one rests content, untouched by harm.

24 Lazy people bury their hand in the bowl;  
they won't even put it to their mouth.

25 Strike someone who scoffs, and a naive person will become clever;  
correct someone with understanding, and they will gain knowledge.

26 Those who assault their father and drive out their mother  
are disgraceful children, worthy of reproach.

27 If, my child, you stop listening to discipline,  
you will wander away from words of knowledge.

28 A worthless witness mocks justice;  
the wicked mouth gulps down trouble.

29 Punishments were made for mockers,  
and blows for the backs of fools.

20 Wine is a mocker; beer a carouser.  
Those it leads astray won't become wise.

2 A king is as terrifying as a lion's growl.  
Those who anger him may lose their life.

3 It is honorable to back off from a fight,  
but fools jump right in.

4 The lazy don't plow during winter;  
at harvest they look but find nothing.

5 Advice comes from the deep waters of the heart;  
those with understanding can draw it out.

6 Many people will say that they are loyal,  
but who can find a reliable person?

7 The righteous live with integrity;  
happy are their children who come after them.

8 A king who sits on his judgment throne  
sifts out all evil with his eyes.

9 Who can say, "I'm innocent to the core;  
I'm cleansed from my sin"?

10 False weights and measures—  
the LORD detests them both.

11 Even young people are known by their actions,  
whether their conduct is pure and upright.

12 Ears to hear and eyes to see—  
the LORD made them both.

13 Don't love sleep or you will be poor;  
stay alert and you will have plenty to eat.

19:18 *Discipline your children*: See note on Proverbs 13:24.

19:22 *better ... than*: See note on Proverbs 3:14-16.

19:23 *fear of the LORD*: See note on Proverbs 1:7.

19:26 *their father ... their mother*: The words of this verse affirm Exodus 20:12, one of the Ten Commandments. This is the only one of the Ten Commandments that tells the reward for keeping it. Ancient Near Eastern society was based on the extended family unit, and respect for one's elders was an essential element of order within society (see Prov 28:24).

19:27 *If ... you stop listening to discipline*: See note on Proverbs 13:24.

19:28-29 *A worthless witness mocks ... mockers ... fools*: See note on Proverbs 1:22.

20:1 *mocker*: See note on Proverbs 1:22.

20:4, 13 *The lazy*: See Proverbs 10:4-5; 16:3; 18:9; 19:15, 24.

20:5 *the deep waters of the heart*: See Proverbs 18:4.

20:7 *happy are*: See note on Proverbs 3:13.

20:9 *my sin*: See note on Proverbs 1:10.



- 14 The buyer says, "Bad, bad,"  
but then goes away and brags.
- 15 Much gold and many pearls exist,  
but wise speech is the most precious jewel.
- 16 Take the garment of the person who secures a loan for a stranger;  
take his pledge for a foreigner.
- 17 Stolen bread is sweet,  
but afterward the mouth is full of gravel.
- 18 Plans are firmed up by advice;  
wage wars with good guidance.
- 19 Gossips reveal secrets;  
don't associate with those who talk too much.
- 20 Those who curse their father or mother—  
their lamp will be snuffed out when it becomes dark.
- 21 Inheritance gained quickly at first  
won't bless later on.
- 22 Don't say, "I'll repay the evildoer!"  
Wait for the LORD, and he will save you.
- 23 The LORD detests false weights;  
deceptive scales aren't right.
- 24 A person's steps are from the LORD;  
how then can people understand their path?
- 25 It is a snare to say rashly, "It is holy,"  
and only reflect after making the promise.
- 26 A wise king sifts out the wicked,  
and runs them over with a wheel.
- 27 The breath of a person is the lamp of the LORD,  
searching all the inmost parts.
- 28 Kindness and faithfulness protect the king;  
he supports his throne by kindness.
- 29 Strength is the glory of young men;  
gray hair is the splendor of old age.
- 30 Blows and bruises remove evil;  
beatings cleanse the inner parts.
- 21 The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD;  
he directs it wherever he wants.
- <sup>2</sup> Everyone's path is straight in their own eyes,  
but the LORD weighs the heart.
- <sup>3</sup> Acting with righteousness and justice  
is more valued by the LORD than sacrifice.
- <sup>4</sup> Proudful eyes, an arrogant heart, and the lamp of the wicked are all sinful.
- <sup>5</sup> The plans of the diligent end up in profit,  
but those who hurry end up with loss.
- <sup>6</sup> Those who gain treasure with lies are like a drifting fog, leading to death.
- <sup>7</sup> The violence of the wicked will sweep them away,  
for they refuse to act with justice.

20:14 Hos 12:7  
20:17 Prv 9:17;  
Lam 3:16  
20:21 Prv 28:22;  
Lk 15:12  
20:22 Ps 27:14;  
Prv 24:29;  
Ro 12:17;  
1Th 5:15; 1Pt 3:9  
20:23 Prv 11:1,  
Prv 20:10  
20:24 Prv 16:9;  
Jer 10:23  
20:26 Prv 20:8;  
Is 28:27  
20:27 1Co 2:11  
20:28 Prv 3:3,  
Prv 16:12,  
Prv 29:14;  
Is 16:5  
20:30 Prv 20:22;  
Prv 22:15;  
Is 53:5  
21:1 Eze 6:22;  
Eze 7:27  
21:2 Prv 16:2,  
Prv 24:12;  
Lk 16:15  
21:3 1Sa 15:22;  
Prv 15:8; Is 1:11;  
Hos 6:6; Mi 6:6

20:15 *gold ... many pearls ... the most precious jewel*: See Proverbs 3:14-16.  
20:16 *a loan for a stranger*: See note on Proverbs 6:1-5.  
20:20, 27 *their lamp will be snuffed out ... the lamp of the LORD*: See note on Proverbs 13:9. *curse*: See Proverbs 30:10-11.  
20:23 *weights ... scales*: See note on Proverbs 11:1, 3.  
20:26 *the wicked*: See note on Proverbs 3:33-35.  
20:30 *Blows and bruises ... beatings*: a disturbing verse that seems to approve of physical punishment. For some help in trying to understand these words, see note on Proverbs 13:24.  
21:1 *channels of water*: See note on Proverbs 18:4.

21:2 *path*: See note on Proverbs 10:9. *weights*: See note on Proverbs 11:1, 3.  
21:3 *righteousness ... justice ... sacrifice*: Only four verses in the book of Proverbs mention sacrifice (Prov 7:14; 15:8; 21:3, 27). Throughout the ancient Near East, giving grain and animals as offerings was an important part of worship (see Lev 1-7). For many ancient worshippers, though, offering a sacrifice was like saying, "There, I said I was sorry, and now everything is all right." But the prophets of ancient Israel called the people to account. The act of offering a sacrifice wasn't the point. What was required was a fundamental change in the very being of the person offering the sacrifice. See Amos 5:22, 24.

- 21:8 Prv 2:15  
 21:9 Prv 19:13,  
 Prv 21:19,  
 Prv 25:24,  
 Prv 27:15  
 21:10 Ps 52:3;  
 Prv 12:12;  
 Is 32:6; 1Co 10:6;  
 Jas 2:13  
 21:11 Prv 1:5,  
 Prv 19:25  
 21:13 Jas 2:13  
 21:15 Prv 10:29  
 21:16 Ps 49:14  
 21:17 Prv 23:21  
 21:18 Prv 11:8;  
 Is 43:3  
 21:19 Prv 21:9  
 21:20 Ps 112:3  
 21:23 Prv 10:19,  
 Prv 12:13,  
 Prv 13:3;  
 Jas 1:26; Jas 3:2  
 21:25 Prv 6:6,  
 Prv 13:4,  
 Prv 15:19,  
 Prv 19:24,  
 Prv 20:4  
 21:26 Ps 37:26,  
 Ps 112:9  
 21:27 Prv 15:8,  
 Prv 28:9; Is 66:3  
 21:28 Prv 19:5,  
 Prv 19:9
- 8 The ways of some people are twisted and strange,  
 but the behavior of those who do right is pure.  
 9 Better to live on the edge of a roof  
 than with a contentious woman in a large house.  
 10 Wicked people desire evil;  
 their neighbors receive no mercy from them.  
 11 When a mocker is punished, the naive person gains wisdom;  
 when insight comes to the wise, knowledge increases.  
 12 The righteous one observes the house of the wicked,  
 turning the wicked toward trouble.  
 13 Those who close their ears to the cries of the poor  
 will themselves call out but receive no answer.  
 14 A secret gift calms anger,  
 and a hidden bribe removes<sup>a</sup> furious wrath.  
 15 Acting justly is a joy to the righteous,  
 but dreaded by those who do evil.  
 16 People who wander from the path of insight  
 will rest in the company of the dead.  
 17 Those who love pleasure end up poor;  
 lovers of wine and oil won't get rich.  
 18 The wicked are a ransom for the righteous;  
 the treacherous will be punished<sup>a</sup> in the place of the virtuous.  
 19 Better to live in a wilderness  
 than in a house with a contentious and angry woman.  
 20 Precious treasure and oil stay in the home of the wise,  
 but fools swallow them up.  
 21 Those who pursue righteousness and kindness  
 will find life, righteousness, and honor.  
 22 A wise person fought a city of warriors  
 and brought down the stronghold in which they felt safe.  
 23 Those who guard their mouths and their tongues  
 guard themselves from trouble.  
 24 Incredibly proud—mockers are their name!  
 Their conduct involves excessive pride.  
 25 The desires of the lazy will kill them,  
 because their hands refuse to do anything.  
 26 The lazy desire things constantly,  
 but the righteous give without holding back.  
 27 The LORD detests the sacrifices of the wicked,  
 especially when brought with devious motives.  
 28 A lying witness will perish,  
 but one who listens will testify successfully.  
 29 The wicked person appears brash,  
 but the virtuous think about the path ahead.

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks *removes*. <sup>a</sup>Heb lacks *will be punished*.

21:9 *Better... than*: See note on Proverbs 3:14-16. *a contentious woman*: See note on Proverbs 19:13.

21:10 *neighbors*: See Proverbs 11:9, 12.

21:11  *mocker*: See note on Proverbs 1:22.

21:12  *righteous... wicked*: See note on Proverbs 3:33, 35.

21:13  *the poor*: See sidebar, "The Wealthy and the Poor" at Proverbs 10.

21:16  *People who wander from the path of insight... the company of the dead*: See Proverbs 4:11, 18-19. Wisdom and righteousness are compared to straight paths and morning light, while the way of the wicked is full of stumbling and deep darkness (that is, the realm of the dead).

21:18  *virtuous*: The Hebrew root of this word occurs 40 times in the book of Proverbs and is translated,

depending on context, in a few ways: "integrity" (see Prov 1:2; 2:7; 9:13; 23:16), "straight ways" (see Prov 3:6; 4:11, 25; 8:9; 9:15; 21:2); "virtuous" (see Prov 3:32; 21:29; 29:10); and "what is right" (see Prov 8:6; 21:8; 28:10). These various translations provide a good range of meaning for the concept.

21:19  *Better... than*: See Proverbs 12:19.  *contentious and angry woman*: See note on Proverbs 19:13.

21:23  *Those who guard their mouths and their tongues*: See note on Proverbs 10:6, 11.

21:24  *mockers*: See note on Proverbs 1:22.

21:25-26  *the lazy*: See Proverbs 10:4-5.

21:27  *sacrifices*: See note on Proverbs 21:3.

21:29  *the virtuous*: See note on Proverbs 21:18.

- <sup>30</sup> No wisdom, understanding,  
or advice can stand up against the LORD.
- <sup>31</sup> A horse is made ready for the day of battle,  
but victory belongs to the LORD.
- 22** A good reputation is better than much wealth;  
high esteem is better than silver and gold.
- <sup>2</sup> The rich and the poor have this in common:  
the LORD made them both.
- <sup>3</sup> Prudent people see trouble and hide,  
while the simpleminded go right to it and get punished.
- <sup>4</sup> The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD  
is wealth, honor, and life.
- <sup>5</sup> Thorns and nets are in the path of the crooked;  
those who guard their lives keep their distance.
- <sup>6</sup> Train children in the way they should go;  
when they grow old, they won't depart from it.
- <sup>7</sup> The wealthy rule over the poor;  
a borrower is a slave to a lender.
- <sup>8</sup> Those who sow injustice will harvest evil;  
the rod of their fury will come to an end.
- <sup>9</sup> Happy are generous people,  
because they give some of their food to the poor.
- <sup>10</sup> Remove the mocker and conflict disappears;  
judgment and shame also stop.
- <sup>11</sup> Those who love a pure heart—  
their speech is gracious, and the king is their friend.
- <sup>12</sup> The LORD's eyes protect knowledge,  
but he frustrates the words of the treacherous.
- <sup>13</sup> A lazy person says, "There's a lion in the street!  
I'll be killed in the town square!"
- <sup>14</sup> The mouth of a mysterious woman is a deep pit;  
those under the LORD's wrath will fall in it.
- <sup>15</sup> Folly is bound up in a child's heart;  
the rod of discipline removes it.
- <sup>16</sup> Oppressing the poor to get rich  
and giving to the wealthy lead only to poverty.

### Thirty sayings of the wise

- <sup>17</sup> Turn your ear and hear the words of the wise;  
focus your mind on my knowledge.
- <sup>18</sup> It will be pleasant if you keep the words in you,  
if you have them ready on your lips.
- <sup>19</sup> So that your trust will be in the LORD,  
I'm teaching you today—yes, you.
- <sup>20</sup> Haven't I written for you thirty<sup>b</sup> sayings  
full of advice and knowledge?

<sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain

21:30 Prv 19:21;

Is 8:10; Jer 9:23

21:31 Ps 20:7;

Ps 33:17; Is 31:1

22:1 Ecc 7:1

22:2 Job 31:15;

Job 34:19;

Prv 14:31;

Prv 29:13

22:3 Prv 14:16;

Prv 27:12

22:4 Prv 15:33

22:5 Prv 15:19

22:10 Gn 21:9;

Gn 21:10;

Prv 1:22;

Prv 26:20

22:15 Prv 13:24;

Prv 19:18;

Prv 23:13;

Prv 23:14;

Prv 29:15

22:17 Prv 5:1;

Prv 23:12

22:20 Prv 8:6

22:1 *better than*: See note on Proverbs 3:14-16.

22:3 *Prudent people*: See note on Proverbs 8:12.

22:5 *the path of the crooked*: See Proverbs 4:24.

22:9 *Happy are*: See note on Proverbs 3:13. *food*: See note on Proverbs 1:31.

22:10  *mocker*: See note on Proverbs 1:22.

22:11 *gracious*: See note on Proverbs 12:4.

22:14 *a mysterious woman*: See Proverbs 2:16-22.

22:15 *the rod of discipline*: See note on Proverbs 13:24.

22:17-24:22 The third section of the book of Proverbs

is called, "Thirty sayings of the wise." This portion of Proverbs parallels in many ways a text from ancient Egypt called "The Instruction of Amenemope." The compiler of the book of Proverbs may have borrowed material from this Egyptian text. The section speaks to many of the themes addressed in Proverbs 1-22, but it places a special emphasis on how to behave when interacting with those of a higher social status. The reader or hearer is addressed directly in the second person ("you"; see 22:19).

22:21 Lk 1:3,  
Lk 1:4

22:23 1Sa 25:39;  
Ps 12:5, Ps 35:10,  
Ps 140:12;  
Prv 23:11

22:28 Dt 19:14,  
Dt 27:17;  
Job 24:2;  
Prv 23:10;  
Hos 5:10

22:29 Gn 41:46;  
Prv 12:24

23:1 Prv 23:2,  
Prv 25:16;  
1Co 9:25,  
1Co 9:27,  
1Co 10:25

23:2 Prv 23:1,  
Prv 23:3,  
Prv 23:20;  
Lk 21:34;  
Ro 13:14

23:3 Ps 141:4;  
Prv 23:6

23:4 Prv 3:5,  
Prv 28:20

23:5 Prv 27:24;  
Mt 6:19;  
1Ti 6:17

23:9 Prv 9:7,  
Prv 26:4, Mt 7:6

23:11 Job 19:25;  
Prv 22:23;  
Jer 50:34

23:13 Prv 13:24,  
Prv 19:18,  
Prv 22:15,  
Prv 29:17

<sup>21</sup> Their purpose is to teach you true, reliable words,  
so you can report back reliably to those who sent you.

<sup>22</sup> Don't steal from the poor, because they are poor.  
Don't oppress the needy in the gate.

<sup>23</sup> The LORD will take up their case  
and press the life out of those who oppress them.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Don't befriend people controlled by anger;  
don't associate with hot-tempered people;  
<sup>25</sup> otherwise, you will learn their ways and become trapped.

<sup>26</sup> Don't shake hands to guarantee a loan.

<sup>27</sup> If you can't repay, why should they be able to take your bed from you?

<sup>28</sup> Don't remove an ancient boundary marker that your ancestors established.

<sup>29</sup> Do you see people who work skillfully?  
They will work for kings but not work for lowly people.

**23** When you sit down to dine with a ruler,  
carefully consider what is in front of you.

<sup>1</sup> Place a knife at your throat to control your appetite.

<sup>2</sup> Don't long for the ruler's delicacies; the food misleads.

<sup>4</sup> Don't wear yourself out trying to get rich;  
be smart enough to stop.

<sup>5</sup> When your eyes fly to wealth it is gone;  
it grows wings like an eagle and flies heavenward.

<sup>6</sup> Don't eat food with stingy people; don't long for their delicacies,  
<sup>7</sup> because they are like a hair in the throat.<sup>d</sup>  
They say to you, "Eat and drink!" but they don't mean it.

<sup>8</sup> You will eat scraps and vomit them out.  
You will waste your pleasant words.

<sup>9</sup> Don't speak in the ears of fools,  
for they will scorn your insightful words.

<sup>10</sup> Don't remove an ancient boundary marker;  
don't invade the fields of orphans,

<sup>11</sup> for their redeemer is strong.  
He will bring charges against you.

<sup>12</sup> Bring your mind to instruction,  
your ear to knowledgeable sayings.

<sup>13</sup> Don't withhold instruction from children;  
if you strike them with a rod, they won't die.

<sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>LXX; Heb uncertain

22:21 *those who sent you*: This phrase may indicate that the teaching included in this section of Proverbs was taught in a school, a place a young man would have been sent to learn proper social conduct.

22:22-23 *the poor ... the needy*: See Proverbs 10:15; see note on Proverbs 28:3.

22:26-27 *to guarantee a loan*: See note on Proverbs 6:1-5.

22:28 *boundary marker*: These established the limits of family and clan farming and grazing lands in the ancient

Near East. To move boundary markers meant cheating others out of their means of providing for their families (see Deut 19:14).

23:1-3, 6-9 *to dine ... your appetite ... the food; food ... delicacies ... "Eat and drink"*: See notes on Proverbs 1:31; 13:2-4. 23:10-11 *an ancient boundary marker*: See note on Proverbs 22:28.

23:13-14 *a rod*: See note on Proverbs 13:24. *the grave*: See Proverbs 1:12-15.

- 14 Strike them with a rod,  
and you will save their lives from the grave.\*
- 15 My child, if your heart is wise, then my heart too will be happy.
- 16 My inner being will rejoice when your lips speak with integrity.
- 17 Don't let your heart envy sinners, but fear the LORD constantly;  
18 then you will have a future, and your hope won't be cut off.
- 19 Listen, my child, and be wise!  
Keep your mind straight on the path.
- 20 Don't hang out with those who get drunk on wine  
or those who eat too much meat,  
21 because drunks and gluttons will be impoverished;  
their stupor will clothe them in rags.
- 22 Listen to your father, who gave you life;  
don't despise your elderly mother.
- 23 Buy truth and don't sell it;  
buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.
- 24 The father of the righteous will be very happy;  
the one who gives life to the wise will rejoice.
- 25 Your father and your mother will rejoice;  
she who gave you birth will be happy.
- 26 My child, give your mind to me  
and let your eyes keep to my path.
- 27 A prostitute is a deep pit,  
and a foreign woman is a narrow well.
- 28 Indeed, she ambushes like a robber  
and increases the number of the faithless.
- 29 Who is suffering?  
Who is uneasy?  
Who has arguments?  
Who has complaints?  
Who has unnecessary wounds?  
Who has glazed eyes?—  
30 those who linger over wine;  
those who go looking for mixed wine.
- 31 Don't look at wine when it is red,  
when it sparkles in the cup, going down smoothly.
- 32 In the end, it bites like a snake  
and poisons like a viper.
- 33 Your eyes will see strange things,  
and your heart will speak distorted words.
- 34 You will be like one who lies down while out on the sea<sup>f</sup>  
or one who lies on top of a mast.
- 35 "Though hit, I feel no pain;  
though beaten up, I don't know anything about it.  
When I wake up, I'll look for wine again!"

23:14 25a 22:6;  
Job 11:8;  
Prv 13:24;  
Prv 22:15;  
1Co 5:5

23:20 Prv 20:1,  
Prv 23:29,  
Prv 28:7; Is 5:11,  
Is 5:22

23:21 Prv 21:17

23:24 Prv 10:1,  
Prv 15:20,  
Prv 23:15,  
Prv 29:3

23:27 Prv 22:14

23:29 Is 5:11

23:30 Ps 75:8,  
Prv 9:2,  
Prv 20:1,  
Prv 23:29;  
Is 5:11

23:31 Prv 20:1,  
Prv 21:17,  
Prv 23:20,  
Prv 23:29,  
Prv 23:32

23:32 Ps 91:13

23:33 Prv 2:12

23:35 Is 56:12;  
Jer 5:3

\*Heb Sheol <sup>f</sup>Or in the heart of the sea

23:17 *sinners*: See note on Proverbs 1:10. *fear the LORD*: See note on Proverbs 1:7.

23:20-21 *wine... too much meat*: See note on Proverbs 1:31.

23:22, 25 *your father... your elderly mother... your mother*:

These words recall Proverbs 1:8, the opening words of the book.

23:26 *path*: See note on Proverbs 10:9.

23:27 *foreign woman*: See Proverbs 21:6-22.

23:29-35 *wine... mixed wine... wine again!*: comments

24:3 Prv 14:1

24:4 Prv 8:21

24:7 Prv 14:6

24:9 Ps 1:1;

Prv 1:22;

Prv 11:20;

Prv 15:26;

Mt 15:19

24:11 Ps 82:4;

Is 58:6, Is 58:7;

24:12 [Isa 16:7];

Job 34:11;

Ps 62:12;

Prv 21:2;

Jer 17:10

24:15 Ps 10:9;

Ps 10:10;

Prv 1:11

24:16 Job 5:19;

Ps 37:24

24:17 Job 31:29;

Ps 35:15;

Ps 35:19;

Prv 17:5;

Obad 1:12

24:18 Job 31:29

24:21 Ecc 8:2;

Ro 13:1;

1Pt 2:17

**24** Don't envy evil people,  
and don't long to be with them.

<sup>2</sup>Their hearts are focused on violence,  
and their lips speak of trouble.

<sup>3</sup>By wisdom a house is built;  
by understanding it is established.

<sup>4</sup>By knowledge rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant wealth.

<sup>5</sup>A wise person is mightier than a strong one;<sup>6</sup>  
a knowledgeable person than a powerful one.

<sup>6</sup>You should make war with guidance;  
victory comes with many counselors.

<sup>7</sup>Wisdom is beyond foolish people.  
They don't open their mouths in the gate.

<sup>8</sup>Those who plot evil  
will be called master schemers.

<sup>9</sup>The scheming of fools is sin;  
people detest mockers.

<sup>10</sup>If you show yourself weak on a day of distress,  
your strength is too small.

<sup>11</sup>Rescue those being taken off to death;  
and from those staggering to the slaughter, don't hold back.

<sup>12</sup>If you say, "Look, we didn't know about it,"  
the one who weighs hearts—doesn't he understand?  
The one who protects your life—he knows.  
He makes people pay for their actions.

<sup>13</sup>My child, eat honey, for it is good.  
The honeycomb is sweet in your mouth.

<sup>14</sup>Know that wisdom is like that for your whole being.  
If you find it, there is a future.  
Your hope won't be cut off.

<sup>15</sup>Wicked one, don't wait secretly at the home of the righteous.  
Don't destroy their dwelling.

<sup>16</sup>The righteous may fall seven times but still get up,  
but the wicked will stumble into trouble.

<sup>17</sup>When your enemies fall, don't rejoice.  
When they stumble, don't let your heart be glad,

<sup>18</sup>or the LORD will see it and be displeased,  
and he will turn his anger from them.

<sup>19</sup>Don't get fighting mad at evil people;  
don't be envious of the wicked.

<sup>20</sup>Indeed, there is no future for the evil;  
the lamp of the wicked will be put out.

<sup>21</sup>Fear the LORD, my child, as well as the king.  
Don't associate with those who are rebellious.

<sup>6</sup>LXX; MT *A wise man is strong.*

on the dangers of overindulgence of food and drink (see note on Prov 1:31).

**24:3-4** *By wisdom a house is built:* "House" is an image for how one lives one's life (see Prov 9:1-6; 14:1; 31:26-27).

**24:7** *mouths:* See note on Proverbs 10:6, 11.

**24:9** *sin:* See note on Proverbs 1:10. *mockers:* See note on Proverbs 1:22.

**24:13-14** *eat honey... The honeycomb:* See note on Proverbs 1:31.

**24:15-16** *Wicked one... The righteous:* See note on Proverbs 3:33, 35.

**24:20** *the lamp of the wicked:* See notes on Proverbs 13:9; 3:33, 35.

**24:21** *Fear the LORD:* See note on Proverbs 1:7.

24:22 Lv 26:16;  
Prv 6:15,  
Prv 29:1  
24:27 Lk 14:28  
24:28 Ex 20:16;  
Prv 25:18  
24:30 Prv 6:6,  
Prv 22:13,  
Prv 24:31,  
Prv 26:13;  
Ecc 10:18  
25:12 KJ 18:1;  
Prv 1:1, Prv 10:1  
25:2 Dt 29:29;  
Ro 11:33

22 Disaster comes suddenly from them.  
Who can know the ruin that both can bring?

**More sayings of the wise**

23 These are also the sayings of the wise:

Partiality in judgment isn't good.

24 Those who say to the guilty, "You are innocent"—  
the people will curse them.  
Nations will condemn them.

25 But it will go well for those who rebuke them.  
A rich blessing will come to them.

26 Those who speak honestly  
are like those who kiss on the lips.

27 Get your outside work done;  
make preparations in the field;  
then you can build your house.

28 Don't be a witness against your neighbor without reason;  
don't deceive with your lips.

29 Don't say, "I'll do to them what they did to me."  
I'll pay them back for their actions."

30 I happened upon the field of a lazy person,  
by the vineyard of one with no sense.

31 Thorns grew all over it;  
weeds covered the ground,  
and the stone wall was falling down.

32 I observed this and took it to heart;  
I saw it and learned a lesson.

33 "A little sleep, a little slumber,  
a little lying down with folded arms"—

34 and poverty will come on you like a prowler,  
deprivation like a man with a shield.

**More proverbs of Solomon**

**25** These are also proverbs of Solomon, copied by the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah:

<sup>2</sup> It is the glory of God to hide something  
and the glory of kings to discover something.

<sup>3</sup> Like the high heavens and the depths of the earth,  
so the mind of a king is unsearchable.

<sup>4</sup> Remove the dross from the silver,  
and a vessel will come out for the refiner.

<sup>5</sup> Remove the wicked from the king's presence,  
and his throne will be established in righteousness.

24:23-34 A brief section of more "sayings of the wise." Its opening advice, *Partiality in judgment isn't good*, provides the theme for the sayings.

24:26 *kiss on the lips*: An image that we no longer understand, but see note on Proverbs 10:6, 11.

24:28 *your neighbor*: See Proverbs 11:9, 12.

24:30-34 *a lazy person*: See Proverbs 10:4-5.

25:1 *Hezekiah* reigned as king of Israel from approximately 728–700 BCE (see 2 Kgs 18:1–20:21). He's sometimes

viewed as a second Solomon because of his wisdom in dealing with difficult political issues. The word translated as *copied* most likely refers to the editing and arranging of the sayings in these chapters.

25:2-7 *the king*: For discussions of the role of the king, see Proverbs 12:10; 16:10, 12-15. *glory*: or "heaviness," also translated as "honor" and "esteem."

25:5 *the wicked... righteousness*: See note on Proverbs 3:33, 35.

25:7 Lk 14:7;

Lk 14:8

25:8 Prv 17:14;

Mt 5:25

25:11 Prv 15:23

25:12 Ps 141:5;

Prv 15:31

25:14 Prv 20:6;

Jud 4:12

25:16 Jgs 14:8;

1Sa 14:25;

Prv 24:13;

Prv 25:27

25:18 Ps 57:4;

Prv 12:18;

Prv 24:28

25:20 Ps 69:21;

Ps 137:3;

Prv 10:26;

Ro 12:15

25:21 Ex 23:4;

Ex 23:5;

Prv 24:17;

Prv 25:22;

Ro 12:20

25:22 Prv 25:21;

Mt 5:44;

Ro 12:20

25:23 Ps 101:5;

Ro 1:30;

2Co 12:20

25:24 Prv 19:13;

Prv 21:9;

Prv 27:15

25:25 Prv 15:30

- <sup>6</sup>Don't exalt yourself in the presence of the king,  
or stand in the place of important people,  
<sup>7</sup>because it is better that he say to you, "Come up here,"  
than to be demoted before a ruler.

What your eyes see, <sup>8</sup>don't be quick to quarrel over;  
what will you do in the future when your neighbor shames you?

- <sup>9</sup>Argue it out with your neighbor,  
and don't give away someone's secret.  
<sup>10</sup>Otherwise, the one who hears it will vilify you;  
the slander against you will never stop.
- <sup>11</sup>Words spoken at the right time  
are like gold apples in a silver setting.  
<sup>12</sup>Wise correction to an ear that listens  
is like a gold earring or jewelry of fine gold.
- <sup>13</sup>Like the coolness of snow on a harvest day  
are reliable messengers to those who send them;  
they restore the life of their master.
- <sup>14</sup>People who brag about a gift never given  
are like clouds and wind that produce no rain.
- <sup>15</sup>A commander can be persuaded with patience,  
and a tender tongue can break a bone.
- <sup>16</sup>If you find honey, eat just the right amount;  
otherwise, you'll get full and vomit it up.
- <sup>17</sup>Don't spend too much time in your neighbor's house.  
Otherwise, they'll get fed up with you and hate you.
- <sup>18</sup>People who testify falsely against their neighbors  
are like a club, sword, and sharpened arrow.
- <sup>19</sup>Trusting a treacherous person at a difficult time  
is like having a bad tooth or a wobbly foot.
- <sup>20</sup>Singing a song to a troubled heart  
is like taking off a garment on a cold day  
or putting vinegar on a wound.<sup>b</sup>
- <sup>21</sup>If your enemies are starving, feed them some bread;  
if they are thirsty, give them water to drink.
- <sup>22</sup>By doing this, you will heap burning coals on their heads,  
and the LORD will reward you.
- <sup>23</sup>The north wind stirs up rain,  
and a person who plots quietly provokes angry faces.
- <sup>24</sup>Better to live on the edge of a roof  
than to share a house with a contentious woman.
- <sup>25</sup>Good news from a distant land  
is like cold water for a weary person.
- <sup>26</sup>A righteous person giving in to the wicked  
is like a contaminated spring or a polluted fountain.
- <sup>27</sup>Eating too much honey isn't good,  
nor is it appropriate to seek honor.

<sup>b</sup>LXX; MT *vinegar on natron* (a detergent)

25:6-7b *Don't exalt yourself*: the wisdom of humility over pride. Jesus' parable in Luke 14:7-11 reflects the words of these verses. *better... than*: See note on Proverbs 3:14-16. 25:7c-10 *neighbor*: See Proverbs 11:9, 12. 25:11-15 *Words... Wise correction... reliable messengers... People who brag... a tender tongue*: Five sayings about the importance and power of language. See note on Proverbs 10:6, 11.

25:16, 27 *If you find honey... Eating too much honey*: See note on Proverbs 1:31. 25:17-18 *neighbors*: See Proverbs 11:9, 12. 25:21-22 *your enemies... burning coals*: These verses are quoted in Romans 12:20. 25:24 *Better... than*: See note on Proverbs 3:14-16. *a contentious woman*: See note on Proverbs 19:13.



20 A person without self-control  
is like a breached city, one with no walls.

26 Like snow in the summer or rain at harvest,  
so honor isn't appropriate for a fool.

2 Like a darting sparrow, like a flying swallow,  
so an undeserved curse never arrives.

3 A whip for a horse, a bridle for a donkey,  
and a rod for the back of fools.

4 Don't answer fools according to their folly,  
or you will become like them yourself.

5 Answer fools according to their folly,  
or they will deem themselves wise.

6 Sending messages with a fool  
is like cutting off one's feet or drinking down violence.

7 As legs dangle from a disabled person,  
so does a proverb in the mouth of fools.

8 Like tying a stone in a sling,  
so is giving respect to a fool.

9 Like a thorny bush in the hand of a drunk,  
so is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

10 Like an archer who wounds someone randomly,  
so is one who hires a fool or a passerby.

11 Like a dog that returns to its vomit,  
so a fool repeats foolish mistakes.

12 Do you see people who consider themselves wise?  
There is more hope for a fool than for them.

13 A lazy person says, "There's a lion in the path!  
A lion in the plazas!"

14 As a door turns on its hinge,  
so do lazy people in their beds.

15 Lazy people bury their hand into the bowl,  
too tired to return it to their mouth.

16 Lazy people think they are wiser  
than seven people who answer sensibly.

17 Like yanking the ears of a dog,  
so is one who passes by and gets involved in another person's fight.

18 Like a crazy person shooting deadly flaming arrows

19 are those who deceive their neighbor and say, "Hey, I was only joking!"

20 Without wood a fire goes out;  
without gossips, conflict calms down.

21 Like adding charcoal to embers or wood to fire,  
quarrelsome people kindle strife.

22 The words of gossips are like choice snacks;  
they go down to the inmost parts.

25:28 Prv 16:32

26:2 Nm 23:8;

Dt 23:5;

2Sa 16:12

26:4 Prv 23:9;

Mt 7:6

26:5 Prv 3:7,

Prv 26:12,

Prv 28:11;

Is 5:21; Ro 12:16

26:9 Prv 23:35,

Prv 26:7

26:10 Gn 1:1;

Ps 107:17;

Prv 11:31

26:11 Ex 8:15;

2Pt 2:22

26:12 Prv 3:7,

Prv 26:5,

Prv 28:11,

Prv 29:20;

Ro 12:16

26:17 Prv 20:3

26:22 Prv 18:8

26:1-11 These verses contain a number of sayings about fools. See sidebar, "The Fool" at Proverbs 3.

26:1 *honor*: See Proverbs 25:2, where the word is translated as "glory."

26:2 *curse*: See Proverbs 30:10-11.

26:3 *a rod*: See note on Proverbs 13:24.

26:4-5 *Don't answer fools... Answer fools*: Two seemingly contradictory statements. A single proverb isn't appropriate for every circumstance. For example, consider the modern proverbs "many hands make light work" and "too many cooks spoil the broth." Such sayings reflect the

changing nature of human relationships and the orderly balance sought through proverbial wisdom.

26:12 *people who consider themselves wise*: The final word in this section on the fool is a word of warning to those who consider themselves wise (see Prov 3:7).

26:15-16 These verses describe the lazy person. For the value that the book of Proverbs places on hard work, see Proverbs 10:4-5.

26:20-28 *gossips... a lying tongue... a flattering mouth*: A group of proverbs about those who gossip. In 26:20-21, gossiping is like keeping a fire going.

26:25 Ps 28:3

26:27 Ps 7:15;

Prv 28:10;

Ecc 10:8

27:1 Lk 12:19;

Jas 4:13, Jas 4:14

27:2 Prv 25:27;

2Co 10:12;

2Co 10:18;

2Co 12:11

27:4 Prv 6:34

27:6 2Sa 20:9;

Ps 141:5;

Mt 26:49

27:7 Prv 24:13;

Lk 15:16

27:8 Is 16:2

27:10 1Ki 12:6;

Prv 17:17;

Prv 18:24

27:12 Prv 22:3

27:14 Ps 12:2

- 23 Smooth<sup>1</sup> lips and an evil heart  
are like silver coating on clay.
- 24 Hateful people mislead with their lips,  
keeping their deception within.
- 25 Though they speak graciously, don't believe them,  
for seven horrible things are in their heart.
- 26 They may cover their hatred with trickery,  
but their evil will be revealed in public.
- 27 Those who dig a pit will fall in it;  
those who roll a stone will have it turn back on them.
- 28 A lying tongue hates those it crushes;  
a flattering mouth causes destruction.

- 27 Don't brag about tomorrow,  
for you don't know what a day will bring.
- 2 Let another person praise you, and not your own mouth;  
a stranger, and not your own lips.
- 3 A stone is heavy and sand weighs much,  
but the nuisance of fools is heavier than both.
- 4 Wrath is cruel and anger is a flood,  
but who can withstand jealousy?
- 5 A public correction is better than hidden love.
- 6 Trustworthy are the bruises of a friend;  
excessive are the kisses of an enemy.
- 7 Someone who is full refuses honey,  
but anything bitter tastes sweet to a hungry person.
- 8 Like a bird wandering from its nest,  
so is one who wanders from home.
- 9 Oil and incense make the heart glad,  
and the sweetness of friends comes from their advice.<sup>1</sup>
- 10 Don't desert your friend or a friend of your family;  
don't go to your relative's house when disaster strikes.  
Better a neighbor nearby than a relative far away.
- 11 Be wise, my child, and make my heart glad,  
so I can answer those who insult me.
- 12 Prudent people see evil and hide;  
the simpleminded go right to it and get punished.
- 13 Take the garment of the person who secures a loan for a stranger;  
take his pledge for a foreigner.
- 14 Greeting a neighbor with a loud voice early in the morning  
will be viewed as a curse.

<sup>1</sup>LXX; Heb uncertain <sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain

26:25 *seven horrible things*: The number seven in the Bible usually indicates completeness, totality, or perfection (e.g., Prov 6:16; 9:1; 26:25; Gen 2:2; 7:2; 41:25-27; John 6:5-13). Those who gossip, *Though they speak graciously*, have only horrible things... in their heart. For "horrible"; see note on Proverbs 6:16-19.

26:26-27 *their evil will be revealed*... *Those who dig a pit will fall in it*: words of hope for anyone who has been hurt by gossip.

27:3 *the nuisance of fools*: See sidebar, "The Fool" at Proverbs 3.

27:4 *who can withstand jealousy?*: The word "jealousy" occurs three times in Proverbs at 6:34; 14:30; 27:4.

27:5-6, 9 *the bruises of a friend*... *the sweetness of friends*:

These verses summarize the value of true friendship that sometimes requires brutal honesty.

27:5 *better than*: See note on Proverbs 3:14-16.

27:8 *Like a bird wandering from its nest*: See note on Proverbs 6:6-11.

27:10 *don't go to your relative's house*: A gentle admonition to stay true to your friends and your family but not to rely too much on your family in times of need. Sometimes a neighbor is a better help than your own family (cf. Prov 25:17; a single proverbial saying isn't appropriate for every circumstance.) *Better... than*: See note on Proverbs 3:14-16.

27:11 *my child*: See note on Proverbs 1:8.

27:12 *Prudent*: See note on Proverbs 8:12.

27:13 *a loan for a stranger*: See note on Proverbs 6:1-5.

27:14 *Greeting a neighbor*: See Proverbs 11:9, 12.

27:15 Prv 19:13,  
Prv 21:9,  
Prv 21:19,  
Prv 25:24  
27:20 Job 26:6;  
Prv 15:11,  
Prv 30:16;  
Ecc 1:8; Hab 2:5  
27:21 Prv 17:3  
27:22 Jer 5:3  
27:23 Prv 12:10,  
Prv 27:27;  
Ecc 9:10,  
Ecc 11:6; Jn 10:3  
27:25 Song 2:11  
28:1 Lv 26:17;  
Ps 53:5  
28:4 Ro 1:32;  
Eph 5:11  
28:5 Ps 92:6;  
Jn 7:17;  
1Co 2:15

- 15 The constant dripping on a rainy day  
and a contentious woman are alike;  
16 anyone who can control her  
can control the wind  
or pick up oil in his hand.  
17 As iron sharpens iron,  
so friends sharpen each other's faces.  
18 Those who tend a fig tree will eat its fruit,  
and those who look after their master will be honored.  
19 As water reflects the face,  
so the heart reflects one person to another.  
20 The grave<sup>k</sup> and the underworld<sup>l</sup> are never satisfied;  
and people's eyes are never satisfied.  
21 A crucible is for silver and a furnace for gold,  
so are people in the presence of someone who praises them.  
22 Even if you grind fools in a mortar,  
even grinding them along with the grain,  
their folly won't be driven from them.  
23 Know your flock well;  
pay attention to your herds,  
24 for no treasure lasts forever,  
nor a crown generation after generation.  
25 When the grass goes away, new growth appears,  
and the plants of the hills are gathered,  
26 then the lambs will provide your clothes,  
and the goats will be the price of your fields.  
27 There will be enough goat's milk for your food,  
for the food of your house, and to nourish your young women.

**28** The wicked run away even though no one pursues them,  
but the righteous are as confident as a lion.

- <sup>2</sup> When a land rebels, there are many leaders;  
but a person with understanding brings order.  
<sup>3</sup> Poor people who oppress the needy  
are rain that washes away food.  
<sup>4</sup> Those who abandon Instruction praise the wicked,  
but those who follow Instruction battle them.  
<sup>5</sup> Evil people don't understand justice,  
but those who seek the LORD understand everything.

<sup>k</sup>Heb Sheol <sup>l</sup>Heb Abaddon

27:15-16 *a contentious woman*: See note on Proverbs 19:13.

27:20 *The grave and the underworld*: See sidebar, "Sheol" at Proverbs 1.

27:22 *fools*: See sidebar, "The Fool" at Proverbs 3.

27:23-27 *Know your flock... then the lambs... and the goats*: See Proverbs 12:10.

28:1-29:27 The major themes of these two chapters are "the wicked" and "the greedy."

28:1 *The wicked... the righteous*: See note on Proverbs 3:33, 35.

28:3 *Poor people*: See sidebar, "The Wealthy and the Poor" at Proverbs 10. *who oppress the needy*: an interesting insight into the book of Proverbs' understanding of the difference between being "poor" and being "needy." The poor are those who find themselves in situations of temporary want that can be alleviated by the generosity of those around them. The word translated "needy" in

28:3 suggests that these are people who, because of some devastating life situation, most likely will never be able to care for themselves, and must rely on the goodwill of others for their well-being.

28:4 *Instruction*: The Hebrew word here is "Torah," and it occurs four times in this chapter (28:4, 7, 9) and only two other places in the book of Proverbs (Prov 6:23; 29:18). Many think of "Torah" as a set of laws, of rules and regulations, for what to do and not to do in life. But it is much more. The books of Genesis through Deuteronomy are called "The Torah," and contain teaching or instruction about how to live life, including what to think and what to eat. The *Instruction* establishes rules and regulations as part of the stories of God's relationship with our great ancestors in the faith: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah and Rachel, Moses and Aaron and Miriam. "Torah" is a form of instruction, and proverbs are another form of instruction.

28:6 Prv 19:1  
 28:13 Lv 26:40;  
 Job 31:33;  
 Ps 32:3, Ps 32:5;  
 1Jn 1:9  
 28:14 Ps 95:8;  
 Prv 23:17,  
 Prv 29:1  
 28:19 Prv 12:11  
 28:20 Prv 28:22

- <sup>6</sup> Better to be poor and walk in innocence  
 than to be on crooked paths and wealthy.
- <sup>7</sup> Intelligent children follow Instruction,  
 but those who befriend gluttons shame their parents.
- <sup>8</sup> Those who become rich through high interest rates  
 gather money for those who are generous to the poor.
- <sup>9</sup> Those who turn their ears from hearing Instruction—  
 even their prayers will be detested.
- <sup>10</sup> Whoever misleads those who do right onto an evil path  
 will fall into their own pit,  
 but the blameless will inherit good things.
- <sup>11</sup> Rich people think they are wise,  
 but an insightful poor person sees through them.
- <sup>12</sup> When the righteous rejoice, there is great respect,  
 but people hide when the wicked prosper.
- <sup>13</sup> Those who hide their sins won't succeed,  
 but those who confess and give them up will receive mercy.
- <sup>14</sup> Happy are those who are continually fearful,  
 but those whose hearts are hard fall into trouble.
- <sup>15</sup> A wicked ruler over the poor  
 is like a growling lion or a prowling bear.
- <sup>16</sup> A prince without understanding is a cruel oppressor,  
 but one who hates unjust gain will live long.
- <sup>17</sup> If someone feels guilty about murder,  
 don't hold them back from fleeing to the pit.
- <sup>18</sup> Those who walk in innocence will be saved,  
 but those who go on twisted paths will fall into the grave.
- <sup>19</sup> Those who work the land will have plenty to eat,  
 but those with worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.
- <sup>20</sup> Reliable people will have abundant blessings,  
 but those with get-rich-quick schemes won't go unpunished.
- <sup>21</sup> Those who show favoritism aren't good;  
 people do wrong for a crust of bread.
- <sup>22</sup> The stingy try to get rich fast,  
 unaware that loss will come to them.
- <sup>23</sup> Those who correct someone will, in the end, find more favor  
 than those with flattering tongues.
- <sup>24</sup> Those who steal from their father and mother,  
 and say, "It's not a crime," are friends of vandals.
- <sup>25</sup> Greedy people stir up conflict,  
 but those who trust the LORD become prosperous.
- <sup>26</sup> Those who trust in their own reasoning are fools,  
 but those who walk in wisdom will be kept safe.

28:6 *Better... than*: See note on Proverbs 3:14-16.  
*poor... wealthy*: See sidebar, "The Wealthy and the Poor"  
 at Proverbs 10.

28:12 *righteous... wicked*: See note on Proverbs 3:33, 35.  
 28:14 *Happy are those*: See note on Proverbs 3:13. *fearful...  
 hard*: This kind of fear means "to tremble, to be cautious,"  
 and the word translated "hard" means "inflexible, unfeel-  
 ing." The verse warns against setting your mind on a par-  
 ticular course and refusing to consider the pitfalls or the  
 dangers of your decision or the other options that might  
 be available.

28:17 *don't hold them back from fleeing to the pit*: A dif-  
 ficult verse to understand because of the unclear He-  
 brew words in it. Various interpretations are possible, but  
 the basic meaning seems to be that someone who has

committed as heinous a crime as murder has no hope for  
 rest in this life.

28:18 *twisted paths*: See note on Proverbs 10:9. *the  
 grave*: See sidebar, "Sheol" at Proverbs 1. Proverbs 28:17-  
 18 can be read as parallel statements of condemnation  
 for the guilty.

28:19 This verse is the same as Proverbs 12:11 except for  
 the last line. In Proverbs 12:11, worthless pursuits come  
 from a "lack of sense," while in 28:19, such pursuits result  
 in *poverty*.

28:24 *father and mother*: See note on Proverbs 19:26.

28:26-28 Chapter 28 closes with statements about the  
 three groups of people that are addressed repeatedly in  
 the book of Proverbs, and who are a dominant theme  
 in Proverbs 28-29: *fools* (28:26; see sidebar, "The Fool" at

- 27 Those who give to the poor will lack nothing,  
but those who turn a blind eye will be greatly cursed.
- 28 When the wicked rise up, people hide,  
but when they are destroyed, the righteous multiply.

29 One who stays stubborn after many corrections  
will be suddenly broken, beyond healing.

- 2 When the righteous become numerous, the people rejoice,  
but when the wicked dominate, the people moan.
- 3 A man who loves wisdom makes his father rejoice,  
but one who spends time with prostitutes destroys riches.
- 4 A king gives stability to the land by justice,  
but one who imposes heavy taxes tears it down.
- 5 People who flatter their friends  
spread out a net for their feet.
- 6 The wicked are snared by their own sin,<sup>m</sup>  
the righteous sing and rejoice.
- 7 The righteous know the rights of the poor,  
but the wicked don't understand.
- 8 Mockers set a city on fire,  
but the wise turn back anger.
- 9 When the wise make a legal charge against the foolish,  
the fools shout, they laugh—there is no calm.
- 10 Murderous people hate the innocent,  
and they seek the lives of the virtuous.
- 11 Fools show all their anger,  
but the wise hold it back.
- 12 If a ruler listens to lies,  
those who serve him will be wicked.
- 13 The poor and their oppressors have a common bond—  
the LORD gives light to the eyes of both.
- 14 If a king judges the poor honestly,  
his throne will be established forever.
- 15 The rod and correction lead to wisdom,  
but children out of control shame their mothers.
- 16 When the wicked become numerous, so do crimes;  
the righteous will see their downfall.
- 17 Instruct your children; they will give you peace of mind  
and bring delight into your life.
- 18 When there's no vision, the people get out of control,  
but whoever obeys instruction is happy.
- 19 Servants aren't disciplined by words;  
they might understand, but they don't respond.

<sup>m</sup>Tg, Syr; MT *In the sin of an evil man is a snare*

28:27 Prv 11:24,  
Prv 19:17,  
Prv 22:9  
28:28 Prv 28:12  
29:3 Prv 6:26,  
Prv 10:1,  
Prv 15:20,  
Prv 27:11,  
Prv 28:7  
29:5 Ps 5:9,  
Prv 26:28,  
Prv 28:23  
29:7 Job 29:16,  
Ps 41:1  
29:11 Prv 12:16  
29:12 2Ki 21:9  
29:13 Ps 13:3,  
Prv 22:2  
29:16 Ps 37:34,  
Ps 37:36,  
Ps 58:10, Ps 91:8,  
Ps 92:11  
29:17 Prv 10:1,  
Prv 13:24,  
Prv 19:18,  
Prv 22:15,  
Prv 29:15  
29:19 Job 19:16

Prov 3); the poor (28:27; see sidebar, "The Wealthy and the Poor" at Prov 10); and the wicked... the righteous (28:28; see note on Prov 3:33,35).

29:2 righteous... wicked: See note on Proverbs 3:33, 35.  
29:3 wisdom... prostitutes: See note on Proverbs 6:20-35.  
29:5-6 People who flatter... spread out a net for their feet: The Hebrew text for verse 5 has two possible meanings. The net spread could capture the flatterers or their friends. But verse 6 suggests that the flatterers will be caught in their own snares. sin: See note on Proverbs 1:10.  
29:9, 11 Mockers: See note on Proverbs 1:22.  
29:9, 11 wise... foolish: See sidebar, "The Fool" at Proverbs 3.

29:13 The poor: See sidebar, "The Wealthy and the Poor" at Proverbs 10. light to the eyes: See note on Proverbs 13:9.

29:15, 17 The rod and correction... Instruct your children: See note on Proverbs 13:24.  
29:16 wicked... righteous: See note on Proverbs 3:33, 35.  
29:18 instruction: the Hebrew word "Torah," one of only six occurrences of this word in the book of Proverbs. See note on Proverbs 28:4. happy: See note on Proverbs 3:13. The use of both "instruction" and "happy" in this verse recalls the happiness of observing the Lord's Instruction in Psalm 119.  
29:19, 21 Servants: See note on Proverbs 19:13.

29:20 Prv 19:2,  
Prv 21:5,  
Prv 26:12;  
Ecc 5:2

29:22 Prv 15:18,  
Prv 26:21,  
Prv 30:33

29:27 Dt 16:19,  
Dt 24:17;  
Ps 82:2;  
Prv 29:10;  
1In 3:13

30:1 Prv 31:1

30:2 Ps 73:22

30:3 Prv 9:10

30:4 Job 26:8;  
Is 40:12; 1In 3:13

30:5 Gn 15:4;  
Ps 12:6, Ps 18:30;  
Ps 84:11;  
Ps 119:140

30:6 Dt 4:2,  
Dt 12:32;  
Rev 22:18,  
Rev 22:19

30:8 Gn 28:20;  
Mt 6:11

30:9 Ex 20:7;  
Dt 31:20;  
Hos 13:6

**20** Do you see people who are quick to speak?

There is more hope for fools than for them.

**21** Pamper servants from a young age,  
and later on there will be trouble.

**22** Angry people stir up conflict;  
hotheads cause much offense.

**23** Pride lays people low,  
but those of humble spirit gain honor.

**24** Those who share plunder with thieves hate themselves;  
even under oath, they don't testify.

**25** People are trapped by their fear of others;  
those who trust the LORD are secure.

**26** Many seek access to the ruler,  
but justice comes from the LORD.

**27** The unjust person is disgusting to the righteous;  
the straight path is disgusting to the wicked.

### Words of Agur

**30** The words of Agur, Jakeh's son, from Massa.

The man declares: I'm tired, God;  
I'm tired, God, and I'm exhausted.

**1** Actually, I'm too stupid to be human,  
a man without understanding.

**1** I haven't learned wisdom,  
nor do I have knowledge of the holy one.

**4** Who has gone up to heaven and come down?  
Who has gathered the wind by the handful?  
Who has bound up the waters in a garment?  
Who has established all the ends of the earth?  
What is this person's name and the name of this person's child—  
if you know it?

**5** All God's words are tried and true;  
a shield for those who take refuge in him.

**6** Don't add to his words,  
or he will correct you and show you to be a liar.

**7** Two things I ask of you;  
don't keep them from me before I die:

**8** Fraud and lies—keep far from me!  
Don't give me either poverty or wealth;  
give me just the food I need.

**9** Or I'll be full and deny you, and say, "Who is the LORD?"  
Or I'll be poor and steal, and dishonor my God's name.

**29:22** *Angry people... hotheads*: A warning against those who allow anger and strife to rule over them.

**29:27** *righteous... wicked*: See note on Proverbs 3:33, 35. *straight path*: See note on Proverbs 10:9.

**30:1-3** *I'm tired...I'm exhausted...I'm too stupid...I haven't learned wisdom*: The opening words of the chapter convey a sense of being tired and frustrated from trying to understand the complexities of wisdom.

**30:1** No one knows the identity of *Agur* or the location of *Massa*. The Hebrew words might not be proper names.

**30:4** *Who has gone up to heaven...?*: four questions, all

with the obvious answer, "no one." This series of questions is like God's questions to Job in Job 38–41. Only God knows the true workings of this world.

**30:7-9** *poverty or wealth*: With too much wealth a person often denies God. But with the opposite problem—too little food or income—a weary person may steal in order to survive. See sidebar, "The Wealthy and the Poor" at Proverbs 10.

**30:7** *Two things*: Most of the proverbs in chapter 30 are in the form of numerical sayings. See Proverbs 30:15-16, 18-19, 21-23, 24-28, 29-31; 6:16-19.

**More sayings of the wise**

- <sup>10</sup> Don't slander a servant to his master;  
otherwise, the servant will curse you, and you will be guilty.
- <sup>11</sup> There are those who curse their father  
and don't bless their mother.
- <sup>12</sup> There are those who think they are clean,  
but haven't washed off their own excrement.
- <sup>13</sup> There are those—how arrogant are their eyes;  
how their eyebrows are raised!
- <sup>14</sup> There are those whose teeth are swords;  
their jaw is a butcher's knife,  
ready to devour the needy from the earth,  
and the poor from humanity.
- <sup>15</sup> The leech has two daughters: "Give, give!"  
There are three things that are never satisfied,  
four that never say, "Enough!":  
<sup>16</sup> the grave<sup>a</sup> and a barren womb,  
a land never filled with water,  
and fire that doesn't say, "Enough!"
- <sup>17</sup> An eye that mocks a father  
and rejects obedience to a mother,  
may the ravens of the river valley peck it out,  
and the eagle's young eat it.
- <sup>18</sup> Three things are too wonderful for me,  
four that I can't figure out:  
<sup>19</sup> the way of an eagle in the sky,  
the way of a snake on the rock,  
the way of a ship out on the open sea,  
and the way of a man with a young woman.
- <sup>20</sup> This is the way of an adulterous woman:  
she eats and wipes her mouth,  
and she says, "I've done nothing wrong!"
- <sup>21</sup> At three things the earth trembles,  
at four it can't bear up:  
<sup>22</sup> at a servant when he becomes king  
and fools when they are full of food;  
<sup>23</sup> at a detested woman when she gets married  
and a female servant when she replaces her mistress.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Sheol*

30:11 Ex 21:17;  
Prv 20:20,  
Prv 30:17  
30:12 Prv 16:2;  
Jer 2:35  
30:15 Prv 6:16,  
Prv 30:18,  
Prv 30:21,  
Prv 30:29  
30:16 Gn 30:1;  
Prv 27:20  
30:18 Ps 139:6;  
Prv 30:15  
30:19 Dt 28:49;  
Jer 49:22  
30:21 Prv 30:22  
30:22 Prv 19:10;  
Ecc 10:7

30:10-14 *servant will curse... curse their father*: The word "curse" is the translation of a Hebrew word that means "to belittle, to make light of, to not respect" If you slander a servant, one who works for you, they will think little of you (30:10). The context suggests that such a person also wouldn't respect their parents (30:11), would be arrogant and haughty (30:13), and would speak ill of the needy and the poor (30:14). *the needy... the poor*: See note on Proverbs 28:3.  
30:15-16 *two... three... four*: See note on Proverbs 6:16-19. *the grave*: See sidebar, "Sheol" at Proverbs 1.  
30:17 *a father... mother*: See notes on Proverbs 30:10-14; 19:26.

30:17b *ravens... eagle's young*: The second half of 30:17 uses powerful images from nature. See Proverbs 6:6-11.  
30:18-19 *the way of a man with a young woman*: Several images are used to compare the mystery of love, akin to the sentiments expressed in the Song of Songs. "Young woman" refers to a woman of marriageable age.  
30:20 *the adulterous woman* appears abruptly, in contrast with the "young woman" of Proverbs 30:19. See note on Proverbs 7:7-23; see sidebar, "Woman Wisdom and the Mysterious Woman" at Proverbs 9.  
30:21-23 These verses describe a world that runs against the basic order of the universe that the gods had ordained (see intro). In the modern context, the references to

30:24 Job 12:7  
 30:25 Prv 6:6  
 30:26 Lv 11:5;  
 Ps 104:18  
 30:27 Ex 10:4;  
 Jl 1:4, Jl 2:7  
 30:28 Job 8:14  
 30:30 Jgs 14:18  
 30:33 Prv 15:18,  
 Prv 26:21,  
 Prv 29:22  
 31:1 Prv 1:8,  
 Prv 30:1,  
 Prv 31:4  
 31:3 Dt 17:17;  
 Neh 13:26;  
 Prv 5:9  
 31:4 Prv 20:1;  
 Ecc 10:17;  
 Is 28:7; Hos 4:11  
 31:6 Ps 104:15;  
 1Ti 5:23  
 31:7 Ps 104:15  
 31:10 Ru 3:11;  
 Job 28:18;  
 Prv 12:4,  
 Prv 18:22,  
 Prv 19:14

- 24** Four things are among the smallest on earth,  
 but they are extremely wise:
- 25** Ants as creatures aren't strong,  
 but they store away their food in the summer.
- 26** Badgers as creatures aren't powerful,  
 but they make their homes in the rocks.
- 27** Locusts don't have a king,  
 but they march together in ranks.
- 28** You can catch lizards in your hand,  
 but they are in kings' palaces.
- 29** There are three things that are excellent in their stride,  
 four that are excellent as they walk:
- 30** a lion, a warrior among beasts, which doesn't back down at anything;
- 31** the strut of a rooster or a male goat;  
 and a king with his army.
- 32** If you've been foolish and arrogant,  
 if you've been scheming,  
 put your hand to your mouth,  
**33** because churning milk makes curds,  
 squeezing the nose brings blood,  
 and stirring up anger produces strife.

### Words of King Lemuel

**31** The words of King Lemuel of Massa, which his mother taught him:

- 1** No, my son!  
 No, son of my womb!  
 No, son of my solemn promises!
- 2** Don't give your strength to women,  
 your ways to those who wipe out kings.
- 3** It isn't for kings, Lemuel,  
 it isn't for kings to drink wine,  
 for rulers to crave<sup>o</sup> strong drink.
- 4** Otherwise, they will drink and forget the law,  
 and violate the rights of the needy.
- 5** Give strong drink to those who are perishing  
 and wine to those whose hearts are bitter.
- 6** Let them drink and forget their poverty  
 and no longer remember their toil.
- 7** Speak out on behalf of the voiceless,  
 and for the rights of all who are vulnerable.<sup>p</sup>
- 8** Speak out in order to judge with righteousness  
 and to defend the needy and the poor.

### The competent wife

**10** A competent wife, how does one find her?  
 Her value is far above pearls.

<sup>o</sup>Or where or or <sup>p</sup>Or all children who are passing away

servants can be disturbing, but we must remember the context in which the words were first uttered and then recorded. See note on Proverbs 19:10.

30:24-31 Numerical sayings partnered with images from nature. See notes on Proverbs 6:6-11, 16-19.

30:32-33 *churning milk... squeezing the nose... stirring up anger*: The words "churning," "squeezing," and "stirring" convey the idea of active scheming.

31:1-9 *No, my son!*: These verses are the instructions of King Lemuel's mother to her son, apparently as he began

his reign. The instructions contain warnings against women (31:3), strong drink (31:4-7), and admonitions to act justly for those who aren't able to care for themselves (31:8-9).

31:1 No one knows the identity of *Lemuel* or the location of *Massa* (see note on Prov 30:1).

31:9 *the needy and the poor*: See note on Proverbs 28:3; see sidebar, "The Wealthy and the Poor" at Proverbs 10.

31:10-31 The last section in Proverbs is a poem in celebration of a *competent wife*. Each verse of the poem begins



- 11 Her husband entrusts his heart to her,  
and with her he will have all he needs.
- 12 She brings him good and not trouble all the days of her life.
- 13 She seeks out wool and flax;  
she works joyfully with her hands.
- 14 She is like a fleet of merchant ships,  
bringing food from a distance.
- 15 She gets up while it is still night,  
providing food for her household,  
even some for her female servants.
- 16 She surveys a field and acquires it;  
from her own resources, she plants a vineyard.
- 17 She works energetically;  
her arms are powerful.
- 18 She realizes that her trading is successful;  
she doesn't put out her lamp at night.
- 19 She puts her hands to the spindle;  
her palms grasp the whorl.
- 20 She reaches out to the needy;  
she stretches out her hands to the poor.
- 21 She doesn't fear for her household when it snows,  
because they are all dressed in warm<sup>q</sup> clothes.
- 22 She makes bedspreads for herself;  
fine linen and purple are her clothing.
- 23 Her husband is known in the city gates  
when he sits with the elders of the land.
- 24 She makes garments and sells them;  
she supplies sashes to traders.
- 25 Strength and honor are her clothing;  
she is confident about the future.
- 26 Her mouth is full of wisdom;  
kindly teaching is on her tongue.
- 27 She is vigilant over the activities of her household;  
she doesn't eat the food of laziness.
- 28 Her children bless her;  
her husband praises her:
- 29 "Many women act competently,  
but you surpass them all!"

31:11 Gn 2:18;  
Prv 12:4  
31:19 Ex 35:25,  
Ex 35:26  
31:20 Eph 4:28  
31:21 2Sa 1:24  
31:22 Gn 41:42;  
Prv 7:16  
31:25 1Ti 2:10  
31:26 Ps 37:30;  
Prv 10:11,  
Prv 10:31,  
Prv 15:1,  
Prv 25:15  
31:27 1Ti 3:4,  
1Ti 3:5, 1Ti 3:12;  
Ti 2:4

<sup>q</sup>LXX; MT *the path of the trail*

with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet (an acrostic): verse 10 begins with *alef* (a), verse 11 begins with *beth* (b), and so forth. The acrostic form appears in a number of places in the OT (see Lam 1; 2; Pss 111; 112; 119; 145). The acrostic may help those who recite the poem to remember the next line alphabetically in the poem. Or it may be a poetic device that conveyed to the reader that the topic had been covered "from A to Z."

31:10 *competent wife*: The Hebrew word translated "competent" can also mean "strong," while the word translated as "wife" can also mean "woman." Rather than "competent wife," we might understand the poem at the conclusion of the book to be in praise of "a strong woman." The book of Proverbs begins in 1:20 with a strong woman, Woman Wisdom, shouting in the streets, calling to the naïve. Thus the strong woman of Proverbs 31, while certainly the description of the ideal wife for Lemuel (Prov 31:1-9) may also be understood as Woman Wisdom, providing closing words to parallel Woman Wisdom's words in

Proverbs 1:20-33. In addition, the final words of the book of Proverbs call all people, men and women, young and old, to embrace the characteristics of Woman Wisdom in their own lives.

31:11-31 Themes from the book of Proverbs abound in the poem praising "a competent wife" (or "a strong woman"; see note on Prov 31:10).

31:12 *She brings him good and not trouble*: See note on Proverbs 19:13.

31:13-17, 21-25, 27 *she works joyfully and energetically*: See note on Proverbs 10:4-5.

31:18 *she doesn't put out her lamp at night*: See note on Proverbs 13:9.

31:20 *She reaches out to the needy . . . to the poor*: See note on Proverbs 28:3; see sidebar, "The Wealthy and the Poor" at Proverbs 10.

31:26 *Her mouth is full of wisdom*: See the introduction.

31:28 *Her children bless her; her husband praises her*: See note on Proverbs 19:26.

31:30 Ps 39:11.  
Ps 112:1;  
Prov 6:25;  
Prov 11:16;  
Prov 11:22

- 30** Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting,  
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
- 31** Let her share in the results of her work;  
let her deeds praise her in the city gates.

31:30 *a woman who fears the LORD*: See note on Proverbs 1:7.

31:31 *city gates*: In Proverbs 1:21, Woman Wisdom "has her say" in the city gates. In ancient Israel, the city gates

were the places where important members of the community gathered to discuss important issues and to render judgments (see Gen 23:10; Deut 22:15; Judg 9:35; 16:3; 2 Kgs 23:8).

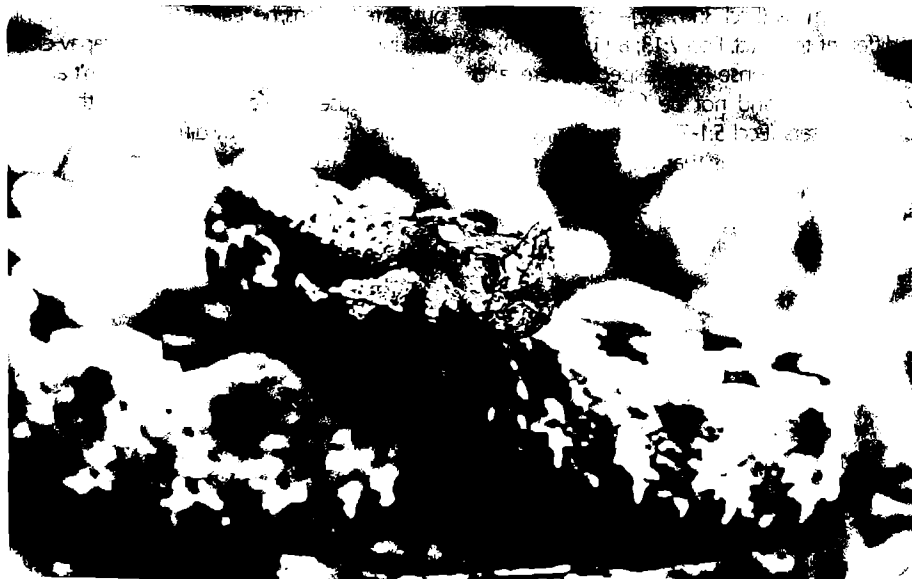
# ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes contains two voices: the editor, who introduces and concludes the book (Eccl 1:1-2; 12:8-14; see also 7:27), and the speaker of the rest of the book, a person called Qoheleth in Hebrew (pronounced *ko-hell-et*). This means “Teacher of the Assembly” (Eccl 1:1) or more simply “Teacher” (Eccl 1:2, 12), because it is related to the verb “to gather” and to the noun “assembly.” The name is thus a kind of title, and since the Teacher addresses all who listen to his words, the book has sometimes been titled “the Preacher.”

Who is this “Teacher,” and what does he teach? Unfortunately, we know very little about the first question. The beginning of the book hints that the Teacher is King Solomon (Eccl 1:1, 12, 16; 2:9), but Solomon’s name is never used (cf. Prov 1:1; Song 1:1) and allusions to Solomon are largely dropped after Ecclesiastes 2:12. Indeed, much of the Teacher’s message implies that he is *not* a king (see Eccl 4:13-16; 5:9; 8:2-4; 9:13-16; 10:20). The type of Hebrew language

used also indicates that the book, at least in its current form, is from a time much later than the days of Solomon. It probably dates from late in the 4th century BCE or maybe sometime in the 3rd century BCE. The allusions to King Solomon appear to be a literary device to show that the Teacher knows what he is talking about when he describes his quest (especially in Eccl 1:12–2:26) and when he gives his conclusions about the pointlessness of wealth, work, and possessions.

The teaching found in Ecclesiastes is difficult to summarize because most of the book lacks a clear or easily understood structure. There is an editorial frame at the beginning and the end (Eccl 1:1-2; 12:8-14), and there are opening and closing poems on life and death (Eccl 1:3-11; 12:1-7). The rest of Ecclesiastes may be roughly divided into two halves (Eccl 1:12–6:9 and 6:10–11:10). Within these halves the Teacher covers a number of topics in a nonlinear, sometimes repetitive, and often contradictory fashion.



Horned viper (Eccl 10:11)  
Shutterstock

These factors make it hard to understand the book, though they may be part of the Teacher's strategy to force the reader to feel his frustrations about life and wisdom.

The Teacher covers many topics, but three themes recur throughout the book, including: the pointlessness of human endeavors, the mysterious nature of God, and the inevitability of death. The Teacher returns to these topics again and again, because each is important to him, and each is difficult to address adequately given the limitations of human knowledge. These limitations are, according to the Teacher, imposed by God (Eccl 1:13; 3:11, 14; 5:18; 6:2; 7:13-14; 8:17). One could go so far as to say that the Teacher's main problems are with human limitation and God's non-limitation.

The Teacher's answer to these problems is reasonable and practical. If the meaning that is experienced in life ends at death, then it makes sense to enjoy life and its simple pleasures, even its work and toil, as much as possible for as long as possible. This isn't easy, and some people can't do it, sometimes because God doesn't permit it (Eccl 6:2). This raises the problem of God in Ecclesiastes and the Teacher's thoughts on God are, once again, highly pragmatic. Since God is infinitely more powerful than us and different from us (Eccl 3:11; 5:2)—at times even indifferent to us (cf. Eccl 7:13; 8:11; 9:2; 10:5)—the proper response is to respect, revere, and worship God, and not be foolish about religious matters (Eccl 5:1-7). But humanity's lack of knowledge means that we can't be certain about righteousness and wickedness, or wisdom and foolishness (Eccl 7:15-18). The wise

life and the life with God in Ecclesiastes require a somber reckoning with numerous limitations: the limits of our lifespan and the limits of our knowledge—and that includes limits to our knowledge about God (Eccl 3:11; 7:14; 8:17).

Ecclesiastes can strike the reader as a dark book because the Teacher seems more like a cynic than a saint. But readers of the book shouldn't give up. The Teacher repeatedly interrupts the seriousness of his speech to advise us to enjoy what is given to us, as much as we can, whenever we can (Eccl 2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-20; 7:14; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:7-10). This is what he calls our "reward" or "allotment" or "place in the world" or "part to play," which is God-given and God-approved (Eccl 2:10; 3:22; 5:18-19; 9:9). The Teacher says that we have to pay serious attention to living our lives joyfully and rightly, despite any limits imposed on us by death, our lack of knowledge, or our uncertainties about God.

Ecclesiastes authorizes an edgy spirituality that makes room for doubt or skepticism (within limits) about various matters. The book shows that skepticism and intelligence don't have to result in unbelief or be an excuse to opt out of a faithful life. The Teacher is both skeptical (Eccl 3:21) and very wise (Eccl 12:9-10), but throughout his reflections, he realizes that he must do his thinking with God. Ecclesiastes will repay close and repeated study, even though it isn't always easy, because the life of wisdom and the life of faith are often marked by difficulty and the pain of learning (Eccl 1:18; 12:11; see also Prov 3:11; 6:23; 12:1; 13:1; 1 Cor 11:32; Heb 12:5-11; Rev 3:19; cf. Ps 94:12).

**I. Introduction (1:1-11)**

- A. Prologue (1:1-2)
  - 1. Heading (1:1)
  - 2. Motto (1:2)
- B. Opening poem: the inevitable cycle of life (1:3-11)

**II. The Teacher's Reflections (1:12-11:10)**

- A. Part 1: Pointless wind chasing (1:12-6:9)
  - 1. Introducing the Teacher's quest (1:12-18)
  - 2. A royal disaster (2:1-23)
  - 3. What joy remains (2:24-26)
  - 4. Poem on the seasons (3:1-8)
  - 5. Reflections on times, time, and God (3:9-15)
  - 6. Reflections on injustice, wickedness, and death (3:16-22)
- 7. Oppression, death, and non-existence (4:1-3)
- 8. The (relative) value of work, companionship, and wisdom (4:4-16)
- 9. Being appropriate in religious matters (5:1-7)

10. Oppression, wealth, and hoarding (5:8-20)

- 11. The tragedy of not enjoying (6:1-9)
- B. Part 2: On not knowing (6:10-11:10)
  - 1. The (relative) merits of wisdom (7:1-12)
  - 2. All things in moderation (7:13-22)
  - 3. Evaluating the quest so far: Woman Wisdom and Woman Folly (7:23-8:1)
  - 4. On power and right and wrongdoing (8:2-14)
  - 5. Enjoying life without pretense (8:15-17)
  - 6. The benefits of living (9:1-10)
  - 7. Wisdom: not "fool"-proof (9:11-10:20)
  - 8. What to do since life is short (11:1-10)

**III. Conclusion (12:1-14)**

- A. Closing poem: the certain disaster of death (12:1-7)
- B. Epilogue (12:8-14)
  - 1. Motto (12:8)
  - 2. Subscription (12:9-14)

*Brent A. Strawn*

1:1 Prv 1:1;  
Ecc 1:12;  
Ecc 7:27;  
Ecc 12:8

1:2 Ps 39:5,  
Ps 62:9,  
Ps 144:4;  
Ecc 12:8;  
Ro 8:20

1:3 Ecc 2:11,  
Ecc 2:22, Ecc 3:9,  
Ecc 5:16

1:4 Ps 104:5,  
Ps 119:90

1:6 Ecc 11:5;  
In 3:8

1:7 Ps 104:8

1:8 Prv 27:20;  
Ecc 4:8

1:9 Ecc 2:12,  
Ecc 3:15,  
Ecc 6:10

### Opening motto

**1** The words of the Teacher of the Assembly,<sup>a</sup>  
David's son, king in Jerusalem:

<sup>2</sup>Perfectly pointless,<sup>b</sup> says the Teacher,  
perfectly pointless.  
Everything is pointless.

### Some things are inevitable

<sup>3</sup>What do people gain from all the hard work  
that they work so hard at under the sun?

<sup>4</sup>A generation goes,  
and a generation comes,  
but the earth remains as it always has.

<sup>5</sup>The sun rises, the sun sets;  
it returns panting  
to the place where it dawns.

<sup>6</sup>The wind blows to the south,  
goes around to the north;  
around and around blows the wind;  
the wind returns to its rounds again.

<sup>7</sup>All streams flow to the sea,  
but the sea is never full;  
to the place where the rivers flow,  
there they continue to flow.

<sup>8</sup>All words<sup>c</sup> are tiring;  
no one is able to speak.  
The eye isn't satisfied with seeing,  
neither is the ear filled up by hearing.

<sup>9</sup>Whatever has happened—that's what will happen again;  
whatever has occurred—that's what will occur again.

*Pointless* *Pointless* (Heb. *hebel*) is a key term in Ecclesiastes, though its precise meaning is uncertain. Elsewhere in the OT, *hebel* can refer to something that is here one minute and gone the next, like a puff of air (e.g., Pss 62:9; 144:4; Job 7:16; note that *hebel* is Abel's name in Gen 4). The term can also be used of idols, the worship of which is worthless (e.g., Deut 32:21; 2 Kgs 17:15; Jer 2:5). In Ecclesiastes, the term is complex because its meaning changes according to the way it is used. The word occurs 37 times in the Hebrew text. It captures the momentary nature of life, and it refers to the frustrating, unpredictable, and unpleasant aspects of life. The term is used in close combination with other phrases in Ecclesiastes, such as Ecclesiastes 1:3, which indicates that there's no "gain" in work, that work has no ultimate significance, that work is pointless. The term also appears with the theme of "wind chasing" (e.g., Eccl 1:14; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4; 6:9)—another pointless endeavor—suggesting that *hebel* also concerns things that are "elusive" or "baffling."

<sup>a</sup>Or *Gatherer* or *Convener* or *Assembler* (Heb *Qoheleth*); see also 1:2, 12; 7:27; 12:8, 9, 10. <sup>b</sup>Or *meaningless* or *vapor* or *puff of air* (Heb *hebel*, which often occurs in the book) <sup>c</sup>Or *things*

1:1-2 The opening verses include a third-person heading about the Teacher and the motto of the book (see notes on Eccl 12:8-14).

1:1 *Teacher of the Assembly*: Hebrew *Qoheleth*, the Teacher, which could also be translated "Gatherer" or "Convener" or "Assembler" (see translation note; also named at Eccl 1:2, 12; 7:27; 12:8, 9, 10). It's apparently a title, because it appears with the definite article in Ecclesiastes 12:8 (see Eccl 7:27). The Greek translation is *ekklesiastes* ("one of the assembly") which becomes the English title of the book. *David's Son, king in Jerusalem*: See the introduction and the note on Ecclesiastes 1:12.

1:2 *Perfectly pointless . . . perfectly pointless. Everything is pointless*: See the translation note; see sidebar, "Pointless." *Perfectly pointless* has the force of "utter absurdity" or "complete futility." The repetition of "perfectly pointless" and the statement that "everything is pointless" make the statement emphatic. Ecclesiastes 1:2 is matched by Ecclesiastes 12:8 (see notes on Eccl 1:1-2; 12:8-14). Both verses combine editorial words about the Teacher with the Teacher's own voice. The verse serves as a summary of the book. *the Teacher*: See note on Ecclesiastes 1:1.

1:3-11 The opening poetic theme begins with a rhetorical question in verse 3, which is followed by a poem about nature (1:4-9) and the Teacher's conclusions (1:10-11). For a similar structure, see Ecclesiastes 3:1-15. The

opening poem is matched by the concluding poem in Ecclesiastes 12:1-7.

1:3 *gain . . . hard work*: The Teacher asks if there is anything to be gained from hard work. The answer offered here and throughout the book is mostly negative (Eccl 2:11, 22; 5:15; but see Eccl 10:10). *gain*: This is a business term suggesting "net gain" or "profit." *hard work* appears frequently in Ecclesiastes and has gloomy connotations. *under the sun*: This phrase, often repeated, refers mostly to human existence (see Eccl 1:13-14 where "under heaven" is defined as "under the sun"; see also Eccl 2:17-20, 22).

1:4-7 The rhetorical question in Ecclesiastes 1:3 is explored by looking at natural processes. The world is hard at work, but there's no obvious gain. Generations come and go, but *the earth remains as it always has* (1:4). The sun keeps rising and setting despite how tiring that is (note *panting* in 1:5). The wind keeps blowing (1:6), and the seas are *never full* despite the never-ending flow of rivers (1:7). If there's no "profit" for the large-scale processes of nature, it's hard to imagine that any one person's work would make much of a difference, especially for long (see Eccl 1:9-11).

1:8-9 These verses also answer the question of Ecclesiastes 1:3, but with reference to human beings. *All words* (or possibly "things") are *tiring*. All that could (or should) be said cannot be said. Neither eyes nor ears are ever satisfied: There is always more to see and hear (see Eccl 4:8; 5:10; 6:7, 9). Human existence, like the natural world, is

There's nothing new under the sun. <sup>10</sup>People may say about something: "Look at this! It's new!" But it was already around for ages before us. <sup>11</sup>There's no remembrance of things in the past, nor of things to come in the future. Neither will there be any remembrance among those who come along in the future.

**The Teacher's quest**

<sup>12</sup>I am the Teacher. I was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

<sup>13</sup>I applied my mind to investigate and to explore by wisdom all that happens under heaven. It's an unhappy obsession that God has given to human beings.

<sup>14</sup>When I observed all that happens under the sun, I realized that everything is pointless, a chasing after wind.

<sup>15</sup>What's crooked can't be straightened;  
what isn't there can't be counted.

<sup>16</sup>I said to myself, Look here, I have grown much wiser than any who ruled over Jerusalem before me. My mind has absorbed great wisdom and knowledge. <sup>17</sup>But when I set my mind to understand wisdom, and also to understand madness and folly, I realized that this too was just wind chasing.

<sup>18</sup>Remember:

In much wisdom is much aggravation;  
the more knowledge, the more pain.

**2** I said to myself, <sup>a</sup>Come, I will make you <sup>e</sup>experience pleasure; enjoy what is good! But this too was pointless! <sup>2</sup>Merriment, I thought, is madness; pleasure, of no use at all. <sup>3</sup>I tried cheering myself with wine and by embracing folly—with wisdom still guiding me—until I might see what is really worth doing in the few days that human beings have under heaven.

<sup>a</sup>Or in my heart; mind <sup>e</sup>Or the self (or heart; mind)

caught in a cycle: *whatever has happened—that's what will happen again* (cf. Eccl 2:12b; 3:15a; 6:10). This is why the Teacher says *There's nothing new under the sun* (Eccl 1:9; see note on Eccl 1:3).

1:10-11 A prose commentary reinforcing the points of the preceding poem. Even if someone thinks there's something new, that's only because they don't know it has been around for *ages before us*. They don't know this precisely because those ages are long forgotten. The theme of death emerges because there is no future remembrance of past generations (cf. Eccl 2:16; 9:5). Ironically, while the Teacher laments lack of memory, he himself mentions past generations, and readers of Ecclesiastes also remember the Teacher.

1:12-18 This section introduces the Teacher and his quest for wisdom, which is detailed further in Ecclesiastes 2:1-26.

1:12 *Teacher*: See Ecclesiastes 1:1. *king over Israel in Jerusalem*: One individual was both David's son (see Eccl 1:1) and king over all Israel in Jerusalem: Solomon. However, Solomon's name is never used in Ecclesiastes, and the book gives many indications that it comes from a much later period than Solomon. See the introduction.

1:13-14 The Teacher lays out his method (*applied my mind to investigate*), his tool (*by wisdom*), and his subject matter (*all that happens under heaven... all that happens under the sun*). He also indicates his conclusion: *everything is pointless, a chasing after wind*. This conclusion will be reiterated numerous times. *unhappy obsession*: repeated in Ecclesiastes 4:8. *that God has given*: The Teacher attributes many of life's frustrations to God (Eccl 6:2; 7:13; see note on Eccl 1:15). *under the sun*: See note on Ecclesiastes 1:3. *everything is pointless*: See note on Ecclesiastes 1:2; sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecclesiastes 1. *chasing after wind*: an absurd activity that underscores "pointless."  
1:15 A proverb that reinforces the points of Ecclesiastes

1:13-14. In light of Ecclesiastes 7:13, the first part probably subtly evokes God.

1:16-17 If the Teacher was literally Solomon, the claim of 1:16 would lack force, because it would apply to David (cf. Eccl 2:9). The purpose of referring to Solomon is clear in 1:17: It's not just anyone who claims the search to understand *wisdom*. It's one of the wisest kings ever! For traditions about Solomon's legendary wisdom and insight, see 1 Kings 3:1-28; 4:29-34. Much of the wisdom literature of the OT was associated with Solomon, though it's clear that he didn't write all of it (see Prov 22:17; 24:23; 30:1; 31:1).

1:18 A proverb reinforcing the points of Ecclesiastes 1:16-17. For the downside of obtaining knowledge, see also Ecclesiastes 12:12.

2:1-26 Still speaking as a king (see Eccl 1:12), the Teacher describes the extensive experiment that he conducted to find meaning in life (2:3). The result was a complete disaster (2:11, 17, 21-23), which leads him to discuss the joy that remains in the aftermath (2:24-26).

2:1-11 The Teacher attempts to find joy in various sources, including the experience of *pleasure*, enjoying *what is good, merriment, wine*, and even the embrace of *folly*. He next moves to a list of the *great projects* he undertook (2:4-9), a listing that is similar to ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions in which a king outlines his many accomplishments. The result is, once again, pointless and a chasing after wind.

2:1 *I said to myself*: See the translation note. In the OT, the heart is the center of thought, and so equivalent to our "mind" or "self." "I"-language dominates in chapter 2. Contrast with the Teacher's reflections on companionship in Ecclesiastes 4:3-12 (see note on Eccl 1:1-2).

2:3 The embrace of folly is unexpected especially in wisdom literature, which typically looks down on foolishness. The Teacher claims to pursue folly *with wisdom still guiding*

1:13 Gn 3:19;  
Eccl 1:17,  
Eccl 10,  
Eccl 7:25  
1:14 Eccl 2:11,  
Eccl 2:17, Eccl 4:4,  
Eccl 6:9  
1:15 Eccl 7:13  
1:16 1 Ki 3:12,  
1 Ki 4:30,  
1 Ki 10:7,  
1 Ki 10:23,  
Eccl 2:9  
1:17 Eccl 1:13,  
Eccl 2:3,  
Eccl 2:12,  
Eccl 7:23,  
Eccl 7:25  
1:18 Eccl 2:23,  
Eccl 12:12  
2:1 Eccl 8:15

2:4 1Ks 7:1;

2Ch 8:1;

Song 8:11

2:5 Gn 2:8;

Song 5:1

2:6 Neh 2:14;

Neh 3:15;

Ecc 2:5

2:7 Gn 14:14;

1Ks 4:23

2:8 2Sa 19:35;

1Ks 9:28;

1Ks 10:10

2:13 Ecc 7:11;

Ecc 7:12;

Ecc 7:19

2:14 Ps 49:10;

Ecc 3:19, Ecc 6:6;

Ecc 9:2, Ecc 9:3

2:16 Ecc 1:11

<sup>4</sup>I took on great projects: I built houses for myself, planted vineyards for myself. <sup>5</sup>I made gardens and parks for myself, planting every kind of fruit tree in them. <sup>6</sup>I made reservoirs for myself to water my lush groves. <sup>7</sup>I acquired male servants and female servants; I even had slaves born in my house. I also had great herds of cattle and sheep, more than any who preceded me in Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup>I amassed silver and gold for myself, the treasures of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers for myself, along with every human luxury, treasure chests galore!<sup>f</sup> <sup>9</sup>So I became far greater than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. Moreover, my wisdom stood by me. <sup>10</sup>I refrained from nothing that my eyes desired. I refused my heart no pleasure. Indeed, my heart found pleasure from the results of my hard work; that was the reward from all my hard work. <sup>11</sup>But when I surveyed all that my hands had done, and what I had worked so hard to achieve, I realized that it was pointless—a chasing after wind. Nothing is to be gained under the sun.

<sup>12</sup>My reflections then turned to wisdom, madness, and folly. What can the king's heir do but what has already been done? <sup>13</sup>I saw that wisdom is more beneficial than folly, as light is more beneficial than darkness.

<sup>14</sup>The wise have eyes in their head,  
but fools walk around in darkness.

But I also realized that the same fate happens to both of them. <sup>15</sup>So I thought to myself, What happens to the fool will also happen to me. So why have I been so very wise? I said to myself, This too is pointless. <sup>16</sup>There is no eternal memory of the wise any more than the foolish,<sup>g</sup> because everyone is forgotten before long. How can the wise die just like the fool? <sup>17</sup>So I hated life, because the things that happen under the sun were troublesome to me. Definitely, everything is pointless—just wind chasing.

<sup>18</sup>I hated the things I worked so hard for here under the sun, because I will have to leave them to someone who comes after me. <sup>19</sup>And who knows whether that one will be wise or foolish? Either way, that person will have control over the results of all my hard work and wisdom here under the sun. That too is pointless. <sup>20</sup>I then gave myself up to despair, as I thought about all my laborious hard work under the sun,<sup>21</sup> because sometimes those who have worked hard with wisdom, knowledge, and skill must leave the results of their hard work as a possession to those who haven't worked hard for it. This too is pointless—it's a

<sup>f</sup>Or many secondary wives <sup>g</sup>Or The wise and the foolish alike are never remembered.

me. That is even more surprising, but it hints at his later critique of wisdom (Ecc 8:17; 9:18–10:1).

2:4-9 See 1 Kings 4–11 for traditions about Solomon's treasures.

2:7 The Teacher doesn't mention any children of his own (cf. Ecc 4:8; 6:3-5).

2:8 The meaning of *treasure chests galore* is uncertain (see the translation note). It may be a euphemism for secondary wives (or concubines), which Solomon had (see 1 Kgs 11:3).

2:9 *far greater than all who preceded me*: See Ecclesiastes 1:16.

2:10 The pursuit of pleasure involved *hard work* (see note on Ecc 1:3). The Teacher claims to derive pleasure from *hard work* and says that this is his reward from such work, though he immediately undercuts the significance of the work (Ecc 2:11; see note on Ecc 2:24).

2:11 Despite the relative success of pursuing pleasure, the result is failure. Even the Teacher's great works were *pointless* (see sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecc 1) and wind chasing (see Ecc 1:14). *Nothing is to be gained under the sun* answers the question in Ecclesiastes 1:3 (see Ecc 2:22; 5:15).

2:12-23 The Teacher next considers *wisdom, madness, and folly* (cf. Ecc 1:17), which leads him to consider future generations, including foolish heirs and how there's no memory of past individuals (2:16; cf. Ecc 1:11; 9:5). At this point the problem of death returns (cf. Ecc 1:11).

2:12 *the king's heir*: The writer is still writing as a king (see Ecc 1:12), but it's dropped after this point. *what has already been done*: See Ecclesiastes 1:9; 2:12b; 3:15a; 6:10.

2:13-14 The Teacher frequently praises wisdom, though the advantage of being wise is slight, and he often undercuts the commendation in further reflections (see Ecc 9:18–10:1). In these verses wisdom is superior to folly as light is better than darkness, but there's no ultimate gain because *the same fate* comes to both the wise and the foolish (Ecc 2:14b-17). *fate*: means "death" (see Ecc 2:16; 3:19; 9:2-3; cf. Ecc 6:6; 7:2).

2:15-16 Death is proof that there's nothing to be gained under the sun (Ecc 1:3; 2:11, 22; 5:15). The situation strikes the Teacher as *pointless* (see Ecc 1:2; see sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecc 1). *no eternal memory... because everyone is forgotten*: See Ecclesiastes 1:9-11. *How can the wise die just like the fool?* The same result raises questions as to what benefit there is in being wise (cf. Ecc 4:8).

2:17-21 The situation leads the Teacher to utter *despair*. He hates life and finds what happens *under the sun* (2:17, 18-20, 22; see note on Ecc 1:3) *troublesome or a terrible wrong*. Both terms can have moral connotations in some contexts (such as "evil"). Once again and *definitely* this time, *everything is pointless—just wind chasing*: See notes on Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14; sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecclesiastes 1. The Teacher also hates all his work since death requires him to leave it to an heir who may be foolish (2:18-21; cf. Ecc 2:12; 4:8).



terrible wrong. <sup>22</sup>I mean, What do people get for all their hard work and struggles under the sun? <sup>23</sup>All their days are pain, and their work is aggravation; even at night, their hearts don't find rest. This too is pointless.

<sup>24</sup>There's nothing better for human beings than to eat, drink, and experience pleasure in their hard work. I also saw that this is from God's hand—<sup>25</sup>Who can eat and find enjoyment otherwise?—<sup>26</sup>because God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please God. But to those who are offensive, <sup>26</sup> God gives the task of hoarding and accumulating, but only so as to give it all to those who do please God. This too is pointless and a chasing after wind.

**A season for everything**

**3** There's a season for everything and a time for every matter under the heavens:

- <sup>2</sup>a time for giving birth and a time for dying,
- a time for planting and a time for uprooting what was planted,
- <sup>3</sup>a time for killing and a time for healing,
- a time for tearing down and a time for building up,
- <sup>4</sup>a time for crying and a time for laughing,
- a time for mourning and a time for dancing,
- <sup>5</sup>a time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones,
- a time for embracing and a time for avoiding embraces,
- <sup>6</sup>a time for searching and a time for losing,
- a time for keeping and a time for throwing away,
- <sup>7</sup>a time for tearing and a time for repairing,
- a time for keeping silent and a time for speaking,
- <sup>8</sup>a time for loving and a time for hating,
- a time for war and a time for peace.

**Hard work**

<sup>9</sup>What do workers gain from all their hard work? <sup>10</sup>I have observed the task that God has given human beings. <sup>11</sup>God has made everything fitting in its time, but has also placed eternity in their hearts, without enabling them to discover what God has done from beginning to end.

<sup>a</sup>Or to those who sin

2:22-23 *What do people get:* This question is similar to the question in Ecclesiastes 1:3, which the Teacher answered with the word "nothing" (Eccl 2:11). Here he says people do get something: *pain, aggravation, and lack of rest* (cf. Eccl 5:12; 8:16; 9:3). *pointless:* See sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecclesiastes 1.

2:24-26 The first of several passages where the Teacher recommends joy (see also Eccl 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-20; 7:14; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:7-10) as a way to conduct life. This isn't simply the pursuit of pleasure, given what the Teacher says elsewhere about the importance of wise action (Eccl 8:2-5), reverence for God (Eccl 5:1-7), and the importance of companionship (Eccl 4:4-12; 9:9; 11:1-2). Moreover, according to the Teacher, this enjoyment is the gift of God, *from God's hand* (2:24; see also Eccl 3:13; 5:18-20; cf. Eccl 7:14; 8:15; 9:7, 9). Ecclesiastes 2:24 differs from 2:10 because here the Teacher allows for an experience of pleasure *in* hard work, in contrast to 2:10 where his pleasure *from* hard work was short lived (Eccl 2:11). Joy can't be wrestled from hard work, but it can be found *within* hard work.

2:26 *wisdom, knowledge, and joy:* the gifts of God to those who please God. God gives a task to those who are offensive, or "sin" (see the translation note) with the ultimate goal to give it all to those who do please God. The full significance of this redistribution of God's blessing is unclear, though it raises issues touched on elsewhere in Ecclesiastes,

such as God's judgment, God's ultimate sovereignty, and God's mysterious ways (see Eccl 3:11, 17; 7:14; 8:17; 11:5, 9; 12:14). It's not clear which part of this verse (or the preceding) that the Teacher finds *pointless and a chasing after wind* (see Eccl 1:2, 14; sidebar, "Pointless" at Eccl 1).

3:1-15 An opening statement (3:1), interpreted by a poem about the seasons of life (3:2-8), which is then followed by the Teacher's reflections (3:9-15). For a similar structure see Ecclesiastes 1:3-11.

3:1-8 This is a popular passage, but the actual content of the poem is full of unpleasant experiences (*dying, killing, mourning*). It may be a traditional piece that the Teacher quotes before offering his own commentary in Ecclesiastes 3:9-11.

3:5 *throwing stones... gathering stones:* The meaning is uncertain. It may refer to building, agriculture, or even be a euphemism for sexual activity.

3:9 See Ecclesiastes 1:3; 2:11, 22; compare with Ecclesiastes 5:15. The implied answer is "nothing."

3:10 See Ecclesiastes 1:13.

3:11 *has made everything fitting in its time:* an explicit comment about the times and seasons of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (cf. Eccl 7:13; 11:5). God also placed *eternity* into human hearts with the result that they are unable to discover what God has done (cf. Eccl 7:13; 11:5). So God makes the times, and humans experience those times, but humans can't determine them. Once again, there's no profit or gain from

7:24 Eccl 3:12,  
Eccl 3:13,  
Eccl 3:22,  
Eccl 8:15, Eccl 9:7  
3:1 Eccl 3:17,  
Eccl 8:6  
3:2 Job 14:5,  
Heb 9:27  
3:3 Hos 6:1  
3:4 Ex 15:20,  
Ro 12:15  
3:5 2Ki 3:25,  
1Co 7:5  
3:6 2Ki 7:15;  
Is 2:20;  
Jon 1:5;  
Mt 19:29;  
Phi 3:7  
3:7 Gn 37:29;  
Est 4:14;  
Pev 15:23;  
Am 5:13  
3:8 Lk 14:26  
3:9 Eccl 1:3  
3:10 Eccl 1:13  
3:11 Gn 1:31;  
Job 5:9, Job 11:7,  
Eccl 8:17;  
Ro 11:33

3:13 Ecc 2:24,  
Ecc 5:18,  
Ecc 5:19, Ecc 9:7

3:14 Ps 33:11,  
Ecc 5:7, Ecc 7:18,  
Ecc 8:12,  
Ecc 12:13

3:16 Ps 82:2;  
Ecc 4:1, Ecc 5:8

3:17 Gn 18:25;  
Ecc 3:1, Ecc 11:9,  
Ecc 12:14;  
Mt 16:27

3:18 Ps 49:12,  
Ps 49:20,  
Ps 73:22,  
2Pt 2:12

3:19 2Sa 14:14;  
Ps 49:12,  
Ps 49:20,  
Ps 89:48;  
Ecc 2:14

3:20 Gn 3:19;  
Job 34:15;  
Ps 104:29;  
Ecc 12:7

3:21 Ecc 12:7

3:22 Ecc 2:10,  
Ecc 2:24,  
Ecc 6:12, Ecc 8:7,  
Ecc 10:14

<sup>12</sup>I know that there's nothing better for them but to enjoy themselves and do what's good while they live. <sup>13</sup>Moreover, this is the gift of God: that all people should eat, drink, and enjoy the results of their hard work. <sup>14</sup>I know that whatever God does will last forever; it's impossible to add to it or take away from it. God has done this so that people are reverent before him. <sup>15</sup>Whatever happens has already happened, and whatever will happen has already happened before. And God looks after what is driven away.<sup>1</sup>

### Enjoy what you do now

<sup>16</sup>I saw something else under the sun: in the place of justice, there was wickedness; and in the place of what was right, there was wickedness again! <sup>17</sup>I thought to myself, God will judge both righteous and wicked people, because there's a time for every matter and every deed. <sup>18</sup>I also thought, Where human beings are concerned, God tests them to show them that they are but animals <sup>19</sup>because human beings and animals share the same fate. One dies just like the other—both have the same life-breath. Humans are no better off than animals because everything is pointless.

<sup>20</sup>All go to the same place:  
all are from the dust;  
all return to the dust.

<sup>21</sup>Who knows if a human being's life-breath rises upward while an animal's life-breath descends into the earth? <sup>22</sup>So I perceived that there was nothing better for human beings but to enjoy what they do because that's what they're allotted in life. Who, really, is able to see what will happen in the future?

### Death is better than oppression

**4** When I next observed all the oppressions that take place under the sun, I saw the tears of the oppressed—and they have no one to comfort them. Their oppressors wield

<sup>1</sup>Or to inspire awe before the divine <sup>2</sup>Or God seeks out what is pursued, or God seeks what has gone by, or God seeks the pursued; Heb uncertain

toil (Ecc 3:9) because the inability to know God's work is an effect of the system (cf. Ecc 7:13; 11:5). *eternity in their hearts*: The meaning is unclear. It may include knowledge (see note on Ecc 2:1) of one's certain death (see Ecc 9:5; cf. Ecc 12:5 "eternal abode").

3:12-13 Another passage about joy (see Ecc 2:24-26; 3:22; 5:18-20; 7:14; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:7-10). Here the Teacher introduces the statement by saying *I know*, and the joy is in response to the problem of life and God's mysterious ways (Ecc 3:1-11). Once again, enjoying oneself and doing good while one lives, including eating, drinking, and enjoying the results of hard work, is *the gift of God* (cf. Ecc 2:24-26; 5:18-19; 8:15; 9:7, 9).

3:14 God's work (perhaps the work in Ecc 3:11) and its endurance lead to reverence or fear of God, a theme that recurs in Ecclesiastes 5:7; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:13.

3:15 *Whatever happens... has already happened before*. See Ecclesiastes 1:9; 2:12b; 6:10. *And God looks after what is driven away*. See the translation note for other possibilities. It might mean that God ensures the cyclical nature of life and time (cf. Ecc 1:3-11; 3:1-8, 15), but the sentence might leave room for God's beneficial oversight of things that otherwise seem forgotten, especially from a human perspective (cf. Ecc 1:10-11; 2:16).

3:16-17 Since life and time seem to be "fixed" or determined, the Teacher considers the problem of injustice and wickedness (see Ecc 4:1-3; 5:8; 7:15; 8:10, 14) and God's judgment of both *righteous and wicked* (see Ecc 8:12-13; 11:9-10; 12:14). *I thought* may reflect the Teacher's own belief, but this thought appears to be challenged in Ecclesiastes 3:18-20. Maybe it reflects a previously held position (cf. Ecc 8:5-8).

3:18-21 The cause of the shift from verse 17 to verse 18

is unclear, though in Hebrew both verses begin with *I thought to myself*. Perhaps the thought of God's (future?) judgment (see Ecc 8:12-13; 11:9-10; 12:14) brings the Teacher to again consider life and death. In contrast to the problem of the wise and the fool dying alike (Ecc 2:14-16), the Teacher now poses the issue as a one of humans and animals dying alike, sharing *the same fate* (3:19; see Ecc 2:14-15; 3:19; 9:2-3), and going to the *same place* (3:20; see Ecc 6:6; 7:2) because they have the same origin (*from the dust*) and destination (*return to the dust*; cf. Ecc 12:7) and because *both have the same life-breath*. There's no escape from death for the wise or the foolish, for humans or animals. That's why *Humans are no better off than animals and why everything is pointless* (see Ecc 1:2; sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecc 1). For the similarity of human and animal life, see Genesis 2:7, 19; 3:19; 7:22. The Teacher has no knowledge about an afterlife, or at least whether there is any difference in the afterlife for humans and animals. The statement in Ecclesiastes 12:7 affirms part of what is said in 3:18-21, but seems somewhat more confident about the final destination of the *life-breath*. See notes on Ecclesiastes 12:1-7.

3:22 Another passage about joy (see Ecc 2:24-26; 3:12-13; 5:18-20; 7:14; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:7-10). This one is prompted by the problem of death and is preceded by the Teacher's statement that he *perceived* that enjoyment is the best option available for humans. *Who, really*: The implied answer is "no one," with the exception being God (cf. Ecc 3:11). The future (Ecc 3:21; 7:14; 8:7; 9:1b, 12; 10:14; 11:2, 6) is as unknowable as the past (Ecc 1:10; 7:10; 11:5).

4:1-3 The Teacher returns to the problem of wickedness (cf. Ecc 3:16). Oppression harms everyone, including the oppressor, and nobody can be comforted. It's better to be

power—but they have no one to comfort them. <sup>2</sup>So I declare that the dead, who have already died, are more fortunate than the living, who are still alive. <sup>3</sup>But happier than both are those who have never existed, who haven't witnessed the terrible things that happen under the sun.

**Envy and loneliness**

<sup>4</sup>I also observed that people work hard and become good at what they do only out of mutual envy. This too is pointless, just wind chasing.

<sup>5</sup>Fools fold their hands and eat their own flesh.

<sup>6</sup>But better is resting with one handful than working hard for two fistfuls and chasing after wind.

<sup>7</sup>Next, I saw under the sun something else that was pointless: <sup>8</sup>There are people who are utterly alone, with no companions, not even a child or a sibling. Yet they work hard without end, never satisfied with their wealth. So for whom am I working so hard and depriving myself of enjoyment? This too is pointless and a terrible obsession.

<sup>9</sup>Two are better than one because they have a good return for their hard work. <sup>10</sup>If either should fall, one can pick up the other. But how miserable are those who fall and don't have a companion to help them up! <sup>11</sup>Also, if two lie down together, they can stay warm. But how can anyone stay warm alone? <sup>12</sup>Also, one can be overpowered, but two together can put up resistance. A three-ply cord doesn't easily snap.

<sup>13</sup>A poor but wise youth is better than an old and foolish king, who no longer listens to advice. <sup>14</sup>He emerged from prison to become king, even though during his rule a poor child<sup>a</sup> is born. <sup>15</sup>I saw all who live and walk under the sun following the next youth who would rise to take his place. <sup>16</sup>There was no counting the number of people he ruled, but those who came later aren't happy with him. This too is pointless and a chasing after wind.

**Listen and speak carefully**

**5** Watch<sup>1</sup> your steps when you go to God's house. It's more acceptable to listen than to offer the fools' sacrifice—they have no idea that they're acting wrongly. <sup>2</sup>Don't<sup>m</sup> be quick with

4:2 Job 3:17; Ecc 2:17  
4:4 Ecc 1:14  
4:5 Prv 6:10, Prv 24:33; Is 9:20  
4:6 Prv 15:16, Prv 15:17, Prv 16:8, Prv 17:1, Ecc 6:5  
4:8 Ps 39:6; Prv 27:20; Ecc 1:8, Ecc 1:13, Ecc 5:10  
4:9 Gn 2:18  
4:10 1Sa 23:16; Ga 6:1  
4:11 1Ki 1:1, 1Ki 1:2  
5:2 Prv 20:25, Mt 6:7

<sup>a</sup>Possibly the youth of 4:13; or *He emerged from prison to become king, even though he was born poor in the kingdom.*  
<sup>1</sup>4:17 in Heb <sup>m</sup>5:1 in Heb

dead because the dead can no longer experience oppression. Even happier are those who never existed, because they don't see the terrible things that happen to victims or perpetrators. For the preferable state of death or nonexistence, see also Ecclesiastes 6:3-6; Job 3; Jeremiah 20:14-18. 4:1 The value of power and its use are ambiguous in Ecclesiastes 4:13-16.

4:2 Compare with Ecclesiastes 6:3.

4:3 *under the sun*: See Ecclesiastes 1:14.

4:4-16 The Teacher reflects on work (4:4-6) and companionship (4:7-12). A brief and confusing parable concludes the perception (4:13-16). In each case the relative benefits of skill, community, and wisdom are evaluated.

4:4 A stunning remark on competition in the workplace and life. If there's no net gain from hard work (Ecc 1:3; 2:11, 22; cf. Ecc 5:15), a person's drive to *work hard and become good at what they do* is *pointless, just wind chasing* (see Ecc 1:2, 14; sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecc 1).

4:5-6 The Teacher isn't recommending laziness in Ecclesiastes 4:4, so he offers two clarifying proverbs. Folding the hands is an image for idleness (cf. Ecc 10:18; Prv 6:10-11; 24:33-34). The Teacher doesn't recommend laziness because it's the work of *fools* who have nothing to eat but *their own flesh*. At the same time, one shouldn't overwork, even if it is productive (*two fistfuls*), precisely because it's also pointless (*chasing after wind*). Better to rest, as long as one has secured what one needs (*one handful*).

4:7-12 The notion of overworking leads the Teacher to discuss individuals who work too hard all by themselves

(*utterly alone*) without companions, siblings, or children (cf. notes on Ecc 2:1, 7). It turns out that the Teacher is really talking about himself (4:8).

4:7 *under the sun*: See Ecclesiastes 1:14. *pointless*: See Ecclesiastes 1:2; sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecclesiastes 1.

4:8 *So for whom am I working so hard*: The question echoes Ecclesiastes 2:15, though there it concerns excessive wisdom (cf. Ecc 7:16). *and depriving myself of enjoyment?*: Given the importance of enjoyment so far in the book (see notes on Ecc 2:24-26; 3:12-14, 22), the delay of joy and its replacement with overwork is completely *pointless and a terrible obsession* (see Ecc 1:13). For lack of satisfaction see also Ecclesiastes 1:8; 5:10; 6:7, 9.

4:9-12 In place of lonely excessive work, the Teacher commends companionship, even if only for pragmatic reasons. *Two are better* because they have a better *return* on their work, can help each other, can keep each other warm and safe. The Teacher discusses companionship elsewhere (Ecc 9:9; cf. Ecc 11:1-2), but it's often implied in the recommendations to eat and drink and enjoy, because meals and feasting were typically community events in ancient Israel (Deut 12:7; 14:26; 26:11).

4:12 *three-ply cord*: This may imply that three companions are even better than two, or it may be a proverbial statement that lends traditional weight to Ecclesiastes 4:9.

4:13-16 The meaning of the parable is unclear (see the translation note on 4:14). Fame and success are always temporary (note also the parable in Ecc 9:13-16).

5:1-7 *God is in heaven, but you are on earth*: Right conduct,

5:1 Job 11:2;  
Prv 10:19;  
Prv 15:2;  
Ecc 10:14

your mouth or say anything hastily before God, because God is in heaven, but you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few.

<sup>3</sup> Remember:

Dreams come with many cares,  
and the voice of fools with many words.

<sup>4</sup>When you make a promise to God, fulfill it without delay because God has no pleasure in fools. Fulfill what you promise. <sup>5</sup>Better not to make a promise than to make a promise without fulfilling it. <sup>6</sup>Don't let your mouth make a sinner of you, and don't say to the messenger: "It was a mistake!" Otherwise, God may become angry at such talk and destroy what you have accomplished.

<sup>7</sup> Remember:

When dreams multiply,  
so do pointless thoughts and excessive speech.  
Therefore, fear God.

5:5 Nm 30:2;  
Dt 23:21;  
Ps 50:14;  
Ps 66:13;  
Ps 76:11

5:6 Prv 20:25;  
Ac 5:4

5:8 Nm 15:25;  
Mal 2:7;  
1Co 11:10;  
Heb 1:14

5:7 Ecc 3:14;  
Ecc 7:18;  
Ecc 8:12;  
Ecc 12:13

5:8 Ps 12:5;  
Ecc 3:16; Ecc 4:1

5:9 Prv 27:23

5:10 Ecc 4:8;  
Hab 2:5

5:12 Prv 3:24

5:18 Ecc 2:10;  
Ecc 2:24;

Ecc 3:13;  
Ecc 3:22; Ecc 9:7

### Hoarding wealth

<sup>8</sup>If you witness the poor being oppressed or the violation of what is just and right in some territory, don't be surprised because a high official watches over another, and yet others stand over them. <sup>9</sup>But the land's yield should be for everyone if the field is cultivated. <sup>10</sup>The money lover isn't satisfied with money; neither is the lover of wealth satisfied with income. This too is pointless. <sup>11</sup>When good things flow, so do those who consume them. But what do owners benefit from such goods, except to feast their eyes on them? <sup>12</sup>Sweet is the worker's sleep, whether there's a lot or little to eat; but the excess of the wealthy won't let them sleep.

<sup>13</sup>I have seen a sickening tragedy under the sun: people hoard their wealth to their own detriment. <sup>14</sup>Then that wealth is lost in a bad business venture so that when they have children, they are left with nothing. <sup>15</sup>Just as they came from their mother's womb naked, naked they'll return, ending up just like they started. All their hard work produces nothing—nothing they can take with them. <sup>16</sup>This too is a sickening tragedy: they must pass on just as they arrived. What then do they gain from working so hard for wind? <sup>17</sup>What's more, they constantly eat in darkness, with much aggravation, grief, and anger.

<sup>18</sup>This is the one good thing I've seen: it's appropriate for people to eat, drink, and find enjoyment in all their hard work under the sun during the brief lifetime that God gives them

<sup>a</sup>Correction; Heb uncertain; or *The land's advantage in everything is this: a king for a plowed field.*

especially in terms of speech, is the result of having a proper understanding of one's place in God's created order (cf. Ps 115:3). *fear God*: the sense of God's power and distance that leads to respect.

5:1-3 On restraint in speech, see also Proverbs 10:19. Fools are marked by excessive speech, a point that is underscored by the proverb in 5:3, which is further clarified in 5:7 (see also Ecc 10:12-14).

5:4-7 Fools are also marked by not doing what they say. The *promise* in question is religious. If one doesn't fulfill the solemn promise, it would be better to not have promised at all, because *God may become angry at such talk and destroy what you have accomplished* (5:6). The proverb in 5:7 reinforces the point. The ultimate right action is to *fear God* (5:7; see Ecc 3:14; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:13).

5:8-17 Various problems associated with wealth and power. 5:8 The Teacher returns to the problem of oppression (see Ecc 4:1-3), but apparently ties it to the hierarchy in society and politics, which may reflect governmental structures at the time.

5:9 A very obscure verse (see the translation note). It may concern the merits of agriculture, or of a good ruler, or that the yield of a cultivated land belongs to all persons (as in the CEB translation).

5:10-12 No amount of money or stuff can ever satisfy (cf. Ecc 1:8; 4:8; 6:7, 9). The Teacher deems this *pointless* (see

Ecc 1:2; sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecc 1). Increase in good things brings an increase in consumption, but the more one has, the more there is to lose. Verse 12 is a proverb that underscores the previous verses. *excess of the wealthy won't let them sleep*: See Ecclesiastes 2:23; 8:16.

5:13-17 Additional downsides to hoarding wealth. Those who hoard can hurt themselves (cf. Ecc 5:11-12) and, since there are no guarantees in business, even great wealth could be lost, leaving children destitute. One dies as naked as one is born, *ending up just like they started*. Hard work produces nothing that survives death. This is the biblical equivalent of the contemporary aphorism, "you can't take it with you."

5:15 *All their hard work produces nothing*: an answer to Ecclesiastes 1:3 (cf. Ecc 2:11, 22), here with an explicit reference to death. See Ecclesiastes 2:18-21.

5:16 Here the hard work is defined as working *hard for wind*, which evokes the theme of wind chasing (see note on Ecc 1:14).

5:17 Compare with Ecclesiastes 2:23.

5:18-20 Another passage about joy (see Ecc 2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 7:14; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:7-10). The Teacher introduces the theme by stating it is *the one good thing I've seen* and by deeming it *appropriate*. Once again, joy is the gift of God (cf. Ecc 2:24-26; 3:13; 8:15; 9:7, 9), but so is a person's *brief lifetime* and *wealth and riches*. Also new is that God

because that's their lot in life. <sup>19</sup>Also, whenever God gives people wealth and riches and enables them to enjoy it, to accept their place in the world<sup>o</sup> and to find pleasure in their hard work—all this is God's gift. <sup>20</sup>Indeed, people shouldn't brood too much over the days of their lives because God gives an answer in their hearts' joy.

### Controlled appetite

**6** I saw a tragedy under the sun, and it weighs heavily upon humanity. <sup>2</sup>God may give some people plenty of wealth, riches, and glory so that they lack nothing they desire. But God doesn't enable them to enjoy it; instead, a stranger enjoys it. This is pointless and a sickening tragedy. <sup>3</sup>Some people may have one hundred children and live a long life. But no matter how long they live, if they aren't content with life's good things, I say that even a stillborn child with no grave is better off than they are.<sup>p</sup> <sup>4</sup>Because that child arrives pointlessly, then passes away in darkness. Darkness covers its name. <sup>5</sup>It hasn't seen the sun or experienced anything. But it has more peace than those <sup>6</sup>who live a thousand years twice over but don't enjoy life's good things. Isn't everyone heading to the same destination? <sup>7</sup>All the hard work of humans is for the mouth, but the appetite is never full. <sup>8</sup>What advantage do the wise have over the foolish? Or what do the poor gain by knowing how to conduct themselves before the living? <sup>9</sup>It's better to enjoy what's at hand than to have an insatiable appetite. This too is pointless, just wind chasing.

<sup>10</sup>Whatever happens has already been designated, and human beings are fully known. They can't contend with the one who is stronger than they are. <sup>11</sup>Because the more words

<sup>o</sup>Or *portion in life*, as in 5:18 <sup>p</sup>Correction; Heb puts the lack of burial site with those who do not enjoy life's good things.

gets credit for being the one who *enables* people to enjoy wealth and riches in the first place, to *accept their place in the world* and to *find pleasure in their hard work*. In Ecclesiastes 6:1-2, the Teacher points out that this isn't always the case.

5:18 *enjoyment in all their hard work*: See note on Ecclesiastes 2:24.

5:19 *place in the world*: See the translation note. The same word is found in Ecclesiastes 5:18 and translated "their lot in life."

5:20 *gives an answer*: or "keeps them occupied" or "keeps them busy" (the same root word is used in Eccl 1:13; 3:10; 10:19). "Gives an answer" is more positive and connects with the overall emphasis in Ecclesiastes on joy as the gift of God. This God-given joy means *people shouldn't brood too much over the days of their lives*. But see also Ecclesiastes 6:1-2.

6:1-9 The Teacher deals with the tragedy of not enjoying life's good things.

6:1-2 In contrast to the earlier passages about joy (especially Eccl 5:19), where God enabled the capacity for enjoyment, here the Teacher considers a situation where God doesn't enable delight. He calls this a *tragedy under the sun*, something that *weighs heavily upon humanity*. The goods are still God-given and exist in abundance, but they are enjoyed by a *stranger*. It may be that the situation is like Ecclesiastes 2:18-19—namely, that the stranger in question is simply an unknown heir. But the Teacher nevertheless implicates God in prohibiting joy, which hasn't happened before in the book. Once again, the Teacher concludes that this lack of joy is *pointless* (see sidebar, "Pointless" at Eccl 1) and a *sickening tragedy* (cf. Eccl 2:17, 21).

6:3-6 The issue isn't the extent of one's life but contentment with one's life. According to Ecclesiastes 6:2, such contentment could be prohibited by God as much as it might be enabled by God (see Eccl 5:19).

6:3 See the translation note; the grave remark might go with those who don't enjoy life's blessings. Lack of a good burial was a negative fate in the ancient world (cf. Eccl 8:10; 2 Kgs 9:33-37; Jer 16:6; 22:18-19; Amos 2:1). *stillborn child*: Compare with Ecclesiastes 4:2-3; Job 3; Psalm 58:8. As pointless (Eccl 6:4; 1:2; see sidebar, "Pointless" at Eccl 1) and dark as such a birth is, such a child "has more peace" (Eccl 6:5) than those who live 2,000 years without enjoying *life's good things* (Eccl 6:5-6). On the benefits of not experiencing things done under the sun, see also Ecclesiastes 4:3.

6:6 *the same destination*: See Ecclesiastes 2:14-15; 3:20; 7:2.

6:7 See Ecclesiastes 1:8; 4:8; 5:10; 6:9.

6:8 See Ecclesiastes 2:13; 4:12-16; 9:18-10:1 for the relative merits of wisdom. The question is answered in Ecclesiastes 7:11-12. *the poor*: See Ecclesiastes 4:13-16; 9:13-16.

6:9 *what's at hand . . . insatiable appetite*: See Ecclesiastes 1:8; 4:6, 8; 5:10; 6:7. *This too is pointless, just wind chasing*:

See Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14; sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecclesiastes 1. It's not clear what *this* refers to, though it's presumably not advice about enjoyment in 6:9a (cf. Eccl 6:2) but perhaps the problem of having an *insatiable appetite*. This is the last mention of *wind chasing* in Ecclesiastes. That phrase and its distribution in the first half of the book are often used as a device to break the book into two halves (Eccl 1:1-6:9; 6:10-12:14). If correct, 6:9b may be a summarizing statement for the first part of the Teacher's reflections.

6:10-12 An introduction to the second half of the book (see note on Eccl 6:9), which is dominated by the themes of not knowing (Eccl 6:12; 7:14; 8:7; 9:1b, 12; 10:14; 11:2, 6).

6:10 *Whatever happens has already been designated*: See Ecclesiastes 1:9; 2:12b; 3:15a. *human beings are fully known*: by God (see Eccl 3:11, 15b), especially since *the one who is stronger than they are* is probably an allusion to God (see notes on Eccl 8:2-4; 10:5-7).

6:11 A comparison with Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 underscores

7:1 Prv 22:1;  
Ecc 4:2; Song 1:2  
7:2 Job 5:17;  
Job 23:10;  
Ps 90:12;  
Ecc 2:14;  
Zec 13:9

7:3 Prv 14:13;  
Ecc 2:2;  
2Co 7:10

7:4 1Ki 20:16;  
Mt 8:14;  
Mk 5:38

7:7 Ex 23:8;  
Dt 16:19;  
Prv 17:8;  
Prv 17:23;  
Ecc 4:1

7:8 Prv 14:29;  
Prv 16:32

7:9 Prv 14:17;  
Prv 16:32;  
Mt 5:22; Jas 1:19

7:11 Ecc 11:7

7:12 Prv 3:18;  
Prv 8:35;  
Ecc 10:19

increase, the more everything is pointless. What do people gain by it? <sup>12</sup>Because who knows what's good for human beings during life, during their brief pointless life, which will pass away like a shadow? Who can say what the future holds for people under the sun?

### Wisdom is better than wealth

**7** A good name is better than fine oil,  
and the day of death better than the birthday.

<sup>2</sup>It is better to go to a house in mourning  
than to a house party,  
because that is everyone's destiny;  
and the living should take it to heart.

<sup>3</sup>Aggravation is better than merriment  
because a sad face may lead to a glad heart.

<sup>4</sup>The wise heart is in the house that mourns,  
but the foolish heart is in the house that rejoices.

<sup>5</sup>It is better to obey the reprimand of the wise  
than to listen to the song of fools,

<sup>6</sup>because the fool's merriment is like nettles crackling under a kettle.  
That too is pointless.

<sup>7</sup>Oppression turns the wise into fools;  
a bribe corrupts the heart.

<sup>8</sup>The end of something is better than its beginning.  
Patience is better than arrogance.

<sup>9</sup>Don't be too quick to get angry  
because anger lives in the fool's heart.

<sup>10</sup>Don't ask, "How is it that the former days were better than these?"  
because it isn't wise to ask this.

<sup>11</sup>Wisdom is as good as<sup>a</sup> an inheritance—  
an advantage for those who see the sun.

<sup>12</sup>Wisdom's protection is like the protection of money;  
the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors.

<sup>a</sup>Or *Wisdom is good with*

that the Teacher's language in Ecclesiastes 6:10-12 relates to God. *pointless . . . gain*: See notes on Ecclesiastes 1:2-3.

6:12 *who knows . . . Who can say*: As in Ecclesiastes 3:22, the implied answer is "no one," with the exception of God. Lack of knowledge about what is good means that the enjoyment of good things is ultimately God's work (see Eccl 3:1-15; 6:1-2). *pointless life*: Compare with Ecclesiastes 6:4; 7:1-5; 9:9. *say what the future holds*: See Ecclesiastes 7:14; 8:7; 9:1b, 12; 10:14; 11:2, 6.

7:1-12 A collection of proverbs where the Teacher recommends unexpected things—for example, the day of death over a birthday (7:1) or mourning over rejoicing (7:4). Wisdom is good (7:11) and can be distinguished from foolishness (7:4-6), but here, as elsewhere (e.g., Eccl 2:13-14; 6:8; 9:18-10:1), the Teacher thinks the merits of wisdom are relative. Wisdom helps us realize that life has limits, and that the end of life in death is certain (7:1-2, 4, 8; cf. Eccl 9:10; 11:8, 10; 12:1, 7). The proverbs in chapter 7 thus balance the passages about joy in the book (Eccl 2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-20; 7:14; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:7-10), showing that the sayings about joy are sober and substantive, not flighty or superficial.

7:1 Compare with Ecclesiastes 7:8.

7:2 *that is everyone's destiny*: Compare with Ecclesiastes

3:20. *the living should take it to heart*: See Ecclesiastes 9:5.

7:6 *like nettles crackling*: an odd image, perhaps signifying heat but no light, sound but no sense. *pointless*: See sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecclesiastes 1.

7:7 Compare with Ecclesiastes 4:1-2.

7:8 Compare with Ecclesiastes 7:1.

7:9 The Teacher frequently counsels moderation and prudence (see Eccl 5:1-7; 7:8; 8:2-4).

7:10 *it isn't wise to ask this*: perhaps because of the cyclical nature of the world (Eccl 1:9a; 3:15a), which insures that there's nothing new under the sun (Eccl 1:9b).

7:11-12 These verses provide an answer to Ecclesiastes 6:8, and 7:1-12 as a whole suggests at least some *advantage* (Eccl 6:8; 7:12) for those who are wise. But the advantage is not as expected (see note on Eccl 7:1-12).

7:11 The translation is uncertain (see the translation note for an alternative).

7:12 In light of the comparison with money, *the advantage of knowledge* is relative and is concerned with preserving life, perhaps because foolishness ends in ruin (Eccl 4:5; 7:17; 10:12). Being wise won't prevent death (Eccl 2:15-16; 7:2; 8:8), and so any advantage is severely restricted to this life (Eccl 7:11; 9:5).

**Good times and bad**

<sup>13</sup>Consider God's work! Who can straighten what God has made crooked? <sup>14</sup>When times are good, enjoy the good; when times are bad, consider: God has made the former as well as the latter so that people can't discover anything that will come to be after them.

<sup>15</sup>I have seen everything in my pointless lifetime: the righteous person may die in spite of their righteousness; then again, the wicked may live long in spite of their wickedness. <sup>16</sup>Don't be too righteous or too wise, or you may be dumbfounded.\* <sup>17</sup>Don't be too wicked and don't be a fool, or you may die before your time. <sup>18</sup>It's good that you take hold of one of these without letting go of the other because the one who fears God will go forth with both.

<sup>19</sup>Wisdom makes a wise person stronger than ten rulers who are in a city. <sup>20</sup>Remember: there's no one on earth so righteous as to do good only and never make a mistake.\* <sup>21</sup>Don't worry about all the things people say, so you don't hear your servant cursing you. <sup>22</sup>After all, you know that you've often cursed others yourself!

**Life is complicated**

<sup>23</sup>I tested all of this by wisdom. I thought, I will be wise, but it eluded me.

<sup>24</sup>All that happens is elusive and utterly unfathomable. Who can grasp it? <sup>25</sup>I turned my mind to know, to investigate, and to seek wisdom, along with an account of things, to know that wickedness is foolishness and folly is madness.

<sup>26</sup>I found one woman more bitter than death: she who is a trap, her heart a snare, her hands shackles. Anyone who pleases God escapes her, but a sinner is trapped by her. <sup>27</sup>See, this is

\*Or *destroyed* \*Or *and never sin*

7:13 Job 12:14;  
Ecc 1:15;  
Is 14:27  
7:16 Ro 12:3;  
1Co 3:18  
7:17 Job 22:16;  
Prv 10:27  
7:20 1Ki 8:46;  
2Ch 6:36;  
Ps 14:3; Prv 20:9;  
Ro 3:23  
7:21 Prv 30:10  
7:23 Ecc 3:11;  
Ecc 8:17;  
Ro 1:22  
7:24 Job 11:7;  
Job 11:8;  
Job 28:12;  
Ps 139:6;  
Ro 11:33  
7:25 Ecc 1:17;  
Ecc 2:12  
7:26 Prv 2:16;  
Prv 5:3;  
Prv 22:14

7:13-22 Counsels moderation in various matters: righteousness and wickedness, good times and bad.  
7:13 See note on Ecclesiastes 1:15.

7:14 *enjoy the good*: one of the Teacher's several recommendations to enjoy life (Ecc 2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:7-10), though this one is abbreviated and muted. On God's absolute control, see Ecclesiastes 11:5. *so that people can't discover*: See Ecclesiastes 3:11; 8:17; 11:5. *anything that will come to be after them*: See Ecclesiastes 6:12; 8:7; 9:1b, 12; 10:14; 11:2, 6.

7:15 *I have seen everything*: The Teacher is either exaggerating here (cf. Ecc 8:9, 16-17) or making the point that everything in life repeats (cf. Ecc 1:9). *pointless lifetime*: See Ecclesiastes 1:2; sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecclesiastes 1; for "pointless life," see Ecclesiastes 6:12; 9:9. *the righteous person may die... the wicked may live long*: The Teacher challenges simplistic understandings of any cause-effect relationship between righteousness and longevity (or prosperity; cf. Ecc 8:10-12, 14; 10:5-7) and wickedness and punishment (Ecc 8:11-14). Compare with Psalm 37:25-29.

7:16-18 The Teacher cautions moderation in life, which is similar to ancient Aristotle's advice about "the golden mean," which is to find the desirable middle between two extremes.

7:16 Perhaps because being *too righteous* or *too wise* would gain too much attention, which can have unfortunate results from both human (Ecc 5:11) and divine (Job 1:8; 2:3) sides. *be dumbfounded*: or "destroyed" (see the translation note) may be preferable in light of *die before your time* in Ecclesiastes 7:17.

7:17 Avoid extreme wickedness and foolishness. As in Ecclesiastes 7:16, it seems best not to attract too much negative attention—in this case probably from God.

7:18 *fears God*: See Ecclesiastes 3:14; 5:7; 8:12-13; 12:13. The attitude is proper reverence and awe (see Ecc 5:2; 11:9; 12:1). *will go forth with both*: evidently righteousness and wickedness, or the wisdom and foolishness mentioned in Ecclesiastes 7:16-17—again in moderation. The Teacher's preference for wisdom (e.g., Ecc 7:19) means

that these items aren't held in perfect balance (see Ecc 8:8b) but are nevertheless held together given the realities of life (Ecc 7:20) and employed prudently (see Ecc 8:5b). See Ecclesiastes 7:21-22.

7:19-20 Wisdom retains merit, but not even righteousness is foolproof. *make a mistake*: or "sin."

7:21-22 An example of moderation, here in response to hearing someone speak badly about oneself (cf. Ecc 10:20).

7:23-8:1 The Teacher steps back and evaluates his quest for wisdom (7:23-25) before abruptly turning to comment on a *woman more bitter than death* (7:26-28) and then returning to the problem of wisdom (7:29-8:1).

7:23 *I tested all this by wisdom*: Compare with Ecclesiastes 1:13. *I will be wise*: Compare with Ecclesiastes 8:1. *it eluded me*: or "was distant" (cf. Ecc 8:17).

7:24 The problem of knowing is defined not in terms of pointlessness but mystery or distance (see note on Ecc 7:23). *Who can grasp it?*: another rhetorical question that implies the negative answer, "no one." For explicit answers, see Ecclesiastes 8:7, 17.

7:25 Compare with the Teacher's method in Ecclesiastes 1:13, 17; 2:12.

7:26-28 Because these verses fit within the Teacher's quest for wisdom (see note on Ecc 7:23-8:1), the *woman* in question here probably isn't a real person but a representation of Woman Wisdom as a person (e.g., Prov 1:20-33) or of Woman Folly (e.g., Prov 9:13-18) or even both. If the language does call to mind Woman Wisdom, it's a stunning reversal of Proverbs and a profound critique of the search for wisdom. See Ecclesiastes 1:13, 17-18; 8:17; 12:12.

7:26 The language is very similar to the representation of foolishness as a person in Proverbs 2:16-19; 7:5-27; 9:13-18. The person clearly isn't a real woman, given these connections. *pleases God... sinner is trapped*: Avoiding her is put in religious terms. For a more positive image of women, see Ecclesiastes 9:9.

7:27 *the Teacher*: This verse is an insertion by the

7:28 1Ki 11:3;  
Job 33:23  
7:29 Gn 1:27  
8:1 Ex 34:30;  
Dt 28:50; Ac 6:15  
8:5 Prv 17:24;  
Ecc 12:13

what I found, says the Teacher, examining one matter after another to account for things.

<sup>28</sup>But there's something that I constantly searched for but couldn't find: I found one man among a thousand, but I couldn't find a woman among any of these.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>29</sup>See, this alone I found: God made human beings straightforward, but they search for many complications.

**8** Who is wise? And who knows the meaning of anything?

A person's wisdom brightens the expression;  
it changes the hardness of someone's face.

### Watch out for power

<sup>2</sup>Keep<sup>a</sup> the king's command  
as you would keep a solemn pledge.

<sup>3</sup>Don't be dismayed; leave his presence.  
Don't linger in a harmful situation  
because he can do whatever he wants!

<sup>4</sup>Because the king's word has authority,  
no one can say to him, "What are you doing?"

<sup>5</sup>Whoever keeps a command will meet no harm, and the wise heart knows the right time and the right way <sup>6</sup>because there's a right time and right way for every matter. But human misfortunes are overwhelming <sup>7</sup>because no one knows what will happen, and no one can say when something might happen. <sup>8</sup>No one has control over the life-breath,<sup>‡</sup> to retain it, and there's no control over the day of death. There's no release from war, and wickedness won't deliver those who practice it.

<sup>9</sup>I observed all of this as I paid attention to all that happens under the sun. Sometimes people exercise power over each other to their detriment. <sup>10</sup>Then I saw the wicked brought to their graves, with people processing from a holy place,<sup>¶</sup> while those who had lived honestly were neglected in the city. This too is pointless.

<sup>†</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>‡</sup>Correction; Heb I (say?) keep <sup>¶</sup>Or wind <sup>¶¶</sup>Or temple

editor responsible for the framework of the book, since it speaks of the Teacher in the third person. See note on Ecclesiastes 1:1.

7:28 *found one man... couldn't find a woman*: The meaning is uncertain because we don't know on what basis the search is conducted, though the verse implies that women are inferior at something. It may be related to the problem of Woman Wisdom and/or Woman Folly in Ecclesiastes 7:26, in which case again it isn't about real women but the problem of wisdom and/or foolishness. See Ecclesiastes 9:9 for a more positive image of women.

7:29 In contrast to other passages (e.g., Eccl 1:15; 3:11; 6:2; 7:13-14), the problems faced by human beings in this verse are not created by God. *complications*: The same word, but in the singular form, is used in Ecclesiastes 7:25 ("an account of things"), 7:27 ("to account for things"), and 9:10 ("thought").

8:1 The Teacher concludes this unit as he began, indicating that wisdom is elusive (Eccl 7:23; cf. Eccl 8:17). Yet wisdom continues to give at least some benefit—in this verse, by softening our facial expressions. Perhaps that is a hint of additional, more substantial benefits.

8:2-14 This chapter consists of reflections about power and right, or wrongdoing.

8:2-4 The language concerns proper conduct before a king, but could also be referring to God in a disguised fashion (cf. Eccl 6:10; 10:5). If this is about God, compare with Ecclesiastes 5:1-7.

8:5-6 *command*: a different term than Ecclesiastes 8:2, but the same as in Ecclesiastes 12:13 ("commands"). *will meet*

*no harm*: an unusually confident claim for the Teacher (contrast with Eccl 9:11). *knows the right time and the right way*: Wisdom excels in prudence (cf. Eccl 8:5-6; Eccl 3:1-11, which concludes that ultimately only God knows the times). *right way*: See the same term in Ecclesiastes 3:16; 5:8, which showed that one can't assume that justice will triumph (cf. Eccl 11:9; 12:14). *human misfortunes*: problems of various sorts, including the problem of death (Eccl 8:8; 9:11-12).

8:7 Answers the question of Ecclesiastes 7:24. On the theme of not knowing, see also Ecclesiastes 6:12; 7:14; 9:1b, 12; 10:14; 11:2, 6.

8:8 *life-breath*: or "wind." "Life-breath" brings to mind the issue of death (Eccl 3:19, 21; 11:5; 12:7; though also life: Eccl 11:5), but "wind" would call to mind the theme of wind-chasing (Eccl 1:14, 17; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6, 16; 6:9; cf. Eccl 5:15; 11:4). *no control over the day of death*: Compare with Ecclesiastes 2:14-17; 3:2, 19-20. *no release from war*: The certainty of death is similar to the constraints of war. Perhaps conscription (or forced enrollment) is intended (cf. Eccl 8:2, 5 on royal/divine commands). *wickedness won't deliver*: Compare with Ecclesiastes 7:15-18.

8:9 *all of this*: Compare with Ecclesiastes 7:15; 8:16-17. *exercise power... to their detriment*: Compare with Ecclesiastes 4:1-3. *under the sun*: See Ecclesiastes 1:3.

8:10 Despite the absurdities of life, the Teacher is still bothered when the wicked are honored in death while honest people are neglected. It's precisely circumstances like these that lead him to conclude *This too is pointless* (see sidebar, "Pointless" at Eccl 1). *brought to their graves*: See note on Ecclesiastes 6:3.



R:11 Ps 50:21;  
Ecc 9:3; Is 26:10;  
Ro 2:4, Ro 2:5  
O:14 Job 21:7;  
Ecc 7:15;  
Jer 12:1  
8:15 Ecc 2:1,  
Ecc 2:24,  
Ecc 3:12,  
Ecc 5:18, Ecc 9:7  
9:2 Job 21:7;  
Ecc 2:14  
9:3 Ecc 8:11  
9:4 Is 38:18

<sup>11</sup>The condemnation for wicked acts isn't carried out quickly; that's why people dare to do evil. <sup>12</sup>Wrongdoers may commit a hundred crimes but still live long lives. But I also know that it will go well for those who fear God, for those who are reverent before God. <sup>13</sup>But it will not go well for the wicked; they won't live long at all because they aren't reverent before God. <sup>14</sup>Here's another thing that happens on earth that is pointless: the righteous get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked get what the righteous deserve. I say that this too is pointless.

**Enjoy life**

<sup>15</sup>So I commend enjoyment because there's nothing better for people to do under the sun but to eat, drink, and be glad. This is what will accompany them in their hard work, during the lifetime that God gives under the sun.

<sup>16</sup>Then I set my mind to know wisdom and to observe the business that happens on earth, even going without sleep day and night <sup>17</sup>I observed all the work of God—that no one can grasp what happens under the sun. Those who strive to know can't grasp it. Even the wise who are set on knowing are unable to grasp it.

**Everyone faces the same fate**

**G**o I considered all of this carefully, examining all of it: The righteous and the wise and their deeds are in God's hand, along with both love and hate. People don't know anything that's ahead of them. <sup>2</sup>Everything is the same for everyone. The same fate awaits the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad,<sup>3</sup> the pure and the impure, those who sacrifice and those who don't sacrifice. The good person is like the wrongdoer; the same holds for those who make solemn pledges and those who are afraid to swear. <sup>3</sup>This is the sad thing about all that happens under the sun: the same fate awaits everyone. Moreover, the human heart is full of evil; people's minds are full of madness while they are alive, and afterward they die. <sup>4</sup>Whoever is among the living can be certain about this. A living dog is definitely better off than a dead lion, <sup>5</sup>because the living know that they will die. But the dead know nothing at all. There is no more reward for them; even the memory of them is lost.

<sup>a</sup>LXX

8:11-14 Once again (e.g., Eccl 7:15), the Teacher challenges the relationship between an action and its consequence (8:11-12a), before he seems to contradict himself (8:12b-13). If verse 14 is his ultimate conclusion, then there's no direct relationship between righteousness and prosperity. 8:11 Delay of punishment leads to increased wrongdoing. But see Ecclesiastes 8:12b-13.

8:12a The long life of some wrongdoers proves that punishment is frequently delayed.

8:12b-13 Seems to contradict 8:11-12a directly. Perhaps the Teacher is quoting a traditional statement only to refute it definitively in Ecclesiastes 8:14. Or perhaps he is hopeful at this point (see note on Eccl 8:5-6). Or he has shifted the topic since he now includes reference to the fear of God (see Eccl 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 12:13) and having reverence before God (here explicitly contrasted with wickedness). For God's judgment, see Ecclesiastes 3:17; 11:9; 12:14.

8:14 *pointless*: See sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecclesiastes 1. *The righteous get what the wicked deserve*. Compare with Ecclesiastes 3:16.

8:15-17 Another passage about joy is followed by a realistic assessment of the limits of knowledge and wisdom.

8:15 See Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-20; 7:14; 9:7-10; 11:7-10. The Teacher explicitly says *I commend enjoyment*. Eating, drinking, and being glad are what will accompany humans in their hard work (see Eccl 2:24).

8:16 The Teacher continues his quest. See Ecclesiastes 1:13-18; 2:12; 7:23. *even going without sleep*: a rhetorical flourish or ironic statement (cf. Eccl 7:15; 8:9, 17). For lack of sleep, see also Ecclesiastes 2:23; 5:12.

8:17 *I observed all the work of God*: another overstatement

or ironic remark (see Eccl 7:15; 8:9, 16), especially in light of Ecclesiastes 3:11; 7:14. *no one can grasp*: explicitly answers the question of Ecclesiastes 7:24. *under the sun*: See note on Ecclesiastes 1:3. *Even the wise*: a stunning critique of Wisdom and the wisdom project by an insider who is himself a sage (Eccl 12:9). It is the logical conclusion to be derived from Ecclesiastes 3:11 and 7:14.

9:1-10 The Teacher summarizes his quest, including the problems of not knowing and death, before once again recommending enjoyment.

9:1 *So I considered ... examining all of it*: See notes on Ecclesiastes 1:13; 7:15, 23; 8:9, 16-17. *in God's hand, along with both love and hate*: The meaning of this phrase is unclear. *People don't know anything that's ahead of them*: See Ecclesiastes 6:12; 7:14; 8:7; 9:10; 10:14; 11:2, 6. The immediate context suggests the time of death (see Eccl 9:2; cf. Eccl 8:7-8).

9:2-3 *The same fate*: namely death (9:3, 5-6; see Eccl 2:14-16; 3:19-20; 6:6; 7:2). The same fate faces all, despite their merits or demerits. The Teacher deems this a *sad thing ... that happens under the sun* (see Eccl 1:3; cf. Eccl 2:17-18, 20-21). His despair over it leads to a remarkably negative statement about the human heart being full of evil and people's minds being full of madness while they are alive. Note a similar progression in Ecclesiastes 2:20-23.

9:4-6 Despite the brutality of the preceding verse, the Teacher says that it's better to be alive. But the advantage is minimal: The living are compared to dogs, not lions. Dogs didn't have the same respect as lions in antiquity. So the benefit is only that *the living know that they will die*. This is contrasted with the dead who *know nothing at all*.

9:7 Ecc 2:24,  
Ecc 3:13,  
Ecc 5:18,  
Ecc 8:15  
9:8 Ru 3:3;  
Rev 3:4  
9:10 Ps 6:5;  
Ecc 9:5, 16, 38; 18;  
In 9:4; Ro 12:11  
9:11 Ecc 2:14;  
Jer 9:23;  
Am 2:14  
9:12 Prv 7:23,  
Prv 29:6,  
Ecc 8:9;  
Lk 21:34;  
1Th 5:3  
9:16 Prv 21:22;  
Ecc 7:19  
9:17 Ecc 10:12  
10:1 Ex 30:25;  
Prv 13:16,  
Prv 14:8  
10:2 Ecc 2:14,  
Ecc 10:10

<sup>a</sup>Their love and their hate, as well as their zeal, are already long gone. They will never again have a stake in all that happens under the sun.

<sup>7</sup>Go, eat your food joyfully and drink your wine happily because God has already accepted what you do. <sup>8</sup>Let your garments always be white; don't run short of oil for your head. <sup>9</sup>Enjoy life with your dearly loved spouse all the days of your pointless life that God<sup>7</sup> gives you under the sun—all the days of your pointless life!<sup>8</sup>—because that's your part to play<sup>a</sup> in this life and in your hard work under the sun. <sup>10</sup>Whatever you are capable of doing, do with all your might because there's no work, thought, knowledge, or wisdom in the grave,<sup>b</sup> which is where you are headed.

### Listen to common wisdom, not fools

<sup>11</sup>I also observed under the sun that the race doesn't always go to the swift, nor the battle to the mighty, nor food to the wise, nor wealth to the intelligent, nor favor to the knowledgeable, because accidents can happen to anyone. <sup>12</sup>People most definitely don't know when their time will come. Like fish tragically caught in a net or like birds trapped in a snare, so are human beings caught in a time of tragedy that suddenly falls to them.

<sup>13</sup>I also observed the following example of wisdom under the sun—it impressed me greatly: <sup>14</sup>There was a small town with only a few residents. A mighty king came against it, surrounded it, and waged a terrible war against it. <sup>15</sup>Now there lived in that town a poor but wise man who saved everyone by his wisdom. But no one remembered that poor man. <sup>16</sup>So I thought, Wisdom is better than might, but the wisdom of commoners is despised and their words aren't heeded.

<sup>17</sup>The calm words of the wise are better heeded than the racket caused by a ruler among fools.

<sup>18</sup>Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one incompetent person destroys much good.

**10** As dead flies spoil the perfumer's oil,  
so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

<sup>2</sup>The mind of the wise tends toward the right,  
but the mind of the fool toward the left.

<sup>7</sup>Or he or that are given you <sup>a</sup>This phrase is missing in some LXX sources, Syr, and Tg. <sup>a</sup>Or portion <sup>b</sup>Or underworld; Heb Sheol

They have no more reward (cf. the same term in Eccl 4:9) and even the memory of them is lost (cf. Eccl 1:11; 2:16). The benefit of knowing that one must die (see Eccl 7:2)—but not when one will die (see Eccl 8:7-8; 9:11-12)—is evidently that one can enjoy life while one has it (see Eccl 9:7-10; 3:12b, 22; 5:18, 20; 7:14a; 8:15; 11:8-10).

9:7-10 Another passage about joy (see Eccl 2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-20; 7:14; 8:15; 11:7-10). The Teacher directly addresses the reader using a string of commands (go, eat, drink, enjoy, do) and verbs with similar sense (Let your garments always be white; don't run short of oil). The joy that's recommended here is justified by the statement that God has already accepted what you do. This may refer to the inevitable structure of life: an order to the world that is determined by God even if it can't be understood by humans (see Eccl 1:4-11; 3:1-15; 7:14). But it is more likely related to the fact that the Teacher repeatedly states that the opportunity and experience of joy is the gift of God (Eccl 2:24-26; 3:13; 5:18-19; 7:14; 8:15; 9:9). The Teacher reminds readers of the basic problems of our limitations by repeating key terms ("pointless life," "under the sun," "hard work") and clarifying their final destination ("the grave . . . where you are headed"). Compare with Ecclesiastes 3:20; 6:6; 7:2.

9:8 garments . . . be white . . . oil for your head: Clean clothes and good hygiene may be the point, but the language is also linked to purity and anointment, which are religious practices.

9:9 dearly loved spouse: a positive image in contrast to Ecclesiastes 7:28 (cf. Eccl 4:9-12; 11:1-2 for companionship).

pointless life: See Ecclesiastes 6:12; 7:15; sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecclesiastes 1. under the sun . . . hard work: See Ecclesiastes 1:3.

9:10 See Ecclesiastes 9:5-6; notes on 9:4-6; 9:7-10.

9:11-10:20 The Teacher returns to the interaction of wisdom and folly, recommending wisdom, though it's far from being "fool proof" (see 9:18; 10:1).

9:11-12 There's no guarantee that good causes lead to good results. People . . . don't know when their time will come: Compare with Ecclesiastes 6:12; 7:14; 8:7; 9:1b; 10:14; 11:2, 6. their time may be the time of accidents (9:11), or a time of tragedy, or any of the seasons of life (Eccl 3:1-8), which would include the time of death (Eccl 3:2).

9:13-16 A perplexing parable that is reminiscent of Ecclesiastes 4:13-16 and further supported by two proverbs in Ecclesiastes 9:17-18.

9:15 poor but wise: See Ecclesiastes 4:13. But no one remembered: Compare with Ecclesiastes 4:15-16 and, more generally, Ecclesiastes 1:11.

9:16 Once again, wisdom is superior in some ways, but there is no guarantee that it will pay off in the long run (see Eccl 2:14; 9:18-10:1).

9:17-18 Two proverbs support the parable of Ecclesiastes 9:13-16.

10:1 See Ecclesiastes 9:18.

10:2-3 Despite the power of even a little foolishness (Eccl 9:18-10:1), it's still possible to distinguish the wise from the fool, with the latter clearly an unattractive option (cf. Eccl 10:15). toward the right: The right hand often represented wisdom, strength, and favor.

- <sup>3</sup>Fools lack all sense even when they walk down the street; they show everyone that they are fools.
- <sup>4</sup>If a ruler's temper rises against you, don't leave your post, because calmness alleviates great offenses.
- <sup>5</sup>There's an evil that I have seen under the sun: the kind of mistake that comes from people in power. <sup>6</sup>Fools are appointed to high posts, while the rich sit in lowly positions. <sup>7</sup>I have seen slaves on horseback, while princes walk on foot like slaves.
- <sup>8</sup>Whoever digs a pit may fall into it, and whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake.
- <sup>9</sup>Whoever quarries stones may be injured by them; whoever splits logs may be endangered by them.
- <sup>10</sup>If an ax is dull and one doesn't sharpen it first, then one must exert more force. It's profitable to be skillful and wise.
- <sup>11</sup>If a snake bites before it's charmed, then there's no profit for the snake charmer.
- <sup>12</sup>Words from a wise person's mouth are beneficial, but fools are devoured by their own lips.
- <sup>13</sup>Fools start out talking foolishness and end up speaking awful nonsense.
- <sup>14</sup>Fools talk too much! No one knows what will happen; no one can say what will happen in the future.
- <sup>15</sup>The hard work of fools tires them out because they don't even know the way to town!
- <sup>16</sup>Too bad for you, land, whose king is a boy and whose princes feast in the morning.
- <sup>17</sup>Happy is the land whose king is dignified and whose princes feast at the right time for energy, not for drunkenness.
- <sup>18</sup>Through laziness, the roof sags; through idle hands, the house leaks.
- <sup>19</sup>Feasts are made for laughter, wine cheers the living, and money answers everything.<sup>c</sup>
- <sup>20</sup>Don't curse a king even in private; don't curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird could carry your voice; some winged creature could report what you said!

**Take risks; life is short**

**11** Send your bread out on the water because, in the course of time, you may find it again. <sup>2</sup>Give a portion to seven people, even to eight: you don't know what disaster

<sup>c</sup>Or *money is everyone's answer.*

10:4 For care with those in power, see Ecclesiastes 8:2-4. *calmness*: Compare with Ecclesiastes 9:17.

10:5-7 The Teacher is again frustrated over the muddled nature of things (Eccl 3:16; 7:15; 8:10). *people in power*. In Hebrew, this is singular, "the one in power," which may echo the ruler of Ecclesiastes 10:4 or refer in a veiled way to God (as in Eccl 6:10; 8:2-4).

10:8-9 Proverbs that echo the sentiment of Ecclesiastes 9:11-12.

10:10-11 Proverbs that suggest, despite all that has been said before, it is nevertheless profitable to be skillful and wise. *profitable*: the same word often translated as "gain" (Eccl 1:3).

10:12-15 Affirmation of the profitability of wisdom by discussing the dangers of foolishness.

10:12 Compare with Ecclesiastes 4:5.

10:13 Compare with Ecclesiastes 5:1-7.

10:14 *No one knows what will happen*: See Ecclesiastes 6:12; 7:14; 8:7; 9:1b, 12; 11:2, 6.

10:15 See Ecclesiastes 10:3.

10:16-18 Prudence seems to be the point of these proverbs. See also Ecclesiastes 8:5b-6a.

10:19 *money answers everything*: This seems out of place (cf. Eccl 4:8; 5:10, 13-14; 7:12). See the translation note. Yet another translation could be "money preoccupies everyone."

10:20 Compare with Ecclesiastes 7:21-22 and the Teacher's advice regarding those in power (Eccl 8:2-4; 10:4).

11:1-10 In the final reflections before the closing poem, the Teacher discusses what one should do, given the brevity of life. This involves charity, taking risks while working wisely, and enjoying life while one can.

11:1-2 Ancient Near Eastern parallels, especially from Egypt, indicate that the metaphor of sending *bread out on the water* is based in charity toward others. Such charity may result in benefits later. *Seven people... eight*: a progression meaning a significant amount, you don't know. See Ecclesiastes 6:12; 7:14; 8:7; 9:1b, 12; 10:14; 11:6. In this case not knowing the future leads to a diversification of

10:4 1Sa 25:24; Prv 15:1, Prv 16:14, Prv 25:15; Ecc 8:3

10:5 Ecc 3:16, Ecc 4:1, Ecc 5:6

10:8 Ps 7:15; Prv 26:27; Am 5:19

10:11 Ps 58:4, Ps 58:5; Jer 8:17

10:13 Prv 29:11; Ecc 5:3

10:15 Is 35:8

10:16 Is 3:4, Is 3:12, Is 5:11

10:17 Prv 31:4; Is 5:11

10:18 Prv 24:30

10:20 Ex 22:28; Lk 12:3; Ac 23:5

11:1 Prv 11:25, Prv 19:17; Is 32:20; Heb 6:10

11:2 Ps 112:9; Lk 6:30; 1Ti 6:18

11:3 Job 26:8;  
Job 36:27;  
Ps 77:17;  
Is 55:10;  
2Pt 2:17  
11:4 Ecc 11:6;  
Is 32:20; Mt 13:3  
11:5 Ecc 8:17;  
In 3:8

11:7 Ecc 7:11  
11:9 Job 31:7;  
Ecc 2:10;  
Ecc 3:17;  
Ecc 12:14;  
Ro 14:10

11:10 2Co 7:1;  
2Ti 2:22  
12:1 Ecc 11:8  
12:1 2Sa 19:35;  
Ps 104:12;  
Song 2:12;  
Jer 25:10

12:5 Job 17:13;  
Job 30:23;  
Jer 9:17

may come upon the land. <sup>3</sup>If clouds fill up, they will empty out rain on the earth. If a tree falls, whether to the south or to the north, wherever it falls, there it will lie. <sup>4</sup>Those who watch the wind blow will never sow, and those who observe the clouds will never reap. <sup>5</sup>Just as you don't understand what the life-breath<sup>d</sup> does in the fetus<sup>d</sup> inside a pregnant woman's womb, so you can't understand the work of God, who makes everything happen. <sup>6</sup>Scatter your seed in the morning, and in the evening don't be idle because you don't know which will succeed, this one or that, or whether both will be equally good.

<sup>7</sup>Sweet is the light, and it's pleasant for the eyes to see the sun. <sup>8</sup>Even those who live many years should take pleasure in them all. But they should be mindful that there will also be many dark days. Everything that happens is pointless.

<sup>9</sup>Rejoice, young person, while you are young! Your heart should make you happy in your prime. Follow your heart's inclinations and whatever your eyes see, but know this: God will call you to account for all of these things. <sup>10</sup>Remove anxiety from your heart, banish pain from your body, because youth and the dawn of life are pointless too.

### Troubling days to come

**12** Remember your creator in your prime,  
before the days of trouble arrive,  
and those years, about which you'll say, "I take no pleasure in these"—  
<sup>2</sup>before the sun and the light grow dark,  
the moon and the stars too,  
before the clouds return after the rain;  
<sup>3</sup>on the day when the housekeepers tremble  
and the strong men stoop;  
when the women who grind stop working because they're so few,  
and those who look through the windows grow dim;  
<sup>4</sup>when the doors to the street are shut,  
when the sound of the mill fades,  
the sound of the bird rises, and all the singers come down low;  
<sup>5</sup>when people are afraid of things above and of terrors along the way;  
when the almond tree blanches, the locust droops,  
and the caper-berry comes to nothing;<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Correction with Tg; MT like the bones <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain

one's resources, but here the resources are not for one's own investment but are used charitably toward others.

11:3-6 Certain natural processes are dependable (cf. Ecc 1:3-7), but a person has to work with them to reap any benefits. Just because a person doesn't know *which will succeed*, that doesn't excuse them from work in the morning and evening.

11:5 The study of how things began is as mysterious as studying how things will end. *so you can't understand the work of God*: Compare with Ecclesiastes 3:11; 7:14; 8:17.

11:6 *you don't know*: Compare with Ecclesiastes 6:12; 7:14; 8:7; 9:1b, 12; 10:14; 11:2.

11:7-10 The last of the passages about joy (see Ecc 2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-20; 7:14; 8:15; 9:7-10). It begins with a statement regarding the sweetness and pleasantness of life (Ecc 9:7).

11:8 *those who live many years should take pleasure in them all*: Contrast with Ecclesiastes 6:1-3. *but they should be mindful*: See Ecclesiastes 12:1-7. *pointless*: See sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecclesiastes 1.

11:9 *young person*: The Teacher imagines the reader as a young person or at least younger than he is (see Ecc 12:1, 12). *while you are young*: For enjoying life while one can, see Ecclesiastes 3:12; 5:18; 7:15; 8:15; 9:9. *Follow your heart's inclinations*: perhaps because of God's approval of enjoyment (see Ecc 9:7b). *God will call you to account for all of these things*: God's judgment is also found in Ecclesiastes

3:17 (cf. Ecc 8:12-13; 12:14). Even full-throttled enjoyment should be appropriately measured (Ecc 7:15-18).

11:10 The Teacher reminds the reader that all joy is temporary and ultimately *pointless* (see sidebar, "Pointless" at Ecc 1). This judgment holds true for *youth and the dawn of life*, as well as it does for the aged and elderly (cf. Ecc 4:2-3; 6:3, 6; 12:1-7).

12:1-7 A closing poem that corresponds to Ecclesiastes 1:3-11. The poem in chapter 1 concerns the cycle of life, but 12:1-7 concerns the coming and altogether certain cataclysm of death. The Teacher describes death with complex imagery that might come from a funeral procession, the deterioration of body parts, a house in disrepair, an approaching thunderstorm, the demise of the cosmos, or some combination of all of these. In several ways, the death of humans is presented as if it were the end of the world, perhaps because it is the end of the world for the individual who dies. For explicit comments on death, see Ecclesiastes 3:19-21, but note that 12:7 puts matters somewhat differently. The Teacher may still not know which direction the *life-breath* goes (Ecc 3:21), but he states confidently that it *returns to God who gave it* (12:7).

12:1 Closely similar to the sentiments of Ecclesiastes 11:7-10. *I take no pleasure in these*: Times will come when enjoyment isn't possible (Ecc 11:8; cf. Ecc 4:8; 6:2).

12:3 The image of women looking through windows is one of lost hope in Judges 5:28 and 2 Kings 9:30.

when the human goes to the eternal abode,  
with mourners all around in the street;  
6 before the silver cord snaps  
and the gold bowl shatters;  
the jar is broken at the spring  
and the wheel is crushed at the pit;  
7 before dust returns to the earth as it was before  
and the life-breath returns to God who gave it.

**Motto and conclusion**

8 Perfectly pointless, says the Teacher, everything is pointless.  
9 Additionally: Because the Teacher was wise, he constantly taught the people knowledge. He listened and investigated. He composed many proverbs. 10 The Teacher searched for pleasing words, and he wrote truthful words honestly.  
11 The words of the wise are like iron-tipped prods;  
the collected sayings of the masters are like nails fixed firmly by a shepherd. f  
12 Be careful, my child, of anything beyond them!  
There's no end to the excessive production of scrolls. Studying too much wearies the body.  
13 So this is the end of the matter; all has been heard. Worship God and keep God's commandments because this is what everyone must do. 14 God will definitely bring every deed to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or bad.

f Or fixed by one shepherd

12:6 The imagery may relate to Egyptian funeral rites, which symbolized the finality of death. It's striking that the breaking of the jar is done *at the spring* because it symbolizes the inevitability of death from the very beginning—at the start or source of life.  
12:7 It's hard to say if the return of the *life-breath* to God who gave it is entirely positive, but it seems more confident than Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 (see notes on Eccl 3:19-21; 12:1-7).  
12:8-14 The closing verses correspond to the opening of the book (Eccl 1:1-2). The motto of Ecclesiastes 1:2 is repeated almost word for word in 12:8, which is followed by a third-person epilogue (or epilogues) about the Teacher. This corresponds to the third-person heading in Ecclesiastes 1:1 (see notes on Eccl 1:1-2; 12:9-14).  
12:8 *Perfectly pointless... everything is pointless*: Like Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12:8 is a combination of the editor's words about the Teacher and the Teacher's own voice. In this climactic position, it may be intended as a concluding summary of the book's message. Ecclesiastes 12:8 is almost identical to 1:2, but 1:2 is more emphatic with its repetition of *perfectly pointless*. The similarities between the two verses suggest that the Teacher's primary judgment remains in place, but the differences, especially the fact that 12:8 is not as emphatic as 1:2, might show that the Teacher's conclusions are slightly less strident than they were at the start. *Teacher*: See note on Ecclesiastes 1:1 and the introduction.  
12:9-14 The epilogue. See notes on Ecclesiastes 1:1-2; 12:8-14. There may be two epilogues, 12:9-11 and 12:12-14, since both begin with the same Hebrew word (translated *Additionally* at verse 9).  
12:9-10 *Because the Teacher was wise*: The epilogue assumes the wise attitude of the Teacher and notes how he taught... *listened and investigated, and composed many proverbs*. He also *searched... and wrote*. These activities describe the work of a sage, and it is asserted that the Teacher did them all with great skill.  
12:11 Despite the Teacher's skill, *the words of the wise* often hurt, like *iron-tipped prods* or *nails fixed firmly* that are used

by a *shepherd*. The pleasing aspect of the Teacher's words (Eccl 12:10) doesn't mean that they are pleasurable. They may "please" only insofar as they provoke! *a shepherd*: or "one shepherd" (see the translation note). The shepherd in question is sometimes identified as Moses or Solomon or even God, but the text isn't clear on this matter.  
12:12 *my child*: a common way to refer to one's student in wisdom literature (e.g., Prov 1:8, 10). *Be careful... of anything beyond them*: The warning may be not to surpass the words of the wise (Eccl 12:11), but it could also recommend not going further than the Teacher did in his quest for meaning. *Studying too much*: See Ecclesiastes 1:18.  
12:13 *all has been heard*: Contrast with Ecclesiastes 1:8.  
12:13-14 *the end of the matter*: a summing up of the Teacher's message by means of the worship of God and the keeping of God's commandments. Reverence and obedience are found elsewhere in the wisdom literature (e.g., Prov 1:7, 29; Job 1:1; 28:28), with the expectation that God will judge every deed... *including every hidden thing, whether good or bad*. The big question is whether this summation is true to the Teacher's reflections. For the fear of God theme, see Ecclesiastes 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12-13. For talk of commandments, see Ecclesiastes 8:5, though there the command is singular and from a king (but see note on Eccl 8:2-4). For God's judgment see Ecclesiastes 3:17; 8:12-13; 11:9. For hidden things coming to light, see Ecclesiastes 10:20 (cf. Eccl 7:21-22). So while some interpreters think these verses are a pious addition intended to make the Teacher orthodox in the end, there are enough connections between the epilogue and the rest of the book for it to serve as an appropriate ending. It is an affirmation that the Teacher is right (as a sage: Eccl 12:9) about not knowing. The Teacher doesn't know everything, even at his most confident or most skeptical (e.g., Eccl 7:15; 8:17). It also affirms that the Teacher makes a realistic assessment of his position before God (e.g., Eccl 5:1-7) and the obedience that should flow from that relationship (cf. Eccl 8:2-5). Throughout Ecclesiastes, the Teacher knows that God is sovereign (Eccl 3:11; 7:14; 11:5).

12:7 Gn 2:7;  
Gn 3:19;  
Job 34:15;  
Ecc 3:20;  
Ecc 3:21  
12:8 Ecc 1:2  
12:10 Prv 22:20;  
Prv 22:21;  
Ecc 1:1; Col 1:5  
12:11 Eyr 9:8;  
Prv 1:6;  
Prv 22:17;  
Ecc 10:12;  
Is 22:23  
12:12 Ecc 1:18  
12:13 Dt 6:2;  
Dt 10:12;  
Ecc 5:7; Ecc 8:12  
12:14 Ecc 3:17;  
Ecc 11:9;  
Ro 2:16; 1Co 4:5;  
2Co 5:10

die	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. F.	she	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. F.
der	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. M.	he	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. M.
es	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. N.	it	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. N.
ich	pron. pers. 1. Sg. S.	I	pron. pers. 1. Sg. S.
du	pron. pers. 2. Sg. S.	you	pron. pers. 2. Sg. S.
er	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. M.	he	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. M.
sie	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. F.	she	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. F.
es	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. N.	it	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. N.
wir	pron. pers. 1. Pl. S.	we	pron. pers. 1. Pl. S.
du	pron. pers. 2. Sg. S.	you	pron. pers. 2. Sg. S.
er	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. M.	he	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. M.
sie	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. F.	she	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. F.
es	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. N.	it	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. N.
wir	pron. pers. 1. Pl. S.	we	pron. pers. 1. Pl. S.
du	pron. pers. 2. Sg. S.	you	pron. pers. 2. Sg. S.
er	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. M.	he	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. M.
sie	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. F.	she	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. F.
es	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. N.	it	pron. pers. 3. Sg. S. N.

ein	num. 1	one	num. 1
zwei	num. 2	two	num. 2
drei	num. 3	three	num. 3
vier	num. 4	four	num. 4
fünf	num. 5	five	num. 5
sechs	num. 6	six	num. 6
sieben	num. 7	seven	num. 7
acht	num. 8	eight	num. 8
neun	num. 9	nine	num. 9
zehn	num. 10	ten	num. 10
hundert	num. 100	hundred	num. 100
tausend	num. 1000	thousand	num. 1000
million	num. 1000000	million	num. 1000000
billiarde	num. 1000000000000	billion	num. 1000000000000
trillion	num. 1000000000000000	trillion	num. 1000000000000000
quadrillion	num. 1000000000000000000	quadrillion	num. 1000000000000000000
quintillion	num. 1000000000000000000000	quintillion	num. 1000000000000000000000
sextillion	num. 1000000000000000000000000	sextillion	num. 1000000000000000000000000
septillion	num. 1000000000000000000000000000	septillion	num. 1000000000000000000000000000
octillion	num. 1000000000000000000000000000000	octillion	num. 1000000000000000000000000000000
nonillion	num. 1000000000000000000000000000000000	nonillion	num. 1000000000000000000000000000000000
decillion	num. 1000000000000000000000000000000000000	decillion	num. 1000000000000000000000000000000000000
und	conj. 1	and	conj. 1
oder	conj. 2	or	conj. 2
aber	conj. 3	but	conj. 3
weil	conj. 4	because	conj. 4
da	conj. 5	since	conj. 5
so	conj. 6	so	conj. 6
sondern	conj. 7	but	conj. 7
entweder	conj. 8	either	conj. 8
entweder	conj. 9	either	conj. 9
entweder	conj. 10	either	conj. 10
entweder	conj. 11	either	conj. 11
entweder	conj. 12	either	conj. 12
entweder	conj. 13	either	conj. 13
entweder	conj. 14	either	conj. 14
entweder	conj. 15	either	conj. 15
entweder	conj. 16	either	conj. 16
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entweder	conj. 93	either	conj. 93
entweder	conj. 94	either	conj. 94
entweder	conj. 95	either	conj. 95
entweder	conj. 96	either	conj. 96
entweder	conj. 97	either	conj. 97
entweder	conj. 98	either	conj. 98
entweder	conj. 99	either	conj. 99
entweder	conj. 100	either	conj. 100

# SONG OF SONGS

The Song of Songs seems out of place in the Bible. Many readers find it embarrassing and confusing. Embarrassing because on first blush (quite literally), the book appears to be nothing less than a collection of poems celebrating the very real, very passionate—even very erotic—love between a man and a woman. This embarrassment leads directly to the confusion: What is this kind of book doing in the Bible, and what does it mean?

Neither question is easily answered. The first verse indicates that the book known as “the Best Song” (see note on Song 1:1) has some relationship to Solomon. Indeed, Solomon is mentioned by name seven times in the book (Song 1:1, 5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11-12) and there are additional mentions of an unidentified king (Song 1:4, 12; 7:5) and other royal allusions (e.g., Song 6:8-9). None of these passages prove that the book was written by Solomon, and several of them indicate quite the opposite. So while the male lover in the Song of Songs is described as a king (Song 1:4, 12) and may even allude

to himself in that way (cf. Song 6:8-9), he isn’t King Solomon himself, since the man speaks in the first person, whereas Solomon is consistently spoken about in the third person. The last verses of the book even seem to poke fun at Solomon: The man says that Solomon can keep his “thousand”; he is perfectly content with his one and only love (Song 8:11-12). The second part of Song 1:1, then, is best understood as a dedication of sorts to Solomon, or *for* him in some way, perhaps because of his reputation as a brilliant sage (1 Kgs 4:29-34) and passionate lover (1 Kgs 11:3).

But if it seems clear that Solomon didn’t write the Song of Songs, it’s equally unclear who did. Much depends on the nature of the book. Is it one long poem, written by one author, meant to be read as a whole? Or is it a collection of many small love poems, some of which, at least, were originally independent and came from different hands? It’s hard to say, though some of the imagery and language found in the book suggest that it was written long after Solomon, perhaps



Pomegranate blossoms (Song 4; 6)  
Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

as late as the 4th or 3rd centuries BCE. But if the Song is a collection of many different and discrete poems, then it remains possible that some of these compositions could be quite old.

The Song of Songs is dominated by two voices: the male and female lovers. In some passages the precise speaker is uncertain, but most of the time the gender of the speaking subject is revealed in the original Hebrew. It is also revealed in terms of content when the man praises the woman's beauty or the woman praises the man's appearance, or by the specific words they use for each other. She prefers to call him "my love" (see note on Song 1:13). He calls her "my dearest" (see note on Song 1:9).

We don't know anything about these two figures, other than what they say about themselves, about each other, and how they say it. The primary thing the lovers discuss is their love for each other and the longing they feel for each other. Of the two voices, the woman speaks first and last and also speaks more than the man does. The dominance of the female voice in the Song is unmatched elsewhere in the Bible. Some have taken it as proof that the book was written by a woman. While this isn't certain, the prominence of the woman's voice offers an important balance to the otherwise male-centered orientation of the Bible. In fact, the primacy of the female lover, her initiative in the romance, and the way she describes the man's longing for her—coupled with the way the man describes the woman and his longing for her—offer important insights into ways the "battle of the sexes" can and should be overcome; namely, through the mutuality and equality that marks the best love between a man and a woman (see note on Song 7:10; see sidebar, "The Garden of Eden" at Song 7).

Other voices are also sometimes heard in the book. These include "the daughters of Jerusalem" (Song 5:9; 6:1; 8:5a) and the woman's brothers (Song 8:8-9). Little can be said about these other figures, but the combination of different voices gives the book the feel of a drama with multiple characters, each replete with speaking parts.

Ultimately the Song of Songs isn't a drama, however, mostly because the different voices are not clearly identified and there is no clear

plot development. Instead, we encounter the sometimes rough juxtaposition of poems about the lovers' love for each other and their longing for each other. At root, then, the Song of Songs is a love poem—or perhaps a collection of love poems—but it isn't a story, a narrative, or a drama.

What does this book mean, and what is it doing in the Bible? The answer to the first question is rather obvious. The Song of Songs is about love: very real, very passionate—yes, even very erotic—love between a man and a woman. But the odd, and for some readers, embarrassing nature of that straightforward answer leads directly to the other question: Why is an erotic love poem in the Bible?

While the Song of Songs is erotic, it isn't pornographic. The book is full of metaphorical imagery, but it remains at that symbolic level, even at its most suggestive (e.g., Song 4:16–5:1; 7:9–8:13). The evocative but not explicit nature of the Song's poetry may be what enabled its reception into the Bible. When the Song is included along with other books of the Bible, one gets the impression that its evocative imagery might be applied not only to the romantic, physical love between a man and a woman but also to the spiritual love between God and Israel or between Christ and the church. These allegorical or figurative readings are found throughout the history of Jewish and Christian interpretation. They are related to ancient Near Eastern love poetry, which also knew of poetry describing divine love, though that analogy was typically portrayed as the love between gods and goddesses.

The metaphorical readings of the Song are proof that it is poetry, which seems on the face of it to be about nothing more or less than romance between a real man and a real woman. This imagery was taken up and applied in ways beyond its "plain sense." Because the other books of the Bible are so frequently and extensively about God and God's people, the logic runs, so also is the Song of Songs. But the direction of influence might also run the other way: if the Song of Songs is understood as an analogy expressing God's love for God's people (and vice versa), it is crucial to note that the nature of that love is expressed in the



most intimate terms, including real, romantic, even sexual longing. That profound insight would apply to God's feelings for humans and humans' feelings toward God, not only in the Song but also in other books of the Bible. In this way, the Song would influence the interpretation of the rest of scripture, just as the rest of scripture influences its interpretation.

But the plain sense of the Song shouldn't be neglected because it also has profound

significance. Here, as nowhere else in the Bible, the love between a man and a woman is celebrated in full blown fashion, with discretion to be sure, but with plenty of suggestive detail, all without any embarrassment or apology.

These insights about love, human and divine, explain why the book is known as the "Best Song," and why the great Rabbi Aqiva (1st century CE) said that, while all of scripture is holy, the Song of Songs is the most holy of all.

### **I. Title and Dedication (1:1)**

#### **II. First Exchange (1:2-17)**

- A. Woman speaks (1:2-7)
- B. Man speaks (1:8-11)
- C. Woman speaks (1:12-14)
- D. Man speaks (1:15)
- E. Woman speaks (1:16-17)

#### **III. Second Exchange (2:1-2)**

- A. Woman speaks (2:1)
- B. Man speaks (2:2)

#### **IV. Woman Speaks (2:3-17)**

#### **V. Woman's Search, First Part (3:1-5)**

#### **VI. Poem about Solomon's Wedding Day (3:6-11)**

#### **VII. Man Speaks: In Praise of Her Beauty, First Part (4:1-7)**

#### **VIII. Man Speaks: In Praise of Her Beauty, Second Part (4:8-16a)**

#### **IX. Third Exchange (4:16b-5:1)**

- A. Woman speaks (4:16b)
- B. Man speaks (5:1)

#### **X. Woman's Search, Second Part (5:2-6:3)**

- A. Woman speaks (5:2-8)
- B. Daughters of Jerusalem speak (5:9)
- C. Woman speaks: In praise of his beauty (5:10-16)
- D. Daughters of Jerusalem speak (6:1)
- E. Woman speaks (6:2-3)

#### **XI. Man Speaks: In Praise of Her Beauty, Third Part (6:4-10)**

#### **XII. Poetic Fragment (6:11-12)**

#### **XIII. Fourth Exchange (6:13-7:13)**

- A. Man speaks: In praise of her beauty, fourth part (6:13-7:9a)
- B. Woman speaks (7:9b-13)

#### **XIV. Woman Speaks (8:1-4)**

#### **XV. Conclusion (8:5-14)**

- A. Daughters of Jerusalem speak (8:5a)
- B. Woman speaks (8:5b-7)
- C. Brothers speak (8:8-9)
- D. Woman speaks (8:10)
- E. Fifth exchange (8:11-14)
  - 1. Man speaks (8:11-13)
  - 2. Woman speaks (8:14)

1:1 1Ki 4:32

1:2 Song 1:4,  
Song 4:10

1:3 Ps 45:14;

Ecc 7:1;

Song 4:10;

In 12:3

1:4 Ps 45:14;

Ps 45:15;

Song 1:2

1:5 Ps 120:5;

Is 60:7

1:6 Ps 69:8;

Song 8:11;

Song 8:12

# 1 The Song of Songs, which is for Solomon.

## Mutual admiration

[Woman]<sup>a</sup>

<sup>2</sup>If only he would give me some of his kisses . . .

Oh, your loving is sweeter than wine!

<sup>3</sup>Your fragrance is sweet;  
your very name is perfume.  
That's why the young women love you.

<sup>4</sup>Take me along with you; let's run!

My king has brought me into his chambers, saying,  
"Let's exult and rejoice in you.

Let's savor your loving more than wine.  
No wonder they all love you!"

<sup>5</sup>Dark am I, and lovely, daughters of Jerusalem—  
like the black tents of the Kedar nomads,  
like the curtains of Solomon's palace.

<sup>6</sup>Don't stare at me because I'm darkened by the sun's gaze.  
My own brothers were angry with me.  
They made me a caretaker of the vineyards—  
but I couldn't care for my own vineyard.

<sup>a</sup>Identification of speakers here and throughout the Song is hypothetical and in several cases uncertain.

1:1 *The Song of Songs*: The grammatical construction can be taken as a superlative in Hebrew ("The Best Song" or "the Greatest Song"; cf. Deut 10:17; Dan 2:37; 1 Tim 6:15). It could also mean "a song (made) of songs"—that is, an anthology. *for Solomon*: not "by Solomon" because the Hebrew doesn't necessarily mean authorship. Rather, "for Solomon" suggests dedication to the king who was a composer (1 Kgs 4:32), an expert in flora and fauna (cf. 1 Kgs 5:9-14), and one who loved many women (1 Kgs 11:1). These aspects are echoed in one way or the other in the Song of Songs, but not exactly. The focus on just one man and one woman, for example, is in marked contrast to Solomon's many wives and concubines (1 Kgs 11:3). "Solomon" is also mentioned by name in Song 1:5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11-12 (cf. Song 1:4, 12; 7:5; see also Song 6:8-9 on "king" and "queens"), but the male lover is never called by name and the end of the book seems to poke fun at Solomon. See the introduction; see note on Song 8:11-12.

1:2-17 The first of several exchanges between the woman and the man (see outline; see translation note on Song 1:2). The identification of the different voices (hers and his) isn't always clear but in most instances the specific language used indicates where one voice ends and another begins (see intro.). In this exchange, the woman speaks first and last: the woman (1:2-7), the man (1:8-11), the woman (1:12-14), the man (1:15), the woman (1:16-17). She also speaks more often than the man (three times to his two) and speaks more words. This is typical for the Song as a whole.

1:2 *If only he would give me some of his kisses*: The woman begins her speech by longing for the man's *loving* which is *sweeter than wine*. The opening in third person speech (*he* rather than "you") may be a respectful means of address, but it may also make 1:2a an introduction to, or motto for, all that follows since the woman shifts immediately to second person address. *your loving* probably includes

lovemaking (see Song 7:12). For *love* and *wine* see Song 1:4; 4:10.

1:3 The woman moves from a compliment about the man's *fragrance* to a metaphor: his *very name is perfume*. The identity of the *young women* is unclear. They may be acquaintances or close friends of the woman (and man), or citizens of Jerusalem (see note on Song 1:5-6). Whatever the case, these *young women love* the man too (cf. Song 1:4b).

1:4 *My king*: The man is idealized as a royal figure (see Song 1:12; cf. Song 6:8-9; 7:5), but isn't necessarily Solomon himself (see note on Song 1:1; see intro.). *his chambers*: a private place (see Song 3:4), suitable for *loving* (see note on Song 1:2). *saying*: The woman now quotes the man's speech to her, as she does elsewhere (e.g., Song 2:10-14). *Let's exult . . . Let's savor*: The plural language means that both the man and the woman will *rejoice* and *savor* the *loving more than wine* (see Song 1:2; intro.; sidebar, "The Garden of Eden" at Song 7). *No wonder they all love you*: The "they" aren't defined here (cf. Song 1:8-9), but the man's compliment to the woman matches what she told him in Song 1:3.

1:5-6 *Dark am I, and lovely*: The woman's darkness is due to sun exposure (*darkened by the sun's gaze*), which in turn is evidently because she served as a *caretaker of the vineyards*. The woman's statement here suggests that some people look down on her, perhaps because she has been doing menial labor outside in the elements. But the woman herself asserts her beauty regardless. *daughters of Jerusalem*: Like the "young women" in Song 1:3, this group isn't clearly identified, but they are also mentioned in Song 2:7; 3:5, 10-11; 5:8, 16; 8:4. *Kedar nomads*: a northern desert tribe; *Kedar* means "dark." References to crops, wine, vines, vineyards, and gardens occur repeatedly in the Song, often with a double meaning, referring to or representing in some way sexuality, especially that of the woman (e.g., Song 1:2, 4,

<sup>7</sup>Tell me, you whom I love with all my heart—  
where do you pasture your flock, where do you rest them at noon?—  
so I don't wander around with the flocks of your companions.

[Man]

<sup>8</sup>If you don't know your way, most beautiful of women,  
then follow the tracks of the herds  
and graze your little goats by the tents of the shepherds.

<sup>9</sup>I picture you, my dearest, as a mare among Pharaoh's chariots!

<sup>10</sup>Lovely are your cheeks, adorned with ear hoops; your neck, with beads.

<sup>11</sup>Let's make hoops of gold beaded with silver for you!

[Woman]

<sup>12</sup>With my king close by, my perfume filled the air.

<sup>13</sup>A sachet of myrrh is my love to me, lying all night between my breasts.

<sup>14</sup>A cluster of henna flowers is my love to me in the desert gardens of En-gedi.

[Man]

<sup>15</sup>Look at you—so beautiful, my dearest!

Look at you—so beautiful! Your eyes are doves!

[Woman]

<sup>16</sup>Look at you—so beautiful, my love!

Yes, delightful! Yes, our bed is lush and green!

<sup>17</sup>The ceilings of our chambers are cedars;  
our rafters, cypresses.

### Love in bloom

[Woman]

**2**I'm a rose of the Sharon plain,  
a lily of the valleys.

14; 2:15; 4:15-5:1; 7:11-13; 8:12). The woman's *brothers* are also mentioned in Song 8:8-9. Why they *were angry* with the woman, or why they would make her take care of the vineyards, isn't specified. *I couldn't care for my own vineyard*: may be an allusion that the woman desires the man.

1:7 The woman requests a meeting with the one *whom I love with all my heart*, perhaps a *tryst at noon* (cf. Song 4:16b; 7:11-13). The reference to wandering around among the man's *companions* may suggest that other men are interested (cf. Song 1:3-4).

1:8 The man answers the question in Song 1:7, calling her *most beautiful of women*. This language of beauty is used repeatedly throughout the Song, mostly of the woman (Song 1:15; 2:10, 13; 4:1, 7, 10; 5:9; 6:1, 4, 10; 7:1, 6) but once of the man (Song 1:16).

1:9 *I picture you, my dearest*: The man introduces his favorite term for the woman (*my dearest*; see Song 1:15; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:2; 6:4; the woman uses it of the man in 5:16) and then compliments her with a metaphor (cf. Song 1:3). *a mare among Pharaoh's chariots*: Ancient Greek writings sometimes compared beautiful women to horses. In this case, the comparison is strengthened by including a reference to the Egyptian monarch. Likening the woman to *a mare among Pharaoh's chariots* may also suggest that she gets many men's attention (cf. Song 1:7b).

1:10-11 The man praises the woman's physical beauty, her cheeks and neck, along with her jewelry—a foreshadowing of the extended poems he devotes to her later (see Song 4:1-7; 4:8-16a; 6:4-10; 6:13-7:9a). He suggests making her even finer jewelry: *hoops of gold beaded with silver*. 1:12 *my king*: See note on Song 1:4. *my perfume* (Heb.

*nard*) was imported from India (see Song 4:13-14; cf. Mark 14:3; John 12:3).

1:13 *myrrh* was another import often used as perfume (Esth 2:12; Prov 7:17) as well as in bridal robes (Ps 45:8). *my love*: the woman's favorite term for the man (see Song 1:14, 16; 2:3, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17; 4:16; 5:2, 4, 8, 10, 16; 6:2; 7:11, 13; 8:14). *lying all night between my breasts*: The grammar is open-ended: the referent could be either the sachet of myrrh or the man himself.

1:14 *henna*, a shrub with aromatic flowers, was indigenous to Israel; here the woman notes its presence in *En-gedi*, an oasis on the west bank of the Dead Sea. *desert gardens*: or more simply, "vineyards." Grapes don't grow at En-gedi, so this may be a case of double meaning. See note on Song 1:5-6.

1:15 The man is entranced with the woman's beauty (cf. Song 1:16). *my dearest*: See note on Song 1:9. *Your eyes are doves*: may mean that her eyes send messages of love. See Song 4:1; 6:5.

1:16-17 The woman is equally entranced with the man's beauty (cf. Song 1:15; see note on Song 1:8). *my love*: See note on Song 1:13. The description of the *bed* and *chambers* (or, more simply, "house") is simultaneously rich and exotic but also located among the trees. The latter accent ties into garden imagery used elsewhere in the Song, especially as a location for the lovers' meetings (e.g., Song 4:14-5:1; 7:11-13; see note on Song 1:5-6).

2:1-17 After a brief exchange in which both the woman and man liken her to a lily (2:1-2), the woman speaks an extended section (2:3-17).

2:1 *Sharon plain*: a fertile part of northern Israel.

1:7 Ps 23:2;  
Song 3:1;  
Is 13:20;  
Jer 33:12  
1:8 Song 5:9,  
Song 6:1  
1:9 2Ch 1:17  
1:10 Song 5:13;  
Is 61:10;  
Eze 16:11  
1:12 Jn 12:3  
1:13 Ps 45:8;  
Jn 19:39  
1:15 Song 4:1,  
Song 4:7,  
Song 5:12,  
Song 6:4  
1:16 Song 2:3  
2:1 Song 5:13;  
Is 33:9; Is 35:1,  
Is 35:2; Hos 14:5

2:2 Song 1:9;  
Hos 14:5  
2:3 Song 8:5  
2:4 Ps 20:5;  
Song 1:4  
2:5 2Sa 6:19;  
Song 5:8;  
Song 7:8;  
Hos 3:1  
2:6 Song 8:3  
2:8 Song 2:17;  
Is 52:7  
2:9 Song 2:17;  
Song 8:14  
2:10 Song 2:13  
2:11 Prv 27:25

[Man]

<sup>2</sup> Like a lily among thornbushes,  
so is my dearest among the young women.

[Woman]

<sup>3</sup> Like an apple tree among the wild trees,  
so is my lover among the young men.  
In his shade I take pleasure in sitting,  
and his fruit is sweet to my taste.

<sup>4</sup> He has brought me to the house of wine;  
his banner raised over me is love.

<sup>5</sup> Sustain me with raisin cakes,  
strengthen me with apples,  
for I'm weak with love!

<sup>6</sup> His left arm is beneath my head,  
his right embraces me.

<sup>7</sup> Make a solemn pledge, daughters of Jerusalem,  
by the gazelles or the wild deer:  
Don't rouse, don't arouse love until it desires.

<sup>8</sup> Listen! It's my lover: here he comes now,  
leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills.

<sup>9</sup> My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag.  
Here he stands now,  
outside our wall,  
peering through the windows,  
peeking through the lattices.

<sup>10</sup> My lover spoke and said to me,  
"Rise up, my dearest, my fairest, and go.

<sup>11</sup> Here, the winter is past;  
the rains have come and gone.

2:2 The man agrees that the woman is *Like a lily*, adding *among thornbushes*. The *thornbushes* in question are the *young women* when compared to his *dearest* (see note on Song 1:9).

2:3 *an apple tree among the wild trees... my lover among the young men*: The woman returns the man's compliment (see Song 2:2). For the *apple* see Song 7:7-8; 8:5b. *his fruit... sweet to my taste*: As elsewhere in the Song, the fruit imagery functions on several metaphorical levels (see Song 4:16-5:1; 7:7-8, 11-13; 8:2; cf. notes on Song 1:5-6; 4:3).

2:4 *On wine and love*, see Song 1:2, 4; 4:10; 5:1. *his banner raised over me is love*: The sense may be that their love is visible to all. The same root word for "banner" is used in Song 5:10, 6:4, 10. See also Numbers 2:2; Psalm 20:5.

2:5 The woman asks for sustenance because she is *weak with love* (cf. Song 5:8). Given the metaphorical nature of the Song, the food she requests may not be actual fruit (see note on Song 2:3).

2:6 A pose found in ancient Near Eastern depictions of sexual intercourse (see Song 8:3).

2:7 *Make a solemn pledge... by the gazelles or the wild deer*: The Hebrew here is quite close to a religious formulation and may be a pun on sacred pledges and divine

titles (specifically, "the Lord of heavenly forces" and "God Almighty") or a way to swear without formally invoking God's name (cf. note on Song 8:6). *daughters of Jerusalem*: See note on Song 1:5-6. *Don't rouse, don't arouse love until it desires*: This is a recurring refrain in the Song (see Song 3:5; 8:4; cf. Song 5:8), but the meaning isn't entirely clear. It may caution the audience against disturbing the lovers' embrace. Or it may be a more general warning about the power of love such that it shouldn't be rushed into prematurely or naively.

2:8-9 The woman praises *my lover* (see note on Song 1:13), likening him to a *gazelle* or a *young stag* (cf. Song 2:17; 8:14). He is now *outside our wall, peering and peeking*, waiting for the woman (cf. Song 5:2), whom he addresses in the next verses.

2:10-14 The woman quotes the man in these verses. The man addresses the woman, calling her *my dearest* (see note on Song 1:9) and *my fairest* (or "my beauty"; see note on Song 1:8) and twice asking her to *Rise up and go* with him (2:10, 13). The world is marked by fertility and beauty (*Blossoms... green fruit... grapevines in bloom*), leading the man to hope for sight and sound of his *dove* (2:14, yet another pet name; see Song 1:15; 4:1; 5:2; 6:9) since that is both *sweet* and *lovely*.

- <sup>12</sup> Blossoms have appeared in the land;  
the season of singing<sup>b</sup> has arrived,  
and the sound of the turtledove is heard in our land.
- <sup>13</sup> The green fruit is on the fig tree,  
and the grapevines in bloom are fragrant.  
Rise up,<sup>c</sup> my dearest, my fairest, and go.
- <sup>14</sup> My dove—in the rock crevices, hidden in the cliff face—  
let me catch sight of you;  
let me hear your voice!  
The sound of your voice is sweet,  
and the sight of you is lovely.”
- <sup>15</sup> Catch foxes for us—  
those little foxes that spoil vineyards,  
now that our vineyards are in bloom!
- <sup>16</sup> I belong to my lover and he belongs to me—  
the one grazing among the lilies.
- <sup>17</sup> Before the day breeze blows and the shadows flee,  
turn about, my love; be like a gazelle  
or a young stag upon the jagged mountains.<sup>d</sup>

2:12 Ps 104:12;  
Ecc 12:4

2:13 Song 2:10,  
Song 7:12

2:14 Song 1:5,  
Song 5:2,  
Song 6:9,  
Song 8:13;  
Jer 48:28

2:15 Ps 63:10,  
Song 2:13;  
Eze 13:4

2:16 Song 4:5,  
Song 6:3,  
Song 7:10

2:17 Song 2:9,  
Song 4:6

3:1 Song 1:7,  
Song 5:6; Is 26:9

3:2 Jer 5:1

3:3 Song 5:7

3:4 Song 8:2

### The search

[Woman]

- 3** Upon my bed, night after night,  
I looked for the one whom I love with all my heart.  
I looked for him but couldn't find him.<sup>e</sup>
- <sup>2</sup> “I will rise now and go all around the city,  
through the streets and the squares.  
I will look for the one whom I love with all my heart.”  
I looked for him but couldn't find him.
- <sup>3</sup> The guards found me, those who make their rounds in the city.  
“The one whom I love with all my heart—have you seen him?”
- <sup>4</sup> No sooner did I depart from them  
than I found the one whom I love with all my heart.

<sup>b</sup>Or *pruning*. <sup>c</sup>LXX and Kethib add *go*; but Qere, DSS, Vulg, Syr, and Tg lack the verb; cf 2:10. <sup>d</sup>Or *upon the mountains of Bether*; cf 8:14 *mountains of spice*. <sup>e</sup>LXX adds *I called him, but he didn't answer me*; cf 5:6.

2:12 *season of singing* or “season of pruning.” Either suits the context.

2:14–15 The mention of *rock crevices* and *the cliff face* probably signals the woman's inaccessibility more than her location. But the mention of *little foxes that spoil vineyards* and the fact that *our vineyards are in bloom* may suggest that she isn't as inaccessible as the man's mountain images imply (see Song 2:16; see note on Song 1:5–6).

2:16 *I belong to my lover and he belongs to me*: an important assertion that also occurs in Song 6:3 and 7:10 (see note on Song 7:10; see sidebar, “The Garden of Eden” at Song 7). The man's description as *the one grazing among the lilies* ties back to the faunal imagery in Song 2:11–13 and the description of the woman as a lily in Song 2:1–2, suggesting intimacy (see also Song 4:5; 6:2–3; cf. Song 5:13; 7:2).

2:17 The woman asks the man to be the gazelle or young stag that she likened him to in Song 2:8–9 (cf. Song 4:6–7), though this time *upon the jagged mountains*. Instead of “the jagged mountains,” perhaps read “the cleft mountains” or “mountains of Bether,” which could refer to landforms outside of Jerusalem. However, various elements

in Song 2:1–16 along with similar sentiments in Song 4:6 (“the mountain of myrrh . . . the hill of frankincense”) and Song 8:14 (“mountains of spice”) suggest that the subject could be anatomical, referring to the woman's body. The allusive nature of the poetry allows for both meanings.

3:1–5 The first of two scenes that have a dream-like quality to them (see also Song 5:2–7). In this one, the woman searches for the man, whom she repeatedly describes as *the one whom I love with all my heart* (3:1, 2, 3, 4).

3:1 *Upon my bed . . . I looked*: perhaps in sleep (cf. Song 5:2) or restless pining. No reason is given for why the woman *looked for him but couldn't find him*, though the Song knows of frustrated desire and the danger that love entails (e.g., Song 3:2; 4:8; 5:6–7).

3:2–3 The woman takes her search into *the city and the streets and the squares* but with the same result: *I looked for him but couldn't find him*. She encounters *guards* and asks them if they have seen him (cf. Song 5:7).

3:4 Suddenly she finds the man (cf. Song 6:2) and *now . . . won't let him go*. The reference to *my mother's house* reflects the female orientation of much of the Song

3:6 Ex 13:21,  
Ex 30:34;  
Song 4:6,  
Song 4:14,  
Song 8:5

3:7 1K 9:22;  
1Ch 11:10;  
Song 3:9

3:8 Ps 45:3,  
Ps 91:5

3:11 Is 3:16,  
Is 4:4, Is 62:5

4:1 Nm 32:1;  
Song 1:15,  
Song 6:5,  
Song 6:7,  
Mi 7:14

4:2 Song 6:6

4:3 Josh 2:18;  
Song 5:16,  
Song 6:7

I held on to him and now I won't let him go,  
until I've brought him to my mother's house,  
to the chamber of the one who conceived me.

<sup>5</sup>I place you under oath, daughters of Jerusalem,  
by the gazelles or the wild deer:  
don't rouse, don't arouse love until it desires.

### Visions of grandeur

<sup>6</sup>Who is this, coming up from the wilderness,  
like pillars of smoke?  
She is perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,  
selected from all the spice merchant's powders.

<sup>7</sup>Picture Solomon's bed—  
sixty heroic men round about it, all from the heroes of Israel,  
<sup>8</sup>all of them skilled with the sword, expert in warfare,  
each with his sword ready at his thigh against terrors that come by night.  
<sup>9</sup>King Solomon made a canopied couch for himself from the trees of Lebanon.  
<sup>10</sup>Its pillars he made of silver,  
its covering, cloth of gold,  
its cushions, royal purple;  
its interior inlaid with love.  
Daughters of Jerusalem, <sup>11</sup>go forth!  
Look, daughters of Zion—  
on King Solomon wearing the crown with which his mother crowned him  
on the day of his wedding, on the day of his heart's joy.

### In praise of her

[Man]

**4** Look at you—so beautiful, my dearest!  
Look at you—so beautiful!  
Your eyes are doves behind the veil of your hair!  
Your hair is like a flock of goats as they stream down Mount Gilead.  
<sup>2</sup>Your teeth are like flock newly shorn ewes as they come up from the washing pool—  
all of them perfectly matched,  
not one of them lacks its twin.  
<sup>3</sup>Like a crimson ribbon are your lips;  
when you smile, it is lovely.  
Like a slice of pomegranate is the curve of your face behind the veil of your hair.

(fathers are never mentioned). to *the chamber of the one who conceived me*: The imagery combines safety and sexuality (Song 1:4; 3:11; 6:9; 8:2).

3:5 See note on Song 2:7.

3:6-11 A brief poem about Solomon's wedding day. For *Solomon*, see the introduction; see note on Song 1:1. The speaker of these lines is unclear.

3:6 The imagery in the first part of the verse is obscure, but the second half seems to describe the bride. For *perfumed with myrrh and frankincense*, compare with the imagery in Song 1:3, 12-13; 3:6; 4:6, 14; 5:1, 5, 13.

3:7-11 Praise for *Solomon's* royal retinue and his *bed* or *canopied couch*. He is attended and protected by the best (*sixty heroic men*), and his *couch* is richly constructed and decorated—not just with *silver, gold, and royal purple* but also *with love* (Song 3:10). *Daughters of Jerusalem*: See note on Song 1:5-6; *daughters of Zion* is a poetic variation of the same. For the connections between mothers and love, see Song 1:4; 3:4; 6:9; 8:2. Note how the wedding day is defined as the day of the *heart's joy*.

4:1-7 The first part of an extended description of the

woman's beauty by the man. It is continued in Song 4:8-16a, which could be considered a separate poem since the dominant images and metaphors differ. Additional poems celebrating the woman's body are found in Song 6:4-10; 6:13-7:9a; compare with Song 1:10.

4:1 *Your eyes are doves*: See Song 1:15 and note (cf. Song 6:5). Here the eyes are *doves behind the veil of your hair* (see Song 4:3). Women wore veils in public, but here the veil is metaphorical: it is made of her hair. Perhaps the lovers are in private. *Your hair is like a flock of goats*: The emphasis is on the movement—as *they stream down*. *Mount Gilead* was known to be a rich region of pastureland across the Jordan River (see Song 6:5).

4:2 *Your teeth . . . newly shorn ewes . . . perfectly matched*: The imagery stresses the whiteness, cleanliness, and perfection of the woman's teeth. See Song 6:6.

4:3 The description moves to the woman's lips, smile, and cheeks. The *pomegranate* is also mentioned in Song 4:13; 6:7, 11; 7:12; 8:2. Here the image invokes the shape and color of the cheeks and is also suggestive with regard to taste (see note on Song 2:3).

- <sup>4</sup> Like David's tower is your neck, splendidly built!  
A thousand shields are hung upon it—  
all the weapons of the warriors.
- <sup>5</sup> Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
twins of a gazelle doe, that graze among the lilies.
- <sup>6</sup> Before the day breeze blows and the shadows flee,  
I will be off to the mountain of myrrh, to the hill of frankincense.
- <sup>7</sup> You are utterly beautiful, my dearest;  
there's not a single flaw in you.

4:6 Song 2:17,  
Song 4:14  
4:7 Song 1:15;  
Eph 5:27  
4:8 Dt 3:9;  
1Ch 5:23;  
Song 5:1  
4:9 Song 5:1,  
Song 5:2  
4:10 Song 1:2,  
Song 1:3,  
Song 1:4; Jn 12:3  
4:11 Gn 27:27;  
Prv 24:13;  
Hos 14:6

### Garden of delight

[Man]

- <sup>8</sup> Come down with me from Lebanon, my bride—  
if only you would come down with me from Lebanon.  
Descend from the peak of Amana,  
from the peaks of Senir and Hermon,  
from the lions' dens,  
from the mountain lairs of leopards.
- <sup>9</sup> You have captured my heart, my sister,<sup>f</sup> my bride!  
You have captured my heart with one glance from your eyes,  
with one strand of your necklace.
- <sup>10</sup> How beautiful is your loving, my sister, my bride!  
Your loving is so much better than wine,  
and your fragrance better than any perfume!
- <sup>11</sup> Sweetness drops from your lips, my bride;  
honey and milk are under your tongue,  
and the fragrance of your garments  
is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

<sup>f</sup>Sister here and below is a common term in ancient love poetry; it doesn't imply blood relation.

4:4 The man now praises the woman's *neck* (see Song 7:4). *David's tower* isn't mentioned anywhere else in the Bible and shouldn't be confused with the structure in present-day Jerusalem. The point of the imagery seems to be the strength of the woman's neck and its majesty.

4:5 The man moves from the neck to the woman's *two breasts*. They are likened to *two fawns, twins of a gazelle doe*, perhaps because she is young (see Song 8:8; cf. Song 8:10), though the emphasis may be more on the animals' vigor and vitality. Twinship, as in Song 4:2, connotes perfect symmetry. Both *graze* and *lilies* have been mentioned before in allusive ways (Song 2:1-2, 16). See Song 6:2-3; compare with Song 5:13; 7:2-3.

4:6-7 *Before . . . flee*: See Song 2:17, where the same sentiment is expressed. Only here it is the man who says it. He is, in effect, becoming the gazelle or young stag the woman asked for in Song 2:17. The similarities with Song 2:17 suggest that *the mountain of myrrh . . . the hill of frankincense* in 4:6 is a further definition of "jagged mountains" in Song 2:17 (see note there) and confirmation of the erotic nature of the image, especially since the man immediately mentions how *utterly beautiful* his *dearest* is (see note on Song 1:9). His last statement, *there's not a single flaw in you*, serves as a fitting summary of the poem.

4:8-5:1 See note on Song 4:1-7. A second poem (or continuation of the preceding poem) celebrating the woman's beauty (4:8-16a; see also Song 4:1-7; 6:4-10; 6:13-7:9a; cf. Song 1:10) is interrupted briefly by the woman in response (4:16b), after which, the man, in turn, replies (5:1). In this section the man repeatedly calls her *my bride* (4:8, 9,

10, 11, 12; 5:1) as well as *my sister* (4:9, 10, 12; 5:1; see note on Song 4:9).

4:8 The mention of *Lebanon, the peak of Amana, and the peaks of Senir and Hermon* is odd since each is far from Jerusalem. The latter three are part of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range between present-day Lebanon and Syria. Their mention is probably metaphorical, connected with the wild animals mentioned in the verse, so that these areas symbolize inaccessibility (cf. note on Song 2:14-15) and danger (cf. Song 3:2; 5:7). The man wants the woman, here called *my bride* (see note on Song 4:9), to come away from these dangerous places or states to be *with me*.

4:9 *my sister*: This language is common in ancient Near Eastern love poetry. It doesn't imply that the lovers are genetically related but is symbolic of their closeness. It is also found in Song 4:10, 12; 5:1; see also Song 8:1, where the woman uses "my brother." *my bride*: a term of affection and perhaps of anticipation since it isn't clear that the lovers are married (cf. Song 8:8-10). It's also found in Song 4:8, 10, 11, 12; 5:1. *one glance from your eyes*: Compare with Song 1:15; 4:1; 6:5. *one strand of your necklace*: Compare with Song 1:10; 4:4.

4:10 *Your loving . . . wine*: See note on Song 1:2. *my sister, my bride*: See note on Song 4:9. *your fragrance . . . perfume*: Compare with Song 1:3, 12-13; 3:6; 4:6, 14; 5:1, 5, 13.

4:11 *your lips*: Compare with Song 4:3. *my bride*: See note on Song 4:9. *honey and milk*: instances of *Sweetness* like the woman's lips, only here they are provocatively located *under your tongue* (cf. Song 7:9a). *fragrance of your garments is like . . . Lebanon*: The scent of the famous trees of Lebanon can be smelled from far away.

4:12 Prv 5:15;

Song 5:1

4:13 Ecc 2:5;

Song 1:14;

Song 7:12

2:14 Ex 30:23;

Ps 45:8;

Prv 7:17;

Song 3:6;

Song 4:6

4:15 Jn 4:10

4:16 Song 4:13;

Song 5:1;

Song 6:2

5:1 Song 4:9;

Song 4:11;

Song 4:12;

Song 4:14;

Song 6:2

5:2 Song 2:14;

Song 4:9;

Song 6:9

**12** An enclosed garden is my sister, my bride;  
an enclosed pool, a sealed spring.

**13** Your limbs are an orchard of pomegranates  
with all kinds of luscious fruit,  
henna, and spices:

**14** nard and saffron,  
sweet cane and cinnamon,  
with all scented woods, myrrh, and aloes,  
with the very choicest perfumes!

**15** You are a garden spring, a well of fresh water, streams from Lebanon.

**16** Stir, north wind, and come, south wind!  
Blow upon my garden; let its perfumes flow!

[Woman]

Let my love come to his garden;  
let him eat its luscious fruit!

[Man]

**5** I have come to my garden, my sister, my bride!  
I have gathered my myrrh and my spices.  
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;  
I have drunk my wine and my milk.  
Eat, dear friends!  
Drink and get drunk on love!

#### A missed encounter

[Woman]

**2** I was sleeping, but my heart was awake.  
A sound! My love is knocking:

[Man]

“Open for me, my sister, my dearest,  
my dove, my perfect one!  
My head is soaked with dew,  
my hair, with the night mists.”

4:12 *An enclosed garden... an enclosed pool, a sealed spring:* Here, as elsewhere in the Song, the imagery suggests the woman's inaccessibility (cf. Song 2:14-15; 4:8) and her sensuous aspects (see note on Song 1:5-6). See note on Song 4:16a. *my sister, my bride:* See note on Song 4:9.

4:13-14 The description of the woman now considers her *limbs* which are compared to delicious tastes (*pomegranates... all kinds of luscious fruit*; see note on Song 2:3) and smells (*henna, spices, nard, saffron, sweet cane, cinnamon, scented woods, myrrh, aloes, choicest perfumes*). *pomegranates:* See note on Song 4:3. *henna:* See note on Song 1:14. *nard:* See note on Song 1:12. *myrrh:* See note on Song 1:13. 4:15 *a garden spring:* Compare with Song 4:12. The *fresh water* in this verse may be alluded to in John 7:38.

4:16a The man asks the wind to *Blow upon my garden*, so that *its perfumes flow*. Following Song 4:13-14, the referent of both the garden and the perfumes is the woman herself (see Song 1:5-6; 8:11-12; see notes on Song 4:16b; 5:1a). The flowing of the garden's perfumes suggests an undoing of its closed state in Song 4:12 (cf. note on Song 2:14-15).

4:16b Following the poetry and praise of Song 4:1-16a, and in direct reply to 4:16a, the woman invites the man (*my love*; see note on Song 1:13) to *come to his garden and eat its luscious fruit*—metaphorical language that is erotic (see notes on Song 1:5-6; 2:3; 7:7-8).

5:1a The man responds immediately to the woman's invitation in Song 4:16b. He has *come to his garden*. Once again he calls the woman *my sister, my bride* (see note on Song 4:9). These terms indicate that “my garden” is the

same entity as “my sister, my bride,” and vice versa. See Song 8:12. *myrrh* and *spices*, which were previously associated with the woman, are now described as the man's (*my*). He claims to have eaten *honeycomb* and *honey* (cf. Song 4:11, 16a) and drunk *wine* and *milk* (cf. Song 4:11).

5:1b The speaker is unclear. It may be spoken by the lovers to the audience or may be a poetic aside by the author to the lovers themselves. The repetition of the key verbs *Eat* and *Drink* and the additional imperative to *get drunk on love* (or “on lovemaking”; cf. Song 1:2; Prov 5:19; 7:18) fits the latter interpretation particularly well and serves as a fitting climax to their encounter.

5:2-6:3 A second dream-like episode (see Song 3:1-5 and note), is recounted in 5:2-7 and runs until the woman finds her lover in 6:3. The house that is evoked in the poem may represent the woman's own body. The woman's search for the man leads her to seek the help of the daughters of Jerusalem (5:8), who ask her, in turn, what is so special about her lover (5:9). The woman responds with a poem praising the man's beauty (5:10-16), at which point the other women agree to help (6:1). But the woman no longer needs help; she is suddenly clear about where her lover is (6:2-3; cf. Song 3:4).

5:2a *I was sleeping, but my heart was awake:* What follows is evidently a dream (cf. Song 3:1). *My lover:* See note on Song 1:13. *is knocking:* Compare with Song 2:9. This verse may be alluded to in Revelation 3:20.

5:2b The man either interrupts the poem here, or, more likely, the woman quotes him as she does in Song 2:10-14.



*[Woman]*

- <sup>3</sup>“I have taken off my tunic—  
why should I put it on again?  
I have bathed my feet—  
why should I get them dirty?”
- <sup>4</sup>My love put his hand in through the latch hole,  
and my body ached for him.
- <sup>5</sup>I rose; I went to open for my love,  
and my hands dripped myrrh,  
my fingers, liquid myrrh,  
over the handles of the lock.
- <sup>6</sup>I went and opened for my love,  
but my love had turned, gone away.  
I nearly died when he turned away.  
I looked for him but couldn't find him.  
I called out to him, but he didn't answer me.
- <sup>7</sup>They found me—the guards who make their rounds in the city.  
They struck me, bruised me.  
They took my shawl away from me, those guards of the city walls!
- <sup>8</sup>I place you under oath, daughters of Jerusalem:  
If you find my love, what should you tell him?  
That I'm weak with love!

*[Daughters of Jerusalem]*

- <sup>9</sup>How is your lover different from any other lover,  
you who are the most beautiful of women?  
How is your lover different from any other lover,  
that you make us swear a solemn pledge?

*In praise of him**[Woman]*

- <sup>10</sup>My lover is radiant and ruddy;  
he stands out among ten thousand!
- <sup>11</sup>His head is finest gold;  
his wavy hair, black as a raven.

He requests entry to the house because he is *soaked* from being outside at *night* (cf. Song 2:9), *my sister*. See note on Song 4:9. *my dearest*: See note on Song 1:9. *my dove*: See note on Song 2:1-14. *my perfect one*: also found in Song 6:9. 5:3 The woman replies that she is already ready for bed, but her subsequent acquiescence to the man's reply indicates she is at best teasing him and may be enticing him since she is undressed and *bathed*.

5:4-5 The poetry is highly suggestive but does not explicitly identify *the latch hole*, the *myrrh*, or *the lock*. Even though 5:4 says the woman's *body ached for him*, the man remains outside of her house, as she discovers in Song 5:6. *My love*: See note on Song 1:13. *myrrh*: See Song 1:13.

5:6 When the woman opens the door, she finds *my love* gone (see note on Song 1:13). No reason is given for his sudden departure, perhaps reinforcing the dream-like quality of this passage. The aching of the woman's body in Song 5:4 is now matched by the equally poignant statement: *I nearly died when he turned away. I looked for him but couldn't find him*: Compare with Song 3:1-2.

5:7 See Song 3:3, but here the woman claims that the guards *struck me, bruised me. They took my shawl away from me*. No reasons are given for this abuse, which is disturbing and graphically portrayed, but which is also quickly dropped. At the very least, it underscores the drama of the poem and the strangeness of the dream

scene. It is also yet another instance of the dangers of love (cf. Song 3:2; 4:8).

5:8 *I place you under oath*: See Song 3:5; compare with Song 2:7; but the expected continuation about not rousing love isn't repeated here. Instead, the *daughters of Jerusalem* (see note on Song 1:5-6) are asked to tell the man, if they *find my love* (see note on Song 1:13), that the woman is *weak with love* (see Song 2:5).

5:9 Apparently spoken by the daughters of Jerusalem (see note on Song 1:5-6) who have been directly addressed by the woman in Song 5:8. But instead of agreeing to her request, they ask for further information about how *your lover is different from any other lover*. They also call her *the most beautiful of women* (cf. Song 4:7; see note on Song 1:8). This odd response serves to introduce the woman's praise of the man's beauty in Song 5:10-16.

5:10-16 The woman praises the man's physical beauty, using metaphors for different parts of the man's body (*head, wavy hair, eyes, cheeks, lips, arms, belly, thighs, appearance, mouth*) that are every bit as evocative as those used by the man for the woman's body (see Song 4:1-7; 4:8-16a; 6:4-10; 6:13-7:9a). In some cases, the metaphors are identical (see note on Song 5:12; see sidebar, "The Garden of Eden" at Song 7). The woman's description of the man is somewhat more static, however, than his description of her. At times it seems almost statuesque,

5:3 Lk 11:7  
5:4 Gn 43:30;  
1Ki 3:26;  
Jer 31:20;  
1Jn 3:17  
5:6 Song 3:1,  
Song 5:2  
5:7 Song 3:3  
5:8 Song 2:5,  
Song 2:7  
5:10 1Sa 16:12;  
Ps 45:2  
5:11 Song 5:2

5:12 Song 1:15,  
Song 4:1  
5:15 1Ki 4:33  
5:16 Song 7:9  
6:1 Song 1:8,  
Song 5:9  
6:3 Song 2:16,  
Song 7:10  
6:4 1Ki 14:17,  
1Ki 15:33;  
Ps 48:2, Ps 50:2;  
Song 6:10  
6:5 Song 4:1  
6:6 Song 4:2

- <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like doves by channels of water.  
They are bathing in milk,  
sitting by brimming pools.
- <sup>13</sup> His cheeks are like fragrant plantings, towers of spices.  
His lips are lilies dripping liquid myrrh.
- <sup>14</sup> His arms are gold cylinders studded with jewels.  
His belly is smooth ivory encrusted with sapphires.
- <sup>15</sup> His thighs are pillars of whitest stone set on pedestals of gold.  
His appearance—like Lebanon, stately, like the cedars.
- <sup>16</sup> His mouth is everything sweet,  
every bit of him desirable.

This is my love, this my dearest, daughters of Jerusalem!

[Daughters of Jerusalem]

**6** Which way did your lover go,  
you who are the most beautiful of women?  
Which way did your lover turn,  
that we may look for him along with you?

[Woman]

- <sup>2</sup> My lover has gone down to his garden,  
to the fragrant plantings,  
to graze in the gardens,  
to gather the lilies.
- <sup>3</sup> I belong to my lover and my lover belongs to me—  
the one grazing among the lilies.

An overwhelming sight

[Man]

- <sup>4</sup> You are as beautiful, my dearest, as Tirzah,  
as lovely as Jerusalem, formidable as those lofty sights.
- <sup>5</sup> Turn your eyes away from me, for they overwhelm me!

Your hair is like a flock of goats  
as they stream down from Gilead.

- <sup>6</sup> Your teeth are like a flock of ewes  
as they come up from the washing pool—  
all of them perfectly matched,  
not one of them lacks its twin.

replete with fine materials like *gold, jewels, ivory, and sapphires*.

5:12 *eyes are like doves*: Compare with Song 1:15; 4:1 where the man makes this same statement about the woman's eyes.

5:13 *cheeks . . . lips . . . lilies . . . liquid myrrh*: Compare with the similar imagery in Song 2:1-2, 16; 4:3, 5; 5:5; 6:2-3; 7:2. *fragrant plantings*: See Song 6:2.

5:14 *arms*: Compare with Song 4:13. *belly*: Compare with Song 7:2.

5:15 *like Lebanon*: See Song 3:9; 4:8, 11, 15; 5:15; 7:4.

5:16a *mouth*: Compare with Song 4:3. *every bit of him desirable*: a fitting equivalent to Song 4:7.

5:16b The woman's conclusion, summarizing for the *daughters of Jerusalem* (Song 5:8; see note on Song 1:5-6) why her *love* (see note on Song 1:13) and her *dearest* (see note on Song 1:9, but here used of the man) is different from all other lovers (see Song 5:9).

6:1 The daughters of Jerusalem (Song 5:8-9), evidently convinced by the poem in Song 5:10-16, ask how they can assist the *most beautiful of women* (see Song 5:9) in her search. 6:2 Suddenly the woman is clear about the man's location

(cf. Song 3:4). Perhaps she has awoken from her dream (cf. Song 5:2). *My lover* (see note on Song 1:13), she says, *has gone down to his garden* (see notes on Song 5:1a; 1:5-6). *fragrant plantings*: See Song 5:13. *to graze in the gardens*: Compare with Song 4:5; 4:16b-5:1; 6:3. *the lilies*: Compare with Song 2:1-2, 16; 4:5; 5:13; 6:3; 7:2.

6:3 *I belong to my lover . . . my lover belongs to me*: See Song 2:16 (cf. Song 7:10). *the one grazing among the lilies*: See Song 2:1-2; 4:5; 4:16b-5:1; 5:13; 7:2; compare with Song 2:16;

6:4-10 The third poem by the man praising the woman. The others are found in Song 4:1-7; 4:8-16a; 6:13-7:9a (cf. Song 1:10).

6:4 The man begins by comparing his *dearest* (see note on Song 1:9) to *Tirzah*, a site in Israel that was once capital of the northern kingdom (see Josh 12:24; 1 Kgs 15:21), and *Jerusalem*, capital of the southern kingdom. The woman is as *formidable as those lofty sights* (see Song 6:10; see note on Song 2:4).

6:5 The man finds *your eyes* overwhelming. Compare with Song 1:15; 4:1. *Your hair . . . Gilead*: See Song 4:1 and note.

6:6 *Your teeth . . . twin*: See Song 4:2 and note.

<sup>7</sup> Like a slice of pomegranate is the curve of your face  
behind the veil of your hair.

<sup>8</sup> There may be sixty queens and eighty secondary wives,  
young women beyond counting,

<sup>9</sup> but my dove, my perfect one, is one of a kind.

To her mother she's the only one,  
radiant to the one who bore her.

Young women see her and declare her fortunate;  
queens and secondary wives praise her.

<sup>10</sup> Who is this, gazing down like the morning star,  
beautiful as the full moon,  
radiant as the sun,  
formidable as those lofty sights?

### Transported

[Man]

<sup>11</sup> To the nut grove I went down to look upon the fresh growth in the valley,  
to see whether the vine was in flower,  
whether the pomegranates had bloomed.

<sup>12</sup> I hardly knew myself;  
she had set me in an official's chariot!<sup>ⓔ</sup>

### Graceful dancer

[Man]

<sup>13</sup><sup>b</sup> Come back, come back, Shulammitel!<sup>ⓑ</sup>  
Come back, come back, so we may admire you.  
How you all admire the Shulammitel  
as she whirls between two circles of dancers!

<sup>7</sup> How graceful are your sandaled feet, willing woman!  
The smooth curves of your thighs—like fine jewelry,  
the work of an artist's hands!

<sup>ⓔ</sup>Or I hardly knew what happened; my passion set me in an official's chariot! LXX, Vulg. Aminadab's chariots; Heb. uncertain <sup>ⓑ</sup>7:1 in Heb. <sup>ⓑ</sup>A name or title for the woman

6:7 Like a slice . . . hair. See Song 4:3 and note.

6:8-9 The man compares his *dove* (see note on Song 2:10-14), his *perfect one* (see Song 5:2) to the royal harem. Here the kingly role of Song 1:4, 12 returns, this time in the man's own mouth. The man deems the woman *one of a kind*, and all others agree: from the *mother . . . who bore her* (cf. Song 1:4; 3:4, 11; 8:2) to the *Young women who see her and declare her fortunate* (or "happy"), to the *queens and secondary wives who praise her*. Compare with Song 8:11-12.

6:10 In the final verse of the poem, the man likens the woman to even loftier subjects: *the morning star, the full moon, the sun*. Her look is equal to their gaze (cf. Song 6:5), her beauty and radiance to theirs. As the poem began, so it ends: the woman is *formidable as those lofty sights* (see Song 6:4; see note on Song 2:4).

6:11-12 are difficult to understand, and the meaning of 6:12 is obscure (see translation note). The identity of the speaker is also not certain: if it is still the man, the relationship between these verses and those that precede and follow is unclear. The garden in question could be an allusion to the woman or to the place where the lovers meet (see note on Song 1:5-6). The sense may be that their rendezvous transported the speaker (the man or the woman?) to "another world" but how that relates to *an official's chariot* is obscure.

6:13-7:13 The man's fourth and final poem celebrating

the woman's beauty (6:13-7:9a; see Song 4:1-7; 4:8-16a; 6:4-10; cf. Song 1:10). The woman interrupts him in the middle of 7:9, completing the man's thought (and the poetic line) before offering a sentiment that echoes Song 2:16 and Song 6:3 but takes it even further (see note on 7:10; see sidebar, "The Garden of Eden"). She continues speaking through 7:13.

6:13 *Shulammitel*: The word seems to be a title of some sort, since in Hebrew it has the definite article ("the Shulammitel"). The word could be related to the Hebrew root designating "completion, wholeness," or even "peace" (Heb. *shalom*; cf. Song 8:10). In this sense, the word would refer to the woman's perfection (Song 4:7; 5:2; 6:9). Alternatively, it could be wordplay on the name "Solomon," which comes from the same root. Another possibility is that the word means "girl from Shulem," though no place by that name is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, unless it is a shortened form of "Jerusalem" or if it is a variant of Shunem (mentioned in Josh 19:18; 1 Sam 28:4; 2 Kgs 4:8; cf. 1 Kgs 1:3 for "the Shunammite"). *so we may admire* implies a larger group of speakers or the man's identification with others who admire her as she dances (cf. Song 1:3; 8:13).

7:1 The man begins this description of the woman with her *sandaled feet* before moving to her *thighs*, which are compared to *fine jewelry*. The sentiment is similar to what the woman said of the man in Song 5:15.

7:4 Nm 21:26;  
Song 4:4  
7:6 Song 1:15,  
Song 1:16,  
Song 4:10  
7:7 Song 4:5  
7:8 Song 2:5  
7:9 Song 5:16  
7:11 Song 2:10,  
Song 4:8

- <sup>2</sup>Your navel, cupped like the full moon—  
may it never lack spiced wine!  
Your belly is a mound of winnowed wheat edged with lilies.
- <sup>3</sup>Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
twins of a gazelle doe;
- <sup>4</sup>your neck, like a tower of ivory;  
your eyes, pools in Heshbon, by the gate of that lordly city!<sup>1</sup>  
Your profile is like the tower of Lebanon, looking out toward Damascus.
- <sup>5</sup>Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel,  
and your hair, braided in royal purple—  
a king is bound by the tresses!
- <sup>6</sup>You are so beautiful, so lovely—  
my love, delightful one!<sup>2</sup>
- <sup>7</sup>Your stately form resembles a date palm,  
and your breasts are like clustered fruit.
- <sup>8</sup>I say, "I will climb the palm tree;  
I will hold its fruit!"  
May your breasts be now like grape clusters,  
and the scent of your breath like apples!
- <sup>9</sup>Your palate is like excellent wine . . .

[Woman]

. . . flowing smoothly for my love,  
gliding through the lips and teeth.<sup>1</sup>

- <sup>10</sup>I belong to my lover,  
and his longing is only for me.

### The ripeness of love

[Woman]

- <sup>11</sup>Come, my love:  
Let's go out to the field and rest all night among the flowering henna.

<sup>1</sup>Or by the gate of Bath-rabbim <sup>2</sup>With Syr and Aquila daughter of delights; MT love in delights or love with every charm  
<sup>1</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT through the lips of those who sleep; Heb uncertain

7:2 The woman's *navel* and *belly* are described sensuously with images taken from nature and food. *full moon*: Compare with Song 6:10. *wine*: See note on Song 1:2. The *mound of winnowed wheat* may suggest the shape and color of the woman's stomach as well as imply her fertility. On the *belly*, compare also with the woman's sentiment in Song 5:14. *lilies*: Compare with Song 2:1-2, 16; 4:5; 5:13; 6:2-3.

7:3 See Song 4:5 and note.

7:4 *your neck*: Compare with Song 4:4. *your eyes, pools*: Compare with the woman's sentiment in Song 5:12. *Heshbon* is east of Jerusalem. *that lordly city*: or "Bath-rabbim," which is otherwise unknown; perhaps it is a gate or location in Heshbon. In light of the comparison with *the tower of Lebanon*, *Your profile* is a better translation than the standard "your nose." It isn't clear what this tower is (cf. note on Song 4:4). Perhaps it is a landmark in Lebanon that resembles a tower. Whatever the case, the context makes clear that it is intended as a compliment, which may relate to the woman's stateliness or strength (cf. Song 4:4; 7:7).

7:5 *Your head . . . your hair*: Compare with the woman's remark in Song 5:11. *a king*: Compare with note on Song 1:4. *bound by the tresses*: The man finds the woman utterly captivating. Compare with Song 6:5a.

7:6 A dense combination of the man's favorite terms for the woman. See translation note; see Song 1:15; 4:7 and notes.

7:7-8 The woman is now compared to a *date palm* with her *breasts* its *clustered fruit* (cf. Song 4:5; 7:3). The man resolves to *climb the palm tree* and *hold its fruit*, hoping that her breasts will be like grapes and her breath like apples (cf. Song 2:3 and note). The suggestiveness of the poetry here and in what follows in Song 7:9-13 is similar to and every bit as strong as that found in Song 4:16-5:1.

7:9 The man begins this verse, comparing the woman's *palate* to *excellent wine* (cf. Song 4:11; see note on Song 1:2), when the woman breaks into his sentence, completing its image and poetic form. It's hard to imagine a more powerful way to show the closeness and unity of the two lovers. *gliding . . . teeth*: See translation note.

7:10 *I belong to my lover* has been said by the woman before, but instead of completing the thought with the usual "and my lover belongs to me" (as in Song 2:16; 6:3), this time she says *his longing is only for me*. "Longing," a rare term in the OT, connotes strong desire. For a discussion of the significance of 7:10 for the garden of Eden story and the equality of the sexes, see sidebar, "The Garden of Eden" and the introduction.

7:11-13 The woman continues speaking, offering the man a night and morning of romance.

7:11 *my love*: See note on Song 1:13. *the field*: See note on Song 1:5-6. *flowering henna*: See Song 1:14.

*The Garden of Eden* The word “desire” or “longing” (Heb. *teshuqa*) occurs only three times in the OT: Genesis 3:16; 4:7; and Song 7:10. The instances in Genesis 3:16 and Song 7:10 are mutually illuminating because they both speak about desire between the sexes. In Genesis 3:16, after the wrongdoing in the garden, God tells the woman, “You will desire your husband, but he will rule over you.” In the middle of Song 7:9, however, the woman breaks in, finishing the man’s sentence, and states, “I belong to my lover, and his longing is only for me.” In Genesis, then, the woman’s desire (*teshuqa*) for her husband is defined as a hardship (“he will rule over you”), but this is entirely reversed in the Song of Songs, where it is now the man who longs (*teshuqa*) for the woman without any accompanying negative sentiments. This reversal is not accidental, nor is it coincidence that it takes place in the Song of Songs, which is full of garden imagery (see note on Song 1:5–6). In the Song of Songs, the “battle of the sexes”—one of the unfortunate outcomes of the wrongdoing in the garden of Eden—is finally overcome. It is ended by means of the beautiful, egalitarian, mutual, and reciprocal love between a man and a woman.

<sup>12</sup>Let’s set out early for the vineyards.

We will see if the vines have budded and the blossoms opened,  
see if the pomegranates have bloomed.  
There I’ll give my loving to you.

<sup>13</sup>The mandrakes give off their scent,

and at our doorways is every delicacy—  
fresh or ripened—my love, I have kept them hidden for you.

### Wishing

[Woman]

8 If only you were as my brother—  
the one who nursed at my mother’s breast.  
I would find you in the street and kiss you,  
and no one would shame me for it.

<sup>2</sup>I would lead you, I would bring you to my mother’s house;  
she would teach me what to do.<sup>m</sup>  
I would give you spiced wine to drink,  
some of my fresh pomegranate juice.

<sup>3</sup>His left arm is beneath my head,  
and his right embraces me!

<sup>4</sup>Make a solemn pledge, daughters of Jerusalem,  
never to rouse, never to arouse love until it desires.

### Love, strong and invaluable

[Daughters of Jerusalem]

<sup>5</sup>Who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning against her lover?

<sup>m</sup>Or you would teach me; LXX, Syr to my mother’s house, and to the chamber of the one who conceived me (cf 3:4)

7:12 vineyards . . . blossoms: See Song 1:5–6. pomegranates have bloomed: See Song 6:11; see note on Song 4:3. There I’ll give my loving to you: See notes on Song 1:2; 1:5–6.

7:13 mandrakes: a plant thought to be an aphrodisiac, useful for fertility (see Gen 30:14–16). my love: See note on Song 1:13. I have kept them hidden for you: “them” refers to every delicacy—fresh or ripened; these delicacies, in turn, seem to refer to the woman herself (see note on Song 2:3).

8:1–4 The woman continues speaking, wishing for a romantic exchange with the man (8:1–2), which she evidently gets in 8:3, leading her to repeat her statement about not rousing love (8:4).

8:1 my brother: As was the case with “my sister,” the language here is commonly used in ancient Near Eastern

love poetry to symbolize the lovers’ closeness (see note on Song 4:9). It doesn’t imply that they are genetically related. and no one would shame me: Perhaps public displays of affection were frowned upon; the woman desires to kiss the man and more (see Song 8:2–3).

8:2 bring you to my mother’s house: Compare with Song 1:4; 3:4, 11. she would teach me what to do: See translation note. I would give you . . . to drink: In Hebrew this is a word play with “I would kiss you” in Song 8:1. my fresh pomegranate juice: See Song 7:12; compare with Song 4:3 and note; see note on Song 2:3.

8:3 See note on Song 2:6.

8:4 See Song 2:7; 3:5 and notes (cf. Song 5:8).

8:5–14 The final verses seem disorganized. They may be

H: 6 Prv 6:34;

Is 49:16;

Jer 22:24;

Hag 2:23

R: 7 Prv 6:35

8: 9 1Ki 6:15

R: 10 Song 4:5;

Song 7:3;

Song 7:4;

Song 8:9;

Eze 16:7

[Woman]

Under the apple tree I aroused you—  
there, where your mother labored with you,  
there where, laboring, she bore you.

<sup>6</sup>Set me as a seal over your heart,  
as a seal upon your arm,  
for love is as strong as death,  
passionate love unrelenting as the grave.<sup>a</sup>

Its darts are darts of fire—divine flame!

<sup>7</sup>Rushing waters can't quench love;  
rivers can't wash it away.

If someone gave all his estate in exchange for love,  
he would be laughed to utter shame.

[The Woman's Brothers]

<sup>8</sup>Our sister is small; she has no breasts.  
What will we do for our sister on the day that she is spoken for?

<sup>9</sup>If she is a city wall,  
then we will build a turret of silver on her.<sup>o</sup>

And if she is a door,  
then we will barricade her<sup>p</sup> with a panel of cedar.

[Woman]

<sup>10</sup>I'm a city wall, and my breasts are the towers.  
So now I'm in his eyes as one who brings peace.

[Man]

<sup>11</sup>Solomon had a vineyard in Baal-hamon.  
He gave charge of the vineyard to keepers;  
one would bring in exchange for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver.

<sup>a</sup>Heb Sheol <sup>o</sup>Or on it (the city wall) <sup>p</sup>Or it (the door)

appendices to the rest of the book. The voicing seems to switch between a third party (perhaps the daughters of Jerusalem) in 8:5a, to the woman in 8:5b-7, to her brothers in 8:8-9, back to the woman in 8:10, to the man in 8:11-13, and then finally to the woman again in 8:14.

8:5a *Who is this coming up*: Compare with Song 3:6-7, but here the answer must be the woman who speaks in Song 8:5b.

8:5b *apple tree*: See Song 2:3; 7:7-8. *where your mother labored with you*: Compare with Song 1:4; 3:4, 11; 8:2 and notes.

8:6 *seal*: Seals were used to mark property and designate ownership. They often carried their owner's name and a picture of some sort. In 8:6, the woman wants to be sealed on the man's *heart* and *arm*, marking him inwardly and outwardly as her own. The reason for this desire is because of the fierce strength of love which is *as strong as death . . . unrelenting as the grave*. In contrast to the rest of the Song, the imagery in 8:6-7 is more cosmic than agricultural. *divine flame*: Some find a possible allusion to God's name in this word, but, if so, it is very subtle (cf. note on Song 2:7).

8:7 Nothing can stop love, and nothing is as priceless as love.

8:8-9 The woman's brothers (see Song 1:6) break in here, though there is no obvious connection between their speech and what precedes it. Perhaps the woman is quoting what her brothers said about her when she was younger. Her response is found in Song 8:10.

8:8 *small; she has no breasts*: Compare with Song 4:5; 7:3, 7-8; 8:10. *What will we do for our sister*: The brothers

contemplate courses of action once their sister is grown up. *spoken for*: married, perhaps, or engaged.

8:9 The imagery in this verse is unclear (see translation notes). *If she is a city wall*: perhaps a symbol of the woman's rejection of suitors, her maturity, or her chastity. *then we will build a turret of silver*: a response, not clear in force, to whatever the *city wall* designates. *if she is a door*: perhaps a symbol for the woman's acceptance of an early marriage, her immaturity, or a possible lack of chastity. *then we will barricade her*: a response to the *door* image, apparently indicating that the brothers will do what is necessary to protect their sister.

8:10 *I'm a city wall*: The woman clarifies the situation for her brothers, opting for the first of their two scenarios in Song 8:9. This would mean that she rejects all suitors save her chosen lover or that she is now ready for marriage and love. *my breasts are the towers*: She is no longer the brothers' immature sister (Song 8:8). *in his eyes*: evidently a reference to the man. *as one who brings peace*: or well-being or wholeness (Heb. *shalom*). Compare with note on Song 6:13.

8:11-13 The man seems to speak these verses. *Solomon*: See note on Song 1:1. *had a vineyard*: perhaps a real and highly valuable vineyard, or perhaps a symbolic one, which would refer to the royal harem (cf. Song 6:8; note on Song 1:5-6). *Baal-hamon*: The location is unknown. The name means "possessor of wealth," so it may be an allusion back to Solomon himself. *My vineyard, my very own, is before me*: The man's vineyard is the woman (see Song 5:1; see note on Song 1:5-6). He prizes her above the *thousand* that *Solomon* has (see 1 Kgs 11:3). Compare with Song 6:9.

<sup>12</sup> My vineyard, my very own, is before me.  
You can have the thousand, Solomon<sup>a</sup>—  
with two hundred for those who tend the fruit!

<sup>13</sup> You who sit in the gardens, my companions are listening for your voice.  
Let me hear it!

[Woman]

<sup>14</sup> "Take flight, my love, and be like a gazelle  
or a young stag on the mountains of spice!"

<sup>a</sup>Cf 1 Kgs 11:3

8:13 The man addresses the woman as *You who sit in the gardens*. He asks to *hear her voice* along with his *companions* who are also *listening*.

8:14 The final lines belong to the woman. *Take flight* is somewhat ambiguous: could the woman be telling the man to leave her? The similarities to Song 2:17 suggest

otherwise, as does the mention of *the mountains of spice* (cf. Song 4:6), which is probably a reference to the woman herself (see notes on Song 1:5-6; 2:17). If so, the woman has not only answered the man's request in Song 8:13, she has invited him again to join her in romance (cf. Song 4:16b; 7:11-13).

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses, including:

2. The second part of the document is a list of names and addresses, including:

3. The third part of the document is a list of names and addresses, including:

4. The fourth part of the document is a list of names and addresses, including:

5. The fifth part of the document is a list of names and addresses, including:

6. The sixth part of the document is a list of names and addresses, including:

7. The seventh part of the document is a list of names and addresses, including:

8. The eighth part of the document is a list of names and addresses, including:

9. The ninth part of the document is a list of names and addresses, including:

10. The tenth part of the document is a list of names and addresses, including:



# ISAIAH

Isaiah is one of the Bible's most well-loved books. It is also one of its most complex works, because it reflects settings that span hundreds of years of Judean history. Some parts refer to the late 8th century BCE when Assyria dominated the ancient Near East. Some parts refer to Babylonian times, and other parts emerged deep into, if not beyond, the era of Persian rule that began in the late 6th century.

No other prophetic book is more often quoted in the NT, nor appears more frequently in the Jewish annual lectionary and contemporary Catholic and Protestant lectionaries.

Isaiah was Amoz's son and is the Bible's only 8th-century prophet in Jerusalem. He was a sophisticated poet with an educated grasp of Israel's traditions. He enjoyed ready access to Kings Ahaz and Hezekiah, but insisted that Jerusalem's elite bear deep ethical responsibility

for those they governed. Prominent in his own prophecies, as well as in those that were later added to his book, are the paired expressions "justice" and "righteousness." Isaiah held that being God's people involved not only worship of Jerusalem's God but also behavior consistent with God's plans. God's care extended especially to the people without wealth, who stood outside the halls of power. Isaiah was appalled by those who used the legal system to enrich themselves and cheat the needy (Isa 10:1-2).

A major theme of Isaiah 1-39 is arrogance. Isaiah shows that the urge toward human greatness is empty. Pride, whether belonging to oppressor nations or to classes of people within Judean society, would inevitably be thwarted by God, who has planned a day "against all that is prideful and haughty" (Isa 2:12). People and even whole societies who pay no attention



City of David and Mount Zion form the east  
*David Bivin/LifeintheHolyLand.com*

to the demands of justice won't stand, he said, but as God's enemies they are bound for destruction.

The prophet Amos, speaking a generation earlier, warned the rulers of Israel while the nation was still strong that the threat of Assyrian conquest was on the horizon. Isaiah's prophetic career began as international instability grew. Early on he saw Israel and Aram, Judah's more powerful neighbors to the north, attempt to remove Jerusalem's King Ahaz, and then vanish before Assyria's war machine. From that point until the near destruction of Judah by the Assyrian king Sennacherib in 701 BCE, Isaiah saw the stable community of worshippers shrink from two kingdoms to one city. He accepted the grim task of interpreting in ethical and theological terms the disasters they witnessed. Isaiah attempted to warn Jerusalem that Israel's fate could happen to Judah if they continued to ignore God's just demands.

Isaiah's reputation apparently was enhanced by Jerusalem's near destruction in 701 BCE and by the grace of Jerusalem's survival. In 587 Babylon replaced Assyria as the regional superpower. Babylon then attacked and destroyed Jerusalem. Thus Isaiah's reputation as an authentic prophet grew. Other prophets' concerns with Jerusalem's future during and beyond the Babylonian exile became attached to Isaiah, expanding his book into a much longer work. These additions were placed within his writings and in compositions appended to the end of his prophecies at Isaiah 39.

While a few scholars maintain that the whole book originated with Isaiah, most scholars speak of the book's primary divisions as First Isaiah (Isa 1–39); Second Isaiah (Isa 40–55); and Third Isaiah (Isa 56–66). Broadly speaking, the material in First Isaiah is associated with the period of Assyrian rule. Second Isaiah deals with the end of Babylonian control. Third Isaiah fits with Persian reign, beginning in the late 6th century BCE. This division, however, is accurate only to a limited degree. The settings reflected in most of

the book are actually far more complex. Within First Isaiah are many extensions that can be attributed to Persian times—that is, fully as late as anything appearing in Isaiah 40–66.

Literary genres found in Isaiah 1–39 include not only poetic prophecy but prophetic prose, first and third person narratives and narrative snippets, hymns, dirges, and early apocalyptic writing. Seven chapters at the end (Isa 33–39) seem designed to conclude this portion and to join it to what follows.

Isaiah 40–55 consists of more self-contained and unified poetic sections associated with the end of the Babylonian exile and the hope that those who had been removed from Jerusalem would return and resettle. Here a thoroughly monotheistic vision of God as the only God, the creator of heaven and earth, is proclaimed over and over, alongside a hopeful vision of restoration for Jerusalem and Jerusalem's people.

By contrast, Isaiah 56–66 appears to be a compilation reflecting various viewpoints, settings, and concerns surrounding Jerusalem, arranged in an envelope structure around the central chapters, Isaiah 60–62, where close ties to the themes and language of Second Isaiah are found.

What holds the book together is neither authorship nor time, but rather geopolitical and theological concern. The entire book focuses attention on the continuing but troubled relationship between the city of Jerusalem and Jerusalem's God. The book of Isaiah probes the question of righteousness, both divine and human, within this relationship between the people and God. Many other nations beyond Judah populate the book, and it's finally not a king of Jerusalem but Persia's King Cyrus who is called God's "anointed" (Isa 45:1). Nevertheless, Jerusalem remains central in the imaginations of the several prophets who contributed to Isaiah's formation. Having endured destruction and reconstruction, Jerusalem is seen as having a glorious future as the world's center, the home of God's temple, the destination of nations who seek to learn the ways of peace.

**I. Prophecies Centering on Ahaz's Crisis (1:1–12:6)**

- A. Overview of Jerusalem's judgment and redemption (1:1-31)
  - 1. The vision of Isaiah (1:1)
  - 2. Overture to Isaiah's message (1:2-31)
    - a. Rebels condemned (1:2-9)
    - b. Hands filled with bloodshed (1:10-20)
    - c. Zion will be redeemed (1:21-31)
- B. Jerusalem's future: judgment and cleansing (2:1–4:6)
  - 1. Two visions: a dream and a nightmare (2:1-22)
    - a. The Lord's mountain (2:1-5)
    - b. Everyone is brought low (2:6-22)
  - 2. Haughtiness brought low in Jerusalem (3:1–4:1)
    - a. Your leaders mislead you (3:1-12)
    - b. The goods taken from the poor are in your houses (3:13-15)
    - c. Daughter Zion is haughty (3:16–4:1)
  - 3. Zion's glorious future (4:2-6)
- C. Jerusalem's future: terror and trust (5:1–12:6)
  - 1. Warnings and doom (5:1-30)
    - a. Song of the vineyard (5:1-7)
    - b. Sayings of doom (5:8-24)
    - c. God's powerful hand (5:25-30)
  - 2. The divine throne room (6:1-13)
  - 3. Reassurance to King Ahaz (7:1-25)
    - a. It won't happen (7:1-9)
    - b. The sign of Immanuel (7:10-17)
    - c. The devastated land (7:18-25)
  - 4. Isaiah's testimonies (8:1–9:1)
  - 5. Promise and judgment (9:2-21)
    - a. A great light (9:2-7)
    - b. God's hand still stretched out (9:8-21)
  - 6. Assyria as God's weapon (10:1-34)
    - a. Wicked laws (10:1-4)
    - b. Assyria as God's punishing weapon (10:5-19)
    - c. A few will return (10:20-27a)
    - d. The exalted laid low (10:27b-34)
  - 7. Justice, righteousness, and peace (11:1-16)
    - a. A shoot from Jesse's stump (11:1-9)
    - b. A signal to the peoples (11:10-16)
  - 8. A hymn of trust (12:1-6)

**II. Prophecies Concerning the Nations of the World (13:1–27:13)**

- A. The fall of the tyrant empire (13:1–14:32)
  - 1. Babylon falls (13:1-22)
  - 2. The fall of the tyrant (14:1-32)
    - a. Compassion for Jacob (14:1-2)
    - b. Mockery of a tyrant (14:3-23)
    - c. Promise for oppressed Judah (14:24-27)
    - d. An oracle concerning the Philistines (14:28-32)
  - 3. Concerning Moab (15:1–16:14)
  - 4. Concerning Damascus and Ephraim (17:1-14)

- 5. Oracles concerning Cush and Egypt (18:1–20:6)
  - a. Concerning Cush (18:1-7)
  - b. Concerning Egypt (19:1-15)
  - c. Blessed be God's people (19:16-25)
  - d. Isaiah naked and barefoot (20:1-6)
- 6. The destruction of Babylon, and other stern visions (21:1-17)
  - a. Fallen, fallen is Babylon (21:1-10)
  - b. A mysterious dialogue (21:11-17)
- 7. Two rebukes (22:1-25)
  - a. Jerusalemites rebuked (22:1-14)
  - b. An administrator rebuked (22:15-25)
- 8. Concerning Tyre (23:1-18)
- 9. The fall of the city of chaos and the restoration of the people (24:1–27:13)
  - a. City of chaos falls (24:1-23)
  - b. Rejoicing in God's salvation (25:1-12)
  - c. Trusting in God forever (26:1-21)
  - d. Scattered people return (27:1-13)

**III. Prophecies for Hezekiah's Days and Beyond (28:1–66:24)**

- A. Judgment and hope surrounding Hezekiah (28:1–32:20)
  - 1. Confrontations with Jerusalem's scoffers (28:1-29)
    - a. Judgment on Ephraim and Judah (28:1-13)
    - b. The covenant with death overturned (28:14-22)
    - c. Plowing and threshing (28:23-29)
  - 2. Who will hear the message? (29:1-24)
    - a. Ariel besieged but spared (29:1-12)
    - b. The wisdom of their wise (29:13-24)
  - 3. The Lord of Hosts will protect Jerusalem (30:1–31:9)
    - a. Help from Egypt is futile (30:1-18)
    - b. This is the way (30:19-26)
    - c. Assyria punished (30:27-33)
    - d. Doom to those going down to Egypt (31:1-9)
  - 4. The blessing of righteous rule (32:1-20)
    - a. A king rules for righteousness (32:1-8)
    - b. Warnings to the carefree (32:9-14)
    - c. A spirit from on high (32:15-20)
- B. Transitional oracles (33:1–35:10)
  - 1. Judgment and hope for the righteous (33:1-24)
  - 2. Contrasting futures for Edom and Zion (34:1–35:10)
    - a. Vengeance against Edom (34:1-17)
    - b. Fertile wilderness (35:1-10)
- C. Narratives concerning Hezekiah (36:1–39:8)
  - 1. The Assyrian crisis (36:1–37:38)
    - a. Sennacherib's message (36:1-22)
    - b. Hezekiah and Isaiah (37:1-13)
    - c. Hezekiah prays (37:14-38)
  - 2. Hezekiah's illness, and a visit from afar (38:1–39:8)

- a. Hezekiah's illness (38:1-22)
  - b. The Babylonian king's messengers (39:1-8)
- D. Prophecies from the end of the Babylonian era (40:1–55:13)
- 1. Overture concerning Jerusalem's restoration (40:1-31)
    - a. Comfort for God's people (40:1-11)
    - b. The incomparable God (40:12-25)
    - c. Power for the weary (40:26-31)
  - 2. Israel/Jacob section (41:1–48:22)
    - a. A victor from the east (41:1-7)
    - b. Israel as God's servant (41:8–42:9)
    - c. Warrior and mother, blindness and deafness (42:10-25)
    - d. Don't fear, don't remember (43:1-28)
    - e. You are my witnesses (44:1-28)
    - f. Cyrus as God's anointed (45:1-15)
    - g. Idols can't compare with God (45:16–46:13)
    - h. Daughter Babylon dethroned (47:1-15)
    - i. New things from now on (48:1-22)
  - 3. Zion/Jerusalem section (49:1–55:13)
    - a. The servant speaks up (49:1-13)
    - b. Compassion for Zion (49:14–50:3)
    - c. God's faithful servant (50:4-11)
    - d. Look to Abraham and Sarah (51:1-8)
    - e. Awake, arm of the Lord (51:9-23)
    - f. Awake, holy Zion (52:1-12)
    - g. Suffering servant (52:13–53:12)
    - h. Sing, barren woman (54:1-17)
    - i. Invitation to the feast (55:1-13)
- E. Prophecies primarily from the Persian period (56:1–66:24)
- 1. Justice and injustice in Jerusalem (56:1–59:21)
    - a. Keeper's of God's sabbath (56:1-8)
    - b. Neglectful leaders (56:9–57:2)
    - c. Accusations against idolaters (57:3-13)
    - d. Peace for the remorseful (57:14-21)
    - e. Fasting from injustice (58:1-14)
    - f. Alienation from God (59:1-8)
    - g. Injustice obscures vision (59:9-15a)
    - h. God will intervene (59:15b-21)
  - 2. Jerusalem's glorious future (60:1–62:12)
    - a. Jerusalem's coming radiance (60:1-22)
    - b. Joyful proclamations (61:1-11)
    - c. Jerusalem redeemed (62:1-12)
  - 3. Faithfulness and unfaithfulness in Jerusalem (63:1–66:24)
    - a. Vengeance against the nations (63:1-6)
    - b. A prayer of yearning (63:7–64:12)
    - c. Judgment for idolaters (65:1-16)
    - d. New creation and new Jerusalem (65:17-25)
    - e. Where God may be found (66:1-6)
    - f. Mother Zion (66:7-17)
    - g. Worshipers gathering from the nations (66:18-24)

*Patricia K. Tull*

**1** The vision about Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah, Amoz's son, saw in the days of Judah's kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

**Rebels condemned**

- <sup>2</sup>Hear you heavens, and listen earth,  
for the LORD has spoken:  
I reared children; I raised them,  
and they turned against me!
- <sup>3</sup>An ox knows its owner,  
and a donkey its master's feeding trough.  
But Israel doesn't know;  
my people don't behave intelligently.
- <sup>4</sup>Doom! Sinful nation, people weighed down with crimes,  
evildoing offspring, corrupt children!  
They have abandoned the LORD,  
despised the holy one of Israel;  
they turned their backs on God.
- <sup>5</sup>Why do you invite further beatings?  
Why continue to rebel?  
Everyone's head throbs,  
and everyone's heart fails.
- <sup>6</sup>From head to toe, none are well—  
only bruises, cuts, and raw wounds,  
not treated, not bandaged, not soothed with oil.
- <sup>7</sup>Your country is deserted,  
your cities burned with fire;  
your land—strangers are devouring it in plain sight.  
It's a wasteland, as when foreigners raid.
- <sup>8</sup>Daughter Zion is left like a small shelter in a vineyard,  
like a hut in a cucumber field,  
like a city besieged.<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>9</sup>If the LORD of heavenly forces had not spared a few of us,  
we would be like Sodom; we would resemble Gomorrah.

<sup>a</sup>LXX, Vulg, MT *spared*

1:1 2Ch 26:22,  
2Ch 27:1, Is 2:1;  
Hos 1:1, Mi 1:1  
1:2 Dt 4:26;  
Mi 1:2  
1:3 Dt 32:28;  
Jer 4:22, Jer 8:7,  
Jer 9:3  
1:4 Is 5:24,  
Is 14:20  
1:5 Is 9:13,  
Is 31:6, Jer 2:30,  
Jer 5:3  
1:6 Ps 38:3;  
Jer 8:22;  
Lk 10:34  
1:7 Lv 26:34;  
Dt 28:33,  
Dt 28:51; Is 5:5,  
Is 6:11  
1:8 Nm 11:5;  
Job 27:18;  
Ps 9:14;  
Is 10:32,  
Is 24:20  
1:9 Gn 19:24;  
Is 37:4; Ro 9:29

1:1 Many prophetic books, including Isaiah, begin with a superscription naming the prophet and often identifying his time and place. Isaiah lives in Judah's capital city during the reigns of four Judean kings in the 8th century BCE. Only the last two of these will actually appear in the book (Isa 7:1-17; 36:1-39:8).

1:2-31 This initial chapter hints at many but not all of the major themes to follow in Isaiah. It focuses on injustice among Jerusalem's leading citizens. Neglect of widows and orphans and other societal sins are viewed as punishable rebellion against God. God's actions against rebels may be severe but are intended to redeem the city and restore its justice (see sidebar, "Social Justice in Isaiah" at Isa 3).

1:2-3 Isaiah presents God's initial complaint as a controversy, calling heaven and earth as witnesses (cf. Deut 32:1; Ps 50:1, 4; Mic 6:1-2). The *children* God has raised have rebelled (cf. Deut 21:18-21). Livestock are more responsive to their human owners than Israel is to God.

1:3 *Israel*: refers not to the northern kingdom as opposed to the southern kingdom of Judah but to the whole

community, whose historic center was Jerusalem. In Isaiah 7 the northern kingdom will be called Ephraim.

1:4-9 The nation has already suffered grave afflictions, which the prophet compares to blows inflicted by a divine parent who punishes.

1:4 *Doom*: also translated as "woe" or "ah." *holy one of Israel*: a favorite name for God in Isaiah (see Isa 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 21:19; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14). Outside Isaiah the name appears only six times.

1:7-8 *Your country is deserted*: The image of the wounded body is now clarified by a more literal depiction of a nation ravaged by foreigners. It probably refers to the devastating Assyrian invasion of 701 BCE, in which most of Judah outside Jerusalem was destroyed (cf. Isa 36:1).

1:8 *Daughter Zion*: The city is personified as a woman (cf. Isa 10:30, 32; 16:1; 23:10, 12; 37:22; 47:1, 5; 52:2; 62:11).

1:9 *like Sodom*: The utter destruction of the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah is remembered (cf. Gen 19:24-25), but in Isaiah 1:10 their evil behavior is recalled.

1:10 Dt 32:32;  
Jer 23:14;  
Eze 16:46;  
Eze 16:49;  
Rev 11:8  
1:11 Isa 15:22;  
Ps 40:6; Is 66:3;  
Jer 6:20;  
Am 5:22  
1:12 Ex 23:17  
1:13 Is 66:3  
1:14 Is 29:1;  
Is 43:24;  
Am 5:21  
1:15 Is 59:2;  
Is 59:3;  
Jer 14:12; Mi 3:4  
1:16 Is 55:7;  
Jas 4:8  
1:17 Ps 82:3;  
Is 1:23; Is 10:2;  
Jer 22:3;  
Jas 1:27  
1:18 Ps 51:7;  
Is 43:26; Mi 6:2;  
Rev 7:14  
1:19 Dt 30:15  
1:20 Nm 23:19;  
Isa 12:15;  
Is 40:5; Is 58:14;  
Mi 4:4  
1:21 Is 5:7;  
Jer 2:20  
1:22 Jer 6:30;  
Eze 22:18  
1:23 Ex 23:8;  
Prv 17:23;  
Is 1:17; Jer 5:28;  
Mi 7:3

### **Hands filled with bloodshed**

- 10** Hear the LORD's word, you leaders of Sodom.  
Listen to our God's teaching, people of Gomorrah!
- 11** What should I think about all your sacrifices? says the LORD.  
I'm fed up with entirely burned offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts.  
I don't want the blood of bulls, lambs, and goats.
- 12** When you come to appear before me, who asked this from you,  
this trampling of my temple's courts?
- 13** Stop bringing worthless offerings.  
Your incense repulses me.  
New moon, sabbath, and the calling of an assembly—  
I can't stand wickedness with celebration!
- 14** I hate your new moons and your festivals.  
They've become a burden that I'm tired of bearing.
- 15** When you extend your hands,  
I'll hide my eyes from you.  
Even when you pray for a long time,  
I won't listen.  
Your hands are stained with blood.
- 16** Wash! Be clean!  
Remove your ugly deeds from my sight.  
Put an end to such evil;
- 17** learn to do good.  
Seek justice:  
help the oppressed,<sup>b</sup>  
defend the orphan;  
plead for the widow.

- 18** Come now, and let's settle this, says the LORD.  
Though your sins are like scarlet,  
they will be white as snow.  
If they are red as crimson,  
they will become like wool.
- 19** If you agree and obey,  
you will eat the best food of the land.
- 20** But if you refuse and rebel,  
you will be devoured by the sword.  
The LORD has said this.

### **Zion will be redeemed**

- 21** This faithful town has become a prostitute!  
She was full of justice;  
righteousness lived in her—  
but now murderers.
- 22** Your silver has become impure;  
your beer is diluted with water.
- 23** Your princes are rebels,  
companions of thieves.

<sup>b</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT *lead the oppressor*

1:10-17 Divine accusations focus on those who carry out worship while ignoring the plight of society's unprotected members. The description in 1:10-15 gives readers a glimpse of the variety of worship practices in the temple. It also details the care with which worshippers attend to sacrifice, festival, and prayer. Yet God desires attention to the needs of widows and orphans (cf. Exod 22:22; Deut 10:18; 24:19-21; 26:12-13; 27:19; Pss 68:5; 146:9). 1:18-20 Appeal is made to human reason and self-interest. An either-or choice is laid out.

1:21-26 The discussion begins afresh. God will purify the city, removing the unjust and restoring righteousness. 1:21 The city is imagined not only as a woman but as a prostitute (cf. Isa 23:15-18; Jer 3:1-9; Ezek 16; 23; Hos 4:15; 5:3; 9:1; Nah 3:4). Yet as Isaiah 1:23 testifies, the city's thieves and extortioners aren't its women but its male leadership. 1:22 *Your silver has become impure*: Images of impure metal and diluted drinks describe polluted morals. 1:23 Those responsible for enforcing justice are the very leaders who flaunt it.

- Everyone loves a bribe and pursues gifts.  
 They don't defend the orphan,  
 and the widow's cause never reaches them.
- 24 Therefore, says the LORD God of heavenly forces, the mighty one of Israel:  
 Doom! I will vent my anger against my foes;  
 I will take it out on my enemies,  
 25 and I will turn my hand against you.  
 I will refine your impurities as with lye,  
 and remove all your cinders.
- 26 Then I will restore your judges as in earlier times,  
 and your counselors as at the beginning.  
 After this you will be called Righteous City, Faithful Town.
- 27 Zion will be redeemed by justice,  
 and those who change their lives by righteousness.
- 28 But God will shatter rebels and sinners alike;  
 those who abandon the LORD will be finished.
- 29 You will be ashamed of the oaks you once desired,  
 and embarrassed by the gardens you once chose.
- 30 You will be like an oak with withering leaves,  
 like a garden without water.
- 31 The strong will be like dry twigs,  
 their deeds like sparks;  
 the two will burn together,  
 with no one to extinguish them.

**The LORD's mountain**

- 2 This is what Isaiah, Amoz's son, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.  
 2 In the days to come the mountain of the LORD's house  
 will be the highest of the mountains.  
 It will be lifted above the hills;  
 peoples will stream to it.
- 3 Many nations will go and say,  
 "Come, let's go up to the LORD's mountain,  
 to the house of Jacob's God  
 so that he may teach us his ways  
 and we may walk in God's paths."  
 Instruction will come from Zion;  
 the LORD's word from Jerusalem.
- 4 God will judge between the nations,  
 and settle disputes of mighty nations.

1:25 Is 4:4;  
 Is 48:10;  
 Jer 9:7;  
 Zec 13:9; Mal 3:3

1:26 Is 62:1;  
 Jer 33:7; Zec 8:3

1:27 Is 62:12

1:28 2Th 1:8

1:29 Is 57:5;  
 Is 65:3; Is 66:17;  
 Eze 6:13;  
 Hos 4:13

1:30 Ps 1:3;  
 Is 64:6; Jer 17:6;  
 Jer 17:8

2:1 Is 1:1;  
 Is 13:1

2:2 Dn 2:45;  
 Mi 4:1

2:3 Is 51:4;  
 Jer 31:6;  
 Lk 24:47

2:4 Is 9:7;  
 Hos 2:18;  
 Jl 3:10; Mi 4:3;  
 Zec 9:10

1:25 *cinders*: lead oxide impurities, debris, or waste—sometimes called dross—left over when silver metal is melted.

1:26-27 Separate futures are envisioned for righteous and unrighteous individuals.

1:29-31 These verses refer not to unjust worship in the temple as in Isaiah 1:11-15 but to worship practices associated with Canaanite gods. Worshipers of trees will themselves become like dried and flammable fuel.

2:1 Another superscription, shorter than the one at Isaiah 1:1. How many verses or chapters it applies to is uncertain.

2:2-4 The same oracle (a form of prophetic speech) is also found in Micah 4:1-3, but the conclusions in Isaiah 2:5 and Micah 4:4 differ. Whereas in Micah 1:24 God's own people were viewed as God's enemies, here enemy nations become God's own people, coming to the temple for divine instruction. In contrast to Micah 1:12, where the temple

was trampled by unjust worshippers, now it is the source of justice. Such hopeful portrayals of Jerusalem occupy key points in Isaiah (Isa 4:2-6; 12:1-6; 33:20-24; 40:1-2, 9-10; 62:1; 66:7-14, 18-23).

2:2 *highest of the mountains*: High mountains are associated with the gods. In Isaiah 2:9-21 every human pride is brought low, and God alone is exalted. In Psalm 122:4 the tribes of Israel go up to the mountain, but here all the nations do.

2:3 *Instruction*: Teaching (Torah) will come from Zion. Though God's people often reject it (Isa 5:24; 24:5; 30:9; 42:24), it will nevertheless be known (Isa 42:21; 51:4).

2:4 For the nations seeking God's ways, weapons will no longer be necessary. These will instead be fashioned into tools for tending the earth and nurturing life (cf. Ps 46:9, in which God destroys weapons of war assembled against Jerusalem).

2:5 Is 2:3,  
Is 58:1, Is 60:1,  
Is 60:2, Is 60:19  
2:6 Dt 31:17;  
Mt 5:12  
2:7 Dt 17:16,  
Dt 17:17;  
Is 30:16, Is 31:1;  
Mt 5:10  
2:8 Jer 2:28  
2:9 Is 5:15  
2:10 Job 37:22;  
Is 2:9;  
Rev 6:15,  
Rev 6:16  
2:11 Ps 18:27;  
Is 2:17, Is 5:15  
2:12 Is 13:6;  
Mal 4:1  
2:13 Jgs 9:15;  
Ps 29:5;  
Is 10:33,  
Is 10:34;  
Zec 11:2  
2:14 Is 30:25,  
Is 40:4  
2:15 Is 25:12,  
Is 30:25

Then they will beat their swords into iron plows  
and their spears into pruning tools.  
Nation will not take up sword against nation;  
they will no longer learn how to make war.

<sup>5</sup> Come, house of Jacob,  
let's walk by the LORD's light.

**Everyone is brought low**

<sup>6</sup> You have abandoned your people, house of Jacob.  
They are full of sorcerers from the east and fortune-tellers  
like the Philistines;  
they hold hands with foreigners' children.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Their land is full of silver and gold;  
they have countless treasures.  
Their land is filled with horses;  
they have countless chariots.

<sup>8</sup> Their land is filled with idols;  
they worship their handiwork,  
what their own fingers have made.

<sup>9</sup> Humanity will be brought down;  
each person laid low—don't lift them up!<sup>d</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Go into the rocks, and hide yourself in the dust  
from the terror of the LORD,  
from the splendor of God's majesty!

<sup>11</sup> People's proud gazing will be stopped  
and humanity's arrogance brought down;  
the LORD alone will be exalted on that day.

<sup>12</sup> The LORD of heavenly forces has planned a day:  
against all that is prideful and haughty;  
against all that is lofty, and it will be laid low;<sup>e</sup>

<sup>13</sup> against all the cedars of Lebanon, high and lofty;  
against all the oaks of Bashan;

<sup>14</sup> against all the high mountains;  
against all the lofty hills;

<sup>15</sup> against every tall tower;  
against every fortified wall;

<sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Or don't forgive them <sup>e</sup>LXX and high

2:5 The chapter pivots on this verse calling on the *house of Jacob* to walk in the ways of "Jacob's God" (Isa 2:3).

2:6 *house of Jacob*: It is unclear from grammar and context whether the house of Jacob is addressed here, or whether it is identified with your (i.e., God's) people. In contrast to Isaiah 2:2, here foreigners enter the land not to seek Judah's God but to bring their own misleading practices, such as sorcery.

2:7-8 Close repetition characterizes these verses. The commodities of precious metals, weapons of war, and human-made gods litter the land (see Isa 2:18, 20). The derogatory word used here for "idols" is common in Isaiah but uncommon elsewhere in the OT. For references to idolatry, see Isaiah 10:10-11; 19:1, 3; 30:22; 31:7; 40:19; 42:8; 44:9-20; 45:16, 20; 46:1; 48:5; 66:3.

2:9-22 These verses cycle around the themes of high and low: All that rivals God, both human and nonhuman, will be laid low, and God alone will be exalted.

2:10 *Go into the rocks*: This theme is repeated in Isaiah 2:19-21. It echoes the digging imagery of Amos 9:2. Revelation 6:15-17 combines the imagery of this verse with that of Hosea 10:8 (see also 2 Thess 1:9).

2:12 *has planned a day*: Beginning with Amos 5:18-20, biblical prophets share the concept of the "day of the Lord," when divine judgment will fall upon nations that rebel against God, including God's own people (Isa 13:6, 9; Jer 46:10; Ezek 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14; Mal 4:5). In some NT writings it becomes a Judgment Day at the end time (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 6:17).

2:13 *cedars of Lebanon*: These trees are famed for their splendor in the Bible and in ancient Near Eastern sources, and are often harvested by conquerors (cf. Isa 14:8). *Bashan*: a fertile plateau region east of the northern Jordan River and the Galilee Sea, and south of Mount Hermon, famed for its lumber and cattle.



<sup>16</sup>against all the ships of Tarshish;  
 against all the wonderful boats.<sup>f</sup>  
<sup>17</sup>People's pride will be brought down  
 and human arrogance humiliated.  
 The LORD alone will be exalted on that day;  
<sup>18</sup>the idols will completely pass away.

2:16 1Kg 10:22;  
 Is 23:1, Is 60:9  
 2:17 Is 2:11  
 2:18 Is 21:9  
 2:19 Is 2:10,  
 Is 2:21;  
 Lk 23:30;  
 Rev 6:15  
 2:20 Lv 11:19;  
 Is 30:22, Is 31:7  
 2:21 Is 2:10,  
 Is 2:19  
 2:22 Ps 144:3,  
 Ps 144:4,  
 Ps 146:3;  
 Jer 17:5;  
 Jas 4:14  
 3:1 Lv 26:26;  
 Eze 4:16  
 3:2 2Ki 24:14;  
 Eze 17:13  
 3:3 2Ki 1:9  
 3:4 Ecc 10:16  
 3:7 Hos 5:13

<sup>19</sup>Go into caves in the rocks  
 and holes in the dust  
 before the terror of the LORD  
 and the splendor of God's majesty,  
 when he arises to terrify the earth.  
<sup>20</sup>On that day, people will toss to the rodents<sup>g</sup> and to the bats  
 their idols of silver and idols of gold,  
 which they made for themselves to worship.  
<sup>21</sup>They will hide in fissures of rocks and in crevices of cliffs  
 before the terror of the LORD  
 and the splendor of God's majesty  
 when he arises to terrify the earth.

<sup>22</sup>Quit admiring the human race,  
 who breathe through their nostrils.  
 Why should they be admired?

**Your leaders mislead you**

**3** Now the LORD God of heavenly forces is removing from Jerusalem and from Judah every  
 form of support:

- all rations of food and water;
- <sup>2</sup>soldier and warrior;  
 judge and prophet;  
 fortune-teller and elder;
- <sup>3</sup>commander and celebrity;  
 counselor, clever craftsman, and cunning charmer.

<sup>4</sup>I will make youths their commanders;  
 mischief makers will rule over them.  
<sup>5</sup>The people will oppress each other,  
 each one against the other, neighbor against neighbor.  
 The young will bully the old,  
 the rogue, and the respectable.

<sup>6</sup>Someone will seize a family member, saying,  
 "You have clothing! You be our leader!  
 This mess will be your responsibility!"

<sup>7</sup>Someone else will cry out on that day,  
 "I'm no healer!  
 I have neither food nor clothing in my house!  
 Don't make me the leader of the people!"

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain

2:16 *ships of Tarshish*: mighty seagoing ships (1 Kgs 10:22; 22:48; Isa 60:9; Ezek 27:25) that are nevertheless no match for God's power (Ps 48:7; Isa 23:1, 6, 10, 14). The location of Tarshish is disputed. Some believe it to be on the Atlantic coast of Spain beyond Gibraltar, but others suggest Tarsus in southern Turkey.  
 3:1-4:1 Jerusalem's elite, both men and women, are singled out for critique and threat.

3:1-12 The removal of male leadership will result in chaos. This scenario contrasts with Isaiah 1:26, where the removal of corrupt leadership clears the way for just judges and the restoration of faithfulness.  
 3:4-5 Unqualified and inexperienced people will take charge.  
 3:6-7 Brief sayings suggesting the desperation of the times. See Isaiah 4:1 for a similar saying.

3:9 Gn 13:13,

Gn 18:20;

Prv 8:36;

Hos 13:9;

Ro 6:23

3:10 Dt 28:1;

Ps 128:2;

Ecc 8:12

3:11 Dt 28:15

3:12 Is 3:4,

Is 9:16, Is 28:14;

Mt 3:5

3:13 Hos 4:1;

Mt 6:2

3:14 Job 22:4;

Ps 143:2; Is 5:7;

Is 10:1; Mt 3:1

3:15 Job 24:4;

Ps 10:2;

Ps 94:5;

Prv 17:5; Am 2:6

3:16 Is 3:18,

Is 24:4, Is 32:9;

Zep 3:11

3:17 Dt 28:27;

Is 47:3

3:18 Jgs 8:21,

Jgs 8:26; Is 3:16

*Social Justice in Isaiah* Social justice is a prominent theme among the prophets. The Hebrew word pair *mishpat* ("justice") and *tsedakah* ("righteousness") often signals this concept. The social categories "widows" and "orphans" (and often "immigrants") function as shorthand for all whose access to wealth in ancient Judah was diminished and who depended on the community ethic for survival.

In Isaiah 1:10-17 the prophet makes clear that even devout worship is acceptable to God only when accompanied by actions that "help the oppressed; defend the orphan; plead for the widow" (Isa 1:17). The prophet asserts, "Your princes are rebels, companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and pursues gifts. They don't defend the orphan, and the widow's cause never reaches them" (Isa 1:23). Isaiah holds that when God purifies the city, "Zion will be redeemed by justice, and those who change their lives by righteousness" (Isa 1:27). This theme, so prominent in Isaiah 1, continues to sound in accusations against greed and consumption in Isaiah 3:14-15 and throughout Isaiah 5, and in expectations of Judah's rulers that are expressed in Isaiah 9; 11; 32. The theme resounds once again in the latter parts of the book, particularly in Isaiah 58; 59; 61.

<sup>8</sup> Yes, Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen,  
because the way they talk and act in word and deed insults the LORD,  
defying his brilliant glory.

<sup>9</sup> Their bias in judgment gives them away;  
like Sodom, they display their sins in public.  
Doom to them, for they have done themselves in!

<sup>10</sup> Tell the righteous how blessed they are;  
they will eat the fruit of their labors.

<sup>11</sup> Doom to the wicked; they are evil.  
What they have done will be done to them.

<sup>12</sup> As for my people—oppressors strip them and swindlers<sup>b</sup> rule them.  
My people—your leaders mislead you and confuse your paths.

<sup>13</sup> The LORD arises to accuse;  
he stands to judge the peoples.

<sup>14</sup> The LORD will enter into judgment  
with the elders and princes of his people:  
You yourselves have devoured the vineyard;  
the goods stolen from the poor are in your houses.

<sup>15</sup> How dare you crush my people  
and grind the faces of the poor?  
says the LORD God of heavenly forces.

<sup>16</sup> The LORD says:  
Because Zion's daughters applaud themselves,  
walking with their chins in the air,  
flirting with their eyes,  
tiptoeing as they walk, feet jingling—

<sup>17</sup> the Lord will shave the heads of Zion's daughters,  
and will expose their scalps.

<sup>18</sup> On that day, the LORD will remove:  
the splendid ankle chains; headbands and moon-shaped pendants;

<sup>b</sup>LXX; MT *women*

3:13-15 These three verses in the chapter's center specify the charge. As in Isaiah 1, God rises as if in court, accusing the wealthy of having *devoured the vineyard*. It operates on two levels: as an accusation of stripping the fruit, leaving none for the poor to glean; and as an accusation of having devoured Israel itself, often symbolized as God's vine (Isa 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Exod 15:17; Pss 44:2; 80:8-15; Jer 2:21; Ezek 17:1-10; 19:10-14; Amos 9:15).

3:15 *How dare you crush*: The poor are characterized as

God's own people (see Amos 8:4-6; Mic 2:1-2; 1 Kgs 21; Prov 22:22-23).

3:16-4:1 Elite women of Jerusalem are accused alongside elite men. Their vanity is particularly ridiculed; compare with Amos 4:1.

3:17-24 A series of reversals will result in humiliation. Many of the items of jewelry and clothing in these verses are impossible to translate with certainty, but the net effect of the list nevertheless communicates doomed opulence.

- 19 the earrings, bracelets, and veils;  
 20 the hats, bangles, and sashes;  
     the amulets and charms;  
 21 the signet rings and nose rings;  
 22 the robes and capes;  
     the shawls and handbags;  
 23 the mirrors and linen garments;  
     the turbans and the veils.  
 24 Instead of perfume there will be a disgusting odor;  
     instead of a sash, a rope;  
     instead of styled hair, shaved heads;  
     instead of expensive clothes, rags as mourning clothes;  
     instead of beauty, shame.<sup>1</sup>

25 Your men will fall by the sword,  
     your warriors in battle!

26 Her gates will lament and mourn;  
     desolate, she will sit on the ground.

4 Seven women will grab one man on that day, saying, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes—only let us take your name; take away our disgrace."

### Zion's glorious future

2 On that day, the LORD's branch will become beautiful and glorious. The earth's fruit will be the pride and splendor of Israel's survivors. 3 Whoever remains in Zion and is left in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who is on the list of those living in Jerusalem. 4 When the Lord washes the filth from Zion's daughters, and cleanses Jerusalem's bloodguilt from within it by means of a wind of judgment and a searing wind, 5 then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over its assembly a cloud by day and smoke and the light of a blazing fire by night. Over all the glory there will be a canopy, 6 which will be a booth by day for shade from the heat and a hiding place and shelter from a stormy downpour.

### Song of the vineyard

5 Let me sing for my loved one  
     a love song for his vineyard.

My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.

2 He dug it,  
     cleared away its stones,  
     planted it with excellent vines,  
     built a tower inside it,  
     and dug out a wine vat in it.

He expected it to grow good grapes—  
     but it grew rotten grapes.

<sup>1</sup>DSS (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>); MT lacks *shame*.

4:2-6 This brief paragraph concludes the section that began in Isaiah 2:1 with hopeful words concerning Jerusalem. It reflects language from a later era than the 8th century.

4:2 *earth's fruit*: Or the land's fruit; see Numbers 13:20; Deuteronomy 1:25. The splendor described contrasts sharply with the dubious splendor in the previous chapter.

4:3 *Whoever remains*: The frequent prophetic idea of the surviving remnant is invoked; see Isaiah 6:13; 7:3; 10:19-22; 11:11-16; 16:14; 17:3, 6; 21:17; 24:6; 28:5; 37:31-32; 49:21; Jeremiah 8:3; 24:8; 34:7; 42:2; Ezra 9:8-15. *called holy*: Usually it is God, rather than people, who is called holy, but see Exodus 19:6 and the Leviticus formula, "you must be holy, because I am holy" (Lev 11:45; 19:2; 20:26; 1 Pet 1:16). Also compare with Isaiah 62:12.

4:4 *filth from Zion's daughters*: For Jerusalem's uncleanness,

see Lamentations 1:9. In Isaiah 1:15-16 and Isaiah 28:8, it is Jerusalem's men who are associated with filth and bloodguilt. The Greek (LXX) translation of this verse refers to the filth of the "sons and daughters of Zion."

4:5 *cloud by day*: This cloud is reminiscent of the exodus tradition (Exod 13:21; 19:18; 20:18) and of the prophet's vision in Isaiah 6:4.

5:1-7 Often called the Song of the Vineyard, this section is echoed by some changes in Isaiah 27:2-5, and later in the parable of the vineyard in Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19.

5:1 *my loved one*: The "loved one" (or friend) isn't identified until Isaiah 5:7.

5:2 *He dug it*: Several strenuous actions are listed, indicating the vineyard owner's investment of maximum effort toward its success. *rotten*: sometimes translated as "wild,"

3:19 Gn 24:30;  
 Nm 31:50;  
 Eze 16:11  
 3:20 Ex 39:28;  
 Eze 24:17  
 3:21 Gn 24:47;  
 Eze 16:12  
 3:23 Eze 16:10  
 3:24 Is 15:2,  
 Is 22:12;  
 Lam 2:10;  
 Eze 27:31;  
 Am 8:10  
 4:1 Gn 30:23;  
 Is 13:12  
 4:3 Is 52:1;  
 Lk 10:20  
 4:4 Is 28:6;  
 Mal 3:2;  
 Mt 3:11  
 4:6 Ps 27:5;  
 Is 25:4, Is 32:2;  
 Eze 11:16  
 5:1 Ps 80:8;  
 Is 27:2;  
 Mt 21:33;  
 Mk 12:1;  
 Lk 20:9  
 5:2 Jer 2:21;  
 Mt 12:19;  
 Mt 21:33;  
 Mk 11:13;  
 Lk 13:6

5:3 Mt 21:40

5:4 Mi 6:3;

Mt 23:37

5:5 Ps 80:12

5:6 Is 7:23

5:7 Ps 80:8;

Is 3:14

5:8 Jer 22:13;

Mi 2:2; Hab 2:9

5:9 Is 6:11;

Mt 23:38

5:10 Eze 45:11;

Hg 1:6

5:11 Prv 23:29;

Ecc 10:17;

Is 5:22; Is 28:1;

Is 28:7

5:12 Job 21:12;

Ps 28:5; Is 24:8;

Am 6:4; Am 6:5

5:14 Prv 27:20;

Hab 2:5

<sup>3</sup>So now, you who live in Jerusalem, you people of Judah,  
judge between me and my vineyard:

<sup>4</sup>What more was there to do for my vineyard that I haven't done for it?  
When I expected it to grow good grapes,  
why did it grow rotten grapes?

<sup>5</sup>Now let me tell you what I'm doing to my vineyard.  
I'm removing its hedge, so it will be destroyed.  
I'm breaking down its walls, so it will be trampled.

<sup>6</sup>I'll turn it into a ruin;  
it won't be pruned or hoed,  
and thorns and thistles will grow up.  
I will command the clouds not to rain on it.

<sup>7</sup>The vineyard of the LORD of heavenly forces is the house of Israel,  
and the people of Judah are the plantings in which God delighted.  
God expected justice, but there was bloodshed;  
righteousness, but there was a cry of distress!

### Sayings of doom

<sup>8</sup>Doom to those who acquire house after house,  
who annex field to field until there is no more space left  
and only you live alone in the land.

<sup>9</sup>I heard the LORD of heavenly forces say this:<sup>j</sup>  
Many houses will become total ruins,  
large, fine houses, with no one living in them.

<sup>10</sup>Ten acres of vineyard will produce just one bath,<sup>k</sup>  
and a homer of seed will produce only an ephah.

<sup>11</sup>Doom to those who wake up early in the morning to run after beer,  
to those who stay up late, lit up by wine.

<sup>12</sup>They party with lyre and harp, tambourine, flute, and wine;  
but they ignore the LORD's work;  
they can't see what God is doing.

<sup>13</sup>Therefore, my people go into exile since they didn't understand—  
their officials are dying of hunger;  
so many of them are dried up with thirst.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, the grave<sup>l</sup> opens wide its jaws,  
opens its mouth beyond all bounds,  
and the splendid multitudes will go down,  
with all their uproar and cheering.

<sup>j</sup>Heb lacks *say this*. <sup>k</sup>One bath is approximately twenty quarts, the same as an ephah; one homer contains ten ephahs (or baths) of grain. <sup>l</sup>Heb *Sheol*

"sour," "worthless," or "bad." The exact meaning is unclear, but it's clear that these aren't the good grapes the owner expected.

5:3 The story shifts at this point from third person "my loved one" to first person *me*. Judeans are asked to agree that the vineyard has failed through no fault of its owner.

5:6 *I will command*: Until this point the proposals to destroy the vineyard, though perhaps extreme, remained within the realm of human possibility. Here, however, the owner proposes to do what only God can do, to command the clouds not to rain.

5:7 This verse shows that the song isn't about a literal vineyard but rather the people of Israel and Judah. (For similar imagery concerning Israel, see Exod 15:17; Pss 44:2; 80:8-15; Hos 10:1-2; 14:5; Jer 2:21; Ezek 17:1-10; 19:10-14; Amos 9:15.) Asking the audience to render a verdict that, in the end, brings charges against the audience itself can also

be seen in 2 Samuel 12:1-7. In the Hebrew text, two word-plays dramatize divine disappointment: God expected *mishpat* (justice) but instead found *mishpah* (bloodshed); instead of *tsedakah* (righteousness), there was *tse'akah* (a cry of distress).

5:8-24 A series of oracles condemning social injustice of various kinds. The final oracle in this series is found, after a long interlude, at Isaiah 10:1.

5:8-10 The wealthy are accused of amassing houses and fields at the expense of the poor. Fittingly, their wealth won't enrich them. They will instead be left with ruins.

5:11-17 Like the previous one, this oracle is filled with irony. Though the psalmists used lyre and harp to sing about God's deeds, these revelers are too drunk to see what God is doing. As a result of their drinking, they are dying of thirst. These exalted people will be humiliated. In fact, they will go down to the grave (Sheol, the abode

- 15 Humanity will be humiliated;  
 each person laid low,  
 the eyes of the exalted laid low.
- 16 But the LORD of heavenly forces will be exalted in justice,  
 and the holy God will show himself holy in righteousness.
- 17 Lambs will graze as if in their pasture;  
 young goats<sup>a</sup> will feed among the ruins of the rich.<sup>a</sup>
- 18 Doom to those who drag guilt along with cords of fraud,  
 and haul sin as if with cart ropes,  
 19 who say, "God should hurry and work faster so we can see;  
 let the plan of Israel's holy one come quickly, so we can understand it."
- 20 Doom to those who call evil good and good evil,  
 who present darkness as light and light as darkness,  
 who make bitterness sweet and sweetness bitter.
- 21 Doom to those who consider themselves wise,  
 who think of themselves as clever.
- 22 Doom to the wine-swigging warriors, mighty at mixing drinks,  
 23 who spare the guilty for bribes,  
 and rob the innocent of their rights.
- 24 Therefore, as a tongue of fire devours stubble,  
 and as hay shrivels in a flame,  
 so their roots will rot,  
 and their blossoms turn to dust,  
 for they have rejected the teaching of the LORD of heavenly forces,  
 and have despised the word of Israel's holy one.

**God's powerful hand**

- 25 This is why the LORD's anger burned against the people:  
 he extended his hand to strike them,  
 the mountains trembled,  
 and their corpses lay in the middle of the streets like dung.  
 Even then God's anger didn't turn away;  
 God's hand was still extended.
- 26 God will raise a signal to a nation from far away  
 and whistle to them from the end of the earth—  
 now look—hurrying, swiftly they come!
- 27 Not one is tired; not one stumbles;  
 they don't rest or sleep;  
 no belt is loose; no sandal broken;  
 28 their arrows are sharp;  
 all their bows drawn;  
 their horses' hooves are like flint;  
 their wheels like the whirlwind.

<sup>a</sup>Or *strangers* <sup>a</sup>Or *Calves and young goats will feed on the ruins*; Heb uncertain

of the dead). The only ones left to feast will be lambs and young goats. The subject will return to drunkenness in Isaiah 5:22-24, and in Isaiah 28:7-8.  
 5:18-19 *drag guilt along with cords of fraud*: People are so trapped by sin that they have become its beasts of burden. They respond to prophetic warnings by taunting the holy one, saying, in effect, "Bring it on." God's *plan*, mentioned here, becomes an important theme of First Isaiah (see Isa 8:10; 11:2; 14:26; 19:3, 11, 17; 25:1; 28:29; 29:15; 30:1) and reappears in Isaiah 46:10-11.

5:20 The centerpiece of the series, this oracle sums up the contrary attitudes of Isaiah's hearers: Using words to deceive, they cynically reverse good and evil, dark and light, bitter and sweet.  
 5:25 Instead of a seventh oracle (which is postponed until Isa 10:1-4), judgment is proclaimed. For repetitions of the last portion of this verse, see Isaiah 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4.  
 5:26-30 The vividly portrayed enemy onslaught will be brought on by none other than God. For God's summoning the enemy by whistling, see Isaiah 7:18.

5:18 Job 15:16;  
 Job 20:12;  
 Ps 10:11,  
 Ps 14:1, Ps 53:1  
 5:19 Jer 17:15;  
 Eze 12:22;  
 2Pl 3:4  
 5:20 Prv 17:15;  
 Mt 6:23;  
 Lk 11:35  
 5:21 Prv 3:7,  
 Prv 26:12;  
 Ro 12:16;  
 1Co 3:18  
 5:22 Prv 23:20;  
 Is 5:11, Is 28:1,  
 Is 28:7, Is 56:12  
 5:23 Ex 23:8;  
 Prv 17:15;  
 Is 1:23, Is 10:2  
 5:24 Job 18:16;  
 Is 1:4, Is 30:9,  
 Is 30:12; Jl 2:5  
 5:25 2Ki 22:13;  
 Is 9:12, Is 9:17,  
 Is 9:21, Is 10:4  
 5:26 Dt 28:49;  
 Is 7:18, Is 11:12,  
 Is 18:3;  
 Zec 10:8  
 5:27 Job 12:18;  
 Jl 2:7, Jl 2:8

6:1 1Ki 22:19;  
2Ki 15:7;  
2Ch 26:23;  
Is 1:1; Jn 12:41  
6:2 Is 6:6;  
Eze 1:11; Rev 4:8  
6:3 Ex 15:11;  
Nm 14:21;  
Ps 72:19; Rev 4:8  
6:4 1Ki 8:10;  
Am 9:1;  
Rev 15:8

6:5 Ex 6:12;  
Job 42:5;  
Is 33:17; Lk 5:8  
6:6 Is 6:2  
6:7 Jer 1:9;  
Dn 10:16;  
Jhn 1:7  
6:8 Gn 1:26  
6:9 Mt 13:14;  
Mt 13:15;  
Mk 4:12;  
Lk 8:10;  
Ro 11:8

- <sup>29</sup>Their roaring is like the lion;  
they roar like young lions;  
they growl, seize their prey,  
and carry it off, with no one to rescue.
- <sup>30</sup>On that day, they will roar over it like the roaring of the sea.  
And if one looks toward the land, there's darkness.  
Tyre and the Nile will be darkened by the clouds.<sup>o</sup>

### **The divine throne room**

**6**In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a high and exalted throne, the edges of his robe filling the temple. <sup>2</sup>Winged creatures were stationed around him. Each had six wings: with two they veiled their faces, with two their feet, and with two they flew about. <sup>3</sup>They shouted to each other, saying:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of heavenly forces!

All the earth is filled with God's glory!"

<sup>4</sup>The doorframe shook at the sound of their shouting, and the house was filled with smoke.

<sup>5</sup>I said, "Mourn for me; I'm ruined! I'm a man with unclean lips, and I live among a people with unclean lips. Yet I've seen the king, the LORD of heavenly forces!"

<sup>6</sup>Then one of the winged creatures flew to me, holding a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs. <sup>7</sup>He touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips. Your guilt has departed, and your sin is removed."

<sup>8</sup>Then I heard the Lord's voice saying, "Whom should I send, and who will go for us?"

I said, "I'm here; send me."

<sup>9</sup>God said, "Go and say to this people:

*The Setting of Isaiah 6–9* The poetic oracles that began in Isaiah 5:8 will resume in Isaiah 9:8. Isaiah 6:1–9:7 contains narratives, narrative fragments, oracles, and expansions loosely related to King Ahaz's reign. In Isaiah 6 and 8 the prophet himself narrates; in Isaiah 7 he is depicted in third person. Beginning with divine kingship and concluding with human kingship, this section concerns Jerusalem's kingship and its relationship to God. These narratives originate in Ahaz's time and show evidence that an editor expanded the stories.

Isaiah 6 sets the scene: A human king has died, but Isaiah finds himself face-to-face with the divine king. The message he is given accuses his people of self-destructive lack of receptivity to God. We never witness Isaiah delivering this painful message. But his encounter with God sets the scene for Isaiah's frustrating encounters with King Ahaz and Jerusalem's people.

The international crisis surrounding Ahaz is often called the "Syro-Ephraimite War." Syria and Israel (Ephraim) have rebelled against the Assyrian Empire to their east, and try to strong-arm Judah into their alliance by replacing Ahaz with a more compliant ally (Isa 7:6). Isaiah encounters resistance when he encourages the king to stand firm. A series of oracles follows concerning the Assyrian crisis and the leadership desired by God.

<sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain

6:1-13 Isaiah describes his commissioning by God to bring a message of judgment to his people.

6:1 *In the year of King Uzziah's death:* Uzziah (often called "Azariah" in 2 Kings) was the first of four kings who reigned during Isaiah's ministry. A skin disease forced him to abdicate the throne to Jotham long before his death (2 Kgs 15:5). Isaiah reports seeing God on a throne in the temple. For a similar scene of commissioning in the divine throne room (though not of a prophet, but of a lying spirit), see 1 Kings 22:19-22. God's conversations in Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6 similarly show heavenly transactions with earthly consequences.

6:2 *Winged creatures:* called *seraphim* in Hebrew. These flying serpents reappear in Isaiah 14:29 and Isaiah 30:6; see also Numbers 21:6, 8. Here, uniquely, they are God's attendants.

6:3 *Holy, holy, holy:* The winged creatures dramatically affirm Isaiah's favored name for God, "holy one." *filled*

*with God's glory:* See Numbers 14:21, Psalm 72:19; Habakkuk 2:14.

6:4 *The doorframe shook:* Shaking and smoke recall the dramatic descent of God to Mount Sinai in Exodus 19:18. See also 1 Kings 8:11-12; Psalm 29:9.

6:5-7 Isaiah is dismayed, fearing contact with God's holiness. According to some biblical traditions, humans will die if they see God; see Exodus 33:20. According to others, they can't see God (John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). But in still other traditions, God is seen (Gen 16:13; 18:22; 32:30; Exod 24:9-11; 33:11; Judg 13:22; 1 Kgs 22:19; Amos 9:1; Pss 11:7; 17:15; 27:4; 63:2). One of the winged creatures purifies the prophet's lips with a burning coal.

6:8 *Whom should I send:* It isn't clear whether God is including Isaiah in the address, or only the heavenly court. But Isaiah volunteers immediately. (See 1 Kgs 22:20, "Who will persuade Ahab . . .?")

6:9-10 *Listen intently, but don't understand:* God offers

Listen intently, but don't understand;  
look carefully, but don't comprehend.

<sup>10</sup>Make the minds of this people dull.

Make their ears deaf and their eyes blind,  
so they can't see with their eyes or hear with their ears,  
or understand with their minds,  
and turn, and be healed."

<sup>11</sup>I said, "How long, Lord?"

And God said, "Until cities lie ruined with no one living in them, until there are houses without people and the land is left devastated." <sup>12</sup>The LORD will send the people far away, and the land will be completely abandoned. <sup>13</sup>Even if one-tenth remain there, they will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, which when it is cut down leaves a stump. Its stump is a holy seed.

**Reassurance to King Ahaz**

**7**In the days of Ahaz (Jotham's son and grandson of Judah's King Uzziah), Aram's King Rezin and Israel's King Pekah (Remaliah's son) came up to attack Jerusalem, but they couldn't overpower it.

<sup>2</sup>When the house of David was told that Aram had become allies with Ephraim, their hearts and the hearts of their people shook as the trees of a forest shake when there is a wind. <sup>3</sup>But the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub,<sup>P</sup> at the end of the channel of the Upper Pool, by the road to the field where laundry is washed, <sup>4</sup>and say to him, 'Be careful and stay calm. Don't fear, and don't lose heart over these two pieces of smoking torches, over the burning anger of Rezin, Aram, and Remaliah's son. <sup>5</sup>Aram has planned evil against you with Ephraim and Remaliah's son, saying, <sup>6</sup>"Let's march up against Judah, tear it apart, capture it for ourselves, and install Tabeel's son as its king."<sup>7</sup> But the LORD God says: It won't happen; it won't take place. <sup>8</sup>The chief of Aram is Damascus; the chief of Damascus is Rezin (in sixty-five more years Ephraim will be shattered as a nation); <sup>9</sup>the chief of Ephraim is Samaria; and the chief of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you don't believe this, you can't be trusted."

**The sign of Immanuel**

<sup>10</sup>Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: <sup>11</sup>"Ask a sign from the LORD your God. Make it as deep as the grave<sup>Q</sup> or as high as heaven."

<sup>12</sup>But Ahaz said, "I won't ask; I won't test the LORD."

<sup>13</sup>Then Isaiah said, "Listen, house of David! Isn't it enough for you to be tiresome for people that you are also tiresome before my God? <sup>14</sup>Therefore, the Lord will give you a sign.

<sup>P</sup>Or the remaining few will return <sup>Q</sup>Heb Sheol

the prophet a contrary message for people who haven't been listening (cf. Deut 29:4). Isaiah is never seen preaching this message. In fact, in Isaiah 7 he reassures Ahaz of God's favor. Beginning in the Gospels, these verses were cited against non-Christian Jews by early Christians (see Matt 13:10-17; Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39-40; Acts 28:25-27).

6:10 Failing to see and hear is a frequent theme in Isaiah (see Isa 29:9, 18; 35:5; 42:7, 16, 18-20; 43:8; 56:10; 59:10).

6:11-13 The prophet's question is reminiscent of psalms of lament, more a protest than a request for a timetable (Pss 13:1-2; 35:17; 62:3; 74:9-10; 79:5; 80:4; 89:46; 90:13; 119:84). But God's response indicates that it will take utter destruction to make Judah receptive.

6:13 *Even if one-tenth remain*: This verse is difficult to translate. Its ending conveys some hope.

7:1 Most of this verse coincides with 2 Kings 16:5-9. In the Syro-Ephraimite War (which ended in 722 BCE), rulers of Israel and Aram attacked Jerusalem. According to 2 Kings, Ahaz bribed King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria into rescuing him by attacking Aram, destroying that nation and

isolating Israel. This isn't mentioned in Isaiah. Instead, the prophet encourages Ahaz to trust God's protection.

7:3 *Shear-jashub*: The name of Isaiah's son means "a few will return" (see Isa 10:21-22). The place described so precisely is the location where Assyria's field commander will meet King Hezekiah's representatives a generation later (Isa 36:2).

7:4-9 The response in Jerusalem is fearful, but Isaiah offers reassurance that the attack will fail. *If you don't believe this, you can't be trusted*: Only the final phrase is negative. In Hebrew there is a play on words that might also be rendered "If you aren't steadfast, you won't stand fast."

7:11-13 The prophet again seeks to reassure King Ahaz. Rather than simply giving him a sign, he asks Ahaz to choose one. The king's refusal to "test the Lord" sounds pious (see Exod 17:2; Num 14:22; Deut 6:16; Pss 78:18, 41, 45; 95:9; 106:14), but the prophet views it as a refusal to trust.

7:14 The identity of the young woman isn't stated. Perhaps it is the king's or the prophet's wife, or simply a pregnant young woman nearby. She will give her child a name

6:10 Is 29:10;  
Jer 5:21;  
Mt 13:15;  
Jn 12:40;  
Ac 28:26

6:11 Ps 79:5;  
Is 1:7, 15 3:26

6:12 Jer 4:29  
7:1 2Ki 15:25,  
2Ki 15:37,  
2Ki 16:1,  
2Ki 16:5;  
2Ch 28:6

7:2 Is 7:13,  
Is 9:9, Jer 21:12  
7:4 Dt 20:3;  
Is 7:1; Am 4:11

7:7 Is 8:10;  
Ac 4:25

7:9 2Ch 20:20

7:11 2Ki 19:29

7:12 2Ki 15:38,  
2Ki 16:2,  
2Ki 16:5,  
2Ki 16:8,  
2Ki 16:15

7:13 Is 7:2,  
Is 43:24

7:14 Gn 3:15;  
Is 8:8, Is 9:6;  
Mt 1:23;  
Lk 1:31

7:15 Gn 18:8;  
Is 7:22  
7:16 Is 8:4  
7:17 1 Ki 12:16;  
2Ch 28:20;  
Is 8:7, 16 8:8,  
Is 10:5  
7:20 Is 10:5;  
Eze 5:1

7:23 Song 8:11;  
Is 5:6, Is 5:10  
8:1 Is 30:8;  
Jer 36:2; Hab 2:2  
8:3 Hos 1:4  
8:4 Is 7:8,  
Is 7:16, Is 9:11  
8:6 Neh 3:15;  
Is 5:24, Is 7:1,  
Is 7:4; Jn 9:7  
8:7 Is 17:12,  
Is 17:13  
8:8 Is 7:14,  
Is 30:28  
8:9 Jer 46:3  
8:10 Job 5:12;  
Is 7:7; Ro 8:31

The young woman is pregnant and is about to give birth to a son, and she will name him Immanuel.<sup>r</sup> <sup>15</sup>He will eat butter and honey, and learn to reject evil and choose good. <sup>16</sup>Before the boy learns to reject evil and choose good, the land of the two kings you dread will be abandoned. <sup>17</sup>The LORD will bring upon you, upon your people, and upon your families days unlike any that have come since the day Ephraim broke away from Judah—the king of Assyria.”

### *The devastated land*

<sup>18</sup>On that day, the LORD will whistle for the flies from the remotest streams of Egypt and for the bees that are in the land of Assyria. <sup>19</sup>They will come and settle in the steep ravines, in the cracks of the cliffs, in all the thornbushes, and in all the watering holes.

<sup>20</sup>On that day, the Lord will shave with a razor hired from beyond the Euphrates—with the king of Assyria—the head and the pubic hair, and will cut off the beard as well.

<sup>21</sup>On that day, one will raise a young cow and two sheep <sup>22</sup>and will eat butter because of the abundance of milk, for all who remain in the land will eat butter and honey.

<sup>23</sup>On that day, there will be thorns and thistles in every place where a thousand vines worth a thousand silver shekels once grew. <sup>24</sup>Only those with bows and arrows will go there, because the entire land will become thorns and thistles. <sup>25</sup>As for the hills that were once farmed with hoes, you won't go there for fear of the thorns and thistles. They will become places where cattle are turned loose and sheep wander.

### *Isaiah's testimonies*

**8** The LORD said to me, “Take a large tablet, and write on it in ordinary letters,<sup>o</sup> For Maher-shalal-hash-baz.”<sup>c</sup> Summon trusted people, Uriah the priest and Zechariah, Jeberechiah's son, to witness it.<sup>q</sup>

<sup>3</sup>I then had sex with the prophetess, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to me, “Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz. <sup>4</sup>Before the boy knows how to say ‘my father’ and ‘my mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.”

<sup>5</sup>The LORD spoke again to me: <sup>6</sup>Since this people has rejected the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and instead rejoices over<sup>n</sup> Rezin and Remaliah's son—<sup>7</sup>therefore, look, the Lord is raising up against them the powerful floodwaters of the Euphrates, the king of Assyria and all his glory. It will rise up over all its channels, overflowing all its banks, <sup>8</sup>and sweep into Judah, flooding, overflowing, and reaching up to the neck. But God is with us;<sup>v</sup> the span of his wings will cover the width of the land.

<sup>9</sup>Unite<sup>w</sup> yourselves, peoples, and be shattered!

Listen, all distant places of the earth!

Prepare to be shattered!

Prepare to be shattered!

<sup>10</sup>Create a plan, but be frustrated!

Speak a word, but it won't stand, for God is with us.<sup>z</sup>

<sup>r</sup>Or God is with us <sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Or spoil hastens, plunder hurries <sup>n</sup>Or melts before <sup>v</sup>Heb Immanuel <sup>w</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>z</sup>Heb Immanuel

meaning “God is with us” (see Ps 46:7, 11; Isa 8:8, 10; for where such trust is criticized, see Mic 5:9-11). Her faith will serve as a sign to Ahaz of God's protection. This verse is removed from its historical context in Ahaz's house by the author of Matthew (Matt 1:23), where the young woman is understood as a virgin (based on the Greek LXX translation of Isaiah), and the timeframe changes from Isaiah's present to the far future in Jesus' time. Interpretation of this verse has figured into Jewish-Christian debates from the 2nd century CE on.

7:16-17 In a very short time, before the child reaches the tender age of moral or aesthetic reasoning, the threatening countries will have vanished before the even greater threat of Assyria.

7:18-25 *On that day*: In Isaiah, the phrase “on that day” (7:18, 20, 21, 23) often signals a later addition. Similar

extended series occur in Isaiah 17:4, 7, 9 and Isaiah 19:16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24. Here enemy troops are compared to an insect infestation, a plague commanded by God. The countryside will revert to wild pasture. It isn't clear where the prophet's speech ends.

8:1-4 As in Isaiah 6, the prophet himself tells the story in first person. Maher-shalal-hash-baz is a third symbolic name, meaning “spoil hastens, plunder hurries.” This name describes the looting of Damascus and Samaria by Assyria. 8:5-22 The rest of Isaiah 8 consists of a series of oracles, vivid but sometimes obscure.

8:5-10 *waters of Shiloah*: the small stream flowing from Jerusalem's Gihon spring, called Siloam in John 9:7, 11 (cf. Luke 13:4). Today the Arab village of Silwan retains the ancient name. The stream represents the local Davidic dynasty, which some in Jerusalem evidently



<sup>11</sup>The LORD spoke to me, taking hold of me and warning me not to walk in the way of this people: <sup>12</sup>Don't call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy. Don't fear what they fear, and don't be terrified. <sup>13</sup>It is the LORD of heavenly forces whom you should hold sacred, whom you should fear, and whom you should hold in awe.

8:14 Is 28:16;  
Lk 2:34;  
Ro 9:32;  
Ro 9:33; 1Pt 2:8  
8:16 Is 29:11;  
Dn 12:4

8:17 Dt 31:17;  
Ps 27:14;  
Is 54:8; Hab 2:3

8:18 Lk 2:34;  
Heb 2:13

8:19 Lv 19:31;  
1Sa 28:8;  
Is 19:3, Is 29:4

8:20 Mi 3:6;  
Lk 16:29

8:21 Rev 16:11

9:1 2Ki 15:29;  
2Ch 16:4;  
Is 8:22; Mt 4:15;  
Mt 4:16

9:2 Mt 4:16;  
Lk 1:79; Eph 5:8

9:5 Ps 46:9;  
Is 13:16, Is 19:2;  
Jer 47:3

9:6 Is 7:14,  
Is 22:22,  
Is 28:29;  
Mt 28:18;  
Lk 2:11

<sup>14</sup>God will become a sanctuary—  
but he will be a stone to trip over  
and a rock to stumble on for the two houses of Israel;  
a trap and a snare for those living in Jerusalem.

<sup>15</sup>Many of them will stumble and fall,  
and be broken, snared, and captured.

<sup>16</sup>Bind up the testimony; seal up the teaching among my disciples. <sup>17</sup>I will wait for the LORD, who has hidden his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in God. <sup>18</sup>Look! I and the children the LORD gave me are signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of heavenly forces, who lives on Mount Zion.

<sup>19</sup>If they say to you: "Consult the ghosts and the spirits that chirp and mutter. (Shouldn't a people consult its gods?) Consult the dead on behalf of the living <sup>20</sup>for instruction and for testimony"—they will surely say such things, but they will never see the dawn.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>21</sup>They will pass through the land,<sup>a</sup> dejected and hungry, and when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will curse their king and God. They will turn toward heaven <sup>22</sup>and look to the earth, but they will see only distress and darkness, random movement, and the anguish and doom of banishment.<sup>a</sup>

**A great light**

**9**<sup>b</sup>Nonetheless, those who were in distress won't be exhausted. At an earlier time, God cursed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but later he glorified the way of the sea, the far side of the Jordan, and the Galilee of the nations.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>2</sup>The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.  
On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.

<sup>3</sup>You have made the nation great;  
you have increased its joy.  
They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest,  
as those who divide plunder rejoice.

<sup>4</sup>As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them,  
the staff on their shoulders,  
and the rod of their oppressor.

<sup>5</sup>Because every boot of the thundering warriors,  
and every garment rolled in blood will be burned, fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup>A child is born to us, a son is given to us,  
and authority will be on his shoulders.

<sup>7</sup>Heb uncertain for 8:19-20 <sup>a</sup>Or it <sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain for 8:21-22 <sup>b</sup>8:23 in Heb <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>9:1 in Heb

wanted to replace with foreign rule from Israel and Aram. The prophet threatens that what will replace these waters instead are the much more powerful  *floodwaters of Assyria*.

8:11-15 Once again the prophet says not to fear what everyone else is fearing, because God is more powerful than any human enemy, and what God wishes will prevail. Those who take refuge in God will be protected; those opposing God will stumble.

8:16-18 Even if his contemporaries fail to trust God, the prophet himself is content to wait. References to the prophet's testimony and his disciples are unusual, and have led to much speculation; see Isaiah 29:11; 30:8-11.

8:19-22 Isaiah ridicules people who practice necromancy (consulting the dead, in contrast to trusting the living God) as people who  *chirp and mutter*.

9:1 The verse is ambiguous. Some think the pronoun "he" refers to a human king, perhaps the king of Aram.  *land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali*: northern and

northeastern portions of the kingdom of Israel, which along with the other regions mentioned were incorporated into Aram before being taken by Assyria (see Isa 9:12; 2 Kgs 10:32-33; 13:3-5, 25; 15:29). Hope is now offered to regions long subject to political turmoil. Part of this verse and the next are quoted in Matthew 4:15-16 in relation to Jesus' move to Capernaum on the Galilee Sea.

9:2-7 A joyful hymn celebrating either the birth or the enthronement of a Davidic king in Jerusalem.

9:2 Imagery of darkness from Isaiah 5:20, 30 and Isaiah 8:22 is reversed.

9:3 Two kinds of gathering are paired: the agricultural harvest and the gathering of spoils after a battle.

9:4  *day of Midian*: Victory over Midian is described in Judges 7. For a similar reference to Midian, see Isaiah 10:26-27.

9:6-7 The future king will usher in an age of peace, justice, and righteousness. For the last part of 9:7, see Isaiah 37:32.

9:7 Is 16:5;

Jer 23:5;

Dn 2:44;

Lk 1:32;

Lk 1:33

9:9 Is 7:9;

Is 46:12

9:13 Jer 5:3;

Hos 7:10

9:15 Is 3:2;

Is 3:3; Mt 24:24

9:16 Is 3:12;

Mt 15:14;

Mt 23:16

He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

- <sup>7</sup>There will be vast authority and endless peace  
for David's throne and for his kingdom,  
establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness  
now and forever.

The zeal of the LORD of heavenly forces will do this.

**God's hand still stretched out**

- <sup>8</sup>The Lord sent a word against Jacob;  
it fell upon Israel;  
<sup>9</sup>the people all knew it—Ephraim and the one who rules in Samaria.  
But with a proud and arrogant heart they said,  
<sup>10</sup>"Bricks have fallen, but let's rebuild with stones.  
Sycamores were cut down, but let's replace them with cedars."  
<sup>11</sup>So the LORD raised up their foes against them,<sup>e</sup>  
and stirred up their enemies—  
<sup>12</sup>Aram from the east and the Philistines from the west—  
and they devoured Israel with an open mouth.  
Even then God's anger didn't turn away;  
God's hand was still extended.
- <sup>13</sup>But the people didn't turn to the one who struck them.  
They didn't seek the LORD of heavenly forces.
- <sup>14</sup>So the LORD cut off head and tail,  
palm branch and reed from Israel in one day.
- <sup>15</sup>(Elders and celebrities are the head;  
prophets who teach lies are the tail.)
- <sup>16</sup>But this people's leaders were misleading,  
and those being led were confused.
- <sup>17</sup>So the Lord showed their youth no pity,  
and showed their orphans and widows no mercy;  
for everyone was godless and evil; every mouth spoke nonsense.  
Even then God's anger didn't turn away;  
God's hand was still extended.
- <sup>18</sup>Wickedness burned like fire, devouring thorn and thistle.  
It kindled the thickets of the forest; they swirled in rising smoke.
- <sup>19</sup>The land was scorched by the rage of the LORD of heavenly forces;  
the people were like fuel for the fire.  
Not one person pitied another:
- <sup>20</sup>they consumed on the right, but remained hungry;  
devoured on the left, and weren't satisfied.  
They devoured the flesh of their own children.<sup>f</sup>
- <sup>21</sup>Manasseh devoured Ephraim and Ephraim Manasseh;  
together they turned against Judah.

<sup>e</sup>Or the enemies of Rezin <sup>f</sup>Or arm

9:8–10:4 A series of condemnations that began in Isaiah 5:25 resumes here. The same conclusion found there (*Even then God's anger didn't turn away; God's hand was still extended*) is repeated in Isaiah 9:12, 17, 21, and Isaiah 10:4. The place-names (Israel, Jacob, Ephraim, Samaria, and Manasseh) indicate that these condemnations refer to the northern kingdom, which fell into chaos just before Assyria destroyed Israel's capital, Samaria, in 722 BCE.

9:9 *Ephraim*: another term for "Israel," from the name of Joseph's second son.

9:10 *Bricks have fallen*: This apparently refers to an earthquake (see Isa 5:25; Amos 1:1; 8:8; 9:1). The prophet regards the proposal to rebuild as defying the "word" with which God was trying to correct them.

9:12 *Aram and Philistia* are described as taking land from Israel (see Isa 9:1).

9:14 *head and tail, palm branch and reed*: the nation's leadership; see Isaiah 19:15.

9:21 *Manasseh*: a major portion of Israel, primarily associated with the Transjordan region, named after Joseph's first son.

Even then God's anger didn't turn away;  
God's hand was still extended.

**Wicked laws**

**10** Doom to those who pronounce wicked decrees,  
and keep writing harmful laws  
to deprive the needy of their rights  
and to rob the poor among my people of justice;  
to make widows their loot;  
to steal from orphans!  
**3** What will you do on the day of punishment  
when disaster comes from far away?  
To whom will you flee for help;  
where will you stash your wealth?  
**4** How will you avoid crouching among the prisoners  
and falling among the slain?  
Even so, God's anger hasn't turned away;  
God's hand is still extended.

10:1 Ps 94:20  
10:2 Is 1:17,  
Is 1:23, Is 3:14,  
Is 5:23  
10:3 Hos 9:7;  
Lk 19:44  
10:8 2Ki 18:24  
10:9 Gn 10:10;  
2Ki 16:9,  
2Ki 17:6;  
2Ch 35:20;  
Am 6:2  
10:10 2Ki 19:17,  
2Ki 19:18  
10:11 Is 2:8  
10:12 Is 2:11  
10:13 Eze 28:2;  
Dn 4:30

**Assyria as God's punishing weapon**

**5** Doom to Assyria, rod of my anger,  
in whose hand is the staff of my fury!  
**6** Against a godless nation I send him;  
against an infuriating people I direct him to seize spoil, to steal plunder,  
and to trample them like mud in the streets.  
**7** But he has other plans;  
he schemes in secret;  
destruction is on his mind,  
extermination of nation after nation.  
**8** He says: Aren't my commanders all kings?  
**9** Isn't Calno like Carchemish?  
Isn't Hamath like Arpad?  
Isn't Samaria like Damascus?  
**10** Just as I took control of idolatrous kingdoms  
with more images than Jerusalem and Samaria,  
**11** just as I did to Samaria and her false gods,  
won't I also do this to Jerusalem and her idols?  
**12** But when the Lord has finished all this work on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, he will  
punish<sup>a</sup> the Assyrian king's arrogant actions and the boasting of his haughty eyes.  
**13** He said, "By my own strength I have achieved it,  
and by my wisdom, since I'm so clever.

<sup>a</sup>Or I will punish

10:1-4 This concluding oracle begins like the series in Isaiah 5 with *Doom* and ends like the series in Isaiah 9 with the refrain concerning God's still-extended hand.  
10:2 Because of their economic vulnerability, widows and orphans stand for all who are easily deprived of justice (cf. Isa 1:17). Here the charge is even more severe: Those in power appear to be constructing the law itself as an instrument of oppression. A parallel is drawn between this treatment of weaker subjects and what the tyrant Assyria does to weaker nations: The same pair of words, "spoil" and "plunder," found in the name of Isaiah's son Maher-shalal-hash-baz ("spoil is hurrying, plunder is hastening," Isa 8:1-4; see also note on Isa 10:6), reappears here.  
10:5 *Doom to Assyria, rod of my anger*: As in Isaiah 5:26 and 7:18, the powerful empire of Assyria is merely an instrument carrying out God's purpose.  
10:6 *Against a godless nation*: the chosen people who

refuse to choose God. *seize spoil, to steal plunder*: See Isaiah 10:2; 8:14.  
10:8-11, 13-14 The prophet mocks the Assyrian king's arrogant boasting, presenting him as overreaching God's intent.  
10:9 *Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, and Arpad*: These are all Aramean cities conquered by Assyria between 738 and 717 BCE. *Damascus*: Aram's capital, which fell in 732. Samaria stands out in this list as the capital of Israel.  
10:10-11 Not counting on the living God, Assyria's king wrongly assumes he can conquer Jerusalem's "idols" as easily as those of the other nations.  
10:12 Before the Assyrian king's speech resumes in Isaiah 10:13, a prose interruption says that the king's arrogance will be stopped by God.  
10:13-14 *By my own strength*: The king boasts of attributes that belong to God—wisdom and strength of

10:14  
Job 31:25;  
Jer 49:16;  
Obad 4

I disregarded national boundaries;  
I raided their treasures;  
I knocked down their rulers like a bull.

10:15 Is 10:5,  
Is 29:16,  
Is 45:9; Ro 9:20,  
Ro 9:21

<sup>14</sup>My hand found the wealth of the peoples as if it were in a nest.  
Just as one gathers abandoned eggs,  
I have gathered the entire earth;  
no creature fluttered a wing or opened a mouth to chirp.<sup>g</sup>

10:16 Is 17:4  
10:17 Is 9:18,  
Is 37:23

<sup>15</sup>Will the ax glorify itself over the one who chops with it?  
Or will the saw magnify itself over its user?  
As if a rod could wave the one who lifts it!  
As if a staff could lift up the one not made of wood!

10:19 Is 21:17  
10:21 Is 7:3,  
Is 9:6

10:22 Hos 1:10;  
Ro 9:27,  
Ro 9:28

<sup>16</sup>Therefore, the LORD God of heavenly forces  
will make the well-fed people waste away;  
and among his officials, a blaze will burn like scorching fire.

10:23 Is 28:22  
10:26 Ex 14:16;  
Jgs 7:25; Is 9:4

<sup>17</sup>The light of Israel will become a fire,  
its holy one a flame,  
which will burn and devour its thorns and thistles in a single day.

<sup>18</sup>Its abundant forest and farmland  
will be finished completely,<sup>h</sup>  
as when a sick person wastes away;

<sup>19</sup>its forest's remaining trees will be no more than a child can count.

#### *A few will return*

<sup>20</sup>On that day, what's left of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no longer depend on the one who beat them. Instead, they will faithfully depend on the LORD, the holy one of Israel. <sup>21</sup>A few will return, what's left of Jacob, to the mighty God. <sup>22</sup>Although your people, Israel, were like the sand of the sea, only a few survivors will return. The end is announced, overflowing with justice. <sup>23</sup>Yes, destruction has been announced; the LORD God of heavenly forces will carry it out against the entire land.

<sup>24</sup>Therefore, the LORD God of heavenly forces says: My people who live in Zion, don't fear Assyria, which strikes you with the rod and raises its staff against you as Egypt did. <sup>25</sup>In a very short time my fury will end, and my anger at the world will be finished.<sup>l</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Therefore, the LORD of heavenly forces will crack a whip against Assyria,  
as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb.  
He will raise a rod over the sea,  
as he did in Egypt.

<sup>27</sup>On that day, God will remove the burden from your shoulder  
and destroy the yoke on your neck.<sup>j</sup>

#### *The exalted laid low*

He has gone up from Samaria, <sup>28</sup>come against Aiath, passed to Migron.  
At Michmash he stored his equipment.

<sup>29</sup>They crossed at the pass: "We'll camp at Geba!"  
Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul has fled.

<sup>h</sup>Syr, Vulg *body and soul* (that is, completely); MT *he will finish* <sup>l</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>j</sup>Or *and his yoke from your neck, and a yoke will be destroyed because of fatness*

hand—calling to mind the outstretched divine hand behind Assyria's invasion.

10:15 *Will the ax glorify itself*: The prophet undercuts the king's arrogant words by reiterating that Assyria is merely God's instrument (cf. Isa 10:5).

10:19 *no more than a child can count*: The motif of children, prominent in Isaiah 7; 8; 9, returns here.

10:20-22 *On that day*: See note on Isaiah 7:18. After Assyria's conquest, only a few will be left (see Isa 7:3).

10:22 *sand*: God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the grains of sand on the

seashore (Gen 22:17; see also Gen 32:12; 1 Kgs 4:20; Hos 1:10), but now the end of Israel has come.

10:24 *Zion*: Jerusalem.

10:26 *the rock of Oreb*: See Judges 7:25; Isaiah 9:4.

10:27b-32 The names Samaria, Aiath, Migron, Michmash, Geba, Ramah, and Gibeah trace the path of an army marching through towns north of Jerusalem, terrifying residents as it advances. The locations of Gallim, Laishah, Madmenah, and Gebim are no longer known; most likely they, too, were north of Jerusalem. Anathoth is less than three miles from Jerusalem. Nob is probably Mount

10:33 Am 2:9  
 11:1 Is 4:2,  
 Is 11:10;  
 Jer 23:5;  
 Zec 3:8;  
 Ac 13:23  
 11:2 Is 42:1,  
 Is 61:1;  
 Mt 3:16; Jn 1:32,  
 Jn 16:13  
 11:3 Jn 2:25,  
 Jn 7:24  
 11:4 Job 4:9;  
 Ps 2:9,  
 Ps 72:2;  
 Is 29:19; 2Th 2:8

*Imperial Boasting and Divine Power* Beginning in Isaiah 5:26-30 and continuing throughout Isaiah 10-14 (see also Isaiah 36-37), Isaiah makes a bold claim in the face of international chaos: The powerful, arrogant Mesopotamian Empire is no more than a tool for God's purposes. In Isaiah 10:5-6 the prophet says Assyria is the rod of God's anger, sent to punish God's own "godless nation." The Assyrian emperor boasts of plans to destroy one nation after another, but the prophet claims that his arrogance will soon end, since no tool is mightier than the one who uses it. Beyond the end of Assyria lie recovery and redemption for God's people.

Similar themes develop in Isaiah 13, where mighty Babylon is destroyed by invaders. In Isaiah 14 Babylon's king is depicted as boasting of raising himself to the heavens to become like God. When he is slain instead, no one is sorry. Even the kings who have preceded him to the underworld marvel at his fall.

A recurring theme throughout this section and elsewhere is the contrast between divine and human plans. Though Assyria has grand plans (Isa 10:7), only God's plans will stand (Isa 14:24-27).

<sup>30</sup> Cry aloud, Daughter Gallim!

Listen, Laishah! Answer her, Anathoth!

<sup>31</sup> Madmenah has flown.

Gebim's inhabitants sought refuge.

<sup>32</sup> This very day he will stand at Nob

and shake his fist<sup>a</sup> at Daughter Zion's mountain, the hill of Jerusalem!

<sup>33</sup> Look! The LORD God of heavenly forces

is chopping off the branches with terrible power.

The loftiest ones are about to be cut down and the exalted laid low.

<sup>34</sup> He will strike down the forest thickets with an ax,

and mighty Lebanon will fall.

### A shoot from Jesse's stump

**11** A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse;  
 a branch will sprout<sup>1</sup> from his roots.

<sup>2</sup> The LORD's spirit will rest upon him,  
 a spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
 a spirit of planning and strength,  
 a spirit of knowledge and fear of the LORD.

<sup>3</sup> He will delight in fearing the LORD.

He won't judge by appearances,  
 nor decide by hearsay.

<sup>4</sup> He will judge the needy with righteousness,  
 and decide with equity for those who suffer in the land.

He will strike the violent<sup>m</sup> with the rod of his mouth;  
 by the breath of his lips he will kill the wicked.

<sup>a</sup>Or wave his hand <sup>1</sup>LXX, Vulg; MT bear fruit <sup>m</sup>Or land

Scopus, a ridge continuous with the Mount of Olives, overlooking the city from the northeast.

10:33-34 *chopping off the branches*: The ax imagery from Isaiah 10:15 returns, but now it is used against Assyria. As in Isaiah 10:18-19, Assyria is a forest that God will destroy. 10:34 *mighty Lebanon will fall*: Assyria is compared to the great cedar forests of Lebanon; see Isaiah 2:13.

11:1-9 An ideal Davidic ruler is described as ushering in peace that's so universal it extends even to the animal world. Whether any specific king is being described is a matter of speculation. But like Isaiah 9:1-6 and Isaiah 32:1-5, this passage draws a connection between wise leadership and peace for the nation.

11:1 *stump of Jesse*: Jesse was King David's father. The one referred to here is a descendant of this royal family. A tree metaphor appears again, as at the end of Isaiah 6 and 10. In contrast to the mighty Assyrian tree that falls, Judean

kinship grows from the ground up, regenerated from its well-developed root system.

11:2 *a spirit of wisdom and understanding*: All six of the traits described here are used in Wisdom's self-description in Proverbs 8:12-15. She concludes by saying, "By me kings rule, and princes issue righteous decrees." Wisdom and might stand in ironic contrast to the Assyrian king's boasts of wisdom and cleverness in Isaiah 10:13.

11:3 *He won't judge by appearances*: For where God counsels Samuel not to regard appearances when choosing a future king from among Jesse's sons, see 1 Samuel 16:7. Justice and equity, rather than superficial judgments, will characterize his rulings.

11:4 *He will judge the needy with righteousness*: The needy and poor (those who suffer) are the same two groups described in Isaiah 10:2 as being exploited by those responsible for the law. *rod of his mouth*: Unlike the forceful

11:5 Is 25:1;

Eph 6:14

11:6 Is 65:25

11:7 2Sa 17:8;

Prv 17:12;

Is 65:25

11:8 Is 14:29;

Is 59:5; Jer 8:17

11:9 Hab 2:14

11:10 Is 11:1;

Is 28:12;

Lk 2:32;

Jn 12:32;

Ro 15:12

11:12 Is 11:10;

Is 56:8

11:14 Is 25:10;

Is 63:1;

Dn 11:41;

Jl 3:19;

Am 9:12

12:1 Is 25:1

<sup>5</sup>Righteousness will be the belt around his hips,  
and faithfulness the belt around his waist.

<sup>6</sup>The wolf will live with the lamb,  
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;  
the calf and the young lion will feed<sup>a</sup> together,  
and a little child will lead them.

<sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear will graze.  
Their young will lie down together,  
and a lion will eat straw like an ox.

<sup>8</sup>A nursing child will play over the snake's hole;  
toddlers will reach right over the serpent's den.

<sup>9</sup>They won't harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain.  
The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the LORD,  
just as the water covers the sea.

### A signal to the peoples

<sup>10</sup>On that day, the root of Jesse will stand as a signal to the peoples. The nations will seek him out, and his dwelling will be glorious.

<sup>11</sup>On that day, the Lord will extend his hand a second time to reclaim the survivors of God's people who are left from Assyria and from Egypt, from Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the coastlands<sup>o</sup> of the sea.

<sup>12</sup>God will raise a signal for the nations and gather the outcast men of Israel.  
God will collect the dispersed women of Judah from the four corners  
of the earth.

<sup>13</sup>Ephraim's jealousy will cease, and Judah's harassment will be eliminated.  
Ephraim won't be jealous of Judah, and Judah won't harass Ephraim.

<sup>14</sup>But they will swoop down on the slopes of Philistia to the west;  
together they will plunder the people to the east.  
Edom and Moab will be under their power,  
and the Ammonites will be their subjects.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD will split the tongue of the Egyptian sea. God will wave a hand over the Euphrates with a powerful<sup>p</sup> wind and break it into seven streams so that it can be crossed in sandals. <sup>16</sup>Then there will be a highway from Assyria for the survivors of God's people who are left from Assyria, just as there was for Israel on the day they went up from the land of Egypt.

### Hymn of trust

**12** You will say on that day:  
"I thank you, LORD.

Though you were angry with me,  
your anger turned away and you comforted me.

<sup>a</sup>Correction; MT and the calf <sup>o</sup>Or islands <sup>p</sup>Heb uncertain

rod of the Assyrians in Isaiah 10:5, 15, 24, the rod of the Judean ruler is verbal, that is, just legislation on behalf of the needy and against those who are violent.

11:6-9 *The wolf will live with the lamb*: a return to the ideal world of Genesis 1:29-30, when not even animals were predators and prey, but all ate green plants (see also Isa 65:25). Once again, as in Isaiah 7:3, 14-16; 8:3-4; 9:6-7; 10:19, children are featured. This time they are the offspring of sheep, goats, and cows, as well as of humans.

11:9 *my holy mountain*: Mount Zion, where the temple is. See Psalms 48:1; 99:9; Isaiah 27:13; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20. See also Habakkuk 2:14, which is almost identical. 11:10 As in Isaiah 2:2-4, the nations are attracted to Zion. Here the king acts as God's regent.

11:11 Refugees return from all directions, not only from Assyria but from Egypt and several scattered locations. Pathros was a region in Egypt. Cush was ancient Ethiopia (today's Sudan). Elam was directly east of Babylon in

today's Iran. Shinar was in Mesopotamia. Hamath was a city in northern Aram.

11:13 *Ephraim's jealousy*: This entire section began with Ephraim's (Israel's) attempt to invade Judah and replace Ahaz with another king (Isa 7:1; cf. Isa 9:21).

11:14 Israel and Judah will unite to subdue the surrounding nations that David once subdued.

11:15-16 *over the Euphrates*: The Hebrew reads "over the river," which is obviously the Euphrates. Those journeying from Assyria will be divinely aided by an event comparable to the crossing of the Reed Sea, so that Assyria's mighty river may likewise be crossed on foot. There will even be a highway like the one the Israelites traveled (Num 20:19).

12:1-6 The first major portion of the Isaiah scroll concludes with a hymn of thanks. The whole chapter is a fabric woven of phrases from related psalms.

12:1 *I thank you, Lord*: See Psalm 112:21.

<sup>2</sup>God is indeed my salvation;  
I will trust and won't be afraid.  
Yah, the LORD, is my strength and my shield;  
he has become my salvation."

12:2 Ex 15:2;  
Ps 27:1,  
Ps 118:14;  
Is 43:17;  
Jer 3:23  
12:3 Is 55:1;  
Jn 4:10, Jn 4:14,  
Jn 7:37

<sup>3</sup>You will draw water with joy from the springs of salvation.

<sup>4</sup>And you will say on that day:  
"Thank the LORD; call on God's name;  
proclaim God's deeds among the peoples;  
declare that God's name is exalted.

12:4 1 Ch 16:8;  
Ps 105:1,  
Ps 145:4

<sup>5</sup>Sing to the LORD, who has done glorious things;  
proclaim this throughout all the earth."

12:5 Ex 15:1;  
Ps 98:1  
12:6 Is 1:24,  
Is 41:14,  
Zep 3:14

<sup>6</sup>Shout and sing for joy, city of Zion,  
because the holy one of Israel is great among you.

13:1 Is 1:1,  
Is 14:4, Is 14:28,  
Is 15:1, Is 47:1

13:2 Is 5:26;  
Jer 50:2,  
Jer 51:58

13:3 Jl 3:11

13:4 Jl 3:14

13:6 Is 2:12,  
Is 13:9;

Eze 30:3;  
Jl 1:15

13:7 Josh 2:11;

Is 19:1;

Eze 21:7;

Na 2:10

13:8 Is 21:3,  
Is 26:17;

Jer 43:1;

Jn 16:21

**Babylon falls**

**13**An oracle about Babylon, which Isaiah, Amoz's son, saw.

<sup>1</sup>On a bare mountain raise a signal;  
cry aloud to them; wave a hand;  
let them enter the officials' gates.

<sup>3</sup>I have commanded my holy ones;  
I have called my warriors,  
my proud, jubilant ones, to execute my wrath.

<sup>4</sup>Listen!<sup>a</sup> A roar on the mountains like that of a great crowd.  
Listen! An uproar of kingdoms, of nations coming together.  
The LORD of heavenly forces is mustering an army for battle.

<sup>5</sup>They are coming from a distant land, from the faraway heavens,  
the LORD and the instruments of his fury, to destroy the whole land.

<sup>6</sup>Wail, for the day of the LORD is near.  
Like destruction from the Almighty<sup>c</sup> it will come.

<sup>7</sup>Then all hands will fall limp;  
every human heart will melt,  
<sup>8</sup>and they will be terrified.

Like a woman writhing in labor, they will be seized by spasms and agony.  
They will look at each other aghast, their faces blazing.

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks Listen! <sup>b</sup>Heb *Shaddai* or *Mountain One*

12:2 *Yah, the LORD, is my strength and my shield:* In Hebrew, this phrase almost precisely repeats Exodus 15:2; see also Psalm 118:14.

12:3 *springs of salvation:* See Isaiah 8:6-8.

12:4 *Thank the LORD; call on God's name:* See Psalm 105:1. *God's name is exalted:* See Psalm 148:13.

12:5 *Sing to the LORD:* See Psalm 105:2, 5, 7.

12:6 *Shout and sing for joy:* the first of many words addressed to Zion. This exultant image contrasts sharply with the opening images of Zion in Isaiah 1.

13:1-22 The superscription in 13:1 names Babylon as the subject (see also Isa 13:19). Since the reigning tyrant in Isaiah's time wasn't Babylon but Assyria, this oracle may actually date from the 6th century, after Jerusalem fell to Babylon. If so, it comes from a time close to that of Isaiah 40-55. There are a great many parallels between this oracle and Jeremiah's much longer oracle against Babylon in Jeremiah 50-51.

13:1 *An oracle about Babylon:* a new superscription (cf. notes on Isa 1:1; 2:1).

13:2-5 *On a bare mountain raise a signal:* The poetry is

vivid and suspenseful. At first it isn't clear who is being addressed, who is making the uproar, and who is being attacked. As in Isaiah 5:26-30; 7:18-20; 8:6-8; 10:5-6, in which Assyria attacks Judah at God's command, here God also is commanding the coming armies.

13:6 *Wail, for the day of the LORD is near:* The perspective shifts to those being attacked. For "day of the LORD," see Isaiah 13:9; see note on Isaiah 2:12. The fullest explanation of the idea of the "day of the LORD" can be found in Obadiah 15: "The day of the LORD is near against all the nations. As you have done, so it will be done to you; your actions will make you suffer!" *destruction from the Almighty:* The Hebrew term for God underlying "Almighty," *Shaddai*, is found elsewhere, and frequently in the books of Genesis and Job, but this is its only occurrence in Isaiah, and here it is used for a different destructive purpose (for nearly parallel language, see Joel 1:15).

13:8 *Like a woman writhing in labor:* For this image of terror elsewhere, see Isaiah 19:16; 21:3; Exodus 15:14; Psalm 48:6; Micah 4:9-10; Jeremiah 4:31; 6:24; 50:43. The language in this section is highly stylized, distancing the horror.

13:9 Is 13:6

13:10 Is 24:23;

Eze 32:7;

Il 2:10; Am 8:9;

Mt 24:29

13:11 Is 3:11,

Is 26:21

13:12 Gn 10:29;

IKg 9:28;

IKg 10:11;

Job 28:16;

Ps 45:9

13:13 Hg 2:6

13:14 IKg 22:17;

Jer 50:16,

Jer 51:9

13:21 Is 34:11,

Is 34:13;

Jer 50:39;

Rev 18:2

<sup>9</sup>Look, the day of the LORD is coming with cruel rage and burning anger, making the earth a ruin, and wiping out its sinners.

<sup>10</sup>Heaven's stars and constellations won't show their light.

The sun will be dark when it rises;  
the moon will no longer shine.

<sup>11</sup>I will bring disaster upon the world for its evil,  
and bring their own sin upon the wicked.

I will end the pride of the insolent,  
and the conceit of tyrants I will lay low.

<sup>12</sup>I will make humans scarcer than fine gold;  
people rarer than the gold of Ophir.

<sup>13</sup>I will rattle the heavens;  
the earth will shake loose from its place—  
because of the rage of the LORD of heavenly forces  
on the day his anger burns.

<sup>14</sup>They will be like hunted gazelles, like sheep without a shepherd;  
all will turn to their own people and flee to their own lands.

<sup>15</sup>Whoever is found will be stabbed;  
whoever is caught will fall by the sword.

<sup>16</sup>Their infants will be crushed before their eyes;  
their houses plundered, their women raped.

<sup>17</sup>Look! I'm rousing the Medes against them;  
the Medes pay no mind to silver, no desire for gold.

<sup>18</sup>Their bows will smash youths;  
they will be merciless to newborns, pitiless to children.

<sup>19</sup>So Babylon, a jewel among kingdoms, the Chaldeans' splendor and pride,  
will be like Sodom and Gomorrah,  
destroyed by God.

<sup>20</sup>No one will ever resettle or live there for generations.  
No Arab will camp there;  
no shepherds will rest flocks there.

*Prophetic Oracles about the Nations* An oracle is a prophetic message. Isaiah 13–23 consists primarily of oracles concerning foreign nations (see similarly Jer 46:1–51:58; Ezek 25:1–32:32; Amos 1:3–2:3; the books of Nahum and Obadiah). The oracles begin with two chapters labeled “an oracle about Babylon,” a surprising theme, since in Isaiah’s time Babylon is only another country to the east that is, like Judah, suffering from Assyria’s tyranny. Isaiah 13 and 14 may originally have been about Assyria. Their naming of Babylon instead, as well as verses concerning Babylon in Isaiah 21:6–10, reflect Babylon’s 6th-century rise and fall.

Oracles follow concerning Moab (Isa 15–16); Syria and Israel (Isa 17); Cush and Egypt (Isa 18–20); Judah itself (Isa 22); and finally Tyre (Isa 23); with assorted sayings in Isaiah 21. They aren’t all judgments, but a variety of kinds of writing that seem to have been composed at various times. The oracles concerning Moab and Tyre, for instance, take the form of laments, while other chapters such as Isaiah 17; 18; 21 are infused with awed mystery. Isaiah 20 is a very brief narrative and oracle concerning Isaiah, and Isaiah 22 is made up of two rebukes against the people of Jerusalem. Each portion must be read as its own piece, with the recognition that wherever context is missing, interpretation becomes more challenging.

13:10 *Heaven's stars and constellations:* The disaster is cosmic. For parallel imagery, see Joel 2:10; 3:4, 15.

13:12 *gold of Ophir:* Ophir’s location is unknown, but references to Ophir’s gold are common (see 1 Kgs 9:28; 10:11; 22:48; 1 Chron 29:4; 2 Chron 8:18; 9:10; Job 22:24; 28:16; Ps 45:9).

13:13 *I will rattle the heavens:* See Joel 2:10; 3:16.

13:17 *Medes:* a tribal group east of Babylon, who allied with the Babylonians to besiege and defeat the Assyrian capital city of Nineveh in 612 BCE. They later helped Cyrus the Great of Persia (see Isa 44:28; 45:1, 13) to conquer Babylon.

13:19 *So Babylon:* Within the poem, the identity of the victim of attack is revealed only as it perishes. *the Chaldeans' splendor and pride:* Chaldea was a region in the marshland of Babylonia. It first appears in Genesis as Abram’s prior home (Gen 11:28, 31), and is used in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel as a synonym for Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar and his dynasty were Chaldeans. *like Sodom and Gomorrah:* See Isaiah 1:9. The prophets frequently compare divinely decreed destruction to that of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Jer 49:18; 50:40; Amos 4:11; Zeph 2:9; Matt 10:15).

13:20–22 *No one will ever resettle:* Babylon becomes an



- <sup>21</sup>Wildcats will rest there;  
houses will be filled with owls.  
Ostriches will live there,  
and goat demons will dance there.  
<sup>22</sup>Hyenas will howl in its strongholds,  
and jackals in its luxurious palaces.  
Babylon's<sup>a</sup> time is coming soon;  
its days won't drag on.

13:22 Dt 32:35;  
Is 25:2, Is 34:14,  
Is 35:7; Jer 9:11  
14:1 Ps 102:13;  
Eze 39:25;  
Zec 1:17;  
Eph 2:12  
14:4 Is 13:1;  
Hab 2:6  
14:5 Is 9:4  
14:6 Is 47:6  
14:7 Ps 126:1  
14:8 Eze 31:16  
14:9 Eze 32:21  
14:10 Eze 32:21  
14:11 Job 24:20;  
Is 5:12;  
Eze 26:13;  
Am 5:23, Am 6:5

**Compassion for Jacob**

**14** The LORD will have compassion on Jacob, will again choose Israel, and will give them rest in their own land. Immigrants will join them, and attach themselves to the house of Jacob. <sup>2</sup>The peoples will take them and will bring them to their own place. The house of Israel will possess them as male and female slaves in the LORD's land, making captives of their captors and ruling their oppressors.

**Mockery of a tyrant**

<sup>3</sup>When the LORD has given you rest from pain and trouble and from the hard labor that you perform, <sup>4</sup>you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon:

How the oppressor<sup>a</sup> has ceased!  
How the flood<sup>a</sup> has receded!

<sup>5</sup>The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,  
the rod of tyrants <sup>6</sup>that struck peoples in rage with ceaseless blows,  
that ruled nations with anger, with relentless aggression.

<sup>7</sup>All the earth rests quietly, then it breaks into song.

<sup>8</sup>Even the cypresses rejoice over you, the cedars of Lebanon:  
"Since you were laid low,  
no logger comes up against us!"

<sup>9</sup>The underworld<sup>b</sup> beneath becomes restless to greet your arrival.  
It awakens the ghosts, all the leaders of earth;  
it makes the kings of the nations rise from their thrones.

<sup>10</sup>All of them speak and say to you:  
"Even you've become weak like we are!  
You are the same as us!"

<sup>11</sup>Your majesty has been brought down to the underworld,<sup>c</sup>  
along with the sound of your harps.  
Under you is a bed of maggots, and worms are your blanket.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Itz* <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>DSS (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>), LXX, Syr, Tg; MT *fury* <sup>d</sup>Heb *Sheol* <sup>e</sup>Heb *Sheol*

environmental wasteland, unwelcoming even to nomads. Only the most marginal creatures find something hospitable in this city's remains.

14:1-2 *The Lord will have compassion on Jacob*: In contrast to the destruction of Babylon, and as a result of its demise, Israel will be restored to their own land. Rather than violently attacking them as was described for Babylon, the nations will assist and vindicate them.

14:1 *will again choose Israel*: See Zechariah 1:17; 2:12. *Immigrants will join them*: See Isaiah 56:3, 6; Esther 9:27; Zechariah 2:11.

14:2 For similar ideas, see Isaiah 49:22-23; 60:4, 11-16; 61:5; 66:19-20.

14:3-4a These verses call the poem that follows a *taunt against the king of Babylon* (see also Isa 14:22, following the poem). However, the poem itself doesn't name a particular tyrant. Similarities between the king's boasting here and in Isaiah 10:8-14 suggest that the poem may

have originally referred to an Assyrian king. Sargon II, who reigned from 722 BCE until he was killed in battle in 705, is most frequently suggested.

14:4 *How the oppressor has ceased!:* Both in its meter and its use of "how" at the outset, the poem parodies lament like that found in Isaiah 1:21; 2 Samuel 1:19, 25, 27; Lamentations 1:1; 2:1; 4:1-2.

14:5-8 Both the human and nonhuman worlds enjoy relief from the tyrant king's violence. The joy of trees safe from logging reflects the ax imagery from Isaiah 10:15-19.

14:9-10 *underworld*: The Hebrew word rendered here as "underworld" (as well as in Isa 14:11, 15, and elsewhere) is *Sheol*. *Sheol* in ancient Israel, much like Hades in ancient Greece, was the realm of the dead, deep in the earth. Unlike the later concept of hell, it wasn't a place simply for the wicked but for any who died. Here the dead kings rise from their thrones in astonishment to see the fallen tyrant.

14:12 Lk 10:18;

2Pt 1:19;

Rev 8:10

14:13 Is 14:14;

Eze 28:2;

Dn 5:23;

Dn 8:10; 2Th 2:4

14:14 Is 14:13,

Is 47:8; 2Th 2:4

14:15 Eze 31:16;

Eze 32:23;

Mt 11:23

14:16 Jer 50:23

14:17 Jl 2:3

14:19 Is 34:3;

Jer 8:1, Jer 41:7

14:20 Job 18:19;

Ps 21:10;

Ps 37:28

14:21 Ex 20:5;

Lv 26:39;

Mt 23:35

14:22 1Ki 14:10;

Job 18:19;

Ps 109:13;

Prv 10:7;

Is 13:19

14:25 Is 9:4;

Is 10:12;

Is 10:27;

Is 30:31, Is 31:8

14:27 2Ch 20:6;

Is 43:13;

Dn 4:35

<sup>12</sup>How you've fallen from heaven,  
morning star, son of dawn!

You are cut down to earth,  
helpless on your back!

<sup>13</sup>You said to yourself, I will climb up to heaven;  
above God's stars, I will raise my throne.

I'll sit on the mount of assembly,  
on the heights of Zaphon.

<sup>14</sup>I'll go up to the cloud tops;  
I'll be like the Most High!

<sup>15</sup>But down to the underworld<sup>a</sup> you are brought,  
to the depths of the pit.

<sup>16</sup>Those who see you will stare at you;  
they will examine you closely:

"Is this the man who rattled the earth, who shook kingdoms,  
<sup>17</sup>who made the world a wasteland and tore down its cities,  
and wouldn't let his prisoners go home?"

<sup>18</sup>All the kings of the nations lie down honored,  
all of them, each in his own tomb.

<sup>19</sup>But you are cast away from your own grave like a rejected branch,  
covered by the dead and those pierced by the sword—  
who go down to the stony pit—like a trampled corpse.

<sup>20</sup>You won't join them in burial,  
for you destroyed your own land;  
you killed your own people.

Such evil offspring will never be mentioned again!

<sup>21</sup>Prepare a place to slaughter his sons for the guilt of their father. Don't let them arise to take over the earth or fill the world with cities.

<sup>22</sup>I will arise against them, says the LORD of heavenly forces. I will cut off Babylon's renown and remnant, offshoot and offspring. <sup>23</sup>I will make it the home of herons, a swamp-land. I will sweep it away with the broom of destruction, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

### Promise for oppressed Judah

<sup>24</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces has promised:

As I intended, so it will be;  
and as I have planned, so it will happen:

<sup>25</sup>I will break Assyria in my land;  
on my mountains I will trample it  
and remove its yoke from my people;<sup>b</sup>  
his burden will be taken from their shoulders.

<sup>26</sup>This is the plan that has been made for all the earth;  
this is the hand extended over all the nations.

<sup>27</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces has created a plan;  
who can stop it?

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Sheol*. <sup>b</sup>Or *them*

**14:12** *morning star, son of dawn:* Though the exact story is unknown, it is clear that a Canaanite myth is invoked here, possibly arising from astronomical observation of Venus, a planet that at certain points in its orbit rises before the dawn and vanishes from view as the sky brightens. Though it can appear very bright, it is never visible high in the sky. Similarly, the king's high hopes will be dashed. Later interpretation understood this poem as referring to a fall of Satan from heaven into hell after rebelling against God (Rev 12:7-9; 20:1-3; 2 Pet 2:4; Luke 10:18).

**14:13** *mount of assembly:* mountain where the Canaanite gods assembled to deliberate. *Zaphon:* a mountain in the

north, the site of the Canaanite god Baal's palace. The king proudly aspires to become equal to God, but instead falls to the depths of the underworld.

**14:16** *Those who see you:* The tyrant's dead body is viewed, evidently on a battlefield. His crimes even against his own subjects inspire little compassion.

**14:22-23** These verses, with their reminders of Isaiah 13:20-22 and stark contrast with Isaiah 11:6-9, serve to reinforce the poem's referent to Babylon.

**14:24-27** Though the preceding verses concerned Babylon, this portion refers to Assyria, who was the oppressor during Isaiah's own time. For similar language about

God's hand is extended;  
who will stop it?

14:28 2Ki 16:1,  
2Ki 16:20;  
2Ch 28:27;  
Is 13:1

**An oracle concerning the Philistines**

15:1 Nm 21:28;  
Is 11:14, Is 13:1;  
Jer 48:1;  
Eze 25:8

<sup>28</sup>This oracle came in the year of King Ahaz's death:

15:5 Gn 13:10,  
Gn 19:22;  
Jer 4:20,  
Jer 48:5,  
Jer 48:34

<sup>29</sup>Don't rejoice, all you Philistines, that the rod that struck you is broken,  
because from the snake's root a viper will grow,  
and it will produce a winged creature.

<sup>30</sup>The oldest offspring of the poor will graze;  
their needy will lie down secure.  
But he will starve your offspring to death,  
and murder all who remain.

<sup>31</sup>Wail, gate! Cry out, city!  
Melt in terror, all you Philistines!  
Smoke is coming from the north;  
there is no straggler in its ranks.\*

<sup>32</sup>What will one say to that nation's messengers?  
The LORD has founded Zion;  
the oppressed among God's people will find refuge there.

**Concerning Moab**

**15** An oracle about Moab.  
Ar was devastated in a night; Moab is ruined!  
Kir was devastated in a night; Moab is ruined!

<sup>2</sup>Dibon has gone up to the temple, to the shrines to weep.<sup>a</sup>  
Moab wails over Nebo and over Medeba.  
Every head is shaved,  
every beard cut off.

<sup>3</sup>In its streets they wear mourning clothes;  
on its rooftops and in its plazas, everyone wails and falls down weeping.

<sup>4</sup>Heshbon and Elealeh cry out;  
as far as Jahaz their voice is heard.  
The armed men of Moab shout, spirits trembling.

<sup>5</sup>My heart cries out for Moab.  
Its fugitives flee to Zoar, to Eglath-shelishiyah.<sup>b</sup>  
At the ascent of Luhith, each will go up with weeping.  
On the road to Horonaim, they will raise a piercing cry.

<sup>6</sup>The waters of Nimrim are used up.  
Grass has withered;  
vegetation is dead;  
greenery is gone.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

Assyria, see Isaiah 9:4; 10:27. See also the refrain concerning God's extended hand (Isa 5:25; 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4), which is repeated here.

14:28-32 An oracle directed against the Philistines at the death of King Ahaz. Though they may plot a revolt against Assyria and invite Judah to join them (see Isa 20:1-6), Judah's security rests in God.

15:1-16:14 An oracle about Moab, which was situated on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, east of Judah. It isn't thought to be the writing of Isaiah himself. Much of it follows a lament form. Jeremiah 48:1-47 presents an oracle concerning Moab with many direct parallels to this one.

15:1-9 Descriptions of widespread destruction and mourning fill the first nine verses. Specificity is enhanced by the use of many place-names and the concrete pictures of mourning actions and postures. The event causing mourning isn't directly described.

15:1 Ar and Kir: may be either city names or synonyms meaning "city," designating Moab's capital city of Dibon, or the country as a whole.

15:2 Nebo and Medeba, as well as Heshbon, Elealeh, and Jahaz (Isa 15:4), lay in the northern part of Moab, which was often claimed and occupied by Israel.

15:5 My heart cries out: Here a sympathetic speaker appears for the first time; see also Isaiah 16:9, 11. For parallels, see Isaiah 21:3-4; 22:4; Jeremiah 8:18-9:2; 23:9; Lamentations 2:13. Zoar probably lay either on the border of Edom to the south or within Edom, at the south end of the Dead Sea. Eglath-shelishiyah: The meaning is uncertain, but it is usually understood as a Moabite town. Locations of Luhith and Horonaim are likewise uncertain, but they are most likely in southern Moab.

15:6 waters of Nimrim: This location in Moab is uncertain. Context indicates that it is normally a fertile area.

16:1 2Ki 3:4.

2Ki 14:7;  
Is 10:32

16:2 Nm 21:13.

Jgs 11:18;

Prv 27:8;

Jer 48:20

16:3 1Ki 18:4

16:6 Jer 48:29;

Am 2:1;

Obad 3;

Zep 2:10

<sup>7</sup>Therefore, they carry what they had stored up,  
all their provisions to the Valley of the Willows.

<sup>8</sup>An outcry sounds within the borders of Moab,  
as far as Eglaim, a cry of distress,  
as far as Beer-elim, a cry of distress.

<sup>9</sup>The waters of Dibon are full of blood.  
But I will bring still more upon Dibon:  
a lion for Moab's survivors, for the remaining few in the land.

**16** Send lambs to the ruler of the land,<sup>6</sup>  
from Sela through the desert to the mountain of Daughter Zion.

<sup>2</sup>The daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon  
are like orphaned birds pushed from the nest.

<sup>3</sup>Consider carefully, act justly;  
at high noon provide your shade like night.  
Hide the outcasts;  
keep the fugitives hidden.

<sup>4</sup>Let the outcasts of Moab live among you.  
Be a hiding place for them from the destroyer.  
When the oppressor is no more,  
when destruction has ceased,  
when the trampler has vanished from the land,

<sup>5</sup>a throne will be established based on goodness,  
and someone will sit faithfully on it in David's dwelling<sup>d</sup>—  
a judge who seeks justice and timely righteousness.

<sup>6</sup>We have heard of Moab's pride, his great pride,  
his outrageous pride and arrogance,  
his empty boasting.

<sup>7</sup>Therefore, let Moab wail;  
let everyone wail for Moab.  
Let them moan, utterly stricken, for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth.

<sup>8</sup>The fields of Heshbon languish.  
The vines of Sibmah,  
whose honored grapes overpowered masters of nations,  
had reached as far as Jazer and strayed to the desert.  
Their tendrils spread out and crossed the sea.

<sup>9</sup>Therefore, I will weep with Jazer's weeping for the vines of Sibmah.  
I will drench you with my tears, Heshbon and Elealeh.  
Cheers have fallen silent concerning your summer fruit  
and your grain harvest.

<sup>10</sup>Joy and happiness have been harvested from the farmland,  
and in the vineyards no one sings, no one shouts.  
No treader crushes grapes in the wine vats;  
I have brought the cheers to an end.

<sup>6</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Or tent

15:7 *Valley of the Willows*: Probably the Wadi Zered (present-day Wadi al-Hesa).

15:8 *Eglaim* and *Beer-elim* aren't otherwise known.

15:9 *The waters of Dibon*: The Masoretic Hebrew reads "Dimon," which may be a wordplay with *dam*, "blood." *But I will bring still more*: This isn't the sympathetic voice found in Isaiah 15:5, but evidently a vicious divine voice threatening even more punishment. The reason for this isn't given. Because of the negativity of this verse, some interpreters, including Martin Luther and John Calvin, read the entire oracle ironically or satirically. Others read it as a layering of several different voices displaying varying attitudes toward Moab.

16:1 *Send lambs to the ruler of the land*: evidently directed

toward refugees (characterized as orphaned birds in Isa 16:2) who ask Judah's king for asylum. *Sela* (meaning "rock") may be Petra in Edom.

16:3-4a These verses (or perhaps Isa 16:3-5) evidently detail the plea from Moabites seeking safety in Judah (see Pss 36:7; 57:1; 61:2-4; 91:1).

16:5 The shift to Davidic royal language is difficult to fit into this context. Its vocabulary resembles that of Psalm 89:15 (cf. Isa 9:7; Exod 34:6).

16:6 *We have heard of Moab's pride*: Compare with Zephaniah 2:8. The vocabulary of this verse resembles descriptions of pride in Isaiah 2:11, 17; 9:8; 10:12; 13:11, 19; 14:11. This accusation may be a refusal of asylum.

16:7-10 These verses focus on the loss of produce and

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, my heart plays sadly like a harp for Moab,  
my inner being for Kir-heres.

<sup>12</sup>Even if Moab presents himself,  
and Moab wears himself out going to the shrine,  
and comes to his sanctuary to pray,  
he won't prevail.

<sup>13</sup>This is the word that the LORD had spoken concerning Moab long ago. <sup>14</sup>But now the LORD has said: In three years, like the years of a hired worker, the glory of Moab, with all its great multitude, will dwindle. The small remnant will be few and feeble.

**Concerning Damascus and Ephraim**

**17**An oracle about Damascus.  
Look! Damascus is finished as a city;  
it will become a fallen ruin.

<sup>2</sup>The villages of Aroer are abandoned forever.\*  
They will be pastures for flocks,<sup>f</sup> which will lie down undisturbed.

<sup>3</sup>Ephraim's security will cease, as will Damascus' rule.  
What's left of Aram will resemble the glory of the Israelites,  
says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>4</sup>On that day, Jacob's glory will dwindle;  
his sleek body will waste away.

<sup>5</sup>It will be as when harvesters gather grain.  
God will harvest armfuls at a time,  
like one who gathers grain in the Rephaim Valley.

<sup>6</sup>Only remaining bits are left,  
like an olive tree that has been shaken:  
two or three olives on the highest branch;  
four or five on a fruitful twig,  
says the LORD God of Israel.

<sup>7</sup>On that day, people will have regard for their maker,  
and their eyes will look to the holy one of Israel.

<sup>8</sup>They will have no regard for altars, the work of their hands,  
or look to what their fingers made: sacred poles<sup>g</sup> and incense stands.

<sup>9</sup>On that day, their strong cities will be like those abandoned by the Hivites and the Amorites,<sup>h</sup> abandoned because of the Israelites. They will be a wasteland,

\*Cf LXX; MT *The cities of Aroer are abandoned* <sup>f</sup>Or *For flocks they will be* <sup>g</sup>Heb *asherim*, possibly objects devoted to the goddess Asherah <sup>h</sup>LXX; MT *like the abandonment of the forest and the bough*

grain to harvest. The locations of *Kir-hareseth*, *Sibmah*, and *Jazer* are uncertain. For *Heshbon* and *Elealeh*, see note on Isaiah 15:2.

16:14 *But now the LORD has said:* As if the previous had been sympathetic, an even more dismal fate is foreseen for Moab. In contrast, Jeremiah's oracle concerning Moab ended in Jeremiah 48:47 with the prospect of return from captivity. The language in this prose addition resembles that found in Isaiah 21:16-17 concerning Kedar and in Isaiah 23:15-18 concerning Tyre.

17:1-14 *An oracle about Damascus:* This oracle concerning Aram, the country ruled from Damascus, also concerns Israel (Ephraim). This pairing and the claim that these countries are a threat to Judah (17:14) suggest that the oracle is related to these countries' attempt to overthrow King Ahaz of Judah (see Isa 7) and their subsequent destruction. Assyria conquered Damascus in 732 BCE and Samaria in 722.

17:2 The identity, and the translation "Aroer," is uncertain.

No city of Aroer in Aram is known. For parallel imagery, see Isaiah 5:17; 7:25; 14:30.

17:4-6 Destruction by the enemy is imagined as a harvest leaving only gleanings; compare with Isaiah 1:8; 24:13; Joel 3:13; Revelation 14:14-20. For "on that day" sayings in Isaiah 17:4, 7, 9, see note on Isaiah 7:18-25.

17:5 *Rephaim Valley:* a fertile agricultural valley southwest of Jerusalem.

17:7-11 References to idolatry and its abandonment abound in these verses. The contrast between God as maker and idols as made by humans is common in anti-idolatry passages (see Isa 2:8; 44:2, 9-20).

17:8 *sacred poles*, or, in Hebrew, *asherim*, are Canaanite worship objects frequently forbidden (see, for instance, Deut 7:5; 12:3; 16:21). For their pairing with incense stands, see Isaiah 27:9; 2 Chronicles 34:4, 7.

17:9 Hivites and Amorites were two pre-Israelite Canaanite groups whose destruction was frequently envisioned in the exodus narrative (Exod 3:8, 17; 13:5; 23:23; 33:2; 24:11; Deut 7:1; 20:17).

17:14 2Ki 19:35;  
Ps 37:36  
18:1 2Ki 19:9;  
Eze 30:4;  
Zep 2:12,  
3:10  
18:2 Gn 10:8;  
Ex 2:3, Is 18:7

- <sup>10</sup>because you forgot the God who saves you,  
and didn't remember the rock who shelters you.  
Therefore, plant your pleasant plants,  
and set out exotic sprouts;  
<sup>11</sup>make them grow the day you plant them,  
and make them bloom the morning you start them.  
But the harvest will disappear on a day of sickness and incurable pain.

- <sup>12</sup>Doom to the raging of many peoples;  
like the thundering seas they thunder.  
Doom to the roar of nations,  
like the roaring of mighty waters.  
<sup>13</sup>Nations roar like the roaring of rushing waters.  
But God will rebuke them,  
and they will flee far away,  
pursued like chaff by wind in the mountains,  
like tumbleweeds before a storm.  
<sup>14</sup>In the evening, there is terror;  
but before morning it is gone.  
This is the fate of those who loot us,  
the destiny of those who rob us.

### Concerning Cush

**18** Doom to the land of winged ships, beyond the rivers of Cush  
<sup>2</sup>that sends messengers by sea, reed vessels on the water.  
Go, swift messengers,  
to a nation tall and clean-shaven,  
to a people feared near and far,  
a nation barbaric and oppressive,  
whose land the rivers divide.

- <sup>3</sup>All you who inhabit the world, who live on earth,  
when a signal is raised on the mountains, you will see!  
When the trumpet blasts, you will hear!  
<sup>4</sup>The LORD said to me:  
I will quietly watch from my own place,  
like the shimmering heat of sunshine,  
like a cloud's shade in the harvest heat.  
<sup>5</sup>Before the harvest, when the bloom is finished,  
when the blossom is becoming a ripening fruit,  
God will cut the shoots with a pruning knife,  
and lop off the spreading branches.

17:10 *you forgot the God who saves you*: See Deuteronomy 32:15, 18; Hosea 8:14. *plant your pleasant plants*: Isaiah 17:10-11 probably reflects a Canaanite worship practice also known from Greek and Roman sources. Women would sow seeds of fennel, lettuce, wheat, or barley in shallow dishes to sprout in midsummer and die off within days, to honor the short life and violent death of the god the Canaanites knew as Adon (known in Greek mythology as Adonis).

17:12 *Doom to the raging*: The word translated as "doom" can also be rendered here as "woe." For nations imagined as roaring seas, see Psalms 46:3, 6; 65:7; Isaiah 5:30; 8:7-8; Jeremiah 51:55. God was viewed as defeating this sea of destruction on Jerusalem's behalf (Pss 46:9-10; 89:9-10).

17:13 *pursued like chaff*: For a parallel scenario, see Psalm 83:13.

18:1-7 This oracle concerns the land of Cush (sometimes translated as "Ethiopia" or "Nubia"), south of Egypt. During

Isaiah's lifetime, Egypt was ruled by a Cushite dynasty (for where the two nations are paired, cf. Isa 20:3-5).

18:1 *Doom to the land of winged ships*: An alternative meaning could be "Ah, the land of whirring wings," which might be a reference to the noisy African desert locust (cf. Exod 10) or to insects that travel swiftly.

18:2 Two different words are translated as "messengers" in this verse. Although the first group of messengers travels from Cush, the second group isn't identified, and both their origin and destination are uncertain. The lengthy description of the nation to which they travel suggests they may be Judeans returning a visit to Cush. The scenario resembles that criticized in Isaiah 30-31, in which Judean envoys attempt to establish an alliance with Egypt against Assyria.

18:4 *I will quietly watch*: In contrast to the busy travel back and forth, God sits still, watching. *cloud's shade*: The word in Hebrew is rare (here and Gen 27:28) and is often

<sup>6</sup>They will all be left to the mountain birds  
and to the beasts of the land.  
The birds will eat them in summer,  
all the beasts of the land in winter.

<sup>7</sup>At that time, gifts will be brought to the LORD of heavenly forces  
from a tall and clean-shaven people  
and from a people feared near and far,  
a nation barbaric and oppressive,  
whose land the rivers divide,  
to the place of the name of the LORD of heavenly forces,  
to Mount Zion.

### Concerning Egypt

**19** An oracle about Egypt.  
Look! The LORD is riding upon a swift cloud, and is coming to Egypt.

Egypt's idols will tremble before God;  
the Egyptians' hearts will melt within them.

<sup>2</sup>I will stir up Egyptian against Egyptian,  
and they will fight, one against another,  
neighbor against neighbor, city against city,  
kingdom against kingdom.

<sup>3</sup>Egypt's spirit will fail from within;  
I will frustrate their plans.  
They will consult the idols and spirits and ghosts and fortune-tellers.

<sup>4</sup>I will hand Egypt over to a harsh master;  
a strong king will rule them, says the LORD God of heavenly forces.

<sup>5</sup>The waters of the sea will dry up;  
the river will be parched and bare.

<sup>6</sup>The rivers will stink;  
the streams will shrink and dry;  
reeds and rushes will decay.

<sup>7</sup>Grass around the Nile,  
the grass at the mouth of the Nile, and all the sown land of the Nile  
will dry up, blow away, and be no more.

<sup>8</sup>Those who fish will lament;  
all who cast fishhooks in the Nile will mourn,  
and those who spread nets on the water will pine away.

<sup>9</sup>Workers with flax will be dismayed;  
carders and weavers will grow pale.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Makers of cloth will be crushed;  
all who earn money will become distressed.

<sup>†</sup>DSS (1Q)sa'

translated as a cloud's dew, suggesting that God is watching from behind the cloud or peering through oppressive heat and humidity.

18:7 *gifts will be brought*: See Psalms 76:12; 68:29, 31; Isaiah 45:14; 60:3.

19:1-15 *An oracle about Egypt*: God inflicts hardship on Egypt, creating disorder, oppression, drought, and economic failure, and confounding the king's advisors. The verses emphasize God's power and the ineffectiveness of those, both divine and human, upon whom the Egyptians rely. Ultimately the chapter describes the Egyptians themselves worshipping and being blessed by God.

19:1 *The LORD is riding upon a swift cloud*: See Deuteronomy

33:26; Psalms 68:33; 104:3. In Canaanite stories found by archaeologists on the coast of Syria, Baal is similarly described as "rider of the clouds."

19:2-3 As in the plain of Shinar (Gen 11:7), the Lord will confuse the plans of the Egyptians. Here it is done by fomenting internal strife among the Egyptians.

19:4 *harsh master*: This may refer to the Cushite dynasty ruling Egypt in Isaiah's time. However, Egypt came under the dominion of other masters so many times during its long history that certainty is impossible.

19:5-10 Drought causes the Nile and its vegetation to dry up, the fish to die, and those who rely on the river for their livelihood to despair.

19:11 Nm  
13:22; 1Kj 4:30;  
Is 19:3, Is 30:4  
19:18 Is 45:23;  
Zep 3:9  
19:19 Gn 28:18;  
Josh 22:10  
19:20 Jgs 2:18;  
Ps 50:15;  
Is 43:3,  
Is 43:11,  
Is 45:21  
19:21 Is 11:9,  
Is 56:7, Is 60:7;  
Jon 1:16;  
Zec 14:16  
19:24 Gn 12:2  
20:2 Isa 19:24;  
Is 13:1;  
Eze 24:17;  
Mi 1:8, Mi 3:4

- <sup>11</sup>The officials of Tanis are fools;  
the wisest of Pharaoh's counselors give stupid advice.  
How can you say to Pharaoh,  
"I'm a wise person, one of the ancient kings?"  
<sup>12</sup>Where now are your wise ones? Let them tell you,  
let them inform you what the LORD of heavenly forces  
has planned concerning Egypt.  
<sup>13</sup>The officials of Tanis have become fools;  
the princes of Memphis are deluded;  
the tribal chiefs have led Egypt astray.  
<sup>14</sup>The LORD has poured into them a spirit of confusion.  
They will make Egypt stumble in everything it does,  
just as a drunk stumbles in his vomit.  
<sup>15</sup>Neither head nor tail, palm branch nor reed  
will be able to do anything for Egypt.

### **Bless God's people**

<sup>16</sup>On that day, the Egyptians will be like women and will tremble with terror before the hand that the LORD of heavenly forces will raise against them. <sup>17</sup>Judah's land will become what the Egyptians dread; whenever anyone mentions it, they will be terrified because of the plans that the LORD of heavenly forces is making against them.

<sup>18</sup>On that day, there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan and swear loyalty to the LORD of heavenly forces. One of them will be called "the city of the sun."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>19</sup>On that day, there will be an altar to the LORD within the land of Egypt, and a standing stone for the LORD at its border. <sup>20</sup>It will be a sign and a witness to the LORD of heavenly forces in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the LORD because of oppressors, God will send them a savior and defender to rescue them. <sup>21</sup>The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians; the Egyptians will know the LORD on that day. They will worship with sacrifices and offerings, making solemn promises to the LORD and fulfilling them. <sup>22</sup>The LORD will strike Egypt; striking and then healing. They will return to the LORD, who will hear their pleas and heal them.

<sup>23</sup>On that day, there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will come to Egypt, and the Egyptians to Assyria; and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.

<sup>24</sup>On that day, Israel will be the third along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing at the center of the world. <sup>25</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces will pronounce this blessing: Bless Egypt my people, and Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.

### **Isalah naked and barefoot**

**20**In the year that Assyria's King Sargon sent his general to Ashdod, he fought against Ashdod and captured it. <sup>2</sup>At that time the LORD had spoken through Isaiah, Amoz's

<sup>1</sup>DSS (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>), Tg, Vulg; Heb uncertain

19:11-15 Egypt's elite, despite their self-proclaimed wisdom, can't save the country. The story line here resembles that of Joseph in Genesis 37-50, who with God's help saved Egypt from famine when its wise counselors were confounded (Gen 41:8); and of Moses, whose God overcame the pharaoh's counselors to destroy Egypt (Exod 7:11; 8:18-19; 9:11). *Tanis*: known also as Zoan (cf. Isa 30:4; Ps 78:12, 43). It became known as Tanis to the Greeks. It was the residence of the pharaohs of the earlier 21st and 22nd dynasties. Memphis was the capital of Egyptian kings during the "Old Kingdom," and once again came to prominence during the Cushite dynasty.

19:15 *Neither head nor tail*: Egypt's leaders; compare with Isaiah 9:14-16.

19:16-25 Five prose oracles conclude the chapter, each introduced by *On that day* (19:16, 18, 19, 23, 24; cf. note on Isa 7:18-25). They don't all fit together in terms of message or tone.

19:16-17 *the Egyptians will be like women*: The first saying extends the threat against the Egyptians. Terror is often described as resembling the pains of a woman in labor (Isa 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; Jer 30:6; Mic 4:9-10).

19:18 The second and subsequent oracles are much more positive toward Egypt. In this one, five Egyptian cities become subjects of Judah's God. *city of the sun*: possibly Heliopolis.

19:19-22 This third oracle depicts God treating the Egyptians much as Judah has been treated, reproving them with punishment and healing them when they pray, saving them from oppressors.

19:23-25 Bitter enemies *Assyria, Egypt, and Israel* are all blessed by God and become friendly with each other.

20:1-6 *the year... Ashdod*: 711 BCE. *walking naked and barefoot*: Like Micah, who walked naked and barefoot as a sign of Israel's approaching capture in 722 BCE, Isaiah is commanded to walk naked and barefoot as a sign not



20:3 Is 8:18,  
Is 20:2, Is 43:3  
21:2 Is 13:17,  
Is 24:16, Is 33:1  
21:6 2Ki 9:17  
21:9 Is 46:1;  
Jer 51:8;  
Jer 51:44;  
Rev 14:8,  
Rev 18:2

son, "Go, take off the mourning clothes from your waist, and remove the shoes from your feet." And Isaiah did this, walking naked and barefoot.

<sup>3</sup>The LORD said, "Just as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years, as a sign and omen against Egypt and Cush, <sup>4</sup>so will the king of Assyria lead the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, both young and old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks bared, humiliating Egypt. <sup>5</sup>They will be shattered and shamed because of Cush their hope, and because of Egypt their glory.

<sup>6</sup>"On that day, those who live on this coast will say, 'Look at those in whom we had hoped, to whom we fled for help and rescue from the king of Assyria. How then will we escape?'"

**Fallen, fallen is Babylon**

**21** An oracle about the wilderness near the sea. Like whirlwinds sweeping through the arid southern plain, it comes from the desert, from a fearsome land.

<sup>2</sup>A harsh vision was proclaimed to me:

The betrayer betrays, and the destroyer destroys.

Go up, Elam! Lay siege, Media!

Put an end to all her groaning.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore, I'm shaken to my core in anguish.

Pains have seized me like the pains of a woman in labor.

I'm too bent over to hear, too dismayed to see.

<sup>4</sup>My heart pounds; convulsions overpower me.

He has turned my evening of pleasure into dread—

<sup>5</sup>setting the table, spreading the cloth, eating, drinking.

"Arise, captains! Polish the shields."

<sup>6</sup>The Lord said this to me:

"Go, post a lookout to report what he sees.

<sup>7</sup>When he sees chariots, pairs of horsemen,

donkey riders, camel riders,

he should listen carefully,

carefully, very carefully."

<sup>8</sup>Then the seer<sup>h</sup> called out:

"Upon a watchtower, Lord, I'm standing all day;  
and upon my observation post I'm stationed throughout the night.

<sup>9</sup>Here they come:

charioteers, pairs of horsemen!"

One spoke up and said, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon,

and all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground!"

<sup>10</sup>Oh, my downtrodden people, threshed on my threshing floor,

what I heard from the LORD of heavenly forces,

the God of Israel, I reported to you.

<sup>h</sup>DSS (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>), Syr; MT a lion

against Ashdod but against Egypt and Cush (see Isa 18; 19), which are likewise expected to fall to Assyria. Isaiah thus warns that those who rely on Egypt for help against Assyria are bound for grave and tragic disappointment. This is the message the prophet will give King Hezekiah of Judah several times in Isaiah 28–31.

21:1–10 A mysterious oracle conveys a mood of awe and horror as news comes of Babylon's defeat. At first we only know that something is sweeping in from the desert.

21:2 *Go up, Elam! Lay siege, Media!*: The invaders are finally named. The ancient civilization of Elam, with its capital Susa, was due east of Babylon in the western part of today's Iran. It was incorporated into Persia in the 6th century BCE. For Media, the home of the Medes, see note on Isaiah 13:17.

21:3 *Pains have seized me*: See note on Isaiah 13:8. The perspective shifts to that of those within the city, or the city itself.

21:6 *Go, post a lookout*: Prophets were often compared with sentinels, watching over a society's welfare (see Isa 62:6; Hos 9:8; Hab 2:1; Jer 6:17; Ezek 3:17; 33:1–9).

21:9 *Fallen, fallen is Babylon*: After several verses drawing attention to the anticipated news, Babylon's defeat is announced. These verses probably reflect expectations of Babylon's fall in the 6th century as Cyrus approached the city. "Fallen, fallen is Babylon" is echoed in Revelation 14:8; 18:2.

21:10 *threshed on my threshing floor*: Threshing (beating or crushing grain stalks to release the grain) was often used as an image for military violence or divine punishment

22:2 Is 32:13;  
Jer 14:18;  
Lam 4:9

22:4 Jer 9:1;  
Mi 1:8;  
Lk 19:41

### A mysterious dialogue

<sup>11</sup>An oracle about Dumah.<sup>1</sup>

Someone is calling to me from Seir:

“Guard, how long is the night?”

Guard, how long is the night?”

<sup>12</sup>The guard said,

“Morning has come, but it is still night.

If you must inquire, inquire; come back again.”

<sup>13</sup>An oracle about the desert.

In the woods, in the desert where you camp,  
caravans of the Dedanites <sup>14</sup>meet the thirsty with water;  
inhabitants of the land of Tema greet the refugees with bread.

<sup>15</sup>They have fled from swords, from the drawn sword,  
from the bent bow and from the intensity of battle.

<sup>16</sup>So the Lord said to me: Within a year, according to the number of years for which a laborer is hired, all the glory of Kedar will end; <sup>17</sup>there will be few Kedarite archers remaining. The LORD God of Israel has spoken.

### Jerusalemites rebuked

**22**An oracle about the Valley of Vision.

What is wrong with you,  
that you have all gone up to the rooftops,

<sup>2</sup>you who are filled with noise,  
you roaring city, you party town?

Your dead weren't slaughtered by the sword;  
they didn't die in battle.

<sup>3</sup>All your leaders escaped together but were captured without a single bow shot.

All your escapees were bound together, even though they fled far away.<sup>m</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Therefore, I said, “Don't look at me; let me weep bitterly.

Don't try to comfort me about the destruction of my dearly loved people.”

<sup>5</sup>The LORD God of heavenly forces has a day of tumult and trampling  
and turmoil in the Valley of Vision,

a breaking down of walls,  
a cry for help to the mountains.

<sup>6</sup>Elam carried the quiver with chariots and horsemen,  
and Kir uncovered the shield.

<sup>1</sup>LXX Edom <sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain

(see Isa 27:12; 28:27-28; 41:15; Jer 51:33; Amos 1:2; Mic 4:12-13).

21:11-12 *An oracle about Dumah*: Dumah was a town in northern Arabia. Yet the oracle headings in Isaiah 21:1, 13, and 22:1 refer to indefinite locations, leaving the referent of this one in doubt. What sounds like a chance exchange between a sentinel and an inquirer minimizes the impact of the momentous news of Babylon's defeat, perhaps as if to say, “Empires come and go.” *Seir* was a synonym for “Edom.” 21:13-17 *An oracle about the desert*: The final oracle of Isaiah 21 depicts needy fugitives fleeing from battle. The addition in prose is similar to those found at the end of Isaiah 16 (concerning Moab) and Isaiah 23 (concerning Tyre). Dedan and Tema were major trade cities of northwestern Arabia. The Kedarites were a tribal group in north Arabia considered descendants of Ishmael (Gen 25:13).

22:1-14 *An oracle about the Valley of Vision*: Like the referents mentioned in Isaiah 21:1, 11, 13, the referent of this heading is unknown. It may derive from Isaiah 22:5. The “Valley of Vision” may refer to the Kidron Valley between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, or it may refer to the Hinnom Valley south and west of Jerusalem. This section

concerns Jerusalem itself, rebuking its citizens' behavior in wartime. Its leaders attend to the details of Jerusalem's defense systems, but, Isaiah says, they fail to attend to their God, who is both cause of and potential redeemer from their straits.

22:1-3 *What is wrong with you*: What exactly Jerusalemites did to earn the rebuke isn't clear. It is possible they are going to the rooftops to celebrate Assyrian failure to conquer Jerusalem in 701 BCE (see note on Isa 1:7-8). The meaning of and circumstances underlying 22:2-3 are unclear. What is clear is that their reaction to events isn't the same as the prophet's.

22:4 *my dearly loved people*: This expression is used sympathetically, especially in relation to the city's destruction. It is found frequently in Lamentations and Jeremiah (see the parallel expressions in Lam 3:48; Jer 9:1). Some see this and other verses as referring not to Assyria's invasion of 701 BCE, but to Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem in 587. Others see here the prophet's rebuke of the city for rejoicing when the rest of the country lies in ruins.

22:5-8a Enemy attack is described as divine judgment against the people.

7 Your finest valleys were filled with chariots,  
and horsemen doggedly guarded the gate.

8 Judah's covering has been stripped away.

On that day, you trusted the weapons in the Forest House.

9 You observed the many broken defenses in David's City,  
and you collected the waters of the lower pool.

10 You counted Jerusalem's houses,  
and you tore down houses to fortify the wall.

11 You made a reservoir between the walls for the water of the earlier pool.  
But you didn't trust its maker;  
you didn't consider the one who planned it long ago.

12 The LORD God of heavenly forces called on that day for weeping and mourning,  
and shaven heads, and wearing of mourning clothes.

13 But instead there was fun and frivolity,  
killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep,  
eating of meat and drinking of wine:  
"Eat and drink! Tomorrow we will die!"

14 But the LORD of heavenly forces has revealed in my hearing:  
This iniquity won't be forgiven you until you die,  
says the LORD God of heavenly forces.

#### **An administrator rebuked**

15 The LORD God of heavenly forces says, Go now to this official, to Shebna,  
who is in charge of the house, and say to him:

16 What do you have here—and whom do you have here—  
that you have hewed out a tomb for yourself,  
you who cuts his grave on high and carves himself a home in the cliff?

17 The LORD is about to hurl you down, mighty man!

He is surely going to cover you with darkness;

18 he will indeed unroll your head wrapping,  
rolling it like a ball into the open country.  
There you will die, with your glorious chariots,  
you disgrace to the house of your master!

19 I will thrust you from your monument;  
you will be pulled down from your platform.

20 On that day, I will call my servant Eliakim, Hilkiah's son.

21 I will give him your robe and wrap him in your sash,  
and I will hand over to him your authority.

He will be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

22 I will place the key to David's house on his shoulder;  
what he opens no one will close,  
and what he closes no one will open.

**22:8b-11** *you trusted the weapons*: Hezekiah's preparations for Jerusalem's defense against the Assyrians include inspecting weapons, strengthening walls, bringing water into the city (cf. 2 Kgs 20:20; 2 Chron 32:2-5; 30). The activity is criticized as trust in human defenses rather than in God (cf. Isa 26:3-4; 30:15-18). The *Forest House* was the palace armory (see 1 Kgs 7:2; 10:17, 21). One of the most remarkable finds in ancient Jerusalem is the water tunnel running 1,738 feet (530 meters) through bedrock from Gihon Spring under the city's ridge to the Pool of Siloam, thought to have been dug in Hezekiah's time.

**22:12-14** As in Isaiah 22:1-3, the prophet rebukes the Jerusalemites for responding inappropriately to the crisis. Instead of mourning the losses brought on the country by

Jerusalem's revolt against the Assyrians, they take a fatalistic approach to life's brevity, feasting rather than fasting. Missing is any sense that the crisis has theological import and calls for sober reflection. The popular saying "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" blends together Isaiah 22:13 and Ecclesiastes 8:15.

**22:15-19** *Go now to this official, to Shebna*: A new oracle rebuking an individual official begins, like the previous section, with an outraged rhetorical question. The offense seems to be Shebna's arrogance in hewing a monumental tomb for himself.

**22:17b-18** Translation of this section is difficult, though the tone of threat is clear.

**22:20-23** Isaiah predicts that Shebna will be replaced by another official, Eliakim. In contrast, Shebna and Eliakim

22:12 J1 2:17;

Mi 1:16

22:13 Is 56:12;

Lk 17:26;

1Co 15:32

22:14 1Sa 3:14;

Is 5:9;

Eze 24:13

22:16

2Ch 16:14;

Mt 27:60

22:22 Job 12:14;

Is 9:6; Mt 16:19;

Rev 3:7

23:1 Gn 10:4;  
1Kj 10:22;  
Is 2:16, Is 23:12;  
Jer 47:4  
23:2 Is 23:4,  
Is 23:12;  
Eze 27:8  
23:4 Is 23:2;  
Jer 47:4;  
Eze 28:21  
23:5 Ex 15:14;  
Josh 2:9

<sup>23</sup>I will fasten him securely like a tent peg,  
and he will be a throne of honor for his ancestors' house.

<sup>24</sup>All the honor of his household will hang on him, the offspring and the offshoots, every little dish, every bowl, every jar.

<sup>25</sup>On that day, says the LORD of heavenly forces, the peg that is fastened securely will give way; it will be cut down, and it will fall, and all the load hanging on it will be lost. The LORD has spoken.

### Concerning Tyre

**23** An oracle about Tyre.

Wail, ships of Tarshish, because your port is destroyed!<sup>a</sup>

When returning from Cyprus, they heard about it.

<sup>2</sup>Be still, inhabitants of the coast, traders of Sidon,  
whose messengers crossed over the sea,<sup>o</sup> <sup>3</sup>over the mighty waters.  
The grain of Shihor, the Nile's harvest, was her income;  
she was the marketplace of nations.

<sup>4</sup>Be ashamed, Sidon, because the sea has spoken;  
the fortress of the sea has said,  
"I haven't been in labor; I didn't give birth;  
I never raised young men or brought up young women."

<sup>5</sup>When the Egyptians hear, they will be in anguish at the news about Tyre.

<sup>6</sup>Cross over to Tarshish; wail, inhabitants of the coast.

<sup>7</sup>Is this your triumphant town,  
whose origin is from ancient times,  
whose feet carried her to settle far away?

<sup>8</sup>Who planned this concerning Tyre, the one who gives crowns,  
whose merchants were princes,  
whose traders were the honored of the earth?

<sup>9</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces planned it,  
to defile the pride of all beauty,  
to shame all the honored of the earth.

<sup>10</sup>Go through your own land, Daughter Tarshish, for the harbor<sup>p</sup> is gone.

<sup>11</sup>God's hand is extended over the sea, shaking nations.

The LORD gave the command to destroy Phoenicia's fortresses,

<sup>12</sup>saying, You will no longer celebrate, violated virgin Daughter Sidon.  
Get up and head to Cyprus;  
even there you will find no rest.

<sup>13</sup>Look at the land of the Chaldeans,  
the people who are no more.

Assyria destined it for wild animals:

they raised up their siege towers, stripped its palaces, and made it a ruin.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>o</sup>Correction; MT *one crossing over the sea filled you* <sup>p</sup>Heb uncertain

are seen working together as faithful officials of Hezekiah in Isaiah 36:3, 11, 22; and Isaiah 37:2.

22:22 *I will place the key to David's house:* This verse is adapted to a very different setting in Matthew 16:17-19, in which Jesus says to Peter that he will be given the "keys of the kingdom of heaven." But in Revelation 3:7 it is Jesus who is said to have the key of David.

22:24-25 Eliakim is evidently being accused of nepotism. The abrupt shift in tone is puzzling.

23:1-18 *An oracle about Tyre:* Like the oracle about Moab in Isaiah 15-16, this one is written like a lament. As with Isaiah 15-16, interpreters differ over its sincerity. An island city-state about 27 miles (45 km) north of Akko, Tyre was well known for dominating sea trade. Its colonies spread from Asia Minor to Carthage, Sicily, and possibly Spain.

Tyre and Sidon were Canaanite cities. The area was later called Phoenicia by the Greeks. Translation of this chapter presents many difficulties.

23:1 *Wail, ships of Tarshish:* See note on Isaiah 2:16.

23:2 *Sidon:* Another prominent coastal city, about 28 miles (40 km) north of Tyre. Sidon's kings sometimes dominated Tyre as well. The two are paired frequently in the Bible (Ezra 3:7; Jer 25:22; 47:4; Joel 3:4; Zech 9:2; Matt 11:21; etc.).

23:3 *Shihor:* possibly a river in Egypt, perhaps a branch of the Nile.

23:6 *Cross over to Tarshish:* See note on Isaiah 2:16.

23:13 *Look at the land of the Chaldeans:* Translation of this verse is difficult. It appears to refer to Assyria's attack on Babylon in 703 BCE, shortly before its attacks in 701 on

23:15 Jer 25:11,  
Jer 25:22,  
Jer 29:10  
23:16 Psv 7:10  
23:17 Na 3:4,  
Rev 17:1,  
Rev 17:2  
24:2 Eze 7:12;  
Hos 4:9

<sup>14</sup>Wail, ships of Tarshish, for your fortress is destroyed!

<sup>15</sup>On that day, Tyre will be forgotten seventy years, the lifetime of one king. At the end of seventy years, Tyre will become like the prostitute in the song:

<sup>16</sup>Take a harp, go around the city, forgotten prostitute.

Play well, sing many songs, so they'll remember you.

<sup>17</sup>At the end of seventy years, the LORD will visit Tyre. She will return to her trade and will prostitute herself with all the kingdoms on the earth. <sup>18</sup>Her profits and wages will be sacred to the LORD. They won't be stored or saved. Her profits will go to those living before the LORD, for plentiful food and elegant clothes.

**City of chaos falls**

**24** Look! The LORD will devastate the earth and destroy it, will twist its face and scatter its inhabitants.

- <sup>2</sup>It will be the same for the people and for the priest;  
for the slave and for his master;  
for the female servant and for her mistress;  
for the buyer and for the seller;  
for the lender and for the borrower;  
for the creditor and for the debtor.

<sup>3</sup>The earth will be devastated, totally devastated;  
it will be destroyed, completely destroyed  
because the LORD has said it would be so.

<sup>4</sup>The earth dries up and wilts;  
the world withers and wilts;  
the heavens wither away with the earth.

<sup>5</sup>The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants,  
for they have disobeyed instruction,  
swept aside law,  
and broken the ancient covenant.

<sup>6</sup>Therefore, a curse devours the earth; its inhabitants suffer for their guilt.  
Therefore, the earth's inhabitants dwindle; very few are left.

<sup>7</sup>The wine dries up;  
the vine withers;  
all the merry-hearted groan.

<sup>8</sup>The joyous tambourines have ceased;  
the roar of partyers has stopped;  
the joyous harp has ceased.

<sup>9</sup>No one drinks wine or sings;  
beer is bitter to its drinkers.

<sup>10</sup>The town is in chaos, broken;  
every house is shut, without entrance.

Babylon's ally Tyre and on Judah. For Chaldeans, see note on Isaiah 13:19.

23:15-18 *On that day*: Language in this section parallels material concerning Moab (Isa 16:13-14) and Kedar (Isa 21:16-17). Hints of sexual violence occur throughout the chapter. See particularly the feminine pronouns throughout and the imagery of Isaiah 23:4, 9, 10, 12. But here it is raised to a new level as Tyre, the formerly prosperous merchant, is reduced to prostitution, and her wages are given to Judah's temple personnel.

24:1-23 This chapter resembles Isaiah 13, employing cosmic language to describe divine destruction that consumes humanity. But here, the human agent of destruction never becomes visible; instead, God is the source of disaster. The victim of destruction isn't a named city but rather the whole "earth," or "land," a Hebrew word recurring

16 times in 23 verses. Concern with the whole earth, and much of the specific language of this chapter, calls to mind Genesis 1-11, suggesting that creation is being unmade (cf. Isa 24:1/Gen 11:4, 8, 9; Isa 24:5/Gen 9:16; Isa 24:10/Gen 1:2; Isa 24:18/Gen 7:11; 8:2).

24:2 *the same for the people and for the priest*: See Hosea 4:9, which is exactly the same in Hebrew. The author has here expanded on the Hosea saying. All people, regardless of status, will suffer from the coming calamity.

24:4 *earth dries up and wilts*: The first verb, translated here as "dries up," also means "mourns" (cf. Isa 3:26; 19:8; 33:9; 57:18; 60:20; 61:2-3; 66:10).

24:5 *The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants*: Human sins and land pollution are connected (cf. Jer 3:1-3).

24:7-13 *The wine dries up*: Compare with Joel 1:5-12; Isaiah 16:8-10.

24:16 Is 21:2,

Is 33:1

24:19 Dt 11:6;

Is 24:1, Is 24:20;

Is 29:6; Na 1:5

24:20 Is 19:14,

Is 29:9

24:21 Ps 76:12;

Is 10:12,

Is 13:11

24:22 Eccl 38:8

*Oracles Concerning the Whole Earth* Isaiah 24–27 concludes the prophetic sayings concerning the nations with several poems that are somewhat unified in theme. They aren't about particular, named countries but about "the whole earth" and mostly unidentified cities and towns. The section draws upon typologies, mythologies, themes, and imagery, sometimes delighting in the sounds of particular words and phrases at the expense of clear meaning. It is filled with allusions to other parts of scripture as well as to Isaiah. Though it stands within Isaiah 1–39, scholars consider it to be among the last additions to the book of Isaiah. It was written after Isaiah 40–55 and parts of 56–66. Unlike Isaiah's preaching, these chapters lack specific accusations of sin, dwelling instead on divine acts of judgment and redemption. Ancient Near Eastern mythic themes similar to Canaanite Baal stories occur regularly, while no interest is shown in the Davidic kingship or Jerusalem's leadership. The chapters engage in and invite reflection on theological themes such as the problem of evil; the future of the created world; and complex relationships among God, the ever-present foreign nations, and Judah. Along with Isaiah 13–14 concerning Babylon and its leadership, these chapters form a bookend around the oracles about foreign nations.

- <sup>11</sup> There is a cry for wine in the streets.  
All joy has reached its dusk;  
happiness is exiled from the earth.
- <sup>12</sup> Ruin remains in the city,  
and the gate is battered to wreckage.
- <sup>13</sup> It will be like this in the central part of the land and among the peoples,  
like an olive tree that has been shaken,  
like remains from the grape harvest.
- <sup>14</sup> They raise their voice;  
they sing with joy;  
from the west they will shout about the LORD's majesty.
- <sup>15</sup> Therefore, in the east honor the LORD;  
in the islands of the sea, the name of the LORD God of Israel!
- <sup>16</sup> From the ends of the earth we have heard songs:  
"Glory to the righteous one!"  
But I say, "I waste away; I waste away; I'm doomed!  
Betrayers betray; treacherously betrayers betray."
- <sup>17</sup> Terror, trench, and trap are upon you, ruler of the earth!
- <sup>18</sup> Whoever flees from the sound of terror will fall into the trench;  
whoever climbs from the trench will be caught in the trap.  
Heaven's windows will open, and the earth's foundations will quake.
- <sup>19</sup> The earth is shattering, shattering;  
the earth is shaking, shaking;  
the earth is teetering, tottering.
- <sup>20</sup> The earth trembles like a drunk and shudders like a hut;  
its rebellion weighs heavy upon it;  
it will fall, no more to rise.
- <sup>21</sup> On that day, the LORD will punish the forces of heaven in heaven, and the kings of the earth on earth. <sup>22</sup> They will be gathered together like prisoners in a pit, shut into a prison, and punished after many days. <sup>23</sup> The moon will be diminished, and the sun will fade, since the LORD of heavenly forces will rule on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, glorious before his elders.

24:13 *like an olive tree that has been shaken*: See Isaiah 17:6. It refers to the practice, which continues to the present, of beating, that is shaking, a tree to harvest the fruit. Harvest is a frequent image for conquest; see note on Isaiah 17:6. 24:14–16 *They raise their voice*: It's unclear who "they" are, but the language in this section closely resembles that of Isaiah 42:8–12; 45:21; 52:8; and 54:1. Why the speaker declines to join the chorus is unclear. Neither position is criticized. Coexisting in the same moment, they encompass both future and present realities. See Isaiah 21:2; 33:1.

24:15 *islands of the sea*: or coastlands. For the motif of coastlands responding to Judah's God, see Isaiah 41:1, 5; 42:4, 10, 12; 49:1; 51:4; 60:9.

24:17 *Terror, trench, and trap are upon you*: This phrase echoes Jeremiah 48:43 word for word. As in Jeremiah, the reference isn't to "rulers" but to "inhabitants." As at many points in Isaiah 24, words were chosen more for their rhythm and sound than for their meaning.

24:23 *The moon will be diminished*: See Isaiah 13:10–11. *before his elders*: See Exodus 24:9–11, 16–17.

*Rejoicing in God's salvation*

**25** LORD, you are my God.  
I will exalt you; I will praise your name,  
for you have done wonderful things,  
planned long ago, faithful and sure.

<sup>2</sup>You have turned the city into rubble,  
the fortified town into a ruin,  
the fortress of foreigners into a city no more,  
never to be rebuilt.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore, strong people will glorify you;  
the towns of tyrant nations will fear you.

<sup>4</sup>You have been a refuge for the poor,  
a refuge for the needy in distress,  
a hiding place from the storm,  
a shade from the heat.

When the breath of tyrants is like a winter<sup>a</sup> storm  
<sup>5</sup>or like heat in the desert,  
you subdue the roar of foreigners.  
Like heat shaded by a cloud,  
the tyrants' song falls silent.

<sup>6</sup>On this mountain, the LORD of heavenly forces will prepare for all peoples  
a rich feast, a feast of choice wines,  
of select foods rich in flavor, of choice wines well refined.

<sup>7</sup>He will swallow up on this mountain the veil that is veiling all peoples,  
the shroud enshrouding all nations.

<sup>8</sup>He will swallow up death<sup>f</sup> forever.  
The LORD God will wipe tears from every face;  
he will remove his people's disgrace from off the whole earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.

<sup>9</sup>They will say on that day,  
"Look! This is our God, for whom we have waited—  
and he has saved us!

This is the LORD, for whom we have waited;  
let's be glad and rejoice in his salvation!"

<sup>10</sup>The LORD's hand will indeed rest on this mountain.

Moab will be trampled down as straw is trampled into manure.

<sup>a</sup>Or wall <sup>f</sup>Heb *Maveth*

25:1-12 In contrast to Isaiah 24, most of Isaiah 25 celebrates divine faithfulness. Hymns of thanks surround a prophetic description of a universal banquet hosted by God on Mount Zion, where the temple stood.

25:1-5 A communal hymn of thanks for God's deliverance from tyrants.

25:1 *planned long ago*: God's plan has been a frequent theme in Isaiah; compare with Isaiah 5:19; 11:2; 14:26.

25:3-5 *tyrant nations*: The term "tyrant" is repeated three times in three verses (25:3, 4, 5). In Isaiah 13:11 and 49:25, the term refers to Babylon. The lack of specific referents here conveys the cycle of threat and deliverance recurring frequently in history, though the players may change.

25:4-5 *You have been a refuge*: The terms for "refuge" and "shelter" usually have negative associations in Isaiah (see Isa 23:4, 14; 28:15, 17; 30:2, 3). But they are frequent descriptions of God in the Psalms (e.g., Pss 14:6; 27:1; 28:8; 31:3, 5; 46:2). The extended images involving weather recall similar images in Isaiah 4:5-6.

25:6-10a In one of many expansive visions in Isaiah, God is imagined preparing a banquet not just for the elders on Mount Sinai (Exod 24; cf. note on Isa 24:23), nor even for

Judah, but for all the nations. This contrasts sharply with Isaiah 24:7-13, in which the wine dried up and merriment ceased.

25:8 *He will swallow up death forever*: This imagery reflects, and reverses, the mythological theme found in the story of the fertility god Baal, in which the underworld god Mot ("Death") either swallows Baal or threatens to do so, but is defeated. Baal's story recurs annually in relation to the seasons, but here it is said that God's swallowing of death is forever. This verse doesn't yet reflect belief in the resurrection of the dead, which came many centuries later. However, Paul employs it in his description of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:54. It is also paraphrased in Revelation 21:3-4.

25:9 *They will say on that day*: Compare with Isaiah 12:1, 4; 26:1. The grateful hymn that follows echoes many psalms (see Pss 35:9; 130:5; 118:24).

25:10 *The LORD's hand will indeed rest*: In contrast to the many references to God's hand extended to destroy (Isa 5:25; 9:11, 17, 21; 10:4; 14:27), now it comes to rest on *this mountain* (cf. Isa 25:6).

25:10b-12 *Moab will be trampled down*: These verses stand out not only because they are vicious but also

25:1 Ex 15:2;  
Ps 118:28  
25:3 Ps 22:23;  
Ps 46:10;  
Is 13:11;  
Eze 28:22;  
Rev 14:7  
25:4 Is 4:6,  
Is 14:32, Is 32:2  
25:6 Is 2:2,  
Is 55:1; Mt 6:11;  
Rev 19:9  
25:8 Is 35:10;  
Hos 13:14;  
1Co 15:54;  
Rev 7:17;  
Rev 21:4  
25:9 Ps 9:14;  
Is 8:17, Is 12:2,  
Is 26:8

25:11 Is 9:25,  
Is 14:26,  
Is 16:14

26:1 Is 12:1,  
Is 60:18

26:2 Ps 118:19,  
Ps 118:20

26:3 2Sa 22:31;  
Is 9:6, Is 57:19;  
Jer 17:7, Phi 4:7

26:6 Is 3:15,  
Is 28:3, Mal 4:3

26:9 Ps 63:1;  
Hos 5:15;  
Mt 6:33

- <sup>11</sup>When in it they spread out their hands  
as swimmers spread out their hands to swim,  
God will lay low their pride, even by the efforts of their hands.
- <sup>12</sup>The fortified towers of their<sup>a</sup> walls will be thrown down,  
will be leveled, will be brought down to the earth, to the dust.

### Trusting in God forever

**26** On that day, this song will be sung in the land of Judah:  
Ours is a strong city!

- God makes salvation its walls and ramparts.
- <sup>2</sup>Open the gates and let a righteous nation enter,  
a nation that keeps faith.
- <sup>3</sup>Those with sound thoughts you will keep in peace,  
in peace because they trust in you.
- <sup>4</sup>Trust in the LORD forever,  
for the LORD is a rock for all ages.
- <sup>5</sup>He has thrown down those living on high,  
and he will level the lofty town,  
leveling it down to the earth;  
he will bring it down to dust.
- <sup>6</sup>The feet trample it,  
the feet of the poor,  
the steps of the needy.
- <sup>7</sup>The way of the righteous is level;  
you clear a path for the righteous.
- <sup>8</sup>In the path of your justice, LORD, we wait for you;  
with all our being, we long for your name and your acclaim.
- <sup>9</sup>At night I long for you with my whole being;  
my spirit within me watches for you.
- When your judgments are at work in the earth,  
those living in the world learn righteousness.

<sup>a</sup>Or *your*

because they specify a place-name, otherwise completely lacking in Isaiah 24–27. They are likely a very late addition, or series of additions, to Isaiah's scroll, reflecting later sectarian rivalries.

25:11 *God will lay low their pride*: Compare with Isaiah 16:6.

25:12 *The fortified towers of their walls*: Vocabulary of judgment for general human pride in Isaiah 2:6–21 is reapplied here to Moab alone. The verses may reflect a specific conflict with Moabites that's otherwise unknown.

26:1–21 Isaiah 26 continues themes of Isaiah 24–25, including the fate of unnamed cities and the expectation that God will carry out justice, rescuing those who have suffered and punishing those who have inflicted suffering. Its language resembles that of several types of psalms. The passage can be viewed as consisting of three parts: 26:1–6 offers a celebration hymn; 26:7–18 is a prayer (or series of prayers) reflecting on righteousness and justice; and 26:19–21 (perhaps along with Isa 27:1) responds to the prayer with promises of justice. The chapter is more impressionistic than logical.

26:1 *On that day, this song will be sung*: an introduction to a hymn similar to those in Isaiah 12:1, 4; 25:9. Most likely, *that day* is the day of God's banquet, when the last of enemies will be vanquished and tears and disgrace will vanish.

26:1b–6 The hymn consists of lines reflecting several literary forms in the Psalms, named as follows.

26:1b *Ours is a strong city*: Compare with Psalms 46; 48.

26:2 *Open the gates*: Compare with Psalms 24:7–10; 118:19–20.

26:3 *Those with sound thoughts*: Compare with Psalm 112:7–8; Isaiah 32:17.

26:4 *Trust in the Lord forever*: Compare with Psalms 37; 115; 125.

26:5–6 *He has thrown down those living on high*: Compare with Isaiah 2:6–22; specifically the words against Moab in Isaiah 25:10–12.

26:7–18 A series of prayers. The tone and exact meaning of several prayers, and their relationships to each other, are unclear.

26:7 *The way of the righteous is level*: Compare with Isaiah 40:3–4; Proverbs 4:18, 26.

26:8 *In the path of your justice, Lord, we wait for you*: Compare with Isaiah 25:9; 40:14; Proverbs 2:8; 17:23. *your name and your acclaim*: or "remembrance." Compare with Exodus 3:15, which employs the same two nouns.

26:9–10 *At night I long for you*: Compare with Psalms 6:6; 77:2, 6. The speaker longs to see divine justice, teaching humans righteousness. Justice isn't fully realized until even the wicked recognize, to their dismay, the just order God has ordained. These verses reflect wisdom traditions.



- <sup>10</sup>When the wicked are favored, they don't learn righteousness; even among those who do right they do wrong, and they fail to see the LORD's majesty.
- <sup>11</sup>LORD, your hand is lifted up, but they don't see. Let them see and shrink back because of your zeal for your people; your burning anger that consumes your enemies.
- <sup>12</sup>LORD, grant us peace, because all that we have done has been your doing.
- <sup>13</sup>LORD our God, other masters besides you have ruled us, but we will profess your name alone.
- <sup>14</sup>The dead don't live; ghosts don't rise. Indeed, you have punished and destroyed them, and abolished all memory of them.
- <sup>15</sup>You've enlarged the nation, LORD. You've enlarged the nation; you are glorified. You've expanded all the land's boundaries.
- <sup>16</sup>LORD, in distress they sought you out; they poured out prayers to you when you disciplined them.
- <sup>17</sup>As a pregnant woman close to childbirth is in labor pains, crying out in her pangs, so were we because of you, LORD.
- <sup>18</sup>We were pregnant, we writhed, but we gave birth to wind. We have achieved no victories on earth; the inhabitants of the earth never fall.
- <sup>19</sup>Your dead will live, their<sup>c</sup> corpses will rise, and those who dwell in the dust will shout for joy. Your shadow is a shadow of light, but you will bring down the ghosts into the underworld.
- <sup>20</sup>Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut your doors behind you. Take cover, for in a little while the fury will be over.
- <sup>21</sup>Look! The LORD is going out from his place to bring the iniquity of the ruler of the earth down upon him. The earth will uncover its blood and will conceal its slain no longer.

### Scattered people return

**27**On that day, the LORD will take a great sword, harsh and mighty, and will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the writhing serpent, and will kill the dragon that is in the sea. <sup>2</sup>On that day: Sing about a delightful vineyard!

<sup>c</sup>Or my

26:12 *grant us peace*: Compare with Isaiah 26:3.

26:14-18 *The dead don't live*: The meaning and logical sequence of these verses are difficult to understand. It's unclear whether the observation concerning the permanence of death is a complaint or a celebration of the fact that "other masters" will die (Isa 26:13). The labor imagery in the description of fruitless prayer in Isaiah 16:17-18 differs from that of other passages concerning labor—it isn't fear but futility that characterizes their pain. In contrast to the claim in Isaiah 26:14, 26:19 offers a reversal: "Your dead will live."

26:19-21 The rest of this mysterious chapter promises that divine justice will come soon: The dead will live

(26:19); justice will be revealed (26:20-21). If Isaiah 27:1 is a response to the prayers of Isaiah 26, it reassures that God will overpower the ancient enemy once and for all. Scholars disagree over whether the language of resurrection in Isaiah 26:14, 19 should be taken literally or metaphorically. Individual resurrection is a concept developing late in post-exilic times (after 200 BCE), and it appears clearly in the OT only in Daniel 12:2.

26:21 *The LORD is going out from his place*: Compare with Micah 1:3.

27:1-13 The relationship of this chapter to the preceding three is unclear. While Isaiah 24; 25; 26 each used the formula "on that day" only once, Isaiah 27 uses it four times

26:10 Hos 11:7  
 26:11 Ps 10:12;  
 Is 5:12, Is 5:24,  
 Is 44:18;  
 Heb 10:27  
 26:12 Dt 30:6;  
 Ps 29:11,  
 Ps 68:28,  
 Ps 119:165;  
 Is 9:6  
 26:13 Is 2:8  
 26:15 Is 9:3,  
 Is 33:17, Is 54:2  
 26:17 Is 13:8,  
 Is 21:3,  
 Jn 16:21  
 26:18 Ps 17:14;  
 Is 33:11  
 26:19 Is 25:8;  
 Eze 37:1;  
 Dn 12:2;  
 Hos 13:14  
 26:20 Is 10:25  
 26:21 Job 16:18;  
 Is 13:11; Mi 1:3  
 27:1 Job 26:13;  
 Ps 74:13,  
 Ps 74:14;  
 Is 51:9;  
 Eze 29:3

27:6 Is 37:31;  
Hos 14:5;  
Hos 14:6

- <sup>3</sup>I, the LORD, am its guardian.  
Every moment I water it;  
night and day I guard it from attack.
- <sup>4</sup>I'm not angry,  
but if it yields thorns and thistles for me,  
I will march to battle against it;  
I will torch it completely.
- <sup>5</sup>Or let them<sup>a</sup> cling to me for refuge;  
let them make peace with me;  
let them make peace with me.
- <sup>6</sup>In coming days,<sup>v</sup>  
Jacob will take root;  
Israel will blossom and sprout  
and fill the whole world with produce.



A vineyard (Isa 27:2-6)

iStockPhoto

<sup>a</sup>Or it <sup>v</sup>Or those coming

(27:1, 2, 12, 13; cf. 27:6). Because it is the only chapter of the four that focuses almost exclusively on Israel and because of differences between the city in 27:10 and other cities in the section, many scholars consider it an even later expansion than Isaiah 24–26.

27:1 This verse may end the previous section, may introduce what is to come, or may stand independently. The myth of a divine battle with powerful watery opponents (here called Leviathan the serpent, and the dragon in the sea) underlies this verse. A close parallel is found in Canaanite stories of Baal, in which Mot (“Death”) taunts, “Just as you struck down *Ltn*, the fleeing serpent, as you prepared an end for the twisting serpent, the ruler with seven heads, thus you also will be struck and will sink down.” A similar battle with Leviathan appears in Psalm 74:13–14. Job 26:13 recalls God’s piercing of the fleeing serpent, and Isaiah

51:9–10 recalls the Lord’s piercing of the dragon. While most scriptural recollections of this mythological motif place the battle in the past, Isaiah 27:1 presents it as the culminating triumph of the Lord’s struggle, similar to the swallowing of death forever (Isa 25:8). The Lord’s victory subdues primordial chaos and all its worldly manifestations.

27:2–6 *Sing about a delightful vineyard!*: This poem echoes Isaiah’s earlier vineyard song in Isaiah 5:1–7. Much of the vocabulary is the same. But here the Lord’s management style differs, as does the outcome. Isaiah 5 emphasized preparation. In contrast, Isaiah 27 emphasizes ongoing husbandry: watering *Every moment*, guarding *night and day*.

27:6 *Jacob will take root*: For the image of Israel as a vine, compare with Isaiah 37:31; Exodus 15:17; Hosea 10:1; Jeremiah 2:21; Psalm 80:8–19. See Hosea 14:5–7, in which God causes the vine to flourish.

<sup>7</sup>Did God strike Israel as he struck those who struck him?

Was Israel killed as his killers were killed?<sup>w</sup>

<sup>8</sup>By frightening Jerusalem, by sending her away,<sup>x</sup> you contended with her, expelling with a fierce blast on the day of the east wind.

<sup>9</sup>By this Jacob's guilt is reconciled, and this was how his sins were finally removed: he made all the altar stones like shattered chalk, sacred poles<sup>y</sup> and incense altars that couldn't stand.

<sup>10</sup>The fortified city lies alone, a hut forsaken, abandoned like the desert. Calves graze there; they lie down there and feed on its boughs.

<sup>11</sup>When its branches are dry, they are broken. Women come and set fire to it. These people have no understanding; therefore, their maker won't have compassion; the one who formed them won't be gracious.

<sup>12</sup>On that day, the LORD will beat grain from the channel of the Euphrates up to the Valley of Egypt. You will be collected, Israelites, one by one. <sup>13</sup>On that day, a great trumpet will be played. Those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come. They will bow to the LORD at his holy mountain in Jerusalem.

### Judgment on Ephraim and Judah

**28** Oh, the majestic garland of Ephraim's drunks and the fading flower of its splendid beauty on the head that flows with perfume<sup>a</sup> of those hammered with wine.

<sup>2</sup>Look! The Lord has someone who is powerful and strong; like a hailstorm, a disastrous tempest, like a downpour of mighty, overflowing waters, he can level them to the ground with his hand.

<sup>3</sup>The majestic garland of Ephraim's drunks will be trampled underfoot.

<sup>4</sup>The withered flower, which is a thing of beauty<sup>a</sup> as it sits on the head of those bloated with fat,<sup>b</sup> will be like an early fig before the summer harvest: whoever sees it swallows it as soon as it is in hand.

<sup>w</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>x</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>y</sup>Heb *asherim*, perhaps objects devoted to the goddess Asherah <sup>a</sup>DSS (1QIsa)  
<sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Or at the head of the fat valley

27:7-9 *Did God strike Israel*: Translation and interpretation of these verses are extremely uncertain. They appear to review once again the story line of God's using other nations to inflict harsh punishment on Israel for ultimately redemptive and instructive purposes; compare with Isaiah 10:5, 12. The implied answer to the rhetorical questions of Isaiah 27:7 is "Certainly not!"

27:8 *east wind*: usually associated with destruction, particularly with Assyrian or Babylonian exile (Hos 13:15; Jer 18:17). The verse describes exile as *sending... away* (cf. Gen 3:23; 21:14; Deut 22:19; 24:1-4; Jer 15:1; 24:5; 29:20; Isa 50:1).

27:9 For similar descriptions of the destruction of illicit sanctuaries by King Josiah of Judah, see 2 Kings 23:15; 1 Chronicles 34:4, 7.

27:10-11 *The fortified city lies alone*: This image recollects Isaiah's many portrayals of cities that were once strong but are now deserted (Isa 1:7-8; 6:11-13; 13:19-22; 17:1-9; 23:13-14; 24:10-13; 25:2; 26:5-6). Similar language describes Jerusalem in Lamentations 1:1-4.

27:12-13 Restoration from exile is imagined as a harvest

extending from Assyria to Egypt. When a great trumpet sounds, Israel will be gathered to God's holy mountain in Jerusalem (cf. Exod 19:13-19).

28:1-13 Isaiah's words first describe the vain spectacle of the leaders of Israel (Ephraim), whom he has previously accused of being "wine-swaggering warriors" (Isa 5:22; cf. Isa 5:11-12; 9:9).

28:1-4 *Oh, the majestic garland*: Isaiah 28; 29; 30; 31; 33 each begins with the prophetic word "hoy" ("oh" or "woe," translated elsewhere as "doom"), while Isaiah 32 begins with a contrasting term. The prophet sarcastically describes the leaders' drunken partying. The party may be a Canaanite festival called *marzeah*, which was celebrated by the affluent and characterized by flowers, perfume, oil, rich food, and plenty of wine (cf. Amos 6:7). The prophet isn't concerned with the meaning of the ritual, but offended by its incompatibility with gratitude toward God and generosity toward the poor.

28:2 *mighty, overflowing waters*: The attacking enemy has frequently been described as an overflowing flood. See Isaiah 5:30; 8:6-8; 25:4; 28:17; 30:30; 17:12.

27:11 Dt 32:28; Is 1:3  
28:1 Is 5:11; Is 28:3; Is 28:7; Hos 7:5  
28:2 Is 6:7; Is 30:30; Eze 13:11

28:7 Lv 10:9;  
Prv 31:4;  
Is 3:12; Is 5:22;  
Hos 4:11  
28:9 Ps 131:2;  
Jer 6:10

28:10  
2Ch 36:15;  
2Ch 36:16;  
Neh 9:30;  
Is 28:13;  
Jn 21:15

28:11 Dt 28:49;  
Is 33:19;  
Jer 5:15;  
Eze 3:5;  
1Co 14:21

28:12 Is 11:10;  
Is 30:15;  
Jer 6:16;  
Mt 11:28;  
Mt 11:29

28:13 Is 8:15;  
Mt 21:44  
28:14 Is 28:22;  
Is 29:20

28:15 Is 8:8;  
Is 28:18

<sup>5</sup>On that day, the LORD of heavenly forces will be a splendid garland and a beautiful wreath for the people who survive, <sup>6</sup>and a spirit of justice for the one who sits in judgment, and a strength for those who repel the assault at the gate.

<sup>7</sup>These also stagger from wine and stumble from beer:

priest and prophet stagger from beer;  
they are confused by wine;  
they stray on account of beer;  
they err when receiving visions;  
they stumble when making judgments.

<sup>8</sup>All the tables are covered with vomit;  
filth overruns the place.

<sup>9</sup>To whom will God teach knowledge?

To whom will he explain the message?

To those just weaned from milk?

To those who have hardly outgrown the breast?

<sup>10</sup>It is “tsav letsav, tsav lestav; qav leqav, qav leqav,”<sup>c</sup>  
a little of this, a little of that.

<sup>11</sup>With derisive speech and a foreign tongue,  
he will speak to this people.

<sup>12</sup>He has said to them,  
“This is the place of rest;  
give rest to the weary;  
this is the place of repose”;  
but they refused to listen.

<sup>13</sup>So the LORD’s word will be for them:  
“tsav letsav, tsav letsav; qav leqav, qav leqav,”  
a little of this, a little of that.

So that they will go and stagger backward,  
they will be broken, snared, and captured.

### ***The covenant with death overturned***

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, hear the LORD’s word,  
you scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem.

<sup>15</sup>You said, “We’ve cut a deal with death,<sup>d</sup>  
with the underworld” we made a pact.

When the overflowing flood passes through, it won’t reach us;  
for we have made lies our hiding place,  
and in falsehood we take shelter.”

<sup>c</sup>A Hebrew version of baby talk or gibberish <sup>d</sup>Heb *Maveth* <sup>e</sup>Heb *Sheol*

28:5-6 In contrast to the party garlands, God will be the garland adorning the survivors, and the society will be characterized by justice and safety (cf. Isa 4:2-6).

28:7-8 *priest and prophet stagger from beer*: Even the religious leaders are too drunk to perceive their fate. Like their reeling drunkenness, descriptions circle round and round the same terms: They stagger with wine, stumble from beer, stagger from beer, are confused (or ironically swallowed) by wine; they stray from beer, stagger in their visions (the verb is the same as was used of wine and beer), and stumble even when engaged in court decisions (cf. Hos 4:4-6).

28:9 *To whom will God teach knowledge?*: The subject for the pronoun “he” in Hebrew is disputed. Some think that the Lord is the subject of the verbs on teaching or explaining. Others understand this question as a sarcastic retort or quotation concerning the prophet by those he is confronting.

28:10 *tsav letsav*: The Hebrew is reproduced as sounding like the babbling of a baby (see Isa 28:9) or like a foreigner: who can’t be understood. Those who refuse to understand when the prophet speaks for God will end up being delivered a message at sword point—by the Assyrian invaders (cf. Isa 33:19, which renders the intent explicit).

28:11-12 *With derisive speech*: Or “with stammering speech,” as in Isaiah 33:19. With a somewhat different meaning Paul quotes this passage in 1 Corinthians 14:21.

28:14 *you scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem*: The early part of this chapter was clearly aimed at the northern kingdom of Israel (Ephraim). But now Jerusalem’s leadership is accused of similar defiance.

28:15 *We’ve cut a deal with death*: The prophet here strategically misquotes words he attributes to Jerusalem’s leadership, who attempted to form an alliance with Egypt and its pharaoh in opposition to Assyria (see Isa 30:1-7; 31:1-3; 36:6). The prophet considers this a deal not with Egypt but

**Prophecies during Hezekiah's Reign** A new section begins at Isaiah 28:1. Language similar to that in Isaiah 1–12 returns, criticizing Isaiah's contemporaries in Israel and Judah. As in Isaiah 1–12, Isaiah's own prophecies are added to by later writers.

The circumstances in Isaiah 28–31 date from the reign of King Ahaz's son Hezekiah, and lead up to the Assyrian crisis in 701 BCE. Isaiah criticizes Jerusalem's leaders for trusting Egypt to bail them out when they refuse to pay taxes to Assyria: "Doom to those going down to Egypt for help! They rely on horses, trust in chariots because they are many, and on riders because they are very strong. But they don't look to the holy one of Israel; they don't seek the LORD" (Isa 31:1). In Isaiah 32, just and wise kingship is described, contrasting with the leadership the prophet is criticizing.

Such criticisms stand in tension with the admiring stories of Hezekiah and his administration that will follow in Isaiah 36–39. Together these two sections offer two distinct views of the events of the day, in which most of Judah was destroyed, but Jerusalem itself was spared.

28:16 Ps 118:22;  
Ac 4:11;  
Ro 9:33;  
1Co 3:11;  
1Pt 2:6  
28:17 2Ki 21:13  
28:19 2Ki 24:2;  
Job 18:11;  
Is 50:4  
28:22 Is 10:22,  
Is 10:23,  
Is 28:14  
28:24 Ecc 3:2;  
Hos 10:11  
28:25 Ex 9:32;  
Is 28:27;  
Eze 4:9;  
Mt 23:23

<sup>16</sup>Therefore, the LORD God says:  
Look! I'm laying in Zion a stone,  
a tested stone, a valuable cornerstone, a sure foundation:  
the one who trusts won't tremble.

<sup>17</sup>I will make justice the measuring line  
and righteousness the plumb line.  
But hail will sweep away the hiding place of lies,  
and water will overflow the shelter.

<sup>18</sup>Your deal with death<sup>f</sup> will be dissolved,  
and your pact with the grave<sup>g</sup> won't stand.  
The rushing flood: when it passes through,  
you will be annihilated by it.

<sup>19</sup>Every time it passes through it will take you,  
for morning by morning it will pass,  
by day and by night.  
It will be nothing but terror to understand the message.

<sup>20</sup>The bed is too short to stretch out,  
and the shroud is too narrow to cover oneself.

<sup>21</sup>Just as on Mount Perazim, the LORD will rise up;  
as in the Gibeon Valley he will rage to do his deed—strange is his deed!—  
And to work his work—foreign is his work!

<sup>22</sup>So now stop your scoffing, or your chains will be tightened,  
because destruction has been ordered—I have heard it!—  
by the LORD God of heavenly forces against the whole land.

**Plowing and threshing**

<sup>23</sup>Listen and hear my voice;  
pay attention and hear my word:  
<sup>24</sup>Does the plowman plow without stopping for planting,  
opening and harrowing their ground?  
<sup>25</sup>When he has smoothed its surface,  
doesn't he scatter fennel,<sup>h</sup> and sow cumin,

<sup>f</sup>Heb *Maveth* <sup>g</sup>Heb *Sheol* <sup>h</sup>Or *black cumin*

with death. They assume that what already happened to Ephraim—the overflowing flood (cf. Isa 28:2)—won't happen to Judah. But see Isaiah 28:18.

28:16 *the one who trusts won't tremble*: Or "won't act hurriedly." The prophet's message to Judah's leadership is similar to that given during the previous generation's military crisis, when Israel and Aram threatened Ahaz (Isa 7:1–9). This verse is combined with Isaiah 8:14 and reapplied to Jesus in Romans 9:33. In 1 Peter 2:6–8 it is also combined with Psalm 118:22.

28:21 *Mount Perazim . . . Gibeon Valley*: references to earlier victories granted by God (see Josh 10:7–13; 2 Sam 5:20, 25). 28:23–29 The chapter concludes with a parable from agricultural life. Unlike the plant images at the chapter's beginning, this one describes wisdom. When sowing seed and when harvesting plants, farmers use methods appropriate to each crop. Likewise, the prophet explains, divine actions that may seem harsh are intended to yield the greatest benefit, so that Jerusalem will become a fruitful field for God's own purposes.

29:1 2Sa 5:9;  
Is 1:14  
29:4 Is 2:11,  
Is 4:19  
29:8 Is 29:7  
29:9 Is 19:14,  
Is 51:21

- and plant wheat and barley in their places,  
and spelt as a border?  
**26** They are properly ordered;  
their God directs them.<sup>1</sup>  
**27** Fennel<sup>l</sup> isn't threshed with a threshing sledge,  
nor is a cart wheel rolled over cumin,  
but fennel<sup>k</sup> is beaten with a staff, and cumin with a rod.  
**28** Bread grain is crushed,  
but the thresher<sup>l</sup> doesn't thresh it forever.  
He drives the cart wheel over it;  
he spreads it out but doesn't crush it.  
**29** This also comes from the LORD of heavenly forces,  
who gives wondrous counsel and increases wisdom.

### **Ariel besieged but spared**

- 29** Oh, Ariel, Ariel,  
town where David encamped!  
Year by year, let the festivals come around—  
<sup>2</sup>but I will oppress Ariel.  
There will be mourning and lamentation;  
she will be like an Ariel to me.  
<sup>3</sup>I will surround you like a wall,  
and I will lay a siege against you with assault towers,  
and I will raise up siegeworks against you.  
<sup>4</sup>You will be brought down;  
from the ground you will speak;  
from low in the dust your speech will come.  
Your voice will be like a ghost's from the earth;  
from the dust your words will whisper.  
<sup>5</sup>But your many enemies will be like fine dust,  
the terrible horde like passing chaff.  
Suddenly, in an instant, <sup>6</sup>the LORD of heavenly forces will come to you  
with thunder, earthquake, and a mighty voice,  
with whirlwind, tempest, and flames of devouring fire.  
<sup>7</sup>The horde of nations fighting against Ariel,  
and all who make war on her and her fortress and besiege her,  
will be like a dream, a vision of the night.  
<sup>8</sup>It will be like when a hungry person dreams of eating  
but wakes up and the mouth is empty.  
Or when a thirsty person dreams of drinking  
but wakes up and has a dry throat.  
So will it be for all the horde of nations  
who fight against Mount Zion.  
<sup>9</sup>Be shocked and stunned;  
blind yourselves; be blind!

<sup>1</sup>Or waters them <sup>l</sup>Or black cumin <sup>k</sup>Or black cumin <sup>l</sup>DSS (1QIsa\*)

29:1-8 *Oh, Ariel, Ariel:* In a dreamlike vision, the prophet describes a siege against Jerusalem (here nicknamed Ariel) that humbles the city until it is rescued by God.

29:1 *town where David encamped:* As Isaiah 29:2 confirms, the phrase refers to David's attack on the Jebusite city (2 Sam 5:6-9). It recalls that the city has changed hands before and could do so again.

29:3 *surround you like a wall:* This may refer to Sennacherib's failed attack in 701 BCE.

29:4 *You will be brought down... from low in the dust:* For similar language concerning the humbling of the overconfident, see Isaiah 2:6-21.

29:5 *like fine dust:* It isn't clear here whether the comparison to fine dust means that the enemies are numerous or that they are insubstantial. Later verses will clarify that insubstantial is meant. *passing chaff:* or "flying chaff."

29:7-8 *like a dream:* The threatening vision proves itself to have been only Jerusalem's nightmare, while the enemy's dream of gain remains unfulfilled.

29:9-12 *Be shocked and stunned:* At the beginning of a series of related sayings about human senselessness, the subject of drunkenness (Isa 28:1-8) reappears. Only here it isn't wine that has dulled senses. Rather, a divine trance has overpowered the prophets (cf. Gen 2:21; 15:12; 1 Sam

Be drunk, but not on wine;  
stagger, but not on account of beer!

<sup>10</sup>The LORD has poured on you a spirit of deep sleep,  
and has shut your eyes, you prophets,  
and covered your heads, you seers.

<sup>11</sup>This entire vision has become for you like the words of a sealed scroll. When they give it to one who can read, saying, "Read this," that one will say, "I can't, because it's sealed." <sup>12</sup>And when the scroll is given to one who can't read, saying, "Read this," that one will say, "I can't read."

**The wisdom of their wise**

<sup>13</sup>The Lord says:

Since these people turn toward me with their mouths,  
and honor me with lip service while their heart is distant from me,  
and their fear of me is just a human command that has been memorized,

<sup>14</sup>I will go on doing amazing things to these people,  
shocking and startling things.

The wisdom of their wise will perish,  
and the discernment of their discerning will be hidden.

<sup>15</sup>Doom to those who hide their plan deep, away from the LORD,  
whose deeds are in the dark,  
who say, "Who sees us? Who knows us?"

<sup>16</sup>You have everything backward!  
Should the potter be thought of as clay?  
Should what is made say of its maker,  
"He didn't make me?"  
Should what is shaped say of the one who shaped it,  
"He doesn't understand"?

<sup>17</sup>In just a little while won't Lebanon become farmland once again,  
and the farmland be considered a forest?

<sup>18</sup>On that day: The deaf will hear the words of a scroll and,  
freed from dimness and darkness, the eyes of the blind will see.

<sup>19</sup>The poor will again find joy in the LORD,  
and the neediest of people will rejoice in the holy one of Israel.

<sup>20</sup>The tyrant will be no more, the mocker will perish,  
and all who plot evil will be eliminated:

29:10 Ps 69:23;  
Is 6:9, Is 6:10,  
Is 44:18;  
Ro 11:8

29:11 Is 8:16;  
Dn 12:4,  
Dn 12:9;  
Mt 13:11;  
Rev 5:1

29:13 Is 58:2;  
Jer 12:2;  
Eze 33:31;  
Mt 15:8,  
Mt 15:9

29:14 Is 6:9,  
Is 28:21;  
Jer 49:7;  
Hab 1:5;  
1Co 1:19

29:15 Ps 10:11,  
Ps 94:7; Is 30:1,  
Is 47:10;  
Eze 8:12

29:16 Is 10:15,  
Is 45:9, Is 64:8,  
Ro 9:20,  
Ro 9:21

29:17 Ps 107:33;  
Is 32:15

29:18 Is 32:3,  
Is 35:5; Mt 11:5

26:12; Job 4:13). The spirit God pours out doesn't result in understanding, as one might expect (Num 11:25; Joel 2:28-29), but senselessness. As in Isaiah 6:9-10, human inattention has led God to remove the ability to hear. Failure to comprehend is compared in 29:11-12 to refusal on the part of some, and inability on the part of others, to read the words plainly written on a scroll. Paul blends 29:10 with Deuteronomy 29:4 in Romans 11:8 to explain Jewish resistance to his message.

29:13-14 Isaiah and other prophets frequently criticize their contemporaries for worship that's empty of ethical responsibility (Isa 1:10-17; 58:1-14; Amos 4:4-5; Hos 10:1-2; Mic 3:11; 6:6-8). Matthew 15:8-9 and Mark 7:6-7 show Jesus quoting this passage when similarly criticizing religious leaders—a critique that finds a home wherever piety ignores justice. Paul uses 29:14 in his argument in 1 Corinthians 1:19 that human wisdom can't reason its way to God.

29:15-16 *hide their plan deep*: Here, as in other parts of Isaiah, the topic is a "plan." This isn't the divine plan as in Isaiah 5:19; 11:2; 14:26; but the human plot, which is opposed to God's ways (as in Isa 8:10; 19:3, 11; 30:1) and is destined

to be confounded by God. What plan the prophet accuses Judah's leaders of hiding isn't yet clear, but see Isaiah 30:1-2 and 31:1.

29:16 *Should the potter be thought of as clay?*: A wide-spread image in scripture is of God making humans and the world as a potter makes clay pots (Gen 2:7, 19; Pss 33:15; 74:17; 94:9; 95:5; 103:14; 104:26; Isa 27:11; Job 10:9; 33:6). If it's unthinkable for clay to criticize its maker, it's also absurd for humans to question God. This image explicitly recurs twice more in Isaiah 45:9 and 64:8 (see also Jer 18:1-12). In Romans 9:20 Paul cites this verse to argue for God's mysterious wisdom.

29:17-24 A series of promising sayings attached to harsh critiques. These aren't addressed to the leadership but to the powerless: the deaf, blind, poor, needy, and innocent. *won't Lebanon become farmland*: Land devastated by war will become fertile and fruitful once again (cf. Isa 32:15; 37:24; Ps 72:16).

29:18-21: *The deaf will hear*: Deafness and blindness appear frequently in Isaiah, sometimes as physical disabilities (Isa 35:5) and other times as willful refusal to pay attention (Isa 6:9-10).

29:21 Am 5:10,  
Am 5:12  
29:22 Is 41:8,  
Is 51:2  
29:24 Is 28:7,  
Is 32:4  
30:1 Is 1:2,  
Is 29:15, Is 31:1  
30:2 Is 31:1,  
Is 36:6,  
Eze 17:15  
30:3 Is 20:5,  
Is 30:5, Is 36:6  
30:4 Is 19:11  
30:5 Is 20:5,  
Is 30:7, Is 31:1;  
Jer 2:36  
30:6 Dt 8:15;  
1 Ki 10:2;  
Is 14:29

- <sup>21</sup>all who incriminate others wrongly,  
who entrap the judge in the gate,  
and pointlessly postpone justice for the innocent.
- <sup>22</sup>Therefore, proclaims the LORD, the God of<sup>m</sup> the house of Jacob,  
who redeemed Abraham:  
Jacob won't be ashamed now,  
and his face won't grow pale now.
- <sup>23</sup>When he sees his children among them,  
the work of my hands,  
proclaiming my name holy,  
they will make holy the holy one of Jacob,  
and stand in awe of Israel's God.
- <sup>24</sup>Those who wander in spirit will have understanding,  
and those who grumble will gain insight.

### Help from Egypt is futile

- 30** Doom to you, rebellious children, says the LORD,  
who make a plan, which is not mine;  
who weave a plot,<sup>n</sup> but not by my spirit, piling up sin on sin;  
<sup>2</sup> setting out to go down to Egypt without consulting me,  
taking refuge in Pharaoh's refuge and hiding in Egypt's shadow.  
<sup>3</sup> Pharaoh's refuge will become your shame,  
hiding in Egypt's shadow your disgrace.  
<sup>4</sup> Though their officials are in Zoan,  
and their messengers reach Hanes,  
<sup>5</sup> all will become shamed because of a people who can't assist them.  
They are no help; they are no profit;  
rather, shame and disgrace.
- <sup>6</sup>An oracle about the beasts in the arid southern plain.  
Through a land of distress and danger,  
lioness and roaring<sup>o</sup> lion, viper and flying serpent,  
they will carry their wealth on donkeys' shoulders  
and their treasures on camels' humps to a people who won't profit,  
<sup>7</sup> for Egypt's help is utterly worthless.  
Therefore, I call her Rahab Who Sits Still.<sup>p</sup>
- <sup>8</sup> Now go, write it before them on a tablet,  
inscribe it on a scroll,  
so in the future it will endure as a witness.

<sup>m</sup>Or to <sup>n</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>o</sup>Or from them <sup>p</sup>Or Rahab the silent

29:23 *proclaiming my name holy*: Isaiah's preferred name for God, "holy one of Israel," is the subject of a pun in this verse, which repeats the word "holy" three times. When Jesus teaches his disciples to pray in Matthew 6:9, "uphold the holiness of your name" echoes the meaning of this verse very closely.

30:1–31:9 Explicit criticism of Hezekiah's administration. Visions of the future in which God deals with tyrants and restores safety for those buffeted by political storms are added to criticism of seeking an alliance with Egypt against Assyria.

30:1 *rebellious children*: This is a very serious accusation; compare with the sentence of execution for a rebellious son in Deuteronomy 21:18, and the accusations of rebellion in Isaiah 1:4, 23. *who make a plan*: Divine and human plans consistently clash in Isaiah. The prophet says human plans won't stand (Isa 8:10; 19:3; 29:15–16), but God's plans will (Isa 14:24–27; 23:9).

30:2 *refuge... shadow*: The expedition seeks from Egypt and Egypt's ruler what the psalmists seek in God alone.: They seek "refuge" (Pss 27:1; 28:8; 31:2, 4; cf. Isa 17:10; 25:4) in the "shadow" (Pss 36:7; 57:1) of Egypt.

30:4 *Zoan*: See note on Isaiah 19:11–15. Psalm 78:12, 43 placed God's signs and wonders against the Egyptians in Zoan, the same place where Judeans are now seeking Egypt's power instead of God's. *Hanes*: a second Egyptian city, whose location is uncertain.

30:6 *flying serpent*: Compare with Isaiah 6:2; 14:29.

30:7 *Rahab Who Sits Still*: The mocking name associates Egypt with Rahab, a mythical beast parallel to the chaos monster Leviathan (see note on Isa 27:1; cf. Isa 51:9; Ps 89:10; Job 26:12). In Psalm 87:4 the name Rahab stands for "Egypt."

30:8 *write it before them on a tablet*: See Isaiah 8:1, 16. It isn't clear what the prophet is to write, whether it is Egypt's name (Isa 38:7), the warning against seeking Egypt's help,



30:9 Is 30:1  
 30:10 Jer 11:21;  
 Am 2:12;  
 Am 7:13;  
 Ro 16:18; 2Ti 4:3  
 30:15 Is 28:12;  
 Hos 14:1  
 30:17 Lv 26:8,  
 Lv 26:36;  
 Dt 28:25;  
 Dt 32:30  
 30:18 2Pr 3:9,  
 2Pr 3:15

- <sup>9</sup>These are rebellious people, lying children,  
 children unwilling to hear the LORD's teaching,  
<sup>10</sup>who say to the seers, "Don't foresee,"  
 and to the visionaries, "Don't report truthful visions;  
 tell us flattering things;  
 envision deceptions;  
<sup>11</sup>get out of the way;  
 step off the path;  
 let's have no more 'holy one of Israel.'"

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, the holy one of Israel says:

Because you reject this word

and trust in oppression and cunning and rely on them,

- <sup>13</sup>your sin will be like a crack in a high wall; it bulges, about to fall:  
 suddenly, in an instant, it breaks!

- <sup>14</sup>Its breaking is like the breaking of a storage jar that is totally shattered.

No piece from among its fragments

will be large enough to take fire from a hearth,

or to dip water from a cistern.

- <sup>15</sup>Therefore, the LORD God,  
 the holy one of Israel, says:

In return and rest you will be saved;

quietness and trust will be your strength—  
 but you refused.

- <sup>16</sup>You said,

"No! We'll flee on horses"—

therefore, you will indeed flee—

"and we'll ride off; on swift steeds we will ride"—

therefore, your pursuers will be swift.

- <sup>17</sup>One thousand will flee at the threat of one,

and at the threat of five you will flee,

until you are left like a flagstaff on a mountaintop,  
 like a flag on a hill.

- <sup>18</sup>Nonetheless, the LORD is waiting to be merciful to you,  
 and will rise up to show you compassion.

The LORD is a God of justice;

happy are all who wait for him.

or the criticisms of rebelliousness that follow. Writing such as this may allow future generations to confirm the prophet's warnings.

30:9 *rebellious people*: The accusation that they are *unwilling to hear* the divine word concerning rest and repose was already sounded at Isaiah 28:12, and recurs in Isaiah 30:15.

30:10 "*Don't foresee*": Ironically, the words Isaiah imputes to rebellious Judeans seeking to keep seers from truth-telling echo those of God in Isaiah 6:9, "look carefully, but don't comprehend."

30:12 *Therefore, the holy one of Israel says*: The prophet immediately defies the people's refusal in Isaiah 30:11 to hear any more about the "holy one of Israel." *trust in oppression and cunning*: The connection between resorting to Egypt and resorting to oppression has already been made in Isaiah 28:17, where justice and righteousness enter the debate over the deals the leadership is cutting. It was also evident in Isaiah 29:18-21, where the vision of restorative reversals follows criticism of hiding plans from God.  
 30:13 *like a crack in a high wall*: The word for "wall" used

here is the same as in Isaiah 22:11, where the prophet criticized the policy of destroying houses to build up the city's defensive wall. While a crack may seem like an insignificant flaw, it can be the beginning of destruction for a city wall and for all who rely on its protection.

30:14 *breaking of a storage jar*: The city's defense wall will be no stronger than a clay pot. Trusting flawed policies for protection while removing the protections God intended for the poor results in the loss of all in which the wealthy trusted.

30:15 *quietness and trust will be your strength*: Trust in God is advocated not simply as individual piety but as a national alternative to political maneuvering, strengthened by the infrastructure of societal justice. "Strength" often describes God's mighty deeds for Israel (Pss 54:1; 66:7). The position being advocated isn't compliance with Assyria, but trust in divine defense (cf. Isa 36-37). This inviting saying is abruptly shattered by the final clause, *but you refused*, repeating the accusation of Isaiah 30:9 (cf. Isa 28:12).

30:17 *One thousand will flee*: See Leviticus 26:8, 17, 36; Deuteronomy 32:30.

30:19 Ps 50:15;  
Is 58:9, Is 65:24;  
Mt 7:7

30:20 1Ki 22:27;  
Ps 69:1, Ps 74:9,  
Ps 127:2;  
Am 8:11

30:21 Is 42:16

30:23 Lv 26:4,  
Lv 26:5,  
Is 32:20

30:25 Is 2:15,  
Is 41:18, Il 3:18

30:26 Is 60:19,  
Is 60:20;  
Rev 21:23

30:27 Is 10:5

30:30 Josh  
10:11

30:33 2Ki 23:10

### *This is the way*

<sup>19</sup>People in Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. God will certainly be merciful to you. Hearing the sound of your outcry, God will answer you. <sup>20</sup>Though the Lord gives you the bread of distress and the water of oppression, your teacher will no longer hide, but you will see your teacher. <sup>21</sup>If you stray to the right or the left, you will hear a word that comes from behind you: "This is the way; walk in it." <sup>22</sup>You will defile your silver-plated idols and your gold-covered priestly vest,<sup>a</sup> and you will scatter them like menstrual rags. "Get out," you will say to them.

<sup>23</sup>God will provide rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food the ground produces will be rich and abundant. On that day, your cattle will graze in large pastures. <sup>24</sup>The oxen and donkeys that are working the ground will eat tasty feed spread for them with shovel and fork.

<sup>25</sup>On every lofty mountain, and on every high hill, streams will run with water on the day of the great massacre, when the towers fall. <sup>26</sup>The light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter—like the light of seven days—on the day that the LORD bandages the people's brokenness and heals the wounds inflicted by his blows.

### *Assyria punished*

<sup>27</sup>Look there! The LORD is coming from far away;  
his anger blazing, his smoke-cloud thick.

His lips are full of fury;  
his tongue is like a devouring fire.

<sup>28</sup>His breath is like a raging river that reaches up to the neck,  
to shake the nations with a sieve of destruction,  
and to put a misleading rein on the people's jaws.

<sup>29</sup>There will be singing for you  
as on the night that people celebrate a festival.  
The heart will be joyful  
as it is when one goes with a flute to the LORD's mountain,  
to the rock of Israel.

<sup>30</sup>The LORD will unleash his majestic voice and display his crushing arm  
in furious anger, with a flame of consuming fire, in stormy rain and hail.

<sup>31</sup>The LORD's voice will terrify Assyria;  
with a rod he will smite it.

<sup>32</sup>And every crack that is made in the foundation wall,  
which the LORD will bring down upon him,  
will be accompanied by timbrels and lyres.  
The LORD will raise his arm and fight against Assyria in battle.

<sup>33</sup>His place for burning<sup>a</sup> was arranged long ago;  
it is indeed made ready for a king.

God has made its wood pile wide and deep,  
fire and wood in abundance.

The breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, ignites it.

<sup>a</sup>Correction; Heb *ephod* <sup>b</sup>Heb *Topheth*

**30:19-26** Several visions of restoration supplement the prophet's speech: (1) God will answer the people's cry of distress (30:19) and teach them through affliction (30:20-21), so that they will do away with idols (30:22); (2) climatic conditions will promote agricultural well-being (30:23-24); water will be found on every hill (30:25); and the light of moon and sun will dramatically increase (30:26a); and (3) blows inflicted by God will be healed (30:26b).

**30:20** *your teacher will no longer hide*: The verb "teach" is fairly widespread in relation to God (Exod 4:12, 15; 24:12; 1 Kgs 8:36; Pss 25:8, 12; 32:8; Isa 2:3/Mic 4:2; Isa 28:26). Yet referring to God by the noun "teacher" is highly unusual (cf. only Job 36:22).

**30:25** *when the towers fall*: The insertion of violence into what is otherwise a vision of widespread peace is puzzling,

but may reflect the theme of the lofty falling in Isaiah 2:6-21; see specifically 2:15.

**30:26** In a reversal of Isaiah 13:10, sun and moon shine unnaturally brightly.

**30:27-33** In this final note contrasting Israel's and Assyria's fates, imagery of judgment is interwoven with imagery of pilgrimage and celebration. Much of the language of judgment against Assyria recalls—and reverses—earlier prophetic language concerning the empire. See, for instance, the *raging river* reaching up to the neck (30:28; cf. Isa 8:7-8; 28:2, 15-18); and the *rod* and "staff" that strike Assyria (30:31-32; cf. Isa 10:5, 15, 24, 26; 14:5; 28:27).

**30:27** *his anger blazing*: Compare with Exodus 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3; Isaiah 33:14; Lamentations 2:3.

**Doom to those going to Egypt**

**31** Doom to those going down to Egypt for help!

They rely on horses,  
trust in chariots because they are many,  
and on riders because they are very strong.  
But they don't look to the holy one of Israel;  
they don't seek the LORD.

<sup>2</sup>But God also knows how to bring disaster;  
he has not taken back his words.  
God will rise up against the house of evildoers  
and against the help of those who do wrong.

<sup>3</sup>Egypt is human and not divine;  
their horses are flesh and not spirit.  
The LORD will extend his hand;  
the helper will stumble,  
those helped will fall,  
and they will all die together.

<sup>4</sup>The LORD has said to me:  
When the lion growls,  
the young lion, over its prey,  
though a band of shepherds is summoned against it,  
isn't scared off by their noise  
or frightened by their roar.  
So the LORD of heavenly forces will go down  
to fight on Mount Zion and on her hill.

<sup>5</sup>Like birds flying aloft,  
so the LORD of heavenly forces will shield Jerusalem:  
shielding and saving, sparing and rescuing.

<sup>6</sup>People of Israel, return to the one whom you have deeply betrayed! <sup>7</sup>On that day, you will each reject the idols of silver and the idols of gold, which you have sinfully made for yourselves.

<sup>8</sup>Assyria will fall, but not by a human sword—  
a sword not made by humans will devour them.  
They will flee before the sword;  
their young men will become forced laborers.

<sup>9</sup>In horror they will flee from their stronghold;  
their officers will be terrified at the signal,  
says the LORD, whose fire is in Zion  
and whose oven is in Jerusalem.

**Righteous rule**

**32** See here: A king rules to promote righteousness;  
rulers govern to promote justice,

31:1-9 Jerusalem's leaders plan to seek help from Egypt. The prophet objects because only God is powerful enough to protect Jerusalem.

31:1-3 Nearly every word in 31:1 appeared in Isaiah 28–30. *going down to Egypt* recalls the ancestors who repeatedly went down to Egypt for help and refuge (Gen 12:10; 39:1; 42:2-3; 46:3-4; cf. Isa 30:2). Isaiah 31:3 echoes God's defeat of the pharaoh's chariots and horses at the sea (Exod 14:9, 23; 15:19; Deut 11:4; cf. Isa 43:17). What was once an article of trust in God's deliverance is now a stern warning.

31:4-5 *When the lion growls . . . Like birds flying aloft*: These verses are somewhat unclear: Isaiah 31:4 portrays God as predator and 31:5 as protector. They hold in common divine determination to let no other power encroach on Jerusalem. It isn't clear whether the lion refers to God's own

attack on Jerusalem by means of the Assyrians (as in Isa 29:3) or whether the Assyrians themselves are shepherds repelled by the lion (cf. Isa 29:5-8). The nightmarish threat dissolves into motherly protection in 31:5.

31:6-7 A later addition (as indicated by the phrase "On that day") inspired by the theme of trust in God rather than others. For the phrase *idols of silver and the idols of gold*, see Isaiah 2:20 (cf. Isa 2:8, 18).

31:8-9 In contrast to the Egyptians, who are "human and not divine" (Isa 31:3), here the Assyrians are defeated by a *sword not made by humans*.

32:1 See here: In contrast to Isaiah 28; 29; 30; 31; 33, this one begins not with *hoy* ("woe" or "oh" or "doom") but See here, which gently draws attention to what follows. As a portrait of how kings ought to reign is spotlighted,

31:6 Is 1:5;  
Is 30:15, Is 55:7;  
Jer 3:12  
31:9 Dt 32:31;  
Is 18:3  
32:1 Ps 72:1;  
Is 9:7; Jer 23:5;  
Zec 9:9

32:5 Is 5:20

32:6 Is 3:15

32:8 Ps 112:9;

Pv 11:25;

2Co 9:6

32:9 Is 3:16;

Is 4:1, Is 28:23;

Is 47:8; Am 6:1

32:10 Is 24:7

32:13 Is 5:6;

Is 22:2;

Hos 10:8

- <sup>2</sup>each like a shelter from the wind  
and a refuge from a storm,  
like streams of water in a wasteland,  
like the shade of a massive cliff in a worn-out land.
- <sup>3</sup>Then the eyes of those who can see will no longer be blind,  
the ears of those who can hear will listen,  
<sup>4</sup>the minds of the rash will know and comprehend,  
and the tongues of those who stammer will speak fluently and plainly.
- <sup>5</sup>Then a fool will no longer be called honorable,  
nor a villain considered respectable.
- <sup>6</sup>Fools speak folly;  
their minds devise wickedness,  
acting irreverently,  
speaking falsely of the LORD,  
leaving the hungry empty,  
and depriving the thirsty of drink.
- <sup>7</sup>As for the villain, his villainies are evil.  
He plans schemes to destroy the poor with lying words,  
even when the needy speak justly.
- <sup>8</sup>But an honorable person plans honorable things  
and stands up for what is honorable.

**Warnings to the carefree**

- <sup>9</sup>Women of leisure, stand up! Hear my voice!  
Carefree daughters, listen to my word!
- <sup>10</sup>In a little over a year, the carefree will shudder,  
because the grape harvest will fail;  
the vintage won't arrive.
- <sup>11</sup>Tremble, all of you who are at ease;  
shudder, all of you who are secure!  
Strip yourselves, bare your skin,  
and tie mourning clothes around your waist,  
<sup>12</sup>beating your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine,  
<sup>13</sup>for my people's soil growing barbs and thorns,  
for all the joyous houses in the jubilant town.
- <sup>14</sup>The palace will be deserted,  
the crowded city abandoned.  
Stronghold and watchtower will become empty fields forever,  
suited for the pleasure of wild donkeys,  
and a pasture for flocks—  
<sup>15</sup>until a spirit from on high is poured out on us,  
and the desert turns into farmland,  
and the farmland is considered a forest.

contrasting sharply with all that the past several chapters have condemned, the heedlessness of the Judean leaders' ways is thrown into sharp relief. *A king rules to promote righteousness:* For parallels, see Proverbs 8:15-16. For the theme of just rule, see Isaiah 1:21-27; 9:6-7; 11:1-9; 16:4-5. Just divine rule is seen in Isaiah 4:2-6.

**32:2** This verse contrasts sharply with the refuge and shelter sought by Jerusalem's rulers in Isaiah 28:17, and to Egypt's useless protection in Isaiah 30:1-7; 31:1-3. It parallels descriptions of God in the psalms (e.g., Pss 31:20; 63:1; 91:1; cf. Isa 25:4-5). The king functions here as in Psalm 72, as the regent through whom divine prosperity is available for all.

**32:3-5** When righteous rule emerges, enlightenment abounds. In contrast to Isaiah 6:10 (cf. Isa 29:9-10), impediments are removed. Understanding replaces ignorance (cf. Isa 1:3; 6:9); eloquence replaces incoherence. With clarity renewed, foolishness will no longer pass as respectable.

**32:6-8** Poor judgment isn't simply self-destructive. Folly leads to a practice frequently denounced in Isaiah (Isa 10:1; 29:20-21): twisting the law to benefit the powerful. Honorable leaders stand up for what is good for all.

**32:9-14** Condemnations of the powerful in Isaiah 28–32: conclude with a call addressed first to women (32:9), and then to the general population (32:11), calls to fear and to mourn. The prophet Amos had accused Samaria's women: of participating in orgies of wealth (Amos 4:1; 5:23-24; 6:1). Here wealthy women are called to pay attention, but are not accused of any particular wrongdoing.

**32:13-14** Urban civilization is envisioned as destroyed and deserted, replaced by the nonhuman and noncultivated natural world: thorns and briars, wild donkeys, and flocks (Isa 6:11-12; 7:23-25; 14:23; 17:1-2, 9; 27:10; 34:11-15).

**32:15-20** *spirit from on high:* This section is filled with:

- <sup>16</sup>Then justice will reside in wild lands,  
and righteousness will abide in farmlands.
- <sup>17</sup>The fruit of righteousness will be peace,  
and the outcome of righteousness, calm and security forever.
- <sup>18</sup>Then my people will live in a peaceful dwelling,  
in secure homes, in carefree resting places.
- <sup>19</sup>Even if the forest falls<sup>a</sup> and the humbled city is laid low,  
<sup>20</sup>those who sow beside any stream will be happy,  
sending out ox and donkey to graze.

32:17  
Ps 119:165;  
Ro 14:17;  
Jas 3:18  
32:20 Ecc 11:1;  
Is 30:23,  
Is 30:24  
33:2 Is 25:9,  
Is 26:8  
33:5 Ps 97:9  
33:6 Ps 112:1;  
Prv 1:7;  
Prv 15:16;  
Is 11:9; Mt 6:33

### Judgment and hope for the righteous

**33** Doom to the destroyer left undestroyed,  
you traitor whom none have betrayed:  
when you have finished destroying, you will be destroyed;  
and when you have stopped betraying, they will betray you.

- <sup>2</sup>LORD, show us favor;  
we hope in you.  
Be our strength every morning,  
our salvation in times of distress.
- <sup>3</sup>At the noise, peoples fled;  
on account of your roar, nations scattered.
- <sup>4</sup>They gathered spoil like insects;  
they rushed upon it like a swarm of locusts.<sup>b</sup>
- <sup>5</sup>The LORD is exalted; he lives on high,  
filling Zion with justice and righteousness.
- <sup>6</sup>He will provide security during a lifetime:<sup>c</sup>  
a source of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge—  
fear of the LORD will be Zion's treasure.<sup>d</sup>
- <sup>7</sup>But then those in Ariel<sup>e</sup> cried out in the streets;  
messengers of peace wept bitterly.

<sup>a</sup>Or it will hail when the forest falls <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Or your times <sup>d</sup>Or his treasure <sup>e</sup>Or the valiant; Heb uncertain

hopeful reversals that are precisely keyed to the previous themes. Description of change in terms of divine spirit calls to mind Isaiah 4:4; 11:2; 28:5-6. Whereas in Isaiah 11 the spirit rested upon the king, here it comes out on us, the people as a whole. *desert turns into farmland*: Compare with Isaiah 29:17.

32:16-17 These verses echo the association between justice and prosperity spelled out in Isaiah 32:1-8: not false trust in Egyptian chariots (Isa 31:1-3) or in insulation for the wealthy (Isa 28:15; 29:20-21; 32:9-14), but secure trust supported by a social order sustainable for all.

32:18 *secure homes, in carefree resting places*: See Isaiah 32:9, 11.

33:1-24 This chapter is the first of three consecutive sections in Isaiah that together serve as hinges, joining the days of Davidic monarchy and the days of direct rule by Persia. Isaiah 34-35 and 36-39 form the second and third hinges. Isaiah 33 often echoes First Isaiah (Isa 1-39), but it more closely resembles the language of the Psalms. Its themes anticipate salvation. Accusations are reversed, and hopes for Jerusalem's future reinforced.

33:1 *Doom to the destroyer left undestroyed*: Like Isaiah 28-31 but unlike Isaiah 32, this one begins with the Hebrew word *hoy*, "woe" or "doom." Here it is aimed not at Jerusalem's elite but at the enemy, whose imagined destruction assures the security envisioned in Isaiah 32:20

and prayed for in Isaiah 33:2. Isaiah 21:2 and 24:16 used similar language to reflect on destruction's certainty, but this verse points out that the seed of self-destruction is inherent in the actors' own deeds.

33:2-6 *Lord, show us favor*: Compare with Psalm 123:3. Like many psalms, these five verses move from petition to praise to reassurance. *we hope in you*: Compare with Psalms 25:3, 5, 21; 37:9, 34; Isaiah 8:17; 26:8; 25:9.

33:3 *nations scattered*: For the theme of God arising to scatter enemies, compare with Numbers 10:35; Psalms 68:1; 89:10; 92:9.

33:4 *They gathered spoil like insects*: This likely refers to those whose enemies were scattered by God in the previous verse; compare with Isaiah 9:3-5.

33:5 *The Lord is exalted*: Compare with God's unique status in Isaiah 2:11, 17; 12:4; 57:15. *filling Zion with justice and righteousness*: Compare with Isaiah 1:21-27; 5:7, 16; 9:7; 28:17; 32:1, 16.

33:6 *salvation, wisdom, and knowledge—fear of the Lord*: Wisdom themes fill this verse; compare with Isaiah 11:2; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10.

33:7-9 All references to time in this chapter are relative, so it is best not to try to connect the poetry too closely to particular events. The verses may be intended more to create a mood than to recall events; compare with Lamentations 1:2, 4, 16. Much of the language in these three

33:10 Ps 12:5  
 33:11 Ps 7:14;  
 Is 5:24, Is 26:18,  
 Is 59:4; Jas 1:15  
 33:13 Ps 48:10;  
 Is 49:1  
 33:14  
 Heb 12:29;  
 Rev 20:10  
 33:15 Ps 15:2,  
 Ps 24:4,  
 Ps 119:37  
 33:16 Dt 32:13;  
 Job 11:18;  
 Prv 1:33;  
 Is 25:4, Is 49:10  
 33:17 Is 6:5,  
 Is 26:15,  
 Is 33:22;  
 Jn 17:24  
 33:18 2Ki 18:14;  
 Is 17:14;  
 1Co 1:20

- <sup>8</sup>The highways were deserted;  
 travelers left the road.  
 The covenant was broken;  
 solemn pledges<sup>m</sup> were rejected;  
 no one cared for humanity.
- <sup>9</sup>The land mourned; it wasted away;  
 Lebanon was ashamed; it withered.  
 Sharon became like the desert,  
 and Bashan and Carmel were dropping their leaves.
- <sup>10</sup>Now I will arise, says the LORD.  
 Now I will exalt myself; now I will stand tall.
- <sup>11</sup>You conceive straw, give birth to stubble;  
 your breath is a fire that devours you.
- <sup>12</sup>Peoples will be burned to lime,  
 thorns cut up and set ablaze.
- <sup>13</sup>You who are far away, hear what I have done;  
 and you who are near, know my strength!
- <sup>14</sup>Sinners became terrified in Zion;  
 trembling seized the godless:  
 "Who among us can live with the devouring fire?  
 Who among us can live with the everlasting blaze?"
- <sup>15</sup>The one who walks righteously and speaks truthfully,  
 who rejects profit from extortion,  
 who waves away a bribe instead of grabbing it,  
 who won't listen to bloody plots,  
 and who won't contemplate doing something evil.
- <sup>16</sup>He will live on the heights;  
 fortresses in the cliffs will be his refuge.  
 His food will be provided,  
 his water guaranteed.
- <sup>17</sup>When you gaze upon a king in his glamour  
 and look at the surrounding land,  
<sup>18</sup>in dismay you will think:  
 Where is the one who counts?

<sup>m</sup>Correction; or *cities*; DSS (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>) *witnesses*

verses echoes that of Isaiah 24. Beginning in Isaiah 33:10, God responds with purifying judgment.

33:7 *Ariel*: a synonym for Jerusalem; see note on Isaiah 29:1.  
 33:8 *The covenant was broken*: This could refer to King Hezekiah's rebellion against Assyria, or more generally to the way humanity has polluted the earth (cf. Isa 24:5; 33:9).

33:9 *The land mourned*: Compare with Isaiah 24:4. Unlike the wilderness immediately surrounding Jerusalem, the four geographical regions named in this verse (to the north, west, northeast, and northwest of Jerusalem) were celebrated for their lush vegetation (Isa 2:13; 35:2; Song 2:1; 3:9; 4:11, 15; 7:5; Jer 50:19). The verse echoes the call in Isaiah 32:9-14.

33:10 *Now I will arise*: Compare with Isaiah 6:1; 57:15.

33:11 *You conceive straw*: For the image of the wicked giving birth to the fruit of their malice, see Isaiah 59:4; Psalm 7:14; Job 15:35. *your breath is a fire*: Compare with Isaiah 1:32; 5:24; 9:18-21.

33:14-15 *Sinners became terrified in Zion*: In the biblical tradition, terror and dread accompany the recognition of divine power (Exod 15:15-16; Pss 2:11; 48:6), especially

among foreigners (Deut 2:25; 11:25), but also among ungodly individuals (Pss 14:5; 53:5; Isa 2:10, 19, 21) and even the godly (Ps 55:5; Job 4:14). *The one who walks righteously*: Isaiah 33:15 resembles the responses in a temple entrance ritual outlining acceptable moral behavior among those entering God's presence (see Pss 15:1-5; 24:3-5). But the questions preceding them in 33:14 seem far from routine. They ask not "Who can live in your tent?" as in Psalm 15:1, but *Who among us can live with the devouring fire?* Fire is associated with the mortally dangerous presence of God (Exod 24:17; Lev 9:24; 10:2; Num 11:1; 16:35), who is sometimes even identified with devouring fire (Deut 4:24; cf. Deut 9:3; Amos 1:4, 7). Like Isaiah 1:27-31; 65:8-15; 66:15-17, 24, this passage imagines not one common fate awaiting Jerusalem's survivors but separate destinies based on individual deeds.

33:17 *When you gaze upon a king*: Unlike Isaiah 32:1, this most likely refers to God as king; compare with Isaiah 33:22, "The LORD is our king," and Isaiah 6:1, 5; 24:23; Psalm 27:4.

33:18 *in dismay you will think*: or "You will muse on [for-mer] terrors." Translations disagree on whether "dismay"/

Where is the one who weighs?  
Where is the one who counts towers?

33:19 Dt 28:49,  
Dt 28:50;  
Is 28:11  
33:20 Ps 46:5,  
Ps 48:12,  
Ps 125:1;  
Is 32:18, Is 54:2  
33:22 Ps 89:18;  
Is 25:9; Jas 4:12  
34:4 Ps 102:26;  
Mt 24:29;  
2Pt 3:10;  
Rev 6:13,  
Rev 6:14

- <sup>19</sup>You will no longer see the defiant people,  
the people of speech too obscure to understand,  
who stammer in an incomprehensible language.
- <sup>20</sup>Gaze upon Zion, our festival town.  
Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a carefree dwelling,  
a tent that is not packed up,  
whose stakes are never pulled up,  
whose ropes won't snap.
- <sup>21</sup>The LORD's majesty will be there for us:  
as a place of rivers, broad streams  
where no boat will go,  
no majestic ship will cross.
- <sup>22</sup>The LORD is our judge;  
the LORD is our leader;  
the LORD is our king—  
he will deliver us.
- <sup>23</sup>Your ropes are loosened;  
they can't hold the mast firmly;  
they can't spread the sail.  
Then abundant spoil will be divided;  
even the lame will seize spoil.
- <sup>24</sup>And no inhabitant will say, "I'm sick."  
The people living there will be forgiven their sin.

**Vengeance against Edom**

**34** Draw near, you nations, to hear;  
and listen, you peoples.  
Hear, earth and all who fill it,  
world and all its offspring.

- <sup>2</sup>The LORD rages against all the nations,  
and is angry with all their armies.  
God is about to wipe them out  
and has prepared them for slaughter.
- <sup>3</sup>Their dead will be cast out,  
the stench of their corpses will rise,  
and the mountains will melt from their blood.
- <sup>4</sup>All the stars of heaven will dissolve,  
the skies will roll up like a scroll,  
and all the stars will fall,

"terror" should be understood as a present condition, as in the CEB, or as an earlier condition. According to the latter understanding, those left are amazed that the oppressor has disappeared; compare with Isaiah 33:19. In the chapter's remaining verses, themes of land security, health, and just divine rule are spun out at length.

33:19 *who stammer in an incomprehensible language*: This verse reverses Isaiah 28:11.

34:1–35:10 These two chapters together make the second hinge joining the prophecies from Assyrian times to those reflecting Babylonian and Persian times. Here two contrasting images describe two differing fates: one for Edom in Isaiah 34 and one for Judah in Isaiah 35. Edom is envisioned as destroyed, but Judah is envisioned as restored—its land fruitful, its people healed. God is seen delivering Zion from neighboring rivals and enemies within. The same two nations are likewise contrasted in Ezekiel 35–36 and Malachi 1. Isaiah 34 shares close ties with the prophecy against Babylon in Isaiah 13 and other

words against Edom in Isaiah 63, while Isaiah 35 echoes Isaiah 40–55 so forcefully that some propose that it was written by the same prophet.

34:1 The section begins with a call to nations and to all the earth and its inhabitants (cf. Ps 96:1/Isa 42:10; Pss 24:1; 89:11; Mic 1:2) to pay attention. A summons like this can be an invitation to hear instruction (cf. Isa 28:23; Ps 49:2; Prov 4:1); a calling of third-party witnesses (cf. Isa 1:2; Mic 6:2); or a summons to those the caller intends to engage in dispute (cf. Isa 41:1; 21; Mic 1:2). Readers soon learn that the earth's inhabitants are summoned to witness destruction of one particular nation.

34:2–4 *The LORD rages*: Compare with Isaiah 63:3, 5–6. Descriptions here are extreme. *wipe them out* refers to killing an entire population, such as was decreed by God against the Canaanites (Deut 7:2; 13:15; cf. Jer 50:21, 26; 51:3). Divine destruction is on such a scale that the earth and heavens are ruined (cf. Isa 13:9, 10, 13; 24:1–6). Not only do the stars rot from the heavens like leaves from a vine, but

34:5 Is 63:1;

Jer 49:7;

Am 1:11

34:13 Is 13:22;

Jer 9:11;

Jer 51:37;

Mal 1:3

34:14 Is 13:21;

Is 13:22

34:15 Dt 14:13

like a leaf withering from a vine,  
like fruit from a fig tree.

<sup>5</sup>When my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens,  
it will descend upon Edom for judgment,  
upon a people I have doomed for destruction.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD has a sword covered with blood;  
it is soaked with fat  
from the blood of lambs and goats,  
from the kidney fat of rams,  
for the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah,  
a great slaughter in the land of Edom.

<sup>7</sup>Wild oxen will fall with them,  
steers with mighty bulls,  
and their land will be drenched with blood;  
its soil soaked with fat.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD has a day of vengeance,  
a year of payback for Zion's cause.

<sup>9</sup>Edom's streams will be turned into pitch,  
its dust into sulfur,  
and its land will become burning pitch.

<sup>10</sup>Night and day won't be extinguished;  
its smoke will go up forever.  
From generation to generation it will lie waste;  
no one will ever pass through it again.

<sup>11</sup>Screech owls and crows will possess it;  
owls and ravens will live there.<sup>7</sup>  
God will stretch over it the measuring line of chaos  
and the plummet stone of emptiness over its officials.

<sup>12</sup>No Kingdom There, they will call it,  
and all its princes will disappear.

<sup>13</sup>Thorns will grow up in its palaces,  
weeds and brambles in its fortresses.  
It will be a dwelling for jackals,  
a home for ostriches.

<sup>14</sup>Wildcats will meet hyenas,  
the goat demon will call to his friends,  
and there Lilith<sup>a</sup> will lurk  
and find her resting place.

<sup>15</sup>There the snake will nest and lay eggs  
and brood and hatch in its shadow.  
There too vultures will gather,  
each with its mate.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Species uncertain <sup>a</sup>Name of a demon <sup>a</sup>Species uncertain

the sky itself is packed away like a scroll no longer in use. This imagery inspires Mark 13:24-25 (cf. Matt 24:29) and Revelation 6:12-17.

34:5 *descend upon Edom for judgment*: Imagery of worldwide destruction emphasizes the forcefulness of the violence to be inflicted on Edom. It will reappear in similar terms in Isaiah 63:1-6. Edom was southeast of Judah and the Dead Sea, directly south of Moab. Edom is named in relation to Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonians in Obadiah; Psalm 137:7; and Lamentations 4:21-22.

34:6-7 *the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah*: Compare with Isaiah 63:10. Bozrah was the principal city of Edom. These

verses are rich with vocabulary of sacrifice: "blood," "fat," "kidney," and names of typical sacrificial animals.

34:8 *day of vengeance*: Compare with Isaiah 61:2; 63:4; Jeremiah 46:10.

34:9-10 Compare with Revelation 14:10-11.

34:10 *it will lie waste*: Compare with Isaiah 35:17; 13:20.

34:13-14 *Thorns... brambles*: As in Isaiah 5:6; 7:23-25; 32:13 (cf. Isa 55:13), dried vegetation takes over where humans once lived. As in Isaiah 13:21-22, jackals, ostriches, wildcats, hyenas, and goat demons take up residence. *Lilith will lurk*: Lilith is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible. The exact meaning and origin are uncertain. The name



- <sup>16</sup>Consult the LORD's scroll and read:  
 Not one of these will be missing;  
 none will lack its mate.  
 God's own mouth has commanded;  
 God's own spirit has gathered them.
- <sup>17</sup>God has cast the lot for them;  
 God's hand allotted it to them with the measuring line.  
 They will possess it forever;  
 they will live in it from generation to generation.

34:16 Dt 17:19;  
 Is 30:8; Jn 5:39  
 35:1 Is 32:15,  
 Is 51:3, Is 55:12  
 35:2 Is 33:9,  
 Is 40:5, Is 55:12,  
 Is 60:13  
 35:3 Job 4:4;  
 Heb 12:12  
 35:4 Is 25:9,  
 Is 34:8, Is 40:9  
 35:5 Is 29:18,  
 Is 32:3, Is 32:4  
 35:6 Is 32:4,  
 Is 35:1, Is 41:18,  
 Is 43:19;  
 Mt 9:32  
 35:7 Job 8:11;  
 Is 13:22, Is 19:6,  
 Is 34:13,  
 Is 49:10  
 35:8 Is 11:16,  
 Is 40:3, Is 52:1;  
 Zec 14:20

**Fertile wilderness**

**35** The desert and the dry land will be glad;  
 the wilderness will rejoice and blossom like the crocus.

- <sup>2</sup>They will burst into bloom,  
 and rejoice with joy and singing.  
 They will receive the glory of Lebanon,  
 the splendor of Carmel and Sharon.  
 They will see the LORD's glory,  
 the splendor of our God.
- <sup>3</sup>Strengthen the weak hands,  
 and support the unsteady knees.
- <sup>4</sup>Say to those who are panicking:  
 "Be strong! Don't fear!  
 Here's your God, coming with vengeance;  
 with divine retribution God will come to save you."
- <sup>5</sup>Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,  
 and the ears of the deaf will be cleared.
- <sup>6</sup>Then the lame will leap like the deer,  
 and the tongue of the speechless will sing.  
 Waters will spring up in the desert,  
 and streams in the wilderness.
- <sup>7</sup>The burning sand will become a pool,  
 and the thirsty ground, fountains of water.  
 The jackals' habitat, a pasture;<sup>b</sup>  
 grass will become reeds and rushes.
- <sup>8</sup>A highway will be there.  
 It will be called The Holy Way.  
 The unclean won't travel on it,  
 but it will be for those walking on that way.<sup>c</sup>  
 Even fools won't get lost on it;

<sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

may derive from *lilitu*, wind and storm demons in Assyrian mythology.

35:1-10 The contrast between Edom in Isaiah 34 and Judah in Isaiah 35 could hardly be starker. Edom was transformed into a dramatically uninhabitable place, but Judah is imagined bursting into bloom.

35:2 *glory of Lebanon*: In Isaiah 33:9 Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon (as well as Bashan) were turned into desert. Now they symbolize renewal.

35:4 *Don't fear!*: Compare with Isaiah 7:4; 8:12. This is an especially important phrase in Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55; see Isa 40:9; 41:10-14; 43:1, 5; 44:2, 8; 51:7; 54:4). *coming with vengeance*: See Isaiah 34:8.

35:5 *the eyes of the blind will be opened*: See note on Isaiah

29:18-21. The reversal of disabilities, already anticipated in Isaiah 29:18; 32:3-4; 33:23, is prominent in this section. This concern will reappear in Isaiah 42:7, 18; 43:8.

35:6 *Waters will spring up*: See Isaiah 34:9, where Edom's streams are turned into pitch.

35:7 *The jackals' habitat, a pasture*: Compare with Isaiah 35:9. See Isaiah 34:11, 13-15, in which Edom becomes a habitat for wild animals, including the jackal. *grass will become reeds and rushes*: See Isaiah 34:13, which describes Edom's barren landscape.

35:8 *A highway will be there*: Compare with Isaiah 40:3; 42:16; 49:11; 57:14; 62:10. This contrasts sharply with Isaiah 33:8. *The unclean won't travel on it*: Compare with Isaiah 52:1, 11. In biblical ritual, "unclean" can refer not only

35:9 Is 62:12

35:10 Ps 126:5;

Is 25:8, Is 51:11,

Is 65:19;

Rev 21:4

36:1 2Ki 18:13,

2Ki 18:17;

2Ch 32:1

36:7 Dt 12:2;

2Ki 18:4

36:8 Ps 20:7;

Is 30:16

36:10 1Ki 13:18;

Is 10:5

36:12 2Ki 6:25

<sup>9</sup>no lion will be there,  
and no predator will go up on it.

None of these will be there;  
only the redeemed will walk on it.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD's ransomed ones will return and enter Zion with singing,  
with everlasting joy upon their heads.

Happiness and joy will overwhelm them;  
grief and groaning will flee away.

### Sennacherib's message

**36** Assyria's King Sennacherib marched against all of Judah's fortified cities and captured them in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah. <sup>2</sup>Assyria's king sent his field commander from Lachish, together with a large army, to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. He stood at the water channel of the Upper Pool, which is on the road to the field where clothes are washed. <sup>3</sup>Hilkiah's son Eliakim, who was the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Asaph's son Joah the recorder went out to them.

<sup>4</sup>Then the field commander said to them, "Say to Hezekiah: Assyria's Great King says this: Why do you feel so confident? <sup>5</sup>Do you think that empty words are the same as good strategy and the strength to fight? Who are you trusting that you now rebel against me? <sup>6</sup>It appears that you are trusting in a staff—Egypt—that's nothing but a broken reed! It will stab the hand of anyone who leans on it! That's all that Pharaoh, Egypt's king, is to anyone who trusts in him. <sup>7</sup>Now suppose you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God.' Isn't he the one whose shrines and altars Hezekiah removed, telling Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship only at this altar'?"

<sup>8</sup>"So now, make a wager with my master, Assyria's king. I'll give you two thousand horses if you can supply the riders! <sup>9</sup>How will you drive back even the least important official among my master's servants when you are relying on Egypt for chariots and riders? <sup>10</sup>What's more, do you think I've marched against this place to destroy it without the LORD's support? It was the LORD who told me, 'March against this land and destroy it!'"

<sup>11</sup>Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the field commander, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, because we understand it. Don't speak with us in Hebrew,<sup>4</sup> because the people on the wall will hear it."

<sup>12</sup>The field commander said to them, "Did my master send me to speak these words just to you and your master and not also to the men on the wall? They are the ones who will have to eat their dung and drink their urine along with you." <sup>13</sup>Then the field commander stood

<sup>4</sup>MT *Judean*, so also 36:13

to animals the Judeans were forbidden to eat but also to people who were ritually impure due to contact with the dead, skin disease, sexual discharges, childbirth, and more. By extension, those who were morally impure, as well as non-Judeans who didn't practice Jewish instructions about ritual purity, were considered unclean.

**36:1** See 2 Kings 18:13. The Assyrian king Sennacherib was son and successor of Sargon (Isa 20:1), who was killed in battle. Judah's revolt against Assyria was one of many following Sargon's death. The parallel account in 2 Kings 18 relates Hezekiah's payment of taxes to prevent further disaster. This incident is omitted from Isaiah 36. King Sennacherib's own historical annals relate the siege and destruction of "forty-six of [Hezekiah's] strong cities, fortresses, and countless small villages in their vicinity" and the capture of more than 200,000 people. His destruction of Lachish, Judah's second-largest city, is known from evidence at Lachish itself and from a large and elaborate wall sculpture, depicting the violent assault, which was found in Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh.

**36:2** at the water channel of the Upper Pool: The field commander delivers his threat from the same location where

Isaiah had delivered reassurance to Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, in Isaiah 7:3. This shows a contrast between Hezekiah's piety and his father's obstinacy.

**36:3** Shebna and Eliakim appeared in different roles in Isaiah 22:15-25.

**36:4** Why do you feel so confident?: The idea of "trusting," here translated as "confident," was a major theme in the prophecies associated with Hezekiah; see Isaiah 30:12; 31:1; 32:9-11, 17.

**36:6** The field commander's opinion of Egypt's help is similar to that offered by Isaiah in Isaiah 30:1-7 and 31:1-3.

**36:7** shrines and altars: 2 Kings 18:4 praises King Hezekiah for centralizing worship in Jerusalem by removing other shrines from the land. Here the field commander attempts to reverse the meaning of this act, portraying it as offensive to God.

**36:8-9** two thousand horses: Compare with Isaiah 30:16; 31:1-3.

**36:10** It was the LORD who told me: Isaiah's prophecies concerning God's use of Assyria as a weapon against rebellious Judah (Isa 10:5-6) sound different when repeated as foreign propaganda by the Assyrian official.

**36:11** Aramaic, the language of ancient Aram, was an

*Narratives Concerning Hezekiah* Isaiah 36–39, which narrates events during King Hezekiah's reign, is, with some exceptions, identical to 2 Kings 18–20. Isaiah 36 and 37 tell the story of the threat of King Sennacherib of Assyria against Jerusalem in 701 BCE, conveyed through his field commander to three of Hezekiah's officials. They tell what came of this threat after Hezekiah prayed for divine intervention. Isaiah 38 concerns Hezekiah's illness and recovery, which in many ways parallels the threat to Jerusalem and the miracle of its survival. Isaiah 39 points to the disastrous defeat by Babylon that will come after Hezekiah's death.

Together these chapters, along with Isaiah 33–35, connect the prophecies originating in Isaiah's 8th-century setting with those originating during and after the Babylonian exile, which begin with Isaiah 40. They offer a story of faith and faithfulness, and one accounting for Jerusalem's survival in 701 and its destruction in 587. Their flattering portrayal of King Hezekiah stands in some tension with what actually happened to the rest of Judah and with Isaiah's criticism of governmental policies in prophecies considered authentic in Isaiah 28–32.

up and shouted in Hebrew at the top of his voice: "Listen to the message of the great king, Assyria's king. <sup>14</sup>The king says this: Don't let Hezekiah lie to you. He won't be able to rescue you. <sup>15</sup>Don't let Hezekiah persuade you to trust the LORD by saying, 'The LORD will certainly rescue us. This city won't be handed over to Assyria's king.'

<sup>16</sup>Don't listen to Hezekiah, because this is what Assyria's king says: Surrender to me and come out. Then each of you will eat from your own vine and fig tree and drink water from your own well <sup>17</sup>until I come to take you to a land just like your land. It will be a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards. <sup>18</sup>Don't let Hezekiah fool you by saying, 'The LORD will rescue us.' Did any of the other gods of the nations save their lands from the power of Assyria's king? <sup>19</sup>Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Did they rescue Samaria from my power? <sup>20</sup>Which one of the gods from those countries has rescued their land from my power? Will the LORD save Jerusalem from my power?"

<sup>21</sup>But they kept quiet and didn't answer him with a single word, because King Hezekiah's command was, "Don't answer him!" <sup>22</sup>Hilkiah's son Eliakim, who was the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Asaph's son Joah the recorder came to Hezekiah with ripped clothes. They told him what the field commander had said.

### *Hezekiah and Isaiah*

**37** When King Hezekiah heard this, he ripped his clothes, covered himself with mourning clothes, and went to the LORD's temple. <sup>2</sup>He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests to the prophet Isaiah, Amoz's son. They were all wearing mourning clothes. <sup>3</sup>They said to him, "Hezekiah says this: Today is a day of distress, punishment, and humiliation. It's as if children are ready to be born, but there's no strength to see it through. <sup>4</sup>Perhaps the LORD your God heard all the words of the field commander who was sent by his master, Assyria's king. He insulted the living God! Perhaps he will punish him for the words that the LORD your God has heard. Offer up a prayer for those few people who still survive."

<sup>5</sup>When King Hezekiah's servants got to Isaiah, <sup>6</sup>Isaiah said to them, "Say this to your master: The LORD says this: Don't be afraid at the words you heard, which the officers of Assyria's king have used to insult me. <sup>7</sup>I'm about to mislead him, so when he hears a rumor, he'll go back to his own country. Then I'll have him cut down by the sword in his own land."

<sup>8</sup>The field commander heard that the Assyrian king had left Lachish. So he went back to the king and found him attacking Libnah. <sup>9</sup>Then the Assyrian king learned that Cush's King Tirhakah was on his way to fight against him. So he sent messengers to Hezekiah again:

international language during Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian rule (see Ezra 4:7; Dan 2:4). It eventually replaced Hebrew as the language of Judah.

36:16-17 The official's promises ironically imitate biblical visions of peace and security (Mic 4:4; Deut 8:7-10).

36:19-20 The field commander here contradicts his own words in Isaiah 36:10, now equating Judah's God with those the writer considered nonexistent gods; compare with Isaiah 10:10-11. For *Hamath* and *Arpad*, see note on Isaiah 10:9. *Sepharvaim* was located somewhere along the

Euphrates River, though its exact location is unknown (see 2 Kgs 17:24).

37:4 Hezekiah's message to Isaiah doesn't emphasize the threat to Jerusalem, but rather the insults and taunts of the Assyrians against God.

37:6-7 Whereas the field commander's message was lengthy and elaborate, Isaiah's is short and to the point.

37:8 *Libnah*: a Judean city west of Jerusalem. Its exact location is uncertain.

37:9 *Cush's King Tirhakah*: For Cush, see note on Isaiah

37:12 Gn 11:31;  
2Ki 17:6;  
2Ki 18:11;  
Eze 27:23;  
Am 1:5

37:16 Ex 25:22;  
Isa 4:4; Ps 80:1;  
Ps 86:10

37:20 Ps 46:10  
37:22 Job 16:4

37:23 Ex 5:2;  
2Ki 19:22;  
Is 12:6

Eze 39:7;  
Dn 7:25

37:24 Is 14:8  
37:25 Is 19:6

<sup>10</sup>"Say this to Judah's King Hezekiah: Don't let the God you trust deceive you by saying, 'Jerusalem won't fall to the Assyrian king.' <sup>11</sup>You yourself have heard what Assyrian kings do to other countries, wiping them out. Is it likely that you will be saved? <sup>12</sup>Did the gods of the nations that my ancestors destroyed save them, the gods of Gozan, Haran, Rezepeh, or the people of Eden in Telassar? <sup>13</sup>Where now is Hamath's king, Arpad's king, or the kings of Lair, Sepharvaim, Hena, or Ivvah?"<sup>a</sup>

### Hezekiah prays

<sup>14</sup>Hezekiah took the letters from the messengers and read them. Then he went to the temple and spread them out before the LORD. <sup>15</sup>Hezekiah prayed to the LORD:

<sup>16</sup>"LORD of heavenly forces, God of Israel: you sit enthroned on the winged creatures. You alone are God over all the earth's kingdoms. You made both heaven and earth. <sup>17</sup>LORD, turn your ear this way and hear! LORD, open your eyes and see! Listen to Sennacherib's words. He sent them to insult the living God! <sup>18</sup>It's true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have destroyed all the nations and their lands. <sup>19</sup>The Assyrians burned the gods of those nations with fire because they aren't real gods. They are only man-made creations of wood and stone. That's how the Assyrians could destroy them. <sup>20</sup>So now, LORD our God, please save us from Sennacherib's power! Then all the earth's kingdoms will know that you alone are LORD."

<sup>21</sup>Then Isaiah, Amoz's son, sent a message to Hezekiah: The LORD God of Israel says this: Since you prayed to me about Assyria's King Sennacherib, <sup>22</sup>this is the message that the LORD has spoken against him:

The young woman, Daughter Zion, despises you and mocks you;  
Daughter Jerusalem shakes her head behind your back.

<sup>23</sup>Whom did you insult and ridicule?

Against whom did you raise your voice and look on with disdain?  
It was against the holy one of Israel!

<sup>24</sup>With your servants, you've insulted the Lord;

you said, "I, with my many chariots, have gone up to the highest mountains,  
to the farthest reaches of Lebanon.

I have cut down its tallest cedars, the best of its pine trees.

I have reached its most remote lodging place, its best forest.

<sup>25</sup>I have dug wells, have drunk water in foreign lands.<sup>f</sup>

With my own feet, I dried up all of Egypt's streams."

<sup>26</sup>Haven't you heard?

I set this up long ago;

I planned it in the distant past!

Now I have made it happen,

making fortified cities collapse into piles of rubble.

<sup>a</sup>Or the king of the city of Sepharvaim; or the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah <sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain; DSS (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>) in foreign lands

18:1-7. The kings of Cush were ruling Egypt at this time. Tirhakah was the fourth king in this dynasty.

37:10-13 Sennacherib's second message to Hezekiah, delivered by unnamed messengers, maintains the boastful tone of the field commander's speech in Isaiah 36:4-20, but it is much shorter. Some scholars believe it to be an alternate narration of the interactions between the kings during this crisis. Whatever its origins, in its present setting it is less powerful than the message in Isaiah 36.

37:12 *the gods of Gozan, Haran, Rezepeh, or the people of Eden in Telassar*: Gozan was northwest of Judah in today's northern Syria. Haran (Gen 11:31-32) was some 50 miles west of Gozan in today's eastern Turkey. The locations of Rezepeh and Telassar are uncertain. In denying that the foreign gods were unable to save their cities, Assyria's king implies that Judah's God is equally powerless.

37:13 *Where now is Hamath's king*: Sennacherib lists several cities that have already been conquered. For Hamath and Arpad (also mentioned by the field commander in Isa

36:19), see note on Isaiah 10:9. For Sepharvaim, see note on Isaiah 36:19.

37:16 *You alone are God*: Whereas Sennacherib's message pictured Judah's God as being just as helpless as the other gods, Hezekiah emphasizes God's uniqueness as the creator of all the earth.

37:19 *Only man-made creations of wood and stone*: Hezekiah distinguishes further between his God and the gods whose cities were conquered, characterizing them as being of no more substance than the human-made idols that represent them (cf. Isa 44:9-20).

37:22 *The young woman, Daughter Zion, despises you*: Just as Sennacherib and his field commander mocked Judah's God, now Isaiah portrays Jerusalem (personified as Daughter Zion) as boldly mocking Sennacherib.

37:24 *Isaiah mocks Sennacherib's boastful speech*; compare with Isaiah 10:8-14. Archaeologists have found boasts like these in the historical records of Assyrian kings.

37:26 *I set this up long ago*: According to Isaiah, even

<sup>27</sup>Their citizens have lost their power;  
they are frightened and dismayed.  
They've become like plants in a field,  
tender green shoots,  
the grass on rooftops, blasted by the east wind.

<sup>28</sup>I know where you are,  
how you go out and come in,  
and how you rage against me.

<sup>29</sup>Because you rage against me and because your pride has reached my ears,  
I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth.  
I will make you go back the same way you came.

<sup>30</sup>Now this will be the sign for you, Hezekiah: This year you will eat what grows by itself. Next year you will eat what grows from that. But in the third year, plant seed and harvest it; plant vineyards and eat their fruit. <sup>31</sup>The survivors of Judah's family who have escaped will put down roots and bear fruit above. <sup>32</sup>Those who remain will go out from Jerusalem, and those who survive will go out from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of heavenly forces will do this.

<sup>33</sup>Therefore, the LORD says this about Assyria's king: He won't enter this city. He won't shoot a single arrow here. He won't come near the city with a shield. He won't build a ramp to besiege it. <sup>34</sup>He'll go back by the same way he came. He won't enter this city, declares the LORD. <sup>35</sup>I will defend this city and save it for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.

<sup>36</sup>The LORD's messenger went out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand soldiers in the Assyrian camp. When people got up the next morning, there were dead bodies everywhere. <sup>37</sup>So Assyria's King Sennacherib left and went back to Nineveh, where he stayed. <sup>38</sup>Later, while he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with a sword. Then they escaped to the land of Ararat. His son Esarhaddon ruled after him.

### Hezekiah's illness

**38** At about that time Hezekiah became deathly sick. The prophet Isaiah, Amoz's son, came to him and said: "The LORD God says this: Put your affairs in order because you are about to die. You won't survive this."

<sup>2</sup>Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD: "Please, LORD, remember how I've walked before you in truth and sincerity. I've done what you consider to be good." Then Hezekiah cried and cried.

<sup>4</sup>Then the LORD's word came to Isaiah: "Go and say to Hezekiah: The LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says this: I have heard your prayer and have seen your tears. I will add fifteen years to your life. <sup>6</sup>I will rescue you and this city from the power of the Assyrian king,

37:28 Ps 139:1  
37:29 Is 10:12,  
Is 37:34;  
Eze 29:4,  
Eze 38:4  
37:31 Is 27:6  
37:35 1Ki 11:12;  
2Ki 20:6;  
Is 31:5, Is 38:6,  
Is 43:25  
37:38 Gn 8:4;  
2Ki 19:37;  
2Ch 32:21;  
Ezr 4:2;  
Jer 51:27  
38:5 1Ki 8:25,  
1Ki 9:4;  
2Ki 18:2,  
2Ki 18:13,  
2Ki 19:20

Assyria's conquests were planned and allowed by God (cf. Isa 52:6-30; 10:5-7, 15).

37:36 *The LORD's messenger:* Ironically, after all the messengers sent by Sennacherib to Hezekiah, this message, going out from God to the Assyrians, puts an end to the negotiations and to the crisis itself. This account resembles one recorded in the 5th century BCE by the Greek historian Herodotus: When Sennacherib attacks Egypt and Egypt's king goes to the temple to pray, a horde of field mice gnaws quivers, bows, and shield handles, disarming and defeating the Assyrians.

37:38 Fulfilling Isaiah's prediction in Isaiah 37:7, Sennacherib is killed in his own land. Ironically, the emperor claims that Hezekiah's God was powerless to save Jerusalem against Assyria, but the emperor is killed in the presence of his own god Nisroch, who is powerless to save him from his own sons. Assyrian records indicate that Sennacherib was indeed assassinated 20 years later.

38:1-22 The story of Hezekiah's illness and healing is apparently adapted from the account in 2 Kings 20:1-11 or from a common source. It differs slightly from the Kings account in its narrative sequence and emphasis, and

includes a poetic prayer attributed to Hezekiah that isn't found in Kings. 2 Chronicles 32:24 refers to this event briefly. As in the much longer story in Isaiah 36-37, a crisis arises; the king responds with prayer; the prophet reassures; and a good outcome follows. This sequence, and the reference to God's promise to rescue the city in Isaiah 38:6, highlights the analogy being drawn between restoration of the nation and the monarchy: A king's prayer, when received by God, can save both himself and his city. In both cases this deliverance postpones the end of Hezekiah's life by 15 years; the end of the city by more than a century.

38:1 *Hezekiah became deathly sick:* The nature of his illness is left undescribed, except for the use of a salve of figs in Isaiah 38:21. Throughout these four chapters, Isaiah appears to be a friend and confidant to the king rather than his critic.

38:3 Hezekiah's plea for healing is based on his own integrity, which was shown in the narrative of Isaiah 36-37.

38:5 *I have heard your prayer:* Elsewhere in Isaiah divine plans are fixed (Isa 14:24-27; 37:26). Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55) will even claim that they have been determined from

38:7 1a 7:11,  
1a 7:14, 1a 37:30  
38:8 Josh 10:12;  
2Ki 20:9,  
2Ki 20:11  
38:12 Job 7:6,  
2Co 5:1  
38:13 Job 10:16,  
Ps 51:8,  
1am 3:4,  
1In 6:24  
38:15 1Ki 21:27,  
Job 7:11,  
Ps 39:9  
38:16 Dt 8:3

I will defend this city. <sup>7</sup>This will be your sign from the LORD that he will do what he promised: <sup>8</sup>“once the shadow cast by the sun descends on the steps of Ahaz, I will make it back up ten steps.” And the sun went back ten of the steps that it had already descended.

<sup>9</sup>A composition by Judah’s King Hezekiah when he was sick and then recovered from his sickness:

<sup>10</sup>I thought, I must depart in the prime of my life;

I have been relegated to the gates of the underworld<sup>g</sup> for the rest of my life.

<sup>11</sup>I thought, I won’t see the LORD.

The LORD is in the land of the living.

I won’t look upon humans again

or be with the inhabitants of the world.

<sup>12</sup>My lifetime is plucked up  
and taken from me like a shepherd’s tent.

My life is shriveled like woven cloth;

God cuts me off from the loom.

Between daybreak and nightfall

you carry out your verdict against me.

<sup>13</sup>I cried out<sup>h</sup> until morning:

“Like a lion God crushes all my bones.

Between daybreak and nightfall

you carry out your verdict against me.

<sup>14</sup>Like a swallow<sup>i</sup> I chirp;

I moan like a dove.

My eyes have grown weary looking to heaven.

Lord, I’m overwhelmed; support me!”

<sup>15</sup>What can I say?

God has spoken to me;

he himself has acted.

I will wander<sup>j</sup> my whole life with a bitter spirit.

<sup>16</sup>The LORD Most High is the one who gives life to every heart,  
who gives life to the spirit!<sup>k</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Look, he indeed exchanged my bitterness for wholeness.<sup>l</sup>

You yourself have spared<sup>m</sup> my whole being from the pit of destruction,  
because you have cast all my sins behind your back.

<sup>g</sup>Heb *Sheol* <sup>h</sup>Or *I lay down* <sup>i</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>j</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>k</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>l</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>m</sup>Cf LXX, Vulg; MT *loved*

long before (Isa 45:21; 46:10-11; 48:3-7). But here, as in Moses’ story (Exod 32:11-14), the divine mind is changed by human prayers.

**38:7** *your sign*: Like his father, Ahaz, King Hezekiah is offered a sign of the restoration to come (Isa 7:11-14). Unlike his father, he isn’t asked to choose the sign, and unlike his father, he doesn’t reject it. In the account in 2 Kings, Isaiah asks him whether the shadow should advance or back up (2 Kgs 20:8-11). Hezekiah’s request for a sign is moved in Isaiah’s account to the very end (Isa 38:22), perhaps to emphasize that he not only accepted but asked for it. This placement, along with the placement of Isaiah’s prescription of the fig salve in Isaiah 38:21, shows readers that his prayer of gratitude in Isaiah 38:10-20 is offered while he is still waiting for recovery.

**38:8** *steps of Ahaz*: Some early translators understood the shadow to have been cast on a sundial. But the Hebrew and Greek texts say it was on a stairway. The descent of the sun’s shadow symbolizes the descent of Hezekiah’s own life to the grave or the underworld. Like the shadow, Hezekiah’s descent is turned backward in time.

**38:9-20** Unlike the king’s prayer for healing in Isaiah 28:3, the prayer here is both unusual in form and, at points, very obscure. Translations differ markedly in some verses.

**38:10** The prayer begins with a retrospective of Hezekiah’s extended laments during his illness. As in many lament psalms, vivid images show a grief that defies simple expression.

**38:12** *My lifetime . . . shepherd’s tent*: The translation “my lifetime” could instead be “my dwelling” (cf. Ps 52:5), and the second line might mean, “I have rolled up my life like a weaver.” The last line of this verse and the next (Isa 38:13) may read, “Between daybreak and nightfall you bring me to an end.”

**38:15** Since Hebrew lacks punctuation, the end of the self-quotation is unclear. The implication here isn’t a bitter attitude but rather resignation before the heartache that has come.

**38:16** *who gives life to the spirit*: Translation in this verse is difficult. The final line can also mean “You will restore and revive me.”

**38:17** *he indeed exchanged my bitterness for wholeness*:

- <sup>18</sup>The underworld<sup>a</sup> can't thank you,  
nor can death<sup>o</sup> praise you;  
those who go down to the pit can't hope for your faithfulness.
- <sup>19</sup>The living, the living can thank you, as I do today.  
Parents will tell children about your faithfulness.
- <sup>20</sup>The LORD has truly saved me,  
and we will make music<sup>p</sup> at the LORD's house all the days of our lives.

38:18 Ps 6:5,  
Ps 30:9,  
Ps 115:17;  
Ecc 9:10

38:19 Dt 4:9,  
Dt 6:7, Dt 11:19

38:20 Ps 116:17

38:21 2Ki 20:7,  
2Ki 20:8

38:22 2Ki 20:8

39:6 2Ki 24:13,  
2Ki 25:13;  
Jer 20:5

39:7 2Ch 36:10,  
Dn 1:1, Dn 1:2,  
Dn 1:3

39:8 Jgs 10:15;  
2Ch 32:26;  
Job 1:21;  
Ps 39:9

<sup>21</sup>Then Isaiah said, "Prepare a salve made from figs, put it on the swelling, and he'll get better."

<sup>22</sup>Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What's the sign that I'll be able to go up to the LORD's temple?"

*The Babylonian king's messengers*

**39**At that time, Babylon's King Merodach-baladan, Baladan's son, sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been ill and had recovered. <sup>2</sup>Hezekiah was pleased, and he showed them his treasury—the silver and the gold, the spices and fine oil—and everything in his armory, all that was found in his storerooms. There wasn't a thing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah didn't show them.

<sup>3</sup>Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, "What did these men say? Where did they come from?"

Hezekiah replied, "They came to me from a distant land, from Babylon."

<sup>4</sup>So Isaiah said, "What did they see in your house?"

Hezekiah said, "They saw everything in my house. There was nothing in my storerooms that I didn't show them."

<sup>5</sup>Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of heavenly forces: <sup>6</sup>Days are coming when all that is in your house, which your ancestors have stored up until this day, will be carried to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. <sup>7</sup>Some of your sons, your own descendants whom you fathered, will be taken to become eunuchs in the king of Babylon's palace."

<sup>8</sup>Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The LORD's word that you delivered is good," since he thought, That means there will be peace and security in my lifetime.

<sup>a</sup>Heb Sheol <sup>o</sup>Heb Maveth <sup>p</sup>Or my stringed instruments

Translation of this verse's first line is difficult. Another way to say it: "Truly it was for my welfare that I suffered such heartache."

38:18-19 The inability of those who have died to thank or praise God is a common theme in the Psalms; compare with Psalms 6:5; 30:9; 88:10-12. Here, however, it is stated not as a complaint but as praise, since it is said from the perspective of the living rather than of the dead.

38:21-22 See note on Isaiah 38:7. Given what will become of the temple within 10 verses, Hezekiah's question unintentionally offers poignant speech for all who subsequently prayed for the restoration of the temple.

39:1-8 The story that begins with a friendly visit by Babylonian envoys is the only one in this sequence that doesn't end on a hopeful note. Rather it occasions Isaiah's prediction of the exile of Judah's kings. Though peace and security reemerged in Hezekiah's own time (see 39:8), the very next verse (Isa 40:1) evokes a time much farther in the future, when affliction and suffering rule instead. Isaiah's words become a direct introduction to the leap from Isaiah 39:8 to 40:1, from Assyrian to Persian times, from deliverance from one threat, past a much more critical crisis, to promises of restoration once again. This narrative is quite similar to that in 2 Kings 20:12-21. 2 Chronicles 32:31 offers an alternative

explanation for the Babylonian visit—that they were curious about the miraculous sign, most probably that of the sun's backward move. It claims a positive view of the king's actions in this episode.

39:1 *Merodach-baladan* was a sheikh (or chief) of the Chaldean tribe of Bit Yakin south of Babylon. He seized the Babylonian throne around 721 BCE and built up opposition to Assyria in Babylon and other regions. He was driven from the throne by Sargon in 710. After a new Babylonian king revolted against Assyria in 703, Merodach-baladan seized the throne again before being driven out once again by Sennacherib.

39:2-3 Hezekiah's naiveté in showing the visitors all the royal possessions matches his chillingly innocent reference to Babylon as "a distant land."

39:6 Just as all was seen and there wasn't a thing not seen (Isa 39:2, 4), all will be carried to Babylon and not a thing will be left (39:6).

39:7 *Some of your sons*: Earlier chapters expressed hope in terms of sons (Isa 7:14; 9:6; 11:1). But here the fate of the sons is a sign that all will go badly awry. As eunuchs they will be unable to carry on the royal line. Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55) proposes an alternative line through which God's blessing will continue: The promise to David will pass to the nation as a whole (Isa 55:4).

40:1 Is 49:13,  
Is 51:3, Is 51:12,  
Is 66:13

40:2 Jer 16:18

40:3 Is 11:16;  
Mal 3:1; Mt 3:3;  
Mk 1:3, Jn 1:23

40:4 Is 45:2,  
Is 49:11; Lk 3:5

40:5 Is 1:20,  
Is 35:2, Is 52:10,  
Is 58:14

40:6 Job 14:2,  
Ps 90:5, Ps 90:6,  
Ps 103:15;  
JPs 1:24

40:7 Ps 90:5,  
Ps 90:6,  
Ps 103:15,  
Ps 103:16;  
Is 40:6

40:8 Ps 119:89;  
Is 55:11;  
Mt 5:10

40:9 Is 25:9,  
Is 41:27, Is 52:7,  
Is 61:3

40:10 Is 9:6,  
Is 59:16,  
Is 62:11;  
Rev 22:12

40:11 Is 42:3,  
Is 49:10;  
Eze 34:23;  
Mt 5:4, Jn 10:11

### Comfort for God's people

**40**<sup>1</sup> Comfort, comfort my people! says your God.  
<sup>2</sup> Speak compassionately to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her that her compulsory service has ended,  
that her penalty has been paid,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins!

<sup>3</sup> A voice is crying out:  
"Clear the LORD's way in the desert!  
Make a level highway in the wilderness for our God!"

<sup>4</sup> Every valley will be raised up,  
and every mountain and hill will be flattened.  
Uneven ground will become level,  
and rough terrain a valley plain.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD's glory will appear,  
and all humanity will see it together;  
the LORD's mouth has commanded it.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> A voice was saying:  
"Call out!"  
And another<sup>7</sup> said,  
"What should I call out?"

All flesh is grass;  
all its loyalty is like the flowers of the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass dries up  
and the flower withers  
when the LORD's breath blows on it.  
Surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass dries up;  
the flower withers,  
but our God's word will exist forever.

<sup>9</sup> Go up on a high mountain, messenger Zion!  
Raise your voice and shout, messenger Jerusalem!  
Raise it; don't be afraid; say to the cities of Judah,  
"Here is your God!"

<sup>10</sup> Here is the LORD God, coming with strength,  
with a triumphant arm, bringing his reward with him  
and his payment before him.

<sup>11</sup> Like a shepherd, God will tend the flock;  
he will gather lambs in his arms and lift them onto his lap.  
He will gently guide the nursing ewes.

<sup>9</sup>MT; DSS (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>), LXX /

40:1-31 Isaiah 40 functions as a two-part introduction to Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55). Isaiah 40:1-11 presents a series of voices announcing themes that will appear throughout the chapters that follow. Isaiah 40:12-31 launches an argument, based on God's unique power to create both the cosmos and the people of Israel. All that happened was planned by Israel's attentive God, for Israel's benefit.

40:1-2 The prophet shows God instructing unnamed hearers to *comfort my people* and to *Speak . . . to Jerusalem*, announcing an end to suffering and the beginning of redemption. Such announcements of comfort, which recur in Isaiah 49:13; 51:3, 12, 19; 54:11, directly answer the cries in Lamentations that Jerusalem has no comforter (Lam 1:2, 9, 16, 17, 21; 2:13). Readers throughout the ages have tried to identify those being addressed by these words, but the poetry itself offers no explanation. The message is more important than the messengers.

40:2 The city itself, envisioned as a woman suffering for her past sins, receives comfort. For the theme of double punishment, see Exodus 22:4-9; Jeremiah 16:18; Isaiah 61:7.

40:3 *A voice is crying out*: The source of this voice isn't named. More important is the command to make way for God's coming on the royal highway. Clearing obstacles to God's ways, including mountains, was a significant theme of Isaiah 2:6-21. For highways that return to Zion, see Isaiah 11:16; 62:10 (which echoes this verse); Jeremiah 31:21. 40:9 *messenger Zion*: Jerusalem, personified as a female figure, is told to convey the message of God's return to the other towns of Judah. *don't be afraid*: a frequent phrase in Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55; see Isa 41:10, 13, 14; 43:5; 44:2, 8; 51:7; 54:4, 14; see note on Isa 41:10).

40:10-11 Two contrasting images of God's coming: as a victorious warrior and as a compassionate shepherd. The first reflects the turning of the tide of international power.



**The incomparable God**

- <sup>12</sup>Who has measured the waters  
in the palm of a hand  
or gauged the heavens with a ruler  
or scooped the earth's dust up  
in a measuring cup  
or weighed the mountains on a scale  
and the hills in a balance?
- <sup>13</sup>Who directed the LORD's spirit  
and acted as God's advisor?
- <sup>14</sup>Whom did he consult for enlightenment?  
Who taught him the path of justice  
and knowledge  
and explained to him  
the way of understanding?
- <sup>15</sup>Look, the nations are like a drop  
in a bucket,  
and valued as dust on a scale.  
Look, God weighs the islands  
like fine dust.
- <sup>16</sup>Lebanon doesn't have enough fuel;  
its animals aren't enough  
for an entirely burned offering.
- <sup>17</sup>All the nations are like nothing before God.  
They are viewed as less than nothing and emptiness.
- <sup>18</sup>So to whom will you equate God;  
to what likeness will you compare him?
- <sup>19</sup>An idol? A craftsman pours it,  
a metalworker covers it with gold,  
and fashions silver chains.
- <sup>20</sup>The one who sets up an image chooses wood that won't rot<sup>f</sup>  
and then seeks a skilled artisan to set up an idol that won't move.
- <sup>21</sup>Don't you know? Haven't you heard?  
Wasn't it announced to you from the beginning?  
Haven't you understood since the earth was founded?
- <sup>22</sup>God inhabits the earth's horizon—its inhabitants are like locusts—  
stretches out the skies like a curtain and spreads it out like a tent for dwelling.
- <sup>23</sup>God makes dignitaries useless  
and the earth's judges into nothing.
- <sup>24</sup>Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,  
scarcely is their shoot rooted in the earth

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain

The second portrays the returning exiles as defenseless ewes and lambs.

40:12-31 An extended argument from creation. The section invites addressees to imagine Israel's God as the unparalleled creator and powerful protector of all creation, who gives strength to God's people.

40:12 All five elements mentioned in this verse—*waters, heavens, earth's dust, mountains, and hills*—appear repeatedly throughout Second Isaiah (Isa 40–55). For water that won't pose any barrier, see Isaiah 43:2, 16; 50:2; 51:10; 54:9; for water provided to the thirsty, see Isaiah 41:17–18; 43:20; 44:3–4; 48:21; 49:10; 55:1. For the heavens as example of God's creative power, see Isaiah 40:22; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 48:13; 51:13, 16; 45:18; 50:3. For sky invoked to praise God, see Isaiah 44:23; 49:13. The earth's dust will signal the coming conquest of the nations (Isa 41:2) and

**Second Isaiah** For the past century most scholars have understood Isaiah 40–55 in relation to the end of the Babylonian exile, an event that Isaiah 39 foreshadows. At this time (around 540 BCE), the victories of the Persians under King Cyrus allow nations who were relocated by the Babylonians some 50 years before to return to their own lands. These 16 chapters, often called Second Isaiah or Deutero-Isaiah, urge Judeans living in exile to see this circumstance as a continuation of Israel's story from the past. Judeans should view the opportunity to return to Judah as a second exodus, a chance to renew faithfulness to their ancient God, who is still at work. Though this section contains speeches of rebuke and correction, it is characterized most often by comfort and invitation. The exiled people are invited to imagine themselves once again as descendants of Jacob (also named Israel), as servants of God, and as children of Jerusalem.

- 40:12 Prv 30:4;  
Is 48:13;  
Heb 1:10
- 40:13 Job 15:8;  
Job 21:22;  
Is 11:2;  
Ro 11:34;  
1Co 2:16
- 40:14 Job 12:13;  
Job 21:22;  
Is 55:9; Col 2:3
- 40:15 Ps 62:9;  
Is 29:5;  
Jer 10:10
- 40:16 Ps 50:9;  
Mi 6:6; Mi 6:7;  
Heb 10:5
- 40:17 Dn 4:35
- 40:18 Ex 8:10;  
Ex 15:11;  
Is 40:25, Is 46:5;  
Ac 17:29
- 40:19 Is 41:7;  
Is 44:10, Is 46:6;  
Hab 2:18
- 40:20 Isa 5:3
- 40:21 Ps 19:1;  
Is 40:28;  
Ac 14:17;  
Ro 1:19
- 40:22 Nm  
13:33; Job 9:8;  
Ps 104:2;  
Prv 8:27;  
Is 42:5
- 40:23 Job 12:21;  
Ps 107:40

their service of Zion (Isa 49:23), as well as Daughter Babylon's fall (Isa 47:1) and Jerusalem's restoration (Isa 52:2). The role of the mountains and hills in proclamation is seen already in Isaiah 40:9, and will return in Isaiah 42:11 and 52:7; their vulnerability to divine destruction will be revisited in Isaiah 41:15; 42:15; 49:11; 54:10. Like the other elements in this verse, mountains and hills sing praise to God (Isa 44:23; 49:13; 55:12).

40:13 God's plan figured prominently in First Isaiah (Isa 1–39; see Isa 5:19; 14:24–27; 19:17; 23:8–9; 25:1; 28:29; 8:10; 11:2; 16:3; 19:3, 11; 29:15; 30:1).

40:18–20 God's incomparability is frequently argued in Isaiah 40–48, specifically in contrast to other gods who are deemed as nothing more than human-made idols (Isa 41:6–7; 44:9–20; 46:6–7; 41:21–24, 29; 42:8, 17; 45:16, 20; 46:1–2; 48:5).

Approximate Date (BCE)					
			Jehoahaz (816-800)		
805	Assyria defeats Damascus, opening the way for sixty years of Israelite and Judean expansion, a growing luxury class, and economic and religious excesses			Amaziah (7)	
			Joash (800-875)		
		Jonah*	Jeroboam II (785-745)	Uzziah (7)	
		Amos (760)		Jotham (7-742)	
		Hosea (750-724)			
745	Renewed Assyrian campaigns against Aram and Palestine		Zechariah, Shallum (745)		2 Kgs 15:10
745-724	Political unrest in Israel: assassinations of Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah		Menahem (745-736)	Jehoahaz I (742-727)	2 Kgs 15
		Isalah of Jerusalem (738-701)	Pekahiah (736-735)		
735-733	Syro-Ephraimite War; Ahaz pays tribute to Assyria		Pekah (735-732)		2 Kgs 16:5-8; Isa 7:1-8:15; 2 Chron 28:5-21
732	Damascus destroyed by Assyria; Aram becomes an Assyrian province; Israel made a vassal state	Micah (730-700)	Hoshea (732-723)	Hezekiah (727-698)	2 Kgs 16:2
722	Israel defeated by Assyria; Hoshea imprisoned				2 Kgs 17:3-4
721	Samaria destroyed by Assyria, population deported				2 Kgs 17:5-6; 18:9-12
713-711	Assyria defeats coalition led by Ashdod				Isa 20:1-6
705	Hezekiah joins coalition against Assyria				
701	Coalition defeated by Assyria; Jerusalem spared				2 Kgs 18:13-19:37; 2 Chron 32:1-22
				Manshaph (697-642)	
689	Babylon destroyed by Assyria				
679-671	Assyrian campaigns against Egypt and Phoenicia				

Year	Event	Scripture	King	Reference
626	Babylon gains freedom from Assyria; Josiah's "deuteronomiac reform"	Jeremiah (627-583)		2 Kgs 23:1-25; 2 Chron 34:1-33
614	City of Asshur destroyed by Medes			
612	Nineveh destroyed by Medes and Babylonians	Nahum (612)		
609	Josiah killed; Judah under Egyptian control; defeat of Assyrian and Egyptian forces at Haran	Habakkuk (609-597)	Jehoahaz II (609) Jehoiakim (608-598)	2 Kgs 23:29-30, 33-35; 2 Chron 35:20-24; Jer 46:1-12
605	Defeat of Egyptian forces at Carchemish and Hamath			
604	Babylon gains control of Syria, Palestine, and Phoenicia			
601/600	Egypt defeats Babylonian army; Jehoiakim withholds tribute			2 Kgs 24:1
598/597	Babylonians besiege Jerusalem; first deportation		Jehoiachin (598-597)	2 Kgs 24:18-17; 2 Chron 36:10
		Ezekiel (593-573)	Zedekiah (597-586)	
590/589	Zedekiah withholds tribute			2 Kgs 24:20b; 2 Chron 36:13
587	Jerusalem falls; Gedaliah appointed governor; second deportation	Obadiah (?)	Gedaliah (586-581?)	2 Kgs 25:1-24; 2 Chron 36:17-21; Jer 52:1-30
582/581	Gedaliah assassinated; third deportation			2 Kgs 25:25-26; Jer 40:7-42:18; 52:30
561	Jehoiachin released from prison; remains in Babylon			2 Kgs 25:27-30; Jer 52:31-34
550	Cyrus the Persian begins campaigns against Lydia and Media	Second Isaiah (550-538)		
538	The city of Babylon surrenders to Persia; Edict of Cyrus; first return of exiles led by Sheshbazzar; rebuilding of the temple begun, but soon halted			2 Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-2-70; Ezra 3:8-4:5
526/525	Persia defeats Egypt			
522	Accession of Darius; temple rebuilding resumed	Haggai (520); Zechariah (520-518)		Ezra 5:1-6:12
516/515	Temple completed and rededicated			Ezra 6:13-18
		Malachi (?)		

40:25 Is 40:18  
 40:26 Ps 89:11,  
 Ps 147:4  
 40:27 Is 49:14  
 40:28 Gn 21:33;  
 Ps 147:5;  
 Ro 11:33  
 40:29 Is 41:10,  
 Is 50:4;  
 Jer 31:25  
 40:31 Ex 19:4;  
 Ps 103:5;  
 Is 8:17;  
 2Co 4:16  
 41:4 Is 41:26,  
 Is 44:6, Is 46:10,  
 Is 48:12;  
 Rev 1:17

when God breathes on them, and they dry up;  
 the windstorm carries them off like straw.  
**25** So to whom will you compare me,  
 and who is my equal? says the holy one.

### Power for the weary

- 26** Look up at the sky and consider:  
 Who created these?  
 The one who brings out their attendants one by one,  
 summoning each of them by name.  
 Because of God's great strength  
 and mighty power, not one is missing.
- 27** Why do you say, Jacob, and declare, Israel,  
 "My way is hidden from the LORD  
 my God ignores my predicament?"
- 28** Don't you know? Haven't you heard?  
 The LORD is the everlasting God,  
 the creator of the ends of the earth.  
 He doesn't grow tired or weary.  
 His understanding is beyond human reach,  
**29** giving power to the tired  
 and reviving the exhausted.
- 30** Youths will become tired and weary,  
 young men will certainly stumble;  
**31** but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength;  
 they will fly up on wings like eagles;  
 they will run and not be tired;  
 they will walk and not be weary.

### Victor from the east

- 41** Be quiet before me, coastlands.  
 Let the nations renew their strength.  
 Let them approach and speak.  
 Let's draw near for a judgment.
- 2** Who has awakened one from the east  
 and has authority to summon him to serve—  
 giving him nations, conquering kings,  
 making them like dust with his sword,  
 like scattered straw with his bow?
- 3** He pursues them and passes untouched,  
 needing no path for his feet.
- 4** Who has acted and who has done this,  
 calling upon generation after generation since the beginning?  
 I, the LORD, was first, and I will be the last!

40:25 God speaks now, asking the same question as was posed in Isaiah 40:18.

40:26 *Who created these?*: Isaiah 40-48 discusses God's act of creation—of the physical world, of humans, and of Israel—more frequently than any other portion of scripture. See Isaiah 40:28; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1, 7, 15; 45:7, 8, 12, 18; 48:7; see also Isaiah 54:16; 57:19; 65:17, 18.

40:27 *Why do you say, Jacob*: For the first time the audience is directly named. It is Israel, the descendants of Jacob, who will often be addressed as a collective individual. The complaint attributed to Jacob here is answered in the next several chapters. A similar complaint against God will be voiced by Jerusalem in Isaiah 49:14.

40:28-31 The first reply to Israel's complaint is a promise of God-given renewal.

41:1-28 The prophet continues speaking directly for God. This continues through Isaiah 48 with few interruptions.

41:1 *Let's draw near for a judgment*: In response to Jacob's accusation in Isaiah 40:27 that God is ignoring justice, God issues a challenge, summoning the nations into a controversy to search out justice (see also Isa 41:11, 21).

41:2 *Who has awakened one from the east*: As in Isaiah 40:12-31, rhetorical questions prevail. *one from the east* is the first reference to Persia's King Cyrus, who will be named explicitly in Isaiah 44:28; 45:1, 13. Cyrus the Great was founder of the Persian Achaemenid dynasty, which ruled much of western Asia and some portions of Europe and Africa until the rise of Alexander the Great in the late 4th century BCE. Cyrus' peaceful conquest of Babylon occurred in 539.

41:4 *Who has acted and who has done this*: Cyrus' victories are not by chance but were planned long ago for Israel's sake. *I, the LORD, was first*: See Isaiah 41:6, 27; 44:6; 48:12. These words are echoed in Revelation 1:17; 2:8; 22:13. The

- <sup>5</sup>The coastlands see and fear;  
the ends of the earth tremble;  
they draw near and arrive.
- <sup>6</sup>Each helps the other,  
each saying to the other, "Take courage!"
- <sup>7</sup>The craftsman encourages the metalworker;  
the one who smoothes with the hammer  
encourages the one who strikes the anvil,  
saying of the welding, "That's good,"  
and strengthening it with nails so it won't move.

41:8 2Ch 20:7;  
Is 44:1, Is 44:2,  
Is 44:21;  
Jas 2:23

41:10 Josh 1:9;  
Ps 18:35,  
Ps 37:17;  
Is 41:13, Is 43:5  
41:14 Job 25:6;  
Ps 22:6;  
Is 43:14, Is 44:6,  
Is 47:4

41:15 Is 21:10;  
Mi 4:13

41:16 Is 45:25;  
Jer 15:7,  
Jer 51:2

**Israel as God's servant**

- <sup>8</sup>But you, Israel my servant,  
Jacob, whom I have chosen,  
offspring of Abraham, whom I love,
- <sup>9</sup>you whom I took from the ends of the earth  
and called from its farthest corners,  
saying to you, "You are my servant;  
I chose you and didn't reject you":
- <sup>10</sup>Don't fear, because I am with you;  
don't be afraid, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you,  
I will surely help you;  
I will hold you with my righteous strong hand.
- <sup>11</sup>All who rage against you will be shamed and disgraced.  
Those who contend with you will be as nothing and will perish.
- <sup>12</sup>You will look for your opponents, and won't find them.  
Those who fight you will be of no account and will die.
- <sup>13</sup>I am the LORD your God, who grasps your strong hand,  
who says to you, Don't fear; I will help you.
- <sup>14</sup>Don't fear, worm of Jacob, people of Israel!  
I will help you, says the LORD.  
The holy one of Israel is your redeemer.
- <sup>15</sup>Look, I've made you into a new threshing tool with sharp teeth.  
You will thresh mountains and pulverize them;  
you will reduce hills to straw.
- <sup>16</sup>When you winnow them,  
the wind will carry them off;  
the tempest will scatter them.

final phrase of this verse, *I will be the last*, could also read, "I am the one!" (cf. Isa 43:10, 13, 25; 45:19; 46:4; 48:12; 51:9, 12; 52:6).

41:6-7 *Each helps the other*: In contrast to God, the idols are dependent on humans, who encourage each other as they fashion objects for their worship (see Isa 40:18-20; 44:9-20; 45:20; 46:1-7).

41:8-10 The nations must strengthen themselves and their gods, but the Lord strengthens Israel. The idol-makers help each other (Isa 41:6), but God helps and upholds Israel (41:10). The woodworker chose his wood (Isa 40:20), but it is God who has chosen Israel (41:8, 9). The combination *my servant* and "my chosen" is repeated twice (41:8, 9), and recurs (as does the meaning "uphold" from the end of 41:10) in Isaiah 42:1; they also reappear together in Isaiah 43:10; 45:4; 49:6-7 (see also Isa 49:3, 5). The reassurances *Don't fear* and *I will surely help you* in 41:10 are repeated immediately in Isaiah 41:13, 14 (see also Isa 43:1, 5; 49:8; 50:7, 9; 51:7; 54:4, 14). All four terms are recombed in Isaiah 44:1-2. For *servant*, see also Isaiah 42:19; 44:21, 26; 48:20; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11. For *chosen*, see Isaiah 43:20.

41:9 *and didn't reject you*: See Lamentations 5:21-22.

41:10 *Don't fear*: a frequent reassurance in Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55; see Isa 40:9; 41:10, 13, 14; 43:5; 44:2, 8; 51:7; 54:4, 14). These oracles may have arisen in the context of worship, as a priestly response to prayers (Lam 3:57). They echo the story of Jacob (Gen 26:24). *I am with you*: See Isaiah 43:2, 5; 45:14; Jeremiah 30:11.

41:14 *The holy one of Israel*: A frequent name for God especially throughout First Isaiah (Isa 1-39) and Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55); see note on Isaiah 1:4. *redeemer*: originally a relative designated to assist family members in economic distress (Lev 25:25), or to avenge a murder (Num 35:19). From this usage arose the image of God as redeemer of worshippers from oppression (Prov 23:11), and especially as redeemer of Israel from slavery (Exod 6:6; 15:13). In Second Isaiah, God is repeatedly called Israel's redeemer from exile (see Isa 43:14; 44:6, 22-24; 47:4; 48:17, 20; 49:7, 26; 51:10; 52:3, 9; 54:5, 8).

41:15 *I've made you into a new threshing tool*: In Isaiah 40:24 the windstorm carried off the earth's judges like straw, but here the hills, standing in as obstacles, become like straw before Israel.

41:17 Is 30:19,  
Is 44:3, Is 55:1  
41:18 Ps 107:35,  
Is 30:25, Is 35:6,  
Is 35:7, Is 43:19  
41:19 Is 35:1,  
Is 51:3,  
Is 55:13,  
Is 60:13; Zec 1:8  
41:20 Job 12:9,  
Is 66:14  
41:22 Is 42:9,  
Is 43:9, Is 44:7,  
Is 45:21, Is 46:10  
41:23 Jer 10:5,  
Jn 13:19  
42:1 Is 11:2,  
Is 52:13,  
Is 61:1, Mt 3:16,  
Mt 3:17

You will rejoice in the LORD  
and take pride in the holy one of Israel.

- <sup>17</sup>The poor and the needy seek water, and there is none;  
their tongues are parched with thirst.  
I, the LORD, will respond to them;  
I, the God of Israel, won't abandon them.
- <sup>18</sup>I will open streams on treeless hilltops  
and springs in valleys.  
I will make the desert into ponds  
and dry land into cascades of water.
- <sup>19</sup>I will plant in the desert cedar, acacia, myrtle, and olive trees;  
I will put in the wilderness cypress, elm, and pine as well,  
<sup>20</sup>so that they will see and know  
and observe and comprehend  
that the LORD's hand has done this,  
and the holy one of Israel has created it.

### Other gods challenged

- <sup>21</sup>Present your case, says the LORD.  
Bring forward your evidence, says Jacob's king.
- <sup>22</sup>Let the idols\* approach and tell us what will happen.  
The prior things—what are they?  
Announce them, and we'll think about them and know their significance.  
Or proclaim to us what is to come!
- <sup>23</sup>Report things that will happen in the future,  
then we'll know that you are gods.  
Do good! Or do bad!  
Then we will all be afraid and fearful.
- <sup>24</sup>Look! You are nobody, and your deeds are nothing.  
Whoever chooses you is disgusting.
- <sup>25</sup>I woke up one from the north and he came;  
from the east, one who calls my name.  
He tramples governors like mud,  
as a potter treads clay.
- <sup>26</sup>Who announced this from the start so that we would know;  
from an earlier time so we would say, "That's right!"  
Truly, no one announced it,  
no one proclaimed it,  
and no one heard your words.
- <sup>27</sup>I first said it to Zion, "Look, here they are";  
to Jerusalem I now send a herald.
- <sup>28</sup>But I look, and there's no one among them, no counselor;  
and when I ask, no one can answer.
- <sup>29</sup>Look, all of them are frauds;  
their deeds amount to nothing;  
their images are a total delusion.

### God's servant described

**42** But here is my servant, the one I uphold;  
my chosen, who brings me delight.

\*Or them

**41:18 streams on treeless hilltops:** Wilderness is a recurring image in Isaiah (see Isa 29:17; 30:23-25; 32:15-16; 35:1-2, 6-7; 43:20-21; 44:3-4; 49:9-10; 51:3; 55:13). The image can be read literally to help the journey homeward and to provide sustenance in the drought-prone and war-decimated land itself. It can also be read as God's provision of spiritual renewal.

**41:21-22 Present your case:** By Isaiah 41:23 we learn that God is addressing other nations' deities. This section is designed to demonstrate to the Judean audience the incomparability of their own God, who not only knew but planned what was to come. For *The prior things*, see Isaiah 42:9; 43:18; 46:9; 48:3, 42:1-4 *But here is my servant:* Having demanded that the

I've put my spirit upon him;  
 he will bring justice to the nations.  
<sup>2</sup> He won't cry out or shout aloud  
 or make his voice heard in public.  
<sup>3</sup> He won't break a bruised reed;  
 he won't extinguish a faint wick,  
 but he will surely bring justice.  
<sup>4</sup> He won't be extinguished or broken  
 until he has established justice in the land.  
 The coastlands await his teaching.  
<sup>5</sup> God the LORD says—  
 the one who created the heavens,  
 the one who stretched them out,  
 the one who spread out the earth and its offspring,  
 the one who gave breath to its people  
 and life to those who walk on it—  
<sup>6</sup> I, the LORD, have called you for a good reason.  
 I will grasp your hand and guard you,  
 and give you as a covenant to the people,  
 as a light to the nations,  
<sup>7</sup> to open blind eyes, to lead the prisoners from prison,  
 and those who sit in darkness from the dungeon.  
<sup>8</sup> I am the LORD; that is my name;  
 I don't hand out my glory to others or my praise to idols.  
<sup>9</sup> The things announced in the past—look—they've already happened,  
 but I'm declaring new things.  
 Before they even appear, I tell you about them.

42:2 1Pt 2:23  
 42:3 Is 40:11  
 42:4 Is 11:11,  
 Is 60:9  
 42:5 Ps 24:2,  
 Ps 102:25,  
 Is 40:22,  
 Is 44:24,  
 Is 45:12  
 42:6 Is 9:2,  
 Is 49:6, Is 49:8,  
 Is 51:4; Lk 2:32  
 42:7 Is 29:18,  
 Is 35:5, Is 49:9,  
 Is 61:1; Lk 4:18  
 42:8 Ex 20:3;  
 Ps 83:18;  
 Is 43:11,  
 Is 48:11  
 42:9 Is 41:22,  
 Is 43:19,  
 Is 46:10  
 42:10 Ps 33:3,  
 Ps 96:1,  
 Ps 107:23;  
 Is 42:4  
 42:11 Is 21:16,  
 Is 60:7

**Warrior and mother**

<sup>10</sup> Sing to the LORD a new song!  
 Sing his praise from the ends of the earth!  
 You who sail the sea and all that fills it,  
 the coastlands and their residents.  
<sup>11</sup> Let the desert and its towns shout aloud,  
 the villages that Kedar inhabits.

foreign gods present their case, and having determined by their failure to respond that these gods don't exist, God now offers evidence for God's own case. This servant is described in vocabulary repeated from the previous chapter: chosen (Isa 41:8, 9/42:1); called (Isa 41:9/42:6); supported (Isa 41:10/42:1); and grasped by the hand (Isa 41:13/42:6) in righteousness (Isa 41:10/42:6) by the one who self-identifies as "I, the LORD" (Isa 41:13/42:6, 8). The prophet invites Jacob's descendants to take on the identity, self-understanding, and roles of leaders from the nation's past. The literary form resembles that of royal commissioning. The servant's primary responsibility, like those of the earlier kings, is administering justice (2 Sam 8:15; 1 Kgs 3:28; 10:9; Ps 72:1-2; Isa 9:7; 11:4; 16:5; 32:1). But his influence is much greater than that of Judah's kings: not the nation but the nations, plural.

Christian tradition tended to read this and other servant passages in Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55) as predictions of Jesus. The context of these passages shows that the servant was a model for returning Israel for Second Isaiah's earliest readers. Since Jesus also lived as a model Israelite in his time, it makes sense to understand him in terms of these passages without excluding the earlier understanding of the prophet's readers.

**42:6 a covenant to the people:** God doesn't simply make a covenant with the servant, but makes the servant the

substance of that covenant. Israel functions as "a covenant/light to the people/nations" by being a sign of what God intends to do among all nations.

**42:7 open blind eyes... from prison:** It isn't clear whether the subject of all these actions is the servant or God. Though traditional Christian translations attributed these to the servant (often read as Jesus), all healing power ultimately comes from God, as Isaiah 42:8 attests. As in other parts of Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55), images of healing and liberation function on both literal and figurative levels. Failing to see and hear is a frequent theme in Isaiah; see Isaiah 6:10; 29:9, 18; 35:5; 42:16, 18-20; 43:8; 56:10; 59:10. **42:8** For discussion of idols, see note on Isaiah 40:18-20.

**42:9 I'm declaring new things:** See note on Isaiah 41:21. Having dismissed any other god's ability to know past or future (Isa 41:22-23), and having declared God the only one capable of announcing the future (Isa 41:26-27), the prophet builds on this argument to establish credibility for the *new things* now being said. With this verse a plural audience comes into view.

**42:10-12 Sing to the LORD a new song!:** The first of many recollections of praise psalms, particularly of Psalm 98. See also Isaiah 44:23; 49:13; 51:3; 52:9-10; 55:12. *You who sail... fills it:* Changing one Hebrew word in Isaiah 42:10 yields "Let the sea and everything in it roar" (cf. Ps 98:7).

**42:11 Kedar:** desert-dwellers of northern Arabia; compare

42:12 Is 24:15  
 42:13 Ps 78:65;  
 Is 37:32;  
 Is 59:17;  
 Jer 25:30;  
 Am 1:2  
 42:14 Ps 50:21;  
 2Pt 3:9  
 42:15 Ps 107:33;  
 Is 44:27, Is 50:2;  
 Na 1:4  
 42:16 Is 30:21;  
 Is 32:3, Is 40:4;  
 Jer 31:8;  
 Heb 13:5  
 42:18 Is 29:18  
 42:19 Is 26:3,  
 Is 41:8, Is 44:26;  
 Eze 12:2

**On God and the Gods** While earlier biblical writings reflect the Idea, common at that time, that other gods existed but Israel belonged to Yahweh ("the LORD"), Isaiah 40–48 develops the belief that Israel's God is the only living deity, and that the gods worshipped by other nations are nothing more than the idols created by humans to represent them. Second Isaiah celebrates God's exclusive acts of creation and ridicules the idols and their human creators. Such assertions directly dispute claims of the supremacy of Babylon's god Marduk.

Beginning in Isaiah 40:12, Israel's God is praised for acting alone as architect of the world's great structures. The world's creation is connected with the choosing of Israel (Isa 51:16). God, who made all things, knows both past and future, planning from the beginning things yet to be seen.

The prophet challenges the audience to find anyone who is God's equal (Isa 40:18, 25; 46:5). Gods of other nations are challenged to come forward to make their own case, but since they are only idols, they can't (Isa 41:21–29). The futility of manufacturing one's own saving god is ridiculed (Isa 44:9–20), as is the idols' need to be saved by humans since they can't move, let alone help their worshippers (Isa 46:1–7).

- Let the cliff dwellers sing;  
 from the top of the mountains let them shout.  
 12 Let them give the LORD glory  
 and declare God's praise in the coastlands.  
 13 The LORD will go out like a soldier;  
 like a warrior God will stir up rage.  
 God will shout, will roar;  
 over enemies he will prevail.  
 14 I've kept still for a very long time.  
 I've been silent and restrained myself.  
 Like a woman in labor I will moan;  
 I will pant, I will gasp.  
 15 I will wither mountains and valleys,  
 and I will dry up all their vegetation.  
 I will turn rivers into deserts,<sup>a</sup>  
 and I will dry up pools.  
 16 I will make the blind walk a road they don't know,  
 and I will guide them in paths they don't know.  
 But I will make darkness before them into light  
 and rough places into level ground.  
 These things I will do;  
 I won't abandon them.

#### **Blindness and deafness**

- 17 Turned backward, utterly shamed are those who trust in idols,  
 who say to a cast image, "You are our god!"  
 18 Hear, deaf ones,  
 and blind ones, look and see!  
 19 Who is blind if not my servant  
 and deaf like my messenger whom I send?

<sup>a</sup>Or *islands*

with note on Isaiah 21:13–17. Praise for God will come not just from Israel but from the east (Kedar) and from the west (coastlands), that is, surrounding nations.

42:13–14 *like a soldier* . . . *Like a woman in labor*: Two powerful images for God stand side by side, one male and the other female; one destroying life and the other creating it. The image of people being like women in the throes of labor often signaled helplessness (Ps 48:6; Isa 13:8; 21:3; Jer 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; 30:6; 48:41; 49:22; 50:43; Mic 4:9–10). But here it shows the heroic strength of bringing a child to birth. The two images and the preceding verses

are bound together by noise—the noise of praise, of battle cries, of God's childbearing.

42:15–16 As in Israel's founding story of the exodus, the drying of rivers and pools allows the people to cross to new land.

42:17 *utterly shamed*: Shame frequently characterizes idolatry in Second Isaiah (Isa 40–55) and other Prophets; see Isaiah 44:9, 11; 45:16–17; 49:23; Jeremiah 6:15; 11:13; 13:26–27.

42:18–25 The prophet justifies God's ways in the past, punishing Israel's refusal to see and hear (see Isa 6:9–10).



42:20 Jer 6:10  
 42:22 Is 5:29,  
 Is 14:17,  
 Is 24:18,  
 Is 24:22  
 42:24 Is 5:24,  
 Is 30:15  
 43:1 Gn 32:28;  
 Is 41:14, Is 44:2,  
 Is 44:21, Is 45:4  
 43:2 Ps 66:12;  
 Dn 3:25,  
 Dn 3:27  
 43:3 Is 41:14,  
 Is 45:15,  
 Is 60:16  
 43:4 Is 63:9

- Who is blind like the restored one,<sup>a</sup>  
 blind like the servant of the LORD?
- <sup>20</sup> You have seen many things, but don't keep watch.  
 With ears open, you don't hear.<sup>▼</sup>
- <sup>21</sup> The LORD desired for the sake of his righteousness  
 to expand and glorify the Instruction.
- <sup>22</sup> But this is a people plundered and looted,  
 everyone trapped in holes and hidden in dungeons.  
 They have become plunder with no one to rescue,  
 loot with no one to say, "Give it back."
- <sup>23</sup> Which of you will listen to this,  
 will pay attention and respond from now on?
- <sup>24</sup> Who gave Jacob to the looter,  
 and Israel to the plunderers?  
 Wasn't it the LORD, the one we sinned against?  
 They were not willing to walk in God's ways,  
 and wouldn't listen to his teaching.
- <sup>25</sup> So God poured out on Jacob the heat of his anger and the fury of battle.  
 It scorched him, and he didn't know it;  
 it burned him, but he didn't give it much thought.

**Don't fear**

- 43** But now, says the LORD—  
 the one who created you, Jacob,  
 the one who formed you, Israel:  
 Don't fear, for I have redeemed you;  
 I have called you by name; you are mine.
- <sup>1</sup> When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
 when through the rivers, they won't sweep over you.  
 When you walk through the fire, you won't be scorched  
 and flame won't burn you.
- <sup>3</sup> I am the LORD your God,  
 the holy one of Israel, your savior.  
 I have given Egypt as your ransom,  
 Cush and Seba in your place.
- <sup>4</sup> Because you are precious in my eyes,  
 you are honored, and I love you.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *Meshullam*, possibly a proper name <sup>▼</sup>Or *he does not hear*

But as Isaiah 40:1-2 announced, and Isaiah 43:1 will announce again, the past is past, and redemption is now declared.

43:1-7 *But now, says the LORD:* Leaving behind the accusations of Isaiah 42:17-25, the prophet returns to positive promises for the future.

43:1 *who created you . . . who formed you:* For "created," see note on Isaiah 40:26. Now it is paired with "formed" (cf. Isa 43:7). The motif of God forming Israel will be prominent in Isaiah 44, where it contrasts with the claim that it is humans who create the other gods. *Don't fear:* See Isaiah 43:5; see note on Isaiah 41:10. *I have redeemed you:* See note on Isaiah 41:14. Here divine redemption is in the past tense. *I have called you by name:* See Isaiah 43:7; 45:3, 4; 49:1. In Isaiah 40:26, the stars were all called by name. *you are mine:* See Isaiah 41:9.

43:2 *pass through the waters:* a reminder of the crossing of the sea from Egypt (see Exod 14-15). Other exodus reminders will follow. *I will be with you:* See note on Isaiah 41:10. *they won't sweep over you:* The raging waters of

enemy forces had been a concern in the days of Ahaz and Hezekiah; see Isaiah 8:8; 10:22; 28:2, 15, 17; 30:28.

43:3 *I am the LORD your God:* For "I am the LORD" (without the "your God"), see note on Isaiah 42:6. This is the first instance in Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55) of the full phrase reminiscent of the saying from the Pentateuch, "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (Exod 20:2; Lev 19:36; 25:38; 26:13; Num 15:41; Deut 5:6). See also Isaiah 48:17; 51:15.

43:3 *the holy one of Israel:* See note on Isaiah 41:14. *your savior:* This is the first instance of this word in Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55); see Isaiah 43:11; 45:15, 21; 47:15; 49:26; 60:16. Although the psalmists often use "save" as a verb, the description of God as "the one who saves" is infrequent outside Second Isaiah (see Isa 63:8; Ps 106:21; Hos 13:4, which all refer to the exodus story). *Cush and Seba:* both in Africa, associated with Egypt. In Genesis 10:7, Seba was Cush's oldest male child.

43:4 *I love you:* See Isaiah 41:8, in which God loves either Abraham or his offspring (or perhaps both).

43:5 Is 41:10,  
Is 44:2  
43:8 Is 6:9;  
Eze 12:2  
43:10 Is 43:12,  
Is 44:6, Is 44:8;  
Ac 1:8  
43:11 Is 49:21;  
Hos 13:4  
43:12 Dt 32:12;  
Is 43:10  
43:15 Is 43:1,  
Is 45:11

I give people in your place,  
and nations in exchange for your life.

- <sup>5</sup>Don't fear, I am with you.  
From the east I'll bring your children;  
from the west I'll gather you.  
<sup>6</sup>I'll say to the north, "Give them back!"  
and to the south, "Don't detain them."  
Bring my sons from far away,  
and my daughters from the end of the earth,  
<sup>7</sup>everyone who is called by my name  
and whom I created for my glory,  
whom I have formed and made.

- <sup>8</sup>Bring out the blind people who have eyes,  
the deaf ones who have ears.  
<sup>9</sup>All the nations are gathered together;  
the peoples are assembled.  
Which of them announced this?  
Who predicted to us the past events?  
Let them bring their witnesses as a defense;  
let them hear and say, "It's true!"  
<sup>10</sup>You are my witnesses, says the LORD,  
my servant, whom I chose,  
so that you would know and believe me  
and understand that I am the one.  
Before me no god was formed;  
after me there has been no other.  
<sup>11</sup>I, I am the LORD, and there is no savior besides me.  
<sup>12</sup>I announced, I saved, I proclaimed,  
not some stranger among you.  
You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and I am God.  
<sup>13</sup>From the dawn of time, I am the one.  
No one can escape my power.  
I act, and who can undo it?

### **Don't remember**

- <sup>14</sup>The LORD your redeemer, the holy one of Israel, says,  
For your sake, I have sent an army<sup>w</sup> to Babylon,  
and brought down all the bars,  
turning the Chaldeans' singing into a lament.\*  
<sup>15</sup>I am the LORD, your holy one, Israel's creator, your king!

<sup>w</sup>Heb lacks *an army*. <sup>\*</sup>Heb uncertain

43:5 *Don't fear, I am with you*: See Isaiah 43:1; see note on Isaiah 41:10. *From the east*: The exiles (*children*) will come not only from Babylon in the east but from all directions. See Isaiah 49:12.

43:7 *whom I have formed and made*: To "created" and "formed" the prophet now adds the synonym "made." See Isaiah 44:2, 24, and the contrast in Isaiah 44:13, 15, 17, 19, in which the idol-maker makes his god.

43:8-13 In Isaiah 41:21-29, the gods of the other nations were summoned to testify. Now the nations are summoned. The people of Israel themselves will be witnesses to God's sole existence and power.

43:8 *Bring out the blind people*: See Isaiah 42:18-19.

43:9 *Which of them announced this?*: See Isaiah 41:22-26, where the nations' gods are similarly challenged. *past*

*events*: The Hebrew term used here, usually translated "prior things," is a key motif in this section; see note on Isaiah 41:21-22. *witnesses*: See Isaiah 43:10, 12; 44:8, 9.

43:10 *my servant, whom I chose*: a frequent description of Israel in Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55); see note on Isaiah 41:8. Those being addressed are called both *witnesses* (plural) and *servant* (singular). *I am the one*: See Isaiah 43:13, 25; see note on Isaiah 41:4. *Before me no god was formed*: Other gods don't exist; their representations are empty idols. See Isaiah 40:18; 44:6, 8; 45:5, 6, 14-22; 46:9.

43:14-21 This passage addresses a plural audience. The prophet compares the present time to the exodus, only to suggest that the ancient story will no longer define Israel, since this new one will replace it. See Jeremiah 16:14-15 (cf. Jer 23:7-8).

- <sup>16</sup>The LORD says—who makes a way in the sea  
and a path in the mighty waters,  
<sup>17</sup>who brings out chariot and horse, army and battalion;  
they will lie down together and will not rise;  
they will be extinguished, extinguished like a wick.  
<sup>18</sup>Don't remember the prior things;  
don't ponder ancient history.  
<sup>19</sup>Look! I'm doing a new thing;  
now it sprouts up; don't you recognize it?  
I'm making a way in the desert,  
paths<sup>†</sup> in the wilderness.  
<sup>20</sup>The beasts of the field, the jackals and ostriches, will honor me,  
because I have put water in the desert and streams in the wilderness  
to give water to my people, my chosen ones,  
<sup>21</sup>this people whom I formed for myself, who will recount my praise.
- <sup>22</sup>But you didn't call out to me, Jacob;  
you were tired of me, Israel.  
<sup>23</sup>You didn't bring me lambs for your entirely burned offering;  
you didn't honor me with your sacrifices.  
I didn't make you worship with offerings;  
I didn't weary you with frankincense.  
<sup>24</sup>You didn't buy spices for me with your money,  
or satisfy me with the fat of your sacrifices.  
Instead, you have burdened me with your sins  
and wearied me with your evil actions.  
<sup>25</sup>I, I am the one who wipes out your rebellious behavior for my sake.  
I won't remember your sin.  
<sup>26</sup>Summon me, and let's go to trial together;  
you tell your story so that you may be vindicated!  
<sup>27</sup>Your first ancestor sinned,  
and your officials rebelled against me.  
<sup>28</sup>So I made the holy officials impure,  
handed over Jacob to destruction and Israel to abuse.

43:18 Is 65:17;  
Jer 23:7  
43:19 Is 41:18,  
Is 42:9, Is 48:6;  
2Co 5:17;  
Rev 21:5  
43:20 Ps 148:10;  
Is 13:22,  
Is 34:13,  
Is 48:21  
43:21 Ps 102:18;  
1Pt 2:9  
43:23 Lv 21:1;  
Am 5:25;  
Zec 7:5  
43:24 Ex 30:23;  
Is 7:13; Jer 6:20  
43:25 Is 37:35,  
Is 44:22;  
Jer 31:34;  
Mi 7:18; Mk 2:7  
43:26 Is 1:18,  
Is 41:1, Is 50:8  
44:1 Is 41:8

**You are my witnesses**

**44** But now hear this, Jacob my servant,  
and Israel, whom I have chosen.

<sup>2</sup>The LORD your maker,  
who formed you in the womb and will help you, says:

<sup>†</sup>DSS (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>); MT *streams*

43:16-17 *who makes a way in the sea*: See Exodus 14–15. Unlike God's people, who need not fear the waters (Isa 43:2), Pharaoh's chariots, horses, and armies are destroyed. 43:18 *Don't remember the prior things*: After this detailed and graphic reminder of the ancient miracle, the prophet ironically tells the audience not to remember it. It will pale in comparison to what God will do now. See Isaiah 46:8-9. 43:19-20 *I'm making a way in the desert*: Instead of a path through the sea (cf. Ps 77:19), God makes a way through the desert, paths (or streams) through the wilderness. The miracle of the exodus was turning the sea into dry land (Exod 14:21; Ps 66:6); the miracle now will be providing water in the desert—a feat that also recalls the exodus story (see Exod 15:22-27; 17:1-6; Isa 41:17-18; 44:3-5, 12; 48:21; 49:10). *jackals and ostriches*: residents of the unpopulated wilderness; compare with Isaiah 13:21-22; 34:13; 35:7. 43:22-28 *you didn't call out to me*: The accusing tone of Isaiah 42:22-25 returns, as Israel (now addressed as singular)

is accused of improper worship. This section recalls Isaiah 1:10-20. God's forgetting of Israel's sin (43:25) is an act of pure grace; compare with Isaiah 44:21-22. 43:27 *Your first ancestor sinned*: This probably refers to Jacob, whose story is remembered ambivalently in Hosea 12 as well as in Genesis 25–50. 44:1-8 The prophet ceases judgment and proclaims redemption. Many of the arguments of Isaiah 41–43 are repeated once again here, and pushed a step further to prepare for the ridiculing of other gods in Isaiah 44:9-20 and concrete announcement of God's plans for Judah in Isaiah 44:24-28. 44:1-2 Key themes are repeated: the identification of Israel/Jacob as God's servant and chosen; God as the one who made or formed Israel. This sets up the contrast with the idol-maker's work of making or forming his god from wood (Isa 44:9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19; 46:6). 44:2 *who formed you in the womb*: Compare with Isaiah

44:3 Is 32:15,  
Is 41:17; Jl 2:28,  
Jl 3:18

44:4 Lv 23:40;  
Job 40:22;  
Ps 1:3; Is 58:11;  
Eze 17:5

44:5 Ex 13:9;  
Neh 9:38;  
Ps 116:16;  
Is 4:2; Zec 8:20

44:6 Is 41:4,  
Is 43:10,  
Is 43:14,  
Is 48:12;  
Rev 1:17

44:7 Is 41:22,  
Is 41:26,  
Is 45:21

44:8 Dt 4:35,  
Dt 4:39;  
1Sa 2:2;  
Is 43:10, Is 45:5

44:9 Is 41:24

44:10 Jer 10:5;  
Hab 2:18

44:11 Is 42:17,  
Is 45:16

Don't fear, my servant Jacob,  
Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

<sup>3</sup>I will pour out water upon thirsty ground  
and streams upon dry land.

I will pour out my spirit upon your descendants  
and my blessing upon your offspring.

<sup>4</sup>They will spring up from among the reeds  
like willows by flowing streams.

<sup>5</sup>This one will say, "I am the LORD's,"  
and that one will be named after Jacob.  
Another will write on his hand, "The LORD's"  
and will take the name Israel.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD, Israel's king and redeemer,  
the LORD of heavenly forces, says:  
I am the first, and I am the last,  
and besides me there are no gods.

<sup>7</sup>Who is like me?  
Let them speak up, explain it, and lay it out for me.  
Who announced long ago what is to be?<sup>a</sup>  
Let them tell us<sup>a</sup> what is to come.

<sup>8</sup>Don't tremble; have no fear!  
Didn't I proclaim it?  
Didn't I inform you long ago?  
You are my witnesses!  
Is there a God besides me?  
There is no other rock; I know of none.

### **Idol-makers mocked**

<sup>9</sup>Idol-makers are all as nothing;  
their playthings do no good.  
Their promoters neither see nor know anything,  
so they ought to be ashamed.

<sup>10</sup>Who would form a god or cast an idol that does no good?

<sup>11</sup>All its worshippers will be ashamed,  
and its artisans, who are only human.  
They will all gather and stand,  
tremble and be ashamed together.

<sup>a</sup>Or *Since I placed an ancient people and coming things* <sup>a</sup>Or *them*

49:5; Jeremiah 1:5. *Don't fear*. See note on Isaiah 41:10. *Jeshurun*: a poetic name for Israel found only here and in Deuteronomy 32:15; 33:5, 26.

44:3-5 *water upon thirsty ground*: These verses reiterate the theme of water found most recently in Isaiah 43:20. But here its metaphorical significance becomes apparent: *my spirit* is also, like water, "poured out." Like Ezekiel (Ezek 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29), the prophet envisions Israel's descendants flourishing (cf. Isa 66:14). Once again the audience is plural.

44:6-8 *Israel's king and redeemer*: See note on Isaiah 41:14. *I am the first, and I am the last*: See note on Isaiah 41:4. *besides me there are no gods*: See note on Isaiah 43:10. God's uniqueness is elaborated in this chapter and the two that follow. The other gods are powerless (Isa 41:21-29) because they don't exist. Only Israel's God and creator can know the future and communicate it to Israel's prophets.

44:8 *Don't tremble; have no fear!*: See Isaiah 41:10 and note. In contrast, Isaiah 44:11 envisions the worshippers and makers of idols trembling. *You are my witnesses!*: See Isaiah 43:9-12. "You" is plural. *There is no other rock*: See Deuteronomy 32:4, 18, 30-31, 37; Isaiah 26:4; Psalms 18:3, 31; 19:15.

44:9-20 An extended satire concerning the folly of worshipping the idols of one's own creation. Craftsmen "make" and "form" idols as God "made" and "formed" Israel. Whereas God stretched out heaven and earth (Isa 40:22; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 51:13), a metalworker spreads out gold on an idol (Isa 40:19) and a carpenter stretches a string. See Isaiah 40:18-20 and note (see also Isa 41:6-7, 21-24, 29; 42:17; 45:16; 46:1-7). See Jeremiah 10:1-16, which anticipates many of the themes found here.

44:9 *Idol-makers are all as nothing*: Not simply the idols but their makers are as empty as the earth was before creation (Gen 1:2; cf. Isa 40:17, 23; 41:29; 45:18-19). *they ought to be ashamed*: See note on Isaiah 42:17.

- <sup>12</sup>A blacksmith with his tools works it over coals,  
and shapes it with hammers,  
and works it with his strong arm.  
He even becomes hungry and weak.  
If he didn't drink water, he'd pass out.
- <sup>13</sup>A carpenter stretches out a string,  
marks it out with a stylus,  
fashions it with carving tools,  
and marks it with a compass.  
He makes it into a human form,  
like a splendid human, to live in a temple.
- <sup>14</sup>He cuts down cedars for himself,  
or chooses a cypress<sup>b</sup> or oak,  
selecting from all the trees of the forest.  
He plants a pine,<sup>c</sup> and the rain makes it grow.
- <sup>15</sup>It becomes suitable to burn for humans,  
so he takes some of the wood and warms himself.  
He kindles fire and bakes bread.  
He fashions a god and worships it;  
he makes an idol and bows down to it.
- <sup>16</sup>Half of it he burns in the fire;  
on that half he roasts and eats meat, and he is satisfied.  
He warms himself and says,  
"Ah, I'm warm, watching the fire!"
- <sup>17</sup>And the rest of it he makes into a god, into his idol,  
and he bows down, worships, and prays to it, saying,  
"Save me, for you are my god!"
- <sup>18</sup>They don't know or comprehend,  
for their eyes can't see and their minds can't comprehend.
- <sup>19</sup>He doesn't think,  
and has no knowledge or understanding to think:  
Half of it I burned in the fire,  
and I baked bread on its coals,  
and roasted meat and ate.  
Should I make the rest into something detestable?  
Should I bow down to a block of wood?
- <sup>20</sup>He's feeding on ashes;  
his deluded mind has led him astray.  
He can't save himself and say,  
"Isn't this thing in my hand a lie?"

**Promises to Jacob and Jerusalem**

- <sup>21</sup>Remember these things, Jacob;  
Israel, for you are my servant.  
I formed you; you are my servant!  
I won't forget you, Israel.
- <sup>22</sup>I swept away your rebellions like a cloud,  
and your sins like fog.  
Return to me, because I have redeemed you.

<sup>b</sup>Species uncertain <sup>c</sup>Species uncertain

44:12 Is 40:19,  
Is 41:8, Is 41:7;  
Jer 10:3  
44:13 Dt 4:16;  
Jgs 17:4; Is 41:7  
44:14 Is 40:20  
44:15 2Ch 25:14  
44:17 1Ki 18:26;  
Is 2:8, Is 45:20  
44:18 Is 6:10,  
Is 29:10  
44:19 Dt 27:15  
44:20 Ro 1:25  
44:21 Is 41:8,  
Is 43:1, Is 44:1,  
Is 44:2, Is 49:15  
44:22 Is 43:1,  
Is 43:25, Is 55:7,  
Ac 3:19;  
1Co 6:20

44:12-13 All the active verbs apply not to idols but to their makers.

44:14-17 Like Jeremiah and later apocryphal writings such as the Letter of Jeremiah, the prophet ridicules worship of idols, saying that the idol-maker expects his prayers to be heard by a block of wood that is suitable for burning. Babylonian texts describe a detailed rite of initiation in which the deity is invited to descend from

heaven to dwell in a newly fashioned idol, indicating the worshippers' awareness of the distinctions between idols and the gods they represent. According to Exodus 20:4-5, Israelites are forbidden to represent God as an idol.

44:21-22 In direct contrast to the idols' passivity, God, who formed Israel, remembers, forgives, and redeems; compare with Isaiah 43:25.

44:23 Ps 69:34;  
Ps 98:8; Is 49:3;  
Is 49:13;  
Is 55:12

44:24 Is 40:22;  
Is 42:5; Is 43:14;  
Is 44:2; Is 45:12

44:25 2Sa 15:31;  
Job 5:12;  
Ps 33:10;  
Is 29:14;  
Jer 27:9

44:26 1Ki 18:36;  
2Ki 10:10;  
2Ch 36:15;  
Is 61:4; Zec 1:6

44:27 Is 11:15;  
Is 50:2;  
Jer 50:38

45:1 2Ch 36:22;  
Ezr 1:1; Is 41:2;  
Is 41:13;  
Is 44:28

45:2 Ps 107:16;  
Is 40:4;  
Jer 51:30

45:3 Ez 33:12;  
Is 43:1; Jer 41:8;  
Jer 50:37

<sup>23</sup> Sing, heavens, for the LORD has acted;  
shout, depths of the earth!  
Burst out with a ringing cry,  
you mountains, forest, and every tree in it.  
The LORD has redeemed Jacob,  
and will glorify himself through Israel.

<sup>24</sup> The LORD your redeemer  
who formed you in the womb says:  
I am the LORD, the maker of all,  
who alone stretched out the heavens,  
who spread out the earth by myself,

<sup>25</sup> who frustrates the omens of diviners  
and makes a mockery of magicians,  
who turns back the wise  
and turns their knowledge into folly.

<sup>26</sup> But who confirms the word of my<sup>a</sup> servant,  
and fulfills the predictions of my messengers;  
who says about Jerusalem, "It will be resettled";  
and who says about the cities of Judah, "They will be rebuilt,  
and I will restore their ruins";

<sup>27</sup> who says to the ocean depths,  
"Dry up; I will dry your streams";

<sup>28</sup> who says about Cyrus, "My shepherd—  
he will do all that I want";  
who says about Jerusalem, "She will be rebuilt";  
and who says about the temple, "You will be founded once again."

#### *Cyrus as God's anointed*

**45** The LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus,  
whom I have grasped by the strong hand,  
to conquer nations before him, disarming kings,  
and opening doors before him, so no gates will be shut:

<sup>2</sup> I myself will go before you,  
and I will level mountains.  
I will shatter bronze doors;  
I will cut through iron bars.

<sup>3</sup> I will give you hidden treasures of secret riches,  
so you will know that I am the LORD,  
the God of Israel, who calls you by name.

<sup>4</sup> For the sake of my servant Jacob and Israel my chosen,  
I called you by name.

<sup>a</sup>Or *his*; also in next line

44:23 *Sing, heavens*: See Isaiah 42:10-12 and note. The inhabited world and the natural world join in praise (see Isa 44:14-17). For where heaven and earth witness Israel's rebellion rather than redemption, see Isaiah 12.

44:24-28 After all the buildup of arguments, a concrete announcement concerning Judah's future is issued. See Isaiah 48:20 for a similar strategically placed announcement.

44:24 *who formed you in the womb*: See Isaiah 44:2.

44:26 *who confirms the word*: The prophet argues on the basis of earlier prophecies that only Israel's God can foresee and bring about the future. These earlier prophecies could be predictions of doom made by 8th-century prophets such as First Isaiah, or Jeremiah's later warnings, or the Prophets' forecasts of restoration—or all of these. *who says*: God is speaking throughout this passage. Six

statements are ordered so that the first and last correspond to each other, the second and fifth correspond to each other, and the two in the middle correspond to each other. In the outside layer, Jerusalem and the temple will be restored. In the second and fifth sayings, both the cities and Jerusalem will be rebuilt. In the innermost layer, God's act of drying the sea to set the Israelites free from Egypt is paralleled by God's bringing Cyrus to set the exiles free from Babylon. Cyrus has been discussed, though not by name, since Isaiah 41:2. Now, finally, he is named (cf. Isa 45:1, 13).

45:1 *Cyrus*: The Persian conqueror has been referred to since Isaiah 41:2, but was first named in Isaiah 44:28. God is the one arranging Cyrus' victories.

45:4 *For the sake of my servant Jacob and Israel my chosen*: See Isaiah 41:8 and note.

45:5 Is 44:8  
 45:6 Ps 102:15,  
 Ps 113:3;  
 Is 37:20, Is 45:5;  
 Mal 1:11  
 45:7 Lam 3:38;  
 Am 3:6  
 45:8 Ps 72:6,  
 Ps 85:11,  
 Is 61:11,  
 Hos 10:12;  
 Jl 3:18  
 45:9 Is 10:15,  
 Is 29:16,  
 Is 64:8; Jer 18:6;  
 Ro 9:20  
 45:11 Is 19:25,  
 Is 29:23;  
 Jer 31:9  
 45:12 Gn 2:1;  
 Neh 9:6;  
 Is 40:22, Is 42:5,  
 Is 44:24  
 45:13 2Ch  
 36:22; Is 41:2,  
 Is 44:28, Is 52:3  
 45:14 Ps 68:31;  
 Is 14:2, Is 18:7,  
 Is 43:3, Is 60:14

I gave you an honored title,  
 though you didn't know me.

<sup>5</sup>I am the LORD, and there is no other;  
 besides me there is no God.

I strengthen you—though you don't know me—

<sup>6</sup>so all will know, from the rising of the sun to its setting,  
 that there is nothing apart from me.

I am the LORD; there's no other.

<sup>7</sup>I form light and create darkness,  
 make prosperity and create doom;

I am the LORD, who does all these things.

<sup>8</sup>Pour down, you heavens above,  
 and let the clouds flow with righteousness.

Let the earth open for salvation to bear fruit;  
 let righteousness sprout as well.

I, the LORD, have created these things.

### Potter and clay

<sup>9</sup>Doom to the one who argues with the potter,<sup>e</sup>  
 as if he were just another clay pot!

Does the clay say to the potter, "What are you making?"  
 or "Your work has no handles"?

<sup>10</sup>Doom to one who says to a father, "What have you fathered?"  
 and to a woman, "With what are you in labor?"

<sup>11</sup>The LORD, the holy one of Israel and its maker,<sup>f</sup> says:  
 Are you questioning me<sup>g</sup> about my own children?

Are you telling me what to do with the work of my hands?

<sup>12</sup>I myself made the earth,  
 and created humans upon it.

My own hands stretched out the heavens.  
 I commanded all their forces.

<sup>13</sup>I have a right to awaken Cyrus;  
 I will smooth all his paths.

He will build my city and set my exiles free,  
 not for a price and not for a bribe,  
 says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>14</sup>The LORD says:

Egypt will grow weary, Cush will be sold,<sup>h</sup>  
 and the tall Sabeans will cross over to you.  
 They will be yours, and after you they will go.  
 In chains they will come;  
 to you they will bow down.  
 They will plead with you:  
 "Truly God is with you;  
 there's no other, no other God."

<sup>e</sup>Or maker <sup>f</sup>Or potter <sup>g</sup>Or about future things ask me <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain

45:5-6 *there is no other.* The question of other gods who might have aided Cyrus' victories emerges again; compare with Isaiah 43:10 and note. The uniqueness of Israel's God is emphasized: "No other" is repeated in Isaiah 45:5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22; 46:9.

45:9 *Does the clay say to the potter.* See note on Isaiah 29:16.

45:10 Here God is compared to both father and mother. See also Isaiah 42:13-14; 49:15; 66:13.

45:11 The audience is plural.

45:12-25 The remainder of the chapter repeats, as a finale, themes that have emerged throughout Isaiah 41-44: God's creation of heaven, earth, and humans; God's calling of Cyrus; God's uniqueness as savior; and the disgrace of idolatry.

45:14 *They will be yours:* This verse begins an unusual address to Jerusalem herself, who has receded into the background until now. *there's no other:* People from other nations recognize God's uniqueness as self-proclaimed in Isaiah 45:5-6.

45:15 Is 43:3

45:16 Is 42:17;  
Is 44:9, Is 44:11

45:17 Ro 11:26

45:18 Ps 115:16;  
Is 42:5, Is 45:5

45:19 Dt 30:11;

2Ch 15:2;  
Is 48:16;  
Jer 29:1345:20 Is 43:9,  
Is 44:17, Is 46:1,  
Is 46:7; Jer 10:545:21 Is 43:11,  
Is 44:7, Is 44:8,  
Is 45:5, Is 46:9

45:22 Is 49:6

45:23 Gn 22:16;  
Is 19:18;Ro 14:11;  
Phi 2:10;  
Heb 6:13

45:24 Is 41:11

45:25 Is 41:16

46:1 Is 21:9;  
Jer 50:2,  
Jer 51:4446:2 Jgs 18:17;  
2Sa 5:21;  
Jer 48:7

46:3 Dt 1:13

**15** Surely you are a god who hides himself,  
Israel's God and savior.

### *Idols contrasted with God*

**16** They will all be shamed and disgraced;  
the makers of idols will end up disgraced together.

**17** Israel has been saved by the LORD of everlasting salvation.  
You won't be shamed,  
and you won't be disgraced forever and always.

**18** For this is what the LORD said, who created the heavens,  
who is God,  
who formed the earth and made it,  
who established it,  
who didn't create it a wasteland but formed it as a habitation:  
I, the LORD, and none other!

**19** I didn't speak in secret or in some land of darkness;  
I didn't say to the offspring of Jacob, "Seek me in chaos."  
I am the LORD, the one who speaks truth,  
who announces what is correct.

**20** Gather and come,  
draw near together,  
fugitives of the nations!  
Those who carry their wooden idols don't know;  
those who pray to a god who won't save.

**21** Announce! Approach! Confer together!  
Who proclaimed this from the beginning,  
announced it from long ago?  
Wasn't it I, the LORD?  
There's no other God except me,  
a righteous God and a savior;  
there's none besides me!

**22** Turn to me and be saved,  
all you ends of the earth,  
for I am God, and there's no other.

**23** I have sworn a solemn pledge;  
a word has left my mouth;  
it is reliable and won't fail.  
Surely every knee will bow  
and every tongue will confess;

**24** they will say, "Righteousness and strength come only from the LORD.  
All who are angry with him will come to shame.

**25** All the Israelites will be victorious and rejoice."

### *Babylon's idols can't compare*

**46** Bel crouches down; Nebo cowers.  
Their idols sit on animals, on beasts.

The objects you once carried about  
are now borne as burdens by the weary animals.

**2** They crouch down and cower together.  
They aren't able to rescue the burden,  
but they themselves go into captivity.

**3** Listen to me, house of Jacob,  
all that remains from the house of Israel

45:17 *You won't be shamed:* The plural audience is reassured. Their enemies (Isa 41:11) will be shamed and disgraced, but Israel won't be (see Isa 50:7; 54:4).

45:20-25 *Gather and come:* An invitation is issued far and wide, since there's no other God by whom any can be saved.

46:1 *Bel:* meaning "Lord," refers to the Babylonian god

Marduk. *Nebo:* or Nabu, is Marduk's son. The entire chapter is addressed to the plural audience, who in Isaiah 46:8 are called "rebels," and in Isaiah 46:12, "bullheaded people."

46:3 *whom I carried from the womb:* In contrast to helpless Babylonian gods, Israel's God carries the people, and has done so since their beginning.



who have been borne by me since pregnancy,  
whom I carried from the womb  
4until you grow old. I am the one,  
and until you turn gray I will support you.  
I have done it, and I will continue to bear it;  
I will support and I will rescue.

5To whom will you liken me and count me equal  
and compare me so that we are alike?

6Those who pour out gold from a bag  
and weigh silver with a balance  
hire a metalworker; then he makes a god.

They bow down; they worship;

7they carry the idol<sup>1</sup> on their shoulders and support it;  
they set it down, and it stands still,  
unable to move from its place.

If one cries out to it, it doesn't answer.  
It can't save people from their distress.

46:4 Ps 71:18;  
Is 43:13  
46:5 Ex 15:11;  
Is 40:18,  
Is 40:25;  
Jer 10:6  
46:6 Is 40:19

46:7 Isa 5:3;  
1Ki 18:26;  
Is 45:20, Is 46:1

46:8 Dt 32:29;  
Is 44:21;  
Eze 18:28;  
Hg 1:7;  
Eph 5:14

46:9 Is 45:5,  
Is 45:21

46:10 Ps 33:11;  
Prv 19:21;  
Is 14:24;  
Ac 5:39

46:12  
Ps 119:50;  
Is 48:4

46:13 Is 44:23,  
Is 51:5; Ro 3:21

47:1 Dt 28:56;  
Ps 137:8;  
Is 3:26; Zec 2:7

### Remember past events

8Remember this and take courage;  
take it to heart, you rebels.

9Remember the prior things—from long ago;  
I am God, and there's no other.

I am God! There's none like me,

10who tells the end at the beginning,  
from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, "My plan will stand;  
all that I decide I will do,"

11I call a bird of prey from the east,  
a man from a distant land for my plan.  
As surely as I have spoken, I'll make it happen;  
I have planned, and yes, I'll do it.

12Listen to me, you bullheaded people who are far from victory:

13I'm bringing my victory near—it isn't far,  
and my salvation—it won't delay.  
I will establish salvation in Zion  
and grant my splendor to Israel.

### Daughter Babylon dethroned

**47**Go down and sit in the dust, virgin Daughter Babylon!  
Sit on the ground without a throne, Daughter Chaldea,  
because they will no longer call you tender and pampered.

<sup>1</sup>Or it

46:4 *I am the one*: See note on Isaiah 41:4. Five repetitions of the pronoun "I" emphasize that the same God who carried Israel from the womb will carry them to their old age.

46:5 *To whom will you liken me*: This verse intensifies the question about comparability that was first asked in Isaiah 40:18, 25. This answer is "No one."

46:6-7 These verses repeat themes concerning the manufacture of idols; see note on Isaiah 40:18-20.

46:8-9 *Remember*: At Isaiah 43:18 Israel is told not to remember earlier things, since new events are now upon them. But this time Israel is instructed to remember. The phrase "prior things" recalls the exodus from Egypt, but it also includes God's ability to foretell and even to plan the future (Isa 46:10; cf. Isa 40:21; 41:4; 45:21). Other gods can't interpret either past or future (Isa 41:21-23).

46:10-11 God's "plan" is a theme sounded frequently in First Isaiah (Isa 1-39); see note on Isaiah 5:18.

46:11 *bird of prey from the east*: Cyrus of Persia; compare with Isaiah 41:2; 44:28; 45:1.

46:13 *salvation in Zion*: Nearly invisible since Isaiah 40:9, Zion here reappears, just before her enemy Daughter Babylon is addressed. Zion will be addressed further in Isaiah 49-54.

47:1-11 Just as the Babylonian gods were envisioned humiliated and crouched down (Isa 46:1-2), Babylon itself is envisioned removed from her throne, disgraced, and humbled. This chapter mirrors the earlier humiliation of Daughter Zion (see Lam 1:1, 8-9, 20; 2:10). It also anticipates Daughter Zion's own reversal of fortunes in Isaiah 52:1-2.

47:1 *Daughter Babylon*: Like Jerusalem and other cities, Babylon is personified as a woman. Despite the appearance of youthful beauty, Babylon is viewed as an oppressive mistress who deserves to lose her seat of privilege. For

47:2 Ex 11:5;

Jgs 16:21;

Mt 24:41

47:3 Is 34:8;

Na 3:5

47:4 Is 41:14;

Is 43:14;

Jer 50:34

47:5 Is 13:19;

Is 47:7

47:6 Dt 28:50;

Is 14:17;

Zec 1:15

47:7 Dt 32:29;

Is 47:5

47:8 Is 32:9;

Is 45:6, Is 47:10;

Zep 2:15;

Rev 18:7

47:9 Is 47:12;

Is 47:13; Na 3:4;

Rev 18:23

47:10 Ps 52:7;

Is 52:1, Is 29:15;

Is 47:8

47:11 1Th 5:3

47:12 Is 47:9

- <sup>2</sup>Take the millstones and grind flour!  
Remove your veil, strip off your robe,  
expose your thighs, wade through the rivers!
- <sup>3</sup>Your nakedness will be exposed,  
and your disgrace will be seen.  
I will take vengeance;  
no one will intervene.<sup>†</sup>
- <sup>4</sup>Our redeemer has spoken;  
the LORD of heavenly forces is his name,  
the holy one of Israel.
- <sup>5</sup>Sit silent and go into darkness, Daughter Chaldea,  
because they will no longer call you Queen of Kingdoms.
- <sup>6</sup>I was enraged with my people;  
I made my inheritance impure  
and put them under your power.  
You took no pity on them.  
You made your yoke heavy even on the elderly.
- <sup>7</sup>You said, "I'm forever; I'm the eternal mistress."  
You didn't stop and think;  
you didn't consider the outcome.
- <sup>8</sup>So listen to this, luxuriant one who sits secure,  
who says in her heart, I'm utterly unique;  
I'll never sit as a widow;  
I'll never know childlessness:
- <sup>9</sup>Both of these will happen to you at once, on a single day:  
childlessness and widowhood will envelop you in full measure,  
despite your many sorceries,  
despite your very powerful spells.
- <sup>10</sup>You felt secure in your evil;  
you said, "No one sees me."  
Your wisdom and knowledge spun you around.  
You thought to yourself, I and no one else.
- <sup>11</sup>Now evil will come against you,  
something you won't anticipate.  
A curse will fall upon you,  
something you won't be able to dispel.  
Destruction will come upon you suddenly,  
something you won't foresee.
- <sup>12</sup>Continue with your enchantments,  
and with your many spells,  
which you have practiced since childhood.

<sup>†</sup>Syr. cf Vulg; MT *I won't meet a man*

other bitter invectives addressed to Babylon as "Daughter," see Psalm 137:8; Jeremiah 50:42; 51:33.

47:2-3 Hardships and humiliations that ill befitted a princess await Babylon; compare with Lamentations 1:8.

47:4 This verse interrupts God's speech and interjects a refrain connecting three frequent titles for Israel's God. "Redeemer" and "holy one of Israel" appeared together at Isaiah 41:14; 43:14; and will reappear at Isaiah 48:17; 49:7. "Redeemer" and "LORD of heavenly forces" appeared together at Isaiah 44:6. This nearly unique plural interruption (see likewise Isa 42:24) celebrates Babylon's condemnation and Israel's redemption.

47:5 *Sit silent*: See Lamentations 2:10.

47:6 Though God takes responsibility for allowing Babylon to overthrow Jerusalem, Babylon is answerable for its

own arrogant cruelty, just as the king of Assyria was; compare with Isaiah 10:5-6, 12.

47:7 *you didn't consider the outcome*: See Lamentations 1:9.

47:8 *I'm utterly unique*: or, "I and no one else," as in Isaiah 47:10. Israel's God has repeatedly claimed to be unparalleled (Isa 45:5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22; 46:9). Babylon's boast can't compare with these claims.

47:9 Two terrible fates Babylon inflicted on Jerusalem and its people (Lam 1:1, 20) will now befall the oppressive city. 47:11 *Destruction . . . suddenly*: Predictions of Babylon's violent end suggest that these prophecies were composed before Cyrus entered Babylon peacefully (see Isa 13:1-22; 21:9). Although some Jews left Babylon, a Jewish community continued to flourish there until modern times.

47:13 Is 44:25;  
Dn 2:2  
47:14 Is 5:24;  
Na 1:10; Mal 4:1  
47:15 Rev 18:11  
48:4 Ex 32:9;  
Ac 7:51  
48:9 Neh 9:31;  
Ps 78:38,  
Ps 103:8

Maybe you will be able to succeed.

Maybe you will inspire terror.

- <sup>13</sup>You are weary from all your consultations;  
let the astrologers stand up and save you,  
those who gaze at the stars,  
and predict what will happen to you at each new moon.
- <sup>14</sup>They are just like stubble; the fire burns them.  
They won't save themselves from the powerful flames.  
This is no warming ember or fire to sit beside.
- <sup>15</sup>Those with whom you have wearied yourself are like this,  
those with whom you were in business from your youth:  
each has wandered off on their own way;  
none will save you.

**New things from now on**

**48** Listen to this, house of Jacob,  
who are known by the name of Israel, descendants of Judah,<sup>k</sup>  
who swear by the LORD's name  
and invoke Israel's God dishonestly and unrighteously.

- <sup>2</sup>They are known as residents of the holy city,  
those who depend upon the God of Israel—  
the LORD of heavenly forces is his name.
- <sup>3</sup>Past things I announced long ago;  
from my mouth I proclaimed them.  
I acted suddenly, and they came about.
- <sup>4</sup>Because I know that you are stubborn,  
your neck is made of iron,  
and your forehead is bronze.
- <sup>5</sup>I informed you long ago;  
before they came about I proclaimed them to you  
so you wouldn't say, "My idol did them;  
my wood statue and metal god commanded them."
- <sup>6</sup>You've heard and seen all this—  
won't you admit it?  
From now on I'll tell you new things,  
guarded secrets that you don't know.
- <sup>7</sup>They are created now, not long ago;  
before today you hadn't heard of them,  
so you won't say, "I already knew them."
- <sup>8</sup>You haven't heard, nor have you known;  
as in ages past your ears are closed,  
because I knew what a traitor you were;  
you were known as a rebel from birth.
- <sup>9</sup>For the sake of my reputation I control my anger;  
for your sake I restrain my powerful radiance  
so as to not destroy you.

<sup>k</sup>Or came out from the waters of Judah

48:1 The Israelites are called both *house of Jacob* (cf. Isa 46:3) and, uniquely in Second Isaiah (Isa 40–55), *descendants of Judah*.

48:2 *holy city*: Jerusalem (cf. Isa 52:1; Neh 11:1, 18; Dan 9:24).

48:3 *Past things I announced long ago*: In contrast to the other gods, who were unable to announce either past or future (Isa 41:22), Israel's God established long ago a reputation for announcing what was to come and fulfilling it (cf. Isa 42:9). This argument uses past prophecy and its

fulfillment as proof of God's power to bring about things being announced now.

48:4 *stubborn*: The accusation of stubbornness goes back to Exodus 32:9 (cf. Exod 33:3, 5; 34:9). Here the people, rather than their God, are represented as having been made of cast metal (cf. Isa 44:12).

48:8 *rebel from birth*: See the initial accusation in Isaiah 1:2, which also can be translated, "I reared children; I raised them, and they rebelled against me!" (cf. Isa 1:28; 43:27; 46:8).

48:10 Dt 4:20;  
Is 1:25;  
Jer 9:7;  
Zec 13:9; Mal 3:3  
48:11 Is 42:8;  
Eze 20:9  
48:12 Is 41:4;  
Is 44:6;  
Rev 1:17;  
Rev 22:13  
48:13 Ex 20:11;  
Ps 102:25;  
Is 40:22;  
Is 40:26;  
Heb 1:10  
48:14 Is 46:11  
48:15 Is 45:1  
48:16 Is 45:19;  
Is 61:1  
48:20 Is 52:9;  
Is 52:11;  
Jer 50:8;  
Jer 51:6; Zec 2:6  
48:21 Ex 17:6;  
Nm 20:11;  
Is 35:6; Is 43:20  
48:22 Is 57:21;  
Eze 7:25

- <sup>10</sup> See, I have refined you, but not like silver;  
I have tested you<sup>1</sup> in the furnace of misery.
- <sup>11</sup> For the sake of my reputation, for my own sake, I will act,  
for why will my name be made impure?  
I won't give my glory to another.
- <sup>12</sup> Listen to me, Jacob;  
Israel, whom I called:  
I am the one;  
I am the first and I am the last.
- <sup>13</sup> My hand founded the earth;  
my strong hand spread out the heavens.  
When I call to them, they all stand up.
- <sup>14</sup> Gather yourselves, all of you, and listen.  
Who among you announced these things?  
"The LORD loves him.  
He will do what God wants with Babylon  
and with the descendants<sup>m</sup> of Chaldea."
- <sup>15</sup> I, I have spoken and told him the things that will happen to him;  
I will make him succeed.
- <sup>16</sup> Come close to me; listen to this:  
Since the very beginning I haven't spoken in secret.  
Whenever anything happens, I am there.  
(And now the LORD God has sent me with his spirit.)
- <sup>17</sup> The LORD your redeemer, the holy one of Israel, proclaims:  
I am the LORD your God who teaches you for your own good,  
who leads you in the way you should go.
- <sup>18</sup> If you would pay attention to my commands,  
your well-being would be like a river,  
and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.
- <sup>19</sup> Your offspring would be like the sand,  
and your descendants like its grains.  
Their name would never be eliminated,  
never wiped out from before me.
- <sup>20</sup> Go out from Babylon;  
flee from the Chaldeans!  
Report this with a loud shout, proclaim it;  
broadcast it out to the end of the earth.  
Say, "The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!"
- <sup>21</sup> They weren't thirsty when he led them through the deserts.  
God made water flow from the rock for them;  
split the rock, and water flowed out.
- <sup>22</sup> There is no well-being, says the LORD, for the wicked.

<sup>1</sup>Or I have chosen <sup>m</sup>LXX; MT his arm

**48:10 furnace of misery:** Slavery in Egypt was sometimes called the "iron furnace" (Deut 4:20; 1 Kgs 8:51; Jer 11:4). Ezekiel 22:18-22 claims that God in rage was refining the people of Jerusalem like silver (cf. Jer 6:27-30), but Isaiah 48:9-10 claims that God's refining of the people hasn't been in rage, and not as silver is refined.

**48:12 I am the one; I am the first and I am the last:** See note on Isaiah 41:4.

**48:14 He will do what God wants with Babylon:** another reference to Cyrus (cf. Isa 41:2; 44:28; 45:1; 46:11).

**48:17 who teaches you:** See Isaiah 30:20-21 (see also Ps 25:4-9).

**48:19 like the sand:** See Isaiah 10:22; Hosea 1:10. Similar promises were made to Abraham and his family in Genesis 22:17; 32:12 (cf. Gen 13:16; 15:5; 26:4; 28:14).

**48:20 Go out from Babylon:** In this most direct and concrete command, the prophet draws the conclusion to which Isaiah 40-48 leads. See Isaiah 52:11-12.

**48:21 They weren't thirsty:** God's provision of water in the wilderness; compare with Exodus 17:6. As in Deuteronomy 8:15; Psalms 78:20; 105:41; 114:8, it is God who split the rock. This story matters for Judeans contemplating crossing the desert again; compare with Isaiah 49:10.

**48:22 Compare with Isaiah 57:21.**

*The servant speaks up*

- 49** Listen to me, coastlands;  
pay attention, peoples far away.  
The LORD called me before my birth,  
called my name when I was in my mother's womb.
- <sup>2</sup> He made my mouth like a sharp sword,  
and hid me in the shadow of God's own hand.  
He made me a sharpened arrow,  
and concealed me in God's quiver,  
<sup>3</sup> saying to me, "You are my servant,  
Israel, in whom I show my glory."
- <sup>4</sup> But I said, "I have wearied myself in vain.  
I have used up my strength for nothing."  
Nevertheless, the LORD will grant me justice;  
my reward is with my God.
- <sup>5</sup> And now the LORD has decided—  
the one who formed me from the womb as his servant—  
to restore Jacob to God,  
so that Israel might return to him.  
Moreover, I'm honored in the LORD's eyes;  
my God has become my strength.
- <sup>6</sup> He said: It is not enough, since you are my servant,  
to raise up the tribes of Jacob  
and to bring back the survivors of Israel.  
Hence, I will also appoint you as light to the nations  
so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.
- <sup>7</sup> The LORD, redeemer of Israel and its holy one,  
says to one despised, rejected by nations, to the slave of rulers:  
Kings will see and stand up;  
commanders will bow down  
on account of the LORD, who is faithful,  
the holy one of Israel, who has chosen you.
- <sup>8</sup> The LORD said:  
At the right time, I answered you;  
on a day of salvation, I helped you.  
I have guarded you, and given you as a covenant to the people,  
to restore the land,  
and to reassign deserted properties,  
<sup>9</sup> saying to the prisoners, "Come out,"  
and to those in darkness, "Show yourselves."

49:1 Is 41:1;  
Jer 1:5  
49:2 Is 11:4,  
Is 51:16;  
Heb 4:12;  
Rev 1:16  
49:3 Is 44:23;  
Zec 3:8  
49:5 Is 49:1  
49:6 Is 9:2,  
Is 42:6, Is 55:5;  
Lk 2:32;  
Ac 13:47  
49:8 Ps 69:13;  
Is 42:6; 2Co 6:2  
49:9 Is 41:1,8,  
Is 42:7, Is 61:1

49:1-6 This is a turning point. For the first time, Israel speaks up as God's servant, echoing much of what has been said previously by God. This shows that the servant has accepted his role.

49:1 *The Lord called me before my birth*: The servant is modeled on Jeremiah, who likewise relates that God's call to him came while he was yet in the womb (cf. Isa 44:2, 24), and called himself a "prophet to the nations" (Jer 1:5; cf. Isa 49:6; 42:6). Although Jeremiah himself is never called God's servant, within his book both prophets in general (Jer 7:25; 25:4; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4) and Jacob (Jer 30:10; 46:2B) are so designated.

49:2 *hid me in the shadow of God's own hand*: See Isaiah 51:16; Jeremiah 1:9.

49:4 *But I said*: Like Jeremiah (Jer 1:6), the servant rehearses

his own earlier objections to God's call. These objections concerned not youth but weariness; compare with Isaiah 40:27-31.

49:5 *restore Jacob*: The question "How can Israel [Isa 49:3] have a mission to Israel [49:5]?" has been raised by readers. It is indeed awkward. The servant who is speaking may represent those Israelites who accept this calling, while others are as yet awaiting restoration.

49:6 *light to the nations*: Compare with Isaiah 42:6. Concern with foreign nations is a recurring theme in Isaiah; see Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:10; 19:19-25; 25:6-9; 42:1-4; 52:15; 56:3-7; 60:3; 61:9; 62:10; 66:18-19, 23. The theme of God's salvation reaching earth's ends is consistent with the portrayal of God as the world's sole creator.

49:8 *covenant to the people*: See Isaiah 42:6.

49:12 Is 43:5.

Is 43:6

49:13 Is 40:1.

Is 44:23

49:15 | Ki 3:26;

Ps 27:10;

Is 44:21;

Lam 4:10

49:16 Song 8:6;

Is 62:6; Hg 2:23

49:17 Is 10:6.

Is 37:18;

Is 51:22; Is 62:5

49:18 Is 43:5.

Is 52:1; Is 60:4.

Is 61:10; Jer 2:32

49:19 Is 51:3.

Is 54:1;

Zec 10:10

49:20 Is 54:1

49:21 Is 1:8,

Is 5:13; Is 29:23;

Is 54:6; Is 60:8

Along the roads animals<sup>a</sup> will graze;  
their pasture will be on every treeless hilltop.

<sup>10</sup>They won't hunger or thirst;  
the burning heat and sun won't strike them,  
because one who has compassion for them will lead them  
and will guide them by springs of water.

<sup>11</sup>I will turn all my mountains into roads;  
my highways will be built up.

<sup>12</sup>Look! These will come from far away.  
Look! These from the north and west,  
and these from the southland.<sup>o</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Sing, heavens! Rejoice, earth!  
Break out, mountains, with a song.  
The LORD has comforted his people,  
and taken pity on those who suffer.

### Compassion for Zion

<sup>14</sup>But Zion says, "The LORD has abandoned me;  
my Lord has forgotten me."

<sup>15</sup>Can a woman forget her nursing child,  
fail to pity the child of her womb?  
Even these may forget, but I won't forget you.

<sup>16</sup>Look, on my palms I've inscribed you;  
your walls are before me continually.

<sup>17</sup>Your builders<sup>p</sup> come quickly;  
those who destroy and demolish you will depart from you.

<sup>18</sup>Look up all around and see:  
they are all gathered;  
they come to you.

As surely as I live, says the LORD,  
you will put them all on like ornaments,  
bind them on like a bride.

<sup>19</sup>As for your ruins and desolate places and destroyed land—  
you will soon be crowded with settlers,  
and those who swallowed you will be far away.

<sup>20</sup>You will again hear the children who were born bereaved say,  
"The place is too crowded for me;  
make room for me to settle."

<sup>21</sup>And you will think to yourself,  
Who bore me these?  
I was bereaved and desolate, exiled and sent off.  
So who raised these?  
I was left behind, I was alone; where were these?

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks *animals*. <sup>o</sup>Heb *Sinim* <sup>p</sup>Or *children*

49:13 *Sing, heavens*: See note on Isaiah 42:10-12. The theme of divine comfort is reintroduced (see note on Isa 40:1). It will recur periodically throughout Isaiah 49-54.

49:14 *But Zion says*: Jerusalem states a complaint against God that closely resembles Israel's in Isaiah 40:27. This complaint echoes Lamentations 5:20. But important changes in context should be noted. A reassuring divine response follows, which is thick with answers to many complaints from Lamentations.

49:15 *Can a woman forget*: Jeremiah accused Jerusalem of forgetting God more easily than a bride forgets her jewelry (Jer 2:32; cf. Isa 49:18). Lamentations suggested

that God's wrath was the cause of the most horrific form of maternal forgetting: eating one's own child (Lam 2:20). According to the prophet, God's memory is far longer than that of humans. Children that Jerusalem doesn't even recall bearing will soon crowd her streets.

49:16 *on my palms I've inscribed you*: Compare with Lamentations 2:18-19.

49:18 *they come to you*: Compare with Lamentations 1:4.

49:19 *those who swallowed you*: Compare with Lamentations 2:5.

49:21 *I was bereaved and desolate, exiled and sent off*: Compare with Lamentations 1:3, 20; 4:15.

49:22 Is 11:10,  
Is 11:12; Is 14:2  
49:23 Ps 25:3,  
Ps 72:9,  
Is 45:14,  
Is 60:14,  
Is 60:16  
49:24 Mt 12:29;  
Lk 11:21  
50:1 Dt 24:1,  
Is 52:3; Is 59:2;  
Jer 3:8;  
Mt 18:25  
50:2 Nm 11:23;  
Is 42:15; Is 59:1,  
Is 66:4; Na 1:4

*The Servant and Daughter Zion as Representative Figures* In Second Isaiah (Isa 40–55) the people of Judah are addressed not only as a plural group, but also by the name of their ancestor Jacob (also named Israel), who represents them. After he complains that God “ignores my predicament” (Isa 40:27), Jacob is repeatedly reassured of God’s care: “You are my servant; I chose you and didn’t reject you” (Isa 41:9). Up to Isaiah 48, the exiled people of Judah are repeatedly reassured and encouraged to view themselves as God’s servant Israel.

In Isaiah 49 this servant is portrayed as speaking for the first time since his initial complaint. Taking the role offered to him, he repeats much of what was said to him in earlier chapters. Now attention goes to Jerusalem. Speaking as the city personified, she complains, much as Israel had, that “the LORD has abandoned me” (Isa 49:14). In three sections that follow, she is offered reassurance and encouragement. The city who has suffered (Isa 51:21) is now bidden to rise up (Isa 52:2) and to sing for joy (Isa 54:1), since God has reclaimed her (Isa 54:7). Interwoven with three major sections concerning Zion (Isa 49:14–50:3; 51:9–52:12; 54:1–17) are three sections in which God’s “servant” speaks or is described (Isa 49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). Finally, in Isaiah 54:17, God’s servant becomes plural; they are the citizens who have returned to their mother city.

**22** The LORD God says:

Look, I will raise my hand to the nations,  
and to the peoples I will lift up my signal.  
They will bring your sons in their arms,  
and will carry your daughters on their shoulders.

**23** Kings will be your attendants,  
and their queens your nursemaids.

With faces to the ground they will bow down to you;  
they will lick the dust from your feet.  
You will know that I am the LORD;  
the one who hopes in me won’t be ashamed.

**24** Can loot be taken from warriors?  
Can a tyrant’s captives escape?

**25** The LORD says:

Even the captives of warriors will be taken,  
and the tyrant’s loot will escape.  
I myself will oppose those who oppose you,  
and I myself will save your children.

**26** I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh;  
and as with wine, with their own blood they will be drunk,  
so that all flesh will know that I, the LORD, am your savior,  
and the mighty one of Jacob is your redeemer.

**50** The LORD says:

Where’s your mother’s divorce decree,  
with which I sent her away?  
Or to which lender did I sell you?  
On account of your sins you were sold;  
on account of your transgressions your mother was sent away.

**2** Why did I come and find no one?  
Why did I call when no one answered?  
Is my hand too small to redeem you?<sup>a</sup>  
Don’t I have enough power to save?

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks you.

49:23 *the one who hopes in me*: Compare with Lamentations 3:25.

49:25 *I myself will oppose*: Compare with Lamentations 3:58.

49:26 *I will make your oppressors eat*: Compare with Lamentations 2:20; 4:10, 21.

50:1 *Where’s your mother’s divorce decree*: According to

Deuteronomy 24:1–4, a man who divorced his wife and sent her away wasn’t allowed to take her back after she married another. Jeremiah 3:1 invoked this instruction to deny that God could reclaim Jerusalem. But Isaiah 50:1 asks for evidence that the divorce occurred, blaming not Jerusalem, but her citizens. The marriage image reappears in Isaiah 54.

50:3 Rev 6:12

50:4 Is 40:29;  
Mt 11:28

50:5 Mt 26:39;

Jn 8:29;

Jn 14:31;

Jn 15:10;

Heb 5:8

50:6 Lam 3:30;

Mt 26:67;

Mt 27:30;

Mk 14:65;

Lk 22:63

50:7 Is 41:10;

Eze 3:8, Eze 3:9

50:8 Is 41:1;

Is 45:25;

Is 54:17;

Ro 8:33;

Ro 8:34

50:9 Job 13:28;

Is 41:10, Is 51:8

50:10 Ps 25:12;

Is 26:4, Is 49:3;

Mal 3:16

50:11 Is 65:13;

Jn 9:39

With my rebuke I dry up the sea  
and make the rivers into wilderness.

Their fish stink from lack of water;  
they die of thirst.

<sup>3</sup>I clothe the heavens with darkness  
and cover them with funeral clothing.

### God's faithful servant

<sup>4</sup>The LORD God gave me an educated tongue  
to know how to respond to the weary  
with a word that will awaken them in the morning.<sup>†</sup>  
God awakens my ear in the morning to listen, as educated people do.

<sup>5</sup>The LORD God opened my ear;  
I didn't rebel; I didn't turn my back.

<sup>6</sup>Instead, I gave my body to attackers,  
and my cheeks to beard pluckers.  
I didn't hide my face from insults and spitting.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD God will help me;  
therefore, I haven't been insulted.  
Therefore, I set my face like flint,  
and knew I wouldn't be ashamed.

<sup>8</sup>The one who will declare me innocent is near.  
Who will argue with me?  
Let's stand up together.

Who will bring judgment against me?  
Let him approach me.

<sup>9</sup>Look! The LORD God will help me.  
Who will condemn me?  
Look, they will wear out like clothing;  
the moth will eat them.

<sup>10</sup>Who among you fears the LORD?  
Who listens to the voice of his servant,  
who walks in darkness and has no light?  
They will trust in the LORD's name,  
and rely upon their God.

<sup>11</sup>Look! All of you are kindling fire, igniting torches.  
Walk by the light of your fire, by the torches you have ignited.  
This is what will happen to you by my hand:  
you will lie down in grief.

<sup>†</sup>Heb uncertain

50:4-9 Servant Israel speaks again (see Isa 50:10). As in Isaiah 49:1-6, he confirms the divine support promised to Israel in earlier chapters. Here he emphasizes that God sustains him even in conflict and crisis.

50:4 *a word that will awaken them*: According to the Hebrew, the first phrase concludes with "a word." The second phrase begins with a repetition: "In the morning he awakens, wakens my ear in the morning." Echoing the confidence expressed in Lamentations 3:22-23 that God's love and mercy are renewed every morning, the servant's alert ear contrasts with the willful deafness criticized in Isaiah 42:20; 48:8. Emphasis is on learning from God's voice. Attending to God's instruction prepares the speaker to stand strong in the midst of interhuman conflict and harassment.

50:6-7 Because of God's support, the servant withstands insults without disgrace or shame—a direct reflection of

Isaiah 45:16-17, which pledges that though idol-makers will end up disgraced and ashamed, God's worshippers won't. Enduring physical assaults such as beard plucking and insults, the servant models word for word the patience recommended in Lamentations 3:30.

50:7 The speaker expresses confidence in God's help; see Isaiah 41:10-14; 44:2; 49:8.

50:8 *Who will bring judgment against me?*: God's attentiveness to Israel's cause was first addressed in Isaiah 40:27, echoing pleas for justice found in Lamentations 3:57-59. Here, using the same vocabulary, the speaker challenges anyone to stand against him when God's support is nearby (see also Isa 41:1, 21-22).

50:10 *Who among you fears the LORD?*: Another speaker invites hearers to follow the servant's example. As in Lamentations 3:2, the servant trusts God even while walking in darkness.



**Look to Abraham and Sarah**

**51** Listen to me, you who look for righteousness,  
you who seek the LORD:

Look to the rock from which you were cut  
and to the quarry where you were dug.

<sup>2</sup>Look to Abraham your ancestor,  
and to Sarah, who gave you birth.  
They were alone when I called them,  
but I blessed them and made them many.

<sup>3</sup>The LORD will comfort Zion;  
he will comfort all her ruins.  
He will make her desert like Eden  
and her wilderness like the LORD's garden.  
Happiness and joy will be found in her—  
thanks and the sound of singing.

**Salvation endures forever**

<sup>4</sup>Pay attention to me, my people;  
listen to me, my nation,  
for teaching will go out from me,  
my justice, as a light to the nations.

<sup>5</sup>I will quickly bring my victory.  
My salvation is on its way,  
and my arm will judge the peoples.  
The coastlands hope for me;  
they wait for my judgment.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Look up to the heavens,  
and gaze at the earth beneath.  
The heavens will disappear like smoke,  
the earth will wear out like clothing,  
and its inhabitants will die like gnats.  
But my salvation will endure forever,  
and my righteousness will be unbroken.

<sup>7</sup>Listen to me, you who know what is right,  
people who carry my teaching in your heart:  
Don't fear human scorn,  
and don't be upset when they abuse you.

<sup>8</sup>The moth will eat them as if they were clothing,  
and the worm will eat them like wool,  
but my righteousness is forever,  
and my salvation for all generations.

**Awake, arm of the LORD**

<sup>9</sup>Awake, awake, put on strength, arm of the LORD.  
Awake as in times past, generations long ago.

<sup>a</sup>Or for my arm

51:1 Is 51:7,  
Is 55:6  
51:2 Is 29:22;  
Eze 33:24  
51:3 Gn 2:8;  
Is 35:1, Is 40:1,  
Is 52:9; Jl 2:3  
51:4 Ps 78:1;  
Is 2:3, Is 42:6,  
Is 49:6  
51:5 Is 40:10,  
Is 46:13  
51:6 Ps 102:25,  
Ps 102:26;  
Is 34:4;  
Mt 24:35;  
2Pt 3:10  
51:7 Dt 6:6;  
Ps 37:31,  
Ps 119:11;  
Is 51:1; Mt 5:11  
51:8 Job 13:28;  
Is 50:9, Is 51:6  
51:9 Dt 4:34;  
Ps 74:13;  
Is 27:1, Is 52:1,  
Is 53:1

51:1-2 The prophet appeals to Abraham and Sarah, who were promised a huge number of descendants (see note on Isa 48:19). This is the only mention of Sarah in the OT outside Genesis. Abraham is seldom mentioned except as an ancestral name (but see Isa 29:22; 63:16; 41:8). This reference to Abraham and Sarah affirms a version of a saying that Ezekiel 33:24 rejected: "Abraham was just one man, and he inherited the land. We are many, so certainly the land has been given to us as an inheritance." Ezekiel addressed people he saw as having abandoned God, but Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55) specifically addresses the faithful. As the ancestors' example suggests, God is able to build a whole nation out of a few.

51:3 *Eden*: A rare reference outside Genesis, one used already by Ezekiel in 36:33-38; 36:35 (cf. Ezek 28:31; 31:9-18).  
51:4 *teaching will go out from me*: See Isaiah 2:2-4; 42:6; 49:6.  
51:6-8 See Isaiah 34:4; 40:8; 50:9; 54:10; Psalm 102:26. The endurance of God's word and intentions is repeated in Matthew 5:18; 24:35, and stands behind the visions of 2 Peter 3:10 and Revelation 6:14.  
51:9 *Awake, awake*: The beginning of a climactic three-part section that dramatizes a call to action. The call to God's arm to awaken is echoed in Isaiah 51:17 and Isaiah 52:1 as calls to Jerusalem. This first section concerns God's saving role toward the world in general and God's people

51:10 Ex 14:21;  
Ex 15:13;  
Is 35:9; Is 43:16;  
Is 50:2  
51:11 Is 25:8;  
Is 35:10;  
Is 44:23;  
Is 65:19;  
Rev 7:17  
51:16 Is 48:13;  
Is 49:2; Is 59:21  
51:17 Job 21:20;  
Ps 60:3; Is 52:1;  
Jer 25:15;  
Rev 14:10  
51:18 Ps 88:18;  
Is 41:13;  
Is 49:21

- Aren't you the one who crushed Rahab,  
who pierced the dragon?  
 10 Didn't you dry up the sea, the waters of the great deep?  
And didn't you make the redeemed a road to cross  
through the depths of the sea,  
a road for the redeemed to pass?  
 11 Then let those ransomed by the LORD return and come to Zion with singing  
and with everlasting joy upon their heads.  
Let happiness and joy overwhelm them;  
let grief and groaning flee.  
 12 I, I am the one who comforts you.  
Why should you fear humans who will die,  
mortals who are treated like grass?  
 13 You forgot the LORD your maker,  
the one who stretched out the heavens  
and founded the earth.  
You were continually afraid, all day long,  
on account of the oppressor's wrath—  
a fear by which they intend to destroy you.  
Where now is the oppressor's wrath?  
 14 The imprisoned ones will soon be released;  
they won't die in the pit or even lack bread.  
 15 I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—  
the LORD of heavenly forces is his name.  
 16 I put my words in your mouth  
and hid you in the shadow of my hand,  
stretching out<sup>†</sup> the heavens, founding the earth,  
and saying to Zion, "You are my people."

### Wake yourself, Jerusalem

- 17 Wake yourself, wake yourself!  
Rise up, Jerusalem,  
who drank the cup of wrath from the LORD's hand.  
You drank; you drained the goblet of reeling.  
 18 There's no one to guide her among all the children she bore;  
there's no one to take her by the hand among all the children she raised.

<sup>†</sup>Or *planting*

in particular; see Psalm 93:1. *Rahab . . . dragon*: Near Eastern traditions of a battle between powerful gods are evoked. Common to these myths is the enthronement of the victor (cf. Isa 52:7). Though the Bible has no fully realized story of God fighting watery enemies, there are many references to the myth; see Isaiah 27:1 and note. For Rahab, see Job 26:12; Psalm 89:10; Isaiah 30:7. For the dragon, see Isaiah 27:1; Job 7:12; Psalm 74:13. Psalm 74, a prayer following the Babylonian destruction, is a particularly striking pattern for these verses. See its plea for God's action in the present based on this story from the past, especially in Psalm 74:12-15. See also Psalms 77:6, 27, 20-21; 44:2, 4, 24, 27.

51:10 *Didn't you dry up the sea*: The myth is specifically connected with the Hebrew slaves' crossing of the sea. The sea and the deep, while still evoking watery enemies in ancient myths, are also brought into the story as part of the great founding drama of salvation.

51:11 Compare with Isaiah 35:10, which repeats this verse almost exactly.

51:12 *I am the one who comforts you*: a response to the

prayer of Isaiah 51:9-11. The motif of comfort has been developing throughout Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55), but this is the most definitive declaration, countering the complaint of Lamentations 1 that Zion has no comforter. See notes on Isaiah 40:1; Isaiah 41:4.

51:15 *I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea*: "Who stirs up the sea" is a direct quotation of Jeremiah 31:35, which argues for Israel's security on the basis of God's maintenance of the created order. As in Job 26:12 (which also uses the myth of divine combat found above in Isa 51:9) and the more common translation of this word, both Jeremiah 31:35 and Isaiah 51:15 can be translated: "I am the Lord who *stills* the sea, though its waves roar." Despite the raging of the sea (or the nations), God reigns over all; compare with Psalm 93.

51:16 Compare with Isaiah 40:22; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 48:13. 51:17 *Wake yourself, wake yourself*: Another form of the verb repeated in Isaiah 51:9 and Isaiah 52:1 appears here. For the motif of drinking a poisoned cup as suffering divine punishment in Isaiah 51:21-23, see Jeremiah 25:15; 51:7; Psalms 60:3; 75:8; Ezekiel 23:31; Zechariah 12:2;

- <sup>19</sup>These two things have happened to you—  
Who will be sorry for you?<sup>a</sup>—destruction and devastation,  
famine and sword—  
who will comfort you?<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>20</sup>Your children passed out;  
they lay at the head of every street like antelope in a net,  
filled with the LORD's wrath, with the rebuke of your God.
- <sup>21</sup>Therefore, hear this, suffering one,  
who is drunk, but not from wine.
- <sup>22</sup>The LORD, your Lord and your God,  
who contends for his people, says:  
Look, I have taken the cup of reeling,  
the goblet of my wrath, from your hand.  
You will no longer drink from it.
- <sup>23</sup>I will put it in the hand of your tormentors, who said to you,  
"Lie down so that we can walk on you.  
Make your back like the ground,  
like a street for those walking on it."

51:21 Is 29:9,  
Is 51:17,  
Is 54:11

51:22 Is 49:25,  
Is 51:17,  
Jer 50:34

51:23 Josh  
10:24; Is 49:26;  
Jer 25:26,  
Jer 25:28;  
Zec 12:2

52:1 Neh 11:1;  
Is 35:8, Is 48:2,  
Is 51:9, Is 51:17

52:2 Is 51:14,  
Is 60:1

52:3 Ps 44:12;  
Is 45:13, Is 50:1;  
1 Pt 1:18

52:5 Ps 74:10;  
Eze 36:20;  
Ro 2:24

52:6 Is 49:23

52:7 Is 24:23,  
Is 40:9, Is 61:1;  
Na 1:15;  
Ro 10:15

**Awake, holy Zion**

- 52** Awake, awake, put on your strength, Zion!  
Put on your splendid clothing, Jerusalem, you holy city;  
for the uncircumcised and unclean will no longer come into you.
- <sup>2</sup> Shake the dust off yourself;  
rise up; sit enthroned, Jerusalem.  
Loose the bonds from your neck, captive Daughter Zion!

- <sup>3</sup> The LORD proclaims:  
You were sold for nothing,  
and you will be redeemed without money.
- <sup>4</sup> The LORD God proclaims:  
Long ago my people went down to reside in Egypt.  
Moreover, Assyria has oppressed them without cause.
- <sup>5</sup> And now what have I here? says the LORD.  
My people are taken away for nothing.  
Their rulers wail, says the LORD,  
and continually all day long my name is despised.
- <sup>6</sup> Therefore, my people will know my name on that day;  
I'm the one who promises it; I'm here.

**Your God rules**

- <sup>7</sup> How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of a messenger  
who proclaims peace,

<sup>a</sup>DSS (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>), LXX, Vulg; MT *How will I* <sup>a</sup>Or *how will I comfort you?*

Lamentations 4:21. This section repeatedly evokes Lamentations 4, which described the sufferings of Jerusalem's citizens. Particularly prominent in Lamentations is the suffering and loss of children. Isaiah 51:18-20 recalls Lamentations 4:1-10 while steering around its most gruesome portrayals. It does so in part by distilling the sufferings of real people into that of the personified city, Daughter Zion, and in part by replacing the dead children with Jerusalem's returning exiles (Isa 43:6; 49:20-22, 25; 54:1, 13). 51:20 *they lay at the head of every street*: Compare with Lamentations 2:19; 4:1-2; Nahum 3:10. 52:1 *Awake, awake, put on your strength, Zion!*: The city parallels God's strong arm (Isa 51:9). Her past sufferings having been remembered (Isa 51:17-23), she is now

invited to rise and receive her returning "children," the exiled community. In direct contrast to Daughter Babylon (Isa 47:1-15), Zion will be splendidly clothed, enthroned, freed, and repopulated. Lamentations 4:15 described the humiliation of being called unclean by the nations, but now the invading nations are called unclean. Nahum 1:15 is echoed here and in Isaiah 52:7. 52:3-6 These four verses, breaking the flow of the poetry, are likely an insertion by a later editor. 52:7-12 These climactic verses are filled with allusions to earlier passages of scripture. 52:7 *How beautiful upon the mountains*: Compare with Nahum 1:16, an oracle celebrating the earlier fall of Assyria's capital, Nineveh. Here it is applied to the

52:10 Is 45:22,  
Is 51:9, Is 66:18;  
Lk 3:6

52:11 Is 48:20;  
2Co 6:17

52:13 Is 42:1;  
Phi 2:9

52:14 Is 53:2,  
Is 53:3

52:15 Is 49:7;  
Ro 15:21

53:1 Is 51:9;  
In 12:38;  
Ro 10:16

53:2 Is 11:1,  
Is 11:10,  
Is 52:14

53:3 Ps 22:6,  
Is 49:7, Is 53:4;  
In 1:10, In 1:11

who brings good news,  
who proclaims salvation,  
who says to Zion, "Your God rules!"

- <sup>8</sup> Listen! Your lookouts lift their voice;  
they sing out together!  
Right before their eyes they see the LORD returning to Zion.

- <sup>9</sup> Break into song together, you ruins of Jerusalem!  
The LORD has comforted his people and has redeemed Jerusalem.

- <sup>10</sup> The LORD has bared his holy arm in view of all the nations;  
all the ends of the earth have seen our God's victory.

- <sup>11</sup> Depart! Depart! Go out from there!  
Unclean! Don't touch!  
Get out of that place, purify yourselves,  
carriers of the LORD's equipment!

- <sup>12</sup> You won't go out in a rush,  
nor will you run away,  
because the one going before you is the LORD;  
your rear guard is the God of Israel.

### *Suffering servant*

- <sup>13</sup> Look, my servant will succeed.  
He will be exalted and lifted very high.

- <sup>14</sup> Just as many were appalled by you,  
he too appeared disfigured, inhuman,  
his appearance unlike that of mortals.

- <sup>15</sup> But he will astonish<sup>m</sup> many nations.  
Kings will be silenced because of him,  
because they will see what they haven't seen before;  
what they haven't heard before, they will ponder.

**53** Who can believe what we have heard,  
and for whose sake has the LORD's arm<sup>a</sup> been revealed?

- <sup>2</sup> He grew up like a young plant before us,<sup>7</sup>  
like a root from dry ground.

He possessed no splendid form for us to see,  
no desirable appearance.

- <sup>3</sup> He was despised and avoided by others;  
a man who suffered, who knew sickness well.

<sup>m</sup>Or *sprinkle* <sup>a</sup>Or *power* <sup>7</sup>Or *him*

announcement of liberation from Babylon. God's reign is openly proclaimed (cf. Pss 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; Isa 41:21; 43:15; 44:6).

52:8 *Your lookouts lift their voice:* Compare with Lamentations 4:17; Numbers 14:14.

52:9 *Break into song:* The first part of this verse echoes Psalm 98, which appears more fully in Isaiah 52:10; see note on Isaiah 42:10-12. The second part echoes again God's comfort of Zion; see notes on Isaiah 40:1; 51:12.

52:10 See Psalm 98:1-4, 8. In the Hebrew, the final phrase of this verse precisely repeats Psalm 98:3. The claim that the entire world will see what God does for Israel began at Isaiah 42:10 and reaches its climax here.

52:11 *Depart! Depart! Go out from there!:* As in Isaiah 48:20, the invitation to leave Babylon is made explicit. Here it is described as separation from the Gentile city. This reverses Lamentations 4:15, where the Israelites are rejected as unclean (cf. Isa 52:1). According to instruction in

the Pentateuch, the shout *unclean!* was used to warn the healthy against those with skin disease (Lev 13:45).

52:12 *You won't go out in a rush:* In contrast to the hasty flight from Egypt (Deut 16:3), those leaving Babylon will join a stately procession, because God is going before them (as in Num 14:14) and behind them.

52:13-53:12 *Look, my servant will succeed:* For a third time in Isaiah 49-52, the servant reappears. As in Isaiah 50:4-11, the servant's suffering at the hand of others is reviewed. Unlike that poem and Isaiah 49:1-6, this one doesn't offer the servant's own words—in fact, his silence is noted (Isa 53:17). He is discussed by surprised foreign rulers (see 52:15). Their speech is preceded in 52:13-15 and followed in 53:11-12 by the divine voice.

53:1 *Who can believe what we have heard:* This verse is quoted, in different contexts, in John 12:38 and Romans 10:16.

53:2-3 *possessed no splendid form for us to see:* God's

Like someone from whom people hid their faces,  
he was despised, and we didn't think about him.

<sup>4</sup>It was certainly our sickness that he carried,  
and our sufferings that he bore,  
but we thought him afflicted,  
struck down by God and tormented.

<sup>5</sup>He was pierced because of our rebellions  
and crushed because of our crimes.  
He bore the punishment that made us whole;  
by his wounds we are healed.

<sup>6</sup>Like sheep we had all wandered away,  
each going its own way,  
but the LORD let fall on him all our crimes.

<sup>7</sup>He was oppressed and tormented,  
but didn't open his mouth.  
Like a lamb being brought to slaughter,  
like a ewe silent before her shearers,  
he didn't open his mouth.

<sup>8</sup>Due to an unjust ruling he was taken away,  
and his fate—who will think about it?  
He was eliminated from the land of the living,  
struck dead because of my people's rebellion.

<sup>9</sup>His grave was among the wicked,  
his tomb with evildoers,<sup>a</sup>  
though he had done no violence,  
and had spoken nothing false.

<sup>10</sup>But the LORD wanted to crush him  
and to make him suffer.  
If his life is offered<sup>a</sup> as restitution,  
he will see his offspring; he will enjoy long life.  
The LORD's plans will come to fruition through him.

<sup>11</sup>After his deep anguish he will see light,<sup>b</sup> and he will be satisfied.  
Through his knowledge, the righteous one, my servant,  
will make many righteous, and will bear their guilt.

<sup>a</sup>Cf Tg, MT and with a rich one in his deaths <sup>a</sup>Or if you place his life <sup>b</sup>DSS (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>); MT lacks light.

servant isn't attractive by human standards. He may have been ill (Isa 53:3) or disfigured (Isa 52:14). He is discounted and rejected; see similarly Lamentations 3:63.

53:4 *It was certainly our sickness that he carried:* This verse is quoted in Matthew 8:17 to describe Jesus' healing of the sick. *we thought him afflicted:* The onlookers understood the servant to bear punishment from God. They didn't realize he was carrying their sufferings. See similarly Lamentations 3:33-34.

53:5-6 *He bore the punishment that made us whole:* Like a sacrificial lamb, the servant suffers not only because of others but on their behalf, for their redemption. *by his wounds we are healed:* This phrase, as well as part of 53:6, is quoted in 1 Peter 2:24-25 to portray Jesus as a role model for those patiently enduring undeserved suffering.

53:7 *Like a lamb being brought to slaughter:* See Jeremiah's self-description in Jeremiah 11:19. When Philip interprets

scripture to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:27-39, the eunuch is reading Isaiah 53:7-8. The eunuch, a mutilated man himself, may be drawn to a figure who likewise suffers deformity and ostracism. *he didn't open his mouth:* As in Isaiah 50:4-11, the servant resembles the suffering speaker in Lamentations 3. As Lamentations 3:28 prescribes, he doesn't speak. Others speak for him.

53:8-10 The servant suffers unjust and undeserved afflictions. But according to this writer, undeserved suffering can result in redemption for others. This allows divine justice to coexist with innocent suffering. Since not all the suffering caused by Jerusalem's destruction and Israel's exile was deserved, the concept of innocent suffering on behalf of others opens the possibility for meaning in pain. While the poem is most likely modeled on the experiences of exemplary individuals, the suggestion is that Israel suffered on behalf of the sins of surrounding nations.

53:4 Mt 8:17  
53:5 Ro 4:25;  
1Pt 2:24  
53:6 Is 56:11;  
1Pt 2:25  
53:7 Mk 14:61;  
Jn 1:29; Jn 19:9;  
Ac 8:32;  
1Pt 2:23  
53:8 Is 53:12;  
Dn 9:26  
53:9 Mt 27:57;  
Heb 4:15;  
1Pt 2:22; 1Jn 3:5  
53:10 Lv 5:15;  
Ps 22:30;  
Is 53:6;  
Zec 13:7;  
Heb 9:26  
53:11 Is 45:25

53:12 Is 53:6,  
Is 53:11,  
Lk 22:37;  
Ph 2:9;  
Heb 9:28  
54:1 1Sa 2:5;  
Is 49:20, Is 62:4,  
Is 66:7, Ga 4:27

54:2 Ex 35:18,  
Ex 39:40;  
Is 49:19,  
Is 49:20,  
Jer 10:20

54:3 Is 49:19

54:4 Is 45:17

54:5 Is 62:5,  
Jer 3:14;  
Hos 2:19

54:6 Is 49:14,  
Is 50:1, Is 62:4

54:7 Ps 30:5;  
Is 26:20, Is 43:5

54:8 Is 55:3,  
Is 60:10

54:9 Gn 8:21,  
Gn 9:11; Is 12:1

- <sup>12</sup>Therefore, I will give him a share with the great,  
and he will divide the spoil with the strong,  
in return for exposing his life to death and being numbered with rebels,  
though he carried the sin of many  
and pleaded on behalf of those who rebelled.

*Sing, barren woman*

**54** Sing, barren woman who has borne no child;  
break forth into singing and cry out, you who were never in labor,  
for the children of the wife who has been deserted  
will be more numerous than the children of the married,  
says the LORD.

- <sup>2</sup>Enlarge the site of your tent,  
and stretch out the drapes of your dwellings;  
don't hold back.  
Lengthen your tent ropes and strengthen your stakes.

<sup>3</sup>To the right and to the left you will burst out,  
and your children will possess the nations' land  
and settle their desolate cities.

<sup>4</sup>Don't fear, because you won't be ashamed;  
don't be dismayed, because you won't be disgraced.  
You will forget the shame of your youth;  
you'll no longer remember the disgrace of your widowhood.

<sup>5</sup>The one marrying you is the one who made you—  
the LORD of heavenly forces is his name.  
The one redeeming you is the holy one of Israel,  
the one called the God of all the earth.

<sup>6</sup>As an abandoned and dejected woman the LORD has summoned you;  
as a young wife when she is rejected, says your God.

<sup>7</sup>For a brief moment I abandoned you,  
but with great mercy I will bring you back.

<sup>8</sup>In an outburst of rage, I hid my face from you for a moment,  
but with everlasting love I have consoled you, says your redeemer, the LORD.

<sup>9</sup>These are like the days<sup>c</sup> of Noah for me,  
when I promised that Noah's waters would never again cover the earth.  
Likewise I promise not to rage against you or rebuke you.

<sup>10</sup>The mountains may shift,  
and the hills may be shaken,  
but my faithful love won't shift from you,  
and my covenant of peace won't be shaken,  
says the LORD, the one who pities you.

<sup>c</sup>Or for the waters

53:12 *being numbered with rebels*: Compare with Luke 22:37; Hebrews 9:28.

54:1 *Sing, barren woman who has borne no child*: Like mountains, hills, forests, and trees in Isaiah 44:23; 49:13; 55:12; and Jerusalem's ruins in Isaiah 52:9, Zion herself is invited to burst into song. In Isaiah 51:18-20 she has lost children, but here she never had them. This paves the way for Zion to accept the returning exiles as her children (cf. Isa 54:2-3).

54:2 *Enlarge the site of your tent*: This reverses Jeremiah 4:20; 10:20, in which Jerusalem's tent was proclaimed destroyed. The complaint in Lamentations 1:1, 4 is of an empty city, but here as well as in Isaiah 49:19-20, the happy problem is overcrowding.

54:7 *For a brief moment I abandoned you*: In Isaiah 49:14

Zion was heard complaining that God had abandoned and forgotten her, and in the next verse God denied forgetting her. Here God admits to brief abandonment, but claims that it was slight and momentary compared with the current reconciliation.

54:9 *like the days of Noah*: God briefly abandoned the earth, but afterward promised never to do so again. God promises not to punish Zion again.

54:10 *The mountains may shift, and the hills may be shaken*: Compare with Psalm 46:3-4, a psalm of reassurance of divine protection. Assurances that the city is once again a secure place serve not only to renew trust in God's protection and goodwill, but also to address the practical question of physical safety in a city that had been breached and burned.

- 11 Suffering one, storm-tossed, uncomforted,  
look, I am setting your gemstones in silvery metal  
and your foundations with sapphires.
- 12 I will make your towers of rubies,  
and your gates of beryl,  
and all your walls of precious jewels.
- 13 All your children will be disciples of the LORD—  
I will make peace abound for your children.
- 14 You will be firmly founded in righteousness.  
You will stay far from oppression because you won't fear,  
far from terror because it won't come near you.
- 15 If anyone attacks you, it's none of my doing.  
Whoever attacks you will fall because of you.
- 16 Look, I myself created the metalworker who blows the fire of coal  
and who produces a tool for his work.  
And I myself created the looter to destroy.
- 17 No weapon fashioned against you will succeed,  
and you may condemn every tongue that disputes with you.  
This is the heritage of the LORD's servants,  
whose righteousness comes from me, says the LORD.

54:11 Rev 21:19  
54:12 Ex 28:19  
54:13  
Ps 119:165;  
Is 48:18; Jn 6:45  
54:14 Zec 9:8  
54:15 Is 8:9;  
Is 41:11; Zec 2:8  
54:17 Is 45:24;  
Is 50:8  
55:1 Mt 5:6;  
Jn 4:14; Jn 7:37;  
Rev 21:6;  
Rev 22:17  
55:2 Ps 22:26;  
Is 25:6;  
Jer 31:14;  
Hos 8:7  
55:3 Is 61:8;  
Jer 32:40;  
Ac 13:34;  
Heb 13:20  
55:4 Dn 9:25;  
Mt 5:2; Rev 1:5  
55:5 Is 49:6;  
Is 60:9  
55:6 Dt 4:29;  
Ps 32:6;  
Jer 29:13;  
Am 5:4;  
Ac 17:27  
55:7 Prv 28:13;  
Is 43:25;  
Is 44:22;  
Eze 18:27

*Invitation to the feast*

- 55 All of you who are thirsty, come to the water!  
Whoever has no money, come, buy food and eat!  
Without money, at no cost, buy wine and milk!
- 2 Why spend money for what isn't food,  
and your earnings for what doesn't satisfy?  
Listen carefully to me and eat what is good;  
enjoy the richest of feasts.
- 3 Listen and come to me;  
listen, and you will live.  
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,  
my faithful loyalty to David.
- 4 Look, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a prince and commander of peoples.
- 5 Look, you will call a nation you don't know,  
a nation you don't know will run to you  
because of the LORD your God,  
the holy one of Israel, who has glorified you.
- 6 Seek the LORD when he can still be found;  
call him while he is yet near.
- 7 Let the wicked abandon their ways  
and the sinful their schemes.

54:11 The imagery shifts from Zion as woman to Zion as city, rebuilt with precious stones.

54:13 *peace abound for your children*: Psalm 72:3-4, 7, which celebrated the peace abounding with righteous kingship, is evoked here. The prophet here foresees peace abounding in a kingless city (cf. Isa 55:3, in which the promises to David are given to the people overall).

54:17 *the heritage of the LORD's servants*: In this final verse addressed to Zion, God's servant (now plural) merges with her children, now envisioned living safely with their mother, the city of Jerusalem.

55:1-13 Scholars consider this chapter the end of the "exilic" section of Isaiah, or Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55), but no clear division separates it from what follows.

55:1-5 *All of you who are thirsty*: God's bounty, imagined as plentiful water, wine, milk, and rich food, is extended

to all who will come (see Isa 25:6-8; Prov 9:1-6). Water is a powerful symbol of God's provision for the thirsty in Isaiah 41:17-18; 43:20; 44:3; 48:21; 49:10 (see also Isa 12:3; 32:2; 33:16).

55:3 *faithful loyalty to David*: This is the only mention of King David in Isaiah. It concerns God's covenant with Jerusalem's royalty (see Ps 89; 2 Sam 7:8-16; 23:5, where an "eternal covenant" is mentioned between God and David). Here, after the collapse of the kingship, the covenant is bestowed on the whole community (see also Isa 61:8; Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 37:26; Ps 105:10).

55:5 *call a nation you don't know*: As in Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:10; 42:6; 49:6; 60:3, other nations will be attracted to Israel because of the LORD your God. See Isaiah 49:7b.

55:6-7 God's mercy for those who return is generous (see Ps 103:3-4, 10-14; Isa 43:25; 44:22; Ezek 18).

55:8 Ro 11:33  
 55:9 Ps 103:11;  
 Ro 11:33  
 55:10 Is 30:23;  
 2Co 9:10  
 55:11 Dt 32:2;  
 Is 40:8, Is 44:26,  
 Is 45:23,  
 Is 46:10  
 56:1 Is 1:17,  
 Is 46:13, Is 51:5  
 56:2 Ex 20:8;  
 Is 58:13;  
 Jer 17:21;  
 Eze 20:12  
 56:3 Dt 23:1;  
 Is 14:1, Jer 38:7;  
 Zec 8:20;  
 Ac 8:27  
 56:4 Ex 31:13;  
 Is 56:2

Let them return to the LORD so that he may have mercy on them, to our God, because he is generous with forgiveness.

- <sup>8</sup>My plans aren't your plans,  
 nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
- <sup>9</sup>Just as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
 so are my ways higher than your ways,  
 and my plans than your plans.
- <sup>10</sup>Just as the rain and the snow come down from the sky  
 and don't return there without watering the earth,  
 making it conceive and yield plants  
 and providing seed to the sower and food to the eater,  
<sup>11</sup>so is my word that comes from my mouth;  
 it does not return to me empty.  
 Instead, it does what I want,  
 and accomplishes what I intend.
- <sup>12</sup>Yes, you will go out with celebration,  
 and you will be brought back in peace.  
 Even the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you;  
 all the trees of the field will clap their hands.
- <sup>13</sup>In place of the thorn the cypress will grow;  
 in place of the nettle the myrtle will grow.  
 This will attest to the LORD's stature,  
 an enduring reminder that won't be removed.

### Keepers of God's Sabbath

**56** The LORD says:  
 Act justly and do what is righteous,  
 because my salvation is coming soon,  
 and my righteousness will be revealed.

- <sup>2</sup>Happy is the one who does this,  
 the person who holds it fast,  
 who keeps the Sabbath, not making it impure,  
 and avoids doing any evil.
- <sup>3</sup>Don't let the immigrant who has joined with the LORD say,  
 "The LORD will exclude me from the people."  
 And don't let the eunuch say,  
 "I'm just a dry tree."
- <sup>4</sup>The LORD says:  
 To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths,  
 choose what I desire,  
 and remain loyal to my covenant.

55:8-9 *My plans aren't your plans*: The theme of divine and human ways, and divine and human plans, carries over from Isaiah 55:7 ("schemes"). As in Isaiah 5:19; 8:10; 14:26; 25:1; 29:15; 30:1; 46:10-11, God's plans rather than human ones will stand.

55:10-11 The enduring effectiveness of God's words are reaffirmed, as in Isaiah 40:8.

55:12 *go out with celebration*: The audience is called to leave Babylon, not as escapees, but as in a religious procession (see Isa 48:20; 52:11-12). As elsewhere, members of the nonhuman world praise God (Isa 42:10; 44:23; 49:13; 52:9; cf. Pss 96; 98).

55:13 *enduring reminder that won't be removed*: See Isaiah 56:5.

56:1 *Act justly and do what is righteous*: While much of First Isaiah (Isa 1-39) discussed human righteousness (or its absence; see Isa 1:27; 5:7; 28:17; 32:16-17; 33:15); and much of Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55) discussed divine righteousness (see Isa 45:23-24; 51:6-8; 54:14, 17), these verses

connect the two. The God of justice pays attention to what humans do and will demand an accounting, delivering those who have not received justice.

56:2 *who keeps the Sabbath*: Concern for the Sabbath will recur in Isaiah 56:6 and Isaiah 58. It recurs at the book's end in Isaiah 66:23. Sabbath-keeping involves rest not only for the self and family but for employees and work animals (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15), so that all may be renewed.

56:3-8 Reassurance for both immigrants and eunuchs is intertwined. Some had been explicitly excluded from the worshipping assembly in instruction found in the Pentateuch. Deuteronomy 23:1 (see also Lev 21:20-23; 22:24) banned men with damaged or missing sex organs from participating in worship; and Isaiah 56:2-3 excluded those born of illicit unions and the descendants of Ammonites and Moabites. Status before God isn't determined by ancestry or physical wholeness, but by behavior. Eunuchs who prove faithful will be given an everlasting name, and



*Third Isaiah's Setting and Arrangement* The clear shift in context that occurs with the beginning of Isaiah 40 isn't so sharply drawn at Isaiah 56, and for this reason some scholars argue against the existence of a "Third Isaiah." But most distinguish between the messages of Isaiah 40–55, which primarily call Judeans living elsewhere to return and rebuild, and those of Isaiah 56–66, which mostly address people living in Jerusalem. While Jerusalem remains the center of concern, the literary forms, voices, and messages found in the last 11 chapters are indeed more varied than those in the previous 16. In addition, these chapters recall elements of Isaiah 1–39 in a much more thorough way than Isaiah 40–55 does.

A particular sequence scholars call an "envelope structure" fits these chapters together, like Russian dolls, one inside another, which is inside of still another. Isaiah 60–62 (see sidebar, "Isaiah 60–62" at Isa 60) forms the center of this sequence, with discussions of God's enemies (Isa 59:15b–21; 63:1–6) on either side. Community laments are found outside these (Isa 59:9–15a; 63:7–64:12); and in the outermost portion, discussions of right worship and prosperity (Isa 56:1–59:8; 65:1–66:24). Such a structure imposes order on materials that may otherwise appear more diverse. Here the editor seems to have placed priority on the outermost and innermost layers as expressions both of Jerusalem's promise and of its mission.

56:5 Is 56:13;  
Rev 3:12  
56:7 Is 2:2,  
Is 2:3; Mt 21:13;  
Mk 11:17;  
Lk 19:46  
56:8 Ps 147:2;  
Is 11:12, Is 60:3;  
Jn 10:16  
56:10 Jer 14:13;  
Eze 3:17  
56:11 Jer 6:13,  
Jer 22:17;  
Eze 34:2;  
Mt 3:11  
57:1 2Ki 22:20;  
Ps 12:1; Mt 7:2  
57:2 Gn 17:1;  
2Ch 16:14;  
Dn 12:13;  
Lk 2:29;  
Rev 14:13

<sup>5</sup>In my temple and courts,

I will give them a monument and a name better than sons and daughters.

I will give to them an enduring name that won't be removed.

<sup>6</sup>The immigrants who have joined me,<sup>d</sup>

serving me and loving my name,<sup>e</sup> becoming my servants,<sup>f</sup>

everyone who keeps the Sabbath without making it impure,

and those who hold fast to my covenant:

<sup>7</sup>I will bring them to my holy mountain,

and bring them joy in my house of prayer.

I will accept their entirely burned offerings and sacrifices on my altar.

My house will be known as a house of prayer for all peoples,

<sup>8</sup>says the LORD God, who gathers Israel's outcasts.

I will gather still others to those I have already gathered.

### **Neglectful leaders**

<sup>9</sup>All you beasts of the field,

come and eat, all you beasts of the forest!

<sup>10</sup>The lookouts are blind;

they all lack sense.

They are all mute dogs that can't bark,

dreamers, loungers, loving to sleep.

<sup>11</sup>But the dogs have monstrous appetites.

They never have enough.

They are shepherds who don't understand.

All of them have turned to their own ways,

every last one greedy for profit.

<sup>12</sup>"Come! I'll get some wine!

Let's drink beer!

Tomorrow will be like today, or even much better."

**57** The righteous person perishes,  
and no one takes it to heart.

Loyal people are gathered together,

and no one understands that because of evil the righteous one passed away.

<sup>1</sup>They will find peace;

those who walk in straight paths will find rest on their burial beds.

<sup>d</sup>Or to the LORD <sup>e</sup>Or serving him and loving the LORD's name <sup>f</sup>Or becoming his servants

better than children. Faithful immigrants are welcomed to worship and even to serve as priests (see Isa 66:19–21). In Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; and Luke 19:46, Jesus quotes 56:7, joining it to Jeremiah 7:11.

56:9–57:2 All you beasts of the field, come and eat: A society ruled by unfit leaders is vulnerable to predators, like a flock of sheep neglected by their guards. Even in death, however, the righteous find escape from present evil.

57:3 Mt 16:4

57:4 Ps 35:21;  
Is 1:457:6 Is 65:11;  
Jer 3:9, Jer 7:18,  
Jer 19:13;  
Eze 20:2857:7 Jer 3:6;  
Eze 16:16

57:11 Ps 50:21

57:13 Jgs 10:14;  
Ps 37:9, Is 56:7

57:14 Is 62:10

**Accusations against idolaters**

<sup>3</sup> Come here, you children of sorcery,  
offspring of adultery and prostitution!

<sup>4</sup> Whom are you mocking?

Against whom do you open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue?

Aren't you children of rebellion, offspring of lies,

<sup>5</sup> who console yourselves with idols under every green tree,  
who slaughter children in the valleys, under the rocky cliffs?

<sup>6</sup> You belong with the smooth talkers<sup>g</sup> in the valley;  
they, they are your lot.

For them you poured out a drink offering,  
and presented a grain offering.

Should I condone these things?

<sup>7</sup> On a very high mountain you made your bed.

You went up there to offer a sacrifice.

<sup>8</sup> Behind the door and the doorpost you placed your symbols.

You abandoned me and lay down, making room in your bed  
and making deals for yourself with them.<sup>h</sup>

You loved their bed;

you saw their nakedness.

<sup>9</sup> You went down to Molech<sup>i</sup> with oil,  
and you slathered on your ointments;  
you sent your messengers far away,  
sent them down to the underworld.<sup>j</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Worn out by all your efforts,  
yet you wouldn't say, "This is useless."

You found new strength;  
therefore, you weren't tired.

<sup>11</sup> Whom did you dread and fear so that you lied,  
didn't remember me or give me a thought?

Isn't it because I was silent and closed my eyes that you stopped fearing me?

<sup>12</sup> I will bring evidence about your righteousness and your actions;  
they won't help you.

<sup>13</sup> When you cry out,  
let those things you've gathered save you!  
The wind will lift them all;  
one breath will take them away.

but those taking refuge in me will inherit the land  
and possess my holy mountain.

**Peace for the remorseful**

<sup>14</sup> It will be said: "Survey, survey; build a road!  
Remove barriers from my people's road!"

<sup>g</sup>Or smooth things <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>i</sup>Or the king <sup>j</sup>Heb Sheol

57:3-13 *Come here, you children of sorcery*: This passage is dark in tone, and it isn't clear what it refers to. It calls a female figure, most likely Jerusalem, a sorceress and whore (see Isa 1:21 and, with a different word, Isa 47:9, 12). The language is sexual in nature, following traditions best known in Hosea 1-3 and Ezekiel 16 (see also Mal 3:5). Idolatry is described as adultery. It contrasts sharply with treatments of Jerusalem as the city's mother in Isaiah 49:14-50:1; 51:17-52:12; 54:1-17; as well as in Isaiah 60; 62; 66, in which sons and daughters are once again said to flock toward Jerusalem.

57:4 *Against whom do you open your mouth wide*: Unlike the worshipful, whose mouths are open in praise and

whose tongues speak honorably, the addressees open mouths only to mock (see Ps 35:18-28). They contrast sharply with the suffering servant in Isaiah 53:7, who didn't open his mouth.

57:5 *under every green tree*: similar to the criticisms of idolatry in Deuteronomy 12:2; 2 Kings 16:4; 17:10; Jeremiah 2:20; 3:6, 13; Ezekiel 6:13. *slaughter children in the valleys*: Though scripture condemns human sacrifice, ample evidence shows that it was practiced in Jerusalem's Hinnom Valley (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut 12:31; 18:10; 2 Kgs 16:3; 21:6; 23:10; Jer 7:31).

57:9 *Molech*: a Canaanite god associated with child sacrifice.  
57:14 *build a road*: an exact repetition of Isaiah 40:3.

57:15 Dt 33:27;  
Ps 34:18,  
Ps 51:17;  
Is 66:2; Lk 1:49  
57:16 Ps 103:9  
57:17 Is 56:11;  
Jer 6:13  
57:18 Jer 3:22;  
Hos 14:4  
57:19 Ac 2:39;  
Eph 2:17;  
Heb 13:15  
57:20 Job 18:5;  
Jud 1:13  
57:21 Is 48:22  
58:1 Mi 3:8  
58:2 Is 1:11,  
Is 29:13, Is 48:1;  
Ti 1:16  
58:3 Ps 69:10;  
Jer 14:12;  
Zec 7:5;  
Mal 3:14  
58:4 Dt 1:12;  
1Ki 21:9;  
Prv 17:19;  
Prv 26:21;  
Is 59:2

- <sup>15</sup>The one who is high and lifted up,  
who lives forever, whose name is holy, says:  
I live on high, in holiness,  
and also with the crushed<sup>k</sup> and the lowly,  
reviving the spirit of the lowly,  
reviving the heart of those who have been crushed.<sup>1</sup>
- <sup>16</sup>I won't always accuse,  
nor will I be enraged forever.  
It is my own doing that their spirit is exhausted—  
I gave them breath!
- <sup>17</sup>I was enraged about their illegal profits;  
I struck them; in rage I withdrew from them.  
Yet they went on wandering wherever they wanted.
- <sup>18</sup>I have seen their ways, but I will heal them.  
I will guide them, and reward them with comfort.  
And for those who mourn,
- <sup>19</sup>I will create reason for praise:<sup>m</sup>  
utter prosperity to those far and near,  
and I will heal them, says the LORD.
- <sup>20</sup>But the wicked are like the churning sea that can't keep still.  
They churn up from their waters muck and mud.
- <sup>21</sup>There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked.

**Fasting from injustice**

- 58** Shout loudly; don't hold back;  
raise your voice like a trumpet!  
Announce to my people their crime,  
to the house of Jacob their sins.
- <sup>2</sup>They seek me day after day, desiring knowledge of my ways  
like a nation that acted righteously, that didn't abandon their God.  
They ask me for righteous judgments, wanting to be close to God.
- <sup>3</sup>"Why do we fast and you don't see;  
why afflict ourselves and you don't notice?"  
Yet on your fast day you do whatever you want,  
and oppress all your workers.
- <sup>4</sup>You quarrel and brawl, and then you fast;  
you hit each other violently with your fists.  
You shouldn't fast as you are doing today  
if you want to make your voice heard on high.

<sup>k</sup>Or contrue <sup>1</sup>Or contrue <sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain

57:15 *The one who is high and lifted up:* For the same language about God, see Isaiah 6:1; 33:10. For God's opposition to the proud, see Isaiah 2:12-17. For a similar treatment of God's exaltation yet tenderness toward the lowly, see Isaiah 66:1-2.

57:16 *I won't always accuse:* Compare with Psalm 103:9.

57:18 *I will heal them:* Compare with Lamentations 2:13; Jeremiah 3:22; 30:17; 33:6; Hosea 14:4.

57:19 *utter prosperity:* The words in Hebrew are *shalom, shalom*. This verse is quoted in reference to Jesus in Ephesians 2:17.

57:21 *There is no peace:* Compare with Isaiah 48:22. In contrast to the peace God gives to those who are mourning, the wicked who churn up trouble will find no peace.

58:1-14 A lesson on insincere and sincere worship: Devout rituals are meaningless when accompanied by self-serving practices. But fasting from injustice and actively pursuing the interests of those who are socially

defenseless—the hungry, oppressed, naked, and homeless—benefits the whole society.

58:1-2 *Shout loudly; don't hold back:* The prophet is instructed to correct those expecting God to hear their prayers. For similar language, see Micah 3:8. The chapter's structure reflects not condemnation but ethical instruction.

58:3 *Why do we fast and you don't see:* Fasting often expressed mourning, petition, or a change of heart and mind, and carried hope for divine response (Judg 20:26; 1 Sam 7:6; 2 Sam 12:16-23; Ezra 8:21-23; Neh 1:4; 9:1-2; Esth 4:3, 16; Pss 35:13; 109:24; Jer 14:12; Dan 9:3; Joel 1:14; 2:12-17; Jon 3:5). The question suggests divine neglect: We are doing right; why does God fail to respond? The difficulties of life in the early decades of post-exilic Jerusalem may have led to such frustration—see, for instance, Haggai 1:6-11; 2:16-19; Zechariah 8:10. But the fact that people continue to act unjustly even on fast days suggests that

58:5 1Ki 21:27;  
Zec 7:5  
58:6 Neh 5:10  
58:7 Job 31:19;  
Is 16:4;  
Eze 18:7;  
Mt 23:5;  
Mt 23:36  
58:8 Job 11:17;  
Is 52:12;  
Is 58:10  
58:9 Ps 122;  
Ps 50:15;  
Pev 6:13;  
Is 30:19;  
Is 65:24  
58:10 Dt 15:7;  
Job 11:17;  
Pev 11:25;  
Pev 28:27;  
Is 58:8  
58:11 Ps 48:14;  
Ps 107:9;  
Is 57:18;  
Jer 31:12  
58:12 Is 49:8;  
Is 61:4  
58:13 Eze 20:8;  
Is 56:2;  
Jer 17:21  
58:14 Dt 32:13;  
Job 22:26;  
Is 1:20  
59:1 Nm 11:23;  
Josh 4:24;  
Is 50:2, Is 58:9,  
Is 65:24

- 5** Is this the kind of fast I choose,  
a day of self-affliction,  
of bending one's head like a reed  
and of lying down in mourning clothing and ashes?  
Is this what you call a fast,  
a day acceptable to the LORD?
- 6** Isn't this the fast I choose:  
releasing wicked restraints, untying the ropes of a yoke,  
setting free the mistreated, and breaking every yoke?
- 7** Isn't it sharing your bread with the hungry  
and bringing the homeless poor into your house,  
covering the naked when you see them,  
and not hiding from your own family?
- 8** Then your light will break out like the dawn,  
and you will be healed quickly.  
Your own righteousness will walk before you,  
and the LORD's glory will be your rear guard.
- 9** Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;  
you will cry for help, and God will say, "I'm here."  
If you remove the yoke from among you,  
the finger-pointing, the wicked speech;
- 10** if you open your heart to the hungry,  
and provide abundantly for those who are afflicted,  
your light will shine in the darkness,  
and your gloom will be like the noon.
- 11** The LORD will guide you continually  
and provide for you, even in parched places.  
He will rescue your bones.  
You will be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water that won't run dry.
- 12** They will rebuild ancient ruins on your account;  
the foundations of generations past you will restore.  
You will be called Mender of Broken Walls,  
Restorer of Livable Streets.
- 13** If you stop trampling the Sabbath,  
stop doing whatever you want on my holy day,  
and consider the Sabbath a delight,  
sacred to the LORD, honored,  
and honor it instead of doing things your way,  
seeking what you want and doing business as usual,
- 14** then you will take delight in the LORD.  
I will let you ride on the heights of the earth;  
I will sustain you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob.  
The mouth of the LORD has spoken.

### *Alienation from God*

**59** Look! The LORD does not lack the power to save,  
nor are his ears too dull to hear,

religious devotion isn't causing worshippers to think about their treatment of others.

58:5-7 Displays of piety that simply draw attention to the practice of fasting produce nothing (see likewise Zech 7:5-10). As in earlier prophets' criticisms of religious practices, it isn't the fast itself that's in question but the spirit in which it's carried out (see Amos 5:21-25; Isa 1:12-27; Mic 6:6-8). The acceptable fast means refraining from taking economic advantage of others, and instead offering

assistance necessary for health and dignity. Complaints mentioned in Nehemiah 5:1-8 suggest the economic des- peration of some Judeans during Persian rule.

58:8-12 Generosity toward others results in healing, com- munion with God, guidance, renewal, and restoration.

58:13-14 Self-serving piety is called *trampling the Sab- bath*. Those who honor Sabbaths and holy days do what pleases God on those days.

59:1-8 The hardships the community faces, and the gulf |

- <sup>2</sup>but your misdeeds have separated you from your God.  
Your sins have hidden his face from you  
so that you aren't heard.
- <sup>3</sup>Your hands are stained with blood,  
and your fingers with guilt.  
Your lips speak lies;  
your tongues mutter malice.
- <sup>4</sup>No one sues honestly;  
no one pleads truthfully.  
By trusting in emptiness and speaking deceit,  
they conceive harm and give birth to malice.
- <sup>5</sup>They hatch adders' eggs, and weave spiderwebs.  
Whoever eats their eggs will die.  
Moreover, the crushed egg hatches a viper.
- <sup>6</sup>Their webs can't serve as clothing;  
they can't cover themselves with their deeds.  
Their deeds are deeds of malice,  
and the work of violence is in their hands.
- <sup>7</sup>Their feet run to evil;  
they rush to shed innocent blood.  
Their thoughts are thoughts of malice;  
desolation and destruction litter their highways.
- <sup>8</sup>They don't know the way of peace;  
there's no justice in their paths.  
They make their roads crooked;  
no one who walks in them knows peace.

59:2 Is 1:15;  
Eze 39:23  
59:3 Is 1:15  
59:4 Job 15:35  
59:5 Job 8:14;  
Is 11:8, Is 14:29,  
Is 30:6; Jer 8:17  
59:6 Prv 4:17;  
Is 28:20; Jer 6:7  
59:7 Prv 1:16;  
Prv 6:17;  
Mk 7:21;  
Ro 3:15  
59:8 Ps 125:5;  
Prv 2:15;  
Is 48:22,  
Is 57:21;  
Lk 1:79  
59:9 Is 5:30  
59:10 Dt 28:29;  
Job 5:14;  
Lam 3:6  
59:11 Is 38:14;  
Eze 7:16  
59:12 Eze 9:6;  
Jer 14:7

**Injustice obscures vision**

- <sup>9</sup>Because of all this, justice is far from us,  
and righteousness beyond our reach.  
We expect light, and there is darkness;  
we await a gleam of light, but walk about in gloom.
- <sup>10</sup>We grope along the wall like the blind;  
like those without eyes we grope.  
We stumble at noonday as if it were twilight,  
and among the strong as if we were dying.
- <sup>11</sup>All of us growl like bears,  
and like doves we moan.  
We expect justice, but there is none;  
we await salvation, but it is far from us.
- <sup>12</sup>Our rebellions are numerous in your presence;  
our sins testify against us.

between worshippers and God, result from human injustice. God won't hear the prayers of those who are violent and deceitful.

59:2-3 As in Isaiah 58, religious piety doesn't bring practitioners of injustice any redemption or help.

59:4 *trusting in emptiness*: Those engaging in dishonesty are accused of placing their faith in what is (in Hebrew) *tohu*; that is, the very chaos that preceded God's original creation; see Genesis 1:2. This has been a key word in Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55), which calls the nations, idols, and idolmakers *tohu*; see Isaiah 40:23; 41:29; 44:9; 45:18-19; Jeremiah 4:23. Unlike God, who brought forth order, the people are imagined as giving birth to the very malice they are practicing; compare with Job 15:35; Psalm 7:14.

59:5-6 *They hatch adders' eggs*: The image of birth from Isaiah 59:4 becomes even more elaborate in this verse, as the worshippers are compared with snakes and spiders,

which can only produce poisonous eggs. Their webs of deceit won't clothe them.

59:7-8 *Their feet run to evil*: The image shifts to that of the "path" taken by means of deeds. Rather than the level path of peace (cf. Isa 40:3; 62:10), they take the crooked road and perform destructive deeds. As in Isaiah 57:21, those who disrupt peace for others won't know peace themselves (see Prov 1:16; 6:18).

59:9-15a *justice is far from us*: The following lament mirrors the accusations of Isaiah 59:1-8.

59:9-10 In a deceitful society, moral vision is so lacking that the whole community lives as if in darkness (cf. Isa 29:9-10; 56:10). All the hopeful words about God's bringing light and healing blindness (cf. Isa 35:5; 42:6-7, 16) can't be fulfilled if the people insist on living under cover of darkness.

59:12 A confession of sins that mirrors the accusations of Isaiah 59:3-4.

59:13 Prov 30:9;

Is 5:7; Is 59:3;

Is 59:4;

Mk 7:21

59:14 Ps 82:2;

Ecc 3:16;

Is 1:21; Is 5:7;

Hab 1:4

59:15 Is 5:7;

Is 29:21;

Is 59:14;

Jer 7:28;

Hab 1:13

59:17 Is 9:7;

Eph 6:14;

Eph 6:17;

1Th 5:8

59:20 Job 19:25;

Eze 18:30;

Ro 11:26;

Ro 11:27

59:21 Jer 31:31

50:1 Is 52:2;

Is 2:32

50:2 1Sa 2:9;

Ps 82:5;

Jer 13:16;

Ac 26:18;

Col 1:13

Our rebellions are with us;  
we're aware of our guilt:

<sup>13</sup>defying and denying the LORD,  
turning away from our God,  
planning oppression and revolt,  
muttering lying words conceived in our minds.

<sup>14</sup>Justice is pushed aside;  
righteousness stands far off,  
because truth has stumbled in the public square,  
and honesty can't enter.

<sup>15</sup>Truth is missing;  
anyone turning from evil is plundered.

#### God will intervene

The LORD looked and was upset at the absence of justice.

<sup>16</sup>Seeing that there was no one,  
and astonished that no one would intervene,  
God's arm brought victory,  
upheld by righteousness,

<sup>17</sup>putting on righteousness as armor  
and a helmet of salvation on his head,  
putting on garments of vengeance,  
and wrapping himself in a cloak of zeal.

<sup>18</sup>God will repay according to their actions:  
wrath to his foes, retribution to enemies,  
retribution to the coastlands,

<sup>19</sup>so those in the west will fear the LORD's name,  
and those in the east will fear God's glory.

It will come like a rushing river that the LORD's wind drives on.

<sup>20</sup>A redeemer will come to Zion  
and to those in Jacob who stop rebelling,  
says the LORD.

<sup>21</sup>As for me, this is my covenant with them, says the LORD.

My spirit, which is upon you,  
and my words, which I have placed in your mouth  
won't depart from your mouth,  
nor from the mouths of your descendants,  
nor from the mouths of your descendants' children,  
says the LORD, forever and always.

#### Jerusalem's coming radiance

**60**Arise! Shine! Your light has come;  
the LORD's glory has shone upon you.

<sup>2</sup>Though darkness covers the earth  
and gloom the nations,  
the LORD will shine upon you;  
God's glory will appear over you.

59:14-15a *Justice is pushed aside*: Where corruption prevails, even those who seek honest dealings are overrun and overruled.

59:15b-21 Many elements of this passage are paralleled in Isaiah 63:1-6, in which God returns from victory over Edom.

59:16 *God's arm brought victory*: Compare with Isaiah 63:5; 52:10; 40:10; Psalm 98:1. Battle imagery is used to describe God's actions to save the victims of injustice. 1 Thessalonians 5:8 and Ephesians 6:10-17 echo this description of God's battle array.

59:21 *this is my covenant with them*: Echoing Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:26-28 (cf. Ezek 37:26), God finally speaks, promising that the community will be guided by God's own spirit and word.

60:1-4 *Arise! Shine! Your light has come*: In contrast to the darkness described in Isaiah 59:9-15a, and perhaps as a response to divine appearance in Isaiah 59:15b-20, here are encouraging words for Jerusalem. It is addressed as a woman able to rise up (cf. Isa 52:1-2); lift up her eyes and look (cf. Isa 49:18); and receive her children (cf. Isa 49:22), who come carried in foreigners' arms (cf. Isa 49:23).

- <sup>3</sup>Nations will come to your light  
and kings to your dawning radiance.
- <sup>4</sup>Lift up your eyes and look all around:  
they are all gathered; they have come to you.  
Your sons will come from far away,  
and your daughters on caregivers' hips.
- <sup>5</sup>Then you will see and be radiant;  
your heart will tremble and open wide,  
because the sea's abundance will be turned over to you;  
the nations' wealth will come to you.
- <sup>6</sup>Countless camels will cover your land,  
young camels from Midian and Ephah.  
They will all come from Sheba,  
carrying gold and incense,  
proclaiming the LORD's praises.
- <sup>7</sup>All Kedar's sheep will be gathered for you;  
rams from Nebaioth will be your offerings;  
they will be accepted on my altar,  
and I will glorify my splendid house.
- <sup>8</sup>Who are these who fly like a cloud,  
like doves to their shelters?
- <sup>9</sup>I'm the hope of the coastlands.  
Ships from Tarshish are in the lead to bring your children from afar,  
their silver and gold with them for the name of the LORD your God  
and for the holy one of Israel, who has glorified you.
- <sup>10</sup>Foreigners will rebuild your walls,  
and their kings will serve you.  
Though in my rage I struck you down,  
in my favor I have consoled you.
- <sup>11</sup>Your gates will be open continually;  
day and night they won't close,  
to bring to you the wealth of nations,  
and their kings led in procession.
- <sup>12</sup>The nation and the dynasty that won't serve you will perish;  
such nations will be devastated.
- <sup>13</sup>Lebanon's glory will come upon you,  
cypress, elm, and pine, to glorify the site of my sanctuary,  
and I will honor my royal footstool.
- <sup>14</sup>The children of your tormenters will come bending low to you;  
all who despised you will bow down at your feet.  
They will call you The LORD's City,  
Zion, of the holy one of Israel.
- <sup>15</sup>Instead of being abandoned, hated, and forbidden,  
I will make you majestic forever, a joy for all generations.
- <sup>16</sup>You will suck the milk of nations,  
and nurse at royal breasts.  
You will know that I am the LORD, your savior  
and your redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.

60:3 Is 49:6;  
Rev 21:24  
60:4 Is 49:18,  
Is 49:20  
60:6 Gn 25:4;  
Ps 72:10;  
Jer 6:20;  
Mt 2:11  
60:8 Ps 68:13;  
Is 45:22,  
Is 49:21;  
Lk 13:29;  
Heb 12:1  
60:13 1Ch 28:2;  
Is 35:2, Is 41:19  
60:14 Is 1:26,  
Is 14:1,  
Is 14:2, Is 49:23;  
Rev 3:9  
60:15 Is 54:6,  
Is 65:18  
60:16 Is 43:3,  
Is 49:23,  
Is 59:20,  
Is 66:11

60:5-13 *sea's abundance*: As in the tribute to the Davidic king in Psalm 72 and the stories of Solomon's international renown in 1 Kings 9-10, wealth flows in from foreign nations. Specific mention is made of foreign places found in both Psalm 72 and 1 Kings 9: *Sheba* (60:6; cf. Ps 72:10, 15; 1 Kgs 10:1-13); *Tarshish* (60:9; cf. Ps 72:10; 1 Kgs 10:22); *Lebanon* (60:13; cf. Ps 72:16; 1 Kgs 9:19). The influx of foreign nations with their silver and gold was rebuffed in Isaiah 26:22 (including the ships of Tarshish, Isa 60:16; and the

cedars of Lebanon, Isa 60:13), but here they are welcomed. The other place-names (*Midian, Ephah, Kedar, Nebaioth*) are associated with the Arabian desert.  
60:10 *Foreigners will rebuild*: Compare with Zechariah 6:15.  
*Though in my rage*: Compare with Isaiah 54:8.  
60:12 Rather than serving other nations, Jerusalem will be served by them; compare with Isaiah 14:2.  
60:14 *all who despised you will bow down*: Compare with Isaiah 49:23.

60:17 (Kj 10:21);  
Is 9:7, Is 60:7,  
Is 60:9  
60:18 Is 26:1,  
Is 51:19  
60:19 Is 24:23;  
Rev 21:23,  
Rev 22:5  
60:20 Ps 27:1;  
Is 30:26,  
Is 35:10,  
Is 65:19;  
Rev 21:4  
61:1 Ps 45:7;  
Is 11:2, Is 42:7,  
Is 48:16,  
Is 4:18

*Isaiah 60–62* Positioned in the center of “Third Isaiah” (Isa 56–66), Isaiah 60–62 contains distinctive features. From one end to the other, these chapters proclaim salvation and forecast redemption, standing much closer than surrounding chapters do to the themes and vocabulary of Isaiah 40–55, the chapters that anticipated and paved the way for the Judean return to Jerusalem from exile.

Isaiah 60 addresses Jerusalem much as Isaiah 49 had, directing her eyes to see her children coming from afar, and with them, the wealth of the nations. In a strange mix of images, mother Zion herself is told, “You will suck the milk of nations, and nurse at royal breasts” (Isa 60:16). The motif of Israel as the one served and enriched by other nations continues in Isaiah 61:5–6, while other parts of this chapter particularly echo Isaiah 40:1–11. Isaiah 62 echoes and extends Isaiah 54, using its image of marriage in 62:4–5.

These three chapters adopt and adapt so much imagery from Second Isaiah (Isa 40–55) that some have thought them to have been composed by the same poet or poets. Emphasis has shifted, however, in subtle ways, and it is more likely that prophets living in the rebuilt (or rather rebuilding) city of Jerusalem are freely borrowing from earlier prophetic language.

- <sup>17</sup> Instead of bronze I will bring gold;  
instead of iron I will bring silver;  
instead of wood, bronze;  
and instead of stones, iron.  
I will make peace your governor  
and righteousness your taskmaster.
- <sup>18</sup> Violence will no longer resound throughout your land,  
nor devastation or destruction within your borders.  
You will call your walls Salvation,  
and your gates Praise.
- <sup>19</sup> The sun will no longer be your light by day,  
nor will the moon shine for illumination by night.<sup>a</sup>  
The LORD will be your everlasting light;  
your God will be your glory.
- <sup>20</sup> Your sun will no longer set;  
your moon will no longer wane.  
The LORD will be an everlasting light for you,  
and your days of mourning will be ended.
- <sup>21</sup> Your people will all be righteous;  
they will possess the land forever.  
They are the shoot that I planted,  
the work of my hands, to glorify myself.
- <sup>22</sup> The least will become a thousand,  
and the smallest a powerful people.  
I am the LORD; at the right moment, I will hurry it along.

### Joyful proclamations

**61** The LORD God's spirit is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me.  
He has sent me  
to bring good news to the poor,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim release for captives,  
and liberation for prisoners,

<sup>a</sup>Cf DSS (1QIsa\*), LXX; MT lacks *by night*.

60:19–20 *The sun will no longer be your light*: Compare with Isaiah 24:23. Revelation 21:23–25; 22:5 echo these verses, as well as Isaiah 60:11.

61:1–11 This chapter stands in the center of Isaiah's final 11 chapters. It echoes many themes of Isaiah 40–55, especially Isaiah 40, and emphasizes the ancient concept of the Jubilee, which entailed liberation from landlessness, slavery, and debt (see Lev 25).

61:1 *The LORD God's spirit is upon me*: The speaker is most likely a prophet. For other instances of God's spirit coming upon prophets, see Numbers 11:17–29; 24:2; 1 Samuel 10:6; 10:10; 19:20–24; Isaiah 59:21; Ezekiel 11:5. Luke presents Jesus's reading from Isaiah 61:1–2a in Luke 4:18–19, but including in his reading is a snippet from Isaiah 58:6, “setting free the oppressed, to bring good news: See Isaiah 40:9; 52:7, to proclaim release: See Leviticus 25:10, which says, “proclaiming



- <sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor  
and a day of vindication for our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,
- <sup>3</sup>to provide for Zion's mourners,  
to give them a crown in place of ashes,  
oil of joy in place of mourning,  
a mantle of praise in place of discouragement.  
They will be called Oaks of Righteousness,  
planted by the LORD to glorify himself.
- <sup>4</sup>They will rebuild the ancient ruins;  
they will restore formerly deserted places;  
they will renew ruined cities,  
places deserted in generations past.
- <sup>5</sup>Foreigners will stay and shepherd your sheep,  
and strangers will be your farmers and vinedressers.
- <sup>6</sup>You will be called The Priests of the LORD;  
Ministers of Our God, they will say about you.  
You will feed on the wealth of nations,  
and fatten<sup>o</sup> yourself on their riches.
- <sup>7</sup>Instead of shame, their<sup>p</sup> portion will be double;  
instead of disgrace, they will rejoice over their share.  
They will possess a double portion in their land;  
everlasting joy will be theirs.
- <sup>8</sup>I, the LORD, love justice;  
I hate robbery and dishonesty.<sup>q</sup>  
I will faithfully give them their wage,  
and make with them an enduring covenant.
- <sup>9</sup>Their offspring will be known among the nations,  
and their descendants among the peoples.  
All who see them will recognize that they are a people blessed by the LORD.
- <sup>10</sup>I surely rejoice in the LORD;  
my heart is joyful because of my God,  
because he has clothed me with clothes of victory,  
wrapped me in a robe of righteousness like a bridegroom in a priestly crown,  
and like a bride adorned in jewelry.
- <sup>11</sup>As the earth puts out its growth, and as a garden grows its seeds,  
so the LORD God will grow righteousness and praise before all the nations.

### Jerusalem redeemed

**62** For Zion's sake I won't keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem's sake I won't sit still  
until her righteousness shines out like a light,  
and her salvation blazes like a torch.

<sup>2</sup>Nations will see your righteousness,  
all kings your glory.

<sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>p</sup>Or your <sup>q</sup>Heb manuscripts, LXX, Syr, Tg; MT robbery with an entirely burned offering

freedom throughout the land" in the 50th year, the year of Jubilee. On one level this verse reasserts the importance of Jubilee for restoring Judean society. On another level it interprets the people's release from Babylon.

61:2 *the year of the LORD's favor*: See Isaiah 49:8, which also points toward the Jubilee Year (see Lev 25). *to comfort all who mourn*: See Isaiah 40:1; 51:12; 52:9 (see also Matt 5:4).

61:4 *rebuild the ancient ruins*: See Isaiah 58:12.

61:6 *Priests of the LORD*: See Exodus 19:6. *wealth of nations*: See Isaiah 60:5, 11.

61:7 *their portion will be double*: See Isaiah 40:2.

61:8 *give them their wage*: See Isaiah 40:10; 49:4; 62:11; 65:7. *an enduring covenant*: See Isaiah 55:3.

61:10 The prophet is compared with both a bridegroom and a bride. *like a bride adorned in jewelry*: See Isaiah 49:18.

62:1-12 Jerusalem's expected restoration is announced in lofty terms.

62:1-2 Attention turns once again to the city. The prophet promises not to rest (see Isa 62:6) until its righteousness shines brightly. See Isaiah 1:21-26, where after Jerusalem's

61:2 Is 34:8;  
Is 49:8; Is 57:18;  
Mt 5:4

61:3 Ps 45:7;  
Is 60:21;  
Jer 17:8; Mt 5:4;  
Heb 1:9

61:8 Ps 11:7;  
Is 55:3

61:9 Is 65:23

61:10 Ps 132:16;  
Is 25:9; Is 49:18;  
Is 52:1;  
Rev 21:2

61:11 Is 45:8;  
Is 60:18

62:2 Is 60:3;  
Is 65:15;

Rev 2:17;  
Rev 3:12

62:3 Is 28:5;

Zec 9:16;

1Th 2:19

62:4 Is 54:5;

Is 54:6;

Jer 32:41;

Hos 2:19;

Zep 3:17

62:6 Is 52:8;

Jer 6:17;

Eze 3:17;

Heb 13:17

62:7 Is 60:18;

Is 62:1;

Zep 3:20;

1k 18:1

62:10 Is 11:10;

Is 11:12;

Is 11:16;

Is 49:22;

Is 57:14

62:11 Is 40:10;

Zec 9:9;

Mt 21:5;

Rev 22:12

62:12 Is 35:9;

1Pt 2:9

63:1 Is 34:5;

Is 34:6;

Jer 49:13;

Eze 25:12;

Am 1:12

You will be called by a new name,  
which the LORD's own mouth will determine.

<sup>3</sup>You will be a splendid garland in the LORD's hand,  
a royal turban in the palm of God's hand.

<sup>4</sup>You will no longer be called Abandoned,  
and your land will no longer be called Deserted.  
Instead, you will be called My Delight Is in Her,  
and your land, Married.

Because the LORD delights in you,  
your land will be cared for once again.

<sup>5</sup>As a young man marries a young woman,  
so your sons will marry you.  
With the joy of a bridegroom because of his bride,  
so your God will rejoice because of you.

<sup>6</sup>Upon your walls, Jerusalem,  
I have appointed sentinels.  
Continually, all day and all night,  
they won't keep silent.

You who call on the LORD, don't rest,

<sup>7</sup>and don't allow God to rest until he establishes Jerusalem,  
and makes it the praise of the earth.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD has promised with raised hand and strong arm:  
I will never again give your grain as food for your enemies.  
Foreigners won't drink your wine for which you labored.

<sup>9</sup>Those who harvest will eat it and will praise the LORD;  
those who gather will drink it in my holy courtyards.

<sup>10</sup>Pass through, pass through the gates;  
prepare the way for the people!  
Build, build the road;  
clear away the stones!  
Raise up a signal for the peoples.

<sup>11</sup>This is what the LORD announced to the earth's distant regions:  
Say to Daughter Zion, "Look! Your deliverer arrives,  
bringing reward and payment!"

<sup>12</sup>They will be called The Holy People, Redeemed By the LORD.  
And you will be called Sought After—A City That Is Not Abandoned.

### Vengeance against the nations

**63** Who is this coming from Edom,  
from Bozrah in bright red garments,

restoration it also receives new names: Righteous City, Faithful Town. As in Isaiah 60:1-3, 19-20, and elsewhere, light becomes a sign of spiritual and moral clarity (see Isa 2:5; 5:30; 9:2; 30:26; 42:6-7, 16; 51:4; 58:8-10; 59:9).

62:3 Jerusalem continues to be addressed. Though according to earlier passages we might have expected her to put on festive garments (Lam 1:9; Isa 52:1-2), instead she is the splendid adornment in God's own hand.

62:4 Naming (and often, renaming) to characterize a person or place is frequent in scripture (see Gen 17:5; 32:29; Hos 1:9-10; Isa 44:5; Zech 8:3). For similar imagery of Jerusalem's restored "marriage" to God, see Isaiah 54:1-8.

62:5 *your sons will marry you*: Some translations revise "sons" to "builder," which is spelled similarly (cf. Ps 147:2). "Sons" can also represent inhabitants.

62:6 Prophets were often compared with sentinels, watching over the welfare of the society (see Isa 21:6; Hos 9:8;

Jer 6:17; Hab 2:1; Ezek 3:17; especially Ezek 33:1-9, where this image is explained). Here the sentinels aren't posted to warn, but to intercede with God on the people's behalf.

62:8-9 In elevated language God makes a solemn pledge to the city: The food the people grew won't be taken away as punishment for disobedience (see Lev 26:16; Deut 28:31-34; Isa 1:19-20), or through war or conquest (see Isa 1:7; Jer 5:17; Lam 1:11, 19; 2:19-20; 4:4, 9-10). As in Micah's vision of peace (Mic 4:4), inhabitants will have enough food.

62:10 *prepare the way for the people*: See Isaiah 40:3.

62:11 *Your deliverer arrives*: See Isaiah 40:10.

63:1-6 God is portrayed as a victorious warrior returning from battle against a neighboring enemy nation. *Edom*, located to the southeast of Judah in present-day southern Jordan, is presented in Genesis as descended from Jacob's twin brother, Esau, who forgave him for stealing

this splendidly dressed one, striding<sup>r</sup> with great power?  
 It is I, proclaiming righteousness, powerful to save!  
 2 Why is your clothing red,  
 and your garments like those of one who stomps on grapes?  
 3 I have pressed out in the vat by myself—  
 from the peoples, no one was with me.  
 I stomped on them in my anger,  
 trampled them in my wrath.  
 Their blood splashed on my garments,  
 and stained all my clothing,  
 4 because I intended a day of vengeance;  
 the year of my deliverance had arrived.  
 5 I looked and found no helper;  
 I was astonished to find no supporter.  
 But my arm brought victory for me;  
 my wrath helped me.  
 6 I trampled down nations in my anger and made them drunk on my wrath;  
 I spilled their blood on the ground.

63:2 Is 63:3;  
 Rev 19:13;  
 Rev 19:15  
 63:3 Rev 19:13  
 63:4 Is 34:8,  
 Is 61:2  
 63:5 Ps 44:3,  
 Ps 98:1,  
 Is 40:10,  
 Is 41:28,  
 Is 59:16  
 63:6 Is 51:17,  
 Is 51:21  
 63:9 Ex 14:19,  
 Ex 23:20,  
 Ex 33:14;  
 Dt 1:31, Dt 7:7  
 63:10 Ps 78:40;  
 Ac 7:51;  
 Eph 4:30  
 63:11  
 Nm 11:17,  
 Nm 11:25;  
 Ps 77:20; Hg 2:5  
 63:13 Jer 31:9  
 63:14 Is 63:12

**Prayer of yearning**

7 I will recount the LORD's faithful acts;  
 I will sing the LORD's praises, because of all the LORD did for us,  
 for God's great favor toward the house of Israel.  
 God treated them compassionately and with deep affection.  
 8 God said, "Truly, they are my people,  
 children who won't do what is wrong."  
 God became their savior.  
 9 During all their distress, God also was distressed,  
 so a messenger who served him saved them.  
 In love and mercy God redeemed them,  
 lifting and carrying them throughout earlier times.  
 10 But they rebelled, and made God's holy spirit terribly sad,  
 so that he turned into their enemy—  
 he fought against them!  
 11 Then they remembered earlier times, when he rescued his people.<sup>a</sup>  
 Where was the one who drew them up from the sea,  
 the shepherd<sup>b</sup> of the flock?  
 Where was the one who put within them his holy spirit;  
 12 the one who guided Moses' strong hand with his glorious arm;  
 who split the water for them to create an enduring reputation for himself,  
 13 and who guided them through the depths?  
 Like a horse in the desert, they didn't stumble.  
 14 Like cattle descending to the valley,  
 the LORD's spirit brought them to rest.  
 In this way you led your people  
 and made for yourself a glorious reputation.

<sup>r</sup>Or stooping <sup>a</sup>Or Moses, his people <sup>b</sup>LXX, Tg; MT shepherds

their father's blessing (Gen 27:1-41; 33:1-16). See Isaiah 34:1-17, which likewise concerns Edom. For *Bozrah*, see note at Isaiah 34:6.  
 63:3 Human victims of divine wrath are imagined as grapes, their blood as grape juice.  
 63:4 Compare with Isaiah 34:8; 61:2.  
 63:7-64:12 An extended prayer of longing addressed to God, whose deeds for Israel in the past are remembered, but who seems absent in the present despite

overwhelming need and yearning. This prayer in many ways resembles psalmic laments (see Pss 74; 79). It pre-dates the rebuilding of the temple (see Isa 63:18; 64:11).  
 63:7-14 The ancient story of divine redemption is recalled. God's mercy, the poet ruefully recalls, was complicated by Israel's rebellion, which in turn was quelled by recollection of God's deliverance of the people in the wilderness in Moses' time. Remembering God's graciousness in the face of past distresses (*Truly, they are my people*, cf. Deut 29:13;

63:15 Dt 26:15;  
Ps 80:14;  
Ps 123:1;  
Lam 3:50

63:16 Ex 4:22;  
Dt 32:6;  
Is 41:14, Is 44:6,  
Is 64:8

63:17  
Nm 10:36;  
Is 6:10, Is 29:13;  
Jn 12:40

63:18 Ps 74:3;  
Is 64:11

63:19 Is 65:1  
64:1 Jgs 5:5;  
Na 1:5

64:2 Ps 99:1;  
Jer 5:22;  
Jer 33:9

64:4 Ps 31:19;  
Is 30:18;  
1Co 2:9

64:5 Is 26:8,  
Is 56:1

64:6 Ps 90:5,  
Ps 90:6

**15** Look down from heaven and see,  
from your holy and glorious perch.  
Where are your energy and your might,  
your concern and your pity?  
Don't hold back!<sup>a</sup>

**16** You are surely our father,  
even though Abraham doesn't know us,  
and Israel doesn't recognize us.  
You, LORD, are our father;  
your reputation since long ago is that of our redeemer.

**17** Why do you lead us astray, LORD, from your ways?  
Why do you harden our heart so we don't fear you?  
Return for the sake of your servants the tribes that are your heritage!

**18** Why did the wicked bring down your holy place?<sup>b</sup>  
Why did our enemies trample your sanctuary?

**19** For too long we have been like those you don't rule,  
like those not known by your name.

**64** <sup>c</sup>If only you would tear open the heavens and come down!  
Mountains would quake before you

<sup>d</sup>like fire igniting brushwood or making water boil.

<sup>e</sup>If you would make your name known to your enemies,  
the nations would tremble in your presence.

<sup>3</sup>When you accomplished wonders beyond all our expectations;  
when you came down, mountains quaked before you.

<sup>4</sup>From ancient times,  
no one has heard,  
no ear has perceived,  
no eye has seen any god but you  
who acts on behalf of those who wait for him!<sup>f</sup>

<sup>5</sup>You look after those who gladly do right;  
they will praise you for your ways.<sup>g</sup>  
But you were angry when we sinned;  
you hid yourself when we did wrong.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>6</sup>We have all become like the unclean;  
all our righteous deeds are like a menstrual rag.  
All of us wither like a leaf;  
our sins, like the wind, carry us away.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Cf LXX, Vulg; Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>63:19b in Heb <sup>d</sup>64:1 in Heb <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain  
<sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain

Lev 26:12) helps the community to pray with hope in the present (see Lam 3:21-26; Pss 42:4; 74:11-17; 75:5-20; 80:8-14; 85:1-4; 143:5).

63:15 Prayer begins with the plea that God *Look down* (cf. Deut 26:15; Ps 80:14) from heaven in pity to see the people's troubles.

63:16 In contrast to the Gospel of John, where God is called Father well over 100 times, the OT rarely uses fatherly language for God (cf. Deut 32:6; Ps 103:13; Prov 3:12; Jer 3:19; Mal 2:10). Though earlier biblical books outside the Pentateuch had seldom invoked Abraham, Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55) did so twice (Isa 41:8; 51:2). Here the poet bypasses Abraham and his grandson Israel in favor of a more direct affiliation with God. *our redeemer*. See note on Isaiah 41:14.

63:17-19 Though he confessed shortcomings in Isaiah 63:10, here the poet blames God for the ruptured relationship (see also Isa 64:5, 7). God not only has led the people

astray but, as with Pharaoh (Exod 4:21; 7:3), has made them stubborn. Distress comes not only from the ruined condition of city and temple and God's apparent absence but also from the people's religious disengagement.

64:1-3 *If only you would . . . come down!* The poet invokes the motif of the divine warrior, who forcefully intervenes against Israel's enemies (Exod 15:3; Isa 42:13). When God goes to war, according to this tradition, even the mountains tremble (Judg 5:5; Ps 18:7; Ezek 38:20; Nah 1:5).

64:4 *no one has heard*: quoted in 1 Corinthians 2:9.

64:5 *But you were angry when we sinned*: Or "But you were angry and we sinned." In the Hebrew, the relationship between divine anger and human wrongdoing is unclear. Because of the accusations of divine responsibility in Isaiah 63:17 and 64:7, many scholars believe the poet is implying that God's wrath led to their sin.

64:6 *all our righteous deeds*: Even attempts at faithfulness fall short. For similar images, see Psalms 1:4; 90:5-6.

- <sup>7</sup>No one calls on your name;  
no one bothers to hold on to you,  
for you have hidden yourself from us,  
and have handed us over<sup>b</sup> to our sin.
- <sup>8</sup>But now, LORD, you are our father.  
We are the clay, and you are our potter.  
All of us are the work of your hand.
- <sup>9</sup>Don't rage so fiercely, LORD;  
don't hold our sins against us forever,  
but gaze now on your people, all of us:
- <sup>10</sup>Your holy cities have become a wilderness;  
Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a wasteland.
- <sup>11</sup>Our holy, glorious house,  
where our ancestors praised you, has gone up in flames;  
all that we treasured has become a ruin.
- <sup>12</sup>After all this, will you hold back, LORD?  
Will you keep silent and torment us so terribly?

64:8 Is 29:16,  
Is 45:9, Is 63:16;  
Jer 18:6

64:10 Is 1:7

64:11 2Ki 25:9;  
2Ch 36:19;  
Lam 1:7,  
Lam 1:10,  
Lam 2:7

64:12 Ps 74:10;  
Is 42:14;  
Zec 1:12

65:1 Ro 10:20

65:2 Ro 10:21

65:3 Is 1:29,  
Is 66:17

65:5 Prv 10:26;  
Mt 9:11;  
Lk 7:39,  
Lk 15:2,  
Lk 18:9

*Judgment for idolators*

**65** I was ready to respond to those who didn't ask.  
I was ready to be found by those who didn't look for me.  
I said, "I'm here! I'm here!" to a nation that didn't call on my name.

<sup>2</sup>I extended my hands all day to a rebellious people  
walking in a way that isn't good,  
following their own plans;

<sup>3</sup>people who provoke me to my face continually,  
sacrificing in gardens and burning incense on bricks,  
<sup>4</sup>who sit in tombs  
and spend the night among rocks;<sup>c</sup>  
who eat swine's flesh  
with broth of unclean meat in their bowls;

<sup>5</sup>who say, "Keep to yourself!  
Keep away from me! I'm too holy for you."  
These people ignite my anger  
like a fire that burns all day.

<sup>b</sup>LXX, cf Syr, Tg, Vulg; MT *melted* <sup>c</sup>Or in guarded places

64:8 *you are our potter*. To the image of God as father (cf. Isa 63:16) is added one of God as potter (cf. Gen 2:7; Isa 29:16; 45:9; Jer 18:1-11; Rom 9:20). Other prophetic uses of this image suggest the potter's absolute right of decision-making concerning the clay, but this verse turns the issue around: The creator bears responsibility for the flaws of clay vessels.

64:9-12 The prayer closes with a request for forgiveness and a concrete description of the burned temple. Like the book of Lamentations, which also mourned Jerusalem's destruction, it leaves an unresolved question hanging in the air (cf. Lam 5:20-22).

65:1-7 This section, expressed as if from the divine viewpoint, laments a situation similar to the one in Isaiah 63:7-64:12. In Isaiah 64:7 the lamenter complained that "no one calls on your name," and in Isaiah 65:1 God complains similarly of those who don't ask or look for God. The passage describes people engaging in illicit worship (cf. Isa 57:3-13). Beginning in Isaiah 64:8, it becomes clear that condemnation doesn't extend to the whole community. Instead, a distinction is made between the faithful and the faithless within Jerusalem.

65:1 *I was ready to respond*: Very similar vocabulary of

seeking, being found, calling on God, and human plans appears in Isaiah 55:6-9, which advises worshippers to seek and call on God when God can be found, and to abandon sinful plans. *I'm here!*: Compare with Isaiah 52:6. God uses the same word as Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and Isaiah had used (Gen 22:1, 7, 11; Exod 3:4; 1 Sam 3:4-8; Isa 6:8).

65:2 *I extended my hands*: More often it is humans who are said to extend their hands in prayer toward God (see, e.g., Exod 9:29, 33; 1 Kgs 8:22, 38; Ezra 9:5; Job 11:13; Ps 143:6; Isa 1:15; Lam 1:17). *to a rebellious people*: Despite all that has happened in the meantime, the condition of rebellion identified in Isaiah 1:23 (cf. Isa 30:1) remains. Paul uses this passage in Romans 10:20-21. But there, because of some features of the Greek translation, Paul draws a distinction between those who weren't seeking God (and yet found God), whom he identifies as Gentiles; and rebels who rejected God's outstretched hands, whom he identifies as Jews. Here the two groups are the same.

65:3-5 The exact nature of the idolatrous practices is not clear.

65:4 *who sit in tombs and spend the night among rocks*: to communicate with the dead (cf. Isa 8:19; Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut 18:11).

65:8 Gn 18:26;  
Is 6:13, Is 17:6,  
Is 48:9;  
Jer 30:11

65:9 Is 27:6,  
Is 45:19

65:10 Josh 7:26;  
1Ch 27:29;  
Is 33:9, Is 35:2;  
Hos 2:15

65:11 Is 1:28

65:12 Psv 1:24;  
Is 50:2, Is 66:4;  
Jer 7:13

65:13 Is 1:19,  
Is 61:7, Is 66:14

65:14 Mt 8:12;  
Isa 5:13

65:15 Is 62:2;  
Jer 29:22;  
Zec 8:13

65:16 Dt 32:4;  
Ps 31:5;  
Is 19:18

<sup>6</sup>Look, this stands written before me.

I won't be silent, but I will repay;

I will repay in full measure

<sup>7</sup>your sins and the sins of your ancestors as well,

says the LORD.

Since they burned incense on the mountains,

and mocked me in the hills,

I will count out to them full payment for their actions.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD proclaims:

As new wine is found in the grape cluster,

and someone says, "Don't destroy it, for there is a blessing in it,"

so I will do for the sake of my servants and not destroy everything:

<sup>9</sup>I will bring out offspring from Jacob,

and from Judah, heirs to my mountains.

My chosen ones will take possession;

my servants will dwell there.

<sup>10</sup>Sharon will become a pasture for sheep,

and the Achor Valley a resting place for cattle,

for my people who seek me.

<sup>11</sup>But you who abandon the LORD,

who forget my holy mountain,

who set a table for a god of good fortune,

and fill cups of mixed wine for a god of fate:

<sup>12</sup>I will offer you to the sword.

You will all bow down for slaughter,

because I called and you didn't answer;

I spoke and you wouldn't hear.

You did what I considered evil,

and chose what I didn't want.

<sup>13</sup>Therefore, the LORD God says:

Look, my servants will eat, but you will hunger.

My servants will drink, but you will thirst.

My servants will rejoice, but you will be ashamed.

<sup>14</sup>My servants will sing with contented hearts,

but you will cry out from heartache;

with broken spirits you will wail.

<sup>15</sup>You will leave your name behind for my chosen ones to curse:

"May the LORD God kill you!

May he call his servants by a different name!"

<sup>16</sup>Those who pronounce a blessing in the land will do so by the God called Amen;

those who make a solemn pledge in the land

will do so by the God called Amen.<sup>d</sup>

Past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my sight.

<sup>d</sup>Or so be it

65:6-7 *I will repay*: As in Isaiah 59:18 and Isaiah 66:6, God will repay in kind those who act as enemies. Using the same vocabulary as in promises of reward for the faithful (Isa 49:4; 61:8), appropriate reward for faithlessness is promised.

65:8-16 A sharp distinction is made between those being addressed as *you*, who are disapproved by God, and those who are repeatedly called *my servants* (Isa 65:9, 13, 14; 66:14) and *my chosen* (Isa 65:9, 15, 22). Whereas all Israel together were called God's servants in Leviticus 25:42, 55, and "my servant" and "my chosen" in Isaiah 41:8, 9; 42:1, 19;

43:10, 20; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4; 49:3, 6, here only the faithful are so designated.

65:10 *Sharon*: the sandy Mediterranean coastal plain. *Achor Valley*: a dry valley north of Judah that once formed its border with Benjamin to the north. The prophet envisions both of these regions as becoming life-sustaining (cf. Hos 2:15; Isa 35:2).

65:16 *the God called Amen*: "So be it"; compare the response to curses in Deuteronomy 27:15-26, and the liturgical conclusion to sections of Psalms 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48. God confirms the blessings of faithful servants.

**New creation and new Jerusalem**

- <sup>17</sup> Look! I'm creating a new heaven and a new earth:  
 past events won't be remembered;  
 they won't come to mind.
- <sup>18</sup> Be glad and rejoice forever in what I'm creating,  
 because I'm creating Jerusalem as a joy  
 and her people as a source of gladness.
- <sup>19</sup> I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad about my people.  
 No one will ever hear the sound of weeping or crying in it again.
- <sup>20</sup> No more will babies live only a few days,  
 or the old fail to live out their days.  
 The one who dies at a hundred will be like a young person,  
 and the one falling short of a hundred will seem cursed.
- <sup>21</sup> They will build houses and live in them;  
 they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
- <sup>22</sup> They won't build for others to live in,  
 nor plant for others to eat.  
 Like the days of a tree will be the days of my people;  
 my chosen will make full use of their handiwork.
- <sup>23</sup> They won't labor in vain,  
 nor bear children to a world of horrors,  
 because they will be people blessed by the LORD,  
 they along with their descendants.
- <sup>24</sup> Before they call, I will answer;  
 while they are still speaking, I will hear.
- <sup>25</sup> Wolf and lamb will graze together,  
 and the lion will eat straw like the ox,  
 but the snake—its food will be dust.  
 They won't hurt or destroy at any place on my holy mountain,  
 says the LORD.

65:17 Is 43:18,  
 Is 66:22;  
 Jer 3:16;  
 ZPr 3:13;  
 Rev 21:1

65:18 Ps 98:1

65:19 Is 25:8,  
 Is 35:10,  
 Is 51:11, Is 62:5;  
 Jer 32:41

65:20 Job 5:26;  
 Ecc 8:12

65:21 Dt 28:30;  
 Is 37:30;  
 Jer 31:5;  
 Eze 28:26;  
 Am 9:14

65:22 Ps 91:16,  
 Ps 92:12

65:23 Is 49:4,  
 Is 61:9; Ac 2:39

65:24 Ps 91:15;  
 Is 58:9;  
 Dn 10:12

65:25 Gn 3:14;  
 Is 24, Is 11:6;  
 Is 11:9; Mt 7:17

66:1 1 Ki 8:27;  
 Mt 5:34;  
 Mt 5:35;  
 Ac 7:49;  
 Ac 17:24

66:2 Ps 34:18,  
 Ps 138:6;  
 Is 40:26,  
 Is 57:15; Mt 5:3

**Where God may be found**

- 66** The LORD says:  
 Heaven is my throne,  
 and earth is my footstool.  
 So where could you build a house for me,  
 and where could my resting place be?
- <sup>2</sup> My hand made all these things  
 and brought them into being, says the LORD.  
 But here is where I will look:  
 to the humble and contrite in spirit, who tremble at my word.

65:17-25 Renewed Jerusalem won't suffer sorrow, death, displacement, and hunger. Contrary to the interpretation in 2 Peter 3:13, where the present heavens and earth pass away, the new heavens and new earth envisioned here and in Isaiah 66:22 continue life on earth. This is an earth free of invasion, violence, and suffering, where contentment and security reign, where life is long, work yields prosperity, descendants are born, and God hears prayers (see Isa 65:1-2).

65:25 *Wolf and lamb will graze together*: an echo of Isaiah 11:6-9, where just rule results in security. This verse also reflects upon Genesis 1:30, where all wildlife and birds are said at first to have eaten only plants for food. Only the snake is omitted from this peaceful scene (cf. Gen 3:14). The final line follows Isaiah 11:9a precisely.

66:1-2 *Heaven is my throne*: Though the temple represents a meeting place between humans and God, it doesn't

contain God. Solomon acknowledged this even in the act of dedicating his temple (1 Kgs 8:27). In Acts 7:49-50, Stephen invokes these verses just before accusing his Jewish hearers of rebellion against God. For this and other reasons, Christians have remained dubious about the temple's value. In context, these verses recognize the temple's limitations as a symbol of the divine, but don't constitute opposition to its existence. Interest in the temple (Isa 2:2-4; 6:1-7; 37:1, 14; 38:20, 22; 56:5-7; 57:13; 65:11; 66:6, 20) and in its rebuilding (Isa 44:28, 60:7, 13; 63:18; 64:11) has been prominent throughout Isaiah.

66:2 *to the humble and contrite*: Compare with Isaiah 57:15. *tremble at my word*: See Isaiah 66:6. The phrase serves to describe the God-fearing, as opposed to rebels. This division, anticipated in Isaiah 1:27-31, becomes more and more prominent in Isaiah 65-66. See Isaiah 65:13-15; 66:14, 16, 17, 24.

66:3 Lv 2:2;  
Is 1:11, Is 65:4  
66:4 2Ki 21:2;  
Prv 1:24;  
Prv 10:24;  
Is 65:12;  
Jer 7:13  
66:5 Ps 38:20;  
Is 5:19; Mt 5:10;  
In 15:18  
66:6 Is 59:18,  
Is 65:6; H 3:7  
66:7 Is 54:1;  
Rev 12:5  
66:8 Is 64:4  
66:9 Is 37:3  
66:10 Dt 32:43;  
Ps 122:6  
66:11 Is 60:16  
66:12 Ps 72:3;  
Is 48:18, Is 60:4,  
Is 60:5  
66:13 Is 40:1,  
Is 51:3; 2Co 1:3

<sup>3</sup>The one who slaughters an ox kills a person;  
the one who sacrifices a sheep breaks a dog's neck;  
the one who makes a grain offering offers swine's blood;  
the one who burns incense blesses an idol.

All these have chosen their own ways,  
and prefer their detestable things.

<sup>4</sup>So I too will choose to punish them,  
to bring horrors upon them,  
since I called and no one answered.  
I spoke and no one heard,  
but they did evil in my eyes.  
What I didn't want, they chose.

<sup>5</sup>Listen to the LORD's word,  
you who tremble at his word:  
Your family members, those who hate and exclude you because of my name,  
have said, "Let the LORD be glorified;  
let's see your joy."  
But they will be ashamed.

<sup>6</sup>The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple!  
The sound of the LORD repaying his enemies what they have earned.

### Mother Zion

<sup>7</sup>Before she was in labor, she gave birth.  
Before her pangs came upon her, she delivered a boy.

<sup>8</sup>Whoever heard of such a thing?  
Whoever saw such things as these?  
Can a land come to birth in one day?  
Can a nation be born all at once?  
Yet as soon as birth pangs came,  
Zion bore her children.

<sup>9</sup>Will I open the womb and not bring to birth? says the LORD.  
Will I, who create life, close the womb? says your God.

<sup>10</sup>Celebrate with Jerusalem; be happy with her,  
all you who love her!  
Rejoice with her in joy,  
all you who mourn over her,

<sup>11</sup>so that you may nurse and be satisfied from her comforting breasts,  
that you may drink and be refreshed from her full breasts.

<sup>12</sup>The LORD says:  
Look, I'm extending prosperity to her like a river,  
and the wealth of nations like an overflowing stream.  
You will nurse and be carried on the hip  
and bounced upon the knee.

<sup>13</sup>As a mother comforts her child,  
so I will comfort you;  
in Jerusalem you will be comforted.

66:3 Both orthodox and illicit acts are being carried out by the same worshippers.

66:4 *So I too will choose*: Reacting to detestable human choices, God also chooses horrors. *I called and no one answered*: Compare with Isaiah 65:1-2. For a very similar sentiment, likewise emphasizing improper choices and shame, see Isaiah 1:27-31. Compare also with Isaiah 42:17; 44:9, 11; 45:16; 65:13-14.

66:5 *Let the LORD be glorified*: a sarcastic comment, as in Isaiah 5:19; 30:10-11.

66:6 *repaying his enemies*: Compare with Isaiah 3:11; 59:18; 65:6; 66:14.

66:7-12 Jerusalem, personified as Mother Zion, appears again; compare with Isaiah 40:9; 49:18-25; 50:1; 51:18-22; 54:1, 13; 60:4.

66:8-9 *as soon as birth pangs came*: In a reversal of the curse of Genesis 3:16, the pain of childbirth will be minimized for Zion. But just as Eve bore a man with God's participation (Gen 4:1), so likewise, Zion's son (Isa 66:7) comes to birth with the help of the creator of life.

66:13 *As a mother comforts her child*: Comfort has been a dominant theme since it was introduced in Isaiah 40:1; see also Isaiah 12:1; 49:13; 51:3, 12, 19; 52:9; 54:11; 57:18; 61:2. Like Jerusalem, now God is described with motherly



**14** When you see this, your heart will rejoice;  
 your entire being will flourish like grass.  
 The LORD's power will be known among his servants,  
 but his fury among his enemies.

**15** The LORD will come with fire,  
 God's chariots like a windstorm,  
 to repay in hot anger,  
 to rebuke with fiery flames.

**16** With fire and with sword the LORD will judge all humanity;  
 many will be slain by the LORD.

**17** Those who became holy and purify themselves, following their leader into the gardens,\*  
 who eat pork, detestable animals, and mice, will meet their end together, says the LORD.

**Worshippers gathered from the nations**

**18** Because of their actions and thoughts, I'm coming to gather all nations and cultures.  
 They will come to see my glory. **19** I will put a sign on them, by sending out some of the survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Libya, and Lydia, and to the archers of Cilicia and Greece—  
 distant coastlands that haven't heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will declare my glory  
 among the nations. **20** They will bring your family members from all nations as an offering to  
 the LORD—on horses, in chariots, in wagons, on mules, and on camels—to my holy mount-  
 ain Jerusalem, says the LORD, like Israelites bringing an offering in purified containers to  
 the LORD's house. **21** I will select some of them as priests and Levites, says the LORD.

**22** As the new heavens and the new earth that I'm making will endure before me, says the  
 LORD, so your descendants and your name will endure.

**23** From month to month and from Sabbath to Sabbath,  
 all humanity will come to worship me, says the LORD.

**24** They will go out and see the corpses of the people who rebelled against me,  
 where their worm never dies, where their fire is never extinguished.  
 They will be a horror to everyone.

66:14 Eze 8:22,  
 Eze 8:31;  
 Prv 3:8; Is 58:11;  
 Zec 10:7

66:15 Ps 50:3,  
 Ps 68:17;  
 Is 30:27

66:16 Is 27:1,  
 Is 30:30;  
 Eze 38:22

66:18 Dt 31:21;  
 Job 42:2;  
 Ps 86:9,  
 Ps 94:11; Is 2:2

66:19 Gn 10:2;  
 Eze 27:10;  
 Eze 27:13,  
 Eze 38:2,  
 Eze 39:1

66:20 Is 2:2,  
 Is 11:9, Is 11:12,  
 Is 14:2, Is 43:6

66:21 Ex 19:6;  
 Is 61:6; 1Pt 2:5,  
 1Pt 2:9

66:22 Is 65:17;  
 Jn 10:27;  
 1Pt 1:4;  
 2Pt 3:13;  
 Rev 21:1

66:23 Is 1:13,  
 Is 19:21;  
 Eze 46:1;  
 Zec 14:16;  
 Rev 15:4

66:24 Is 1:31,  
 Is 14:11;  
 Dn 12:2;  
 Mk 9:44,  
 Mk 9:48

\*Heb uncertain

imagery; compare with Isaiah 42:14; 49:15 (see also Deut 32:11; Ps 131:2; Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34).

66:14 *flourish like grass*: This verse contrasts with Isaiah 40:3, where grass and flowers signify transience. *among his servants*: On the division between God's servants and God's enemies, see note on Isaiah 65:8-16.

66:18-24 The dividing line is now no longer between Israel and the nations but between the faithful among both Israel and the nations and those who rebel against God. As in Isaiah 2:2-4 (cf. Mic 4:1-3) and Isaiah 56:3-8, all nations will come to worship on God's holy mountain.

66:19 All the place-names listed in this verse are found in the "Table of Nations" in Genesis 10:2, 4, 6, 22. *Tarshish*: a coastal locale to the west of Judah (cf. Gen 10:4; Jon 1:3). In Isaiah 2:16 the tall ships of Tarshish represented, along with the cedars of Lebanon, oaks of Bashan, and lofty hills, mountains, towers, and walls, all that was lifted up against God. But ships of Tarshish have already contributed to the ingathering of refugees in Isaiah 60:9. *Libya*: Hebrew reads *Pul*, but most translations follow the Greek *Put* (cf. Gen 10:6; Jer 46:9, etc.), designating a region in Africa, either west of Egypt (as in Libya) or southeast of it (close to Ethiopia). *Lydia*: (Heb. *Lud*; cf. Gen 10:22) a region of Asia Minor, that is, Turkey. *archers*

of: or *Meshech*: (cf. pairings with Tubal in Gen 10:2; 1 Chron 1:5; Ezek 27:13) in Asia Minor; called Phrygia in Greek sources. *Cilicia*: (Heb. *Tubal*, cf. Gen 10:2, etc.) north of Israel, but the exact location is unclear. *Greece*: (Heb. *Javan*; cf. Gen 10:2, etc.) frequently associated with Meshech and Tubal.

66:21 It is unclear whether those to be selected as priests and Levites are the Gentiles or the Israelites they bring with them. Isaiah 61:6 would suggest the latter.

66:22 *new heavens*: See Isaiah 65:17 and note.

66:23 *From month to month and from Sabbath to Sabbath*: In contrast to Isaiah 1:13-14, where the monthly new moon and weekly sabbath celebrations are rejected as hypocritical, here they depict continuity in a newly restored and inclusive world.

66:24 *corpses*: This verse, though continuous with the theme of rebellion that has developed in the final two chapters, concludes the book of Isaiah on a sour note. Jewish tradition designates that Isaiah 66:23 be repeated after this verse. Though the vision here is of the dead being burned in the Hinnom Valley (Heb. *ge-hinnom*; see Neh 11:30; Jer 7:31-32, 32:35), just to the south of the temple in Jerusalem, the imagery that later evolved from this was of hell itself (Gk. *gehenna*). See Mark 9:47-48.



# JEREMIAH

Jeremiah is the longest and most complex prophetic book in the Bible. It's also the most deeply anchored in suffering. Written for survivors of war and exile, the book is filled with pain and trauma. It bears witness to three Babylonian military invasions (597, 587, 582 BCE), resulting in the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and the royal palace complex, the taking of land, and the death and exile of thousands of people. Although the precise nature of these events is disputed, the book of Jeremiah portrays these historical losses as the end of the life God's people had known. Undoubtedly, this series of military invasions destroyed Judah's social and political life and left survivors displaced and disillusioned. How could God allow such suffering? How did things go so terribly wrong? Has the God of Israel abandoned us? Can the flame of faith burn in the darkness? With vivid images and intense emotion, the book of Jeremiah struggles with such questions. This haunting book addresses the quest for theodicy: What answer do human beings

expect from a powerful God in the face of unspeakable human suffering?

Jeremiah's understanding of suffering gives voice to multiple interpretations of the national tragedy. The dominant view grows out of a logical view of life. According to this view, the nation and its leaders sinned against God, so they are largely responsible for the disaster. Indeed, poetic oracles in the book accuse God's people of unfaithfulness and corruption. Sermons in Jeremiah often place the blame for the national crisis on Judah's rejection of God's commandments and disobedience to the message of the prophets. Still other texts affirm that the disaster is simply God's workings on earth. They portray a God who "digs up and pulls down, destroys and demolishes," as well as "builds and plants," in order to accomplish God's purposes in the world (Jer 1:10). Others refer to Judah's massive upheaval without any reference to God or Jeremiah. These texts seem to remove God and God's prophet from the excessive violence and brutality of these events (e.g., Jer 40:7–41:18).



Potter's wheel at the Ekron Museum of the History of Philistine Culture (Jer 18:1-6)  
*Ekron Museum of the History of Philistine Culture/BiblePlaces.com*

Jeremiah's "confessions" (Jer 11:18–12:6; 15:10–21; 17:14–18; 18:18–23; 20:7–13, 14–18) are more at home with moral and social ambiguity. They speak of innocent suffering and suffering for God's sake. These various interpretations can be read as attempts by survivors to make sense of their fallen world. Their rich theological reflection keeps hope alive during times of great loss and confusion.

In addition to presenting several theological perspectives on suffering, the book of Jeremiah reenacts the traumatic violence of war and exile. Grief flows over the prophet, the people, the land, and God. All are flooded with pain, and all are drenched in tears. The lament, or song of mourning, is the dominant form of speech in Jeremiah 1. The prophet's judgment oracles and prayers (or "confessions") are lamentations. The longest section of the second half of the book, called the Baruch narrative, can be described as a story of suffering. So the book invites its readers to participate in a liturgy of loss.

The book of Jeremiah is disaster literature, then, but it is also survival literature. It serves as a survival guide for a suffering people, the historical losers of war. When the prophetic text names Judah's disaster and grieves its losses, when it refuses to let death and destruction have the final say, and when it imagines a future beyond destruction, it serves as a map for finding hope. In a world crushed with pain, the book imagines God shaping new beginnings from the ruins of fallen worlds.

The book of Jeremiah is well known for its complex and disorderly character, and modern readers can be frustrated if they come to it looking for coherence and linear thinking. Some recent interpreters suggest that the book's jumbled order reflects the lived chaos of a crushed and defeated people. Ironically, then, the meaning of the book may in fact be found in its lack of structure!

The book isn't entirely chaotic, though. We can identify literary collections united by common themes. For instance, Jeremiah 27–28 deals with prophetic conflicts and opposing interpretations of Judah's future. Jeremiah 30–33 is a collection of oracles of restoration and hope. Jeremiah 36–45, commonly referred

to as the Baruch narrative, is a story of Jeremiah's ordeals and courage during the most trying of times. In Jeremiah 46–51, Jeremiah emerges as "a prophet to the nations," in fulfillment of his initial call. Even more far-reaching, the book breaks down into two major parts. Jeremiah 1–25 rehearses the dismantling of Judah's treasured beliefs and institutions and takes the reader on a painful journey through the debris of the nation's collapse, with only few traces of hope. Jeremiah 26–52 continues this lament but with glimpses of hope rising from the wreckage.

The book of Jeremiah shares much in common with the larger prophetic collection in the Bible. It urges God's people to practice social justice, faithfulness, and compassion, especially on behalf of the most vulnerable in society. It is rooted in Israel's ancient exodus and covenant traditions. It charges the nation's failed leadership with self-interest and neglect. It rejects worship that is unconcerned with the poor. It condemns the community for idolatry, disobedience, corruption, and greed. It speaks of divine judgment against those who act in such ways, especially for those within the household of faith. And it speaks of an approaching "enemy from the north," the reversal of creation, and the overthrow of Judah's temple, liturgy, covenant, dynasty, and land.

The book of Jeremiah also envisions life beyond the devastation. It speaks of God's saving intervention on behalf of those ravaged by war and captivity. It speaks of God's promise to restore the nation's Davidic king, to save Israel, to return exiles to their land, and to create a new covenant and new relationship (Jer 31:31–34). These promises depend more on God's sovereign and merciful purposes than on what Judah does or deserves. To use Jeremiah's own language, God resolves "to dig up and pull down, to destroy and demolish, to build and plant" (Jer 1:10).

In the book of Jeremiah, the prophet plays a central role. Often the lives of the prophets are overshadowed by their words. Here, though, the prophet takes center stage. In his call, prayers, harassment, struggles, and devotion to God, Jeremiah not only speaks for God, but also embodies the divine message. In fact,

Jeremiah *becomes* the word of God. This larger-than-life figure exemplifies righteous, or innocent, suffering, not unlike the biblical Job. The hostility he endures demonstrates to exiled readers that their suffering isn't shameful or punishing, nor is it a sign of God's powerlessness or neglect. To the contrary, suffering, as seen in the body of Jeremiah, is a consequence of service and devotion to God. As does Isaiah's suffering servant (cf. Isa 42:1-4; 44:1-2; 49:1-6), so the suffering prophet in Jeremiah prepares for the narratives of Jesus' suffering and death in the NT and, indeed, for the suffering of all God's people.

The sermons in Jeremiah are distinctive in style and function. They share a vocabulary, form, and theology similar to the book of Deuteronomy. Together, they insist that God will destroy the very pillars that have long supported Israel's cultural and religious worlds. In actuality, though, this destruction will serve the welfare of a war-torn and displaced community that can no longer cling to those cherished systems. If the Judean exiles are to survive the wreckage of war, they have to give up the old world and receive the new, with a different understanding of their new culture and with a new theology of hope.

### I. Making Sense of National Tragedy:

#### The End of Judah's Known World (1:1–25:38)

- A. Introduction to the words of Jeremiah (1:1–19)
  - 1. Historical heading (1:1–3)
  - 2. Jeremiah's call and commission to be a prophet (1:4–19)
- B. Divine grief over a history of unfaithfulness (2:1–4:4)
  - 1. Unfaithfulness and betrayal (2:1–37)
  - 2. Longing for return and reunion (3:1–4:4)
- C. From grief to rage: God's declaration of war (4:5–6:30)
  - 1. Prepare for battle (4:5–31)
  - 2. Dreadful acts; dreadful consequences (5:1–6:30)
- D. The end of the temple and its culture of idolatry (7:1–10:25)
  - 1. Contaminated worship (7:1–8:3)
  - 2. Weeping and warning (8:4–10:25)
- E. The end of the covenant and its culture of self-determination (11:1–12:17)
  - 1. Breaking the covenant (11:1–17)
  - 2. Attack on Jeremiah's life (11:18–12:17)
- F. Signs of destruction (13:1–15:21)
  - 1. The linen undergarment and broken wine jars (13:1–27)
  - 2. Death, war, famine, and exile (14:1–15:21)
- G. The end of ordinary life (16:1–17:27)
  - 1. Present judgment, eventual restoration (16:1–21)
  - 2. Judah's enduring sin (17:1–27)
- H. The end of salvation history and its culture of privilege (18:1–20:18)
  - 1. Broken pots and foiled plots (18:1–20:6)
  - 2. Dashed hopes (20:7–18)
- I. The end of the nation's leaders and their culture of self-interest (21:1–24:10)
  - 1. Failed, fallen kings and prophets (21:1–23:40)
  - 2. Baskets of figs: Forced relocation as divine will (24:1–10)
- J. A world uprooted and overthrown (25:1–38)

- 1. Recap of Jeremiah's prophecy of judgment (25:1–14)
- 2. The cup of God's wrath (25:15–38)

### II. Making Sense of National Tragedy: Glimmers of Hope, Strategies for Survival (26:1–52:34)

- A. A new beginning: Jeremiah's (second) temple sermon (26:1–24)
  - 1. Jeremiah's sermon and sentence (26:1–11)
  - 2. Jeremiah's defense and rescue (26:12–24)
- B. Prophetic conflict over Babylonian rule (27:1–28:17)
  - 1. Surrender to Babylon and live (27:1–22)
  - 2. Jeremiah versus Hananiah (28:1–17)
- C. Jeremiah's disturbing hope: Put down roots in Babylon (29:1–32)
  - 1. Jeremiah's letter to the exiles (29:1–23)
  - 2. Jeremiah's letter to Shemaiah (29:24–32)
- D. Healing and hope (30:1–33:26)
  - 1. Poetic book of comfort (30:1–31:40)
  - 2. Stories of restoration (32:1–33:26)
- E. Choices and consequences (34:1–35:19)
  - 1. An unfaithful king (34:1–22)
  - 2. A faithful community (35:1–19)
- F. The enduring word (36:1–32)
  - 1. A defiant king (36:1–26)
  - 2. A relentless word (36:27–32)
- G. The "Baruch narrative" (37:1–45:5)
- H. Jeremiah imprisoned and released (37:1–38:28)
  - 1. Last minute pleas and accusations of treason (37:1–38:6)
  - 2. Jeremiah rescued by Ebed-melech (38:7–28)
- I. The fall of Jerusalem (39:1–40:6)
  - 1. Babylon captures Jerusalem (39:1–10)
  - 2. Jeremiah's life is spared (39:11–40:6)
- J. Post-disaster Judah: Plots and bloodshed (40:7–41:18)
  - 1. Gedaliah's temporary government (40:7–16)
  - 2. Mutiny and murder (41:1–18)

**K. The question of Egypt (42:1–44:30)**

1. Don't go to Egypt (42:1-22)
2. Off to Egypt with Jeremiah and Baruch (43:1-13)
3. Jeremiah's final words to Judeans in Egypt (44:1-30)

**L. Survival promised Baruch (45:1-5)****M. Jeremiah as prophet to the nations (46:1–51:64)**

1. Oracles Against the Nations (46:1–51:58)
2. Performing the collapse of the empire (41:59-64)

**N. Epilogue: The fall of Jerusalem**

1. The end has come (52:1-30)
2. An open-ended future (52:31-34)

*Louis Stulman*

**Introduction**

1 These are the words of Jeremiah, Hilkiah's son, who was one of the priests from Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. 2 The LORD's word came to Jeremiah in the thirteenth year of Judah's King Josiah, Amon's son, 3 and throughout the rule of Judah's King Jehoiakim, Josiah's son, until the fifth month of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah, Josiah's son, when the people of Jerusalem were taken into exile.

**Call of Jeremiah**

- 4 The LORD's word came to me:
- 5 "Before I created you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I set you apart; I made you a prophet to the nations."
- 6 "Ah, LORD God," I said, "I don't know how to speak because I'm only a child."
- 7 The LORD responded, "Don't say, 'I'm only a child.' Where I send you, you must go; what I tell you, you must say."
- 8 "Don't be afraid of them, because I'm with you to rescue you," declares the LORD.
- 9 Then the LORD stretched out his hand, touched my mouth, and said to me, "I'm putting my words in your mouth."
- 10 This very day I appoint you over nations and empires, to dig up and pull down, to destroy and demolish, to build and plant."

**Jeremiah's mission confirmed**

11 The LORD asked me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?"

*Prophetic Beginnings* Prophetic books typically begin with a reference to the background, time, and location of the prophetic messenger. These headings function as historical markers, reminders that prophets addressed real people, facing real human problems, at particular moments in history. To separate the prophetic message from these local contexts is to read against the grain of the text and play down the memory of survivors.

1:1-19 The first chapter of Jeremiah presents the whole book in miniature. It introduces its main characters. It shows that Jeremiah is a prophet like Moses. It points forward to the many conflicts that will arise: between nations, between outsider Jeremiah and the religious and political leadership of Judah, and even within the prophet himself and with his God.

1:1-3 Historical heading. *Anathoth*: a small village a few miles north of Jerusalem where Solomon once banished the priest Abiathar (cf. 1 Kgs 2:26-27). Jeremiah is an outsider. He comes from a small town, yet God calls him to critique kings, priests, prophets, and legal scholars in Jerusalem. *the thirteenth year of Judah's King Josiah... fifth month of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah*: 627–587 BCE: the "forty-year" prophetic ministry of Jeremiah reminds us of Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. *exile*: Judah's present wilderness experience looms large and leaves a lasting mark on virtually every page of the book.

1:1-2 *the words of Jeremiah* serve as bookends (Jer 1:1; 51:64), and the phrase *The Lord's word* appears more than 50 times in the book. The Hebrew Bible (which contains the same books as the OT but arranged in a different order) concludes with a reference to the fulfillment of the Lord's word spoken by Jeremiah (2 Chron 36:22-23).

1:4-10 Jeremiah's call. This humble call story authorizes Jeremiah the prophet and Jeremiah the book. It says that Jeremiah isn't a prophet because of his own work or the force of his personality, but by God's design and power. Jeremiah's prophetic message won't be limited by local interests or party politics. God calls Jeremiah to be "a

prophet to the nations" (see Jer 46–51). The report of this call (see sidebar, "Prophetic Beginnings") assures readers that Jeremiah is a truth-teller. Jeremiah's words and mission, although enormously troubling, are authorized by God. He is equipped and charged by God to *dig up and pull down... [and] build and plant* (e.g., Jer 12:14-17; 18:7-10; 24:6; 31:4-5, 28, 38, 40; 33:7; 42:10; 45:4), a description that defines the book's whole structure (Jer 1–25; 26–52). The call story shows that Jeremiah shares much in common with other great figures in the Bible. Like Solomon, he responds to the divine charge with reluctance: *I'm only a child* (see 1 Kgs 3:7). Like Moses, Jeremiah says he is inadequate and afraid: *I don't know how to speak* (Exod 4:10-17; see also Exod 3:1-6). Like Isaiah's "Servant of the Lord," Jeremiah is chosen and formed in the womb by God (Isa 44:1-2; 49:1, 5; see also Luke 1:15; Gal 1:15-16). And like the Servant of the Lord, Jeremiah's task is bigger than national interests (*over nations*; Isa 42:1; 49:6; see also Jer 46–51; cf. Isa 49: 7). To fulfill this mission, God puts God's own words in Jeremiah's mouth and promises to be with him (Deut 18:18; Exod 3:12). Yet even with God's empowerment, this prophet like Moses is conflicted from the outset. He struggles with his call, his community, and the God who created him. Much in the call report—and in the following sermons (e.g., Jer 7:1-15; 11:1-17; 21:1-10)—connects Jeremiah to Moses, Israel's great deliverer, teacher, and prophet.

1:11-19 Commissioned to be a prophet. Jeremiah's mission is substantiated and elaborated. He is summoned to see what he has already heard, touched, and most probably tasted—God's words (cf. Ezek 3:1-3).

1:1 Josh 21:18;  
2Ch 36:12;  
2Ch 36:21;  
Jer 11:21;  
Jer 32:7  
1:2 2Ki 21:24;  
2Ki 22:1;  
2Ch 34:1;  
Jer 25:3  
1:5 Is 49:1  
1:6 Ex 4:10;  
1Ki 3:7  
1:7 Jer 1:17;  
Eze 3:17  
1:8 Jer 15:20;  
Eze 2:6, Eze 3:9  
1:9 Is 6:7  
1:10 Jer 18:7;  
Jer 24:6;  
Jer 31:28  
1:11 Am 7:8

1:13 Eze 24:3

1:14 Jer 4:6,  
Jer 10:221:16 Jer 2:13,  
Jer 7:9; Jer 19:4

1:18 Is 50:7

1:19 Ps 129:2;  
Jer 1:8; Jer 20:11

2:1 Jer 7:1;

Eze 1:3; Eze 7:1;

Mt 1:1; Heb 1:1

2:5 2K 17:15;

Jer 2:31; Mt 6:3

I said, "A branch of an almond<sup>a</sup> tree."

<sup>12</sup>The LORD then said, "You are right, for I'm watching over<sup>b</sup> my word until it is fulfilled."

<sup>13</sup>The LORD asked me again, "What do you see?"

I said, "A pot boiling over from the north."

<sup>14</sup>The LORD said to me, "Trouble will erupt from the north against the people of this land."

<sup>15</sup>I'm calling for all the tribes of great nations from the north, says the LORD, and they will set up their rulers by the entrances of Jerusalem, on its walls, and in every city of Judah.

<sup>16</sup>I will declare my judgment against them for doing evil: for abandoning me, worshipping other gods, and trusting in the works of their hands. <sup>17</sup>But you must prepare for battle and be ready to utter every word I command you. Don't be frightened before them, or I will frighten you before them. <sup>18</sup>Today I have made you an armed city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall against the entire land—the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and all its people.

<sup>19</sup>They will attack you, but they won't defeat you, because I am with you and will rescue you, declares the LORD.

### God's people abandon their God

**2** The LORD's word came to me:

<sup>2a</sup>Go and proclaim to the people of Jerusalem,

The LORD proclaims:

I remember your first love,<sup>c</sup>

your devotion as a young bride,

how you followed me in the wilderness, in an unplanted land.

<sup>3</sup>Israel was devoted to the LORD,  
the early produce of the harvest.

Whoever ate from it became guilty;

disaster overtook them,

declares the LORD.

<sup>4</sup>Listen to the LORD's word, people of Judah,  
all you families of the Israelite household.

<sup>5</sup>This is what the LORD says:

What wrong did your ancestors find in me that made them wander so far?

They pursued what was worthless and became worthless.

<sup>a</sup>Heb *shaqed* <sup>b</sup>Heb *shaqed* <sup>c</sup>Or *the love of your youth*

1:11-12 There's a play on words in the first vision report of the book (see also Jer 24:3). Jeremiah sees an *almond tree* (Heb. *shaqed*) and is reassured that God is *watching over* (Heb. *shaqed*) the prophetic word to make sure it blooms. This assures Jeremiah and his readers that God's purposes will be realized through the prophet's ministry. God will see to it!

1:13-14 In the second vision, the danger lurking on the horizon, already a historical reality for the readers of the book, is brought into greater focus, although it is still portrayed in cryptic terms. Jeremiah sees a *pot boiling over from the north*, warning of a military assault from the north against Judah and Jerusalem. Disaster from the north is a major theme in the book (e.g., Jer 4:6; 6:1, 22; 10:22).

1:15-16 The attack by northern armies is all the more threatening because God is its architect. God uses the military campaign as a divine offensive against a disloyal and defiant nation. As is characteristic of the book of Jeremiah and ancient Near Eastern literature in general, the ravages of war and dislocation are rarely perceived as mere political events; rather, they are theologically charged events. Here and elsewhere in Jeremiah, readers are alerted that this series of tragic events signals neither God's lack of power nor God's injustice.

1:17-19 God warns Jeremiah that he, too, must prepare for combat. But Jeremiah's opposition will come from

forces within the boundaries: kings, princes, priests, and people. They will wage war against him but won't prevail, for God will defend and deliver him.

2:1-13 The section opens with a reference to Israel's devotion to God in the *wilderness*. Note the many interpretations of Israel's wilderness wandering: see Exodus 16:1-17:16; Deuteronomy 1:6-3:29; Psalms 78:17; 95:8; Isaiah 43:19. This fond memory quickly turns into a charge of unfaithfulness and betrayal. The image of the broken marriage (or fractured family) (see also Hos 1-3; Isa 1:21; Ezek 16; 23) emphasizes Israel's fascination with other gods. It also reveals God's vulnerability and grief over unfaithfulness. The poetry that follows is erratic, mirroring the uncontrollable pain of a spurned lover. In an extended lament, God hurls at Israel a series of accusatory questions (2:5-11), all leading to the same conclusion: Israel has broken the covenant, mocked God's kindness, and worshipped other gods. Recalling God's gracious acts of deliverance out of Egypt, God's provision in the wilderness, and the gift of land makes Israel's disloyalty all the more serious.

2:2-4 Several words used in this section to describe once-faithful Israel occur earlier in the call narrative at Jeremiah 1:11-19 (see sidebar, "Prophetic Beginnings" at Jer 1). *devoted*: or "set apart" or "made holy."

2:2 *love*: loyalty and commitment.



- 6 They didn't ask,  
 "Where's the LORD who brought us up from the land of Egypt,  
 who led us through the wilderness,  
 in a land of deserts and ravines,  
 in a land of drought and darkness,  
 in a land of no return, where no one survives?"
- 7 I brought you into a land of plenty, to enjoy its gifts and goodness,  
 but you ruined my land;  
 you disgraced my heritage.
- 8 The priests didn't ask, "Where's the LORD?"  
 Those responsible for the Instruction didn't know me;  
 the leaders rebelled against me;  
 the prophets spoke in the name of Baal,  
 going after what has no value.
- 9 That is why I will take you to court  
 and charge even your descendants,  
 declares the LORD.
- 10 Look to the west as far as the shores of Cyprus  
 and to the east as far as the land of Kedar.  
 Ask anyone there:  
 Has anything this odd ever taken place?
- 11 Has a nation switched gods, though they aren't really gods at all?  
 Yet my people have exchanged their glory for what has no value.
- 12 Be stunned at such a thing, you heavens;  
 shudder and quake,  
 declares the LORD.
- 13 My people have committed two crimes:  
 They have forsaken me, the spring of living water.  
 And they have dug wells, broken wells that can't hold water.
- 14 Is Israel a slave, a servant by birth?  
 If not, why then has he become prey?
- 15 Lions roar at him; they growl.  
 They destroy his land  
 and make his towns desolate until nothing is left.
- 16 As well, the people of Memphis and Tahpanhes lay open your scalp.
- 17 Haven't you brought this on yourself by abandoning the LORD your God,  
 who has directed your paths?
- 18 So why take the path to Egypt to drink water from the Nile?  
 Why travel the path to Assyria to drink water from the Euphrates?
- 19 Your wrongdoing will punish you.  
 Your acts of unfaithfulness will find you out.  
 Don't you understand how terribly bitter  
 it is to abandon the LORD your God and not fear me?  
 declares the LORD of heavenly forces.
- 20 Long ago I broke your yoke;  
 I shattered your chains.  
 But even then you said, "I won't serve you."  
 On every high hill and under every lush tree, you have acted like a prostitute.

2:6 Dt 8:15;  
 Dt 32:10;  
 Is 63:11;  
 Hos 13:4;  
 Hos 13:5

2:8 Jer 5:31;  
 Jer 23:1, Jer 23:2;  
 Jer 23:13

2:9 Jer 2:35;  
 Eze 20:35;  
 Eze 20:36;  
 Mi 6:2

2:10 Gn 10:4;  
 Gn 25:13; Is  
 21:16

2:11 Ps 106:20;  
 Is 37:19;  
 Jer 16:20;  
 Ro 1:23; Ga 4:8

2:12 Is 1:2

2:13 Ps 36:9;  
 Jer 1:16;  
 Jer 5:19;  
 Jer 17:13; Jn 4:14

2:18 Josh 13:3;  
 Is 30:2; Jer 2:36;  
 Hos 5:13;  
 Hos 7:11

2:19 Ps 36:1;  
 Is 3:9; Jer 4:18;  
 Hos 5:5

2:20 Lv 26:13;  
 Is 57:5; Jer 17:2

2:9 *I will take you to court*: God's charges against God's people become the basis for divine judgment. The "dispute," a charge against God's people for breaking the covenant, is used elsewhere in the Bible (Hos 4:1-4; Mic 6:1-5; cf. Exod 23:2; Deut 21:5). Here the elements of the dispute are made into a painful divine lament.

2:14-19 Rather than trusting the Lord for protection (2:17), Israel relies on the regional military powers of Egypt and Assyria. Rather than drinking "living water" (Jer 2:13),

it prefers waters from *the Nile and the Euphrates* (2:18). While such acts may be politically expedient, they actually cost Israel its freedom. And they show national disloyalty. These claims and the accompanying rhetorical questions are clear: God's people brought defeat and captivity on themselves (2:17, 19).

2:16 *Memphis and Tahpanhes*: important cities in Egypt. 2:20-28 The lament recalls moments of God's generosity, which only emphasizes Israel's unfaithfulness and

2:21 Ex 15:17;  
Ps 44:2, Ps 80:8;  
Is 5:2, Is 5:4

2:22 Job 9:30,  
Job 14:17;  
Jer 17:1

2:25 Dt 32:16;  
Jer 3:13,  
Jer 18:12

2:27 Jgs 10:10;  
Is 26:16;  
Jer 18:17,  
Jer 32:33;  
Hos 5:15

2:30 Dt 32:37,  
Dt 32:38;  
Jgs 10:14;  
Is 45:20;  
Jer 11:13

2:29 Jer 5:1,  
Jer 6:13, Dn 9:11

2:30 Neh 9:26;  
Is 1:5, Is 9:13;  
Jer 5:3, 1Th 2:15

2:31 Dt 32:15;  
Jer 2:5, Jer 2:6

2:32 Dt 32:18;  
Is 17:10,  
Jer 3:21,  
Jer 13:25;  
Hos 8:14

- 21** Yet it was I who planted you, a precious vine of fine quality;  
how could you turn into a wild vine and become good for nothing?
- 22** Even though you scrub yourself with soap or strong powder,  
the stain of your sin is still before me,  
declares the LORD God.
- 23** How can you say, "I'm not dirty;  
I haven't gone after Baals."  
Look what you have done in the valley;  
consider what you have done there.  
You are like a frenzied young camel, racing around,  
**24** a wild donkey in the wilderness, lustfully sniffing the wind.  
Who can restrain such passion?  
Those who desire her need not give up;  
with little effort they will find her in heat.
- 25** Don't run about until your feet are blistered and your throat is parched.  
But you say, "What's the use? I have fallen in love with foreign gods,  
and I must pursue them."
- 26** As a thief is ashamed when caught in his tracks,  
so the people of Israel are ashamed—  
their kings, officials, priests, and prophets—  
**27** when they say to a piece of wood, "You are my father,"  
and to a stone, "You gave me birth."  
They have turned their backs to me and not their faces.  
Yet in their time of trouble they say, "Arise and save us!"
- 28** Where are the gods you have made for yourselves?  
Let's see if they will come through for you in your time of trouble.  
You have as many gods, Judah, as you have towns.
- 29** Why would you bring charges against me?  
You have all rebelled against me,  
declares the LORD.
- 30** I have disciplined your children in vain;  
they have rejected my correction.  
You have devoured your prophets like a hungry lion.
- 31** People of this generation, listen closely to the LORD's word:  
Have I been a wasteland to Israel  
or a land of dense darkness?  
Why then do my people say,  
"We have wandered far away;  
we'll come to you no longer"?
- 32** Does a young woman forget her jewelry  
or a bride her wedding dress?  
Yet you have forgotten me days without end!
- 33** So skilled are you at pursuing lovers<sup>d</sup> that you instruct even the most wicked.<sup>e</sup>
- 34** Your garments are stained with the blood of the innocent poor,  
even though you didn't catch them breaking and entering.

<sup>d</sup>Or love <sup>e</sup>Or you have taught your ways to wicked women.

defiance. To drive this point home, image is placed on image to erect an almost comical structure of guilt: a prostitute, wild vine, one blemished beyond repair, a young camel in heat, a wild ass sniffing the wind (in heat), a bad thief. But this story is too painful to be amusing, because at its core is the scathing accusation and the agonizing acknowledgment that God's people have deserted God, which is grounds for divorce. That Israel participated in the worship of the fertility god *Baal* is a common accusation in the book and in the Bible in general. Jeremiah interprets

the union of Baal worship, or that of any foreign god, with worship of the true God (see Jer 10:10) as a shameless act of unfaithfulness (2:23).

**2:29-37** The divine accusation insists that God's people are not only *skilled* (i.e., street-smart) at pursuing its many lovers but they also trade in violence and injustice (2:33-34). One can see an increasing degree of regret in this section. God reflects on ineffective attempts to restore the broken relationship; Israel gives weak declarations of innocence and countercharges (2:29, 35). Perhaps Israel's

Yet, despite all this,<sup>f 35</sup> you still insist,  
 "I'm innocent;  
 as a result he will turn his anger away from me."  
 Because you claim not to have sinned,  
 I will pass judgment against you.  
<sup>36</sup> You change sides so casually!  
 But Egypt will shame you no less than Assyria.  
<sup>37</sup> From there you will go out with your hands on your heads,  
 because the LORD has rejected those you rely on;  
 they won't help you.

3:1 Dt 24:1;  
 Jer 2:20  
 3:2 Gn 38:14;  
 Jer 2:7, Jer 3:21;  
 Eze 16:25  
 3:3 Jer 6:15;  
 Am 4:7  
 3:4 Jer 2:2,  
 Jer 2:27, Jer 3:19,  
 Jer 31:9  
 3:6 Jer 2:20  
 3:7 Eze 16:46;  
 Eze 23:2  
 3:8 Dt 24:1;  
 Is 50:1;  
 Eze 23:11  
 3:9 Is 57:6;  
 Jer 2:27, Jer 3:2,  
 Jer 10:8  
 3:10 Jer 12:2;  
 Hos 7:14  
 3:11 Eze 16:51;  
 Eze 16:52;  
 Eze 23:11  
 3:12 Is 31:6;  
 Jer 3:22, Jer 4:1,  
 Jer 31:20,  
 Hos 14:1

**Jeremiah's summons to change**

**3** If a man divorces his wife,  
 and after she leaves him marries another,  
 can he return to her again?  
 Wouldn't such an act completely corrupt the land?  
 Yet you have prostituted yourself with many lovers.  
 Would you return to me?  
 declares the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> Look to the well-traveled paths<sup>g</sup> and see!  
 Where haven't you committed adultery?  
 On the roadsides you sit in wait for lovers, like a nomad in the wilderness.  
 You have corrupted the land with your cheap and reckless behavior.

<sup>3</sup> That's why the showers have failed  
 and the spring rains have ceased.  
 Still you act like a brazen prostitute<sup>h</sup> who refuses to blush.

<sup>4</sup> At the same time you say to me,  
 "My father, my friend since youth,  
<sup>5</sup> will you stay angry forever?  
 Will you continue to be furious?"

This is what you say while you do as much evil as you possibly can.

<sup>6</sup> During the rule of King Josiah, the LORD said to me: Have you noticed what unfaithful Israel has done? She's gone about looking for lovers on top of every high hill and under every lush tree. <sup>7</sup>I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me, but she didn't. Her disloyal sister Judah saw this. <sup>8</sup>She<sup>i</sup> also saw that I sent unfaithful Israel away with divorce papers because of all her acts of unfaithfulness; yet disloyal sister Judah was not afraid but kept on playing the prostitute. <sup>9</sup>She didn't think twice about corrupting the land and committing adultery with stone and tree. <sup>10</sup>Yet even after all this, disloyal sister Judah didn't return to me with all her heart but only insincerely, declares the LORD. <sup>11</sup>Then the LORD said to me: Unfaithful Israel is less guilty<sup>j</sup> than disloyal Judah.

<sup>12</sup>Go proclaim these words to the north and say:  
 Return, unfaithful Israel,  
 declares the LORD.

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain. <sup>g</sup>Or bare heights. <sup>h</sup>Or You have a prostitute's forehead. <sup>i</sup>LXX, Syr; MT I. <sup>j</sup>Or more righteous

most devastating act against God is forgetting God for days without end (2:32)! The chapter ends with rejection and overwhelming despair.

3:1-4:4 Longing for return and reunion. This is God's longing.

3:1-5 Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is the basis for another charge against Israel. The instruction states that a husband who lawfully divorces his wife can't remarry her if she remarries and is divorced or widowed. Jeremiah applies this teaching to God and God's people (see also Isa 50:1), making the case that God's unfaithful wife, Israel, guilty of idolatry, can't return to her divine spouse. She can't return to God, and God can't return to (remarry) her. Reconciliation is impossible; the divorce is final, or so it seems!

3:6-11 A voice enters the dialogue to clarify how the

image of a broken marriage relates to Judah/Israel's estrangement from God. The storyteller reflects on a time during Josiah's reign when the northern state of Israel had deserted the Lord and rejected God's pleas to change their hearts and lives. In response, God issued *divorce papers* (3:8). One would think, the storyteller imagines, that the idolatrous southern state Judah would have learned a lesson from Israel's mishap and returned *with all her heart* (3:10). But disloyal sister Judah only acts more boldly.

3:6 One of the few references to *King Josiah*, one of Judah's celebrated leaders (Jer 1:2-3; 22:11, 18; 36:2; see also 2 Kgs 22-23; 2 Chron 34-35).

3:12-14 As if to annoy Judah (or more likely to rekindle her love for God, the rejected divine lover/parent/spouse invites *unfaithful Israel* (not unfaithful Judah) to change

3:14 Is 54:5;  
Jer 31:32;  
Hos 2:19;  
Hos 2:20

3:15 Jer 23:4;  
Eze 34:23;  
Ac 20:28;  
Eph 4:11,  
Eph 4:12

3:19 Is 63:16;  
Jer 3:4

3:20 Jer 3:8;  
Jer 5:11

3:22 Is 57:18;  
Jer 3:12;  
Jer 30:17;  
Hos 6:1,  
Hos 14:4

3:23 Ps 3:8,  
Ps 37:39

I won't reject you, for I'm faithful,  
declares the LORD;

I won't stay angry forever.

<sup>13</sup> Only acknowledge your wrongdoing:  
how you have rebelled  
against the LORD your God,  
and given yourself to strangers  
under every lush tree  
and haven't obeyed me,  
declares the LORD.

<sup>14</sup> Return, rebellious children,  
declares the LORD,  
for I'm your husband.

I'll gather you—one from a city and two from a tribe—  
and bring you back to Zion.

<sup>15</sup> I will appoint shepherds with whom I'm pleased, and they will lead you with knowledge and understanding. <sup>16</sup> And in those days, when your numbers have greatly increased in the land, declares the LORD, people will no longer talk about the LORD's covenant chest; they won't recall or remember it; they won't even miss it or try to build another one. <sup>17</sup> At that time, they will call Jerusalem the LORD's throne, and all nations will gather there to honor the LORD's name. No longer will they follow their own willful and evil hearts. <sup>18</sup> In those days the people of Judah and Israel will leave the north together for the land that I gave their ancestors as an inheritance.

<sup>19</sup> I thought to myself,

How wonderful it would be to treat you like children  
and give you a beautiful land,  
an inheritance unrivaled among the nations.

And I thought, You will call me father,  
and you won't turn away from me.

<sup>20</sup> But as a woman betrays her lover,  
so you, people of Israel, have betrayed me,  
declares the LORD.

<sup>21</sup> A voice is heard on the well-traveled paths;<sup>b</sup>  
it's the crying and pleading of the people of Israel,  
who have lost their way and forgotten the LORD their God.

<sup>22</sup> Return, rebellious children, and I will heal your rebellion.

"Here we are; we come to you, for you are the LORD our God.

<sup>23</sup> Surely what happens on the hills<sup>c</sup> is a waste,  
as is the uproar on the mountains.

Only in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.

<sup>b</sup>Or bare heights <sup>c</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT from the hills

everything and return home. *Return*: The Hebrew word *shub*, translated "return," or "turn," is central here and throughout this larger section (occurring over 10 times in Jer 3:1–4:4; God calls Jeremiah to "return" in Jer 15:19; see also Deut 4:30; 30:2, 10). The question is open whether Judah can and will return to God. The call to the north in 3:12 is unclear. Does it refer to northern Israelites of long ago or to the Judean exiles who live in (northern) Babylon? In either case, God promises to gather and bring back rebellious children to Jerusalem (3:14).

3:15–18 The promise of restoration includes *shepherds with whom I'm pleased* (or "after my heart," i.e., "of his own choosing"). This recalls the description of David in 1 Samuel 13:14; *shepherds* refers to kings and those who rule with them. The appointment of good shepherds who lead with knowledge and understanding contrasts with rebellious ones in Jeremiah 2:8, with those who have lost

*Divine Grief* This initial collection of poetry, Jeremiah 2:1–4:4, contrasts Israel's guilt with a wounded God who is determined to restore the broken relationship. Both God and God's people are determined, and both make their counterclaims in a dispute before the readers, where God is ultimately cleared of any wrongdoing. This section, with its wide range of images, defends God against accusations of wrongdoing and powerlessness. It demonstrates that the national tragedy isn't beyond the reach of God's just governance.

their senses (Jer 10:21; see also Jer 12:10), and with those who destroy the sheep (=people) and ignore their needs in Jeremiah 23:1–2. (In Jer 23:3–4, God promises to shepherd God's people and to set over them rulers who truly attend to their needs; see also Ezek 34.) Residents of the new Jerusalem, or Zion, the returnees from exile in Babylon, won't need the LORD's covenant chest, i.e., the place of God's special presence (Exod 25:10–16) which housed the two tablets of the Instruction (see Deut 10:1–5; 31:24–29; 1 Sam 4:4; 1 Kgs 8:1–13). The text doesn't say why the covenant chest won't be mentioned or missed.

3:19–4:4 The poetic voice returns to the earlier theme of God's reckless children and spouse. This section can be read as a dialogue: (1) God laments Israel's rejection (3:19–20). (2) The narrator reports hearing Israel weeping and praying (3:21). (3) God invites God's prodigal children home (3:22a). (4) God's rebellious people confess their sin

4:2 Dt 10:20;  
Is 65:16;  
Jer 5:2, Jer 9:24,  
Jer 12:16  
4:3 Hos 10:12;  
Mt 13:7;  
Mk 4:18  
4:4 Dt 10:16,  
Dt 30:6; Jer 9:26;  
Ro 2:28, Ro 2:29  
4:5 Josh 10:20;  
Jer 6:1, Jer 8:14

<sup>24</sup>From our youth, shame<sup>m</sup> has devoured the fruit of our parents' labor—  
their flocks and herds, as well as their sons and daughters.

<sup>25</sup>Let's lie down in our shame.

Let our dishonor cover us, for we have sinned against the LORD our God,  
both we and our ancestors, from our youth to this very day.

We have disobeyed the voice of the LORD our God.”

**4** If you return, Israel, return to me, declares the LORD.

If you get rid of your disgusting idols from my presence  
and wander no more,

<sup>2</sup>and if you swear by the living God in truth, justice, and righteousness,  
then the nations will enjoy God's blessings;<sup>m</sup>  
they will boast about him.

<sup>3</sup>This is what the LORD says to the people of Judah and to the residents of Jerusalem:

Break up your hard rocky soil;  
don't plant among the thorns.

<sup>4</sup>Dedicate<sup>o</sup> yourselves to the LORD;  
don't be thick-skinned.<sup>p</sup>

people of Judah and residents of Jerusalem,  
or else my anger will spread like a wildfire.

It will burn, with no one to put it out,  
because of your evil deeds.

### Disaster approaches

<sup>5</sup>Announce in Judah,  
in Jerusalem proclaim,  
sound the alarm throughout the land,  
cry out and say,  
“Gather together! Let's flee to the fortified towns!”

<sup>6</sup>Set up a flag to Zion;  
take cover, don't just stand there!  
I'm bringing disaster from the north,  
massive devastation.

<sup>7</sup>A lion bursts out of the thicket;  
a destroyer of nations advances.  
He's gone forth from his place to ravage your land,  
to wipe out your towns, until no one is left.

<sup>8</sup>Put on funeral clothing.  
Weep and wail,  
for the LORD's fierce anger hasn't turned away from us.

<sup>m</sup>Or the shame <sup>n</sup>Or bless themselves in him or be blessed by him or will bless themselves <sup>o</sup>Or circumcise <sup>p</sup>Or remove the foreskins of your hearts

(3:22b-25). (5) God responds by clarifying the conditions for genuine life change (4:1-4). Judah's return to God—disallowed by the Instruction itself—is now possible, because God is willing to restore the broken relationship. In the ritual of changing heart and life (Jer 4:22b-25), do God's wayward children actually admit their sin and confess faith in God, as God desires? Is the sorrow fleeting or insincere (4:1-4), or is God only imagining the return of *rebellious children* (see Hos 2:8-9; cf. Hos 14:1-3)? The passage can be interpreted many ways.

4:3-4 Two dominant images for the changed life: *break up... rocky soil* (Hos 10:12) and *Dedicate* (or circumcise) yourselves—that is, open your hearts to God (see Deut 10:16; 30:6; 9:25-26).

4:5-6:30 From grief to rage: God's declaration of war. In this section, Israel's unfaithfulness and disobedience are the basis for the announcement of divine judgment. By the end of the section, God's disappointment and grief

turn into rage and resolve. Despite this display of divine power, God's people remain stubborn and arrogant.

4:5-18 Battle alarms, funeral clothing, and references to war show that disaster is coming. The prophet urges Judah to prepare for the military assault. The unnamed northern attacker, made all the more threatening because it comes at God's bidding, is likened to a *lion* (4:7; see Amos 1:1; 3:4) that will ravage and completely destroy. The powerful invader advances with swift chariots and horses, evoking dread (4:13). Amid the wreckage, Jeremiah blames the Lord for deceiving the people into believing that peace was approaching when in fact the enemy was at the gates (4:10). Jeremiah's accusation might recall the false words of the prophets who insist in the Lord's name that “all is well” when in fact disaster looms (e.g., Jer 6:14; 8:1; 14:13; see also 1 Kgs 22:22). Jeremiah's claim, justified or not, is a daring act of protest on behalf of God's suffering people (see also Jer 27:18).

4:11 Hos 13:15  
 4:14 Psv 1:22;  
 Is 1:16; Jer 13:27;  
 Jas 4:8  
 4:16 Jer 5:15;  
 Eze 21:22  
 4:19 Is 22:4;  
 Jer 9:1; Jer 9:10;  
 Zep 1:16  
 4:22 Dt 32:28;  
 Is 1:3; Is 27:11;  
 Jer 5:21; Jer 8:7  
 4:25 Jer 9:10,  
 Jer 12:4; Zep 1:3

- <sup>9</sup>On that day, declares the LORD,  
 the courage of the king and his princes will fail,  
 the priests will be stunned,  
 and the prophets will be shocked.
- <sup>10</sup>Then I said, "LORD God, no!  
 You have utterly deceived this people and Jerusalem  
 by promising them peace even though the sword is at their throats."
- <sup>11</sup>At that time, this people and Jerusalem will be told:  
 A blistering wind from the bare heights;  
 it rages in the desert toward my people,  
 not merely to winnow or cleanse.
- <sup>12</sup>This wind is too devastating for that.  
 Now I, even I, will pronounce my sentence against them.
- <sup>13</sup>Look! He approaches like the clouds;  
 his chariots advance like a tempest,  
 his horses swifter than eagles.  
 How horrible! We're doomed!
- <sup>14</sup>Cleanse your heart of evil, Jerusalem, that you may be saved.  
 How long will you entertain your destructive ideas?
- <sup>15</sup>A voice declares from Dan;  
 someone proclaims disaster from the highlands of Ephraim.
- <sup>16</sup>Warn the nations,  
 proclaim it to Jerusalem!  
 Armies are approaching from a far-away country,  
 raising their war cries against the towns of Judah.
- <sup>17</sup>They hem her in like those guarding a field,  
 because she has rebelled against me,  
 declares the LORD.
- <sup>18</sup>Your own conduct, your own deeds have done this to you.  
 This is your payment and how bitter it is,  
 piercing into the depths of your heart.

### **Anguish over looming disaster**

- <sup>19</sup>Oh, my suffering, my suffering! My pain is unbearable;  
 my heart is in turmoil; it throbs nonstop.  
 I can't be silent, because I hear the blast of the trumpet  
 and the roar of the battle cry!
- <sup>20</sup>Disaster follows disaster;  
 the whole land is ruined.  
 Suddenly, my tents are destroyed,  
 my shelter in a moment.
- <sup>21</sup>How long must I see the battle flags  
 and hear the blast of the trumpet?
- <sup>22</sup>My people are foolish.  
 They don't even know me!  
 They are thoughtless children without understanding;  
 they are skilled at doing wrong, inept at doing right.
- <sup>23</sup>I looked at the earth, and it was without shape or form;  
 at the heavens and there was no light.
- <sup>24</sup>I looked at the mountains and they were quaking;  
 all the hills were rocking back and forth.
- <sup>25</sup>I looked and there was no one left;  
 every bird in the sky had taken flight.

**4:19-31** This section expresses Jeremiah's or God's grief over the horror of war and the thoughtless deeds of God's people (*my people* in 4:22). Jeremiah 4:23-27 portray the destruction as though it were the collapse of creation, the world returning to chaos. Note the reversal

of the order of creation—the *earth ... was without shape or form ... [and] the heavens ... no light*—as described in Genesis 1:1-5. In 4:28 earth and heaven join God, Jeremiah, and Daughter Zion in their grief over the wholesale destruction.

4:30 2K1 9:30;  
Lam 1:2;  
Eze 23:22,  
Eze 23:40  
5:1 Gn 18:32;  
2Ch 16:9;  
Eze 22:30  
5:2 Lv 19:12;  
Is 48:1; Jer 4:2,  
Jer 7:9; Ti 1:16  
5:3 2Ch 16:9;  
Is 1:5, Is 9:13;  
Jer 2:30, Jer 7:28  
5:5 Ps 2:3,  
Jer 2:20; Mi 3:1  
5:6 Hos 13:7,  
Hab 1:8; Zep 3:3  
5:7 Dt 32:15,  
Dt 32:21;  
Josh 23:7;  
Jer 2:11; Ga 4:8

- 26 I looked and the fertile land was a desert;  
all its towns were in ruins  
before the LORD, before his fury.
- 27 The LORD proclaims:  
The whole earth will become a desolation,  
but I will not destroy it completely.
- 28 Therefore, the earth will grieve  
and the heavens grow dark  
because I have declared my plan  
and will neither change my mind nor cancel the plan.
- 29 As the horsemen and archers approach, the people take flight.  
They hide in the bushes and escape to the cliffs.  
Every city is deserted;  
no one remains.
- 30 And you, devastated one,  
why dress up in scarlet,  
deck yourself in gold jewelry,  
and color your eyes with paint?  
In vain you get all decked out;  
your lovers have rejected you and now seek your life.
- 31 I hear the cry of a woman in labor,  
the distress of one delivering her first child.  
It is the cry of Daughter Zion, gasping for breath,  
her arms stretched out, and moaning,  
"I'm about to fall into the hands of murderers!"

#### *Futile search for a good person*

- 5 Search every street in Jerusalem,  
comb the squares,  
look far and wide for one person,  
even one who acts justly and seeks truth  
that I may pardon her!
- 2 Even when making a pledge—"As the LORD lives"—  
they swear falsely.
- 3 LORD, don't you look for integrity?  
You have struck them down, but they didn't even cringe.  
You have crushed them, but they have ignored your discipline.  
They make their faces harder than rock and refuse to return.
- 4 Then I thought to myself,  
These are the poor who don't know better!  
They don't understand the LORD's way  
or the justice of their God.
- 5 Let me go and speak to the powerful people,  
for they will surely know the LORD's way and the justice of their God.  
But they too have broken their yoke and shattered the chains.
- 6 Therefore, a lion from the forest will attack them;  
a wolf from the desert will destroy them;  
a leopard prowling around their towns  
will tear to pieces anyone venturing out—  
because of their many crimes and countless acts of unfaithfulness.
- 7 How can I pardon you?  
Your children have forsaken me  
and swear by gods that are not gods.

5:1-9 God gives a command to *search every street in Jerusalem... one who acts justly*, a command suggestive of Abraham's request for enough righteous people to prevent divine judgment on Sodom (Gen 18:22-33). Pardon wasn't granted to Sodom. And with even more modest expectations here—one person *who acts justly and seeks*

*truth*—it isn't granted to Jerusalem. *As the LORD lives*: a divine and solemn promise that occurs throughout the book (e.g., Jer 4:2; 12:16; 16:14; 23:7; 38:16). *How can I pardon you?*: a rhetorical question that demands a negative response. Yet God does eventually pardon (see Jer 31:34; cf. Hos 11:8-9).

5:8 Jer 13:27;  
Jer 29:23;  
Eze 22:11  
5:9 Jer 5:29;  
Jer 9:9  
5:11 Jer 3:6;  
Jer 3:20  
5:12 Is 28:15;  
Jer 14:13;  
Jer 23:17  
5:14 Jer 1:9;  
Jer 23:29;  
Hos 6:5  
5:21 Is 6:9;  
Jer 4:22;  
Eze 12:2

Although I could have satisfied them,  
they committed adultery,  
dashing off to the prostitution house.

<sup>8</sup>They are lusty stallions roving about,  
snorting for another's wife.

<sup>9</sup>The LORD declares:  
Shouldn't I confront these acts?  
Shouldn't I take revenge on such a nation?

### Contempt for God

<sup>10</sup>Climb through her vineyards and ravage them,  
although not completely.  
Prune back her branches,  
because they aren't the LORD's.

<sup>11</sup>The people of Israel and Judah have been utterly faithless to me,  
declares the LORD.

<sup>12</sup>They have lied about the LORD  
and said, "He'll do nothing!<sup>9</sup>  
Disaster won't come upon us;  
we won't see war or famine."

<sup>13</sup>The prophets are so much wind;  
the word isn't in them.

Thus and so may it be done to them.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, the LORD God of heavenly forces proclaims:  
Because you have spoken this way,  
I will put my words in your mouth as a fire;  
it will consume the people, who are but kindling.

<sup>15</sup>I am about to bring a distant nation against you, people of Israel,  
declares the LORD.

It is an established nation, an ancient nation,  
a nation whose language you don't know,  
whose speech you won't understand.

<sup>16</sup>Its weapons are deadly;<sup>7</sup>  
its warriors are many.

<sup>17</sup>It will devour your harvest and food;  
it will devour your sons and daughters;  
it will devour your flocks and herds;  
it will devour your vines and fig trees;  
it will shatter your fortified towns in which you trust—  
with the sword!

<sup>18</sup>Yet even in those days, declares the LORD, I won't completely destroy you. <sup>19</sup>And when they ask, "Why has the LORD our God done all these things to us?" you must reply, "Just as you have abandoned me and served foreign gods in your land, so you will serve strangers in a land not your own."

### Shouldn't you fear me?

<sup>20</sup>Declare this to the people of Jacob,  
announce it in Judah:

<sup>21</sup>Listen, you foolish and senseless people,  
who have eyes but don't see and ears but don't hear.

<sup>9</sup>Or not he <sup>7</sup>Or Its quiver is like an open grave

5:10-19 The image of Israel as a vineyard is common (Jer 2:21; 12:10; Isa 5:1-7; Ezek 19:10-14; Hos 10:1; John 15:1-11). In this instance, God instructs destroyers to prune Judah's vineyards. The prophet accuses the people of deceit and contempt—*He'll do nothing!* (5:12). Then he accuses the prophets of being windbags: *the word isn't in them* (5:13). Jeremiah repeats the threat that divine judgment would

come as a military assault from the north. The fourfold use of the word *devour* (or consume) in 5:17 emphasizes the force and scope of the attack. Yet the LORD... *won't completely destroy* (5:18; see also Jer 5:10; 30:11; 46:28; 49:6, 39). Mercy will triumph.

5:20-30 New charges against the people of Judah: God's people don't fear God (5:22, 24; a prominent theme in the



- 22 Shouldn't you fear me, declares the LORD,  
and tremble before me,  
the one who set the shoreline for the sea,  
an ancient boundary that it can't pass?  
Though its waves may rise and roar,  
they can't pass the limits I have set.
- 23 And yet the people have stubborn and rebellious hearts;  
they turn and go their own way.
- 24 They don't say in their hearts,  
Let's fear the LORD our God,  
who provides rain in autumn and spring  
and who assures us of a harvest in its season.
- 25 Your wrongdoing has turned these blessings<sup>a</sup> away.  
Your sin has robbed you of good.
- 26 Criminals are found among my people;  
they set traps to catch people,  
like hunters lying in wait.<sup>b</sup>
- 27 Like a cage full of birds,  
so their houses are full of loot.  
No wonder they are rich and powerful  
28 and have grown fat and sleek!  
To be sure, their evil deeds exceed all limits,  
and yet they prosper.  
They are indifferent to the plight of the orphan,  
reluctant to defend the rights of the poor.
- 29 Shouldn't I punish such acts? declares the LORD.  
Shouldn't I repay that nation for its deeds?
- 30 An awful, a terrible thing has happened in the land:  
31 The prophets prophesy falsely,  
the priests rule at their sides,<sup>c</sup>  
and my people love it this way!  
But what will you do when the end comes?

5:22 Dt 28:58;  
Job 38:11;  
Ps 104:9;  
Pv 8:29;  
Jer 10:7  
5:24 Gn 8:22;  
Dt 11:14;  
Ps 147:8; Jl 2:23;  
Mt 5:45  
5:30 Jer 23:14;  
Hos 6:10  
5:31 Jer 14:14;  
Mt 2:11; Mt 7:15  
6:1 Neh 3:14;  
Jer 1:14; Jer 4:6

*Prepare for war*

- 6 Escape, people of Benjamin,  
get out of Jerusalem!  
Blow the trumpet in Tekoa,  
sound the alarm in Beth-haccherem;  
for disaster looms from the north, massive devastation.
- 2 You are like a lovely pasture, Daughter Zion.<sup>d</sup>
- 3 Shepherds come to her with their flocks.  
They pitch their tents around her and graze in their place.
- 4 "Prepare for battle against her;  
get ready; let's attack by noon!  
Oh, no! Daylight is fading,  
and the evening shadows lengthen.

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks  *blessings*. <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Or by their hands <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain

wisdom books; e.g., Prov 1:7; 3:7; 24:21; Job 1:1, 8, 9; cf. Eccl 12:13). Fearing the Lord, among other things, is the awareness of what God desires and the doing of it, the commitment not to do evil, being aware of the consequences of one's behavior. But the people of Judah are *foolish and senseless*; they don't get it (5:21; Jer 6:10; see also Ezek 12:2; Ps 135:15-18; cf. Isa 69-10; Matt 13:14-15; John 12:40), they don't recognize moral boundaries (5:22-24, 28), and they are unresponsive to those in need (5:28; see also Jer 7:6; 22:3). 6:1-8 War is on the horizon. Jeremiah urges God's people

to escape while there is still time. *Escape ... Blow the trumpet ... Prepare for battle ... Hear me out*: commands that convey urgency. 6:2 *lovely pasture* or simply "lovely" occurs in Song of Songs (Song 1:5; 2:14; 4:3; 6:4). The text is complicated by the union of language of affection with the language of accusation, love, and hate. 6:4-5 The tension is heightened by listening in on the generals (that is, "shepherds" in Jer 6:3) from the enemy camp who are eager to attack.

6:7 Ps 55:9;  
Is 57:20;  
Jer 20:8;  
Jer 10:12;  
Eze 7:23  
6:8 Eze 23:18;  
Hos 9:12  
6:9 Is 11:16;  
Jer 11:23;  
Jer 16:16;  
Jer 31:7; Jer 49:9  
6:10 Jer 20:8;  
Ac 7:51  
6:14 Jer 4:10;  
Jer 8:11;  
Jer 14:13;  
Jer 23:17;  
Eze 13:10  
6:16 Is 8:20;  
Is 28:12;  
Jer 18:15;  
Mal 4:4;  
Mt 11:29

<sup>5</sup>Get ready, let's attack by night  
and destroy her fortresses!"

<sup>6</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:  
Cut down her trees, and build siege ramps against Jerusalem.  
This city must be held accountable,<sup>¶</sup>  
for there's nothing but oppression in her midst.

<sup>7</sup>As a well brings forth fresh water,  
she brings forth evil.  
Violence and destruction are heard within her;  
injury and wounds are ever before me.

<sup>8</sup>Hear me out,<sup>¶</sup> Jerusalem,  
or else I'll turn away from you and reduce you to ruins,  
a land unfit to live in.

### Unresponsive people

<sup>9</sup>This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says:  
From top to bottom, let them harvest the remaining few in Israel.  
Pick clean every last grape on the vine!

<sup>10</sup>To whom can I speak and warn?  
How can I get someone's attention?  
Their ears are shut tight,<sup>¶</sup> so they won't hear.  
They are ashamed of the LORD's word  
and take no pleasure in it.

<sup>11</sup>But I'm filled with the LORD's rage  
and am tired of holding it in.

Pour it out on the children in the streets  
and on the youths gathered together;  
husband with wife will be trapped,  
as will those old and gray.

<sup>12</sup>Their homes will be turned over to others,  
their fields and wives as well.  
I will stretch out my hand against the people of this land,  
declares the LORD.

<sup>13</sup>From the least to the greatest, each is eager to profit;  
from prophet to priest, each trades in dishonesty.

<sup>14</sup>They treat the wound of my people as if it were nothing:  
"All is well, all is well," they insist,  
when in fact nothing is well.

<sup>15</sup>They should be ashamed of their detestable practices,  
but they have no shame; they don't even blush!  
Therefore, they will fall among the fallen  
and stumble when I bring disaster, declares the LORD.

<sup>16</sup>The LORD proclaims:  
Stop at the crossroads and look around;  
ask for the ancient paths.  
Where is the good way?  
Then walk in it and find a resting place for yourselves.  
But you<sup>a</sup> said, "We won't go!"

<sup>¶</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>¶</sup>Or Accept correction <sup>¶</sup>Or uncircumcised <sup>¶</sup>Or they

6:9-21 God's people ignore the warnings. A frustrated God asks, *How can I get someone's attention?* (6:10). The description of the *remaining few in Israel* (or the "survivors of Israel") is also used in Jeremiah 31:7; Ezekiel 9:8; 11:13; Micah 2:12; Zephaniah 3:13. Here it conveys the idea of total destruction. The sins of God's people include greed, dishonesty, and indifference—"All is well, all

is well"... when in fact nothing is well (see Jer 5:13-14; cf. Jer 8:11). The *ancient paths* and the *good way* may refer to the God's Instruction or covenant. At a *crossroads* the prophet implores God's people to remember God's saving acts. But they refuse, "We won't go!" The persistent God dispatches *watchmen*, likely a reference to prophets (6:17; Ezek 3:17; 33:7; Hos 9:8), to give warnings, but they go

<sup>17</sup> Still, I have appointed watchmen to warn you.

But you<sup>a</sup> said, "We won't listen!"

<sup>18</sup> Therefore, pay attention, nations;  
take notice, assembly, what is ahead of them.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Pay attention, earth:

I'm bringing disaster upon my people,  
the fruit of their own devices,  
because they have ignored my words  
and they have rejected my teaching.

<sup>20</sup> What use to me is incense from Sheba or sweet cane from a faraway land?

Your entirely burned offerings won't buy your pardon;  
your sacrifices won't appease me.

<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the LORD proclaims:

I'm putting obstacles before this people,  
and both parents and children will stumble over them;  
neighbor and friend alike will perish.

### **Panic-stricken Zion**

<sup>22</sup> The LORD proclaims:

An army is on the move from the northern regions;  
a great nation is roused from the ends of the earth.

<sup>23</sup> Equipped with bow and spear, they are cruel;  
they show no mercy.

Their horsemen sound like the roaring sea,  
arrayed in battle formation against you, Daughter Zion.

<sup>24</sup> We have heard reports of them and are panic-stricken;  
distress overwhelms us, pain like that of a woman in labor.

<sup>25</sup> Don't go out into the field!

Don't walk on the road!

The enemies' sword terrorizes at every turn.

<sup>26</sup> My people, put on funeral clothes and roll in ashes;  
weep and wail as for an only child,

because the destroyer will suddenly descend upon us.

### **Prophet as tester**

<sup>27</sup> I have made you a tester of metals,

to examine my people<sup>c</sup>

to know and prove their ways.

<sup>28</sup> They are tin<sup>d</sup> and iron;

they are headstrong and rebellious.

They live to slander.

They act corruptly—every last one!

<sup>29</sup> The bellows roar;

the lead is consumed.<sup>e</sup>

Yet the refining fails;

the impurities<sup>f</sup> remain.

<sup>30</sup> They are called "rejected silver,"

for the LORD has rejected them.

<sup>a</sup>Or they <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Or bronze <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Or wicked

6:17 Is 21:11,  
Is 58:1; Jer 25:4;  
Eze 3:17

6:20 Ps 40:6;  
Is 1:11, Is 60:6;  
Jer 7:21,  
Jer 14:12

6:29 Zec 13:9;  
Mal 3:3

6:30 Ps 119:119;  
Is 1:22;  
Eze 22:18;  
Hos 9:17

unheeded. So God's people have brought punishment on themselves. Religious offerings won't placate God and purge Israel's willful transgressions (6:20; Jer 7:21-22; see also 1 Sam 15:22; Isa 1:10-17; Hos 6:6; Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-24; Mic 6:6-8).

6:22-26 The army approaching from the north causes Daughter Zion to panic. *My people*: or, "daughter of my people"—must put on mourning clothes and lament as if she has lost her only child.

6:27-30 God assigns Jeremiah the task of refiner or *tester of metals* to determine the quality of God's people. The prophet finds little of value—only dross—so the Lord rejects them. The first major block of (mostly) poetry of the book ends with God's rejection of the people. Also the section contrasts the strong and obedient Jeremiah—whom God makes "an iron pillar, and a bronze wall" (Jer 1:18)—with the *headstrong and rebellious* people of God, who are *tin* [or bronze] and *iron* (6:28).

7:2 Jer 17:19,  
Jer 17:20,  
Jer 22:1, Jer 26:2  
7:3 Jer 18:11,  
Jer 26:13  
7:4 Jer 7:8;  
Mt 3:11  
7:5 1Ki 6:12;  
Is 1:19, Jer 4:1,  
Jer 7:3, Jer 26:13  
7:6 Ex 22:21;  
Jer 5:28, Jer 22:3  
7:11 Is 56:7;  
Mt 21:13;  
Mk 11:17;  
Lk 19:46

7:12 Josh 18:1;  
Jgs 18:31;  
1Sa 1:3, 1Sa 4:3;  
Ps 78:60  
7:14 1Ki 9:7;  
Ps 78:60;  
Jer 26:6

7:16 Ex 32:10;  
Dt 9:14;  
Jer 11:14,  
Jer 14:11,  
Jer 15:1

7:18 Jer 19:13,  
Jer 44:17;  
Hos 7:4

7:21 Is 1:11;  
Jer 6:20,  
Hos 8:13;  
Am 5:21

7:22 1Sa 15:22;  
Hos 6:6

### The Lord's temple

**7** Jeremiah received the LORD's word: <sup>2</sup>Stand near the gate of the LORD's temple and proclaim there this message: Listen to the LORD's word, all you of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. <sup>3</sup>This is what the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, says: Improve your conduct and your actions, and I will dwell with you<sup>a</sup> in this place. <sup>4</sup>Don't trust in lies: "This is the LORD's temple! The LORD's temple! The LORD's temple!" <sup>5</sup>No, if you truly reform your ways and your actions; if you treat each other justly; <sup>6</sup>if you stop taking advantage of the immigrant, orphan, or widow; if you don't shed the blood of the innocent in this place, or go after other gods to your own ruin, <sup>7</sup>only then will I dwell with you<sup>b</sup> in this place, in the land that I gave long ago to your ancestors for all time.

<sup>8</sup>And yet you trust in lies that will only hurt you. <sup>9</sup>Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, sacrifice to Baal and go after other gods that you don't know, <sup>10</sup>and then come and stand before me in this temple that bears my name, and say, "We are safe," only to keep on doing all these detestable things? <sup>11</sup>Do you regard this temple, which bears my name, as a hiding place for criminals? I can see what's going on here, declares the LORD. <sup>12</sup>Just go to my sanctuary<sup>d</sup> in Shiloh, where I let my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel. <sup>13</sup>And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD, because you haven't listened when I spoke to you again and again or responded when I called you, <sup>14</sup>I will do to this temple that bears my name and on which you rely, the place that I gave to you and your ancestors, just as I did to Shiloh. <sup>15</sup>I will cast you out of my sight, just as I cast out the rest of your family, all the people of Ephraim.

<sup>16</sup>As for you, don't pray for these people, don't cry out or plead for them, and don't intercede with me, for I won't listen to you. <sup>17</sup>Can't you see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? <sup>18</sup>The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead dough to make sacrificial cakes for the queen of heaven. And to offend me all the more, they pour out drink offerings to foreign gods. <sup>19</sup>But am I the one they are really offending? declares the LORD. Aren't they in fact humiliating themselves? <sup>20</sup>Therefore, this is what the LORD God says: I'm going to pour out my fierce anger on this place, on humans and beasts, on the trees of the field and the crops of the fertile land. It will burn and not go out.

<sup>21</sup>This is what the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, says: Add your entirely burned offerings to your sacrifices and eat them yourselves! <sup>22</sup>On the day I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I didn't say a thing—I gave no instructions—about entirely

<sup>a</sup>Or I will let you dwell <sup>b</sup>Or I will let you dwell <sup>c</sup>Or place

7:1–10:25 The end of the temple and its culture of idolatry. This section focuses on worship and its abuses. It opens with Jeremiah delivering a sermon in the temple on the importance of obedience, and it concludes with a wholesale condemnation of idolatry. True worship, the text insists, is expressed in loyalty and love for God as well as acts of kindness and generosity to others.

7:1–8:3 The Lord's temple: contaminated worship. Jeremiah stands at the entrance of the temple and criticizes the kind of worship practiced there. True worship, the prophet proclaims, is expressed in a changed life, obedience to God, and love for neighbor, especially love for the vulnerable and disadvantaged. To exploit those created in God's image is to show disdain for God's most basic demands. God has nothing to do with worship that ignores justice. Put simply, love for God is linked to love for neighbor (e.g., Lev 19:18, 34; Deut 10:19; Amos 5:21–24; Matt 22:34–39; 1 John 4:16–21).

7:4 *This is the LORD's temple!... The LORD's temple!*: is perhaps part of Judah's entrance liturgy, conveying the belief that worshippers are safe from harm when entering God's presence (cf. Jer 7:10). The prophet mocks these words by referring to them as *lies* and by claiming that God is

present in the temple only when worshippers reform their ways and treat people compassionately (Jer 7:5–7)

7:6 *the immigrant, orphan, or widow*: those located at the base of the economic system and therefore most vulnerable to abuse (see Exod 22:21–24; Deut 10:18–19; 24:17–22; 1Sa 1:17; Jer 22:3; Zech 7:10). Israel is to protect people who can't protect themselves. To abuse them is to outrage their divine guardian (Ps 146:9).

7:9–10 To violate five of the Ten Commandments and then seek safety in the temple is absurd.

7:11 *a hiding place for criminals*: that is, using the temple as a place to hide from God after committing acts against God and others (see Matt 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).

7:12, 14 *Shiloh*: an ancient sanctuary associated with God's presence (Josh 21:1–2; 1 Sam 1:1–9, 24; 2:14; 4:1–11), assumed to be in ruins because of Israel's transgressions.

7:16 The ban on prophetic prayer and intercession (see Jer 11:14; 14:11; 15:1) violates the core prophetic duty of praying for God's people (Jer 27:18).

7:18 *queen of heaven*: a title associated with the Assyrian-Babylonian goddess Ishtar, also known as Astarte (see Jer 44:15–30; cf. 2 Kgs 21:1–9).

7:23 Ex 15:26,  
Ex 19:5; Dt 4:40,  
Dt 5:33; Jer 11:4  
7:24 Jer 3:17,  
Jer 11:8  
7:25 2Ch 36:15;  
Jer 25:4,  
Jer 35:15  
7:26 Jer 7:34,  
Jer 16:12,  
Jer 17:23,  
Jer 19:15  
7:29 Job 1:20,  
Jer 6:30;  
Eze 19:1;  
Mi 1:16  
7:30 2Ch 33:7;  
Jer 7:10,  
Jer 32:34;  
Eze 7:20  
7:34 Is 24:7,  
Is 24:8; Jer 16:9,  
Jer 25:10;  
Rev 18:23  
8:1 Eze 6:5  
8:2 Dt 4:19,  
2Ki 9:37,  
2Ki 23:5;  
Jer 19:13;  
Zep 1:5  
8:4 Prv 24:16;  
Mi 7:8  
8:5 Jer 5:3,  
Jer 5:6, Jer 7:24,  
Jer 9:6

*True and False Worship* Jeremiah 7:1-15 is a sermon that is usually considered as an interruption in its narrative context. However, when read as a theological response to the haunting and elusive poetry of Jeremiah 2-6, it asserts that even the Jerusalem temple, the center of national life, won't save Judah from national disaster and divine judgment. Despite its standing and long association with God's presence, the temple won't provide unconditional protection and blessing. If God's people don't reform their ways, practice justice, and care for those in great need, God will destroy the great temple, and they will go into exile. Jeremiah appeals to historical examples to make this case. Thus the great sanctuary at Shiloh was destroyed because Israel failed to obey God's will.

burned offerings or sacrifices. <sup>23</sup>Rather, this is what I required of them: Obey me so that I may become your God and you may become my people. Follow the path I mark out for you so that it may go well with you. <sup>24</sup>But they didn't listen or pay attention. They followed their willful and evil hearts and went backward rather than forward. <sup>25</sup>From the moment your ancestors left the land of Egypt to this day, I have sent you all my servants the prophets—day after day. <sup>26</sup>But they didn't listen to me or pay attention; they were stubborn and did more harm than their ancestors. <sup>27</sup>When you tell them all this, they won't listen to you. When you call to them, they won't respond. <sup>28</sup>Therefore, say to them: This nation neither obeys the LORD its God nor accepts correction; truth has disappeared; it has vanished from their lips.

<sup>29</sup>Cut off your hair and cast it away;  
grieve on the well-traveled paths.

The LORD has rejected you  
and has cast off a generation that provokes his anger.

<sup>30</sup>The people of Judah have done what displeases me, declares the LORD. They have corrupted the temple that bears my name by setting up their disgusting idols. <sup>31</sup>They have built shrines at Topheth in the Ben-hinnom Valley to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, although I never commanded such a thing, nor did it ever cross my mind. <sup>32</sup>So now the time is coming, declares the LORD, when people will no longer speak of Topheth or the Ben-hinnom Valley, but the Carnage Valley. They will bury in Topheth until no space is left. <sup>33</sup>The corpses of this people will be food for birds and wild animals, with no one to drive them off. <sup>34</sup>I will silence the sound of joy and delight as well as the voice of bride and bridegroom in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, for the country will be reduced to a wasteland.

**G**At that time, declares the LORD, the bones of the kings of Judah and its officers, the bones of the priests and the prophets, and the bones of the people of Jerusalem will be taken from their graves and exposed to the sun, the moon, and the whole heavenly forces, which they have loved and served and which they have followed, consulted, and worshipped. Their bones won't be gathered for reburial but will become like refuse lying on the ground. <sup>3</sup>The survivors of this evil nation will prefer death to life, wherever I have scattered them, declares the LORD of heavenly forces.

### Depth of Judah's wrongdoing

<sup>4</sup>Say to them, The LORD proclaims:  
When people fall down, don't they get up?  
When they turn aside, don't they turn back?

<sup>5</sup>Why then does this people, rebellious Jerusalem,  
persistently turn away from me?  
They cling to deceit  
and refuse to return.

7:31-32 *Topheth* (or fire pit) or the *Ben-hinnom Valley*: the place associated with human (child) sacrifice (Jer 19:1-13; 2 Kgs 23:10; see also 2 Kgs 21:6), a practice strictly forbidden in Leviticus 18:21 and Deuteronomy 18:10 and said to be abolished by Josiah (2 Kgs 23:10)

8:4-10:25 Weeping and warning. The material in these chapters is diverse. The section begins with an accusation that God's people *refuse to return* (8:5-13); it then develops the charge of unfaithfulness in Jeremiah 8-9. Condemning words together with signs of the northern enemy's advance lead to a chorus of suffering voices that are difficult to tell apart (8:14-21, 8:22-9:12, 17-24). The first

wave of grief comes from God's people, who finally realize that disaster is close (8:14-16): "*The harvest is past, the summer has ended, yet we aren't saved*" (8:20). Either God or God's prophet Jeremiah in *darkness* or *despair* grieves the *wounds of [God's] people* (8:18-9:12). The funeral song isn't complete until professional mourners lament a fallen world and urge others to do the same (9:17-22, especially 9:18). This diverse body of literature concludes with a reflection on the dangers of idolatry (10:1-25).

8:4-13 Jeremiah charges *rebellious Jerusalem* (8:5) with rejecting the Lord's ways. The prophet delivers the divine charge with grim force. Despite the claim to be wise, God's

8:6 Mt 7:2;  
Mal 3:16  
8:7 Is 1:3,  
Is 30:14; Jer 4:22;  
Jer 5:4  
8:8 Ro 2:17  
8:9 Jer 6:19  
8:11 Jer 6:14,  
Jer 8:21,  
Jer 14:13;  
Lam 2:14;  
Eze 13:10  
8:13 J1 1:7;  
Mt 21:19;  
Lk 13:6  
8:16 Jer 4:15  
8:17 Nm 21:6;  
Dt 32:24;  
Ps 58:4, Ps 58:5;  
Is 14:29

- <sup>6</sup>I have listened carefully  
but haven't heard a word of truth from them.  
No one regrets their wrongdoing;  
no one says, "What have I done?"  
Everyone turns to their own course,  
like a stallion dashing into the thick of battle.
- <sup>7</sup>Even the stork in the sky knows the seasons,  
and the dove, swallow,<sup>h</sup> and crane<sup>i</sup> return in due time.  
But my people don't know the LORD's ways.
- <sup>8</sup>How can you say, "We are wise; we possess the LORD's Instruction,"  
when the lying pen of the scribes has surely distorted it?
- <sup>9</sup>The wise will be shamed and shocked when they are caught.  
Look, they have rejected the LORD's word;  
what kind of wisdom is that?
- <sup>10</sup>Therefore, I will give their wives to others  
and their fields to their captors.  
From the least to the greatest, all are eager to profit.  
From prophet to priest, all trade in falsehood.
- <sup>11</sup>They treat the wound of my people as if it were nothing:  
"All is well, all is well," they insist, when in fact nothing is well.
- <sup>12</sup>They should be ashamed of their detestable practices,  
but they have no shame; they don't even blush!  
Therefore, they will fall among the fallen  
and stumble when disaster arrives, declares the LORD.
- <sup>13</sup>I will put an end to them,<sup>l</sup> declares the LORD;  
there are no grapes on the vine,  
no figs on the tree,  
only withered leaves.  
They have squandered what I have given them!<sup>m</sup>

### ***A lament for God's people***

- <sup>14</sup>Why are we sitting here?  
Come, let's go to the fortified towns and meet our doom there.  
The LORD our God has doomed us by giving us poisoned water to drink,  
because we have sinned against the LORD!
- <sup>15</sup>We longed for relief, but received none;  
for a time of healing, but found only terror.
- <sup>16</sup>The snorting of their horses can be heard as far as Dan;  
the neighing of their stallions makes the whole land tremble.  
They come to devour the land and everything in it,  
towns and people alike.
- <sup>17</sup>See, I'm sending serpents against you,  
vipers that you can't charm,  
and they will bite you, declares the LORD.
- <sup>18</sup>No healing, only grief;  
my heart is broken.<sup>n</sup>

<sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>i</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>l</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>n</sup>Heb uncertain

people lack all good sense. They betray the natural order (8:7), trade in greed and falsehood (8:10), and openly engage in idolatry (8:12). Although there's enough guilt to go around (*From the least to the greatest*), Judah's failed leadership bears most responsibility. Scribes (or wise ones), prophets, and priests betray their sacred obligations to the community.

**8:4-6** *turn*: The Hebrew word *shub*, often translated "turn" or "return" in Jeremiah 2-6, reappears, emphasizing that God's people have turned away from God and not to God.  
**8:7** Unlike migratory birds that follow their instincts, God's people don't know the LORD's ways (cf. Isa 1:2-3)

**8:10** Charges against prophets and priests are common in Jeremiah 2:8; 4:9; 5:31; 6:13; 14:18; 18:18; 23:11, 33-40; see also Jeremiah 26:7-11.

**8:11** See Jeremiah 6:14.

**8:14-21** The community cries out in despair, resigning itself to a terrible future (8:14-16). Although God doesn't relent, God is heartbroken and crushed (8:17-21).

**8:14** *The LORD our God has doomed us*: See, e.g., Psalms 10; 13; 44; 74.

**8:16** *Dan*: the northern frontier of Israel (see also Jer 4:15). Babylonian military troops would invade Israel or Judah by way of Dan. The army is close.

8:22 Gn 37:25;  
Jer 46:11;  
Mt 9:12  
9:1 Is 22:4;  
Jer 8:21;  
Jer 13:17;  
Jer 14:17;  
Lam 3:48  
9:2 Ps 55:6;  
Ps 55:7, Ps 120:5;  
Jer 5:7, Jer 23:10  
9:3 Jgs 2:10;  
Ps 64:3; Jer 4:22;  
Jer 9:8; Hos 4:1  
9:4 Ps 15:3;  
Ps 50:20;  
Prv 10:18;  
Jer 6:28; Mt 7:5  
9:5 Lv 6:2;  
Ps 50:19;  
Ps 116:11;  
Jer 9:3; Mt 6:12  
9:6 Job 21:14;  
Jn 3:19, Jn 3:20  
9:8 Ps 12:2;  
Ps 28:3; Jer 9:3  
9:10 Jer 4:25;  
Jer 12:4; Hos 4:3

19 Listen to the weeping of my people all across the land:  
“Isn’t the LORD in Zion?  
Is her king no longer there?”  
Why then did they anger me with their images,  
with pointless foreign gods?

20 “The harvest is past,  
the summer has ended,  
yet we aren’t saved.”

21 Because my people are crushed, I am crushed;  
darkness and despair overwhelm me.

**What to do with God’s people**

22 Is there no balm in Gilead?  
Is there no physician there?  
Why then have my people not been restored to health?

9<sup>o</sup> If only my head were a spring of water,  
and my eyes a fountain of tears,  
I would weep day and night for the wounds of my people.

2<sup>p</sup> If only I could flee for shelter in the desert,  
to leave my people and forget them—  
for they are all adulterers, a bunch of crooks.

3 They bend their tongues like bows to spew out lies;  
they are renowned in the land, but not for truth.  
They go from bad to worse.  
They don’t know me! declares the LORD.

4 Be wary of your friends!  
Don’t trust your sibling!<sup>q</sup>  
Every sibling is a cheater,  
and every friend traffics in slander.

5 One cheats the other; no one tells the truth;  
they train themselves to lie; they wear themselves out by doing wrong.

6 You live in a world of deceit,  
and in their deceit they refuse to know me,<sup>r</sup> declares the LORD.

7 Therefore, the LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:  
I’m going to refine and test them,  
for what else can I do with my people?

8 Their tongue is a lethal arrow;  
their words are deceitful.  
They wish their neighbors well,  
but in their hearts plot their ruin.

9 Shouldn’t I punish them for this? declares the LORD;  
shouldn’t I avenge such a nation?

10 I will weep and wail for the mountains,  
and lament for the grazing lands in the wilderness.  
They are dried up and deserted; no sound of the flocks is heard;  
no sign of birds or animals is seen; all have vanished.

11 I will reduce Jerusalem to ruins, a den for wild dogs.  
I will make the towns of Judah a wasteland, without inhabitant.

12 Who is wise enough to understand this?  
Who has been taught by the LORD and can therefore explain it?

<sup>o</sup>8:23 in Heb <sup>p</sup>9:1 in Heb <sup>q</sup>Or brother <sup>r</sup>Heb uncertain

8:22–9:16 A remarkable display of divine grief. God would weep uncontrollably for Israel. The pain is so overwhelming that even God would avoid it at all costs—even *flee[ing] for shelter in the desert* (9:2; cf. Ps 55:4–8). Does God lament because of Israel’s terrible suffering or because Israel has wandered so far from God? The two can’t be easily separated. God weeps *day and night for the wounds*

*of [God’s] people* (9:1), but the list of the people’s transgressions (9:3–9) suggests that God is deeply wounded by the broken relationship. In addition, God is profoundly affected by the destruction of the land (9:10), although God is the one who reduces land, city, and town to rubble (9:11). Still the wise realize that the community, not God, is responsible for the ruin (9:12–16, 24).

9:17 2Ch 35:25;  
Ecc 12:5;  
Am 5:16;  
Mt 9:23  
9:18 Is 22:4;  
Jer 9:1, Jer 14:17  
9:21 2Ch 36:17;  
Jer 6:11  
9:23 1Ki 20:11;  
Ecc 9:11  
9:24 Jer 31:34;  
Mt 7:18;  
1Co 1:31;  
2Co 10:17  
9:25 Jer 4:4;  
Ro 2:9, Ro 2:25  
9:26 Jer 4:4;  
Jer 25:23;  
Jer 49:32;  
Eze 44:7;  
Ro 2:28

Why has the land been reduced to rubble  
and laid waste like a desert, with no one passing through?

<sup>13</sup>The LORD says: It is because they have abandoned my Instruction that I gave them, and haven't obeyed or followed it. <sup>14</sup>Instead, they have followed their own willful hearts and have gone after the Baals, as their ancestors taught them. <sup>15</sup>Therefore, this is what the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, says: I'm going to feed this people bitter food and give them poison to drink. <sup>16</sup>I will scatter them among nations about whom neither they nor their ancestors have ever heard. I will pursue them with the sword until all are gone.

<sup>17</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

Pay attention!

Summon the women who mourn, let them come;

send for those best trained, let them come.

<sup>18</sup>Hurry!

Let them weep for us

so that our eyes fill up with tears and water streams down.

<sup>19</sup>The sound of sobbing is heard from Zion:

"We're devastated! We're so ashamed!

We have to leave the land and abandon our homes!"

<sup>20</sup>Women, hear the LORD's word.

Listen closely to the word from his mouth:

teach your daughters to mourn;

teach each other to grieve.

<sup>21</sup>Death has climbed through our windows;

it has entered our fortresses to eliminate children from the streets,

the youth from the squares.

<sup>22</sup>Declare what the LORD says:

Dead bodies will lie like dung on the fields,

like bundles of grain after the harvest,

with no one to pick them up.

<sup>23</sup>The LORD proclaims:

the learned should not boast of their knowledge,

nor warriors boast of their might,

nor the rich boast of their wealth.

<sup>24</sup>No, those who boast should boast in this:

that they understand and know me.

I am the LORD who acts with kindness,

justice, and righteousness in the world,

and I delight in these things, declares the LORD.

<sup>25</sup>The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will deal with everyone who is physically circumcised: <sup>26</sup>whether they are Egyptians or Judeans, Edomites or Ammonites, Moabites or the desert dwellers who cut the hair on their foreheads. All these nations are really uncircumcised; even the people of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.

9:17-22 God calls professional mourners to participate in the national funeral song. Their presence signals death, again as a result of military actions. All must come to terms with the realities of a fallen world, and all must take part in this public ritual of grief.

9:23-24 These verses are frequently read as an interruption into the larger context of mourning, but they may be read as a response to it. If so, the immediacy of death and destruction refocuses national priorities. What once seemed vital to life and national security—knowledge, power, and wealth—is exposed as sorely inadequate. Readers, especially exilic readers who have suffered the loss of power and position, are to celebrate something far more essential: understanding and knowing the living

God (cf. 1 Cor 1:26-31). To know God is to live in intimate relationship with God and to recognize that God's activity *in the world* is rooted in kindness, justice, and righteousness (see Jer 2:8; 4:22; 8:7; 9:3, 6; 24:7; 31:34). These three aspects of divine action are also lauded as basic virtues of community (*I delight in these things*). It's no accident that Jeremiah draws attention to King Josiah's defense of the rights of the poor as an example of what it means to know the Lord (Jer 22:16).

9:25-26 The special status of God's people is questioned, as is the practice of circumcision as a rite that averts divine judgment (see Gen 17:9-14; cf. Deut 10:16; 30:6-7). Judeans are included in a list of those who are *physically circumcised*, but not circumcised properly, that is, in heart (see Jer 4:4).



## Living God or human handiwork

**10** Listen to the word that the LORD has spoken to you, people of Israel!  
 The LORD proclaims:

Don't follow the ways of the nations  
 or be troubled by signs in the sky,  
 even though the nations are troubled by them.

<sup>3</sup> The rituals of the nations are hollow:  
 a tree from the forest is chopped down and shaped by the craftsman's tools.

<sup>4</sup> It's overlaid with silver and gold,  
 and fastened securely with hammer and nails so it won't fall over.

<sup>5</sup> They are no different than a scarecrow in a cucumber patch:  
 they can't speak;  
 they must be carried because they can't walk.

Don't be afraid of them,  
 because they can't do harm or good.

<sup>6</sup> LORD, no one is like you!  
 You are great, and great is your mighty name.

<sup>7</sup> Who wouldn't fear you, king of the nations?  
 That is your due;  
 among all the wise of the nations and in all their countries,  
 there is no one like you!

<sup>8</sup> But they are both foolish and silly;  
 they offer nothing because they are mere wood.

<sup>9</sup> Covered with silver from Tarshish and gold from Uphaz,  
 they are the work of a craftsman and the hands of a goldsmith.  
 Clothed in blue and purple,  
 all of them nothing more than the work of artisans.

<sup>10</sup> But the LORD is the true God!  
 He's the living God and the everlasting king!  
 When he's angry, the earth quakes;  
 the nations can't endure his rage.

<sup>11</sup> Tell them this: The gods who didn't make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>12</sup> But God made the earth by his might;  
 he shaped the world by his wisdom,  
 crafted the skies by his knowledge.

<sup>13</sup> At the sound of his voice, the heavenly waters roar.  
 He raises the clouds from the ends of the earth.  
 He sends the lightning with the rain,  
 the wind from his treasures.

<sup>14</sup> Everyone is too foolish to understand;  
 every goldsmith is dishonored by his idols,  
 for their images are shams; they aren't alive.

<sup>15</sup> They are a delusion, a charade;  
 at the appointed time they will vanish!

<sup>a</sup>10:11 is written in Aramaic.

10:1-16 This hymn of praise, located near the end of the first major section of the book (Jer 1-10), expresses deep and abiding devotion to the Lord. It contrasts the incomparable God of Israel *the true God, the living God, the everlasting king* with the idols of the nations. Referred to as *gods* (only in 10:11 in the Aramaic), the *ways and rituals* of the nations are worthless, ineffective, foolish, and absurd. They are mocked as nothing but a fabrication of human hands. At the heart of this text is the underlying concern: Who's in control? What's dependable? How can one be safe in a dangerous world? Such questions couldn't have been more pressing for exilic or post-exilic readers

immersed in strange worlds with competing social systems and ways of understanding the world. This hymn celebrates the Lord as the only one worthy of admiration and allegiance. At the same time it warns the community to avoid the idolatrous practices of the nations.

10:5, 8 For similar caricatures, see Psalms 115:4-8; 135:15-18; Isaiah 44:9-20.

10:12 See also Jeremiah 51:15.

10:14 *shams*: a term used to describe the idols of the nations is a translation of the same Hebrew word used for false worship at the Jerusalem temple (Jer 7:4; cf. Jer 7:8; see sidebar, "True and False Worship" at Jer 7).

10:2 Lv 18:3,  
 Lv 20:23  
 10:3 Is 44:9  
 10:4 Is 40:19,  
 Is 41:7  
 10:5 Ps 115:5,  
 Ps 115:7;  
 Is 41:23, Is 46:7;  
 1Co 12:2  
 10:9 1Ki 10:22;  
 Ps 115:4;  
 Is 40:19;  
 Eze 27:12;  
 Dn 10:5  
 10:10 Ps 76:7;  
 Na 1:6  
 10:11 Ps 96:5;  
 Is 2:18, Jer 10:15;  
 Zep 2:11;  
 Zec 13:2  
 10:12 Gn 1:1;  
 Job 9:8;  
 Ps 104:24;  
 Prv 3:19;  
 Jer 51:15  
 10:13 Ps 135:7  
 10:14 Jer 10:8

10:16 Dt 32:9;  
Ps 74:2;  
Jer 10:12;  
Jer 31:35;  
Jer 51:19

10:21 Jer 2:8,  
Jer 23:1, Jer 23:2;  
Eze 34:6

10:23 Psv 16:1,  
Psv 20:24

10:24 Ps 6:1,  
Ps 38:1,  
Jer 30:11

11:4 Lv 26:3,  
Dt 4:20,  
1Kg 8:51;  
Jer 7:23

<sup>16</sup>Jacob's portion is utterly different because God has formed all things, including Israel, his very own people—the LORD of heavenly forces is his name!

### Get ready for exile!

<sup>17</sup>Pack your bags and get ready to leave, you who live under siege.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>18</sup>The LORD proclaims:  
I'm going to eject those who live in the land at this time;  
I will badger them until they leave.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>19</sup>How terrible for me,  
due to my injury; my wound is terrible.  
Yet I said to myself: This is my sickness, and I must bear it.

<sup>20</sup>But now my tent is destroyed;  
all its ropes are cut, and my children are gone for good.  
There's no one left to set up my tent frame and to attach the fabric.

<sup>21</sup>The shepherd kings have lost their senses  
and don't seek answers from the LORD.  
That is why they have failed and their flock is scattered.

<sup>22</sup>Listen! The sound is getting louder,  
a mighty uproar from the land of the north;  
it will reduce the towns of Judah to ruins, a den for wild dogs.

<sup>23</sup>I know, LORD, that our lives are not our own,  
that we're not able to direct our paths.

<sup>24</sup>So correct me, LORD,  
but with justice, not in your anger,  
or else you will reduce me to nothing.

<sup>25</sup>Pour out your wrath on the nations that ignore you  
and on the people who don't call on you, since they have devoured Jacob;  
they have devoured him completely and ruined his country.

### Judah's broken covenant with God

**11** Jeremiah received the LORD's word: <sup>1</sup>Listen to the terms of this covenant and proclaim them to the people of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>Say to them: This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Cursed are those who don't heed the terms of this covenant <sup>3</sup>that I commanded your ancestors when I bought them out of the land of Egypt:

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>a</sup>Or find it

10:17-25 The reference to God's people is probably to Daughter Zion (see 10:20). They must prepare at once for exile (10:17-18). A disjointed reaction of grief follows. The Hebrew noun *sheber*, translated in 10:19 as *wound*, has a range of meanings in Jeremiah, including "devastation" (Jer 4:30), "disaster" (Jer 4:6), "crushed" (Jer 8:21), and "a crushing blow" (Jer 14:17). The painful language *my tent is destroyed... my children are gone for good* (10:20) recalls the destruction of homes and the disappearance or death of Daughter Zion's family. Harsh words for *shepherd kings* are found elsewhere in Jeremiah 22:13-23, 24-30; 23:1-2; Ezekiel 34:1-6; compare with Hosea 9:15. Their failures are made all the more poignant in light of the advancing Babylonian armies. *devoured Jacob*: likely a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.

10:23 See Proverbs 16:9; 20:24.

10:24 See Psalm 6:2.

10:25 See Psalm 79:6-7.

11:1-12:17 End of the covenant and its culture of self-determination. This section is held together by the

assertion that Israel and Judah have broken the covenant and must suffer for their disobedience. The people's disobedience is demonstrated both in Jeremiah's second sermon (11:1-17) and in the attempt on the prophet Jeremiah's life (11:18-23). Both Jeremiah and God lament the people's resistance to God and God's messengers (12:1-4, 7-13).

11:1-17 The second major sermon in the book. The LORD instructs Jeremiah to preach a sermon calling the Judeans to obey the terms of the covenant. Judah's future as God's people in the land rides on their response. The Hebrew word translated as *heed*, *obey*, or *listen* occurs nine times in this sermon, five of which are negated—such as *they didn't listen*, or *they refused to obey*, culminating in the frightening prospect of God not listening to the people's pleas. The sermon is less an appeal to the community than a charge that Judah has already broken its covenant with God. Many words and phrases in this sermon are identical to those found in Deuteronomy.

11:1, 2 Covenant curses are the consequence of breaking the covenant (Deut 27:26).

that iron crucible, saying, Obey me and observe all that I instruct you. Then you will be my people and I, even I, will be your God. <sup>5</sup>I will fulfill my solemn pledge that I made to your ancestors to give them a land full of milk and honey, as is the case today.

And I replied, "As you say, LORD!"

<sup>6</sup>The LORD said to me: Announce all these words in the towns of Judah and on the streets of Jerusalem: Obey the terms of this covenant and perform them. <sup>7</sup>I repeatedly and tirelessly warned your ancestors when I brought them out of the land of Egypt to this very day, saying, Obey me. <sup>8</sup>But they didn't listen or pay attention; they followed their own willful ambitions. So I brought upon them all the punishments I prescribed for violating this covenant—for refusing to obey.

<sup>9</sup>The LORD said to me: A conspiracy is taking place among the people of Judah and residents of Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup>They have returned to the sins of their ancestors who refused to obey my words. They too are following other gods and serving them. The people of Israel and the people of Judah have broken my covenant that I made with their ancestors.

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, the LORD proclaims: I will bring upon them a disaster from which they won't be able to escape. They will cry out to me, but I won't listen to them. <sup>12</sup>Then the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem will call upon the gods they worship,<sup>v</sup> but they won't save them when disaster strikes. <sup>13</sup>You have as many gods as you have towns, Judah, and you have as many shameful altars for worshipping Baal as you have streets in Jerusalem.

<sup>14</sup>As for you, don't pray for these people, don't cry out or plead for them, for I won't listen when they cry out to me on account of their distress.

<sup>15</sup>What are my loved ones doing in my temple while working out their many evil schemes?

Can sacred offerings cancel your sin so that you revel in your evil deeds?<sup>w</sup>

<sup>16</sup>The LORD named you,

"A blossoming olive tree, fair and fruitful";  
but with the blast of a powerful storm he will set it ablaze,  
until its branches are completely consumed.<sup>x</sup>

<sup>17</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces who planted you has announced disaster for you, because the people of Israel and Judah have done evil and made me angry by worshipping Baal.

**Jeremiah's lament**

<sup>18</sup>The LORD informed me and I knew.

Then he helped me see what they were up to.

<sup>19</sup>I was like a young lamb led to the slaughter;

I didn't realize that they were planning their schemes against me:

"Let's destroy the tree with its fruit;  
let's cut him off from the land of the living  
so that even any knowledge of him will be wiped out."

<sup>20</sup>LORD of heavenly forces, righteous judge, who tests the heart and mind,

let me see your revenge upon them,  
because I have committed my case to you.

<sup>21</sup>This is what the LORD says concerning the men from Anathoth who seek your life and say, "Don't prophesy in the LORD's name or else you will die at our hands." <sup>22</sup>Therefore, the LORD of heavenly forces proclaims, I'm going to punish them. Their young men will die in war, and their sons and daughters will die by famine. <sup>23</sup>No one will be left because I will bring disaster upon the men of Anathoth when their time comes.

<sup>v</sup>Or to whom they burn incense <sup>w</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>x</sup>Vulg; MT broken

11:5 Ex 3:8,  
Ex 13:5; Dt 7:12;  
Ps 105:9;  
Jer 32:22

11:8 Jer 3:17,  
Jer 7:24,  
Jer 7:26; Jer 9:14;  
Eze 20:8

11:11 Psv 1:28;  
Is 1:15; Jer 14:12;  
Eze 8:18; Mi 3:4

11:14 Ex 32:10;  
Jer 7:16,  
Jer 14:11,  
Jer 14:11;  
1Jn 5:16

11:15 Eze 16:25  
11:18 1Sa 23:11,  
1Sa 23:12;  
2Ki 6:9; 2Ki 6:10;  
Eze 8:6

11:19 Ps 83:4;  
Is 53:7; Is 53:8;  
Jer 18:18

11:18–12:17 If read as a reaction to the sermon (Jer 11:1–17), a literary coherence emerges: At the instruction of the Lord, Jeremiah delivers an assault on the people's cherished beliefs and institutions—turning their covenant status against them. In retaliation the people try to silence God by silencing God's messenger. Then Jeremiah complains to God concerning the ensuing suffering. This

is the first of Jeremiah's confessions (see intro). Jeremiah cries out to God, blames his adversaries for his distress, declares his own innocence, and prays for justice and retribution. When there is no relief, Jeremiah accuses God of not acting justly. God warns Jeremiah that things will only get worse.

11:21 *Anathoth*: Jeremiah's own village (Jer 1:1).

12:1 Eze 9:15;  
 Job 12:6,  
 Job 21:7; Ps 37:1,  
 Ps 73:3  
 12:2 Is 29:13;  
 Jer 3:10,  
 Jer 11:17;  
 Mk 7:6; Ti 1:16  
 12:7 Is 2:6;  
 Jer 11:15  
 12:8 Hos 9:15;  
 Am 6:8  
 12:9 Is 56:9;  
 Jer 7:33;  
 Eze 39:17  
 12:10 Is 5:1

- 1** If I took you to court, LORD, you would win.  
 But I still have questions about your justice.  
 Why do guilty persons enjoy success?  
 Why are evildoers so happy?
- 2** You plant them, and they take root;  
 they flourish and bear fruit.  
 You are always on their lips but far from their hearts.
- 3** Yet you, LORD, you know me. You see me.  
 You can tell that I love you.<sup>†</sup>  
 So drag them away and butcher them like sheep.  
 Prepare them for the slaughterhouse.
- 4** How long will the land mourn and the grass in the fields dry up?  
 The animals and birds are swept away due to the evil of those in the land.  
 The people say, "God doesn't see what we're up to!"
- 5** If you have raced with people and are worn out,  
 how will you compete with horses?  
 If you fall down in an open field,<sup>‡</sup>  
 how will you survive in the forest along the Jordan?
- 6** Even your relatives, your very family, are planning to trap you.  
 They are out to get you.  
 So don't trust them, even if they appear to be on your side.

#### **God's lament over Judah's destruction**

- 7** I have abandoned my house;  
 I have deserted my inheritance.  
 I have given the one I love into the power of her enemies.
- 8** My inheritance has turned against me like a lion in the forest;  
 she growls at me; therefore, I have rejected her.
- 9** My inheritance has become like a bird of prey, surrounded and attacked.<sup>‡</sup>  
 Go, gather all the wild animals for the feast.
- 10** Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard;  
 they have trampled down my field;  
 they have reduced my treasured field to a desolate wilderness.
- 11** They have devastated her;  
 desolate, she cries out to me in distress:  
 "The whole land is desolate, and no one seems to care."
- 12** Over all the desert roads destroyers march;  
 for the sword of the LORD devours from one end of the land to the other;  
 no one is safe.

*The End of the Covenant* Jeremiah 11:1–12:17 opens the second major section of the book (Jer 11:1–20:18), a section that grapples with the meaning of the disastrous military blows suffered by the Judeans in the 6th century BCE. It offers insightful responses to the question, "Why has all this happened?" Jeremiah 11:1–12:17 makes the case that God's people have rejected God's covenant and therefore must face the dire consequences. As before, however, a dispute leads to lament. These accusations generate human and divine anguish. Jeremiah's laments, or "confessions," throughout the second major section of the book serve several purposes: (1) to bring evidence confirming the nation's guilt (by drawing attention to the rejection of God's messenger); (2) to reveal divine and prophetic suffering over and on account of Judah's awful circumstances; and (3) to show that some in the community, like Jeremiah, suffer innocently, even for God's sake. Jeremiah 11:1–12:17 emphasizes Judah's broken covenant, Jeremiah's lament over his mistreatment, and God's apparent indifference.

<sup>†</sup>Or *You test my heart.* <sup>‡</sup>Or *If you are at ease only when in a peaceful land* <sup>‡</sup>Heb uncertain

<sup>13</sup>They have sown wheat and reaped weeds;  
they have worn themselves out for nothing.

They will be ashamed of their<sup>b</sup> harvest on account of the LORD's fierce anger.

<sup>14</sup>The LORD proclaims: The evil nations have seized the land<sup>c</sup> that I gave my people Israel. I'm going to dig them up from their own lands, and I will dig up the people of Judah from among them. <sup>15</sup>And after I have dug them up, I will again have compassion on them and restore their inheritance and their land. <sup>16</sup>And then, if they will learn the ways of my people, to make a solemn pledge in my name, "As the LORD lives," just as they once taught my people to swear to Baal, then they will be built up in the midst of my people. <sup>17</sup>But if they don't listen, I will dig up that nation; yes, I will dig up and destroy, declares the LORD.

### *Jeremiah's symbolic acts*

**13** The LORD proclaimed to me: Go and buy a linen undergarment. Wear it for a while without washing it. <sup>2</sup>So I bought a linen undergarment, as the LORD told me, and I put it on. <sup>3</sup>The LORD spoke to me again: <sup>4</sup>Take the undergarment that you are wearing and go at once to the Euphrates and put it under a rock. <sup>5</sup>So I went and buried it at the Euphrates,<sup>d</sup> as the LORD instructed. <sup>6</sup>After a long time, the LORD said to me: Return to the Euphrates and dig up the undergarment that I commanded you to bury there. <sup>7</sup>So I went to the Euphrates and I dug up the linen undergarment from the place I had buried it. But it was ruined and good for nothing.

<sup>8</sup>Then the LORD's word came to me: <sup>9</sup>The LORD proclaims: In the same way I will ruin the brazen pride of Judah and Jerusalem! <sup>10</sup>Instead of listening to me, this wicked people follow their own willful hearts and pursue other gods, worshipping and serving them. They will become like this linen garment—good for nothing! <sup>11</sup>Just as a linen undergarment clings to the body, so I created the people of Israel and Judah to cling to me, declares the LORD, to be my people for my honor, praise, and grandeur. But they wouldn't obey.

<sup>12</sup>So deliver this word to them: The LORD the God of Israel proclaims: Every wine jug should be filled with wine. And they will answer you, "Don't we already know that? Obviously every wine jug should be filled with wine!" <sup>13</sup>Then you should say to them: The LORD proclaims: I'm going to fill everyone who lives in this country with wine that makes them drunk, including the kings on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all those living in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>And I will shatter every one of them, even parents and children, declares the LORD. I won't take pity; I won't have compassion; I will show no mercy when I destroy them.

<sup>15</sup>Listen closely, don't be arrogant, for the LORD has spoken.

<sup>16</sup>Honor the LORD your God, before it's too late,  
before you stumble on the mountain paths in the evening shadows.  
Then you will hope for light,  
only to find darkness and gloom.

<sup>17</sup>If you are too proud to listen,  
I will go off alone and cry my eyes out.  
I will weep uncontrollably because the LORD's flock  
will be dragged off into exile.

<sup>b</sup>Or your <sup>c</sup>Or inheritance <sup>d</sup>Heb *Perath*

12:14-17 As indicated in Jeremiah's call, God's purposes extend beyond the borders of Judah. God will eventually show mercy to the nations that attacked God's people. 13:1-15:21 Signs of destruction. A report of signs (13:1-11) accompanied by a proverb (13:12-14) and three poems (13:15-17, 18-19, 20-27) introduces this section. These level further charges against God's people and repeat warnings of approaching disaster, although a ray of hope is present in Jeremiah's appeal to honor the Lord *before it's too late* (13:16). The coming disaster leads to expressions of grief by the community (14:1-9; 14:19-22)—to which God responds (14:10-12; 15:1-4, 5-9)—and by Jeremiah (14:13; 15:10, 15-18) to which God also responds (14:14-18; 15:11-14, 19-21). This section is distinctive because of its conversational style, with all of the participants distraught over Judah's plight.

13:1-11 Prophets deliver the divine message through prophetic speech and symbolic action (e.g., Jer 16:1-13; 18:1-12; 19:1-15; see also Hos 1-3; Isa 20:1-6; Ezek 24:1-27). Jeremiah relates God's command to buy a *linen undergarment* (13:2), perhaps as a sign of priestly purity (see Lev 8:1-9; Zech 3:1-5). He puts it on and then buries it (symbolically not actually) under a rock near the Euphrates. Two different though related interpretations of the action are given: (1) just as the linen undergarment is ruined, so the Lord will *ruin* proud Judah and Jerusalem; and (2) the people of Israel and Judah are created to cling to God, the way a linen undergarment clings to the body, but instead they act arrogantly and stray far from God.

13:12-14 This is likely a familiar proverb with an unexpected interpretation (see Jer 25:15-29).

12:13 Dt 28:38;  
Is 55:2; Jer 4:26  
12:15 Dt 30:3;  
Jer 48:47,  
Jer 49:6  
13:1 Jer 13:11,  
Jer 27:2  
13:2 Is 20:2;  
Eze 2:8  
13:4 Jer 51:63  
13:5 Ex 40:16  
13:9 Lv 26:19  
13:10 Jer 3:17,  
Jer 9:14, Jer 11:8,  
Jer 16:12  
13:11 Ex 19:5;  
Is 43:21; Jer 33:9  
13:12 Jer 25:15,  
Jer 48:12

13:20 Jer 1:14,  
Jer 6:22, Jer 23:2,  
Hab 1:6

13:23 Is 1:5,  
Jer 2:22

13:24 Lv 26:33,  
Ps 134, Ps 83:13,  
Jer 4:11

13:25 Job 20:29;  
Ps 11:6, Jer 2:32,  
Mt 24:51

13:26 Lam 1:8,  
Eze 16:37

18 Tell the king and the queen mother:

Come down from your lofty place,  
because your glorious crowns will soon be removed from your heads.

19 The towns of the arid southern plain will be surrounded;

no one will get in or out;  
all Judah will be taken into exile; everyone will be led away.

20 Lift up your eyes and see who is approaching from the north.

Where is the flock entrusted to you, your beautiful flock?

21 What will you say when he appoints someone as head over you:  
your defenders, your trusted allies?<sup>a</sup>

Won't pain grip you like that of a woman in labor?

22 And when you ask yourself,

Why have all these things happened to me?

it is because of your many sins that you have been stripped and violated.

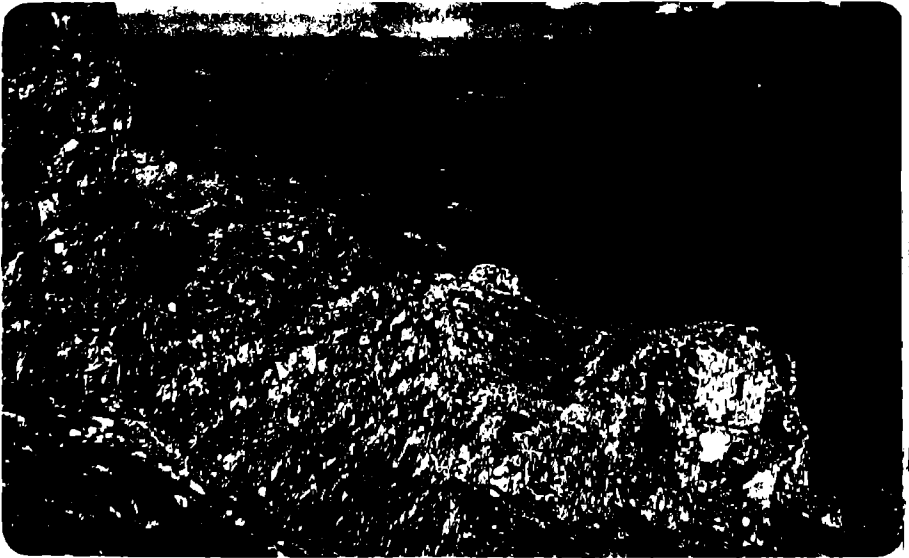
23 Can a Cushite change his skin or a leopard its spots?

Neither can you do good when doing evil comes so naturally.

24 So I will scatter you<sup>f</sup> like straw that is blown away by the desert winds.

25 This is the future that I have prepared for you, declares the LORD,  
because you have forgotten me and trusted in lies.

26 I myself will pull up your skirt over your face and expose your shame.



The Euphrates River (Jer 13:4)

Shutterstock

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Or them

13:18-19 *the king and the queen mother*: perhaps Jehoiachin and Nehushta (see Jer 22:24-27; 2 Kgs 24:8-17). The poem develops the theme that God humbles the proud (Jer 22:1-30; Isa 10:33; Zeph 3:11; see also Prov 16:18).

13:20-27 Accusations are hurled at Jerusalem for her *many sins* (13:22) and failure to *do good* (13:23). God isn't to blame for Judah's suffering. The city has brought the horrors of war on itself. To convey such disregard for God, the poet employs disturbing sexual imagery. As armies

approach from the north, mother Jerusalem is separated from her children (*flock* and *beautiful flock*), exposed, and raped. The shocking language—to *pull up your skirt*, *over your face* and *expose your shame* is euphemistic language for rape—is likely associated with war crimes against women, horrors that the exiles witnessed firsthand. What makes the imagery all the more disturbing is its contention that God has committed this violence: (13:25-27).

13:27 Jer 2:20,  
Jer 5:8; Eze 6:13;  
Hos 8:5  
14:1 Jer 17:8  
14:5 Job 39:1;  
Ps 29:9; Is 15:6  
14:7 Ps 25:11;  
Is 59:12;  
Jer 2:19; Jer 3:25;  
Jer 14:20  
14:10 Jer 2:25;  
Hos 8:13;  
Hos 9:9  
14:11 Jer 7:16;  
Jer 11:14  
14:12 Is 1:15;  
Is 58:3; Jer 6:20;  
Jer 7:21;  
Jer 11:11  
14:15 Dt 18:20;  
Jer 20:6,  
Jer 23:15,  
Jer 28:16,  
Jer 28:17

<sup>27</sup>I have seen your adultery and lust,  
your disgusting idols and shameless prostitution on the hills and in the fields.  
How terrible for you, Jerusalem!  
How long will you remain dirty?

**Destruction on the horizon**

**14** The LORD's word to Jeremiah concerning the droughts:  
<sup>1</sup>Judah mourns; her gates wither away.

The people fall to the ground in sorrow, as sobs of Jerusalem ascend.

<sup>3</sup>The rich send their servants for water, but the wells run dry.  
They return with empty jars, ashamed, bewildered, and in despair.

<sup>4</sup>Because the ground is cracked due to lack of rain,  
the farmers too are ashamed;  
they cover their heads.

<sup>5</sup>Even the doe in the field abandons her newborn,  
for there's no grass.

<sup>6</sup>The wild donkeys stand on the well-traveled paths, panting like thirsty dogs;  
they go blind since there's nothing to eat.

<sup>7</sup>Even though our sins testify against us,  
help us, LORD, for your name's sake.  
We have turned away from you  
and sinned against you time and again.

<sup>8</sup>You are the hope of Israel,  
its savior in times of trouble.  
Why are you like a stranger in the land,  
like a tourist spending only the night?

<sup>9</sup>Why are you like one taken by surprise,  
like a warrior unable to act?  
Yet you are in our midst, LORD;  
we are called by your name.  
Don't give up on us.

<sup>10</sup>This is what the LORD proclaims about this people:  
Since they have loved to wander off  
and haven't restrained themselves,  
<sup>11</sup>I won't accept them.

Now I will recall their wrongdoing and punish their sin.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD said to me: Don't pray for the safety of these people. <sup>12</sup>When they fast, I won't pay attention to their pleas, and when they offer entirely burned offerings and grain offerings, I won't accept them. Instead, I will devour them with war, famine, and disease.

<sup>13</sup>I replied, "LORD God, the prophets are telling them: 'You won't see war or famine, for I will give you lasting peace in this place.'"

<sup>14</sup>Then the LORD said to me: The prophets are telling lies in my name. I haven't sent them. I haven't commanded them. I haven't spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, worthless predictions, and deceit they have made up on their own. <sup>15</sup>Therefore, this is what the LORD proclaims concerning the prophets who are speaking in my name when I didn't send them, and who are telling you that war or famine will never come to this land: Those very prophets will die in war and by famine! <sup>16</sup>And the people they are prophesying

<sup>6</sup>Or the Lord

14:1-10 A communal lament. The series of negations—no water, no rain, no grass, nothing to eat—signals the certainty of death. In response the community cries out to God and confesses its sins. It prays for God's deliverance and expresses trust in the Lord. Like many laments in the Psalms, it changes into a complaint against God. The language echoes Jeremiah's laments and produces a

similar response (14:10; see also Jer 12:5-6; 15:19-21). For the exiles to survive, they must break all forms of denial and give up any immediate hope for the restoration of the old world.

14:11-16 God forbids Jeremiah to pray for the community. Nothing will change God's mind. Jeremiah complains that other prophets promise peace, but God tells him

14:22 Jer 16:19  
 15:1 Ex 32:11;  
 Nm 14:13;  
 1Sa 7:9;  
 1Sa 12:23;  
 Ps 99:6

15:5 Is 51:19;  
 Jer 21:7; Na 3:7  
 15:6 Jer 7:24

to will be thrown into the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and war. There will be no one to bury them or their wives and children. I will pour out on them their own wickedness.

<sup>17</sup> So deliver this word to them:

My eyes well up with tears;  
 I can't stop weeping—day and night,  
 because my virgin daughter, my people,  
 has suffered a crushing blow and is mortally wounded.

<sup>18</sup> If I go into the fields,

I see only the slain in battle.

If I enter the city,

I see only those suffering from famine.

Even both prophet and priest wander about aimlessly in ignorance.

<sup>19</sup> Have you completely rejected Judah?

Do you hate Zion?

Why then have you mortally wounded us?

We look for peace, but nothing good comes of it;  
 for a time of healing, only to be terrorized.

<sup>20</sup> We acknowledge our sin, LORD,

the wrongdoing of our ancestors,

because we have sinned against you.

<sup>21</sup> For your name's sake, don't reject us,

don't scorn your glorious throne.

Remember your covenant with us;

don't break it.

<sup>22</sup> Can any of the false gods of the nations make it rain?

Can the sky by itself bring showers?

Aren't you the LORD, our God?

You are our hope, since only you can do such things.

### Lamenting Jerusalem's dire circumstances

**15** The LORD said to me: Even if Moses and Samuel stood before me, I wouldn't change my mind about these people. Send them away from me. Let them go! <sup>2</sup>And if they say "Go where?" tell them, This is what the LORD proclaims:

Those marked for death—to death,  
 those marked for war—to war,  
 those marked for famine—to famine, and those marked for exile—to exile.

<sup>3</sup>I will appoint over them four agents<sup>b</sup> of death, declares the LORD: soldiers to kill, dogs to drag off, and vultures and wild animals to devour and destroy. <sup>4</sup>Because of what Judah's King Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, has done in Jerusalem, I will make them an object of horror to all nations on earth.

<sup>5</sup>Who will pity you, Jerusalem?

Who will shed tears over you?

Who will stop and ask how you're doing?

<sup>6</sup>You have deserted me, declares the LORD.

You have turned your back on me.

<sup>b</sup>Or families

that these prophets are lying. God hasn't authorized their words of salvation. Prophetic conflicts and denunciations are found elsewhere (e.g., Jer 23:9-40; 27:1-28:17).

14:17-18 Who is the speaker? Who can't stop crying? Some scholars think that God is the one lamenting over Israel, especially in light of the personal pronoun—*my virgin daughter, my people*. Others propose Jeremiah as the speaker. In either case, Israel's righteous judge doesn't stand off to the side in the midst of judgment but suffers as a good parent suffers for a child in distress.

14:19-22 The people complain that God has treated them unfairly. In hopes of preventing coming disaster, they appeal to God's reputation or character (*For your name's*

*sake*), God's honor (*glorious throne*), God's covenant, and God's power. But even this prayer won't change God's mind. War and its terrible consequences are certain.

15:1-9 Nothing will change God's mind, not even Israel's famous intercessors, *Moses* (see, e.g., Exod 32:7-14; 33:12-23) or *Samuel* (see 1 Sam 12). Jeremiah 15:2-4 recalls the consequences of disobedience in Deuteronomy (see Deut 28:25-26). *King Manasseh*: See 2 Kings 21:1-18; 23:26-27; 24:3-4. Note several reversals of Israel's salvation history: *Send them away . . . Let them go!* not from disaster (15:1, cf. Exod 5:1; 7:16) but to disaster; *Their widows will outnumber the sand on the shore*. (15:8, cf. Gen 22:17); *mother of seven* (15:9, cf. 1 Sam 2:5).



- So I will turn my hand against you and destroy you.  
I'm tired of holding back.
- <sup>7</sup>I will winnow them with a winnowing fork at the gates of their country.  
I will bereave and destroy my people because they haven't changed their ways.
- <sup>8</sup>Their widows will outnumber the sand on the shore.  
I will bring a destroyer in broad daylight against the mothers of young men.<sup>1</sup>  
Suddenly I will bring distress and terror upon them.
- <sup>9</sup>The mother of seven will grow weak and gasp for air;  
her sun will set while it is yet day;  
she will be ashamed and disgraced.  
I will deliver the survivors to the sword,  
to the power of their enemies, declares the LORD.
- <sup>10</sup>I wish I had never been born! I have become a source of conflict and dissension in my own country. Even though I haven't lent or borrowed, still everyone curses me.
- <sup>11</sup>The LORD said:  
Haven't I taken care of you?  
Haven't I helped you with your enemies in time of trouble and distress?<sup>2</sup>
- <sup>12</sup>Can a person shatter iron, iron from the north, or bronze?
- <sup>13</sup>Your wealth and belongings I will deliver as plunder, without a fee,  
because of all your sins throughout your territory.
- <sup>14</sup>I will make you serve your enemies in a land you don't know,  
for my anger blazes like a fire that won't go out.
- <sup>15</sup>You understand, LORD!  
Remember me and act on my behalf.  
Bring judgment on those who torment me.  
In your mercy, spare my life.<sup>3</sup>  
Consider how I'm insulted on your account.
- <sup>16</sup>When your words turned up, I feasted on them;  
and they became my joy, the delight of my heart,  
because I belong to you, LORD God of heavenly forces.
- <sup>17</sup>I didn't join the festive occasions;  
I took no delight in them. I sat alone  
because your hand was upon me and you had filled me with curses.
- <sup>18</sup>Why am I always in pain?  
Why is my wound incurable,  
so far beyond healing?  
You have become for me as unreliable as a spring gone dry!
- <sup>19</sup>Therefore, the LORD proclaims:  
If you return to me, I will take you back  
and let you stand before me.  
If you utter what is worthwhile,  
not what is worthless,  
you will be my spokesman.  
They will turn to you, not you to them!
- <sup>20</sup>I will make you a sturdy bronze wall against these people.  
They will attack you, but they won't triumph,  
because I am with you to protect and rescue you, declares the LORD.
- <sup>21</sup>I will rescue you from the hand of the wicked;  
I will redeem you from the grasp of the violent.

15:7 Jer 51:2  
15:9 1Sa 2:5;  
Jer 21:7;  
Lam 1:1; Am 8:9  
15:10 Ex 22:25;  
Jer 1:19;  
Jer 20:14  
15:14 Dt 28:36;  
Dt 32:22;  
Ps 21:9; Jer 4:4;  
Jer 17:4  
15:15 Ps 69:7;  
Jer 11:20;  
Jer 12:3  
15:16 Job 23:12;  
Ps 119:72;  
Ps 119:103;  
Jer 14:9; Eze 3:3  
15:17 Ps 1:1;  
Ps 26:4; Jer 6:11;  
Jer 16:8;  
Lam 3:28  
15:18 Job 6:15;  
Job 34:6;  
Jer 30:12;  
Jer 30:15; Mi 1:9  
15:19 Ex 4:16;  
Jer 15:1;  
Eze 44:23;  
Zec 3:7  
16:2 1Co 7:26

**Loss of hope**

**16** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Don't marry or have children in this place. <sup>3</sup>This is what the LORD proclaims concerning children who are born in this place and their mothers and fathers who give birth to them in this place:

<sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>2</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>3</sup>Heb uncertain

15:10-21 The second of Jeremiah's confessions is composed of two laments (15:10, 15-18) followed by divine responses (15:11-14, 19-21).

16:1-17:27 The end of ordinary life. For the writers and readers of Jeremiah, the prewar and pre-exilic world had ended. The most pressing questions for survivors were

16:9 Jer 7:34.

Jer 25:10.

Eze 26:13.

Hos 2:11.

Rev 18:23.

16:10 Dt 29:24.

Jer 5:19; Jer 22:8.

16:16 1Sa 26:20;

Am 4:2; Mi 7:2.

Hab 1:14.

Hab 1:15.

16:19 Is 2:2.

Is 25:4; Jer 3:17.

Jer 17:17; Na 1:7.

<sup>4</sup>They will die of horrible diseases.

No one will mourn for them or bury them.

They will be like refuse lying on the ground.

They will die from the sword and by famine,  
and their corpses will be food for birds and wild animals.

<sup>5</sup>This is what the LORD says:

Don't enter a house where there is mourning;

don't grieve or lament for them,

for I have taken away my blessing, kindness, and mercy from this people,  
declares the LORD.

<sup>6</sup>From the least to the greatest, all will die in this land,  
and there will be no funerals or time of mourning.

No one will gash themselves in grief or shave their heads in sorrow.

<sup>7</sup>No one will bring food<sup>1</sup> for the mourner as comfort for the dead.

No one will offer a cup of consolation for the loss of father or mother.

<sup>8</sup>Don't enter a house where there is feasting and sit down to eat and drink. <sup>9</sup>This is what the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims:

Before your very eyes and in your own lifetime, I will silence in this place the sounds of joy and gladness and the voices of the bridegroom and the bride.

<sup>10</sup>When you proclaim all these things to the people, and they ask you, "Why has the LORD pronounced such massive devastation against us? What have we done wrong? How have we sinned against the LORD our God?" <sup>11</sup>then you should tell them: It's because your ancestors have deserted me and followed other gods, declares the LORD. They have served and worshipped them, while abandoning me and refusing to keep my Instruction. <sup>12</sup>And you, you have acted worse than your ancestors, each of you following your own willful, evil hearts and paying no attention to me. <sup>13</sup>So I will banish you from this land to a place that neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no mercy.

<sup>14</sup>But the time is coming, declares the LORD, when no one will say, "As the LORD lives who brought up the Israelites from the land of Egypt"; <sup>15</sup>instead, they will say, "As the LORD lives who brought up the Israelites from the land of the north and from all the lands where he has banished them." I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their ancestors.

<sup>16</sup>I'm going to send hordes of fishermen to catch them, declares the LORD. Afterward I will send a party of hunters to hunt them down on every mountain, hill, and cave. <sup>17</sup>I am watching their every move; not one is hidden from me. Nor is their sin concealed from my sight <sup>18</sup>I will initially pay them back double for their evil and sin, because they have corrupted my land with their disgusting, lifeless idols and have filled my inheritance with their detestable practices.

<sup>19</sup>LORD, you are my strength and my stronghold;

you are my refuge in time of trouble.

The nations will flock to you from the ends of the earth, and they will say:

"Our ancestors have inherited utter lies, things that are hollow and useless."

<sup>1</sup>LXX; Heb *break for them*

why it had all happened, what did it mean, and how could they cope as God's people in a new and dangerous world. This section sorts out these matters in varied ways, but always under a dark shadow of death and divine judgment. The prophetic mission "to dig up and pull down, to destroy and demolish" (Jer 1:10) is well under way.

16:1-13 God's instructions to Jeremiah not to *marry or have children* are especially disturbing given the divine mandate in Genesis to "be fertile and multiply" (Gen 1:28) and the divine promises of fertility and abundance (e.g., Gen 15:5; 22:17). The command not to attend weddings or funerals is equally chilling. Both imply that the end has come; all forms of ordinary life will cease. Such utter destruction, and particularly such dreadful divine judgment, evokes the painful question, why? (16:10-13). God's answer is clear: Israel's suffering is neither arbitrary nor

random. God has acted justly and wisely in bringing judgment. The people's long history of unfaithfulness bears witness against them.

16:14-21 Although there is "no mercy" (Jer 16:13) on this side of judgment, mercy will indeed be granted. The Israelites will eventually return to the land from which they have been deported (16:14-15). For the present people of God, however, there is no respite. God goes on a search-and-find mission, not to rescue but to hunt down and destroy. The image of God sending *fishermen* and *hunters* to search out people for judgment, in retaliation for destroying God's land, contributes to the terrifying tone of this chapter. Providing further emphasis is the dialogue between Jeremiah and the Lord (16:19-21), which concludes with an affirmation that the nations will one day recognize (or know) the Lord.

- <sup>20</sup> Can humans make their own gods?  
If so, they are not gods at all!
- <sup>21</sup> Therefore, I will teach them;  
this time I will teach them my power and my might.  
They will understand that I am the LORD.

**17** Judah's sin is engraved with an iron pen.  
It's etched with a diamond point on the tablets of their hearts  
and on the horns of their altars.

<sup>2</sup> Their children remember their altars and sacred poles<sup>m</sup>  
by the lush trees and high hills.

<sup>3</sup> Because you have committed such sins throughout your country,  
I will give to your enemies my mountain in the land,  
as well as your wealth and all that you treasure.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>4</sup> You will lose the inheritance that I gave you.  
I will make you slaves of your enemies in a land you don't know,  
for my anger blazes like a fire that won't go out.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD proclaims:  
Cursed are those who trust in mere humans,  
who depend on human strength  
and turn their hearts from the LORD.

<sup>6</sup> They will be like a desert shrub that doesn't know when relief comes.  
They will live in the parched places of the wilderness,  
in a barren land where no one survives.

<sup>7</sup> Happy are those who trust in the LORD, who rely on the LORD.

<sup>8</sup> They will be like trees planted by the streams,  
whose roots reach down to the water;  
They won't fear drought when it comes;  
their leaves will remain green.  
They won't be stressed in the time of drought or fail to bear fruit.

<sup>9</sup> The most cunning heart—it's beyond help.  
Who can figure it out?

<sup>10</sup> I, the LORD, probe the heart and discern hidden motives,  
to give everyone what they deserve,  
the consequences of their deeds.

<sup>11</sup> Like a partridge gathering a brood that is not its own,  
so are those who acquire their wealth corruptly.  
By midlife it will be gone; afterward they will look like fools.

<sup>12</sup> Splendid and exalted throne,  
the place of our sanctuary from the beginning!

<sup>m</sup>Heb *asherim*; perhaps objects devoted to the worship of Asherah <sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

16:20 Ps 115:4;  
Is 37:19; Jer 2:11;  
Ga 4:8

16:21 Jer 33:2

17:1 Ex 28:16;  
Job 19:24;  
Prv 3:3; Prv 7:3;  
2Co 3:3

17:5 2Ch 32:8;  
Ps 146:3; Is 2:22;  
Is 30:1; Is 31:1

17:6 Dt 29:23;  
Job 39:6; Jer 48:6

17:7 Ps 2:12;  
Ps 34:8; Ps 40:4;  
Ps 84:12;  
Ps 125:1

17:8 Ps 1:3;  
Ps 92:12;  
Jer 14:1;  
Eze 47:12

17:9 Ecc 9:3;  
Mk 7:21

17:10 1Ch 28:9;  
Ps 62:12;  
Jer 11:20;  
Jer 32:19;  
Rev 2:23

17:11 Jer 22:13;  
Lk 12:20

17:12 Jer 3:17;  
Jer 14:21

17:1-4 *engraved with an iron pen* (cf. Job 19:24) and *etched with a diamond point*: Judah's wrongdoing is unforgettable, related above all to its idolatrous practices (17:2; cf. 17:3-4 with 15:13-14). A diamond point was used to carve stone inscriptions. *tablets of their hearts*: an image representing inner motives and disposition (see Prov 3:3, 7). The *horns of their altars* are commonly associated with mercy and forgiveness of sins (see, e.g., Exod 29:12; 30:10; Lev 4:7), but here they mean the opposite.  
17:5-8 A wisdom voice enters the dialogue with the observation that trust in humans—perhaps a reference to

manufactured idols—rather than in the Lord leads to ruin (see also Ps 40:5a; Matt 6:1-12; cf. Pss 1; 62:10-13; 146:3-4). Although these verses deal with rewards and punishments, they are not rigid cause and effects. For instance, *relief* (or “good”) comes to those who trust in humans, but they just don’t recognize it. And those who trust in the Lord face drought, but they weather it well.  
17:9-10 God probes heart and mind and discerns hidden motives. Underlying these sayings are probing questions about divine justice and human suffering.  
17:11-13 Unidentified voices enter the conversation. A

17:13 Is 1:28;  
Jer 2:13, Jer 14:8;  
Is 4:10

17:14 Dt 10:21;  
Ps 6:2, Ps 109:1

17:15 Is 5:19;  
2Pt 3:3, 2Pt 3:4

17:16 Jer 18:20

17:18 Ps 35:4;  
Jer 11:20

17:21 Nm 15:32;  
Neh 13:15

17:22 Ex 20:8;  
Ex 31:13;  
Dt 5:12, Is 56:2,  
Is 58:13

17:23 Jer 7:24,  
Jer 7:26,  
Jer 19:15

17:24 Ex 15:26;

Dt 11:13;

Jer 17:21;

Jer 17:22

17:25 Is 9:7;  
Jer 22:4; Lk 1:32

18:1 2Ch 36:12;

Jer 1:1, Jer 7:1;

Jer 11:1, Jer 25:1

18:2 Jer 19:1

18:3 Zec 11:13

**13** LORD, the hope of Israel,  
all who forsake you will suffer disgrace;  
those who turn away from you<sup>o</sup> in the land will be written off,<sup>p</sup>  
for they have abandoned the LORD, the fountain of living water.

**14** Heal me, LORD, and I'll be healed.  
Save me and I'll be saved,  
for you are my heart's desire.

**15** See how they harass me: "Where's the LORD's word? Let it come now!"

**16** Yet I didn't urge you to bring disaster;<sup>q</sup>  
I didn't want the calamity to happen.  
You know what comes out of my mouth;  
it's always before you.

**17** Don't terrorize me;  
you are my refuge in time of disaster.

**18** Let my tormentors be disgraced, but not me;  
let them be terrorized, but not me.  
Bring on them the time of disaster, as they deserve;  
destroy them repeatedly.

**19**The LORD proclaimed to me: Go and stand by the People's Gate where Judah's kings go in and out, and then by all the gates of Jerusalem, **20**and say to them: Listen to the LORD's word, you kings of Judah, all you people of Judah, and anyone living in Jerusalem who passes through these gates. **21**The LORD says: Be on guard not to carry a load on the Sabbath day or conduct business at the gates of Jerusalem. **22**Don't carry a load from your houses or do any kind of work on the Sabbath day. Rather, keep the Sabbath day holy as I commanded your ancestors, **23**although they didn't listen or pay attention. They were stubborn and wouldn't obey or accept correction. **24**If you are careful to obey me, declares the LORD, and don't conduct business at the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, if you keep the Sabbath day holy by not working, **25**then through the gates of this city will come kings who occupy the throne of David and their officers, all riding on chariots and horses. They will be accompanied by the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem. And this city will always be inhabited. **26**Others will come from the towns of Judah and Benjamin, from all around Jerusalem, and from the western foothills, the highlands, and the arid southern plain—they will come bringing entirely burned offerings, sacrifices, grain offerings, incense, and thanksgiving offerings to the LORD's temple. **27**But if you don't obey me by keeping the Sabbath day holy, if you carry your loads and conduct your business at the gates of Jerusalem as usual, then I will set fire to those gates that will completely engulf the fortresses of Jerusalem; it will not be put out.

### God the potter

**18** Jeremiah received the LORD's word: **2**Go down to the potter's house, and I'll give you instructions about what to do there. **3**So I went down to the potter's house; he was

<sup>o</sup>Or me <sup>p</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>q</sup>LXX; Heb uncertain

voice from the wisdom tradition affirms that justice may be delayed but it can't be avoided (17:11). And a voice from the worshipping community affirms the truth of the earlier statements (Jer 17:1-4, 5-8): those who *turn* (the same Hebrew word used in Jer 17:5) from God, the *fountain of living water* (see Jer 2:13) will suffer dishonor.

**17:14-18** The third of Jeremiah's confessions, like the others, follows many of the formal characteristics of the lament: a cry for help (17:14), a description of suffering (17:15), a statement of innocence (17:16), an affirmation of trust (17:17), and a petition for payback to adversaries, that is, a cry for justice (17:18). The customary ending of praise is missing. This is the first prophetic confession in Jeremiah that isn't followed by a divine response.

**17:19-27** The future of the nation depends on its devotion to the Sabbath (see Gen 2:1-3; Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17; Deut 5:12-16). Many scholars date this sermon to the

exilic (or post-exilic) period, when Sabbath observance became a defining feature of community life (see Isa 56:1-8; 58:13; Ezek 46:1-3; Neh 13:15-22). If this dating is correct, then the text—and those responsible for it—blames the destruction of Jerusalem on the nation's failure to keep the Sabbath.

**18:1-20:18** End of salvation history and its culture of privilege. This section makes the case that chosen Israel has become rejected Israel. The image of God as potter and God's people as clay holds this section together. However, unlike other texts in the Bible that employ this imagery, the emphasis here is on shattering the pottery and thus the irreparable character of the relationship between God and Israel. No wonder this section concludes with two confessions in which Jeremiah expresses powerlessness and loss of hope.

**18:1-12** The images of God as potter and people as clay

*An Assault on Israel's Election Tradition* The book of Jeremiah has already rejected belief in the unconditional protection of the Jerusalem temple (Jer 7:1-15) and Israel's sacred covenant (Jer 11:1-17). Soon it will confront the sure claims of dynasty and kingship (Jer 21:1-10). Jeremiah 18:1-12 disputes another core belief of God's people: the election tradition. This is the supposed certainty that God has chosen Judah and will shield the nation from harm. The potter-clay image challenges this position of privilege. It insists that God the potter can do whatever God wishes, even reverse divine decrees, depending on what people do. The focus is on divine authority, although not to the exclusion of human freedom. Both authority and freedom are paradoxically affirmed in this key text.

working on the potter's wheel. <sup>4</sup>But the piece he was making was flawed while still in his hands, so the potter started on another, as seemed best to him. <sup>5</sup>Then the LORD's word came to me: <sup>6</sup>House of Israel, can't I deal with you like this potter, declares the LORD? Like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in mine, house of Israel! <sup>7</sup>At any time I may announce that I will dig up, pull down, and destroy a nation or kingdom; <sup>8</sup>but if that nation I warned turns from its evil, then I'll relent and not carry out the harm I intended for it. <sup>9</sup>At the same time, I may announce that I will build and plant a nation or kingdom; <sup>10</sup>but if that nation displeases and disobeys me, then I'll relent and not carry out the good I intended for it. <sup>11</sup>Now say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem: This is what the LORD says: I am a potter preparing a disaster for you; I'm working out a plan against you. So each one of you, turn from your evil ways; reform your ways and your actions. <sup>12</sup>But they said, "What's the use! We will follow our own plans and act according to our own willful, evil hearts."

<sup>13</sup>Therefore, the LORD proclaims:

Ask among the nations:

Have you ever heard anything like this?

Virgin Israel has done the most horrible thing.

<sup>14</sup>Does the snow on the mountains of Lebanon ever melt entirely off their rocky cliffs?

Do the cool mountain streams ever dry up?"

<sup>15</sup>Yet my people have forgotten me; they have offered sacrifices to a lie.

And so they have stumbled along the way, even along the ancient paths.

They have taken side roads, not the main roads.\*

<sup>16</sup>They have ruined their country and brought utter shame on it.

All who pass by are shocked and shake their heads.

<sup>17</sup>Like a strong east wind, I will scatter them before their enemy.

When disaster strikes them, I will show them my back, not my face.

<sup>18</sup>Then they said, "Come, let's unite against Jeremiah, for the priest's instruction won't fail, nor will the sage's counsel, nor the prophet's word. Come, let's silence him and pay no attention to his words."

<sup>19</sup>Pay attention to me, LORD;

listen to what my enemies are saying.

<sup>20</sup>Should evil be returned for good?

Yet they have set traps for me.

Remember that I stood before you,

begging you to be merciful and not to punish them.

\*Heb uncertain; or *be dug up* \*Heb uncertain

are found elsewhere in scripture (e.g., Isa 29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Rom 9:19-21; Sir 33:13; Wis 15:7-8). Most of these references, if not all, convey divine privilege and authority to act and human frailty. In this story, God's power is affirmed (18:6) but qualified by human freedom to do good or ill (18:7-10). Divine authority emphasizes the Lord's intent to bring disaster on Jerusalem, and human freedom emphasizes Judah's total rejection of the Lord (18:12). The proverbial saying of the book (Jer 1:10)—"to dig up and pull down... to build and plant"—occurs in 18:7, 9. The key

Hebrew word *shub*, often translated "to turn" or "return," occurs in 18:4, 11. The phrase *willful, evil hearts* (18:12) also appears in Jeremiah 16:12.

18:13-17 Three rhetorical questions show the outrageous nature of Judah's actions and the depths of God's pain. Divine sorrow swiftly turns to rage.

18:18-23 This fourth of Jeremiah's confessions begins with a quotation of the words of Jeremiah's enemies. They are planning ways to silence Jeremiah because they think he is a grave threat to the nation and its

18:4 Jer 13:7  
18:6 Is 29:16,  
Is 45:9, Is 64:8;  
Ro 9:20, Ro 9:21  
18:7 Jer 1:10  
18:8 Jer 26:3,  
Jer 26:13,  
Jer 36:3; Jl 2:13;  
Jon 3:10  
18:9 Jer 1:10,  
Jer 31:28  
18:10 1Sa 2:30,  
1Sa 13:13;  
Eze 33:18  
18:11 2Ki 17:13;  
Jer 7:3, Jer 25:5  
18:12 Dt 29:19;  
Is 57:10;  
Jer 2:25, Jer 3:17,  
Jer 16:12  
18:13 Jer 2:10,  
Jer 2:11, Jer 5:30;  
Hos 6:10  
18:15 Is 57:14;  
Jer 2:32, Jer 6:16,  
Jer 10:15

18:21 Ps 109:9;

Jer 11:22

18:22 Ps 140:5;

Jer 6:26

18:23 Neh 4:5

19:1 Jer 18:2;

Jer 19:10; Eze 5:1

19:2 Josh 15:8;

2Ki 23:10;

2Ch 28:3;

Jer 7:32

19:3 1Sa 3:11;

2Ki 21:12

19:5 Lv 18:21;

Nm 22:41;

Dt 12:31;

2Ki 3:27;

Jer 7:31;

Jer 32:35

19:9 Lv 26:29;

Dt 28:53;

Lm 4:10;

Eze 5:10

19:11 Ps 2:9;

Is 30:14; Jer 7:32;

Lam 4:2

20:2 Jer 37:13;

Jer 37:15;

Jer 38:6; Jer 38:7;

Zec 14:10

**21** Enough! Let their children starve;  
let them die by the sword.  
Let their wives be barren widows;  
let their men be slaughtered and their youth struck down in battle.

**22** Let screams be heard from their homes  
when you suddenly bring armies against them.  
They have dug a pit to capture me,  
set traps for my feet.

**23** But you, LORD, you know all their sinister plots to kill me.  
Don't overlook their wrongdoing;  
don't cleanse their sin from before you.  
May they stumble before you;  
when you become angry, do something about them.

### Broken beyond repair

**19** The LORD proclaims: Go buy a clay jar from a potter in the presence of the elders of the people and the priests. **2** Then go out to the Ben-hinnom Valley at the entrance of the gate called Broken Pots and proclaim there the words I will tell you. **3** Listen to the LORD's word, you kings of Judah and those of you living in Jerusalem: This is what the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, says: I'm going to bring such disaster upon this place that it will shock all who hear of it. **4** They have deserted me and degraded this place into a shrine for other gods, which neither they nor their ancestors nor Judah's kings have ever known. And they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. **5** Yes, they have built shrines to Baal, to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, although I never commanded or ordered such a thing, nor did it ever cross my mind.

**6** So now the time is coming, declares the LORD, when people will no longer call this place Topheth or Ben-hinnom Valley but Carnage Valley. **7** I will foil the plans of Judah and Jerusalem in this place and will have them fall in battle before their enemies, before those who seek their lives. I will give their corpses as food to the birds and the wild animals. **8** I will make this city something that sounds horrible; all who pass by it will be shocked at its pain. **9** And when their enemies lay siege to the city, seeking their lives, they will resort in desperation to eating the flesh of their sons and daughters, and to devouring the flesh of their neighbors.

**10** Then you should shatter the clay jar in the sight of the people who are with you, **11** and you should say to them: This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says: Just as one smashes the potter's piece beyond repair, so I will smash this people and this city. And they will bury the dead in Topheth until there's no room left. **12** That is what I will do to this place and its residents, declares the LORD: I will make this city like Topheth. **13** The houses of Jerusalem and those of Judah's kings will become as foul as Topheth—all the houses on whose roofs they made offerings to the heavenly force and poured out drink offerings to other gods.

**14** When Jeremiah returned from Topheth where the LORD had sent him to prophesy, he stood in the court of the LORD's temple and said to all the people: **15** The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: I am about to bring upon this city and its surrounding towns every disaster that I have pronounced against them, because they have been stubborn and wouldn't obey my words.

**20** When the priest Pashhur, Immer's son, the officer in charge of the LORD's temple, heard Jeremiah prophesying these words, **2** he beat the prophet and detained him in confinement at the upper Benjamin Gate in the LORD's temple. **3** The next day, when Pashhur released Jeremiah from confinement, Jeremiah said to him, "The LORD has changed your name from Pashhur to Panic Lurks Everywhere. **4** The LORD proclaims: I'm going to strike panic into your heart and into the hearts of your friends. You will watch as they fall in battle to their enemies. I will hand over all Judah to the king of Babylon, who will exile some to

major stakeholders: priests, sages, and prophets. They are correct. Jeremiah threatens the nation and its leading power structures. But his opponents fail to recognize that God has appointed Jeremiah to take apart Judah's old world (Jer 1:10).

**19:1–20:6** The longest narrative in the first half of the book (Jer 1–25) is held together by the potter-clay image (see Jer 18:1–12). The allusion to *Topheth* or the

*Ben-hinnom Valley* (19:6)—the site associated with the sacrifice of children to Baal and Molech (see Jer 7:31–33; 2 Chron 33:6)—serves to justify the severity of divine judgment. The temple official *Pashhur* (20:1) can't tolerate Jeremiah's attack on the nation, so he has the prophet held in custody and beaten, perhaps in accordance with the Instruction (Deut 25:2–3; see also Amos 7:10–17). Jeremiah is perceived as an enemy of the state.

Babylon and slaughter others. <sup>5</sup>I will hand over all the wealth of this city, all its goods and valuables, including the treasures of the kings of Judah, to their enemies, who will ransack and pillage and carry it all off to Babylon. <sup>6</sup>And you, Pashhur, and all those in your household, will go into captivity. You will be deported to Babylon where you will die. There you will be buried with all your friends to whom you prophesied falsely.”

### Total despair

<sup>7</sup> LORD, you enticed me, and I was taken in.

You were too strong for me, and you prevailed.

Now I'm laughed at all the time;  
everyone mocks me.

<sup>8</sup> Every time I open my mouth, I cry out and say, “Violence and destruction!”

The LORD's word has brought me nothing but insult and injury, constantly.

<sup>9</sup> I thought, I'll forget him;

I'll no longer speak in his name.

But there's an intense fire in my heart, trapped in my bones.

I'm drained trying to contain it; I'm unable to do it.

<sup>10</sup> I hear many whispering—“Panic Lurks Everywhere!—

proclaim, yes, let's proclaim it ourselves!”

All my friends are waiting for me to stumble:

“Perhaps he can be enticed.

Then we'll prevail against him and get our revenge on him!”

<sup>11</sup> But the LORD is with me like a strong defender.

Therefore, my oppressors will stumble and not prevail.

They will be disgraced by their own failures.

Their dishonor will never be forgotten.

<sup>12</sup> The LORD of heavenly forces tests the righteous

and discerns the heart and the mind.

Let me see your retribution upon them,

for I have committed my case to you.

<sup>13</sup> Sing to the LORD, praise the LORD,

for he has rescued the needy from the clutches of evildoers.

<sup>14</sup> Cursed be the day that I was born.

May the day my mother gave birth to me not be blessed.

<sup>15</sup> Cursed be the one who delivered the news to my father,

“You have a son!”—filling him with joy.

<sup>16</sup> May the bearer of that news be like the cities

that the LORD destroyed without mercy.

May he hear screams in the morning, and the battle cries at noon,

<sup>17</sup> because he didn't kill me in the womb

and let my mother become my grave,

her womb pregnant forever.

20:7 Ex 5:23;  
Job 12:4;  
Ps 22:7;  
Ps 119:51;  
Lam 3:14

20:8 2Ch 36:16;  
Jer 6:7, Jer 6:10,  
Jer 20:7

20:9 Ps 39:3

20:12 Ps 7:9;  
Jer 11:20,  
Jer 17:10

20:14 Job 3:3;  
Jer 15:10

20:7-18 This final confession of Jeremiah is actually two distinct laments (20:7-13, 14-18). Both are related to his prophetic mission and the fierce opposition it engenders (see especially 20:1-6). Accordingly, Jeremiah's suffering isn't only personal suffering. It has always been suffering he endures for God's sake. The first lament pushes the literary form to its limits. Some scholars say that Jeremiah uses language of sexual violence to convey his sense of powerlessness. In support of this argument, the words *enticed* and *You were too strong for me* (20:7) are used elsewhere for seduction (Exod 22:16) and rape (Deut 22:25). Others suggest that the language is more appropriate to prophetic deception (see, e.g., Ezek 14:9; 1 Kgs 22). Either represents a daring expression of prayer. Jeremiah feels overwhelmed by God's purposes, yet still acknowledges God's presence and protection (20:11). The Hebrew phrase translated here as *Panic Lurks Everywhere* (20:10)

also appears in Jer 6:25; 20:3 (Pashhur's new name); 46:5; 49:29; Ps 31:13. The language of 20:7—“enticed” and “prevailed”—reappears in 20:10, although now it is Jeremiah's *friends* who seek him harm. The prophet presents his legal *case* (or *cause*) to God (20:12; see Jer 12:1). Even though 20:13 may appear out of place, the vast majority of laments in the Psalms end with praise. Representing the bleakest point in the prophetic experience—and perhaps the failure of prophecy itself—the second lament (20:14-18) is a death wish or a self curse, similar to Job 3. Jeremiah grieves all the suffering he has had to endure. It's important to note that Jeremiah's laments complicate logical and predictable understandings of human suffering, particularly the belief in clearly defined consequences for the righteous and the wicked. This acknowledgment of innocent suffering or suffering for God's sake, is particularly important to survivors of war and captivity.

20: 18 Job 3:20;  
Lam 3:1  
21: 8 Dt 30:15,  
Dt 30:19  
21: 11 Jer 13:18,  
Jer 17:20

**18** Why was I ever born when all I see is suffering and misery,  
and my days are filled with shame?

### Verdict against king and city

**21** Jeremiah received the LORD's word when King Zedekiah sent Pashhur, Malchiah's son, and the priest Zephaniah, Maaseiah's son, to him with an appeal: **2**"Speak to the LORD on our behalf because Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar<sup>a</sup> is attacking us. Perhaps the LORD will perform one of his mighty deeds and force him to withdraw from us."

**3**Jeremiah answered them: This is what you should tell Zedekiah: **4**"The LORD, the God of Israel, says: I'm going to turn your own weapons against you, yes, the weapons you are using to fight the king of Babylon and the Babylonians<sup>b</sup> who have surrounded you! I will round them up in the center of the city. **5**Then I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and strong arm in fierce anger and rage. **6**I will strike down those within this city—both people and animals—and they will die of a terrible plague. **7**Afterward, declares the LORD, I will deliver Judah's King Zedekiah, his servants, and those in this city who have survived plague, war, and famine to Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar<sup>c</sup> and to their enemies who seek to do them harm. He will put them to the sword without pity, mercy, or compassion.

**8**This is what you should tell this people: The LORD says: I'm setting before you the way of life and the way of death. **9**Whoever stays in the city will die by the sword, famine, and disease. But whoever leaves the city and surrenders to the Babylonians<sup>d</sup> will live; yes, their lives will be spared. **10**I have set my face against this city for harm and not for good, declares the LORD; it will be delivered to the king of Babylon, who will set it on fire.

### Judah: Hear the LORD's word

**11** House of Judah! This is what the LORD says:

**12**House of David! The LORD proclaims:

Begin each morning by administering justice,  
rescue from their oppressor those who have been robbed,  
or else my anger will spread like a wildfire,  
with no one to put it out, because of your evil deeds.

**13**I am against you, you who live in the valley,<sup>e</sup>  
like a rock of the plain, declares the LORD,

<sup>a</sup>Heb Nebuchadnezzar <sup>b</sup>Heb Chaldeans <sup>c</sup>Heb Nebuchadnezzar <sup>d</sup>Heb Chaldeans <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain

21:1–24:10 End of the nation's leaders and their culture of self-interest. The final unit of the first half of the book confronts Judah's leadership, particularly its Davidic kings and its prophets. The section begins with a warning to King Zedekiah and a life-or-death directive to the Judean people (21:1–10). Following this narrative, Jeremiah accuses Judah's final kings of crimes committed against their own people. This is an assault on the belief in the unconditional nature of the Davidic dynasty (21:11–23:8). Like the temple, covenant, land, and election tradition, the ancient promise to David (2 Sam 7:1–19) comes under scrutiny in the first part of prophetic performance (Jer 1–25). The text is adamant that none of Israel's sacred pillars of faith would protect the people from disaster. This gives voice to a reality all too tangible for exilic readers. Judah's kings might have negotiated the many political hazards had they fulfilled their duty as custodians of justice and defenders of the poor (22:1–3). But their track records testify against them, as survivors would clearly recognize. Jeremiah argues that Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin in particular are guilty of injustice, abuse of power, and repression. And Judah's prophets (and priests) are no better. They, too, are corrupt and self-serving (23:9–40). The section concludes with a brief narrative that contrasts the fate of Judeans deported to Babylon with Jehoiachin and those left in the land under Zedekiah's rule.

21:1–10 One of the few texts in the first half of the book with a historical allusion: The narrative is set during the reign of King Zedekiah (597–586 BCE) when Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian forces were waging war against Jerusalem. During this time, Zedekiah sends a delegation to Jeremiah to seek counsel and aid from the Lord. His envoy Pashhur, who isn't the same person mentioned in Jeremiah 20 (see, however, Jer 38:1), and the priest Zephaniah (Jer 29:25, 29; 52:24) ask Jeremiah to intercede on the king's behalf. Such a request for God's help has strong historical precedent. The Bible is full of stories in which God comes to the aid of people in distress (see Gen 18:14; Exod 3:20; Pss 31:21; 107:8, 15, 21). But the Lord refuses to be Zedekiah's savior (21:3–7). God is intent on delivering the king into the clutches of Nebuchadnezzar. The people, moreover, are urged to leave the city and surrender to Babylon in obedience to God. The phrase *the way of life and the way of death* (21:8) recalls the choice afforded to Israel on the plains of Moab (Deut 30:19; see Josh 24:15). In contrast to their ancestors, however, *the way of life* no longer involves living in the land but living outside the land under Babylonian captivity. "Life" now involves mere survival.

21:11–14 The oracle can be read as part of the response to Zedekiah's plea for divine help or as a general statement addressed to Judah's Davidic kings. It says that the king's



and who say, "Who will come down to attack us?  
Who will breach our fortresses?"

- <sup>11</sup>I will punish you based on what you have done, declares the LORD.  
I will set your<sup>7</sup> forests on fire;  
the flames will engulf everything around you.<sup>8</sup>

### Oracles against the kings

**22** The LORD proclaims: Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and declare this message: <sup>2</sup>Listen to the LORD's word, king of Judah, you who sit on David's throne—you and your attendants, and all those who go through these gates. <sup>3</sup>The LORD proclaims: Do what is just and right; rescue the oppressed from the power of the oppressor. Don't exploit or mistreat the refugee, the orphan, and the widow. Don't spill the blood of the innocent in this place. <sup>4</sup>If you obey this command, then through the gates of this palace will come kings who occupy the throne of David, riding on chariots and horses along with their entourage and subjects. <sup>5</sup>But if you ignore these words, I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that this palace will become a ruin. <sup>6</sup>The LORD proclaims concerning the palace of the king of Judah:

Though you are like Gilead to me, like the summit of Lebanon,  
I will turn you into a desert—uninhabited cities.

- <sup>7</sup>I will summon destroyers against you,  
who will use their weapons to cut down your finest cedars  
and hurl them into the fire.

<sup>8</sup>People from many nations will pass by this city and ask each other: "Why has the LORD treated that great city like this?" <sup>9</sup>And the answer will be, "Because they abandoned the covenant with the LORD their God and worshipped and served other gods."

- <sup>10</sup>Don't weep or lament for the dead king.<sup>9</sup>

Weep instead for the one who has gone away,  
for he will never return to see his native soil.

<sup>11</sup>This is what the LORD says about Shallum son of Judah's King Josiah, who succeeded his father Josiah as king but who is now gone from this place: He will never return! <sup>12</sup>He will die where he's been exiled and never see this land again.

- <sup>13</sup>How terrible for Jehoiakim, who builds his house with corruption  
and his upper chambers with injustice,  
working his countrymen for nothing,  
refusing to give them their wages.

- <sup>14</sup>He says, "I'll build myself a grand palace, with huge upper chambers,  
ornate windows, cedar paneling, and rich red decor."

- <sup>15</sup>Is this what makes you a king,  
having more cedar than anyone else?  
Didn't your father eat and drink and still do what was just and right?  
Then it went well for him!

- <sup>16</sup>He defended the rights of the poor and needy;  
then it went well.

Isn't that what it means to know me? declares the LORD.

<sup>7</sup>Or its <sup>8</sup>Or it <sup>9</sup>Heb lacks king.

fundamental role is to be the custodian of justice. Rulers must protect and care for their people, especially those who are disadvantaged and deprived of justice (e.g., Isa 1:16-17; 11:1-9; see also Deut 17:14-20). *your forests*: likely refers to the royal palaces and their grounds (1 Kgs 7:2; 10:17, 21).

22:1-9 The future of the Davidic dynasty—understood by many as sure and unending—depends on obedience to the divine mandate to *do what is just and right*. The Lord's charge to an unidentified Judean king and the royal house of David in general exposes the failure of the monarchy and explains (to survivors and neighbors) what led to the nation's ruin.

22:10-30 A series of oracles that condemn specific Judean kings. These harsh accusations often take the form

of a funeral song. The text expresses the profound sadness and rage of the surviving Judean community.

22:10-12 The series begins with a brief poem that speaks of the fate of *Shallum* (Jehoahaz) as more distressing than the death of his father, *Josiah* (2 Kgs 23:28-30; see also 2 Kgs 23:31-35).

22:13-19 Next in line for critique and mourning is *Jehoiakim*. Portrayed as the antithesis of the good king, this ruler is accused of corruption and injustice, cruelty and oppression (see also 2 Kgs 23:36-24:7). The relative clause *who builds his house* is usually taken as an allusion to the royal residence, especially in light of the parallel verse, *and his upper chambers*. But the poet may also be imagining the empire itself, built, as many believed, on the backs of fellow Judeans (see 1 Kgs 5:13; 11:28; Deut 24:14-15). In

22:3 Ec 22:2;  
Is 1:17; Jer 5:28,  
Jer 7:6, Jer 21:12  
22:5 Gn 22:16;  
Heb 6:13  
22:10 Ecc 4:2;  
Jer 22:11  
22:13 Lv 19:13;  
Dt 24:14;  
Mi 3:10; Jas 5:4  
22:14 2Sa 7:2;  
Is 5:8; Eze 23:14;  
Hg 1:4

22:17 Jer 8:10  
 22:19 Jer 36:30  
 22:24 2Ki 24:6;  
 Song 8:6;  
 Jer 37:1; Hg 2:23  
 22:25 Jer 21:7,  
 Jer 34:20  
 22:28 Ps 31:12;  
 Jer 22:24,  
 Jer 48:38;  
 Hos 8:8  
 22:29 Jer 6:19  
 22:30 1Ch 3:17;  
 Ps 94:20;  
 Jer 36:30;  
 Mt 1:12  
 23:1 Jer 10:21;  
 Eze 34:2;  
 Zec 11:17  
 23:2 Ex 32:34;  
 Is 9:14, Is 56:10;  
 Jer 21:12,  
 Jer 23:1

<sup>17</sup> But you set your eyes and heart on nothing but unjust gain;  
 you spill the blood of the innocent;  
 you practice cruelty;  
 you oppress your subjects.

<sup>18</sup> Therefore, this is what the LORD says to Jehoiakim son of Judah's King Josiah:  
 They won't grieve for him, saying, "My brother, my sister!"  
 They won't grieve for him, saying, "My master, my majesty!"

<sup>19</sup> They will give him a donkey's burial,  
 dragging him outside the gates of Jerusalem and dumping him there.

<sup>20</sup> Go up to Lebanon and cry out,  
 lift up your voice in Bashan, cry out from Abarim,  
 because all your lovers have been ravished.

<sup>21</sup> I spoke to you when you felt safe and secure,  
 but you said, "I won't listen."  
 You have been that way since your youth:  
 not listening to a word I say.

<sup>22</sup> Your shepherds will be tossed to the wind,  
 your lovers taken off to exile.  
 Then you will be embarrassed and humiliated by all your wickedness.

<sup>23</sup> You who live in Lebanon, nestled in cedar,  
 who will pity you<sup>b</sup> when you are overcome in pain, like that of childbirth?

<sup>24</sup> As surely as I live, declares the LORD, even if Coniah,<sup>c</sup> King Jehoiakim's son from Judah were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still remove you from there. <sup>25</sup> I would hand you over to those who seek to kill you, those you dread, even Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar and his army. <sup>26</sup> I will banish you and your mother who bore you to a land far from your native soil, and there the two of you will die. <sup>27</sup> You<sup>e</sup> will never return to the land you<sup>f</sup> long to go back to.

<sup>28</sup> Is this man Coniah merely a defiled and broken pottery jar that no one wants?  
 Why then have he and his children been hurled out  
 and cast into an unfamiliar land?

<sup>29</sup> Land, land, land, hear the LORD's word:

<sup>30</sup> The LORD proclaims:  
 Mark this man as childless;  
 he will not prosper during his lifetime.

None of his children will sit on David's throne and rule again in Judah.

### Promise of restoration

**23** Watch out, you shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, declares the LORD. <sup>2</sup>This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, proclaims about the shepherds who "tend to" my people: You are the ones who have scattered my flock and driven them away. You haven't attended to their needs, so I will take revenge on you for the terrible things you have done to them, declares the LORD. <sup>3</sup>I myself will gather the few remaining sheep from all

<sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Cf Jeconiah in Jer 24:1 <sup>d</sup>Or the Babylonians <sup>e</sup>Or They <sup>f</sup>Or they

contrast to Jehoiakim, who shows little regard for God's people or God's word, stands King Josiah, whose fame isn't derived from amassing wealth and erecting massive arrangements but by practicing justice and defending the poor (22:15-16). When Josiah cares for the poor and needy, he knows the Lord.

22:20-23 a somewhat obscure poem addressed to an unknown female figure. These verses are likely included here because they refer to *shepherds* (kings) and *cedar* (Jer 22:7, 14, 15), which brings to mind the extravagant building projects of kings.

22:24-30 The last king to be censured is *Coniah* (or Jehoiachin), who reigned for only three months in Jerusalem in 597 BCE (2 Kgs 24:8-12). Because of an intensive prophetic effort, many people believed that Jehoiachin

would return from exile and restore the kingdom. But the Lord resolves through a solemn pledge to *banish* Coniah and the queen mother (Nehushta) to a distant land, never to return to Jerusalem (22:24-27). The judgment oracle (22:28-30) kills any hope for Coniah or his descendants to sit on David's throne. The exact form of the Hebrew word translated *childless* in 22:30 appears in Genesis 15:2. Unlike the barrenness of Abram (and Sarai), however, the childlessnessness of Coniah (i.e., the lack of heir to the throne) symbolizes the end of the line. There is no hope for his royal aspirations or for the continuation of the kingship as it was long known in Judah.

23:1-8 Three brief comments punctuate the collection on kings or shepherds, as they are frequently called (23:1-4, 5-6, 7-8). The first denounces shepherds for failing to care

the countries where I have driven them. I will bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. <sup>4</sup>I will place over them shepherds who care for them. Then they will no longer be afraid or dread harm, nor will any be missing, declares the LORD.

### **Promise of a righteous and just king**

<sup>5</sup>The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up a righteous descendant<sup>6</sup> from David's line, and he will rule as a wise king. He will do what is just and right in the land. <sup>6</sup>During his lifetime, Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And his name will be The LORD Is Our Righteousness.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>7</sup>So the time is coming, declares the LORD, when no one will say, "As the LORD lives who brought up the Israelites from the land of Egypt." <sup>8</sup>Instead, they will say, "As the LORD lives who brought up the descendants of the people of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where he<sup>1</sup> has banished them so that they can live in their own land."

### **Oracles against the prophets**

<sup>9</sup>As for the prophets:

My heart inside me is broken; my body aches.<sup>1</sup>

I stagger like a drunk who has had too much wine to drink,  
because of the LORD and because of God's holy words.

<sup>10</sup>Because the country teems with adulterers,  
because of them,<sup>h</sup> yes, because their might isn't right  
and their way is evil,  
the land dries up,  
and the grazing areas in the wilderness wither.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Both prophet and priest are godless;  
I even find their evil in my temple, declares the LORD.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, they will find themselves on slippery ground  
and will be thrust into darkness, where they will collapse.

I will bring disaster upon them, when their time comes, declares the LORD.

<sup>13</sup>In the prophets of Samaria I saw something shocking:  
They prophesied by Baal and led astray my people Israel.

<sup>14</sup>In the prophets of Jerusalem I saw something horrible:  
They commit adultery and tell lies.

23:5 Is 4:2,  
Is 9:7, Is 11:1,  
Is 32:1,  
Jer 33:15  
23:6 Dt 33:28;  
Jer 30:10,  
Jer 33:16;  
Mt 1:21,  
1Co 1:30  
23:7 Jer 16:14,  
Jer 16:15,  
Jer 30:3

<sup>6</sup>Or *branch* <sup>h</sup>Or of *Our Righteousness*, possibly a play on the name *Zedekiah* <sup>1</sup>Or *I* <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain; or *my bones shake*  
<sup>h</sup>LXX; MT a *curse* <sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain

for the flock (cf. Ezek 34:1-10) and then imagines God, the ideal shepherd (see Ps 23; Ezek 34:11-16), restoring the flock to safe pastures. God will see to it that the sheep are *fruitful and multiply*, recalling the divine blessing at creation (Gen 1:28), and live without fear of harm. Then God promises to raise up a wise and just king from David's lineage who will fulfill the duties of kingship (23:5; cf. Jer 22:3). The name of this ideal king is *The Lord Is Our Righteousness* (23:6), which is a play on and contrast to the disappointing King Zedekiah (see Jer 33:16; Isa 11:1-5). The next comment speaks of homecoming from exile (23:7-8). Like the second exodus out of Babylon in Isaiah (Isa 43:14-21; 51:9-11), the people's deliverance from exile—their new exodus and return to their homeland—is spoken of as an extraordinary event that eclipses the memory of the great exodus out of Egypt. This is one of the few passages in Jeremiah 1-25 in which the term *north* is used for future deliverance (see also Jer 3:12, 18; 16:15). It is significant that in this segment the characteristics of ideal rulers/kings pertain to domestic affairs—how the kings treat their own people—and not foreign affairs.

23:9-40 The longest discussion of prophecy—or more precisely the failure of prophecy—in the Bible. It can be broken down into the following parts: a brief introduction (23:9a), a lament of Jeremiah that turns into a

divine charge (23:9b-12), an announcement of judgment against prophets from *Samaria* and *Jerusalem* (23:13-15), an admonition to readers not to listen to the prophets proclaiming peace and well-being (23:16-24), a warning concerning the dreams of the prophets (23:25-28b), the Lord's clear-cut stand against the prophets (23:28c-32), and a play on the Hebrew word for *message* or "burden" of the Lord (23:33-39). These sharp condemnations reflect deep tensions in the surviving community over divine authority. The collection of oracles serves to prove Jeremiah's authenticity as God's spokesperson over against the words of his opponents.

23:9a *As for the prophets*: a title for the section, a rare occurrence in Jeremiah. Here and elsewhere in this section, prophets are never referred to as "false prophets," but simply as prophets without authority to speak God's word. Such prophets speak falsely.

23:9b-12 Jeremiah is grief-stricken over the failure of the prophets. Their failure takes an enormous toll on him physically and on the land. The fallout of godless prophets and priests is thus personal, social, and ecological. As suggested by his drunken state, Jeremiah is also deeply wounded (or driven mad) by *God's holy words*.

23:13-15 *prophets of Samaria*: the capital of the former northern state of Israel. *prophets of Jerusalem*: the capital

23:15 Jer 8:14,  
Jer 9:15  
23:16 Jer 14:14,  
Jer 27:9; Mi 7:15  
23:17 Jer 5:12,  
Jer 6:14;  
Eze 13:10;  
Am 9:10;  
Mi 3:11  
23:18 Job 15:8;  
Jer 23:22  
23:19 Jer 25:32,  
Jer 30:23;  
Am 1:14  
23:20 2Ki 23:26;  
Jer 30:24  
23:21 Jer 14:14,  
Jer 27:15  
23:22 Jer 23:18,  
Jer 25:5; Zec 1:4  
23:23 Ps 139:1,  
Ps 139:7  
23:24 1Ki 8:27;  
Ps 139:7; Is 66:1  
23:28 Nm 12:6;  
Jer 23:25;  
2Co 2:17  
23:29 Jer 5:14;  
Heb 4:12  
23:30 Dt 18:20;  
Ps 34:16;  
Jer 14:15;  
Eze 13:8

- They encourage evildoers so that no one turns from their wickedness.  
In my eyes, they are no better than Sodom;  
its people are like Gomorrah.  
<sup>15</sup>Therefore, this is what the LORD of heavenly forces proclaims concerning the prophets:  
I'm going to feed them bitter food  
and give them poison to drink.  
Wickedness has spread from the prophets of Jerusalem throughout the land.
- <sup>16</sup>The LORD proclaims:  
Don't listen to the prophets who are speaking to you;  
they are deceiving you.  
Their visions come from their own hearts,  
not from the LORD's mouth.
- <sup>17</sup>They keep saying to those who scorn God's message,  
"All will go well for you,"  
and to those who follow their own willful hearts,  
"Nothing bad will happen to you."
- <sup>18</sup>But who has stood in the LORD's council to listen to God's word?  
Who has paid attention to his word and announced it?
- <sup>19</sup>Look! The LORD's angry storm breaks out;  
it whirls around the heads of the wicked.
- <sup>20</sup>The LORD's fierce anger won't turn back  
until it accomplishes all that he has planned.  
In the days to come, you will understand what this means.
- <sup>21</sup>I didn't send the prophets, yet they ran anyway.  
I didn't speak to them, yet they prophesied anyway.
- <sup>22</sup>If they had stood in my council,  
they would have proclaimed my words to my people;  
they would have turned them from their evil ways and deeds.
- <sup>23</sup>The LORD declares, Am I a God who is only nearby and not far off?
- <sup>24</sup>Can people hide themselves in secret places so I might not see them?  
Don't I fill heaven and earth?
- <sup>25</sup>I have heard the prophets prophesying lies in my name. They claim, "I've had a dream;  
I've had a dream!" <sup>26</sup>How long will deceitful prophecies dominate the minds of the prophets?  
Those prophets are treacherous. <sup>27</sup>They scheme to make my people forget me by their  
dreams that people tell each other, just as their ancestors forgot me because of Baal. <sup>28</sup>Let the  
prophet who has a dream declare it, but let the one who has my word proclaim it faithfully.  
What a difference between straw and wheat! declares the LORD.
- <sup>29</sup>Isn't my word like fire  
and like a hammer that shatters rock? declares the LORD.
- <sup>30</sup>Therefore, I'm against the prophets who steal my words from each other,  
declares the LORD.

of southern Judah. This is a wholesale condemnation of the prophetic enterprise. Jerusalem prophets are lumped with those who speak in the name of the Canaanite god Baal. Both stand under God's judgment, as the allusion to *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* drives home.

23:16-24 The community isn't to be taken in by prophets who promise national well-being and security (e.g., Haniah and others in Jer 28-29). Their vision of the future is attractive, but it doesn't derive from God: They haven't stood in the LORD's council (23:18, see 1 Kgs 22; Ps 82; Job 1-2; the divine council is usually understood as the heavenly court over which the Lord presides). The critique doesn't consider the motivation or intentions of these prophets. Nor does it comment on their sincerity or morality. It only says that God hasn't sent them, so their words and visions lack divine authority. Jeremiah is capable of prophesying

peace as well (see Jer 30-33), but his oracles of hope are an outgrowth of a radical program of destabilizing Judah's entire social and theological value systems (Jer 1:10). Jeremiah's honesty, however painful, makes peace and survival possible. God isn't a domesticated, local deity but a God who fills *heaven and earth* (23:23-24).

23:25-28b a development of the previous accusation with a focus on prophetic dreams. The motives of lying prophets now come under scrutiny. They are accused of scheming (like Jeremiah's adversaries noted in Jer 11:9; 18:18) and are said to be *treacherous*. *How long* (23:26) is a painful question often posed in laments (Pss 6:3; 74:10; 80:4; Isa 6:11; Hab 1:2; Jer 12:4). Here it is asked by God. 23:28c-32 In the strongest and most plain language thus far, this poem impresses on the reader the difference between prophetic messages that derive from the Lord (*my*

23:32 Jer 7:8;  
Lam 2:14  
24:1 2Ki 24:14;  
Jer 22:24,  
Jer 29:2; Am 8:1  
24:2 Is 5:4,  
Is 28:4; Hos 9:10;  
Mi 7:1  
24:3 Jer 1:11;  
Am 8:2; Zec 4:2

<sup>31</sup>I'm against the prophets who carelessly deliver oracles,<sup>m</sup> declares the LORD.

<sup>32</sup>I'm against the prophets who dream up lies and then proclaim them, declares the LORD.

With their reckless lies, they lead my people astray.

I didn't send them;

I didn't commission them.

They are completely useless to these people, declares the LORD.

<sup>33</sup>When these people or a prophet or a priest asks you, "What is the LORD's message?"<sup>n</sup> say to them, "What message? I will cast you off, declares the LORD." <sup>34</sup>I will punish anyone, including prophet or priest, who says, "This is the LORD's message." <sup>35</sup>This is what you should ask each other: "What has the LORD said?" "What has the LORD declared?" <sup>36</sup>But you are no longer to mention the LORD's message, because everyone thinks they have received a message from the LORD. You destroy the very word of the living God, the LORD of heavenly forces, our God. <sup>37</sup>So this is what you should say to the prophet: "What has the LORD said to you?" "What has the LORD declared?" <sup>38</sup>But if you insist on saying, "This is the LORD's message," the LORD says to you: Because you have made this claim—this is the LORD's message—when I told you not to proclaim the LORD's message, <sup>39</sup>I will lift you up<sup>o</sup> and cast you out of my presence, together with the city that I gave to your ancestors. <sup>40</sup>I will make you an object of disgrace and enduring shame that no one will ever forget.

**Good and bad figs**

**24**After Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar had deported Judah's King Jeconiah, King Jehoiakim's son, and the Judean officials, as well as the craftsmen and metalworkers from Jerusalem to Babylon, the LORD showed me two baskets of figs set in front of the LORD's temple. <sup>2</sup>One basket was filled with fresh and ripe figs; the other basket was filled with rotten figs—too rotten to eat. <sup>3</sup>And the LORD asked me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I replied: "Figs! Some good ones and others very bad—so bad that they can't be eaten."

<sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to me: <sup>5</sup>The LORD, the God of Israel, proclaims: Just as with these good figs, I will treat kindly the Judean exiles that I have sent from this place to Babylon. <sup>6</sup>I regard them as good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not pull them down; I will plant them and not dig them up. <sup>7</sup>I will give them a heart to know me, for I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart. <sup>8</sup>And just like the rotten figs that are so bad that they can't be eaten, the LORD says, I will do to Judah's King Zedekiah and his officials, as well as the remaining few in Jerusalem and those who are living in Egypt. <sup>9</sup>I will make them an object of horror and evil to all the kingdoms of the earth. Wherever I scatter them, they will be disgraced and insulted, mocked and cursed. <sup>10</sup>I will send the sword, famine, and disease against them until they vanish from the fertile land that I gave to their ancestors.

<sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>n</sup>Or burden <sup>o</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT *forget you*

word like fire and like a hammer in 23:29) and those that don't (i.e., prophets who *steal my words* in 23:30); a difference no less blatant than that of *straw and wheat*. Note the first-person condemnations (*I'm against* in 23:30, 31, 32) and then the negation, *I didn't send... I didn't commission* (see also "I didn't send... I didn't speak to them" in Jer 23:21). Also note the repeated use of the phrase *declares the LORD* (23:28, 29, 30, 31, 32 [twice]). At stake here is nothing less than the future character of the Judean community.

23:33-40 A play on the double meaning of the phrase, "the LORD's message/burden." The Hebrew word *massa'* means either "burden" or "message" ("oracle"). Initially addressed to Jeremiah (23:33-34), God instructs Jeremiah to respond to inquiries by the people, prophets, or priests with an unmistakable message of judgment. God addresses the people, prophets, or priests (23:35-39) and demands that they no longer prophesy in the LORD's name. Their messages *destroy the very word of the living God* (23:36). When they disobey and prophesy, they become

a "burden" that God will lift... up (a play on the same Hebrew word *massa'*) and cast away.

24:1-10 Dated to the period shortly after the relocation of King Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) and many of the leading citizens to Babylon (between 597 and 587 BCE), this simple vision report is similar to Jeremiah's call (see Jer 1:11-18; see sidebar, "Prophetic Beginnings" at Jer 1). *two baskets of figs*: Compare with Amos 7:7-9; 8:1-3. These baskets of figs symbolize the fate of two groups of Judeans: the Jeconiah group exiled to Babylon and the Zedekiah group left in the land. The oracle concerning the former employs the encouraging language of the call narrative: God promises to *build them up and not pull them down... plant them and not dig them up* (24:6; cf. Jer 1:10). God regards the exiles as good, and promises to bring them back to the land and give them a *heart to know the Lord* (24:7). The oracle concerning the latter also employs familiar language, but it is language of death (24:9-10; see Jer 15:4; 25:9, 18; 29:17, 18; 34:17; 38:2; 49:13). The vision turns ordinary expectations upside down: The fate of exile is a covenant blessing, and

25:1 2Ks 24:1;  
Jer 32:1, Jer 36:1,  
Jer 46:2

25:4 2Ch 36:15;  
Jer 6:17, Jer 7:25,  
Jer 25:3,  
Jer 29:19

25:5 2Ks 17:13;  
Jer 7:7, Jer 18:11;  
Jon 3:8

25:6 Dn 8:19;  
Jer 35:15

25:7 2Ks 21:15

25:9 Jer 1:15,  
Jer 27:6,  
Jer 43:10

25:10 Jer 7:34,  
Jer 16:9,  
Ezek 26:13,  
Rev 18:22,  
Rev 18:23

25:11 2Ch  
36:21; Dn 9:2;  
Zec 7:5

25:12 Is 13:19,  
Is 47:1; Jer 29:10,  
Jer 50:1

25:15 Job 21:20,  
Ps 75:8; Is 51:17;  
Jer 51:7;  
Rev 14:10

25:16 Jer 25:27,  
Jer 51:7

25:17 Jer 1:10

25:18 Jer 24:9

25:19 Jer 43:9,  
Jer 46:2

25:20 Job 1:1;  
Jer 47:1,  
Jer 47:5,  
Lam 4:21;  
Zep 2:4

25:21 Jer 27:3,  
Jer 48:1, Jer 49:1,  
Jer 49:7

25:22 Jer 27:3,  
Jer 47:4; Zec 9:2

### A summary of Jeremiah's message

**25** Jeremiah received the LORD's word concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Judah's King Jehoiakim, Josiah's son. This was the first year of Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>2</sup>The prophet Jeremiah addressed all the people of Judah and all those living in Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>From the thirteenth year of Judah's King Josiah, Amon's son, to this very day—twenty-three years—the LORD's word has come to me. I have delivered it to you repeatedly, although you wouldn't listen. <sup>4</sup>In fact, the LORD has tirelessly sent you all his servants, the prophets, but you wouldn't listen or pay attention. <sup>5</sup>They said, "Each one of you, turn from your evil ways and deeds and live in the fertile land that the LORD gave you and your ancestors for all time. <sup>6</sup>Don't follow or worship other gods and don't anger me by what you make with your hands. Then I won't bring disaster upon you." <sup>7</sup>But you wouldn't listen to me, making me angry by what you do and bringing disaster upon yourselves, declares the LORD.

<sup>8</sup>Therefore, this is what the LORD of heavenly forces says: Because you haven't listened to my words, <sup>9</sup>I am going to muster all the tribes of the north and my servant King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, declares the LORD, and I will bring them against this country and its residents as well as against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and will make them an object of horror, shock, and ruins for all time. <sup>10</sup>I will silence the sounds of joy and laughter and the voices of the bride and the bridegroom. Yes, I will silence the millstones and snuff out the lamplight. <sup>11</sup>This whole country will be reduced to a wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. <sup>12</sup>When the seventy years are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation for their wrongdoing, declares the LORD. I will reduce the land of the Babylonians to a wasteland for all time. <sup>13</sup>I will unleash upon that land everything I decreed, all that is written in this scroll, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. <sup>14</sup>Yes, many great nations and powerful kings will enslave them, and I will pay them back in full for what they have done and made with their hands.

<sup>15</sup>This is what the LORD, God of Israel, said to me: Take this seething cup of wine from my hand and make all the nations gulp it down where I'm sending you. <sup>16</sup>They will drink and stagger about half-crazed because of the sword that I am sending against them.

<sup>17</sup>So I took the cup from the LORD's hand, and I made all the nations drink from it where the LORD had sent me: <sup>18</sup>Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials. This was to make them a wasteland, an object of horror, shock, and cursing, as it is today; <sup>19</sup>Pharaoh, Egypt's king, his attendants and officials, and all his people, <sup>20</sup>including the foreigners<sup>P</sup> living there; all the kings of the land of Uz; all the kings of the land of the Philistines—Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and what's left of Ashdod; <sup>21</sup>Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites; <sup>22</sup>all

<sup>P</sup>Heb uncertain

land occupation is a covenant curse. Jeremiah's sympathies lie with the Judean survivors living in Babylon, so he insists that Israel's future is in their hands.

25:1-38 A world uprooted and overthrown. The final chapter of the first half of the book of Jeremiah. It summarizes 23 years of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry as a period of sin and judgment and concludes with the prophet's oracles against the nations in fulfillment of his call (Jer 1:4-10). The chapter has three parts: a sermon that encapsulates the first stage of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry (25:1-14), the cup of divine wrath that the nations must drink (25:15-29), and images of the cosmic disaster (25:30-38).

25:1-14 The historical allusion is full of symbolic meaning: the year 605 BCE, *the first year of Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar*, signals the beginning of the end for Judah. Henceforth, Judah will live under Babylonian control. *The thirteenth year of Judah's King Josiah* (25:3; see Jer 1:2) is the beginning of Jeremiah's prophetic activity. The sermon imitates many of the great speeches in the Bible, especially key addresses in the Deuteronomistic History (i.e., Deut-2 Kgs; see, e.g., 2 Kgs 17:13-23). The Lord sends prophets to warn Israel and urge a change in behavior (25:4-6). Israel doesn't heed their message (25:7). God therefore brings

judgment in the form of disaster, or more precisely Israel brings disaster on itself (25:7). The words *wouldn't listen* or *haven't listened* occur four times in the sermon (25:3, 4, 7, 8), demonstrating that God's people have rejected frequent invitations to return (25:8-14). The language of sin and judgment makes the traumatic events rationally manageable for survivors. It says that suffering isn't arbitrary. Finally, the sermon both vindicates Jeremiah as a true prophet and emphasizes his role as God's voice to the nations (25:13-14). In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the collection of oracles against the nations found in the Hebrew text of Jeremiah 46-51 follows Jeremiah 25:13 (although the oracles themselves aren't in the same order as they appear in the Hebrew text). Note also that it is uncertain whether the allusion to *seventy years* (25:11, 12; see also Jer 29:10; Isa 23:15, 17; Dan 9:2; Zech 7:5) is literal or metaphorical. It may symbolize a normal human life span (cf. Ps 90:10).

25:15-29 Oracles against the nations are common in the prophetic literature (e.g., Isa 13-23; Jer 46-51; Ezek 25-32; Amos 1-2; Zeph 2:4-15). This relatively brief text takes the form of a symbolic action in which God instructs Jeremiah to make the nations drink from the cup of divine wrath.

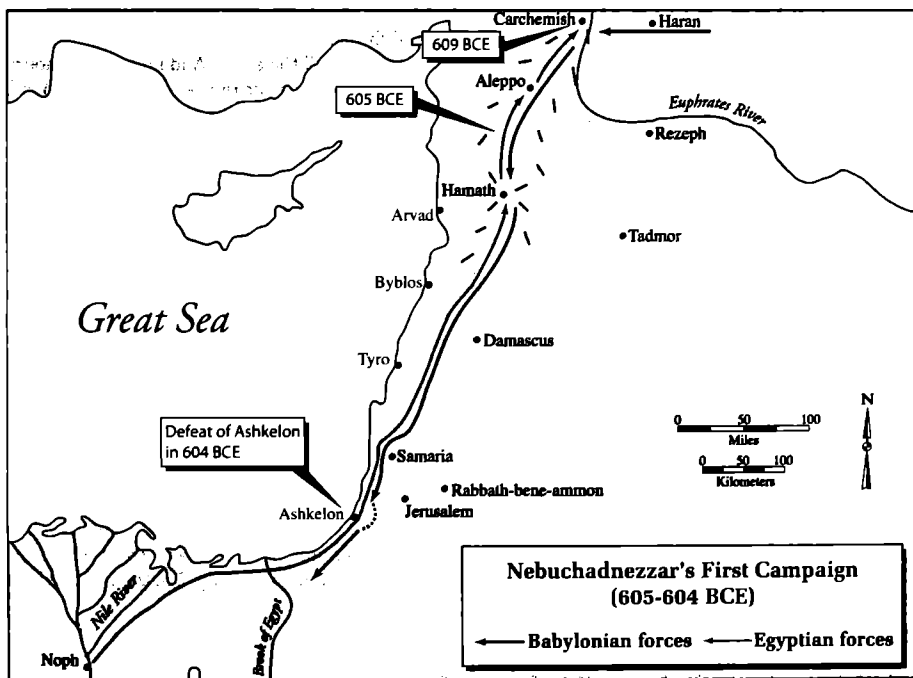
the kings of Tyre and Sidon, and the kings of the coastlands across the sea; <sup>23</sup>Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all those who cut the hair of their foreheads; <sup>24</sup>all the kings of Arabia and the nomadic tribes, <sup>25</sup>all the kings of Zimri, <sup>26</sup>Elam, and Media; <sup>26</sup>all the kings of the north, those nearby and those faraway, one after another, all the empires on the earth will drink from this cup. <sup>27</sup>And after them the king of Sheshach<sup>a</sup> will drink from it.

<sup>27</sup>Then say to them: The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: Drink this seething cup of wine and get drunk. Vomit and collapse and don't get up again because of the sword that I'm thrusting into you. <sup>28</sup>If they refuse to take the cup in your hand and drink from it, tell them: This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says: You must drink! <sup>29</sup>Look! I'm bringing disaster upon the city that bears my name; how then will you escape unpunished? You will not! I'm summoning the sword against everyone on earth, declares the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>30</sup>Now prophesy all these things and say to them:

The LORD roars on high;  
 from his holy place he thunders.  
 He roars fiercely against his flock,  
 like the shouting of those who tread on grapes, against everyone on earth.

25:23 Gn 25:15;  
 Job 6:19;  
 Jer 9:26; Jer 49:8;  
 Jer 49:32  
 25:24 2Ch 9:14;  
 Jer 25:20  
 25:25 Gn 10:22;  
 Is 11:11;  
 Jer 49:34  
 25:26 Jer 25:9;  
 Jer 50:9;  
 Jer 51:41  
 25:27 Jer 25:16;  
 Eze 21:4;  
 Hab 2:16  
 25:28 Jer 49:12  
 25:29 Prv 11:31;  
 Is 10:12; Eze 9:6;  
 1Pt 4:17



<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>h</sup>Heb lacks will drink from this cup. <sup>a</sup>Sheshak is a name for Babylon.

The image of the cup (of punishment and comfort) is common in the Bible (see Jer 16:7; 49:12; 51:7; Lam 4:21; Ezek 23:31-33; Hab 2:16; Pss 16:5; 23:5; Gen 40: 44). Judgment oracles against the nations often imply salvation and survival for Israel. But in this case Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, along with their leaders, are the first to drink from the cup. *the king of Sheshach*: a cryptic allusion to Babylon's ruler (25:26), perhaps employed in this form because

an explicit denunciation of the empire would be too dangerous for subject peoples. The core theological claim of this distasteful narrative is that the Lord, and not Babylon or any other political power, is in control of world events, however chaotic they might be. 25:30-38 This concluding section takes up the theme of a world under divine judgment. Although no particular crimes are listed, the nations are guilty before the Lord. So

25:34 Jer 6:26  
 26:1 2Ki 23:16;  
 2Ch 36:5;  
 Jer 25:1, Jer 27:1,  
 Jer 36:1  
 26:2 Dt 4:2;  
 Jer 1:17, Jer 7:2,  
 Jer 19:14;  
 Mt 28:20

*A World Under Divine Judgment* The first half of the book of Jeremiah, chapters 1–25, is distinctive in several respects: (1) it introduces readers to the prophetic hero who suffers ridicule, abuse, and rejection on account of his mission as God’s spokesperson; (2) It is full of explosive and passionate poetry that the sermons attempt to tame; (3) it urges the people of Judah to return to God in faithfulness and obedience; (4) it claims that God’s people have rejected God’s persistent appeals; (5) It envisions the entire world under divine judgment, with the family of God first in line to drink from the cup of God’s wrath; and therefore (6) It presents a strong defense of God’s justice. Jeremiah 25 functions as a hinge text that unites the two parts of the book. It brings to a close Jeremiah’s prophetic activity from its beginning in 627 BCE to the threatening fourth year of King Jehoiakim in 605/4 BCE—also the first year of King Nebuchadnezzar’s reign—and it declares in no uncertain terms that the divine work of “digging up and pulling down, destroying and demolishing” is well under way. This frightful tearing down of the world precedes God’s program of “building and planting,” which begins to take shape amid the wreckage in Jeremiah 26–52.

<sup>31</sup> The uproar is heard far and wide,  
 because the LORD is bringing a lawsuit against the nations.  
 He’s entering into judgment with all people,  
 sentencing the guilty to death, declares the LORD.

<sup>32</sup> The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:  
 Look! Disaster travels from nation to nation.  
 A terrible storm comes from the far ends of the earth.

<sup>33</sup> At that time, those struck down by the LORD will fill the earth. And no one will mourn for them or prepare their bodies for burial. They will become like refuse lying on the ground.

<sup>34</sup> Wail, you shepherds, cry out.  
 Roll in the dust, you masters of the flock!  
 The day of your slaughter has arrived.  
 You will fall and shatter like a fragile vase.

<sup>35</sup> The shepherds have no place to hide;  
 the masters of the flock can’t escape.

<sup>36</sup> Hear the cry of the shepherds  
 and the sobbing of the masters of the flock,  
 because the LORD is ravaging their pasture.

<sup>37</sup> There’s an eerie silence in the peaceful meadows,  
 because of the LORD’s fierce anger.

<sup>38</sup> The lion is on the prowl,  
 and the land is reduced to nothing,  
 because of the fierce sword,<sup>v</sup>  
 because of his fierce anger.

### *Jeremiah arrested and sentenced to death*

**26** Early in the rule of Judah’s King Jehoiakim, Josiah’s son, this word came from the LORD: <sup>2</sup>The LORD proclaims: Stand in the temple courtyard and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who have come to the temple to worship. Tell them everything:

<sup>v</sup>LXX, Heb manuscripts; Heb uncertain

God enters into judgment with all people (25:31). Familiar legal terminology is employed for God’s action: the Lord brings a *lawsuit* (or a dispute) against the nations. (The Hebrew word *rib*, translated as *lawsuit* here, appears also in Jer 2:9, 29; 11:20; 12:1; 20:12; 50:34; 51:36; see sidebar, “The End of the Covenant” at Jer 12). Accordingly, divine justice lies behind much of what is envisioned here. The Lord roars like a lion ready to pounce on nations (25:30; cf. Amos 1:2); the sounds of war echo throughout the world (25:31); a violent storm destroys all in its path (25:32–33); the slain of war fills the earth (25:33). Perhaps most terrifying is the *eerie silence* of a world reduced to nothing (25:37, 38). This deathscape brings to a close the first half of the book (Jer 1–25). Although the world is in total disorder,

God is still in control, and God’s word spoken by Jeremiah isn’t silenced.

26:1–52:34 Making sense of national tragedy. The second act of the prophetic drama tells the tragic story of the nation’s final days, which cover Nebuchadnezzar’s conquests, failed Judean revolts, and Gedaliah’s failed government. The book as a whole ends on a sad note with a summary: of the fall of Jerusalem, the burning of the temple, and the relocation of Judeans (Jer 52).

26:1–24 A new beginning: Jeremiah’s (second) temple sermon. This short temple sermon (see Jer 7:1–8:3 for the long version) focuses on the nation’s reaction to Jeremiah’s prophetic challenge regarding the fate of the temple and city. Factions of Judah’s leadership accuse Jeremiah of:



I command you; leave nothing out. <sup>3</sup>Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from their evil ways. If they do, I will relent and not carry out the harm I have in mind for them because of the wrong they have done. <sup>4</sup>So tell them, The LORD proclaims: If you don't listen to me or follow the Instruction I have set before you—<sup>5</sup>if you don't listen to the words of the prophets that I have sent to you time and again, though you haven't listened, <sup>6</sup>then I will make this temple a ruin like Shiloh, and this city I will make a curse before all nations on earth.

<sup>7</sup>The priests, the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah declare these words in the LORD's temple. <sup>8</sup>And when Jeremiah finished saying everything the LORD told him to say, the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him and said, "You must die! <sup>9</sup>Why do you prophesy in the LORD's name that 'this temple will become a ruin like Shiloh, and this city will be destroyed and left without inhabitant'?" Then all the people joined ranks against Jeremiah in the LORD's temple.

<sup>10</sup>When the officials of Judah heard these things, they went up from the royal palace to the LORD's temple and took their places at the entrance of the New Gate of the LORD's temple. <sup>11</sup>The priests and the prophets said to the officials and all the people: "This man deserves to die for prophesying against this city as you have all heard firsthand."

<sup>12</sup>Jeremiah said to all the officials and to all the people, "The LORD sent me to prophesy to this temple and this city everything you have heard. <sup>13</sup>So now transform your ways and actions. Obey the LORD your God, and the LORD may relent and not carry out the harm that he's pronounced against you. <sup>14</sup>But me? I'm in your hands. Do whatever you would like to me. <sup>15</sup>Only know for certain that if you sentence me to death, you and the people of this city will be guilty of killing an innocent man. The LORD has in fact sent me to speak everything I have said to you."

<sup>16</sup>Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, "This man doesn't deserve to die, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God."

<sup>17</sup>A few of the community elders got up and addressed the whole crowd: <sup>18</sup>"Micah of Moresheth, who prophesied during the rule of Judah's Hezekiah, said to all the people of Judah, 'The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

Zion will be plowed down like a field,  
Jerusalem will become piles of rubble,  
and the temple mount will become an overgrown mound.'

*Glimmers of Hope* Despite Jeremiah's demanding interaction with the Judean people and their leaders, glimmers of hope become apparent in the second part of the book. Jeremiah is still scolded and rejected by God's people, but now certain defenders emerge and come to Jeremiah's aid. These defenders include a number of ranking officials, community elders, and temple personnel, as well as Ahikam, Ebed-melech, and Baruch. In this way, the story of Jeremiah's suffering and the nation's losses is unexpectedly sprinkled, perhaps overlaid, with hope. We witness these signs of hope not only in (1) the presence of supporters who dare to speak and act on Jeremiah's behalf but also in (2) the scroll of comfort (Jer 30–31; 33), which imagines a world beyond war and exile, the restoration of land and king, and the prospect of a new covenant and a reunited nation; and in (3) the stunning and long-awaited announcement of Babylon's fall (Jer 50–51).

prophesying falsely (see Deut 18:20) and seek to put him to death. The narrative, however, emphasizes Jeremiah's deliverance and the courageous figures who prevent a miscarriage of justice. The narrative recaps Jeremiah's earlier prophecies while introducing themes that shape the second half of the book: Jeremiah's assault on the belief in the invincibility of Jerusalem and its temple, the mounting efforts by power brokers to silence Jeremiah, the guilt of the nation's leadership, the emergence of a faithful few, the influential role played by written prophecy, the sustained testimony of Jeremiah's truthfulness, and the survival of the prophet.

26:1–11 Jeremiah's sermon and sentence. The narrative is set at the beginning of King Jehoiakim's reign (608 BCE). This association with Jehoiakim, a reckless Judean ruler, is more than a historical reference. It is also a code word

for moral failure and looming danger. Jeremiah's lengthy temple sermon of Jeremiah 7:1–8:3 is reduced to a warning about the consequences of disobedience: If the nation doesn't obey God, the capital city and its central shrine will be destroyed. Jeremiah's opponents can't tolerate his message, and they seek to have him killed (cf. Amos 7:10–17). Judean officials are alerted and assemble at the entrance of the *New Gate* (unknown location) of the temple for Jeremiah's hearing.

26:12–24 Jeremiah insists that he is speaking as a true prophet of God and is even willing to die at the hands of his accusers. For the first time in the book, supporters rally around Jeremiah. A few of the *community elders* appeal to written prophecy in Jeremiah's defense: *Micah* prophesied against Jerusalem (Mic 3:12) and was recognized as a true prophet. In fact King *Hezekiah* heeded his

27:6 Jer 25:9,  
Jer 28:14,  
Jer 43:10,  
Dn 2:38  
27:8 Jer 14:12,  
Jer 21:9,  
Jer 24:10,  
Jer 27:6,  
Jer 27:13

<sup>19</sup>“Did King Hezekiah or anyone else in Judah execute him? Didn’t he instead fear the LORD and plead for his mercy? Then the LORD relented of the harm that he had pronounced against them. We are about to commit a huge mistake that will cost us our lives.”

<sup>20</sup>There was another man who prophesied in the LORD’s name: Uriah, Shemaiah’s son from Kiriath-jearim. He prophesied the same things that Jeremiah did about this city and against this land. <sup>21</sup>When King Jehoiakim and all his warriors and officials heard his words, the king sought to kill him. Uriah heard of this and fled in fear to Egypt. <sup>22</sup>But King Jehoiakim dispatched Elnathan, Achbor’s son, and others to Egypt. <sup>23</sup>They brought Uriah back from Egypt to the king who had him killed, and his body was thrown into the common burial ground.

<sup>24</sup>But Ahikam, Shaphan’s son, protected Jeremiah and wouldn’t let the people execute him.

### *Submit to the king of Babylon and live*

**27**Early in the rule of Judah’s King Zedekiah,<sup>w</sup> Josiah’s son, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: <sup>2</sup>This is what the LORD said to me: Make a yoke of straps and bars and wear it on your neck. <sup>3</sup>Then send word<sup>a</sup> to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon through their representatives who have come to Jerusalem to Judah’s King Zedekiah! <sup>4</sup>Tell them to say to their masters: The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: Say this to your masters:

<sup>5</sup>By my great power and outstretched arm, I have made the earth and the people and animals that are on it. I can give it to anyone I please. <sup>6</sup>Now I hand over all these countries to my servant King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. I even give him the wild animals as subjects. <sup>7</sup>All nations will serve him, his son and grandson, until the time for his land arrives; then many nations and great kings will conquer him.

<sup>8</sup>As for the nation or country that won’t serve Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar and won’t put its neck under his yoke, I will punish it with sword, famine, and disease until I have destroyed it by his hand, declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup>As for you, don’t listen to your prophets, diviners, dreamers,<sup>y</sup> mediums, or your sorcerers who say to you, “Don’t serve the king of Babylon.” <sup>10</sup>They are lying to you, and their lies will lead to banishment from your land. I will drive you out, and you will perish. <sup>11</sup>But any nation that puts its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serves him, I will let stay in its land to till it and live on it, declares the LORD.

<sup>w</sup>Heb manuscripts, Syr; MT *Jehoiakim* <sup>a</sup>Or *them* (the yokes) <sup>y</sup>Or *dreams*

message and averted disaster. Jeremiah’s defenders point out another (otherwise unknown) prophet to strengthen his case: *Uriah, Shemaiah’s son from Kiriath-jearim delivered a similar message in the Lord’s name against this city and . . . this land.* Although King Jehoiakim had Uriah killed for his prophecy, his testimony lives on and functions here as historical example. Indeed, multiple witnesses (cf. Deut 17:6)—textual and historical—bear out Jeremiah’s innocence. Despite this persuasive evidence, Jeremiah’s life is still in grave danger—innocent prophets are still murdered—until *Ahikam, Shaphan’s son*, comes to his aid. The Shaphan family supported King Josiah, allies of Jeremiah, and leaders in Judah after the exile of 587 BCE (see 2 Kgs 22:3, 8-10; 25:22; Jer 29:3; 36:10-14; 40:5, 9, 11; 41:2). 27:1-28:17 Prophetic conflict over Babylonian rule. Linked by the yoke motif and the reference *that same year* (28:1), these chapters are set in the period between the first relocation of Judeans to Babylon (597 BCE) and the fall of Jerusalem (587). The Babylonian armies had invaded Judah, plundered the Jerusalem temple, and deported many of Judah’s leading citizens to Babylon. Within a decade, the temple would be burned to the ground, and other Judeans would be relocated in the east. During the in-between years, priests, prophets, and people in Judah struggle to come to grips with the unfolding events and their implications for national life. What does the military invasion mean politically and theologically? Will the Lord deliver as in days past? What will become of the Judean

refugees as well as the temple treasures hauled off to Babylon? How long must the community endure foreign control? Perhaps fueled by unrest in Babylon and political developments in Egypt, an international coalition of nations emerges that resists Babylonian power. At the same time a strong ideological rift surfaces in Judah. Some, including King Zedekiah and the prophet Hananiah, encourage rebellion. Jeremiah, in contrast, promotes submission to Babylon in preparation for long-term captivity. Both perspectives claim divine authority. And both hold serious ramifications for the future of the Judean community: 27:1-11 The text is dated *Early in the rule* (or at the beginning) of Judah’s King Zedekiah. God commands Jeremiah to wear a *yoke of straps and bars* (27:2), an instrument ordinarily used across the neck of oxen to pull heavy loads! Here the yoke symbolizes servitude to Babylonian rule. Jeremiah is to deliver the Lord’s message to a delegation of foreign ministers who are in Jerusalem to meet with King Zedekiah. God’s word through Jeremiah is extremely disturbing. The prophet insists that the ambassadors persuade their kings to surrender unconditionally to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, as if to God. Resistance to Babylonian rule will result in further destruction. Submission, or putting their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, will lead to life or survival. Although one could make this argument on regional and political grounds alone—resistance to the empire is doomed to failure—Jeremiah’s claims are rooted in God’s authority

27:12 Jer 27:3.  
Jer 28:1,  
Jer 38:17  
28:6 1Ki 1:36;  
Ps 41:13;  
Jer 11:5

<sup>12</sup>I delivered the same message to Judah's King Zedekiah: If you want to live, put your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people. <sup>13</sup>Why should you and your people die by sword, famine, and disease, as the LORD pronounced against any nation that won't serve the king of Babylon? <sup>14</sup>Pay no attention to the words of the prophets who encourage you not to serve the king of Babylon, for they are lying to you. <sup>15</sup>I haven't sent these prophets, declares the LORD; they are prophesying falsely in my name. If you listen to them, I will drive you out, and you will perish, both you and your prophets!

<sup>16</sup>Then I spoke to the priests and all this people: This is what the LORD says: Don't listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you, "In a short while, the temple equipment will be brought back from Babylon." They are prophesying a lie to you. <sup>17</sup>Don't listen to them; serve the king of Babylon and live. Otherwise, this city will be reduced to ruin. <sup>18</sup>If they are really prophets and have the LORD's word, let them intercede with the LORD of heavenly forces not to let the equipment left in the LORD's temple and in the royal palace of Judah and Jerusalem be carted off to Babylon.

<sup>19</sup>This is what the LORD of heavenly forces proclaims about the pillars, the Sea, the stands, and the rest of the equipment left in this city, <sup>20</sup>which Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar didn't plunder when he deported Jeconiah the son of Judah's King Jehoiakim from Jerusalem to Babylon, along with all the officials of Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>21</sup>Yes, this is what the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims about the equipment that is left in the LORD's temple and in the royal palace in Judah, and in Jerusalem: <sup>22</sup>They will be carted off to Babylon where they will remain until the day I come looking for them, declares the LORD; then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.

**Prophet against prophet**

**28** That same year, early in the rule of Judah's King Zedekiah, in the fifth month of his fourth year, the prophet Hananiah, Azzur's son from Gibeon, spoke to me in the LORD's temple before the priests and all the people. <sup>2</sup>He said: "The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. <sup>3</sup>In two years I will restore to this place all of the temple equipment that Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar carted off to Babylon. <sup>4</sup>I will also restore to this place Judah's King Jeconiah, Jehoiakim's son, along with all the exiles from Judah who were deported to Babylon, for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon, declares the LORD."

<sup>5</sup>Then the prophet Jeremiah responded to Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the LORD's temple. <sup>6</sup>The prophet Jeremiah said: "Indeed. May the LORD do just as you have said! May the LORD fulfill the words that you have prophesied and bring back from Babylon the equipment of the LORD's temple and all the exiles to this place. <sup>7</sup>However, listen closely to what I have to say to you and all the people: <sup>8</sup>The prophets who came before you and me long ago prophesied war, disaster, and disease against many lands and great kingdoms. <sup>9</sup>So the prophet who prophesies peace is recognized as one who is actually sent by the LORD only when that prophet's message is fulfilled."

(27:5-7). Counter-voices are deemed misleading and dangerous (27:9-10).

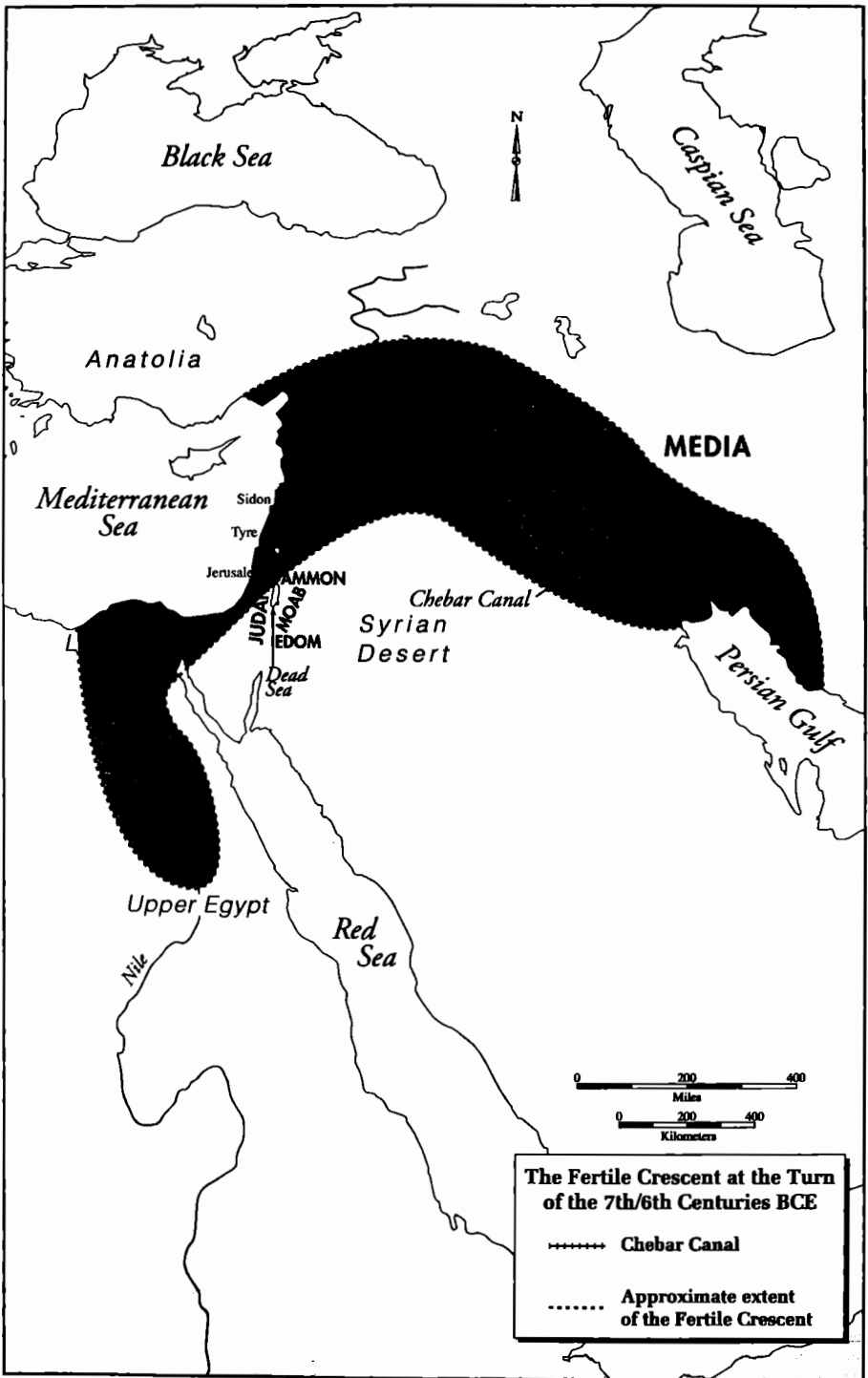
27:12-22 Jeremiah tells the same message to King Zedekiah (27:12-15): Judah's survival depends on submission to Babylonian rule. Resistance will lead to further bloodshed. Zedekiah must not be fooled by prophets who suggest otherwise. God hasn't sent these prophets. They are *prophesying falsely in [the Lord's] name*. Then Jeremiah addresses the priests and all this people (27:16-22). They also must submit to Babylon and not be fooled by prophets who promise the speedy return of the looted temple treasures. God states through Jeremiah that the remaining treasures from the temple and the royal palace will soon be carried off to Babylon (27:19-22; see 2 Kgs 25:13-17), but eventually they will be returned to Jerusalem (see Ezra 1:7-11).

28:1-17 This story develops the theme of prophetic conflict over how the nation should respond to Babylonian control. the fifth month of his fourth year: 593 BCE (28:1). Hananiah, Azzur's son from Gibeon: the Greek version (LXX)

of the Hebrew Bible refers to Hananiah as a false prophet, but he isn't identified this way in the Hebrew text. Hananiah is a genuine prophet. His name means "the Lord is gracious." He speaks in the Lord's name, and he is authorized to prophesy in the temple. He uses customary prophetic language and symbolic actions, and his message is similar to Isaiah's: God will save Jerusalem and its king from their enemies. All this complicates a story that paints Hananiah in the worst possible light (e.g., Jer 27:16-17; cf. Deut 18:20).

28:1-4 Hananiah directly challenges the Lord's word proclaimed by Jeremiah. *King Jeconiah*: known also as Jehoiachin.

28:5-9 Jeremiah's response, *Indeed* (or "Amen") is difficult to interpret. It could be a cynical reaction to Hananiah's stance, or it could be an expression of hope that God will "indeed" intervene on Judah's behalf. Jeremiah's even prays that such will be the case. Nevertheless, Jeremiah has serious doubts for two reasons: as a rule prophets deliver messages of doom, and on the rare occasion they



**The Fertile Crescent at the Turn of the 7th/6th Centuries BCE**

----- Chebar Canal

..... Approximate extent of the Fertile Crescent

28:13 Dt 28:48;  
Jer 28:14  
28:14 Dt 28:48;  
Jer 25:11;  
Jer 27:6  
29:4 Jer 24:5  
29:5 Jer 29:28;  
Jn 20:15  
29:6 1Ti 5:14  
29:7 Est 6:10;  
1Ti 2:1, 1Ti 2:2

<sup>10</sup>Then the prophet Hananiah took hold of the yoke that was on the prophet Jeremiah's neck and broke it. <sup>11</sup>He said before all the people, "This is what the LORD says: Just as this yoke has been broken, I will break the yoke of Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar from the neck of all the nations within two years." Then the prophet Jeremiah walked away.

<sup>12</sup>Sometime after Hananiah had broken the yoke that was on Jeremiah's neck, the LORD told him: <sup>13</sup>Go, say to Hananiah, The LORD proclaims: You have broken a wooden yoke,<sup>a</sup> but I<sup>a</sup> will replace it with an iron one. <sup>14</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: I will put iron yokes on the necks of all these nations, and they will serve Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar; even the wild animals will be subject to him!

<sup>15</sup>Then the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah: "Listen, Hananiah! The LORD hasn't sent you. All you are doing is persuading these people to believe a lie. <sup>16</sup>Therefore, the LORD proclaims: I'm going to send you somewhere—right off the face of the earth! Before the year ends, you will die since you have incited rebellion against the LORD." <sup>17</sup>The prophet Hananiah died in the seventh month<sup>b</sup> of that year.

**Disturbing hope: Settle down in Babylon**

**29** The prophet Jeremiah sent a letter from Jerusalem to the few surviving elders among the exiles, to the priests and the prophets, and to all the people Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylon from Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>The letter was sent after King Jeconiah, the queen mother, the court officials, the government leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, and the craftsmen and smiths had left Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>It was delivered to Babylon by Elasah, Shaphan's son, and Gemariah, Hilkiyah's son—two men dispatched to Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar by King Zedekiah.

<sup>4</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims to all the exiles I have carried off from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup>Build houses and settle down; cultivate gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup>Get married and have children; then help your sons find wives and your daughters find husbands in order that they too may have children. Increase in number there so that you don't dwindle away. <sup>7</sup>Promote the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because your future depends on its welfare.

<sup>a</sup>Or yokes <sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>September–October, Tishrei

deliver a message of peace, their prophecy is recognized as true only when it is fulfilled (a deviation from Deut 18:9-22).

28:10-11 Hananiah breaks the wooden yoke on Jeremiah's neck to show that God will break the iron grip of Babylon on all the nations and to demonstrate the superiority of his message to Jeremiah's message.

28:12-14 Jeremiah reenters the fray with an iron yoke to symbolize the certainty and power of Babylon's monopoly over the nations.

28:15-17 With the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prediction of Hananiah's death, the story comes to an end. The final word serves to confirm the truthfulness of Jeremiah's prophecy, especially from a Deuteronomist perspective (Deut 18:15-22, especially 18:20).

29:1-32 Jeremiah's disturbing hope: put down roots in Babylon. Jeremiah 29:1-32 is often read in conjunction with Jeremiah 27:1-28:17 since it also addresses matters related to the period between the first relocation of Judeans to Babylon (597 BCE) and the fall of Jerusalem (587). The three chapters concentrate on the controversy over the length and the meaning of the exile for survivors. Because of the word the Lord entrusted to him, Jeremiah is convinced that the exile will be long and have profound implications for the ongoing character of community life. Jeremiah's opponents expect the exile to be brief and have few long-term consequences. They champion belief in Judah's continued nationhood after a brief interlude of Babylonian control. Their perspective is rooted in God's commitment to David and the Jerusalem temple, as God's

everlasting dwelling place. And they are willing to risk their lives in support of an anti-Babylonian stance. At issue is Judah's posture towards the empire, whether it should resist or submit to Babylonian rule. At stake is the very survival of God's people. These conflicting views come to the fore in Jeremiah 29 in letters written by Jeremiah (29:1-23) and Shemaiah (29:24-28), and they are given further emphasis by Jeremiah's condemnation of Shemaiah as a false prophet (29:29-32).

29:1-23 Jeremiah writes or sends a letter to Judean exiles in Babylon. Letters are common in the NT, but they are rare in the OT (see 2 Sam 11:14-15; 1 Kgs 21:8-10; Ezra 7:11-26). Rarer still are letters written or dictated by prophets (2 Chron 21:12-15). The writing of scrolls, however, plays an important role in Jeremiah (see Jer 25:13; 30:1-2; 36:1-32; 45:1; 51:59-64).

29:1-3 The letter is full of details, including Jeremiah's location (in Jerusalem), the recipients of his letter (elders . . . people), the time of delivery (after King Jehoiachin [Jeconiah]; the queen mother, Nehushta; and others had left Jerusalem), and the couriers (Elasah and Gemariah).

29:4-14 The letter provides God's instruction's for life in Babylon: The Judean refugees in Babylon are to settle down and attend to the needs of family and community. They are to promote the welfare of Babylon (not Jerusalem!) and refrain from engaging in violence against the empire (see Deut 20:1-9). God promises the exiles a hopeful future, including eventual homecoming (seventy years, i.e., a long time or a lifetime; see Jer 25:11). But this future is unsettling since it destabilizes their old and settled world.

29:9 Jer 14:14,  
Jer 27:15,  
Jer 29:31  
29:10-2Ch 36:21;  
Jer 24:6,  
Jer 25:12,  
Jer 33:14; Dn 9:2  
29:14 Jer 23:3,  
Jer 30:3  
29:16 Jer 22:2  
29:17 Jer 24:8,  
Jer 29:18  
29:18 Jer 15:4,  
Jer 42:18  
29:19 Jer 6:19,  
Jer 25:4, Jer 26:5  
29:20 Jer 24:5  
29:21 Jer 14:14,  
Jer 29:8, Jer 29:9  
29:22 Is 65:15;  
Dn 3:6  
29:23 Jer 23:14

<sup>8</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: Don't let the prophets and diviners in your midst mislead you. Don't pay attention to your dreams. <sup>9</sup>They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I didn't send them, declares the LORD.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD proclaims: When Babylon's seventy years are up, I will come and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. <sup>11</sup>I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the LORD; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope. <sup>12</sup>When you call me and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup>When you search for me, yes, search for me with all your heart, you will find me. <sup>14</sup>I will be present for you, declares the LORD, and I will end your captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have scattered you, and I will bring you home after your long exile," declares the LORD.

<sup>15</sup>Yet you say, The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon:

<sup>16</sup>This is what the LORD proclaims concerning the king sitting on David's throne and all the people who live in this city, that is, those among you who didn't go into exile: <sup>17</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims: I'm going to send the sword, famine, and disease against them. I will make them like rotten figs that are too spoiled to eat. <sup>18</sup>I will pursue them with the sword, famine, and disease; and I will make them an object of horror to all nations on earth and an object of cursing, scorn, shock, and disgrace among all the countries where I have scattered them, <sup>19</sup>because they wouldn't listen to my words, declares the LORD, which I sent them time and again through my servants the prophets. They<sup>d</sup> wouldn't listen, declares the LORD.

<sup>20</sup>But now, all you exiles I deported from Jerusalem to Babylon, listen to the LORD's word. <sup>21</sup>This is what the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims concerning Ahab, Kolaiah's son, and Zedekiah, Maaseiah's son, who are prophesying lies to you in my name: I will hand them over to Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar, and he will slay them before your very eyes. <sup>22</sup>Because of them, all the Judean exiles in Babylon will use this curse: "The LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, who were burned alive by the king of Babylon." <sup>23</sup>They committed a horrible scandal in Israel—adultery with their neighbors' wives and deceit spoken in my name, with which I had nothing to do. Yet I'm still aware of it and am witness to it, declares the LORD.

<sup>24</sup>Tell Shemaiah the Nehelamite, <sup>25</sup>This is what the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: "You sent letters on your own accord to all the people in Jerusalem, to the priest Zephaniah, Maaseiah's son, and to the rest of the priests. <sup>26</sup>You said to Zephaniah:<sup>f</sup> The LORD has appointed you priest in charge of the LORD's temple instead of Jehoiada. You are responsible for putting every madman who prophesies into stocks and neck irons. <sup>27</sup>So why haven't you threatened Jeremiah of Anathoth, who pretends to be a prophet among you? <sup>28</sup>He has sent a letter telling those of us in Babylon: "You are going to be there a long time, so build houses and settle down, plant gardens and eat what they produce."

<sup>29</sup>The priest Zephaniah read this letter to the prophet Jeremiah. <sup>30</sup>Then the LORD's word came to Jeremiah: <sup>31</sup>Send word to all the exiles: The LORD proclaims concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite: Because Shemaiah prophesied to you when I didn't send him, and because

<sup>c</sup>Or I will restore you to the place from which I exiled you. <sup>d</sup>Syr; MT you <sup>e</sup>Or because you sent <sup>f</sup>Heb lacks You said to Zephaniah.

Although God's intentions for them are gracious (29:11), the Judean refugees must contend with displacement and loss. Jeremiah 29:13 is a modified quotation of Deuteronomy 4:29.

29:15-23 The text moves with little warning from disturbing salvation (Jer 29:4-14) to disturbing judgment (29:15-19), and then to a denunciation of two otherwise unknown prophets (29:20-23). The focus shifts initially from the Judean exiles in Babylon to King Zedekiah and people with him in Jerusalem (i.e., who don't go into exile). The Jerusalem contingent will suffer the terrible consequences of war because it doesn't heed the word of God spoken by the prophets (to submit to Babylon). As in Jeremiah 24, the king and those left in Judah are likened to *rotten figs*. Such language supports the Judean exiles in Babylon (and

specifically the exiles who return to Judah years later) as heirs of God's promises. With them—and not the remnant in Judah—rests the future of Israel. Jeremiah 29:16-20, the condemnation of those who remain in Judah, are a later interpretive comment that is absent in the LXX. *Ahab* and *Zedekiah*: otherwise unknown prophets.

29:24-32 *Shemaiah*: a prophet in Babylon who writes the deputy *priest Zephaniah* and demands that he fulfill his priestly duty (as guardian) and deal with Jeremiah for his subversive letter to the exiles (29:28 summarizes Jer 29:4-14, see especially 29:5). According to Shemaiah, Jeremiah is a *madman* (29:26) who must be locked up and silenced. And it's Zephaniah's responsibility to do so (see also Jer 21:1; 52:24). Zephaniah reads Shemaiah's letter to Jeremiah, and in response Jeremiah sends another letter to

he convinced you to believe a lie, <sup>32</sup>I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his descendants, declares the LORD. Not one member of this people will be around to see the good that I have in store for my people, declares the LORD, for he incited rebellion against me.

## THE SCROLL OF COMFORT

### Healing and restoration for my people

**30** Jeremiah received the LORD's word: <sup>2</sup>The LORD, the God of Israel, proclaims: Write down in a scroll all the words I have spoken to you. <sup>3</sup>The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will bring back my people Israel and Judah from captivity,<sup>4</sup> says the LORD. I will bring them home to the land that I gave to their ancestors, and they will possess it. <sup>4</sup>Here are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah:

<sup>5</sup>The LORD proclaims:

<sup>1</sup>I<sup>a</sup> hear screams of panic and terror; no one is safe.

<sup>6</sup>Ask and see: Can men bear children?

Then why do I see every man bent over in pain,<sup>i</sup> as if he's in labor?

Why have all turned pale?

<sup>7</sup>That day is awful, beyond words.

A time of unspeakable pain for my people Jacob.

But they will be delivered from it.

<sup>8</sup>At that time, I will break the yoke off their<sup>j</sup> necks and remove their<sup>k</sup> shackles. Foreigners will no longer enslave them, declares the LORD of heavenly forces. <sup>9</sup>They will serve the LORD their God and the king whom I will raise up for them from David's family.

<sup>10</sup>So don't be afraid, my servant Jacob, declares the LORD,

Don't lose hope, Israel.

I will deliver you from faraway places

and your children from the land of their exile.

My people Jacob will again be safe and sound,

with no one harassing them.

<sup>11</sup>I am with you and will rescue you, declares the LORD.

I will put an end to all the nations where I have scattered you.

But I won't put an end to you.

I won't let you remain unpunished:

I will discipline you as you deserve.

<sup>a</sup>Or restore the fortunes <sup>b</sup>Or We <sup>i</sup>Or with his hands on his groin <sup>j</sup>Or your <sup>k</sup>Or your

30:1 Jer 1:1,

Jer 7:1, Jer 11:1,

Jer 18:1, Jer 25:1

30:8 Is 9:4,

Is 10:27; Jer 2:20,

Jer 27:2;

Eze 34:27

30:9 Is 55:3;

Jer 23:5;

Eze 34:23,

Eze 37:24;

Hos 3:5

30:10 Is 43:5,

Is 44:2; Jer 46:27,

Jer 46:28

30:11 Jer 1:8,

Jer 4:27,

Jer 10:24,

Jer 46:28

the exiles, denouncing Shemaiah as a lying prophet who will be punished for provoking rebellion against the Lord by opposing Babylonian rule.

30:1–33:26 Healing and hope: the Book of Comfort. These are the most hopeful poems and prose passages in the book. It is as if, for a moment, the solemn tone of Jeremiah disappears. A closer look, however, reveals that despair and hardship have shaped the background for the words of comfort. Even images of restoration draw heavily on painful memories of the past (e.g., yoke in 30:8; wilderness in 31:2; north in 31:8; Ramah in 31:15, and the motto of the book in 31:28). Consequently, the reader won't encounter a utopian world here but rather a world of grace and truth rooted deeply in human brokenness and pain. God grants a war-torn and exiled community a future when none seems possible. Some read this section as the centerpiece of Jeremiah, while others consider its many expressions of comfort muted by a larger context of misery. In either case, it's a wondrous theological expression of hope for suffering people.

30:1–4 God commands Jeremiah to record the divine words on a scroll (see also Jer 25:13; 36:1–32; 45:1; 51:60, 63). These words must be preserved in writing because

they refer to future restoration. Furthermore, the very act of writing is a pledge of restoration that bears witness to life beyond captivity. Written prophecy rises above the limitations of the spoken word of the prophet. Written prophecy can go where prophets can't go and can endure all types of attacks (see Jer 36).

30:5–11 The background of the scroll of comfort is the horror of war. *Jacob*: Israel (30:7). *That day*: This may refer to "the day of the Lord"—that is, to God's reign on earth, a time when God breaks into history to establish justice and judgment for those who committed evil, and salvation for broken and needy people. The word *yoke* (burden or oppression) links this text with the previous symbolic actions of Jeremiah and Hananiah (see Jer 28:2, 4, 14). Now Jeremiah voices what Hananiah had predicted prematurely, that God will liberate God's people from their oppressors. Rather than serving their tormenters, they will serve the Lord and a ruler from David's dynasty. Jeremiah 30:10–11 are words of assurance that recall Jeremiah's call (Jer 1:19; see sidebar, "Prophetic Beginnings" at Jer 1). They're also related to the prophetic reassurance given to Jacob in Jeremiah 46:28. God's declaration—*don't be afraid... I am with you*—is affirmed throughout the Bible.

- <sup>12</sup>This is what the LORD says:  
Your injury is incurable;  
your illness is grave.
- <sup>13</sup>No one comes to your aid;  
no one attends to your wound;  
your disease is incurable.
- <sup>14</sup>All your lovers disregard you;  
they write you off as a lost cause,  
because I have dealt harshly with you as an enemy would,  
because your guilt is great and your sins are many.
- <sup>15</sup>Why cry out for relief from your pain?  
Your wound is incurable.  
I have done these things to you,  
because your guilt is great  
and your sins are many.
- <sup>16</sup>Yet all who ravage you will be ravaged;  
all who oppress you will go into exile.  
Those who rob you will be robbed,  
and all who plunder you will be plundered.
- <sup>17</sup>I will restore your health,  
and I will heal your wounds, declares the LORD,  
because you were labeled an outcast, "Zion, the lost cause."
- <sup>18</sup>The LORD proclaims:  
I will restore Jacob's tents and have pity on their birthplace.  
Their city will be rebuilt on its ruins and the palace in its rightful place.
- <sup>19</sup>There will be laughter and songs of thanks.  
I will add to their numbers so they don't dwindle away.  
I will honor them so they aren't humiliated.
- <sup>20</sup>Their children will thrive as they did long ago,  
and their community will be established before me.  
I will punish their oppressors.
- <sup>21</sup>They will have their own leader;  
their ruler will come from among them.  
I will let him approach me, and he will draw near.  
Who would dare approach me unless I let them come? declares the LORD.
- <sup>22</sup>You will be my people,  
and I will be your God.
- <sup>23</sup>Look! The LORD's anger breaks out like a violent storm,  
a fierce wind that strikes the heads of the wicked.
- <sup>24</sup>The LORD's fierce anger won't turn back  
until God's<sup>1</sup> purposes are entirely accomplished.  
In the days to come, you will understand what this means.

<sup>1</sup>Or *his or its*

30:12-17 The poem portrays Zion's condition in the bleakest of terms, but God pledges to save Zion and restore her to health. God's motive (30:17) is the nations' scorn for Daughter Zion. *All your lovers*: likely refers to political allies (30:14).

30:18-31:1 The Hebrew word *shub*, found often in Jeremiah and translated here as *restore* (30:18) and *turn back* (30:24), brackets this passage. In doing so, it brings together salvation and judgment, planting and uprooting (note the inverted order). Jacob's (=Israel's) restoration involves a rebuilt city (Jerusalem), a safe and secure place for children to thrive, political independence, and

the reinstatement of the broken covenant relationship, indicated by the covenant expression, *You will be my people, and I will be your God* (30:22). This vision of the future is incomplete without the restoration of moral order. So the Lord's anger breaks out against oppressors (30:20) and other evildoers (30:23-24) in order to execute the divine purposes, which readers will understand *In the days to come* (30:24). God's campaign against miscarriages of justice will lead to the reunion of all the dispersed clans of Israel—northern and southern—in a renewed covenant relationship (31:1). Compare 30:23 with Jeremiah 23:19 and 30:24 with Jeremiah 23:20.



**31** At that time, declares the LORD,  
I will be the God of all the families of Israel,  
and they will be my people.

31:1 Jer 30:22

31:2 Ex 2:23,  
Ex 12:37,  
Ex 14:8, Ex 17:8;  
Dt 12:931:8 Is 42:16;  
Jer 3:18,  
Jer 23:8;  
Eze 34:16;  
Mi 4:6

31:10 Is 40:11

31:11 Is 44:23,  
Is 48:20

<sup>2</sup>The LORD proclaims:

The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness.

As Israel searched for a place of rest,

<sup>3</sup>the LORD appeared to them<sup>m</sup> from a distance:<sup>n</sup>

I have loved you with a love that lasts forever.

And so with unending love, I have drawn you to myself.<sup>o</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Again, I will build you up, and you will be rebuilt, virgin Israel.

Again, you will play your tambourines and dance with joy.

<sup>5</sup>Again, you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria;

farmers will plant and then enjoy the harvests.

<sup>6</sup>The time will come when the watchmen shout from the highlands of Ephraim:

"Get ready! We're going up to Zion to the LORD our God!"

<sup>7</sup>The LORD proclaims:

Sing joyfully for the people of Jacob;

shout for the leading nation.

Raise your voices with praise and call out:

"The LORD has saved his people,<sup>p</sup> the remaining few in Israel!"

<sup>8</sup>I'm going to bring them back from the north;

I will gather them from the ends of the earth.

Among them will be the blind and the disabled,

expectant mothers and those in labor;

a great throng will return here.

<sup>9</sup>With tears of joy they will come;

while they pray, I will bring them back.

I will lead them by quiet streams and on smooth paths so they don't stumble.

I will be Israel's father,

Ephraim will be my oldest child.

<sup>10</sup>Listen to the LORD's word, you nations,

and announce it to the distant islands:

The one who scattered Israel will gather them

and keep them safe, as a shepherd his flock.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD will rescue the people of Jacob

and deliver them from the power of those stronger than they are.

<sup>1</sup>Or his or its <sup>m</sup>Or to me <sup>n</sup>Or a long time ago <sup>o</sup>Heb lacks myself. <sup>p</sup>LXX; MT Save your people, LORD

31:2-7 In this section, Jeremiah draws from Israel's great statements of faith, especially the exodus of Egypt, the wilderness wandering, the Sinai covenant, and the promise of land. In fact, the lines between past and present blur. For example, who are the people who find grace in the wilderness (31:2): Israel past (delivered from Egypt) or Israel present and future (delivered from Babylon)? This ambiguity is probably deliberate: Israel's ancient traditions structure Israel's understanding of the present and its vision of the future. The nation's deliverance from slavery in Egypt (*survived the sword*) and its years in the wilderness are recalled (31:2-3). Whereas some view the wilderness period as a time of disobedience, others see it through a more positive interpretive lens: The people *found grace in the wilderness* (31:2), *the LORD appeared to them from a distance*: perhaps an allusion to the Sinai (e.g., Exod 16:10; Num 14:10). God's unending love (31:3) draws Israel to God and forms the basis for constructions of newness. Israel is no longer faithless Israel but now *virgin Israel*. Whereas the imperative, "Get ready," earlier summoned the nation to

war (e.g., Jer 6:4, 5), now it's a call to worship: "Get ready! We're going up to Zion to the LORD our God!" (31:6). Like Isaiah of the exile, Jeremiah calls the community to sing joyfully because of God's acts of salvation (31:7; Isa 44:23; 49:13). The *remaining few* (31:7): a term also used in other prophetic books to convey the destruction of God's people, acknowledges both the toll of war and hope of survival.

31:8-14 Images of homecoming and boundless joy: *quiet streams and smooth paths*, as well as the portrait of God as *Israel's father* and Israel as God's *oldest child*. The nations that once mocked Zion (Jer 30:17) are now summoned to witness God's gracious acts of kindness on behalf of God's people (31:10). A poetic sequence of verbs expresses God's bountiful grace (31:10-11): *gather, keep, shepherd, rescue, and deliver*. The last two verbs recall liberation from Egyptian control (Exod 6:6; Deut 7:8; 9:26; Pss 74:2; 77:15). The central confession of faith says that God will rescue the weak from the clutches of the powerful (31:11). Note the use of this poetic language elsewhere in the

31:15 Gn 37:35;

Josh 10:25;

Jer 10:20;

Mt 2:18

31:16 Ru 2:12;

2Ch 15:7;

Jer 30:3;

Eze 11:17

31:18 Job 5:17;

Ps 80:3; Lam 5:21

31:19 Eze 9:6;

Jer 22:21;

Eze 21:12

31:20 Is 55:7;

Hos 11:8;

Mt 7:18

- 12 They will come shouting for joy on the hills of Zion,  
 jubilant over the LORD's gifts:  
 grain, wine, oil, flocks, and herds.  
 Their lives will be like a lush garden;  
 they will grieve no more.
- 13 Then the young women will dance for joy;  
 the young and old men will join in.  
 I will turn their mourning into laughter and their sadness into joy;  
 I will comfort them.
- 14 I will lavish the priests with abundance  
 and shower my people with my gifts, declares the LORD.

15 The LORD proclaims:  
 A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and wailing.  
 It's Rachel crying for her children; she refuses to be consoled,  
 because her children are no more.

16 The LORD proclaims:  
 Keep your voice from crying and your eyes from weeping,  
 because your endurance will be rewarded, declares the LORD.  
 They will return from the land of their enemy!

17 There's hope for your future, declares the LORD.  
 Your children will return home!

18 I hear, yes, I hear Ephraim lamenting:  
 "You disciplined me,  
 and I learned my lesson,  
 even though I was as stubborn as a mule.  
 Bring me back, let me return,  
 because you are the LORD my God.

19 After I turned away from you, I regretted it;  
 I realized what I had done, and I have hit myself<sup>a</sup>—  
 I was humiliated and disgraced,  
 and I have carried this disgrace since I was young."

20 Isn't Ephraim my much-loved child?  
 Don't I utterly adore him?  
 Even when I scold him, I still hold him dear.  
 I yearn for him and love him deeply, declares the LORD.

21 Set up markers, put up signs;  
 think about the road you have traveled,  
 the path you have taken.  
 Return, virgin Israel;  
 return to these towns of yours.

<sup>a</sup>Or struck my thigh

Bible: shouting for joy (31:12; Isa 26:19); lush garden (31:12; Isa 58:11); mourning into laughter (31:13; Ps 30:11); I will comfort them (31:13; Isa 40:1-2; 49:13; 51:3; 52:9).

31:15-26 Ramah: a town five miles north of Jerusalem. Rachel: In the Bible, Rachel is Jacob's favored wife, the mother of Joseph and grandmother of Ephraim (Gen 29-30), a name subsequently used for the northern state of Israel. Interjecting his own voice into the dialogue, Ephraim, Rachel's (grand)son and now the personification of the wayward nation, acknowledges his wrongdoing and expresses his longing to return to God (31:18-19). And like the waiting father of the lost son (Luke 15:11-32),

Ephraim's (=Israel's) father (31:20; see also Jer 31:9) doesn't hesitate to lavish his much-loved son with affection. After consoling mother Rachel and her (grand)son Ephraim, the Lord addresses the daughter of the same broken family. Like her brother, virgin Israel represents the refugee community that God invites home. Unlike her brother, she is reluctant to return home. Despite her unwillingness, which may represent the reluctance of many families to leave Babylon for their homeland, God's plan won't be frustrated. God resolves to do something completely new on earth (cf. Isa 43:19): heal and restore the broken and dysfunctional family of God (31:22b-25). The mysterious

<sup>22</sup>How long will you hem and haw, my rebellious daughter?

The LORD has created something new on earth:

Virgin Israel will once again embrace her God!<sup>f</sup>

<sup>23</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: When I bring my people<sup>g</sup> back from captivity, they will once again utter these words in the land and towns of Judah:

The LORD bless you,  
righteous dwelling place,  
holy mountain.

<sup>24</sup>Those who live in Judah and its towns will dwell together with farmers and shepherds.

<sup>25</sup>I will strengthen the weary and renew those who are weak.

<sup>26</sup>Then I woke up and looked around. What a pleasant sleep I had!

<sup>27</sup>The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will plant seeds in Israel and Judah, and both people and animals will spring up. <sup>28</sup>Just as I watched over them to dig up and pull down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and plant, declares the LORD. <sup>29</sup>In those days, people will no longer say:

Sour grapes eaten by parents leave a bitter taste in the mouths of their children.

<sup>30</sup>Because everyone will die for their own sins:

whoever eats sour grapes will have a bitter taste in their own mouths.

<sup>31</sup>The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. <sup>32</sup>It won't be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant with me even though I was their husband, declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup>No, this is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time, declares the LORD. I will put my Instructions within them and engrave them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. <sup>34</sup>They will no longer need to teach each other to say, "Know the LORD!" because they

31:22 Jer 2:18,  
Jer 2:23, Jer 3:6,  
Jer 49:4

31:25 Ps 107:9;  
Jer 31:12,  
Jer 31:14; Jn 4:14

31:26 Prv 3:24;  
Zec 4:1

31:27 Eze 36:9,  
Eze 36:11;  
Hos 2:23

31:29 Jer 31:30;  
Lam 5:7;  
Eze 18:2,  
Eze 18:3

31:30 Dt 24:16;  
Is 3:11; Eze 18:4,  
Eze 18:20

31:31 Lk 22:20;  
Heb 8:8,  
Heb 10:16

31:32 Jer 3:14

31:33 Ps 57:31;  
Jer 32:40;  
2Co 3:3;  
Heb 8:10,  
Heb 10:16

31:34 Is 11:9,  
Is 43:25;  
Jer 33:8,  
Jer 50:20;  
Mi 7:18

*The New Covenant* Jeremiah 31:31-34 has probably generated more interest than any other in Jeremiah (and perhaps in the entire Bible). For Christians the promise of a new covenant is of central importance, especially since it is quoted at crucial junctures in the NT (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:5-14; Heb 8:8-12; 9:15; 10:16-17; cf. 2 Cor 3:14). The designation of the Second Testament itself, as the "New Testament," can be traced back to this passage. Some have interpreted the new covenant text as a prophecy that predicts the replacement or overthrow of God's covenant with Judaism. This view is called "supersessionism," and those who hold it interpret Christians as the sole heirs of the new covenant relationship with God. But Jeremiah is absolutely clear that the new covenant has to do in the first place with "the people of Israel and Judah" (Jer 31:31). When this influential text is read in its literary and historical contexts, it serves as an essential part of God's program of hope and new life—"building and planting"—for Judeans who suffered the destruction of war and captivity. Christians enjoy a wondrous relationship with God through Jesus Christ, but their participation in the new covenant in no way excludes the initial recipients and their heirs.

<sup>f</sup>Or a woman surrounds a man <sup>g</sup>Or them <sup>h</sup>Or orders of

meaning of 31:22 includes the translation note—a woman surrounds a man, which can be interpreted in various ways, including the claim that virgin Israel will embrace her divine husband, or mother Rachel will finally embrace her wayward Ephraim. God's word comes to Jeremiah in a deep sleep from which he awakes (31:26; see Gen 28:16; cf. Ps 127:2).

31:27-30 The first of three prophecies introduced by the phrase, *The time is coming, declares the Lord* (31:27, 31, 38; Jer 31:35 introduces an oracle with "The Lord proclaims"). God will repair, replenish, and repopulate a ravaged land and war-torn community. This ecological renewal signals the end of a time of judgment and suffering and the promise of newness and hope for survivors. Jeremiah's call narrative organizes this shift in fortunes (Jer 1:10, 11-13; see also Jer 44:27). The rejection of the ancient proverb in the present literary context (cf. Ezek 18:2) is a response

to survivors and their children who feel that they have suffered enormous hardship as punishment for the sins of previous generations (31:29). To dispute these misgivings about divine justice, Jeremiah maintains that in the restored community every person will be accountable to God for their own actions (31:30).

31:31-34 *covenant*: a committed relationship between two or more parties (31:31). *covenant I made with their ancestors*: a reference to the Sinai covenant (see Exod 19-24; the book of Deuteronomy). *They broke that covenant*: to break the covenant is to break the relationship. The core relationship is expressed in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21), and the principal expectation of the commandments is loyal love toward God (monotheism). *their husband*: or "lord," is a translation of the Hebrew word *baal*, and an allusion to the broken marriage between God and Israel (see Jer 3:1-4:4), which is now repaired.

31:35 Gn 1:14;  
Gn 1:16;  
Ps 136:7;  
Jer 10:16

31:36 Ps 148:6;  
Is 54:9; Is 54:10;  
Jer 33:20

31:37 Jer 33:24;  
Ro 11:2

31:38 2Ki 14:13;

Neh 3:1;  
Neh 12:39;  
Jer 30:18;  
Zec 14:10

31:39 Eze 40:3;  
Zec 2:1; Zec 2:2

31:40 2Sa 15:23;  
Jer 7:32; J13:17;  
Jn 18:1

32:5 Jer 21:4;  
Jer 39:7

32:7 Lv 25:25;  
Josh 21:18;

Ru 4:3; Ru 4:4;  
Jer 1:1

32:8 Jer 32:2;  
Jer 32:7

will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD; for I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins.

<sup>35</sup>The LORD proclaims:

The one who established the sun to light up the day and ordered\* the moon and stars to light up the night, who stirs up the sea into crashing waves, whose name is the LORD of heavenly forces:

<sup>36</sup>If the created order should vanish from my sight, declares the LORD, only then would Israel's descendants ever stop being a nation before me.

<sup>37</sup>The LORD proclaims:

If the heavens above could be measured and the foundation of the earth below could be fathomed, only then would I reject Israel's descendants for what they have done, declares the LORD.

<sup>38</sup>The time is coming, declares the LORD, when the city will be rebuilt for the LORD from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. <sup>39</sup>Its boundaries will extend to the Gareb Hill and around to Goah. <sup>40</sup>The entire valley defiled by corpses and ashes, and all the fields as far as the Kidron Valley and the Horse Gate on the east, all this will be set apart for the LORD. And the city will never again be dug up or overthrown.

*Nothing is too hard for the LORD*

**32** Jeremiah received the LORD's word in the tenth year of Judah's King Zedekiah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule. <sup>2</sup>At that time, the army of the Babylonian king had surrounded Jerusalem, and the prophet Jeremiah was confined to the prison quarters in the palace of Judah's king. <sup>3</sup>Judah's King Zedekiah had Jeremiah sent there after questioning him: "Why do you prophesy, 'This is what the LORD says: I'm handing this city over to the king of Babylon, and he will occupy it; and Judah's King Zedekiah will be captured and handed over to the king of Babylon; he will speak to the king of Babylon personally and see him with his very own eyes.' <sup>4</sup>And Zedekiah will be carried off to Babylon to live out his days until I punish him, declares the LORD. If you make war against the Babylonians, you will fail."

<sup>6</sup>Jeremiah said, The LORD's word came to me: <sup>7</sup>Your cousin Hanamel, Shallum's son, is on his way to see you; and when he arrives, he will tell you: "Buy my field in Anathoth, for by law you are next in line to purchase it." <sup>8</sup>And just as the LORD had said, my cousin Hanamel

\*Or a woman surrounds a man \*Or them

Jeremiah's covenant is new in several key respects (31:32). First, it reunites the northern and southern kingdoms as one people in covenant relationship with God. God brings old hostilities to an end. Second, God engraves the divine Instruction on the hearts of God's people (31:33). Third, there is full knowledge of God for everyone. This inclusive vision of life imagines every member of the community enjoying a new relation with God and living justly (see Jer 22:16). Finally, sin no longer hinders God's relationship with God's people. God's unconditional forgiveness forms the basis for full restoration and healing (31:34).

31:35-37 This poem shifts focus from God's role as covenant maker (Jer 31:31-34) to God's role as creator. In a reversal of the breaking up of the world (Jer 4:23-28) and the rejection of Israel (e.g., Jer 15:1-4; 18:1-12), God the creator ensures the future of God's people for the duration of the world. The created order itself is a sign of God's enduring commitment to Israel.

31:38-40 *The time is coming* (see also Jer 31:27, 31) speaks of a future era that is fundamentally unlike the present. The wide-ranging vision of newness in the scroll of comfort (which includes survival, deliverance from oppression, boundless joy, a new covenant, homecoming, and the reestablishment of Israel's election) is incomplete

without reference to a rebuilt Jerusalem. So the text outlines the boundaries of the new city, most probably the four corners of the New Jerusalem—the *Tower of Hananel*, the *Corner Gate*, the *Gareb Hill*, and *Goah* (cf. Neh 3:1; 12:39; Zec 14:10; 2 Kgs 14:13; 2 Chron 25:23; 26:9). Places once contaminated by horrific crimes will be set apart for the Lord, and the city will remain forever (cf. Ezek 47:13-48:35).

32:1-15 This chapter builds on the theme of restoration in a narrative that outlines Jeremiah's purchase of family property in *Anathoth* (see Jer 1:1). The story serves as a sign of God's resolve to transform a land destroyed by war into livable space. It shows God's intent to bring Judean refugees back home after years of Babylonian captivity.

32:1-5 It is the tenth year of Zedekiah's reign, the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule, 588 BCE. Jerusalem is occupied by Babylonian troops, and Jeremiah is a political prisoner under house arrest, accused of treason by King Zedekiah. While Jeremiah is in prison, the Lord informs him that his cousin Hanamel will soon arrive with a request that he buy back ancestral property in keeping with the teaching about redemption (Jer 32:6-9). As set down in Leviticus 25:25-28, when a family member has to sell part of the family land, it can be reclaimed by a family

showed up at the prison quarters and told me, “Buy my field in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for you are next in line and have a family obligation to purchase it.” Then I was sure this was the LORD’s doing.

9So I bought the field in Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and weighed out for him seventeen shekels of silver. 10I signed the deed, sealed it, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver on the scales. 11Then I took the deed of purchase—the sealed copy, with its terms and conditions, and the unsealed copy—12and gave it to Baruch, Neriah’s son and Mahseiah’s grandson, before my cousin Hanamel and the witnesses named in the deed, as well as before all the Judeans who were present in the prison quarters. 13I charged Baruch before all of them: 14“**The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims:** Take these documents—this sealed deed of purchase along with the unsealed one—and put them into a clay container so they will last a long time. 15**The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims:** Houses, fields, and vineyards will again be bought in this land.”

16After I had given the documents to Baruch, Neriah’s son, I prayed to the LORD: 17**LORD God, you created heaven and earth by your great power and outstretched arm; nothing is too hard for you!** 18**You act with mercy toward thousands upon thousands, but you also bring the consequences of the fathers’ sins on their children after them. Great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of heavenly forces,** 19**marvelous are your purposes, and mighty are your deeds. You are aware of all the ways of humanity, and you reward us for how we live and what we do even now.** 20**You have performed signs and wonders in the land of Egypt as you do to this very day in Israel and everywhere else. That’s why you are so renowned.** 21**With a strong hand, an outstretched arm, and with awesome power, yes, with signs and wonders, you brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt.** 22**You gave them this land that you promised to their ancestors, a land full of milk and honey.** 23**They entered and took possession of it, but they didn’t obey you or follow your Instruction. In fact, they didn’t do anything you commanded them. So you brought upon them this disaster.** 24**Now the siege ramps are in place to take the city. And the Babylonians are about to capture it by war, famine, and disease. What you have pronounced is now happening, as you can see.** 25**So why tell me, LORD God, Buy the field for money and make sure there are witnesses, when the city is under Babylonian control?**

26Then the LORD’s word came to Jeremiah: 27**I am the LORD, the God of all living things! Is anything too hard for me?** 28**Therefore, the LORD proclaims:** I’m handing this city over to the Babylonians and King Nebuchadnezzar, who will capture it. 29**They will enter the city, set it on fire, and burn it down—including the houses on whose roofs offerings have been made to Baal and drink offerings to other gods, which made me especially angry.** 30**The people of Israel and Judah have done nothing but evil in my eyes since their youth; the people of Israel and Judah have done nothing but anger me by the work of their hands, declares the LORD.** 31**This city has enraged me from the day it was built to this very day, and so it must be removed from my sight—**32**because of all the evil done by the people of Israel and Judah to make me angry—they, their kings and officials, their priests and prophets, the men of Judah, and those who live in Jerusalem.** 33**They turned their backs to me and not their faces; and though I taught them over and over, they wouldn’t accept my correction.**

32:9 Gn 23:16; Jer 32:7; Zec 11:12  
32:10 Ru 4:9; Is 8:2; Jer 32:25, Jer 32:44  
32:11 Jer 32:12; Lk 2:27  
32:12 Jer 32:16; Jer 36:4; Jer 43:3; Jer 45:1; Jer 51:59  
32:13 Jer 32:12  
32:15 Jer 30:18; Jer 32:43; Jer 32:44; Am 9:14  
32:18 Ex 20:5; Ex 20:6; Ex 34:7; Dt 5:10; Is 9:6  
32:19 Job 34:21; Ps 62:12; Is 28:29; Jer 16:17; Jer 17:10  
32:27 Gn 18:14; Nm 16:22; Nm 27:16; Jer 32:17; Mt 19:26  
32:32 Is 1:4; Jer 2:26; Dn 9:8

member in order to keep the property in the clan. As predicted, Hanamel turns up, and Jeremiah, aware that the encounter is “the LORD’s doing,” fulfills his duty as next of kin and purchases the field.

32:10-15 It’s important to preserve the documents for future generations, since they pertain to the future of God’s people. This is the first reference to Jeremiah’s scribe Baruch, who serves here as witness to the transaction.

32:16-25 Jeremiah recites God’s marvelous deeds of salvation and judgment. He confesses that God’s power is unrivaled, and God’s purposes are astonishing. Jeremiah is aware that God has acted mercifully and mightily in creation, in the exodus, and in the promise of land. He even understands the national crisis as divine judgment for Israel’s misdeeds (32:23-24). What the prophet can’t grasp in light of the grim circumstances is God’s instruction to buy a piece of land occupied by enemy forces (32:25).

32:26-44 God restates Jeremiah’s affirmation, “nothing is too hard for you” (Jer 32:17), in the form of a query, *Is anything too hard for me?* (32:27). The rhetorical question demands a “No!” A similar construction is found in Genesis 18:14—“Is anything too difficult [hard] for the LORD?”—when God promises Abraham and Sarah a child, though Abraham is old and Sarah is childless and beyond child-bearing years. Luke may have this language in mind when speaking of the wondrous birth of Jesus (Luke 1:37). God’s reply to Jeremiah gives the reasons for Judah’s crisis. The long list of sins exonerates God of injustice, it upholds a morally coherent world, and it ultimately helps postwar readers cope with their plight by placing their suffering within a context of meaning. Finally, the divine speech moves from judgment to hope (32:36-44). God responds to Jeremiah’s questions about the future, that is, whether a future is possible for war-torn Judah. And the answer is

32:39 Eze 11:19  
 32:40 Is 55:3;  
 Jer 31:33  
 32:41 Dt 28:63,  
 Dt 30:9; Is 62:4,  
 Is 65:19; Jer 24:6  
 33:2 Ex 3:15,  
 Ex 6:3; Jer 10:16  
 33:5 Dt 31:17,  
 Is 8:17; Jer 21:4,  
 Jer 32:5; Mi 3:4

<sup>34</sup>They set up their disgusting idols in the temple that bears my name and violated it; <sup>35</sup>and they built shrines to Baal in the Ben-hinnon Valley, where they sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded them—nor did it even cross my mind—that they should do such detestable things, leading Judah to sin.

<sup>36</sup>You have been saying, “This city will be handed over to the king of Babylon through sword, famine, and disease.” But this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: <sup>37</sup>I will gather them from all the countries where I have scattered them in my fierce anger and rage. I will bring them back to this place to live securely. <sup>38</sup>They will be my people, and I will be their God. <sup>39</sup>I will give them one heart and one mind so that they may worship me all the days of their lives, for their own good and for the good of their children after them. <sup>40</sup>I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to stop treating them graciously. I will put into their hearts a sense of awe for me so that they won’t turn away from me. <sup>41</sup>I will rejoice in treating them graciously, and I will plant them in this land faithfully and with all my heart and being.

<sup>42</sup>The LORD proclaims: Just as I brought this great disaster on this people, so I will bring on them all the good I promised them. <sup>43</sup>Fields will be bought in this land, a land you have said is bleak and uninhabited and in the possession of the Babylonians. <sup>44</sup>Fields will be bought, and deeds will be signed, sealed, and witnessed in the land of Benjamin and in the outlying areas of Jerusalem, in the towns of Judah and in the highlands, in the towns of the western foothills and the arid southern plain; for I will bring them back from their captivity, declares the LORD.

### Restoration of Judah and Israel

**33** While he was still confined to the prison quarters, the LORD’s word came to Jeremiah a second time: <sup>2</sup>The LORD proclaims, the LORD who made the earth,<sup>a</sup> who formed and established it, whose name is the LORD: <sup>3</sup>Call to me and I will answer and reveal to you wondrous secrets that you haven’t known.

<sup>4</sup>This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, proclaims about the houses of this city and the palaces of the kings of Judah that were torn down to defend against the siege ramps and weapons<sup>b</sup> of the invading Babylonians.<sup>c</sup> They will be filled with the corpses of those slain in my fierce anger. I hid my face from the people of this city because of all their evil deeds,<sup>d</sup> but now I will heal and mend them. I will make them whole and bless them<sup>e</sup> with an abundance of peace and security. <sup>7</sup>I will bring back the captives of Judah and Israel, and I will rebuild them as they were at first. <sup>8</sup>I will cleanse them of all the wrongdoing they committed against me, and I will forgive them for all of their guilt and rebellion. <sup>9</sup>Then this city<sup>f</sup> will bring me great joy, praise, and renown before all nations on earth, when they hear of all the good I provide for them. They will be in total awe at all the good and prosperity I provide for them.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD proclaims: You have said about this place, “It is a wasteland, without humans or animals.” Yet in the ravaged and uninhabited towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, <sup>11</sup>the sounds of joy and laughter and the voices of the bride and the bridegroom will again be heard. So will the voices of those who say, as thank offerings are brought to the LORD’s temple, “Give thanks to the LORD of heavenly forces, for the LORD is good and his kindness lasts forever.” I will bring back the captives of this land as they were before, says the LORD.

<sup>12</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims: This wasteland, without humans or animals—and all its towns—will again become pastures for shepherds to care for their flocks.

<sup>a</sup>LXX *the earth*; MT *it* <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Or *it*

a resounding “Yes.” God will create new beginnings out of the rubble of a crumbling world. God will act decisively to rescue the scattered exiles, reestablish a deep and meaningful relationship with them—an *everlasting covenant* (32:40)—treat them graciously forever, and *plant them in this land* (32:41, see Jer 1:10) with all God’s heart and being (see Deut 6:5). Despite the wreckage, therefore, life will one day return to normal, that is, a new normal!

33:1-13 The final chapter of the scroll of comfort is connected to its larger context by the allusion to the Lord’s word coming to Jeremiah *a second time* while he remains under house arrest and Judah is still under siege (32:2). God’s promise of restoration is ironically linked to

Jeremiah’s and Judah’s bleakest hours. The work of Israel’s future, moreover, is anchored in God’s creation as creator (33:1-2). God invites Jeremiah to discover certain divine mysteries (33:3), which include spectacular transformations of Judah’s circumstances. God will turn its ecological wasteland into a place of abundance, and God will overturn its sentence of death and estrangement. In a long string of first-person constructions, God pledges to *heal, bless, rebuild, cleanse, and forgive* (33:6-8). This reversal of fortunes includes the restoration of human emotions and basic societal structures (*the voices of the bride and the bridegroom*) abolished by God in wartime (33:10-13; see Jer 16:1-9). The word *good* appears twice in 33:9 to express

*God's Word* Jeremiah is noted for its detailed attention to the prophetic scroll: its production, destruction, and survival. Written prophecy, and in particular the prophetic scroll, emerges as a more than adequate stand-in for the actual prophet. Jeremiah can be silenced, but the prophetic scroll cannot. Jeremiah can be barred from the temple, but the scroll is free to move about. Like all prophets, Jeremiah is confined physically and temporally, but the scroll has no such restraints. And even if the scroll is destroyed, others can be made. At critical turning points of the book, we encounter the transition from spoken to written prophecy (see Jer 25:13; 26:17-18; 29:1-23; 30:1; 45:1; 51:59-64). But in Jeremiah 36 the transformation from speech to the written word plays a central theological role. Written prophecy—that is, the written word—takes priority over spoken prophecy. Indeed this narrative asserts that the Lord's word endures forever.

33:15 Is 4:2;  
Is 11:1; Jer 23:5;  
Zec 3:8,  
Zec 6:12

33:16 Is 45:17;  
Jer 23:6,  
Jer 32:37;  
1Co 1:30,  
2Co 5:21

33:20 Gn 8:22;  
Is 54:9, Is 54:10;  
Jer 33:25

33:21 2Sa 23:5;  
2Ch 7:18,  
2Ch 21:7;  
Ps 89:34

33:22 Gn 15:5,  
Gn 22:17;  
Eze 37:24;  
Hos 1:10

<sup>13</sup>Shepherds will again count their flocks in the towns of the highlands, the western foothills and the arid southern plain, in the land of Benjamin, as well as in the outlying areas of Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, says the LORD.

<sup>14</sup>The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill my gracious promise with the people of Israel and Judah. <sup>15</sup>In those days and at that time, I will raise up a righteous branch from David's line, who will do what is just and right in the land. <sup>16</sup>In those days, Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is what he will be called: The LORD Is Our Righteousness. <sup>17</sup>The LORD proclaims: David will always have one of his descendants sit on the throne of the house of Israel. <sup>18</sup>And the levitical priests will always have someone in my presence to make entirely burned offerings and grain offerings, and to present sacrifices.

<sup>19</sup>Then the LORD's word came to Jeremiah: <sup>20</sup>This is what the LORD says: If one could break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night so that they wouldn't come at their proper time, <sup>21</sup>only then could my covenant with my servant David and my covenant with the levitical priests who minister before me be broken; only then would David no longer have a descendant to rule on his throne. <sup>22</sup>And just as the stars in the sky can't be numbered and the sand on the shore can't be counted, so I will increase the descendants of my servant David and the Levites who minister before me.

<sup>23</sup>Then the LORD's word came to Jeremiah: <sup>24</sup>Aren't you aware of what people are saying: "The LORD has rejected the two families that he had chosen"? They are insulting my people as if they no longer belong to me.<sup>†</sup> <sup>25</sup>The LORD proclaims: I would no sooner break my covenant with day and night or the laws of heaven and earth <sup>26</sup>than I would reject the descendants of Jacob and my servant David and his descendants as rulers for the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will restore the captives and have compassion on them.

<sup>†</sup>Heb uncertain

God's gracious intent and once in 33:11 to express God's generous character.

33:14-26 This passage is absent from the 2nd-century BCE Greek translation (LXX), and is considered by many scholars to be one of the latest parts of the book. It is distinctive in several respects. First, it portrays the restoration of the king and the priest. Under the leadership of a royal figure from David's dynasty (see 2 Sam 7; 23:5; Ps 89; 1 Kgs 8:22-26; 9:1-9), Judah will be saved, and its capital city will be secure. Judah's ideal king will embody the most admirable virtues and will appropriately be named, *The Lord Is Our Righteousness*, (33:16) in contrast to Judah's disappointing King Zedekiah, whose life contradicts the meaning of his name, "The Lord Is Righteousness" (see Jer 23:5-6). As mediators, the levitical priests will make offerings and present sacrifices to God on behalf of the people (see Lev 18:1-5; Num 18). Second, God's covenant with the Davidic King and the Levites can't be dissolved (33:19-23). To convey God's faithful pledge to king and priest, the writer employs language of divine promise to the ancestors (33:22; cf. Gen 15:5; 22:17). Third, God asks Jeremiah if he is aware of the insults that people have hurled upon two families (i.e., Judah and Israel). God refutes their claims

by reaffirming enduring divine support and boundless mercy for children of the covenant (33:23-26).

34:1-35:19 Choices and consequences. The common theme in these chapters is the contrast between faithful and unfaithful living. Although this theme isn't new in Jeremiah, it is presented here with a strange twist. Those who should know better, the Israelites, behave badly, while a fringe group (the Rechabites) receives praise for its devotion. Put differently, insiders act like outsiders and outsiders like insiders. The Bible is full of such reversals: for instance, when Tamar is deemed more righteous than Judah (Gen 38), when Jethro the priest of Median recites what Israelites should (Exod 18:10-12), when Ruth the Moabite acts more nobly than her companions (Ruth 1-4), and when a Samaritan shows more compassion than a priest and Levite (cf. Luke 10:25-37). The Rechabites' loyalty to their founder Jonadab son of Rechab serves as a biting contrast to Judah's unfaithfulness to God. After an introduction (34:1-7), the chapters divide into parallel parts: a description of the bad behavior (34:8-11) and good behavior (35:1-11), denunciation for bad behavior (34:12-16) and praise for good behavior (35:12-16), and the consequences of their choices (34:17-22; 35:17-19).

34:8 Ex 21:2;

Lv 25:10;

2Ki 11:17

34:9 Gn 14:13;

Ex 2:6; Lv 25:39;

Dt 15:12

34:10 Jer 26:10;

Jer 26:16

34:12 Jer 7:1;

Jer 11:1; Jer 18:1;

Jer 25:1; Jer 25:2

34:13 Ex 13:3;

Ex 20:2; Ex 24:3;

Ex 24:7; Ex 24:8

34:14 Ex 21:2;

Dt 15:12;

2Ki 17:14

34:15 Jer 7:10;

Jer 34:8

34:16 Lv 19:12;

Jer 34:11;

Eze 3:20;

Eze 18:24

34:17 Jer 15:4;

Jer 29:18

34:18 Gn 15:10

34:19 Zep 3:3

34:20 Jer 7:33;

Jer 16:4; Jer 21:7;

Jer 22:25

### Lessons on obedience and disobedience

**34** Jeremiah received the LORD's word when Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar and his army, and all the countries and people he ruled, were attacking Jerusalem and all its towns. <sup>2</sup>The LORD, the God of Israel, proclaims, Go and speak to Judah's King Zedekiah and say to him: The LORD proclaims, I'm handing this city over to the king of Babylon, and he will burn it down. <sup>3</sup>You won't escape but will be captured and handed over to him. You will see the king of Babylon with your very own eyes and speak to him personally, and you will be taken to Babylon. <sup>4</sup>Even so, hear the LORD's word, King Zedekiah of Judah: This is what the LORD proclaims about you: You won't die in battle; <sup>5</sup>you will die a peaceful death. As burial incense was burned to honor your ancestors, the kings who came before you, so it will be burned to honor you as people mourn, "Oh, master!" I myself promise this, declares the LORD.

<sup>6</sup>The prophet Jeremiah delivered this message to Judah's King Zedekiah in Jerusalem <sup>7</sup>when the army of the king of Babylon was attacking Jerusalem and all the remaining Judean towns, Lachish and Azekah—the only fortified towns still standing in Judah.

<sup>8</sup>Jeremiah received the LORD's word after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to proclaim liberty for their slaves: <sup>9</sup>everyone was to free their male and female Hebrew slaves and no longer hold a Judean brother or sister in bondage. <sup>10</sup>So all the officials and people who entered into this covenant agreed to free their male and female slaves and no longer hold them in bondage; they obeyed the king's command<sup>a</sup> and let them go. <sup>11</sup>But afterward they broke their promise, took back the men and women they had freed, and enslaved them again.

<sup>12</sup>Then the LORD's word came to Jeremiah: <sup>13</sup>The LORD, the God of Israel, proclaims: I made a covenant with your ancestors when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <sup>14</sup>I said that every seventh year each of you must free any Hebrews who have been sold to you. After they have served you for six years, you must set them free. But your ancestors didn't obey or pay any attention to me. <sup>15</sup>Recently you turned about and did what was right in my sight; each of you proclaimed liberty for the other and made a covenant before me in the temple that bears my name. <sup>16</sup>But then you went back on your word and made my name impure; each of you reclaimed the men and women you had set free and forced them to be your slaves again.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore, the LORD proclaims: Since you have defied me by not setting your fellow citizens free, I'm setting you free, declares the LORD, free to die by the sword, disease, and famine! And I will make you an object of horror for all nations on earth. <sup>18</sup>I will make those who disregarded my covenant, violating its terms that they agreed to in my presence, like the calf they cut in two and then walked between the halves of its carcass. <sup>19</sup>The officials of

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks the king's command.

34:1-7 During Nebuchadnezzar's assault on Jerusalem, Jeremiah tells Zedekiah that the Lord is waging war against Jerusalem and will hand over the city and its king to Babylon. Zedekiah, however, is assured that even though he will be captured, his life will be spared (see, however, Jer 21:1-10; 1 Kgs 25:5-7). *Lachish and Azekah*: fortified cities located about 30 miles and 18 miles southwest of Jerusalem, respectively (34:7).

34:8-11 Zedekiah issues an edict (i.e., makes a covenant) that everyone in Jerusalem should free their Hebrew slaves in compliance with the Deuteronomic teaching, which demands the release of debt slaves (i.e., persons who become slaves to repay debts) at the beginning of their seventh year of service (Deut 15:1-16; Exod 21:1-11; Lev 25:39-55). The narrative is silent as to Zedekiah's motivation. Perhaps he hopes to appease God and alter the course of events, or perhaps he intends to secure more soldiers in Jerusalem's defense. The people comply with the king's declaration only to change their minds and take back their slaves. The Hebrew word used in 34:11 to describe their breach of covenant is *shub* (took back), which is often translated "turn" or "return." Jeremiah repeatedly

calls God's people to "turn" or "return" to God, but their only turning is away from the Lord. The same Hebrew word is used in Jeremiah 34:15, 16 (twice), 22 (see also Jer 35:15).

34:12-16 At the core of this charge is the contention that God's people should know better. When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, God delivered them from their oppression. Indeed, the exodus is the basis for the teaching requiring the freedom of Hebrew slaves every seventh year (see Deut 15:15). Thus the memory of God's liberation from Egyptian control makes Israel's broken promise (*shub*) an even more serious breach of covenant loyalty (34:16). Those who were once oppressed have now become the oppressors.

34:17-22 These verses describe the punishment for the crime. Traditional language from the exodus and covenant traditions is employed to stress the severity of the offense and God's resolve to hold both king and people accountable for their actions. The prophetic announcement of judgment plays on two words: "set free" (or "liberate"), associated with God's gracious act of deliverance from slavery in Egypt, and "cut," the term for making a covenant.



Judah and Jerusalem, the eunuchs and priests, and all the people who passed through the pieces of the calf <sup>20</sup>I will hand over to their enemies who seek to kill them. And their corpses will become food for birds and wild animals. <sup>21</sup>I will hand over Judah's King Zedekiah and his officials to their enemies who seek to kill them: namely, the army of Babylon's king, which has just withdrawn from you. <sup>22</sup>I'm about to issue orders, declares the LORD, that the army of Babylon return to this city. They will wage war against it, capture it, and burn it down along with other Judean cities. I will make Judah a wasteland, without inhabitants.

**35** Jeremiah received the LORD's word during the rule of Judah's King Jehoiakim, Josiah's son: <sup>2</sup>Go to the Rechabite family and invite them to come to one of the rooms of the LORD's temple. When they arrive, offer them some wine to drink. <sup>3</sup>So I took Jaazaniah, Jeremiah's son and Habazziniah's grandson, and his brothers and all his sons, and the whole Rechabite family. <sup>4</sup>I brought them to the room in the LORD's temple assigned to the sons of Hanan, Igdaliah's son, the man of God. The room was next to the one used by the chief officers and right above the room of Maaseiah, Shallum's son, the temple doorkeeper. <sup>5</sup>Then I set bowls full of wine before the Rechabites, along with several cups, and I said to them, "Have some."

<sup>6</sup>But they refused: "We don't drink wine because our ancestor Jonadab, Rechab's son, commanded us, 'You and your children are never to drink wine; nor are you to build or own houses or plant gardens and vineyards; rather, you are always to dwell in tents so you may live a long time in the fertile land you pass through.' <sup>8</sup>We have obeyed everything our ancestor Jonadab, Rechab's son, commanded us. No one in our household, including our wives and children, has ever had wine. <sup>9</sup>And we haven't built houses to live in or had vineyards, fields, or crops. <sup>10</sup>We have lived in tents and done everything our ancestor Jonadab commanded us. <sup>11</sup>But when Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar invaded the country, we said, 'We better go to Jerusalem to escape the Babylonian and Aramean armies.' That's why we're here in Jerusalem."

<sup>12</sup>Then the LORD's word came to Jeremiah: <sup>13</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: Go and tell the people of Judah and those who live in Jerusalem: Can't you learn a lesson about what it means to obey me? declares the LORD. <sup>14</sup>Jonadab, Rechab's son, commanded his descendants not to drink wine, and to this very day they have not drunk wine, obeying their ancestor's instruction. But I have spoken to you again and again, and you haven't listened to me. <sup>15</sup>I have sent you all my servants, the prophets, time and again, saying, "Each of you, turn from your evil ways and reform your actions; don't worship or serve other gods. Then you may live in the fertile land I gave to you and your ancestors." But you haven't paid attention or listened to me. <sup>16</sup>The descendants of Jonadab, Rechab's son, have thoroughly obeyed their ancestor, but this people have not listened to me. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, this is what the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, says: I'm going to bring upon the

34:21 Jer 32:4,  
Jer 37:5, Jer 39:6  
34:22 Jer 9:11,  
Jer 33:10,  
Jer 37:8, Jer 39:1,  
Jer 39:8  
35:6 Nm 6:2;  
2Ki 10:15;  
1Ch 2:55;  
Lk 1:15  
35:7 Ex 20:12;  
Eph 6:2;  
Heb 11:9  
35:11 2Ki 24:1,  
2Ki 24:2,  
Jer 8:14  
35:15 Jer 7:25,  
Jer 18:11

<sup>a</sup>Or keeper of the threshold

In the first play on words, God no longer liberates or sets Israel free from the burden of slavery but permits them to become enslaved. Because God's people didn't set their Hebrew slaves free, as their ancestors were once set free, the Lord will free them to die by the sword, disease, and famine (34:17). The second play on the word "cut" is even more alarming. The people who cut or made a covenant to free their slaves and then broke their promise will suffer the same fate as a sacrificial animal that is cut in half during covenant rituals (see Gen 15:1-20). The image derives from the ancient Near Eastern covenant rites in which the interested parties would walk between the slaughtered animal and pronounce a similar fate on themselves if they should violate the conditions of the covenant.

35:1-11 To find a fitting contrast to the faithlessness of the people of Jerusalem, the narrator leaves the reign of Zedekiah for the time of King Jehoiakim (609-598 BCE), a decade or so earlier. The theme is more important than chronological order. God commands Jeremiah to visit the Rechabite family, a small nomadic group that had taken up residence in Jerusalem in an emergency measure after

Nebuchadnezzar invaded the country. Much of what we know about this community derives from the story itself. Apparently this small religious group strictly followed the teachings of its founder *Jehjonadab*, *Rechab's son*, whose efforts to eliminate service to the god Baal from the borders of Israel had become famous (see 2 Kgs 10:15-17). The Rechabites lived in tents and practiced a form of faith that was frozen in the distant past before Israel settled in Palestine. They likely considered this "simple life" uncontaminated by the fertility religion of Baal and by the values and practices of the dominant society. Their abstinence from wine symbolized their rejection of life lived in one place (cf. the nazirite vow not to drink wine in Num 6:1-21). Jeremiah offers wine to *Jaazaniah* and the whole *Rechabite family* in one of the temple chambers, but they refuse in compliance with their founder's teaching.

35:12-16 The Rechabites' faithfulness to the founder's teachings serves as an object lesson. The fringe counter-cultural group epitomizes the values of faithfulness and loyalty, whereas the people of Judah, who should know better, disregard the prophetic plea to listen to and obey

35:18 Jer 35:19  
 35:19 1Ch 2:55;  
 Jer 15:19,  
 Jer 33:17,  
 Jer 35:6,  
 Jer 35:18  
 36:1 2Ki 24:1,  
 Jer 25:1, Jer 45:1

people of Judah and all those who live in Jerusalem the disaster I pronounced against them, because they wouldn't listen to me or respond when I called.

<sup>18</sup>Then Jeremiah said to the Rechabite family: The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: Because you have obeyed all Jonadab's instructions and you have done everything he commanded you, <sup>19</sup>the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel proclaims: Jonadab, Rechab's son, will always have a descendant that stands before me.

### Enduring word of God

**36** In the fourth year of Judah's King Jehoiakim, Josiah's son, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: <sup>2</sup>Take a scroll and write in it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah, and all the nations from the time of Josiah until today. <sup>3</sup>Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I intend to bring upon them, they will turn from their evil ways, and I will forgive their wrongdoing and sins. <sup>4</sup>So Jeremiah sent for Baruch, Neriah's son. As Jeremiah dictated all the words that the LORD had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them in the scroll. <sup>5</sup>Then Jeremiah told Baruch, "I'm confined here and can't go to the LORD's temple. <sup>6</sup>So you go to the temple on the next day of fasting, and read the LORD's words from the scroll that I have dictated to you. Read them so that all the people in the temple can hear them, as well as all the Judeans who have come from their towns. <sup>7</sup>If they turn from their evil ways, perhaps the LORD will hear their prayers. The LORD has threatened them with fierce anger." <sup>8</sup>Baruch, Neriah's son, did everything the prophet Jeremiah instructed him: he read all the LORD's words from the scroll in the temple.

<sup>9</sup>In the ninth month of the fifth year of Judah's King Jehoiakim, Josiah's son, all the people in Jerusalem and all those who had come from Judean towns observed a fast for the LORD in Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup>Then Baruch read Jeremiah's words from the scroll to all the people in the LORD's temple; he read them in the chamber of Gemariah, Shaphan the scribe's son, in the upper courtyard near the entrance of the New Gate of the LORD's temple. <sup>11</sup>When Micaiah, Gemariah's son and Shaphan's grandson, heard all the LORD's words from the scroll, <sup>12</sup>he went down to the scribes' chamber in the royal palace. There he found all the officials meeting together: Elishama the scribe; Delaiah, Shemaiah's son; Elnathan, Achbor's son; Gemariah, Shaphan's son; Zedekiah, Hananiah's son, and all the other officials. <sup>13</sup>Micaiah told them all the words he heard Baruch read from the scroll before the people.

<sup>14</sup>Then all the officials sent Jehudi, Nethaniah's son and Shelemiah's grandson, and Cushih's great-grandson, to Baruch: "Take the scroll you read to the people and come with me."

So Baruch, Neriah's son, took the scroll and went to the officials. <sup>15</sup>They said to him, "Sit down and read it to us." So Baruch read it to them. <sup>16</sup>When they heard all its words, they were alarmed and said to Baruch: "We must at once report all this to the king!" <sup>17</sup>Then they asked Baruch, "Tell us, how did you write all these words? Did they come from Jeremiah?"

<sup>18</sup>Baruch replied, "He dictated all the words to me, and I wrote them with ink in the scroll."

<sup>19</sup>The officials then said to Baruch, "You and Jeremiah had better go and hide. And don't let anyone know where you are."

the Lord. The Hebrew word for "listen" or "obey" occurs seven times in 35:13-18 and 14 times in Jeremiah 34-35. Together the two chapters call (exilic) readers to faithful and obedient living, but not necessarily to emulate the Rechabite lifestyle.

35:17-22 The consequences of the Rechabites' faithfulness and Judah's unfaithfulness are as different as the acts themselves. Faithful living leads to blessing and survival. Unfaithfulness leads to death and disaster.

36:1-32 The enduring word. This story of the rejection and triumph of God's word has three main parts: an introduction that sets the stage and tone (36:1-8); the plot that pits king against scroll (36:9-26); and the resolution in which the scroll, God's word, survives the most brutal of assaults by royal power (36:27-32). The narrative plays a key role in the structure of the book, although this role is disputed. Some scholars highlight its parallels with Jeremiah 25, the end of the first half of the prophetic book. Some emphasize similarities with Jeremiah 26, the beginning of the second half of the book. Others argue that Jeremiah 36 and 45

function as bookends to the so-called Baruch narrative (Jer 36-45). Still others read Jeremiah 36 as a bridge between Jeremiah 26-35 and 37-45. Clearly Jeremiah 36 exhibits strong ties to key sections of the book, however defined, as seen by its attention to: (1) the malevolence of *Jehoiakim* (Jer 26; 36), (2) the menacing *fourth year of Judah's King Jehoiakim* (Jer 25; 36; 45), (3) the spoken and/or written prophecies of Jeremiah (Jer 25; 26; 36; 45), (4) *Baruch* as a central character (Jer 36; 45), (5) the temple locale (Jer 26; 36), and (6) the call to turn back to the Lord (Jer 25; 26; 36). 36:1-26 The narrative is set in the *fourth year of Judah's King Jehoiakim* (605 BCE) when Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish, a major city in northern Syria. This date not only serves as a historical reference but also as a symbol for the end of Judah's freedom and its once stable world. It marks the onset of Jeremiah's prophecies of "digging up and pulling down, destroying and demolishing" (Jer 1:10). Jeremiah dictates the prophecies to his scribe, Baruch, and instructs him to read the words in the temple, since Jeremiah is no longer permitted temple

<sup>20</sup>After leaving the scroll in the room of Elishama the scribe, they went to the king's court and told him everything. <sup>21</sup>The king sent Jehudi to take the scroll, and he retrieved it from the room of Elishama the scribe. Then Jehudi read it to the king and all his royal officials who were standing next to the king. <sup>22</sup>Now it was the ninth month,<sup>b</sup> and the king was staying in the winterized part of the palace with the firepot burning near him. <sup>23</sup>And whenever Jehudi read three or four columns of the scroll, the king would cut them off with a scribe's knife and throw them into the firepot until the whole scroll was burned up. <sup>24</sup>Neither the king nor any of his attendants who heard all these words were alarmed or tore their clothes. <sup>25</sup>Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah begged the king not to burn the scroll, but he wouldn't listen to them.

<sup>26</sup>The king commanded Jerahmeel, the king's son, along with Seraiah, Azriel's son, and Shelemiah, Abdeel's son, to arrest the scribe Baruch and the prophet Jeremiah. But the LORD hid them.

<sup>27</sup>The LORD's word came to Jeremiah after the king had burned the scroll containing the words written by Baruch at Jeremiah's dictation: <sup>28</sup>Get another scroll and write in it all the words that were in the first scroll that Judah's King Jehoiakim burned. <sup>29</sup>Then say to Judah's King Jehoiakim: The LORD proclaims: You burned that scroll because it declared that the king of Babylon will come and destroy this land and eliminate every sign of life from it. <sup>30</sup>Therefore, this is what the LORD proclaims about Judah's King Jehoiakim: He won't have any heirs to occupy the throne of David, and his dead body will be cast out and exposed to the heat of the day and the frost of the night. <sup>31</sup>I will punish him and his family and his attendants for their wrongdoing. I will bring upon them, as well as the residents of Jerusalem and the people of Judah, every disaster I pronounced against them. But they wouldn't listen.

<sup>32</sup>So Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch, Neriah's son, who wrote at Jeremiah's dictation all the words in the scroll burned in the fire by Judah's King Jehoiakim. Many similar words were added to them.

**Jeremiah falsely accused and imprisoned**

**37** Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah, Josiah's son, to succeed Coniah, Jehoiakim's son, as king of Judah. <sup>2</sup>Neither Zedekiah, his attendants, nor the people of the land listened to the LORD's words spoken by the prophet Jeremiah.

<sup>3</sup>Nevertheless, King Zedekiah sent Jehuchal, Shelemiah's son, and the priest Zephaniah, Maaseiah's son, to Jeremiah the prophet with this plea: "Please pray for us to the LORD our

36:23 1Ki 22:8  
36:30 Jer 22:19,  
Jer 22:30  
36:31 Dt 28:15;  
Prv 29:1;  
Jer 35:17  
37:1  
2Ki 24:17, 18;  
2Ch 36:10b; 11;  
Jer 52:1  
37:2 2Ki 24:19;  
2Ch 36:12;  
Jer 52:2

<sup>b</sup>November–December, Kislev

access. The private reading takes place in the chamber of Gemariah (36:10), who is one of the sons of Shaphan, the renowned legal scholar in Josiah's court (2 Kgs 22:3) and the brother of Ahikam, who rescued Jeremiah from priests and prophets who sought to put him to death (Jer 26:24). Micaiah is part of this family as well (36:11). Eventually the scroll reaches as far as the king himself, where it was always intended. *Jehudi* reads the scroll to Jehoiakim, who cuts it up with a scribe's knife and burns it. Note the play on words. The story contrasts Jehoiakim's response to the reading (Heb. *qr*) of the scroll (the word) with that of his righteous father, Josiah (2 Kgs 22:8-11; see also Jer 22:13-19). Whereas Josiah ripped/cut (*qr*) his clothes in mourning when hearing the words of the scroll, Jehoiakim cut (*qr*) the scroll into pieces in open rebelliousness. Whereas Josiah listens to the Lord's word, Jehoiakim won't even listen to his advisers (36:25). Jehoiakim demonstrates further rebellion by giving orders to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch. The narrator concludes with their miraculous escape (36:26; see also Jer 26:24).

36:27-32 Jehoiakim's display of contempt and political muscle doesn't have the last word. The king's actions are condemned. Moreover, God instructs Jeremiah to dictate another scroll with the same words as well as additional ones. Once again the prophetic summons to change and avert disaster goes unheeded.

37:1-45:5 The "Baruch narrative." Jeremiah 37-45 is often

referred to as the "Baruch narrative" because Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, is thought to be the author. This is based largely on the role that Baruch plays in the second half of the book, especially in Jeremiah 36 and 45, which serve as bookends to the section.

37:1-38:28 Jeremiah imprisoned and released. The first section of the Baruch narrative recounts the final months of Judah before Nebuchadnezzar captures Jerusalem. It emphasizes Jeremiah's ill treatment and King Zedekiah's growing lack of power. Like Jehoiakim (in Jeremiah 36), Zedekiah (37:2) rejects the Lord's word given by Jeremiah. Unlike Jehoiakim, Zedekiah emerges as a sympathetic figure who seeks Jeremiah's counsel but can't muster the courage to accept it. State officials, the real power brokers, display no such indecision! They seize Jeremiah, beat him, and imprison him for treason (*deserting to the Babylonians*, 37:13). The king's secret meetings with Jeremiah and his unsuccessful attempts to improve the prophet's situation reveal his waning influence. Although Zedekiah's efforts on Jeremiah's behalf are frustrated, *Ebed-melech's* (38:7) efforts are not. This Ethiopian figure saves Jeremiah's life. Throughout the episode Jeremiah insists that the Babylonian forces won't retreat and that Judeans will survive only if they surrender.

37:1-10 In 37:1-2, we learn that Judah is already a subject people of Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar has appointed Zedekiah as the Judean ruler in place of Coniah

37:16 Jer 38:6,  
Jer 38:10

*The Baruch Story* Jeremiah 36–45 is the longest continuous narrative in the book. Unlike others, it exhibits a degree of chronological order, recounting Judah's final days from the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem and the fall of the temporary government of Gedaliah to the departure and settlement of certain Judeans in Egypt. Jeremiah is taken to Egypt by a group of Judeans who leave their war-torn country for fear of Babylonian reprisals. While the Baruch narrative focuses on the destruction of Jerusalem and the desperate conditions in Judah that ensue, it pays particular attention to the suffering and persecution of Jeremiah. In this way, it functions as a complex theodicy (an answer to the problem of suffering). In this role, it presents the dismantling of Judah's world as a result of the rejection of God's word and God's messenger, and so it defends God from charges of injustice and powerlessness. At the same time, the text emphasizes Jeremiah's innocent suffering and survival, which serves to sustain all those who suffer innocently and for God's sake. Consequently, the Baruch narrative is both disaster and survival literature.

God." (4)Now Jeremiah hadn't been imprisoned yet, so he was free to come and go among the people. (5)Pharaoh's army had recently<sup>c</sup> set out from Egypt; when the Babylonians who were attacking Jerusalem learned of the Egyptian advance, they withdrew from Jerusalem.)

(6)Then the LORD's word came to Jeremiah the prophet: (7)The LORD, the God of Israel, proclaims: Tell the king of Judah who sent his emissaries to seek advice from me: "Pharaoh's army that came to assist you is heading back to Egypt. (8)The Babylonians will return and attack this city. They will capture it and burn it down."

(9)The LORD proclaims: Don't let yourself be deceived into thinking that the Babylonians will withdraw for good.<sup>d</sup> They won't! (10)Even if you were to crush the entire Babylonian army that's attacking you and only the wounded in their tents remained, they would rise up and burn this city down.

(11)Now when the Babylonian army had withdrawn from Jerusalem due to Pharaoh's advance, (12)Jeremiah set out for the land of Benjamin to secure his share of the family property.<sup>e</sup> (13)He got as far as the Benjamin Gate in Jerusalem when the guard there named Irijah, Shelemiah's son and Hananiah's grandson, arrested the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "You are deserting to the Babylonians."

(14)"That's a lie," Jeremiah replied. "I'm not deserting to the Babylonians." But Irijah wouldn't listen to him. He arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials, (15)who were furious with him. They beat him and threw him into the house of the scribe Jonathan, which had been turned into a prison. (16)So Jeremiah was put in a cistern, which was like a dungeon, where he remained a long time.

(17)Later King Zedekiah sent for him and questioned Jeremiah secretly in the palace: "Is there a word from the LORD?"

"There is," Jeremiah replied. "You are going to be handed over to the king of Babylon." (18)Then Jeremiah asked King Zedekiah, "What have I done wrong to you or your attendants or this people that you should throw me into prison? (19)Where are your prophets now who prophesied that the king of Babylon wouldn't attack you and this land? (20)Now, my master and king, I beg you, don't send me back to the house of Jonathan the scribe, or I'll die there." (21)So King Zedekiah gave orders that Jeremiah be held in the prison quarters and that he

<sup>c</sup>Heb lacks recently. <sup>d</sup>Heb lacks for good. <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain

(Jehoiachin), who has been captive in Babylon since 598 BCE (2 Kgs 24:8-17). Zedekiah, his administration, and the people of the land haven't listened to the Lord's words spoken by Jeremiah. King Zedekiah is a complex figure who seeks Jeremiah's counsel but is reluctant to accept it. Jeremiah tells him not to interpret the military withdrawal by the Babylonian army as anything other than a momentary reprieve. The Egyptian effort to lift Babylon's siege of Jerusalem will fail, and the Babylonian army will resume its offensive until Jerusalem is destroyed. Under Pharaoh Hophra (589–570 BCE), Egyptian troops were apparently deployed to drive back the Babylonian presence in Jerusalem and regain control over Judah. This effort initially met with some degree of success but couldn't break Babylon's stranglehold on Judah.

37:11-21 Jeremiah leaves Jerusalem to attend to family matters in the territory of Benjamin (see Jer 32:6-15). The action of the Judean guard Irijah in 37:12-16 is a calculated response of the monarchy to Jeremiah's presumed pro-Babylonian activities. To protect the rulers, Jeremiah must be imprisoned and silenced. Despite his imprisonment, Zedekiah secretly sends for Jeremiah, so desperate is he for a good word. The prophet can't give Zedekiah what he desires, but he uses the opportunity to plead for relief from his harsh circumstances (37:18-20). As conditions disintegrate, one wonders who is in control: Egypt, Babylon, Judah, Zedekiah, the military, or the royal court? Zedekiah apparently realizes that the situation is slipping out of his control. So like the Pharaoh in the exodus story, he begs Jeremiah, a prophet like Moses, for help (see Exod

receive a loaf of bread daily from the street vendors<sup>f</sup>—until all the bread in the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained in the prison quarters.

**38** Shephatiah, Mattan's son; Gedaliah, Pashhur's son; Jucal, Shelemiah's son; and Pashhur, Malchiah's son heard what Jeremiah had been telling the people: <sup>2</sup>The LORD proclaims: Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine, and disease. But whoever surrenders to the Babylonians will live; yes, their lives will be spared. <sup>3</sup>The LORD proclaims: This city will certainly be handed over to the army of Babylon's king, who will capture it.

<sup>4</sup>Then the officials said to the king: "This man must be put to death! By saying such things, he is discouraging the few remaining troops left in the city, as well as all the people. This man doesn't seek their welfare but their ruin!"

<sup>5</sup>"He's in your hands," King Zedekiah said, "for the king can do nothing to stop you." <sup>6</sup>So they seized Jeremiah, threw him into the cistern of the royal prince Malchiah, within the prison quarters, and lowered him down by ropes. Now there wasn't any water in the cistern, only mud, and Jeremiah began to sink into the mud.

<sup>7</sup>Ebed-melech the Cushite, a court official in the royal palace, got word that they had thrown Jeremiah into the cistern. Since the king was sitting at the Benjamin Gate, <sup>8</sup>Ebed-melech left the palace and said to the king: <sup>9</sup>"My master the king, these men have made a terrible mistake in treating the prophet Jeremiah the way they have; they have thrown him into the cistern where he will die of starvation, for there's no bread left in the city."

<sup>10</sup>Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Cushite, "Take thirty men from here and take Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies." <sup>11</sup>So Ebed-melech took the men and returned to the palace, to an underground supply room, where he found some old rags and scraps of clothing.

Ebed-melech lowered them down the cistern by the ropes <sup>12</sup>and called to Jeremiah, "Put these old rags and scraps of clothing under your arms and hold on to the ropes." When Jeremiah did this, <sup>13</sup>they pulled him up by the ropes and got him out of the cistern. After that Jeremiah remained in the prison quarters.

<sup>14</sup>King Zedekiah ordered that the prophet Jeremiah be brought to him at the third entrance of the LORD's temple, where the king said to Jeremiah, "I want to ask you something, and don't hide anything from me."

<sup>15</sup>Jeremiah replied, "If I do, you'll kill me! And if I tell you what to do, you won't listen to me!"

<sup>16</sup>So King Zedekiah swore to Jeremiah behind closed doors, "As the LORD lives, who has given us this life, I won't put you to death and I won't hand you over to those who seek to kill you."

<sup>17</sup>So Jeremiah said to Zedekiah: "The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: If you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, you and your family will live,

<sup>f</sup>Or from the street of the bakers

38:4 Jer 26:11,  
Jer 29:7,  
Jer 36:12;  
Am 7:10  
38:5 Jer 38:24  
38:7 Jer 37:13,  
Jer 39:16  
38:11 Jer 38:6,  
Jer 38:7  
38:17 Jer 27:12,  
Jer 38:2

9:28). Zedekiah apparently discerns that the Lord is in control despite the coming of darkness.

38:1-6 *Shephatiah, Mattan's son and Gedaliah, Pashhur's son* are mentioned only here. *Jucal, Shelemiah's son* is the royal emissary mentioned in Jeremiah 37:3 (as "Jehucal"), and *Pashhur, Malchiah's son* may be the grandson of King Zedekiah (38:6; see Jer 21:1). This section is out of sync with the events in Jeremiah 37. But if one reads these individual scenes together as a unified story, the level of danger and desperation increases exponentially: Jeremiah's survival is in peril, the nation is on the verge of collapse, and Zedekiah is crippled by fear. Yet Jeremiah continues to preach the same message while confined to the prison compound: Babylon's victory is as sure as Jerusalem's fall! The only possibility for Judean survival is surrender to Babylon. As before, Judean officials consider Jeremiah to be an enemy of the state. King Zedekiah can do little to prevent his own officials from mistreating Jeremiah.

38:7-13 *Ebed-melech* enters the narrative unannounced. The narrator tells us practically nothing about this foreign

dignitary apart from his courageous acts on Jeremiah's behalf. When the African court official learns of Jeremiah's situation, he leaves the comforts of the palace to come to the prophet's aid (38:8). Ebed-melech is the second person to save Jeremiah's life (see also Jer 26:24; 36:19). The city gate is where legal disputes are settled, so note the irony of an innocent prophet wasting away in prison, *sinking* into the mud (38:6), while the king is attending to matters of justice at the *Benjamin Gate* (38:7; see also Jer 37:13; cf. Jer 20:2). A courageous Ebed-melech approaches King Zedekiah when court is in session to champion the cause of Jeremiah, a victim of the state. Zedekiah grants Jeremiah a stay of execution, although the prophet remains in the *prison quarters* (38:13).

38:14-28 Once again Zedekiah calls on Jeremiah and tries to squeeze a good word out of him, and once again the prophet won't comply. The secret meeting exposes the utter desperation of king and prophet, both portrayed as victims of forces beyond their control. Yet Zedekiah can still find a way out, even at the eleventh hour. God will

38:18 Jer 24:8,  
Jer 32:4, Jer 38:3  
38:19 Is 51:12;  
In 12:42  
38:20 Is 55:3;  
Jer 26:13  
38:22 Ps 69:14;  
Jer 6:12,  
Jer 20:10,  
Jer 43:6  
38:23 Jer 38:18,  
Jer 39:6,  
Jer 41:10  
39:1 2Ki 25:1;  
Jer 52:4  
39:2 Jer 52:7  
39:5 2Ki 23:33;  
Jer 32:4, Jer 52:9

and this city will not be burned down. <sup>18</sup>If you don't surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, the city will be handed over to the Babylonians, who will burn it down, and you won't escape from them."

<sup>19</sup>King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I'm afraid that I will fall into the hands of the Judeans who have defected to the Babylonians, and they will torture me."

<sup>20</sup>"That won't happen," Jeremiah replied, "if you obey the LORD, whose message I bring. You will survive, and all will go well for you. <sup>21</sup>But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the LORD has shown me: <sup>22</sup>All the women left in the palace of the king of Judah will be led out to the officers of the king of Babylon. And they will say:

'Your trusted friends have betrayed you;  
they have deceived you;  
now that your feet are stuck in the mud,  
they are nowhere to be found.'

<sup>23</sup>"All your wives and children will be led out to the Babylonians, and you yourself won't escape from them. The king of Babylon will capture you, and this city will be burned down."

<sup>24</sup>Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "No one is to know about these matters or else you will die. <sup>25</sup>If the officials find out that we met, and they come and say to you, 'Tell us what you said to the king. Don't hide anything from us; otherwise, we'll kill you. So what did the king say to you?' <sup>26</sup>you should say to them, 'I was begging the king not to send me back to the house of Jonathan to die there.'

<sup>27</sup>Then all the officials approached Jeremiah to question him. And he responded exactly as the king had instructed him. So they stopped interrogating him because the conversation between the king and Jeremiah<sup>a</sup> hadn't been overheard. <sup>28</sup>Jeremiah remained in the prison quarters until Jerusalem was captured.

### Fall of Jerusalem

**39** In the ninth year and the tenth month of Judah's King Zedekiah, Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar and his entire army came against Jerusalem and surrounded it. <sup>2</sup>In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, on the ninth day of the fourth month, they broke through the city walls. <sup>3</sup>Then all the commanding officers of the king of Babylon—Nergal-sharezzer, Samgar-nebo,<sup>b</sup> Sarsechim the chief officer, Nergal-sharezzer the field commander—entered it and took their places at the middle gate with the rest of the officials of the king of Babylon.

<sup>4</sup>When Judah's King Zedekiah and his troops saw them, they tried to escape at night through the royal gardens and the gate between the two walls, toward the desert plain. <sup>5</sup>But the Babylonian<sup>1</sup> army chased them down and caught Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. They arrested him and brought him before Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah in the land of Hamath. There the king put him on trial. <sup>6</sup>The king of Babylon slaughtered Zedekiah's

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks *between the king and Jeremiah*. <sup>b</sup>Or *Nergal-sharezzer the Simmagir*. <sup>1</sup>Heb *Chaldean* and hereafter through Jeremiah

spare him and his country if he surrenders to Babylon. But Zedekiah's fear and self-interest prevent him from acting on behalf of his country (38:19). As the narrator forewarned (37:1-2), the king refuses to obey the Lord's word delivered by Jeremiah. As a result, Zedekiah and his royal court will suffer humiliation and defeat (38:20-23). Sworn to secrecy by the king, Jeremiah remains in prison until the fall of Jerusalem.

39:1-40:6 The fall of Jerusalem. In many respects the entire book thus far anticipates, indeed dreads, this moment. From Jeremiah's call in Jeremiah 1, Jerusalem's impending destruction casts a shadow over every prophecy, prayer, poem, and symbolic act in the book. The national crisis represents the climax and fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophetic mission: to dig up and pull down, to destroy and demolish. Yet when the disaster finally occurs, when Jerusalem is set aflame, and when its king is tortured, and Judeans are deported to Babylon (Jer 39:1-10), the narrator employs matter-of-fact language. The report occupies less space and time than one might expect. The telling

of Jerusalem's fall includes little commentary, motive, or theological explanation, except for the words of *Nebuzaradan*, the head of Babylon's special guard (40:2-5).

This section can be divided into four parts: (1) the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem (39:1-10), (2) Nebuchadnezzar's kind treatment of Jeremiah (39:11-14), (3) God's promise to rescue Ebed-melech (39:15-18), and (4) Jeremiah's release and decision to remain in the land (40:1-6). Note that immediately following the description of the great national tragedy come three stories of hope, as if to punctuate the "digging up and pulling down" with "building and planting."

39:1-10 The description of the Babylonian capture and destruction of the city also appears in Jeremiah 52 and in 2 Kings 25 (see also 2 Chron 36:17-21). After an 18-month siege, from January 588 to July 587, the city falls. Babylonian officers take their seats at the middle gate to signal their control of Jerusalem. Zedekiah and his entourage attempt to escape to the south, but they are caught and taken to Nebuchadnezzar's headquarters at *Riblah*, in the

children at Riblah before his very own eyes, and the king of Babylon slaughtered all the officials of Judah. <sup>7</sup>Then he gouged out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him in chains, and dragged him off to Babylon.

<sup>8</sup>The Babylonians burned down the royal palace and the houses of the people, and they destroyed the Jerusalem walls. <sup>9</sup>Nebuzaradan the captain of the special guard rounded up the rest of the people who were left in the city, including those who had defected to the Babylonians, and deported them to Babylon. <sup>10</sup>But Nebuzaradan the captain of the special guard left some of the poorest people in the land of Judah. He gave them vineyards and fields at that time.

<sup>11</sup>Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar gave orders concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the special guard: <sup>12</sup>"Find Jeremiah and look after him; don't harm him but do whatever he asks from you." <sup>13</sup>So Nebuzaradan the captain of the special guard, Nebushazban the chief officer, Nergal-sharezer the field commander, and all the commanders of the king of Babylon <sup>14</sup>sent orders<sup>†</sup> to release Jeremiah from the prison quarters. They entrusted him to Gedaliah, Ahikam's son and Shaphan's grandson, so that Jeremiah could move about freely<sup>‡</sup> among the people.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD's word came to Jeremiah when he was still confined to the prison quarters: <sup>16</sup>Go and say to Ebed-melech the Cushite that the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: I'm about to fulfill my words concerning this city, for harm and not for good. You will witness it for yourself on that day. <sup>17</sup>But on that day, declares the LORD:

I will rescue you;  
you won't be handed over to those you dread.

<sup>18</sup>I will defend you;  
you won't die in battle.

You will escape with your life, because you have trusted in me,  
declares the LORD.

*Jeremiah's release*

**40** Jeremiah received the LORD's word after Nebuzaradan the captain of the special guard had released him from Ramah. He had been bound in chains there along with all the other detainees from Jerusalem and Judah who were being sent off to Babylon. <sup>2</sup>The captain of the special guard located Jeremiah and said to him, "The LORD your God declared that a great disaster would overtake this place. <sup>3</sup>Now the LORD has made it happen. He has done just as he warned because all of you have sinned against the LORD and haven't obeyed him. That's why this has happened to you. <sup>4</sup>But I'm setting you free from the chains on your hands. If you would like, come with me to Babylon, and I'll take care of you. If you would rather not come with me, that's fine too. Now, the whole land lies before you; go wherever

39:8 Neh 1:3;  
Jer 21:10,  
Jer 38:18,  
Jer 52:13  
39:9 Gn 37:36;  
2Ki 25:8;  
Jer 40:1,  
Jer 52:12  
39:11 Jer 40:1  
39:18 Jer 17:7,  
Jer 21:9, Jer 38:2,  
Jer 45:5

<sup>†</sup>Heb lacks orders. <sup>‡</sup>Heb uncertain

region of *Hamath* (39:5) to the north, where the Judean king is put on trial and tortured. After the city is destroyed, Nebuzaradan rounds up the people and exiles many of them to Babylon. However, he leaves behind some of the poor and gives them land to cultivate (cf. Jer 52:15-16; 2 Kgs 25:11-12). Jeremiah 39:4-13 isn't found in the Greek translation (LXX) of the Hebrew.

39:11-14 Jeremiah's situation improves under Babylonian occupation, perhaps further confirmation to some that the prophet is a Babylonian sympathizer. Nebuchadnezzar treats Jeremiah with more goodwill than Jehoiakim or Zedekiah (see also Jer 40:1-6). Nebuchadnezzar's military commanders free the prophet from prison and entrust him to the care of *Gedaliah*, whom the Babylonian king eventually appoints as governor of Judah (see Jer 40:1-41:18; 2 Kgs 25:22-26). *Gedaliah* is a member of a prominent family with strong ties to King Josiah (2 Kgs 22) who was a key ally of Jeremiah (Jer 26:24).

39:15-18 Despite the national upheaval, *Ebed-melech's* acts of kindness on Jeremiah's behalf don't go unnoticed. Jeremiah tells Ebed-melech that God will reward him for

his trust in the Lord (39:18). *I will rescue you* (39:17) are the same words of assurance given to Jeremiah in 15:21. *escape with your life* conveys a sense of barely surviving (this language is used for Baruch in Jer 45:5). Jeremiah, Baruch, and Ebed-melech—and the faithful few whom they represent—will survive war and exile, although not unscathed.

40:1-6 *Nebuzaradan* has Jeremiah released from confinement in Ramah and offers him the option of going to Babylon or staying in the land under *Gedaliah's* care. This account is likely a variant of the same story told in Jeremiah 39:11-14, though some scholars think that it may describe Jeremiah's later release from confinement in Ramah after Babylonian troops had mistakenly detained him. Nebuzaradan's speech echoes language from other books of the Bible. For examples, *the LORD your God* (throughout Deuteronomy), *a great disaster* (1 Kgs 9:9; Ezek 6:10), *just as he warned* (throughout Deuteronomy and Joshua), *sinned against the LORD* (Num 32:23; Deut 9:16), *haven't obeyed him* (Deut 9:23; Judg 2:2; 6:10), and *the whole land lies before you* (Gen 13:9).

40:5 2Ki 25:22  
 40:7-41:18  
 2Ki 25:23-26  
 40:15 2Ki 25:23

**Nebuzaradan** Nebuzaradan is the high-ranking military figure responsible for destroying Jerusalem and relocating hundreds of Judeans to Babylon. In Jeremiah 40:1-6, however, he is presented in a positive light. This discrepancy in character has been the source of many interpretations. One scholar has suggested that Nebuzaradan is a righteous Gentile who deals humanely with Jeremiah. The positive portrait of Nebuzaradan, a complete outsider, may serve as a foil to draw attention to the shortcomings of insiders, God's people who should have obeyed Jeremiah and treated him well. The Bible tells numerous stories of insiders becoming outsiders and outsiders becoming insiders, no doubt to blur these hard and fast lines. It's also possible that the positive portrayal of the Babylonian military officer functions to emphasize God's authority over all powers and principalities, not unlike Jeremiah's portrait of Nebuchadnezzar as the Lord's servant (Jer 25:9; 27:6). However, Nebuzaradan's kindness and theological claims may merely serve as a tactic of the empire to win influence over its subject people.

you want. <sup>5</sup>If you decide to remain here,<sup>1</sup> stay with Gedaliah, Ahikam's son and Shaphan's grandson—the Babylonian appointee in charge of the cities of Judah. Stay with him and the people he rules or go wherever you want." Then the captain of the special guard gave him ample provisions and let him go. <sup>6</sup>Jeremiah went to Gedaliah, Ahikam's son at Mizpah, and he stayed with him and the people who remained in the land.

### **Gedaliah's provisional government**

<sup>7</sup>Some of the army officers and their troops were still hiding out in the countryside when they heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah, Ahikam's son, over the region, responsible for the men, women, and children who were the poorest in the land and who hadn't been deported to Babylon. <sup>8</sup>So they went out to meet Gedaliah at Mizpah: Ishmael, Nethaniah's son; Johanan and Jonathan, Kareah's sons; Seraiah son of Tanhumeth; the sons of Ephai the Netophathite; Jezaniah son of the Maacathite; and their troops. <sup>9</sup>Gedaliah, Ahikam's son and Shaphan's grandson, firmly assured them all: "Don't be afraid of serving the Babylonians. Remain in the land, serve the king of Babylon, and all will go well for you. <sup>10</sup>But me? I will stay at Mizpah so I can speak on your behalf when the Babylonians arrive. But you? Settle down in the towns you have taken; harvest the grapes, the summer fruits and figs, and then store them in your containers."

<sup>11</sup>In the same way, all the Judeans living in Moab, Ammon, Edom, and in other countries heard that the king of Babylon had left a few people in the land and that he had put Gedaliah, Ahikam's son and Shaphan's grandson, in charge of them. <sup>12</sup>So they left the places where they had been scattered and returned to the land, to Gedaliah at Mizpah. There they gathered large amounts of grapes and summer fruits.

<sup>13</sup>Johanan, Kareah's son, and all the army officers in the countryside approached Gedaliah at Mizpah <sup>14</sup>and said to him, "Are you aware that King Baalis of Ammon has sent Ishmael, Nethaniah's son, to kill you?" But Gedaliah, Ahikam's son, wouldn't believe them. <sup>15</sup>Still Johanan, Kareah's son, met with Gedaliah secretly at Mizpah and said to him, "Let me go and

<sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain

40:7-41:18 Post-disaster Judah: Plots and bloodshed. Initially the portrait of life in Judah after the fall of Jerusalem is unexpectedly tranquil. In the previous scene, Jeremiah is released from confinement in Ramah. He casts his lot with Gedaliah, Ahikam's son (see Jer 40:1-6), who is installed as governor in "Mizpah" (40:6), a city about eight miles north of Jerusalem. Unlike Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, Gedaliah is depicted as a kind leader and a man of peace. He forms a temporary government that is responsive to the needs of the people, including the poorest in the land. The newly appointed governor offers assurances of welfare and amnesty to nationalists who had resisted Babylonian rule. This was no time for reprisals but for rebuilding a wrecked country. Before long, however, this setting is shattered by conspiracy, assassination, and mass murder. This narrative excludes God and God's prophet Jeremiah. 40:7-16 Gedaliah's temporary government. The narrator

sympathizes with Gedaliah and his postwar efforts. In fact one can detect clear echoes of Jeremiah's earlier prophecies in the governor's appeal (e.g., *serve the king of Babylon, and all will go well for you* in 40:9; cf. Jer 27:12, 17). The reader might even see Gedaliah's postwar government as the fulfillment of Jeremiah's oracles of restoration. The gathering of *large amounts of grapes and summer fruits* (40:12) only reinforces such hopes. Judean resistance fighters hear of Gedaliah's caring government and come out of hiding. And the governor offers them assurances for their loyalty to the empire. Although this involves certain concessions, it comes with the prospect of limited Judean independence in the land. The scene has an almost peaceful quality until *Johanan, Kareah's son*, and other military leaders approach Gedaliah with news that the Ammonite king has conspired to kill him. *Ishmael, Nethaniah's son*, a member of the royal family (see Jer 41:1), is about to execute his



kill Ishmael, Nethaniah's son; no one needs to know about this matter. Otherwise, he'll kill you, and all the Judeans who have gathered around you will be scattered, and the few who are left will perish."

<sup>16</sup>But Gedaliah son of Ahikam told Johanan, Kareah's son, "Don't do such a thing, for what you are saying about Ishmael is wrong."

### Mutiny and murder

**41** In the seventh month,<sup>m</sup> Ishmael, Nethaniah's son and Elishama's grandson, who was from a royal family and who was one of the chief officers of the king, came with ten men to Gedaliah, Ahikam's son, at Mizpah. While they were eating a meal together, <sup>2</sup>Ishmael, Nethaniah's son, and the ten men got up and struck down Gedaliah, Ahikam's son and Shaphan's grandson, with the sword. They murdered him because he had been appointed over the region by the king of Babylon. <sup>3</sup>Ishmael also murdered all the Judeans who had rallied around Gedaliah at Mizpah as well as the Babylonian soldiers who were posted there.

<sup>4</sup>The day after Gedaliah was killed, before anyone knew of it, <sup>5</sup>eighty men with shaved beards, torn clothes, and gashed bodies arrived from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria. They were bringing grain offerings and incense to present at the LORD's temple. <sup>6</sup>Ishmael, Nethaniah's son, left Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went. When he reached them, he said, "Come to Gedaliah, Ahikam's son!" <sup>7</sup>When they arrived in the middle of the town, Ishmael, Nethaniah's son, and the men with him slaughtered them and threw their bodies<sup>n</sup> into a cistern.

<sup>8</sup>But there were ten men among them who begged Ishmael, "Don't kill us; we have wheat, barley, oil, and honey hidden in a field." So he stopped and didn't kill them along with the rest.

<sup>9</sup>Now the cistern that Ishmael used to discard the bodies of the men he had killed because of their association with Gedaliah<sup>o</sup> was the one that King Asa had made to defend against Israel's King Baasha. Ishmael, Nethaniah's son, filled it with the dead.)

<sup>10</sup>Ishmael captured the rest of the people who were at Mizpah, including the daughters of the king and all those assigned to Gedaliah, Ahikam's son, at Mizpah by Nebuzaradan the captain of the special guard. Then Ishmael, Nethaniah's son, set out to cross over to the Ammonites with the hostages.

<sup>11</sup>Johanan, Kareah's son, and all the army officers at his side heard of the terrible acts committed by Ishmael, Nethaniah's son. <sup>12</sup>So they mustered all their forces and went to fight him. They found Ishmael, Nethaniah's son, at the great pool in Gibeon. <sup>13</sup>When all those taken by Ishmael at Mizpah saw Johanan, Kareah's son, and all his army officers with him, they were delighted. <sup>14</sup>They rallied around Johanan, Kareah's son, and returned home with him. <sup>15</sup>But Ishmael, Nethaniah's son, and eight of his men eluded Johanan and went to the Ammonites.

<sup>16</sup>Then Johanan, Kareah's son, and all the army officers with him took the small group they had rescued in Gibeon, including the soldiers, women, children, and commanding officers that Ishmael, Nethaniah's son, had captured at Mizpah after killing Gedaliah, Ahikam's son. <sup>17</sup>They set out for Egypt, stopping on the way at Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem, <sup>18</sup>because they were afraid of what the Babylonians would do when they found out that

<sup>m</sup>September–October, Tishrei <sup>n</sup>Heb lacks *and threw their bodies*; cf 41:9. <sup>o</sup>Or *by the hand of Gedaliah*

plot. Gedaliah dismisses the intelligence report as *wrong* (40:16), which is the same Hebrew word used by Jeremiah to describe the message of his prophetic opponents (see Jer 27:10, 14, 16; 28:15; 29:21). Gedaliah rejects any covert operation to assassinate Ishmael.

41:1-18 On 41:1 see 2 Kings 25:25. Gedaliah's refusal to believe Johanan costs him his life. The reference to Ishmael's royal ancestry (41:1) might suggest that he and his company are patriots seeking to reestablish an independent Judean state. *eating a meal together* is an act of hospitality and peace, but Ishmael fools his host. He kills Gedaliah and the Judeans who rallied around him at Mizpah as well as the Babylonian soldiers posted there (41:1-3). A group of worshippers from the northern cities of Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria en route to Jerusalem (41:4-7) also fall victim

to Ishmael's brutality. The *shaved beards, torn clothes, and gashed bodies* (41:5) are signs of mourning, likely for the destruction of the temple. Apparently some form of worship continued at the temple site after 587 BCE. Although Ishmael murders Gedaliah for his pro-Babylonian loyalties (41:2), his motives for the massacre of the innocent worshippers are unknown. King Asa's construction of a *cistern* to ward off Israel's King Baasha (41:9) isn't mentioned elsewhere. Ishmael takes hostages and tries to escape to Ammon before Johanan and his military unit intervene (41:10-15). *the great pool in Gibeon* (41:12) was the site of an earlier conflict between Judah and Israel (2 Sam 2:12-17). Now it's the setting for a skirmish between Johanan and Ishmael, who manages to avoid capture and flees to Ammon. Johanan gathers Ishmael's captives and heads

42:6 Ex 24:7;  
Dt 5:29; Jer 7:23  
42:7 2Ch 36:12;  
Jer 1:1  
42:9 2Ki 19:20,  
2Ki 22:15  
42:10 Dt 32:36;  
Jer 18:8; Jer 18:8;  
Eze 36:36;  
Jl 2:13; Am 7:3  
42:16 Jer 44:12;  
Jer 44:13;  
Eze 11:8

Ishmael, Nathaniah's son, had killed Gedaliah, Ahikam's son, whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the region.

### *Don't go to Egypt!*

**42** Then all the army officers, including Johanan, Kareah's son, and Jezaniah, Hoshaiah's son, and the rest of the people, from the least to the greatest, approached <sup>2</sup>Jeremiah the prophet and said to him, "We have something to ask you: Please pray to the LORD your God for us, this small group, for as you can see we were once many but now are very few. <sup>3</sup>May the LORD your God show us where we should go and what we should do."

<sup>4</sup>The prophet Jeremiah replied, "Yes, I'll pray to the LORD your God as you have asked. And I'll tell you whatever the LORD says; I won't hide anything from you."

<sup>5</sup>Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we fail to do everything that the LORD your God tells us through you. <sup>6</sup>Whether we like it or not, we will obey all that the LORD our God says. We will obey the LORD our God, to whom we're sending you, so it may go well for us."

<sup>7</sup>Ten days later Jeremiah received the LORD's word. <sup>8</sup>So he called Johanan, Kareah's son, and all the army officers with him and the rest of the people, from the least to the greatest, <sup>9</sup>and he said to them: You have sent me to present your plea to the LORD, and this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: <sup>10</sup>If you live in this land, I will build you up and not pull you down. I will plant you and not dig you up because I grieve over the disaster I have brought upon you. <sup>11</sup>You don't have to be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you now fear. You don't have to be afraid of him anymore, declares the LORD, for I will be with you to save you and rescue you from his hand. <sup>12</sup>I will be merciful to you, and he will be merciful and return you to your land.

<sup>13</sup>But if you say, "We won't live in this land," you will disobey the LORD your God. <sup>14</sup>And if you insist, "No, we're going to live in Egypt, where there's no war, battle alarms, or hunger, and there we will stay," <sup>15</sup>then listen to the LORD's word, you remaining Judeans. The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: If you are determined to go to Egypt and you then go and live there, <sup>16</sup>then the war you fear will seize you in the land of Egypt; and the famine you dread will hunt you down in Egypt, and there you will die. <sup>17</sup>Every one of you who is determined to go and live in Egypt will die by the sword, famine, and disease. No one will escape the disaster that I will bring upon them there.

<sup>18</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: Just as my fierce anger was poured out on the people of Jerusalem, so it will be poured out on you if you go to Egypt. You will become an object of cursing, scorn, shock, and disgrace. And you will never see this

south for Egypt for fear of Babylonian reprisals (41:16-18). This sets the stage for Jeremiah 42-44. Again it should be noted that God and Jeremiah are entirely absent in this narrative. The militants may have thought they were acting in God's name, but God and God's prophet are far removed from this brutality and deception. Divine silence calls attention to the horror of the violence, whether done in the name of patriotism, religion, or ideological purity.

42:1-44:30 What to do and where to go? The question of Egypt. The final chapters of the Baruch narrative focus on two major incidents: (1) Johanan and his military officers rejecting the prophetic word and departing to Egypt, taking with them the surviving Judeans, including Jeremiah and Baruch (Jer 42:1-43:7); and (2) Jeremiah, now in Egypt, continuing his accusations against the people, mostly for their idolatry and opposition to God's word (Jer 43:8-44:30). The two scenes belong together sequentially and thematically. They describe the events that lead to a Judean presence in Egypt, they make a strong case that going to Egypt is against God's will, and they charge the Judeans with disobeying God's will. In fact, the people's solemn pledge to *obey the LORD* (42:6) and their choice to *disobey the LORD* (42:13-15, 21; 43:4, 7; 44:5, 16, 23) hold the narratives together. Judah's opposition to God's will serves at least two purposes: (1) it blames the people for the

disasters that took place (see, e.g., 44:2-6; see, however, 42:10), clearing God of charges of injustice or impotence; and (2) it suggests that the exiles in Babylon, not the Judean contingent in Egypt, are heirs of God's promises.

42:1-6 Jeremiah reenters the story as the key figure. Although the survivors associated with Johanan seem intent on going to Egypt (Jer 41:16-18), they approach Jeremiah and ask for prayer and divine guidance. *Please pray to the Lord your God for us* (42:2): God has forbidden Jeremiah to intercede for the people (Jer 7:16; 11:14; 15:1), but now God allows him to do so as before (see Jer 37:3-10; 38:14-23). The small group we encounter here is only a shadow of Israel of the past, but its meeting with the prophet—and especially its solemn promise—recalls covenant ceremonies at key times in Israel's history (Exod 19:1-13; 24:3-4; Josh 24:1-28).

42:7-22 All, including Jeremiah, must wait for a divine response, and it comes *Ten days later*. God gives the people a life-and-death decision. If they remain in the land, God will *build [them] up and not pull [them] down... plant [them] and not dig [them] up* (42:10; see Jer 1:10), and the *king of Babylon* will be merciful to them (42:11-12). If they return to Egypt—the place where their ancestors were enslaved—they will not only face disaster but their fears will be realized (42:13-17). The prophetic word is a terrible

place again. <sup>19</sup>You who survive from Judah, the LORD has told you: Don't go to Egypt. Know without a doubt that I have warned you this day. <sup>20</sup>You are putting your lives at risk<sup>p</sup> by sending me to the LORD your God, saying, "Pray for us to the LORD our God; tell us everything the LORD our God says, and we'll do it." <sup>21</sup>Today I have told you, but you still haven't obeyed all that the LORD your God has sent me to tell you. <sup>22</sup>So know without a doubt that you will die by war, famine, and disease in the place you yearn to go and live.

42:21 Eze 2:7;  
Zec 7:11  
43:8 Jer 44:1  
43:12 Ex 12:12;  
Ps 104:2,  
Ps 109:18;  
Jer 46:25;  
Eze 30:13

### Off to Egypt with Jeremiah and Baruch

**43** When Jeremiah finished telling the people all the words of the LORD their God—he didn't omit anything the LORD sent him to convey—<sup>2</sup>Azariah, Hoshaiah's son, and Johanan, Kareah's son, and all the arrogant men said to Jeremiah, "You're lying to us! The LORD our God didn't send you to tell us not to go to Egypt to live. <sup>3</sup>It's Baruch, Neriah's son, who put you up to it so that we end up in the hands of the Babylonians, who will either kill us or deport us to Babylon."

<sup>4</sup>So Johanan, Kareah's son, and all the army officers and the rest of the people disobeyed the LORD's command to stay in the land of Judah. <sup>5</sup>Johanan, Kareah's son, and all the army officers took the remaining Judeans who had returned to the land of Judah after being scattered among the nations—<sup>6</sup>men, women, children, the king's daughters, everyone Nebuzaradan the captain of the special guard had left with Gedaliah, Ahikam's son and Shaphan's grandson, including Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch, Neriah's son. <sup>7</sup>They went to the land of Egypt, as far as Tahpanhes, for they wouldn't obey the LORD.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD's word came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes: <sup>9</sup>Take some large stones and set them in the clay pavement<sup>q</sup> in front of Pharaoh's palace in Tahpanhes while the people of Judah are watching. <sup>10</sup>After that, say to the people: The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: I'm sending for my servant King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who<sup>r</sup> will set his throne over these stones and will spread his canopy over them. <sup>11</sup>He will come and ravage the land of Egypt:

those marked for disaster, to disaster,  
and those marked for exile, to exile.  
and those marked for war, to war.

<sup>12</sup>He will set on fire<sup>s</sup> the temples of the Egyptian gods. He will burn them down and carry off their gods. He will wrap the land of Egypt around himself, just as a shepherd wraps<sup>t</sup> his garment around himself, and he will move on unharmed. <sup>13</sup>He will shatter the sacred pillars in the temple of the sun in Egypt and burn down the temples of the Egyptian gods.

<sup>p</sup>Or to do evil <sup>q</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>r</sup>LXX; MT I <sup>s</sup>LXX; Syr; MT I will set on fire <sup>t</sup>Or picks clean <sup>u</sup>Heb uncertain

warning and a passionate appeal. God *grieve[s] over the disaster (God has) brought upon them* (42:10; see also Gen 6:7). And God urges Johanan and his company neither to fear Babylon (42:11-12) nor to consider Egypt's help a good solution (42:13-17). Although Egypt may look as if it is an alternative to Babylon, to go there to live would be an act of rebellion and a dreadful political mistake (cf. Isa 31:1; see also Deut 17:16). *sword, famine, and disease*: a phrase (42:17) used often to denote divine judgment (see Jer 14:12, 13; 24:10; 27:8, 13; 29:17, 18; 32:24), as are the phrases *my fierce anger* (42:18; see also Jer 7:20), *an object of cursing, scorn, shock, and disgrace* (42:18; see Jer 29:18; 44:12), and *war, famine, and disease* (42:22; see Jer 27:13; 29:18; 38:2; 44:12, 13). The prophet speaks as if the people's decision has already been made (42:18-22; see Deut 31:24-29; Josh 24:19-25; cf. 1 Sam 8:10-18).

43:1-7 The moment Jeremiah concludes the prophetic message, Azariah, Johanan, and other commanders reject it. Jeremiah often accuses his opponents of lying (Jer 8:8, 10; 14:14; 23:25, 26; 27:10). Now he is charged with fabricating God's word. Grasping at straws, the Judean officers claim that *Baruch*, who hasn't been mentioned since Jeremiah 36, has put Jeremiah up to betraying them. Baruch has played a relatively minor role in the book. He aids Jeremiah in a business transaction/symbolic action

(Jer 32), he transcribes Jeremiah's words on a scroll (Jer 36), and he is the recipient of a prophetic message (Jer 45). Now he is transformed into the secret source behind Jeremiah's words. The narrative collapses a whole range of partisan issues—that is, pro-Babylonian and pro-Egyptian rivalries—into a sweeping claim: The small group of Judeans in the land *wouldn't obey the LORD* (43:7). Their guilt increases when they force all the survivors, including Jeremiah and Baruch, to go with them to *Tahpanhes*, an Egyptian city in the northeast Nile Delta.

43:8-13 In this first narrative set in Egypt, sometime after 582 BCE, Jeremiah takes several large stones and buries them under a pavement in front of the palace in Tahpanhes. This symbolic act demonstrates that the king of Babylon will establish his throne there. The reference to the king of Babylon as *my servant King Nebuchadnezzar* (43:10; see Jer 25:9; 27:6) focuses on the Lord's dominion in human history. That is, Babylon's impending defeat of Egypt isn't only political but also a theological reality (see Ezek 29:19-20; 30:10-19). *those marked for disaster, to disaster* (43:11; cf. Jer 15:2 referring to Jerusalem). Babylon's victory has military and religious consequences: Nebuchadnezzar will dismantle Egypt's entire religious world. Such language is a reminder of the exodus story and the utter defeat of the Egyptian gods. The image of wrapping

44:4 Jer 7:25

44:8 Jer 25:6,  
Jer 44:3,  
1Co 10:2244:10 Prv 28:14;  
Ecc 8:13;  
Jer 8:1244:11 Lv 17:10;  
Jer 21:10;  
Am 9:444:14 Jer 22:27;  
Jer 44:28;  
Rom 9:27**Jeremiah's final words to Judeans in Egypt**

**44** Jeremiah received the LORD's word for the Judeans living in the land of Egypt, those living in Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis and in the land of Pathros. <sup>1</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: You have seen the disaster I brought on Jerusalem and the towns of Judah. They are now a wasteland with no one left <sup>2</sup>because of their evil ways. They have angered me by making offerings and worshipping other gods that neither they nor you nor your ancestors knew. <sup>3</sup>Yet time and again I sent you all my servants the prophets, saying, "Don't do these detestable things that I hate." <sup>4</sup>But they wouldn't listen or pay attention or turn from their evil ways. They continued making offerings to other gods. <sup>5</sup>So my fierce anger poured out and blazed against the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem. And they were reduced to an utter wasteland, as they are today.

<sup>7</sup>Now the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: Why are you committing this huge mistake that will cost you your lives? Every man, woman, child, and infant will be eliminated from the midst of Judah, and no one will be left. <sup>8</sup>Why do you anger me by what you do: by burning incense to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have come to live? You will be eliminated and become an object of cursing and disgrace among all the nations of the earth. <sup>9</sup>Have you forgotten the sins of your ancestors and the sins of the kings of Judah and their wives? <sup>10</sup>Have you forgotten the sins that you and your wives committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? <sup>11</sup>To this day you<sup>w</sup> haven't shown any sorrow for what you have done. And you haven't revered me or followed my Instruction and my laws that I set before you and your ancestors.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: I'm determined to bring disaster on you, to eliminate all of Judah. <sup>13</sup>I will take the few remaining Judeans who were determined to go to the land of Egypt to live. They will all perish there. They will fall by the sword and perish due to famine. The least to the greatest will die by the sword and by famine. They will become an object of cursing, scorn, contempt, and disgrace. <sup>14</sup>I will punish those who live in the land of Egypt, just as I punished Jerusalem with war, famine, and disease. <sup>15</sup>From the few remaining in Judah, no fugitive or survivor who came to live here in the land of Egypt will be able to return to the land of Judah. Even though they want to return and live there, they won't be able to return, except for some fugitives.

<sup>16</sup>Then all the men who knew that their wives had made offerings to other gods, along with the great crowd of women who were present, as well as the people living in Pathros in

<sup>w</sup>Heb his wives <sup>w</sup>Or they

the land around oneself as a shepherd wraps his garment around himself (i.e., carrying his loot away) conveys a sense of crushing the enemy. The same Hebrew text has also been translated as a shepherd "picking lice off his clothes," perhaps denoting victory with little opposition (43:12), the sacred pillars in the temple of the sun: may refer to sacred monuments ("sacred pillars" or "obelisks") in Heliopolis—a city seven miles northeast of modern Cairo—which was the center of the worship of the sun-god, Re.

44:1-30 Jeremiah's final words for Judeans living in Egypt. His three statements (44:1-14, 20-23, 24-30) explain the results from the fall of Judah and Jerusalem for those living in Egypt. The central point of Jeremiah's speeches is that worship of foreign deities is a serious violation of the covenant. Such a breach of the covenant's principal demand—"You must have no other gods before me" (Deut 5:7)—carries the gravest of consequences. The people insist on worshipping the queen of heaven. This drives home the people's guilt and collective responsibility (notice the word *all* in 44:15 [twice], 20, 24 [twice]).

44:1-14 The multiple settlements of Judean communities in Egypt (44:1) suggest the passage of time since the Johanan group left Judah (Jer 43:4-13). Jeremiah addresses Judeans who are now settled in Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis and in the land of Pathros. Migdol was a city in northern Egypt. Tahpanhes: See Jeremiah 43:1-7. Memphis:

(or Noph) See Jeremiah 2:16; south of modern Cairo, Memphis was the ancient capital of Egypt. Pathros denotes Upper Egypt. In this first of Jeremiah's three speeches in this chapter, he accuses the people of disobeying God and worshipping other gods. These offenses explain the fall of Judah and Jerusalem. And if the Judeans living in Egypt continue to worship other gods, they will suffer a similar fate. Jeremiah's sermon reflects the language and theology of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History (Deut-2 Kgs). Similar to 2 Kings 17:5-23 (see also Jer 25:3-10), for instance, Jeremiah proclaims: (1) the Lord sends the prophets to warn the people, (2) God's people reject their message, and (3) as a result, they suffer divine judgment, that is, God brings upon them war, famine, and disease. This passage says that the nation's tragic circumstances don't occur outside the scope of God's power and purposes. It also makes the case that Israel—whether at home or living outside the land of Judah—is obligated to be God's faithful covenant people. And finally its accusations against the Judean survivors in Egypt support the interests of the Judeans living in Babylon who later receive support from the Persian government for the rebuilding of Judah and Jerusalem. This latter group probably put together an early form of the book.

44:15-19 The people reject the prophetic word—*We're not going to listen to a word you have said to us in the Lord's*

the land of Egypt, all answered Jeremiah: <sup>16</sup>“We’re not going to listen to a word you have said to us in the LORD’s name! <sup>17</sup>No, we’re going to do exactly what we want: We’re going to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we and our ancestors, our kings and our officials, have done in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. Then we had plenty to eat and we were thriving; we didn’t have any troubles. <sup>18</sup>But ever since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring drink offerings to her, we have been destroyed by the sword and by famine.”

<sup>19</sup>And the women added,\* “Do you think that we burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour drink offerings to her without our husbands’ support when we make cakes in her image and pour drink offerings to her?”

<sup>20</sup>Jeremiah said to all the people, men and women alike, in fact everyone who had spoken this way: <sup>21</sup>“Do you really think the LORD was unaware of what you were up to in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem? Don’t you think the LORD knew that you and your ancestors were making offerings to other gods<sup>†</sup>—along with your kings and officials, and the people of the land? <sup>22</sup>It got so bad that the LORD could no longer bear your evil and shameless acts; it was at that point that your land was reduced to an utter wasteland and a curse, as it is today. <sup>23</sup>The current dire situation occurred because you made offerings to other gods<sup>‡</sup> and sinned against the LORD—because you wouldn’t obey the LORD or follow the LORD’s instruction, laws, or warnings.”

<sup>24</sup>Then Jeremiah said to all the people, including the women: Listen to the LORD’s word, all you Judeans in the land of Egypt. <sup>25</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: You and your wives have done exactly what you said you would do. You said, “We will definitely fulfill our promise to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her.” Go ahead and keep your promises! <sup>26</sup>But listen to the LORD’s word, all you Judeans who live in the land of Egypt. I swear by my great name, says the LORD, that no one from Judah living in Egypt will utter my name again, even in the solemn pledge: “As surely as the LORD God lives.” <sup>27</sup>I’m watching over them for harm and not for good. Everyone from Judah who is living in the land of Egypt will die by the sword and by famine, until all are gone. <sup>28</sup>Those who actually survive war and return from Egypt to the land of Judah will be very few. Then the few remaining Judeans living in Egypt will know for certain whose word is true—mine or theirs! <sup>29</sup>And this will be a sign for you, declares the LORD: I will punish you here so that you know my threats against you will surely be fulfilled. <sup>30</sup>The LORD proclaims: I will hand Pharaoh Hophra, Egypt’s king, over to his enemies who seek to kill him, just as I delivered Judah’s King Zedekiah over to his enemy King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who sought to kill him.

**A final word for Baruch**

**45** In the fourth year of Judah’s King Jehoiakim, Josiah’s son, Baruch was writing in a scroll the words that Jeremiah was dictating to him. Jeremiah the prophet told Baruch, Neriah’s son: <sup>2</sup>This is what the LORD the God of Israel proclaims about you, Baruch:

\*Syr; MT lacks *and the women added*. †Heb lacks *to other gods*. ‡Heb lacks *to other gods*.

*name!* (44:16)—and affirm their allegiance to the *queen of heaven* (44:17; see also Jer 7:18), likely a reference to Ishtar, the Mesopotamian goddess of fertility and war. They defend their position: when they worshipped the queen of heaven, all went well—perhaps an allusion to the period before Josiah’s reform (2 Kgs 22–23).

44:20–23 The prophet refutes the people’s basic interpretation of life and death, reward and punishment. Their circumstances are a direct consequence of disobedience to the Lord, not the queen of heaven.

44:24–30 With biting irony, Jeremiah grants that the people have fulfilled their solemn promises (Jer 42:4–6), but not to the Lord! Consequently, God swears to fulfill God’s own *solemn pledge* to bring further disaster (44:26). *I’m watching over them* (44:27) employs the same verb as in Jeremiah’s call narrative (Jer 1:11–12), as if to remind the reader that God has been attentive all along. Although God’s attention (*watching*) can lead to building and

planting (as in Jer 31:28; see also Jer 1:10), it serves the Judean remnant in Egypt *for harm and not for good* (see also 21:10; 39:16). This is a reversal of God’s assurance given to the Babylonian exiles: God has plans for their good, not for harm (Jer 29:11). Moreover, God promises to “treat [them] kindly” (i.e., do good) and “regard them as good” (Jer 24:5–6). Jeremiah declares that *Pharaoh Hophra* (known as Apries, who ruled 589–570 BCE) will be handed over to his enemies. The allusion to Pharaoh Hophra’s death as a *sign* (Jer 44:29) again brings to mind the exodus story, which begins with a sign for Moses (Exod 3:12). The sign for Moses, however, confirmed God’s liberation of Israel, whereas the sign of Pharaoh Hophra’s death confirms the community’s death sentence in Egypt.

45:1–5 Survival promised Baruch. An individual oracle of comfort. Like Jeremiah’s confessions, Baruch cries out to God, the source of his distress and his only hope for relief from it. He can no longer cope with his circumstances,

44:16 1Sa 8:19;  
Jer 11:8;  
Zec 7:11  
44:19 Jer 7:18  
44:21 Ps 79:8;  
Is 64:9, Jer 11:13  
44:26 Gn 22:16;  
Dt 32:40, Jer 4:2;  
Eze 20:39  
44:28 Is 27:13  
44:29 Ex 3:12;  
1Sa 2:34,  
1Sa 10:7; Is 7:11,  
Is 37:30, Is 38:7  
45:1 Jer 25:1,  
Jer 32:12,  
Jer 36:1, Jer 36:4

45:4 Is 5:5

46:2 2Ki 23:29.

2Ch 35:20.

Jer 25:1

**The End of the Baruch Narrative** God's brief word of assurance to Jeremiah's secretary concludes the Baruch narrative (Jer 36–45). It's significant that the beginning and the end of this narrative refer to the prophetic scroll that Baruch writes at Jeremiah's dictation. The Baruch narrative is organized around the production of the scroll in the year 605 BCE, the "fourth year of Judah's King Jehoiakim, Josiah's son" (Jer 36:1; 45:1). God's words uttered by Jeremiah are now preserved in authoritative written form. Much of Judah's world is now shattered. The land is ravaged, the temple is razed to the ground, the Davidic king is exiled in Babylon, the Gedaliah experiment has failed, Jeremiah and Baruch are taken to Egypt, and God's people are suffering the traumatic violence of war. But the scroll remains intact. And even though King Jehoiakim has it shredded and burned, Baruch creates another one as Jeremiah dictates "all the words in the scroll burned in the fire by Judah's King Jehoiakim" (Jer 36:32). One of the great themes of the Baruch Narrative is the resilience of God's word as it changes from spoken to written form.

<sup>3</sup>You have said, "I can't take it anymore! The LORD has added sorrow to my pain. I'm worn out from groaning and can find no rest." <sup>4</sup>This is what you should say to him: "The LORD proclaims: I'm breaking down everything I have built up. I'm digging up that which I have planted—the entire land. <sup>5</sup>You seek great things for yourself, but don't bother. I'm bringing disaster on all humanity, declares the LORD, but wherever you go I will let you escape with your life."

#### ORACLES CONCERNING THE NATIONS

**46** This is what the LORD told the prophet Jeremiah concerning the nations.

##### **Prophecy against Egypt**

<sup>2</sup>About Egypt! A message for the army of Pharaoh Neco, Egypt's king, which was defeated by Babylon's Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish near the Euphrates River in the fourth year of Judah's King Jehoiakim, Josiah's son:

<sup>3</sup>Grab your shields and prepare for war!

<sup>4</sup>Saddle the horses; mount the stallions!

Take your positions with helmets on!

Polish your spears; put on your armor!

as he *can find no rest* (45:3). In response to his lament, Jeremiah delivers a disconcerting response: Baruch's situation can't be divorced from the dangerous times in which he lives, when God is *breaking down everything [God has] built up . . . [and] digging up that which [God has] planted—the entire land* (45:4). Once again we encounter language from Jeremiah's call (Jer 1:10). The Hebrew word translated as *land* is often rendered "earth." Accordingly, the crisis may refer to national, regional, or even global disaster (see, however, 45:5). Baruch expects a reward for his service, but in moments of great upheaval, even modest expectations must give way to more realistic forms of hope: mere survival. God won't grant Baruch's petition for *great things* for himself (45:5), but assures him that he will survive the perilous times. *escape with your life*: a phrase also found in Jeremiah 39:18 with reference to Ebed-melech, another faithful servant of God. Survival, not reward, is the operative word in times of war.

46:1–51:64 Jeremiah's mission as prophet to the nations. The final collection of prophecies in Jeremiah is commonly called the "oracles concerning (or against) the nations." The countries spoken of in this concluding section include Egypt (46:2–28), Philistia (47:1–7), Moab (48:1–47), Ammon (49:1–6), Edom (49:7–22), Damascus (49:23–27), Kedar and Hazor (49:28–33), Elam (49:34–39), and Babylon (50:1–51:64). The prophecies differ in substance and length, but most are announcements of divine judgment. Collections of oracles against the nations are common in

the prophetic literature (see Amos 1–2; Isa 13–23; Ezek 25–23). Jeremiah's oracles against the nations begin with a denunciation of Egypt, Israel's first oppressor, and conclude with a lengthy judgment oracle against Babylon, its present nemesis. The enormous space and time given to the latter suggests that the predicted fall of Babylon represents the climax and culmination of the oracles against the nations. God's decisive action against oppressive powers and principalities signals hope and the promise of restoration for God's mistreated people.

The placement of the oracles against the nations in Jeremiah is significant. In the Greek text (LXX) the collection of oracles appears at the end of the first half of the prophetic drama (25:13a)—in many respects a more natural literary setting—followed by a terrifying text in which Jeremiah charges the nations to drink God's cup of judgment. Thus, the oracles against the nations bring to a close the first half of the book with universal judgment: the nations, including Judah and its capital city, Jerusalem, drink from the Lord's cup of wrath. No one escapes divine judgment; no one eludes disaster. Indeed, judgment begins with the household belonging to God.

The oracles against the nations function very differently in the Hebrew Bible. The collection of oracles appears at the end of the book, emphasizing the entire prophetic performance with God's dramatic defeat of those who commit injustice and brutality. God won't let governing authorities get away with murder, a fact that conveys hope for

46:8 Is 10:13;  
Is 37:24;  
Eze 29:3; Am 8:8  
46:10 Dt 32:42;  
Is 34:5-6;  
Jer 46:2; Jl 1:15;  
Zep 1:7  
46:11 Gn 37:25;  
Jer 8:22;  
Jer 30:13

<sup>5</sup>Why do I see them terrified, retreating in haste?  
Their soldiers are crushed, running for cover,  
and they don't turn back.  
Panic lurks at every turn, declares the LORD.  
<sup>6</sup>The swift can't flee; the mighty can't escape.  
Up north by the Euphrates River, they stagger and fall.

<sup>7</sup>Who is this that rises like the Nile, whose banks overflow?<sup>a</sup>

<sup>8</sup>It's Egypt that rises like the Nile, whose banks overflow,<sup>b</sup>  
who declares, "I will arise and cover the earth  
and destroy cities and inhabitants."

<sup>9</sup>Charge, you horses;  
advance, you chariots!  
Attack, you soldiers with your shield in hand,  
you people of Cush and Put<sup>c</sup> with your bow drawn,  
you archers from Lud.

<sup>10</sup>But that day belongs to the LORD God of heavenly forces;  
it's a day of reckoning,  
settling scores with enemies.  
The sword will devour until it has had its fill of blood.  
The LORD God of heavenly forces is preparing a sacrifice in the north  
by the Euphrates River.

<sup>11</sup>Go up to Gilead and seek balm, virgin Daughter Egypt.  
You search out remedies in vain,  
for your disease is incurable.

<sup>12</sup>Nations hear of your shame;  
the earth is filled with your sobs.  
Soldier stumbles over soldier;  
together they go down.

<sup>13</sup>This is the word that the LORD spoke to the prophet Jeremiah about the military of-  
fensive of Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar against the land of Egypt:

<sup>a</sup>Or like rivers whose waters roar <sup>b</sup>Or like rivers whose waters roar <sup>c</sup>Traditionally Ethiopia and Libya

their victims. God's people have endured enormous hard-  
ship, and now God resolves to punish oppressors, disman-  
tle arrogant world powers, and bring peace. Furthermore,  
the placement of the oracles against the nations at the  
end of the book rounds out the mission of Jeremiah as a  
"prophet to the nations" (Jer 1:5, 10). At the start, God ap-  
points Jeremiah "over nations and empires, to dig up and  
pull down, to destroy and demolish, to build and plant"  
(Jer 1:10). Now at its close, his international mission comes  
to fruition. Moreover, it becomes clear that God's purposes  
on earth extend far beyond the scope of Judah's borders.  
Finally, the different internal arrangement of the poems  
in the Hebrew emphasizes Babylon's downfall. Unlike the  
internal order of the oracles against the nations in the LXX,  
Babylon appears in the final and climactic position, as if  
all other oracles serve as a prelude to God's victory over  
Judah's archenemy. The broader setting of the oracles  
against the nations in the Hebrew text as well as the inter-  
nal arrangement of the poems affirm that God reigns on  
earth, that evildoers won't skirt God's justice, and that the  
historical losers will one day be vindicated.

46:1-28 Prophecy against Egypt. The prophecy concern-  
ing Egypt has three parts (46:2-12, 13-24, and 25-28), each  
introduced by an historical allusion (46:2, 13, 25-26). Jer-  
emiah 46:1 serves as an introduction to the oracles against  
the nations.

46:2-12 The prophecy against Egypt is set in the year 605  
BCE when Babylon defeated Egypt at *Carchemish*, which  
ended Egyptian control of Judah. As noted previously  
(see Jer 25:1; 36:1; 45:1), this particular date has histori-  
cal and symbolic significance. The reference to *the fourth*  
*year of Judah's King Jehoiakim, Josiah's son* marks the onset  
of King Nebuchadnezzar's reign and Babylon's control of  
Judah. Elsewhere in Jeremiah this allusion conveys a deep  
sense of anxiety at the prospect of the pulling apart of  
Judah's old world. In this instance, however, the year 605  
signals the defeat of Egypt, which may signal more posi-  
tive prospects for Judah. Military troops are to prepare  
for war (46:3-9). *Panic lurks at every turn*: or "everywhere"  
(46:5; see also Jer 6:25; 20:3, 10; 49:29), which portrays  
the situation of the Egyptian soldiers. *I will arise and cover the*  
*earth*: conveys Egyptian arrogance and aggression, which  
seem silly in light of regional political realities and God's  
military campaign (46:10-12). *Cush* is Ethiopia, and *Put*  
is likely Libya (46:9; see the translation note). Employing  
funeral speech, Egypt's defeat is described as divine judg-  
ment, that is, *a day of reckoning*, a bloody sacrifice (46:10),  
the futile search for healing and help (46:11-12). For the  
association of Gilead with *balm* (46:11), see Jeremiah 8:22.  
46:13-24 A brief note introduces the second scene  
(46:13): Jeremiah's prophetic message is about Babylon's  
advance on Egypt. The prophet portrays both the political

46:20 Jer 47:2;  
Hos 10:11  
46:22 Is 10:34,  
Is 14:8, Is 29:4;  
Jer 51:20  
46:23 Jdg 6:5,  
Jdg 7:12  
46:27 Is 41:14;  
Jer 30:10;  
Ezr 39:25

- 14** Tell Egypt, warn Migdol,  
alert Memphis and Tahpanhes!  
Say: "Brace yourselves for what's coming.  
War is breaking out from every side!"
- 15** Why have your mighty fallen?  
Why haven't they stood their ground?  
Because the LORD has struck them down.
- 16** He's tripped them up;  
they fall over each other and say,  
"Let's get out of here and go home to our people,  
where we were born, far away from the oppressor's sword."<sup>d</sup>
- 17** There they call Pharaoh, Egypt's king, Loudmouth—Nothing But Hot Air!
- 18** As I live, declares the king, whose name is the LORD of heavenly forces,  
one is coming just as surely as Tabor is in the mountains  
and Carmel is by the sea.<sup>e</sup>
- 19** Get what you need for deportation,  
you inhabitants of Egypt.<sup>f</sup>  
Memphis will be reduced to a wasteland,  
a ruin with no one left.
- 20** Egypt is a beautiful, yes, beautiful heifer,  
but a horsefly from the north is coming to bite her.<sup>g</sup>
- 21** Even her mercenaries are like well-fed calves;  
they too will retreat and run for cover;  
they won't survive.  
The day of disaster has come to haunt them,  
the time of their punishment.
- 22** Like the sound of a snake hissing as it slithers away  
is Egypt<sup>h</sup> as armies approach in force;  
they come against her with axes, like woodcutters.
- 23** They destroy her dense forest, though it is vast,  
because they outnumber locusts and can't be counted, declares the LORD.
- 24** Daughter Egypt will be humiliated,  
handed over to people from the north.  
<sup>25</sup>This is what the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: I'm going to  
punish Amon of Thebes, Egypt and its gods and kings, as well as Pharaoh and all who rely  
on him. <sup>26</sup>I will hand them over to those who seek to kill them, namely Babylon's King Ne-  
buchadnezzar and his servants. But afterward Egypt will dwell like it did a long time ago,  
declares the LORD.
- 27** But don't be afraid, my servant Judah;  
don't lose heart, Israel.  
I will deliver you from a faraway place  
and your children from the land of their exile.

<sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Or *inhabitant, Daughter Egypt* <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>h</sup>Heb lacks *is Egypt*.

and symbolic downfall of mighty Egypt—the nation that once defied the king, whose name is the LORD of heavenly forces (46:18). Migdol, Memphis, and Tahpanhes: See notes on Jeremiah 43:1-7; 44:1-14. The prophetic call to prepare for war is actually a taunt against Israel's ancient foe, long associated with its bondage. Insults are hurled at the Egyptian gods (*your mighty* in 46:15; the Greek reads "Apis," the fertility god), warriors, and king, who is called a wind-bag with *Nothing But Hot Air* (46:15-17). Such empty talk contrasts with real power wielded by the heavenly king. A series of striking images continues the parody on Egypt (46:19-24): *heifer, horsefly from the north* (for the theme of danger from the north, see Jer 1:13-15; 4:6; 6:1, 22), *well-fed calves*, and a *snake hissing*; its adversaries are likened to *woodcutters* and *locusts*. The reversal of power structures,

which includes defeated gods, blundering kings, conquered warriors, and exiled Egyptians, would no doubt delight war-torn Judeans under foreign control.

46:25-28 The prose (46:25-26) serves as a literary bridge to the next prophetic scene. It comments on and clarifies the previous oracles of judgment and introduces an element of hope for Egypt and Judah. Egypt's downfall is now spelled out. The God of Israel will punish everything Egyptian: Amon, the sun god whose temple was in Thebes, its (other) gods, and kings, as well as *Pharaoh and all who rely on him* (46:25). The latter may be an oblique reference to Judeans who sought refuge in Egypt. Babylon is still God's instrument of judgment, but now it takes military action against Egypt, not Judah. Divine judgment against Egypt is unqualified, but it isn't the final word



47:1 Gn 10:19;  
 Jer 25:20;  
 Eze 25:15;  
 Am 1:6; Zep 2:4  
 47:4 Gn 10:14;  
 Dt 2:23;  
 Jer 25:22; Jl 3:4;  
 Am 9:7  
 47:5 Lv 19:28;  
 Is 3:24; Jer 48:37  
 48:1 Nm 32:3;  
 Is 15:1; Eze 25:9

My people Jacob will again be safe and sound,  
 with no one harassing them.

<sup>2a</sup> So don't be afraid, my servant Jacob, declares the LORD.

I'm with you;

I will put an end to all the nations where I have scattered you.

But I won't put an end to you.

I won't let you avoid punishment;

I will discipline you as you deserve.

**Prophecy against Philistia**

**47** The LORD's word to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the Philistines before Pharaoh conquered Gaza.

<sup>2</sup> The LORD proclaims:

Waters are rising from the north and turning into a raging flood.

They will engulf the land and everything in it,  
 the towns and those living in them.

The people cry out;  
 all who live there scream.

<sup>3</sup> At the pounding of the stallions' hooves,  
 at the deafening roar of the chariots' wheels,  
 parents abandon children, so paralyzed are they with fear.

<sup>4</sup> The time is coming for the Philistines' destruction,  
 for cutting off from Tyre and Sidon anyone who might try to save Gaza,<sup>i</sup>  
 because the LORD will destroy the Philistines,  
 the few left from the island of Caphtor.

<sup>5</sup> Mourning<sup>j</sup> will come upon Gaza;  
 silence will cover Ashkelon, the few left in their valley.  
 How long will you gash yourselves in grief?<sup>k</sup>

<sup>6</sup> You sword of the LORD, how long until you are silent?  
 Return to your sheath; rest and be still!

<sup>7</sup> How can you be silent when the LORD has directed you<sup>l</sup>  
 to attack Ashkelon and the coast line?

**Prophecy against Moab**

**48** Concerning Moab:  
 The LORD of heavenly forces,  
 the God of Israel, proclaims:

How awful for Nebo; it lies in ruins.

Kirathaim is captured and shamed;  
 the fortress is disgraced, reduced to rubble.

<sup>i</sup>Or a helper <sup>j</sup>Or baldness <sup>k</sup>Heb lacks in grief. <sup>l</sup>Or it

(46:26; cf. Jer 48:47; 49:6, 39). Moreover, in 46:27-28 (a text that is virtually identical to Jer 30:10-11), Jeremiah urges Israel and Judah not to fear.

47:1-7 Prophecy against Philistia. A people located on the southern Mediterranean coast, often referred to as "Sea Peoples," the *Philistines* were one of Israel's earliest rivals (see Judg 13-16; 1 Sam 4-7; 13-14; 17). Although their power had long since waned, they were likely included in the oracles against the nations because of their symbolic role as archenemy of Israel. *Pharaoh conquered Gaza*: perhaps a cryptic reference to Pharaoh Neco II's military campaign in 609 BCE, which came from the south. This is at odds with an assault on Philistia from the north (47:2). The poetry creates a picture of a small country, like Judah, crushed between two superpowers. The image of the *north* and the *deafening roar of the chariots' wheels* in 46:2-3 elicit dread of impending chaos, as does the intensity of *raging flood*. Consider the terrifying image of

the sea: "the deep sea" (Gen 1:2), the "floodwaters" (Gen 6:17; 7:6), "massive waves" (Ps 42:7), "waters roar[ing] and rag[ing] . . . surging waves" (Ps 46:3), the "deep water" (Ps 144:7), all symbolize powers of chaos that jeopardize the very structure of life. The Philistines' dilemma is far more than political: the Lord is the architect of Philistia's doom (46:4). No wonder great mourning follows (47:5-7). *Tyre and Sidon*: Phoenician cities that may have been allies of Philistia (46:4). The *island of Caphtor*: or Crete, which is identified as the ancestral home of the Philistines in Amos 9:7. In the final verses of the poem, the victims of the invasion cry out in pain and plead for mercy (46:6-7). Even the enemy's cries must be heard.

48:1-47 The prophecy against Moab. The longest oracle of judgment in the Bible against Israel's ancient neighbor to the east of the Dead Sea (see also Isa 15-16; Ezek 25:8-11; Amos 2:1-3; Zeph 2:8-11). Although Israel had kinship ties to Moab (Gen 19:37-38), many of its interactions were

48:6 Dt 2:36;  
Josh 13:9;  
Isa 4:13;  
Jer 48:19

48:7 Nm 21:9;  
Jdg 11:24;  
1Ki 11:33;  
Ps 49:6, Ps 52:7;  
Jer 48:46

48:10 Jgs 5:23;  
1Ki 20:42;  
Jer 47:6

48:13 Jdg 11:24;  
1Ki 11:7;  
1Ki 12:29;  
Jer 48:7; Hos 8:6,  
Hos 10:6

- <sup>2</sup>No one sings Moab's praise any longer!  
In Heshbon they are hatching a plot against her:  
"Come, let's bring down the nation!"  
You too, madmen, will be silenced;  
the sword will pursue you.
- <sup>3</sup>Listen to the cries for help from Horonaim:  
"Destruction and massive devastation!"
- <sup>4</sup>Moab is shattered; its young cry for help.
- <sup>5</sup>On the way up to Luhith, there is uncontrollable weeping.  
On the way down to Horonaim, they hear sobs of anguish.
- <sup>6</sup>Run for your lives!  
Be like Aroer<sup>m</sup> in the desert.
- <sup>7</sup>Because you have relied on your own strength and treasures,  
you also will be captured.  
Chemosh will go into exile, together with his priests and officials.
- <sup>8</sup>The destroyer will sweep through every town;  
no town will escape.  
The valleys will be ravaged; the plateaus will be destroyed,  
because the LORD has declared it so.
- <sup>9</sup>Give wings to Moab, and it would fly away<sup>n</sup>  
because its towns lie in ruins, with no one left in them.
- <sup>10</sup>Cursed is the one who is halfhearted in doing the LORD's work.  
Cursed is the one who restrains the sword from bloodshed.
- <sup>11</sup>From early on Moab has been at ease,  
like wine<sup>o</sup> left to settle on its sediment.  
It hasn't been poured into jars;  
nor has Moab been taken into exile.  
Therefore, its taste is still pleasant,  
and its aroma is the same.
- <sup>12</sup>But the time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will send to him someone to spill  
it—to pour out his wine and to smash his jars. <sup>13</sup>And Moab will be put to shame on account  
of Chemosh, just as the people of Israel were put to shame on account of Bethel, in which  
they trusted.<sup>p</sup>
- <sup>14</sup>How can you claim, "We're soldiers; we're war heroes"?
- <sup>15</sup>Moab is doomed;  
its towns will surrender;<sup>q</sup>  
its elite forces will go down in defeat,  
declares the king whose name is the LORD of heavenly forces.
- <sup>16</sup>Moab's destruction is near;  
its downfall approaches rapidly.

<sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>n</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>o</sup>Heb lacks like wine. <sup>p</sup>Or And Moab will be ashamed of Chemosh just as the people of Israel were ashamed of Bethel, in which they trusted. <sup>q</sup>Heb uncertain

hostile from the time of the exodus to that of Ezra (Num 22-25; 1 Sam 14:47; Ezra 9:1; Neh 13:1, 23). In the post-exilic period, however, the Moabite Ruth came to serve as an exemplar of love and loyalty. This Moabite woman, an outsider in the extreme, became part of King David's family tree (Ruth 4:18-22) and Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (Matt 1:5-6). The sections are repetitive, disorganized, and are at times made up of quotations from other parts of the Bible (e.g., Jer 48:43-44; Isa 24:17-18; 48:29-39; 15-16). 48:1-9 The first poem is a divine lament over Moab's ruin. Its fallen cities and fortresses evoke expressions of alarm. The words *cries*, *cry*, and *sobs* (48:3-5), translations of the same Hebrew word, emphasize the ravages of war, especially upon the vulnerable (*its young*). *Nebo*

is remembered elsewhere as the mountain upon which Moses viewed the land of Israel from a distance (Deut 34). *Kirathaim* is a Moabite city whose location is unknown, although it is listed on the Moabite Stone. *Heshbon* is an Amorite stronghold captured by the Israelites en route to the promised land (Num 21:21-31). The location of *Horonaim* is uncertain (Jer 48:3, 5, 34; see 2 Sam 13:34; Isa 15:5), as is *Luhith's* (see Isa 15:5). *Chemosh* is the chief god of Moab (see Num 21:29; Jdg 11:24; 1 Kgs 11:7). 48:10-17 Moab's undoing is portrayed in terms of crime and punishment. Its undoing is seen as *the LORD's work*, and those engaged in this work are scolded for their lack of diligence. Moab's complacency is likened to wine jars that haven't been moved and have been allowed to settle.

48:17 Is 9:4;  
Is 14:5  
48:18  
Nm 21:30;  
Josh 13:9; Is 15:2;  
Is 47:1  
48:19 Dt 2:36;  
Josh 13:9;  
Isa 4:13  
48:25 Ps 75:10;  
Eze 30:21  
48:26 Is 19:14;  
Jer 25:27;  
Jer 48:42  
48:29 Ps 138:6;  
Prv 18:12;  
Is 16:6; Zep 2:8  
48:31 2Ki 3:25;  
Is 16:7  
48:32 Nm 21:32;  
Is 16:9

- 17 Grieve for this nation, you neighbors of Moab,  
all you who know his name.  
Proclaim how its mighty scepter and magnificent staff are shattered!
- 18 Come down from your lofty place and sit in the dust,<sup>f</sup>  
you inhabitants of Daughter Dibon,<sup>g</sup>  
because Moab's destroyer has arrived to level your fortresses.
- 19 Stand by the roads and watch,  
you inhabitants of Aroer.  
Ask the men who flee and the women who run off,  
"What's happened?"
- 20 Moab is shamed and shocked;  
weep and wail!  
Tell it by the Arnon River:  
Moab's been destroyed!
- 21 Judgment has come to the towns of the plateau—  
to Holon, Jahzah, and Mephaath,  
22 to Dibon, Nebo, and Beth-diblathaim,  
23 to Kiriathaim, Beth-gamul, and Beth-meon,  
24 to Kerioth and Bozrah, to all the towns of Moab, far and near.
- 25 Moab's horn is cut off;  
its arm is broken, declares the LORD.
- 26 Get Moab drunk, because it has exalted itself above the LORD.  
Moab will collapse in its vomit and become the butt of every joke.
- 27 Wasn't Israel the butt of your jokes?  
Didn't you shake your head as if they were thieves caught in the act?
- 28 Leave your towns, head for the cliffs, you people of Moab.  
Hide like a dove that nests in the mouth of a cave.
- 29 We have heard of Moab's pride:  
arrogant, puffed up, exalted, high and mighty, boastful!
- 30 I myself know about its arrogance, declares the LORD,  
the idle talk, the empty deeds.
- 31 But I'll still wail for Moab;  
I'll cry out for all Moab;  
I'll sob for the people of Kir-heres.  
I'll weep for you, vine of Sibmah, more than I would for Jazer.  
Though your branches extended to the sea and reached the coast of Jazer,  
now the destroyer has come to harvest your grapes and summer fruits.
- 33 Joy and gladness have been taken from the orchards and farms of Moab.  
I have stopped making wine in the presses.

<sup>f</sup>Or thirst <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain, or residing Daughter Dibon <sup>h</sup>Or He

The Lord, however, will disturb Moab's stability by sending people (i.e., Babylonians) to pour out the Moabites (48:12). Moab's idolatry and arrogance will then be exposed, as demonstrated by its fallen *war heroes* (48:14) and shattered *scepter* (48:17).

48:18-28 *Dibon*: an important city in central Moab along the major trade route through the Transjordan. *Aroer*: a reference to a fortified settlement southeast of Dibon. The *Amon River* ran through central Moab to the Dead Sea from the east. The towns of the central plateau are listed in 48:21-24. *horn* and the *arm*: symbols of power. Moab's drunkenness is an image of its humiliation and God's judgment (48:26). Jeremiah 48:27 reveals deep hostility for Moab's mistreatment of Israel. Proud Moab will finally get its due.

48:29-39 Although Moab's arrogance is still center stage, the Lord grieves over Moab's sad condition. Throughout the book of Jeremiah, God suffers with suffering people, especially the people of Judah (e.g., Jer 8:22-9:3). Now God weeps over suffering Moab. The intensity of God's grief is clear in the string of verbs: *God wails, cries, sobs, and weeps* (48:31); *God's heart wails for Moab . . . [God's] heart wails for the people of Kir-heres* (48:36). Although the text celebrates the humiliation of the proud, the Lord takes no delight in their suffering. The text paints a dreadful picture of the wreckage of war. *the destroyer has come*: war ravaged the land (48:32). The result is drought, devastation, and death. Shaved heads, cut beards, slashed hands, and mourning clothes are conventional expressions of grief (48:37).

48:40 Dt 28:49;  
Is 8:8; Hos 8:1;  
Hab 1:8

48:43  
Is 24:17-18;  
Lam 3:47

48:46 Nm 21:29;  
Jdg 11:24;  
1Ki 11:7;  
Jer 48:7

48:47 Jer 49:6;  
Jer 49:39

- No one shouts with joy while treading the grapes.  
Though there are shouts, they are not shouts of joy!<sup>a</sup>
- <sup>34</sup> Screams are heard from Heshbon to Elealeh and Jahaz;  
their cries resound from Zoar to Horonaim and Eglath-selishiyah.  
Even the waters of Nimrim are dried up.
- <sup>35</sup> I'll put an end to Moab, declares the LORD,  
for making offerings on the shrines, and worshipping their gods.
- <sup>36</sup> Therefore, my heart wails for Moab  
like a mournful<sup>b</sup> flute that plays the dirge;  
my heart wails for the people of Kir-heres,  
like a mournful flute.  
Their abundance is now gone.
- <sup>37</sup> Every head is shaved,  
every beard is cut off,  
every hand is slashed,  
and everyone wears mourning clothes.
- <sup>38</sup> On every housetop of Moab and in all its streets,  
there's nothing but mourning.  
I have shattered Moab like a pottery vessel no one wants, declares the LORD.
- <sup>39</sup> How it's shattered! Go wail!  
How Moab turns away!  
What shame!  
Moab has become the butt of every joke,  
horrific to all its neighbors.
- <sup>40</sup> The LORD proclaims:  
Look! One who soars like an eagle  
and spreads its wings over Moab.
- <sup>41</sup> The towns will be captured;  
the strongholds will be seized.  
On that day, the heart of every soldier from Moab  
will be like that of a woman in the throes of labor.
- <sup>42</sup> Moab will be destroyed once and for all  
because it has exalted itself above the LORD.
- <sup>43</sup> Terror, traps, and trackers<sup>c</sup> are upon you, people of Moab, declares the LORD.
- <sup>44</sup> Those who flee from terror will fall into a pit;  
those who escape the pit will be captured by the trap.  
I will bring upon Moab the year of its punishment, declares the LORD.
- <sup>45</sup> In Heshbon tired refugees seek shelter.  
But fire is raging in Heshbon,  
flames from the house<sup>d</sup> of Sihon.  
It has burned up part of Moab,  
including the leader of this rebellious nation.<sup>e</sup>
- <sup>46</sup> How terrible for you, Moab;  
the people of Chemosh have perished.  
Your sons have been carried off;  
your daughters have been taken captive.
- <sup>47</sup> But in the days to come I'll bring back Moab from captivity, declares the LORD.  
Such is the judgment on Moab.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Heb lacks *mournful*. <sup>c</sup>Or *terror, pit, and trap* <sup>d</sup>Heb manuscripts; MT *from among*  
<sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain

48:40-47 The advance on Moab is swift and thorough, unfolding with military precision: (1) Moabite towns fall one after another, warriors lose heart, and strongholds are seized; (2) the people of Moab are captured and their

cities are set on fire; and (3) all are carried off into captivity. Once again the prophet holds Moab accountable: It has *exalted itself above the LORD* (48:42). But one of the voices in this prophetic performance refuses to let judgment have

**Prophecy against the Ammonites**

**49** Concerning the Ammonites, the LORD proclaims:  
Doesn't Israel have children?

Aren't there heirs to his land?

Why then has Milcom taken over Gad?

Why have his people settled in its towns?

**2** Therefore, the time is coming, declares the LORD,  
when I will sound the battle alarm against Rabbah,  
the capital city of the Ammonites.

The city will be demolished, and its neighboring villages  
will be burned to the ground.

Then Israel will repossess the land seized by its captors, says the LORD.

**3** Weep, you people of Heshbon; Ai has been destroyed.  
Wail, you daughters of Rabbah; put on funeral clothing,  
cry your eyes out, run for shelter.<sup>a</sup>

Milcom will surely go into exile, together with his priests and ministers.

**4** Why do you brag about your strength?

Your strength is exhausted,<sup>a</sup> you rebellious daughter.

You trust in your treasures,  
never imagining who would attack you.

**5** I'm the one who will terrify you from every side,  
declares the LORD of heavenly forces.

Every one of you will be scattered about;  
no one will gather those who fled.

**6** Afterward, though, I will bring back the Ammonites from captivity,  
declares the LORD.

**Prophecy against Edom**

**7** Concerning Edom, the LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

Is wisdom no longer in Teman?

Has good sense vanished from the perceptive?

Are they no longer wise?

**8** Turn, flee, and run for cover, you inhabitants of Dedan.

I'm bringing disaster on Esau: its day of reckoning.

**9** If workers would come to you to pick grapes,  
they would at least leave a few on the vine.

If thieves would come in the night,  
they would take only what they needed.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain; or run back and forth in the sheepfolds. <sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

the final word, even for Israel's ancient nemesis. As is the case for Egyptians (46:26), Ammonites (49:6), and Elamites (49:39), divine mercy awaits the people of Moab.

49:1-6 The prophecy against Ammon. The Ammonites were neighbors (and kin; see Gen 19:38) of Israel and Judah, located east of the Jordan and north of Moab. Political relations between the nations were often hostile (e.g., Deut 23:3). Biblical stories recall their frequent battles (e.g., Judg 3:12-14; 10:6-18; 1 Sam 11:1-11). During Jeremiah's time, the Ammonites were part of an anti-Babylonian alliance (Jer 27) and helped overthrow Gedaliah's government (Jer 40-41). Their country was destroyed in the 6th-century Babylonian invasion. The prophecy against Ammon has three parts. It opens with an accusation of wrongdoing (49:1). The prophet accuses Ammon of taking land that isn't its own (e.g., Judg 10:6-12:7; see also Amos 1:13-15). Under the auspices of their patron god *Milcom* (49:3, see 1 Kgs 11:5, 33), the Ammonites dispossess the people of Gad and settle in their towns. The point is

that the disputed territory belongs to Israel because Israelites still live there. The second part of the oracle spells out the punishment for the crime (49:2-5): Those (=Ammon) who have taken the land from Israel will become the dispossessed, and the once-dispossessed people of Gad will repossess their land. The Lord sounds the battle alarm, signaling divine judgment against Ammon, and then calls the people of *Heshbon* to lament. Yet Ammon, like its neighbor to the south, Moab, boasts of its strength and trusts in its treasures. Such arrogance doesn't impress the Lord, who will terrify [Ammon] from every side (49:5). Even so, the brief oracle ends with God's promise to restore the Ammonites (49:6).

49:7-22 The prophecy against Edom. Edom is the target of more denunciations than any other nation (see, e.g., Ps 137; Isa 34:1-17; Ezek 25:12-14; 35:1-9; Amos 1:11-12; Obad; Mal 1:2-5). Edom, a country located in the Transjordan south of Moab, was another continuing foe of Israel. Their tumultuous relationship is often spoken of

49:1 Eze 21:28;  
Am 1:13;  
Zep 2:8  
49:4 Ps 52:7;  
Prv 26:12;  
Jer 21:13;  
1Ti 6:17  
49:6 Jer 48:47;  
Jer 49:39  
49:7 Jer 25:21;  
Eze 25:12;  
Eze 25:13;  
Am 1:11;  
Obad 1:1

49:14 Obad 1:1  
 49:19 Job 9:19;  
 Jer 4:7, Jer 12:5,  
 Jer 50:44  
 49:20 Is 14:27;  
 Jer 49:7,  
 Jer 50:45;  
 Mal 1:3, Mal 1:4

<sup>10</sup>But me? I will strip Esau bare.

I will expose his hiding places,  
 and he will find no place to take cover.

His offspring, family, and acquaintances will perish,  
 and there will be no one left to say,<sup>b</sup>

<sup>11</sup>"Leave me your orphans, and I'll look after them;  
 trust your widows into my care."

<sup>12</sup>The LORD proclaims: If the innocent must drink the cup, why do you expect to escape punishment? You won't! You will drink it! <sup>13</sup>I myself swear, declares the LORD, that Bozrah will become an object of horror and scorn, a wasteland and a curse. And all of its towns will lie in ruins forever.

<sup>14</sup>I have heard a report from the LORD  
 that a messenger is sent among the nations:  
 Join forces and come against her;  
 prepare for war!

<sup>15</sup>I'm about to cut you down to size before the nations;  
 you will be scorned by everyone.

<sup>16</sup>The terror you have inflicted on others has deceived you,  
 as has your own pride.  
 Though you live in a fortress and occupy the high ground;  
 though you nest on high like the eagles, I will bring you down,  
 declares the LORD.

<sup>17</sup>Then Edom will become a wasteland.  
 All who pass by will be shocked by its injuries.

<sup>18</sup>It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah  
 and their surrounding towns,  
 says the LORD.  
 No one will live there;  
 no human will dwell in it.

<sup>19</sup>Like a lion coming up from the jungle of the Jordan to a well-watered meadow,<sup>c</sup>  
 so I will suddenly chase down Edom and single out its choicest of rams.<sup>d</sup>

Who is like me?  
 Who can direct me?  
 What shepherd can withstand me?

<sup>20</sup>Therefore, listen to the counsel that the LORD has for Edom  
 and the plans he's devised against the people of Teman:  
 The little ones of the flock will be dragged off,  
 as their pasture watches in utter disbelief.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>21</sup>The earth quakes as the Edomites go down;  
 their screams echo as far as the Reed Sea.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Look! One who mounts up and soars like an eagle,  
 who swoops down and spreads his wings over Bozrah.  
 On that day, the heart of every soldier from Edom  
 will be like that of a woman in the throes of labor.

<sup>b</sup>LXX; MT and there will (or he will) be no more <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Or Red Sea

as though they were brothers at war with each other (Esau=Edom and Jacob=Israel). The Edomites are considered children of Jacob's brother Esau (see Gen 36; Obad; Mal 1:2-5). This ancient hostility (Num 20:14-21; 1 Sam 14:47; 1 Kgs 11:14-17) reaches new heights in the 6th century when Edom joins Babylon in the destruction of Jerusalem (Ps 137; Lam 4:21-23; Ezek 25:12-14) and thereafter takes over southern parts of Judean territory (Ezek 35:1-5; 36:5; Obad 11-14). Such acts go unmentioned here. Edom's only transgression noted is pride (49:16). The poet uses an array of images, biblical citations, and literary devices to portray the destruction of Edom. Like the preceding text, the oracle against Edom

opens with rhetorical questions. The questions focus on its loss of wisdom, all the more biting since Edom was famous for its wisdom (many scholars place Job's home of Uz in Edomite territory). *Teman* is a principal city in Edom traditionally known for its sages (49:7; see Job 2:11). *Dedan* is a well-known commercial city in north-west Arabia (49:8). The destruction of Edom is described as *its day of reckoning* (49:8). Jeremiah 49:9-10 is similar to Obadiah 5-6, which depicts the full extent of Edom's destruction. Amid the wreckage, concern is expressed for the most vulnerable in the society (49:11). At the same time, the image of divine judgment as *drinking] the cup* (49:12) heightens the threatening tone of the oracle (see

**Prophecy against Damascus**

<sup>23</sup> Concerning Damascus:

Hamath and Arpad lose heart when they hear the bad news.

They are trembling with fear, like the raging sea, which can't become quiet.

<sup>24</sup> Damascus staggers about;

she tries to flee, but panic overwhelms her.

She's gripped by anguish and pain, like a woman in labor.

<sup>25</sup> Forsaken<sup>g</sup> is the renowned city, city of my delight.

<sup>26</sup> Yes, her young men will fall in the streets,  
and her soldiers will be silent on that day,  
declares the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>27</sup> I will set fire to the walls of Damascus;  
it will burn up the fortresses of Ben-hadad.

**Prophecy against Kedar and Hazor**

<sup>28</sup> Concerning Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor, which Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar defeated, the LORD proclaims:

Get ready to attack Kedar;  
destroy the people from the east!

<sup>29</sup> Seize<sup>h</sup> their tents and their flocks, their belongings and all their goods.

Take off with their camels and shout as you go: "Panic Lurks Everywhere!"

<sup>30</sup> Run away; take cover, you people of Hazor, declares the LORD.

Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar  
has taken counsel and devised a plan against you.

<sup>31</sup> Get ready to attack a nation that feels safe and secure, declares the LORD,  
one without barred gates that lives by itself.

<sup>32</sup> Their camels will become plunder;  
their many cattle will be pillaged.

I will scatter to the winds those who are clean-shaven,<sup>i</sup>  
and I will bring disaster on them from every side, declares the LORD.

<sup>33</sup> Hazor will become a den for wild dogs, a wilderness forever.  
No one will live there;  
no human will dwell in it.

<sup>g</sup>Vulg; MT *Not forsaken* <sup>h</sup>Or *They will seize . . . they will take off* <sup>i</sup>Or *those who have temples that are shaved*

Jer 25:15-29), as does the fate of the fortified city *Bozrah* (49:13) and the portrait of God as a hungry lion (49:19; cf. Jer 4:7). Jeremiah 49:14-16 is similar to Obadiah 1-4. With stinging satire, God counsels the wise Edomites to prepare for destruction (49:20-22).

49:23-27 The prophecy against Damascus. *Damascus* is the ancient capital of Syria (Aram). This is a brief announcement of judgment (see also Isa 17:1-6; Amos 1:3-5). Syria was another enemy of Israel, especially during the 9th and 8th centuries BCE (see Isa 7:1-8:4). The Assyrians defeated Syria in 732, but Aramean/Syrian raiding parties continued to harass Judah well into the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 24:1-2). The oracle against Syria doesn't include a setting or description of guilt. Rather, it describes the grief of *Hamath and Arpad*, two city-states north of Damascus, at the report of imminent disaster. Damascus, which is called the *city of [the Lord's] delight* (49:25), is portrayed as a pregnant woman in labor (49:24). Its warriors fall in battle, its walls are set on fire, and its strongholds are destroyed (see Amos 1:4). *Ben-hadad*: the name of two Aramean kings (49:27, see 1 Kgs 15:18-20; 2 Kgs 13:24).

49:28-33 The prophecy against Kedar and Hazor. *Kedar* is a seminomadic people located in the Arabian Peninsula east of the Dead Sea. It is mentioned several times

in the Bible: as a descendant of Ishmael (Gen 25:13), as warriors who would soon fall in battle (Isa 21:16-17), as a distant land whose flocks would one day be gathered to Zion (Isa 60:7), as a place of diaspora (Ps 120:5), as traders (Ezek 27:21), and as a far-away western boundary marker (Jer 2:10). Little is known of the Arabian tribal groups of *Hazor*, which shouldn't be mistaken for the ancient Palestinian city (Josh 11:1-13). Based on the heading (49:28), these *people from the east* had become casualties of the Babylonian military machine. Why Kedar and Hazor are included in oracles against the nations isn't clear. As far as we know, Israel or Judah had little contact with these tribes. And the oracle gives no explicit reason for the divine judgment, although they are described as feeling *safe and secure* with no need for *barred gates* as protection (49:31).

God directs the destroyer to attack the Kedemites, to seize their tents, animals, and goods (49:28-30). In this instance, the destroyer is identified: *Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar* (49:30). The people of Hazor are warned to flee, even though attempts to do so are futile. The phrase *Panic Lurks Everywhere* (49:29) appears also in Jeremiah 6:25; 20:3, 10; 46:5 (see also Ps 31:14). The effects of the invasion are similar to those suffered by Israel or Judah (49:32-33; see Jer 9:11; 10:22; 15:13; 18:17; 21:9; 31:10).

49:34 Gn 10:22;  
2Ki 24:18;  
Ezr 32:24  
49:39 Jer 48:47  
50:1 Ps 137:8;  
Is 13:1, Is 47:1;  
Jer 25:12  
50:2 Is 46:1

### Prophecy against Elam

<sup>34</sup>This is what the LORD told the prophet Jeremiah concerning Elam at the beginning of the rule of Judah's King Zedekiah. <sup>35</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

I'm going to break the bow of Elam,  
the backbone of its military might.

<sup>36</sup>I will bring against Elam four winds from the four corners of heaven,  
and I will scatter them to the winds.  
Those banished from Elam will migrate to every nation.

<sup>37</sup>I will terrify Elam before their enemies,  
before those who seek to kill them.

I will bring disaster upon them, my fierce anger, declares the LORD.  
I will send the sword to attack them until I have destroyed them all.

<sup>38</sup>I will establish my rule in Elam and dispose of its king and officials,  
declares the LORD.

<sup>39</sup>But in the days to come I will bring back the captives of Elam,  
declares the LORD.

### Prophecy against Babylon

**50** This is what the LORD said concerning Babylon and the land of the Babylonians through the prophet Jeremiah:

<sup>1</sup>Tell the nations; proclaim it far and wide!

Set up a flag; proclaim it far and wide!

Hold nothing back; just shout it:

"Babylon is captured;

Bel is shamed;

Marduk is panic-stricken.

Her images are shamed;

her idols are panic-stricken."

<sup>2</sup>A nation from the north has risen up against her.

It will decimate her land, and no one will live in it.

Every living thing will flee.

49:34-39 The prophecy against Elam. *Elam* was an ancient country east of Babylon and north of the Persian Gulf whose capital was Susa (see the book of Esther). There are a few references to it in the Bible. The table of nations lists Elam as a descendant of Shem (Gen 10:22; see 1 Chron 1:17). Two kings of Elam are mentioned among Abram's heroic campaign (Gen 14:1, 9). God promises to rescue the scattered Judeans from far-away Elam (Isa 11:11). Elam and Media are called on to wage war against Babylon (Isa 21:2). Elam is involved in the invasion and siege of Judah (Isa 22:6). "The kings of Zimri, Elam, and Media" (Jer 25:25) are listed among those who must drink the cup of divine wrath. The Elamites are among the slain who have gone down to the underworld (Ezek 32:24-25). And Daniel has a vision in the "walled city of Susa in the province of Elam" (Dan 8:2). The presence of Elam in the oracles against the nations may emphasize the extensive reach of Babylonian control, demonstrating that none can escape the judgment that God is "bringing on all humanity" (Jer 45:5). The oracle is distinctive in several respects. First, it opens with a heading that relates the speech to the beginning of King Zedekiah's reign (597 BCE). Second, it is organized around a series of one-sided declarations of divine judgment. Employing several first-person singular pronouns, the divine warrior, the Lord of heavenly forces, declares all-out war on Elam. There is no intermediate party, no regional instrument of war, no directives to the Elamites. The divine assault is apparently cosmic, not regional (e.g., *four winds from the four corners of heaven* in 49:36; see also Ezek 37:9; Dan 8:8). Divine speech and action eclipse

human initiative and resolve. As a result, the language is metaphorical. Third, no explanation is given for God's *fierce anger* (49:37). And Elam's crimes are never mentioned. Divine constraint isn't distinctive in the prophecy against Elam. Once again God's mercy interrupts, if not trumps, judgment (49:39). The promise of restoration has the last word.

50:1-51:58 The prophecy against Babylon. This message is by far the longest of the oracles against the nations, comprising almost half of its space. This disproportionate attention suggests that the condemnation of Babylon is the climax of the collection. There is an unmistakable logic in bringing the oracles against the nations to completion in this way. Babylon and its ambition for world dominance lies behind almost every prophetic word and action in the book, including the foe from the north, the destruction on the horizon, and Judah's forfeiture of hope, as well as the text's ethos of danger and vulnerability. Jeremiah speaks of Babylon in cryptic as well as clear terms, as a worldwide historical empire and as the Lord's political instrument of judgment in the region. The prophet urges Judah's kings to submit to Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar as if to God, insisting that Babylonian control represents the divine will. Not to submit to Babylon's rule is the same thing as rebellion against the Lord. Until this point in the book, Jeremiah seldom denounces the superpower. In Jeremiah 50-51, all that changes. Babylon, once God's servant, is now targeted as God's archenemy (50:21-32). God attacks Babylon for its rebellion, cruelty, and injustice. Babylon becomes the embodiment of evil, the symbolic representation of human



- <sup>4</sup>In those days and at that time, declares the LORD,  
the people of Israel and Judah will come out of Babylon<sup>l</sup> together;  
with weeping they will leave as they seek the LORD their God.
- <sup>5</sup>They will search for Zion, turning their faces toward it.  
They will come<sup>h</sup> and unite with the LORD,  
in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten.
- <sup>6</sup>My people were lost sheep;  
their shepherds led them astray;  
they deserted them on the mountains,  
where they wandered off among the hills, forgetting their resting place.
- <sup>7</sup>All who found them devoured them;  
and their attackers said, "It's not our fault,  
because they have sinned against the LORD,  
the true pasture,<sup>1</sup> the hope of their ancestors—the LORD."
- <sup>8</sup>Now wander far from Babylon.  
Get out of that country.  
Like rams of the flock, lead the way home.
- <sup>9</sup>I'm stirring up against Babylon a coalition of mighty nations.  
It will mobilize in the north,  
and from there she will be captured.  
Their arrows are like those of an expert archer  
who does not return empty-handed.
- <sup>10</sup>Babylon will be defeated;  
its attackers will carry off all that they want, declares the LORD.
- <sup>11</sup>Sure, you gloat and rejoice, you plunderers of my possession.  
Sure, you dance around like a calf and neigh like a stallion.
- <sup>12</sup>But Mother Babylon<sup>m</sup> will be humiliated;  
the one who bore you will be disgraced.  
She will become the least of the nations:  
a wilderness, a desert, and parched land.
- <sup>13</sup>Because of the LORD's anger, no one will live there;  
she will be reduced to total ruin.  
All who pass by Babylon will be shocked;  
they will gasp at all her injuries.
- <sup>14</sup>Take up your positions around Babylon, all you archers;  
now shoot at her; save none of your arrows,  
because she's sinned against the LORD.

<sup>l</sup>Heb lacks of Babylon. <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>1</sup>Or righteous dwelling place <sup>m</sup>Or your mother

arrogance and oppressive human power. Consequently, when the prophetic book ends with the defeat of Babylon, it actually celebrates God's world-changing victory over the forces of chaos and the arrival of divine justice. God rights the wrongs of the world and crushes the powers of evil. The routing of *Mother Babylon* (50:12) signals hope for all nations, especially spirted Judah. The final scene in the oracles against the nations showcases Jeremiah as "a prophet to the nations" and God as one who digs up and pulls down, destroys and demolishes, and builds and plants (Jer 1:5, 10).

The oracle against Babylon may be outlined as follows: the overthrow of Babylon and the liberation of God's people (50:1-20), God's weapons against Babylon and redemption of God's people (50:21-34), Babylon as a wasteland (50:35-46), God's judgment against Babylon for its cruelty (51:1-19), Babylon's repayment (51:20-33), God's concern for the cries of the innocent (51:34-44), God's call to the exiles to return home (51:45-51), and the final victory of

the Lord of heavenly forces (51:52-58). These units are often made up of small poems that place divine judgment against Babylon side by side with the promise of salvation for Judean refugees.

50:1-20 The oracle announces that Babylon and its god (*Bel* is an alternate name for *Marduk* or *Merodach*) have fallen to an enemy from the north. Earlier in the prophetic drama, God had stirred up an enemy from the north to wage war against Judah (see Jer 4-6). Now God enlists a northern power—perhaps an allusion to Persia—to punish Babylon. Babylon's downfall is so certain that the prophet presents it as already accomplished (50:2-3). The defeat of Babylon creates the conditions for the people of Israel and Judah to return home (50:4-7). Long held captive, they can leave Babylon for Zion and unite with the Lord in an *everlasting covenant* (50:5; see also Jer 32:40). Jeremiah blames the kings (=shepherds) of Judah and Israel for their nation's suffering, as well as the kings of Assyria and Babylon (50:6, 17-18). The image of the Israelites

50:17 2Ki 17:6;  
2Ki 18:9;  
Jer 2:15;  
Jer 51:34  
50:20 Jer 31:34;  
Mi 7:19  
50:23 Jer 51:20  
50:25 Is 13:5;  
Jer 51:25;  
Jer 51:55

- <sup>15</sup>Raise a victory shout against her on every side!  
She's surrendered;  
her towers have collapsed;  
her walls are destroyed.  
This is the LORD's retribution;  
now pay her back:  
do to her what she's done to others!
- <sup>16</sup>Cut Babylon off from those who plant and those who harvest the crops,  
because of its ruthless sword.<sup>a</sup>  
Now return, all of you, to your people;  
flee to your homeland!
- <sup>17</sup>Israelites are scattered sheep, driven away by lions.  
First the king of Assyria devoured them,  
and now Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar has ravaged them.<sup>b</sup>
- <sup>18</sup>Therefore, the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims:  
I'm going to punish the king of Babylon and his land,  
just as I punished the king of Assyria.
- <sup>19</sup>But I will restore Israel to their pasture;  
they will graze on Carmel and Bashan;  
they will eat their fill in the highlands of Ephraim and Gilead.
- <sup>20</sup>In those days and at that time, declares the LORD,  
if one searches for the sin of Israel, they will find nothing;  
if one seeks out the wrongdoing of Judah, they will look in vain.  
I will forgive those I have spared.
- <sup>21</sup>Attack the land of Merathaim;<sup>c</sup>  
crush those living in Pekod.  
Ruin and destroy them, declares the LORD;  
do all I have commanded you.
- <sup>22</sup>There's the sound of war in the land and enormous devastation.
- <sup>23</sup>How the hammer of the whole earth  
has been broken and shattered into pieces!  
How Babylon has become a wasteland among the nations!
- <sup>24</sup>You set a trap for others, Babylon,<sup>d</sup>  
but you yourself were caught in it unaware;  
you have been found and captured because you have defied the LORD.
- <sup>25</sup>The LORD has opened his arsenal and brought out his brutal weapons.  
The LORD God of heavenly forces has a job to do in the land of the Babylonians.
- <sup>26</sup>Come against her from every side;  
throw open her granaries;  
pile her up like stalks of grain;  
totally destroy her;  
leave nothing intact.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Or gnawed their bones <sup>c</sup>Or Double rebellion <sup>d</sup>Or I set a trap for you, Babylon, and you were

as scattered sheep (50:17) is also found in Ezekiel 34:5-6, 12. The good shepherd king, however, will restore God's people and pardon their sin (50:19-20; see also Ezek 34:11-16). To graze on *Carmel and Bashan* as well as in highlands of *Ephraim and Gilead*, all fertile agricultural regions in Israel, represents the abundant provision of the good shepherd (50:19).

50:21-34 Preparations for war intensify. The divine command to attack Merathaim and Pekod is a play on words (50:21). *Merathaim* means "double rebellion" and *Pekod* means "punishment." These names of minor regions in Babylonia are used here to indict the country as a whole. To *destroy* (50:21) is a technical term for devoting to God

everything captured in battle. Nothing is to be spared without incurring divine wrath (see 1 Sam 15). The implications are clear. The attackers summoned to destroy Babylon are to show no mercy. Babylon's crimes are shocking and universal in scope: This regional powerhouse has not only "sinned against the LORD" (Jer 50:14) but is *the hammer of the whole earth* (50:23). It has *set a trap for others* (50:24), *defied the LORD* (50:24), destroyed God's temple (50:28), and "acted arrogantly toward the Lord, the holy one of Israel!" (50:29). Indeed, abusive Babylon is the *arrogant one* in the extreme (50:31-32) and consequently! God musters all God's forces to destroy and humble this cruel military machine (50:25-34). The *day of reckoning* is

*Theological Language of Violence* Images of war and violence organize the prophecy against Babylon. Battle cries, commands to attack, pleas to destroy, descriptions of weapons, and horrific pictures of the wreckage don't endorse war or other forms of physical violence. Rather, this language must be read as theological speech. While such language is still problematic, the oracle against Babylon serves in the first place to strengthen the spirits of a captive community of Judeans likely residing in Babylon. These readers are the historical losers who have access only to words and poetry, imagination and worship, not to military weapons. Consequently, the violent language, perhaps uttered and performed within a context of worship, says something about survival and hope. God, they confess, is concerned about the suffering of people. God will right the wrongs of the world. Oppressive governments won't get away with murder. Raw political power isn't ultimate power. In other words, the politics of arrogance and abuse won't have the final say. Suffering people can find hope and comfort in the true king, the Lord of heavenly forces, whose power utterly surpasses that of human empires. Consequently, the oracle against Babylon doesn't authorize war or any form of physical violence. The violence it authorizes is, perhaps, the violence of poetry or the violence of worship. Put differently, this oracle as well as the preceding ones depict God's reign on earth, God's kingdom.

- <sup>27</sup> Destroy all her bulls; prepare them for slaughter.  
How terrible for them!  
Their time has come, the day of reckoning.
- <sup>28</sup> A voice of fugitives and refugees, from the land of Babylon,  
declaring in Zion the retribution of the LORD our God  
because of what has been done to his temple.
- <sup>29</sup> Send the archers against Babylon, all who draw the bow!  
Surround her and let no one escape.  
Pay her back for her deeds;  
do to her what she's done to others.  
She has acted arrogantly toward the LORD, the holy one of Israel!
- <sup>30</sup> Therefore, her soldiers will fall in the streets;  
all her warriors will be silenced on that day, declares the LORD.
- <sup>31</sup> I'm against you, you arrogant one! declares the LORD God of heavenly forces.  
Your day has come, your time of reckoning.
- <sup>32</sup> The arrogant one will stumble and fall,  
and no one will help her up.  
I'll set your cities on fire,  
and it will consume all that's around her.
- <sup>33</sup> The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:  
The people of Israel were oppressed, together with the people of Judah.  
Their captors held them and refused to let them go.
- <sup>34</sup> Yet their redeemer is strong;  
the LORD of heavenly forces is his name.  
He will surely defend their cause and give them rest in the land.  
But he will unsettle the people of Babylon.
- <sup>35</sup> A sword against Babylon and its people, declares the LORD,  
along with its officials and sages.
- <sup>36</sup> A sword against its diviners so that they become fools.  
A sword against its warriors so that they are terrified.

the day of the Lord, which denotes the critical moment in history when God punishes evil and saves the righteous (50:27, 31; see Jer 46:10; 49:8; 51:6, 11). The moment of judgment has arrived for Babylon, as has salvation for God's people, who have suffered much under the cruel government (50:33-34). Language of justice and mercy is prominent here, as seen in the description of God as Israel's redeemer (50:34). The notion of redemption plays a key role in the exodus story (see, e.g., Exod 6:6; 15:13) as

well as in the promise of a second exodus in Isaiah 40-55 (Isa 41:14; 43:14; 44:6; 24; 49:26).

50:35-46 Judgment against Babylon now takes shape in the series of statements about the sword against Babylon and its people, diviners, warriors, weapons, and economic systems (50:35-40). Some scholars see echoes of the exodus plagues against Pharaoh. Both texts refer to sages (50:35; Exod 7:11), horses and chariots (50:37; Exod 14:9, 23; 15:19), and water (50:38; cf. Exod 14:21-22). In

50:37 Is 19:16,  
Is 45:3, Jer 51:21,  
Jer 51:30;  
Na 3:13

50:39 Is 13:21,  
Is 34:11, Is 34:13;  
Jer 25:12,  
Jer 51:37

- <sup>37</sup> A sword against its horses and chariots,  
and the mercenaries<sup>f</sup> in its midst so that they lose courage.<sup>g</sup>  
A sword against its treasures so that they are looted.
- <sup>38</sup> A sword<sup>h</sup> against the water supplies so that they dry up.  
It is truly the land of idols,  
idols about which they have gone utterly mad!
- <sup>39</sup> Therefore, Babylon will become a ghost town,  
a place for desert animals, hyenas, and ravenous birds.<sup>h</sup>  
No one will live there again;  
no one will make it their home.
- <sup>40</sup> Just as God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbors,  
declares the LORD,  
so no one will live in Babylon or settle there again.
- <sup>41</sup> Look! An army is on the move from the northern regions.  
A powerful nation and many kings are coming from the ends of the earth.
- <sup>42</sup> Equipped with bow and spear, they are cruel and show no mercy.  
Their horsemen sound like the roaring sea,  
arrayed in battle formation against you, Daughter Babylon.
- <sup>43</sup> The king of Babylon has heard reports of them and is panic-stricken;  
distress overwhelms him,  
pain like that of a woman in labor.
- <sup>44</sup> Like a lion coming up from the jungle of the Jordan to a well-watered meadow,<sup>i</sup>  
so I will suddenly chase down Babylon and single out its choicest of rams.  
Who is like me?  
Who can direct me?  
What shepherd can withstand me?
- <sup>45</sup> Therefore, listen to the counsel that the LORD has for Babylon  
and the plans he's devised against the land of Babylon:  
The little ones of the flock will be dragged off, as their pasture watches  
in utter disbelief.<sup>j</sup>
- <sup>46</sup> The earth quakes at the sound of Babylon's capture;  
its screams echo throughout the world.

**51** The LORD proclaims:  
I'm stirring up a violent wind against Babylon  
and those who live in *Leb-qamai*.<sup>k</sup>

- <sup>2</sup> I will send mercenaries<sup>l</sup> to Babylon who will sift her and clear out her land.  
They will surround her on the day of disaster.
- <sup>3</sup> Let the archers draw their bows;  
let them prepare their armor.

<sup>f</sup>Or foreigners <sup>g</sup>Or become like women <sup>h</sup>Or drought or A drought <sup>i</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>j</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>k</sup>Heb uncertain  
<sup>l</sup>Or the inhabitants of *Leb qamai*, a reference to Chaldea (Babylonia); or those who rise up against me <sup>m</sup>Or foreigners :

addition, the Hebrew word for *mercenaries* (50:37; see also Jer 51:2) and “swarms” (of insects in Exod 8) are strikingly similar. But more importantly, both the “sword” poem and the exodus narrative are resistance literature designed to empower the powerless to imagine the defeat of their oppressor. The result of the sword is the empire’s utter destruction, symbolized by the ancient towns of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:23-28; see Isa 1:10; Jer 49:18; Amos 4:11; cf. Ezek 16:49-50). The final poem of this chapter (50:41-46) repeats, at times almost verbatim, prophetic sayings found elsewhere in Jeremiah. The reference to an enemy advancing from the north towards Babylon (50:41-43) repeats the threatening language used against Judah in Jeremiah 6:22-24. And God as devouring lion (50:44-46)

draws on the image employed against Edom in Jeremiah 49:19-21. The effect of these images—regional and larger-than-life forces from the northern wasteland and the lion God lunging to kill its prey—would bring delight to a refugee community held captive by the empire. The three rhetorical questions in 50:44 emphasize the Lord’s power and resolve to overthrow oppressive human power structures 51:1-19 This section is made up of four short poems in 51:1-6, 7-10, 11-14, and 15-19. The main theme is God’s plan for the destruction of Babylon and the liberation of Israel. The Lord rouses a *violent wind against Babylon and those who live in Leb-qamai* (51:1). *Leb-qamai* means “those intent to rise up against me” and functions as a cryptic reference to the Chaldeans (Babylonians). God’s assault on

Show no mercy to her young men;  
wipe out her entire company!

<sup>4</sup>They will fall wounded in the land of Babylon,  
struck down in her streets.

<sup>5</sup>God, the LORD of heavenly forces, hasn't abandoned Israel and Judah,  
even though they live in a land filled with guilt before the holy one of Israel.

<sup>6</sup>Escape from Babylon;  
each of you run for your lives!  
Don't perish because of her guilt,  
because this is the time for the LORD's retribution,  
a day of reckoning for all that Babylon<sup>a</sup> has done.

<sup>7</sup>Babylon was a gold cup in the LORD's hand;  
it made the whole earth drunk.  
The nations drank her wine and went mad.

<sup>8</sup>But suddenly Babylon fell and shattered into pieces.  
Wail for her!  
Bring medicine for her pain;  
perhaps she will recover.

<sup>9</sup>We tried to cure Babylon, but she was beyond help.  
Let's depart from her and return to your own country, each of you.  
Her punishment reaches to heaven and extends to the clouds.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD has come to our defense,  
so let's declare in Zion what the LORD our God has done!

<sup>11</sup>Sharpen your arrows;  
prepare your shields.  
The LORD is stirring up the spirit of kings from Media.  
He intends to destroy Babylon;  
this is the LORD's retribution,  
a day of reckoning for his people.

<sup>12</sup>Set up a flag on the walls of Babylon,  
fortify the guards,  
post watchmen,  
prepare an ambush,  
because the LORD has a plan against the inhabitants of Babylon.  
He will accomplish it,  
just as he said he would.

<sup>13</sup>You live beside a great river,  
and you are rich in treasures.  
But your time has come;  
your cruelty has caught up with you.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>14</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces has sworn by his own name:  
I'm going to fill your cities<sup>b</sup> with soldiers like a swarm of locusts;  
they will celebrate their victory over you.

<sup>15</sup>God made the earth by his might,  
shaped the world by his wisdom,  
and crafted the skies by his knowledge.

<sup>a</sup>Or she or it <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Heb lacks cities.

51:6 Nm 16:26;  
Jer 50:8,  
Jer 50:15,  
Jer 51:45;  
Rev 18:4

51:7 Jer 25:15,  
Jer 25:16,  
Jer 25:27;  
Hab 2:16;  
Rev 14:8

51:8 Is 13:6,  
Is 21:9; Jer 8:22,  
Jer 46:11;  
Rev 14:8

51:9 Is 13:14;  
Jer 50:16;  
Rev 18:5

51:15 Gn 1:1;  
Jer 10:12

Babylon is a sure sign of God's faithfulness to Israel and Judah (51:5, 10). The cup image refers to Babylon. Elsewhere in Jeremiah, the Lord compels the nations to drink from the divine cup of wrath (Jer 25:17-29), but here the Lord punishes Babylon, a *gold cup in the Lord's hand* (51:7), for making the whole earth drunk. The crime includes the whole world and more, as does God's sentence: Babylon

will be *shattered into pieces* (51:8) and is *beyond help* (51:9); *Her punishment reaches to heaven* (51:9), and her cities will be filled with armies (51:14). The allusion to *kings from Media* (51:11) intensifies the dread of the divine warrior. 2 Chronicles and Ezra speak of God "stirring up the spirit of Persia's King Cyrus" (Ezra 1:1; see 2 Chron 36:22). Persia and its king, Cyrus, defeated Babylon in 539 BCE.

51:16 Ps 135:7;  
Jer 10:13;  
Jon 1:4  
51:17 Hab 2:18,  
Hab 2:19  
51:18 Jer 18:15  
51:19 Jer 10:16  
51:25 Jer 50:31;  
Zec 4:7; Rev 8:8  
51:26 Is 13:19

- 16 At the sound of God's voice, the heavenly waters roar.  
God raises the clouds from the ends of the earth.  
He makes lightning for the rain and sends the wind from his treasuries.
- 17 Everyone is too foolish to understand;  
every smith is shamed by his idols,  
for their images are shams; they aren't alive.
- 18 They are a delusion, a charade;  
at the appointed time they will be ruined!
- 19 But the portion of Jacob is utterly different,  
for he has formed all things, including his very own tribe;  
the LORD of heavenly forces is his name!
- 20 You are my hammer, my weapon of war.  
With you I will crush the nations.  
With you I will destroy kingdoms.
- 21 With you I will crush horse and rider.  
With you I will crush chariot and driver.
- 22 With you I will crush men and women.  
With you I will crush old and young.  
With you I will crush young men and young women.
- 23 With you I will crush shepherds and flocks.  
With you I will crush farmers and oxen.  
With you I will crush governors and officials.
- 24 I will repay Babylon and all its inhabitants for the terrible things  
they have done to Zion in your sight, declares the LORD.
- 25 I'm against you, you mountain of destruction, declares the LORD,  
you destroyer of the whole earth!  
I will reach out against you;  
I will topple you from your heights;  
I will turn you into a rubbish heap.
- 26 They will never remove a cornerstone or a foundation stone from you.  
You will be a wasteland forever, declares the LORD.
- 27 Set up a flag in the land;  
sound the alarm among the nations!  
Prepare them for war against her;  
summon kingdoms against her—Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz.  
Appoint a commander against her;  
call up the troops, like swarms of locusts!
- 28 Prepare the nations for war against her,  
the kings of Media, its governors, all its officials,  
and all the countries they rule.
- 29 The earth quakes and trembles  
because the LORD's plans against Babylon are fulfilled:  
to reduce Babylon to a wasteland, with no one left in it.
- 30 Babylon's warriors quit fighting;  
they hide in their fortifications.  
Their strength is worn out;  
their courage is gone!  
Babylon's houses are burned down,  
and its gates are smashed.

The section concludes by celebrating the Lord's power and wisdom and mocking the *idols* and *images* as a *delusion*, a *charade* (51:17, 18; see Jer 10:12-16). 51:20-33 In the previous chapter (Jer 50:23) Babylon is called the "hammer of the whole earth." The same image is used in 51:20-23, but the identity of the Lord's hammer isn't clear: *You are my hammer*. Who is the *you* referenced here? We are uncertain as to whether Babylon is the Lord's

instrument of judgment or the object of its punishment: If the latter, then the Lord commands a new destroyer—to perhaps Persia—to punish Babylon (and the *nations*).<sup>14</sup> Flags and alarms (51:27) warn the people of invading armies. The regions of *Ararat*, *Minni*, and *Ashkenaz* (51:27);<sup>15</sup> located northwest of Babylon and part of the Median Empire, are summoned to take part in war against Babylon.<sup>16</sup> For the image of troops as *swarms of locusts*, see 51:14, 27.<sup>17</sup>

51:34 Jer 50:17,  
Jer 51:44  
51:45 Is 48:20;  
Jer 51:6;  
2Co 6:17;  
Rev 18:4

- <sup>31</sup> Courier joins courier, messenger joins messenger  
to relate the news to the king of Babylon that his entire city has fallen.
- <sup>32</sup> The river crossings are blocked;  
the marshes are on fire;  
the soldiers are terrified.
- <sup>33</sup> The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims:  
Daughter Babylon is like a threshing floor ready to be trampled down.  
In a little while her harvest will come.
- <sup>34</sup> Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar has eaten us alive;  
he's drained us of strength; he's left us for dead.<sup>c</sup>  
He's gobbled us up like a great sea monster;  
he's filled his belly with our treasures; and he's spit us out.
- <sup>35</sup> May Babylon be violated as our bodies were,  
say the inhabitants of Zion.  
May our blood be on the Babylonians,  
say those from Jerusalem.
- <sup>36</sup> Therefore, the LORD proclaims:  
I'm going to defend your cause;  
I'll turn the tables on your attacker.  
I'll dry up her sea;  
I'll shut up her springs.
- <sup>37</sup> Babylon will become a heap of ruins,  
a den of wild dogs, a wasteland with no one left in it.
- <sup>38</sup> Like lions they will roar together;  
they will growl like lions' cubs.
- <sup>39</sup> They are ready to devour,  
so I'll prepare the feast and mix the drinks!  
But after their noisy drunkenness,  
they will fall fast asleep.  
They will sleep forever, never to get up, declares the LORD.
- <sup>40</sup> I'll lead them off like lambs for slaughter, like rams and goats.
- <sup>41</sup> How Sheshach<sup>d</sup> has been defeated,  
the pride of the whole earth taken captive!  
How Babylon has become a wasteland among the nations!
- <sup>42</sup> The sea has risen over Babylon;  
its pounding waves overwhelm her.
- <sup>43</sup> Her towns are devastated;  
her land is scorched and barren,  
a place where no one lives or dares to pass through.
- <sup>44</sup> I will punish Bel in Babylon;  
I will force him to vomit what he's consumed.  
Then nations will no longer stream to him,  
and Babylon's walls will collapse!
- <sup>45</sup> Get out of Babylon, my people!  
Run for your lives from the LORD's fierce anger.
- <sup>46</sup> Don't be distracted or frightened by the rumors you hear in the land.

<sup>c</sup>Or *He's made us an empty container.* <sup>d</sup>*Sheshach* is a name for Babylon.

The defeat of Babylon is unmistakably a theological and political event that fulfills the LORD's plans (51:29). *her harvest*: (i.e., *Daughter Babylon's*) refers to divine judgment. 51:34-44 This section begins with a lament by the *inhabitants of Zion*. This is the first time the Judean refugees have their own voice. God will defend the cause of God's suffering people and dry up the sea of the empire (51:36). This is another allusion to the exodus story and the defeat of

Israel's first enemy, Egypt. *Sheshach* is a cryptic reference to Babel or Babylon (see Jer 25:26). The Lord will cause the Babylonian god *Bel* to vomit the nations it has consumed (51:44). 51:45-51 Now that the monster is slain (see Jer 51:41-44), God calls Babylon's victims to escape. The oppressive regime's defeat is cause for joy. It dispels any lingering doubts about God's power and justice. *Babylon must fall* to honor

51:50 2Ki 19:7;  
 Mi 24:6  
 51:48 Is 44:23;  
 Jer 50:3;  
 Rev 18:20  
 51:53 Gn 11:4;  
 Is 14:13;  
 Jer 49:16

- Sometimes you hear one thing and another time something else:  
 rumors of violence and uprisings.
- 47** The time is coming when I will deal with Babylon's idols;  
 the whole land will be disgraced, and her wounded will fall in her midst.
- 48** Then all creation will rejoice over Babylon,  
 because out of the north destroying armies will come to attack her,  
 declares the LORD.
- 49** Babylon must fall for the dead in Israel,  
 as the dead of all the earth have fallen to Babylon.
- 50** You survivors of war, leave now; don't delay!  
 Remember the LORD, from a faraway land.  
 Keep Jerusalem alive in your hearts.
- 51** We're humiliated by their taunts;  
 we're disgraced that strangers have violated the sacred places  
 of the LORD's temple.
- 52** The time is coming, declares the LORD,  
 when I will deal with her idols,  
 and the wounded in her land will groan.
- 53** Even if Babylon scales the heavens and strengthens its towering defenses,  
 the destroying armies will still come against her, at my command,  
 declares the LORD.
- 54** Listen to the cries for help from Babylon,  
 signs of massive devastation in the land, declares the LORD.
- 55** The LORD is destroying Babylon and silencing her outcry,  
 whose roar is like the crushing waves, a deafening crash.
- 56** He certainly comes against her;  
 the destroyer comes against Babylon.  
 Her warriors are captured;  
 their bows are broken.  
 The LORD is an exacting God who repays in full.
- 57** I'll make her leaders and sages drunk,  
 her governors, officials, and warriors as well.  
 They will sleep forever, never to get up,  
 declares the king, whose name is the LORD of heavenly forces.
- 58** The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:  
 Babylon's massive walls will come down, down to the ground;  
 and its high gates will be burned to the ground.

People labor in vain;  
 nations toil for nothing but ashes!

<sup>59</sup>This is what the prophet Jeremiah instructed the staff officer<sup>a</sup> Seraiah, Neriah's son and Mahseiah's grandson, when Seraiah went to Babylon with Judah's King Zedekiah in the fourth year of his rule. <sup>60</sup>Jeremiah wrote down in a single scroll all the disasters that would

<sup>a</sup>Or *officer of rest*, often translated as *quartermaster*

the dead in Israel, [as well] as the dead of all the earth (51:49). And yet this grand celebration still evokes painful memories (51:51). The violation of the temple is a cause for great concern (51:50-51; see also Jer 50:4-5, 28). 51:52-58 *The time is coming*: The text moves back and forth between Babylon's defeat as an accomplished fact and as yet to happen. For the prophet and poet, however, the distinction is artificial. God has declared the empire's doom and so it is! In response to the lament of God's people (51:51), God pledges to crush Babylon. The Hebrew word for *destroy* occurs three times (51:53, 55, 56; see also Jer 51:48). The assault on Babylon isn't only a

political fact (the empire will fall to Cyrus in 539 BCE), but also a demonstration of the just judgment of *an exacting God who repays in full* (51:56). Furthermore, it is a *sure sign* of the Lord's victory as true *king, whose name is the LORD of heavenly forces* (51:57). In sum, the oracle against Babylon claims that the oppressive superpower won't endure God's scrutiny, that raw political power isn't ultimate power, and that God's power and justice will eventually answer the harsh situation of suffering people. 51:59-64 The oracles against the nations conclude with a brief story of Jeremiah writing down God's words against Babylon in a scroll (cf. Jer 36). The prophet then entrusts



happen to Babylon—all these things concerning Babylon. <sup>61</sup>Jeremiah said to Seraiah: When you get to Babylon, see to it that you read all these words. <sup>62</sup>Then say, “LORD, you declared that this place will be destroyed and nothing will remain in it—neither human nor animal; that it will forever be a wasteland!” <sup>63</sup>When you finish reading the scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates River. <sup>64</sup>Then say, “In the same way, Babylon will sink and never rise again because of the disaster I’m bringing against it.”

Jeremiah’s words end here.

**Rule of Zedekiah and the fall of Jerusalem**

**52** Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king, and he ruled for eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hamutal; she was a daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah. <sup>2</sup>He did evil in the LORD’s eyes just as Jehoiachin had done. <sup>3</sup>It was because the LORD was angry against Jerusalem and Judah that he thrust them out of his presence. Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

<sup>4</sup>In the ninth year, the tenth month, and the tenth day of the month, Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem with all of his army. He camped beside the city and built a siege wall around it. <sup>5</sup>The city was under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. <sup>6</sup>On the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine in the city reached a point that no food remained for the people. <sup>7</sup>The enemy entered the city, and all the soldiers fled by night along the gate between the two walls by the royal gardens. So the Babylonians surrounded the city while the soldiers fled toward the desert plain. <sup>8</sup>However, the Babylonian army chased down Zedekiah and caught him in the plains of Jericho. (His entire army had fled from him.) <sup>9</sup>They arrested the king and brought him before the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath. And he pronounced sentence on him. <sup>10</sup>The king of Babylon slaughtered Zedekiah’s children before his very own eyes, and he slaughtered all Judah’s officers at Riblah. <sup>11</sup>Then he gouged out Zedekiah’s eyes and bound him in chains. The king of Babylon dragged him off to Babylon and put him in prison, where he remained until he died.

<sup>12</sup>In the tenth day of the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan commander of the guard came to Jerusalem on behalf of his king. <sup>13</sup>He burned down the LORD’s temple, the royal palace, all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the important buildings. <sup>14</sup>The entire Babylonian army and the commander of the guard destroyed the walls surrounding Jerusalem. <sup>15</sup>Nebuzaradan commander of the guard deported some of the poorest people, the rest of the people left in the city, a few skilled workers, and those who had joined the king of Babylon. <sup>16</sup>But Nebuzaradan commander of the guard left some of the poor to tend the vineyards and till the land.

<sup>17</sup>The Babylonians broke apart the bronze columns, the stands, and the bronze Sea in the LORD’s temple. They carried the bronze to Babylon. <sup>18</sup>They took the pots, the shovels, the wick trimmers, the sprinkling bowls, the incense dishes, and all the bronze equipment used for the temple services. <sup>19</sup>The commander of the guard took whatever gold or silver he could find as well: the small bowls, the fire pans, the sprinkling bowls, the pots, the lampstands,

51:63 Rev 18:21  
51:64 Job 31:40;  
Jer 51:58;  
Rev 18:21  
52:1  
2Ki 24:17, 18;  
2Ch 36:10b; 11;  
Jer 37:1  
52:2 2Ki 24:19;  
2Ch 36:12;  
Jer 37:2  
52:3a  
2Ki 24:20a;  
2Ch 36:13b-16  
52:3b  
2Ki 24:20b;  
2Ch 36:13a  
52:4, 5  
2Ki 25:1, 2;  
Jer 39:1  
52:6 2Ki 25:3;  
Is 3:1; Jer 38:9;  
Jer 39:2  
52:6-11  
2Ki 25:3-7;  
Jer 39:4-7  
52:9 Nm 13:21;  
2Ki 25:6;  
Jer 32:4, Jer 39:5  
52:12-14  
2Ki 25:8-10;  
2Ch 36:17, 19;  
Jer 39:2, 3, 8  
52:17-23  
2Ki 25:13-17;  
2Ch 36:18  
52:15 2Ki 25:11;  
2Ch 36:20a

the scroll to *Seraiah*, apparently Baruch’s brother (see Jer 32:12; 36:4), who is to (1) read it aloud in Babylon, (2) pray to God for its fulfillment, and (3) tie a stone to the scroll and throw it into the Euphrates to symbolize Babylon’s drowning. These are daring acts of resistance in the face of a massive and menacing Babylonian enterprise. In fact they function like liturgical theater, which reimagines dominant power structures in light of the concerns of the historical losers. The oracles against the nations celebrate the fall of Babylon in word, prayer, and public worship. This brief narrative of Babylon’s collapse marks the end of *Jeremiah’s words* (51:64).

52:1-34 Epilogue: The fall of Jerusalem. There are multiple endings to Jeremiah, as if the book doesn’t want to conclude: Jeremiah’s final prophecies to the Judeans in Egypt (Jer 44:1-30), Jeremiah’s last word to Baruch (Jer 45:1-5), the oracles against the nations (Jer 46-51; esp. Jer 51:64, “Jeremiah’s words end here”), and the historical epilogue, which details the end of Judah as a royal-temple state (52:1-34). The very last words of the book (Jer 52) confirm

the truthfulness of Jeremiah’s prophecies concerning Judah and its capital Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 52 duplicates 2 Kings 24:18–25:30, although it doesn’t mention Gedaliah and his failed government (see 2 Kgs 25:22-26; see, however, Jer 40:1–41:18), and it includes the three Judean relocations to Babylon, specifying the number of exiles in each relocation (52:28-30). 52:1-30 See 2 Kings 24:18–25:30, 2 Chronicles 36:11-21; Jeremiah 39:1-10. Zedekiah is described here as one who *did evil in the LORD’s eyes just as Jehoiachin had done* (52:2). This way of portraying the king, drawn from 2 Kings 24:18-20, reveals little of the king’s tortured indecision and secret meetings with Jeremiah (see Jer 37–38). In the end, however, the king rejects Jeremiah’s warnings and rebels against Babylon. Jeremiah 52:1-3 provide a theological rationale for the siege of Jerusalem (52:4-11), the destruction of the temple (52:12-23), and the executions and exile (52:24-30). For 18 months, from January 588 to July/August 587 BCE—although these dates are disputed—Jerusalem is under siege (52:4-11). Zedekiah attempts to escape to

52:24-27a  
2Ki 25:18-21a  
52:31-34  
2Ki 25:27-30

*Bookends* Together the prologue (Jer 1:1-3) and the epilogue (Jer 52:1-34) function as bookends to the complex and at times shapeless book of Jeremiah. They transport the reader from Anathoth and Jerusalem (Jer 1:1-3) to Babylon (Jer 52:31-34). They frame the text's messy chronology, beginning with the thirteenth year of Josiah, 627 BCE (Jer 1:1), and ending with the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of King Jehoiachin of Judah in 560 BCE. The prologue and epilogue surround the prophetic drama in trauma and loss. The prologue anticipates national crisis and the exile of the people of Jerusalem (Jer 1:3), and the epilogue relates the fall of Jerusalem and the successive Judean relocations to Babylon. Despite these references to war and violence, foreshadowed and fulfilled, the final words of the epilogue offer a glimmer of hope. In recounting the release and kind treatment of Judah's King Jehoiachin, the final scene may foreshadow the survival, and even restoration, of Judah and its Davidic king. If so, Jeremiah joins the prophetic chorus whose final song is almost always hopeful.

the basins, and the offering bowls. <sup>20</sup>There was too much bronze to be weighed: two columns, the bronze Sea and the twelve bronze bulls that held it up, and the stands, all of which Solomon had made for the LORD's temple. <sup>21</sup>Each column was about twenty-seven feet high and eighteen feet around. They were hollow, but the bronze was about three inches thick. <sup>22</sup>Each had a capital of bronze above it that towered seven and a half feet high, and each had an ornate design of bronze pomegranates around it. The second column was the same, also with pomegranates. <sup>23</sup>There were ninety-six pomegranates on the sides, a total of one hundred pomegranates around the ornate design.

<sup>24</sup>The commander of the guard also took Seraiah the high priest, Zephaniah the deputy priest, and the three doorkeepers. <sup>25</sup>From the city, he took a eunuch who was appointed over the army and the seven royal advisors who remained in the city. He also took the scribe of the commander of the army in charge of military conscription and sixty military personnel<sup>f</sup> who were found in the city. <sup>26</sup>Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. <sup>27</sup>The king of Babylon struck them and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. And Judah went away from its land into exile.

<sup>28</sup>This is the number of people whom Nebuchadnezzar deported: In the seventh year, 3,023 Judeans. <sup>29</sup>In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, he took 832 people from Jerusalem. <sup>30</sup>In the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, he dispatched Nebuzaradan commander of the guard, who deported 745 Judeans. Altogether, 4,600 were taken captive.

<sup>31</sup>Judah's King Jehoiachin had been in exile for thirty-seven years when Awil-merodach<sup>g</sup> became king in Babylon. He took note of Jehoiachin's plight and released him from prison on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month<sup>h</sup> of that very year. <sup>32</sup>Awil-merodach treated Jehoiachin kindly and gave him a throne higher than those of the other kings with him in Babylon. <sup>33</sup>So Jehoiachin discarded his prison clothes and ate his meals at the king's table for the rest of his life. <sup>34</sup>The Babylonian king provided him daily provisions for the rest of his life, right up until he died.

<sup>f</sup>Or from the people of the land <sup>g</sup>Or Evil-merodach <sup>h</sup>February–March, Adar

Jericho but is chased down and captured by Babylonian troops. Nebuchadnezzar takes the Judean king to Riblah, a city in Hamath in northern Syria, for sentencing. There Zedekiah is tortured, his sons and officers are executed, and he is eventually removed to Babylon as a prisoner of war. A month after Jerusalem falls in 587, Nebuchadnezzar's military commander Nebuzaradan destroys the temple and royal complex, along with other important structures in the capital city (52:12-16). Nebuzaradan then relocates a number of Judeans to Babylon, but leaves behind the poorest farmers to care for the land. The desecration of the temple, the Lord's house, receives much attention and is clearly of focal concern (52:17-23). On sheer political terms, plundering the loser's treasures is part and parcel of war. But for the first writers and readers of the account, it represents the miserable humiliation of God's people. Nebuzaradan arrests the high priest Seraiah (not the

Seraiah mentioned in Jer 40:8 or Jer 51:59) and the deputy priest Zephaniah (see 21:1; 29:24-32; 37:3), along with key royal and military personnel, over 70 individuals, and at Nebuchadnezzar's direction has them executed at Riblah (52:24-27). And Judah went away from its land into exile (52:27). Jeremiah 52:28-30 delineates the number of Judeans exiled (cf. 2 Kg 24:13-17). Thus these final verses in the book describe in relatively matter-of-fact terms the most painful and influential events in the history of Israel: the destruction of Jerusalem, the burning of the temple, and the exile to Babylon.

52:31-34 Focus on Jehoiachin's exile to Babylon and his release from prison in 560 BCE. The Babylonian king Awil-merodach treats Jehoiachin kindly, granting him a status higher than that of other captive kings. This final scene is sometimes read as a cryptic sign of hope for the continuation of the Davidic line.

# LAMENTATIONS

The book of Lamentations is the most tragic in the Bible. The language is blunt and graphic. The images are violent and brutal. Lamentations describes the historical event of the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians (see the narrative report of the event in 2 Kgs 25). It presents the immense suffering, agony, and pain of Jerusalem's people. Readers of the book are called to stand at ground zero and witness the collapse of the city around them, to hear the anguished cries of its inhabitants.

The central concern of the book is theological. In general, Lamentations shares the larger theological dilemma of the exile: how God could allow the promised land to be destroyed and God's people sent away in exile. Lamentations asks, "Where is God in the midst of the people's suffering?" God is viewed as having permitted this terrible situation to occur. The speakers repeatedly call on God for mercy and compassion. They beg God to see their grief and shame. But God doesn't respond. God's silence in the face of the people's despair is never resolved. The book doesn't include traditional ideas of optimism, hope, or comfort. Brief expressions of hope at the book's center are drowned out by the conclusion. Any end to the people's suffering, any

healing of the community's brokenness, seems very far away indeed.

The entire book is poetry. As poetry, information and emotion are often portrayed through images and metaphor. Lamentations includes five poems, each represented by a separate chapter. Each poem has a different tone and character. The poetry is difficult, containing many rare words and odd grammar, and the arrangement of verses doesn't always seem to make sense. It's written in what is called "qinah" meter, a poetic rhythm in which the lines are unbalanced. This type of rhythm is often seen in laments and other solemn literature, and it gives a sense of order breaking down into emotion.

There are several voices that speak throughout the book. They include the narrator, Daughter Zion, an individual resident, and the community at large. These various voices represent persons who stand in different locations with regard to the city's destruction. A change in speaking voice represents a change in point of view. At some places, however, these voices blend into each other, and it becomes difficult to tell who's speaking.

The structure of Lamentations is a pattern based on the alphabet, called an "acrostic." In the



The sea (Lam 2:13)

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first four chapters, each line begins with a different letter, in the order of the alphabet (Lam 3 has three lines for each letter). Though chapter 5 doesn't follow the alphabet, it has 22 verses, the same number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, so it also fits the pattern. Alphabetic acrostic patterns are seen elsewhere in the OT (e.g., Pss 25, 34, 119; Prov 31:10-31). But the book of Lamentations stands out as the most highly developed example of this form. It gives the sense that the poems provide a complete picture of the event, including everything "from A to Z."

In some ways, the book of Lamentations is like other Hebrew literature. Most particularly, there are other poems of lament in the book of Psalms, spoken both by individuals and the community. Lamentations shares some, though not all, of the elements of these biblical lament psalms. Funeral songs were also sung to grieve the deaths of persons (e.g., 2 Sam 1). In ancient Mesopotamian literature, centuries before Lamentations was written, we find laments for cities and temples that had been destroyed. The book of Lamentations adopts some of the features of these other types of literature, yet it differs in many other ways. Therefore, it should be seen as a unique composition.

Because Lamentations describes the devastation of Jerusalem in such thorough and vivid language, it is usually claimed that these poems were written soon after the Babylonian destruction in 587 BCE. The author (or authors) may have been an eyewitness of the event, who survived and remained in the land after the catastrophe. But because it sometimes takes many years after a traumatic situation to

be emotionally able to speak about it, Lamentations may instead have been written by later generations who were attempting to understand that event in their national history. Perhaps the poems were used in public rituals of mourning and remembrances of times of tragedy, such as we see in Jeremiah 41:5, Esther 9:31, and Zechariah 7:1-7. It's possible that the five poems were written by different authors and later grouped together. It's just as possible, however, that one author wrote them all, using different points of view for each poem.

Ancient tradition connected Jeremiah, who is sometimes called the "weeping prophet," with the book of Lamentations, even (mistakenly) thinking that he was its author. That's why the Christian order of books in the Bible, which is followed by the CEB, places Lamentations with the prophetic books, right after the book of Jeremiah. The Jewish tradition, which goes back to ancient Hebrew manuscripts, instead places Lamentations with the Five Scrolls (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther) in the Writings section of the Hebrew Bible. Lamentations has a rich theological tradition within faith communities. In Christianity, it's included as part of worship services during Holy Week. In Judaism, it's read on the Ninth of Ab, a holiday that remembers the destructions of both the first temple (587 BCE) and the second temple (70 CE), and other more recent catastrophes, including the Holocaust that occurred during World War II. Used in these ways, the book of Lamentations creates space for the recognition, and even the healing, of painful situations for individuals and for the community.

#### **I. Jerusalem's Suffering (1:1-22)**

- A. The abandonment of the city (1:1-11b)
- B. The city's lament (1:11c-22)

#### **II. God's Anger Toward Jerusalem (2:1-22)**

- A. God's destruction of the city (2:1-12)
- B. Address to the city (2:13-19)
- C. The city's lament (2:20-22)

#### **III. An Individual's Complaint (3:1-66)**

- A. The suffering of a city resident (3:1-20)

- B. Reasons for hope in God (3:21-42)

- C. God's destruction of the city (3:43-66)

#### **IV. The People's Suffering (4:1-22)**

- A. The city's disintegration (4:1-16)
- B. The city's attack (4:17-22)

#### **V. The People's Complaint (5:1-22)**

- A. Appeal to God (5:1-18)
- B. God's rejection of the city (5:19-22)

## Jerusalem's suffering

- 1 <sup>a</sup>Oh, no!  
She sits alone, the city that was once full of people.
- κ Once great among nations, she has become like a widow.  
Once a queen over provinces, she has become a slave.
- ζ <sup>2</sup>She weeps bitterly in the night, her tears on her cheek.  
None of her lovers comfort her.  
All her friends lied to her; they have become her enemies.
- ι <sup>3</sup>Judah was exiled after suffering and hard service.  
She lives among the nations; she finds no rest.  
All who were chasing her caught her—right in the middle of her distress.
- τ <sup>4</sup>Zion's roads are in mourning; no one comes to the festivals.  
All her gates are deserted. Her priests are groaning,  
her young women grieving. She is bitter.
- π <sup>5</sup>Her adversaries have become rulers; her enemies relax.  
Certainly the LORD caused her grief because of her many wrong acts.  
Her children have gone away, captive before the enemy.
- ρ <sup>6</sup>Daughter Zion lost all her glory.  
Her officials are like deer that can't find pasture.  
They have gone away, frail, before the hunter.
- σ <sup>7</sup>While suffering and homeless,  
Jerusalem remembers all her treasures from days long past.  
When her people fell by the enemy's hand, there was no one to help her.  
Enemies saw her, laughed at her defeat.
- τ <sup>8</sup>Jerusalem has sinned greatly; therefore, she's become a joke.<sup>b</sup>  
All who honored her now detest her, for they've seen her naked.  
Even she groans and turns away.
- υ <sup>9</sup>Her uncleanness shows on her clothing;  
she didn't consider what would happen to her.  
She's gone down shockingly; she has no comforter.  
"LORD, look at my suffering—the enemy has definitely triumphed!"

<sup>a</sup>Four of the five chaps of Lamentations are alphabetically structured (acrostic) poems. Each verse in chaps 1, 2, and 4 begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Chap 3 is a triple acrostic: three verses in a row use the same letter before moving to the next letter. The acrostic form is not used in chap 5, though it does contain twenty-two verses, the same number as chaps 1, 2, and 4. <sup>b</sup>Or *she's become unclean*.

1:1-11 b The voice of the narrator, describing the scene of destruction and reporting what has happened to Jerusalem. There's a huge contrast between how Jerusalem used to be in its glory days and its current wretched circumstances. Throughout the book the city is spoken about as if it were a person.

1:1 *Oh, no!* This expression, which is a single word in Hebrew, is an exclamation of astonishment and horror (cf. Lam 2:1; 4:1). It's often used in funeral songs. *widow*: In ancient Israel, a woman's husband was her only financial support. Widows were usually poor, vulnerable, and without family.

1:2 *her lovers*: or "those who love her." It means friends and family, and not necessarily romantic partners (cf. Lam 1:19). It refers to Israel's political allies, who didn't help when the Babylonians attacked.

1:4 The *gates* are typically the social hub of a city where people would gather for business and public activities (cf. Lam 5:14). They and the *roads* to Jerusalem should be very busy places.

1:5 *because of her many wrong acts*: The narrator emphasizes that Daughter Zion bears some responsibility for her current situation. *Her children have gone away*: The suffering of her children is one of Daughter Zion's greatest heartaches (see Lam 1:16; 2:11-12, 19, 20, 22; 4:2, 4, 10).

1:8 *naked*: In ancient Israel, it was shameful for people, and especially women, to be seen naked (e.g., Gen 9:22-23; Exod 20:26; Ezek 16:37-39). The imagery is of Jerusalem's public humiliation and visible mocking by her enemies.

1:9 *uncleanness*: menstrual bleeding (cf. Lam 1:17). Menstruation is a time of ritual impurity (Lev 15:16-24).

1:1 Is 3:26

1:2 Ps 6:6;

Jer 30:14;

Lam 1:16;

Mi 7:5

1:4 Jer 9:11;

Lam 2:6,

Lam 2:10; Il 1:8

1:8 Is 59:2;

Lam 1:20,

Lam 1:21,

Lam 1:22

1:16 Jer 13:17,  
Jer 14:17;  
Lam 1:2,  
Lam 2:11,  
Lam 2:18  
1:18 Dt 28:32;  
Isa 12:14;  
Jer 12:1

- 10 The enemy grabbed all her treasures.  
She watched nations enter her sanctuary—  
nations that you, God,<sup>c</sup> commanded:  
They must not enter your assembly.
- 11 All her people are groaning, seeking bread.  
They give up their most precious things for food to survive.  
“LORD, look and take notice: I am most certainly despised.”
- 12 Is this nothing to all you who pass by?<sup>d</sup>  
Look around: Is there any suffering like the suffering inflicted on me,  
the grief that the LORD caused on the day of his fierce anger?
- 13 From above he sent fire into my bones; he trampled them.  
He spread a net for my feet; he forced me backward.  
He left me devastated, constantly sick.
- 14 My steps<sup>e</sup> are being watched;<sup>f</sup> by his hand they are tripped up.  
His yoke is on my neck; he makes my strength fail.  
My Lord has handed me over to people I can’t resist.
- 15 My Lord has despised my mighty warriors.  
He called a feast for me—in order to crush my young men!  
My Lord has stomped on the winepress  
of the young woman Daughter Judah.
- 16 Because of all these things I’m crying. My eyes, my own eyes pour water  
because a comforter who might encourage me is nowhere near.  
My children are destroyed because the enemy was so strong.
- 17 Zion spreads out her hands; she has no comforter.  
The LORD commanded Jacob’s enemies to surround him.  
Jerusalem is just a piece of garbage to them.
- 18 The LORD is right, because I disobeyed his word.  
Listen, all you people; look at my suffering.  
My young women and young men have gone away as prisoners.
- 19 I called to my lovers, but they deceived me.  
My priests and my elders have perished in the city;  
they were looking for food to survive.

<sup>c</sup>Heb lacks *God*. <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>e</sup>Correction; or *my wrong acts* <sup>f</sup>Or *a yoke is bound to my wrong acts*; Heb uncertain

Daughter Zion has been completely abandoned. No one takes any pity on her in her distress. The fact that *she has no comforter* is repeated frequently throughout the poem (see Lam 1:4, 7, 16, 17, 21). *LORD, look at my suffering*: Here Daughter Zion interrupts, addressing God directly.

1:10 *treasures*: The sacred objects the Babylonians stole from the temple. *enter her sanctuary*: Just as a woman is raped and violated, the temple has been violated.

1:11b-22 The voice of Daughter Zion. She briefly speaks directly to God (1:11c, 20-22) but mostly to human on-lookers (*all you who pass by*, 1:12), explaining how it feels to suffer her losses and asking for sympathy. She’s emotional and desperate, in contrast to the more distanced description of the narrator.

1:11 *LORD, look and take notice*: Daughter Zion speaks in a strong commanding tone, insisting on God’s attention.

She repeatedly demands witnesses of her pain (cf. Lam 1:9, 12, 20).

1:12-14 God’s actions are violent, even brutal, as God acts out of *fierce anger*. They are similar to the enemies’ actions in lament psalms (e.g., Pss 10:9; 57:6; 102:3).

1:13 *devastated* may have a double meaning, indicating both a destroyed city (e.g., Lev 26:33; Isa 1:7; Jer 12:11) and a raped woman (e.g., 2 Sam 13:20).

1:17 Here the narrator interrupts. *a piece of garbage*: The Hebrew here refers to “a menstruating woman” (cf. Lam 1:9). In her state of ritual impurity, no one wants to have relations with Daughter Zion.

1:18-19 In the siege of Jerusalem, some people were taken away in exile, and others, even the city’s leaders, died of starvation.

1:18 *The LORD is right*: may be either a sincere confession

7<sup>20</sup> Pay attention, LORD, for I am in trouble. My stomach is churning;  
my heart is pounding inside me because I am so bitter.  
In the streets the sword kills; in the house it is like death.

7<sup>21</sup> People heard that I was groaning, that I had no comforter.  
All my enemies heard about my distress;  
they were thrilled that you had done this.  
Bring the day you have announced so they become like me!

7<sup>22</sup> Let all their evil come before you.  
Then injure them like you've injured me because of all my wrong acts;  
my groans are many, my heart is sick.

### God's anger toward Jerusalem

2 Oh, no!

7 In anger, my Lord put Daughter Zion under a cloud;<sup>g</sup>

7 he threw Israel's glory from heaven down to earth.  
On that day of wrath, he didn't consider his own footstool.

7<sup>2</sup> Showing no compassion, my Lord devoured each of Jacob's meadows;  
in his wrath he tore down the walled cities of Daughter Judah.  
The kingdom and its officials, he forced to the ground, shamed.

7<sup>3</sup> In his burning rage, he cut off each of Israel's horns;  
right in front of the enemy, he withdrew his strong hand;  
he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire that ate up everything nearby.

7<sup>4</sup> He bent his bow as an enemy would;  
his strong hand was poised like an adversary.  
He killed every precious thing in sight;  
he poured out his wrath like fire on Daughter Zion's tent.

7<sup>5</sup> My Lord has become like an enemy. He devoured Israel;  
he devoured all her palaces; he made ruins of her city walls.  
In Daughter Judah he multiplied mourning along with more mourning!

7<sup>6</sup> He wrecked his own booth like a garden; he destroyed his place for festivals.  
The LORD made Zion forget both festival and sabbath;  
in his fierce rage, he scorned both monarch and priest.

7<sup>7</sup> My Lord rejected his altar, he abandoned his sanctuary;  
he handed Zion's palace walls over to enemies.  
They shouted in the LORD's own house as if it were a festival day.

<sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain

or a sarcastic statement about God's injustice, as Jeremiah uses the same phrase (Jer 12:1).

1:20-22 *My stomach is churning; my heart is pounding. . . my groans are many, my heart is sick:* Daughter Zion's physical and emotional symptoms are combined. Her suffering is on many levels at the same time.

1:22 *injure them like you've injured me:* She asks that Israel's enemies would suffer as she's suffering. She's not just being vindictive but asking that God would act with justice and put things in their right order again.

2:1-12 The narrator's voice is heard throughout most of this second poem. Chapter 2 repeats many of the same ideas and vocabulary of Lamentations 1. The focus, however, shifts from the victim to the perpetrator. The

speakers see God as the cause of the city's destruction. The numerous references to *anger* (2:1), *wrath* (2:1, 2, 4), and *burning rage* (2:3), along with the many very strong and violent actions, suggest that God is out of control.

2:1 *Oh, no!* See note on Lamentations 1:1. *his own footstool:* the temple (e.g., Pss 99:5; 132:7; 1 Chron 28:2).

2:3-4 *God's strong hand* (or "right hand") that should protect Israel has instead been used to attack Jerusalem (cf. Exod 15:6; Isa 41:10). God is acting like an enemy.

2:3 *horns* are symbols of a people's power and reputation (see also Lam 2:17; cf. Jer 48:25; Ps 77:10).

2:6 *his own booth:* the temple. It's shocking that God would destroy even the most holy place of worship.

1:20 Dt 32:25;  
Is 16:11; Jer 4:19;  
Lam 2:11  
2:1 1Ch 28:2;  
Lam 3:44  
2:2 Ps 21:9;  
Is 25:12; Is 43:28;  
Lam 3:43;  
Mi 5:11

2:10 Josh 7:6;  
Job 2:12,  
Job 2:13; Is 3:26,  
Is 15:3  
2:11 Lam 1:16,  
Lam 1:20,  
Lam 2:19,  
Lam 3:48,  
Lam 4:4  
2:14 Eze 22:28

- ¶ <sup>8</sup>The LORD planned to destroy Daughter Zion's wall.  
He stretched out a measuring line, didn't stop himself from devouring.  
He made barricades and walls wither—together they wasted away.
- ¶ <sup>9</sup>Zion's gates sank into the ground; he broke and shattered her bars;  
her king and her officials are now among the nations.  
There is no Instruction!<sup>h</sup>  
Even her prophets couldn't find a vision from the LORD.
- ¶ <sup>10</sup>Daughter Zion's elders sit on the ground and mourn.  
They throw dust on their heads; they put on mourning clothes.  
Jerusalem's young women bow their heads all the way to the ground.
- ¶ <sup>11</sup>My eyes are worn out from weeping; my stomach is churning.  
My insides are poured on the ground  
because the daughter of my people is shattered,  
because children and babies are fainting in the city streets.
- ¶ <sup>12</sup>They say to their mothers, "Where are grain and wine?"  
while fainting like the wounded in the city streets,  
while their lives are draining away at their own mothers' breasts.
- ¶ <sup>13</sup>What can I testify about you, Daughter Jerusalem?<sup>1</sup>  
To what could I compare you?  
With what could I equate you?  
How can I comfort you, young woman Daughter Zion?  
Your hurt is as vast as the sea. Who can heal you?
- ¶ <sup>14</sup>Your prophets gave you worthless and empty visions.  
They didn't reveal your sin so as to prevent your captivity.  
Instead, they showed you worthless and incorrect prophecies.
- ¶ <sup>15</sup>All who pass by on the road clap their hands about you;  
they whistle, shaking their heads at Daughter Jerusalem:  
"Could this be the city called Perfect Beauty, the Joy of All the Earth?"
- ¶ <sup>16</sup>All your enemies open wide their mouths against you;  
they whistle, grinding their teeth. They say, "We have devoured!  
This is definitely the day we've been waiting for. We've seen it come to pass."

<sup>h</sup>Heb Torah <sup>1</sup>Or *How can I warn you? or To what could I liken you?;* Heb uncertain

2:8-9 That God's actions to destroy Jerusalem were *planned*, rather than spontaneous, is even more disturbing. A *measuring line* was typically used for constructing a building, not demolishing one (Amos 7:7-9). *Walls, barricades, gates, and bars* were to protect a city, but they can't withstand God's attack.

2:9 The *Instruction* (Torah) was the foundation of Israel's faith and practice. A *vision* of the *prophets* guided Israel at times of crisis. The lack of these things highlights God's abandonment of the people.

2:9-10 *king, officials, prophets, elders, young women*: All members of society—from high to low, from old to young—have been affected. To *sit on the ground*, put *dust on one's head*, and wear *mourning clothes* are traditional actions in times of sadness and mourning (e.g., Job 2:12-13; Jer 4:8; 6:26).

2:11-12 The image of mothers unable to feed their dying children is especially heartbreaking. Not only are the children the most vulnerable members of a community; they

also represent the future generation of Israel, which now will be lost.

2:11 The narrator, who was emotionally detached in chapter 1, has now become as distressed as Daughter Zion herself (see Lam 1:16, 20). The narrator now enters into her pain.

2:13-19 The narrator now speaks to Daughter Zion directly, beginning with a series of questions. The narrator tries to understand her suffering. But they are questions that can't be answered. There's no way to comprehend or to measure *hurt... as vast as the sea*. Her pain is infinite in scope.

2:14-16 One by one, all those who might possibly comfort Daughter Zion instead act against her. She had earlier called to *All who pass by on the road* (Lam 1:12), *clap their hands... open wide their mouths... whistle*: actions that show scorn and hatred (cf. Jer 19:8; Ps 22:13; Zeph 2:15). *We have devoured!* repeats God's actions described earlier (see Lam 2:2, 5, 8). *Perfect Beauty, the Joy of All the Earth*: descriptions that are elsewhere used for Jerusalem (e.g.,



2:18 Ps 119:145;  
Lam 1:2,  
Lam 2:8,  
Lam 3:49  
2:19 Ps 28:2;  
1Ti 2:8  
2:20 Lv 26:29;  
Dt 28:53;  
2Ki 6:28;  
Eze 5:10  
2:22 Jer 6:25

**Daughter Zion** The title “Daughter Zion” and similar phrases are used many times throughout the book of Lamentations. The term “Zion” is a synonym for the city of Jerusalem. Calling the city “Zion” shows its importance in the theology of the OT as the place for God’s special care and concern.

It is significant that the city of Jerusalem—Zion—is represented by a female image. In the ancient Near East, the goddess of a city was sometimes seen as the partner of the city’s primary male god. Moreover, in times of war the women of an attacked city were especially in danger of rape and other violent acts. Perhaps these ancient understandings lie behind the use of Daughter Zion in Lamentations.

Referring to something as “daughter” was a term of endearment. Instead of “Daughter Zion,” we might say “Precious Zion” or “Dearly Loved Zion.” “Daughter” is used a great deal throughout the five poems of Lamentations. Though the most frequent term is “Daughter Zion” (Lam 1:6; 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 18; 4:22), there’s also “daughter of my people” (Lam 3:48; 4:3, 6, 10), “young woman Daughter Judah” (Lam 1:15), “young woman Daughter Zion” (Lam 2:13), and “Daughter Jerusalem” (Lam 2:13, 15). By using these affectionate titles for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah, the poet is making the situation of the city and its people seem much more emotional and heartbreaking. How much harder to see the suffering and pain of someone you hold dear—especially of a “daughter”!

י<sup>17</sup> The LORD did what he had planned.

He accomplished the word that he had commanded long ago.

He ripped down, showing no compassion.

He made the enemy rejoice over you; he raised up your adversaries’ horn.

צ<sup>18</sup> Cry out to my Lord from the heart,<sup>1</sup> you wall of Daughter Zion;  
make your<sup>2</sup> tears run down like a flood all day and night.  
Don’t relax at all; don’t rest your eyes a moment.

פ<sup>19</sup> Get up and cry out at nighttime, at the start of the night shift;  
pour out your heart before my Lord like water.  
Lift your hands up to him for the life of your children—  
the ones who are fainting from hunger on every street corner.

ק<sup>20</sup> LORD, look and see to whom you have done this!  
Should women eat their own offspring, their own beautiful babies?  
Should priest and prophet be killed in my Lord’s own sanctuary?

ר<sup>21</sup> Young and old alike lie on the ground in the streets;  
my young women and young men fall dead by the sword.  
On the day of your anger, you killed;  
you slaughtered, showing no compassion.

ש<sup>22</sup> You invited—as if to a festival!—terrors<sup>1</sup> from every side.  
On the day of the LORD’s anger, no one escaped, not one survived.  
The children that I nurtured, that I raised myself,  
my enemy finished them off.

<sup>1</sup>Correction; or *their heart cried out to my Lord* <sup>2</sup>Heb lacks *your*. <sup>3</sup>Correction; or *my attackers*

Pss 48:2; 50:2). The passersby use these phrases to mock her instead.

2:17 A further affirmation that Jerusalem wasn’t destroyed by chance but by God’s plan. With *no compassion*, it’s clear that God won’t come to help Daughter Zion.

2:19 *night shift*: Guards kept watch in the city during the night (cf. Song 3:1-3; 5:7). *for the life of your children*: If anything can move God to compassion, we might think that it would be the suffering of innocent children.

2:20-22 Daughter Zion speaks up and addresses God. She demands the same response from God as in the first poem, to *look* and to *see* (see Lam 1:9, 11, 20). But her speech is much briefer here. *to whom you have done this!*: Rather than

emphasizing her own pain, she now lists all the people who have been harmed—*women, babies, priest, prophet, young people, old people, young women, young men*. Their misery is the human consequence of God’s actions.

2:20 Women eating their own children is the most extreme situation of famine and desperation. The cannibalism of babies is an unthinkable horror.

2:21 *showing no compassion*: Daughter Zion echoes the narrator’s opinion about the extent of God’s cruelty (see Lam 2:2, 17).

2:22 *no one escaped, not one survived*: The destruction is complete. The second poem ends with a vision of utter devastation and hopelessness.

3:6 Ps 88:5,  
Ps 143:3

3:7 Job 3:23,  
Job 19:8; Hos 2:6

3:8 Dt 1:45;  
Job 30:20;  
Ps 22:2

3:12 Job 6:4,  
Ps 7:12, Ps 38:2;  
Lam 2:4

3:14 Job 30:9;  
Ps 22:6; Jer 20:7

3:16 Ps 3:7,  
Ps 58:6;

Pev 20:17;  
Jer 6:26

3:19 Dt 29:18;  
Jer 9:15;

Lam 1:7,  
Lam 3:5,  
Lam 3:15

3:24 Ps 16:5,  
Ps 33:18,  
Ps 73:26;

Ps 119:57;  
Lam 3:21

### An individual's complaint

**3** I am someone<sup>m</sup> who saw the suffering caused by God's<sup>n</sup> angry rod.

**2** He drove me away, forced me to walk in darkness, not light.

**n** **3** He turned his hand even against me, over and over again, all day long.

**4** He wore out my flesh and my skin; he broke my bones.

**5** He besieged me, surrounding me with bitterness and weariness.

**6** He made me live in dark places like those who've been dead a long time.

**7** He walled me in so I couldn't escape; he made my chains heavy.

**8** Even though I call out and cry for help, he silences my prayer.

**9** He walled in my paths with stonework; he made my routes crooked.

**10** He is a bear lurking for me, a lion in hiding.

**11** He took me from my path<sup>o</sup> and tore me apart; he made me desolate.

**12** He drew back his bow, made me a shooting target for arrows.

**13** He shot the arrows of his quiver into my inside parts.

**14** I have become a joke to all my people,

the object of their song of ridicule all day long.

**15** He saturated me with grief, made me choke on bitterness.

**16** He crushed my teeth into the gravel; he pressed me down into the ashes.

**17** I've<sup>p</sup> rejected peace; I've forgotten what is good.

**18** I thought: My future is gone, as well as my hope from the LORD.

**19** The memory of my suffering and homelessness is bitterness and poison.

**20** I<sup>q</sup> can't help but remember and am depressed.

**21** I call all this to mind—therefore, I will wait.

**22** Certainly the faithful love of the LORD hasn't ended;<sup>r</sup>

certainly God's compassion isn't through!

**23** They are renewed every morning. Great is your faithfulness.

**24** I think:<sup>s</sup> The LORD is my portion! Therefore, I'll wait for him.

<sup>m</sup>Or the man; also in 3:27, 35, 39 <sup>n</sup>Or his <sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>p</sup>Or my spirit; also in 3:20, 24, 25, 51, 58 <sup>q</sup>Or My spirit can't help but remember and is depressed <sup>r</sup>Tg, Syr, and other ancient sources; MT we aren't finished. <sup>s</sup>Or My spirit thinks

3:1-66 The third poem introduces a new voice, an individual survivor. He describes the situation from his experience. This poem includes the only expression of hopefulness in the book.

3:1 *I am someone*: or, "I am the strong man." This figure, who is also identified by the same term in Lamentations 3:27, 35, 39, may be a soldier. He's an anonymous character, an "everyman." The strong man gives a male perspective throughout Lamentations 3, balancing the female perspective of Daughter Zion in Lamentations 1-2. *saw the suffering*: He answers Daughter Zion's pleas that someone would see her distress (see Lam 1:12, 18). *angry rod*: He also testifies that the destruction that fell on Jerusalem was because of God's wrath.

3:2-16 The images throughout this section are violent. Most of the verbs are strong and are often used to describe physical attacks.

3:3-4 *He turned his hand even against me... He wore out my flesh and my skin; he broke my bones*: God's hand against humans often causes them to be physically ill (e.g., 1 Sam 5:6-12; Job 19:20-21).

3:5-9 *surrounding me... walled me in... walled in my paths... made my routes crooked*: God has trapped the

strong man, like in a prison, and made it impossible to escape.

3:6 *dark places* represent the netherworld, a form of death. 3:10-13 *God is the hunter, and the speaker is the prey. bear and lion*: Enemies are often imagined as animals (e.g., Pss 7:2; 17:8-12). *inside parts* (kidneys) are the location of a person's emotions (see also Lam 1:20; 2:11; 5:17).

3:17-20 The speaker turns to reflective thoughts, which taste like *bitterness and poison*. His memories make him feel discouraged and hopeless.

3:21-42 These verses sound more like an intellectual essay about God than reflection on personal experience. The speaker faces a theological dilemma: What do you do when your experience doesn't match what you have been taught about God? He chooses to embrace hope in God's goodness, a hope arrived at through internal struggle. In situations of tragedy, people can often feel despair and hope at the same time.

3:21 Though they may seem abrupt, such sudden transitions in attitude from despair to hope are common in lament psalms.

3:22-23 *faithful love... compassion... faithfulness*: characteristics frequently used to describe God (e.g., Exod 34:6-7).

25 The LORD is good to those who hope in him, to the person<sup>a</sup> who seeks him.

3:25 Ps 27:14,  
Ps 130:6; Is 25:9,  
Is 30:18

26 It's good to wait in silence for the LORD's deliverance.

3:26 Gn 49:18;  
Ps 37:7, Ps 130:5

27 It's good for a man to carry a yoke in his youth.

3:27 Mt 11:29

28 He should sit alone and be silent when God lays it on him.

3:28 Jer 15:17;  
Lam 1:1,  
Lam 2:10

29 He should put his mouth in the dirt—perhaps there is hope.

30 He should offer his cheek for a blow; he should be filled with shame.

3:29 Job 40:4;  
Jer 31:17

31 My Lord definitely<sup>a</sup> won't reject forever.

32 Although he has caused grief,

he will show compassion in measure with his covenant loyalty.

33 He definitely doesn't enjoy affliction,<sup>v</sup> making humans suffer.

3:30 Job 16:10;  
Is 50:6; Mt 5:39

3:31 Ps 77:7,  
Ps 94:14; Is 54:7

34 Now crushing underfoot all the earth's prisoners,

35 denying someone justice before the Most High,

36 subverting a person's lawsuit—doesn't my Lord see all this?

3:32 Ps 78:38,  
Ps 106:43

3:33 Eze 33:11;  
Heb 12:10

3:35 Prv 17:15;  
Lam 3:36

37 Who ever spoke and it happened if my Lord hadn't commanded the same?

38 From the mouth of the Most High evil things don't come, but rather good!

39 Why then does any living person complain;

why should anyone complain about their sins?

3:36 Lam 3:35;  
Hab 1:13

3:37 Ps 33:9

3:38 Job 2:10;  
Is 45:7; Jer 32:42

40 We must search and examine our ways; we must return to the LORD.

41 We should lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven.

42 We are the ones who did wrong; we rebelled.

But you, God, have not forgiven.

3:39 Prv 19:3,  
Mt 7:9

3:40 Ps 119:59,  
Ps 139:23;  
Hos 6:1;  
1Co 11:28;  
2Co 13:5

43 You wrapped yourself up in wrath and hunted us;

you killed, showing no compassion.

44 You wrapped yourself up in a cloud; prayers can't make it through!

45 You made us trash and garbage in front of all other people.

3:41 Ps 25:1,  
Ps 28:2; Ps 141:2

3:42 2Ki 24:4;  
Jer 5:7;

Jer 14:20;  
Lam 1:18;  
Dn 9:5

46 All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.

47 Terror and trap have come upon us, catastrophe and collapse!

48 Streams of water pour from my eyes because of the destruction  
of the daughter of my people.

3:43 Ps 119:136;  
Jer 9:1;

Lam 1:16,  
Lam 2:11

3:53 Jer 37:16,  
Jer 38:6; Jer 38:9;  
Dn 6:17

49 My eyes flow and don't stop.

There is no relief<sup>50</sup> until the LORD looks down from the heavens and notices.

51 My eyes hurt me<sup>v</sup> because of what's happened to my city's daughters.

52 My enemies hunted me down like a bird, relentlessly, for no reason.

53 They caught me alive in a pit and threw stones at me;

54 water flowed over my head. I thought: I'm finished.

<sup>a</sup>Or spirit <sup>b</sup>Or: Because my Lord won't reject forever <sup>v</sup>Heb He does not afflict from his heart. <sup>v</sup>Or my spirit

3:25-30 These statements reflect the wisdom tradition in the OT. They urge patience and submission during times of suffering. *carry a yoke... mouth in the dirt... offer his cheek for a blow*: Actions similar to the imprisonment and injury the strong man described in Lamentations 3:1-16.

3:31-33 *won't reject forever*: the hope that God will change God's mind, that God's *compassion* will overcome God's anger.

3:36 *doesn't my Lord see all this?* Like the Daughter Zion, the strong man emphasizes the importance of God seeing injustice and pain (see Lam 1:9, 11, 20; 2:20). They both face the same contradiction: God is the cause of their affliction, yet God is the only one who can take it away.

3:37-39 With these rhetorical questions, the speaker suggests that it's people's own fault if they suffer.

3:40-42 The strong man includes others, with the communal language of *we*, in encouraging self-examination

and turning away from sin. *hearts and hands*: inward sincerity as well as outward actions.

3:42 *But you, God, have not forgiven*: The strong man turns to speak to God rather than just about God. At this point he seems to give up on waiting for God to show mercy.

3:43-66 The man continues to speak to God, accusing God of mistreatment. His hope has disappeared, and he is again overwhelmed by pain and suffering.

3:44 In the story of the exodus, a *cloud* protects and leads Israel to safety (cf. Num 9:15-23; Ps 105:39). Here a cloud is viewed negatively instead. It's a barrier between God and the people, making God inaccessible.

3:48-49 The strong man shifts to speaking personally, out of his own experience. He can't stop crying until God responds.

3:53-55 *a pit* and *water flowed over my head* are images of the netherworld and death.

4:1 2Kj 25:9;  
Lam 2:19;  
Eze 7:19  
4:2 Is 30:14;  
Is 51:18;  
Jer 19:11  
4:4 Ps 22:15;  
Lam 1:11;  
Lam 2:11;  
Lam 2:12  
4:6 Gn 19:24;  
Gn 19:25;  
Mt 10:15;  
Lk 10:12  
4:7 Ps 51:7;  
Am 2:11

**55** I call on your name, LORD, from the depths of the pit.

**56** Hear my voice. Don't close your ear<sup>a</sup> to my need for relief,  
to my cry for help.<sup>7</sup>

**57** Come near to me on the day I call to you. Say to me, "Don't be afraid."

**58** My Lord! Plead my desperate case;<sup>8</sup> redeem my life.

**59** LORD, look at my mistreatment; judge my cause.

**60** Look at all of my enemies' vengeance, all of their scheming against me.

**61** Hear their jeering, LORD, all of their scheming against me,

**62** the speech of those who rise up against me,  
their incessant gossiping about me.

**63** Whether sitting or standing,  
look at how I am the object of their song of ridicule.

**64** Pay them back fully, LORD, according to what they have done.

**65** Give them a tortured mind—put your curse on them!

**66** Angriily hunt them down; wipe them out from under the LORD's heaven.

### The people's suffering

**4** Oh, no!

Gold is tarnished;<sup>a</sup> even the purest gold is changed.

**5** Sacred jewels are scattered on every street corner.

**6** Zion's precious children, once valued as pure gold—  
oh no!—now they are worth no more than clay pots made by a potter.

**7** Even jackals offer the breast; they nurse their young.  
But the daughter of my people has become cruel, like desert ostriches.

**8** The baby's tongue sticks to the roof of its mouth, thirsty.  
Children ask for bread, beg for it—but there is no bread.

**9** Those who once ate gourmet food now tremble in the streets.  
Those who wore the finest purple clothes now cling to piles of garbage.

**10** Greater was the punishment<sup>b</sup> of the daughter of my people  
than Sodom's penalty,<sup>c</sup>  
which was quickly overthrown without any hand-wringing.<sup>d</sup>

**11** Her nazirites were purer than snow; they were more dazzling than milk.  
Their limbs were redder than coral; their bodies were sapphire.

**12** But their appearance grew darker than soot;  
they weren't recognized in the streets.  
Their skin shriveled on their bones; it became dry like wood.

<sup>a</sup>Or You didn't close your ear. <sup>7</sup>Or You have heard my voice. <sup>8</sup>Or my spirit's case or my spirit's grievance

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Or iniquity <sup>c</sup>Or sin <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain

3:55-66 This section includes typical elements of lament psalms: address to God (3:55-56), request for God to help (3:57-60), and a description of enemies' mistreatment (3:60-66). An expression of trust in God, which is also a common element, is missing from the strong man's prayer.

3:57 *Don't be afraid*: God often says this when coming near to human beings (e.g., Gen 15:1; Isa 41:13).

4:1-16 In this fourth poem, the speaking voice may be the same as the narrator in the first two poems (Lam 1-2). This voice, however, speaks less passionately. The poem stresses the contrast between how things used to be and how they are now.

4:1-2 Everything that was valuable has become worthless.

*Gold and Sacred jewels* (perhaps from the temple), and even *precious children* are now thrown away like broken *clay pots*. *Oh, no!*: See note on Lamentations 1:1.

4:3 *jackals and ostriches*: animals known for neglecting their young.

4:4-8 The physical effects of famine during the siege and destruction: clamped mouth, trembling, shriveled skin. The bright and beautiful colors of health faded and *grew darker than soot* with the people's starvation.

4:6 The city of *Sodom* is the ultimate example of sinfulness, causing God to destroy it (Gen 19:1-28). Here and in Lamentations 4:9, the narrator argues that a quick death would have been preferable to the slow suffering experienced during the siege.

- 9 Things were better for those stabbed by the sword  
 than for those stabbed by famine—  
 those who bled away, pierced, lacking food from the field.
- 10 The hands of loving women boiled their own children  
 to become their food during the destruction of the daughter of my people.
- 11 The LORD let loose his fury; he poured out his fierce anger.  
 He started a fire in Zion; it licked up its foundations.
- 12 The earth's rulers didn't believe it—neither did any who inhabit the world—  
 that either enemy or adversary could enter Jerusalem's gates.
- 13 It was because of her prophets' sins, her priests' iniquities,  
 those who shed righteous blood in the middle of the city.
- 14 People wandered blindly in the streets, polluted with blood.  
 No one would even touch their clothing.
- 15 "Go away! Unclean!" was shouted at them, "Go away! Away! Don't touch!"  
 So they fled and wandered around.  
 The nations said, "They can't stay here anymore."
- 16 It was the LORD's presence that scattered them;\* he no longer notices them.  
 They didn't honor the priests' presence; they didn't favor the elders.
- 17 Our eyes continually failed, looking for some help, but for nothing.  
 From our watchtower we watched for a nation that doesn't save.
- 18 Our steps were tracked; we could no longer walk in our streets.  
 Our end had drawn near; our days were done—our end had definitely come.
- 19 Our hunters were faster than airborne eagles.  
 They chased us up the mountains; they ambushed us in the wilderness.
- 20 The LORD's chosen one, the very breath in our lungs,  
 was caught in their traps—  
 the one we used to talk about, saying,  
 Under his protection we will live among the nations."
- 21 Rejoice and be happy, Daughter Edom, you who live in the land of Uz.  
 But this cup will pass over to you too.  
 You will get drunk on it. You will be stripped naked.

4:10 Lv 26:29;  
 Dt 28:53;  
 2Ki 6:29;  
 Jer 19:9;  
 Lam 2:20  
 4:16 Is 9:14;  
 Lam 5:12  
 4:20 Gn 2:7;  
 2Sa 19:21;  
 Jer 39:5;  
 Eze 19:4

\*Heb uncertain

4:10 See note on Lamentations 2:20. As *loving women*, they acted not out of cruelty but because they had no other choice.

4:11 This is the first mention of God in the poem. God's *fury* and *fierce anger* reflect the angry violence of God described in Lamentations 1–3.

4:12 Traditional theology held that Jerusalem, or Zion, couldn't be destroyed. The city was the dwelling place of God, and God would always keep it from harm. But the unthinkable has occurred, and it has shocked the rulers of surrounding nations.

4:13–15 The *prophets* and *priests* were to promote ritual purity. Instead, they themselves have become impure. Persons with a scaly skin disease (it was not leprosy) were to shout "Unclean!" so that no one would touch them (Lev 13:45–46). The people of Jerusalem are now as contaminated and isolated as a person with a skin disease.

4:17–20 A shift to the voice of the community as a whole.

There's a contrast between the city's inhabitants, who *actively watched* and *could no longer walk*, and the speed and agility of their enemies. It was inevitable that they would be caught.

4:17 It's not fully clear which *nation* was hoped to provide some *help* during the siege. Perhaps Egypt (cf. Jer 37:5–10)? Perhaps Edom (cf. Lam 4:21–22)?

4:20 *The Lord's chosen one, the very breath in our lungs*, and *Under his protection* are all traditional titles for kings. Zedekiah, who was captured by the Babylonians, is probably the king in mind (2 Kgs 25:1–7; Jer 39:1–7).

4:21–22 *Daughter Zion* returns (see Lam 1–2), along with *Daughter Edom*. Edom was a traditional enemy of Israel. It is shameful to be *stripped naked* and exposed (see note on Lam 1:8). What happened to Jerusalem will also happen to Edom.

4:21 *this cup*: The cup of God's wrath (e.g., Jer 25:15–29; Isa 51:17–22).

5:16 Job 19:9;  
Ps 89:39;  
Jer 13:18

22 Your punishment<sup>f</sup> is over, Daughter Zion; God won't expose you anymore.  
But he will attend to your punishment,  
Daughter Edom; he will expose your sins.

### The people's complaint

5 LORD, consider what has become of us; take notice of our disgrace. Look at it!  
2 Our property has been turned over to strangers;  
our houses belong to foreigners.  
3 We have become orphans, having no father;  
our mothers are like widows.  
4 We drink our own water—but for a price;  
we gather our own wood—but pay for it.  
5 Our hunters have been at our necks;<sup>g</sup>  
we are worn out, but have no rest.  
6 We held out a hand to Egypt and to Assyria, to get sufficient food.  
7 Our fathers have sinned and are gone,  
but we are burdened with their iniquities.  
8 Slaves rule over us; there is no one to rescue us from their power.  
9 We get our bread at the risk of our lives because of the desert heat.<sup>h</sup>  
10 Our skin is as hot as an oven because of the burning heat of famine.  
11 Women have been raped in Zion,  
young women in Judah's cities.  
12 Officials have been hung up by their hands;  
elders have been shown no respect.  
13 Young men have carried grinding stones;  
boys have stumbled under loads of wood.  
14 Elders have left the city gate;  
young people stop their music.  
15 Joy has left our heart;  
our dancing has changed into lamentation.  
16 The crown has fallen off our head.  
We are doomed because we have sinned.  
17 Because of all this our heart is sick;  
because of these things our glance is dark.  
18 Mount Zion, now deserted—  
only jackals walk on it now!  
19 But you, LORD, will rule forever;  
your throne lasts from one generation to the next.  
20 Why do you forget us continually;  
why do you abandon us for such a long time?

<sup>f</sup>Or iniquity <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>h</sup>Or sword; Heb uncertain

5:1-22 The fifth, and shortest, poem continues the voice of the community. It's much like a communal psalm. The poem gives a picture of Jerusalem after the Babylonians took possession of the city. The structures of civil society have disintegrated.

5:1 The speakers call out to God right away, demanding that God pay attention to their need. This poem is more of a prayer than the other four poems. The details of *our disgrace* are described in Lamentations 5:2-18.

5:2-3 Family life was the center of Israelite society, but it has been broken apart. *widows*: See note on Lamentations 1:1.

5:4-5 Daily life is a struggle. Items that used to be plentiful are now expensive.

5:7 Though it was the past generation who sinned, the current generation is still paying the price for their sin.

5:8 The people used to have their own king (see Lam

5:17). But now they are being ruled by *Slaves*, low-level Babylonian administrators.

5:9-13 Food is scarce and difficult to get. The people have been pressed into hard labor. Daily life is unsafe, including dangers of rape, heatstroke, and even execution (*hung up*, 5:12).

5:14-17 *Joy has left our heart... our heart is sick*: All of these struggles have ultimately had a negative impact on the people's spirits. They no longer engage in pleasurable social activities. *city gate*: See note on Lamentations 1:4.

5:18 *jackals* live in destroyed places (cf. Isa 34:11-17; Jer 9:11; Lam 4:3). Once populated by God's chosen people, only wild beasts live in Zion now.

5:19 A brief statement of about God's authority, common in lament psalms (see Lam 3:21-42).

5:20-22 The people's final plea is for a *return* to a good relationship with God. But God still doesn't answer them. It

<sup>21</sup> Return us, LORD, to yourself. Please let us return!<sup>i</sup>

Give us new days, like those long ago—

<sup>22</sup> unless you have completely rejected us,  
or have become too angry with us.<sup>j</sup>

<sup>i</sup>Or *and we will return or so that we can return* <sup>j</sup>Or *But instead you have completely rejected us, become too angry with us, or Because if you have completely rejected us, have become too angry with us.*

seems that God is still angry with them and continues to reject them. God hasn't healed their suffering. The people are as abandoned as they were at the beginning. The book ends tragically, with disappointment and hopelessness.

by the firms and by the government. The government is expected to be able to

act as a 'coordinator' of the market and to be able to influence the market

through the use of instruments such as taxes and subsidies. The government is

expected to be able to act as a 'regulator' of the market and to be able to

influence the market through the use of instruments such as standards and

regulations. The government is expected to be able to act as a 'producer' of

public goods and to be able to influence the market through the use of

instruments such as public provision and public financing. The government

is expected to be able to act as a 'consumer' of private goods and to be able

to influence the market through the use of instruments such as public

procurement and public consumption. The government is expected to be able

to act as a 'provider' of social services and to be able to influence the market

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market through the use of instruments such as public provision and public

financing. The government is expected to be able to act as a 'regulator' of the

market and to be able to influence the market through the use of instruments



"This was how the form of the LORD's glory appeared" (Ezek 1:28). With this halting, nervous statement, the prophet Ezekiel sums up his first encounter with God, and in so doing states the thesis for his prophecies. The scroll containing his prophetic speech is controlled by this experience, because each of Ezekiel's prophecies, in some way, relates to the issue of God's presence with God's people. These prophecies were written long ago, in a culture filled with images and worship practices quite strange to the modern reader. They were written by a priest for a highly educated audience. Each prophecy requires literary and theological knowledge that is difficult for us to understand today. As we study the ancient expressions of Ezekiel, we attempt to mentally transport ourselves to a distant intellectual, historical, and cultural setting to appreciate Ezekiel's encounter with God.

Though known to readers as a prophet, Ezekiel was first and foremost a priest in the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. As a temple priest,

he belonged to a select, privileged, educated class in Judah's ancient society. His prophecies show familiarity with the literature and theological symbols of his day. In Ezekiel 28, for example, he not only refers to the story of the garden of Eden but he toys with it. His learning was a function of his call to minister before God's presence in the temple. He helped God's people distinguish between holy things and ordinary things. To make this distinction he followed the authoritative traditions of Jerusalem's temple on Mount Zion. This meant for Ezekiel that God was enthroned in the most holy place, and priests approached the Lord on behalf of the nation through long-established rituals that ensured purity.

As someone trained to approach God's presence, Ezekiel felt God's absence deeply. Since the death of King Josiah in 609 BCE, the tiny nation of Judah had been caught in the trap of international politics. Immediately after Josiah's death, his successor King Jehohaz was taken into captivity to Egypt. In 605, Babylon



Cedar trees (Ezek 17:22)

iStockPhoto

defeated Egypt at the battle of Carchemish, which moved Judah and the whole region under the authority of Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar (605–562 BCE). The royal court in Judah debated whether to remain loyal to Babylon, or to ally with Egypt and make a bid for self-rule. King Jehoiakim (608–598 BCE) decided for rebellion, which failed, resulting in the first Babylonian exile (597 BCE). In its quest for a more controlled, compliant Judah, Babylon took the educated and powerful officials from Judah, hauling them away to refugee camps southwest of Babylon. With this first wave of exiles, Ezekiel was welcomed to his new home, where he saw visions of God, predicted judgment and hope, and most likely lived out the remainder of his life.

Back in Jerusalem, however, life continued, as did also the political dilemma, even though the royal house had been transformed. Jehoiakim died before he saw the consequences of his decision, leaving his son King Jehoiachin (598–597 BCE) to be taken into captivity. In his place, King Zedekiah (597–587 BCE) was placed on the Jerusalem throne, having solemnly promised to serve King Nebuchadnezzar. Still the internal conflict continued on several fronts. The initial defeat and the continuing Babylonian threat raised theological questions about God's presence in the temple, the implications for the people's covenant with their God, and who might now be considered God's elect people. On the political front, questions of loyalty to Babylon or aid from Egypt continued. Such questions were felt just as deeply by Ezekiel and his fellow exiles in Mesopotamia, with all of these questions focused on whether, given the separation from and possible destruction of the temple, God's presence could ever be encountered again. Eventually Zedekiah rebelled once more. In 587 Jerusalem fell, the temple

was destroyed, and Jerusalem and Judah lay in ruins. Some effort was made to maintain a governmental presence, initially led by Gedaliah (cf. Jer 40–41). But Babylon generally left the land to its "sabbath" (cf. 2 Chron 36:21), underdeveloped and chaotic, until Persian rule during the last quarter of the 6th century BCE. This physical state was a mere reflection of the much more serious rip in the cosmos left by the absence of Israel's national God, Yahweh.

Ezekiel confronted these issues directly and bluntly. Today, Ezekiel's prophecies are delivered to us in a handy book form, progressing from oracles mainly judging the house of Israel (Ezek 1–24), to a mediating section of oracles against foreign nations (Ezek 25–32), followed by oracles dominated by messages promising restoration (Ezek 33–48). This organization creates the appearance of a well-mannered, highly structured composition. This neat package, however, is the creation of editors. Ezekiel, as can be seen from the different dates attached to many of his oracles, prophesied his oracles over some 20 years, dating from 593 to 571 BCE. Though his prophecies carry a single thesis and relate ultimately to a longing to encounter God's presence, each passage speaks to a specific situation and has an integrity all its own. Later editors collected the individual pieces, treasured them, and strung them together to form the book we read today.

As we approach the book, we find Ezekiel and his community believing that they no longer have access to God's presence. They had been expelled from Jerusalem and the temple. Their access and service to the presence of the enthroned God had ended. They truly were "completely finished" (Ezek 37:11) or "cut off" from the land and from any experience of the Lord. On a dark day such as this, in the midst of his hopelessness, God startled Ezekiel.

**I. Heading to the Scroll (1:1-3)****II. First Vision: Ezekiel's Call (1:4-3:27)**

- A. Ezekiel sees the Lord's glory (1:4-28a)
- B. Ezekiel hears the Lord's voice (1:28b-3:27)
  1. God speaks #1 (2:1): Swallowing the scroll (1:28b-3:3)
  2. God speaks #2 (3:4): Ezekiel's head and heart (3:4-11)
  3. A pause: Ezekiel stunned among the exiles in Tel-abib (3:15)
  4. The Lord's word: Ezekiel as a lookout (3:16-21)
  5. The Lord's glory: the closing of Ezekiel's mouth (3:22-27)

**III. Four Symbolic Actions: The Final Siege of Jerusalem (4:1-5:17)**

- A. Brick (4:1-3)
- B. Lying on his sides (4:4-8)
- C. Starving (4:9-17)
- D. Cutting Ezekiel's hair (5:1-17)

**IV. Prophecy Against the Land (6:1-7:27)**

- A. The mountains of Israel (6:1-14; recognition formula)
- B. The day and an end! (7:1-27; recognition formula)

**V. Second Vision: The Lord Abandons the Temple (8:1-11:25)**

- A. The detestable practices of the house of Israel (8:1-18)
- B. Execution of Jerusalem (9:1-11)
- C. The Lord's exit (10:1-11:25)
  1. Vision of the Lord's glory in the temple (10:1-22)
  2. Disputing the elders' claim (11:1-21)
  3. Vision of the Lord's glory departing to the east (11:22-25)

**VI. After the Siege: Two Sign-Acts (12:1-20)**

- A. Exile's baggage (= prince in Jerusalem after the fall; 12:1-16)
- B. Eating food in fear and trembling (= survivors in the land; 12:17-20)

**VII. Messages about Prophecy (12:21-14:11)**

- A. Dispute concerning the proverb regarding prophecy unfulfilled (12:21-28)
- B. Judgment on the prophets (13:1-23):
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- C. Refusal to be consulted (14:1-11)

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- A. Covenantal curses on the land (14:12-23)
- B. The vine: inhabitants of Jerusalem (15:1-8)
- C. The prostitute: Jerusalem (16:1-63)
- D. The cedar: Zedekiah (17:1-24)
- E. The three generations (18:1-32)
- F. Two laments (19:1-14)
  1. Over the lioness and her cubs (19:2-9)
  2. Over the vine (19:10-14)

**IX. The Exodus Delayed (20:1-44)****X. Fire and Sword (20:45-22:32)**

- A. Fire from the Lord (20:45-49)
- B. The Lord's sword (21:1-17)
- C. Nebuchadnezzar's decision (21:18-27)
- D. Acquittal of the Ammonites (21:28-32)
- E. Burning and purgation (22:1-31)
  1. Jerusalem and blood (22:1-16)
  2. House of Israel and smelting (22:17-22)
  3. Unclean land (22:23-31)

**XI. Oholah and Oholibah (23:1-49)****XII. Jerusalem, the Cooking Pot (24:1-14)****XIII. Death of the Wives (24:15-27)****XIV. Oracles Against the Nations (25:1-32:32)**

- A. Against Judah's neighbors (25:1-17)
- B. Against Tyre (26:1-28:19)
- C. Against Sidon (28:20-26)
- D. Against Egypt (29:1-32:32)

**XV. Ezekiel's Recommissioning (33:1-33)**

- A. Ezekiel as a lookout (33:1-9)
- B. God's justice (33:10-20)
- C. The report from the escapee (33:21-22)
- D. Rightful inheritance (33:23-29)
- E. Opening of Ezekiel's mouth (33:30-33)

**XVI. Restoration (34:1-37:28)**

- A. The shepherd and the flock (34:1-31)
- B. Oracles claiming the land of Israel (35:1-36:15)
  1. Against Edom's claim on the land (35:1-15)
  2. Promising Israel's repossession of the land (36:1-15)
- C. In defense of the Lord's honor (36:16-38)
- D. Vision of resuscitation (37:1-14)
- E. Unification of the land (37:15-28)

**XVII. God's Protection of an Unwalled Land (38:1-39:29)****XVIII. Fourth Vision: A New Temple for a New Land (40:1-48:35)**

- A. Introduction (40:1-5)
- B. Access to the holy: The dimensions of the new temple (40:5-42:20)
- C. God enthroned (43:1-12)
- D. Temple policies (43:13-46:24)
  1. The altar (43:13-27)
  2. The east gate (44:1-3)
  3. Granting access to classes within society (44:4-31)
  4. The holy portion (45:1-9)
  5. The prince and proper sacrifices (45:10-46:24)
- E. The river of paradise (47:1-13)
- F. The allotment of the land (47:14-48:35a)
- G. The name of the city (48:35b)

1:1 Eze 1:3;  
Eze 3:23, Eze 8:3;  
Eze 10:15;  
Eze 11:24

1:4 Jer 1:14;  
Jer 23:19;  
Eze 1:27, Eze 8:2

1:5 Rev 4:6

1:6 Eze 1:10;  
Eze 10:14;  
Eze 10:21

1:7 Dn 10:6;  
Rev 1:15

1:8 Eze 10:8;  
Eze 10:21

1:9 Eze 10:22

1:10 Eze 10:14;  
Rev 4:7

1:11 Is 6:2;  
Eze 1:23

1:12 Eze 1:9;  
Eze 1:20

### First vision

**1** In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, I was with the exiles at the Chebar River when the heavens opened and I saw visions of God. <sup>2</sup>(It happened on the fifth day of the month, in the fifth year after King Jehoiachin's deportation. <sup>3</sup>The LORD's word burst in on the priest Ezekiel, Buzi's son, in the land of Babylon at the Chebar River. There the LORD's power overcame him.)

<sup>4</sup>As I watched, suddenly a driving storm came out of the north, a great cloud flashing fire, with brightness all around. At its center, in the middle of the fire, there was something like gleaming amber. <sup>5</sup>And inside that were forms of four living creatures. This was what they looked like: Each had the form of a human being, <sup>6</sup>though each had four faces and four wings. <sup>7</sup>Their feet looked like proper feet, but the soles of their feet were like calves' hooves, and they shone like burnished bronze. <sup>8</sup>Human hands were under their wings on all four sides. All four creatures had faces and wings, and <sup>9</sup>their wings touched each other's wings. When they moved, they each went straight ahead without turning. <sup>10</sup>As for the form of their faces: each of the four had a human face, with a lion's face on the right and a bull's face on the left, and also an eagle's face. <sup>11</sup>The pairs of wings<sup>a</sup> that stretched out overhead touched each other, while the other pairs covered their bodies. <sup>12</sup>Each moved straight ahead wherever

<sup>a</sup>LXX, MT adds *and their faces*.

1:1-3 As is typical of prophetic books (e.g., Isa 1:1; Jer 1:1; Amos 1:1; Hos 1:1), the heading of the book introduces the prophet by name, the general era of the prophecies, and Judah's king. The heading is written in both first and third person, indicating that the community later added to the heading. This may have happened after circumstances had demonstrated that Ezekiel truly was a prophet (cf. Ezek 2:5; 33:33).

1:1 *In the thirtieth year*: The initial date of the thirtieth year seems most likely to refer to Ezekiel's age. This would be the age at which, if Ezekiel were still in Jerusalem, he would have been fully initiated as a priest and able to serve in God's presence (Num 4, 3, 23, 30), *with the exiles at the Chebar River*: The Chebar River is identified roughly along the stretches of the lower Euphrates, southeast of Babylon, and may have been a part of the Babylonian canal systems, by which they diverted water for irrigation. Fragments of ancient Near Eastern documents mentioned a canal with a similar name as a location where refugees were enslaved to build the Babylonian infrastructure. Harsh labor, verbal and physical abuse, and shaming of both the exiles and their God can be assumed (cf. Ps 137). *visions of God*: Although much of the material in the prophetic book isn't a reported vision, the visions of Ezekiel 1, 8-11, and 40-48, each deal with God's presence and carry the theme of the prophetic message.

1:2 *fifth year*: This second date clarifies the initial date, anchoring it this time, not in the prophet's life but in the life of the exiles. The fifth year was 593 (in August), a time when the nation was wrestling with whether to remain passive subjects of Nebuchadnezzar, or to seek help from Egypt and attempt to break away (cf. Jer 27-28). Only one other time does the book present a second, clarifying date formula: Ezekiel 40:1, which introduces God's final grand vision.

1:2 *Jehoiachin*: Jehoiakim's son and Josiah's grandson reigned only three months after the death of his father before being carried into exile in 597 BCE. The fact that he names Jehoiachin (and not his successor in Jerusalem, Zedekiah the youngest son of Josiah), reveals Ezekiel's loyalties and ideas about who was the legitimate ruler.

1:3 *The LORD's word... on the priest Ezekiel, Buzi's son*: The shift to third-person speech provides important

biographical information not known outside of Ezekiel's immediate audience. *the Lord's power*: Compare with Exodus 9:3; Joshua 4:24; 1 Samuel 5:6, 9. In Ezekiel's prophecies, the phrase refers to the means by which the prophet sees visions and has the strength to deliver God's message (cf. Ezek 3:14, 22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1).

1:4-28 Ezekiel's encounter with God's presence in exile. The prophet describes his vision progressively, moving from a description of the four creatures (1:5-14), to the wheels (1:15-21), then to a dome (1:22-25), which separated what was below from what was above, and finally, the climax, a sapphire throne with the Lord's glory seated above it (1:26-28a). Ancient Hebrew tradition included a prophet being met by God as a part of their commission (cf. Isa 6; Jer 1:4-19).

1:4 *a driving storm*: This is typical OT language of theophany, which is an appearance that communicates God's power (cf. Exod 19:16; 20:18; Deut 4:11; 5:22-24; Ps 18:11-15; 46:1-3; 68:7-8; Nah 1:3-5; but compare with 1 Kgs 19:11-12). *came out of the north*: In ancient Israelite tradition, God lived on a mountain in the north (sometimes left untranslated, "Zaphon"). Mount Zion, the location of the temple in Jerusalem, was believed to grant spiritual access to this mountain (cf. Job 26:7; Isa 14:13; Ps 48:2).

1:5 *four living creatures*: As will be seen, these are composite beings, common in the religious images of the ancient Near East (cf. Isa 6:1-3; see sidebar, "The Living Creatures"). These fearsome and powerful beasts did the bidding of the deity in ancient Near Eastern thought. To Ezekiel, they signaled the Lord's entourage. *forms of*: This language separates Ezekiel and his audience from God's presence. The sense is that the vision is too amazing to describe in words.

1:6 *four faces*: The creatures' faces were trained on the points of the compass, as faithful guardians.

1:9, 12, 20 *each went straight ahead without turning*: emphasizing the right of God to move anywhere and in any direction.

1:11 *covered their bodies*: The creatures are sensitive not to insult God by uncovering their nakedness (cf. Isa 62; but also Exod 20:26; 28:42 in regard to priests).

1:12, 17, 20 *wherever the wind propelled*: The Hebrew word here translated "wind" is the same word translated

1:13 Ps 104:4;  
Rev 4:5  
1:14 Zec 4:10;  
Mt 24:27  
1:15 Eze 3:13,  
Eze 10:9; Dn 7:9  
1:16 Eze 10:9,  
Eze 10:10;  
Dn 10:6  
1:17 Eze 1:9,  
Eze 1:12  
1:18 Eze 10:12;  
Rev 4:6, Rev 4:8  
1:19 Eze 10:16  
1:20 Eze 1:12  
1:21 Eze 10:17  
1:22 Gn 1:6;  
Eze 1:26,  
Eze 10:1;  
Rev 4:6,  
Rev 21:11  
1:23 Eze 1:11  
1:24 Eze 10:5,  
Eze 43:2;  
Dn 10:6;  
Rev 1:15,  
Rev 19:6

*The Living Creatures* The four creatures of Ezekiel 1 are composite beasts, human in form, but with body parts from different animals: for example, the legs of a calf, faces of a lion, bull, and eagle, and wings. While strange and speculative to us, such imagery was a regular part of the theological speech of the ancient world and in Israel (cf. 1 Kgs 7:27-39) when depicting heavenly beings.

The inner sanctuary of a temple excavated at Ain Dara in Syria had a floor plan very similar to that of the temple in Jerusalem. In that sanctuary, on a row of basalt stones, a series of images show composite beasts surrounding a mountain god. Each figure has wings, and the faces of lions, bull-men, and eagles, corresponding to the creatures in Ezekiel 1.

Ezekiel 1:22-28 describes an appearance of an enthroned figure, seated above a dome or a sky platform. Again, this image would be recognizable to the prophet's audience. Archaeologists have found ancient tiles depicting a god seated on a throne that rests on a platform, which is itself above a resting composite beast.

In Ezekiel 1:9, 12, 20, reference is made to the four beasts transporting a litter (or sedan), which carried royalty in the ancient world. In a basalt sculpture from Carchemish (northern Syria), two lions, being led by an eagle-headed human, carry a litter, with the god enthroned above it.

While strange to the modern reader, and surprising to Ezekiel and his compatriots as well, we can all know what Ezekiel saw: the glory of God, enthroned and being carried by a heavenly entourage, coming to the exiles in Babylon.

the wind propelled them; they moved without turning. <sup>13</sup>Regarding the creatures' forms: they looked like blazing coals, like torches. Fire darted about between the creatures and illuminated them, and lightning flashed from the fire. <sup>14</sup>The creatures looked like lightning streaking back and forth.

<sup>15</sup>As I looked at the creatures, suddenly there was a wheel on the earth corresponding to all four faces of the creatures. <sup>16</sup>The appearance and composition of the wheels were like sparkling topaz. There was one shape for all four of them, as if one wheel were inside another. <sup>17</sup>When they moved in any of the four directions, they moved without swerving. <sup>18</sup>Their rims were tall and terrifying, because all four of them were filled with eyes all around. <sup>19</sup>When the creatures moved, the wheels moved next to them. Whenever the creatures rose above the earth, the wheels also rose up. <sup>20</sup>Wherever the wind would appear to go, the wind would make them go there too. The wheels rose up beside them, because the spirit<sup>b</sup> of the creatures was in the wheels. <sup>21</sup>When they moved, the wheels<sup>c</sup> moved; when they stood still, the wheels stood still; and when they rose above the earth, the wheels rose up along with them, because the spirit<sup>d</sup> of the creatures was in the wheels.

<sup>22</sup>The shape above the heads of the creatures<sup>e</sup> was a dome; it was like glittering ice stretched out over their heads. <sup>23</sup>Just below the dome, their outstretched wings touched each other. They each also had two wings to cover their bodies. <sup>24</sup>Then I heard the sound of

<sup>b</sup>Or wind <sup>c</sup>Or they <sup>d</sup>Or wind <sup>e</sup>LXX; MT creature

"storm" in Ezekiel 1:4, and sometimes "breath" elsewhere. It appears 32 times in Ezekiel. As seen in 1:4, the spirit almost has a life of its own, though it always works in loyal obedience to God. In 1:12, the spirit directs the movement of the creatures. The spirit lifts up Ezekiel and moves him around the earth (Ezek 2:2; 3:12, 24; 8:3; 11:24; 37:1; 43:5). Similarly, the spirit is the force that gives life to the dry bones (Ezek 37:5, 6, 9, 10; cf. Gen 2). The east wind sinks the ship Tyre in the midst of the chaotic waters (Ezek 27:26; cf. Exod 14:21; 15:8-10).

1:13 *blazing coals*: a common image accompanying an appearance of God (Ps 18:8, 12 // 2 Sam 22:9, 13). Burning coals also appear in the vision in Ezekiel 10:2, where they serve a purifying purpose. *torches*: The Hebrew indicates specific torches that were moving. This suggests that this image would have had some specific meaning for Ezekiel's audience. Note that torches pass between the offerings at the covenant sealing ceremony in Genesis 15:17.

1:15 *a wheel*... *corresponding to all four faces of the creatures*: The addition of wheels implies a ceremonial cart

being ushered in by the creatures, or perhaps a four-wheeled chariot.

1:16 *as if one wheel were inside another*: reflects the practical construction of wheels in the ancient world. An inner spoke-wheel was supported by an outer rim made of wood and metal, which bore the punishment of the road or terrain (cf. Ezek 1:18). As the rim wore out, it would be replaced without having also to remake the inner wheel.

1:18 *eyes all around*: Although this phrase may refer to the sparkling nails holding together these wheels made of precious materials, omniscience (that is, "knowing everything") is more likely the point.

1:22 *a dome*: This platform separates the sacred from the ordinary, the heavenly from the earthly. In Genesis 1:6-8, the same term refers to the means by which the chaotic waters are kept away from the life-giving created order.

1:24 *the Almighty*: a name for an appearance of God, sometimes left untranslated: "El Shaddai" (Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3; Exod 6:3; Num 24:4, 16; and Ezek 10:5). Ancient tradition seemed to have held that appearances of

1:25 Eze 1:22  
 1:26 Ex 24:10;  
 Is 6:1; Eze 1:22;  
 Eze 10:1;  
 Rev 1:13  
 1:27 Eze 1:4;  
 Eze 8:2  
 1:28 Gn 9:13;  
 Gn 17:3;  
 Eze 3:23;  
 Rev 4:3;  
 Rev 10:1  
 2:1 Eze 3:17;  
 Dn 10:11; Ac 9:6  
 2:3 Eze 3:4;  
 Eze 20:18  
 2:4 Eze 3:7

their wings when they moved forward. It was like the sound of mighty waters, like the sound of the Almighty,<sup>f</sup> like the sound of tumult or the sound of an army camp. When they stood still, their wings came to rest. <sup>25</sup>Then there was a sound from above the dome over their heads. They stood still, and their wings came to rest.

<sup>26</sup>Above the dome over their heads, there appeared something like lapis lazuli in the form of a throne. Above the form of the throne there was a form that looked like a human being. <sup>27</sup>Above what looked like his waist, I saw something like gleaming amber, something like fire enclosing it all around. Below what looked like his waist, I saw something that appeared to be fire. Its brightness shone all around. <sup>28</sup>Just as a rainbow lights up a cloud on a rainy day, so its brightness shone all around. This was how the form of the LORD's glory appeared. When I saw it, I fell on my face. I heard the sound of someone speaking.

### **Ezekiel's commissioning**

**2**The voice said to me: Human one, stand on your feet, and I'll speak to you. <sup>2</sup>As he spoke to me, a wind<sup>g</sup> came to me and stood me on my feet, and I heard someone addressing me. <sup>3</sup>He said to me: Human one, I'm sending you to the Israelites, a traitorous and rebellious people. They and their ancestors have been rebelling against me to this very day. <sup>4</sup>I'm sending you to their hardheaded and hard-hearted descendants, and you will say to them:

*The Dates in the Book of Ezekiel* Few other prophetic books use dates as extensively and purposefully as Ezekiel. Thirteen dates introduce prophetic passages in the book (Ezek 1:1; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:21; 40:1), which follow a regular form. Prior to Ezekiel, date formulas weren't commonly associated with prophecies. Instead, the context of an oracle or vision was identified by an event or a year in a king's reign (e.g., Isa 6:1; Amos 1:1; Jer 27:1). The dates in Ezekiel generally follow chronologically, though there are departures (e.g., Ezek 29:17). They are clumped heavily around the fall of Jerusalem, which is certainly the critical event for Ezekiel. The dates serve to archive Ezekiel's prophecies, certifying when a prophecy was spoken for a later reader, who knows how things turned out (cf. Isa 8:16). The recognition of Ezekiel as a prophet was an important theme (Ezek 2:5; 33:33), and the archiving of prophecies allows for the truth of the prophetic word to be evaluated (cf. Deut 18:15-22). In contrast to his predecessors, who interceded with God to affect events in their own day (e.g., Jer 26:3; Joel 2:12-14), Ezekiel wrote in part to reveal the will of God for a later audience, one that lived in the future, restored nation.

<sup>f</sup>Heb *Shaddai* or *Mountain One* <sup>g</sup>Or *spirit*

the Almighty could be accompanied by powerful sounds, such as thunder or the roar of the ocean.

1:26 *in the form of a throne*: The description of the vision nears its climax, and the mention of a throne shows the reader that God still reigns, even in exile (cf. Isaiah's call at Isa 6:1).

1:28 *a rainbow ... on a rainy day*: In Genesis 9:12-17, the rainbow signals God's promise to humankind that God will guard the created order. In ancient Near Eastern culture, a warrior's bow, hanging down, signified the end of war—peace. Up to this point, the prophet may not have known why God was coming to Babylon; perhaps it was to finish off him and his exilic compatriots. This final detail shows Ezekiel and his readers that God intends peace for the exiles. *the LORD's glory*: This sentence closes out the vision, stating for the first time that Ezekiel encountered God's glory (see sidebar, "The Lord's Glory" at Ezek 10).

2:1-3:27 The vision ends in 1:28a, and Ezekiel hears God's assignment for him. This section has five parts (2:1-3:3; 3:4-11; 3:12-15; 3:16-21; 3:22-27), with the center serving as a pause, when the prophet sits stunned for seven days, allowing readers to catch their breath. Afterward, his attention is turned away from God and toward his community.

2:1 *Human one*: The title given to Ezekiel throughout the prophecies, occurring over 90 times. The point is to contrast the prophet, who represents humanity (cf. Gen 2:7)

before God, with God and all that is divine. In Ezekiel 34:31; 36:37-38, God's "flock," the remaining few elected by the Lord for restoration, are identified as "human."

2:3 *the Israelites*: This is Ezekiel's broadest category for all of the people, without distinction, whether from Judah or Israel, in exile or still in the land, righteous or unrighteous. This category didn't include people of other nations whose national deities were not Israel's Lord. *they and their ancestors*: In Ezekiel's prophecies, there is never a time when the people are righteous before God. Any salvation that the nation experienced was a product of God's concern for God's own reputation and presence on the earth (cf. Ezek 20; 36:22-23).

2:4 *The LORD God proclaims*: a standard prophetic phrase, designed to emphasize a quoted message from God (modeled after the speech of messengers used in the ancient world to deliver diplomatic messages, cf. 1 Kgs 20:2, 13). The repetition of the phrase here and in Ezekiel 3:11; 3:27 helps to shape the passage. *LORD God*: This is Ezekiel's most important name for the people's national God, appearing over 210 times in the book, and fewer than 100 times elsewhere in the OT. In particular, Ezekiel seems to have chosen this name for God over against the name "Lord of heavenly forces," the name typically applied to God by the Jerusalem priests. Such a shift in terminology implies that for Ezekiel, the exile and the glory's later

The LORD God proclaims. <sup>5</sup>Whether they listen or whether they refuse, since they are a household of rebels, they will know that a prophet has been among them.

<sup>6</sup>And as for you, human one, don't be afraid of them or their words. Don't be afraid! You possess thistles and thorns that subdue scorpions. <sup>b</sup>Don't be afraid of their words or shrink from their presence, because they are a household of rebels. <sup>7</sup>You'll speak my words to them whether they listen or whether they refuse. They are just a household<sup>1</sup> of rebels!

<sup>8</sup>As for you, human one, listen to what I say to you. Don't become rebellious like that household of rebels. Open your mouth and eat what I give you. <sup>9</sup>Then I looked, and there in a hand stretched out to me was a scroll. <sup>10</sup>He spread it open in front of me, and it was filled with writing on both sides, songs of mourning, lamentation, and doom.

**3** Then he said to me: Human one, eat this thing that you've found. Eat this scroll and go, speak to the house of Israel. <sup>2</sup>So I opened my mouth, and he fed me the scroll. <sup>3</sup>He said to me: Human one, feed your belly and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you. So I ate it, and in my mouth it became as sweet as honey.

<sup>4</sup>Then he said to me: Human one, go! Go to the house of Israel and speak my words to them. <sup>5</sup>You aren't being sent to a people whose language and speech are difficult and obscure but to the house of Israel. <sup>6</sup>No, not to many peoples who speak difficult and obscure languages, whose words you wouldn't understand. If I did send you to them, they would listen to you. <sup>7</sup>But the house of Israel—they will refuse to listen to you because they refuse to listen to me. The whole house of Israel is hardheaded and hard-hearted too. <sup>8</sup>I've now hardened your face so that you can meet them head-on. <sup>9</sup>I've made your forehead like a diamond, harder than stone. Don't be afraid of them or shrink away from them, because they are a household of rebels.

<sup>10</sup>He said to me: Human one, listen closely, and take to heart every word I say to you. <sup>11</sup>Then go to the exiles, to your people's children. Whether they listen or not, speak to them and say: The LORD God proclaims!

<sup>12</sup>Then a wind lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great quaking sound from his place. Blessed is the LORD's glory! <sup>13</sup>The sound was the creatures' wings beating against each other and the sound of the wheels beside them; it was a great rumbling noise. <sup>14</sup>Then the wind picked me up and took me away. With the LORD's power pressing down against me I went away, bitter and deeply angry, <sup>15</sup>and I came to the exiles who lived beside the Chebar River at Tel-abib. I stayed there among them for seven desolate days.

<sup>b</sup>Or *thistles and thorns are with you, and you sit on scorpions*. <sup>1</sup>LXX, Syr, Tg; MT lacks *household*.

appearance in Babylon marks a significant theological point in time.

2:5 *a prophet has been among them*: shows Ezekiel as a prophet, which is an important theme in his prophecies (cf. Ezek 12:21-28; 20:49; 33:30-33). His prophetic role is bound together with his purpose as a lookout (Ezek 3:16-21; 33:1-9) and his inability to speak (Ezek 3:26-27; 33:22). Ezekiel accepts that the process of testing prophecies in order to prove they are true doesn't have immediate results. This delay leads to the later study and reflection of his message, and then an understanding of the nature and will of God (cf. Isa 8:16-18; see sidebar, "The Dates in the Book of Ezekiel"). This principle is found in the instruction concerning the prophets in Deuteronomy 18:15-22.

2:8 *open your mouth*: Some have connected this expression to a Mesopotamian ceremony in which an idol is made alive with the spirit of the deity. Similarly, Ezekiel is made alive with God's message, representing God before the people of Israel.

2:9-10 *a scroll... words of mourning, lamentation, and doom*: God's message to the people was fixed. Their fate—that is, their judgment—had already been determined, without any possibility of turning the nation around. Contrast this message with Jeremiah (Jer 26:3-6) or with the story of Jonah (Jon 3:10-4:5).

3:1 *house of Israel*: Ezekiel often parallels this phrase with "rebellious house." It describes the people as those who

violate the covenant and thereby deserve God's justice. Sometimes the "house of Israel" is distinguished from the house of Judah (cf. Ezek 4:4-8; 9:9), but more often it includes Hebrews from the northern kingdom Israel and the southern kingdom Judah/Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 8:6, 10-11; 11:5, 15). Rarely (Ezek 20:40; 28:25; 36:10; 37:11) is "house of Israel" used positively.

3:3 *in my mouth it became as sweet as honey*: A surprising turn, but God's word, no matter its content, is contrasted with the words of the "rebellious house"; it's like sweet honey, in contrast with briars, thorns, and scorpions (Ezek 2:3-7; cf. Jer 15:16).

3:7-10 *hardheaded and hard-hearted*: Ezekiel's forehead counters the house of Israel's forehead (3:8). His receptive heart is contrasted with their stubborn hearts (3:10).

3:12-13 *Blessed is the LORD's glory... a great rumbling noise*: The Lord's glory now departs from Ezekiel. God's spirit (cf. Ezek 1:12, 17, 20) remains to direct Ezekiel, now that his initial encounter with God has ended. See sidebar, "The Lord's Glory" at Ezekiel 10.

3:14 *the LORD's power pressing down*: Ezekiel's expression for divine strength (cf. Ezek 1:3). Here it empowers him to move to the exiles at Tel-abib. *bitter and deeply angry*: With feelings of anger, Ezekiel must return to his former, ordinary world, separated from God's presence.

3:15 *I came to the exiles... at Tel-abib*: "Tel" means mound, and "abib" in Akkadian, the language of Babylon, refers to

2:5 Eze 3:11;  
Eze 3:27;  
Eze 33:33;  
Jon 15:22

2:6 Jer 1:8;  
Jer 1:17;  
Eze 3:9;  
Eze 28:24;  
Mt 7:4

2:7 Jer 1:7;  
Jer 1:17;  
Eze 2:5, Eze 3:10;  
Eze 3:17

2:9 Jer 36:2;  
Eze 3:1, Eze 8:3;  
Rev 5:1;  
Rev 10:8

2:10 Is 3:11;  
Rev 8:13

3:1 Eze 2:8;  
Eze 2:9

3:2 Jer 25:17

3:3 Ps 19:10;  
Ps 119:103;  
Jer 15:16;  
Rev 10:9;  
Rev 10:10

3:4 Eze 2:3

3:8 Jer 1:18;  
Jer 15:20

3:9 Is 50:7;  
Jer 1:8; Eze 2:6;  
Zec 7:12

3:11 Eze 2:7;  
Eze 3:27;  
Eze 33:2;  
Eze 33:17;  
Eze 33:30

3:12 Eze 8:3

3:15 Gn 50:10;  
Job 2:13;  
Ps 137:1; Eze 1:1

3:17 Is 52:8,  
Is 56:10, Is 58:1,  
Is 62:6; Eze 33:7;  
3:18 Gn 2:17;  
Eze 33:6,  
Eze 33:8

3:19 Eze 14:14,  
Eze 14:20,  
Eze 33:9

3:20 Ps 125:5;  
Jer 6:21;  
Eze 18:24,  
Eze 33:12,  
Eze 33:18

3:21 Ac 20:31

3:22 Eze 1:3,  
Eze 3:14, Eze 8:4,  
Eze 37:1, Ac 9:6

<sup>16</sup>At the end of the seven days, the LORD's word came to me: <sup>17</sup>Human one, I've made you a lookout for the house of Israel. When you hear a word from me, deliver my warning. <sup>18</sup>If I declare that the wicked will die but you don't warn them, if you say nothing to warn them from their wicked ways so that they might live, they will die because of their guilt, but I will hold you accountable for their deaths. <sup>19</sup>If you do warn the wicked and they don't turn from their wickedness or their wicked ways, they will die because of their guilt, but you will save your life.

<sup>20</sup>Or suppose righteous people turn away from doing the right thing. If they act dishonestly, and I make them stumble because of it, they will die because you didn't warn them of their sin. Their righteous deeds won't be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for their deaths. <sup>21</sup>But if you do warn the righteous not to sin, and they don't sin, they will be declared righteous. Their lives will be preserved because they heeded the warning, and you will save your life.

<sup>22</sup>The LORD's power overcame me, and he said to me: Get up! Go out to the valley, and I'll speak to you there. <sup>23</sup>So I got up and went out to the valley. Suddenly, the LORD's glory stood there, like the glory that I had seen at the Chebar River, and I fell on my face. <sup>24</sup>When a wind came to me and stood me on my feet, he spoke to me and said: Go, shut yourself up inside your house. <sup>25</sup>Look at you, human one! They've now put cords on you and bound you up so that you can't go out among them. <sup>26</sup>I'll make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth and take away your ability to speak. You won't be able to correct them, because they are a household of rebels. <sup>27</sup>But whenever I speak to you, I'll open your mouth, and you will say to them: The LORD God proclaims. Those who hear will understand, but those who refuse will not. They are just a household of rebels.

a flood. This location may indicate that Babylon settled a group of exiles on a mound of an ancient ruined town, located in the middle of a flood plain. This community of exiles was apparently not where Ezekiel himself had been settled. *seven desolate days*: In Leviticus 8:33, seven days marked the period of time when a priest was ordained for service to the people, as a part of the preparation for a visit by the Lord's glory (Lev 9:6). The process is reversed in Ezekiel. After already seeing the Lord's glory, and instead of sitting in the meeting tent, as in Leviticus, Ezekiel is in the unholy land of the Chaldees. Ezekiel is shocked because as a priest he expects the Lord's glory to be in the temple. **3:16 LORD's word**: This phrase marks a subtle change in the text. While Ezekiel was in the presence of the Lord's glory, God speaks directly to Ezekiel (Ezek 1:28b, 2:1; 3:1; 3:4). With the glory departed, Ezekiel now receives God's word, seemingly independent of the Lord.

**3:17 lookout**: The OT often portrays the prophet as a lookout (cf. Isa 21:6-9; Jer 6:17; Hos 9:8; Hab 2:1). This role is assigned to Ezekiel here and again in Ezekiel 33:1-9. This instance starts Ezekiel's prophetic mission before the fall of Jerusalem, while the symbol in 33:1-9 restates Ezekiel's mission as his ministry addresses the situation after the fall of the monarchy in 587 BCE. This role as lookout coincides with the other time Ezekiel is recognized as a prophet (cf. Ezek 2:5; 33:33), as well as with the lifting of his muteness (Ezek 33:22; cf. 3:26-27).

**3:18-21** Four conditional sentences present four hypothetical cases. The point of these case studies is to press Ezekiel to deliver God's message. Only his fate hangs in the balance, as stated in each hypothetical situation. The content of the scroll (cf. Ezek 2:10) indicates that the fate of the people is already sealed, and a change of heart isn't an option.

**3:23 to the valley... like the glory... at the Chebar River**: This valley is a new location, different from where Ezekiel was met by the Lord's glory in Ezekiel 1:4-3:11. The definite article *the* implies a certain location, and indeed this

particular valley doesn't appear again in the book until Ezekiel 37:1-14, where Ezekiel sees this valley filled with dry bones. *the LORD's glory*: The glory has returned to meet Ezekiel (cf. Ezek 1:4-28a), speaking to him directly. Ezekiel responds as he did when he first met God's glory (cf. Ezek 1:28b).

**3:24-27 Go, shut yourself up inside your house**: This time, when the glory speaks to Ezekiel, the prophet receives a command that contradicts the earlier commands. Instead of being sent to the people of Israel (2:3-4), he is confined to his house and tied up with cords. Moreover, God is shutting Ezekiel's mouth. This is a difficult turn of events, but the overall effect is to isolate the prophet from the people. Ezekiel is in his own house (3:24b), separate from the house of Israel (Ezek 3:1, 4, 5, 7). After eating God's word, Ezekiel doesn't need to open his mouth again. Throughout Ezekiel's prophecies, delegations come to Ezekiel's house (Ezek 8:1; and probably also Ezek 14:1-3; 20:1). The symbolic action in Ezekiel 12:1-7 seems to take place in Ezekiel's home.

**3:26 I'll make your tongue stick**: This theme is linked with the fall of Jerusalem, when the prophet's mouth is opened (Ezek 24:27; 33:21; cf. the note on Ezek 2:5). Ezekiel's God-imposed silence functions as a powerful sign (Ezek 3:27; see Ezek 24:27), perhaps to cut off any sense that the people could plead with God for mercy (see the notes on Ezek 2:9; 10; 3:17-21). The text is difficult to interpret because the prophet clearly communicates before the fall of the city, at times commanded by God to speak to the people (Ezek 12:10; 12:23; 13:17-18; 14:4; 16:3). Nevertheless, symbolic actions play an important role in the prophecies of Ezekiel (Ezek 4:1-3; 4:4-8; 4:9-12; 5:1-4; 12:1-7; 12:17-20; 24:15-24). Many of his prophecies have a literary quality about them. He may have written them to be read rather than spoken aloud. The prophet may have been muted.

**3:27 The LORD God proclaims**: This repetition of the messenger speech closes out Ezekiel's call narrative (cf. Ezek 2:4).



**Jerusalem's siege**

**4** You, human one, take a brick. Put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it. **2** Prepare the siege: Build a wall, construct ramps, set up army camps, and place battering rams all around. **3** Take an iron plate and set it up as an iron wall between you and the city. Face it directly. When it is under siege like this, press hard against it. This is a sign for the house of Israel.

**4** Now, lie on your left side, and set the guilt of the house of Israel on it. For the length of time that you lie on your side, you will bear their punishment. **5** I appoint to you three hundred ninety days, one day for each year of their guilt. So you will bear the punishment of the house of Israel. **6** When you have completed these days, lie on your right side to bear the guilt of the house of Judah. I appoint forty days to you, one day for each year. **7** With your arm stretched out, face the siege of Jerusalem directly and prophesy against it. **8** I've now bound you with cords so that you can't turn from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your siege.

**9** You, gather some wheat and barley, beans and lentils, and millet and spelt. Put them in a bowl and make your bread from them. Eat it during the three hundred ninety days that you lie on your side. **10** At fixed times you will eat your food by weight, fourteen ounces

4:1 Is 20:2;  
Jer 13:1, Jer 19:1;  
Eze 5:1  
4:5 Nm 14:34;  
Eze 4:9  
4:6 Nm 14:34;  
Dn 9:24,  
Dn 12:11,  
Dn 12:12  
4:9 Is 28:25;  
Eze 4:5  
4:10 Lv 26:26;  
Eze 4:16

4:1-5:17 This section contains four symbolic actions: Ezekiel 4:1-3; 4:4-8; 4:9-17; and 5:1-17, all addressing the siege of Jerusalem (see note on Ezek 5:2). A symbolic action is a public performance that contains a prophetic message. In many ways similar to extended metaphors (or parables), performed prophecy was a common and powerful type of prophetic communication in ancient Israel. The symbolic actions are seen in the work of many of Israel's prophets, some simple and direct, some elaborate and involved (Isa 20; Jer 19; Hos 1-3). This collection of four enacted prophecies was based closely on the treaty curses of Leviticus 26:14-39.

4:1-3 This first symbolic action shows the certainty of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. Note the exiles' continuing interest in the fate of Jerusalem and their nation. Because Jerusalem was the location of the temple and the place where they approached God, its fate was theologically meaningful.

4:1 *human one*: See note on Ezekiel 2:1. *a brick*: Mud bricks were large and used everywhere in the ancient world. Although shapes and sizes of mud bricks varied, a typical square mud brick was about 12 to 15 inches on a side and 4 to 6 inches in height. Before being dried in the sun, a mud brick could provide an excellent means of sculpting a city. Wall reliefs in Assyrian palaces showed processions in which tax payments and plunder were brought to the Assyrian king. In these processions, models of the conquered cities, most probably made of clay and roughly the size of a mud brick, were also presented to the king. So, for Ezekiel's audience a model of Jerusalem as a city would be a well-known though threatening symbol.

4:3 *an iron plate*: perhaps a cooking griddle. Its placement between the prophet, God's representative to the people ("human one," Ezek 4:1), and the mud brick/city symbolizes that the city is cut off from both God and God's help (cf. Lev 26:19). *Face it directly*: As a common expression in Ezekiel, it is the posture that God commands him to take toward the subject of God's judgment (cf. Ezek 6:2; 13:17; 14:8; 15:7; 20:46; 21:2; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2; and also Jer 21:10). It is also listed among the curses found in Leviticus (cf. Lev 26:17; but elsewhere in Lev 17:10; 20:3, 5, 6).

4:4-8 The second of this set of performed prophecies explains the guilt of the nation.

4:4 *set the guilt... bear their punishment*: The same Hebrew word is translated both as *guilt* and *punishment*;

the Hebrew doesn't distinguish between the two but rather binds them together as a whole. The guilt of the people is the reason for the curses in Leviticus (cf. Lev 26:39). *house of Israel*: This is one of the few passages where the house of Israel is distinguished from Judah (see the note on Ezek 3:1). *left side*: Since the ancient world was oriented toward the east, the northern kingdom of Israel would be to the left side and Judah would be to the right (Ezek 4:6).

4:5-6 *three hundred ninety days... forty days*: These numbers are theological in nature, and do not conform precisely to any historical period. They total 430 years, which according to ancient Judahite priests was how long Israel was in Egypt (Exod 12:40-41). Forty years is the length of the wilderness wanderings, which was a time for purification of the people, cleansing them of the generation that rebelled in the wilderness (Num 14:20-25, 33-34). The period of 390 years may refer to the time from Solomon's building of the temple to the fall of Jerusalem. If we read the numbers theologically, then Ezekiel seems to be saying that neither the northern nor the southern kingdoms have experienced God's salvation by living obediently in the land. They have lived for 390 years in guilt, and the exodus from captivity and into salvation is still in the future. This denial of the history of the nation in the land is an important theme in Ezekiel (see sidebar, "The Dates in the Book of Ezekiel" at Ezek 2).

4:9-17 Ezekiel's third symbolic action emphasizes a severe lack of food and drink during the siege, one of the promised curses of Leviticus (Lev 26:26). It also emphasizes impurity and distance from God. Ezekiel's audience had already experienced the exile, and this prophecy about the fate of the people remaining in Judah and Jerusalem was important to them.

4:9 *wheat... spelt*: Wheat and barley were common ingredients in ancient bread, but weren't commonly mixed into one loaf. Barley was the bread of poorer families. To add beans, lentils, millet, and spelt (a kind of unhusked wheat) emphasized further how far a person had to go to make a single loaf of bread. Instructions in Leviticus 19:19 and Deuteronomy 22:9 prohibit sowing together in one field different species of seeds, so the cooking together of different cereals and vegetables may carry not only a message of starvation but also a sense of improper sacrifice practices.

4:11 Eze 4:16  
 4:12 Dt 23:13;  
 Is 36:12;  
 Eze 12:3  
 4:13 Dn 1:8;  
 Hos 9:3;  
 Am 7:17  
 4:14 Ez 22:31;  
 Lv 17:15; Eze 9:8;  
 Eze 20:49;  
 Ac 10:14  
 4:16 Lv 26:26;  
 Eze 4:10;  
 Eze 5:16;  
 Eze 12:19;  
 Eze 14:13  
 5:1 Lv 21:5;  
 Is 7:20;  
 Eze 44:20  
 5:2 Lv 26:33;  
 Jer 9:16;  
 Eze 5:12;  
 Eze 12:14  
 5:3 2Ki 25:12;  
 Jer 39:10;  
 Jer 40:6;  
 Jer 52:16  
 5:4 1Sa 3:11;  
 1Ki 21:21;  
 Ps 59:5; Is 5:24;  
 Jer 42:18  
 5:5 Dt 4:6;  
 Eze 4:1;  
 Eze 16:14  
 5:7 2Ki 21:9;  
 2Ch 33:9;  
 Jer 2:10; Jer 2:11;  
 Eze 16:47

a day.<sup>11</sup> You will also ration your water by measure, drinking a sixth of a hin<sup>12</sup> at fixed times each day. <sup>12</sup>Eat it like barley bread, and bake it on human excrement while they watch. <sup>13</sup>The LORD says: In this same way the Israelites will eat their unclean bread among the nations where I am scattering them.

<sup>14</sup>And I said: "Ah, LORD God! I've never been unclean! From my childhood until now I've never eaten anything that wasn't properly slaughtered,<sup>1</sup> and no unclean meat has ever entered my mouth!"

<sup>15</sup>He answered me: "Then I'll let you use cow dung instead of human excrement. You can make your bread over that."

<sup>16</sup>Then he said to me: Human one, I'm destroying the food supply in Jerusalem. They will anxiously ration and eat their food, and in dismay they will dole out and drink their water.

<sup>17</sup>When their food and water dwindles away, everyone will be horrified, and they will waste away because of their guilt.

**5** You, human one, take a sharp sword. Use it like a razor and shave your head and beard. Then use scales to divide the hair. <sup>2</sup>At the end of the siege, burn one-third of it in the city. Strike another third with the sword left and right. Then scatter one-third to the wind and let loose<sup>m</sup> the sword after it. <sup>3</sup>From that third, take a few strands and hide them in your garment. <sup>4</sup>From that hair, take yet another batch and throw it into the fire and burn it up. From there, fire will spread to the whole house of Israel.

<sup>5</sup>The LORD God proclaims: This is Jerusalem! I have set her in the middle of the nations and surrounding countries. <sup>6</sup>But she rebelled against my case laws and my regulations with greater treachery than these nations and surrounding countries, who also rejected my case laws and didn't follow my regulations. <sup>7</sup>Therefore, the LORD God proclaims: You have become more turbulent than these nations around you because you haven't obeyed my regulations or followed my case laws. You haven't even followed the case laws of the nations around you! <sup>8</sup>So now the LORD God proclaims: I myself am now against you! I will impose the case law penalties on you in the sight of the nations. <sup>9</sup>Because of you, I will do what I've never done before and will never do again—all because of your detestable practices. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, parents among you will eat their children, and children will eat their parents. I will impose penalties

<sup>1</sup>Or twenty shekels <sup>2</sup>A hin is approximately one pint. <sup>3</sup>Or what died of itself or was torn by wild beasts <sup>m</sup>Or I will let loose

4:12 *human excrement*: Using animal dung as fuel was common in ancient Israel, but human dung was repulsive (cf. Deut 23:12-14).

4:14-15 *Ah LORD God!*: In addition to this instance, Ezekiel protests against God three other times: Ezekiel 9:8; 11:13; 20:49. Here his protest revolves around his purity, by which he was allowed to stand in God's presence. God makes allowances for Ezekiel's priestly sensibilities, but the point remains. The siege involves not only severe suffering for the people but also defilement that puts distance between them and God (cf. Ezek 5:3).

5:1-17 This fourth symbolic action proclaims the death or disbanding of nearly all of the people of Jerusalem resulting from the siege. This punishment is promised in Leviticus 26:14-45 (cf. 5:9).

5:1 *divide the hair*: The purpose of the division isn't to distinguish between wicked and righteous hair, but to provide the prophet with a way to show the various types of gruesome outcomes awaiting the people.

5:2 *At the end of the siege*: The four symbolic actions were meant to be read one after the other. The first announces the siege; the second justifies it; the third identifies the severity and impurity of the siege. Now, at the end of the siege, the outcome of the people is announced. *burn one-third . . . scatter one-third to the wind*: Three outcomes are portrayed here, each of which was all too real in the ancient world, and well known to Ezekiel's fellow exiles. The curses promised in Leviticus are reflected here as well: death by the sword (Lev 26:25, 33) and flight into exile (Lev

26:33), and the burning of a city (Lev 26:30-31), a standard part of siege warfare.

5:3-4 *from that third, take a few strands*: A telling exception that reveals Ezekiel's biases toward the exiles, since only from the exiles will any small number of the nation survive. According to Ezekiel, his exilic community will form God's elect (cf. 11:1-21; 20:33-38; Lev 26:40-45). *from that hair . . . burn it up*: Still, even from the exiles who escape the final destruction of Jerusalem, some will die (cf. Ezek 20:38; Lev 26:36-39).

5:5 *in the middle of the nations*: This statement claims that Jerusalem is the source of life (Ps 46:4; and the concept ultimately reflects the promise of Abraham, Gen 12:1-3). Jerusalem also has the attention of the nations, and thus divine honor is tied to the city's success (Pss 48; 72; see Ezek 5:14-15).

5:6 *my case laws and my regulations*: These two terms, common in teaching contexts, include all of the requirements for keeping a covenantal relationship with God. Ezekiel and Leviticus especially pair these two terms together (Lev 18:4, 5, 26; 19:37; 20:22; 25:18; 26:15, 43; Ezek 11:20; 18:9, 17, 19, 21; 20:11, 13, 19, 21, 24; 36:27; 44:24).

5:9, 11 *detestable practices*: a common term occurring over 40 times in Ezekiel. It refers to acts that so thoroughly defile the person that the covenantal relationship with the Lord is broken (Ezek 6:11; 7:3, 4, 8, 9, 20; 8:6, 9, 13, 15, 17; 16:2, 22, 36, 43, 47, 50, 51, 58; 23:36; 33:26; 43:8).

5:10 *parents . . . will eat their children*: See Leviticus 26:29.

from case laws on you and scatter all that is left of you to the winds. <sup>11</sup>Therefore, as surely as I live, this is what the LORD God says: Because you made my sanctuary unclean with all your disgusting practices and detestable things, I myself will shave you. I will not shed a tear. You will have no compassion, even from me. <sup>12</sup>One-third of you will die of plague and waste away by famine among you. One-third will fall by the sword all around you. And one-third I will scatter to all the winds, letting loose a sword to pursue them. <sup>13</sup>My anger will be complete. I will exhaust my wrath against them and take my revenge. Then they will know that I, the LORD, have spoken against them in my zeal and consumed them in my wrath. <sup>14</sup>I will turn you into a desolation to the ridicule of the nations all around you, in the sight of all who pass by. <sup>15</sup>You will become an object of ridicule, a mockery, and a horrifying lesson to the nations all around you, when I impose penalties from case laws against you in anger, wrath, and overflowing fury. I, the LORD, have spoken. <sup>16</sup>When I launch my deadly arrows of famine against you, I have released them for your destruction! I will add to your famine and completely cut off your food supply. <sup>17</sup>I will send famine and wild animals against you, and they will leave you childless. Plague and bloodshed will come to you, and I will bring the sword against you. I, the LORD, have spoken.

### **Against the mountains of Israel**

**6** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, face Israel's mountains, and prophesy to them. <sup>3</sup>Say:

Hear the LORD God's word, mountains of Israel!

The LORD God proclaims to the mountains and hills,  
to the valleys and their deepest ravines:

I'm about to bring a sword against you and destroy your shrines.

<sup>4</sup>Your altars will be destroyed,  
your incense altars broken.

And I'll make your slain fall in front of your idols.

<sup>5</sup>I'll throw the Israelites' corpses in front of their idols,  
and I'll scatter your bones all around your altars.

5:11 *made my sanctuary unclean*: This specifies the guilt, mentioned in the second symbolic action (Ezek 4:4). It will be taken up again in Ezekiel 8:6. The temple and its worship practices and ceremonies are the source of the people's relationship with God, so this verse touches on the critical issue of the book of Ezekiel: the Lord's presence with the people.

5:14-15 *to the ridicule of the nations*: Ancient civilizations were based on a system of honor and shame. The honor of the individual, family, tribe, nation, and ultimately the national god was most important. Elaborate steps were taken either to raise one's own honor or to shame an opponent. The Lord placed Jerusalem in the middle of the nations (Ezek 5:5) to bring honor to the city (Ezek 16:9-14), but instead, the nations now see its shame. Jerusalem's shame reflects on the Lord, and the shame brought on God by the fall of Jerusalem and its temple is the problem (cf. Ezek 20:9, 14, 22, 44; 36:6-7, 16-21, 22-36; and cf. Num 14:13-20; Deut 32:26-27; Josh 7:6-9).

6:1-14 Three passages judge the land of Israel (6:1-7; 8-10; and 11-14; cf. the note on Ezek 35:1-15; 36:1-38). The subject matter is the land and its ruin on account of the worship of idols and unacceptable shrines (cf. Deut 12:2-3; 1 Kgs 12:31; 14:23; 2 Kgs 17:9, 11, 32; 23:8; Jer 19:5; Ezek 16:16). This passage justifies the siege of Jerusalem, described immediately before, in Ezekiel 4-5. In the background are psalms that refer to the Lord's control over and the praise of the mountains, hills, and valleys of Israel (Pss 95; 104; 114; 121).

6:3 *your shrines*: This is a reference to worship centers outside of the Jerusalem temple. Such shrines are

condemned by Ezekiel. The mountains, hills, valleys, and ravines are poetic allusions to these shrines. Though unacceptable from the perspective of a Jerusalem priest, they were a traditional part of the people's worship, a way for ordinary people to access God. While some were dedicated to other gods (2 Kgs 17:7-17; Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:35), archaeological evidence from Arad shows that some were dedicated to the worship of the Lord, and allowed during some periods by the priesthood in Jerusalem.

6:4 *altars . . . incense altars*: Altars varied in size, materials, and design. A four-horned altar (cf. Exod 27:1-8; 38:1-3; Lev 4:18; 8:15; 9:9) excavated at Beersheba was made of cut limestone, and measured about 5 feet square, as well as in height. In contrast, the altar excavated at Arad, about 20 miles away, was made of fieldstones and mud (cf. Exod 20:24-25; 27:5-6; Josh 8:30-31), with a flat stone slab on its top, and measured seven feet, two inches by seven feet, ten inches, and about five feet in height. Incense altars also varied in size; one from Tanaach measured 19 inches in height. Incense altars found at Arad measured 15 and 19 inches in height, respectively. The incense burner from Tanaach was constructed with window-like openings and elaborately decorated, while the two incense altars at Arad were cut from limestone (cf. Exod 37:25).

6:4 *I'll make your slain fall*: This is a judgment on ancestor worship, known to have been practiced by the ancient Hebrews. Ezekiel 32:17-32 provides a rare glimpse into traditions about the role of dead ancestors.

6:5 *I'll throw the Israelites' corpses . . . bones all around your altars*: Corpses and bones (that is, Death) violate sacred shrines, which were built in the ancient world to ensure

7:7 Eze 7:12,  
Eze 13:23;  
Zeph 1:14  
7:8 Eze 7:3,  
Eze 9:8,  
Eze 14:19,  
Eze 20:8

**The Recognition Formula** The expression “Then you will know that I am the Lord” appears in some form over 70 times in Ezekiel, so much so that it characterizes the book, and to a large extent, carries its message. This expression, known as the recognition formula, appears in the conclusion of prophecies, serving as the lesson to be learned. But what is the content of this lesson? What is to be recognized about God from divine action, whether in judgment or when bringing salvation?

Apparently, humans are expected to see God’s power and respond by showing the Lord the proper honor. In Ezekiel 36:22-26, the Lord offers grace to the Lord’s people, not for their own sake but rather “for the sake of my name” (cf. Ezek 20:9, 14, 22, 44). This offer is concluded with the recognition formula. The recognition formula appears sparingly outside of Ezekiel, but always in connection to powerful interventions into human affairs. Most notably, the recognition formula explains the Lord’s response to Pharaoh’s question prior to the exodus: “Who is this Lord whom I’m supposed to obey?” (Exod 5:2; cf. Exod 7:3-5; 14:18).

<sup>6</sup>Wherever you live, cities will be in ruins, shrines made desolate,  
turned into utter ruin.

Your altars will be punished and then broken down.

Your idols will be demolished,  
your incense altars shattered,  
and all your works wiped out.

<sup>7</sup>The slain will fall among you,  
and you will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>8</sup>But I will spare a few.

Some of you will escape the nations’ swords  
when you are scattered throughout the lands.

<sup>9</sup>Your fugitives will remember me in the nations to which they’ve been banished,  
how I was crushed when their roving hearts turned away from me,  
and their roving eyes went after their idols.

They will loathe themselves for their treacherous acts and detestable practices,

<sup>10</sup>and they will know that I am the LORD.

Not in vain have I threatened to bring this evil against them.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD God proclaims: Clap your hands, stamp your feet, and cry “Horror” over all the detestable practices of the house of Israel. They will fall by the sword, famine, and plague.

<sup>12</sup>Whoever is far off will die of plague, whoever is nearby will fall to the sword, and whoever finds refuge will die of famine. I’ll satisfy my wrath against them! <sup>13</sup>They will know that I am the LORD when their slain appear among their idols and around their altars, wherever they offered up pleasing aromas for all their idols, on every high hill and mountaintop, and under

life and fertility. Perhaps the best example of this is the unnamed prophet’s prediction of such a violation of the shrine at Bethel (1 Kgs 13:1-3), later fulfilled by Josiah (2 Kgs 23:5, 15-16).

6:7 *you will know that I am the LORD*: The content of the knowledge to be recognized through the Lord’s various actions and by the various audiences is an acknowledgment of God’s honor (cf. Ezek 36:22-23 with Ezek 20:9, 14, 22; see sidebar, “The Recognition Formula”).

6:8-10 *I will spare a few. . . they will know that I am the LORD*: The point is to explain the role of these fugitives, which is to uphold the honor of the Lord among the nations.

6:11 *sword, famine, and plague*: standard curses for breaking God’s covenant (Lev 26:25-26; Ezek 5:12, 17; 7:15; 12:16; 14:21; 33:27).

6:14 *Riblah desert*: perhaps a reference to where Zedekiah, after having been captured, was blinded (Jer 39:5-7; 52:9).

7:1-27 This chapter is divided into three sections—7:1-4, 5-9, 10-27—organized by the threefold appearance of the recognition formula (7:4, 9, 27; see sidebar, “The Recognition Formula” at Ezek 6). These sections work together to

announce the *end* (7:2) and the *day*, meaning the Day of the Lord (7:10). In Ezekiel’s day, the end of human history isn’t intended but rather the end of an era in Israelite history. So Ezekiel proclaims here that the siege of Jerusalem will bring one chapter of history to a close (cf. Ps 137:7). The Day of the Lord may have had its roots in military traditions, where God fought for God’s people, and God’s intervention brought salvation (cf. Josh 10:8-15). Well before Ezekiel’s time, the prophet Amos had turned this idea on its head, using it as a day of judgment for the wicked, disobedient nation (Amos 5:18, 20; 8:1-3; Joel 1:15-18; 2:1-11; Zeph 1:7-18).

7:2 *land of Israel*: Consistent with Ezekiel 6, the Hebrew indicates that the soil or dirt of Israel is intended, not the political boundaries. Ezekiel later promised the dry bones in Ezek 37:1-14 that they would stand on the soil of Israel (cf. Ezek 37:12-14). *The end has come*: The definite article *the* marks this end as a unique event (as does Ezek 7:5-7). The same phrase is found in Amos 8:2, alongside the mention of “that day.” This appears to be a comment on Amos’ text. 7:10 *The staff blossoms*: Aaron’s staff blossomed in the

every lofty tree and leafy oak. <sup>14</sup>Wherever they live, I will direct my power against them. I will turn the land into a greater wasteland than the Riblah desert. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

7:26 Ps 74:9;  
Jer 4:20,  
Jer 18:18;  
Lam 2:9; Mi 3:6

### The end

<sup>7</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>You, human one, this is what the LORD God proclaims to the land of Israel:

An end! The end has come to the four corners of the earth!

<sup>3</sup>Even now the end is upon you!

I'll send my anger against you,

I'll judge you according to your ways,

and I'll turn all your detestable practices against you.

<sup>4</sup>I won't shed a tear for you or show any pity.

Instead, I'll turn your ways against you,

and your detestable practices will stay with you.

Then you will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>5</sup>The LORD God proclaims:

Disaster! A singular disaster! Look, it comes!

<sup>6</sup>The end has come! Oh, yes, it has come!

It has come to you! Look, it's here!

<sup>7</sup>You who live on the earth, you are finally caught in your own trap!

The time has come; the day draws near.

On the hills panic, not glory.

<sup>8</sup>And now it's near!

Against you I will pour out my wrath,

and my anger will be satisfied.

I'll judge you according to your ways,

and turn all your detestable practices against you.

<sup>9</sup>I won't shed a tear or show any pity when I turn your ways against you,

and your detestable practices stay with you.

Then you will know that I, the LORD, am the one who strikes you!

<sup>10</sup>Look, the day! Look, it comes!

Doom has arrived! The staff blossoms, and pride springs up!

<sup>11</sup>Violence rises up as a wicked master.<sup>a</sup>

It isn't from others or their armies or their violence.

It hasn't loomed up because of them.

<sup>12</sup>The time is coming! The day draws near!

No buyer should rejoice, and no seller should mourn,

because wrath overcomes the whole crowd.

<sup>13</sup>The seller will never get back what was sold, even if both of them survive.

The vision concerns the whole crowd.

It won't be revoked.

And the guilty ones—they won't even be able to hang on to their lives.

<sup>14</sup>They have blown the horn,

and everything is ready, but no one goes to battle,

because my wrath overcomes the whole crowd.

<sup>15</sup>Outside, the sword! Inside, plague and famine!

Whoever is out in the field will die by the sword.

Whoever is in the city, plague and famine will consume them.

<sup>16</sup>And those who flee?

They will turn up on the hills like valley doves,

all of them moaning, those guilty ones.

<sup>a</sup>Or wicked staff

desert as a sign of his election (Num 17:1-13). Ezekiel seems to recall that scene here, but promises doom for the elect.

7:15 sword... plague... famine: Compare with Ezekiel 6:11. *out in the field... in the city*: a common prophetic expression of no escape (cf. 1 Kgs 14:11; 16:4; 21:24; Jer 14:18).

8:1 2Ki 6:32;  
Eze 1:3, Eze 14:1,  
Eze 20:1

8:3 Dt 32:16;  
Eze 2:9, Eze 8:5,  
Eze 11:1,  
Eze 11:24

8:6 Eze 5:11,  
Eze 8:9,  
Eze 10:19

8:8 Eze 12:5

8:10 Ex 20:4;  
Eze 23:14

- 17 Every hand will hang limp;  
urine will run down every leg.
- 18 They will put on mourning clothes,  
and horror will cover them.  
On every face, shame;  
on all their heads, baldness.
- 19 They will hurl their silver into the street,  
and their gold will seem unclean.  
Their silver and their gold won't deliver them on the day of the LORD's anger.  
They won't satisfy their appetites or fill their bellies.  
Their guilt will bring them down.

- 20 From their beautiful ornament, in which they took pride,  
they have made horrible and detestable images!  
Therefore, I've declared it an unclean thing for them.
- 21 I'll hand it over to foreigners as loot taken in war,  
to the earth's wicked ones as plunder—they will defile it!
- 22 When I hide my face from my people,  
foreigners will defile my treasured place.  
Violent intruders will invade it; they will defile it!

- 23 Make a chain!  
The earth is full of perverted justice,  
the city full of violence.
- 24 I'll bring up the cruelest nations, and they will seize their houses.  
I'll break their proud strength, and their sanctuaries will be defiled.

- 25 Disaster! It has come!  
They seek peace, but there is none.
- 26 One disaster comes after another,  
and rumor follows rumor.

They seek a vision from the prophet.  
Instruction disappears from the priest,  
and counsel from the elders.

- 27 The king will go into mourning,  
the prince will clothe himself in despair,  
and the hands of the land's people will tremble.  
When I do to them as they have done  
and judge them by their own justice,  
they will know that I am the LORD.

7:20 *their beautiful ornament*: description of the Jerusalem temple, which in priestly tradition was beautiful because it was the doorway to God's throne room (Pss 46; 48:2; Lam 2:15; Ezek 16:14; 20:6, 15; 24:16, 21). It refers to the temple (Ezek 7:20-22). *have made horrible and detestable images*: Compare with Ezekiel 8:3-5, 10-12.

7:23 *make a chain*: referring to the taking of captives, which will happen after the siege (Ezek 7:27).

7:26 *vision from the prophet . . . instruction disappears from the priest . . . counsel from the elders*: to be read ironically, with Ezekiel's commission echoing in the background (cf. Ezek 2:1-3:3). Ezekiel reports his visions (Ezek 1:4-3:11; 8:1-11:25; 37:1-14; 40:1-48:35), and as a priest, he instructs the people through his prophecies (but also, see his "instructions for the temple," Ezek 43:12; 44:24). Note that the elders come to him for counsel (Ezek 8:1, 14:1; 20:1).

7:27 *they will know that I am the Lord*: The knowledge of God is contained wholly in the judgment. This formula

justifies and explains the purpose of the end. In other words, the siege of Jerusalem is a defense of God's honor: (See Ezek 7:4, 9.)

8:1-11:25 With this second vision, Ezekiel explains the exile as the justice of God, placing the blame on the *detestable practices* of the house of Israel (cf. 8:6). This large unit divides into three parts: a vision of the detestable practices (8:1-18), the execution of Jerusalem (9:1-11), and the departure of the Lord's glory (10:1-11:25). The last section subdivides further, to include an oracle judging the leaders who remain in Jerusalem (Ezek 11:1-21).

8:1-18 After introducing the reader to the setting in the Jerusalem temple (8:1-3a), four exhibits present evidence against the house of Israel (8:3b-6; 7-13; 14; 15-18). In each, a different detestable practice is being performed by a different set of worshippers, in locations increasingly closer to the throne of God in the most holy place.

8:1 *In the sixth year, on the fifth day of the sixth month*:

### Temple vision

**8**In the sixth year, on the fifth day of the sixth month, I was sitting in my house, and Judah's elders were sitting with me, when the LORD God's power overcame me. <sup>2</sup>I looked, and there was a form that looked like fire. Below what looked like his waist was fire, but above his waist it looked like gold, like gleaming amber. <sup>3</sup>He stretched out the form of a hand and picked me up by the hair of my head. A wind lifted me up between earth and heaven, and in a divine vision it brought me to Jerusalem, to the north-facing entrance of the gate to the inner court. That was where the pedestal was for the outrageous image that incites outrage. <sup>4</sup>There I saw the glory of Israel's God, exactly like what I had seen in the valley. <sup>5</sup>He said to me: Human one, look toward the north. So I looked north, and there, north of the altar gate, was this outrageous image in the entrance. <sup>6</sup>He said to me: Human one, do you see what they are doing, the terribly detestable practices that the house of Israel is doing here that drive me far from my sanctuary? Yet you will see even more detestable practices than these.

<sup>7</sup>Then he brought me to the court entrance. When I looked, I saw a hole in the wall. <sup>8</sup>He said to me: Human one, dig through the wall. So I dug through the wall, and I discovered a doorway. <sup>9</sup>And he said to me: Go in and see what wicked and detestable things they are doing in there. <sup>10</sup>So I went in and looked, and I saw every form of loathsome beasts and creeping things and all the idols of the house of Israel engraved on the walls all around. <sup>11</sup>The seventy elders of the house of Israel were standing in front of them, and all of them were holding

8:12 Job 22:13;  
Ps 10:11;  
Is 29:15; Eze 9:9  
8:13 Eze 8:6  
8:14 Eze 44:4;  
Eze 46:9  
8:16 Dt 4:19;  
Dt 17:3;  
Job 31:26;  
Jer 2:27  
8:17 Eze 7:23;  
Eze 9:9;  
Eze 16:26;  
Am 3:10; Mi 2:2  
8:18 Is 1:15;  
Jer 11:11;  
Eze 5:11; Mi 3:4;  
Zec 7:13  
9:1 Is 6:8  
9:2 Lv 16:4;  
2Ki 15:35;  
Eze 9:3; Eze 10:2

September 592, a little over a year after his first vision of God's glory (cf. Ezek 1:1), and about five years before the final fall of the city.

**8:1 in my house:** Compare with the note on Ezekiel 3:24; and also Ezekiel 14:1-3; 20:1; 33:31. **Judah's elders:** These would have been other officials from Judah, captured alongside Ezekiel by the Babylonians in 597. Elsewhere, the elders sitting before Ezekiel are described as "elders of Israel" (Ezek 14:1; 20:1). It isn't clear here what counsel they are seeking from Ezekiel, but the text doesn't indicate conflict between the elders of Judah and Ezekiel, as it does in the other two passages. The condemnation in Ezekiel 8-11 concerns the Lord and the people and leaders remaining in Jerusalem. **LORD God's power:** See Ezekiel 1:3; 3:14, 22; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1.

**8:2-3 a form ... fire ... gleaming amber:** The Lord's glory appears to Ezekiel again (cf. Ezek 1:4-28; 3:22-27). The Lord's glory speaks to Ezekiel and leads him on his visionary tour of the violation of the temple. **the form of a hand:** Compare with Ezekiel 1:8. **A wind:** See Ezekiel 1:12, 17, 20; 2:2; 3:12, 24; 11:24; 37:1; 43:5. **north-facing entrance of the gate to the inner court:** The temple was divided into areas of ever-increasing holiness, from an outer to an inner court, leading to the temple itself, and eventually to the most holy place, the doorway to the divine king's throne room (see sidebar, "The Temple Plan" at Ezek 40). The first station on Ezekiel's guided tour would have been the entrance most accessible to a common person (cf. Ezek 40:38-43).

**8:3, 5 the pedestal ... for the outrageous image that incites outrage:** This is a roundabout way of describing some type of a worship image or perhaps a small, uncarved pillar. Such standing stones were common in Israel. Shrines in gates, including standing stones, were common in ancient Israel and Judah, excavated, for example, at Dan and et-Tell (ancient Geshur). Dan's city gate featured four sets of pillars that were a little more than a foot in height. Seven were discovered at Bethsaida's gate area, which also featured a stepped platform with a small basin to receive offerings for a nicely carved image of a god (over four feet in height), perhaps a moon god.

**8:6 that drive me far from my sanctuary:** In this simple question is the theological center of all Ezekiel's prophecies.

The temple was the Lord's residence (Pss 2:6; 68:15-16; 78:68-69; 132:13-14), who was the great king (Ezek 47:2; 48:2; 83:18; 97:8-9), and his invisibly enthroned presence there (cf. Isa 6:1-3; Ps 9:7-12) was believed to guarantee the covenant relationship with the king and nation (Pss 2:7-8; 78:67-72; 89:3-4, 19-20, 27; 132:11-18), as well as protection (Pss 46:1; 48:3; 76:3-6) and prosperity (cf. Ps 46:4; Ezek 47:1-12). The abandonment of the temple, described in Ezekiel 10-11, ended that relationship and all of its benefits. With the Lord absent from Jerusalem's temple, the elders before Ezekiel understood that the city was defenseless, doomed, and that the end (cf. Ezek 7:2ff.) was inevitable. According to the first vision, when the Lord's glory met Ezekiel in exile, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple wasn't the final word (see Ezek 37:20-28; 43:1-9; 48:35). For these reasons, Ezekiel plays with the concept of presence and abandonment throughout Ezekiel 8:1-11:25 (cf. 9:9; 11:15). See sidebar, "Divine Abandonment."

**8:7 court entrance:** The exact location isn't known, but the second station leads the prophet further into the temple precinct. Temple compounds in the ancient world were filled with many rooms used for archiving, warehousing treasures, storage, and priestly preparations.

**8:8 dig through the wall ... a doorway:** Ezekiel is led to a hidden doorway, where he finds a small group of elders.

**8:10 loathsome beasts and creeping things ... all the idols:** categories of animals that were unclean, especially to eat (Gen 1:25; 6:7, 20; 7:8, 23; Lev 11), and certainly excluded from proper worship (Deut 4:18). The Hebrew term translated as *idols* refers to the balls of fecal matter pushed around by dung beetles. The prophet used this word throughout his prophecy (over 35 times).

**8:11 seventy elders:** A symbolic number that refers to the people's representatives at the banquet with God on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:9-11). **Jaazaniah, Shaphan's son:** a different person from the Jaazaniah mentioned in Ezekiel 11:1. Shaphan may be the highly regarded official under Josiah (2 Kgs 22). In addition to moving the evil thing further into the temple compound, Ezekiel refers to even greater wickedness by moving from the general population to the secular leaders, and by moving from one image in a gate to a gallery of images of unclean animals.

9:4 Ex 12:7;  
Ps 119:53;  
Ps 119:136;  
Jer 13:17; Rev 7:3  
9:5 Ex 32:27;  
Eze 5:11  
9:6 Ex 12:23;  
2Ch 36:17;  
Jer 25:29;  
1Pt 4:17; Rev 9:4  
9:8 Nm 14:5;  
Josh 7:6;  
Eze 11:13  
10:1 Ex 24:10;  
Eze 1:22;  
Eze 1:26;  
Rev 4:2; Rev 4:3

**Divine Abandonment** Ezekiel finds himself in familiar company by suggesting that the reason for Jerusalem and its temple's demise is God's abandonment. When bad things happen, priests and preachers often declare that God has abandoned the nation. The theme of divine abandonment was common and understood in the ancient Near East. One parallel from the ancient world is the Poem of Erra. This text explained internal turmoil that befell Babylon from roughly 1100 to 750 BCE. The poem linked this chaotic state with Marduk, the chief god of the city, stepping down from his throne for a period of time. Order was restored when Marduk returned. In another example, the destruction and restoration of Babylon at the hands of Assyria led to literature that employed the motif of divine abandonment. In the early decades of the 8th century BCE, Sennacherib destroyed Babylon. The people and priests thought that Marduk had left the city and gone up to heaven because he was angry with the sins of the Babylonians. Eleven years later, Sennacherib's son and successor, Esarhaddon, for his own purposes restored the city. The Babylonian literature explained this reversal as Marduk's change of heart, who out of his mercy forgave his people, reducing the punishment from 70 to 11 years. The restoration of this deity, his reinstatement in his sanctuary, signaled his return and a new future for Babylon.

censers in their hands. Jaazaniah, Shaphan's son, was standing right there with them, and the scent of the incense cloud rose up. <sup>12</sup>He said to me: Human one, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, every one of them in their rooms full of sculptured images? They say, "The LORD doesn't see us; the LORD has abandoned the land." <sup>13</sup>He said to me: You will see them performing even more detestable practices. <sup>14</sup>He brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the temple, where women were sitting and performing the Tammuz lament.

<sup>15</sup>He said to me: Human one, do you see? Yet you will see even more detestable practices than these. <sup>16</sup>He brought me to the inner court of the LORD's temple. There, at the entrance to the LORD's temple, between the porch and the altar, were twenty-five men facing toward the east with their backs to the LORD's temple. They were bowing to the sun in the east. <sup>17</sup>He said to me: Do you see, human one? Isn't it enough that the house of Judah has observed here all these detestable things? They have filled the land with violence, and they continue to provoke my fury. Look at them! They even put the branch to their noses! <sup>18</sup>I will certainly respond with wrath. I won't spare or pity anyone. Even though they call out loudly to me in my hearing, I won't listen to them.

**9** Then in my hearing he called out loudly: Draw near, you guardians of the city, and bring your weapons of destruction! <sup>2</sup>Suddenly, six men came from the Upper Gate that faces

8:12 *The LORD doesn't see us; the LORD has abandoned the land:* The irony is the people's assumption that they can behave in wicked ways because God has abandoned the land (cf. Ezek 9:9; 11:1-21). The reverse is true. The Lord's constant question to Ezekiel, "do you see?" (Ezek 8:5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17; 9:9; 11:1) shows that God isn't absent. The reality is that their terrible practices drive the Lord away from God's sanctuary (cf. Ezek 8:6).

8:14 *north gate:* In the third station of Ezekiel's guided tour of the house of Israel's sins, the prophet is now inside the north gate leading from the outer court to the inner court, a higher level of holiness. *women:* For the women to be there, they must be people who serve in the temple by performing rituals and ceremonies for the worship of the Lord (Ezek 13:17-23; 32:16; Lam 2:10). Having just left the secular leadership, Ezekiel now encounters sacred servants. *performing the Tammuz lament:* Tammuz was a Mesopotamian god of the harvest. Worship of Tammuz involved women acting out mourning rituals in order to assure a stable agricultural cycle.

8:16 *inner court... between the porch and the altar:* The fourth station of Ezekiel's tour brings him to the front of the temple and to the dreadful end of his survey of temple violations. *twenty-five men:* In this location, these could only be priests. The fact that Ezekiel didn't identify them as priests was part of his criticism of these men;

they weren't worthy of the title. *east... backs to the LORD's temple... bowing to the sun:* The temple was oriented on an east-west axis, with the Lord's throne room, the most holy place, to the west of the altar. Located between the altar and the porch of the temple, the 25 priests must turn eastward for the altar and their sacrifices to be in front of them. This means that their backs were turned to the most holy place, which is a physical example of betraying the covenant.

8:17 *branch to their noses:* Clearly an offensive gesture to God, but one whose meaning has been lost.

9:1-11 Having described the detestable practices of the nation, which have violated God's sanctuary, Ezekiel turns to the Lord's response to these practices. In his first response (9:1-11), God orders the execution of the citizens of Jerusalem, who have now made themselves his enemies. <sup>9:1</sup> *guardians of the city:* heavenly beings, similar to the four creatures seen in Ezekiel 1, assigned by the Lord to guard the city against all enemies (see the note on Ezekiel 8:16). Given the violation of the temple detailed in Ezekiel 8, the citizens of Jerusalem are now God's enemies. These four creatures are therefore transformed from being protectors into executioners.

9:2 *another man... dressed in linen:* a seventh figure serving the Lord, perhaps one assigned priestly duties (cf. Ezekiel 10:2; Exod 28:1-43; Lev 16:4; Ezek 44:17-18; Dan 10:5). I



north. All of them were holding weapons of destruction. Among them was another man who was dressed in linen and had a writing case at his side. When they came in and stood beside the bronze altar, <sup>3</sup>the glory of Israel's God rose from above the winged creatures<sup>o</sup> where he had been and moved toward the temple's threshold. The LORD called to the man who was dressed in linen with the writing case at his side: <sup>4</sup>Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and mark the foreheads of those who sigh and groan because of all the detestable practices that have been conducted in it. <sup>5</sup>To the others he said in my hearing: Go through the city after him, and attack. Spare no one! Be merciless! <sup>6</sup>Kill them all, old men, young men and women, babies and mothers. Only don't touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary. So they began with the men, the elders in front of the temple. <sup>7</sup>He said to them: Make the temple unclean! Fill the courts with the slain! Go! And they went out and attacked the city.

<sup>8</sup>While they were attacking, I was left alone. I fell on my face, and I cried out, "Oh, LORD God! When you pour out your wrath on Jerusalem, will you destroy all that is left of Israel?"

<sup>9</sup>He said to me: "Judah and the house of Israel are very, very guilty. The land is filled with blood, and the city is full of injustice. They have said, 'The LORD has forsaken the land; the LORD sees nothing.'<sup>10</sup>I most definitely won't spare or pity anyone! I will hold them accountable for their ways."

<sup>11</sup>Just then the man who was dressed in linen with the writing case at his side returned and said, "I've done just as you commanded."

**10**At that moment I saw a form of a throne in the dome above the heads of the winged creatures. It appeared above them, and it looked like lapis lazuli. <sup>2</sup>He said to the man clothed in linen: Go in between the wheels under the winged creatures. <sup>3</sup>Fill your hands with fiery coals from between the winged creatures, and scatter them over the city. As I watched, he went in. <sup>3</sup>Now the winged creatures were standing to the right of the temple when the man went in, and the cloud filled the inner courtyard. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD's glory rose from above the winged creatures<sup>4</sup> and moved toward the temple's threshold. The temple was filled with the cloud, and the courtyard was filled with the brightness of the LORD's glory. <sup>5</sup>The sound of the winged creatures' wings could be heard as far as the outer courtyard. It was like the sound of God Almighty<sup>7</sup> when he speaks. <sup>6</sup>When he instructed the man clothed in linen to take fire from between the winged creatures and their wheels, the man went and stood next to the wheel. <sup>7</sup>Then one of the winged creatures stretched a hand between the winged

10:8 Eze 1:8, Eze 10:21  
 10:9 Eze 1:15, Eze 1:16, Eze 3:13, Dn 10:6, Rev 21:20  
 10:11 Eze 1:17  
 10:12 Eze 1:18, Rev 4:6, Rev 4:8  
 10:14 1Ki 7:29, 1Ki 7:36;  
 Eze 1:6, Eze 1:10, Rev 4:7  
 10:15 Eze 1:1, Eze 1:3, Eze 1:5, Eze 10:20  
 10:16 Eze 1:19  
 10:17 Eze 1:21  
 10:18 Ps 18:10, Eze 10:4  
 10:19 Eze 11:1, Eze 11:22, Eze 43:4  
 10:20 Eze 1:1, Eze 1:5, Eze 1:22, Eze 1:26, Eze 10:15  
 10:21 Eze 1:6, Eze 1:8, Eze 10:8, Eze 10:14, Eze 41:18  
 10:22 Eze 1:1, Eze 1:10

<sup>o</sup>LXX; MT creature <sup>p</sup>LXX; MT creature <sup>q</sup>LXX; MT creature <sup>r</sup>Heb *El Shaddai* or *God of the Mountain*

*writing case*: it would have held inks and writing tools (stylus), or perhaps brushes. *bronze altar*: the altar for entirely burned sacrifices to the Lord (Exod 27:1-7; 38:1-2). Again, the change in vocabulary is telling, for the prophet now merely describes a structure. Its function as an altar in service to the Lord has been lost.

9:3 *moved toward the temple's threshold*: An important part of the dynamic of this vision is the movement of the Lord's glory eastward out of the temple. The text makes it a point to mark its location at the temple's threshold. From this platform, the glory commands the Lord's heavenly army and the man in linen.

9:4 *mark the foreheads*: Literally, place the Hebrew letter *tau* on their foreheads, which at that time looked like the English letter *x*. Potters in ancient Israel commonly marked certain pots with "taus."

9:7 *Make the temple unclean! Fill the courts with the slain!* Just as the Lord would defile the unorthodox shrines of the Israelites (see the note on Ezek 6:5), so now the Lord defiles the Jerusalem temple with the corpses of the slain. An end has come to this period of service as the doorway to the Lord's throne room (see the note introducing Ezek 7:1-27).

9:8 *Oh, LORD God!* See the note on Ezekiel 4:14-15.

9:9 *The LORD has forsaken the land; the LORD sees nothing*: See note on Ezekiel 8:12.

9:11 *"I've done just as you commanded"*: It isn't clear whether the man in linen found anyone who "sigh[s] and groan[s]" on account of all of the detestable practices (9:4). Ezekiel's objection in 9:8 suggests that he didn't.

10:1-11:25 In God's second response to the violation of his sanctuary, the Lord's glory leaves the temple, moving eastward. This scene recalls Ezekiel 1:4-28.

10:1 *form of a throne . . . lapis lazuli*: See Ezekiel 1:26-27. *winged creatures*: This vision identifies these creatures slightly differently from the creatures of Ezekiel 1, where they were stated to be "living creatures." Ezekiel 10:15, 20-22 make this connection clear.

10:2 *man clothed in linen*: Compare with Ezekiel 9:2. *fiery coals*: Compare with Ezekiel 1:13, where the coals accompanied the theophany, or divine appearance, of God. Burning coals were also used by priests in rituals before God's presence in the temple. In this setting, they seem to have been related to purification (cf. Lev 16:12; Isa 6:6). *scatter them over the city*: In preparation for the eastward departure of the glory, the coals purified the defilement of the city.

10:3-4 *The temple was filled with the cloud . . . and the brightness of the Lord's glory*: signaling the movement of the glory (cf. Ezek 1:4).

10:5 *sound of God Almighty when he speaks*: See Ezekiel 1:24.

11:5 Jer 17:10

11:13 Eze 9:8,  
Eze 11:1; Ac 5:5

11:19 Ps 51:10;

Jer 24:7;

Eze 18:31;

Eze 36:26;

2Co 3:3

11:20 Ps 105:45;

Jer 31:33;

Jer 32:38;

Eze 14:11;

Eze 36:28

**The Lord's Glory** The Lord's glory was an important theological concept in the ancient world, representing God's presence. To imagine how the ancients conceived of the deity's glory, think of a visible aura, something like the sun's rays shining out from behind a cloud. An Assyrian drawing of the glory of their god, Assur, depicts the glory flying alongside the king. Below the waist of the glory of the god is something that looks like rays of light, perhaps representing flashing fire (Ezek 1:27). Streaming beams of light encircle the figure. The figure has drawn his bow, aiming it at the enemies.

In Ezekiel, the location and movement of the Lord's glory is an important part of Ezekiel's prophecies. In Ezekiel 1, the appearance of God's glory by the Chebar River represents God coming to be with the exiles outside of the land. In Ezekiel 10–11, the movement of the glory out of the temple represents God's abandonment of Jerusalem's temple, signaling the Lord's judgment. But then in Ezekiel 43, when the glory again reenters the future temple, the prophet proclaims that the day will come when God's presence with God's people will be restored. This is a visionary statement of the theological confession bound up in the new name of the city, given at the book's conclusion, "The Lord Is There" (Ezek 48:35).

creatures into the fire that was between them, and he drew out some of it and set it in the palm of the one clothed in linen. He took it and went out. <sup>9</sup>It appeared that the winged creatures had the form of a human hand under their wings.

<sup>9</sup>Suddenly, I saw four wheels next to the winged creatures. There was a wheel next to each winged creature, and the appearance of the wheels was like sparkling topaz. <sup>10</sup>It appeared that there was one shape for all four of them, as if one wheel were inside another. <sup>11</sup>When they moved in any of the four directions, they moved without swerving. Whichever way the leading one faced, they moved in that direction without swerving. <sup>12</sup>Their whole body—backs, hands, and wings—as well as their wheels, all four of them, were covered with eyes all around. <sup>13</sup>It was these wheels that were called "the wheels" in my hearing. <sup>14</sup>Each winged creature had four faces. The first face was that of a winged creature, the second face was that of a human being, the third that of a lion, and the fourth that of an eagle. <sup>15</sup>The winged creatures rose up, the same creatures that I had seen at the Chebar River. <sup>16</sup>When the winged creatures moved, the wheels moved beside them. When the winged creatures lifted their wings to ascend above the earth, the wheels remained beside them without swerving. <sup>17</sup>When they stood still, the wheels stood still; when they rose up, they rose up with them, because the spirit<sup>a</sup> of the living creatures was in them. <sup>18</sup>Then the LORD's glory went out from above the temple's threshold and it stood over the winged creatures. <sup>19</sup>While I watched, the winged creatures raised their wings and rose from the ground to leave, with their wheels beside them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the temple, and the glory of Israel's God was up above them. <sup>20</sup>These were the same living creatures that I saw underneath Israel's God at the Chebar River, and I realized that they were winged creatures. <sup>21</sup>Each had four faces and four wings, with the form of a human hand under their wings. <sup>22</sup>The forms of their faces were the same faces that I saw at the Chebar River. Their appearance was also the same. All four of them moved straight ahead.

**11** A wind lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the LORD's temple. There at the entrance to the gate were twenty-five men, and I saw that two officials of the people, Jaazaniah, Azzur's son, and Pelatiah, Benaiah's son, were with them.

<sup>a</sup>Or wind

10:9-17 *wheels...covered with eyes...four faces...the spirit:* All of these images connect this vision with the first (cf. Ezek 10:15, 20-22).

10:18-19 *from above the temple's threshold... at the entrance to the east gate of the temple:* another stage in the departure of the Lord's glory, a pause just at the exit from the temple.

11:1-21 As the Lord's glory exited the temple area, Ezekiel encounters 25 men. Here Ezekiel reveals that God's election will rest with the community in exile, and not

with the few who are left in the land (cf. 24:17, 23; 33:24-29). The passage disputes two claims by these 25 men (Ezek 11:3, 15), both claiming that the remaining few have inherited the land.

11:1 *twenty-five men:* Based on differences in location and function in the text (civic leaders [Ezek 11:2] versus religious leaders), this group seems to be different from those in the temple (Ezek 8:16), though we can't be sure. *Jaazaniah, Azzur, Benaiah,* were known to Ezekiel's audience, and are found elsewhere in biblical texts (e.g., 2 Kgs

<sup>2</sup>He said to me: Human one, these men devise evil plans and give wicked advice in this city. <sup>3</sup>They are the ones who say, "The nearest relatives aren't building houses." <sup>4</sup>The city is the cooking pot, and we are the meat." <sup>5</sup>Therefore, prophesy against them, human one, prophesy! <sup>6</sup>The LORD's spirit took hold of me, and he said to me: Say, This is what the LORD God proclaims: So you have said, house of Israel! But I know what you really mean. <sup>7</sup>You continue to commit murder in this city, and you fill its streets with the slain.

<sup>8</sup>Therefore, the LORD God proclaims: The city is the cooking pot, and the ones you have slain in it are the meat. But you will be taken out of it. <sup>9</sup>You fear the sword, so I will bring the sword against you. This is what the LORD God says! <sup>10</sup>I will lead you out of the city, hand you over to foreigners, and execute judgments against you. <sup>11</sup>You will fall by the sword! At Israel's borders I will judge you, and you will know that I am the LORD. <sup>12</sup>The city won't be your cooking pot, and you won't be the meat in it. At Israel's borders, I will judge you. <sup>13</sup>You will know that I am the LORD, whose regulations you didn't observe and whose case laws you didn't follow. Instead, you followed the case laws of the nations around you.

<sup>14</sup>While I was prophesying, Benaiah's son Pelatiah dropped dead. I fell on my face, and I wailed and said, "Oh, LORD God! Are you finishing off even the Israelites who are left?"

<sup>15</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>16</sup>Human one, when the people living in Jerusalem said, "They've gone far from the LORD, and we've been given the land as an inheritance," they were talking about your family, your nearest relatives, the whole house of Israel, all of it.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore, say, The LORD God proclaims: Even though I made them go far away among the nations and caused them to scatter throughout the earth, I've provided some sanctuary for them in the countries to which they've gone.

<sup>18</sup>Therefore, say, The LORD God proclaims: I will gather you from the nations, assemble you from the countries where you were scattered, and I will give you Israel's fertile land. <sup>19</sup>They will enter the land, and they will remove from it all its disgusting and detestable things. <sup>20</sup>I will give them a single heart, and I will put a new spirit in them. I will remove the stony hearts from their bodies and give them hearts of flesh <sup>21</sup>so that they may follow my regulations and carefully observe my case laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. <sup>22</sup>As for those whose hearts continue to go after their disgusting and detestable things, I will hold them accountable for their ways. This is what the LORD God says!

<sup>†</sup>Or it is not time to build houses

25:23; Jer 28:1; 35:3). Many of these very names have also been found on seals and seal impressions from this era (cf. the note on Ezek 11:14).

11:3 *The nearest relatives aren't building houses*: Property rights were kept in the family in ancient Israel and Judah. If a property wasn't passed down to the head of the household, then a close relative—a "redeemer"—would have the first right of refusal (Lev 25:25; Jer 32:6-15). If the property wasn't claimed, "squatter's rights" would prevail (see Lev 25:29-30). *The city is the cooking pot, and we are the meat*: Set side by side with the first saying, the officials claim to be the choicest meat, not the parts of the stew thrown out (i.e., the exiles). In another prophecy (Ezek 24:1-14), Ezekiel turns this boast on its head, saying that the meat in the pot will be consumed by fire.

11:6-7 *fill its streets with the slain . . . are the meat*: God disputes the men's claim. Instead of their being the meat, the slain (recall Ezek 9) are so named—and the men are to blame.

11:11 *The city won't be your cooking pot . . . Israel's borders*: A further reversal of the men's claim. These officials will suffer by not being buried with honor in the family tomb, but at the edge of the land, most probably without burial, which is a shameful death.

11:13 *while I was prophesying . . . dropped dead*: an immediate fulfillment of Ezekiel 11:8 (cf. Deut 18:15-22; Jer 28:12-17). *Benaiah's son Pelatiah*: A stamp seal belonging to a certain Pelatiah was excavated in a tomb of a wealthy

family just outside of the ancient borders of Jerusalem, and dating to about this period. However, it remains pure speculation whether we should connect that grave with this Pelatiah. Structurally, Pelatiah's death closes this first dispute over possession of the land.

11:15 *They've gone far from the LORD*: the exiles. *we've been given the land*: the 25 men. The officials claim the land (cf. Ezek 33:24) on their supposed nearness to the Lord by means of the temple. Ezekiel crafts this statement to be ironic, which contrasts with the true summary, stated in Ezekiel 8:6.

11:16 *sanctuary*: not a safe haven or protection for the exiles but rather a place of worship, a place to encounter God. This sentence affirms the Lord's presence with the exiles, which helps the reader remember the theology of the vision in Ezekiel 1. In the ancient world, God's presence was linked to the election of a people and the land provided to these elect; it was a whole.

11:17-20 This passage is the first of several that promise the restoration of the people, land, and covenant. See also Ezekiel 16:59-63; 20:33-44; 34:20-30; 36:16-38; 37:20-28.

11:19-20 *heart . . . spirit*: The pairing of a new heart and spirit is necessary to replace the heart and spirit that will melt and faint at the news of Jerusalem's fall (Ezek 21:7). This pairing of heart and spirit is inseparable from loyal love through the covenant with the Lord (cf. Jer 31:31-34; 32:36-41; Deut 6:4-5). Sometimes "heart of flesh" is contrasted with "heart of stone" to symbolize covenantal

11:22 Eze 10:19,  
Eze 10:20  
11:23 Eze 10:4;  
Zec 14:4  
11:24 Eze 1:1,  
Eze 1:3, Eze 8:3,  
Eze 11:1,  
Eze 37:1  
12:7 Is 6:9,  
Is 6:10; Jer 5:21;  
Eze 2:5,  
Mt 13:13  
12:9 Eze 2:5,  
Eze 17:12,  
Eze 24:19  
12:13 Is 24:17;  
Eze 17:20,  
Eze 19:8,  
Eze 32:3;  
Hos 7:12

12:22 Is 5:19;  
Eze 11:3,  
Eze 12:27,  
Eze 18:2, 2Pt 3:4  
12:27 Eze 12:22;  
Dn 10:14; 2Pt 3:4  
12:28 Jer 1:12;  
Eze 12:23,  
Eze 12:25;  
Mt 24:48;  
1Th 5:2  
13:3 Lam 2:14;  
Hos 9:7  
13:5 Ps 106:23;  
Is 5:5, Is 58:12;  
Eze 22:30

<sup>22</sup>Then the winged creatures raised their wings. The wheels were next to them, and the glory of Israel's God was above them. <sup>23</sup>The LORD's glory ascended from the middle of the city, and it stopped at the mountain east of the city. <sup>24</sup>And a wind lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Chaldea, through a vision with a divine wind. <sup>25</sup>When the vision I had seen left me, <sup>25</sup>I spoke to the exiles about everything the LORD had shown to me.

### Baggage for exile

**12**The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, you live in a household of rebels. They have eyes to see but they don't see, ears to hear but they don't hear, because they are a household of rebels. <sup>3</sup>But you, human one, prepare a backpack for going into exile. In the daytime while they watch, go into exile; while they watch, go out from your place to another. Even though they are a household of rebels, perhaps they will understand. <sup>4</sup>In the daytime while they watch, carry your backpack as if for exile. At twilight while they watch, go out like those who are led out to exile. <sup>5</sup>While they watch, dig a hole through the wall and take your backpack out through it. <sup>6</sup>While they watch, shoulder your backpack and carry it out in the dark. Cover your face so that you can't see the land, because I'm making you a sign for the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup>So I did as I was commanded. I carried out my backpack like an exile's backpack in the daytime. At night I dug a hole through the wall with my hands. In the darkness, I shouldered my backpack and carried it out while they watched.

<sup>8</sup>In the morning, the LORD's word came to me: <sup>9</sup>Human one, has the house of Israel, that household of rebels, asked you, "What are you doing?" <sup>10</sup>Say to them, The LORD God proclaims: This concerns the prince in Jerusalem, along with the entire house of Israel in it. <sup>11</sup>Say: I'm your sign. Just as I have done, so it will be done to them. They will go into captivity in exile. <sup>12</sup>Their prince will shoulder his backpack at night and go out. They will dig through the wall to lead him out through it, and he will cover his face so that his eyes won't see the land. <sup>13</sup>But I will spread my net over him, catch him in my trap, and bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans. He won't see it, but he will die there. <sup>14</sup>As for all those who are in league with him, I will scatter his helpers and all his troops to the winds and let the sword loose after them. <sup>15</sup>They will know that I am the LORD when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them throughout the lands. <sup>16</sup>But I will preserve a few of their number from the sword, famine, and plague, so that they may confess all their detestable practices among the nations where they go. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>25</sup>Or spirit <sup>25</sup>Or them

loyalty or disloyalty (Ps 37:31; cf. also Ezek 3:7; 36:26). The pair covers the ancient Israelites' understanding of human nature. The heart signified the will or desires of a person, and the spirit signified a person's actions, or that which makes a person alive. *They will be my people, and I will be their God*: This is a statement of the covenant (Lev 26:44-45; Jer 24:7; 31:33; 32:38; Ezek 14:11; 34:30; 37:23, 27; Hos 4:12; Zech 8:8). The exilic community will be the recipients of the new covenant.

11:23 *The LORD's glory ascended*: The glory continues its exit out of the barren space once occupied by the holy ground of the temple. *the mountain east of the city*: today known as the Mount of Olives, this was ancient Jerusalem's eastern horizon. In the time of the monarchy, Aza-zel's goat, carrying the sins of the people, left from this mountain and headed into the wilderness, the unclean regions of the cosmos (cf. Lev 16:6-10). This station and the glory's departure signify the end of this period of the election of Jerusalem's temple. Later in Ezekiel's prophecies, the glory reverses its path (cf. Ezek 43:1-9).

12:1-20 This section features two symbolic actions, both of which announce the exile after the fall of the city (12:3-16, 17-20). These enacted prophecies close out the section begun by those of Ezekiel 4. Ezekiel also continues with his ironic pronouncements, continuing the play with God's presence or abandonment of the temple and city (Ezek 8:1-11:25).

12:2 *eyes to see but they don't see*: Compare with Ezekiel 8:12. The Hebrew word here translated "see" is translated "understand" in 12:3. The wordplay anticipates the blinding of Zedekiah, and emphasizes the peoples' need to understand God's actions.

12:4-7 *while they watch*: The people must see Ezekiel perform his sign, continuing the play on (not) seeing/(not) understanding. *daytime... twilight... dark*: This symbolic action seems to have lasted for a full day (cf. Ezek 12:8), a statement of length of the exile. The symbolic action concludes in the dark, with Ezekiel covering his eyes, continuing the play on sight and understanding.

12:10 *the prince in Jerusalem, along with the entire house of Israel in it*: Though unnamed, his audience knows that Ezekiel means Zedekiah. The sting of this judgment oracle isn't directed toward the prophet's exilic audience but targets the survivors in Jerusalem. Ezekiel intentionally avoids using Zedekiah's name throughout his prophecies (see the note on Ezek 1:2). Jeremiah (Jer 39:1-7; 52:1-11) records that Zedekiah and the soldiers escaped at night (Jer 39:4; 52:7), but he was captured and eventually blinded at Riblah (Jer 39:5-7; 52:7; cf. Ezek 6:14). The message buried into this reference to a blinded king (12:10-12) would not be lost on his audience, who perhaps might see (cf. Jer 12:2-3).

12:15, 16 *Then they will know that I am the Lord*: Their knowing or "seeing" the honor due the Lord will come

<sup>17</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>18</sup>Human one, eat your bread in trembling, and drink your water in anxious agitation. <sup>19</sup>Say to the land's people, The LORD God proclaims to those living in Jerusalem regarding Israel's fertile land: As they anxiously eat up their bread and drink up their water in dismay, the land will be emptied of everything in it because of the violence of all who live there. <sup>20</sup>The inhabited cities will be laid waste, the land left desolate, and you will know that I am the LORD.

### Fulfillment of prophecy

<sup>21</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>22</sup>Human one, what is this proverb of your people concerning Israel's fertile land? They say, "The days go by, and every vision vanishes." <sup>23</sup>Therefore, say to them, The LORD God proclaims: I'll put an end to this proverb! It will never again be uttered in Israel. Tell them instead: The days are coming soon for the fulfillment of every vision. <sup>24</sup>Never again will there be any worthless vision or deceptive divination in the house of Israel. <sup>25</sup>I am the LORD! The word that I speak is the word that I will speak! It will happen and be delayed no longer. In your own days, household of rebels, I speak a word and make it happen. This is what the LORD God says!

<sup>26</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>27</sup>Human one, the house of Israel is now saying, "The vision that he sees is for distant days; he prophesies about future times." <sup>28</sup>Therefore, say to them, The LORD God proclaims: It will be delayed no longer. Every word of mine that I've spoken is certain, and it will happen. This is what the LORD God says.

### Against the prophets

**13** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, prophesy to Israel's prophets who prophesy from their own imaginations. Say, Hear the LORD's word! <sup>3</sup>The LORD God proclaims: Doom to the foolish prophets who follow their own whims but see nothing. <sup>4</sup>Israel, your prophets have been like jackals among ruins. <sup>5</sup>You haven't gone up into the breach or reinforced the wall of the house of Israel, so that it might withstand the battle on the day of the LORD. <sup>6</sup>They saw worthless visions and performed deceptive divinations. Even though the LORD didn't send them, they said, "This is what the LORD says" and expected their word to stand. <sup>7</sup>Didn't you see worthless visions? And didn't you report deceptive divinations and say, "This is what the LORD says," even though I didn't speak?

13:9 Eze 20:38  
13:10 Jer 6:14,  
Jer 8:11,  
Eze 13:16,  
Eze 22:28  
13:11 Is 28:2;  
Eze 13:10,  
Eze 38:22;  
Mi 7:27  
13:13 Is 30:30;  
Rev 11:19,  
Rev 16:21  
13:14 Jer 6:15;  
Mi 1:6  
13:16 Is 57:21;  
Jer 6:14;  
Eze 12:27,  
Eze 13:10  
13:18 Eze 13:20;  
2Pt 2:14  
13:19 Prv 28:21;  
Mi 3:5

in their judgment (see the sidebar, "The Recognition Formula" at Ezek 6).

12:17, 19 *eat your bread in trembling, and drink your water in anxious agitation*: building on the imagery of the third symbolic action in Ezekiel 5:9-17.

12:19 *the land's people*: perhaps identifying an influential political group (see note on Ezek 22). *land will be emptied*: Ancient priestly traditions held that land had to remain fallow for a time for it to be cleansed and prepared for people to live on it. See Leviticus 25 regarding the sabbatical and jubilee years (see notes on Ezek 40:1; 2 Chron 36:21).

12:21-28 These verses introduce material challenging opposition to Ezekiel with two disputations (cf. Ezek 11:1-21). This issue relates to Ezekiel's reputation as a true prophet (cf. Ezek 2:5; 20:49; 33:33).

12:22 *The days go by, and every vision vanishes*: This proverb represents the views of Ezekiel's opponents. God's pronouncement in Ezekiel 12:25 contradicts it. Ezekiel's vision now found in chapters 8-11 dates to fall 592 (Ezek 8:1), and Zedekiah didn't rebel until 588. Therefore, sufficient time had passed for the public to gain a sense of security. Moreover, Nebuchadnezzar experienced a setback in 591, permitting optimism. Circumstances such as these would have prompted Ezekiel "to archive" his prophecies (cf. Isa 8:16; see sidebar, "The Dates in the Book of Ezekiel" at Ezek 2).

12:27 *The vision that he sees is for distant days; he prophesies about future times*: This second saying now tries to take advantage of Ezekiel's practice of archiving his

prophecies by claiming that the envisioned disaster won't affect them. Nearly the same wording as in Ezekiel 12:25 announces God's counterclaim.

13:1-23 Prophetic conflict came with the role in ancient Israel and Judah (cf. 1 Kgs 21:1-28; Jer 27-28), and indeed in the entire ancient world. Ezekiel 13 accuses further prophetic opposition to Ezekiel of being false, contrasting their "word" (13:6) and "visions" (13:7, 8) with the Lord's or Ezekiel's "word" (cf. Ezek 12:21-28). The chapter divides into two sections, 13:1-16, addressing male prophets, and 13:17-23, addressing female prophets.

13:3 *Doom*: Stated here and in Ezek 13:18, this sentence is given to both male and female prophets (cf. Ezek 2:10; 34:2).

13:4-5 *jackals among ruins... into the breach or reinforced the wall*: In ancient Judah and Israel, a prophet was likened to a sentinel (cf. note on Ezek 3:17-22), and thus actively strengthening the defenses associated with the city wall. In contrast, these prophets have been jackals. In the ancient world, more than defending against a military attack, city walls protected the citizens and livestock against wild animals such as lions and jackals. Such animals represented chaos, those forces opposing life. Ezekiel's complex metaphor, then, pits his prophetic opponents against the Lord and all that supports life.

13:6-7 *This is what the Lord says*: Compare with the command to Ezekiel to announce, "The LORD God proclaims" (cf. Ezek 2:4; 3:11, 27).

14:5 Is 1:4;  
Jer 2:11;  
Zec 11:8  
14:9 2Sa 12:12;  
1Ki 22:23;  
Ps 81:11; Is 9:12;  
Is 9:14

14:12 Eze 18:1  
14:13 Lv 26:26;  
Is 3:1; Eze 4:16;  
Eze 5:16;  
Eze 14:19

14:14 Gn 6:8;  
Job 1:1; Jer 15:1;  
Eze 14:20;  
Eze 28:3

14:16 Gn 19:29;  
Eze 14:14;  
Eze 14:18;  
Eze 14:20

14:18 Eze 14:14  
14:20 Eze 14:14;  
Eze 14:16

<sup>8</sup>Therefore, the LORD God proclaims: Because you spoke worthless things and had false visions, I'm against you. This is what the LORD God says! <sup>9</sup>I'll wield my power against the prophets, those seers of nothingness and diviners of lies. They won't be included in my people's council, or recorded in the house of Israel's official records, or enter Israel's fertile land. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>10</sup>Without a doubt, they led my people astray, saying "Peace" when there was no peace, and "He is building a wall" when they were the ones who laid on the plaster. <sup>11</sup>Say to those who laid on the plaster that it will fall. When the flooding rains appear and I send hailstones, it will collapse, and the storm winds will break it apart. <sup>12</sup>The wall will certainly fall. Won't it be said about you, "Where is your plaster now?"

<sup>13</sup>Therefore, the LORD God proclaims: In my fury I will make a storm wind break out, and in my anger there will be flooding rains and hailstones in consuming wrath. <sup>14</sup>I will tear down the wall on which you laid plaster. I will raze it to the ground and expose its foundation. When it falls, you will be destroyed with it, and you will know that I am the LORD. <sup>15</sup>I will exhaust my fury on the wall and on those who laid plaster on it. Then I will say to you, "Where is the wall?"<sup>w</sup> and "Where are those who plastered it, <sup>16</sup>those prophets of Israel who prophesied to Jerusalem and envisioned peace when there was no peace?" This is what the LORD God says!

<sup>17</sup>You, human one, face the daughters of your people, those women who prophesy from their imaginations. Prophesy against them <sup>18</sup>and say, The LORD God proclaims: Doom to the women who sew bands on every wrist and make veils for heads of all sizes to entrap human lives. Will you ensnare my people's lives but preserve your own? <sup>19</sup>When you degrade me to my people for handfuls of barley and bread crumbs, you mislead my gullible people, and you bring about the death of those who shouldn't die and keep alive those who shouldn't live.

<sup>20</sup>Therefore, the LORD God proclaims: I'm against the bands that you use to trap human lives.<sup>e</sup> I will tear them from your arms, and I will set free the lives that you've trapped like birds. <sup>21</sup>I will tear off your veils and snatch my people out of your clutches. They will be prey in your clutches no longer. Then you will know that I am the LORD. <sup>22</sup>You hurt the righteous with slander—I didn't wound them!—and you strengthened the hands of the wicked so that they survived without changing their evil ways! <sup>23</sup>Therefore, you will no longer see empty visions or perform divinations. I will rescue my people from your clutches, and you will know that I am the LORD.

### False devotion

**14** When some of the elders of the house of Israel came to sit in my presence, <sup>2</sup>the LORD's word came to me: <sup>3</sup>Human one, these men decide on their own to set up their idols, so the cause of their downfall is right in front of them. Why should I allow them to ask me

<sup>w</sup>Syr, cf 13:12; MT *There is no wall.* <sup>e</sup>LXX; MT adds *like birds.*

13:9 *my people's council, or recorded in the house of Israel's official records:* In ancient theocracies such as Judah's, many prophets were royal advisors, a part of the governmental administration. Here, the divine king removes Ezekiel's adversaries from office!

13:10 *saying "Peace":* an announcement that a sentinel might make. In Hebrew, peace carries the sense of whole or complete, not just the absence of conflict. *He is building a wall:* The false prophets accuse Ezekiel of creating divisions among the people, of building walls within the nation.

13:11-12 *plaster:* City walls were made with mud bricks covered with plaster, which in turn was made out of burned limestone. The mud brick interior provided the strength of the wall, and the plaster coating protected the mud from rain and hail. Ezekiel argues that his opponents are creating a facade that hides structural weaknesses (also Ezek 13:14). Here, Ezekiel freely toys with the metaphor he began in Ezekiel 13:5, and with it, mocking his adversaries (cf. Ezek 22:28).

13:13 *storm wind... flooding rains... hailstones:* images of God at war against the forces of chaos (cf. Judg 5:4-5; Pss 18:11-15; 68:7-10; Nah 1:3-8).

13:17-23 Ezekiel now turns his wrath against prophetesses. It was common for women to serve as prophetesses in the ancient world (Miriam, Exod 15:20; Deborah, Judg 4:4; Huldah, 2 Kgs 22:14; Isaiah's wife, Isa 8:3). Letters from ancient Mari (ca. 1775 BCE) reported of "shockheads," or ecstatic female prophetesses.

13:18 *bands on every wrist... veils for heads:* These accessories seem to have been given out with the promise of protection.

13:19 *handfuls of barley and bread crumbs:* payment for the bands and veils. Prophets were customarily paid for their services (cf. 1 Sam 9:7; 2 Kgs 5).

14:1-11 Ezekiel brings one more prophetic word against false prophets, but this time there is a twist—the Lord himself caused these prophets to speak falsely!

14:1 *elders of the house of Israel:* Again Ezekiel uses the title he has given for all who are breaking God's covenant (cf.

anything? <sup>4</sup>Therefore, speak to them and tell them, The LORD God proclaims: If anyone from the house of Israel decides on his own to set up his idols and puts the cause of his downfall right in front of him, but then comes to the prophet, I, the LORD, will require an answer from him through his many idols. <sup>5</sup>So I'll seize the hearts of the house of Israel, whose idols have made them all strangers to me.

<sup>6</sup>Therefore, say to the house of Israel, The LORD God proclaims: Come back! Turn away from your idols and from all your detestable practices. Turn away! <sup>7</sup>Or anyone of the house of Israel or any immigrant in Israel who becomes estranged from me by deciding on their own to set up their idols and puts the cause of their downfall right in front of them, but then comes to the prophet to ask me something through him, I, the LORD, will require an answer. <sup>8</sup>I will confront that one. I will set them up as a sign and an object lesson, and I will cut them off from my people. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>9</sup>As for the prophet who was seduced into speaking a word, even though it was I, the LORD, who seduced that prophet, I will use my power against him and cut him off completely from my people Israel. <sup>10</sup>The prophet and the inquirer alike will bear their guilt, <sup>11</sup>so that the house of Israel won't stray away from me again or make themselves impure with any of their sins. They will be my people, and I will be their God. This is what the LORD God says!

### Failed request

<sup>12</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>13</sup>Human one, suppose a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, so that I use my power against it, break off its food supply, let famine run rampant, and eliminate both humans and animals. <sup>14</sup>If these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, lived there, their lives alone would be saved because they were righteous. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>15</sup>Or suppose I allow wild animals to roam through the land, and it becomes so wild that no one can live there or even travel through it on account of the wild animals. <sup>16</sup>If these three men lived there, as surely as I live, proclaims the LORD God, they wouldn't be able to rescue even their sons or daughters. They alone would be rescued, but the land would become a ruin. <sup>17</sup>Or suppose I bring a sword against that land and command the sword to pass through and eliminate both humans and animals. <sup>18</sup>If these three men lived there, as surely as I live, proclaims the LORD God, they wouldn't be able to rescue even their sons or daughters. They alone would be rescued. <sup>19</sup>Or suppose I send a plague against that land and pour out my fury on it. With great bloodshed I would eliminate both humans and animals. <sup>20</sup>If Noah, Daniel, and Job lived there, as surely as I live, proclaims the LORD God, they wouldn't be able to rescue either sons or daughters. But they would save their lives because they were righteous.

<sup>21</sup>The LORD God proclaims: How much more if I send all four of these terrible acts of judgment—sword, famine, wild animals, and plague—against Jerusalem, to eliminate both humans and animals? <sup>22</sup>Yet a few survivors will be left. Sons and daughters will be brought out to you. When you see their ways and their deeds, you will be consoled for the evil that I

Ezek 3:1). This is the second time that people come to Ezekiel for advice (cf. Ezek 3:24; 8:1; 20:1; 33:31), an indication of Ezekiel's prestige in the community.

14:4 to set up his idols: See note on Ezekiel 20:32, but then comes to the prophet, I, the LORD, will require an answer from him: Prophets in ancient Israel and Judah were not lone, spiritually sensitive people, announcing private revelations from God. They were public advisors, helping to direct the government. Officials and others came to a prophet to ask questions of God (cf. 1 Sam 28:3-25; 1 Kgs 22:1-38). The same was true in Mesopotamia, where kings and others asked their gods for a prophetic word, which involved elaborate ceremonies through which they would ask their idols. The prophet or priest would conduct these rituals and would in turn speak for the deity.

14:7 any immigrant: Ezekiel considered such immigrants welcome (Ezek 47:23) and deserving of protection (Ezek 22:29), but they were also expected to abide by the obligations of the covenant with the Lord.

14:9 even though it was I, the LORD, who seduced that prophet: In Ezekiel's theology, the Lord could be a source

of goodness and blessings, or malicious when angered (cf. Ezek 20:25; and also 1 Sam 16:14; 1 Kgs 22:22).

14:12-23 Ezekiel again judges the land (cf. Ezek 6) and initiates several judgments against the key components of God's elect (continuing through chapter 24). The oracle is structured around the four covenantal curses (cf. Lev 26:14-39): food supply (14:12-14); wild animals (14:15-16); sword (14:17-18); and plague (14:19-20), recalling the content of Ezekiel 6 once more. Noah, Daniel, and Job were figures of legendary righteousness known from the literature of the day. As such, Ezekiel repeatedly mentioned them to emphasize the certainty of the judgment on the land, not as a promise of salvation to righteous individuals (cf. Jer 5:1-9).

14:22 Sons and daughters will be brought out to you: The remaining few of the elected nation will become exiles; nobody will be found in the land (cf. Ezek 11:1-21).

14:22-23 you will be consoled . . . will bring you some consolation: The Hebrew term denotes the sense of accepting the justice of a sentence (cf. Ezek 16:63; 20:43; 36:31; 43:10-11).

15:4 Jn 15:16;  
16:1 Is 5:1;  
Eze 23:1  
16:2 Is 58:1;  
Eze 20:4;  
Eze 22:2  
16:3 Gn 15:16;  
Eze 16:45  
16:4 Hos 2:3;  
Lk 2:7  
16:5 Dt 32:10  
16:6 Ex 19:4;  
Eze 16:22  
16:7 Ex 1:7;  
Dt 1:10  
16:8 Ru 3:9;  
Jer 2:2; Eze 20:5  
16:9 Ru 3:3;  
Eze 36:25  
16:10 Ex 26:36;  
Ps 45:14;  
Eze 16:13;  
Eze 16:18  
16:11 Gn 24:22;  
Gn 24:47;  
Gn 41:42;  
Is 3:19;  
Eze 23:42  
16:12 Is 3:21

16:14 1Ki 10:24;  
Lam 2:15  
16:15 1a 1:21,  
Is 57:8; Jer 2:20;  
Eze 16:25,  
Eze 23:3

inflicted on Jerusalem, for all that I brought against it. <sup>23</sup>Seeing their ways and their deeds will bring you some consolation, because then you will understand what I've done, and that I didn't do any of these things without cause. This is what the LORD God says.

### The vine's wood

16:17 Eze 7:20,  
Eze 16:11

**15** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, how is the vine's wood better than the wood of all the trees in the forest? <sup>3</sup>Can you make anything useful from its wood? Can you make a peg from it and hang objects on it? <sup>4</sup>If not, can it be used as firewood? Fire would consume its two ends, but its middle part would only get charred. So is it useful for anything? <sup>5</sup>Look, even when it was whole, it was worthless. Now that the fire has consumed it, and it is charred, it's even more useless.

16:19 Hos 2:8  
16:20 Eze 13:2;  
2Ki 16:3;  
Ps 106:37;  
Is 57:5;  
Eze 23:37  
16:21 2Ki 17:17;  
Jer 19:5

<sup>6</sup>Therefore, the LORD God proclaims: Of all the trees in the forest, I have decreed that the vine's wood is destined to be consumed by fire. So also have I decreed for those who live in Jerusalem, <sup>7</sup>and I have confronted them. They may try to go out from the fire, but the fire will consume them. You will know that I am the LORD, because I confronted them. <sup>8</sup>I will turn the land into a ruin because they acted faithlessly, proclaims the LORD God.

16:22 Jer 2:2;  
Eze 16:6,  
Eze 16:43,  
Eze 16:60

### Jerusalem's unfaithfulness

16:23 Eze 24:6

16:25 Prv 9:14;  
Jer 3:2;  
Eze 16:15

**16** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, show Jerusalem her detestable practices. <sup>3</sup>Say, The LORD God proclaims to Jerusalem: By origin and birth you are from the land of Canaan. Your father was an Amorite, your mother a Hittite. <sup>4</sup>This is how you were treated on the day you were born: Your umbilical cord wasn't cut, you weren't washed clean with water or rubbed with salt, and you weren't wrapped in blankets. <sup>5</sup>No one took pity or cared enough to do any of these things for you. You were despised on the day of your birth and thrown out on the open field. <sup>6</sup>When I happened to come by, I saw you flailing about in your blood. I said to you while you were still bloody, "Live!" <sup>7</sup>I helped you to flourish like a young plant in the field, and you grew tall and became wonderfully endowed. Your breasts were firm, your hair beautifully thick. And you were completely naked.

16:26 Eze 23:19

16:33 Is 57:9;  
Hos 8:9

16:37 Jer 13:22;  
Jer 13:26;  
Eze 23:22;  
Hos 2:10;  
Rev 17:16

16:38 Gn 9:6;  
Lv 20:10;  
Eze 23:45

16:39 Eze 16:7;  
Eze 16:24,  
Eze 16:31,  
Eze 23:26;  
Hos 2:3

<sup>8</sup>When I passed by you, I realized that you were ready for love. So I spread my cloak over you and covered your nakedness. I made a solemn promise and entered into a covenant with you, and you became mine. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>9</sup>Then I washed you with water, rinsed off your blood, and poured oil on you. <sup>10</sup>I clothed you with colorful garments, put fine sandals on you, wrapped your head in linen, and covered you with jewels. <sup>11</sup>I adorned you with fine jewelry, and put bracelets on your wrists and a necklace around your neck. <sup>12</sup>I put

15:1-8 In this brief metaphor, Ezekiel identifies the inhabitants of Jerusalem (15:6) with the wood of a vine, which is only good for a bonfire (15:2-5; cf. Judg 9:7-21; Ps 80:8-9). *and it is charred*: perhaps referring to the first siege of Jerusalem (597 BCE) and the deportation of Jehoiachin, Ezekiel, and their fellow exiles. *those who live in Jerusalem*: Ezekiel again targets those remaining in Jerusalem (possibly the 25 men of Ezek 11:1), in contrast to his exilic community.

16:1-63 In an extended metaphorical depiction of Jerusalem as a prostitute, Ezekiel says again that the exile was deserved because of Jerusalem's offenses. The portrayal separates into four main sections. First, God graciously delivers the city from squalor, bringing life to her, and marrying her at the appropriate age. Second is a description in offensive sexual imagery of Jerusalem's breach of covenant. Third, Jerusalem will be shamed before her lovers. Fourth, a promise of a new covenant completes the metaphor.

16:2 *show Jerusalem her detestable practices*: The subject of the metaphor is Jerusalem, the city as a whole. Cities were commonly depicted in the ancient world as wives to their patron god.

16:3 *you are from the land of Canaan*: Historically, Jerusalem wasn't originally incorporated into the tribal league (Josh 15:63; Judg 1:21), but only became a part of Judah when David took the city and made it the seat of his kingdom (cf. 2 Sam 5:6-16), and then centralized the worship

of the Lord there (2 Sam 6). Theologically, Ezekiel understood the Israelites to be outsiders (i.e., the house of Jacob, coming from Egypt; cf. Ezek 20:5), elected to come into the land. Linked as it is with Canaan (Gen 9:25-27), Ezekiel identifies Jerusalem as being unclean.

16:4-7 God cares for Jerusalem, prior to being mature, that is, before David's conquest.

16:4 *Your umbilical cord wasn't cut... weren't washed clean... rubbed with salt*: Ancient priests believed that both mother and child were defiled and in need of purification because of the blood that accompanies childbirth (Lev 12:1-8; Lev 17:10-14; see note on Ezek 22:3-4). Ezekiel uses this tradition in an interesting way. God never cleanses the child Jerusalem of her defiling blood, but only provides for her to live (16:6).

16:8-14 Jerusalem, covenanted to the Lord, i.e., as the location of the temple.

16:8 *You were ready for love*: explicitly, sexual intercourse (cf. Ezek 23:17; Prov 7:16; Song 4:10; 7:13). *I spread my cloak over you*: a gesture of marriage (Ruth 3:9). *a solemn promise*: See Ezekiel 20:5, 6, 15, and 28. *a covenant*: To Ezekiel's audience, these words express the divine side of the covenantal clause, "You will be my people; I will be your God" (see the discussion of Ezek 11:19). *you became mine*: Jerusalem's side of the formula.

16:9 *I washed you... poured oil on you*: Jerusalem is being cleansed for her wedding day (cf. Esth 2:9-12; Ezek 36:25).



a ring in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. <sup>13</sup>I adorned you with gold and silver, and your garments were made of the finest linen and brocade. You ate the finest flour, honey, and oil. You became very beautiful, fit for royalty. <sup>14</sup>Among the nations you were famous for your beauty. It was perfect because of the splendor that I had given you. This is what the LORD God says.

<sup>15</sup>But you trusted in your beauty and traded on your fame. At every opportunity, you seduced all who came by. <sup>16</sup>You took some of your clothing to make colorful shrines and prostituted yourself in them. <sup>17</sup>You took the beautiful gold and silver jewelry that I had given to you, and you made male images for yourself and prostituted yourself with them. <sup>18</sup>You took your fine garments and clothed them. You set my oil and incense before them. <sup>19</sup>You set my food that I had given you to eat—fine wheat, oil, and honey—before them as a pleasing aroma. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>20</sup>You took your sons and daughters, which you had borne to me, and you sacrificed these to them so they could consume them. Was this promiscuity of yours a small thing? <sup>21</sup>You slaughtered my sons and placed them in the fire for them! <sup>22</sup>In all your detestable practices and promiscuities, you didn't remember the days of your infancy when you lay completely naked, flailing about in your blood.

<sup>23</sup>After all your wickedness—doom, doom to you, proclaims the LORD God—<sup>24</sup>you built a pavilion for yourself and set up platforms in every square. <sup>25</sup>At every crossroad you built your platform and degraded your beauty by spreading your legs to all comers. And so you encouraged even more promiscuity. <sup>26</sup>You prostituted yourself with the Egyptians, your neighbors with the large sexual organs, and as you added to your seductions, you provoked me to anger. <sup>27</sup>So I used my power against you, cut off your allowance, and gave you up to the passions of the Philistine women who had been confounded by your infamous ways and had rejected you. <sup>28</sup>Still not satisfied, you prostituted yourself to the Assyrians, but they weren't enough for you either. <sup>29</sup>So you prostituted yourself with the Babylonians, the land of traders, but again you weren't satisfied. <sup>30</sup>How sick was your heart—the LORD God proclaims—that you could do all these things, the deeds of a hardened prostitute. <sup>31</sup>But you weren't like an ordinary prostitute! When you built your pavilion at the head of every street and made your platform in every square, you refused to be paid. <sup>32</sup>You are like an adulterous wife: you take in strangers instead of your husband. <sup>33</sup>Ordinary prostitutes are given gifts, but you gave your gifts to all your lovers. From every direction you even bribed them to come to you for your sexual favors. <sup>34</sup>As a prostitute, you were more perverse than other women. No one approached you for sexual favors, but you yourself gave gifts instead of receiving them. You are perversion itself! <sup>35</sup>Therefore, you prostitute, hear the LORD's word!

<sup>36</sup>The LORD God proclaims: You were in a constant state of arousal<sup>7</sup> and exposed yourself when you acted like a prostitute with your lovers and with the idols to which you gave your children's blood. <sup>37</sup>Therefore, I will now gather all of your lovers whom you pleased, the ones you loved and the ones you rejected. I will gather them against you from all around, and I will expose you to them. They will see it all. <sup>38</sup>I will convict you of adultery and murder, and I will hand you over in bloody fury and zeal. <sup>39</sup>I will hand you over to them, and they will tear down

<sup>7</sup>Heb uncertain

16:14 *Among the nations*: In the ancient world, honor before the public is crucial (see the discussion of Ezek 5:14-15). *you were famous for your beauty. It was perfect*: This language echoes descriptions of Jerusalem as the seat of the Lord's throne (cf. Ps 48:2; Lam 2:15).

16:15 To indict the city for breaking the covenant, Ezekiel graphically describes Jerusalem's sexual encounters in the following verses. Jerusalem's sin was not that she was erroneously proud of her beauty. Her beauty was good, a gift of God (Ezek 16:8-14). Her sin was that she misused it in making political treaties.

16:20-21 These verses reference the practice of child sacrifice, which the Lord abhors and Ezekiel condemns (cf. Ezek 20:26, 31; Deut 12:31; Jer 19:4-6; 32:35).

16:23-35 The text condemns a litany of political alliances. *Egyptians*: In Hezekiah's attempts to break free of the Assyrians in the late 8th century BCE, and again

in the late 7th and early 6th century, Judah formed alliances with Egypt, something forbidden for Judah's kings (Deut 17:16). *passions of the Philistine women*: Philistia also formed political alliances, in attempts to repel the Assyrians and Babylonians over time. Ezekiel accuses Jerusalem of exceeding Philistia in these alliances. *Assyrians*: In 735-732, Ahaz allied with Assyria during his conflict with Syria and the northern kingdom, Israel (cf. 2 Kgs 15:29-16:20; 2 Chron 28:1-27; Isa 7-8). *Babylonians*: Hezekiah is remembered as welcoming the Babylonians into the temple treasuries (2 Kgs 20:12-19; Isa 39). *you gave your gifts to all your lovers*: These alliances were secured by the payment of tribute to the protecting nation.

16:37-41 The metaphor now draws on public trials against women caught in adultery, which involved public humiliation at the city gates and stoning (cf. Lev 20:10;

16:40 Ezek 23:47; Jn 8:5

16:41 2Ki 25:9;

Jer 39:8;

Jer 52:13;

Eze 5:8;

Eze 23:48

16:42 Is 40:1;

Is 54:9; Eze 5:13;

Eze 21:17;

Eze 39:29

16:43 Eze 11:21;

Eze 16:22;

Eze 22:31

16:45 Eze 16:3

16:48 Mt 10:15;

Mt 11:24

16:49 Gn 13:10;

Gn 19:9;

Dn 32:15;

Ps 138:6; Is 3:9

16:51 Jer 3:8

16:52 Eze 16:47

16:55 Eze 36:11

16:60 Is 55:3;

Jer 32:40;

Eze 37:26

16:61 Jer 50:5;

Eze 16:63;

Eze 20:43;

Eze 36:31

16:62 Jer 24:7

16:63 Dn 9:7;

Ro 3:19

17:2 Jgs 14:12;  
Eze 20:49,  
Eze 24:3  
17:3 Jer 22:23,  
Jer 48:40;  
Eze 17:7,  
Eze 17:22,  
Hos 8:1  
17:5 Dt 8:7;  
Is 44:4  
17:6 Eze 19:10  
17:9 Eze 17:15  
17:12 2Kj 24:11;  
Eze 12:9,  
Eze 24:19  
17:14 Eze 29:14  
17:16 Jer 52:11;  
Eze 12:13,  
Eze 16:59  
17:17 Is 36:6,  
Jer 37:5, Jer 37:7;  
Eze 4:2, Eze 29:6

your pavilion and destroy your platforms. They will strip you of your garments, take your beautiful jewels, and they will leave you completely naked. <sup>40</sup>They will bring an army against you, pelt you with stones, and slaughter you with their swords. <sup>41</sup>They will burn down your houses and execute judgments against you in the sight of many women. I will bring an end to your prostitution; indeed, you will never again give payment. <sup>42</sup>When I've satisfied my anger, and my rage has turned away from you, I will be calm and no longer angry. <sup>43</sup>Because you didn't remember your youthful days, and infuriated me with all these things, I will hold you accountable for what you've done. This is what the LORD God says.

Have you not added bad reputation to all your detestable acts? <sup>44</sup>Now everyone who speaks in proverbs will say this about you: "Like mother, like daughter." <sup>45</sup>You are your mother's daughter! She loathed her husband and also her children. You are just like your sisters too! They also loathed their husbands and children. Your mother was a Hittite, and your father was an Amorite. <sup>46</sup>Your older sister is Samaria, who lives with her daughters in the north. Your younger sister is Sodom, who lives with her daughters in the south. <sup>47</sup>You didn't follow in their ways or engage in their detestable practices in any small way. You were far more destructive. <sup>48</sup>As surely as I live, says the LORD God, not even your sister Sodom and her daughters did what you and your daughters have done! <sup>49</sup>This is the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were proud, had plenty to eat, and enjoyed peace and prosperity; but she didn't help the poor and the needy. <sup>50</sup>They became haughty and did detestable things in front of me, and I turned away from them as soon as I saw it.

<sup>51</sup>Samaria didn't sin even half as much as you did. You've so outstripped her in multiplying your detestable practices, with all the detestable things you've done, that you've even made your sisters seem innocent. <sup>52</sup>Bear your disgrace, which has actually improved your sisters' position. Because your sins and detestable acts were greater than theirs, they are now more righteous than you. Be ashamed, and bear the disgrace of making your sisters righteous! <sup>53</sup>I will improve the circumstances of Sodom and her daughters and the circumstances of Samaria and her daughters. And what's left of your fortune will go to them, <sup>54</sup>so that you will bear your disgrace and be humiliated by all that you've done to make them feel better. <sup>55</sup>Then your sister Sodom and her daughters will return to their former state, and your sister Samaria and her daughters will return to their former state. You and your daughters will return to your former state, <sup>56</sup>but you will no longer talk about your sister Sodom as in your haughty days <sup>57</sup>before your wickedness was exposed. You are now the reproach of all the daughters of Edom<sup>a</sup> and all those around her, including the daughters of the Philistines. They mock you on every side. <sup>58</sup>You alone must bear your bad reputation and your detestable ways. This is what the LORD says.

<sup>59</sup>The LORD God proclaims: I will do to you just as you have done, despising solemn pledges and breaking covenants. <sup>60</sup>Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with you when you were young, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. <sup>61</sup>And you will remember your ways and be ashamed, when in spite of your covenant I<sup>a</sup> take your big sisters and little sisters from you and give them back to you as daughters. <sup>62</sup>I myself will establish my covenant with you, and you will know that I am the LORD. <sup>63</sup>Then you will remember and be ashamed, and you won't even open your mouth because of your shame, after I've forgiven you for all that you've done. This is what the LORD God says.

<sup>a</sup>Syr; MT *Aram* <sup>a</sup>LXX; MT *you*

Deut 22:22-24). Other prophetic metaphors convicting Jerusalem of infidelity also mention exposing nakedness (cf. Hos 2:13; Nah 3:5; Jer 13:26-27). The theme of honor and shame (see the discussion of Ezek 5:14-15) plays an especially strong role.

16:43-58 Continuing the theme of publicly shaming Jerusalem, Ezekiel restates Jerusalem's ancestry (16:3, 45). Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, was destroyed by the Assyria's King Sargon II in 720 BCE, and will again share the spotlight with Jerusalem in Ezekiel 23. Sodom was a prophetic byword for sin and destruction of legendary proportions (cf. Gen 19:1-28; Isa 1:9; Jer 23:14; 50:40; Lam 4:6).

16:59-63 The reader is almost shocked to encounter one of the most concise statements of deliverance in the entire book. No reason, such as changed hearts and lives (see the note on Ezek 2:9-10), is given for the Lord remembering the covenant with Jerusalem (16:60); it will be entirely an act of God.

16:60 *everlasting covenant*: The future covenant with Jerusalem is variously described in Ezekiel's prophecies as "everlasting" (16:60), "covenant bond" (Ezek 20:37), and a "covenant of peace" (Ezek 34:25; 37:26).

16:63 *ashamed, and you won't even open your mouth*: Jerusalem knows its punishment is deserved (cf. Ezek 14:22-23; 20:43; 36:31; 43:10-11).

17:18 1Ch 29:24

17:19 Jer 7:9;  
Eze 16:59;  
Eze 21:2317:20 Jer 2:35;  
Eze 12:13;  
Eze 20:35;  
Eze 20:36;  
Eze 32:317:24 Eze 21:26;  
Eze 22:1418:1 Eze 3:18;  
Eze 14:1218:2 Jer 31:29;  
Jer 31:30;  
Lam 5:7;  
Eze 12:2218:3 Jer 31:29;  
Eze 12:23;  
Eze 16:48;  
Eze 18:2;  
Eze 18:3018:4 Nm 27:16;  
Eze 18:20;  
Ro 6:2318:5 Gn 18:19;  
Ps 15:1; Ps 15:2;  
Pv 21:3;  
Jer 22:1518:6 Eze 18:11;  
Eze 18:15;  
Eze 22:9;  
Eze 22:1018:7 Ex 22:26;  
Is 58:7;  
Eze 18:12;  
Eze 18:16;  
Eze 33:1518:8 Ex 22:25;  
Dt 23:19;  
Ps 15:5; Pv 28:8;  
Zec 8:1618:9 Lv 18:5;  
Eze 18:17;  
Eze 20:11;  
Am 5:4; Hab 2:4

*Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Ezekiel* Ezekiel was known for his eloquence (Ezek 33:32). Perhaps his rhetorical skill is best displayed in his many elaborate metaphors (chapters 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 27, 28:11-19). However, Ezekiel 16 and 23, in which Jerusalem and Samaria are portrayed as prostitutes, are filled with disturbing words. Readers will disapprove of the insulting portrayal of women shown here. The prophet used vulgar language, unparalleled in the OT (e.g., Ezek 16:25-26; 23:20). He did so intentionally, because Ezekiel aimed to offend his audience. Sexual and marital metaphors were familiar to Ezekiel's audience (cf. Hos 1-3; Isa 1:21; Jer 2:1-4:4). At the heart of these prophecies for Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel was the accusation of covenantal infidelity to the Lord. Viewed historically, Ezekiel intended the metaphors of chapters 16 and 23 to convict the people and explain the justice of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. Whether or not his language is accepted as covered by the artistic license for prophetic outrage, Ezekiel meant to shock and offend his audience.

### Transplanted cedar

**17** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, compose a riddle and a parable about the house of Israel. <sup>3</sup>Say, The LORD God proclaims: The great eagle with great wings, long feathers, and full, colorful plumage came to Lebanon and took the top branch of the cedar. <sup>4</sup>He plucked a twig from the cedar's crown, brought it to the land of traders, and set it down in a city of merchants. <sup>5</sup>He took a native seed and planted it in a prepared field, placing it like a willow beside plentiful water. <sup>6</sup>It grew and became a low-spreading vine. Its foliage turned toward him, and its roots developed under him. And so it became a vine, and it produced branches and sent out its shoots.

<sup>7</sup>Now there was another great eagle with great wings and much plumage. This vine bent its roots and turned its branches toward him so that it might draw more water from him than from its own bed, <sup>8</sup>a good field with plentiful water where it was planted to grow branches, bear fruit, and become a splendid vine. <sup>9</sup>Say, The LORD God proclaims: Will it thrive? Won't he tear out its roots, strip its fruit, and cause all the leaves of its branches to wither? It will dry up, and no one will need a strong arm or a mighty army to uproot it. <sup>10</sup>Though it is planted, will it thrive? When the east wind touches it, won't it completely wither? On the bed in which it was planted, it will wither away.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>12</sup>Say now to the rebellious household: Don't you know what these things mean? Say: The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and carried its king and its officers away with him to Babylon. <sup>13</sup>Then he took a prince from the royal line, made an agreement with him, and made him take a solemn pledge of loyalty. He also took away the land's officials. <sup>14</sup>Thus it would be a lowly kingdom, not asserting its own interests but observing the agreement so that it would survive. <sup>15</sup>But the prince rebelled against him and sent messengers to Egypt to supply him with horses and a great army. Can such a person succeed? Can one who does these things escape? Can he overturn the agreement and escape capture? <sup>16</sup>As surely as I live, says the LORD God, he will die in Babylon, in the place of the king who gave him the authority to rule, whose solemn pledge he scorned and whose agreement he overturned. <sup>17</sup>Pharaoh won't help him. There will be no strong force or mighty army in battle when siege ramps are set up and towers are built to eliminate many lives.

17:1-24 The third in this string of extended metaphors, this time judging Zedekiah and the officials left in Jerusalem. The passage draws the reader in with its riddle and parable (17:3-10), and then follows with the interpretation (17:11-21). A final section promises a new restored shoot from the cedar (17:22-24).

17:1-21 The prophet's allegorical images in 17:3-10 emphasize his theological biases, hardly needing the interpretations (17:11-21). *The great eagle*: Nebuchadnezzar (17:12). *top branch of the cedar*: Jerusalem's officers (17:12). *a twig from the cedar's crown*: Jehoiachin, the king (17:12; see the note on Jehoiachin at Ezek 1:2). *the land of traders . . . city of merchants*: Babylon (17:12). *a native seed*: Zedekiah, a prince (17:13). *another great eagle*: Pharaoh (Psammetichus II) and his Egyptian army (17:15-17), with whom Zedekiah had allied himself in 594 BCE. True, the

prophet recounts Jerusalem's history post-597, but by employing allegorical imagery, the prophet more powerfully engages the reader's imagination.

17:5, 8 *plentiful water*: a theological image indicating divine nourishment and fruitfulness sent from God (cf. Ezek 27:26; 31:7; 47:1-12).

17:10 *east wind*: another theologically loaded term, indicating God at war (cf. Ezek 27:26; Exod 14:21; 15:8).

17:13-21 *a solemn pledge of loyalty*: cf. 16:8. Though the pledge is with Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah is expected to honor his promise. Pledges were sworn on the life of the Lord (cf. 1 Sam 14:39, 45; 19:6; 20:21; 2 Sam 12:5). The punishment for breaking a pledge, that is, taking the name of the Lord in vain, is death (see Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11). When God makes a pledge, God forfeits his own life (17:16) if he breaks the pledge. Here, Ezekiel turns the tables on

18:14 2Ch 34:21

18:16 Ps 41:1;  
Is 58:7; Is 58:10;  
Eze 18:718:17 Eze 18:8,  
Eze 18:9

18:18 Eze 3:18

18:19 Ex 20:5;  
Jer 15:4;  
Eze 18:2; Zec 1:318:20 Dt 24:16;  
2Ki 14:6; Is 3:10;  
Is 3:11; Eze 18:418:21 Jer 18:8;  
Eze 18:27;  
Eze 33:1918:23 Ps 18:20;  
Is 43:25;  
Eze 33:1618:23 Eze 18:32;  
Eze 33:11;  
Mt 7:18; 1Ti 2:4;  
2Pt 3:918:24 Eze 3:20;  
Eze 33:12;  
Eze 33:13;  
Eze 33:18;  
2Pt 2:2018:25 Gn 18:25;  
Jer 12:1;Eze 18:29;  
Eze 33:17;  
Eze 33:20

18:26 Eze 18:24

18:30 Eze 7:3;  
Eze 14:6;  
Eze 33:20;

Hos 12:6

18:31 Ps 51:10;  
Is 1:16;  
Eze 11:19;Eze 33:11;  
Eze 36:2618:33 Eze 18:23;  
Eze 33:11

<sup>18</sup>He scorned the solemn pledge and overturned the agreement! Even though he made a promise, he did all these things, and he won't escape capture. <sup>19</sup>So now the LORD God proclaims: As surely as I live, it was my solemn pledge that he scorned and my agreement that he overturned, and I will hold him accountable. <sup>20</sup>I will spread my net over him, and he will be caught in my trap. I will bring him to Babylon, and I myself will enter into judgment with him there for rebelling against me. <sup>21</sup>All his elite fighters<sup>b</sup> along with all his troops will fall by the sword, and those who are left will be scattered to the winds. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken.

<sup>22</sup>The LORD God proclaims: I myself will take one of the top branches from the tall cedar. I will pluck a tender shoot from its crown, and I myself will plant it on a very high and lofty mountain. <sup>23</sup>On Israel's mountainous highlands I will plant it, and it will send out branches and bear fruit. It will grow into a mighty cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it and find shelter in the shade of its boughs. <sup>24</sup>Then all the trees in the countryside will know that I, the LORD, bring down the tall tree and raise up the lowly tree, and make the green tree wither and the dry tree bloom. I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do it.

### Sins of parents and children

**18**The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>What do you mean by this proverb of yours about the land of Israel: "When parents eat unripe grapes, the children's teeth suffer"? <sup>3</sup>As surely as I live, says the LORD God, no longer will you use this proverb in Israel! <sup>4</sup>All lives are mine; the life of the parent and the life of the child belong to me. Only the one who sins will die.

<sup>5</sup>People are declared innocent when they act justly and responsibly. <sup>6</sup>They don't eat on the hills or give their attention to the idols of the house of Israel. They don't defile the wives of their neighbors or approach menstruating women. <sup>7</sup>They don't cheat anyone, but fulfill their obligations. They don't rob others, but give food to the hungry and clothes to the naked. <sup>8</sup>They don't impose interest or take profit. They refrain from evil and settle cases between people fairly. <sup>9</sup>They follow my regulations, keep my case laws, and act faithfully. Such people are innocent, and they will live, proclaims the LORD God.

<sup>10</sup>But suppose one of them has a violent child who sheds blood or does any one of these things, <sup>11</sup>even though his parents didn't do any of them. He eats on the mountains, defiles his neighbor's wife, <sup>12</sup>oppresses the poor and needy, robs others and doesn't fulfill his obligations, pays attention to the idols and does detestable things, <sup>13</sup>and takes interest and profit. Should he live? He should not. He engaged in all these detestable practices. He will surely die, and his blood will be on him.

<sup>14</sup>But suppose he has a child who sees all the sins that his father committed. He becomes alarmed and doesn't do them. <sup>15</sup>He doesn't eat on the mountains or pay attention to the

<sup>b</sup>LXX, Syr, Tg; MT *his fugitives*

Zedekiah, having the Lord make a promise that assures Zedekiah's death on account of his breaking his pledge with Nebuchadnezzar.

17:22 *one of the top branches*: The text doesn't promise that the restored Davidic leadership will be Jehoiachin, or even one of his sons. *a tender shoot*: The text promises that the dynasty will continue (cf. Ezek 37:24), but the role of the future leader is diminished elsewhere in Ezekiel's prophecies, reducing him to a patron of the future temple service (Ezek 44:2-3; 45:7-9, 17, 21-25; 46:1-18; 48:21-22; see sidebar, "The Demotion of the King in Ezekiel" at Ezek 34).

17:23 *a mighty cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it*: The image of a primeval, world tree (see Ezek 31), set on the high mountain of God (cf. Ps 48:1-2), nourishing all of life, communicated the prosperity that stemmed from the Lord through the wise rule of a righteous king.

18:1-31 In disputing a proverb popular among the people (18:1; cf. Ezek 12:22, 16:44), the text remains within the realm of extended metaphors, begun in Ezekiel 15. The chapter divides into three parts: a hypothetical illustration of three generations (Ezek 18:1-24); challenges to the theological charge behind this proverb (Ezek 18:25-29); and

finally, the prophet urging the people to turn to a renewed covenant (18:30-31). The message is that God's ways are just, and that God has remained true to the covenant.

18:2 *When parents eat unripe grapes, the children's teeth suffer*: Jeremiah disputed the same proverb (Jer 31:29-30). This proverb meant that God had mistreated the people.

18:5-9 In his description of the first generation of the people, Ezekiel presents the principles on which God will judge the people to be righteous or wicked. A combination of worship (e.g., idolatry) and immoral deeds (e.g., cheating and stealing) form the list of offenses. They are identified with God's expectations (18:9), which identify all of the regulations and case laws necessary to maintain the covenant with God (cf. Lev 18:4, 5, 26; 19:37; 20:22; 25:18; 26:15, 43; and the note on Ezek 5:6).

18:10-13 The second generation, represented by the image of a violent child, departs from the righteous acts of the previous generation. Most of the offenses listed in 18:5-9 are repeated.

18:14-18 The third generation again embodies righteousness, using the same list of deeds seen in 18:5-9. *case laws ... regulations*: See Ezekiel 18:9.

*Individual Retribution* In ancient Israel, and throughout the ancient Near East, identity was formed through communal, family relationships. An individual defined himself or herself by membership in their extended family, clan, and tribe. The same principle applied to sin and righteousness, shame and honor. Thus a person in ancient Israel understood the sins of an individual to express the moral character of the clan (cf. Josh 7:16-26). Ezekiel 18 is often regarded as a new revelation of individual responsibility. However, a closer look shows that Ezekiel still thought communally; that is, in terms of the family, clan, and tribe. In this prophecy, he indicted the present generation as a collective whole, which he calls the "house of Israel" (Ezek 18:25, 29). While the language sounds as though individuals may be singled out, this oracle designates itself as a "parable" (Ezek 18:1), that is, an extended metaphor referring to the house of Israel (cf. other extended metaphors in Ezek 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 27, 28:11-19). Ezekiel's separation of a son's sins from those of his father must be read as a parable about Israel. Ezekiel thought that his own generation must take responsibility for the fall of Jerusalem. Ezekiel 18 disputed the protests of the prophet's own generation, and declared God's punishment to be just (Ezek 18:25-29).

idols of the house of Israel. He doesn't defile his neighbor's wife. <sup>16</sup>He doesn't cheat anyone, either by seizing collateral for loans or committing robbery. He gives his food to the hungry and clothes to the naked. <sup>17</sup>He refrains from oppressing the poor by taking neither interest nor profit. He observes my case laws and follows my regulations. He won't die because of his father's guilt. He will surely live. <sup>18</sup>As for his father: If he exploited the weak or committed robbery, or did anything else that wasn't good for the people, he will die because of his own guilt.

<sup>19</sup>You will say, "Why doesn't the child bear his parent's guilt?" The child has acted justly and responsibly. The child kept all my regulations and observed them. The child will surely live. <sup>20</sup>Only the one who sins will die. A child won't bear a parent's guilt, and a parent won't bear a child's guilt. Those who do right will be declared innocent, and the wicked will be declared guilty.

<sup>21</sup>But if the wicked turn away from all the sins that they have committed, keep all my regulations, and act justly and responsibly, they will surely live and not die. <sup>22</sup>None of the sins that they committed will be held against them, but they will live because they do the right things. <sup>23</sup>Do I take pleasure in the death of the wicked? says the LORD God. Certainly not! If they change their ways, they will live.

<sup>24</sup>If those who do the right thing turn from righteousness and engage in the same detestable practices that the wicked committed, can they do these things and live? None of their righteous deeds will be remembered. They will die because of their treacheries and sins. <sup>25</sup>But you say, "My Lord's way doesn't measure up." Listen, house of Israel, is it my ways that don't measure up? Isn't it your ways that don't measure up? <sup>26</sup>When those who do the right thing turn from their responsible ways and act maliciously, they will die because of it. For their malicious acts they will die. <sup>27</sup>And when the wicked turn from their wicked deeds and act justly and responsibly, they will preserve their lives. <sup>28</sup>When they become alarmed and turn away from all their sins, they will surely live; they won't die. <sup>29</sup>Yet the house of Israel says, "My Lord's way doesn't measure up." Is it my ways that don't measure up? Isn't it your ways that don't measure up, house of Israel? <sup>30</sup>Therefore, I will judge each of you according to your ways, house of Israel. This is what the LORD God says. Turn, turn away from all your sins. Don't let them be sinful obstacles for you. <sup>31</sup>Abandon all of your repeated sins. Make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. Why should you die, house of Israel? <sup>32</sup>I most certainly don't want anyone to die! This is what the LORD God says. Change your ways, and live!

18:21-24 *if... turn*: The verb used here commonly refers to turning to follow God in the OT. The imagery is that of following the Lord on a path, and not straying (cf. Deut 5:32; Gen 18:19; Prov 10:29; 11:4, 20; 14:12; Jer 5:4-5).

18:25 *My Lord's way*: The Hebrew word translated "Lord" here is probably shorthand for Lord God, seen elsewhere in Ezekiel. The possessive pronoun "My" alludes to the

covenantal clause "they will be my people; I will be their God" (see the note on Ezek 11:19). The implication is that if God is found to be unfair, God is in breach of the covenant, releasing the people from its obligations.

18:31 *a new heart and a new spirit*: As seen earlier, this is covenantal language (see note on Ezek 11:19; 36:26). As with Ezekiel 16 and 17, this oracle ends with a new relationship promised for the future.

20:7 Lv 18:3

20:8 Dt 9:7;  
Is 63:10, Eze 7:8,  
Eze 20:13,  
Eze 20:2120:12 Ex 31:13;  
Eze 20:2020:19 Ex 20:2;  
Dt 5:32, Dt 6:120:20 Ex 31:13;  
Jer 17:22;  
Eze 20:12,  
Eze 44:2420:21 Nm 25:1;  
Dt 31:27;  
Eze 7:8, Eze 20:8,  
Eze 20:13**A mother's sons****19** You, raise a lament for Israel's princes. <sup>2</sup>Say:

What a lioness among lionesses was your mother!

She bedded down among the strong young lions and reared her cubs.

<sup>3</sup>She singled out one of her cubs and he became a strong young lion;  
he learned to tear flesh and devour humans.<sup>4</sup>When the nations heard about him, they caught him in their trap  
and carried him with hooks to the land of Egypt.<sup>5</sup>When she realized that she waited in vain, her hope faded.

So she took another of her cubs and set him up as a strong young lion.

<sup>6</sup>He went on the prowl with the other lions and became a strong young lion.

He learned to tear flesh and devour humans;

<sup>7</sup>he ravaged<sup>c</sup> their widows and laid waste to their cities.When the earth and everything in it  
became horrified by the sound of his raging,<sup>8</sup>the nations from the surrounding regions allied against him.

They cast their nets over him and caught him in their trap.

<sup>9</sup>They put a collar on him and brought him with hooks.

They brought him with nets to the king of Babylon

so that his voice would no longer be heard on the mountains of Israel.

**The proud mother**<sup>10</sup>Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard<sup>d</sup> planted beside the waters;  
she bore lush fruit and foliage because of the plentiful water,<sup>11</sup>and she produced mighty branches, fit for rulers' scepters.

She grew tall, and her crown went up between the clouds.

Because of her height and thick growth, she became conspicuous.

<sup>12</sup>So she was struck down in anger, thrown down to the ground.

The east wind dried her out and destroyed her fruit;

it sapped the branch of its strength, and fire consumed it.

<sup>13</sup>So now she is planted in the desert, in a parched and thirsty land,<sup>14</sup>and fire has gone out from her branch and consumed her foliage and fruit,  
leaving her no strong branch or ruler's scepter.

This is a lamentation, and it will serve as a lamentation.

<sup>c</sup>Or knew <sup>d</sup>Or in your blood

19:1-14 Two laments are now added to this collection of extended metaphors, one dealing with a lioness and her two cubs (19:2-9), and the second returning to the vine imagery (19:10-14). As laments, these passages don't actually judge their subjects but rather they merely acknowledge their downfall.

19:1 *lament*: Ezekiel used laments as means of taunting the fall of his subjects (see Ezek 26:15-18; 27:1-36; 28:11-19; 32:1-16, 17-32). Laments celebrate the grandeur of their subjects and mourn their loss. They weren't sung to condemn the dead, and the reader should take the first part of the lament that emphasizes the beauty of the subject seriously. Indeed, the lions had much of which to be proud (see the discussion of honor and shame in the note on Ezek 5:14-15).

19:2 *lioness . . . was your mother*: Within the context of the other subjects of Ezekiel's metaphors, the mother seems to be Jerusalem, though the queen mother, Hamutal (2 Kgs 23:31; 24:18), could be Ezekiel's intended target.

19:3-4 *one of her cubs . . . to the land of Egypt*: Lions symbolized strength, domination, and honor in the ancient world, and thus were commonly used to describe kings and nations (cf. Gen 49:9; Num 23:24; 24:9; Jer 4:7; Mic 5:8). This

metaphor refers to Jehoahaz, who was captured by Egypt after Josiah's death in 609 BCE (2 Kgs 23:31-35//2 Chron 36:1-4; Jer 22:11-12). This metaphor would have had the effect of maintaining some degree of interest in Egypt as an ally among Jehoahaz's supporters in Jerusalem. Ezekiel's opposition to Egypt (cf. Ezek 29-32) would have, then, been the motivating factor in singling out this king.

19:5-9 *another of her cubs . . . to the king of Babylon*: This image could represent either Jehoiachin or Zedekiah, since both were finally led before Nebuchadnezzar. But since Ezekiel seems to have favored Jehoiachin (cf. Ezek 1:2; 17:4-6, 22-24), while he repeatedly denounced Zedekiah, more likely this passage references Jehoiachin.

19:10 *Your mother was like a vine*: As in Ezekiel 19:2-9, the figure behind the metaphor is Jerusalem, a shift from Ezekiel 15, where the vine stood for the inhabitants or officials of Jerusalem.

19:11 *grew tall . . . between the clouds*: The source of this image is the idea of the world tree (cf. Ezek 17:23; Ezek 31).

19:12 *struck down in anger . . . The east wind*: Typical of laments, the text turns suddenly and without explanation, from describing the grandeur of the vine to its withering in the desert.

## History of rebellion

**20**In the seventh year, on the tenth day of the fifth month, some of Israel's elders came to inquire of the LORD. As they were sitting with me, <sup>2</sup>the LORD's word came to me: <sup>3</sup>Human one, speak to Israel's elders and say to them, The LORD God proclaims: Have you come to petition me? As surely as I live, I reject your petitions. This is what the LORD God says! <sup>4</sup>Will you judge them, human one, will you judge them? Then expose to them the detestable practices of their ancestors. <sup>5</sup>Say to them, The LORD God proclaims: On the day I chose Israel, I swore a solemn pledge to the descendants of Jacob's household. When I made myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I swore a solemn pledge: I am the LORD your God. <sup>6</sup>On that day I swore that I would lead them out of the land of Egypt to a land that I would show them, a land full of milk and honey, the most splendid of all lands. <sup>7</sup>And I said to them, Every one of you must cast away your disgusting things. Don't let yourselves be defiled by Egypt's idols. I am the LORD your God. <sup>8</sup>But they rebelled against me and refused to listen to me. No one cast off their disgusting things or abandoned their Egyptian idols. So I declared that I would pour out my wrath on them and satisfy my anger against them in the land of Egypt. <sup>9</sup>But I acted for my name's sake, so that it wouldn't be degraded in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, and in whose sight I made it known that I would lead them out of the land of Egypt.

<sup>10</sup>So I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the desert. <sup>11</sup>I gave them my regulations and made known to them my case laws, which bring life to all who observe them. <sup>12</sup>I also gave them my sabbaths as a sign between us that I, the LORD, have set them apart for my purpose. <sup>13</sup>But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the desert. They didn't follow my regulations and rejected my case laws, which bring life to all who observe them. They completely degraded my sabbaths. So I declared that I would pour out my anger against them and destroy them in the desert. <sup>14</sup>But instead, I acted for the sake of my name so that it wouldn't be degraded in the sight of the nations who saw me lead them out of Egypt. <sup>15</sup>So in the desert I swore another solemn pledge, that I wouldn't bring them to the land that I had given to them, a land full of milk and honey, a land more splendid than any other, <sup>16</sup>because they rejected my case laws, didn't follow my regulations, and degraded my sabbaths. They had their hearts set on their idols. <sup>17</sup>But I had too much compassion to destroy them, so I didn't put an end to them in the desert.

<sup>18</sup>In the desert, I said to their children, Don't follow your parents' regulations or observe their case laws or become defiled by their idols. <sup>19</sup>I am the LORD your God! Follow my regulations! Observe my case laws and do them! <sup>20</sup>Make my sabbaths holy, and let them be a sign between us that I am the LORD your God. <sup>21</sup>But the children rebelled against me. They didn't

<sup>a</sup>Or to make them holy

20:1-44 Ezekiel 20 gives a complex theological argument by Ezekiel, one in which he describes the nation's history as one of continually violating the covenant. The conclusion, however, must have surprised his audience, for the prophet ultimately reenvisioned the exile as the completion of the exodus (see sidebar, "The Exile as Exodus," and cf. Ezek 37:1-14).

20:1 *In the seventh year, on the tenth day of the fifth month.* The third dated passage in the book (cf. Ezek 1:1; 8:1). August 14, 591—about a year since the temple vision in Ezekiel 8:1, and about four years before the fall of Jerusalem. *some of Israel's elders:* Compare with Ezekiel 8:1; 14:1; the location is probably the prophet's home (cf. Ezek 3:24; 8:1; 14:1-3; 33:31).

20:3 *petition me.* The text doesn't state the petition, though it is possible that Ezekiel 20:32 states the petition. In addition, around this time, there were indications of Babylonian weakness (Jer 28:1-4), and Pharaoh Psammetichus II was touting his strength to the kingdoms in the region near Judah. Perhaps the elders sought a sign of an early return from exile.

20:4 *detestable practices.* See the note on Ezekiel 5:9.

20:5 *I chose Israel:* language of election for the purpose of a covenantal relationship (cf. Deut 4:37; 7:6, 7; 10:15; 12:5; 14:2). *solemn pledge.* The Hebrew idiom expresses how a pledge is made ("I lifted up my hand") and denotes a covenantal promise to bring Israel into the land (Exod 6:8; Num 14:30; and cf. Ezek 16:8). *descendants of Jacob's household:* Jacob appears in Ezekiel as the ancestor to whom the Lord promised the land (cf. Ezek 28:25; 37:25; and see the note on Ezek 47:14). *I am the LORD your God:* covenantal language (see the note on Ezek 11:20).

20:6 *a land full of milk and honey:* a common expression of fruitfulness (Exod 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27; 14:8; Deut 6:3; 26:9, 15).

20:9 *acted for my name's sake:* an expression of God's honor on the world stage (Exod 9:16; 1 Kgs 8:41 // 2 Chron 6:32; Isa 48:9; Jer 14:7, 21; and similarly, Josh 7:9; Mal 1:11; and cf. Ezek 36:20-23), related to the formula "then you will know that I am the Lord" (see sidebar, "The Recognition Formula" at Ezek 6).

20:11 *regulations . . . case laws:* encompassing the whole covenantal instruction; see the discussion on Ezekiel 5:6.

20:12 *sabbaths as a sign . . . have set them apart:* This

20:22 Ps 78:38;  
Eze 20:9,  
Eze 20:14

20:23 Lv 26:33;  
Dt 28:64

20:24 Eze 6:9,  
Eze 20:13,  
Eze 20:16

20:25 Ps 81:12;  
Is 66:4; Ro 1:28

20:26 Lv 18:21;  
Eze 16:21,  
Eze 20:31

20:43 Eze 6:9,  
Eze 16:61,  
Eze 36:31;  
Hos 5:15;  
Zec 12:10  
20:44 Eze 20:14,  
Eze 36:22

follow my regulations or observe my case laws, which bring life to all who observe them. They also degraded my sabbaths. So I declared that I would pour out my wrath on them and satisfy my anger against them in the desert. <sup>22</sup>But I restrained myself and acted for the sake of my name so that it wouldn't be diminished in the sight of the nations who saw me lead them out of Egypt. <sup>23</sup>And I swore yet another solemn pledge in the desert, that I would disperse them among the nations and scatter them throughout the earth, <sup>24</sup>because they didn't observe my case laws, they rejected my regulations, and they degraded my sabbaths while they kept looking to their parents' idols. <sup>25</sup>I also issued regulations that were not good and case laws by which they could not live. <sup>26</sup>I defiled them with their very gifts when they offered up all their oldest children. They were supposed to be so horrified that they would acknowledge that I am the LORD.

<sup>27</sup>Therefore, human one, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, The LORD God proclaims: Yet again your ancestors defamed me by rebelling against me! <sup>28</sup>I brought them into the land that I swore to give to them. But when they saw all the high hills and lofty trees, there they made their sacrifices: irksome offerings here, pleasing aromas there, and drink offerings elsewhere! <sup>29</sup>I said to them, What shrine are you going to now? So it's called Shrine<sup>f</sup> to this very day.

<sup>30</sup>So now say to the house of Israel, The LORD God proclaims: Will you defile yourselves as your ancestors did, and will you prostitute yourself after their disgusting things? <sup>31</sup>When you offer up your gifts and make your children pass through the fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this very day. Should I let you seek me out, house of Israel? This is what the LORD God says: As surely as I live, I won't let you seek me. <sup>32</sup>What is in your minds will never happen! You've been saying, "Let's be like the nations and the clans of the lands in the service of wood and stone." <sup>33</sup>This is what the LORD God says: As surely as I live, with a strong hand, an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, I will be your king! <sup>34</sup>I will lead you out from the peoples and gather you from the countries where you've been scattered—yes, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out! <sup>35</sup>I will march you out to the wilderness nations, and there I will judge you face-to-face. <sup>36</sup>Just as I judged your ancestors in the desert of the land of Egypt, so will I judge you. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>37</sup>I will make you walk under the rod, and I will bring you into the covenant bond. <sup>38</sup>I will remove from among you those who rebel and transgress against me. I will lead them out from the land where they lived as immigrants, but they won't enter Israel's fertile land. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>39</sup>But to you, house of Israel, the LORD God proclaims: Go ahead and serve your idols, all of you! But afterward, if any of you are left to listen to me,<sup>g</sup> you will no longer make my holy name impure with your gifts or your idols! <sup>40</sup>On my holy mountain, on the high mountain in Israel, the whole house of Israel will serve me there—every one of them in the land! This is what the LORD God says. There I will accept them, and there I will ask for their offerings,;

<sup>f</sup>Heb sounds like *Where are you going?* <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain

reflects the priestly idea that the Sabbath was symbolic of the covenant. See Exodus 20:8; 31:31; Leviticus 19:3, 30; 23:2-4; Deuteronomy 5:12.

20:25-26 *regulations that were not good and case laws by which they could not live*: This verse is confusing. Elsewhere, however, Ezekiel's theology allowed for God to sabotage the nation (cf. Ezek 14:9).

20:31 *pass through the fire*: another reference to child sacrifice. See the note on Ezekiel 16:20.

20:32 The idolatrous interests of the elders shouldn't surprise us (cf. Ezek 14:4). The exiles had just been defeated by a king who worshipped other gods. Ezekiel himself predicted the destruction of the Lord's temple in Jerusalem in the near future. Other texts from this time (Pss 115; 135:15-18; Isa 40:18-20; 41:6-7; 44:9-20; 45:16, 20-46:13; Jer 10:1-16) indicate that the Israelites were attracted to worship of other gods in addition to the Lord, but exclusive covenantal fidelity was required (Deut 6:4-5).

20:33 *I will be your king!*: This is the only time that Ezekiel

specifically says the Lord is king over the nation. But the idea of the Lord as the divine king is fundamental in the concept of covenant, and a strong theme in his prophecies (cf. Ezek 1:27-28; 34:1-31; 43:7).

20:34 *out from the peoples and gather you from the countries*: an expression of restoration after exile (cf. Ezekiel 11:17; 34:13). This promise reverses what is in the minds of the elders, to be like the nations in which they are exiled (Ezek 20:32).

20:34 *strong hand... outstretched arm*: An expression of the Lord's might (Deut 11:2; Ps 44:3; 98:1; Ezek 30:22), particularly regarding the creation (Pss 89:13; 136:12), and the exodus (Deut 4:34; 7:19; 26:8; Jer 32:21).

20:37-38 *walk under the rod*: a shepherd's staff that separates certain sheep out from the rest of the flock (cf. Lev 27:32).

20:40 *On my holy mountain, on the high mountain in Israel*: two parallel designations for Mount Zion, the location of the temple in Jerusalem (Pss 48:1-2; 78:54; 99:9; Ezek 40:2). 5



21:9 Eze 21:28  
 21:12 Eze 21:6  
 21:14 Nm  
 24:10, 2K1 24:1,  
 2K1 24:10,  
 2K1 25:1,  
 Eze 21:17

*The Exile as Exodus* Ezekiel 20 stands as an amazing recital of ancient Israel's history, unique in the OT. Other histories can be found, both long (Joshua through 2 Kings) and short (Pss 105–106). Ezekiel 20 stands apart by presenting a wholly negative view of Israel's past, one lacking in either righteousness on the part of the people, or peace granted by God. But Ezekiel hasn't lost confidence in God's power or intention to save the people, because the exile itself is actually portrayed as the last stage in the exodus, after which a promise of a new covenant is assured. Ezekiel begins his march through Israel's history with the first generation located in Egypt (Ezek 20:5–9). Upon their rebellion, the prophet moves this generation to a new location, the wilderness (Ezek 20:10–22), replacing them with the second generation. Ezekiel's diatribe against the second generation (Ezek 20:15–26) overlaps the setting of the wilderness, but in the end, they go into exile (Ezek 20:23–26). After an interlude (the mention of the land, Ezek 20:27–29), one section announces covenant and judgment all in the same breath (Ezek 20:30–38), followed by a concluding prediction of service to the Lord in the land (Ezek 20:39–44). This renewed service in the Lord's presence foreshadows Ezekiel's final vision (Ezek 40–48).

their finest gifts, and all their holy things. <sup>41</sup>When I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries where you are scattered, I will accept you as a pleasing aroma. Through you I will be made holy in the sight of the nations. <sup>42</sup>Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you to Israel's fertile land, to the land that I swore to give to your ancestors. <sup>43</sup>There you will remember how your ways and all your wicked deeds defiled you, and you will loathe yourselves for all the wicked things that you've done. <sup>44</sup>Then, house of Israel, you will know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for the sake of my name and not according to your wicked ways and ruinous deeds. This is what the LORD God says.

#### Fire in the southern plain

<sup>45b</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>46</sup>Human one, face Teman, preach against the south, and prophesy against the thicket in the arid southern plain. <sup>47</sup>Say to the thicket in the arid southern plain: Hear the LORD God's word. This is what the LORD God says: I'm about to set a fire in you, and it will consume every green and every dry tree in you. Its blazing flame won't be put out, and everything from south to north will be scorched. <sup>48</sup>Everyone will see that I, the LORD, have set it on fire. It won't be quenched. <sup>49</sup>Then I said, "Oh, LORD God! They say about me, 'Isn't he one for making metaphors?'"

#### The sword

**21**<sup>a</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, face Jerusalem, preach against their sanctuary, and prophesy against Israel's fertile land. <sup>3</sup>Say to Israel's fertile land, The

<sup>a</sup>21:1 in Heb <sup>b</sup>21:6 in Heb

*their offerings, their finest gifts, and all their holy things:* priestly worship of the Lord in the Jerusalem temple. The renewal of worship in the temple summarizes what will be described in Ezekiel 40–48.

20:41 *you as a pleasing aroma:* While rejecting child sacrifice (cf. Ezek 20:31 and 16:20), the Lord will accept Israel as an entirely burned offering (cf. Gen 8:20–22; Lev 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9, 12; 3:5, 16; 4:31; 6:15, 21; 8:21, 28; 17:6; 23:13, 18; Num 18:17). Even while predicting restoration, Ezekiel doesn't relent from promising death and horror. *I will be made holy in the sight of the nations:* Compare with Ezekiel 28:22, 25; 36:22–23; 38:16.

20:43 *you will remember how your ways . . . defiled you:* According to Ezekiel, exile taught and corrected the people, and wasn't simply a product of God's anger (cf. Ezek 14:22–23; 16:63; 36:31; 43:10–11).

20:45–49 Turmoil is coming in southern Judah from Babylon's army, and it is coming because of God's judgment on Judah.

20:46 *Teman:* A term for the southerly direction or side (cf. in regard to the Lord's mobile dwelling: Exod 26:18, 35; 27:9; 36:23; 38:9; in regard to the wilderness encampment: Num 2:10; 3:29; 10:6; and in Ezekiel, the southern

border of the land: Ezek 47:19; 48:28). In this context, all of Judah may be in focus, but in light of the oracle against Ammon (Ezek 21:28–32), perhaps the southern region near Judah. Theologically, God's tool of punishment comes from the north and moves southward (cf. Ezek 1:4; and Jer 1:13–14; 4:6; 6:1, 22; 10:22; but the tables are turned in Ezek 38–39).

20:47 *I'm about to set a fire in you:* Fire as a metaphor for God's judgment is a theme in this section (cf. Ezek 21:31; 22:20, 21, 31; and see also Jer 5:14–17; 17:27; 21:14).

20:49 *maker of metaphors:* Another indication that Ezekiel was recognized for his eloquence, but not for his prophecy (cf. Ezek 12:21–28; and 33:30–33; but not by all—e.g., certain elders! Cf. Ezek 8:1; 14:1; 20:1; 33:31). His desire to be recognized as a prophet was important to Ezekiel (see the note on Ezek 2:5).

21:1–17 This section is unified by the motif of God's sword, which stands for the Babylonian army as the tool of the Lord's punishment of Jerusalem. After the general announcement (21:1–5), two symbolic actions follow: Ezekiel groans with sorrow (21:6–7), and an imaginative description of the sword flashing to and fro (21:8–17).

21:2 *face Jerusalem:* A common formula in Ezekiel,

21:21 Gn 31:19;  
Nm 22:7;  
Jgs 17:5;  
Prv 16:33;  
Zec 10:2  
21:27 Gn 49:10;  
Ps 2:6; Jer 23:5;  
Eze 37:24;  
Hlg 2:21

LORD proclaims: I'm now against you! I will draw my sword from its sheath and cut off both the righteous and the wicked from you. <sup>4</sup>In order to cut off the righteous and wicked from you, my sword will go out from its sheath against everyone from south to north. <sup>5</sup>And everyone will know that I, the LORD, have taken my sword out of its sheath. It won't be put away again.

<sup>6</sup>You, human one, groan in their sight; groan bitterly with trembling knees. <sup>7</sup>If they ask you why you're groaning, say to them, "Because of the news." When it comes, every heart will despair, every hand will hang lifeless, every spirit will be listless, and urine will run down every leg. It's coming! It will happen! This is what the LORD God says.

### The sword dance

<sup>8</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>9</sup>Human one, prophesy! Say, The Lord proclaims! Say:

A sword! A sharp and polished sword!

<sup>10</sup>For utter slaughter it is sharpened,  
polished to flash like lightning.

Let's not rejoice, because no one will escape the purge.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>11</sup>He appoints it for polishing, to seize in the hand.

The sword is sharpened, it is polished;  
it is ready for the destroyer's hand.

<sup>12</sup>Human one, cry aloud, and wail,

for it comes against my people,  
against all of Israel's princes,

handed over to the sword along with my people.

Therefore, strike your thigh. <sup>13</sup>He's testing.

When even the rod rejects, will it not certainly happen?<sup>\*</sup>

This is what the LORD God says.

<sup>14</sup>And you, human one, prophesy!

Strike hand to hand.

Let the sword strike twice, three times!

It's a deadly sword, a great deadly sword.

It whirls around them <sup>15</sup>to make hearts shudder,  
to make many stumble and fall.

I've set the slaughtering sword against all their gates.

Oh! It's crafted to flash like lightning, polished for slaughter!

<sup>16</sup>Stab again and again! Plunge right,  
plunge left, wherever your edge goes.

<sup>17</sup>It is I who strike hand to hand!

I'll satisfy my wrath! I, the LORD, have spoken.

<sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>\*</sup>Heb uncertain

expressing God "facing off" against his opponent, the object of God's judgment (cf. Ezek 4:3, 7; 6:2; 13:17; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2). In this section, the prophet is commanded to set his face against the southern region (Ezek 20:45) and against Jerusalem.

21:3 *my sword*: a symbol of God's aggression, often combined with fire imagery (Gen 3:24; Pss 7:13; 17:13; Isa 66:16; Amos 4:10; 7:9; 9:1; Nah 2:13; 3:15).

21:6-7 *groan in their sight... with trembling knees*: Ezekiel shows the fear that will accompany the coming siege. *Because of the news*: See Ezekiel 24:26-27; 33:21. This symbolic action describes the exiles' reaction, not what will take place in Jerusalem, a switch from the subject of Ezekiel 4-5. *every hand will hang lifeless*: Compare with Ezekiel 7:17. *It's coming*: Compare with Ezekiel 7:5, 6, 10, 12.

21:12 *my people*: The possessive signifies a covenantal relationship (see the note on Ezek 11:17). *Israel's princes*: Compare with Ezekiel 12:10, 12; 19:1; 22:6. During the wilderness period, the princes were tribal leaders who reported to Moses (Exod 16:22; Num 1-2; 13:2; 17:21).<sup>1</sup> This is the term Ezekiel will use to designate the new royal figure, demoting him to the role of patron of the temple (see sidebar, "The Demotion of the King in Ezekiel" at Ezek 34). *strike your thigh*: a sign of lamentation (cf. Jer 31:19).

21:13 *even the rod rejects*: The text is obscure. Perhaps: the mention of the rod should be read in context with; Ezekiel 20:37.

21:14 *Strike hand to hand*: gestures accompanying prophetic denunciations (cf. Ezek 6:11 and Ezek 22:13).

**Guilt remembered**

<sup>18</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>19</sup>You, human one, mark two roads for the coming of the sword of the king of Babylon. They should diverge from a single country. Where the road to the city begins, set up a sign, <sup>20</sup>and point out the way for the sword to come: "To Rabbah of the Ammonites" or "To Judah in its stronghold Jerusalem." <sup>21</sup>The king of Babylon stands at the fork in the road where the two roads begin and performs his divinations. He shakes the arrows, consults the divine images, and inspects the liver. <sup>22</sup>On his right side appeared the omen for Jerusalem: to put battering rams in place, to proclaim war and raise the alarm, to place battering rams against the gates, and to set up siege ramps and build towers. <sup>23</sup>It seems to them like a lying divination, because solemn pledges had been sworn to them. But he will remind them of their guilt, and they will be captured.

<sup>24</sup>So the LORD God proclaims: Now that you have remembered your guilt and your treacheries are exposed, your sins can be seen in everything you do. Because you have brought your guilt to light, you will be captured! <sup>25</sup>But you vile, wicked prince of Israel whose day has come, the time of final punishment, <sup>26</sup>this is what the LORD God says: Remove the turban, take off the crown! Nothing will be as it was. Bring down the exalted, and exalt the lowly. <sup>27</sup>A ruin, ruin, ruin, I'll make it! Such a thing has never happened! Even before the rightful judge comes, I've handed it over to him.

**Avenging Ammon's disgrace**

<sup>28</sup>You, human one, prophesy and say, The LORD God proclaims to the Ammonites concerning their disgrace. Say, Sword! Sword unsheathed for slaughter, burnished, battle-ready,<sup>1</sup> flashing like lightning: <sup>29</sup>False visions and lying divinations set you against the necks of vile, wicked men whose day had come, the time of final punishment. <sup>30</sup>Return it to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, I will judge you. <sup>31</sup>I will pour out my wrath against you. With a raging fire I will blow against you, and I will hand you over to those who burn and forge destruction. <sup>32</sup>Fire will consume you, your blood will sink into the earth, and you will no longer be remembered. I, the LORD, have spoken.

<sup>1</sup>Or to take in the hand

21:18-27 In another symbolic action, Ezekiel says that it is the Lord who directs Nebuchadnezzar's sword toward Jerusalem and away from Ammon.

21:18-20 *mark two roads*: This is a symbolic action, in which, much like modeling a city out of a brick (cf. Ezek 4:1-3), Ezekiel models roads and direction markers in the dirt all the while remaining in Babylon.

21:20 *Rabbah*: the capital city of the Ammonites. In the early 6th century BCE, the Ammonites apparently rebelled against Babylon, perhaps at the same time as Judah's rebellion. The report in Jeremiah 41 indicates that the Ammonites supported the coup against Gedaliah, the Babylonian appointed governor of the land.

21:21 *shakes the arrows, consults the divine images, and inspects the liver*: These were all common, established forms of predicting future events (known as divination) in the ancient Near Eastern world, but were generally rejected as unacceptable in ancient Israel (Deut 18:10, 14; 1 Sam 15:23; 2 Kgs 17:17; Isa 6:2). In this instance, however, Ezekiel says that the Lord of Israel will speak through such practices.

21:23 *It seems to them*: It's unclear who "them" refers to, but it may mean Israel's princes (Ezek 21:12, 25). *solemn pledges*: could be those made by Zedekiah with Babylon or newer pledges with Egypt (cf. Ezek 17:13). *he will remind them*: Nebuchadnezzar will remind those still in the land of their guilt (in Ezek 21:24-25; and cf. Ezek 14:22-23; 16:63; 20:43).

21:26-27 *Nothing will be as it was*: another expression of the future stated in Ezekiel 7. *ruin, ruin, ruin*: recalls Jeremiah's speech against the Jerusalem temple (Jer 7:4), in

which he compares it to the ruined sanctuary of Shiloh (Jer 7:12-15; 26:9). *the rightful judge*: Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek 21:21).

21:26 *Remove the turban*: This headdress identified holders of high offices in ancient Israel (cf. Exod 28:4; 29:6; Lev 8:9; 16:4; and Ezek 24:17, 23; 44:18).

21:28-32 Multiple interpretations of these verses are possible, because it isn't clear to whom the pronouns and descriptive phrases refer. Verse 28 directs this prophecy against Ammon, so perhaps Ezekiel announces that while God has chosen Nebuchadnezzar to be his sword against Jerusalem and Judah, Ammon wasn't selected in their place. The prophet will return to this subject in Ezekiel 25:1-7.

21:29 *False visions and lying divinations*: The divinations given to Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek 21:21) were true and only seemed like "lying divinations" to Israel's princes (Ezek 21:23), but Ezekiel says the divinations given to the Ammonites are false. *vile, wicked men*: These must be the princes and people (Ezek 21:12, 25). Ezekiel doesn't relent from his condemnation of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; indeed, they deserved their defeat. Still, only the Babylonians, not the Ammonites, were preferred by the Lord to implement this just sentence.

21:32 *you will no longer be remembered*: This is a statement of extinction (cf. Ezek 27:36; 28:19). In the ancient Near East, the dead lived on through memorial stones, on which their names were inscribed. Though it isn't the prophet's focus here, he spares the exiles, the remaining few of God's elect, this fate (cf. Ezek 37:1-14).

22:2 Eze 16:2,  
Eze 20:4,  
Eze 23:36,  
Eze 24:6,  
Eze 24:9  
22:8 Lv 19:30;  
Eze 20:13,  
Eze 20:24,  
Eze 22:26,  
Eze 23:38  
22:18 Ps 119:119;  
Is 1:22; Jer 6:28  
22:20 Mal 3:2

22:24 Eze 24:13

22:26 Lv 10:10;  
Jer 2:8,  
Eze 22:8,  
Eze 44:23,  
Zep 3:422:30 Ps 106:23;  
Is 59:16, Is 63:5;  
Jer 5:1; Eze 13:522:3 Lv 17:7;  
Josh 24:14;  
Eze 23:8,  
Eze 23:19,  
Eze 23:21

23:4 Eze 16:46

23:5 2Ks 15:19;  
2Ks 16:7;  
Eze 16:28;Hos 5:13,  
Hos 6:923:11 Jer 3:8,  
Eze 16:47,  
Eze 16:51**Bloody city**

**22**The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>You, human one, will you judge? Will you judge the bloody city? Then explain all her detestable practices to her. <sup>3</sup>Say, The LORD God proclaims: City, self-destructive blood-letter, self-defiling idol maker: <sup>4</sup>All the blood that you've shed is your punishment, and all the idols that you've made are your defilement. This is how you've shortened your days and hastened the end<sup>m</sup> of your years! For this reason I've given you over to the ridicule of nations and the derision of every land. <sup>5</sup>Those from near and far will mock your infamous name and great chaos. <sup>6</sup>Look, Israel's princes, every one of them, have joined forces to shed blood in you. <sup>7</sup>In you they treat father and mother with contempt. In you they oppress immigrants and deny the rights of orphans and widows. <sup>8</sup>You despise my holy things and degrade my sabbaths. <sup>9</sup>In you slanderers show up to shed blood. In you they eat on the mountains. In you they do obscene things. <sup>10</sup>In you a father's nakedness is uncovered. In you menstruating women are violated. <sup>11</sup>Every man engages in detestable practices with his neighbor's wife, every man defiles his daughter-in-law with obscene acts, and every man violates his sister, his own father's daughter. <sup>12</sup>In you they take bribes to shed blood. You collect interest and fees, you profit by extorting your neighbor, and you neglect even me! This is what the LORD God says.

<sup>13</sup>I now strike my hands over your ill-gotten gain and blood that's been shed in you. <sup>14</sup>Will your strength and courage endure when I deal with you? I am the LORD: I speak, and I act! <sup>15</sup>I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you throughout the lands, and so I will remove your uncleanness from you. <sup>16</sup>When you are degraded<sup>n</sup> like this in the sight of the nations, then you will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>17</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>18</sup>Human one, the house of Israel has become a waste product for me. They are all copper, tin, iron, and lead. In the furnace, they've become the waste product of silver. <sup>19</sup>So this is what the LORD God says: Because you've all become a waste product, I'm now gathering you into the middle of Jerusalem. <sup>20</sup>Just as silver, copper, iron, lead, and tin are collected and placed in a furnace to fan the flames under them and melt them down, so in my anger and rage I will collect you, put you in, and melt you down. <sup>21</sup>I will gather you, fan the flames of my wrath under you, and melt you down in the middle of it. <sup>22</sup>As silver is melted in a furnace, so you will be melted in it. You will know that I, the LORD, have poured out my rage on you.

<sup>m</sup>LXX, Syr; Vulg time; MT until <sup>n</sup>MT adds in you.

22:1-31 This chapter preserves three of Ezekiel's oracles, loosely collected around the theme of burning and purging. The first oracle (22:1-16), judges the city of Jerusalem for worship practices and defilement. A word targeting the house of Israel follows (22:17-22), and was constructed on the theme of a cooking pot. The final prophecy (22:23-31) is hurled against the land, said to be unclean, due to the practices of its leaders.

22:2 *will you judge?*: a command in the form of a question. Compare with Ezekiel 8:6; 20:4; 23:36; 37:3.

22:3-4 *blood*: Blood played a special role for priests. It was believed to contain a person's life (Gen 9:1-6; Lev 17:11; Deut 12:23), which made it a powerful marker of life and death, order and chaos (cf. Exod 12:7, 13, 22-23). This gave blood its power in reconciling the people with God through sacrificial services (Lev 1:4-5; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4-5, 15-16, 24-25, 29-30). In this chapter, however, the unlawful shedding of blood made it into a defiling agent (cf. Lev 12:1-8; 20:18; Num 35:33-34; and in regard specifically to murder, cf. Gen 4:10; Deut 21:1-9; 2 Sam 16:8; for Jerusalem as a city of murderers, see Isa 1:21).

22:4-5 *the end of your years*: Again, a reference to the end of an age for Jerusalem. See the note on Ezekiel 7:1-27. *ridicule of nations*: Punishment involves the shaming of the nation (cf. Ezek 5:14-15; 36:22-23).

22:7-12 Ezekiel runs through a catalog of sins (cf. Ezek 18:5-9; Amos 2:7-8), some of which involve unauthorized

use of blood, but all of which are covenantal instructions *father and mother*. Compare with Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16. *immigrants . . . orphans and widows*: These three classes of persons were the most vulnerable because they weren't protected by patriarchal relationships (cf. Deut 14:29; 24:19-22; 26:12-13; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Amos 2:7). Together with the reference to *father and mother*, Ezekiel presents all of the citizens as being mistreated by the powerful princes (Ezek 22:6).

22:9 *eat on the mountains . . . do obscene things*: A two-sentence restatement of Ezekiel 16:1-58 and Ezek 23.

22:10-11 See Leviticus 18 for a list of sexual prohibitions which Ezekiel says have been violated.

22:12 *bribes . . . interest and fees . . . extorting your neighbors*: financial corruption (cf. Exod 22:25; Lev 25:36-37; Deut 16:19; 23:19-20; Amos 2:8).

22:17-22 Ezekiel updates the image of Jerusalem as a cooking pot with choice meat within (cf. Ezek 11:2-12, 24:1-14). This oracle is directed against the house of Israel (22:17; cf. Ezek 11:5; and see the note on Ezek 3:1), which may refer to the city leaders, who are in view in Ezekiel 11 and in the following passage. In any case, the house of Israel is identified as *dross* that is consumed in the fire that melts the pot, Jerusalem (22:19, and cf. Ezek 11:3). The point is that the cooking pot is destroyed, not that it is purified or that any part of it remains to be refashioned into a new utensil.

23:24 Jer 39:5;  
Jer 47:3;  
Eze 26:10;  
Na 2:4  
23:25 Ex 34:14;  
Dt 29:20;  
Eze 23:47;  
Zep 1:18

<sup>23</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>24</sup>Human one, say to her, You are an unclean land without rain on the day of reckoning. <sup>25</sup>The conspiracy of princes<sup>o</sup> in her is like a roaring lion ripping up prey. They've piled up wealth and precious goods and made many widows in her. <sup>26</sup>Her priests have done violence to my instructions and made my holy things impure. They have not clearly separated the holy from the ordinary, and they have not taught the difference between unclean and clean things. They've disregarded my sabbaths. So I've been degraded among them. <sup>27</sup>The officials in her are like wolves ripping up prey. They shed blood and destroy lives for unjust riches. <sup>28</sup>Her prophets have whitewashed everything for them, seeing false visions and making wrong predictions for them, saying, "This is what the LORD God says," when the LORD hasn't spoken. <sup>29</sup>The important people of the land have practiced extortion and have committed robbery. They've oppressed the poor and mistreated the immigrant. They've oppressed and denied justice. <sup>30</sup>I looked for anyone to repair the wall and stand in the gap for me on behalf of the land, so I wouldn't have to destroy it. But I couldn't find anyone. <sup>31</sup>So I've poured out my anger on them. With my furious fire I've finished them off. I've held them accountable. This is what the LORD God proclaims.

### Two sisters

**23** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, there were two women, daughters of one woman. <sup>3</sup>When they were girls in Egypt, they began to prostitute themselves by allowing their young and nubile breasts to be touched and fondled. <sup>4</sup>The older sister was named Oholah, and the younger sister was named Oholibah. They became mine and gave birth to sons and daughters. Now Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>But Oholah became unfaithful to me and lusted after her lovers the Assyrians: <sup>6</sup>warriors dressed in fine blue cloth, governors and officers, charioteers and horsemen, all of them the most handsome of men. <sup>7</sup>She sought them out to seduce them, all of them men of the highest rank of Assyria. She defiled herself by everyone she lusted after and also by all their idols. <sup>8</sup>But she never gave up her promiscuities with the Egyptians, who had slept with her in her girlhood and fondled her nubile breasts, and who continued to seduce her. <sup>9</sup>Therefore, I handed her over to her lovers, to the Assyrians for whom she lusted. <sup>10</sup>They stripped her naked, took her sons and daughters, and killed her with the sword. And she became notorious among women for the punishments they enacted against her.

<sup>11</sup>Her sister Oholibah saw it, and she proceeded to outdo her sister in her lust and in her

<sup>o</sup>LXX: MT prophets

22:23-31 These lines declare the reason the land is suffering (cf. Ezek 6). It is unclean because of the conspiracy of its leaders: princes (22:25), priests (22:26), officials (22:27), prophets (22:28), and "important people of the land" (22:29). Their failures correspond roughly with the list of sins in Ezekiel 22:7-12.

22:28, 30 *whitewashed everything... to repair the wall:* These two verses pull together all the ways that Ezekiel has confronted opposing prophets and defended his own prophetic calling (cf. Ezek 2:5; 3:11, 26; 13:6-7, 12).

22:29 *important people of the land:* The "people of the land" is a proper noun in the OT for a group of leaders, perhaps a class of influential officials. At times, they were viewed favorably, such as when they installed Josiah as king (2 Kgs 21:24 // 2 Chron 33:25). They were not, however, viewed favorably by Ezekiel (cf. Ezek 7:27). In the post-exilic period, this term designated a party that opposed Ezra and his fellow priests (Ezra 4:4).

23:1-49 A second set of extended metaphors depicting Jerusalem as a prostitute. This time Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom (cf. Jer 3:6-11), is also included. After a brief introduction (23:1-4), the chapter presents two metaphorical depictions. The first (23:5-36) accuses and judges first Samaria (Oholah; 23:5-10) and then Jerusalem (23:11-35). A second metaphor paints another scathing portrait of the two sisters together (23:36-45), followed by God's judgment (23:46-49). The

metaphors here focus on political alliances. The mention of Samaria, a city long destroyed by Ezekiel's day, serves only a rhetorical function, underscoring the fate of Jerusalem, not in any way as a prophetic word for the northern capital.

23:3 *When they were girls in Egypt:* Ezekiel locates the origins of Jerusalem and Samaria in Egypt, recalling the revised history narrated in Ezekiel 20. The metaphor of Ezekiel 16 restricted Jerusalem's heritage to Canaan.

23:4 *Oholah:* The name means "her tent." *Oholibah:* the name means "my tent is with her." The divine dwelling is in some texts associated with the "meeting tent" (e.g., Exod 26; 31:7; Lev 14:11; Num 16:19; 20:6), perhaps endowing these feminine names with the sense of God's sanctuary. Oholah may imply that Samaria set up its own meeting tent, without regard to the Lord's presence there. Oholibah may suggest that the Lord's sanctuary was in Jerusalem. On the other hand, the names are similar in sound, and the point of the story is the promiscuity of both cities, so perhaps names were selected merely to join the two sisters together.

23:5-10 This section is about the political alliances that the northern kingdom had with Assyria (23:5-7) and Egypt (23:8), which ended in 720 BCE, when Assyrian kings besieged Samaria and removed its citizens to various regions across its territory (Ezek 23:9-10; cf. 2 Kgs 17:1-6).

23:11-34 *she proceeded to outdo her sister in her lust and in*

23:40 2Ki 9:30;  
Is 3:18, Is 57:9;  
Jer 4:30;  
Eze 16:13  
23:42 Eze 16:11,  
Eze 16:12  
24:4 Mi 3:2,  
Mi 3:3

seductions. <sup>12</sup>She lusted after the Assyrians, governors and officers, warriors richly clothed, charioteers and horsemen, all of them the most handsome of men. <sup>13</sup>I saw that she too defiled herself. Both had the same tendencies, <sup>14</sup>but she was even more promiscuous. She saw men carved in wall reliefs, images of Chaldeans outlined in vermilion, <sup>15</sup>wearing only loincloths around their hips and flowing headbands on their heads. All of them had the appearance of warriors of the third rank, the likeness of Babylonians whose native land is Chaldea. <sup>16</sup>Aroused just by looking at them, she sent messengers to them in Chaldea. <sup>17</sup>The Babylonians came to her to lie down and make love with her, defiling her with their seductions. But once she had defiled herself with them, she recoiled from them in disgust. <sup>18</sup>When her seductions became known and her nakedness exposed, I recoiled from her just as I had recoiled from her sister. <sup>19</sup>But she added to her promiscuities, bringing to mind her youthful days when she was a prostitute in the land of Egypt. <sup>20</sup>She lusted after their male consorts, whose sexual organs were like those of donkeys, and whose ejaculation was like that of horses. <sup>21</sup>She relived the wicked days of her youth, when the Egyptians touched and fondled her young and nubile breasts.

<sup>22</sup>So Oholibah, the LORD God proclaims: I'm now inciting your lovers against you, all those from whom you recoiled, and I will bring them against you from all around—<sup>23</sup>Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, all the Assyrians with them, the most handsome young men, all of them governors and officers, career officers and conscripts, all of them on horseback. <sup>24</sup>They will come against you with weapons,<sup>p</sup> chariots, and wagons, and with a great army, with shield, buckler, and helmet; and they will surround you. I will hand your punishment over to them, and they will judge you according to their laws. <sup>25</sup>I will direct my passion against you, and they will deal with you in wrath. They will cut off your nose and ears, and those who are left will fall by the sword. They will seize your sons and daughters, and those who are left will be burned with fire. <sup>26</sup>They will strip your clothing from you and remove your beautiful crown. <sup>27</sup>That's how I will put an end to your lewdness and your Egyptian-styled promiscuity. Never again will you stare at them, and you won't remember Egypt anymore. <sup>28</sup>The LORD God proclaims: I'm now handing you over to those whom you hate and from whom you recoil. <sup>29</sup>They will deal hatefully with you: They will seize your pay and leave you completely naked. Your promiscuity, betrayal, and seductions will be exposed. <sup>30</sup>This will be done to you because you sold yourself to the nations and became defiled by their idols. <sup>31</sup>You followed in your sister's path, so I have put her cup into your hand.

<sup>32</sup>The LORD God proclaims:

Deep and wide is your sister's cup. Drink!

Appointed for abuse and scorn, it overflows.

<sup>33</sup>You will be filled with drunken sadness.

A cup of devastation and dismay is the cup of your sister Samaria.

<sup>34</sup>Drink it, drain it dry, break it into pieces, and tear off your breasts, for I have spoken.

This is what the LORD God says.

<sup>35</sup>So now the LORD God proclaims: Because you forgot me and turned your back on me, you alone will bear the consequences of your betrayal and promiscuities.

<sup>36</sup>Then the LORD said to me, Human one, judge Oholah and Oholibah, and make known

<sup>p</sup>Heb uncertain

*her seductions:* The point of the narrative is to emphasize Jerusalem's infidelities over Samaria's. For this reason, the prophet went into greater detail in his accusation (Ezek 23:11-21), as well as his judgment (23:22-35).

23:12-13 *Assyrians:* Judah first asked for Tiglath-Pileser III's military assistance to protect them from a Syrian-Israel alliance in the mid-to-late 730s (cf. Isa 8:5-8). Assyrian presence was felt in the land until that nation's downfall in 612 BCE. With this presence, in varying degrees, elements of the Assyrian worship practices existed in the Jerusalem temple (cf. 2 Kgs 21:1-9).

23:14-18 *Chaldeans . . . Babylonians:* Hezekiah is reported to have invited Babylonian envoys into the temple, revealing its wealth (cf. 2 Kgs 20:12-19 // Isa 39:1-8).

23:20-21 *Egyptians:* Alluding to the pro-Egyptian sentiment prominent in the politics of the final decades of Judah's history, which resulted in the alliance with Egypt in 588-587 BCE.

23:25-26 *They will cut off our nose and ears:* This, and what follows, is a double entendre. On the one hand, the beautiful Oholibah is made ugly, stripped, and shamed. It is also precisely what happened in siege warfare, boastfully portrayed on the wall reliefs of Mesopotamian palaces.

23:32-34 *your sister's cup. Drink!* Ezekiel depicts God's punishment as a poisonous brew (cf. Pss 11:6; 75:8; Jer 25:15-29; 49:12; 51:7; Hab 2:15-17).

23:36-49 This second parable treats Oholah and Oholibah together (23:36, 44).

their detestable practices to them. <sup>37</sup>They committed adultery, so now blood is on their hands. They committed adultery with their idols, and they even took their children whom they had borne to me and offered them up to be consumed for them. <sup>38</sup>They also did this to me: On the same day, they made my sanctuary unclean and made my sabbaths impure. <sup>39</sup>When they slaughtered their children for their idols, they came into my sanctuary and made it impure on that very same day. They actually did this inside my temple. <sup>40</sup>They even sent for men who came from a great distance. No sooner than a messenger was sent, they arrived! For these men you bathed, you painted your eyes, and you put on your jewelry. <sup>41</sup>You took your place on a splendid couch with a richly set table in front of it, and you set my incense and my oil on it. <sup>42</sup>The sound of a noisy crowd was around her. Men from the common multitude, drinkers of wine, were brought from the desert. They put bracelets on their wrists and beautiful crowns on their heads. <sup>43</sup>Then I thought, For a foolish woman they become adulterers! Incited by her seduction, they prostitute themselves—for her!<sup>9</sup> <sup>44</sup>They come as if coming to a prostitute, first to Oholah, and then to Oholibah, those traitorous women. <sup>45</sup>But men who do the right thing will judge them, and they will be punished as adulterers and murderers, because they are in fact adulterers, and blood is on their hands.

<sup>46</sup>The LORD God proclaims: Bring up an assembly against them, and decree terror and plunder for them. <sup>47</sup>Let the assembly stone them! Let them carve them up with their swords, slay their sons and daughters, and burn their houses with fire! <sup>48</sup>So I will put an end to betrayal in the land. Taking warning, no woman will betray as you have done. <sup>49</sup>You will be held accountable for your betrayals, and you will bear the sins of your idols. Then you will know that I am the LORD God.

### The useless pot

**24** In the ninth year, on the tenth day of the tenth month, the LORD's word came to me: <sup>1</sup>Human one, write down today's date, because today the king of Babylon has set up camp at Jerusalem—today! <sup>2</sup>Compose a parable for the rebels' household and say to them, The LORD God proclaims:

Put on the pot, set it on, and fill it with water.

<sup>4</sup>Add meat to it, every good piece.

With shoulder and thigh, the meatiest bones, fill it up.

<sup>5</sup>Take the flock's best animal;  
arrange the wood<sup>f</sup> beneath it.

Bring it to a rolling boil,  
and cook its bones in it.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD God proclaims: Horror! You bloody city, you corroded pot; pot whose corrosion can't be removed! Empty it piece by piece. She is rejected<sup>g</sup> <sup>7</sup>because her blood is still with her. She didn't pour it out on the ground so that it could be covered with dirt, but she spread it out on a bare rock. <sup>8</sup>In order to arouse wrath, to guarantee vengeance, I will spread her blood on a bare rock, never to be covered.

<sup>9</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Or bones <sup>g</sup>Or the lot did not fall to her

23:37-39 *inside my temple*: These verses carry the same content as the detailed vision of Ezekiel 8.

23:45 *men who do the right thing*: Most interpreters take these men to be the very men with whom the sisters have committed adultery (likewise Ezek 16:37). Ancient Israelite law held men caught in adultery accountable alongside women (Deut 22:22-29). The point seems to be that their judgment will be justified by the inappropriate sexual behaviors of the sisters.

23:46-49 *Bring up an assembly*: The final judgment again draws upon a public trial and execution of the sisters (see the note on Ezek 16:37-41; and cf. Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22-24).  
24:1 *ninth year, on the tenth day of the tenth month*: January 15, 588 BCE; the day when Nebuchadnezzar began his siege of Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kgs 25:1; Jer 39:1).

24:3 *Compose a parable*: Compare with Ezekiel 17:2; 18:3; and recall Ezekiel 21:49. *rebels' household*: Compare with Ezekiel 2:1-3:27; 12:2, 9, 25.

24:4-5 The ceremony described here is the preparation of a sacrificial meal by a priest (cf. Exod 29:17, 31; Lev 1:6, 12; 8:20). Ezekiel may have acted this prophecy out, but his offering has an ironic twist. The meat being sacrificed is the house of Israel (cf. Ezek 20:41).

24:6-8 The offering (the house of Israel) is rejected because of defilement, found both in the corrosion of the pot and the blood in the meat (see the note on Ezek 22:3-4). Once deemed defiled, the offering must be abandoned to scavengers. To bury it properly would have defiled those already properly buried. This image would have expressed to Ezekiel's audience the failure to bury the corpses after the fall of Jerusalem, which was a curse (cf. 1 Kgs 14:11; 21:23-24; 2 Kgs 9:34-37; Jer 16:4; 34:19-20; Ezek 37:1-14; 39:11-20), since it cut off the dead from continued association with both the ancestors and living descendants (see the sidebar, "Death and Afterlife in the Ancient Near East" at Ezek 32). *bare rock*: The temple stood on the

24:11 Jer 21:10;

Eze 22:15;

Eze 23:27

24:12 Jer 9:5

24:13 Eze 5:13;

Eze 22:24

24:16 Jer 13:17;

Jer 22:10;

Eze 24:21

24:17 Lv 13:45;

2Sa 15:30;

Jer 16:7;

Eze 24:22;

Hos 9:4

24:18 Eze 12:7

24:19 Eze 12:9;

Eze 37:18

24:27 Eze 3:26;

Eze 3:37;

Eze 29:21;

Eze 33:22

25:8 Is 15:1;  
Jer 48:1  
25:13 Gn 36:11;  
Jer 49:7;  
Eze 29:8;  
Am 1:12;  
Hab 3:3

<sup>9</sup>So now the LORD God proclaims:  
Horror! You bloody city!

I myself will add fuel to the fire!

<sup>10</sup>Pile on the wood, light the fire, and cook the meat.  
Season it well and let the bones be charred.

<sup>11</sup>Let the pot stand empty on its coals until it's so hot that its copper glows,  
its impurities melt in it, and its corrosion is consumed.

<sup>12</sup>It's a worthless task.

Even by fire its great corrosion isn't removed.

<sup>13</sup>How your betrayals defile you! I cleansed you, but you didn't come clean from your impurities. You won't be clean again until I have exhausted my anger against you. <sup>14</sup>I, the LORD, have spoken! It's coming, and I'll do it. I won't relent or have any pity or compassion. Your punishments will fit your ways and your deeds! This is what the LORD God says.

### *Ezekiel's wife dies*

<sup>15</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>16</sup>Human one, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you in a single stroke. Don't mourn or weep. Don't even let your tears well up. <sup>17</sup>Sigh inwardly; be deathly still. Don't perform mourning rites, but bind on your turban and put your shoes on your feet. And don't cover your upper lip or eat in human company.

<sup>18</sup>I spoke with the people in the morning, and by evening my wife was dead. The next morning I did as I was commanded. <sup>19</sup>The people asked, "Won't you tell us what your actions mean for us?"

<sup>20</sup>So I said to them, The LORD's word came to me: <sup>21</sup>Say to the house of Israel, the LORD God proclaims: I'm about to make my sanctuary impure, the pride of your strength, the delight of your eyes. Your heart's desire, the sons and daughters you left behind, will fall by the sword. <sup>22</sup>You will do as I have done. You will neither cover your upper lip nor eat in human company. <sup>23</sup>Your turbans will be on your heads, your sandals on your feet. You won't mourn or weep. You will waste away in your guilt, all of you groaning to each other. <sup>24</sup>Ezekiel is your sign. You will do everything that he has done. When this happens, you will know that I am the LORD God.

<sup>25</sup>And you, human one: On the day that I take from them their proud stronghold—their crowning joy, the delight of their eyes—and their sons and daughters, whose fate weighs on them, <sup>26</sup>on that day, a refugee will come to you so that you yourself will hear the news. <sup>27</sup>On that day your mouth will be opened to the refugee, and you will speak and no longer be silent. You will be their sign, and they will know that I am the LORD.

### *Against the neighboring nations*

**25** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, face the Ammonites and prophesy against them. <sup>3</sup>Say to the Ammonites: Hear the LORD God's word! The LORD God proclaims:

top of Mount Zion, a rocky outcropping that can still be seen today within the Dome of the Rock. Ezekiel's expression here denies any holiness to Mount Zion, relegating it instead to ordinary ground. For a more detailed, explicit portrayal of the temple serving as a morgue, see Ezekiel 9. **24:14** *It's coming*: recalling Ezekiel 7, a reference to the end of this era of Jerusalem's service as the location of God's presence.

**24:15-27** Ezekiel's wife dies in this passage, by which God illustrates the death of God's wife, Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 16:8; 23:4). The prophecies of Ezekiel pivot around this passage, because at the very point when Ezekiel receives his prophetic voice (24:25-27; 33:21-22), he begins to see a future with hope of God's blessings (cf. Ezek 37:1-14; 37:26-28; 43:1-7; 47:1-12; 48:35).

**24:17** *Don't perform mourning rites*: Mourning for the dead was performed publicly, and not to do so insulted the dead as well as the living (cf. 1 Kgs 14:13; Jer 16:4, 6; 22:18; 25:33; 34:5; Ezek 26:15-18; 27:30-32; 32:16). Such rituals, lasting varying lengths of time (cf. Gen 50:10; Num 20:29; Deut 34:8; 1 Sam 31:13; 1 Chron 10:12), involved

behaviors otherwise deemed asocial, such as the tearing of clothing, shaving, and smearing one's self with dirt or ashes (Job 1:20; 2:12). Ezekiel is specifically commanded to refrain from performing any of these behaviors, thereby shocking his audience, because his own self becomes a symbolic action (Ezek 24:24, 27).

**24:23** *turbans will be on your heads*: This act contrasts with the removal of the prince's turban in Ezekiel 21:26. Ezekiel counseled the demotion of the prince (see sidebar, "The Demotion of the King in Ezekiel" at Ezek 34) and the Jerusalem officials in general. By wearing their turbans, the community continued in their offices (cf. Ezek 44:18). At the center of this symbolic action was the announcement that the new leadership for the next era would come from exile (see the note on Ezek 11:1-21).

**24:26-27** *a refugee*: This is an explicit reference to Ezekiel 33:21. At that time, Ezekiel was recommissioned as a sentinel (Ezek 33:1-9), his mouth was opened (cf. Ezek 33:22), all of which combine to create a pivot in Ezekiel's prophecies (cf. the note on Ezek 2:5; and cf. Ezek 3:16-21, 26-27).

**25:1-17** The first set of oracles against the nations (see



You laughed when my sanctuary was degraded, when Israel's fertile land was laid waste, and when the house of Judah went into exile; <sup>4</sup>therefore, I'm handing you over to people in the east for them to take possession. They will set up their encampments against you, establish residence, devour your fruit, and drink your milk. <sup>5</sup>I'll make Rabbah into pastureland for camels and Ammon a resting place for flocks. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD God proclaims: Because you clapped your hands and stamped your feet when you rejoiced with utter contempt for Israel's fertile land, <sup>7</sup>I'm about to overpower you. Nations will plunder you. I will cut you off from the peoples, remove you from the lands, and utterly destroy you. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD God proclaims: Because Moab and Seir say, "Aha! The house of Judah has become like all the nations," <sup>9</sup>I'll open up the flank of Moab from the cities at its border, the land's splendid cities, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim. <sup>10</sup>I'll hand it over, along with the Ammonites, to people in the east for them to take possession. And so Ammon will no longer be remembered among the nations. <sup>11</sup>I'll execute judgments in Moab, and they will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>12</sup>The LORD God proclaims: Edom acted with excessive force against the house of Judah. The Judeans were guilty, but Edom's vengeance was excessive. <sup>13</sup>So the LORD God now proclaims: I'll overpower Edom, eliminate all living creatures, and make it a wasteland from Teman to Dedan. They will fall by the sword. <sup>14</sup>I will execute my vengeance in Edom through

*Oracles Against the Nations* In most of the prophetic books in the Bible, oracles are directed against nations or kingdoms other than Judah or Israel. Ezekiel made great use of this genre in chapters 25–32 and 35, targeting Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt—but never Babylon! No one from any nation against which Ezekiel prophesied could have heard his prophetic declarations: Ezekiel prophesied to the exiles by the Chebar River, which is in Babylon. Within these oracles against other nations, Ezekiel was actually delivering a message about the fate of Jerusalem, Judah, and his own people. The key to hearing these oracles is to understand the role that the stated nations played in the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem. Prior to the fall, when Egypt seemed to have promised protection from Babylon, Ezekiel prophesied the defeat of Egypt. After 587 BCE, Edom sought to profit from Judah's downfall. So when Ezekiel constructed a message of restoration, he singled out this desert nation for condemnation. By knowing the situation and relationship to the fall of Jerusalem and the temple, Ezekiel's audience would have had no difficulty understanding the judgment speech targeting the nations.

sidebar, "Oracles Against the Nations") are addressed to Judah's closest neighbors, Ammon (25:1-7), Moab (25:8-11), Edom (25:12-14), and Philistia (25:15-17). All four are formulaic, with an accusation, an announcement of judgment, and concluding with a statement that the nations will recognize the honor due the Lord (see sidebar, "The Recognition Formula" at Ezek 6), except in the case of Edom (Ezek 25:14). The real point behind these oracles is the Lord's, and thus Israel's (constituted by the exilic community), rightful claim to the land, and the Lord's honor tied up with the nation's peaceful and prosperous possession of it (cf. Ezek 35:10, 12, 13; 36:4, 5). As such, these all proclaim restoration to the exiles.

25:1-7 Ezekiel levels two oracles against Ammon (25:2-5, 6-7; cf. Jer 49:1-6; Ezek 21:28-32; Amos 1:13-15; Zeph 2:8-11), Judah's eastern neighbor, located in the transjordanian highlands. The biblical tradition remembers Ammon as a vassal kingdom under David and Solomon (cf. 2 Sam 10:2), but Ammon supported the coup against Gedaliah after the fall of Jerusalem (cf. Jer 40:14). Ezekiel's oracle here may reflect these events, as well as the memory of the Davidic dynasty's theological claim on Ammon.

25:3, 6 *You laughed*: The issue is the sanctuary's honor in the international community (see the note on Ezek 5:14-15). *my sanctuary*: Compare with Ezekiel 8:6; 23:38-39;

24:21. This oracle promises reclamation and cleansing of the Lord's sanctuary (cf. Ezek 37:26-28; 43:1-9; 48:35). *clapped your hands and stamped your feet*: gestures of celebration over the expansion of the Ammonites' territory to the west (cf. Ezek 6:11; Ps 47:1; Lam 2:15; Nah 3:19).

25:4 *people in the east*: referring to nomadic tribes that traveled the desert of the Saudi Arabian peninsula. Assyrian texts also mention trouble from such tribes, who would raid settled lands.

25:8-11 Ezekiel next targets the nation of Moab, a land just south of Ammon, and across the Dead Sea from Judah (cf. Isa 15:1-16:13; Jer 48:1-47; Ezek 35:1-15; Amos 2:1-3; Zeph 2:8-11). Though often dominated by Israel, Moab's King Meshah boasted of winning his independence from the Omrides. The accusation (25:8) challenges the joy felt by the belief that Israel, now in exile, has been absorbed into Babylon and Mesopotamia (cf. Ezek 20:32). Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim all sat northeast of the Dead Sea.

25:8 *Seir*: a mountain region in Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea. Some evidence associates it with ancient, pre-Israelite worship of the Lord (cf. Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4; Ezek 35). 25:12-14 *As hate-filled* as Ezekiel's oracles against the other nations are, he reserved special bitterness for Edom (see also Ps 137; Isa 34:1-17; Jer 49:7-22; Ezek 35:1-17; Amos 1:11-12; Obad). Edom appears to have either joined

26:13 Is 24:7;  
Jer 7:34;  
Rev 18:22

26:20 Ps 28:1;  
Eze 31:14;  
Eze 32:18

26:21 Eze 26:15;  
Eze 27:36;  
Rev 18:21

27:3 Is 23:3;  
Eze 28:12

my people Israel's power. They will act in Edom according to my anger and fury, and they will know my vengeance. This is what the LORD God says.

<sup>19</sup>The LORD God proclaims: When the Philistines set out to right the wrongs done to them, they enacted revenge with utter contempt and old hatreds. <sup>20</sup>So now the LORD God proclaims: I will overpower the Philistines, eliminate the Cherethites, and obliterate all who are left along the coastline. <sup>21</sup>I will act against them with great vengeance and with wrathful punishments. When I execute my vengeance against them, they will know that I am the LORD.

### Against Tyre

**26** In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, because Tyre laughed at Jerusalem:

"The gate of the peoples is broken,  
she lies open before me,  
she is destroyed, but I will succeed!"

<sup>3</sup>The LORD God now proclaims:  
Tyre, I'm now against you!

Just as the sea hurls up its waves,  
I will bring many nations up against you.

<sup>4</sup>When they destroy the walls of Tyre and throw down its towers,  
I will scrape off all its dirt and make it into a bare rock,

<sup>5</sup>a place for drying nets in the middle of the sea.  
I have spoken! This is what the LORD God says.

It will become prey for the nations,

<sup>6</sup>and its towns around it will be put to the sword.  
Then they will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD God proclaims:

I'm bringing Nebuchadrezzar against Tyre,  
the king of Babylon from the north, the greatest of all kings,  
with horses, chariots, and charioteers, an assembly, a great army.

<sup>8</sup>The towns around you he will destroy with the sword.

Then he will build towers against you,  
erect siege ramps against you, and set up shields.

<sup>9</sup>He will pound his battering ram against your walls;  
with crowbars he will tear down your towers.

forces with Babylon, or at least profited when Babylon emptied the southern regions of Judah. Archaeological and textual evidence agree that Edom invaded the arid southern plain in the late 7th or early 6th centuries BCE.

25:15-17 Philistia may actually have fallen before Jerusalem did, and thus this oracle may offer theological reflections from the time of Saul and the rise of David rather than historical insult. Such a situation only emphasizes Ezekiel's theological interests behind these oracles—to announce the Lord's restoration of Israel in the land.

26:1-28:19 More than any other prophet, Ezekiel poured out his anger against Tyre (cf. Isa 22; Amos 2). Tyre was an island city, which provided it with a natural defense against any enemy. Not until Alexander the Great (332 BCE) built a causeway out to it was it defeated (see the note on Ezek 29:17-21). During the siege of Jerusalem, Tyre remained neutral, so it isn't clear why Ezekiel was so angry. Whatever the reason, Ezekiel clearly viewed Tyre as a theological threat for his exilic community. Its demise would have been viewed in some respect as God's salvation to the exiles.

26:1-21; 27:1-36 The prophecies against Tyre are a

complex four-part literary piece. The first part (26:1-21) is a judgment oracle directed against the city. A lament over the city, metaphorically presented as a sunken ship, is paired with this judgment oracle (27:1-36).

26:2 because Tyre laughed: Its mockery of fallen Jerusalem is the basis for the prophet's judgment of Tyre. So stated, the issue touches again on honor and shame. *The gate of the peoples*: though clear to Ezekiel's audience, this reference has now been lost. *I will succeed!*: Competition over prestige, commerce, or perhaps mere survival was at the heart of Tyre's joy over Jerusalem's fall.

26:3-5 as the sea hurls up its waves... in the middle of the sea: Ezekiel used the sea here in a cosmic sense; the sea represented all the chaotic forces (cf. Ps 74:13-14; Isa 27:1).

26:4, 14 bare rock: The same fate met by fallen Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 24:7).

26:7-14 Tyre was supported by dependent towns on the shore, which supplied food to the island city. In focus here is Nebuchadrezzar's attempt to starve Tyre by destroying its sister-cities on the shore. For similar imagery of an invading army, see Nahum 2:1-10.

<sup>10</sup>The dust from all his horses will cover you when he enters your gates  
as one who enters a breached city.  
Your walls will quake  
at the thundering of the charioteers and chariot wheels.

<sup>11</sup>His horses' hooves will trample all your courtyards;  
he will cut down your people with the sword,  
and the monuments to your strength he will bring down<sup>f</sup> to the ground.

<sup>12</sup>They will destroy your wealth, plunder your goods,  
tear down your walls, and raze your fine houses.  
Your stone, lumber, and rubble they will dump into the sea.

<sup>13</sup>I will bring an end to your cacophonous songs;  
the sound of your lyres will never be heard again.

<sup>14</sup>I will make you into a bare rock, a place for drying nets,  
and you will never be rebuilt.  
I, the LORD, have spoken.  
This is what the LORD God says.

### **A lament for Tyre**

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God proclaims to Tyre: Won't the coastlands quake at the news of your downfall, when the wounded groan, and when the slaughter in your midst goes on and on? <sup>16</sup>All the princes of the sea will come down from their thrones, remove their royal robes, and strip off their fine garments. They will be clothed only in terror as they sit on the ground. They will be so terrified, they won't stop shuddering because of you. <sup>17</sup>They will sing a lament for you, and they will say:

How you have perished, queen of the sea, city once praised,  
who once dominated the sea, she and her rulers,  
who spread their terror abroad, every one of them.

<sup>18</sup>Now the wastelands tremble on the day of your fall.  
Your expulsion horrifies the islands of the sea.

<sup>19</sup>The LORD God proclaims: When I turn you into ruins like uninhabitable cities, when the deep sea washes over you and the raging seas cover you, <sup>20</sup>I will lead you down into the pit, to the everlasting people. I will install you in the world below,<sup>g</sup> in the everlasting ruins, with those who go down to the pit. And so you will neither rule nor radiate splendor in the land of the living. <sup>21</sup>I will terrify you, and you will disappear. You will be sought but never found again. This is what the LORD God says.

### **Tyre, the ship of state**

**27**The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>You, human one, sing a lament for Tyre. <sup>3</sup>Say this about Tyre, who sits enthroned at the entrance to the sea, the people's agent for trade throughout the coastlands. The LORD God proclaims:

Tyre, you say,  
"I'm perfectly beautiful!"

<sup>f</sup>LXX, MT it will fall <sup>g</sup>Or the land of the lowest places

26:15-21 A brief lament over Tyre (cf. Ezek 19:1-14; 27:1-36; 28:11-19; 32:1-16, 17-32), followed by a concluding summary of the judgment on Tyre.

26:16-17 *princes of the sea . . . queen of the sea*: The princes are Tyre's trade partners; Tyre is exalted over them. All rule over the sea, which is a double entendre. On the one hand, it is the Mediterranean Sea, but at the same time it represents the chaotic forces opposing the Lord who created ordered living space (cf. Gen 1). As queen of the sea, Ezekiel draws a parallel with Jerusalem, the wife of the Lord (Ezek 16 and 23). But the power to whom Tyre is married—chaos—opposes life, absorbing it into nonexistence, which finally will also be Tyre's fate (cf. 26:19-20).

27:1-36 Laments over the destruction of a city filled the literature of Ezekiel's day. See now the book of Lamentations, but also the lamentations over the ancient city of Ur (3rd millennium BCE). Throughout his prophecies, Ezekiel uses this genre sarcastically.

27:3 *enthroned at the entrance to the sea*: As an island and port city, Tyre literally sat at the entrance to the Mediterranean, but Ezekiel also intends to mock Tyre. Only God has the power to hold back the chaotic sea from ordered space (Gen 1:6-10; Job 38:4-11; 74:12-17), and so here, Ezekiel derisively sets Tyre on the throne of God. *I'm perfectly beautiful*: Ezekiel attributes to Tyre speech that should only properly be said of Jerusalem (Ps 48:2; Lam 2:15),

27:5 Dt 3:9  
27:15 Gn 10:7;  
1Ki 10:22;  
Eze 25:13;  
Eze 27:20;  
Rev 18:12  
27:19 Ex 30:23;  
Ex 30:24;  
Jgs 5:17; Ps 45:8;  
Song 4:14  
27:23 Gn 10:22;  
2Ki 19:12;  
Is 37:12; Am 1:5  
27:25 Ps 48:7;  
Is 2:16; Eze 27:4;  
Eze 27:12

28:2 Ps 9:20;  
Is 14:14;  
Is 31:3; Eze 28:9;  
2Th 2:4  
28:3 Eze 14:14  
28:4 Zec 9:2;  
Zec 9:3  
28:5 Job 31:24;  
Job 31:25;  
Eze 28:2;  
Hos 12:8;  
Hos 13:6  
28:6 Eze 28:2  
28:7 Eze 30:11;  
Eze 31:12;  
Eze 32:12;  
Hab 1:6  
28:8 Eze 27:27  
28:9 Eze 28:2  
28:10 |Sa 17:26;  
Eze 31:18;  
Eze 32:19;  
Eze 32:24;  
Eze 44:9  
28:12 Eze 19:1;  
Eze 27:2;  
Eze 27:3;  
Eze 28:2  
28:13 Gn 2:8;  
Is 51:3;  
Eze 27:16;  
Eze 31:8;  
Eze 31:9

<sup>4</sup>But your territory is in the depths of the sea,  
and it's your builders who made you beautiful.

<sup>5</sup>For you they made your deck of cypress from Senir.  
To make your mast, they took cedar from Lebanon.

<sup>6</sup>For your oars, they used the oaks of Bashan.

They made your hull, inlaid with ivory, of boxwood from the coasts of Cyprus.

<sup>7</sup>Fine embroidered linen from Egypt was your sail;  
it became your emblem.

Your awning was made of blue and purple cloth from the coasts of Elishah.

<sup>8</sup>The princes of Sidon and Arvad were your oarsmen. Your own wise men were in you as your helmsmen. <sup>9</sup>The elders and wise men of Gebal were in you, patching up your leaks. Every seagoing ship and its sailors came to do business with you. <sup>10</sup>Paras, Lud, and Put were the warriors in your army. By hanging their shields and helmets on you, they made you radiant. <sup>11</sup>The men of Arvad and Helech were stationed on your walls all around; the men of Gamad were in your towers. They hung their weapons on your walls all around. They were the ones who completed your beauty.

<sup>12</sup>Tarshish was your procurer of great wealth. For your wares, they exchanged silver, iron, tin, and lead. <sup>13</sup>Javan, Tubal, and Meshech were your agents in human trafficking. They gave you bronze vessels for these wares of yours. <sup>14</sup>Beth-togarmah traded horses, warhorses, and mules for your wares. <sup>15</sup>Islanders from Rhodes<sup>w</sup> were your agents. By contract they procured ebony and ivory for you from many coastlands. <sup>16</sup>Aram was your agent for many products. They traded turquoise, purple cloth, colorful brocades, linen, coral, and rubies for your wares. <sup>17</sup>Judah and the land of Israel were your agents, trading the finest wheat,<sup>w</sup> millet,<sup>x</sup> honey, oil, and balm for your wares. <sup>18</sup>For many of your finished products, Damascus traded out of its great wealth the wine of Helbon and white wool. <sup>19</sup>Vedan and Javan from the region of Uzal traded with you. They exchanged wrought iron, cinnamon, and spices for your wares. <sup>20</sup>Dedan was your agent for saddle blankets. <sup>21</sup>Arabia and all the princes of Kedar traded for you. They procured lambs, rams, and goats for you. <sup>22</sup>They were your agents in Sheba and Raamah. For your wares they exchanged the finest spices, every kind of precious stone, and gold. <sup>23</sup>Haran, Canneh, and Eden were your agents,<sup>y</sup> and also Assyria and Chilmad. <sup>24</sup>They procured fine finished goods for you, garments of purple and brocade, and plush carpets rolled up and securely tied with ropes, among your acquisitions. <sup>25</sup>The ships of Tarshish carried your goods.

You were filled to capacity and heavily laden in the middle of the sea.

<sup>26</sup>Your oarsmen brought you out onto the high seas;  
an east wind sank you into the sea's depths.

<sup>27</sup>Your goods, your wares, your wealth,  
your sailors, your helmsmen, those patching your leaks,  
your merchants, all your warriors in you,  
and all the company that is with you—  
they also sank into the sea's depth on the day of your demise.

<sup>28</sup>At your helmsmen's cries for help,  
the troubled waters seethe.

<sup>29</sup>Those entrusted with the oars desert their posts.  
All sailors and helmsmen seek footing on the shore.

<sup>w</sup>Heb *Dedan* <sup>x</sup>Or *wheat from Minnith* <sup>y</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>z</sup>LXX; MT adds *Sheba*.

which points to competition between Tyre and Jerusalem as the motive driving the prophet's condemnation of the island state (cf. Ezek 26:2).

27:4-11 Only luxury and exotic imported materials were used to construct the ship, Tyre. Likewise, the sailors staffing the Tyre ship's decks come from far and wide, and not every location can be identified today. *Paras, Lud, and Put*: Paras refers to Persia, located in modern Iran. Lud could be either an area south of Egypt or in west-central Turkey. Put is identified with Libya. These regions symbolize the extent of the known world in Ezekiel's day, and may have

also been vague to the prophet and his exilic audience (cf. Jer 46:9; Nah 3:8).

27:12-25a A trade list adds texture to Ezekiel's depiction of Tyre. *Tarshish*: Perhaps Spain, but symbolizing the ends of the earth (cf. Ps 72:10; Jer 10:9; Jon 1:3).

27:26 *east wind*: a tool of the Lord when fighting the forces of chaos, such as the sea during the time of the exodus (cf. Exod 14:21 and 15:1-19). *into the sea's depths*: In contrast to Ezekiel 27:2, 4, references to Tyre's throne, here the city sinks into the chaotic waters of the sea.

27:27-29 The portrayal of the sinking of the ship.

- <sup>30</sup> Loudly they cry,  
bitterly they wail,  
and they put dust on their heads  
and cover themselves with ashes.
- <sup>31</sup> They cut off all their hair  
and put on mourning clothes.  
In despair they weep for you,  
and bitterly perform the mourning rites.
- <sup>32</sup> In their lamentation they raise a lament for you;  
they sing lamentations over you:  
"Who was like Tyre, silenced in the middle of the sea?"
- <sup>33</sup> When your wares came out from the seas, you satisfied many people.  
Your abundant wealth and merchandise enriched the kings of the earth.
- <sup>34</sup> Now you are shattered by the seas;  
your cargoes, as well as everyone in your company,  
are sunk into the water's depths.
- <sup>35</sup> Now the inhabitants of the coastlands shudder on account of you.  
And as for their kings, their hair stands on end;  
their faces betray their horror.
- <sup>36</sup> The merchants for the peoples hiss because of you.  
You have become a terror;  
from now on you are nothing.

28:14 Ex 25:17,  
Ex 30:26,  
Ex 40:9;  
Eze 20:40,  
Eze 28:16

28:15 Eze 27:3,  
Eze 27:4,  
Eze 28:3,  
Eze 28:12,  
Eze 28:17

28:16 Eze 28:14;  
Hab 2:17

28:17 Eze 28:2,  
Eze 28:5,  
Eze 31:10

28:18 Am 1:10;  
Mal 4:3

28:19 Jer 51:64;  
Eze 26:21,  
Eze 27:36

28:25 Is 11:12;  
Jer 23:8;  
Eze 11:17,  
Eze 20:41,  
Eze 34:13

28:26 Lv 25:18;  
Is 65:21;  
Jer 23:6;  
Eze 38:8;  
Am 9:14

29:3 Ps 74:13;  
Is 27:1, Is 51:9;  
Eze 29:9,  
Eze 32:2

### Prince of Tyre

**28** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, say to the prince of Tyre, The LORD God proclaims: In your arrogance, you say, "I am God, and as God I rule the seas!" Though you claim to have the mind of a god, you are mortal, not divine. <sup>3</sup>You are certainly wiser than Daniel; no secrets are hidden from you. <sup>4</sup>By your wisdom and discernment, you made yourself rich, and you filled your storehouses with silver and gold. <sup>5</sup>Through your shrewd trading you multiplied your riches. But then you became proud of your riches.

<sup>6</sup>So now the LORD God proclaims: Because you claim to have the mind of a god, <sup>7</sup>I'll bring foreigners, the most ruthless nations, against you. They will let loose their swords against your fine wisdom, and they will degrade your splendor. <sup>8</sup>They will hurl you to destruction, and you will die, murdered, on the high seas. <sup>9</sup>When you face your murderers, will you still say, "I'm God"? In your killers' hands, you are mortal, not divine. <sup>10</sup>You will die as the uncircumcised do, at the hands of foreigners. I have spoken. This is what the LORD God has said.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>12</sup>Human one, sing a lament for the king of Tyre. Say to him, The LORD God proclaims: You were full of wisdom and beauty, the image of perfection.

<sup>13</sup>You were in Eden, God's garden. You were covered with gold and every precious stone:

27:30-32 The mariners carry out public lamentation rituals over Tyre's ruin (see the note on Ezek 24:9-10).

28:1-10, 11-19 The pairing of judgment and lament in Ezekiel 26-27, focused on the city, is matched by another pairing of judgment and lament over the city's leader (28:1-10, a judgment against the prince; 28:11-19, a lament over the king).

28:2-5 "I am God": The accusation against Tyre's leader is that of excessive pride (also 28:6), a mortal claiming the position of God, and an accusation rarely found in the OT (cf. Gen 3; Isa 14:12-13).

28:3 *You are certainly wiser than Daniel*: Wisdom was a quality by which the Lord created the ordered cosmos (cf. Job 38:36-37; 39:26; Ps 104:24; Prov 8:22-31; Isa 29:13-16), and so exhibiting wisdom moved a person toward the divine, according to the ancient mind-set. But true wisdom was incompatible with excessive pride (Prov 8:13). In this instance, Daniel represents legendary wisdom. Compare with Ezek 14:14, 20, where Daniel was a legendary figure of righteousness.

28:9 *you are mortal, not divine*: The punishment for excessive pride isn't merely death, rather mortality abstractly understood (cf. Gen 3:22-24; Isa 14:9-11, 15-21).

28:12-13 *image of perfection... finely crafted pendants and engravings were prepared*: The Hebrew is very difficult to understand here, but the image on a stamp seal, set among other stones, dominates the metaphor. In the ancient world, stamp seals carried the authority of their owner, even in his or her absence, just as signatures on notarized legal documents do today. In the theocracies of the ancient world, the earthly king was understood to be the seal of the divine king, the Lord (cf. Jer 22:24; Hag 2:24). The lament in Ezekiel 28:11-19 connects with the lament over the ship in Ezekiel 27, for just as a king was a signet seal for the divine king in a theocracy, so, too, did the king's seal authorize all of the transactions of an ancient trade ship.

28:13 Similar lists of stones made up the high priests' breastplate (cf. Exod 28:15-22; 39:10-14).

28:13-16 *You were in Eden... in God's holy mountain*:

29:4 2K1 19:28;  
Is 37:29;  
Eze 38:4  
29:5 Jer 7:33,  
Jer 8:2, Jer 34:20;  
Eze 32:4,  
Eze 39:4  
29:18 Jer 25:9,  
Jer 27:6,  
Jer 49:28,  
Eze 26:7  
29:19 Jer 43:10,  
Eze 30:10,  
Eze 30:24,  
Eze 32:11

carneian, topaz, and moonstone; beryl, onyx, and jasper; lapis lazuli, turquoise, and emerald. On the day that you were created, finely crafted pendants and engravings were prepared. <sup>14</sup>You, a winged creature, were installed as a guardian. I placed you in God's holy mountain where you walked among the stones of fire. <sup>15</sup>From the day you were created until injustice was found in you, your ways were assured. <sup>16</sup>But because of your trade, your oppressive business practices piled up, and you became impure. So I expelled you from God's mountain. I removed you, winged creature, guardian, from among the stones of fire. <sup>17</sup>You exalted yourself because of your beauty and corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I will cast you down to the earth in the sight of kings, and I will make a spectacle of you. <sup>18</sup>Because of your corrupt trade, which surpassed your many other sins, you made your sanctuaries impure. Therefore, I will bring fire from your midst. When it has consumed you, I will turn you into dust on the earth in the sight of all who see you. <sup>19</sup>Everyone among the peoples who knows you will be appalled because of you. You will become a terror. From that time on, you will be nothing.

### Against Sidon

<sup>20</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>21</sup>Human one, face Sidon, prophesy against it, <sup>22</sup>and say, The LORD God proclaims: I'm against you, Sidon, and I will manifest my glory in you. When I've executed judgment against it and through it have manifested my holiness, they will know that I am the LORD. <sup>23</sup>I will hurl plague against it, and blood will run in its streets. When the sword comes against it from all sides, the slain will fall within it. Then they will know that I am the LORD. <sup>24</sup>The house of Israel will no longer suffer from the pricking thorn or painful briar of any of its neighbors who hold it in contempt. And they will know that I am the LORD God.

<sup>25</sup>The LORD God proclaims: When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they've scattered, and I demonstrate my holiness through them in the sight of the nations, they will live on their fertile land, which I gave to my servant Jacob. <sup>26</sup>They will live on it in safety. They will build houses, plant vineyards, and live in safety. When I execute judgments against all who hold them in contempt on every side, they will know that I, the LORD, am their God.

### Against Egypt

**29**In the tenth year, on the twelfth day of the tenth month, the LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, face Pharaoh, Egypt's king, and prophesy against him and against all of Egypt. <sup>3</sup>Speak and say, The LORD God proclaims:

Ezekiel applies human attributes to the divine image, and places it in God's first garden. While this mixing of metaphors seems strange to modern audiences, in the ancient world, precious stones, Eden, and the primeval human were all a part of the same theological idea about creation, and thus available to Ezekiel to mold to his own purposes. **28:16** you became impure: Impurity couldn't dwell on God's mountain, where Eden was located. Just as the primeval man and woman were cast out of the garden in Genesis 3, so too here is the winged guardian expelled on account of its sin. The metaphor restates the judgment of mortality (28:19; cf. Ezek 27:36) leveled against the king in Ezekiel 28:7-10.

**28:20-26** As a powerful coastal city, Sidon sat to the north of Tyre and was often mentioned in the ancient literature, with Tyre to signify all of Phoenicia. Beginning in the late 8th and continuing into the 7th centuries BCE, Sidon was a target of Assyrian aggression, one more easily besieged than the island of Tyre. By Ezekiel's day, Sidon had been dishonored by Nebuchadnezzar, making it a ready subject for this oracle. Ezekiel's purpose here is to announce restoration for the house of Israel (28:25) for the purpose of demonstrating God's power (28:22) on the international stage (28:24, 25; cf. Ezek 20:41; 38:16). No mention of any sin on the part of Sidon is listed.

**29:1-32:32** The oracles against Egypt are set in context by their dates, which place these words in the period leading up to (Ezek 29-31) and then after (Ezek 32) the fall of Jerusalem. As outlined in the introduction, the fate of Egypt and Judah were tied together in opposition to Babylon. Since Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian sword were tools of the Lord (cf. Ezek 21), doom to Egypt was synonymous with the judgment of God on Zedekiah and Jerusalem. Once Jerusalem fell, however, Ezekiel's pronouncements of doom on Egypt became good news for the exiles, because doom to Egypt promised the restoration of honor due to the Lord and God's people.

**29:1-16** A series of oracles based on the image of a crocodile lurking in the Nile curses and shames Egypt.

**29:1** In the tenth year, on the twelfth day of the tenth month: January 587 BCE and a year after the beginning of the siege according to Ezekiel 24:1.

**29:3** great crocodile: This image operates on several different levels. As a metaphor, Pharaoh is a crocodile, and Ezekiel then proceeds to describe how the crocodile will be captured and killed. Egyptian iconography also presented the god Sobek as a crocodile. Elsewhere, the Hebrew term used here represents the chaos monster the Lord battled against (cf. Job 7:12; Ps 74:13; 148:7; Isa 27:1). Ezekiel thus places the Lord's battle against Egypt, and against

I'm against you, Pharaoh, Egypt's king,  
great crocodile lurking in the Nile's canals,  
who says, "The Nile is all mine; I made it for myself!"

<sup>4</sup>I will set hooks in your jaws;

I will make the fish from the Nile's canals cling to your scales.

I will drag you out of the Nile's canals,  
and also all the fish from the Nile's canals clinging to your scales.

<sup>5</sup>I will fling you out into the desert, and also all the fish from the Nile's canals.

You will fall on the open ground, and won't be gathered or retrieved.

I've given you to the beasts of the earth and the birds in the sky for food.

<sup>6</sup>Everyone living in Egypt will know that I am the LORD.

Because they were a flimsy crutch for the house of Israel—<sup>7</sup>when they took you in hand, you would splinter and make their shoulders sore; when they leaned on you, you would break, bringing them to their knees—<sup>8</sup>now the LORD God proclaims: I'm bringing a sword against you, and I will cut off from you human and beast. <sup>9</sup>The land of Egypt will be turned into a wasteland and ruins. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

Because you<sup>a</sup> said, "The Nile is mine; I made it," <sup>10</sup>I'm against you and against the Nile's canals. I will make the land of Egypt into an utter ruin, a wasteland, from Migdol to Syene and as far as its boundary with Cush. <sup>11</sup>No foot, animal or human, will walk across it, and it won't be inhabited for forty years. <sup>12</sup>I will make the land of Egypt the most desolate of wastelands and its cities the most devastated of ruined cities. It will be a wasteland for forty years, and the Egyptians will be scattered among the nations and dispersed throughout the lands.

<sup>13</sup>The LORD God proclaims: At the end of forty years, I will gather the Egyptians from among the nations where they are scattered. <sup>14</sup>I will improve their circumstances and bring them back to the land of Pathros, the land of their origin. Egypt will be a lowly kingdom there. <sup>15</sup>Out of all the kingdoms, it will be the lowliest. It will never again exalt itself over the nations, and I will make it small to keep it from ruling the nations. <sup>16</sup>The house of Israel will never again bring guilt on itself by faithlessly turning to Egypt for help, for they will know that I am the LORD God.

<sup>17</sup>In the twenty-seventh year, on the first day of the first month, the LORD's word came to me: <sup>18</sup>Human one, Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar made his army labor very hard against Tyre. Every head was scraped bald, and every shoulder was rubbed raw, yet he got nothing from Tyre for himself or for his army for any of his efforts against it. <sup>19</sup>So now the LORD God proclaims: I'm going to give the land of Egypt to Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar. He will carry off its wealth, he will plunder and loot it, and it will be the wages for his army. <sup>20</sup>I will give him the land of Egypt as payment for his laboring for me. This is what the LORD God says.

<sup>21</sup>On that day I will give new strength<sup>a</sup> to the house of Israel, and I will open your mouth among the great. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>a</sup>Or he <sup>a</sup>Or make a horn sprout

Judah since they were allied, on a cosmic plane. *The Nile is all mine; I made it for myself.* The Nile river served as the source of life for Egypt (cf. Ps 46:4; Ezek 47:1-12). Ezekiel is playing with this image by separating Pharaoh from this life-giving source (Ezek 29:4-5).

29:4-5 *all the fish from the Nile's canals:* a reference to allied kingdoms, such as Judah, linked with Egypt (cf. Ezek 30:6, 8).

29:5 *open ground:* a curse (see the note on Ezek 24:6-8; and sidebar, "Death and Afterlife in the Ancient Near East" at Ezek 32). *I've given you to the beasts of the earth and the birds in the sky for food:* a part of the reversal of Pharaoh's claim (Ezek 29:3), but also looking ahead to Ezekiel 31:6, 13. Ezekiel's mocking irony is on full display. Instead of being a life-giving force through military might, Egypt's king will provide life in the decomposition of his corpse. 29:6 *a flimsy crutch:* a literary allusion to 2 Kings 18:21//

Isaiah 36:6, and the memory of Egypt's failure to help during Assyria's assault on Judah in the late 8th century BCE. 29:10 *Migdol to Syene... Cush:* all of Egypt from north to south (cf. Ezek 30:6). Migdol was a northern fortress, Syene a fortress on the southern stretch of the Nile, and Cush is identified with southern Egypt or northern Ethiopia.

29:13-16 A curious promise of Egyptian restoration (cf. Isa 19:24-25). *forty years:* a symbolic number, defining Egypt's exile as an exodus—a new creation. *Egypt will be a lowly kingdom:* The new creation, however, won't be one that tempts the house of Israel, and so Ezekiel's promise for Egypt has its own set of purposes.

29:17-21 These few verses offer an amazing look into ancient prophetic practice. This oracle is the latest dated prophecy in the book, dating to 571 BCE. Babylonian sources record a 13-year siege of Tyre, which ended around this time with a king loyal to Nebuchadnezzar

31:1 Jer 52:5;  
Eze 30:20

**30** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, prophesy and say, The LORD God proclaims:

How! Horror for the day!

<sup>3</sup>The day is coming, the day of the LORD comes,  
a day of clouds: the nations' time has come.

<sup>4</sup>A sword will come into Egypt,  
and trembling will overcome Cush,  
when the slain fall in Egypt, its wealth carried away,  
and its foundations razed.

<sup>5</sup>Cush, Put, and Lud, all Arabia and Cub,  
and the people from the allied country<sup>b</sup> with them will fall by the sword.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD proclaims:

When Egypt's helpers fall,  
its proud strength will decline.

From Migdol to Syene they will fall by the sword.

This is what the LORD God says.

<sup>7</sup>Of all the lands laid waste, it will be the most desolate; of all cities, the most ruined. <sup>8</sup>They will know that I am the LORD. On the day that I set fire to Egypt and all its helpers are broken, <sup>9</sup>messengers in ships will go out from me to startle the complacent Cushites. Anguish will overcome them on Egypt's day. It's certainly coming.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD God proclaims:

I will bring an end to the hordes of Egypt  
through the power of Babylon's King Nebuchadrezzar.

<sup>11</sup>He and his people with him, the most terrible of the nations,  
will be brought in to destroy the land.

They will draw their swords against Egypt and fill the land with the slain.

<sup>12</sup>I will dry up the Nile canals;

I will sell the land to evildoers.

With the help of foreigners I will lay waste to the land and everything in it.  
I, the LORD, have spoken.

<sup>13</sup>The LORD God proclaims:

I will destroy the idols

and bring an end to the images in Memphis.

Never again will there be a prince from the land of Egypt;  
so I will kindle fear in the land of Egypt.

<sup>14</sup>I will turn Pathros into a desolation,

set fire to Zoan, and execute judgments in Thebes.

<sup>15</sup>I will pour out my anger on Pelusium, the stronghold of Egypt,  
and I will cut down pompous Thebes.

<sup>16</sup>I will set Egypt on fire;

Pelusium will writhe in travail,

Thebes will be split open,

Memphis assaulted in broad daylight.

<sup>17</sup>The elite troops of On and Pi-beseth will fall by the sword,  
and the cities themselves will go into captivity.

<sup>b</sup>Or land of the covenant

being placed on this Phoenician throne. But this outcome didn't seem to satisfy the total devastation Ezekiel had envisioned. In the face of this disappointment, Ezekiel added to his oracles against Tyre, promising riches from Egypt as compensation for the expense and effort against the island fortress. Not every prophetic oracle had to come true (cf. Hag 2:23)

30:1-12 Drawing upon vocabulary and images elsewhere applied to Judah, this judgment oracle against Egypt subtly yet clearly connects Egypt's fate with Judah's.

30:2 *Horror*: Compare with Ezekiel 24:6, 9.

30:3 *The day is coming*: Compare with Ezekiel 7:7, 10, 12,

19; 21:25. *time has come*: Compare with Ezekiel 7:7, 12; 21:25, 29.

30:4 *A sword*: Compare with Ezekiel 21:1-17.

30:5 *Cush, Put, and Lud*: Compare with Ezekiel 27:9.

30:6 *Egypt's helpers*: Compare with Ezekiel 30:8; 29:5. *Migdol to Syene*: Compare with Ezekiel 29:10.

30:12 The curses on the land of Egypt are similar to the curse on the land of Israel in Ezekiel 6.

30:13-19 Just as Ezekiel combined images of fire and sword in the punishments upon Judah (cf. Ezek 20:45-49; 22:1-31), here, too, the prophet proclaims that fire will follow the sword. The various cities mentioned



<sup>18</sup>At Tephnehes the day will go dark when I break Egypt's yoke and bring an end to its proud strength. A cloud will cover it, and the towns around it will go into captivity. <sup>19</sup>I will execute judgments in Egypt, and they will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>20</sup>In the eleventh year, on the first day of the seventh month, the LORD's word came to me: <sup>21</sup>Human one, I've broken the arm of Pharaoh, Egypt's king, and it hasn't been set so that it might heal, nor has it been braced or wrapped up so that it might be strong enough to grasp a sword.

<sup>22</sup>So now the LORD God proclaims: I'm against Pharaoh, and I will break his arms, both the sound one and the broken one, and I'll make the sword fall out of his hand. <sup>23</sup>I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout the earth. <sup>24</sup>I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and I will put my sword into his hand. When I break the arms of Pharaoh, he will groan like a dying man in his presence. <sup>25</sup>I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh will fall. They will know that I am the LORD, when I put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon and he uses it against the land of Egypt. <sup>26</sup>When I scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout the earth, they will know that I am the LORD.

### *Egypt is not Assyria*

**31** In the eleventh year, on the first day of the third month, the LORD's word came to me:

<sup>2</sup>Human one, say to Pharaoh, Egypt's king, and his troops:

With whom do you compare in your greatness?

<sup>3</sup>Consider Assyria, a cedar of Lebanon:

beautiful branches, dense shade, towering height;  
indeed, its top went up between the clouds.

<sup>4</sup>Waters nourished it; the deep raised it up,  
because its streams flowed around the place where it was planted.  
From there, water trickled down to all the other trees of the field.

<sup>5</sup>And so it became higher than all the trees of the field.  
Its branches became abundant; its boughs grew long.

Because of the plentiful water, it grew freely.

<sup>6</sup>All the birds in the sky made nests in its branches;  
all the beasts of the field gave birth under its boughs,  
and in its shade, every great nation lived.

<sup>7</sup>It became beautiful in its greatness and in its lush foliage,  
because it took root in plentiful water.

<sup>8</sup>No cedar was its equal in God's garden.

The fir trees didn't have anything like its branches,  
and the plane trees had nothing like its boughs.

None of the trees in God's garden could compare to it in its beauty.

were prominent cultural, political, and religious centers in Egypt.

30:20-26 Dated to late April 587, this oracle addressed a critical point in the siege of Jerusalem, after which the fall of the city became inevitable. *I've broken the arm of Pharaoh:* The arm of a king or a deity represented military power (cf. Ezek 20:33-34; and Deut 4:34; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8; Pss 44:3; 89:13; 98:1; 136:12; Jer 32:21). Apparently, Babylonian forces had repelled Egypt once, based on the reference to a broken arm (30:21), and Ezekiel predicted that the final defeat of Egyptian forces would come (*the sound one*, 30:22), which would spell certain doom for Jerusalem. Jeremiah 37:11 describes a time when Babylonian forces withdrew from Jerusalem to meet Pharaoh in battle.

31:1-18 Ezekiel now returns to crafting magnificent metaphors. This time Egypt is cast as a mythical world tree. Ezekiel's exilic audience understood that a world tree carried the image of life-giving prosperity, by which all of the animals of creation were nourished, a concept carried by the tree of life in Genesis 3. In this chapter, the prophet

cuts down the tree, condemning it to the underworld (31:17).

31:1 The date is May 587, merely two months after Ezekiel 30:20-26. Perhaps this marks the time when Egypt's "sound" arm was broken (cf. Ezek 30:22).

31:2-3 *With whom do you compare...? Assyria, a cedar of Lebanon:* The metaphor is built on a multilayered comparison. On one level, Ezekiel compares Egypt to Assyria, which had been the mightiest and most feared empire of the ancient Near Eastern world but was finally defeated in 612 BCE, and so was an extinct nation in Ezekiel's day. Another layer depicts Egypt as a cedar. Lebanon was renowned for its thick forests of tall, mighty cedar trees, used for building (cf. 2 Sam 5:11; 7:2; 1 Kgs 5:8, 10; 6:9, 10, 15, 16; Ezek 27:5), but which also made them symbols of strength and wealth (cf. Judg 9:15; Ps 104:16; Isa 2:13; Ezek 17:3).

31:4 *Waters nourished it:* The reference is to primeval, mythical waters (cf. Ezek 31:7; and also Ezek 1:24; 17:5, 8; 43:2).

31:6 *All the birds in the sky:* a reference to the concept that the world tree provides life to all (cf. Ezek 29:5; 32:4).

32:3 Eze 12:13

32:4 Is 18:6;  
Eze 29:5,  
Eze 31:13,  
Eze 39:4

32:5 Eze 31:12

32:6 Is 34:3,  
Rev 14:2032:7 Is 13:10,  
Is 34:4; J1 2:31,  
J1 3:15; Mt 24:2932:8 Gn 1:14;  
J1 2:10; Am 8:9

32:9 Rev 18:10

32:10 Eze 26:16,  
Eze 27:3532:11 Jer 46:13,  
Jer 46:26;  
Eze 21:19,  
Eze 29:19

32:12 Eze 28:7

32:13 Eze 29:11

32:15 Ex 7:5,  
Ex 14:4,  
Ex 14:1832:16 Eze 26:17,  
Eze 32:2

32:17 Eze 32:1

32:18 Eze 26:20,  
Eze 31:14,  
Eze 32:2,  
Eze 32:1632:19 Eze 28:10,  
Eze 31:18,  
Eze 32:29

32:20 Ps 26:3

32:21 Is 14:9;  
Eze 32:27

<sup>9</sup>As for its beauty—I made it so, with its abundant foliage.  
All the trees of Eden envied it, all that were in God's garden.

<sup>10</sup>So now the LORD God proclaims:  
Consider the fate of those who tower high  
When it allowed its branches to reach up among the clouds,  
it became arrogant.

<sup>11</sup>So I handed it over to the most powerful nation,  
who continually acted treacherously against it.  
I banished it!

<sup>12</sup>Foreigners, the worst of the nations, cut it down  
and left it to lie among the hills.  
All its branches fell among the valleys,  
and its boughs were broken off in the earth's deep ravines.  
All the earth's peoples departed from its shade and abandoned it.

<sup>13</sup>On its trunk roost all the birds in the sky,  
and on its boughs lie all the beasts of the field.

<sup>14</sup>All this has happened so that no other well-watered tree would tower high or allow its branches to reach among the clouds. Nor would their leaders achieve the towering stature of such well-watered trees. Certainly, all of them are consigned to death, to the world below,<sup>c</sup> among human beings who go down to the pit.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God proclaims: On the day that it went down to the underworld,<sup>d</sup> I caused mourning. I blocked off the deep sea against it. I dried up its rivers and restrained the mighty waters. I made Lebanon go into mourning for it, and all the trees of the field languished on its account. <sup>16</sup>When it was felled, the nations quaked at the sound. When I cast it down into the underworld, with those who go down to the pit, all the trees of Eden were comforted in the world below, the choicest and the best of Lebanon, all the trees that depended on water. <sup>17</sup>His allies,<sup>e</sup> those among the nations who lived under his shade, these also went down with him to the underworld, to those who are slain by the sword.

<sup>18</sup>Are you like any of these in glory or greatness among Eden's trees? Then you too will go down with Eden's trees to the world below. You will lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and his entire horde. This is what the LORD God says.

### Egypt the crocodile

**32** In the twelfth year, on the first day of the twelfth month, the LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, sing a lament for Pharaoh, Egypt's king. Say to him:

You consider yourself a young lion among the nations,  
but you are like the sea monster!  
You thrash about in your rivers,  
you roil the waters with your feet,  
and you muddy your<sup>f</sup> rivers.

<sup>c</sup>Or the land of the lowest places <sup>d</sup>Heb Sheol <sup>e</sup>Or his arms <sup>f</sup>LXX; MT their

Implied by Ezekiel, however, are Judah and perhaps other nations who as allies hoped to benefit from Egypt's might. 31:10-17 The fate of the world tree is described in past tense, and thus the focus remains on fallen Assyria. The *most powerful nation* is a not-so-veiled reference to Babylon, which with the Medes defeated Assyria in 612 BCE, slightly more than two decades before this oracle. The world would have still been astonished at Assyria's surprising and precipitous downfall. Verse 18 then applies this lesson from history to Egypt.

31:13 *all the birds... all the beasts*: a reversal of Ezekiel 31:6; compare with Ezekiel 29:5.

32:1-16 In the fourth dated oracle against Egypt, Ezekiel buries the nation of the Nile by means of a public lament (32:16; cf. Ezek 19:1-14; 26:15-18; 27:1-36; 28:11-19; and the note on Ezek 19). The oracle dates to March 585 BCE,

or about one year and nine months after the last dated oracle in Ezekiel 31. This period was after the fall of Jerusalem, and after the report of Jerusalem's destruction by the refugee (cf. Ezek 33:21). This oracle, then, doesn't carry with it a judgment upon Judah but perhaps something new. At some point, Ezekiel's exilic audience would have surely read this oracle in context with Ezekiel 37:1-14, which promises that the Lord's fallen elect would experience renewed life on their own land. Hence, in this oracle, Ezekiel shamed Egypt, which brought with it a message of restoration and honor to the Lord and his exilic audience.

32:2 *You consider yourself a young lion*: A desirable image of a king and nation's power (cf. Ezek 19:3-4), *but you are like the sea monster*: once again as the embodiment of chaos (cf. Ezek 29:3).

<sup>3</sup>The LORD God proclaims:

In the company of many peoples I will spread my net over you,  
and I will haul you up in my dragnet.

<sup>4</sup>I will cast you out on the earth

and throw you on the open ground.  
I will cause all the birds in the sky to settle on you,  
and all the beasts of the earth to devour you.

<sup>5</sup>Your flesh I will set upon the mountains,  
and I will fill the valleys with your gore.

<sup>6</sup>With your blood I will soak your irrigated land,<sup>g</sup>  
and the streambeds will be filled with you.

<sup>7</sup>When you are snuffed out, I will cover the sky,  
and I will darken the stars.

I will cover the sun with a cloud,  
and the moon won't radiate its light.

<sup>8</sup>As for the shining lights of the heavens,  
I will make them dark over you,  
and set darkness over your land.

This is what the LORD God says.

<sup>9</sup>I will trouble the hearts of many peoples when I bring about your destruction  
with nations from lands you didn't know.

<sup>10</sup>I will make many peoples appalled because of you.  
Their kings will shudder violently on your account  
when I brandish my sword before them.

They will tremble for their lives again and again on the day of your downfall.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD God proclaims: The sword of the king of Babylon is coming against you! <sup>12</sup>I will make your hordes fall by the swords of mighty men, the most terrifying of the nations, all of them. They will bring an end to Egypt's pride, and all of its hordes will be destroyed. <sup>13</sup>I will remove all its livestock from beside the plentiful waters so that neither human foot nor livestock's hoof will trouble it again. <sup>14</sup>At that time, I will allow the waters to run clear, and make its rivers flow like oil. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>15</sup>When I turn the land of Egypt into a wasteland and the land is deprived of all that fills it, and when I strike down those who live there, then they will know that I am the LORD. <sup>16</sup>This is a lament, and it will be sung as a lament. The daughters of the nations will lament for Egypt, and they will also lament for Egypt's hordes. This is what the LORD God says.

<sup>17</sup>In the twelfth year, on the fifteenth day of the first month,<sup>h</sup> the LORD's word came to me:

<sup>18</sup>Human one, mourn for Egypt's hordes.

Send Egypt down with the mighty nations subject<sup>i</sup> to it, to the world below,<sup>j</sup>  
among those who go down to the pit.

<sup>19</sup>Whom do you surpass in beauty?

Go down and take your bed with the uncircumcised,

<sup>20</sup>among those who fall slain by the sword.

A sword is appointed, and all his hordes will carry him off. <sup>21</sup>The mighty chieftains, those who once came to his aid, will speak to him from the middle of the underworld,<sup>k</sup> for the uncircumcised have gone down and have lain down, slain by the sword.

<sup>g</sup>MT adds to the mountains. <sup>h</sup>LXX; MT lacks the first month. <sup>i</sup>Or daughter nations <sup>j</sup>Or the land of the lowest places

<sup>k</sup>Heb Sheol

32:4 all the birds in the sky ... all the beasts of the earth: recalls Ezekiel 29:5; 31:6, 13.

32:17-32 Ezekiel reveals in this passage an amazing glimpse into ancient Israel's beliefs about death and the afterlife (see sidebar, "Death and Afterlife in the Ancient Near East"). Whereas Ezekiel 32:1-16 lamented the fact of Egypt's death, now Ezekiel mockingly narrates the placement of Egypt in the society of dead nations. The shaming of Egypt in this dirge implies a contrast to the honor coming to a revitalized Judah (cf. Ezek 37:1-14).

32:17 on the fifteenth day of the first month: The spring of 587 BCE, shortly after the fall of Jerusalem.

32:19 Whom do you surpass in beauty? Compare with Ezekiel 31:2, 18. The question addresses the proper association for Egypt in the netherworld. The following list of nations mocks Pharaoh and his nation by placing them in the lowest reaches of the pit, far away from the honorable heroes (Ezek 32:27).

32:21 mighty chieftains: ancient, mythical leaders who now hold places of honor and leadership among the

32:22 Eze 31:3

32:23 Is 14:15;  
Eze 26:17

32:24 Gn 10:22;

Jer 49:34;

Eze 32:25

32:25 Ps 139:8

32:26 Is 66:19;

Eze 27:13,

Eze 38:2,

Eze 38:3,

Eze 39:1

32:27 Eze 32:21

32:28 Eze 28:10,

Eze 31:18

33:2 Eze 3:11,  
Eze 33:12,  
Eze 33:17,  
Eze 33:30,  
Eze 37:18

33:3 Neh 4:18;  
Hos 8:1, 11:21;  
Am 3:6

33:6 Is 56:10;  
Eze 3:18,  
Eze 33:8

33:7 Is 62:6;  
Jer 1:17, Jer 26:2;  
Eze 3:17

33:8 Is 3:11;  
Eze 18:4,  
Eze 33:6,  
Eze 33:14

33:9 Eze 3:19

33:10 Lv 26:39;  
Eze 4:17,  
Eze 24:23,  
Eze 37:11

33:11 Is 55:7;  
Eze 18:23,  
Eze 18:30,  
Eze 18:31,  
Eze 18:32

33:12 2Ch 7:14;  
Eze 3:20,  
Eze 18:21,  
Eze 18:24,  
Eze 33:2

33:13 Eze 3:20,  
Eze 18:24;  
Heb 10:38;  
2Pt 2:20,  
2Pt 2:21

33:14 Eze 18:27

33:15 Eze 22:1,  
Lv 6:2, Eze 18:7;  
Lk 19:8

33:16 Is 1:18,  
Is 43:25,  
Eze 18:22

### Vanished glory

<sup>22</sup> Assyria is there, and all its assembly round about his grave,  
all of them slain, fallen by the sword,

<sup>23</sup> who were assigned graves in the deepest region of the pit.  
His assembly surrounded his grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword,  
who caused terror in the land of the living.

<sup>24</sup> Elam is there, her entire horde round about her grave,  
all of them slain, fallen by the sword,  
who went down uncircumcised to the world below,<sup>1</sup>  
who caused terror in the land of the living.  
They bore their shame like those who go down to the pit.

<sup>25</sup> Among the slain they made a bed for her,  
with all her hordes round about her grave,  
all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword,  
for they caused terror in the land of the living.  
They bore their shame like those who go down to the pit;  
in the midst of the slain she<sup>m</sup> was placed.

<sup>26</sup> Meshech and Tubal are there, and all their hordes around their graves,  
all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword,  
for they caused terror in the land of the living.

<sup>27</sup> They don't lie with the mighty men fallen among the uncircumcised. When they went  
down to the underworld<sup>n</sup> with their weapons of war, they put their swords under their heads  
and their shields<sup>o</sup> over their bones. The terror of the mighty men is in the land of the living.

<sup>28</sup> But you, you will be broken among the uncircumcised, and you will lie with those who  
are slain by the sword.

<sup>29</sup> Edom is there, its kings and all its princes,  
who, though strong, were put with those slain by the sword.  
They lie with the uncircumcised,  
like those who go down to the pit.

<sup>30</sup> All the princes of the north are there,  
and all the Sidonians who went down with the slain;  
in spite of the terror of their strength, they were disgraced.  
They lie uncircumcised with those slain by the sword.  
They bore their shame like those who go down to the pit.

<sup>31</sup> When Pharaoh sees them,  
he will be sorry for all his hordes who are slain by the sword—  
Pharaoh and all his army.  
This is what the LORD God says,

<sup>1</sup>Or the land of the lowest places <sup>m</sup>Or he <sup>n</sup>Heb Sheol <sup>o</sup>Or sin

dead nations. They will determine Egypt's proper setting and associations among the dead. *uncircumcised . . . slain by the sword*: Egypt's compatriots in the underworld are those excluded from acceptance by God (cf. Gen 17:14; 34:14; Exod 12:48; Josh 5:7; Ezek 28:10; 44:7, 9) and cursed (cf. Lev 26:7-8; Num 14:3, 43; 2 Sam 3:29; Job 36:12; Ps 74:64; Isa 3:25; 14:19; Jer 14:12, 18; 16:4). Historically, Egypt practiced a form of circumcision.

32:22-30 Moving through a list of vanquished and dishonored nations, Ezekiel identifies Egypt's proper relations in Sheol, the underworld, beginning with the former imperial power, Assyria (32:22-23), now long vanquished. 32:24 *Elam*: located to the east of Babylon. The Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal (669-627), devastated this nation in 647-646 BCE.

32:26 *Meshech and Tubal*: independent kingdoms from

Asia Minor. This pair were also victims of Assyrian violence in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE.

32:27 *mighty men*: soldiers who died honorably, and who were thus allowed to be buried with their weapons. As a matter of practicality, if a soldier was defeated in battle, his shield, sword, and other weapons would be taken, if possible, and his corpse would be left to decompose in the open air. But if a soldier was victorious in battle, he returned with his weapons, and could be buried with them in the family tomb.

32:29 *Edom*: See the note on Ezekiel 25:12-14.

32:30 *princes of the north . . . Sidonians*: For Sidon, see the note on Ezekiel 28:20-26. The "princes of the north" were probably rulers over a network of northern, related towns to Sidon.

32:31 *he will be sorry*: The text anticipates Pharaoh's

*Death and Afterlife in the Ancient Near East* The ancient Near Eastern world, including Israel, had various understandings of an afterlife. However, belief in a final judgment—leading to eternal life in paradise or to punishment after death—did not develop until late Persian and early Greek periods (see the only OT example at Dan 12:4, which dates to early Greek times). Nevertheless, ancient Israel did have a view of existence after life. Ideally, and for wealthy families, the deceased would be buried in the family tomb, where earlier generations had been buried. After decaying, the dry bones would be gathered into a repository that contained the bones of past ancestors. Gifts of food and other goods were brought to their dead family members, though the exact practices have been lost to time. Conceptually, the deceased were believed to enter into the netherworld, where they would continue to advocate before the patron god of the family on behalf of the living. With the passing of time, an ancestor may have even become deified (e.g., the Rephaim in Deut 2). Thus the netherworld was its own society where the rules of honor and shame applied. Ezekiel's oracles reflect these ancient beliefs about how life continued after death: (1) his description of Pharaoh and Egypt in the netherworld (Ezek 32); (2) his vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek 37); and (3) his mention of the insult caused by the king's graves being too close to the Lord's most holy place (Ezek 43:8-9).

33:17 Eze 18:25,  
Eze 18:29,  
Eze 33:20  
33:18 Eze 3:20,  
Eze 18:26,  
Eze 33:12,  
Eze 33:13  
33:19 Eze 18:27,  
Eze 33:14  
33:20 Eze 18:30,  
Eze 33:17  
34:1 Jer 23:1,  
Jer 23:2  
34:2 Is 40:11;  
Jer 3:15, Jer 23:1;  
Eze 34:8; Mi 3:1  
34:3 Psv 31:13;  
Is 56:11;  
Zec 11:5,  
Zec 11:16  
34:4 Ex 1:13,  
Eze 34:16;  
Zec 11:15,  
Zec 11:16;  
Mt 10:6  
34:5 Nm 27:17;  
Mt 9:36  
34:6 Ps 142:4;  
1Pt 2:25  
34:7 Mi 3:9

<sup>32</sup>Though it was I who put his terror in the land of the living, he will be laid out among the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword, Pharaoh and all his horde. This is what the LORD God says.

### The lookout

**33** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, speak to your people and say to them: Suppose I bring a sword against a country, and the people of the land take a certain person from their assembly and make him their lookout. <sup>3</sup>When he sees the sword coming against the land, he blows the trumpet and warns the people. <sup>4</sup>If they hear the sound of the trumpet but don't heed the warning, when the sword comes and they are taken away, they are responsible for their blood. <sup>5</sup>They heard the sound of the trumpet but didn't heed the warning, so their blood is on them. If they had paid attention to the warning, they would have saved their lives. <sup>6</sup>If the lookout sees the sword coming but doesn't blow the trumpet to warn the people, when the sword comes and takes away any of them, they are taken away in their sin, but I'll hold the lookout responsible for their blood.

<sup>7</sup>You, human one, I've made you a lookout for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear me speaking, you must give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup>If I pronounce a death sentence on wicked people, and you don't warn them to turn from their way, they will die in their guilt, but I will hold you responsible for their blood. <sup>9</sup>But suppose you do warn the wicked of their ways so that they might turn from them. If they don't turn from their ways, they will die in their guilt, but you will save your life.

<sup>10</sup>You, human one, say to the house of Israel: This is what all of you are saying: "How our transgressions and our sins weigh on us! We waste away because of them. How can we live?"

<sup>11</sup>Say to them, This is what the LORD God says: As surely as I live, do I take pleasure in the death of the wicked? If the wicked turn from their ways, they will live. Turn, completely turn from your wicked ways! Why should you die, house of Israel?

<sup>12</sup>You, human one, say to your people: The righteousness of the righteous doesn't rescue them when they begin to sin. Nor does the wickedness of the wicked make them stumble if they turn from their wickedness. If the righteous sin, their righteousness won't protect

reaction to his new surroundings among the uncircumcised and the fallen in the netherworld (cf. Ezek 14:22-23; 16:63; 20:43).

33:1-33 This collection of oracles restarts and restates Ezekiel's prophetic ministry. Five sections pick up themes already seen earlier in the book, but at times pointing them in new directions.

33:1-9 Ezekiel is again called to be the sentinel (cf. Ezek 3:17-21). As in Ezekiel 3, the point of these case studies is not to show various possible outcomes for the people but to compel Ezekiel to deliver God's message.

33:10-20 The text now shifts from the role of the prophet in announcing God's warning to the role of the house of

Israel in responding to the warning. The listeners might recall the principles of the disputation in Ezekiel 18 (cf. Ezek 18:27-29). Just as Ezekiel 18 explained God's justice in relation to covenantal faithfulness, implied in the possibility of life is loyalty to the covenant.

33:10 *How can we live?* As in Ezekiel 18:2, this passage disputes a saying of the people. Here, however, he challenges Israel not to give in to death—by charting out a conditional course for life.

33:11 *do I take pleasure in the death of the wicked?* Compare with Ezekiel 18:23. *Why should you die?* Compare with Ezekiel 18:31.

33:12-16 Compare with Ezekiel 18:5-24.

34:8 Eze 16:48,  
Eze 34:2,  
Eze 34:10,  
Eze 34:31,  
Jud 1:12

34:10 Eze 34:2

34:11 Is 40:11

34:12 Jer 31:10,  
Eze 10:3, 11:2,  
Zep 1:15

34:13 Eze 11:17,  
Eze 28:25

34:14 Ps 23:2,  
In 10:9

34:15 Ps 24:1,  
Ps 23:2,  
Eze 34:23,  
Zep 3:13; 1Pt 5:2

34:16 Is 10:16,  
Is 40:11,  
Eze 34:4; Mi 4:6

34:17 Eze 20:38,  
Eze 34:20,  
Zec 10:3

Mt 25:32,  
Mt 25:33

34:18 Eze 32:2

them. <sup>13</sup>Even if I've told the righteous they will live, none of their righteous deeds will be remembered if they trust in their righteousness and do wrong. They will die because of their evil deeds. <sup>14</sup>And even if I have pronounced a death sentence on the wicked, if they turn from sin and do what is just and right—<sup>15</sup>if they return pledges, make restitution for robbery, and walk in life-giving regulations in order not to sin—they will live and not die. <sup>16</sup>None of the sins they've committed will be remembered against them. They've done what is just and right, and they will live.

<sup>17</sup>Yet your people say, "My Lord's way doesn't measure up." Isn't it their ways that don't measure up? <sup>18</sup>When the righteous turn from their righteousness to do wrong, they will die because of it. <sup>19</sup>And when the wicked turn from their wickedness to do what is just and right, it is for that reason they will live. <sup>20</sup>Yet you say, "My Lord's way doesn't measure up." I judge each one of you according to your ways, house of Israel!

### News from Jerusalem

<sup>21</sup>In the twelfth year, on the fifth day of the tenth month of our exile, a survivor from Jerusalem came to me and reported, "The city has fallen!" <sup>22</sup>The LORD's power was with me in the evening before the survivor arrived, and just before he arrived in the morning, God opened my mouth. So my mouth was opened, and I was no longer speechless.

<sup>23</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>24</sup>Human one, those who live among those ruins in Israel's fertile land are saying, "Abraham was just one man, and he inherited the land. We are many, so certainly the land has been given to us as an inheritance."

<sup>25</sup>So say to them, The LORD God proclaims: You eat with the blood, you lift your eyes to the idols, and you shed blood. Should you inherit the land? <sup>26</sup>You live by the sword, you observe detestable practices, and every one of you commits adultery.<sup>a</sup> Should you inherit the land?

<sup>27</sup>Say to them, The LORD God proclaims: As surely as I live, those in the ruins will fall by the sword, those in the countryside I will give to the wild beasts to consume, and those in the strongholds and caves will die of plague. <sup>28</sup>I will make the land an uninhabitable waste. Its proud strength will come to an end, and Israel's highlands will become so deserted that no one will cross through them. <sup>29</sup>They will know that I am the LORD when I make the land an uninhabitable waste because of all their detestable practices.

### A fickle audience

<sup>30</sup>As for you, human one, your people talk about you beside the walls and in their doorways. One by one, they say to each other, "Let's go hear what sort of message has come from the LORD." <sup>31</sup>So they come to you as people do, and they sit before you as my people. They listen to your words, but they refuse to do them. Though they speak of their longing<sup>a</sup> for me, they act out of their own interests and opinions. <sup>32</sup>To them you are like a singer of love songs with a lovely voice and skilled technique. They listen to your words, but no one does them. <sup>33</sup>When this comes—and it is certainly coming—they will know that a prophet has been among them.

### The good shepherd

**34** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, prophesy against Israel's shepherds. <sup>3</sup>Prophesy and say to them, The LORD God proclaims to the shepherds: Doom to

<sup>a</sup>Or defiles his neighbor's wife <sup>a</sup>Or love songs

33:15 return pledges, make restitution for robbery... life-giving regulations: an abbreviation of the list found in Ezekiel 18:6-9, which themselves stood for instruction about covenant behavior.

33:17, 20 My Lord's way doesn't measure up: Compare with Ezekiel 18:25, 29.

33:21-22 The closing of Ezekiel's mouth is reversed, signaling a new direction in both the role of the prophet and his message. twelfth year, on the fifth day, of the tenth month: January 585. The city has fallen!: the critical event and the culmination of all of Ezekiel's earlier prophecies. God opened my mouth: Compare with Ezekiel 24:25-27 (see the note on Ezek 2:5; and cf. Ezek 3:16-21, 26-27).

33:23-29 Abraham was just one man... the land has been

given to us as an inheritance: Once again, Ezekiel addresses the important issue of who will inherit the land, by countering a claim by those remaining in the land (cf. Ezek 11:3, 15). fall by the sword... give to the wild beasts... die of plague: recalling the curses that the survivors in the land were convicted of earlier (cf. Lev 26:21-26; Ezek 5:12, 17; 6:11; 7:15; 12:16; 14:21; 33:27). uninhabitable waste: Compare with Ezekiel 6:6, 14; 12:20; but also see Ezekiel 36:10, 33.

33:30-33 This time, the Lord defends Ezekiel as a prophet whose clear call should be heeded rather than dismissed (33:33; cf. Ezek 2:5; 12:21-28; 33:30-33). they sit before you: Compare with Ezekiel 3:24; 8:1; 14:1; 20:1.

34:1-31 Ezekiel restarted his prophetic ministry after the fall of Jerusalem. This section is a statement about the

Israel's shepherds who tended themselves! Shouldn't shepherds tend the flock? <sup>3</sup>You drink the milk, you wear the wool, and you slaughter the fat animals, but you don't tend the flock. <sup>4</sup>You don't strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strays, or seek out the lost; but instead you use force to rule them with injustice. <sup>5</sup>Without a shepherd, my flock was scattered; and when it was scattered, it became food for all the wild animals. <sup>6</sup>My flock strayed on all the mountains and on every high hill throughout all the earth. My flock was scattered, and there was no one to look for them or find them. <sup>7</sup>So now shepherds, hear the LORD's word! <sup>8</sup>This is what the LORD God says: As surely as I live, without a shepherd, my flock became prey. My flock became food for all the wild animals. My shepherds didn't seek out my flock. They tended themselves, but they didn't tend my flock.

<sup>9</sup>So, shepherds, hear the LORD's word! <sup>10</sup>The LORD God proclaims: I'm against the shepherds! I will hold them accountable for my flock, and I will put an end to their tending the flock. The shepherds will no longer tend them, because I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and they will no longer be their food.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD God proclaims: I myself will search for my flock and seek them out. <sup>12</sup>As a shepherd seeks out the flock when some in the flock have been scattered, so will I seek out my flock. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered during the time of clouds and thick darkness. <sup>13</sup>I will gather and lead them out from the countries and peoples, and I will bring them to their own fertile land. I will feed them on Israel's highlands, along the riverbeds, and in all the inhabited places. <sup>14</sup>I will feed them in good pasture, and their sheepfold will be there, on Israel's lofty highlands. On Israel's highlands, they will lie down in a secure fold and feed on green pastures. <sup>15</sup>I myself will feed my flock and make them lie down. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>16</sup>I will seek out the lost, bring back the strays, bind up the wounded, and strengthen the weak. But the fat and the strong I will destroy, because I will tend my sheep<sup>f</sup> with justice.

<sup>17</sup>As for you, my flock, the LORD God proclaims: I will judge between the rams and the bucks among the sheep and the goats. <sup>18</sup>I'm feeding in good pasture or drinking clear water such a trivial thing that you should trample and muddy what is left with your feet? <sup>19</sup>But now my flock must feed on what your feet have trampled and drink water that your feet have muddied.

<sup>f</sup>Or *them*

monarchy and the people. Beginning with an indictment of the failure of Israel's shepherds (i.e., kings; 34:2-8), followed by a judgment (34:9-10), Ezekiel proclaims that God will take control and himself shepherd the flock (34:11-16). This won't be universally good for all of the flock, however, because the Lord will also judge the members of the flock who have ruined the land (34:17-20). A new covenant will be established with the elect of the flock, led by a descendant of David (34:22-31).

34:2 *Israel's shepherds*: The image of the king as the good and faithful shepherd is common in the OT (cf. 2 Sam 5:2; 7:7; Ps 74:70-72; Isa 44:28; Zech 13:7), and was a standard royal metaphor in the ancient Near East generally. The metaphor was also used to describe the role of the Lord as the divine king over the nation (cf. Gen 49:15, 24; Num 27:17; Pss 23:1; 27:9; 80:1; Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10; Mic 7:14). Ezekiel 34 plays upon the application of this image to both the divine and earthly king, since the Davidic king was understood to be the Lord's earthly ruler.

34:2b-3, 8 *tended themselves! . . . tend the flock?*: The metaphor addresses the injustice built into the monarchy. Royal leaders grabbed wealth for themselves, not prosperity for the citizens (cf. 1 Sam 8:1-18).

34:4 The prophet lists ordinary duties of a shepherd that the shepherds didn't fulfill. Later (Ezek 34:16), God will be committed to these tasks.

34:5 *Without a shepherd*: Ezekiel takes a swipe at the reign

of Zedekiah (cf. Ezek 1:3). *my flock was scattered*: referring to the exiles. *wild animals*: an abbreviation for the covenantal curses (cf. Lev 26:22; see the note on Ezek 4:1-5:17). 34:10 *I will rescue my flock*: The same Hebrew verb is used in regard to David rescuing one of his flock from the mouth of a lion (1 Sam 17:35, 37; Amos 3:12), but also of the Lord in regard to the exodus (cf. Gen 32:12, 31; 37:21-22; Exod 3:8; 6:6; 18:8-10), or delivering the people from the midst of other nations (cf. 1 Sam 7:3, 14; 2 Kgs 18:29-35; Ps 18:1, 18, 49).

34:11-16 God, in the role of shepherd, goes out to find and gather the scattered flock (cf. Num 27:17; Jer 23:2, 4), a clear metaphor for the exiles.

34:13-14 The Hebrew text uses several theologically loaded terms for the land, which convey holiness, security, and prosperity (cf. Exod 15:13; 2 Sam 15:25; Pss 23:2; 79:7; Jer 10:25).

34:16 The tasks of a shepherd, which God will fulfill (in contrast to the nation's kings, Ezek 34:4).

34:17-31 Ezekiel turns his attention to a future covenant with the chosen few of the flock, which clearly means the exiles.

34:17-19 God will elect selected sheep to be his flock. *good pasture . . . clear water*: referring to the land of Israel (cf. Ezek 34:13-14). *trample and muddy what is left*: indicating that the subjects being judged are the survivors in the land (cf. Ezek 11:1-15; 33:23-29).

34:20 *Eze 34:10*

*Eze 34:17*

34:21 *Dt 33:17*

34:22 *Ps 72:12*

34:23 *Is 40:11;*

*Jer 23:4; Jer 30:9;*

*Eze 37:24,*

*Eze 37:25*

34:24 *Jer 30:9;*

*Eze 37:24,*

*Eze 37:25*

34:25 *Lv 26:6;*

*Is 11:6;*

*Eze 37:26;*

*Hos 2:18*

34:26 *Gn 12:2;*

*Lv 26:4; Ps 68:9*

34:27 *Lv 26:4;*

*Lv 26:13;*

*Jer 30:8;*

*Eze 36:30*

34:28 *Jer 30:10*

34:29 *Is 4:2;*

*Eze 36:6,*

*Eze 36:15,*

*Eze 36:29*

34:30 *Ps 46:7;*

*Eze 14:11,*

*Eze 37:27*

34:31 *Ps 80:1.*

*Ps 100:3*

35:6 (in 9:6,  
1a 6:2  
16:1 Eze 6:2  
16:5 DN 4:24,  
Eze 25:12,  
Eze 35:15,  
Eze 36:3,  
Eze 38:19

*The Demotion of the King in Ezekiel* Ezekiel envisioned a radical political realignment for the restored, future nation. During the time of Judah's monarchy, the Davidic king had been viewed as the earthly representative of the Lord, the divine king of the theocracy (cf. Pss 2, 89:1-37). Ezekiel stands with many other voices (cf. Ezek 34; 45:9; 1 Sam 8) that were disappointed with the Davidic dynasty. In his future vision, Ezekiel demotes the king to the position of prince. Only in Ezekiel 37:24 does Ezekiel say that the Lord will once again place David as king over his people, but even there, he describes the role of shepherd, recalling the powerful diatribe of Ezekiel 34, in which David is titled "prince" (cf. Ezek 34:24). The prince's role in the future will be limited to patron to the temple. He will have a large tract of land (cf. Ezek 45:7-8; 48:21-22), with which to supply the temple sacrifice with livestock and produce (cf. Ezek 45:18-25). As patron, the prince is given a place of honor in the east gate (cf. Ezek 44:3; 46:1-3), but still his duty is to deliver offerings (cf. Ezek 45:16), and he must be counted among the people of the land when entering the inner court (cf. Ezek 46:9-10). These are all positions of servitude to the temple officials, and nowhere in the text is the prince assigned to a position of authority, such as military leader or judge.

<sup>20</sup>So the LORD God proclaims to them: I will judge between the fat and the lean sheep. <sup>21</sup>You shove with shoulder and flank, and with your horns you ram all the weak sheep until you've scattered them outside. <sup>22</sup>But I will rescue my flock so that they will never again be prey. I will even judge between the sheep! <sup>23</sup>I will appoint for them a single shepherd, and he will feed them. My servant David will feed them. He will be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup>I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be their prince. I, the LORD, have spoken. <sup>25</sup>I will make a covenant of peace for them, and I will banish the wild animals from the land. Then they will safely live in the desert and sleep in the forest. <sup>26</sup>I will give them and those around my hill a blessing by sending the rain in its season. They will be rains of blessing. <sup>27</sup>The trees in the field will bear fruit, and the earth will yield its harvest. They will be safe on their fertile land, and they will know that I am the LORD when I break the bars of their yoke and deliver them from those who enslaved them. <sup>28</sup>The nations will no longer prey on them, and wild animals will no longer devour them. They will live in safety, with no one to trouble them. <sup>29</sup>I will establish for them a place famous for what it grows. No longer will they experience famine in the land, nor will they bear the disgrace of the nations. <sup>30</sup>They will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and they, the house of Israel, are my people. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>31</sup>You are my flock, the flock of my pasture. You are human, and I am your God. This is what the LORD God says.

### Against Edom

**35** The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, face Mount Seir, and prophesy against it. <sup>3</sup>Say to it, The LORD God proclaims:

34:21 The Hebrew text makes it clear that the sheep being judged are the fat sheep, which are the same sheep defiling the land in Ezekiel 34:18-19. The flock has been abandoned without a shepherd (Ezek 34:5), so that the remaining leadership are cast as fat sheep, not shepherds. The lean sheep, the exiles, make up the Lord's flock, those scattered *outside* of the land.

34:24 *David will be their prince*: one of only two mentions of David in Ezekiel's prophecies (cf. Ezek 37:24-25). The text doesn't use the term "king," but instead *prince*, implying a demotion for the Davidic line (see sidebar, "The Demotion of the King in Ezekiel").

34:25 *covenant of peace*: Peace carries with it the sense of completion, as when God had completed creation at the end of the sixth day, and so had nothing more to do on the seventh. As a unique expression in the OT, Ezekiel envisions a future covenant that is complete (cf. Ezek 16: 60, "everlasting covenant"; Ezek 20:37, "covenant bond"; Ezek 34:25 and Ezek 37:26, "covenant of peace").

34:26 *my hill*: In contrast to "every high hill" (Ezek 34:5; also Ezek 6:3, 13; 20:28), "my hill" clearly refers to Mount Zion, the location of the temple (cf. Ezek 40:2). *rain in its season*: For this and the following blessings, see the gifts promised

if the covenant is kept in Leviticus 26:4-6; and cf. Ezekiel 47:1-12.

34:29 *a place famous for what it grows*: Compare with Psalm 46:4; Ezekiel 36:13-15; 47:1-12.

34:30-31 *I, the Lord their God... they... are my people*: covenantal language binding the Lord and Israel together (cf. Lev 26:44-45; Jer 24:7; 31:33; 32:38; Ezek 14:11; 37:23, 27; and the discussion on Ezek 11:19). *You are my flock... You are human*: Compare with Psalm 80:1; Ezekiel 2:1; 36:10, 37:38.

35:1-15 Chapter 35, an oracle against Edom's central mountain range, works in tandem with Ezekiel 36 to promise renewal to the land, which reverses the curse pronounced in chapter 6. The repetition of mountains, hills, watercourses, and valleys in Ezekiel 6:3, 35:8, and 36:4, which are parts standing for the whole land, link these passages together. These chapters share themes and also show how the prophet's message changed after the fall of Jerusalem.

35:2 *Mount Seir*: a holy mountain in Edom. See the notes on Ezekiel 25:8 and Ezekiel 25:12-14. Chapter 35 is an oracle against Edom, with special attention given to its land and national cult. It promises salvation for the holy land of Israel.



I'm against you, Mount Seir!  
 I will use my power against you.  
 I will make you into a desolate wasteland,  
 4I will turn your cities into ruins,  
 and you will become a desolation.  
 Then you will know that I am the LORD.

5Because you nursed an ancient grudge, you handed the Israelites over to the sword in the time of their distress, during their final punishment. 6So now the LORD God proclaims: As surely as I live, I will prepare you for blood, and blood will pursue you. Because you don't hate bloodshed, bloodshed will pursue you. 7I will turn Mount Seir into a desolate wasteland, when I cut off from it both passerby and homecomer. 8I will fill its highlands—your hills and your valleys, and all your ravines—with its slain. Those who are slain by the sword will fall on them. 9I will turn you into an eternal desolation. Your cities won't be inhabited, and you will know that I am the LORD.

10You said, "These two nations and these two territories are mine. We will take possession of them even if the LORD is there." 11Therefore, the LORD God proclaims: As surely as I live, I will act according to the anger and zeal you displayed when you dealt with them so hatefully. When I judge you, I will make myself known to them, 12and you will know that I am the LORD. I've heard the lies and libels that you uttered against Israel's highlands when you said, "They are laid waste. They've been given to us to consume." 13With your mouths you exalted yourselves against me and spoke your words against me. I myself heard it!

14The LORD God proclaims: As the whole world rejoices, I will turn you into a desolation. 15Just as you rejoiced over the house of Israel's inheritance because it became desolate, so I will deal with you. Mount Seir, you will become a desolation, with all of Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

### *Mountains of Israel*

36 You, human one, prophesy to Israel's mountains and say, Hear the LORD's word, mountains of Israel! 2The LORD God proclaims: The enemy mocked you and said, "The ancient heights belong to us." 3Therefore, prophesy and say, The LORD God proclaims: When the surviving nations pressed in and ravaged you from all around to lay claim to you, you became an object of the people's slander and derision. 4Hear the LORD God's word, mountains of Israel! The LORD God proclaims to the mountains and the hills, the watercourses and the valleys, the desolate ruins and the abandoned cities that were contemptuously looted by the surviving nations all around you.

5So now, says the LORD God, I will speak in my fiery passion against the surviving nations and against Edom, all those who gleefully and spitefully took my land for themselves as a possession only for plunder. 6Prophesy concerning Israel's fertile land, and say to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys, The LORD God proclaims: Because you endured the ridicule of the nations, my passion and fury lead me to speak. 7So now the

\*MT adds to *drive it out*.

35:3-4 *desolate wasteland... cities into ruins... desolation*: All judgments borne by the land of Israel (cf. Ezek 6:14; 13:4; 33:24-27; 36:4, 10, 33).

35:5 *an ancient grudge*: The nature of the hatred isn't clear to the modern reader. Later verses mention land claims and honor (Ezek 35:10, 12, 13; 36:2) as a part of this grudge. If Seir was an ancient site where the Lord was worshipped, from Ezekiel's perspective, the Lord's election of Jerusalem as his holy habitation would be just cause for an ancient grudge.

35:10 *These two nations*: Judah and Israel (cf. Ezek 37:15-28; 47:13-48:29). *The Lord is there*: Compare with Ezekiel 48:35.

35:13 *you exalted yourselves against me*: Again, central to Ezekiel's theology is the honor of the Lord on the world stage (cf. Ezek 5:14-15; 20:9, 14, 22, 44; 36:22-36).

36:1-15 Following the condemnation of Mount Seir, a

metaphor for Edom, Ezekiel addresses an oracle of promise to the mountains of Israel. This passage clearly states the other side of Ezekiel 35, and serves further to reverse the curses upon the land first announced in Ezekiel 6.

36:2 *enemy*: The Hebrew terms used link this enemy with the "ancient grudge" in Ezekiel 35:5. "The ancient heights belong to us": In this instance, the enemy (i.e., Edom) is looking to acquire the traditional land of Israel (cf. Ezek 35:35:10, 12; for other places with the sense of acquiring new land, see Exod 6:8; Deut 33:4; Ezek 11:15; 25:4, 10; Obad 17).

36:4 *mountains and the hills, the watercourses and the valleys*: Compare with Ezekiel 34:6; 6:3, 35:8. *desolate ruins... abandoned cities*: See the note on Ezekiel 35:3-4. *surviving nations all around you*: See the note on Ezekiel 25:1-17.

36:6 *the ridicule of the nations*: Compare with Ezekiel 5:14-15.

36:12 Nm 13:32;  
 Jer 15:7;  
 Jer 32:15;  
 Eze 34:3,  
 Eze 34:14

36:17 Jer 2:7

36:18 2Ch 34:21;  
 Eze 7:8

36:19 Dt 28:64;  
 Eze 22:15

36:20 Is 52:5;  
 Jer 33:24;  
 Ro 2:24

36:21 Lv 19:2;  
 Ps 22:3, Ps 74:18;  
 Is 12:6, Is 48:9

36:22 Dt 9:5;  
 Eze 36:32

36:23 Eze 20:41,  
 Eze 38:23

36:24 Is 43:5;  
 Eze 11:17,  
 Eze 34:13,  
 Eze 37:21

36:25 Ps 51:7;  
 Is 44; Jer 33:8;  
 Eze 37:23;  
 Heb 10:22

36:26 Ps 51:10;  
 Jer 24:7;  
 Eze 11:19,  
 Eze 18:31;  
 2Co 3:3

36:27 Is 44:3;  
 Eze 37:14,  
 Eze 39:29;  
 Jl 2:28, Jl 2:29

36:28 Eze 11:20,  
 Eze 38:25,  
 Eze 37:23,  
 Eze 37:27

36:29 Eze 34:29;  
 Mt 1:21

36:31 Eze 6:9,  
 Eze 16:61,  
 Eze 20:43

36:32 Dt 9:5;

Eze 16:63,

Eze 36:22

36:36 Eze 17:24,

Eze 37:14

37:1 Eze 1:3,

Eze 3:22,

Eze 11:24,

Eze 40:1,

Ac 8:39

37:3 Dt 32:39;

[Sa 2:6; In 5:21]

37:4 Jer 22:29

37:5 Gn 2:7;

Ps 104:29,

Ps 104:30,

Eze 37:9

37:6 Eze 37:8,

Eze 38:23

37:7 1Ki 19:11;

Jer 13:5

37:9 Ps 104:30;

Eze 37:14,

Eze 39:29

LORD God proclaims: I myself swear that the nations round about you will themselves suffer ridicule. <sup>8</sup>But you, mountains of Israel, will extend your branches and bear your fruit for my people Israel, because they will come home very soon. <sup>9</sup>Look, I'm here for you, and I will turn toward you, and you will be farmed and sown. <sup>10</sup>I will populate you with human beings, the whole house of Israel, all of them. The cities will be inhabited, the ruins rebuilt. <sup>11</sup>When I make people and animals increase on you, they will multiply and be fruitful. I will cause you to be inhabited as you were before. I will do more good for you than in the beginning, and you will know that I am the LORD. <sup>12</sup>I will let people walk through you, my people Israel! They will lay claim to you, you will be their inheritance, and you will no longer deprive them of anything.

<sup>13</sup>The LORD God proclaims: Because people say, "You are a devourer of human beings" and "You are depriving your nation," <sup>14</sup>therefore, you will no longer devour human beings or deprive your nation of anything. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>15</sup>You won't have to listen anymore to the taunts of the nations or endure the scorn of the peoples. And you will no longer deprive your nation of anything. This is what the LORD God says.

### A new heart

<sup>16</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>17</sup>Human one, when the house of Israel lived on their fertile land, they polluted it with their ways and deeds. Their ways before me were polluted like the blood of menstruation, <sup>18</sup>and so I poured out my fury on them for all the blood they had poured out on the land and for all the defilement of their idols. <sup>19</sup>When I scattered them to the nations and dispersed them into other lands, I judged them according to their ways and deeds. <sup>20</sup>But then when they entered the other nations, they degraded my holy name because it was said of them, "These are the LORD's people, yet they had to leave his land." <sup>21</sup>So I had compassion on my holy name, which the house of Israel degraded among the nations where they had gone.

<sup>22</sup>Therefore, say to the house of Israel, The LORD God proclaims: House of Israel, I'm not acting for your sake but for the sake of my holy name, which you degraded among the nations where you have gone. <sup>23</sup>I will make my great name holy, which was degraded among the nations when you dishonored it among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD. This is what the LORD God says.

When I make myself holy among you in their sight, <sup>24</sup>I will take you from the nations, I will gather you from all the countries, and I will bring you to your own fertile land. <sup>25</sup>I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be cleansed of all your pollution. I will cleanse you of all your idols. <sup>26</sup>I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your stony heart from your body and replace it with a living one, <sup>27</sup>and I will give you my spirit so that you may walk according to my regulations and carefully observe my case laws. <sup>28</sup>Then you will live in the land that I gave to your ancestors, you will be my people, and I will be your God. <sup>29</sup>I will save you from all your uncleanness, and I will summon the grain and make it grow abundantly so that you won't endure famine. <sup>30</sup>I will make abundant the orchards'

36:9-12 *farmed and sown*: signifying inhabited, cultivated land, and in opposition to land left fallow and open to defilement (cf. Deut 21:4). *I will populate you with human beings*: a fulfillment of the covenant (cf. Ezek 34:38;33:31; see Gen 17:6, 20; Lev 26:9; Ps 105:24; Jer 23:3). *they will multiply and be fruitful*: signs of the Lord's blessings, what should and will happen when all is right with creation (cf. Gen 1:27-28; 8:17; 9:1, 7). *walk through you... their inheritance*: language affirming God's gift of the land to the people as a part of God's covenant with Israel (Deut 26:1, 9; Josh 11:16-23; 13:6-7; 14:1-5; 21:43-45; Ezek 35:15; 47:13; 48:29). 36:13-14 *You are a devourer of human beings... You are depriving your nation*: The subject is the land, which should produce prosperity (cf. Ps 46:4; Ezek 34:26-29; 47:1-12), and the taunts come from the other nations surrounding the land.

36:16-38 Alongside Ezekiel 20 and the constant repetition of the recognition formula (see sidebar, "The Recognition Formula" at Ezek 6), this passage makes one of the strongest statements of the Lord's defenses of his own honor (36:20-23), which was damaged by exile of the

nation (36:21). Here, Ezekiel places on full display the divine purpose of his prophetic message.

36:16-23a Israel's sin poses a dilemma for God. Both the defilement of the land and God's just punishment of the nation shamed the Lord before the other nations. God's restoration, then, isn't the result of any righteousness on the part of the Lord's people, but the people will benefit solely because God acts in order to restore God's own honor (cf. Ezek 20:9, 14, 22, 44).

36:22-23 *my holy name*: here, the Lord's honor is meant (cf. Lev 20:3; 22:2, 32; Pss 106:47; 145:21; Ezek 5:14-15; 20:39, 41; 38:16; 43:7-8; Amos 2:7; and sidebar, "The Recognition Formula" at Ezek 6).

36:23b-32 Ezekiel anticipates God's restoration of the people on the land, where God will purify the people who were defiled (Ezek 36:16-19).

36:25 *I will sprinkle clean water on you*: preparation for the new covenant (cf. Ezek 16:9).

36:26 *a new heart... a new spirit*: covenantal language (cf. Ezek 18:31; and see the note on Ezek 11:19).

36:27 *my regulations... my case laws*: a formula signaling

fruit and the fields' produce so that you will never again endure the shame of famine among the nations. <sup>31</sup>Then you will remember your evil ways and no-good deeds, and you will feel disgust for yourselves because of your sinful and detestable practices. <sup>32</sup>Not for your sake do I act. This is what the LORD God proclaims. Let that be known to you! Be ashamed and be humiliated because of all your ways, house of Israel.

<sup>33</sup>The LORD God proclaims: On the day that I cleanse you of all your guilt, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the ruins will be rebuilt. <sup>34</sup>The desolate land will be farmed, and it won't be like it was when it seemed a wasteland to all who passed by. <sup>35</sup>They will say, "This land, which was a desolation, has become like the garden of Eden." And the cities that were ruined, ravaged, and razed are now fortified and inhabited. <sup>36</sup>The surviving nations around you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt what was torn down and have planted what was made desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do it.

<sup>37</sup>The LORD God proclaims: I will also allow the house of Israel to ask me to do this for them: that I increase them like a human flock. <sup>38</sup>Like the holy flock, like the flock of Jerusalem at its festivals, the ruined cities will be filled with a human flock. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

### Valley of dry bones

**37**The LORD's power overcame me, and while I was in the LORD's spirit, he led me out and set me down in the middle of a certain valley. It was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me through them all around, and I saw that there were a great many of them on the valley floor, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup>He asked me, "Human one, can these bones live again?"

I said, "LORD God, only you know."

<sup>4</sup>He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, Dry bones, hear the LORD's word! <sup>5</sup>The LORD God proclaims to these bones: I am about to put breath in you, and you will live again. <sup>6</sup>I will put sinews on you, place flesh on you, and cover you with skin. When I put breath in you, and you come to life, you will know that I am the LORD."

<sup>7</sup>I prophesied just as I was commanded. There was a great noise as I was prophesying, then a great quaking, and the bones came together, bone by bone. <sup>8</sup>When I looked, suddenly there were sinews on them. The flesh appeared, and then they were covered over with skin. But there was still no breath in them.

<sup>9</sup>He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, human one! Say to the breath, The LORD God proclaims: Come from the four winds, breathe! Breathe into these dead bodies and let them live."

37:10 Rev 11:11

37:11 Lam 3:54

37:12 Is 26:19;  
Eze 37:21

37:14 Eze 36:27,

Eze 37:9,

Eze 39:29;

Jl 2:28

37:18 Eze 12:9,

Eze 17:12,

Eze 24:19

37:22 Jer 3:18,

Jer 50:4;

Hos 1:11

37:23 Eze 36:25,

Eze 36:28,

Eze 36:29

37:24 Jer 30:9;

Eze 34:23,

Eze 34:24;

Eze 37:25;

Hos 3:5

37:25 Is 9:7;

Eze 28:25,

Eze 34:23,

Eze 37:24;

Lk 1:32

37:27 Lv 26:11;

Eze 11:20,

Eze 36:28;

2Co 6:16;

Rev 21:3

the instruction that defines the covenant (see the note on Ezek 5:6).

36:31 *you will feel disgust for yourselves*: The shame experienced by the Lord in punishing Israel will pass to the people when he restores them (cf. Ezek 14:22-23; 16:63; 20:43; 43:10-11).

36:33-38 This section promises a restoration of the cities, reversing judgments earlier in the book.

36:35 *They will say, "This land . . . has become like the garden of Eden"*: This saying reverses public opinion, expressed in Ezekiel 36:13, 20. Eden is the proper name for God's garden (cf. Ezek 28:13), which symbolizes a divine promise of fertility (cf. Gen 2-3; Isa 51:3; Ezek 31:9, 16, 18; 28:13; Joel 2:3). *cities that were ruined . . . are now fortified and inhabited*: Compare with Ezekiel 36:4; 6:6; 12:20; see the note on Ezekiel 13:4-5.

36:38 *human flock*: Compare with Psalm 80:1; Ezekiel 2:1; 34:17-31, especially Ezekiel 34:31.

37:1-14 The valley of the dry bones is Ezekiel's third of four visions (the other visions are Ezek 1:4-28; 8:1-11; 25; 40:1-48:35). With drama, the vision tells the story about God re-creating the people of Israel (37:10). Because burial and possession of the land were related in the ancient world, the vision concludes with replanting the people in their land (37:14; and see the note on Ezek 47:13-48:29). The revived bones symbolize the new nation, Israel (37:11),

and shouldn't be read as a revelation about individual resurrection from death.

37:1 *a certain valley*: the same valley where Ezekiel was commissioned to prophesy to the exiles (cf. Ezek 3:22-27), and only the second time that this valley has been mentioned.

37:1 *It was full of bones*: Ezekiel's audience would have known instantly the importance of this (see sidebar, "Death and Afterlife in the Ancient Near East" at Ezek 32). These bones belonged to an entire army of soldiers who had been slain by the sword (see the note on Ezek 32:21). The scene of a slain army, having been left to scavengers and open-air decomposition, marks it as cursed (cf. 1 Kgs 14:11; 21:23-24; 2 Kgs 9:34-37; Jer 16:4; 34:19-20; Ezek 24:6-8; 39:11-20).

37:3 *can these bones live again?*: The central message of the vision in Ezekiel 8-11 was underscored by the question in Ezekiel 8:6. Likewise, the vision of the dry bones conveys its most critical point through a question (cf. Ezek 20:4; 21:2). "LORD God, only you know": Ezekiel's answer is a pious one, open to new knowledge of the Lord (cf. Ezek 37:13-14).

37:4-10 God commands Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones, which initiates his resuscitation of the bones. The ensuing prophesying plays itself out in two stages: the re-creation of the physical bodies (37:7-8); and then their animation (37:10).

37:9-10 *Prophecy to the breath*: The scene reflects the same theology of creation seen in Genesis 2. The Hebrew

38:2 Gn 10:2;  
Eze 27:13,  
Eze 32:26,  
Eze 39:1;  
Rev 20:8

38:13 Eze 25:13,  
Eze 27:12,  
Eze 27:15,  
Eze 27:22

38:14 Jer 23:6;  
Eze 38:8; Zec 2:5

<sup>10</sup>I prophesied just as he commanded me. When the breath entered them, they came to life and stood on their feet, an extraordinarily large company.

<sup>11</sup>He said to me, "Human one, these bones are the entire house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely finished.'<sup>12</sup>So now, prophesy and say to them, The LORD God proclaims: I'm opening your graves! I will raise you up from your graves, my people, and I will bring you to Israel's fertile land.<sup>13</sup>You will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and raise you up from your graves, my people.<sup>14</sup>I will put my breath<sup>e</sup> in you, and you will live. I will plant you on your fertile land, and you will know that I am the LORD. I've spoken, and I will do it. This is what the LORD says."

### **Divided kingdom united**

<sup>15</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>16</sup>You, human one, take a stick, and write on it, "Belonging to Judah and to the Israelites associated with him." Take another stick and write on it, "Stick of Ephraim belonging to Joseph and everyone of the house of Israel associated with him."<sup>17</sup>Join them to each other to make a single stick so that they become one stick in your hand.<sup>18</sup>When your people ask you, "Why won't you tell us what these sticks mean to you?"<sup>19</sup>say to them, The LORD God proclaims: I'm taking Joseph's stick, which has been in Ephraim's hand, and the tribes of Israel associated with him, and I'm putting it with Judah's stick, and I'm making them into a single stick so that they will be one stick in my hand.<sup>20</sup>When the two sticks that you've written on are in your hand in their sight,<sup>21</sup>speak to them, This is what the LORD God says: I will take the Israelites from among the nations where they've gone, I will gather them from all around, and I will bring them to their fertile land.<sup>22</sup>I will make them into a single nation in the land on Israel's highlands. There will be just one king for all of them. They will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms.<sup>23</sup>They will no longer defile themselves with their idols or their worthless things or with any of their rebellions. I will deliver them from all the places where they sinned, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God.<sup>24</sup>My servant David will be king over them. There will be just one shepherd for all of them. They will follow my case laws and carefully observe my regulations.<sup>25</sup>They will live on the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where their ancestors lived. They will live on it, they and their children and their grandchildren, forever. My servant David will be their prince forever.<sup>26</sup>I will make a covenant of peace for them. It will be their covenant forever. I will grant it to them and allow them to increase. I will set my sanctuary among them forever.<sup>27</sup>My dwelling will be with

<sup>e</sup>Or spirit

term translated here as "breath" is the same term translated "wind" elsewhere (see the note on Ezek 1:12, 17, 20). Ezekiel and his fellow priests understood that God's breath animated otherwise lifeless flesh.

37:11 *"Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely finished"*: The text describes being cut off from God, from life, and from the land (cf. Pss 31:22; 88:5; Isa 53:8). Earlier, Ezekiel announced that the idolater would be cut off from the elect of the Lord (cf. Ezek 14:8).

37:12 *I'm opening your graves*: The statement about the "bones" in Ezekiel 37:11 is accurate: They have perished! The resuscitation of Israel stands in opposition to the prophet's burial of Egypt in Ezekiel 32:17-32.

37:15-28 Ezekiel performs a final symbolic action (37:15-19), writing with sticks, which is then interpreted (37:20-28). In a flourish, Ezekiel unites the people, land, and the Lord's sanctuary (i.e., God's presence!), which are all bound together through a final covenant (37:26).

37:15-19 *Ephraim belonging to Joseph*: This stick stands for the northern kingdom, which had gone into exile in 720 BCE. Tradition held Joseph to be the father of the two dominant tribes of the northern kingdom, Ephraim and Manasseh (cf. Gen 48; Num 1:10; 26:28, 37; Josh 14:4; 17:14-18). The Joseph tribes separated from Judah after Solomon's death (approximately 925 BCE; cf. 1 Kgs

12:1-24). Both history and tradition, then, placed Joseph in opposition to Judah (cf. Ps 78:67-68).

37:19 *a single stick*: Ezekiel hopes for a reunification of the people, once the nation is restored. With the defeat and exile of Samaria and the northern kingdom in 720 BCE, northern refugees fled to Judah and Jerusalem, but the unification was uncertain after nearly 200 years of separation and political strife. Since both kingdoms had been "scattered among the nations," perhaps Ezekiel hoped that the exile would serve as the great equalizer. *Judah's stick*: For the traditional strife between Judah and Joseph, see Genesis 37:18-30.

37:20-28 The interpretation of the symbolic action offers a densely packed promise of restoration.

37:23 *They will be my people, and I will be their God*: a statement of the covenant between God and the people (see the note on Ezek 11:19).

37:24 *my servant David*: The second mention of David in Ezekiel's prophecies (cf. 34:24 and sidebar, "The Demotion of the King in Ezekiel" at Ezek 34). The mention of David as king seems inconsistent with Ezekiel's other, more cautious statements about the future ruler. Ultimately, the Lord will be king (cf. Ezek 20:33; 34:11-16).

37:25 *my servant Jacob*: the ancestor with whom Ezekiel identifies all Israel (cf. Ezek 20:5; 28:25).

37:26 *my sanctuary among them forever*: This promise will

them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. <sup>28</sup>The nations will know that I, the LORD, make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.

### Attack of Gog

**38**The LORD's word came to me: <sup>2</sup>Human one, face Gog in the land of Magog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. Prophecy concerning him <sup>3</sup>and say, The LORD God proclaims: I challenge you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal! <sup>4</sup>I will turn you about, set hooks in your jaws, and lead you out, you and all your army, horses and riders, handsomely dressed, all of them, a great assembly, with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords. <sup>5</sup>Persia, Cush, and Put are with you, <sup>6</sup>all of them equipped with shield and helmet. <sup>7</sup>Gomer and all his troops, Beth-togarmah from the far north and all his troops; many peoples are with you. <sup>8</sup>Stand ready and be prepared, you and all your assembly. You will watch out for those who gather against you.

<sup>9</sup>After many days you will be called out. In future years you will enter a country that has been freed from the sword, a gathering from many peoples on the mountains of Israel, which had become a perpetual ruin. This country was brought out from the peoples, and all of them live securely. <sup>10</sup>You will invade like a sudden storm. You and all your troops, and the many peoples with you, will be like clouds covering the earth.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD God proclaims: On that day, thoughts will come into your mind, and you will devise an evil plan. <sup>12</sup>You will say, "I will go up against the open country and come against a quiet people who all live securely without walls, bars, or doors <sup>13</sup>to take plunder and seize loot, to use my <sup>14</sup>power against the resettled waste places, against a people gathered from the nations, who are acquiring goods and cattle, and who live at the center <sup>15</sup>of the earth." <sup>16</sup>Sheba and Dedan and the merchants and officials of Tarshish will say to you, "Have you come to take plunder and seize loot? Have you assembled your army to take silver and gold, to take goods and cattle, to engage in great looting?"

<sup>17</sup>So now, prophesy, human one, and say to Gog, The LORD God proclaims: Isn't that what you will decide to do <sup>18</sup>on that day, when my people Israel live securely? <sup>19</sup>You will come up from your place from the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding horses, a great assembly, a mighty army. <sup>20</sup>You will go up against my people Israel like a cloud

38:22 Gn 19:24;  
Ps 11:6;  
Eze 13:11  
38:23 Ps 9:16;  
Eze 36:23,  
Eze 37:28,  
Eze 38:16  
39:10 Is 14:2,  
Is 33:1; Eze 39:9

<sup>6</sup>Cf 38:6; MT *them* <sup>7</sup>LXX; MT *your* <sup>13</sup>Or *navel* <sup>15</sup>Or *you will know*

reverse Ezekiel 8:6 (and cf. Ezek 23:38-39; 24:21; 25:3), in which God states that the sins of the people have separated the people from the Lord. See also Ezekiel 11:16; 43:1-9; 48:35.

38:1-39:29 Although modern readers often understand the strange-sounding judgment on the mysterious Gog of Magog as predictions for the end of time, these two chapters were composed as promises of God's protection of the soon-to-be-restored, yet vulnerable, nation peacefully living in the land.

38:2-9 Ezekiel sets the stage for his prophecy, listing the coming enemies of Israel (38:2-7), as well as the tranquil setting that they will disrupt (Ezek 38:8-9).

38:2 *Gog in the land of Magog*: No satisfactory explanation or identification of this individual or his land has been found, and they are best read as literary creations, symbolic barbaric powers of every period of time and from every corner of the earth. Such an effect is strengthened by the names that follow, which refer to vaguely known, exotic lands. *Meshech and Tubal*: regions in Anatolia (cf. Gen 10:2; and Ezek 32:26).

38:5 *Persia, Cush, and Put*: the ends of the known world; see the note on the similar combination in Ezekiel 27:9.

38:6 *Gomer... Beth-togarmah*: cf. Genesis 10:2-3 and Ezekiel 27:14. *from the far north*: Traditionally destruction approached from the north (Ezek 39:2 also; and cf. Isa 14:31; Jer 1:13-14; 46:6; 1, 22).

38:8 *In future years*: The text looks toward a time when the

people had been restored to the land. *a country... freed from the sword*: clearly a reference to the punishment of Judah (e.g., Ezek 5:12, 17; 6:11; 7:15; 12:14; 14:17; 21:1-17). *a gathering from many peoples*: Compare with Ezekiel 11:17; 20:34, 41; 34:13; 36:24. *on the mountains of Israel*: Compare with Ezekiel 6:2, 3; 35:2, 3, 12, 15; 36:1, 4, 6, 8. *a perpetual ruin*: Compare with Ezekiel 21:7; 33:24, 27; 36:4, 10, 33.

38:10-23 Ezekiel describes Gog's plans of conquest as evil on his part (38:10-13), but ultimately as a part of the Lord's broader plan (38:14-23).

38:11 *open country... without walls, bars, or doors*: the state of the post-exilic land, prior to the walls of Jerusalem being rebuilt (ca. 539-450 BCE). The people's security (Ezek 38:8, 11, 14) comes from God's protection, not their walls (cf. Deut 20:1-4).

38:12 *center of the earth*: A theological valuation of the nation as the center of the cosmos (cf. Ezek 5:5).

38:13 *Sheba and Dedan... Tarshish*: Sheba and Dedan were rest stops for the caravan trade routes through the Arabian Desert to the east. Tarshish was located in Spain, but really signaled the farthest western trading partner of the earth (cf. Ezek 27:12, 25). This is another stock phrase, which by using distant lands denotes the commercial interests of all of the known earth, from east to west. This global scope explains the content of their question, *Have you come to take plunder?* (cf. Ezek 26:12).

38:16 *But when this happens... I will be the one who brings*

39:17 in 34:6;  
Jer 12:9;  
Jer 46:10;  
Zep 1:7;  
Rev 19:17  
39:29 in 32:15;  
Eze 37:14;  
II 2:28

covering the earth. But when this happens in future days, I will be the one who brings you up against my land, so that the nations may know me, Gog, when through you I show my holiness in their sight!

<sup>17</sup>The LORD God proclaims: Are you the one about whom I spoke in former times through my servants, Israel's prophets, the ones who prophesied for years in those days to bring you against them? <sup>18</sup>On that day, the day when Gog comes against Israel's fertile land, my wrath will be aroused. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>19</sup>In my jealousy and blazing anger I declare: On that day, a great quaking will come over Israel's fertile land. <sup>20</sup>The fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the beasts of the field, all the creatures crawling on the ground, and every living human being will quake in my presence. Mountains will be thrown down and cliffs will crumble; every wall will fall to the ground. <sup>21</sup>I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains. This is what the LORD God says! The swords of the warriors will be against each other, <sup>22</sup>and I will enter into judgment with him, with plague and blood. I will pour out flooding rain, hailstones, fire, and sulfur on him, on all his troops, and on the many peoples with him. <sup>23</sup>So I will display my greatness, show my holiness, and make myself known in the sight of many nations. And they will know that I am the LORD.

**39**You, human one, prophesy about Gog and say, The LORD God proclaims: I challenge you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal! <sup>2</sup>I will turn you about, drag you out, and bring you out of the far north, and I will bring you to Israel's mountains. <sup>3</sup>I will strike your bow from your left hand, and make your arrows fall from your right. <sup>4</sup>You will fall on Israel's mountains, you, all your troops, and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to the birds of prey, to every kind of bird and wild animal as food. <sup>5</sup>You will fall on the open field, for I have spoken! This is what the LORD God says! <sup>6</sup>I will send fire on Magog and on those who live securely in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the LORD. <sup>7</sup>I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. They will never again degrade my holy name, and the nations will know that I, the LORD, am holy in Israel. <sup>8</sup>Look, it has come! It has happened! This is what the LORD God says. This is the day that I spoke about.

<sup>9</sup>Those who live in Israel's cities will go out and kindle a fire with the weapons—shield and buckler, bow and arrow, spear and lance. They will burn them with fire for seven years. <sup>10</sup>They won't gather wood from the field or chop down trees from the forest, because they will be able to keep the fire burning with the weapons. So they will take plunder and seize loot. This is what the LORD says.

<sup>11</sup>On that day, I will assign Gog a place for burial in Israel in the Travelers' Valley east of the sea. It will block the travelers' way, because Gog and all of his horde will be buried there. It will be called Hamon-gog<sup>7</sup> Valley. <sup>12</sup>For seven months, the house of Israel will bury them in

<sup>7</sup>Or *horde of Gog*

*you up:* In contrast to past judgments, when God used the foreign power of Babylon to punish Israel, now God brings Magog to destroy them to show all foreign powers the power and glory of the Lord (cf. Ezek 20:41; 28:22, 25; 36:23; see sidebar, "The Recognition Formula" at Ezek 6).

**38:17** *my servants, Israel's prophets:* Which prophets exactly, and what their message was, is unknown. Clear, however, is the role of their prophecies in revealing the Lord through the defeat of Gog.

**38:20** *will quake in my presence:* In the OT, when God comes as a warrior, all of the natural upheavals listed in 38:20-22 typically happen (see the note on Ezek 1:4; cf. Exod 19:16; 20:18; Deut 4:11; 5:22-24; Pss 18:11-15; 46:1-3; 68:7-8).

**38:21** *The swords of the warriors will be against each other.* The Lord will confuse the armies of Gog so that they fight each other (cf. Judg 7:22; 2 Chron 20:23).

**39:1-24** The Lord announces the slaughter of Gog's armies, assuring that they will die a cursed death.

**39:3-6** The language here is similar to the oracles against Egypt. *from your left hand... from your right:* Compare with Ezekiel 30:20-26. *You will fall on Israel's mountains:* Compare

with Ezekiel 6:2, 3; 35:10-13; 36:1-12. *I will give you to the birds... as food:* Compare with Ezekiel 29:5; 31:13; 32:4. *open field:* Compare with Ezekiel 16:5; 29:5; 32:4; 33:27. *I will send fire:* Compare with Ezekiel 30:8, 14, 16.

**39:8** *it has come:* This event marks Gog's future end, not the end of Israel's land (cf. Ezek 7). This is a promise of a new era of peace and security for the restored land (cf. Isa 11:6-9).

**39:10** *take plunder and seize loot:* upending Gog's evil plan (cf. Ezek 38:13).

**39:11-16** Details are supplied for Gog's shame-filled burial. **39:11** *Travelers' Valley:* may refer to those who have traveled to the netherworld. *east of the sea:* the Mediterranean Sea. *it will block the travelers' way:* If the travelers are now dead, then the valley will be filled with corpses, preventing any further burials.

**39:11, 15** *Hamon-gog Valley:* This is a play on the Hinnom Valley, which was outside of the walls of Jerusalem in the 6th century BCE, where children were sacrificed (cf. Jer 19:5; 32:35; and see the note on Ezek 16:21; cf. 20:31; 23:37, 39). By becoming an open grave of Gog's fallen soldiers, this site of unorthodox worship has been defiled.

order to cleanse the land. <sup>13</sup>All the people of the land will take part in the burial, so they will make a name for themselves on the day that I glorify myself. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>14</sup>They will appoint people who will continually cross through the land and bury<sup>a</sup> the human remains that are left on the surface of the ground in order to purify it. They will begin their search at the end of seven months. <sup>15</sup>As the travelers cross through the land, when they see a human bone, they will set up a marker next to it until the gravediggers bury it in Hamon-gog Valley <sup>16</sup>(the name of the city is Hamonah). So they will purify the land.

<sup>17</sup>And you, human one, the LORD God proclaims: Say to the birds of prey, to every kind of bird and every wild animal: Assemble and come! Come together from all around for the sacrifice that I make for you, a great sacrifice on Israel's mountains! You will eat flesh and drink blood. <sup>18</sup>You will eat the flesh of warriors and drink the blood of the princes of the earth: rams, lambs, goats, bulls, all fattened animals from Bashan. <sup>19</sup>Gorge yourselves on their fat, and get drunk on their blood, from the sacrifice that I have made for you. <sup>20</sup>Satisfy yourselves at my table with horses and riders, mighty men and every warrior. This is what the LORD God says! <sup>21</sup>When I glorify myself among the nations, all the nations will understand the judgments that I executed and the power that I used among them. <sup>22</sup>And the house of Israel will know that I, the LORD, am their God, from that day on. <sup>23</sup>The nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile because of their guilt. Because they rebelled against me, I hid my face from them. When I handed them over to their enemies, all of them fell by the sword. <sup>24</sup>I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions and hid my face from them.

<sup>25</sup>So the LORD God proclaims: Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob. I will have compassion on the whole house of Israel and defend my holy name. <sup>26</sup>They will forget their humiliation and all their rebellions against me when they live securely on their fertile land with no one to frighten them. <sup>27</sup>When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, I will be made holy through them in the sight of the many nations. <sup>28</sup>They will know that I am the LORD their God when, after I made them go into exile among the nations, I gathered them to their land. I won't leave any of them behind. <sup>29</sup>When I pour my Spirit upon the house of Israel, I won't hide my face from them again. This is what the LORD God says.

### Vision of restoration

**40** In the beginning of the twenty-fifth year of our exile, on the tenth day of the month, exactly fourteen years after the city was struck down, on that very day, the LORD's

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT adds *the travelers*.

39:16 *the name of the city is Hamonah*: Compare with Jeremiah 25:29; 33:9; Ezekiel 48:35.

39:17-20 Instead of dying as heroes, with their weapons of war (see the note on Ezek 32:27), and being gathered to their ancestors, these warriors will become the excrement of scavengers after a gory feast. With such a vivid scene, the text curses Gog and its armies (see sidebar, "Death and Afterlife in the Ancient Near East" at Ezek 32. See note on Ezek 24:6-8; cf. 1 Kgs 14:11; 21:23-24; 2 Kgs 9:34-37; Jer 16:4; 34:19-20; Ezek 37:1-14).

39:25-29 God will protect the land, allowing it to live peacefully, and in so doing, make clear the honor properly due to God.

40:1-48:35 In the ancient world, temple architecture combined with proper ceremonies and rituals carried out by priests enabled the nation to experience God's presence. The prophet's fourth and final vision promises Israel that it would dwell in the Lord's presence again. The vision clearly brings closure to his first two visions at Ezekiel 1 and Ezekiel 8-11. Ezekiel encounters God's presence in the form of the Lord's glory (Ezek 43:2; cf. Ezek 1) and is taken on a guided tour of a new temple (Ezek 40:5-42:20; cf. Ezek 8), leading to an announcement of the reestablishment of the Lord's throne (Ezek 43:7; cf. Ezek

37:26; and note the contrast with Ezek 11:22-23). This promise includes a vision of the restored land (47:1-12; cf. 37:1-14) and its allotment to the tribes, priestly orders, and patron (47:13-48:29; cf. 37:12-14). Also included is a set of (Torah) instructions (43:12-46:24), which is the only Instruction in the OT found outside of the Pentateuch and not associated with Moses. This vision brings full circle the theme of Ezekiel's prophecies, the encounter with God's presence, with a final statement that names the future city, rebuilt in the midst of the land: "The LORD Is There" (48:35b).

40:1-4 The introduction to the vision.

40:1 *In the beginning of the twenty-fifth year of our exile*: midway to the year of Jubilee (cf. Lev 25:3-8). Jubilee was the year when all family allotments return to their proper ancestral titleholders, and all was restored to its originally created order. The text is delivered at the theological mid-point of the exile, *exactly fourteen years after the city was struck down*: This is the second double date in the book (cf. Ezek 1:3; and sidebar, "The Dates in the Book of Ezekiel" at Ezek 8), and it focuses the reader's attention on destroyed Jerusalem (*and he took me there*). In counterbalance to Ezekiel 7, which prophesied the end of the era for Jerusalem (see the note on Ezek

40:19 Eze 40:23,  
Eze 40:27  
40:20 Eze 40:6  
40:21 Eze 40:7,  
Eze 40:13  
40:22 Eze 40:16,  
Eze 40:26  
40:23 Eze 40:19,  
Eze 40:27  
40:24 Eze 40:21,  
Eze 40:35  
40:25 Eze 40:22,  
Eze 40:33  
40:26 Eze 40:22,  
Eze 40:16  
40:27 Eze 40:23,  
Eze 40:19  
40:28 Eze 40:35  
40:29 Eze 40:7  
40:30 Eze 40:21  
40:31 Eze 40:26,  
Eze 40:34,  
Eze 40:22  
40:32 Eze 40:28  
40:33 Eze 40:21

power was on me, and he took me there. <sup>2</sup>In God's visions, he brought me to the land of Israel and set me down on a very high mountain, where there was a city structure to the south. <sup>3</sup>When he brought me there, I saw a man standing in the gate. He appeared to be bronze, and he had a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand. <sup>4</sup>The man spoke to me, "Human one, look and listen well, and take seriously everything I show you, because you were brought here so that these things could be revealed to you. Describe everything you see to the house of Israel."

### Temple compound

<sup>5</sup>Now there was an outer wall that went all the way around the temple compound. The measuring rod in the man's hand was ten and a half feet<sup>a</sup> (based on a standard eighteen inches<sup>b</sup> plus three inches<sup>c</sup>). When he measured the wall's height and width it was ten and a half feet high and ten and a half feet wide. <sup>6</sup>He entered the gate facing east. He went up its steps, and he measured the plaza<sup>d</sup> at the gate. It was ten and a half feet wide: the plaza was ten and a half feet wide. <sup>7</sup>The rooms were ten and a half feet long and ten and a half feet wide, with a space of seven and a half feet between them. The plaza next to the porch at the gate opposite the temple was ten and a half feet. <sup>8</sup>He measured the porch of the gate opposite the temple: it was ten and a half feet. <sup>9</sup>Then he measured the porch of the gate: it was twelve feet,<sup>e</sup> and its arches were three feet. The porch of the gate was opposite the temple. <sup>10</sup>Inside the east gate, there were three rooms on each side. Each was the same size, and the arches on each side were the same size also. <sup>11</sup>Then he measured the width of the gate opening, which was fifteen feet, and the gate's length, which was nineteen and a half feet. <sup>12</sup>A border running along the front of the rooms on each side was eighteen inches wide, and each of the rooms was nine feet square. <sup>13</sup>He measured the gate through the room openings that faced

<sup>a</sup>Heb *shesh ammoth ba'ammah* traditionally six long cubits, which is defined as six times a standard *ammah* of eighteen inches plus a *topha* (traditionally *handbreadth*) of three inches. So the measuring rod has six segments of twenty-one inches each, which equals ten and a half feet. It is unclear whether the measurements with the rod continue past 40:8, when standard *ammah* appear, though the longer *ammah* do continue briefly in 43:13-17 for the altar. <sup>b</sup>Or a standard cubit <sup>c</sup>Or a handbreadth <sup>d</sup>Or threshold; Heb architectural and decorative terminology in Ezek 40-48 is often uncertain. <sup>e</sup>Or eight cubits

7:1-27), Ezekiel 40-48 foresees the opening of a new epoch for the city.

40:2 *In God's visions:* Compare with Ezekiel 1:1; 8:3; 37:1-2. *very high mountain:* In the land of Israel, only Mount Zion could be meant. That it isn't identified by name but by stature makes the reader consider its theological significance and equate it with the mountain of God's abode (cf. Ps 48:1-2; Isa 2:2 // Mic 4:1; Ezek 17:22; 20:40; Zech 14:10). *a city structure to the south:* In Ezekiel's day, the temple sat to the north of Jerusalem.

40:3 *I saw a man:* a heavenly guide who will lead Ezekiel throughout the temple (Ezek 40-42), and the river (Ezek 47:1-12), a *linen cord and a measuring rod:* surveying tools of the ancient world.

40:4 *Describe everything you see:* As the "human one," Ezekiel serves as mediator of the new temple structure given to him by God. David fulfills this role in 1 Chronicles 28:19. 40:5-42:20 The text describes a heavenly tour of the sacred precinct, filled with tedious details, measurements, and architectural features that were, even when they were written, imprecise in their presentation. The prophet didn't prepare drawings, which could be handed to a builder, but rather he led his audience through a structure whose architectural features could, if managed by the priests according to ordained instructions about holiness, allow access to the Lord, and yet still maintain the necessary separation between the holy and the ordinary (42:20). Ezekiel's exilic audience understood that the features would be functional architecture for God's presence. 40:5-47 The guided tour of the outer and inner courtyards is arranged broadly in three segments: the outer wall,

gates, and outer courtyard (40:5-27); the inner courtyard and gates (40:28-37); special rooms dedicated for preparation and purification (40:38-47).

40:5 *ten and a half feet high and ten and a half feet wide:* These dimensions of the wall would accomplish no military purpose: Their symmetry indicates ordered space.

40:6-16 *the gate facing east:* Beginning with the gate out of which the Lord's glory exits the temple (cf. Ezek 10:19), the east gate provides a template for all the other gates. The exact arrangement of the porches, steps, and plazas isn't described with enough accuracy so that these features could be constructed. Instead, Ezekiel described architecture that his audience already knew. Ezekiel does explain the measurements, which are unlikely. They were described for the priestly ear and eye, which searched for cosmic order during exile.

40:10 *three rooms on each side:* Six-chambered gates were in Ezekiel's day famous and royal. Such gates have been excavated at Gezer, Hazor, Lachish, Megiddo, and elsewhere, and were associated in the biblical tradition with Judah's royal past (cf. 1 Kgs 9:15-16). Their size and military purposes would have been overstated for the temple precinct, except that they communicate proper access to the Lord's presence (cf. Ezek 44:5).

40:13-15 *thirty-seven and a half feet wide... seventy-five feet:* These dimensions express a one-to-two ratio, or two squares placed next to each other. The square shape seems to form the basic building block for the plan, and is repeated throughout (e.g., the inner court, Ezek 40:47; the temple building, Ezek 41:13-14; the structure to the west, Ezek 41:15; the shape of the temple grounds, Ezek



*The Temple Plan* Ezekiel 40–42 contains much tedious detail. But Ezekiel's audience would have appreciated every measurement of an ideal new temple. With his presentation of the temple's architecture, Ezekiel explained how it would be possible for the holy God to live in the midst of and be accessed by a nation of ordinary humans. The juxtaposition of the holy and the ordinary was made possible by carefully designing architectural features that controlled access to space, as well as providing for the proper purification of all things ordinary. In the ancient Near East, it was common for the gods to reveal to their priests and prophets temple plans that regulated proper approach to them. As confusing as the measurements and arrangements are to us, one thing is clear: the temple and all of its particulars were based on the shape of a square (cf. Ezek 42:15-20; 45:2; see the associated diagram). This use of the square shape even extends to the holy portion (cf. Ezek 45:1-9; 48:8-22; see the associated diagram). For Ezekiel the square represented cosmic order.

40:34 Eze 40:22  
 40:35 Eze 47:2,  
 Eze 40:32  
 40:36 Eze 40:7  
 40:37 Eze 40:34  
 40:38 2Ch 4:6  
 40:39 Lv 1:3,  
 Lv 4:3; Eze 40:42  
 40:42 Ex 20:25  
 40:43 Ex  
 25:25; 1Ki 7:26;  
 2Ch 4:5  
 40:44 1Ch 6:31  
 40:46 2Sa 8:17;  
 1Ki 2:35;  
 Eze 44:15  
 40:47 Eze 40:19,  
 Eze 40:23  
 40:48 1Ki 6:3;  
 2Ch 3:4  
 40:49 1Ki 7:15;  
 2Ch 3:17  
 41:1 Eze 41:23  
 41:2 1Ki 6:17;  
 2Ch 3:3  
 41:3 Eze 40:16  
 41:4 Ex 26:33;  
 1Ki 6:20; Heb 9:3

each other. From the outer ceiling edge of one room to the outer ceiling edge of the other, the gate was thirty-seven and a half feet wide. <sup>14</sup>Next he made out the perimeter of the hallway, defined by the arches inside the gate: it was ninety feet. <sup>15</sup>It was seventy-five feet from the front of the outer gate to the front of the inner porch of the gate. <sup>16</sup>Inside the gate, all of the rooms and their arches had closed windows; there were also niches inside the porch all the way around. The arches were decorated with palm trees.

<sup>17</sup>Then he brought me to the outer courtyard, which consisted of chambers and a pavement all the way around. Thirty chambers came up to the pavement, <sup>18</sup>and the pavement came up to the facades of the gates along their entire length. That was the lower pavement. <sup>19</sup>When he measured the width from the inside of the lower gate to the outer edge of the inner courtyard, it was one hundred fifty feet.

After he measured the east gate, he measured the north gate, <sup>20</sup>the one facing north at the outer courtyard. He measured its length and width, <sup>21</sup>its three inner rooms on each side, its arches, and its porch. Its measurements were the same as the first gate: seventy-five feet long and thirty-seven and a half feet wide. <sup>22</sup>The windows, porch, and palm decorations had the same measurements as those of the east gate. Seven steps led up to the entrance, and the porch was at the other end. <sup>23</sup>There were also gates to the inner courtyard opposite the north and east gates. When he measured from gate to gate, it was one hundred fifty feet.

<sup>24</sup>Then he had me walk toward the south, where there was a gate facing south. He measured its arches and porch using the same measurements. <sup>25</sup>Its windows and its porch all around were like the others, and the gate also was seventy-five feet long and thirty-seven and a half feet wide. <sup>26</sup>Its stairway had seven steps, and its porch was at the other end. On its arches, one on either side, were palm decorations. <sup>27</sup>There was a gate to the inner courtyard on the south. When he measured from gate to gate on the south side, it was one hundred fifty feet.

<sup>28</sup>When he brought me to the inner courtyard by way of the south gate, he took the same measurements of the south gate. <sup>29</sup>Its rooms, arches, and porch, as well as its windows and porch all the way around, measured the same as the others. It was seventy-five feet long and thirty-seven and a half feet wide. <sup>30</sup>There were porches all around, thirty-seven and a half feet long and seven and a half feet wide. <sup>31</sup>Its porch faced the outer courtyard. Palms decorated its arches, and its stairway had eight steps.

<sup>32</sup>Then he brought me to the inner courtyard on the east side, and again he took the same measurements of the gate. <sup>33</sup>Its rooms, arches, and porch measured the same as the

42:15-20; 45:2; and the holy portion, Ezek 48:20). Actual six-chambered gates would be nearly as wide as they are long, indicating that this ratio is generated by theological notions of sacred order and symmetry, rather than actual brick and mortar.

40:17-19 The outer court is described, with its associated rooms for priestly service and preparations. This courtyard sits lower than the inner courtyard (40:18), creating an ascending progression as one moves toward the temple and the altar, as would be appropriate for climbing God's mountain (cf. Ezek 40:2).

40:19-27 The north (40:19-23) and south (40:24-27) gates of the outer wall are described in less detail, referring back

to the east gate as their model, yet still emphasizing the overall one-to-two ratio of proportion. There is no west gate, but instead a large nondescript structure (Ezek 41:12) takes up the area behind the temple and the most holy place.

40:28-37 Now the tour moves closer to the altar and the temple itself, by measuring the sacred space of the inner court and its gates. The bronze man guides Ezekiel successively from the south gate (40:28-31), to the east gate (40:32-34), and then to the north gate (40:35-37) of the inner court. No wall separated the inner court from the outer, but the inner court does seem raised by eight steps (40:31, 34, 37), which points to its higher state of holiness.

41:5 1Ki 6:5;  
Eze 41:6  
41:7 1Ki 6:8  
41:10 Eze 40:17  
41:15 Eze 42:3  
41:16 1Ki 6:4;  
1Ki 6:15;  
Eze 40:16  
41:22 Ex 30:1;  
1v 23:6, 1Ki 6:20,  
Eze 23:41  
41:23 1Ki 6:31  
41:24 1Ki 6:34  
41:25 Eze 41:18  
41:26 Eze 40:16  
42:1 Eze 40:17,  
Eze 41:12  
42:2 Eze 41:13

others, as well as its windows and porch all the way around. It was seventy-five feet long and thirty-seven and a half feet wide. <sup>34</sup>Its porch faced the outer courtyard. Palm trees decorated its arches on both sides, and its stairway had eight steps. <sup>35</sup>Then he brought me to the north gate and took the same measurements of the <sup>36</sup>rooms, arches, and porch, and also its windows all around. It was seventy-five feet long and thirty-seven and a half feet wide. <sup>37</sup>Its porch<sup>f</sup> faced the outer courtyard. Palm trees decorated its arches on both sides, and its stairway had eight steps.

<sup>38</sup>At that gate, there was a room with an entrance in the arches for washing the entirely burned offering, <sup>39</sup>and inside the porch on each side of the gate were two tables where the entirely burned offerings, the purification offerings, and the compensation offerings were slaughtered. <sup>40</sup>Outside, two pairs of tables flanked the entrance of the north gate at both ends, at the steps on one end and the porch on the other. <sup>41</sup>There were four tables on each side of the gate, eight tables in all, for preparing the animal offerings. <sup>42</sup>The four tables that were used for the entirely burned offering as well as for the communal sacrifices were made of hewn stone. Each was twenty-seven inches square and eighteen inches high. Equipment used in the ritual slaughter was set on them. <sup>43</sup>Hooks,<sup>g</sup> three inches wide, were securely fixed all the way around. The tables were for the flesh of the offerings.

<sup>44</sup>Outside the inner gate there were two<sup>h</sup> chambers in the inner courtyard. The one beside the north gate faced south, and the one beside the east gate faced north. <sup>45</sup>He spoke to me: "The chamber facing south is for the priests who keep watch over the temple, <sup>46</sup>and the chamber facing north is for the priests who keep watch over the altar. Of all the Levites, only the Zadokites may draw near to serve the LORD." <sup>47</sup>Then he measured the courtyard. It was square, one hundred fifty feet long and one hundred fifty feet wide. The altar was in front of the temple.

### The temple

<sup>48</sup>Then he brought me to the porch of the temple and measured its arches. They were seven and a half feet on each side, and the width of the gate was four and a half feet on each side. <sup>49</sup>The porch was thirty feet long and eighteen feet wide. Steps led up into the porch, and there were columns for the arches, one on each side.

**41** He brought me to the main hall, and he measured the arches. They were nine feet deep on both sides, so that was also the depth of the tent. <sup>2</sup>The entrance was fifteen feet wide, and the facades on either side of the entrance were seven and a half feet. When he measured its length, it was sixty feet, and its width was thirty feet. <sup>3</sup>Then he went into the inner room, and he measured the arches on both sides of the entrance; they were each three feet. The entrance was nine feet wide, and its depth was ten and a half feet. <sup>4</sup>When he measured the length of the inner room, it was thirty feet, and the width of the side adjoining the main hall was also thirty feet. He said to me, "This is the most holy place."

<sup>f</sup>LXX; MT arches <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>h</sup>LXX; MT singing

Conspicuously absent is the bronze Sea, a huge basin for water, which was present in Solomon's temple (cf. 1 Kgs 7:23-26 // 2 Chron 4:2-5).

**40:38-43** *At that gate:* The north gate of the inner court leads most directly to the outside, ordinary spaces (cf. Ezek 8:3-5; and see the note on Ezek 8:2-3). Just to the north of the temple grounds would be a spring and a dammed up pool, to be used for temple service (cf. John 5:1-18).

**40:41** *There were four tables on each side of the gate, eight tables in all:* The two sets of four tables are set for purifying the person entering the north gate separating the outer and inner courts. One set would be used when leaving the outer court, the other set for use when entering the inner court.

**40:45-46** These two chambers distinguish the two priestly orders. The Zadokites are projected as a specialized branch of the broader Levites (40:46), whose hierarchical superiority over the other Levites is clear from both their location (next to the east gate, as opposed to the north gate) and service to the Lord (in contrast to

service to the temple by the Levites, 40:45; and cf. Ezek 44:9-14, 15-31).

**40:47** The inner court forms a square, 150 feet in length.

**40:48-41:26** The tour now proceeds to the temple itself. The building is empty, and so the description has a mundane, matter-of-fact feel to it as it moves from one room to another. Any excitement is reserved for the coming of the Lord's presence (cf. Ezek 43:1-9).

**40:48-49** The description of the porch. *Steps led up:* Each successive level of holiness is marked by an increase in height, representative of moving up God's mountain toward the Lord's dwelling. *there were columns:* Compare with 1 Kings 7:17-22 // 2 Chronicles 3:15-17.

**41:1-2** The main hall, or sanctuary, of the temple (cf. 1 Kgs 6:17). As was typical of ancient Near Eastern temples, Ezekiel envisions a long-room style of temple. The dimensions (41:2), like the gates, are built on a one-to-two ratio of width to length.

**41:3-4** The dimensions of *the most holy place* are now described (cf. 1 Kgs 6:20), which are a perfect 30 feet by 30

<sup>5</sup>When he measured the wall of the temple, it was nine feet, and the side chambers that went all the way around the temple were six feet. <sup>6</sup>Now these side chambers adjoined each other, thirty chambers in three stories. The side chambers had a ledge in the temple wall all the way around to serve as supports, but these supports were not inserted into the temple wall itself. <sup>7</sup>A wide ramp ascended stage by stage to the side chambers all the way around the temple. In this way, the ascent stage by stage all around the temple added to the temple's width. One ascended from the foundation to the top by way of the middle story. <sup>8</sup>Then I looked at the temple: Its roof all around rested on the side chambers. Each raised section was ten and a half feet, and the indentations between them were nine feet.<sup>1</sup> <sup>9</sup>The width of the outer wall of the side chambers was seven and a half feet. The space left free between the temple's side chambers and <sup>10</sup>the other chambers was thirty feet wide all the way around the temple. <sup>11</sup>There were two entrances from the side chambers to the free space, one facing north, the other facing south. And the width of the place that was left free was seven and a half feet all the way around. <sup>12</sup>The structure facing the yard on the west was one hundred five feet wide. The structure's wall was seven and a half feet wide all the way around, and its length was one hundred thirty-five feet.

<sup>13</sup>Then he measured the temple. It was one hundred fifty feet long. The yard, the structure, and its walls were also one hundred fifty feet. <sup>14</sup>The area in front of the house and the yard to the east was one hundred fifty feet also. <sup>15</sup>Then he measured the length of the structure along the side of the yard, including its promenades on both sides: one hundred fifty feet.

Now the interior of the main hall as well as the porches in the courtyard <sup>16</sup>were paneled all around, including the ceilings,<sup>1</sup> closed windows, and its three courses of promenades adjoined the ceiling. From the ground up to the windows was covered. <sup>17</sup>Above the entrance, from the interior to the exterior of the temple, and on every interior and exterior wall, <sup>18</sup>there were carved winged creatures and palm trees. The palm trees were positioned between the winged creatures, and each winged creature had two faces. <sup>19</sup>A human face turned toward one palm tree, and the face of a lion turned toward another. They were carved on the temple all the way around. <sup>20</sup>From the ground to above the entrance, the walls of the main hall were carved with winged creatures and palm trees. <sup>21</sup>In the main hall itself, there were square doorposts in front of the holy place, where there was the appearance of <sup>22</sup>the altar. It was four and a half feet high and three feet wide. It was made of wood, and its corners, base, and sides were also wood. He said to me, "This is the table that stands before the LORD."

<sup>23</sup>The main hall and the holy place each had two doors, <sup>24</sup>and each door had two turning panels, two for one door and two for the other. <sup>25</sup>Like the walls, the doors of the main hall were carved with winged creatures and palm trees. A single luxuriant<sup>2</sup> tree stood outside, in front of the porch, <sup>26</sup>while closed windows and palm trees decorated both sides of the facade of the porch, the temple's side chambers, and the beams.

### Chambers and promenades

**42** Then he led me north to the outer courtyard and brought me into the set of chambers opposite the yard and the structure to the north. <sup>2</sup>The length of the facade at

<sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>1</sup>Or thresholds <sup>2</sup>Heb uncertain

feet square. "This is the most holy place": Dialogue in this vision is selective (cf. Ezek 40:45-46; 41:22; 42:13-14; 47:6, 8-12), and the speech of the bronze man here underscores this room as special.

41:5-11 The side chambers of the temple are placed and measured (cf. 1 Kgs 6:5-8). Their precise arrangement isn't clear, but Ezekiel's audience presumably understood their structure and purpose.

41:12-15 The temple is situated in relation to a structure to the west. Together, they form two squares of 150 feet on each side (41:12, 15, 13-14).

41:12, 15 *The structure facing the yard on the west*: No detail is given to this structure, whose purpose seems merely to fill out the space west of the most holy place (i.e., "behind" the Lord), and to create the necessary symmetry for the holy compound.

41:16-26 The interior decorations of the temple are

42:3 Eze 41:15

42:4 Eze 46:19

42:8 Eze 41:13

42:9 Eze 44:5, Eze 46:19

42:13 Ex 29:31; Lv 7:6, Lv 10:17; Nm 18:9

42:14 Lv 8:7, Eze 44:19

43:1 Eze 10:19, Eze 40:6, Eze 42:15, Eze 44:1, Eze 46:1

43:2 Eze 1:24, Eze 10:4, Eze 10:19; Rev 1:15, Rev 18:1

described. Ezekiel doesn't mention furnishings, such as lampstands or incense altars (cf. 1 Kgs 7:48-50), nor is the paneling said to be plated with gold (cf. 1 Kgs 6:21-22) nor even made with special types of wood (cf. 1 Kgs 5:6; 2 Chr 2:8-9).

41:18 *carved winged creatures and palm trees*: See 1 Kings 6:29; 32. The winged creatures represent heavenly attendants (cf. Ezek 1:5-14; 10:1-17). Palm trees symbolize God's primeval garden (Eden), which is always green, and are theologically related to the creator of life (see Ezek 41:25-26).

41:22 *the altar*: the table for the bread of presence (cf. Exod 25:23-30; Lev 24:5-9; 1 Kgs 6:20; 7:48).

42:1-14 The tour now moves outside of the temple itself, and explores rooms where the priests share sacrificial meals (42:13). The two sets of chambers (the northern set are described in 42:1-10; the southern in 42:9-12) together form a square, 150 feet on all sides (42:2, 11), the

43:13 Ex 27:1;  
2Ch 4:1;  
Eze 40:5,  
Eze 41:8  
43:19 1Ki 2:35;  
Eze 40:46,  
Eze 44:15,  
Eze 45:18

the north entrance was one hundred fifty feet, its depth seventy-five feet. <sup>3</sup>It was next to the twenty chambers that belonged to the inner courtyard and next to the pavement of the outer courtyard, and it had three courses of promenades. <sup>4</sup>In front of the chambers there was a passage fifteen feet wide, and to the inside, a passage eighteen inches wide. The entrance to the chambers was on the north. <sup>5</sup>The upper chambers were smaller, because the promenades took up more space from them than from the first and second stories. <sup>6</sup>This was because the promenades were arranged in three levels, but they didn't have columns like those in the courtyards. For this reason, the top story was narrower than the first and second stories. <sup>7</sup>A stone wall ran parallel to the chambers facing the outer courtyard. It was seventy-five feet long, <sup>8</sup>the same length, seventy-five feet, as the chambers facing the outer courtyard. Those facing the temple were one hundred fifty feet. <sup>9-10</sup>These chambers were entered from the outer courtyard at the end of the courtyard wall, because the entrance was at the end of the chambers at the east. South of the yard and the building, there were more chambers with a passage <sup>11</sup>in front of them. The design of the chambers resembled the ones to the north in length and width, as well as in all their exits. The arrangement of the entrances <sup>12</sup>to the chambers on the south side was identical as well. One entered from the east at the beginning of the corresponding wall.

<sup>13</sup>Then he said to me, "The north and south chambers that face the building and the yard are the holy chambers where the priests eat the offerings that have been brought to the LORD. They are most holy. Here they will place the most holy things, the grain offering, the purification offering, and the compensation offering. The place is holy. <sup>14</sup>When the priests enter, they won't go out of the sanctuary to the outer courtyard. There they will place the priestly vests that they wore when they were ministering, because these garments are also holy. They will put on other garments when they go out to the people's area."

<sup>15</sup>When he finished making the interior measurements of the temple, he led me out toward the east gate, and he measured all the way around. <sup>16</sup>He used the same measuring rod on all four sides. He measured the east side, seven hundred fifty feet; <sup>17</sup>the north side, seven hundred fifty feet; and <sup>18</sup>the south side, seven hundred fifty feet. <sup>19</sup>He turned to the west side, seven hundred fifty feet. <sup>20</sup>On all four sides he measured the wall all the way around. Its length was seven hundred fifty feet, and its width seven hundred fifty feet. So he made a division between the holy and the ordinary.

### Return of the divine glory

**43** Then he led me to the east gate, <sup>2</sup>where the glory of Israel's God was coming in from the east. Its sound was like the sound of a mighty flood, and the earth was lit up with his glory. <sup>3</sup>What appeared when I looked was like what I had seen when he<sup>c</sup> came to destroy the city, and also like what I saw at the Chebar River, and I fell on my face. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD's glory came into the temple by way of the east gate. <sup>5</sup>A wind picked me up and brought me to the inner courtyard, and there the LORD's glory filled the temple. <sup>6</sup>A man was standing next to me, but the voice that I heard came from inside the temple. <sup>7</sup>He said to me, Human one,

<sup>b</sup>vulg; MT 1

same dimensions as the other square shapes that formed the basis of the cosmically ordered temple mount. The building instructions of these chambers (42:13-14) conclude with the function and directions for how to keep the space holy.

42:15-20 Ezekiel's guide finally measures the entire worship grounds, a massive square 750 feet on each side (cf. also Ezek 45:2).

42:20 *So he made a division between the holy and the ordinary*: the purpose of the temple compound. The issue is equally keeping the defiled things out and allowing for access to the holy (cf. Ezek 44:5, 23).

43:1-9 In one of the most dramatic scenes in the book, the visionary temple tour climaxes with the Lord's glory entering the temple and announcing that God's presence will once again be enthroned in the most holy place (43:7). The route of the glory retraces the steps taken in Ezekiel 10-11, when it abandoned the defiled temple.

43:1-2 *coming in from the east*: See Ezekiel 11:22-23, where the glory is described as leaving the temple precinct and resting on the mountain to the east (i.e., Mount of Olives). *like the sound of a mighty flood*: Compare with Ezekiel 1:24. *the glory*: Compare with Ezekiel 1:28, 3:12, 23; 8:4; 10:4, 18; 11:23.

43:3 *when he came to destroy the city*: a reference to the six executioners (cf. Ezek 9:1-11). *Chebar River*: Compare with Ezekiel 1:1, 3; 3:15, 23.

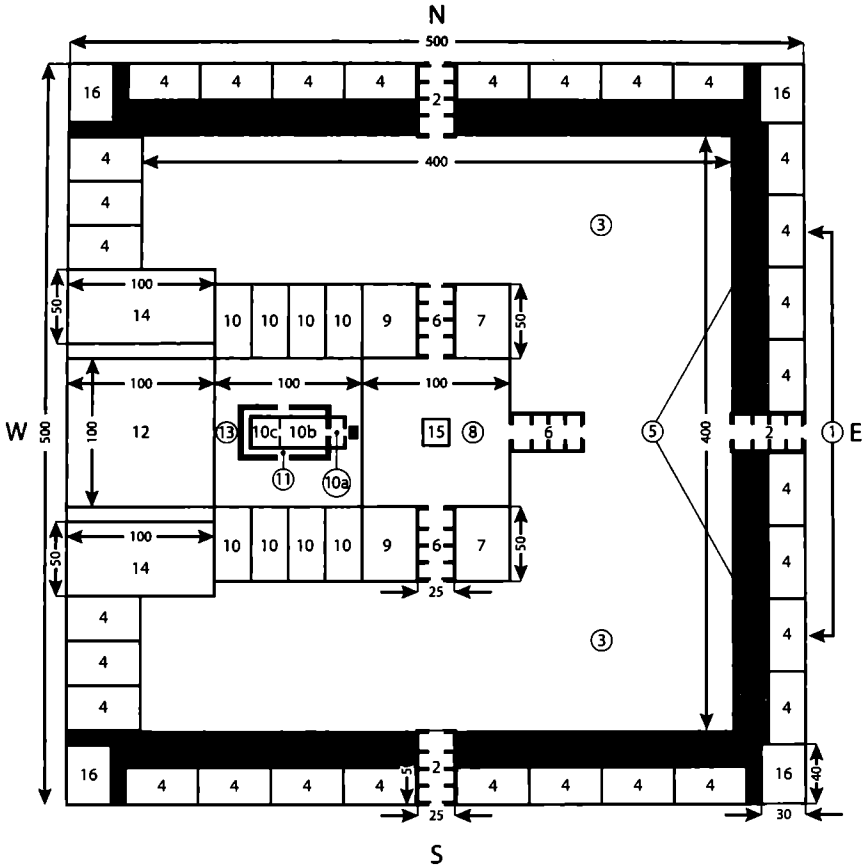
43:4 *east gate*: Compare with Ezekiel 10:19.

43:5 *A wind*: Compare with Ezekiel 1:4; 2:2; 3:12, 24; 8:3; 11:1. *the Lord's glory filled the temple*: Reversing the glory's previous exit (cf. Ezek 10:4, 18-19; Exod 40:35).

43:6 *but the voice that I heard came from inside the temple*: The location makes it clear that this is the voice of the Lord's glory (cf. Ezek 1:28).

43:7 *the place for my throne*: This verse reestablishes the Lord's throne room in the temple, which the abominations

## The Temple of Ezekiel's Vision



- |                        |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. 40:5                | Outer Wall                    |
| 2. 40:5-16, 20-27      | Outer Gates                   |
| 3. 40:17-19            | Outer Courtyard               |
| 4. 40:12               | Rooms                         |
| 5. 40:18               | Lower Pavement                |
| 6. 40:28-37            | Inner Gates                   |
| 7. 40:38               | Rooms for Washing Offerings   |
| 8. 40:44               | Inner Courtyard               |
| 9. 40:44-46            | Chambers for the Priests      |
| 10. 40:48-41:11, 15-26 | Temple                        |
| 10a. 40:48-49          | Porch of the Temple           |
| 10b. 41:1-2            | Main Hall of the Temple       |
| 10c. 41:3-4            | The Most Holy Place           |
| 11. 41:9b-10           | Side Chambers of the Temple   |
| 12. 41:12-14           | The Structure on the West     |
| 13. 41:13              | The Temple Yard               |
| 14. 42: 1-14           | Chambers for Eating Offerings |
| 15. 43:13-17           | Altar                         |
| 16. 46:19-24           | Kitchens                      |

All measurements on this diagram are in cubits.

44:1 Eze 40:6,  
Eze 43:1  
44:2 Eze 43:2,  
Eze 43:4  
44:3 Gn 31:54;  
Eze 24:9;  
Eze 34:24,  
Eze 46:2,  
Eze 46:8

this is the place for my throne and the place for the soles of my feet, where I will dwell among the Israelites forever. The house of Israel will never again defile my holy name, neither they nor their kings, with their disloyalties<sup>m</sup> and with their kings' corpses at the shrines. <sup>8</sup>When they set their plazas<sup>n</sup> with mine and their doorposts next to mine, the wall was between us. They defiled my holy name with their detestable practices, so I consumed them in my anger. <sup>9</sup>Now let them remove their disloyalties and their kings' corpses from me, and I will dwell among them forever.

<sup>10</sup>You, human one, describe the temple to the house of Israel. Let them be humiliated because of their guilt when they think about its design. <sup>11</sup>When they feel humiliated by all that they have done, make known to them the shape of the temple and its adornment, its exits and its entrances, its entire plan and all of its regulations.<sup>o</sup> Write them down in their sight so that they may observe all of its entire plan and all its regulations and perform them.

<sup>12</sup>These are the instructions for the temple: the top of the mountain, as well as its boundaries all around, are most holy. These are the instructions for the temple.

### The altar

<sup>13</sup>These are the dimensions of the altar, according to a twenty-one-inch unit of measure.<sup>p</sup> The base is twenty-one inches high and twenty-one inches wide, with an outer curb measuring one and a half inches all around. This is the altar's height. <sup>14</sup>From the base at ground level to the lower ledge is forty-two inches; the lower ledge is twenty-one inches wide. The distance from the lower to the upper ledge is seven feet; the upper ledge is twenty-one inches wide. <sup>15</sup>The hearth is seven feet high, with four horns projecting upward from the hearth. <sup>16</sup>The hearth is twenty-one feet square; each side is equal to the others. <sup>17</sup>The ledge around the hearth is twenty-four and a half feet long by twenty-four and a half feet wide, a square. Its outer rim is ten and a half inches, and its base all around is twenty-one inches. Its ramp faces east.

### Purification of the altar

<sup>18</sup>He said to me, Human one, the LORD God proclaims: These are the regulations established for the altar on the day when it is prepared for making entirely burned offerings and dashing blood on it. <sup>19</sup>You will provide a young bull as a purification offering to the levitical priests who are descendants of Zadok, the ones who may draw near to minister to me. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>20</sup>You will take some of its blood and set it on the four horns of the

<sup>m</sup>Or prostitution <sup>n</sup>Or thresholds <sup>o</sup>LXX; MT adds and all of its structures and all of its instructions. <sup>p</sup>Heb *ammah ammah*, traditionally a long cubit

of the people had earlier driven away (cf. Ezek 8:6). For the temple as the Lord's throne room, compare Isaiah 6:1-3; Psalms 9:7-12; 99:1-5. *the place for the soles of my feet*: Excavations in the ancient Near East indicate that thrones were regularly equipped with footstools (cf. 2 Chron 9:18). The Lord's throne had a footstool (cf. Pss 99:5; 132:7), which in some texts was identified as the chest containing the covenant (cf. 1 Chron 28:2). Note also Isaiah 66:1, in which heaven is God's throne, and the earth God's footstool. *where I will dwell among the Israelites*: Language used in connection with the Lord's presence in the midst of Israel (1 Chron 23:25; Ps 15:1), managed through the Lord's dwelling (cf. Exod 25:8; 29:45, 46), and Solomon's temple (cf. Deut 12:5, 11; 14:23; 1 Kgs 6:13; 8:12 // 2 Chron 6:1). The establishment of the Lord's throne establishes the precedent for the nation's access to God through priestly ritual (cf. Ezek 43:27).

43:9 *remove . . . their kings' corpses from me*: The practice here is unclear. Some beliefs about the afterlife, however, involved the idea that dead ancestors went before the gods to speak on behalf of their living descendants (see sidebar, "Death and Afterlife in the Ancient Near East" at Ezek 32). As the patriarchs of the nation, the kings would speak with the national god on behalf of

the people. Ezekiel signals here a theological shift in the role of the king before the Lord (see sidebar, "The Demotion of the King in Ezekiel" at Ezek 34; and cf. Isa 8:19-22).

43:10-12 The conclusion to this initial part of the vision, which describes the measurements of the future temple.

43:10 *Let them be humiliated*: Compare with Ezekiel 14:22-23, 16:63; 20:43; 36:31.

43:13-17 The dimensions of the altar. As with all of the structures on the temple mount, the altar is a square (43:17). In addition, the altar was a stepped structure, symbolizing the mountain of God (cf. Ezek 40:2).

43:17 *Its ramp faces east*: The officiating priest faces the temple as he ascends the altar, preventing anyone from turning their backs to the Lord, and thereby avoiding worship of the sun (cf. Ezek 8:16).

43:18-27 Detailed instructions are given for making the altar holy over the course of seven days (cf. Exod 29:36-37; 40:10; Lev 8:11; and Num 7:1-88, in which 12 days are prescribed, one for each tribe).

43:19 *to the levitical priests who are descendants of Zadok*: Ezekiel's theology of holiness involved a strict hierarchy, especially in regard to priestly families (cf. Ezek 40:45-46; 44:9-14, 15-31).

altar and on the four sides of the ledge and on the curb all around. So you will purify it and purge it. <sup>21</sup>Then you will take the bull selected as the purification offering, and the priests will burn it in a designated place of the temple outside of the sanctuary. <sup>22</sup>On the second day, you will present a flawless male goat as a purification offering. The priests will purify the altar just as they purified the altar with the bull. <sup>23</sup>When you have completed the purification, you will present a flawless bull from the herd and a flawless ram from the flock. <sup>24</sup>You will present them to the LORD. The priests will throw salt on them and offer them as entirely burned offerings to the LORD. <sup>25</sup>Daily, for seven days, you will present a male goat for a purification offering. You will also present a bull from the herd and a ram from the flock, both flawless. <sup>26</sup>For seven days the priests will purge the altar in order to purify it and to dedicate it. <sup>27</sup>When the seven days are completed, the priests will offer you entirely burned offerings and your well-being sacrifices on the altar from the eighth day on, and I will accept you with pleasure. This is what the LORD God says.

44:9 Eze 44:7  
44:10 Eze 48:11  
44:11 Nm 16:9;  
1Ch 26:1;  
2Ch 29:34  
44:12 Eze 14:3;  
Eze 14:4  
44:13 Nm 18:3;  
2Ki 23:9  
44:15 Eze 40:46;  
Eze 43:19;  
Eze 44:7  
44:16 Eze 41:22  
44:20 Lv 21:5;  
Nm 6:5  
44:22 Lv 21:7;  
Lv 21:13;  
Lv 21:14  
44:27 Lv 4:3;  
Eze 44:17

### The closed gate

**44** He brought me back to the outer sanctuary gate that faces east. It was closed. <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to me, This gate remains closed. It shouldn't be opened. No one should come in through it because the LORD, Israel's God, has entered through it. It will remain closed. <sup>3</sup>As for the prince, he may sit in it to eat bread in the LORD's presence. He may come in and go out by way of the gate's porch.

### Foreigners, Levites, Zadokites

<sup>4</sup>Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple. I looked, and suddenly the LORD's glory filled the LORD's temple, and I fell on my face. <sup>5</sup>Then the LORD said to me: Human one, pay close attention! Use your eyes and ears and listen to all that I say to you concerning the regulations of the LORD's temple and all its instructions. Pay close attention to the access to the temple through all the sanctuary portals. <sup>6</sup>Speak to the rebels, to the house of Israel, The LORD God proclaims: Enough of your detestable practices, house of Israel! <sup>7</sup>You made my temple unclean because you brought into my sanctuary foreigners who were physically and spiritually uncircumcised. When you offered my food of fat and blood to me, you<sup>f</sup> broke my covenant with all your detestable practices. <sup>8</sup>You didn't keep charge of my holy things. On the contrary, you appointed them<sup>g</sup> to keep charge in my sanctuary for you.

<sup>f</sup>Or exits <sup>g</sup>LXX, Syr, Vulg; MT they <sup>h</sup>Heb lacks them.

43:27 *I will accept you with pleasure:* The defiling, detestable practices had separated the Lord and the people (cf. Ezek 8:6). Now through priestly purification rituals, Ezekiel promises an audience with the divine king (cf. Ezek 43:7).

44:1-3 The east gate can be locked because the Lord will dwell with the people forever (Ezek 43:7, 9).

44:3 The prince, though demoted and limited in his duties, is given this one privilege as the patron of the temple (see sidebar, "The Demotion of the King in Ezekiel" at Ezek 34; and cf. Ezek 46:1-2). Nevertheless, he can go no further than the threshold of the gate, and isn't allowed into the inner court (cf. Ezek 46:2, 8).

44:4-31 Within the context of access (44:5), the text discusses different groups within the general population, condemning once more the house of Israel (44:5-8), limiting access by foreigners to the sanctuary (44:9), demoting the Levites (44:10-14), and promoting the Zadokite priestly order, who are allowed to approach God's presence on behalf of the nation (44:15-31).

44:4 While in the outer court, in front of the locked east gate (Ezek 44:1-2), Ezekiel must be led by his heavenly guide through the north gate in order to enter the inner court as the setting for receiving the Instruction. Ezekiel's audience understood the temple as God's mountain, and so this passage has strong correlation with Moses

receiving the Instruction at Mount Sinai (cf. Exod 19:3, 9-25; 24:13-18). Ezekiel never mentions Moses or the Instruction from Moses, and the instruction that follows is the only instruction in the OT besides the Instruction from Moses.

44:5 *all its instructions:* The Hebrew word, *torah*, is only applied to teaching dealing with the temple or priestly service in the book of Ezekiel (cf. Ezek 22:26; 43:11, 12; 44:24). In the Pentateuch (Gen to Deut), it is the designation for the entire teaching or instruction that the Lord gave to the nation through Moses (cf. Exod 24:12; Lev 26:46; Num 31:21; Deut 1:5; 4:44; 31:9, 24; 33:4). *the access to the temple through all the sanctuary portals:* The purpose behind the overly elaborate gates is made clear (cf. Ezek 40:5-47).

44:6-8 *You made my temple unclean:* The first group to be identified is the house of Israel, a rebellious lot in Ezekiel (see the note on Ezek 3:1). Their detestable practices (see the note on Ezek 5:9) are what defiled the temple in the first place, and according to Ezekiel, caused the Lord to abandon the temple (cf. Ezek 8:6). The instructions given here, and ultimately to be carried out by the Zadokites (not the Levites), are intended to distinguish between holy and ordinary, clean and unclean (cf. Ezek 44:23; 42:20).

45:1 Nm 34:13;  
Eze 47:21,  
Eze 47:22,  
Eze 48:8,  
Eze 48:29  
45:9 Ps 12:5;  
Jer 22:3;  
Eze 44:6  
45:10 Lv 19:36;  
Pry 11:1;  
Mic 6:11  
45:12 Ex 30:13;  
Lv 27:25;  
Nm 3:47  
45:15 Lv 1:4,  
Lv 6:30;  
Eze 45:17;  
Dan 9:24

<sup>9</sup>The LORD God proclaims: Foreigners who are spiritually and physically uncircumcised must not enter my sanctuary; that is, all foreigners among the Israelites. <sup>10</sup>But the Levites, who went far from me when Israel went astray, who went astray from me after their idols, will bear their guilt. <sup>11</sup>They will keep charge in my sanctuary, and they will oversee the temple gates and keep charge of the temple. They will slaughter the entirely burned offerings and the sacrifices for the people, and they will stand before them to minister to them. <sup>12</sup>Because they ministered to them before their idols, they brought about the downfall of the house of Israel. For that reason I made a solemn pledge against them—this is what the LORD God says—and they will bear their guilt. <sup>13</sup>They won't approach me to officiate for me as priests or approach any of my holy things or the most holy place. Though they will bear their humiliation and the consequences of their detestable practices, <sup>14</sup>I will appoint them to keep charge of the temple, all its work, and all that is done in it.

<sup>15</sup>As for the priests of the levitical family of Zadok who did keep charge of my sanctuary when the Israelites strayed away from me, they will draw near to me to serve me. They will stand in my presence to present fat and blood to me. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>16</sup>They will come into my sanctuary, and they will approach my table to minister to me. They will keep my charge. <sup>17</sup>When they come through the gates to the inner courtyard, they will wear linen garments. They won't wear any wool when they minister at the gates of the inner courtyard or in the temple. <sup>18</sup>They will have linen turbans on their heads and linen undergarments around their waists. They won't wear anything that makes them sweat. <sup>19</sup>When they go out to the outer courtyard to the people, they will remove the garments in which they were ministering. They will lay them aside in the holy chambers and wear other clothing. They must not transfer holiness to the people through their clothing. <sup>20</sup>They must neither shave their heads nor let their hair grow long, but they will trim the hair on their heads. <sup>21</sup>None of the priests should drink wine when they come into the inner courtyard. <sup>22</sup>They must not marry widows or divorced women, but only Israelite virgins. Priests may, however, marry the widows of other priests. <sup>23</sup>They must teach my people the difference between the holy and the ordinary, and show them the difference between clean and unclean. <sup>24</sup>They must execute judgments according to my case laws in cases of civil conflict. They must observe my instructions and my regulations regarding all my festivals. They must keep my sabbaths holy. <sup>25</sup>In order to avoid uncleanness, they must not approach the dead. They may, however, become unclean for their father or mother, son or daughter, brother or unmarried sister. <sup>26</sup>Once the priest is clean again, he must count off seven days. <sup>27</sup>On the day that he comes into the holy place, the inner courtyard, to minister in the holy place, he will present his purification offering. This is what the LORD God says. <sup>28</sup>As for their inheritance, I am their inheritance.

44:9 *Foreigners*: The text refers to immigrants. The stipulation here is that they shouldn't be given access to the temple, in preparation for highlighting the sins of the Levites (Ezek 44:10-14). Elsewhere in the book, foreigners were to be welcomed (cf. Ezek 47:21-23; and see Lev 19:33; Num 9:14; Deut 10:18).

44:10-14 The instructions governing the Levites relegate them to temple service and sacrificial preparation (44:11, 13), lesser tasks than ministry to the Lord's presence (44:12-13).

44:10 *who went far from me... will bear their guilt*: The historical circumstances that Ezekiel describes have now been lost. While Ezekiel takes a dim view of the Levites, other texts secure a place of honor for them (cf. Deut 18:1-8; 27:11-26).

44:13 *They won't approach me*: another expression of Ezekiel 8:6.

44:15-31 Ezekiel now outlines for the Zadokites the instructions opening up access to the Lord's presence.

44:15 *of the levitical family of Zadok*: The Zadokites were a specific line within the levitical family (cf. 1 Chron 6:1-10). *They will stand in my presence*: Privileged service is granted to the Zadokites (cf. Ezek 44:13; see Ezek 40:46).

44:16 *come into my sanctuary... approach my table*: the

table holding the bread of presence (cf. Ezek 41:22; and cf. Exod 25:23-30; Lev 24:5-9; 1 Kgs 6:20; 7:48 ). Note the contrast to the Levites, who "keep charge in my sanctuary" (Ezek 44:11), with no mention of service to the Lord or in relationship to this table.

44:17 *through the gates*: Compare with Ezekiel 44:5. *linen*: the distinctive fabric worn by priests (cf. Ezek 9:2; and Exod 28:1-43; Lev 16:4; Dan 10:5).

44:18 *linen turbans*: Symbols of authority that Ezekiel and his exilic colleagues were commanded to continue wearing (cf. Ezek 24:17, 23).

44:19-27 *they will remove the garments*: This and the other list of practices commanded in these verses guarantee the holiness of the temple.

44:23 *They must teach my people the difference between the holy and the ordinary... clean and unclean*: the correction to the initial problem posed by the people's detestable practices (cf. Ezek 44:6-8; Ezek 42:20; and cf. Ezek 8:6).

44:24 *They must execute judgments... in cases of civil conflict*: One of the duties of the priests was to teach and interpret the Instruction. In Deuteronomy, this role was assigned to the Levites (cf. Deut 17:8-13, 18; 27:9, 11-26; 31:24-29).

44:28 *I am their inheritance*: also said of the Levites (cf. Deut 19:1-8).



They won't be given family property in Israel; I am their family property. <sup>29</sup>They will eat the grain offerings, the purification offerings, and the compensation offerings. Every dedicated thing in Israel belongs to them. <sup>30</sup>The best of the early produce of every kind, and every contribution, all of them, belong to the priests. You will give the best of your bread dough to the priest so that a blessing may come to rest on your household. <sup>31</sup>The priests must not eat any bird or animal that dies naturally or is torn apart by prey.

45:17 LKI 8:63;  
2Ch 31:3;  
Is 66:23;  
Eze 46:4  
45:18 Ex 12:2;  
Lv 16:16  
45:19 Lv 16:18;  
Eze 43:20

### The holy portion

**45** When you distribute the land as an inheritance, you will set aside a holy portion of land for the LORD. It will be 7.1 miles long and 5.68 miles<sup>4</sup> wide. It will be holy throughout the entire area. <sup>2</sup>Out of this portion, an area seven hundred fifty feet by seven hundred fifty feet square will be for the sanctuary. All around it will be an open space seventy-five feet wide. <sup>3</sup>Beginning with this measurement, you will measure out an area 7.1 miles long and 2.84 miles wide. The sanctuary, the most holy place, will lie on it. <sup>4</sup>It is holy, set apart from the land, and it belongs to the priests who draw near to minister in the LORD's sanctuary. It will be a place for their houses, and a holy place for the sanctuary. <sup>5</sup>The area 7.1 miles long and 2.84 miles wide will be for the Levites who minister in the temple. Twenty chambers are theirs as their property. <sup>6</sup>As the property for the city, you will set aside an area 1.42 miles wide and 7.1 miles long next to the holy portion. It will be for the whole house of Israel. <sup>7</sup>The territory for the prince will be on both sides of the holy portion and the city property, alongside the holy portion and alongside the city property, from their western boundaries westward and from their eastern boundaries eastward. Its length will equal one tribal portion, from the western border to the eastern border. <sup>8</sup>The land will be his property in Israel, and my princes will no longer oppress my people. They will give the land to the house of Israel according to their tribes.

<sup>9</sup>The LORD God proclaims: Enough, princes of Israel! Turn aside from violence and oppression. Establish justice and righteousness. Cease your evictions of my people! This is what the LORD God says: <sup>10</sup>You must use fair scales, a fair ephah,<sup>5</sup> and a fair bath.<sup>6</sup> <sup>11</sup>The ephah and the bath must be the same size. Both should be calibrated to the homer: each will contain one-tenth of a homer. <sup>12</sup>The shekel must weigh twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels will equal one maneh for you.

### Sacrificial offerings and gifts

<sup>13</sup>These are your prescribed contributions: one-sixth of an ephah for each homer of wheat, and one-sixth of an ephah for each homer of barley; <sup>14</sup>a regular amount of oil,<sup>7</sup> one-tenth of a bath for each kor<sup>8</sup> (each kor<sup>7</sup> contains ten baths); <sup>15</sup>and one sheep from the flock for every

<sup>4</sup>LXX twenty thousand (pechon, standard cubit); MT ten thousand (ammah); see note at Ezek 40:5. <sup>5</sup>One ephah is approximately twenty quarts of grain. <sup>6</sup>One bath is approximately twenty quarts of liquid. <sup>7</sup>Syr, Tg; MT adds a bath of oil. <sup>8</sup>MT adds each homer contains ten baths. <sup>9</sup>Vulg; MT homer

45:1-9 This passage is the first description of the holy portion (cf. also Ezek 48:8-22), which sits in the theological center of the land (cf. Ezek 5:5; 38:12), and which includes space for the sanctuary (45:2), the priests (presumably the Zadokites, 45:3-4), the Levites (45:5), the city (45:6), and the prince (45:7-9). When the area for the city is added to the portion assigned to the temple and the priests, another large square is formed, measuring 7.1 miles on each side (cf. Ezek 48:20).

45:2 an area seven hundred fifty feet by seven hundred fifty feet square. Compare with Ezekiel 42:15-20. an open space seventy-five feet wide: the same length as all of the gates (cf. Ezek 40:15, 21, 25, 29, 33, 36), and equally for the purpose of preserving the temple's holiness.

45:4 the priests who draw near to minister in the Lord's sanctuary: The priests here are presumably the Zadokites, because they are the ones allowed to minister in the Lord's presence in the sanctuary (cf. Ezek 44:16, and Ezek 44:13).

45:7-9 Land given to the prince removes his portion away from the temple, but also is designed to secure fairer treatment of the people. This land allows the prince, as the

patron of the temple (see sidebar, "The Demotion of the King in Ezekiel" at Ezek 34), to raise livestock and produce to supply the needs of the temple. In the past, the kings taxed the population for the maintenance of their own palace and the temple (45:9; cf. 1 Sam 8:10-18). Kings had also encroached on ancestral inheritance (cf. 1 Kgs 21:1-16). This provision stops the annexation of private lands (cf. Ezek 46:16-18).

45:10-17 The role of the prince is restricted in these verses to that of patron in service to the temple. Nowhere in Ezekiel's Instruction is the prince given any authority over temple proceedings or over governing of the state.

45:10-12 In preparation for prescriptions for the various offerings (Ezek 45:13-17), proper weights and measures are commanded.

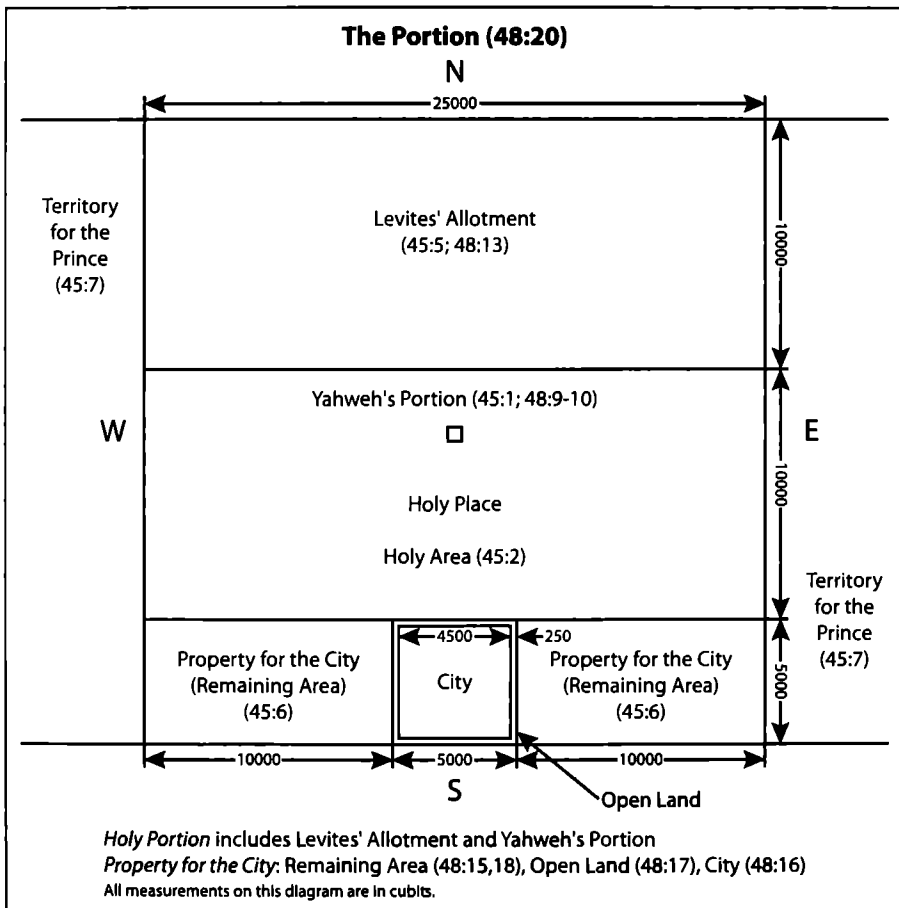
45:13-16 For their own reconciliation with God (45:15), the people offer sacrifices, in which the prince plays a role (45:16). See Leviticus for descriptions of these offerings: grain (Lev 2:1-16; 6:14-18); entirely burned (Lev 1:3-17; 6:8-13); well-being (Lev 3:1-17; 7:11-21); purification (Lev 4:1-5:13; Num 15:22-31).

45:21 Lv 23:5  
 45:23 Lv 23:8;  
 Nm 23:1;  
 Job 42:8  
 45:24 Nm 28:12;  
 Eze 46:5  
 45:25 Lv 23:34;  
 Nm 29:12  
 46:1 Ex 20:9;  
 Is 66:23  
 46:3 Is 66:23  
 46:4 Nm 28:9;  
 Eze 45:17  
 46:9 Ex 23:14;  
 Dt 16:16

two hundred from Israel's pastureland, for grain offerings, for entirely burned offerings, and for well-being sacrifices to make reconciliation for them. This is what the LORD God says. **16**All the people will make this contribution on behalf of the prince in Israel. **17**The prince will be responsible for the entirely burned offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings for the festivals, new moons, and sabbaths, all the appointed festivals of the house of Israel. He will offer the purification offering, the grain offering, the entirely burned offering, and the well-being sacrifice to make reconciliation on behalf of the house of Israel.

**Festivals**

**18**The LORD God proclaims: On the first day of the first month,\* you will take a flawless young bull from the herd, and you will purify the sanctuary. **19**The priest will take some of the blood from the purification offering, and he will set it on the doorposts of the temple and on the four corners of the ledge of the altar and on the doorposts of the gate to the inner courtyard. **20**You will do the same on the seventh day of the month for anyone who sins



\*March-April, Nisan

**45:17** The prince, in turn, makes sacrifices on festival days and for the reconciliation of the people.  
**45:18-25** Provisions are made for supplying the proper sacrifices for three annual festivals: the Day of Reconciliation (45:18-20; cf. Lev 16:1-34); Passover (45:21-24; cf.

Exod 12:1-28; Num 9:1-14; Deut 16:1-8; 2 Kgs 23:21-23); and the Festival of Booths (45:25; cf. Lev 23:33-36; Num 29:12-38; Deut 16:13-15). Ezekiel's liturgical calendar diverges from other calendars found elsewhere in the OT (cf. Num 28).

through inadvertence or ignorance. So you will purge the temple. <sup>21</sup>Your Passover will be on the fourteenth day of the first month. Unleavened bread will be eaten during the seven days of the festival. <sup>22</sup>On that day, the prince will provide a young bull as the purification offering for himself and for the people of the land. <sup>23</sup>For the seven days of the festival, he will provide seven flawless bulls and seven flawless rams, one for each day of the festival, as the entirely burned offering for the LORD, and, for the purification offering, one male goat for each day. <sup>24</sup>He will also provide the grain offerings, one ephah<sup>a</sup> for each bull, and one ephah for each ram, with one hin<sup>b</sup> of oil for each ephah. <sup>25</sup>For the festival that begins on the fifteenth day of the seventh month,<sup>c</sup> he will make the same provisions for the purification offerings, entirely burned offerings, grain offerings, and oil, for all seven days of the festival.

### Sabbaths and gift offerings

**46** The LORD God proclaims: The east-facing gate of the inner courtyard will remain closed for the six days of the workweek. But on the Sabbath and on the day of the new moon it will be opened, <sup>2</sup>and the prince will come in from outside by way of the porch of the gate and stand at the gate's doorposts. The priests will present the prince's entirely burned offerings and well-being sacrifices, and then he will bow down on the threshold of the gate and go out. The gate won't be closed until evening <sup>3</sup>so that the people of the land may bow in the presence of the LORD on sabbaths and new moons at the opening of that gate. <sup>4</sup>On the Sabbath day, the prince will offer to the LORD an entirely burned offering of six flawless lambs and a flawless ram, <sup>5</sup>a grain offering of one ephah for the ram, and a grain offering at his discretion for the lambs, with one hin of oil for each ephah. <sup>6</sup>For the day of the new moon, the offering will be a flawless young bull from the herd, six lambs, and a flawless ram, <sup>7</sup>and he will provide a grain offering of one ephah each for the bull and the ram, and for the lambs as much as he likes, with one hin of oil for each ephah.

<sup>8</sup>When the prince enters, he comes in by way of the porch of the gate and goes out in the same direction. <sup>9</sup>When the people of the land come into the LORD's presence for the festivals, those who enter through the north gate to worship should go out through the south, and those who come in through the south gate should go out through the north gate. They shouldn't turn around and go out the same way they came in. Instead, they should go out the opposite gate. <sup>10</sup>The prince should accompany them: when they come in, he comes in, and when they go out, he goes out. <sup>11</sup>At the festivals and appointed gatherings, the grain offering is one ephah for each bull, one ephah for each ram, and whatever one is able to give for each lamb, with one hin of oil for each ephah.

<sup>12</sup>Whenever the prince makes a spontaneous gift to the LORD, whether it is an entirely burned offering or a well-being sacrifice, the gate facing east will be opened for him, and he will present his entirely burned offering and well-being sacrifices, just as he does on the Sabbath day. When he leaves, the gate will be closed after he has gone out.

### Daily offerings

<sup>13</sup>As a daily entirely burned offering for the LORD, you will provide a flawless year-old lamb. You will make the offering every morning. <sup>14</sup>You will provide a grain offering along

<sup>a</sup>One ephah is approximately twenty quarts of grain. <sup>b</sup>One hin is approximately equal to one gallon.

<sup>c</sup>September–October, Tishrei

46:1-12 Access to holy purification is regulated for two important secular parties: the prince (46:1-12) and the people of the land (46:3, 9-12; Ezek 45:22; see the note on Ezek 22:29). The instruction from Moses prescribes different celebrations for both the Sabbath (cf. Num 28:9-10) and the new moon (cf. Num 28:11-15).

46:1-2 *the east-facing gate of the inner courtyard ... the prince will come in from outside*: The movement of the prince is carefully directed. The east gate is the gate of honor, because the Lord enters by it (cf. Ezek 44:1-2), and the ramp of the altar is on the east side, closest to the east gate of the inner court (cf. Ezek 43:17). Thus, among the secular segments of society, the prince alone as the patron of the temple is allowed to worship there. Still, he may go no farther (Ezek 46:2-3, 8; 44:3).

46:3, 9-10 *the people of the land may bow in the presence of the Lord*: Significantly, they are not allowed through the east gate, into the inner court, but may only access the inner court by means of the north or south gate. The prohibition against turning around may reflect another attempt to avoid turning one's back to God (cf. Ezek 8:16; 43:17).

46:10 *The prince should accompany them*: The prince and the people of the land are set on the same social level when they enter the inner court. Any hierarchical distinctions are leveled. Only when the prince worships alone is he granted a privilege with a place in the east gate, and then he never enters into the inner court.

46:12 *just as he does on the Sabbath day*: In other words, the prince is again restricted to the east gate.

46:13-15 The directions for the daily offering (cf. Num

46:17 Lv 25:10  
 46:20 2Ch 35:13;  
 Eze 44:19  
 47:1 Ps 46:4;  
 Is 55:1; Il 3:18;  
 Zec 14:8;  
 Rev 22:1

with it every morning, one-sixth of an ephah along with one-third of a hin of oil to moisten the choice flour. This is a permanent and perpetual regulation for the grain offering to the LORD. <sup>15</sup>So the lamb, the grain offering, and the oil are provided every morning as a perpetual entirely burned offering.

### Royal land grants

<sup>16</sup>The LORD God proclaims: When the prince gives a gift to each of his sons, it becomes their inheritance. It becomes their family property as an inheritance. <sup>17</sup>And if he gives one of his servants a gift from his inheritance, it will belong to the servant only until the year of release, and then it will revert to the prince. It is his children's inheritance; it belongs to them. <sup>18</sup>The prince won't take the people's inheritance by evicting them from their family property. He will bequeath only his own property to his sons, lest any of my people be deprived of their rightful property.

### Kitchens

<sup>19</sup>Then he brought me through the passage beside the gate next to the priests' quarters, the holy chambers facing north. There was a place hidden away on the western side. <sup>20</sup>He said to me, "Rather than taking these offerings out into the outer courtyard and transferring holiness to the people, this is the place where the priests will boil the compensation offerings and the purification offerings, and where they will bake the grain offerings."

<sup>21</sup>Then he took me to the outer courtyard, and he had me pass through its four corners, and I saw that there were additional courtyards in each of the corners. <sup>22</sup>In all four corners of the courtyard, these courtyards were constructed to handle smoke. All four were the same size, sixty feet long by forty-five feet wide. <sup>23</sup>All four had stone masonry all the way around, and hearths were built under this masonry all the way around. <sup>24</sup>He said to me, "These are the kitchens where those who minister in the temple cook the people's sacrifices."

### The river

**47**When he brought me back to the temple's entrance, I noticed that water was flowing toward the east from under the temple's threshold (the temple faced east). The water was going out from under the temple's facade toward the south, south of the altar. <sup>2</sup>He led me out through the north gate and around the outside to the outer east gate, where the

28:3-8), which again differ from those given in Moses' instruction.

46:16-18 Stipulations regarding the land granted to the prince (cf. Ezek 45:7-12) reserve this portion for his family forever. This guarantees that the temple's patron will have the resources necessary to maintain the temple practices (46:17), but it also aims at protecting the citizens from future attempts by the prince of seizing land for his government (cf. Ezek 45:9).

46:17 *and if he gives one of his servants a gift from his inheritance . . . until the year of release.* The year of release is the jubilee year (cf. Ezek 40:1; Lev 25:3-8). See this issue also in Genesis 15:2-3, where the blessings from God are threatened by being given an inheritance to someone not chosen by God.

46:19-24 Ezekiel resumes his tour of the temple area, now viewing the kitchens where sacrificial meals will be prepared and shared. The passage focuses on maintaining the holiness of the offerings (46:20). Thus one area is designated for the priests, which connected to their chambers adjoining the inner court (46:19-20; cf. Ezek 42:1-14). On the margins of the outer court, nestled away in its four corners, other courtyards are appointed for the sacrificial meals of the people (46:21-24). The sacrificial meals of the Zadokite priests and those of the people are kept separate and appropriately clean.

46:19 *Then he brought me.* Ezekiel's guide has reappeared, last seen in Ezekiel 44:4. At that point in the tour, the bronze man led Ezekiel to the inner court by way

of the north gate. The gate beside the passage is clearly this north gate ("the holy chambers facing north").

46:24 *those who minister in the temple:* apparently Levites (cf. Ezek 44:11).

47:1-12 The prophet's guide now leads him out of the temple precinct proper, in order to show him the blessings outside of the temple that God will bring, once proper temple service has been restored. The vision of this river paradise is full of theologically rich images, all of which were obvious to his exilic audience. In brief, 47:1-12 is a vision of Eden, God's garden, from which a life-giving stream flows, nourishing all of creation. This iconic image was an important aspect of the theology in the Jerusalem royal court for its priests (cf. Ps 46:4; Joel 3:18; Zech 13:1; 14:8). Ezekiel alluded to it often in his mention of plentiful waters (cf. Ezek 17:5; 8; 27:26; 31:7).

47:1 *to the temple's entrance:* The guide leads Ezekiel back into the inner court, where he can see the entrance to the temple (cf. Ezek 8:16; 41:14; 43:1-4).

47:2 *out through the north gate:* The eastern gate could only be entered by the Lord's glory (cf. Ezek 44:1-2), and so only the north gate led immediately out of the temple area. *to the outer east gate, where the water flowed out under the facade:* The water then flowed into the Kidron Valley, which is immediately east of the temple mount. Ezekiel's vision mimics reality, since the Gihon spring sat at the base of the mountain on which David's ancient city sat, and which led, just a bit farther to the north, to the temple compound. The Gihon not only supplied the city

water flowed out under the facade on the south side. <sup>3</sup>With the line in his hand, the man went out toward the east. When he measured off fifteen hundred feet, he made me cross the water; it was ankle-deep. <sup>4</sup>He measured off another fifteen hundred feet and made me cross the water; it was knee-deep. He measured off another fifteen hundred feet and made me cross the water, and it was waist-high. <sup>5</sup>When he measured off another fifteen hundred feet, it had become a river that I couldn't cross. The water was high, deep enough for swimming but too high to cross. <sup>6</sup>He said to me, "Human one, do you see?" Then he led me back to the edge of the river. <sup>7</sup>When I went back, I saw very many trees on both banks of the river. <sup>8</sup>He said to me, "These waters go out to the eastern region, flow down the steep slopes,<sup>d</sup> and go into the Dead Sea.<sup>e</sup> When the flowing waters enter the sea, its water becomes fresh. <sup>9</sup>Wherever the river flows, every living thing that moves will thrive. There will be great schools of fish, because when these waters enter the sea, it will be fresh. Wherever the river flows, everything will live. <sup>10</sup>People will stand fishing beside it, from En-gedi to En-eglayim, and it will become a place for spreading nets. It will be like the Mediterranean Sea,<sup>f</sup> having all kinds of fish in it. <sup>11</sup>Its marshes and swamps won't be made fresh (they are left for salt), <sup>12</sup>but on both banks of the river will grow up all kinds of fruit-bearing trees. Their leaves won't wither, and their fruitfulness won't wane. They will produce fruit in every month, because their water comes from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for eating, their leaves for healing."

<sup>13</sup>The LORD God proclaims: These<sup>g</sup> are the boundaries of the portions of land that will be distributed as an inheritance to the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph will receive two portions. <sup>14</sup>What I swore to give to your ancestors, you will distribute as an inheritance equally. This land is given to you as an inheritance. <sup>15</sup>This is the boundary of the land. The northern limit begins at the Mediterranean Sea and goes in the direction of Hethlon toward Lebo-hamath, Zedad,<sup>h</sup> <sup>16</sup>Berothah, Sibraim (which is between the boundary of Damascus and the boundary of Hamath), and Hazer-hatticon (that is on the boundary of Hauran).

<sup>d</sup>Or *Arabah* <sup>e</sup>Or *sea* <sup>f</sup>Or *great sea* <sup>g</sup>LXX, Tg, Vulg; Heb uncertain <sup>h</sup>LXX; MT transposes *Hamath* and *Zedad*.

of Jerusalem with drinking water; it also watered the fields in the Kidron. Theological significance was, therefore, attached to the Gihon (cf. Gen 2:13; 1 Kgs 1:32-48; Isa 8:6, "the waters of Shiloah").

47:6 *do you see*: The same question was asked of Ezekiel when he encountered the detestable practices that defiled the Lord's sanctuary (cf. Ezek 8:12, 15, 17). Now the prophet is shown the abundant waters by which the land will be fertilized and the people will flourish.

47:7 *very many trees*: a symbol for fruitfulness, life, and at points, an image for Eden (cf. Gen 1:9-12; 2:4-3:24; Ezek 28:11-19).

47:8 *go into the Dead Sea*: The Wadi Kidron empties into the Dead Sea, just south of Qumran. The water of the Dead Sea exceeds 30 percent saline content (compare with less than 4 percent for the oceans), and isn't merely brackish but poisonous.

47:10 *En-gedi*: an important and famous oasis on the western shore of the Dead Sea (cf. 1 Sam 23:29; 24:1; 2 Chron 20:2). *En-eglayim*: an unknown location today.

47:11 *Its marshes and swamps won't be made fresh*: Salt was a treasured commodity in the ancient world (cf. Ezra 4:14; 7:22), used for a variety of purposes, including preserving meats, priestly rituals (cf. Exod 30:35; Lev 2:13; Num 18:19; 2 Chron 13:5; Ezra 6:9), and purifying (cf. Judg 9:45; 2 Kgs 2:20). Ezekiel envisions a controlled, balanced environment, one that has the right amounts of everything necessary for life.

47:13-48:35 Ezekiel turns his prophetic gaze toward populating the revived land, but in an order dictated by his priestly traditions and principles (see sidebar, "Divisions of the Land" at Ezek 48). In ancient Near Eastern thought, the land ultimately belonged to the gods, and the earth was

divided up by region and assigned to various deities, with the land of Canaan belonging to the Lord (cf. Deut 32:8-9). God then elected the Hebrew people to live on the land (cf. Gen 18:17-19; Deut 7:6; 14:2; Pss 33:12; 105:6, 43; 135:4; Isa 41:8-9; 44:1), in order to worship the Lord according to the covenantal instructions (cf. Lev 26:3-46; Deut 28:1-2, 15; 30:15-20). To their benefit for following the teaching, the people will reap blessings from the land (cf. Pss 46:4; 106:5; Ezek 47:1-12). So for Ezekiel, who is familiar with these traditions, the full end of his people's punishment will come when they once again inherit the land (cf. Ezek 20:39-44; 34:25-31; 37:11-14, 20-28).

47:13 *Joseph will receive two portions*: This accounts for the portions for the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (cf. Ezek 37:15-19; Gen 48; Num 1:10; 26:28, 37; Josh 14:4; 17:14-18).

47:14 *What I swore to give to your ancestors*: The precise ancestors Ezekiel had in mind can't be discerned here, but Jacob and his sons are named most prominently elsewhere in the book (Ezek 20:5; 28:25; 37:25). Abraham receives one mention, but from the survivors who were cast out by God (cf. Ezek 33:24), who mistakenly hope for possession of the land. Isaac is never mentioned.

47:15 *the boundary of the land*: The boundaries outlined here follow those of Numbers 34:1-12 in most of their particulars. Both texts reflect an ancient, idealized tradition of the land of Canaan, dating perhaps to 1400-1200 BCE, though the eastern boundary (Ezek 47:18) seems to reflect Ezekiel's knowledge of provincial boundaries established by the Assyrians in the 8th century BCE.

47:15-17 As an exile in Mesopotamia, Ezekiel begins with the northern boundary, in contrast to the outline given in Numbers 34, which was oriented with the exodus out of Egypt. The northern boundary is far to the north of Dan,

47:8 Dt 1:1;  
Dl 3:17;  
Josh 3:16  
47:10 Nm 34:6;  
Eze 26:5,  
Eze 48:28  
47:12 Gn 2:9;  
Ps 1:3; Jer 17:8;  
Eze 47:7;  
Rev 22:2

17:22-26:14:1

18:2

Josh 19:24-31

18:1

Josh 19:32-39

48:4

Josh 17:1-11

48:5 Josh 16:5-9

48:6

Josh 13:15-21

48:7

Josh 15:1-63

38:11 2Sa 8:17

<sup>17</sup>So the boundary from the Mediterranean Sea<sup>1</sup> to Hazar-enon will run north of the boundary of Damascus, with the boundary of Hamath to the north. This is the northern limit. <sup>18</sup>For the eastern limit, you will measure continuously between Hauran and Damascus and between Gilead and the land of Israel, along the Jordan River as far as the Dead Sea.<sup>1</sup> This is the eastern limit. <sup>19</sup>The southern limit runs from Tamar to the waters of Meribath-kadesh and from there along the border<sup>1</sup> of Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea. This is the southern limit. <sup>20</sup>For the western limit, the Mediterranean Sea is the boundary up to Lebo-hamath. This is the western limit. <sup>21</sup>You will apportion this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. <sup>22</sup>When you distribute the land as an inheritance, the immigrants who reside with you and raise families among you are considered full citizens along with the Israelites. They will receive an inheritance along with you among the tribes of Israel. <sup>23</sup>You will assign the immigrants' inheritance with the tribe with whom they reside. This is what the LORD God says.

**48**These are the tribes' names: Beginning at the north, along the Hethlon road from Lebo-hamath to Hazar-enon, the boundary of Damascus with Hamath to the north, from the eastern border to the western border: Dan, one portion. <sup>2</sup>Along the boundary of Dan from the eastern border to the western border: Asher, one portion. <sup>3</sup>Along the boundary of Asher from the eastern border to the western border: Naphtali, one portion. <sup>4</sup>Along the boundary of Naphtali from the eastern border to the western border: Manasseh, one portion. <sup>5</sup>Along the boundary of Manasseh from the eastern border to the western border: Ephraim, one portion. <sup>6</sup>Along the boundary of Ephraim from the eastern border to the western border: Reuben, one portion. <sup>7</sup>Along the boundary of Reuben from the eastern border to the western border: Judah, one portion.

<sup>8</sup>Along the boundary of Judah from the eastern border to the western border will be the portion that you will set aside, 7.1 miles wide and the length of a tribal portion from the eastern border to the western border. The sanctuary is in its center. <sup>9</sup>The portion that you will set aside for the LORD will be 7.1 miles long and 5.68 miles<sup>1</sup> wide. <sup>10</sup>These measurements define the holy portion for the priests: along the north, a length of 7.1 miles; along the west, a width of 2.84 miles; along the east, a width of 2.84 miles; and along the south, a length of 7.1 miles. The LORD's sanctuary is in its center. <sup>11</sup>This holy area is for the Zadokite priests who kept my charge and didn't stray as the Levites did when the house of Israel strayed away

<sup>1</sup>Or the sea <sup>1</sup>Or eastern sea <sup>1</sup>Or Wadi; traditionally Brook <sup>1</sup>Cf LXX and Ezek 45:1; MT *ten thousand ammah* equals 2.84 miles.

and thus far from any actual political boundary ever realized by Israel.

47:18 Ezekiel's eastern boundary actually doesn't claim land east of the Jordan, possessed by Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh during Israel's history (cf. Num 32; Deut 3:12-20; Josh 13:8-32; 22).

47:19 *waters of Meribath-kadesh*: Kadesh was the southern rest station for the Israelites, when they first prepared to enter the land (cf. Num 13:26), and from which they were eventually sentenced to wander farther eastward for 40 more years in the wilderness (cf. Num 20:1, 16; 33:36). It represented for Ezekiel space between the ordered, life-giving land and the chaotic wilderness.

47:21-23 *the immigrants who reside with you*: Ezekiel's perspective and other priestly traditions provided for a home for immigrants, that is, non-Israelites living in the land (see the story of Ruth; cf. Lev 19:33; Num 9:14; Deut 10:18), though their access to the sanctuary was restricted (cf. Ezek 44:9). This attitude for a prophet in exile stands in stark contrast to later, disturbing traditions (Num 25:1-18; Ezra 9:1-10:44; Neh 13:1-3, 23-30).

48:1-29 The land is divided among the 12 tribes, paralleling the story of the allotment of the land at the time of the conquest (cf. Josh 14:1-21:45). As Ezekiel does here, the book of Joshua also describes the Lord granting tracts

of land to the various tribes through the priests (cf. Josh 14:1; 17:4; 19:51; 21:43), who determined the Lord's will through the manipulation of lots at the shrine at Shiloh (cf. Josh 14:2; 15:1; 18:1; 19:51).

48:1 *from the eastern border to the western border*: All of the tribal lands, including the holy portion containing the temple, the city, and the prince's land, extended across the entire width of the new land. Such an arbitrary division of boundaries, which doesn't take into account geographical features, cities, population, and agricultural advantages or disadvantages, in reality would not work in practice. Ezekiel's plan, in contrast to the tribal boundaries drawn up in Joshua, is entirely idealized, based in the theological imagination of the priestly prophet. So the order of the tribes in Ezekiel doesn't match any reality that ever existed in Israel. The tribal portions also were assigned in a specific order based on a theological map (see sidebar, "Divisions of the Land").

48:11 *Zadokite priests... the Levites*: Compare Ezekiel 44:10-31.

48:8-22 Another description of the holy portion (cf. Ezek 45:1-9), this time placing it in relationship to the other tribes. In this instance, the Zadokites are given the northern half of the portion (48:10-13), with the Levites receiving the portion just south (Ezek 38:13-14), next to the city.

48:13 Eze 45:5  
 48:16 Rev 21:16  
 48:26 Josh 19:10  
 48:27 Josh 13:24  
 48:30 Eze 48:16,  
 Eze 48:32  
 48:31 Rev 21:12,  
 Rev 21:13

*Divisions of the Land* Ezekiel's rearrangement of the tribes in the land is as peculiar as it is rigid, raising questions about the theological reasoning he employed. For example, Ezekiel transported Judah to the north of the holy portion (48:7), while he pushed Benjamin to its south (48:23). Issachar (48:25) and Zebulun (48:26) are both assigned territory south of the holy portion, even though they had been a part of the northern kingdom. Ezekiel was working on a theological arrangement of space, also evident in the assignment of city gates (48:30-35). A clue to his theological scheme was the hierarchical status of the different mothers of the tribes' original ancestors, and their birth order. The holy portion (48:8-22) is fixed by the geographical location of the temple on Mount Zion at Jerusalem, and it is the anchor for the rest of the ordering of the land. Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel, now adjoins the holy portion's southern border, a favored position. Next all of Leah's sons (Reuben, Judah, Levi, Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun) are placed to the north and south. The tribes descending from the two female servants, Zilpah and Bilhah (Gad, Dan, Asher, and Naphtali), find themselves farthest away from the holy portion.

from me. <sup>12</sup>It belongs to them as a most special portion of the land, a most holy place, up to the border of the Levites. <sup>13</sup>The Levites' allotment is next to the boundary of the priests, a length of 7.1 miles and a width of 2.84 miles. The entire length is 7.1 miles and the width 2.84 miles. <sup>14</sup>None of it will be sold, exchanged, or transferred. It is the choicest land, because it is holy to the LORD. <sup>15</sup>The remaining area, 1.42 miles wide and 7.1 miles long, is for ordinary use for the city, for residences, and for pastures. The city will be in the middle of it. <sup>16</sup>It measures 1.28 miles on its northern border, 1.28 miles on its southern border, 1.28 miles on its eastern border, and 1.28 miles on its western border. <sup>17</sup>There will be pastures for the city, three hundred seventy-five feet on the north side, three hundred seventy-five feet on the south side, three hundred seventy-five feet on the east side, and three hundred seventy-five feet on the west side. <sup>18</sup>The remaining area alongside the holy portion is 2.84 miles on the east and 2.84 miles on the west. These areas that adjoin the holy portion will produce the food for the city's workers. <sup>19</sup>The city's workers from every tribe of Israel will farm it. <sup>20</sup>The entire portion that you will set aside is 7.1 miles by 7.1 miles, a square; it includes the holy portion in addition to the city property. <sup>21</sup>What is left on both sides of the holy portion and the city property belongs to the prince. The land from the edge of the portion of 7.1 miles, to the eastern boundary, and on the western edge of the 7.1 miles to the western boundary, belongs to the prince. It corresponds to one tribal portion. The holy portion and the temple sanctuary are in the middle of it, <sup>22</sup>but what belongs to the prince is separate from both the levitical property and the city property. The prince's territory will be between the boundary of Judah and the boundary of Benjamin.

<sup>23</sup>Now for the rest of the tribes: From the eastern border to the western border: Benjamin, one portion. <sup>24</sup>Along the boundary of Benjamin from the eastern border to the western border: Simeon, one portion. <sup>25</sup>Along the boundary of Simeon from the eastern border to the western border: Issachar, one portion. <sup>26</sup>Along the boundary of Issachar from the eastern border to the western border: Zebulun, one portion. <sup>27</sup>Along the boundary of Zebulun from the eastern border to the western border: Gad, one portion. <sup>28</sup>Along the boundary of Gad to the southern border, the boundary will run from Tamar to the waters of Meribath-kadesh and from there to the border of Egypt<sup>m</sup> and to the Mediterranean Sea. <sup>29</sup>This is the land that you will distribute as an inheritance for the tribes of Israel. These are their portions. This is what the LORD God says.

<sup>30</sup>These are the city exits. The north side is measured at 1.28 miles. <sup>31</sup>The gates of the city go by the names of the tribes of Israel. There are three gates on the north side: one gate for Reuben, one gate for Judah, and one gate for Levi. <sup>32</sup>There are three gates on the east

<sup>m</sup>Or *Wadi*; traditionally *Brook*, MT lacks of *Egypt*. <sup>n</sup>Or *Great Sea*

48:20 *a square*: The shape of this territory is emphasized for theological interests.

48:22 *separate from both the levitical property and the city property*: a reiteration of Ezekiel's concern for the separation of the holy and the ordinary. See also Ezekiel 48:15.

48:30-35a The city gates are named and assigned to specific tribes, according to Ezekiel's priestly notions of order

and the divine will (cf. Num 2:1-34; see sidebar, "Divisions of the Land").

48:31 *three gates on the north*: Since the city sits to the south of the holy portion (Ezek 48:15-19), and the temple compound sits in the middle of it (Ezek 48:21), the city's northern gates don't open up onto the temple's outer court as they did beginning with Solomon's time. The

48:35 Jer 3:17;  
II 3:21; Rev 21:3

side along its 1.28 miles: one gate for Joseph, one gate for Benjamin, and one gate for Dan. <sup>33</sup>There are three gates on the south side measuring 1.28 miles: one gate for Simeon, one gate for Issachar, and one gate for Zebulun. <sup>34</sup>There are three gates on the west side along its 1.28 miles: one gate for Gad, one gate for Asher, and one gate for Naphtali. <sup>35</sup>The circumference of the city is 5.1 miles. As of today, the name of the city is The LORD Is There.

levitical territory intervenes between the city and the temple (Ezek 48:13-14).

48:35b *The LORD Is There*: The final sentence of the book stands out from the rest of the prophetic words, making a very important theological statement. Ezekiel and his

audience began the book in exile, separated from God's presence. Then the Lord's glory appeared to Ezekiel by the Chebar River, and after a series of visions and prophecies, first of judgment, then of restoration, this priest left his audience with a new expectation of dwelling in God's presence.



# DANIEL

The book of Daniel is about God's final plans for the earth and humanity. The Bible's most powerful symbols come together in a vision of end times that have commanded the attention of Jews and Christians for centuries. But Daniel is as much concerned with life in the present as with God's plan for future salvation. That's because thinking about the end time gives the reader a sense of mission in this present world. This book leads the reader to believe that the here and now contains a more lively, profound reality than the naked eye can see. The last things are present already, Daniel claims. Readers should live their ordinary lives, day by day, with last things in mind.

Daniel is a different kind of literature from most other parts of the Bible. It is an "apocalypse" (see sidebar, "Apocalypse" at Dan 3). In an apocalypse, messengers (or "angels" in Greek) help someone understand what lies beyond our present world. The person (here, Daniel) having the vision explores a more important, stronger reality that is on a collision course with

ordinary human history. This type of literature doesn't emphasize common-sense wisdom. Instead, apocalyptic imagination deals with basic conflicts of existence and with evil that is bigger than individual sins. Apocalyptic writing gives rise to a sense of awe at God's presence.

The book of Daniel has two parts. Part one contains folktales about Jews working in a foreign court during the exile in the 500s BCE (Dan 1–6). Part two gives reports of visions (Dan 7–12). Part one includes well-known stories about three young men thrown into a fiery furnace, the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast, and Daniel in the lions' den. Part two contains many strong images that resurface in the NT: monsters like those in nightmares, the "ancient one" (in other translations, the "ancient of days") seated for final judgment, and the arrival of "one like a human being" (usually translated "son of man") on clouds. In part two we also hear about the bodies of the dead being raised to life.

The folktales in the first half of Daniel are set far from Judah, in foreign courts, at the time of



Lion mosaic from the processional street to the Ishtar Gate in Babylon  
*iStockPhoto*

Israel's exile in Babylon and Babylon's defeat by the Persians (606–536 BCE). In some of the stories, the heroes are in danger of death. In others, the heroes simply outperform their rivals in court contests. These stories emphasize God's power over human affairs. When Babylonia's King Nebuchadnezzar bows low in front of his servant Daniel, the reader should think of Isaiah 40–55, which says that earth's rulers will bow down before the lowly exiles, the few survivors from God's chosen people. The story shows that even now, earth's only true ruler is God. It's a small step from this idea to the visions in the second half of the book, which show how God's rule will be established beyond question.

The visions of Daniel 7–12 reveal a heavenly world and the end of ordinary history, close at hand. They contain vibrant, wondrous images of stupendous proportion. They predict the ultimate triumph of good over evil. A steady, unstoppable increase of evil will occur in the world, according to the visions, but it will be followed by God's end-time victory. God is about to take action in history to destroy empires that crush the human spirit. Then God will rule the earth forever and reward the people who have been faithful.

The early chapters of Daniel, the stories about life at court, come from late in the period of Persian rule over Judea and early in the period of Greek control (that is, between 350 and 200 BCE). The book of Daniel reached its final form somewhat later, in the years leading up to 164 BCE. At this time, Judea was under the control of a Greek king in Syria, Antiochus IV, who committed "desolating monstrosities" (Dan 9:27) in the Jerusalem temple and outlawed many Jewish religious practices. This setting makes Daniel the latest book of the OT.

Both major sections of the book of Daniel hint that their authors are wise men. Daniel 1:4 describes the heroes of the court stories as "young men . . . skilled in all wisdom, possessing knowledge, conversant with learning." Daniel 11:33, 35; 12:3, 10 celebrate teachers (also called "those skilled in wisdom") who give instruction and understanding to their people during earth's last days.

In addition to being educated, the wise people in the book of Daniel can interpret special signs and dreams. The Daniel authors probably had similar responsibilities in their work as royal advisors in foreign courts. Because these wise people treasured their Hebrew Bible, their interpretive wisdom took a particularly interesting turn. The puzzles that most interested the authors of Daniel were the riddles of scripture, especially predictions of events that had not yet happened. Group members wrestled with how the unfulfilled ideals and symbols of the Bible would eventually play out in the world. That's why Daniel echoes Isaiah so much.

Life at court was probably competitive and full of pitfalls for the authors of Daniel 1–6, just as it is for the heroes in their stories, but they weren't singled out for harassment. In the court stories, Daniel and his companions face danger because the kings they work for are childish and incompetent, but the kings aren't bad hearted. In fact, King Darius worries all night about how to save Daniel from the lions!

Eventually, the Daniel group returned to Judea, the land from which their ancestors had come. After 198 BCE, their expanding apocalyptic imagination would have angered the officials they worked with. But they didn't hide. They wrote the apocalyptic visions (Dan 7–12) in Daniel's name—not to hide who the authors were but to show that they stood in the tradition of Daniel and that their visions came from God. People sometimes think that apocalyptic writings are a cry of despair from people who have no hope. But these chapters are full of hope, a God-revealed hope that puts ordinary experience, both horrible and joyful, into a bigger perspective. The fearless writers of Daniel's visions want readers to see life in a new way and to commit themselves to active, risky, suffering discipleship. The visions of last things in the book of Daniel resist all imperial efforts to control people and take away their humanity.

With time, the Daniel writings took on a deadly seriousness. This book says that God's reign won't come without horrible birth pains, but it *will* come.

**I. Tales of the Babylonian Court (1:1–6:28)**

- A. Introduction: Daniel and three friends taken into exile (1:1-7)
- B. Exiles in a foreign court (1:8-21)
  - 1. Refusal of the king's food (1:8-17)
  - 2. Daniel and his friends promoted (1:18-21)
- C. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue (2:1-49)
  - 1. The dream and the impossible challenge (2:1-13)
  - 2. God reveals the mystery (2:14-23)
  - 3. Daniel tells the dream (2:24-35)
  - 4. The meaning: four future kingdoms (2:36-45)
  - 5. Nebuchadnezzar honors Daniel (2:46-49)
- D. Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue and the furnace of flaming fire (3:1-30)
  - 1. The gold statue (3:1-7)
  - 2. The plot against the three friends (3:8-18)
  - 3. Inside the fiery furnace (3:19-27)
  - 4. Nebuchadnezzar praises God (3:28-30)
- E. Nebuchadnezzar's visions of a toppled tree (4:1-37)
  - 1. Nebuchadnezzar's testimony (4:1-3)
  - 2. The king tells the dream (4:4-18)
  - 3. Daniel interprets the dream (4:19-27)
  - 4. The dream comes true (4:28-33)
  - 5. The king's reason returns (4:34-37)
- F. Belshazzar's party (5:1-31)
  - 1. A loud, pagan party (5:1-4)
  - 2. God's writing on the wall (5:5-9)
  - 3. The forgotten interpreter (5:10-12)
  - 4. Daniel interprets the writing (5:13-31)

- G. Daniel in the lions' pit (6:1-28)
  - 1. The plot against Daniel (6:1-9)
  - 2. Daniel ignores the king's decree (6:10-18)
  - 3. Saved from lions (6:19-24)
  - 4. A new decree (6:25-28)

**II. The Visions of Daniel (7:1–12:13)**

- A. Daniel's vision of four beasts and God's court (7:1-28)
  - 1. A vision of four beasts (7:1-8)
  - 2. The throne of fire and the human figure (7:9-14)
  - 3. Interpreting the vision (7:15-28)
- B. A vision of a ram, a goat, and a little horn (8:1-27)
  - 1. Daniel's second vision (8:1-14)
  - 2. Gabriel's interpretation (8:15-27)
- C. Daniel's prayer and the answer of seventy weeks (9:1-27)
  - 1. Daniel's prayer (9:1-19)
  - 2. The seventy weeks (9:20-27)
- D. A vision of final conflict in heaven and on earth (10:1–12:4)
  - 1. A vision of a man (10:1-9)
  - 2. Gabriel's encouragement (10:10–11:1)
  - 3. An empire divided (11:2-4)
  - 4. South versus north (11:5-20)
  - 5. Antiochus Epiphanes (11:21-35)
  - 6. An end to the arrogant king (11:36-45)
  - 7. The resurrection of the dead (12:1-4)
- E. Waiting for the end time (12:5-13)

*Stephen L. Cook*

1:1 2Ki 24:1;  
2Ch 36:6  
1:3 2Ki 20:18;  
Is 39:7  
1:4 2Sa 14:25;  
Dn 1:17  
1:8 Eze 4:13;  
Dn 1:5; Hos 9:3  
1:9 Gn 39:21;  
1Ki 8:50;  
Ps 106:46;  
Prv 16:7  
1:11 Dn 1:6,  
Dn 1:7  
1:12 Dn 1:16  
1:15 Ex 23:25  
1:16 Dn 1:12

### Jerusalem taken by the Babylonians

**1** In the third year of the rule of Judah's King Jehoiakim, Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and attacked it. **2**The Lord handed Judah's King Jehoiakim over to Nebuchadnezzar, along with some of the equipment from God's house. Nebuchadnezzar took these to Shinar, to his own god's temple, putting them in his god's treasury.

### Training for royal service

**3**Nebuchadnezzar instructed his highest official Ashpenaz to choose royal descendants and members of the ruling class from the Israelites—**4**good-looking young men without defects, skilled in all wisdom, possessing knowledge, conversant with learning, and capable of serving in the king's palace. Ashpenaz was to teach them the Chaldean language and its literature. **5**The king assigned these young men daily allotments from his own food and from the royal wine. Ashpenaz was to teach them for three years so that at the end of that time they could serve before the king. **6**Among these young men from the Judeans were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. **7**But the chief official gave them new names. He named Daniel "Belteshazzar," Hananiah "Shadrach," Mishael "Meshach," and Azariah "Abednego."

### Test

**8**Daniel decided that he wouldn't pollute himself with the king's rations or the royal wine, and he appealed to the chief official in hopes that he wouldn't have to do so. **9**Now God had established faithful loyalty between Daniel and the chief official; **10**but the chief official said to Daniel, "I'm afraid of my master, the king, who has mandated what you are to eat and drink. What will happen if he sees your faces looking thinner than the other young men in your group? The king will have my head because of you!"

**11**So Daniel spoke to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: **12**"Why not test your servants for ten days? You could give us a diet of vegetables to eat and water to drink. **13**Then compare our appearance to the appearance of the young men who eat the king's food. Then deal with your servants according to what you see."

**14**The guard decided to go along with their plan and tested them for ten days. **15**At the end of ten days they looked better and healthier than all the young men who were eating the king's food. **16**So the guard kept taking away their rations and the wine they were supposed to drink and gave them vegetables instead. **17**And God gave knowledge, mastery of all literature, and wisdom to these four men. Daniel himself gained understanding of every type of vision and dream.

1:1–6:28 The first half of Daniel presents six folktales about the hero Daniel and his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The tales are set far from Judah in foreign courts, in the period of Israel's Babylonian exile and Babylon's defeat by the Persians (606–536 BCE).

1:1–7 Introduction: How Daniel and his three friends became exiles in the court of Babylon.

1:1 *third year*: 606 or 605 BCE, when Babylon defeated Egypt and became the Near East's dominant superpower. *Nebuchadnezzar* wasn't yet king at the time of this verse, nor is there evidence that he attacked Jerusalem this early (597 BCE marks his first known siege of the city, although 2 Kgs 24:1 hints at an earlier attack). This wrong historical information may be a deliberate signal from the storytellers that they are writing historical fiction.

1:2 *The Lord handed... over*: Babylon's king thought the victory was his own, but for Daniel's writers the Lord God controls history. *Shinar*: the land of Babylon (see Gen 10:10; 11:2; Zech 5:11).

1:4 *Chaldean*: here (and in Dan 5:30; 9:1), an ancient name for the Babylonians. Elsewhere (e.g., Dan 2:2), it refers more specifically to a particular group of Babylonian wise men.

1:5 *own food*: not a Hebrew term but a foreign one, emphasizing that the action takes place in a foreign court.

Eating from the royal table signals fellowship with the king and loyalty to him (cf. Dan 11:26). The king wants these young men to know who butters their bread, but the story challenges his claim of imperial control.

1:7 *new names*: Again the king works to make the young men more Babylonian and erase their Israelite heritage. The new names contain or suggest the names of Babylonian gods: Bel (a title of Marduk, god of Babylon; see Dan 4:5), Nabu, and perhaps Aku.

1:8–21 Daniel and his friends resist being made into Babylonians. If loyalty to the king conflicts with loyalty to God, God is the one who must be obeyed. In this story as in Isaiah 40–55, symbols of power, such as rich food and free-flowing wine, are symbols of ignorance, not privilege. The young men choose a different set of values, a lifestyle "like a young plant... like a root from dry ground" (Isa 53:2), that taps into the true power that comes from God and allows servants of God to "succeed... [and] be exalted and lifted very high" (Isa 52:13).

1:8 *Daniel decided*: or "placed on his heart," over against the chief official's "placing" (same Hebrew word) of foreign names on the young men in Daniel 1:7. *wouldn't pollute himself*: Daniel turns down the food that would show his loyalty to the king. Even here in the foreign court, the four friends depend on the Lord, not on Babylon's king.

2:1 Gn 41:1,  
Gn 41:8; Est 6:1;  
Dn 1:1, Dn 4:5  
2:4 Ezz 4:7;  
Dn 3:9, Dn 5:10,  
Dn 6:6, Dn 6:21  
2:8 Eph 5:16;  
Col 4:5

### Result of the training

<sup>18</sup>When the time came to review the young men as the king had ordered, the chief official brought them before Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup>When the king spoke with them, he found no one as good as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they took their place in the king's service. <sup>20</sup>Whenever the king consulted them about any aspect of wisdom and understanding, he found them head and shoulders above all the dream interpreters and enchanters in his entire kingdom. <sup>21</sup>And Daniel stayed in the king's service until the first year of King Cyrus.

### An impossible challenge

**2**In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule, he had many dreams. The dreams made him anxious, but he kept sleeping. <sup>2</sup>The king summoned the dream interpreters, enchanters, diviners, and Chaldeans to explain his dreams to him. They came and stood before the king.

<sup>3</sup>Then the king said to them: "I had a dream, and I'm anxious to know its meaning."

<sup>4</sup>The Chaldeans answered the king in Aramaic:<sup>a</sup> "Long live the king! Tell your servants the dream, and we will explain its meaning."

<sup>5</sup>The king answered the Chaldeans: "My decision is final: If you can't tell me the dream and its meaning, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be turned into trash dumps. <sup>6</sup>But if you do explain the dream and its meaning, you'll receive generous gifts and glorious honor from me. So explain to me the dream as well as its meaning."

<sup>7</sup>They answered him again: "The king must tell his servants the dream. We will then explain the meaning."

<sup>8</sup>The king replied: "Now I definitely know you are stalling for time, because you see that my decision is final <sup>9</sup>and that if you can't tell me the dream, your fate is certain. You've conspired to make false and lying speeches before me until the situation changes. Tell me the dream now! Then I'll know you can explain its meaning to me."

<sup>10</sup>The Chaldeans answered the king: "No one on earth can do what the king is asking! No king or ruler, no matter how great, has ever asked such a thing of any dream interpreter, enchanter, or Chaldean. <sup>11</sup>What the king is asking is impossible! No one could declare the dream to the king but the gods, who don't live among mere humans."

<sup>a</sup>The book switches into Aramaic at this point, returning to Hebrew in 8:1.

1:18-21 The king finds Daniel and his friends far superior to all the other young men in training (even though the other young men have eaten what the king said they should), and the king welcomes them into royal service.

2:1-49 Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue that is made in four sections. The connection between the court tales and the apocalyptic visions (see sidebar, "Apocalypse" at Dan 3) in the second part of Daniel can be seen in this chapter. At one level Daniel 2 tells about a contest at court, in which the truly wise lean humbly on God and do far better than Babylon's own dream interpreters, enchanters, diviners, and Chaldeans (see 2:2 and note). But the story also offers an apocalyptic image of a stone from outside of human history that smashes the statue (which represents empires of the world) and takes over the entire earth. Daniel's vision in chapter 7 will echo this dream about history's final end. Although the king's dream has an ending that will come centuries after Nebuchadnezzar's time, the king isn't off the hook. Verse 35 shows that God's reign shatters all parts of the statue, including the gold part (Babylon), *simultaneously*, Babylon pales in comparison to the power of God's reign.

2:1-13 Nebuchadnezzar challenges his court advisors to prove their powers not just by interpreting his dream but by telling him what the dream was. The stakes are high, since he threatens to tear them limb from limb if none can prove they understand the dream.

2:1 second year: This doesn't fit with the timeline of the first chapter, in which Nebuchadnezzar is king while Daniel and his friends train for three years before joining

the court staff (Dan 1:5), but the two years do echo the beginning of the story of Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dream (Gen 41:1; see note on Dan 1:1).

2:2-3 The king's anxiety at his dreams will turn out to be fully appropriate. Although God's final judgment won't come until the time of Antiochus Ephiphanes (whose kingdom the statue's clay feet represent), the arrival of God's reign (Dan 2:34) shows that all earth's empires are weak and temporary. Even the king's own empire will become "like chaff, left on summer threshing floors" (Dan 2:35).

2:2 Chaldeans: From here through Daniel 5:11, the term refers to people skilled in Babylonian "sciences."

2:4 Following the words in Aramaic, the book's language switches from Hebrew into Aramaic, returning to Hebrew in Daniel 8:1. The Aramaic language was used for official and diplomatic purposes in the Babylonian and Persian Empires, within whose courts Daniel and his friends served. After the exile it became the ordinary spoken language of Judea. The Aramaic not only adds local color to the stories, but allows them to prove in the empire's own language that the empire's claims are lies.

2:5 The king wants his advisors to prove their supernatural knowledge of dreams by telling him the content (not just the interpretation) of his dream. Not even Joseph in Genesis had to tackle such an impossible challenge (see note on Dan 2:1; cf. Gen 40:8; 41:8, 17-24).

2:10-11 The Chaldeans (see note on Dan 2:2) essentially admit that they aren't in touch with any reality beyond the human plane. Humble Daniel, by contrast, proves to be in

2:12 Dn 3:13,  
Dn 3:19  
2:13 Dn 1:19,  
Dn 1:20

<sup>12</sup>At this, the king exploded in a furious rage and ordered that all Babylon's sages be wiped out. <sup>13</sup>So the command went out: The sages were to be killed. Daniel and his friends too were hunted down; they were to be killed as well.

2:15 Dn 2:14,  
Dn 2:24,  
Dn 2:25

### God reveals the mystery

2:17 Dn 1:6,  
Dn 1:7,  
Dn 2:18,  
Dn 2:49,  
Dn 3:12

<sup>14</sup>Then Daniel, with wisdom and sound judgment, responded to Arioch the king's chief executioner, who had gone out to kill Babylon's sages. <sup>15</sup>He said to Arioch the king's royal officer, "Why is the king's command so unreasonable?" After Arioch explained the situation to Daniel, <sup>16</sup>Daniel went and asked the king to give him some time so he could explain the dream's meaning to him. <sup>17</sup>Then Daniel went to his house and explained the situation to his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah <sup>18</sup>so that they would ask the God of heaven for help about this mystery, in hopes that Daniel and his friends wouldn't die with the rest of Babylon's sages. <sup>19</sup>Then, in a vision by night, the mystery was revealed to Daniel! Daniel praised the God of heaven:

2:18 Dn 2:17  
2:19 Nm 12:6,  
Dn 1:17

<sup>20</sup>God's name be praised from age to eternal age!

2:20 1Ch 29:12;  
Job 12:13;  
Ps 113:2,  
Ps 115:18,  
Ps 145:1

Wisdom and might are his!

2:21 Ps 75:6,  
Ps 75:7; Dn 2:9;  
Dn 4:17; Jas 1:5

<sup>21</sup>God is the one who changes times and eras,  
who dethrones one king, only to establish another,  
who grants wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those with insight.

2:22 Job 12:22,  
Job 26:6;  
Jer 23:24;  
Heb 4:13;  
Jas 1:17

<sup>22</sup>God is the one who uncovers what lies deeply hidden;  
he knows what hides in darkness;  
light lives with him!

2:24 Dn 2:12,  
Dn 2:13,  
Dn 2:14,  
Dn 2:15

<sup>23</sup>I acknowledge and praise you, my fathers' God!  
You've given me wisdom and might,  
and now you've made known to me what we asked of you:  
you've made known to us the king's demand.

2:26 Dn 1:7,  
Dn 4:8, Dn 5:12  
2:27 Dn 2:2,  
Dn 2:10, Dn 5:7

### Daniel recounts the dream

2:28 Gn 40:8;  
Dn 4:5,  
Dn 10:14

<sup>24</sup>So Daniel went to Arioch, the man the king had appointed to wipe out Babylon's sages. Daniel said to him, "Don't wipe out the sages of Babylon! Bring me before the king, and I will explain the dream's meaning to him." <sup>25</sup>Wasting no time, Arioch brought Daniel before the king, telling him, "I have found someone from the Judean exiles who will tell the dream's meaning to the king."

2:30 Gn 41:16;  
Ac 3:12  
2:31 Hab 1:7  
2:32 Dn 2:38,  
Dn 2:39

<sup>26</sup>In reply the king said to Daniel (whose name was Belteshazzar), "Can you really tell me the dream that I saw, as well as its meaning?"

<sup>27</sup>Daniel answered the king, "Sages, enchanters, dream interpreters, and diviners can't explain to the king the mystery he seeks. <sup>28</sup>But there is a God in heaven, a revealer of mysteries, who has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the days to come! Now this was your dream—this was the vision in your head as you lay in your bed:

<sup>29</sup>"As you lay in bed, Your Majesty, your thoughts turned to what will happen in the future. The revealer of mysteries has revealed to you what will happen. <sup>30</sup>Now this mystery was revealed to me, not because I have more wisdom than any other living person but so that the dream's meaning might be made known to the king, and so that you might know the thoughts of your own mind.

<sup>31</sup>"Your Majesty, you were looking, and there, rising before you, was a single, massive statue. This statue was huge, shining with dazzling light, and was awesome to see. <sup>32</sup>The statue's head was made of pure gold; its chest and arms were made from silver; its abdomen

close contact with the One who lives on high in holiness (cf. Isa 57:15).

2:14-23 Daniel's God, who is willing to reveal mysteries (2:22; cf. Amos 3:7; Isa 44:7-8), informs Daniel of both the dream and its meaning. Daniel's victory over all of Babylon's supposed experts proves that Israel's God indeed "makes a mockery of magicians" (Isa 44:25).

2:18 *with the rest*: In the end, Daniel will save not only his Judean friends but also the whole company of Babylon's sages (that is, the court's wise people and counselors, Dan 2:24).

2:24-35 Daniel tells the dream, proving that God has power over all the world's mysteries.

2:25 The storyteller makes quiet fun of Arioch by giving Arioch a speech in which Arioch, although himself unable to tell the dream, tries to get the king's favor by making it seem that Daniel was discovered through Arioch's own skill.

2:28 *days to come*: This phrase, like the similar ones used in Isaiah 2:2; Ezekiel 38:16; and Daniel 10:14, may refer to the end times.

2:30 *this mystery... thoughts of your own mind*: Readers sometimes think of Daniel as a book that encourages faith during hard times, but this verse emphasizes special, wondrous knowledge about God and what the revealing of God's reign teaches us about ourselves.

and hips were made of bronze. <sup>33</sup>Its legs were of iron, and its feet were a mixture of iron and clay. <sup>34</sup>You observed this until a stone was cut, but not by hands; and it smashed the statue's feet of iron and clay and shattered them. <sup>35</sup>Then all the parts shattered simultaneously—iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold. They became like chaff, left on summer threshing floors. The wind lifted them away until no trace of them remained. But the stone that smashed the statue became a mighty mountain, and it filled the entire earth.

### *The dream's meaning: four future rulers*

<sup>36</sup>"This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its meaning: <sup>37</sup>You, Your Majesty, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given kingship, power, might, and glory to you! <sup>38</sup>God has delivered into your care human beings, wild creatures, and birds in the sky—wherever they live—and has made you ruler of all of them. You are the gold head. <sup>39</sup>But in your place, another kingdom will arise, one inferior to yours, and then a third, bronze kingdom will rule over all the earth. <sup>40</sup>Then will come a fourth kingdom, mighty like iron. Just as iron shatters and crushes everything; so like an iron that smashes, it will shatter and crush all these others. <sup>41</sup>As for the feet and toes that you saw, which were a mixture of potter's clay and iron, that signifies a divided kingdom; but it will possess some of the unyielding strength of iron. Even so, you saw the iron mixed with earthy clay <sup>42</sup>so that the toes were made from a mixture of iron and clay. Part of the kingdom will be mighty, but part of it will be fragile. <sup>43</sup>Just as you saw the iron mixed with earthy clay, they will join together by intermarrying, but they will not bond to each other, just as iron does not fuse with clay.

<sup>44</sup>"But in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will raise up an everlasting kingdom that will be indestructible. Its rule will never pass to another people. It will shatter other kingdoms. It will put an end to all of them. It will stand firm forever, <sup>45</sup>just like you saw when the stone, which was cut from the mountain, but not by hands, shattered the iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. A great God has revealed to the king what will happen in the future. The dream is certain. Its meaning can be trusted."

### *Nebuchadnezzar honors Daniel*

<sup>46</sup>Then King Nebuchadnezzar bowed low and honored Daniel. The king ordered that grain and incense offerings be made to Daniel. <sup>47</sup>The king declared to Daniel, "No doubt about it: your God is God of gods, Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries because you were able to reveal this mystery!" <sup>48</sup>Then the king exalted Daniel and lavished gifts on him, making him ruler over all the province of Babylon and chief minister over all Babylon's sages. <sup>49</sup>At Daniel's urging, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to administer the province of Babylon, but Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

### *Gold statue*

**3** King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue. It was ninety feet high and nine feet wide. He set it up in the Dura Valley in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup>King Nebuchadnezzar then

2:34 *a stone*: The reign of God (cf. Isa 28:16). *not by hands*: God's reign is God's work, not a human accomplishment (cf. Dan 8:25).

2:35 *simultaneously*: God's reign overturns human history as a whole, without distinguishing between empires. In this way among others, it is surely not of this world. *mighty mountain . . . the entire earth*: God's mountain is no longer a symbol of grace at one earthly location (cf. Pss 2:6; 48:2; 50:2; Lam 2:15; Ezek 20:40), but God's global rule becomes concrete and boundless (an idea that also begins to emerge in Isa 2:2; 56:7).

2:36-45 The dream gives a map of history similar to the one that will be given in Daniel 7-12. God has planned a sequence of kingdoms leading up to the end time. The first kingdom, the statue's gold head, is that of Nebuchadnezzar himself (2:38). Readers must identify the other three. An audience living in 167 BCE, when the book first came together, would have thought the kingdoms were Babylon, Media, Persia, and then the Greek kingdoms that rose after Alexander the Great's death, especially the Seleucid kingdom of Antiochus IV. Later readers saw

the chest and two arms as Media/Persia (cf. Dan 8:20), the belly and thighs as the Greek kingdoms (cf. Dan 8:21), and the legs and feet as Rome (cf. Dan 11:30 and note) or some new sort of Rome. The decreasing value of the materials as one proceeds from head to feet may be a symbol for moral decline (cf. Dan 12:4).

2:44-45 God's reign will invade earth, end history, and establish a new creation.

2:46-49 Nebuchadnezzar honors Daniel and confesses God's power (cf. Dan 3:28-30 and note). This silly king has such high spirits at finally getting his dream interpreted that Daniel's message of doom goes in one ear and out the other.

3:1-30 The third court tale deals with Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue and Daniel's friends being thrown into a furnace of fire. The tale is amusing and well told, especially when it makes fun of the overgrown egos of earth's imperial rulers. The story makes clear that in God's eyes, the ego-filled words and actions of earth's superpowers are ridiculous.

3:1-7 The huge statue of Nebuchadnezzar is probably supposed to represent his royal power (remember how

2:33 Dn 2:40

2:34 Dn 2:44,  
Dn 2:45,  
Dn 8:252:35 Ps 1:4;  
Is 2:2, Is 17:13;  
Mi 4:12:37 Eze 7:12;  
Eze 26:7;  
Dn 5:182:38 Jer 27:6;  
Dn 2:32,  
Dn 4:21,  
Dn 4:222:39 Dn 2:32,  
Dn 7:52:40 Dn 7:7,  
Dn 7:232:41 Dn 2:33,  
Dn 7:7, Dn 7:242:44 Dn 4:34,  
Dn 6:26,  
Dn 7:14,  
Dn 7:27; Lk 1:332:45 Gn 41:28;  
Dn 2:34;  
Mal 1:112:46 Eze 6:10;  
Dn 3:5; Ac 10:25,  
Ac 14:132:47 Dt 10:17;  
Dn 11:36;  
1Ti 6:152:48 Dn 2:6,  
Dn 4:9, Dn 5:11,  
Dn 5:29, Dn 6:22:49 Dn 1:7,  
Dn 2:17,  
Dn 3:12

3:1 Is 46:6

3:2 Dn 3:3,  
Dn 3:27, Dn 6:7

3:3 Dn 3:2  
 3:4 Dn 3:7,  
 Dn 4:1, Dn 6:25  
 3:5 Dn 3:7,  
 Dn 3:10,  
 Dn 3:15  
 3:6 Jer 29:22  
 3:7 Dn 3:5  
 3:8 Dn 2:2,  
 Dn 6:12  
 3:9 Dn 2:4,  
 Dn 5:10, Dn 6:6  
 3:10 Dn 3:4,  
 Dn 3:5, Dn 3:7,  
 Dn 3:15,  
 Dn 6:12  
 3:12 Dn 1:7,  
 Dn 2:49,  
 Dn 6:13  
 3:13 Dn 2:12,  
 Dn 3:19  
 3:14 Is 46:1;  
 Jer 50:2; Dn 3:1  
 3:15 Ex 3:2;  
 2Ch 32:15;  
 Dn 3:5; Dn 3:10  
 3:16 Dn 1:7,  
 Dn 3:12  
 3:17 1Sa 17:37;  
 Ps 27:1  
 3:18 Ex 20:3

ordered the chief administrators, ministers, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to assemble and come for the dedication of the statue that he had set up. <sup>3</sup>So the chief administrators, ministers, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. They stood in front of the statue the king had set up. <sup>4</sup>The herald proclaimed loudly: "Peoples, nations, and languages! This is what you must do: <sup>5</sup>When you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument, you must bow down and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. <sup>6</sup>Anyone who will not bow down and worship will be immediately thrown into a furnace of flaming fire." <sup>7</sup>So because of this order as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute,<sup>b</sup> and every kind of instrument, all the peoples, nations, and languages bowed down and worshipped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

### Plot against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

<sup>8</sup>At that moment some Chaldeans came forward, seizing a chance to attack the Jews. <sup>9</sup>They said to King Nebuchadnezzar:

"Long live the king! <sup>10</sup>Your Majesty, you gave a command that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument should bow down and worship the gold statue. <sup>11</sup>Anyone who wouldn't bow and worship would be thrown into a furnace of flaming fire. <sup>12</sup>Now there are some Jews, ones you appointed to administer the province of Babylon—specifically, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—who have ignored your command. They don't serve your gods, and they don't worship the gold statue you've set up."

<sup>13</sup>In a violent rage Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were brought before the king.

<sup>14</sup>Nebuchadnezzar said to them: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: Is it true that you don't serve my gods or worship the gold statue I've set up? <sup>15</sup>If you are now ready to do so, bow down and worship the gold statue I've made when you hear the sound of horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument. But if you won't worship it, you will be thrown straight into the furnace of flaming fire. Then what god will rescue you from my power?"

<sup>16</sup>Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar: "We don't need to answer your question. <sup>17</sup>If our God—the one we serve—is able to rescue us from the furnace of flaming fire and from your power, Your Majesty, then let him rescue us." <sup>18</sup>But if he doesn't, know this for certain, Your Majesty: we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you've set up."

<sup>b</sup>Identification of the instruments is not certain; several of the Aramaic terms are Greek loanwords. <sup>c</sup>Or he will deliver us

the gold head of the statue in his dream stood for the king; Dan 2:38). He challenges all other authorities, even divine ones: "What god will rescue you from my power?" (Dan 3:15).

3:2-3 The long, twice-repeated list of officials pokes fun at the Babylonian bureaucracy and the unthinking obedience of its members.

3:5-7 The people respond to the sounding of the instruments (named in a long, twice-repeated list; cf. note on Dan 3:2-3) by immediately bowing down in worship, like unthinking robots.

3:6 The threat to burn people alive shows that the king's claim to power isn't just funny. He wants every heart and mind to bend to his will, and he will act like a demon to get his way. We'll see more of this demon-like side of kings in Daniel's second half (Dan 7:8; 8:9-11; 11:36-37). The terrible rulers in Daniel 7-12 claim power over worship and law, just like Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 7:25; 8:11; 11:37).

3:8-18 Jealous rivals turn in Daniel's three friends, who see the dark side of the king's religious rules, for refusing to

worship Nebuchadnezzar's image. Apocalyptic literature (see sidebar, "Apocalypse" at Dan 3) calls its readers to be similarly able to see such things and resist them. Heroic, life-risking action may be necessary in the face of evil that takes away our humanity and our ability to think.

3:13 The king's *violent rage* shows that political rule based on ego is very unstable. Nothing is firm in this warped situation. Even threat of immediate death (Dan 3:3) isn't firm, as the reader now realizes (see note on Dan 3:17-18): 3:17-18 *If our God . . . is able*: In this translation, the *if* refers to the reality of God's power. Another possibility is that the *if* applies to the threat of death: "If your power sends us immediately into the furnace of flaming fire, your majesty, with no second chance, then our God—the one we serve—is able to rescue us. But if not [that is, even if we receive mercy from your hand], know for certain that we will still never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you've set up." Neither death threats nor the promise of official special treatment will alter their devotion to God.



3:19 Dn 3:13  
 3:20 Dn 1:7  
 3:21 Ex 28:40  
 3:22 Dn 1:7  
 3:23 Dn 1:7,  
 Dn 2:49,  
 Dn 3:12,  
 Dn 3:20,  
 Dn 3:30  
 3:24 Dn 3:2,  
 Dn 3:3, Dn 3:9,  
 Dn 4:36,  
 Dn 5:18  
 3:25 Is 43:2;  
 Dn 3:28  
 3:26 Ezr 5:11;  
 Dn 4:2, Dn 6:20  
 3:27 Is 43:2,  
 Dn 3:2; Lk 21:18  
 3:28 Ps 34:7;  
 Dn 2:47,  
 Dn 3:25,  
 Dn 6:22; Ac 5:19  
 3:29 Dn 2:5,  
 Dn 3:4,  
 Dn 3:28,  
 Dn 6:26,  
 Dn 6:27  
 3:30 Dn 2:49,  
 Dn 3:12

*Apocalypse* Daniel 7–12 emphasizes visions from God, which make a clear contrast between heavenly and earthly reality and a clear division between good and evil. The visions anticipate that this world will end soon, and assert that when it does, all persons will be judged. These features belong to a type of writing called an “apocalypse,” used by a number of Jews and Christians in Greek and Greco-Roman times (300s BCE to 200s CE). The most famous apocalyptic writing of this period is the book of Revelation in the NT. Daniel, like other apocalyptic heroes, relies on help from divine messengers (called angels in the NT) to understand a different, more powerful reality that stands in tension with, and will eventually overcome, ordinary human history. His visions help the book’s audience in the 160s BCE to understand the spiritual dimensions of their challenging circumstances. However, because the spiritual dimensions aren’t unique to that time, the meaning of Daniel isn’t limited to that time. The apocalyptic visions in the Bible (there were also some visions that weren’t included in the Bible) help readers of every age understand terrible experiences when the world seems to wobble on the brink of utter chaos. Times when the world has come up against apocalyptic upsets or miniature doomsdays include Rome’s destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the killing of people for their religious beliefs in Tudor England, Hitler’s atrocities during World War II, and the current experience of African Christians in Sudan. The meaning of an apocalypse isn’t limited to the events that its original writers or audience were thinking of. Instead, apocalypses are capable of ongoing fulfillment over the ages.

### Inside the furnace

<sup>19</sup>Nebuchadnezzar was filled with rage, and his face twisted beyond recognition because of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In response he commanded that the furnace be heated to seven times its normal heat. <sup>20</sup>He told some of the strongest men in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the furnace of flaming fire. <sup>21</sup>So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were bound, still dressed in all their clothes, and thrown into the furnace of flaming fire. (<sup>22</sup>Now the king’s command had been rash, and the furnace was heated to such an extreme that the fire’s flame killed the very men who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to it.) <sup>23</sup>So these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell, bound, into the furnace of flaming fire.

<sup>24</sup>Then King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in shock and said to his associates, “Didn’t we throw three men, bound, into the fire?”

They answered the king, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

<sup>25</sup>He replied, “Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren’t hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods.” <sup>26</sup>Nebuchadnezzar went near the opening of the furnace of flaming fire and said, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. <sup>27</sup>The chief administrators, ministers, governors, and the king’s associates crowded around to look at them. The fire hadn’t done anything to them: their hair wasn’t singed; their garments looked the same as before; they didn’t even smell like fire!

### Nebuchadnezzar praises God

<sup>28</sup>Nebuchadnezzar declared: “May the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be praised! He sent his messenger<sup>4</sup> to rescue his servants who trusted him. They ignored the king’s order, sacrificing their bodies, because they wouldn’t serve or worship any god but their God. <sup>29</sup>I now issue a decree to every people, nation, and language: whoever speaks disrespectfully about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s God will be torn limb from limb and their house made a trash heap, because there is no other god who can rescue like this.”

<sup>30</sup>Then the king made Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego prosper in the province of Babylon.

<sup>4</sup>Or angel

3:19–27 God’s cause wins the day, as a mysterious figure protects the friends amid the superhot flames, as is promised in Isaiah 43:2: “When you walk through the fire, you won’t be scorched and flame won’t burn you.”

3:25 The king, who believes in many gods, thinks that he sees one of the gods. For readers who believe in one God, the verse can also refer to a heavenly being or “messenger”

(in the Greek translation, the same word *angelou* [angell] is used in Dan 3:25, 28), like the one who later shuts the lions’ mouths (Dan 6:22).

3:28–30 Nebuchadnezzar praises God for the amazing rescue, but still thinks he has the power, with his royal decree, to defend God’s honor—as if God needed such help! Only in Daniel 4 does the king learn to be truly humble before God.

4:1 Dn 3:4,  
Dn 6:25  
4:2 Dn 3:26  
4:3 Dn 2:44,  
Dn 4:34,  
Dn 6:26  
4:8 Dn 1:7,  
Dn 4:9, Dn 4:18,  
Dn 5:11  
4:9 Dn 2:48,  
Dn 4:8, Dn 5:11  
4:10 Eze 31:3,  
Dn 4:5  
4:11 Dt 9:1,  
Dn 4:22  
4:12 Eze 17:23,  
Eze 31:6,  
Eze 31:7,  
Mt 13:32,  
Lk 13:19  
4:13 Dt 33:2,  
Dn 7:1, Dn 8:13

### Nebuchadnezzar's testimony

**4**\*King Nebuchadnezzar's message to all the peoples, nations, and languages inhabiting the entire earth: "I wish you much peace. <sup>2</sup>I'm delighted to share the signs and miracles that the Most High God has worked in my life.

<sup>3</sup>His signs are superb!

His miracles so powerful!

His kingdom is everlasting.

His rule is for all time.

**4**"While I, Nebuchadnezzar, was safe in my house, content in my palace, <sup>5</sup>I had a terrifying dream. My thoughts while I was lying in bed and the vision in my mind overwhelmed me. <sup>6</sup>I ordered all Babylon's sages to come before me, so they might tell me the dream's meaning. <sup>7</sup>So the dream interpreters, enchanters, Chaldeans, and diviners came. I told them the dream, but they couldn't interpret it for me. <sup>8</sup>Daniel, who is called Belteshazzar after the name of my god, was the last to come before me. In him is the breath<sup>g</sup> of the holy gods! I told Daniel the dream:

### Nebuchadnezzar's dream

<sup>9</sup>"Belteshazzar, chief of the dream interpreters, I know the breath of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Tell me the meaning of the visions I had in my dream. <sup>10</sup>In my mind, as I lay in bed, I saw a vision:

At the center of the earth was a towering tree.

<sup>11</sup>The tree grew in size and strength;

it was as high as the sky;

it could be seen from every corner of the earth.

<sup>12</sup>Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant;

it had enough food for everyone.

Wild animals took shade under it;

birds nested in its branches.

All living things lived off that tree.

<sup>13</sup>"In my mind, as I lay in bed, I saw another vision: A holy watcher came down from heaven. <sup>14</sup>He proclaimed loudly:

'Cut down the tree and shear off its branches!

Strip its leaves and scatter its fruit!

The creatures should flee from its shelter;

the birds should take flight from its branches.

<sup>g</sup>3:31 in Aram <sup>f</sup>4:1 in Aram <sup>g</sup>Or *spirit*; also in 4:9, 18

4:1-37 Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a toppled tree, and Daniel interprets the dream correctly, as a prediction that Nebuchadnezzar will finally learn that God is *able to humble all who walk in pride* (4:37; cf. Job 40:11-12). The story may have been prompted by a tradition that the last Babylonian king, Nabonidus (556-539 BCE), left Babylon and spent 10 years in the desert. Another Jewish reference to this legend appears in a Dead Sea scroll known as the *Prayer of Nabonidus*, which presents Nabonidus as saying he was ill for seven years and then cured by a Jewish diviner.

4:1-3 Like the Dead Sea scroll mentioned in the preceding note, Daniel 4 presents its story in (supposedly) the Babylonian king's own words. The storytellers' voice enters only in Daniel 4:19-33, where the king has lost his mind. Poetic praise at the beginning and end of the chapter gives God glory (Dan 4:3, 34b-35, 37), driving home the key point: "The Most High does whatever he wants with heaven's forces and with earth's inhabitants" (Dan 4:35).

4:2 *I'm delighted*: Surprisingly, the king appreciates God's severe judgment, showing that judgment may be constructive and direct a person to richer life.

4:4-18 Reaching to heaven is often a sign of inappropriate

pride in the scriptures (cf. Gen 11:1-9; Isa 10:33-34; Eze 31:10, 14; Zech 11:1-3), but this king goes to extremes. The giant object that he has seen is the world tree. It is a symbol, in myths and dreams around the world, of the order and power that support the world (cf. Ezek 17:22-24; 31:3-14). The world tree links heaven and earth, ideally blessing creation with the favor of the Beyond. Only the most arrogant human would imagine himself or herself to be like this huge tree, the source of shelter and food for all earth's life.

4:8 *breath of the holy gods*: Nebuchadnezzar, who isn't Jewish, thinks that Daniel's wisdom comes from many gods rather than one. The Aramaic for *breath* here appears in Daniel 4:9, 18 (also in Dan 5:11, 14) could also be translated "spirit." The book of Isaiah uses the Hebrew form of the term when speaking about God granting a chosen servant the special gift of God's spirit (Isa 11:2; 42:1; 48:16b; 59:21; 61:1). Daniel is such a specially chosen servant of God.

4:13 *holy watcher*: See Daniel 4:17, 23. Daniel is the only book in the Bible to use this term, but it also appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls and some other ancient Jewish religious writings outside the Bible. It refers to heavenly beings who involve themselves in human history.

<sup>15</sup>But leave its deepest root in the earth,  
bound with iron and bronze in the field grass.  
Dew from heaven is to wash it,  
and it must live with the animals in the earth's vegetation.

<sup>16</sup>Its<sup>a</sup> human mind is to be changed:  
it will be given the mind of an animal.  
Seven periods of time will pass over it.

<sup>17</sup>This sentence is by the watchers' decree;  
this decision is the holy ones' word  
so that all who live might know  
that the Most High dominates human kingship.  
The Most High gives kingship to anyone he wants  
and sets over it the lowest of people.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>18</sup>"This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. So now Belteshazzar, tell me the meaning because all the sages in my kingdom were unable to interpret it for me. But you are able to do it because the breath of the holy gods is in you."

### *Daniel interprets the visions*

<sup>19</sup>Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar, was shocked for a bit. What he thought about frightened him.

The king declared, "Don't let the dream and its meaning scare you, Belteshazzar."

Then Belteshazzar answered, "Sir, I wish the dream to be for those who hate you and its meaning to be for your enemies! <sup>20</sup>The tree you saw that grew in size and strength, that was as high as the sky, that could be seen from every corner of the earth, <sup>21</sup>with its beautiful leaves and its abundant fruit, and that had enough food for everyone, with wild animals living under it and birds nesting in its branches—<sup>22</sup>Your Majesty, that tree is you! You have grown large and become powerful. Your greatness is as high as the sky; your rule extends to the edge of the earth!

<sup>23</sup>"Your Majesty, the holy watcher you saw coming down from heaven, who said, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave its deepest root in the earth, bound with iron and bronze in the field grass, dew from heaven is to wash it, and it must live with the wild animals until seven periods of time pass over it'— <sup>24</sup>Your Majesty, this is the dream's meaning: It is the sentence of the Most High, delivered to my master the king. <sup>25</sup>You will be driven away from other humans and will live with the wild animals. You will eat grass like cattle and will be washed by dew from heaven. Seven periods of time will pass over you, until you acknowledge that the Most High dominates human kingship, giving it to anyone he wants. <sup>26</sup>And when he said to leave the deepest root of the tree—that means your kingship will again be yours, once you acknowledge that heaven rules all. <sup>27</sup>Therefore, Your Majesty, please accept my advice: remove your sins by doing what is right; remove your wrongdoing by showing mercy to the poor. Then your safety will be long lasting."

### *Visions come true*

<sup>28</sup>All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>29</sup>Twelve months later, he was walking on the roof of the royal palace in Babylon. <sup>30</sup>The king declared, "Isn't this Babylon, the magnificent city that I built as the royal house by my own mighty strength and for my own majestic glory?"

<sup>31</sup>These words hadn't even left the king's mouth when a voice came from heaven: "You, King Nebuchadnezzar, are now informed: Kingship is taken away from you. <sup>32</sup>You will be

<sup>a</sup>Throughout 4:15-16 and later in this chap, *it* and *its* could also be translated *he* and *his*.

4:15 *leave its deepest root*: so that life can come again (cf. Isa 11:1). *bound with iron and bronze*: In the ancient world, sacred trees were sometimes protected with metal bands. The image means that the Babylonian Empire will remain safe during the king's absence.

4:16 *Seven periods*: A "full" or "complete" number of years (on "seven," see Dan 3:19; 7:25 and note). *human mind*: Here, plain reality invades the images. Compare with the choppy style at Ezekiel 27:11; 31:14-15.

4:19-27 Daniel interprets the visions, which put even the best of earth's political, military, and economic systems

into perspective. God must judge such systems, because in the end human efforts to mold a perfect world always become sinful and cruel. Like all empires, Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, as wonderful as it is, will finally be chopped down.

4:19 *for your enemies*: A double meaning is possible. These words could mean that Daniel wants the chopping-down to happen to the king's enemies, or that having Nebuchadnezzar chopped down would be a dream come true for the king's enemies.

4:28-33 The visions come true as the king walks on his

4:16 Dn 4:23,

Dn 4:32

4:17 Ps 83:18;

Jer 27:5;

Dn 2:21,

Dn 4:25,

Dn 5:18

4:19 Dn 7:15,

Dn 7:28,

Dn 8:27

4:22 2Sa 12:7;

Jer 27:6;

Dn 2:37,

Dn 2:38,

Dn 5:18

4:23 Dn 4:13,

Dn 4:15,

Dn 4:16

4:24 Job 40:12;

Ps 107:40

4:25 Ps 83:18,

Ps 106:20;

Jer 27:5; Dn 4:17,

Dn 5:21

4:27 Prv 28:13;

Is 55:6, Is 58:10;

Ac 8:22,

Ac 26:20

4:28 Nm 23:19

4:30 Dn 5:20;

Hab 2:4

4:32 Dn 4:17,

Dn 4:25,

Dn 5:21

4:33 Dn 4:25;  
Dn 4:32  
4:34 Ps 145:13;  
Dn 2:44;  
Dn 4:3, Dn 6:26,  
Dn 12:7

4:35 Job 9:12;  
Ps 115:3,  
Ps 135:6;  
Is 14:27, Is 45:9

4:36 Prv 22:4;  
Dn 4:34

4:37 Dt 32:4;  
Ps 33:4,  
Ps 145:17;  
Dn 4:34,  
Dn 5:20

5:1 Est 1:3;  
Dn 5:30, Dn 7:1,  
Dn 8:1

5:2 Est 1:7;  
Dn 1:2

5:3 Dn 5:2

5:7 Gn 41:42;  
Dn 2:2, Dn 4:6,  
Dn 4:7, Dn 5:16

driven away from other humans and will live with the wild animals. You will eat grass like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you acknowledge that the Most High dominates human kingship, giving it to anyone he wants.”

<sup>33</sup>Nebuchadnezzar’s sentence was immediately carried out. He was driven away from other humans and ate grass like cattle. Dew from heaven washed his body until he grew hair like eagles’ feathers and claws like a bird.

### ***Nebuchadnezzar is restored***

<sup>34</sup>“At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes to heaven. My reason returned to me, and I praised the Most High. I worshipped and glorified the one who lives forever because his rule is everlasting; his kingdom is for all time. <sup>35</sup>All of earth’s inhabitants are nothing in comparison. The Most High does whatever he wants with heaven’s forces and with earth’s inhabitants. No one can contain his power or say to him, ‘What do you think you are doing?’ <sup>36</sup>So at that moment my reason returned to me. My honor and splendor came back to me for the glory of my kingdom. My associates and my princes wanted to be with me again. Not only was I reinstated over my kingdom, I received more power than ever before.

<sup>37</sup>“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, worship, magnify, and glorify the king of heaven. All his works are truth, all his paths are justice, and he is able to humble all who walk in pride.”

### ***Belshazzar’s party***

**5** King Belshazzar threw a huge party for a thousand of his princes, and he drank a lot of wine in front of them. <sup>2</sup>While he was under the wine’s influence, Belshazzar commanded that the gold and silver equipment that his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem’s temple be brought to the party so that the king, his princes, his consorts, and his secondary wives could drink wine out of them. <sup>3</sup>So the gold<sup>1</sup> equipment that had been carried out of the temple, God’s house in Jerusalem, was brought in; and the king, his princes, his consorts, and his secondary wives drank out of it. <sup>4</sup>They drank a lot of wine; and they praised the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

### ***Writing on the wall***

<sup>5</sup>Right then the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the king’s palace wall in the light of the lamp. The king saw the hand that wrote. <sup>6</sup>The king’s mood changed immediately, and he was deeply disturbed. He felt weak, and his knees were shaking. <sup>7</sup>The king yelled, calling for the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the diviners.

The king told these sages of Babylon: “Anyone who can read this writing and tell me its meaning will wear royal robes, will have a gold chain around his neck, and will rule the kingdom as third in command.”

<sup>8</sup>Then all the king’s sages arrived, but they couldn’t read the writing or interpret it for the king. <sup>9</sup>At that point King Belshazzar was really frightened. All the color drained from his face, and his princes were also very worried.

<sup>1</sup>Vulg., Theodotion add *silver*.

roof, bragging about “his” wonderful achievements. For him to say that he built Babylon all by himself is ridiculous. 4:33 One of Daniel’s many references to other books of Hebrew scripture: God’s removal of Nebuchadnezzar’s reason echoes the wisdom of Job 12:24-25, “[He] takes away the power to think from earth’s leaders, making them wander in untraveled wastelands.”

4:34-37 The king’s reason returns. He appears to have learned some key lessons, although he still seems overly focused on his own honor, splendor, and power (4:36).

4:35 one of Daniel’s many echoes of Isaiah 40–55. Isaiah 40:17 declares, “All the nations are like nothing before God.” 5:1-31 The powers of heaven and earth clash again in the tale of Belshazzar’s feast, but this king fares far worse than Nebuchadnezzar. In apocalyptic thinking (see sidebar, “Apocalypse” at Dan 3), carelessness, contempt, and sin increase as history moves forward.

5:1-4 God’s equipment had been in God’s holy presence at Jerusalem’s temple. Belshazzar’s indecent pride shows

when he uses these items in drunken praise of his Babylonian gods. A similar contempt for God will be described in the apocalyptic visions, when an evil king sets up a “desolating enormity” in the Jerusalem temple (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; cf. 1 Macc 1:54; Mark 13:14; 2 Thess 2:3-5; Rev 13).

5:1 *Belshazzar*: son of Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king (see note on Dan 4:1-37). He helped his father rule Babylon before the Persians captured it.

5:2 *his father*: *Father* in Aramaic can mean “ancestor” or “predecessor” (cf. Gen 28:13; 2 Kgs 14:3). Nebuchadnezzar was a feared and accomplished ruler, while Belshazzar is a hero at partying and sacrifice.

5:5-9 A hand without a body writes on the palace wall, scaring the king out of his wits.

5:4 The *Prayer of Nabonidus* in the Dead Sea Scrolls (see note on Dan 4:1-37), in which King Nabonidus reportedly turns away from worshipping idols, has a similar list of materials.

5:11 Dn 2:47,  
Dn 2:48, Dn 4:8,  
Dn 4:9, Dn 4:18  
5:12 Dn 1:7,  
Dn 1:17, Dn 4:8,  
Dn 5:14, Dn 6:3  
5:14 Dn 5:11  
5:16 Dn 5:7,  
Dn 5:29  
5:17 2K: 5:16;  
Dn 6:10  
5:28 Is 13:17,  
Is 21:2; Dn 5:31,  
Dn 6:28, Dn 9:1

<sup>10</sup>Upon hearing the commotion coming from the king and his princes, the queen entered the banqueting hall and declared, “Long live the king! Don’t be so disturbed. Don’t be so frightened. <sup>11</sup>There is a man in your kingdom who has the breath<sup>l</sup> of holy gods in him! When your father was alive, this man was shown to possess illumination, insight, and wisdom like the very wisdom of the gods.<sup>k</sup> Your father King Nebuchadnezzar appointed this man as chief over the dream interpreters, enchanters, Chaldeans, and diviners. Yes, your father did this <sup>12</sup>because this man—Daniel, the one the king named Belteshazzar—possesses an extraordinary spirit, knowledge, and insight into the meaning of dreams. He can explain ambiguities and resolve mysteries. Now in light of all that, summon Daniel! He will explain the meaning of this thing.”

<sup>13</sup>So Daniel was brought before the king. The king said to him, “So you are Daniel, the Daniel from the exiles that my father the king brought from Judah? <sup>14</sup>I have heard that the breath of the gods is in you and that you possess illumination, insight, and extraordinary wisdom. <sup>15</sup>Now, the sages and the dream interpreters were brought before me to read this writing and interpret it for me, but they couldn’t explain its meaning. <sup>16</sup>But I’ve heard that you can explain meanings and solve mysteries. So if you can read this writing and interpret it for me, you will wear royal robes, have a gold chain around your neck, and will rule the kingdom as third in command.”

### Daniel interprets the writing

<sup>17</sup>Daniel answered the king: “Keep your gifts. Give the rewards to someone else. But I will still read the writing to the king and interpret it for him. <sup>18</sup>Listen, Your Majesty: The Most High God gave kingship, power, glory, and majesty to your father Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup>Because of the power God gave Nebuchadnezzar, all peoples, nations, and languages were terrified of him. He did whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted: killing or sparing, exalting or humbling. <sup>20</sup>But when he became arrogant, acting in stubborn pride, he was pulled off his royal throne and the glory was taken from him. <sup>21</sup>He was driven away from other humans, and his mind became like an animal’s. He lived with wild donkeys, he ate grass like cattle, and dew from heaven washed his body until he realized that the Most High God dominates human kingship and sets over it anyone he wants.

<sup>22</sup>But you who are his son, Belshazzar, you haven’t submitted, even though you’ve known all this. <sup>23</sup>Instead, you’ve set yourself up against the Lord of heaven! The equipment of God’s house was brought to you; and you, your princes, your consorts, and your secondary wives drank wine out of it, all the while praising the gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone—gods who can’t see, hear, or know anything. But you didn’t glorify the true God who holds your very breath in his hand and who owns every road you take.

<sup>24</sup>That’s why this hand was sent from God and why this message was written down. <sup>25</sup>This is what was written down:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>26</sup>This is the meaning of the word MENE: God has numbered<sup>m</sup> the days of your rule. It’s over! <sup>27</sup>TEKEL means that you’ve been weighed<sup>n</sup> on the scales, and you don’t measure up. <sup>28</sup>PERES<sup>o</sup> means your kingship is divided<sup>p</sup> and given to the Medes and the Persians.<sup>q</sup>

<sup>l</sup>Or spirit; also in 5:14 <sup>k</sup>Or wisdom of God <sup>1</sup>Aram Upharsin <sup>m</sup>Aram menah, which is a wordplay with Mene <sup>n</sup>Aram teqal, which is a wordplay with Tekel <sup>o</sup>The singular form of the plural Parsin in 5:25 <sup>p</sup>Aram peras, which is a wordplay with Parsin <sup>q</sup>Aram Paras, another wordplay with Parsin

5:10-12 Only Daniel may be able to explain what’s going on. *the queen*: perhaps the king’s mother or even grandmother (Nebuchadnezzar’s wife), since she can remember how Daniel impressed earlier kings. Daniel is now 81 years old and mostly forgotten at court (cf. Exod 1:8).

5:11 *breath*: See note on Daniel 4:8.

5:13-31 The king offers fame and riches, but Daniel explains the writing for free. He wants no rewards from a king who would treat the living God with contempt.

5:18-21 A reminder of how God knocked Nebuchadnezzar off his high horse (see Dan 4 and notes).

5:22-28 Daniel bluntly confronts the king, speaking truth to power (contrast his more diplomatic approach in Dan 4:19).

5:23 *can’t see, hear, or know anything*: The sarcasm about idols strongly echoes sections of Isaiah 40–55, especially Isaiah 46:7.

5:25-26 *MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN*: units of weight and money in Aramaic: the mina (worth between 50 and 60 shekels), shekel, and half-mina. The king and his sages understood the weight names but didn’t see that they were puns (cf. Amos 8:1-2). *Mene* sounds like the Aramaic verb “to number”; *tekel* sounds like the verb “to weigh”; *parsin* sounds like the verb “to divide” and it also sounds like the word *Persians*. Read Daniel’s way, the Aramaic words become: “Numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided.”

5:28 *the Medes and the Persians*: connected as one kingdom in Daniel (see Dan 6:8, 12, 15; 8:20). Persia’s Cyrus the

5:29 Gn 41:42;  
Dn 2:48, Dn 5:7,  
Dn 5:16, Dn 6:2

5:31 Dn 6:1,  
Dn 9:1, Dn 11:1

6:1 Est 1:1;  
Dn 5:31, Dn 9:1

6:3 Est 10:3;  
Dn 5:12

6:5 Ac 24:13

6:10 1Ki 8:48;  
Ps 55:17, Ps 95:6

6:11 Ps 37:32,  
Ps 37:33; Dn 6:6

6:13 Est 3:8;  
Dn 1:6,

Dn 2:25,  
Dn 3:12,  
Dn 5:13

<sup>29</sup>Then Belshazzar commanded that Daniel be dressed in a purple robe, have a gold chain around his neck, and be officially appointed as third in command in the kingdom.

<sup>30</sup>That very same night, Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. <sup>31</sup>Darius the Mede received the kingdom at the age of 62.

### Plot against Daniel

**6**Darius decided to appoint one hundred twenty chief administrators throughout the kingdom, <sup>2</sup>and to set over them three main officers to whom they would report so that the king wouldn't have to be bothered with too much. <sup>3</sup>One of these main officers was Daniel. <sup>4</sup>Because of his extraordinary spirit, Daniel soon surpassed the other officers and the chief administrators—so much so that the king had plans to set him over the entire kingdom. <sup>5</sup>As a result, the other officers and the chief administrators tried to find some problem with Daniel's work for the kingdom. But they couldn't find any problem or corruption at all because Daniel was trustworthy. He wasn't guilty of any negligence or corruption.

<sup>6</sup>So these men said, "We won't find any fault in Daniel, unless we can find something to use against him from his religious practice."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>6</sup>So these officers and chief administrators ganged together and went to the king. They said to him, "Long live King Darius! <sup>7</sup>All the officers of the kingdom, the ministers, the chief administrators, the royal associates, and the governors advise the king to issue an edict and enforce a law, that for thirty days anyone who says prayers to any god or human being except you, Your Majesty, will be thrown into a pit of lions. <sup>8</sup>Now, Your Majesty, issue the law and sign the document so that it cannot be changed, as per the law of Media and Persia, which cannot be annulled." <sup>9</sup>Because of this, King Darius signed the document containing the law.

### Daniel prays

<sup>10</sup>When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went to his house. Now his upper room had open windows that faced Jerusalem. Daniel knelt down, prayed, and praised his God three times that day, just like he always did. <sup>11</sup>Just then these men, all ganged together, came upon Daniel praying and seeking mercy from his God. <sup>12</sup>They then went and talked to the king about the law: "Your Majesty! Didn't you sign a law, that for thirty days any person who prays to any god or human being besides you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into a pit of lions?"

The king replied, "The decision is absolutely firm in accordance with the law of Media and Persia, which cannot be annulled."

<sup>13</sup>So they said to the king, "One of the Judean exiles, Daniel, has ignored you, Your Majesty, as well as the law you signed. He says his prayers three times a day!"

<sup>a</sup>Aram uncertain <sup>b</sup>Or in the Instruction of his God

Great made Media (a kingdom in northwest Iran) into a Persian province in 549 BCE. The Medians helped him defeat Babylon in 539 BCE.

5:30 The death of Belshazzar *that very same night* (cf. Dan 4:31) echoes the wisdom of Job 34:25: "he regards their deeds, overturns them at night, and they are crushed." According to ancient Greek historians, the Medes and Persians attacked Babylon during a great banquet. Everyone was so absorbed with partying that no one noticed the enemy diverting the Euphrates River to enter Babylon across the riverbed.

5:31 *Darius the Mede*: The official-sounding royal name makes for good storytelling, but it isn't historically correct. Babylon fell to Persia's King Cyrus the Great (see note on Dan 5:2B), not to *Darius*. The book of Daniel likely combines Kings Cyrus and Darius into one larger-than-life character (see Dan 6:1; 9:1; 11:1). The Aramaic of Daniel 6:28 may even be meant to explain that in this book *Darius the Mede* is the same as King Cyrus. As in Daniel 1:1 (see note there), playfulness with the historical record may be the authors' signal to the reader that this story is sacred fiction rather than secular history.

6:1-28 The tale of Daniel in the lion's pit is a well-loved

story of God's power over all earthly dangers. The officers plot against Daniel because of professional jealousy, not because of prejudices against his ethnic group or religion, although they use Daniel's religion in their plot.

6:1-9 A plot against Daniel arises out of competition between Darius' administrators. Since they can't find any problems with Daniel's work, they decide to attack his distinctive religion. The king's inflated ego makes it easy for the officers and administrators to use him for their plan. He has no problem taking the place of a god (cf. the attitude of the "small horn" in Dan 7:8, 25; 8:11, 25; 11:37).

6:1 Historians note that King Darius I (522-486 BCE) created large administrative districts governed by Persian nobles.

6:8 *cannot be changed*: Compare with Daniel 6:12, 15; Esther 1:19; 8:8. This makes fun of Persia's claim to provide permanent, unchanging rule. In inscriptions at his grave, King Darius claims that no one broke his laws: "What was said to them by me, that they did; my law—that held them firm."

6:10-18 Daniel ignores the king's document. Continuing to pray openly three times a day (cf. Ps 55:17), he bears witness that God's reality is more important than human politicking and plotting.

<sup>14</sup>When the king heard this report, he was very unhappy. He decided to rescue Daniel and did everything he could do to save Daniel before the sun went down. <sup>15</sup>But these men, all ganged together, came and said to the king, "You must realize, Your Majesty, that the law of Media and Persia, including every law and edict the king has issued, cannot be changed."

### Daniel in the lions' pit

<sup>16</sup>So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and hurled him into the pit of lions.

The king said to Daniel: "Your God—the one you serve so consistently—will rescue you."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>A single stone was brought and placed over the entrance to the pit. The king sealed it with his own ring and with those of his princes so that Daniel's situation couldn't be changed. <sup>18</sup>The king then went home to his palace and fasted through the night. No pleasures<sup>18</sup> were brought to him, and he couldn't sleep. <sup>19</sup>At dawn, at the first sign of light, the king rose and rushed to the lions' pit.

<sup>20</sup>As he approached it, he called out to Daniel, worried: "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God—the one you serve so consistently—able to rescue you from the lions?"

<sup>21</sup>Then Daniel answered the king: "Long live the king! <sup>22</sup>My God sent his messenger, who shut the lions' mouths. They haven't touched me because I was judged innocent before my God. I haven't done anything wrong to you either, Your Majesty."

<sup>23</sup>The king was thrilled. He commanded that Daniel be brought up out of the pit, and Daniel was lifted out. Not a scratch was found on him, because he trusted in his God. <sup>24</sup>The king then ordered that the men who had accused Daniel be brought and thrown into the lions' pit—including their wives and children. They hadn't even reached the bottom of the pit before the lions overpowered them, crushing all their bones.

### New decree

<sup>25</sup>Then King Darius wrote the following decree:

To all the peoples, nations, and languages inhabiting the entire earth: I wish you much peace. <sup>26</sup>I now issue this command: In every region of my kingdom, all people must fear and revere Daniel's God because:

He is the living God.

God stands firm forever.

His kingship is indestructible.

God's rule will last until the end of time.

<sup>27</sup>He is rescuer and savior;

God performs signs and miracles in heaven and on earth.

Here's the proof: He rescued Daniel from the lions' power.

<sup>28</sup>And so Daniel was made prosperous during the rule of Darius and during the rule of Cyrus the Persian.

### Daniel's vision: four beasts

**7**In the first year of Babylon's King Belshazzar, Daniel had a dream—a vision in his head as he lay on his bed. He wrote the dream down. Here is the beginning of the account:

<sup>1</sup>Or *May your God—the one you serve so consistently—rescue you.* <sup>18</sup>Aram uncertain

6:14 Powerful King Darius is caught by his own law. He can't undo the trouble created by his jealous officials.

6:16 *Your God . . . rescue you:* Although Darius made a law that people come only to him for help (Dan 6:7, 9), he now admits that true power lies completely outside his rule: Only God can rescue Daniel (contrast King Nebuchadnezzar's attitude in Dan 3:15).

6:19-24 After rushing in a very un-kingly way to the sealed pit, Darius discovers Daniel rescued from the lions. A higher law than that of the Medes and the Persians has judged Daniel and declared him innocent (cf. 1 Macc 2:60; *Daniel* means "God is judge").

6:24 The fate of the administrators who accused Daniel recalls words from Psalm 57:4-6, "They dug a pit for me, but they fell into it instead!" (v. 6). *wives and children:* The king favors Daniel, but his rule and his empire remain extraordinarily cruel. *hadn't even reached:* The lions jump to

eat, proving that a true miracle, not some problem with the lions, saved Daniel.

6:25-28 King Darius writes a new decree, declaring God's permanent rule (cf. Dan 6:8 and note). The king remains focused on power and fear (6:26), making no mention of how God inspires loyalty and love.

7:1-12:13 The second half of Daniel contains apocalyptic visions (see sidebar, "Apocalypse" at Dan 3) that help readers imagine a new world and a new identity. This new world and new identity put the here and now in a new light. While waiting for God's resurrection world to arrive in power, the wise prepare through open, faithful witness and action. They take a position much like Isaiah's suffering servant of the Lord.

7:1-28 Building on the picture of history in Daniel 2, chapter 7 adds details about God's coming reign. The powers that oppose it are pictured as monsters coming out of

6:14 Mk 6:26  
6:16 Job 5:19;  
Ps 37:39;  
Dn 3:17, Dn 6:7,  
Dn 6:20  
6:22 Nm 20:16;  
Ps 91:11;  
Is 63:9; Dn 3:28;  
2Ti 4:17  
6:23 1Ch 5:20;  
Dn 3:25,  
Dn 3:27  
6:24 Dt 19:18,  
Dt 19:19,  
Dt 24:16,  
2Ki 14:6  
6:25 Dn 3:4,  
Dn 4:1  
6:26 Ps 99:1;  
Dn 2:44,  
Dn 3:29, Dn 4:3,  
Dn 4:34  
6:27 Dn 3:29,  
Dn 4:2, Dn 4:3  
6:28 2Ch 36:22,  
2Ch 36:23;  
Ezr 1:2; Is 44:28;  
Dn 1:21  
7:1 Dn 1:17,  
Dn 4:5, Dn 5:1

7:2 Rev 7:1

7:3 Dn 7:17;  
Rev 13:17:4 Jer 47;  
Eze 17:3

7:5 Dn 2:39

7:6 Rev 13:2

7:7 Dn 2:40;

Dn 7:19;

Dn 7:23;

Rev 13:1;

Rev 13:1

7:8 Dn 7:20;

Dn 8:9; Rev 13:5;

Rev 13:6

<sup>2</sup>I am Daniel. In the vision I had during the night I saw the four winds of heaven churning the great sea. <sup>3</sup>Four giant beasts emerged from the sea, each different from the others. <sup>4</sup>The first was like a lion with eagle's wings. I observed it until its wings were pulled off, and it was lifted up from the ground. It was then set on two feet, like a human being, and it received a human mind. <sup>5</sup>Then I saw another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told: "Get up! Devour much flesh!" <sup>6</sup>I kept watching, and suddenly there was another beast, this one like a leopard. On its back it had four wings like bird wings. This beast had four heads. Authority was given to it.

<sup>7</sup>After this, as I continued to watch this night vision, I saw a fourth beast, terrifying and hideous, with extraordinary power and with massive iron teeth. As it ate and crushed, its feet smashed whatever was left over. It was different from all the other beasts before it, and it had ten horns. <sup>8</sup>I was staring at the horns when, suddenly, another small horn came up between them. Three of the earlier horns were ripped out to make room for it. On this new horn were eyes like human eyes and a mouth that bragged and bragged.

**The Anti-Messiah** The notion of an end-time leader with a character opposite that of God's promised Anointed One (in Heb. "Messiah"; in Gk., "Christ") appears as early as the book of Zechariah. That book starts by celebrating the anointed leaders Joshua (Zech 3) and Zerubbabel (Zech 4), who led the people at the time of return from exile, but then the book turns to hope for God's future intervention in the people's history. Zechariah 11:15-17 states that, before God finally rescues Judah, the land will suffer under a worthless ruler who devours flesh and tears off hooves. An ancient Jewish tablet called "Gabriel's Vision" picks up on Zechariah's use of the word "branch" for the Anointed One (Zech 3:8; 6:12), and speaks of a dark counterpart, the "evil branch." The *new horn* of Daniel 7:7-8 is another example of an anti-messiah. The New Testament refers to false messiahs or "antichrists" in Mark 13:6, 21-22; Matthew 24:5, 24; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 8-10; 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; Revelation 11:1-2; 12:6; 13:1-10; 17:8.

a raging sea, a common symbol for chaos (cf. Isa 27:1; 51:9-10; Rev 21:1). The monsters are spiritual powers that stand behind a series of ferocious earthly empires, leading finally to the reign of an arrogant bully, the vision's *small horn*. In spite of the monsters, this revelation is full of hope. The Most High easily defeats the dictator, and God's reign appears on the clouds of heaven for all to see.

7:1-8 Daniel's vision of four beasts is a historical drama in which four kingdoms arise, one after the other, on earth (Dan 7:17; cf. notes on Dan 2:36-45; 5:28). Daniel's interpreter never explains what kingdoms the beasts stand for. The chapter's original writers and hearers, living under the rule of King Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE; see Dan 11:21-35) would have supposed the sequence ended in their own era, as follows: (1) Babylon, (2) Media, (3) Persia, and (4) the Greek kingdoms (that is, Alexander the Great and the Greek kings, including Antiochus IV, that ruled his empire after his death). As Daniel continued to be read in later Jewish and Christian communities, however, interpreters saw a different sequence: (1) Babylon, (2) Medo-Persia (the combined kingdoms of Media and Persia), (3) the Greek kingdoms, and (4) Rome (for details, see the following notes). Even later readers have often understood the fourth kingdom to be some "new Rome" of their own time.

7:2 I saw: an Aramaic phrase (Dan 7:4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13) that helps identify the passage as an apocalyptic vision (see sidebar, "Apocalypse" at Dan 3). According to Luke 10:18, Jesus uses the Greek version of this phrase in reporting a similar vision. *churning*: the Greek translation of Daniel says the winds "fell upon"/"attacked" the sea of chaos. This fits with poetic images of God as a thunderstorm attacking the raging sea (e.g. Pss 74:13-14; 89:8-11; 93:3-4).

7:4 a lion with eagle's wings: the spirit of Babylon, an

empire strong and swift like the lion and eagle (cf. Jer 4:7, 13; 49:19-22). Images of lions with wings decorated the main street of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. The beast's getting a human mind recalls Nebuchadnezzar's recovery in Daniel 4:36.

7:5 bear: originally Media (cf. Isa 13:17; Jer 51:11), but Medo-Persia according to other clues in the present form of Daniel (see Dan 5:28 and note; Dan 6:8; note on Dan 7:1-8). The latter identification fits Daniel 8:20, where Medo-Persia is a single beast (a ram with two horns; see Dan 8:3). *raised on one side*: The original sense may have been "tearing up, front paws raised." In the book's present form, however, the image is of Media and Persia united in an unbalanced empire (as in Dan 8:3, "one was higher than the other"). *three ribs*: Medo-Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BCE, Lydia in 546, and Egypt in 525.

7:6 leopard: For the original writers and audience, the Persian Empire. When chapters 7 and 8 of Daniel are read side by side as related parts of a book of scripture that holds together, however, the leopard seems most like the Greek kingdoms of Alexander, because its *four heads* look like the four kingdoms created when Alexander died in 323 BCE, after his generals divided up his empire. Daniel 8 stresses how Alexander's empire split into four parts (see Dan 8:8, 21-22). *four wings*: Symbols for speed in conquest, which matches Persia's King Cyrus (see Isa 41:3) but fits even better with Alexander the Great of Greece (the "big horn" of Dan 8:21), who conquered the known world by age 32 (see Dan 8:5). *Authority*: Compare with the universal rule of the third kingdom in Daniel 2:39.

7:7-8 The fourth beast was originally Greece, but was thought of as Rome by the time the book of Daniel entered into the canon of holy scripture (cf. note on Dan 11:30). Its alien character shows that it stands for terrible



**Throne of fire and the human figure**

<sup>9</sup>As I was watching, thrones were raised up.  
The ancient one took his seat.  
His clothes were white like snow;  
his hair was like a lamb's wool.  
His throne was made of flame;  
its wheels were blazing fire.

<sup>10</sup>A river of fire flowed out from his presence;  
thousands upon thousands served him;  
ten thousand times ten thousand stood ready to serve him!  
The court sat in session; the scrolls were opened.

<sup>11</sup>I kept watching. I watched from the moment the horn started bragging until the beast was killed and its body was destroyed, handed over to be burned with fire. <sup>12</sup>Then the authority of the remaining beasts was brought to an end, but they were given an extension among the living for a set time and season.

<sup>13</sup>As I continued to watch this night vision of mine,  
I suddenly saw one like a human being<sup>▼</sup> coming with the heavenly clouds.  
He came to the ancient one and was presented before him.

<sup>14</sup>Rule, glory, and kingship were given to him;  
all peoples, nations, and languages will serve him.  
His rule is an everlasting one—it will never pass away!—  
his kingship is indestructible.

**Beasts interpreted**

<sup>15</sup>Now this caused me, Daniel, to worry.<sup>▼</sup> My visions disturbed me greatly. <sup>16</sup>So I went to one of the servants who was standing ready nearby. I asked him for the truth about all this.

*The Human One in Daniel* The term “anointed one” (in Heb., “messiah”) doesn’t appear in Daniel 7:13. Some interpreters believe that the *one like a human being* (the phrase has sometimes been translated “a son of man”) isn’t a messiah but is probably a symbol for God’s people or the authority that is going to be given to them (Dan 7:22, 27). Other interpreters insist that the monsters and saviors in apocalypses are usually real, not just symbols of something else. Ancient Jewish interpreters understood the “human one” to be an end-time redeemer, God’s anointed ruler (see an example of such interpretation in 4 Ezra 13, in the Apocrypha). In the NT period, the phrase which we translate “one like a human being” (or “son of man”) is used by both Jewish and Christian writers for a godly ruler who will come in the end times. The NT pictures Jesus speaking of himself as the “Human One” (another translation for the “Son of Man” phrase) who will come on the clouds of heaven (e.g., Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62).

<sup>▼</sup>Aram *kebar enash* (like a son of man) is an idiom that means like a human being; cf also 8:17; 10:16, 18 for Heb approximations. <sup>▼</sup>Or *my spirit was distressed in its sheath*; Aram uncertain

end-time evil. *ten horns*: Compare with the ten toes of Daniel 2:42. *Horns* represent strength and violence; *ten stands* for completeness; *three* (7:8) means “some of” the kings. *small horn... that bragged and bragged*: Like Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3, this evil king has an indecently inflated ego. Daniel’s authors doubtless thought of Antiochus IV (see Dan 11:21-35) as the end-time foe described by their writings. But Daniel became scripture at a time when the bragging little horn of the end times could no longer be imagined to be Antiochus, since history continued to march ahead, and the events of Daniel 7:21-22 remained unfulfilled. Thus Jews and Christians have received the book of Daniel as a forward-pointing prophecy of a future “small horn,” who will come as the anti-messiah (see sidebar, “The Anti-Messiah” at Dan 7).

7:9-14 Daniel uses poetry to help convey the wonder and majesty of a second scene taking place on God’s level of reality. God, *the ancient one* (cf. Ps 102:12, 24), sits on a throne of fire to judge the beasts of chaos. A new

character, a mysterious royal figure, then receives everlasting kingship on earth.

7:9 *flame... wheels*: The prophet Ezekiel also pictures God on a fiery, wheeled throne (see notes on Ezek 1:4-28; 10:1-2).

7:11-12 *an extension*: Only the fourth, horrific beast is killed immediately. The remains of the other empires survive. In the end, they will serve and obey God’s people (Dan 7:27).

7:13-14 A wonderful royal figure appears, a symbol of God’s good rule that will be given to God’s holy people (Dan 7:27). In another Jewish writing from the same period as Daniel, a white bull brings good rule that ends the cruel reign of vicious animals (see sidebar, “Apocalypse” at Dan 3), *like a human being*: See sidebar, “The Human One in Daniel.” The human form shows that this figure, unlike the monstrous animals, will rule justly and well, in God’s own image (see Gen 1:26-28).

7:15-28 Earlier, Daniel didn’t need help to interpret dreams

7:9 Eze 10:2;  
Dn 7:22; Mk 9:3;  
Rev 1:14  
7:10 Ps 50:3;  
Ps 68:17;  
Is 30:27;  
Rev 5:1,  
Rev 20:12  
7:11 Rev 19:20,  
Rev 20:10  
7:13 Mt 26:64;  
Mk 14:62;  
Rev 1:7,  
Rev 1:13,  
Rev 14:14  
7:14 Is 9:7;  
Dn 2:44,  
Dn 7:27; Lk 1:33;  
Rev 11:15  
7:15 Dn 4:19,  
Dn 7:1, Dn 7:28  
7:16 Dn 8:16

7:17 Dn 7:3;  
Dn 7:11, Dn 8:4;  
Rev 13:1

7:18 Is 60:12;  
Dn 7:22;  
Dn 7:27;  
Rev 2:26;  
Rev 20:4

7:19 Dn 7:7

7:20 Dn 7:6

7:21 Rev 13:7

7:22 Dn 7:9;  
Dn 7:13;  
Dn 7:18;  
1Co 6:2;  
Rev 20:4

7:24 Dn 7:7;  
Rev 17:12

7:25 Dn 2:21;  
Dn 11:36;  
Dn 12:7

7:26 Dn 7:10

7:27 Ps 22:27;  
Ps 86:9; Dn 2:44;  
Lk 1:33;  
Rev 11:15

7:28 Dn 4:19;  
Dn 7:15;  
Dn 8:27;  
Dn 10:8; Lk 2:19

8:1 Dn 5:1;  
Dn 7:1

8:2 Neh 1:1;  
Est 1:2

8:3 Dn 8:20

He spoke to me and explained to me the meaning of these things. <sup>17</sup>“These four giant beasts are four kings that will rise up from the earth, <sup>18</sup>but the holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingship. They will hold the kingship securely forever and always.”

<sup>19</sup>Next I wanted greater clarity about the fourth beast, the one that was different from all the others and utterly terrifying with its iron teeth and bronze claws. As it ate and crushed, its feet smashed whatever was left over. <sup>20</sup>I wanted greater clarity about the ten horns on its head, and the other horn that came up, along with the three that fell out to make room for it—but especially about the horn that had eyes and a mouth that bragged, and that seemed more important than the others. <sup>21</sup>As I watched, this same horn waged war against the holy ones and defeated them, <sup>22</sup>until the Ancient One came. Then judgment was given in favor of the holy ones of the Most High. The set time arrived, and the holy ones held the kingship securely.

<sup>23</sup>This is what he said:

“The fourth beast means that there will be a fourth kingship on the earth.

It will be different from all the other kingships.

It will devour the entire earth, trample it, crush it.

<sup>24</sup>The ten horns mean that from this kingship will rise ten kings, and after them will rise yet another.

He will be different from the previous ones.

He will defeat three kings.

<sup>25</sup>He will say things against the Most High and will exhaust the holy ones of the Most High.

He will try to change times set by law.

And for a period of time, periods of time, and half a period of time, they will be delivered into his power.

<sup>26</sup>Then the court will sit in session.

His rule will be taken away—

ruined and wiped out for all time.

<sup>27</sup>The kingship, authority, and power of all kingdoms under heaven will be given to the people, the holy ones of the Most High.

Their kingship is an everlasting one; every authority will serve them and obey.”

<sup>28</sup>The account ends here.

Now as for how I, Daniel, felt about this: My thoughts disturbed me greatly. My mood darkened considerably, and I kept thinking about this matter.

### *Vision of a ram and a goat*

**O**In the third year of King Belshazzar’s rule, a vision came to me, Daniel, some time after the earlier vision I had. <sup>21</sup>I saw this vision, and as I experienced it I was in the walled city of Susa in the province of Elam, <sup>2</sup>by the Ulai canal. <sup>3</sup>When I lifted my eyes, I suddenly saw a

<sup>2</sup>Some LXX sources; MT repeats *I had this vision before I was by the Ulai canal*.

(Dan 2:28; 4:9, 18; 5:11-12, 17), but now that he is peering deeper into God’s mysteries, he asks a divine messenger about the meaning of the vision (cf. Dan 8:15-16; 9:21-23; 10:14-17; 12:8; Zech 1:9, 19; 2:3; 4:1).

7:21, 22 *holy ones*: See note on Daniel 7:27.

7:25-26 The last king is an arrogant fool, who dares to challenge God (see Dan 2:21) and interfere with proper worship (see Dan 8:11-13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; 1 Macc 1:45; 2 Macc 6:6). *period . . . periods . . . half a period*: three and a half years (cf. Dan 8:14; 9:27; 12:7). Seven stands for completeness, so half of seven is a “broken,” perhaps godless, number. The same stretch of time is referred to in Daniel 9:27 as a “half-week” that will end in “decreed destruction.” Daniel’s original readers would have understood the period as the final years of Antiochus IV. Although their crisis with Antiochus turned out not to be history’s final hour, later generations have continued to find meaning in the hope expressed here. That’s because

the book never says the last king is Antiochus. Instead readers now know that the earth managed to avoid the end of history at the time of the leopard-beast (Dan 7:6); although it was a near miss!

7:27 *holy ones*: here God’s people, set apart and devoted (as in Ps 34:9; Isa 4:3). The term can also refer to heavenly beings with God’s people under their protection (e.g. Dan 8:13, 24).

7:28 *kept thinking*: While living at the time of the first beast (Dan 7:4), Daniel could hardly imagine the era of the fourth one. Having already seen his competence (e.g., Dan 5:11) we now see his human limits (cf. Dan 8:5, 27). Even divine messengers must ask each other about the meaning of apocalyptic visions (see Dan 8:13-14; see sidebar, “Apocalypse” at Dan 3), so we should be cautious when people today claim that they know exactly what the visions mean. 8:1-27 This chapter explains its symbols much more plainly than Daniel 7 did. Daniel 8 also focuses more

ram with two horns standing in front of the canal. Both horns were high, but one was higher than the other. The higher one came up after the other one. <sup>4</sup>I saw the ram goring west, north, and south. No animal could resist the ram, and no one could stop it, rescuing others from its power. The ram did whatever it pleased. It became powerful.

<sup>5</sup>I was trying to understand this when suddenly a he-goat came from the west, crossing the entire earth but not touching the ground. Between this goat's eyes was a horn that was a sight to see. <sup>6</sup>The he-goat came to the ram that had two horns, the one I'd seen standing in front of the canal. The he-goat charged the ram in powerful anger. <sup>7</sup>I saw the he-goat approach the ram. It was enraged at the ram and attacked it, shattering the ram's two horns. The ram couldn't resist the he-goat. The he-goat threw the ram on the ground and trampled on it. No one could rescue the ram from the he-goat's power.

<sup>8</sup>The he-goat became even greater, but at the height of its power, its large horn snapped. In its place, four horns, each a sight to see, came up toward the four winds of heaven. <sup>9</sup>A single, very small horn came out of one of the four horns. It grew bigger and bigger, stretching toward the south, the east, and the beautiful country. <sup>10</sup>It grew as high as the heavenly forces, until it finally threw some of them and some of the stars down to the earth. Then it trampled on them. <sup>11</sup>It grew as high as the very leader of those forces, taking the daily sacrifice away from him<sup>\*</sup> and overturning his holy place. <sup>12</sup>In an act of rebellion, another force will take control of the daily sacrifice. It will throw truth to the ground and will succeed in everything it does.\*

### How long?

<sup>13</sup>I then heard a certain holy one speaking. A second holy one said to the first one: "How long will this vision last—the one concerning the daily sacrifice, the desolating rebellion, and the handing over of the sanctuary and its forces to be trampled?"

<sup>7</sup>Or the daily sacrifice was taken away from him. <sup>\*</sup>Heb uncertain

specifically on the Greek era, the period when Daniel came together as a complete book. This focus shows that the book's original writers understood their own days, when Antiochus IV Epiphanes ruled (175–164 BCE), as the end times. Looking back, today's readers can see that those times weren't the final end, but that doesn't make the vision irrelevant (see sidebar, "Apocalypse" at Dan 3). 8:1–14 In his second apocalyptic vision (see sidebar, "Apocalypse" at Dan 3), Daniel sees a ram (the combined empires of Media and Persia) goring in all directions. No one can stop it. It does as it pleases until a he-goat (Greece), sporting an immense horn (Alexander the Great), flies in from the west. The goat charges the ram, shatters its two horns, and stomps it into the ground. Then, four horns (Alexander's four generals) sprout on the goat, replacing the big horn. Another horrific little horn (King Antiochus IV Epiphanes) pushes up out of one of the four earlier horns. This little horn commits great sins, even attacking God's heavenly armies.

8:1 As Daniel's vision begins, the book switches from Aramaic back to Hebrew (see note on Dan 2:4). Why do the writers switch, when their Aramaic (which Judeans of their time spoke in daily life) is better than their Hebrew? By using the ancient language of their people, they find a way of resisting the cultural and religious changes that Antiochus is trying to make. By writing in Hebrew, Daniel's authors resist foreign ways and deny that "foreign" equals power. They insist that true reality has to do with God's saving work amid the Hebrew people. They leave Daniel 7 in Aramaic, however, to help knit the book's second, mostly Hebrew half to the sacred fiction written in Aramaic in the first half.

8:2 *Susa*: By the time Daniel 8 was written, Susa (under the same Greek king as Judea), had become a model of Greek

culture and values. Perhaps that is why the chapter places Daniel there, even though Susa didn't really become a winter capital until after King Belshazzar's time. Being in *Susa* may symbolize the Jews surrounded by crushing experiences of foreign ("Greek") ways (see note on Dan 8:1). *Ulai*: rivers are sometimes associated with visions (cf. Dan 10:4; Ezek 1:1–3; Zech 1:8; Gen 32:22–32). They are boundary markers, and boundaries were believed to be places of contact between worlds, places where people could experience divine reality more easily.

8:3 The ram's two horns represent the two kingdoms of Media and Persia (Dan 8:20). Persia came up as a world power later than Media, but became the dominant of the two kingdoms in 550 BCE under King Cyrus.

8:5 *horn*: Alexander the Great (see Dan 8:21). *not touching the ground*: Alexander conquered the known world with the speed of a powerful bird (cf. Dan 7:6).

8:8 *four horns*: See Daniel 8:22; see note on Daniel 7:6.

8:9 *small horn*: King Antiochus IV Epiphanes (see Dan 8:23–25). *south*: Antiochus invaded Egypt in 169 BCE. *east*: He attacked Parthia in 165 BCE. *beautiful country*: namely, Judea (see Dan 11:16, 41, 45). When Antiochus returned from Egypt in 169, he plundered the temple (cf. Dan 11:28).

8:11–12 (see 1 Macc 1:54–61; 2 Macc 4:11–6:11). *leader*: God. Antiochus declared himself "god manifest" ("Epiphanes") on coins and ordered sacrifices, probably to Zeus, in the Jerusalem temple on the twenty-fifth of each month in celebration of his own birthday (see 2 Macc 6:5; 10:7, and notes). *truth to the ground*: Antiochus' troops tore up and burned scrolls of holy scripture (see 1 Macc 1:56).

8:13–14 Two divine beings struggle to understand why God is slow to fix the situation (cf. the conversation of divine messengers in Zech 2:3–4). *How long*: Language of yearning for God to stop the course of earth's history

8:4 Dn 7:17;  
Dn 11:3,  
Dn 11:16  
8:5 Dn 8:21  
8:7 Dn 11:11  
8:8 2Ch 26:16;  
Dn 5:20,  
Dn 7:2, Dn 8:22;  
Rev 7:1  
8:10 Is 14:13;  
Dn 7:7, Dn 8:7;  
Rev 12:4  
8:12 Is 59:14;  
Dn 11:28  
8:13 Dn 4:13,  
Dn 11:31,  
Dn 12:6

8:14 Dn 7:25,  
Dn 12:11;  
Rev 11:3

8:15 Dn 10:16

8:16 Dn 8:2,  
Dn 9:21,  
Dn 12:5; Lk 1:19,  
Lk 1:26

8:17 Eze 1:28;  
Dn 8:19,  
Dn 11:35;  
Rev 1:17

8:20 Dn 8:3

8:21 Dn 8:5,  
Dn 10:20,  
Dn 11:3

8:23 Dt 28:50;  
Dn 8:25,  
Dn 11:21

8:24 Dn 8:12,  
Dn 11:36

8:25 Dn 2:34,  
Dn 8:11

9:1 Dn 5:31,  
Dn 6:1, Dn 11:1

<sup>14</sup>He said to me, "For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary will be restored."

### Vision interpreted

<sup>15</sup>Now I, Daniel, needed help understanding the vision I saw. Suddenly standing in front of me was someone who looked like a man. <sup>16</sup>I then heard a human voice coming out of the center of the Ulai canal. It called out: "Gabriel, help this person understand what he has seen."

<sup>17</sup>Gabriel approached me, and I was terrified when he came. I fell with my face to the ground. Gabriel said to me, "Know this, human one: the vision is for the end time." <sup>18</sup>As soon as he said this to me, I fell into a trance. My face was still on the ground. Then Gabriel touched me and set me up on my feet.

<sup>19</sup>He said, "Now, I am going to tell you what will happen during the time of doom that is coming, because at the appointed time there will be an end. <sup>20</sup>The two-horned ram you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. <sup>21</sup>The long-haired he-goat is the king of Greece, and the big horn between its eyes is the first king. <sup>22</sup>The horn that snapped so that four came up in its place means that four kingdoms will come from one nation, but these four won't have the strength of the first one.

<sup>23</sup>When their kingship nears its end

and their sins<sup>a</sup> are almost complete,  
a king will step forward.

He will be stern and a master of deception.

<sup>24</sup>At the height of his power,<sup>b</sup>

he will wreak unbelievable destructions.

He will succeed in all he does.

He will destroy both the mighty and the people of the holy ones.

<sup>25</sup>Along with his cunning,

he will succeed by using deceit.

In his own mind, he will be great.

In a time of peace,

he will bring destruction on many,  
opposing even the supreme leader.

But he will be broken—and not by a human hand.

<sup>26</sup>Now this vision of evening and morning, which has been announced, is true. But you must seal it up, because it is for days far in the future."

<sup>27</sup>Then I, Daniel, was overwhelmed and felt sick for days. When I finally got up and went about the king's business, I remained troubled by the vision and couldn't understand it.

### Daniel's prayer

**9**In the first year of Darius' rule—Darius, who was Ahasuerus' son, a Median by birth and who ruled the Chaldean kingdom—<sup>2</sup>I, Daniel, pondered the scrolls, specifically

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT *rebels* <sup>b</sup>LXX sources; MT *His power will grow strong, but not by his own power, perhaps influenced by 8:22.*

(cf. Isa 64:12; Zech 1:11-12; Rev 6:10). *desolating rebellion*: Antiochus turned God's house into a pagan worship site (1 Macc 1:54, 59; 4:38, 43-46; 6:7; cf. Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). **2** Maccabees 6:5 describes abominable offerings (probably pigs), forbidden by the Instruction from Moses, covering the altar. *two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings*: 1,150 days, about three and a half years, the same period referred to in Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7. For discussion of how such numbers may have symbolic meaning, see note on Daniel 12:11-12.

8:15-27 The divine messenger Gabriel interprets the vision for Daniel. He explains that it isn't for Daniel's own Babylonian era but applies to future days (Persian through Greek times, particularly the era of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, 175–164 BCE).

8:15-16 *looked like a man*: Divine messengers tend to appear human in form (cf. Dan 10:16, 18; Josh 5:13-14; Judg 13:16). The Hebrew expression in 8:15 makes a pun on the

messenger's name, *Gabriel*. A different expression is used for the figure in Daniel 7:13-14, which is probably not a divine messenger (or angel, although scholars differ on this): 8:22 After Alexander's death in 323 BCE, four of his generals divide his empire between them. See note on Daniel 7:6.

8:25 *time of peace*: A reference to the surprise attack on Jerusalem described in 1 Maccabees 1:29-30. *supreme leader*: God. *not by a human hand*: Compare with Daniel 2:34, 45. In apocalyptic thinking, God alone rescues the world (see sidebar, "Apocalypse" at Dan 3).

8:26 *seal it up*: Apocalyptic visions contain rare and unusual knowledge about the world to come. The writers thus speak of it as remaining "sealed up" until long after Daniel's life and times, available only when the book of Daniel appears in writing.

9:1-27 Here at the center of the visions Daniel appears as an "apocalyptic scribe"—one who gets wisdom from

the number of years that it would take to complete Jerusalem's desolation according to the LORD's word to the prophet Jeremiah. It was seventy years. <sup>3</sup>I then turned my face to my Lord God, asking for an answer with prayer and pleading, and with fasting, mourning clothes, and ashes. <sup>4</sup>As I prayed to the LORD my God, I made this confession:

Please, my Lord—you are the great and awesome God, the one who keeps the covenant, and truly faithful to all who love him and keep his commands: <sup>5</sup>We have sinned and done wrong. We have brought guilt on ourselves and rebelled, ignoring your commands and your laws. <sup>6</sup>We haven't listened to your servants, the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our leaders, our parents, and to all the land's people. <sup>7</sup>Righteousness belongs to you, my Lord! But we are ashamed this day—we, the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all Israel whether near or far, in whatever country where you've driven them because of their unfaithfulness when they broke faith with you. <sup>8</sup>LORD, we are ashamed—we, our kings, our leaders, and our parents who sinned against you. <sup>9</sup>Compassion and deep forgiveness belong to my Lord, our God, because we rebelled against him. <sup>10</sup>We didn't listen to the voice of the LORD our God by following the teachings he gave us through his servants, the prophets. <sup>11</sup>All Israel broke your Instruction and turned away, ignoring your voice. Then the curse that was sworn long ago—the one written in the Instruction from Moses, God's servant—swept over us because we sinned against God. <sup>12</sup>God confirmed the words he spoke against us and against our rulers, bringing great trouble on us. What happened in Jerusalem hasn't happened anywhere else in the entire world! <sup>13</sup>All this trouble came upon us, exactly as it was written in the Instruction of Moses, but we didn't try to reconcile with the LORD our God by turning from our wrongdoing or by finding wisdom in your faithfulness. <sup>14</sup>So the LORD oversaw the great trouble and brought it on us, because the LORD our God has been right in every move he's made, but we haven't listened to his voice.

<sup>15</sup>But now, my Lord, our God—you who brought your people out of Egypt with a strong hand, making a name for yourself even to this day: We have sinned and done the wrong thing." <sup>16</sup>My Lord, please! In line with your many righteous acts, please turn your raging anger from Jerusalem, which is your city, your own holy mountain. Because of our sins and the wrongdoing of our parents, both Jerusalem and your people have become a disgrace to all our neighbors.

<sup>17</sup>But now, our God, listen to your servant's prayer and pleas for help. Shine your face on your ruined sanctuary, for your own sake, my Lord. <sup>18</sup>Open your ears, my God, and listen! Open your eyes and look at our devastation. Look at the city called by your name! We pray our prayers for help to you, not because of any righteous acts of ours but because of your great compassion. <sup>19</sup>My Lord, listen! My Lord, forgive! My Lord, pay attention and act! Don't delay! My God, do all this for your own sake, because your city and your people are called by your name.

### Seventy weeks

<sup>20</sup>While I was still speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sins of my people Israel—while I was still praying my prayer for help to the LORD my God about my God's holy mountain—<sup>21</sup>while I was still speaking this prayer, the man Gabriel approached me at the time of the evening offering. This was the same Gabriel I had seen in my earlier vision. He was weary with exhaustion.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>c</sup>Or *approached me in swift flight at the time of the evening offering*; Heb uncertain

close study of sacred texts (see discussion of interpretive wisdom in the intro; see sidebar, "Apocalypse" at Dan 3). He prays to God to end the exile, based on study of Jeremiah. God's promise, according to Jeremiah, was to end the exile after 70 years (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10; cf. Zech 7:5). The divine messenger Gabriel then appears and offers a complex interpretation of Jeremiah's prophecy.

9:1-19 Daniel realizes from studying Jeremiah that God should now be ending the exile. He asks God to act in a prayer filled with references to earlier scripture (cf. 1 Kgs 8; Ezra 9:6-15; Neh 9:6-37). Daniel's prayer confesses the people's sins (as is required by Deut 30:1-10; 1 Kgs 8:46-53;

Jer 29:10-14). Daniel pictures a rescue in the Babylonian era that was longed for by Jews living under Antiochus IV and his arrogant ways.

9:1 *Darius, who was Ahasuerus' son*: The Persian names are for vividness and local color; they don't aim for historical precision. *Darius* is the character we met in Daniel 5:31-6:1. According to the book of Daniel, Darius defeated Babylon (*the Chaldean kingdom*), fulfilling God's promise in Jeremiah 25:12. Daniel could now hope that a return from exile would soon begin (cf. Jer 29:10).

9:20-27 In the 500s BCE, Judah's exiles had no need of a complex interpretation of Jeremiah's "seventy years." A

9:3 Neh 1:4  
9:4 Dt 7:9;  
1Ki 8:23;  
Neh 1:5;  
Neh 9:32  
9:5 Neh 9:33;  
Ps 106:6;  
Jer 8:14; Jer 14:7;  
Lam 1:20  
9:6 2Ch 36:15;  
2Ch 36:16;  
Jer 44:5  
9:7 Am 9:9  
9:8 Jer 14:20  
9:9 Ex 34:7;  
Neh 9:17;  
Ps 130:4  
9:10 2Ki 17:13;  
2Ki 18:12  
9:11 Dt 28:15;  
Is 1:4  
9:12 Is 44:26;  
Eze 5:9  
9:13 Is 9:13;  
Jer 2:30; Dn 9:11  
9:14 Neh 9:33;  
Jer 31:28;  
Jer 44:27; Dn 9:7;  
Dn 9:10  
9:15 Ex 32:11;  
Neh 9:10;  
Jer 32:20; Dn 9:5  
9:16 Dn 9:20;  
Zec 8:3  
9:17 Nm 6:25;  
Ps 80:3; Ps 80:19;  
Lam 5:18  
9:18 2Ki 19:16;  
Ps 80:14;  
Is 37:17; Jer 7:10;  
Jer 25:29  
9:19 Ps 44:23  
9:20 Ps 145:18;  
Is 58:9; Dn 9:16  
9:21 1Ki 18:36;  
Dn 8:16; Lk 1:19;  
Ac 3:1

9:23 Dn 10:11;  
Dn 10:12;  
Dn 10:19;  
Mt 24:15

9:24 Ps 45:7;  
Is 56:1, Is 61:1;  
Jer 23:5, Jer 23:6

9:25 Ezr 4:24;  
Jn 1:41, Jn 4:25

9:26 Is 53:8;  
Dn 11:10;  
Na 1:6, Mt 24:2;  
Lk 19:43

<sup>22</sup>He explained as he spoke with me: “Daniel, here’s why I’ve come: to give you insight and understanding. <sup>23</sup>When you began making your requests, a word went out, and I’ve come to tell it to you because you are greatly treasured. So now understand this word and grasp the meaning of this vision! <sup>24</sup>Seventy weeks are appointed for your people and for your holy city to complete the rebellion, to end sins, to cover over wrongdoing, to bring eternal righteousness, to seal up prophetic vision, and to anoint the most holy place.

<sup>25</sup>“So you must know and gain wisdom about this: There will be seven weeks from the moment the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until a leader is anointed. And for sixty-two weeks the city will be rebuilt with a courtyard and a moat. But in difficult times, <sup>26</sup>after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one will be eliminated. No one will support him.”<sup>d</sup>

<sup>d</sup>OT and will have nothing or and will disappear, Heb uncertain

plain understanding was adequate (see 2 Chron 36:22-23; Zech 1:12; 7:5). Bands of exiles did in fact return to Jerusalem, and finished rebuilding the temple by 519 BCE, about 70 years after the Babylonians destroyed it (587 BCE). But during Greek times and afterwards, people increasingly saw the achievements of 519 BCE as disappointing and incomplete. Daniel 9:20-27 uses verses from Jeremiah and other OT books in a new combination that reveals the true, final end of exile on earth (see discussion of interpretive wisdom in the intro.; see sidebar, “Apocalypse” at Dan 3).

9:22 A confused Daniel (Dan 8:27; 12:8) receives understanding here and in Daniel 10:1. According to Daniel 12:10, wise readers and hearers will similarly find understanding. Apocalyptic revelations don’t allow people to predict the details of history, but they do give a clear understanding of daily existence. In particular, they help readers see through the violence, lies, and greed of earthly powers (see sidebar, “Apocalypse” at Dan 3).

9:23 *a word went out*: the command to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem” (Dan 9:25). It came ultimately from God (Isa 55:11-12) through at least two Persian kings, Cyrus (in 538 BCE, Ezra 1:1-4) and Artaxerxes (in 458 BCE, Ezra 7:11-28). Gabriel’s interpretation of Jeremiah’s key number “seventy” may begin counting from one of these dates (see notes on Dan 9:24-27).

9:24 *Seventy weeks*: The Hebrew idiom is “seventy sevens.” The book of Chronicles speaks of Jeremiah’s “seventy years” as a sabbath time for the land (2 Chron 36:21; cf. Lev 26:34-39). During sabbath years the land wasn’t farmed. These land sabbaths were normally supposed to occur once every seven years (Lev 25:4). Chronicles imagines the land enjoying sabbath continuously during the exile, making up for sabbath years it didn’t get during the rule of Judah’s kings. Daniel 9 also understands the “years” of Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10 as sabbath years for the land, but occurring on the regular seven-year schedule (one every “week” of years) so the 70 years become *seventy weeks* of years (490 years).

9:25-27 God’s rescue of the people will come in three stages, the first after *seven weeks* of years (9:25), the second after another *sixty-two weeks* of years (9:26), and the last after one additional *week* of years, which will be a time of crisis (9:27). Together, these weeks add up to the full 70 weeks of years. (Alternatively, some interpreters count the 62 weeks starting back at some earlier point, such as 605 BCE, the date of Daniel’s exile. See note on the phrase “an anointed one will be eliminated” in 9:26; see sidebar, “Anointed One”). Dividing history into periods like this is a common feature of apocalyptic literature

(see sidebar, “Apocalypse” at Dan 3). No one should claim to offer a single true interpretation of the 70 weeks (see Dan 8:27), but how we “do the math” makes a real difference in Daniel’s meaning for today. If we stick with what the original writers were thinking, and understand the vision only in terms of the history leading up to Antiochus IV, the results are interesting mostly to historians. But if we think of the numbers as pointing into the future, beyond the times of Daniel’s original writers, the math work becomes forward-pointing *prophecy*, revealing God’s plans for earth’s final destiny.

9:25-26 *a leader is anointed*: The book’s original writers and readers probably thought of a leader (such as Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, or the high priest Joshua; see Ezra 5:14; Hag 1:1) of Israel’s first return from exile in 539 BCE, which is about seven *weeks* of years after the temple’s destruction in 587 BCE. In this interpretation, the *word* that goes out (9:25) would be spoken by someone, like Jeremiah, who was alive in 587 (see Jer 30:18; 31:18). Later readers of Daniel identified the *word* in 9:25 with the “word” of Daniel 9:23, in which case Gabriel’s *weeks* start from a point such as King Artaxerxes’ decree in 458 (see note on Dan 9:23). *Seven weeks* [of years] from this point brings us to Nehemiah’s rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the full 70 weeks would reach far beyond the time of Daniel’s writers. Read in this way, the vision becomes prophecy not mere history.

9:26 *an anointed one will be eliminated*: The book’s original readers in the 160s BCE could have thought this referred to a former high priest, Onias III, who was murdered in 171 BCE (2 Macc 3:1; 4:7, 34). His murder was *sixty-two weeks* [of years] from the date of Daniel’s exile (605 BCE see Dan 1:1). Yet it is hard to understand why we should start counting from this early point of 605, long before the “word” to rebuild Jerusalem of Daniel 9:25 goes out. Some later readers of Daniel believe it is more straightforward to understand the 62 weeks as part of the countdown to the end of Daniel’s 70 weeks, a countdown to the end of history (see note on Dan 9:25-27). They thus understand this verse as looking far ahead to a future servant of God destined to suffer and die along the lines of Zechariah 13:7-9 and Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (see sidebar, “Anointed One at Dan 9). *future leader*: Same as the “small horn” in Daniel 7:8. Daniel’s first readers would have thought of Antiochus IV, who set up the “desolating monstrosity” in Jerusalem’s temple (Dan 11:31). He didn’t *destroy the city*, however, and later readers have interpreted the verse as a reference to the Roman general Titus (who destroyed Jerusalem in 70 CE; see note on Dan 9:27) or other candidates (see sidebar, “The Anti-Messiah” at Dan 7).

9:27 Dn 11:31;  
 Mt 24:15;  
 Mk 13:14  
 10:1 Dn 1:7,  
 Dn 1:17,  
 Dn 1:21,  
 Dn 6:28,  
 Dn 8:26  
 10:2 Ezz 9:4  
 10:3 2Sa 14:2;  
 Dn 6:18,  
 Mt 6:17

**Anointed One** Interpreters over the centuries have offered strikingly different understandings of Daniel 9:26, which states that *an anointed one will be eliminated*. Is he a real figure of history or a future, promised “anointed one” (in Heb., “messiah”)? There appears to be truth in both understandings. On the one hand, the original writers of Daniel were likely thinking of a figure of history, the high priest Onias III (see note on Dan 9:26). On the other hand, the math in the text points to a very different understanding. Why should we count from 605 BCE to arrive at the “anointed one” (see note on Dan 9:26, “an anointed one will be eliminated”) instead of from 587 BCE, as we do to get to Zerubbabel, or from 458 BCE as we do to get to Nehemiah (see the discussion in the note on Dan 9:25-26)? Shouldn’t these 62 weeks of waiting for the “anointed one” occur *after* the initial seven weeks of Daniel 9:25 (see note on Dan 9:26)? That is, shouldn’t the anointed one die after seven “weeks” *plus* 62 “weeks”? Perhaps we should look for fulfillment of 9:26 long after Onias’ time. Certainly, by the time Daniel came to be considered as part of the Jewish and Christian Bibles, readers were looking outside the bounds of ancient history for the realization of 9:26.

Some Christian readers, comfortable with the thought of a dying and rising savior, have noted that the Hebrew word for anointed one in 9:26 is “Messiah” (the Greek translation for this word is “Christ”). Counting seven “weeks” plus 62 “weeks” (approximately 483 years) from the decree of Artaxerxes in 458 BCE (see note on Dan 9:23) brings them to the time of Jesus of Nazareth. Other interpreters (both Christian and non-Christian) have thought that this math is too imaginative and speculative.

The army of a future leader will destroy the city and the sanctuary. His<sup>e</sup> end will come in a flood, but devastations will be decreed until the end of the war.<sup>f</sup> <sup>27</sup>For one week, he will make a strong covenant with many people. For a half-week, he will stop both sacrifices and offerings. In their place<sup>g</sup> will be the desolating monstrosities until the decreed destruction sweeps over the devastator.<sup>h</sup>

#### Vision of a man

**10** In the third year of Persia’s King Cyrus, a message was revealed to Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar. The message was true: there would be a great conflict. Daniel understood the message, having discerned the meaning of the vision.

<sup>2</sup>During that time, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three weeks. <sup>3</sup>I didn’t eat any rich foods. Neither meat nor wine passed my lips, and I didn’t clean up at all until the three weeks were up. <sup>4</sup>Then, on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was on the bank of the great

<sup>a</sup>Or *Its* (the army’s) <sup>b</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>c</sup>Correction on the wing: Heb uncertain

9:27 *one week*: earth’s final seven years. The book’s original readers would likely have imagined the final week as running from the death of Onias III in 171 BCE (see note on Dan 9:26) to the death of Antiochus IV. From the standpoint of later times, however, the evil ruler of the final days would need to be far later than Antiochus. Some interpreters would see Antiochus as part of the Greek “leopard” kingdom in Daniel 7:6 and the *devastator* as part of a later, perhaps still-future era. *strong covenant*: Antiochus allied with those Jews who supported Greek culture (see Dan 11:32; 1 Macc 1:11-15). Later dictators would similarly work to deceive and win over allies (cf. Mark 13:22). *a half-week*: a final three and a half years of terror (see Dan 7:25; 8:13-14). *desolating monstrosities*: Compare with Daniel 8:11-13; 11:31; 12:11. The original writers would have been thinking of actions by Antiochus IV (see 1 Macc 1:54, 59). The writer and first readers of Mark 13:14, which uses the Greek form of this phrase (translated as “disgusting and destructive thing” in the CEB), would have been thinking of the Roman emperor Caligula’s attempt to erect his statue in the temple (39–40 CE) or the destruction of the temple by Emperor Titus (70 CE). Matthew 24:15 expects a still later monstrosity, as do Revelation 13 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-5.

10:1–12:4 A heavenly visitor gives Daniel a sweeping view of international history from the Persian period through the time of Antiochus IV and beyond to the end of days. This history is controlled by faceless powers. In it, human authorities are less like kings and more like pawns. Daniel sees that God knows this history, with all its greed, lies, and lust for power. Even leaders of God’s own people cooperate with evil to advance their own (they think) interests, but God will finally bring an end to the evil.

10:1-9 A vision of a man (probably the divine messenger Gabriel, as in Dan 8 and 9) comes to Daniel in 536 BCE, nearly 70 years after Daniel’s exile in 605 BCE (Dan 1:1). Daniel has just spent three weeks mourning over the exile and pleading with God (as in Dan 9:1-3) to end it, in line with the 70-year prediction found in Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10 (cf. Zech 7:5). Daniel’s fasting and prayer prepare him to receive revelation about God’s exact manner of ending the exile, now that 70 years have passed (see Dan 10:12; cf. 2 Esdr 5:20; 6:35). Daniel’s fast is probably also an act of solidarity with Jews who had returned to Jerusalem a few years earlier and were having problems there (cf. Hag 1:9-11; 2:17; Isa 58:4; 59:4; Ezra 4:5, 24).

10:4 *bank*: See note on Daniel 8:2.

10:5 Jer 10:9;  
Eze 9:2;  
Dn 12:6;  
Rev 11:3;  
Rev 15:6  
10:6 Rev 1:15  
10:8 Gn 32:24;  
Dn 7:28;  
Dn 8:27;  
Hab 3:16  
10:9 Gn 15:12;  
Dn 8:18  
10:11 Eze 2:1;  
Dn 8:16;  
Dn 8:17;  
Dn 9:23  
10:12 Rev 1:17  
10:13 Dn 10:21;  
Dn 12:1; Jud 1:9;  
Rev 12:7  
10:14 Dn 2:28;  
Dn 8:26;  
Dn 9:22; Hab 2:3  
10:16 Is 6:7;  
Jer 1:9; Dn 8:15  
10:17 Dn 10:8  
10:18 Dn 8:18;  
Dn 10:16  
10:19 Dn 10:12  
10:20 Dn 8:21;  
Dn 10:13;  
Dn 11:2  
10:21 Dn 10:13;  
Dn 12:1;  
Dn 12:4; Jud 1:9;  
Rev 12:7

Tigris River, <sup>5</sup>I looked up and suddenly saw a man clothed in linen in front of me. He had a brilliant gold belt around his waist, <sup>6</sup>and his body was like topaz. His face was like a flash of lightning, and his eyes were like burning torches. His arms and feet looked like polished bronze. When he spoke, it sounded like the roar of a crowd. <sup>7</sup>Only I, Daniel, saw this vision. The other people who were with me didn't see it. Despite that, they were terrified and ran away to hide.

<sup>8</sup>So I was left alone to see this great vision all by myself. All my strength left me. My energy was sapped, and I couldn't stay strong. <sup>9</sup>Then I heard the sound of the man's words. When I heard it, I fell into a trance with my face on the ground. <sup>10</sup>But then a hand touched me, lifting me up to my hands and knees.

<sup>11</sup>The man said to me, "Daniel, you are greatly treasured. Now grasp the meaning of what I'm saying to you. And stand up, because I've been sent to you."

As he said this to me, I stood up, shaking.

<sup>12</sup>Then the man said to me, "Don't be afraid, Daniel, because from the day you first set your mind to understand things and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I've come because of your words! <sup>13</sup>For twenty-one days the leader of the Persian kingdom blocked my way. But then Michael, one of the highest leaders, came to help me. I left Michael there with the leader of the Persian kingdom. <sup>14</sup>But I've come to help you understand what will happen to your people in the future, because there is another vision concerning that time."

<sup>15</sup>While he said this to me, I turned my face to the ground and kept quiet. <sup>16</sup>But then someone who looked like a human being<sup>1</sup> touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to the person standing in front of me: "My lord, the vision bothered me deeply, and I couldn't stay strong during it. <sup>17</sup>So how can I, my lord's servant, speak with you, my lord? Even now there's no strength in me, and I can barely breathe."

<sup>18</sup>The one who looked like a human being touched me again and gave me strength. <sup>19</sup>He said, "Don't be afraid. You are greatly treasured. All will be well with you. Be strong!"

As he spoke to me, I suddenly felt strong. Then I said: "My lord can go on, because you've made me strong."

<sup>20</sup>Then he said: "Do you know why I have come to you? Now I must go back to fight the leader of Persia. As I leave, the leader of Greece will come! <sup>21</sup>But I will tell you what is written in the Scroll of Truth. No one stands strong with me against these leaders except your leader Michael.

### A vast empire divided

**11** In the first year of Darius the Mede's rule, I took my stand to strengthen and protect him.<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup>I will now tell you the truth. Persia will have three more kings, but the fourth

<sup>1</sup>LXX; Heb after I was detained there with the kings of Persia <sup>2</sup>Heb *bene adam* (a son of a man) is an idiom that means human being; cf 7:13.

10:5 *linen*: Worn by priests and, as here, divine messengers (cf. Dan 12:6; Ezek 9:2, 11; 10:2, 6, 7).

10:6 *roar*: Compare with Ezekiel 1:24.

10:10–11:1 Although Daniel feels overwhelmed (Dan 10:8–9, 15–17), the visitor has him stand up (cf. Dan 8:18; Ezek 2:1) and tells him that he is treasured by the Most High (10:11, 18–19; cf. Dan 9:23). The divine messenger says that although he set out on the day Daniel began mourning and fasting (10:13, cf. Dan 10:2), he was delayed by a struggle with an enemy leader (who was apparently operating in the divine realm; 10:13, cf. 10:20). He was delayed until *Michael, one of the highest leaders of the messenger-princes*, came to take over the battle. Like the beasts and monsters of Daniel 7 and 8, the divine messenger-princes of Persia (10:13) and Greece (10:20) are the dark powers behind the claims and conquests of human empires (see sidebar, "Apocalypse" at Dan 3). The writers of Daniel want us to know that such empires are mistaken in believing that their actions are purely rational, practical, and self-chosen.

10:13 *leader of the Persian kingdom*: Since the story is set in the Persian era (Dan 10:1), it is Persia's messenger-prince who tries to stop the messenger, but the greater powers of heaven are involved, limiting what the Persians can do to God's people. *Michael*: a warrior messenger or angel also mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls and early Christian writings (e.g., Rev 12:7).

10:14 *another vision*: in addition to those in Daniel 7–9. The details begin in Daniel 11:2.

10:20–21 Once the visitor delivers his message (in Dan 11), he will return to his struggle with the messenger-prince of Persia. After that, there will be a battle with the messenger-prince of Greece, the next empire in the series as it is shown in Daniel 2; 7–8 (e.g., Dan 8:20–25). *your leader*: Michael is the special messenger-prince who protects God's people (see Dan 10:13 and note; 12:1).

11:1 The *I* speaking here is Daniel's visitor (probably Gabriel; see note on Dan 10:1–9), but who is the *him*? If Gabriel still speaks of Michael (see Dan 10:21), he is affirming that he has supported the chief messenger-prince since



will be richer than all of them. Once he has become strong through his great riches, he will disturb everyone, including the Greek kingdom. <sup>3</sup>Then a warrior-king will come forward, ruling over a vast empire and doing whatever he wants. <sup>4</sup>But even as he takes control, his kingdom will be broken, divided to the four winds of heaven. It won't pass to his descendants. No one will rule like he did because his kingdom will be uprooted. It will belong to others, not to these.

### South and north

<sup>5</sup>Then the southern king will gain power, but one of his princes will overpower him, ruling in his place. His empire will be vast. <sup>6</sup>After some years, they will make an agreement together. The southern king's daughter will go to the northern king to finalize the agreement, but she won't retain her great power. Neither will his power remain in place. In those times she will be handed over, along with her escort, the one who fathered her, and the one who strengthened her.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>7</sup>A branch from her roots will rise up in his place. Attacking the army, he will enter the walled fortress of the northern king. He will fight with them, and he will conquer. <sup>8</sup>He will even carry off their gods to Egypt, along with their statues and their silver and gold equipment. For years he will avoid the northern king. <sup>9</sup>Then the northern king will attack the kingdom of the southern king, but will return to his own land. <sup>10</sup>His sons will get ready for war, gathering massive forces. Their attack will be like an overwhelming flood. And they will attack again, taking the battle as far as his walled fortress.

<sup>11</sup>The southern king, in a bitter rage, will come out to battle the northern king. He will muster a huge army, but the army will be handed over to his enemy. <sup>12</sup>When the army is carried off, he will become confident. He will kill tens of thousands, but he will not stand strong.

<sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain

the start of Darius' reign. If the *him* refers to Darius, however, Gabriel implies that heaven had a part in the king's order that the exiles could return to Jerusalem (see note on Dan 5:31).

11:2-45 Gabriel now begins a detailed review of Greek history, an account that takes up half of Daniel 10:1-12:4. The history mirrors an ongoing battle in heaven between Michael (on Israel's side) and the messenger-princes of the Greek kingdoms. The first section (11:2-20) focuses on the battle between kings descended from Alexander's general Ptolemy (in Egypt, south) and kings descended from Alexander's general Seleucus (in Syria, north). The second section (11:21-35) tells about the actions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The third (11:36-45) describes Antiochus' fuller incarnation in an end-time anti-messiah (see sidebar, "The Anti-Messiah" at Dan 7). These verses look to the vision of the end times in Ezekiel 38-39 for their inspiration, not to the events of Greek history.

11:2-4 The Persian Empire will give way to the *vast empire* of Alexander the Great. After Alexander's death, his four generals will divide his empire among themselves (cf. Dan 8:22), leaving no part for Alexander's *descendants*.

11:2 *three more kings*: The authors may mean merely "a few," since they are not trying to preserve the details of Persian history (see notes on Dan 5:31; 7:8; 9:1). *the fourth*: perhaps Xerxes I (known in the books of Ezra and Esther as Ahasuerus; 486-464 BCE), who was wealthy and invaded Greece, or Artaxerxes II, who bribed Greeks to war against each other.

11:3 *warrior-king*: Alexander the Great (336-323 BCE; cf. Dan 8:5, 21).

11:5-20 The vision of history now shifts to the struggles and wars between the Ptolemies (in Egypt, south) and the Seleucids (with their capital in Syria, north), two of the four kingdoms that arose out of Alexander's empire (cf. Dan

8:8, 22). At first, the south seems stronger, but eventually the north gains control of Judea.

11:5 Alexander's general Ptolemy I (323-285 BCE), *the southern king*, establishes the Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt and Palestine, while *one of his princes*, Seleucus I (311-280 BCE), eventually takes over an even greater kingdom to the north (in Babylonia, Syria, and Media).

11:6 *they*: The kings of the south and the north, now Ptolemy II (285-246 BCE) and Antiochus II (262-246 BCE). *an agreement*: In approximately 250 BCE, Ptolemy II, seeking peace, sends his daughter to be the second wife of Antiochus II (Seleucus' grandson). But Antiochus' first wife poisons her husband, has the second wife killed, and installs her own son, Seleucus II, as king. *the one who fathered her*: Some ancient texts read "her child," that is, the second wife's infant son, who was also killed.

11:7-8 *A branch*: Ptolemy III (246-221 BCE), brother of the murdered woman (see note on Dan 11:6). He invades the Seleucid kingdom in 246 BCE and takes revenge for her death.

11:9 Seleucus II, the son of Antiochus II's first wife (see note on Dan 11:6), responds by trying to invade Egypt in 242 BCE, but loses much of his army.

11:10 The *sons* of Seleucus II were Seleucus III (227-223 BCE) and Antiochus III ("the Great," 223-187 BCE). They build up their army and begin a series of seesaw struggles with the Ptolemies ending with Antiochus' victory over Egypt in 200 BCE (Dan 11:15-16).

11:11 Taking his place as the new *southern king*, Ptolemy IV (221-204 BCE) defeats Antiochus III in 217 BCE. *He*: the northern king, Antiochus III.

11:12 After his victory, Ptolemy orders a slaughter, but he doesn't take advantage of his victory, and Antiochus soon wins back the lost territories. Ptolemy IV dies in 205 BCE.

<sup>13</sup>The northern king will then muster another army—this one bigger than the first. After some years have passed, he will attack with a large and well-equipped army. <sup>14</sup>In those times, many will oppose the southern king. Violent persons from among your people also will rise up to support the vision, but they will fail.

<sup>15</sup>When the northern king attacks, he will throw up a siege ramp and occupy a walled city. The southern forces will not be able to resist—not even its elite forces. No one will be strong enough to resist. <sup>16</sup>The one who comes to attack will do whatever he wants; no one will be able to oppose him. He will take his place in the beautiful country, and he will hand out destruction. <sup>17</sup>He will decide to occupy his entire kingdom by force. He will make an agreement with him and will give him a wife, intending to destroy him,<sup>18</sup> but it won't succeed and it won't happen.<sup>1</sup> <sup>18</sup>He will turn his face to the coastlands, capturing many people. A commander will put an end to his disgrace,<sup>20</sup> even though he won't repay that disgrace. <sup>19</sup>Then he will turn his attention to the walled fortresses of his own country but will stumble, fall, and disappear.

<sup>20</sup>In his place one will arise who will send his agent to exact a kingdom's glory, but in a few days he will be broken, though not by anger and not by war. <sup>21</sup>A worthless person will arise in his place. Royal majesty will not have been given to him, but he will come in a time of security and seize the kingdom by deceitful means. <sup>22</sup>Forces will be completely swept away and broken before him. The same is true for the leader of the covenant. <sup>23</sup>From the moment they make an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully. He will gain power at the expense of a small nation. <sup>24</sup>He will come into a province's richest places untroubled and will do what his fathers and grandfathers never could. He will hand out plunder, spoil, and wealth to them. He will make plans against fortresses, but only for a time.

<sup>25</sup>Then with a large army he will gather his strength and courage against the southern king. The southern king, with a large and super powerful army, will prepare for war, but he won't endure because they will make plans against him. <sup>26</sup>Those who eat the king's provisions will destroy him. His army will be overrun. Many will die.

<sup>1</sup>DSS; MT *her or it (the kingdom)* <sup>1</sup>Heb adds *for him*. <sup>20</sup>Heb adds *for him*.

11:13-16 Antiochus III (the Great) musters an enormous army and attacks Ptolemy V. *many will oppose*: Ptolemy V is only six when he becomes king; groups in Egypt and its conquered territories take advantage of the opportunity to revolt. *Violent persons*: likely Jewish supporters of the Seleucids (see Dan 11:30, 32). In 200 BCE, Antiochus defeats Egypt's army at Paneas (a walled city, northeast of the Sea of Galilee) and lays siege to the city (11:15). *elite forces*: Greek mercenary soldiers hired by Egypt. After his victories, Antiochus makes Judea (the beautiful country) part of the Seleucid Empire (11:16). Judea remains under Seleucid control until Maccabean forces stage a successful rebellion (see Dan 11:32-35 and note). In 165 BCE they rededicate the Jerusalem temple (1 Macc 4:36-61; 2 Macc 10:1-9).

11:17-20 Antiochus III ends his war with Ptolemy V and gives him his daughter in marriage (11:17). *destroy him*: He hoped his daughter would promote Seleucid interests within Ptolemy's court (she did not). Still ambitious, Antiochus captures lands along the Mediterranean coast (196-191 BCE) and tries to invade Greece (11:18). A Roman commander eventually stops Antiochus (190 BCE). *put an end to his disgrace*: The bully ends up bullied; the commander, Lucius Cornelius Scipio, stops Antiochus' bold and violent behavior (his disgrace). *he won't repay that disgrace*: The disgraced Antiochus is unable to hit back. Soon after this, Antiochus dies (11:19). His son Seleucus IV takes his place. Burdened with money problems, the new king sends an agent named Heliodorus to rob the Jerusalem temple (11:20). *broken*: According to 2 Maccabees 3:24-26, a horseman and soldiers from God appear to stop Heliodorus; Seleucus IV's reign is short and minor.

11:21-35 This section of the vision brings us up to the time of Daniel's authors. The Seleucid throne is now held by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE), the terrible dictator ("small horn") of Daniel 8:9-12, 23-25 (cf. 1 Macc 1:10). He calls himself "Antiochus Epiphanes" ("Epiphanes" means "God made visible"; cf. Dan 8:25), but some call him "Epimanes" ("madman"). The original readers and hearers of the book of Daniel knew this man's terror firsthand.

11:21 The throne should have gone to his nephew, (Demetrius I), but Antiochus IV successfully plots to get it for himself.

11:22-24 *leader of the covenant*: Perhaps the high priest Onias III (see note on Dan 9:26; 2 Macc 4:34-35). *deceitfully*: Antiochus IV usually double-crosses his allies. *small nation*: Perhaps Pergamum (in what is now Turkey), whose support Antiochus used to gain power; or perhaps Judea, which Antiochus soon plunders. *hand out*: Unlike earlier Seleucid rulers, Antiochus gives away plunder to win local people's loyalty (he wins over Judea's pro-Greek Jews that way). *a time*: As bad as things will become, God will soon stop it all.

11:25-28 Antiochus IV invades Egypt in 170 BCE, but pulls back a year later. *Those who eat*: Egyptian advisors, who give bad counsel to their very young king, Ptolemy VI. *telling lies*: Antiochus and Ptolemy become allies to try to control Egypt, but probably neither one means to honor the agreement. *set time*: God has already decided when and how to put an end to the evil (cf. Dan 8:19; 10:14; 11:35). On his way back to Syria, Antiochus raids the temple in Jerusalem to get funds (see 1 Macc 1:20; 2 Macc 5:11-21). *against a holy covenant*: a reference to grabbing the temple's valuables.

<sup>27</sup>“These two kings, with their minds set on evil, will sit at one table, telling lies, but with no success because the end will come at the set time. <sup>28</sup>He will return to his country with great wealth and set his mind against a holy covenant. He will do what he wants and then return to his country. <sup>29</sup>At the set time he will again battle against the south, but the second time will be different from the first. <sup>30</sup>Kittim ships will fight against him, and he will retreat in fear. He will rage against a holy covenant and will do what he wants. Then he will pay special attention to those who violate a holy covenant. <sup>31</sup>His forces will come and make the sanctuary fortress impure. They will stop the daily sacrifice and set up a desolating monstrosity. <sup>32</sup>By deceitful means he will corrupt those who violate a covenant, but the people who acknowledge their God will stand strong and will act.

11:31 Dn 8:11;  
Dn 8:13,  
Dn 9:27,  
Dn 12:11;  
Mt 24:15

11:33 Dn 12:3,  
Dn 12:10;  
Mal 2:7; Mt 24:9;  
Jn 16:2

11:37 2Th 2:4

<sup>33</sup>“The people’s teachers will help many understand, but for a time they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder. <sup>34</sup>When they fall, they will receive a little help, but many will join them with deceitful plans. <sup>35</sup>Some of the teachers too will fall in order that they might be refined, purified, and cleansed—until an end time, because it is still not yet the set time.

### **An end to the arrogant king**

<sup>36</sup>“The king will do whatever he wants. He will exalt himself, making himself greater than any god. He will say unbelievable things against the God of gods. He will succeed until the doom is completed, because what is decreed must take place. <sup>37</sup>He will give no thought to the gods of his fathers, nor to the god cherished by women. He will give no thought to any god, because he will make himself greater than all of them. <sup>38</sup>In their place, he will worship a god of walled fortresses. With gold and silver, rare stones and precious things, he will worship a god his fathers did not acknowledge. <sup>39</sup>He will deal with walled fortresses with the help of a foreign god. He will heap rewards on those who support him, making them rule over many and dividing up the land for a price. <sup>40</sup>At the end time, the southern king will attack him. The northern king will storm against him with chariots and horses and many ships. He will

11:29-31 Antiochus IV attacks Egypt again in 168 BCE. The Romans force him to pull back. Furious at the defeat, Antiochus attacks Jerusalem again (cf. Dan 11:28) in 168–167 BCE. In December 167 BCE he puts a pagan altar on top of the Jerusalem temple altar (Dan 11:31; cf. Dan 8:11-13; 9:27; 12:11; 1 Macc 1:54).

11:30 *Kittim*: The term originally referred to people from Citium, in Cyprus, but came to be used as a general term for western peoples. Here it refers specifically to the Romans. In later times the Romans, who took control of the Greek kingdoms, came to be thought of as the book of Daniel’s final evil kingdom (cf. Dan 2:36-45; 7:7-8 and notes). This designation of Rome has been the interpretation of classic Jewish writers from Josephus to Rashi to Malbim.

11:32-35 The book of Daniel calls for faithful, nonviolent resistance in times of severe trial (on the model of Isaiah’s suffering servant, Isa 52–53), rather than armed rebellion. Up against evil and chaos, the faithful will sometimes suffer badly. Such suffering, these verses proclaim, is far from meaningless. *those who violate*: Jews who adopt the Greek way of life and take sides with Antiochus. *teachers*: The Hebrew term echoes Isaiah’s language about the suffering servant (Isa 52:13). The teachers would include the authors of Daniel (cf. Dan 1:4; 12:3, 10). *help many*: Compare with Isaiah 53:11, which says the servant “will make many righteous.” *a little help . . . deceitful plans*: a reference to the Maccabean rebellion (see 1 and 2 Macc). The Maccabees shared many goals with Daniel’s authors, but they chose military action rather than nonviolent resistance. The apocalyptic imagination, by contrast, resists empire by proclaiming a radical new vision of reality that turns the values of empire upside down (see sidebar, “Apocalypse” at Dan 3).

11:36-45 The end of Daniel 11 shows how prophetic texts can squeeze history’s timeline and merge parallel events. This section, which draws heavily on the middle part of Isaiah, Joel, and Ezekiel 38–39, points at some of the offenses of Antiochus IV, but can also be read as pointing to an end-time anti-messiah (see notes on Dan 7:7-8; 9:26-27; see sidebar, “The Anti-Messiah” at Dan 7). The final evil ruler described here breaks with even his own ancient traditions (11:38), which wasn’t true of Antiochus. Antiochus also didn’t die in Judea (Antiochus died in 165 BCE during a campaign in Persia). The writers of Daniel (who didn’t yet know how Antiochus would die) may have had Antiochus in mind, but by the time the book of Daniel came to be considered holy scripture, people knew that when Antiochus died, evil didn’t disappear from the world, and the dead didn’t rise out of their graves (Dan 12:2). Yet they continued to read Daniel, not because it spoke of what was by then past history, but because it could, like Ezekiel 38:21-22; 39:4-5, be read for the promise that God will defeat evil in an end time, still to come.

11:36 *whatever he wants*: Compare with Daniel 8:4; 11:3, 16. A ruler who thinks this way will soon fall. *say unbelievable things*: Compare with Daniel 7:8, 20, 25. *doom*: The same word is translated as “rage” in Daniel 11:30. Here it refers to the wrath of God, an echo of the scene in Ezekiel 38:18-19.

11:37 *god cherished by women*: Tammuz/Adonis, the god of vegetation, popular among women (cf. Ezek 8:14).

11:40-43 A great force of evil from the north sweeps down into the holy land, as described in Ezekiel 38–39 and Joel 2:1-11. *with chariots and horses*: Compare with Ezekiel 38:4. *Libyans and Cushites*: Compare with Ezekiel 38:5 (in which the term “Put” is sometimes translated “Libya”).

11:41 Is 11:14;  
Jer 9:26;  
Jer 48:47;  
Jer 49:6;  
Da 11:16

11:45 Is 2:2;  
Dn 7:26;  
Dn 8:25;  
Dn 9:16;  
Dn 9:20

12:1 Jer 30:7;  
Dn 10:13;  
Dn 10:21;  
Mt 24:21;  
Lk 10:20

12:2 Is 26:19;  
Mt 25:46;  
Jn 5:28, Jn 5:29;  
Ac 24:15

12:3 Dn 11:33;  
Dn 11:35;  
Mt 13:43;  
Jn 5:35

12:4 Is 8:16;  
Dn 8:26;  
Dn 12:9;  
Rev 10:4;  
Rev 22:10

12:5 Dn 10:4

12:6 Eze 9:2;  
Dn 8:13;  
Dn 8:16;  
Dn 10:5

invade countries, sweeping over them like a flood. <sup>41</sup>He will invade the beautiful country, and tens of thousands will die. But Edom, Moab, and the best of the Ammonites will escape from his hand. <sup>42</sup>He will extend his power into other countries. Even Egypt won't escape. <sup>43</sup>He will take control of Egypt's hidden treasures of gold, silver, and all its precious things. Libyans and Cushites will follow at his feet. <sup>44</sup>But reports from the east and north will alarm him, and in a great rage he will set off to devastate and destroy many. <sup>45</sup>He will pitch his royal tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain. But he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

### *Eternal life or eternal disgrace*

**12**“At that time, Michael the great leader who guards your people will take his stand. It will be a difficult time—nothing like it has ever happened since nations first appeared. But at that time every one of your people who is found written in the scroll will be rescued. <sup>2</sup>Many of those who sleep in the dusty land<sup>a</sup> will wake up—some to eternal life, others to shame and eternal disgrace. <sup>3</sup>Those skilled in wisdom<sup>b</sup> will shine like the sky. Those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and always. <sup>4</sup>But you, Daniel, must keep these words secret! Seal the scroll until the end time! Many will stray far, but knowledge will increase.”

### *Waiting for the end time*

<sup>5</sup>I, Daniel, looked and suddenly saw two other figures—one standing on each side of the stream. <sup>6</sup>One said to the man clothed in white linen, who was farther upstream: “When will these astonishing things be over?”

*Resurrection* The term *wake up* in Daniel 12:2 suggests that God will raise the dead, complete with their bodies, to renewed, living, breathing life on earth. This idea isn't new in Daniel. Other Jewish books even older than Daniel speak of future resurrection, or at least resuscitation. More significantly, Israel was long familiar with the idea that God can bring the dead back to life (e.g., 1 Kgs 17:17-24; 2 Kgs 4:8-37; 13:21; Hos 6:2; Ezek 37; Isa 53:9-10). Isaiah 26:19 speaks of dead corpses rising. The prophet isn't merely using a figure of speech. Rather, the phrase “your dead” refers to deceased members of the family of Israel. Verses such as Hosea 13:14 understand God to be capable of destroying death itself. Isaiah 25:8 declares that death, well known for being hungry and never getting full (cf. Isa 5:14; Hab 2:5), will get its paycheck and then some. Death is going to be swallowed up for all time. Daniel 12 further develops these biblical hopes and prophecies into the statement, in so many words, that God will forever release death's prisoners.

<sup>a</sup>Or *earthy soil or dust of the earth*    <sup>b</sup>See 1:4; or *The teachers*; see 11:33, 35; also in 12:10.

11:45 *between the sea*: the Mediterranean Sea, since the Hebrew uses a plural form conveying the idea of the high seas (cf. Gen 49:13; Ps 46:3; Deut 33:19). The location where the anti-messiah comes to his end matches Ezekiel 39:11 and Gog's final end “east of the sea,” that is, between the high seas and the holy mountain of Jerusalem.

12:1-4 A great rescue follows the events of Daniel 11:36-45, bringing Daniel's hope-filled visions to a climax. The world will endure never-before-seen troubles, but the great angel-prince Michael will step in. Every person written in God's book will find rescue from the trouble.

12:1 *Michael*: See note on Daniel 10:13. *take his stand*: Michael gets directly involved, defending and fighting for Israel (cf. Joel 3:16). *the scroll*: The idea that God has a written record book also appears in Daniel 7:10; Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28; Isaiah 4:3.

12:2 God's saving plan to defeat all evil powers on earth includes conquering death (cf. Isa 25:8; 26:19). With death destroyed, God can unite the faithful of all eras. This resurrection faith has earlier biblical roots (see sidebar, “Resurrection” at Dan 12). *Many*: While this is often interpreted to mean that only some of the dead will be raised, it is actually a biblical way of speaking about an

uncountable many, that is, about the great multitude, *all*. The meaning is that everyone written in the scroll of Daniel 12:1 will *wake up* to enjoy *eternal life*. In the same way, the term “many” in Isaiah 2:3 refers to *all* the nations (see Isa 2:2). God's servant in Isaiah 53:11-12 acts on behalf of *all* who need the servant (see Isa 53:6); and in Mark 10:45 and 14:24, Jesus gives his life for *all* (see 1 Tim 2:6). *those who sleep*: the dead. *dusty land*: a poetic image, based on a Mesopotamian idea that the spirits of the dead go to a land of dust, where dust is all there is to eat and drink.

12:3 *skilled in wisdom*: Daniel's group, the “teachers” of Daniel 11:33, 35 (see note there). *to righteousness*: The “teachers” (Daniel's writers) fulfill the role of the servant in Isaiah 53:11. Their suffering changes people, puts them on the right path. *stars*: Compare with Isaiah 52:13, “lifted very high.”

12:4 *knowledge*: a gift of the suffering servant (see Isa 53:11; cf. Dan 1:4).

12:5-13 A concluding section gives numbers related to the times remaining until the end.

12:5-6 *stream . . . linen*: The scene remains the same as at Daniel 10:4-5.

<sup>7</sup>I heard the man clothed in white linen, who was farther upstream, swear by the one who lives forever as he raised both hands to heaven: "For one set time, two set times, and half a set time. When the breaking of the holy people's power is over, all these things will be over."

<sup>8</sup>I heard it, but I didn't understand it. "My lord," I said, "what will happen after all this?"

<sup>9</sup>He said, "Get going now, Daniel, because these words must remain secret and sealed up until the end time. <sup>10</sup>Many will purify, cleanse, and refine themselves, but the wicked will act wickedly. None of the wicked will understand, but those skilled in wisdom will understand.

<sup>11</sup>There will be one thousand two hundred ninety days from the time the daily sacrifice is stopped to the setting up of the desolating monstrosity. <sup>12</sup>Happy is the one who waits and reaches one thousand three hundred thirty-five days. <sup>13</sup>Now as for you, go on to the end. You will rest and will stand to receive your reward at the end of days.

12:7 Dn 4:34;

Dn 7:25;

Dn 8:24;

Rev 10:5;

Rev 10:6;

12:9 Dn 12:4

12:10 Dn 11:35;

Hos 14:9;

Rev 22:11

12:11 Dn 9:27;

Dn 11:31;

Mt 24:15;

Mk 13:14

12:12 Is 30:18;

Dn 8:14

12:13 Is 57:2;

2Co 5:1;

Rev 14:13

12:7 *raised both hands*: a gesture when making a solemn pledge (Deut 32:40). On the three and a half *times* until the end, see Daniel 7:25; 9:27 and note.

12:10 *those skilled in wisdom*: See note on Daniel 12:3. *will understand*: See note on Daniel 9:22.

12:11-12 *from the time . . . to the setting up*: Probably to be understood as the time from both of these events until the end (see Dan 9:27). How do the numbers 1,290 days (12:11) and 1,335 days (12:12) relate to each other? Each is approximately three and a half years; that is, each number amounts to one-half of earth's final "week" of years (see Dan 9:27). A common view is that Daniel's writers revised their predictions of the arrival of the end when it didn't come on schedule (which is why the numbers keep getting larger, starting with the 1,150 days in Dan 8:14).

Another possibility, however, is that earth's last full "week," that is, its last seven years (Dan 9:27), begins with a quiet "half week" of 1,335 days (12:12) and ends with an awful, shorter "half week" of 1,290 days (12:11). This interpretation has the advantage of not leaving readers wondering why editors allowed Daniel to end in contradictory numbers. Adding 1,335 (12:12) and 1,290 (12:11) produces 2,625, which is a highly symbolic figure: 70 days more than seven (solar) years. It would be a number symbolizing history's absolute fulfillment and perhaps also an indication that the exact timing of the fulfillment is never sure. God just might keep adding 70s on to the end of history, until God finally brings the complete end.

12:13 *rest . . . stand*: Die and be resurrected; compare with Daniel 12:2.

	1997		1998		1999	
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
1. <b>Revenue</b>	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
2. <b>Operating Expenses</b>	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000
3. <b>Operating Income</b>	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
4. <b>Income Tax Expense</b>	400	400	400	400	400	400
5. <b>Net Income</b>	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600
6. <b>Operating Assets</b>	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
7. <b>Operating Liabilities</b>	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
8. <b>Operating Equity</b>	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000
9. <b>Operating Cash Flow</b>	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
10. <b>Operating Capital Expenditures</b>	500	500	500	500	500	500
11. <b>Operating Cash Flow minus Capital Expenditures</b>	700	700	700	700	700	700
12. <b>Operating Cash Flow plus/minus Changes in Operating Assets and Liabilities</b>	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
13. <b>Operating Cash Flow plus/minus Changes in Operating Assets and Liabilities minus Operating Capital Expenditures</b>	200	200	200	200	200	200
14. <b>Operating Cash Flow plus/minus Changes in Operating Assets and Liabilities minus Operating Capital Expenditures plus/minus Changes in Operating Equity</b>	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200

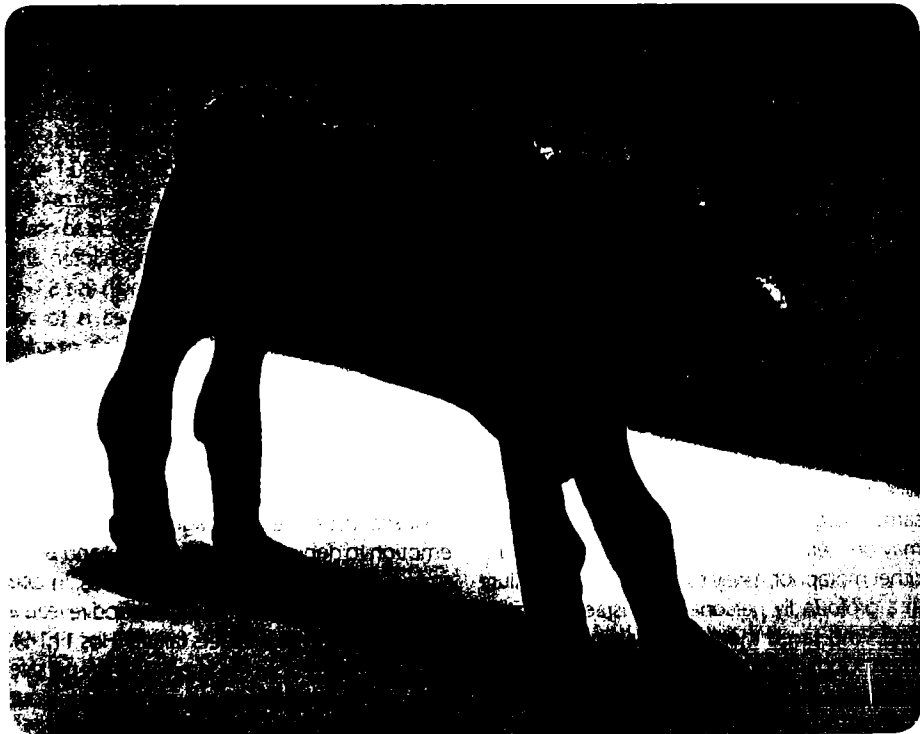
# HOSEA

Hosea is the first of the Minor Prophets, a collection of 12 shorter works (see Sir 49:10) that could be kept on a single scroll. This collection is also known as the Book of the Twelve. Hosea's themes set the tone for much of what follows in the books of the Minor Prophets.

Most of the book addresses Israel (in the north), with shorter but important parts addressing Judah (in the south) (see map 9). The book was likely put together and circulated in Judah after the fall of Samaria in 722 BCE. Its heading (Hos 1:1) places the book during the reigns of four kings of Judah and one from Israel in the 8th century BCE. The Israelite king is Jeroboam II, Joash's son (2 Kgs 14:23-29), who was a contemporary of King Uzziah in Judah and died midcentury. Several changes

in kingship occurred after his death, including armed conflict and murders (2 Kgs 15:1-31).

The second half of the 8th century BCE was a period of huge change in the eastern Mediterranean. The region's inhabitants were confronted by the rising power of Assyria, a fierce nation from northern Mesopotamia (northern Iraq today). Assyrian influence had been around for more than a century, but it took a gloomy turn with the rule of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BCE) and his successors. Israel and Judah were forced to pay tribute to Assyria. Israel was overrun in the years 734-732 BCE, with two-thirds of its territory taken by the Assyrians (2 Kgs 15:17-31). About 10 years later the Assyrian army surrounded and took over Israel's capital city, Samaria (2 Kgs 17:1-23), bringing



Bronze bull from Samaria (Hos 8:5)  
Israel Museum/Ferrell Jenkins

Israel to a political end. During the military campaigns, the Assyrians forced thousands of Israelites to leave their property and settle elsewhere, outside of Israel. Hosea sees all of this as God's judgment on or discipline of Israel because of its misdeeds. During this time Judah managed to survive, but under Assyrian control (2 Kgs 16:1-20).

The three major sections of book show a thematic arrangement (see outline). Each begins with judgment language and concludes with prophecies of restoration. As with many of the books that make up the Minor Prophets, the language of judgment occurs more often than the language of hope.

The book is composed mostly in poetic language that includes literary devices like puns (plays on words) and similes and metaphors (comparing two unlike things so that one of them is better understood). These literary devices mark Hosea's distinctive style. An example of a pun is the claim in Hosea 4:8 that priests "feed on the sin of my people." The Hebrew words for "sin" and "sin offering" are very similar. The priests were eating parts of the animal sacrifices brought for sin offerings, and they were also practicing the sinful activities of the people. Hosea uses poetic language to compare Israel to such things as a "dove" (Hos 7:11), "trained cow" (Hos 10:11), and "morning cloud" (Hos 6:4). And God is a "lion" (Hos 5:14), "dew" (Hos 14:5), and "green cypress tree" (Hos 14:8).

Hosea understands Israel to be God's family. This is a primary metaphor that informs much of the prophet's thinking. His marriage to Gomer is like the covenant relationship God made with Israel (Hos 1:2; 2:2-20). His relationship with his children is like the one God has with Israel (Hos 1:4-9; 11:1). He describes his wife and children as prostitutes and makes the same charge against Israel (Hos 9:1). The charge may be literal on occasion, but at its root is another metaphor, a way to speak of Israel's failure in a profoundly personal way. Israel has failed God, who saved them from slavery and made them God's family. They worshipped other gods (Baal, Baals; Hos 2:8, 13) and engaged in political deals (Hos 7:8-13; 8:8-10)—behavior

that's like adultery or prostitution (Hos 3:1; 5:3-4; 6:10). (The Hebrew word *Baal* means "owner" or "master" and was used to refer to several different Canaanite gods or deities.)

Hosea makes several references to prior historical events and stories about Israel's ancestors. He refers to Jacob's struggling with God's messenger (Hos 12:4; Gen 32), the rescue of Israel from Egypt (Hos 11:1; Exod 1-15), the people wandering in the wilderness (Hos 13:5; Num 11-20), and the sin with the Canaanite deity at Baal-peor (Hos 9:10; Num 25). Some references to other events are less clear for today's readers. For example, Israel is charged with sinning "since the days of Gibeah" (Hos 10:9). This could refer to the sad rule of Saul, who was from Gibeah (1 Sam 10:26), or to a terrible affair there during the time of the judges (Judg 19-20), or to an otherwise unrecorded event.

The dramatic opening to the book may be understood in various ways. Some readers, finding it unsettling that God would command marriage to a prostitute, conclude the account is best understood as a parable of Israel's failure. Other readers see the commands to marry and have children as real, and they interpret them as symbolic acts intended to show Israel its faithfulness to God. In this way, Hosea's marriage is like Isaiah's public nudity (Isa 20:1-4) or Ezekiel lying on his side for over a year (Ezek 4:4-8). These are acts that shock observers to make a point. The symbolic naming of children also has a parallel with the prophet Isaiah (Isa 8:1-4). Another way to understand Hosea is to see the account as retrospective. Hosea married Gomer in good faith. Their marriage later dissolved because of her infidelity. Looking back on his circumstances, Hosea saw God at work and used his painful experience to teach Israel about its infidelity toward God.

Hosea uses the language of passion and emotion to depict God's love of Israel and God's strong reaction to the people's failures. In one of the great passages of the Bible, God reveals a wounded heart over Israel's failure (Hos 11:1-9). God wants to restore the family and keep it safe from harmful activities, even while pointing out the consequences of those activities.



**I. Heading (1:1)****II. Hosea's Family as a Sign of God's Relation to Israel (1:2-3:5)**

- A. God commands Hosea to marry (1:2-9)
- B. Hope for the future (1:10-11)
- C. Wrongdoing and correction (2:1-13)
- D. Restoration and covenant love (2:14-23)
- E. The lesson of infidelity (3:1-5)

**III. God and People in Conflict (4:1-11:11)**

- A. Israel's sins and coming punishment (4:1-10)
- B. Israel's idolatry (4:11-19)
- C. Judgment on Israel and Judah (5:1-6:3)
- D. Infidelity and divine response (6:4-7:10)
- E. Foolishness and God's wrath (7:11-16)

## F. Idolatry again (8:1-7)

## G. Bargains and punishments (8:8-14)

## H. Tragic consequences (9:1-17)

## I. Folly and punishment (10:1-15)

## J. Love, frustration, and response (11:1-11)

**IV. Judgment Continues, but It Isn't the End (11:12-14:8)**

- A. Ephraim and Judah still in trouble (11:12-12:14)
- B. Infidelity and divine goodness (13:1-6)
- C. Infidelity and consequences (13:7-16)
- D. Return to God (14:1-3)
- E. Healing to come (14:4-8)

**V. The Lord's Ways Are Right (14:9)**

*J. Andrew Dearman*

1:1 2Ks 13:13,  
2Ks 18:1, Is 1:1;  
Am 1:1, Mi 1:1

1:2 Jer 3:1;  
Hos 3:1

1:3 Hos 1:6

1:4 2Ks 10:1,  
2Ks 10:11;  
Hos 1:6

1:6 2Ks 17:6,  
2Ks 17:23;  
Hos 1:4, Hos 1:9,  
Hos 2:4

1:7 Zec 4:6,  
Zec 9:10

1:9 Hos 1:4,  
Hos 1:6

1:10 Gn 22:17;  
Ro 9:26

1:11 Is 11:12;  
Jer 3:18,  
Jer 50:4;  
Eze 37:16;  
Hos 3:5

2:1 Hos 1:6,  
Hos 1:9

**1** The LORD's word that came to Hosea, Beerī's son, in the days of Judah's Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, and in the days of Israel's King Jeroboam, Joash's son.

### God commands Hosea to marry

<sup>2</sup>When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, marry a prostitute and have children of prostitution, for the people of the land commit great prostitution by deserting the LORD." <sup>3</sup>So Hosea went and took Gomer, Diblaim's daughter, and she became pregnant and bore him a son. <sup>4</sup>The LORD said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will destroy the kingdom of the house of Israel. <sup>5</sup>On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Jezreel Valley." <sup>6</sup>Gomer became pregnant again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Name her No Compassion, because I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel or forgive them. <sup>7</sup>But I will have compassion on the house of Judah. I, the LORD their God, will save them; I will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by war, or by horses, or by horsemen." <sup>8</sup>When Gomer finished nursing No Compassion, she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. <sup>9</sup>Then the LORD said, "Name him Not My People because you are not my people, and I am not your God."<sup>a</sup>

### Hope for the future

<sup>10b</sup>Yet the number of the people of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which can be neither measured nor numbered; and in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it will be said to them, "Children of the living God." <sup>11</sup>The people of Judah and the people of Israel will be gathered together, and they will choose one head. They will become fruitful in the land.<sup>c</sup> The day will be a wonderful one for Jezreel.

### Proclamation of wrongdoing

**2**<sup>a</sup>Say to your brother, My People, and to your sister, Compassion:

<sup>2</sup>Level a charge against your mother; plead with her!

She is not my wife,  
and I am not her husband.

Let her remove prostitution from her presence,  
and adultery from between her breasts,

<sup>a</sup>Or *I am not yours*. <sup>b</sup>1:10-11=Heb 2:12 <sup>c</sup>Or *They will go up from the land*. <sup>d</sup>2:1-23=Heb 2:3-25

1:1 This introduction places Hosea's work in the second half of the 8th century BCE (see intro.; Isa 1:1).

1:2-3:5 Hosea's wife and three children are used as a metaphor to portray Israel as God's family. The comparison of Gomer to Israel is more developed in this section than the comparison of the children to Israel.

1:2-9 Each of the children has a symbolic name representing a part of Israel's identity. Gomer's name isn't symbolic, but she also represents Israel as God's disobedient covenant people. Hosea presents God as distressed by the repeated failures of the people.

1:2 *prostitution*: used primarily as a metaphor for Israel's infidelity toward God (see intro.; Hos 12:1). Gomer may have been a prostitute, or she may have been involved in a form of fertility rite associated with the worship of Baal, a Canaanite deity.

1:4 *Jezreel*, meaning "God sows," is a place-name for a fertile valley (Hos 1:5) in Israel where roads crossed and battles were fought. Jeroboam II was a descendant of Jehu, an army officer who took over Israel a century earlier in a bloody fight (2 Kgs 9:1-10:36). The *house of Jehu* came to an end six months after Jeroboam's death (2 Kgs 15:8-12).

1:6 *No Compassion*: The daughter's name illustrates God's intent toward Israel at this historical moment. It's unclear whether *No Compassion* and her younger brother are Hosea's biological children. The first child, a son, was born to him (Hos 1:3). This isn't said of the next two.

1:7 *Judah* escaped the destruction that brought Israel to a political end. Some interpreters think this comment about Judah was added to give an update about Hosea's prediction. Judah wasn't taken by force when Israel (and Samaria, its capital) fell to the Assyrians in 734-722 BCE, but Judah came under Assyrian control. The setting for Judah's deliverance isn't named, but it could refer to the Assyrian failure to take Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign (2 Kgs 18:13-19:37).

1:9 *Not My People*: The son's name has a similar function to that of his sister's. Israel's failures have brought it to a moment of judgment and separation from God.

1:10-11 These two verses indicate a future reversal of the historical judgment on Israel. The reference to the *sand of the sea* follows the promise of future blessing given to Israel's ancestors (Gen 22:17). The judgments associated with Not My People and Jezreel will be overcome. Judah and Israel will be reunited as a people (see Jer 31:1-6, 31-34; Ezek 37:15-28).

2:1-13 The prophet tells the children to accuse their mother of prostitution and adultery, and to point out the consequences of her failure.

2:1 This may be a comment that reverses the negative names in Hosea 1:6; 1:9, continuing the good news of Hosea 1:10-11, or it can be understood as the opening to the next passage.

2:2 *not my wife*: may indicate that Hosea formally divorced Gomer or that their marriage came to a crisis or separation.

- <sup>3</sup> or else I will strip her naked  
and expose her as on the day she was born.  
I will make her like a desert,  
and turn her into a dry land,  
and make her die of thirst.
- <sup>4</sup> I will also have no compassion on her children  
because they are children of prostitution.
- <sup>5</sup> Their mother has played the prostitute;  
she who conceived them has behaved shamefully.  
She said, "I will seek out my lovers;  
they give me my bread and my water,  
my wool and my linen cloth, my oil and my drink."

2:5 Jer 44:17;  
Hos 2:8  
2:6 Job 3:23,  
Job 19:8;  
Lam 3:7, Lam 3:9  
2:7 Dt 4:30;  
Jer 2:2, Jer 3:1;  
Hos 5:13;  
Lk 15:17  
2:8 Is 1:3;  
Hos 8:4  
2:9 Jl 1:10  
2:11 Is 1:13,  
Is 1:14; Jer 7:34,  
Jer 16:9;  
Am 8:10  
2:13 Eze 23:40;  
Hos 4:6,  
Hos 11:2

### Divine correction

- <sup>6</sup> Therefore, I will line her path with thorns;  
and I will build a wall against her, so that she can't find her paths.
- <sup>7</sup> She will go after her lovers,  
but she won't catch up with them;  
she will seek them,  
but she won't find them.  
Then she will say,  
"I will return to my first husband,  
for I had it better then than now."
- <sup>8</sup> She didn't know that I gave her the corn, the new wine, and the fresh oil,  
and that I gave her much silver, and gold that they used for Baal.
- <sup>9</sup> So now I will take back my corn in its time, and my wine in its season;  
and I will take away my wool and my linen cloth,  
which were to cover her nakedness.
- <sup>10</sup> Now I will uncover her nakedness in plain view of her lovers,  
and no one will rescue her from me.
- <sup>11</sup> I will end all her religious celebrations,  
her festivals, her new moons, her Sabbath days, and all her sacred seasons.
- <sup>12</sup> I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she said,  
"These are my pay, which my lovers have given to me."  
I will change them into a forest, and the wild animals will eat them.
- <sup>13</sup> I will punish her for the days dedicated to the Baals,  
when she offered sweet-smelling sacrifices to them  
and dressed herself up with rings and jewelry,  
and went after her lovers,  
and forgot me, says the LORD.

### Promises: restoration and covenant love

- <sup>14</sup> Therefore, I will charm her, and bring her into the desert,  
and speak tenderly to her heart.
- <sup>15</sup> From there I will give her vineyards,  
and make the Achor Valley a door of hope.  
There she will respond to me as in the days of her youth,  
like the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

2:3-4 The coming punishment focuses on the people and land of Israel.

2:5 Gomer's *lovers* are the Canaanite gods that Israel thinks have given them good products. Note the references to Baal (Hos 2:8) and Baals (Hos 2:13). Israel sought security by making deals with Assyria and other nations. These nations, too, are called "lovers" (Hos 8:8-10).

2:7 *first husband*: For Israel, God was their first husband, who delivered them out of Egypt and entered into a covenant with them. Israel's proposed return to God isn't a serious thought but more an act of desperation.

2:8-13 Israel's failures will be exposed and judged. The various deities in the land won't save Israel.

2:14-23 God will reverse the finality of judgment in Hosea 2:2-13. The future will bring blessing and intimacy for Israel. The pattern is the same as in the first chapter. God is the distressed husband who will speak to Israel's heart, bring them into the wilderness as in a former time, and initiate a covenant with them.

2:15 *Achor Valley*: Achor means "trouble" or "calamity." Earlier in this valley Israel sinned and experienced judgment (Josh 7:26). In the future the place will represent hope.

2:17 Ex 23:13;  
Josh 23:7;  
Ps 16:4; Zec 13:2  
2:19 Is 54:5;  
Jer 3:14  
2:20 Jer 31:34;  
Hos 2:19  
2:23 Hos 1:6;  
Hos 1:10;  
Zec 13:9;  
Ro 9:25;  
1Pt 2:10  
3:1 2Sa 6:19;  
Hos 1:2  
3:2 Gn 34:12;  
Lv 27:16;  
Eze 45:11  
3:3 Dt 21:13  
3:4 Gn 31:19;  
Jgs 8:27;  
Jgs 17:5;  
Hos 10:1;  
Hos 10:3  
3:5 Jer 30:9;  
Jer 50:4;  
Eze 34:23;  
Eze 34:24;  
Hos 5:15

<sup>16</sup>On that day, says the LORD, you will call me, "My husband," and no longer will you call me, "My Lord." <sup>17</sup>I will take away the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they will not be mentioned by name anymore. <sup>18</sup>On that day, I will make a covenant for them with the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the creeping creatures of the fertile ground. I will do away with the bow, the sword, and war from the land; I will make you lie down in safety.

<sup>19</sup>I will take you for my wife forever;

I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice,  
in devoted love, and in mercy.

<sup>20</sup>I will take you for my wife in faithfulness;  
and you will know the LORD.

<sup>21</sup>On that day I will answer, says the LORD.

I will answer the heavens  
and they will answer the earth.

<sup>22</sup>The earth will answer the corn, the new wine, and the fresh oil,  
and they will answer Jezreel;

<sup>23</sup>I will sow him for myself in the land;  
and I will have compassion on No Compassion,  
and I will say to Not My People, "You are my people";  
and he will say, "You are my God."

### The lesson of infidelity

**3**Then the LORD said to me again, "Go, make love to a woman who has a lover and is involved in adultery, just as the LORD loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes." <sup>2</sup>So I bought her for fifteen pieces of silver, a large amount of barley, and a portion of wine. <sup>3</sup>I said to her, "You must stay with me for many days; you won't act like a prostitute; you won't have sex with a man, nor I with you." <sup>4</sup>Similarly, the Israelites will remain many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred standing stone, without a priestly vest or household divine images. <sup>5</sup>Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; they will come trembling to the LORD and to the LORD's goodness in the latter days.

\*LXX

2:16 *My husband . . . My Lord*: a pun for Hosea's audience. The word "Lord" is translated from the Hebrew word *Baal*. Israel had called God "Baal" and treated him as one of the local gods (the "Baals" in Hos 2:17).

2:18-20 The renewal of covenant is like a renewal of marriage. It's something the Lord proposes and promises to carry through.

2:19 *take you for my wife*: This simple phrase was like a wedding promise in ancient Israel. The Lord graciously promises to provide bridal gifts that allow life to flourish. *righteousness . . . justice . . . devoted love, and . . . mercy* are characteristics of the Lord that the Lord intends for the life of God's people.

2:21-23 The names of all three children are reversed as the Lord brings blessing to the land and people. The Lord begins a reaction that moves from heaven to the earth, so that the land is fruitful and the people can live in peace.

3:1-5 In a different way, this chapter replays the story of adultery and restoration (see Hos 1-2). Hosea's marriage is compared to God's love for Israel. Gomer isn't named, but she's likely the woman whom Hosea is commanded to love in spite of her adultery. A first-person report ("me" and "I") marks the account. A time of separation and discipline for the woman is described after Hosea marries her.

3:1 *raisin cakes*: Such baked goods were used in celebrations (2 Sam 6:19) and sometimes in the worship of other deities (Jer 44:19). Raisin cakes also have erotic connotations (Song 2:5).

3:2 *I bought her*: Debts were the primary reason for slavery in the ancient Near East. Apparently the woman (Gomer) was in debt or otherwise obligated to someone. Hosea paid to settle accounts and gain her freedom.

3:3-4 There would be a time for Hosea and Gomer to adjust after their separation. Not all aspects of married life would come back immediately. The same would be true for Israel's relationship with God. The effects of judgment meant that the people would do without aspects of their religious activities. Some of these, such as a *standing stone* and *household divine images*, had harmed them and shouldn't be used again. Others, such as political leaders and priests, would come again.

3:5 The verse has two key expressions concerning time and leadership. The expression *latter days* is used by prophets to speak of a future time when God transforms the circumstances of the people. It's similar to the phrase "On that day" used in Hosea 2:16, 18, 21. The expression *David their king* refers to one of David's descendants (see Isa 55:3-5; Jer 33:14-26; Ezek 37:15-28).

**Israel's sins and coming punishment**

- 4** Hear the LORD's word, people of Israel;  
for the LORD has a dispute with the inhabitants of the land.  
There's no faithful love or loyalty,  
and no knowledge of God in the land.
- 2** Swearing, lying, murder, together with stealing and adultery are common;  
bloody crime followed by bloody crime.
- 3** Therefore, the earth itself becomes sick,  
and all who live on it grow weak;  
together with the wild animals and the birds in the sky,  
even the fish of the sea are dying.
- 4** Yet let no one protest,  
and let no one complain.

4:1 Is 1:3;  
Jer 4:22;  
Hos 12:2; Mi 6:2

4:2 Hos 6:9

4:3 Is 24:4;  
Jer 4:28;  
Eze 38:20;  
Zep 1:3

4:4 Dt 17:12

4:5 Hos 2:2

4:6 Is 5:13;  
Hos 2:13;  
Mal 4:1; Mal 2:7;  
Mal 2:8

4:8 Is 56:11;  
Mi 3:11

Listen, priest, I am angry with your people.<sup>f</sup>

- 5** You will stumble by day;  
and at nighttime so will your prophet,  
and I will destroy your mother.
- 6** My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.  
Since you have rejected knowledge,  
so I will reject you from serving me as a priest.  
Since you have forgotten the Instruction of your God,  
so also I will forget your children.
- 7** The more they increased,  
the more they sinned against me;  
they exchanged their glory for shame.
- 8** They feed on the sin of my people;  
they set their hearts on evil things.

**Hosea and the Book of the Twelve** Hosea is the first and longest book in the Jewish collection called the Book of the Twelve and sometimes known as the Minor Prophets. Hosea may have been placed at the head of the other books because it was considered the earliest of the twelve. The prophet's ministry, like that of Amos and Micah, happened during the great Assyrian threat to Israel and Judah in the second half of the 8th century BCE. He saw God using Assyria to judge and to discipline a faithless Israel. The book is a theological response to the crisis Israel faced at that time, the first crisis in a series that the Book of the Twelve addressed. It set a tone for much of what followed in the collection, as well as in the books of Deuteronomy through 2 Kings, because of Hosea's emphasis on God's covenant with Israel. Hosea expects the people to live according to covenant standards. Hosea depicts Israel as God's family, with God committed to the people through the discipline of historical judgment and the promise of continued love afterward.

<sup>f</sup> Heb uncertain

4:1-10 This passage is a transition to the second major section of the book. It contains no direct references to Gomer or to Hosea's children. The prophet accuses the people and the priesthood of failing God.  
4:1-3 Hosea's picture of God and Israel in *dispute* shows the consequences of their dispute on everything, including the land. The first charge is that Israel lacks important things for its common life. The second charge is that Israel hasn't rejected activities it should have rejected; for example, the actions the prophet names are similar to those forbidden in the Ten Commandments (Deut 5:8-21).  
4:1 The phrase *knowledge of God* includes both those experiences that come from right relationship with God and faithfulness toward God's covenant instructions. In Hosea 4:6 Hosea notes that God's people are destroyed for *lack of*

*knowledge* (see Hos 8:1). Note the similarity between the gifts God will bring to make Israel whole in Hosea 2:19-20 and the actions listed in Hosea 4:1.  
4:3 The three categories of life-forms—animals, birds, and fish—are also listed in Genesis 1:26. Israel's moral and spiritual sickness affects all inhabitants and the land itself.  
4:4-10 The prophet's criticism of a priest is God's criticism of the priesthood. Priests should instruct the people appropriately about the knowledge of God and ways to approach God in worship and daily life. Instead, they have rejected the knowledge of God, and their lives show it.  
4:8 Hosea plays on two different meanings of the phrase *feed on the sin of my people*. The Hebrew word for "sin" and that for "sin offering" are similar. The priests ate the meat from the sin offering. The charge is that they fed on the sins of the people by following people's wrongdoings.

4:9 Is 24:2;  
Jer 5:31;  
Hos 12:2  
4:12 Jer 2:27;  
Hos 5:4;  
Hab 2:19  
4:13 Dt 12:2;  
Is 1:29, Is 57:5;  
Jer 3:6; Eze 6:13  
4:14 Gn 38:21;  
Dt 23:17;  
2Ki 23:7;  
Hos 4:1, Hos 4:6  
4:16 Ex 17:7;  
Ex 32:8;  
2Ki 18:1; Is 5:17;  
Jer 3:11  
5:1 Jgs 4:6;  
Jer 46:18;  
Hos 4:1, Hos 6:9;  
Hos 9:8

- <sup>9</sup>The priest will be just like the people;  
I will punish them for their ways,  
and judge them for their deeds.  
<sup>10</sup>They will eat but not be satisfied;  
they will have sex like prostitutes, but they will not have children,  
because they have rejected the LORD  
to devote themselves to <sup>11</sup>false religious practices.

#### Description of Israel's Idolatry

- Wine and new wine destroy understanding.  
<sup>12</sup>My people take advice from a piece of wood,  
and their divining rod gives them predictions.  
A spirit of prostitution has led them astray;  
they have left God to follow other gods.  
<sup>13</sup>They offer sacrifices on mountaintops,  
and make entirely burned offerings on hills;  
they offer sacrifices under various green trees,  
because their shade is pleasant.  
Therefore, your daughters act like prostitutes,  
and your daughters-in-law commit adultery.  
<sup>14</sup>I will not punish your daughters because they act like prostitutes,  
nor your daughters-in-law because they commit adultery;  
for the men themselves visit prostitutes,  
and offer sacrifices with consecrated workers at temples;  
so now the people without sense must come to ruin.  
<sup>15</sup>Israel, even though you act like a prostitute, don't let Judah become guilty.  
Don't enter into Gilgal, or go up to Beth-aven,  
and don't swear, "As the LORD lives."  
<sup>16</sup>Like a stubborn cow Israel is stubborn.  
Now the LORD will tend them,<sup>¶</sup> as the LORD tends a lamb in a pasture.  
<sup>17</sup>Ephraim is associated with idols—let him alone!  
<sup>18</sup>Though they have stopped drinking,  
they continue to behave like prostitutes;  
indeed, they "love"; shame is their pride.  
<sup>19</sup>The wind has wrapped her in its wings;  
they will be ashamed of their sacrifices.

#### Judgment on Israel and Judah

- 5** Hear this, priests!  
Pay attention, house of Israel!  
Listen, house of the king!  
The judgment concerns you because you have been a trap at Mizpah,  
and a net spread out upon Tabor.

<sup>¶</sup>Or her

**4:9-10** God promises to take the priests' misdeeds seriously and punish them. Having *sex like prostitutes* may be a literal charge of immorality. It may also be a metaphor for misdeeds that won't result in bearing *children*, that is, fruit or success.

**4:11-19** Israel's sin is described as idolatry: the worship of images and objects, and the practice of false rituals.

**4:12** *spirit of prostitution*: continues the metaphor of prostitution used to portray the worship of other gods and related bad practices that infected Israel (cf. Hos 5:3-4).

**4:13** *mountaintops* and *hills* were locations of altars and shrines dedicated to various deities and blamed for Israel's and Judah's idolatry (see 2 Kgs 12:3; 14:4; 2 Chron 20:33).

**4:14** *consecrated workers*: The consecrated workers at the shrines are probably not having sex with female or male

prostitutes in hopes of bringing about fertility for families, crops, and flocks. (For other examples of consecrated workers see Gen 38:21; Deut 23:17; 1 Kgs 14:24.) But Hosea is condemning sex for hire. Note also the reference in Hosea 4:18 to behaving "like prostitutes."

**4:15-16** A plea that Judah (the southern nation) not fall into the same trap as Israel (the northern nation).

**4:15** *Gilgal* and *Beth-aven* are also places with shrines. The worship of the Lord in these places was mixed with practices from other religious beliefs and practices (see Hos 9:15; 10:5, 8; 12:11; Amos 4:3; 5:5, 8).

**5:1-6:3** The prophet continues his criticisms of Israel and Judah, and he expresses hope that they will come to their senses after experiencing judgment.

**5:1** The leaders are warned of coming judgment that will

5:2 Is 29:15;  
Hos 9:15  
5:7 Jer 3:20;  
Hos 6:7  
5:8 Josh 7:2;  
Hos 4:15,  
Hos 8:1, Hos 9:9,  
Hos 10:5  
5:11 Dt 28:33;  
Mi 6:16  
5:13 Hos 7:11,  
Hos 8:9,  
Hos 10:6,  
Hos 12:1

<sup>2</sup>In their wicked condition, they have sunk deep into corruption;

I will correct them through judgment.

<sup>3</sup>I know Ephraim;

Israel doesn't escape my eye;

for now Ephraim you have acted like a prostitute; Israel is defiled.

<sup>4</sup>Their deeds don't allow them to return to their God,

because the spirit of prostitution is within them,  
and they don't know the LORD.

<sup>5</sup>Israel's pride is a witness against him;

both Israel and Ephraim stagger because of their guilt;  
Judah staggers with them.

<sup>6</sup>With their sheep and their cattle they will go to seek the LORD,

but they will not find him;  
he has withdrawn from them.

<sup>7</sup>They have acted faithlessly against the LORD;

for their children have produced illegitimate children.

Now the new moon will devour them<sup>a</sup> along with their fields.

<sup>8</sup>Blow a horn in Gibeah;

blow a trumpet in Ramah.

Sound the warning at Beth-aven:

"Look behind you, Benjamin!"

<sup>9</sup>Ephraim will become a horrible place on the Judgment Day.

Against the tribes of Israel I will certainly announce what is to take place.

<sup>10</sup>The princes of Judah act like raiders who steal the land;

I will pour out my anger like water upon them.

<sup>11</sup>Ephraim is under pressure from its enemies;

Ephraim's rights aren't protected.

This is because Ephraim chose to pursue worthless things.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, I am like a moth to Ephraim,

and like decay to the house of Judah.

<sup>13</sup>When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound,

then Ephraim went to Assyria, and Ephraim sent for the great king.

But he could not heal them;

nor could he cure their wound.

<sup>14</sup>I am like a lion to Ephraim,

like a young lion to the house of Judah.

I am the one who tears the prey and goes forth;

no one can snatch it from me.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

strike the nation. *Mizpah* and *Tabor* are small cities in Israel. There's no information elsewhere about the problems in them.

5:3 *Ephraim* is a large tribe in the center of Israel. The capital city of Samaria was located in Ephraim. The name is used here as a parallel term to "Israel" (see also Hos 5:5, 9, 11-14).

5:5 *Judah* is also involved in Israel's corrupt activities (see Hos 5:10, 13-14).

5:6-7 *seek the Lord*: This phrase usually refers to people coming to worship the Lord at a temple or public place. Hosea says the people's deeds (Hos 5:4) have caused a break with the Lord. Now the Lord has withdrawn from them. *new moon*: A month in Israel was measured by the cycles of the moon, and a new moon was a day marked by celebration (Isa 1:14). Hosea sees the near future as a time of judgment.

5:8-10 The *horn* and *trumpet* are instruments used to call people to attention and warn them of a coming threat. Hosea names settlements and tribes facing judgment. The

prophet may be referring to one of several times when the Assyrian army was in the region or to one of Israel's internal struggles when a king was killed (2 Kgs 15:1-31). For a time there was also fighting between Israel and Judah (2 Kgs 16:5; Isa 7:1-17).

5:12 Hosea boldly compares God's judgment to a *moth* and *decay*, natural forces that ruin clothes and food.

5:13 *Assyria*: Its *great king* isn't named. He was probably Tiglath-pileser III (2 Kgs 15:29; 16:10), but he could have been Shalmaneser V (2 Kgs 17:3). Hosea elsewhere charges Israel with playing a dangerous game by appealing to "Assyria" (Hos 8:9). Assyria can't heal what ails Israel. Only God can do that (Hos 7:1).

5:14 *lion*: Hosea changes from similes of decay and sickness to similes of God as a lion. The image emphasizes the fierceness and strength of the coming judgment (cf. Hos 13:7-8). It's also wordplay on the popular use of lion imagery in Assyrian cultures. Some Assyrian kings had portraits in their palaces depicting themselves hunting lions.

5:15 Lv 26:40;  
Ps 50:15;  
Ps 78:34;  
Jer 2:27  
6:1 Jer 3:22;  
Jer 50:4  
6:2 Ps 71:20;  
1Co 15:4  
6:3 Ps 72:6;  
Hos 10:12;  
Hos 14:5; || 2:23  
6:4 Hos 11:8;  
Hos 13:3  
6:5 Jer 5:14;  
Jer 23:29;  
Heb 4:12  
6:6 1Sa 15:22;  
Is 1:11; Mt 9:13;  
Mt 12:7  
7:2 Ps 90:6;  
Jer 14:10

**15** I will leave so that I can return to my place until they pay for their deeds, until they seek me.

In their distress, they will beg for my favor:

**6** "Come, let's return to the LORD;  
for it is he who has injured us and will heal us;  
he has struck us down, but he will bind us up.

**2** After two days he will revive us;  
on the third day he will raise us up,  
so that we may live before him.

**3** Let's know, let's press on to know the LORD;  
whose appearing is as certain as the dawn;  
who will come to us like the showers,  
like the spring rains that give drink to the earth."

### **Infidelity and divine retribution**

**4** Ephraim, what will I do with you?  
Judah, what will I do with you?

Your love is like a morning cloud,  
like the dew that vanishes quickly.

**5** Therefore, I have attacked them by the prophets,  
I have killed them by the words of my mouth,  
and my judgment goes forth like a light.

**6** I desire faithful love and not sacrifice,  
the knowledge of God instead of entirely burned offerings.

**7** But like Adam<sup>1</sup> they broke the covenant;  
then they acted in bad faith against me.

**8** Gilead is a city of wicked people, tracked with blood.

**9** As robbers lie in wait for someone,  
so the priests are in league with each other;  
they murder on the road to Shechem; they have done evil things.

**10** In the house of Israel I have seen something horrible;  
Ephraim acts like a prostitute; Israel is defiled.

**11** For you also, Judah, a harvest is appointed,  
when I would improve the circumstances of my people.

**7** When I would heal Israel,  
the evil acts of Ephraim are exposed,  
and the wicked deeds of Samaria;  
for they deceive and steal,  
a thief breaks in; a group of bandits raid outside.

**2** But they don't consider within their hearts  
that I remember all their wickedness.

Now their deeds show who they are, right in front of my face.

<sup>1</sup>Or at Adam

6:1-3 The prophet describes a time after judgment when the people will come to their senses and seek forgiveness and a new relationship with the Lord.

6:2 The prophet uses the language of reviving to convey that in a short time the Lord will *revive* the people. There's a sense in which they were dead because of their failures (Hos 13:1; see Eph 2:1 for a Christian analogy).

6:3 The prophet uses the language of *spring rains* to speak of God's appearing. These rains bring new crops from the dead fields of winter.

6:4-7:10 This section continues the charges against Israel for its infidelity toward God.

6:4 Hosea uses questions elsewhere as well (Hos 11:8; 13:14). Israel's climate can have clouds in the morning and

dew during the summer months. They disappear early on warm days (see Hos 13:3).

6:5 God used *prophets* to warn Israel and announce God's judgment on its disobedience.

6:6 This proverbial statement summarizes the positive element in prophetic preaching and emphasizes a basic element of a covenant community. It isn't a rejection of sacrifice and worship (see Hos 2:19-20; 4:1; Matt 9:13; 12:7).

6:7 *Adam* may refer to the first man and his failure (Gen 2-3) or to a city (see translation note) in the Jordan Valley (Josh 3:16) where some treachery occurred.

6:8-7:2 These verses detail the wrongdoings of the nation. Murder and robbery show the bad condition of Israel's society.



7:4 Jer 7:18,  
Jer 9:2  
7:6 Ps 21:9  
7:7 Is 64:7  
7:9 Hos 8:7  
7:11 Hos 5:13,  
Hos 8:9, Hos 9:3,  
Hos 12:1  
7:12 Lv 26:14;  
Dt 28:15;  
Eze 12:13,  
Eze 32:3  
7:13 Jer 14:10;  
Hos 9:12  
7:15 Ps 2:1;  
Hos 11:3; Na 1:9

- <sup>3</sup>By their wickedness they make the king glad,  
and give joy to the officials with their lies.
- <sup>4</sup>They all act like adulterers;  
they are like a heated oven, whose baker doesn't need to stoke the fire,  
from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.
- <sup>5</sup>On the day of our king,  
the officials became sick with the heat of wine;  
he stretched out his hand to those who mocked him.
- <sup>6</sup>They approach like a hot oven, their hearts burning.  
Throughout the night, their anger smolders;  
in the morning, it continues to burn like a flaming fire.
- <sup>7</sup>All of them are hot as an oven; they devour their rulers.  
All their kings have fallen; none of them call upon me.
- <sup>8</sup>Ephraim mixes himself among the people;  
Ephraim is like flatbread that is cooked on only one side.
- <sup>9</sup>Strangers have eaten up his strength, yet he doesn't know it;  
gray hairs are sprinkled here and there upon him, yet he doesn't know it.
- <sup>10</sup>Israel's pride is a witness against him;  
yet they don't return to the LORD their God,  
or seek him because of all this.

### *Foolishness and God's wrath*

- <sup>11</sup>Ephraim has become like a dove, silly and without common sense;  
they call upon Egypt; they go to Assyria.
- <sup>12</sup>As they go, I will spread my net over them;  
like birds in the sky, I will bring them down;  
I will judge them according to the report made to their assembly.
- <sup>13</sup>Doom to them, for they have strayed from me;  
destruction will be their lot because they have rebelled against me.  
I would redeem them, but they speak lies against me.
- <sup>14</sup>They don't cry to me from the heart, but they sob upon their beds;  
they fight<sup>1</sup> over grain and wine; they resist me.
- <sup>15</sup>It was I who gave them their strength, yet they plot evil against me.
- <sup>16</sup>They return, but not to the Most High;<sup>h</sup>  
they have become like a worthless bow;  
their officials will fall by the sword  
because of the rage of their tongues;  
in Egypt they will make fun of them.<sup>1</sup>

### *Divine proclamation about Israel's idolatry*

- 8** Put a trumpet to your lips!  
It's as if a bird of prey has flown over the LORD's house,  
because they have broken my covenant,  
and have not kept my Instruction.
- <sup>2</sup>Israel cries to me, "My God, we know you!"

<sup>1</sup>Or cut themselves <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>1</sup>Or they will be scorned in the land of Egypt.

7:3-7 Hosea describes plots and deception regarding Israel's government. Several plots and murders took place in the decades following the death of Jeroboam II (see intro).  
7:8 Hosea's reference to *flatbread that is cooked on only one side* is another one of his metaphors. It follows his description of affairs that are *hot as an oven*. Israel isn't in good condition, hot on one side and uncooked on the other.  
7:11-16 Judgment on foolish people is inevitable because of wrongdoings and hope misplaced in sources other than God.  
7:11-12 *dove... net*: Israel is compared to a dove, which is easy to catch when a trap is baited with grain. Israel plays a

dangerous game in going back and forth between Egypt and Assyria for help and security (Hos 12:1).  
7:14-15 Israel didn't use the right ways to call on God. Their actions betray them.  
7:16 Another one of Hosea's similes compares Israel to a *worthless bow*, one unable to perform its essential task.  
8:1-7 *idols* lead to Israel's failure, the announced charges and judgment against Israel.  
8:1 *my covenant*: likely refers to the covenant made with the people at Mount Sinai after the exodus out of Egypt. This covenant is summarized in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:2-17; Deut 5:6-21).

8:3 Ps 81:11;  
Is 48:1, 16 48:2;  
Jer 3:11;  
Eze 14:4  
8:4 Hos 2:8,  
Hos 13:2  
8:6 Hos 8:5  
8:7 Job 4:8;  
Psv 22:6;  
Hos 10:12,  
Hos 10:13;  
Ga 6:8  
8:10 Eze 16:37  
8:11 Hos 10:1  
8:14 Dt 32:18;  
Is 17:10;  
Jer 17:27;  
Am 2:5

- <sup>3</sup> Israel has turned away from the good; the enemy will pursue him.  
<sup>4</sup> They set up kings, but not through me;  
 they chose princes, but without my knowledge.  
 With silver and gold they crafted idols for their own destruction.  
<sup>5</sup> Your calf is rejected, Samaria.  
 My anger burns against them.  
 How long will they remain guilty?  
<sup>6</sup> The calf is from Israel, a person made it; it is not God.  
 The calf of Samaria will be smashed.  
<sup>7</sup> Because they sow the wind, they will get the whirlwind.  
 Standing grain, but no fresh growth; it will yield no meal;  
 if it were to yield, strangers would devour it.

### ***Bargains, apostasy, and coming punishment***

- <sup>8</sup> Israel is swallowed up;  
 among the nations, they are now like a useless jar.  
<sup>9</sup> They have gone up to Assyria, a wild ass wandering alone;  
 Ephraim has hired lovers.  
<sup>10</sup> Though they have bargained with the nations, I will now gather them up.  
 They will soon be diminished due to the burden of kings and princes.  
<sup>11</sup> When Ephraim added more altars to take away sin,  
 they became altars to him for sinning.  
<sup>12</sup> Even though I write out for him a large number of my instructions,  
 they are regarded as strange.  
<sup>13</sup> Though they offer choice sacrifices,<sup>m</sup>  
 though they eat flesh, the LORD doesn't accept them.  
 Now he will remember their wickedness and punish their sins;  
 they will return to Egypt.  
<sup>14</sup> Israel has forgotten his maker, and built palaces;  
 and Judah has multiplied walled cities;  
 but I will send a fire upon his cities,  
 and it will devour his fortresses.

### ***Arrival of divine judgment***

- 9** Don't rejoice, Israel!  
 Don't celebrate as other nations do;  
 for as whores you have gone away from your God.  
 You have loved a prostitute's pay on all threshing floors of grain.

<sup>m</sup>Correction; Heb uncertain

8:3 *good*: When Israel turns away from God's instruction, they reject what is good for themselves and for their relationship with God. An enemy, probably Assyria, will bring them harm (see intro.).

8:4 *They set up kings*: Political plotting and murder occurred in the years after the death of Jeroboam II (see intro.). Hosea indicates that at least some of the political successions were against the will of God (Hos 13:10-11). This doesn't mean, however, that God opposed kingship in Israel.

8:5-6 *calf of Samaria*: The calf may have been located in Samaria, or in a temple elsewhere (see Hos 10:5). The calf or bull was a symbol of a deity in the ancient world. For Israel to construct one as an image of God broke the covenant God made with them (Exod 20:4-6; 32; 1 Kgs 12:25-30).

8:7 Hosea uses a proverbial saying about sowing and harvesting to say that what Israel has sown with its infidelity toward God will result in judgment. For the positive formulation, see Hosea 10:12.

8:8-14 Israel attempted to gain security by offering deals with other countries but failed to respond to God's instruction.

8:9 The phrase *hired lovers* goes with the criticism elsewhere that a "spirit of prostitution" (Hos 5:4) was among the people.

8:11-13 More altars led to more sinning for rebellious Israel. The phrase *return to Egypt* may refer literally to a return to Egypt, but it may also refer figuratively to a return to slavery-like conditions (see Hos 9:3, 6; 11:5). Egypt was one of the countries Israel appealed to for security (Hos 7:11; 12:1).

8:14 *forgotten his maker*: Israel hasn't taken God's will into account. The judgment of fire on cities is coming. This sounds like the punishment announced by Amos, Hosea's contemporary (Amos 1:14; 2:5; 4:6).

9:1-17 The tragic consequences of Israel's failure are presented. The days of punishment have arrived, and Israel's negative view of the prophets blinds Israel to the consequences.

- <sup>2</sup>Threshing floor and wine vat won't feed them;  
the new wine will fail them.
- <sup>3</sup>They won't remain in the land of the LORD;  
but Ephraim will return to Egypt,  
and in Assyria they will eat unclean food.
- <sup>4</sup>They won't pour wine as an offering to the LORD;  
their sacrifices won't please him.  
Such sacrifices will be like food for those who touch the dead;  
all who eat of it will be unclean;  
their bread will be for their hunger alone;  
it will not come to the LORD's house.
- <sup>5</sup>What will you do on the day of appointed festival,  
on the day of the LORD's festival?
- <sup>6</sup>Even if they escape destruction,  
Egypt will gather them,  
Memphis will bury them.  
Briars will possess their precious things of silver;<sup>a</sup>  
thorns will be in their tents.
- <sup>7</sup>The days of punishment have come;  
the days of judgment have arrived;  
Israel cries, "The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad!"  
Because of your great wickedness, your rejection of me is great.

9:4 Dt 26:14;  
Jer 6:20;  
Hos 8:13; 11 1:13;  
Hg 2:13

9:5 Is 10:3;  
Jer 5:31;  
Hos 2:11

9:7 Is 10:3;  
Jer 10:15;  
Jer 29:26;  
Eze 14:9; Mi 7:4

9:8 Eze 3:17;  
Hos 5:1

9:10 Nm 25:3;  
Dt 32:10;  
Ps 106:28

9:11 Hos 4:7;  
Hos 10:5

9:12 Dt 31:17;  
Hos 7:13;  
Hos 9:16

9:14 Lk 23:29

### Tragic consequences

- <sup>8</sup>The prophet is God's watchman looking over Ephraim,  
yet a hunter's trap is set, covering all his ways,  
and rejection is in his God's house.
- <sup>9</sup>They have corrupted themselves terribly as in the days of Gibeah;  
he will remember their wickedness;  
he will punish their sins.
- <sup>10</sup>Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel.  
In its first season, like the first fruit on the fig tree,  
I saw your ancestors. But they came to Baal-peor,  
and worshipped a thing of shame;  
they became detestable like the thing they loved.<sup>o</sup>
- <sup>11</sup>Ephraim's glory will fly away like a bird—  
no birth, no pregnancy, no conception!
- <sup>12</sup>Though they bring up children, I will make them childless until no one is left.  
Doom to them indeed when I leave them!
- <sup>13</sup>When I looked toward Tyre, Ephraim was planted in a lovely meadow;  
but now Ephraim must lead out his children for slaughter.
- <sup>14</sup>Give them, LORD—what will you give them?

<sup>a</sup>Or *the proud glory pertaining to their silver*; Heb uncertain <sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain

9:3 *won't remain in the land of the LORD*: Israel lived in the land promised to their ancestors. The coming punishment means that some will be forced to live in places outside of that land, like Egypt and Assyria.

9:4-5 *those who touch the dead*: Contact with a corpse rendered persons unclean, and they needed to undergo purification before reentering public life (Num 19:11-20). Hosea compares life and worship outside of Israel to the unclean status of those in contact with the dead.

9:7 *prophet is a fool*: Many in Israel thought prophets and their activities were strange. Hosea charged Israel with having no sense of their sad state and broken relationship with God (Hos 7:11-13).

9:8 *The prophet is God's watchman*: A prophet's job was

either to warn Israel of judgment to come or to announce its coming (Hos 6:5; cf. Jer 28:8-9; Ezek 3:16).

9:9 Hosea uses the phrase *days of Gibeah* elsewhere (Hos 10:9). It may refer to terrible events during the period of the judges (Judg 19:10-20:48); some failures of King Saul, who was from Gibeah (1 Sam 10:26; 15:34); or to something known to the prophet's audience but not to today's readers.

9:10 *the wilderness*: Hosea reminds his listeners of their history. He compares God's preserving of Israel in the wilderness to the delight of finding grapes there. He also recalls the sin of an earlier generation at *Baal-peor*, a place named for a Canaanite god (Num 25:1-18).

9:12-14 Israel's disobedience will result in the loss of

10:1 Is 5:1;

Hos 3:4.

Hos 8:11.

Hos 12:11

10:6 Jer 48:13;

Hos 5:13

Give them a womb that miscarries and breasts that are dried up.

- <sup>15</sup> Every wickedness of theirs began at Gilgal;  
there I came to hate them.

Because of the wickedness of their deeds  
I will drive them out of my house.  
I will love them no more;  
all their officials are rebels.

- <sup>16</sup> Ephraim is sick, their root is dried up, they will bear no fruit.  
Even though they give birth, I will put to death their much-loved little ones.  
<sup>17</sup> Because they haven't listened to him, my God will reject them;  
they will wander among the nations.

### The folly of Israel's idolatry

- 10** Israel is a growing vine that yields its fruit.  
The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built;  
the richer his land became, the more he set up sacred standing stones.  
<sup>2</sup> Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt.  
The LORD will break down their altars and destroy their standing stones.  
<sup>3</sup> For now they will say:  
"We have no king, because we don't love the LORD.  
What then could a king do for us?"  
<sup>4</sup> They have spoken empty words, swearing falsely when making covenants;  
so judgment springs up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field.  
<sup>5</sup> The inhabitants of Samaria shake because of the calf of Beth-aven.  
Its people will mourn over it,  
just as its idolatrous priests who rejoiced over its glory that is now gone.

### Shame and punishment

- <sup>6</sup> To Assyria it will be carried as a gift for the great king.  
Ephraim will be put to shame;  
Israel will be ashamed of his own idol.  
<sup>7</sup> Samaria will be cut off;  
her king is like a chip of wood on the surface of the water.  
<sup>8</sup> The sin of Israel, the shrines of Aven will be torn down.  
Thorn and thistle will sprout up on their altars.  
They will say to the mountains, "Cover us,"  
to the hills, "Fall on us."  
<sup>9</sup> Since the days of Gibeah, you have sinned, Israel;  
there they have continued.  
Will not war overtake them in Gibeah?  
<sup>10</sup> I will come and punish them;  
nations will be gathered against them  
when they are punished for their double crime.

present and future generations. Hosea uses the formula *no birth... no conception* to talk about that loss.

9:15 Israel entered the promised land at *Gilgal*, near the Jordan River (Josh 4–5). Israel may have violated its relationship with God at an outdoor shrine there, so God will drive Israel from *my house*. The word "house" usually refers to a temple, but here it may refer to Israel and its land (Hos 9:3) as God's household.

9:17 *they will wander among the nations*: Israel's punishment for violating the relationship is God's rejection of them. The rejection will lead to Israel's wandering and mixing among peoples and nations, and seeking security among them (Hos 7:8–11).

10:1–15 Israel's folly is exposed and its punishment once again made clear. Hosea uses various metaphors to show the link between the charges against Israel and the announced judgment.

10:1 Israel's fruitfulness is compared to a vine. But the more fruitful it became, the more it grew away from its purpose to serve the Lord.

10:3 Hosea quotes Israel to show its folly, without a king and without a worry. The Lord was their divine king, and they had rebelled against his rule.

10:4 Israel spoke empty words in making solemn promises (covenants), and the result is like *poisonous weeds* in a field.

10:5 *Beth-aven* ("house of sin") is probably a play on the name Bethel ("house of God"), where a temple was located (Amos 7:10–15). See Hosea 10:8.

10:6 Hosea also uses *great king* in Hosea 5:13. It was a title adopted by the Assyrian king.

10:8 *the shrines of Aven*: probably refers to the city of Bethel. The term "aven" means "sin." See note on Hosea 10:5.

10:9 *Gibeah*: See note on Hosea 9:9.

- <sup>11</sup> Ephraim was a trained cow that loved to plow;  
I spared her fair neck; but I will make Ephraim break through the ground;  
Judah will plow; Jacob will turn the soil for himself.
- <sup>12</sup> Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap faithful love;  
break up your unplanted ground, for it is time to seek the LORD,  
that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.
- <sup>13</sup> You have plowed wickedness,  
you have reaped depravity,  
you have eaten the fruit of lies,  
because you have trusted in your way and in your many warriors.
- <sup>14</sup> Therefore, the noise of war will rise against your people;  
all your fortresses will be destroyed,  
as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle,  
when mothers were dashed into pieces with their children.
- <sup>15</sup> It will indeed happen to you, Bethel, because of your great wickedness.  
At dawn, the king of Israel will be cut off completely.

10:11 Dt 25:4;  
Hos 4:16  
10:12 Prv 11:18;  
Is 45:8, Is 55:6;  
Jer 4:3; Hos 6:3  
10:13 Job 4:8;  
Ps 33:16;  
Prv 22:8;  
Hos 8:7; Ga 6:7  
11:1 Ex 4:22;  
Dt 7:8; Hos 2:15;  
Mt 2:15  
11:2 Hos 2:13;  
Hos 11:7;  
Hos 13:1  
11:4 Lv 26:13;  
Jer 31:3; Jn 6:44;  
Jn 12:32  
11:8 Gn 14:8;  
Dt 29:23;  
Jer 31:20;  
Hos 6:4

### Divine love

- 11** When Israel was a child, I loved him,  
and out of Egypt I called my son.
- <sup>2</sup> The more I called them,  
the further they went from me;  
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,  
and they burned incense to idols.
- <sup>3</sup> Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk;  
I took them up in my arms, but they did not know that I healed them.
- <sup>4</sup> I led them with bands of human kindness, with cords of love.  
I treated them like those who lift infants to their cheeks;  
I bent down to them and fed them.

### Divine frustration

- <sup>5</sup> They will return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria will be their king,  
because they have refused to return to me.
- <sup>6</sup> The sword will strike wildly in their cities;  
it will consume the bars of their gates  
and will take everything because of their schemes.
- <sup>7</sup> My people are bent on turning away from me;  
and though they cry out to the Most High,<sup>P</sup> he will not raise them up.

### Divine compassion

- <sup>8</sup> How can I give you up, Ephraim?  
How can I hand you over, Israel?  
How can I make you like Admah?  
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?

<sup>P</sup>Heb uncertain

10:11 The prophet uses the metaphor *trained cow* to speak about Israel. They were chosen for a purpose, but God will change that purpose.

10:12-13 Hosea refers to sowing and reaping to make a positive point about Israel's calling and a negative one about its performance (see Hos 8:7).

10:14 *Shalman* could refer to an earlier Assyrian king, Shalmaneser III, who campaigned in the area a century earlier, or to another enemy in the region who killed the citizens of a defeated town.

11:1-11 God's love for Israel is frustrated by the people's failures, but it will eventually prevail because of God's determination to love Israel.

11:1 The people *Israel* were called God's *son* (Exod

4:22-23). They were rescued from Egypt but went away from God (see Amos 2:6-16).

11:3-4 God's tender care brought Israel along, even though the people didn't recognize God's love for what it was.

11:5 *Assyria will be their king*: In about 740 BCE Israel paid tribute to Assyria. On more than one occasion after that the Assyrian army was in the region and took over portions of Israel. In 722 BCE Samaria was the last Israelite city Assyria defeated.

11:8 *Admah*... *Zeboiim* were cities near Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 14:2). God also judged and destroyed them (Gen 19; Deut 29:23). *heart winces within me*: The Hebrew verb translated as "wince" is the same one used to describe

11:9 Nm 23:19;  
Is 12:6; Jer 30:11  
11:10 Is 31:4;  
Jer 25:30;  
Hos 3:5; 11 3:16;  
Am 1:2  
12:1 Hos 5:13;  
Hos 7:11  
12:4 Gn 28:10;  
Gn 28:11;  
Gn 28:12;  
Gn 28:13;  
Gn 28:19  
12:6 Ps 27:14;  
Hos 14:1; Mi 6:8

My heart winces within me;  
my compassion grows warm and tender.

### Israel's and Judah's responses

- <sup>9</sup>I won't act on the heat of my anger;  
I won't return to destroy Ephraim;  
for I am God and not a human being,  
the holy one in your midst;  
I won't come in harsh judgment.
- <sup>10</sup>They will walk after the LORD, who roars like a lion.  
When he roars, his children will come trembling from the west.
- <sup>11</sup>They will come trembling like a bird,  
and like a dove from the land of Assyria;  
and I will return them to their homes, says the LORD.
- <sup>12a</sup>Ephraim has surrounded me with lies,  
the house of Israel with faithless acts;  
but Judah still walks with God,  
and is faithful to the holy one.

### God's charge against Judah

- 12**<sup>r</sup>Ephraim herds the wind,  
and pursues the east wind all day long;  
they multiply lies and violence;  
they make a treaty with Assyria,  
and oil is carried to Egypt.
- <sup>2</sup>The LORD has a charge against Judah,  
and will punish Jacob according to his ways,  
and respond to him according to his deeds.
- <sup>3</sup>From the womb he tried to be the oldest of twin brothers;  
as an adult he struggled with God.
- <sup>4</sup>He struggled with the messenger and survived;  
he wept and sought his favor;  
he met him at Bethel, and there he spoke with him.
- <sup>5</sup>The LORD God of heavenly forces, the LORD is his name!
- <sup>6</sup>But you! Return to your God with faithful love and justice,  
and wait continually for your God.
- <sup>7</sup>He is a merchant; the means to cheat are in his hands;  
he loves to take advantage of others.
- <sup>8</sup>Ephraim has said,  
"I'm rich, I've gained wealth for myself;  
in all of my gain no offense has been found in me that would be sin."

<sup>a</sup>12:1 in Heb <sup>r</sup>12:2 in Heb

the earlier "overthrow" of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:21). This time it's the movement of God's heart that results in a compassionate response. God will judge Israel but not in a final, unchangeable way.

11:9 *God and not a human being*: God has the freedom and capacity for compassion over judgment. This is one side of the passionate God presented by Hosea. The other is fury because of Israel's repeated failure (Hos 13:7-8).

11:11 After judgment and loss of land, God will return the people to their homes. This prophecy of hope concludes the second major section of the book (see intro.).

11:12-14:8 The book ends with another series of charges against Israel, along with prophecies that God will forgive and restore the people after judgment.

11:12-12:14 Neither Judah (in the south) nor Israel (in the

north) can make its life secure apart from their relationship with God. Hosea uses the life of Jacob/Israel to teach the people (see map 7).

12:1 *oil*: Israel used olive oil as a gift when seeking help. The Egyptians didn't help them, and the Assyrians finally took over the land.

12:2-6 Hosea's audience could learn from Jacob's example, if they would listen. The prophet draws on traditions about Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (see Gen 28-32). God used Jacob's difficulties to work toward future blessing. *struggled with the messenger*: See Genesis 32. The Hebrew verb for "struggle" is also part of the name Israel.

12:7-8 Ephraim is interested in profit, not faithfulness to God's instruction.

12:10 2Ki 17:13;  
Jer 7:25  
12:12 Gn 28:1,  
Gn 28:5,  
Gn 29:15,  
Gn 29:18,  
Gn 29:20  
13:2 1Ki 19:18;  
Is 46:6; Hos 8:4  
13:3 Ps 1:4,  
Ps 68:2; Is 17:13;  
Dn 2:35; Hos 6:4  
13:4 Ex 20:3;  
Is 43:11, Is 45:21,  
Is 45:22;  
Hos 12:9  
13:7 Jer 5:6;  
Hos 5:14  
13:8 2Sa 17:8;  
Psv 17:12;  
Hos 2:12

- <sup>9</sup>I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt;  
I will make you live in tents again, as in former days.
- <sup>10</sup>I spoke to the prophets; and I multiplied visions,  
and through them I uttered parables.
- <sup>11</sup>In Gilead there is wickedness;  
they will surely come to nothing.  
In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls,  
so their altars will be like piles of stones on the rows of the field.
- <sup>12</sup>Jacob fled to the land of Aram;  
there Israel served for a wife,  
and for a wife he kept watch over livestock.
- <sup>13</sup>By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt,  
and by a prophet he was guarded.
- <sup>14</sup>Ephraim has given bitter offense;  
so the LORD will bring his crimes down on him  
and pay him back for his wrongdoing.

### *Infidelity despite divine goodness*

- 13** When Ephraim spoke, there was excitement;  
he was praised in Israel;  
but he became guilty through Baal and died.
- <sup>2</sup>And now they keep on sinning;  
they have made metal images, idols of silver,  
as a result of their skill,  
all of them the work of craftsmen.  
“Sacrifice to these,” they say.  
People are kissing calves!
- <sup>3</sup>Therefore, they will be like the morning mist,  
like the dew that passes away early,  
like husks that swirl from the threshing floor,  
or like smoke from a window.
- <sup>4</sup>Yet I have been the LORD your God ever since the land of Egypt;  
and you will know no other gods but me;  
there is no savior besides me.
- <sup>5</sup>I knew you in the wilderness,  
in the land of no rain.
- <sup>6</sup>When I fed them, they were satisfied;  
and their hearts became proud;  
therefore, they forgot me.

### *Consequences of infidelity*

- <sup>7</sup>So I will become like a lion to them;  
like a leopard I will lurk beside the road.
- <sup>8</sup>I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs,  
and I will tear open the covering of their hearts.  
I will devour them like a lion,  
as a wild animal would eat them.
- <sup>9</sup>I will destroy you, Israel;  
for you didn't realize that I could help you.

12:9-14 Hosea again mentions Jacob and refers to the nation's founding story of the exodus from Egypt. *live in tents*: The judgment that God will bring upon Israel means that they will live in tents, as did their ancestors, rather than in the houses they have built in the promised land.

12:13 *by a prophet*: God used a prophet (Moses) to bring Israel out of Egypt.

12:14 Israel's judgment grows out of its own misdeeds.

13:1-14 Lists of charges continue the theme of Israel's infidelity and its consequences.

13:1 One repeated charge is idolatry. *guilty through Baal and died*: one of several references to a Canaanite god named Baal. The plural is also used (see Hos 2:8, 13, 17; 11:2). Worshipping gods other than the Lord brought death to the people.

13:2 *idols*: See Hosea 8:4-6.

13:4 *there is no savior besides me*: Only the Lord, who saved Israel from Egypt (Hos 11:1), is able to deliver them in their hour of trouble. No king can do it (Hos 13:10-11).

13:7-8 God's judgment against repeated failure in this

13:11 1Sa 8:7;  
1Sa 15:23;  
1Ki 14:7;  
Is 13:13;  
Hos 10:7

13:13 2Ki 19:3;  
Is 13:8; Mi 4:9

13:14 Ps 16:10;  
Ps 49:15; Is 25:8;  
Is 26:19;  
1Co 15:55

13:15 Job 27:21;  
Jer 4:11; Jer 20:5;  
Eze 17:10;  
Eze 19:12

13:16 2Ki 8:12;  
2Ki 15:16;  
Is 13:16;  
Hos 10:14;  
Am 1:13

14:2 Heb 13:15

14:3 Ps 10:14;  
Ps 33:17; Ps 68:5;  
Is 31:1; Hos 5:13

14:5 Ps 92:12;  
Song 2:1; Is 35:2;  
Mt 6:28

- <sup>10</sup>Where is your king now, so that he can save you?  
Where in all your cities are your judges, of whom you said,  
“Give me a king and rulers?”
- <sup>11</sup>I gave you a king in my anger,  
and I took him away in my wrath.
- <sup>12</sup>Ephraim’s wickedness is bound up;  
his sin is kept in store.
- <sup>13</sup>The pangs of a woman in childbirth come for him,  
but he is not aware of the time to be born;  
for at the proper time he doesn’t present himself at the mouth of the womb.
- <sup>14</sup>Will I ransom them from the power of the grave\*?  
Will I redeem them from death’s hold?  
Death, where are your diseases?  
Grave,<sup>†</sup> where is your destruction?  
Compassion is hidden from my eyes.
- <sup>15</sup>Although he may flourish among rushes,  
the east wind will come—  
the breath of God rising from the wilderness;  
and his spring will dry up;  
his fountain will be dried up.  
It will strip his household of every cherished possession.
- <sup>16</sup>Samaria will be desolate,  
because she has rebelled against her God;  
by the sword they will fall—their babies will be dashed,  
and their pregnant women ripped open.

#### A plea: Return to God

- 14**<sup>v</sup>Return, Israel, to the LORD your God;  
you have stumbled because of your wickedness.
- <sup>2</sup>Prepare to speak and return to the LORD;  
say to the LORD,  
“Forgive all wickedness; and receive the good.  
Instead of bulls, let us offer what we can say:
- <sup>3</sup>Assyria won’t save us; we won’t ride upon horses;  
we will no longer say, ‘Our God,’ to the work of our hands.  
In you the orphan finds compassion.”

#### Divine promise of healing

- <sup>4</sup>I will heal their faithlessness; I will love them freely,  
for my anger has turned from them.
- <sup>5</sup>I will be like the dew to Israel;  
he will blossom like the lily;  
he will cast out his roots like the forests of Lebanon.<sup>¶</sup>
- <sup>6</sup>His branches will spread out;  
his beauty will be like the olive tree,  
and his fragrance like that of Lebanon.

<sup>†</sup>Heb Sheol <sup>‡</sup>Heb Sheol <sup>¶</sup>14:1 in Heb <sup>v</sup>14:2 in Heb <sup>¶</sup>Or like Lebanon

historical moment is like that of a fierce animal. This is one side of the God presented by Hosea. The other is the passion that won’t let Israel destroy itself (Hos 11:8-9).

13:12-13 Hosea compares Israel’s sin and its consequences to the difficulty and tragedy of an untimely birth. *sin is kept in store*: Israel’s sin isn’t compared to the child in the womb but to the timing of a birth after months of preparation. If the child doesn’t come when the birth pangs are strong and the mother is ready to deliver (*the proper time* of 13:13), then pain and death can result. Israel’s sinfulness is coming to a head and will result in deadly consequences.

13:14-16 The questions show God’s struggle over Israel. Israel is on the path to judgment. God won’t avert it.

13:14 *Death... Grave*: A portion of this verse is quoted in the NT (1 Cor 15:55), where disease and death are overcome.

14:1-3 Israel is invited to return to the Lord to ask for forgiveness. Neither Assyria nor another god can save them.

14:3 *we won’t ride upon horses*: Israel won’t depend on warfare and military forces for deliverance.

14:4-8 The prophet uses a metaphor to show God’s intention to love and restore Israel. *I will love them freely*: God’s love is a free decision and can’t be forced. The prophet compares it to sustaining *dew* and a *green cypress tree*. The



- 7 They will again live beneath my shadow,  
they will flourish like a garden;  
they will blossom like the vine,  
their fragrance will be like the wine of Lebanon.
- 8 Ephraim, what do idols have to do with me?  
It is I who answer and look after you.  
I am like a green cypress tree;  
your fruit comes from me.

***Be careful***

- 9 Whoever is wise understands these things.  
Whoever observes carefully knows them.  
Truly, the LORD's ways are right,  
and the righteous will walk in them,  
but evildoers will stumble in them.

conclusion to the third and final section of the book affirms that God's anger has turned away (14:4). God is the one who brings fruitfulness and blessing to Israel (Hos 2:19-23).

14:9 The final comment uses proverbial wisdom to urge care and understanding on readers of the book: *The LORD's ways are right* (see Ps 1:6).

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The book of Joel is placed second in the Minor Prophets, which are also called the Book of the Twelve. The first line identifies the book as a communication from the Lord to Joel, Pethuel's son. Nothing else is known about this Joel.

The historical setting for Joel's prophecies is unclear. Unlike several other prophetic books, no mention is made of major events or world powers such as Assyria or Babylon. Instead, the book speaks about Judah and Jerusalem and uses the term "Israel" to mean God's people. Joel is familiar with the priesthood and temple service in Jerusalem. Perhaps his references in Joel 2:6-8 to selling people to Greeks and Sabeans (an Arab tribe) fit best in the 5th century BCE during Persian control of the region. The reference in Joel 3:1 to those sent away from Judah and Jerusalem likely refers to the Babylonian campaigns in Judah in the early 6th century BCE and the waves of people sent into exile at that time. These data suggest that Joel was a post-exilic prophet living in Jerusalem.

As with other prophets, Joel sees the Lord at work in the circumstances of his day and beyond. He describes future events as part of the "day of the Lord" (Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; see Amos 5:18-20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7). The phrase doesn't refer to a 24-hour period but to a decisive time in the future. Joel uses similar terms for the future such as "in those days and in that time" (Joel 3:1) and "in that day" (Joel 3:18). He tells the message that God judges nations and peoples and will ultimately deliver Judah and Jerusalem on such a "day."

A striking feature of the book is its depiction of a locust plague. The deadly effects of the locusts are used to impress readers with God's judgment in the historical process and to remind them there is more of that to come. Locusts may also symbolically refer to human threats to the well-being of Judah and Jerusalem. In either case, people of the ancient world were terrified of locust plagues, because the insects could ruin fields and crops (see Amos 4:9).



Middle Eastern locusts (Joel 1:4)  
*iStockPhoto*

In response, Joel urges his audience to consider prayer, lament, fasting, and heartfelt return to the Lord. His plea to “tear your hearts and not your clothing” (Joel 2:13) is a classic call to the people for sincere change.

The outline of the book shows a blend of judgment and deliverance. Joel uses metaphors and symbols to describe events of the past and the future. Locusts are like a fierce nation, the bite of lions, and fire (Joel 1:6, 19-20; 2:2-7). The earth and heavens shake, with the sun, moon, and stars showing the effects of

the assault (Joel 2:10; 3:15). Both heaven and earth will have signs that God is at work (Joel 2:28-31). Hills will drip with wine and flow with milk (Joel 3:18) when Judah is restored. Joel shares some words and themes with Amos and Obadiah, the two books that come after it in the order of the Minor Prophets. For example, compare Joel 3:16 with Amos 1:2 and Joel 3:19 with Obadiah’s longer description of Edom. This may mean that the three books were read alongside each other to reinforce common prophetic themes.

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### **I. Locust Plague and a Call to Return to the Lord (1:1–2:27)**

- A. Plague and lament (1:1-12)
- B. Fasting and prayer (1:13-20)
- C. Locusts signal the day of the Lord (2:1-11)
- D. A call to return to the Lord (2:12-17)
- E. The Lord returns to the land and people (2:18-27)

### **II. Future Deliverance and Judgment (2:28–3:21)**

- A. Spirit and prophecy (2:28-29)
  - B. Signs of the times (2:30-32)
  - C. Days of restoration and judgment among the nations (3:1-8)
  - D. Judgment of nations in Jerusalem (3:9-15)
  - E. Deliverance for the Lord’s people (3:16-21)
- 

*J. Andrew Dearman*

**Song of lament**

- 1** The LORD's word that came to Joel, Pethuel's son:  
**1** Hear this, elders;  
 pay attention, everyone in the land!  
 Has anything like this ever happened in your days,  
 or in the days of your ancestors?<sup>a</sup>  
**2** Tell it to your children,  
 and have your children tell their children,  
 and their children tell their children.  
**3** What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten.  
 What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten.  
 And what the hopping locust left, the devouring locust has eaten.<sup>b</sup>  
**4** Wake up, you who drink too much, and weep.  
 Scream over the sweet wine, all you wine drinkers,  
 because it is snatched from your mouth;  
**5** because a nation, powerful and beyond number, has invaded my land.

Its teeth are like lions' teeth;  
 its fangs are like those of a lioness.

- 7** It has destroyed my vines, splintered my fig trees,  
 stripped off their bark and thrown it down;  
 their branches have turned white.  
**8** Lament like a woman dressed in funeral clothing,  
 one who has lost the husband of her youth.  
**9** The grain offering and the drink offering are gone from the LORD's temple.  
 The priests and the LORD's ministers mourn.  
**10** The fields are devastated,  
 the ground mourns;  
 for the grain is destroyed,  
 the new wine dries up,  
 the olive oil fails.  
**11** Be shocked, you farmers;  
 howl, you vinedressers,  
 over the wheat and the barley, for the crops of the field are destroyed.  
**12** The grapevine is dried up; the fig tree withers.  
 Pomegranate, palm, and apple—all the trees of the field are dried up.  
 Joy fades away from the people.<sup>c</sup>

**Call to mourn**

- 13** Dress for a funeral and grieve, you priests;  
 lament, ministers of the altar.  
 Come, spend the night in funeral clothing, servants of my God,

<sup>a</sup>Or your fathers <sup>b</sup>The Heb uses several different words for locust; none of the meanings are identical. <sup>c</sup>Or from the sons of men; cf 2:1 Heb the people of the land

1:2 Hos 5:1;  
 Jl 2:2  
 1:3 Ex 10:2  
 1:4 Dt 28:38;  
 Ps 78:46;  
 Jl 2:25; Am 4:9;  
 Na 3:15  
 1:5 Jl 3:3  
 1:6 Jl 2:2,  
 Jl 2:25; Rev 9:8  
 1:7 Is 5:6;  
 Jer 8:13;  
 Hos 2:12;  
 Jl 1:12; Am 4:9  
 1:10 Is 24:4  
 1:13 1Ki 21:27;  
 Jer 4:8; Jl 1:9;  
 Jl 2:17; Jon 3:5

1:1-12 The prophet calls attention to the terrible effects of a mighty locust plague. Joel uses the plague as a reason to call people to pray and to return to God.  
 1:4 Locusts move fast in eating crops and plants. They join quick movements with strong appetites.  
 1:5 you who drink too much: Those who enjoy wine will lose their drink. They will go from the delight of drink to the shock of loss.  
 1:6 These images describe an overwhelming power that invades the nation. The locusts are like an army, and they eat like lions. See Joel 2:4-11.  
 1:7-12 These verses list the various parts of Judah that the locusts devastate, including crops, people, and farms. There are grains for bread and fruits from trees and vines.

Joel is familiar with the agricultural produce of Judah and its importance for the life of the people.  
 1:8 funeral clothing: The locusts will bring death, and the people of Judah are compared to a young widow in mourning.  
 1:9 priests . . . ministers: Priests serve at the temple in Jerusalem. They "minister" before the Lord and on behalf of the people. They won't have offerings to present to the Lord, and they should mourn for themselves and for the people. See Joel 1:13.  
 1:13-20 The Lord's people should gather at the temple and pray because of the terrible things to come.  
 1:13-14 Joel calls for a special assembly at the temple where people and priests mourn and pray. They won't

1:14 2Ch 20:3;  
 Jl 2:12, Jl 2:15,  
 Jl 2:16; Jon 3:8  
 1:17 Is 17:10,  
 Is 17:11;  
 Mal 2:3  
 1:19 Ps 50:15;  
 Jer 9:10; Am 7:4  
 2:3 Gn 2:8;  
 Is 51:3;  
 Eze 28:13,  
 Eze 31:9,  
 Eze 36:35

because the grain offering and the drink offering  
 have gone from the temple of your God.

- 14** Demand a fast,  
 request a special assembly.  
 Gather the elders and all the land's people  
 to the temple of the LORD your God,  
 and cry out to the LORD.

### *Time of suffering*

- 15** What a terrible day!  
 The day of the LORD is near; it comes like chaos from the Almighty.<sup>d</sup>  
**16** Isn't the food cut off right before our eyes?  
 Aren't joy and gladness also gone from our God's house?  
**17** The grain shrivels under the shovels;<sup>e</sup>  
 the barns are empty.  
 The granaries are in ruin because the grain has dried up.  
**18** How the animals groan!  
 Herds of cattle are in distress because there is no pasture for them;  
 even the flocks of sheep pant.

### *The prophet's prayer*

- 19** To you, LORD, I cry,  
 for fire has completely destroyed the pastures of the wilderness;  
 and flames have burned all the trees of the field.  
**20** Even the field's wild animals cry to you because the streams have dried up;  
 the fire has completely destroyed the meadows of the wilderness.

### *Announcement of alarm and peril*

- 2** Blow the horn in Zion;  
 give a shout on my holy mountain!  
 Let all the people of the land tremble,  
 for the day of the LORD is coming.  
 It is near—  
<sup>2a</sup> a day of darkness and no light,  
 a day of clouds and thick darkness!  
 Like blackness spread out upon the mountains,  
 a great and powerful army<sup>f</sup> comes,  
 unlike any that has ever come before them,  
 or will come after them in centuries ahead.  
<sup>3</sup> In front of them a fire consumes;  
 and behind them a flame burns.  
 Land ahead of them is like Eden's garden,  
 but they leave behind them a barren wasteland;  
 nothing escapes them.  
<sup>4</sup> They resemble horses,  
 and like warhorses they charge,  
<sup>5</sup> like the rumbling of chariots.

<sup>d</sup>Heb *Shaddai* <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>Or a great and strong people

have the grain and drink offerings from the fields, so they should cry out to the Lord. This follows up the thought expressed in Joel 1:9.

**1:15 day of the LORD:** Chaos is coming to the land, and it is the Lord's work. The "day" is a decisive moment or time.

**1:17-18 grain . . . animals:** The lack of grain affects animals as well as people. Sheep and goats graze on the stubble in grainfields after harvest. Now they will have less to eat.

**1:19-20 fire:** The destruction by fire may refer to wildfires that can break out when fields are stripped of their crops.

It could be a metaphor and refer to what the locusts eat (see Joel 2:3-5).

**2:1-11** These verses describe in detail the locust destruction coming on the day of the Lord. They use various images to show the effects of the locust.

**2:1 horn:** A horn signals a public alarm. Here it alerts the nation to the coming of the day of the Lord (see Hos 5:8).

**2:2 clouds and thick darkness:** main features of the day of the Lord. Amos 5:18-20 describes judgment to come on the day of the Lord in similar language.

**2:3 Eden's garden:** the fruitful land of Judah. But destruction!

- They leap on the mountaintops—  
like the crackling of a fire's flame,  
devouring the stubble;  
like a powerful army ready for battle.
- <sup>6</sup>In their presence, peoples shake with fear;  
all faces turn red with worry.
- <sup>7</sup>Like warriors they charge;  
like soldiers they climb the wall.  
Each keeps to their own path;  
they didn't change their course.
- <sup>8</sup>They don't crowd each other;  
each keeps to their own path.  
Even if they fall among the weapons,  
they won't stop.
- <sup>9</sup>They rush upon the city; they run upon the walls.  
They climb into the houses; they enter through the windows like thieves.
- <sup>10</sup>The earth quakes before them;  
the heavens shake.  
The sun and the moon are darkened;  
the stars have stopped shining,
- <sup>11</sup>because the LORD utters his voice at the head of his army.  
How numerous are his troops!  
Mighty are those who obey his word.  
The day of the LORD is great;  
it stirs up great fear—who can endure it?

### Change your hearts

- <sup>12</sup>Yet even now, says the LORD,  
return to me with all your hearts,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with sorrow;
- <sup>13</sup>tear your hearts and not your clothing.  
Return to the LORD your God,  
for he is merciful and compassionate, very patient, full of faithful love,  
and ready to forgive.
- <sup>14</sup>Who knows whether he will have a change of heart  
and leave a blessing behind him,  
a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?
- <sup>15</sup>Blow the horn in Zion;  
demand a fast;  
request a special assembly.

will come to it. According to Joel 3:21, Judah will again be like a garden.

2:11 *the LORD utters his voice*: The Lord is at the head of the invading army and speaks for it. See Joel 3:16 for a similar claim.

2:12-17 In light of the difficult circumstances, the prophet calls the people to return to the Lord in a special assembly. The priests should lead them in fasting and public worship at the temple, where all can seek a renewed relationship with the Lord.

2:12 *now . . . return*: There is still time to return. Sorrow and weeping come with the call. The heart represents the intentions, desires, and expectations of a person. Note the calls in Deuteronomy 6:5 and 10:12 for Israelites to love and serve the Lord with "with all your heart." Jesus understands this to be the first and greatest commandment (Matt 22:37-38).

2:13 *tear your hearts*: In the ancient world people would tear their clothing to show that they were sorry and wanted a change of circumstances. King Josiah

*Mourning Customs* The Israelites, following customs from the ancient world, employed ritual forms to display their sorrow over pain and suffering, death, their return to the Lord concerning sin, or their horror at blasphemy. These ritual acts included fasting, tearing clothes, wearing rough goat hair garments, sprinkling dirt or ashes upon their heads, shaving or pulling out hair and beards, and chanting laments. For examples, see Job 1:20; Esther 4:1-3; Jonah 3:1-9; 2 Samuel 1:2; Ezra 9:3.

2:5 Is 5:24;  
Na 1:10, Na 3:2;  
Rev 9:9

2:10 Is 13:10;  
Eze 32:7;  
Jl 2:31, Jl 3:15;  
Mt 24:29

2:11 Jl 2:25,  
Jl 2:31, Jl 3:16;  
Mal 3:2;  
Rev 6:17

2:12 Dt 4:30;  
1Sa 7:3;  
Is 22:12;  
Hos 12:6; Jl 1:14

2:13 Ex 34:6;  
Ps 34:18,  
Ps 51:17;  
Is 57:15; Jon 4:2

2:14 Jl 1:9,  
Jl 1:13;  
Am 5:15;  
Jon 3:9;  
Eg 2:19

2:15 Nm 10:3;  
Jl 1:14, Jl 2:1

tore his clothing after hearing the contents of a scroll found during temple repairs. He then led the people in a ceremony to return to the Lord (2 Kgs 22:8-23:3). Joel knows that people will show signs of sorrow such as weeping and fasting at the temple. He urges them to make sincere and lasting changes and not simply outward signs. *merciful and compassionate*: The Lord is ready to forgive. The prophet reminds the people of this core belief. When the Israelites failed in the wilderness and made a gold calf, judgment came upon them (Exod 32-34). Nevertheless, the Lord offered them mercy and forgiveness (Exod 34:6-7). Jonah 4:2 describes the Lord's mercy in similar terms.

2:14 Forgiveness is God's free choice. Even at this late date God may still give a blessing to the distraught people, based on their heartfelt response to God.

2:15-17 Everyone should participate in the special assembly. The altar for sacrifice is in the courtyard in front of the door to the temple. The priests stand between the altar and the temple when leading worship. See Joel 2:1.

2:16 Ps 19:5;  
 Il 1:14  
 2:17 Ps 79:10,  
 Ps 115:2;  
 Est 8:16  
 2:21 Ps 126:3;  
 Lu 54:4;  
 Zep 3:16,  
 Zep 3:17  
 2:22 Ps 65:12,  
 Il 1:18;  
 Zec 8:12  
 2:23 Lv 26:4,  
 Ps 149:2;  
 Hab 3:18;  
 Zec 10:1,  
 Zec 10:7  
 2:25 Il 1:4;  
 Am 4:9  
 2:26 Lu 62:9

- 16** Gather the people;  
 prepare a holy meeting; assemble the elders;  
 gather the children, even nursing infants.  
 Let the groom leave his room and the bride her chamber.  
**17** Between the porch and the altar let the priests, the LORD's ministers, weep.  
 Let them say, "Have mercy, LORD, on your people,  
 and don't make your inheritance a disgrace,  
 an example of failure among the nations.  
 Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

**Words of compassion and promise**

- 18** Then the LORD became passionate about this land,<sup>a</sup> and had pity on his people.  
**19** The LORD responded to the people:  
 See, I am sending you the corn, new wine, and fresh oil,  
 and you will be fully satisfied by it;  
 and I will no longer make you a disgrace among the nations.  
**20** I will remove the northern army far from you  
 and drive it into a dried-up and desolate land,  
 its front into the eastern sea,  
 and its rear into the western sea.  
 Its stench will rise up;  
 its stink will come to the surface.  
 The LORD is about to do great things!  
**21** Don't fear, fertile land;  
 rejoice and be glad, for the LORD is about to do great things!  
**22** Don't be afraid, animals of the field,  
 for the meadows of the wilderness will turn green;  
 the tree will bear its fruit; the fig tree and grapevine will give their full yield.  
**23** Children of Zion, rejoice and be glad in the LORD your God,  
 because he will give you the early rain as a sign of righteousness;  
 he will pour down abundant rain for you,  
 the early and the late rain, as before.<sup>b</sup>  
**24** The threshing floors will be full of grain;  
 the vats will overflow with new wine and fresh oil.  
**25** I will repay you for the years that the cutting locust, the swarming locust,  
 the hopping locust,  
 and the devouring locust have eaten—  
 my great army, which I sent against you.  
**26** You will eat abundantly and be satisfied,  
 and you will praise the name of the LORD your God,  
 who has done wonders for you;  
 and my people will never again be put to shame.

<sup>a</sup>Or then the LORD became jealous for his land <sup>b</sup>Or at the first

2:17 *inheritance*: Israel is God's family (Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1). As such, they're also God's inheritance (Deut 32:8-9).

2:18-27 *Forgiveness and restoration will come*. The locust plague will go away, the land will be fertile again, and God will bless the people.

2:19 *disgrace*: In Joel 2:17 the people cried out concerning their disgrace among the nations. The Lord will remove it from them and bring back the lost crops (Joel 1:9-13).

2:20 *northern army*: The locust army (see Joel 2:2, 23) will die.

2:21-22 *fertile land ... animals of the field*: On the Lord's behalf, the prophet speaks to the land and to the wild animals that inhabit it (see Joel 1:20). The land will be fruitful and support all who live on it.

2:23 *Children of Zion*: the people of Judah. Zion is another

name for Jerusalem. In the ancient world, cities and land were widely spoken of as female persons. Other biblical writers speak of Jerusalem or Zion as a mother with children (Isa 49:21-22; 50:4; Ps 87:5-6; Gal 4:26-27).

2:26-27 *shame*: or "disgrace" (Joel 2:17, 19). It is the people's condition when they fail the Lord. Here the Lord promises to remove their shame. *midst of Israel*: The temple in Jerusalem was the Lord's house, representing the divine presence in the midst of Israel. People went up to Jerusalem to worship and to meet the Lord. In Joel 2:27, Joel promises that the people will again know that the Lord is in their midst (see Zeph 3:17). This is an important theme in the prophetic books. After judgment the land of Israel will be restored, and the people will know that the Lord is with them.



2:28 Is 32:15,  
Is 44:3;  
Eze 39:29;  
Zec 12:10;  
Ac 2:17  
2:29 1Co 12:13;  
Ga 3:28  
2:30 Mt 24:29;  
Mk 13:24;  
Lk 21:11,  
Lk 21:25;  
Ac 2:19  
2:31 Is 13:10;  
Jl 2:10; Mal 4:1;  
Mt 24:29;  
Rev 6:12  
2:32 Is 46:13;  
Obad 1:17;  
Mi 4:7; Ro 9:27;  
Ro 10:13  
3:1 Jer 16:15,  
Jer 30:3;  
Am 9:14  
3:2 Jl 3:12,  
Jl 3:14; Zep 3:8;  
Zec 14:2  
3:9 Is 6:9;  
Jer 46:4

<sup>27</sup>You will know that I am in the midst of Israel,  
and that I am the LORD your God—no other exists;  
never again will my people be put to shame.

<sup>28</sup>After that I will pour out my spirit upon everyone;  
your sons and your daughters will prophesy,  
your old men will dream dreams,  
and your young men will see visions.

<sup>29</sup>In those days, I will also pour out my spirit on the male and female slaves.

<sup>30</sup>I will give signs in the heavens and on the earth—blood and fire and columns of smoke.  
<sup>31</sup>The sun will be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood before the great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. <sup>32</sup>But everyone who calls on the LORD’s name will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be security, as the LORD has promised; and in Jerusalem, the LORD will summon those who survive.

**Judgment on the nations**

**3** Truly, in those days and in that time, I will bring back to Judah and Jerusalem those who were sent away. <sup>2</sup>I will gather all the nations, and I will bring them to the Jehoshaphat Valley. There I will enter into judgment with them in support of my people and my possession, Israel, which they have scattered among the nations. They have divided my land, <sup>3</sup>and have cast lots for my people. They have traded boys for prostitutes, and sold girls for wine, which they drank down. <sup>4</sup>What are you to me, Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, then in a flash I will turn your deeds back upon your own heads. <sup>5</sup>You have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried my rich treasures into your temples. <sup>6</sup>You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, removing them far from their own border. <sup>7</sup>But now I am calling them from the places where you have sold them, and I will repay you for your deeds. <sup>8</sup>I will sell your sons and your daughters as a possession of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabaeans, to a nation far away; for the LORD has spoken.

**Declaration of war**

<sup>9</sup>Announce this among the nations:  
Prepare a holy war, wake up the warriors;  
let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up!

2:28-32 The reversal of Israel’s shame will lead to even greater things. On a decisive day the Lord’s spirit will be on young and old alike, and everyone can have the role of prophet. There will be signs in the heavens, and people will call on the name of the Lord. This passage is quoted in Acts 2:17-21 to interpret the events of Pentecost Day.

2:28-29 *my spirit*: In the future God’s presence is poured out on all the people. In the beginning God’s spirit moved over creation (Gen 1:2). The spirit spoke to and through prophets (Isa 42:1; 61:1-4; Ezek 2:1-2; 37:1), giving them inspiration and guidance. Eventually men and women, young and old, slave and free, will have this experience.

2:30-31 *great and dreadful day*: Joel refers elsewhere to decisive events as happening on the day of the Lord (Joel 1:15). Not only will people prophesy and have dreams, the heavens and earth will show signs that point to judgment and deliverance to come.

2:32 *the LORD’s name*: A person’s name in Hebrew culture stands for his or her identity. So it is with God’s name. The psalmist celebrates that help comes in the “name of the LORD” (Ps 124:8) and that one can “call on the LORD’s name” for deliverance and by giving thanks (Ps 116:4, 13). On the day to come people will call on the Lord’s name for salvation. The Lord will deliver those in Jerusalem and on Mount Zion, the hill in Jerusalem where the temple is located.

3:1-8 God’s future deliverance of Judah and Jerusalem

also brings judgment on neighboring states and peoples. They are judged for scattering Israel among the nations and for selling them as slaves.

3:2 *Jehoshaphat*: means “the LORD judges.” Jehoshaphat Valley may have been the name of one of the valleys or open areas around Jerusalem, or a symbolic name for such an area. Joel mentions it again in Joel 3:12 and also a “valley of judgment” in Joel 3:14, which is probably the same place. Jewish and Christian traditions have identified the valley directly east of the Jerusalem temple mount with Jehoshaphat Valley. This is the Kidron Valley of the NT.

3:4 *Tyre, Sidon, Philistia*: The people of these communities on or near the Mediterranean coast were traders over land and sea. They were involved in selling Israelites into slavery. See Amos 1:6-10. *deeds back upon your own heads*: The evil done to God’s people will come back in kind upon those who did it. Note also the promise in Joel 3:7 that God will repay evil deeds.

3:8 *Sabaeans*: an Arab tribal group involved in long-distance trade, whose homeland was located in southern Arabia (modern Yemen) according to ancient Near Eastern sources. The queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:1-10) was from this region.

3:9-15 These verses follow up the judgment previously described for the day of the Lord. The prophet announces that judgment is coming on evildoers and that it will take place in Jerusalem.

3:9 *holy war*: Bringing evildoers to justice is God’s work.

3:10 Is 2:4;  
Is 18:5; Mi 4:3;  
Zec 12:8

3:11 Is 13:3;  
Eze 38:15

3:12 Ps 96:13;  
Ps 98:9; Is 2:4;  
Is 3:13; Il 3:2

3:13 Is 63:3;  
Jer 51:33;  
Hos 6:11;  
Mt 13:39;  
Rev 14:15

3:14 Is 34:2;  
Il 1:15; Il 2:1;  
Il 3:2

3:15 Is 13:10;  
Eze 32:7; Il 2:10;  
Il 2:31;  
Mt 24:29

3:16 Ps 46:1;  
Jer 25:30;  
Eze 38:19;  
Hos 11:10;  
Am 1:2

3:18 Is 30:25;  
Eze 47:1;  
Am 9:13;  
Rev 22:1

- 10** Beat the iron tips of your plows into swords  
and your pruning tools into spears;  
let the weakling say, "I am mighty."  
**11** Come quickly, all you surrounding nations;  
gather yourselves there;  
bring your mighty ones, LORD.  
**12** Let the nations prepare themselves, and come up to the Jehoshaphat Valley;  
for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.  
**13** Cut with the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.  
Go and crush grapes, for the winepress is full.  
The jars overflow with wine, for their wickedness is great.  
**14** Crowd after crowd fills the valley of judgment,  
for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of judgment.  
**15** The sun and the moon are darkened;  
the stars have ceased shining.

### Salvation for God's people

- 16** The LORD roars from Zion,  
and utters his voice from Jerusalem;  
the heavens and the earth quake.  
But the LORD is a refuge for his people,  
a shelter for the people of Israel.  
**17** So you will know that I am the LORD your God,  
settle down in Zion, my holy mountain.  
Jerusalem will be holy, and never again will strangers pass through it.  
**18** In that day  
the mountains will drip sweet wine,  
the hills will flow with milk,  
and all the streambeds of Judah will flow with water;  
a spring will come forth from the LORD's house  
and water the Shittim Valley.  
**19** Egypt will become desolate and Edom a desolate wilderness.  
This is because of the violence done to the people of Judah,  
in whose land they have shed innocent blood.  
**20** But Judah will be inhabited forever,  
and Jerusalem for all generations.  
**21** I will forgive their bloodguilt,  
which I had not forgiven.  
I will act on their account;  
I will not pardon the guilty.

The LORD dwells in Zion.

**3:10** *plows... spears*: Iron tools were valuable possessions in the ancient Near East. Some farmers didn't have iron weapons in addition to their tools. They went to a metalworker to heat their plows and hooks to reshape them for weapons (1 Sam 13:19-22). One did this only in exceptional circumstances. When Isaiah and Micah predict the end of human warfare, they speak of nations coming to Jerusalem for divine instruction and then beating their swords and spears into plows and pruning tools (Isa 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-4).

**3:11-15** The nations will gather for judgment in Jerusalem. The exercise of judgment is like that of harvesting crops.

**3:16-21** The Lord will finish the time of judgment in Jerusalem (Zion) and then will provide peace and blessing for Israel.

**3:16** Biblical writers occasionally refer to the Lord as a lion. Both Joel and Amos (Amos 1:2) have the Lord *roaring* from Zion. *refuge*: Psalms often refer to the Lord as the refuge of people (Pss 5:11; 14:6). The fortifications of Jerusalem reinforced this image for God (Pss 28:8; 31:2, 4; 48:9-14; 125:1-5).

**3:18-21** Joel mixes a poetic description of blessedness for Israel and Jerusalem with prophecies that God will judge Egypt and Edom for their oppression. Other prophets single out Edom for its particularly harsh treatment of God's people (Obad; Mal 1:2-5). Amos 9:13-15 predicts future blessings similar to those in Joel's conclusion. Zechariah (Zech 13:1; 14:8) and Ezekiel (Ezek 47:1-12) join Joel with prophecies of new water sources in a future Jerusalem.

# AMOS

The book of Amos is the third book of the Minor Prophets, which are also called the Book of the Twelve. Its sayings and prophecies are attributed to a shepherd who lived in the middle of the 8th century BCE. The book includes poetry and a little prose, and reflects an oral style of public presentation. Readers are asked to “hear” a word (Amos 3:1; 4:1; 5:1) spoken earlier and then written by Amos or one of his followers.

The heading to the book places Amos’ work during the reigns of King Uzziah in Judah and King Jeroboam II in Israel. Both ruled for decades in the first half of the 8th century BCE. Samaria was Israel’s capital, and Jerusalem (Zion) was Judah’s. The Assyrian threat, which had been around for 100 years, was at a low point. Jeroboam’s reign was largely peaceful, but changes came soon after his death. The Assyrian threat surfaced in the second half of the century, leading to the loss of territory and eventually the fall of Israel and Samaria in 722 BCE. In various ways Assyria also took control of other states in the eastern Mediterranean,

including Judah. One of the military strategies for defeating populations was forced resettlement in a foreign country. Amos refers many times to judgment in the form of removal from the land or forced resettlement. The accounts of Israel’s history in 2 Kings 15–17 tell how the Assyrians came through the land, destroying some cities and forcing people to leave their land and homes. Archaeologists have discovered portions of Assyrian records from the same time period that describe campaigns in the region. Amos says the coming threat to Israel and the region is God’s work.

There are references in the book to events that happened after the death of Jeroboam (see notes on Amos 5:15 and 6:2). And the whole tone of the book says that judgment is coming soon or has already begun. So the date given at the beginning of the book could be when Amos started his prophetic activity, but some of the prophecies in the book must have come later. His followers wrote down his prophecies in a book to explain that God had



Cows of Bashan with Mount Hermon (Amos 4:1)  
Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

used the Assyrian onslaught to judge Israel and Judah. With the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians, Amos' followers hoped that readers would learn from this disaster and renew their relationship with God.

The basic message is that Israel (the northern kingdom) will come to an end as a nation, even though it has had a favored place in God's plan (Amos 3:1-2; 8:1-3). Amos was a stern advocate for justice and righteousness (Amos 5:24), but he found Israel full of injustice and oppression (Amos 2:6-8; 5:10-13; 8:4-6). He charged the people with hypocritical worship (Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-23) and idolatry (Amos 5:27; 5:26; 8:14). To Israel he says: "Prepare to meet your God!" (Amos 4:12). Amos means that Israel is about to encounter God through a coming act of judgment upon the nation. Although he doesn't say specifically through whom the judgment would come, it was the Assyrians, a people from northern Mesopotamia (today the northern part of Iraq). Judgment is also announced upon several of Israel's neighbors, because God is the moral judge of all history (Amos 1:3-2:5). There are repeated references to peoples and city populations being forced

to leave their homes and land (Amos 1:5, 15; 4:1-3; 5:3-5; 7:17). The judgment language against Israel is so strong that some interpreters think that the brief prophecies about Israel's restoration (Amos 9:11-15) come from an editor who wanted to provide hope for later readers. Amos follows a pattern seen with other prophetic books. Although the dominant tone is that of judgment, it concludes with prophecies of hope and restoration.

Amos was from Tekoa (Amos 1:1). There is a Tekoa south of Bethlehem, which is in Judah, but some interpreters have suggested that Amos' home was a village of the same name in the Galilee region of Israel. Perhaps the priest who urges Amos to leave Israel and go to the land of Judah (Amos 7:12) knew his origins. The location of Tekoa is important for understanding Amos' background. If Amos is from Judah, then the judgment language against Israel and the references to Jerusalem (Amos 1:2) and the rebuilding of David's tent (Amos 9:11) would reflect his heritage over against that of the separate nation of Israel. In any case, the book also contains judgment against Judah (Amos 2:4-5) and Zion (Amos 6:1).

### **I. Heading (1:1)**

### **II. Prophecies Against Nations (1:2-2:16)**

- A. Damascus (1:3-5)
- B. Gaza and the Philistines (1:6-8)
- C. Tyre (1:9-10)
- D. Edom (1:11-12)
- E. Ammon (1:13-15)
- F. Moab (2:1-3)
- G. Judah (2:4-5)
- H. Israel (2:6-16)

### **III. Prophecies against Israel (3:1-6:14)**

- A. Chosen family and judgment (3:1-15)
- B. Against the elites and their supporters (4:1-13)!
- C. A funeral and its message (5:1-27)
- D. Against the self-satisfied in Zion and Samaria (6:1-14)

### **IV. Visions about Israel and Amos' Encounter with Amaziah (7:1-9:10)**

- A. Locusts, fire, and a plumb line (7:1-9)
- B. Rejection by Amaziah and Jeroboam (7:10-17)
- C. Fruit and judgment on oppressors (8:1-14)
- D. Shake the foundations and the people (9:1-10)

### **V. Restoration in the Future (9:11-15)**

1:1 2Kings 14:23;  
 2Ch 26:1;  
 Hos 1:1;  
 Am 7:14;  
 Zec 14:5  
 1:2 Jer 12:4;  
 Jl 3:16  
 1:3 Is 64,  
 Is 17:1;  
 Jer 49:23;  
 Am 2:6; Zec 9:1

**Introduction**

1 These are the words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa. He perceived these things concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, in the days of Judah's King Uzziah and in the days of Israel's King Jeroboam, Joash's son.

**Proclamation of divine judgment**

2 He said:  
 The LORD roars from Zion.  
 He shouts from Jerusalem;  
 the pastures of the shepherds wither,  
 and the top of Carmel dries up.

**A word to Damascus**

3 The LORD proclaims:  
 For three crimes of Damascus,  
 and for four, I won't hold back the punishment,  
 because they have harvested Gilead with sharp iron tools.  
 4 I will send down fire on the house of Hazael;  
 it will devour the palaces of Ben-hadad.  
 5 I will break the fortified gates of Damascus,  
 and eliminate the people from the Aven Valley,  
 including the one who rules from Beth-eden;  
 the people of Aram will be forced to live in Kir, says the LORD.

**A word to Gaza and Ashdod**

6 The LORD proclaims:  
 For three crimes of Gaza,  
 and for four, I won't hold back the punishment,  
 because they rounded up entire communities, to hand them over to Edom.  
 7 I will send down a fire on the wall of Gaza;  
 it will devour Gaza's palaces.  
 8 I will eliminate the people from Ashdod,  
 the one who rules from Ashkelon.  
 I will turn my hand against Ekron,  
 and the Philistines who remain will perish, says the LORD God.

**A word to Tyre**

9 The LORD proclaims:  
 For three crimes of Tyre,  
 and for four, I won't hold back the punishment,  
 because they have delivered up entire communities over to Edom,  
 and neglected their covenantal obligations.

1:1 This heading functions like a modern book's title page, introducing the prophet and his context to later readers. The only other biographical data for Amos comes in Amos 7:12-15. Note the prophecy against Jeroboam II in Amos 7:9. *earthquake*: The Jordan Valley is a part of a fault line that produces periodic tremors.

1:2 *Zion*: another name for Jerusalem, Judah's capital. The temple built by Solomon was there and the Lord's presence is associated with it (1 Kgs 8:12-21).

1:3-2:16 Prophecies of judgment against eight city-states or nations. Some think that the list is arranged geographically, and others think it reflects the nations' relationship to Israel. (See map 9.)

1:3 *three crimes... and for four*: a poetic way to say that time is up and consequences for these crimes will begin. In North American societies, someone might say "Three strikes and you are out," using baseball as an analogy for activities that have come to an end.

1:3-5 *Damascus*: The people of Aram, sometimes called Arameans or Syrians, lived north and east of Israel. Damascus was a major city in the region. For Hazael, see 2 Kings 8:7-29; 12:17-13:25. *Ben-hadad*: "Hadad's son." Hadad was a chief Aramean deity, and Ben-hadad was the name of more than one Aramean king, including the son of Hazael. *Beth-eden*: a tribal area north of Damascus.

1:6-8 *Gaza*: The Philistines lived in the cities of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron. See note on Amos 9:7. Gaza was an international trading center where the Philistines were involved in forced settlement and selling people to Edom. Ancient Gaza's ruins are a part of the modern Gaza Strip territory between Egypt and Israel.

1:9-10 *Tyre*: a Phoenician city-state on the Mediterranean coast to the north of Israel and a center for international trade. Its ruins are part of modern Tyre on the Lebanese coast. The city had a long history with Israel and Judah.

1:12 Gn 36:11;  
Is 63:1;  
Jer 49:7;  
Eze 25:13;  
Obad 1:9

1:13 Jer 49:1;  
Eze 21:28;  
Hos 13:16;  
Zep 2:8

<sup>10</sup>So I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre;  
it will devour their palaces.

#### **A word to Edom**

<sup>11</sup>The LORD proclaims:  
For three crimes of Edom,  
and for four, I won't hold back the punishment,  
because he chased after his brother with the sword,  
denied all compassion, kept his anger alive, and fueled his wrath forever.

<sup>12</sup>So I will send a fire on Teman;  
it will devour the fortresses of Bozrah.

#### **A word to Ammon**

<sup>13</sup>The LORD proclaims:  
For three crimes of the Ammonites,  
and for four, I won't hold back the punishment,  
because they have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead  
in order to possess more land.

<sup>14</sup>So I will start a fire at the wall of Rabbah;  
the fire will devour its palaces,  
with a war cry on the day of battle,  
with strong wind on the day of the storm.

<sup>15</sup>Then their king will be taken away,  
he and his officials together, says the LORD.

#### **A word to Moab**

**2** The LORD proclaims:  
For three crimes of Moab,  
and for four, I won't hold back the punishment,  
because he burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom.

<sup>2</sup>So I will send down a fire on Moab;  
it will devour the palaces of Kerioth.  
Moab will die in a great uproar,  
with a war cry, with the sound of the ram's horn.

<sup>3</sup>I will remove their judge from them  
and slay all their officials with him, says the LORD.

#### **A word to Judah**

<sup>4</sup>The LORD proclaims:  
For three crimes of Judah,  
and for four, I won't hold back the punishment,  
because they have rejected the Instruction of the LORD,  
and haven't kept his laws.  
They have been led off the right path by the same lies  
after which their ancestors walked.

<sup>5</sup>So I will send a fire on Judah,  
and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

Tyre's leaders violated solemn obligations and, as did the Philistines, sold people to Edom.

1:11-12 *Edom*: According to Genesis 36:1-43, the descendants of Esau lived in the region of Edom, south and east of the Dead Sea. They treated Israel and Judah harshly, though they were related. Other prophets note Edom's hostility (Obad; Joel 3:19).

1:13-15 *Ammonites*: Ammon is the region northeast of the Dead Sea. According to Genesis 19:30-38, the Ammonites and their southern neighbors, the Moabites, are descended from Lot, Abraham's nephew. *Rabbah*: means

"large or significant one," and refers to Ammon's capital city. Its ruins are located in modern Amman, Jordan, which takes its name from biblical Ammon.

2:1-3 *Moab*: See preceding note. It isn't clear what the crime was, but it may refer to desecration of a corpse.

2:4-5 *Judah*: It was likely Amos' home. In his day, Judah (the southern kingdom) was a separate state from Israel (the northern kingdom). Jerusalem was the capital. Judah's rejection of the Lord's Instruction is a different type of failure from those named previously. The punishment listed, however, is like that announced for the other peoples and states.

2:6 J1 3:3;  
Am 5:11, Am 8:6  
2:7 Am 5:12,  
Am 8:4  
2:8 Ex 22:26;  
Am 6:6  
2:11 Nm 6:2;  
Jgs 13:5; Jer 7:25;  
Lam 4:7  
2:12 Is 30:10;  
Jer 11:21;  
Am 7:13,  
Am 7:16; Mi 2:6  
3:1 Am 2:10  
3:2 Dt 7:6;  
Lk 12:47  
3:3 2Co 6:14

**A word to Israel**

- 6 The LORD proclaims:  
For three crimes of Israel,  
and for four, I won't hold back the punishment,  
because they have sold the innocent for silver,  
and those in need for a pair of sandals.
- 7 They crush the head of the poor into the dust of the earth,  
and push the afflicted out of the way.  
Father and son have intercourse with the same young woman,  
degrading my holy name.
- 8 They stretch out beside every altar on garments taken in loan;  
in the house of their god they drink wine bought with fines they imposed.
- 9 Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them,  
whose height was as tall as cedar trees,  
and whose strength was as strong as oak trees.  
I destroyed his fruit above and his roots below.
- 10 Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt,  
and led you forty years in the wilderness,  
to lay claim to the land of the Amorite.
- 11 I raised up some of your children to be prophets  
and some of your youth to be nazirites.  
Isn't this so, people of Israel? says the LORD.
- 12 But you made the nazirites drink wine,  
and commanded the prophets, saying, "You won't prophesy."
- 13 So now I will oppress you,  
just like a cart is weighed down<sup>a</sup> when it is full of harvested grain.
- 14 Fast runners will find no refuge;  
the strong will lose their strength;  
the mighty will be unable to save their lives.
- 15 Those who shoot the bow won't survive.  
Fast runners won't escape;  
those who ride horses won't save themselves.
- 16 The bravest warrior will flee away naked in that day, says the LORD.

**Words of doom for Israel**

- 3 Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought out of the land of Egypt:  
2 You only have I loved so deeply of all the families of the earth.  
Therefore, I will punish you for all your wrongdoing.  
3 Will two people walk together unless they have agreed to do so?<sup>b</sup>  
4 Does a lion roar in the forest when it has no prey?  
Does a young lion cry out from its den if it has caught nothing?  
5 Will a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait for it?  
Will a trap spring up from the ground when it has taken nothing?

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Or Will two walk together unless they have agreed?

2:6-16 *Israel*: The longest of the initial prophecies against nations addresses Israel. Their failures are those of injustice and immorality (2:6-8), committed against their own people and against the guidance of the Lord, who brought them out of Egyptian slavery and into a promised land (2:9-11). The Lord also provided guidance for them through nazirites (those who made solemn religious promises, see Num 6:1-21) and prophets.  
3:1-6:14 Israel is dearly loved by the Lord but will be judged for its repeated failures.  
3:1-2 A central passage for understanding Amos. Israel

owes their existence to the Lord's choice to deliver them from Egypt (see Exod 1-15) and to enter into a covenant with them. That makes Israel different from all other nations, even though the whole earth belongs to the Lord (Exod 19:4-6). Israel will be punished precisely because they failed to respond appropriately to the Lord's loving attention.  
3:3-8 A series of rhetorical questions reminds hearers that events have causes. This leads also to the conclusion that the Lord is at work in the events of the day, including those that seem unpleasant.

3:6 Is 45:7

3:8 Jer 20:9;

Am 1:2;

Jon 1:1;

Jon 3:1;

Ac 4:20

3:12 1Sa 17:34;

Am 6:4

4:1 Ps 22:12;

Eze 39:18;

Am 2:8, Am 3:9;

Am 6:1

**6**If a ram's horn is blown in a city, won't people tremble?

If disaster falls on a city, is it the LORD who has done it?

**7**Surely the LORD God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.**8**A lion has roared; who will not fear?

The LORD God has spoken; who can but prophesy?

**9**Proclaim it to the palaces of Ashdod and to the palaces in the land of Egypt.

Say, "Gather yourselves on Mount Samaria, and see the great turmoil in the city, and what violent deeds are inside it."

**10**They don't know how to do right, says the LORD—those who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.**11**Therefore, the LORD my God proclaims:

An enemy will surround the land; he will bring you down from your protected places, and your palaces will be robbed.

**12**The LORD proclaims:Just as the shepherd rescues two legs or the piece of an ear from the mouth of the lion, so will the people of Israel be rescued. Those who live in Samaria will escape with the corner of a bed, and those in Damascus with a piece of a couch.<sup>c</sup>**13**Hear this and speak against the house of Jacob, says the LORD God, the God of heavenly forces:**14**On the day I punish the crimes of Israel, I will also visit the altars of Bethel; the horns of the altar will be cut off and will fall to the ground.**15**I will tear down the winter house as well as the summer house; the houses of ivory will perish; the great houses will be swept away, says the LORD.

### Judgment on Israel's elite

**4**Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on Mount Samaria, who cheat the weak,<sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

**3:6** *ram's horn*: When blown in public, this instrument called *horn* to attention and was an alarm (see Joel 2:1). *If disaster falls on a city*: The rhetorical question assumes that Amos' hearers would agree that the disaster came as judgment from the Lord.

**3:7** *his servants the prophets*: God reveals God's will and purpose to the prophets who are then called to proclaim it. The fact that Amos' prophecies are now compiled in a book also means that Amos is one of the Lord's prophetic servants. In this sense Amos is a prophet, even though he denies being part of a professional guild of prophets (see Amos 7:14-15).

**3:8** *lion has roared*: A lion's roar produces fear and self-awareness. The proper prophetic response to hearing the Lord's words is to tell them to the people, even if they cause an alarm. Note the reference to the Lord's roaring at the beginning of the book (Amos 1:2).

**3:9-15** A series of short prophecies against Samaria, the capital city of Israel, and Bethel, where a prominent temple was located (see Gen 28:10-22; 1 Kgs 12:28-33). Two traditional rivals of Israel, Ashdod (Philistines) and Egypt, are called to see the turmoil and violence in Samaria. The

suggestion is that the violence in Samaria is so great that even the Egyptians and the Philistines would be surprised to see it. Samaria's inhabitants were the political and economic leaders of Israel. *store up violence and robbery*: a way of saying they have gotten their wealth and power unjustly. In the future they will escape with very little (see Amos 6:8).

**3:13** *house of Jacob*: Israel.

**3:14** *horns of the altar*: Stone altars from this period often had carved raised corners known as "horns." Bethel's altars will be useless in the coming destruction. People seeking protection and begging for their lives would seize the horns of an altar (e.g., 1 Kgs 1:50-51).

**3:15** *houses of ivory*: Archaeological finds confirm the trade of carved ivory goods and furniture inlaid with ivory during the 8th century BCE. Some carved ivory figures were discovered in the ruins of Samaria, dating from the Israelite period. Amos saw the ivory furniture and carvings as evidence for an unhealthy disparity between rich and poor in Israel.

**4:1-3** Amos sarcastically announces Samaria's judgment. The wives of the capital's elite are called *cows* because



4:5 Lv 7:13,  
Lv 22:18;  
Hos 9:10  
4:7 Ex 9:26;  
Dt 11:17;  
2Ch 7:13; Jer 3:3  
4:9 Dt 28:22;  
Jl 1:4, Jl 2:25;  
Hg 2:17  
4:11 Gn 19:24;  
Is 13:19; Zec 3:2

who crush the needy,  
who say to their husbands, "Bring drinks, so we can get drunk!"

- <sup>2</sup>The LORD God has solemnly promised by his holiness:  
The days are surely coming upon you,  
when they will take you away with hooks,  
even the last one of you with fishhooks.  
<sup>3</sup>You will go out through the broken wall, each one after another;  
and you will be flung out into Harmon, says the LORD.

**A divine taunt**

- <sup>4</sup>Come to Bethel—and commit a crime;  
multiply crimes at Gilgal.  
Bring your sacrifices every morning,  
your tenth-part gifts every three days.  
<sup>5</sup>Offer a thanksgiving sacrifice of leavened bread,  
and publicize your gifts to the LORD;  
for so you love to do, people of Israel! says the LORD God.

**Israel's stubbornness**

- <sup>6</sup>I have sent a famine in all your cities,  
and not provided enough bread in all your places,  
yet you didn't return to me, says the LORD.  
<sup>7</sup>I also withheld rain from you  
when there were still three months to the harvest.  
I allowed no rain to fall on one city, no rain to fall on another city.  
One field was rained on,  
and the field dried up where it didn't rain.  
<sup>8</sup>So two or three thirsty towns went to one city to drink water,  
and weren't satisfied;  
yet you didn't return to me, says the LORD.  
<sup>9</sup>I struck you with disease and mildew.  
I destroyed your gardens and your vineyards.  
The locust devoured your fig trees and your olive trees;  
yet you didn't return to me, says the LORD.  
<sup>10</sup>I sent a plague against you like the one in Egypt.  
I killed your young men with the sword.  
I carried away your horses.  
I made the stink of your camp go up into your nostrils;  
yet you didn't return to me, says the LORD.  
<sup>11</sup>I destroyed some of you,  
as when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.  
You were like a burning coal plucked out of the fire;  
yet you didn't return to me, says the LORD.

they are well fed and consume many resources. The hilly region of Bashan received enough rain in most years to support well-fed cattle.

4:3 *Harmon*: The word is obscure. Here it seems to refer either to a place or condition of judgment.

4:4-5 Amos' sarcasm continues. He plays on the priestly call to come and worship the Lord at places like Bethel and Gilgal (in the Jordan Valley). Amos isn't opposed to the worship itself, which seems frequent, but to the lack of what is "right" (see Amos 3:10) in the people's daily lives. The people shouldn't think that attending temple services, while engaging in immoral and unjust activities, was pleasing to God. Amos taunts them for misplaced love.

Rather than assuring them that God accepts their offerings, Amos charges them with crimes. Note the three categories of offerings: sacrifices, tenth-part gifts, and general gifts. These are a good summary of the things brought to a temple as part of worship.

4:6-13 Israel stubbornly rejects all correction from the Lord. This list of warnings is similar to the series of prophecies against nations in Amos 1:3-2:5, the questions in Amos 3:3-8, and the series of visions in Amos 7-9, all intended to lead the hearers to return to the Lord.

4:11 *Sodom and Gomorrah*: a well-known story of divine judgment on wickedness (Gen 19:1-29; Deut 29:23; Hos 11:8; Ezek 16:44-58).

4:12 1Ki 8:33;  
2Ch 30:6; Ia 31:6;  
Jer 3:12, Jer 4:1  
4:13 Ps 65:6;  
Jer 10:13;  
Am 5:8, Am 9:6;  
Mi 1:3

5:1 Jer 7:29;  
Eze 19:1, Am 3:1

5:2 Jer 14:17,  
Jer 50:32;  
Am 8:14

5:4 Dt 4:29;  
Is 55:6; Jer 29:13;  
Zep 2:3

5:6 Am 5:4

5:8 Job 9:9,  
Job 38:31;  
Ps 104:6;  
Am 4:13, Am 9:6

<sup>12</sup> Truly, Israel,  
I will act in this way toward you;  
therefore, I will do this to you.  
Prepare to meet your God, Israel!

<sup>13</sup> The one who forms the mountains, creates the wind,  
makes known his thoughts to humankind,  
makes the morning darkness,  
and moves over the heights of the earth—  
the LORD, the God of heavenly forces is his name!

### *A song of lament*

**5** Hear this word—a funeral song—that I am lifting up against you, house of Israel:

<sup>2</sup> Fallen, no more to rise, is virgin Israel,  
deserted on her land, with no one to raise her up.

<sup>3</sup> The LORD God proclaims:  
The city that marched out one thousand people will have one hundred left,  
and the city that marched out one hundred  
will have ten left in the house of Israel.

### *Words of encouragement*

<sup>4</sup> The LORD proclaims to the house of Israel:  
Seek me and live.

<sup>5</sup> But don't seek Bethel,  
don't enter into Gilgal,  
or cross over to Beer-sheba;  
for Gilgal will go into exile,  
and Bethel will come to nothing.

<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD and live,  
or else God might rush like a fire against the house of Joseph.  
The fire will burn up Bethel, with no one to put it out.

### *Words of doom*

<sup>7</sup> Doom to you who turn justice into poison,  
and throw righteousness to the ground!

<sup>8</sup> The one who made the Pleiades and Orion,  
and turns deep darkness into the morning,  
and darkens the day into night;  
who summons the waters of the sea,  
and pours them out on the surface of the earth—  
this one's name is the LORD—

<sup>9</sup> who causes destruction to flash out against the strong,  
so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

4:13 This verse is a burst of praise, identifying the Lord as God of creation and history. It may have come from an Israelite hymn. Here it confirms that the Lord of all will act on God's prophetic word.

5:1-27 Amos 5 combines words of encouragement with more judgment. This and Amos 9 offer encouragement for Israel.

5:1-3 *funeral song*: The prophet uses the poetry of a funeral song to say that the house of Israel is dead and come to an end. *virgin Israel* refers to the nation as a whole or to the capital city of Samaria as a representative of the nation. A funeral for an unmarried woman would be especially poignant, since in Hebrew culture she didn't marry and produce children for the ongoing life of the community.

5:4-6 *Seek the Lord and live*: an alternative to the judgment.

To "seek the Lord" means to commit oneself wholeheartedly to live in accordance with the Lord's revealed will (see 2 Chron 11:16; 19:13; Ezra 8:22; Isa 55:6). The phrase often appears in the Psalms (Pss 24:6; 34:10; 63:1; 70:4; 105:4): Simply going to worship at a shrine at Bethel, Gilgal, or Beer-sheba (south of Jerusalem) is inadequate. Amos criticizes here and elsewhere the false confidence that worship centers have given Israel (see Amos 4:4-5; 8:14).

5:7-13 The Lord is the creator of the world and judges in-justice wherever it is found. The *you* of Amos 5:7, 11-12, addresses those with power and influence, including the power to collect taxes (see also Amos 3:9-11). According to the psalmist, justice and righteousness are the foundations of God's rule, and fire goes before him against enemies (Ps 97:1-5). This is also Amos' view (see Amos 5:24):

5:10 1Ki 22:8;  
Is 29:21  
5:11 Dt 28:30,  
Dt 28:39;  
Am 3:15;  
Mi 6:15;  
Zep 1:13  
5:12 Ps 26:10;  
Is 1:23, Is 5:23;  
Am 2:6  
5:13 Ecc 3:7;  
Mi 2:3  
5:16 Jer 9:17,  
Jer 9:18, Jl 1:11  
5:18 Is 5:19;  
Jl 1:15, Jl 2:1,  
Jl 2:2  
5:19 Job 20:24;  
Ecc 10:8;  
Is 24:17, Is 24:18;  
Jer 48:44  
5:21 Lv 26:31;  
Is 1:11, Is 1:14,  
Is 66:3; Jer 6:20

- 10 They hate the one who judges at the city gate,  
and they reject the one who speaks the truth.
- 11 Truly, because you crush the weak, and because you tax their grain,  
you have built houses of carved stone, but you won't live in them;  
you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you won't drink their wine.
- 12 I know how many are your crimes,  
and how numerous are your sins—  
afflicting the righteous,  
taking money on the side,  
turning away the poor who seek help.
- 13 Therefore, the one who is wise will keep silent in that time;  
it is an evil time.

**Words of inspiration**

- 14 Seek good and not evil, that you may live;  
and so the LORD, the God of heavenly forces,  
will be with you just as you have said.
- 15 Hate evil, love good, and establish justice at the city gate.  
Perhaps the LORD God of heavenly forces  
will be gracious to what is left of Joseph.

**Divine wrath anticipated**

- 16 Truly, the LORD proclaims, the God of heavenly forces, the Lord:  
Crying will be heard in all the squares.  
In all the streets they will say, "Oh no! Oh no!"  
They will call upon the farmers to wail,  
and those skilled in mourning to lament.
- 17 In all the vineyards there will be bitter crying because  
I will pass through your midst, says the LORD.

**A statement of divine disgust**

- 18 Doom to those who desire the day of the LORD!  
Why do you want the day of the LORD?  
It is darkness, not light;
- 19 as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear;  
or sought refuge in a house, rested a hand against the wall,  
and was bitten by a snake.
- 20 Isn't the day of the LORD darkness, not light;  
all dark with no brightness in it?
- 21 I hate, I reject your festivals;  
I don't enjoy your joyous assemblies.
- 22 If you bring me your entirely burned offerings and gifts of food—  
I won't be pleased;  
I won't even look at your offerings of well-fed animals.

By their disobedience, Israel's leadership and institutions have become God's enemies.

5:10 *gate*: Much business was done in the gate of walled cities. It was a place of meeting (see Ruth 4:1-12) as people went in and out of the city during daylight hours.

5:14-15 Once more (see Amos 5:4-6) the prophet notes the alternative to destruction. Israel must come to its senses. To seek the Lord also means to seek what is good for the nation's life and health and to reject what is evil.

5:15 *what is left of Joseph*: The reference to the people's ancestor reminds them of their heritage, even as it reflects the reality that portions of the nation are already gone (see Amos 6:6). The Assyrians pressed hard on Israel in the years 740-732 BCE, eventually taking two-thirds of the

country and making Assyrian provinces out of the land and its inhabitants. See 2 Kings 15:17-31.

5:16 *those skilled in mourning*: This phrase picks up the theme of the funeral in Amos 5:1-3.

5:17 *I will pass through your midst*: Exodus 12:12 has a parallel, where the Lord declares that "I'll pass through" the land of Egypt in judgment.

5:18-20 The day of the Lord's judgment is at hand. Other prophets use the term *day of the Lord* to refer to decisive events in the future (Isa 2:12; Ezek 13:5; Joel 1:15; Obad 15; Zeph 1:14). Such a day is coming soon for Israel, and it will not result in deliverance.

5:21-27 God is disgusted by insincere worship. Note also the sarcasm in Amos 4:4-5. This criticism of worship

5:23 Is 5:12,  
Is 14:11; Am 6:5  
5:25 Dt 32:17;  
Ac 7:42; Ac 7:43  
5:26 Ac 7:43  
5:27 Am 4:13

6:1 Is 32:9;  
Am 4:1;  
Zep 1:12;  
Lk 6:24

6:2 Gn 10:10;  
2Ki 18:34;  
2Ch 26:6; Is 10:9;  
Na 3:8

6:3 Is 56:12;  
Eze 12:27;  
Am 9:10

6:4 Est 1:6;  
Am 3:12

6:5 1Ch 15:16,  
1Ch 23:5; Is 5:12;  
Am 5:23

6:6 Am 2:8  
6:7 Am 7:11

**23** Take away the noise of your songs;  
I won't listen to the melody of your harps.

**24** But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

**25** Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings  
during the forty years in the wilderness, house of Israel?

**26** You will take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god,  
your images, which you made for yourselves.

**27** Therefore, I will take you away beyond Damascus, says the LORD,  
whose name is the God of heavenly forces.

### Warnings to the self-satisfied

**6** Doom to those resting comfortably in Zion  
and those trusting in Mount Samaria,  
the chiefs of the nations, to whom the house of Israel comes!

**2** Cross over to Calneh and see;  
from there go to Hamath the great;  
then go down to Gath of the Philistines.

Are you better than these kingdoms?  
Or is your territory greater than their territory?

**3** Doom to those who ignore the evil day  
and make violent rule draw near:

**4** who lie on beds of ivory,  
stretch out on their couches,  
eat lambs from the flock,  
and bull calves from the stall;

**5** who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,  
and, like David, compose tunes on musical instruments;

**6** who drink bowls of wine,  
put the best of oils on themselves,  
but who aren't grieved over the ruin of Joseph!

**7** Therefore, they will now be the first to be taken away,  
and the feast of those who lounged at the table will pass away.

**8** The LORD God has solemnly sworn,  
says the LORD, the God of heavenly forces:

I reject the pride of Jacob.  
I hate his fortresses.  
I will hand over the city and all that is in it.

doesn't say that God finds worship to be irrelevant or unimportant. God rejects public worship when public life is full of injustice and unrighteousness. This is a common theme in the Prophets (Isa 1:10-17; Jer 7:1-26; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8; see 1 Sam 15:22).

5:24 This is the positive form of Amos' critique of Israel.

5:25 Israel depended on the Lord after leaving Egypt and wandering in the wilderness and didn't have the same kind of worship as in sedentary life (see also Jer 7:22-23).

5:26 *Sakkuth, Kaiwan*: Some Israelites made images of gods for themselves and worshipped them. Sakkuth and Kaiwan are associated with the Assyrians and worship of the stars.

5:27 *beyond Damascus*: The Assyrians took portions of the Israelite population and forced them to move to areas north and east of Israel (2 Kgs 15:29; 17:5-6).

6:1-14 The prophet resumes funeral language. Doom is coming for the self-satisfied in Zion (Jerusalem) and Samaria.

6:2 *Calneh* (the Calno of Isa 10:9) and Hamath were in Syria. Gath was a prominent Philistine city. Four other Philistine cities are mentioned for judgment in Amos 1:6-8. No doubt the misfortunes of these cities were well known to Israel. Calneh (about 740 BCE) and Hamath (720 BCE) were victims of the Assyrian army. Gath was conquered by Hazael in the last half of the 9th century BCE (2 Kgs 12:17) and later by the Assyrians (734 BCE). Zion and Samaria shouldn't think that their fate will be different from these cities.

6:3-7 See other references to ivory and a life of luxury in Amos 3:15. Judgment is coming.

6:3 *evil day*: This refers to a day or time of judgment. Perhaps it is shorthand for the day of the Lord mentioned in Amos 5:18.

6:5 *David*: King David played music to soothe King Saul (1 Sam 16:23) and composed songs (2 Sam 23:1).

6:8-14 The Lord makes a solemn pledge that Israel will suffer the consequences of its failures.

6:11 Is 55:11;  
Am 3:15  
6:12 Hos 10:4;  
Am 5:7  
6:13 Is 28:14,  
Is 28:15;  
Lk 12:19,  
Lk 12:20  
6:14 1Ki 8:65;  
2Ki 14:25;  
Jer 5:15  
7:1 Ps 129:7;  
Jl 1:4; Am 4:9,  
Am 8:1  
7:7 Zec 4:10

- <sup>9</sup>If ten people remain in one house, then they will die.  
<sup>10</sup>If a relative, someone who burns the dead,  
 picks up the body to bring it out of the house,  
 and says to someone inside the house,  
 "Is anyone else with you?" the answer will be, "No."  
 Then the relative will say,  
 "Hush! We mustn't mention the name of the LORD."  
<sup>11</sup>Look, the LORD is giving an order;  
 he will shatter the great house into bits  
 and the little house into pieces.  
<sup>12</sup>Do horses run on rocks?  
 Does one plow the sea with oxen?  
 But you have turned justice into poison  
 and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness—  
<sup>13</sup>you who rejoice in Lo-debar,  
 who say, "Haven't we by our own strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?"  
<sup>14</sup>Indeed, I will raise up against you a nation, house of Israel,  
 says the LORD God of heavenly forces,  
 and they will oppress you from Lebo-hamath to the desert ravine.

**A vision of locusts**

<sup>7</sup>This is what the LORD God showed me: The LORD God was forming locusts at the time the late grass began to sprout. (It was the late grass after the king's harvest.) <sup>2</sup>When they had finished eating the green plants of the land, I said,  
 "LORD God, please forgive! How can Jacob survive? He is so small!"  
<sup>3</sup>The LORD relented concerning this: "It won't take place," says the LORD.

**A vision of fire**

<sup>4</sup>This is what the LORD God showed me: The LORD God was calling for judgment with fire, and it devoured the great deep and was eating up part of the land. <sup>5</sup>Then I said,  
 "LORD God, I beg you, stop!  
 How can Jacob survive? He is so small!"  
<sup>6</sup>The LORD relented concerning this: "This also won't take place," says the LORD God.

**A vision of a plumb line**

<sup>7</sup>This is what the LORD showed me: The LORD was standing by a wall, with a plumb line in his hand. <sup>8</sup>The LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?"  
 "A plumb line," I said.  
 Then the LORD said,  
 "See, I am setting a plumb line in the middle of my people Israel.  
 I will never again forgive them.

6:10 *the name of the LORD*: Even the mention of the Lord's name in the house may provoke another round of judgment to fall on it.  
 6:12 The prophet uses questions with absurd conclusions to show Israel that its faithless life is absurd. No one would run a horse over rocks or plow water with oxen! Why would those in their right mind poison justice? See Amos 3:3-8.  
 6:13 *Lo-debar, Karnaim*: Amos makes a pun using two city names: Lo-debar means "no matter"; Karnaim means "horns." The two cities were located east of the Jordan River and were taken for Israel by Jeroboam II (2 Kgs 14:25). Israel rejoices in a town of no importance and boasts that it has seized a town with horns (see note on Amos 3:14). Thus Israel may boast in territory, but it is of little importance, and it won't save their lives.  
 6:14 *Lebo-hamath to the desert ravine*: from the north (Lebo-hamath) in Syria to the south of Israel and Judah. God will raise up a nation to oppress Israel completely from north to south.

7:1-9:10 This part of the book has five visions and judgment speeches, along with an account of Amos' encounter with a priest at Bethel.  
 7:1-9 *This... showed me*: three short visions, each beginning with the same phrase. With the third report, it's clear that judgment can't be avoided any longer.  
 7:1-3 *locusts*: A locust plague was feared in the ancient world. The fast-moving insects can strip fields of green plants in short order. The prophet Joel uses a locust plague as the basis for his prophecies against Judah.  
 7:4-6 *fire*: Wildfires were another fear. The Lord shows fire to the prophet and again doesn't send the devastation on Jacob (Israel). See Amos 3:7.  
 7:7-9 *plumb line*: If a wall is not vertical, it will eventually fall over. The plumb line stands for the Lord's righteous standards. Israel doesn't measure up to them. The inevitable conclusion is that judgment is coming. See Zechariah 2:1-5 for a parallel use of a plumb line to measure elements in Jerusalem.

7:12 1Sa 9:9;  
Mt 6:34  
7:13 1Ki 12:29;  
Am 2:12;  
Ac 4:18  
7:14 1Ki 10:27;  
Am 1:1  
7:15 Eze 2:3  
8:1 2Sa 16:1;  
Am 7:1, Am 7:4  
8:3 Am 5:23,  
Am 6:9,  
Am 6:10; Na 3:3  
8:5 2Ki 4:23;  
Neh 13:15;  
Eze 45:10;  
Hos 12:7;  
Mi 6:11

<sup>9</sup>The shrines of Isaac will be made desolate,  
and the holy places of Israel will be laid waste,  
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

#### **Exchange between Amaziah, Jeroboam, and Amos**

<sup>10</sup>Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, reported to Israel’s King Jeroboam, “Amos has plotted against you within the house of Israel. The land isn’t able to cope with everything that he is saying. <sup>11</sup>Amos has said, ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will be forced out of its land.’”

<sup>12</sup>Amaziah said to Amos, “You who see things, go, run away to the land of Judah, eat your bread there, and prophesy there; <sup>13</sup>but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s holy place and his royal house.”

<sup>14</sup>Amos answered Amaziah, “I am <sup>d</sup> not a prophet, nor am I a prophet’s son; but I am a shepherd, and a trimmer of sycamore trees. <sup>15</sup>But the LORD took me from shepherding the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’

<sup>16</sup>Now then hear the LORD’s word.

You say, ‘Don’t prophesy against Israel, and don’t preach against the house of Isaac.’

<sup>17</sup>“Therefore, the LORD proclaims:

‘Your wife will become a prostitute in the city,  
and your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword,  
and your land will be measured and divided up;  
you yourself will die in an unclean land,  
and Israel will surely be taken away from its land.’”

#### **A vision of summer fruit**

**8** This is what the LORD God showed me: a basket of summer fruit. <sup>2</sup>He said, “Amos, what do you see?”

I said, “A basket of summer fruit.”

Then the LORD said to me,

“The end has come upon my people Israel;

I will never again forgive them.

<sup>3</sup>On that day, the people will wail the temple songs,” says the LORD God;

“there will be many corpses, thrown about everywhere.”

Silence.”

#### **Judgment on oppressors and hypocrites**

<sup>4</sup>Hear this, you who trample on the needy and destroy the poor of the land, <sup>5</sup>saying,

“When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain,

<sup>d</sup>Or was; the verb is implied. <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain

7:9 *Isaac*: Amos uses this ancestor’s name (also in Amos 7:16), like those of Israel, Jacob, and Joseph, to refer to the people and their land. *house of Jeroboam*: Jeroboam II (Amos 1:1; 7:10-11). 2 Kings 14:23-29 tells about his reign. The prophet Hosea prophesied against the house of Jehu (Hos 1:1, 4-5) at approximately the same time as Amos. Jeroboam was a descendant of Jehu.

7:10-17 The priest Amaziah accuses Amos of plotting against the king and nation.

7:10, 13 *Bethel*: There was a temple in Bethel, a city located on the southern border of Israel. Jacob had a dream there (Gen 28:10-22). The city and temple were under royal control.

7:12 *land of Judah*: a different country than Israel. It may have been Amos’ ancestral home. Because of the prophet’s hard words against Jeroboam and Israel, Amaziah tells Amos to leave Israel.

7:14 *not a prophet*: Amos denies that he is a professional prophet or out for gain when prophesying. Amaziah’s

charge in Amos 7:12 to “eat your bread” in Judah can be taken to mean that Amos should go to Judah and get paid for his prophet’s work there.

7:15 Amos’ activities result from a call from the Lord (see also note on Amos 3:7).

7:16-17 Amaziah and his family will suffer the same fate as many others in Israel. There will be loss of land, dignity, and life itself. Some will be taken away and forced to live elsewhere.

8:1-3 *basket of summer fruit*: a play on Hebrew words. The word for “summer fruit” sounds like the word for “end.” Much of Amos’ prophecy can be summed up in the statement that the end has come upon Israel. The destruction and upheaval brought by the Assyrians wasn’t a final end to the Lord’s people, but the separate kingdom of Israel did come to a political end (see 2 Kgs 17).

8:4-6 Judgment on those who oppress the poor. Similar language occurs in Amos 2:6-8.

and the Sabbath so that we may offer wheat for sale,  
make the ephah smaller, enlarge the shekel, and deceive with false balances,  
in order to buy the needy for silver and the helpless for sandals,  
and sell garbage as grain?"

<sup>7</sup>The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:  
Surely I will never forget what they have done.

<sup>8</sup>Will not the land tremble on this account,  
and all who live in it mourn,  
as it rises and overflows like the Nile,  
and then falls again, like the River of Egypt?<sup>f</sup>

<sup>9</sup>On that day, says the LORD God,  
I will make the sun go down at noon,  
and I will darken the earth in broad daylight.

<sup>10</sup>I will turn your feasts into sad affairs  
and all your singing into a funeral song;  
I will make people wear mourning clothes and shave their heads;  
I will make it like the loss of an only child,  
and the end of it like a bitter day.

<sup>11</sup>The days are surely coming, says the LORD God,  
when I will send hunger and thirst on the land;  
neither a hunger for bread, nor a thirst for water,  
but of hearing the LORD's words.

<sup>12</sup>They will wander from sea to sea, and from north to east;  
they will roam all around, seeking the LORD's word, but they won't find it.

<sup>13</sup>On that day the beautiful young women and the young men  
will faint with thirst.

<sup>14</sup>Those who swear by the guilt of Samaria,  
and say, "As your god lives, Dan,"  
and, "As the way of Beer-sheba lives"—  
even they will fall and never rise again.

### Description of Israel's fate

**G**I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and the Lord said:  
Strike the pillars until the foundations shake,  
shatter them on the heads of all the people.  
With the sword, I will kill the last of them;  
not one of them will flee,  
not one of them will escape.

<sup>2</sup>If they dig through into the underworld,<sup>g</sup>  
from there my hand will take them.  
If they climb up to the heavens,  
from there I will bring them down.

<sup>3</sup>If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel,  
I will search for them there and remove them.  
If they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea,  
I will give an order to the sea serpent, and it will bite them.

<sup>4</sup>If they are forced from their homes before their enemies,

8:9 Is 13:10;  
Jer 15:9;  
Am 4:13;  
Am 5:8; Mi 3:6

8:10 Jer 6:26;  
Eze 7:18;  
Hos 2:11;  
Zec 12:10

8:11 Is 3:1;  
2Ch 15:3;  
Ps 74:9; Eze 7:26

8:13 Is 41:17;  
Hos 2:3  
9:3 Ps 68:22;  
Is 27:1; Jer 16:16;  
Am 1:2

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Heb Sheol

8:8-9 The shaking of the earth and the darkening of the sun are signs that go along with strong judgment (see Joel 2:30-31; 3:14-16).

8:11-13 *hunger and thirst*: There will be upheaval and lack of food in the judgment to come. There will be something more, which is just as deadly—the lack of hearing from the Lord.

8:14 The prophet pokes fun at those who swear by other gods. The *guilt of Samaria* likely refers to a goddess worshipped by some in Israel. Similarly, the gods of Dan (a city in northern Israel) and Beer-sheba (a city in southern Judah) will be of no help in the time of judgment.

9:1-4 A fifth vision confirms the coming judgment. The location of the altar isn't mentioned (see Amos 3:14). As with

9:6 Ps 104:3,  
Ps 104:5,  
Ps 104:13;  
Am 4:13, Am 5:8  
9:7 Dt 2:23;  
2Ki 16:9; Is 43:3;  
Jer 47:4; Am 1:5  
9:11 Ac 15:16  
9:12 Nm 24:18;  
Is 11:14

there I will give an order to the sword, and it will kill them.  
I will fix my eyes on them for harm and not for good.

### A divine confession

<sup>5</sup>The LORD, God of heavenly forces, touches the earth and it melts,  
and all who live in it are sick to death.

All of it<sup>a</sup> rises up like the Nile  
and sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt.

<sup>6</sup>It is the LORD who builds his upper rooms in the heavens  
and establishes his residence upon the earth;  
who summons the waters of the sea,  
and pours them out upon the face of the earth—the LORD is his name.

### Divine address to the Israelites

<sup>7</sup>Aren't you like the Cushites to me, people of Israel? says the LORD.  
Haven't I brought Israel up from the land of Egypt,  
and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?

<sup>8</sup>Look, the LORD God is eyeing the sinful kingdom,  
and I will destroy it from the face of the earth.  
However, I won't destroy fully the house of Jacob, says the LORD.

### Warning to the house of Israel

<sup>9</sup>Look, I am giving orders,  
and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations  
as one sifts dirt with a screen, but no pebble will fall to the ground.

<sup>10</sup>All the sinners of my people will die by the sword,  
those who say, "Evil won't overtake or meet us."

### Divine promise of restoration

<sup>11</sup>On that day I will raise up the meeting tent of David that has fallen,  
and repair its broken places.

I will raise up its ruins, and I will rebuild it like a long time ago;

<sup>12</sup>so that they may possess what is left of Edom,  
as well as all the nations who are called by my name,  
says the LORD who will do this.

<sup>13</sup>The days are surely coming, says the LORD,  
when the one who plows will overtake the one who gathers,  
when the one who crushes grapes  
will overtake the one who sows the seed.

<sup>a</sup>Or the earth

most biblical accounts, the prophet sees the Lord, but provides little or no description (see Amos 7:7). Amos once again reports that there's no escape from coming disaster. 9:5-6 Both the earth and the human community will be affected by judgment.

9:7-8 The Lord works in the history of Israel and all other nations. Although Israel has a special bond with the Lord (Amos 3:2), including an exodus from Egypt (Amos 2:10), it's not the only people that the Lord has brought to a designated place.

9:7 *Cushites*: A people south of Egypt on the edge of Israel's geographical knowledge (Isa 18:1-2). *Kir*: According to Amos 1:5, the Arameans will be sent to Kir in punishment. It may be that Amos knows of a tradition that the Lord earlier freed the Arameans from oppression in Kir and that in judgment they will soon return there. *Caphtor*: may be a reference to Crete. The Philistines were part of a larger movement of peoples that left Anatolia and various Mediterranean islands in the 13th and 12th centuries BCE. They settled in the cities mentioned in Amos 1:6-8 plus Gath (Amos 6:2).

9:9-10 The judgment will fall on the *sinners* in Israel. This prophecy follows the claim in Amos 9:8 that the Lord won't fully destroy Israel.

9:11-15 Restoration will come after judgment. Israel will have an important place among nations and live in security. As noted in the introduction, a later editor may have added this final portion to soften the harsh language elsewhere in the book. Whether original with the prophet Amos or not, these verses are a part of the book as we have received it. They follow a pattern seen in other prophetic books such as Joel, Micah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah, where harsh words of judgment come to an end, and a final section projects a future deliverance and peaceful kingdom.

9:11 *meeting tent of David*: King David earlier ruled over all Israel, and various prophets predict that his descendants will rule again over an expanded kingdom (Isa 11:1-9; Jer 23:5-6; Ezek 37:15-28).

9:13 *drip wine*: This poetic phrase illustrates a garden-like existence. See also Joel 3:18.



The mountains will drip wine,  
and all the hills will flow with it.

<sup>14</sup>I will improve the circumstances of my people Israel;  
they will rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them.  
They will plant vineyards and drink their wine;  
and they will make gardens and eat their fruit.

<sup>15</sup>I will plant them upon their land,  
and they will never again be plucked up  
out of the land that I have given them, says the LORD your God.

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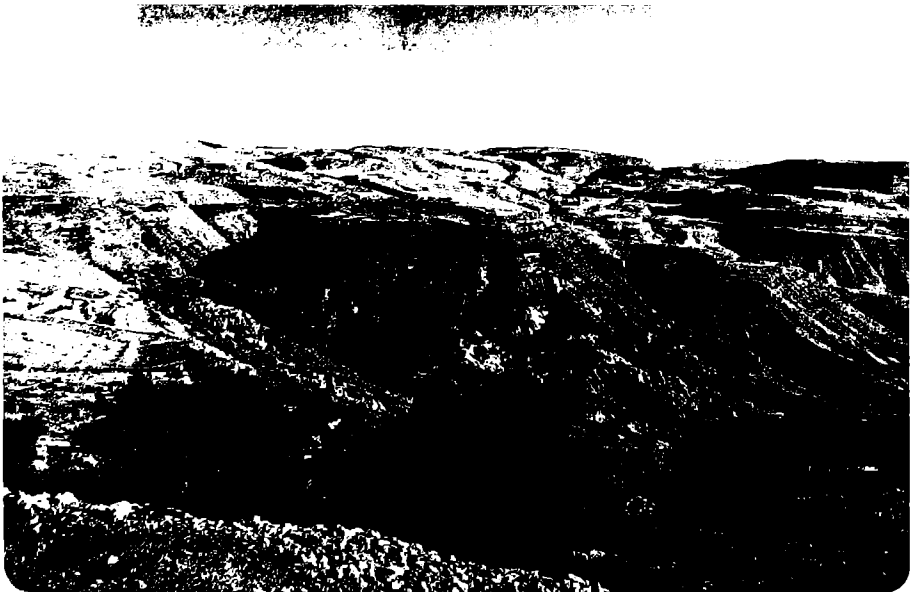
# OBADIAH

Obadiah is the shortest book in the OT and follows Amos in the sequence of prophetic books. Obadiah may occupy this place in the lineup because it offers an explanation of the last prophecy in Amos, that Israel will possess what is left of Edom (Amos 9:11-12). The author of Obadiah is unknown; the name Obadiah, however, is relatively common in ancient Israel and means “servant of the LORD.”

“Vision” (Obad 1) defines the book of Obadiah as a prophetic revelation and fits the subject matter and forms of expression in the book. The Hebrew word translated as “vision” occurs elsewhere in the OT to indicate an insight from divine revelation (1 Sam 3:1; Hos 12:10), some of which were written down (Isa 1:1; Nah 1:1; Hab 2:2-3). Obadiah’s primary focus is to show the actions of the people of “Edom” (Obad 1) as being under God’s judgment. Similar prophecies against Edom are found in Isaiah 63:1-6; Jeremiah 49:7-22; Ezekiel 25:12-14; Joel 3:19; and Amos 1:11-12; as compared to Malachi 1:2-5.

Edom is the land southeast of the Dead Sea, and its inhabitants are called Edomites. Their influence periodically reached to the lands belonging to the tribes of Judah and Simeon to the west (the “southern plain” of Obad 19-20). In the book of Obadiah, Edom is also called Esau (Obad 6), Mount Esau (Obad 8, 19), and the House of Esau (Obad 18). These references to Esau, plus those to “brother Jacob” (Obad 10, 12), remind readers that the Edomites and Israelites were descendants of Esau and Jacob, and thus were related to Israel (see Gen 27-36; Mal 1:2).

Historically, interactions between Edom and Israel were both positive and negative. Several references to Edom’s violence and pride in Obadiah indicate bad relations with Judah/Jerusalem. Such strained relations are made clear in reports of slaughter (1 Kgs 11:14-16) and political control (2 Kgs 8:20-22). One biblical reference notes that Edomites celebrated when Babylon defeated Jerusalem and destroyed the



Bozrah, a city in Edom  
Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

city in 587 BCE (Ps 137:7). Others list Edomite slave trading (Amos 1:6, 9) and acts of violence (Amos 1:11; Ezek 25:12-14; Lam 4:21-22). The book of Malachi contains the strong statement that God loved Jacob (=Israel) but rejected Esau (=Edom) (Mal 1:2-3). It's likely that Edom's

delight in Jerusalem's destruction is reflected in Obadiah 11-14. Edom's response to Jerusalem helps date the prophecies of the book to some time after 587 BCE and probably in the post-exilic period in the 5th century, similar to the date of Malachi.

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**I. Edom's Judgment Announced among the Nations (1-4)**

**II. Edom's Violence Portrayed and Judged (5-14)**

**III. Edom's Day of Judgment among the Nations (15-18)**

**IV. Edom Possessed by Others; Zion and the Lord Exalted (19-21)**

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*J. Andrew Dearman*

1:4 Job 20:6;  
 Prv 17:19;  
 Is 14:12;  
 Jer 49:16;  
 Eze 31:10  
 1:9 Gn 36:11;  
 Eze 25:13;  
 Am 1:12

### Edom falls

<sup>1</sup>The vision of Obadiah.

The LORD God proclaims concerning Edom:  
 We have heard a message from the LORD—  
 a messenger has been sent among the nations:  
 “Rise up! Let us rise against her for battle!”

<sup>2</sup>Look now, I will make you of little importance among the nations;  
 you will be totally despised.

<sup>3</sup>Your proud heart has tricked you—  
 you who live in the cracks of the rock,  
 whose dwelling is high above.  
 You who say in your heart,  
 “Who will bring me down to the ground?”

<sup>4</sup>Though you soar like the eagle,  
 though your nest is set among the stars,  
 I will bring you down from there, says the LORD.

### Edom is robbed

<sup>5</sup>If thieves approach you,  
 if robbers by night—how you’ve been devastated!—  
 wouldn’t they steal only what they wanted?  
 If those who gather grapes came to you,  
 wouldn’t they leave some grapes?

<sup>6</sup>How Esau has been looted,  
 his treasures taken away!

<sup>7</sup>All those who were your allies have driven you to the border.  
 Those who were on your side tricked you and triumphed over you.  
 They are setting your own bread as a trap under you,<sup>a</sup>  
 but you don’t see it coming.

<sup>8</sup>Won’t I on that day, says the LORD, destroy the wise from Edom  
 and understanding from Mount Esau?

<sup>9</sup>Your warriors will be shattered, Teman,  
 and everyone from Mount Esau will be eliminated.

### Edom’s misdeeds

<sup>10</sup>Because of the slaughter and violence done to your brother Jacob,  
 shame will cover you, and you will be destroyed forever.

<sup>11</sup>You stood nearby,  
 strangers carried off his wealth,  
 and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem;  
 you too were like one of them.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain

1-4 These first verses highlight the basic theme of the book. God will judge Edom for its pride and violence. Much of the land of Edom is rugged and mountainous. Edomite settlements could be located in high and hard-to-reach places. That location gave Edomites a false sense of security and pride.

1 *The vision of Obadiah*: The first phrase is a heading for the book, similar to a subtitle for a modern literary work. *We have heard*: The writer uses “we” to say that the prophetic message announced among the nations is similar to other prophetic messages. Edom is referred to as *her*. In this part of the world, cities and city-dwellers were personified as female.

4 God will bring Edom *down*. This refers literally to the defeat of cities set high in the mountains and symbolically to the defeat that will destroy the nation.

5-14 These verses describe the reversal of fortune. Edom’s destruction will be complete, and it is deserved. Edom will suffer for its violence against Jerusalem.

8 The Edomites had a reputation for wisdom (Jer 49:7-10), but this won’t help when God brings judgment against them.

9 *Teman* was a descendant of Esau (Gen 36:11). The name also refers to a region of or a city in Edom (Amos 1:12; Ezek 25:13). In this verse *Teman* is used as a parallel term for *Mount Esau* (=Edom). The failure of Edomite warriors is also noted in Jeremiah 49:20-22.

10 *Jacob* is used here as the covenant name of the people Israel who lived in Judah/Jerusalem. Edom violated a family bond. The *shame* to come on Edom reverses the honor it should have as a loyal family member.

11-14 Edom rejoiced over Judah and Jerusalem’s

1:12 Job 31:29;  
 Prv 17:5;  
 Prv 24:17;  
 Eze 35:15;  
 Mt 4:11  
 1:17 Is 14:4;  
 Jl 2:32; Am 9:11

- 12** But you should have taken no pleasure over your brother  
 on the day of his misery;  
 you shouldn't have rejoiced over the people of Judah  
 on the day of their devastation;  
 you shouldn't have bragged  
 on their day of hardship.
- 13** You shouldn't have entered the gate of my people  
 on the day of their defeat;  
 you shouldn't have even looked on his suffering  
 on the day of his disaster;  
 you shouldn't have stolen his possessions  
 on the day of his distress.
- 14** You shouldn't have waited on the roads  
 to destroy his escapees;  
 you shouldn't have handed over his survivors  
 on the day of defeat.
- 15** The day of the LORD is near against all the nations.  
 As you have done, so it will be done to you;  
 your actions will make you suffer!
- 16** Just as you have drunk on my holy mountain,  
 so will all the nations around you drink;  
 they will drink and swallow quickly,  
 and they will be like they've never been before.

#### *Edom's punishers*

- 17** But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape, and it will be holy;  
 and the house of Jacob will drive out those who drove them out.
- 18** The house of Jacob will be a fire,  
 the house of Joseph a flame,  
 and the house of Esau straw;  
 they will burn them up completely,  
 and there will be no one left of the house of Esau,  
 for the LORD has spoken.
- 19** Those of the arid southern plain will possess Mount Esau,  
 and those of the western foothills, the land of the Philistines;  
 they will possess the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria,  
 and Benjamin will possess Gilead.
- 20** Those who remain of the Israelites  
 will possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath;

destruction, most likely in 587 BCE, the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25; Jer 52). When escapees fled from Judah, the Edomites badly mistreated them (see Obad 14).

15-18 These verses further describe the judgment announced in previous verses of a reversal of fortunes. Edom's good fortune will be reversed. Judah's bad fortunes will be reversed.

15 *day of the LORD*: Prophets speak about important events in the future as happening on a "day." Sometimes the term is "day of the LORD" (Amos 5:18-20). Obadiah refers to the "day" of Edom's destruction in Obadiah 8. That destruction is explained in Obadiah 15 as both act and consequence. This is a theme of wisdom (Prov 26:27; Ps 7:12-16). Those who do evil will bring judgment on themselves. Edom will suffer violence because of the violence it has done.

16 *you have drunk*: The drinking referred to here is the cup of God's judgment, a prophetic theme using drunkenness

to portray impending destruction (Jer 25:15-38; Isa 51:17-23). Jerusalem's inhabitants drank of it in the Babylonian destruction. Now others will drink of it, particularly Edom. The text refers to Jerusalem drinking in the past and other nations drinking in the future. The judgment announced against Edom throughout the book means that it, too, is one of the nations that will drink of the cup.

19-21 The theme of reversal continues with nations possessing the property of their oppressors.

19 *Philistines*: a nation that lived along or near the Mediterranean coast. The Israelites who lived nearby in the western foothills had a long history of difficulties with them. In the future the Israelites will possess the land of the Philistines, just as those of the southern region of Israel will possess Mount Esau. *Gilead* is the hill country to the east of the Jordan River.

20 *Canaanites*: Israelite remnants will also possess the land north of Ephraim and Samaria, part of the land of Canaan.

and those left from Jerusalem and who are now living in Sepharad  
will possess the cities of the arid southern plain.

1:21 Ps 22:28;  
Zec 14:9;  
Rev 11:15

<sup>21</sup>The deliverers will go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau,  
and the kingdom will be the LORD's.

1:21 Ps 22:28; Zec 14:9; Rev 11:15

*Act and Consequence* Act and consequence is a theme of the book. Obadiah describes a reversal of circumstances brought about by God's judgment. Edom violated its brother Israel's security. It will suffer violation as a result. Judah and Jerusalem had been defeated by the Babylonians and preyed on by the Edomites, but the Lord will reverse Jerusalem's lowly status while bringing down Edom. Prophets often speak of future decisive changes as happening on a certain "day." This is true of Obadiah's references to Edom's coming judgment (Obad 8, 15). The book concludes with a depiction of Edom's downfall, Mount Zion's rise, and the rule of the Lord made clear.

<sup>21</sup> *Mount Zion*: The future restoration of Mount Zion (=Jerusalem) will include control of Mount Esau (=land of Edom). This prophecy is similar to the day when God will raise up the meeting tent of David, and God's people will possess what is left of Edom (Amos 9:11-12).





# JONAH

The account of Jonah and his adventures in Nineveh is by far the most peculiar writing in the prophetic literature of the Bible. The story is more about the prophet's actions than his words. The book also focuses on foreigners, non-Israelites, who receive God's mercy, which is surprising in the OT. A reluctant prophet preaches to his enemies, and the Ninevites change their hearts and lives to receive God's mercy.

Several themes emerge in the story. The first is God's deliverance of Jonah. Though Jonah disobeys God's call, God still delivers Jonah from the belly of the fish. Second, God delivers the Ninevites from destruction because they listen to Jonah and change their evil ways. Third, Jonah becomes upset because God shows mercy to Jonah's enemies. The story emphasizes God's gracious and compassionate character, which displaces God's promise to punish the wicked.

Jonah, Amittai's son, is mentioned briefly in 2 Kings 14:25 as an 8th-century prophet from Gath-hepher who prophesied that King Jeroboam II would extend the borders of the northern kingdom of Israel. The account in 2 Kings doesn't mention a journey to Nineveh for Amittai's son Jonah.

This particular story about a prophet named Jonah isn't historical in the narrow sense. Instead, readers should receive Jonah as an extended metaphor marked by wordplay, suspense, intra-biblical allusions, satire, irony, hyperbole, and humor. Much like a parable, the book of Jonah teaches that "deliverance belongs to the LORD" (Jon 2:9), even if that deliverance comes to the most unlikely candidates. Much like a satire, Jonah contains extraordinary events and extravagant characters designed to amuse and delight the reader. Much like a novella, the



Phoenician ship carved on a sarcophagus, 2nd century CE  
*Public domain*

narrative has a clearly defined hero (God) and a haphazard rival (Jonah).

In the larger literary context of the Book of the Twelve (Hosea through Malachi), Jonah is a companion piece to Nahum. Both Jonah and Nahum focus on the wicked city of Nineveh,

but each contains a very different message. Jonah promotes God's mercy and compassion for the Ninevites, while Nahum advances God's judgment against Nineveh and God's refusal to leave the guilty unpunished (see Exod 34:6-7; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; Nah 1:3).

### **I. Jonah's Commission, Flight, and the Storm (1:1-16)**

- A. God's commission and Jonah's disobedience (1:1-3)
- B. Trouble at sea (1:4-11)
- C. Jonah thrown overboard (1:12)
- D. The sailors worship the Lord (1:13-16)

### **II. In the Belly of the Fish (1:17-2:10)**

- A. Narrative frame (1:17-2:1)
- B. Thanksgiving song from the fish's belly (2:2-9)
- C. Narrative frame (2:10)

### **III. Jonah Reluctantly Speaks—the Ninevites Overwhelmingly Change their Lives (3:1-10)**

- A. The Lord commissions Jonah again, and Jonah obeys (3:1-3)
- B. The people of Nineveh believe God and change their lives (3:4-5)
- C. The king mourns sin and decrees rejection of evil ways (3:6-9)
- D. God has mercy on Nineveh (3:10)

### **IV. Jonah and God Talk (4:1-11)**

- A. Jonah's irritated prayer and God's response (4:1-4)
- B. Jonah sulks away and laments for a shrub (4:5-8)
- C. The Lord teaches Jonah about compassion (4:9-11)

*James D. Nogalski and Anna E. Sieges*

**Commissioning of a reluctant prophet**

**1** The LORD's word came to Jonah, Amittai's son: <sup>2</sup>"Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their evil has come to my attention."

<sup>3</sup>So Jonah got up—to flee to Tarshish from the LORD! He went down to Joppa and found a ship headed for Tarshish. He paid the fare and went aboard to go with them to Tarshish, away from the LORD. <sup>4</sup>But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, so that there was a great storm on the sea; the ship looked like it might be broken to pieces. <sup>5</sup>The sailors were terrified, and each one cried out to his god. They hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to make it lighter.

Now Jonah had gone down into the hold of the vessel to lie down and was deep in sleep. <sup>6</sup>The ship's officer came and said to him, "How can you possibly be sleeping so deeply? Get up! Call on your god! Perhaps the god will give some thought to us so that we won't perish."

<sup>7</sup>Meanwhile, the sailors said to each other, "Come on, let's cast lots so that we might learn who is to blame for this evil that's happening to us." They cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. <sup>8</sup>So they said to him, "Tell us, since you're the cause of this evil happening to us: What do you do and where are you from? What's your country and of what people are you?"

<sup>9</sup>He said to them, "I'm a Hebrew. I worship the LORD, the God of heaven—who made the sea and the dry land."

<sup>10</sup>Then the men were terrified and said to him, "What have you done?" (The men knew that Jonah was fleeing from the LORD, because he had told them.)

<sup>11</sup>They said to him, "What will we do about you so that the sea will become calm around us?" (The sea was continuing to rage.)

<sup>12</sup>He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea! Then the sea will become calm around you. I know it's my fault that this great storm has come upon you."

<sup>13</sup>The men rowed to reach dry land, but they couldn't manage it because the sea continued to rage against them. <sup>14</sup>So they called on the LORD, saying, "Please, LORD, don't let us perish on account of this man's life, and don't blame us for innocent blood! You are the LORD: whatever you want, you can do." <sup>15</sup>Then they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased its raging. <sup>16</sup>The men worshipped the LORD with a profound reverence; they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made solemn promises.

**No escape for the prophet**

<sup>17</sup>Meanwhile, the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

<sup>a</sup>2:1 in Heb

1:1-16 The initial scene develops in four phases: (1) The introduction: God instructs Jonah to go to Nineveh (1:1-2). (2) The conflict: Jonah disobeys (1:3). (3) The problem: The Lord sends a storm and the sailors learn they cannot escape without surrendering Jonah (1:4-14). (4) The answer: The sailors throw Jonah overboard, the sea calms, and the sailors worship the Lord (1:15-16).

1:1 *Jonah, Amittai's son*: Compare 2 Kings 14:25.

1:2 *Nineveh*: the capital of Assyria, located along the Tigris River in modern-day Iraq. The Assyrians had a reputation for extreme brutality. Many reliefs (large stone panels with images carved into them) from the walls of the ancient palace at Nineveh display horrific battle scenes that portray the removal of arms and legs and the decapitation of conquered peoples, as well as the practice of thrusting a sharp stick up through their bodies.

1:3 *to flee to Tarshish from the LORD*: The Lord calls Jonah to Nineveh, several hundred miles east of Israel. Instead, Jonah goes to Joppa, a coastal seaport. There he boards a ship headed in the opposite direction toward Tarshish, a city in the far western part of the Mediterranean Sea.

1:4 *But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea*: Contrary to Jonah's own statement that the Lord's dominion extended even to the sea (Jon 1:9), Jonah acts as though he can escape the Lord's control. He learns otherwise.

1:5 *each one cried out to his god*: Polytheism (the belief in many gods) was the norm for most ancient Near Eastern cultures. Usually, each city had a different god to whom the people turned for support and gifts. These sailors probably came from various locations, so each one calls upon a different local god.

1:7 *let's cast lots*: Casting lots (similar to throwing dice) was a common way to make decisions in the ancient Near East, including Judah and Israel (see Lev 16:8), or to determine how property would be divided (cf. Josh 18:6, 8; Ps 22:18). The ancients thought that casting lots revealed hidden truth from the gods.

1:9-10 *The LORD... who made the sea and the dry land... the men were terrified*: Jonah says that the Lord created the sea and the dry land, a theological statement that indicates to the sailors that the Lord was responsible for the storm. This proclamation frightens the crew because they know that Jonah had been trying to escape the Lord.

1:13-16 *The men worshipped the LORD*: The power of the Hebrew God impresses the sailors, and they honor the Lord with sacrifices. These sacrifices take place outside of the temple, which surprisingly suggests that worship of the Lord can occur outside of the temple precincts.

1:17-2:10 A fish swallows Jonah, and Jonah responds with a prayer in the form of a thanksgiving psalm.

1:1 2Ki 14:25;  
Jon 3:1;  
Mt 12:39;  
Mt 16:4;  
Lk 11:29

1:2 Gn 10:11;  
2Ki 19:36;  
Is 58:1; Jon 3:2;  
Na 1:1

1:3 Josh 19:46;  
Ps 139:7;  
Ac 9:36

1:5 Ac 27:18

1:6 Ps 107:28;  
Jon 3:9

1:7 Nm 32:23;  
1Sa 14:41;  
1Sa 14:42;  
Pv 16:33

1:9 Neh 9:6;  
Ps 95:5; Ps 146:6

1:12 2Sa 24:17;  
1Ch 21:17

1:14 Dt 21:8;  
Ps 107:28;  
Ps 115:3;  
Dn 4:35; Jon 1:16

1:17 Jon 4:6;  
Mt 12:40;  
Mt 16:4;  
Lk 11:30

2:1 2Ki 14:25;  
Job 13:15;  
Ps 130:1, Jon 1:1,  
Jon 3:1  
2:2 Ps 118:6,  
Ps 86:13,  
Ps 120:1  
2:3 Ps 42:7,  
Ps 69:1, Ps 88:6  
2:4 1Ki 8:38,  
1Ki 8:48;  
Ps 5:7, Ps 31:22;  
Jer 7:15  
2:5 Ps 69:1,  
Ps 69:2,  
Lam 3:54  
2:6 Ps 16:10,  
Ps 30:3, Is 38:17  
2:7 2Ch 30:27;  
Ps 11:4, Ps 118:6,  
Ps 65:4, Ps 77:11  
2:8 2Ki 17:15;  
Ps 31:6; Jer 10:8  
2:10 Jon 1:17  
3:1 Jon 1:1,  
Jon 1:2, Jon 2:1

2 Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish:  
2<sup>a</sup>I called out to the LORD in my distress, and he answered me.

From the belly of the underworld<sup>b</sup> I cried out for help;  
you have heard my voice.

3 You had cast me into the depths in the heart of the seas,  
and the flood surrounds me.

All your strong waves and rushing water passed over me.

4 So I said, 'I have been driven away from your sight.

Will I ever again look on your holy temple?

5 Waters have grasped me to the point of death;  
the deep surrounds me.

Seaweed is wrapped around my head

6 at the base of the undersea<sup>c</sup> mountains.

I have sunk down to the underworld;

its bars held me with no end in sight.

But you brought me out of the pit.<sup>d</sup>

7 When my endurance<sup>d</sup> was weakening, I remembered the LORD,  
and my prayer came to you, to your holy temple.

8 Those deceived by worthless things lose their chance for mercy.<sup>e</sup>

9 But me, I will offer a sacrifice to you with a voice of thanks.

That which I have promised, I will pay.

Deliverance belongs to the LORD!<sup>f</sup>

10 Then the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto the dry land.

### Nineveh hears God's word

3 The LORD's word came to Jonah a second time: 2<sup>a</sup>Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and declare against it the proclamation that I am commanding you." 3And Jonah

*The Sea, the Fish, and the Underworld* The sea was a terrifying mystery to the ancient Israelites. Its wild character and unknown depths presented a serious threat to anyone who tried to cross it. In addition, the sea was the home of sea monsters such as Leviathan and Rahab, whom the Bible describes as powerful creatures that oppose God (Job 26:12; Ps 104:26; Isa 27:1; 51:9). To be thrown into the sea and swallowed by a creature would be one of the worst fates imaginable. Jonah speaks of this experience as being cast into Sheol—the Hebrew term for the place of the dead—and often translated as “the underworld.” The place of the dead is an abstract concept with generally negative connotations. The OT frequently describes Sheol as a watery netherworld where chaos reigns (Pss 42:8; 69:2-3, 15-16; 88:7-8). It is down, while God is up; it is chaotic, and God is orderly. Though this story doesn't say that Jonah has died, the psalm describes a metaphorical death in the depths of the Sheol-sea. Therefore, when Jonah sinks “down to the underworld” and cries for help “from the belly of the underworld” and (its bars holding him with no end in sight), he is describing serious distress in a death-like state.

<sup>b</sup>Heb Sheol <sup>c</sup>Heb lacks undersea. <sup>d</sup>Endurance here renders the same Heb word as *life* in 1:14 and *death* in 2:5.

<sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain

Individuals experiencing extreme difficulty may have prayed this psalm in worship at the Jerusalem temple. The psalm recounts the Lord's deliverance from death because of prayer (2:2-7). The psalm expresses a confession of misplaced devotion, and makes a pledge to pay what he has promised (2:8-9).

1:17 *great fish*: The original readers of Jonah likely thought of the fish that swallows Jonah as some kind of sea monster. The ancients knew very little about marine life, but tales from ancient mariners of unusual sightings are based in mythology concerning sea life (cf. Gen 1:21; Job 7:12; Pss 74:13; 104:25; 148:7).

2:2 *the underworld*: See sidebar, “The Sea, the Fish, and the Underworld.”

2:4, 7: *Will I ever again look on your holy temple . . . your holy*

*temple*: The emphasis on the temple is contrasted with other parts of Jonah, which acknowledge sacrificial worship and the mercy of the Lord outside of the temple and outside of Israel (Jon 1:4; 1:16; 3:5-9).

2:9 *Deliverance belongs to the Lord!*: the core message of the book of Jonah. Even though Jonah says this, he still gets upset later in the story when he learns that the Lord's merciful deliverance extends even to the Ninevites (Jon 4:1-3).

3:1-10 Chapter 3 begins in the same way as Jonah 1: The Lord's word comes to Jonah. But this time Jonah obeys. The narrative of Jonah 3 progresses in four phases: (1) Jonah obediently goes to the metropolis of Nineveh (3:1-3). (2) Jonah declares the Lord's word to the Ninevites, and they immediately believe and change their ways

got up and went to Nineveh, according to the LORD's word. (Now Nineveh was indeed an enormous city, a three days' walk across.)

4Jonah started into the city, walking one day, and he cried out, "Just forty days more and Nineveh will be overthrown!" 5And the people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and put on mourning clothes, from the greatest of them to the least significant.

6When word of it reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, stripped himself of his robe, covered himself with mourning clothes, and sat in ashes. 7Then he announced, "In Nineveh, by decree of the king and his officials: Neither human nor animal, cattle nor flock, will taste anything! No grazing and no drinking water! 8Let humans and animals alike put on mourning clothes, and let them call upon God forcefully! And let all persons stop their evil behavior and the violence that's under their control!" 9He thought, Who knows? God may see this and turn from his wrath, so that we might not perish.<sup>f</sup>

10God saw what they were doing—that they had ceased their evil behavior. So God stopped planning to destroy them, and he didn't do it.

*Jonah balks at God's mercy*

4 But Jonah thought this was utterly wrong, and he became angry. 2He prayed to the LORD, "Come on, LORD! Wasn't this precisely my point when I was back in my own land? This is why I fled to Tarshish earlier! I know that you are a merciful and compassionate God, very patient, full of faithful love, and willing not to destroy. 3At this point, LORD, you may as well take my life from me, because it would be better for me to die than to live."

4The LORD responded, "Is your anger a good thing?" 5But Jonah went out from the city and sat down east of the city. There he made himself a hut and sat under it, in the shade, to see what would happen to the city.

6Then the LORD God provided a shrub,<sup>g</sup> and it grew up over Jonah, providing shade for his head and saving him from his misery. Jonah was very happy about the shrub. 7But God

<sup>f</sup>Heb lacks *For he thought*. <sup>g</sup>Botanists disagree about whether Heb *qiqayon* refers to a climbing gourd plant, a castor bean plant, or some other shrub.

3:4 Ex 3:18;  
1Ki 19:4;  
Jer 18:7; Jon 1:5;  
Jon 3:1  
3:5 2Ch 20:3;  
Jer 36:9; Jl 1:14;  
Mt 12:41;  
Lk 11:32  
3:6 Est 4:1;  
Job 2:8; Jer 6:26  
3:7 2Ch 20:3  
3:8 Ps 130:1;  
Is 55:6, Is 55:7;  
Jer 18:11;  
Jer 36:3  
3:9 2Sa 12:22;  
Ps 106:45;  
Jer 18:8; Jl 2:13;  
Jl 2:14  
3:10 Ex 32:14;  
Jer 18:8;  
Jer 31:18;  
Am 7:3; Am 7:6  
4:2 Ex 34:6;  
Nm 14:18;  
Ps 86:5, Ps 86:15;  
Jl 2:13  
4:6 Jon 1:17

(3:4-5). (3) Nineveh's king, in an overstatement, declares that Nineveh is turning away from evil, and everyone (including the animals!) is to fast and wear mourning clothes (3:6-9). (4) God sees their changed lives and withholds judgment (3:10).

3:3 a *three days' walk*: an exaggeration. The archaeological record shows that the wall around Nineveh was nearly 7.5 miles long. Though this is large by ancient standards, it wouldn't take three days to walk from one end to the other.

3:4-5 "Just forty days more and Nineveh will be overthrown": The rounded reference to "forty days" may be an allusion to the covenant with Noah and the story of God's destruction of the earth by flood (Gen 7:4). In Hebrew, Jonah preaches only five words. Yet this short sermon has a profound result: The people of Nineveh believe God (as Abram does in Gen 15:6), and they respond dramatically with fasting and wearing mourning clothes.

3:6 *covered himself with mourning clothes, and sat in ashes*: This description of the king's turnaround is striking when one considers that Assyrian kings weren't known for their humility. An example of the boastful nature of Assyrian kings comes from the palace of Ashurbanipal, who inscribed on many of the walls: "I am Ashurbanipal, the great king, the mighty king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, king of the world's four regions, king of kings, unrivaled prince." See also Isaiah 10:12-15.

3:7-8 *Let humans and animals alike put on mourning clothes*: The king's instructions to have the animals dress in mourning clothes humorously shows the king leading from behind, since the Ninevites have already changed their lives, and cattle normally do not.

3:9 *Who knows? God may see this and turn*: A nearly identical phrase occurs in Joel 2:14. The author of Jonah demonstrates that Judah's enemy, Assyria, has heard the voice of the prophet Jonah and responded in the way that Joel tried to get Judah to respond.

4:1-11 Jonah is indignant that God decides not to destroy Nineveh and attempts to teach Jonah compassion. This story develops around several repeated phrases. Jonah wishes to die twice (4:3, 8). In response to Jonah's desire to die, the Lord twice asks Jonah if his anger is a good thing (4:4, 9). The first time the Lord asks, Jonah doesn't answer but sulks. The second time, Jonah answers that his anger is good. As an object lesson to display the senseless nature of Jonah's response, the Lord compares Jonah's pity for the shrub to the Lord's pity for Nineveh (4:10). The story ends without saying how Jonah reacts to the Lord's teaching.

4:2 *I know that you are a merciful and compassionate God*: The Lord's merciful and compassionate nature is often recounted in the OT as a liturgical profession of faith (Pss 78:38; 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 116:5; 145:8-9) as well as a common declaration of the Lord's character (Exod 34:6-7; Num 14:18; Deut 4:31; 2 Chron 30:9; Neh 9:17, 31; Joel 2:13; Nah 1:3). Yet for Jonah this quality isn't a virtue. Instead, he accuses God of giving mercy to people that Jonah thinks don't deserve mercy.

4:3 *it would be better for me to die*: Jonah's sulking remark is an echo from the grumbling of the Hebrew people in the wilderness after the Lord delivered them from Egypt (Exod 14:12).

4:6-8 *The LORD God provided a shrub*: This mirrors Jonah 1:17, where the Lord "provided" a fish; 4:7, where the Lord

4:8 Ps 121:6;  
Jon 4:3, Jon 4:9  
4:9 Jon 4:1,  
Jon 4:4, Jon 4:8  
4:10 Ex 34:6,  
Ex 34:7,  
Neh 9:17,  
Ps 62:12;  
Jon 4:2  
4:11 Ex 34:6,  
Ex 34:7, Ps 36:6;  
Jon 1:2, Jon 3:10

provided a worm the next day at dawn, and it attacked the shrub so that it died. <sup>9</sup>Then as the sun rose God provided a dry east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint. He begged that he might die, saying, "It's better for me to die than to live."

<sup>9</sup>God said to Jonah, "Is your anger about the shrub a good thing?"

Jonah said, "Yes, my anger is good—even to the point of death!"

<sup>10</sup>But the LORD said, "You 'pitied' the shrub, for which you didn't work and which you didn't raise; it grew in a night and perished in a night. <sup>11</sup>Yet for my part, can't I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than one hundred twenty thousand people who can't tell their right hand from their left, and also many animals?

"provided" a worm; and 4:8, where the Lord "provided" a dry east wind.

4:9-11 *You 'pitied' the shrub for which you didn't work and which you didn't raise:* The Lord states that Jonah had nothing to do with the creation or death of the shrub, suggesting that the Lord did have a hand in the creation of Nineveh. This statement affirms that the Lord is the ruler of the region's nations as well as Israel.

4:11 *can't I pity Nineveh:* The placement of Jonah's pity

for the plant next to the Lord's pity for the people (and cattle) of Nineveh shows Jonah's foolishness and lack of compassion. Jonah received the Lord's compassion when the Lord saved him from the fish. At that moment, Jonah proclaimed a significant truth: "Deliverance belongs to the LORD" (Jon 2:9). But Jonah had hoped that the Lord's salvation wouldn't extend to his enemies. Nevertheless, the Lord shows Jonah the extent of his compassion by offering salvation even to Nineveh.

The beginning of the book says that Micah from Moresheth prophesied in the days of the Judean kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (mid-8th to early 6th century BCE). During this period, the Assyrians increasingly exercised power over both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. In 722 BCE, the Assyrian army destroyed Samaria, the northern capital, because it stopped paying taxes. Micah 1:5-7 considers this attack and uses the destruction of Samaria as a warning to Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kgs 17). In 701 BCE, Assyria's King Sennacherib destroyed most of the cities of the Judean countryside and laid siege to Jerusalem.

Events from the latter part of the 8th century (722–701 BCE) form the background of Micah 1–3. Micah 1 describes the chaos and mourning caused by the destruction Sennacherib brought. Chapters 2–3 contain accusations of injustice against the leadership in Judah and Jerusalem. Portions of chapters 1–3 may be the

work of the 8th-century prophet Micah from Moresheth, who would have witnessed the destruction caused by Sennacherib's forces. The prophet's hometown, Moresheth, is most likely the same as Moresheth-gath, mentioned in Micah 1:14. Though the location of Moresheth is unknown, Micah associates it with other towns of the lower Judean highlands, an area that Sennacherib destroyed. During Micah's career, the prophet likely traveled to Jerusalem on occasion to deliver his oracles to the prophets, priests, and leaders (Mic 3:1-12).

Micah 4–7 contains two separate units. Chapters 4–5 contain oracles of hope that look far into the future and predict a peaceful time when all of Judah's enemies are defeated and God's people experience prosperity. These chapters mention the Assyrian threat of Micah 1–3 as well as the Babylonian threat and the exile that occur over 100 years after Micah. Chapters 6–7 accuse Judah of following the



A bowl of figs (Mic 4:4)  
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wicked ways of the northern kingdom. The book, however, closes with words of hope, forgiveness, and restoration (Mic 7:8-20). As a whole, Micah swings between images of judgment (Mic 1-3; 6) and hope (Mic 4-5; 7). It's therefore difficult to speak of a single theme in the book of Micah. Nevertheless, chapters 1-3 and 6 compare Judah to Israel (Mic 1:5; 3:1; 6:16), warning that the Lord will judge Judah just as the Lord judged the northern kingdom.

In Micah 4-5; 7 we find another theme: a coming hope at the end of time and renewal. Both themes (judgment like the northern kingdom and hope and renewal) are included under the opening sentence that sets the entire work in the 8th century. Therefore, the message of Micah becomes one of a warning unheeded that results in disaster, but, because of God's kindness and faithful love, hope and renewal will follow disaster.

#### **I. The Lord's Judgment (1:1-3:12)**

- A. Judgment of Samaria and Judah (1:1-13)
- B. Judgment of the wicked ones (2:1-6)
- C. Judgment of the leaders (2:7-3:12)

#### **II. Hope and Restoration (4:1-5:15)**

- A. A peaceful world with a powerful Zion at its center (4:1-13)
- B. God's enemies defeated and the restoration of a Davidic king (5:1-15)

#### **III. God's Case against Israel, Judgment, and Restoration (6:1-7:20)**

- A. The trial (6:1-8)
- B. The verdict (6:9-16)
- C. The prophet laments (7:1-8)
- D. Zion will rise (7:9-20)

*James D. Nogalski and Anna E. Sieges*



**The Lord is coming!**

**1** The LORD's word that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Judah's Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem:

<sup>2</sup> Listen, all you peoples!

Pay attention, earth, and all that fills it!  
May the LORD God be a witness against you,  
the Lord from his holy temple.

<sup>3</sup> Look! The LORD is coming out from his place;  
he will go down and tread on the shrines of the earth.

<sup>4</sup> Then the mountains will melt under him;  
the valleys will split apart,  
like wax yielding to the fire,  
like waters poured down a slope.

<sup>5</sup> All this is for the crime of Jacob  
and the sins of the house of Israel.  
Who is responsible for the crime of Jacob?<sup>a</sup>  
Isn't it Samaria?  
Who is responsible for<sup>b</sup> the shrines of Judah?  
Isn't it Jerusalem?

<sup>6</sup> So I will make Samaria a pile of rubble in the open field,  
a place for planting vineyards.  
I will pour her stones into the valley;  
her foundations I will lay bare.

<sup>7</sup> All her images will be beaten to pieces;  
all her wages will be burned;  
I will make all her idols worthless.  
Since she gathered them from the wages of a prostitute,  
they will again become wages of a prostitute.

<sup>8</sup> On account of this, I will cry out and howl;  
I will go about barefoot and stripped.  
I will cry out like the jackals,  
and mourn like the ostriches.

**Destruction looms**

<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Zion has been weakened by her wounds!  
It has come as far as Judah;

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks *responsible for*. <sup>b</sup>Heb lacks *responsible for*.

1:1 *Micah of Moresheth . . . Samaria and Jerusalem*: See the introduction for information about these places.

1:2-8 Micah's opening verses call on witnesses during a controversy to view the Lord's activity (see Jer 6:19). Verses 3-7 describe the Lord's activity. The Lord comes from the Lord's dwelling place and wreaks havoc on the earth. Verse 8 contains the prophet's response to the Lord's destructive activity.

1:4 All of nature responds to the Lord's presence (see Ps 97:5; Isa 64:1-2; Nah 1:5).

1:5 *crime of Jacob . . . Samaria . . . the shrines of Judah . . . Jerusalem*: The Lord has come to judge the northern kingdom (Jacob, Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah) for their false worship. The prophet condemns Samaria, the capital of Israel, for the sins of Jacob and Israel. The verse identifies the shrines of Judah, the places where false worship occurs, with Jerusalem itself. Several passages in the OT speak of Jerusalem as the only location where proper worship can occur (see Deut 12; 1 Kgs 8; 2 Kgs 23). Micah turns this image around and maintains that Jerusalem has become a location of false worship.

1:7 *the wages of a prostitute*: Throughout the Book of the

Twelve (Hosea through Malachi, or the Minor Prophets) the image of a prostitute or unfaithful wife describes Israel or Judah's worship of gods other than the Lord. Samaria has engaged in the worship of images and idols. Micah draws from Hosea 2:12; 9:1 (see also Hos 4:17; 8:4; 13:2; 14:9; Mal 2:11-12).

1:8 *I will go about barefoot and stripped. I will cry out like the jackals, and mourn like the ostriches*: The prophet symbolically acts out what he has proclaimed will occur to the land. The land will become bare (Mic 1:6) because of the Lord's wrath, so Micah will also make himself bare by stripping and removing his shoes (see Isa 20:1-6; Jer 13:1-11; 19:1; 51:62-64; Ezek 5:1-17; 6:1-14; 24:1-27). Jackals and ostriches often lived in barren places and produced strange howling cries.

1:9-16 Nearly every city named contains a pun with the city name. For instance in Hebrew, *Beth-le-aphrah* sounds like "dust" (1:10); *Zaanana* sounds like the verb "come out" (1:11); *Lachish* sounds like the word for "a team of horses" (1:13); *Mareshah* sounds like "conqueror" (1:15). See sidebar, "Sennacherib's Campaign," for historical background.

1:1 2Ch 27:1;  
Is 1:1; Jer 26:18;  
Hos 1:1; Mi 1:14  
1:2 Ps 11:4  
1:3 Ps 115:3;  
Is 26:21;  
Am 4:13  
1:8 Job 30:29;  
Is 13:21; Is 20:2;  
Is 22:4

1:11 Josh 15:37;  
Isa 20:4; Is 47:3;  
Eze 23:29  
1:12 Jer 14:19;  
Am 3:6  
1:13 Josh 10:3;  
Josh 10:31;  
1Ki 14:16;  
2Ki 18:14;  
Mi 1:5  
1:14 Josh 15:44;  
2Ki 16:8; Mi 1:1  
2:3 Is 2:11;  
Jer 18:11;  
Am 3:1; Am 3:2;  
Am 5:13

**Sennacherib's Campaign** Micah 1:9-15 contains the names of several places that would have suffered at the hands of the Assyrian forces during Sennacherib's campaign through Judah and the Philistine coast in 701 BCE. Archaeologists have not yet successfully located every city in this list. However, the biblical account contains reference to Sennacherib's campaign through both Lachish (southwest of Jerusalem) and Jerusalem (see 2 Kgs 19). Gath is a well-known Philistine city along the coast (Mic 1:10). Miraculously, Sennacherib didn't destroy Jerusalem. Two biblical accounts claim that the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers while they slept outside of Jerusalem and that because of this loss, Sennacherib and his forces were forced to return to Nineveh, their capital (2 Kgs 19:35-37; Isa 37:36-38; cf. 2 Chron 32:20-21). An inscription found in Sennacherib's palace confirms this account insofar as it admits that Sennacherib didn't take Jerusalem, but Sennacherib claims Hezekiah paid tribute so he would leave (cf. 2 Kgs 18:13-16, missing from the other two parallels). Though Sennacherib didn't take Jerusalem, the destruction he left behind in the surrounding Judean countryside was horrific.

he has struck as far as the gate of my people,  
as far as Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup>In Gath tell it not; no need to weep there!<sup>c</sup>

In Beth-le-aphrah, roll yourself in the dust!

<sup>11</sup>Pass by (for your sake),<sup>d</sup> inhabitants of Shaphir!

In nakedness and shame she will not go out, inhabitants of Zaanan.

The cry of Beth-ezel will take away from you<sup>e</sup> any place to stand.

<sup>12</sup>How she longs for good, inhabitants of Maroth!

Calamity has come down from the LORD to the gate of Jerusalem.

<sup>13</sup>Harness the horses to the chariot, inhabitants of Lachish!

It was the beginning of sin for Daughter Zion;

the crimes of Israel have been found in you.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, you will give good-bye gifts to Moresheth-gath;

the houses of Achzib have become a deception for the kings of Israel.

<sup>15</sup>Again I will bring to you the one who conquers, inhabitants of Mareshah;

the glory of Israel will come as far as Adullam.

<sup>16</sup>Make yourself bald and cut off your hair because of your cherished children!

Make yourself as bald as the vulture, for they have gone from you into exile.

### ***Oppressors will themselves be ruined***

**2** Doom to those who devise wickedness,  
to those who plan evil when they are in bed.

By the light of morning they do it,  
for they are very powerful.

<sup>2</sup>They covet fields and seize them,

houses and take them away.

They oppress a householder and those in his house,

a man and his estate.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore, the LORD proclaims:

I myself am devising an evil against this family  
from which you will not be able to remove your necks!

You will no longer be able to go about arrogantly,  
for it will be an evil time.

<sup>4</sup>On that day, a taunt will be raised against you;

someone will wail bitterly:

"We are utterly destroyed!

<sup>c</sup>Heb lacks *there*. <sup>d</sup>You (plural) <sup>e</sup>You (feminine singular)

2:1-5 These verses contain a two-step judgment scene. In 2:1-2 the prophet recounts a list of sinful activities undertaken by certain powerful landowners in Judah. They fix the property system so that they receive the most land and resources at the expense of others in the community. In Micah 2:3-8 the Lord speaks and declares the

punishment that will come on these individuals. Just as the powerful landowners have taken land from others, the Lord will take land from them (see *plan evil* in 2:1 and *devising an evil* in 2:3).

2:4 *On that day*: Throughout the Book of the Twelve (Hosea through Malachi), this phrase means a day of God's

He exchanges the portion of my people;  
he removes what belongs to me;  
he gives away our fields to a rebel.”

<sup>5</sup> Therefore, you will have no one to set boundary lines  
by lot in the LORD’s assembly.

### Leaders unwilling to hear God’s word

<sup>6</sup> “They mustn’t preach!” so they preach.

“They mustn’t preach of such things!  
Disgrace won’t overtake us.”

<sup>7</sup> (Should this be said, house of Jacob?)

“Is the LORD’s patience cut short? Are these his deeds?”  
Don’t my words help the one who behaves righteously?

<sup>8</sup> But yesterday, my people, the LORD rose up as an enemy.<sup>f</sup>

You strip off the glorious clothes<sup>g</sup>  
from trusting passersby, those who reject war.

<sup>9</sup> You drive out the women of my people, each from her cherished house;  
from their young children you take away my splendor forever.

<sup>10</sup> Rise up and go! This can’t be the resting place;  
because of its uncleanness, it destroys and the destruction is horrific.

<sup>11</sup> If someone were to go about inspired and say deceitfully:

“I will preach to you for wine and liquor,”  
such a one would be the preacher for this people!

### The false prophet’s “peace” will be destruction

<sup>12</sup> I’ll surely gather Jacob—all of you!

I’ll surely assemble you, those who are left of Israel!

I’ll put them together like sheep in Bozrah,<sup>b</sup>  
like a flock in its pen, noisy with people.

<sup>13</sup> The one who breaks out will go before them;  
they will break out and pass through the gate;  
they will leave by it.

They will pass on, their king before them, the LORD at their head.

### Micah justifies the coming destruction

**3** But I said:

Hear, leaders of Jacob,  
rulers of the house of Israel!

Isn’t it your job to know justice?—

<sup>2</sup> you who hate good and love evil,  
who tear the skin off them, and the flesh off their bones,

<sup>3</sup> who devour the flesh of my people, tear off their skin,  
break their bones in pieces, and spread them out as if in a pot,  
like meat in a kettle.

<sup>f</sup>Heb lacks the LORD. <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>See Isa 34:6; 63:1.

decisive activity, whether for good or for ill (see Hos 1:5; 2:16, 18, 21; Amos 8:3, 9, 13; 9:11; Obad 8; Mic 2:4; 4:6; 5:10; 7:11, 12; Zeph 1:9, 10; 3:11, 16; Hag 2:23; Zech 2:11; 3:10; 9:16; 11:11; 12:1-11; 13:1-4; 14:6-21).

2:5 *no one to set boundary lines by lot*. This phrase refers to the method used by the powerful landowners for dividing property by casting lots. The verse proclaims their punishment. They will no longer be able to participate in the distribution of land and will therefore become landless.

2:6-11 These verses tell of the conflict between Micah and the powerful landowners.

2:12-13 These images are unclear. Some interpreters believe they describe the Lord judging the people of Judah. Others conclude that they describe the Lord as shepherd, rescuing God’s people.

3:1-12 This unit is a three-part indictment spoken by the prophet against the leaders, prophets, and priests in Jerusalem. Verses 1-4 indict the leaders for their injustice, verses 5-8 the prophets for their willingness to prophesy peace for a price, and verses 9-12 the leaders, priests, and prophets for their greed. The unit ends with judgment against Jerusalem.

3:1-4 *your job to know justice*: The leaders and the rulers in Jerusalem were those responsible for delivering just judgments on behalf of the city’s population. Micah condemns these leaders and rulers because they have refused to judge fairly and have made the people their own victims. *devour the flesh of my people*: Micah uses a metaphor to speak of this practice. Treating the people unjustly is like eating their flesh.

2:7 Ps 15:2,  
Ps 19:7, Ps 84:11,  
Ps 119:65;  
Jer 15:16  
2:8 2Ch 28:8;  
Ps 120:6,  
Ps 120:7  
2:11 Is 30:10;  
Jer 5:31  
3:1 Jer 5:5;  
Mi 3:9

3:5 Is 3:12;  
Jer 6:14

3:6 Is 29:10;  
Eze 13:23;  
Am 8:9

3:7 [v 13:45;  
Is 44:25;  
Zec 13:4

3:8 Is 58:1

3:10 Jer 22:13;  
Jer 22:17;  
Hab 2:12

3:11 Is 1:23;  
Jer 6:13; Jer 7:4;  
Am 9:10; Mi 7:3

3:12 Ps 79:1;  
Jer 9:11;  
Jer 26:18; Mi 1:6

4:1 Ps 22:27;  
Ps 86:9; Is 2:2;  
Jer 3:17; Dn 2:28

- <sup>4</sup>Then they will cry out to the LORD,  
but he won't answer them.  
He will hide his face from them at that time,  
because of their evil deeds.
- <sup>5</sup>The LORD proclaims concerning the prophets, those who lead my people astray,  
those who chew with their teeth and then proclaim "Peace!"  
but stir up war against the one who puts nothing in their mouths:
- <sup>6</sup>Therefore, it will become night for you,  
without vision, only darkness  
without divination!  
The sun will set on the prophets;  
the day will be dark upon them.
- <sup>7</sup>Those seeing visions will be ashamed,  
and the diviners disgraced;  
they will all cover their upper lips,<sup>1</sup>  
for there will be no answer from God.
- <sup>8</sup>But me! I am filled with power,  
with the spirit of the LORD,  
with justice and might,  
to declare to Jacob his wrongdoing and to Israel his sin!
- <sup>9</sup>Hear this, leaders of the house of Jacob,  
rulers of the house of Israel,  
you who reject justice and make crooked all that is straight,  
<sup>10</sup>who build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with injustice!
- <sup>11</sup>Her officials give justice for a bribe,  
and her priests teach for hire.  
Her prophets offer divination for silver,  
yet they rely on the LORD, saying,  
"Isn't the LORD in our midst?  
Evil won't come upon us!"
- <sup>12</sup>Therefore, because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field,  
Jerusalem will become piles of rubble,  
and the temple mount will become an overgrown mound.

### A peaceable world

- 4** But in the days to come,  
the mountain of the LORD's house will be the highest of the mountains;  
it will be lifted above the hills; peoples will stream to it.

<sup>1</sup>Or *mustache* or *beard*

3:4 *he won't answer them. He will hide his face from them:* signs of the Lord's judgment (see Ps 18:41; Prov 1:28; Isa 1:15; 59:2; Jer 11:11; Deut 31:17).

3:5-7 *chew with their teeth:* likely relates to the picture (in Mic 3:2-3) of the leaders who skin, chop up, and cook the people, then proclaim "Peace!": The prophets are guilty of predicting positive outcomes for those who give them money or food. This jeopardizes the truthfulness of their predictions. Consequently, like the leaders and rulers, these prophets will receive *no answer from God*.

3:8 *But me! I am filled with power . . . with justice and might:* Micah differs from the other prophets who prophesy for money, because Micah relies on the Lord's spirit. Micah differs from the leaders because he proceeds with justice.

3:10 *who build Zion with bloodshed:* See Nahum 3:1; Habakkuk 2:12.

3:11 *Even the priests give in to bribery and corruption.* The leaders, prophets, and priests together believe that the Lord's presence in the temple will prevent evil from happening to Jerusalem—a belief that Micah denies.

3:12 *Zion will be plowed like a field:* The leaders, prophets, and priests mistakenly believe that God won't judge Jerusalem. More than 100 years after Micah, in the time of Jeremiah, this misunderstanding still existed. In Jeremiah 26:18, the elders of the land quote this passage to convince the people to listen to Jeremiah's message, which was very similar to Micah's.

4:1-4 This section imagines a peaceful time in the distant future when the problems of Micah 3:1-12 will be reversed. The temple will no longer be in danger of destruction (4:1; cf. Mic 3:12), the priests won't be able to charge for their teaching because God will be the teacher (4:2; cf. Mic 3:11), and the leaders won't judge unjustly because God will be the judge (4:3; cf. Mic 3:1). No one will need weapons (4:3), and everyone will prosper (4:4). These verses repeat Isaiah 2:2-4, though Micah 4:4 ends differently.

4:1-2 *peoples will stream to it. Many nations will go:* In the OT, the words "peoples" and "nations" usually refer to foreign people groups who weren't included in God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 17). This passage imagines all

- <sup>2</sup> Many nations will go and say:  
 "Come, let's go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
 to the house of Jacob's God,  
 so that he may teach us his ways  
 and we may walk in God's paths!"  
 Instruction will come from Zion  
 and the LORD's word from Jerusalem.
- <sup>3</sup> God will judge between the nations  
 and settle disputes of mighty nations, which are far away.  
 They will beat their swords into iron plows  
 and their spears into pruning tools.  
 Nation will not take up sword against nation;  
 they will no longer learn how to make war.
- <sup>4</sup> All will sit underneath their own grapevines,  
 under their own fig trees.  
 There will be no one to terrify them;  
 for the mouth of the LORD of heavenly forces has spoken.

4:2 Ps 25:8;  
 Is 2:3, Is 54:13;  
 Jer 31:6

4:3 Ps 46:9;  
 Is 2:4; Jl 3:10;  
 Zec 9:10

4:4 Lv 26:6;  
 1Ki 4:25; Is 1:20,  
 Is 40:5; Zec 3:10

4:8 Gn 35:21;  
 Ps 48:12, Is 1:26;  
 Zec 9:10;  
 Mt 21:33

### **An assertion of enduring loyalty**

- <sup>5</sup> Each of the peoples walks in the name of their own god;  
 but as for us, we will walk in the name of the LORD our God  
 forever and always.

### **Dominion in Zion**

- <sup>6</sup> On that day, says the LORD,  
 I will gather the lame;  
 I will assemble those who were driven away and those whom I have harmed.
- <sup>7</sup> I will make the lame into survivors, those driven away into a mighty nation.  
 The LORD will rule over them on Mount Zion from now on and forever.
- <sup>8</sup> As for you, Tower of Eder,<sup>1</sup> hill of Daughter Zion, as for you it will come,  
 the former dominion will come,  
 the royal power belonging to Daughter Zion.

### **God is in control**

- <sup>9</sup> Now why do you cry out so loudly?  
 Isn't the king in you?  
 Or has your counselor perished,  
 so that pain has seized you like that of a woman in labor?
- <sup>10</sup> Writhe and scream, Daughter Zion, like a woman in labor!  
 Now you will leave the city and dwell in the open field;  
 you will go to Babylon.  
 There you will be rescued;  
 there the LORD will redeem you from the power of your enemies.

<sup>1</sup>Or tower of the flock

peoples coming to the Lord's house (the temple). This is remarkable because throughout most of the OT only those who are direct descendants of Abraham may worship at the temple.

4:2 *he may teach us his ways and we may walk in God's paths*: See Psalm 25:8, 9, 12.

4:3 *swords into iron plows and their spears into pruning tools*: This image of a peace when people no longer need weapons agrees with Isaiah 2:4, but Joel 3:10 reverses it with instructions for an epic battle.

4:5 This statement seems out of place because the preceding verses say that the nations will follow the Lord. Here the nations follow other gods, while God's people walk *in the name of the Lord our God*. Nevertheless, the

verse encourages the faithfulness of God's people even if others don't follow.

4:6-8 These verses say that the Lord will rule from Jerusalem in the future. They anticipate a time of reversal when the Lord will restore those the Lord had driven away (in the Babylonian exile).

4:9-13 This passage takes a step backward from the previous verses and describes what has to happen before the peaceful time that Micah 4:1-8 predicts. These verses reveal the Lord's plan for *Daughter Zion* (a reference to Jerusalem). First, she will be stripped of her leadership (4:9). Second, other nations will attack her and take her to Babylon (4:10-11). Third, the Lord will rescue her from Babylon (4:10). Fourth, Daughter Zion will fight

5:1 1Ki 22:24;  
Lam 3:30;  
Mt 26:67;  
Jn 18:22

5:2 Gn 48:7;  
Ru 4:11;  
Prv 8:22; Mt 2:6;  
Jn 7:42

5:3 1Ki 14:16;  
Is 4:2, Is 10:20;  
Mi 2:12, Mi 4:10

5:4 Ps 72:8;  
Is 40:11; Mi 7:14;  
Lk 1:32

5:5 Is 8:7, Is 9:6;  
Lk 2:14;  
Eph 2:14

5:6 Gn 10:8;  
Na 2:11

5:7 Ps 72:6;  
Hos 14:5; Mi 5:3

- <sup>11</sup> Now many nations may gather against you;  
they say, "Let her be defiled,"  
or "Let our eyes look with desire at Zion."  
<sup>12</sup> But they don't know the plans of the LORD;  
they can't understand his scheme,  
namely, that he will bring them like grain to the threshing floor!  
<sup>13</sup> Arise and thresh, Daughter Zion,  
for I will make your horn out of iron;  
your hooves I will make out of bronze.  
You will crush many peoples;  
you will dedicate their ill-gotten gains to the LORD,  
their wealth to the LORD of all the earth.

**Call to arms; the future is secure**

- 5** <sup>a</sup> Now muster your troops, Daughter Troop!<sup>1</sup>  
They have laid siege against us;  
with a rod they will strike the cheek of the judge of Israel.  
<sup>2</sup> As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
though you are the least significant of Judah's forces,  
one who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf will come out from you.  
His origin is from remote times, from ancient days.  
<sup>3</sup> Therefore, he will give them up  
until the time when she who is in labor gives birth.  
The rest of his kin will return to the people of Israel.  
<sup>4</sup> He will stand and shepherd his flock<sup>m</sup> in the strength of the LORD,  
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.  
They will dwell secure,  
because he will surely become great throughout the earth;  
<sup>5</sup> he will become one of peace.<sup>a</sup>  
When Assyria invades our land and treads down our fortresses,  
then we will raise up against him seven shepherds  
and eight human princes.  
<sup>6</sup> They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword,  
the land of Nimrod with the drawn sword.  
He will rescue us from Assyria when he invades our land  
and treads within our territory.  
<sup>7</sup> Then the few remaining in Jacob will be amid many peoples  
like dew from the LORD,  
like spring showers upon the grass,  
which does not hope for humans or wait for human ones.

<sup>k</sup>4:14 in Heb <sup>l</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>m</sup>Heb lacks *his flock*. <sup>a</sup>Or *this will ensure peace*.

the nations who fought against her, and she will win (4:12, 13).

5:1-9 The first section (5:1-4) issues a call to arms for God's forces against an unnamed enemy, and promises that God will restore a Judean king to the throne in Jerusalem. The following section (5:5-6) names the enemy as Assyria and promises that God will provide Judean rulers to defeat the Assyrian forces. 5:7-9 promises that after the Assyrian attack, some of the Judeans will survive and eventually triumph. The Judean survivors in various places will be both a positive force (5:7) and a force of judgment against the enemies of God (5:8-9).

5:2 *Bethlehem ... a ruler in Israel*: The NT (e.g., Matt 2:6; cf. John 7:42) picks up on this promise of a Davidic ruler and applies it to the messianic hope of the 1st century CE. The original audience of this passage would have understood the promised ruler to be someone like Hezekiah, who delivered Jerusalem from the attacking Assyrians.

5:3 *until... she who is in labor gives birth*: It's unclear whether "she" is an unnamed woman who will be the mother of the promised king or "she" is Daughter Zion, mentioned in Micah 4:8, 10, 13; 5:1. ("Daughter Troop" in Mic 5:1 has uncertain meaning.) This verse is probably talking about Daughter Zion (another name for Jerusalem) producing a Davidic king.

5:5 *seven shepherds and eight human princes*: The promise of a Davidic king expands to include an entire organization under the king's rule. In this context, the shepherds are likely military officials responsible for organizing troops to resist the enemy.

5:6 *They will shepherd ... with the drawn sword*: Rulers from Judah will even have dominion in Mesopotamia and will defeat the Assyrians and subdue them militarily.

5:7-8 *like dew ... like a lion*: The presence of God's people will be nourishing, like dew (see Deut 32:2; Hos 14:5) and showers (see Ps 72:6), but also destructive like a lion.

- <sup>8</sup>Then the few remaining in Jacob will be among the nations,  
amid many peoples,  
like a lion among the creatures of the forest,  
like a young lion among flocks of sheep,  
which when it passes by, tramples and tears to pieces  
with no one to deliver.
- <sup>9</sup>Your hand will be lifted over your foes;  
all your enemies will be cut off.

5:8 Gn 49:9;

Ps 50:22;

Hos 5:14;

Mi 4:13;

Zec 10:5

5:9 Is 26:11

6:1 Ps 50:4;

Mi 1:2

6:2 Is 1:18;

Hos 4:1

6:3 Is 43:22;

Is 43:23; Jer 2:5;

Jer 2:31

6:4 Ex 12:51;

Ex 15:20;

Nm 12:1; Dt 7:8;

Ps 77:20

6:5 Nm 22:1;

Nm 22:5;

Nm 25:1

6:6 Ps 40:6;

Ps 51:16

### **Doom for Israel's enemies**

- <sup>10</sup>On that day—says the LORD—  
I will cut down your horses in your midst;  
I will destroy your chariots!
- <sup>11</sup>I will cut down the cities of your land;  
I will tear down your defenses!
- <sup>12</sup>I will demolish the sorceries you perform;  
you will have no more diviners!
- <sup>13</sup>I will cut down your images and your sacred pillars in your midst.  
You will no longer bow down to the works of your hands!
- <sup>14</sup>I will tear down your sacred poles<sup>o</sup> in your midst;  
I will destroy your cities!
- <sup>15</sup>I will exact vengeance in anger and in wrath on the nations that don't obey!

### **God's dispute with Israel**

- 6**Hear what the LORD is saying:  
Arise, lay out the lawsuit before the mountains;  
let the hills hear your voice!
- <sup>2</sup>Hear, mountains, the lawsuit of the LORD!  
Hear, eternal foundations of the earth!  
The LORD has a lawsuit against his people;  
with Israel he will argue.
- <sup>3</sup>"My people, what did I ever do to you?  
How have I wearied you? Answer me!
- <sup>4</sup>I brought you up out of the land of Egypt;  
I redeemed you from the house of slavery.  
I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam before you.
- <sup>5</sup>My people, remember what Moab's King Balak had planned,  
and how Balaam, Beor's son, answered him!  
Remember everything<sup>p</sup> from Shittim to Gilgal,  
that you might learn to recognize the righteous acts of the LORD!"

### **What does the LORD require?**

- <sup>6</sup>With what should I approach the LORD  
and bow down before God on high?  
Should I come before him with entirely burned offerings, with year-old calves?

<sup>o</sup>Heb *asherim* <sup>p</sup>Heb lacks *everything*.

5:10-15 Judah was addressed in Micah 5:1-9; now *the nations that don't obey* are addressed. This shift takes place without any notice until 5:15. The unit contains two different statements of judgment. The first (5:10-11) describes the military destruction of God's enemy, moving from the troops (horses and chariots) to the whole country (cities and defenses). The second statement relates the destruction of inappropriate religious practices, including sorcery, divination (5:12), and idol worship (5:13-14).

5:14 The Hebrew word for *sacred pole* is *asherim*. The "sacred pole" was an image of the Canaanite goddess Asherah (see Deut 16:21-22; 1 Kgs 15:13; 2 Kgs 18:3-4; 23:6; 14, 15).

6:1-5 The Lord assembles a trial or a dispute, and reads the charges against the people. The Lord reminds the people of the Lord's delivering acts from the time of the exodus until the entry into the land.

6:2 *Hear, mountains, the lawsuit of the LORD!* The mountains are the witnesses called to the controversy (see Mic 1:2; Deut 31:28; Isa 1:2).

6:5 *Moab's King Balak . . . from Shittim to Gilgal:* These statements give brief reminders of God's deliverance in Moab (before the Israelites entered the land; see Num 22-24) and the movement of the Israelites into the land from Shittim on the east side of the Jordan River in Moab to Gilgal (one of Joshua's main camps) in the land.

6:6-8 An unnamed individual (likely a representative of

6:7 Lv 18:21;  
2Kj 3:27,  
2Kj 16:3  
6:8 Dt 10:12;  
Is 57:15;  
Hos 6:6,  
Hos 12:6;  
Zec 7:9  
6:9 Job 5:17  
7:1 Is 17:6,  
Is 24:13, Is 28:4;  
Jer 48:32;  
Hos 9:10

- 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with many torrents of oil?  
Should I give my oldest child for my crime;  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my spirit?  
8 He has told you, human one, what is good and  
what the LORD requires from you:  
to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God.

### **Punishment is near**

- 9 The voice of the LORD calls out to the city;  
wisdom appears when one fears your name.<sup>9</sup>  
Hear, tribe, and who appointed her!<sup>9</sup>  
10 Are the treasures of wickedness still in the house of wickedness,  
while the shorted basket<sup>10</sup> is denounced?<sup>10</sup>  
11 Can I approve wicked scales and a bag of false weights  
12 in a city<sup>11</sup> whose wealthy are full of violence  
and whose inhabitants speak falsehood  
with lying tongues in their mouths?  
13 So I have made you sick by striking you!  
I have struck you because of your sins.  
14 You devour, but you aren't satisfied;  
a gnawing emptiness is within you.  
You put something aside,  
but you don't keep it safe.  
That which you do try to keep safe,  
I will give to the sword.  
15 You sow, but you don't gather.  
You tread down olives, but you don't anoint with oil;  
you tread grapes, but don't drink wine.  
16 Yet you<sup>16</sup> have kept the policies of Omri,  
all the practices of the house of Ahab;  
you have followed their counsels.  
Therefore, I will make you a sign of destruction,  
your<sup>16</sup> inhabitants an object of hissing!  
You must bear the reproach of my people.

### **The prophet laments**

7 I'm doomed!  
I've become like one who,  
even after the summer fruit has been gathered,  
after the ripened fruits have been collected,

<sup>9</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>10</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>11</sup>Or *ephah*, approximately twenty quarts of grain <sup>12</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>13</sup>Heb lacks in a city. <sup>14</sup>Or *he* <sup>15</sup>Or *her*

the people) responds to the charges the Lord presented in the controversy in 6:6-7. This individual asks the Lord a rhetorical question, in effect, "What more do you want from us?" and moves from the expected offering (*year-old calves*), to increasingly exaggerated offerings (*thousands of rams, torrents of oil*), to the most extreme sacrifice, one's oldest male child. In Micah 6:8 the prophet responds with a profound statement: The Lord wants people to live ethically in close relationship with God.

6:8 *do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God*: Earlier in Micah, the prophet addressed the leadership of Judah of corrupting justice (Mic 3:2-12). The term for "faithful love" occurs frequently in Micah (Mic 2:19; 4:1; 6:2, 6; 10:12, 12:6) and suggests the sort of deep abiding covenant loyalty that can be seen in one's actions. God also requires that the people walk humbly with God. The previous arrogant reply to God's indictment shows that the people lack humility, and their misunderstanding

concerning what God requires shows that they are out of step with God.

6:9-16 This unit contains a call to attention (6:9), followed by a pronouncement of guilt for cheating in the marketplace (6:10-11), for violence, and for false testimony (6:12). 6:13-15 relates the verdict for the people's sins. 6:16 contains a brief accusation and verdict that charge the people of Jerusalem with sinning in the same way that the northern kingdom did before its destruction. Therefore, the destruction for Jerusalem will be the same.

6:11 *wicked scales and a bag of false weights*: See Leviticus 19:36; Amos 8:5; Hosea 12:7.

6:15 *You sow, but you don't gather*: The punishment for Jerusalem's sins is a time of poor harvests that contrasts with the future hope in Micah 4:3-4.

7:1-7 This unit presents the prophet's response to the judgment and the verdict in Micah 6:9-16. There are



has no cluster of grapes to eat,  
no ripe fig that I might desire.

<sup>2</sup>Faithful ones have perished from the land;  
there is no righteous one among humanity.  
All of them lie in wait for bloodshed;  
they hunt each other with nets.

<sup>3</sup>Their hands are skilled at doing evil.  
Official and judge alike ask for a bribe;  
the powerful speak however they like;  
this is how they conspire.

<sup>4</sup>The good among them are like a briar;  
those who do the right thing are like a thorny thicket.  
(A day for your lookouts!<sup>a</sup>  
Your punishment has arrived.  
The confusion of the wicked<sup>b</sup> is nearby.)

<sup>5</sup>Don't rely on a friend;  
put no trust in a companion;  
guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your embrace.

<sup>6</sup>Son disrespects father;  
a daughter rises up against her mother,  
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;  
the enemies of a man are those of his own household.

<sup>7</sup>But me! I will keep watch for the LORD;  
I will wait for the God of my salvation;  
my God will hear me.

### Zion speaks

<sup>8</sup>Do not rejoice<sup>a</sup> over me, my enemy,  
because when I fall, I will rise;  
if I sit in darkness, the LORD is my light.

<sup>9</sup>I must bear the raging of the LORD,  
for I have sinned against him,  
until he decides my case and provides justice for me.  
He will bring me out into the light;  
I will see by means of his righteousness.

<sup>10</sup>Then my enemy will see;  
shame will cover her who said to me:  
"Where is the LORD your God?"  
My eyes will see her ruin;<sup>a</sup>  
now she will become something to be trampled,  
like mud in the streets.

### Micah responds to Zion

<sup>11</sup>A day for the building of your walls!  
On that day, the boundary will be distant.

<sup>12</sup>On that day, they will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt,  
from Egypt to the River, from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Heb lacks *the wicked*. <sup>a</sup>Rejoice (feminine singular) <sup>a</sup>Heb lacks *ruin*.

three parts to this unit: 7:1 is the prophet's cry of lamentation and declaration of his discouraged state. 7:2-6 relates why the prophet is distressed. 7:7 states the prophet's hope that God will still hear him and bring about deliverance.

7:2 *All of them lie in wait for bloodshed*: See Micah 3:10; Isaiah 59:7.

7:3 *Official and judge alike ask for a bribe*: See Micah 3:1-3, 9-11.

7:7 *But me!*: See Micah 3:8. *I will keep watch for the LORD*: See Habakkuk 2:1.

7:8-10 In this section, the Hebrew terms used indicate that one female character addresses another female. The speaker is Daughter Zion—or Jerusalem, now presented as though it were a person. She addresses the city of Nineveh, also presented as if it were a person, and instructs her not to take pride over the weakened state of Jerusalem, because Nineveh also will be destroyed (see Nah 1:8; 2:7; 3:4).

7:11-13 The prophet responds to Daughter Zion with three statements. First is a statement of hope for the time following the exile when the community will rebuild the

7:2 Ps 12:1,  
Ps 14:1, Ps 14:3;  
Is 57:1; Jer 5:1  
7:3 Mi 3:11  
7:4 2Sa 23:6;  
Is 10:3; Is 22:5;  
Eze 2:6; Hos 9:7  
7:5 Jer 9:4  
7:6 Eze 22:7;  
Mi 10:21,  
Mi 10:35,  
Mi 10:36  
7:8 Ps 27:1;  
Is 9:2  
7:9 Lam 3:39  
7:10 2Sa 22:43;  
Ps 42:3; Is 51:23;  
Jl 2:17; Zec 10:5

7:14 Ps 23:4,  
Ps 28:9, Ps 95:7,  
Jer 50:19; Mi 5:4

7:15 Ps 78:12

7:16 Is 26:11

7:17 Gn 3:14;  
Ps 18:45, Ps 72:9;  
Is 2:19, Is 49:23

7:18 Ex 34:7;

Ps 103:9;

Is 43:25;

Jer 50:20

7:19 Is 38:17

7:20 Jer 33:26

**13** And the earth will become desolate because of her inhabitants,  
because of the fruit of their actions.

***Micah intercedes for the people***

**14** Shepherd your people with your staff,  
the sheep of your inheritance,  
those dwelling alone in a forest in the midst of Carmel.  
Let them graze in Bashan and Gilead, as a long time ago.

***God agrees***

**15** As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt,  
I will show Israel wonderful things.

***The prophet continues***

**16** Nations will see and be ashamed of all their strength;  
they will cover their mouths;  
their ears will be deaf.

**17** They will lick dust like the snake,  
like things that crawl on the ground.  
They will come trembling from their strongholds to the LORD our God;  
they will dread and fear you!

**18** Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity,  
overlooking the sin of the few remaining for his inheritance?  
He doesn't hold on to his anger forever;  
he delights in faithful love.

**19** He will once again have compassion on us;  
he will tread down our iniquities.  
You will hurl all our sins into the depths of the sea.

**20** You will provide faithfulness to Jacob, faithful love to Abraham,  
as you swore to our ancestors a long time ago.

walls of Jerusalem (7:11; see Ezra 9:9; Isa 58:12; Amos 9:11). Next the prophet states that several different nations will come to Jerusalem (7:12). It is unclear whether this is a positive statement or a negative one. If one reads 7:12 with 7:11, the statement seems positive and creates a scene like that of Micah 4:1-3. However, if one reads it with the third statement, 7:13, which predicts the destruction of the earth, then the nations coming to Jerusalem are invading forces attacking Jerusalem. When one reads 7:12 as a negative statement, each of the major powers that oppressed Jerusalem from the 8th to the 6th century receives mention: Egypt, Assyria, and the River (Babylon). Therefore, it seems right to read 7:12 as a negative statement of nations coming against Jerusalem with the outcome stated in 7:13 that the earth (or the land of Judah) is desolate because of its inhabitants.

7:14 The prophet asks the Lord to shepherd God's people, providing them with fertile land (i.e., Carmel, Bashan, and Gilead).

7:15 This verse presents the Lord's response to the prophet's petition in Micah 7:14. The Lord will shepherd Israel just as in the time of the exodus.

7:16-20 These closing verses contain two parts. 7:16-18 relates the response of the nations to the Lord's positive activity for Judah. 7:18-20 switches between addressing God directly and speaking about God in the third person. The verses affirm that God will show compassion to Judah and forgive them for their wrongdoings.

7:17 *lick dust*: This is a sign of submission, usually paired with bowing (see Isa 49:23; Ps 72:9).

7:18 *pardoning iniquity, overlooking the sin*: The Book of the Twelve (Hosea through Malachi) speaks elsewhere of the Lord's gracious character (Joel 2:13; Jon 3:9). The phrasing of these verses comes from the revelation of God's name in Exodus 34:6-7 (see also Nah 1:2).

7:20 *faithfulness to Jacob, faithful love to Abraham*: The prophet appeals to the promise to Abraham, which included descendants and the land of Israel. The prophet maintains that the Lord's covenant promise to Abraham and Jacob is the reason that the Lord has shown compassion and forgiven iniquity, which under the Mosaic covenant (the Instruction given at Mount Sinai) called for punishment and the destruction of the people of God.

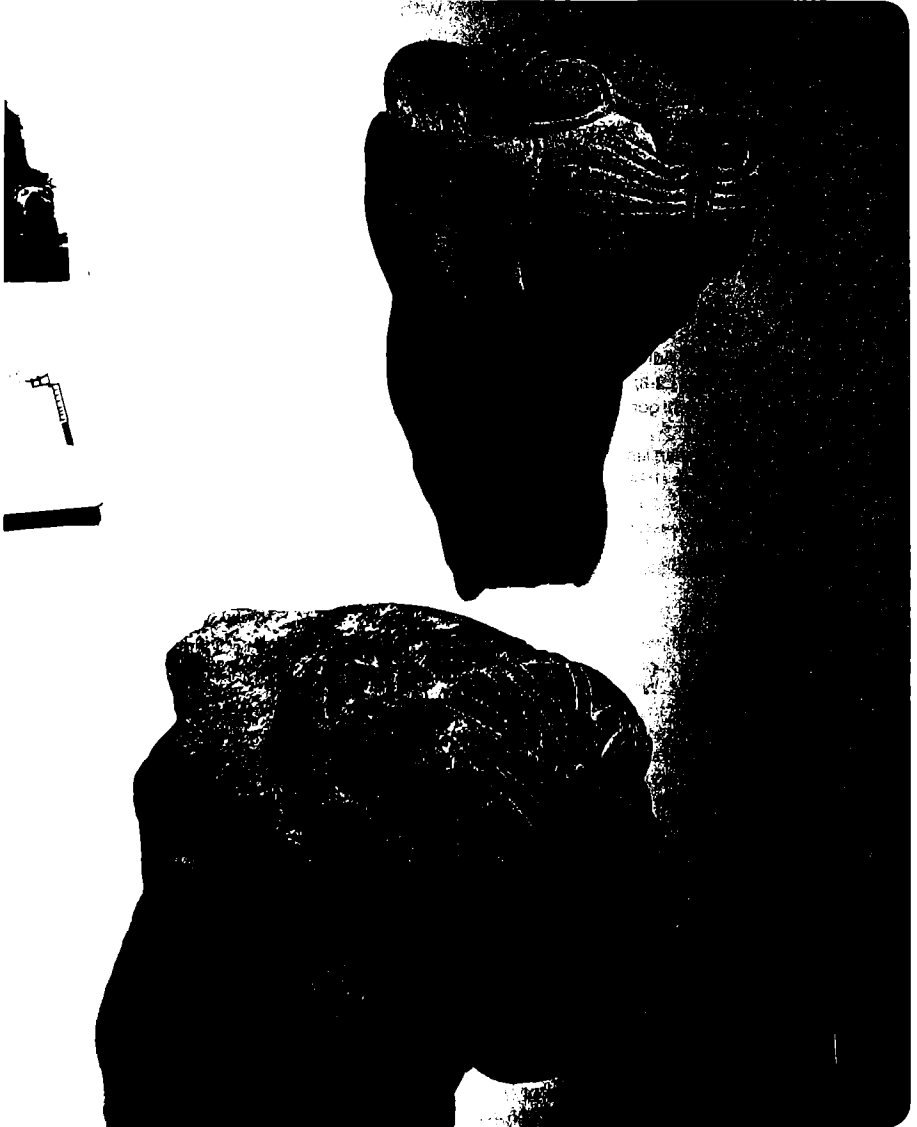
# NAHUM

12/20/2017

10:17AM EST

The book of Nahum announces the fall of Nineveh in graphic detail from the point of view of the Judean prophet Nahum. Neither the prophet nor Elkosh, the prophet's hometown,

appears in any other biblical source. Scholars generally consider Nahum a 7th-century prophet, some of whose words have been preserved in the prophetic book that bears his



Basalt lion heads from Carchemish, Assyria, 9th century BCE (Nah 2:11)  
*British Museum/BiblePlaces.com*

name. The name Nahum means “comfort,” but the violent imagery in the book offers little comfort, except for those who would rejoice over the downfall of a hated enemy.

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire from approximately 700 BCE until its destruction in 612 BCE. Nahum 3:8 shows that the Egyptian city Thebes had been destroyed. That happened in 663 BCE. Additionally, the fall of Nineveh to the Babylonians in 612 BCE likely triggered the initial gathering of the prophet’s words into a book. Nahum portrays the Assyrian Empire as a ruthless regime, an image promoted by the Assyrians themselves to cause deep fear in other countries. Nahum celebrates Assyria’s destruction. However, Nahum’s strong

approval of bloodshed can be contrasted with Ezekiel’s affirmation that the Lord does not delight in the destruction of the wicked (Ezek 18:23).

The disturbing picture Nahum presents is similar to some other oracles against nations (cf. Isa 13–23; Jer 46–51; Ezek 25–32). But the placement of the book of Nahum near Jonah in the OT contrasts Nahum’s judgment against Assyria with Jonah’s story of how Assyria turned to the Lord. Consequently, Nahum also sends a message to Judah: If Nineveh is judged for not keeping its commitment to the Lord, the Lord can also punish Judah for turning from the Lord’s covenant. This warning to Judah is made clear in the next prophetic book, Habakkuk.

### **I. Introduction of the Divine Warrior and Nineveh’s Fate (1:1–15)**

- A. Hymn concerning the divine power of the creator and warrior (1:2–8)
- B. Bad news for Nineveh; good news for Judah (1:9–13)
- C. The end of the Assyrian king brings new beginnings for Judah (1:14–15)
  - 1. Removal of idols (1:14)
  - 2. Celebration of feasts (1:15)

### **II. The Divine Warrior Attacks Nineveh (2:1–10)**

- A. The attack (2:1–6)
- B. The victory of the divine warrior and plunder of the city (2:7–10)

### **III. Images of Nineveh’s Destruction (2:11–3:19)**

- A. Nineveh as defeated lion (2:11–13)
- B. Nineveh as the shamed whore (3:1–7)
- C. Nineveh like Thebes (3:8–14)
- D. Nineveh like locusts, once the scatterer but now the scattered (3:15–19)

*James D. Nogalski and Anna E. Sieges*

1 An oracle about Nineveh:  
the scroll containing the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

**Power of the creator**

2 The LORD is a jealous and vengeful God;  
the LORD is vengeful and strong in wrath.

The LORD is vengeful against his foes;  
he rages against his enemies.

3 The LORD is very patient but great in power;  
the LORD punishes.

His way is in whirlwind and storm;  
clouds are the dust of his feet.

4 He can blast the sea and make it dry up;  
he can dry up all the rivers.

Bashan and Carmel wither;  
the bud of Lebanon withers.

5 The mountains quake because of him;  
the hills melt away.

The earth heaves before him—  
the world and all who dwell in it.

6 Who can stand before his indignation?  
Who can confront the heat of his fury?

His wrath pours out like fire;  
the rocks are shattered because of him.

7 The LORD is good, a haven in a day of distress.  
He acknowledges those who take refuge in him.

8 With a rushing flood, he will utterly destroy her\* place  
and pursue his enemies into darkness.

**A challenge to God's enemies**

9 What are you plotting against the LORD?

He is one who can annihilate!  
Distress will not arise twice.

\*her, likely Nineveh

1:1 Is 13:1;  
Jer 23:33; Jon 1:2  
1:2 Ex 20:5;  
Josh 24:19;  
Ps 94:1  
1:3 Ex 34:6,  
Ex 34:7;  
Neh 9:17;  
Ps 103:8,  
Ps 104:3  
1:4 Ps 106:9;  
Is 33:9, Is 50:2  
1:5 Mi 1:4  
1:6 Ps 76:7;  
Jer 10:10  
1:7 Ps 1:6,  
Ps 25:8, Ps 100:5;  
Is 25:4; Jer 33:11  
1:9 Ps 2:1;  
Na 1:11

1:1 This introduction contains two elements. The first describes the content as an *oracle* (Heb *massa*, often translated "burden," cf. Isa 13:1; 15:1; 17:1) directed against Nineveh. The second gives the name and hometown of the prophet, and says the message is a vision.

1:2-8 These verses in Hebrew are a type of poem called an acrostic. The first verse starts with the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet; the next verse starts with the next letter, and so on. This poem introduces the Lord as a divine warrior (cf. Mic 1:2-4; Hab 3:3-18) and proceeds in three segments. The first segment (1:2-3a) describes the Lord as a God who punishes God's enemies. The second segment (1:3b-6) speaks of the Lord's great power against nature. The last segment (1:7-8) divides the world into those who take refuge in the Lord and those who don't.

1:2 *The LORD is a... vengeful God... vengeful... vengeful against his foes:* The theme of the Lord's vengeance occurs over 20 times in the OT (e.g., Deut 32:35; Pss 58:10; 98:8; Isa 1:24; 34:8; 59:17; Jer 46:10; 51:36; Mic 5:15).

1:3 *the LORD punishes:* an allusion to Exodus 34:6-7, "The LORD! a God who is compassionate and merciful... yet by no means clearing the guilty." Allusions to the first half of Exodus 34:6-7 that refer to the Lord's merciful nature are common in the OT (cf. Pss 78:38; 103:8; 111:4; 145:8-9; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2). This poem emphasizes the second half of

Exodus 34:6-7 and reinforces a major theme of Nahum: punishment of the guilty.

1:4 *Bashan and Carmel... Lebanon:* These northern regions contained some of the most fertile land in ancient Israel, but several prophetic texts predict these locations will become a wasteland (cf. Isa 2:12-13; 19:5-7).

1:7 *those who take refuge in him:* Compare with Psalms 27:1; 43:2; 52:9; Isaiah 17:10; 25:4; Joel 4:6; Jeremiah 16:19; Nehemiah 8:10; Proverbs 10:29.

1:8 *her:* The feminine singular pronoun, in this case, refers to Nineveh. See comments on the pronouns in Nahum 1:9-11, 12.

1:9-14 This section uses pronouns without clear antecedents. For example: "they" (masculine plural) in verses 9-12 refers to Assyrian forces at the command of the Assyrian king; "you" (feminine singular) in verse 11 refers to Nineveh; "you" (feminine singular) in 1:12 refers to the city as though it were a woman—Lady Zion, the counterpart to Lady Nineveh; "you" (masculine singular) in verse 14 refers to the king of Assyria.

1:9 *What are you plotting:* addresses the Lord's enemies (the Assyrian forces) directly. This is a rhetorical question; all plotting against the Lord will fail. *Distress will not arise twice:* The Lord only needs to act once to completely wipe out the Assyrian forces.

1:14 Ps 109:13  
 1:15 Is 40:9,  
 Is 52:7; Ro 10:15  
 2:1 Jer 51:20;  
 Na 3:14

<sup>10</sup>They are tangled up like thorns,  
 like drunkards in their cups.

They are consumed like stubble that is entirely dried up.

<sup>11</sup>From you<sup>b</sup> goes out one who plots evil against the LORD—  
 a worthless counselor!

### Reassurance for God's people

<sup>12</sup>The LORD proclaims:

Though once they were a healthy and numerous force,  
 they have been cut off and have disappeared.

I have afflicted you;

I won't afflict you further, Zion.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Now I will break off his yoke from you  
 and tear off your chains.

### Assyrian king's future doom

<sup>14</sup>The LORD has commanded concerning you:

You will have no children to carry on your name.

I will remove carved idol and cast image from the house of your gods;

I will make your grave, for you are worthless.

<sup>15</sup><sup>d</sup>Look, on the mountains: the feet of a messenger who announces peace!

Celebrate your festivals, Judah!

Fulfill your solemn promises!

The worthless one will never again invade you;  
 he has been completely cut off.

### A city under attack

**2** A scatterer has come up against you.

Guard the ramparts, watch the road,  
 protect your groin, save your<sup>e</sup> strength!

<sup>2</sup>The LORD will restore the pride of Jacob, indeed, the pride of Israel,  
 because ravagers have destroyed them and spoiled their branches.

<sup>3</sup>The shields of his warriors are red;  
 his soldiers are dressed in crimson.

The ironwork of the chariots flashes like fire on the day he has prepared;  
 the horses quiver.

<sup>4</sup>The chariots race wildly through the streets;  
 they rush back and forth through the squares.

<sup>b</sup>you (feminine singular); likely Nineveh <sup>c</sup>Heb lacks Zion. <sup>d</sup>2:1 in Heb <sup>e</sup>Heb lacks your.

1:10 *They*: (masculine plural) refers to the Assyrian forces. *consumed like stubble*: The OT commonly uses the image of dried-up stubble to describe the Lord's enemies, often accompanied by the threat of fire (cf. Exod 15:7; Ps 83:18; Isa 5:24; 47:14; Joel 2:5; Obad 1:18; Mal 4:1).

1:11 *From you goes out*: Here again the reader encounters a pronoun without a clear antecedent (see note on Nah 1:9-14). The feminine singular pronoun refers to Nineveh because cities are feminine in the OT. The one who goes out from Nineveh (masculine singular) is the Assyrian king at the head of his forces.

1:12-13 Here the Lord speaks for the first time in Nahum. The Lord proclaims that the Assyrian threat against Judah is over (cf. Nah 1:15). The Lord also reveals that these same Assyrian forces that afflicted Judah were the Lord's agents (cf. Isa 10:5-7).

1:12 *cut off*: The Hebrew word translated "cut off" typically refers to shearing sheep. Micah 1:16 uses this word to describe the treatment of prisoners of war who had their heads shaved as a sign of disgrace. But in Micah the captors are the Assyrians and the captives are the Judeans.

Nahum turns this image around so that the Assyrians will be sheared.

1:14-15 These two verses celebrate Judah's safety because the Lord has destroyed the king of Assyria (addressed as "you"—masculine singular pronoun). The Assyrian king's dynasty, idols, and life will end.

1:15 *the feet of a messenger*: A runner with a message will bring the good news of Assyria's destruction to Judah (cf. Isa 52:7; Rom 10:15); and Judah will resume proper worship of the Lord in solemn festivals.

2:1-10 This section possibly describes the attack against and fall of Nineveh (which isn't mentioned by name in 2:1), or it may describe Nineveh as a bloodthirsty and greedy invader of Judah.

2:1 *A scatterer*: Scattering is part of curse language in the OT, usually implying military defeat (cf. Gen 11:4, 8, 9; Num 10:35; Deut 4:27; 28:64; 2 Sam 22:15; 1 Kgs 22:17; 2 Kgs 25:5; Neh 1:8; Jer 9:16; Ezek 20:23; 34: 41).

2:3-4 These two verses describe the attack so that the reader can visualize what the inhabitants would have seen as the troops advanced on their city.

2:6 Is 45:1  
 2:10 Ps 22:14;  
 Is 13:7, Is 21:3;  
 Jl 2:6  
 3:1 Eze 24:6,  
 Eze 24:9; Hos 4:2

They look like flaming torches;  
 they dart like bolts of lightning.

<sup>5</sup>He musters his officers; they stumble as they press forward.  
 They hurry to the city wall, and the portable shield is set up.

<sup>6</sup>The gates of the rivers are opened;  
 the palace melts.

<sup>7</sup>It is decreed.<sup>f</sup> She is sent into exile, carried away,  
 while her female servants moan like doves, beating their breasts.

<sup>8</sup>Nineveh has been like a pool of water.  
 Such are its waters,<sup>g</sup> and others are fleeing.  
 “Stop, stop!”—but no one can turn them back.

<sup>9</sup>Plunder silver! Plunder gold!  
 There is no end to the supplies,  
 an abundance of precious objects!

<sup>10</sup>Destruction and devastation;  
 the city is laid waste!  
 The heart grows faint and knees buckle;  
 there is anguish in every groin;  
 all the faces grow pale.

***Cruel Nineveh will be destroyed***

<sup>11</sup>Where is the lions’ den, the meadow of the young lions,  
 where lion, lioness, even lion cub go about with no one to terrify them?

<sup>12</sup>The lion has torn enough prey for his cubs  
 and strangled enough for his lionesses;  
 he has filled his lairs with prey,  
 his dens with torn flesh.

<sup>13</sup>Look! I am against you, proclaims the LORD of heavenly forces.  
 I will burn your<sup>h</sup> chariots in smoke;  
 the sword will devour your young lions;  
 I will cut off your prey from the earth,  
 the voice of your messengers will never again be heard!

**3** Doom, city of bloodshed—all deceit,  
 full of plunder: prey cannot get away.

<sup>2</sup>Cracking whip and rumbling wheel,  
 galloping horse and careening chariot!

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>h</sup>Or her

2:5 *He musters*: the Assyrian king. *they stumble*: The king’s troops.

2:6 *The gates of the rivers*: The historical accounts of Diodorus and Xenophon say that Nineveh fell because of the flooding of their water supply, but these accounts likely rely on Nahum’s report or a tradition that developed because of it. The verse uses water imagery to talk about the city’s destruction (cf. Jer 51:42; Nah 1:8; 2:8).

2:7 *She is sent into exile*: “She” is probably Nineveh, portrayed here as a lady or a queen with female servants who lament her exile.

2:8 *like a pool of water*: See note on Nahum 2:6.

2:9 *Plunder silver*: As the capital of the Assyrian Empire, Nineveh possessed great wealth. Victorious armies customarily plundered a city of its valuables after its destruction. Assyrian reliefs (large stone panels) show Assyrians plundering Judean cities. Nahum announces that the Lord’s forces will now plunder Assyria.

2:10 *all the faces grow pale*: the Ninevites’ reaction to the destruction of their city. A similar response to a fearful enemy occurs in Joel 2:6, except there Judah is the one attacked.

2:11–3:19 An extended description of a city’s destruction.

In Nahum 2:1-10, the reader witnessed the attack and imagined the horrible destruction of Nineveh, or possibly the horror of destruction of Judah by Assyria. The remainder of chapter 2 and all of chapter 3 slow the pace and multiply the images of urban destruction. In 2:11-13 the destroyer (feminine singular pronoun) is a lion whose pride and source of food (prey) are taken away. 3:1-3 pronounces horrific judgment on the city of bloodshed. 3:4-7 takes up the metaphor of Nineveh as a whore whom the Lord shames. 3:8-11 compares Nineveh to the Egyptian capital, Thebes, destroyed by Assyrian forces in 663 BCE. 3:12-19 presents various images of Nineveh. 3:12-14 demonstrates the uselessness of Nineveh’s attempt to defend itself by comparing its fortresses to a ripe fig tree and its soldiers to women (deemed unfit for warfare). 3:15-17 uses images of locusts to convey Nineveh’s destruction. Finally, 3:18-19 declares that Nineveh’s leaders (shepherds, king) have died, leaving Nineveh hopeless.

3:1 *city of bloodshed*: This phrase characterizes the city of Nineveh as extremely cruel. The Hebrew phrase translated here as “city of bloodshed” also occurs in Ezekiel 9:9;

3:4 Is 47:9;  
Is 47:12;  
Rev 18:3

- <sup>3</sup>Charging cavalry, flashing sword, and glittering spear;  
countless slain, masses of corpses,  
endless dead bodies—they stumble over their dead bodies!
- <sup>4</sup>Because of the many whorings of the whore,  
the lovely graces of the mistress of sorceries,  
the one who sells nations by means of her whorings  
and peoples by means of her sorceries:
- <sup>5</sup>Look! I am against you, proclaims the LORD of heavenly forces.  
I will lift your skirts over your face;  
I will show nations your nakedness and kingdoms your dishonor.
- <sup>6</sup>I will throw disgusting things at you;  
I will treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle.
- <sup>7</sup>Then all who look at you will recoil from you and say,  
“Nineveh has been devastated! Who will lament for her?”  
Where could I possibly seek comforters for you?
- <sup>8</sup>Are you better than Thebes, situated by the Nile, waters surrounding her,  
whose fortress is sea and whose city wall is waters?
- <sup>9</sup>Cush<sup>l</sup> and Egypt constituted her strength, without limit;  
Put and the Libyans were her<sup>l</sup> help.
- <sup>10</sup>Yet even she was destined for exile;  
she went into captivity.  
Indeed, her infants were dashed to pieces at the head of every street.  
They cast lots for her officials;  
all of her powerful citizens were bound in chains.
- <sup>11</sup>Yes, even you will become drunk;  
you will have to hide!  
Even you will have to seek refuge from the enemy!
- <sup>12</sup>All your fortifications are fig trees with ripe fruit;  
when the trees are shaken, the fruit falls into the mouth of the eater.
- <sup>13</sup>Look, your people are women in your midst.  
The gates of your land have been flung wide open to your enemies.  
Fire consumes the bars of your gates.
- <sup>14</sup>Draw water for yourself to prepare for siege!  
Strengthen your fortifications!  
Tread the clay, trample the mortar, grab the brick mold!

*The City as a Whore* Nahum 3:4-6 shames Nineveh's fall by depicting her as a woman convicted of whoredom in a public square, with her skirts lifted over her head. She is an exposed spectacle. To add to her shame, her accuser, the Lord, hurls disgusting things at her. This image is shocking by design and should make the reader uncomfortable. The imagery presupposes the idea that sexual promiscuity deserves sexual humiliation and violent punishment. This understanding was common in the ancient Near East. How can we reject sexual humiliation and violence while upholding Nahum's principle that the Lord's justice requires punishment of the oppressor? Consider first that the analogy of the guilty city to a prostitute is a metaphor. However, the analogy doesn't fully resolve the problem, because this metaphor still is based in brutal images for the humiliation of a woman, who is often a victim of sexual oppression. Consider second that this image is expressed from an oppressed community who has suffered greatly at the hands of the oppressors. In the end a theological tension remains. Out of a deep respect for covenant faithfulness and loyal love, we reject the view that sexual humiliation and violence are permissible, while we also affirm a God who will not leave the guilty unpunished.

<sup>l</sup>Traditionally *Ethiopia* <sup>l</sup>LXX; MT *your*

22:2; 24:6, 9; Habakkuk 2:12, but in these passages it refers to Jerusalem.

3:4 *Because of the many whorings*: The text speaks of the city as though it were a prostitute. This is a common poetic device in prophetic literature. However, the image of the whoring woman usually applies to Israel, Judah, and

Jerusalem, who are accused of being unfaithful to the Lord (cf. Isa 1:21; 57:3; Jer 2:20; 3:3, 6, 8; Ezek 16:15-41; 23:3-44; Hos 9:1).

3:8-12 *Thebes*: Assyrian forces destroyed Thebes in 663 BCE. Thebes had a reputation for invincibility because its surrounding waterways made it difficult to attack.



- 15 Fire will consume you there;  
the sword will cut you down;  
like the locust it will consume you.  
Multiply like the locust; multiply like the grasshopper!
- 16 You boasted more traders than the heavens have stars.  
The locust sheds its skin and flies away.
- 17 Your guards are like grasshoppers,  
your marshals like swarms of cicadas  
that encamp on stone fences on a chilly day;  
when the sun rises, they take flight; no one knows where they have gone.
- 18 Your shepherds have fallen asleep, king of Assyria!  
Your officials are lying down.  
Your people are scattered across the mountains;  
there is no one to gather them.
- 19 There is no remedy for your injury;  
your wound is grievous.  
All who hear the news about you clap their hands over you.  
Who has not suffered from your continual cruelty?

However, just as Thebes wasn't invincible, Nahum's analogy assumes Nineveh will also fall. Assyria destroyed Thebes, but the forces of the Lord will destroy Nineveh. 3:15b-17 *Locust... grasshoppers... cicadas*: This passage reflects a complex use of locust imagery. The first reference (Nah 3:15a) compares the fire that consumes Nineveh to locusts jumping around. The next references to locusts and grasshoppers address Assyria's vast military numbers and strength. However, 3:17 turns this image of swarming

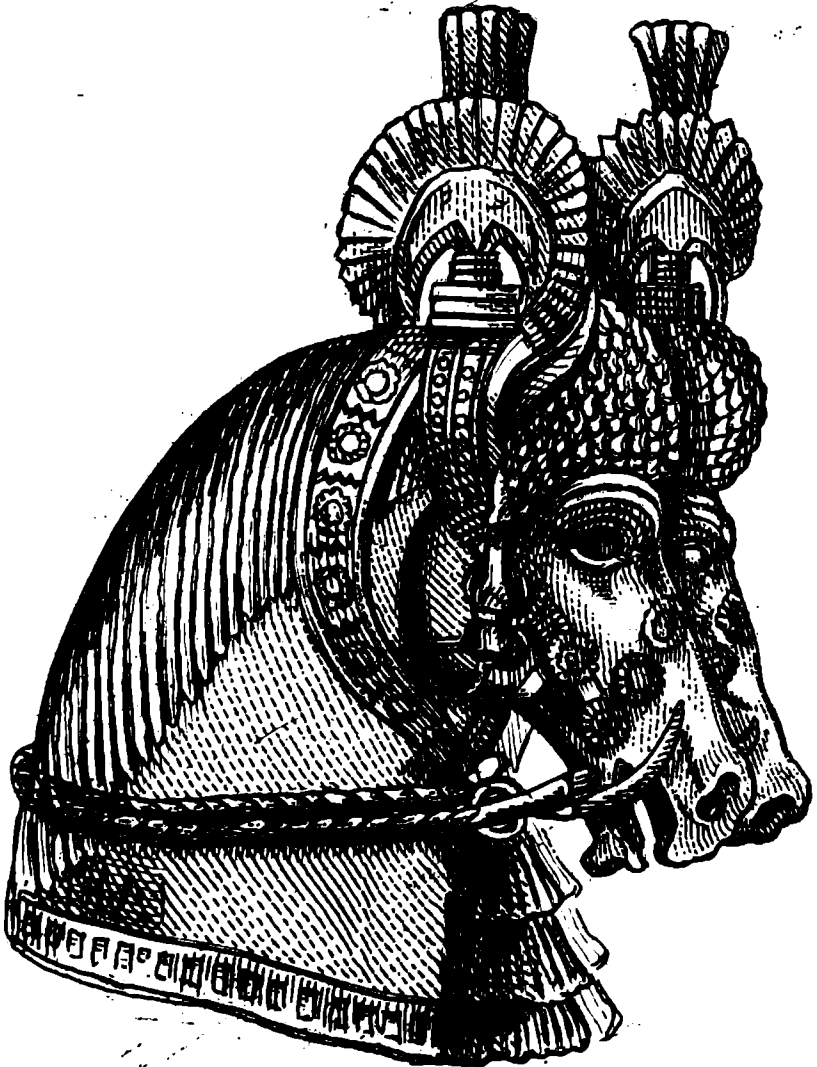
insects upside down by asserting that the vast numbers of merchants, guards, and marshals of Assyria will flee from the invading forces. 3:19 *There is no remedy for your injury*: an image for Nineveh's complete destruction (cf. Isa 1:5-6; Jer 30:12; 46:11; Mic 1:9). *Who has not suffered from your continual cruelty?*: Nineveh's extensive cruelty is both the reason for her punishment and the reason that those who pass by applaud her bloodbath.



# HABAKKUK

The book of Habakkuk is one of the Minor Prophets, or Book of the Twelve, and tells the story of a prophet's disagreement with God. The dialogue between Habakkuk and God occurs in Habakkuk 1:2-2:5. The next section

(Hab 2:6-20) is a series of five speeches that anticipate doom for a wicked nation. The final section (Hab 3:1-19) combines a prayer, a victory song, and a prophetic response. The key question asked of God by Habakkuk is how God can



Engraving of an ancient Assyrian relief of horses (Hab 1:8)  
iStockPhoto

remain “silent when the wicked swallows one who is more righteous” (Hab 1:13).

Two groups are causing problems in Habakkuk: Judeans acting in violent ways and neglecting the Instruction (the teaching from Moses) and the Babylonians whom God will send to punish Judah. Most of Habakkuk addresses the problem of the approaching attack by the Babylonians.

By combining earlier material with commentary, the book of Habakkuk weaves together two themes to create a unified message. One theme considers why the wicked flourish but the righteous suffer. The second theme anticipates the Babylonian attack at any moment. It appears that the author inserted the Babylonian question into the earlier thoughts about God’s justice. Both themes specify Judah’s punishment

at the hands of the Babylonians and assert that Babylonian control won’t last forever.

Apart from this prophetic work, the only mention of the prophet Habakkuk in the Bible is in the Greek addition to the book of Daniel, known as Bel and the Snake (Bel 33-37), found in the Apocrypha or deuterocanonical books. That reference seems more legendary than historical. The book of Habakkuk contains some internal information concerning Habakkuk’s identity. Both headings (Hab 1:1; 3:1) refer to Habakkuk as a prophet. Habakkuk seems associated with the worship at the temple. Thus Habakkuk’s complaints (1:2-4, 12-14) resemble psalms that pose a complaint (e.g., Pss 55; 64). The watch post on which Habakkuk will wait for a reply from the Lord may have been located at the temple, and the psalm that closes the book shows signs of use in worship.

### **I. The First Dispute: The Unrighteous in Judah (1:1-11)**

- A. Habakkuk’s question (1:2-4)
- B. God’s response: I will send the Babylonians (1:5-11)

### **II. The Second Dispute: The Unrighteous Babylonians (1:12–2:20)**

- A. Habakkuk questions God’s choice of the Babylonians (1:12–2:1)

### **B. God responds (2:2-20)**

- 1. The Babylonians are coming (2:2-5)
- 2. Oracles of doom: The Babylonians will be punished (2:6-20)

### **III. The Answer: God’s Arrival and Habakkuk’s Praise (3:1-19)**

- A. God travels the earth (3:1-15)
- B. Habakkuk praises God (3:16-19)

*James D. Nogalski and Anna E. Sieges*

1:2 Ps 13:1,  
Ps 22:1; Jer 14:9  
1:5 Is 29:14;  
Ac 13:41  
1:8 Jer 4:13,  
Jer 5:6; Zep 3:3  
1:9 Hab 2:5  
1:10 2Ch 36:6

**1** The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.

**The prophet complains**

- 2** LORD, how long will I call for help and you not listen?  
I cry out to you, "Violence!" but you don't deliver us.
- 3** Why do you show me injustice and look at anguish  
so that devastation and violence are before me?  
There is strife, and conflict abounds.
- 4** The Instruction is ineffective.  
Justice does not endure because the wicked surround the righteous.  
Justice becomes warped.

**The Lord responds**

- 5** Look among the nations and watch!  
Be astonished and stare because something is happening in your days  
that you wouldn't believe even if told.
- 6** I am about to rouse the Chaldeans, that bitter and impetuous nation,  
which travels throughout the earth to possess dwelling places it does not own.
- 7** The Chaldean is dreadful and fearful.  
He makes his own justice and dignity.<sup>a</sup>
- 8** His horses are faster than leopards;  
they are quicker than wolves of the evening.  
His horsemen charge forward;  
his horsemen come from far away.  
They fly in to devour, swiftly, like an eagle.<sup>b</sup>
- 9** They come for violence, the horde with all their faces set toward the desert.<sup>c</sup>  
He takes captives like sand.
- 10** He makes fun of kings;  
rulers are ridiculous to him.  
He laughs at every fortress,  
then he piles up dirt and takes it.
- 11** He passes through like the wind and invades;  
but he will be held guilty, the one whose strength is his god.

**The prophet questions the Lord**

- 12** LORD, aren't you ancient, my God, my holy one?  
Don't let us die.<sup>d</sup>  
LORD, you put the Chaldean here for judgment.  
Rock, you established him as a rebuke.
- 13** Your eyes are too pure to look on evil;  
you are unable to look at disaster.  
Why would you look at the treacherous  
or keep silent when the wicked swallows one who is more righteous?

<sup>a</sup>Or his justice and dignity come from him <sup>b</sup>Or vulture <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>d</sup>Heb uncertain

1:1 See the introduction.

1:2-4 The prophet asks the Lord two questions: How long will the turmoil last for the people of God? (See Pss 6:3; 13:1; 79:5; 80:4; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3; Jer 31:22; Zech 1:12.) And why are injustice and violence everywhere?

1:4 *The Instruction*: In this context "The Instruction" probably means the first five books of the OT (Genesis-Deuteronomy), but here *torah* could simply mean "instruction" from God.

1:5-6 The Lord's response.

1:6 *the Chaldeans*: a tribal group that lived to the south of Babylon and at times rose to power over Babylon. They are mentioned frequently in Jeremiah (e.g., Jer 21:4, 9; 22:25; 24:5; 25:12; 32:4-5), often in parallel with Babylon.

1:7 *He makes his own justice and dignity*: The word

translated "dignity" has a range of meanings: majesty, elevation, pride, and splendor. It carries an element of respect rather than mockery. The problem is that Babylon's "strength is his god" (Hab 1:11). It's for this reason that Babylon is guilty.

1:8-9 These verses emphasize Babylon's military power and skill.

1:10 *he piles up dirt*: refers to the military tactic of building a siege ramp. Military commanders forced prisoners of war to pile up earth next to a city wall to create a ramp so their forces could take the city. Travelers can still see the Babylonian siege ramp at the Judean city of Lachish to this day.

1:12-17 Habakkuk questions the Lord's plan to send Babylon to judge Judah. First, Habakkuk appeals to the Lord's

1:16 Is 22:13;

Hab 1:11

2:1 Ps 85:8;

Is 21:8

2:2 Dt 27:8;

Is 8:1, Is 30:8;

Rev 1:19

2:3 Ps 27:14;

Is 8:17; Dn 8:19;

Dn 10:14

2:4 Ro 1:17;

Ga 3:11;

Hab 10:38

2:5 2 Ki 14:10;

Prv 20:1;

Prv 27:20

<sup>14</sup>You made humans like the fish of the sea,  
like creeping things with no one to rule over them.

<sup>15</sup>The Chaldean brings all of them up with a fishhook.  
He drags them away with a net;  
he collects them in his fishing net,  
then he rejoices and celebrates.

<sup>16</sup>Therefore, he sacrifices to his net;  
he burns incense to his fishing nets,  
because due to them his portion grows fat  
and his food becomes luxurious.

<sup>17</sup>Should he continue to empty his net  
and continue to slay nations without sparing them?

**2**I will take my post;  
I will position myself on the fortress.  
I will keep watch to see what the Lord says to me  
and how he<sup>e</sup> will respond to my complaint.

### The Lord responds

<sup>2</sup>Then the LORD answered me and said,  
Write a vision, and make it plain upon a tablet so that a runner can read it.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>3</sup>There is still a vision for the appointed time;  
it testifies to the end; it does not deceive.<sup>g</sup>

If it delays, wait for it;  
for it is surely coming; it will not be late.

<sup>4</sup>Some people's desires are truly audacious;<sup>h</sup>  
they don't do the right thing.  
But the righteous person will live honestly.

<sup>5</sup>Moreover, wine betrays an arrogant man.  
He doesn't rest.

He opens his jaws<sup>i</sup> like the grave;<sup>j</sup>  
like death, he is never satisfied.

He gathers all nations to himself  
and collects all peoples for himself.

<sup>e</sup>Syr he; MT I <sup>f</sup>Or a reader can run with it <sup>g</sup>Heb uncertain; antecedents to pronouns in 2:3-6 are uncertain.

<sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>i</sup>Or throat <sup>j</sup>Heb Sheol

sense of justice (1:12, 13; see sidebar, "Why Do Bad Things Happen?"). Second, he appeals to the Lord as creator. Habakkuk draws an analogy between humans and the fish of the sea, demonstrating that though God created humanity, the Babylonians think that they have control over humanity and all the nations, just as fishermen do whatever they like with the fish. Habakkuk asks whether God should continue to allow the Babylonians to do as they please with the people that God created.

2:1 *I will take my post . . . to see what the Lord says to me:* The word for the prophet's post can mean a place on the city (Jerusalem) wall or a place in the temple where religious leaders go to receive visions from God. It is in this place, fortress or temple, that Habakkuk waits to see how the Lord will answer his complaint.

2:2-20 The Lord's second response to Habakkuk. The Lord instructs Habakkuk to write down a vision from the Lord and give it to a runner, who will travel and read the vision aloud. The vision begins in Habakkuk 2:3, but it is unclear where it ends (2:6a or 20). Verses 6b-20 include five doom oracles, each beginning with the Hebrew word "hoy" (translated "doom" in 2:6, 9, 15, 19; and "pity" in 2:12). These doom oracles have a common theme: Babylon will be punished for its injustice and violence.

2:3 *it testifies to the end . . . If it delays, wait for it:* It's unclear

from the context whether the vision proclaims Babylon or Judah's end. Habakkuk as a whole declares the end of both, so the verse may be intentionally ambiguous. The verse also warns that the "end" might be slow in coming but declares that it will certainly come.

2:4 *the righteous person will live honestly:* Habakkuk 2:4 compares the righteous person to the unrighteous person. While honesty and doing the right thing govern the righteous person's life, the unrighteous person desires more than his or her fair share (see Hab 2:5). Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 in Galatians 3:11. The Hebrew in the Habakkuk statement is very difficult to translate because it isn't clear whether the pronouns refer to a specific individual. Though Paul interprets the verse differently than the original audience of Habakkuk would hear it, the apostle maintains the main idea that there is a fundamental distinction between a righteous person and an unrighteous person. 2:5 *wine betrays:* Excessive consumption of alcohol often reveals the inner character of a person. Wine exposes a prideful person much as it exposes foolishness and laziness (see Prov 4:17; 9:2, 5; 21:17; 23:20, 30-31; 31:4, 6). The arrogance maintains the theme that began Habakkuk 2:4: "Some people's desires are truly audacious." *He doesn't rest:* Habakkuk 2:5 shifts abruptly to a military image of the Babylonian forces piling up victims.

2:6 Is 5:8,  
Is 14:4; Mi 2:4  
2:9 Jer 22:13,  
Jer 49:16  
2:11 Josh 24:27;  
Lk 19:40  
2:14 Ps 22:27,  
Ps 72:19; Is 11:9;  
Zec 14:9  
2:15 Gn 9:22;  
Dt 21:20;  
Prv 20:1,  
Prv 23:20,  
Prv 23:29

*Why Do Bad Things Happen?* The book of Habakkuk explores a fundamental question for any person of faith: If God is good and just, why does God allow bad things to happen to good people and good things to happen to bad people? At the beginning of the book, Habakkuk asks God why the righteous people in Judah are oppressed by the unrighteous people (Hab 1:2-4). The answer is less than satisfying. God tells Habakkuk that God will punish the unrighteous in Judah by sending the Babylonians to destroy them (Hab 1:5-11). This also seems unfair to Habakkuk because the Babylonians are even worse than the unrighteous in Judah (Hab 1:12-17). God promises also to punish the Babylonians (Hab 2:6-17). Habakkuk still hasn't received a satisfying answer from God when the Babylonians approach Judah.

The turning point for the prophet occurs when God appears and defeats God's enemies. This situation becomes one of profound praise for the prophet. The final chapter of the book contains a psalm that praises God even while anticipating disaster: "Though the fig tree doesn't bloom, and there's no produce on the vine . . . I will rejoice in the LORD. I will rejoice in the God of my deliverance" (Hab 3:17-18).

- 6 Won't everyone tell parables about him  
or mocking poems concerning him?  
They will say:  
Doom to the one who multiplies what doesn't belong to him  
and who increases his own burden.  
How long?
- 7 Won't they suddenly rise up to bite you?  
Those who frighten you will awaken;  
you will become plunder for them.
- 8 Since you yourself have plundered many nations,  
all the rest of the peoples will plunder you because of the human bloodshed  
and the violence done to the earth,  
to every village, and to all its inhabitants.
- 9 Doom to the one making evil gain for his own house,  
for putting his own nest up high,  
for delivering himself from the grasp of calamity.
- 10 You plan shame for your own house,  
cutting off many peoples  
and sinning against your own life.
- 11 A stone will cry out from a village wall,  
and a tree branch will respond.
- 12 Pity the one building a city with bloodshed  
and founding a village with injustice.
- 13 Look, isn't this from the LORD of heavenly forces?  
Peoples grow weary from making just enough fire;  
nations become tired for nothing.<sup>k</sup>
- 14 But the land will be full of the knowledge of the LORD's glory,  
just as water covers the sea.
- 15 Doom to the one who makes his companions drunk,  
pouring out your wrath in order to see them naked.<sup>l</sup>

<sup>k</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>l</sup>Heb uncertain

2:9 *house*: palace or dynasty. From the context, it becomes clear that the well-protected house was built with violence and injustice (Hab 2:12). This text likely refers to Babylon.  
2:12 *city with bloodshed*: See Ezekiel 22:2, 3; 24:6, 9; Nahum 3:1.  
2:13 *isn't this from the LORD . . . Peoples grow weary from making . . . fire*: The Lord apparently brings fire to consume the walls of the city that the people labored to build. Habakkuk 2:13 contains Hebrew with uncertain meaning.

The prophet may be ironic by putting in parallel the making of the city wall and the making of fire. The writer may be alluding to Jeremiah's condemnation of Babylon and the burning of its walls (Jer 51:58; see Isa 11:9).  
2:14 *But the land*: In contrast to the fire and destruction of the preceding verse, this verse sees future hope for the land (of Judah; see Isa 11:9).  
2:15-16 *makes his companions drunk . . . cup of the LORD's strong hand*: The image of someone getting another

2:16 Ps 16:5;

Ps 75:8;

Jer 25:15;

Lam 4:21;

Na 3:6

2:18 Ps 115:4;

Is 42:17, Is 44:9;

Jer 10:8;

Zec 10:2

2:19 1Ki 18:26;

Ps 135:17

2:20 Ps 11:4;

Mi 1:2; Zep 1:7;

Zec 2:13

3:1 Ps 7:1;

Hab 1:1

3:2 Ps 85:6;

Hab 3:16

3:3 Gn 36:11;

Dt 33:2; Jer 49:7;

Am 1:12

3:4 Is 60:19

3:5 Ex 12:29;

Ex 12:30

<sup>16</sup>You have drunk your fill of dishonor rather than glory.

So drink and stagger.<sup>m</sup>

The cup of the LORD's strong hand will come around to you;  
disgrace will engulf you.

<sup>17</sup>Because of the violence done to Lebanon, he will overwhelm you;  
the destruction of animals will terrify you,

as will human bloodshed and violence throughout the land, the villages,  
and all their inhabitants.<sup>m</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Of what value is an idol, when its potter carves it,  
or a cast image that has been shaped?

It is a teacher of lies,

for the potter trusts the pottery, though it is incapable of speaking.

<sup>19</sup>Doom to the one saying to the tree, "Wake up!"  
or "Get up" to the silent stone.

Does it teach?

Look, it is overlaid with gold and silver,  
but there is no breath within it.

<sup>20</sup>But the LORD is in his holy temple.

Let all the earth be silent before him.

### The Lord's victory

**3**The prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth:

<sup>1</sup>LORD, I have heard your reputation.

I have seen your work.

Over time, revive it.

Over time, make it known.

Though angry, remember compassion.

<sup>2</sup>God comes from Teman

and the holy one from the mountain of Paran.

His majesty covers the heavens

and his praise fills the earth.

<sup>4</sup>His radiance is like the sunlight,

with rays flashing from his hand.

That is the hiding place of his power.

<sup>5</sup>Pestilence walks in front of him.

Plague marches at his feet.

<sup>m</sup>DSS, LXX; MT *uncircumcised* <sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain

*Selah*

drunk to see them naked is apparently a reference to Babylon, who is taking advantage of smaller nations (see Jer 51:7). The punishment for getting others drunk fits the crime, as the guilty one will drink from the cup of the Lord (see Isa 51:22; Jer 25:15, 17, 28; 49:12) until he staggers and experiences disgrace.

2:17 *Lebanon*: a region north of Israel conquered by Babylon.

2:18-20 These verses shift from condemnation for violence to condemnation for idolatry (see Isa 46:1-7; 57:13; Jer 10:2-5, 8-10, 14-16).

3:1-15 A new heading (3:1) again designates Habakkuk as the prophet (cf. Hab 1:1) responsible for the material that follows. A musical notation states that the prayer is to be prayed or sung according to the *Shigionoth*. The meaning of the word is unknown, but Psalm 7 also mentions the *Shigionoth* as a singular noun (here it is plural). The similarity with Psalm 7 probably indicates that chapter 3 was originally sung like other psalms in worship at the Jerusalem temple. The uses of "Selah" at Habakkuk 3:3, 9, 13 are also musical notations known

from the Psalms. Habakkuk 3 contains (1) a prayer asking for God's mercy (3:2); (2) the Lord's victory song during a battle march (3:3-7; see Nah 1:2-6, Mic 1:2-7, Exod 15:1-21; Deut 33:2-5) from the southern desert; (3) a direct address to the Lord that narrates the preparation for battle (3:8-9a); (4) the response to that preparation (3:9b-11); (5) the march to battle (3:12-13a); and (6) the battle proper, which the Lord wins (3:13b-15). The chapter clearly had a liturgical purpose because it contains ritual instructions (3:1, 3, 9, 13, 19) also found in psalms, which are used during worship services at the Jerusalem temple.

3:3 *Teman*: the capital city of Edom, located east of the Jordan River. *Paran*: south of the Dead Sea in the Arabah valley, Deuteronomy 33:2 and Judges 5:4 imagine the Lord, a divine warrior, coming from this area.

3:4 *radiance*... *sunlight*... *rays*: See also Exodus 3:2; 13:21; Psalms 4:6; 18:12; 27:1; Micah 7:8-9; Zechariah 9:14.

3:5 *Pestilence*... *Plague*: These words in Hebrew reflect the names of ancient warrior gods Rešep and Debēr (see Ps 78:48; Deut 28:21).



3:6 Gn 49:26  
 3:8 Dt 33:26;  
 Ps 68:17,  
 Ps 104:3;  
 Is 66:15  
 3:9 Ps 7:12,  
 Ps 78:16  
 3:10 Jgs 5:5;  
 Ps 77:16, Ps 93:3,  
 Ps 98:7  
 3:11 Josh 10:12,  
 Josh 10:13;  
 Ps 144:6  
 3:12 Jer 51:33;  
 Mi 4:13  
 3:13 Ps 68:21,  
 Ps 110:6  
 3:14 Ps 10:8  
 3:16 Jer 23:9;  
 Eze 3:14;  
 Dn 10:8; Hab 3:2  
 3:17 Jer 5:17;  
 Jl 1:10

6 He stops and measures the earth.  
 He looks and sets out against the nations.  
 The everlasting mountains collapse;  
 the eternal hills bow down;  
 the eternal paths belong to him.  
 7 I saw the tents of Cushan under duress.  
 The curtains of the land of Midian were quaking.

8 Was the LORD raging against the rivers?  
 Or was your anger directed against the rivers?  
 Or was your fury directed against the sea when you rode on your horses  
 or rode your chariots to victory?

9 You raise up your empty bow, uttering curses for the arrows.<sup>o</sup>  
 With rivers you split open the earth.

Selah

10 The mountains see you and writhe.  
 A flood of water rushes through.  
 The deep utters its voice;  
 it raises its hands aloft.<sup>p</sup>

11 Sun and moon stand still high above.  
 With the light, your arrows shoot,  
 your spear at the flash of lightning.

12 In fury, you stride the earth;  
 in anger you tread the nations.

13 You go out to save your people.  
 For the salvation of your anointed  
 you smashed the head of the house of wickedness,  
 laying bare the foundation up to the neck.

Selah

14 You pierce the head of his warrior with his own spear.  
 His warriors are driven off,  
 those who take delight in oppressing us,<sup>q</sup>  
 those who take pleasure in secretly devouring the poor.

15 You make your horses tread on the sea;  
 turbulent waters foam.

**The prophet responds**

16 I hear and my insides tremble.  
 My lips quiver at the sound.  
 Rottenness enters my bones.  
 I tremble while I stand,<sup>r</sup>  
 while I wait for the day of distress to come against the people who attack us.

17 Though the fig tree doesn't bloom,  
 and there's no produce on the vine;  
 though the olive crop withers,  
 and the fields don't provide food;  
 though the sheep is cut off from the pen,  
 and there is no cattle in the stalls;

<sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>p</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>q</sup>Or me <sup>r</sup>Or I tremble beneath me.

3:6 *mountains collapse... hills bow down*: See Deuteronomy 33:15; Micah 1:4; Psalm 104:32.

3:7 *Cushan... Midian*: These regions are also located east of the Jordan River, and are associated with the wilderness wanderings after the exodus from Egypt.

3:8-15 *raging against the rivers... against the sea... With rivers you split open the earth... A flood of water rushes through... you smashed the head... You pierce the*

*head... your horses tread on the sea*: Battling the waters is a common theme of ancient epics about origins. In these epics the god or great warrior battles the threatening waters to restore order to creation and conquer forces of chaos (see Ps 74:12-17; Isa 51:9-10; Job 26:1-14).

3:16-19 The prophet recounts his own reaction to the certainty of Judah's destruction at the hands of the Babylonians (3:16) as well as his hope that God will punish the

- <sup>18</sup>I will rejoice in the LORD.  
I will rejoice in the God of my deliverance.
- <sup>19</sup>The LORD God is my strength.  
He will set my feet like the deer.  
He will let me walk upon the heights.\*

To the director, with stringed instruments

\*Or *my heights*

Babylonians. Thus the final unit reinforces the book's message: God will first use Babylon to punish Judah and then will punish the Babylonians.

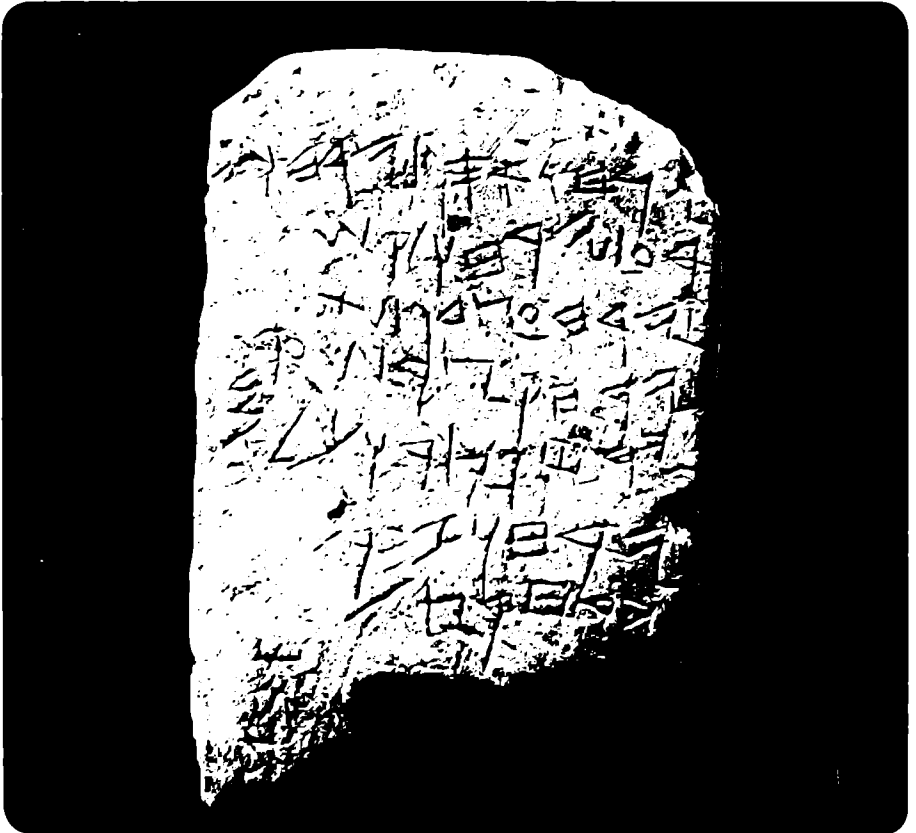
**3:18** *I will rejoice*: The prophet claims that even if all sources of income and food have been cut off from him, he will rejoice in the Lord.

# ZEPHANIAH

The writer and the actual date of writing of Zephaniah are uncertain, though the book begins with a heading that attributes it to the prophet Zephaniah and links him to the historical period of Josiah, who reigned in Judah from approximately 640 to 609 BCE. Josiah was best known for discovering the Torah, the instruction scroll from Moses, in the temple. He was also admired for a series of religious reforms in Judah that were, however, only partially successful (2 Kgs 18:3-7). Zephaniah probably started preaching before Josiah's reforms began. Zephaniah's name could mean

"Yahweh hides" or "Yahweh treasures." Zaphon is the name of a Canaanite god, so the name could also mean "Zaphon is Yahweh."

Five literary techniques are markers of Zephaniah's prophecy. First, the repetitious use of the phrase "on that day" and its related references (see Zeph 1:9, 10, 14-16, 18; 2:1; 3:11) hold the series of prophecies of destruction together. The phrase also provides an element of surprise: The day of the Lord is a time of destruction (Zeph 1:9-10) that will bring a time of cleansing and restoration (Zeph 3:11-13). Second, the technique of cataloging, "I will ..."



A calendar from Gezer (Zeph 1:7)

*Istanbul Archaeological Museum/BiblePlaces.com*

(Zeph 1:2-4, 8-9, 12, 17; 3:9-12, 18-20), emphasizes the power and deeds of Israel's God. Third, the use of quoted speech (Zeph 1:12; 2:15; 3:7) adds to the drama of the prophet's message. Fourth, metaphors and similes create vivid impressions in the imaginations of Zephaniah's hearers and readers (see, e.g., Zeph 1:17; 2:9, 13; 3:1). Fifth, representations of the city of Jerusalem as though it were a person bring the city to life (Zeph 3:1-2).

Unlike some prophetic books in the Bible, Zephaniah features only one main speaker—God—whose speeches reveal a God full of wrath and hostility (Zeph 1:2-3). In a fit of rage, this God makes no discrimination between the guilty human beings and nonhuman creatures. All creation will experience the devastating effects of divine anger. This God is completely disgusted with Judah and Jerusalem because of

their idolatry, their lack of trust in God, and their false worship (Zeph 1:4-6; 3:1-5). Israel's God is also enraged with the nations because of their unjust treatment of Judah (Zeph 2:8) and their corrupt deeds (Zeph 3:7). These images of God reflect not only the culture of the day but also the biblical writer's theological concerns. Zephaniah establishes Israel's God not only as king over all nations, peoples, and gods but also as one who is more powerful than the most powerful nations and peoples on earth. The text makes it clear that God's intent isn't for complete destruction. Some people will be spared, the nations will be brought into line, and Zion will be restored—but only after everything has been divinely disciplined and purified, and love is renewed. Finally, the text shows that salvation is meant not only for Judah but also for the nations.

## **I. Heading (1:1)**

### **II. Proclaiming Judgment and Imminent Disasters (1:2–2:15)**

- A. Against Jerusalem and Judah (1:2–2:3)
- B. Against Philistia (2:4-7)
- C. Against Moab and Ammon (2:8-11)
- D. Against Ethiopia (2:12)
- E. Against Assyria (2:13-15)

## **III. Criticism of Jerusalem (3:1-7)**

### **IV. Promise of Future Purification (3:8-13)**

### **IV. Proclaiming Hope, Salvation, and Restoration (3:14-20)**

*Carol J. Dempsey, O.P.*

**1** The LORD's word that came to Zephaniah, Cushi's son, Gedaliah's grandson, Amariah's great-grandson, and Hezekiah's great-great-grandson in the days of Judah's King Josiah, Amon's son.

### **Judgment on the world and Judah**

- 2** I will wipe out everything from the earth, says the LORD.  
**3** I will destroy humanity and the beasts;  
 I will destroy the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea.  
 I will make the wicked into a heap of ruins;  
 I will eliminate humanity from the earth, says the LORD.

- 4** I will stretch out my hand against Judah  
 and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.  
 I will eliminate what's left of Baal from this place  
 and the names of the priests of foreign gods,<sup>a</sup>  
**5** those bowing down to the forces of heaven on the rooftops,  
 those swearing by the LORD along with those swearing by Milcom,  
**6** those turning away from the LORD,  
 those who don't seek the LORD and don't pursue him.

### **The day of the Lord**

- 7** Hush before the LORD God,  
 for the day of the LORD is near!  
 The LORD has established a sacrifice;  
 he has made holy those he has summoned.  
**8** On the day of the LORD's sacrifice,  
 I will punish the princes, the king's sons,  
 and all those wearing foreign clothes.  
**9** I will punish the one leaping on the threshold on that day,  
 those filling the house of their master with violence and deceit.  
**10** On that day—says the LORD—  
 an outcry will resound from the Fish Gate,

<sup>a</sup>Or the name of the priests of foreign gods along with the priests

1:1 The book of Zephaniah opens with a simple statement that says the words of the book come from the Lord. It then identifies the prophet Zephaniah through his ancestry. The fact that the word of the Lord *came* to Zephaniah shows that the prophetic word is a gift, and not something that can be learned or sought after. This heading is similar to that of Hosea, Joel, Micah, Haggai, and Zechariah, all of which identify the prophetic proclamations as "the LORD's word." 1:2-6 Zephaniah describes the destruction that will befall Judah, especially those who have disregarded God and God's ways (1:6). God will not discriminate, and the judgment will be more complete than the flood Noah survived. The reason for such divine wrath is clear from Zephaniah 1:4-6: Idolatry breaks the first commandment (Exod 20:2-6). Violation of the covenant relationship with God on the part of human beings results in destruction for both humanity and the natural world.

1:4 *Baal*: the storm god, the son of El, who is the chief Canaanite god. Baal was the god of rain and the giver of fertility. He was sometimes referred to as the husband of the land. Originally, the word "*Baal*" meant "lord" or "owner" (e.g., Exod 21:28-29) or "husband." By the Late Bronze Age, which was around 1550-1200 BCE, it had become a title for various gods and also the name of El's son. Worship of Baal took place on hills or mountaintops (1 Kgs 12:31; 2 Kgs 17:9-10; 23:8, 13, 15).

1:7-2:3 The day of the Lord will be a day of divine wrath, anguish, ruin, devastation, darkness, gloom, clouds, sadness, wailing, and economic distress for the inhabitants of Judah, their leaders, and even the capital city, Jerusalem. This day of the Lord is exaggerated, and it symbolizes God's extraordinary rage over the central sin of some people: apostasy. God won't tolerate Judah's worshipping other gods. The text as a whole shows God as a violent and somewhat unjust God who threatens to sweep away everything because some people have sinned. The last section of the poem is a warning (2:1-3). The prophet calls Judah to make restitution and to turn back to God before the day of the Lord becomes a reality (2:1-3b). If the people turn aside from their ways and seek a right relationship once more, then perhaps they will be hidden on the day of the Lord's anger (2:3c). The mission of the prophet, therefore, isn't only to expose wrongdoing but also to offer hope to a struggling people.

1:8 *all those wearing foreign clothes*: The officials and the king's sons who wear foreign clothing are most likely guilty of Baal worship (2 Kgs 10:22) and therefore having left the faith.

1:9 *the one leaping on the threshold*: refers to the superstition that evil spirits lurk at a doorway, waiting to enter a person who steps over the threshold.

1:2 Gn 6:7;  
 2Ki 22:16;  
 2Ki 22:17;  
 Eze 33:27  
 1:3 Eze 7:19,  
 Eze 14:3; Hos 4:3  
 1:7 1Sa 16:5;  
 Is 34:6; Jer 46:10;  
 Eze 39:17;  
 Zep 1:14  
 1:10 2Ch 33:14;  
 Neh 3:3

1:11 Jas 5:1  
 1:12 Jer 48:11;  
 Eze 8:12;  
 Am 6:1; Am 9:1  
 1:13 Dt 28:30,  
 Dt 28:39;  
 Jer 15:13;  
 Am 5:11;  
 Mi 6:15  
 1:14 Eze 7:7;  
 Zep 1:7  
 1:15 Is 8:22,  
 Is 22:5; Jl 2:2;  
 Am 5:18  
 1:16 Is 2:15;  
 Jer 4:19; Am 2:2  
 1:18 Dt 29:20;  
 Prv 11:4;  
 Eze 7:19; Zep 3:8  
 2:1 2 Ch 20:4;  
 Jer 6:15; Jl 1:14

wailing from the second quarter,  
 a loud crash from the hills.

- 11** The ones who grind the grain<sup>b</sup> will wail;  
 all the merchants will be silenced.  
 I will eliminate all those weighing out silver.
- 12** At that time, I will search Jerusalem with lamps;  
 I will punish the men growing fat on the sediment in their wine,  
 those saying to themselves, The LORD won't do good or evil.
- 13** Their wealth will be looted and their houses destroyed.  
 They will rebuild houses, but not live in them;  
 they will plant vineyards, but not drink the wine.
- 14** The great day of the LORD is near;  
 it is near and coming very quickly.  
 The sound of the day of the LORD is bitter.  
 A warrior screams there.
- 15** That day is a day of fury,  
 a day of distress and anxiety,  
 a day of desolation and devastation,  
 a day of darkness and gloominess,  
 a day of clouds and deep darkness,  
**16** a day for blowing the trumpet and alarm against their invincible cities  
 and against their high towers.
- 17** I will make humanity suffer;  
 they will walk like the blind because they sinned against the LORD.  
 Their blood will be poured out like dust and their intestines like manure.
- 18** Moreover, their silver and their gold won't be able to deliver them  
 on the day of the LORD's fury.  
 His jealousy will devour the entire land with fire;  
 he will make an end, a truly horrible one, for all the inhabitants of the land.
- 2** Gather together and assemble yourselves, shameless nation,  
**2** before the decision is made—the day vanishes like chaff<sup>c</sup>—  
 before the burning anger of the LORD comes against you,  
 before the day of the LORD's anger comes against you.
- 3** Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land who practice his justice;  
 seek righteousness;  
 seek humility.  
 Maybe you will be hidden on the day of the LORD's anger.

### Oracles against foreign nations

- 4** Gaza will certainly be abandoned; and Ashkelon destroyed.  
 Ashdod will be driven out at noon; Ekron will be uprooted.
- 5** Doom, inhabitants of the seacoast, nation of Cretans.  
 The LORD's word is against you, Canaan, land of the Philistines.  
 I will exterminate you, leaving no inhabitant.

<sup>b</sup>Or keeper of the mortar <sup>c</sup>Heb uncertain

1:13 *Their wealth will be looted:* The wealthy who arrogantly believe that God isn't paying attention to them will also experience God's punishment. Their wealth will be taken, and their houses and vineyards will be ruined and useless.

2:1-3 This series of commands calls the community together and addresses the *shameless nation* of Judah.

2:2 The threefold use of *before* shows the urgency of the situation. If the people change their ways, then God's wrath can be avoided.

2:3 The three *before* statements appear side by side with three commands that the prophet addresses to the

community. Three times the people are told to *seek*: seek the Lord; seek righteousness; and seek humility. If the people seek God and the virtues of righteousness and humility, then they may escape God's wrath, which is coming no matter what the people do.

2:4-15 The day of the Lord will not only affect Jerusalem and Judah but also many of the Lord's other nations as well.

2:4 The first nation to be affected is Philistia (cf. Ezek 25:15-17). Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron (2:4) are all cities of the Philistine confederation.

2:5 *inhabitants of the seacoast, nation of Cretans:* These

- <sup>6</sup>The seacoast will become pastureland,  
with wells for shepherds and pens for the flocks.
- <sup>7</sup>The coast will belong to the survivors from the house of Judah;  
they will pasture beside the sea;<sup>4</sup>  
in the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down in the evening.  
The LORD their God will visit them and restore their possessions.
- <sup>8</sup>I have heard the taunting of Moab  
and the defamation of the Ammonites;  
they taunted my people and enlarged their borders.
- <sup>9</sup>Therefore, as I live—  
says the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel—  
Moab will become like Sodom and the Ammonites like Gomorrah:  
a plot of weeds, salt pits, and devastation forever.  
The few remaining from my people will plunder them;  
the rest of my nation will possess them.
- <sup>10</sup>This will happen on account of their pride,  
because they taunted and boasted over the people  
of the LORD of heavenly forces.
- <sup>11</sup>The LORD will terrify them;  
he will make all the gods of the earth disappear.  
All the coastlands of the nations will bow down to the LORD,  
each one in its own place.
- <sup>12</sup>Moreover, you too, Cushites, will be pierced by my sword.
- <sup>13</sup>He will stretch out his hand against the north  
and will cause Assyria to perish.  
Let him make Nineveh a desolation,  
a desolate place like the wilderness.
- <sup>14</sup>Flocks will lie down in its midst,  
every living thing of the nation.  
Moreover, the owl and the porcupine will spend the night on its columns.  
A bird's call will resound from the window.  
Desolation will be on the sill,  
for the cedar will be stripped bare.
- <sup>15</sup>This is the jubilant city, the one dwelling securely,  
the one saying in her heart, I, and no one else, will endure forever.  
How she has become a desolation, a resting place for the wild animals.  
All those who pass through her hiss and shake their fist.

<sup>4</sup>Or they will pasture by them.

people would be the Cherethites, which is a synonym for, or a subdivision of, the Philistines. Crete is part of the larger Aegean region from which the Philistines came.

2:6-7 *shepherds*: These are Judeans. Even though the image in Zephaniah 2:4-5 is destruction, the land itself will continue on as a sign with life-sustaining possibilities. A word of hope for Judah can be found in this judgment against Philistia.

2:8-11 In this third judgment speech, the targets of God's wrath are *Moab* and *Ammon* (cf. Gen 19:30-38; Isa 15; Jer 48-49:6; Ezek 25:1-11). These two nations were Judah's neighbors to the east across the Jordan River. Both the *Moabites* and the *Ammonites* have made fun of the people of Judah, God's *people*, and have insulted their territory (2:8). Therefore, Israel's God will deal terribly with these two groups. Ironically, the raiders will

be looted by those whom they have attacked (2:9-10). For reference to *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, see Genesis 19:1-29. The focus is on Israel's God as the ruler over all other gods and the conversion of the nations to worshipping God.

2:12 The fourth judgment speech is directed toward Ethiopia (cf. Isa 18:1-6), also known as Cush. The *Cushites* will be slain by the Lord's sword, a dreadful weapon, sharpened, polished, flashing, and always ready for slaughter (cf. Ezek 21:1-17).

2:13-15 What the prophet Nahum anticipated, Zephaniah sees as well: the destruction of *Nineveh* and the Assyrians. This fifth judgment speech is addressed to Assyria and its capital city *Nineveh*. Animal images reinforce the picture of the city's total destruction. Though once a secure city, *Nineveh* will become a wilderness for animals.

3:1 Jer 6:6  
 3:2 Ps 73:28,  
 Ps 78:22;  
 Jer 2:30, Jer 5:3  
 3:3 Jer 5:6;  
 Eze 22:27;  
 Mi 3:9, Mi 7:3;  
 Hab 1:8  
 3:4 Eze 22:26;  
 Hos 9:7  
 3:7 Hos 9:9  
 3:8 Ps 27:14;  
 Eze 36:5,  
 Eze 38:19, Jl 3:2;  
 Zep 1:18  
 3:9 Ps 22:27,  
 Ps 86:9, Is 19:18;  
 Hab 2:14;  
 Zep 2:11  
 3:10 Ps 68:31;  
 Is 11:11, Is 18:1,  
 Is 18:7, Is 60:4

### Judgment against Jerusalem

**3** Doom, obstinate one, the defiled one,  
 the violent city.

<sup>2</sup> She listened to no voice;  
 she accepted no discipline.  
 She didn't trust in the LORD,  
 nor did she draw near to her God.

<sup>3</sup> The princes in her midst are roaring lions.  
 Her judges are wolves of the evening;  
 they leave nothing for the morning.

<sup>4</sup> Her prophets are reckless,  
 men of treachery.  
 Her priests pollute that which is holy;  
 they do violence to the Instruction.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD is righteous in her midst.  
 He does nothing unjust.  
 Morning by morning he renders justice,  
 but the unrighteous one  
 knows no shame.

<sup>6</sup> I will cut off nations;  
 their towers will be destroyed;  
 I will devastate their streets.  
 No one will pass through.

Their cities will be laid waste.  
 There will be no person, no inhabitant left.

<sup>7</sup> I said, "Surely, she will fear me; she will take instruction  
 so that her habitation won't be cut off<sup>a</sup> because of everything I did to her."  
 However, they rose early to corrupt their deeds.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore, wait for me, says the LORD,  
 wait for the day when I rise up as a witness,<sup>f</sup>  
 when I decide to gather nations,  
 to collect kingdoms,  
 to pour out my indignation upon them,  
 all the heat of my anger.  
 In the fire of my jealousy,  
 all the earth will be devoured.

### Restoration of the nations and Jerusalem

<sup>9</sup> Then I will change the speech of the peoples into pure speech,  
 that all of them will call on the name of the LORD  
 and will serve him as one.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>10</sup> From beyond the rivers of Cush,  
 my daughter, my dispersed ones, will bring me offerings.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>f</sup>LXX; MT it <sup>g</sup>Or with one shoulder

**Foreign Nations** One of the main sections of the book of Zephaniah is made up of the oracles against the foreign nations (2:4-15). To Israel and Judah the foreign nations are a political threat because of their military power (Isa 30:1-5; 31:1-3) and strength (Ezek 38; Jer 50:1-3). The foreign nations are a religious temptation because of their idols (Deut 20:15-16; Ezek 20:32). Because of their wickedness, the nations are under the threat of God's wrath, but they are also under God's favor. They receive God's promise and goodness (Isa 42:1; 66:18-19), and they have a place in the divine plan for universal salvation (Isa 2:1-3; 25:6-8; Mic 4:1-4). In Zephaniah the foreign nations are faced with charges and judged (Zeph 2:4-15). They also exist under the divine promise of restoration (Zeph 3:9-20). Viewed favorably by God (Zech 8:20-23; Isa 56:3-8), they will one day stream toward God's holy mountain, experience peace, and be welcomed into God's kingdom (Isa 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-5).

3:1-8 These verses criticize Jerusalem. Verses 1-5 portray God taking Jerusalem to task for a variety of reasons: It is stubborn, argumentative, and distant from God (3:2). The city's officials and judges are violent and vicious, preying on those under their authority (3:3). Its religious leaders are just as bad: The prophets are reckless, unfaithful people, and its priests have corrupted what is sacred and have done violence to the teaching of the Torah, the Instruction (3:4). God stands in sharp contrast to all of these persons. God acts justly every day (3:5) and distributes judgment on Jerusalem (3:6). God hopes that Jerusalem will reform her ways (3:7). Following the series of judgment speeches and criticism of Jerusalem, Jerusalem is now called to wait

for the Lord, who will surely pour out divine wrath on the nations (3:8).

3:5 The prophet shifts the focus away from Jerusalem (see Zeph 3:1-4) and introduces God as the speaker in Zephaniah 3:6-13.

3:9-20 The prophet gives a dramatic description of the restoration of the nations and Jerusalem. His listeners learn that words of judgment, criticism, and purification lead to words of hope, salvation, and restoration.

3:9-10 The prophet indicates the type of purification that will occur: Foreign countries will be given pure speech so that they can all worship Israel's God, and bring gifts to this God as well (3:10).



3:11 Is 54:4;  
Jl 2:26  
3:12 Is 14:32  
3:13 Zep 2:7;  
Rev 14:5  
3:14 Is 12:6;  
Zec 2:10; Zec 9:9  
3:15 Is 54:14;  
Eze 37:26;  
Jn 1:49  
3:19 Is 60:14;  
Eze 34:16;  
Mi 4:6

- <sup>11</sup> On that day, you won't be ashamed of all your deeds  
with which you sinned against me;  
then I will remove from your midst those boasting with pride.  
No longer will you be haughty on my holy mountain,  
<sup>12</sup> but I will cause a humble and powerless people to remain in your midst;  
they will seek refuge in the name of the LORD.  
<sup>13</sup> The few remaining from Israel won't commit injustice;  
they won't tell lies;  
a deceitful tongue won't be found on their lips.  
They will graze and lie down; no one will make them afraid.
- <sup>14</sup> Rejoice, Daughter Zion! Shout, Israel!  
Rejoice and exult with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem.
- <sup>15</sup> The LORD has removed your judgment;  
he has turned away your enemy.  
The LORD, the king of Israel, is in your midst;  
you will no longer fear evil.
- <sup>16</sup> On that day, it will be said to Jerusalem:  
Don't fear, Zion.  
Don't let your hands fall.
- <sup>17</sup> The LORD your God is in your midst—a warrior bringing victory.  
He will create calm with his love;  
he will rejoice over you with singing.
- <sup>18</sup> I will remove from you those worried about the appointed feasts.<sup>h</sup>  
They have been a burden for her, a reproach.
- <sup>19</sup> Watch what I am about to do to all your oppressors at that time.  
I will deliver the lame;  
I will gather the outcast.  
I will change their shame into praise and fame throughout the earth.
- <sup>20</sup> At that time, I will bring all of you back, at the time when I gather you.  
I will give you fame and praise among all the neighboring peoples  
when I restore your possessions and you can see them<sup>i</sup>—says the LORD.

<sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>i</sup>Or before your eyes

3:14-20 This section is addressed to *Daughter Zion* (Daughter Jerusalem), who is now disciplined and purified. Zephaniah calls on the city to shout and sing joyfully (3:14). They sing because God has removed the judgment against the city, has turned away all the enemies (cf. Zeph 1:2-3:8, 15), and now dwells in their midst (3:15). These verses point forward to the realized promises of deliverance and restoration for Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel.

3:15 God has removed the judgments against the people, turned away the enemy, and is now the king, who dwells in the people's midst. These actions will bring about peace.

3:16 *On that day*: The phrase points to a future new day for Jerusalem. Jerusalem and its inhabitants will no longer experience the "day of the Lord," a day of wrath (Zeph 1:2-2:3). *Don't fear, Zion*: This is a typical formula (cf. Gen 15:1;

21:17; 35:17; Exod 20:20; Isa 7:4; 35:4; 40:9; 41:10; Jer 30:10; Joel 2:21; Hag 2:5; Ruth 3:11). The prophet anticipates the end of the Babylonian exile and the return of the people of Judah to their land.

3:17 Because God dwells in Jerusalem and among the people, there is reason to celebrate. Jerusalem's disgrace will no longer be remembered by others, because God is about to remove disaster from the city.

3:18-20 A city and a people now purified will soon be made glorious through God's transformative love. Jerusalem is reassured that God will deal with the city's oppressors (3:19a). With the right relationship renewed, God will gather the peoples together, bring them home, restore them, and make them glorious throughout the earth. This transformation will happen as a result of God's initiative. As with many of Israel's prophets, Zephaniah's final proclamation brings hope.



The first part of the text is a list of items, each followed by a description. The items are:

- 1. a. The first part of the text is a list of items, each followed by a description.
- 2. b. The second part of the text is a list of items, each followed by a description.
- 3. c. The third part of the text is a list of items, each followed by a description.
- 4. d. The fourth part of the text is a list of items, each followed by a description.
- 5. e. The fifth part of the text is a list of items, each followed by a description.
- 6. f. The sixth part of the text is a list of items, each followed by a description.
- 7. g. The seventh part of the text is a list of items, each followed by a description.
- 8. h. The eighth part of the text is a list of items, each followed by a description.

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# HAGGAI

Haggai is the 10th book in the Minor Prophets, or the Book of the Twelve. The book contains several date formulas that place the prophecies during the second year of Persia's King Darius I (522–486 BCE) in approximately 520 BCE.

The information about the prophet's identity and role in his community is typical of an Israelite prophet. He is designated as the Lord's "messenger" in Haggai 1:13. This may be a symbolic title for a prophet (cf. Mal 2:7; 3:1). The name Haggai, which means "my feasts," suggests that the prophecies in the book may be associated with festival days, such as the new moon or the Festival of Booths.

According to the date formulas in the book (Hag 1:1, 15; 2:1, 10, 20), Haggai's prophetic work

was short and effective. Within four months, he convinced the reluctant community to work on the temple. The first temple (built by Solomon; 1 Kgs 6) had been destroyed, and the people were scattered in Egypt, Babylon, and elsewhere. In 538 BCE they were given the opportunity to return to Judah to rebuild their lives, which included restoring the temple (cf. 2 Chron 36:22–23). Upon their return to the land, the community encountered various challenges in rebuilding the temple and altar (a story told in the book of Ezra).

Haggai expects his listeners to obey God while rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. His tone is sometimes encouraging and sometimes scolding as he offers hope for a restored community.

## I. Dispute about Building the Temple (1:2-15)

- A. Dispute and supporting evidence (1:2-11)
  - 1. Various views (1:2-4)
  - 2. Support for the Lord's view (1:5-11)
- B. Outcome of the dispute (1:12-15)

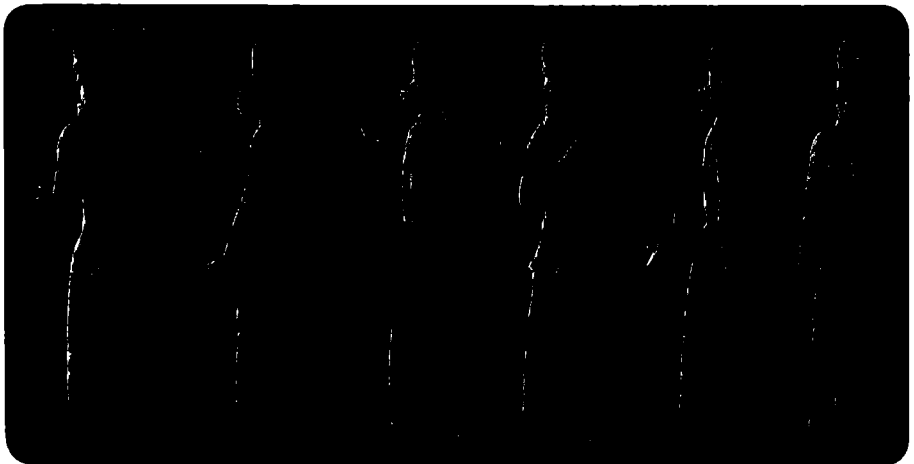
## II. Message of Comfort to the People (2:1-9)

- A. Question regarding the temple (2:1-3)
- B. Expression of comfort (2:4-9)

## III. Message Regarding the Political Rule (2:10-23)

- A. Oracle and warning (past and present realities) (2:10-19)
- B. Concerning the kingdoms (future reality) (2:20-23)
  - 1. The kingdoms (2:20-22)
  - 2. The Lord's servant (2:23)

*Mignon R. Jacobs*



Bas-relief of Darius I of Persia (Hag 1:1)

*iStockPhoto*

1:1 Ezer 3:2,  
Ezer 5:1, Ezer 6:14;  
Haggai 2:1, Zech 1:1  
1:6 Isa 5:10;  
Hos 8:7; Haggai 1:9,  
Haggai 2:16;  
Zech 8:10  
1:9 Isa 40:7;  
Haggai 1:4, Haggai 1:6

### The challenge to rebuild

**1** The LORD's word came through Haggai the prophet in the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month on the first day of the month, to Judah's governor Zerubbabel, Shealtiel's son, and to the high priest Joshua, Jehozadak's son:

**2** This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says:

These people say, "The time hasn't come, the time to rebuild the LORD's house."

**3** Then the LORD's word came through Haggai the prophet:

**4** Is it time for you to dwell in your own paneled houses while this house lies in ruins?

**5** So now, this is what the LORD of heavenly forces says:

Take your ways to heart.

**6** You have sown much, but it has brought little.

You eat, but there's not enough to satisfy.

You drink, but not enough to get drunk.

There is clothing, but not enough to keep warm.

Anyone earning wages puts those wages into a bag with holes.

**7** This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says:

Take your ways to heart.

**8** Go up to the highlands and bring back wood.

Rebuild the temple so that I may enjoy it and that I may be honored, says the LORD.

**9** You expect a surplus, but look how it shrinks.

You bring it home, and I blow it away, says the LORD of heavenly forces, because my house lies in ruins.

But all of you hurry to your own houses.

**10** Therefore, the skies above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce because of you.

**11** I have called for drought on the earth, on the mountains, on the grain, on the wine, on the olive oil,

1:1 *through Haggai the prophet*: Haggai is the instrument God used to speak to the community. *the second year*: the first of several date formulas in the book of Haggai (see Hag 1:15; 2:1, 10, 20). Dates are important in the book because they establish the historical setting for the message. In the late 7th century BCE there was a shift in the pattern of dating events. Before that time only years were given (see 1 Kgs 15:9; Isa 14:28). With the exile, the month, the day, and sometimes both were added to the year (see Jer 28:1, 17; 36:9, 22; 39:1, 2; 52:4, 5-6, 12; 2 Chron 3:2; Zech 7:1). Later in Haggai, when the prophet speaks about the whole earth quaking "on that day" (Hag 2:23), he is referring to a future when the people of God, led by Governor Zerubbabel, would rule over the other nations. 1:1 introduces the political leader, *governor Zerubbabel* (cf. Ezra 3:2, 8; 4:3; 5:2; Neh 12:1; Zech 4:6, 9, 10) and the religious leader, *the high priest Joshua* (cf. Ezra 3:2, 8; 4:3; 5:2). These two leaders play key roles in the Jerusalem community during this time of restoration.

1:2-15 A dispute breaks out about rebuilding the temple. The people are working on their own homes but not providing a house for worshipping God.

1:2 *this is what the LORD . . . says*: a typical way for a prophet to let the people know what is expected of them. *of heavenly forces*: refers to the Lord's power and command over a heavenly army. The people, however, say that *the time hasn't come*. The people may be saying that they still have time to rebuild the temple. Perhaps they have in mind the

prediction in Jeremiah 24:11-12, which anticipates (possibly in 597 BCE) that the temple would be restored in 70 years. This would mean that they still have another seven years to restore God's house. But their reason is much more practical: They haven't yet rebuilt their own houses.

1:4 God's view is introduced through a question about personal priorities.

1:5-6 *Take your ways to heart*: The community is asked to recognize that their efforts are futile. The list of misfortunes is similar to the curses in Deuteronomy 28:15-41. Even hard work and dedication are cursed by loss and lack of needed resources. They won't be satisfied by anything.

1:7-8 *This is what the LORD . . . says*: See note on Haggai 1:2. This command to *take your ways to heart* is repeated (Hag 1:5, 7; 2:15, 18) in order to draw attention to the job of replacing the temple. *that I may be honored*: See Haggai 2:9.

1:9-11 The focus on futile effort resumes and makes clear the connection between the mixed-up priorities. *my house lies in ruins*: Even though the people were saying that it's not the time to complete the temple (Hag 1:2, 4), they appear to have completed their houses. So the prophet thinks they really are shirking their responsibility to build God's house. He threatens them with a curse that *the skies and earth* will withhold their produce (see Deut 28:15-68).

1:11 *called for drought*: See Deuteronomy 28:22, 39 and Amos 4:6-9, where drought and spoiled crops are connected to disobedience.

on that which comes forth from the fertile ground,  
on humanity, on beasts,  
and upon everything that handles produce.

<sup>12</sup>Zerubbabel, Shealtiel's son, and the high priest Joshua, Jehozadak's son, along with all who remained among the people, listened to the voice of the LORD God and to the words of Haggai the prophet because the LORD their God sent him. Then the people feared the LORD.

<sup>13</sup>Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave the LORD's message to the people:

I am with you, says the LORD.

<sup>14</sup>The LORD moved the spirit of Judah's governor Zerubbabel, Shealtiel's son, and the spirit of the high priest Joshua, Jehozadak's son, and the spirit of all the rest of the people. Then they came and did work on the house of the LORD of heavenly forces, their God, <sup>15</sup>on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king.

### Encouraging the people

**2** On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the LORD's word came through Haggai the prophet: <sup>2</sup>Say to Judah's governor Zerubbabel, Shealtiel's son, and to the chief priest Joshua, Jehozadak's son, and to the rest of the people:

<sup>3</sup>Who among you is left who saw this house in its former glory?

How does it look to you now?

Doesn't it appear as nothing to you?

<sup>4</sup>So now, be strong, Zerubbabel, says the LORD.

Be strong, High Priest Joshua, Jehozadak's son,  
and be strong, all you people of the land, says the LORD.

Work, for I am with you, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>5</sup>As with our agreement when you came out of Egypt,  
my spirit stands in your midst.

Don't fear.

<sup>6</sup>This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says:

In just a little while, I will make the heavens, the earth,  
the sea, and the dry land quake.

<sup>7</sup>I will make all the nations quake.

The wealth of all the nations will come.

I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>8</sup>The silver and the gold belong to me, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>9</sup>This house will be more glorious than its predecessor,  
says the LORD of heavenly forces.

I will provide prosperity in this place, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

1:12 Ezer 5:2;  
Is 50:10; Hg 1:1;  
Hg 1:14; Hg 2:2  
1:13 Is 41:10;  
Hg 2:4; Mal 3:1  
2:2 Hg 1:1;  
Hg 1:12  
2:4 Hg 1:13;  
Zec 8:9;  
Eph 6:10  
2:5 Neh 9:20;  
Zec 8:13  
2:6 Is 10:25;  
Hg 2:21;  
Heb 12:26  
2:7 Is 60:7;  
Dn 2:44; Mal 3:1  
2:8 1Ch 29:14;  
Ps 24:1; Ps 50:10;  
Is 60:17  
2:9 Is 9:6;  
Eph 2:14

1:12 The list signals that the whole community listened to the prophet Zerubbabel (the political representative) and the high priest Joshua (the religious representative), and the people feared (see Hag 1:1; 2:1). The entire community is responsible for obeying God (cf. Hag 2:4-5).

1:13-15 *I am with you*: words of assurance to the people about God's presence (see Hag 2:4). This assurance occurs in situations where the people have real reason to be distressed (cf. Gen 26:24; Isa 41:10; 43:5; Jer 1:19; 15:20).

1:14 God also *moved the spirit* of the entire community. This is more than simply cheering them up. They were motivated into action and responded by building the temple (Hag 1:15).

1:15 *the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month*: 23 days after the prophet began to speak God's message to the community (cf. Hag 1:1). The short response time is remarkable, perhaps easier after the curses they experienced. Contrast other prophets, such as Jeremiah or Amos, who struggled to get the community to listen to God's message.

2:1-2 *On the twenty-first day of the seventh month*: another date stamp. See note on Haggai 1:1; compare with Haggai

1:15; 2:20. *through Haggai the prophet*: identifies Haggai as the instrument used to give the message.

2:3 *Who among you*: a question for any eyewitnesses to the former temple. Anyone who was alive and aware of the temple before it was vandalized (pre-597 BCE) and eventually destroyed (587 BCE) would be at least 80 years old in 520 BCE. So Haggai's audience probably has no memory of an eyewitness experience of the temple. The reputation of the temple was of a huge complex, filled with riches. By contrast, the temple ruins are nothing to look at. The community is asked to rebuild a temple that may not live up to the reputation of the first temple (cf. 1 Kgs 7:51).

2:4-5 *Be strong*: words of encouragement to the community. *Don't fear* (2:5) is tied to the promise of divine presence within the community (see Isa 41:10).

2:6-9 *This is what*: See notes on Haggai 1:2, 5. God promises to provide resources to build the second temple. The promise signals control over the elements—from the created order to the political structures of the world. *the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the dry land*: echo the creation

2:10 Hg 1:1,  
Hg 1:15, Hg 2:1,  
Hg 2:20  
2:11 Lv 10:10;  
Mal 2:7  
2:12 Lv 6:27;  
Mt 23:19  
2:13 Lv 22:4;  
Nm 19:11  
2:17 Dt 28:22;  
1Kt 8:37; Is 9:13;  
Jer 2:30; Am 4:6  
2:19 Prv 3:10;  
Mal 3:10  
2:21 Ezz 5:2;  
Hg 1:1; Zec 4:6  
2:22 Jdg 7:22;  
Mic 5:10;  
Dn 2:44

### Cleansing the work

<sup>10</sup>On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month in the second year of Darius, the LORD's word came to Haggai the prophet:

<sup>11</sup>This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says:

Go ahead and ask the priests for a ruling:

<sup>12</sup>"If someone lifts holy meat into the hem of one's garment and that hem touches bread, stew, wine, oil, or any kind of food, will it be made holy?"

And the priests responded, "No."

<sup>13</sup>Haggai said,

"If an unclean person touches any of these things, will it become unclean?"

And the priests responded, "It will be unclean."

<sup>14</sup>Then Haggai responded:

Thus has this people and this nation become to me, says the LORD,  
and everything that they do with their hands.  
Whatever they offer is unclean.

<sup>15</sup>So now, take it to heart from this day forward.

Before stone was placed on stone in the LORD's temple,

<sup>16</sup>when one came to the granary for twenty measures,  
there were only ten;

and when one came to the wine vat for fifty measures,  
there were only twenty.

<sup>17</sup>I struck you—everything you do with your hands—  
with blight and mildew and hail;  
but you didn't return to me.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>18</sup>So take it to heart from this day forward,  
from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month.

Take it to heart from the day when the foundation for the LORD's temple was laid.

<sup>19</sup>Is the seed yet in the granary—

or the vine, the fig tree, or the pomegranate—  
or has the olive tree not borne fruit?

From this day forward, I will bless you.

### Royal expectations

<sup>20</sup>And the LORD's word came to Haggai a second time on the twenty-fourth of the month, saying:

<sup>21</sup>Speak to Judah's governor Zerubbabel:

I am about to make the heavens and the earth quake.

<sup>22</sup>I will overthrow the thrones of the kingdoms;

I will destroy the strength of the nations.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Or but you weren't with me. <sup>b</sup>Or of the kingdoms of the nations

story in Genesis 1. *the nations*: indicates God's power over the world. *The silver and the gold*: These precious metals signal wealth (cf. Gen 13:2; 24:35; Exod 12:35; 1Kgs 10) and support the promise to make the second temple *more glorious* than the first.

2:10-19 *twenty-fourth day of the ninth month*: another date formula. Time has passed since the last time the prophet communicated with the community about obedience (see notes on Hag 1:5-11).

2:10-14 The lesson illustrates the priests' knowledge and thus their duty (cf. Lev 10:10; 11:16-47; 14:56-57). *will it be made holy?*: It was the priests' duty to teach the people the Instruction and to teach the community how to remain in a pure relationship with God (cf. Lev 6:18, 27; Exod 29:37). *will be unclean*: Holiness isn't transferred continually from one object to another, but uncleanness is easily passed on (see Hag 1:13).

2:15-17 *take it to heart*: See Haggai 1:5, 7; 2:18. The

community is asked to compare its reduced resources before and after they began working on the temple. *I struck you*: God takes responsibility for the community's distress. While *blight and mildew and hail* may be natural occurrences, these curses are the result of God's actions against the community (see Hag 1:11; cf. Deut 28:22; Amos 4:9).

2:18-19 *Take it to heart*: See Haggai 1:5, 7; 2:15. The focus is now on the link between obedience and God's blessing.

2:20 The *second time* points back to the ninth month mentioned in Haggai 2:10, 18. In Haggai 2:10 the prophet is commanded to speak to the priests, but in Haggai 2:21 he is commanded to speak to "Judah's governor Zerubbabel."

2:21-22 The book's conclusion has strong political overtones. The message to Zerubbabel is that God is going to *make the heavens and the earth quake*, which shows God's power over the created order (see Hag 2:6; cf. Amos 4:13) and the world powers, including their palaces and their ability to make war.

I will overthrow chariot and rider;  
horses and riders will fall.

Each one will fall by the sword of his companion.

<sup>23</sup>On that day, says the LORD of heavenly forces:

I will take you, Zerubbabel, Shealtiel's son, my servant, says the LORD;

I will make you like a signet ring

because I have chosen you, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

2:23 Eze 3:2;  
Neh 12:1;  
Jer 22:24

2:23 *On that day*: a formula used to refer to a date already mentioned or to a time in the distant future. Here it may point to the date in Haggai 2:20. It is also used elsewhere of the future when God will overthrow the nations (cf. Isa

19:21-24; Zech 3:7). *signet ring*: God will place Zerubbabel in charge, thus placing the power of decision in his hand. The radical message is that the leader of Judah, a small province under Persian rule, will rule the world by God's design.





# ZECHARIAH

The book of Zechariah features the prophet Zechariah, who began preaching around 520 BCE. He was a contemporary of the prophet Haggai, and in the Minor Prophets, also known as the Book of the Twelve, Zechariah follows Haggai. Zechariah's name is a compound derived from *Yah*, which is the first syllable of *Yahweh* (the LORD), and the verb *zakar*, which means "to remember." Hence, the prophet's name can be translated "The LORD remembered."

Even though we don't know when it was written, the text of Zechariah reflects the historical times of Darius I, when the remaining few people in Judah were struggling against other kingdoms and trying to limit the influence of other gods. This small group of faithful Israelites was also struggling to rebuild the temple. Very little is known about the person Zechariah, but he was likely a priest. The material of the text reflects the years surrounding the collapse of the Babylonian Empire and the rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel in about 520 BCE. The

text's focus is primarily on Jerusalem, though Babylon also comes into view.

The book itself consists of prose and poetry and isn't a unified text. It can be divided into two parts: chapters 1–8 and 9–14. The relationship of the two parts is confusing because the parts seem to reflect different authors, different time periods, and different themes. Whereas Zechariah 1–8 contains mostly visions, Zechariah 9–14 has no visions. The rebuilding of the temple is a primary theme and concern in Zechariah 1–8, but Zechariah 9–14 makes no mention of this theme or concern.

In Zechariah 1–8, Judah is called to turn away from sin. The restoration of the land of Israel to its people becomes a hope. Exiles are encouraged to return to Jerusalem. The restoration of the temple, the priesthood, ritual practices, and the monarchy under Zerubbabel are promoted with a renewed respect for each element. In Zechariah 9–14, Judah's long-awaited king is expected at any moment (Zech 9:1-10).



Two olive trees (Zech 4:12)

iStockPhoto

This king will bring release from captivity (Zech 9:11-17). Before the monarchy can be restored, however, the people must be cleansed (Zech 12:10–13:1), along with the priests (Zech 12:13-14) and the prophets (Zech 13:3-6). Further, the exiles live under the possibility of being scattered once again (Zech 13:7-9), due to the

threat of attack by enemy nations (Zech 12:1-6; 14:1-5, 12). The people are also informed that the north and the south will not be reunited until their leaders turn away from sin and reform their ways (Zech 11:7-11). Thus this second part of the book delivers a word of cautious hope and possible doom.

### **I. First Address (1:1-6)**

### **II. Second Address (1:7–6:15)**

- A. First vision: four horsemen and God's return to Jerusalem (1:7-17)
- B. Second vision: horns and metalworkers, end of foreign control (1:18-21)
- C. Third vision: a man measuring Jerusalem: promise of prosperity (2:1-5)
- D. First word of encouragement: exiles called to return home (2:6-13)
- E. Fourth vision: cleansing of Joshua (3:1-10)
- F. Fifth vision: the lampstand, olive trees, and God's presence (4:1-14)
- G. Sixth vision: the flying scroll and cleansing of Jerusalem (5:1-4)
- H. Seventh vision: a woman in a basket; wickedness delivered to Babylon (5:5-11)
- I. Eighth vision: four chariots; patrol of the earth; and rest for God (6:1-8)

### **III. Second Word of Encouragement: Address to the Returned Exiles (6:9-15)**

### **IV. Third Address (7:1–8:23)**

- A. Questions pertaining to fasting (7:1-7)
- B. Divine instruction and response (7:8-14)
- C. Divine proclamations about the future (8:1-23)

### **V. Judgment on Israel's Enemies (9:1-8)**

### **VI. Word of Hope for Judah and Israel (9:9-17)**

### **VII. Restoration of Judah and Israel (10:1-12)**

### **VIII. Treachery of the Shepherds (11:1-17)**

### **IX. A Word against Jerusalem (12:1-9)**

### **X. Mourning and Cleansing of Jerusalem and the People (12:10–13:9)**

### **XI. Future Warfare; Jerusalem's Final Victory (14:1-21)**

*Carol J. Dempsey, O.P.*

**The people change**

**1** In the eighth month in the second year of Darius, the LORD's word came to Zechariah the prophet, Berechiah's son and Iddo's grandson:

<sup>2</sup>The LORD was terribly angry with your ancestors.

<sup>3</sup>But you must say to the people,

The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims: Return to me,  
says the LORD of heavenly forces,  
and I will return to you, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>4</sup>Don't be like your ancestors to whom the former prophets preached:

The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:  
Turn from your evil ways and your evil deeds.  
But they didn't listen;  
they didn't draw near to me.

<sup>5</sup>So where are your ancestors?

Do the prophets live forever?

<sup>6</sup>In fact, didn't my words and laws,  
which I gave to my servants, the prophets,  
pursue your ancestors?

And then the people changed their hearts, and they said, The LORD of heavenly forces has treated us according to what we have done,<sup>a</sup> exactly as he planned.

**First night vision**

<sup>7</sup>On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month (the month of Shebat<sup>b</sup>) in the second year of Darius, the LORD's word came to Zechariah the prophet, Berechiah's son and Iddo's grandson:

<sup>a</sup>Or *our ways and our actions* <sup>b</sup>January–February

1:1 The heading identifies the time period when Zechariah delivered his prophetic message. It also names the king who was in power when Zechariah was preaching, makes clear that the prophetic word is God's word, and provides some knowledge that pertains to Zechariah's ancestry. *Darius*, the king of Persia from 522 to 486 BCE, was one of the Persian Empire's more skilled administrators, and he was credited by the Greeks for his skill as a lawgiver. *The LORD's word came to Zechariah* indicates that the prophetic word about to be preached is a divine gift that Zechariah received, most likely, intuitively. The phrase lends authority to Zechariah's message. *Iddo*: Zechariah's grandfather was a priest in charge of one of the priestly families that returned from the Babylonian exile (Neh 12:4). Given this ancestral background, Zechariah was probably connected with the Zadokite branch of the priesthood.

1:2-6 The prophet provides a view of the past for his listeners. He reminds them of the stubbornness of their ancestors who ignored the message of the prophets. As a result God became terribly angry with the people. The ancestors didn't return to their God. They didn't turn from their evil ways until they experienced terrible hardship, which led to their changed hearts and lives (1:6). Zechariah pleads with his listeners not to be like their ancestors (cf. 2 Chron 20:7). He reminds them that their return to God and their reconciliation with God are linked to their turning away from evil ways and deeds (1:4). Zechariah's message is directed toward a new generation of people, and he is encouraging them to break the cycle, once and for all, of transgression that leads to prophetic doom and divine punishment.

1:2 *ancestors*: pre-exilic Judeans who were subjected to Babylonian destruction, and in some cases, to exile.

1:3 *The LORD of heavenly forces*: God is the commander in chief of all the powers in heaven and on earth. *Return to me*: a common theme throughout biblical prophetic literature (Isa 44:22; Jer 3:12, 14, 22; Hos 14:1; Joel 2:13; Mal 3:7). *and I will return to you*: See Malachi 3:7.

1:6 *my servants, the prophets*: The prophets don't act on their own initiative; each one receives a mission and commission from God (Isa 6:1-13; Jer 1:4-12). God gives each prophet the word or message to preach (Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1), sometimes through a vision (Isa 1:1; Hab 1:1). They are often referred to as God's servants (Jer 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Dan 9:10; Amos 3:7).

1:7-17 A report that describes the first of eight night visions experienced by Zechariah. It opens with a new heading (1:7) that introduces a major section of the book (Zech 1:7-6:15). The sequence of visions occurs three months after the sermon (1:2-6). The second heading contains much of the same information found in Zechariah 1:1. 1:8-17 describes the vision in two parts: the vision (1:8-13) and a divine response that takes the form of three proclamations (1:14-15, 16, 17). This first vision is of a man riding on a horse with a group of riders behind him on different colored horses (1:8-10). Divine visions can have sound as well as visual images. The three proclamations in 1:14-17 express God's sentiments toward the nations and Jerusalem. The vision makes clear God's promise to restore the temple, Jerusalem, and Judah to the original position of prominence among the nations.

1:7 *On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month*: February 15, 519 BCE, approximately one month prior to the spring New Year. This date doesn't necessarily apply to the entire visionary experience. *Shebat*: the 11th month of the Jewish calendar (January/February).

1:9 Zec 1:19,  
Zec 2:3, Zec 4:4,  
Zec 5:5

1:12 Ps 6:3;  
Jer 25:11,  
Jer 29:10;  
Dn 9:2; Zec 7:5

1:14 Jl 2:18;  
Zec 1:9,  
Zec 1:17, Zec 8:2

1:15 Is 47:6;  
Jer 48:11,  
Zec 1:2

8Tonight I looked and saw a man riding on a red horse, which was standing among the myrtle trees in the valley; and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses.

9I said, "What are these, sir?"

The messenger speaking with me said, "I will show you what they are."

10The man standing among the myrtles responded, "These are the ones the LORD sent to patrol the earth."

11Then they responded to the LORD's messenger, who was standing among the myrtles, "We have patrolled the earth. The whole earth is peaceful and quiet."

12Then the LORD's messenger, who was speaking with me, said:

"LORD of heavenly forces,  
how long will you withhold compassion from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah,  
with whom you have been angry these seventy years?"

13The LORD responded to the messenger who was speaking with me with kind and compassionate words.

14The messenger speaking with me called out,

"This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says:  
I care passionately about Jerusalem and Zion.

15And I am exceedingly angry with those carefree nations.

Though I was somewhat angry, they added to the violence."

16Therefore, this is what the LORD says:

I have returned to Jerusalem with compassion.  
My house will be built in it, says the LORD of heavenly forces.  
Let a measuring line be stretched over Jerusalem.

17"Call out again, The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

My cities will again overflow with prosperity.  
The LORD will again show compassion to Zion  
and will again choose Jerusalem."

1:8 These were normal horse colors and aren't unique to Zechariah. *myrtle trees*: nonpoisonous shrubs with dense growth, bright green oval leaves, white or pink flowers, and black berries. These trees were common in Syria and Palestine and elsewhere in the Mediterranean region. Myrtle is also associated with the transformation of the desert into a well-watered place (see Isa 4:19; 55:13).

1:9 *The messenger*: This character functions as an interpreter (cf. Dan 8:10; see also Mal 1:1 for the meaning of Malachi's name, "my messenger."). The messenger will speak regularly with Zechariah. *I will show you what they are*: The messenger offers to show Zechariah what the horses are, instead of explaining what Zechariah has already seen.

1:10 Here the one who responds to Zechariah isn't the messenger but rather the man who was riding the red horse, which was standing among the myrtle trees in the valley (Zec 1:8). The horses were sent to *patrol the earth*, so that the earth can remain at peace. They keep watch on behalf of God.

1:12 *compassion*: The biblical writers often describe God as disciplining the people first and then showing them compassion (Lam 3:22, 32; Dan 9:9). Throughout the

**The Heart** In the biblical understanding of the mind, the heart is the seat of desires, intentions, expectations, and plans that determine a person's character and the results of a person's behavior. The heart is the primary place where one encounters God and where God works to cause change, insight, and the transformation of one's life. The heart pertains to one's inner life. In Zechariah 1:6 "the people changed their hearts," which is a direct response to God's action occurring within a human being, and a human being's response to the divine will taking root within them.

writings of the prophets, God's anger gives way to compassion (see Isa 30:18; Mic 7:19).

1:14 *I care passionately about Jerusalem and Zion*: or "I am jealous for Jerusalem and Zion." In biblical terms, to care passionately or to be "jealous for" or "zealous for" is to have a passionate devotion to the good, either one's own good or the good of another. God is described as a "passionate God" (Exod 20:5; Deut 4:24; 5:9; 6:15) who is protective. God becomes "passionate" for the land (Joel 2:18) and has "zeal" for the people (Isa 26:11).

1:15 *And I am exceedingly angry with those carefree nations*: The nations haven't yet received the punishment that is due to them (see Isa 13–23; 34; 47; Jer 46–51; Ezek 28–32; Zeph 2:14–15).

1:16 *measuring line*: refers to the marking off of land for possession (Isa 34:17). It also refers to the building or restoration of the temple and its fixtures (1 Kgs 7:23; 2 Chron 4:2; Ezek 47:3).

1:17 *My cities*: the cities of Judah that were destroyed by foreign invasion. *overflow with prosperity*: The theme also appears in Hosea 15:5–8; Joel 3:18–21; Amos 9:11–15. Divine punishment ends (cf. Isa 40:1–2) and Jerusalem will once again take its place in the world (cf. Isa 2:2–4).

**Second night vision**

<sup>18</sup>Then I looked up and saw four horns. <sup>19</sup>I said to the messenger speaking with me, "What are these?"

He said to me, "These are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem."

<sup>20</sup>Then the LORD showed me four metalworkers.

<sup>21</sup>I said, "What are they coming to do?"

And he said,

"These are the horns that scattered Judah so that no one could raise his head.

The metalworkers have come to terrify them

and to destroy the horns of the nations,

those who were attacking the land of Judah with<sup>d</sup> their horns to scatter it."

**Third night vision**

<sup>2</sup>Then I looked up and saw a man. In his hand was a measuring line.

<sup>3</sup>I said, "Where are you going?"

He said to me,

"To measure Jerusalem to see how wide and long it will be."

<sup>3</sup>As I watched, the messenger speaking with me went ahead and another messenger came to meet him.

<sup>4</sup>He said to him,

"Run! Say to this young man:

Jerusalem will be inhabited like open fields

because of the throngs of people and cattle inside it.

<sup>5</sup>But I will be a wall of fire around it, says the LORD,

and I will be glorious inside it.

<sup>6</sup>Look out; look out! Flee from the land of the north, says the LORD,

for I will scatter you like the four winds of heaven, says the LORD.

<sup>c</sup>2:1 in Heb <sup>d</sup>Or those lifting their horns toward Judah <sup>e</sup>2:5 in Heb

1:18-21 This vision continues the theme of punishment for nations that is introduced in Zechariah 1:15. The nations, symbolized as horns, are responsible for scattering Judah and humiliating it (1:21). Thus because of the nations' disregard for Judah's plight, God will enact justice by making the nations powerless before God.

1:18 *four horns*: Rather than ram's horns, they refer more generally to animal horns, which are a symbol of power. The messenger interprets these horns as all the nations that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. Judah is the southern kingdom, Israel is the northern kingdom, and Jerusalem is the capital of Judah. The four horns might be a reference to Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Edom, Tyre, and Persia.

1:21 *metalworkers*: the artisans who work in metal (1 Sam 3:19; Hos 8:6; 2 Chron 34:11), wood (2 Sam 5:11; 2 Kgs 12:12), and stone (Exod 28:11; 2 Sam 5:11; 1 Chron 14:11). These artisans were sent by God to terrify the nations and reshape them because they have brought devastation on Judah.

2:1-13 Zechariah's third vision: a man measuring Jerusalem (2:1-5) and the prophet's first proclamation that calls the exiles to return home (2:6-13). The vision offers hope to both Jerusalem and the nations, many of whom will be joined to God when the day of the Lord dawns (2:11). The vision concerning the restoration of Jerusalem, and God's presence in Jerusalem and among the people, is oriented toward the future. However, it also reflects the world of the Persian Empire in the late 6th century BCE.

2:1 *a measuring line*: different from the measuring line in Zechariah 1:16. In this verse, the measuring line refers to

distributing pieces of land (Deut 32:9; Amos 7:17; Mic 2:5) and is associated with Israel's "inheritance" (cf. Zech 2:12).

*To measure Jerusalem*: This action affirms the historical role of Jerusalem as the capital of Judah, and also makes the city a symbol of a political state that has God's holy earthly dwelling at its center, which becomes the source of God's universal rule. The measuring line defines the city's boundary. This whole city will be holy and will be the focal point of God's presence (Zech 2:11-12). Thus the measuring of Jerusalem marks the beginning of Jerusalem's restoration. 2:4-5 A new message of prosperity is delivered. *like open fields*: The restored Jerusalem will have no walls. A city lacking a wall would have been a concern because the city walls protected the city and its inhabitants from human and nonhuman predators. The vision may refer to a political compromise made by leaders to have the temple restored while putting the plans for the rebuilding of the city's walls on hold until a later time. The city walls weren't built during Darius I's reign. They were built 75 years later during the time of Nehemiah, around 445 BCE. *I will be a wall of fire around it*: Fire typically shows divine presence in the OT (see Exod 3:2-4; 13:21-22). The wall of fire symbolizes God's protection around Jerusalem, which results in God's indwelling presence. *I will be glorious inside it*: God's glory will no longer be limited to the temple, but will extend to all of Jerusalem. Thus God's presence will be fully revealed in Jerusalem, and God's city will once again become "holy," a refuge for all (cf. Ezek 43:1-5; Ps 46:1).

2:6 The speaker of this proclamation and the following ones in Zechariah 2:7-13 is most likely the prophet himself and not one of the messengers heard earlier. *land of the north*: Babylon, which recalls an earlier allusion to Babylon

2:8 Dt 32:10

2:9 Is 11:15;  
Is 14:2, 14:19-16;  
Zec 4:9;  
Zec 6:152:10 Lv 26:12;  
Zep 3:14;  
Zec 8:3, Zec 9:9;  
2Co 6:162:11 Is 2:2;  
Mi 4:2; Zec 6:15;  
Zec 8:20;  
Mal 1:112:12 Dt 32:9;  
Ps 33:12;  
Jer 10:16;  
Zec 1:172:13 Dt 26:15;  
Is 51:9; Hab 2:20;  
Zep 1:73:1 1Ch 21:1;  
Job 1:6; Ps 109:6;  
Hg 1:1; Zec 6:11

7Look out, Zion.

Flee, you who dwell with Daughter Babylon!

8The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims (after his glory sent me)<sup>f</sup> concerning the nations plundering you:

Those who strike you strike the pupil of my eye.

9But look, I am about to raise my hand against them;

they will become prey to their own slaves,

so you will know that the LORD of heavenly forces sent me.

10Rejoice and be glad, Daughter Zion,

because I am about to come and dwell among you, says the LORD.

11Many nations will be joined to the LORD on that day.

They will become my people, and I will dwell among you

so you will know that the LORD of heavenly forces sent me to you.<sup>g</sup>12The LORD will possess Judah as his inheritance upon the holy land;  
he will again choose Jerusalem.

13Be silent, everyone, in the LORD's presence,

because he has moved from his holy habitation!

**Fourth night vision**3Then the LORD showed me the high priest Joshua, standing before the messenger from the LORD, and the Adversary<sup>h</sup> was standing by his right side to accuse him.<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Heb *hassatan*; cf Job 1:6

heard in Jeremiah 1:14-19; 4:5-10:25 and suggests that the punishment Jeremiah saw for Babylon is now ended. The urgency of the language *Look out; look out! Flee* may reflect a crisis such as the impending fall of Babylon in 538 BCE. Most likely the phrase urges all those who are still in exile to return to the restored Jerusalem. *I will scatter you*: The language reflects the scattering of the people in exile, but here the focus is on the return to Zion. *like the four winds of heaven*: This is an image for God, who was supposedly responsible for the people's exile. God will now scatter the people from exile and bring them back to Jerusalem.

2:7 *Look out, Zion. Flee*: another call to the exiles to flee from Babylon (cf. Isa 48:20; 49:8-13; 51:9-11; 52:11-12). The description of *Zion* and *Daughter Babylon* as dwelling together draws heavily on the book of Isaiah, which often portrays Jerusalem and Babylon as two women who suffer various fates, misfortunes, and restorations (see Isa 3:25-4:1; 49:18; 52:1-2; 54).

2:8-9 This divine proclamation builds on the second vision (Zech 1:19-21) with respect to the coming punishment of the nations. Those who have treated Judah unjustly will now get what they deserve.

2:8 *Those who strike you strike the pupil of my eye*: the intimate and sensitive relationship that exists between God and God's people—those called to return from exile. The eye is one of the most sensitive organs of the body. The one who harms God's people harms God.

2:9 *I am about to raise my hand against them*: imagines God with a human attribute (a hand). *They will become prey to their own slaves*: The Babylonians will become prey to God's exiled people, the Israelites.

2:10 The prophet's words offer hope to the Israelites and indirectly encourage the exiles to return home. *Rejoice and be glad*: These two instructions recall the message of Second Isaiah (see Isa 42:11; 44:23; 49:13; 52:8, 9; 54:1; 61:7). *Daughter Zion*: This phrase is a common way to represent the city of Jerusalem as though it were a person.

2:11 *many nations will be joined to the LORD*: a future expectation, signaled by the words on *that day*. God's people won't be only the Israelites; others will be joined to God as well (cf. Zech 8:20-23). Those nations who once acted against Zion (Pss 2:1-3; 83:2-8) will one day be joined to Zion. God's intentions will cut through all lines of division (cf. Isa 2:1-4; Mic 4:1-4). God will make all people one, and God will live among them (cf. Isa 56:3-8). The text points toward a universal covenant (cf. Isa 56:6, 7).

2:12 God's special possession will be Judah, and God will once again choose Jerusalem. The verse speaks of reunion and restoration. *his inheritance*: Usually, "inheritance" would refer to territory. It frequently represents the land given to Israel by God (Judg 20:6). But here "inheritance" denotes a community of people (cf. Exod 34:9; Ps 82:8). God will once again exercise control over Judah and the entire world.

2:13 *Be silent*: The Israelites, once called to rejoice and be glad (Zech 2:10), are now called, along with everyone else, to act with reverence in God's presence. God is moving *from his holy habitation*: Israel's God is on the way down to earth to dwell among the people, and the only appropriate response is awe-filled silence (cf. Hab 2:20; Zeph 1:7). Again, Zechariah's scope is universal. Just as the people will come home to God, so God will come home to the people (cf. Rev 21:3).

3:1-10 Zechariah's fourth vision reports the cleansing of Joshua the high priest. Many scholars think that this chapter is a later addition, not part of the original sequence of the seven visions, and that the vision describes the ordination of Joshua, Jehozadak's son. In a scene reminiscent of a courtroom, God clears Joshua of all blame for his wrongdoing. In addition to Joshua and God, another character enters the picture, namely, *the Adversary*, who plays the role of the prosecuting attorney. God defends Joshua. The courtroom scene opens with God presenting a rebuttal against the Adversary's case. The rebuttal consists of one simple but striking

<sup>2</sup>And the LORD said to the Adversary:

“The LORD rebukes you, Adversary.

The LORD, the one choosing Jerusalem, rebukes you.

Is this one not a log snatched from the fire?”

<sup>3</sup>Joshua was wearing filthy clothes and standing before the messenger. <sup>4</sup>He responded to those standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.”

And he said to Joshua, “Look, I have removed your guilt from you. Put on priestly robes.”

<sup>5</sup>He<sup>b</sup> said, “Put a clean turban upon his head.” So they put the clean turban upon his head, and they dressed him in garments while the LORD’s messenger stood by.

<sup>6</sup>Then the LORD’s messenger admonished Joshua:

<sup>7</sup>“The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

If you will walk in my paths,

if you will keep my charge,

then you will lead my house and guard my courts,

and I will allow you to walk among those standing here.

<sup>8</sup>Now listen, High Priest Joshua, you and your companions sitting before you—

for these men are a sign—

look, I am about to bring my servant, Branch.

<sup>9</sup>See this stone that I have put before Joshua.

Upon one stone, there are seven facets.

I am about to engrave an inscription on it,

says the LORD of heavenly forces.

I will remove the guilt of that land in one day.

<sup>10</sup>On that day, says the LORD of heavenly forces,

everyone will invite their neighbors

to sit beneath their vines and the fig trees.”

3:2 Am 4:11;  
Jud 1:9; Rev 12:9  
3:3 Eze 9:15;  
Is 64:6; Zec 3:1  
3:4 Is 61:10  
3:5 Ex 29:6;  
Zec 6:11  
3:6 Zec 3:1  
3:7 Gn 26:5;  
Ex 19:5; Lv 8:35;  
1Ki 3:14;  
Jer 15:19  
3:8 Is 11:1,  
Is 42:1; Jer 23:5,  
Jer 33:15;  
Zec 6:12  
3:9 Jer 50:20;  
Zec 4:10  
4:1 Jer 31:26;  
Dn 8:18; Zec 1:9  
4:2 Ex 25:31,  
Ex 25:37;  
Zec 5:2;  
Rev 1:12, Rev 4:5  
4:3 Zec 4:11;  
Ro 11:17;  
Rev 11:4

#### Fifth night vision

**4** The messenger speaking with me returned and woke me like one who awakens someone who is asleep.

<sup>2</sup>Then he said to me, “What do you see?”

I said, “I see a lampstand made entirely of gold. It has a bowl on top. The bowl has seven lamps on top and seven metal pipes for those lamps.

<sup>3</sup>It has two olive trees beside the lampstand, one to the right of its bowl and one to the left.” <sup>4</sup>I responded to the messenger speaking with me, “What are these, sir?”

<sup>5</sup>The messenger responded to me: “Don’t you know what these are?” I said, “No, sir. I don’t.”

<sup>b</sup>Or I

rhetorical question (3:2). Joshua’s change of clothes represents his purification process (3:3). Those witnessing Joshua’s experience are members of the heavenly divine council (3:6-7; cf. Ps 29:1; Job 1:6). During this process Joshua also hears about future good news for the land and the restored community.

3:1 *high priest*: the primary official of the Israelite worshipping community. After Joshua, the high priesthood was hereditary and bestowed upon an individual for life. The title is applied to Joshua in Haggai 1:1, 12, 14; 2:4; Zechariah 6:11.

3:2 *Adversary*: This character in Hebrew is *hassatan* (cf. Job 1:6-12) and means “the accuser.” The term doesn’t refer to “the devil” mentioned in later Jewish and Christian literature.

3:3 *filthy clothes*: symbolize Joshua’s impure state.

3:4 *priestly robes*: symbolize Joshua’s new state of ritual purity.

3:5 *turban*: a generic term for “headband,” which refers to the headgear of men (Job 29:14); women (Isa 3:23); and

royalty (Isa 62:3). For a reference to a priest’s turban, see also Exodus 29:6 and Leviticus 8:9.

3:8 *Branch*: Two interpretations are possible: First, the expected restoration of a descendant of David to the throne, perhaps Zerubbabel; or second, the reference is to Joshua. 4:1-14 This fifth vision report of Zechariah features a lampstand and olive trees. Unlike Zechariah’s other visions, this experience seems to wake him up from sleep. In essence, he receives this vision at a heightened state of awareness, as if he had been asleep. What he sees is a detailed lampstand of pure gold that has a bowl on its top, as well as seven metal pipes for those lamps (4:2). Also present are two olive trees on either side of the bowl (4:3). The messenger, who is also part of the vision, has a message for Zerubbabel that he delivers to Zechariah. The message makes clear that nothing will stop Zerubbabel from constructing the temple. Zerubbabel will begin the process and will see it to completion (4:6-10). Further understanding of the vision’s symbols is given to Zechariah in 4:8-14. Zechariah’s vision shows that the

4:7 Is 40:4;  
Jer 51:25  
4:10 2Ch 16:9;  
Prv 15:3; Hg 2:3;  
Zec 3:9; Rev 5:6  
4:14 Ex 29:7;  
Ex 40:15;  
Dn 9:24;  
Mt 4:13; Zec 6:5  
5:1 Jer 36:2;  
Eze 2:9; Rev 5:1  
5:2 Zec 4:2  
5:3 Ex 20:15;  
Is 24:6; Zec 5:4  
5:4 Mal 3:5

<sup>6</sup>He answered me:

"This is the LORD's word to Zerubbabel:  
Neither by power, nor by strength,  
but by my spirit, says the LORD of heavenly forces."

<sup>7</sup>Who are you, great mountain?

Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain.

He will present the capstone to shouts of great gratitude.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD's word came to me:

<sup>9</sup>The hands of Zerubbabel laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it so that you will know that the LORD of heavenly forces has sent me to you. <sup>10</sup>Those who despise a time of little things will rejoice when they see the plumb line<sup>1</sup> in Zerubbabel's hand. These are the seven eyes of the LORD, surveying the entire earth.

<sup>11</sup>I responded to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right and left sides of the lampstand?" <sup>12</sup>Then I responded a second time, "What are these two olive branches that empty out golden oil through the two gold pipes?"

<sup>13</sup>He said to me, "Don't you know what these are?"

I said, "No, sir."

<sup>14</sup>He said, "These are the two anointed ones<sup>2</sup> standing beside the LORD of all the earth."

### Sixth night vision

**5** I looked up again and saw a flying scroll.

<sup>2</sup>And he said to me, "What do you see?"

I said, "I see a flying scroll, thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide."

<sup>3</sup>He said to me, "This is the curse going out across all the land.

Anyone stealing will be purged according to what's on one side of the scroll,<sup>3</sup> and anyone swearing lies<sup>4</sup> will be purged according to what's on the other side.

<sup>4</sup>I sent it out, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

It will come to the house of the thief

and the one swearing lies in my name.

It will lodge in their house

and destroy the wood and stones of that house."

<sup>1</sup>Or stone, tin <sup>2</sup>Or sons of oil <sup>3</sup>Heb lacks of the scroll. <sup>4</sup>Heb lacks lies.

new community will enjoy a balance of leadership and authority, and that the work of God will be a shared, communal effort.

**4:6 Zerubbabel:** He is a puzzling figure from the time after the exile. Messianic language is associated with him in the books of Haggai and Zechariah. As the son of Sheatiel, he was a coleader of the second major group of exiles, along with the priest Joshua. He began the temple reconstruction around 520 BCE.

**4:10 plumb line:** a builder's device that consists of a string with a weight, or plummet, on one end. It is used to recognize those walls that are tilted and identified for replacement. *seven eyes of the LORD:* represents the constant sight of God, who sustains all creation (Ps 104:29). The number seven symbolizes completeness or perfection (for the plumbness of the wall), and perhaps the seven days of creation.

**4:12 these two olive branches:** These two branches represent the two anointed ones, the priestly figure Joshua, Jehozadak's son; and Zechariah (see 1 Sam 16:3; 1 Kgs 1:39; Ps 89:20).

**5:1-4** The sixth vision reports the *flying scroll* and the cleansing of Jerusalem. The vision reminds the community that God's people have ethical responsibilities. Here

the focus is on stealing and lying (5:3). Anyone found guilty of these sins will experience a curse that God sent out (5:4). This curse will bring death upon the entire household of those who failed to live out the ethical message of the Instruction (Torah).

**5:1 flying scroll:** Little precedent exists for the vision of the flying scroll. Most interpreters link it to the scroll that God delivered at Ezekiel's commissioning (Ezek 2:1-3:11). Here the *flying scroll* can be identified in general with God's Instruction. The scroll makes a symbolic statement: the normal systems of law that ensure order in a society are broken.

**5:3 curse:** In the OT three types of curses exist: (1) the aggressive, spoken curse, which is often asserted by a prophet (e.g., Hos 13:2-4) who is condemning a departure from the faith or a failure to obey God's Instruction; (2) the curse of a person during an argument or controversy; and (3) the treaty curse toward a tribe or nation that agrees to obey a more powerful nation. This curse in Zechariah is most likely a prophetic curse toward sinful behavior. *Stealing and swearing lies* or giving false witness are disruptions of the social order and violations throughout the land of the covenant with God (see two of the Ten Commandments at Exod 20:15-16).



5:7 Rev 17:1  
 5:8 Mi 6:11;  
 Zec 5:7  
 6:1 Dn 2:39,  
 Dn 7:3,  
 Dn 8:22;  
 Zec 1:18, Zec 6:5  
 6:2 Zec 1:8;  
 Rev 6:4, Rev 6:5  
 6:3 Zec 1:8;  
 Rev 6:2, Rev 6:8

### Seventh night vision

<sup>5</sup>Then the messenger speaking with me came forward and said, "Look up and see what's approaching."

<sup>6</sup>I said, "What's this?"

He said, "This is the basket<sup>m</sup> that is going out. This is how it appears<sup>n</sup> throughout the entire land."<sup>o</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Then a lead cover was lifted, showing a woman sitting in the middle of the basket.

<sup>8</sup>He said, "This is wickedness." He shoved her back into the basket, and he put the lead stone over its opening.

<sup>9</sup>I looked up again and saw two women going out. There was a wind in their wings; their wings were like the wings of a stork. They carried the basket between the earth and the sky.

<sup>10</sup>I said to the messenger speaking with me, "Where are they taking the basket?"

<sup>11</sup>He said to me, "To build a house for it in the land of Shinar. It will be firmly placed there on its base."

### Eighth night vision

**6**I looked up again and saw four chariots coming out from between two mountains; the mountains were made of bronze. <sup>2</sup>The first chariot had red horses, and the second chariot had black horses. <sup>3</sup>The third chariot had white horses, and the fourth chariot had horses that were heavily spotted.

<sup>4</sup>I responded and said to the messenger speaking with me, "What are these, sir?"

<sup>5</sup>The messenger answered and said to me, "These are the four winds of heaven that are going out after presenting themselves to the LORD of all the earth. <sup>6</sup>The one with the black horses is going to the north country; the white ones are going to the west;<sup>p</sup> and the spotted ones are going south."

<sup>7</sup>Then the powerful ones approached, intent on going to patrol the earth.

He said, "Go! Patrol the earth!" So they patrolled the earth. <sup>8</sup>Then he called out and said to me, "Look, the ones going north have provided rest for my spirit in the north."

<sup>9</sup>The LORD's word came to me: <sup>10</sup>Take silver and gold<sup>q</sup> from the exiles who came from Babylon, from Heldai, from Tobijah, and from Jedaiah. As for you, go that same day to the

<sup>m</sup>Heb *ephah*, a basket measuring approximately twenty quarts <sup>n</sup>Or *their eye* <sup>o</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>p</sup>Or *after them*  
<sup>q</sup>Heb lacks *silver and gold*; cf 6:11.

5:5-11 In the seventh vision, the prophet describes how wickedness will be removed from the land by way of a floating basket. Zechariah sees three images: a basket (5:6), a woman sitting in the middle of the basket (5:7), and two women going out (5:9). The women are on their way to *Shinar*, which is another name for Babylon (see Gen 10:10; 11:2; 14:1, 9; Isa 11:1; Dan 1:2), where they will build a new house for wickedness (5:11). This new house is presumably a house from the land of God's people and sent to Babylon.

5:7 *a woman*: Her identity remains unknown. She serves more as a symbolic figure than a literal one.

5:8 *wickedness*: The portrayal of wickedness as a woman is troublesome. The particular image of an anonymous woman for this vision shouldn't be generalized toward all women.

5:9 *two women*: symbolic figures that don't refer to anyone historically. *wind in their wings*: They can glide effortlessly. *wings of a stork*: The image is ironic because elsewhere in the OT the stork is listed as an unclean animal (Deut 14:18; Lev 11:19). The stork is considered detestable, and yet the women have stork wings and are the people designated for the act of cleansing the land of its wickedness. *between the earth and the sky*: implies that when the women cleanse the land, they are careful not to touch it with something unclean, lest they pollute it again.

5:11 *To build a house*: some sort of temple. The people of Babylon (*Shinar*) will worship wickedness, the exact thing that has been cast out of the land of Israel.

6:1-15 The eighth and final vision describes four chariots (6:1-6), the patrol of the earth (6:7), and rest for God's spirit (6:8). Zechariah sees four chariots coming out between two bronze mountains (6:1), horses pulling the chariots (6:2-3), and four riders in the chariots whose task is to patrol the earth (6:5-7). The response to the vision includes the prophet's question (6:4) and the messenger's statement that explains the vision the prophet has seen (6:5-8). The passage also contains a second word of encouragement addressed to the returned exiles (6:9-15). The proclamation offers Zechariah's community a word of hope and promise.

6:1 *four chariots*: The image of a chariot represents God's presence (Hab 3:8). God is said to be "the one who rides the clouds," possibly on a chariot (Ps 68:4). This wheeled vehicle has a long history and serves a variety of functions. It was used for ordinary transportation, hunting, royal and religious processions, and warfare. Chariots were symbols of power and prestige.

6:2-3 The colors of the horses recall the colors of the horses in the first vision (Zech 1:8). The colors link the first and last visions.

6:7 The chariot riders are commissioned to go forth, to patrol the earth. The first vision features the riders returning from a mission. Again, the image of the chariot riders and their work helps to link the first and last visions.

6:10 *Heldai*: He is the first in a series of three men cited in God's charge to Zechariah and a former Babylonian exile. *Tobijah*: He was one of three people who had returned

6:1 Eze 3:2;  
Ps 21:3; Hg 1:1;  
Zec 3:1

6:12 Is 4:2;  
Is 11:1;  
Jer 23:5;  
Jer 33:15;  
Zec 3:8

7:5 Is 1:11;  
Is 58:5; Zec 1:12

7:6 Hos 8:13

7:9 Mi 6:8;  
Zec 8:16

7:10 Ex 22:21;  
Ex 22:22;  
Dt 24:14; Is 1:23;  
Jer 7:6

7:11 1Sa 8:19;  
Jer 44:16

house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. <sup>11</sup>Take silver and gold and make a crown.\* Place it on the head of the high priest Joshua, Jehozadak's son.

<sup>12</sup>Say to him, "The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

Here is a man.

His name is Branch, and he will branch out from his place;  
he will build the LORD's temple.

<sup>13</sup>He will build the LORD's temple.

He will be majestic;

he will sit and rule on his throne.

There will be a priest on his throne,  
and the two of them will share a peaceable plan.

<sup>14</sup>The crown will be a memorial in the LORD's temple for Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and for Hen, Zephaniah's son. <sup>15</sup>People from far away will come and build the LORD's temple so you might know that the LORD of heavenly forces has sent me to you. It will happen if you truly obey the voice of the LORD your God."

### Answering the Bethel delegation

**7**In the fourth year of Darius the king, the LORD's word came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, Kislev.\* <sup>2</sup>The people of<sup>k</sup> Bethel sent Sharezer and Regem-Melech,<sup>l</sup> along with his men, to seek the LORD's favor, <sup>3</sup>saying to the priests who were in the house of the LORD of heavenly forces and to the prophets: "Should I weep in the fifth month and abstain as I have done for a number of years?"

<sup>4</sup>Then the word of the LORD of heavenly forces came to me: <sup>5</sup>Say to all the land's people and to the priests: When you fasted and lamented in the fifth month and the seventh month for these past seventy years, did you fast for me? <sup>6</sup>When you ate and drank, weren't you the ones eating and drinking? <sup>7</sup>Weren't these the words that the LORD proclaimed through the former prophets when Jerusalem was dwelling quietly along with the surrounding cities, and when the arid southern plain and the western foothills were inhabited?

<sup>8</sup>The LORD's word came to Zechariah:

<sup>9</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

Make just and faithful decisions; show kindness and compassion to each other! <sup>10</sup>Don't oppress the widow, the orphan, the stranger, and the poor; don't plan evil against each other! <sup>11</sup>But they refused to pay attention. They turned a cold shoulder and stopped listening.

<sup>12</sup>They steeled their hearts against hearing the instruction and the words that the LORD of heavenly forces sent by his spirit through the earlier prophets. As a result, the LORD of heavenly forces became enraged.

\*LXX; Heb *crowns*, so also 6:14 <sup>k</sup>November–December <sup>l</sup>Heb lacks *the people of*. <sup>m</sup>Heb uncertain

from whom Zechariah was to collect silver and gold to take to Josiah. *Jedaiah*: He was a contemporary of Zechariah who returned from exile to Judah. Together these three men supplied silver and gold to Zechariah, who prepared a crown for Joshua the high priest (Zech 6:10-11). The crown possibly was a reminder of how the people departed from the faith in the past (Zech 6:14).

6:12 *Branch*: This person was to function as both a priest and a king and would rebuild and restore the temple.

7:1–8:23 Zechariah's third address. It contains: (1) questions about fasting (7:1-7); (2) a divine instruction and response about justice (7:8-14); and (3) a series of divine proclamations about the future that highlight restoration (8:1-17) and universal joy (8:18-23).

7:1 *In the fourth year*: the third and final chronological heading in the book of Zechariah. The date would be December 7, 518 BCE.

7:2 *Bethel*: This city, also known as "house of God," was located at the crossroads 12 miles north of Jerusalem at the border of Ephraim and Judah. The city was eventually destroyed by Joshua (2 Kgs 23:15-20). *Sharezer*: He

had special status within the community because he had a part in an official delegation. *Regem-Melech*: He also had a high standing in the community and apparently had authority over the men who accompanied him in the delegation.

7:5 *fifth month*: An official time of lament in response to the trauma and tragedy of the destruction of the temple, the holy city Jerusalem, and the king's palace. The fall of the temple reportedly occurred "on the seventh day of the fifth month in the nineteenth year of Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar" (see 2 Kgs 25:8).

7:8-14 Following the discussion on fasting (Zech 7:1-7), the theme shifts to exercising justice. This implies that the type of fasting that God wants isn't mourning but rather the practice of justice (cf. Isa 58:6-14). As in Zechariah 1:2-6, the prophet looks back on the failures of past generations in hope that the new generation will learn a lesson and live differently.

7:10 *Don't oppress the widow, the orphan, the stranger, and the poor*: The instruction demanded justice and care for all of these people (Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19-21).

<sup>13</sup>So just as he called and they didn't listen, when they called, I didn't listen, says the LORD of heavenly forces. <sup>14</sup>I scattered them throughout the nations whom they didn't know. The land was devastated behind them, with no one leaving or returning. They turned a delightful land into a wasteland.

**8**The word from the LORD of heavenly forces came to me:<sup>a</sup>  
<sup>2</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

I care passionately about Zion; I burn with passion for her. <sup>3</sup>The LORD proclaims: I have returned to Zion; I will settle in Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be called the city of truth; the mountain of the LORD of heavenly forces will be the holy mountain.

<sup>4</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

Old men and old women will again dwell in the plazas of Jerusalem. Each of them will have a staff in their hand because of their great age. <sup>5</sup>The city will be full of boys and girls playing in its plazas.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

Even though it may seem to be a miracle for the few remaining among this people in these days, should it seem to be a miracle for me? says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

I'm about to deliver my people from the land of the east and the land of the west. <sup>8</sup>I'll bring them back so they will dwell in Jerusalem. They will be my people, and I will be their God—in truth and in righteousness.

<sup>9</sup>The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

Be strong, you who are now hearing these words from the mouths of the prophets spoken on the day when the foundations for the house of the LORD of heavenly forces were laid. <sup>10</sup>Before this time, there were no wages for people or animals; there was no relief from distress about going out or coming in, because I set everyone against their own neighbor. <sup>11</sup>But now, unlike those earlier days, I'll be with the few remaining among this people, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>12</sup>The seed is healthy:

the vine will give its fruit.

The land will give its produce;

the heavens will give its dew.

I will give the remnant of this people all these things.

<sup>13</sup>Just as you were a curse among the nations,

house of Judah and house of Israel,

so now I will deliver you; you will be a blessing.

Don't fear, but be strong.

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks to me.

7:14 *a delightful land into a wasteland*: The people are responsible for the sad circumstances of the land.

8:1-23 The third address ends with a series of divine proclamations about the future of Zion and God's people. These words of hope include God's great love for Jerusalem (8:1-2); God's promise to return to Zion/Jerusalem (8:3); the promise that Jerusalem will be filled with both young and old inhabitants (8:4-5); a statement about God's power to do what seems impossible for humans (8:6); reestablishment of God's people on their land, and covenant renewal between God and God's people (8:7-8); a divine word of encouragement and promise of divine presence (Zech 8:9-13); a reversal of divine intent and an instruction on ethical living (8:14-17); and a promise of universal joy (8:18-23).

8:3 *I have returned to Zion*: See Zechariah 1:16, the first vision where God promises to return to the city. *city of truth*: Jerusalem will be recognized as a faithful city. This nickname for Jerusalem is unusual. *mountain of the Lord*:

associated with *the holy mountain* where the temple will soon be functioning again.

8:4 *Old men and old women will again dwell*: a promise to Zechariah's listeners. *boys and girls playing*: One day people will live unconcerned for their safety.

8:7 *from the land of the east and the land of the west*: The reference isn't to any specific location. The phrase is poetic and means from the land of sunrise and from the land of sunset. The pair is intended to represent the entire scattered population that went into exile.

8:8 *I'll bring them back*: the exiled people. *They will be my people, and I will be their God*: This phrase highlights the renewal of covenant (cf. Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12; 2 Sam 7:24; Jer 31:33; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 37:23, 27). *in truth and in righteousness*: This pair is common and often appears in covenants (see also 1 Kgs 3:6). These virtues recall God's qualities in Exodus 43:6.

8:13 *house of Judah and house of Israel*: the southern and northern kingdoms. *you will be a blessing*: The restored community will serve as a blessing to the nations.

7:13 Prov 1:24;  
Is 1:15; Jer 11:11,  
Jer 14:12; Mi 3:4  
8:2 Zec 1:14  
8:3 Is 1:26,  
Is 2:3; Zec 1:16,  
Zec 2:10  
8:4 Is 65:20  
8:5 Jer 30:20;  
Mi 11:16,  
Mi 11:17  
8:6 Ps 118:23;  
Jer 32:17,  
Jer 32:27  
8:7 Ps 107:3;  
Is 11:11, Is 43:5  
8:8 Zec 1:9  
8:9 Eze 5:1;  
Is 35:4; Hg 2:4  
8:10 2Ch 15:5;  
Is 19:2; Am 3:6;  
Hg 1:6; Hg 2:15  
8:11 Is 12:1  
8:12 Gn 27:28;  
Hos 2:21; Jl 2:22  
8:13 Gn 12:2;  
Zec 8:9

8:14 Jer 31:28;  
Eze 24:14  
8:15 Jer 29:11;  
Mi 7:18;  
Zec 8:13  
8:16 Ps 15:2;  
Zec 7:9;  
Eph 4:25  
8:17 Prv 3:29;  
Zec 7:3;  
Prv 6:16;  
Zec 5:4;  
Zec 7:10  
8:19 Jer 39:2;  
Zec 7:3, Zec 7:5;  
Zec 8:16

**14** The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

Just as I planned evil against you when your ancestors angered me, says the LORD of heavenly forces, and did not relent, **15** so now I have changed course and again plan to do good to Jerusalem and the house of Judah. Don't be afraid.

**16** These are the things you should do: Speak the truth to each other; make truthful, just, and peaceable decisions within your gates. **17** Don't plan evil for each other. Don't adore swearing falsely, for all of these are things that I hate, says the LORD.

**18** The word of the LORD of heavenly forces came to me:

**19** The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months will become times of joy and gladness, pleasant feasts for the house of Judah. Love truth and peace!

**20** The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

Peoples will still come, the inhabitants of many cities. **21** The inhabitants of one city will go to another saying, "Let's go and seek the favor of the LORD, and look for the LORD of heavenly forces. I'm going too." **22** Many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of heavenly forces in Jerusalem and to seek the favor of the LORD.

**23** The LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:

In those days ten men from nations with entirely different languages will grab hold of a Judean's clothes and say, "Let's go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

### **Fate of the nations**

**9** A pronouncement. The LORD's word is against the land of Hadrach, and Damascus is its resting place, for the city of Aram<sup>w</sup> and all the tribes of Israel belong to the LORD. **2** Hamath also borders on it. Tyre and Sidon, indeed, each is exceedingly wise.

**3** Tyre built a fortress for herself.

She piled up silver like dust  
and gold like mud in the streets,

**4** but the LORD will take her possessions away  
and knock her wealth into the sea.

She will be devoured with fire.

**5** Ashkelon will look and be afraid.

Gaza will writhe in agony,  
and also Ekron, because her hope has dried up.

The king will perish from Gaza;  
Ashkelon won't be inhabited.

**6** An illegitimate child will dwell in Ashdod;

I will eliminate the pride of the Philistines.

**7** I will remove bloody food from his mouth  
and pieces of unclean food from between his teeth.

He will be a survivor who belongs to our God.

He will be like a chieftain in Judah;

Ekron will be like a Jebusite.

**8** I will encamp before my house as a guard against anyone departing or returning.

A slave driver will no longer pass through against them,  
for I have seen you<sup>w</sup> with my eyes.

<sup>w</sup>Or eyes of humanity <sup>x</sup>Heb lacks you.

9:1-8 The prophet announces that the threat Jerusalem faces from Syria, Phoenicia, and the Philistines no longer exists, because God will act on Jerusalem's behalf.

9:1 *land of Hadrach*: This term is found only here in the Bible and refers to a district in Syria. *Damascus*: a major Aramean city mentioned nearly 50 times in the OT (e.g., 1 Kgs 15:18; 20:34; Isa 7:8). The reference can also be to the territory around the city. *Aram*: territory belonging to the Arameans.

9:2 *Hamath*: a city located on the Orontes River along the primary trade route heading south from Asia Minor. This

city formed the northern boundary of the land of Israel (cf. Num 13:21; Josh 13:5; Ezek 47:15). *Tyre*: a Phoenician port and kingdom located on an island about 2,000 feet offshore and about 35 miles south of Sidon. *Sidon*: a Phoenician metropolis and famous harbor in southern Lebanon.

9:3 *Tyre built a fortress for herself*: The focus on Tyre is most likely because the city plays a major role in the history of nearby Judah and Israel. The remainder of verse 3 sheds light on the destruction of Tyre's economic power and its pride in that power (see also Zech 9:4).

9:5-6 *Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod* represent four of

**Joy and protection for Judah and Ephraim**

<sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion.

Sing aloud, Daughter Jerusalem.

Look, your king will come to you.

He is righteous and victorious.

He is humble and riding on an ass,  
on a colt, the offspring of a donkey.

<sup>10</sup> He<sup>a</sup> will cut off the chariot from Ephraim  
and the warhorse from Jerusalem.

The bow used in battle will be cut off;  
he will speak peace to the nations.

His rule will stretch from sea to sea,  
and from the river to the ends of the earth.

<sup>11</sup> Moreover,<sup>a</sup> by the blood of your covenant,  
I will release your prisoners from the waterless pit.

<sup>12</sup> Return to the stronghold, prisoners of hope.  
Moreover, declare today that I will return double to you.

<sup>13</sup> Indeed, I myself will bend Judah as a bow;  
I will fill it with Ephraim.  
Zion, I will rouse your sons against your sons.  
Greece, I will make you like a warrior's sword.

<sup>14</sup> The LORD will appear above them;  
his arrow will go forth like lightning.  
The LORD God will blow the horn;  
he will march forth on the stormy winds of the south.

<sup>15</sup> The LORD of heavenly forces will protect them.  
They will devour and subdue like sling stones.<sup>a</sup>  
They will drink, mumbling like one having wine.  
They will be filled like a bowl, like the corners of the altar.

<sup>16</sup> The LORD their God will deliver them on that day as the flock of his people;  
they will be the jewels in a crown dotting his land.

<sup>17</sup> What is his goodness, and what is his beauty?  
Grain will make his young men flourish;  
so too wine his young women.

**Fate of Judah and Ephraim**

**10** Ask the LORD for rain when it is time for the spring rain.  
The LORD is the one who makes the thunderstorms.

He gives them rain showers.

He gives vegetation in the field to each of them.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The household divine images speak idolatry,  
and diviners see lies.

They interpret dreams falsely  
and provide empty comfort.

Therefore, they wander like sheep,  
but they are oppressed because there is no shepherd.

<sup>3</sup> My anger burns hot against the shepherds;  
I will punish the goats.

9:9 Jer 23:5;  
Zep 3:14;  
Zec 2:10;  
Mt 11:29;  
Mt 21:5

9:10 Ps 72:8;  
Hos 1:7;  
Zec 2:18;  
Mt 5:10

9:11 Ex 24:8;  
Is 42:7, Is 51:14;  
Jer 38:6;  
Mt 26:28

9:12 Is 61:7;  
Hos 2:15; Jl 3:16;  
Heb 6:18

9:15 Ex 27:2;  
Is 37:35;  
Zec 10:7;  
Zec 12:6;  
Zec 12:8

9:16 Is 62:3

9:17 Jgs 11:34;  
Jgs 21:21;  
Ps 27:4; Is 62:9;  
Hos 2:22

10:1 Is 30:23;  
Jer 10:13; Jl 2:23

10:2 Jer 23:25;  
Jer 27:9;  
Eze 34:5;  
Hos 3:4;  
Hab 2:18

10:3 Song 1:9;  
Jer 23:1; Jer 23:2;  
Zep 2:7;  
Zec 11:17

<sup>a</sup>LXX; MT J <sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>b</sup>Heb lacks of them.

the five cities included in the Philistine pentapolis. These cities are subject to severe divine punishment because of their past atrocities committed against Israel.

9:9-17 Zechariah exhorts Daughter Zion/Daughter Jerusalem to rejoice and sing aloud. Her messianic king is coming, whose rule will extend to the ends of the earth (9:10). The divine warrior will use Judah and Ephraim as a weapon against the Greeks (Zech 9:13) to

protect, deliver, and make prosperous the people of Israel (9:14-17).

10:1-11:3 Themes and topics include a petition for rain (10:1-2); the failure of Judah's leaders and divine disgust with them (10:3-4); a word of hope for Judah (10:5-6); the return of Ephraim/Israel from exile in Egypt and Assyria (10:7-12); and a warning to Lebanon and Bashan that its territory will eventually be retaken (11:1-3).

10:9 Eze 6:9  
 10:11 Is 51:10;  
 Eze 30:13;  
 Zep 2:13  
 10:12 Mi 4:5;  
 Zec 10:6  
 11:1 Eze 31:3  
 11:2 Is 2:13  
 11:3 Jer 25:34;  
 Jer 50:44  
 11:5 Jer 50:7;  
 Eze 34:2;  
 Eze 34:3;  
 Hos 12:8

The LORD of heavenly forces will take care of his splendor,  
 the house of Judah.

He will make them like his majestic horse in battle.

<sup>4</sup>The cornerstone, the tent peg, and the bow used in battle  
 will come from Judah.

Every oppressor will leave Judah simultaneously.

<sup>5</sup>Judah will be like warriors,  
 trampling through the muddy streets during battle.

They will do battle because the LORD is with them.

All the cavalry will be ashamed.

<sup>6</sup>I will strengthen the house of Judah  
 and deliver the house of Joseph.

I will bring them back<sup>c</sup> because I have compassion on them.

They will be as though I hadn't rejected them, for I am the LORD their God;  
 I will respond to them.

<sup>7</sup>Ephraim will be like a warrior.

They will be as glad as if they were drinking wine.

Their children will watch and be glad.

Their hearts will rejoice in the LORD.

<sup>8</sup>I will whistle for them and gather them,  
 because I have ransomed them.

They will be as numerous as they were previously.

<sup>9</sup>Though I sowed them among the peoples,  
 they will remember me in the distant places  
 where they are living with their children until they return.

<sup>10</sup>I will bring them back from the land of Egypt;

I will collect them from Assyria.

I will bring them to the land of Gilead and Lebanon  
 until there is no more room for them.

<sup>11</sup>They<sup>d</sup> will pass through the sea of distress  
 and strike the sea with waves.<sup>e</sup>

All the depths of the river will dry up.

The pride of Assyria will be brought down;

the scepter of Egypt will turn away.

<sup>12</sup>I will strengthen them in the LORD,

and they will walk in his name, says the LORD.

**11** Open your doors, Lebanon, so that fire will devour your cedars.

<sup>2</sup>Scream, cypress, for the cedar has fallen;

those majestic ones have been devastated.

Scream, oaks of Bashan, for the deep forest has fallen.

<sup>3</sup>The sound of screaming appears among the shepherds  
 because their majesty has been devastated.

The sound of roaring can be heard among the young lions

because the pride of the Jordan has been devastated.

### *The shepherd's two staves*

<sup>4</sup>This is what the LORD my God says:

Shepherd the flock intended for slaughter.

<sup>5</sup>Those who buy them will kill them, but they will go unpunished.

Those who sell them will say, "Blessed is the LORD, for I have become rich."

And their own shepherds won't spare them.

<sup>c</sup>Or I will restore them <sup>d</sup>LXX; MT he <sup>e</sup>Heb uncertain

11:4-17 This passage is one of the most difficult passages to understand in the OT because of its vague language and uncertain form. It is a poetic story about the prophet

being asked to be the shepherd of a doomed flock (cf. Zech 10:3). The *flock* is Israel (11:4-6). In verses 7-9 the prophet recounts his positive response to God's command

<sup>e</sup>In fact, I will no longer spare the inhabitants of the land,  
says the LORD.

But look what I am about to bring upon humanity,  
upon each of them by their neighbor's hand  
and by the hand of their king:

They will beat the land to pieces,  
but I won't rescue anyone from their hand.

<sup>7</sup>So I shepherded the flock intended for slaughter,  
the afflicted of the flock.<sup>f</sup>

I took two staffs for myself.  
I named one *Delight*;  
the other I named *Harmony*.

I shepherded the flock.

<sup>8</sup>I removed three shepherds in one month when I grew impatient with them.  
Moreover, they detested me.

<sup>9</sup>Then I said, "I won't shepherd you.  
Let the dying die,  
and let what is to be removed be removed.  
Let those who are left devour the flesh of their neighbor."

<sup>10</sup>Then I took the staff *Delight*,  
and I chopped it up in order to break my covenant  
that I had made with all the peoples.

<sup>11</sup>It was broken on that day.  
As a result, the afflicted<sup>g</sup> of the flock knew that it was the LORD's word.

<sup>12</sup>And I said to them,  
"If it appears good to you, give me my wages; but if not, then stop."  
So they weighed out my wages, thirty shekels of silver.

<sup>13</sup>The LORD said to me,  
"Put it in the treasury.<sup>h</sup> They value me at too magnificent a price."  
So I took the thirty shekels<sup>i</sup> of silver  
and put them in the treasury of the LORD's house.

<sup>14</sup>Then I chopped up my second staff *Harmony*,  
to break the alliance between Judah and Israel.

<sup>15</sup>Then the LORD said to me,  
"Take for yourself again the equipment of a foolish shepherd,

<sup>16</sup>because I am about to appoint a shepherd in the land.

He won't tend to those who have been removed.

He won't seek the young or heal the broken.

He won't sustain the one standing.

Instead, he will devour the flesh of the fat ones,  
even tearing off their hooves.

<sup>17</sup>Doom, foolish shepherd who forsakes the flock.

A sword will strike<sup>j</sup> his arm and his right eye.

His arm will wither completely;

his right eye will become blind."

### Jerusalem on that day

**12**<sup>A</sup> pronouncement. The LORD's word against Israel,  
an utterance of the LORD

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>g</sup>Cf Zech 11:7 <sup>h</sup>Syr; MT to the potter <sup>i</sup>Heb lacks *shekels*. <sup>j</sup>Heb lacks *will strike*.

11:6 Is 9:19;  
Jer 13:14;  
Mi 5:8, Mi 7:2;  
Zec 14:13  
11:9 Jer 15:2  
11:12 Mt 26:15  
11:13 Mt 27:3,  
Mt 27:9;  
Mt 27:10;  
Ac 1:18  
11:15 Is 6:10  
11:16 Jer 23:2;  
Eze 34:4  
11:17 Jer 23:1  
12:1 Ps 102:25;  
Is 42:5,  
Is 57:16;  
Jer 51:15;  
Zec 9:1

and the difficulties he encountered. Verses 10-16 describe the prophet's symbolic action and its interpretation. In breaking his staffs called *Delight* and *Harmony*, Zechariah symbolically annuls the covenant that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai, and he breaks the unity between the

northern and southern people of Israel. The passage ends with a curse against the shepherd who would forsake his flock (11:17). The passage is symbolic and allegorical.

**12:1-13:9** Jerusalem is the subject of Zechariah's pronouncement. The entire unit is concerned with the

12:3 Zec 14:2  
 12:4 Dt 28:28  
 12:5 Zec 10:12  
 12:6 Is 10:17;  
 Obad 1:18;  
 Zec 2:4,  
 Zec 14:10,  
 Zec 14:11  
 12:7 Jer 30:18;  
 Am 9:11  
 12:8 Jl 3:16;  
 Zec 9:15  
 12:9 Hg 2:22;  
 Zec 14:2  
 12:10 Eze 39:29;  
 Jl 2:28;  
 Am 8:10;  
 In 19:37; Rev 1:7  
 12:11 2Ki 23:29;  
 2Ch 35:24  
 12:12 2Sa 5:14,  
 2Sa 12:1,  
 Lk 3:31  
 12:13 Es 6:16;  
 Nm 3:18;  
 1Ch 23:7,  
 1Ch 23:10;  
 Mal 2:4  
 13:1 Ps 51:2;  
 Eze 36:25;  
 In 1:29;  
 Heb 9:14;  
 1In 1:7

who stretches out the heavens,  
 who establishes the earth,  
 and who fashions the spirit of humanity within it:

- <sup>2</sup> I am about to make Jerusalem a cup  
 that will stagger all the surrounding nations.  
 There will be a siege against Judah and against Jerusalem.
- <sup>3</sup> On that day I will make Jerusalem into a heavy stone<sup>a</sup> for all the peoples.  
 All who carry it will hurt themselves;  
 nevertheless, the nations of the earth will conspire against it.
- <sup>4</sup> On that day, says the LORD, I will strike every horse with confusion  
 and its rider with madness.  
 I will keep my eyes open for the house of Judah;  
 I will strike blind every horse of the peoples.
- <sup>5</sup> The chieftains of Judah will say to themselves, We are strong;  
 the inhabitants of Jerusalem will say,  
 The LORD their God of heavenly forces is strong.<sup>1</sup>
- <sup>6</sup> On that day I will place the chieftains of Judah like a pot  
 on a wood fire and like a burning torch among the bundles of grain.  
 They will devour all the surrounding nations to the right and the left.  
 Jerusalem will dwell again in its place, in Jerusalem.
- <sup>7</sup> The LORD will first deliver the tents of Judah  
 so that the splendor of David's house  
 and the splendor of Jerusalem's inhabitants won't overshadow Judah.
- <sup>8</sup> On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem.  
 Anyone among them who stumbles on that day will become like David,  
 and David's house will become like God,  
 like the LORD's messenger in front of them.
- <sup>9</sup> On that day I intend to destroy all the nations who come against Jerusalem,  
<sup>10</sup> but I will pour out a spirit of grace and mercy on David's house  
 and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem.  
 They will look to me concerning the one whom they pierced;  
 they will mourn over him like the mourning for an only child.  
 They will mourn bitterly over him like the bitter mourning  
 over the death of<sup>m</sup> an oldest child.
- <sup>11</sup> On that day, the mourning in Jerusalem  
 will be as great as the mourning of Hadad-Rimmon in the Megiddo Valley.
- <sup>12</sup> The land will mourn, each of the clans by itself:  
 the clan of David's house by themselves, and their women by themselves;  
 the clan of Nathan's house by themselves, and their women by themselves;
- <sup>13</sup> the clan of Levi's house by themselves, and their women by themselves;  
 and the Shimeites' clan by themselves, and their women by themselves;
- <sup>14</sup> and all the remaining clans, each clan by itself, and their women by themselves.

**13** On that day, a fountain will open to cleanse<sup>n</sup> the sin and impurity of David's house  
 and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

<sup>a</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>1</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>m</sup>Heb lacks the death of. <sup>n</sup>Heb lacks to cleanse.

distant future. God will act on Jerusalem's behalf, and those nations who would come up against Jerusalem will be destroyed (12:9). This day of favor, however, also has moments of mourning (12:11-14) because of the

battle waged and the lives lost (12:10). In 13:1-9 the prophet announces that Jerusalem will be cleansed of idolatry, its unclean spirit, and its prophets associated with the unclean spirit. The closing verses (13:7-9) make



- <sup>2</sup>On that day, says the LORD of heavenly forces,  
I will eliminate the names of the idols from the land;  
they will no longer be remembered.  
Moreover, I will remove the prophets and the sinful spirit from the land.
- <sup>3</sup>If anyone again prophesies,  
then that person's birth father and mother will say,  
"You won't live, for you have told a lie in the name of the LORD."  
That person's own birth father and mother will stab him when he prophesies.
- <sup>4</sup>On that day each of the prophets will be ashamed of his vision  
when he prophesies  
and won't put on a shaggy coat in order to deceive.
- <sup>5</sup>Each will say, "I'm not a prophet.  
I'm a man who works the ground, for the soil has been my occupation  
since I was young."
- <sup>6</sup>Someone will say to him,  
"What are these wounds between your hands?"  
And he will say, "These happened when I was hit in my friends' home."
- <sup>7</sup>Sword, arise against my shepherd,  
against the man responsible for<sup>o</sup> my community,  
says the LORD of heavenly forces!  
Strike the shepherd in order to scatter the flock!  
I will turn my hand against the little ones.
- <sup>8</sup>Throughout all the land, says the LORD,  
two-thirds will be cut off and die;  
but one-third will be left in it.
- <sup>9</sup>I will put the third part into the fire.  
I will refine them like one refines silver;  
I will test them like one tests gold.  
They will call on my name, and I will respond to them.  
I will say, "They are my people."  
And they will say, "The LORD is our God."

### The day of the LORD

**14** A day is coming that belongs to the LORD, when that which has been plundered from  
you will be divided among you.

<sup>2</sup>I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem for the battle, the city will be captured, the  
houses will be plundered, and the women will be raped.

Half of the city will go forth into exile,  
but what is left of the people won't be eliminated from the city.

<sup>3</sup>The LORD will go out and fight against those nations  
as when he fights on a day of battle.

<sup>4</sup>On that day he will stand upon the Mount of Olives, to the east of Jerusalem.  
The Mount of Olives will be split in half  
by a very large valley running from east to west.  
Half of the mountain will move north, and the other half will move south.

<sup>5</sup>You will flee through the valley of my mountain,  
because the valley of the mountains will reach to Azal.  
You will flee just as you fled from the earthquake  
in the days of Judah's King Uzziah.

The LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.<sup>p</sup>

<sup>6</sup>On that day, there will be no light.  
Splendid things will disappear.<sup>q</sup>

<sup>o</sup>Heb lacks *responsible for*. <sup>p</sup>Or *you* <sup>q</sup>Heb uncertain

13:2 Jer 23:14;

Eze 36:25;

Hos 2:17

13:7 Is 40:11,

Is 53:4; Jer 47:6;

Mt 26:31;

Mk 14:27

13:8 Is 6:13;

Eze 5:2, Eze 5:12;

Zec 14:2

13:9 Ps 66:10;

Is 48:10;

Zec 10:6;

Mal 3:2, Mal 3:3

14:4 Eze 11:23;

Mi 1:4

14:5 Am 1:1;

Mt 25:31

14:6 Is 13:10;

Jer 4:23

clear that purging and cleansing will be ongoing, and that all of these occurrences are for the purpose of covenant renewal (13:9).

14:1-21 All that Zechariah preached reaches its high point as the prophet describes a future with dramatic, disastrous events. The day of the Lord is coming, and battles will take

14:7 Is 30:26;  
Mt 24:36;  
Rev 22:5  
14:9 Dt 6:4;  
Rev 11:15  
14:14 Is 23:18;  
Zec 12:2

- <sup>7</sup>On one day known to the LORD, there will be neither day nor night, but at evening time there will be light.
- <sup>8</sup>On that day, running water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it to the Dead Sea<sup>a</sup> and half of it to the Mediterranean;<sup>b</sup> this will happen during the summer and the fall.
- <sup>9</sup>The LORD will become king over all the land. On that day the LORD will be one, and the LORD's name will be one.
- <sup>10</sup>The entire land will become like the desert<sup>c</sup> from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be high up and firmly in place from the Benjamin Gate to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Hananel Tower to the king's wine vats.
- <sup>11</sup>People will dwell in it; it will never again be destroyed. Jerusalem will dwell securely.
- <sup>12</sup>This will be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples who swarmed against Jerusalem:  
their flesh will rot, even while standing on their feet;  
their eyes will rot in their sockets;  
and their tongues will rot in their mouths.
- <sup>13</sup>On that day, a great panic brought on by the LORD will fall upon them; they will all grasp at the hand of their neighbors; neighbors will attack each other.
- <sup>14</sup>Even Judah will fight in Jerusalem. The wealth of all the surrounding nations will be collected:  
gold, silver, and a great abundance of garments.
- <sup>15</sup>This<sup>d</sup> plague will also affect the horses, mules, camels, donkeys, and any cattle in those camps during this plague.
- <sup>16</sup>All those left from all the nations who attacked Jerusalem will go up annually to pay homage to the king, the LORD of heavenly forces, and to celebrate the Festival of Booths.
- <sup>17</sup>Whoever among the families of the earth doesn't go up to Jerusalem to pay homage to the king, the LORD of heavenly forces, upon them no rain will fall.
- <sup>18</sup>And if the family of Egypt doesn't go up and doesn't present itself, then no rain<sup>e</sup> will fall on them. There will<sup>f</sup> be a plague like the one with which the LORD struck the nations that didn't go up to celebrate the Festival of Booths.
- <sup>19</sup>This would be the sin of Egypt and the sin of all the nations who don't go up to celebrate the Festival of Booths.

**Day of the Lord/On That Day** The phrase "on that day" appears several times in Zechariah 12–14 and can be understood as the day of the Lord. This day will be a time of judgment, doom, destruction, purification (Zech 12:3, 4, 6, 9, 11; 13:4; 14:1–4, 6, 7, 13), protection, restoration, and reunion (Zech 12:8; 14:8, 9, 20). The day of the Lord is rooted in Israel's holy war experiences (see Isa 5:26; Zeph 3:8; Zech 14:2). God personally intervenes on the day of the Lord (Isa 34:8; Ezek 24:25; Amos 3:14; Zeph 1:8; 2:2–3). The events of the day of the Lord included raging fires (Isa 10:16; 38:22; Joel 2:30), whirlwinds and storms (Isa 28:2; 30:30; Jer 25:32; Ezek 38:22), the shaking of the heavens and the earth (Isa 2:10, 19; 13:13; 23:11; Ezek 38:19; Hag 2:21–22), floods (Isa 28:2; Jer 47:1–7), and the darkening of the sun and the moon (Isa 5:30; 13:10; 24:23; Ezek 32:7–8; Zeph 1:15). Finally, the day of the Lord is not only a day of judgment (Isa 34:2–3; Jer 25:33; 49:26; Ezek 24:21) but also a day of deliverance, replenishment, refreshment, and rejoicing (Isa 29:18–19; Zeph 3:11–14, 16–20).

<sup>a</sup>Or eastern sea <sup>b</sup>Or western sea <sup>c</sup>Heb Arabah <sup>d</sup>Heb lacks this, cf 14:12. <sup>e</sup>Heb lacks rain. <sup>f</sup>Or will not.

place. The nations and the Israelites will suffer, but in the end the survivors from among the nations and the survivors from among the Israelites will acknowledge God.

All will come up to Jerusalem in worship (cf. Isa 2:1–4; Mic 4:1–4). Thus a small group of international survivors will exist, and all the families of the earth will once again

<sup>20</sup>On that day, *Holy to the LORD* will be inscribed<sup>a</sup> on the bells of the horses, and the pots in the LORD's house will be holy<sup>b</sup> like the bowls before the altar. <sup>21</sup>Every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of heavenly forces. All those who sacrifice will come. They will take some of the pots and cook with them. There will no longer be any merchants<sup>c</sup> in the house of the LORD of heavenly forces on that day.

14:20 Ex 28:36,  
Ex 39:30

<sup>a</sup>Heb lacks *inscribed*. <sup>b</sup>Heb lacks *holy*. <sup>c</sup>Heb *Canaanite*

be blessed (cf. Gen 12:3), but only if they acknowledge, honor, and worship Israel's God (14:17-19). Finally, Zechariah makes clear that on this day of the Lord, even the

most ordinary things will be considered *holy to the Lord* (14:21). Everyone and everything will be transformed by and in God.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LAW OF PATIENTS' RIGHTS TO REFUSE TREATMENT

As a result of the Supreme Court's decision in *Cruzan*,<sup>1</sup> the law of patients' rights to refuse treatment has become more complex. This article discusses the current state of the law and offers suggestions for how to address the challenges that have arisen.

The Supreme Court's decision in *Cruzan* has had a significant impact on the law of patients' rights to refuse treatment. The Court's decision in *Cruzan* was a landmark case that established the right of a competent patient to refuse medical treatment.

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# MALACHI

The book of Malachi concludes the prophetic literature in the Christian Bible. The heading names Malachi (which means “my messenger”) as the author, but the actual author of the book is unknown. The text contains no specific information that would indicate when it was written, though the most likely date is the second half of the 5th century BCE. The contents of the text reflect post-exilic times during the mid-5th century BCE.

During this period, the Persians were in power. Persia’s King Darius I (522–486 BCE) had given the Jews permission to rebuild their temple, and they did. But the size and strength of the Persian Empire posed a great challenge to the Jews, who were tempted to pledge allegiance to a heathen governor instead of to their God. For the Jews, this was a time of great discouragement, a climate that prompted Malachi to assure his people that God still loved them (Mal 1:2-5) and that they were to honor and respect their covenant relationship

with God and with each other. In his various addresses, Malachi says that God’s people had lost their way. They experienced conflict within the priesthood (Mal 1:6–2:9); mixed marriages, struggles within marriages, and divorce (Mal 2:10-16); offenses regarding tithes and offerings (Mal 3:7-15); and sorcery, perjury, and social injustices (Mal 3:5).

Malachi appears to be written in prose, but some readers see Malachi as a type of poetry. The literary style is simple, direct, terse, and candid. His message is often punctuated with questions and answers that take the form of disputes or dialogues, which Malachi uses to challenge his listeners to change their ways (see, e.g., Mal 1:2-5, 6-8, 9-13; 2:10-15, 17; 3:2-6, 13-15).

Unlike many of Israel’s other prophets, Malachi shows no concern for a future temple. His focus is on reforming the abuses in ritual and worship practices. Malachi’s primary theme is Israel’s covenant relationship with God (Mal



A jackal (Mal 1:3)  
*iStockPhoto*

2:10-17) and the consequences the people will suffer for not remaining in a right relationship with God and with each other (see Mal 3:1-6, 7-18; 4:1-6). For Malachi, God is the maker and keeper of covenant (Mal 1:2; cf. Exod 6:2-7; Jer 31:31-34). The relationship between God and

Israel is like a relationship between a father and a son (Mal 1:6; 2:10-12). Malachi sees Israel as a chosen people dearly loved by God (Mal 1:2; 3:17; cf. Deut 7:6-11). Malachi's God is the one who purifies (Mal 3:1-7) the relationship for the sake of transformation (Mal 4:1-6).

**I. Heading (1:1)**

**II. First Argument: God's Love (1:2-5)**

**III. Second Argument: God's Honor (1:6-2:9)**

**IV. Third Argument: Faithfulness (2:10-16)**

**V. Fourth Argument: God's Justice (2:17-3:5)**

**VI. Fifth Argument: Return to God (3:6-12)**

**VII. Sixth Argument: Speech against God (3:13-4:3)**

**VIII. Two Appendixes (4:4; 4:5-6)**

*Carol J. Dempsey, O.P.*

1 A pronouncement. The LORD's word to Israel through Malachi.<sup>a</sup>

### Love of Jacob

<sup>2</sup>I have loved you, says the LORD;  
but you say, "How have you loved us?"  
Wasn't Esau Jacob's brother? says the LORD.  
I loved Jacob, <sup>3</sup>but I rejected Esau.

I turned Esau's mountains into desolation,  
his inheritance into a wilderness for jackals.

<sup>4</sup>Edom may say, "We are beaten down, but we will rebuild the ruins";  
but the LORD of heavenly forces proclaims:  
They may build, but I will tear them down.  
They will call themselves a wicked territory,  
the people against whom the LORD rages forever.

<sup>5</sup>Your eyes will see it and you will say,  
"May the LORD be great beyond the borders of Israel."

### Honoring the Lord

<sup>6</sup>A son honors a father,  
and a servant honors his master.  
But if I'm a father, where is my honor?  
Or if I'm a master, where is my respect? says the LORD of heavenly forces  
to you priests who despise my name.  
So you say, "How have we despised your name?"  
<sup>7</sup>By approaching my altar with polluted food.

<sup>a</sup>Or my messenger

1:1 The first verse emphasizes the content, address, and instrument of the prophecy that follows in 1:2–4:6. A pronouncement is delivered. The divine word will be communicated to Israel through the human messenger Malachi. This opening verse gives authority to Malachi's proclamation and introduces the three main parties that play roles in the following proclamation: God, Israel, and Malachi.

1:2–5 At the heart of Malachi's message is God's love for Israel. Because of this desire and intention, both the prophet and God can be honest with the people, at times scolding them and at other times offering them comfort, hope, and compassion. God's declaration of love for Israel echoes Hosea 11:1–9, where the prophet shows God moving back and forth between compassion and frustration. Hosea draws on the language of the exodus, but Malachi recalls Isaac's two sons, Esau and Jacob (Gen 25:19–34; 27:1–45; 32:1–33:20; 36:1–43).

1:2–3 *I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau*: Isaac had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Jacob, the younger of the twins, was chosen by God over Esau. Jacob was the favorite son of his mother, Rebekah. She schemed to have Jacob receive Isaac's blessing, which was customarily given to the oldest male child (who was Esau). Esau's father excluded him from receiving the blessing, which was Esau's birthright. This family conflict is the social foundation for establishing Israel against its neighbor, Edom, which is represented by Esau (see Gen 36:1–43). Edom was located southeast of Palestine and was a continual source of conflict throughout Israel's history. The Edomites were accused of participating in the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 or 586 BCE. What Rebekah and Isaac did to their two sons when they favored one and excluded the other is now attributed to God.

1:3 The image of Esau shifts from being a person to being

a country. Edom is located primarily east of the Wadi Arabah, north of the Gulf of Aqabah, south of the Wadi el-Hesa, and west of the Arabian Desert. The image of Edom's mountains turning into ruins refers to a series of victories over Edom by various Israelite, Judahite, and Babylonian kings: David (2 Sam 8:13–14), Amaziah (2 Kgs 14:7), Uzziah (2 Kgs 14:22), and Nabonidus of Babylon (from 552 BCE onward). The final defeat of Edom came sometime during the 5th century BCE when Arab tribes overpowered and displaced the Edomites. *inheritance*: land. *jackals*: members of the dog family common to southwest Asia and North Africa. They resemble large foxes, and are shy, nighttime creatures that hunt in small packs. They eat garbage, vegetation, and unprotected small livestock. In the Bible they are symbols of isolation, destruction, and abandonment (e.g., Job 30:29; Ps 44:19; Mic 1:8).

1:6–2:9 The longest section of the book. With the exception of 1:14, which is directed toward the people, this section concerns a dispute with the priests. The first part of the passage begins with a universal statement that would seem to be true: *A son honors a father, and a servant honors his master* (1:6). Malachi implies, however, that God is father and Lord to Israel, and the people don't honor or respect God (1:6b). Here the charge is addressed directly to the priests who despise God's name and perform unclean sacrifices (1:6–13). The second half of the passage is the announcement of judgment on the priests (2:1–9). If the priests don't hear and obey the prophet's words of warning (1:6–13), then they will be cursed, defiled, and removed from office (2:3). 2:1–9 is a prophetic dispute, but ironically those receiving the divine judgment have no reply.

1:7 *polluted food*: the animal sacrifices that are contaminated with blood.

1:1 Is 13:1;  
Zec 9:1,  
Zec 12:1

1:2 Is 41:8;  
Jer 31:3;  
Mal 2:17,  
Mal 3:7; Ro 9:13

1:3 Is 34:13;  
Jer 9:11

1:5 Ps 35:27;  
Mt 5:4

1:6 Ex 20:12;  
Is 1:2; Lk 6:46

1:7 Lv 21:6;  
Mal 1:8,  
Mal 1:12

1:10 Is 1:11;

Am 5:21

1:11 Ps 113:3;

Is 45:6

1:12 Mal 1:7

1:13 Is 43:22;

Mal 1:8;

Mal 1:10

1:14 Zec 14:9

2:1 Mal 1:6

2:2 Dt 28:15;

Mal 3:9

But you say, "How have we polluted it<sup>b</sup>?"

When you say, "The table of the LORD can be despised."

<sup>8</sup>If you bring a blind animal to sacrifice, isn't that evil?

If you bring a lame or sick one, isn't that evil?

Would you bring it to your governor?

Would he be pleased with it or accept you? says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>9</sup>So now ask God to be gracious to us.

After what you have done, will he accept you? says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>10</sup>Who among you will shut the doors of the temple<sup>c</sup>

so that you don't burn something on my altar in vain?

I take no delight in you, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

I won't accept a grain offering from your hand.

<sup>11</sup>Nevertheless, from sunrise to sunset,  
my name will be great among the nations.

Incense and a pure grain offering will be offered everywhere in my name,

because my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>12</sup>But you make my name impure when you say,

"The table of the LORD is polluted.

Its fruit, its food, is despised."

<sup>13</sup>But you say, "How tedious!"

and you groan about it, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

You permit what is stolen, lame, or sick to be brought for a sacrifice,<sup>d</sup>

and you bring the grain offering.

Should I accept such from your hands? says the LORD.

<sup>14</sup>I will curse the cheater who has a healthy<sup>e</sup> male in his flock,

but who promises and sacrifices to the LORD that which is corrupt.

I am truly a great king, says the LORD of heavenly forces,

and my name is feared among the nations.

**2**But now, this command is for you, priests:

<sup>2</sup>If you don't listen,

or don't intend to glorify my name, says the LORD of heavenly forces,

then I will send a curse among you.

**God's Name** In the book of Malachi, references to God's name appear many times. The priests are scolded for despising God's name (Mal 1:6b), an act of which they are seemingly unaware (Mal 1:6c). God's name was also made impure (Mal 1:12). Through the prophet, God declares that God's name will be great (Mal 1:11a) and is great (Mal 1:11b). The divine name is to be feared among the nations (Mal 1:14); it is to be glorified (Mal 2:2) and revered (Mal 4:2), and is something awesome (Mal 2:5). God's name is also a source for meditation (Mal 3:16b). God's name is tied to God's reputation. When God acts to preserve God's name, God is upholding God's own reputation, whether by guiding (Pss 23:3; 31:3), pardoning (Pss 25:11; 70:9), sparing (1 Sam 12:22; Isa 48:9; Jer 14:7, 21; Ezek 20:44), or delivering (Pss 106:8; 109:21; 143:11). Once Israel's behavior undermines God's reputation, God will act for the sake of God's holy name (Isa 52:5-6; Ezek 20:9, 14, 22; 36:19-24). Profaning God's name was a serious offense and usually happened through false worship (Lev 20:3; 22:2; Ezek 20:39; Mal 1:12) or injustice (Jer 34:16; Amos 2:7).

To know God's name means to be in a harmonious relationship with God and God's ways (cf. Ps 91:14). When one is in harmonious relationship with God, then the name of God is a strong tower (Prov 18:10) that can be called on to defend, save, help, and protect (Pss 20:1; 54:1; 124:8). God's name is worthy of trust (Ps 33:21; Isa 50:10; Zeph 3:12).

<sup>b</sup>Gk; Heb you <sup>c</sup>Heb lacks of the temple. <sup>d</sup>Heb lacks for a sacrifice. <sup>e</sup>Heb lacks healthy.

**1:8** *blind animal...lame or sick one*: The priests are brought up on charges of offering animals that weren't acceptable for sacrifice and forbidden by the Instruction (see Lev 22:17-30; Deut 15:21).

**1:9** *to be gracious to us*: The tone is sarcastic, because the priests have insulted God with their unacceptable sacrifices.  
**1:10** *shut the doors of the temple*: God aims to stop the pretense of worship conducted by the priests.



2:5 Nm 25:12;

Is 54:10;

Eze 34:25

2:6 Gn 5:22;

Dt 33:16;

Jer 23:22;

Jas 5:19;

Rev 14:5

2:7 Lv 10:11

2:10 Is 43:1;

Is 64:8; 1Co 8:6;

Eph 4:6

2:11 Eze 9:1;

Eze 9:2

2:12 Nm 24:5

2:13 Prv 15:8;

Prv 21:27;

Is 1:11, Is 58:2;

Jer 6:20

2:14 Is 54:6;

Mal 2:15;

Mal 3:5

I will curse your blessings,  
and I mean really curse them, because none of you intend to do it.

<sup>3</sup>I am about to denounce your offspring;

I will scatter feces on your faces,  
the feces of your festivals.

Then I will lift you up to me,<sup>f</sup>

<sup>4</sup>and you will know that I have sent this command to you  
so that my covenant with Levi can continue to exist,  
says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>5</sup>My covenant with him involved life and peace, which I gave him,  
and also fear so that he honored me.

He was in awe of my name.

<sup>6</sup>True Instruction was in his mouth;  
injustice wasn't found on his lips.

He walked with me in peace and did the right thing;  
he made many turn from iniquity.

<sup>7</sup>The lips of the priest should guard knowledge;  
everyone<sup>g</sup> should seek Instruction from his mouth,  
for he is the messenger from the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>8</sup>But you have turned from the path.

You have caused many to stumble by your instruction.

You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>9</sup>Moreover, I have made you despised and humiliated in the view of all the people,  
since none of you keep my ways or show respect for Instruction.

### Judah's dishonesty

<sup>10</sup>Isn't there one father for all of us,  
one God who created us?

Why does everyone cheat each other  
to make the covenant of our ancestors impure?

<sup>11</sup>Judah cheated—a detestable thing was done in Israel and Jerusalem.  
Judah made the LORD's holy place impure, which God loved,  
and married the daughter of a foreign god.

<sup>12</sup>May the LORD eliminate anyone who does so from the tents of Jacob,  
anyone awaking, testifying,<sup>h</sup>  
and making an offering to the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>13</sup>You should do this as well:  
cover the altar of the LORD with tears, weeping, and groaning  
because there is still no divine favor for your offering  
or favorable regard for anything from your hand.

<sup>14</sup>But you say, "Why?"  
Because the LORD testifies about you  
and the wife of your youth against whom you cheated.

<sup>f</sup>Heb uncertain; MT *He will carry you to it.* <sup>g</sup>Or *they* <sup>h</sup>Heb uncertain

2:10-16 The charge in these verses is threefold. Using a marriage metaphor, the prophet sets out three charges. First, Judah, depicted as a male spouse (2:10-13), is guilty of adultery, the same sin as some of the men of Judah. Judah committed adultery against the *one God* who created all (Mal 1:10) and demands fidelity. Here the prophet draws on Deuteronomy 32:6, which describes God as father and creator. Judah's *detestable thing* is the worship of other gods instead of the one God. The *daughter of a foreign god* (2:11) could be a reference to Asherah, a goddess honored at Ugarit and worshipped in Judah (1 Kgs 15:9-13) and Israel (1 Kgs 18:19). She was the mate of the high god El, and the mother of 70 sons. Second, the image of Judah marrying the *daughter of a foreign god* points to mixed marriages,

a practice found among some of the men of Judah. Marriage to foreign women was a major issue (see Ezra 9-10; Neh 13:1-3, 23-30). The threat of mixing with cultures that worship many gods instead of the one God puts into jeopardy the identity of the Jewish people. Inter-marriage with spouses from various Canaanite nations was prohibited (Exod 34:11-16; Deut 7:1-6). Third, like Judah, some of the men of Judah are guilty of cheating on their wives (2:14), a breach in covenant relationship. The prophet seems to base this concern in Genesis 2:21-24.

2:12 The distinction is between those who worship only God and those who desire to worship other gods in addition to God.

2:14 See Hosea 2.

2:15 Gn 2:24;  
 Mal 2:14;  
 Mt 19:4, Mt 19:5;  
 Ti 1:6  
 2:16 Dt 24:1;  
 Mt 5:31  
 2:17 Is 5:20,  
 Is 43:24; 2Pt 3:4  
 3:1 Is 40:3;  
 Mt 11:10;  
 Mk 1:2; Lk 1:76,  
 Lk 7:27  
 3:2 Is 4:4;  
 Zec 13:9;  
 Rev 6:17  
 3:3 Is 1:25,  
 Is 48:10;  
 Dn 12:10;  
 Zec 13:9; 1Pt 1:7  
 3:4 2Ch 7:1;  
 Eze 20:40  
 3:5 Lv 19:13;  
 Jer 7:9; Zec 5:4;  
 Jas 5:4  
 3:6 Nm 23:19;  
 Jas 1:17  
 3:7 Zec 1:3

She is your partner,  
 the wife of your covenant.

<sup>15</sup> Didn't he make her<sup>d</sup> the one<sup>j</sup> and the remnant of his spirit?<sup>k</sup>

What is the one?

The one seeking godly offspring.

You should guard your own spirit.

Don't cheat on the wife of your youth <sup>16</sup>because he hates divorce,

says the LORD God of Israel,

and he also hates the one covering his garment with violence,<sup>l</sup>

says the LORD of heavenly forces.

Guard your own life, and don't cheat.

### **Purifying judgment**

<sup>17</sup> You have made the LORD tired with your words.

You say, "How have we made him tired?"

When you say:

"Anyone doing evil is good in the LORD's eyes,"

or "He delights in those doing evil,"<sup>m</sup>

or "Where is the God of justice?"

**3** Look, I am sending my messenger who will clear the path before me;  
 suddenly the LORD whom you are seeking will come to his temple.

The messenger of the covenant in whom you take delight is coming,  
 says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>2</sup> Who can endure the day of his coming?

Who can withstand his appearance?

He is like the refiner's fire or the cleaner's soap.

<sup>3</sup> He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver.

He will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.

They will belong to the LORD, presenting a righteous offering.

<sup>4</sup> The offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD  
 as in ancient days and in former years.

<sup>5</sup> I will draw near to you for judgment.

I will be quick to testify against the sorcerers,

the adulterers, those swearing falsely,

against those who cheat the day laborers out of their wages

as well as oppress the widow and the orphan,

and against those who brush aside the foreigner and do not revere me,

says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>6</sup> I am the LORD, and I do not change;

and you, children of Jacob, have not perished.

### **Return to the LORD**

<sup>7</sup> Ever since the time of your ancestors,

you have deviated from my laws

and have not kept them.

Return to me and I will return to you,

says the LORD of heavenly forces.

But you say, "How should we return?"

<sup>d</sup>Heb lacks *her*. <sup>j</sup>Heb uncertain; *her* refers to the wife in Mal 2:14. <sup>k</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>l</sup>Heb uncertain <sup>m</sup>Or *them*

2:17–3:6 The prophet argues that God's messenger will soon arrive to establish justice (2:17–3:4) as God draws near to the people to judge them (3:5–6).

2:17 The verse contains quotations from the people. These highlight their inability to understand justice. *Anyone doing evil is good in the LORD's eyes*: The statement represents a reversal of justice found throughout the community.

3:6 *I am the LORD, and I do not change*: The moral force behind the prophet's accusation against the people is

grounded in God's unchangeable nature. The people haven't been consumed by God's rage for violating the covenant only because of God's faithfulness, patience, and compassion (cf. Hos 11:1–8). God makes it clear that the people have violated the covenant, but this hasn't prevented God's continued graciousness.

3:7–15 The people have not been giving a tenth of their income as an offering to God (3:7–10). Despite these charges, God continues to show them grace and favor. God offers them three promises: a renewal of the

<sup>8</sup>Should a person deceive God?

Yet you deceive me.

But you say, "How have we deceived you?"

With your tenth-part gifts and offerings.

<sup>9</sup>You are being cursed with a curse,  
and you, the entire nation, are robbing me.

<sup>10</sup>Bring the whole tenth-part to the storage house  
so there might be food in my house.

Please test me in this, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

See whether I do not open all the windows of the heavens for you  
and empty out a blessing until there is enough.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>11</sup>I will threaten the one who wants to devour you  
so that it doesn't spoil the fruit of your fertile land,  
and so that the vine doesn't abort its fruit in your field,  
says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>12</sup>All the nations will consider you fortunate,  
for you will be a desirable land, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>13</sup>You have spoken harshly about me, says the LORD;  
but you say, "What have we spoken about you?"

<sup>14</sup>You said, "Serving God is useless.

What do we gain by keeping his obligation or by walking around as mourners  
before the LORD of heavenly forces?"

<sup>15</sup>So now we consider the arrogant fortunate.  
Moreover, those doing evil are built up;  
they test God and escape."

### The scroll of remembrance

<sup>16</sup>Then those revering the LORD,  
each and every one, spoke among themselves.  
The LORD paid attention and listened to them.

Then a scroll of remembrance was written before the LORD  
about those revering the LORD,  
the ones meditating on his name.

<sup>17</sup>On the day that I am preparing, says the LORD of heavenly forces,  
they will be my special possession.

I will spare them just as parents spare a child who serves them.

<sup>18</sup>You will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked,  
between those serving God and those not serving him.

### The day of the Lord

**4**<sup>o</sup>Look, the day is coming, burning like an oven.

All the arrogant ones and all those doing evil will become straw.

The coming day will burn them, says the LORD of heavenly forces,  
leaving them neither root nor branch.

<sup>a</sup>Or *Until what is required is lacking.* <sup>o</sup>3:19 in Heb

covenant relationship (3:7), blessings (3:10), and security against their enemies (3:11). God's vision for the people and Judah is that they once again be a *desirable land* (3:12). The people still need a change of heart that would in turn give them the knowledge they need to return to their God (3:13-15).

3:16-18 The message is directed toward those who remained faithful to God. These are the ones who now have God's attention. These verses make the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, and point out to the wicked that they will receive no attention from God (cf. Mic 3:4).

3:16 *scroll of remembrance*: This scroll is drawn up to identify the righteous.

3:17 On the day when God will act, the scroll of remembrance will be opened and will reveal and confirm who is righteous and who isn't.

4:1-6 These verses describe the day of the Lord, which signals destruction for the wicked and healing for the righteous (4:1-2). The passage also contains two appendixes: 4:4 and 4:5-6. The first appendix encourages listeners to remember Moses and his teachings. The second identifies Elijah as "the messenger" sent to the community the prophet referred to in Malachi 3:1.

3:8 Neh 13:10

3:10 Lv 27:30;  
Neh 13:12;  
2Co 9:6

3:13 Ex 5:2;  
Job 34:7;  
Ps 10:11; Is 3:8;  
Mal 2:17

3:14 Job 21:15;  
Job 34:9; Is 58:3;  
Zep 1:12

3:15 Mal 4:1

3:16 Ps 33:18,  
Ps 34:15; Ps 56:8,  
Ps 119:63,  
Ps 147:11

3:17 Ex 19:5;  
Dt 7:6; 1Pt 2:9

3:18 Gn 18:25

4:1 Ps 21:9;  
Is 5:24; Is 47:14;  
Jl 2:31; Na 1:10

4:2 Is 30:26;  
Lk 1:78

4:3 Job 40:12;  
Eze 28:18;  
Mal 3:17

4:4 Ex 3:1;  
Dt 4:10; 1Ki 8:9;  
Ps 147:19

4:5 Mt 11:14;  
Mk 9:11; Lk 1:17  
4:6 Lk 1:17

<sup>2</sup>But the sun of righteousness will rise on those revering my name;  
healing will be in its wings  
so that you will go forth and jump about like calves in the stall.

<sup>3</sup>You will crush the wicked;  
they will be like dust beneath the soles of your feet  
on the day that I am preparing, says the LORD of heavenly forces.

<sup>4</sup>Remember the Instruction from Moses, my servant,  
to whom I gave Instruction and rules for all Israel at Horeb.

<sup>5</sup>Look, I am sending Elijah the prophet to you,  
before the great and terrifying day of the LORD arrives.

<sup>6</sup>Turn the hearts of the parents to the children  
and the hearts of the children to their parents.

Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse.

4:4 *Instruction from Moses*: On Horeb/Sinai Moses received the Ten Commandments that are essential to the covenant relationship between Israel and God (Exod 20:1-21). The language of this verse reflects Deuteronomy 5:1-5. On the plains of Moab, Moses encouraged the Israelites to remember the covenant that God established with them 40 years earlier at Sinai. *Remember* implies more than merely recalling something from memory. Here the people are called not only to recollect but also to reenact and follow all they have been taught so that they can move into the future as God's people.

4:4-5 The reference to *Horeb* links the first appendix (4:4) to

the second one (Mal 4:5-6), and also links *Moses* with *Elijah*. Moses received the Ten Commandments on Horeb, and Elijah had an encounter with God at Horeb (1Kgs 19:9-19).

4:5 *Elijah*: one of Israel's early and great prophets, active during the 9th century BCE. He was taken up into heaven by chariots, and no mention was ever made of his death (see 2 Kgs 2:10-12).

4:5-6 This second appendix looks forward to a new age characterized by healing, reconciliation, and peace. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke identify the coming of John the Baptist with God's promise to send Elijah (e.g., Matt 11:12-15; 17:10-13; Luke 1:13-17).

# New Testament

41

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# MATTHEW

Matthew 1:1-28

The overarching theme of the Gospel of Matthew is the role of Jesus as the Christ in relation to God's plan of salvation for all humanity. Toward the end of the 1st century CE, after the destruction of the temple, Judaism itself was in the process of being reshaped. During this time, Matthew redefined what it means to be God's people as those who share a common ancestry with the historic nation of Israel and also participate in the new way made available through "Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1) and the ruler of the universe (Matt 28:18).

Jesus was born in the house of the royal Davidic dynasty, in a family that reaches back to Abraham. His conception by the Holy Spirit set him apart from ordinary humans, and words of prophecy declare him as the one who will save his people. His public life begins with his baptism by John, after which a heavenly voice

presents him as God's Son, whom God dearly loves. He proclaims the kingdom of heaven, performs miracles, and teaches his followers what it means to be righteous and how to enter God's kingdom. Above all, Jesus in Matthew's Gospel is the authoritative interpreter of the Jewish scriptures, which we know as the Old Testament. He fulfilled the Torah and the Prophets by teaching how they express God's will and by living out God's will in his own life and ministry. Jesus identified and exposed evil at work in the religious, political, and social structures of his time. By doing so, he became an enemy of the religious establishment and the Roman Empire. This ultimately led to his arrest and trial by the Jewish leadership and then to his being sentenced to death and executed by the Roman military authority. The story ends with the resurrected Jesus encountering first



The Jordan River south of the Sea of Galilee  
*Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com*

Mary Magdalene and another Mary and then the 11 disciples, telling them to go to all the nations to make disciples, baptize them, and teach the good news.

The Gospel of Matthew was written during the last decades of the 1st century CE. It was published anonymously, so the exact identity of the author is difficult to determine. Christian tradition since the 2nd century has identified Matthew as the evangelist who wrote this Gospel. We don't know with any certainty where this Gospel was written. Syria had a sizable Jewish population, and has been suggested as a probable candidate. The author seems to address Jewish Christians and tries to redefine

their identity as God's people after the temple's destruction.

We find indications in the Gospel of Matthew that the author worked with sources for much of his narrative. He exercised great care in preserving those sources. At the same time, he was creative in the way he used his sources so that his narrative could speak relevantly and authentically to the situation and issues of his own day, in the latter part of the 1st century. In other words, Matthew's biography of Jesus gives us more than the bare facts. Like the other New Testament Gospels, this one comes to us as a kind of theological history that tells us the significance of what Jesus said and did.

### **I. Introduction (1:1–2:23)**

- A. Jesus' genealogy (1:1-17)
- B. Jesus' birth (1:18-25)
- C. Jesus' early days (2:1-23)

### **II. Jesus' Public Ministry in Galilee (3:1–20:34)**

- A. John the Baptist (3:1-17)
- B. Beginning of Jesus' public ministry (4:1-25)
- C. First great sermon: the Sermon on the Mount (5-7)
- D. Jesus' ministry to the crowd (8:1–9:34)
- E. Second great sermon: the mission of the Twelve (9:35–11:1)
- F. Jesus' continued healing ministry and his rejection by this generation (11:2–13:1)
- G. Third great sermon: the parables of the kingdom of heaven (13:2-52)
- H. Miracles, conflicts, and predictions of Jesus' suffering (13:53–17:27)

### **I. Fourth great sermon: the community instructions (18:1-35)**

- J. Jesus' teachings about legal and religious issues (19:1–20:34)

### **III. Jesus in Jerusalem (21:1–28:15)**

- A. Entry into Jerusalem (21:1-17)
- B. Jesus' teaching in Jerusalem and his conflict with the religious authorities (21:18–22:46)
- C. Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees and legal experts (23:1-39)
- D. Fifth great sermon: the temple's destruction and the end (24:1–25:46)
- E. Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection (26:1–28:15)

### **IV. Jesus Commissions the Disciples (28:16-20)**

*Eugene Eung-Chun Park  
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**Genealogy of Jesus**

**1** A record of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham:

<sup>2</sup>Abraham was the father of Isaac.

Isaac was the father of Jacob.

Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.

<sup>3</sup>Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah,

whose mother was Tamar.

Perez was the father of Hezron.

Hezron was the father of Aram.

<sup>4</sup>Aram was the father of Amminadab.

Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.

Nahshon was the father of Salmon.

<sup>5</sup>Salmon was the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.

Boaz was the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth.

Obed was the father of Jesse.

<sup>6</sup>Jesse was the father of David the king.

David was the father of Solomon,

whose mother had been the wife of Uriah.

<sup>7</sup>Solomon was the father of Rehoboam.

Rehoboam was the father of Abijah.

Abijah was the father of Asaph.

<sup>8</sup>Asaph was the father of Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat was the father of Joram.

Joram was the father of Uzziah.

<sup>9</sup>Uzziah was the father of Jotham.

Jotham was the father of Ahaz.

Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.

<sup>10</sup>Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh.

Manasseh was the father of Amos.

Amos was the father of Josiah.

<sup>11</sup>Josiah was the father of Jechoniah and his brothers.

This was at the time of the exile to Babylon.

<sup>12</sup>After the exile to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel.

Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.

<sup>13</sup>Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud.

Abiud was the father of Eliakim.

Eliakim was the father of Azor.

<sup>14</sup>Azor was the father of Zadok.

Zadok was the father of Achim.

Achim was the father of Eliud.

<sup>15</sup>Eliud was the father of Eleazar.

Eleazar was the father of Matthan.

Matthan was the father of Jacob.

<sup>16</sup>Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary—of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Christ.

1:1 Lk 1:32;  
Jn 7:42; Ro 1:3;  
Ga 3:16;  
Rev 22:16  
1:2 Gn 25:26  
1:3 Ru 4:18;  
1Ch 2:4;  
Lk 3:33  
1:4 Lk 3:32  
1:5 Ru 4:17;  
1Ch 2:12;  
Lk 3:32  
1:6 1Sa 16:1;  
1Sa 17:12;  
2Sa 12:24  
1:7 1Ki 15:8;  
1Ch 3:10;  
2Ch 14:1  
1:8 1Ki 15:24;  
1Ch 3:10;  
1Ch 3:11  
1:9 2Ki 16:20;  
2Ki 18:1;  
1Ch 3:13;  
2Ch 27:1;  
2Ch 27:9  
1:10 1Ch 3:14  
1:11 1Ch 3:15;  
Jer 27:20  
1:12 1Ch 3:17;  
Ezr 3:2; Lk 3:27  
1:13 Mt 1:14  
1:14 Mt 1:13;  
Mt 1:15  
1:15 Mt 1:14  
1:16 Mt 27:17;  
Lk 1:27;  
Lk 2:5; Lk 2:11;  
Lk 3:23

1:1-17 Matthew's genealogy presents Jesus as the rightful heir to the royal Davidic dynasty, and traces his family tree back to the great patriarch Abraham. Jesus is rightly called son of David, son of Abraham.

1:1 The word translated as *ancestors*, or "genealogy," is the same as the name of the first book of the OT in Greek: Genesis. Matthew wants to present Jesus' story as a new beginning of the history of salvation by God. The significance of this new beginning is like creation itself. A *record of the ancestors of*: exactly the same phrase used in Genesis 5:1 in the Greek OT. The verse functions as a title to the whole book as well as a reference to this section, Matthew 1:1-17. The name *Christ* comes from the Greek

*christos*, meaning "anointed." See sidebar, "The Christ" at Matthew 11.

1:2-16 Five women are mentioned in the genealogy: Tamar (1:3; see Gen 38:1-27); Rahab (1:5; see Josh 2:1-24); Ruth (1:5; see Ruth 4:1-22); the wife of Uriah (1:6; 2 Sam 11:1-27); and Mary (1:16). All of them except Mary seem to have been of Gentile descent. This prepares for Matthew's affirmation that the good news is for all people (see Matt 28:18-20).

1:6 *David the king*: David is the only person called *king* in this genealogy. This is because he is the representative king of Israel. Israel's royal dynasty was called the house of David. See 2 Samuel 7:12-13.

1:17 Mt 2:4,  
Mt 11:2,  
Mt 16:16,  
Mt 22:42,  
Mt 23:10

1:18 Lk 1:27,  
Lk 1:35

1:19 D:24:1

1:20 Mt 2:12,  
Mt 2:13, Mt 2:19,  
Mt 2:22

1:21 Lk 1:31,  
Lk 2:11; Jn 1:29,  
Ac 4:12, Ac 5:31

1:22 Mt 2:15,  
Mt 2:23,  
Lk 24:44

1:23 Is 7:14,  
Is 8:8, Is 8:10,  
Is 9:6, Is 9:7

1:24 Gn 6:22;  
Mt 1:20, Mt 2:13,  
Mt 2:19; Ac 5:19

1:25 Mt 1:21;  
Lk 2:7, Lk 2:21

2:1 Mt 5:2;  
Lk 1:5, Lk 2:4;  
Jn 7:42

2:2 Nm 24:17;  
Jer 23:5;  
Zec 9:9;  
Mt 27:11;  
Jn 1:49

<sup>17</sup>So there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen generations from the exile to Babylon to the Christ.

### Birth of Jesus

<sup>18</sup>This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup>Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly. <sup>20</sup>As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup>Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled:

<sup>23</sup>*Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son,*

*And they will call him, Emmanuel.<sup>a</sup>*

(*Emmanuel* means "God with us.")

<sup>24</sup>When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife. <sup>25</sup>But he didn't have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. Joseph called him Jesus.

### Coming of the magi

**2**After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>They asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him."

<sup>a</sup>Isa 7:14

1:17 The three-part division of the record of Jesus' family tree indicates that the establishment of the Davidic dynasty and the Babylonian exile were key events in Israel's history. Names (e.g., Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah) have been dropped from the genealogy in order to fit into this three-part division of 14 names each. Even so, the numbers don't add up, since the third set has only 13 names. Some scholars think that the number *fourteen* is important because this is the sum of the consonants of David's name. (In Hebrew, "d" has the numerical value of 4, and "v" has the numerical value of 6. David—or d-v-d—would be 4 + 6 + 4, or 14.)

1:18-25 Jesus' birth is told primarily from Joseph's perspective. He's the one who connects Jesus to the Davidic dynasty.

1:18 *became pregnant by the Holy Spirit*: Matthew's wording doesn't refer to the Spirit's taking the role of a male in a sexual encounter. Instead, Matthew refers to the unexplainable exercise of God's creative power. Clearly, Joseph isn't Jesus' biological father (see Matt 1:25).

1:19 See Deuteronomy 22:23-27, which distinguishes between two cases of an engaged woman who had sexual relations with a man and provides different judgments for each. Joseph doesn't seem to concern himself with which case applies to his fiancée. Instead, his decision to *call off their engagement* is viewed as an act of kindness, and he is therefore regarded as *righteous*. His righteousness is on display further in Matthew 1:24, since he does "just as an angel from God commanded."

1:20 Dreams are an important means of divine communication in Matthew. Except for the dream of the magi (Matt 2:12) and that of Pilate's wife (Matt 27:19), all dream-visions are given to Joseph (Matt 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22).

1:21 The name *Jesus* comes from the Hebrew *Yeshua*, which means "deliverance" or "salvation." *save his people from their sins*: Israel was living in exile because of its sins. The coming of Jesus Christ marked the end of exile (see

Matt 1:17) because, through him, God would forgive God's people.

1:22-23 All that has occurred thus far is interpreted as a fulfillment of what the Lord said through the prophet Isaiah. Matthew cites Isaiah 7:14, an oracle of the impending birth of a crown prince. Although the Hebrew text refers to "the young woman," Matthew follows the Greek OT in his reference to *A virgin*. This fits well with his story of Mary's conception by the Holy Spirit. *God with us*: This promise is crucial for a people who have experienced life apart from God, in exile. A similar phrase occurs in Matthew 18:20; 28:20.

1:25 *Joseph called him Jesus*: Naming a child in the ancient Mediterranean world was a significant act on the part of the father. In naming the child, the father officially acknowledges the infant as his own legitimate child. Here, the act of naming functions as a virtual adoption of Jesus by Joseph as his son, even though he had nothing to do with the pregnancy of Mary. This is how Jesus became an heir to the Davidic dynasty. Now he is rightly called "son of David" (Matt 1:1).

2:1-12 The story of the visit of the *magi* contrasts two responses to Jesus' birth as son of David: a visit by Gentiles from the East who honor Jesus; and a hostile reaction by Herod, who has nothing to do with the Davidic line and is therefore an illegitimate king. In addition, scattered throughout this chapter are echoes of the story of Moses, including, for example, opposition from a leader and his people (2:3); the death of baby boys (Matt 2:16); and the journey out of Egypt (Matt 2:21).

2:1 *born in Bethlehem*: Since this is David's city, it's important that Jesus was born here (see 1 Sam 16:1-13). Herod the Great was appointed as king of the Jews by the Roman senate in 40 BCE. This marked the beginning of the Herodian dynasty. He ruled Judea until his death in 4 BCE. The noun "magi" refers to interpreters of dreams, astrologers, fortune-tellers, or anyone who possesses secret

<sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. <sup>4</sup>He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup>They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

<sup>6</sup>*You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah, because from you will come one who governs, who will shepherd my people Israel.*"<sup>b</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. <sup>8</sup>He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor

**Herod the Great** King of Galilee, Trachonitus, Samaria, Judea, and Idumea (37–4 BCE)

**Herod-Philip** Did not rule

**Herod Archelaus** Governor of Samaria, Judea, and Idumea (4 BCE–6 CE)

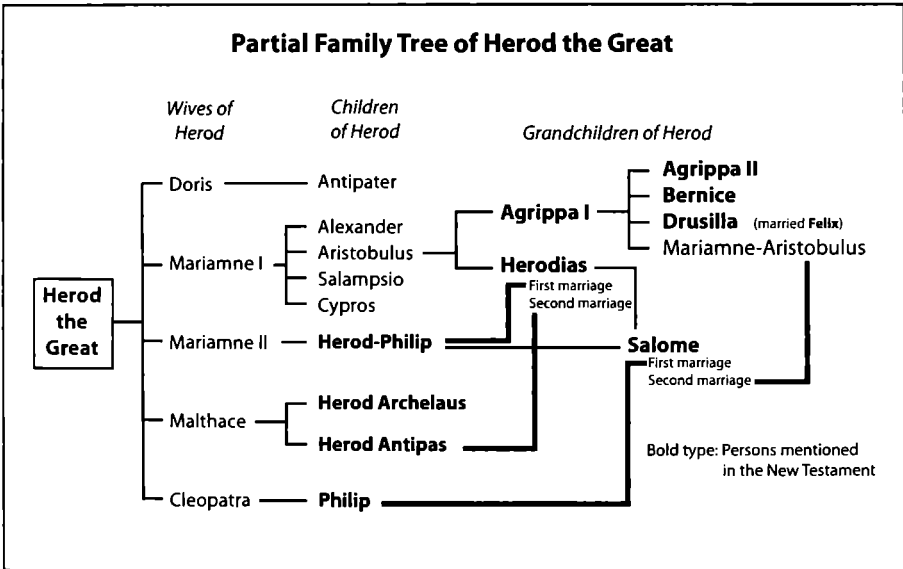
**Herod Antipas** Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 BCE–39 CE)

**Philip** Tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis (4 BCE–34 CE)

**Agrippa I** King of Iturea, Traconitis, and Abilene (34–44 CE), of Galilee and Perea (39–44 CE), of Samaria and Judea (41–44 CE)

**Agrippa II** King of Chalcis (49–53 CE); King of Iturea and Traconitis (53–93 CE), of Galilee and Perea (56–93 CE)

<sup>2:3</sup> Mt 2:1, Mt 2:7, Mt 2:16; Lk 1:5  
<sup>2:4</sup> Mt 1:17; Mk 12:35; Ac 6:12  
<sup>2:5</sup> Mt 1:1; Jn 7:42  
<sup>2:6</sup> 2Sa 5:2; Mt 5:2  
<sup>2:7</sup> Mt 2:1, Mt 2:3, Mt 2:16; Lk 1:5



<sup>b</sup>Mic 5:2; 2 Sam 5:2

knowledge. These magi are portrayed as astrologers who can read signs in the stars and planets that point to the birth of a king.

<sup>2:2-3</sup> Matthew contrasts two kings: Herod is the present king, but is of Gentile descent and has no real claim to the throne; Jesus is the legitimate king of the royal Davidic line. This is a criticism of Herod.

<sup>2:2</sup> Signs in the stars and planets concerning the birth of a future king were common in ancient literature.

<sup>2:3</sup> The magi refer to signs in the stars and planets that have nothing to do with Herod's sons. This alarms both Herod and everyone who benefits from his rule,

including Roman officers and their Jewish partners in Jerusalem.

<sup>2:4</sup> *legal experts*: These are scripture scholars. The *Christ* in this verse is not a proper name but a title for the anointed one (see sidebar, "The Christ" at Matt 11).

<sup>2:5-6</sup> *Bethlehem* is David's hometown (1 Sam 16:4; Luke 2:4). This reference to a prophecy that says the future ruler, or Christ, will come from Bethlehem indicates a strong desire on the part of many Jewish people for the restoration of the Davidic kingdom of Israel.

<sup>2:6</sup> The quotation combines Micah 5:2 and 2 Samuel 5:2. Both passages originally referred to David. Matthew

2:9 Mt 2:2  
2:10 Lk 2:10  
2:11 Ps 72:10;  
Mt 14:33;  
Lk 2:16  
2:12 Mt 1:20,  
Mt 2:13, Mt 2:19,  
Mt 2:22,  
Mt 27:19

him.”<sup>9</sup>When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was.<sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they were filled with joy.<sup>11</sup>They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.<sup>12</sup>Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

### Escape to Egypt

2:13 Mt 1:20,  
Mt 2:12, Mt 2:19,  
Mt 2:20; Ac 5:19  
2:14 Mt 1:24  
2:15 Hos 11:1,  
Mt 1:22  
2:16 Ex 1:16;  
Mt 2:1, Mt 2:7  
2:17 Mt 1:22

<sup>13</sup>When the magi had departed, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon search for the child in order to kill him.”<sup>14</sup>Joseph got up and, during the night, took the child and his mother to Egypt.<sup>15</sup>He stayed there until Herod died. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: *I have called my son out of Egypt.*<sup>6</sup>

### Murder of the Bethlehem children

2:18 Gn 35:19;  
Jer 31:15  
2:19 Mt 1:20,  
Mt 2:12, Mt 2:13,  
Mt 2:22  
2:20 Ex 4:19;  
Mt 2:13  
2:21 1Sa 13:19;  
Mt 2:20

<sup>16</sup>When Herod knew the magi had fooled him, he grew very angry. He sent soldiers to kill all the children in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding territory who were two years old and younger, according to the time that he had learned from the magi.<sup>17</sup>This fulfilled the word spoken through Jeremiah the prophet:

2:22 Mt 1:20,  
Mt 2:12, Mt 2:13,  
Mt 2:19, Lk 2:39  
2:23 Mt 1:22;  
Lk 1:26, Lk 2:39;  
Jn 1:45, Jn 1:46

<sup>18</sup>*A voice was heard in Ramah,  
weeping and much grieving,  
Rachel weeping for her children,  
and she did not want to be comforted,  
because they were no more.*<sup>d</sup>

### Return from Egypt

2:22 Mt 1:20,  
Mt 2:12, Mt 2:13,  
Mt 2:19, Lk 2:39  
2:23 Mt 1:22;  
Lk 1:26, Lk 2:39;  
Jn 1:45, Jn 1:46

<sup>19</sup>After King Herod died, an angel from the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt.<sup>20</sup>“Get up,” the angel said, “and take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel. Those who were trying to kill the child are dead.”<sup>21</sup>Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.<sup>22</sup>But when he heard that Archelaus ruled over Judea in place of his father Herod, Joseph was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he went to the area of Galilee.<sup>23</sup>He settled in a city called Nazareth so that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled: He will be called a Nazarene.

<sup>6</sup>Hos 11:1 <sup>d</sup>Jer 31:15

applies these prophecies to Jesus, the true heir to the house of David.

2:11 In contrast to the birth stories of Jesus in Luke, these Gentile magi are the first and the only ones who came and worshipped the infant Jesus.

2:13–15 Jesus’ escape to Egypt and his later return recall the exodus story. This is made clear by the quotation of Hosea 11:1.

2:16–18 No other historian refers to the murder of the Bethlehem children by Herod. However, it fits with the many other similar acts of violence that the 1st-century Jewish historian Josephus narrates in his accounts of Herod’s rule. This story of Herod’s killing these infants parallels the murder of Israelite male infants by Pharaoh (Exod 1:15–22).

2:16 Herod knows that he was fooled by the magi, but he doesn’t know of Jesus’ escape to Egypt. He assumes that the infant is still in Bethlehem, and this motivates him to kill all the male infants there. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, it was illegal even for a king to kill anybody unless a death sentence was first handed down by the Jewish council in Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin. Indeed, Josephus accuses Herod of illegal executions like this.

2:18 Matthew quotes Jeremiah 31:15, which refers to the removal of the people of Judah to Babylon as captives. It was in Ramah that the captives were gathered before they were taken to exile. In this oracle, Jeremiah calls upon

Rachel, an ancestral matriarch, to weep for her descendants as they are taken away. The oracle as a whole (Jer 31:15–22) is ultimately about God’s promise for the restoration from exile. This fits with Matthew’s story of Jesus as one who will save God’s people (see Matt 1:21).

2:19–22 When Herod the Great died in 4 BCE, his kingdom was divided among three of his sons. Archelaus was appointed as ruler over Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. Philip was made ruler over Iturea and Trachonitis. And Antipas was made ruler over Galilee and Perea.

2:20 The angel’s instruction parallels the exodus story, in which the Lord says to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt because everyone there who wanted to kill you has died” (Exod 4:19). *Those who were trying to kill the child:* the chief priests and legal experts, Herod’s partners in Matthew 2:4.

2:22 Herod Archelaus (see note on Matt 2:19–22) was known to be a cruel, ironfisted ruler. In 6 BCE, he was summoned to Rome because of his excessive harshness. As a result he was removed from office and driven away to Gaul. This explains why Joseph chose to settle in Galilee rather than going back to Judea.

2:23 *Nazareth* is about 15 miles west of the Galilee Sea. This town is never mentioned in the OT, nor does the OT refer to someone who would be called a *Nazarene*. Matthew may be using a play on the word “Nazarene”—perhaps to identify Jesus as one dedicated to the Lord, a “nazirite” (from the Hebrew root *nzr*; for a description of a

*Judea under Foreign Rule* Alexander the Great conquered Persia and its former colonies, including Judea, in 332 BCE. When he died in 323 BCE, his vast kingdom was divided among his three generals. Palestine first fell under the Ptolemies. But in 198 BCE the Seleucids gained control of Palestine and began introducing Greek culture into Judea. This process reached its peak during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Judas Maccabeus led a revolt against Greek rule and successfully recaptured Jerusalem in 164 BCE. His brother Simon established a kingdom in 142 BCE, marking the beginning of the Hasmonean dynasty. In 63 BCE Pompey entered Palestine, which fell under the rule of the Roman republic until Rome appointed Herod the Great as king of Judea in 37 BCE. When Herod died in 4 BCE, his kingdom was divided among his three sons: Herod Archelaus ruled Judah, Samaria, and Idumea until 6 CE; Herod Antipas ruled Galilee until 39 CE; and Philip ruled Trachonitis until 34 CE.

3:1 Mt 11:7;  
Mt 11:11;  
Mt 16:14; Lk 3:2;  
Jn 1:6  
3:2 Mt 4:17;  
Mt 6:10; Mt 10:7;  
Mk 1:15  
3:3 Is 40:3;  
Lk 1:17; Lk 1:76;  
Jn 1:23  
3:4 Lv 11:22;  
2Ki 1:8; Zec 13:4;  
Mk 1:6  
3:5 Mk 1:5;  
Jn 3:23  
3:6 Mk 1:5;  
Jn 3:23; Ac 2:38  
3:7 Mt 12:34;  
Mt 22:23;  
Mt 23:33;  
Ro 1:18;  
1Th 1:10

### Ministry of John the Baptist

**3**In those days John the Baptist appeared in the desert of Judea announcing, <sup>2</sup>"Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!" <sup>3</sup>He was the one of whom Isaiah the prophet spoke when he said:

*The voice of one shouting in the wilderness,  
"Prepare the way for the Lord;  
make his paths straight."*<sup>a</sup>

<sup>4</sup>John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey.

<sup>5</sup>People from Jerusalem, throughout Judea, and all around the Jordan River came to him.

<sup>6</sup>As they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. <sup>7</sup>Many Pharisees and Sadducees came to be baptized by John. He said to them, "You children of snakes! Who warned

<sup>a</sup>Isa 40:3

nazirite, see Num 6) like Samson (Judg 13:2-7) or Samuel (1 Sam 1-2); or as a "sprout" or "shoot" (from the Hebrew root *ntr*), a term used in Isaiah 11:1 to refer to God's agent of salvation.

3:1-6 John the Baptist preaches the same message of the kingdom of heaven as Jesus will preach (Matt 4:17). For Matthew, Isaiah anticipated a figure like John the Baptist, who would be Jesus' predecessor as proclaimer of God's rule. See sidebar, "The Kingdom of Heaven."

3:1 *In those days*: Matthew's story jumps from the time of Jesus' infancy to his adulthood. *in the desert of Judea*: The location is imprecise, but Matthew 3:5-6 locates John's ministry around the Jordan River. The Jordan River runs over a long stretch of desert from the Galilee Sea (also known as the Lake of Gennesaret; e.g., Luke 5:1) to the Dead Sea. The exact location of John's activity isn't known. It was probably on the banks of the river east of Jerusalem or in the Transjordan area (that is, east of the Jordan River). 3:2 See sidebar, "The Kingdom of Heaven."

3:3 The quotation is from Isaiah 40:3, which was addressed to the Jews in Babylon as a prophecy of God's coming to rescue them from exile. Here the voice of the prophet is applied to John the Baptist, and the way of God is understood as the way of Jesus.

3:4 John's clothing is like Elijah's clothing in 2 Kings 1:8, portraying John as a prophetic figure like Elijah. Later, Jesus will refer to John the Baptist as Elijah (Matt 11:14; 17:12). In Malachi 4:5, the Lord says, "Look, I am sending Elijah the prophet to you, before the great and terrifying day of the Lord."

3:6 Some OT texts associate sin with the need for washing (e.g., Ezek 36:25-28; Zech 13:1; see Acts 22:16), and 1st-century Jewish people practiced a ritual of washing themselves as a way of making themselves clean from a

religious viewpoint. John's baptism wasn't self-washing, however. Like Christian baptism that would come later (see Matt 28:18-20), this baptism was performed by God's agent as a concrete expression of covenant renewal with those who profess the desire to change their hearts and lives (see Matt 3:1).

3:7-12 John receives ordinary people who come to him for baptism (Matt 3:5-6), but he challenges the Pharisees and Sadducees. Although these two groups had vastly different views about how to be faithful to God (see note on Matt 3:7), Matthew can lump them together because of their shared hostility toward Jesus and his mission (see Matt 16:1-12). For them in particular, John renews his earlier call to change hearts and lives (see Matt 3:1). His words of warning and challenge anticipate the coming of the Christ.

3:7 *Pharisees*: members of a Jewish political and religious party that began during the Hasmonian dynasty (167–36 BCE) and continued after the temple's destruction. They were known for their devotion to the study of the scriptures and observance of the laws, especially the purity laws. *Sadducees*: the priestly elite, who were in charge of worship practices in the temple. They were a Jewish political and religious party that began during the Hasmonian period, but they ceased to exist as a party after the temple's destruction. See sidebar, "Pharisees and Sadducees" at Matthew 16. *the angry judgment* reflects a popular belief among some Jewish people during the second-temple period (from the late 6th century BCE through 70 CE) that God would soon intervene directly in history, and that this would bring about a radical change of the present social and political order and usher in a new era of salvation. John the Baptist is presented as a prophet who stood in that tradition.

3:8 Ac 26:20;  
Phi 1:11  
3:9 Lk 3:8;  
Jn 8:33; Jn 8:39;  
Ac 13:26; Ro 4:1  
3:10 Mt 7:19;  
Lk 3:9; Lk 13:6;  
Jn 15:2; Jn 15:6  
3:11 Is 4:4;  
Mt 1:4; Mk 1:8;  
Jn 1:33; Ac 1:5  
3:12 Job 21:18;  
Ps 1:4; Is 30:24;  
Mt 13:30;  
Mk 9:43  
3:13 Mk 1:9;  
Lk 3:21  
3:14 Jn 13:6;  
Ac 1:5  
3:15 Jn 4:34  
3:16 Is 11:2;  
Is 42:1; Jn 1:32;  
Ac 7:56;  
Ac 10:38  
3:17 Ps 2:7;  
Is 42:1; Mt 12:18;  
Mt 17:5;  
Jn 12:28  
4:1 Mk 1:12;  
Mk 1:13; Lk 4:1;  
Heb 4:15  
4:2 Is 34:28;  
1Ki 19:8;  
Mt 21:18;  
Mk 11:12  
4:3 Mt 14:33;  
Mk 3:11;  
Lk 1:35; Jn 1:34;  
1Th 3:5

you to escape from the angry judgment that is coming soon? <sup>8</sup>Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives. <sup>9</sup>And don't even think about saying to yourselves, Abraham is our father. I tell you that God is able to raise up Abraham's children from these stones. <sup>10</sup>The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be chopped down and tossed into the fire. <sup>11</sup>I baptize with water those of you who have changed your hearts and lives. The one who is coming after me is stronger than I am. I'm not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. <sup>12</sup>The shovel he uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in his hands. He will clean out his threshing area and bring the wheat into his barn. But he will burn the husks with a fire that can't be put out."

### Baptism of Jesus

<sup>13</sup>At that time Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River so that John would baptize him. <sup>14</sup>John tried to stop him and said, "I need to be baptized by you, yet you come to me?"

<sup>15</sup>Jesus answered, "Allow me to be baptized now. This is necessary to fulfill all righteousness."

So John agreed to baptize Jesus. <sup>16</sup>When Jesus was baptized, he immediately came up out of the water. Heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and resting on him. <sup>17</sup>A voice from heaven said, "This is my Son whom I dearly love; I find happiness in him."

### Temptation of Jesus

**4** Then the Spirit led Jesus up into the wilderness so that the devil might tempt him. <sup>2</sup>After Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights, he was starving. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came to him and said, "Since you are God's Son, command these stones to become bread."

**3:9** Many Jews believed that descent from Abraham offered membership within Israel's covenant community, providing the basis for salvation. But John warns the religious leaders that physical descent from Abraham doesn't guarantee salvation. People needed to share in Abraham's commitments and behavior. The image of stones emphasizes this point, though without suggesting that Jews will be replaced as God's people by Gentiles.

**3:11** *The one who is coming*—clearly, Jesus. The word for *Spirit*, both in Greek and Hebrew, also refers to "wind." Together with *fire*, wind is frequently used as an image for judgment in the OT (e.g., Isa 4:4).

**3:12** *shovel*: a tool used to separate the good seed from the husks (of chaff) and then to gather each into piles—the seed for storage, the husks for burning. John uses an image from the harvest to portray the end-time judgment, separating those who have changed their hearts and lives from those who haven't.

**3:13-17** Jesus' baptism by John marks the beginning of his public ministry.

**3:14** John's baptism looked forward to the baptism of "The one who is coming" (Matt 3:11). Jesus is that "one," so John recognizes that he is in need of the baptism Jesus brings, a baptism "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matt 3:11).

**3:15** *righteousness*: refers to life lived in a restored relationship with God, which both John and Jesus preach. As the people show their commitment to God's ways in baptism, so Jesus' baptism would mark his allegiance to God's righteousness (or "justice").

**The Kingdom of Heaven** Unlike the Gospels of Mark and Luke, Matthew rarely refers to "God's kingdom." Instead, Matthew prefers the phrase "kingdom of heaven." "Heaven" is an indirect way of referring to God, following Jewish misgivings about pronouncing God's name. The phrase doesn't imply that the kingdom is located in heaven, though it does make clear that God rules from heaven and that the nature of the kingdom proclaimed by John and Jesus is determined by God's will. Proclamation of the kingdom of heaven by John and Jesus stands as a challenge to Rome's way of ruling.

**3:16** *Heaven was opened*: In Ezekiel 1:1-3, the opening of heaven enables the prophet Ezekiel to see visions of God and hear the Lord's words (see John 1:51; Rev 19:11). In the same manner, Jesus sees God's Spirit coming down to him.

**3:17** *A voice from heaven*: Not just for Jesus but for all to hear that Jesus is God's beloved Son. God speaks of Jesus, borrowing language from Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 42:1; and possibly Exodus 4:22-23. *I find happiness in him*: or "He is my favorite." The reference is both to God's approval and to God's delight. This clarifies Jesus' identity as God's Son and marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

**4:1** *Then the Spirit led*: The Spirit's coming upon Jesus in his baptism (Matt 3:13-17) prepares for the Spirit's role as leader in Jesus' ministry here and throughout the Gospel. *the devil might tempt him*: The devil is introduced without fanfare in the role by which he will be named in Matthew 4:3: "The tempter" tempts. See Matthew 13:39; 25:41. In Matthew 4:10; 12:26; 16:23, the devil (a Greek term) is known by his Hebrew name, "Satan."

**4:2** *forty days and forty nights*: Moses also fasted 40 days and 40 nights on Mount Sinai (Exod 34:28; Deut 9:9). In addition, God led the people of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years to test whether they would keep the commandments (Deut 8:2).

**4:3-4** *Since you are God's Son*: Some translations read "If you are God's Son," but the Greek text leaves no doubt. The devil knows that Jesus is God's Son, so the question is how he will fulfill his role as God's Son. Will he use his status to work a miracle or will he depend on God?

<sup>4</sup>Jesus replied, "It's written, *People won't live only by bread, but by every word spoken by God.*"<sup>f</sup>

<sup>5</sup>After that the devil brought him into the holy city and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him, <sup>6</sup>"Since you are God's Son, throw yourself down; for it is written, *I will command my angels concerning you, and they will take you up in their hands so that you won't hit your foot on a stone.*"<sup>g</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Jesus replied, "Again it's written, *Don't test the Lord your God.*"<sup>h</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Then the devil brought him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup>He said, "I'll give you all these if you bow down and worship me."

<sup>10</sup>Jesus responded, "Go away, Satan, because it's written, *You will worship the Lord your God and serve only him.*"<sup>i</sup> <sup>11</sup>The devil left him, and angels came and took care of him.

**Move to Galilee**

<sup>12</sup>Now when Jesus heard that John was arrested, he went to Galilee. <sup>13</sup>He left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum, which lies alongside the sea in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali.

<sup>14</sup>This fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet said:

<sup>15</sup>*Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,  
alongside the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,  
<sup>16</sup>the people who lived in the dark have seen a great light,  
and a light has come upon those who lived in the region  
and in shadow of death.*<sup>j</sup>

<sup>17</sup>From that time Jesus began to announce, "Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!"

**Calling of the first disciples**

<sup>18</sup>As Jesus walked alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, because they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup>"Come, follow me," he said, "and I'll show you how to fish for people." <sup>20</sup>Right away, they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup>Continuing on, he saw another set of brothers, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father repairing their nets. Jesus called them and <sup>22</sup>immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

<sup>f</sup>Deut 8:3 <sup>g</sup>Ps 91:11-12 <sup>h</sup>Deut 6:16 <sup>i</sup>Deut 6:13 <sup>j</sup>Isa 9:1-2

4:18 Mt 10:2, Mk 1:16; Lk 5:2; Jn 1:40, Jn 6:1 4:19 Mt 8:22, Mt 9:9; Mk 1:17; Lk 5:10, Jn 1:43 4:20 Mt 9:9 4:21 Mt 10:2, Mt 17:1, Mt 20:20, Mt 26:37; Mk 1:19 4:22 Mk 1:20

4:4 Dt 8:3; Mt 4:7, Mt 4:10; Eph 6:17  
4:5 Neh 11:1; Neh 11:18; Is 48:2; Mt 27:53; Lk 4:9  
4:6 Ps 91:11; Ps 91:12; Mt 4:3  
4:7 Dt 6:16; Mt 4:4, Mt 4:10  
4:8 Mt 16:26; Lk 4:5; Jn 2:15; Jn 2:16  
4:9 1Co 10:20; 1Co 10:21  
4:10 Dt 6:13; Dt 10:20; 1Sa 7:3; 1Ch 21:1; Job 1:6  
4:11 Mt 26:53; Lk 22:43; Heb 1:14  
4:12 Mt 14:3; Mk 1:14; Lk 3:20; Lk 4:14  
4:13 Mt 11:23; Mk 1:21; Lk 4:31; Jn 2:12  
4:14 Mt 1:22; Mt 8:17; Mt 12:17  
4:15 Is 9:1, Is 9:2; Lk 1:79; Lk 2:32  
4:17 Mt 3:2; Mt 10:7; Mk 1:14; Mk 1:15

Quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, Jesus demonstrates his obedience to God; unlike Israel, who failed a similar test in the wilderness.

4:5-7 *Since you are God's Son*: See note on Matthew 4:3-4. Will Jesus test God to see if God will prove that Jesus is God's Son by protecting him from injury? Jesus refuses, quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, a reference to Israel's testing of God in the wilderness. Unlike Israel, Jesus doesn't test God, proving again that he is God's faithful Son.

4:8-10 The devil invites Jesus to transfer his loyalty from God to the devil. Jesus refuses by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13, which commands Israel to worship and serve God alone. Jesus again proves to be God's faithful Son.

4:12-16 Matthew has demonstrated in chapters 2-3 that John and Jesus are parallel figures. For this reason, when we read that John is arrested we can anticipate that Jesus will experience the same fate. For now, Jesus goes to Galilee to begin his ministry.

4:13-16 *the area of Zebulun and Naphtali*: According to the book of Joshua, after the conquest of the promised land, the lower land of Galilee west of the Lake of Galilee, which includes Nazareth, belonged to the tribes of Zebulun (Josh 19:10-16); and the area to the northwest of the Lake of Galilee belonged to the tribes of Naphtali (Josh 19:32-39). Matthew lumps them together as the primary location of Jesus' ministry. *This fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet said*: See Isaiah 9:1-2. When Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, invaded Israel in 732 BCE, he captured Gilead and Galilee,

including all the land of Naphtali (2 Kgs 15:29). As a result, this region became the Assyrian province of Galilee with Megiddo as its capital. That is probably why this region is called "Galilee of the nations [or Gentiles]" in Isaiah (Isa 9:1-2). Matthew will later develop the significance of this phrase when he reports Jesus' words that salvation is to include "all nations" (Matt 28:16-20) or "the Gentiles" (Matt 12:16-21). The prophecy from Isaiah referred to the birth of a Davidic heir as a promise for the restoration of the occupied Assyrian provinces. For Matthew, this message is fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus.

4:17-25 A summary of Jesus' entire ministry and message (Matt 4:17) leads to two stories in which Jesus calls disciples (4:18-22) and to a summary of Jesus' itinerant ministry (4:23-25). These stories demonstrate what it means to *Change your hearts and lives* and for the *kingdom of heaven* to draw near. See sidebar, "The Kingdom of Heaven" at Matthew 3.

4:18-22 In the ancient world, fisherfolk were peasants. Matthew's two accounts portray different kinds of fishing—Peter and Andrew have only nets, which they throw into the lake; whereas James and John are part of a family business with a boat.

4:19, 22 *fish for people*: From the very beginning, the calling of disciples suggests missionary activity. *they left*: Both in 4:19 and 4:22, the response is immediate and complete. They left their ways of life, even family. This wholesale following after Jesus summarizes the nature of discipleship.

4:23 Mt 9:35,  
Mt 13:54,  
Mt 15:30,  
Mk 1:39,  
Ac 10:38

4:24 Mt 8:6,  
Mt 8:16, Mt 9:2,  
Mt 17:14; Lk 2:2  
4:25 Mt 19:2;  
Mk 3:7,  
Mk 3:8, Mk 5:20;  
Lk 6:17

5:1 Mt 15:29,  
Mk 3:13, Mk 4:1;  
Lk 4:20, Lk 6:20

5:2 Ps 78:2,  
Mt 13:35,  
Ac 8:35

5:3 Is 61:1;  
Mt 5:10,  
Mt 19:14,  
Lk 6:20

5:4 Is 61:2,  
Is 61:3; Jn 16:20

5:5 Ps 37:11;  
Is 29:19

### Ministry to the crowds

<sup>23</sup>Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues. He announced the good news of the kingdom and healed every disease and sickness among the people. <sup>24</sup>News about him spread throughout Syria. People brought to him all those who had various kinds of diseases, those in pain, those possessed by demons, those with epilepsy, and those who were paralyzed, and he healed them. <sup>25</sup>Large crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapo-

**5**lis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from the areas beyond the Jordan River. <sup>1</sup>Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up a mountain. He sat down and his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>He taught them, saying:

### Happy people

<sup>3</sup>“Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

<sup>4</sup>“Happy are people who grieve, because they will be made glad.

<sup>5</sup>“Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>“Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full.

<sup>7</sup>“Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy.

<sup>8</sup>“Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God.

<sup>9</sup>“Happy are people who make peace, because they will be called God’s children.

5:6 Is 55:1, Is 55:2; Jn 4:14, Jn 7:37 5:7 Prv 11:17, Prv 14:21; Mt 6:14; Jas 2:13 5:8 Ps 24:3, Ps 24:4, Ps 73:1; Heb 12:14; 1 Pt 1:22 5:9 Mt 5:45; Ro 8:14

4:23-25 Jesus’ ministry consists of synagogue teaching, proclaiming the kingdom of heaven, and healing. The list of diseases emphasizes the enormous range of Jesus’ healing activity. In this way, the *good news* is experienced as “a great light . . . in [the] shadow of death” (Matt 4:16). The Roman province of Syria was north of the area of Galilee. Matthew’s reference to Syria has led some scholars to think that Matthew’s Gospel was written in Syria.

5:1-7:29 Matthew’s Gospel contains five long sermons delivered by Jesus (Matt 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25). These help to shape the overall structure of the Gospel. The Sermon on the Mount is the first of them. The parallel in Luke 6:20-49 is called the Sermon on the Plain.

5:1-2 *up a mountain*: Mountains are important in Matthew’s Gospel (see Matt 4:8; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1; 24:3; 28:16), where they are often places of revelation. Jesus is like Moses, who went up the mountain to bring God’s Instruction to God’s people (Exod 19-20). *He sat down*: Rabbis typically sat down to teach (see also Matt 13:2; 24:3).

5:3-12 *Happy*: The Greek term *makarios* is often translated as “blessed.” For a similar emphasis, see Psalm 1. *Makarios* refers to a person’s being fortunate or happy on account of their circumstances. In using the translation *happy*, the CEB is emphasizing the flourishing, contentment, and well-being of the persons described in Matthew 5:3-12. Jesus’ words may seem strange, though, since he regards as “happy people” those who are usually regarded as troubled and unfortunate. Located at the beginning of Jesus’ first major sermon, this alerts us to the topsy-turvy nature of Jesus’ teaching. It shows us who experiences well-being and contentment under God’s rule rather than according to normal social conventions. In this way, each of these statements declares as happy people those ordinarily regarded as living miserable lives and provides them with an assurance in the form of a promise. Verses 3-10 form a self-contained unit, sharing the same literary pattern of a pronouncement of happiness followed by the reason. The last pronouncement (5:11-12) breaks this pattern and stands on its own.

5:3 *hopeless*: often translated as “poor in spirit.” The phrase doesn’t refer to “humility” but to those who continue to

look to God for help in the midst of their present, needy state. See the parallel in Matthew 5:10, which refers to those who are harassed because of righteousness or justice. The kingdom of heaven belongs to both. These two affirmations function like a set of bookends for Matthew 5:1-10. See sidebar, “The Kingdom of Heaven” at Matthew 3. 5:4 *who grieve*: recalls Isaiah 61:1-3, in which the prophet is commissioned by the Spirit of the Lord to comfort all who mourn for Zion. For people experiencing grief in the midst of exile, following the destruction of the temple in 587 BCE, comfort marks the end of the time of loss and exile, when God will bring restoration (Isa 61:4).

5:5 *humble*: recalls Psalm 37:11, which refers to the powerless, the poor, the humble, who look to God for rescue.

5:6 *hungry and thirsty*: See Psalm 107:9, which praises God, who satisfies the thirsty and the hungry. Jesus’ announcement adds the phrase *for righteousness* (or “justice”). Hunger and thirst identify basic human needs—usually for food and drink, but in this case for righteousness or justice. Such people long for God to set things right: to establish a just social order and to defend God’s people.

5:7 *show mercy*: The emphasis shifts from the needs of God’s people to the ways they orient their lives to the situations in which they find themselves. People who *show mercy* are generous in the help they show others in need. Those who are themselves needy are thus encouraged to care for others in need. Elsewhere, Matthew twice quotes Hosea 6:6, which says that God desires love (or mercy) rather than sacrifice (Matt 9:13; 12:7; see also Matt 23:23).

5:8 *pure hearts*: In Psalm 24:3-4 a pure heart is one of the qualifications for standing in the sanctuary of the mountain of the Lord. In ancient psychology, the heart was a person’s core, the location of thoughts, feelings, and decisions. A pure heart, then, is the opposite of deceit or trickery, but refers to integrity and sincerity. In Jewish thought, seeing God wouldn’t really have been a possibility (cf. Exod 33:20), but as a metaphor it can refer to God’s drawing near to protect God’s people, bringing justice and happiness (e.g., Ps 11).

5:9 *peace*: complete well-being, the kind that results from right relations with God and with fellow human beings. Peacemakers are involved in practices that nurture



<sup>10</sup>Happy are people whose lives are harassed because they are righteous, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

<sup>11</sup>Happy are you when people insult you and harass you and speak all kinds of bad and great things about you, all because of me. <sup>12</sup>Be full of joy and be glad, because you have a great reward in heaven. In the same way, people harassed the prophets who came before you.

**Salt and light**

<sup>13</sup>You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness, how will it become salty again? It's good for nothing except to be thrown away and trampled under people's feet. <sup>14</sup>You are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill can't be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.

**Jesus and the Law**

<sup>17</sup>Don't even begin to think that I have come to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I haven't come to do away with them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup>I say to you very seriously that as long as heaven and earth exist, neither the smallest letter nor even the smallest stroke of a pen will be erased from the Law until everything there becomes a reality. <sup>19</sup>Therefore, whoever ignores one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called the lowest in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps these commands and teaches people to keep them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup>I say to you that unless your righteousness is greater than the righteousness of the legal experts and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

**Law of murder**

<sup>21</sup>You have heard that it was said to those who lived long ago, *Don't commit murder*,<sup>k</sup> and all who commit murder will be in danger of judgment. <sup>22</sup>But I say to you that everyone

<sup>k</sup>Exod 20:13

5:10 Mt 5:3; 1Pt 3:14  
 5:11 Mt 5:12; Lk 6:22; Jn 15:21; 1Pt 4:14  
 5:12 2Ch 36:16; Lk 6:23; Ac 5:41; Col 1:24; 1Pt 4:13  
 5:13 Mk 9:50; Lk 14:34; Lk 14:35  
 5:14 Jn 8:12; Jn 12:36; Eph 5:8; Phi 2:15; 1Th 5:5  
 5:15 Mk 4:21; Lk 8:16; Lk 11:33  
 5:16 Mt 9:8; 1Pt 2:12  
 5:17 Ro 3:31  
 5:18 Mt 24:35; Lk 16:17  
 5:19 Mt 11:11; Jas 2:10  
 5:20 Hos 10:12; Mt 5:10; Mt 18:3; Jn 3:5; Rev 21:27  
 5:21 Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17; Mt 5:27; Mt 5:33  
 5:22 Ps 37:8; Ecc 7:9; Mt 10:28; Mt 18:9; 1Jn 3:15

well-being in the midst of situations marked by bad relations or hostility. Such persons are *God's children* both because they work for peace just as God does and because they are counted among God's people.

5:10 *harassed*: those who maintain faithfulness and resist compromise even in the presence of suffering. The phrase *kingdom of heaven* links Matthew 5:3 and 5:10; the passage has come full circle. The presence of the heavenly kingdom turns the tables on normal expectations regarding what it means to flourish as human beings.

5:11-12 *Happy are you*: In verses 3-10, Jesus spoke to his disciples (Matt 5:1-2) about happy people. Now he speaks directly to his disciples: *Happy are you*. Those who follow Jesus in his ministry of proclaiming the kingdom of heaven will face suffering, just as Jesus does, but ultimately God will triumph and reward them in the newly ushered kingdom of heaven. See sidebar, "The Kingdom of Heaven" at Matthew 3.

5:13-14 In the ancient world, *salt* was used for flavoring and preserving food, as an agent for cleansing, and for other things as well. Without trying to tie down its specific meaning here, it's probably best to talk about how basic and beneficial it is to human life. Jesus uses salt and light to suggest that disciples aren't expected to live or work for themselves but for others. Moreover, their focus isn't just Israel (or the church), but the whole world (cf. Isa 42:6; 49:6). 5:17-20 Jesus isn't against the Law. He doesn't abolish or replace it. Rather, he shows how it is to be interpreted, and in this way fulfills it. *the Law and the Prophets*: a traditional designation for the OT. *Law* is a translation of the Hebrew term *torah*, which is best understood as instruction. "Torah" can also refer to the first five books of the OT. See sidebar, "Israel's Scriptures."

5:19 *one of the least of these commands*: Some Jews distinguished between greater commandments and less important ones, but rabbinic literature emphasizes that there will be a reward for keeping every Torah commandment, however great or small it may be.

5:20 *righteousness*: traditionally associated with maintaining the commandments (see Deut 6:25). Jesus says that the religious leaders failed to keep the Law, in spite of their claims to observe all the commandments. Jesus' followers are expected to keep God's commandments more faithfully than the legal experts and Pharisees, who apparently focused on the details of the Law without honoring its deeper significance.

5:21-48 Matthew 5:20 calls for a greater righteousness, and now Jesus gives six examples of what this would look like. He does this, first, by quoting a conventional interpretation of a law and then by pressing it further with his own interpretation.

5:21-26 The law against murder is the sixth of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17). Jesus quotes it together with its usual interpretation, and then reinterprets it so that it applies more widely to relationships with others. The examples Jesus gives in 5:22 demonstrate the importance of not acting with hostility toward others, and the examples in 5:23-26 show the importance of seeking reconciliation when there are broken relationships.

5:21 *it was said*: This way of speaking (using a passive verb) is typical of Jewish custom to avoid mentioning God's name. The point is that it was God who spoke these words. *those who lived long ago*: likely a reference to Moses and the Israelites who received the Ten Commandments.

5:22 *But I say to you*: Jesus speaks as one with authority. Jesus doesn't use the word "but" to contradict either the

5:23 Mt 5:24

5:24 Mt 5:23,  
Mt 18:15;  
Ro 12:17;  
Ro 12:185:25 Prv 25:8;  
Lk 12:58;  
Lk 12:595:26 Mt 18:34;  
Lk 12:595:27 Ex 20:14;  
Dt 5:18; Mt 5:215:28 2Sa 11:2;  
Job 31:1;  
Prv 6:25;  
Jas 1:15;  
2Pt 2:145:29 Mt 5:22;  
Mt 10:28;  
Mt 18:8; Mt 18:9;  
Mk 9:435:30 Mt 5:29;  
Mt 18:8;  
Mk 9:435:31 Dt 24:1;  
1er 3:1; Mt 19:3;  
Mt 19:75:32 Mt 19:9;  
Lk 16:18;  
1Co 7:105:33 Lv 19:12;  
Nm 30:2;  
Dt 23:215:34 Is 66:1;  
Mt 23:22;  
Jas 5:125:35 Ps 48:2;  
Ps 95:5; Is 66:1;  
Ac 7:49

5:36 Mt 6:27

5:37 Mt 13:19;  
Col 4:6; Jas 5:12

who is angry with their brother or sister will be in danger of judgment. If they say to their brother or sister, 'You idiot,' they will be in danger of being condemned by the governing council. And if they say, 'You fool,' they will be in danger of fiery hell. <sup>23</sup>Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift at the altar and go. First make things right with your brother or sister and then come back and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup>Be sure to make friends quickly with your opponents while you are with them on the way to court. Otherwise, they will haul you before the judge, the judge will turn you over to the officer of the court, and you will be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup>I say to you in all seriousness that you won't get out of there until you've paid the very last penny.

### Law of adultery

<sup>27</sup>"You have heard that it was said, *Don't commit adultery.*<sup>1</sup> <sup>28</sup>But I say to you that every man who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart. <sup>29</sup>And if your right eye causes you to fall into sin, tear it out and throw it away. It's better that you lose a part of your body than that your whole body be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup>And if your right hand causes you to fall into sin, chop it off and throw it away. It's better that you lose a part of your body than that your whole body go into hell.

### Law of divorce

<sup>31</sup>"It was said, 'Whoever divorces his wife must give her a divorce certificate.'<sup>m</sup> <sup>32</sup>But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife except for sexual unfaithfulness forces her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

### Law of solemn pledges

<sup>33</sup>"Again you have heard that it was said to those who lived long ago: *Don't make a false solemn pledge, but you should follow through on what you have pledged to the Lord.*<sup>n</sup> <sup>34</sup>But I say to you that you must not pledge at all. You must not pledge by heaven, because it's God's throne. <sup>35</sup>You must not pledge by the earth, because it's God's footstool. You must not pledge by Jerusalem, because it's the city of the great king. <sup>36</sup>And you must not pledge by your head, because you can't turn one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup>Let your *yes* mean yes, and your *no* mean no. Anything more than this comes from the evil one.

<sup>1</sup>Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18 <sup>m</sup>Deut 24:1 <sup>n</sup>Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; Deut 23:21

commandment or its conventional interpretation. Rather, Jesus deepens the meaning of the commandment and expands its application.

**5:23-24** *First make things right:* Even practices of worship can't be regarded as genuine until relationships with others are made right.

**5:27-28** The law against adultery is the seventh of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18). In the OT, adultery refers to sexual relations between a married woman and a man other than her husband. Jesus expands the category of adultery to include the desire to violate another's marriage sexually.

**5:29-30** *tear it out... chop it off:* Jesus uses symbolic language to drive home the seriousness of his teaching. The eye and the hand might be used as one moves from looking "at a woman lustfully" to actually committing "adultery" (Matt 5:28), but Jesus isn't actually

*Israel's Scriptures* During the time of Jesus, for most Jews the scriptures had three parts: Law, Prophets, and Writings. Different groups of Jews had different ideas about the scriptures, however. Everyone recognized the Law as scripture, but some acknowledged only the Law as scripture, while others included the Prophets and still others regarded all three as scripture. Jesus frequently refers to "the Law and the Prophets" in Matthew, though this doesn't imply that he accepted only the Law and the Prophets as having authority. Matthew's Gospel assumes among its readers a high level of familiarity with Israel's scriptures.

calling people to participate in acts of self-harm. Instead, he claims that failing to take sin seriously can lead one to experience judgment in hell. *Geenna* (Gk.) is sometimes translated as "Gehenna" instead of *hell*. In the Gospels, the term typically refers to the place of judgment in the afterlife.

**5:31-32** Jesus comments on the divorce procedure in Deuteronomy 24:1, which allows men to divorce their wives for almost any reason. Here, Jesus allows divorce only in cases of *sexual unfaithfulness*, thus limiting what a man can do in matters of marriage and divorce while also protecting women from mistreatment.

**5:33-37** Leviticus 19:12 forbids swearing falsely by God's name. Jesus takes the command even further, saying no to swearing of any kind. He demands complete honesty in all verbal communication at all times. This alone rules out the need for swearing, as 5:37 makes clear.

**Law of retaliation**

<sup>38</sup>"You have heard that it was said, *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.*<sup>o</sup> <sup>39</sup>But I say to you that you must not oppose those who want to hurt you. If people slap you on your right cheek, you must turn the left cheek to them as well. <sup>40</sup>When they wish to haul you to court and take your shirt, let them have your coat too. <sup>41</sup>When they force you to go one mile, go with them two. <sup>42</sup>Give to those who ask, and don't refuse those who wish to borrow from you.

**Law of love**

<sup>43</sup>"You have heard that it was said, *You must love your neighbor*<sup>p</sup> and hate your enemy. <sup>44</sup>But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who harass you <sup>45</sup>so that you will be acting as children of your Father who is in heaven. He makes the sun rise on both the evil and the good and sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup>If you love only those who love you, what reward do you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup>And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing? Don't even the Gentiles do the same? <sup>48</sup>Therefore, just as your heavenly Father is complete in showing love to everyone, so also you must be complete.

**Showy religion**

**6**Be careful that you don't practice your religion in front of people to draw their attention. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>Whenever you give to the poor, don't blow your trumpet as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets so that they may get praise from people. I assure you, that's the only reward they'll get. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing <sup>4</sup>so that you may give to the poor in secret. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.

**Showy prayer**

<sup>5</sup>"When you pray, don't be like hypocrites. They love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners so that people will see them. I assure you, that's the only reward they'll get. <sup>6</sup>But when you pray, go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you.

<sup>o</sup>Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21 <sup>p</sup>Lev 19:18

5:38 Ex 21:24; Lev 24:20; Dt 19:21; Mt 5:27  
 5:39 Prv 24:29; Lk 6:29; Ro 12:17; 1Pt 3:9  
 5:40 Lk 6:29  
 5:41 Mt 27:32  
 5:42 Dt 15:7; Dt 15:8; Ps 37:21; Ps 37:26; Ps 112:5  
 5:43 Lv 19:18; Mt 19:19; Mt 22:39; Ga 5:14; Jas 2:8  
 5:44 Ex 23:4; Lk 6:27; Lk 23:34; Ac 7:60; Ro 12:20  
 5:45 Mt 5:9; Lk 6:35; Ac 14:17; Eph 5:1  
 5:46 Mt 18:17; Mt 21:31; Lk 6:32  
 5:47 Mt 5:46  
 5:48 Gn 17:1; Lv 19:2; Dt 18:13; 2Co 7:1; Col 1:28  
 6:1 Mt 6:16; Mt 23:5  
 6:2 Mt 6:5; Mt 6:16  
 6:4 Jer 17:10; Mt 6:6; Mt 6:18; Heb 4:13  
 6:5 Mt 6:2; Mt 6:16; Mk 11:25; Lk 18:11  
 6:6 2Ki 4:33

5:38-42 *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*: a phrase that is used to talk about "proportional justice," which the OT maintains (Exod 21:23-25; Lev 24:17-21; Deut 19:21). Originally, this principle was formulated in order to prevent disproportionate revenge. Jesus commands his followers to go even further in order to achieve greater righteousness (Matt 5:20). This means refusing to take even what they deserve and acting more kindly toward others, including others who wrong them.

5:43-48 Love for enemies is the highest form of the "greater righteousness" to which Jesus calls his disciples (Matt 5:20). The words "love your neighbor" come from Leviticus 19:18, but the OT has no parallel for the phrase *hate your enemy*. This second phrase probably represents oral tradition.

5:45 God's blessings are given generously both to the evil and to the good. By imitating God's love for everyone, one demonstrates that one is God's child.

5:48 The Greek term *teleios*, translated here as *complete*, is sometimes translated as "perfect." It refers here to the highest ethical standard, which is understood in terms of the love commandment. This is a fitting summary of the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount.

6:1-18 Jesus talks about how one shouldn't try to show off to other people when participating in righteous practices like aiding those in need, prayer, and fasting. These practices should direct people's attention to God and lead people to praise God, not direct people's attention and praise to oneself (see Matt 5:16).

6:2-4 *Whenever you give to the poor*: Care for the needy is grounded in the OT (e.g., Exod 22:25; Lev 25:35-37; Deut 14:27-29) and has a strong tradition in Judaism in the time of Jesus (e.g., Tob 4:6-7; Sir 3:30; 7:10). With the use of the word "whenever," Jesus assumes that his followers will give to the poor. The only question is whether they will do so faithfully.

6:2 *blow your trumpet*: an exaggerated form of advertising one's religion. In the ancient world, people were praised for their generous gifts with monuments and inscriptions. *hypocrites*: actors who play parts onstage. Here the word is used negatively to describe people who pretend to be one thing but are really something else.

6:3 *don't let your left hand*: a powerful image designed to drive a sharp wedge between religious practices and public honor.

6:5-15 *When you pray*: Jesus assumes that his followers will pray, and gives both negative and positive instructions on how to pray. The emphasis is less on "technique" and more on one's motivations for prayer and on recognizing rightly the one to whom prayer is offered.

6:5-6 *standing*: a typical posture for praying (e.g., 1 Sam 1:26; Neh 9:1-5; Mark 11:25). Jesus isn't criticizing the posture of standing itself, nor is the problem simply the public nature of these prayers. Instead, the problem is using prayers to God as a way of attracting the attention of others. Jesus emphasizes the nature of one's motivation to pray. On "hypocrite," see note on Matthew 6:2.

6:7 1Ki 18:26;  
Ecc 5:2; Mt 6:32  
6:8 Ps 38:9;  
Mt 6:32  
6:9 Is 29:23,  
Is 63:16;  
Eze 36:23;  
Mt 7:11; Lk 11:2  
6:10 Mt 3:2,  
Mt 12:50,  
Mt 26:39,  
Mt 26:42;  
Ac 21:14

6:11 Gn 28:20;  
Pv 30:8; Is 33:16  
6:12 Mt 18:21

6:13 Mt 26:41;  
Jn 17:15

6:14 Mk 11:25;  
Eph 4:32;  
Col 3:13

6:15 Mt 18:35;  
Jas 2:13

6:16 Mt 6:2,  
Mt 6:5; Lk 18:12

6:17 Lu 3:3;  
2Sa 12:20; Ecc 9:8

6:18 Mt 6:4,  
Mt 6:6

6:19 Pv 23:4;  
Lk 12:21,  
Lk 12:33;

Heb 13:5; Jas 5:2  
6:20 Mt 6:19,  
Mt 19:21;

Lk 12:33;  
Lk 18:22;  
1Ti 6:19

6:21 Lk 12:34

### Proper prayer

<sup>7</sup>“When you pray, don't pour out a flood of empty words, as the Gentiles do. They think that by saying many words they'll be heard. <sup>8</sup>Don't be like them, because your Father knows what you need before you ask. <sup>9</sup>Pray like this:

Our Father who is in heaven,  
uphold the holiness of your name.

<sup>10</sup>Bring in your kingdom  
so that your will is done on earth as it's done in heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Give us the bread we need for today.

<sup>12</sup>Forgive us for the ways we have wronged you,  
just as we also forgive those who have wronged us.

<sup>13</sup>And don't lead us into temptation,  
but rescue us from the evil one.

<sup>14</sup>“If you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup>But if you don't forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your sins.

### Showy fasting

<sup>16</sup>“And when you fast, don't put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They distort their faces so people will know they are fasting. I assure you that they have their reward. <sup>17</sup>When you fast, brush your hair and wash your face. <sup>18</sup>Then you won't look like you are fasting to people, but only to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

### Earthly and heavenly treasures

<sup>19</sup>“Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. <sup>20</sup>Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. <sup>21</sup>Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

6:7-8 as the Gentiles do: See also Matthew 5:47; 6:32. Like Jesus, even some Gentile authors spoke against the tendency to pester or pressure the gods with long prayers and repeated requests. Jesus' emphasis isn't so much on *how* to pray, however. He's concerned with recognizing the one to *whom* prayers are offered. Referring to God as *Father* is a reminder that, in the OT, God is portrayed as the one who provides and cares for God's people. Similarly, here God knows what God's people need (see Isa 65:24). 6:9-13 The “Lord's Prayer” is the only time Jesus teaches the content of a specific prayer. He thus provides an example for his followers to imitate. Again, the emphasis isn't so much on our having a formula to recite as it is on learning well the nature of the God to whom we offer prayer. The prayer has two parts—petitions concerning God's name, kingdom, and will; and petitions concerning human needs.

6:9-10 *Our Father*: Jesus gathers together in his address to God what he has already affirmed about God, especially that God is the Father who dwells in heaven and cares for and blesses God's people (Matt 5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 8). The three requests in 6:9-10 are closely related, since God will uphold the holiness of [God's] name, or show that God is in the right (see Ezek 36:23), by bringing the kingdom and accomplishing God's will on earth (see Isa 29:23). Those who pray these words thus ask God to act with justice, and they commit themselves to respond in faithful obedience. The nature of God's will is already on display in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) and will be further explained in the rest of Matthew's Gospel.

6:11-13 The model prayer includes four requests concerning human need. First is a request for the *bread we need for today*, in which “bread” is shorthand for food, a most basic human requirement. Jesus refers, second, to the human

need for divine forgiveness. This is a prayer for God to restore God's people and to do so by making right the relationship with God that has been broken by unfaithfulness. Jesus goes on to emphasize the way human initiative in forgiving others must mirror divine initiative (see Matt 6:14-15). The third and fourth requests are closely related, with the third concerned with God not bringing Jesus' followers into a situation so difficult that their faith would fail and the fourth a prayer for God to deliver Jesus' followers from just that kind of situation. The source of this kind of testing is thereby identified as *the evil one* (see Matt 4:1-11: “the devil” and “the tempter”), not God (see Jas 1:13). Later tradition has inserted the words “For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, amen” at the conclusion of the prayer in 6:13. These words were probably added to Matthew's text when Jesus' prayer became more and more a part of the church's worship.

6:14-15 Jesus returns to the second request (Matt 6:12) in order to emphasize the point. It would be unthinkable that people could receive God's forgiveness and yet not forgive each other (see Matt 18:23-35).

6:16-18 *when you fast*: Jesus assumes his followers will fast, that is, deliberately refuse to eat, and sometimes to drink, for a set period of time. In ancient Israel fasting was a common ritual for mourning, remorse, or request for divine aid or wisdom (e.g., 1 Sam 31:13; 2 Sam 12:16; Neh 9:1-3; Dan 9:1-19). In the OT, it's often associated with humility (e.g., Ezra 8:21; Ps 35:13; Isa 58:3, 5), which contrasts sharply with the attempt to attract attention to oneself that Jesus talks about here. As in Matthew 6:1-8, so here Jesus directs his followers to avoid showy religion in favor of religious acts devoted to God.

6:19-24 Concern for wealth and treasures gets in the way of what really matters—a heart oriented toward the

**Seeing and serving**

<sup>22</sup>"The eye is the lamp of the body. Therefore, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup>But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how terrible that darkness will be! <sup>24</sup>No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

**Worry about necessities**

<sup>25</sup>"Therefore, I say to you, don't worry about your life, what you'll eat or what you'll drink, or about your body, what you'll wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothes? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds in the sky. They don't sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth much more than they are? <sup>27</sup>Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? <sup>28</sup>And why do you worry about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don't wear themselves out with work, and they don't spin cloth. <sup>29</sup>But I say to you that even Solomon in all of his splendor wasn't dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully, even though it's alive today and tomorrow it's thrown into the furnace, won't God do much more for you, you people of weak faith? <sup>31</sup>Therefore, don't worry and say, "What are we going to eat?" or "What are we going to drink?" or "What are we going to wear?" <sup>32</sup>Gentiles long for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup>Instead, desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup>Therefore, stop worrying about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

**Judging**

<sup>7</sup>"Don't judge, so that you won't be judged. <sup>2</sup>You'll receive the same judgment you give. Whatever you deal out will be dealt out to you. <sup>3</sup>Why do you see the splinter that's in your brother's or sister's eye, but don't notice the log in your own eye? <sup>4</sup>How can you say to your brother or sister, "Let me take the splinter out of your eye," when there's a log in your eye? <sup>5</sup>You deceive yourself! First take the log out of your eye, and then you'll see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother's or sister's eye. <sup>6</sup>Don't give holy things to dogs, and don't throw your pearls in front of pigs. They will stomp on the pearls, then turn around and attack you.

**Asking, seeking, knocking**

<sup>7</sup>"Ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks, receives. Whoever seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks,

6:22 Lk 11:34, Lk 11:35  
 6:23 Mt 6:22, Mt 20:15, Jn 3:19, Eph 4:18, Eph 5:8  
 6:24 1Ki 18:21, Lk 16:9, Lk 16:11, Lk 16:13; Jas 4:4  
 6:25 Mt 6:31, Lk 10:41, Lk 12:22, Phi 4:6; 1Pt 5:7  
 6:26 Job 38:41, Ps 104:27, Ps 145:15, Ps 147:9, Lk 12:24  
 6:27 Lk 12:25  
 6:28 Lk 12:27  
 6:29 1Ki 10:4, 2Ch 9:20  
 6:30 Mt 8:26, Mt 14:31, Mt 16:8, Lk 12:28; Jas 1:10  
 6:31 Mt 6:25, Mt 6:32; 1Pt 5:7  
 6:32 Mt 6:8  
 6:33 Ex 23:25, Lv 26:4; Dt 4:29; Mt 5:6; 1Ti 4:8  
 6:34 Mt 6:25  
 7:1 Lk 6:37, Ro 2:1, Ro 14:10, Ro 14:13, 1Co 4:5  
 7:2 Mk 4:24, Lk 6:38  
 7:3 Lk 6:41, Lk 6:42  
 7:5 Mt 6:2, Mt 22:18  
 7:6 Prv 9:7, Prv 9:8, Prv 23:9, Mt 15:26, 2Pt 2:22

7:7 Mt 21:22; Lk 11:9; Jn 14:13; Jn 16:24; 1Jn 3:22 7:8 Ps 81:10; Prv 8:17; Jer 29:13; Mt 21:22; Jn 14:13

things of heaven (see Matt 6:10). According to a common view in the ancient world, the eye allowed the body's light (or darkness) to be seen by others. Whether one's eye is healthy or bad signals whether one's life is full of light or of darkness. Here, "wealth" is portrayed as if it had the status of a god someone might serve. This would be the opposite of serving God. The idea of piling up treasures in heaven is found in 2 Esdras 7:77: "You have a treasure of works stored up with the Most High, but it won't be shown to you until the last times."

6:25-34 Concern for wealth and possessions (Matt 6:19-24) stands in opposition both to faith in God as the Father who provides for God's people (6:25-32) and to desiring first and foremost God's kingdom and righteousness (6:33). Jesus' audience would have been ordinary peasant people who had to worry about their next meal all the time, yet Jesus tells them not to worry about anything. He asks them instead to view the world with new eyes, in order to see all around them evidence of God's care and provision. Jesus uses a well-known Jewish pattern of speech to persuade his followers: If this, how much more that? Jesus uses the phrase *weak faith* (6:30) to refer to his disciples (see Matt 8:26; 14:31; 16:8). As in Matthew 6:7, Jesus uses *Gentiles* as examples of what sort of people his

followers shouldn't be. Such behavior contrasts with seeking God's kingdom and righteousness (6:33). For Jesus, what is needed is not a departure from Israel's faith but greater faithfulness to the covenant relationship to which Israel was called.

7:1-2 *Don't judge*: Generally, in Matthew "judgment" refers to God's end-time judgment. Accordingly, disciples are warned that involving themselves in judging others now will result in their judgment at the end of time. This isn't a rejection of the court system, nor a general reference to showing discernment, but a recognition that we make ourselves to be like God when we condemn others.

7:3-5 Jesus uses exaggerated images to emphasize the idea that underlies his instruction in Matthew 7:1-2. This is that we all have faults, and so we all need mercy. Recognizing our own failings makes us more forgiving toward others.

7:6 Jesus uses exaggerated images to develop his early teaching in Matthew 6. Everything one has and does ought to be directed toward God. Otherwise, one is throwing one's life away, like pearls given to pigs or sacrifices to dogs.

7:7-11 Jesus invites his followers to depend on God's provision and faithfulness. In doing so, he makes use of

7:10 Lk 24:42  
 7:11 Gn 6:5,  
 Gn 8:21;  
 Ps 84:11; Mt 6:9;  
 Jas 1:17  
 7:12 Mt 22:39,  
 Mt 22:40;  
 Lk 6:31; Ro 13:8;  
 Ga 5:14

7:13 Lk 13:24  
 7:14 Mt 22:14  
 7:15 Mt 24:11,  
 Mt 24:24;  
 Ac 20:29;  
 2Pt 2:1; 1Jn 4:1

7:16 Mt 7:20,  
 Mt 12:33;  
 Lk 6:43; Lk 6:44;  
 Jas 3:12

7:17 Mt 12:33  
 7:18 Mt 7:17  
 7:19 Mt 3:10;  
 Lk 3:9; Jn 15:2  
 7:20 Mt 7:16

7:21 Hos 8:2;  
 Mt 12:50;  
 Lk 6:46; Ro 2:13;  
 Jas 1:22

7:22 Mt 10:15  
 7:23 Ps 6:8;  
 Mt 7:22,  
 Mt 25:12,  
 Mt 25:41;  
 Lk 13:27

7:24 Lk 6:47;  
 Lk 11:28; Jas 1:22

7:25 Col 2:7  
 7:26 Lk 6:49  
 7:27 Jer 13:16;  
 Eze 13:10,  
 Eze 13:11;  
 Mt 7:26

7:28 Mt 13:54,  
 Mt 19:1,  
 Mt 22:33;  
 Mk 1:22; Lk 4:32  
 7:29 Mt 28:18

the door is opened. <sup>9</sup>Who among you will give your children a stone when they ask for bread? <sup>10</sup>Or give them a snake when they ask for fish? <sup>11</sup>If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. <sup>12</sup>Therefore, you should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you; this is the Law and the Prophets.

### Narrow gate

<sup>13</sup>“Go in through the narrow gate. The gate that leads to destruction is broad and the road wide, so many people enter through it. <sup>14</sup>But the gate that leads to life is narrow and the road difficult, so few people find it.

### Tree and fruit

<sup>15</sup>“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you dressed like sheep, but inside they are vicious wolves. <sup>16</sup>You will know them by their fruit. Do people get bunches of grapes from thorny weeds, or do they get figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup>In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, and every rotten tree produces bad fruit. <sup>18</sup>A good tree can't produce bad fruit. And a rotten tree can't produce good fruit. <sup>19</sup>Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Therefore, you will know them by their fruit.

### Entrance requirements

<sup>21</sup>“Not everybody who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will get into the kingdom of heaven. Only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter. <sup>22</sup>On the Judgment Day, many people will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name and expel demons in your name and do lots of miracles in your name?’ <sup>23</sup>Then I'll tell them, ‘I've never known you. Get away from me, you people who do wrong.’

### Two foundations

<sup>24</sup>“Everybody who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise builder who built a house on bedrock. <sup>25</sup>The rain fell, the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house. It didn't fall because it was firmly set on bedrock. <sup>26</sup>But everybody who hears these words of mine and doesn't put them into practice will be like a fool who built a house on sand. <sup>27</sup>The rain fell, the floods came, and the wind blew and beat against that house. It fell and was completely destroyed.”

### Crowd's response

<sup>28</sup>When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were amazed at his teaching <sup>29</sup>because he was teaching them like someone with authority and not like their legal experts.

a well-known way of talking about God: “If you . . . , then how much more God?” See Matthew 6:33; James 1:17.

**7:12** Jesus summarizes the entire Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7) as well as the *Law and the Prophets* (see Matt 22:34–40; sidebar, “Israel's Scriptures” at Matt 5). Similar sayings are found throughout the ancient world. When we read it in the context of Jesus' sermon, though, we understand that it is a way of emphasizing Jesus' teaching that love of God must be paired with love of one's neighbor, and even love of one's enemies (see Matt 5:43–48).

**7:13–14** The OT (e.g., Ps 1; Jer 21:8) and other Jewish texts speak of two “ways” presented to people on life's journey. In this case, each *gate* leads down a different *road* toward a different life-goal. The difficulty of the road *that leads to life* lies in the fact that life in the service of God's kingdom often places one at odds with the established social order (see Matt 5:10–12).

**7:15–20** Although Jesus doesn't use the language of “hypocrisy” here, he does refer to people who disguise themselves. They appear to be something other than what they truly are. The danger they represent is precisely because their nature isn't obvious or expected. They look like *sheep*, an image sometimes used for God's people in the OT (e.g., Ezek 34:10; cf. Ps 23:13). The true test comes not from looking at what people appear to be, but what they actually

teach and how they behave. As John the Baptist had proclaimed, “Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives” (Matt 3:8).

**7:21–23** It's not even enough to name Jesus as *Lord*, or perform extraordinary activities (like throwing out demons or working miracles) in his name. What matters is that one put into practice in one's life the true righteousness of which Jesus had spoken in Matthew 5:20. Salvation, here pictured as getting *into the kingdom of heaven*, depends on doing *the will of my Father who is in heaven* (see Matt 25:31–42). *kingdom of heaven*: life in the service of God's will in the present as well as life in the world to come. This phrase indicates that the patterns of a faithful life under God's rule are determined by God, whose home is in heaven, rather than by the ways of this world. See sidebar, “The Kingdom of Heaven” at Matthew 3.

**7:24–27** Like the two gates in Matthew 7:13–14, here *bedrock* and *sand* signify two different ways of living one's life. *these words of mine*: a reference to the whole of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5–7. Jesus' words aren't only to be heard, but also put into practice in one's life. For the contrast between the wise and the foolish, see also Matthew 25:1–13.

**7:28–29** Although Matthew informed us at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7) that Jesus' audience was “his disciples” (Matt 5:1–2), now we discover that

**A man with a skin disease**

Now when Jesus had come down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. <sup>2</sup>A man with a skin disease came, kneeled before him, and said, "Lord, if you want, you can make me clean."

<sup>3</sup>Jesus reached out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do want to. Become clean." Instantly his skin disease was cleansed. <sup>4</sup>Jesus said to him, "Don't say anything to anyone. Instead, go and show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded. This will be a testimony to them."

**Healing of the centurion's servant**

<sup>5</sup>When Jesus went to Capernaum, a centurion approached, <sup>6</sup>pleading with him, "Lord, my servant is flat on his back at home, paralyzed, and his suffering is awful."

<sup>7</sup>Jesus responded, "I'll come and heal him."

<sup>8</sup>But the centurion replied, "Lord, I don't deserve to have you come under my roof. Just say the word and my servant will be healed. <sup>9</sup>I'm a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and the servant does it."

<sup>10</sup>When Jesus heard this, he was impressed and said to the people following him, "I say to you with all seriousness that even in Israel I haven't found faith like this. <sup>11</sup>I say to you that there are many who will come from east and west and sit down to eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>12</sup>But the children of the kingdom will be thrown outside into the darkness. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth." <sup>13</sup>Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it will be done for you just as you have believed." And his servant was healed that very moment.

8:1 Mt 4:25  
 8:2 Mt 9:18, Mt 15:25; Mk 1:40; Lk 5:12; Jn 9:38  
 8:3 Mt 20:34; Lk 5:13  
 8:4 Mt 9:30, Mt 12:16, Mt 17:9; Mk 5:43; Lk 17:14  
 8:5 Mt 27:54; Lk 7:1  
 8:6 Mt 4:24, Mt 9:2  
 8:7 Mt 9:19; Mk 5:24; Lk 7:6  
 8:8 Ps 107:20; Jn 1:27  
 8:9 Mt 8:8; Eph 6:5; Col 3:22; Ti 2:9  
 8:10 Mt 9:2, Mt 15:28; Mk 6:6  
 8:11 Is 59:19; Mal 1:11; Lk 13:29  
 8:12 Mt 13:42, Mt 15:50, Mt 22:13, Mt 24:51, Mt 25:30

8:13 Mt 9:22, Mt 9:29, Mt 15:28, Mt 17:20; Mk 9:23

his teaching wasn't only for them, but also for the crowds. Their response to Jesus' teaching (*amazed*) is based on the contrast between his teaching and the teaching of the legal experts. This could be because legal experts based their teaching on the ongoing tradition by which the Law was interpreted, whereas Jesus didn't appeal to that tradition but spoke as the teacher with unique authority. It could also be because Jesus' life was lived in a way that was harmonious with his teaching, whereas the legal experts said one thing but did another (see Matt 23).

**8:1** *come down from the mountain:* The Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7) is over. Jesus moves from teaching the disciples and crowds to a series of healings and miracles (Matt 8–9).

**8:2** *a skin disease:* The Greek term is *leprosy*, sometimes translated "leprosy," but used to describe a range of skin diseases and only rarely true "leprosy" (Hansen's disease). According to Leviticus 13:45, people with a skin disease are ritually unclean and "must wear torn clothes, dishevel their hair, cover their upper lip, and shout out, 'Unclean! Unclean!'" Their unclean status was contagious, so they were supposed to avoid contact with other (clean) people. Therefore, the man with a skin disease asks not only for healing but also for the restoration of normal human interaction.

**8:3** *I do want to:* Jesus wants people to be restored to wholeness. Moreover, Matthew's note that the skin disease was cleansed *instantly* emphasizes Jesus' ability to make people whole.

**8:4** *go and show yourself:* Jesus doesn't bypass the requirements of the Law (see Matt 5:17–20), but directs the man to go through the ritual procedure at the temple in order to be declared clean. This would allow him to enjoy again normal relationships with others.

**8:5–6** *a centurion:* a commander of 100 soldiers in the Roman military system. The centurion is probably a

Gentile, making this the first encounter between Jesus and a Gentile in Matthew's Gospel. Like the man with a skin disease in Matthew 8:2, the centurion comes to Jesus and addresses him as "Lord." *Lord* could simply communicate respect for someone in authority (like "sir"). The term was also used in the Roman world to refer to benefactors, that is, persons who provided gifts to those in need. Thus, the centurion places himself in a position of need for the sake of his own needy servant.

**8:8–9** *I don't deserve:* Although a person in authority himself, the centurion recognizes the higher authority of Jesus. In the military structure known to the centurion, it's his own position in a chain of command that empowers his commands. It's similar in the case of Jesus, whose authority is grounded in his status as God's Son (see Matt 3:17–4:11).

**8:10–11** *faith like this:* At this early point in Jesus' ministry, this is less a criticism of how slow Israel has been to believe and more an affirmation of the insight and trust the centurion has exercised. His faith anticipates the growing openness to Gentiles and Gentile faith in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 24:14; 28:18–20). For the image of a heavenly banquet, see, for example, Isaiah 25:6–8; Luke 14:15; Revelation 19:9.

**8:11–12** Jesus uses images of removal (*thrown outside*); evil and death (*darkness*); grief (*weeping*); and hostility (*grinding their teeth*) to document the judgment awaiting those who reject Jesus' ministry and message. *children of the kingdom:* stands in clear contrast to *kingdom of heaven*. Children of the *kingdom of heaven* are those whose lives follow the way of God revealed from heaven in Jesus' mission. These people will participate in life in the world to come. *children of the kingdom* may be a clear reference to the Jews, but the rest of Matthew's Gospel denies the idea that all Jews will be rejected. See sidebar, "The Kingdom of Heaven" at Matthew 3.

8:14 Mk 1:29;  
Lk 4:38; 1Co 9:5

8:15 Mt 8:3,  
Mt 8:14; Lk 4:38,  
Lk 4:39

8:16 Mt 4:23,  
Mt 4:24

8:17 Is 53:4;  
Mt 1:22

8:18 Mt 14:22;  
Mk 4:35;

Lk 8:22; Jn 6:15

8:19 Lk 9:57

8:20 Mt 16:13

8:21 Mt 8:22;  
Lk 9:59

8:22 Mt 4:17,  
Mt 4:18, Mt 4:19,  
Mt 9:9; Jn 1:43

8:23 Mk 4:36;  
Lk 8:22

8:24 Jn 1:5;  
Mk 4:38

8:25 Mt 14:30

8:26 Ps 65:7,  
Ps 89:9;

Mt 6:30,

Mt 14:31,

Mt 16:8

8:27 Mk 1:27

8:28 Mt 4:24;  
Mk 5:1, Mk 5:2,  
Lk 8:26

8:29 Mk 1:24,

Mk 5:7; Lk 4:34,  
Lk 8:28; Jn 2:4

8:30 Lk 15:15

8:31 Mt 8:32

8:32 Mt 8:31;

Mk 5:13; Lk 8:33

8:34 Ac 16:39

9:1 Mt 4:13;

Mk 5:21

9:2 Mt 4:24,

Mt 9:22; Mk 2:3;  
Lk 5:18, Lk 7:48

### Healing of many people

<sup>14</sup>Jesus went home with Peter and saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. <sup>15</sup>He touched her hand, and the fever left her. Then she got up and served them. <sup>16</sup>That evening people brought to Jesus many who were demon-possessed. He threw the spirits out with just a word. He healed everyone who was sick. <sup>17</sup>This happened so that what Isaiah the prophet said would be fulfilled: *He is the one who took our illnesses and carried away our diseases.*<sup>9</sup>

### Discussions about following

<sup>18</sup>Now when Jesus saw the crowd, he ordered his disciples to go over to the other side of the lake. <sup>19</sup>A legal expert came and said to him, "Teacher, I'll follow you wherever you go."

<sup>20</sup>Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens, and the birds in the sky have nests, but the Human One<sup>e</sup> has no place to lay his head."

<sup>21</sup>Another man, one of his disciples, said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

<sup>22</sup>But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

### Calming a storm

<sup>23</sup>When Jesus got into a boat, his disciples followed him. <sup>24</sup>A huge storm arose on the lake so that waves were sloshing over the boat. But Jesus was asleep. <sup>25</sup>They came and woke him, saying, "Lord, rescue us! We're going to drown!"

<sup>26</sup>He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you people of weak faith?" Then he got up and gave orders to the winds and the lake, and there was a great calm.

<sup>27</sup>The people were amazed and said, "What kind of person is this? Even the winds and the lake obey him!"

### Jesus frees demon-possessed men

<sup>28</sup>When Jesus arrived on the other side of the lake in the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed came from among the tombs to meet him. They were so violent that nobody could travel on that road. <sup>29</sup>They cried out, "What are you going to do with us, Son of God? Have you come to torture us before the time of judgment?" <sup>30</sup>Far off in the distance a large herd of pigs was feeding. <sup>31</sup>The demons pleaded with him, "If you throw us out, send us into the herd of pigs."

<sup>32</sup>Then he said to the demons, "Go away," and they came out and went into the pigs. The whole herd rushed down the cliff into the lake and drowned. <sup>33</sup>Those who tended the pigs ran into the city and told everything that had happened to the demon-possessed men. <sup>34</sup>Then the whole city came out and met Jesus. When they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

### Healing of a man who was paralyzed

<sup>9</sup>Boarding a boat, Jesus crossed to the other side of the lake and went to his own city. <sup>2</sup>People brought to him a man who was paralyzed, lying on a cot. When Jesus saw

<sup>9</sup>Isa 53:4 <sup>e</sup>Or Son of Man

**8:14-15 home with Peter:** Although Peter left his livelihood to follow Jesus (Matt 4:18), here we learn that Peter is married (cf. 1 Cor 9:5). Households in antiquity would have included extended family, in this case, a mother-in-law. Her healing leads to hospitality.

**8:16 That evening:** that is, when people were free from the day's responsibilities. *with just a word:* See Matthew 8:8. *He healed everyone:* a reference both to Jesus' unique healing power and to the universal scope of his ministry.

**8:17** Jesus is the servant of Isaiah 53:4, who takes away the suffering of the people.

**8:18-22** Discipleship requires a rigorous lifestyle, sometimes even homelessness, and priorities that can overturn normal social expectations. *one of his disciples:* Apparently, answering the call to discipleship isn't a one-time decision, but is a decision that must continually be made. *let the dead bury their own dead:* This difficult phrase might refer to secondary burial, which is based on the ancient practice of burying someone a second time when nothing

but the skeleton remains. In this case, Jesus would be saying that those who have been dead longer should bury the more recently arrived corpses. Nothing in the text suggests that "spiritual" death is in mind. Even if the image is a difficult one, its meaning is clear: For followers of Jesus, the single priority is faithful discipleship.

**8:23-27** This is the first nature miracle in Matthew. Following as it does a section of the Gospel that sets forth the heavy demands of discipleship (Matt 8:18-22), this story communicates the power of Jesus to provide and care for his followers. *weak faith:* See Matthew 6:30.

**8:28-34** The people may not recognize who Jesus is (Matt 8:27), but demons know he is God's son. *herd of pigs:* Jesus is in Gentile country (cf., e.g., Lev 11:7), where he experiences the inhospitality about which he spoke in Matthew 8:20.

**9:1 his own city:** Capernaum (Matt 4:13).

**9:2-3 your sins are forgiven:** The idea that illness was caused by sin is one of several explanations of illness



their faith, he said to the man who was paralyzed, “Be encouraged, my child, your sins are forgiven.”

<sup>3</sup>Some legal experts said among themselves, “This man is insulting God.”

<sup>4</sup>But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said, “Why do you fill your minds with evil things? <sup>5</sup>Which is easier—to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’ <sup>6</sup>But so you will know that the Human One<sup>a</sup> has authority on the earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralyzed—“Get up, take your cot, and go home.” <sup>7</sup>The man got up and went home. <sup>8</sup>When the crowds saw what had happened, they were afraid and praised God, who had given such authority to human beings.

### Calling of Matthew

<sup>9</sup>As Jesus continued on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at a kiosk for collecting taxes. He said to him, “Follow me,” and he got up and followed him. <sup>10</sup>As Jesus sat down to eat in Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners joined Jesus and his disciples at the table.

<sup>11</sup>But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

<sup>12</sup>When Jesus heard it, he said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor, but sick people do.

<sup>13</sup>Go and learn what this means: *I want mercy and not sacrifice.* <sup>14</sup>I didn’t come to call righteous people, but sinners.”

### Question about fasting

<sup>14</sup>At that time John’s disciples came and asked Jesus, “Why do we and the Pharisees frequently fast, but your disciples never fast?”

<sup>15</sup>Jesus responded, “The wedding guests can’t mourn while the groom is still with them, can they? But the days will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they’ll fast.

<sup>16</sup>No one sews a piece of new, unshrunk cloth on old clothes because the patch tears away the cloth and makes a worse tear. <sup>17</sup>No one pours new wine into old wineskins. If they did, the wineskins would burst, the wine would spill, and the wineskins would be ruined. Instead, people pour new wine into new wineskins so that both are kept safe.”

### A ruler’s daughter and the woman who touched Jesus’ clothes

<sup>18</sup>While Jesus was speaking to them, a ruler came and knelt in front of him, saying, “My daughter has just died. But come and place your hand on her, and she’ll live.” <sup>19</sup>So Jesus and

<sup>a</sup>Or *Son of Man* <sup>b</sup>Hos 6:6

in the 1st century. Matthew’s emphasis falls primarily on Jesus’ authority to pronounce forgiveness—as the response of the legal experts makes clear. *insulting God*: Some translations use the language of “blasphemy.” The basic idea is one of slandering God’s name, but here it has the broader sense of claiming to do what only God can do.

9:5 *Which is easier*: It’s easier to pronounce the forgiveness of sins, since one’s ability to do so can’t be checked by observation. It’s harder to say ‘Get up and walk,’ since a physical healing (or its failure) would be evident to everyone.

9:6-8 *Human One... human beings*: Initially, Matthew highlights Jesus’ authority as the Human One. Reference to *human beings* anticipates the extension of that authority to those who follow Jesus (see Matt 10:1).

9:9 *a man named Matthew*: The author of the Gospel of Matthew isn’t named. This verse is the probable source for the early church tradition that named Matthew as the author of this biography of Jesus.

9:10-11 *tax collectors*: As a group, they were regarded as cheaters and snoopers. They were also despised because they made visible in everyday life the demands of the Roman Empire. *sinners*: not clearly defined here, but people who lived beyond the boundaries of acceptable Jewish life.

9:13 *Go and learn*: This is what people in school are told to do. Jesus uses a phrase in keeping with his role as “teacher” (Matt 9:11). *I want mercy and not sacrifice*: a quotation of Hosea 6:6, which will be repeated in Matthew 12:7. It’s not that Jesus is against *sacrifice* (see Matt 5:23-24), but that human need is more important. Jesus casts his own work as a healer as an expression of God’s compassion.

9:14 On fasting, see Matthew 6:16-18.

9:15 *the groom is still with them*: The presence of Jesus is like a wedding celebration, a time of happiness. *will be taken away*: Jesus anticipates his suffering and death.

9:16-17 *both are kept safe*: The *new* likely refers to the gospel and the *old* to Israel’s scriptures, and especially Moses’ Instruction. Jesus interprets the Law in fresh ways, but he doesn’t dispense with it.

9:18-26 A story of healing of a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years (9:20-22) is sandwiched within a story of the healing of a ruler’s daughter (9:18-19, 23-26). Together, they emphasize the initiative of those in need, Jesus’ concern for women, and the healing power associated with contact with Jesus.

9:18 Compare with Matthew 8:2 (the man with a skin disease kneels before Jesus); Matthew 8:3 (Jesus cleanses a disease through his touch); and Matthew 8:5-6, 10 (a ruler demonstrates faith as he comes to Jesus for help).

9:3 Mt 26:65;  
Jn 10:33

9:4 Mt 12:25;  
Lk 6:8, Lk 9:47;  
Jn 2:24, Jn 2:25

9:5 Mk 2:9;  
Lk 5:23

9:6 Mt 8:20

9:8 Mt 15:31;  
Lk 7:16,  
Lk 23:47

9:9 Mt 10:3;  
Mk 2:14;  
Lk 5:27; Ac 1:13

9:10 Mt 5:46

9:11 Mt 11:19;  
Mk 2:16;  
Lk 5:30, Lk 15:2;  
Lk 19:7

9:12 Lk 5:31

9:13 Hos 6:6;  
Mt 12:7; Lk 5:32;  
1Ti 1:15

9:14 Mt 11:2;  
Mk 2:18;  
Lk 18:12; Jn 3:25

9:15 Jn 3:29

9:17 Josh 9:4;  
Mk 2:22

9:18 Mt 8:2;  
Mk 5:22; Lk 8:41

9:19 Mt 8:7;  
Mt 9:23; Jn 4:34;  
Ac 10:38

9:20 Lv 15:25;  
Nm 15:38;  
Dt 22:12;  
Mt 14:36;  
Mr 23:5

9:22 Mt 8:13;  
Mt 9:2; Mr 15:28;  
Lk 7:50;  
Jk 10:42

9:23 2Ch 35:25;  
Jer 9:17; Mt 9:19

9:24 In 11:11;  
Ac 20:10

9:25 Mk 9:27;  
Ac 9:40

9:26 Mt 4:24;  
Mt 14:1;  
Mk 1:45

9:27 Mt 12:23;  
Mt 15:22;  
Mt 20:30;  
Mt 20:31;  
Mt 21:9

9:28 Mt 8:2;  
Mt 8:5;  
Mt 9:22;  
Mk 7:27;  
Ac 14:9

9:29 Mt 8:13;  
Mt 9:22

9:30 Mt 8:4

9:31 Mt 4:24;  
Mk 1:45;  
Mk 7:36

9:32 Mt 4:24;  
Mt 12:22

9:33 2Ki 5:8;  
Ps 76:1; Is 35:6;  
Mt 15:31;  
Mk 2:12

9:34 Mt 12:24;  
Mk 3:22;  
Lk 11:15

9:35 Mt 4:23

9:36 Nm 27:17;  
1Ki 22:17;  
Mt 14:14;  
Mt 15:32;  
Mk 6:34

9:37 Mt 9:38;  
Lk 10:2; Jn 4:35

9:38 Mt 9:37;  
Lk 10:2; 2Th 3:1

his disciples got up and went with him. <sup>20</sup>Then a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years came up behind Jesus and touched the hem of his clothes. <sup>21</sup>She thought, If I only touch his robe I'll be healed.

<sup>22</sup>When Jesus turned and saw her, he said, "Be encouraged, daughter. Your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that time on.

<sup>23</sup>When Jesus went into the ruler's house, he saw the flute players and the distressed crowd. <sup>24</sup>He said, "Go away, because the little girl isn't dead but is asleep"; but they laughed at him. <sup>25</sup>After he had sent the crowd away, Jesus went in and touched her hand, and the little girl rose up. <sup>26</sup>News about this spread throughout that whole region.

### Healing of two blind men

<sup>27</sup>As Jesus departed, two blind men followed him, crying out, "Show us mercy, Son of David."

<sup>28</sup>When he came into the house, the blind men approached him. Jesus said to them, "Do you believe I can do this?"

"Yes, Lord," they replied.

<sup>29</sup>Then Jesus touched their eyes and said, "It will happen for you just as you have believed."

<sup>30</sup>Their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly warned them, "Make sure nobody knows about this." <sup>31</sup>But they went out and spread the word about him throughout that whole region.

### Healing of a man unable to speak

<sup>32</sup>As they were leaving, people brought to him a man who was demon-possessed and unable to speak. <sup>33</sup>When Jesus had thrown out the demon, the man who couldn't speak began to talk. The crowds were amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."

<sup>34</sup>But the Pharisees said, "He throws out demons with the authority of the ruler of demons."

### Compassion

<sup>35</sup>Jesus traveled among all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, announcing the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. <sup>36</sup>Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, "The size of the harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers." <sup>38</sup>Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest."

### Mission of the Twelve

**10** He called his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to throw them out and to heal every disease and every sickness. <sup>2</sup>Here are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, who is called Peter; and Andrew his brother; James the son of

10:1 Mk 3:13; Mk 6:7; Mk 16:18; Lk 9:1 10:2 Mt 4:18; Mt 4:21; Mk 3:16; Lk 6:14; Ac 1:13

**9:20-21** *bleeding for twelve years*: The woman has been ritually unclean for 12 years, due to her condition. The reference is to menstruation (see Lev 15:19-33). Her situation would have been embarrassing and she would be physically weakened, though apparently her life wasn't in danger.

**9:23** *flute players*: a standard feature of Jewish mourning practice.

**9:24** *they laughed at him*: Though they mean to ridicule Jesus, they in fact demonstrate the certainty that the girl was dead. This certifies the nature of the miracle Jesus performs.

**9:27** *Son of David*: a title for the royal Christ (see Matt 1:1). Isaiah 42:7 anticipates the age of salvation when the blind will be healed.

**9:28-29** Matthew emphasizes the faith of the blind men.

**9:30** "Make sure nobody knows about this": See Matthew 12:16-21.

**9:32-34** *unable to speak*: Matthew portrays the man's inability to speak as the result of his being demon-possessed. Hence, his ability to speak is proof that the demon has been expelled. The Pharisees don't deny this. Instead, they

claim that Jesus doesn't have God's authority but the authority of the ruler of demons (also known as the "tempter," "Satan," "the devil," or "Beelzebub"—see Matt 4:1-11; 12:24). This is their way of discrediting Jesus with the crowds.

**9:35** Matthew sums up the kind of thing Jesus has been doing since the beginning of chapter 5. Summary statements like this indicate what is typical of Jesus' ministry.

**9:36** *sheep without a shepherd*: a criticism of the Jewish leaders (see Num 27:17; Ezek 34:5).

**9:37-38** *harvest*: an image for the gathering of God's restored people. *workers for his harvest*: God is portrayed as a farmer in need of workers. This prepares for the commissioning of the Twelve in Matthew 10:1 and anticipates Jesus' command in Matthew 28:18-20.

**10:1-11:1** This is the second major sermon in Matthew (see the note at Matt 5:1-7:29).

**10:1-4** *twelve disciples ... twelve apostles*: symbolic of Israel's 12 tribes. Israel's restoration is further symbolized through their being summoned and sent to heal by Jesus. See Matthew 19:28. Matthew 10:2 provides the only reference in this Gospel to the "apostles," a term that can refer to someone sent as a designated ambassador.

Zebedee; and John his brother; <sup>3</sup>Philip; and Bartholomew; Thomas; and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus; and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup>Simon the Cananaean; <sup>a</sup> and Judas, who betrayed Jesus.

**Commissioning of the Twelve**

<sup>5</sup>Jesus sent these twelve out and commanded them, "Don't go among the Gentiles or into a Samaritan city. <sup>6</sup>Go instead to the lost sheep, the people of Israel. <sup>7</sup>As you go, make this announcement: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' <sup>8</sup>Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with skin diseases, and throw out demons. You received without having to pay. Therefore, give without demanding payment. <sup>9</sup>Workers deserve to be fed, so don't gather gold or silver or copper coins for your money belts to take on your trips. <sup>10</sup>Don't take a backpack for the road or two shirts or sandals or a walking stick. <sup>11</sup>Whatever city or village you go into, find somebody in it who is worthy and stay there until you go on your way. <sup>12</sup>When you go into a house, say, 'Peace!' <sup>13</sup>If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if the house isn't worthy, take back your blessing. <sup>14</sup>If anyone refuses to welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet as you leave that house or city. <sup>15</sup>I assure you that it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than it will be for that city.

10:3 Mt 9:9; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:14; Jn 21:2; Ac 1:13  
 10:4 Mt 26:14; Mt 26:47; Mt 27:3; Jn 13:26; Ac 1:16  
 10:5 2Ks 17:24; Lk 9:52; Jn 4:9; Jn 8:48; Ac 8:25  
 10:6 Jer 50:6; Mt 9:36; Mt 15:24  
 10:7 Mt 3:2; Mt 4:17; Lk 9:2; Lk 10:9  
 10:8 Mt 10:1; Mk 16:18; Ac 20:33  
 10:9 Mk 6:8; Lk 9:3; Lk 10:4; Lk 22:35  
 10:10 1Co 9:14; Ga 6:6; 1Ti 5:18

**Apostles Identified in Matthew, Mark, Luke/Acts, John, and Paul**

Matthew	Mark	Luke/Acts	John	Paul
1. Simon Peter	1. Simon Peter	1. Simon Peter	1. Simon Peter	1. Simon Peter
2. Andrew	4. Andrew	2. Andrew	2. Andrew	19. James brother of Jesus (Gal 1:19)
3. James	2. James	3. James	3-4. "the sons of Zebedee"	20. Andronicus (Rom 16:7)
4. John	3. John	4. John	5. Philip	21. Junia (Rom 16:7)
5. Philip	5. Philip	5. Philip	7. Thomas	22. Paul (1 Cor 9:1, etc.)
6. Bartholomew	6. Bartholomew	6. Bartholomew		1 Cor 15:7 indicates that Paul knew of more than 12 apostles.
7. Thomas	8. Matthew	8. Matthew		
8. Matthew	7. Thomas	7. Thomas		
9. James son of Alphaeus	9. James son of Alphaeus	9. James son of Alphaeus		
10. Thaddaeus	10. Thaddaeus			
11. Simon the Cananaean	11. Simon the Cananaean	11. Simon the Zealot		
12. Judas Iscariot	12. Judas Iscariot	12. Judas Iscariot	12. Judas Iscariot	
13. <i>Lebbaeus</i> for Thaddaeus in some MSS	14. Levi son of Alphaeus	15. Judas son of James	17. Nathanael	
		16. Matthias	18. The Beloved Disciple	

<sup>a</sup>Or zealot

10:12 Isa 25:6; 10:13 Ac 16:15; 10:14 Neh 5:13; Mk 6:11; Lk 9:5; Ac 13:51; Ac 18:6; 10:15 Mt 11:22; Mt 11:24; Mt 12:36; 2Pt 3:7; 1Jn 4:17

According to Matthew 16:17-18, Jesus gave Simon the name "Peter." For the call of Simon and Andrew, James and John (Zebedee's sons), see Matthew 4:18-22. For the call of Matthew, see Matthew 9:9. *Cananaean*: refers to someone committed to freeing the Jewish people from Roman rule. Matthew describes Judas as the one who betrayed Jesus, leaving his readers with no doubt about the one of whom Jesus speaks at the Last Supper (Matt 26:20-26).

10:5-8a The disciples are commissioned to carry out a mission that mirrors Jesus' own mission in Matthew 8-9. Their commission is now limited to Israel, but this will later be expanded to include all the nations (Matt

28:18-20). See sidebar, "The Kingdom of Heaven" at Matthew 3.

10:8a-14 The gospel is a gift (cf. 2 Cor 2:17). The disciples are to move around from place to place, trusting in God and depending on acts of hospitality from those who share in God's peace. They aren't to depend on payment or advanced preparations. *shake the dust off your feet*: This was a practice among Jews as they returned from traveling on Gentile soil. It signified separation from things that were ritually unclean. Jesus thus directs these missionaries to separate themselves from those who reject the good news.

10:15 *Sodom and Gomorrah*: See Genesis 19:24-28; Isaiah 1:9-10; 2 Peter 2:6.

10:16 Gn 3:1;

Lk 10:3;  
Ac 20:29;  
Ro 16:19

10:17 Mt 23:34;

Mk 13:9;  
Lk 12:11;  
Ac 22:19;  
Ac 26:11

10:18 Ac 25:24

10:19 Ex 4:12;  
Mt 6:25;  
Mk 13:11;  
Lk 12:11

10:20 Lk 12:12;

Ac 4:8; Ac 13:9  
10:21 Mt 7:6;  
Mk 13:12

10:22 Mt 24:9;

Mt 24:13;  
Mk 13:13;  
Jn 15:18;  
Jn 15:19

10:23 Mt 16:28

10:24 Lk 6:40;

Jn 13:16;  
Jn 15:20

10:25 Mt 9:34;

Mt 12:24;  
Mt 12:27;  
Mk 3:22;  
Lk 11:15

10:26 Mk 4:22;

Lk 8:17; Lk 12:2;  
1Co 4:5

10:27 Ac 5:20

10:28 Jt 8:12;  
Is 8:13; Mt 5:22;  
Lk 12:5; 1Pt 3:14

10:29 Lk 12:6

10:30 Isa 14:45;  
2Sa 14:11;  
1Ki 1:52;  
Lk 21:18;  
Ac 27:34

10:31 Mt 6:26;

Mt 12:12

10:32 Lk 12:8;

Jn 9:22;  
Ro 10:9;  
Ro 10:10;  
Rev 3:510:33 Mk 8:38;  
Lk 9:26; 2Ti 2:12;  
2Pt 2:1; 1Jn 2:23

10:34 Lk 12:51

**Response to harassment**

<sup>16</sup>“Look, I’m sending you as sheep among wolves. Therefore, be wise as snakes and innocent as doves. <sup>17</sup>Watch out for people—because they will hand you over to councils and they will beat you in their synagogues. <sup>18</sup>They will haul you in front of governors and even kings because of me so that you may give your testimony to them and to the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup>Whenever they hand you over, don’t worry about how to speak or what you will say, because what you can say will be given to you at that moment. <sup>20</sup>You aren’t doing the talking, but the Spirit of my Father is doing the talking through you. <sup>21</sup>Brothers and sisters will hand each other over to be executed. A father will turn his child in. Children will defy their parents and have them executed. <sup>22</sup>Everyone will hate you on account of my name. But whoever stands firm until the end will be saved. <sup>23</sup>Whenever they harass you in one city, escape to the next, because I assure that you will not go through all the cities of Israel before the Human One<sup>e</sup> comes.

<sup>24</sup>“Disciples aren’t greater than their teacher, and slaves aren’t greater than their master. <sup>25</sup>It’s enough for disciples to be like their teacher and slaves like their master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, it’s certain that they will call the members of his household by even worse names.

**Whom to fear**

<sup>26</sup>“Therefore, don’t be afraid of those people because nothing is hidden that won’t be revealed, and nothing secret that won’t be brought out into the open. <sup>27</sup>What I say to you in the darkness, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, announce from the rooftops. <sup>28</sup>Don’t be afraid of those who kill the body but can’t kill the soul. Instead, be afraid of the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell. <sup>29</sup>Aren’t two sparrows sold for a small coin? But not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father knowing about it already. <sup>30</sup>Even the hairs of your head are all counted. <sup>31</sup>Don’t be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

**Confessing Christ to people**

<sup>32</sup>“Therefore, everyone who acknowledges me before people, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven. <sup>33</sup>But everyone who denies me before people, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

**Trouble in the family**

<sup>34</sup>“Don’t think that I’ve come to bring peace to the earth. I haven’t come to bring peace but a sword. <sup>35</sup>I’ve come to turn a man *against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.* <sup>36</sup>*People’s enemies are members of their own households.*”

<sup>37</sup>“Those who love father or mother more than me aren’t worthy of me. Those who love son or daughter more than me aren’t worthy of me. <sup>38</sup>Those who don’t pick up their crosses

<sup>e</sup>Or *Son of Man*    <sup>f</sup>Mic 7:6

10:35 Mt 7:6; Mt 10:21    10:36 Mt 7:6    10:37 Dt 33:9; Lk 14:26    10:38 Mt 16:24; Mk 8:34; Mt 10:21; Lk 9:23; Lk 14:27

10:17-23 See Matthew 5:11-12. *councils*: the governing bodies of local Jewish communities (see Matt 5:22). The supreme example is the Jerusalem Council (see Matt 26:59), also known as the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:55; 15:1), which handed Jesus over to the Roman governor for judgment and execution. Jesus anticipates that his disciples engaged in mission will be harassed by Roman and Jewish leaders. This harassment is an opportunity for Spirit-empowered witness. *escape to the next*: Although the coming harassment can lead to death (10:21), Jesus prefers that his disciples find refuge and continue their missionary activity rather than give up their lives. *before the Human One comes*: The Human One, Jesus, has already come, of course. Jesus’ words thus anticipate his coming departure and future return (the allusion is to Dan 7:13).

10:24-31 According to Jesus, harassment of the disciples is to be expected from those who have first harassed Jesus, the master. Additionally, harassment isn’t a sign that the disciples have been abandoned by God.

10:28 *body and soul*: Those who harass Jesus’ disciples can’t destroy the life God has given. They may put an end to life on this earth, but God raises the whole person from the dead (see Matt 22:23-33; cf. Wis 16:13-14; 2 Macc 6:30). Throughout his Gospel, Matthew refers to the “soul” as the living vitality of a person, not a thing separate from the body.

10:31 *Don’t be afraid*: This is the third time Jesus has used this phrase (Matt 10:26, 28, 31). Fear isn’t the appropriate response to harassment. What is needed is awareness of God’s care and compassion in the midst of harassment, together with hope for the life that only God can give.

10:32-33 *acknowledges . . . denies*: These are the options in the courtroom-type settings Jesus has just pictured. How disciples respond to harassment determines their ultimate fate.

10:34 *a sword*: an image of division, including division within families (see Matt 10:35-37).

10:38 *pick up their crosses*: an image borrowed from the

and follow me aren't worthy of me. <sup>39</sup>Those who find their lives will lose them, and those who lose their lives because of me will find them.

**Rewards**

<sup>40</sup>Those who receive you are also receiving me, and those who receive me are receiving the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup>Those who receive a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. Those who receive a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. <sup>42</sup>I assure you that everybody who gives even a cup of cold water to these little ones because they are my disciples will certainly be rewarded."

**Ministry to the people**

**11** When Jesus finished teaching his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

**Question from John the Baptist**

<sup>2</sup>Now when John heard in prison about the things the Christ was doing, he sent word by his disciples to Jesus, asking, <sup>3</sup>"Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"

<sup>4</sup>Jesus responded, "Go, report to John what you hear and see. <sup>5</sup>*Those who were blind are able to see. Those who were crippled are walking. People with skin diseases are cleansed. Those who were deaf now hear. Those who were dead are raised up. The poor have good news proclaimed to them.* <sup>6</sup>Happy are those who don't stumble and fall because of me."

**Appeal of John's ministry**

<sup>7</sup>When John's disciples had gone, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John: "What did you go out to the wilderness to see? A stalk blowing in the wind? <sup>8</sup>What did you go out to see? A man dressed up in refined clothes? Look, those who wear refined clothes are in royal palaces. <sup>9</sup>What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup>He is the one of whom it is written: *Look, I'm sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you.*<sup>7</sup>

**Significance of John's ministry**

<sup>11</sup>"I assure you that no one who has ever been born is greater than John the Baptist. Yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. <sup>12</sup>From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven is violently attacked as violent people seize it. <sup>13</sup>All the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John came. <sup>14</sup>If you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. <sup>15</sup>Let the person who has ears, hear.

10:39 Mt 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24, Lk 17:33; Jn 12:25  
10:40 Mt 18:5; Mk 9:37; Lk 9:48; Lk 10:16; Jn 13:20  
10:41 Lk 18:4; 2Ki 4:8; Mt 25:34; Ro 16:1; Heb 6:10  
10:42 Mt 25:40; Mk 9:41; Heb 6:10  
11:1 Mt 4:23; Mt 7:28; Mt 9:35  
11:2 Mt 4:12; Mt 9:14; Mt 14:3; Mk 6:17; Lk 7:18  
11:3 Jn 6:14; Jn 11:27  
11:4 Mt 4:23; Mt 28:18; Mk 1:14; Lk 7:20; Lk 7:22  
11:5 Is 61:1; Mt 15:31; Lk 4:18  
11:6 Mt 13:57; Jn 6:51  
11:7 Mt 3:1  
11:8 Mt 3:4  
11:9 Mt 14:5; Mt 21:26; Lk 1:76  
11:10 Ex 23:20; Mal 3:1; Mk 1:2; Lk 7:27  
11:11 Mt 3:1; Mt 3:13; Mt 4:12; Mt 5:19; Jn 1:15  
11:12 Lk 16:16  
11:13 Lk 16:16  
11:14 Mal 4:5; Mt 17:10; Mk 9:11; Lk 1:17; Jn 1:21  
11:15 Mt 13:9; Mt 13:43

<sup>7</sup>Isa 35:5-6; 61:1 <sup>7</sup>Mal 3:1

Roman custom of having the condemned criminal carry the crossbar to the place of crucifixion (apparently, Jesus was unable to bear the weight of his own cross; see Matt 27:32). Here the image refers to living as though nothing but allegiance to Jesus matters. Even family ties are secondary (see Matt 10:35-27).

10:40-42 *Those who receive you*: See Matthew 10:11-14. Jesus refers to those who extend hospitality to his disciples. 11:1 *When Jesus finished*: See Matthew 7:28; 19:1. This marks the end of Jesus' sermon, begun in Matthew 10:5. *their cities*: the cities of Israel, in Galilee.

11:2-3 See Matthew 4:12. For John's disciples, see Matthew 9:14; 11:7; 14:12. *the one who is to come*: that is, *the Christ* (see Matt 3:11). This is the first time the title appears since Jesus began his public ministry. Apparently, John the Baptist has difficulty recognizing in Jesus' ministry of compassion (Matt 8-9) the deliverer and judge he had anticipated.

11:4-5 Jesus interprets his ministry in terms borrowed from Isaiah 61:1-2. *The poor*: In the Roman world, this term would have referred to those with low status, the marginal, and not only to those who were lacking basic life provisions or who had just enough to survive. 11:6 *Happy*: See the note on Matthew 5:3-12. *who don't*

*stumble and fall because of*: or "who aren't offended by." Jesus issues an invitation to recognize through his ministry that he is indeed the one who brings God's restoration.

11:7-10 *A stalk blowing in the wind*: a weak, uncertain figure. *A man dressed up in refined clothes*: royalty, the opposite of John's appearance (see Matt 3:4). *a prophet*: John attracted a following not because he was weak or a king, but because he was God's spokesperson. Moreover, he's the one whom God had promised to send in advance of the Christ. See Exodus 23:20; Malachi 3:1; 4:5; Matthew 3.

11:11 *greater than John... greater than he*: In the topsy-turvy reality of the kingdom of heaven, there's no room for making comparisons about who is more or less important. 11:12 *violently attacked*: Jesus refers to the harassment that the people who welcome and announce God's rule will experience from those who resist the good news. John, who is now in prison, is an example of this harassment.

11:13-14 The period before the coming of Jesus is understood as a time of anticipation. The age of salvation has now dawned. *Elijah who is to come*: See Malachi 4:5.

11:14-15 *If you are willing... ears, hear*: Hearing isn't enough. It takes a willingness to see and hear the way things really are from Jesus' viewpoint.

11:16 Exe 27:12,  
Eze 27:19;  
Zec 8:5;  
Mt 11:17;  
Lk 7:31

11:17 Lk 1:40;  
Mt 9:23;  
Lk 15:25

11:18 Mt 3:4;  
Mk 1:6; Lk 1:15;  
Jn 10:20

11:19 Mt 9:11;  
Lk 15:2

11:20 Ps 81:11,  
Pss 124:16, 132;  
Lk 10:13;  
Jn 15:24

11:21 Mt 11:22,  
Mt 15:21;  
Mk 3:8; Mk 6:45;  
Lk 10:13

11:22 Mt 10:15  
11:23 Is 14:13;  
Mt 4:13;  
Mt 16:18;  
Lk 16:23;  
Ac 2:27

11:24 Mt 10:15,  
Mt 11:22

11:25 Ps 8:2;  
Mt 16:17;  
Lk 10:21;  
Lk 23:34;  
Jn 11:41

11:26 Lk 10:21,  
Lk 23:34;  
Jn 11:41,  
Jn 12:27,  
Jn 12:28

11:27 Mt 28:18;  
Jn 1:18; Jn 7:29,  
Jn 10:15,  
Jn 17:25

11:28 Jn 7:37  
11:29 Jer 6:16;  
Mt 21:5;  
Jn 13:15; Phi 2:5;  
1Pi 2:21

11:30 Jn 5:3

12:1 Dt 23:25;  
Mk 2:23; Lk 6:1  
12:2 Mt 12:10;  
Lk 13:14; Jn 5:10,  
Jn 7:23; Jn 9:16

### This generation

<sup>16</sup>"To what will I compare this generation? It is like a child sitting in the marketplaces calling out to others, <sup>17</sup>'We played the flute for you and you didn't dance. We sang a funeral song and you didn't mourn.' <sup>18</sup>For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' <sup>19</sup>Yet the Human One<sup>a</sup> came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved to be right by her works."

### Condemnation of Bethsaida and Capernaum

<sup>20</sup>Then he began to scold the cities where he had done his greatest miracles because they didn't change their hearts and lives. <sup>21</sup>"How terrible it will be for you, Chorazin! How terrible it will be for you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done among you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have changed their hearts and lives and put on funeral clothes and ashes a long time ago. <sup>22</sup>But I say to you that Tyre and Sidon will be better off on Judgment Day than you. <sup>23</sup>And you, Capernaum, will you be honored by being raised up to heaven? No, you will be thrown down to the place of the dead. After all, if the miracles that were done among you had been done in Sodom, it would still be here today. <sup>24</sup>But I say to you that it will be better for the land of Sodom on the Judgment Day than it will be for you."

### The Father and the Son

<sup>25</sup>At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you've hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have shown them to babies.

<sup>26</sup>Indeed, Father, this brings you happiness.

<sup>27</sup>"My Father has handed all things over to me. No one knows the Son except the Father. And nobody knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wants to reveal him.

<sup>28</sup>"Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I'm gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. <sup>30</sup>My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light."

### Working on the Sabbath

**12** At that time Jesus went through the wheat fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry so they were picking heads of wheat and eating them. <sup>2</sup>When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are breaking the Sabbath law."

<sup>a</sup>Or Son of Man

**11:16-19** Jesus observes how fickle people can be as they refuse to understand and accept what God is doing. Even though he and John the Baptist carry out their ministries of proclaiming the kingdom of heaven in different ways, both are rejected. *wisdom is proved to be right*: Jesus concludes with a proverb. People may reject John and Jesus, but their ministries demonstrate that they really are agents of God's restoration. Jesus really is "the Christ" "the one who is to come," and John really is "Elijah who is to come" (Matt 11:2, 14).

**11:21-24** *Chorazin . . . Bethsaida*: towns of Israel in northern Galilee. *Tyre and Sidon*: Gentile cities north of Galilee along the Mediterranean coast. *Capernaum*: home base for Jesus' mission (see Matt 4:12), *the place of the dead*: or "Hades"—called "Sheol" in the OT. *Sodom*: See Matthew 10:15.

**11:25-27** *hidden . . . shown*: Understanding and accepting Jesus' identity as the promised deliverer and his message

as good news isn't simply a matter of human effort. This kind of insight is a gift from God. *babies*: in contrast to the *wise and intelligent*. The focus here is simply that God's gift of insight is available to those who haven't predetermined what God can or can't do. See Matthew 21:15-16.

**11:29** *Put on my yoke, and learn from me*: In the world of farming, a "yoke" is a wooden frame used to control farm animals at work. Throughout the OT (e.g., 2 Chron 10:4; Isa 9:4), it's used as an image for obedience and service. Here it's specifically tied to learning from Jesus. Accordingly, we understand that Jesus is calling people to follow his teaching. See Matthew 28:18-20, and especially verse 20: "teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you." *you will find rest*: See Jeremiah 6:16, where God's offer of rest was rejected, eventually leading to exile.

**12:1-2** *Sabbath*: the seventh day of the week, a day of rest. The Ten Commandments specify that no work is to

<sup>3</sup>But he said to them, "Haven't you read what David did when he and those with him were hungry? <sup>4</sup>He went into God's house and broke the law by eating the bread of the presence, which only the priests were allowed to eat. <sup>5</sup>Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple treat the Sabbath as any other day and are still innocent? <sup>6</sup>But I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. <sup>7</sup>If you had known what this means, *I want mercy and not sacrifice*,<sup>a</sup> you wouldn't have condemned the innocent. <sup>8</sup>The Human One<sup>b</sup> is Lord of the Sabbath."

**Healing on the Sabbath**

<sup>9</sup>Jesus left that place and went into their synagogue. <sup>10</sup>A man with a withered hand was there. Wanting to bring charges against Jesus, they asked, "Does the Law allow a person to heal on the Sabbath?"

<sup>11</sup>Jesus replied, "Who among you has a sheep that falls into a pit on the Sabbath and will not take hold of it and pull it out? <sup>12</sup>How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! So the Law allows a person to do what is good on the Sabbath." <sup>13</sup>Then Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he did and it was made healthy, just like the other one. <sup>14</sup>The Pharisees went out and met in order to find a way to destroy Jesus.

**Healing the crowd**

<sup>15</sup>Jesus knew what they intended to do, so he went away from there. Large crowds followed him, and he healed them all. <sup>16</sup>But he ordered them not to spread the word about him, <sup>17</sup>so that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled:

<sup>18</sup>*Look, my Servant whom I chose,  
the one I love, in whom I find great pleasure.  
I'll put my Spirit upon him,  
and he'll announce judgment to the Gentiles.*

<sup>19</sup>*He won't argue or shout,  
and nobody will hear his voice in the streets.*

<sup>20</sup>*He won't break a bent stalk,  
and he won't snuff out a smoldering wick,  
until he makes justice win.*

<sup>21</sup>*And the Gentiles will put their hope in his name.*<sup>c</sup>

<sup>22</sup>They brought to Jesus a demon-possessed man who was blind and unable to speak. Jesus healed him so that he could both speak and see. <sup>23</sup>All the crowds were amazed and said, "This man couldn't be the Son of David, could he?"

<sup>a</sup>Hos 6:6 <sup>b</sup>Or *Son of Man* <sup>c</sup>Isa 42:1-4

be done on the Sabbath (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15), but they don't specify the nature of "the work" that shouldn't be done. This question was debated by Jewish scholars in the time of Jesus. *picking heads of wheat*: According to Deuteronomy 24:19-22 and Leviticus 19:9-10, farmers shouldn't harvest the whole crop, but should leave some for the needy. The Pharisees don't complain because the disciples are stealing other people's wheat, but because they think the disciples are violating the sabbath law. The question is whether picking heads of grain—not in order to harvest the grain but in order to satisfy immediate hunger—is work prohibited by the Law.

**12:3-8** Jesus' response has four points: (1) He finds evidence in 1 Samuel 21:1-6 that dealing with a human need like hunger is more important than a strict application of the sabbath law. (2) Drawing on Numbers 28:9-10, he first shows that the needs of the temple outweigh the need to keep the Sabbath, then claims that he and his mission are more important than the temple. (3) Borrowing language from Hosea 6:6 (see Matt 9:13), he insists that, just as God's compassion lies behind the sabbath law, so God's compassion takes priority over that law. (4) Finally, as the Human One, Jesus has the authority to interpret how the sabbath law ought to be put into practice.

**12:9** *their synagogue*: emphasizes the tension between Jesus and the Pharisees at this point of the story.

**12:10** *a withered hand*: no longer useful as a result of disease. The important point here is that this medical problem wasn't deadly. Because it didn't require immediate attention, there's no reason "to work" (by healing someone) on the Sabbath. On "Sabbath," see note on Matthew 12:1-2.

**12:11-12** Although the rabbis debated what was allowed on the Sabbath, Jesus' remarks appeal to compassion and common sense.

**12:14** *to destroy Jesus*: Earlier, Jesus' violent death was implied (Matt 9:15). The plot to kill Jesus due to the nature of his teaching is now made explicit.

**12:15-21** Matthew sheds light on Jesus' motivations. Jesus isn't interested in challenging his opponents or in seeking publicity. Instead, his commitment is to his mission, explained here in the words of Isaiah 42:1-4. For similar language, see Matthew 3:17; 17:5. The reference to the Gentiles (or "nations") in the citation from Isaiah will become important later in the Gospel (see Matt 24:14; 28:18-20).

**12:23** *Son of David*: See note on Matthew 9:27. See also Matthew 1:1.

12:3 1Sa 21:1  
12:4 Ex 25:30;  
Lv 24:5; Lv 24:9;  
1Sa 21:6  
12:5 Nm 28:9;  
Nm 28:10;  
Jn 7:22; Jn 7:23  
12:6 2Ch 6:18;  
Mt 12:41;  
Mt 12:42  
12:7 Is 1:11;  
Hos 6:6; Mt 6:6;  
Mt 9:13  
12:8 Gn 2:3  
12:9 Mk 3:1;  
Lk 6:6  
12:10 Mt 12:2;  
Lk 11:54;  
Lk 14:3; Jn 8:6  
12:11 Dt 22:4;  
Lk 14:5  
12:12 Mt 6:26;  
Mt 10:31  
12:13 Mt 8:3  
12:14 Mt 26:4;  
Mt 27:1; Lk 6:11;  
Jn 11:53  
12:15 Mt 4:23;  
Mt 10:23;  
Mk 3:7  
12:16 Mt 8:4;  
Mt 9:30; Mt 17:9;  
Mk 3:12  
12:17 Mt 1:22;  
Mt 8:17;  
Jn 12:38  
12:18 Is 42:1;  
Mt 3:17; Lk 4:18;  
Jn 3:34  
12:19 Is 42:2;  
Zec 9:9;  
Mt 11:29;  
Mt 12:15;  
2Co 10:1  
12:20 Is 42:3  
12:21 Is 42:1;  
Ro 15:12  
12:22 Mt 9:32;  
Lk 11:14  
12:23 Mt 9:27;  
Mt 15:22;  
Mt 21:9

12:24 Mt 9:34,  
Mt 10:25,  
Mt 12:27,  
Mk 3:22,  
Lk 11:15

12:25 Mt 9:4,  
Mk 2:8, Mk 3:23;  
Lk 11:17

12:26 Mt 4:10

12:27 Mt 10:25,  
Mt 12:24,  
Mk 3:22,  
Lk 11:15;  
Ac 19:13

12:28 Is 9:6,  
Mt 3:2, Mt 12:18,  
Mt 21:31;  
Lk 11:20

12:29 Is 49:24,  
Is 53:12,  
Mk 3:27;  
Lk 11:21,  
Lk 11:22

12:30 Mk 9:40,  
Lk 9:50,  
Lk 11:23

12:31 Mt 12:32;  
Mk 3:28;  
Lk 12:10;  
Jhn 5:16

12:32 Mk 3:29,  
Mk 10:30;  
Lk 12:10,  
Lk 20:34;  
Eph 1:21

12:33 Mt 7:16,  
Mt 7:17; Lk 6:43,  
Lk 6:44

12:34 Mt 3:7,  
Mt 23:33; Lk 3:7,  
Lk 6:45

12:35 Prv 10:20,  
Prv 25:11;  
Mt 12:34,  
Mt 13:52;  
Col 4:6

12:36 Ecc 12:14;  
Mt 10:15;  
1Pt 4:5; Jud 1:15

12:37 Jas 3:2

<sup>24</sup>When the Pharisees heard, they said, “This man throws out demons only by the authority of Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.”

<sup>25</sup>Because Jesus knew what they were thinking, he replied, “Every kingdom involved in civil war becomes a wasteland. Every city or house torn apart by divisions will collapse. <sup>26</sup>If Satan throws out Satan, he is at war with himself. How then can his kingdom endure? <sup>27</sup>And if I throw out demons by the authority of Beelzebul, then by whose authority do your followers throw them out? Therefore, they will be your judges. <sup>28</sup>But if I throw out demons by the power of God’s Spirit, then God’s kingdom has already overtaken you. <sup>29</sup>Can people go into a house that belongs to a strong man and steal his possessions, unless they first tie up the strong man? Then they can rob his house. <sup>30</sup>Whoever isn’t with me is against me, and whoever doesn’t gather with me scatters.

### Insulting the Holy Spirit

<sup>31</sup>“Therefore, I tell you that people will be forgiven for every sin and insult to God. But insulting the Holy Spirit won’t be forgiven. <sup>32</sup>And whoever speaks a word against the Human One<sup>d</sup> will be forgiven. But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit won’t be forgiven, not in this age or in the age that is coming.

### Trees and fruits

<sup>33</sup>“Either consider the tree good and its fruit good, or consider the tree rotten and its fruit rotten. A tree is known by its fruit. <sup>34</sup>Children of snakes! How can you speak good things while you are evil? What fills the heart comes out of the mouth. <sup>35</sup>Good people bring out good things from their good treasure. But evil people bring out evil things from their evil treasure. <sup>36</sup>I tell you that people will have to answer on Judgment Day for every useless word they speak. <sup>37</sup>By your words you will be either judged innocent or condemned as guilty.”

### Request for a sign

<sup>38</sup>At that time some of the legal experts and the Pharisees requested of Jesus, “Teacher, we would like to see a sign from you.”

<sup>39</sup>But he replied, “An evil and unfaithful generation searches for a sign, but it won’t receive any sign except Jonah’s sign. <sup>40</sup>Just as *Jonah was in the whale’s belly for three days and three nights*,<sup>e</sup> so the Human One<sup>f</sup> will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

<sup>41</sup>The citizens of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it as guilty, because they changed their hearts and lives in response to Jonah’s preaching. And

<sup>d</sup>Or *Son of Man*   <sup>e</sup>Jonah 1:17   <sup>f</sup>Or *Son of Man*

12:38 Mt 16:1; Mk 8:11; Lk 11:16; Jn 2:18; 1Co 1:22   12:39 Mt 16:4; Lk 11:29   12:40 Jon 1:17; Mt 16:21; Mt 17:23   12:41 Jon 1:2; Jon 3:5; Mt 12:6; Lk 11:32

12:24 by the authority of Beelzebul: that is, by the authority of “the ruler of demons.” The Pharisees try to undercut Jesus’ influence with the crowds (see Matt 13:15, 23) by dismissing him as an instrument of the devil. The question isn’t *whether* he throws out demons, but by whose authority.

12:25–29 Jesus’ response takes three forms: (1) He appeals to common sense. What ruler would incite civil war? (2) He observes that their accusation against him must also be heard as an accusation against those in their own group whose ministry includes expelling demons from the demon-possessed. (3) Most important, he claims for himself a different source of power—not the ruler of demons but God’s Spirit. Recall Jesus’ baptism, when God’s Spirit rested on him (Matt 3:16); and the quotation from Isaiah 42, with its reference to God’s Spirit on God’s servant (Matt 12:18).

12:28–29 *God’s kingdom*: in opposition to the kingdom over which Beelzebul rules (Matt 12:24). “God’s kingdom” is typically called “kingdom of heaven” in Matthew. Here the emphasis falls on the withdrawal of evil in the face of the advancing new world order. See sidebar, “The Kingdom of Heaven” at Matthew 3.

12:30 *Whoever isn’t with me is against me*: Jesus presents

an either-or choice. A person is either loyal to the devil’s rule or loyal to God’s rule. There’s no in between.

12:31–32 *forgiven for every sin*: a summary of Jesus’ saving work (see Matt 1:21; 26:26–28). *insulting the Holy Spirit won’t be forgiven*: Some translations refer to “blasphemy” against the Spirit. Read in relation to the accusation against Jesus and his response in Matthew 12:24–30, the problem Jesus identifies is refusing to recognize that the Holy Spirit is at work through Jesus’ ministry and claiming instead that it is an expression of the devil’s rule.

12:33–37 See Matthew 7:16–20.

12:38 *a sign from you*: The Pharisees and legal experts want Jesus to prove himself in spite of the way his ministry has already been on display (see Matt 11:4–5; 12:13, 22). In Matthew 12:41–42, sign-seeking is what people do instead of changing their hearts and lives.

12:39–42 *evil and unfaithful generation*: Similar language was used to describe those Israelites whom God rescued from Egypt, but who resisted God and Moses on the journey to the land God had promised to give them (e.g., Deut 1:35). *Jonah’s sign*: Here Jesus interprets this in two ways:

- (1) Unlike Jews who refuse to change their hearts and lives, the Ninevites do change their hearts and lives; and
- (2) the time Jonah spent in the whale’s belly (see Jon 2:1)



look, someone greater than Jonah is here. <sup>42</sup>The queen of the South will be raised up by God at the judgment with this generation and condemn it because she came from a distant land to hear Solomon's wisdom. And look, someone greater than Solomon is here.

### Unclean spirit seeking a home

<sup>43</sup>"When an unclean spirit leaves a person, it wanders through dry places looking for a place to rest. But it doesn't find any. <sup>44</sup>Then it says, 'I'll go back to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the place vacant, cleaned up, and decorated. <sup>45</sup>Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself. They go in and make their home there. That person is worse off at the end than at the beginning. This is the way it will be also for this evil generation."

### Jesus' family

<sup>46</sup>While Jesus was speaking to the crowds, his mother and brothers stood outside trying to speak with him. <sup>47</sup>Someone said to him, "Look, your mother and brothers are outside wanting to speak with you."

<sup>48</sup>Jesus replied, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" <sup>49</sup>He stretched out his hand toward his disciples and said, "Look, here are my mother and my brothers. <sup>50</sup>Whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother."

### Setting for the parables

**13** That day Jesus went out of the house and sat down beside the lake. <sup>2</sup>Such large crowds gathered around him that he climbed into a boat and sat down. The whole crowd was standing on the shore.

### Parable of the soils

<sup>3</sup>He said many things to them in parables: "A farmer went out to scatter seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering seed, some fell on the path, and birds came and ate it. <sup>5</sup>Other seed fell on rocky ground where the soil was shallow. They sprouted immediately because the soil wasn't deep. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, it scorched the plants, and they dried up because they had no roots. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorny plants grew and choked them. <sup>8</sup>Other seed fell on good soil and bore fruit, in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one. <sup>9</sup>Everyone who has ears should pay attention."

### Why Jesus speaks in parables

<sup>10</sup>Jesus' disciples came and said to him, "Why do you use parables when you speak to the crowds?"

<sup>11</sup>Jesus replied, "Because they haven't received the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but you have. <sup>12</sup>For those who have will receive more and they will have more than enough. But as for those who don't have, even the little they have will be taken away from them. <sup>13</sup>This is

will correspond to the time between Jesus' death and resurrection. *citizens of Nineveh*: See John 3. *queen of the South*: that is, Sheba (see 1 Kgs 10:1-13; 2 Chron 9:1-12). Jesus refers to Gentiles as models of people who responded appropriately, anticipating the mission to all nations (Matt 28:18-20).

12:43-45 Jesus isn't so much teaching about unclean spirits and what happens after a demon is thrown out of a demon-possessed person as he is telling a parable. This is clear from the last phrase: *This is the way it will be also for this evil generation*—an obvious reference to the sign-seekers of Matthew 12:39. It's not enough to see or even experience what Jesus can do. A complete change of heart and life is needed.

12:46-50 The call to follow Jesus led Simon, Andrew, James, and John to leave their families (Matt 4:18-22). Earlier, too, Jesus had spoken of division within families (Matt 10:21, 34-37). Now he speaks of the formation of a new family, made up of those who do *the will of my Father who is in heaven*. See Matthew 7:21 (cf. Matt 28:10, where Jesus refers to his disciples as "my brothers").

13:3 *parables*: a wide-ranging term used especially to draw comparisons between different things. In Matthew's Gospel, parables often draw on everyday peasant life in order to illustrate the nature of the kingdom of heaven.

13:4-8 Although this is called the "parable of the farmer" in Matthew 13:18, the focus is on what happens to the seed. And what happens to the seed depends on the different kinds of soil. The farmer scatters the seed generously. He doesn't discriminate. It falls everywhere.

13:9 *pay attention*: The listener is warned that this parable does more than describe everyday farming practices. Understanding will require reflection.

13:10 *Jesus' disciples came*: Note the shift in audience from "large crowds" (Matt 13:2) to the inner circle of disciples.

13:11-13 *secrets of the kingdom of heaven*: Although Jesus has openly proclaimed the kingdom of heaven, people need the gift of insight from God in order to understand (see Matt 11:25-26; sidebar, "The Kingdom of Heaven" at Matt 3). *those who have... those who don't have*: People are like the soils of Jesus' parable, with some more receptive than others to the good news.

12:42 1Ki  
10:1, 1Ki 10:4;  
2Ch 9:1

12:43 Lk 11:24  
12:44 Ps 81:11,  
Ps 81:12;  
Mt 12:43

12:45 Mk 5:9;  
Heb 6:4;  
2Pt 2:20

12:46 Mt 13:55;  
Mk 3:31;  
Lk 2:48, Lk 8:19;  
Ga 1:19

12:49 In 20:17  
12:50 Mt 7:21;  
Jn 15:14

13:1 Mt 9:28,  
Mt 13:36;  
Mk 4:1; Lk 8:4

13:2 Mt 4:25;  
Lk 5:3

13:3 Lk 8:5

13:4 Mt 13:19

13:5 Mt 13:20

13:6 Jas 1:11

13:7 Jer 4:3;  
Mt 13:22

13:8 Gn 26:12;  
Mt 13:23

13:9 Mt 11:15

13:11 Mt 11:25;  
Mt 4:25;  
Col 1:27;  
1Jn 2:20,  
1Jn 2:27

13:12 Mt 25:29;  
Mk 4:25;  
Lk 8:18,  
Lk 19:26; Jn 15:2

13:13 Dt 29:4;  
Jer 5:21;  
Eze 12:2

13:14 Is 6:9;  
Is 6:10; Jn 12:40

13:15 Is 6:9;  
Is 6:10

13:16 Mt 16:17;  
Lk 10:23;  
Lk 10:24;  
In 20:29

13:17 In 8:56;  
Heb 11:13;  
1Pt 1:10

13:18 Lk 8:11

13:19 Mt 4:23;  
Mt 13:38

13:20 In 5:35

13:21 Hos 6:4;  
Mt 11:6;  
Mt 24:10;  
Mt 26:31

13:22 Mt 6:25;  
Mt 19:23;  
1Ti 6:9, 1Ti 6:10;  
1Ti 6:17

13:23 Mt 13:8  
13:24 Mt 13:47;  
Mt 20:1;  
Mt 22:2, Mt 25:1;  
Mk 4:26

13:25 Mt 13:38;  
Mt 13:39;  
Heb 12:15

13:29 Mt 3:12;  
Mt 13:30

13:30 Mt 3:12

13:31 Mt 13:24;  
Mt 17:20;  
Mk 4:30;  
Lk 13:18;  
Lk 13:19

13:32 Eze 17:23;  
Eze 31:6;  
Dn 4:12

why I speak to the crowds in parables; although they see, they don't really see; and although they hear, they don't really hear or understand. <sup>14</sup>What Isaiah prophesied has become completely true for them:

*You will hear, to be sure, but never understand;  
and you will certainly see but never recognize what you are seeing.*

<sup>15</sup>For this people's senses have become calloused,  
and they've become hard of hearing,  
and they've shut their eyes  
so that they won't see with their eyes  
or hear with their ears  
or understand with their minds,  
and change their hearts and lives that I may heal them.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Happy are your eyes because they see. Happy are your ears because they hear. <sup>17</sup>I assure you that many prophets and righteous people wanted to see what you see and hear what you hear, but they didn't.

### Explanation of the parable of the farmer

<sup>18</sup>Consider then the parable of the farmer. <sup>19</sup>Whenever people hear the word about the kingdom and don't understand it, the evil one comes and carries off what was planted in their hearts. This is the seed that was sown on the path. <sup>20</sup>As for the seed that was spread on rocky ground, this refers to people who hear the word and immediately receive it joyfully. <sup>21</sup>Because they have no roots, they last for only a little while. When they experience distress or abuse because of the word, they immediately fall away. <sup>22</sup>As for the seed that was spread among thorny plants, this refers to those who hear the word, but the worries of this life and the false appeal of wealth choke the word, and it bears no fruit. <sup>23</sup>As for what was planted on good soil, this refers to those who hear and understand, and bear fruit and produce—in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one.”

### Parable of the weeds

<sup>24</sup>Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like someone who planted good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup>While people were sleeping, an enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat and went away. <sup>26</sup>When the stalks sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared.

<sup>27</sup>“The servants of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Master, didn't you plant good seed in your field? Then how is it that it has weeds?’

<sup>28</sup>“An enemy has done this,’ he answered.

“The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us to go and gather them?’

<sup>29</sup>“But the landowner said, ‘No, because if you gather the weeds, you'll pull up the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup>Let both grow side by side until the harvest. And at harvesttime I'll say to the harvesters, ‘First gather the weeds and tie them together in bundles to be burned. But bring the wheat into my barn.’”

### Parable of the mustard seed

<sup>31</sup>He told another parable to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and planted in his field. <sup>32</sup>It's the smallest of all seeds. But when it's grown,

<sup>8</sup>Isa 6:9-10

13:14-15 In order to explain negative responses to the good news, Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10. When they “see” but “don't really see,” for example, they demonstrate their unwillingness to welcome the good news.

13:16 *Happy*: See Matthew 5:3-12.

13:18-23 Consider then the parable of the farmer: Jesus explains the parable he told in Matthew 13:3-8. First, he identifies the seed as the word about the kingdom. Then he shows how each soil represents a different response by people to the message of the kingdom.

13:21 *distress or abuse*: See Matthew 5:10-12, 44; 10:16-23.

13:22 *worries . . . wealth*: See Matthew 6:19-34.

13:23 *hear and understand*: See Matthew 13:13-16; 15:10. *bear fruit*: See Matthew 3:8; 7:16-20.

13:24-30 For Jesus' explanation of this parable, see Matthew 13:36-43.

13:24: *them*: refers to the crowds, and not only the disciples (see Matt 13:2, 34). *seed*: See Matthew 13:4, 19. In Hosea 2:23, God “sows” a people.

13:30 *harvest*: a popular image of the last judgment in Jewish literature (e.g., Isa 27:12-13; Joel 3:13; 4 Ezra 4:28-32). See Matthew 3:12.

13:31-32 The parable exaggerates both the smallness of the mustard seed and the greatness of the mustard plant

it's the largest of all vegetable plants. It becomes a tree so that the birds in the sky come and nest in its branches."

### Parable of the yeast

<sup>33</sup>He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and hid in a bushel of wheat flour until the yeast had worked its way through all the dough."

### Purpose of parables to the crowds

<sup>34</sup>Jesus said all these things to the crowds in parables, and he spoke to them only in parables. <sup>35</sup>This was to fulfill what the prophet spoke:

*I'll speak in parables;*

*I'll declare what has been hidden since the beginning of the world.<sup>b</sup>*

### Explanation of the parable of the weeds

<sup>36</sup>Jesus left the crowds and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

<sup>37</sup>Jesus replied, "The one who plants the good seed is the Human One.<sup>i</sup> <sup>38</sup>The field is the world. And the good seeds are the followers of the kingdom. But the weeds are the followers of the evil one. <sup>39</sup>The enemy who planted them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the present age. The harvesters are the angels. <sup>40</sup>Just as people gather weeds and burn them in the fire, so it will be at the end of the present age. <sup>41</sup>The Human One<sup>l</sup> will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that cause people to fall away and all people who sin. <sup>42</sup>He will throw them into a burning furnace. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth. <sup>43</sup>Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom. Those who have ears should hear."

### Parable of the treasure

<sup>44</sup>"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure that somebody hid in a field, which someone else found and covered up. Full of joy, the finder sold everything and bought that field.

### Parable of the merchant

<sup>45</sup>"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. <sup>46</sup>When he found one very precious pearl, he went and sold all that he owned and bought it.

### Parable of the net

<sup>47</sup>"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that people threw into the lake and gathered all kinds of fish. <sup>48</sup>When it was full, they pulled it to the shore, where they sat down and put the good fish together into containers. But the bad fish they threw away. <sup>49</sup>That's the way it will be at the end of the present age. The angels will go out and separate the evil people from the righteous people, <sup>50</sup>and will throw the evil ones into a burning furnace. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth.

### Treasures new and old

<sup>51</sup>"Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked.

They said to him, "Yes."

<sup>b</sup>Ps 78:2 <sup>i</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>l</sup>Or Son of Man

(hardly a tree!) in order to emphasize the surprising character of the kingdom of heaven.

**13:33 yeast:** The active agent necessary for making bread might seem insignificant when compared to about 50 pounds of flour, yet it transforms everything.

**13:34-35 See Psalm 78:2.** Jesus explains that his aim is to let the secret of the kingdom of heaven be known to anyone who is ready to receive it.

**13:36-43 Jesus left the crowds:** See Matthew 13:10 for a similar shift of audience. Jesus explains the parable told in Matthew 13:24-30, though he now focuses on the harvest. The effect is to emphasize the Father's recognition of and care for the righteous (13:43). The "righteous" are those who hear and do the Father's will (see Matt 7:16-20). For a similar emphasis, see Matthew 10:16-33. *shine like the sun:*

Compare with Daniel 12:3. *Those who have ears:* See Matthew 11:15; 13:9.

**13:44-46** The incomparable value of God's kingdom demands a complete reorientation of life. See Matthew 4:18-22; 19:21.

**13:47-50 a net that people threw into the lake:** Jesus describes a large net dragged between two boats, capable of hauling in a large catch (that is, a "dragnet"). Like the farmer who sowed seed everywhere (Matt 13:4-8), the dragnet doesn't discriminate. For the picture of good and evil side by side in this life, compare Matthew 13:24-30. For the picture of end-time judgment, compare Matthew 13:36-43 (see also Matt 3:12). *weeping and grinding their teeth:* See Matthew 8:11-12.

**13:51-52 Have you understood:** See Matthew 14:23, and

13:33 Gn 18:6;  
Mt 13:24;  
Lk 13:21;  
1Co 5:6; Ga 5:9

13:34 Mk 4:34;  
Jn 16:25

13:35 Ps 78:2;  
Ro 16:25;  
Ro 16:26;  
1Co 2:7

13:36 Mt 13:1;  
Mt 13:24;  
Mt 15:15

13:37 Mt 8:20

13:38 Mt 8:12;  
Mt 13:19;  
Jn 8:44; Ac 13:10;  
1Jn 3:10

13:39 Jl 3:13;  
Mt 13:49;  
Mt 24:3;  
Mt 28:20;  
Rev 14:15

13:40 Mt 3:12;  
Mt 13:30;  
Mt 13:49

13:41 Mt 24:31

13:42 Mt 8:12;  
Mt 13:50;  
Mt 25:41

13:43 Dn 12:3;  
Mt 11:15

13:44 Is 55:1;  
Mt 13:24;  
Mt 19:21;  
Phi 3:7; Rev 3:18

13:45 Mt 13:24

13:46 Mt 13:45;  
Rev 21:21

13:47 Mt 4:19;  
Mt 13:24;  
Mt 22:10

13:49 Mt 13:39;  
Mt 25:32

13:50 Mt 8:12;  
Mt 13:42

13:51 Mt 11:25;  
Mt 20:25;  
Mk 8:17;  
Lk 10:21; Jn 10:6

13:52 Est 7:10;  
Prv 11:30;  
Mt 12:35;  
Mt 23:34;  
2Ti 3:16

<sup>52</sup>Then he said to them, “Therefore, every legal expert who has been trained as a disciple for the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings old and new things out of their treasure chest.”

13:53 Mt 7:28  
13:54 Mt 4:23;  
Mt 7:28; Mk 6:1

### Jesus in his hometown

<sup>53</sup>When Jesus finished these parables, he departed. <sup>54</sup>When he came to his hometown, he taught the people in their synagogue. They were surprised and said, “Where did he get this wisdom? Where did he get the power to work miracles? <sup>55</sup>Isn’t he the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother named Mary? Aren’t James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas his brothers? <sup>56</sup>And his sisters, aren’t they here with us? Where did this man get all this?” <sup>57</sup>They were repulsed by him and fell into sin.

13:55 Mt 12:46;  
Mk 6:3; Jn 6:42;  
Ga 1:19

13:56 Mk 6:3  
13:57 Mt 11:6;  
Mk 6:3; Mk 6:4;  
Lk 4:24; Jn 4:44

But Jesus said to them, “Prophets are honored everywhere except in their own hometowns and in their own households.” <sup>58</sup>He was unable to do many miracles there because of their disbelief.

13:58 Ps 78:19;  
Is 53:1; Mt 17:20;  
Mt 21:32;  
Mk 16:14

### Death of John the Baptist

**14**At that time Herod the ruler<sup>a</sup> heard the news about Jesus. <sup>2</sup>He said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist. He’s been raised from the dead. This is why these miraculous powers are at work through him.” <sup>3</sup>Herod had arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of Herod’s brother Philip.

14:1 Mk 6:14;  
Mt 8:15; Lk 3:1;  
Lk 9:7; Lk 13:31

14:2 Mt 16:14;  
Mk 6:14; Lk 9:7

14:3 Mt 4:12;  
Mt 11:2;  
Mk 6:17;  
Lk 3:19; Lk 3:20

<sup>4</sup>That’s because John told Herod, “It’s against the law for you to marry her.”

14:4 Lv 18:16;  
Lv 20:21;  
Mk 6:18

<sup>5</sup>Although Herod wanted to kill him, he feared the crowd because they thought John was a prophet. <sup>6</sup>But at Herod’s birthday party Herodias’ daughter danced in front of the guests and thrilled Herod. <sup>7</sup>Then he swore to give her anything she asked.

14:5 Mt 11:9;  
Mt 21:26

14:6 Gn 40:20  
14:7 Est 5:3

14:8 Mk 6:24  
14:10 Mt 3:1;  
Mt 3:13;

<sup>8</sup>At her mother’s urging, the girl said, “Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a plate.” <sup>9</sup>Although the king was upset, because of his solemn pledge and his guests he commanded that they give it to her. <sup>10</sup>Then he had John beheaded in prison. <sup>11</sup>They brought his head on a plate and gave it to the young woman, and she brought it to her mother. <sup>12</sup>But John’s disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened.

Mt 4:12; Mt 11:2;  
Mt 11:7

14:12 Ac 8:2

<sup>a</sup>Or *tetrarch*, which refers to a prince over a small region

the lack of understanding in Matthew 13:13-15, 19. *legal expert... trained as a disciple for the kingdom of heaven*: Legal experts were the trained scholars of the Jewish world, so Jesus’ disciples are those who understand, uphold, and share with others Jesus’ teaching.

13:54 *his hometown*: Nazareth (Matt 2:23; see Matt 21:11; 26:71).

13:55-56 Those in the synagogue name Jesus’ family as proof that he isn’t anyone special. Recall that status in the ancient world was based less on one’s accomplishments and more on one’s family roots.

13:57 *They were repulsed by him*: Compare with Matthew 11:6.

13:58 *He was unable to do many miracles*: or, better, “He didn’t do many miracles.” Matthew’s emphasis is on Jesus’ unwillingness to perform miracles (cf. Matt 12:38-39), not on his inability.

14:1 *Herod the ruler*: Herod Antipas. Caesar Augustus (see Luke 2:1) appointed Herod Antipas ruler of Galilee and Peraea after the death of Antipas’ father, Herod the Great, in 4 BCE (see the note on Matt 2:19-22). See sidebar, “Judea under Foreign Rule” at Matthew 3.

14:2 *raised from the dead*: Matthew has informed us that John is in prison, but not that he was dead. Herod’s attempt to explain the basis of Jesus’ miraculous powers prepares for the story of how John was put to death. *This is why*: The Pharisees claimed that Jesus’ authority came from “the ruler of demons” (Matt 9:34; 12:28). Herod adds a further misconception, one based in

popular religious thought, that people brought back from the dead must be able to exercise special powers. For Matthew, Jesus’ power came from God’s Spirit (Matt 3:16-17; 12:18, 28).

14:3-12 A flashback relating the death of John the Baptist. Matthew connects the story of John’s execution to Jesus (see Matt 14:1-2, 12-13). In fact, John’s death at the hand of a Roman ruler foreshadows Jesus’ own death. Some details of Matthew’s story are difficult to tie down. For example, according to the 1st-century Jewish historian Josephus, *Herodias* was married to one of Herod’s sons, not to Herod’s brother *Philip*, as in Matthew. According to Josephus, Herod had John executed because of his growing popularity, which might lead to rebellion against Rome. There’s a hint of this in Matthew 14:5. Josephus also writes that the daughter’s name is Salome.

14:3-4 *against the law*: See Leviticus 18:16; 20:21. Herod’s marriage was regarded as an incestuous relationship. *John told Herod*: The Greek verb translated as “told” refers to continuous action. In other words, Matthew portrays John as mounting an ongoing protest against Herod’s marriage.

14:5 *a prophet*: See Matthew 17:12-13.

14:7 *he swore*: See Matthew 5:33-37.

14:9 *king*: Herod the Great had the title of “king,” but Herod Antipas was only a ruler who depended on Rome (see Matt 14:1; sidebar, “Judea under Foreign Rule” at Matt 3).

14:12 *John’s disciples came and took his body and buried it*: an anticipation of Matthew 27:55-60.

**Feeding the five thousand**

<sup>13</sup>When Jesus heard about John, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. When the crowds learned this, they followed him on foot from the cities. <sup>14</sup>When Jesus arrived and saw a large crowd, he had compassion for them and healed those who were sick. <sup>15</sup>That evening his disciples came and said to him, "This is an isolated place and it's getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

<sup>16</sup>But Jesus said to them, "There's no need to send them away. You give them something to eat."

<sup>17</sup>They replied, "We have nothing here except five loaves of bread and two fish."

<sup>18</sup>He said, "Bring them here to me." <sup>19</sup>He ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves of bread and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed them and broke the loaves apart and gave them to his disciples. Then the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>20</sup>Everyone ate until they were full, and they filled twelve baskets with the leftovers. <sup>21</sup>About five thousand men plus women and children had eaten.

**Walking on the water**

<sup>22</sup>Right then, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake while he dismissed the crowds. <sup>23</sup>When he sent them away, he went up onto a mountain by himself to pray. Evening came and he was alone. <sup>24</sup>Meanwhile, the boat, fighting a strong headwind, was being battered by the waves and was already far away from land. <sup>25</sup>Very early in the morning he came to his disciples, walking on the lake. <sup>26</sup>When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified and said, "It's a ghost!" They were so frightened they screamed.

<sup>27</sup>Just then Jesus spoke to them, "Be encouraged! It's me. Don't be afraid."

<sup>28</sup>Peter replied, "Lord, if it's you, order me to come to you on the water."

<sup>29</sup>And Jesus said, "Come."

Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup>But when Peter saw the strong wind, he became frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, "Lord, rescue me!"

<sup>31</sup>Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him, saying, "You man of weak faith! Why did you begin to have doubts?" <sup>32</sup>When they got into the boat, the wind settled down.

<sup>33</sup>Then those in the boat worshipped Jesus and said, "You must be God's Son!"

**Healing the sick**

<sup>34</sup>When they had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret. <sup>35</sup>When the people who lived in that place recognized him, they sent word throughout that whole region, and they brought to him everyone who was sick. <sup>36</sup>Then they begged him that they might just touch the edge of his clothes. Everyone who touched him was cured.

14:13-21 Jesus' miraculous provision of food in the wilderness brings to mind God's provision of manna to Israel in the wilderness (Exod 16). See also 2 Kings 4:38-44. Recall the prayer Jesus taught his disciples: "Give us the bread we need for today" (Matt 6:11).

14:14 *he had compassion for them*: Jesus' motivation both for healing the sick and for feeding the hungry (see Matt 9:36; 20:34).

14:19 *took... blessed... broke... gave*: See Matthew 26:26-27.

14:20 *twelve baskets*: There's the same number of baskets of leftovers as there are disciples who had questioned how the large crowd could be fed. Twelve is also symbolic of the restoration of Israel.

14:22-23 *go ahead*: It's clear that Jesus had wanted to be alone after hearing the news of John's death (see Matt 14:13), but it isn't clear how Jesus plans to catch up with the disciples, who are directed to cross the Galilee Sea. For prayer on a mountain, see Matthew 26:36-46.

14:25-26 *Very early*: or "in the fourth watch of the night." Romans divided the night into four watches. The fourth

would be from 3:00 to 6:00 a.m. This is the darkest part of the night and the disciples have been battling the storm for hours. *walking on the lake*: Matthew portrays Jesus in the role God has in some OT texts (e.g., Ps 77:19; Isa 43:16; and especially Job 9:8). (For the sea as a place of chaos and evil, see Job 26:12-14; Pss 74:13-17; 89:9-12; Rev 21:1. For God's mastery of the sea, see, e.g., Job 38:16; Ps 77:16; Hab 3:15; Sir 24:5. For similar images of God rescuing people, see Pss 69:1-3, 13-15; 107:23-32.)

14:30-31 See Matthew 8:25-26. *weak faith*: an expression applied to the disciples in Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 16:8. See also Matthew 17:20.

14:33 The miracle leads to worship and confession (see Matt 28:9, 17). For Jesus as *God's Son*, see Matthew 3:16-17; 11:27; 16:16; 17:5.

14:34 *Gennesaret*: a city on the northwestern shore of the Galilee Sea (also called "Lake Gennesaret," Luke 5:1).

14:34-36 The length of Jesus' mission in Gennesaret is unspecified. Matthew summarizes with what would have been Jesus' typical activity there. *touch the edge of his clothes*: See Matthew 9:20-21.

14:13 Mt 15:32; Mk 6:32; Lk 9:10; Jn 6:1  
14:14 Mt 4:23; Mt 9:36; Mt 15:32  
14:15 Lk 9:12  
14:16 2Ks 4:42; Jn 13:29  
14:17 Mt 15:134; Mt 16:9  
14:19 1Sa 9:13; Mt 15:36; Mt 26:26; Lk 24:30; Ac 27:35  
14:20 Mt 15:37  
14:22 Mk 6:45; Jn 6:15  
14:23 Lk 6:12  
14:25 Mt 24:43; Lk 12:38; Jn 6:19  
14:26 Lk 24:37  
14:27 Mt 9:2; Mt 17:7; Mt 28:5; Mt 28:10; Ac 23:11  
14:28 Mt 17:4; Mt 19:27; Mt 26:33; Jn 6:68; Jn 13:36  
14:29 Mt 17:20; Mt 21:21; Mk 9:23; Mk 11:22; Jn 21:7  
14:30 Mt 8:25  
14:31 Mt 6:30; Mt 8:26; Mt 16:8  
14:32 Mt 8:26  
14:33 Ps 2:7; Mt 4:3; Mt 16:16; Mk 1:1; Jn 11:27  
14:34 Mk 6:53; Jn 6:24  
14:35 Mt 4:24  
14:36 Mt 9:20; Mk 3:10; Lk 6:19

15:1 Mt 23:2;  
Mk 7:1  
15:2 Mk 7:2;  
Mk 7:3;  
Lk 11:38; Col 2:8  
15:3 Col 2:8

15:4 Ex 20:12;  
Ex 21:17;  
Lv 20:9; Dt 5:16  
15:5 Mk 7:11;  
Mk 7:12  
15:7 Mt 23:13  
15:8 Is 29:13  
15:9 Is 29:13;  
Col 2:22; Ti 1:14  
15:11 Mt 15:18;  
Ac 10:14;  
Ac 10:15

15:12 Mt 17:27  
15:13 Is 60:21;  
Is 61:3; Jn 15:2  
15:14 Mt 23:16;  
Mt 23:24;  
Lk 6:39

15:15 Mt 13:36  
15:16 Mt 16:9;  
Mt 16:11;  
Jn 14:9

15:17 1Co 6:13  
15:18 Mt 12:34;  
Jas 3:6

15:19 Gn 6:5;  
Gn 8:21; Ga 5:19  
15:20 Mk 7:2;  
1Co 6:9

15:21 Mt 11:21;  
Mk 7:24

15:22 Mt 9:27;  
Mt 20:30;  
Mt 20:31

15:23 Mt 14:15;  
Mk 10:13;  
Mk 10:47;  
Mk 10:48;  
Lk 18:15

### Rules from the elders

**15** Then Pharisees and legal experts came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, <sup>2</sup>“Why are your disciples breaking the elders’ rules handed down to us? They don’t ritually purify their hands by washing before they eat.”

<sup>3</sup>Jesus replied, “Why do you break the command of God by keeping the rules handed down to you? <sup>4</sup>For God said, *Honor your father and your mother,*<sup>1</sup> and *The person who speaks against father or mother will certainly be put to death.*<sup>5</sup> But you say, ‘If you tell your father or mother, “Everything I’m expected to contribute to you I’m giving to God as a gift,” then you don’t have to honor your father.’ <sup>6</sup>So you do away with God’s Law for the sake of the rules that have been handed down to you. <sup>7</sup>Hypocrites! Isaiah really knew what he was talking about when he prophesied about you, <sup>8</sup>*This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from me. <sup>9</sup>Their worship of me is empty since they teach instructions that are human rules.*<sup>10</sup>”

<sup>10</sup>Jesus called the crowd near and said to them, “Listen and understand. <sup>11</sup>It’s not what goes into the mouth that contaminates a person in God’s sight. It’s what comes out of the mouth that contaminates the person.”

<sup>12</sup>Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended by what you just said?”

<sup>13</sup>Jesus replied, “Every plant that my heavenly Father didn’t plant will be pulled up. <sup>14</sup>Leave the Pharisees alone. They are blind people who are guides to blind people. But if a blind person leads another blind person, they will both fall into a ditch.”

<sup>15</sup>Then Peter spoke up, “Explain this riddle to us.”

<sup>16</sup>Jesus said, “Don’t you understand yet? <sup>17</sup>Don’t you know that everything that goes into the mouth enters the stomach and goes out into the sewer? <sup>18</sup>But what goes out of the mouth comes from the heart. And that’s what contaminates a person in God’s sight. <sup>19</sup>Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adultery, sexual sins, thefts, false testimonies, and insults. <sup>20</sup>These contaminate a person in God’s sight. But eating without washing hands doesn’t contaminate in God’s sight.”

### Canaanite woman

<sup>21</sup>From there, Jesus went to the regions of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup>A Canaanite woman from those territories came out and shouted, “Show me mercy, Son of David. My daughter is suffering terribly from demon possession.” <sup>23</sup>But he didn’t respond to her at all.

<sup>1</sup>Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16 <sup>2</sup>Mt 23:17; Lev 20:9 <sup>3</sup>Isa 29:13

15:1 Reports of Jesus’ ministry have apparently reached Jerusalem (see Matt 4:25). Because Jerusalem is the center of Jewish religion, the controversy regarding washing hands in Matthew 15:1-11 has added significance. *Pharisees*: See note on Matthew 3:7. *legal experts*: scripture scholars.

15:2 *elders’ rules*: traditional interpretations of the Law. Here, these traditions have to do with Jewish ritual purity. See sidebar, “Oral Law and Written Law.”

15:3-6 Jesus’ response insists that the “elders’ rules” could have the effect of countering the very Law they were meant to protect. He quotes Exodus 20:12; 21:17. Matthew presents Jesus as the genuine interpreter of scripture, over against those interpretations that Jesus dismisses by calling them “human rules” (Matt 15:9).

15:8-9 Jesus interprets Isaiah 29:13 as a charge against the Pharisees and legal experts.

15:10-11 Jesus’ audience shifts from the Pharisees and legal experts (Matt 15:1-9) to *the crowd*. Jesus, the Pharisees, and the legal experts all sought to answer the same question: What does it mean to be faithful to God? They also answered in terms of living pure lives. But they understood in different ways what this entails. Jesus’ interpretation of the idea of “purity” dismisses the “elders’ rules” and casts in a bad light the Pharisees and legal experts who uphold those rules. *what goes into the mouth... what*

*comes out of the mouth*: What contaminates people in terms of their relationship to God isn’t what they eat but their moral character, which is on display in their words and deeds (see Jas 3).

15:13 *Every plant*: See Matthew 13:24-30; Isaiah 60:21.

15:15 *riddle*: or “parable,” in reference to Jesus’ words in Matthew 15:11.

15:16: *Don’t you understand yet*: For the importance of “understanding,” see Matthew 13:13-15, 19, 23; 15:10; 16:9. 15:17-20 *enters the stomach... comes from the heart*: Although the *stomach* can refer to a person’s inner desires, here Jesus thinks of it only in terms of its place in the path of digestion. Here, the heart is the center of a person’s thinking, feeling, and will.

15:22 *A Canaanite woman from those territories*: from “the regions of Tyre and Sidon” (Matt 15:21). Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities along the Syrophenician coast. The term “Canaanite” appears only here in the NT but more than 80 times in the OT. It recalls the people who lived in the land conquered by the Israelites after the exodus from Egypt (e.g., Exod 3:8). *Son of David*: Though this woman is clearly a Gentile, she recognizes Jesus as David’s son and appeals to him in a properly Jewish way. See Matthew 9:27; 20:30-31.

15:23-24 *he didn’t respond*: The mission to the Gentiles will feature later in the Gospel (see Matt 24:14; 28:18-20), but

**Oral Law and Written Law** Some Jews before and during the time of Jesus accepted the idea of an oral law set alongside the written Law. This oral law was passed on from generation to generation by legal experts. In part, the oral law included rules and regulations in addition to the written Law. And in part, it consisted of traditional interpretations of the written Law. The idea of an oral law wasn't accepted by everyone. The Sadducees rejected it, for example, while the Pharisees actively supported it. As the Pharisees gained the upper hand as the leaders of Judaism after the temple's destruction, the oral law increased in its authority. The oral law was finally written down in Jewish books and collections of books known as Mishnah, Tosefta, and Talmud.

His disciples came and urged him, "Send her away; she keeps shouting out after us."

<sup>24</sup>Jesus replied, "I've been sent only to the lost sheep, the people of Israel."

<sup>25</sup>But she knelt before him and said, "Lord, help me."

<sup>26</sup>He replied, "It is not good to take the children's bread and toss it to dogs."

<sup>27</sup>She said, "Yes, Lord. But even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall off their masters' table."

<sup>28</sup>Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith. It will be just as you wish." And right then her daughter was healed.

### Healing of many people

<sup>29</sup>Jesus moved on from there along the shore of the Galilee Sea. He went up a mountain and sat down. <sup>30</sup>Large crowds came to him, including those who were paralyzed, blind, injured, and unable to speak, and many others. They laid them at his feet, and he healed them. <sup>31</sup>So the crowd was amazed when they saw those who had been unable to speak talking, and the paralyzed cured, and the injured walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

### Feeding the four thousand

<sup>32</sup>Now Jesus called his disciples and said, "I feel sorry for the crowd because they have been with me for three days and have nothing to eat. I don't want to send them away hungry for fear they won't have enough strength to travel."

<sup>33</sup>His disciples replied, "Where are we going to get enough food in this wilderness to satisfy such a big crowd?"

<sup>34</sup>Jesus said, "How much bread do you have?"

They responded, "Seven loaves and a few fish."

<sup>35</sup>He told the crowd to sit on the ground. <sup>36</sup>He took the seven loaves of bread and the fish. After he gave thanks, he broke them into pieces and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>37</sup>Everyone ate until they were full. The disciples collected seven baskets full of leftovers. <sup>38</sup>Four thousand men ate, plus women and children. <sup>39</sup>After dismissing the crowds, Jesus got into the boat and came to the region of Magadan.

### Demand for a sign

**16** The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus. In order to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.

<sup>2</sup>But he replied, "At evening you say, 'It will be nice weather because the sky is bright red.'

<sup>3</sup>And in the morning you say, 'There will be bad weather today because the sky is cloudy.' You

15:24 Mt 10:6;

Ro 15:8

15:25 Mt 8:2

15:26 Mt 7:6

15:27 Lk 16:21

15:28 Mt 8:13;

Mt 9:22;

Mt 17:18

15:29 Mt 4:18;

Mt 4:23; Mt 5:1;

Mk 7:31; Jn 6:1

15:30 Mt 4:23;

Mt 4:24; Lk 6:17;

Lk 7:21

15:31 Mt 9:8;

Mt 9:33;

Mk 7:37

15:32 Mt 9:36;

Mt 14:14;

Mk 8:1

15:33 Mt 14:15

15:34 Mt 16:10

15:36 Mt 14:19;

Mt 26:27;

Lk 22:19; Jn 6:11;

Ac 27:35

15:37 Mt 14:20;

Mt 16:10

15:39 Mk 8:10

16:1 Mt 3:7;

Mt 12:38;

Mk 8:11;

Lk 11:16

16:2 Lk 12:54

16:3 Lk 12:54;

Lk 12:56

for now Jesus' mission is to Israel (cf. Matt 10:5-6, though see the exception in Matt 8:5-13).

15:26-27 Compare with Matthew 5:6. *dogs*: No evidence from the ancient world supports the often-repeated view that "dogs" was a label used by Jews to belittle Gentiles. Jesus' words and the woman's reply should be taken at face value, as references to what actually happens when dogs are present at meals.

15:28 As in Matthew 8:5-13, Jesus recognizes great faith in a non-Jew, and this faith leads to healing.

15:31 *they praised the God of Israel*: They recognize God's healing gifts made available through Jesus' ministry.

15:29-31 The healing ministry of Jesus continues. The focus of this summary report is on God's healing mercies rather than on Jesus himself.

15:32-39 Compare with Matthew 14:13-21. *Magadan*: The name appears only here in ancient literature; the location is uncertain.

16:1 *Pharisees and Sadducees*: For these two groups, see the note on Matthew 3:7 and the sidebar, "Pharisees and Sadducees." They hold different beliefs on many matters (e.g., Acts 23:6-8) but are united in their opposition of Jesus. *to test him*: The same Greek term is used to describe the activity of the devil in Matthew 4:1, 3. Their request is more than an expression of curiosity. *a sign from heaven*: Jesus had condemned sign-seeking in Matthew 12:38-39. Given Jesus' recent activity—including healing and miraculous feeding in Matthew 15:29-39—the request for a sign is ironic.

16:3 *what the time is*: or "the signs of the times." They can

16:4 Mt 12:39,  
Mt 12:40,  
Lk 11:29,  
Lk 11:30

16:6 Mk 8:15;  
Lk 12:1

16:7 Lk 9:46

16:8 Mt 6:30,  
Mt 8:26,  
Mt 14:31

16:9 Mt 14:17,  
Mt 15:16;  
Mk 7:18;  
Lk 24:25

16:10 Mt 15:34,  
Mt 15:37

16:11 Mt 16:6;  
Lk 24:25

16:12 Lk 32:6;  
Mt 3:7; Mt 5:20,  
Mt 16:6; Lk 12:1

16:13 Mt 8:20;  
Mk 8:27; Lk 9:18

16:14 Mt 14:2,  
Mt 17:10;  
Mk 6:15; Lk 9:8;  
Jn 1:21

16:15 Lk 9:20

16:16 Ps 42:2;  
Mt 4:3; Mt 26:63;  
Jn 11:27;  
Ac 14:15

16:17 Mt 11:25;  
Jn 1:42; Jn 21:15;  
1 Co 15:50;  
Eph 6:12

16:18 Mt 10:2,  
Mt 11:23;  
Jn 1:42;  
Eph 2:20

16:19 Jn 22:22;  
Mt 18:18;  
Jn 20:23;  
Rev 1:18; Rev 3:7

16:20 Mt 8:4,  
Mt 17:9;  
Mk 8:30

know how to make sense of the sky's appearance. But you are unable to recognize the signs that point to what the time is. <sup>4</sup>An evil and unfaithful generation searches for a sign. But it won't receive any sign except Jonah's sign." Then he left them and went away.

### **Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees**

<sup>5</sup>When the disciples arrived on the other side of the lake, they had forgotten to bring bread. <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to them, "Watch out and be on your guard for the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

<sup>7</sup>They discussed this among themselves and said, "We didn't bring any bread."

<sup>8</sup>Jesus knew what they were discussing and said, "You people of weak faith! Why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you don't have any bread? <sup>9</sup>Don't you understand yet? Don't you remember the five loaves that fed the five thousand and how many baskets of leftovers you gathered? <sup>10</sup>And the seven loaves that fed the four thousand and how many large baskets of leftovers you gathered? <sup>11</sup>Don't you know that I wasn't talking about bread? But be on your guard for the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." <sup>12</sup>Then they understood that he wasn't telling them to be on their guard for yeast used in making bread. No, he was telling them to watch out for the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

### **Peter's declaration about Jesus**

<sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus came to the area of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Human One<sup>o</sup> is?"

<sup>14</sup>They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."

<sup>15</sup>He said, "And what about you? Who do you say that I am?"

<sup>16</sup>Simon Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

<sup>17</sup>Then Jesus replied, "Happy are you, Simon son of Jonah, because no human has shown this to you. Rather my Father who is in heaven has shown you. <sup>18</sup>I tell you that you are Peter.<sup>p</sup> And I'll build my church on this rock. The gates of the underworld won't be able to stand against it. <sup>19</sup>I'll give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Anything you fasten on earth will be fastened in heaven. Anything you loosen on earth will be loosened in heaven." <sup>20</sup>Then he ordered the disciples not to tell anybody that he was the Christ.

<sup>o</sup>Or *Son of Man* <sup>p</sup>Peter means *rock*.

identify changes in the weather, but they can't recognize in Jesus' teaching and miracles signs of the presence of the kingdom of heaven.

16:4 Compare with Matthew 12:39.

16:5-12 *they had forgotten to bring bread*: "Bread" can refer generally to "food." Here, though, the word is used to recall Jesus' ability to provide more than enough to feed huge crowds. It also prepares for his use of the image of "yeast," the *yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees*: Borrowing from the parable in Matthew 13:33, the idea is that a little influence from the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:12) will soon take over one's whole life. *weak faith*: See Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31. *Don't you understand yet?*: See Matthew 13:13-15, 19, 23; 15:10, 16.

16:13 *Caesarea Philippi*: The city was about 25 miles north of the Galilee Sea, just south of Mount Hermon. *Human One*: a phrase Jesus often uses for himself. It could have been heard in a variety of ways—for example, as the personal pronoun "I" as well as a reference to the "one like a human being coming with the heavenly clouds" of Daniel 7:13. In effect, Jesus asks, "Who do people say I am?" and Peter responds with language taken from Daniel's description of the heavenly figure (Matt 16:16).

16:14 *John the Baptist*: See Matthew 14:1-2. *Elijah*: See Malachi 4:5 (cf. Sir 48:10)—though Jesus had already identified John the Baptist in this way (Matt 11:14). *Jeremiah*: See 2 Maccabees 15:11-16; 2 Esdras 2:18. Matthew has a

special interest in Jeremiah as one who foreshadows Jesus (Matt 2:17; 16:14; 27:9).

16:16 *Simon Peter*: in the role of representative spokesperson for Jesus' disciples (see Matt 14:28; 15:15). *Christ* meaning "anointed one." Around the time of Jesus, Jews had different expectations for a savior. These expectations included a figure who would overturn Roman rule and restore the Davidic dynasty (see 2 Sam 7:16) and who would usher in God's rule (see sidebar, "The Christ" at Matt 11). *Son of the living God*: See 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:6-8. *living* describes Israel's God (e.g., Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; Ps 42:2), the all-powerful one, as opposed to idols made of wood, stone, and the like (e.g., Deut 29:17; Ps 115:1-8; Rev 9:20). See also Matthew 14:33.

16:17 *Happy*: See Matthew 5:3-12. *my Father ... has shown you*: See Matthew 11:25-27.

16:18 *Peter*: the English form of the Greek term *Petros*, which is derived from a noun that means "rock" (*petra*). Peter is also called "Cephas" (e.g., John 1:42; 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14), from the Aramaic term for "rock" (*kepha*). Jesus thus uses a wordplay. *church*: the community of Christ-followers (cf. Matt 18:17). The term is used in the Gospels only here and in Matthew 18:17. *underworld*: or "Hades"—called "Sheol" in the OT. The term is translated as "the place of the dead" in Matthew 11:23.

16:19 *keys of the kingdom of heaven*: As the one to whom the Father has revealed Jesus' true identity, Peter is given



**Pharisees and Sadducees** We don't know the origin of the Pharisees. Their name seems to derive from a Hebrew verb that means "to separate." They may be descendants of the Hasidim, who were the major participants in the Maccabean Revolt. They were heavily involved in politics during the Hasmonean period. At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees were mostly lay leaders who supported rigorous observance of the Torah according to their own traditions of interpretation. They became the mainstream form of Judaism after the destruction of the temple during the Jewish War of 66–70 CE. The Sadducees were the priestly aristocrats in charge of temple worship. They take their name from Zadok, the first high priest, whose heirs formed the legitimate line of priests. The Sadducees recognized only the written Law as scripture. This distinguished them from the Pharisees, who also regarded their traditions of interpreting the Law as binding. This is probably why the Sadducees rejected belief in bodily resurrection. After the destruction of the temple, they gradually disappeared.

16:21 Mt 17:22; Mt 17:23; Mt 20:17; Lk 9:22; Jn 2:19  
 16:22 Mk 8:32; Jn 13:6  
 16:23 Mt 4:10  
 16:24 Mt 10:38; Mk 10:21; Lk 14:27  
 16:25 Mt 10:39; Jn 12:25  
 16:26 Ps 49:7  
 16:27 Ps 62:12; Mt 25:31; Ro 2:6; 2Co 5:10; Rev 22:12  
 16:28 Mt 10:23; Heb 2:9  
 17:1 Mt 26:37; Mk 5:37; Mk 9:2; Lk 9:28  
 17:2 Mt 28:3; Rev 10:1

**First prediction of Jesus' death and resurrection**

<sup>21</sup>From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and legal experts, and that he had to be killed and raised on the third day. <sup>22</sup>Then Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him: "God forbid, Lord! This won't happen to you." <sup>23</sup>But he turned to Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are a stone that could make me stumble, for you are not thinking God's thoughts but human thoughts."

**Saving and losing life**

<sup>24</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples, "All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. <sup>25</sup>All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me will find them. <sup>26</sup>Why would people gain the whole world but lose their lives? What will people give in exchange for their lives? <sup>27</sup>For the Human One<sup>a</sup> is about to come with the majesty of his Father with his angels. And then he will repay each one for what that person has done. <sup>28</sup>I assure you that some standing here won't die before they see the Human One<sup>c</sup> coming in his kingdom."

**Jesus' transformation**

**17**Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them to the top of a very high mountain. <sup>2</sup>He was transformed in front of them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light.

<sup>a</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>c</sup>Or Son of Man

the task of cultivating and proclaiming what he has received. *fasten... loosen*: This will become the role of the community of Christ-followers in Matthew 18:18. See sidebar, "The Kingdom of Heaven" at Matthew 3.

16:21 *From that time*: It is one thing to know that Jesus is the Christ, Son of the living God (Matt 16:16, 20), but quite another to know what this means. Jesus now begins and will continue the process of interpreting his identity as Christ and God's Son in terms of impending suffering, death, and resurrection. This is the first of three predictions of Jesus' suffering (see Matt 17:22-23; 20:18-19).

16:22 *Peter... scolding him, began to correct him*: Peter knows who Jesus is (Matt 16:16) but doesn't yet understand what this means. Jesus' talk of suffering and death contradicts Peter's view of what it means for Jesus to be the Christ. This isn't surprising, since Jewish tradition didn't support the idea of a Christ who would suffer.

16:23 *Satan*: Recall Matthew 4:1-11, where the devil acknowledged that Jesus was God's Son (Matt 4:3, 6), but tried to influence in the wrong way how Jesus would exercise his status and role as God's Son. Peter acts similarly, insisting that, as God's Christ, Jesus shouldn't suffer.

16:24-26 *All who want to come after me*: The pattern of discipleship is set by Jesus.

16:27 *repay each one for what that person has done*: In the ancient world, people didn't separate a person's character and commitments from that person's behavior. For this reason, when Jesus speaks of reward and punishment on the basis of one's words and deeds, he is referring to the way one's faith is expressed through one's faithfulness. See Matthew 25:31-46.

16:28 *see the Human One coming in his kingdom*: The following scene, Matthew 17:1-8, is a foretaste of the triumph to come.

17:1 *Six days later*: perhaps an allusion to Exodus 24:12-18, where Moses sees God's glory "on the seventh day" (and note that in Exod 24, three of Moses' companions are named). *Peter, James, and John*: Jesus' inner circle. These three will accompany Jesus to Gethsemane (Matt 26:37). *the top of a very high mountain*: In the Bible, mountains often serve as places of revelation (see, e.g., Matt 5:1; 28:16; cf. Matt 4:8).

17:2 *He was transformed in front of them*: Jesus has just predicted his suffering, death, resurrection, and royal rule (Matt 16:21-28). Now his appearance is transformed, and some of his disciples receive a preview of his glory. *His face shone like the sun*: Compare what happens with Moses in Exodus 34:29-35 (see also Matt 13:43). *white as light*: See Daniel 7:9; Matthew 28:3; Wisdom 7:26.

17:3 Ex 2:10,  
Ex 2:14; Dt 34:5;  
Mk 9:4; Lk 9:30

17:4 Mt 14:28,  
Mt 17:3; Mk 9:5;  
Lk 9:33; Jn 21:7

17:5 Mt 3:17;  
Mk 1:11

17:6 Lv 9:24;  
Jgs 13:20;  
Ac 26:14;  
2Pt 1:18

17:7 Mt 14:27

17:8 Mk 9:8;  
Lk 9:36

17:9 Mt 8:4,  
Mt 8:20,  
Mt 16:20,  
Mt 16:21;  
Mk 8:30

17:10 Mal 4:5;  
Mt 11:14,  
Mt 16:14

17:11 Lk 1:16,  
Lk 1:17; Ac 3:21

17:12 Mt 11:14,  
Mt 14:3,  
Mt 16:21;  
Mk 9:13

17:13 Mt 3:1,  
Mt 21:32

17:14 Mk 9:14;  
Lk 9:37

17:15 Mt 4:24,  
Mt 15:22

17:17 Jn 20:27

17:18 Mt 9:22,  
Mt 15:28

17:19 Mt 17:20

17:20 Mt 13:31,  
Mt 17:17,

Mt 21:21;  
Mk 9:23;  
Lk 17:6

17:21 1Co 7:5

17:22 Mt 16:21,  
Mt 20:17;  
Mk 9:30

17:23 Mt 16:21

<sup>3</sup>Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Jesus. <sup>4</sup>Peter reacted to all of this by saying to Jesus, "Lord, it's good that we're here. If you want, I'll make three shrines: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

<sup>5</sup>While he was still speaking, look, a bright cloud overshadowed them. A voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son whom I dearly love. I am very pleased with him. Listen to him!"

<sup>6</sup>Hearing this, the disciples fell on their faces, filled with awe.

<sup>7</sup>But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." <sup>8</sup>When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

<sup>9</sup>As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Don't tell anybody about the vision until the Human One<sup>e</sup> is raised from the dead."

<sup>10</sup>The disciples asked, "Then why do the legal experts say that Elijah must first come?"

<sup>11</sup>Jesus responded, "Elijah does come first and will restore all things. <sup>12</sup>In fact, I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they didn't know him. But they did to him whatever they wanted. In the same way the Human One<sup>e</sup> is also going to suffer at their hands." <sup>13</sup>Then the disciples realized he was telling them about John the Baptist.

### *Healing of a boy who was demon-possessed*

<sup>14</sup>When they came to the crowd, a man met Jesus. He knelt before him, <sup>15</sup>saying, "Lord, show mercy to my son. He is epileptic and suffers terribly, for he often falls into the fire or the water. <sup>16</sup>I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't heal him."

<sup>17</sup>Jesus answered, "You faithless and crooked generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." <sup>18</sup>Then Jesus spoke harshly to the demon. And it came out of the child, who was healed from that time on.

<sup>19</sup>Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and said, "Why couldn't we throw the demon out?"

<sup>20</sup>"Because you have little faith," he said. "I assure you that if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Go from here to there,' and it will go. There will be nothing that you can't do."<sup>a</sup>

### *Second prediction of Jesus' death and resurrection*

<sup>22</sup>When the disciples came together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Human One<sup>v</sup> is about to be delivered over into human hands. <sup>23</sup>They will kill him. But he will be raised on the third day." And they were heartbroken.

<sup>a</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>e</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>v</sup>17:21 is omitted in most critical editions of the Gk New Testament *This kind doesn't come out except through prayer and fasting.* <sup>v</sup>Or Son of Man

17:3 *Moses and Elijah:* Both were regarded as prophets in the OT, and both are associated with expectation of the end of the age (e.g., Deut 18:15-18; Mal 4:4-6).

17:4 *shrines:* or "tents." If these are "shrines," then the emphasis is on remembering and celebrating this amazing event. If these are "tents," then this might allude to the Festival of Booths (Lev 23:39-43).

17:5 *a bright cloud overshadowed them:* a symbol of God's presence (e.g., Exod 40:35; Ps 104:3). *A voice from the cloud:* Compare with Exodus 24:16. This recalls the divine affirmation of Jesus' identity as God's Son in Matthew 3:17, where God speaks of Jesus with language borrowed from Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 42:1; and possibly Exodus 4:22-23. Here, though, there is an added quotation of Deuteronomy 18:15: *Listen to him!* Peter wanted to set Jesus, Moses, and Elijah on the same level (Matt 17:4), but God distinguishes Jesus from the other two as the one with divine authority to lead God's people.

17:7 *Jesus... touched them:* Usually in Matthew, Jesus' "touch" is associated with healing (e.g., Matt 8:3, 15). After this glorious event, however, it may prove to them that Jesus is a real human being. *Don't be afraid:* a typical word of assurance in scenes in which God or a heavenly messenger or angel is revealed (e.g., Gen 15:1; Matt 28:5, 10; Luke 1:13).

17:9 *Don't tell anybody:* See Matthew 16:21.

17:10-13 *Elijah must first come:* See Malachi 4:5. Since the disciples just experienced a preview of the end-time triumph of God, they aren't sure what to make of the expectation that Elijah would come first. Jesus explains that this expectation had been fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist. See Matthew 11:14.

17:15 *show mercy:* See Matthew 5:7; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31. *epileptic:* In the ancient world, epilepsy was popularly called the "sacred disease" because people thought it was caused by evil spirits and could be cured only with divine help (see Matt 17:18).

17:16-17 *they couldn't heal him:* In spite of the fact that Jesus had given them "authority over unclean spirits... and to heal every disease" (Matt 10:1), *faithless and crooked generation:* See Deuteronomy 32:5; Matthew 12:39-45; 16:4.

17:19 *in private:* See Matthew 13:10, 36; 20:17; 24:3.

17:20 *little faith:* or "weak faith," as in Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8. Apparently, their faith is smaller than even a *mustard seed*, which Jesus had identified as "the smallest of all seeds" (Matt 13:32). *'Go from here to there':* See 1 Corinthians 13:2.

17:22-23 The second of three predictions of Jesus' suffering (see Matt 16:21; 20:18-19). This is a firm reminder that

**Paying the temple tax**

<sup>24</sup>When they came to Capernaum, the people who collected the half-shekel temple tax came to Peter and said, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?"

<sup>25</sup>"Yes," he said.

But when they came into the house, Jesus spoke to Peter first. "What do you think, Simon? From whom do earthly kings collect taxes, from their children or from strangers?"

<sup>26</sup>"From strangers," he said.

Jesus said to him, "Then the children don't have to pay. <sup>27</sup>But just so we don't offend them, go to the lake, throw out a fishing line and hook, and take the first fish you catch. When you open its mouth, you will find a shekel coin. Take it and pay the tax for both of us."

**Greatest in the kingdom**

**18**At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

<sup>2</sup>Then he called a little child over to sit among the disciples, <sup>3</sup>and said, "I assure you that if you don't turn your lives around and become like this little child, you will definitely not enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>Those who humble themselves like this little child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>5</sup>Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

**Falling into sin**

<sup>6</sup>"As for whoever causes these little ones who believe in me to trip and fall into sin, it would be better for them to have a huge stone hung around their necks and be drowned in the bottom of the lake. <sup>7</sup>How terrible it is for the world because of the things that cause people to trip and fall into sin! Such things have to happen, but how terrible it is for the person who causes those things to happen! <sup>8</sup>If your hand or your foot causes you to fall into sin, chop it off and throw it away. It's better to enter into life crippled or lame than to be thrown into the eternal fire with two hands or two feet. <sup>9</sup>If your eye causes you to fall into sin, tear it out and throw it away. It's better to enter into life with one eye than to be cast into a burning hell with two eyes.

**Parable of the lost sheep**

<sup>10</sup>"Be careful that you don't look down on one of these little ones. I say to you that their angels in heaven are always looking into the face of my Father who is in heaven." <sup>12</sup>What do you think? If someone had one hundred sheep and one of them wandered off, wouldn't he

17:24 Ex 30:13  
 17:25 Mt 22:17;  
 Ro 13:7  
 17:26 Mt 17:17  
 17:27 1Co 8:13  
 18:1 Mt 20:20;  
 Mk 9:33;  
 Lk 9:46;  
 Lk 22:24  
 18:2 Mt 14:14;  
 Mt 15:32;  
 Mt 18:1;  
 Mt 19:13;  
 Mt 19:14;  
 18:3 Mt 19:14;  
 Mk 10:15;  
 Lk 18:17;  
 1Co 14:20;  
 1Pt 2:2  
 18:4 Mt 18:1;  
 Mt 23:11;  
 Mt 23:12  
 18:5 Mt 10:40  
 18:6 Mk 9:42;  
 Lk 17:2  
 18:7 Mt 26:24;  
 Lk 17:1;  
 1Co 11:19  
 18:8 Mt 5:29;  
 Mt 5:30;  
 Mt 25:41;  
 Mk 9:43  
 18:9 Mt 5:22;  
 Mt 5:29  
 18:10 Ps 34:7;  
 Lk 1:19;  
 Heb 1:14  
 18:11 Lk 19:10  
 18:12 Lk 15:4

<sup>w</sup>18:11 is omitted in most critical editions of the Gk New Testament *For the Human One has come to save the lost.*

Jesus' glory (Matt 17:1-13) and power to restore health (Matt 17:14-20) don't contradict his commitment to fulfill God's purpose through suffering and death.

**17:24 Capernaum:** Jesus had settled in Capernaum (see Matt 4:13), so it is here that the issue of taxation would be raised. *half-shekel:* that is, a two-drachma piece, using Greek coinage. The equivalent in the Jewish monetary system was a half-shekel, which was the rough equivalent of the pay one might receive for two days' labor. *temple tax:* collected annually from every adult Jewish male to support the temple. This practice arose from interpretation of Exodus 30:13-16; Nehemiah 10:32-33 (cf. 2 Chron 24:9). *the people who collected:* not to be confused with "tax collectors" (Matt 5:46; 9:10-11; 10:3). "Tax collectors" worked on behalf of Rome, not the temple, and collected a toll from those who traveled from place to place with items bought and sold in the market.

**17:25-26 the children don't have to pay:** Since the temple is God's house, and since Jesus and his followers are God's family, they shouldn't be required to pay the tax. Like many other Jews, then, Jesus criticizes the tradition of collecting a temple tax (which, after all, isn't required by scripture).

**17:27 you will find a shekel coin:** God provides the means for paying the tax. *for both of us:* Like Jesus (see the note

on Matt 17:24), Peter made his home in Capernaum (see Matt 4:13; 8:14).

**18:1-4 like this little child:** Jesus refers to an infant. In the ancient world, emphasis would fall on the child's lack of status. This requires a change of heart and life, away from concerns with prestige and status.

**18:5 welcomes one such child:** To "welcome" is to "show hospitality," here to children as honored guests (on what this might entail in the ancient world, see Luke 7:37-38, 44-46). See Matthew 10:40; 25:31-46.

**18:6-7 little ones:** that is, disciples (see Matt 10:42; 18:10, 14). Disciples are like "little children" (Matt 18:3; see Matt 11:25). *huge stone:* the kind that would have been pulled by a donkey in a mill for grinding wheat.

**18:8-9** See Matthew 5:29-30.

**18:10 look down on one of these little ones:** the opposite of the humility and hospitality described in Matthew 18:4-5. *their angels in heaven:* For the idea of angels assigned to individuals, see Psalm 91:1; Acts 12:15; Hebrews 1:14. Here, these angels are said to look into the Father's face, which no human can do (Exod 33:20) and which, according to Jewish tradition, only certain angels could do (cf. Isa 6:1-2). This emphasizes the respect Jesus' followers should give to each other.

**18:12-14** Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep to

18:13 Lk 15:23  
 18:14 In 6:39  
 18:15 Lv 19:17;  
 Lk 17:3; Ga 6:1;  
 2Th 3:15;  
 Jas 5:19

18:16 Dt 19:15;  
 In 8:17;  
 2Co 13:1;  
 1Th 5:19;  
 Heb 10:28

18:17 Mt 5:46;  
 Ro 16:17;  
 2Th 3:6; 2Jn 10

18:18 Mt 16:19;  
 In 20:23

18:19 Mt 7:7;  
 Ac 1:14

18:20  
 Mt 28:20;  
 In 20:19; 1Co 5:4

18:21 Mt 18:15;  
 Lk 17:4

18:22 Gn 4:24;  
 Gn 50:17;  
 Mt 10:5;

Mt 16:24;  
 Mt 18:21

18:23 Mt 13:24;  
 Mt 25:19

18:24 Mt 25:15

18:25 Ex 21:2;  
 Lv 25:39;  
 2Ki 4:1; Neh 5:5;  
 Lk 7:42

18:26 Mt 8:2

18:27 Lk 7:42

18:28 Neh 5:7;  
 Job 24:3;  
 Mt 20:2

18:29 Mt 6:12

18:30 Mt 5:26

18:31 Mk 3:5

18:33 Eph 4:32

18:34 Mt 5:25;  
 Mt 5:26

18:35 Mt 6:14;  
 Mt 6:15; Jas 2:13

leave the ninety-nine on the hillsides and go in search for the one that wandered off? <sup>13</sup>If he finds it, I assure you that he is happier about having that one sheep than about the ninety-nine who didn't wander off. <sup>14</sup>In the same way, my Father who is in heaven doesn't want to lose one of these little ones.

### Sinning brother or sister

<sup>15</sup>"If your brother or sister sins against you, go and correct them when you are alone together. If they listen to you, then you've won over your brother or sister. <sup>16</sup>But if they won't listen, take with you one or two others so that *every word may be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses*.<sup>17</sup> <sup>17</sup>But if they still won't pay attention, report it to the church. If they won't pay attention even to the church, treat them as you would a Gentile and tax collector. <sup>18</sup>I assure you that whatever you fasten on earth will be fastened in heaven. And whatever you loosen on earth will be loosened in heaven. <sup>19</sup>Again I assure you that if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, then my Father who is in heaven will do it for you. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, I'm there with them."

### Parable of the unforgiving servant

<sup>21</sup>Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Should I forgive as many as seven times?"

<sup>22</sup>Jesus said, "Not just seven times, but rather as many as seventy-seven times."<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup>When he began to settle accounts, they brought to him a servant who owed him ten thousand bags of gold.<sup>25</sup> Because the servant didn't have enough to pay it back, the master ordered that he should be sold, along with his wife and children and everything he had, and that the proceeds should be used as payment. <sup>26</sup>But the servant fell down, kneeled before him, and said, 'Please, be patient with me, and I'll pay you back.'<sup>27</sup> The master had compassion on that servant, released him, and forgave the loan.

<sup>28</sup>"When that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him one hundred coins.<sup>29</sup> He grabbed him around the throat and said, 'Pay me back what you owe me.'

<sup>29</sup>"Then his fellow servant fell down and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I'll pay you back.'<sup>30</sup> But he refused. Instead, he threw him into prison until he paid back his debt.

<sup>31</sup>"When his fellow servants saw what happened, they were deeply offended. They came and told their master all that happened. <sup>32</sup>His master called the first servant and said, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you appealed to me. <sup>33</sup>Shouldn't you also have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' <sup>34</sup>His master was furious and handed him over to the guard responsible for punishing prisoners, until he had paid the whole debt.

<sup>35</sup>"My heavenly Father will also do the same to you if you don't forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

<sup>13</sup>Deut 19:15 <sup>17</sup>Or seventy times seven <sup>18</sup>Or ten thousand talanta, an amount equal to the wages for sixty million days

<sup>19</sup>Or one hundred denaria, an amount equal to the wages for one hundred days

emphasize again the value God places on God's people and, therefore, the honor Jesus' followers should give to each other.

18:15-17 *your brother or sister*: The respect Jesus' followers show each other includes correcting them when they sin. *two or three witnesses*: The language is borrowed from Deuteronomy 19:15. *church*: the community of Christ-followers (Matt 16:18). *a Gentile and tax collector*: On the one hand, they are to be treated as outsiders (cf. Matt 5:46-47). On the other, Jesus' behavior toward such outsiders, together with his call for his followers to love their enemies, recommends ongoing prayer for and interaction with them (e.g., Matt 5:44; 11:19).

18:18-19 See Matthew 16:19. The authority given to Peter is extended to the whole community of Christ-followers.

18:20 See Matthew 1:23; 28:20.

18:23 *like a king*: Jesus' parables generally draw from the

world of peasant farmers (see Matt 13), but this one portrays for most people a world of unimaginable wealth and authority.

18:24 *ten thousand bags of gold*: or "ten thousand talents." The Greek word *talanton* refers to a monetary unit roughly equivalent to what a day laborer would make in 6,000 days. Therefore, 10,000 talents is what a day laborer would earn in about 165,000 years.

18:25 *sold*: sold into slavery (cf. 2 Kgs 4:1; Neh 5:3-5; Amos 2:6; 8:6). Some scholars estimate the price of slaves sold in the marketplace as the rough equivalent of what a day laborer might make in two to five years. In other words, the debt (Matt 18:24) was astronomical in relation to what the slave could ever imagine paying.

18:28 *coins*: or "denarii." The Greek word *denarion* refers to a monetary unit roughly equivalent to what a day laborer would make in a single day (see Matt 20:10).

18:32-35 See Matthew 6:14-15.

Teaching about divorce

19 When Jesus finished saying these things, he left Galilee and came to the area of Judea on the east side of the Jordan. 2Large crowds followed him, and he healed them. 3Some Pharisees came to him. In order to test him, they said, "Does the Law allow a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

4Jesus answered, "Haven't you read that at the beginning the creator made them male and female? 5And God said, 'Because of this a man should leave his father and mother and be joined together with his wife, and the two will be one flesh.' 6So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, humans must not pull apart what God has put together."

7The Pharisees said to him, "Then why did Moses command us to give a divorce certificate and divorce her?"<sup>a</sup>

8Jesus replied, "Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because your hearts are unyielding. But it wasn't that way from the beginning. 9I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

10His disciples said to him, "If that's the way things are between a man and his wife, then it's better not to marry."

11He replied, "Not everybody can accept this teaching, but only those who have received the ability to accept it. 12For there are eunuchs who have been eunuchs from birth. And there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by other people. And there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs because of the kingdom of heaven. Those who can accept it should accept it."

Jesus blesses children

13Some people brought children to Jesus so that he would place his hands on them and pray. But the disciples scolded them. 14"Allow the children to come to me," Jesus said. "Don't forbid them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like these children." 15Then he blessed the children and went away from there.

A rich man's question

16A man approached him and said, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?"

17Jesus said, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There's only one who is good. If you want to enter eternal life, keep the commandments."

18The man said, "Which ones?"

Then Jesus said, "Don't commit murder. Don't commit adultery. Don't steal. Don't give false testimony. 19Honor your father and mother,\* and love your neighbor as you love yourself."<sup>f</sup>

20The young man replied, "I've kept all these. What am I still missing?"

19:1 Mt 7:28; Mk 10:1  
 19:2 Mt 4:23  
 19:3 Mt 5:31; Mk 22:15; Mk 10:2; Jn 8:6  
 19:4 Gn 1:27; Gn 5:2; Mal 2:15; Mt 12:3  
 19:5 Gn 2:24; 1Co 6:16; Eph 5:31  
 19:6 Ro 7:2; 1Co 7:10  
 19:7 Dt 24:1; Mt 5:31  
 19:8 Ps 95:8; Mt 19:7; Mk 10:5; Mk 16:14; 1Co 7:6  
 19:9 Mt 5:32; Mk 10:11; Lk 16:18; Ro 7:3  
 19:10 1Co 7:8  
 19:11 Mt 13:11; 1Co 7:7; 1Co 7:17  
 19:12 Ls 56:3; 1Co 7:32; 1Co 9:15  
 19:13 Mk 10:13; Lk 18:15  
 19:14 Mt 18:3  
 19:15 Ls 40:11; Mk 10:16  
 19:16 Mt 25:46; Mk 10:17; Lk 10:25; Lk 18:18  
 19:17 Lv 18:5  
 19:18 Ex 20:13  
 19:19 Ex 20:12; Lv 19:18; Dt 5:16; Mt 22:39  
 19:20 Phi 3:6

<sup>b</sup>Gen 1:27; 5:2 <sup>c</sup>Gen 2:24 <sup>d</sup>Deut 24:1 <sup>e</sup>Exod 20:12-16; Deut 5:16-20 <sup>f</sup>Lv 19:18

19:1 When Jesus finished saying these things: The phrase marks the end of the fourth of five sermons delivered by Jesus in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25). he left Galilee and came to the area of Judea on the east side of the Jordan: a major shift in Jesus' itinerary. Typically, Jews crossed the Jordan River when heading south toward Jerusalem, in order to avoid traveling through Samaria.

19:3 Pharisees... test him: See the note on Matthew 16:1. Does the Law allow: As the Pharisees' question in Matthew 19:7 makes clear, the law in question is Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Different rabbis interpreted the basis for divorce in different ways. The school of Shammai didn't allow divorce except for adultery, while the school of Hillel allowed a husband to divorce his wife on the basis of just about any excuse. Whom would Jesus side with? (See sidebar, "Pharisees and Sadducees" at Matt 16.)

19:4-6 Jesus emphasizes the unity and permanence of marriage by quoting Genesis 1:27; 2:24.

19:7-8 See the note on Matthew 19:3. The Pharisees refer to the law on divorce as Moses' command, while Jesus refers to what Moses allowed. The law on divorce was a concession, but it didn't represent God's original purpose.

19:12 eunuchs: Jesus identifies three groups of men with the same term: those born without the ability to have children; those who are castrated males (often as preparation for certain types of offices in the courts of antiquity; cf. Acts 8:27); and those who have chosen to abstain from marriage in order to devote themselves fully to the kingdom of heaven (cf. 1 Cor 7:32-34; for the incomparable value of the kingdom, see Matt 13:44-46; 19:27-29).

19:13-15: See Matthew 18:1-5.

19:16 have eternal life: This phrase is recast by Jesus as "enter eternal life" (Matt 19:17); "have treasure in heaven" (Matt 19:21; cf. Matt 6:19-21); "enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 19:23); and "inherit eternal life" (Matt 19:29). Each phrase is roughly synonymous with the others. See sidebar, "The Kingdom of Heaven" at Matthew 3.

19:17-19 keep the commandments: The commandments represent how people respond faithfully to the gracious deliverance of God. For this list, see Exodus 20:12-16; Deuteronomy 5:16-20. Jesus adds to the commandments a phrase from Leviticus 19:18: love your neighbor as you love yourself (see Matt 5:43; 22:39). See sidebar, "Israel's Scriptures" at Matthew 5.

19:20 I've kept all these: This need not be read as an

19:21 Mt 5:48,  
Mt 6:20,  
Mt 16:24;  
Lk 12:33;  
Ac 2:45  
19:22 Eze 33:31;  
Mt 6:24

<sup>21</sup>Jesus said, "If you want to be complete, go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven. And come follow me."

<sup>22</sup>But when the young man heard this, he went away saddened, because he had many possessions.

19:23 Mt 13:22;  
Lk 18:24

### Teaching about giving up things

<sup>23</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I assure you that it will be very hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup>In fact, it's easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God's kingdom."

19:24 Mt 23:24;  
Mk 10:25;  
Lk 18:25

19:25 Mt 7:28,  
Mt 24:22;  
Ro 10:13

<sup>25</sup>When his disciples heard this, they were stunned. "Then who can be saved?" they asked.

19:26 Gn 18:14,  
Job 42:2,  
Jer 32:17;

<sup>26</sup>Jesus looked at them carefully and said, "It's impossible for human beings. But all things are possible for God."

Mk 10:27;  
Lk 1:37

<sup>27</sup>Then Peter replied, "Look, we've left everything and followed you. What will we have?"

19:27 Mt 4:18,  
Mt 4:20, Mt 4:22,  
Mt 16:16;  
Mk 10:28

<sup>28</sup>Jesus said to them, "I assure you who have followed me that, when everything is made new, when the Human One<sup>e</sup> sits on his magnificent throne, you also will sit on twelve thrones overseeing the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>29</sup>And all who have left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children, or farms because of my name will receive one hundred times more and will inherit eternal life. <sup>30</sup>But many who are first will be last. And many who are last will be first.

19:28 Mt 25:31;  
Lk 22:30;  
1Co 6:2;  
Rev 3:21,  
Rev 20:4

### Workers in the vineyard

**20** "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup>After he agreed with the workers to pay them a denarion,<sup>h</sup> he sent them into his vineyard.

19:29 Mt 6:33,  
Mt 19:16,  
Mt 25:34,  
Mt 25:46;  
Lk 14:26

19:30 Mt 20:16;  
Mk 10:31;  
Lk 13:30

20:1 Lk 5:1;  
Mt 13:24,  
Mt 21:28,  
Mt 21:33

<sup>3</sup>Then he went out around nine in the morning and saw others standing around the marketplace doing nothing. <sup>4</sup>He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I'll pay you whatever is right." <sup>5</sup>And they went.

20:2 Mt 18:28,  
Mt 20:1

20:3 Mt 11:16,  
Mt 20:6;

Mk 15:25;  
Jn 11:9; Ac 2:15

<sup>6</sup>Again around noon and then at three in the afternoon, he did the same thing. <sup>6</sup>Around five in the afternoon he went and found others standing around, and he said to them, "Why are you just standing around here doing nothing all day long?"

20:4 Col 4:1

20:5 Mt 20:6,  
Mt 27:45;  
Mk 15:33; Jn 4:6,  
Jn 11:9

20:6 Psv 19:15;  
Eze 16:49;  
Mt 20:5;  
Ac 17:21

20:8 Lv 19:13;  
Dt 24:15

<sup>7</sup>"Because nobody has hired us," they replied.

"He responded, 'You also go into the vineyard.'

20:9 Mt 20:6

<sup>8</sup>"When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the workers and give them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and moving on finally to the first.' <sup>9</sup>When those who were hired at five in the afternoon came, each one received a denarion. <sup>10</sup>Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more. But each of them also received a denarion. <sup>11</sup>When they received it, they grumbled against the

<sup>e</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>h</sup>A denarion was a typical day's wage.

arrogant or false claim. Compare with Luke 1:6; Philippians 3:6.

19:21 *If you want to be complete*: The Greek word *teleios* is sometimes translated "perfect," but the translation "complete" forms a suitable pair with the young man's question about what he is "missing" (Matt 19:20). See also Matthew 5:48, *go, sell... give the money to the poor*. The problem isn't possessions as such, or Jesus might simply have told the young man to get rid of everything he has. Rather, the point is twofold—first, wealth functions as a measure of one's social prestige, which runs against Jesus' instruction to humble oneself like a little child (Matt 18:1-4); and second, it is important to care for the needy (see Matt 25:31-46). *come follow me*: the call to discipleship. Compare Matthew 4:18-22; 8:22; 9:9; 10:38; 16:24.

19:22 Only now do we learn that the young man was wealthy.

19:23-24 See Matthew 6:24.

19:25 *they were stunned*: Apparently, the disciples share the widely held view that great wealth is a sign of great blessing from God. This view contradicts Jesus' definition

of human happiness in Matthew 5:3-12. This isn't the first time they have failed to embrace Jesus' topsy-turvy message (see, e.g., Matt 19:13-15).

19:27 See Matthew 4:18-22.

19:28: *when everything is made new*: the end-time transformation of all creation (cf. Isa 65:17; Rev 21:1), *the Human One sits on his magnificent throne*: an image that draws on Psalm 110:1; Daniel 7:13 (see Matt 25:31). *you also will sit on twelve thrones*: Jesus' words portray the restoration of God's people, with the disciples installed as their leaders.

19:29-30 The end-time transformation of creation signals a great reversal of status and rewards.

20:1-7 *workers*: people hired for physical labor on a day-by-day basis. They were neither slaves (who at least were regularly given food to eat and a roof over their heads) nor ordinary employees (who could depend on having a job day after day). *denarion*: the typical wage of an unskilled person for a single day's work.

20:8 *evening came*: Deuteronomy 24:14-15 requires that day laborers receive their pay before sunset (cf. Jas 5:4).

landowner, <sup>12</sup>“These who were hired last worked one hour, and they received the same pay as we did even though we had to work the whole day in the hot sun.”

<sup>13</sup>“But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I did you no wrong. Didn’t I agree to pay you a denarius? <sup>14</sup>Take what belongs to you and go. I want to give to this one who was hired last the same as I give to you. <sup>15</sup>Don’t I have the right to do what I want with what belongs to me? Or are you resentful because I’m generous?’ <sup>16</sup>So those who are last will be first. And those who are first will be last.”

**Jesus predicts his death and resurrection**

<sup>17</sup>As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the Twelve aside by themselves on the road. He told them, <sup>18</sup>“Look, we are going up to Jerusalem. The Human One<sup>1</sup> will be handed over to the chief priests and legal experts. They will condemn him to death. <sup>19</sup>They will hand him over to the Gentiles to be ridiculed, tortured, and crucified. But he will be raised on the third day.”

**Request from James and John’s mother**

<sup>20</sup>Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus along with her sons. Bowing before him, she asked a favor of him.

<sup>21</sup>“What do you want?” he asked.

She responded, “Say that these two sons of mine will sit, one on your right hand and one on your left, in your kingdom.”

<sup>22</sup>Jesus replied, “You don’t know what you’re asking! Can you drink from the cup that I’m about to drink from?”

They said to him, “We can.”

<sup>23</sup>He said to them, “You will drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left hand isn’t mine to give. It belongs to those for whom my Father prepared it.”

<sup>24</sup>Now when the other ten disciples heard about this, they became angry with the two brothers. <sup>25</sup>But Jesus called them over and said, “You know that those who rule the Gentiles show off their authority over them and their high-ranking officials order them around. <sup>26</sup>But that’s not the way it will be with you. Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant. <sup>27</sup>Whoever wants to be first among you will be your slave—<sup>28</sup>just as the Human One<sup>2</sup> didn’t come to be served but rather to serve and to give his life to liberate many people.”

**Healing of two blind men**

<sup>29</sup>As Jesus and his disciples were going out of Jericho a large crowd followed him. <sup>30</sup>When two blind men sitting along the road heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, “Show us mercy, Lord, Son of David!”

<sup>31</sup>Now the crowd scolded them and told them to be quiet. But they shouted even louder, “Show us mercy, Lord, Son of David!”

<sup>1</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>2</sup>Or Son of Man

20:16 See Matthew 19:30. This saying frames Jesus’ parable. 20:17 *As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem:* This is the first explicit reference to Jesus’ destination, though it was implied in Matthew 19:1. The significance of Jerusalem becomes clear in Matthew 20:18: It is there that Jesus will be tortured, killed, and resurrected.

20:17-18 This is the third time that Jesus predicts his suffering and death (cf. Matt 16:21; 17:22-23).

20:20 *Zebedee’s sons:* James and John (see Matt 4:21-22; 10:2). Their mother is one of the women who followed Jesus to the very end and witnessed his crucifixion (Matt 27:55-56).

20:21 *your right hand . . . your left:* the first and second positions of honor.

20:22-23 *drink from the cup:* See Matthew 26:39. The mother’s request on behalf of her sons is all the more out of place since it comes immediately after Jesus has given his most detailed description of his future suffering (Matt 20:17-18).

20:24 *became angry:* The other disciples seem to be as concerned with prestige as James and John’s mother was.

20:12 Jon 4:8; Lk 12:55; Jas 1:11  
 20:13 Mt 22:12; Mk 26:50  
 20:15 Dt 15:9; Mt 6:23  
 20:16 Mt 19:30; Mt 22:14  
 20:17 Mk 10:32; Lk 18:31  
 20:18 Mt 16:21  
 20:19 Mt 16:21  
 20:20 Mt 4:21; Mt 8:2; Mt 15:25; Mk 27:56; Mk 10:35  
 20:21 Mt 19:28  
 20:22 Is 51:22; Mt 26:39; Mt 26:42; Lk 22:42; Jn 18:11  
 20:23 Mt 25:34; Ac 12:2; Ro 8:17; Rev 1:9  
 20:24 Lk 22:24; Lk 22:25  
 20:25 Mk 10:42; Lk 22:25  
 20:26 Mt 23:11; Mk 9:35; Mk 10:43  
 20:27 Mk 9:33  
 20:28 Mt 26:28; Lk 22:27; Phi 2:7; 1Ti 2:6; Ti 2:14  
 20:29 Mk 10:46; Lk 18:35  
 20:30 Mt 9:27; Mt 21:9; Mt 22:42; Mk 10:46  
 20:31 Mt 9:27; Mt 15:22; Lk 18:39

20:25 *those who rule the Gentiles:* As before (Matt 5:47; 6:7, 32; 18:17), “Gentiles” is used to refer to people who are outsiders. Their behavior contradicts what is expected of Christ-followers. Here the reference would be especially to high-ranking Roman officials who rule cities and regions.

20:26-27 *that’s not the way it will be with you:* Jesus borrows language from the Roman world, *servant* and *slave*, to portray relationships among his followers. Within their community, greatness is measured through humility and service (see Matt 19:30; 20:16).

20:28 *just as:* Jesus is himself the model that his followers should imitate in terms of living sacrificial, others-oriented lives.

20:29 *out of Jericho:* Jericho is about 16 miles from Jerusalem. Jesus is drawing closer to his destination and impending death (Matt 20:17-18).

20:30-31 *the crowd scolded:* Earlier the disciples had formed a boundary separating children from Jesus (Matt 19:13-15). “Show us mercy, Lord, Son of David!”: See Matthew 5:7; 9:27; 15:22; 17:15.

20:32 Mt 15:26,  
Mt 20:21

20:33 Ps 119:18

20:34 Mt 8:3,  
Mt 9:36

21:1 Mt 24:3,  
Mt 26:30;

Mk 11:1;  
Lk 19:29; Jn 8:1

21:2 Gn 22:3;  
Mk 11:2

21:4 Mt 1:22,  
Mt 26:56;  
Jn 12:12

21:5 Ps 2:6;  
Is 62:11;  
Zec 9:9;

Mt 11:29;  
2Co 10:1

21:6 Mt 26:19

21:7 Mt 21:5

21:8 2Ks 9:13

21:9 Ps 118:25,  
Ps 118:26;

Is 9:27,  
Mt 23:39;

Lk 2:14

21:10 Lk 5:21;  
Ac 9:5

21:11 Lk 7:16,  
Lk 24:19; Jn 4:19;

Jn 6:14; Jn 7:40

21:12 Lv 1:14;  
Mk 11:15;

Lk 19:45; Jn 2:13

21:13 Is 56:7;  
Jer 7:11

21:14 Mt 4:23,  
Mt 11:5,  
Mt 15:31

21:15 Mt 9:27,  
Mt 21:9

21:16 Ps 8:2;  
Mt 11:25

<sup>32</sup>Jesus stopped in his tracks and called to them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

<sup>33</sup>"Lord, we want to see," they replied.

<sup>34</sup>Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they were able to see, and they followed him.

### Entry into Jerusalem

**21** When they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave two disciples a task. <sup>2</sup>He said to them, "Go into the village over there. As soon as you enter, you will find a donkey tied up and a colt with it. Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup>If anybody says anything to you, say that the Lord needs it." He sent them off right away. <sup>4</sup>Now this happened to fulfill what the prophet said, <sup>5</sup>Say to Daughter Zion, "Look, your king is coming to you, humble and riding on a donkey, and on a colt the donkey's offspring."<sup>a</sup> <sup>6</sup>The disciples went and did just as Jesus had ordered them. <sup>7</sup>They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their clothes on them. Then he sat on them.

<sup>8</sup>Now a large crowd spread their clothes on the road. Others cut palm branches off the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup>The crowds in front of him and behind him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" <sup>10</sup>And when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. "Who is this?" they asked. <sup>11</sup>The crowds answered, "It's the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

### Cleansing the temple

<sup>12</sup>Then Jesus went into the temple and threw out all those who were selling and buying there. He pushed over the tables used for currency exchange and the chairs of those who sold doves. <sup>13</sup>He said to them, "It's written, *My house will be called a house of prayer.*"<sup>b</sup> But you've made it a hideout for crooks."

<sup>14</sup>People who were blind and lame came to Jesus in the temple, and he healed them. <sup>15</sup>But when the chief priests and legal experts saw the amazing things he was doing and the children shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were angry. <sup>16</sup>They said to Jesus, "Do you hear what these children are saying?"

<sup>a</sup>Isa 62:11; Zech 9:9 <sup>b</sup>Ps. 118:26 <sup>c</sup>Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11

**20:34** *Jesus had compassion on them:* See Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32. For the restoration of sight as a sign of Jesus' identity as the Christ, see Matthew 11:5 (cf. Isa 35:5-6).

**21:1** *Bethphage on the Mount of Olives:* a small town located about two miles east of Jerusalem. Jesus draws ever closer to his destination, and thus to his impending death (Matt 20:17-18, 29).

**21:2-7** Matthew tells the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as a strict fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 (see 1 Kgs 1:33). In doing so, however, Matthew seems to have imagined that Zechariah referred to two animals, a donkey and a colt, rather than his referring to one animal in two different ways. As a result, he portrays Jesus riding on both a donkey and a colt at the same time.

**21:5** *your king:* See Matthew 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37, 42. *humble:* See Matthew 11:29.

**21:8** *spread their clothes on the road:* See 2 Kings 9:13.

**21:9** *Hosanna:* a shout of praise, from an Aramaic term that means "Save, please!" *Son of David:* See 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Matthew 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31. *Blessings on the one:* The quotation is from Psalm 118:25-26.

**21:10-11** *the whole city was stirred up:* See Matthew 2:3. *prophet:* See Matthew 13:57; 16:14.

**21:12-14** Jewish literature at the time of Jesus speaks of the coming of a king into a city, then entering the temple either to offer sacrifices or to expel people engaged in idolatry. Clearly, the scene Matthew portrays represents a prophetic judgment against the temple system. But

this is not simply because of the presence of people buying, selling, and exchanging currency. After all, this was required for people who had traveled a long way, carrying foreign money, and needing to obtain animals for the purpose of offering sacrifice. As the quotation from Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 (Matt 21:13) makes clear, the problem isn't the temple itself or even the sacrificial system, but the temple leadership. Rather than using the temple for its intended purpose, as a *house of prayer*, they use their relationship to the temple to hide their unjust behavior.

**21:14** *he healed them:* a strong reference to the character of Jesus' mission as the Davidic king. First, according to Isaiah 35:5-6, the blind and lame will be restored to health when the age of salvation arrives (see Matt 9:27-30; 11:4-5; 12:22; 20:30-34). Second, Matthew notes that the blind and lame sought Jesus out in the temple, in spite of evidence that such persons were excluded from the temple (see the proverbial statement in 2 Sam 5:8, "That is why people say, 'The blind and the lame will not enter the temple';" cf. Lev 21:18-19).

**21:15-16:** *chief priests and legal experts:* the temple leadership. This pairing was previously mentioned in Matthew 2:4. There, they were able to identify "where the Christ was to be born," but here they are unable to recognize who the Christ is. *From the mouths of babies and infants:* a quotation from Psalm 8:3 in the LXX (see Ps 8:2). Children recognize what the leadership doesn't (see Matt 11:25).



"Yes," he answered. "Haven't you ever read, *From the mouths of babies and infants you've arranged praise for yourself?*"<sup>17</sup> Then he left them and went out of the city to Bethany and spent the night there.

**Cursing the fig tree**

<sup>18</sup>Early in the morning as Jesus was returning to the city, he was hungry. <sup>19</sup>He saw a fig tree along the road, but when he came to it, he found nothing except leaves. Then he said to it, "You'll never again bear fruit!" The fig tree dried up at once.

<sup>20</sup>When the disciples saw it, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree dry up so fast?" they asked.

<sup>21</sup>Jesus responded, "I assure you that if you have faith and don't doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree. You will even say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the lake.' And it will happen. <sup>22</sup>If you have faith, you will receive whatever you pray for."

**Jesus' authority questioned**

<sup>23</sup>When Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and elders of the people came to him as he was teaching. They asked, "What kind of authority do you have for doing these things? Who gave you this authority?"

<sup>24</sup>Jesus replied, "I have a question for you. If you tell me the answer, I'll tell you what kind of authority I have to do these things. <sup>25</sup>Where did John get his authority to baptize? Did he get it from heaven or from humans?"

They argued among themselves, "If we say 'from heaven,' he'll say to us, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' <sup>26</sup>But we can't say 'from humans' because we're afraid of the crowd, since everyone thinks John was a prophet." <sup>27</sup>Then they replied, "We don't know."

Jesus also said to them, "Neither will I tell you what kind of authority I have to do these things.

**Parable of two sons**

<sup>28</sup>"What do you think? A man had two sons. Now he came to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.'

<sup>29</sup>"No, I don't want to," he replied. But later he changed his mind and went.

<sup>30</sup>The father said the same thing to the other son, who replied, 'Yes, sir.' But he didn't go.

<sup>31</sup>"Which one of these two did his father's will?"

They said, "The first one."

Jesus said to them, "I assure you that tax collectors and prostitutes are entering God's kingdom ahead of you. <sup>32</sup>For John came to you on the righteous road, and you didn't believe him. But tax collectors and prostitutes believed him. Yet even after you saw this, you didn't change your hearts and lives and you didn't believe him.

**Parable of the tenant farmers**

<sup>33</sup>Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a tower. Then he rented it to tenant farmers and took a trip. <sup>34</sup>When it was time for harvest, he sent his servants to the tenant farmers to collect his fruit. <sup>35</sup>But the tenant farmers grabbed his servants. They beat some of them, and some of them they killed. Some of them they stoned to death.

<sup>a</sup>Ps 8:3 LXX

21:17 *Bethany*: a small town about two miles east of Jerusalem on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives.

21:18-22 *nothing except leaves*: An unfruitful fig tree is an image of Israel in Jeremiah 8:13. *You will even say to this mountain*: that is, the Mount of Olives, which, according to Zechariah 14:4, was to be leveled at the end time. Both images, the unfruitful fig tree and the mountain removed, point to judgment against Jerusalem. *If you have faith*: See Matthew 17:20.

21:23 *Who gave you this authority*: See Matthew 7:29; 9:6, 34; 12:24, 27; 28:18.

21:26 *we're afraid of the crowd*: The temple leadership is less concerned with the question of Jesus' identity and authority and more concerned with maintaining their influence over the people. Compare with Matthew 14:5.

21:17 Mk 11:11; Lk 24:50; Jn 11:18; Jn 12:1

21:18 Mt 4:2; Mk 11:12

21:19 Lk 13:6

21:21 Mt 17:20; Mk 9:23; Jas 1:5

21:22 Mt 7:7

21:23 Mt 26:55; Mk 11:27; Lk 20:1; Ac 4:7

21:24 Lk 6:9

21:25 Mk 1:4; Lk 7:29; Ac 19:3

21:26 Mt 11:9; Mt 14:5; Mk 6:20; Mk 11:32

21:27 Lk 20:8; Jn 9:41

21:28 Mt 20:1; Mt 21:33

21:29 Mt 21:32

21:31 Lk 7:29; Lk 7:37

21:32 Lk 3:12; Lk 7:29; Lk 7:30

21:33 Is 5:1; Is 5:2; Mt 25:14; Mk 12:11; Lk 20:9

21:34 Mt 21:33; Mt 22:3

21:35

2Ch 24:21; Mt 5:12; Mt 23:37; Ac 7:52; Heb 11:36

21:28-32 Jesus contrasts the temple leadership (who said the right words but didn't do the right thing) with tax collectors and prostitutes (who didn't say the right words, but did the right thing). Obedience is key (see Matt 7:21; 28:20). *prostitutes*: mentioned only here in Matthew. *tax collectors*: See Matthew 9:10-11; 10:3. Together, they represent disreputable sinners in contrast to the upstanding chief priests and elders.

21:33-46 *vineyard*: See Isaiah 5:1-7, in which the owner of the vineyard is identified as the Lord and the vineyard is the people of Israel. Accordingly, in this parable the *tenant farmers* represent Israel's leadership. The chief priests and Pharisees recognize that they have been cast as the *wicked farmers* in Jesus' parable (21:45).

21:34-36 *servants*: a reference to Israel's prophets.

## The Chronology of Jesus' Final Days in Jerusalem

Matthew  
Day 1 (Monday)

Enters Jerusalem  
(21:1-9)

"Cleanses" temple  
(21:10-16)

Leaves city  
(21:17)

Day 2 (Tuesday)

Curses fig tree  
(21:18-19a)

Fig tree dries up  
(21:19b-22)

Mark  
Day 1 (Sunday)

Enters Jerusalem  
(11:1-10)  
Looks around (11:11a)

Leaves city  
(11:11b)

Day 2 (Monday)

Curses fig tree  
(11:12-14)

"Cleanses" temple  
(11:15-17)  
Conspiracy against Jesus  
(11:18)  
Leaves city (11:19)

Day 3 (Tuesday)

Discovers fig tree  
dried up (11:20-26)

Question about authority (21:23-27 = Mark 11:27-33)\*

Three parables (21:28-22:14 = Mark 12:1-12)

On paying taxes to Caesar (22:15-22 = Mark 12:13-17)

Question about the resurrection (22:23-33 = Mark 12:18-27)

The Great Commandment (22:34-40 = Mark 12:28-34)

Question about David's son (22:41-46 = Mark 12:35-37a)

Judgment discourse (23:1-25:46 = Mark 12:37b-13:37)

Day 3 "two days before the Passover" (Wednesday) (Mark's Day 4)

Jesus' death plotted (26:1-5 = Mark 14:1-2)

Anointing in Bethany (26:6-13 = Mark 14:3-9)

Betrayal by Judas (26:14-16 = Mark 14:10-11)

Day 4 (Thursday) (Mark's Day 5)

Preparation, last supper, arrest, trial before the council, Peter's denial  
(26:17-75 = Mark 14:12-72)

Day 5 (Friday) (Mark's Day 6)

Trial before Pilate, crucifixion, burial (27:1-61 = Mark 15:1-47)

Day 6 (Saturday) (Mark's Day 7)

The guard at the tomb (27:62-66; this day is not described in Mark)

Day 7 (Sunday) (Mark's Day 8)

Discovery of empty tomb, appearances, commissioning the disciples  
(28:1-20 = Mark 16:1-8a)

\*From this point on, the events happen on the same day of the week in Matthew and Mark. This makes "Tuesday" a long day in both Mark and Matthew.

<sup>36</sup>“Again he sent other servants, more than the first group. They treated them in the same way. <sup>37</sup>Finally he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

<sup>38</sup>“But when the tenant farmers saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come on, let’s kill him and we’ll have his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup>They grabbed him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

<sup>40</sup>“When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenant farmers?”

<sup>41</sup>They said, “He will totally destroy those wicked farmers and rent the vineyard to other tenant farmers who will give him the fruit when it’s ready.”

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you ever read in the scriptures, *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The Lord has done this, and it’s amazing in our eyes?*”

<sup>43</sup>Therefore, I tell you that God’s kingdom will be taken away from you and will be given to a people who produce its fruit. <sup>44</sup>Whoever falls on this stone will be crushed. And the stone will crush the person it falls on.”

<sup>45</sup>Now when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard the parable, they knew Jesus was talking about them. <sup>46</sup>They were trying to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, who thought he was a prophet.

**Parable of the wedding party**

**22** Jesus responded by speaking again in parables: <sup>2</sup>“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding party for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent his servants to call those invited to the wedding party. But they didn’t want to come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other servants and said to them, ‘Tell those who have been invited, “Look, the meal is all prepared. I’ve butchered the oxen and the fattened cattle. Now everything’s ready. Come to the wedding party!”’ <sup>5</sup>But they paid no attention and went away—some to their fields, others to their businesses. <sup>6</sup>The rest of them grabbed his servants, abused them, and killed them.

<sup>7</sup>“The king was angry. He sent his soldiers to destroy those murderers and set their city on fire. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his servants, “The wedding party is prepared, but those who were invited weren’t worthy. <sup>9</sup>Therefore, go to the roads on the edge of town and invite everyone you find to the wedding party.’

<sup>10</sup>“Then those servants went to the roads and gathered everyone they found, both evil and good. The wedding party was full of guests. <sup>11</sup>Now when the king came in and saw the guests, he spotted a man who wasn’t wearing wedding clothes. <sup>12</sup>He said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ But he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king said to his

<sup>o</sup>Ps 118:22-23

(Prophets were sometimes called “servants” in the OT; e.g., Jer 7:25; 25:4.) On violent resistance as the common fate of God’s prophets, see Matthew 5:12; 23:31, 34, 37.

21:37 *Finally he sent his son to them*: a reference to Jesus, God’s Son (e.g., Matt 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16; 17:5).

21:38-39 *when the tenant farmers saw the son*: At this point, there’s no obvious parallel with the relationship between the Jewish leaders and Jesus, since they don’t recognize him as God’s Son. Within the logic of the parable, though, this must be seen as the strongest possible rebellion against the owner of the vineyard.

21:41 *other tenant farmers who will give him the fruit*: new leaders of Israel, identified earlier as the 12 disciples (Matt 19:28). On fruitfulness, see Matthew 3:8, 10; 7:16-20; 13:3-8.

21:42 *Haven’t you ever read*: The quotation is from Psalm 118:22-23, which anticipates the contrast between what God values and what the Jewish leadership values.

21:43 *to a people who produce its fruit*: The new people are those with changed hearts and lives, and whose lives thus produce obedience (see Matt 3:8; 7:16-20; 28:18-20).

21:46: *they feared the crowds, who thought he was a prophet*: See Matthew 14:5; 21:26.

22:1 *responded*: Jesus continues to address the chief priests and the Pharisees (see Matt 21:45).

22:3-6 *those invited*: The parable describes a typical, two-stage invitation—the first to invite people to a feast, the second to announce that the feast is ready. Those invited have already responded positively to the invitation, so they now receive the second invitation. Rather than attend the feast, their responses range from indifference to violence.

22:8 *those who were invited weren’t worthy*: See Matthew 10:11-13, 37-38.

22:9-10 *roads on the edge of town*: where all kinds of people might be located. *everyone you find... both evil and good*: a wonderfully generous invitation in which all are to be included (see Matt 5:45; 13:29-30, 47-48).

22:11 *a man who wasn’t wearing wedding clothes*: The “wedding clothes” represent a fruitful life lived in obedience to God’s will. For the image, see Revelation 19:7-8. The metaphor is made possible by the significance of clothing in the ancient world, in which one’s clothing exhibited one’s character (thus, e.g., “dress yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ” [Rom 13:14]; or “All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” [Gal 3:27]).

22:13 *weeping and grinding their teeth*: See Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 24:51; 25:30.

21:36 Mt 22:4  
 21:37 Heb 1:1  
 21:38 Mt 12:14;  
 Mt 26:3,  
 Mt 28:4; Mt 27:1,  
 Mt 27:2  
 21:39 Mt 26:50;  
 Heb 13:12  
 21:41 Ac 13:46  
 21:42 Ps 118:22;  
 Ps 118:23;  
 Mt 21:16;  
 Ac 4:11;  
 Eph 2:20  
 21:43 Mt 8:12  
 21:44 Is 8:14  
 21:46 Mt 21:11,  
 Mt 21:26;  
 Lk 7:16; Jn 7:40  
 22:1 Mt 9:15,  
 Mt 13:34,  
 Mt 19:23;  
 Lk 14:16,  
 Lk 18:24  
 22:2 Mt 13:24,  
 Mt 25:1;  
 Lk 14:16;  
 Rev 19:7  
 22:3 Mt 21:34  
 22:4 Prv 9:2;  
 Mt 21:36  
 22:5 Heb 2:3  
 22:6 Mt 21:35  
 22:7 Lk 19:27  
 22:8 Mt 10:11;  
 Lk 20:35;  
 Ac 13:46  
 22:9 Prv 1:20;  
 Prv 1:21; Is 55:1;  
 Est 21:21;  
 Rev 22:17  
 22:10 Mt 13:47  
 22:11 Rev 16:15  
 22:12 Mt 20:13;  
 Mt 26:50  
 22:13 Mt 8:12;  
 Mt 25:30;  
 2Pt 2:17; Jud 1:6

22:14 Mt 7:14;  
Rev 17:14  
22:15 Mt 12:14,  
Mt 19:3,  
Mk 12:13,  
Lk 11:54,  
Lk 20:20

servants, 'Tie his hands and feet and throw him out into the farthest darkness. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth.'

<sup>14</sup>"Many people are invited, but few people are chosen."

#### Question about taxes

22:16 Mk 3:6,  
Mk 8:15,  
Mk 12:13

<sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees met together to find a way to trap Jesus in his words. <sup>16</sup>They sent their disciples, along with the supporters of Herod, to him. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are genuine and that you teach God's way as it really is. We know that you are not swayed by people's opinions, because you don't show favoritism. <sup>17</sup>So tell us what you think: Does the Law allow people to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

22:17 Mt 17:25;  
Lk 2:1, Lk 3:1,  
Lk 20:22

<sup>18</sup>Knowing their evil motives, Jesus replied, "Why do you test me, you hypocrites? <sup>19</sup>Show me the coin used to pay the tax." And they brought him a denarius. <sup>20</sup>"Whose image and inscription is this?" he asked.

22:22 Mk 12:12  
22:23 Mt 3:7;  
Mk 12:18;  
Lk 20:27; Ac 4:1,  
Ac 23:8

<sup>21</sup>"Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

22:24 Dt 25:5;  
Mk 12:19

<sup>22</sup>When they heard this they were astonished, and they departed.

#### Question about resurrection

22:29 Jn 20:9  
22:30 Mt 18:10,  
Mt 24:38;  
Jn 5:28, Jn 5:29

<sup>23</sup>That same day Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Jesus. <sup>24</sup>They asked, "Teacher, Moses said, *If a man who doesn't have children dies, his brother must marry his wife and produce children for his brother.*"<sup>25</sup>Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married, then died. Because he had no children he left his widow to his brother.

22:31 Mt 12:3,  
Mt 21:16  
22:32 Ex 3:6;  
Ac 7:32

<sup>26</sup>The same thing happened with the second brother and the third, and in fact with all seven brothers. <sup>27</sup>Finally, the woman died. <sup>28</sup>At the resurrection, which of the seven brothers will be her husband? They were all married to her."

<sup>29</sup>Jesus responded, "You are wrong because you don't know either the scriptures or God's power. <sup>30</sup>At the resurrection people won't marry nor will they be given in marriage. Instead, they will be like angels from God. <sup>31</sup>As for the resurrection of the dead, haven't you read what God told you, <sup>32</sup>*I'm the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?*"<sup>33</sup> He isn't the

<sup>14</sup>Deut 25:5 <sup>9</sup>Exod 3:6, 15-16

22:14 "Many people are invited, but few people are chosen": The invitation must be accepted with a positive response, measured by faithfulness to God's will (see Matt 5:20).

22:15 to trap Jesus in his words: As in Matthew 21:46, they are seeking a reason to arrest him. Here they are giving him an opportunity either to encourage rebellion against Rome or to weaken his popular support by appearing to support Rome. Previously, the Pharisees have been involved in testing Jesus (Matt 16:1; 19:3).

22:16 their disciples, along with the supporters of Herod: Pharisees define themselves in relation to faithfulness to God's Law, but Herod's supporters are those who align themselves with Herod and, thus, with Rome. This unnatural alliance is possible because Jesus was a threat to both groups. *you are genuine*: Although these words to Jesus are intended to flatter him, Matthew's readers recognize their truth. See sidebar, "Judea under Foreign Rule" at Matthew 3.

22:17 Does the Law allow: or "is it permitted." Moses' Law doesn't address the question in a specific way, so the question revolves around how Jesus understands the nature of faithfulness to God in the presence of Rome's claims of allegiance. *taxes*: The question concerns the "head tax," which was charged to all adults in the Roman provinces, including Judea. If Jesus says no, then he would be challenging the authority of the Roman Empire. If he says yes, then he would be acknowledging that he was pro-Roman—a position that would undermine his preaching of the kingdom of heaven.

22:19-21 denarius: The Roman coin used to pay the head tax during the time of Jesus would have carried the image of Emperor Tiberius (14–37 CE). When an emperor minted coins with his own image, the coins were regarded as his property. It is telling that Jesus doesn't carry such a coin, but his questioners do.

22:21 Give to Caesar . . . and to God: The coin may belong to Caesar, but human lives belong completely to God. Jesus' answer doesn't call for the revolutionary overthrow of the empire, but neither does it support Roman authority. Rather, it identifies one's most basic and essential allegiance as belonging to God; this commitment determines the rest of life (see Matt 6:33). See sidebar, "Judea under Foreign Rule" at Matthew 3.

22:23 Sadducees: the priestly aristocrats. They didn't believe in the resurrection (cf. Acts 23:6-8), probably because it's not mentioned in the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy). See sidebars, "Israel's Scriptures" at Matthew 5; "Pharisees and Sadducees" at Matthew 16.

22:24 his brother must marry his wife: According to a law known as the "levirate law," when a man dies without a male descendant, his brother should marry the widow and raise an heir for his dead brother (see Deut 25:5-10).

22:25-28 In their attempt to cast doubt on belief in the resurrection, the Sadducees pose an extreme question.

22:29-32 You are wrong: Jesus' response takes two forms. First, they don't know the scriptures. Rather than refer to a biblical text like Daniel 12:2-3, which clearly refers to the resurrection, Jesus refers to a text that the Sadducees

God of the dead but of the living.”<sup>33</sup> Now when the crowd heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

**Great commandment**

<sup>34</sup>When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had left the Sadducees speechless, they met together. <sup>35</sup>One of them, a legal expert, tested him. <sup>36</sup>“Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

<sup>37</sup>He replied, “*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being,*” and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: *You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.*” <sup>40</sup>All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.”

**Question about David’s son**

<sup>41</sup>Now as the Pharisees were gathering, Jesus asked them, <sup>42</sup>“What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?”

“David’s son,” they replied.

<sup>43</sup>He said, “Then how is it that David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, called him Lord when he said, *‘The Lord said to my lord, ‘Sit at my right side until I turn your enemies into your footstool!’*” <sup>44</sup>“If David calls him Lord, how can he be David’s son?” <sup>45</sup>Nobody was able to answer him. And from that day forward nobody dared to ask him anything.

**Ways of the legal experts and the Pharisees**

**23** Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and his disciples, <sup>2</sup>“The legal experts and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat. <sup>3</sup>Therefore, you must take care to do everything they say. But don’t do what they do. <sup>4</sup>For they tie together heavy packs that are impossible to carry. They put them on the shoulders of others, but are unwilling to lift a finger to move them.

22:33 Mt 7:28  
22:34 Mk 12:28;  
Lk 10:25  
22:35 Lk 7:30;  
Lk 10:25;  
Lk 11:45;  
Lk 14:3  
22:36 Dt 6:5;  
Dt 10:12;  
Dt 10:13  
22:37 Dt 6:5;  
Josh 22:5  
22:38 Dt 6:5;  
Dt 10:12  
22:39 Lv 19:18;  
Mt 19:19;  
Ga 5:14; Jas 2:8  
22:40 Mt 7:12  
22:41 Mk 12:35;  
Lk 20:41  
22:42 Mt 1:1;  
Mt 9:27  
22:43 2Sa 23:2;  
Ac 1:16;  
Rev 1:10; Rev 4:2  
22:44 Ps 110:1;  
Ac 2:34;  
1Co 15:25;  
Heb 1:13;  
Heb 10:13  
22:45 Ro 1:3;  
Rev 22:16  
22:46 Mk 12:34;  
Lk 14:6;  
Lk 20:40

<sup>1</sup>Deut 6:5 <sup>2</sup>Lev 19:18 <sup>3</sup>Ps 110:1

23:1 Mk 12:38; Lk 20:45 23:2 Ezr 7:6; Eze 7:25; Neh 8:4; Mt 23:3; Mk 12:38 23:3 Mt 23:2 23:4 Mt 11:28; Lk 11:46; Ac 15:10

would have accepted as scripture. This is Exodus 3:6, which Jesus interprets to mean that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are (now) alive (the same point is made in 4 Macc 7:19; 16:25). Second, they don’t know *God’s power*. Jesus refers both to God’s ability to raise people from the dead and also to the transformation that takes place in the resurrection. Jesus had brought a little girl back to life in Matthew 9:18-19, 23-25 (cf. Matt 11:5), but eventually she would die again, like everyone else. The resurrection refers to a different form of bodily life (cf. 1 Cor 15:35-50), one that doesn’t involve marriage. See sidebars, “Israel’s Scriptures” at Matthew 5; “Pharisees and Sadducees” at Matthew 16. 22:35 *tested him*: See Matthew 4:7; 16:1; 19:3; 22:18. 22:36 *the greatest commandment*: According to some Jewish literature, the rabbis discussed the 613 commandments attributed to Moses to determine the most important one(s). David, it was said, reduced the law to 11 commands (Ps 15); Micah reduced the law to three (Mic 6:8); and so on. Since Jesus was asked this question in order to test him (see Matt 22:35), had he given the wrong answer, this might have been useful to those who opposed him. 22:37-38 *You must love the Lord your God*: Jesus quotes part of the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:5, which Jews were to recite twice daily. 22:39 *You must love your neighbor*. Jesus adds a second commandment, drawing from Leviticus 19:18. (See Matt 5:43; 19:9.) 22:40 *All the Law and the Prophets*: See Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 11:13. Jesus had been asked to identify the greatest commandment. Instead, he sets two commandments, love of God and love of neighbor, side by side, and declares that

these two are essential for understanding all Israel’s scriptures. See sidebar, “Israel’s Scriptures” at Matthew 5. 22:42 *“David’s son”*: The Pharisees agree with the perspective of the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 1:1), that the Christ is David’s son (cf. 2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 89:3-4). Jesus has been called “son of David” repeatedly (Matt 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15). 22:43-45 *how is it*: Jesus poses a puzzle based on Psalm 110:1. In doing so, he expands the identity and mission of the Christ, naming him as the one who shares in the Lord’s divine identity and thus must be addressed even by his own father as *Lord*. 22:46-23:1 Attempts to test Jesus have failed. Rather than interacting with the legal experts and Pharisees, Jesus now speaks about them to the crowds and disciples. Just as the legal experts and Pharisees had been trying to influence the Jewish people to turn against Jesus, so now Jesus casts the legal experts and Pharisees in a bad light with the crowds. This is not mere name-calling, but a serious attempt to undercut their ability to lead the people down the wrong path (see Matt 15:14; 23:16). 23:2-3 *Moses’ seat*: Since most of the population couldn’t read very well, and certainly didn’t own their own copies of the scriptures, they depended on *The legal experts and the Pharisees* to tell them what the Law says. Even if they didn’t live according to the Law, their knowledge of its contents could be trusted. 23:4 *For they tie together heavy packs*: Their attempts to spell out how to be faithful to the Law added more and more regulations that made it impossible for most people. Contrast Jesus’ understanding of the Law, which is “easy to bear” (Matt 11:29-30); and which he has just explained in

23:5 Nm 15:38;  
Dt 6:8; Mt 6:1;  
Mt 6:5; Mt 6:16

23:6 Lk 11:43;  
Lk 14:7; Lk 14:8;  
Lk 20:46

23:7 In 1:38;  
In 3:2

23:8 Jas 3:1

23:9 Mal 1:6;  
Mal 2:10; Mt 6:9;  
Mt 7:11

23:10 Mt 1:17;  
Mt 2:4; Mt 23:8;  
Ac 2:36; Ro 9:5

23:11 Mt 20:26  
23:12 Lk 14:11;  
Lk 18:14

23:13 Mt 23:27;  
Lk 11:52

23:14 Mk 12:40;  
Lk 20:47

23:15 Mt 5:22;  
Mt 5:29;  
Mt 23:33;  
Ac 2:10;  
Ac 13:43

23:16 Mt 5:33;  
Mt 15:14;  
Mt 23:24;  
Mt 23:26

23:17 Ex 30:29

23:18 Mt 23:19

23:19 Ex 29:37

23:21 1Ki 8:13;

Ps 26:8;

Ps 132:14

23:22 Ps 11:4;

Is 66:1; Mt 5:34;

Rev 4:2

23:23 Lv 27:30;

Is 28:27; Mt 6:8;

Lk 11:42

23:24 Mt 19:24;

Mt 23:16

<sup>5</sup>Everything they do, they do to be noticed by others. They make extra-wide prayer bands for their arms and long tassels for their clothes. <sup>6</sup>They love to sit in places of honor at banquets. <sup>7</sup>They love to be greeted with honor in the markets and to be addressed as 'Rabbi.'

<sup>8</sup>"But you shouldn't be called *Rabbi*, because you have one teacher, and all of you are brothers and sisters. <sup>9</sup>Don't call anybody on earth your father, because you have one Father, who is heavenly. <sup>10</sup>Don't be called *teacher*, because Christ is your one teacher. <sup>11</sup>But the one who is greatest among you will be your servant. <sup>12</sup>All who lift themselves up will be brought low. But all who make themselves low will be lifted up.

### Condemnation of the legal experts and the Pharisees

<sup>13</sup>"How terrible it will be for you legal experts and Pharisees! Hypocrites! You shut people out of the kingdom of heaven. You don't enter yourselves, and you won't allow those who want to enter to do so.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>15</sup>"How terrible it will be for you, legal experts and Pharisees! Hypocrites! You travel over sea and land to make one convert. But when they've been converted, they become twice the child of hell you are.

<sup>16</sup>"How terrible it will be for you blind guides who say, 'If people swear by the temple, it's nothing. But if people swear by the gold in the temple, they are obligated to do what they swore.' <sup>17</sup>You foolish and blind people! Which is greater, the gold or the temple that makes the gold holy? <sup>18</sup>You say, 'If people swear by the altar, it's nothing. But if they swear by the gift on the altar, they are obligated to do what they swore.' <sup>19</sup>You blind people! Which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift holy? <sup>20</sup>Therefore, those who swear by the altar swear by it and by everything that's on it. <sup>21</sup>Those who swear by the temple swear by it and by everything that's part of it. <sup>22</sup>Those who swear by heaven swear by God's throne and by the one who sits on it.

<sup>23</sup>"How terrible it will be for you legal experts and Pharisees! Hypocrites! You give to God a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, but you forget about the more important matters of the Law: justice, peace, and faith. You ought to give a tenth but without forgetting about those more important matters. <sup>24</sup>You blind guides! You filter out an ant but swallow a camel.

<sup>a</sup>Most critical editions of the Gk New Testament omit 23:14 *How terrible it will be for you legal experts and Pharisees! Hypocrites! You eat up widows' houses and make a show of praying long prayers. Therefore, you will receive greater judgment.*

the simple terms of loving God and loving neighbor (Matt 22:35-40).

**23:5** *Everything they do*: See Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18. *prayer bands*: a reference to a "phylactery," that is, a leather case containing scripture passages. This practice is drawn from a strict reading of Exodus 13:9, 16; Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18. *long tassels*: See Numbers 15:37-39; Deuteronomy 22:12. That Jesus wore such tassels is indicated by Matthew 9:20; 14:36, where the CEB refers to a "hem" or the "edge" of his clothes. Both *prayer bands* and *long tassels* were reminders of God's commandments.

**23:6-7** *places of honor... greeted with honor*: The legal experts and Pharisees are concerned with prestige and status, in opposition to Jesus' teaching (see Matt 18:1-4; 20:20-28).

**23:7-10** *Rabbi*: a Hebrew term that means "my great one" or "master," used as a title of honor for legal experts. *father*: sometimes used as a title of honor for great teachers (e.g., Acts 7:2; 22:1). Jesus directs his followers and the crowds not to use such titles for each other, since they are all siblings, no one with more status than the other. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is called "Rabbi" only twice, both times by Judas, his betrayer (Matt 26:25, 49).

**23:11-12** See Matthew 18:1-4; 20:20-28.  
**23:13** *How terrible*: The Greek word *ouai* often appears in English translations as "woe." It's like an emotional outburst associated with pain or bad news. In literature, it refers to an unhappy state, the opposite of flourishing,

contentment, and well-being (see Matt 5:3-12). The term appears in Matthew 11:21; 18:7; 23:13, 15, 16, 23, 27, 29; 24:19; 26:24.

**23:14** *You shut people out of the kingdom of heaven*: Not only do the legal experts and Pharisees contradict God's ways in their teaching, but they also oppose Jesus, who proclaims God's reign. See sidebar, "The Kingdom of Heaven" at Matthew 3.

**23:15** *make one convert*: Gentiles were sometimes attracted to the Jewish faith, but generally Judaism in the time of Jesus wasn't a missionary religion. Some Gentiles participated in the life of the Jewish synagogue, and Jesus may be referring to occasional efforts to attract such Gentiles into Judaism. Or he may be referring to attempts by Pharisees to win Jews over to the Pharisaic group. *child of hell*: destined for judgment (see Matt 13:38).

**23:16-22** *blind guides*: See Matthew 15:14. *swear*: See Matthew 5:33-37.

**23:23** *more important matters*: Jesus criticizes attention to details of the Law (in this case, tithing one's crops; e.g., Lev 27:30-33; Deut 14:22-29) while overlooking *justice, peace, and faith* (see, e.g., Mic 6:8; Hab 2:4). In doing so, though, he doesn't dismiss the smaller matters (see Matt 5:17-19).

**23:24** *blind guides*: See Matthew 15:14; 23:16. *ant... camel*: Both are unclean and thus not to be eaten (Lev 11:4, 41). This illustrates their concern with small things to the neglect of large.

<sup>25</sup>How terrible it will be for you legal experts and Pharisees! Hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and plate, but inside they are full of violence and pleasure seeking. <sup>26</sup>Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup so that the outside of the cup will be clean too.

<sup>27</sup>How terrible it will be for you legal experts and Pharisees! Hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs. They look beautiful on the outside. But inside they are full of dead bones and all kinds of filth. <sup>28</sup>In the same way you look righteous to people. But inside you are full of pretense and rebellion.

<sup>29</sup>How terrible it will be for you legal experts and Pharisees! Hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. <sup>30</sup>You say, 'If we had lived in our ancestors' days, we wouldn't have joined them in killing the prophets.' <sup>31</sup>You testify against yourselves that you are children of those who murdered the prophets. <sup>32</sup>Go ahead, complete what your ancestors did. <sup>33</sup>You snakes! You children of snakes! How will you be able to escape the judgment of hell? <sup>34</sup>Therefore, look, I'm sending you prophets, wise people, and legal experts. Some of them you will kill and crucify. And some you will beat in your synagogues and chase from city to city. <sup>35</sup>Therefore, upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been poured out on the earth, from the blood of that righteous man Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you killed between the temple and the altar. <sup>36</sup>I assure you that all these things will come upon this generation.

**Crying over Jerusalem**

<sup>37</sup>Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You who kill the prophets and stone those who were sent to you. How often I wanted to gather your people together, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you didn't want that. <sup>38</sup>Look, your house is left to you deserted. <sup>39</sup>I tell you, you won't see me until you say, *Blessings on the one who comes in the Lord's name.*"<sup>v</sup>

**The temple's fate**

**24** Now Jesus left the temple and was going away. His disciples came to point out to him the temple buildings. <sup>2</sup>He responded, "Do you see all these things? I assure that no stone will be left on another. Everything will be demolished."

**Beginning of troubles**

<sup>3</sup>Now while Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately and said, "Tell us, when will these things happen? What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?"

<sup>4</sup>Jesus replied, "Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>5</sup>Many will come in my name, saying,

<sup>v</sup>Ps 118:26

23:25 Mk 7:4; Lk 11:39  
 23:26 Mt 12:33  
 23:27 Lk 11:44; Ac 23:3  
 23:28 Mt 23:5  
 23:29 Lk 11:47; Lk 11:48  
 23:31 Lk 19:22; Ac 7:51  
 23:32 Gn 15:16  
 23:33 Mt 3:7; Mt 5:22; Mt 12:34; Mt 23:15; Lk 3:7  
 23:34 Mt 10:16; Mt 10:17; Mt 10:23; Lk 11:49; Ac 22:19  
 23:35 Gn 4:8; 2Ch 24:21; Zec 1:1; Heb 11:4; Heb 12:24  
 23:36 Mt 10:23; Mt 24:34  
 23:37 Ru 2:12; Psa 124; Lk 13:34  
 23:38 Jer 22:5  
 23:39 Ps 118:26; Mt 21:9  
 24:1 Mk 13:1; Lk 21:5  
 24:2 Mt 3:12; Mk 13:2; Lk 19:44  
 24:3 Mt 13:39; Mt 21:1; Mt 28:20  
 24:4 Jer 29:8; Mk 13:5; 2Th 2:3  
 24:5 Mt 24:11; Mt 24:23; Mt 24:24; 1In 2:18

23:25-26 *Hypocrites*: usually understood in the ancient world as a "play actor." Here the term is explained in terms of purity laws, which distinguished between cleaning the inside and the outside of a cup. Jesus draws an analogy to people who pretend to be one thing on the outside but are quite different on the inside. See Matthew 15:10-20.

23:27-28 The message of Matthew 23:25-26 is extended, now with reference to corpse impurity, a major concern of Pharisees at the time of Jesus (see Num 19:16).

23:29-31 *You build tombs . . . and decorate the graves*: They give the impression that they honor *the prophets* and *the righteous*, when in fact they oppose them. *children of those who murdered the prophets*: To be a child is to have the characteristics of the parents. For a similar charge, see Matthew 21:33-45.

23:35 *blood*: a term that sometimes refers to "responsibility for someone's death" (cf. Jon 1:14). *Abel*: See Genesis 4:3-12. *Zechariah*: See 2 Chronicles 24:20-22. According to the Jewish order of books in the Hebrew Bible, Genesis is first and 2 Chronicles is last. So Abel would be the first righteous person murdered and Zechariah the last.

23:38 *your house*: the Jerusalem temple. *deserted*:

abandoned by God (cf. Ezek 8:6, 12; 11:22-23) in anticipation of its destruction (see Matt 24).

23:39 See Matthew 21:9 (Ps 118:26).

24:1 *the temple*: The second temple was built in 518 BCE, but Herod the Great had undertaken its massive remodeling. The result was a magnificent temple complex that attracted visitors from far and wide.

24:2 Jesus joins others of his time in his criticism of what the temple system had become under its present leadership. For Jesus, its coming destruction is the consequence of the hypocrisy of the Jewish rulers in Jerusalem (Matt 23). 24:3 *Mount of Olives*: a mountain ridge approximately two miles long, located across the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem. Jesus and his disciples would have been just across the valley from the temple, looking down on its courts. *privately*: See Matthew 13:10, 36; 17:9; 20:17. Zechariah 14:1-4 anticipates the return of the Lord to the Mount of Olives, signaling the end time. *your coming*: See Matthew 10:23; 16:27-28; 25. The disciples' questions suggest that they can't separate these three occurrences: the destruction of the temple (i.e., *these things*, referring back to Matt 24:2); Jesus' future coming; and *the end of the age*.

24:4-51 Jesus answers the disciples' questions about the

24:6 2Th 2:2;  
Rev 6:4  
24:7 2Ch 15:6;  
Is 19:2; Lk 21:11;  
Ac 11:28; Rev 6:5  
24:8 Lk 21:12  
24:9 Mt 10:17;  
Mt 10:22;  
Lk 21:27; In 16:2  
24:10 Mt 10:21;  
Mt 13:21  
24:11 Mt 7:15;  
Mt 24:24  
24:12 Rev 2:4  
24:13 Mt 10:22

24:14 Mt 4:23;  
Mt 28:19;  
Ro 10:16;  
Col 1:6, Col 1:23  
24:15 Dn 9:27;  
Dn 11:31;  
Dn 12:11;  
Mk 13:14  
24:16 Lk 21:21  
24:17 1Sa 9:25;  
Mt 10:27; Lk 5:19;  
Lk 12:3; Ac 10:9  
24:19 Lk 23:29  
24:20 2Ti 4:21  
24:21 Dn 12:1;  
Jl 2:2; Mt 24:29  
24:22 Mt 22:14;  
Mt 24:24;  
Mt 24:31;  
Lk 18:7; Ro 8:33  
24:23 Mt 24:5;  
Lk 17:23; Lk 21:8  
24:24 Mt 24:5;  
Mt 24:11; 2Th 2:9;  
Rev 13:13;  
Rev 19:20  
24:25 Jn 14:29  
24:26 Ac 21:38  
24:27 Job 37:3;  
Job 38:35;  
Zec 9:14;  
Mt 6:20; Lk 17:24  
24:28 Lk 17:37  
24:29 Is 13:10;  
Is 34:4; Eze 32:7;  
Jl 2:10; Jl 2:31  
24:30 Dn 7:13;  
Mt 16:27;  
Mt 24:3;  
Mt 26:64;  
Rev 1:7  
24:31 Is 27:13;  
Zec 9:14;  
Mt 13:41;  
1Co 15:52;  
1Th 4:16

'I'm the Christ.' They will deceive many people. <sup>6</sup>You will hear about wars and reports of wars. Don't be alarmed. These things must happen, but this isn't the end yet. <sup>7</sup>Nations and kingdoms will fight against each other, and there will be famines and earthquakes in all sorts of places. <sup>8</sup>But all these things are just the beginning of the sufferings associated with the end. <sup>9</sup>They will arrest you, abuse you, and they will kill you. All nations will hate you on account of my name. <sup>10</sup>At that time many will fall away. They will betray each other and hate each other. <sup>11</sup>Many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. <sup>12</sup>Because disobedience will expand, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup>But the one who endures to the end will be delivered. <sup>14</sup>This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world as a testimony to all the nations. Then the end will come.

### The great suffering

<sup>15</sup>"When you see the disgusting and destructive thing that Daniel talked about standing in the holy place (the reader should understand this), <sup>16</sup>then those in Judea must escape to the mountains. <sup>17</sup>Those on the roof shouldn't come down to grab things from their houses. <sup>18</sup>Those in the field shouldn't come back to grab their clothes. <sup>19</sup>How terrible it will be at that time for women who are pregnant and for women who are nursing their children. <sup>20</sup>Pray that it doesn't happen in winter or on the Sabbath day. <sup>21</sup>There will be great suffering such as the world has never before seen and will never again see. <sup>22</sup>If that time weren't shortened, nobody would be rescued. But for the sake of the ones whom God chose, that time will be cut short.

<sup>23</sup>"Then if somebody says to you, 'Look, here's the Christ,' or 'He's over here,' don't believe it. <sup>24</sup>False christs and false prophets will appear, and they will offer great signs and wonders in order to deceive, if possible, even those whom God has chosen. <sup>25</sup>Look, I've told you ahead of time. <sup>26</sup>So if they say to you, 'Look, he's in the desert,' don't go out. And if they say, 'Look, he's in the rooms deep inside the house,' don't believe it. <sup>27</sup>Just as the lightning flashes from the east to the west, so it will be with the coming of the Human One. <sup>28</sup>The vultures gather wherever there's a dead body.

### Coming of the Human One

<sup>29</sup>Now immediately after the suffering of that time the sun will become dark, and the moon won't give its light. The stars will fall from the sky and the planets and other heavenly bodies will be shaken. <sup>30</sup>Then the sign of the Human One<sup>W</sup> will appear in the sky. At that time all the tribes of the earth will be full of sadness, and they will see *the Human One<sup>V</sup> coming in the heavenly clouds<sup>Y</sup>* with power and great splendor. <sup>31</sup>He will send his angels with the sound of a great trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from the four corners of the earth, from one end of the sky to the other.

<sup>W</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>X</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>Y</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>Z</sup>Dan 7:13 I suddenly saw one like a human being (Aram kebar enash) coming with the heavenly clouds.

timing of the end with an extended warning to stay alert to deception and to live faithful lives.

**24:6-8** *the beginning of the sufferings*: or "birth pangs." Other Jewish books written about the time of Jesus refer to such disasters as these occurring before the coming of the new age. These occurrences provide no reason to panic.

**24:9-13** These predictions of suffering give added weight to Jesus' earlier teaching about harassment and loving one's enemies (e.g., Matt 5:10-12, 43-45; 10:16-42).

**24:14** *throughout the world*: See Matthew 28:18-20.

**24:15** *the disgusting and destructive thing*: See Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11 (cf. 1 Macc 1:54). The phrase referred originally to an altar to Zeus set up in the Jerusalem temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 BCE.

**24:16-20** *escape*: The appropriate response isn't to stand and fight but to retreat. Jesus doesn't here encourage dying for the faith, but faithful life and witness (likewise, Matt 10:23). Pregnancy and winter make it even more

difficult to leave everything and flee. *Sabbath*: Travel was restricted on the Sabbath, making flight to a mountain difficult.

**24:24** *false prophets*: See Matthew 7:15-23 (counterfeits will be known "by their fruit").

**24:27** *the coming of the Human One*: See Daniel 7:13-14.

**24:28** *The vultures gather*: This proverbial saying refers to the unmistakable location of a dead body—just look for the vultures! In the same way, the signs that Jesus has been identifying show that the end is near.

**24:29** These images are from the OT (e.g., Isa 13:10; 34:4; Joel 2:10). They are highly symbolic ways of describing the final judgment before the remaking of creation (see Matt 19:28).

**24:30** *the sign of the Human One*: See Daniel 7:13-14.

**24:31** *angels*: See Matthew 13:41-43. *the sound of a great trumpet*: announcing the end (cf. Isa 27:13; 1 Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:16). *chosen ones from the four corners*: from all peoples, all nations (see Matt 8:11; 24:14; 28:18-20).



**A lesson from the fig tree**

<sup>32</sup>Learn this parable from the fig tree. After its branch becomes tender and it sprouts new leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>33</sup>In the same way, when you see all these things, you know that the Human One<sup>a</sup> is near, at the door. <sup>34</sup>I assure you that this generation won't pass away until all these things happen. <sup>35</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will certainly not pass away.

**Day and hour**

<sup>36</sup>But nobody knows when that day or hour will come, not the heavenly angels and not the Son. Only the Father knows. <sup>37</sup>As it was in the time of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Human One.<sup>b</sup> <sup>38</sup>In those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. <sup>39</sup>They didn't know what was happening until the flood came and swept them all away. The coming of the Human One<sup>c</sup> will be like that. <sup>40</sup>At that time there will be two men in the field. One will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup>Two women will be grinding at the mill. One will be taken and the other left. <sup>42</sup>Therefore, stay alert! You don't know what day the Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup>But you understand that if the head of the house knew at what time the thief would come, he would keep alert and wouldn't allow the thief to break into his house. <sup>44</sup>Therefore, you also should be prepared, because the Human One<sup>d</sup> will come at a time you don't know.

**Faithful and unfaithful servants**

<sup>45</sup>Who then are the faithful and wise servants whom their master puts in charge of giving food at the right time to those who live in his house? <sup>46</sup>Happy are those servants whom the master finds fulfilling their responsibilities when he comes. <sup>47</sup>I assure you that he will put them in charge of all his possessions. <sup>48</sup>But suppose those bad servants should say to themselves, My master won't come until later. <sup>49</sup>And suppose they began to beat their fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunks? <sup>50</sup>The master of those servants will come on a day when they are not expecting him, at a time they couldn't predict. <sup>51</sup>He will cut them in pieces and put them in a place with the hypocrites. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth.

**Parable of the ten young bridesmaids**

**25**<sup>a</sup>At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten young bridesmaids who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. <sup>2</sup>Now five of them were wise, and the other five were foolish. <sup>3</sup>The foolish ones took their lamps but didn't bring oil for them. <sup>4</sup>But the wise ones took their lamps and also brought containers of oil.

<sup>5</sup>When the groom was late in coming, they all became drowsy and went to sleep. <sup>6</sup>But at midnight there was a cry, 'Look, the groom! Come out to meet him.'

<sup>7</sup>Then all those bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. <sup>8</sup>But the foolish bridesmaids said to the wise ones, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps have gone out.'

<sup>9</sup>But the wise bridesmaids replied, 'No, because if we share with you, there won't be enough for our lamps and yours. We have a better idea. You go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' <sup>10</sup>But while they were gone to buy oil, the groom came. Those who were ready went with him into the wedding. Then the door was shut.

<sup>a</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>b</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>c</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>d</sup>Or Son of Man

24:32 Gn 8:22;  
Mk 13:28;  
Mt 13:29;  
Lk 21:30  
24:33 Jas 5:9  
24:34 Mt 16:28;  
Mt 23:36  
24:35 Ps 102:26;  
Is 40:8, Is 51:6;  
Mt 5:18  
24:36 Mk 13:32;  
Ac 1:7  
24:37 Gn 6:5;  
Gn 7:6;  
Lk 17:26;  
Lk 17:27; 2Pt 2:5  
24:38 Lk 17:26  
24:39 Mt 24:38  
24:40 Lk 17:34  
24:41 Ex 11:5;  
Is 47:2; Lk 17:35  
24:42 Mt 25:13;  
Lk 21:36;  
1Th 5:6  
24:43 Lk 12:39;  
1Th 5:2; 2Pt 3:10  
24:44 Mt 25:10;  
Lk 12:40  
24:45 Mt 25:21;  
Lk 16:10  
24:46 Rev 16:15  
24:47 Mt 25:21;  
Mt 25:23  
24:48 Ecc 8:11;  
Eze 12:22;  
Eze 12:27;  
Mt 7:23; 1Th 5:3  
24:49 Dt 21:20;  
Is 56:12; Jl 1:5;  
Am 6:6;  
Mt 24:48  
24:50 Prv 29:1  
24:51 Mt 8:12  
25:1 Mt 13:24;  
Rev 2:2  
25:2 Mt 24:45  
25:3 Ex 27:20;  
Is 48:1, Is 48:2;  
Is 58:2; Mt 25:4  
25:4 1In 2:20;  
1In 2:27  
25:5 Mt 24:48;  
1Th 5:6; 2Pt 3:4  
25:6 Mt 25:1  
25:7 Lk 12:35  
25:8 Lk 12:35  
25:9 Is 55:1;  
Rev 3:18  
25:10 Mt 24:44;  
Lk 13:25

24:35 *my words will certainly not pass away*: Typically, this kind of permanence is associated with God's words (e.g., Isa 40:8), as Jesus had declared in Matthew 5:18.

24:36 *nobody knows*: Jesus returns to the initial question raised in Matthew 24:3: "Tell us, when will these things happen?" Jesus redirects attention away from when the end is coming, toward how to live every day in anticipation of the end.

24:37-39 *time of Noah*: People were so busy with everyday life that they were caught by surprise (Gen 6:5-8).

24:42-51 *Therefore, stay alert*: Jesus' message has two primary emphases: (1) Since his followers don't know when the day of the Lord will occur, they must maintain constant faithfulness (that is, living according to Jesus' words;

cf. Matt 25:31-46). (2) Those who do so will be rewarded and those who don't will be punished. *a place with the hypocrites*: that is, judged along with the legal experts and Pharisees (see Matt 23). *weeping and grinding their teeth*: See Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50.

25:2-4 *wise... foolish*: See Matthew 7:24-27; 24:45. Note the idea of separation in Matthew 24:40-41. *lamps... containers of oil*: A "lamp" was a small clay vessel with a chamber for oil and a wick. The significance of the parallel draws on an analogy between "oil" and faithful living (i.e., hearing Jesus' words and putting them into practice; Matt 7:24) in anticipation of the coming of the end.

25:10-12 *Lord, lord... I don't know you*: See Matthew 7:21-23.

25:11 Mt 7:22;  
Mt 25:12;  
Lk 13:25

<sup>11</sup>"Later the other bridesmaids came and said, 'Lord, lord, open the door for us.'

<sup>12</sup>"But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'

25:12 Mt 7:23;  
Mt 25:11;  
Lk 13:25

<sup>13</sup>"Therefore, keep alert, because you don't know the day or the hour.

25:13 Mt 24:42;  
Mk 13:33;  
Mk 13:35

### **Parable of the valuable coins**

<sup>14</sup>"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who was leaving on a trip. He called his servants and handed his possessions over to them. <sup>15</sup>To one he gave five valuable coins,\* and to another he gave two, and to another he gave one. He gave to each servant according to that servant's ability. Then he left on his journey.

25:14 Mt 21:33;  
Mk 13:34;  
Lk 19:12

25:15 Mt 18:24

<sup>16</sup>"After the man left, the servant who had five valuable coins took them and went to work doing business with them. He gained five more. <sup>17</sup>In the same way, the one who had two valuable coins gained two more. <sup>18</sup>But the servant who had received the one valuable coin dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money.

25:19 Mt 18:23

25:21 Mt 24:45;  
Mt 24:47;  
Mt 25:23;  
Lk 16:10;  
Heb 12:2

<sup>19</sup>"Now after a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>The one who had received five valuable coins came forward with five additional coins. He said, 'Master, you gave me five valuable coins. Look, I've gained five more.'

25:23 Mt 25:21

25:24 Job 21:14;  
Job 21:15;  
Jer 2:31;  
Mal 3:14;  
Lk 19:20

<sup>21</sup>"His master replied, 'Excellent! You are a good and faithful servant! You've been faithful over a little. I'll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.'

25:25 Prv 26:13;  
Ro 8:15;  
Rev 21:8

<sup>22</sup>"The second servant also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two valuable coins. Look, I've gained two more.'

25:26 Prv 10:26;  
Prv 15:19;  
Prv 18:9;  
Mt 18:32;  
Ro 12:11

<sup>23</sup>"His master replied, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful servant. You've been faithful over a little. I'll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.'

25:27 Lk 19:23

25:28 Lk 19:24

<sup>24</sup>"Now the one who had received one valuable coin came and said, 'Master, I knew that you are a hard man. You harvest grain where you haven't sown. You gather crops where you haven't spread seed. <sup>25</sup>So I was afraid. And I hid my valuable coin in the ground. Here, you have what's yours.'

25:29 Mt 13:12;  
Mk 4:25; Lk 8:18

25:30 Mt 8:12;  
Mt 13:42;  
Mt 22:13;  
Mt 24:51;  
Lk 13:28

<sup>26</sup>"His master replied, 'You evil and lazy servant! You knew that I harvest grain where I haven't sown and that I gather crops where I haven't spread seed? <sup>27</sup>In that case, you should have turned my money over to the bankers so that when I returned, you could give me what belonged to me with interest. <sup>28</sup>Therefore, take from him the valuable coin and give it to the one who has ten coins. <sup>29</sup>Those who have much will receive more, and they will have more than they need. But as for those who don't have much, even the little bit they have will be taken away from them. <sup>30</sup>Now take the worthless servant and throw him outside into the darkness.'

25:31 Mt 16:27;  
Mt 19:28;  
2Th 1:7; Jud 1:14

25:32 Eze 34:17;  
Eze 34:20;  
Mal 3:18;  
Mt 13:49

"People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth.

25:33 Ps 45:9

### **Judgment of the nations**

<sup>31</sup>"Now when the Human One<sup>f</sup> comes in his majesty and all his angels are with him, he will sit on his majestic throne. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered in front of him. He will separate them from each other, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup>He will put the sheep on his right side. But the goats he will put on his left.

\*Or *talantas* (talents) <sup>f</sup>Or *Son of Man*

25:13 See Matthew 24:42.

25:15 *valuable coins*: The Greek word is *talanton*, often translated as "talent," which refers to a monetary unit equal to more than 16 years of earnings for a laborer (cf. Matt 18:24). In this parable, though, the emphasis falls less on the value of the money and more on the stewardship practiced by each servant.

25:19 *Now after a long time*: See Matthew 24:48; 25:5.

25:21, 23 See Matthew 24:45-47.

25:24-25 *You harvest grain where you haven't sown*: The third servant describes precisely what would be expected with a landowner who leaves the working of the land to others. The servant thus acknowledges that he knew he would've been expected to share the profits with the landlord. *you are a hard man*: that is, unbending in his expectations. According to this analogy, the Lord may be

gracious to all (so Matt 5:45; 20:1-15; 22:9-10) but judges on the basis of faithful obedience.

25:25-26 The servant and the master have two different opinions about the servant's behavior. The servant claims to have been *afraid*, whereas the master regards him as *evil and lazy*.

25:29 Compare Matthew 13:12.

25:30 *weeping and grinding their teeth*: See Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 24:51.

25:31 *the Human One comes in his majesty*: See Daniel 7:13-14. The Human One is called "the king" in Matthew 25:34, 40; and in Matthew 25:34 his reference to "my Father" identifies him as God's Son. Jesus paints a scene of final judgment in which he himself is the judge.

25:32 *All the nations*: See Matthew 8:11; 24:14, 31; 28:18-20.

<sup>34</sup>“Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who will receive good things from my Father. Inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world began. <sup>35</sup>I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.’

<sup>37</sup>“Then those who are righteous will reply to him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? <sup>38</sup>When did we see you as a stranger and welcome you, or naked and give you clothes to wear? <sup>39</sup>When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

<sup>40</sup>“Then the king will reply to them, ‘I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.’

<sup>41</sup>“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Get away from me, you who will receive terrible things. Go into the unending fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup>I was hungry and you didn’t give me food to eat. I was thirsty and you didn’t give me anything to drink. <sup>43</sup>I was a stranger and you didn’t welcome me. I was naked and you didn’t give me clothes to wear. I was sick and in prison, and you didn’t visit me.’

<sup>44</sup>“Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and didn’t do anything to help you?’ <sup>45</sup>Then he will answer, ‘I assure you that when you haven’t done it for one of the least of these, you haven’t done it for me.’ <sup>46</sup>And they will go away into eternal punishment. But the righteous ones will go into eternal life.”

**Plot to kill Jesus**

**26** When Jesus finished speaking all these words, he said to his disciples, <sup>2</sup>“You know that the Passover is two days from now. And the Human One<sup>6</sup> will be handed over to be crucified.”

<sup>3</sup>Then the chief priests and elders of the people gathered in the courtyard of Caiaphas the high priest. <sup>4</sup>They were plotting to arrest Jesus by cunning tricks and to kill him. <sup>5</sup>But they agreed that it shouldn’t happen during the feast so there wouldn’t be an uproar among the people.

**A woman pouring perfume on Jesus**

<sup>6</sup>When Jesus was at Bethany visiting the house of Simon, who had a skin disease, <sup>7</sup>a woman came to him with a vase made of alabaster containing very expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus’ head while he was sitting at dinner. <sup>8</sup>Now when the disciples saw it they were angry and said, “Why this waste? <sup>9</sup>This perfume could have been sold for a lot of money and given to the poor.”

<sup>10</sup>But Jesus knew what they were thinking. He said, “Why do you make trouble for the woman? She’s done a good thing for me. <sup>11</sup>You always have the poor with you, but you won’t

<sup>6</sup>Or Son of Man

25:35-45: The basis of judgment is closely tied to love of neighbor (see Matt 5:43; 19:19; 22:39), to caring for those in need. Jesus as king identifies himself with the least ones, who are hungry, thirsty, sick, and imprisoned. Serving the least ones is equated with serving Jesus (cf. Matt 18:5). This is the “righteousness” necessary if one is to “enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20).

26:1 When Jesus finished speaking all these words: the conclusion of Jesus’ fifth sermon (see also Matt 5-7; 10:13; 18). Matthew 26-27 is often called Matthew’s “passion narrative,” that is, his account of Jesus’ suffering and death (as predicted in Matt 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19).

26:2 Passover: an annual Jewish feast celebrated in Jerusalem by families remembering the night of Israel’s liberation from Egypt (see Exod 12:1-20). And the Human One: At the outset of Matthew’s account of Jesus’ suffering and death, Jesus associates his crucifixion with the Passover.

26:3-4 chief priests and elders: Jesus’ main opponents in the final days. The Pharisees are mentioned only once in Matthew 26-27, after Jesus’ death (Matt 27:62), while the legal experts have a slightly more visible role (Matt 26:57;

27:41). Caiaphas was the high priest from 18 to 36 CE. During this period, the high priest was appointed by Rome and had enormous power—for example, to collect taxes and to oversee the temple and the Jewish council. They were plotting: See Matthew 12:14; 21:46; 22:15.

26:5 it shouldn’t happen during the feast: The Passover feast required that a lamb be sacrificed on the altar of the Jerusalem temple. Moreover, Jews were expected to eat the meal in Jerusalem. Therefore, during the Passover, the city would swell with thousands of people who came to celebrate. among the people: See Matthew 21:46.

26:6 at Bethany: See Matthew 21:17. Jesus’ presence in Bethany wouldn’t have been surprising, given how crowded Jerusalem must have been in preparation for Passover. Simon, who had a skin disease: Simon is mentioned in the parallel account in Mark 14:3, but he is otherwise unknown to us. Apparently, his skin disease has been cured, since he welcomes guests into his home. On skin disease, see note on Matthew 8:2.

26:11-12 You always have the poor with you: Jesus’ words echo those in Deuteronomy 15:11. There, they provide

25:34 Mt 5:3; Mt 19:29; Eph 1:4; Jas 2:5; Rev 13:8  
25:35 Is 58:7; Eze 18:7; Eze 18:16  
25:36 Is 58:7; Eze 18:7; Ac 20:35; Jas 1:27  
25:37 1Ch 29:14; Mt 6:3; 1Co 15:10  
25:40 Mt 10:40; Mt 10:42; Mt 12:50; Mt 25:34; Heb 2:11  
25:41 Mt 7:23; Mt 13:42; Mk 9:43; 2Pt 2:4; Rev 20:10  
25:45 Prv 14:31  
25:46 Dn 12:2; Jn 3:36; Jn 5:29; Ro 2:7, Ro 5:21  
26:1 Mt 7:28  
26:2 Mt 16:21; Mt 20:18; Mt 20:19; Mk 14:1; Mk 14:2  
26:3 Mt 26:57; Lk 3:2; Jn 11:49; Jn 18:14; Ac 4:6  
26:4 Mt 12:14  
26:5 Mt 27:24  
26:6 Mt 21:17; Mk 14:3; Lk 7:37; Jn 12:1  
26:7 Lk 7:37  
26:8 Mk 14:4; Jn 12:4; Jn 12:5  
26:9 Mk 14:4; Mk 14:5; Jn 12:5  
26:10 Ga 6:17  
26:11 Dt 15:11; Mk 14:7

26:12 Mk 16:1;  
Lk 23:56;  
Jn 19:40

26:13 Mk 14:9

26:14 Mt 10:4;

Mt 26:47;

Mt 27:3;

Mk 14:10;

Lk 22:3

26:15 Ex 21:32;

Zec 11:12;

Mt 26:14;

Mt 27:3; Jn 12:6

26:16 Mt 26:15;

Mk 14:11;

Jn 12:6

26:17 Ex 12:18;

Mk 14:12;

Lk 22:7

26:18 Jn 7:6;

Jn 7:30; Jn 13:1;

Jn 17:1

26:19 Mt 21:6

26:20 Mk 14:17;

Lk 22:14

26:21 Lk 22:21;

Jn 13:21

26:22 Mk 14:19

26:23 Ps 41:9;

Lk 22:21;

Jn 13:18

26:24 Mt 18:7;

Mt 26:54;

Mt 26:56;

Mk 9:12;

Lk 24:25

26:25 Mt 26:49;

Mt 26:64

26:26 Mt 14:19;

Mk 14:22;

1Co 10:16;

1Co 11:23

26:27 Ps 116:13;

Is 55:1; Mt 11:25;

Mt 15:36;

Mk 14:23

always have me. <sup>12</sup>By pouring this perfume over my body she's prepared me to be buried. <sup>13</sup>I tell you the truth that wherever in the whole world this good news is announced, what she's done will also be told in memory of her."

### Judas betrays Jesus

<sup>14</sup>Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests <sup>15</sup>and said, "What will you give me if I turn Jesus over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver. <sup>16</sup>From that time on he was looking for an opportunity to turn him in.

### Passover with the disciples

<sup>17</sup>On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover meal?"

<sup>18</sup>He replied, "Go into the city, to a certain man, and say, 'The teacher says, "My time is near. I'm going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house."' "<sup>19</sup>The disciples did just as Jesus instructed them. They prepared the Passover.

<sup>20</sup>That evening he took his place at the table with the twelve disciples. <sup>21</sup>As they were eating he said, "I assure you that one of you will betray me."

<sup>22</sup>Deeply saddened, each one said to him, "I'm not the one, am I, Lord?"

<sup>23</sup>He replied, "The one who will betray me is the one who dips his hand with me into this bowl. <sup>24</sup>The Human One<sup>b</sup> goes to his death just as it is written about him. But how terrible it is for that person who betrays the Human One!<sup>l</sup> It would have been better for him if he had never been born."

<sup>25</sup>Now Judas, who would betray him, replied, "It's not me, is it, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "You said it."

### Last supper

<sup>26</sup>While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take and eat. This is my body." <sup>27</sup>He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from this, all of you. <sup>28</sup>This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many so that their sins may be forgiven. <sup>29</sup>I tell you, I won't drink wine again until that day when I drink it in a new way with you in my Father's kingdom." <sup>30</sup>Then, after singing songs of praise, they went to the Mount of Olives.

<sup>b</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>l</sup>Or Son of Man

26:28 Ex 24:8; Zec 9:11; Mt 20:28; Col 1:14; Heb 9:22 26:29 Mt 13:43 26:30 Mt 21:1; Mk 14:26; Lk 21:37; Lk 22:39; Jn 18:1

the motivation for treating the poor with generosity. Here they illustrate that everyday responsibilities, like caring for the poor, are not as important as serving Jesus in his last hours. Preparing people for burial was an important religious responsibility.

26:14 *one of the Twelve*: See Matthew 10:1-4; 20:17. That Judas is a member of the inner circle emphasizes the travesty of the betrayal about to be recounted. *Iscariot*: a reference to his hometown, Kerioth, in southern Judea.

26:15 *thirty pieces of silver*: Each silver piece was worth the equivalent of about four days' work for a laborer, so they pay Judas the rough equivalent of 120 days' labor.

26:17-20 *Festival of Unleavened Bread*: a seven-day festival (see Exod 12:17-20; Lev 23:4-8). *the Passover meal*: unleavened bread, lamb, and bitter herbs (Num 9:11). Celebrating the Passover feast is a family affair, so it is important that Jesus will celebrate Passover with *the twelve disciples*. This reflects the redefinition of "family" in Matthew 12:46-50.

26:21-23 Eating together signified close bonds of friendship, so it is all the more distressing that one of Jesus' table companions would betray Jesus.

26:24 *The Human One goes to his death just as it is written about him. But how terrible it is for that person who betrays the Human One!*: Setting these two sentences side by side indicates how scripture can hold together God's actions

and human responsibility. Jesus' crucifixion may serve God's purpose, but this doesn't excuse Judas from his act of betrayal. There are no OT texts that require or predict that the Human One must die. The point isn't to find this or that text in order to prove something. Rather, Jesus' statement means that the OT as a whole must be read and reread from the perspective of his crucifixion.

26:25 In Matthew 26:22, each of the disciples asks Jesus a question and expects a negative answer. Judas does the same. However, when Judas asks the question, he isn't "deeply saddened," and he addresses Jesus as "Rabbi" rather than as "Lord." In Matthew's Gospel disciples and would-be disciples call Jesus "Lord," while other titles, like "teacher" and "Rabbi," are generally used by people who don't follow or who even oppose Jesus (see Matt 12:38; 19:16; 22:16, 24, 36; 26:49). Matthew clearly identifies Judas as the betrayer (cf. Matt 10:4). "*You said it*": Jesus' answer is indirect, but, in this context, clearly affirmative.

26:26-29 *While they were eating*: Jesus and the disciples celebrate the Passover meal, which Jesus now reinterprets with reference to his own death (see Matt 20:28). *blood of the covenant*: See Exodus 24:8; Zechariah 9:11. *so that their sins may be forgiven*: See Matthew 1:21. This last supper becomes the basis for the church's celebration of the Lord's Supper.

26:30 *Mount of Olives*: See the note on Matthew 24:3.

**Predictions about disciples leaving Jesus**

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Tonight you will all fall away because of me. This is because it is written, *I will hit the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will go off in all directions.*"

<sup>32</sup>But after I'm raised up, I'll go before you to Galilee."

<sup>33</sup>Peter replied, "If everyone else stumbles because of you, I'll never stumble."

<sup>34</sup>Jesus said to him, "I assure you that, before the rooster crows tonight, you will deny me three times."

<sup>35</sup>Peter said, "Even if I must die alongside you, I won't deny you." All the disciples said the same thing.

**Jesus in prayer**

<sup>36</sup>Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane. He said to the disciples, "Stay here while I go and pray over there." <sup>37</sup>When he took Peter and Zebedee's two sons, he began to feel sad and anxious. <sup>38</sup>Then he said to them, "I'm very sad. It's as if I'm dying. Stay here and keep alert with me." <sup>39</sup>Then he went a short distance farther and fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it's possible, take this cup of suffering away from me. However—not what I want but what you want."

<sup>40</sup>He came back to the disciples and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, "Couldn't you stay alert one hour with me? <sup>41</sup>Stay alert and pray so that you won't give in to temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak." <sup>42</sup>A second time he went away and prayed, "My Father, if it's not possible that this cup be taken away unless I drink it, then let it be what you want."

<sup>43</sup>Again he came and found them sleeping. Their eyes were heavy with sleep. <sup>44</sup>But he left them and again went and prayed the same words for the third time. <sup>45</sup>Then he came to his disciples and said to them, "Will you sleep and rest all night? Look, the time has come for the Human One<sup>e</sup> to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>46</sup>Get up. Let's go. Look, here comes my betrayer."

**Arrest**

<sup>47</sup>While Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, came. With him was a large crowd carrying swords and clubs. They had been sent by the chief priests and elders of the people. <sup>48</sup>His betrayer had given them a sign: "Arrest the man I kiss." <sup>49</sup>Just then he came to Jesus and said, "Hello, Rabbi." Then he kissed him.

<sup>50</sup>But Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came and grabbed Jesus and arrested him.

<sup>51</sup>One of those with Jesus reached for his sword. Striking the high priest's slave, he cut off his ear. <sup>52</sup>Then Jesus said to him, "Put the sword back into its place. All those who use the sword will die by the sword. <sup>53</sup>Or do you think that I'm not able to ask my Father and

26:31 Zec 13:7; Mt 26:56; Mk 14:27; Jn 16:32  
26:32 Mt 16:21; Mt 28:7; Mt 28:10; Mt 28:16; Mk 16:7  
26:33 Prv 28:26; Mk 14:29; Lk 22:33; Jn 13:36  
26:34 Mt 26:69; Mt 26:74; Mt 26:75; Mk 14:30; Jn 13:38  
26:35 Jn 13:37  
26:36 Mk 14:32; Lk 22:39; Lk 22:40; Jn 18:1  
26:37 Mt 4:21; Mt 17:1; Mk 5:37  
26:38 Ps 42:5; Mt 26:40; Jn 12:27  
26:39 Mt 6:10; Mt 20:22; Mt 26:42; Jn 6:38; Jn 18:11  
26:40 Mt 26:38; Lk 9:32  
26:41 Mt 6:13; Lk 22:40; 1Pt 5:8  
26:42 Mt 6:10; Mt 26:39  
26:43 Lk 9:32  
26:44 2Co 12:8  
26:45 Mt 17:22; Mt 26:18; Jn 12:23; Jn 12:27; Jn 13:1  
26:47 Mt 26:14; Mk 14:43; Lk 22:47; Jn 18:3; Ac 1:16  
26:48 2Sa 20:9; 2Sa 20:10; Mt 26:49  
26:49 Mt 26:25  
26:50 Mt 20:13; Mt 22:12

<sup>1</sup>Zech 13:7 <sup>2</sup>Or Son of Man

26:51 Mk 14:47; Lk 22:38; Jn 18:10 26:52 Gn 9:6; Rev 13:10 26:53 2Ki 6:17; Mt 4:11

26:31 *Tonight you will all fall away because of me.* Jesus anticipates that his disciples will abandon him (Matt 26:56). The quotation is from Zechariah 13:7, understood here in terms of Jesus' suffering and death (*hit the shepherd*) and the disciples' departure (*the flock will go off in all directions*). 26:32 Death and abandonment aren't the last words. Jesus anticipates his resurrection and the regathering of his followers (see Matt 28:10, 16-20).

26:33-35 Peter again has the role of representative disciple (see Matt 14:28; 15:15; 16:16). *deny me three times*: See Matthew 26:69-75.

26:36 *Gethsemane*: a Hebrew term meaning "oil press." It refers to the site of an oil press in an olive grove on the slope of the Mount of Olives.

26:37 *Peter and Zebedee's two sons*: See Matthew 17:1. The three who were given a vision of Jesus' glory are now with him during this time of despair.

26:38-42 *keep alert... stay alert*: See Matthew 24:42-25:13. *cup of suffering*: signifying suffering destined by

God (e.g., Ps 75:8; Isa 51:17, 22; Jer 25:15-28; Ezek 23:31-34). *not what I want but what you want*: Jesus uses words that recall the prayer he taught his disciples (Matt 6:10). *pray... temptation*: an echo of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples (Matt 6:13).

26:46-50 The identification of Judas as the betrayer is both clear and tragic. It is clear from the two references to Jesus' betrayer in 26:46-47, 48, and in Judas' address to Jesus as *Rabbi* (see the note on Matt 26:25). It is tragic because he is *one of the Twelve* (26:47; cf. Matt 10:2-4; 26:14) and because his act of betrayal is committed with a *sign* of affection (*kiss*, 26:48-49). The need for a *sign* suggests that the mob that had come to take Jesus couldn't recognize him.

26:52 *Put the sword back into its place*: See Matthew 5:38-42. *All those who use the sword*: Jesus quotes a proverbial statement, the meaning of which is that one act of violence leads to another.

26:53 *more than twelve battle groups*: A Roman battle

26:54 Mt 1:22;  
Mt 26:24  
26:55 Mt 4:23;  
Mt 21:23;  
Mk 12:35;  
Jn 7:14, Jn 18:20  
26:56 Mt 26:31  
26:57 Mt 26:3;  
Mk 14:53;  
Jn 18:12

26:58 Mt 26:69;  
Jn 18:15  
26:59 Mt 5:22;  
Ac 6:11

26:60 Dt 19:15;  
Ps 35:11

26:61 Mt 27:40;  
Jn 21:9; Ac 6:14  
26:62 Mt 27:12

26:63 Lv 5:1;  
Mt 4:3;  
Mt 16:16;  
Mt 27:12;  
Mk 5:7

26:64 Ps 110:1;  
Dn 7:13;  
Mt 16:27;  
Mt 27:11;  
Mk 14:62

26:65 Nm 14:6;  
Mt 9:3; Jn 10:33;  
Jn 10:36;  
Ac 14:14

26:66 Lv 24:16;  
Jn 19:7

26:67 Is 50:6;  
Mt 27:30;  
Lk 22:63;  
Jn 18:22

26:68 Mk 14:65

26:69 Mt 26:58;  
Mk 14:66;  
Lk 22:55;  
Jn 18:16;  
Jn 18:25

26:70 Prv 29:25;  
Mt 26:34

he will send to me more than twelve battle groups<sup>1</sup> of angels right away?<sup>54</sup> But if I did that, how would the scriptures be fulfilled that say this must happen?"<sup>55</sup> Then Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come with swords and clubs to arrest me, like a thief? Day after day, I sat in the temple teaching, but you didn't arrest me."<sup>56</sup> But all this has happened so that what the prophets said in the scriptures might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left Jesus and ran away.

### Jesus before the council

<sup>57</sup>Those who arrested Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest. The legal experts and the elders had gathered there. <sup>58</sup>Peter followed him from a distance until he came to the high priest's courtyard. He entered that area and sat outside with the officers to see how it would turn out.

<sup>59</sup>The chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they could put him to death. <sup>60</sup>They didn't find anything they could use from the many false witnesses who were willing to come forward. But finally they found two <sup>61</sup>who said, "This man said, 'I can destroy God's temple and rebuild it in three days.'"

<sup>62</sup>Then the high priest stood and said to Jesus, "Aren't you going to respond to the testimony these people have brought against you?"

<sup>63</sup>But Jesus was silent.

The high priest said, "By the living God, I demand that you tell us whether you are the Christ, God's Son."

<sup>64</sup>"You said it," Jesus replied. "But I say to you that from now on you'll see *the Human One*<sup>Ⓜ</sup> sitting on the right side of the Almighty<sup>Ⓜ</sup> and coming on the heavenly clouds."<sup>Ⓞ</sup>

<sup>65</sup>Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He's insulting God! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, you've heard his insult against God. <sup>66</sup>What do you think?"

And they answered, "He deserves to die!" <sup>67</sup>Then they spit in his face and beat him. They hit him <sup>68</sup>and said, "Prophecy for us, Christ! Who hit you?"

### Peter's denial

<sup>69</sup>Meanwhile, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant woman came and said to him, "You were also with Jesus the Galilean."

<sup>70</sup>But he denied it in front of all of them, saying, "I don't know what you are talking about."

<sup>71</sup>When he went over to the gate, another woman saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus, the man from Nazareth."

<sup>1</sup>Or legions (of the Roman army, about five thousand soldiers each) <sup>Ⓜ</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>Ⓜ</sup>Or the Power <sup>Ⓞ</sup>Dan 7:13

group included about 6,000 soldiers, so Jesus refers to more than 72,000 angels. (For angelic assistance, see Matt 4:6 [Ps 91:11-12]. For the idea of fighting angels, see 2 Kgs 6:17; Dan 10:13-21.)

26:55 *Have you come with swords and clubs:* The "chief priests and elders" sent a mob (Matt 26:47), as though Jesus were a violent revolutionary. This is consistent with the unfolding picture that Jesus will be executed as a pretender to the throne (cf. Matt 27:37), but it contrasts sharply with the nature of Jesus' healing and teaching activity in the temple (Matt 21:14; 21:23-23:39).

26:56 *all the disciples left Jesus and ran away:* See Matthew 26:31.

26:57-71 The stories of Peter and Jesus are intertwined, emphasizing Jesus' courage when questioned by the high priest in contrast to Peter's failure under questioning by two women and some unnamed bystanders.

26:57, 59 The cast of characters includes *Caiaphas* (see the note on Matt 26:3-4), the *legal experts, elders,* and the *chief priests.* Together, they make up the *whole council*, also known as the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:55; 15:1). This is the supreme ruling and judicial body, over which the high priest presided. *false testimony:* From the outset, Matthew presents the proceedings against Jesus as a travesty of justice. 26:60 *they found two:* See Deuteronomy 17:6, which

requires "two or three witnesses" in cases of capital punishment.

26:61 *This man said:* Matthew records no such statement, though he does report that Jesus predicted the temple's destruction (Matt 24:2; cf. Matt 23:38).

26:64 *You said it. . . But I say to you:* Jesus' answer is indirect, but affirmative. He turns immediately to explain the nature of his status as Christ and God's Son, using language from Daniel 7:13-14; Psalm 110:1.

26:65 *tore his clothes:* The high priest is deeply troubled by Jesus' response. *He's insulting God:* See Matthew 9:3; 12:31. The basis for the insult may be Jesus' claim that, as the Human One, he will sit at God's right side; or it may be that the high priest thought he was trying to make himself like God in order to deceive God's people.

26:66 See Matthew 26:4.

26:67-68 See Isaiah 50:6.

26:69-74 While Jesus was on trial in the high priest's house, Peter sat outside in the high priest's courtyard (see Matt 26:57-58). Peter is on trial, too, though his questioners don't seem like people to be feared—a *servant woman, another woman, and those standing there.* From the first to the third denial Peter's responses grow stronger. A simple denial becomes a solemn pledge, and the third denial includes cursing and swearing (see Matt 5:33-37; 23:16-22).

<sup>72</sup>With a solemn pledge, he denied it again, saying, "I don't know the man."

<sup>73</sup>A short time later those standing there came and said to Peter, "You must be one of them. The way you talk gives you away."

<sup>74</sup>Then he cursed and swore, "I don't know the man!" At that very moment the rooster crowed. <sup>75</sup>Peter remembered Jesus' words, "Before the rooster crows you will deny me three times." And Peter went out and cried uncontrollably.

**Jesus before Pilate**

**27**Early in the morning all the chief priests and the elders of the people reached the decision to have Jesus put to death. <sup>2</sup>They bound him, led him away, and turned him over to Pilate the governor.

**Judas' death**

<sup>3</sup>When Judas, who betrayed Jesus, saw that Jesus was condemned to die, he felt deep regret. He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, and <sup>4</sup>said, "I did wrong because I betrayed an innocent man."

But they said, "What is that to us? That's your problem." <sup>5</sup>Judas threw the silver pieces into the temple and left. Then he went and hanged himself.

<sup>6</sup>The chief priests picked up the silver pieces and said, "According to the Law it's not right to put this money in the treasury. Since it was used to pay for someone's life, it's unclean." <sup>7</sup>So they decided to use it to buy the potter's field where strangers could be buried. <sup>8</sup>That's why that field is called "Field of Blood" to this very day. <sup>9</sup>This fulfilled the words of Jeremiah the prophet: *And I took the thirty pieces of silver, the price for the one whose price had been set by some of the Israelites,* <sup>10</sup>*and I gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me.*<sup>9</sup>

**Questioned by Pilate**

<sup>11</sup>Jesus was brought before the governor. The governor said, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Jesus replied, "That's what you say." <sup>12</sup>But he didn't answer when the chief priests and elders accused him.

<sup>13</sup>Then Pilate said, "Don't you hear the testimony they bring against you?" <sup>14</sup>But he didn't answer, not even a single word. So the governor was greatly amazed.

**Death sentence**

<sup>15</sup>It was customary during the festival for the governor to release to the crowd one prisoner, whomever they might choose. <sup>16</sup>At that time there was a well-known prisoner named Jesus Barabbas. <sup>17</sup>When the crowd had come together, Pilate asked them, "Whom would you

26:72 Mt 5:34.  
Mt 26:74  
26:73 Jgs 12:6.  
Mk 14:70.  
Jn 18:26  
26:74 Mt 26:34  
26:75 Mt 26:34.  
Lk 22:62.  
Jn 13:38  
27:1 Mt 26:4.  
Mk 15:1.  
Lk 22:66.  
Jn 18:28  
27:2 Mt 20:19;  
Mk 15:1; Lk 3:1.  
Lk 13:1; Ac 3:13  
27:3 Mt 26:14,  
Mt 26:15  
27:4 Mt 27:24  
Ac 1:18  
27:6 Mk 12:41.  
Jn 8:20  
27:7 Jer 26:23  
27:8 Ac 1:19  
27:9 Zec 11:13  
27:10 Jer 32:6.  
Zec 11:12.  
Zec 11:13  
27:11 Mt 2:2.  
Mt 26:64.  
Mk 15:2.  
Lk 23:2, Lk 23:3  
27:12 Mt 26:63.  
Ac 8:32  
27:13 Mt 26:62.  
Mt 27:2.  
Jn 18:35; Jn 19:8.  
Jn 19:10  
27:15 Mk 15:6.  
Lk 23:16.  
Lk 23:17.  
Jn 18:39  
27:16 Mk 15:7.  
Lk 23:18.  
Jn 18:40  
27:17 Mt 1:16.  
Mt 27:22

<sup>9</sup>Zech 11:12-13; Jer 32:6-9

Moreover, he goes from denying that he knows what the servant woman is talking about to denying that he knows Jesus at all. *The way you talk:* They recognize his Galilean accent.

26:74-75 *At that very moment:* See Matthew 26:34.

27:1-14 The stories of Jesus' trial before Pilate and of Judas' death are intertwined. Whereas Jesus embraces the path he has chosen, Judas is filled with regret at what he has done. The stories of Peter and Jesus are similarly intertwined in Matthew 26:57-71.

27:1-2 *reached the decision to have Jesus put to death:* Although "the whole council" pronounced the death sentence (Matt 26:59, 66), Matthew now names Jesus' chief opposition as *the chief priests and the elders*. They are "the leaders of the people" (Matt 27:18) and are most responsible for Jesus' execution. *Pilate:* Rome's appointed ruler over Judea from 26 to 36 CE. His headquarters were in Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast, but he had come to Jerusalem, probably with a significant army, in case disturbances broke out during Passover. He (and not the Jerusalem Council) had the authority to carry out a death sentence. See sidebar, "Judea under Foreign Rule" at Matthew 3.

27:3-10 Matthew structures his account of Judas' death around a quotation taken mostly from Zechariah 11:13, though Jeremiah 32:6-9 may be in the background as well. For a different account of Judas' death, see Acts 1:15-26.

27:11 *king of the Jews:* The titles used by the Jewish council, "Christ" and "God's Son" (Matt 26:63, 68), now become *king of the Jews* (see Matt 2:2). The meaning is roughly the same, with the language of kingship reflecting the move from a Jewish trial to a Roman one. For a Roman ruler like Pilate, the language of kingship would have raised the question of whether Jesus was a political threat to Rome. The only other "king" of the Jews in Matthew's Gospel was Herod the Great (Matt 2:1), who had been appointed to his post by the Roman senate in 40 BCE. *"That's what you say":* Jesus doesn't deny Pilate's question. His response may be regarded as an indirect yes.

27:12-14 *he didn't answer:* Jesus accepts the path he has chosen, to serve God even at the cost of his own life, so he doesn't protest against even false charges. *chief priests and elders:* Matthew names these leaders of the Jewish people (and not the Jewish people as such) as Jesus' accusers (see Matt 27:1).

27:18 Gn 37:11;  
Mk 15:10;  
Ac 13:45  
27:19 Mt 1:20;  
Mt 27:24  
27:20 Mk 15:11;  
Lk 23:18;  
Ac 3:14  
27:22 Mt 1:16  
27:24 Dt 21:6;  
Ps 26:6, Ps 73:13;  
Mt 27:4  
27:25 Josh 2:19;  
Mt 23:35;  
Ac 5:28  
27:26  
Mk 15:15;  
Lk 23:16; Jn 19:1  
27:27 Mk 15:16;  
Jn 18:28;  
Jn 18:33; Jn 19:9  
27:28  
Mk 15:17;  
Lk 23:11; Jn 19:2  
27:29 Is 53:3;  
Mt 20:19;  
Mt 27:11;  
Lk 23:36; Jn 19:3  
27:30 Mt 26:67;  
Mk 15:19  
27:31 Is 53:7  
27:32 Mk 15:21;  
Lk 23:26;  
Ac 2:10;  
Ac 11:20;  
Ac 13:1  
27:33 Mk 15:22;  
Jn 19:17  
27:34 Ps 69:21;  
Mt 27:48;  
Mk 15:23  
27:35 Ps 22:18;  
Jn 19:23  
27:36 Mt 27:54  
27:37 Mk 15:26;  
Lk 23:38;  
Jn 19:19

like me to release to you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?" <sup>18</sup>He knew that the leaders of the people had handed him over because of jealousy.

<sup>19</sup>While he was serving as judge, his wife sent this message to him, "Leave that righteous man alone. I've suffered much today in a dream because of him."

<sup>20</sup>But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and kill Jesus. <sup>21</sup>The governor said, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?"

"Barabbas," they replied.

<sup>22</sup>Pilate said, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"

They all said, "Crucify him!"

<sup>23</sup>But he said, "Why? What wrong has he done?"

They shouted even louder, "Crucify him!"

<sup>24</sup>Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere and that a riot was starting. So he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I'm innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It's your problem."

<sup>25</sup>All the people replied, "Let his blood be on us and on our children." <sup>26</sup>Then he released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus whipped, then handed him over to be crucified.

### **Soldiers mocking Jesus**

<sup>27</sup>The governor's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's house, and they gathered the whole company<sup>d</sup> of soldiers around him. <sup>28</sup>They stripped him and put a red military coat on him. <sup>29</sup>They twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They put a stick in his right hand. Then they bowed down in front of him and mocked him, saying, "Hey! King of the Jews!" <sup>30</sup>After they spit on him, they took the stick and struck his head again and again. <sup>31</sup>When they finished mocking him, they stripped him of the military coat and put his own clothes back on him. They led him away to crucify him.

### **Crucifixion**

<sup>32</sup>As they were going out, they found Simon, a man from Cyrene. They forced him to carry his cross. <sup>33</sup>When they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Skull Place, <sup>34</sup>they gave Jesus wine mixed with vinegar to drink. But after tasting it, he didn't want to drink it. <sup>35</sup>After they crucified him, they divided up his clothes among them by drawing lots. <sup>36</sup>They sat there, guarding him. <sup>37</sup>They placed above his head the charge against him. It read, "This

<sup>d</sup>Or *cohort* (approximately six hundred soldiers)

**27:18** *because of jealousy*: In the ancient world, status was often measured in terms of influence over the people. Jealous of Jesus' success, the leaders of the people want him out of the picture.

**27:19** *suffered much today in a dream*: Dreams were taken seriously in antiquity, often as instruments of divine revelation (cf. Matt 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22). Suffering in a dream suggests a nightmare, the result of which is this woman's counsel to her husband that he remove himself from any involvement with Jesus. Her message doesn't call for Pilate to release Jesus, but does uphold Jesus' innocence.

**27:24** *a riot was starting*: Pilate seems intent on releasing Jesus, against the efforts of "the chief priests and the elders," who stir up the crowd to demand Jesus' execution (Matt 27:20). This forces Pilate's hand, since one of his main responsibilities was keeping the peace. *washed his hands*: an external act meant to communicate moral innocence. *this man's blood*: See the note on Matthew 23:35.

**27:25** *Let his blood be on us*: Roused by "the chief priests and the elders," the people have been led to accept the decision of the Jerusalem Council: "He deserves to die!" (Matt 26:66; cf. Matt 27:1). They therefore declare their willingness to take responsibility for the decision, even though their leaders are the ones actually responsible for this turn of events.

**27:27-31** *the whole company*: about 600 soldiers. This is the second time Jesus is mocked. It was typical to ridicule

the condemned by reflecting back on them the charges brought against them. In Matthew 26:67-68, he is mocked as the Christ. Here he is mocked as a king, with a royal robe (a red military coat); a crown (of thorns); and a scepter (a stick in his right hand). See Isaiah 50:6.

**27:32** *Cyrene*: a Roman town in northeast Africa, present-day Libya.

**27:33** *Golgotha*: the Aramaic term for "skull." Archaeologists debate the actual location of Jesus' crucifixion. "Skull" may simply refer to the place where executions took place, or it may refer to a prominent feature of that place, such as a skull-shaped hill.

**27:34** *wine mixed with vinegar*: Although wine might be used as a painkiller, it would have been spoiled by the addition of vinegar. Offering this mixture to Jesus isn't a sign of compassion but the act of an enemy (Ps 69:21).

**27:35-37** We have few records from the Roman world regarding the act of crucifixion, but Matthew's account includes some standard features. The condemned is whipped (Matt 27:26). He is made to carry the horizontal piece of the cross to the place of execution, which Jesus was unable to do (Matt 27:32). A plaque stating the charges is placed above his head (27:37). Matthew gives no details regarding the act of crucifixion itself, though we can imagine that Jesus was stripped of his clothes (27:35) and fixed to the cross with either ropes or nails. He would thus hang, publicly humiliated, as a warning against



is Jesus, the king of the Jews.”<sup>38</sup> They crucified with him two outlaws, one on his right side and one on his left.

<sup>39</sup>Those who were walking by insulted Jesus, shaking their heads<sup>40</sup> and saying, “So you were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, were you? Save yourself! If you are God’s Son, come down from the cross.”

<sup>41</sup>In the same way, the chief priests, along with the legal experts and the elders, were making fun of him, saying, <sup>42</sup>“He saved others, but he can’t save himself. He’s the king of Israel, so let him come down from the cross now. Then we’ll believe in him.”<sup>43</sup> He trusts in God, so let God deliver him now if he wants to. He said, ‘I’m God’s Son.’”<sup>44</sup> The outlaws who were crucified with him insulted him in the same way.

### Death

<sup>45</sup>From noon until three in the afternoon the whole earth was dark.<sup>46</sup> At about three Jesus cried out with a loud shout, “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*,” which means, “My God, my God, why have you left me?”

<sup>47</sup>After hearing him, some standing there said, “He’s calling Elijah.”<sup>48</sup> One of them ran over, took a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a pole. He offered it to Jesus to drink.

<sup>49</sup>But the rest of them said, “Let’s see if Elijah will come and save him.”

<sup>50</sup>Again Jesus cried out with a loud shout. Then he died.

<sup>51</sup>Look, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split,<sup>52</sup> and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised.<sup>53</sup> After Jesus’ resurrection they came out of their graves and went into the holy city where they appeared to many people.<sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and what had just happened, they were filled with awe and said, “This was certainly God’s Son.”

<sup>55</sup>Many women were watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to serve him.<sup>56</sup> Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

### Burial

<sup>57</sup>That evening a man named Joseph came. He was a rich man from Arimathea who had become a disciple of Jesus.<sup>58</sup> He came to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. Pilate gave him

27:38 Is 53:12;  
27:39 Ps 22:7;  
Ps 109:25;  
Lam 2:15;  
Mk 15:29  
27:40 Mt 4:3;  
Mt 4:6, Mt 26:61;  
Jn 2:19  
27:42 Mt 27:37;  
Jn 1:49, Jn 12:13  
27:43 Ps 22:8  
27:44 Lk 23:39  
27:45 Am 8:9;  
Mk 15:33;  
Lk 23:44;  
Rev 8:12  
27:46 Ps 22:1;  
Lk 23:46;  
Jn 19:28  
27:47 Mt 11:14;  
Mk 15:35;  
Mk 15:36  
27:48 Ps 69:21;  
Mt 27:34;  
Lk 23:36;  
Jn 19:29  
27:50 Mt 27:46;  
Mk 15:37;  
Lk 23:46;  
Jn 19:30  
27:51 Ex 26:31;  
2Ch 3:14;  
Mt 27:54;  
Mk 15:38;  
Lk 23:45  
27:52 Is 25:8;  
Is 26:19;  
Dn 12:2;  
Hos 13:14;  
Jn 5:25  
27:53 Mt 4:5  
27:54 Mt 4:3;  
Mt 8:5, Mt 27:43;  
Mk 15:39;  
Lk 23:47

<sup>f</sup>Ps 22:1

27:55 Lk 8:2, Lk 8:3 27:56 Mt 20:20, Mt 28:1; Mk 15:40, Mk 15:47; Lk 8:2 27:57 Mk 15:42, Mk 15:43; Lk 23:50; Jn 19:38 27:58 Lk 23:52

others who might threaten Roman peace. *they divided up his clothes*: See Psalm 22:18. *king of the Jews*: an indication that Jesus was crucified as a pretender to the throne, a threat to Roman peace. Among the Romans, death by crucifixion was reserved for people like this.

27:38 *outlaws*: The Greek term *léstēs* refers to political outlaws, revolutionaries.

27:39–44 Jesus is mocked by three groups—passersby; people representing the Jewish council (*the chief priests, along with the legal experts and the elders*); and the outlaws. Their insults recall the words of the devil, who tested Jesus (Matt 4:1–11); and of Peter, who scolded Jesus (Matt 16:22). Like them, these mockers have preconceived ideas about what it must mean for Jesus to be God’s Son, and those ideas make no room for self-sacrifice on behalf of others. Jesus’ mission, however, was to serve and to give his life to liberate others (Matt 20:28). *God’s Son*: Compare the words of the righteous person’s enemies in Wisdom 2:12–21.

27:45 *dark*: an image of evil (outside God’s illumination) and judgment (see Matt 4:16; 6:23; 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

27:46 “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*”: Jesus’ final words are a mixture of Hebrew (*Eli, Eli, lama*) and Aramaic (*sabachthani*), taken from Psalm 22:1. Psalm 22 speaks of temporary abandonment and ultimate rescue.

27:47–49 *Elijah*: Bystanders think Jesus refers to *Elijah*

when he shouts, “*Eli*!” Popular religion thought of *Elijah* as a helper in times of need.

27:51 *a curtain of the sanctuary*: probably the one covering the doorway that separates the outer room of the sanctuary, the holy space, from the inner room of the sanctuary, the holiest space (Exod 26:31–35). Noting that the curtain was torn in two from top to bottom suggests that God has torn the curtain. This is a sign anticipating the total destruction of the temple that Jesus predicted in Matthew 24:2. Since this curtain separated the world of human beings from God’s holiness, we should also find here a reference to access to God for all, whether Jew or Gentile.

27:51b–54 *The earth shook*: These signs emphasize the role of Jesus’ death in God’s transformation of creation. *came out of their graves*: a symbolic anticipation of the resurrection of God’s holy people. See Ezekiel 37:13. *centurion*: a commander of 100 soldiers in the Roman military system. Compare with the impressive faith of the centurion in Matthew 8:5–10. A Roman centurion and his guards, but not the Jewish leaders, recognize Jesus as *God’s Son*. The aftermath of Jesus’ death is for them a moment of revelation (see Matt 11:27; 16:17).

27:55–56 *Many women*: Compare Jesus’ disciples, who betrayed (Matt 26:48–49); abandoned (Matt 26:56); or denied (Matt 26:69–75) him.

27:57–60 *Joseph*: Though *he was a rich man*, Joseph was

27:60 Is 53:9;  
Mt 27:66;  
Mt 28:2;  
Mk 16:4  
27:61 Mt 27:56;  
Mt 28:1

27:62 Mk 15:42;  
Lk 23:54;  
Jn 19:14;  
Jn 19:31;  
Jn 19:42

27:63 Mt 16:21,  
Mt 17:23,  
Mt 20:19;  
Mk 8:31,  
Mk 10:34

27:64 Mt 28:13  
27:65 Mt 27:66,  
Mt 28:11

27:66 Dn 6:17;  
Mt 27:60

28:1 Mt 27:56,  
Mt 27:61,  
Mk 16:4;

Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1  
28:2 Mt 11:20,  
Mt 27:51;  
Jn 20:12;  
Ac 16:26;  
Rev 11:19

28:3 Dn 7:9,  
Dn 10:6;  
Mt 17:2; Mk 9:3;  
Jn 20:12

28:4 Rev 1:17  
28:5 Mt 14:27,  
Mt 28:10

28:6 Mt 16:21,  
Mt 27:63

28:7 Mt 26:32,  
Mt 28:10,  
Mt 28:16;  
Mk 16:7

28:8 Ps 2:11  
28:9 Mt 28:17;  
Lk 24:52;  
Jn 20:14

28:10 Mt 14:27,  
Mt 28:5,  
Jn 20:17;  
Ro 8:29;  
Heb 2:11

28:11 Mt 27:65,  
Mt 27:66,  
Mt 28:4

28:12 Mk 14:11  
28:13 Mt 27:64  
28:14 Mt 27:2

permission to take it. <sup>59</sup>Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, <sup>60</sup>and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had carved out of the rock. After he rolled a large stone at the door of the tomb, he went away. <sup>61</sup>Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting in front of the tomb.

### Guard at the tomb

<sup>62</sup>The next day, which was the day after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate. <sup>63</sup>They said, "Sir, we remember that while that deceiver was still alive he said, 'After three days I will arise.' <sup>64</sup>Therefore, order the grave to be sealed until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people, 'He's been raised from the dead.' This last deception will be worse than the first."

<sup>65</sup>Pilate replied, "You have soldiers for guard duty. Go and make it as secure as you know how." <sup>66</sup>Then they went and secured the tomb by sealing the stone and posting the guard.

### Resurrection

**28** After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb. <sup>2</sup>Look, there was a great earthquake, for an angel from the Lord came down from heaven. Coming to the stone, he rolled it away and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>Now his face was like lightning and his clothes as white as snow. <sup>4</sup>The guards were so terrified of him that they shook with fear and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>But the angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He isn't here, because he's been raised from the dead, just as he said. Come, see the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup>Now hurry, go and tell his disciples, 'He's been raised from the dead. He's going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' I've given the message to you."

<sup>8</sup>With great fear and excitement, they hurried away from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>But Jesus met them and greeted them. They came and grabbed his feet and worshipped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid. Go and tell my brothers that I am going into Galilee. They will see me there."

### Guards' report

<sup>11</sup>Now as the women were on their way, some of the guards came into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. <sup>12</sup>They met with the elders and decided to give a large sum of money to the soldiers. <sup>13</sup>They told them, "Say that Jesus' disciples came at night and stole his body while you were sleeping. <sup>14</sup>And if the governor hears about this, we will take care of it with him so you will have nothing to worry about." <sup>15</sup>So the soldiers took the money and did as they were told. And this report has spread throughout all Judea to this very day.

### Commissioning of the disciples

<sup>16</sup>Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>Jesus came near and

also a *disciple of Jesus* (see Matt 19:23-26). Compare with Matthew 14:12. *asked for Jesus' body*: Victims of crucifixion typically hung on the cross after death as food for scavenging animals. This served as a warning to the populace not to oppose Rome. This is why Joseph had to request the body. 27:62a *Preparation Day*: the day before the Sabbath.

27:62b-66 *chief priests and the Pharisees*: Although the chief priests were active in the process that led to Jesus' crucifixion, the Pharisees had nothing to do with Jesus' trial and death. They reappear now in this clear attempt to prove that Jesus was wrong to expect that God would raise him from the dead. This scene sets the stage for Matthew 28:4, 11-15.

28:1 *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary*: See Matthew 27:56, 61.

28:3 See Daniel 7:9 (cf. Matt 17:2).

28:4 *guards*: See Matthew 27:65-66.

28:6 *just as he said*: See Matthew 16:21; 17:9, 23; 20:19; 26:32 (cf. Matt 27:63-64).

28:7 See Matthew 26:32.

28:9 *Jesus met them*: The two Marys witness the empty

tomb (Matt 28:6) and become the first to encounter the resurrected Jesus. *grabbed his feet and worshipped him*: They recognize that he is no mere human being, but one worthy of their allegiance and devotion.

28:10 *brothers*: Jesus' disciples (cf. Matt 12:50). *Galilee*: See Matthew 26:32.

28:11-15 See Matthew 27:62-66; 28:4. The guards had witnessed the earthquake and appearance of the angel at the empty tomb. Like Judas (Matt 26:14-16), they are paid to participate in the schemes of the Jerusalem leadership. 28:16 *eleven*: Of Jesus' 12 apostles (Matt 10:2-4), only 11 remain after Judas' defection and death (Matt 27:3-10). *Galilee*: See Matthew 26:32; 27:7. The *mountain* is unspecified, but its presence here isn't surprising, given the importance of mountains as places of revelation (cf. Matt 5:1; 17:1).

28:17 *they worshipped him*: See the note on Matthew 28:9. *some doubted*: The other two occurrences of the word "doubt" are associated with the disciples' weak faith (Matt 14:31; 21:21). The presence of doubt and worship at the same time speaks to the shift in thinking required of Jesus'

spoke to them, "I've received all authority in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age."

followers (e.g., Matt 16:21-23) and to the need for ongoing development in belief.

28:18: *all authority*: See Matthew 11:27 (cf. Matt 9:6). Contrast the devil's promise in Matthew 4:8-10.

28:19-20 *go and make disciples... baptizing... teaching*: The central task given Jesus' followers is to *make disciples*, with going, baptizing, and teaching serving this central

task. Note that they are to make disciples for Jesus (whose commandments they are to obey; cf. Matt 7:21-27), not for themselves. *all nations*: no longer only "the people of Israel" (Matt 10:5-6). *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*: a formula that anticipates the later Christian doctrine of the triune God. *I myself will be with you*: Jesus is "Emmanuel," "God with us" (see Matt 1:23).

1. 1000  
2. 1000  
3. 1000

1. 1000  
2. 1000  
3. 1000

# MARK

Mark's Gospel tells the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. As the shortest NT Gospel, it's often overlooked by those who want to know more about Jesus' ministry. Mark has no birth story, leaves out many of Jesus' famous teachings, and ends before the risen Jesus appears to his disciples. At times its portrait of both Jesus and the disciples can be troubling. In Mark, Jesus confronts both friend and foe, and even seems to challenge God (Mark 14:36; 15:34). The disciples fail to grasp Jesus' message again and again (Mark 4:13; 6:52; 8:17-21) and disappear when Jesus faces death (Mark 14:27, 50).

In spite of these features—or perhaps because of them—readers appreciate the power of Mark's Gospel. It's probably the earliest written Gospel, and it brings an urgent message about God's coming kingdom. In Mark, Jesus shows the world what that kingdom looks like through deeds of power as well as suffering. Along the way he encourages others to trust in

God's kingdom and to join forces with him as God's power defeats evil at every turn. In the end, Jesus' resurrection displays God's power over death itself.

No one knows exactly who wrote this Gospel. The title "according to Mark" was added in the 2nd century CE. Early Christian tradition claims that Mark wrote down the apostle Peter's memories. Others have identified this Mark as the John Mark who traveled with the apostle Paul (see Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37-39; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24).

Mark is the second of the four Gospels in the NT, but it likely predates all of them for several reasons. First, it's shorter and less polished in style. Second, it tells the story with urgency, using the word "immediately" some 40 times, as though the whole story of Jesus' life rushes toward its climax in his crucifixion. Finally, although Matthew and Luke include much of Mark's message word for word in their Gospels, both add important information about



The Mount of Olives from the Golden Gate (Mark 11:1)  
Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

Jesus' birth, his teachings, and his appearances after the resurrection. They also improve Mark's grammar and style. Most scholars believe, then, that the authors of Matthew and Luke used Mark as a written source.

When was Mark written and for whom? Most scholars think the evangelist wrote between 65 and 72 CE. Some believe Mark's audience was Roman Christians, those followers of Christ whom the emperor Nero blamed for a destructive fire in 64 CE. The Gospel's emphasis on Jesus' model of suffering (see 8:34-38) may have been intended to encourage those harassed by Roman authorities (see Mark 13:9) in the fire's aftermath. On the other hand, the Gospel may have first addressed Christians closer to Palestine, perhaps in Syria. Mark 13 seems to reflect the turmoil associated with the Jewish War (66-70 CE), and the theme of Jewish-Christian conflict emerges early in the story (see Mark 2:1-3:6). Whenever it originated, this Gospel emphasizes the cost of following Jesus.

What is a Gospel? Since it portrays Jesus' virtue, some view Mark as an example of Greco-Roman biography. Yet it is more than that. This Gospel also reads like Jewish religious history (e.g., 1-2 Kgs) because it reflects strong religious commitments. It includes the sort of prophecy we find in Jewish writings and reflects a belief that the end of the world is coming soon. Perhaps most important, Mark locates stories about Jesus within the larger story of God's coming kingdom. This Gospel presents a historical narrative that calls for a faithful response to the good news about God's kingdom.

The main story line establishes Jesus of Nazareth as the Jewish Christ, the one anointed to bring God's kingdom to earth. ("Christ" is the Greek word for the Hebrew term "Messiah." Both words can be used to refer to someone anointed by God.) From the beginning we learn that this is a story about the "good news" (or gospel) that "God's kingdom" is fast

approaching (Mark 1:14-15). While he heals the sick, casts out demons, tames nature, and challenges religious and political authorities, Jesus also wages hand-to-hand combat against the power of evil. As the story progresses, the tone grows more somber, and Jesus explains the sacrifice that's required from those who take God's side in this confrontation (Mark 8:34-37; 13:9-13). But that's not the end of the story. The women who search for his dead body find instead an empty tomb and this word of hope: "He has been raised. He isn't here" (Mark 16:6).

It's helpful to understand this story in relation to Jewish patterns of thinking that were common in Jesus' day. Many who suffered under Rome's rule desperately hoped that God's heavenly kingdom would gain a foothold on the earth. Mark's good news is that, in Jesus, that kingdom has indeed come near. Those loyal to God's kingdom will suffer in the meantime, but salvation will soon arrive throughout the earth. The message is clear. Followers of Jesus must hold on, keep the faith, and await God's renewal of the world (see Mark 13:14).

Perhaps what's most compelling about Mark is that Jesus' disciples are far from perfect in this story. Sometimes they misunderstand Jesus' teaching (Mark 4:13). At other times they fail to appreciate his power (Mark 4:40; 6:52). They also seek status instead of service (Mark 9:34-37; 10:35-40). They sleep when he's asked them to remain awake (Mark 14:32-42); they scatter when he's arrested (Mark 14:50); and Peter denies him not once but three times (Mark 14:66-72). Despite these faults, Jesus never gives up on his followers. He remains with them, nudging them toward faithfulness. Even after his death and resurrection, a messenger delivers word to the women at Jesus' tomb that Jesus is "going ahead" of the disciples to Galilee (Mark 16:7). Even after his death, the risen Jesus promises his presence as his followers continue to trust God's coming kingdom.

## I. Prologue: Baptism and Opening Proclamation (1:1-15)

- A. Baptism by John the Baptist (1:1-11)
- B. Jesus' wilderness testing (1:12-13)
- C. Jesus proclaims God's coming kingdom (1:14-15)

## II. Jesus' Ministry of Word and Deed (1:16-6:52)

- A. In and around Galilee (1:16-4:41)
  - 1. Calling disciples, healing, and proclamation (1:16-45)
  - 2. Encountering opposition (2:1-3:35)
  - 3. Defining and instructing his own (4:1-34)
  - 4. Failed discipleship at sea (4:35-41)
- B. To the other side of the lake and back again (5:1-6:52)
  - 1. Stemming the tide of evil (5:1-53)
  - 2. Rejection in Nazareth and commission of the Twelve (6:1-13)
  - 3. Recalling John the Baptist's death (6:14-29)
  - 4. Engaging the disciples in feeding 5,000 men (6:30-44)
  - 5. Failed discipleship at sea (6:45-52)

## III. Among the Gentiles (6:53-8:21)

- A. Healing and opposition (6:53-7:37)
- B. Feeding 4,000 people and opposition (8:1-13)
- C. Failed discipleship at sea (8:14-21)

## IV. A Two-Stage Healing (8:22-26)

### V. Jesus' Sacrificial Ministry (8:27-15:47)

- A. The way of the cross (8:27-10:52)
  - 1. Jesus predicts his suffering and self-sacrifice for the first time (8:27-9:29)

- a. The significance of Jesus' identity as Christ (8:27-9:1)
  - b. The prophetic roots of Jesus' identity as Christ (9:2-13)
  - c. God's power through prayer (9:14-29)
- 2. Jesus predicts his suffering a second time and teaches about power reversal (9:30-10:31)
    - a. Death and greatness redefined (9:30-37)
    - b. The cause of the "little ones" (9:38-10:16)
    - c. Wealth as an obstacle (10:17-31)
  - 3. Jesus predicts his suffering a third time and teaches about servant leadership (10:32-45)
  - 4. Blindness restored (10:46-52)
- B. Jesus in Jerusalem (11:1-15:47)
    - 1. Jesus challenges the Jerusalem leaders (11:1-12:44)
      - a. Entry into Jerusalem (11:1-26)
      - b. Criticism of temple authorities (11:27-12:40)
      - c. A widow's offering (12:41-44)
    - 2. Jesus teaches his disciples about things to come (13:1-37)
    - 3. Jesus' trial and death (14:1-15:47)
      - a. Preparation for death (14:1-52)
      - b. Jesus' case before the authorities (14:53-15:15)
      - c. Jesus' suffering and death (15:16-41)
      - d. Jesus' burial (15:42-47)

## VI. Epilogue: Resurrection and Silence (16:1-8)

16:1-8

*Suzanne Watts Henderson*

1:1 Mt 4:3,  
 Mt 14:33  
 1:2 Mal 3:1;  
 Mt 11:10;  
 Lk 1:76, Lk 7:27  
 1:3 Is 40:3;  
 Mt 3:3; Lk 3:4;  
 Jn 1:23  
 1:4 Mt 3:1;  
 Jn 1:26, Jn 3:23;  
 Ac 13:24,  
 Ac 19:3  
 1:5 Mt 3:5,  
 Mt 3:6; Jn 1:28  
 1:6 Lv 11:22;  
 2Ks 1:8; Mt 3:4  
 1:7 Ac 13:25  
 1:8 Jn 1:33;  
 Ac 1:5; Ac 11:16  
 1:9 Mt 2:23,  
 Mt 3:13; Lk 3:21,  
 Lk 3:22; Jn 1:32  
 1:10 Jn 1:32  
 1:11 Ps 2:7;  
 Is 42:1; Mt 3:17;  
 Mk 9:7  
 1:12 Mt 4:1;  
 Lk 4:1  
 1:13 Heb 4:15

### Beginning of good news

**1** The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, God's Son, <sup>2</sup>happened just as it was written about in the prophecy of Isaiah:

*Look, I am sending my messenger before you.*

*He will prepare your way,*

<sup>3</sup>*a voice shouting in the wilderness:*

*"Prepare the way for the Lord;*

*make his paths straight."\**

### John's preaching

<sup>4</sup>John the Baptist was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. <sup>5</sup>Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins. <sup>6</sup>John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>He announced, "One stronger than I am is coming after me. I'm not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals. <sup>8</sup>I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

### Jesus is baptized and tempted

<sup>9</sup>About that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. <sup>10</sup>While he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven splitting open and the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. <sup>11</sup>And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."

<sup>12</sup>At once the Spirit forced Jesus out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among the wild animals, and the angels took care of him.

\*Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1; Exod 23:20

**1:1 good news:** The term "good news" (or "gospel") describes the message that follows in Mark. In the Roman world good news followed victory in battle or the birth of an emperor. Mark traces the good news back to the OT, especially to Isaiah: the good news of God's coming to reign (Isa 40:3-9; 52:6). See note on Mark 1:2. **about Jesus Christ:** or "of Jesus Christ." The good news includes Jesus' identity as the Christ, or "anointed one." It's also Jesus' good news, since it's the message of his ministry (see Mark 1:14-15). Jesus' identity as the Christ gives him a special role in announcing the revelation of God's kingdom on earth. **God's Son:** This phrase is missing in some early copies of Mark, but it plays an important role throughout the Gospel (Mark 1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:6; 14:61; 15:39).

**1:2 as it was written:** Mark traces the story of Jesus back to Jewish scripture. **prophecy of Isaiah:** The quotation combines Isaiah 40:3 with Malachi 3:1 and Exodus 23:20. **prepare your way:** Isaiah looks forward to Israel's return from exile.

**1:3 wilderness:** In Jewish scripture the wilderness is often the place where God's people encounter God. Mark uses this setting throughout the Gospel (see Mark 1:12, 13, 35, 45; 6:31, 32, 35). Many Jews in Jesus' day thought God would deliver God's people, beginning in the wilderness.

**1:4-8** See Matthew 3:1-12; Luke 3:1-20; John 1:19-28. Mark's story begins with John the Baptist. John was a Jewish prophet who challenged people to prepare for the arrival of God's kingdom.

**1:4 wilderness:** See note on Mark 1:3. **baptized:** Ritual cleansing from sin was a common practice in 1st-century

Judaism. Those who were pure were prepared for God's kingdom.

**1:6 John... honey:** These details connect John with the OT portrait of Elijah (see 2 Kgs 1:8). Many believed Elijah would return at the beginning of the end time (Mal 4:5-6).

**1:9 Nazareth of Galilee:** Jesus' hometown, Nazareth, is in the region of Galilee in modern-day northeastern Palestine. Jesus first appears in Mark as an adult.

**1:10 heaven splitting open:** Jesus' baptism bridges the gap between heaven and earth. Mark's language associates it with divine revelation (see Isa 64:1; 15:38). Later, in Mark 15:38-39, the ripping of the temple curtain precedes the centurion's confession of Jesus as God's Son.

**1:11 my Son, whom I dearly love:** See Mark 1:1; Psalm 2:7. In the OT the term "God's son" sometimes applied to kings, to the people of Israel, or to the faithful. For Mark's audience, the name designates Jesus' special role in God's coming kingdom (see Rom 1:1-4).

**1:12-13 Mark's account of Jesus' time in the wilderness lacks the details found in the other Gospels (see Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).**

**1:12 At once:** Mark regularly uses phrases that convey the urgent nature of Jesus' ministry (see, for instance, Mark 1:18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43).

**1:13 forty days:** This length of time is important for Mark. In the OT the Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt and before entering the promised land. **wild animals:** Jesus is apparently at ease in nature. Mark may be referring to the covenant promised in Hosea 2:18, where harmony with creation will be reestablished.



**Jesus' message**

<sup>14</sup>After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, <sup>15</sup>saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!"

**Jesus calls disciples**

<sup>16</sup>As Jesus passed alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>"Come, follow me," he said, "and I'll show you how to fish for people." <sup>18</sup>Right away, they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup>After going a little farther, he saw James and John, Zebedee's sons, in their boat repairing the fishing nets. <sup>20</sup>At that very moment he called them. They followed him, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired workers.

**Jesus throws a demon out**

<sup>21</sup>Jesus and his followers went into Capernaum. Immediately on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and started teaching. <sup>22</sup>The people were amazed by his teaching, for he was teaching them with authority, not like the legal experts. <sup>23</sup>Suddenly, there in the synagogue, a person with an evil spirit screamed, <sup>24</sup>"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the holy one from God."

<sup>25</sup>"Silence!" Jesus said, speaking harshly to the demon. "Come out of him!" <sup>26</sup>The unclean spirit shook him and screamed, then it came out.

<sup>27</sup>Everyone was shaken and questioned among themselves, "What's this? A new teaching with authority! He even commands unclean spirits and they obey him!" <sup>28</sup>Right away the news about him spread throughout the entire region of Galilee.

**Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law**

<sup>29</sup>After leaving the synagogue, Jesus, James, and John went home with Simon and Andrew. <sup>30</sup>Simon's mother-in-law was in bed, sick with a fever, and they told Jesus about her at once. <sup>31</sup>He went to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her, and she served them.

**Jesus' ministry spreads**

<sup>32</sup>That evening, at sunset, people brought to Jesus those who were sick or demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup>The whole town gathered near the door. <sup>34</sup>He healed many who were sick with all kinds of diseases, and he threw out many demons. But he didn't let the demons speak, because they recognized him.

1:14-15 See Matthew 4:12-17; Luke 4:14-15. Mark summarizes Jesus' message.

1:14 *After . . . arrested*: Mark portrays Jesus as John's successor. Their ministries don't overlap. *God's good news*: Mark clarifies the content of that good news in Mark 1:15. See note on Mark 1:1.

1:15 *Now is the time!*: or "the time has been fulfilled." What people have been waiting for is now on the horizon. *God's kingdom*: See sidebar, "God's Kingdom" at Mark 3. *Change your hearts and lives*: Like John, Jesus calls for an active response to the good news. *trust this good news*: In Mark, Jesus builds people's trust in God and in the truth of God's kingdom (cf. John 20:30-31). See sidebar, "Faith/Trust" at Mark 11.

1:16-20 See Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11. Jesus' first public act is to call four fishermen to follow him. See sidebar, "The Disciples in Mark" at Mark 5.

1:17 *follow me*: In Judaism rabbis often shared their wisdom with their followers. *fish for people*: The OT prophet Jeremiah writes about God calling people to "catch" others in the net of God's coming kingdom (see Jer 16:16).

1:21-28 See Matthew 7:28-29; Luke 4:31-37.

1:21 *Capernaum*: a seaside Galilean village. *synagogue*: a Jewish community center for instruction and prayer.

1:22 *amazed*: People often respond to Jesus with amazement (see Mark 6:2; 7:37; 10:26; 12:17). *legal experts*: This

group opposes Jesus throughout the Gospel (see Mark 2:6, 16). They were trained to interpret Jewish Law.

1:24 *us*: The plural pronoun suggests a host of evil spirits torment the man. *holy one from God*: Evil spirits often recognize Jesus' special relationship to God when humans don't (see Mark 1:34; 3:11).

1:25 *"Silence!"*: Jesus rebukes the demon with a command that's common in ancient writings. In Mark, Jesus often keeps characters from telling others about his identity (see Mark 1:34; 3:11-12; 8:30; 9:30). See sidebar, "Secrecy" at Mark 8.

1:27 *"What's this? A new teaching . . . obey him!"*: The crowd marvels at Jesus' authority in word and deed. Together, his instruction (Mark 1:22) and his power over evil (see also Mark 3:5; 6:7) suggest Jesus brings a divine presence into the world.

1:29-31 See Matthew 8:14-15; Luke 4:38-39.

1:31 *by the hand*: Jesus often heals by physical touch (see Mark 1:41; 5:41; 8:23, 25). This implies that health, rather than illness, is contagious. *she served them*: The verb recalls the angels' care for Jesus in the wilderness and is related to the term "deacon" (see Mark 1:13; 10:45). This healed woman plays an important role in the ministry of Jesus and his followers.

1:32-39 See Matthew 8:16-17; 4:23; Luke 4:40-44.

1:34 *threw out many demons*: Jesus removes evil from

1:14 Mt 4:12;  
Mk 4:17; Mt 4:23  
1:15 Mt 3:2;  
Ac 20:21; Ga 4:4;  
Eph 1:10  
1:16 Mt 4:18;  
Jn 1:40  
1:17 Mt 4:19  
1:19 Mt 4:21;  
Mk 3:17; Ac 1:13  
1:20 Mt 4:21  
1:21 Mt 4:13;  
Mk 4:23; Mk 1:39;  
Lk 4:31  
1:22 Mt 7:28;  
Mt 7:29; Mk 6:2;  
Mk 7:37;  
Mk 11:18  
1:23 Mt 8:28;  
Mt 9:32;  
Mt 13:22;  
Mk 5:2; Lk 4:33  
1:24 Mt 8:29;  
Mk 5:7; Lk 1:35;  
Lk 24:19; Ac 3:14  
1:25 Mk 9:25  
1:26 Mk 9:20;  
Mk 9:26  
1:27 Mt 7:29;  
Mt 8:27; Mt 9:33;  
Mt 12:23;  
Mt 13:54  
1:28 Mt 4:24  
1:29 Mt 8:14;  
Lk 4:38  
1:30 Mk 1:29;  
Lk 4:38; 1 Co 9:5  
1:31 Mt 4:23;  
Mt 8:14; Lk 4:38;  
Ac 9:41  
1:32 Mt 4:24  
1:33 Mt 4:25;  
Mt 13:2; Mt 19:2;  
Mk 2:2; Mk 3:20  
1:34 Mt 4:23;  
Mk 3:12;  
Ac 16:18

1:35 Lk 4:42  
 1:37 Jn 12:19  
 1:38 Is 61:1  
 1:39 Mt 4:23,  
 Mt 9:35;  
 Mk 1:21; Lk 4:44  
 1:40 Mt 8:2;  
 Mk 10:17;  
 Lk 5:12  
 1:41 Mk 6:34  
 1:43 Mt 9:30  
 1:44 Lv 14:1,  
 Lv 14:2; Mt 8:4;  
 Mk 5:43,  
 Mk 7:36  
 1:45 Mk 2:2,  
 Mk 2:13; Mk 3:7;  
 Lk 5:15; Jn 6:2  
 2:1 Mt 9:1  
 2:2 Mk 1:33,  
 Mk 1:45,  
 Mk 2:13  
 2:3 Mt 9:2;  
 Lk 5:18  
 2:4 Lk 5:19  
 2:5 Mt 9:2  
 2:6 Mt 16:7  
 2:7 Is 43:25  
 2:8 Jn 2:25  
 2:9 Mk 2:5  
 2:10 Mt 9:6;  
 Ac 5:31;  
 Col 3:13  
 2:11 Jn 5:8  
 2:12 Mt 9:8,  
 Mt 9:33

<sup>35</sup>Early in the morning, well before sunrise, Jesus rose and went to a deserted place where he could be alone in prayer. <sup>36</sup>Simon and those with him tracked him down. <sup>37</sup>When they found him, they told him, "Everyone's looking for you!"

<sup>38</sup>He replied, "Let's head in the other direction, to the nearby villages, so that I can preach there too. That's why I've come." <sup>39</sup>He traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and throwing out demons.

### A man with a skin disease

<sup>40</sup>A man with a skin disease approached Jesus, fell to his knees, and begged, "If you want, you can make me clean."

<sup>41</sup>Incensed,<sup>b</sup> Jesus reached out his hand, touched him, and said, "I do want to. Be clean."

<sup>42</sup>Instantly, the skin disease left him, and he was clean. <sup>43</sup>Sternly, Jesus sent him away, <sup>44</sup>saying, "Don't say anything to anyone. Instead, go and show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifice for your cleansing that Moses commanded. This will be a testimony to them."

<sup>45</sup>Instead, he went out and started talking freely and spreading the news so that Jesus wasn't able to enter a town openly. He remained outside in deserted places, but people came to him from everywhere.

### Healing and forgiveness

**2**After a few days, Jesus went back to Capernaum, and people heard that he was at home. <sup>2</sup>So many gathered that there was no longer space, not even near the door. Jesus was speaking the word to them. <sup>3</sup>Some people arrived, and four of them were bringing to him a man who was paralyzed. <sup>4</sup>They couldn't carry him through the crowd, so they tore off part of the roof above where Jesus was. When they had made an opening, they lowered the mat on which the paralyzed man was lying. <sup>5</sup>When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven!"

<sup>6</sup>Some legal experts were sitting there, muttering among themselves, <sup>7</sup>"Why does he speak this way? He's insulting God. Only the one God can forgive sins."

<sup>8</sup>Jesus immediately recognized what they were discussing, and he said to them, "Why do you fill your minds with these questions? <sup>9</sup>Which is easier—to say to a paralyzed person, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take up your bed, and walk'?" <sup>10</sup>But so you will know that the Human One<sup>c</sup> has authority on the earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed, <sup>11</sup>"Get up, take your mat, and go home."

<sup>12</sup>Jesus raised him up, and right away he picked up his mat and walked out in front of everybody. They were all amazed and praised God, saying, "We've never seen anything like this!"

<sup>b</sup>Most critical editions of the Gk New Testament read *filled with compassion*. <sup>c</sup>Or *Son of Man*

those it possesses (see Mark 1:39; 3:13; 6:13). *didn't let the demons speak*: See note on Mark 1:25.

1:35 a *deserted place*: or "wilderness." See note on Mark 1:3.

1:38 the *other direction*: Jesus deliberately expands the scope of his ministry. Although he stays in Galilee for now, his travels will eventually take him into Gentile territory (see Mark 5:1; 6:53; 7:24, 31). This shows that God's coming kingdom includes both Jewish and non-Jewish people (see Mark 13:27).

1:40-45 See Matthew 8:1-4; Luke 5:12-16.

1:40 *skin disease*: refers to different kinds of blemishes but probably not to what we today call leprosy (i.e., Hansen's disease). According to Leviticus 13-14, skin disease disqualified people from participating in religious rituals. People with blemishes were kept apart from others to prevent the spread of their disease (see 2 Kgs 7:3-10; 2 Chron 26:19-21).

1:41 *Incensed*: Some Greek manuscripts say that Jesus was "filled with compassion." Scribes who made copies of Mark may have found Jesus' anger troubling and softened the tone. This statement of Jesus' fury, though, fits the aggressive nature of his combat against evil.

1:44 *show yourself to the priest*: Priests determined whether a person was clean or unclean. Jesus' instruction is a reminder that he worked within Judaism, not outside of it.

1:45 *the news*: refers to Jesus' message about God's coming kingdom (see Mark 1:14-15; 2:2; 4:14-20; 5:36). *deserted places*: See note on Mark 1:3.

2:1-3:6 Mark presents a series of stories of conflict between Jesus and Jewish leaders.

2:1-12 See Matthew 9:1-8; Luke 5:17-26.

2:2 *the word*: See note on Mark 1:45.

2:5 *their faith*: In Mark faith is depending on the good news of God's coming kingdom. These people show faith by trusting that Jesus offers God's power over physical ailments. See sidebar, "Faith/Trust" at Mark 11.

2:6 *legal experts*: See note on Mark 1:22.

2:10 *Human One*: a common term in Mark (see Mark 2:28; 8:31, 38; 9:12; 10:45; 13:26; 14:21). As an agent of God's coming kingdom, Jesus claims authority to forgive sins. He may suggest that people who trust God's power will also have that authority. See sidebar, "The Human One in Mark" at Mark 14.

**Eating with sinners**

<sup>13</sup>Jesus went out beside the lake again. The whole crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. <sup>14</sup>As he continued along, he saw Levi, Alphaeus' son, sitting at a kiosk for collecting taxes. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Levi got up and followed him.

<sup>15</sup>Jesus sat down to eat at Levi's house. Many tax collectors and sinners were eating with Jesus and his disciples. Indeed, many of them had become his followers. <sup>16</sup>When some of the legal experts from among the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples, "Why is he eating with sinners and tax collectors?"

<sup>17</sup>When Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. I didn't come to call righteous people, but sinners."

**When to fast**

<sup>18</sup>John's disciples and the Pharisees had a habit of fasting. Some people asked Jesus, "Why do John's disciples and the Pharisees' disciples fast, but yours don't?"

<sup>19</sup>Jesus said, "The wedding guests can't fast while the groom is with them, can they? As long as they have the groom with them, they can't fast. <sup>20</sup>But the days will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

<sup>21</sup>"No one sews a piece of new, unshrunk cloth on old clothes; otherwise, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and makes a worse tear. <sup>22</sup>No one pours new wine into old leather wineskins; otherwise, the wine would burst the wineskins and the wine would be lost and the wineskins destroyed. But new wine is for new wineskins."

**Scripture and the Sabbath**

<sup>23</sup>Jesus went through the wheat fields on the Sabbath. As the disciples made their way, they were picking the heads of wheat. <sup>24</sup>The Pharisees said to Jesus, "Look! Why are they breaking the Sabbath law?"

<sup>25</sup>He said to them, "Haven't you ever read what David did when he was in need, when he and those with him were hungry? <sup>26</sup>During the time when Abiathar was high priest, David went into God's house and ate the bread of the presence, which only the priests were allowed to eat. He also gave bread to those who were with him." <sup>27</sup>Then he said, "The Sabbath was created for humans; humans weren't created for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup>This is why the Human One<sup>d</sup> is Lord even over the Sabbath."

**Healing on the Sabbath**

**3** Jesus returned to the synagogue. A man with a withered hand was there. <sup>2</sup>Wanting to bring charges against Jesus, they were watching Jesus closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. <sup>3</sup>He said to the man with the withered hand, "Step up where people can see you." <sup>4</sup>Then he said to them, "Is it legal on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or

2:13 Mk 1:45, Mk 4:1  
 2:14 Mt 9:9, Mk 1:17, Mk 3:18, Lk 5:27  
 2:15 Mt 4:23, Mt 7:28, Mt 9:9, Mt 9:10, Mt 9:27  
 2:16 Mt 9:11, Mk 2:7, Lk 5:30, Lk 15:2, Ac 23:9  
 2:17 Lk 5:31, Lk 5:32; 1Ti 1:15  
 2:18 Mt 9:14, Lk 5:33, Lk 18:12  
 2:19 Mt 9:15  
 2:20 Lk 17:22  
 2:21 Mt 9:16  
 2:22 Josh 9:4, Mt 9:17  
 2:23 Dt 23:25, Mt 12:1; Lk 6:1  
 2:24 Ex 20:10, Ex 31:15, Mt 12:2  
 2:25 1Sa 21:1; Mt 12:3, Mt 21:16, Mk 12:26, Lk 6:3  
 2:26 Lv 24:5; 1Sa 21:1; 2Sa 8:17; 1Ch 24:6  
 2:27 Ex 23:12; Dt 5:14; Col 2:16  
 2:28 Mt 12:8; Lk 6:5; Eph 1:22  
 3:1 Mt 12:9; Mk 1:21; Lk 6:6  
 3:2 Lk 11:54, Lk 14:1, Lk 20:20

<sup>d</sup>Or Son of Man

2:13-17 See Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 5:27-32. Mark combines another call to discipleship (2:13-14; see Mark 1:16-20) with a report about Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners (2:15-17). These groups were typically excluded from normal social interaction.  
 2:16 legal experts from among the Pharisees: Here, Mark identifies these "legal experts" with another Jewish group, the Pharisees. Pharisees interpreted Jewish Law in a way that offered priestly status to everyone. Since that meant following standards of purity at home, table fellowship with sinners and tax collectors violated their reading of the Torah. See note on Mark 1:22.  
 2:17 Righteousness is a result, not a precondition, of sharing a meal with Jesus.  
 2:18-22 See Matthew 9:14-17; Luke 5:33-39.  
 2:18 fast: Jewish Law required a yearly fast to prepare for God's forgiveness (Lev 16:29). Some Jews fasted more frequently as an act of devotion to God.  
 2:19 wedding guests: OT prophets often use wedding

imagery to express the joy that's a part of God's coming kingdom (see Isa 54:4-8; 62:4-5; Ezek 16:1-63; Hos 2:19).  
 2:21-22 Jesus points out the dangers of mixing new and old. His disciples aren't fasting because they belong to the new humanity as part of the community of Christ's followers.  
 2:23-28 See Matthew 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-5. As a rabbi, Jesus is responsible for his disciples' actions.  
 2:26 Abiathar: 1 Samuel 21:1-6 says Ahimelech, not his son Abiathar, was high priest when David shared the sacred bread.  
 2:27 Jesus emphasizes the purpose of Jewish Law, which is to benefit humanity.  
 2:28 This is why: or "so that." Human One: See sidebar, "The Human One in Mark" at Mark 14.  
 3:1-6 See Matthew 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-11. This story concludes the section that began in Mark 2:1.  
 3:2 heal on the Sabbath: The question of what was allowed on the Sabbath was debated. Mark portrays some Jews

3:5 Ro 11:25  
3:6 Mt 12:14,  
Mt 22:16;  
Mk 12:13  
3:7 Mt 4:25,  
Mt 12:15;  
Lk 6:17

3:8 Eze 35:15;  
Mt 11:21;  
Mk 7:24; Lk 6:17

3:9 Mk 4:1  
3:10 Mt 4:23,  
Mt 9:20,  
Mt 14:36;  
Mk 5:29,  
Mk 6:56

3:11 Mt 4:3,  
Mt 8:29,  
Mt 14:33;  
Mk 1:24; Lk 4:41

3:12 Mt 8:4,  
Mt 12:16

3:13 Mt 10:1;  
Lk 6:12

3:14 Mk 3:13,  
Mk 6:7,  
Mk 16:15;  
Lk 9:1, Lk 10:1

3:15 Mt 10:1,  
Mt 16:16;  
Lk 6:14; Jn 1:42;  
Ac 1:13

3:17 Mk 1:19,  
Mt 5:37,  
Mk 10:35,  
Mk 14:33

3:18 Mt 9:9,  
Mt 10:3, Mt 10:4;  
Lk 6:14, Lk 6:15

3:19 Mt 10:4,  
Mt 26:14,  
Mt 26:47,  
Mt 27:3,  
Mk 14:10

to kill?" But they said nothing. <sup>8</sup>Looking around at them with anger, deeply grieved at their unyielding hearts, he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he did, and his hand was made healthy. <sup>9</sup>At that, the Pharisees got together with the supporters of Herod to plan how to destroy Jesus.

### Healing and throwing demons out

<sup>7</sup>Jesus left with his disciples and went to the lake. A large crowd followed him because they had heard what he was doing. They were from Galilee, <sup>8</sup>Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the area surrounding Tyre and Sidon. <sup>9</sup>Jesus told his disciples to get a small boat ready for him so the crowd wouldn't crush him. <sup>10</sup>He had healed so many people that everyone who was sick pushed forward so that they could touch him. <sup>11</sup>Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down at his feet and shouted, "You are God's Son!" <sup>12</sup>But he strictly ordered them not to reveal who he was.

### Jesus appoints twelve apostles

<sup>13</sup>Jesus went up on a mountain and called those he wanted, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup>He appointed twelve and called them apostles. He appointed them to be with him, to be sent out to preach, <sup>15</sup>and to have authority to throw out demons. <sup>16</sup>He appointed twelve: Peter, a name he gave Simon; <sup>17</sup>James and John, Zebedee's sons, whom he nicknamed Boanerges, which means "sons of Thunder"; <sup>18</sup>and Andrew; Philip; Bartholomew; Matthew; Thomas; James, Alphaeus' son; Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean; <sup>19</sup>and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus.

**God's Kingdom** In Mark the good news Jesus proclaims is that God's kingdom is on the horizon. Historians agree this message was the trademark of Jesus' earthly ministry. But how are we to understand the term "God's kingdom"? For Mark it's the very real hope, rooted in Jewish thought, that God's power will soon overwhelm Rome's. The book of Daniel, for instance, speaks of God's kingdom at last prevailing over all the evil rulers who have gone before (Dan 7:26-27). In Mark, Jesus is the Jewish Christ who establishes God's kingdom by fighting the forces of evil (Mark 3:27) wherever they appear—in demons, illness, human need, and abusive power. Even though he was writing several decades after Jesus' death, Mark expects God's kingdom will arrive at any moment. In the meantime, those who trust in God's kingdom suffer at the hands of those whose power comes from the present evil age. By following a suffering Christ, Mark's audience takes its place within God's new world order, which uses power for good. Evil—even death itself—will finally lose its grip upon the earth.

\*Or *zealot*

who have a strict interpretation of the sabbath law, according to which healing on the Sabbath isn't allowed.

3:5 *with anger, deeply grieved*: Mark notes Jesus' emotional response to his opponents (see Mark 1:41; 14:19). *unyielding hearts*: Like Pharaoh in the OT (see Exod 7:3), the Pharisees resist God's power.

3:6 *supporters of Herod*: Herod Antipas ruled Galilee during Jesus' lifetime. The Pharisees joined forces with his supporters to achieve their destructive aims.

3:7-8 *Galilee... Tyre and Sidon*: Mark stresses the diversity of the crowd around Jesus. His followers come from both Jewish and non-Jewish locations.

3:7 *lake*: a term often used for the Sea of Galilee. Much of Jesus' ministry takes place near this body of water (see Mark 1:16; 2:13; 4:1). *large crowd*: Mark contrasts the Pharisees' destructive plans with Jesus' increasing popularity.

3:10 *touch him*: See note on Mark 1:31.

3:11 *God's Son*: See Mark 1:1, 11. *fell down at his feet*: a posture of worship (see Mark 5:33; 7:25). In Mark evil spirits recognize Jesus (see Mark 1:24).

3:12 *strictly ordered them*: See Mark 1:25, 43. See sidebar, "Secrecy" at Mark 8.

3:13-19 See Matthew 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16. Jesus calls and

equips his apostles to join his mission. See sidebar, "The Disciples in Mark" at Mark 5.

3:13 *up on a mountain*: Like Moses (Exod 19) and Elijah (1 Kgs 19:8), Jesus approaches God at a critical moment in his ministry. Unlike them, he enlists his followers to help reveal God's kingdom.

3:14 *twelve*: In the OT Israel was made up of 12 tribes (see Gen 49:28; Num 1:4-16). In Jesus' time, most of these had lost their identity through migration, exile, and intermarriage. By choosing 12 apostles, Jesus symbolized his mission to restore Israel as part of God's coming kingdom (see Ezek 47:13). *apostles*: The term means "those who are sent out." *be with him*: These apostles are called first to be "with" Jesus, to remain with him, and only then to be sent out. *preach*: The apostles will announce the same message (see Mark 1:45; 2:2) about God's coming kingdom that Jesus proclaims (see Mark 1:14-15).

3:15 *authority to throw out demons*: Like Jesus, the apostles will exercise God's power over evil spirits.

3:16-19 *Peter... Judas Iscariot*: Compare with the lists of apostles in Matthew 10:2-4; Luke 6:14-16; John 1:40-49; 21:2; Acts 1:13.

3:17 *Boanerges... "sons of Thunder"*: Mark translates the

**Misunderstandings about Jesus**

<sup>20</sup>Jesus entered a house. A crowd gathered again so that it was impossible for him and his followers even to eat. <sup>21</sup>When his family heard what was happening, they came to take control of him. They were saying, "He's out of his mind!"

<sup>22</sup>The legal experts came down from Jerusalem. Over and over they charged, "He's possessed by Beelzebul. He throws out demons with the authority of the ruler of demons."

<sup>23</sup>When Jesus called them together he spoke to them in a parable: "How can Satan throw Satan out? <sup>24</sup>A kingdom involved in civil war will collapse. <sup>25</sup>And a house torn apart by divisions will collapse. <sup>26</sup>If Satan rebels against himself and is divided, then he can't endure. He's done for. <sup>27</sup>No one gets into the house of a strong person and steals anything without first tying up the strong person. Only then can the house be burglarized. <sup>28</sup>I assure you that human beings will be forgiven for everything, for all sins and insults of every kind. <sup>29</sup>But whoever insults the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. That person is guilty of a sin with consequences that last forever." <sup>30</sup>He said this because the legal experts were saying, "He's possessed by an evil spirit."

<sup>31</sup>His mother and brothers arrived. They stood outside and sent word to him, calling for him. <sup>32</sup>A crowd was seated around him, and those sent to him said, "Look, your mother, brothers, and sisters are outside looking for you."

<sup>33</sup>He replied, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" <sup>34</sup>Looking around at those seated around him in a circle, he said, "Look, here are my mother and my brothers. <sup>35</sup>Whoever does God's will is my brother, sister, and mother."

**Parable of the soils**

**4** Jesus began to teach beside the lake again. Such a large crowd gathered that he climbed into a boat there on the lake. He sat in the boat while the whole crowd was nearby on the shore. <sup>2</sup>He said many things to them in parables. While teaching them, he said, <sup>3</sup>"Listen to this! A farmer went out to scatter seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering seed, some fell on the path; and the birds came and ate it. <sup>5</sup>Other seed fell on rocky ground where the soil was shallow. They sprouted immediately because the soil wasn't deep. <sup>6</sup>When the sun came up, it scorched the plants; and they dried up because they had no roots. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorny plants grew and choked the seeds, and they produced nothing. <sup>8</sup>Other seed fell into good soil and bore fruit. Upon growing and increasing, the seed produced in one case a yield of thirty to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of one hundred to one." <sup>9</sup>He said, "Whoever has ears to listen should pay attention!"

3:20 Mk 6:31  
 3:21 Jn 10:20, Ac 26:24  
 3:22 Mt 9:34, Mt 10:25, Mt 12:24, Mt 15:11, Lk 11:15  
 3:23 Mt 4:10, Mt 12:25, Lk 11:17  
 3:24 1Co 1:10  
 3:25 Gn 13:8, Ga 5:15  
 3:26 Mt 4:10  
 3:27 Is 49:24  
 3:28 Mt 12:31, Mt 12:32, Lk 12:10, 1Jn 5:16  
 3:29 Mt 12:31, Mt 12:32, Mt 25:46, Lk 12:10, Ac 7:51  
 3:30 Mk 3:22, Jas 2:7  
 3:31 Mt 12:46, Lk 8:19  
 3:34 Mt 12:49  
 3:35 Lk 11:28, 1Jn 2:17  
 4:1 Mt 13:1, Mk 2:13, Mk 3:7, Lk 5:1, Lk 8:4  
 4:2 Mk 3:23  
 4:3 Mk 4:26  
 4:4 Mt 13:4  
 4:5 Mt 13:20, Mt 4:17, Lk 8:13  
 4:6 Jas 1:11  
 4:7 Jer 4:3, 1Ti 6:10  
 4:8 Gn 26:12, Mk 4:20, Jn 15:5, Col 1:6  
 4:9 Mt 11:15, Mk 4:23

Aramaic word for his Greek-speaking audience (see Mark 5:41; 7:11, 34; 10:46; 11:9-10; 14:36; 15:22, 34, 42).

3:20-35 See Matthew 12:22-32; Luke 11:14-23; 12:10. These stories emphasize absolute loyalty to God's will.

3:20 *house*: In Mark, Jesus' ministry often takes place in homes (see Mark 1:29, 32-33; 2:1). Early Christian communities like Mark's also met in homes. The church was the gathering of people, not a building.

3:22 *legal experts*... *Jerusalem*: For the first time, Mark connects Jesus' opponents with the capital city. See note on Mark 1:22. *Beelzebul*: The name echoes an OT term that mocks competing gods ("Lord of the Flies"; see 2 Kgs 1:2). By Jesus' time it was a name for Satan, who rules over the demons.

3:23 *parable*: a story that uses a familiar example from daily life to illustrate a point. Parables aren't always easy to understand (see Mark 4:13).

3:27 *strong person*: As the "stronger" one (Mark 1:7), Jesus restrains even Satan's power as part of the housecleaning that reveals God's kingdom (see Isa 49:24-25).

3:29 *insults the Holy Spirit*: the only sin that can't be forgiven. Since Jesus' combat against Satan is the work of

God's Spirit, the legal experts have offended God by calling it the work of Beelzebul (Mark 3:22).

3:32 *mother, brothers, and sisters*: Mark doesn't mention Jesus' father, either here or in Mark 6:3. This may imply that God is the true head of God's family, or it may be that Jesus' father has already died.

3:35 *God's will*: Jesus understands family in terms of loyalty to God's kingdom rather than as a bloodline. Since that loyalty can create division within families, this saying offers a new family of origin to those who follow Jesus.

4:1-34 The breathless pace of Mark's story slows down in this chapter. Here Jesus teaches about God's coming kingdom. He uses parables (see note on Mark 3:23) to portray the nature of that kingdom and its growth.

4:1-9 See Matthew 13:1-9; Luke 8:4-8. Because they depended on the land for their livelihood, Jesus' hearers were familiar with the images in this story.

4:3 *Listen to this!*: Hearing Jesus' words isn't enough. He wants people to genuinely understand what he's saying (see Mark 4:12).

4:8 *thirty to one... one hundred to one*: Even good soil produces a variety of yields.

4:10 Mt 13:36;  
 Mk 4:34;  
 Mk 7:17;  
 Mk 9:28

4:11 Col 4:5;  
 1Th 4:12; 1Ti 3:7

4:12 Is 6:9;  
 Is 6:10; Jer 5:21;  
 Jn 12:40;  
 Ro 11:8

4:13 Mt 13:18;  
 Mt 16:8; Lk 8:11

4:14 Mt 13:37;  
 Mk 2:2; Lk 1:2;  
 Lk 8:11; Ac 8:4

4:15 Rev 20:7

4:16 Eze 33:31;  
 Eze 33:32;  
 Mk 6:20; Jn 5:35

4:17 Mt 11:6;  
 Mk 4:5;  
 1Co 10:13

4:19 1Ti 6:9;  
 1Ti 6:10;  
 1Ti 6:17

4:20 Jn 15:16

4:21 Mt 5:15;  
 Lk 8:16;  
 Lk 11:33

4:22 Mt 10:26;  
 Lk 8:17; Lk 12:2

4:23 Mt 11:15;  
 Mk 4:9

4:24 Mt 7:2;  
 Lk 6:38

4:25 Mt 13:12;  
 Mt 25:29;  
 Lk 8:18

4:26 Mt 13:24;  
 Mt 13:31;  
 Mt 13:33

4:27 Ecc 11:5  
 4:29 11:31,3;  
 Rev 14:15

4:30 Mt 13:24;  
 Mt 13:31;  
 Mt 13:32;

4:31 Mt 13:31;  
 Lk 13:19

4:32 Ps 104:12;  
 Dn 4:12

### Jesus explains his parable

<sup>10</sup>When they were alone, the people around Jesus, along with the Twelve, asked him about the parables. <sup>11</sup>He said to them, "The secret of God's kingdom has been given to you, but to those who are outside everything comes in parables. <sup>12</sup>This is so that they can look and see but have no insight, and they can hear but not understand. Otherwise, they might turn their lives around and be forgiven.

<sup>13</sup>"Don't you understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables?"

<sup>14</sup>The farmer scatters the word. <sup>15</sup>This is the meaning of the seed that fell on the path: When the word is scattered and people hear it, right away Satan comes and steals the word that was planted in them. <sup>16</sup>Here's the meaning of the seed that fell on rocky ground: When people hear the word, they immediately receive it joyfully. <sup>17</sup>Because they have no roots, they last for only a little while. When they experience distress or abuse because of the word, they immediately fall away. <sup>18</sup>Others are like the seed scattered among the thorny plants. These are the ones who have heard the word; <sup>19</sup>but the worries of this life, the false appeal of wealth, and the desire for more things break in and choke the word, and it bears no fruit. <sup>20</sup>The seed scattered on good soil are those who hear the word and embrace it. They bear fruit, in one case a yield of thirty to one, in another case sixty to one, and in another case one hundred to one."

### Parables about lamps and measures

<sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them, "Does anyone bring in a lamp in order to put it under a basket or a bed? Shouldn't it be placed on a lampstand? <sup>22</sup>Everything hidden will be revealed, and everything secret will come out into the open. <sup>23</sup>Whoever has ears to listen should pay attention!"

<sup>24</sup>He said to them, "Listen carefully! God will evaluate you with the same standard you use to evaluate others. Indeed, you will receive even more. <sup>25</sup>Those who have will receive more, but as for those who don't have, even what they don't have will be taken away from them."

### More parables about God's kingdom

<sup>26</sup>Then Jesus said, "This is what God's kingdom is like. It's as though someone scatters seed on the ground, <sup>27</sup>then sleeps and wakes night and day. The seed sprouts and grows, but the farmer doesn't know how. <sup>28</sup>The earth produces crops all by itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full head of grain. <sup>29</sup>Whenever the crop is ready, the farmer goes out to cut the grain because it's harvesttime."

<sup>30</sup>He continued, "What's a good image for God's kingdom? What parable can I use to explain it? <sup>31</sup>Consider a mustard seed. When scattered on the ground, it's the smallest of all the seeds on the earth, <sup>32</sup>but when it's planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all vegetable plants. It produces such large branches that the birds in the sky are able to nest in its shade."

4:10-20 See Matthew 13:10-23; Luke 8:9-15.

4:10 *people around Jesus*: Jesus turns from the "whole crowd" (Mark 4:1) to a smaller group of followers that includes the Twelve (see Mark 3:13-19), as well as others.

4:11 *secret . . . to you*: The phrase points to the mysterious nature of God's kingdom. Not everyone understands the mystery, but it *has been given* to his followers. See sidebar, "Secrecy" at Mark 8. *those . . . outside*: notes the gap between insiders and outsiders (see Dan 2:18-19, 27-30). *in parables*: Outsiders grasp only the surface meaning of the story, not the deeper truth to which it points. See note on Mark 3:23.

4:12 See Isaiah 6:9-10. Parables are hard to understand, so they can prevent people from changing their lives and receiving forgiveness (cf. Matt 13:13-14; Luke 8:10).

4:13-20 Jesus interprets the parable.

4:13 *Don't you understand this parable?*: Jesus accuses even insiders of missing the point of his story (see Mark 4:12). Because they're "with him" (Mark 3:14), he explains it in detail. See sidebar, "The Disciples in Mark" at Mark 5.

4:14 *the word*: Jesus identifies the seed with the message about God's coming kingdom. See note on Mark 1:45.

4:15 *Satan*: See Mark 1:13; 3:23-27. Satan represents, in the form of a person, those evil forces that challenge the

power of God's kingdom. *planted in them*: See 1 Corinthians 3:6-8.

4:20 *hear the word . . . embrace it . . . bear fruit*: The verbs follow a deliberate sequence, from hearing to embracing to bearing fruit. Although the harvest varies (see note on Mark 4:1-9), the yield far exceeds the number of seeds spread (see Mark 4:30-32).

4:21-25 See Matthew 5:15; 7:2; 10:26; 13:12; 25:29; Luke 6:38; 8:16-18; 11:33; 12:2; 19:26. These parables suggest God's mysterious kingdom will soon be revealed (cf. Mark 4:12). They also remind those who hear Jesus of their role in disclosing it.

4:24 *evaluate . . . same standard*: God measures results, just as humans do. Here the results relate to the growth of the kingdom (see Mark 4:9, 20).

4:25 *Those who have . . . taken away*: In Mark, what hearers have refers to the mystery "given" to them (Mark 4:11). It's a secret to be shared, not kept from others (Mark 4:21-22).

4:26-33 Jesus' teachings end with two more examples from the earth.

4:28 *by itself* or "automatically": The farmer scatters seed but trusts God to produce results.

4:32 *the largest of all vegetable plants*: A very small

<sup>33</sup>With many such parables he continued to give them the word, as much as they were able to hear. <sup>34</sup>He spoke to them only in parables, then explained everything to his disciples when he was alone with them.

**Jesus stops a storm**

<sup>35</sup>Later that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the lake." <sup>36</sup>They left the crowd and took him in the boat just as he was. Other boats followed along.

<sup>37</sup>Gale-force winds arose, and waves crashed against the boat so that the boat was swamped. <sup>38</sup>But Jesus was in the rear of the boat, sleeping on a pillow. They woke him up and said, "Teacher, don't you care that we're drowning?"

<sup>39</sup>He got up and gave orders to the wind, and he said to the lake, "Silence! Be still!" The wind settled down and there was a great calm. <sup>40</sup>Jesus asked them, "Why are you frightened? Don't you have faith yet?"

<sup>41</sup>Overcome with awe, they said to each other, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

**Jesus frees a demon-possessed man**

**5** Jesus and his disciples came to the other side of the lake, to the region of the Gerasenes. <sup>2</sup>As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out of the tombs. <sup>3</sup>This man lived among the tombs, and no one was ever strong enough to restrain him, even with a chain. <sup>4</sup>He had been secured many times with leg irons and chains, but he broke the chains and smashed the leg irons. No one was tough enough to control him. <sup>5</sup>Night and day in the tombs and the hills, he would howl and cut himself with stones. <sup>6</sup>When he saw Jesus from far away, he ran and knelt before him, <sup>7</sup>shouting, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!"

<sup>8</sup>He said this because Jesus had already commanded him, "Unclean spirit, come out of the man!"

<sup>9</sup>Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

seed produces a very large bush. *birds... shade*: The image may refer to the wide reach of God's kingdom, since Jewish literature sometimes portrays Gentiles as birds who take shelter in God's tree (see Ezek 17:23; Dan 4:12).

4:35-41 See Matthew 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25. In all three sea-crossing stories (see Mark 6:45-52; 8:14-21), the disciples show more fear than faith.

4:35 *other side*: Jesus expands his sphere of influence. See note on Mark 1:38. *lake*: Ancient people often associated the lake/sea with the power of evil (see Rev 21:1). See note on Mark 3:7.

4:38 *sleeping*: The disciples find fault with Jesus for sleeping. Elsewhere, though, sleeping is evidence of trust in God (see Mark 4:27; Pss 3:5; 4:8; Job 11:18-19).

4:39 *gave orders*: Jesus often shows his authority over evil spirits by giving them orders (see Mark 1:25; 3:12; 9:25).

4:40 *frightened... faith*: Fear and faith are opposites. The disciples do trust Jesus—after all, they expected him to

*The Disciples in Mark* Throughout Mark the disciples fail to understand what Jesus says and does. He must explain the parables to them (Mark 4:13-20, 33-34). They're surprised by his power over the sea (Mark 4:40-41), they don't understand "about the loaves" (Mark 6:52), they deny his predictions of his destiny (Mark 8:32), and they're absent from the empty tomb (Mark 16:1-8). On the other hand, they're involved with Jesus from early in his ministry (Mark 1:16-20), they play an active part in his mission (Mark 6:7-13), and he expects them to continue his witness after his death (Mark 13:9-14). What are we to make of such a mixed review? One popular view is that Mark contrasts these insiders with outsiders—such as women, children, and even a Roman centurion—who appear as more faithful followers. But Mark's picture is even more complex. Mark may include the disciples' flaws to make them seem more real to his audience. Like the original disciples, Mark's audience probably followed Jesus at great personal cost (Mark 10:28-30). But if they see firsthand the power of evil at work in the world, they may still struggle to trust God's coming kingdom. Perhaps Mark offers a realistic glimpse of fallible followers to encourage his audience along the way. After all, despite their faults and fears, the risen Lord promises to go "ahead of you into Galilee" (Mark 16:7).

rescue them (Mark 4:38). But they don't seem to trust that God's power over evil is available to them as well (see Mark 3:15).

4:41 *Who then is this?*: The disciples are surprised by Jesus' power. Although Jesus doesn't seek fame, characters in Mark's story keep calling attention to his remarkable abilities (see Mark 1:27).

5:1-20 See Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39.

5:1 *other side of the lake*: See note on Mark 1:38.

5:2 *the tombs*: Traditions about evil spirits living in tombs were common in Mark's day (see Isa 65:1-7).

5:7 *Son of the Most High God*: This is a typically Gentile name for God in the OT (see Isa 14:14; Dan 3:26; 4:2). The man's request not to be tortured by Jesus is ironic, since the evil spirits have been busy torturing the possessed man (Mark 5:4-5). See note on Mark 1:24.

5:9 *Legion*: a Roman military term for a group of about 6,000 soldiers. Jesus may be outnumbered, but he easily takes command of his opponent(s).

- 4:33 Jn 16:12; JCo 3:2
- 4:34 Lk 24:27; Jn 16:25
- 4:35 Mt 8:18; Mk 8:23; Lk 8:22
- 4:36 Mk 3:9; Mk 4:1
- 4:37 Jon 1:4; Ac 27:14
- 4:38 Ps 22:2; Ps 77:7; Is 40:27; Is 40:28; Is 49:14
- 4:39 Ps 65:7; Ps 89:9; Ps 107:29; Mt 8:26
- 4:40 Mt 14:31; Lk 8:25
- 4:41 Mk 1:27; Mk 5:33; Mk 7:37; Lk 4:36; Lk 8:25
- 5:1 Mt 8:28; Lk 8:26
- 5:2 Mk 1:23
- 5:3 Is 65:4
- 5:4 2Ch 33:11; Jas 3:7
- 5:5 1Ki 18:28
- 5:6 Mt 8:29; Mt 14:33; Mt 28:9; Mt 28:16; Mt 28:18
- 5:7 Mt 4:3; Mt 8:29; Mt 26:63; Mk 1:24; Ac 16:17
- 5:8 Mk 1:25
- 5:9 Mt 26:53; Mk 5:15; Lk 8:30

5:11 Lk 8:32  
 5:13 Mt 8:32  
 5:15 Mk 5:9;  
 Lk 8:35  
 5:17 Mt 8:34;  
 Ac 16:39  
 5:19 Ps 66:16;  
 Mt 8:4; Mk 5:20;  
 Lk 8:35, Lk 8:39  
 5:20 Mt 4:25;  
 Mk 7:31  
 5:21 Mt 9:1;  
 Mk 4:1; Lk 8:40  
 5:22 Mt 9:18;  
 Lk 8:41;  
 Ac 13:15  
 5:23 Mk 6:5,  
 Mk 7:32,  
 Mk 16:18;  
 Lk 4:40,  
 Lk 13:13  
 5:24 Lk 8:45  
 5:25 Lv 15:25,  
 Mt 9:20; Lk 8:43  
 5:26 Jer 8:22  
 5:27 Mt 14:36  
 5:29 Mk 3:10,  
 Mk 5:34  
 5:30 Lk 5:17,  
 Lk 6:19

He responded, "Legion is my name, because we are many." <sup>10</sup>They pleaded with Jesus not to send them out of that region.

<sup>11</sup>A large herd of pigs was feeding on the hillside. <sup>12</sup>"Send us into the pigs!" they begged. "Let us go into the pigs!" <sup>13</sup>Jesus gave them permission, so the unclean spirits left the man and went into the pigs. Then the herd of about two thousand pigs rushed down the cliff into the lake and drowned.

<sup>14</sup>Those who tended the pigs ran away and told the story in the city and in the countryside. People came to see what had happened. <sup>15</sup>They came to Jesus and saw the man who used to be demon-possessed. They saw the very man who had been filled with many demons sitting there fully dressed and completely sane, and they were filled with awe. <sup>16</sup>Those who had actually seen what had happened to the demon-possessed man told the others about the pigs. <sup>17</sup>Then they pleaded with Jesus to leave their region.

<sup>18</sup>While he was climbing into the boat, the one who had been demon-possessed pleaded with Jesus to let him come along as one of his disciples. <sup>19</sup>But Jesus wouldn't allow it. "Go home to your own people," Jesus said, "and tell them what the Lord has done for you and how he has shown you mercy." <sup>20</sup>The man went away and began to proclaim in the Ten Cities all that Jesus had done for him, and everyone was amazed.

### *Jesus heals two people*

<sup>21</sup>Jesus crossed the lake again, and on the other side a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. <sup>22</sup>Jairus, one of the synagogue leaders, came forward. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet <sup>23</sup>and pleaded with him, "My daughter is about to die. Please, come and place your hands on her so that she can be healed and live." <sup>24</sup>So Jesus went with him.

A swarm of people were following Jesus, crowding in on him. <sup>25</sup>A woman was there who had been bleeding for twelve years. <sup>26</sup>She had suffered a lot under the care of many doctors, and had spent everything she had without getting any better. In fact, she had gotten worse. <sup>27</sup>Because she had heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his clothes. <sup>28</sup>She was thinking, If I can just touch his clothes, I'll be healed. <sup>29</sup>Her bleeding stopped immediately, and she sensed in her body that her illness had been healed.

<sup>30</sup>At that very moment, Jesus recognized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?"

<sup>31</sup>His disciples said to him, "Don't you see the crowd pressing against you? Yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'" <sup>32</sup>But Jesus looked around carefully to see who had done it.

5:11 *herd of pigs*: Pigs are unclean according to Jewish Law (Lev 11:7-8; Isa 65:4; 66:17).

5:15 *filled with awe*: or "they feared." The people's response to Jesus' throwing out the demons is the same as the disciples' response to Jesus' power over the wind and sea (see Mark 4:41).

5:17 *pleaded...leave their region*: For these people, evidence of God's power among them is unsettling.

5:19 *your own people*: Jesus sends the man home to share with his neighbors the good news that he is no longer possessed by an evil spirit. *what the Lord has done*: Jesus is probably referring to God, the giver of mercy. This command, then, is consistent with other instances when Jesus discourages attempts to spread the message about his power (see Mark 1:34, 44).

5:20 *Ten Cities*: Sometimes called the Decapolis, this region was to the east of the Jordan River, and many Jews lived there. *all that Jesus had done for him*: Jesus had urged him to go home to report God's merciful deed (Mark 5:19). The man, though, stays and proclaims Jesus' power over the demons.

5:21-43 See Matthew 9:18-26; Luke 8:40-56. Mark surrounds Jesus' encounter with a bleeding woman with a report about Jairus' daughter. The stories share similarities:

Both feature females, and the woman has suffered for the same number of years (12) the child has been alive.

5:22 *synagogue leaders*: Jesus is back on the Jewish side of the lake (see Mark 5:21; see note on Mark 1:38), where a community leader seeks his help. *fell at his feet*: a physical posture of worship or deep respect (see Mark 5:6). A powerful man throws himself at Jesus' mercy.

5:23 *place your hands*: This story recalls those about Elijah (1 Kgs 17:17-24) and Elisha (2 Kgs 4:18-37). See note on Mark 1:31.

5:25-26 The woman's case is a desperate one. She's been bleeding for 12 years, and even expensive doctors haven't healed her. Her bleeding makes her impure by religious standards, so she suffers physically, emotionally, socially, financially, and spiritually.

5:27 *touched his clothes*: The woman disobeys Jewish Law by touching a man while she's bleeding (see Lev 15:19).

5:29-30 Both the woman and Jesus simultaneously feel the healing power exchanged through their physical contact.

5:32 *looked around carefully*: In Mark, seeing is more than physical vision; it's also spiritual insight. Jesus sometimes sees before he heals (see Mark 2:5), but here he gazes at the woman who has already been healed.



<sup>33</sup>The woman, full of fear and trembling, came forward. Knowing what had happened to her, she fell down in front of Jesus and told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup>He responded, "Daughter, your faith has healed you; go in peace, healed from your disease."

<sup>35</sup>While Jesus was still speaking with her, messengers came from the synagogue leader's house, saying to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. Why bother the teacher any longer?"

<sup>36</sup>But Jesus overheard their report and said to the synagogue leader, "Don't be afraid; just keep trusting." <sup>37</sup>He didn't allow anyone to follow him except Peter, James, and John, James' brother. <sup>38</sup>They came to the synagogue leader's house, and he saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup>He went in and said to them, "What's all this commotion and crying about? The child isn't dead. She's only sleeping." <sup>40</sup>They laughed at him, but he threw them all out. Then, taking the child's parents and his disciples with him, he went to the room where the child was. <sup>41</sup>Taking her hand, he said to her, "*Talitha koum*," which means, "Young woman, get up." <sup>42</sup>Suddenly the young woman got up and began to walk around. She was 12 years old. They were shocked! <sup>43</sup>He gave them strict orders that no one should know what had happened. Then he told them to give her something to eat.

### Jesus in his hometown

**6** Jesus left that place and came to his hometown. His disciples followed him. <sup>2</sup>On the Sabbath, he began to teach in the synagogue. Many who heard him were surprised. "Where did this man get all this? What's this wisdom he's been given? What about the powerful acts accomplished through him? <sup>3</sup>Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't he Mary's son and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" They were repulsed by him and fell into sin.

<sup>4</sup>Jesus said to them, "Prophets are honored everywhere except in their own hometowns, among their relatives, and in their own households." <sup>5</sup>He was unable to do any miracles there, except that he placed his hands on a few sick people and healed them. <sup>6</sup>He was appalled by their disbelief.

### Sending out the disciples

Then Jesus traveled through the surrounding villages teaching.

<sup>7</sup>He called for the Twelve and sent them out in pairs. He gave them authority over unclean spirits. <sup>8</sup>He instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a walking stick—no bread, no bags, and no money in their belts. <sup>9</sup>He told them to wear sandals but not to put on two shirts. <sup>10</sup>He said, "Whatever house you enter, remain there until you leave that place.

5:33 Lk 1:12  
5:34 Mt 9:22;  
Mk 10:52;  
Lk 7:50  
5:35 Mk 5:22  
5:36 Mk 9:23;  
Lk 8:50  
5:37 Mt 17:1;  
Mk 9:2;  
Mk 14:33;  
Lk 8:51  
5:38 Mk 5:22  
5:39 Jn 11:1  
5:41 Mk 1:31;  
Lk 7:14  
5:42 Mk 1:27  
5:43 Mt 8:4;  
Mt 9:30;  
Mk 3:12;  
Mk 7:36, Mk 9:9  
6:1 Mt 13:54;  
Lk 4:16  
6:2 Mt 7:28;  
Mk 1:21;  
Mk 1:22  
6:3 Mt 11:6;  
Mt 13:55;  
Ga 1:19  
6:4 Mt 13:57;  
Lk 4:24; Jn 4:44  
6:5 Mk 5:23  
6:6 Mt 9:35;  
Lk 13:22  
6:7 Mt 10:1;  
Mt 10:5; Mt 10:9;  
Mk 3:13; Lk 9:1  
6:8 Mt 10:9;  
Mt 10:10  
6:9 Ac 12:8

5:33 *fear and trembling*: a frequent response among those who witness Jesus' power (see Mark 4:41; 5:15). *fell down*: See note on Mark 3:11.

5:34 *faith*: See note on Mark 5:27. See sidebar, "Faith/Trust" at Mark 11.

5:36 *Don't be afraid; just keep trusting*: Although fear is a father's natural response to his daughter's death (reported in Mark 5:35), Jesus urges Jairus to depend on the possibility of life. See Mark 4:40 and note.

5:37 *Peter, James, and John*: These three disciples make up Jesus' inner circle (see Mark 1:16, 19; 9:2; 14:33).

5:39 *She's only sleeping*: To sleep is to give oneself over to God's care. See note on Mark 4:38.

5:41 "*Talitha koum*": Mark provides Jesus' words in Aramaic (Jesus' native tongue), then translates it for his Greek-speaking audience. See note on Mark 3:17.

5:43 *something to eat*: See Mark 6:37. Sharing a meal not only strengthens people physically but also celebrates the promise of new life in God's kingdom.

6:1-6 See Matthew 13:53-58; Luke 4:16-30.

6:1 *hometown*: Nazareth is a village in Galilee (see Mark 1:24).

6:2 *teach in the synagogue*: See note on Mark 1:21. *surprised*: The people have known Jesus since he was a boy, so it's hard for them to see what he's become. See note on Mark 1:22. *wisdom . . . powerful acts*: Both Jesus' words and deeds are impressive. See note on Mark 1:27.

6:3 *carpenter*: refers to a practiced skill, such as a handcraft. *Mary's son . . . sisters*: See note on Mark 3:32. *repulsed . . . fell into sin*: Since Jesus doesn't fit the people's notions of who he is, they resist his ministry.

6:4 *honored everywhere . . . hometowns*: Jesus identifies himself with rejected prophets (see Mark 12:1-12; cf. Luke 4:24; John 4:44).

6:5 *unable to do any miracles*: Their lack of belief (see Mark 6:6a) limits Jesus' power. On the connection between faith and healing, see Mark 2:5; 5:34.

6:6b-13 See Matthew 10:1, 9-14; 14:1-12; Luke 9:1-10a. Already Jesus has recruited disciples and given them a role in his mission (Mark 1:16-20; 3:13-19). They've stayed with him, and now he sends them out (see Mark 3:14) to reveal God's coming kingdom in word and deed.

6:7 *in pairs*: The disciples go out in groups of two. This may be related to the need for two witnesses required by Jewish tradition (see Deut 17:6; 19:15; Num 35:30). *authority over unclean spirits*: See note on Mark 3:15.

6:8 *nothing for the journey*: Packing light requires trust in God and in others' hospitality. *no bread, no bags, and no money*: Jesus' requirements are even more strict than those of the ancient Roman Cynics, wandering philosophers who rejected material things yet carried the kinds of belongings Jesus tells the disciples to leave behind.

6:11 Mt 10:14  
 6:12 Mk 1:15  
 6:13 Jas 5:14  
 6:14 Mt 14:1,  
 Mt 14:2; Lk 9:7  
 6:15 Mt 16:14,  
 Mt 21:1;  
 Mk 8:28  
 6:16 Mt 14:2;  
 Mk 6:27  
 6:17 Mt 11:2,  
 Mt 14:3; Lk 3:19,  
 Lk 3:20  
 6:18 Lv 18:16;  
 Mt 14:3; Mt 14:4;  
 Mk 6:17  
 6:19 Mt 14:3,  
 Mt 14:6;  
 Mk 6:22; Lk 3:19  
 6:20 Mt 21:26  
 6:21 Gn 40:20;  
 Est 1:3; Est 2:18;  
 Lk 3:1  
 6:22 Mt 14:3,  
 Mt 14:6  
 6:23 Est 5:3,  
 Est 5:6; Est 7:2  
 6:24 Mt 14:8  
 6:25 Mt 14:8  
 6:27 Mk 6:16  
 6:30 Mt 10:2;  
 Lk 9:10; Lk 17:5,  
 Lk 22:14,  
 Lk 24:10  
 6:31 Mk 3:19

"If a place doesn't welcome you or listen to you, as you leave, shake the dust off your feet as a witness against them." <sup>12</sup>So they went out and proclaimed that people should change their hearts and lives. <sup>13</sup>They cast out many demons, and they anointed many sick people with olive oil and healed them.

### Death of John the Baptist

<sup>14</sup>Herod the king heard about these things, because the name of Jesus had become well-known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and this is why miraculous powers are at work through him." <sup>15</sup>Others were saying, "He is Elijah." Still others were saying, "He is a prophet like one of the ancient prophets." <sup>16</sup>But when Herod heard these rumors, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised to life."

<sup>17</sup>He said this because Herod himself had arranged to have John arrested and put in prison because of Herodias, the wife of Herod's brother Philip. Herod had married her, <sup>18</sup>but John told Herod, "It's against the law for you to marry your brother's wife!" <sup>19</sup>So Herodias had it in for John. She wanted to kill him, but she couldn't. <sup>20</sup>This was because Herod respected John. He regarded him as a righteous and holy person, so he protected him. John's words greatly confused Herod, yet he enjoyed listening to him.

<sup>21</sup>Finally, the time was right. It was on one of Herod's birthdays, when he had prepared a feast for his high-ranking officials and military officers and Galilee's leading residents.

<sup>22</sup>Herod's daughter Herodias<sup>f</sup> came in and danced, thrilling Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the young woman, "Ask me whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." <sup>23</sup>Then he swore to her, "Whatever you ask I will give to you, even as much as half of my kingdom."

<sup>24</sup>She left the banquet hall and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?"

"John the Baptist's head," Herodias replied.

<sup>25</sup>Hurrying back to the ruler, she made her request: "I want you to give me John the Baptist's head on a plate, right this minute." <sup>26</sup>Although the king was upset, because of his solemn pledge and his guests, he didn't want to refuse her. <sup>27</sup>So he ordered a guard to bring John's head. The guard went to the prison, cut off John's head, <sup>28</sup>brought his head on a plate, and gave it to the young woman, and she gave it to her mother. <sup>29</sup>When John's disciples heard what had happened, they came and took his dead body and laid it in a tomb.

### Jesus feeds five thousand people

<sup>30</sup>The apostles returned to Jesus and told him everything they had done and taught.

<sup>31</sup>Many people were coming and going, so there was no time to eat. He said to the apostles,

<sup>f</sup>Or the daughter of Herodias herself; Gk uncertain

6:11 *shake the dust off your feet*: The gesture symbolizes a broken relationship (see Neh 5:13; Acts 18:6). Jesus makes it clear the mission won't be entirely successful (see Mark 4:11-12). *witness against them*: refers to the coming judgment associated with God's kingdom.

6:12-13 This summary of the missionary journey describes the apostles' actions in terms that recall Jesus' own mission. *proclaimed... hearts and lives*: See Mark 1:15; 3:14. *cast out... healed them*: See Mark 1:34; 3:15.

6:14-29 See Matthew 14:1-12; Luke 9:7-9. This story about John the Baptist's death is chronologically out of place (for John's arrest, see Mark 1:14). It fits here, though, for three reasons: (1) it shows that Jesus' reputation is spreading even among the powerful; (2) it contrasts the banquet of an earthly king with God's banquet in the wilderness (Mark 6:30-44); and (3) it reveals the hostility that people who proclaim God's kingdom may attract. If this is what happened to John, what will happen to Jesus? What will happen to Jesus' disciples?

6:14 *Herod the king*: Herod wasn't technically a king. Mark uses the term to draw a contrast between Herod's rule and God's rule. See notes on Mark 3:6; 6:14-29.

6:15 *Elijah*: See note on Mark 1:6.

6:16 *raised to life*: Jews who awaited God's kingdom expected it to bring the resurrection of the dead. In the 1st century the Pharisees were known for their belief in the resurrection (cf. Mark 12:18).

6:17-18 Herod's rule was authorized by Rome, but he was also a Galilean who was subject to Jewish Law. His marriage to his brother's wife (while his brother was alive) went against Leviticus 18:16; 20:21. As a prophet who was calling people to live holy lives, John would have spoken freely against Herod for his disobedience.

6:20 *righteous and holy person*: Herod recognizes John's religious integrity.

6:21-28 Mark portrays Herod as a weak ruler who falls victim to his wife's determination to kill John (see Mark 6:19).

6:23 *I will give it to you*: See Mark 6:28. Herod's plan to share his power leads to a horrible death. God's plan brings health and life (see Mark 6:7, 37, 41).

6:30-44 See Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13. The miraculous feeding story recalls Israel's wilderness story and anticipates the abundance of God's kingdom (see Isa 49:10; 55:1; 58:7).

6:31-32 *secluded place... deserted place*: Both of these terms refer to a wilderness. See note on Mark 1:3.

“Come by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while.”<sup>32</sup> They departed in a boat by themselves for a deserted place.

<sup>33</sup> Many people saw them leaving and recognized them, so they ran ahead from all the cities and arrived before them. <sup>34</sup> When Jesus arrived and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then he began to teach them many things.

<sup>35</sup> Late in the day, his disciples came to him and said, “This is an isolated place, and it’s already late in the day. <sup>36</sup> Send them away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy something to eat for themselves.”

<sup>37</sup> He replied, “You give them something to eat.”

But they said to him, “Should we go off and buy bread worth almost eight months’ pay<sup>8</sup> and give it to them to eat?”

<sup>38</sup> He said to them, “How much bread do you have? Take a look.”

After checking, they said, “Five loaves of bread and two fish.”

<sup>39</sup> He directed the disciples to seat all the people in groups as though they were having a banquet on the green grass. <sup>40</sup> They sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. <sup>41</sup> He took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed them, broke the loaves into pieces, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup> Everyone ate until they were full. <sup>43</sup> They filled twelve baskets with the leftover pieces of bread and fish. <sup>44</sup> About five thousand had eaten.

### Jesus walks on water

<sup>45</sup> Right then, Jesus made his disciples get into a boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake, toward Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>46</sup> After saying good-bye to them, Jesus went up onto a mountain to pray. <sup>47</sup> Evening came and the boat was in the middle of the lake, but he was alone on the land. <sup>48</sup> He saw his disciples struggling. They were trying to row forward, but the wind was blowing against them. Very early in the morning, he came to them, walking on the lake. He intended to pass by them. <sup>49</sup> When they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost and they screamed. <sup>50</sup> Seeing him was terrifying to all of them. Just then he spoke to them, “Be encouraged! It’s me. Don’t be afraid.” <sup>51</sup> He got into the boat, and the wind settled down. His disciples were so baffled they were beside themselves. <sup>52</sup> That’s because they hadn’t understood about the loaves. Their hearts had been changed so that they resisted God’s ways.

<sup>8</sup>Or two hundred denaria; a denarius was a typical day’s wage.

6:34 *sheep without a shepherd*: See Numbers 27:15-17. *teach them many things*: Jesus addresses the crowd’s spiritual hunger by instructing them about God’s coming kingdom (see Mark 4:1-34).

6:37 *“You give them something to eat”*: The Greek emphasizes that the disciples should feed the crowd. Jesus’ command doesn’t seem very practical to them (see 2 Kgs 4:42-44). See note on Mark 6:23. *almost eight months’ pay*: or “200 denarii.” Hired workers earned about one denarius per day.

6:39 *as though they were having a banquet*: Mark portrays the meal in the wilderness as though it were a formal celebration with invited guests (cf. Mark 6:14-29).

6:40 *hundreds and fifties*: See Exodus 18:21, 25.

6:41 *took... blessed... broke... gave*: Jesus handles the bread as if he’s at a traditional Jewish meal. *gave... people*: See notes on Mark 6:23, 37. Jesus’ disciples work with him as agents of God’s miraculous feeding power.

6:44 *five thousand*: The Greek text counts 5,000 men. Since women and children were also present, the size of the crowd here was much larger.

6:45-52 See Matthew 14:22-33; John 6:15-21. Jesus and his disciples cross the Sea of Galilee frequently in Mark.

This is the second story that happens there (see Mark 4:35-41; 8:14-21).

6:45 *go ahead*: Often in Mark, Jesus goes ahead of his disciples (Mark 14:28; 16:7), but here they go ahead of him. *the other side*: See note on Mark 1:38. *Bethsaida*: located on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

6:46 *up onto a mountain*: See note on 3:13. *to pray*: Prayer is a key weapon in Jesus’ battle against evil (see Mark 9:29). *6:48 struggling*: The disciples fight against the wind and the sea, which represent evil in ancient thought. See note on Mark 4:35. *He intended to pass by them*: Jesus probably plans to reveal himself in order to encourage his disciples, not taunt them. God passed by both Moses (Exod 33:12-23) and Elijah (1 Kgs 19) in desperate moments as a way of strengthening them for what lay ahead.

6:50 *It’s me*: Jesus seems to identify himself with the divine name I Am (see Exod 3:13-15; Isa 41:4; 43:10-11). *Don’t be afraid*: See Mark 5:36. Fear is a natural human response, but Jesus encourages faith.

6:52 *they hadn’t understood about the loaves*: The disciples are both fearful and confused about what’s happened (see Mark 6:50, 51). Mark explains their response by linking it to the feeding story (Mark 6:30-44). What they

6:32 Mt 14:13;  
Mk 6:45; Lk 9:10  
6:33 Mk 3:20,  
Mk 6:54,  
Mk 6:55; Jn 6:2  
6:34 Mt 9:36  
6:35 Mt 14:15;  
Lk 9:12; Jn 6:5  
6:36 Mt 15:23  
6:37 2Kj 4:42;  
Jn 6:7  
6:38 Mt 15:34;  
Mk 8:5  
6:41 Mt 14:19;  
Mk 14:22  
6:45 Mt 11:21,  
Mt 14:22;  
Mk 6:32,  
Mk 8:22; Jn 6:15  
6:48 Ex 14:24;  
Isa 11:11;  
Job 9:8;  
Mt 14:25;  
Lk 24:28  
6:49 Mt 14:25,  
Mt 14:26,  
Lk 24:37  
6:50 Is 43:2;  
Mt 14:27  
6:51 Mk 4:39  
6:52 Mk 3:5,  
Mk 8:17,  
Mk 16:14

5:4, Mk 14:34,  
 Jn 6:24, Jn 6:25  
 6:15, Mk 14:24  
 7:10, Mt 9:20  
 Mk 3:10,  
 Lk 6:19, Ac 5:15  
 7:1, Mt 15:1  
 7:7, Mt 15:2,  
 Lk 11:38,  
 Ac 10:14,  
 Ac 10:28,  
 Ro 14:14

7:1, Mt 15:2,  
 Mk 7:5, Mk 7:13,  
 Ga 1:14, Col 2:9  
 Mt 23:25  
 Lk 11:39,  
 Heb 9:10  
 Mk 7:3  
 Ga 1:14

### Healings at Gennesaret

<sup>53</sup>When Jesus and his disciples had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret, anchored the boat, <sup>54</sup>and came ashore. People immediately recognized Jesus <sup>55</sup>and ran around that whole region bringing sick people on their mats to wherever they heard he was. <sup>56</sup>Wherever he went—villages, cities, or farming communities—they would place the sick in the marketplace and beg him to allow them to touch even the hem of his clothing. Everyone who touched him was healed.

### What contaminates a life?

**7**The Pharisees and some legal experts from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus. <sup>2</sup>They saw some of his disciples eating food with unclean hands. (They were eating without first ritually purifying their hands through washing. <sup>3</sup>The Pharisees and all the Jews don't eat without first washing their hands carefully. This is a way of observing the rules handed down by the elders. <sup>4</sup>Upon returning from the marketplace, they don't eat without first immersing themselves. They observe many other rules that have been handed down, such as the washing of cups, jugs, pans, and sleeping mats.) <sup>5</sup>So the Pharisees and legal experts asked Jesus,



The Sea of Galilee

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misunderstood about the loaves, though, is unclear. Perhaps they didn't recognize Jesus' divine power (see Mark 4:40-41; Luke 24:30-31). They also may have forgotten that they share that power (Mark 3:14-15; 6:7, 13, 41). Their hearts . . . God's ways: or "Their hearts were hardened." This is ironic, because the expression normally applies to outsiders. See note on Mark 3:5.

6:53-57 See Matthew 14:34-36. Mark gives another summary report of Jesus' ministry around the Sea of Galilee.

6:53 *Gennesaret*: located on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee. Gennesaret is in a different direction from Bethsaida, the group's original destination (see Mark 6:45).

6:56 *hem of his clothing*: See note on Mark 5:27.

7:1-23 See Matthew 15:1-20. This is the second set of stories in which Jesus comes into conflict with Jewish leaders (see note on Mark 2:1-3:6).

7:1 *from Jerusalem*: See note on Mark 1:22, where legal experts came from Jerusalem to oppose Jesus. The story hints at Jesus' destiny, since his ministry takes him to Jerusalem, where he dies.

7:2 *eating food*: or "eating the loaves" (see Mark 6:38, 41). *unclean hands*: See Leviticus 15:11. Jesus' opponents focus on religious purity (see note on Mark 2:16).

7:2b-4 Mark explains to his audience the Jewish practices of becoming ritually pure. This suggests his audience includes people who aren't Jewish.

7:3 *rules handed down by the elders*: The Pharisees thought the authority of the written Law (Instruction) applied equally to its oral interpretation by the elders. These rules were handed down through instruction by the rabbis. Paul uses similar language to describe the handing down of early Christian tradition (see 1 Cor 11:23).

"Why are your disciples not living according to the rules handed down by the elders but instead eat food with ritually unclean hands?"

<sup>6</sup>He replied, "Isaiah really knew what he was talking about when he prophesied about you hypocrites. He wrote,

*This people honors me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far away from me.*

<sup>7</sup>*Their worship of me is empty  
since they teach instructions that are human words.*<sup>b</sup>

<sup>8</sup>You ignore God's commandment while holding on to rules created by humans and handed down to you." <sup>9</sup>Jesus continued, "Clearly, you are experts at rejecting God's commandment in order to establish these rules. <sup>10</sup>Moses said, *Honor your father and your mother,*<sup>1</sup> and *The person who speaks against father or mother will certainly be put to death.*<sup>1</sup> <sup>11</sup>But you say, 'If you tell your father or mother, "Everything I'm expected to contribute to you is *corban* (that is, a gift I'm giving to God)," <sup>12</sup>then you are no longer required to care for your father or mother.' <sup>13</sup>In this way you do away with God's word in favor of the rules handed down to you, which you pass on to others. And you do a lot of other things just like that."

<sup>14</sup>Then Jesus called the crowd again and said, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand.

<sup>15</sup>Nothing outside of a person can enter and contaminate a person in God's sight; rather, the things that come out of a person contaminate the person."<sup>k</sup>

<sup>17</sup>After leaving the crowd, he entered a house where his disciples asked him about that riddle. <sup>18</sup>He said to them, "Don't you understand either? Don't you know that nothing from the outside that enters a person has the power to contaminate? <sup>19</sup>That's because it doesn't enter into the heart but into the stomach, and it goes out into the sewer." By saying this, Jesus declared that no food could contaminate a person in God's sight. <sup>20</sup>"It's what comes out of a person that contaminates someone in God's sight," he said. <sup>21</sup>"It's from the inside, from the human heart, that evil thoughts come: sexual sins, thefts, murders, <sup>22</sup>adultery, greed, evil actions, deceit, unrestrained immorality, envy, insults, arrogance, and foolishness. <sup>23</sup>All these evil things come from the inside and contaminate a person in God's sight."

### **An immigrant's daughter is delivered**

<sup>24</sup>Jesus left that place and went into the region of Tyre. He didn't want anyone to know that he had entered a house, but he couldn't hide. <sup>25</sup>In fact, a woman whose young daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit heard about him right away. She came and fell at his feet.

<sup>26</sup>The woman was Greek, Syrophenician by birth. She begged Jesus to throw the demon out

<sup>b</sup>Isa 29:13 <sup>1</sup>Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16 <sup>1</sup>Exod 21:17; Lev 20:9 <sup>k</sup>7:16 is omitted in most critical editions of the Gk New Testament *Whoever has ears to listen should pay attention!*

7:6-7 See Isaiah 29:13. OT prophets often criticized superficial worship (see Jer 7:3-7; Amos 5:21-24).

7:8 *rules created by humans:* Jesus contrasts the rabbis' interpretation of the Law with *God's commandment*, or the written Law.

7:10 *Honor... death:* See Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9. Jesus quotes both the commandment to honor parents and the legal price for breaking it.

7:11 *corban... to God:* The term "corban" refers to an offering presented to God. Mark's explanation of Jewish practice again suggests some in his audience are unfamiliar with it (see Mark 7:2b-4).

7:13 *do away with:* or "invalidate." *God's word:* The reference here is to the written Law, the first five books of the OT. When human rules serve as loopholes in the Law, they make the Law null and void.

7:15 *Nothing outside... contaminate:* Jesus returns to the question of purity.

7:17 *entered a house:* Jesus moves from a public to a private setting, where his disciples seek an explanation (see Mark 4:10-12, 20-34).

7:18 *Don't you understand either?:* See Mark 4:13; 6:52. See sidebar, "The Disciples in Mark" at Mark 5.

7:19 *heart:* In ancient thought, moral decisions came from the heart. Jesus points out that true purity has to do with one's attitude and actions, not one's diet. *By saying this... God's sight:* Mark applies Jesus' saying to the rules about food found in the Law (Lev 11:1-47). Early Christian communities like Mark's wrestled with the ongoing importance of these laws (see Acts 10:9-16; Gal 2:11-14).

7:21-22 Lists of sins like this one were common in ancient Judaism and the Greco-Roman world. As in 7:19, Jesus emphasizes the heart as the source of these sinful practices.

7:24-30 See Matthew 15:21-28.

7:24 *Tyre:* located to the northwest of Galilee, on the Mediterranean Sea. Jesus is again in Gentile territory (see Mark 3:8).

7:25 *fell at his feet:* See note on Mark 5:22.

7:26 *Greek, Syrophenician by birth:* Jesus talks with a Gentile woman. She's an outsider both as a woman and as a Gentile.

7:6 Is 29:13

7:8 Mk 7:3

7:9 Mk 7:13

7:10 Ex 20:12,

Ex 21:17;

Lev 20:9; Dt 5:16

7:11 Mt 15:5,

Mt 23:18

7:13 Jer 8:9;

Mk 7:9

7:15 Ac 10:14

7:17 Mt 13:36,

Mt 15:15;

Mk 9:28

7:18 Mt 16:11;

Lk 24:25

7:19 Lk 11:41;

Ac 10:15

7:21 Gn 6:5,

Gn 8:21;

Ex 20:13,

Ex 28:17;

Job 14:4

7:22 Mt 20:15;

Ro 1:29; Ga 5:19

7:24 Gn 10:19;

Mt 11:21,

Mt 15:21;

Mk 6:31

7:25 Mt 15:22;

Mk 5:22

7:26 Mt 15:22;

Ac 21:3;

1Co 12:13

7:27 Mt 7:6,  
Mt 8:5, Mt 9:28,  
Mt 10:5,  
Mt 15:21  
7:31 Mt 4:18,  
Mt 4:25,  
Mt 15:29,  
Mk 5:20,  
Mk 7:24

7:32 Mk 5:23

7:33 Mk 8:23

7:34 Mk 6:41,

Mk 8:12;

Jn 11:33,

Jn 11:41

7:35 Is 35:5,

Is 35:6

7:36 Mt 8:4;

Mk 1:45

7:37 Mt 15:31;

Mk 2:12

8:1 Mt 15:32

8:6 1Sa 9:13;

Jn 6:11, Jn 6:23;

Ac 27:35;

Ro 14:6

8:10 Mt 15:39

of her daughter. <sup>27</sup>He responded, "The children have to be fed first. It isn't right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

<sup>28</sup>But she answered, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

<sup>29</sup>"Good answer!" he said. "Go on home. The demon has already left your daughter."

<sup>30</sup>When she returned to her house, she found the child lying on the bed and the demon gone.

### **A deaf man is healed**

<sup>31</sup>After leaving the region of Tyre, Jesus went through Sidon toward the Galilee Sea through the region of the Ten Cities. <sup>32</sup>Some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly speak, and they begged him to place his hand on the man for healing. <sup>33</sup>Jesus took him away from the crowd by himself and put his fingers in the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. <sup>34</sup>Looking into heaven, Jesus sighed deeply and said, "Ephphatha," which means, "Open up." <sup>35</sup>At once, his ears opened, his twisted tongue was released, and he began to speak clearly.

<sup>36</sup>Jesus gave the people strict orders not to tell anyone. But the more he tried to silence them, the more eagerly they shared the news. <sup>37</sup>The people were overcome with wonder, saying, "He does everything well! He even makes the deaf to hear and gives speech to those who can't speak."

### **Jesus feeds four thousand people**

**I**n those days there was another large crowd with nothing to eat. Jesus called his disciples and told them, <sup>21</sup>"I feel sorry for the crowd because they have been with me for three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>22</sup>If I send them away hungry to their homes, they won't have enough strength to travel, for some have come a long distance."

<sup>4</sup>His disciples responded, "How can anyone get enough food in this wilderness to satisfy these people?"

<sup>5</sup>Jesus asked, "How much bread do you have?"

They said, "Seven loaves."

<sup>6</sup>He told the crowd to sit on the ground. He took the seven loaves, gave thanks, broke them apart, and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they gave the bread to the crowd. <sup>7</sup>They also had a few fish. He said a blessing over them, then gave them to the disciples to hand out also. <sup>8</sup>They ate until they were full. They collected seven baskets full of leftovers. <sup>9</sup>This was a crowd of about four thousand people! Jesus sent them away, <sup>10</sup>then got into a boat with his disciples and went over to the region of Dalmanutha.

7:27 *children's bread... dogs*: Jesus' response reflects his understanding of his mission as being directed to the Jews first. The OT sometimes uses "dogs" as an insulting term for Gentiles (see 1 Sam 17:43; 24:14).

7:28 *even the dogs... crumbs*: The woman cleverly takes Jesus' insult as a reason for him to help her daughter.

7:29 *demon has already left*: The act of freeing the woman's daughter from the demon doesn't require Jesus' presence (see Mark 5:39).

7:31-37 See Matthew 15:29-31.

7:31 The route isn't a direct one. Together, Tyre and Sidon were used to refer to the Gentile territory on the Mediterranean coast northwest of the Sea of Galilee (see Mark 3:8). The Ten Cities (also called "Decapolis") mark a region to the southeast of the Sea of Galilee (see Mark 5:20 and map 17).

7:33 *fingers in the man's ears... spit... touched the man's tongue*: Mark emphasizes physical details of the healing. See note on Mark 1:31; 8:23.

7:34 "Ephphatha... Open up": Mark translates the Aramaic command for his Greek-speaking audience. See note on Mark 3:17.

7:36 *strict orders not to tell anyone*: See sidebar, "Secrecy" at Mark 8, *shared the news*: or "announced" (see Mark 1:14, 45;

3:14). In Mark the message connects Jesus' amazing powers with God's coming kingdom.

7:37 *overcome with wonder*: See note on Mark 1:22. *deaf... speak*: Jesus' miracles reflect the power of God's kingdom (see Isa 35:5-6).

8:1-10 See Matthew 15:32-39. Compare with the earlier feeding miracle in Mark 6:30-44. This time Jesus and his disciples provide for a group of Gentiles (see Mark 7:31).

8:2 *nothing to eat*: Jesus focuses on the crowd's physical hunger (cf. Mark 6:34).

8:3 *If I send them away*: Jesus explains why it won't work to send them away, which his disciples had recommended doing in the first feeding story (Mark 6:36).

8:4 *wilderness*: The disciples act as though they've learned nothing from the earlier feeding miracle or from Jewish traditions about food in the wilderness (see Exod 16:1-36). See notes on Mark 1:3; 6:30-44.

8:5 "Seven loaves": Compare with Mark 6:38.

8:7 *gave them to the disciples to hand out also*: The disciples distribute fish as well as bread (cf. Mark 6:41).

8:8 *seven baskets*: The number of baskets equals the number of loaves in Mark 8:5.

8:10 *Dalmanutha*: an otherwise unknown region. Mark

**Looking for proof**

<sup>11</sup>The Pharisees showed up and began to argue with Jesus. To test him, they asked for a sign from heaven. <sup>12</sup>With an impatient sigh, Jesus said, "Why does this generation look for a sign? I assure you that no sign will be given to it." <sup>13</sup>Leaving them, he got back in the boat and crossed to the other side of the lake.

**Understanding about the bread**

<sup>14</sup>Jesus' disciples had forgotten to bring any bread, so they had only one loaf with them in the boat. <sup>15</sup>He gave them strict orders: "Watch out and be on your guard for the yeast of the Pharisees as well as the yeast of Herod."

<sup>16</sup>The disciples discussed this among themselves, "He said this because we have no bread."

<sup>17</sup>Jesus knew what they were discussing and said, "Why are you talking about the fact that you don't have any bread? Don't you grasp what has happened? Don't you understand? Are your hearts so resistant to what God is doing? <sup>18</sup>Don't you have eyes? Why can't you see? Don't you have ears? Why can't you hear? Don't you remember? <sup>19</sup>When I broke five loaves of bread for those five thousand people, how many baskets full of leftovers did you gather?"

They answered, "Twelve."

<sup>20</sup>"And when I broke seven loaves of bread for those four thousand people, how many baskets full of leftovers did you gather?"

They answered, "Seven."

<sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them, "And you still don't understand?"

**A blind man is healed**

<sup>22</sup>Jesus and his disciples came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged him to touch and heal him. <sup>23</sup>Taking the blind man's hand, Jesus led him out of the village. After spitting on his eyes and laying his hands on the man, he asked him, "Do you see anything?"

**Secrecy** In Mark, Jesus frequently orders people and spirits not to tell others about his miracles. He also calls the message about God's kingdom a "secret," or mystery, that's revealed to only a few (Mark 4:10-12). And he specifically charges his disciples not to tell anyone about him (Mark 8:30). In all these ways, according to Mark, Jesus works to contain the word of his ministry. It's probably best to understand the theme of secrecy in light of Jesus' aims. He may have avoided public recognition for his miracle-working because he didn't want to be associated with other, fame-seeking healers of the day. He may have resisted the political hopes many attached to the title "Christ." His identity and mission as the Christ is a secret partly because God's kingdom is still hidden from view. From Mark's perspective, Jesus' status as Christ remains a mystery to some but only until God's kingdom arrives.

seems to suggest it's somewhere between the Ten Cities and Bethsaida.

8:11-13 See Matthew 16:1-4; Luke 11:29-32. The Pharisees return to the story, this time to test Jesus.

8:11 *sign from heaven*: God's presence is often confirmed by signs in the OT (e.g., Gen 9:12, 13, 17; Exod 3:12; 4:28, 30).  
8:12 *this generation*: refers to those who belong to the present evil age, rather than to the coming age of God's reign (see Mark 8:38; 9:19; 13:30). *sign*: The Pharisees can't see signs because they don't belong to God's coming kingdom (see Mark 4:12).

8:14-21 See Matthew 16:5-12; Luke 12:1; John 6:32-36. The disciples again share a boat with Jesus, and again he confuses and bewilders them (see Mark 4:35-41).

8:14 *one loaf*: Mark connects the story to the feeding that's just occurred (Mark 8:1-10).

8:15 *yeast of the Pharisees... Herod*: The yeast metaphor illustrates the corrupting power of religious and political authorities (see Mark 8:11-13; 6:14-29; 1 Cor 5:6). See note on Mark 3:6.

8:16 *no bread*: See Mark 8:14. The disciples miss Jesus' point and exaggerate their lack of food.

8:17-18 Jesus speaks to his own followers in harsh terms. In this series of questions, he returns to earlier charges against the disciples (Mark 4:13; 6:52) and compares them to the Pharisees (see Mark 3:5) and to outsiders (Mark 4:11-12).

8:19-20 *baskets full of leftovers*: The disciples are focused on the shortage (see Mark 8:16), but Jesus emphasizes the surplus.

8:21 *still don't understand*: The disciples have answered Jesus' questions correctly, but they don't grasp his point. Where they see a shortfall, God's coming kingdom is known for its abundance.

8:22-26 See John 9:1-7. This story serves as a turning point in Mark. On one level, it seems to imply that even the disciples' blindness (see Mark 8:18) is only temporary. On another level, it shows that clear vision may come in stages and include a time when the world doesn't look quite right.

8:22 *Bethsaida*: See note on Mark 6:45.

8:23 *out of the village*: Jesus removes himself from the public eye (see Mark 5:37). He isn't like those miracle workers who seek fame.

8:11 Mt 12:38;  
Mt 16:4;  
Lk 11:16; Jn 4:48  
8:12 Mk 7:34;  
Jn 11:33  
8:15 Mt 14:1;  
Mt 16:6; Lk 12:1  
8:17 Mk 6:52  
8:18 Jer 5:21;  
Eze 12:2;  
Mk 4:12  
8:19 Mk 6:41  
8:20 Mk 8:6  
8:21 Mk 6:52  
8:22 Mt 9:27;  
Mt 11:21;  
Mk 6:45;  
Mk 10:46; Jn 9:1  
8:23 Mk 5:23;  
Mk 7:33; Jn 9:6

8:26 Mt 8:4;

Mk 8:23

8:27 Mt 16:13;

Lk 9:18

8:28 Mk 6:14;

Lk 9:7

8:29 Jn 6:69;

Jn 11:27

8:30 Mt 8:4;

Mt 16:20;

Mk 9:9; Lk 9:21

8:31 Mt 16:21;

Mk 9:31;

Mk 10:34;

Lk 9:22

8:32 Mt 16:22;

Jn 16:25

8:33 Mt 4:10;

Mt 16:23

8:34 Mt 10:38;

Lk 14:27

8:35 Mt 10:39;

Lk 17:33;

Jn 12:25

8:36 Mt 16:26;

Lk 12:20

8:37 Ps 49:7;

Ps 49:8

8:38 Mt 10:33;

Mt 16:27;

Mt 25:31;

Lk 12:9; Ro 1:16

9:1 Mt 16:28;

Mt 25:31;

Mk 13:30;

Lk 9:27

<sup>24</sup>The man looked up and said, "I see people. They look like trees, only they are walking around."

<sup>25</sup>Then Jesus placed his hands on the man's eyes again. He looked with his eyes wide open, his sight was restored, and he could see everything clearly. <sup>26</sup>Then Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village!"

### Jesus predicts his death

<sup>27</sup>Jesus and his disciples went into the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?"

<sup>28</sup>They told him, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others one of the prophets."

<sup>29</sup>He asked them, "And what about you? Who do you say that I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Christ." <sup>30</sup>Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: "The Human One<sup>1</sup> must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and the legal experts, and be killed, and then, after three days, rise from the dead." <sup>32</sup>He said this plainly. But Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him. <sup>33</sup>Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, then sternly corrected Peter: "Get behind me, Satan. You are not thinking God's thoughts but human thoughts."

<sup>34</sup>After calling the crowd together with his disciples, Jesus said to them, "All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. <sup>35</sup>All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me and because of the good news will save them. <sup>36</sup>Why would people gain the whole world but lose their lives?

<sup>37</sup>What will people give in exchange for their lives? <sup>38</sup>Whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this unfaithful and sinful generation, the Human One<sup>m</sup> will be ashamed of that person when he comes in the Father's glory with the holy angels." <sup>1</sup>Jesus continued, "I assure you that some standing here won't die before they see God's kingdom arrive in power."

<sup>1</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>m</sup>Or Son of Man

**8:24** This story is unique in the NT in that the healing happens in two stages. Mark's account, however, has an important, symbolic significance as well: Clarity about Jesus' mission comes only after confusion. Mark's account even includes the strange idea of a Christ who suffers (see Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34).

**8:25 eyes ... clearly:** Mark uses repetition to emphasize the man's restored vision (see Mark 7:33).

**8:26 the village:** Jesus continues to avoid popular recognition (see Mark 1:44-45; 5:43; 7:24, 36; 8:23).

**8:27-9:1** See Matthew 16:21-28; Luke 9:22-27. Jesus predicts his own death and resurrection for the first time in Mark. Just as his suffering is inseparable from his role as the Christ (see Mark 1:1), so his followers' lives, too, will be defined by self-sacrifice.

**8:27 Caesarea Philippi:** Located some 30 miles north of Bethsaida, this was the site of a temple built by Herod the Great and dedicated to Caesar Augustus.

**8:29 Christ:** or "the anointed one" (see Mark 1:1). This term carried a range of meanings among 1st-century Jews. In the OT it usually refers to human religious and/or political leaders. Other texts from this period affirm the role of the anointed one in revealing God's reign on the earth.

**8:30 ordered them not to tell anyone:** See Mark 1:25; 3:12; 4:39; 9:25; 10:34. See sidebar, "Secrecy."

**8:31 Human One:** Jesus refers to himself as the one who goes before the new humanity that will live in God's coming kingdom. See notes on Mark 2:10, 28. See sidebar, "The

Human One in Mark" at Mark 14. *elders, chief priests, and the legal experts:* These Jewish authorities together form the Sanhedrin, the ruling council in Jerusalem.

**8:32 plainly:** Jesus freely announces the outcome of his mission as the Christ (cf. Mark 8:30).

**8:33 Satan:** See Mark 1:13; 3:22-27. By calling out Satan, Jesus exposes an evil force behind Peter's response. The problem is that Peter denies that Jesus' mission as the Christ includes suffering. He isn't thinking from God's point of view. See note on Mark 4:15.

**8:34 say no ... follow me:** Jesus defines discipleship in terms of self-denial and suffering. Like Jesus, his followers actively choose their destiny; they aren't passive victims.

**8:35 because of me and because of the good news:** Jesus' followers *lose their lives* because they have learned from him the pattern of self-sacrifice that reflects God's kingdom. Notice Jesus' distinction between himself and the good news. While Jesus proclaims and demonstrates God's good news, Mark doesn't equate it with Jesus' identity, strictly speaking (see also Mark 10:29).

**8:38 ashamed:** Jesus' call for self-sacrifice would have been humiliating to ancient hearers, since he's urging voluntary weakness in a culture that avoids it. *comes in the Father's glory:* probably a reference to Daniel 7:13-14. As God's kingdom arrives on earth, the Human One will practice judgment according to divine, not human, standards. **9:1 God's kingdom:** See Mark 1:15. Jesus says God's kingdom will soon be revealed on earth (cf. Mark 13:32).



### Jesus transformed

<sup>2</sup>Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and brought them to the top of a very high mountain where they were alone. He was transformed in front of them, <sup>3</sup>and his clothes were amazingly bright, brighter than if they had been bleached white. <sup>4</sup>Elijah and Moses appeared and were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Peter reacted to all of this by saying to Jesus, “Rabbi, it’s good that we’re here. Let’s make three shrines—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” <sup>6</sup>He said this because he didn’t know how to respond, for the three of them were terrified.

<sup>7</sup>Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice spoke from the cloud, “This is my Son, whom I dearly love. Listen to him!” <sup>8</sup>Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

<sup>9</sup>As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after the Human One<sup>a</sup> had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup>So they kept it to themselves, wondering, “What’s this ‘rising from the dead’?” <sup>11</sup>They asked Jesus, “Why do the legal experts say that Elijah must come first?”

<sup>12</sup>He answered, “Elijah does come first to restore all things. Why was it written that the Human One<sup>a</sup> would suffer many things and be rejected? <sup>13</sup>In fact, I tell you that Elijah has come, but they did to him whatever they wanted, just as it was written about him.”

### A demon-possessed boy

<sup>14</sup>When Jesus, Peter, James, and John approached the other disciples, they saw a large crowd surrounding them and legal experts arguing with them. <sup>15</sup>Suddenly the whole crowd caught sight of Jesus. They ran to greet him, overcome with excitement. <sup>16</sup>Jesus asked them, “What are you arguing about?”

<sup>17</sup>Someone from the crowd responded, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, since he has a spirit that doesn’t allow him to speak. <sup>18</sup>Wherever it overpowers him, it throws him into a fit. He foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and stiffens up. So I spoke to your disciples to see if they could throw it out, but they couldn’t.”

<sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, “You faithless generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I put up with you? Bring him to me.”

<sup>20</sup>They brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a fit. He fell on the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. <sup>21</sup>Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been going on?”

He said, “Since he was a child. <sup>22</sup>It has often thrown him into a fire or into water trying to kill him. If you can do anything, help us! Show us compassion!”

<sup>23</sup>Jesus said to him, “If you can do anything? All things are possible for the one who has faith.”

<sup>a</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>b</sup>Or Son of Man

9:2-13 See Matthew 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36.

9:2 *Peter, James, and John*: See note on Mark 5:37. *very high mountain*: See note on Mark 3:13. *transformed*: or “changed in form.” The word indicates Jesus’ divine status (see Mark 9:7).

9:4 *Elijah and Moses*: Jewish tradition expected one or both of these OT figures to return to earth at the arrival of God’s kingdom. See note on Mark 1:6.

9:5 *three shrines*: Peter intends to build dwelling places for God’s special agents. In the OT, before the temple was built, God lived in a shrine (see Exod 25:9; 2 Sam 7:2, 6).

9:7 *my Son, whom I dearly love*: Here the voice speaks to Jesus’ disciples. See note on Mark 1:11. *Listen to him!*: Jesus is the prophet who was to come (see Deut 18:15). See note on Mark 4:3.

9:10 *“rising from the dead”*: Resurrection was a familiar concept in Jewish thought. Those who expected God’s kingdom to come believed that the dead would be raised to participate in end-time judgment. See note on Mark 6:16.

9:11 *Elijah must come first*: See note on Mark 1:6.

9:12 *written . . . many things*: See sidebar, “The Human One

in Mark” at Mark 14. Jesus’ words would seem strange to his disciples because no known writings say the Human One would suffer (cf. Dan 7:1-27). Jesus isn’t referring to a particular text, then, but is trying to get his followers to adopt his point of view on how to read all of the scriptures. 9:14-29 See Matthew 17:14-20; Luke 9:37-43a. Compare with Mark 6:5; 3:15; 6:7.

9:14 *legal experts*: See note on Mark 1:22.

9:18 *fit . . . stiffens up*: The boy’s condition is similar to what happens during an epileptic seizure. *they couldn’t*: or “they weren’t strong enough.” Elsewhere Mark portrays power over evil as a matter of strength against strength (see Mark 1:7; 3:27; 5:4; 14:37).

9:19 *faithless generation*: Jesus expresses regret over the faithless condition of those who belong to the present evil age (see Mark 1:15). It’s unclear whether the term refers to his disciples, to the boy’s father, or to both—or even to a broader group. See note on Mark 8:12.

9:23 *All things . . . faith*: In Mark, God’s power works effectively among those who trust in God’s kingdom (see Mark 2:5; 5:34; 11:22-23; cf. 6:5-6).

9:2 Mt 17:1;  
Mk 5:37;  
Mk 14:33;  
Lk 9:28  
9:3 Dn 7:9;  
Mt 28:3  
9:4 Dt 34:5;  
Mt 17:3, Mt 17:4;  
Lk 9:30;  
Rev 19:10  
9:5 Ex 33:17;  
Mt 17:4, Mt 23:7;  
Mt 26:49;  
Mk 11:21  
9:6 Mk 14:40  
9:7 Mt 3:17;  
Mk 1:11;  
2Pt 1:17  
9:8 Lk 9:36  
9:9 Mk 8:30  
9:10 Jn 16:17  
9:11 Mal 4:5;  
Mt 11:14;  
Mt 17:10;  
Mk 9:4  
9:12 Lk 1:17  
9:13 Mt 11:14;  
Mt 17:12;  
Lk 1:17  
9:14 Mt 17:14;  
Lk 9:37  
9:17 Mk 9:25  
9:18 Ac 7:54  
9:19 Mt 17:17  
9:20 Mk 1:26  
9:21 Mk 5:25;  
Jn 5:5, Jn 9:1;  
Ac 3:2  
9:22 Mt 9:28  
9:23 Mt 17:20;  
Mt 21:21;  
Mk 11:23;  
Jn 11:40

9:24 Lk 17:5

9:25 Lk 35:6;  
Mt 9:33,  
Mt 12:22,  
Mk 1:25,  
Mk 9:15

9:26 Mk 1:26

9:27 Mk 1:31,  
Mk 1:41

9:28 Mk 7:17

9:29 Eph 6:18

9:30 Mt 17:22,  
Mt 17:23; Lk 9:439:31 Mt 16:21,  
Mk 8:31,  
Mk 9:12; Lk 9:449:32 Mk 9:10;  
Lk 2:50, Lk 9:45,  
Lk 18:34;  
Jn 12:169:33 Mt 18:1;  
Lk 9:46

9:34 Lk 22:24

9:35 Mt 23:11;  
Mk 10:43,  
Mk 10:44;  
Lk 22:26

9:36 Mk 10:16

9:37 Mt 10:40

9:38 Lk 9:49,  
Lk 9:509:39 Mt 9:10,  
Mt 10:5,  
Mt 16:24;

Lk 9:50, 1Co 12:3

9:40 Mt 12:30,  
Lk 11:23

9:41 Mt 10:42

9:42 Mt 18:6;  
Lk 17:29:43 Mt 5:22,  
Mt 5:29, Mt 5:30,  
Mt 18:8,  
Mt 25:41

9:44 Lk 6:24

9:45 Mt 5:22,  
Mt 18:8; Mk 9:439:47 Mt 5:22,  
Mt 5:29, Mt 18:9;  
Mk 9:43

9:48 Lk 6:24;

Mt 25:41

9:49 Lv 2:13

<sup>24</sup>At that the boy's father cried out, "I have faith; help my lack of faith!"

<sup>25</sup>Noticing that the crowd had surged together, Jesus spoke harshly to the unclean spirit, "Mute and deaf spirit, I command you to come out of him and never enter him again." <sup>26</sup>After screaming and shaking the boy horribly, the spirit came out. The boy seemed to be dead; in fact, several people said that he had died. <sup>27</sup>But Jesus took his hand, lifted him up, and he arose.

<sup>28</sup>After Jesus went into a house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we throw this spirit out?"

<sup>29</sup>Jesus answered, "Throwing this kind of spirit out requires prayer."

### Jesus predicts his death

<sup>30</sup>From there Jesus and his followers went through Galilee, but he didn't want anyone to know it. <sup>31</sup>This was because he was teaching his disciples, "The Human One<sup>P</sup> will be delivered into human hands. They will kill him. Three days after he is killed he will rise up." <sup>32</sup>But they didn't understand this kind of talk, and they were afraid to ask him.

<sup>33</sup>They entered Capernaum. When they had come into a house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about during the journey?" <sup>34</sup>They didn't respond, since on the way they had been debating with each other about who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup>He sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be least of all and the servant of all." <sup>36</sup>Jesus reached for a little child, placed him among the Twelve, and embraced him. Then he said, <sup>37</sup>"Whoever welcomes one of these children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me isn't actually welcoming me but rather the one who sent me."

### Recognize your allies

<sup>38</sup>John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone throwing demons out in your name, and we tried to stop him because he wasn't following us."

<sup>39</sup>Jesus replied, "Don't stop him. No one who does powerful acts in my name can quickly turn around and curse me. <sup>40</sup>Whoever isn't against us is for us. <sup>41</sup>I assure you that whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will certainly be rewarded.

<sup>42</sup>As for whoever causes these little ones who believe in me to trip and fall into sin, it would be better for them to have a huge stone hung around their necks and to be thrown into the lake. <sup>43</sup>If your hand causes you to fall into sin, chop it off. It's better for you to enter into life crippled than to go away with two hands into the fire of hell, which can't be put out. <sup>44</sup>If your foot causes you to fall into sin, chop it off. It's better for you to enter life lame than to be thrown into hell with two feet." <sup>47</sup>If your eye causes you to fall into sin, tear it out. It's better for you to enter God's kingdom with one eye than to be thrown into hell with two.

<sup>48</sup>That's a place *where worms don't die and the fire never goes out.* <sup>49</sup>Everyone will be salted with

<sup>P</sup>Or *Son of Man* <sup>9:44</sup>is omitted in most critical editions of the Gk New Testament *where worms don't die and the fire never goes out.* <sup>9:46</sup>is omitted in most critical editions of the Gk New Testament *where worms don't die and the fire never goes out.* <sup>9:49</sup>Isa 66:24

9:24 "I have faith; help my lack of faith!": The father uses the language of prayer (see Mark 9:29; Pss 109:26; 119:86).

9:29 prayer: Jesus may be referring to the father's request for help (Mark 9:24).

9:30-37 See Matthew 17:22-23; 18:1-9; Luke 9:43b-48. This passage combines Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection with instruction about discipleship (see Mark 8:27-9:1).

9:30 didn't want anyone to know it: See sidebar, "Secrecy" at Mark 8.

9:31 delivered: or "handed over." This verse mostly repeats Mark 8:31 but adds a note about betrayal (see Mark 14:11, 18).

9:32 didn't understand... afraid to ask: See sidebar, "The Disciples in Mark" at Mark 5.

9:33 Capernaum: See note on Mark 1:21.

9:35 least... servant: Jesus turns common notions of greatness upside down (see Mark 9:34). In God's kingdom, leaders are the lowest on the social ladder (see Mark 8:34-35).

9:36 little child: Children held a very low social status in the ancient world.

9:37 one who sent me: See John 12:44-45. Jesus is an agent of God. Since his ministry reflects the power structure of God's kingdom, those who welcome him also welcome God.

9:38-50 See Matthew 18:6-9; Luke 9:49-50; 17:1-2.

9:39 powerful acts in my name: Jesus doesn't claim he's the only one who can access God's power. Since he's secured a foothold for God's kingdom on earth, he makes it possible for others to do miracles (see Mark 3:15; 6:7, 13).

9:40 you belong to Christ: Jesus' followers participate in his mission as the Christ.

9:42-47 Jesus warns against causing others or oneself to fall into sin (Mark 9:42, 43, 45, 47).

9:42 little ones: specifically, the children Jesus has just "embraced" (Mark 9:36-37). More broadly, the term may include anyone whose trust in God's kingdom exposes them to abuse by earthly power structures.

9:43 chop it off: Jesus uses a violent image to make his point (see also Mark 9:45, 47). *hell*: or "Gehenna," a place of eternal punishment (Matt 5:30; Luke 12:5).

9:49 salted with fire: Salt is a preservative. Together, the

fire. <sup>50</sup>Salt is good; but if salt loses its saltiness, how will it become salty again? Maintain salt among yourselves and keep peace with each other.”

**Divorce and remarriage**

**10** Jesus left that place and went beyond the Jordan and into the region of Judea. Crowds gathered around him again and, as usual, he taught them. <sup>2</sup>Some Pharisees came and, trying to test him, they asked, “Does the Law allow a man to divorce his wife?”

<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, “What did Moses command you?”

<sup>4</sup>They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a divorce certificate and to divorce his wife.”

<sup>5</sup>Jesus said to them, “He wrote this commandment for you because of your unyielding hearts. <sup>6</sup>At the beginning of creation, *God made them male and female.* <sup>7</sup>*Because of this, a man should leave his father and mother and be joined together with his wife, and the two will be one flesh.*” So they are no longer two but one flesh. <sup>9</sup>Therefore, humans must not pull apart what God has put together.”

<sup>10</sup>Inside the house, the disciples asked him again about this. <sup>11</sup>He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; <sup>12</sup>and if a wife divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

**Jesus blesses children**

<sup>13</sup>People were bringing children to Jesus so that he would bless them. But the disciples scolded them. <sup>14</sup>When Jesus saw this, he grew angry and said to them, “Allow the children to come to me. Don’t forbid them, because God’s kingdom belongs to people like these children. <sup>15</sup>I assure you that whoever doesn’t welcome God’s kingdom like a child will never enter it.” <sup>16</sup>Then he hugged the children and blessed them.

**A rich man’s question**

<sup>17</sup>As Jesus continued down the road, a man ran up, knelt before him, and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to obtain eternal life?”

<sup>18</sup>Jesus replied, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except the one God. <sup>19</sup>You know the commandments: *Don’t commit murder. Don’t commit adultery. Don’t steal. Don’t give false testimony. Don’t cheat. Honor your father and mother.*”

<sup>20</sup>“Teacher,” he responded, “I’ve kept all of these things since I was a boy.”

<sup>21</sup>Jesus looked at him carefully and loved him. He said, “You are lacking one thing. Go, sell

9:50 Mt 5:13;  
Lk 14:34;  
Ro 12:18;  
2Co 13:11;  
1Th 5:13

10:1 Mt 19:1  
10:2 Mt 5:31,  
Mt 19:3; Jn 8:6

10:4 Dt 24:1,  
Dt 24:3; Mt 5:31

10:5 Mk 16:14

10:6 Gn 1:27,  
Gn 5:2;  
Mk 13:19;  
2Pt 3:4

10:8 Gn 2:24;  
1Co 6:16

10:9 1Co 7:10  
10:10 Mk 9:28

10:11 Mt 5:32,  
Mt 19:9;  
Lk 16:18

10:12 1Co 7:11,  
1Co 7:13

10:13 Mt 19:13;  
Lk 18:15

10:14 Mt 5:3,  
Mt 14:14,  
Mt 15:32,  
Mt 19:14;  
Lk 18:16

10:15 Mt 18:3,  
Lk 18:17; Jn 3:3

10:16 Gn 48:14;  
Mk 9:36

10:17 Mt 19:16,  
Mt 25:34;  
Mk 1:40;  
Lk 10:25,  
Lk 18:18

10:18 Lk 18:19

10:19 Ex 20:12;  
Dt 5:16; Ro 13:9

10:20 Mt 19:20  
10:21 Mt 16:24;  
Lk 12:33

<sup>†</sup>Gen 1:27 <sup>‡</sup>Gen 2:24 <sup>¶</sup>Exod 12:16; Deut 16:20

images of salt and fire portray the judgment that comes with God’s kingdom (see 1 Cor 3:13).

9:50 *peace with each other*: God’s kingdom brings harmony to social relationships. Peace among Jesus’ followers in turn reflects the character of God’s kingdom to the world (see Matt 5:13).

10:1-12 See Matthew 19:1-9. Jesus’ view of divorce comes from his belief that God’s coming kingdom will restore creation to its original design.

10:1 *beyond the Jordan and into the region of Judea*: Jesus and his disciples make their way toward Jerusalem.

10:2 *Pharisees*: See note on Mark 2:16. *test*: See Mark 8:11; 12:15.

10:3 *“What did Moses command you?”*: Jesus appeals to the written Jewish Law (see Mark 7:9-10).

10:4 See Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

10:5 *unyielding hearts*: or “hardened hearts.” The phrase describes those who belong to the present evil age and resist God’s kingdom.

10:6-8 Jesus combines Genesis 1:27 with Genesis 2:24. Those who looked for God’s coming kingdom considered Genesis a blueprint for the new creation.

10:9 *pull apart*: Jesus’ concerns about divorce are consistent with the “peace” he’s commanded in Mark 9:50.

10:11-12 Jesus interprets Jewish Law strictly, while introducing equality between men and women. Traditionally,

both Jewish and Roman laws restricted women’s right to divorce.

10:13-16 See Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17; Mark 9:36-37.

10:14 *angry*: See Mark 1:41; 3:5; 10:41. Jesus often displays anger when people resist the values of God’s kingdom. Society’s weakest members inherit God’s kingdom because they so freely welcome it (see Mark 10:15).

10:17-31 See Matthew 19:16-30; Luke 18:18-30. Children welcome God’s kingdom (Mark 10:14-16), but a wealthy man walks away from it.

10:17 *eternal life*: The man asks Jesus about the way of life associated with God’s coming kingdom (see Mark 10:24).

10:18 *No one . . . one God*: Jesus affirms the Jewish belief in one and only one God.

10:19 *commandments*: Jesus omits the laws that refer to people’s devotion to God and focuses instead on those that address relationships among people (see Exod 20:12-16; Deut 5:16-20). He adds one law, *Don’t cheat*, that isn’t among the Ten Commandments (but see Exod 20:17; Deut 24:14).

10:21 *the poor*: Jewish tradition shows consistent concern for the poor. Jesus’ radical command goes a step further by insisting the man sell what he owns before following Jesus (see Mark 10:28).

10:22 Fze 33:31

10:23 Mt 19:23;  
Lk 18:2410:24 Ps 49:6,  
Ps 52:7,  
Pv 11:28;  
1Ti 6:17

10:25 Mt 19:24

10:27 Gn 18:14;  
Job 42:2;Jer 32:17;  
Jer 32:27;  
Mt 19:26

10:28 Mt 19:27

10:29 Mt 10:37;  
Mt 16:24;Mt 19:21;  
Mk 8:35;  
Lk 14:26

10:30 Mt 12:32

10:31 Mt 19:30;  
Mt 20:16;  
Lk 13:3010:32 Mt 20:17;  
Lk 18:3110:33 Mt 16:21;  
Mt 27:2;  
Mk 8:3110:34 Mt 26:67;  
Mk 14:6510:35 Mt 20:20;  
Mk 1:19

10:36 Mk 10:51

10:37 Mt 19:28

10:38 Mt 20:22;  
Mk 14:36;  
Lk 12:50;

Jn 18:11

10:39 Ac 12:2;  
Rev 1:910:40 Mt 20:23;  
Mt 25:3410:41 Lk 22:24;  
Lk 22:25

what you own, and give the money to the poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me.”<sup>22</sup> But the man was dismayed at this statement and went away saddened, because he had many possessions.

<sup>23</sup> Looking around, Jesus said to his disciples, “It will be very hard for the wealthy to enter God’s kingdom!”<sup>24</sup> His words startled the disciples, so Jesus told them again, “Children, it’s difficult to enter God’s kingdom!<sup>25</sup> It’s easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God’s kingdom.”

<sup>26</sup> They were shocked even more and said to each other, “Then who can be saved?”

<sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them carefully and said, “It’s impossible with human beings, but not with God. All things are possible for God.”

<sup>28</sup> Peter said to him, “Look, we’ve left everything and followed you.”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said, “I assure you that anyone who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, or farms because of me and because of the good news<sup>30</sup> will receive one hundred times as much now in this life—houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and farms (with harassment)—and in the coming age, eternal life.<sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last. And many who are last will be first.”

### *Jesus predicts his death and resurrection*

<sup>32</sup> Jesus and his disciples were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, with Jesus in the lead. The disciples were amazed while the others following behind were afraid. Taking the Twelve aside again, he told them what was about to happen to him.<sup>33</sup> “Look!” he said. “We’re going up to Jerusalem. The Human One<sup>34</sup> will be handed over to the chief priests and the legal experts. They will condemn him to death and hand him over to the Gentiles.<sup>35</sup> They will ridicule him, spit on him, torture him, and kill him. After three days, he will rise up.”

### *A request from James and John*

<sup>36</sup> James and John, Zebedee’s sons, came to Jesus and said, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

<sup>37</sup> “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

<sup>38</sup> They said, “Allow one of us to sit on your right and the other on your left when you enter your glory.”

<sup>39</sup> Jesus replied, “You don’t know what you’re asking! Can you drink the cup I drink or receive the baptism I receive?”

<sup>40</sup> “We can,” they answered.

Jesus said, “You will drink the cup I drink and receive the baptism I receive,<sup>41</sup> but to sit at my right or left hand isn’t mine to give. It belongs to those for whom it has been prepared.”

<sup>42</sup> Now when the other ten disciples heard about this, they became angry with James and

<sup>34</sup> Or Son of Man

10:22 *dismayed*: Jesus’ response deeply offends the man.

10:25 *eye of a needle*: Wealth prevents entry into God’s kingdom because it’s easier to rely on money and things than on God.

10:26 *saved*: that is, enter eternal life at the judgment.

10:27 *All things are possible for God*: See Mark 9:23; Genesis 18:14; Zechariah 8:6.

10:29 *because of me and because of the good news*: See note on Mark 8:35.

10:30 *one hundred times . . . (with harassment)*: See Mark 13:9-13. Jesus promises his followers both rich reward and public scorn. He omits “father” when repeating the list of Mark 10:29. The community of Jesus’ disciples has God as its Father. See note on Mark 3:32.

10:31 *first . . . first*: See Mark 9:35; 10:44.

10:32-34 See Matthew 20:17-19; Luke 18:31-33. This is the third prediction of Jesus’ death and resurrection in Mark (See Mark 8:27-29; 9:30-10:31).

10:32 *amazed . . . afraid*: The Greek text doesn’t say who was amazed, but it does distinguish between

amazement (see Mark 1:27; 10:24) and fear (see Mark 4:41; 6:50).

10:34 *ridicule . . . spit . . . torture*: The final prediction includes graphic details about Jesus’ destiny (see Mark 15:15-32).

10:35-45 See Matthew 20:20-27. For a third time, Jesus’ prediction about his death leads to instruction about discipleship.

10:35 *James and John*: See Mark 1:19. With Peter, these two brothers belong to the inner circle of Jesus’ disciples. See note on Mark 5:37.

10:37 *right*: a place of honor (see Ps 110:1). *enter your glory*: The brothers assume they’ll join Jesus in the heavenly throne room once God’s kingdom arrives.

10:39 *cup . . . baptism*: Both images belong to the coming kingdom of God. “Cup” is shorthand for destiny (see Pss 11:6; 23:5; 116:13). “Baptism” here refers to the final cleansing of sin in preparation for God’s kingdom. See note on Mark 1:4. Jesus’ disciples will share his destiny.

10:40 *it has been prepared*: The passive verb suggests God is the one in charge of people’s destinies.

John. <sup>42</sup>Jesus called them over and said, "You know that the ones who are considered the rulers by the Gentiles show off their authority over them and their high-ranking officials order them around. <sup>43</sup>But that's not the way it will be with you. Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant. <sup>44</sup>Whoever wants to be first among you will be the slave of all, <sup>45</sup>for the Human One\* didn't come to be served but rather to serve and to give his life to liberate many people."

**Healing of blind Bartimaeus**

<sup>46</sup>Jesus and his followers came into Jericho. As Jesus was leaving Jericho, together with his disciples and a sizable crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, Timaues' son, was sitting beside the road. <sup>47</sup>When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was there, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, show me mercy!" <sup>48</sup>Many scolded him, telling him to be quiet, but he shouted even louder, "Son of David, show me mercy!"

<sup>49</sup>Jesus stopped and said, "Call him forward."

They called the blind man, "Be encouraged! Get up! He's calling you."

<sup>50</sup>Throwing his coat to the side, he jumped up and came to Jesus.

<sup>51</sup>Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

The blind man said, "Teacher, I want to see."

<sup>52</sup>Jesus said, "Go, your faith has healed you." At once he was able to see, and he began to follow Jesus on the way.

**Jesus enters Jerusalem**

**11** When Jesus and his followers approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives. Jesus gave two disciples a task, <sup>2</sup>saying to them, "Go into the village over there. As soon as you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt that no one has ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'Its master needs it, and he will send it back right away!'"

<sup>4</sup>They went and found a colt tied to a gate outside on the street, and they untied it. <sup>5</sup>Some people standing around said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" <sup>6</sup>They told them just what Jesus said, and they left them alone. <sup>7</sup>They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes upon it, and he sat on it. <sup>8</sup>Many people spread out their clothes on the road while others spread branches cut from the fields. <sup>9</sup>Those in front of him and those following were shouting, "*Hosanna! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*"

\*Or Son of Man †Ps 118:26

10:42 Mt 20:25  
 10:43 Mt 20:26;  
 Mk 9:35; Lk 9:48  
 10:44 Mk 10:43  
 10:45 Mt 20:28  
 10:46 Mt 20:29;  
 Mt 20:30;  
 Lk 18:35; Jn 9:8  
 10:47 Mt 9:27;  
 Mt 20:30,  
 Mt 22:42;  
 Mk 1:24  
 10:48 Mt 9:27;  
 Mt 15:22;  
 Mt 20:31,  
 Mt 21:9;  
 Mk 10:47  
 10:49 Mt 9:2,  
 Mt 20:32,  
 Lk 18:40  
 10:51 Jn 20:16  
 10:52 Mt 9:22;  
 Mk 5:34  
 11:1 Mt 21:1;  
 Lk 19:29;  
 Ac 1:12  
 11:2 Nm 19:2;  
 1Sa 6:7; Mt 21:2  
 11:7 Lk 19:35;  
 Jn 12:12  
 11:8 2Ks 9:13;  
 Lk 4:15; Jn 12:13  
 11:9 Ps 118:25;  
 Ps 118:26;  
 Mt 21:9,  
 Mt 23:39

10:42 *considered the rulers*: Jesus hints at the fragile power of earthly rulers. They only seem to be in charge. *authority over*: Earthly power is top-down power.

10:43 *with you*: or "among you." Like Jesus, the disciples reflect God's power, which is bottom-up power.

10:45 *Human One... people*: Like Jesus, his followers will give their lives (see Mark 13:12) as part of God's redemption of the world. See note on Mark 2:10. See sidebar, "The Human One in Mark" at Mark 14.

10:46-52 See Matthew 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43. The story of Bartimaeus concludes the Gospel's middle section, which began with a story of restored sight (see Mark 8:22-26).

10:46 *Jericho*: about 20 miles from Jerusalem.

10:47 *Son of David*: a rare use of this title in Mark. Jewish tradition often linked hopes for God's coming kingdom with the renewal of David's kingdom (2 Sam 7:4-17; Mark 11:10). Elsewhere in Mark, Jesus distances himself from this tradition (Mark 12:35-37), probably because it implies a military and/or political grab for power. *show me mercy*: See Mark 5:19.

10:52 *your faith has healed you*: See note on Mark 5:27. *on the way*: an early Christian expression for the life of

discipleship. In the book of Acts, for example, the Christian movement is sometimes called "the Way" (e.g., Acts 9:2; 19:9; 24:14).

11:1-13:37 Jesus and his disciples enter Jerusalem for the Passover Festival (see Mark 14:1).

11:1-11 See Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-19.

11:1 *Bethphage and Bethany*: The two towns are just outside Jerusalem. Because the city was crowded during Passover, many pilgrims found places to stay in nearby towns and villages.

11:2 *colt*: This act symbolizes Jesus' humble authority (see Zech 9:9; cf. Matt 21:5; John 12:15).

11:6 *just what Jesus said*: Mark shows that Jesus knows what lies ahead.

11:8 *clothes... branches*: The OT associates similar details with Israel's kings (see 2 Kgs 9:13). For Mark, though, Jesus is a different kind of king (see Mark 11:2, 9).

11:9 The reference to Psalm 118:26 draws attention to Jesus' royal status. The shout *Hosanna!* literally means "Save now!" The people think Jesus will save them from Roman occupation. Ironically, this misplaced hope will ultimately lead to his death.

11:10 Lk 1:32  
 11:11 Mt 21:12,  
 Mt 21:17  
 11:12 Mt 4:2,  
 Mt 21:18  
 11:13 Mt 21:19,  
 Lk 13:6  
 11:14 Mt 3:10,  
 Mt 21:19,  
 Mt 21:33,  
 Mk 11:20,  
 Mk 11:21

<sup>10</sup>Blessings on the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest!"  
<sup>11</sup>Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. After he looked around at everything, because it was already late in the evening, he returned to Bethany with the Twelve.

### Fig tree and the temple

11:15 Mt 21:12;  
 Lk 19:45; Jn 2:13  
 11:17 Is 56:7;  
 Jer 7:11  
 11:19 Mk 11:11;  
 Lk 21:37  
 11:20 Mt 21:19  
 11:21 Mt 9:5,  
 Mk 14:72  
 11:22 2Ch.  
 20:20; Ps 62:8;  
 Mt 10:5,  
 Mt 16:24,  
 Mt 17:18  
 11:23 Mt 17:20,  
 Mt 21:21;  
 1Co 13:2; Jas 1:6  
 11:24 Mt 7:7  
 11:25 1Ki 8:22;  
 Mt 6:5, Mt 6:14;  
 Eph 4:32;  
 Col 3:13  
 11:26 Mt 6:15,  
 Mt 18:35

<sup>12</sup>The next day, after leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. <sup>13</sup>From far away, he noticed a fig tree in leaf, so he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing except leaves, since it wasn't the season for figs. <sup>14</sup>So he said to it, "No one will ever again eat your fruit!" His disciples heard this.

<sup>15</sup>They came into Jerusalem. After entering the temple, he threw out those who were selling and buying there. He pushed over the tables used for currency exchange and the chairs of those who sold doves. <sup>16</sup>He didn't allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. <sup>17</sup>He taught them, "Hasn't it been written, *My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations*?<sup>a</sup> But you've turned it into a *hideout for crooks*."<sup>b</sup> <sup>18</sup>The chief priests and legal experts heard this and tried to find a way to destroy him. They regarded him as dangerous because the whole crowd was enthralled at his teaching. <sup>19</sup>When it was evening, Jesus and his disciples went outside the city.

### Power, prayer, and forgiveness

<sup>20</sup>Early in the morning, as Jesus and his disciples were walking along, they saw the fig tree withered from the root up. <sup>21</sup>Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look how the fig tree you cursed has dried up."

<sup>22</sup>Jesus responded to them, "Have faith in God! <sup>23</sup>I assure you that whoever says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea'—and doesn't waver but believes that what is said will really happen—it will happen. <sup>24</sup>Therefore I say to you, whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you will receive it, and it will be so for you. <sup>25</sup>And whenever you stand up to pray, if you have something against anyone, forgive so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your wrongdoings."<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Isa 56:7 <sup>b</sup>Jer 7:11 <sup>b</sup>11:26 is omitted in most critical editions of the Gk New Testament *And if you don't forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive you your wrongdoings.*

11:11 *looked around*: Although his ride into Jerusalem has drawn a crowd, no one seems to notice Jesus' first visit to the temple.

11:12-25 See Matthew 21:12-22; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-22. Mark places the story of the temple incident within his account of the cursing of the fig tree (he uses a similar style in Mark 5:21-43; 14:1-11). The effect is to highlight his criticism of the Jewish leaders.

11:13 *season*: The Greek word translated here as "season" implies that God orders time for certain purposes. In Mark it's the season for God's kingdom (see Mark 1:15).

11:14 "No one... fruit!": On one level, Jesus' response to the fig tree is disturbing. This is because he seems to punish the tree for not producing fruit out of season (see Mark 11:20). The real point, though, is to show that the coming of God's kingdom marks the end of the time of Jerusalem's temple.

11:15 *threw out*: See note on Mark 1:34. *currency exchange... sold doves*: People who came to worship God in Jerusalem exchanged their coins for temple currency to

*Faith/Trust* These two words, along with "belief," are translated from the same Greek word, and they're an important concept in Mark's Gospel. Faith in Mark is active. It isn't simply believing in a set of doctrines; faith is about those things people entrust their lives with. Jesus urges people to "trust this good news" (Mark 1:15) about God's coming kingdom. And throughout the Gospel, he draws a close connection between faith/trust and the power of God at work in the world. When people act as if God's power is available through Jesus, they turn to him for healing (Mark 2:5; 5:34). When they're more skeptical or fail to believe, even he can't do much good (Mark 6:5-6). In Mark, Jesus calls for "faith in God" (Mark 11:22), not faith in himself (cf. John 20:30-31). But Jesus is God's Christ, the one who serves as an authorized agent of divine power. So people turn to him in faith when they trust that power—and they find life.

be used within the temple area itself. They then purchased animals (such as doves) to sacrifice (see Lev 1:15; 5:7).

11:17 *My house... crooks*: Like OT prophets, Jesus condemns temple activity that violates its sacred purpose (see Isa 56:7; Jer 7:1-11). The crooks probably include those who corrupt the temple by their deeds as well as those who profit from the temple economy at the expense of the poor.

11:18 *destroy him*: The Jewish leadership wants to destroy Jesus (see Mark 3:6). This time Mark says it's because Jesus has the attention and support of the *whole crowd*.

11:22-25 These sayings turn from Jesus' power over the fig tree to the power available to those who have *faith in God*.

11:22 *faith*: See Mark 2:5; 5:34; 10:52. Compare with Mark 6:5-6a. See sidebar, "Faith/Trust."

11:25 *so that... forgive you*: See Matthew 6:5; Luke 18:11, 13. Effective prayer depends on forgiveness. In other words, a right relationship with God requires right relationships with other people.

### Controversy over authority

<sup>27</sup>Jesus and his disciples entered Jerusalem again. As Jesus was walking around the temple, the chief priests, legal experts, and elders came to him. <sup>28</sup>They asked, "What kind of authority do you have for doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?"

<sup>29</sup>Jesus said to them, "I have a question for you. Give me an answer, then I'll tell you what kind of authority I have to do these things. <sup>30</sup>Was John's baptism of heavenly or of human origin? Answer me."

<sup>31</sup>They argued among themselves, "If we say, 'It's of heavenly origin,' he'll say, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' <sup>32</sup>But we can't say, 'It's of earthly origin.'" They said this because they were afraid of the crowd, because they all thought John was a prophet. <sup>33</sup>They answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Jesus replied, "Neither will I tell you what kind of authority I have to do these things."

### Parable of the tenant farmers

**12** Jesus spoke to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the winepress, and built a tower. Then he rented it to tenant farmers and took a trip. <sup>2</sup>When it was time, he sent a servant to collect from the tenants his share of the fruit of the vineyard. <sup>3</sup>But they grabbed the servant, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>4</sup>Again the landowner sent another servant to them, but they struck him on the head and treated him disgracefully. <sup>5</sup>He sent another one; that one they killed. The landlord sent many other servants, but the tenants beat some and killed others. <sup>6</sup>Now the landowner had one son whom he loved dearly. He sent him last, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' <sup>7</sup>But those tenant farmers said to each other, 'This is the heir. Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' <sup>8</sup>They grabbed him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

<sup>9</sup>"So what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others. <sup>10</sup>Haven't you read this scripture, *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.* <sup>11</sup>*The Lord has done this, and it's amazing in our eyes?*"<sup>c</sup>

<sup>12</sup>They wanted to arrest Jesus because they knew that he had told the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd, so they left him and went away.

### A question about taxes

<sup>13</sup>They sent some of the Pharisees and supporters of Herod to trap him in his words. <sup>14</sup>They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know that you're genuine and you don't worry about what people think. You don't show favoritism but teach God's way as it really is. Does the Law allow people to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay taxes or not?"

<sup>c</sup>Ps 118:22-23

11:27-33 See Matthew 21:23-27; Luke 20:1-8. This is the first of several exchanges between Jesus and the temple authorities.

11:27 *chief priests, legal experts, and elders*: On legal experts, see note on Mark 1:22. On chief priests and elders, see note on Mark 8:31. The list combines some of Jesus' opponents from Galilee with Jerusalem leaders.

11:28 *authority*: People have noticed Jesus' authority from early in the Gospel (see Mark 1:22, 27; 2:10).

11:29-30 *question for you*: Like a true rabbi, or Jewish teacher, Jesus answers a question with another question. *John's baptism*: Jesus' words suggest he had a relationship with the prophet John (see Mark 1:4-11; 6:14).

11:32 *afraid of the crowd*: The Jewish leaders probably fear the crowd's opinion, as well as a possible Roman reaction against a popular uprising.

11:33 *"We don't know"*: Jesus' opponents provide a safe answer. For Mark their reply is probably ironic as well. They truly don't know the nature of John's authority.

12:1-12 See Matthew 21:33-46; Luke 20:9-19.

12:1 *in parables*: See note on Mark 4:11. *vineyard*: The comparison of a vineyard to God's people is a familiar one (see Isa 5:1-7).

12:2 *When it was time*: By highlighting the harvesttime,

this parable supports Jesus' claim that God's kingdom is near (Mark 1:15). See note on Mark 11:13. *servant*: OT prophets are often called God's servants (see Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6).

12:5 *beat some and killed others*: The messengers' fate fits 2 Chronicles 36:15-16, which says many prophets have warned about Israel's defeat.

12:6 *son whom he loved dearly*: The contrast between the servants and the son is striking. In Mark, Jesus has now twice been called God's dearly loved son (Mark 1:11; 9:7).

12:7 *heir*: The tenant farmers recognize the son. Instead of respecting him, they plot to steal his property.

12:9 *destroy those tenants*: The son's death isn't the end of the story. Rather, the murderers will face judgment. *to others*: Jesus suggests other people, probably Gentiles, will take their place among God's people.

12:10-11 See Psalm 118:22-23. Early Christians often explained Jesus' death by turning to the OT.

12:12 *afraid of the crowd*: See note on Mark 11:32.

12:13-17 See Matthew 22:15-22; Luke 20:20-26.

12:13 *supporters of Herod*: Jewish leaders oppose Jesus. Mark includes groups that represent Galilean interests. See note on Mark 3:6.

11:27 Mt 21:23;

Lk 20:1

11:28 Ex 2:14

11:29 Mt 21:24

11:30 Mt 3:1,

Mt 3:13,

Mt 21:25;

Mk 1:4; Lk 7:29

11:31 Mt 21:32

11:32 Mt 3:5,

Mt 14:5,

Mt 21:32;

Mk 12:12;

Lk 20:6

11:33 Mt 21:27;

Lk 10:21,

Lk 20:8; Jn 3:10

12:1 Is 5:1,

Is 5:2; Mt 21:33;

Mk 13:34;

Lk 20:9

12:2 Jer 35:15

12:3 2Ch 24:19,

2Ch 36:16;

Neh 9:26;

Jer 37:15;

Mt 23:34

12:5 Jer 7:25;

Mt 23:37

12:6 Heb 1:1

12:9 Mt 8:11,

Mt 21:41,

Mt 21:43;

Lk 19:27;

Lk 20:16

12:10 Ps 118:22,

Ps 118:23;

Ac 4:11

12:11 Ps 118:22,

Ps 118:23

12:12 Mt 22:22;

Mk 11:18,

Mk 11:32

12:13 Mt 22:15,

Mt 22:16;

Mk 3:6;

Lk 11:54,

Lk 20:20

12:14 Mt 22:17;

Lk 20:22

12:16 Lk 20:24  
12:17 Mt 22:21;  
Ro 13:7

12:18 Mt 22:23;  
Lk 20:27; Ac 4:1;  
Ac 4:2; Ac 23:8

12:19 Dt 25:5

12:24 2Ti 3:15

12:25 Mt 22:30;  
Lk 20:35;

1Co 15:42;

Heb 12:22

12:26 Ex 3:6;

Lk 20:37

12:27 Jn 11:26;

2Ti 1:10;

Heb 11:13

12:28 Mt 22:34;

Lk 10:25

12:29 Dt 6:4

12:30 Dt 6:4;

Dt 6:5; Josh 22:5

12:31 Lv 19:18;

Mt 19:19;

Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8

12:32 Dt 4:35;

Is 45:21

12:33 Isa 15:22;

Hos 6:6; Mt 6:6

<sup>15</sup>Since Jesus recognized their deceit, he said to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring me a coin. Show it to me." <sup>16</sup>And they brought one. He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

<sup>17</sup>Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." His reply left them overcome with wonder.

### **A question about the resurrection**

<sup>18</sup>Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Jesus and asked, <sup>19</sup>"Teacher, Moses wrote for us that *if a man's brother dies, leaving a widow but no children, the brother must marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.*" <sup>20</sup>Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman; when he died, he left no children. <sup>21</sup>The second married her and died without leaving any children. The third did the same. <sup>22</sup>None of the seven left any children. Finally, the woman died. <sup>23</sup>At the resurrection, when they all rise up, whose wife will she be? All seven were married to her."

<sup>24</sup>Jesus said to them, "Isn't this the reason you are wrong, because you don't know either the scriptures or God's power? <sup>25</sup>When people rise from the dead, they won't marry nor will they be given in marriage. Instead, they will be like God's angels. <sup>26</sup>As for the resurrection from the dead, haven't you read in the scroll from Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God said to Moses, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?*" <sup>27</sup>He isn't the God of the dead but of the living. You are seriously mistaken."

### **God's most important command**

<sup>28</sup>One of the legal experts heard their dispute and saw how well Jesus answered them. He came over and asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"

<sup>29</sup>Jesus replied, "The most important one is *Israel, listen! Our God is the one Lord,* <sup>30</sup>*and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*" <sup>31</sup>The second is this, *You will love your neighbor as yourself.* <sup>32</sup>No other commandment is greater than these."

<sup>33</sup>The legal expert said to him, "Well said, Teacher. You have truthfully said that God is one and there is no other besides him. <sup>34</sup>And to love God with all of the heart, a full understanding, and all of one's strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more important than all kinds of entirely burned offerings and sacrifices."

<sup>d</sup>Deut 25:5; Gen 38:8 <sup>e</sup>Exod 3:6, 15-16 <sup>f</sup>Deut 6:4-5 <sup>g</sup>Lev 19:18

12:15 *Jesus recognized their deceit:* See Mark 2:8. *coin:* a denarius. See note on Mark 6:37.

12:16 *image and inscription:* Roman coins bore the imprint of the emperor.

12:17 Jesus doesn't specify *what belongs* to both Caesar and God, leaving his audience to wrestle with it for themselves. This ambiguity, though, invites the faithful to reflect on the tension between loyalties to political power and religious commitment. Rather than affirming separate-but-equal power for these two spheres, Jesus seems to imply that God's image, reflected in humanity, merits higher devotion than Caesar's, which is found on the face of a coin. *wonder:* See Mark 5:20.

12:18-27 See Matthew 22:23-33; Luke 20:27-40.

12:18 *Sadducees:* probably a group of wealthy priests of the Jerusalem temple (see Acts 4:1; 5:17). They don't believe in either the resurrection or the oral interpretation of the Law. See note on Mark 7:3.

12:19 The Sadducees refer to the Law of Moses. See note on Mark 12:18.

12:24 *the scriptures or God's power:* Jesus detects two levels of ignorance: (1) the Sadducees don't understand the

writings themselves, and (2) they deny God's authority over human life.

12:25 *God's angels:* At the resurrection, people will be changed into a different form altogether (see 1 Cor 15:35-50).

12:27 *God... of the living:* Jesus stresses God's connection to human beings (Mark 12:26; see Exod 3:6, 15-16). *seriously mistaken:* Their concern with the afterlife misses the point of living in relationship with God in the here and now.

12:28-34 See Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-28.

12:28 *legal experts:* Usually in Mark this group opposes Jesus. See note on Mark 1:22.

12:29-30 Jesus offers an obvious answer, taken from the opening of the Ten Commandments (see Deut 6:4-5; cf. 10:19). Jews in his day routinely memorized and recited these verses. In Mark's account Jesus expands the sacred text by adding *with all your mind* (see Deut 6:6).

12:31 Jesus names the love of neighbor (Lev 19:18) as the second commandment. Jews and early Christians generally thought one couldn't love God without loving others (see Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8).

12:33 *more important... sacrifices:* See Hosea 6:6. Jesus echoes a common view of the OT prophets.



<sup>34</sup>When Jesus saw that he had answered with wisdom, he said to him, “You aren’t far from God’s kingdom.” After that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

### Jesus corrects the legal experts

<sup>35</sup>While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he said, “Why do the legal experts say that the Christ is David’s son? <sup>36</sup>David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, said, *The Lord said to my lord, ‘Sit at my right side until I turn your enemies into your footstool.’*<sup>b</sup> <sup>37</sup>David himself calls him ‘Lord,’ so how can he be David’s son?” The large crowd listened to him with delight.

<sup>38</sup>As he was teaching, he said, “Watch out for the legal experts. They like to walk around in long robes. They want to be greeted with honor in the markets. <sup>39</sup>They long for places of honor in the synagogues and at banquets. <sup>40</sup>They are the ones who cheat widows out of their homes, and to show off they say long prayers. They will be judged most harshly.”

### A poor widow’s contribution

<sup>41</sup>Jesus sat across from the collection box for the temple treasury and observed how the crowd gave their money. Many rich people were throwing in lots of money. <sup>42</sup>One poor widow came forward and put in two small copper coins worth a penny.<sup>1</sup> <sup>43</sup>Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I assure you that this poor widow has put in more than everyone who’s been putting money in the treasury. <sup>44</sup>All of them are giving out of their spare change. But she from her hopeless poverty has given everything she had, even what she needed to live on.”

### The temple’s fate

**13**As Jesus left the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Teacher, look! What awesome stones and buildings!”

<sup>2</sup>Jesus responded, “Do you see these enormous buildings? Not even one stone will be left upon another. All will be demolished.”

<sup>3</sup>Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives across from the temple. Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, <sup>4</sup>“Tell us, when will these things happen? What sign will show that all these things are about to come to an end?”

<sup>b</sup>Ps 110:1 <sup>1</sup>Or two *lepta* (the smallest Greek copper coin, each worth 1/128 of a single day’s pay), that is, a *kodrantes* (the smallest Roman coin, equal in value to two *lepta*)

12:34 *“You aren’t far from God’s kingdom”*: The statement may have a double meaning. To Jesus, God’s kingdom is fast approaching (see Mark 1:15). The man’s favorable response qualifies him to enter God’s kingdom.

12:35–40 See Matthew 22:41–46; Luke 20:41–47.

12:35 *David’s son*: Some Jews in Jesus’ day expected a Davidic king to liberate Palestine from the Romans. Early Christians thought Christ had to come from David’s family (see Matt 1:20; Luke 2:4; Rom 1:3). See note on Mark 10:47. 12:36 *my lord*: Jesus uses Psalm 110:1 to prove that David’s son couldn’t be the anointed one, or “Christ.” Perhaps Jesus wants to dismiss any political hopes people have about the Davidic line. *turn your enemies into your footstool*: God’s kingdom will defeat all human and spiritual opposition (see 1 Cor 15:25).

12:37 *delight*: The crowd’s favorable response continues (see Mark 6:20). They may not understand that Jesus’ question has already undermined any hopes they might have had that Jesus would deliver them from Roman rule. 12:38–40 The legal experts have stopped questioning Jesus (see Mark 12:34), but he hasn’t stopped questioning them.

12:38 *long robes*: The legal experts wore robes that declared how important they were. *greeted with honor*: Ancient peoples associated honor with privileged social status (see also Mark 12:29).

12:40 *widows*: OT prophets condemn the powerful for taking advantage of widows (see Isa 10:1–2). *show off*: See Matthew 6:5–6; 23:5–6.

12:41–44 See Luke 21:1–4. The *poor widow* is a good example of devotion to God.

12:42 *two small copper coins*: worth a tiny fraction of a day’s wage.

12:44 *spare change*: The widow’s offering counts for more than the rich people’s leftovers. *what she needed to live on*: or “her whole life.” The woman’s offering represents her sacrificial devotion to God (see Mark 8:35–36; cf. Mark 10:22).

13:1–37 See Matthew 24:1–44; Luke 21:5–33. Jesus teaches about the temple and its coming destruction. His message about endurance (13:13) seems especially focused on Mark’s audience.

13:1 *awesome stones and buildings*: Jesus’ disciples are filled with wonder at the temple complex. Herod the Great had significantly expanded the structure decades earlier.

13:2 *Not even one stone*: Jesus predicts complete destruction of Jerusalem’s second temple. When Rome destroyed the temple in 70 CE, it left stones and rubble visitors can see today. Jesus’ words echo Jewish prophecy about the destruction of the first temple. Both Jeremiah (26:6) and Micah (3:12) believed that religious abuses by the authorities would lead to such an outcome.

13:3 *Peter, James, John, and Andrew*: See Mark 1:16–20. See note on Mark 5:37.

13:4 *all these things . . . come to an end*: Jesus has mentioned only the temple’s destruction. The disciples’ question uses words (“all . . . things” and “end”) that hint at the sweeping impact of God’s coming kingdom.

12:34 Mt 22:46;  
Lk 20:40

12:35 Mt 22:41;  
Lk 20:41; Jn 7:42

12:36 Ps 110:1;  
Ac 2:34;  
1Co 15:25

12:37 Lk 19:48;  
Lk 21:38; Jn 12:9;  
Ro 1:3

12:38 Mt 23:1;  
Mt 23:2;  
Mk 12:39;  
Lk 11:43;  
Lk 20:45

12:39 Lk 11:43  
12:40 Lk 20:47

12:41 2Ki 12:9;  
Lk 21:1; Jn 8:20

12:42 1Ki 17:9;  
Mt 5:26; Lk 21:2  
12:43 2Co 8:2;  
2Co 8:12

12:44 Lk 8:43

13:1 Mt 24:1;  
Lk 21:5

13:2 Mt 24:2;  
Lk 19:44;  
Lk 21:6

13:3 Mt 17:1;  
Mt 21:1

13:4 Mt 24:3;  
Ac 1:6, Ac 1:7

13:5 Jer 29:8;  
 Mt 16:6,  
 Mt 24:1, Mt 24:4,  
 Eph 5:6  
 13:6 Mt 24:5  
 13:7 Jer 51:46;  
 Mt 24:6; Lk 21:9  
 13:8 Is 19:2  
 13:9 Mt 10:17  
 13:10 Mt 24:14,  
 Mt 28:19,  
 Col 1:23  
 13:11 Mt 10:19,  
 Mt 10:20,  
 Lk 12:12  
 13:12 Mt 10:21  
 13:13 Mt 10:22  
 13:14 Dn 9:27,  
 Dn 11:31,  
 Dn 12:11,  
 Mt 24:15,  
 Lk 21:21  
 13:15 Lk 17:31  
 13:17 Lk 23:29  
 13:19 Dn 12:1;  
 Jl 2:2; Mk 10:6  
 13:20 Mt 24:22;  
 Mk 13:22  
 13:21 Lk 17:23,  
 Lk 21:8  
 13:22 Mt 7:15,  
 Mt 24:24  
 13:23 2Pt 3:17  
 13:24 Is 13:10;  
 Eze 32:7; Jl 2:10,  
 Jl 2:31; Rev 6:12  
 13:25 Is 34:4;  
 Rev 6:13  
 13:26 Dn 7:13;  
 Rev 1:7

### Keep watch!

<sup>5</sup>Jesus said, "Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>6</sup>Many people will come in my name, saying, 'I'm the one!' They will deceive many people. <sup>7</sup>When you hear of wars and reports of wars, don't be alarmed. These things must happen, but this isn't the end yet. <sup>8</sup>Nations and kingdoms will fight against each other, and there will be earthquakes and famines in all sorts of places. These things are just the beginning of the sufferings associated with the end.

<sup>9</sup>"Watch out for yourselves. People will hand you over to the councils. You will be beaten in the synagogues. You will stand before governors and kings because of me so that you can testify before them. <sup>10</sup>First, the good news must be proclaimed to all the nations. <sup>11</sup>When they haul you in and hand you over, don't worry ahead of time about what to answer or say. Instead, say whatever is given to you at that moment, for you aren't doing the speaking but the Holy Spirit is. <sup>12</sup>Brothers and sisters will hand each other over to death. A father will turn in his children. Children will rise up against their parents and have them executed. <sup>13</sup>Everyone will hate you because of my name. But whoever stands firm until the end will be saved.

<sup>14</sup>"When you see the disgusting and destructive thing standing where it shouldn't be (the reader should understand this), then those in Judea must escape to the mountains. <sup>15</sup>Those on the roof shouldn't come down or enter their houses to grab anything. <sup>16</sup>Those in the field shouldn't come back to grab their clothes. <sup>17</sup>How terrible it will be at that time for women who are pregnant and for women who are nursing their children. <sup>18</sup>Pray that it doesn't happen in winter. <sup>19</sup>In those days there will be great suffering such as the world has never before seen and will never again see. <sup>20</sup>If the Lord hadn't shortened that time, no one would be rescued. But for the sake of the chosen ones, the ones whom God chose, he has cut short the time.

<sup>21</sup>"Then if someone says to you, 'Look, here's the Christ,' or 'There he is,' don't believe it. <sup>22</sup>False christs and false prophets will appear, and they will offer signs and wonders in order to deceive, if possible, those whom God has chosen. <sup>23</sup>But you, watch out! I've told you everything ahead of time.

<sup>24</sup>"In those days, after the suffering of that time, the sun will become dark, and the moon won't give its light. <sup>25</sup>The stars will fall from the sky, and the planets and other heavenly bodies will be shaken. <sup>26</sup>Then they will see the Human One<sup>d</sup> coming in the clouds with great

<sup>1</sup>Or *Son of Man*

13:6 *in my name*: Elsewhere Jesus praises those who work miracles in his name (see Mark 9:39). Here he warns against those who claim to be the one.

13:8 *sufferings . . . the end*: Jesus explains that human suffering plays an inevitable part in the unfolding redemption of the world. The end is really the full arrival of God's kingdom.

13:9-13 These verses predict in detail the destiny of Jesus' followers.

13:9 *hand you over*: See Mark 9:31; 10:33. This prediction suggests some in Mark's audience have been or will be betrayed. *beaten in the synagogues*: See Mark 14:65.

13:10 *good news*: News about God's coming kingdom must be shared with *all the nations* so they can prepare to participate in it. See note on Mark 1:14.

13:11 *Holy Spirit*: See Mark 1:8. God's Spirit is at work among those who join forces with God's kingdom.

13:12 Earlier Jesus redefined family relationships (see Mark 3:31-35). Here he notes that traditional family units will divide over the question of loyalty to God's kingdom.

13:13 *stands firm until the end*: See Mark 13:4, 7, 8. "The end" means the end of the world in its present state, not the destruction of the created order. *saved*: See Mark 10:26. Salvation is a future reality. The faithful will receive it at Judgment Day.

13:14 *disgusting and destructive thing*: This description recalls the statue placed in the Jerusalem temple in the 2nd century when the Jewish people were under foreign rule (Dan 7:27; 11:31; 12:11). It could also point to corruption in the temple during the Jewish War (66-70 CE), which

occurred about the time scholars believe Mark was written. (*the reader should understand this*): Jesus' words apply not only to the disciples in the story but also to Mark's audience. *escape to the mountains*: The chaos of the Jewish War left Christians vulnerable to attack. Outsiders saw them as a fringe movement devoted to a leader who had failed (see Mark 13:9-13).

13:18 *in winter*: This season typically brings heavy rains that make travel more difficult.

13:19 *great suffering*: Intense suffering is only to be expected as part of God's unfolding plan.

13:20 *shortened that time*: Those who think God's kingdom is near often count the days until the coming end. By shortening the time span, God has also diminished the suffering. *the ones whom God chose*: Those who trust in God's kingdom have first been chosen by God (see Mark 13:22). See note on Mark 10:40.

13:21-22 See Mark 13:5. Ancient historians note that there were many in 1st-century Judea who claimed to be the Christ. See notes on Mark 1:1; 8:29.

13:23 *watch out*: Jesus urges wide-eyed attentiveness to the signs of God's kingdom breaking into the earthly realm (see Mark 4:24; 8:15, 18).

13:24-25 Even heavenly bodies will display the drama of God's coming kingdom (see Ezek 32:7-8; Joel 2:10, 31; Amos 8:9).

13:24 *In those days*: In the OT the phrase often refers to the "day of the Lord," when God's kingdom will come to earth (see Isa 13:10; 34:4; 50:2-3).

13:26-27 *Human One coming in the clouds*: In Daniel, the

power and splendor. <sup>27</sup>Then he will send the angels and gather together his chosen people from the four corners of the earth, from the end of the earth to the end of heaven.

**A lesson from the fig tree**

<sup>28</sup>Learn this parable from the fig tree. After its branch becomes tender and it sprouts new leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup>In the same way, when you see these things happening, you know that he's near, at the door. <sup>30</sup>I assure you that this generation won't pass away until all these things happen. <sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will certainly not pass away.

<sup>32</sup>But nobody knows when that day or hour will come, not the angels in heaven and not the Son. Only the Father knows. <sup>33</sup>Watch out! Stay alert! You don't know when the time is coming. <sup>34</sup>It is as if someone took a trip, left the household behind, and put the servants in charge, giving each one a job to do, and told the doorkeeper to stay alert. <sup>35</sup>Therefore, stay alert! You don't know when the head of the household will come, whether in the evening or at midnight, or when the rooster crows in the early morning or at daybreak. <sup>36</sup>Don't let him show up when you weren't expecting and find you sleeping. <sup>37</sup>What I say to you, I say to all: Stay alert!"

**Preparation for burial**

**14**It was two days before Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and legal experts through cunning tricks were searching for a way to arrest Jesus and kill him. <sup>2</sup>But they agreed that it shouldn't happen during the festival; otherwise, there would be an uproar among the people.

<sup>3</sup>Jesus was at Bethany visiting the house of Simon, who had a skin disease. During dinner, a woman came in with a vase made of alabaster and containing very expensive perfume of pure nard. She broke open the vase and poured the perfume on his head. <sup>4</sup>Some grew angry. They said to each other, "Why waste the perfume? <sup>5</sup>This perfume could have been sold for almost a year's pay<sup>k</sup> and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her.

<sup>6</sup>Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you make trouble for her? She has done a good thing for me. <sup>7</sup>You always have the poor with you; and whenever you want, you can do something good for them. But you won't always have me. <sup>8</sup>She has done what she could. She has anointed my body ahead of time for burial. <sup>9</sup>I tell you the truth that, wherever in the whole world the good news is announced, what she's done will also be told in memory of her."

<sup>k</sup>Or three hundred denaria; a denarion was equivalent to a day's pay.

Human One who joins God in the heavenly throne room takes the place of the beasts who have gone before (see Dan 7:13-14). According to Mark, the figure will arrive on earth to establish God's kingdom. See sidebar, "The Human One in Mark" from the four corners of the earth: In God's kingdom the chosen people are those who trust God and reflect God's reign, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or even religious tradition (see Mark 13:20).  
 13:28-31 See Mark 11:12-14, 20-21. Jesus says God's kingdom is in season, that is, the signs of its arrival are all around.  
 13:30 *this generation... happen*: Jesus implies God's kingdom will arrive within a lifetime. Some read "this generation" as a metaphor for the era when evil persists unchecked. See notes on Mark 8:12; 9:1; 13:4.  
 13:33 *Stay alert!*: Since only God knows when the kingdom will arrive (Mark 13:32), Jesus repeats his warning to be ready at any moment (Mark 13:35, 37; 13:34).  
 13:34 *someone took a trip*: See Matthew 24:37-51; 25:13-30; Luke 12:35-46; 19:11-27. God is like an absentee landlord who will soon return to reclaim the estate. In the meantime, the tenants are *in charge*.  
 13:35 *in the evening... at daybreak*: Romans divided the night watch into four segments. The owner could return at night, so staying awake required people to be especially alert (see Mark 14:32-42; Rom 13:11-14; 1 Thess 5:1-11).  
 13:37 *to all*: See Mark 13:14. This private conversation

between Jesus and his disciples (see Mark 13:3) applies to everyone.  
 14:1-15:27 See Matthew 26:1-27:66; Luke 22:1-23:56; John 13:1-19:42.  
 14:1-11 See Matthew 26:1-16; Luke 22:1-6. Mark contrasts the story of an unnamed woman's sacrifice (14:3-9) with reports about the plot against Jesus (14:1-2, 10-11).  
 14:1 *Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread*: See Exodus 12:1-13:16; 2 Chronicles 35:17. These holy days celebrate the miracle of Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Exod 12:1-13:16).  
 14:2 *uproar among the people*: At Passover both the crowds and the religious excitement made Jerusalem ripe for rebellion.  
 14:3 *skin disease*: Jesus finds himself among those who are unclean by religious standards (see Mark 1:40-45). *alabaster... nard*: Both the vase and the perfume were very costly.  
 14:7 *You always have the poor... won't always have me*: See Deuteronomy 15:11. Jesus doesn't deny the importance of serving the poor when he affirms the woman's gift (see Mark 2:19-20).  
 14:8 *She has done what she could*: See Mark 12:41-44. She's spent everything on Jesus. *anointed my body*: In her symbolic act, the woman has shown that this is the Christ, the anointed one.  
 14:9 *whole world*: God's kingdom doesn't have boundaries

13:27 Dt 30:4  
 13:28 Mt 24:32  
 13:29 Jas 5:9  
 13:30 Mk 9:1  
 13:31 Is 40:8, Is 51:6; Mt 5:18  
 13:32 Mt 24:36, Mt 25:13; Ac 17: 1Th 5:2  
 13:33 Mt 25:13; Mk 14:38; Eph 6:18  
 13:34 Mt 25:14; Lk 12:36, Lk 19:12  
 13:35 Mt 24:42  
 13:36 Ro 13:11  
 13:37 Mk 13:35  
 14:1 Mt 12:14, Mt 26:2, Mt 26:4; Lk 22:1, Lk 22:2  
 14:3 Mt 26:6, Mt 26:7; Lk 7:37; Jn 12:1, Jn 12:3  
 14:4 Mt 26:8, Mt 26:9; Mk 14:5; Jn 12:5  
 14:5 Mk 14:4; Jn 12:5, Jn 13:29; Eph 4:28  
 14:6 Mt 26:10; Jn 10:32; Eph 2:10; Heb 13:21  
 14:7 Dt 15:11; Mt 26:11  
 14:8 Mk 16:1; Jn 19:40  
 14:9 Mt 26:13

14:10 Mt 26:14;  
Lk 22:3; Jn 13:2  
14:11 2Ki 5:26;  
Jer 32:10;  
Mt 26:15,  
Mt 28:12;  
Mk 14:10

14:12 Dt 16:1;  
Mt 26:17;  
Lk 22:7; 1Co 5:7

14:13 Mt 26:18,  
Mt 26:19;  
Lk 22:10

14:14 Mk 13:3;  
Jn 11:28

14:15 Ac 1:13

14:17 Mt 26:20;  
Lk 22:14

14:18 Ps 41:9

14:19 Mt 26:22

14:21 Mt 18:7,  
Mt 26:24

14:22 Mt 26:26;  
1Co 10:16,  
1Co 11:23

14:23 Mt 15:36,  
Mt 26:27;  
Mk 14:22;  
Lk 22:17;  
Ro 14:6

14:24 Ex 24:8;  
Mk 10:45;  
1Co 10:16,  
1Co 11:25

14:25 Mt 26:29

14:26 Mt 26:30

14:27 Zec 13:7;  
Mt 26:31

14:28 Mt 16:21,  
Mt 20:19,  
Mt 26:32,  
Mt 28:16;  
Mk 16:7

14:29 Mt 26:33;  
Lk 22:33;  
Lk 22:34;  
Jn 13:36

14:30 Mt 26:34;  
Mk 14:68;  
Mk 14:72;  
Jn 13:38

### Passover meal

<sup>10</sup>Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to give Jesus up to them. <sup>11</sup>When they heard it, they were delighted and promised to give him money. So he started looking for an opportunity to turn him in.

<sup>12</sup>On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, the disciples said to Jesus, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover meal?"

<sup>13</sup>He sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city. A man carrying a water jar will meet you. Follow him. <sup>14</sup>Wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher asks, "Where is my guest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?"' <sup>15</sup>He will show you a large room upstairs already furnished. Prepare for us there." <sup>16</sup>The disciples left, came into the city, found everything just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

<sup>17</sup>That evening, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup>During the meal, Jesus said, "I assure you that one of you will betray me—someone eating with me."

<sup>19</sup>Deeply saddened, they asked him, one by one, "It's not me, is it?"

<sup>20</sup>Jesus answered, "It's one of the Twelve, one who is dipping bread with me into this bowl. <sup>21</sup>The Human One<sup>1</sup> goes to his death just as it is written about him. But how terrible it is for that person who betrays the Human One!<sup>m</sup> It would have been better for him if he had never been born."

<sup>22</sup>While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." <sup>23</sup>He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. <sup>24</sup>He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. <sup>25</sup>I assure you that I won't drink wine again until that day when I drink it in a new way in God's kingdom." <sup>26</sup>After singing songs of praise, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

### Predictions about disciples leaving Jesus

<sup>27</sup>Jesus said to them, "You will all falter in your faithfulness to me. It is written, *I will hit the shepherd, and the sheep will go off in all directions.*" <sup>28</sup>But after I'm raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."

<sup>29</sup>Peter said to him, "Even if everyone else stumbles, I won't."

<sup>30</sup>But Jesus said to him, "I assure you that on this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times."

<sup>1</sup>Or *Son of Man* <sup>m</sup>Or *Son of Man* <sup>m</sup>Zech 13:7

like a nation or a group of people (see Mark 13:10, 27). *good news*: See note on Mark 1:14. *in memory of her*: The gospel isn't just about Jesus; it's also about how others play a role in his mission.

14:10 *Judas Iscariot*: See Mark 3:19. *chief priests*: See note on Mark 11:18. *give Jesus up*: See Mark 9:31; 10:33; 14:11; 13:9.

14:11-26 See Matthew 26:17-25; Luke 22:7-14.

14:12 *first day... when the Passover lamb was sacrificed*: The timing isn't clear, since the lamb is usually killed the day before the festival begins. Mark may depart from Jewish custom by counting days from sunrise rather than from sunset.

14:16 *as he had told them*: Jesus' directions about preparing for the meal are flawless (see Mark 11:2-6).

14:18 *someone eating with me*: In the ancient world shared meals nurtured friendship bonds. Jesus' prediction of his betrayal, then, is tinged with irony (see Ps 41:9).

14:21 *just as it is written about him*: Jesus doesn't seem to be referring to any particular scriptural texts, since the OT nowhere speaks of the death of the Human One. Instead, he's identifying with traditions in the OT where righteous people are made to suffer.

14:22-25 Jesus' words about the bread and the cup

support early Christian worship habits. His followers often shared a memorial meal when they gathered (see 1 Cor 11:23-26).

14:22 *my body*: The metaphor connects the bread to Jesus' own flesh. In Paul's letters "body" also refers to communities of Jesus' followers after his death (see 1 Cor 12:12-27; Rom 12:4).

14:24 *my blood... for many*: In the OT blood was used to authorize legal contracts (see Exod 24:6-8). The saying probably recalls Jeremiah's hope for a "new covenant" (see Jer 31:31-34), which is written on the heart, not on stone. It's also wide-reaching; the phrase "for many" echoes Mark 10:45.

14:25 *that day*: See Mark 13:32. The appointed time for God's reign to arrive. *God's kingdom*: See note on Mark 1:15.

14:27-31 See Matthew 26:30-35; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:36-38.

14:27 *falter in your faithfulness to me*: or "stumble" (see Mark 9:42-47). Jesus predicts his disciples will abandon him (see Zech 13:7; 14:50).

14:28 *I will go before you*: Jesus will lead his disciples even after the resurrection. *to Galilee*: Mark's audience may have ties to this region (see Mark 16:7).

<sup>31</sup>But Peter insisted, "If I must die alongside you, I won't deny you." And they all said the same thing.

### Jesus in prayer

<sup>32</sup>Jesus and his disciples came to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus said to them, "Sit here while I pray." <sup>33</sup>He took Peter, James, and John along with him. He began to feel despair and was anxious. <sup>34</sup>He said to them, "I'm very sad. It's as if I'm dying. Stay here and keep alert."

<sup>35</sup>Then he went a short distance farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if possible, he might be spared the time of suffering. <sup>36</sup>He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible. Take this cup of suffering away from me. However—not what I want but what you want."

<sup>37</sup>He came and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Couldn't you stay alert for one hour? <sup>38</sup>Stay alert and pray so that you won't give in to temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak."

<sup>39</sup>Again, he left them and prayed, repeating the same words. <sup>40</sup>And, again, when he came back, he found them sleeping, for they couldn't keep their eyes open, and they didn't know how to respond to him. <sup>41</sup>He came a third time and said to them, "Will you sleep and rest all night? That's enough! The time has come for the Human One<sup>o</sup> to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup>Get up! Let's go! Look, here comes my betrayer."

### Arrest

<sup>43</sup>Suddenly, while Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, came with a mob carrying swords and clubs. They had been sent by the chief priests, legal experts, and elders. <sup>44</sup>His betrayer had given them a sign: "Arrest the man I kiss, and take him away under guard."

<sup>45</sup>As soon as he got there, Judas said to Jesus, "Rabbi!" Then he kissed him. <sup>46</sup>Then they came and grabbed Jesus and arrested him.

<sup>47</sup>One of the bystanders drew a sword and struck the high priest's slave and cut off his ear. <sup>48</sup>Jesus responded, "Have you come with swords and clubs to arrest me, like an outlaw?"

14:31 Lk 22:33;  
Jn 13:37  
14:32 Mt 26:36;  
Lk 22:39;  
Lk 22:40; Jn 18:1  
14:33 Mk 5:37;  
Mk 9:2  
14:34 Ps 42:5;  
Jn 12:27  
14:35 Mk 14:41;  
Heb 5:7  
14:36 Jn 18:11;  
Ro 8:15; Ga 4:6  
14:37 Mt 26:40;  
Mk 1:16;  
Mk 14:29;  
Lk 9:32  
14:38 Mt 6:13;  
Mt 24:42;  
Mt 25:13;  
Mt 26:41;  
Lk 22:40  
14:39 Mt 26:42;  
Mt 26:44;  
Mk 14:36  
14:40 Mk 9:6  
14:41 Mk 14:35  
14:42 Mt 26:46;  
Jn 18:1  
14:43 Mt 26:47;  
Lk 22:47; Jn 18:3;  
Ac 1:16  
14:45 Mt 23:7;  
Mt 23:8;  
Mk 9:5; Jn 13:13;  
Jn 13:14  
14:46 Jn 18:12  
14:47 Mt 26:51;  
Jn 18:10  
14:48 Mt 20:22;  
Mt 26:4;  
Mt 26:55;  
Mt 26:59;  
Lk 22:52

*The Human One in Mark* This title is an ambiguous term that appears frequently in Mark (Mark 2:10, 28; 3:28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 62). Sometimes Jesus uses it indirectly to name himself. In other cases, he seems to refer to humanity as a whole or to a special figure who will preside over God's kingdom. How then might we understand the term? It's helpful to remember that, in Jesus' world, individual figures often represented groups of people. The Human One probably is a symbol—an ideal human being who embodies the new humanity that reflects God's kingdom. From this perspective, Jesus is the Human One because he is the Christ who is entrusted with the task of showing the world what God's power looks like. But his followers, too, get involved in his mission. So they also become part of the Human One. In this way, the Human One is both Jesus—God's anointed one—and the people who, through him, trust the power of God's kingdom.

<sup>o</sup>Or Son of Man

14:32-42 See Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46.

14:33 *Peter, James, and John*: See Mark 9:2; 13:3. Jesus' closest friends witness his prayerful struggle. See note on Mark 5:37. *despair* . . . *anxious*: As part of his role as a Christ who suffers, Jesus agonizes as he faces his death.

14:34 *keep alert*: See note on Mark 13:33.

14:35-36 Jesus asks God to spare him the suffering he expects (see Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). *If possible*: See Mark 9:22-23; 10:27. *Abba*: an Aramaic word for "father." *not what I want but what you want*: Jesus finally embraces God's will (see Mark 3:35).

14:38 *spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak*: A contrast between flesh and spirit as two aspects of a person was common in the ancient world. The spirit was generally viewed as more receptive to the divine will, while the body was more vulnerable to human weakness.

14:41 *time has come*: See Mark 13:32. Jesus links his

betrayal and death to God's coming kingdom (see Mark 1:14).

14:43-51 See Matthew 26:47-56; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:3-12. Judas' betrayal is full of irony. He betrays Jesus with a gesture of friendship, and Jesus responds to a frantic, armed mob with a calm acceptance of his impending, violent end.

14:43 *swords and clubs*: The mob has violent plans for Jesus (see Mark 14:28). *sent by the chief priests, legal experts, and elders*: The religious leaders keep a safe distance from the action. See notes on Mark 1:22; 8:31.

14:47 *high priest's slave*: The high priest was Caiaphas, who ruled from 18 to 36/7 CE. The identity of the bystander is unclear. Jesus doesn't say anything about the deed (cf. Matt 26:52-54).

14:48 *like an outlaw*: The mob treats Jesus as if he's an armed rebel.

14:49 Mk 12:35;  
Lk 19:47;  
Jn 18:20

14:50 Ps 88:18;  
Mk 14:27;  
Jn 16:32

14:53 Mt 26:57

14:54 Jn 18:15,  
Jn 18:18

14:55 Mt 26:59

14:58 Mk 15:29;  
Jn 2:19

14:60 Mt 26:63;  
Jn 19:9

14:61 Is 53:7;  
Mt 26:63

14:62 Ps 110:1;  
Dn 7:13;  
Mt 26:64

14:63 Nm 14:6;  
Ac 14:14

14:64 Lv 24:16

14:65 Is 50:6;  
Mt 26:67;  
Mt 26:68;

Mk 10:34;  
Mk 15:19

14:66 Mt 26:69;  
Mk 14:54;

Lk 22:55;  
Jn 18:16,  
Jn 18:25

14:68 Mk 14:30,  
Mk 14:72

14:70 Mt 26:73;  
Ac 2:7

<sup>49</sup>Day after day, I was with you, teaching in the temple, but you didn't arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.<sup>50</sup> And all his disciples left him and ran away.<sup>51</sup> One young man, a disciple, was wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They grabbed him,<sup>52</sup> but he left the linen cloth behind and ran away naked.

### ***A hearing before the Sanhedrin***

<sup>53</sup>They led Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders, and legal experts gathered. <sup>54</sup>Peter followed him from a distance, right into the high priest's courtyard. He was sitting with the guards, warming himself by the fire. <sup>55</sup>The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they couldn't find any. <sup>56</sup>Many brought false testimony against him, but they contradicted each other. <sup>57</sup>Some stood to offer false witness against him, saying, <sup>58</sup>"We heard him saying, 'I will destroy this temple, constructed by humans, and within three days I will build another, one not made by humans.'" <sup>59</sup>But their testimonies didn't agree even on this point.

<sup>60</sup>Then the high priest stood up in the middle of the gathering and examined Jesus. "Aren't you going to respond to the testimony these people have brought against you?" <sup>61</sup>But Jesus was silent and didn't answer. Again, the high priest asked, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the blessed one?"

<sup>62</sup>Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Human One<sup>P</sup> sitting on the right side of the Almighty<sup>Q</sup> and coming on the heavenly clouds."

<sup>63</sup>Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "Why do we need any more witnesses?"

<sup>64</sup>You've heard his insult against God. What do you think?"

They all condemned him. "He deserves to die!"

<sup>65</sup>Some began to spit on him. Some covered his face and hit him, saying, "Prophecy!" Then the guards took him and beat him.

### ***Peter denies Jesus***

<sup>66</sup>Meanwhile, Peter was below in the courtyard. A woman, one of the high priest's servants, approached <sup>67</sup>and saw Peter warming himself by the fire. She stared at him and said, "You were also with the Nazarene, Jesus."

<sup>68</sup>But he denied it, saying, "I don't know what you're talking about. I don't understand what you're saying." And he went outside into the outer courtyard. A rooster crowed.

<sup>69</sup>The female servant saw him and began a second time to say to those standing around, "This man is one of them."<sup>70</sup> But he denied it again.

A short time later, those standing around again said to Peter, "You must be one of them, because you are also a Galilean."

<sup>P</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>Q</sup>Or the Power

14:50 *all his disciples*: The report fulfills Jesus' prediction (see Mark 14:27).

14:51-52 Mark leaves no good hints to aid us in our desire to know who this is. Some interpreters identify the young man as the angel in the empty tomb (Mark 16:5), and some think he's actually Mark himself.

14:53-65 See Matthew 26:57-68; Luke 22:63-65; John 18:19-24. Jesus' first trial is before the Jewish council known as the Sanhedrin (see note on Mark 8:31).

14:53 *high priest*: a reference to Caiaphas. See note on Mark 14:47. *chief priests, elders, and legal experts*: See notes on Mark 1:22; 8:31.

14:54 *from a distance*: Peter follows with caution. He's loyal to Jesus but worried about the danger his loyalty might bring.

14:56 *false testimony... contradicted each other*: Jewish Law required two witnesses to confirm a charge (Num 35:30; Deut 19:15).

14:58 See Mark 11:15-16; 13:1-2.

14:61 *Jesus was silent and didn't answer*: See Psalm 38:12-14; Isaiah 53:7.

14:62 *I am*: See note on Mark 6:50. *And you will*

see... *heavenly clouds*: As the Christ, Jesus announces the coming of the Human One to establish God's kingdom. See note on Mark 13:26-27.

14:64 *insult against God*: The offense of blasphemy carries a death penalty (Lev 24:16). It's unclear, though, exactly how Jesus has committed this crime.

14:65 "*Prophecy!*": This taunt reveals Jesus' reputation as a prophet. It may also refer to his prediction about the Human One in Mark 14:62. The hostile treatment he receives resembles the treatment of God's servant in Isaiah 53:7.

14:66-72 See Matthew 26:69-75; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18. Peter's denials fulfill Jesus' prophecy (Mark 14:30). He's the last disciple to fade from view.

14:66 *woman... high priest's servants*: Caiaphas' household is involved at every turn in the plot against Jesus (see Mark 14:47). Peter denies this servant's accusation twice (Mark 14:68, 70).

14:68 *don't understand*: Peter's response is ironic, since the disciples repeatedly misunderstand Jesus' mission and teaching (see Mark 4:13; 6:52; 8:17, 12; 9:32). See sidebar, "The Disciples in Mark" at Mark 5.

<sup>71</sup>But he cursed and swore, "I don't know this man you're talking about."<sup>72</sup>At that very moment, a rooster crowed a second time. Peter remembered what Jesus told him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down, sobbing.

**Trial before Pilate**

**15**At daybreak, the chief priests—with the elders, legal experts, and the whole Sanhedrin—formed a plan. They bound Jesus, led him away, and turned him over to Pilate.<sup>2</sup>Pilate questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Jesus replied, "That's what you say."<sup>3</sup>The chief priests were accusing him of many things.

<sup>4</sup>Pilate asked him again, "Aren't you going to answer? What about all these accusations?"

<sup>5</sup>But Jesus gave no more answers, so that Pilate marveled.

<sup>6</sup>During the festival, Pilate released one prisoner to them, whomever they requested.<sup>7</sup>A man named Barabbas was locked up with the rebels who had committed murder during an uprising.<sup>8</sup>The crowd pushed forward and asked Pilate to release someone, as he regularly did.<sup>9</sup>Pilate answered them, "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?"<sup>10</sup>He knew that the chief priests had handed him over because of jealousy.<sup>11</sup>But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas to them instead.<sup>12</sup>Pilate replied, "Then what do you want me to do with the one you call king of the Jews?"

<sup>13</sup>They shouted back, "Crucify him!"

<sup>14</sup>Pilate said to them, "Why? What wrong has he done?"

They shouted even louder, "Crucify him!"

<sup>15</sup>Pilate wanted to satisfy the crowd, so he released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus whipped, then handed him over to be crucified.

**Jesus is tortured and killed**

<sup>16</sup>The soldiers led Jesus away into the courtyard of the palace known as the governor's headquarters,<sup>17</sup> and they called together the whole company of soldiers.<sup>18</sup>They dressed him up in a purple robe and twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on him.<sup>19</sup>They saluted him, "Hey! King of the Jews!"<sup>19</sup>Again and again, they struck his head with a stick. They spit on him and knelt before him to honor him.<sup>20</sup>When they finished mocking him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

<sup>21</sup>Simon, a man from Cyrene, Alexander and Rufus' father, was coming in from the countryside. They forced him to carry his cross.

14:72 Mt 26:34; Mk 26:75; Mk 11:21; Mk 14:30; Mk 14:68  
15:1 Mt 27:1; Mk 27:2; Lk 22:66; Lk 23:1; Jn 18:28  
15:2 Mt 27:11; Lk 23:3  
15:4 Jn 19:10  
15:5 Is 53:7; Mk 14:61; Mk 15:4; Jn 19:9  
15:6 Mt 27:15; Jn 18:39; Jn 18:40  
15:7 Mt 27:16; Lk 23:18; Jn 18:40  
15:9 Mt 27:17; Mk 15:2  
15:10 Mt 27:18; Ti 3:3  
15:11 Mt 27:20; Ac 3:14  
15:12 Mk 15:2  
15:14 Mt 27:24; Lk 23:4  
Lk 23:11; Lk 23:23; Jn 19:6  
15:15 Mt 27:26; Jn 19:1  
15:16 Mt 27:27; Jn 18:28; Jn 18:33; Jn 19:9  
15:17 Lk 23:11; Jn 19:2  
15:18 Mk 15:2  
15:19 Mk 14:65  
15:20 Mt 27:31; Jn 19:16  
15:21 Mt 27:32; Lk 23:26; Ro 16:13

<sup>17</sup>Or praetorium <sup>18</sup>Or cohort (approximately six hundred soldiers)

14:72 *broke down, sobbing*: Mark stresses the story's emotional impact (see Mark 14:33-34).

15:1-15 See Matthew 27:1-2, 11-23; Luke 23:1-5, 13-25; John 18:28-40. The Jewish leaders have condemned Jesus (Mark 14:64), but they don't have the power to kill him. They hand him over to Pilate, the Roman governor, who does.

15:1 *daybreak*: Mark divides the last day of Jesus' life into four specific time periods (see Mark 15:25, 33, 42) *plan*: In Mark's view the Jewish leaders' plan is really God's plan. *Pilate*: the Roman governor (called a prefect) of Judea from 26 to 36 CE.

15:2 *king of the Jews*: See Mark 15:9, 12, 18, 26. The Jewish leaders indicate that Jesus poses a political threat. Jesus neither confirms nor denies the claim.

15:5 *no more answers*: Jesus refuses to answer questions directly (see Mark 14:61; 15:2). *marveled*: See Mark 5:20. Pilate doesn't seem convinced Jesus is guilty.

15:7 *Barabbas*: Ironically, the crowds want Pilate to release a member of an armed resistance group. Rebellions were common while Rome occupied Palestine. They were both political and religious in nature.

15:10 *because of jealousy*: Mark suggests Pilate is reluctant to condemn Jesus.

15:13 "*Crucify him!*": The same crowd that welcomed Jesus (Mark 11:1-11, 18) now demands his execution.

15:15 *handed him over*: See Mark 3:19; 8:31; 9:31; 14:10, 11. Pilate appears to be a weak ruler who is only following the crowd. According to other 1st-century reports, he was a ruthless tyrant who crucified troublemakers without a second thought.

15:16-41 See Matthew 27:27-56; Luke 23:26-49; John 19:16b-37.

15:16 *governor's headquarters... whole company of soldiers*: Mark reports that several hundred soldiers watched as Jesus was mocked and tortured.

15:17 *purple robe... crown of thorns*: The soldiers make fun of Jesus' royal status by dressing him as a king (see Mark 10:34).

15:19 *struck his head... spit on him*: See Mark 10:34; Isaiah 50:6.

15:21 *Simon* is probably a Jew in Jerusalem for the Passover. *Cyrene*: a city in North Africa (modern-day Libya). *Alexander and Rufus' father*: Mark's audience may have

15:23 Ps 69:21;  
Mt 27:34;  
Lk 23:36

15:24 Ps 22:18;  
Mt 27:35;  
Jn 19:23;  
Jn 19:24

15:25 Mk 15:33

15:27 Mt 27:38  
15:28 Is 53:12;  
Lk 22:37;  
Jn 19:37

15:29 Ps 22:7;  
Ps 109:25;  
Mt 27:39;  
Mk 14:58

15:31 Lk 23:35

15:32 Mk 14:61;  
Lk 23:39; Jn 14:9;  
Jn 12:13

15:33 Am 8:9;  
Mt 27:45;  
Mk 15:25;  
Lk 23:44

15:34 Ps 22:1;  
Mt 27:46

15:35 Mt 17:11;  
Mt 27:47;  
Mk 9:4, Mk 9:11

15:36 Ps 69:21;  
Mk 15:23

15:37 Mt 27:50;  
Mk 15:34;  
Lk 23:46;  
Jn 19:30

15:38 Ex 26:31;  
Mt 27:51;  
Lk 23:4

<sup>22</sup>They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means Skull Place. <sup>23</sup>They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh, but he didn't take it. <sup>24</sup>They crucified him. They divided up his clothes, drawing lots for them to determine who would take what. <sup>25</sup>It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup>The notice of the formal charge against him was written, "The king of the Jews." <sup>27</sup>They crucified two outlaws with him, one on his right and one on his left.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>29</sup>People walking by insulted him, shaking their heads and saying, "Ha! So you were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, were you?" <sup>30</sup>Save yourself and come down from that cross!"

<sup>31</sup>In the same way, the chief priests were making fun of him among themselves, together with the legal experts. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself. <sup>32</sup>Let the Christ, the king of Israel, come down from the cross. Then we'll see and believe." Even those who had been crucified with Jesus insulted him.

<sup>33</sup>From noon until three in the afternoon the whole earth was dark. <sup>34</sup>At three, Jesus cried out with a loud shout, "Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani," which means, "My God, my God, why have you left me?"

<sup>35</sup>After hearing him, some standing there said, "Look! He's calling Elijah!" <sup>36</sup>Someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, and put it on a pole. He offered it to Jesus to drink, saying, "Let's see if Elijah will come to take him down." <sup>37</sup>But Jesus let out a loud cry and died.

<sup>38</sup>The curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup>When the centurion, who stood facing Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "This man was certainly God's Son."

<sup>40</sup>Some women were watching from a distance, including Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James (the younger one) and Joses, and Salome. <sup>41</sup>When Jesus was in Galilee, these women had followed and supported him, along with many other women who had come to Jerusalem with him.

### Jesus' burial

<sup>42</sup>Since it was late in the afternoon on Preparation Day, just before the Sabbath, <sup>43</sup>Joseph from Arimathea dared to approach Pilate and ask for Jesus' body. (Joseph was a prominent

<sup>†</sup>15:28 is omitted in most critical editions of the Gk New Testament *The scripture was fulfilled, which says, He was numbered among criminals.*

15:39 Mt 27:54; Mk 15:11; Lk 23:47 15:40 Mk 15:47; Mk 16:1; Lk 8:2; Jn 19:25 15:41 Mt 27:55; Mt 27:56; Lk 8:3 15:42 Mt 27:57; Mt 27:62; Lk 23:50; Jn 19:38 15:43 Lk 2:25; Lk 2:38

known Simon's sons, *carry his cross*: Convicted criminals typically carried only the crossbar, not the entire cross.

15:22 *Golgotha, which means Skull Place*: Roman crucifixion usually took place outside the city walls. Executed criminals provided a graphic symbol of Rome's strength. See note on Mark 3:17.

15:23 *wine . . . myrrh*: The combination was used to relieve pain.

15:24 *divided up his clothes, drawing lots*: See Psalm 22:18. The story of the crucifixion includes many details from this lament psalm (see also Mark 15:29, 34).

15:25 *nine in the morning*: See note on Mark 15:1.

15:26 *formal charge*: Notices often announced the charges leading to crucifixion. The title "The king of the Jews" offers a good reason for Jesus' death, since the Romans dealt violently with those whom they regarded as a threat to Caesar.

15:27 *two outlaws*: Jesus hangs between two political rebels.

15:29 *shaking their heads*: See Psalm 22:7. *destroy the temple*: See Mark 11:15-16; 13:1-2.

15:30 *Save yourself*: See Mark 11:9. An ironic command, especially in light of Jesus' teaching in Mark 8:35. For Mark, by not saving himself, Jesus saves others.

15:31-32 *chief priests . . . legal experts*: Jewish leaders appear again, this time to mock Jesus. See notes on Mark 1:22; 8:31. *Christ, the king of Israel*: The title combines words that make sense to Jews (Christ) and Romans (king). *Then we'll see and believe*: In Mark authentic faith comes before,

not after, evidence that confirms it (see Mark 8:11-12; cf. Mark 16:17-18).

15:33 *whole earth was dark*: cosmic proof of the coming end (see Mark 13:24-25).

15:34 "My God, my God, why have you left me?": Jesus' words come from Psalm 22:1. They both express his anguish (see Mark 14:32-42) and look forward to the time when "all the nations" will worship God (see Ps 22:27).

15:35 *Elijah*: See Mark 9:11-13; see note on Mark 1:6.

15:36 *sour wine*: or "vinegar" (see Ps 69:21).

15:38 *curtain . . . was torn*: The temple curtain marked the space reserved for God's presence (see Exod 26:31-37). Its tearing from top to bottom means God is loose in the world. See note on Mark 1:10.

15:39 *centurion*: A Roman soldier—a Gentile—is the first human in Mark to call Jesus *God's Son*. See note on Mark 1:11.

15:40 *watching from a distance*: See note on Mark 14:54. *Mary Magdalene*: See Mark 15:47; 16:1. *Mary . . . Joses*: possibly Jesus' mother (see Mark 6:3). Mark's audience may know James and Joses. *Salome*: She appears only in Mark (see Matt 28:1; John 20:1).

*followed and supported him*: The women are part of a larger group of disciples (see Luke 8:1-3).

15:42-47 See Matthew 27:57-61; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42.

15:42 *late in the afternoon*: Jewish Law said that all work must be completed before the Sabbath begins at sundown. See note on Mark 15:1.



council member who also eagerly anticipated the coming of God's kingdom.) <sup>44</sup>Pilate wondered if Jesus was already dead. He called the centurion and asked him whether Jesus had already died. <sup>45</sup>When he learned from the centurion that Jesus was dead, Pilate gave the dead body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup>He bought a linen cloth, took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in the cloth, and laid him in a tomb that had been carved out of rock. He rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. <sup>47</sup>Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was buried.

**Empty tomb**

**16** When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint Jesus' dead body. <sup>2</sup>Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they came to the tomb. <sup>3</sup>They were saying to each other, "Who's going to roll the stone away from the entrance for us?" <sup>4</sup>When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. (And it was a very large stone!) <sup>5</sup>Going into the tomb, they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right side; and they were startled. <sup>6</sup>But he said to them, "Don't be alarmed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified." He has been raised. He isn't here. Look, here's the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup>Go, tell his disciples, especially Peter, that he is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you." <sup>8</sup>Overcome with terror and dread, they fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.\*

15:44 Mk 15:39; Jn 19:31; Ac 21:32, Ac 22:25, Ac 23:17  
 15:45 Mk 15:39, Mk 15:44; Jn 19:38  
 15:46 Mt 27:60; Mk 16:3  
 15:47 Mt 27:56, Mt 27:61, Mt 28:1; Mk 15:40, Mk 16:1  
 16:1 Mt 28:1; Mk 15:40, Mk 15:47; Lk 23:56; Jn 20:1  
 16:2 Mt 28:1; Lk 24:1  
 16:3 Mt 27:60; Mk 15:46  
 16:5 Jn 20:11, Jn 20:12  
 16:6 Mt 28:6; Mk 1:24; Ac 4:10  
 16:7 Mt 26:32; Mk 14:28; Jn 21:1  
 16:9 Mk 15:47; Lk 8:2; Jn 20:14, Jn 20:18  
 16:10 Lk 24:17; Jn 16:20, Jn 20:18  
 16:11 Mk 16:13, Mk 16:14; Lk 24:11  
 16:12 Lk 24:13



*Endings Added Later*

[<sup>9</sup>They promptly reported all of the young man's instructions to those who were with Peter. Afterward, through the work of his disciples, Jesus sent out, from the east to the west, the sacred and undying message of eternal salvation. Amen.]

[<sup>9</sup>After Jesus rose up early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. <sup>10</sup>She went and reported to the ones who had been with him, who were mourning and weeping. <sup>11</sup>But even after they heard the news, they didn't believe that Jesus was alive and that Mary had seen him.

<sup>12</sup>After that he appeared in a different form to two of them who were walking along in

\*Or the Crucified One In most critical editions of the Gk New Testament, the Gospel of Mark ends at 16:8.

15:43 *Joseph from Arimathea*: a Judean who was an active leader in Jerusalem. His request for Jesus' body is risky in many respects. Pilate might execute him as well. Joseph might violate sabbath law if sundown comes too quickly. He might lose status on the council, the group that turned Jesus over to the Romans.

15:46 Archaeology confirms these burial practices. *stone... tomb*: The tomb was probably a small cave, sealed by a large stone chiseled to fit over its entrance.

16:1-8 See Matthew 28:1-10; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10. This is the earliest existing ending to Mark. See note on Mark 16:9-20.

16:1 *Salome*: See note on Mark 15:40. *anoint Jesus' dead body*: Care for the dead required ritual cleansing (see Mark 14:8).

16:3 *roll the stone away*: The stone was cut in a disk shape so it would roll easily (see note on Mark 15:46). The question implies that its size required physical strength not typical for women.

16:5 *young man in a white robe*: the clothing of angels (see Mark 9:3). Some interpreters think this young man is the same one who ran away in Mark 14:51-52. His dress, however, suggests he's a divine messenger.

16:6 *Don't be alarmed!*: The women shouldn't be surprised to find an empty tomb (see Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). *raised... isn't here*: The man assures them that Jesus' body has been raised.

16:7 *tell his disciples, especially Peter*: Peter was the first

to follow and the last to desert Jesus (see Mark 1:16-18; 14:50, 66-72). *ahead of you*: See Mark 14:28. Despite their faults and his death, the disciples can still count on Jesus to lead them.

16:8 *terror and dread*: See Mark 4:41. *said nothing to anyone*: The women ignore the man's directions to "tell his disciples" (Mark 16:7). *because they were afraid*: The chapter ends abruptly. Some scholars think Mark wrote an open-ended Gospel on purpose; others think an original ending was lost early on.

[16:9] This is one of two separate endings added to Mark. This verse, called the "Shorter Ending," comes from the 4th century CE at the earliest. It's found without the longer ending in only one ancient copy of the Gospel. *sacred and undying message of eternal salvation*: This language is atypical of Mark.

[[16:9-20]] Most ancient copies of Mark include this "Longer Ending." Scribes copying the Gospel probably added it sometime in the 2nd century CE, perhaps after the original ending was lost or because they thought Mark's Gospel—compared to the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John—was incomplete (see note on Mark 16:8). This ending adapts details from the other NT Gospels to report Jesus' final encounter with his disciples.

[[16:9]] The verse summarizes events found in Mark 16:1-8. *seven demons*: See Luke 8:2.

[[16:11]] See Luke 24:9-11, 22-25; John 20:19-29.

[[16:12-13]] See Luke 24:13-35.

16:13 Lk 24:11;  
Lk 24:33;  
Jn 20:25  
16:14 1k 24:36;  
Jn 20:19  
16:15 Mt 28:19;  
Mk 13:10;  
Lk 24:47; Ac 1:8;  
Col 1:23  
16:16 Mt 28:19;  
Jn 3:18; Jn 3:36;  
Ac 2:38; Ac  
16:31  
16:17 Lk 10:17;  
Ac 2:4; Ac 10:46;  
Ac 19:6;  
1Co 12:10

the countryside. <sup>13</sup>When they returned, they reported it to the others, but they didn't believe them. <sup>14</sup>Finally he appeared to the eleven while they were eating. Jesus criticized their unbelief and stubbornness because they didn't believe those who saw him after he was raised up. <sup>15</sup>He said to them, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to every creature. <sup>16</sup>Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever doesn't believe will be condemned. <sup>17</sup>These signs will be associated with those who believe: they will throw out demons in my name. They will speak in new languages. <sup>18</sup>They will pick up snakes with their hands. If they drink anything poisonous, it will not hurt them. They will place their hands on the sick, and they will get well."  
<sup>19</sup>After the Lord Jesus spoke to them, he was lifted up into heaven and sat down on the right side of God. <sup>20</sup>But they went out and proclaimed the message everywhere. The Lord worked with them, confirming the word by the signs associated with them.]]

16:18 Lk 10:19; Ac 28:3, Ac 28:8 16:19 Lk 24:51; Eph 1:20; 1Ti 3:16; Heb 1:3; 1Pt 3:22 16:20 Ac 8:4, Ac 14:3; Ro 15:19; Heb 2:4

[[16:14]] *while they were eating*: See Luke 24:41-42. *unbelief and stubbornness*: These themes are prominent in Mark. On unbelief, see Mark 6:6; 9:24. On stubbornness, see Mark 3:5; 6:52; 8:17; 10:5.

[[16:15]] See Matthew 18:19. Compare with Luke 24:47; John 20:21.

[[16:16]] This claim is found in later NT writings (see Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21; John 3:18).

[[16:17-18]] The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke generally view signs with suspicion (see Mark 8:11-12; 13:22). A positive view appears in John (see John 2:23; 4:48; 6:30). [[16:17]] *throw out demons in my name*: See Mark 3:15; 6:7; 9:38-39. *speak in new languages*: See Acts 2:4-11; 1 Corinthians 14:2-33.

[[16:18]] *pick up snakes*: Luke 10:19 implies protection

from snake poison. Handling snakes isn't mentioned elsewhere in the NT, though Acts 28:3-6 reports Paul's accidental, and harmless, encounter with a snake. *drink anything poisonous*: not found elsewhere in the NT. *place their hands . . . get well*: See Mark 6:13; Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-16; James 5:14-15.

[[16:19]] *lifted up*: See Luke 24:51; Acts 1:2, 11, 22. *sat down on the right side of God*: See Mark 10:37; 14:62; Acts 2:33-34; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20.

[[16:20]] *went out and proclaimed the message*: consistent with Mark's interest in spreading the word (see Mark 1:14; 3:14; 4:3; 6:12; 13:10; 16:15). *with them*: Jesus remains present, even after his death (see Mark 3:14). *confirming the word by the signs*: See Acts 4:30; Romans 15:19; Hebrews 2:3-4. See note on Mark 16:17-18.

# LUKE

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The Gospel of Luke was written by an unknown Christian who, after reading other accounts of the life of Jesus and after careful study, decided to write another. The same person also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. Ancient tradition says the author of both books is “Luke, the dearly loved physician” (Col 4:14), who was with Paul during parts of his missionary work. Nothing in the Gospel of Luke confirms or refutes this tradition. The Gospel was probably composed between 70 and 100 CE, after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple but before the Roman government began regularly putting Christians to death.

Luke and Acts are both addressed to the “most honorable Theophilus” (Luke 1:3; see Acts 1:1). The name means “God’s friend” and could have been an imaginary or ideal audience, a kind of godly reader Luke’s author kept in mind as he wrote. But Theophilus was more likely a real person, perhaps a wealthy and influential

convert—like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10); Cornelius (Acts 10); or Crispus (Acts 18:8)—who served as Luke’s patron, helping him distribute his book. Luke’s Gospel presents Jesus as good news for Jews and Gentiles.

Luke seems to have had a copy of the Gospel of Mark, which he expands considerably by adding stories of Jesus’ birth and childhood (Luke 1–2); much more of Jesus’ teaching (especially in Luke 10–19); and Jesus’ resurrection appearances (Luke 24:13-53). Luke keeps Mark’s arrangement of a ministry in Galilee (Luke 4:14–9:50); a journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51–19:28); and a final ministry in Jerusalem that ends with the crucifixion (Luke 19:29–23:56). Luke stretches out the “journey” section, having Jesus do most of his teaching after his announcement that he’s going to Jerusalem to be crucified. In this way, the traveling Jesus in Luke matches the traveling missionaries of Acts. The story of Jesus is always on the move.



Megiddo stables with manger and tethering posts (Luke 2:7)

Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

Jesus spends a lot of time eating in Luke. He eats with tax collectors (Luke 5:27-32; 15:2; 19:1-10) and Pharisees (Luke 7:36-50; 11:37-54; 14:1-24); with the wealthy (Zacchaeus, Luke 19:1-10); and the relatively poor (Martha, Luke 10:38-42). Jesus also uses the image of a banquet to describe what God's kingdom will be like (Luke 13:28-29; 22:30). Jesus, in addition to being identified as God's Son (Luke 3:22) and Israel's Christ (Luke 1:32-33), is a prophet. His powerful message and miracles remind others of Elijah and Elisha (Luke 7:16; 9:7-8). He uses his prophetic identity to explain why his own people reject him (Luke 4:24) and why he must die in Jerusalem (Luke 13:33-34). Some of his predictions come true during the course of Luke's story (Luke 13:35 fulfilled in Luke 19:38; Luke 9:22 fulfilled in Luke 22-24), while others had already come true by the time of Luke's readers (Luke 19:41-44 fulfilled by the Roman

destruction of Jerusalem, 66-70 CE). These two elements, the banquet and the prophet, were familiar social and religious elements across the 1st-century Roman Empire. By stressing them, Luke makes Jesus accessible to readers in many cultures.

Like John the Baptist before him and the missionaries in Acts after him, Jesus in Luke urges people "to change their hearts and lives" (Luke 5:32) and receive God's forgiveness. This is "the good news of God's kingdom" (Luke 4:43) that Jesus offers to everyone, even enemies (Luke 23:34). He instructs his followers to preach this good news to all nations (Luke 24:47). Luke understands this change to be necessary for everyone (Luke 13:1-5), but especially for the wealthy (Luke 6:24-26; 12:16-21; 16:19-31). Luke's Jesus expects his followers to sell their possessions and accept God's kingdom (Luke 12:32-33; 14:33).

#### **I. Prologue (1:1-4)**

#### **II. Stories of Birth and Childhood (1:5-2:52)**

#### **III. Preparation for Ministry (3:1-4:13)**

#### **IV. Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50)**

#### **V. Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:28)**

#### **VI. Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem (19:29-21:38)**

#### **VII. The Story of Jesus' Trial and Death (22:1-23:56)**

#### **VIII. Resurrection Stories (24:1-53)**

*Richard B. Vinson*

**Luke's purpose**

1 Many people have already applied themselves to the task of compiling an account of the events that have been fulfilled among us. 2 They used what the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed down to us. 3 Now, after having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, I have also decided to write a carefully ordered account for you, most honorable Theophilus. 4 I want you to have confidence in the soundness of the instruction you have received.

**John the Baptist's birth foretold**

5 During the rule of King Herod of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah. His wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron. 6 They were both righteous before God, blameless in their observance of all the Lord's commandments and regulations. 7 They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to become pregnant and they both were very old. 8 One day Zechariah was serving as a priest before God because his priestly division was on duty. 9 Following the customs of priestly service, he was chosen by lottery to go into the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense. 10 All the people who gathered to worship were praying outside during this hour of incense offering. 11 An angel from the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw the angel, he was startled and overcome with fear.

13 The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayers have been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to your son and you must name him John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many people will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great in the Lord's eyes. He must not drink wine and liquor. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth. 16 He will bring many Israelites back to the Lord their God. 17 He will go forth before the Lord, equipped with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will turn the hearts of fathers" back

\*Or parents

1:13 Lk 1:60; Lk 1:63 1:14 Lk 1:58 1:15 Nm 6:3; Jgs 13:4; Jer 1:5; Mt 11:18; Lk 7:33 1:16 Is 29:23; Is 40:3; Is 49:6; Jer 17:13; Jer 31:31 1:17 Mal 4:5; Mal 4:6; Mt 11:14; Lk 1:76

1:1-4 Serious books in Luke's day often had prologues like this one to give readers confidence in the book's reliability. On the identity of Luke, see the introduction.

1:1 Many people... compiling: other written accounts Luke had read.

1:2 eyewitnesses: The written accounts Luke used were based on the testimonies of those who knew Jesus. servants of the word may be another way to refer to eyewitnesses or to any who passed along the stories and teachings of Jesus.

1:3 Theophilus: See the introduction.

1:5 King Herod: Herod the Great, who ruled Palestine from 37 to 4 BCE. priest: a Jewish male who could lawfully offer sacrifices and perform other ritual acts in the holy spaces of the Jerusalem temple. priestly... Abijah: See 1 Chronicles 24:10. descendant of Aaron: Priests were direct male descendants of Moses' brother Aaron. Elizabeth's father was a priest, making her a "daughter of Aaron."

1:6 righteous: They have been diligent about obeying Moses' Law (Instruction). blameless: They have also been diligent about offering sacrifices for their sins.

1:7 no children: Children were seen as God's blessing, so readers would wonder why such good people couldn't have children. very old: like Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18:11a), an elderly couple whose child was born 25 years after God's promise to give them a son.

1:8 on duty: The divisions took turns serving in the temple for a week twice a year.

1:9 chosen by lottery: Temple leaders shook marked stones or sticks from a jar to allow God to pick the priest to offer the incense. sanctuary: the holy place, containing a menorah, a table for sacred bread, and a small container for

burning incense. burn incense: When a priest poured incense on hot coals, the rising smoke symbolized Israel's prayers.

1:10 All the people: People gathered for prayer outside the sanctuary in the Court of Israel and the Court of the Women. They couldn't view the incense altar from there, but they could see and smell the smoke. this hour: around three o'clock in the afternoon (see Acts 3:1).

1:11-12 angel from the Lord: Gabriel (Luke 1:19), understood in ancient Judaism to be one of the seven most important angels. In Luke and Acts angels sometimes bring messages from God to God's chosen servants (e.g., Luke 1:26; 2:8; 24:4; Acts 1:10; 10:3). The servant is often overcome with fear, as one would be in God's presence.

1:13-17 Gabriel's message to Zechariah combines an announcement, commands, and promises; and it blends several OT texts.

1:13 Your prayers: Zechariah and Elizabeth have been praying for a child, probably for years. have been heard: God will grant their request, and they'll have a son. must... John: the angel's first command.

1:14 many... will rejoice: a prediction fulfilled in Luke 1:58. 1:15 great... eyes: God will consider John a great prophet, and so will Jesus (Luke 7:26). must not drink wine and liquor: the angel's second command. Like the nazirites (Num 6:1-4), John must abstain from alcohol. Samuel's mother, Hannah, made this promise when she prayed for a son (1 Sam 1:11). filled with the Holy Spirit: John will be a prophet. God gives messages to prophets, who deliver them to God's people.

1:16 He will bring: a promise fulfilled in Luke 3:3-18.

1:17 equipped... Elijah: Elijah condemned Israelites who

1:1 Ac 1:1;  
2Ti 4:17  
1:2 In 15:27;  
Ac 1:22; Heb 2:3;  
1Pt 5:1; 1Jn 1:1  
1:3 Ac 1:1;  
Ac 11:4;  
Ac 23:26;  
Ac 24:3;  
Ac 26:25  
1:4 In 20:31;  
Ac 18:25;  
Ro 2:18;  
1Co 14:19;  
Ga 6:6  
1:5 1Ch 24:10;  
Mt 2:1  
1:6 Phi 2:15;  
Phi 3:6  
1:7 Gn 18:11;  
Jgs 13:2; 1Sa 1:2;  
Lk 1:36  
1:8 1Ch 24:19;  
2Ch 8:14;  
2Ch 31:2  
1:9 Ex 30:7;  
Ex 30:8;  
1Ch 23:13;  
2Ch 29:11  
1:10 Lv 16:17;  
Rev 8:3  
1:11 Ex 30:1;  
Ex 37:25; Lk 2:9;  
Ac 5:19; Ac 10:3  
1:12 Jgs 6:22;  
Jgs 13:22;  
Mk 16:5

1:18 Gn 15:8,  
Gn 17:17; Lk 1:7  
1:19 Dn 8:16,  
Dn 9:21;  
Mt 18:10;  
Lk 1:26, Lk 2:10

1:20 Ex 4:11;  
Eze 3:26,  
Eze 24:27

1:21 Lk 1:5,  
Lk 1:13, Lk 1:67  
1:22 Lk 1:62

1:23 2Ks 11:5;  
1Ch 9:25; Lk 1:8

1:24 Lk 1:36

1:25 Gn 30:23;  
1Sa 1:6; 1s 4:1

1:26 Mt 2:23;  
Lk 1:19, Lk 2:4,  
Lk 2:39

1:27 Mt 1:16,  
Mt 1:18, Mt 1:20;  
Lk 2:4, Lk 2:5

1:28 Jgs 6:12;  
Lk 1:30

1:29 Lk 1:12

1:30 Gn 6:8;  
Lk 1:13

1:31 Is 7:14;  
Mt 1:21, Mt 1:25;  
Lk 2:21

1:32 2Sa 7:12;  
Ps 132:11; Is 9:7;  
Mk 5:7; Lk 1:35

1:33 Is 9:7;  
Dn 2:44,  
Dn 7:14,  
Dn 7:27; Heb 1:8

to their children, and he will turn the disobedient to righteous patterns of thinking. He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

<sup>18</sup>Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? My wife and I are very old."

<sup>19</sup>The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in God's presence. I was sent to speak to you and to bring this good news to you. <sup>20</sup>Know this: What I have spoken will come true at the proper time. But because you didn't believe, you will remain silent, unable to speak until the day when these things happen."

<sup>21</sup>Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered why he was in the sanctuary for such a long time. <sup>22</sup>When he came out, he was unable to speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he gestured to them and couldn't speak. <sup>23</sup>When he completed the days of his priestly service, he returned home. <sup>24</sup>Afterward, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. She kept to herself for five months, saying, <sup>25</sup>"This is the Lord's doing. He has shown his favor to me by removing my disgrace among other people."

### Jesus' birth foretold

<sup>26</sup>When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" <sup>29</sup>She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. <sup>31</sup>Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. <sup>33</sup>He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

<sup>34</sup>Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?"

<sup>35</sup>The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son. <sup>36</sup>Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman

1:35 Mt 1:18, Mt 1:20, Mt 4:3, Mt 14:33; Lk 1:32 1:36 Lk 1:7, Lk 1:24

worshipped other gods. He made enemies at court and performed amazing miracles (1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 2). His return was predicted as a sign of the last days, when he would lead Israel to reform (Mal 4:5–6). John will fulfill this prediction. *He will turn:* Gabriel quotes Malachi 4:6 and predicts John's ministry will help reconcile families. John will do this in Luke 3:1–20 by urging the *disobedient* to follow God's ways and adopt *righteous patterns of thinking*. Thus John will *make ready a people prepared* for Jesus' preaching.

1:18 Zechariah wants more proof. But if an angel can't convince him, what will?

1:19–20 Gabriel is one of the few beings who can *stand in God's presence* rather than bowing or falling down in reverence (see Rev 4:10). He has fulfilled his mission to *bring this good news* to Zechariah, and his predictions will come true. But because the old priest doubted, he will lose his voice until *these things happen*. This is a pattern in Luke: Good news must be received, or there will be consequences.

1:22 The priest is silenced, but the people *realized he had seen a vision* and don't seem worried.

1:24–25 Elizabeth's pregnancy begins to fulfill Gabriel's promise in Luke 1:13. *She . . . herself.* This helps explain why Mary doesn't hear about Elizabeth's pregnancy until Gabriel tells her (Luke 1:36). *the Lord's doing:* Elizabeth knows her pregnancy is a miracle. In Luke 1:41, Luke will make it clear that Elizabeth is a prophet. *disgrace:* Many regarded childlessness as shameful, sometimes as evidence of God's displeasure (Gen 16:2; 30:1–2).

1:26–27 Luke compares the announcement to Mary with the announcement to Elizabeth in Luke 1:5–25: same angel, same message, both good news. But the

announcement to Mary happens in a village, not in the temple; to a young woman, not to an elderly man; and to an unmarried woman, not to a married man who has been wanting a child for years. Yet Mary believes and becomes Luke's first example of faithful response to God's good news.

1:26 *Nazareth:* a small, rural village (see Luke 2:39, 51).

1:27 *David's house:* All the kings of Judah from around 1000 BCE until the Babylonian exile in 587 BCE were David's descendants. The Christ was to be a member of *David's house* based on the promise in 2 Samuel 7:16. *Mary:* So far we know nothing about her family; she could be anyone.

1:29 *Mary is confused* but not afraid as Zechariah was. Gabriel says *God holds her* in high regard, which surprises her. 1:31 *you will name him:* or "You must name him," as Gabriel commanded Zechariah to name his son John (Luke 1:13). *Jesus:* This is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua or Yeshua, meaning "Yahweh saves."

1:33 *Jacob's house:* the Jewish people. *no end to his kingdom:* unlike the one that ended in 587 BCE.

1:34 *How will this happen:* Mary asks about method, whereas Zechariah asked for proof. She may be thinking Gabriel is speaking of a son to be born to her and Joseph. 1:35 *Holy Spirit:* God will cause her to conceive without sexual intercourse. The two phrases *Holy Spirit* and *power of the Most High* both refer to God's presence. *come over you and overshadow you:* parallel terms for God's approach (see Acts 1:8; 5:15–16). Luke carefully picks words that don't have sexual overtones. His account isn't like Greek or Roman stories in which the gods have sex with women. *holy:* specially designated for God.

who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. <sup>37</sup>Nothing is impossible for God."

<sup>38</sup>Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

### Mary visits Elizabeth

<sup>39</sup>Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. <sup>40</sup>She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup>With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. <sup>43</sup>Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup>As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. <sup>45</sup>Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her."

### Mary praises God

<sup>46</sup>Mary said,

"With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

<sup>47</sup>In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

<sup>48</sup>He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.

Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored

<sup>49</sup>because the mighty one has done great things for me.

Holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup>He shows mercy to everyone,

from one generation to the next,

who honors him as God.

<sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

<sup>52</sup>He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones

and lifted up the lowly.

<sup>53</sup>He has filled the hungry with good things

and sent the rich away empty-handed.

<sup>54</sup>He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,

remembering his mercy,

<sup>55</sup>just as he promised to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever."

1:37 *Nothing . . . God*: Elizabeth is evidence of this (cf. Gen 18:14).

1:38 *servant*: or "female slave." Mary is willing to accept her role.

1:39-45 The two mothers-to-be meet at Elizabeth's home. Each woman speaks under God's inspiration.

1:39 *Judean highlands*: south of Galilee and Samaria, in the central part of Judea.

1:41 *leaped*: John, the future prophet, recognizes Jesus while each is still in the womb (see the prediction in Luke 1:15). *filled with the Holy Spirit*: See note on Luke 1:15. Elizabeth is Luke's first prophet, a model for Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, Anna, John the Baptist, and Jesus.

1:43 *mother . . . Lord*: Elizabeth is the first human to call Jesus "Lord," a term that means "master" and is also a typical way to refer to God.

1:45 *Happy*: Elizabeth pronounces a blessing on herself and Mary for their faith in God's promises. They anticipate others in Luke's Gospel who will believe.

1:46-55 Mary's words are called the Magnificat, which is the first word in the Latin translation of this poem. Like many psalms that praise God (e.g., Pss 34; 104), and like Hannah's prayer (1 Sam 2:1-10), Mary's Song offers reasons why praise is the right response. Her song can function as either a call to praise or a prayer, even though it's not addressed directly to God. The first part (1:46-50) focuses on what God has done for Mary. The second part (1:51-55)

moves on to what God has done for all, especially Israel. Mary is thinking ahead, previewing what Jesus will do by God's direction.

1:46 *my heart*: with her whole self. *glorify*: offer praise of God.

1:48 *low status*: Mary isn't powerful or wealthy. The word translated as "low status" also means "humble," as opposed to "arrogant" (Luke 1:51). *servant*: or "female slave." *highly favored*: echoes Gabriel (Luke 1:28) and Elizabeth (Luke 1:42).

1:49 *great things*: Mary's "glorify" (Luke 1:46) imitates what God has done for her. *Holy is his name*: See 1 Samuel 2:2; Luke 11:2.

1:50 *mercy*: Both parts of Mary's song end by noting God's mercy (Luke 1:54) and God's faithfulness to divine promises (see Deut 5:10).

1:51 *arm*: symbol of God's power exhibited in human events (Deut 4:34).

1:52 *the powerful*: God is the real power in the world, and God favors the *lowly*. Mary's personal experience is God's pattern among humans (see 1 Sam 2:7-8).

1:53 *filled the hungry*: Jesus makes the same promise (see Luke 6:21; 9:10-17), *the rich*: Jesus also warns the rich of God's judgment (Luke 6:24-25; 12:16-21; 16:19-31).

1:54 *aid . . . Israel*: Mary expects Israel to receive God's mercy, just as she has, because of God's promises to Abraham (Gen 12:2-3) and Jacob (Gen 28:13-14).

1:37 Gn 18:14;  
Jer 32:17;  
Mt 19:26

1:38 2Sa 7:25;  
Ps 116:16;  
Ps 119:38;  
Mt 1:16, Mt 2:11

1:39 Lk 1:65

1:40 Lk 1:41

1:41 Lk 1:15;  
Lk 1:67

1:42 Jgs 5:24

1:43 Lk 2:11;

Lk 20:42;

Jn 13:13;

Jn 20:28

1:44 Lk 1:41

1:45 Lk 1:20

1:46 1Sa 2:1;

Ps 34:2, Ps 34:3

1:47 Is 61:10;

Hab 3:18

1:48 1Sa 1:11;

Ps 136:23;

Ps 138:6;

Lk 11:27

1:49 Ps 111:9;

Is 57:15

1:50 Ps 103:17

1:51 Ps 89:10;

Ps 98:1

1:52 Job 5:11

1:53 Ps 107:9

1:54 Ps 98:3;

Is 44:21

1:55 Gn 17:19;

Ps 132:11;

Ga 3:16

1:56 Lk 1:27

1:57 Lk 1:5,  
Lk 1:13

1:58 Gn 19:19

1:59 Gn 17:12,  
Gn 21:3; Lv 12:3;  
Lk 2:21; Phi 3:5

1:60 Lk 1:13

1:62 Lk 1:22

1:63 Is 30:8;  
Lk 1:13; Lk 1:60

1:64 Lk 1:20

1:65 Lk 1:39,  
Lk 7:161:66 Lk 2:19;  
Ac 11:211:67 Nm 11:25;  
Jl 2:28; Lk 1:13,  
Lk 1:15; Lk 1:411:68 Ex 4:31;  
1Ki 1:48;Ps 106:48,  
Ps 111:9; Lk 7:16

1:69 1Sa 2:10;

Ps 18:2,  
Ps 132:17;  
Eze 29:211:70 Ac 3:21;  
Ro 1:2

1:71 Ps 106:10

1:72 Ps 105:8;  
Mi 7:201:73 Gn 22:16;  
Gn 26:3;Ps 105:9;  
Heb 6:13

1:74 Lk 1:75

1:75 Eph 4:24

1:76 Mal 3:1;  
Mk 1:3; Lk 1:17;  
Lk 1:32; Lk 7:27

1:77 Jer 31:34;

Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3

<sup>56</sup>Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, and then returned to her home.

<sup>57</sup>When the time came for Elizabeth to have her child, she gave birth to a boy. <sup>58</sup>Her neighbors and relatives celebrated with her because they had heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy. <sup>59</sup>On the eighth day, it came time to circumcise the child. They wanted to name him Zechariah because that was his father's name. <sup>60</sup>But his mother replied, "No, his name will be John."

<sup>61</sup>They said to her, "None of your relatives have that name." <sup>62</sup>Then they began gesturing to his father to see what he wanted to call him.

<sup>63</sup>After asking for a tablet, he surprised everyone by writing, "His name is John." <sup>64</sup>At that moment, Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God.

<sup>65</sup>All their neighbors were filled with awe, and everyone throughout the Judean highlands talked about what had happened. <sup>66</sup>All who heard about this considered it carefully. They said, "What then will this child be?" Indeed, the Lord's power was with him.

### **Zechariah's prophecy**

<sup>67</sup>John's father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,

<sup>68</sup>"Bless the Lord God of Israel

because he has come to help and has delivered his people.

<sup>69</sup>He has raised up a mighty savior for us in his servant David's house,

<sup>70</sup>just as he said through the mouths of his holy prophets long ago.

<sup>71</sup>He has brought salvation from our enemies  
and from the power of all those who hate us.

<sup>72</sup>He has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,  
and remembered his holy covenant,

<sup>73</sup>the solemn pledge he made to our ancestor Abraham.

He has granted <sup>74</sup>that we would be rescued from the power of our enemies  
so that we could serve him without fear,

<sup>75</sup>in holiness and righteousness in God's eyes,  
for as long as we live.

<sup>76</sup>You, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High,  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way.

<sup>77</sup>You will tell his people how to be saved  
through the forgiveness of their sins.

1:56 about three months: Mary returned home just before John's birth.

1:57-66 The story of John's birth parallels the story of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:1-20), accompanied by miracles and surprised witnesses.

1:57 boy: as predicted in Luke 1:13.

1:58 celebrated: as predicted in Luke 1:14b. mercy: See Luke 1:50, 54.

1:59-60 eighth day: Jews circumcise their sons when they are eight days old (Gen 17:12). This marks a boy as belonging to God and to God's people. name: In OT naming stories sometimes the father (Gen 21:3) or sometimes the mother (Gen 30:24) names the son. The angel said that the boy must be named John (Luke 1:13).

1:61-62 gesturing: Zechariah can't talk, but he isn't deaf. This is a comic scene.

1:64 able to speak: Zechariah's first words after he obeys Gabriel's command (Luke 1:13) are words of praise (Luke 1:67-79).

1:65 neighbors: Witnesses spread the news (Luke 2:17, 38; 4:14). Those who hear are interested but still have questions about what it means. This is a pattern in Luke (Luke 3:15; 4:22; 5:26), who distinguishes being amazed from having faith.

1:67-79 This section is called Zechariah's song, or the Benedictus, after the first word in the Latin translation of it. It parallels the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), and Luke expects readers to compare the two poems. It's divided into two

parts: God's blessings on Israel (1:68-75) and God's blessings on John the Baptist (1:76-79).

1:67 filled... Spirit: See Luke 1:15.

1:68 Bless... Israel: a standard way to begin a Jewish prayer. The phrase closes sections of the Psalter in Psalms 41:13; 72:18; 106:48. has come... has delivered: Zechariah predicts what will happen in John's ministry by describing actions God has already taken. Mary uses the same mode of speaking in her poem.

1:69 mighty savior: Zechariah uses this phrase to refer to Jesus. David's house: See note on Luke 1:27.

1:70 holy prophets: such as Isaiah (Isa 11:1-9); Ezekiel (Ezek 34:23-24); Amos (Amos 9:11); and Zechariah (Zech 12:9-10).

1:71 salvation... enemies: Zechariah hopes for God's blessings for Israel, as Mary did (Luke 1:54-55).

1:72 mercy: See Luke 1:50, 54. covenant: God's promise to Abraham (Luke 1:55, 73; Gen 12:2-3).

1:74 rescued... enemies: The repetition (see Luke 1:71) stresses Zechariah's hope that Israel can be free. In his time that would mean freedom from Roman occupation. The priest, not surprisingly, wants to be able to serve God freely and without fear. Mary's hope is for justice for the poor (Luke 1:51-53).

1:76 prophet: See Luke 7:24-28; 20:6. go... way: See Isaiah 40:3; quoted in Luke 3:4; Malachi 3:1; Mark 1:2-3; Matthew 3:3.

1:77 how to be saved: Luke thinks of John's preaching as the time when the gospel began to be proclaimed (Luke



<sup>78</sup>Because of our God's deep compassion,  
the dawn from heaven will break upon us,  
<sup>79</sup>to give light to those who are sitting in darkness  
and in the shadow of death,  
to guide us on the path of peace."

<sup>80</sup>The child grew up, becoming strong in character. He was in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel.

### Jesus' birth

**2**In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. <sup>2</sup>This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. <sup>3</sup>Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. <sup>4</sup>Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. <sup>5</sup>He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. <sup>7</sup>She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

### Announcement to shepherds

<sup>8</sup>Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. <sup>9</sup>The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

<sup>10</sup>The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. <sup>11</sup>Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup>Suddenly

2:13 Ps 148:2; Rev 5:11

3:18; Acts 10:36-37). For specifics on what John preached, see Luke 3:1-20. *forgiveness of their sins*: one of Luke's key themes. It's part of the message of John the Baptist (Luke 3:3); Jesus (Luke 24:47); and the early Christians in Acts (Acts 2:38).

1:78 *deep compassion*: This is the fourth time Mary's and Zechariah's poems celebrate divine mercy (Luke 1:50, 54, 72).

1:79 *to give light... death*: quoting Isaiah 9:2. John's preaching brings greater clarity about God's will to those who listen. *peace*: Zechariah describes peace as salvation from one's enemies. In Luke *peace* comes first by being forgiven and second by forgiving others, including one's enemies (Luke 6:27-31).

1:80 This brief summary of John's youth contrasts with the longer story about the 12-year-old Jesus in Luke 2:39-52. Luke wants the reader to understand how much more important Jesus was than John, but without criticizing John. *strong in character*: or "in spirit"; a double sense of John's normal human development and his growing attention, as a maturing prophet, to the Spirit of God. *wilderness*: Like Elijah, John lives in unpopulated areas, sustained by God (1 Kgs 17:1-7; 19:4-9).

2:1-7 Jesus' birth, like John's, is accompanied by miracles; and amazed witnesses talk about it widely. But there are some important differences that preview what Jesus' ministry will be like.

2:1 *Caesar Augustus*: Octavian, nephew and heir of Julius Caesar, emperor from 31 BCE to 14 CE. "Augustus" means "most revered." *enrolled*: a census that will determine who pays taxes.

2:2 Publius Sulpicius *Quirinius*: governor of Syria from 6 to 12 CE. Luke's dating must be an approximation.

2:4 Joseph lives in *Nazareth* but must go to Bethlehem, where David, his famous ancestor, was born. It isn't clear why Mary needs to go with him, since she's close to giving

birth. Normally, one would expect her to stay with family, who could help her with the birth.

2:5 *promised... marriage*: Since they are traveling together, they are legally married. This is Luke's delicate way of saying they haven't yet had sex.

2:7 *manger*: a place for feeding animals. A family with only a few animals often kept them inside the house at night. *guestroom*: a spare room inside a house (see Luke 22:11). Joseph and Mary are offered shelter by someone, maybe a relative; but the *guestroom* is full, so they sleep in the animal stalls. John the Baptist was born at home, surrounded by family. Jesus was born in a borrowed space, previewing the nature of his ministry (Luke 9:58; 10:5-11).

2:8 *shepherds*: In Jesus' day they were unskilled labor and poor. However, King David had begun as a shepherd (1 Sam 16:11), and some prophets preached that Israel's ideal king would be a true shepherd for God's people (Ezek 34:20-31; Mic 5:2-9). Thus the announcement to shepherds, just outside David's city, is appropriate.

2:10 *Don't be afraid!*: See Luke 1:13; 1:30. *bring good news*: The noun "gospel," which in Luke refers to the story of Jesus and the forgiveness God grants to those who accept Jesus, means "good news." The verb "bring," in this context, means "to preach" or "to announce" the gospel. To bring good news is to deliver the story of Jesus. *for all people*: See Luke 24:47. 2:11 *Christ*: means "anointed one" in Greek, a translation of the Hebrew word *Messiah*. *the Lord*: Normally an address for God, *Lord* here indicates Jesus' divine origins (see Luke 1:43; 5:17; 10:41).

2:12 *a sign*: the way the shepherds will recognize Jesus: he will be wrapped snugly, as any baby might, but lying in a manger, an unexpectedly low-status spot. As Mary predicted, God is ignoring rulers (Luke 2:1-2) and taking account of the lowly (Luke 1:52).

2:13-14 *heavenly forces*: Sometimes angels are presented as God's army (e.g., Rev 12:7); in this case, however, the

1:78 Ps 25:6;  
Mal 4:2; Lk 1:79;  
2Pt 1:19

1:79 Is 9:2;  
Mt 4:16;  
Lk 2:14; Jn 8:12;  
Ac 26:18

1:80 Mt 3:1,  
Mt 11:7; Lk 2:40,  
Lk 3:2

2:1 Mt 24:14;  
Lk 3:1

2:2 Mt 4:24;  
Lk 3:1; Ac 5:37

2:4 Mt 2:1,  
Mt 2:23; Lk 1:26,  
Lk 1:27; Jn 7:42

2:5 Mt 1:16;  
Lk 1:27

2:7 Gn 42:27;  
Ex 4:24;  
Mt 1:25; Lk 2:12,  
Lk 10:34

2:8 Gn 31:40;  
Ex 3:1; Am 3:12

2:9 Lk 1:11

2:10 Lk 2:32

2:11 Mt 1:16,  
Mt 1:21,  
Mt 16:16;

Jn 4:42; Ac 5:31

2:12 1Sa 2:34;  
2K 19:29;  
Is 7:14

2:14 Is 9:6;  
Lk 1:79;  
Lk 19:38; Ro 5:1;  
Eph 2:14  
2:15 Mt 2:1  
2:16 Lk 2:7  
2:18 Lk 2:33  
2:19 Lk 1:66,  
Lk 2:51  
2:20 Lk 19:37;  
Ac 2:47  
2:21 Gn 21:3;  
Lv 12:3; Mt 1:21;  
Lk 1:31; Lk 1:59  
2:22 Lv 12:1,  
Lv 12:2  
2:23 Ex 13:2,  
Ex 13:12,  
Ex 13:15;  
Nm 31:3  
2:24 Lv 12:8  
2:25 Lk 1:6,  
Lk 2:38,  
Lk 23:51  
2:26 Heb 11:5  
2:27 Lk 2:22,  
Lk 2:43  
2:28 Lk 1:64  
2:29 Gn 15:15;  
Ps 37:37; Lk 2:26  
2:30 Is 52:10;  
Lk 3:6  
2:31 Ps 98:2  
2:32 Is 42:6,  
Is 49:6, Is 60:1;  
Ac 13:47,  
Ac 26:23

a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, <sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.”

<sup>15</sup>When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go right now to Bethlehem and see what’s happened. Let’s confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.”

<sup>16</sup>They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. <sup>18</sup>Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

### ***Jesus’ circumcision, naming, and temple presentation***

<sup>21</sup>When eight days had passed, Jesus’ parents circumcised him and gave him the name Jesus. This was the name given to him by the angel before he was conceived. <sup>22</sup>When the time came for their ritual cleansing, in accordance with the Law from Moses, they brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (<sup>23</sup>It’s written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male will be dedicated to the Lord.”) <sup>24</sup>They offered a sacrifice in keeping with what’s stated in the Law of the Lord, *A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.*<sup>b</sup>

### ***Simeon’s response to Jesus***

<sup>25</sup>A man named Simeon was in Jerusalem. He was righteous and devout. He eagerly anticipated the restoration of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup>The Holy Spirit revealed to him that he wouldn’t die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. <sup>27</sup>Led by the Spirit, he went into the temple area. Meanwhile, Jesus’ parents brought the child to the temple so that they could do what was customary under the Law. <sup>28</sup>Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. He said,

<sup>29</sup>“Now, master, let your servant go in peace according to your word,  
<sup>30</sup>because my eyes have seen your salvation.

<sup>31</sup>You prepared this salvation in the presence of all peoples.

<sup>32</sup>It’s a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and a glory for your people Israel.”

<sup>b</sup>Lev 12:8; 5:11 LXX

angels are worshipping. *in heaven*: where angels offer praise. *peace . . . favors*: As heavenly angels offer praise to God, they also announce peace for humans, whom God blesses; this includes “all people” who accept this baby’s birth as “wonderful, joyous news” (Luke 2:10).

2:17 *reported . . . told*: The shepherds tell others the baby is meant for everyone and he is Christ the Lord. *amazed*: can mean impressed as well as confused. It isn’t the same as accepting the message and being changed by it.

2:19 *Mary’s thoughtful reflection* on God’s activity in her life and in the world is an example for Luke’s readers.

2:20 *praising God*: Luke often closes episodes by noting how people praised God for what they had experienced through Jesus (e.g., Luke 2:36; 5:26; 7:16).

2:21–24 This episode, parallel to that in Luke 1:59–66, describes how Jesus’ parents, like Zechariah and Elizabeth, were blameless in their observance of all the Lord’s commandments.

2:21 *eight days*: See Luke 1:59. *Jesus*: See Luke 1:31.

2:22 *ritual cleansing*: Following the birth of a son, a woman was ritually unclean for 33 days (Lev 12:4). This meant she couldn’t enter the temple. *present . . . Lord*: Firstborn sons belonged to God (Exod 22:29); but instead of actually giving the son as a sacrifice to God, sons were redeemed (Exod 34:19–20) by a monetary payment (five shekels, Num 18:16).

2:23 *It’s written*: See Exodus 13:2; 22:29.

2:24 *sacrifice*: Childbearing wasn’t a sin, but the ritual

impurity resulting from it required an offering (Lev 12:6–8). After the 33 days are up, Mary offers a pair of birds, the animal sacrifice the poor could give (Lev 12:8).

2:25–28 While they’re in the temple, two prophets, Simeon and Anna, come to testify about what Jesus will be.

2:25 *Simeon*, like Zechariah and Elizabeth, was *righteous* (careful to obey the commandments) and *devout* (he led a God-focused life). *restoration*: echoes passages like Isaiah 40:1–2; 49:13; 51:3, which refer to God rescuing God’s people from their exile in Babylon and restoring them to Judea. Simeon, like Zechariah, hopes God will drive the Romans out of Palestine (Luke 1:71, 74). *Holy Spirit rested on him*: He is a prophet, like Elizabeth (Luke 1:41), Zechariah (Luke 1:67), and Anna (Luke 2:36).

2:26 *the Lord’s Christ*: the Christ chosen by God.

2:27 *temple area*: The temple was a huge place, with covered porches surrounding open courtyards the size of several football fields. *the Spirit* leads Simeon to just the right spot to meet Mary and Joseph, who are taking care of the offerings described in Luke 2:22–24.

2:29–32 Simeon’s speech is sometimes called the Nunc Dimittis because those are the first two words in the Latin translation of it.

2:29 *your servant*: or “your slave.” Simeon is referring to himself. *your word*: God’s promise to him as explained in Luke 2:26.

2:31 *all peoples*: As in Luke 2:10, Jesus’ birth is good news for everyone. He will reveal God to *the Gentiles* (non-Jews), and Israel should be glad for this.

<sup>33</sup>His father and mother were amazed by what was said about him. <sup>34</sup>Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “This boy is assigned to be the cause of the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that generates opposition <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your innermost being too.”

#### Anna's response to Jesus

<sup>36</sup>There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, who belonged to the tribe of Asher. She was very old. After she married, she lived with her husband for seven years. <sup>37</sup>She was now an 84-year-old widow. She never left the temple area but worshipped God with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup>She approached at that very moment and began to praise God and to speak about Jesus to everyone who was looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

#### Jesus as a child in Nazareth

<sup>39</sup>When Mary and Joseph had completed everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to their hometown, Nazareth in Galilee. <sup>40</sup>The child grew up and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.

#### Jesus in the temple at Passover

<sup>41</sup>Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. <sup>42</sup>When he was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to their custom. <sup>43</sup>After the festival was over, they were returning home, but the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents didn't know it. <sup>44</sup>Supposing that he was among their band of travelers, they journeyed on for a full day while looking for him among their family and friends. <sup>45</sup>When they didn't find Jesus, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. <sup>46</sup>After three days they found him in the temple. He was sitting among the teachers, listening to them and putting questions to them. <sup>47</sup>Everyone who heard him was amazed by his understanding and his answers. <sup>48</sup>When his parents saw him, they were shocked.

His mother said, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Listen! Your father and I have been worried. We've been looking for you!”

<sup>49</sup>Jesus replied, “Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father's house?” <sup>50</sup>But they didn't understand what he said to them.

<sup>51</sup>Jesus went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. His mother cherished every word in her heart. <sup>52</sup>Jesus matured in wisdom and years, and in favor with God and with people.

#### John the Baptist's message

**3** In the fifteenth year of the rule of the emperor Tiberius—when Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea and Herod was ruler<sup>c</sup> over Galilee, his brother Philip was ruler<sup>d</sup> over

<sup>c</sup>Or tetrarch <sup>d</sup>Or tetrarch

2:34 a sign that generates opposition: Jesus will provoke strong negative (Luke 4:28-29) and positive (Luke 4:22) reactions, leading to the *falling and rising* of those who encounter him.

2:35 inner thoughts... revealed: See Luke 5:22; 7:39-43; 9:47. a sword will pierce: predicts Mary's suffering, especially when her son is executed.

2:36 Anna: an elderly female prophet. Her father was descended from Asher, a nonpriestly family line.

2:37-38 never left the temple... fasting and prayer: She is completely devoted to God (Luke 6:12; 24:53). speak about Jesus: Anna spreads the good news to those around her while Simeon blesses Mary and Joseph and makes predictions. Both are doing prophetic work. redemption: to rescue something lost or about to be lost. Anna hopes Jesus will free Jerusalem from the Romans.

2:40 grew up: See Luke 1:80; 1 Samuel 3:19. God's favor: See Genesis 6:8.

2:41-50 Luke previews Jesus' devotion to his God-given vocation.

2:41 Passover Festival: Celebrating the exodus, Passover begins with an evening meal. For that meal and for the next seven days, Jews eat unleavened bread. Passover was one of three festivals ancient Jews were urged to celebrate in Jerusalem (Deut 16:16).

2:44 band of travelers: Jews coming to Jerusalem traveled in groups for safety. Jesus' family travels with relatives and neighbors.

2:46 teachers: Jesus, filled with wisdom (Luke 2:40), learns in typical Jewish fashion by question, answer, and discussion. 2:48 Child... worried: a mild rebuke. Mary and his father, Joseph, have been looking everywhere for him.

2:49 in my Father's house: Luke doesn't clarify this phrase, which could also be translated as “about my Father's affairs.” In either case, Jesus seeks to please God, even if that worries his parents.

2:50 didn't understand: Jesus' disciples often have the same problem (Luke 8:25; 9:33, 54-55).

2:51-52 The birth and childhood stories of Luke 1-2 end with these notes: Jesus was an obedient child who grew into a man who had a good reputation (Luke 4:14-15); and His mother cherished [his] every word (Luke 8:21).

3:1-20 Luke recounts the ministry of John the Baptist before Jesus' ministry begins. This section parallels Jesus' early ministry (Luke 3:21-4:15), just as the announcement of John's birth (Luke 1:5-25) parallels the announcement of Jesus' birth (Luke 1:26-38).

3:1 Tiberius: Roman emperor from 14 to 37 CE. the fifteenth year: would have been 28 or 29 CE. Pontius Pilate: the fifth of the military governors over southern Palestine (Judea);

2:34 Is 8:14;  
Mt 21:44;  
Lk 1:23;  
1Pt 2:8

2:35 Dt 8:2;  
Jn 19:25; Ac 8:21

2:36 Ex 15:20;  
Ac 21:9

2:37 Ac 13:3;

Ac 14:23;  
1Th 3:10; 1Ti 5:5

2:38 Lk 1:68;  
Lk 2:25

2:39 Mt 2:23;  
Lk 1:26; Lk 2:4;  
Lk 2:51; Lk 4:16

2:40 Lk 1:80;  
Lk 2:47; Lk 2:52;  
Col 2:3

2:41 Ex 23:15;  
Dt 16:1; 1Sa 1:3;  
Jn 2:13

2:43 Ex 12:15;  
Mt 1:16; Lk 1:27;  
Lk 2:16; Lk 2:27

2:44 Ps 42:4

2:46 Lk 5:17;  
Ac 5:34

2:47 Mt 7:28;  
Lk 4:32

2:48 Mt 12:46;  
Lk 4:22

2:49 Jn 2:16;  
Jn 2:17; Jn 4:34

2:50 Mk 9:32;  
Lk 9:45;  
Lk 18:34

2:51 Lk 2:19;  
Lk 2:39

2:52 1Sa 2:26;  
Prv 3:4; Lk 2:40

3:1 Mt 14:1;  
Mt 27:2; Lk 3:19;  
Lk 9:7; Lk 23:7

3:2 Mt 3:1,  
Mt 26:3; Lk 1:80;  
Jn 18:13; Ac 4:6

3:3 Mt 26:28;  
Mk 1:4; Lk 1:77;  
Ac 2:38

3:4 Lk 40:3;  
Jn 1:23

3:5 Is 40:4

3:6 Ps 98:2,  
Ps 98:3; Is 40:3,  
Is 52:10; Lk 2:30

3:7 Mt 12:34,  
Mt 23:33

3:8 Jn 8:33,  
Jn 8:39

3:9 Mt 3:10,  
Mt 7:19; Lk 13:6,  
Lk 13:7; Lk 13:9

3:10 Ac 2:37,  
Ac 16:30

3:11 Is 58:7;  
1Ti 6:18

3:12 Mt 21:31,  
Mt 21:32;  
Lk 7:29

3:13 Lk 19:8

3:14 Ex 20:16,  
Ex 23:1;  
Lv 19:11;  
Phi 4:11;  
Heb 13:5

Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was ruler\* over Abilene, <sup>2</sup>during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—God’s word came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>John went throughout the region of the Jordan River, calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. <sup>4</sup>This is just as it was written in the scroll of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

*A voice crying out in the wilderness:*

*“Prepare the way for the Lord;  
make his paths straight.*

<sup>5</sup>*Every valley will be filled,  
and every mountain and hill will be leveled.*

*The crooked will be made straight  
and the rough places made smooth.*

<sup>6</sup>*All humanity will see God’s salvation.”<sup>f</sup>*

<sup>7</sup>Then John said to the crowds who came to be baptized by him, “You children of snakes! Who warned you to escape from the angry judgment that is coming soon? <sup>8</sup>Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives. And don’t even think about saying to yourselves, Abraham is our father. I tell you that God is able to raise up Abraham’s children from these stones. <sup>9</sup>The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit will be chopped down and tossed into the fire.”

<sup>10</sup>The crowds asked him, “What then should we do?”

<sup>11</sup>He answered, “Whoever has two shirts must share with the one who has none, and whoever has food must do the same.”

<sup>12</sup>Even tax collectors came to be baptized. They said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?”

<sup>13</sup>He replied, “Collect no more than you are authorized to collect.”

<sup>14</sup>Soldiers asked, “What about us? What should we do?”

He answered, “Don’t cheat or harass anyone, and be satisfied with your pay.”

**Tax Collectors** Rome collected money from its provinces to pay for the costs of governing them. The governors often put the job of collecting the money out for bids. The person who promised to collect most, and who knew and bribed the right people, would then hire others to collect more than he had promised to submit. The people he hired would have a quota to meet, and whatever they collected above that would be their profit. Zacchaeus, “a ruler among tax collectors” (Luke 19:2), may have been an example of a person near the top of this unjust system, while Levi (Luke 5:27) was a low-level tax collector. Most people disliked tax collectors; but because they exercised considerable power, most people probably also tried to stay on their good side. In Luke, John the Baptist challenges tax collectors not to collect more than is just (see Luke 3:13), and the Pharisees complain that Jesus accepts the hospitality of tax collectors (Luke 5:30; 7:34; 15:2). A tax collector serves as an example of how, if one truly changes one’s heart and life, God forgives (Luke 18:9-14). Zacchaeus is the camel that passes through the needle’s eye (Luke 18:25), giving away his wealth and receiving Jesus’ blessing (Luke 19:1-10).

\*Or *tetrarch* <sup>f</sup>Isa 40:3-5

his term was from 26 to 36. Herod Antipas ruled Galilee from 4 BCE to 39 CE. He and Herod Philip (4 BCE to 34 CE), whose territories were east of Galilee, were sons of Herod the Great. Lysanias: otherwise unknown.

3:2 **Annas:** high priest from 6 to 15 CE. His son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, was high priest from 18 to 36 CE. **wilderness:** as the angels found the shepherds in the fields (Luke 2:8-20). See Luke 3:4.

3:3 **John:** See Mark 1:4; Matthew 3:1. **baptized:** Jews immersed themselves in water to be clean from ritual impurity. John’s immersion, however, promises forgiveness of sins. This is an innovation and very popular. **changing their hearts and lives:** This radical change of life, with God’s help, is one of Luke’s major themes (see Luke 5:32; 13:1-5; 24:47). 3:7-9 See Matthew 3:7-10.

3:7 **crowds:** John’s basic message is about the coming day of judgment. **children of snakes:** John believes they’re insincere.

3:8 **Produce fruit:** John demands evidence of their change of life. **Abraham:** Simply being a Jew won’t be enough to escape Judgment Day.

3:9 **The ax... at the root:** a symbol of God’s judgment, which is just about ready to begin. **chopped down:** See Luke 13:6-9.

3:10-14 Three sets of would-be followers: crowds, tax collectors, and soldiers (Luke 9:57-62).

3:10 **crowds:** Ordinary people should share food and clothes with those who have none (Luke 6:29-30). If they do this, then everyone will have enough, but only just enough. 3:12 **tax collectors:** See sidebar, “Tax Collectors.”

3:13 **no more:** If they do this, then they’ll be as poor as everyone else.

3:14 **Soldiers:** These might have been Romans or locals recruited as auxiliary troops. If Romans, then even Gentiles were responding to John’s preaching (see Luke 7:1-10, where a Gentile military commander responds in faith).

**Responses to John**

<sup>15</sup>The people were filled with expectation, and everyone wondered whether John might be the Christ. <sup>16</sup>John replied to them all, "I baptize you with water, but the one who is more powerful than me is coming. I'm not worthy to loosen the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup>The shovel he uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in his hands. He will clean out his threshing area and bring the wheat into his barn. But he will burn the husks with a fire that can't be put out." <sup>18</sup>With many other words John appealed to them, proclaiming good news to the people.

<sup>19</sup>But Herod the ruler had been criticized harshly by John because of Herodias, Herod's brother's wife, and because of all the evil he had done. <sup>20</sup>He added this to the list of his evil deeds: he locked John up in prison.

**Jesus' baptism**

<sup>21</sup>When everyone was being baptized, Jesus also was baptized. While he was praying, heaven was opened <sup>22</sup>and the Holy Spirit came down on him in bodily form like a dove. And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."

**Jesus' genealogy**

<sup>23</sup>Jesus was about 30 years old when he began his ministry. People supposed that he was the son of Joseph son of Heli <sup>24</sup>son of Matthat son of Levi son of Melchi son of Jannai son of Joseph <sup>25</sup>son of Mattathias son of Amos son of Nahum son of Esli son of Naggai <sup>26</sup>son of Maath son of Mattathias son of Semein son of Josech son of Joda <sup>27</sup>son of Joanan son of Rhesa son of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel son of Neri <sup>28</sup>son of Melchi son of Addi son of Cosam son of Elmadam son of Er <sup>29</sup>son of Joshua son of Eliezer son of Jorim son of Matthat son of Levi <sup>30</sup>son of Simeon son of Judah son of Joseph son of Jonam son of Eliakim <sup>31</sup>son of Melea son of Menna son of Mattatha son of Nathan son of David <sup>32</sup>son of Jesse son of Obed son of Boaz son of Sala son of Nahshon <sup>33</sup>son of Amminadab son of Admin son of Arni son of Hezron son of Perez son of Judah <sup>34</sup>son of Jacob son of Isaac son of Abraham son of Terah son of Nahor <sup>35</sup>son of Serug son of Reu son of Peleg son of Eber son of Shelah <sup>36</sup>son of Cainan son of Arphaxad son of Shem son of Noah son of Lamech <sup>37</sup>son of Methuselah son of Enoch son of Jared son of Mahalalel son of Cainan <sup>38</sup>son of Enos son of Seth son of Adam son of God.

**Jesus' temptation**

**4** Jesus returned from the Jordan River full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. <sup>2</sup>There he was tempted for forty days by the devil. He ate nothing

3:15 Jn 1:19, Jn 1:20  
 3:16 Jn 1:26, Jn 1:33; Ac 1:5, Ac 11:16, Ac 13:25  
 3:17 Mt 13:30; Mk 9:43  
 3:18 Jn 1:15, Jn 1:29; Jn 1:34; Ac 2:40  
 3:19 Mt 14:1, Mt 14:3; Mk 6:17; Mk 6:18; Lk 3:1  
 3:20 Mt 14:3; Jn 3:24  
 3:21 Mt 3:13; Mk 1:9; Lk 5:16, Lk 9:18  
 3:22 Ps 2:7; Is 42:1; Lk 9:35; 2Pt 1:17  
 3:23 Mt 1:1, Mt 1:16; Mt 4:17; Lk 4:22; Ac 1:1  
 3:27 Ezr 3:2; Mt 1:12  
 3:31 2Sa 5:14; 1Ch 3:5, 1Ch 14:4; Zec 12:12  
 3:32 1Ch 2:12  
 3:33 Ru 4:18; 1Ch 2:4, 1Ch 2:10; Mt 1:3; Mt 1:4  
 3:34 Gn 11:24, Gn 11:26, Gn 21:3, Gn 25:26; 1Ch 1:24  
 3:35 Gn 11:18  
 3:36 Gn 11:10; 1Ch 1:17  
 3:37 Gn 5:12, Gn 5:18  
 3:38 Gn 5:1, Gn 5:2, Gn 5:3, Gn 5:6

4:1 Mt 4:1; Mk 1:12, Mk 1:13; Lk 3:3, Lk 4:14 4:2 Ex 34:28; 1K 19:8; Heb 2:18, Heb 4:15

3:15 See John 1:20, 25.

3:16 *loosen the strap*: a slave's task. *baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire*: Jesus promises that God will give the Spirit to any who ask (Luke 11:13; 24:49); the promise is fulfilled in Acts 2:1-4. *fire*: symbolizes God's judgment (Luke 3:17), which can fall even on Jesus' disobedient followers (Acts 5:1-11). John expects the Christ to initiate God's judgment on the wicked.

3:17 *shovel*: Farmers cut stalks of grain and spread them out on a flat *threshing area*. Next they separated the kernels from the stalks by beating them or dragging something heavy over them. Then they used a *shovel* or pitchfork to toss the kernels of wheat and *husks* into the air. The kernels would fall to the ground to be gathered and stored. The *husks* and stalks were bundled to be burned as fuel for ovens (see Matt 13:30).

3:18 *proclaiming good news*: Luke considers John's preaching to be gospel preaching. See note on Luke 2:10.  
 3:19 *Herod*: Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee from 4 BCE to 39 CE. He married his brother's former wife, a violation of Leviticus 18:16.

3:21 *Jesus... was baptized* along with others who responded to John's preaching. Jesus often prays (Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:28; 11:1); and, as in Luke 9:28-29, something miraculous accompanies his prayer. *heaven was opened*: an image of God revealing something.

3:22 *Holy Spirit... dove*: God's public demonstration of Jesus' chosen status. *You are my Son*: See Psalm 2:7; Luke 9:35. *whom I dearly love*: See Genesis 22:2; Luke 20:13. *in you I find happiness*: See Isaiah 42:1; Luke 2:14.

3:23-38 Matthew 1:1-17 includes a genealogy from Abraham to "Joseph, the husband of Mary" (Matt 1:16). Luke's goes in reverse, from Joseph all the way to *Adam son of God* (3:38). It emphasizes how Jesus is for all people, and it connects the first human with God's Son, who is the Christ. The genealogy is composed of 77 names (counting Joseph's and God's), symbolizing the full number of generations of humans from creation to the Christ's arrival.

4:1 *full... led by the Spirit*: Jesus' words and actions are directed by God (Luke 1:41, 67; 2:27, 40; 3:22).

4:2 *tempted*: The same word can be translated as "tested" if God, rather than Satan, presents the choice (Luke 4:12).

4:3 Mt 4:3;  
Lk 3:22

4:4 Dt 8:3;  
Lk 4:8

4:5 Mt 4:8

4:6 Jn 12:31;  
Jn 14:30

4:8 Dt 6:13;  
Dt 10:20;  
Mt 4:10; Lk 4:4

4:9 Mt 4:5;  
Lk 4:3

4:10 Ps 91:11;  
Ps 91:12

4:11 Ps 91:11;  
Ps 91:12

4:12 Dt 6:16

4:13 Jn 14:30

4:14 Mt 4:12;  
Lk 4:1; Lk 4:37

4:15 Mt 4:23

4:16 Mt 13:54;  
Lk 2:39;  
Ac 13:14

4:17 Lk 3:4;  
Ac 8:28;  
Ac 13:15

4:18 Ps 45:7;  
Is 42:7; Is 61:1;  
Is 61:2; Mt 11:5

4:19 Lv 25:10;  
Is 49:8; Is 61:1;  
Is 61:2

4:20 Mt 5:1;  
Mt 26:55;  
Lk 4:17;  
Lk 19:48

4:21 Mt 1:22

4:22 Mt 13:54;  
Mt 13:55;  
Lk 3:23; Jn 6:42

during those days and afterward Jesus was starving. <sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, "Since you are God's Son, command this stone to become a loaf of bread."

<sup>4</sup>Jesus replied, "It's written, *People won't live only by bread.*"<sup>g</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Next the devil led him to a high place and showed him in a single instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup>The devil said, "I will give you this whole domain and the glory of all these kingdoms. It's been entrusted to me and I can give it to anyone I want. <sup>7</sup>Therefore, if you will worship me, it will all be yours."

<sup>8</sup>Jesus answered, "It's written, *You will worship the Lord your God and serve only him.*"<sup>h</sup>

<sup>9</sup>The devil brought him into Jerusalem and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him, "Since you are God's Son, throw yourself down from here; <sup>10</sup>for it's written: *He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you* <sup>11</sup>and *they will take you up in their hands so that you won't hit your foot on a stone.*"<sup>i</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Jesus answered, "It's been said, *Don't test the Lord your God.*"<sup>j</sup> <sup>13</sup>After finishing every temptation, the devil departed from him until the next opportunity.

### Jesus announces good news to the poor

<sup>14</sup>Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news about him spread throughout the whole countryside. <sup>15</sup>He taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

<sup>16</sup>Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. <sup>17</sup>The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

<sup>18</sup>*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me.*

*He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,  
to proclaim release to the prisoners  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to liberate the oppressed,*

<sup>19</sup>*and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*<sup>k</sup>

<sup>20</sup>He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."

<sup>22</sup>Everyone was raving about Jesus, so impressed were they by the gracious words flowing from his lips. They said, "This is Joseph's son, isn't it?"

<sup>g</sup>Deut 8:3 <sup>h</sup>Deut 6:13 <sup>i</sup>Ps 91:11-12 <sup>j</sup>Deut 6:16 <sup>k</sup>Isa 61:1-2; 58:6

4:3 *this stone*: Satan tempts Jesus to use his divine status to provide for his own needs. Later, Jesus provides *bread* for a multitude (Luke 9:10-17).

4:4 *People... bread*: Like the Israelites in the wilderness, Jesus relies on God to guide him (Deut 8:3).

4:6 *I will give you*: Satan claims to be entrusted with the rule of all earthly kingdoms. Even if this were true, only God could have done such a thing; so to worship Satan would be to choose a second-rate god. Luke's readers faced similar pressure to worship false gods, including the emperor.

4:9 *highest... temple*: the top of the building containing the holy of holies.

4:12 *test*: No one, not even Jesus, should try to control God's actions (see Luke 4:2).

4:13 *every temptation*: Luke thinks of these three temptations as examples of what Jesus went through during his time of testing (Luke 4:2-4, 5-8, 9-12). *the next opportunity*: See Luke 10:18; 22:3, 31.

4:14-15 Luke includes summaries of Jesus' travels (e.g., Luke 4:44; 8:1; 13:22) in his narrative to remind readers that Jesus stayed on the move, spreading the message about God's kingdom as he went.

4:16-30 The parallel stories in Matthew and Mark occur later in Jesus' ministry (Matt 13:53-58; Mark 6:1-6). Luke

places this story here to introduce the major themes of Jesus' ministry.

4:16 *Nazareth*: a small, rural village (see Luke 1:26; 2:39, 51). *Sabbath*: lasts from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. *stood*: Jesus comes to the front to read a passage aloud.

4:17 *synagogue*: See sidebar, "The Synagogues" at Luke 20. *assistant*: brings the scroll from the prophet Isaiah from its storage place to the podium where Jesus is standing.

4:18-19 The passage Jesus reads shows the nature of what he will say and do throughout his ministry.

4:18 *Spirit*: Jesus (Luke 4:14) and his followers (Luke 11:13) are led by the Holy Spirit; and Jesus is known as a prophet (Luke 7:16). *preach good news*: See Luke 4:43. *to the poor*: See Luke 6:20; 7:22. *release*: Elsewhere in Luke this word is often translated as "forgiveness" (see Luke 24:47). *sight*: literal (Luke 18:35-43) and figurative (Luke 6:39-42) healing. *liberate*: literal (Luke 13:16) and figurative (Luke 12:33) freedom.

4:19 *the Lord's favor*: People can respond to God through Jesus' preaching (see Luke 2:14).

4:20 *sat down*: Teachers sat to give instruction.

4:21 *has been fulfilled*: or "God is causing it to happen, even as you listen."

4:22 *raving*: making positive comments to each other.

<sup>23</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Undoubtedly, you will quote this saying to me: 'Doctor, heal yourself. Do here in your hometown what we've heard you did in Capernaum.'" <sup>24</sup>He said, "I assure you that no prophet is welcome in the prophet's hometown. <sup>25</sup>And I can assure you that there were many widows in Israel during Elijah's time, when it didn't rain for three and a half years and there was a great food shortage in the land. <sup>26</sup>Yet Elijah was sent to none of them but only to a widow in the city of Zarephath in the region of Sidon. <sup>27</sup>There were also many persons with skin diseases in Israel during the time of the prophet Elisha, but none of them were cleansed. Instead, Naaman the Syrian was cleansed."

<sup>28</sup>When they heard this, everyone in the synagogue was filled with anger. <sup>29</sup>They rose up and ran him out of town. They led him to the crest of the hill on which their town had been built so that they could throw him off the cliff. <sup>30</sup>But he passed through the crowd and went on his way.

**Jesus in Capernaum**

<sup>31</sup>Jesus went down to the city of Capernaum in Galilee and taught the people each Sabbath. <sup>32</sup>They were amazed by his teaching because he delivered his message with authority.

<sup>33</sup>A man in the synagogue had the spirit of an unclean demon. He screamed, <sup>34</sup>"Hey! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the holy one from God."

<sup>35</sup>"Silence!" Jesus said, speaking harshly to the demon. "Come out of him!" The demon threw the man down before them, then came out of him without harming him.

<sup>36</sup>They were all shaken and said to each other, "What kind of word is this, that he can command unclean spirits with authority and power, and they leave?" <sup>37</sup>Reports about him spread everywhere in the surrounding region.

<sup>38</sup>After leaving the synagogue, Jesus went home with Simon. Simon's mother-in-law was sick with a high fever, and the family asked Jesus to help her. <sup>39</sup>He bent over her and spoke harshly to the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and served them.

<sup>40</sup>When the sun was setting, everyone brought to Jesus relatives and acquaintances with all kinds of diseases. Placing his hands on each of them, he healed them. <sup>41</sup>Demons also came out of many people. They screamed, "You are God's Son." But he spoke harshly to them and wouldn't allow them to speak because they recognized that he was the Christ.

<sup>42</sup>When daybreak arrived, Jesus went to a deserted place. The crowds were looking for him. When they found him, they tried to keep him from leaving them. <sup>43</sup>But he said to them,

4:23 Jer 8:22; Mt 9:12; Mk 2:1; Lk 4:16  
 4:24 Mt 13:57; Mk 6:4; Jn 4:44  
 4:25 1Ks 17:1; 1Ki 18:1; Jas 5:17  
 4:26 1Ki 17:9; Mt 11:21  
 4:27 2Ki 5:1  
 4:28 2Ch 16:10; Lk 6:11  
 4:29 Ac 7:58  
 4:30 Jn 8:59; Jn 10:39  
 4:31 Mt 4:13; Mk 1:21; Lk 4:23  
 4:32 Mt 7:28; Mt 7:29; Lk 4:36; Jn 7:46  
 4:33 Mk 1:23; Lk 4:31; Lk 8:28  
 4:34 Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24; Lk 8:28  
 4:35 Mt 8:26; Lk 4:39; Lk 4:41; Lk 8:24; Lk 9:42  
 4:36 Mk 7:37; Lk 4:32  
 4:37 Lk 4:14  
 4:38 Mt 8:14; Mt 8:15; Mk 1:29  
 4:39 Lk 4:35  
 4:40 Mt 4:23; Mt 8:16; Mt 8:17; Mk 1:32; Mk 5:23  
 4:41 Mt 4:3; Mt 26:63; Mk 3:11  
 4:42 Mk 1:35; Mk 1:37  
 4:43 Mt 4:23; Lk 8:1

4:23 *Capernaum*: This statement assumes Jesus did miracles at Capernaum during the period covered in Luke 4:14-15 (see Luke 4:31-44).

4:24 *no... welcome*: So far, Jesus has been *welcome*, but soon he won't be (Luke 4:28-29). He's predicting this eventuality.

4:26-27 *Elijah*: See 1 Kings 17:8-24. *Elisha*: See 2 Kings 5:1-19. Jesus helps a widow and a Gentile military man in Luke 7:1-17, and some people think he's Elijah (Luke 9:19).

4:28 The congregation's *anger* is sparked by Jesus' suggestion that as a prophet he'll bring God's good news to others, not to his own hometown. As a prophet, Jesus both stirs up and predicts negative responses.

4:30 *passed through*: Jesus escapes (see Luke 9:9; 13:31).

4:31-37 Jesus gets a different reaction from the Capernaum congregation.

4:31 *Capernaum*: a village of about 1,000 people, larger than Nazareth, on the northwest end of the Sea of Galilee (see Luke 7:1).

4:33 *spirit of an unclean demon*: Evil spirits (Luke 7:21); unclean spirits (Luke 8:29); and demons (Luke 11:14) were considered by some in Jesus' day to be the offspring of angels and human women (Gen 6:4; Jude 6) and the servants of Satan (Rev 12:7-9). People believed they caused others to do shameful or self-destructive things (Luke 8:27) or caused disabling conditions (Luke 9:39; 13:11).

4:34 *us*: Jesus' appearance means God's kingdom is overtaking the power of evil (Luke 11:20). *destroy*: The demon wonders if Jesus is about to start the last judgment (see Jude 6; Rev 20:2-3).

4:35 *threw the man down*: visibly indicating the demon's exit, as the dove indicated the Spirit's descent on Jesus (Luke 3:22).

4:38-39 Jesus' first contact with Simon (Peter) in Luke. Peter must have invited Jesus home after worship.

4:39 *spoke harshly*: Jesus treats the fever as if it's been caused by a demon (see Luke 4:35). *served them*: See Luke 8:3; 22:26-27.

4:40-44 Jesus, still a guest in Simon's house, heals many diseases and throws demons out of many.

4:42 *deserted place*: for prayer (see Luke 5:16). *tried to keep him*: The people of Nazareth wanted to kill him, but the people of Capernaum want to keep him as their local healer.

4:43 *other cities*: Jesus' mission will keep him moving (Luke 9:23, 57-62). *God's kingdom*: In contrast to the world's kingdoms (Luke 4:6), ruled by Satan and/or the emperor (Luke 3:1-2), *God's kingdom* is a place of healing and freedom (Luke 4:18-19) for everyone, even the poor (Luke 6:20). It began in Jesus' ministry (Luke 11:20; 17:21) and will be completed when Jesus returns (Luke 21:27; 22:30).

4:44 Mt 4:23;  
Mk 1:39

5:1 Mt 4:18

5:2 Mt 4:18

5:3 Mt 4:18;  
Mt 5:1; Mt 13:2

5:4 Mt 4:18;  
Mk 1:16; Jn 21:3;  
Jn 21:6

5:5 Lk 8:24;  
Lk 9:33;  
Lk 9:49;  
Lk 17:13; Jn 21:3

5:6 Jn 21:6;  
Jn 21:11

5:8 Jn 6:5;  
Mt 2:11

5:9 Lk 4:36

5:10 Mt 4:19;  
Mk 1:17

5:11 Mt 4:20;  
Lk 5:28;  
Lk 10:28

5:12 Mt 8:2;  
Mt 9:28;  
Mk 1:40

5:13 Mt 8:3

5:14 Mt 8:4;  
Lk 17:14

5:15 Mt 9:26

5:16 Mt 14:23;  
Mk 1:35;

Lk 3:21; Lk 6:12

5:17 Mt 15:1;  
Lk 2:46; Lk 6:19;  
Lk 8:46

"I must preach the good news of God's kingdom in other cities too, for this is why I was sent."

**44** So he continued preaching in the Judean synagogues.

### Jesus calls disciples

**5** One day Jesus was standing beside Lake Gennesaret when the crowd pressed in around him to hear God's word. **2** Jesus saw two boats sitting by the lake. The fishermen had gone ashore and were washing their nets. **3** Jesus boarded one of the boats, the one that belonged to Simon, then asked him to row out a little distance from the shore. Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. **4** When he finished speaking to the crowds, he said to Simon, "Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch."

**5** Simon replied, "Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets."

**6** So they dropped the nets and their catch was so huge that their nets were splitting. **7** They signaled for their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They filled both boats so full that they were about to sink. **8** When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Leave me, Lord, for I'm a sinner!" **9** Peter and those with him were overcome with amazement because of the number of fish they caught. **10** James and John, Zebedee's sons, were Simon's partners and they were amazed too.

Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people." **11** As soon as they brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus.

### A man with a skin disease

**12** Jesus was in one of the towns where there was also a man covered with a skin disease. When he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged, "Lord, if you want, you can make me clean."

**13** Jesus reached out his hand, touched him, and said, "I do want to. Be clean." Instantly, the skin disease left him. **14** Jesus ordered him not to tell anyone. "Instead," Jesus said, "go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses instructed. This will be a testimony to them." **15** News of him spread even more and huge crowds gathered to listen and to be healed from their illnesses. **16** But Jesus would withdraw to deserted places for prayer.

### Jesus heals a paralyzed man

**17** One day when Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and legal experts were sitting nearby. They had come from every village in Galilee and Judea, and from Jerusalem. Now the power of

4:44 *Judean synagogues*: In the Roman Empire "Judea" sometimes meant the whole country. Jesus is still in Galilee.

5:1 *Lake Gennesaret*: the Sea of Galilee. *God's word*: It's the same as "the good news of God's kingdom" (Luke 4:43).

5:3 *Simon*: Earlier Jesus ate a meal with Simon (also called Peter) and healed Simon's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-39), so they are already acquainted.

5:4 *drop your nets*: Jesus, a prophet (Luke 4:24), knows what's about to happen.

5:5 *Master*: a respectful address (see Luke 5:8). *all night*: Net fishing often happened at night, when fish would come to warmer, shallower parts of the lake.

5:8 *Leave me*: Peter reacts as if Jesus were an angel (Luke 1:12; 2:9), and his fear is a sign he believes Jesus is divine or divinely gifted. *Lord*: Peter's being not merely respectful but reverent. *sinner*: In Luke everyone (except Jesus) needs to repent in order to come to God (Luke 13:3, 5). Peter is the first of many to "change their hearts and lives" (Luke 5:32) in order to follow Jesus (Luke 19:8; 23:39-43).

5:10 *James and John*: Along with Peter, they're sometimes singled out (Luke 8:51; 9:28, 54). *Don't be afraid*: See Luke 1:13; 2:10. *fishing for people*: sharing in Jesus' mission. The disciples are first sent out in Luke 9:1-6.

5:11 *left . . . followed*: See Luke 18:28; 12:33; 14:33.

5:12 *skin disease*: Various kinds of rashes or scales (in some translations, "leprosy") made a person unclean—not sinful, but ceremonially unfit to enter the temple or

other sacred places. Persons in this condition were required to stay away from others until a priest declared them healed and they'd gone through the cleansing ceremonies required by Leviticus (see Lev 13-14). *on his face*: a posture of reverent submission. *make me clean*: Healing the skin condition is the first step to becoming ceremonially clean.

5:13 *touched him*: Touching a leper made a person unclean. Leviticus 13:45-46 requires people with skin diseases to warn others to stay away but doesn't prohibit a clean person from touching them, so Jesus wasn't disobeying the Law. Since the skin disease disappears when Jesus touches him, Jesus doesn't become unclean.

5:14 *not to tell*: Jesus wants to avoid being a local healer (Luke 4:42-43), so he commands the healed man not to spread the news. But the man does anyway (Luke 5:15). *priest*: He would perform a physical exam to declare the man free of his skin disease (Lev 13-14). *offering*: a sacrifice, made in the Jerusalem temple (Lev 14:1-32). *testimony*: The physical exam and the sacrifice are all the healed man needs to do or say.

5:15 *News*: The story can't be kept quiet, and *huge crowds* became a problem (Luke 5:19; 8:19) and even a danger (Luke 9:7-9; 13:31).

5:16 *would withdraw*: or "was accustomed to withdraw." This is his standard practice.

5:17 *Pharisees*: See sidebar, "Pharisees" at Luke 6. *legal experts*: professionals, experts in Moses' Law and how it was



*The Human One in Luke* In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus never calls himself “Son of God” or “Messiah”; instead, he calls himself “the Human One,” often translated as “the son of man.” Jesus’ native language was Aramaic. In this language *bar enosha* can mean “human being.” God addresses Ezekiel that way (Ezek 4:1), meaning “you mortal” as opposed to the immortal God. In Daniel 7:13-14 a human-looking figure ascends to God and is given power to rule the nations after God destroys the monstrous thing oppressing God’s people. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus often called himself “the Human One” (Luke 5:24; 6:5; 7:34; 9:26, 44, 58; 11:30; 12:8, 10, 40; 17:24, 30; 18:8; 19:10; 22:22, 69). With this title, he claims the authority “to forgive sins” on earth (Luke 5:24) and, on Judgment Day, to decide who will receive eternal life (Luke 9:26; 12:8-9). He uses the title to predict his death (Luke 9:22); resurrection (Luke 22:69); and return (Luke 21:22). Therefore, this title gives us the most complete picture of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.

5:18 Mt 9:2;  
Mk 2:3  
5:19 Mk 2:4  
5:20 Mt 9:2;  
Lk 7:48  
5:21 Is 43:25;  
Lk 7:49  
5:22 Mt 9:4;  
Mt 12:25;  
Jn 2:24; Jn 2:25;  
Rev 2:23  
5:24 Dn 7:13;  
Mt 9:6; Mt 26:64;  
Mt 28:18; Jn 5:8  
5:25 Lk 7:16;  
Lk 13:13;  
Lk 17:15;  
Lk 18:43  
5:26 Mt 9:8;  
Lk 7:16  
5:27 Mt 9:9;  
Mk 2:13;  
Mk 2:14  
5:28 Lk 5:11  
5:29 Mt 9:10;  
Lk 15:1  
5:30 Lk 7:34;  
Lk 15:2; Lk 19:7;  
Ac 23:9  
5:31 Mt 9:12;  
Mk 2:17  
5:32 Lk 15:7;  
Ac 5:31

the Lord was with Jesus to heal. <sup>18</sup>Some men were bringing a man who was paralyzed, lying on a cot. They wanted to carry him in and place him before Jesus, <sup>19</sup>but they couldn’t reach him because of the crowd. So they took him up on the roof and lowered him—cot and all—through the roof tiles into the crowded room in front of Jesus. <sup>20</sup>When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

<sup>21</sup>The legal experts and Pharisees began to mutter among themselves, “Who is this who insults God? Only God can forgive sins!”

<sup>22</sup>Jesus recognized what they were discussing and responded, “Why do you fill your minds with these questions? <sup>23</sup>Which is easier—to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? <sup>24</sup>But so that you will know that the Human One<sup>1</sup> has authority on the earth to forgive sins” —Jesus now spoke to the man who was paralyzed, “I say to you, get up, take your cot, and go home.” <sup>25</sup>Right away, the man stood before them, picked up his cot, and went home, praising God.

<sup>26</sup>All the people were beside themselves with wonder. Filled with awe, they glorified God, saying, “We’ve seen unimaginable things today.”

### *Jesus calls a tax collector*

<sup>27</sup>Afterward, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at a kiosk for collecting taxes. Jesus said to him, “Follow me.”

<sup>28</sup>Levi got up, left everything behind, and followed him. <sup>29</sup>Then Levi threw a great banquet for Jesus in his home. A large number of tax collectors and others sat down to eat with them. <sup>30</sup>The Pharisees and their legal experts grumbled against his disciples. They said, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

<sup>31</sup>Jesus answered, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor, but sick people do. <sup>32</sup>I didn’t come to call righteous people but sinners to change their hearts and lives.”

<sup>1</sup>Or *Son of Man*

traditionally interpreted, who could give advice to public officials and temple leaders (Luke 20:1) as well as to the Pharisees. *from every village*: They are numerous, a part of the crowd in Luke 5:19. *power... to heal*: a reminder that Jesus’ miracles aren’t magic or some superhero type of power. Jesus can heal because of his relationship with God (Luke 4:3-4, 14, 17-18; 5:16; 6:18-19; 8:46).

5:19 *couldn’t reach him*: The crowd (including the legal experts and Pharisees) is blocking the way, but it doesn’t stop these resourceful people.

5:20 *their faith*: They don’t give up. His friends’ efforts demonstrate how committed they are. “*Friend... forgiven*”: God forgives him. Luke doesn’t suggest the man is paralyzed because of his sins; everyone needs to repent and be forgiven (Luke 13:3, 5).

5:21 *Who is this*: The legal experts don’t yet agree that Jesus is a prophet.

5:22 *Jesus recognized*: See Luke 2:35; 6:8.

5:23 “*Get up and walk*”: If Jesus claims to heal in God’s name but fails, he proves he’s a false prophet.

5:24 *the Human One*: See sidebar, “The Human One in Luke.” *authority... to forgive*: See Luke 7:48; 19:9; 23:43. The healed man and the crowd praise God. The legal experts become witnesses to God’s power exercised through Jesus.

5:27 *tax collector*: Levi quit a job that made him wealthy by oppressing others. See sidebar, “Tax Collectors” at Luke 3.

5:29 *great banquet*: See sidebar, “1st-Century Dinner Parties” at Luke 7. *in his home*: In Luke’s time most congregations met in homes like this one.

5:30 *grumbled... disciples*: In Luke 5:21 they “mutter among themselves,” and now they’re complaining to the *disciples*. *eat and drink*: Being their guest means Jesus accepts them. *sinners*: The Pharisees refer here to people, like the tax collectors, who they think disobey God’s laws all the time. But in Luke, Jesus can’t avoid eating with sinners, since all, including Pharisees, are sinners.

5:31-32 Another purpose statement by Jesus (see Luke 4:43; 5:24). He came to *call everyone to change*.

5:33 Mt 9:14;  
 Mk 2:18;  
 Lk 18:12; Jn 3:25  
 5:34 In 3:29  
 5:35 Lk 17:22  
 5:36 Mt 9:16;  
 Mk 2:21  
 5:37 Josh 9:4  
 6:1 Dt 23:25,  
 Mt 12:1;  
 Mk 2:23  
 6:2 Mt 12:2  
 6:3 1Sa 21:6;  
 Mt 12:3,  
 Mt 21:16,  
 Mk 2:25  
 6:4 Lv 24:5,  
 Lv 24:9  
 6:5 Ac 2:36  
 6:6 Mt 4:23,  
 Mt 12:9; Mk 3:1;  
 Lk 4:31, Lk 6:1  
 6:7 Mk 3:2;  
 Lk 14:1,  
 Lk 20:20

### The old and the new

<sup>33</sup>Some people said to Jesus, “The disciples of John fast often and pray frequently. The disciples of the Pharisees do the same, but your disciples are always eating and drinking.”

<sup>34</sup>Jesus replied, “You can’t make the wedding guests fast while the groom is with them, can you? <sup>35</sup>The days will come when the groom will be taken from them, and then they will fast.”

<sup>36</sup>Then he told them a parable. “No one tears a patch from a new garment to patch an old garment. Otherwise, the new garment would be ruined, and the new patch wouldn’t match the old garment. <sup>37</sup>Nobody pours new wine into old wineskins. If they did, the new wine would burst the wineskins, the wine would spill, and the wineskins would be ruined. <sup>38</sup>Instead, new wine must be put into new wineskins. <sup>39</sup>No one who drinks a well-aged wine wants new wine, but says, ‘The well-aged wine is better.’”

### Activities on the Sabbath

**6** One Sabbath, as Jesus was going through the wheat fields, his disciples were picking the heads of wheat, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them. <sup>2</sup>Some Pharisees said, “Why are you breaking the Sabbath law?”

<sup>3</sup>Jesus replied, “Haven’t you read what David and his companions did when they were hungry? <sup>4</sup>He broke the Law by going into God’s house and eating the bread of the presence, which only the priests can eat. He also gave some of the bread to his companions.” <sup>5</sup>Then he said to them, “The Human One<sup>m</sup> is Lord of the Sabbath.”

<sup>6</sup>On another Sabbath, Jesus entered a synagogue to teach. A man was there whose right hand was withered. <sup>7</sup>The legal experts and the Pharisees were watching him closely to see if

*Pharisees* According to the 1st-century Jewish historian Josephus, Pharisees were active in Jewish public life from about 150 years before the birth of Jesus. Their roots probably go back even further to the Persian or Hellenistic periods (i.e., as far back as the 6th century BCE). Putting together evidence from Josephus, the NT, and Jewish writings known as the Mishnah, we know the Pharisees were a group within 1st-century Judaism that wanted to obey God’s rules as fully as possible. They believed the Law could be interpreted so as to uncover God’s opinions about things not directly addressed in scripture. For instance, while the Law forbids work on the Sabbath (Exod 20:10), it isn’t very specific about what counts as work. In Luke, Jesus and the Pharisees differ on whether healing (Luke 6:7) or snacking on wheat kernels (Luke 6:1-2) counts as work. Their definition of restricted activities is broader than his. Jesus and the Pharisees agree, however, that angels and demons are real, that God has appointed a future day of resurrection, and that God’s coming kingdom will be like a great banquet (Luke 14:15). The Pharisees cast out demons (Luke 11:19) and are diligent about praying, tithing, and fasting (Luke 18:11-12). Three times in Luke, they host Jesus for dinner (Luke 7:36-50; 11:37-54; 14:1-24). They also warn him about Herod (Luke 13:31), and some Pharisees later join the church at Jerusalem (e.g., Acts 15:5).

<sup>m</sup>Or Son of Man

5:33 *disciples of John*: John the Baptist has devoted followers (Luke 7:18; Acts 19:1-7). *fast often*: as a sign of their turning to God from the world. *pray frequently*: See Luke 11:1. *disciples of the Pharisees*: Luke says Paul is a disciple of Gamaliel the Pharisee (Acts 22:3). *eating and drinking*: Jesus’ disciples don’t look as serious about their devotion to God.  
 5:34 *wedding guests*: It wouldn’t be polite to refuse to eat and drink at a wedding banquet. God’s kingdom is like a wedding banquet, with Jesus as the groom/host.  
 5:35 *days will come*: a prediction of Jesus’ crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. In Acts Jesus’ followers do *fast* (Acts 13:2; 14:23).  
 5:37 *new wine*: Fermenting wine produces gases that will burst an old leather wineskin, so it’s put into new wineskins that can still stretch. Jesus means that new forms of devotion are appropriate, since God’s kingdom has arrived. But many people dislike change and prefer the older ways; this helps explain all the objections (Luke 5:21, 30, 33).

6:1-2 *Sabbath*: On the Sabbath (Friday sundown to Saturday sundown), Jews were commanded not to work (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15). *picking*: They aren’t stealing, according to Exodus 23:25. *breaking the Sabbath law*: The Pharisees are counting *picking* and *rubbing* as work and thus forbidden on the Sabbath.  
 6:3 *Haven’t you read*: Hungry people may eat, even if that seems to break the Law.  
 6:4 *the bread of the presence* David gave to his companions was holy, off-limits for nonpriests (1 Sam 21:1-6; Lev 24:5-9).  
 6:5 *The Human One*: See sidebar, “The Human One in Luke” at Luke 5. *Lord of the Sabbath*: Jesus exercises God’s authority and can decide what’s appropriate on the Sabbath.  
 6:6 *Sabbath*: See Luke 6:1. *synagogue*: See sidebar, “The Synagogues” at Luke 20.  
 6:7 *legal experts*: See Luke 5:17. *if he would heal*: Healing, or treating illness or injury, counted as work. Some Jews believed such work should be avoided on the Sabbath unless a person’s life was at stake (Luke 13:14). *looking... to*

he would heal on the Sabbath. They were looking for a reason to bring charges against him. <sup>8</sup>Jesus knew their thoughts, so he said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." He got up and stood there. <sup>9</sup>Jesus said to the legal experts and Pharisees, "Here's a question for you: Is it legal on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" <sup>10</sup>Looking around at them all, he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he did and his hand was made healthy. <sup>11</sup>They were furious and began talking with each other about what to do to Jesus.

### Jesus chooses apostles

<sup>12</sup>During that time, Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night long. <sup>13</sup>At daybreak, he called together his disciples. He chose twelve of them whom he called apostles: <sup>14</sup>Simon, whom he named Peter; his brother Andrew; James; John; Philip; Bartholomew; <sup>15</sup>Matthew; Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus; Simon, who was called a zealot; <sup>16</sup>Judas the son of James; and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

### Jesus' popularity increases

<sup>17</sup>Jesus came down from the mountain with them and stood on a large area of level ground. A great company of his disciples and a huge crowd of people from all around Judea and Jerusalem and the area around Tyre and Sidon joined him there. <sup>18</sup>They came to hear him and to be healed from their diseases, and those bothered by unclean spirits were healed. <sup>19</sup>The whole crowd wanted to touch him, because power was going out from him and he was healing everyone.

### Happy people and doomed people

<sup>20</sup>Jesus raised his eyes to his disciples and said:

"Happy are you who are poor, because God's kingdom is yours.

<sup>21</sup>Happy are you who hunger now, because you will be satisfied.

Happy are you who weep now, because you will laugh.

<sup>22</sup>Happy are you when people hate you, reject you, insult you, and condemn your name as evil because of the Human One.<sup>a</sup> <sup>23</sup>Rejoice when that happens! Leap for joy because you have a great reward in heaven. Their ancestors did the same things to the prophets.

<sup>24</sup>But how terrible for you who are rich, because you have already received your comfort.

<sup>a</sup>Or Son of Man

*bring charges:* From this point on in Luke, Jesus usually has enemies around him as well as disciples and crowds (see Luke 6:11).

6:8 *knew their thoughts:* as Simeon had predicted (Luke 2:34-25; 5:22; 11:17).

6:9 *Is it legal:* God's Law always forbids evil and allows good. For Jesus, saving a life is doing good, and thus healing is permitted.

6:10 *Stretch out:* Jesus does nothing physical to cause the healing. God heals the man's hand, proving Jesus correct. 6:12 *out . . . to pray:* See Luke 4:42; 5:16. Jesus experienced God's presence in prayer (Luke 3:21; 9:28-29).

6:13 *The disciples,* those who followed him, were more numerous, and included women (Luke 8:1-3). From this larger group, Jesus *chose twelve apostles:* those sent out with a task to do for the sender.

6:15 *zealot:* designates this Simon as someone other than "Simon, whom he named Peter" (Luke 6:14). Luke tells us this Simon is zealous but doesn't tell us what he's zealous for (cf. Acts 21:20; 22:3).

6:16 *Iscariot:* might mean "from Kerioth," or it might mean "sicarius-user" (a sicarius was a knife). *traitor:* See Luke 22:1-6, 47.

6:17-49 This section, often called the "Sermon on the Plain," has much in common with the more famous "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 5-7. Jesus instructs

disciples (6:20) on some of his expectations for those who follow him.

6:17-19 The setting for the sermon. Luke imagines three groups: (1) the Twelve, just chosen; (2) a larger *company of his disciples* (Luke 8:1-3; 10:1); and (3) a *huge crowd of people* who are attracted to Jesus but haven't joined him yet. *Judea and Jerusalem:* south of Galilee, where Jesus is teaching. *Tyre and Sidon:* north of Galilee. *power was going out:* See Luke 4:14; 5:17; 8:46; Acts 5:15.

6:20-26 Words of happiness (6:20-23) and regret (6:24-26) introduce the sermon.

6:20 *Happy:* the quality of life enjoyed by those who live in God's favor. *you:* Each you in Luke 6:20-26 is plural in the Greek, indicating types or groups of people. *poor:* Needy people receive the good news. *God's kingdom:* See Luke 4:43.

6:21 *hunger . . . weep:* Jesus feeds the hungry (Luke 9:13) and comforts the grieving (Luke 7:13), but the terms can also apply to any who urgently seek God's word (Luke 9:11).

6:22 *hate you:* Early Christians were hated and slandered (Luke 21:12-17; 1 Pet 3:16; 4:4) because they didn't worship Greek and Roman gods.

6:23 *the prophets:* OT heroes who delivered God's message and were mistreated because of that (Luke 11:47-51).

6:24 *how terrible:* Jesus both predicts and expresses

6:8 Mt 9:4;  
Lk 5:22; Jn 2:25  
6:9 Lk 14:3  
6:10 Mk 3:5  
6:12 Mt 14:23;  
Lk 3:21  
6:13 Mt 10:2;  
Mk 3:13;  
Mk 3:16;  
Mk 6:30;  
Ac 1:13

6:14 Mt 4:21;  
Mt 10:3;  
Mk 1:19;  
Ac 1:13

6:15 Mt 9:9;  
Mt 10:3;  
Mt 10:4;  
Mk 3:18;  
Ac 1:13

6:16 Jn 14:22;  
Ac 1:13

6:17 Mt 4:25;  
Mt 11:21;  
Mk 3:7; Mk 3:8;  
Lk 6:12

6:18 Mt 15:22;  
Ac 5:16

6:19 Mt 9:20;  
Mt 14:36;  
Mk 3:10;  
Lk 5:17; Lk 8:46

6:20 Mt 5:3;  
Lk 12:32; Jas 2:5

6:21 Mt 5:4

6:22 Jn 9:22;  
Jn 15:18; Jn 16:2;  
1 Pt 4:14

6:23 Mt 5:12

6:24 Am 6:1;  
Mt 6:2; Lk 16:25;  
Jas 5:1

6:25 Prv 14:13;  
Is 65:13; Jas 4:9  
6:26 Jer 5:31;  
Mt 7:15;  
In 15:19

6:27 Prv 25:21;  
Mt 5:44; Lk 6:35;  
Ro 12:20

6:28 Mt 5:44;  
Ro 12:14; 1Pt 3:9  
6:29 Mt 5:39,  
Mt 5:40

6:30 Dt 15:7;  
Ps 37:21; Ps 41:1;  
Prv 11:2-9;  
Prv 21:26

6:31 Mt 7:12

6:32 Mt 5:46

6:34 Mt 5:42;  
Lk 14:12

6:35 Lk 6:27

6:36 Mt 5:7;  
Mt 5:48; Jas 2:13;  
Jas 5:11

6:37 Mt 6:14;  
Mt 7:1

6:38 Ps 79:12;  
Mk 4:24; 2Co 9:6

6:39 Mt 15:14

6:40 Mt 10:24;  
Jn 13:16

6:41 Mt 7:3;  
Lk 6:42

6:42 Mt 23:13;  
Lk 6:41;  
Lk 13:15

6:43 Mt 7:16;  
Mt 7:20

6:44 Mt 7:16;  
Mt 12:33

**25** How terrible for you who have plenty now, because you will be hungry.

How terrible for you who laugh now, because you will mourn and weep.

**26** How terrible for you when all speak well of you.

Their ancestors did the same things to the false prophets.

### Behaving as God's children

**27** "But I say to you who are willing to hear: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. **28** Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. **29** If someone slaps you on the cheek, offer the other one as well. If someone takes your coat, don't withhold your shirt either. **30** Give to everyone who asks and don't demand your things back from those who take them. **31** Treat people in the same way that you want them to treat you.

**32** "If you love those who love you, why should you be commended? Even sinners love those who love them. **33** If you do good to those who do good to you, why should you be commended? Even sinners do that. **34** If you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, why should you be commended? Even sinners lend to sinners expecting to be paid back in full. **35** Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend expecting nothing in return. If you do, you will have a great reward. You will be acting the way children of the Most High act, for he is kind to ungrateful and wicked people. **36** Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate.

**37** "Don't judge, and you won't be judged. Don't condemn, and you won't be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. **38** Give, and it will be given to you. A good portion—packed down, firmly shaken, and overflowing—will fall into your lap. The portion you give will determine the portion you receive in return."

### Avoiding self-deception

**39** Jesus also told them a riddle. "A blind person can't lead another blind person, right? Won't they both fall into a ditch? **40** Disciples aren't greater than their teacher, but whoever is fully prepared will be like their teacher. **41** Why do you see the splinter in your brother's or sister's eye but don't notice the log in your own eye? **42** How can you say to your brother or sister, 'Brother, Sister, let me take the splinter out of your eye,' when you don't see the log in your own eye? You deceive yourselves! First take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother's or sister's eye.

**43** "A good tree doesn't produce bad fruit, nor does a bad tree produce good fruit. **44** Each tree is known by its own fruit. People don't gather figs from thorny plants, nor do they pick

sorrow for the judgment coming on those who've chosen to live outside God's favor. *rich*: those who have more than they need and don't share it with the poor (see Luke 12:15-21; 16:19-31; 18:18-30). *received your comfort*: See Luke 16:25.

**6:25** have plenty... *laugh*: people who, like the rich, don't desire God's kingdom because they're happy in "the kingdoms of the world" (Luke 4:5-6). When Judgment Day comes, they will mourn and weep.

**6:26** speak well: In Luke's time a Christian was unlikely to be praised publicly (see Luke 6:22).

**6:27** Love your enemies: the topic for Luke 6:27-36. All that follows defines the word "love," which is more about actions than emotional connections. *Do good*: generous acts (Luke 6:33-35).

**6:28** Bless: ask God to do good to them (Luke 2:34; see Rom 12:14).

**6:29** slaps you: an insult, treating someone like a child or slave. *takes your coat*: taken by force by a person with more power, perhaps to secure a loan or pay a debt (see Exod 22:25-27). *your shirt*: a tunic worn by men and women as a first layer of clothing. Offering to go naked might embarrass the one who takes the coat.

**6:30** asks... *take*: Jesus' followers shouldn't be attached to things (Luke 12:22-34), so it really doesn't matter whether

they give to beggars or have their things seized by the powerful.

**6:32** sinners: In Luke everyone needs to change their lives and receive the good news. Anybody can return good treatment, but God expects more of Jesus' disciples.

**6:35** lend expecting nothing: give freely. *great reward*: namely, entrance into God's kingdom (Luke 18:28-30).

**6:36** Be compassionate: Imitating God's compassion means being kind to enemies.

**6:37** Don't judge... *Don't condemn*: Only God can legitimately condemn anyone, so leave judging to God. *won't be judged... won't be condemned*: If you wrongly condemn someone, God may condemn you. *Forgive*: See Luke 17:3-4; 23:34.

**6:38** good portion: A good employer who pays the harvester with grain fills the measuring jar, shakes it to make more room, presses it down to make still more room, and then fills it to overflowing before pouring it into the worker's shirt, which the worker is holding out like a sack.

**6:39** blind: a warning against choosing the wrong teacher. A bad teacher may lead you into trouble, and a poor teacher won't help you improve that much.

**6:41** splinter: Correct your own faults first before trying to help others. Then, when you are able, help them, too (see Luke 22:31-32).

grapes from prickly bushes. <sup>45</sup>A good person produces good from the good treasury of the inner self, while an evil person produces evil from the evil treasury of the inner self. The inner self overflows with words that are spoken.

<sup>46</sup>“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and don’t do what I say? <sup>47</sup>I’ll show what it’s like when someone comes to me, hears my words, and puts them into practice. <sup>48</sup>It’s like a person building a house by digging deep and laying the foundation on bedrock. When the flood came, the rising water smashed against that house, but the water couldn’t shake the house because it was well built. <sup>49</sup>But those who don’t put into practice what they hear are like a person who built a house without a foundation. The floodwater smashed against it and it collapsed instantly. It was completely destroyed.”

**A servant is healed**

**7**After Jesus finished presenting all his words among the people, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup>A centurion had a servant who was very important to him, but the servant was ill and about to die. <sup>3</sup>When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to Jesus

6:45 Mt 12:34,  
Mt 12:35;  
Eph 4:29  
6:46 Mal 1:6;  
Mt 7:21;  
Jn 13:13  
6:47 Mt 12:24;  
Lk 11:28; Jas 1:22  
6:48 Mt 7:25  
6:49 Prv 28:18;  
Mt 7:26;  
Lk 12:47,  
Lk 19:27; Jas 1:22  
7:1 Mt 7:28,  
Mt 8:5  
7:2 Mt 8:5,  
Mt 27:54;  
Lk 23:47;  
Ac 10:1, Ac 10:7  
7:3 Mt 8:5



6:45 *treasury*: a storeroom or treasure box. Good conduct comes from a good character.

6:46 *Lord*: or “Master.” This is how slaves addressed their owners, and it’s one of the ways Jews prayed to God. Calling Jesus *Lord* should indicate readiness to obey his teachings.

6:47 *comes... hears... puts*: Crowds come to hear him, and he challenges them to become disciples (see Luke 6:17-18).

6:48 *flood*: an image for hard times (see Isa 43:2; Ps 69:2). Living by Jesus’ instructions prepares a person to survive life’s trials.

7:1-17 The next two miracles form a pair: one done at the request of a Gentile male and one done for a Jewish woman who asks for nothing. The first reminds us of Elisha curing Naaman (2 Kgs 5; Luke 4:27); and the second is like Elijah raising the widow’s son (1 Kgs 17:8-24; Luke 4:26).

7:1 *Capernaum*: See Luke 4:31.

7:2 *centurion*: like an infantry company or platoon sergeant. *servant*: a slave, perhaps a personal assistant.

7:3 *sent some Jewish elders*: Although the centurion wasn’t Jewish, some of the Jewish town leaders owe him a favor (Luke 7:5) and are willing to contact Jesus for him.

7:4 Mt 8:5;  
Lk 7:3, Lk 7:6,  
Lk 20:35; Jn 4:50

7:6 Lk 8:49  
7:7 Ps 107:20

7:8 Ac 23:17,  
Ac 23:23;  
Col 3:22

7:9 Lk 7:50

7:10 Mt 15:28

7:12 Gn 22:12;  
Lk 8:42

7:13 Jn 11:33

7:14 2Sa 3:31;  
Lk 8:54; Jn 11:43;  
Ac 9:40

7:15 1Ki 17:23

7:16 Mt 9:8,  
Mt 21:11;  
Lk 1:68, Lk 5:26,  
Lk 7:39

7:17 Mt 9:26

7:18 Mt 9:14,  
Mt 11:2; Lk 9:33

7:19 Mal 3:1;  
Lk 3:15, Lk 3:16,  
Lk 10:1, Lk 11:1

7:20 Mt 11:4;  
Lk 7:18; Jn 5:36

7:21 Mt 4:23

7:22 Is 29:18,  
Is 35:5, Is 35:6,  
Is 61:1; Lk 4:18

to ask him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup>When they came to Jesus, they earnestly pleaded with Jesus. "He deserves to have you do this for him," they said. <sup>5</sup>"He loves our people and he built our synagogue for us."

<sup>6</sup>Jesus went with them. He had almost reached the house when the centurion sent friends to say to Jesus, "Lord, don't be bothered. I don't deserve to have you come under my roof." <sup>7</sup>In fact, I didn't even consider myself worthy to come to you. Just say the word and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup>I'm also a man appointed under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and the servant does it."

<sup>9</sup>When Jesus heard these words, he was impressed with the centurion. He turned to the crowd following him and said, "I tell you, even in Israel I haven't found faith like this."

<sup>10</sup>When the centurion's friends returned to his house, they found the servant restored to health.

### Jesus raises a widow's son

<sup>11</sup>A little later Jesus went to a city called Nain. His disciples and a great crowd traveled with him. <sup>12</sup>As he approached the city gate, a dead man was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was with her. <sup>13</sup>When he saw her, the Lord had compassion for her and said, "Don't cry." <sup>14</sup>He stepped forward and touched the stretcher on which the dead man was being carried. Those carrying him stood still. Jesus said, "Young man, I say to you, get up." <sup>15</sup>The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

<sup>16</sup>Awestruck, everyone praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." <sup>17</sup>This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding region.

### John the Baptist and Jesus

<sup>18</sup>John's disciples informed him about all these things. John called two of his disciples <sup>19</sup>and sent them to the Lord. They were to ask him, "Are you the one who is coming, or should we look for someone else?"

<sup>20</sup>When they reached Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you. He asks, 'Are you the one who is coming, or should we look for someone else?'"

<sup>21</sup>Right then, Jesus healed many of their diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and he gave sight to a number of blind people. <sup>22</sup>Then he replied to John's disciples, "Go, report to John

7:4 *He deserves*: The elders assume Jesus needs to be talked into helping a Gentile, especially an army official.

7:5 *He loves*: "Love" means doing good, like giving generously to the synagogue building fund (see Luke 6:27).

7:6 *Jesus went*: He would have entered the centurion's house. *friends*: a second group that delivers the centurion's actual words. *I don't deserve*: He's a Gentile and may think Jesus, who's Jewish, would hesitate to accept his hospitality.

7:7 *worthy*: He knows Jesus owes him no favors but hopes Jesus will say the word. If Jesus asks God to heal the slave, the centurion believes God will do it.

7:9 *even in Israel*: Jesus' first encounter with a Gentile in Luke shows how the good news will be preached "to all nations" (Luke 24:47).

7:11 *Nain*: a small village, like Nazareth, southwest of the Sea of Galilee and almost on the Samaritan border. *disciples . . . great crowd*: See Luke 6:17.

7:12 *a dead man*: one of three children Jesus heals (Luke 8:41-42, 49-56; 9:37-43). *widow*: According to Moses' Law, widows, orphans, and immigrants are under God's special protection (e.g., Exod 22:21-24; Luke 18:1-8; Acts 6:1).

7:13 *The Lord had compassion for her*: the first time Luke calls Jesus "Lord" (see Luke 1:43) and the only time Luke says Jesus had compassion. It's also rare for Jesus to do a miracle without first being asked. "Don't cry": See Luke 6:21.

7:14 *get up*: See Luke 8:54.

7:15 *began to speak*: proof he's fine (see Luke 8:55) and, like Zechariah's renewed speech (Luke 1:64), proof of truly good news.

7:16 *great prophet*: Jesus is a prophet like Elijah and Elisha but also like Elizabeth, Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, Anna, and John the Baptist. *God has come*: See Luke 1:68; 11:20; 19:44.

7:18 *all these things*: the news about Jesus' healings and popular opinion that he's a great prophet (Luke 7:16-17). *John called*: John has been imprisoned by Herod Antipas (Luke 3:19-20) but is still in contact with *his disciples* (see note on Luke 5:33).

7:19 *The Lord*: This is Luke's perspective, not John's (see Luke 7:13). *the one who is coming*: John expects the Christ to begin God's judgment on the wicked (see Luke 3:16-17). While Jesus performs healings like Elijah, he hasn't yet brought God's fire (see 1 Kgs 18:36-38; Luke 9:54). John's question probably expresses hope as well as doubt.

7:21 *Right then*: Jesus performs the healings while John's messengers watch.

7:22 *blind*: See Luke 4:18; 18:35-43. *crippled*: See Luke 5:17-26; 14:13. *skin diseases*: See Luke 5:12-16; 17:11-19. *deaf*: The same word in Greek means "unable to speak" as well as "unable to hear" (see Luke 11:14). *dead*: See Luke 7:11-15. *poor*: See Luke 6:20-21. All these terms refer to people who need God's help and forgiveness.

what you have seen and heard. *Those who were blind are able to see. Those who were crippled now walk. People with skin diseases are cleansed. Those who were deaf now hear. Those who were dead are raised up. And good news is preached to the poor.*<sup>a</sup> <sup>23</sup>Happy is anyone who doesn't stumble along the way because of me."

<sup>24</sup>After John's messengers were gone, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John. "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A stalk blowing in the wind? <sup>25</sup>What did you go out to see? A man dressed up in refined clothes? Look, those who dress in fashionable clothes and live in luxury are in royal palaces. <sup>26</sup>What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>27</sup>He is the one of whom it's written: *Look, I'm sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you.*<sup>b</sup> <sup>28</sup>I tell you that no greater human being has ever been born than John. Yet whoever is least in God's kingdom is greater than he." <sup>29</sup>Everyone who heard this, including the tax collectors, acknowledged God's justice because they had been baptized by John. <sup>30</sup>But the Pharisees and legal experts rejected God's will for themselves because they hadn't been baptized by John.

<sup>31</sup>"To what will I compare the people of this generation?" Jesus asked. "What are they like? <sup>32</sup>They are like children sitting in the marketplace calling out to each other, 'We played the flute for you and you didn't dance. We sang a funeral song and you didn't cry.' <sup>33</sup>John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' <sup>34</sup>Yet the Human One<sup>c</sup> came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' <sup>35</sup>But wisdom is proved to be right by all her descendants."

### Forgiveness and gratitude

<sup>36</sup>One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him. After he entered the Pharisee's home, he took his place at the table. <sup>37</sup>Meanwhile, a woman from the city, a sinner, discovered that Jesus was dining in the Pharisee's house. She brought perfumed oil in a vase made of alabaster. <sup>38</sup>Standing behind him at his feet and crying, she began to wet his feet with her tears. She wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured the oil on them. <sup>39</sup>When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw what was happening, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. He would know that she is a sinner.

<sup>a</sup>See Isa 35:5-6; 61:1 <sup>b</sup>Mal 3:1 <sup>c</sup>Or *Son of Man*

7:23 *Happy*: Everyone who accepts Jesus as the one bringing God's good news lives with God's favor.

7:24 *into the wilderness*: John had drawn huge crowds to hear his preaching (Luke 1:80; 3:2-6; Isa 40:3-5). A *stalk*: A damaged stalk was an image of weakness (Isa 36:6; 42:3); it could also be an image of Herod Antipas, John's murderer (Luke 9:9), because he put an image of a stalk on some of his coins.

7:25 *palaces*: John's power isn't the kind exercised by kings like Antipas.

7:26 *A prophet? ... more than a prophet*: Jesus indicates John is the return of the prophet Elijah, predicted by Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6.

7:28 *no greater human*: high praise from God's Son. *greater than he*: All the prophets, including John, will be included in the kingdom (Luke 13:28). This means anyone would prefer being the lowest participant in God's kingdom banquet to being the greatest person in the present evil age.

7:29 *acknowledged God's justice*: The tax collectors who had accepted John's message (Luke 3:12-13) agree with Jesus' evaluation of John.

7:30 *The Pharisees, who have rejected John, thereby have rejected God's will for themselves*.

7:31 *the people of this generation*: the Pharisees, who refuse to listen to Jesus or John.

7:32 *children*: Jesus compares the Pharisees to fussy children who can't agree on whether to play weddings or funerals.

7:33 *neither eating*: John and his disciples regularly fast (see Luke 5:33). *He has a demon*: John's words and actions don't represent anything like the way others think holy people are supposed to speak and act. As a result, they think he's an agent of the devil.

7:34 *the Human One*: See sidebar, "The Human One in Luke" at Luke 5. *eating*: See Luke 5:33-35. *a glutton and a drunk*: The Pharisees have a low opinion of Jesus (see Luke 7:36-50).

7:35 *wisdom*: In Proverbs 8:1-9:6 God's wisdom is pictured as a female teacher whose *descendants* and students learn the right way to follow God. Jesus means that the tax collectors and sinners who listen to him and to John are wiser than the Pharisees.

7:36 *The first time Jesus dines with Pharisees* (see Luke 11:37-54; 14:1-24). *One of the Pharisees*: Simon (Luke 7:40). See sidebar "Pharisees" at Luke 6. *took his place*: See sidebar, "1st-Century Dinner Parties."

7:37 *from the city*: not traveling with Jesus' disciples. *sinner*: a person who regularly violated Moses' Law (see Luke 5:8, 30-32). For Luke, all are sinners who need "to change their hearts and lives" (Luke 5:32).

7:38 *Standing ... feet*: Jesus is reclining on a bench, his feet angled away from the food. *her hair, kissed*: Except for her weeping, the woman's actions are out of place and could be interpreted as inappropriately sexual.

7:39 Simon concludes that the woman, whom he considers a *sinner*, is acting inappropriately, and no true prophet would accept her touch, much less her kisses.

7:23 Is 8:14.

Is 8:15.

Mt 11:6.

Mt 13:57.

Jn 6:61.

7:24 Mt 11:7.

Lk 3:2.

7:25 Mt 3:4.

7:26 Lk 1:76.

7:27 Mal 3:1.

Mt 11:10.

Mk 1:2; Lk 1:76.

7:28 Mt 11:11.

Lk 1:15; Lk 3:16.

7:29 Mt 21:32.

Lk 3:12; Ac 19:3.

7:30 Mt 22:35.

7:31 Mt 11:16.

7:32 Zec 8:5.

7:33 Mt 3:4.

Mk 1:6; Lk 1:15.

7:34 Lk 5:29.

Lk 15:2.

7:35 Prv 8:1.

Hos 14:9.

Mt 11:19.

Lk 7:29.

7:36 Lk 11:37.

Lk 14:1.

7:37 Mt 26:6.

Mt 26:7.

Mk 14:3; Jn 12:1.

Jn 12:3.

7:38 Gn 18:4.

Lk 7:44.

7:39 Lk 7:16.

Lk 15:2; Jn 4:19.

7:40 Mt 26:49;  
Lk 5:22, Lk 5:31;  
Lk 18:18,  
Lk 20:21

7:41 Mt 18:23,  
Mt 18:28

7:42 Mt 18:25

7:43 1Co 15:9

7:44 Gn 18:4,  
Gn 19:2,  
Gn 43:24;  
Jgs 19:21;  
1Ti 5:10

7:45 2Sa 15:5;  
Ro 16:16

7:46 Ps 23:5;  
Ecc 9:8, Mt 6:17

7:47 Is 1:18,  
Is 55:7, Mt 10:37;  
Lk 5:20, Lk 7:41

7:48 Mt 9:2;  
Mk 2:5, Lk 5:20

7:49 Lk 5:21

7:50 Mt 9:22;  
Mk 5:34,  
Mk 10:52;  
Lk 8:48,  
Lk 18:42

8:1 Mt 4:23;  
Lk 4:43

8:2 Mt 27:55,  
Mt 27:56,  
Mt 28:1;  
Mk 15:40,  
Mk 16:9

8:3 Mt 14:1;  
Lk 24:10

**1st-Century Dinner Parties** Luke 7:36 tells us that Jesus “took his place at the table.” Literally, “He reclined to eat.” Luke’s Jesus goes to dinner parties with Pharisees (Luke 7:36-50; 11:37-54; 14:1-24); tax collectors (Luke 15:1-2; 19:1-10); and the poor (Luke 10:38-42). The meals are images of the presence of God’s kingdom (Luke 10:7-9). In Luke’s world, dinner parties were an important part of maintaining one’s place in society. People bathed, oiled their hair, and put perfume on in the afternoon in preparation for the social event. Sometimes a slave would go around town to tell the invited guests the party was ready to begin (Luke 14:17). As the guests entered the house, a slave would wash their feet (see Luke 7:44). In the dining room guests would recline on cushioned benches arranged in a U-shape, resting on one elbow. Slaves would place the food on low tables in front of the benches, and the diners would slowly eat and drink with one hand while sharing conversation with their neighbors. The best seats were those in the middle of the U (see Luke 14:7); the farther one was away from the center, the less significant one’s status. Slaves were present only to serve or to entertain (see Luke 22:27). By the 1st century CE some Roman hosts included women among the recliners, though that was considered improper and even sexually suggestive. A more conservative approach included seating women in chairs between the dining couches. More conservative still was to include only men.

<sup>40</sup>Jesus replied, “Simon, I have something to say to you.”

“Teacher, speak,” he said.

<sup>41</sup>“A certain lender had two debtors. One owed enough money to pay five hundred people for a day’s work.” The other owed enough money for fifty. <sup>42</sup>When they couldn’t pay, the lender forgave the debts of them both. Which of them will love him more?”

<sup>43</sup>Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the largest debt canceled.”

Jesus said, “You have judged correctly.”

<sup>44</sup>Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? When I entered your home, you didn’t give me water for my feet, but she wet my feet with tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup>You didn’t greet me with a kiss, but she hasn’t stopped kissing my feet since I came in. <sup>46</sup>You didn’t anoint my head with oil, but she has poured perfumed oil on my face. <sup>47</sup>This is why I tell you that her many sins have been forgiven; so she has shown great love. The one who is forgiven little loves little.”

<sup>48</sup>Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

<sup>49</sup>The other table guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this person that even forgives sins?”

<sup>50</sup>Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

### Women who followed Jesus

Soon afterward, Jesus traveled through the cities and villages, preaching and proclaiming the good news of God’s kingdom. The Twelve were with him, <sup>2</sup>along with some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses. Among them were Mary Magdalene (from whom seven demons had been thrown out), <sup>3</sup>Joanna (the wife of Herod’s servant Chuza), Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

<sup>2</sup>Or *five hundred denaria*

**7:42 forgave the debts:** This is how Jesus’ followers are to act (see Luke 6:34-35). **love:** loyalty and kindness rather than tender affection (see Luke 6:27, 35-36).

**7:44 water for my feet:** a customary sign of good manners. Guests walked dirty paths to reach the host’s house, and their feet would be in view when they reclined. **she wet my feet:** The woman is a better host than Simon.

**7:45 You didn’t greet me with a kiss:** In Simon’s culture a host welcomed guests into his house with kisses on the cheeks. Simon has been deliberately rude to Jesus.

**7:46 anoint . . . with oil:** another sign of hospitality (see Ps 23:5) Simon has failed to provide.

**7:47 forgiven:** The woman welcomes Jesus, showing she has changed her life, and so her sins are forgiven. **forgiven little:** Simon shows no regret over his treatment of Jesus.

**7:49 Who . . . forgives:** one of the Pharisees’ issues with Jesus (Luke 5:21). **Your faith:** See Luke 7:9; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42. **8:1 The Twelve:** See Luke 6:13-16.

**8:2 some women:** Jesus’ disciples included women who traveled with him. They were probably part of the Seventy-two sent on mission (Luke 10:1). **healed . . . sicknesses:** After experiencing Jesus’ divine power, they follow Jesus, just as Peter, James, John (Luke 5:9-11), and the blind man do. **Mary Magdalene:** a devoted follower, one of those who later discovers the empty tomb (Luke 24:10). **seven demons:** a sign of her misery, not her wickedness (see Luke 8:30; 11:26).

**8:3 Joanna:** Her husband was Herod Antipas’ business manager (see Luke 24:10). **Susanna:** otherwise unknown. **many others:** See Luke 23:49; 24:10; Acts 1:14. **provided for them:** In Luke 22:27 Jesus uses the same verb to describe his own ministry. **their resources:** See Luke 12:33; 14:33.



**Parable of the soils**

<sup>4</sup>When a great crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from one city after another, he spoke to them in a parable: <sup>5</sup>"A farmer went out to scatter his seed. As he was scattering it, some fell on the path where it was crushed, and the birds in the sky came and ate it. <sup>6</sup>Other seed fell on rock. As it grew, it dried up because it had no moisture. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorns grew with the plants and choked them. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed landed on good soil. When it grew, it produced one hundred times more grain than was scattered." As he said this, he called out, "Everyone who has ears should pay attention."

<sup>9</sup>His disciples asked him what this parable meant. <sup>10</sup>He said, "You have been given the mysteries of God's kingdom, but these mysteries come to everyone else in parables so that *when they see, they can't see, and when they hear, they can't understand.*"<sup>11</sup>

<sup>12</sup>The parable means this: The seed is God's word. <sup>13</sup>The seed on the path are those who hear, but then the devil comes and steals the word from their hearts so that they won't believe and be saved. <sup>14</sup>The seed on the rock are those who receive the word joyfully when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while but fall away when they are tempted. <sup>15</sup>As for the seed that fell among thorny plants, these are the ones who, as they go about their lives, are choked by the concerns, riches, and pleasures of life, and their fruit never matures. <sup>16</sup>The seed that fell on good soil are those who hear the word and commit themselves to it with a good and upright heart. Through their resolve, they bear fruit.

**Sharing the light**

<sup>16</sup>"No one lights a lamp and then covers it with a bowl or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand so that those who enter can see the light. <sup>17</sup>Nothing is hidden that won't be exposed. Nor is anything concealed that won't be made known and brought to the light. <sup>18</sup>Therefore, listen carefully. Those who have will receive more, but as for those who don't have, even what they seem to have will be taken away from them."

**Jesus' family**

<sup>19</sup>Jesus' mother and brothers came to him but were unable to reach him because of the crowd. <sup>20</sup>Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." <sup>21</sup>He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who listen to God's word and do it."

**Jesus calms the sea**

<sup>22</sup>One day Jesus and his disciples boarded a boat. He said to them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the lake." So they set sail.

<sup>8</sup>Isa 6:9

8:4 *great crowd*: See Luke 5:15; 6:17-19; 7:17. *parable*: a brief story that develops a comparison, told to illustrate an idea or to make people think and often based on some aspect of everyday life.

8:5 *scatter*: throwing handfuls of seed.

8:6 *rock*: Where the topsoil has eroded, seeds fall on bedrock.

8:8 *one hundred times*: a good harvest (see Gen 26:12). Even if most seeds don't produce, the harvest is still worth the effort of planting.

8:9 *disciples*: all those following Jesus, including the Twelve and the women (Luke 8:2-3).

8:10 *You have been given*: God has allowed you to know. *the mysteries of God's kingdom*: Some people will respond to the good news and enter God's kingdom, and God will enable them to better understand divine purposes (Luke 24:45). *in parables*: Those who reject the good news will remain puzzled by Jesus' teaching. *when they see*: Those who reject the good news might see it take place in front of them and still not understand it (see Luke 5:17-26; 11:13-16).

8:11 *God's word*: the message about God's kingdom, preached by Jesus and his followers.

8:12 *hearts*: In this culture the heart is where one made decisions.

8:13 *receive the word joyfully*: as many in the crowds do (see Luke 5:1; 6:18). *believe... fall away*: as Peter does when he's pressured (Luke 22:31-34, 54-62).

8:14 *choked... life*: See Luke 12:15-21; 18:18-23.

8:15 *hear... and commit*: True faith is both spoken and practiced (see Luke 6:46-49).

8:16 *lamp*: An ancient oil lamp wasn't bright, so it would be put up high on a *lampstand* for maximum effect. The light of the good news, like the seeds in Luke 8:4-8, is meant to be shared.

8:17 The good news can't be *hidden*, so Jesus' followers shouldn't try to hide their faith (see Luke 12:2-3).

8:18 *listen carefully* to Jesus' teachings and then live by them; then you *will receive more* (see Luke 6:46-49; 8:15). *seem to have*: See Luke 6:46; 13:22-30.

8:19 *Jesus' mother and brothers*: Mary thought a lot about God's revelation to her (Luke 2:19) and Jesus' words (Luke 2:51) in order to understand them well. She and Jesus' brothers were part of the earliest Christian church (Acts 1:14). *unable... crowd*: a positive description of Jesus' family (see Luke 5:18-19).

8:21 *My mother and brothers*: Jesus both praises his family for obeying God's message and includes in his family all who obey God's message.

8:22 *lake*: the Sea of Galilee (see Luke 5:1).

8:5 Mt 13:3

8:6 Am 6:12;  
Lk 8:13; Jn 15:6

8:7 Jer 4:3

8:8 Mt 11:15

8:9 Mt 13:10

8:10 Is 6:9;

Mt 13:11;

Mt 13:14

8:11 Pt 1:23

8:13 Is 58:2;

Eze 33:32

8:14 Mt 6:25;

Mt 13:22;

Lk 21:34; 1Ti 6:9;

1Ti 6:10

8:15 Phi 1:11;

Heb 10:36

8:16 Mt 5:15;

Mk 4:21;

Lk 11:33

8:17 Mt 10:26;

Mk 4:22; Lk 12:2

8:18 Mt 13:12;

Lk 19:26

8:19 Mt 12:46;

Mk 3:31

8:20 Ac 1:14

8:21 Lk 11:28;

Heb 2:11

8:22 Mt 8:23;

Mk 4:35;

Mk 4:36

8:23 Lk 8:22  
8:24 Ps 65:7;  
Lk 4:39, Lk 5:5  
8:25 Job 38:8;  
Pry 30:4;  
Mt 8:26;  
Mt 14:31;  
Mk 4:40

8:26 Mt 8:28;  
Mk 5:1

8:27 Mk 5:2

8:28 Mt 8:29;  
Mk 1:24, Mk 5:7;  
Lk 4:34

8:29 Lk 9:39,  
Lk 9:42

8:30 Mt 26:53;  
Mk 5:9, Mk 16:9

8:31 Rev 20:3

8:32 Mk 5:11

8:33 Lk 8:22

8:35 Lk 10:39

8:36 Mt 4:24

8:37 Ac 16:39

8:38 Mk 5:18,  
Mk 5:19,  
Mk 5:20;

Lk 8:28, Lk 8:35  
8:39 Ps 66:16;  
Mk 1:45,  
Mk 5:19,  
Mk 5:20; Lk 8:35

8:40 Mt 9:1;  
Mk 5:21

8:41 Mt 9:18;  
Mk 5:22; Lk 8:49

8:42 Lk 7:12

<sup>23</sup>While they were sailing, he fell asleep. Gale-force winds swept down on the lake. The boat was filling up with water and they were in danger. <sup>24</sup>So they went and woke Jesus, shouting, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" But he got up and gave orders to the wind and the violent waves. The storm died down and it was calm.

<sup>25</sup>He said to his disciples, "Where is your faith?"

Filled with awe and wonder, they said to each other, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him!"

### *Jesus frees a demon-possessed man*

<sup>26</sup>Jesus and his disciples sailed to the Gerasenes' land, which is across the lake from Galilee. <sup>27</sup>As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, a certain man met him. The man was from the city and was possessed by demons. For a long time, he had lived among the tombs, naked and homeless. <sup>28</sup>When he saw Jesus, he shrieked and fell down before him. Then he shouted, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" <sup>29</sup>He said this because Jesus had already commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had taken possession of him, so he would be bound with leg irons and chains and placed under guard. But he would break his restraints, and the demon would force him into the wilderness.

<sup>30</sup>Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had entered him. <sup>31</sup>They pleaded with him not to order them to go back into the abyss. <sup>32</sup>A large herd of pigs was feeding on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs. Jesus gave them permission, <sup>33</sup>and the demons left the man and entered the pigs. The herd rushed down the cliff into the lake and drowned.

<sup>34</sup>When those who tended the pigs saw what happened, they ran away and told the story in the city and in the countryside. <sup>35</sup>People came to see what had happened. They came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone. He was sitting at Jesus' feet, fully dressed and completely sane. They were filled with awe. <sup>36</sup>Those people who had actually seen what had happened told them how the demon-possessed man had been delivered. <sup>37</sup>Then everyone gathered from the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave their area because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and returned across the lake. <sup>38</sup>The man from whom the demons had gone begged to come along with Jesus as one of his disciples. Jesus sent him away, saying, <sup>39</sup>"Return home and tell the story of what God has done for you." So he went throughout the city proclaiming what Jesus had done for him.

### *Jesus heals two women*

<sup>40</sup>When Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they had been waiting for him. <sup>41</sup>A man named Jairus, who was a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet. He pleaded with Jesus to come to his house <sup>42</sup>because his only daughter, a twelve-year-old, was dying.

<sup>4</sup>Or *underworld*

**8:23 Gale-force winds:** Violent winds in the Bible are often signs of God's activity (e.g., Exod 14:21; Jon 1:4); and violent waves can be images of illness or death (e.g., Ps 69:1-2, 15; Jon 2:3).

**8:24 Master** is what Peter called Jesus before becoming a disciple (Luke 5:5). They are panicked and in despair.

**8:25 "Where is your faith?":** In contrast to the centurion (Luke 7:9) and the woman who anointed Jesus (Luke 7:50), the disciples neither ask for help nor act in faith. *Who is this?* echoes the Pharisees (Luke 5:21; 7:49). The disciples aren't acting as if they know the mysteries of God's kingdom (Luke 8:10).

**8:26 Gerasenes' land:** Gerasa was a town about 30 miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee. Some ancient copies of Luke's Gospel have "Gergesenes' land"; Gergesa was across the lake from Galilee, on the eastern side.

**8:27 among the tombs:** an outcast who lives among the dead.

**8:28 don't torture me:** The demons, speaking through the

man, assume Jesus has come to begin the last judgment (Luke 4:34).

**8:30 "Legion":** a large unit within the Roman army.

**8:31 the abyss:** Some Jews believed many demons were imprisoned in cells under the earth or in remote places (see 1 Pet 3:19; Rev 9:1-6).

**8:32 pigs:** unclean animals, forbidden for Jews to eat. It was logical for unclean spirits to want to escape into unclean animals. But the demons, which have harassed the man for so many years, drive the pigs to self-destruction.

**8:35 filled with awe:** or "They were afraid" (see Luke 8:37).

**8:37 asked Jesus to leave:** Jesus' power to heal leaves them afraid rather than grateful or worshipful (Luke 9:53; 10:10-11).

**8:38 begged to come along:** See Luke 9:57, 61; 18:43.

**8:39 tell the story... proclaiming:** The man becomes a witness to his community (Luke 9:2; 10:1).

**8:40 crowd:** See Luke 8:4, 19.

**8:41 synagogue leader:** head of the group of people who

As Jesus moved forward, he faced smothering crowds. <sup>43</sup>A woman was there who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had spent her entire livelihood on doctors, but no one could heal her. <sup>44</sup>She came up behind him and touched the hem of his clothes, and at once her bleeding stopped.

<sup>45</sup>“Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

When everyone denied it, Peter said, “Master, the crowds are surrounding you and pressing in on you!”

<sup>46</sup>But Jesus said, “Someone touched me. I know that power has gone out from me.”

<sup>47</sup>When the woman saw that she couldn’t escape notice, she came trembling and fell before Jesus. In front of everyone, she explained why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed.

<sup>48</sup>“Daughter, your faith has healed you,” Jesus said. “Go in peace.”

<sup>49</sup>While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the synagogue leader’s house, saying to Jairus, “Your daughter has died. Don’t bother the teacher any longer.”

<sup>50</sup>When Jesus heard this, he responded, “Don’t be afraid; just keep trusting, and she will be healed.”

<sup>51</sup>When he came to the house, he didn’t allow anyone to enter with him except Peter, John, and James, and the child’s father and mother. <sup>52</sup>They were all crying and mourning for her, but Jesus said, “Don’t cry. She isn’t dead. She’s only sleeping.”

<sup>53</sup>They laughed at him because they knew she was dead.

<sup>54</sup>Taking her hand, Jesus called out, “Child, get up.” <sup>55</sup>Her life returned and she got up at once. He directed them to give her something to eat. <sup>56</sup>Her parents were beside themselves with joy, but he ordered them to tell no one what had happened.

### The Twelve sent out

**9** Jesus called the Twelve together and he gave them power and authority over all demons and to heal sicknesses. <sup>2</sup>He sent them out to proclaim God’s kingdom and to heal the sick. <sup>3</sup>He told them, “Take nothing for the journey—no walking stick, no bag, no bread, no money, not even an extra shirt. <sup>4</sup>Whatever house you enter, remain there until you leave that place. <sup>5</sup>Wherever they don’t welcome you, as you leave that city, shake the dust off your feet as a witness against them.” <sup>6</sup>They departed and went through the villages proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

### Herod’s confusion

<sup>7</sup>Herod the ruler<sup>a</sup> heard about everything that was happening. He was confused because some people were saying that John had been raised from the dead, <sup>8</sup>others that Elijah had

<sup>a</sup>Or *tetrarch*

manage the local synagogue. He’s a respected community leader. *fell at Jesus’ feet*: a posture for submission and for asking a favor from someone who owes you nothing (Luke 5:12). *come to his house*: See Luke 7:3-5, 6-8.

8:43 *bleeding for twelve years*: Luke focuses on her helplessness. Even though she has spent all she’s owned on seeking a cure, she hasn’t found healing.

8:44 *came up behind him*: In contrast to Jairus, she acts rather than asks for help (Luke 5:18-19; 7:38).

8:45 *everyone denied*: Although the whole crowd is pressing on Jesus, at first nobody admits to seeking healing.

8:46 *power has gone out*: See Luke 4:14; 5:17; 6:19.

8:48 *Daughter*: Jesus’ family is made up of those who do God’s will (Luke 8:21; 18:29-30). *your faith has healed you*: The verb translated here as “healed” is translated as “saved” in Luke 7:50.

8:52 *only sleeping*: She is dead (see Luke 8:55) but will soon be raised.

8:53 *They laughed*: The parents and the three apostles doubt his judgment.

8:54 *“Child, get up”*: See Luke 7:14.

8:55 *something to eat*: proving she’s truly alive, not just a ghost (see Luke 24:41-43).

8:56 *tell no one*: See Luke 5:14. Jesus doesn’t want to be treated like a local healer (Luke 4:42-43).

9:1-6 See Luke 10:1-16.

9:1 *The Twelve*: See Luke 6:12-16. *he gave them power*: Jesus’ power comes from the Spirit’s presence (Luke 4:14, 18-19), and he assigns the same power to his disciples.

9:2 *proclaim God’s kingdom*: as Jesus does (Luke 4:19, 43).

9:3 *Take nothing*: The apostles must rely on God and on the kindness of strangers. *no walking stick*: unarmed and harmless. *no bag*: no way to carry supplies. *extra shirt*: no extra clothes, so shelter will be needed.

9:4 *Whatever house*: rich or poor hosts.

9:5 *shake the dust*: means either “We’re taking none of your stuff, not even your dirt with us,” or “Come Judgment Day, this is all that will be left of you.”

9:6 *healing*: The Twelve are successful, as Jesus has been (Luke 10:17; but see Luke 9:40, 49-50).

9:7 *Herod*: Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee (Luke 3:1). *raised from the dead*: Jesus’ powerful preaching reminds some of John’s (see Luke 9:19).

9:8 *Elijah*: Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6 predict Elijah’s return just before Judgment Day.

8:43 Lv 15:25;  
Mt 9:20;  
Mk 5:25  
8:44 Dt 22:12  
8:45 Lk 5:5  
8:46 Lk 5:17,  
Lk 6:19  
8:48 Mt 9:22;  
Lk 7:50  
8:49 Lk 7:6,  
Lk 8:41  
8:50 Mk 5:36  
8:51 Mk 5:37,  
Mk 14:33;  
Lk 9:28  
8:52 Mt 11:17;  
Lk 23:27;  
Jn 11:11  
8:53 Lk 16:14  
8:54 Lk 7:14  
8:56 Mt 8:4  
9:1 Mt 10:1;  
Mk 6:7,  
Mk 16:17;  
Lk 10:17  
9:2 Mt 10:7;  
Mk 16:15;  
Lk 10:9  
9:3 Mt 10:9;  
Mk 6:8; Lk 10:4,  
Lk 22:35  
9:5 Mt 10:14;  
Lk 10:11;  
Ac 13:51  
9:6 Mk 6:12  
9:7 Mt 14:1;  
Mk 6:14; Lk 9:19  
9:8 Lk 9:19

9:9 Lk 9:7,  
Lk 23:8  
9:10 Mt 11:21,  
Mt 14:13;  
Mk 6:30,  
Mk 6:32  
9:11 Mk 6:33;  
Lk 9:2  
9:12 Mt 14:15;  
Jn 6:5  
9:13 2Ki 4:42  
9:14 Mk 6:39  
9:16 1Sa 9:13;  
Mt 14:19;  
Mt 15:36;  
Lk 22:19; Jn 6:11  
9:17 Mt 14:20  
9:18 Mt 14:23,  
Mt 16:13,  
Mt 26:36;  
Mk 8:27; Lk 3:21  
9:19 Mt 14:2;  
Lk 9:7; Lk 9:8  
9:20 Mt 16:16;  
Mk 8:29;  
Lk 23:35; Jn 6:69,  
Jn 11:27  
9:21 Mt 16:20;  
Mk 8:30  
9:22 Mt 16:21;  
Mk 8:31;  
Lk 9:44;  
Lk 17:25;  
Lk 24:7

appeared, and still others that one of the ancient prophets had come back to life. <sup>9</sup>Herod said, "I beheaded John, so now who am I hearing about?" Herod wanted to see him.

### Jesus feeds the five thousand

<sup>10</sup>When the apostles returned, they described for Jesus what they had done. Taking them with him, Jesus withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. <sup>11</sup>When the crowds figured it out, they followed him. He welcomed them, spoke to them about God's kingdom, and healed those who were sick.

<sup>12</sup>When the day was almost over, the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so that they can go to the nearby villages and countryside and find lodging and food, because we are in a deserted place."

<sup>13</sup>He replied, "You give them something to eat."

But they said, "We have no more than five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all these people." <sup>14</sup>(They said this because about five thousand men were present.)

Jesus said to his disciples, "Seat them in groups of about fifty." <sup>15</sup>They did so, and everyone was seated. <sup>16</sup>He took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed them, and broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. <sup>17</sup>Everyone ate until they were full, and the disciples filled twelve baskets with the leftovers.

### Following Christ

<sup>18</sup>Once when Jesus was praying by himself, the disciples joined him, and he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

<sup>19</sup>They answered, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others that one of the ancient prophets has come back to life."

<sup>20</sup>He asked them, "And what about you? Who do you say that I am?"

Peter answered, "The Christ sent from God."

<sup>21</sup>Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell this to anyone. <sup>22</sup>He said, "The Human One<sup>v</sup> must suffer many things and be rejected—by the elders, chief priests, and the legal experts—and be killed and be raised on the third day."

<sup>v</sup>Or Son of Man

9:9 *I beheaded John*: Antipas is a cold-blooded murderer, so his wish to see Jesus indicates danger.

9:10 *Jesus withdrew privately*: This time Jesus takes the Twelve with him on retreat (see Luke 4:42; 5:16). *Bethsaida*: a small fishing village on the northeast end of the Sea of Galilee.

9:11 *they followed . . . He welcomed*: Even though he wants to be alone, Jesus is a good host to his unexpected guests. *spoke . . . healed*: as he commissioned the Twelve to do (Luke 9:1-2).

9:12 *Send the crowd away*: Unlike Jesus, the Twelve don't want to show hospitality to these people (Luke 9:5, 53). *deserted place*: The Twelve exaggerate; they're close to Bethsaida (Luke 9:10).

9:13 *give them something*: The Twelve have been accepting hospitality (Luke 8:3; 9:4), so surely they can share what they have. *five loaves of bread and two fish*: small rounds of flatbread and salted or pickled fish, a small meal or snack. *buy food*: Jesus knows they carry no cash (Luke 9:3); they're being sarcastic.

9:14 *groups of about fifty*: about 100 groups, each the size of a typical house church.

9:15 *seated*: or "reclined to eat" (see Luke 7:36). Jesus is hosting a banquet.

9:16 *looked up*: Normal posture for prayer was with upraised face and hands. *blessed . . . and broke . . . and gave*: a typical Jewish practice to begin a meal.

9:17 *full*: See Luke 1:53; 6:21. *twelve baskets*: Each apostle ends with more than he gave away (Luke 6:38).

9:18 *praying by himself*: See Luke 4:42; 5:16; 9:28; 11:1. *joined him*: They come to where he is. *the crowds*: The people are repeating the popular reports mentioned in Luke 9:7-8.

9:20 *Who do you say*: The Twelve have followed him (Luke 5:11) and preached his message (Luke 9:6), but readers have not yet heard who the Twelve understand Jesus to be. "*The Christ sent from God*": the one whom God sends as Israel's Savior (Luke 1:32, 69; 2:11, 26). Peter's claim is correct but incomplete, as the next few verses demonstrate.

9:21 *not to tell*: Jesus commands the Twelve to preach God's kingdom (Luke 9:2), but he doesn't want them to spread the word that he is going to set Israel free.

9:22 *The Human One*: See sidebar, "The Human One in Luke" at Luke 5. *the elders*: male heads of Jewish extended families in Jerusalem who exercised some local governmental authority over the Jewish population of Jerusalem. *chief priests*: heads of priestly family groups, serving as advisors to the high priest and exercising authority over the Jerusalem temple. *legal experts*: secretaries and legal advisors to the elders and chief priests. Later in the Gospel these three groups confront Jesus (Luke 20:1); begin to plot his arrest (Luke 22:2); and interrogate him (Luke 22:66), ultimately deciding to turn him over to Pilate.

<sup>23</sup>Jesus said to everyone, "All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me. <sup>24</sup>All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me will save them. <sup>25</sup>What advantage do people have if they gain the whole world for themselves yet perish or lose their lives? <sup>26</sup>Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Human One<sup>m</sup> will be ashamed of that person when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. <sup>27</sup>I assure you that some standing here won't die before they see God's kingdom."

### Jesus transformed

<sup>28</sup>About eight days after Jesus said these things, he took Peter, John, and James, and went up on a mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup>As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed and his clothes flashed white like lightning. <sup>30</sup>Two men, Moses and Elijah, were talking with him. <sup>31</sup>They were clothed with heavenly splendor and spoke about Jesus' departure, which he would achieve in Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup>Peter and those with him were almost overcome by sleep, but they managed to stay awake and saw his glory as well as the two men with him.

<sup>33</sup>As the two men were about to leave Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it's good that we're here. We should construct three shrines: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—but he didn't know what he was saying. <sup>34</sup>Peter was still speaking when a cloud overshadowed them. As they entered the cloud, they were overcome with awe.

<sup>35</sup>Then a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, my chosen one. Listen to him!" <sup>36</sup>Even as the voice spoke, Jesus was found alone. They were speechless and at the time told no one what they had seen.

### Jesus heals a boy

<sup>37</sup>The next day, when Jesus, Peter, John, and James had come down from the mountain, a large crowd met Jesus. <sup>38</sup>A man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to take a look at my son, my only child. <sup>39</sup>Look, a spirit seizes him and, without any warning, he screams. It shakes him and causes him to foam at the mouth. It tortures him and rarely leaves him alone. <sup>40</sup>I begged your disciples to throw it out, but they couldn't."

<sup>41</sup>Jesus answered, "You faithless and crooked generation, how long will I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here." <sup>42</sup>While he was coming, the demon threw him down and shook him violently. Jesus spoke harshly to the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father. <sup>43</sup>Everyone was overwhelmed by God's greatness.

<sup>m</sup>Or Son of Man

9:23 *to come after me*: or "Follow me to Jerusalem" (see Luke 9:51) and "become my disciple." *say no to themselves*: to deny one's own desires in order to serve God. *take up their cross daily*: Jesus' crucifixion is an example of the sacrifices one is called to make in order to follow Jesus.

9:24 *who want to save their lives*: those who hesitate to make the sacrifices necessary to follow Jesus (Luke 9:57-62). *all who lose their lives because of me*: Examples are those who leave homes, families, and jobs (Luke 18:28-30); those who give away their possessions (Luke 19:8; 21:4); and those who die (Acts 7:60; 12:2).

9:26 *Whoever is ashamed*: In Luke's time Christians were often perceived as being ignorant, naive, immoral, and antisocial and were harassed for it. Being publicly identified as a Christian was shameful and potentially dangerous.

9:27 *won't die before they see God's kingdom*: Some early Christians believed Jesus would return before all his original apostles had died (e.g., Mark 13:30; John 21:22-23). In the next episode Luke shows how Peter, James, and John see a brief glimpse of Jesus as he will be in God's kingdom (Luke 9:28-36).

9:28 *went up on a mountain to pray*: See Luke 6:12.

9:29 *his face changed*: as happened to Moses when he spoke with God on Mount Sinai (Exod 34:29). *flashed white like lightning*: like the clothes angels wear (Luke 24:4).

9:30 *Moses and Elijah*: the Law-giver and the most famous prophet. Elijah was to return prior to Judgment Day (Mal

4:5-6); and both men were taken to God in mysterious ways (Deut 34:6; 2 Kgs 2:1-11).

9:31 *Jesus' departure*: or his "exodus." Jesus' crucifixion, which he has just predicted to the disciples (Luke 9:22).

9:32 *almost overcome by sleep*: Drowsiness is a way of talking about how people allow concern for ordinary things to distract them from expecting Jesus' return (Luke 12:38; 21:34-36; see Luke 22:45-46).

9:33 *construct three shrines*: Jesus is headed for Jerusalem, so Peter's desire to stay at the spot of revelation is misplaced.

9:34-35 *The cloud and the voice* indicate God's presence (Luke 3:21-22; Exod 14:19-20; 19:16-20).

9:39 *seizes him*: The unclean spirit causes violent seizures.

9:40 *couldn't*: Jesus has given the Twelve power to cast out demons (Luke 9:1), but they aren't able to help because they weren't willing to show hospitality to others (see Luke 9:12-13).

9:41 *faithless and crooked generation*: Jesus seems to refer to the disciples. Their lack of faith prevents them from healing, while *crooked* implies they aren't yet truly committed to Jesus. *how long*: not very, as indicated in Luke 9:22, 31, 44.

9:42 *spoke harshly*: Jesus' normal address to demons (Luke 4:35, 39).

9:43 *overwhelmed*: This is a positive response but not the same as faith.

9:23 Mt 10:38;  
Lk 14:27

9:24 Mt 10:39;  
Lk 9:23,  
Lk 17:33;  
Jn 12:25

9:25 Mt 16:26

9:26 Mt 10:33,  
Mt 16:27,  
Lk 12:9; Ro 1:16

9:27 Mt 16:28

9:28 Mt 17:1;  
Mk 9:2; Lk 3:21,  
Lk 8:51

9:29 Ex 34:29;  
Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2;  
Lk 9:18

9:30 Mt 17:3,  
Mt 17:4; Mk 9:4;  
Lk 1:17; Lk 9:19

9:31 Lk 9:22

9:32 Mt 26:43;  
Jn 1:14

9:33 Mt 17:4;  
Mk 9:5; Mk 9:6;  
Lk 5:5; Lk 9:49

9:34 Ex 14:19;  
Ex 24:16;  
Mt 17:5

9:35 Is 42:1;  
Mt 3:17; Lk 3:22;  
2Pt 1:17

9:36 Mt 17:9

9:38 Lk 7:12;  
Lk 8:42; Jn 4:47

9:39 Lk 8:29;  
1Pt 5:8

9:40 Lk 9:1,  
Lk 10:17

9:41 Dt 32:5;  
Jn 14:9

9:42 Lk 4:35,  
Lk 7:15

9:43 Pt 1:16

9:44 Lk 9:22

9:45 Mk 9:10,  
Lk 9:32;  
Lk 18:34;  
Jn 12:16,  
Jn 16:179:46 Mt 18:1,  
Mt 20:20;  
Mk 9:33;  
Lk 22:249:47 Mt 9:4;  
Lk 5:229:48 Mt 10:40;  
Lk 10:16,  
Lk 22:26

9:49 Mk 9:38

9:50 Mt 12:30;  
Lk 11:239:51 Mk 16:19;  
Lk 13:22,  
Lk 17:11,  
Lk 18:31,  
Lk 19:119:52 Mt 10:5;  
Lk 10:33,  
Lk 17:16

9:53 Jn 4:9

9:54 2Ki 1:10;  
Mk 3:17

9:55 Lk 9:54

9:56 Mt 18:11,  
Mt 20:28;  
Lk 19:10; Jn 3:17,  
Jn 10:10

9:57 Mt 8:19

9:58 Mt 8:20;  
2Co 8:9

9:59 Mt 8:22

9:60 Mt 4:23;  
Lk 9:2; Jn 21:15;  
2Ti 2:3, 2Ti 2:4

9:61 1Ki 19:20

**Jesus warns about his arrest**

While everyone was marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, **44**“Take these words to heart: the Human One<sup>a</sup> is about to be delivered into human hands.” **45**They didn’t understand this statement. Its meaning was hidden from them so they couldn’t grasp it. And they were afraid to ask him about it.

**Jesus corrects the disciples**

**46**An argument arose among the disciples about which of them was the greatest. **47**Aware of their deepest thoughts, Jesus took a little child and had the child stand beside him. **48**Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me. Whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever is least among you all is the greatest.”

**49**John replied, “Master, we saw someone throwing demons out in your name, and we tried to stop him because he isn’t in our group of followers.”

**50**But Jesus replied, “Don’t stop him, because whoever isn’t against you is for you.”

**Jesus sets out for Jerusalem**

**51**As the time approached when Jesus was to be taken up into heaven, he determined to go to Jerusalem. **52**He sent messengers on ahead of him. Along the way, they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his arrival, **53**but the Samaritan villagers refused to welcome him because he was determined to go to Jerusalem. **54**When the disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to consume them?” **55**But Jesus turned and spoke sternly to them, **56**and they went on to another village.

**Following Jesus**

**57**As Jesus and his disciples traveled along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

**58**Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and the birds in the sky have nests, but the Human One<sup>a</sup> has no place to lay his head.”

**59**Then Jesus said to someone else, “Follow me.”

He replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

**60**Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead. But you go and spread the news of God’s kingdom.”

**61**Someone else said to Jesus, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say good-bye to those in my house.”

<sup>a</sup>Or Son of Man    <sup>¶</sup>Or Son of Man

**9:44** *the Human One*: See sidebar, “The Human One in Luke” at Luke 5.

**9:45** *hidden*: The disciples aren’t able to understand, partly because they don’t ask and partly because they can’t completely understand until the risen Christ enables them to (Luke 24:45).

**9:46** *the greatest*: the first of three failures by the disciples (Luke 9:50, 54). The disciples begin to quarrel over who will have the most power.

**9:47** *Aware of their deepest thoughts*: See Luke 2:35; 5:22. *took a little child*: Jesus’ followers include women (Luke 8:2-3) and therefore probably children.

**9:48** *Whoever welcomes*: All who follow Jesus, including children, should be treated as if they are Christ. Status among Jesus’ followers is meaningless. *Whoever is least*: If the least is equal to the greatest, then there are no differences of status (Luke 22:24-27).

**9:50** The disciples’ second failure. They think they’re the only ones who follow Jesus. They can’t cast out demons (Luke 9:40), but they try to stop others who can. *whoever . . . for you*: or “Widen your definition of ‘partner.’” For the saying in reverse, see Luke 11:23.

**9:51-55** From here until Luke 19:29, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. Most of his teachings in Luke take place as he travels toward the cross.

**9:52** *Samaritan village*: Samaria was the area just south of Galilee. The Samaritans worshipped God, but their temple was on Mount Gerizim. They and the Jews considered each other separate ethnic groups and often treated each other with hostility.

**9:53** *refused to welcome him*: are unwilling to offer him food and temporary lodging. *because he was determined*: The Samaritans aren’t interested in a message that’s going to their longtime enemies.

**9:54** *do you want us to call fire down*: the disciples’ third failure. They think Jesus might want revenge for being insulted. Elijah calls fire down more than once (1 Kgs 18:36-38; 2 Kgs 1:10-12), but Jesus had instructed the disciples to walk away from audiences who didn’t show hospitality (Luke 9:5).

**9:57-62** See Matthew 8:18-22. Three who want to follow but can’t (see Luke 3:10-14).

**9:57** *I will follow*: The first volunteers, but Jesus reminds him that following him means giving up his home.

**9:58** *the Human One*: See sidebar, “The Human One in Luke” at Luke 5.

**9:60** *Let the dead bury their own dead*: Jesus uses shocking, offensive language to say that if the man is serious about following him, he must abandon his father and come immediately.

**9:61** *let me say good-bye*: The third person hasn’t yet really

<sup>62</sup>Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God's kingdom."

### Seventy-two sent out

**10** After these things, the Lord commissioned seventy-two others and sent them on ahead in pairs to every city and place he was about to go. <sup>2</sup>He said to them, "The harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers. Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest. <sup>3</sup>Go! Be warned, though, that I'm sending you out as lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup>Carry no wallet, no bag, and no sandals. Don't even greet anyone along the way. <sup>5</sup>Whenever you enter a house, first say, 'May peace be on this house.' <sup>6</sup>If anyone there shares God's peace, then your peace will rest on that person. If not, your blessing will return to you. <sup>7</sup>Remain in this house, eating and drinking whatever they set before you, for workers deserve their pay. Don't move from house to house. <sup>8</sup>Whenever you enter a city and its people welcome you, eat what they set before you. <sup>9</sup>Heal the sick who are there, and say to them, 'God's kingdom has come upon you.' <sup>10</sup>Whenever you enter a city and the people don't welcome you, go out into the streets and say, <sup>11</sup>'As a complaint against you, we brush off the dust of your city that has collected on our feet. But know this: God's kingdom has come to you.' <sup>12</sup>I assure you that Sodom will be better off on Judgment Day than that city.

### Judgment against cities that reject Jesus

<sup>13</sup>How terrible it will be for you, Chorazin. How terrible it will be for you, Bethsaida. If the miracles done among you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have changed their hearts and lives long ago. They would have sat around in funeral clothes and ashes. <sup>14</sup>But Tyre and Sidon will be better off at the judgment than you. <sup>15</sup>And you, Capernaum, will you be honored by being raised up to heaven? No, you will be cast down to the place of the dead. <sup>16</sup>Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. Whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

### The seventy-two return

<sup>17</sup>The seventy-two returned joyously, saying, "Lord, even the demons submit themselves to us in your name."

left home. Jesus says that someone with divided loyalties can't reach the kingdom.

10:1-24 Only Luke recounts the mission of the Seventy-two. It has parallels to the mission of the Twelve (see Luke 9:1-6; notes on 10:1).

10:1-12 Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51) but intends to visit villages throughout Galilee on the way. These pairs of followers, who include the apostles (Luke 8:1) and many women (Luke 8:2-3), are advance teams who prepare people for Jesus' coming.

10:1 *seventy-two*: According to Genesis 10 in the LXX, the number of the world's nations. Thus the mission of the Seventy-two anticipates the universal mission in the book of Acts. *sent them on ahead*: Compare the role of John the Baptist (Luke 1:17, 76; 7:27) and "the messengers" (Luke 9:51-52).

10:2 *harvest is bigger*: See Matthew 9:37-38; John 4:35. Many will reject the message, but the number who will respond is still great (see Luke 8:4-8).

10:3 *lambs among wolves*: Following Jesus can be dangerous, and his followers are expected to love and forgive those who are hostile to them (Luke 6:27-36).

10:4 *no wallet, no bag*: neither money nor a sack of food. *no sandals*: This might mean they travel in bare feet to show they're poor and of low status; it might mean they carry no extra clothes (see Luke 9:3), so that they must rely on others to provide them with shelter. *Don't even greet anyone*: Jesus' time is short, so his messengers cannot take time for normal courtesies (see Luke 9:41, 60).

10:5 *Whenever... house*: The messengers will be fed and housed temporarily by those to whom they preach. *peace*: "Peace to you!" was a typical greeting in Jesus' culture. In

Luke peace is God's blessing for those who accept Jesus' message (Luke 1:79; 2:14; 24:36).

10:7 *Remain*: The messengers are to accept whatever level of hospitality they're offered from the poor (Luke 10:38-42) or the wealthy (Luke 19:1-10).

10:8 *eat... before you*: Shared meals show how God's kingdom has come (see note on Luke 5:29).

10:9 *Heal... and say*: The messengers heal and preach the kingdom, just as Jesus has done (Luke 7:21-22). They prepare for Jesus' coming by carrying out his mission to the people of Galilee.

10:10 *don't welcome*: If a village has nobody who wants to listen or provide hospitality to the messengers, then they should leave rather than engage in a debate (see sidebar, "1st-Century Dinner Parties" at Luke 7).

10:12 *Sodom*: The people of Sodom were destroyed for violent inhospitality to God's messengers (Gen 19:1-28).

10:13 *Chorazin*: a village just north of Capernaum, on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee. *Bethsaida*: a village on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee (Luke 9:10; John 1:44; 12:21). We don't know what *miracles* Jesus means. *Tyre and Sidon*: The city of Tyre was on the coast of Phoenicia, north of Galilee; Sidon was also on the coast, even farther north. These were Gentile cities.

10:15 *Capernaum*: It isn't clear why Capernaum is singled out for its rejection of Jesus' message (Luke 4:31; 7:1).

10:16 *Whoever rejects*: God sent Jesus, who sent the Seventy-two, so people who ignore Jesus' messengers invite divine judgment on themselves (Luke 9:48).

10:17-20 The Seventy-two enjoy great success (see Luke 9:6 and note; but see also Luke 9:40, 49).

9:62 Pti 3:13;  
2Pt 2:20

10:1 Nm 11:16;  
Mt 10:1;  
Mk 6:7; Lk 9:52;  
Lk 10:17

10:2 Mt 9:37;  
Mk 9:36; Jn 4:35;  
2Th 3:1

10:3 Mt 10:16

10:4 2Ki 4:29;  
Mt 10:9; Mk 6:8;  
Lk 9:3; Lk 22:35

10:5 1Sa 25:6

10:6 Ps 35:13

10:7 Mt 10:10;  
1Th 5:18

10:8 1Co 10:27

10:9 Mt 3:2;

Lk 9:2; Lk 10:11

10:10 Lk 9:5

10:11 Lk 10:9;  
Ac 13:51

10:12 Mt 10:15;  
Mt 11:24

10:13 Is 23:1;

Mt 11:21

10:14 Mt 11:21

10:15 Is 14:13;

Is 14:15; Mt 4:13;

Mt 11:23

10:16 Mt 10:40;

Lk 9:48;

Jn 5:23; Jn 12:48;

1Th 4:8

10:17 Mk 16:17;

Lk 9:1; Lk 10:1;

Lk 10:9

10:18 Jn 12:31;  
Rev 9:1,  
Rev 12:9  
10:19 Ps 91:13;  
Mk 16:18  
10:20 Ps 69:28;  
Dn 12:1;  
Phi 4:3;  
Heb 12:23;  
Rev 3:5  
10:21 Mt 11:25,  
Mt 16:17  
10:22 Mt 28:18;  
Jn 1:18, Jn 10:15  
10:23 Mt 13:16,  
Mt 13:17  
10:24 1 Pt 1:10  
10:25 Mt 19:16,  
Mt 22:34,  
Mt 22:35;  
Lk 18:18  
10:27 Lv 19:18;  
Dt 6:5; Mt 22:37;  
Mk 12:30  
10:28 Lv 18:5;  
Eze 20:11;  
Ga 3:12  
10:29 Lk 16:15  
10:30 Jgs 9:25;  
Lk 18:31,  
Lk 19:1,  
Lk 19:28;  
Ro 15:5  
10:31 Lk 10:32  
10:32 Lk 10:31  
10:33 Mt 10:5;  
Lk 9:52,  
Lk 17:16; Jn 4:9  
10:34 Gn 42:27;  
Ex 4:24; Is 1:6;  
Lk 2:7; Rev 3:18

<sup>18</sup>Jesus replied, "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning. <sup>19</sup>Look, I have given you authority to crush snakes and scorpions underfoot. I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you. <sup>20</sup>Nevertheless, don't rejoice because the spirits submit to you. Rejoice instead that your names are written in heaven."

<sup>21</sup>At that very moment, Jesus overflowed with joy from the Holy Spirit and said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you've hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and shown them to babies. Indeed, Father, this brings you happiness. <sup>22</sup>My Father has handed all things over to me. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wants to reveal him." <sup>23</sup>Turning to the disciples, he said privately, "Happy are the eyes that see what you see. <sup>24</sup>I assure you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see and hear what you hear, but they didn't."

### Loving your neighbor

<sup>25</sup>A legal expert stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to gain eternal life?"

<sup>26</sup>Jesus replied, "What is written in the Law? How do you interpret it?"

<sup>27</sup>He responded, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live."

<sup>29</sup>But the legal expert wanted to prove that he was right, so he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

<sup>30</sup>Jesus replied, "A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He encountered thieves, who stripped him naked, beat him up, and left him near death. <sup>31</sup>Now it just so happened that a priest was also going down the same road. When he saw the injured man, he crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. <sup>32</sup>Likewise, a Levite came by that spot, saw the injured man, and crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. <sup>33</sup>A Samaritan, who was on a journey, came to where the man was. But when he saw him, he was moved with compassion. <sup>34</sup>The Samaritan went to him and bandaged his wounds, tending them with oil and wine. Then he placed the wounded man on his own donkey, took him to

<sup>a</sup>Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18

**10:18** *I saw Satan fall*: By casting out demons, the Seventy-two are overpowering Satan (see Luke 11:20-22). Jesus means the success of the Seventy-two has already been revealed to him by God.

**10:19** *authority to crush snakes and scorpions*: images of evil things (Luke 11:11-12). *Nothing will harm you*: Since Jesus also predicts that some of his followers will be harassed and killed because of their faith (Luke 21:16), the promise probably means Jesus' followers will be protected from demonic attack (see Luke 21:18-19).

**10:20** *don't rejoice*: There's no place for arrogance (Luke 9:54-55). Jesus instructs his followers to pray for God's deliverance from the powers of evil (Luke 11:4; 22:40, 46).

**10:21** *overflowed with joy from the Holy Spirit*: Jesus has been conceived (Luke 1:35); filled and led (Luke 4:1); and empowered (Luke 4:14) by the Spirit of God. At this moment, seeing God's work done by his disciples, his prayer is joyful praise at sharing completely in God's purposes. *hidden*: Often the powerful do not accept the message (Luke 3:1; 9:6-9), but people who are humble and powerless like babies do (see the contrast illustrated in Luke 7:36-50).

**10:22** *handed all things over to me*: Jesus is the Human One who exercises God's authority and will bring about God's will on Judgment Day (Luke 5:24; 9:26). *No one knows who the Son is*: Even the disciples don't yet completely understand Jesus (Luke 24:44-45).

**10:24** *prophets and kings*: those in Israel's past who also hoped for God's kingdom and the Christ to come.

**10:25** *legal expert*: He knows Moses' Law and how it's been

understood and applied in the past. test: can also be translated as "tempt" *gain eternal life*: "What must I do to be certain to be rewarded with eternal life on Judgment Day?" The question may be hostile or genuinely curious.

**10:27** *You must love*: The legal expert quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

**10:29** *prove that he was right*: Jesus has already told him his answer is correct (Luke 10:28), but the legal expert wants to look more clever than Jesus. *who is my neighbor*: In Leviticus 19:18 "neighbor" means "fellow Israelite," but Leviticus 19:34 also requires loving immigrants. The legal expert wants to know whom he does not have to love as himself.

**10:30** *A man*: The story assumes the man is Jewish. *went down*: Because of its importance, one always goes up to Jerusalem and down when leaving it.

**10:31** *a priest*: He's leaving Jerusalem (going down), probably going home (see note on Luke 1:5). *When he saw... he crossed over*: The priest can see the man needs help; his temple duties are over, so he could have helped. No reason is given for why he doesn't.

**10:32** *a Levite*: Levites assisted priests in the temple and were also the musicians. Like the priest, he refuses to help for unstated reasons.

**10:33** *Samaritan*: Luke's readers knew Samaritans could be unfriendly to Jews and fail to show hospitality (see note on Luke 9:52). *moved with compassion*: The Samaritan imitates Jesus and God, giving the man first aid, taking him to a safe place, and continuing to tend his wounds (see Luke 6:36; 7:13).



an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup>The next day, he took two full days' worth of wages and gave them to the innkeeper. He said, "Take care of him, and when I return, I will pay you back for any additional costs." <sup>36</sup>What do you think? Which one of these three was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?"

<sup>37</sup>Then the legal expert said, "The one who demonstrated mercy toward him."  
Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

### Jesus visits Martha and Mary

<sup>38</sup>While Jesus and his disciples were traveling, Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him as a guest. <sup>39</sup>She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his message. <sup>40</sup>By contrast, Martha was preoccupied with getting everything ready for their meal. So Martha came to him and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to prepare the table all by myself? Tell her to help me."

<sup>41</sup>The Lord answered, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. <sup>42</sup>One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part. It won't be taken away from her."

### Teaching the disciples to pray

**11** Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

<sup>2</sup>Jesus told them, "When you pray, say:

'Father, uphold the holiness of your name.

Bring in your kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> Give us the bread we need for today.

<sup>4</sup> Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who has wronged us.

And don't lead us into temptation."

<sup>5</sup>He also said to them, "Imagine that one of you has a friend and you go to that friend in the middle of the night. Imagine saying, 'Friend, loan me three loaves of bread' because a friend of mine on a journey has arrived and I have nothing to set before him.' <sup>6</sup>Imagine further that he answers from within the house, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up to give you anything.' <sup>7</sup>I assure you, even if he wouldn't get up and help because of his friendship, he will get up and give his friend

10:35 Mt 20:2  
10:37 Hos 6:6;  
Jn 8:11, Jn 13:15;  
2Co 8:9; Heb 2:9  
10:38 Jn 11:1,  
Jn 12:1, Jn 12:2  
10:39 Dt 33:3;  
Lk 8:35; Jn 11:1,  
Jn 12:3; Ac 22:3  
10:40 Lk 10:41;  
Jn 11:1, Jn 11:39,  
Jn 12:2  
10:41 Mt 6:25;  
1Co 7:32  
10:42 Ps 27:4  
11:1 Lk 3:21  
11:2 Mt 6:9  
11:3 Prv 30:8;  
Mt 6:11, Mt 6:34  
11:4 Mt 26:41  
11:5 Lk 18:1  
11:7 Lk 13:25  
11:8 Gn 32:26;  
Lk 18:1

10:36 *Which one... was a neighbor.* This is the real question for Jesus' followers, not "Who is my neighbor?" but "Who behaved like a neighbor?"

10:38-42 This episode happens somewhere in Galilee, so these women shouldn't be confused with Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, who lived in Bethany (John 11:1).

10:38 *Martha welcomed... guest:* Martha offers Jesus a meal and temporary lodging in her house (Luke 10:5-9).

10:39 *Mary... sat at the Lord's feet and listened:* To "sit at someone's feet" meant to take instruction from them (e.g., Acts 22:3 can be translated as "I was raised in this city at Gamaliel's feet").

10:40 *Martha was preoccupied:* She's pulled in many directions by trying to serve Jesus a great meal. Hers is evidently a poor household, since she has no slaves to do the food preparation. *Tell... help me:* Martha assumes Jesus will agree that Mary should be helping to prepare his meal.

10:42 *One thing:* Jesus may mean both "I need only a simple meal" and "You need to listen to the gospel more than I need to eat." *It won't be taken away from her:* Jesus doesn't order Mary to leave behind her chosen role as disciple.

11:1 *teach us to pray:* These Jewish disciples know how to pray but want to learn how to pray as Jesus does. *John taught his disciples:* suggests John the Baptist had a distinctive manner of prayer.

11:2 *Father:* This is how Jesus addresses God in prayer (Luke 10:21; 22:42; 23:24, 46); his Father is theirs too (Luke 6:36; 11:13). *uphold the holiness:* A holy thing is set apart for God's use alone. God's name isn't to be misused (Exod

20:7). Since Jesus' followers bear God's name, we pray God will help us live in ways that bring honor to God. *Bring in your kingdom:* See note on Luke 4:43.

11:3 *the bread we need for today:* or "Day by day, give us enough bread for the day." Like Israel in the wilderness, Jesus' followers are to ask for enough for each day but no more (Exod 16:18).

11:4 *everyone who has wronged us:* or "everyone who is indebted to us." Jesus' followers are expected to forgive monetary debts (Luke 6:35) as well as insults and harassment (Luke 6:27-28; 17:4). *don't lead us into temptation:* Like Jesus, his followers should be led by the Spirit (Luke 4:1). Sometimes we're led into situations that test our ability to hold on to our faith (Luke 21:12-19). As Jesus did, we pray for God to lead us along easier paths, as long as we follow God's leadership, wherever that may take us (Luke 22:42).

11:5 *three loaves:* small, round flatbreads people used to scoop up food.

11:6 *I have nothing:* It would be shameful to send a guest, even a surprise guest, to bed without a meal. The speaker and his family have no leftovers from their supper, so he's counting on his neighbor to lend him bread.

11:7 *Don't bother me:* It would be equally shameful to refuse a request like this. Jesus' audience knows they would never say this.

11:8 *brashness:* or "shamelessness." The man knocking on the door bears no shame since he wasn't expecting his guest; but if the man in bed has bread and won't share it, he'll be ashamed to show his face in the village.

11:9 Mt 7:7  
 11:10 Mt 7:8;  
 Lk 11:9  
 11:11 Is 49:15  
 11:12 Exe 2:6  
 11:13 Gn 6:5,  
 Gn 8:21;  
 Neh 9:20;  
 Ps 51:11; Mt 7:11  
 11:14 Mt 9:32,  
 Mt 9:33,  
 Mt 12:22  
 11:15 Mt 9:34,  
 Mt 10:25,  
 Mt 12:24,  
 Mt 12:27,  
 Mk 3:22  
 11:16 Mt 12:38,  
 Mt 16:1; Mk 8:11  
 11:17 Mt 12:25;  
 Mk 3:23  
 11:18 1 Ch 21:1,  
 Job 1:6; Mt 4:10,  
 Mt 10:25;  
 Lk 11:15  
 11:19 Mt 10:25,  
 Mt 12:24,  
 Mt 12:27  
 11:20 Ex 8:19;  
 Mt 12:28  
 11:21 Mt 12:29;  
 Mk 3:27;  
 Lk 11:22  
 11:22 2Sa 2:21;  
 Is 49:24, Is 53:12;  
 Lk 11:21; 1Jn 3:8  
 11:23 Mt 12:30;  
 Mk 9:40; Lk 9:50  
 11:24 Mt 12:43  
 11:26 2Pt 2:20  
 11:27 Lk 23:29  
 11:28 Lk 8:21;  
 Rev 1:3, Rev 22:7  
 11:29 Mt 12:38,  
 Mt 12:39,  
 Mt 16:4; Mk 8:12;  
 Lk 11:16  
 11:30 Jon 1:17;  
 Mt 12:40,  
 Mt 16:4; Lk 11:29

whatever he needs because of his friend's brashness. <sup>9</sup>And I tell you: Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup>Everyone who asks, receives. Whoever seeks, finds. To everyone who knocks, the door is opened.

<sup>11</sup>"Which father among you would give a snake to your child if the child asked for a fish? <sup>12</sup>If a child asked for an egg, what father would give the child a scorpion? <sup>13</sup>If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

### Controversy over Beelzebul

<sup>14</sup>Jesus was throwing out a demon that causes muteness. When the demon was gone, the man who couldn't speak began to talk. The crowds were amazed. <sup>15</sup>But some of them said, "He throws out demons with the authority of Beelzebul, the ruler of demons." <sup>16</sup>Others were testing him, seeking a sign from heaven.

<sup>17</sup>Because Jesus knew what they were thinking, he said to them, "Every kingdom involved in civil war becomes a wasteland, and a house torn apart by divisions will collapse. <sup>18</sup>If Satan is at war with himself, how will his kingdom endure? I ask this because you say that I throw out demons by the authority of Beelzebul. <sup>19</sup>If I throw out demons by the authority of Beelzebul, then by whose authority do your followers throw them out? Therefore, they will be your judges. <sup>20</sup>But if I throw out demons by the power<sup>a</sup> of God, then God's kingdom has already overtaken you. <sup>21</sup>When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his possessions are secure. <sup>22</sup>But as soon as a stronger one attacks and overpowers him, the stronger one takes away the armor he had trusted and divides the stolen goods.

<sup>23</sup>"Whoever isn't with me is against me, and whoever doesn't gather with me, scatters. <sup>24</sup>When an unclean spirit leaves a person, it wanders through dry places looking for a place to rest. But it doesn't find any. Then it says, 'I'll go back to the house I left.' <sup>25</sup>When it arrives, it finds the house cleaned up and decorated. <sup>26</sup>Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself. They go in and make their home there. That person is worse off at the end than at the beginning."

### On seeking signs

<sup>27</sup>While Jesus was saying these things, a certain woman in the crowd spoke up: "Happy is the mother who gave birth to you and who nursed you."

<sup>28</sup>But he said, "Happy rather are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

<sup>29</sup>When the crowds grew, Jesus said, "This generation is an evil generation. It looks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except Jonah's sign. <sup>30</sup>Just as Jonah became a sign to the

<sup>a</sup>Or *finger*

11:9 Ask... Seek... Knock: Jesus' followers should ask God for what they need, since God is far more generous than even the best neighbor.

11:10 receives... finds... is opened: God will provide, perhaps through the kindness of others.

11:11-12 snake... scorpion: dangerous creatures and symbols of evil (Luke 10:19).

11:13 the Holy Spirit: a promise Jesus repeats in Luke 24:49 and fulfills in Acts 2:1-4.

11:15 Beelzebul: a chief demon, or Satan. The name means "lord of the flies" and was the name of a Philistine deity (2 Kgs 1:3).

11:16 testing: See Luke 10:25; 11:54.

11:17 knew what they were thinking: See Luke 2:35; 5:22; 6:8.

11:19 your followers: Jesus knows of other Jews who can expel demons. Are they also possessed by Satan?

11:20 God's kingdom: See note on Luke 4:43. overtaken you: Jesus has taught his disciples to pray for God's kingdom to arrive (Luke 11:2), but his power over demons also demonstrates how the power of God's kingdom is available to his disciples.

11:21-22 The strong man is Satan, and the stronger one is Jesus.

11:23 Whoever... against me: See Luke 9:50; Matthew 12:30.

11:24 unclean spirit: This passage appears to be a warning: there may be others who can cast out demons (Luke 11:19), but only Jesus, the "stronger one" (Luke 11:22) who introduces and reveals God's kingdom, can undo Satan's power permanently. *dry places*: Demons were believed to live in the desert (Lev 16:8-10; but see Luke 8:31).

11:26 seven other spirits: Jesus can cast out any number of spirits (Luke 8:2, 30).

11:27-28 The woman is correct, because Mary is a happy recipient of God's favor (Luke 1:28, 42), but Jesus knows Mary's true happiness comes from hearing and doing God's word (Luke 1:38; 8:21).

11:29 This generation: In this section of Luke, the crowds react less positively to Jesus. Some are amazed, but others accuse him of gaining his power from Satan, and still others want him to do a miracle that proves who he is (Luke 11:14-16). Satan has also tried to get Jesus to prove his identity (Luke 4:3, 9-10), and so those who seek a sign have been tempted and trapped by evil. *Jonah's sign*: Jonah warned Nineveh of God's coming judgment (Jon 3:4), and they believed.

11:30 the Human One: See sidebar, "The Human One in Luke" at Luke 5.

people of Nineveh, so the Human One<sup>b</sup> will be a sign to this generation. <sup>31</sup>The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from a distant land to hear Solomon's wisdom. And look, someone greater than Solomon is here. <sup>32</sup>The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they changed their hearts and lives in response to Jonah's preaching—and one greater than Jonah is here.

<sup>33</sup>"People don't light a lamp and then put it in a closet or under a basket. Rather, they place the lamp on a lampstand so that those who enter the house can see the light. <sup>34</sup>Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your whole body is full of darkness. <sup>35</sup>Therefore, see to it that the light in you isn't darkness. <sup>36</sup>If your whole body is full of light—with no part darkened—then it will be as full of light as when a lamp shines brightly on you."

**Jesus condemns Pharisees and legal experts**

<sup>37</sup>While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee invited him to share a meal with him, so Jesus went and took his place at the table. <sup>38</sup>When the Pharisee saw that Jesus didn't ritually purify his hands by washing before the meal, he was astonished.

<sup>39</sup>The Lord said to him, "Now, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and platter, but your insides are stuffed with greed and wickedness. <sup>40</sup>Foolish people! Didn't the one who made the outside also make the inside? <sup>41</sup>Therefore, give to those in need from the core of who you are and you will be clean all over.

<sup>42</sup>"How terrible for you Pharisees! You give a tenth of your mint, rue, and garden herbs of all kinds, while neglecting justice and love for God. These you ought to have done without neglecting the others.

<sup>43</sup>"How terrible for you Pharisees! You love the most prominent seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces.

<sup>44</sup>"How terrible for you! You are like unmarked graves, and people walk on them without recognizing it."

<sup>45</sup>One of the legal experts responded, "Teacher, when you say these things, you are insulting us too."

<sup>46</sup>Jesus said, "How terrible for you legal experts too! You load people down with impossible burdens and you refuse to lift a single finger to help them.

<sup>47</sup>"How terrible for you! You built memorials to the prophets, whom your ancestors killed. <sup>48</sup>In this way, you testify that you approve of your ancestors' deeds. They killed the prophets, and you build memorials! <sup>49</sup>Therefore, God's wisdom has said, 'I will send prophets and

11:31 1Ki 10:1; 1Ki 10:2; 2Ch 9:1; Mt 12:42  
 11:32 Jon 1:2; Jon 3:5; Mt 12:41  
 11:33 Mt 5:15; Mk 4:21; Lk 8:16  
 11:34 Mt 6:22; Mt 6:23  
 11:35 Prv 16:25; Prv 26:12; Is 5:20; Is 5:21; Mt 6:1  
 11:37 Lk 7:36; Lk 14:1  
 11:38 Mt 15:2; Mk 7:2; Mk 7:3; Mk 7:4  
 11:39 Mt 7:15; Mt 23:25; Lk 7:13; Lk 20:47  
 11:40 Lk 12:20; 1Co 15:36  
 11:41 Lk 12:33; Lk 16:9; Tr 1:15  
 11:42 Mt 6:8; Mt 23:23; Lk 18:12  
 11:43 Mt 23:6; Mk 12:38; Mk 12:39; Lk 14:7; Lk 20:46  
 11:44 Mt 23:27  
 11:45 Mt 23:35; Lk 11:46; Lk 11:52  
 11:46 Mt 23:4  
 11:47 Mt 23:29  
 11:48 Ac 7:51  
 11:49 Mt 23:34; 1Co 1:24; 1Co 1:30; Col 2:3

<sup>b</sup>Or Son of Man

11:31 *queen of the South*: See 1 Kings 10:1-13.  
 11:32 *changed their hearts*: See Jonah 3:5-10.  
 11:33 *lamp*: See Luke 8:16 and note; Matthew 5:15. Jesus is doing his miracles openly so that all can see the works of God.  
 11:34 *Your eye is the lamp*: Many ancient people believed that light went out from the eyes rather than coming into them. The crowds who believe Jesus to be possessed by demons, or who are asking for more miracles, have *bad* or *evil* eyes; that is, they see Jesus incorrectly and consequently are *full of darkness*.  
 11:35 *the light in you*: The crowds have seen Jesus do God's works but refuse to believe.  
 11:37-54 The second time Jesus dines with Pharisees (see Luke 7:36-50; 14:1-24; Matt 23:6-36).  
 11:37 *took his place*: or "reclined to eat." See sidebar, "1st-Century Dinner Parties" at Luke 7.  
 11:38 *didn't ritually purify his hands by washing*: or "didn't bathe." Either Jesus hasn't bathed before dinner, as was customary, or he hasn't observed the Pharaic custom of ritually purifying his hands before eating. Earlier Simon the Pharisee refused Jesus water for his feet (Luke 7:44), but in this episode Jesus decides to do without some

expected form of washing. *astonished*: In Luke, Pharisees can be influential (Luke 11:43), and Jesus' host is surprised Jesus doesn't show more respect.  
 11:39 *outside...insides*: Jesus accuses his host and his host's companions of being too focused on external things.  
 11:41 *give*: Like the rich man in Luke 18:22-23, the money-loving Pharisees (Luke 16:14) need to change their hearts by giving to the poor.  
 11:42 *You give a tenth*: no substitute for justice and love for God (Luke 10:27).  
 11:43 *most prominent seats*: See Matthew 23:6-7; see sidebar "The Synagogues" at Luke 20.  
 11:44 *unmarked graves*: Graves were marked to prevent unintentional contact with the dead. Touching a corpse made a person unclean (Num 19:11-22).  
 11:45 *legal experts*: Some of the other dinner guests work as advisors or secretaries to the Pharisees.  
 11:47 *You built memorials*: This passage assumes prophets are always killed by their audiences (Luke 4:24, 28-30; 13:33-34). The legal experts set up monuments but won't change their lives when the prophets warn them (Luke 7:30).  
 11:49 *God's wisdom*: Jesus, speaking for God, predicts his

Patches and wineskins	Luke 5:36-39	Matt 9:16-17	Mark 2:21-22
The blind leading the blind	Luke 6:39-40	Matt 15:14b	
The log in your own eye	Luke 6:41-42	Matt 7:3-4	
Producing good fruit	Luke 6:43-45	Matt 7:16-20	
The two builders/building on a solid foundation	Luke 6:46-49	Matt 7:24-27	
The riddle of the children	Luke 7:31-35	Matt 11:16-19	
The two debtors	Luke 7:41-43		
Seed and the soil/the farmer	Luke 8:4-8	Matt 13:3-8	Mark 4:3-9
The lamp	Luke 8:16	Matt 5:14-16	Mark 4:21-22
The good Samaritan	Luke 10:30-35		
The parable of a shameless neighbor	Luke 11:5-8		
The kingdom divided against itself	Luke 11:17a	Matt 12:25a	Mark 3:24
The house divided against itself	Luke 11:17b	Matt 12:25b	Mark 3:25
The return of the unclean spirit	Luke 11:24-26	Matt 12:43-45	
The rich fool	Luke 12:16-21		
The returning master	Luke 12:36-38		
The thief in the night/the watchful owner	Luke 12:39-40	Matt 24:43-44	
The good and wicked servants	Luke 12:42-46	Matt 24:45-51	(Mark 13:33-37)
Going before a judge	Luke 12:58-59	Matt 5:25-26	
The barren fig tree	Luke 13:6-9	(Matt 21:20-22)	Mark 11:20-25)
The mustard seed	Luke 13:18-19	Matt 13:31-32	Mark 4:30-32
The yeast	Luke 13:20-21	Matt 13:33	
The narrow gate	Luke 13:24-30		
The best seats at the table	Luke 14:7-11		
The large dinner/wedding party	Luke 14:16-24	Matt 22:1-14	
The fool at work	Luke 14:28-30		
The fool at war	Luke 14:31-32		
The lost sheep	Luke 15:3-7	Matt 18:12-14	
The lost coin	Luke 15:8-10		
The prodigal son	Luke 15:11-32		
The dishonest manager	Luke 16:1-9		
The rich man and Lazarus	Luke 16:19-31		
The servant who serves without reward	Luke 17:7-10		
The unjust judge and the persistent widow	Luke 18:1-8		
The Pharisee and the tax collector	Luke 18:9-14		
The valuable coins	Luke 19:11-27	Matt 25:14-30	
The tenant farmers	Luke 20:9-18	Matt 21:33-44	Mark 12:1-11
The fig tree in bloom	Luke 21:29-31	Matt 24:32-35	Mark 13:28-29
The weeds		Matt 13:24-30	
The hidden treasure and the pearl		Matt 13:44-46	
The net		Matt 13:47-48	
The owner of a house		Matt 13:52	
What can contaminate		Matt 15:10-11	Mark 7:14-15
The unforgiving servant		Matt 18:21-35	
The workers in the vineyard		Matt 20:1-16	
The olive tree			
The blind men			

apostles to them and they will harass and kill some of them.<sup>50</sup> As a result, this generation will be charged with the murder of all the prophets since the beginning of time.<sup>51</sup> This includes the murder of every prophet—from Abel to Zechariah—who was killed between the altar and the holy place. Yes, I'm telling you, this generation will be charged with it.

<sup>52</sup> "How terrible for you legal experts! You snatched away the key of knowledge. You didn't enter yourselves, and you stood in the way of those who were entering."

<sup>53</sup> As he left there, the legal experts and Pharisees began to resent him deeply and to ask him pointed questions about many things.<sup>54</sup> They plotted against him, trying to trap him in his words.

**Warnings to Jesus' friends**

**12** When a crowd of thousands upon thousands had gathered so that they were crushing each other, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples: "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees—I mean, the mismatch between their hearts and lives.<sup>2</sup> Nothing is hidden that won't be revealed, and nothing is secret that won't be brought out into the open.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, whatever you have said in the darkness will be heard in the light, and whatever you have whispered in the rooms deep inside the house will be announced from the rooftops.

<sup>4</sup> "I tell you, my friends, don't be terrified by those who can kill the body but after that can do nothing more.<sup>5</sup> I'll show you whom you should fear: fear the one who, after you have been killed, has the authority to throw you into hell. Indeed, I tell you, that's the one you should fear.<sup>6</sup> Aren't five sparrows sold for two small coins?<sup>c</sup> Yet not one of them is overlooked by God.<sup>7</sup> Even the hairs on your head are all counted. Don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

**Acknowledging the Human One**

<sup>8</sup> "I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before humans, the Human One<sup>d</sup> will acknowledge before God's angels.<sup>9</sup> But the one who rejects me before others will be rejected before God's angels.<sup>10</sup> Anyone who speaks a word against the Human One<sup>e</sup> will be forgiven, but whoever insults the Holy Spirit won't be forgiven.<sup>11</sup> When they bring you before the synagogues, rulers, and authorities, don't worry about how to defend yourself or what you should say.<sup>12</sup> The Holy Spirit will tell you at that very moment what you must say."

**Warning against greed**

<sup>13</sup> Someone from the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

<sup>c</sup>Or two assaria—that is, 1/8 of a day's wage <sup>d</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>e</sup>Or Son of Man

death and the deaths of *prophets and apostles* who will come in his name (Luke 12:11-12; 21:12-16). See note on Luke 7:35.

11:51 *Abel*: See Genesis 4:8. *Zechariah*: See 2 Chronicles 24:20-22. *this generation*: the Pharisees and the legal experts who refused to listen to John the Baptist or to Jesus (Luke 7:31-35).

11:52 *You didn't enter*: See Luke 7:30. *you stood in the way*: See Luke 5:21, 30; 7:39, 49; 11:53-54.

11:54 *They plotted against him*: The Pharisees want to harm the reputation of Jesus publicly, but they do him no physical harm (see Mark 3:6). In fact, in Luke 13:31 the Pharisees warn Jesus of danger. The plot that gets Jesus killed involves no Pharisees (Luke 19:47).

12:1 *thousands upon thousands*: not Jesus' true followers (Luke 11:15-16; 12:13). *the yeast*: or "the leaven," a clump of wet bread dough left out to start to sour. Cooks would mix a lump of sourdough, or leaven, into new dough to make it rise. Leaven is almost always an image for moral corruption. *the mismatch*: The Pharisees were respected teachers (Luke 11:43) but obstacles to Jesus' mission (Luke 11:53-54).

12:2 *revealed*: God will reveal the true character of the Pharisees (Luke 8:17).

12:4 *those who can kill the body*: For many of Luke's early readers this would mean civil authorities, who might kill the followers of Jesus for their faith.

12:5 *authority to throw you into hell*: Jesus, on Judgment Day (see Luke 12:8-9).

12:6 *five sparrows sold for two small coins*: fast food in the 1st century, sold cooked at food stalls in cities. If God keeps an account of sparrows, then surely God keeps an eye on you.

12:8 *acknowledges me before humans*: as Peter fails to do (Luke 22:54-62). Some of Luke's early readers were offered a choice: Curse Christ and live, or refuse to do so and be killed. *the Human One*: See sidebar, "The Human One in Luke" at Luke 5.

12:10 *insults the Holy Spirit*: by calling the work of God the work of the devil (Luke 11:15).

12:11 *don't worry*: Jesus promises his followers that if they must face harassment and death because of their faith, the Spirit that has guided him will also guide and empower them in their moment of trial.

12:13 *Someone from the crowd* wants Jesus to settle an inheritance dispute. Jesus responds that it isn't his job and then tells the parable to teach a better attitude toward property.

11:50 Mt 23:35; Rev 18:20  
 11:51 Gn 4:8; 2Ch 24:20; 2Ch 24:21; Mt 23:35; Heb 11:4  
 11:52 Mt 23:13  
 11:53 Mk 11:18; Lk 11:54; Lk 20:20  
 11:54 Mt 22:15; Mk 12:13; Lk 20:20  
 12:1 Mt 16:6; Mt 16:12; Mk 8:15  
 12:2 Ecc 12:14; Mt 10:26; Mk 4:22; Lk 8:17; 1Co 4:5  
 12:3 Mt 6:6; Mt 10:27; Mt 24:17  
 12:4 Jn 15:14  
 12:5 Ps 9:17; Mt 5:22; Mt 5:29; Mt 10:28; Mk 9:43  
 12:6 Mt 10:29; Lk 12:24  
 12:7 Mt 6:26; Mt 10:30; Lk 21:18  
 12:8 Mt 10:32; Mt 25:31; Mk 16:7; Lk 15:10; Ro 10:9; Ro 10:10  
 12:9 Mk 8:38; Lk 9:26; 2Ti 2:12  
 12:10 Mt 12:31; Mt 12:32; Mk 3:28; Mk 3:29; 1Jn 5:16  
 12:11 Mt 10:17; Mt 10:19; Lk 21:12; Lk 21:14  
 12:12 Mt 10:20; Mk 13:11; Lk 21:15

12:14 Ro 2:1,  
Ro 2:3, Ro 9:20  
12:15 Heb 13:5  
12:16 Lk 16:19  
12:17 Ps 30:6;  
Hos 12:8;  
Lk 16:3  
12:18 Lk 12:24  
12:19 Ecc 11:9;  
1Co 15:32;  
Jas 4:13  
12:20 Job 27:8;  
Ps 39:6;  
Jer 17:11;  
Lk 11:40  
12:21 Mt 6:19;  
Lk 12:33  
12:22 Mt 6:25  
12:24 Job 38:41;  
Ps 147:9;  
Mt 6:26; Lk 12:7;  
Lk 12:18  
12:25 Mt 6:27  
12:27 1Ks 10:4;  
2Ch 9:3; Mt 6:28  
12:28 Mt 6:30  
12:29 Mt 6:25;  
Mt 6:31;  
Lk 12:22  
12:30 Mt 6:8  
12:31 Mt 6:33  
12:32 Is 40:11  
12:33 Mt 6:20;  
Mt 19:21;  
Lk 11:41;  
Lk 16:9;  
Lk 18:22

**Masters, Managers, and Servants** The master, or “homeowner” (Luke 12:39), was the male head of the household who owned the slaves (translated as “servants” throughout Luke) and owned or employed stewards (*managers*) to oversee the slaves. In the 1st century CE, slaves did all sorts of work, from farming to household chores (Luke 17:7-8) to guarding the house (Luke 12:36). They were property, not persons, and so they could be whipped or killed as their owner saw fit (Luke 12:45). *Managers* were sometimes slaves (Luke 12:42-43) and sometimes employees (Luke 16:3), and they were often given considerable authority to act on the master’s behalf (Luke 16:5-7; 19:13). Most became slaves either because they were on the losing side of a war against the Romans or because their mothers were slaves. It’s estimated that slaves made up as much as 60 percent of the workforce in some parts of the empire during the 1st century.

<sup>14</sup>Jesus said to him, “Man, who appointed me as judge or referee between you and your brother?”

<sup>15</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Watch out! Guard yourself against all kinds of greed. After all, one’s life isn’t determined by one’s possessions, even when someone is very wealthy.”

<sup>16</sup>Then he told them a parable: “A certain rich man’s land produced a bountiful crop. <sup>17</sup>He said to himself, ‘What will I do? I have no place to store my harvest!’ <sup>18</sup>Then he thought, ‘Here’s what I’ll do. I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. That’s where I’ll store all my grain and goods. <sup>19</sup>I’ll say to myself, ‘You have stored up plenty of goods, enough for several years. Take it easy! Eat, drink, and enjoy yourself. <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, ‘Fool, tonight you will die. Now who will get the things you have prepared for yourself?’ <sup>21</sup>This is the way it will be for those who hoard things for themselves and aren’t rich toward God.”

### Warning about worry

<sup>22</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Therefore, I say to you, don’t worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. <sup>23</sup>There is more to life than food and more to the body than clothing. <sup>24</sup>Consider the ravens: they neither plant nor harvest, they have no silo or barn, yet God feeds them. You are worth so much more than birds! <sup>25</sup>Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life?<sup>f</sup> <sup>26</sup>If you can’t do such a small thing, why worry about the rest? <sup>27</sup>Notice how the lilies grow. They don’t wear themselves out with work, and they don’t spin cloth. But I say to you that even Solomon in all his splendor wasn’t dressed like one of these. <sup>28</sup>If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully, even though it’s alive today and tomorrow it’s thrown into the furnace, how much more will God do for you, you people of weak faith! <sup>29</sup>Don’t chase after what you will eat and what you will drink. Stop worrying. <sup>30</sup>All the nations of the world long for these things. Your Father knows that you need them. <sup>31</sup>Instead, desire his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well.

<sup>32</sup>“Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights in giving you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup>Sell your possessions and give to those in need. Make for yourselves wallets that don’t

<sup>f</sup>Or *eighteen inches to your height*

12:15 *one’s life . . . one’s possessions*: See Luke 4:4; 12:23.

12:16-21 The first of three rich man parables in Luke (see Luke 16:1-9, 19-31).

12:16 *rich man’s land*: produces a surplus he can’t possibly eat. He stores it so he can sell it later, when there’s less grain available and the price goes up. It’s legal but greedy behavior.

12:19 *to myself*: He speaks to himself, not to God.

12:20 *Fool*: God interrupts his rest to announce his death. *who will get*: See Ecclesiastes 2:18.

12:21 *hoard things . . . rich toward God*: Jesus’ advice is to give freely to the needy (Luke 6:38; 12:33). This shows one’s values line up with God’s.

12:22 *don’t worry*: Don’t be anxious, but instead ask God for what you need (Luke 11:3, 9-13).

12:24 *ravens*: forbidden as food for Jews (Lev 11:15). They fed the prophet Elijah during the drought (1 Kgs 17:6). *worth so much more than birds*: See Luke 12:7.

12:27 *lilies*: wildflowers that bloom in Galilee in the spring.

12:28 *thrown into the furnace*: Dried grasses, including wildflowers, were bundled and used for fuel in bread-making ovens in Galilean villages (Luke 3:17).

12:29-30 *chase*: The same verb is translated as “desire” in Luke 12:31. Jesus is contrasting life priorities: Choose God’s kingdom instead of food or clothing. *nations*: ethnic groups, rather than political units. *Your Father*: The Greek “Your” is plural. God, who is Jesus’ Father, is also Father of all Jesus’ followers.

12:31 *desire*: See note on Luke 12:29. *his kingdom*: See note on Luke 4:43.

12:32 *little flock*: Prophets sometimes compared God’s people to a flock of sheep and predicted God or God’s Christ would be like a good shepherd (Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:11-24; Mic 5:2-5a). *giving you the kingdom*: A kingdom is a surprising thing to give to a flock of sheep, but God’s kingdom involves no wealth or land (see Luke 6:20; 10:11; 11:20; 12:33; 22:29-30).

12:33 *Sell your possessions and give*: While Luke portrays

wear out—a treasure in heaven that never runs out. No thief comes near there, and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup>Where your treasure is, there your heart will be too.

### Warning about being prepared

<sup>35</sup>Be dressed for service and keep your lamps lit. <sup>36</sup>Be like people waiting for their master to come home from a wedding celebration, who can immediately open the door for him when he arrives and knocks on the door. <sup>37</sup>Happy are those servants whom the master finds waiting up when he arrives. I assure you that, when he arrives, he will dress himself to serve, seat them at the table as honored guests, and wait on them. <sup>38</sup>Happy are those whom he finds alert, even if he comes at midnight or just before dawn. <sup>39</sup>But know this, if the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he wouldn't have allowed his home to be broken into. <sup>40</sup>You also must be ready, because the Human One<sup>b</sup> is coming at a time when you don't expect him."

<sup>41</sup>Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?"

<sup>42</sup>The Lord replied, "Who are the faithful and wise managers whom the master will put in charge of his household servants, to give them their food at the proper time? <sup>43</sup>Happy are the servants whom the master finds fulfilling their responsibilities when he comes. <sup>44</sup>I assure you that the master will put them in charge of all his possessions.

<sup>45</sup>But suppose that these servants should say to themselves, My master is taking his time about coming. And suppose they began to beat the servants, both men and women, and to eat, drink, and get drunk. <sup>46</sup>The master of those servants would come on a day when they weren't expecting him, at a time they couldn't predict. The master will cut them into pieces and assign them a place with the unfaithful. <sup>47</sup>That servant who knew his master's will but didn't prepare for it or act on it will be beaten severely. <sup>48</sup>The one who didn't know the master's will but who did things deserving punishment will be beaten only a little. Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.

### Conflicts brought by Jesus

<sup>49</sup>"I came to cast fire upon the earth. How I wish that it was already ablaze! <sup>50</sup>I have a baptism I must experience. How I am distressed until it's completed! <sup>51</sup>Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, I have come instead to bring division. <sup>52</sup>From now on, a household of five will be divided—three against two and two against three. <sup>53</sup>Father will square off against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother; and mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

<sup>a</sup>Or in the second or third watch <sup>b</sup>Or Son of Man

many of Jesus' original followers doing this (Luke 18:28; Acts 4:32-37). Luke also describes Christians who own houses (Acts 12:12) or who work to support themselves (Acts 18:3). *wallets... treasure*: God won't forget your generous acts, and *No thief or moth* can damage them.

12:35-48 See Matthew 24:43-51; 25:1-13.

12:35 *dressed for service*: Slaves tucked the ends of their robes into their belts to get ready for hard work. See sidebar, "Masters, Managers, and Servants."

12:36 *people waiting for their master*: Household slaves waited up for their master, no matter how late he might be. *wedding celebration*: In Luke 5:34 Jesus was the groom and his disciples were guests at his wedding party (see Rev 19:7-9). Here he's the master and his disciples the slaves.

12:37 *he will dress himself to serve*: Normally, the slaves would serve the master (Luke 17:7-9; 22:27).

12:39-40 In this brief parable Jesus is the thief and each disciple a householder. See sidebar, "Masters, Managers, and Servants." *the Human One*: Jesus in his role on Judgment Day. See sidebar, "The Human One in Luke" at Luke 5. 12:42 *managers*: In this parable Jesus' disciples are slaves who are given responsibility for managing the work of the other household slaves. See sidebar, "Masters, Managers, and Servants." *give them their food*: Jesus expects his followers to help feed the hungry (Luke 9:13; 12:33; Acts 4:34-35).

12:44 *put them in charge*: See Luke 22:28-30.

12:45 *taking his time*: Early Christians wondered why Jesus had not already returned.

12:46 *cut them into pieces*: In the 1st century masters could order the severe beating or even crucifixion of disobedient slaves. Jesus is using this custom as an image for the punishment to be assigned on Judgment Day to disobedient disciples.

12:47-48 *beaten severely*: Punishments vary depending on how much the disciple knows; but none of Luke's readers who hear these parables could claim they *didn't know the master's will*.

12:49 *I came to cast fire*: John the Baptist predicted Jesus would baptize with fire (Luke 3:16), bringing God's judgment. Here the *fire*, a parallel to "baptism" in the next verse, symbolizes Jesus' mission. Like the prophet Elijah (1 Kgs 18:17; 21:20), Jesus creates disagreement.

12:50 *baptism*: See Mark 10:38, where "baptism" and "cup" are images of Jesus' crucifixion. *How I am distressed*: See Luke 22:42.

12:51 *peace*: Zechariah (Luke 1:79) and the angels (Luke 2:14) predicted Jesus would bring peace to some; and Jesus' disciples offer peace in their preaching (Luke 10:5-6). But since some reject Jesus' message, he also creates *division*, "the falling and rising of many" (Luke 2:34).

12:53 *Father... against son*: Traditional family bonds

12:34 Mt 6:21

12:35 Eph 6:14; 1 Pt 1:13

12:36 Jas 5:7

12:37 Mt 24:42;

Lk 17:8; Jn 13:4

12:38 Mt 14:25

12:39 Mt 24:43;

Mt 24:44;

1 Th 5:2;

2 Pt 3:10; Rev 3:3

12:40 Mk 13:33

12:41 Mt 24:45;

Mt 24:46;

Mk 13:37;

Mk 14:37;

Lk 5:8

12:42 Mt 24:45;

Lk 7:13

12:44 Lk 19:17

12:45 1s 56:10;

Eze 34:3; 1l 3:3;

Mt 24:48;

Ro 16:18

12:46 Mt 24:51;

Lk 12:40

12:47 Dt 25:2;

In 15:22; Jas 4:17

12:48 Lv 5:17;

1 Ti 1:13

12:49 Mal 3:2;

Mal 3:3;

Mt 3:10; Mt 3:11;

Mt 5:17

12:50 Mk 10:38

12:51 Mt 10:34

12:53 Mt 7:6;

Mt 10:21

12:54 Lk 18:44;  
Mt 16:2, Mt 16:3  
12:55 Job 37:17

12:56 Mt 16:3  
12:57 Dt 32:29;  
Lk 21:30; Jn 7:24

12:58 Prv 25:8;  
Mt 5:25, Mt 5:26

12:59 Mt 18:34;  
Mk 12:42

13:1 Mt 27:2,  
Mt 27:13,  
Mt 27:24;  
Mk 15:2; Lk 3:1

13:2 Jn 9:2;  
Ac 28:4  
13:3 Lk 13:5

13:4 Neh 3:15;  
Jn 9:7, Jn 9:11

13:5 Lk 13:3  
13:6 Is 5:2;  
Mt 21:19

13:7 Mt 3:10,  
Mt 7:19, Lk 3:9

13:10 Mt 4:23  
13:11 Lk 13:16;  
Jn 5:5

13:13 Mk 5:23,  
Mk 6:5, Lk 4:40,  
Lk 18:43

13:14 Ex 20:9;  
Lk 14:3

13:15 Lk 14:5

13:16 Mt 4:10;  
Lk 19:9

13:17 Lk 18:43

### Learning and practicing good judgment

<sup>54</sup>Jesus also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud forming in the west, you immediately say, 'It's going to rain.' And indeed it does. <sup>55</sup>And when a south wind blows, you say, 'A heat wave is coming.' And it does. <sup>56</sup>Hypocrites! You know how to interpret conditions on earth and in the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret the present time? <sup>57</sup>And why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? <sup>58</sup>As you are going to court with your accuser, make your best effort to reach a settlement along the way. Otherwise, your accuser may bring you before the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. <sup>59</sup>I tell you, you won't get out of there until you have paid the very last cent."

### Demand for genuine change

**13** Some who were present on that occasion told Jesus about the Galileans whom Pilate had killed while they were offering sacrifices. <sup>2</sup>He replied, "Do you think the suffering of these Galileans proves that they were more sinful than all the other Galileans? <sup>3</sup>No, I tell you, but unless you change your hearts and lives, you will die just as they did. <sup>4</sup>What about those eighteen people who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them? Do you think that they were more guilty of wrongdoing than everyone else who lives in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup>No, I tell you, but unless you change your hearts and lives, you will die just as they did."

<sup>6</sup>Jesus told this parable: "A man owned a fig tree planted in his vineyard. He came looking for fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup>He said to his gardener, 'Look, I've come looking for fruit on this fig tree for the past three years, and I've never found any. Cut it down! Why should it continue depleting the soil's nutrients?' <sup>8</sup>The gardener responded, 'Lord, give it one more year, and I will dig around it and give it fertilizer. <sup>9</sup>Maybe it will produce fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down.'"

### Healing on a Sabbath

<sup>10</sup>Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. <sup>11</sup>A woman was there who had been disabled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and couldn't stand up straight. <sup>12</sup>When he saw her, Jesus called her to him and said, "Woman, you are set free from your sickness." <sup>13</sup>He placed his hands on her and she straightened up at once and praised God.

<sup>14</sup>The synagogue leader, incensed that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, responded, "There are six days during which work is permitted. Come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath day."

<sup>15</sup>The Lord replied, "Hypocrites! Don't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from its stall and lead it out to get a drink? <sup>16</sup>Then isn't it necessary that this woman, a daughter of Abraham, bound by Satan for eighteen long years, be set free from her bondage on the Sabbath day?" <sup>17</sup>When he said these things, all his opponents were put to shame, but all those in the crowd rejoiced at all the extraordinary things he was doing.

<sup>1</sup>Or *leptos* (1/128 of a day's wages)

are being broken over different responses to Jesus (see Mic 7:6).

12:54 *cloud . . . west*: rain clouds from the Mediterranean.

12:55 *south wind*: a dry wind from the Arabian Desert to the south.

12:56 *Hypocrites*: Jesus accuses the crowds of dishonesty because they're refusing to believe him, despite his words and deeds.

12:57-59 A parable urging those who've rejected Jesus to change their minds before the judgment, when Jesus the Human One will hand them over to God the Judge. See sidebar, "The Human One in Luke" at Luke 5.

13:1 *Galileans whom Pilate had killed*: We have no other information about this event, but it's in keeping with what is known about Pilate's character.

13:2 *they were more sinful*: Shocking death was sometimes interpreted as God's judgment (Acts 12:20-23). But in this case, Jesus says, the victims aren't more sinful than the average person.

13:3 *unless . . . you will die*: In Luke everyone (except Jesus) needs "to change their hearts and lives" (Luke 5:32) in order to come to God (see note on Luke 5:8).

13:4 *the tower of Siloam*: probably part of the city wall of Jerusalem near the pool of Siloam (John 9:7). We have no other information about it.

13:6-9 The parable presents God as patient, but not endlessly so, with those who won't change their hearts and minds.

13:10 *teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath*: This is Jesus' fourth and last time to teach in a synagogue (Luke 4:16-30, 31-37; 6:6-11) and his second healing on the Sabbath (Luke 6:6-11). See notes on Luke 4:16, 17; see sidebar, "The Synagogues" at Luke 20.

13:12 *Jesus called her to him*: This is only the second time in which Jesus heals without being asked first (Luke 7:13-14). *set free*: Part of his mission was liberation (see Luke 4:18).

13:14 *incensed*: Some Jews considered healing to be work and thus forbidden on the Sabbath unless it was a life-or-death case (see Luke 6:7).

13:16 *daughter of Abraham*: She's worthy of being helped (Isa 51:2).

13:17 *all . . . shame*: Luke quotes Isaiah 45:16-17, comparing the way Jesus liberates this woman to how God set the people free after the Babylonian exile.



### Growth of God's kingdom

<sup>18</sup>Jesus asked, "What is God's kingdom like? To what can I compare it? <sup>19</sup>It's like a mustard seed that someone took and planted in a garden. It grew and developed into a tree and the birds in the sky nested in its branches."

<sup>20</sup>Again he said, "To what can I compare God's kingdom? <sup>21</sup>It's like yeast, which a woman took and hid in a bushel of wheat flour until the yeast had worked its way through the whole."

### Who will be saved?

<sup>22</sup>Jesus traveled through cities and villages, teaching and making his way to Jerusalem.

<sup>23</sup>Someone said to him, "Lord, will only a few be saved?"

Jesus said to them, <sup>24</sup>"Make every effort to enter through the narrow gate. Many, I tell you, will try to enter and won't be able to. <sup>25</sup>Once the owner of the house gets up and shuts the door, then you will stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will reply, 'I don't know you or where you are from.' <sup>26</sup>Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' <sup>27</sup>He will respond, 'I don't know you or where you are from. *Go away from me, all you evildoers!*'" <sup>28</sup>There will be weeping and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and all the prophets in God's kingdom, but you yourselves will be thrown out. <sup>29</sup>People will come from east and west, north and south, and sit down to eat in God's kingdom. <sup>30</sup>Look! Those who are last will be first and those who are first will be last."

### Sorrow for Jerusalem

<sup>31</sup>At that time, some Pharisees approached Jesus and said, "Go! Get away from here, because Herod wants to kill you."

<sup>32</sup>Jesus said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Look, I'm throwing out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will complete my work. <sup>33</sup>However, it's necessary for me to travel today, tomorrow, and the next day because it's impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.'

<sup>34</sup>"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who were sent to you! How often I have wanted to gather your people just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you didn't want that. <sup>35</sup>Look, your house is abandoned. I tell you, you won't see me until the time comes when you say, *Blessings on the one who comes in the Lord's name.*"<sup>k</sup>

13:18 Mt 13:31,  
Mt 13:32;  
Mk 4:30  
13:19 Mt 13:31,  
Mt 13:32;  
Mt 17:20;  
Mk 4:31  
13:20 Mt 13:33  
13:21 Mt 13:33;  
1Co 5:6  
13:22 Lk 9:51  
13:23 Mt 7:14  
13:24 Mt 7:13,  
Mt 7:14  
13:25 Mt 7:22,  
Mt 7:23,  
Mt 25:10,  
Mt 25:11,  
Mt 25:12  
13:26 Is 58:2;  
Mt 3:9; Lk 13:25;  
2Ti 3:5; Ti 1:16  
13:27 Ps 6:8;  
Mt 7:23,  
Mt 25:41;  
Lk 13:25  
13:28 Mt 8:11,  
Mt 8:12  
13:29 Mt 8:11  
13:30 Mt 19:30,  
Mt 20:16;  
Mk 10:31  
13:31 Mt 14:1;  
Lk 3:1, Lk 9:7,  
Lk 23:7,  
Lk 23:11  
13:32 Heb 2:10,  
Heb 5:9  
13:33 Mt 21:11  
13:34 Dt 32:11;  
Mt 23:37;  
Lk 19:41  
13:35 Ps 118:26;  
Lk 19:38

<sup>j</sup>Ps 6:9 LXX <sup>k</sup>Ps 118:26

13:18-21 Two parables about God's kingdom. For another pair featuring a man and a woman as main characters, see Luke 15:3-10.

13:19 *mustard seed*: widely recognized as being very small, but its plant can grow to be over six feet tall. *developed into a tree*: a deliberate exaggeration to make a point: God's kingdom, starting from a small beginning, will surprise many (Luke 13:25-28).

13:21 *yeast*: See note on Luke 12:1. *hid in a bushel*: another exaggeration to make a point. A woman wouldn't hide yeast in her flour jar because it would ruin all the flour in it. God's kingdom will surprise many on Judgment Day (Luke 13:25-28).

13:22 *traveled*: See Luke 9:51, 57; 10:1, 38; 12:1; 13:33; 17:11; 19:1, 28.

13:23 *only a few*: Many prophets had predicted God's judgment would leave only a portion of God's people alive to experience the blessings that will follow judgment (Zech 14:1-3; Jer 31:7).

13:24 *narrow gate*: an image for the demands Jesus makes on his followers.

13:25 *shuts the door*: The owner knows that everyone who belongs to the household is already inside for the night. This scene portrays the finality of the last judgment (Luke 13:8-9; 14:24).

13:26 *We ate and drank... you taught*: Jesus means that

some of those who've heard him teach will, on Judgment Day, regret having decided not to follow him (Matt 7:22-23). 13:28 *weeping and grinding of teeth*: signs of mourning (Matt 8:12).

13:29 *sit down to eat*: God's kingdom is pictured as a huge banquet, with people from all over the world present (Matt 8:11-12). Some who've expected to be included will be disappointed.

13:30 *last will be first*: God's kingdom has no status differences (Matt 20:16).

13:31 *some Pharisees*: This scene is found only in Luke (see sidebar, "Pharisees" at Luke 6). *Herod*: Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee, who executed John the Baptist and has been wanting to question Jesus (Luke 9:9).

13:32 *fox*: regarded as a pest and scavenger. *throwing out demons*: Jesus means he'll continue with his ministry until it's done, and Herod's threat won't stop him.

13:33 *impossible for a prophet*: Many, but not all, prophets died in Jerusalem (Jeremiah probably died in Egypt; Ezekiel in Babylon). Jesus is predicting that, because he's a prophet, Jerusalem will be his place of death.

13:35 *your house is abandoned*: a prediction concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and/or the temple, which occurred later in 70 CE at the hands of the Romans. *you won't see me*: a prediction of what will be shouted when he reaches Jerusalem (Luke 19:38).

14:1 Mk 3:2;  
Lk 7:36,  
Lk 11:37,  
Lk 20:20  
14:3 Lk 13:14  
14:5 Mt 12:11;  
Lk 13:15  
14:6 Mt 22:46  
14:7 Mt 23:6;  
Lk 11:43  
14:8 Prv 25:6;  
Mt 23:6  
14:9 Prv 11:2

### Healing on the Sabbath

**14** One Sabbath, when Jesus went to share a meal in the home of one of the leaders of the Pharisees, they were watching him closely. <sup>2</sup>A man suffering from an abnormal swelling of the body was there. <sup>3</sup>Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, “Does the Law allow healing on the Sabbath or not?” <sup>4</sup>But they said nothing. Jesus took hold of the sick man, cured him, and then let him go. <sup>5</sup>He said to them, “Suppose your child or ox fell into a ditch on the Sabbath day. Wouldn’t you immediately pull it out?” <sup>6</sup>But they had no response.

### Lessons on humility and generosity

<sup>7</sup>When Jesus noticed how the guests sought out the best seats at the table, he told them a parable. <sup>8</sup>“When someone invites you to a wedding celebration, don’t take your seat in the place of honor. Someone more highly regarded than you could have been invited by your host. <sup>9</sup>The host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give your seat to this other person.’ Embarrassed, you will take your seat in the least important place. <sup>10</sup>Instead, when you receive an invitation, go and sit in the least important place. When your host approaches you, he will say, ‘Friend, move up here to a better seat.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. <sup>11</sup>All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up.”

<sup>12</sup>Then Jesus said to the person who had invited him, “When you host a lunch or dinner, don’t invite your friends, your brothers and sisters, your relatives, or rich neighbors. If you do, they will invite you in return and that will be your reward. <sup>13</sup>Instead, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. <sup>14</sup>And you will be blessed because they can’t repay you. Instead, you will be repaid when the just are resurrected.”

<sup>15</sup>When one of the dinner guests heard Jesus’ remarks, he said to Jesus, “Happy are those who will feast in God’s kingdom.”

<sup>16</sup>Jesus replied, “A certain man hosted a large dinner and invited many people. <sup>17</sup>When it was time for the dinner to begin, he sent his servant to tell the invited guests, ‘Come! The dinner is now ready.’ <sup>18</sup>One by one, they all began to make excuses. The first one told him, ‘I bought a farm and must go and see it. Please excuse me.’ <sup>19</sup>Another said, ‘I bought five teams of oxen, and I’m going to check on them. Please excuse me.’ <sup>20</sup>Another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’ <sup>21</sup>When he returned, the servant reported these excuses to his master. The master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go quickly to the city’s streets, the busy ones and the side streets, and bring the poor, crippled, blind, and lame.’ <sup>22</sup>The servant said, ‘Master, your instructions have been followed and there is still room.’ <sup>23</sup>The master said to the servant, ‘Go to the highways and back alleys and urge people to come in so that my house will be filled. <sup>24</sup>I tell you, not one of those who were invited will taste my dinner.’”

14:1-24 The third time Jesus dines with Pharisees (see Luke 7:36-50; 11:37-54).

14:1 *One Sabbath*: For the third time Jesus challenges religious leaders about healing on the Sabbath (Luke 6:6-11; 13:10-17). See note on Luke 6:7.

14:5 *child or ox*: Deuteronomy 22:4 speaks of a “donkey or ox” in distress. By using *child* or *ox*, Jesus makes the point even more obvious.

14:7 *best seats*: See sidebar, “1st-Century Dinner Parties” at Luke 7.

14:9 *Give your seat*: a public embarrassment.

14:10 *go and sit*: Jesus is being sarcastic. Among his followers, status and public recognition count for nothing (see note on Luke 9:48).

14:11 *All who lift themselves up*: Jesus’ real opinion about status. God humbles the proud but lifts up the humble (Luke 1:52; 6:20-26).

14:12-14 In Luke’s time, giving and receiving dinner invitations was part of establishing one’s status. Whoever could invite and be invited by the powerful or the wealthy would gain status in society.

14:13 *invite the poor*: Jesus gives this advice to a Pharisee,

but Luke is also giving this advice to Christian readers, whose house churches should provide care for the poor and those with disabilities (Acts 4:34; 5:12-16).

14:15 *feast in God’s kingdom*: Like Jesus, this guest believes God’s kingdom will be a place without poverty or hunger, symbolized by a great banquet.

14:16 *hosted . . . invited*: The first invitation sets the date for the dinner.

14:17 *sent his servant*: Since nobody had clocks, slaves went to announce when dinner was ready and the guests should come.

14:18-19 The *excuses* are phony. Nobody would buy a *farm* or *oxen* without checking them out first, nor accept an invitation to dinner on his wedding day. The guests are insulting the host by their last-minute decisions not to attend, as if he has suddenly lost status. This sort of thing may have happened to Luke’s readers after they became Christians.

14:21 *Go quickly*: The host follows Jesus’ advice (Luke 14:13-14) and fills his house, first with the urban poor and people with disabilities and then with all manner of homeless people.

**Discipleship's demands**

<sup>25</sup>Large crowds were traveling with Jesus. Turning to them, he said, <sup>26</sup>“Whoever comes to me and doesn’t hate father and mother, spouse and children, and brothers and sisters—yes, even one’s own life—cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup>Whoever doesn’t carry their own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

<sup>28</sup>“If one of you wanted to build a tower, wouldn’t you first sit down and calculate the cost, to determine whether you have enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup>Otherwise, when you have laid the foundation but couldn’t finish the tower, all who see it will begin to belittle you. <sup>30</sup>They will say, ‘Here’s the person who began construction and couldn’t complete it!’ <sup>31</sup>Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down to consider whether his ten thousand soldiers could go up against the twenty thousand coming against him? <sup>32</sup>And if he didn’t think he could win, he would send a representative to discuss terms of peace while his enemy was still a long way off. <sup>33</sup>In the same way, none of you who are unwilling to give up all of your possessions can be my disciple.

<sup>34</sup>“Salt is good. But if salt loses its flavor, how will it become salty again? <sup>35</sup>It has no value, neither for the soil nor for the manure pile. People throw it away. Whoever has ears to hear should pay attention.”

**Occasions for celebration**

**15** All the tax collectors and sinners were gathering around Jesus to listen to him. <sup>2</sup>The Pharisees and legal experts were grumbling, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

<sup>3</sup>Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup>“Suppose someone among you had one hundred sheep and lost one of them. Wouldn’t he leave the other ninety-nine in the pasture and search for the lost one until he finds it? <sup>5</sup>And when he finds it, he is thrilled and places it on his shoulders. <sup>6</sup>When he arrives home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Celebrate with me because I’ve found my lost sheep.’ <sup>7</sup>In the same way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who changes both heart and life than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to change their hearts and lives.

<sup>8</sup>“Or what woman, if she owns ten silver coins and loses one of them, won’t light a lamp and sweep the house, searching her home carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup>When she finds it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Celebrate with me because I’ve found my lost coin.’ <sup>10</sup>In the same way, I tell you, joy breaks out in the presence of God’s angels over one sinner who changes both heart and life.”

14:25 Lk 12:1  
14:26 Mt 10:37;  
Jn 12:25;  
Ac 20:24;  
Rev 12:11  
14:27 Mt 10:38,  
Mt 16:24;  
Mk 8:34;  
Lk 9:23,  
Lk 14:26  
14:28 Prv 24:27  
14:29 Lk 14:28  
14:30 Mt 7:27  
14:31 Prv 20:18  
14:33 Lk 14:26;  
Phi 3:7  
14:34 Mt 5:13;  
Mk 9:49,  
Mk 9:50  
14:35 Mt 11:15  
15:1 Lk 5:29  
15:2 Mt 9:11;  
Mk 2:16;  
Lk 5:30, Lk 7:39,  
Lk 19:7  
15:3 Mt 18:12  
15:4 Ezk 34:11,  
Ez 34:12,  
Ez 34:16;  
Mt 18:12;  
Lk 19:10  
15:5 Is 40:11  
15:6 Is 66:10;  
Lk 15:7,  
Lk 15:10,  
1 Pt 2:25  
15:7 Lk 5:32,  
Lk 15:10  
15:8 Lk 19:10  
15:9 Lk 15:6  
15:10 Lk 12:8,  
Lk 15:7

14:25 *traveling*: Jesus is still heading toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51); and the *crowds* are always around him (Luke 11:14, 27, 29; 12:1; 13:17).

14:26 *Whoever comes*: See Matthew 10:37-38; Mark 8:34-35; Matthew 16:24-25; Luke 9:23-24. *hate*: Jesus’ original followers left their villages, professions, and sometimes their families and must have been accused of hating them. 14:27 *carry their own cross*: Be prepared to be killed, as Jesus will be.

14:28-33 Halfhearted attempts to follow Jesus, like half-finished construction projects, will only make a person look ridiculous.

14:31-32 *what king*: The king with the smaller army who asks for *terms of peace* may save his life but probably will lose his kingdom.

14:33 *none of you who are unwilling*: or “It isn’t possible for any of you who won’t abandon your own stuff to be my disciple.” Jesus won’t let those who refuse to give up their possessions remain with him. For the same rule stated positively, see Luke 12:33.

14:34-35 Galileans sometimes used salt mined from the Dead Sea, which wasn’t pure salt and could become tasteless. Followers of Jesus who don’t follow his radical teachings are as useless as unsalty salt. See Mark 9:50; Matthew 5:13.

15:1-2 These verses provide the setting for all three parables in the chapter.

15:1 *tax collectors*: See sidebar, “Tax Collectors” at Luke 3. *sinners*: See Luke 7:34; see note on Luke 5:30.

15:2 *The Pharisees and legal experts* make the same complaint at Luke 5:30.

15:4 *someone*: This parable pictures a man at work, and the next one (Luke 15:8-10) features a woman at home. *one hundred sheep*: a substantial flock in Jesus’ time. The imaginary owner, who *lost one*, can afford the loss. *in the pasture*: The same word is translated as “wilderness” in Luke 3:2; 4:1; 7:24. The owner leaves his 99 sheep in a dangerous place while he looks for the *lost one*. The answer to the question *Wouldn’t he* is no, not usually; but God is no ordinary Shepherd (Ezek 34:11-16).

15:7 *joy in heaven*: God and all the angels rejoice. *one sinner who changes both heart and life*: In Luke 5:32 Jesus defines his ministry as calling people to do just that.

15:8 *ten silver coins*: Jesus uses the word “drachma,” the normal day’s wage for an unskilled laborer. The woman’s savings amounts to 10 days’ wages. In contrast to the wealthier shepherd (Luke 15:3-7), she can’t afford to lose even one.

15:9 *Celebrate with me*: Surprisingly, she gives a party, perhaps spending the coin she’s just recovered. As the parable about the shepherd (Luke 15:3-7) emphasizes Jesus’ urge to find the lost, so does the parable about the woman illustrate the joy Jesus takes in sharing hospitality with anyone, sinners and Pharisees alike, as he shows that God’s kingdom is present.

15:12 Dt 21:17;  
Mk 12:44;  
Lk 15:30

15:13 Lk 15:30,  
Lk 16:1

15:15 Lv 11:7

15:16 Ps 142:4;  
Lk 16:21

15:17 Jer 31:19

15:18 Lv 26:40;  
Ps 32:5

15:19 Lk 7:6

15:20 Gn 33:4,  
Gn 45:14,  
Gn 46:29;  
Ac 20:37

15:21 Ps 51:4;  
Lk 15:19

15:22 Gn 41:42;  
Est 3:10;  
Ps 132:16;  
Zec 3:4;  
Rev 6:11

15:23 Gn 16:7;  
1Sa 28:24;  
Pev 9:2

15:24 Lk 15:32;  
Ro 11:15;  
Eph 2:1;  
Col 2:13; 1Ti 5:6

15:25 Ex 15:20;  
Ps 30:11;  
Am 6:5;  
Lk 15:12

15:27 Lk 15:23

15:28 Jon 4:1

15:29 Lk 17:10

15:30 Prv 29:3;  
Lk 15:12;  
Lk 15:13

15:32 Lk 15:24

16:1 Lk 12:42,  
Lk 15:13

16:2 1Sa 2:23;  
Mt 12:36

<sup>11</sup>Jesus said, "A certain man had two sons. <sup>12</sup>The younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the inheritance.' Then the father divided his estate between them. <sup>13</sup>Soon afterward, the younger son gathered everything together and took a trip to a land far away. There, he wasted his wealth through extravagant living.

<sup>14</sup>"When he had used up his resources, a severe food shortage arose in that country and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>He hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>He longed to eat his fill from what the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup>When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have more than enough food, but I'm starving to death! <sup>18</sup>I will get up and go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup>I no longer deserve to be called your son. Take me on as one of your hired hands." ' <sup>20</sup>So he got up and went to his father.

"While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. His father ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup>Then his son said, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup>But the father said to his servants, 'Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! <sup>23</sup>Fetch the fattened calf and slaughter it. We must celebrate with feasting <sup>24</sup>because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found! And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup>"Now his older son was in the field. Coming in from the field, he approached the house and heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>He called one of the servants and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup>The servant replied, 'Your brother has arrived, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he received his son back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup>Then the older son was furious and didn't want to enter in, but his father came out and begged him. <sup>29</sup>He answered his father, 'Look, I've served you all these years, and I never disobeyed your instruction. Yet you've never given me as much as a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours returned, after gobbling up your estate on prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.' <sup>31</sup>Then his father said, 'Son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup>But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found.'

### Faithfulness with money

**16** Jesus also said to the disciples, "A certain rich man heard that his household manager was wasting his estate. <sup>2</sup>He called the manager in and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give me a report of your administration because you can no longer serve as my manager.'

15:12 *my share*: customarily, one-third of the estate (the firstborn gets a double share), but he has no right to it while his father is still alive. *the father divided*: Ancient Jewish literature and common sense warn against doing this.

15:13 *The younger son* apparently sold his property rights to someone else. According to custom, the father could still farm what he'd given the younger son, and at his death the new owner will take possession.

15:15 *feed pigs*: Pigs are unclean and off-limits for Jews (Lev 11:7; Deut 14:8). This is not a nice job for a Jewish young man.

15:17 *came to his senses*: The phrase suggests he's had a change of mind, but it isn't yet clear whether he's truly sorry.

15:18 *I have sinned against heaven and against you*: He broke God's commandment to honor his father.

15:20 *moved with compassion*: See Luke 7:13; 10:33.

15:21 *Father*: The son's speech ends with his confession. In the presence of his father's love, he now changes both his heart and his life (Luke 3:3; 5:32).

15:22 *robe . . . ring*: The father restores him to his status as son.

15:23 *celebrate*: The party shows everyone the father isn't

ashamed of his younger son. In Luke parties are images of the presence of God's kingdom.

15:25-32 The typical village had clusters of houses and shops, with farmland and pasture surrounding it. The elder brother can't hear the party until he has gotten close, and nobody has thought to go find him.

15:28 *furious*: The elder son's refusal to enter the house is an insult, and the father's public begging is an embarrassment.

15:29 *I've served you*: The elder brother feels like a slave.

15:30 *this son of yours*: not "my brother."

15:31 *you are always with me*: The father knows the elder son's faithfulness. *everything I have is yours*: because the father had "divided his estate between" the two brothers (Luke 15:12).

15:32 *we had to celebrate*: See Luke 15:7, 10; 13:16-17.

16:1-9 The second of the three rich man parables (see Luke 12:16-21; 16:19-31).

16:1 *household manager*: See sidebar, "Masters, Managers, and Servants" at Luke 12. *wasting*: like the younger son (Luke 15:13). The verb means "to scatter," like seeds.

16:2 *Give me a report*: The boss wants to see the books. *you can no longer serve*: A wiser boss would have seized the books before telling the manager he's fired.

<sup>3</sup>“The household manager said to himself, What will I do now that my master is firing me as his manager? I’m not strong enough to dig and too proud to beg. <sup>4</sup>I know what I’ll do so that, when I am removed from my management position, people will welcome me into their houses.

<sup>5</sup>“One by one, the manager sent for each person who owed his master money. He said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ <sup>6</sup>He said, ‘Nine hundred gallons of olive oil.’<sup>1</sup> The manager said to him, ‘Take your contract, sit down quickly, and write four hundred fifty gallons.’ Then the manager said to another, ‘How much do you owe?’ He said, ‘One thousand bushels of wheat.’<sup>m</sup> He said, ‘Take your contract and write eight hundred.’

<sup>8</sup>“The master commended the dishonest manager because he acted cleverly. People who belong to this world are more clever in dealing with their peers than are people who belong to the light. <sup>9</sup>I tell you, use worldly wealth to make friends for yourselves so that when it’s gone, you will be welcomed into the eternal homes.

<sup>10</sup>“Whoever is faithful with little is also faithful with much, and the one who is dishonest with little is also dishonest with much. <sup>11</sup>If you haven’t been faithful with worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? <sup>12</sup>If you haven’t been faithful with someone else’s property, who will give you your own? <sup>13</sup>No household servant can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

**Jesus responds to Pharisees**

<sup>14</sup>The Pharisees, who were money-lovers, heard all this and sneered at Jesus. <sup>15</sup>He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves before other people, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued by people is deeply offensive to God. <sup>16</sup>Until John, there was only the Law and the Prophets. Since then, the good news of God’s kingdom is preached, and everyone is urged to enter it. <sup>17</sup>It’s easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the smallest stroke of a pen in the Law to drop out. <sup>18</sup>Any man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and a man who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

<sup>19</sup>There was a certain rich man who clothed himself in purple and fine linen, and who feasted luxuriously every day. <sup>20</sup>At his gate lay a certain poor man named Lazarus who was

<sup>1</sup>Or one hundred jugs (approximately nine gallons each) <sup>m</sup>Or eighty measures (ten to twelve bushels each)

16:3 *not strong . . . too proud*: He’s lazy and arrogant as well as crooked.

16:4 *welcome me*: give him another position, or at least a place to stay temporarily.

16:5 *One by one*: The manager reduces the debts owed to his master, which obligates all the borrowers to return a favor to the soon-to-be-fired manager. The master is forced to go along with the scheme, since he has no way to prove he’s been cheated. In addition, if he plays along, he can be known as generous rather than foolish.

16:8 *People . . . this world*: those who aren’t devoted to God.

16:9 *use worldly wealth to make friends*: In Luke, Jesus’ advice about money is consistent: Give it to the needy (Luke 6:38; 12:33; 14:33) and forgive debts, even those of your enemies (Luke 6:35). The dishonest manager does this out of self-interest; Jesus’ followers should do it to serve God. *into the eternal homes*: Those who use their wealth to help the poor will be rewarded in God’s kingdom (Luke 14:14).

16:10-13 Jesus’ followers are to consider themselves God’s slaves (Luke 12:35-48) who are asked to manage God’s property according to God’s wishes.

16:11 In Luke being *faithful with worldly wealth* means giving it to the needy (Luke 12:33). *true riches*: The blessings of God’s kingdom are given to those who prove *faithful*.

16:13 *God and wealth*: Just as Jesus’ followers have had to choose to follow him at the cost of leaving behind their families (Luke 14:26), so they have also had to *hate* their possessions, leaving them behind for Jesus’ sake.

16:14-18 These verses illustrate Jesus’ disagreements with the Pharisees.

16:14 *money-lovers*: In response to Luke 16:13, the Pharisees ridicule Jesus for being so naive.

16:15 *justify yourselves*: They want to prove they are right (Luke 10:29) to retain their high status (Luke 11:43). *highly valued . . . deeply offensive*: wealth, status, power, and influence.

16:16 *Until John*: The preaching of the good news began with John the Baptist (Luke 3:1-14; 7:28). *the Law*: Genesis through Deuteronomy. *the Prophets*: Joshua; Judges; 1–2 Samuel; 1–2 Kings; Isaiah; Jeremiah; Ezekiel; and Hosea through Malachi.

16:17 *It’s easier*: Jesus’ teaching doesn’t cancel the commands found in the Law; Luke 16:18 has an example. See Matthew 5:18.

16:18 *Any man*: If a husband divorces his wife, and she remarries and her second husband divorces her, her first husband can’t remarry her (Deut 24:1-4). Jesus’ rule prohibits all remarriage after divorce by calling it *adultery* (cf. Mark 10:11-12; Matt 5:31-32; 19:9; 1 Cor 7:10-11).

16:19-31 The third of the three rich man parables (see Luke 12:16-21; 16:1-9).

16:19 *purple*: Purple dye was expensive, so normally only royalty and the very wealthy wore purple. *feasted*: The rich man’s love of food and fine things is beyond belief.

16:20 *At his gate*: Lazarus is living in the street, but he’s named while the rich man remains anonymous. God’s point of view is the opposite of the world’s.

16:3 Prv 20:4;  
Lk 12:17;  
Lk 16:22  
16:6 Lk 16:5  
16:8 Lk 20:34;  
Jn 12:36;  
Eph 5:8; 1Th 5:5  
16:9 Mt 6:24;  
Mt 19:21;  
Lk 12:33;  
Lk 16:11;  
Lk 16:13  
16:10 Mt 25:21;  
Mt 25:23;  
Lk 19:17  
16:11 Lk 16:9  
16:12 1Ch 29:14  
16:13 Mt 6:24;  
Lk 11:23;  
Lk 16:9  
16:14 Lk 12:15;  
Lk 20:47;  
Lk 23:35; 2Ti 3:2  
16:15 1Sa 16:7;  
Lk 10:29;  
Lk 18:9  
16:16 Mt 4:23;  
Mt 11:12;  
Mt 11:13;  
Mk 1:14  
16:17 Mt 5:18  
16:18 Mt 5:31;  
Mt 5:32;  
Mt 19:9;  
Mk 10:11;  
1Co 7:10  
16:19 Est 8:15;  
Am 6:4;  
Lk 12:16  
16:20 Is 1:6;  
Lk 16:21; Ac 3:2

16:21 Mt 15:27  
 16:22 Heb 1:14  
 16:23 Mt 8:11,  
 Mt 11:23;  
 Rev 14:11,  
 Rev 20:10  
 16:24 Mt 25:41;  
 Lk 3:8, Lk 16:30  
 16:25 Ps 17:14;  
 Lk 6:24  
 16:26 Mt 25:46  
 16:28 Ac 2:40;  
 1Th 4:6  
 16:29 Lk 16:31;  
 Jn 5:45;  
 Ac 15:21  
 16:30 Lk 16:24  
 16:31 Lk 16:29  
 17:1 Mt 18:7  
 17:2 Mt 18:6;  
 Mk 9:42;  
 1Co 8:12  
 17:3 Lv 19:17;  
 Mt 18:15  
 17:4 Mt 18:21,  
 Mt 18:22;  
 Lk 11:4;  
 Eph 4:32;  
 Col 3:13  
 17:5 Mk 6:30,  
 Mk 9:24

**A Certain Rich Man** Luke includes three parables that involve a “rich man” who is out of touch with the needs of ordinary people (Luke 12:16-21; 16:1-9, 19-31). Jesus warns the rich that judgment awaits them (Luke 6:24-26; 16:25); and three times he announces that those who wish to follow him must give their possessions to the poor (Luke 12:32-33; 14:33; 18:22-30). Zacchaeus, the wealthy tax collector, serves as a model of what rich people should do when he gives away half of his fortune (Luke 19:8). Luke calls the Pharisees, Jesus’ most active opponents, “money-lovers” (Luke 16:14). Among NT writers on wealth, Luke’s negative attitude is most like that of James (e.g., Jas 1:11; 2:6-7; 5:1-6). 1 Timothy 6:17-19 urges the wealthy to secure God’s blessings by being generous and doing good things. In this way they can “take hold of what is truly life.” A 2nd-century document titled *The Shepherd of Hermas* compared rich and poor Christians to a grapevine supported by an elm tree: Those who have money should support those who don’t, and those who don’t should pray for those who do, since God pays special attention to the prayers of the poor.

covered with sores. <sup>21</sup>Lazarus longed to eat the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table. Instead, dogs would come and lick his sores.

<sup>22</sup>“The poor man died and was carried by angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup>While being tormented in the place of the dead, he looked up and saw Abraham at a distance with Lazarus at his side. <sup>24</sup>He shouted, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I’m suffering in this flame.’ <sup>25</sup>But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received good things, whereas Lazarus received terrible things. Now Lazarus is being comforted and you are in great pain. <sup>26</sup>Moreover, a great crevasse has been fixed between us and you. Those who wish to cross over from here to you cannot. Neither can anyone cross from there to us.’

<sup>27</sup>“The rich man said, ‘Then I beg you, Father, send Lazarus to my father’s house. <sup>28</sup>I have five brothers. He needs to warn them so that they don’t come to this place of agony.’ <sup>29</sup>Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets. They must listen to them.’ <sup>30</sup>The rich man said, ‘No, Father Abraham! But if someone from the dead goes to them, they will change their hearts and lives.’ <sup>31</sup>Abraham said, ‘If they don’t listen to Moses and the Prophets, then neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’”

### Faithful service

**17** Jesus said to his disciples, “Things that cause people to trip and fall into sin must happen, but how terrible it is for the person through whom they happen. <sup>2</sup>It would be better for them to be thrown into a lake with a large stone hung around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to trip and fall into sin. <sup>3</sup>Watch yourselves! If your brother or sister sins, warn them to stop. If they change their hearts and lives, forgive them. <sup>4</sup>Even if someone sins against you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times and says, ‘I am changing my ways, you must forgive that person.’

<sup>5</sup>The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

16:21 *dogs*: Lazarus is too weak and sick to fight off the dogs that find their meals in the garbage in the streets.

16:22 *carried by angels*: Other Jewish texts from Jesus’ time also describe the afterlife this way: While the dead await Judgment Day, they’re already divided by the angels into places of rest or suffering based on how they served God during their lifetime.

16:24 *Father Abraham*: The rich man is a Jew, like Abraham and Lazarus. *Send Lazarus*: The rich man imagines earthly status still applies: A beggar should serve a rich man. Note that even though he let Lazarus starve, he knows his name. 16:26 *great crevasse*: Some judgments are final (Luke 13:1-9) and can’t be changed even by changing one’s heart and life (Luke 3:3; 5:32).

16:27 *send Lazarus*: He gives Abraham an order, showing that he’s still thinking like a rich man.

16:29 *Moses and the Prophets*: that is, the Law and the Prophets (Luke 16:16). The OT teaches care for the poor (e.g., Exod 23:11; Lev 19:9-10; Deut 15:1-11) and warns against greed (Amos 2:7-8; Isa 1:22-23).

16:31 *neither will they be persuaded*: Some people won’t stop serving wealth even when confronted by the resurrected Jesus.

17:1 *Things that cause . . . sin must happen*: The world is full of things that can tempt us to turn from God and toward evil (see Luke 4:1-13; 8:11-14; 11:24-26). *how terrible*: God holds humans responsible for encouraging others to do evil (Luke 11:52; 20:46-47; cf. 1 Cor 8:9-13).

17:2 *thrown into a lake*: an image for the certainty of God’s judgment. *little ones*: probably Jesus’ followers (see Luke 17:3; Matt 18:6), possibly meant to include the poor and others vulnerable to abuse.

17:3 *If . . . sins*: Jesus’ followers are required to challenge sinners and, if they change their ways, forgive them as many times as is necessary (Luke 6:37). Only God may pass final judgment on sinners (cf. Luke 13:1-9; 16:25-26).

17:5 *Increase*: The apostles think they need more faith to be able to follow Jesus’ teachings. In Luke faith is shown by those who overcome barriers to reach Jesus (Luke 5:20; 8:48) or trust Jesus to be able to do anything

<sup>9</sup>The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

<sup>7</sup>"Would any of you say to your servant, who had just come in from the field after plowing or tending sheep, 'Come! Sit down for dinner'? <sup>8</sup>Wouldn't you say instead, 'Fix my dinner. Put on the clothes of a table servant and wait on me while I eat and drink. After that, you can eat and drink'? <sup>9</sup>You won't thank the servant because the servant did what you asked, will you? <sup>10</sup>In the same way, when you have done everything required of you, you should say, 'We servants deserve no special praise. We have only done our duty.'"

**Jesus heals a Samaritan**

<sup>11</sup>On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup>As he entered a village, ten men with skin diseases approached him. Keeping their distance from him, <sup>13</sup>they raised their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, show us mercy!"

<sup>14</sup>When Jesus saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." As they left, they were cleansed. <sup>15</sup>One of them, when he saw that he had been healed, returned and praised God with a loud voice. <sup>16</sup>He fell on his face at Jesus' feet and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup>Jesus replied, "Weren't ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" <sup>18</sup>No one returned to praise God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup>Then Jesus said to him, "Get up and go. Your faith has healed you."

**The kingdom is coming**

<sup>20</sup>Pharisees asked Jesus when God's kingdom was coming. He replied, "God's kingdom isn't coming with signs that are easily noticed. <sup>21</sup>Nor will people say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' Don't you see? God's kingdom is already among you."

<sup>22</sup>Then Jesus said to the disciples, "The time will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Human One,<sup>a</sup> and you won't see it. <sup>23</sup>People will say to you, 'Look there!' or 'Look here!' Don't leave or go chasing after them. <sup>24</sup>The Human One<sup>a</sup> will appear on his day in the same way that a flash of lightning lights up the sky from one end to the other. <sup>25</sup>However, first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

<sup>a</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>o</sup>Or Son of Man

17:6 Mt 13:31.  
Mt 17:20;  
Mk 9:23;  
Lk 13:19  
17:8 Lk 12:37  
17:10 Job 22:2,  
Job 22:3,  
Job 35:7;  
Mt 20:27,  
Mt 25:30  
17:11 Lk 9:51;  
Jn 4:3, Jn 4:4  
17:12 Lv 13:45,  
Lv 13:46; 2Kings 7:3;  
2Ch 26:21  
17:13 Mt 9:27,  
Mt 20:30; Lk 5:5,  
Lk 18:38  
17:14 Lv 14:2;  
Mt 8:3, Mt 8:4;  
Lk 5:14  
17:15 Is 38:19  
17:16 Mt 10:5;  
Lk 9:52  
17:17 Lk 17:18;  
Ro 1:21  
17:18 Lk 17:17  
17:19 Mt 9:22;  
Lk 7:50,  
Lk 18:42  
17:20 Lk 19:11;  
Ac 1:6  
17:21 Lk 17:23  
17:22 Mt 9:15;  
Lk 5:35  
17:23 Mt 24:23;  
Mk 13:21;  
Lk 17:21,  
Lk 21:8  
17:25 Mt 16:21,  
Mt 17:22;  
Mk 8:31; Lk 9:22

(Luke 7:9). Even a speck of this faith is enough. The apostles failed at casting out a demon (Luke 9:40-41) but then, as part of the Seventy-two, succeeded (Luke 10:17). So they have enough faith. They just need to put it to use.

17:7-10 *Would any of you:* Normally, slaves didn't eat until the master and his family had been served, even if the slaves had worked all day while the master had been idle (see sidebar, "Masters, Managers, and Servants" at Luke 12). Slaves also didn't expect a thank-you or reward for doing their duty. Jesus' followers, likewise, should expect *no special praise* for obeying Jesus' teachings, even if they are hard.

17:11 *On the way to Jerusalem:* See Luke 9:51. The shortest distance from Galilee to Jerusalem was through Samaria, but Jews normally avoided Samaria (Luke 9:52-56). *the border:* Although Jesus' ultimate aim is Jerusalem, from Luke 9:57 to this point he's been going village by village through Galilee (Luke 10:1).

17:12 *ten men with skin diseases:* Are they Jews or Samaritans? Since people with skin diseases (see notes on Luke 5:12, 13, 14) are excluded from normal society (Lev 13:45-46), their ethnicity doesn't matter.

17:14 *show yourselves:* To be welcomed back into their villages, Jews with skin diseases had to be declared free of their rashes by a priest. Priests lived throughout Galilee and Judea. *As they left:* All demonstrate faith in Jesus by heading off, and they're *cleansed* (cured of their rashes) as they go.

17:15 *praised God:* as do many who experience Jesus' miracles (Luke 5:25; 7:16).

17:16 *fell on his face:* a sign of respect and submission (Luke 5:12; 8:41). *Samaritan:* Samaritans had been hostile to Jesus (Luke 9:53), but the good Samaritan of Jesus' parable is an example of neighborly kindness (Luke 10:30-37); and the newly healed Samaritan is an example of gratitude.

17:19 *Your faith has healed you:* See Luke 7:50; 8:48; 18:42. 17:20-37 See Luke 21:8-36.

17:20 *when:* Since this question comes from the Pharisees, who often oppose Jesus, it may be hostile. Maybe they want Jesus to predict a date so they can prove him a false prophet (Luke 7:39; 11:54). Jesus replies that the kingdom's coming can't be easily predicted.

17:21 *God's kingdom is already among you:* The kingdom is present in the words and deeds of Jesus and his followers, completely visible to the Pharisees if they're willing to recognize it (cf. Luke 11:20, where his exorcisms are a sign of the kingdom's presence). The kingdom is also still to come, as is clear from Luke 17:22-37.

17:22 *you will long to see:* Jesus predicts harassment for his followers (Luke 21:12-19), when they will wish for Jesus' return. *the Human One:* See sidebar, "The Human One in Luke" at Luke 5.

17:23 *'Look there!':* Some will falsely predict or announce Jesus' return. His return will be unmistakable and instantly visible, like lightning.

17:25 *he must suffer:* See Luke 9:22, 44; 13:32-33; 14:27; 18:31-33.

17:26 Gn 6:5;  
Mt 24:37;  
Lk 17:27;  
Heb 11:17;  
2Pe 2:5;  
17:27 Mt 24:38;  
Lk 17:26  
17:28 Gn 19:1;  
2Pe 2:7  
17:29 Gn 19:24;  
Dt 29:23; 2Pe 2:6  
17:30 Mt 16:27;  
1Co 1:7; 2Th 1:7  
17:31 Mt 24:17;  
Mt 24:18

17:32 Gn 19:26  
17:33 Mt 10:39;  
Lk 9:24; Jn 12:25  
17:34 Mt 24:40  
17:35 Mt 24:41  
17:37 Mt 24:28

18:1 Lk 11:5;  
Lk 21:36;  
Eph 6:18;  
Col 4:2; 1Th 5:17  
18:2 Ex 18:21;  
Is 33:8; Lk 18:4  
18:3 Is 1:17  
18:5 Lk 11:8  
18:6 Lk 7:13  
18:7 Ps 88:1;  
Ro 8:3; Rev 6:10  
18:8 Ps 46:5;  
Mt 8:20;  
Mt 16:27;  
Mt 25:31;  
Mk 8:38

18:9 Is 65:5;  
Lk 16:15; Ro 10:3  
18:10 2Ki 20:5;  
Mt 3:7; Lk 1:10;  
Ac 3:1  
18:11 Is 65:5;  
Mt 6:5; Mk 11:25;  
Rev 3:17  
18:12 Mt 9:14;  
Lk 11:42  
18:13 Ezr 9:6;  
Ps 51:1;  
Eze 16:63;  
Lk 23:48;  
1Ti 1:15

<sup>26</sup>As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be during the days of the Human One.<sup>P</sup> <sup>27</sup>People were eating, drinking, marrying, and being given in marriage until the day Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. <sup>28</sup>Likewise in the days of Lot, people were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, and building. <sup>29</sup>But on the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. <sup>30</sup>That's the way it will be on the day the Human One<sup>a</sup> is revealed. <sup>31</sup>On that day, those on the roof, whose possessions are in the house, shouldn't come down to grab them. Likewise, those in the field shouldn't turn back. <sup>32</sup>Remember Lot's wife! <sup>33</sup>Whoever tries to preserve their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life will preserve it. <sup>34</sup>I tell you, on that night two people will be in the same bed: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>35</sup>Two women will be grinding grain together: one will be taken and the other left.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>37</sup>The disciples asked, "Where, Lord?"

Jesus said, "The vultures gather wherever there's a dead body."

### Justice for the faithful

**18** Jesus was telling them a parable about their need to pray continuously and not to be discouraged. <sup>2</sup>He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected people. <sup>3</sup>In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him, asking, 'Give me justice in this case against my adversary.' <sup>4</sup>For a while he refused but finally said to himself, I don't fear God or respect people, <sup>5</sup>but I will give this widow justice because she keeps bothering me. Otherwise, there will be no end to her coming here and embarrassing me." <sup>6</sup>The Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup>Won't God provide justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he be slow to help them? <sup>8</sup>I tell you, he will give them justice quickly. But when the Human One<sup>a</sup> comes, will he find faithfulness on earth?"

### The Pharisee and the tax collector

<sup>9</sup>Jesus told this parable to certain people who had convinced themselves that they were righteous and who looked on everyone else with disgust: <sup>10</sup>"Two people went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself with these words, 'God, I thank you that I'm not like everyone else—crooks, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of everything I receive.' <sup>13</sup>But the tax collector stood at a distance. He wouldn't even lift his

<sup>P</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>a</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>†</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament do not include 17:36 *Two will be in a field: one will be taken and the other left.* <sup>a</sup>Or Son of Man

17:27 The *flood* caught everybody but Noah and his family by surprise (Gen 6:5–7:24).

17:29 *Sodom*: Jesus focuses on the suddenness of the judgment (Gen 19:15–26). His return and Judgment Day will also happen without warning.

17:31 *On that day*: His followers can finally expect relief and salvation (Luke 21:27–28), and possessions won't matter. In the meantime, one must follow Jesus' instructions to let go of one's life and to live or die for him (Luke 8:23–27).

17:34 *on that night*: images of Judgment Day. God will decide who will enter the kingdom based on how faithful they have been to Jesus' teachings (Luke 9:26).

17:37 The disciples' question "*Where, Lord?*" illustrates how hard it is for Christians to avoid guessing when and where Jesus will return. Jesus' reply is essentially, "You'll know it when you see it" (see note on Luke 17:23).

18:1 *to pray continuously and not to be discouraged*: Don't quit praying if what you want doesn't always happen.

18:2 *judge*: In Galilean villages this was usually an older man the villagers trusted to settle their disputes. *neither feared God nor respected people*: He does only what's in his best interests.

18:3 *widow*: Judges were supposed to be careful to be fair to widows, orphans, and immigrants (Deut 24:17–18; 27:19). *Give me justice*: The widow is involved in a lawsuit and wants the judge to rule in her favor. Judges usually sat in public places to hear cases, so the widow's repeated

requests are made in front of the whole town. The judge decides to grant her request, not because it's the right thing to do but because she's bothering him, and publicly ignoring her will damage his status.

18:6–7 *Won't God provide justice*: If an unjust judge will do the right thing for the wrong reason, how much more will a just God do the right thing when people pray? *Will he be slow*: The expected answer is no.

18:8 *when the Human One comes*: on Judgment Day. See sidebar, "The Human One in Luke" at Luke 5. *will he find faithfulness*: Will his followers be praying, still trusting in God's justice?

18:9 *convinced themselves that they were righteous*: See Luke 5:30–32; 7:34, 39; 15:1–2.

18:10 *Pharisee*: See sidebar, "Pharisees" at Luke 6. *tax collector*: See sidebar, "Tax Collectors" at Luke 3.

18:11 *stood*: People normally prayed standing with arms raised. *about himself* or "to himself": *God, I thank you*: Many Jewish prayers began like this, or "blessed be God," but most would then praise God rather than name the worshipper's accomplishments. *I'm not... like this tax collector*: To the Pharisee a tax collector was even worse than an adulterer.

18:12 *fast twice a week*: a sign of his devotion to God (Luke 5:33).

18:13 *wouldn't even lift his eyes... struck his chest*: ritual signs of being very sad or very sorry. *God, show mercy to*



eyes to look toward heaven. Rather, he struck his chest and said, 'God, show mercy to me, a sinner.' <sup>14</sup>I tell you, this person went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up."

**Jesus blesses children**

<sup>15</sup>People were bringing babies to Jesus so that he would bless them. When the disciples saw this, they scolded them. <sup>16</sup>Then Jesus called them to him and said, "Allow the children to come to me. Don't forbid them, because God's kingdom belongs to people like these children. <sup>17</sup>I assure you that whoever doesn't welcome God's kingdom like a child will never enter it."

**A rich man's question**

<sup>18</sup>A certain ruler asked Jesus, "Good Teacher, what must I do to obtain eternal life?" <sup>19</sup>Jesus replied, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except the one God. <sup>20</sup>You know the commandments: *Don't commit adultery. Don't murder. Don't steal. Don't give false testimony. Honor your father and mother.*"<sup>e</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Then the ruler said, "I've kept all of these things since I was a boy." <sup>22</sup>When Jesus heard this, he said, "There's one more thing. Sell everything you own and distribute the money to the poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me." <sup>23</sup>When he heard these words, the man became sad because he was extremely rich. <sup>24</sup>When Jesus saw this, he said, "It's very hard for the wealthy to enter God's kingdom! <sup>25</sup>It's easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God's kingdom."

<sup>26</sup>Those who heard this said, "Then who can be saved?" <sup>27</sup>Jesus replied, "What is impossible for humans is possible for God." <sup>28</sup>Peter said, "Look, we left everything we own and followed you." <sup>29</sup>Jesus said to them, "I assure you that anyone who has left house, husband, wife, brothers, sisters, parents, or children because of God's kingdom <sup>30</sup>will receive many times more in this age and eternal life in the coming age."

**Jesus predicts his death and resurrection**

<sup>31</sup>Jesus took the Twelve aside and said, "Look, we're going up to Jerusalem, and everything written about the Human One<sup>a</sup> by the prophets will be accomplished. <sup>32</sup>He will be handed over

18:14 Mt 23:12; Lk 14:11  
 18:16 Mt 14:14; Mt 15:32; Mt 18:2; Mt 18:3; Mt 18:4  
 18:17 Mt 18:3; Mk 10:15  
 18:18 Mt 19:16; Mk 10:17; Lk 10:25  
 18:19 Ps 25:8; Mk 10:18; In 7:28; Jas 1:17  
 18:20 Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16; Ro 13:9  
 18:21 Mt 19:20; Mk 10:20; Phi 3:6  
 18:22 Mt 6:20; Mt 19:21; Lk 12:33; Lk 19:8; Ac 2:45  
 18:23 Eccl 33:31  
 18:24 Mt 19:23; Mk 10:23  
 18:25 Mt 19:24; Mk 10:25; Lk 18:24  
 18:26 Lk 13:23  
 18:27 Job 42:2; Jer 32:17; Mt 19:26; Lk 1:37  
 18:28 Lk 5:11  
 18:29 Mt 19:28; Mt 19:29; Mk 10:29; Lk 14:26; Lk 18:30  
 18:30 Mt 13:32  
 18:31 Ps 22:1; Is 53:1; Mt 20:17; Mk 10:32; Lk 9:51  
 18:32 Mk 14:65

<sup>e</sup>Deut 5:16-20; Exod 20:12-16 <sup>a</sup>Or *Son of Man*

*me, a sinner*: For Luke, everyone needs to come to God in this way (Luke 13:3, 5; 24:47).  
 18:14 *justified*: God, the just Judge, decides for the tax collector (see note on Luke 18:3). *All who lift themselves*: See note on Luke 14:11.  
 18:15 *bringing babies*: Parents hope Jesus will bless their infants and ask God to keep them strong and healthy.  
*scolded*: The disciples try to control access to Jesus (Luke 9:49-50).  
 18:16 *God's kingdom belongs to people like these children*: those who, like the tax collector (Luke 18:13-14), are humble because they have no status.  
 18:17 *welcome God's kingdom like a child*: can mean both "providing hospitality for children (or other low-status people) is how you welcome God's kingdom"; and "In order to enter God's kingdom you must, like these babies, care nothing about status."  
 18:18 *ruler*: a Jew (Luke 18:21) who holds some kind of power; perhaps he's a chief judge or an elder in one of the villages. *eternal life*: Many Jews believed that on Judgment Day God would reward with eternal life those who had obeyed God's commandments (Dan 12:1-3). The ruler wants to know if Jesus thinks there are any special requirements. Must you fast twice weekly, for instance (Luke 18:12)?  
 18:19 *Why do you call me good?*: or "Why are you asking me? God, who is good, gave the commandments, and I'm sure you know them very well."

18:20 *the commandments*: The ruler not only kept them but probably repeated them twice daily when he said the Shema (Deut 6:4-5), the prayer devout Jews said every morning and evening.  
 18:22 *Sell everything*: what Jesus tells all his disciples to do in Luke (Luke 12:32-33; see note on Luke 14:33). *treasure in heaven*: God will grant you eternal life.  
 18:23 *extremely rich*: In Luke 12:16-21; 16:19-31 two other rich men fail to obey God, but compare their stories with that of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10).  
 18:25 *camel*: Like the log in the eye (Luke 6:41), this is an exaggeration. A camel cannot pass through a needle, but Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) has demonstrated how a rich man may enter the kingdom.  
 18:27 *possible for God*: Gabriel (Luke 1:37) and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) prove this is true.  
 18:28 *we left everything*: Those traveling with Jesus are relying on what others provide (Luke 10:4-8).  
 18:30 *many times more*: Those whose families have turned away from them because of their commitment to Jesus have found a new family among Jesus' followers (Luke 8:19-21; Acts 2:44; 4:32).  
 18:31 *everything written . . . will be accomplished*: See Luke 22:37; 24:25, 44. *the Human One*: See sidebar, "The Human One in Luke" at Luke 5.  
 18:32 *handed over to the Gentiles*: See Luke 23:1. Jesus being handed over to Pilate. *ridiculed*: See Luke 22:63; 23:35-39.

18:33 Mt 27:63;  
Lk 9:22

18:34 Mk 9:32;  
Lk 9:45

18:35 Mt 20:29;  
Mk 10:46

18:37 Mt 21:11;  
Mk 1:24;  
Lk 24:19; Jn 1:45;  
Ac 2:22

18:38 Mt 9:27

18:39 Lk 18:38

18:42 Mt 9:22;  
Lk 7:50

18:43 Mt 9:8;  
Lk 13:17

19:1 Lk 18:35

19:3 Lk 23:8;  
Jn 12:21

19:4 1Ki 10:27;  
1Ch 27:28;  
Ps 78:47; Is 9:10;  
Am 7:14

19:5 Jn 1:48;  
Jn 4:7; Jn 5:6;  
Jn 11:33;  
Jn 14:23

19:6 Lk 5:29

19:7 Mt 9:11;  
Lk 5:30; Lk 15:2

19:8 Ex 22:1;  
Nm 5:7;  
2Sa 12:6;

Lk 3:14;  
1k 10:22

19:9 Lk 3:8;  
Lk 13:16; Jn 8:33;  
Ro 4:16; Ga 3:7

19:10 Mt 18:11;  
Lk 15:4; Jn 3:17

19:11 Lk 17:20;  
Ac 1:6

19:12 Mt 25:14;  
Mk 13:34

to the Gentiles. He will be ridiculed, mistreated, and spit on. <sup>33</sup>After torturing him, they will kill him. On the third day, he will rise up." <sup>34</sup>But the Twelve understood none of these words. The meaning of this message was hidden from them and they didn't grasp what he was saying.

### ***A blind man is healed***

<sup>35</sup>As Jesus came to Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting beside the road begging. <sup>36</sup>When the man heard the crowd passing by, he asked what was happening. <sup>37</sup>They told him, "Jesus the Nazarene is passing by."

<sup>38</sup>The blind man shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, show me mercy." <sup>39</sup>Those leading the procession scolded him, telling him to be quiet, but he shouted even louder, "Son of David, show me mercy."

<sup>40</sup>Jesus stopped and called for the man to be brought to him. When he was present Jesus asked, <sup>41</sup>"What do you want me to do for you?"

He said, "Lord, I want to see."

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight! Your faith has healed you." <sup>43</sup>At once he was able to see, and he began to follow Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they praised God too.

### ***A rich tax collector***

**19** Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through town. <sup>2</sup>A man there named Zacchaeus, a ruler among tax collectors, was rich. <sup>3</sup>He was trying to see who Jesus was, but, being a short man, he couldn't because of the crowd. <sup>4</sup>So he ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. <sup>5</sup>When Jesus came to that spot, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay in your home today." <sup>6</sup>So Zacchaeus came down at once, happy to welcome Jesus.

<sup>7</sup>Everyone who saw this grumbled, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

<sup>8</sup>Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I repay them four times as much."

<sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, "Today, salvation has come to this household because he too is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>The Human One<sup>e</sup> came to seek and save the lost."

### ***Faithful service***

<sup>11</sup>As they listened to this, Jesus told them another parable because he was near Jerusalem and they thought God's kingdom would appear right away. <sup>12</sup>He said, "A certain man who was

<sup>e</sup>Or *Son of Man*

18:33 *torturing*: See Luke 22:63.

18:34 *The meaning... was hidden*: Even after the resurrection, the Twelve doubted (Luke 24:11, 37) until Jesus "opened their minds" (Luke 24:45).

18:35 *Jericho*: a city about 20 miles northeast of Jerusalem (Luke 10:30).

18:38 *Son of David*: a title for the Christ (Luke 1:27; 20:41). *show me mercy*: See Luke 17:13; 18:13.

18:42 *Your faith has healed you*: See Luke 7:50; 8:48; 17:19.

18:43 *began to follow*: became Jesus' disciple. *praising God*: a typical response to Jesus' miracles (Luke 5:25; 7:16; 17:15).

19:1 *passing through*: The blind man (Luke 18:35) was on the road into Jericho.

19:2 *ruler among tax collectors*: See sidebar, "Tax Collectors" at Luke 3.

19:4 *climbed*: Powerful people normally summon those they want to interview (Luke 7:3). By climbing the tree, Zacchaeus is already beginning to give up his status and power.

19:6 *happy to welcome Jesus*: to host him to dinner at his home (cf. Luke 5:28-32; 7:34; 15:1-2).

19:7 *Everyone... grumbled*: Quickly the crowd's praises (Luke 18:43) turn sour (Luke 23:13). *guest of a sinner*: See

note on Luke 5:30. Some tax collectors grew rich by collecting more than was required. Zacchaeus shows how a wealthy person enters God's kingdom (Luke 18:25): By producing fruit, he shows he has changed his heart and life (Luke 5:32).

19:9 This is how he shows he's a *son of Abraham* (Luke 3:7-14).

19:10 *came to seek*: See Luke 4:43; 5:10, 24, 32; 15:1-32.

19:11-28 Some Gospel parables include a king who symbolizes God or Jesus (e.g., Matt 22:1-14; 25:31-46). Here the kingdom is more like a typical worldly kingdom, and the king's values are not Jesus' values.

19:11 *they thought God's kingdom would appear right away*: The disciples remain confused about Jesus' intentions (Luke 18:34; 22:49; Acts 1:6). Luke's readers probably also wondered whether Jesus would return and God's kingdom would come fully in their lifetimes.

19:12 *royalty*: Kings who were appointed to their positions, like Herod Antipas (see note on Luke 3:1), often had to travel to Rome in order to have their right to rule confirmed by the Senate and/or the emperor. A mina was worth 100 denarii, and 1 denarius or drachma was the normal daily wage for an unskilled laborer.

born into royalty went to a distant land to receive his kingdom and then return. <sup>13</sup>He called together ten servants and gave each of them money worth four months' wages.<sup>w</sup> He said, 'Do business with this until I return.' <sup>14</sup>His citizens hated him, so they sent a representative after him who said, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' <sup>15</sup>After receiving his kingdom, he returned and called the servants to whom he had given the money to find out how much they had earned. <sup>16</sup>The first servant came forward and said, 'Your money has earned a return of one thousand percent.' <sup>17</sup>The king replied, 'Excellent! You are a good servant. Because you have been faithful in a small matter, you will have authority over ten cities.'

<sup>18</sup>The second servant came and said, 'Master, your money has made a return of five hundred percent.' <sup>19</sup>To this one, the king said, 'You will have authority over five cities.'

<sup>20</sup>Another servant came and said, 'Master, here is your money. I wrapped it up in a scarf for safekeeping. <sup>21</sup>I was afraid of you because you are a stern man. You withdraw what you haven't deposited and you harvest what you haven't planted.' <sup>22</sup>The king replied, 'I will judge you by the words of your own mouth, you worthless servant! You knew, did you, that I'm a stern man, withdrawing what I didn't deposit, and harvesting what I didn't plant? <sup>23</sup>Why then didn't you put my money in the bank? Then when I arrived, at least I could have gotten it back with interest.'

<sup>24</sup>He said to his attendants, 'Take his money and give it to the one who has ten times as much.' <sup>25</sup>But Master,' they said, 'he already has ten times as much!' <sup>26</sup>He replied, 'I say to you that everyone who has will be given more, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. <sup>27</sup>As for my enemies who don't want me as their king, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'

<sup>28</sup>After Jesus said this, he continued on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

**Procession into Jerusalem**

<sup>29</sup>As Jesus came to Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he gave two disciples a task. <sup>30</sup>He said, "Go into the village over there. When you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup>If someone asks, 'Why are you untying it?' just say, 'Its master needs it.'" <sup>32</sup>Those who had been sent found it exactly as he had said.

<sup>33</sup>As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

<sup>34</sup>They replied, "Its master needs it." <sup>35</sup>They brought it to Jesus, threw their clothes on the colt, and lifted Jesus onto it. <sup>36</sup>As Jesus rode along, they spread their clothes on the road.

<sup>37</sup>As Jesus approached the road leading down from the Mount of Olives, the whole throng

<sup>w</sup>Or he divided ten minas among them

19:13 Mt 25:1-4  
 19:14 Lk 19:27; Jn 15:18  
 19:15 Mt 25:19  
 19:17 Lk 16:10  
 19:20 Jn 11:44; Jn 20:7  
 19:21 Mt 25:24  
 19:22 2Sa 1:16; Job 9:20; Job 15:6  
 19:23 Ex 22:25; Dt 23:19; Mt 25:27  
 19:24 Lk 16:2  
 19:26 Mt 13:12; Mk 4:25; Lk 8:18  
 19:27 Lk 19:14  
 19:28 Mk 10:32; Lk 9:51  
 19:29 Mt 21:1; Mk 11:1; Lk 19:37; Lk 21:37; Jn 12:12  
 19:32 Lk 22:13  
 19:35 Mk 11:7; Jn 12:12  
 19:36 2Ki 9:13  
 19:37 Lk 2:20

19:13 *Do business*: by lending the money at interest, or by buying goods and selling them for a profit.

19:16 *one thousand percent*: an amazing profit. Ancient readers would suspect that dishonest or greedy practices were involved.

19:17 *faithful in a small matter*: See Luke 16:10-13, where being faithful in the small matter of money means forgiving debts from loans. The king doesn't share Jesus' values. *authority over ten cities*: See Luke 22:25-26, where Jesus says that among his followers greatness means service, not power.

19:20 *wrapped it up in a scarf*: The slave disobeyed his master's command to make a profit. He only kept the original money safe.

19:21 *stern*: strict, a stickler for the rules. *withdraw what you haven't deposited*: a bandit who takes what he wants. *harvest what you haven't planted*: He gets rich from other people's labor. The slave is describing the typical king, whose wealth comes from taxes and/or from military victories.

19:22 *You knew, did you*: The king doesn't deny the truth of his slave's description. Instead, he says, the slave should have acted on what he knew about the king.

19:23 *put my money in the bank*: A bank was a wealthy person who lent money at interest.

19:26 *everyone who has*: The rich get richer at the expense of the poor.

19:27 *As for my enemies*: The king watches while his servants slaughter his enemies. Jesus asks God to forgive his enemies (Luke 23:34) and orders his servants to love theirs (Luke 6:27). The parable asks readers to consider carefully what sort of kingdom they hope will appear.

19:28 *going up to Jerusalem*: This ends the journey section (Luke 9:51-19:28).

19:29 *Bethphage and Bethany*: Both villages were east of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives, but their exact location is disputed. Bethany was the site of the ascension (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11).

19:30 *colt*: Zechariah 9:9 predicts the future king will arrive humbly on a colt rather than on a full-grown animal. Jesus predicts how the disciples will find it and what they'll need to say. This continues the theme of how Jesus the prophet must die in Jerusalem (Luke 13:33-35).

19:36 *spread their clothes on the road*: a gesture of respect (2 Kgs 9:13).

19:37 *the whole throng of his disciples*: His followers praise

19:38 Ps 118:26;  
Lk 2:14;  
Lk 13:35

19:39 Mt 21:15;  
Mt 21:16

19:40 Hab 2:11

19:41 Lk 13:34,  
Lk 13:35;  
Jn 11:35

19:42 Dt 32:29;  
Ps 95:8; Is 6:9;  
Is 44:18;  
Lk 19:41

19:43 Is 29:3;  
Lk 21:20

19:44 Mt 24:2;  
Lk 21:6; 1Pt 2:12

19:45 Mt 21:12;  
Mt 21:13;  
Mk 11:15

19:46 Is 56:7;  
Jer 7:11

19:47 Lk 21:37

19:48 Mk 12:37;  
Lk 21:38; Jn 7:46;  
Ac 16:14

20:1 Mt 21:23;  
Mk 11:27

20:2 Ac 4:7

20:4 Mt 3:13,  
Mt 11:7,  
Mt 21:25;  
Mk 1:4; Lk 7:29

20:6 Mt 11:9;  
Lk 7:29

20:8 Mt 21:27;  
Mk 11:33

of his disciples began rejoicing. They praised God with a loud voice because of all the mighty things they had seen. <sup>38</sup>They said,

“Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord.

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens.”

<sup>39</sup>Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, scold your disciples! Tell them to stop!”

<sup>40</sup>He answered, “I tell you, if they were silent, the stones would shout.”

### Jesus predicts Jerusalem's destruction

<sup>41</sup>As Jesus came to the city and observed it, he wept over it. <sup>42</sup>He said, “If only you knew on this of all days the things that lead to peace. But now they are hidden from your eyes.

<sup>43</sup>The time will come when your enemies will build fortifications around you, encircle you, and attack you from all sides. <sup>44</sup>They will crush you completely, you and the people within you. They won't leave one stone on top of another within you, because you didn't recognize the time of your gracious visit from God.”

### Jesus clears the temple

<sup>45</sup>When Jesus entered the temple, he threw out those who were selling things there. <sup>46</sup>He said to them, “It's written, *My house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a hideout for crooks.*”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>47</sup>Jesus was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests, the legal experts, and the foremost leaders among the people were seeking to kill him. <sup>48</sup>However, they couldn't find a way to do it because all the people were enthralled with what they heard.

### Controversy over authority

**20** On one of the days when Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests, legal experts, and elders approached him. <sup>2</sup>They said, “Tell us: What kind of authority do you have for doing these things? Who gave you this authority?”

<sup>3</sup>He replied, “I have a question for you. Tell me: <sup>4</sup>Was John's baptism of heavenly or of human origin?”

<sup>5</sup>They discussed among themselves, “If we say, ‘It's of heavenly origin,’ he'll say, ‘Why didn't you believe him?’ <sup>6</sup>But if we say, ‘It's of human origin,’ all the people will stone us to death because they are convinced that John was a prophet.” <sup>7</sup>They answered that they didn't know where it came from.

<sup>8</sup>Then Jesus replied, “Neither will I tell you what kind of authority I have to do these things.”

<sup>a</sup>Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11

him as the one coming in the Lord's name, which Jesus predicted in Luke 13:35.

**19:38 Blessings...** *Lord*: The disciples borrow language from Psalm 118:26, “The one who enters in the Lord's name is blessed;” but they add “king” to it. *Peace... heavens*: See Luke 2:14.

**19:39 The Pharisees** are upset because the disciples call Jesus “king,” which the Romans could take as an act of rebellion.

**19:40 the stones would shout**: Jesus knows what lies in store for him is God's plan and can't be resisted.

**19:41-44 he wept**: The disciples call him “king,” but he acts like a prophet. First, he weeps as Elijah did when he predicted the downfall of Israel (2 Kgs 8:11-13). *If only you knew*: Second, he offers the chance for the people “to change their hearts and lives” (Luke 5:32) and thus be spared. *The time will come*: Third, he predicts Jerusalem will be besieged and destroyed and its inhabitants crushed (Luke 13:35; 21:6; 23:29-31). This was fulfilled by the Roman army in 70 CE. *the time of your gracious visit*: language used by Zechariah in Luke 1:68.

**19:45 threw out** is the phrase used for expelling demons (Luke 8:2; 11:14).

**19:46 It's written**: Jesus quotes Isaiah 56:7 (as it appears in the Greek translation of the OT) and Jeremiah 7:11. In Luke

1:10 the temple was a house of prayer, but in Jesus' view it has become a safe haven for bandits (see Luke 20:45-47).

**19:47 chief priests**: heads of priestly families and advisors to the high priest. They are angered by Jesus' actions because they run the temple and are responsible for what happens in it. If there had been a riot when Jesus threw out the merchants, the Romans would have held them responsible. *legal experts*: advisors and secretaries to the chief priests. *foremost leaders*: also called the elders of the people (Luke 22:66). These were the heads of prominent nonpriestly family groups living in Jerusalem. The groups named in Luke 19:47 want to have Jesus killed, and eventually they arrest him (Luke 22:52); try him (Luke 22:66); and turn him over to Pilate on charges that, they argue, deserve the death penalty (Luke 23:1-5).

**20:1 chief priests, legal experts, and elders**: See Luke 9:22; 19:47.

**20:2 What kind of authority... Who gave you**: The chief priests had authority for deciding how things were done in the temple. They want to know why Jesus thinks he can order merchants out of the temple (Luke 19:45) and why he has chosen to teach there every day (Luke 19:47).

**20:3 John's baptism**: Was John the Baptist a true prophet sent from God or not?

**20:7 they didn't know**: This isn't true. They don't believe

**Parable of the tenant farmers**

<sup>9</sup>Jesus told the people this parable: “A certain man planted a vineyard, rented it to tenant farmers, and went on a trip for a long time. <sup>10</sup>When it was time, he sent a servant to collect from the tenants his share of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants sent him away, beaten and empty-handed. <sup>11</sup>The man sent another servant. But they beat him, treated him disgracefully, and sent him away empty-handed as well. <sup>12</sup>He sent a third servant. They wounded this servant and threw him out. <sup>13</sup>The owner of the vineyard said, ‘What should I do? I’ll send my son, whom I love dearly. Perhaps they will respect him.’ <sup>14</sup>But when they saw him, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Let’s kill him so the inheritance will be ours.’ <sup>15</sup>They threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to them? <sup>16</sup>He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”

When the people heard this, they said, “May this never happen!”

<sup>17</sup>Staring at them, Jesus said, “Then what is the meaning of this text of scripture: *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?*” <sup>18</sup>Everyone who falls on that stone will be crushed. And the stone will crush the person it falls on.” <sup>19</sup>The legal experts and chief priests wanted to arrest him right then because they knew he had told this parable against them. But they feared the people.

**An attempt to trap Jesus**

<sup>20</sup>The legal experts and chief priests were watching Jesus closely and sent spies who pretended to be sincere. They wanted to trap him in his words so they could hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor. <sup>21</sup>They asked him, “Teacher, we know that you are correct in what you say and teach. You don’t show favoritism but teach God’s way as it really is. <sup>22</sup>Does the Law allow people to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

<sup>23</sup>Since Jesus recognized their deception, he said to them, <sup>24</sup>“Show me a coin.” Whose image and inscription does it have on it?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

<sup>25</sup>He said to them, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” <sup>26</sup>They couldn’t trap him in his words in front of the people. Astonished by his answer, they were speechless.

<sup>†</sup>Ps 118:22 <sup>■</sup>Or *denarius*

John was a true prophet, or they would have conducted their lives by his teachings (Luke 3:7-14; 7:29-30).

**20:9 vineyard:** Jesus’ parable draws from Isaiah 5:1-7, in which the vineyard owner is God and the vineyard is Israel. In Jesus’ parable the owner is God (see Luke 20:13, 15; 10:2); and the tenants are the temple leaders (Luke 20:19). **tenant farmers:** The owner, who lives elsewhere, has hired these people to tend the vineyard, harvesting and processing the grapes at the proper time. The farmers can keep a share and live on the property, but the land and most of the harvest belong to the owner.

**20:10 beaten and empty-handed:** In Luke 11:47-51 Jesus accused the legal experts of killing God’s messengers.

**20:11 empty-handed:** repeats Mary’s prediction of what God will do to the powerful through Jesus (Luke 1:53).

**20:13 my son, whom I love dearly:** God speaks these words about Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:22).

**20:14 the heir. Let’s kill him:** The tenants mistake the owner’s patience for an unwillingness or an inability to respond. They believe that once the heir is dead, the owner will no longer have an interest in the property.

**20:16 “May this never happen!”:** The crowd’s response shows they know Jesus is predicting God’s destruction of the temple leaders, and they pray God won’t do that. Even though the crowd members are fascinated by Jesus’ teachings (Luke 19:48), they don’t want to see the temple destroyed and its leaders killed.

**20:17 The stone:** See Psalm 118:22; 1 Peter 2:7; Acts 4:11.

**20:18 crush:** Those who reject Jesus will be judged by him (Luke 2:34; 9:26; 13:25-29; 1 Pet 2:8).

**20:19 feared the people:** See Luke 19:47-48.

**20:20 spies:** The temple authorities send people to blend in with the crowds (Luke 20:19) and ask a trick question. *hand him over.* They want a charge Pilate will take seriously (see Luke 23:2, where they accuse Jesus of rebellion against Rome).

**20:21 we know that you are correct:** They’re actually telling the truth, even though they don’t believe what they’re saying.

**20:22 the Law:** Moses’ Law, which doesn’t have a rule about taxes paid to an empire but does have rules about offerings owed to God. *to Caesar:* Rome required taxes from the subjects of the empire. Rome expected the temple leaders, who sent the spies, to assist in the orderly collection of the taxes. See sidebar, “Tax Collectors” at Luke 3.

**20:23 recognized their deception:** See Luke 2:35; 5:22; 6:8; 11:17.

**20:24 Show me a coin:** Jesus asks them to show him a denarius, which would have had Tiberius’ picture stamped on it. Jews considered such coins idols, especially since some people honored the emperor as divine. As a result, the spies shouldn’t have had one inside the temple. The spies carry Caesar’s coin and take their orders from the temple leaders who help collect Caesar’s taxes. Their question is thoroughly hypocritical.

**20:25 “Give to Caesar . . . and to God”:** Many early Christians understood this to mean “Pay your taxes and respect the government, but your ultimate allegiance is for God.” In Luke, though, Jesus asks his followers to give away their money to the poor (Luke 12:33; 14:33) and to give themselves completely to God (Luke 10:27-28; 12:31).

**20:26 the people:** See Luke 19:48; 20:19.

20:9 Is 5:1;  
Mt 21:33;  
Mk 12:1  
20:10 Jn 15:16  
20:13 Mt 3:17  
20:14 Mt 16:7;  
Ro 8:17; Heb 1:2  
20:15 Heb 13:12  
20:16 Mt 21:41;  
Mt 21:43;  
Lk 19:27  
20:17 Ps 118:22;  
Ac 4:11; 1Pt 2:7  
20:18 Is 8:14;  
Is 8:15; Dn 2:34;  
Mt 21:44  
20:19 Lk 19:47;  
Lk 19:48  
20:20 Mt 22:15;  
Mt 27:2;  
Mk 12:13;  
Lk 11:54  
20:21 Jn 3:2  
20:22 Mt 22:17;  
Mk 12:14;  
Lk 3:1  
20:23 Lk 11:16;  
1Co 3:19;  
Eph 4:14  
20:24 Mt 18:28;  
Lk 3:1, Lk 20:22;  
Lk 23:2  
20:25 Mt 22:21;  
Mk 12:17;  
Lk 23:2; Ro 13:7  
20:26 Lk 20:20

20:27 Mt 22:23;  
Mk 12:18;  
Ac 4:1, Ac 23:8;  
1Co 15:12  
20:28 Gn 38:8;  
Dt 25:5  
20:34 Lk 16:8  
20:35 2Th 1:5;  
Rev 3:4  
20:36 Rev 21:4  
20:37 Ex 3:6;  
Mk 12:26;  
Ac 7:32  
20:38 Ro 6:11;  
Ro 14:8  
20:39 Mt 22:34;  
Mk 12:28  
20:40 Mt 22:46;  
Mk 12:34  
20:41 Mt 22:41;  
Mk 12:35  
20:42 Ps 110:1;  
Ac 2:34  
20:43 Ps 110:1  
20:44 1k 1:27;  
1k 2:11, Ro 1:3;  
Rev 22:16  
20:46 Mk 12:38;  
1k 11:43;  
1k 12:1, 1k 14:7

### Question about the resurrection

<sup>27</sup>Some Sadducees, who deny that there's a resurrection, came to Jesus and asked, <sup>28</sup>"Teacher, Moses wrote for us that *if a man's brother dies leaving a widow but no children, the brother must marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.*" <sup>29</sup>Now there were seven brothers. The first man married a woman and then died childless. <sup>30</sup>The second <sup>31</sup>and then the third brother married her. Eventually all seven married her, and they all died without leaving any children. <sup>32</sup>Finally, the woman died too. <sup>33</sup>In the resurrection, whose wife will she be? All seven were married to her."

<sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, "People who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage. <sup>35</sup>But those who are considered worthy to participate in that age, that is, in the age of the resurrection from the dead, won't marry nor will they be given in marriage. <sup>36</sup>They can no longer die, because they are like angels and are God's children since they share in the resurrection. <sup>37</sup>Even Moses demonstrated that the dead are raised—in the passage about the burning bush, when he speaks of the Lord as *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*" <sup>38</sup>He isn't the God of the dead but of the living. To him they are all alive."

<sup>39</sup>Some of the legal experts responded, "Teacher, you have answered well." <sup>40</sup>No one dared to ask him anything else.

<sup>41</sup>Jesus said to them, "Why do they say that the Christ is David's son? <sup>42</sup>David himself says in the scroll of Psalms, *The Lord said to my lord, 'Sit at my right side* <sup>43</sup>*until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.*" <sup>44</sup>Since David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be David's son?"

### Jesus condemns the legal experts

<sup>45</sup>In the presence of all the people, Jesus said to his disciples, <sup>46</sup>"Watch out for the legal experts. They like to walk around in long robes. They love being greeted with honor in the

**The Synagogues** A synagogue was a congregation of Jews who met regularly to pray and receive instruction. Archaeologists have identified several 1st-century CE synagogue buildings, all with a similar floor plan: a rectangular interior with stadium-style bench seating that wraps around both long sides and one short side, with decorated columns in the open center. The speaker stood to read (Luke 4:16) and sat to speak (Luke 4:20) at the short end without benches. The "most prominent seats" (Luke 11:43) were at floor level nearest the speaker. Inscriptions indicate synagogues were managed by groups of people called "synagogue rulers," or "synagogue leaders" (Luke 13:14). Sometimes this title was given to women as well as men. In the 1st century, "rabbi," or "Teacher" (Luke 7:40), was an informal title of respect. It didn't refer to an ordained minister serving a congregation.

<sup>a</sup>Deut 25:5; Gen 38:8 <sup>b</sup>Exod 3:6, 15-16 <sup>c</sup>Ps 110:1

**20:27 Sadducees:** Jesus, the Pharisees, and probably most Jews in Jesus' time believed that someday God would raise the dead, judge the wicked, and reward the righteous with eternal life. The Sadducees didn't, holding to the more ancient Jewish view that the dead stay eternally in Sheol, the underground dwelling of the spirits of the dead (Ps 88:4-6; see 1 Sam 28:3-19, where the ghost of Samuel is brought up from Sheol). The Sadducees appear in Acts 4-5; 23, where they're part of the leadership of the temple.

**20:28 Moses:** By this rule, called "levirate marriage," the living brother marries the widow, but the widow's children are considered the dead man's descendants, and they inherit his property (see Deut 25:5). In the Sadducees' imaginary case there are no children, so there are seven successive marriages.

**20:33 whose wife:** The Sadducees attempt to scoff at belief in a resurrection. They assume Moses' Law will govern life in the resurrection and the resurrected life will be much the same as life now, with men and women having sexual needs. The idea of seven brothers all living with the same woman as a wife would be what Leviticus calls a "detestable" practice.

**20:34-38 Jesus' answer** explains that after the resurrection, when people live eternally, there will be no need for children, and thus no marriage, and thus no sexual activity. **20:37 Moses:** Jesus quotes Exodus 3:6, 15-16. Jesus believes (as the Pharisees do) that these ancestors are already enjoying the blessings of God's presence (see Luke 16:22-23).

**20:39 Some of the legal experts** agree with Jesus and most other Jews that God is going to raise the dead someday (Acts 23:6-10).

**20:41 the Christ is David's son:** The Christ was to be from David's line, like the ancient kings of Judah from Solomon through Jehoiakin. See Luke 18:38; see note on Luke 18:38. **20:42 David:** Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1, interpreting it as a conversation between God (*The Lord*) and the promised "anointed one" or "Christ" (*my lord*), in which God tells the future Christ to wait patiently for God to destroy Christ's enemies. Usually a son called his father or grandfather "lord," not the opposite. None of those who question Jesus offer an answer (as in Luke 14:6).

**20:46 legal experts:** the advisors to the temple leaders, who are part of the group trying to have Jesus killed (Luke 19:47). *long robes:* a sign of their wealth and status,

markets. They long for the places of honor in the synagogues and at banquets. <sup>47</sup>They are the ones who cheat widows out of their homes, and to show off they say long prayers. They will be judged most harshly.”

### A poor widow's offering

**21** Looking up, Jesus saw rich people throwing their gifts into the collection box for the temple treasury. <sup>2</sup>He also saw a poor widow throw in two small copper coins worth a penny.<sup>3</sup> He said, “I assure you that this poor widow has put in more than them all. <sup>4</sup>All of them are giving out of their spare change. But she from her hopeless poverty has given everything she had to live on.”

### The temple's fate

<sup>5</sup>Some people were talking about the temple, how it was decorated with beautiful stones and ornaments dedicated to God. Jesus said, <sup>6</sup>“As for the things you are admiring, the time is coming when not even one stone will be left upon another. All will be demolished.”

<sup>7</sup>They asked him, “Teacher, when will these things happen? What sign will show that these things are about to happen?”

<sup>8</sup>Jesus said, “Watch out that you aren't deceived. Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I'm the one!’ and ‘It's time!’ Don't follow them. <sup>9</sup>When you hear of wars and rebellions, don't be alarmed. These things must happen first, but the end won't happen immediately.”

<sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Nations and kingdoms will fight against each other. <sup>11</sup>There will be great earthquakes and wide-scale food shortages and epidemics. There will also be terrifying sights and great signs in the sky. <sup>12</sup>But before all this occurs, they will take you into custody and harass you because of your faith. They will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. <sup>13</sup>This will provide you with an opportunity to testify. <sup>14</sup>Make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance. <sup>15</sup>I'll give you words and wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to counter or contradict. <sup>16</sup>You will be betrayed by your parents, brothers and sisters, relatives, and friends. They will execute some of you. <sup>17</sup>Everyone will hate you because of my name. <sup>18</sup>Still, not a hair on your heads will be lost. <sup>19</sup>By holding fast, you will gain your lives.

<sup>20</sup>“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you will know that its destruction is close at hand. <sup>21</sup>At that time, those in Judea must flee to the mountains, those in the

<sup>d</sup>Or two leptas

demonstrating they do no physical labor. *greeted with honor*: another sign of status. They are important enough that others need to greet them with respect. *places of honor*: See sidebar “The Synagogues” at Luke 20.

**20:47** *cheat widows*: maybe by advising unjust judges (as in the parable in Luke 18:1-8), or maybe by advising the temple leaders, who encourage widows to give more than they can afford (Luke 21:1-4). *long prayers*: Jesus' model prayer is very short (Luke 11:2-4).

**21:1** *Looking up*: from his critique of the rich legal experts who rob widows of their homes (Luke 20:45-47). *collection box*: Thirteen of these were spaced around the outer court of the temple.

**21:2** *worth a penny*: approximately 1/64th of the typical daily wage for an unskilled laborer.

**21:3** Jesus praises the *poor widow* for her generous gift and criticizes the wealthy and powerful for their part in causing her poverty (Luke 20:47).

**21:6** *not even one stone*: Jesus' third prediction of the destruction of the temple (see Luke 13:35; 19:41-44).

**21:7** *What sign*: The disciples naturally want to know when the disaster will happen and how to recognize when it's close, but see Luke 17:20-21.

**21:8-11** *Many will come*: This begins a list of things that don't actually signal the end. False teachers (see Luke

17:23) and *wars and rebellions* prove nothing, so don't be fooled. Likewise, *earthquakes, food shortages, and epidemics*—things most ancient people regarded as signs of bad things to come—will happen, but they aren't signs of the end. Jesus' followers will be harassed, but this isn't a sign of the end either.

**21:12** *hand you over to synagogues*: Examples follow in Acts, where Saul and other temple leaders tried to stop Jesus' followers. *kings and governors*: For kings, see Acts 12:1-5; 25:23-26:32. For governors, see Acts 18:12-17; 23:23-26:32.

**21:15** *words and wisdom*: Jesus (or the Spirit) will inspire his followers at their moment of trial (Luke 12:11-12; Acts 4:8; 6:15; 13:9).

**21:16** *betrayed*: Loyalty to Jesus will divide households (Luke 12:52-53). *execute some of you*: Stephen (Acts 7:54-8:1) and James, son of Zebedee (Acts 12:2), are two of many who will be killed.

**21:18** *not a hair*: Jesus predicts some will die, this promise must mean God will grant them eternal life, provided they maintain their faith (see Luke 12:4-7).

**21:20** *Jerusalem surrounded*: The Jewish war of rebellion (66-70 CE) ended when the Romans, after laying siege to Jerusalem, broke through the defenses, killed or enslaved the defenders, and burned the temple.

20:47 Is 10:2;  
Jer 7:6; Eze 22:7;  
Mt 6:5; Lk 11:39  
21:1 Mt 27:6;  
Mk 12:41;  
Jn 8:20  
21:2 Mk 12:42  
21:3 Lk 9:27;  
2Co 8:2,  
2Co 8:12  
21:4 Mk 12:44;  
Lk 8:43  
21:5 Mt 24:1;  
Mk 13:1; Jn 2:20  
21:6 Mt 24:2;  
Mk 13:2;  
Lk 19:44  
21:7 Lk 21:28;  
Ac 1:6, Ac 1:7  
21:8 Mt 24:5;  
Lk 17:23  
21:9 Mt 24:6;  
Mk 13:7  
21:10 2Ch 15:6;  
Is 19:2  
21:11 Mt 24:7  
21:12 Jn 15:20;  
Jn 16:2; Ac 4:3;  
Ac 8:3; Rev 2:10  
21:13 Phi 1:12  
21:14 Lk 12:11  
21:15 Ex 4:12;  
Prv 2:6;  
Lk 12:12;  
Ac 6:10  
21:16 Lk 12:53  
21:17 Mt 24:9;  
Lk 6:22; Jn 15:19;  
Jn 15:21  
21:18 Mt 10:30;  
Lk 12:7  
21:19 Heb 10:36  
21:20 Lk 19:43  
21:21 Mt 24:16;  
Lk 17:31

21:22 Is 63:4;  
Hos 9:7; Mt 1:22  
21:23 Lk 23:29  
21:24 Dn 28:64;  
Is 63:18;  
Dn 8:13;  
Ro 11:25;  
Rev 11:2  
21:25 Jl 2:31  
21:26 Mt 24:29  
21:27 Dn 7:13;  
Mt 26:64;  
Rev 1:7  
21:28 Ro 8:23  
21:29 Mt 24:32;  
Lk 13:6  
21:30 Lk 12:57  
21:31 Mt 3:2  
21:32 Lk 9:27;  
Lk 11:50  
21:33 Ps 102:26;  
Is 40:8; Is 51:6;  
Mt 5:18  
21:34 Mt 13:22;  
Mk 4:39;  
Lk 12:45;  
Ro 13:13  
21:35 Ecc 9:12  
21:36 Mt 26:41;  
Lk 18:1  
21:37 Mt 21:1,  
Mt 26:30,  
Mt 26:55;  
Mk 11:19;  
Lk 22:39  
21:38 Lk 21:37;  
Jn 8:2  
22:1 Mt 26:2;  
Mk 14:1;  
Mk 14:2;  
Jn 11:55  
22:2 Mt 12:14  
22:3 Mt 26:14;  
Mk 14:10;  
Lk 6:16; Jn 13:2,  
Jn 13:27

city must escape, and those in the countryside must not enter the city. <sup>22</sup>These are the days of punishment, when everything written will find its fulfillment. <sup>23</sup>How terrible it will be at that time for women who are pregnant or for women who are nursing their children. There will be great agony on the earth and angry judgment on this people. <sup>24</sup>They will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations. Jerusalem will be plundered by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are concluded.

<sup>25</sup>“There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. On the earth, there will be dismay among nations in their confusion over the roaring of the sea and surging waves. <sup>26</sup>The planets and other heavenly bodies will be shaken, causing people to faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world. <sup>27</sup>Then they will see the Human One\* coming on a cloud with power and great splendor. <sup>28</sup>Now when these things begin to happen, stand up straight and raise your heads, because your redemption is near.”

### A lesson from the fig tree

<sup>29</sup>Jesus told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. <sup>30</sup>When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. <sup>31</sup>In the same way, when you see these things happening, you know that God’s kingdom is near. <sup>32</sup>I assure you that this generation won’t pass away until everything has happened. <sup>33</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will certainly not pass away.

<sup>34</sup>“Take care that your hearts aren’t dulled by drinking parties, drunkenness, and the anxieties of day-to-day life. Don’t let that day fall upon you unexpectedly, <sup>35</sup>like a trap. It will come upon everyone who lives on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup>Stay alert at all times, praying that you are strong enough to escape everything that is about to happen and to stand before the Human One.”<sup>f</sup>

<sup>37</sup>Every day Jesus was teaching in the temple, but he spent each night on the Mount of Olives. <sup>38</sup>All the people rose early in the morning to hear him in the temple area.

### Plot to kill Jesus

**22**The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called Passover, was approaching. <sup>2</sup>The chief priests and the legal experts were looking for a way to kill Jesus, because they were afraid of the people. <sup>3</sup>Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, who was one of the Twelve. <sup>4</sup>He went out and discussed with the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard how he could hand Jesus over to them. <sup>5</sup>They were delighted and arranged payment

\*Or Son of Man <sup>f</sup>Or Son of Man

22:4 Lk 22:52; Ac 4:1, Ac 5:24 22:5 Zec 11:12; Mt 26:15, Mt 27:3; Ac 8:20

21:22 *everything written*: predictions by OT prophets of suffering to come on the people of Jerusalem (e.g., Zech 14:1-2; Jer 21:7).

21:24 *times of the Gentiles*: Jerusalem will be under Gentile control for an indefinite period of time. This period will come after the destruction of the temple predicted in Luke 21:6 but before Jesus’ return (Luke 21:27). Luke’s first readers would have known they were living during that period.

21:25 *signs*: cosmic disturbances just prior to Jesus’ return. The signs will be universally visible; nobody will need to guess, but everyone will be terrified.

21:27 *the Human One*: See sidebar, “The Human One in Luke” at Luke 5.

21:28 *your redemption*: Jesus’ followers will know their reward is close when they see Jesus returning. This won’t provide much advance warning, emphasizing the importance of being always ready (Luke 12:35-40; 21:34-36).

21:29-31 *Just as leaves on the fig tree* are a sign of summer’s approach, so *these things* predict Jesus’ approach. In context, *these things* are the cosmic disturbances predicted in Luke 21:25-26, universally visible and obvious.

21:32 *this generation*: The generation seeing the signs

predicted in Luke 21:25-26 will also see Jesus’ return. In Luke 21:33 Jesus testifies to the reliability of his promise.

21:34 *your hearts*: in Jesus’ time, the place where people thought and made decisions. *dulled*: See similar warnings in Luke 8:14; 12:45; 16:19. *that day*: Judgment Day, when Jesus returns.

21:35 *like a trap*: The sudden approach of Judgment Day is also emphasized in Luke 12:35-48; 17:26-35.

21:36 *Stay alert*: See Luke 12:38. *praying*: Jesus promises to help those who are being harassed (Luke 21:15) but warns his followers that remaining faithful will be hard. *stand before the Human One*: On Judgment Day everyone’s fate will be determined by Jesus in his role as the Human One. Those who are permitted to *stand* will be those to whom he grants eternal life (see Luke 12:8-9).

21:37-38 This explains why the temple leaders couldn’t seize him earlier: the crowds surrounded him during the day, and he left the city every night.

22:1 *Festival of Unleavened Bread . . . Passover*: See Exodus 12:1-28; Leviticus 23:4-8; Luke 2:41.

22:2 *chief priests*: The temple leaders didn’t want to start a riot at a time when many faithful travelers were in Jerusalem for the festival (see Luke 20:19).

22:3 *Satan entered Judas*: See John 13:2.



for him. <sup>6</sup>He agreed and began looking for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them—a time when the crowds would be absent.

**Disciples prepare for the Passover**

<sup>7</sup>The Day of Unleavened Bread arrived, when the Passover had to be sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>Jesus sent Peter and John with this task: “Go and prepare for us to eat the Passover meal.”

<sup>9</sup>They said to him, “Where do you want us to prepare it?”

<sup>10</sup>Jesus replied, “When you go into the city, a man carrying a water jar will meet you. Follow him to the house he enters. <sup>11</sup>Say to the owner of the house, ‘The teacher says to you, ‘Where is the guestroom where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?’ ’ <sup>12</sup>He will show you a large upstairs room, already furnished. Make preparations there.” <sup>13</sup>They went and found everything just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

**The Passover meal**

<sup>14</sup>When the time came, Jesus took his place at the table, and the apostles joined him.

<sup>15</sup>He said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup>I tell you, I won’t eat it until it is fulfilled in God’s kingdom.” <sup>17</sup>After taking a cup and giving thanks, he said, “Take this and share it among yourselves. <sup>18</sup>I tell you that from now on I won’t drink from the fruit of the vine until God’s kingdom has come.” <sup>19</sup>After taking the bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” <sup>20</sup>In the same way, he took the cup after the meal and said, “This cup is the new covenant by my blood, which is poured out for you.

<sup>21</sup>“But look! My betrayer is with me; his hand is on this table. <sup>22</sup>The Human One<sup>e</sup> goes just as it has been determined. But how terrible it is for that person who betrays him.” <sup>23</sup>They began to argue among themselves about which of them it could possibly be who would do this.

22:6 Mt 26:5; Mk 14:2  
 22:7 Ex 12:18; Mt 26:17; Mk 14:12  
 22:8 Ac 3:1; Ac 8:14  
 22:11 Jn 11:28  
 22:12 Ac 1:13  
 22:13 Lk 19:32  
 22:14 Mt 26:20; Mk 14:17  
 22:15 Mt 26:17  
 22:16 Lk 14:15; Lk 22:30; Rev 19:9  
 22:18 Mt 26:29  
 22:19 Lk 22:20; 1Co 11:24  
 22:20 Ex 24:8; Zec 9:11; 1Co 11:25  
 22:21 Ps 41:9; Mt 26:21; Mk 14:18; Jn 13:18; Jn 13:21  
 22:22 Ac 2:23; Ac 4:28

<sup>e</sup>Or Son of Man

22:6 *opportunity*: Judas agrees to tell the temple leaders when and where they can grab Jesus without public knowledge.

22:7 *when the Passover had to be sacrificed*: Exodus 12:3, 8-10 requires that the Passover lamb be killed during the day prior to the first night of the festival and completely eaten that night. Jews who celebrated Passover in Jerusalem took their lambs to the temple so the priests could kill them. Thus Luke calls it a sacrifice, even though it wasn’t a sin offering.

22:8 *the Passover meal*: The first night of the festival involves a special meal that includes unleavened bread, bitter herbs, salt water, and a sweet fruit mixture, along with the lamb and other vegetables.

22:10 *man carrying a water jar*: work for women or slaves. Male slaves sometimes doubled as fieldworkers and household servants (Luke 17:7-8).

22:11-12 *guestroom*: a spare room on the second floor of the house, nicely furnished and available for the Passover feast. In Bethlehem this room was already occupied (Luke 2:7), but now Jesus, as a prophet, knows where he and his disciples can find a place.

22:14 *took his place at the table*: This is the first formal dinner in Luke at which Jesus is the host.

22:16 *I won’t eat it*: probably means “I won’t eat it again” because of the use of the phrase “after the meal” in Luke 22:20. *until it is fulfilled*: God’s kingdom will be like a banquet where there’s plenty to eat (Luke 13:29; 14:15; 22:30). Jesus’ first vow is a promise to Luke’s readers that the kingdom truly will come.

22:17 *taking a cup*: This first cup is shared with the apostles just before Jesus’ vow in Luke 22:18 (see Luke 22:20). Only Luke’s Gospel has two cups (see Luke 22:20; see sidebar, “The Last Supper in Luke”).

22:18 *I won’t drink*: Jesus’ second vow (Luke 22:16) is also meant to assure readers that God’s kingdom will come, when he and they will share God’s great banquet.

22:19 *taking the bread*: In the Passover meal the unleavened bread is shared to remember how the Hebrews left Egypt in haste (Exod 12:39). “This is my body... in remembrance of me”: From now on for Jesus’ followers, the bread will serve as an image of his death, which is given for you: Jesus’ death and resurrection, like his life and teaching, proclaim God’s salvation (Luke 23:34, 43; 24:26, 46-47).

22:20 *the cup after the meal*: A normal Passover meal includes four cups of wine. This is Luke’s second cup (see Luke 22:17). *the new covenant*: from Jeremiah 31:31-34, which predicts a new agreement between God and God’s people. *by my blood*: In OT thought a person’s life force was in that person’s blood, which was sacred to God (Gen 9:4-6). Thus Jesus’ blood would be one and the same with his life. *poured out for you*: parallel to “given for you” (see note on Luke 22:19).

22:21 *My betrayer*: Judas shares in the now-finished meal, emphasizing his betrayal and Jesus’ offer of grace even to his enemies.

22:22 *The Human One*: See sidebar, “The Human One in Luke” at Luke 5. *just as it has been determined*: Luke understood Jesus’ death to be predicted by the OT (Luke 24:26-27, 46) as well as being what happens to any true prophet (Luke 13:33-34). *how terrible*: Even though Jesus’ death is expected, Judas is still responsible for his part in causing it (see Acts 1:16-20).

22:23 *They began to argue*: They believe Jesus’ prediction and begin to argue about who might betray him (Luke 22:24).

22:24 Mk 9:34;  
Lk 9:46

22:25 Mt 20:25

22:26 Lk 9:48;  
1Pt 5:5

22:27 Mt 20:28;  
Lk 12:37; Jn 13:5;  
Phi 2:7, Phi 2:8

22:28 Heb 2:18,  
Heb 4:15

22:29 Mt 25:34;  
Lk 12:32;  
2Ti 2:12

22:30 Mt 19:28;  
Lk 22:16

22:31 Job 1:6;  
Am 9:9; 1Pt 5:8

22:32 Jn 17:9,  
Jn 17:15,  
Jn 21:15

22:33 Mt 26:33;  
Mk 14:29;  
Jn 13:37

22:34 Mt 26:33;  
Mk 14:29;  
Jn 13:37,  
Jn 13:38

22:35 Mt 10:9,  
Mt 10:10;  
Mk 6:8; Lk 9:3,  
Lk 10:4

22:37 Is 53:12

22:38 Lk 22:49

### The disciples debate greatness

<sup>24</sup>An argument broke out among the disciples over which one of them should be regarded as the greatest.

<sup>25</sup>But Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles rule over their subjects, and those in authority over them are called ‘friends of the people.’ <sup>26</sup>But that’s not the way it will be with you. Instead, the greatest among you must become like a person of lower status and the leader like a servant. <sup>27</sup>So which one is greater, the one who is seated at the table or the one who serves at the table? Isn’t it the one who is seated at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

<sup>28</sup>“You are the ones who have continued with me in my trials. <sup>29</sup>And I confer royal power on you just as my Father granted royal power to me. <sup>30</sup>Thus you will eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones overseeing the twelve tribes of Israel.

### Peter’s denial predicted

<sup>31</sup>“Simon, Simon, look! Satan has asserted the right to sift you all like wheat. <sup>32</sup>However, I have prayed for you that your faith won’t fail. When you have returned, strengthen your brothers and sisters.”

<sup>33</sup>Peter responded, “Lord, I’m ready to go with you, both to prison and to death!”

<sup>34</sup>Jesus replied, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster won’t crow today before you have denied three times that you know me.”

### Call for preparedness

<sup>35</sup>Jesus said to them, “When I sent you out without a wallet, bag, or sandals, you didn’t lack anything, did you?”

They said, “Nothing.”

<sup>36</sup>Then he said to them, “But now, whoever has a wallet must take it, and likewise a bag. And those who don’t own a sword must sell their clothes and buy one. <sup>37</sup>I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in relation to me: *And he was counted among criminals.*<sup>b</sup> Indeed, what’s written about me is nearing completion.”

<sup>38</sup>They said to him, “Lord, look, here are two swords.”

He replied, “Enough of that!”

<sup>b</sup>Isa 53:12

22:24-27 See Luke 9:46-48 and notes.

22:24 *regarded as the greatest*: Following the argument in Luke 22:23, this is meant to seem ridiculous.

22:25 *kings of the Gentiles*: non-Jewish rulers, such as the emperor. *are called ‘friends of the people’*: Rulers want to be called “benefactors” (i.e., those who generously support other people), but they actually use their authority to make others obey.

22:26 *greatest... servant*: Among Jesus’ followers there are to be no differences in status.

22:27 *which one is greater*: In Jesus’ culture the one reclining to eat is of higher status than the slave who serves the meal. *as one who serves*: See Luke 9:48. Jesus, the clear leader, is a servant leader. Luke and other early Christians understood Jesus to be the Lord’s servant portrayed in Isaiah 40–55 (see Luke 22:37; see sidebar, “I Am Among You as One Who Serves” at Luke 24).

22:28 *my trials*: In Luke the disciples don’t completely abandon Jesus when he’s arrested and crucified (Luke 23:49).

22:29 *royal power*: or “a kingdom,” by which he means God’s kingdom promised to them in Luke 12:32.

22:30 *eat and drink*: For Jesus’ vow to neither eat nor drink until he could do both in God’s coming kingdom, see Luke 22:16, 18. *my kingdom*: God gave the kingdom to Jesus (Luke 22:29), and Jesus is now giving it to his followers. *thrones*: Gabriel promised Mary that Jesus would “rule over Jacob’s house forever” (Luke 1:33). Jesus makes the same promise to his followers.

22:31 *Simon*: Peter’s given name (see note on Luke 5:2).

*Satan*: In Luke 22:3 Satan took possession of Judas and wants to do the same to all Jesus’ followers. *sift you all*: an image for separating wheat kernels from the stalks, which are bundled for burning as fuel (see note on Luke 3:17).

22:32 *When... returned*: Peter will deny Jesus (Luke 22:54-62), but his faith will return (Luke 23:49; 24:34). *strengthen your brothers and sisters*: Peter is the leader of the first group of Jesus’ followers to preach salvation in Jesus’ name (Acts 1–12).

22:33 *I’m ready*: He shows that he isn’t. *to prison*: See Acts 4:18-21; 12:3-17. *to death*: Ancient tradition holds that Peter was crucified in Rome when Nero was emperor, around 64 CE (see John 21:18-19).

22:35 *lack*: In Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-12, Jesus told his followers to take no money and no supplies on their preaching missions. Supported by the contributions they have received (Luke 10:7-8), they lack nothing.

22:36 *But now*: Jesus exaggerates to stress how dangerous things will be for his followers. He doesn’t literally intend for them to *sell their clothes* and go naked in order to buy a sword.

22:37 *counted among criminals*: Jesus quotes Isaiah 53:12, one of Isaiah’s poems about the Lord’s servant. Jesus is likely predicting his death between two criminals (Luke 23:32-43), but then the disciples fulfill the prophecy in a different way (Luke 22:49-50). *nearing completion*: See note on Luke 22:22.

22:38 *swords*: The disciples take Luke 22:36 literally, a mistake. But why do two of them own swords when Jesus has

**The Last Supper in Luke** In Luke's account of the Last Supper, Jesus vows not to eat (Luke 22:15-16) or drink (Luke 22:17-18) anymore until God's kingdom arrives. Then he offers the disciples bread (Luke 22:19) and wine (Luke 22:20). Some early manuscripts lack Luke 22:19b-20, "which is given for you . . . poured out for you," and some scholars believe this shorter version is the original version. This would mean Luke's original account had the cup (Luke 22:17-18) before the bread (Luke 22:19) and that the cup symbolized Jesus' promise that the kingdom banquet was coming but not Jesus' death. The CEB translators consider the longer text presented here to be the original.

22:39 Mt 21:1,  
Mk 26:30;  
Lk 21:37; Jn 18:1

22:40 Mt 6:13,  
Mk 26:36,  
Mk 26:41;  
Lk 11:4,  
Lk 22:46

22:41 2Ch 6:13;  
Mk 26:39

22:42 Mt 20:22

22:43 Mt 4:11;  
Heb 1:14

22:44 Gn 32:24;  
Ps 22:1,  
Ps 22:2; Lk 12:27;  
Heb 5:7

22:46 Lk 22:40

22:47 Mt 26:47;  
Mk 14:10,  
Mk 16:43;  
Jn 18:3

22:48 Mt 20:30,  
Mt 26:14;  
Mk 14:10;  
Lk 22:47;  
Jn 13:21

22:49 Lk 22:38

22:50 Mt 26:51;  
Mk 14:47;  
Lk 22:51;  
Jn 18:10

22:51 Mt 4:23,  
Mt 8:3, Mt 9:35,  
Mt 17:18,  
Mt 26:51

22:52 Lk 22:4

22:53 Jn 12:27;  
Ac 26:18;  
Eph 6:12

### Jesus in prayer

<sup>39</sup>Jesus left and made his way to the Mount of Olives, as was his custom, and the disciples followed him. <sup>40</sup>When he arrived, he said to them, "Pray that you won't give in to temptation." <sup>41</sup>He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed. <sup>42</sup>He said, "Father, if it's your will, take this cup of suffering away from me. However, not my will but your will must be done." <sup>43</sup>Then a heavenly angel appeared to him and strengthened him. <sup>44</sup>He was in anguish and prayed even more earnestly. His sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground. <sup>45</sup>When he got up from praying, he went to the disciples. He found them asleep, overcome by grief. <sup>46</sup>He said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray so that you won't give in to temptation."

### Jesus' arrest

<sup>47</sup>While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd appeared, and the one called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him.

<sup>48</sup>Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Human One<sup>i</sup> with a kiss?"

<sup>49</sup>When those around him recognized what was about to happen, they said, "Lord, should we fight with our swords?" <sup>50</sup>One of them struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear.

<sup>51</sup>Jesus responded, "Stop! No more of this!" He touched the slave's ear and healed him.

<sup>52</sup>Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders who had come to get him, "Have you come with swords and clubs to arrest me, as though I were a thief?" <sup>53</sup>Day after day I was with you in the temple, but you didn't arrest me. But this is your time, when darkness rules."

<sup>i</sup>Or Son of Man

told them to love rather than fight their enemies (Luke 6:27-38)? This is not their finest hour. "Enough of that!": Jesus is deeply annoyed with them.

22:39 *Mount of Olives*: During his stay in Jerusalem, Jesus spends the night on the Mount of Olives (Luke 21:37).

22:40 "Pray that you won't give in to temptation": Satan has been trying to gain control of all of them (Luke 22:31) just as he took control of Judas (Luke 22:3). When saying the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, his followers ask God to preserve them from Satan's power (Luke 11:4).

22:42 *Father*: Jesus' normal address to God (Luke 10:21; 11:2; 23:34, 46). *if it's your will*: Jesus, who has already predicted his death (Luke 9:22, 44; 13:33; 14:27; 18:31-33), knows that any change in plans is up to God. *this cup of suffering*: or "this cup," which is often a biblical symbol for God's destiny for a person or the nation. For the disobedient, it's often a "cup of wrath" (e.g., Isa 51:17); but for the faithful, it's a "cup of salvation" (e.g., Ps 116:13). Jesus has already used a cup as an image of the new covenant that began with his death and resurrection (Luke 22:20), so *this cup* probably refers to the whole experience Jesus is about to face—suffering, death, and resurrection. *your will must be done*: As Mary obeyed God (Luke 1:38), so does Jesus.

22:43 *heavenly angel*: Angels appeared in order to predict Jesus' birth (Luke 1:26) and to announce it (Luke 2:8-14); and Moses and Elijah appeared in order to speak with Jesus about his coming death (Luke 9:30-31). Now angels

are appearing in order to strengthen Jesus in this time of testing. This scene is similar to how the angel Gabriel came to Daniel's aid (Dan 8:16-17; 9:21-22).

22:44 *He was in anguish*: unusually strong language. It means Jesus is struggling so hard mentally that there are physical effects. *like drops of blood*: Jesus' sweat is dripping off him in big drops.

22:45 *overcome by grief*: Luke doesn't want readers to think the disciples are utter failures or care nothing for their Lord (see Luke 23:49).

22:47 *crowd*: See Luke 22:52. *approached Jesus to kiss him*: a normal greeting in Jesus' culture. For early Christians, it was a symbol of Christian unity (e.g., 1 Pet 5:14).

22:48 *the Human One*: See sidebar, "The Human One in Luke" at Luke 5.

22:49 "Lord, should we fight with our swords?": The disciples, who misunderstood Jesus' statement in Luke 22:36, should know better. "Love your enemies" (Luke 6:27) should keep them from doing what they're about to do (see note on Luke 22:38).

22:51 *No more of this!*: Jesus' followers are not to use violence against their enemies (see Luke 22:38).

22:52 *chief priests*: See note on Luke 19:47. *the temple guard*: Jewish soldiers who kept order and guarded valuables in the temple. *the elders*: See note on Luke 19:47.

22:53 *when darkness rules*: Satan is actively trying to take control of events (see Luke 22:3, 31, 40, 46).

22:54 Mt 26:57,  
Mt 26:58;  
Mk 14:53;  
Mk 14:54;  
Jn 18:15

### Peter denies knowing Jesus

<sup>54</sup>After they arrested Jesus, they led him away and brought him to the high priest's house. Peter followed from a distance. <sup>55</sup>When they lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them.

22:55 Mt 26:69;  
Mk 14:66;  
Jn 18:16,  
Jn 18:17,  
Jn 18:25

<sup>56</sup>Then a servant woman saw him sitting in the firelight. She stared at him and said, "This man was with him too."

22:56 Mt 26:69  
22:58 Mk 14:70;  
Jn 18:25,  
Jn 18:26

<sup>57</sup>But Peter denied it, saying, "Woman, I don't know him!"

<sup>58</sup>A little while later, someone else saw him and said, "You are one of them too."

But Peter said, "Man, I'm not!"

22:59 Mt 26:73  
22:60 Lk 22:34

<sup>59</sup>An hour or so later, someone else insisted, "This man must have been with him, because he is a Galilean too."

22:61 Lk 22:34  
22:62 Mt 26:75;  
Mk 14:72

<sup>60</sup>Peter responded, "Man, I don't know what you are talking about!" At that very moment, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. <sup>61</sup>The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, and Peter remembered the Lord's words: "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." <sup>62</sup>And Peter went out and cried uncontrollably.

22:63 Jn 18:22  
22:64 Lk 22:63  
22:65 Mt 27:39;  
Rev 16:9

### Jesus taunted

<sup>63</sup>The men who were holding Jesus in custody taunted him while they beat him. <sup>64</sup>They blindfolded him and asked him repeatedly, "Prophecy! Who hit you?" <sup>65</sup>Insulting him, they said many other horrible things against him.

22:66 Mt 5:22,  
Mt 27:1;  
Mk 15:1;  
Ac 22:5

### Jesus before the Jerusalem leadership

<sup>66</sup>As morning came, the elders of the people, both chief priests and legal experts, came together, and Jesus was brought before their council.

22:67 Jn 10:25

<sup>67</sup>They said, "If you are the Christ, tell us!"

He answered, "If I tell you, you won't believe. <sup>68</sup>And if I ask you a question, you won't answer. <sup>69</sup>But from now on, *the Human One<sup>1</sup> will be seated on the right side of the power of God.*"<sup>k</sup>

22:69 Ps 110:1;  
Mk 16:19;  
Ac 7:56

<sup>70</sup>They all said, "Are you God's Son, then?"

22:70 Mt 26:65  
23:1 Mt 27:2;  
Mk 15:1;  
Jn 18:28

He replied, "You say that I am."

22:71 Lk 20:22,  
Lk 23:14;  
Jn 19:12;  
Ac 17:7, Ac 24:5

<sup>71</sup>Then they said, "Why do we need further testimony? We've heard it from his own lips."

23:3 Mt 27:11;  
Mk 15:2;  
Lk 22:70,  
Lk 23:38;  
Jn 18:33

### Jesus before Pilate

**23** The whole assembly got up and led Jesus to Pilate and <sup>2</sup>began to accuse him. They said, "We have found this man misleading our people, opposing the payment of taxes to Caesar, and claiming that he is the Christ, a king."

<sup>3</sup>Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Jesus replied, "That's what you say."

<sup>1</sup>Or *Son of Man* <sup>k</sup>Ps 110:1

**22:55** *courtyard*: Large houses typically had an open courtyard in the center.

**22:56** *servant woman*: a female slave who worked in the high priest's household.

**22:59** *Galilean*: identified by his accent or his clothing.

**22:61** *The Lord ... looked*: Either Jesus is also being led in the courtyard, or he's in a room off the courtyard and sees Peter through the open door. *three times*: See Luke 22:34.

**22:63** *taunted*: See Luke 18:31-33. By placing this scene before the questioning begins, Luke stresses how unfair Jesus' trial is.

**22:65** *Insulting him*: See Luke 23:35-39.

**22:66** *brought before their council*: *elders and chief priests* were the most prominent Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (see note on Luke 19:47).

**22:67** *won't believe*: Jesus refuses to answer their question, perhaps because they're torturing him (Luke 22:63-65), showing they won't change their minds.

**22:69** *the Human One*: See sidebar, "The Human One in Luke" at Luke 5. *will be seated*: Quoting from Psalm 110:1, Jesus predicts his resurrection (see Acts 2:32-36, where Peter does the same).

**22:70** *You say*: Jesus refuses to answer (see Luke 22:67-68).

**22:71** *We've heard it*: They treat his nonanswer as a confession.

**23:2** *misleading our people*: the first of three false accusations. A prophet who leads people astray from God is to be executed (Deut 13:1-5). Yet a typical crowd reaction to Jesus in Luke is to praise God (Luke 5:26; 7:16; 13:17). *taxes to Caesar*: another false charge (see Luke 20:20-26). *claiming ... king*: Jesus never claims this, though his disciples do (Luke 19:38; 23:3).

**23:3** *king of the Jews*: the title the Romans assigned to Herod the Great (father of Herod Antipas, who appears in Luke 23:6-12). Gabriel predicted Jesus "will rule over Jacob's house forever" (Luke 1:33); but in Luke's understanding, the resurrected Jesus rules at God's right side over everyone (Luke 23:69; Acts 1:29-36). *"That's what you say"*: Jesus isn't a king like Herod. But as the Human One, he'll rule everyone; so the answer to Pilate's question isn't yes or no.

**23:4** *no legal basis*: Pilate sees no real case against Jesus. The temple leaders accuse Jesus of being an agitator, stirring up trouble. Their mention of Galilee brings Herod Antipas into the story.

<sup>4</sup>Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no legal basis for action against this man.”

<sup>5</sup>But they objected strenuously, saying, “He agitates the people with his teaching throughout Judea—starting from Galilee all the way here.”

**Jesus before Herod**

<sup>6</sup>Hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. <sup>7</sup>When he learned that Jesus was from Herod’s district, Pilate sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. <sup>8</sup>Herod was very glad to see Jesus, for he had heard about Jesus and had wanted to see him for quite some time. He was hoping to see Jesus perform some sign. <sup>9</sup>Herod questioned Jesus at length, but Jesus didn’t respond to him. <sup>10</sup>The chief priests and the legal experts were there, fiercely accusing Jesus. <sup>11</sup>Herod and his soldiers treated Jesus with contempt. Herod mocked him by dressing Jesus in elegant clothes and sent him back to Pilate. <sup>12</sup>Pilate and Herod became friends with each other that day. Before this, they had been enemies.

**Jesus and Barabbas**

<sup>13</sup>Then Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people. <sup>14</sup>He said to them, “You brought this man before me as one who was misleading the people. I have questioned him in your presence and found nothing in this man’s conduct that provides a legal basis for the charges you have brought against him. <sup>15</sup>Neither did Herod, because Herod returned him to us. He’s done nothing that deserves death. <sup>16</sup>Therefore, I’ll have him whipped, then let him go.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>18</sup>But with one voice they shouted, “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us.” (<sup>19</sup>Barabbas had been thrown into prison because of a riot that had occurred in the city, and for murder.)

<sup>20</sup>Pilate addressed them again because he wanted to release Jesus.

<sup>21</sup>They kept shouting out, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

<sup>22</sup>For the third time, Pilate said to them, “Why? What wrong has he done? I’ve found no legal basis for the death penalty in his case. Therefore, I will have him whipped, then let him go.”

<sup>23</sup>But they were adamant, shouting their demand that Jesus be crucified. Their voices won out. <sup>24</sup>Pilate issued his decision to grant their request. <sup>25</sup>He released the one they asked for, who had been thrown into prison because of a riot and murder. But he handed Jesus over to their will.

**On the way to the cross**

<sup>26</sup>As they led Jesus away, they grabbed Simon, a man from Cyrene, who was coming in from the countryside. They put the cross on his back and made him carry it behind Jesus. <sup>27</sup>A huge crowd of people followed Jesus, including women, who were mourning and wailing

23:4 Mt 27:24; Lk 23:14, Lk 23:22; Jn 18:38, Jn 19:4  
23:5 Mt 4:12, Mt 4:23; Mk 1:14; Lk 4:14  
23:6 Lk 3:1, Lk 13:1  
23:7 Mt 14:1; Lk 3:1, Lk 13:31  
23:8 Mt 14:1; Mk 6:14; Lk 9:7, Lk 9:9, Lk 11:29  
23:9 Mt 27:12, Mt 27:14  
23:11 Mt 27:28; Mk 15:17  
23:12 Ac 4:27  
23:13 Jn 18:38, Jn 19:4  
23:14 Lk 23:2, Lk 23:4  
23:15 Lk 9:9, Lk 23:11; Ac 4:27  
23:16 Mt 27:26; Mk 15:15; Lk 23:22; Jn 19:1  
23:17 Mt 27:15  
23:18 Mt 27:16; Mk 15:7; Jn 18:40; Ac 3:14  
23:19 Ac 3:14  
23:20 Mk 15:15; Jn 19:12  
23:22 Lk 23:16  
23:24 Mk 15:15  
23:25 Ac 3:14  
23:26 Mt 27:32; Mk 15:21; Jn 19:16, Jn 19:17  
23:27 Lk 8:52

<sup>1</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament do not include 23:17 *He had to release one prisoner for them because of the festival.*

23:7 *Herod Antipas* ruled Galilee from 4 BCE to 39 CE. He was appointed to this position by the emperor. Pilate governed Judea and Samaria, so sending Jesus to Antipas was a courtesy. Herod, who was Jewish, was in Jerusalem for Passover.

23:8 *wanted to see him*: See Luke 9:9; 13:31.

23:11 *elegant clothes*: or a “shining robe.” Their mocking resembles how God dressed Jesus at the transformation (Luke 9:29) and foreshadows the resurrection (Luke 24:4). *sent him back*: Herod returns Pilate’s courtesy, acknowledging Rome’s ultimate power in Israel at this time.

23:13 *the rulers, and the people*: or “the rulers of the people.” Three groups are present: the temple leaders, the nonpriestly heads of important families, and a crowd of ordinary people (see Luke 23:27).

23:15 *nothing... death*: Pilate sums up his and Antipas’ examination of Jesus.

23:16 *whipped*: Pilate thinks this might satisfy Jesus’ accusers: Jesus will be punished and warned to stay out of trouble.

23:18 *one voice*: Elite Romans hated mobs like the one Luke describes.

23:22 *third time*: Luke portrays Pilate as reasonable but weak. Pilate lets the mob’s voice overpower him, something no Roman governor could be proud of.

23:25 *riot and murder*: Luke stresses the irony of Jesus, declared innocent three times and being handed over to be executed, while the truly guilty man is released.

23:26 *Cyrene*: a city on the coast of modern-day Libya. Simon was most likely a Jew who had come to Jerusalem for Passover. *the cross*: probably only the horizontal bar. The vertical posts were left at the place of execution.

23:27 *huge crowd... including women*: nondisciples who will witness the crucifixion and be changed by it (Luke 23:48) as a first step toward the experience of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41; Luke 23:23, 36, 37). *mourning and wailing*: This may be simply culturally appropriate behavior when someone is about to die (Luke 8:52), but it might indicate these women don’t approve of what is being done to Jesus.

23:28 Song 1:5;  
Mt 14:14,  
Mt 15:32,  
Mt 18:2, Mt 24:2  
23:29 Mt 24:19;  
Lk 21:23  
23:30 Is 2:19;  
Hos 10:8;  
Rev 6:16

23:31 Eze 20:47  
23:32 Mt 27:38;  
Mk 15:27;  
Jn 19:18

23:33 Mt 27:33,  
Mt 27:35;  
Mk 15:22,  
Mk 15:24;  
Jn 19:17

23:34 Ps 22:18;  
Mt 5:44,  
Mt 11:25;  
Lk 23:46;  
Jn 19:23

23:35 Is 42:1;  
Lk 16:14

23:36 Ps 69:21;  
Mt 27:48;  
Mk 15:36;  
Lk 23:11;  
Jn 19:28

23:38 Mt 27:37;  
Mk 15:26;  
Lk 23:3; Jn 19:19

23:39 Mt 27:44;  
Mk 15:32;  
Lk 23:35,  
Lk 23:37

23:40 Dt 10:12,  
Dt 13:4;  
Josh 4:24,  
Josh 24:14;  
1Ch 16:30

23:41 Is 53:9;  
Mt 27:4;  
Lk 15:18,  
Lk 23:40;  
1Pt 1:19

23:42 Ps 2:6;  
Lk 23:43;  
Jn 18:36;  
Ac 7:59;  
Phi 2:10

for him. <sup>28</sup>Jesus turned to the women and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, don't cry for me. Rather, cry for yourselves and your children. <sup>29</sup>The time will come when they will say, 'Happy are those who are unable to become pregnant, the wombs that never gave birth, and the breasts that never nursed a child.' <sup>30</sup>Then they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' <sup>31</sup>If they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

### Jesus on the cross

<sup>32</sup>They also led two other criminals to be executed with Jesus. <sup>33</sup>When they arrived at the place called The Skull, they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. <sup>34</sup>Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." They drew lots as a way of dividing up his clothing.

<sup>35</sup>The people were standing around watching, but the leaders sneered at him, saying, "He saved others. Let him save himself if he really is the Christ sent from God, the chosen one."

<sup>36</sup>The soldiers also mocked him. They came up to him, offering him sour wine <sup>37</sup>and saying, "If you really are the king of the Jews, save yourself." <sup>38</sup>Above his head was a notice of the formal charge against him. It read "This is the king of the Jews."

<sup>39</sup>One of the criminals hanging next to Jesus insulted him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

<sup>40</sup>Responding, the other criminal spoke harshly to him, "Don't you fear God, seeing that you've also been sentenced to die? <sup>41</sup>We are rightly condemned, for we are receiving the appropriate sentence for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong." <sup>42</sup>Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

<sup>43</sup>Jesus replied, "I assure you that today you will be with me in paradise."

### Jesus' death

<sup>44</sup>It was now about noon, and darkness covered the whole earth until about three o'clock, <sup>45</sup>while the sun stopped shining. Then the curtain in the sanctuary tore down the middle.

<sup>46</sup>Crying out in a loud voice, Jesus said, "Father, into your hands I entrust my life." <sup>47</sup>After he said this, he breathed for the last time.

<sup>48</sup>When the centurion saw what happened, he praised God, saying, "It's really true: this man was righteous." <sup>49</sup>All the crowds who had come together to see this event returned to their homes beating their chests after seeing what had happened. <sup>50</sup>And everyone who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance observing these things.

<sup>m</sup>Hos 10:8 <sup>m</sup>Ps 31:5

23:43 2Co 12:4; Phi 1:23; Rev 2:7 23:44 Am 8:9; Mt 27:45; Mk 15:33 23:45 Ex 26:31; Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38 23:46 Ps 31:5; Mt 27:46; Mt 27:50; Jn 19:30; Ac 7:59 23:47 Mt 9:8; Mt 27:54; Mk 15:39 23:48 Lk 18:13 23:49 Ps 38:11; Lk 8:2; Lk 23:55

**23:28 Daughters of Jerusalem:** Jesus once again predicts the city will be destroyed (Luke 13:34-35; 19:41-44; 21:24), and that time will be especially hard for women and children (Luke 21:23).

**23:31 when the tree is green:** a proverb meaning "You think this is bad, but what will come will be far worse."

**23:34 Father, forgive them:** Jesus taught his followers to forgive everyone (Luke 11:4), even enemies (Luke 6:27-37). *they don't know:* They don't know they're crucifying God's Son (see Acts 3:11-17). *drew lots:* See Psalm 22:18.

**23:35 He saved others:** This is true, though they don't believe it, if... *the Christ:* They don't understand that to fulfill his destiny as God's Son, he can't save himself. He must die, putting his trust in God to deliver him.

**23:38 king of the Jews:** both true and not true. He isn't a king in the usual political sense, but he will rule all people as the Human One (see note on Luke 23:3; see sidebar, "The Human One in Luke" at Luke 5).

**23:41 We are rightly condemned:** Admitting that one is a sinner is, for Luke, a necessary step in following Jesus (see note on Luke 5:8). *nothing wrong:* This criminal agrees with Pilate and Herod.

**23:42 Jesus, remember me:** The criminal believes Jesus will rule over God's kingdom and hopes for admission. Jesus' promise in Luke 22:28-30 is extended to him also.

**23:43 today... paradise:** Jesus promises the criminal will be with him after death (see note on Luke 16:22-23).

**23:44-45 darkness... sun stopped shining:** signs of the coming disaster. *curtain in the sanctuary:* a sign the temple will be destroyed, just as Jesus has predicted (see Luke 21:5-6).

**23:46 Father, into your hands:** Jesus dies believing God will take care of him (Ps 31:5).

**23:47 centurion:** See note on Luke 7:2. *praised God:* a typical reaction in Luke from those who observe Jesus (Luke 5:26; 7:16; 13:17). *righteous:* The centurion concludes that Jesus was truly a godly person.

**23:48 crowds... chests:** In Luke 23:27 only women were mourning what was about to happen to Jesus. Now the whole crowd seems to regret it (cf. Acts 2:37).

**23:49 everyone who knew him:** Acts 1:13-15 describes this original group as the apostles, Jesus' mother and brothers, and other Galilean women, about 120 people in all. *observing:* witnesses to his death.

**Jesus' burial**

<sup>50</sup>Now there was a man named Joseph who was a member of the council. He was a good and righteous man. <sup>51</sup>He hadn't agreed with the plan and actions of the council. He was from the Jewish city of Arimathea and eagerly anticipated God's kingdom. <sup>52</sup>This man went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. <sup>53</sup>Taking it down, he wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid it in a tomb carved out of the rock, in which no one had ever been buried. <sup>54</sup>It was the Preparation Day for the Sabbath, and the Sabbath was quickly approaching. <sup>55</sup>The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph. They saw the tomb and how Jesus' body was laid in it, <sup>56</sup>then they went away and prepared fragrant spices and perfumed oils. They rested on the Sabbath, in keeping with the commandment.

**The empty tomb**

**24**Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb, bringing the fragrant spices they had prepared. <sup>2</sup>They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup>but when they went in, they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup>They didn't know what to make of this. Suddenly, two men were standing beside them in gleaming bright clothing. <sup>5</sup>The women were frightened and bowed their faces toward the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup>He isn't here, but has been raised. Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup>that the Human One<sup>o</sup> must be handed over to sinners, be crucified, and on the third day rise again." <sup>8</sup>Then they remembered his words. <sup>9</sup>When they returned from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven and all the others. <sup>10</sup>It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles. <sup>11</sup>Their words struck the apostles as nonsense, and they didn't believe the women. <sup>12</sup>But Peter ran to the tomb. When he bent over to look inside, he saw only the linen cloth. Then he returned home, wondering what had happened.

**Encounter on the Emmaus road**

<sup>13</sup>On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup>While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. <sup>16</sup>They were prevented from recognizing him.

<sup>o</sup>Or Son of Man

23:50 *member of the council*: a chief priest, an elder, or a legal expert (Luke 22:66). *good and righteous*: like Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:6).

23:51 *Arimathea*: most likely a village about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem, in the hill country. *eagerly anticipated*: Luke doesn't identify Joseph as one of Jesus' disciples. See Luke 14:15, where a Pharisee hopes to share in God's kingdom.

23:52 *asked . . . body*: Criminals were to be buried on the same day they were executed (Deut 21:22-23). So Joseph probably wants to keep the commandments.

23:54 *Sabbath*: Work was forbidden beginning at sundown on Friday. This time was *quickly approaching*, so Joseph secures Jesus' body but doesn't properly prepare it for burial.

23:55 The *tomb* was like a room carved into rock, with holes cut into the walls into which corpses were placed. Jesus is laid out in this room, and then the entrance is blocked with a stone (Luke 24:2). *women*: Some who have followed Jesus (cf. Luke 8:2-3; 24:10) witness how Jesus' body is stored but not properly washed and anointed with oil, so they mark the spot and make preparations for an honorable burial after the Sabbath.

24:1 *spices*: See note on Luke 23:55.

24:2 *the tomb*: See note on Luke 23:55.

24:4 *two men*: like the pair who appeared at Jesus' transformation (Luke 9:30). *gleaming bright clothing*: indicating power from God (Luke 9:29-31).

24:6 *Remember . . . you*: Jesus predicted all this, beginning at Luke 9:22, *while he was still in Galilee*.

24:8 *they remembered*: The first step to understanding the empty tomb is to reflect on Jesus' teachings (see Luke 2:51, where Mary does this).

24:9 *the eleven and all the others*: Luke describes Judas' fate in Acts 1:18-19. According to Acts 1:13-15, there are about 120 people in all, including Jesus' family and a number of Galilean women.

24:10 *Mary Magdalene, Joanna*: See Luke 8:2-3. *Mary the mother of James*: "mother of James" could describe Jesus' mother (Acts 15:13); the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Luke 5:10; 6:14); or the mother of James, the son of Alphaeus (Luke 6:15).

24:11 *didn't believe*: These are women who've been with the group since Galilee (Luke 8:1-3), but the male disciples dismiss their testimony. James (whichever one is meant) doubts his own mother.

24:12 *Peter*: Peter sees the same thing the women did but can't make sense of it. In Luke 24:34 we're told Jesus appears to Peter separately (see 1 Cor 15:5, where he's called Cephas).

24:13 *Emmaus*: most likely the modern-day town of Qaloniyyeh, about three and a half miles from Jerusalem.

24:16 *prevented from recognizing him*: Similarly, angels sometimes appear to be ordinary humans (Gen 18:1-15; Heb 13:2).

23:50 Mt 27:57;  
Mk 15:42;  
Mk 15:43;  
Jn 19:38  
23:51 Mk 15:43;  
Lk 2:25, Lk 2:38  
23:52 Jn 19:38  
23:53 Lk 53:9  
23:54 Mt 27:62;  
Mk 15:42;  
Jn 19:14  
23:55 Lk 23:49  
23:56 Ex 20:10;  
2Ch 16:14;  
Mk 16:1; Lk 24:1  
24:1 Mt 28:1;  
Mk 16:1;  
Lk 23:56; Jn 20:1  
24:2 Mt 27:60;  
Mk 15:46  
24:3 Lk 24:23;  
Ac 1:21  
24:4 Jn 20:12;  
Ac 1:10  
24:5 Rev 1:18  
24:6 Mt 17:23;  
Lk 9:22;  
Lk 24:44  
24:7 Lk 9:22;  
Lk 24:46  
24:8 Jn 2:22  
24:9 Lk 24:22  
24:10 Mt 27:56;  
Mk 15:40;  
Lk 8:2, Lk 8:3;  
Jn 20:11  
24:11 Mk 16:11;  
Lk 24:25  
24:12 Jn 20:3  
24:13 Mk 16:12  
24:15 Mt 8:34;  
Mt 17:17;  
Mt 26:31;  
Mt 26:69;  
Lk 24:36  
24:16 Lk 24:31;  
Jn 20:14, Jn 21:4

24:18 In 19:25

24:19 Mt 21:11;

Mk 1:24;

Lk 7:16; Jn 6:14;

Jn 7:40

24:20 Lk 23:13

24:21 Lk 1:68;

Ac 1:6

24:22 Lk 24:1

24:23 Lk 24:4

24:24 Lk 24:12

24:25 Mt 16:11;

Mk 7:18;

Mk 16:14

24:26 Lk 24:46;

Ac 17:3;

Heb 2:10;

1 Pt 1:11

24:27 Gn 3:15;

Nm 21:9;

Dt 18:15; Is 7:14;

Jn 1:45

24:28 Mk 6:48

24:29 Gn 24:33;

Lk 9:12;

Lk 24:30

24:30 Mt 14:19;

Lk 22:19

24:31 Lk 24:16

24:32 Ps 39:3;

Lk 24:45

24:33 Mk 16:13;

Ac 1:14

24:34 1Co 15:5

24:35 Lk 24:31

24:36 Mk 16:14;

Jn 20:19;

Jn 20:21;

Jn 20:26

24:37 Mt 14:26;

Mk 6:49

24:38 Lk 24:11;

Lk 24:37; Jn 14:1

24:39 Jn 20:20;

Jn 20:27; Ac 1:3;

1 Jn 1:1

24:41 Lk 24:11;

Jn 21:5

24:42 Mt 7:10;

Jn 21:9

24:43 Ac 10:41

24:44 Lk 18:31;

Lk 24:27

<sup>17</sup>He said to them, "What are you talking about as you walk along?" They stopped, their faces downcast.

<sup>18</sup>The one named Cleopas replied, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?"

<sup>19</sup>He said to them, "What things?"

They said to him, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of his powerful deeds and words, he was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. <sup>20</sup>But our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. <sup>21</sup>We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago. <sup>22</sup>But there's more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup>and didn't find his body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them he is alive. <sup>24</sup>Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn't see him."

<sup>25</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. <sup>26</sup>Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" <sup>27</sup>Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets.

<sup>28</sup>When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead. <sup>29</sup>But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup>After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup>Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup>They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?"

<sup>33</sup>They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup>They were saying to each other, "The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!" <sup>35</sup>Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as he broke the bread.

### *Jesus appears to the disciples*

<sup>36</sup>While they were saying these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>37</sup>They were terrified and afraid. They thought they were seeing a ghost.

<sup>38</sup>He said to them, "Why are you startled? Why are doubts arising in your hearts?" <sup>39</sup>Look at my hands and my feet. It's really me! Touch me and see, for a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones like you see I have." <sup>40</sup>As he said this, he showed them his hands and feet. <sup>41</sup>Because they were wondering and questioning in the midst of their happiness, he said to them, "Do you have anything to eat?" <sup>42</sup>They gave him a piece of baked fish. <sup>43</sup>Taking it, he ate it in front of them.

<sup>44</sup>Jesus said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you— that everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms

24:18 *Cleopas*: otherwise unknown.

24:19 *a prophet*: Because of his miracles, many consider Jesus a prophet (Luke 7:16); and his prophetic identity helps him explain why he had to die (Luke 13:33).

24:21 *redeem Israel*: See notes on Luke 1:74; 2:25. Cleopas and his friend had hoped Jesus would liberate Israel from the Romans.

24:22 *stunned*: One can hear the testimony of the resurrection and yet remain confused.

24:25 *Your dull minds*: They won't understand properly until the risen Christ changes their understanding (Luke 24:45).

24:26 *Wasn't it necessary*: See notes on Luke 22:22, 37.

24:27 *interpreted*: Jesus reviews OT passages that explain what happened to him, but the two still don't fully understand.

24:30-31 *took . . . broke it*: repeating Luke 22:19, from the Last Supper. *they recognized him*: Luke's readers will also recognize Jesus when they celebrate the Lord's Supper.

24:32 *hearts on fire*: In the Bible the heart is where one thinks and makes decisions. This is an image for how

encountering the risen Christ changes one's manner of thought (Luke 24:45).

24:34 *Simon*: Peter (see note on Luke 24:12).

24:36 *stood among them*: a sudden appearance. *Peace*: both a typical greeting in Jesus' culture and a promise of peace with God (see notes on Luke 1:79; 2:14).

24:37 *terrified . . . seeing a ghost*: Meeting Jesus personally is more powerful than hearing someone else talk about their own experience with him (Luke 24:34).

24:39 *flesh and bones*: Some early Christians believed Jesus was a spiritual being like an angel, who looked human but had no real flesh; others believed that, while Jesus had been human, the resurrection was about his spiritual presence with believers and not about his body rising from the tomb. This part of the story is meant to correct both beliefs: The body of the risen Jesus was a real body.

24:41 *anything to eat*: A common belief about angels was they didn't eat (Job 12:19), so this is further proof the risen Jesus was physical.

24:44 *everything written about me*: See Luke 22:22, 27; 24:25.



*"I Am Among You as One Who Serves"* Isaiah 40–55 contains several poetic passages describing God's servant (Isaiah 42:1–4; 44:1–5; 49:1–12; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12). Luke's story of Jesus' path to the cross draws on them, especially Isaiah 52:13–53:12. Notice the connections. In Luke, Jesus appears before King Herod (Luke 23:6–12; Isa 52:15), is condemned even though he has been declared innocent (Luke 23:22, 41; Isa 53:8), and dies satisfied, while others recognize that he was righteous (Luke 23:46–47; Isa 53:11). Jesus quotes Isaiah 53:12 (Luke 22:37) to explain why two of his disciples are armed; and in Luke 23:34 he asks God to forgive those who will kill him (Isa 53:12b). All these connections help make clear what Luke has in mind in Luke 22:37; 24:26, 46: The Christ has to suffer because he is also God's servant. In the 1st century Jesus' crucifixion was both the best-known fact about him and the hardest thing Christians had to explain. Why would God's Son allow himself to be killed? Luke offers several explanations: All true prophets are killed in Jerusalem (Luke 13:33); it was done at Satan's urging (Luke 22:3, 31, 53); and it was part of Jesus' destiny as God's servant (Luke 22:27).

24:45 Job 33:16;  
Ps 119:18;  
Lk 24:32;  
Ac 16:14;  
1In 5:20  
24:46 Lk 24:26;  
Ac 17:3  
24:47 Ps 22:27;  
Mt 28:19;  
Ac 2:38, Ac 5:31,  
Ac 13:38  
24:48 Ac 1:8,  
Ac 2:32, Ac 5:32,  
Ac 10:39,  
Ac 13:31  
24:49 In 14:16,  
Jn 14:26; Ac 1:4,  
Ac 1:8  
24:50 Mt 21:17;  
Ac 1:12  
24:51 2Ki 2:11;  
Mk 16:19;  
Jn 20:17; Ac 1:9;  
Eph 4:8  
24:52 Mt 28:9  
24:53 Lk 2:20;  
Ac 2:46, Ac 2:47

must be fulfilled." <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. <sup>46</sup>He said to them, "This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>Look, I'm sending to you what my Father promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power."

**Ascension of Jesus**

<sup>50</sup>He led them out as far as Bethany, where he lifted his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup>As he blessed them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. <sup>52</sup>They worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem overwhelmed with joy. <sup>53</sup>And they were continuously in the temple praising God.

24:45 *opened their minds*: As early as Luke 9:45, Luke alerts us that, though Jesus' disciples followed him faithfully, they weren't able to understand his teachings fully. Now the risen Jesus changes them so they're able to understand him and all the scriptures that point to him.  
24:46 *Christ will suffer*: As Paul states in 1 Corinthians 1:23–24, the crucified Christ was both the heart of Christian preaching and the main obstacle to following Christ for most ancient people.  
24:47 *change of heart and life*: a theme in Luke beginning at Luke 3:3. *in his name*: See Acts 2:38. *to all nations*: See Acts 1:8.  
24:48 *You are witnesses*: This group has seen the crucifixion

(Luke 23:49) and the resurrection. *what my Father promised... heavenly power*: the Holy Spirit, promised in Luke 11:13 and, in Luke's account, delivered on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2; see John 20:22).  
24:50–51 See Acts 1:9–11.  
24:51 *he blessed them*: In the same way, Jacob (Gen 49:28) and Moses (Deut 33:1) blessed God's people as they prepared to die.  
24:53 *temple*: The Gospel of Luke ends where it began, with praises of God in the temple (Luke 1:9–10). Now these praises are joined with the worship of Jesus. This is the pattern of the earliest Christians, as described in Acts 1–6.



# JOHN

The Gospel of John was probably the last of the four Gospels written. The “John” who is named as author in the title is not the same one who is introduced in John 1:6, that is, John the Baptist. Nor is a “John” ever identified within the text as the Gospel’s author. Instead, the author is said to be “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20), an anonymous follower of Jesus who makes brief appearances at the Last Supper (John 13:23); the crucifixion (John 19:26-27); the empty tomb (John 20:2-5, 8); and at the Sea of Galilee after Jesus’ resurrection (John 21:7). Tradition identifies this disciple as John, son of Zebedee (Mark 1:19), but his actual identity remains unknown.

Whether its author is John or not, this Gospel presents itself as the work of an eyewitness. All the more striking, therefore, are its differences from the other three Gospels. No mention is made of Jesus’ baptism, temptation,

or transfiguration. In the other Gospels Jesus travels to Jerusalem just once at the end of his ministry. In John’s Gospel, however, he travels to Jerusalem several times in connection with the Jewish religious festivals. Indeed, he’s in Jerusalem more often than he’s in Galilee. He talks more about himself and less about God’s kingdom, and his claims to be the Son of God are far clearer than in any other Gospel.

Despite its differences, this Gospel is very much at home alongside the other three. Like Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it tells a story and even some of the same stories: the feeding of the 5,000, the cleansing of the temple, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem; and, above all, the arrest and trial of Jesus, Peter’s three denials, and Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. Like Mark, John’s story line begins not with Jesus’ ancestry or birth but with the ministry of that other John, Jesus’ forerunner (John 1:6). But unlike



the other three Gospels, John's story line is not the whole story, for it looks back frequently at what has gone on *before* Jesus' ministry on earth. Jesus repeatedly claims he "came down from heaven" (John 3:13; 6:38, 51) to speak the words and do the works of "the Father who sent me" (John 5:37). Nowhere is Jesus' preexistence clearer than in the Gospel's opening lines (John 1:1-5), where Jesus is introduced as "the Word" who was "with God in the beginning" and through whom God created the world. Even John the Baptizer twice agrees that Jesus "existed before me" (John 1:15, 30). This preexistent relationship between God and the Word, or the Father and the Son, shapes much of what happens within the narrative about Jesus, who "became flesh" (John 1:14) in real time and real history.

John's Gospel is also concerned with what's going to happen *after* the story has been told. This is true of the other three Gospels as well, where the theme of Jesus' teaching is the coming kingdom of God. But in John's Gospel the future is closely tied to the past and to Jesus' preexistence. When people in a crowd challenge his claim to be "the living bread that came down from heaven" (John 6:51), Jesus hints he is "going up where he was before" (John 6:62). He tells the Jewish authorities he is going back "to the one who sent me" (John 7:33). He says to people in the temple, "Where I'm going, you can't come" (John 8:21). Even his disciples won't be able to follow him, at least not immediately (John 13:33, 36), so they must be prepared for a time when he will be absent. In his place he

will send a "Companion," or Advocate, the "Spirit of Truth" (John 14:17), to "teach you everything" and "remind you of everything I told you" (John 14:26). He also instructs the disciples on how to behave toward each other in his absence and in the face of harassment. "I'm going up," he finally tells them through Mary, "to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:17), resuming the relationship he'd had with the Father before the story began.

This persistent awareness of both past and future means that God the Father is very much present within the story. Those who come to Jesus in faith do so because God has *already* been at work in their lives (John 3:21; 9:3). We cannot come to Jesus unless the Father has "drawn" us to him (John 6:44). Believers are the Father's gift to the Son (John 6:37), who in the end gives them back to the Father (John 10:28-29; 17:9-10). Like the other three Gospels, John is written "so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son" (John 20:31). But at the heart of it is something more. Jesus' intent for his disciples is that "you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you" (John 14:20). This, perhaps, is why John is the favorite Gospel of so many Christian believers. More than any other it draws its readers into the ancient story, assuring all who believe that they are "God's children, born not from blood nor from human desire or passion, but born from God" (John 1:12-13). Its legacy is nothing less than a new birth, a promise of eternal life that begins not at death, nor even at the coming of God's kingdom, but here and now.

**I. Preamble (1:1-5)****II. The Testimonies of John (1:6-3:36)**

- A. John's testimony concerning the light (1:6-18)
  - 1. A man sent from God (1:6-8)
  - 2. The true light (1:9-14)
  - 3. Summary of John's testimony (1:15-18)
- B. John's first testimony and its result (1:19-2:11)
  - 1. John's witness to Jesus (1:19-34)
  - 2. Jesus calls disciples (1:35-51)
  - 3. The first miraculous sign in Galilee (2:1-11)
- C. Jesus in Jerusalem at Passover (2:12-3:21)
  - 1. Cleansing the temple (2:12-22)
  - 2. Nicodemus (2:23-3:21)
- D. John's last testimony (3:22-36)

**III. Jesus' Self-Revelation to the World (4:1-12:50)**

- A. Jesus in Samaria (4:1-42)
- B. The second miraculous sign in Galilee (4:43-54)
- C. Jesus at a festival in Jerusalem (5:1-47)
  - 1. A sabbath healing (5:1-18)
  - 2. Jesus and the Jerusalem authorities (5:19-47)
- D. Jesus in Galilee (6:1-71)
  - 1. Feeding of the 5,000 (6:1-15)
  - 2. Crossing the sea on foot (6:16-25)
  - 3. The bread of life (6:26-71)
- E. Jesus in Jerusalem at the Festival of Booths (7:1-8:59)
  - 1. Jesus reveals himself in the temple (7:1-36)
  - 2. His invitations to come and believe (7:37-8:29)
  - 3. Jesus and the believing Jews (8:30-59)
- F. Jesus and the man born blind (9:1-10:21)
  - 1. Jesus heals the man born blind (9:1-7)
  - 2. Interrogations of the former blind man (9:8-34)
  - 3. The man born blind comes to faith (9:35-38)
  - 4. Discourse on the good shepherd (9:39-10:21)
- G. Jesus at the Festival of Dedication (10:22-39)
- H. Jesus at Bethany (10:40-12:11)

- 1. From Bethany to Bethany (10:40-11:16)
- 2. The raising of Lazarus (11:17-44)
- 3. The verdict of the council (11:45-54)
- 4. The anointing at Bethany (11:55-12:11)
- I. Jesus in Jerusalem before Passover (12:12-36)
  - 1. The triumphal entry (12:12-19)
  - 2. The Greeks and the glorification (12:20-36)
- J. Outcome and summary of Jesus' self-revelation (12:37-50)

**IV. Jesus' Self-Revelation to the Disciples (13:1-17:26)**

- A. The foot washing (13:1-20)
- B. The exposure of Judas (13:21-30)
- C. Jesus and his departure (13:31-16:33)
  - 1. Jesus' departure and the love command (13:31-35)
  - 2. Four questions answered (13:36-14:31)
  - 3. The vine, the branches, and the love command (15:1-17)
  - 4. The world and its hatred (15:18-16:4)
  - 5. Jesus' departure and return (16:5-33)
- D. Jesus' prayer to the Father (17:1-26)
  - 1. Review of his ministry (17:1-8)
  - 2. Prayer for his disciples (17:9-19)
  - 3. Prayer for all believers (17:20-26)

**V. Verification of Jesus' Self-Revelation: Death and Resurrection (18:1-21:25)**

- A. The arrest in the garden (18:1-14)
- B. Peter's three denials (18:15-27)
  - 1. The first denial (18:15-18)
  - 2. Jesus' interrogation (18:19-24)
  - 3. The second and third denials (18:25-27)
- C. Jesus before Pilate and the Jews (18:28-19:16)
- D. Jesus on the cross (19:17-37)
- E. The burial (19:38-42)
- F. The discovery of the empty tomb (20:1-10)
- G. Jesus and Mary Magdalene (20:11-18)
- H. Jesus and the disciples behind closed doors (20:19-31)
- I. Jesus and the disciples in Galilee (21:1-25)
  - 1. A third appearance (21:1-14)
  - 2. Jesus, Peter, and the disciple whom Jesus loved (21:15-25)

1:1 Gn 1:1;  
Jn 17:5; Phi 2:6;  
Col 1:17;  
Rev 19:13

1:2 Gn 1:1;  
Jn 1:1, Jn 8:58,  
Jn 17:5, Jn 17:24

1:3 Jn 1:10;  
1Co 8:6;  
Col 1:16; Heb 1:2

1:4 Jn 5:26,  
Jn 8:12, Jn 9:5,  
Jn 11:25,  
Jn 12:46

1:5 Jn 3:19  
1:6 Mt 3:1;  
Mk 1:4; Lk 3:2

1:7 Jn 1:19,  
Jn 1:32, Jn 3:26,  
Jn 5:33; Ac 19:4

1:8 Jn 1:20  
1:9 Is 49:6;  
1Jn 2:8

1:10 Jn 1:3;  
1Jn 3:1

1:11 Is 53:3;  
Jn 3:32, Jn 5:43

1:12 Jn 11:52;  
Ro 8:14; Ga 3:26;  
Jn 3:1, 1Jn 3:23

1:13 Jas 1:18;  
1Pt 1:3, 1Pt 1:23;  
1Jn 3:9

1:14 Jn 14:6;  
1Ti 3:16;  
Heb 2:14;

1Jn 1:1, 1Jn 4:2  
1:15 Mt 3:11;  
Jn 1:7, Jn 1:30,  
Jn 5:33

### Story of the Word

**1** In the beginning was the Word  
and the Word was with God  
and the Word was God.

**2** The Word was with God in the beginning.

**3** Everything came into being through the Word,  
and without the Word  
nothing came into being.

What came into being  
**4** through the Word was life,<sup>a</sup>  
and the life was the light for all people.

**5** The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

**6** A man named John was sent from God. **7** He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light. **8** He himself wasn't the light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light.

**9** The true light that shines on all people  
was coming into the world.

**10** The light was in the world,  
and the world came into being through the light,  
but the world didn't recognize the light.

**11** The light came to his own people,  
and his own people didn't welcome him.

**12** But those who did welcome him,  
those who believed in his name,  
he authorized to become God's children,

**13** born not from blood  
nor from human desire or passion,  
but born from God.

**14** The Word became flesh  
and made his home among us.  
We have seen his glory,  
glory like that of a father's only son,  
full of grace and truth.

**15** John testified about him, crying out, "This is the one of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is greater than me because he existed before me.'"

<sup>a</sup>Or *Everything came into being through the Word, and without the Word / nothing came into being that came into being. In the Word was life*

1:1-18 Five introductory verses show that Jesus *existed before* John (John 1:15, 30), who makes his appearance in John 1:6. Jesus is *the Word* by whom God created the world in the beginning (Gen 1:1). "John" isn't called "the Baptist" or "Baptizer" but rather is known for his testimony *to the light* (1:8). Because *He himself wasn't the light*, the focus shifts back to the *true light*, or the Word that *became flesh* (1:14). But John's voice then blends with that of the believing community (1:14-18), bearing witness to Jesus both as the Word and as *God the only Son*.

1:1 *with God*: or "at home with" or "close to" God (cf. John 1:18). *was God*: In this verse "God" lacks the definite article. This implies not that the Word was a god or merely divine but that "God" refers to God the Father no less than to God the Son (see John 1:8).

1:3-4 From ancient times readers have been unsure how to divide these two verses. The CEB translation implies that all things, including life and light, were created through the Word. The alternative reading offered in the translation note implies that while everything God created was

created *through the Word*, life and light were not created but are attributes of the Word: *In the Word was life, and the life was the light for all people*.

1:5 *extinguish*: translates a Greek word that can also mean "grasp" in the sense of "understand," but "extinguish" is more appropriate in the context of darkness and light.

1:11 *his own... his own*: The first refers broadly to the people of the world, as in John 1:10 (see John 3:16); and the second refers to the people who rejected him. *him*: "The light," like "the Word," is now being viewed in personal terms: Jesus is "the light."

1:12-13 *born not from blood*: Physical birth isn't what makes those who welcome and believe in him *born from God*, or *God's children* (cf. John 3:3-8).

1:14 *flesh*: a human being (see John 1:51). *We have seen his glory*: The voice is that either of the author or of the early Christian community that first published this Gospel (see John 21:24).

1:15 *testified*: in the present tense ("testifies") in the Greek. John's testimony echoes through time, still alive

*The Prologue* The first 18 verses of this Gospel are commonly known as the prologue. They have a distinctive poetic style built around the repetition of such expressions as “the Word,” “God,” “life,” “light,” “darkness,” “the world,” and “his own.” It has often been proposed that behind the prologue was an early Christian hymn to Christ as “the Word” or possibly a pre-Christian hymn to divine Wisdom, as in Proverbs 8. Many attempts have been made to reconstruct this original hymn or poem, but none have met with anything close to general agreement. The poetry, moreover, is interrupted by the beginning of a prose narrative about “a man named John” (see John 1:6-8, 15), a narrative that picks up again at John 1:19 with more of John’s explicit testimony. What is clear in any case is that the prologue testifies strongly to the deity and preexistence of Jesus Christ, a notion that appears already in poetic form in the letters of Paul (e.g., 1 Cor 8:6; Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; 2:9) and is presupposed throughout the rest of John’s Gospel. The prologue, therefore, should be read as an integral part of the Gospel of John, not as an entity unto itself.

- <sup>16</sup>From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace;  
<sup>17</sup>as the Law was given through Moses,  
 so grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ.  
<sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God.  
 God the only Son,  
 who is at the Father’s side,  
 has made God known.

### John’s witness

<sup>19</sup>This is John’s testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, “Who are you?”

<sup>20</sup>John confessed (he didn’t deny but confessed), “I’m not the Christ.”

<sup>21</sup>They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?”

John said, “I’m not.”

“Are you the prophet?”

John answered, “No.”

<sup>22</sup>They asked, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

<sup>23</sup>John replied,

“I am a voice crying out in the wilderness,

Make the Lord’s path straight,<sup>b</sup>

just as the prophet Isaiah said.”

<sup>24</sup>Those sent by the Pharisees <sup>25</sup>asked, “Why do you baptize if you aren’t the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?”

<sup>26</sup>John answered, “I baptize with water. Someone greater stands among you, whom you don’t recognize. <sup>27</sup>He comes after me, but I’m not worthy to untie his sandal straps.” <sup>28</sup>This encounter took place across the Jordan in Bethany where John was baptizing.

<sup>b</sup>Isa 40:3

and present. *This is the one of whom I said:* Some ancient manuscripts have “This is the one who said,” referring to John. It’s difficult to tell where John’s words end and the author’s begin.

1:16 *grace upon grace:* The *grace*, or “gift,” of the Law given through Moses is now replaced by a greater gift, “grace and truth” in the person of Jesus Christ (see John 1:17).

1:18 *No one has ever seen God:* Compare with Exodus 33:20; John 5:37; 6:46; 1 John 4:12. *God the only Son:* or “God the One and Only,” but “Son” is implied. *at the Father’s side:* Even as the disciple “whom Jesus loved, was at Jesus’ side” (John 13:23).

1:19-34 John speaks to a group sent by the leaders in Jerusalem to ask him questions. On the basis of what God has told him and what he himself has seen, he testifies that Jesus is both *The Lamb of God* (1:29) and God’s Son.

1:20 *John confessed (he didn’t deny but confessed):* What

he says (“I’m not the Christ”) is, in fact, a denial; but by acknowledging this he’s implicitly confessing that Jesus is the Christ. This confirms John 1:8: “He himself wasn’t the light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light.”

1:21 *Elijah:* Jesus in other Gospels identifies John the Baptist with Elijah (Mark 9:11-12; Matt 11:14; 17:10-11; cf. Mal 4:5-6), but John himself never does. *the prophet:* an expected prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15-18).

1:25 *Why do you baptize:* His questioners seem to have interpreted his baptizing ministry as implying a claim to be the Christ, Elijah, or the prophet.

1:26 *I baptize with water:* To baptize with water sounds redundant, but John anticipates a greater baptism “with the Holy Spirit,” of which he’ll speak only after the questioners have gone (John 1:33).

1:28 *across the Jordan in Bethany:* east of the Jordan River. As early as the 3rd century CE its exact location was

1:16 Eph 1:23;  
 Eph 4:13;  
 Col 1:19; Col 2:9  
 1:17 Jn 1:14,  
 Jn 7:19; Ro 5:21  
 1:18 Ex 33:20;  
 Jn 3:16; Jn 6:46;  
 Col 1:15;  
 1Jn 4:12  
 1:19 Jn 10:24  
 1:20 Lk 3:15;  
 Jn 3:28  
 1:21 Dt 18:15;  
 Mt 11:14,  
 Mt 16:14  
 1:23 Is 40:3;  
 Mt 3:3; Lk 3:4  
 1:24 Lk 7:30  
 1:25 Mk 1:4;  
 Lk 3:7; Jn 1:20;  
 Ac 19:4  
 1:26 Mt 3:11;  
 Mk 1:4; Mk 1:8;  
 Lk 3:16; Ac 1:5  
 1:27 Mt 3:11;  
 Mk 1:7; Jn 1:15;  
 Jn 1:30  
 1:28 Jn 3:26;  
 Jn 10:40

1:29 Lk 5:37;  
Jn 1:36; 1Pt 1:19;  
1Jn 3:5; Rev 5:6

1:30 Jn 1:15,  
Jn 1:27

1:31 Lk 1:76  
1:32 Mt 3:16;  
Mk 1:10;  
Lk 3:22; Jn 1:7

1:33 Mt 3:11;  
Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16;  
Ac 1:5

1:34 Mt 4:3;  
Jn 1:49; Jn 11:27

1:35 Mt 3:1,  
Mt 21:32;  
Mk 11:32;  
Lk 3:15; Jn 3:25

1:36 Jn 1:29

1:37 Jn 1:43

1:38 Jn 1:49;  
Jn 3:2; Jn 20:16

1:40 Mt 4:18;  
Jn 6:8

1:41 Dn 9:25;  
Jn 4:25

1:42 Mt 16:18;  
Jn 21:15;  
1Co 1:12;  
1Co 3:22

1:43 Mt 4:18;  
Mt 10:3; Jn 6:5;  
Jn 14:8

1:44 Mt 11:21;  
Jn 12:21

1:45 Lk 3:23,  
Lk 24:27,  
Lk 24:44; Jn 21:2

1:46 Jn 7:41,  
Jn 7:52

1:47 Ps 32:2;  
Rev 14:5

1:48 Mt 9:4,  
Mt 10:3,  
Mt 12:25;  
Jn 2:24; Jn 2:25

1:49 Zep 3:15;  
Mt 2:2; Mt 27:42;  
Jn 1:38; Jn 12:13

<sup>29</sup>The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" <sup>30</sup>This is the one about whom I said, 'He who comes after me is really greater than me because he existed before me.' <sup>31</sup>Even I didn't recognize him, but I came baptizing with water so that he might be made known to Israel." <sup>32</sup>John testified, "I saw the Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove, and it rested on him. <sup>33</sup>Even I didn't recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit coming down and resting is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'" <sup>34</sup>I have seen and testified that this one is God's Son."

### Jesus calls disciples

<sup>35</sup>The next day John was standing again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup>When he saw Jesus walking along he said, "Look! The Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup>The two disciples heard what he said, and they followed Jesus.

<sup>38</sup>When Jesus turned and saw them following, he asked, "What are you looking for?"

They said, "Rabbi (which is translated *Teacher*), where are you staying?"

<sup>39</sup>He replied, "Come and see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

<sup>40</sup>One of the two disciples who heard what John said and followed Jesus was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. <sup>41</sup>He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated *Christ*). <sup>42</sup>He led him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which is translated *Peter*).

<sup>43</sup>The next day Jesus wanted to go into Galilee, and he found Philip. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." <sup>44</sup>Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter.

<sup>45</sup>Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets: Jesus, Joseph's son, from Nazareth."

<sup>46</sup>Nathanael responded, "Can anything from Nazareth be good?"

Philip said, "Come and see."

<sup>47</sup>Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, "Here is a genuine Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

<sup>48</sup>Nathanael asked him, "How do you know me?"

Jesus answered, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree."

<sup>49</sup>Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are God's Son. You are the king of Israel."

<sup>c</sup>Or *Anointed One*

unknown, but it was a place to which Jesus returned (John 10:40) before journeying to another place with the exact same name (John 11:1).

1:29 *The Lamb of God*: *Lamb* implies a sacrificial lamb, but *takes away* suggests he isn't a passive victim but an active redeemer (cf. 1 John 3:5). God's *Lamb* turns out to be "God's Son" (John 1:34), with the lamb image adding the notion of purity (1 John 3:5).

1:31 *made known to Israel*: John finally answers the question "Why do you baptize?" (John 1:25). It's to make Jesus known. John is never explicitly said to have baptized Jesus in this Gospel, but his vision of "the Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove" (John 1:32) clearly implies it.

1:33 *resting*: or "remaining," with the implication that the Spirit remains continually with Jesus from here on (see John 3:34), equipping him as *the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit* (see John 20:22).

1:35-51 John repeats his testimony in the presence of his own disciples, who then follow Jesus and spend a day with him. John calls more disciples and sets off for Galilee. All this happens in less than a week, punctuated by two notices of *The next day* (1:35, 43).

1:39 *four o'clock*: or "about the tenth hour" when counting from six o'clock in the morning, as Jewish and Roman custom dictated (cf. John 4:6; 19:14). The lateness could

imply an overnight stay, adding a possible extra day to the sequence of "the next day" indicators in John 1:29, 35, 43.

1:40 *One of the two*: The other is unnamed. Some have identified him as "the one whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23), others (more plausibly) as Philip (John 1:43).

1:42 *Simon, son of John*: Jesus is either naming Simon's father (cf. Matt 16:17) or identifying Simon as John's disciple. *Cephas*, "Cephas" (Aramaic) and "Peter" (Gk.) are nicknames meaning "rock" (cf. Matt 16:18).

1:45 *Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets*: Moses didn't write any of the books of the Prophets. The wording emphasizes the OT witness to the coming of Jesus.

1:46 "Can anything from Nazareth be good?": Nathanael himself was from nearby Cana (John 21:2).

1:47 *a genuine Israelite in whom there is no deceit*: a possible reference to the name change of the deceitful Jacob (Gen 27:35-36) to Israel, father of the people of Israel (Gen 32:28).

1:48 *under the fig tree*: just as God "found Israel," according to Hosea, "like the first fruit on the fig tree" (Hos 9:10).

1:49 *God's Son*: confirms John's testimony in John 1:34. *the king of Israel*: Testimony from a "genuine Israelite" (John 1:47) means Jesus is already being "made known to Israel" (John 1:31).



<sup>50</sup>Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these!" <sup>51</sup>I assure you that you will see heaven open and God's angels going up to heaven and down to earth on the Human One."<sup>d</sup>

**Wedding at Cana**

**2** On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and <sup>2</sup>Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. <sup>3</sup>When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They don't have any wine."

<sup>4</sup>Jesus replied, "Woman, what does that have to do with me? My time hasn't come yet."

<sup>5</sup>His mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." <sup>6</sup>Nearby were six stone water jars used for the Jewish cleansing ritual, each able to hold about twenty or thirty gallons.

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water," and they filled them to the brim.

<sup>8</sup>Then he told them, "Now draw some from them and take it to the headwaiter," and they did. <sup>9</sup>The headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine. He didn't know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.

The headwaiter called the groom <sup>10</sup>and said, "Everyone serves the good wine first. They bring out the second-rate wine only when the guests are drinking freely. You kept the good wine until now." <sup>11</sup>This was the first miraculous sign that Jesus did in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

<sup>12</sup>After this, Jesus and his mother, his brothers, and his disciples went down to Capernaum and stayed there for a few days.

**Jesus in Jerusalem at Passover**

<sup>13</sup>It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>He found in the temple those who were selling cattle, sheep, and doves, as well as those involved in

*Cleansing the Temple* Only the Gospel of John places the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem at the beginning rather than the end of Jesus' ministry. In the other three Gospels, Jesus drives the money changers from the temple near the end of his ministry, less than a week before his crucifixion (Matt 21:12; Mark 11:15; Luke 19:45). Any reader familiar with these accounts may be confused by John's placement of the temple story in John 2, as if this Gospel is to be a very short one indeed! When did this event actually happen, or did it happen twice? The other three Gospels are probably right about the chronology. The author of John's Gospel may have moved the account to the beginning of his Gospel to make the raising of Lazarus later on the reason for Jesus' arrest and execution (see John 11:47-53). Putting the temple scene at the beginning also highlights from the start the certainty of Jesus' death and resurrection (John 2:19-22). It's unlikely that he cleansed the temple twice, since all four Gospels agree in recounting the event just once. Still, it's quite possible Jesus did visit Jerusalem at Passover very early in his ministry and even performed miracles there (see John 2:23-25; 5:1-18).

1:50 Mt 26:63, Mt 26:64, Mt 27:54; Mk 1:1, Mk 5:7  
1:51 Gn 28:12; Eze 1:1; Mt 3:16; Ac 7:56  
2:1 Mt 12:46; Jn 1:29, Jn 1:43; Jn 4:46, Jn 21:2  
2:2 Jn 1:40; Jn 2:12, Jn 2:22; Jn 3:22, Jn 4:2  
2:3 2Sa 6:19; Est 5:6; Ps 104:15; Jn 2:10  
2:4 Jn 7:30; Jn 8:20, Jn 12:23; Jn 13:1, Jn 19:26  
2:5 Mt 12:46  
2:6 Mk 7:3, Mk 7:4; Jn 3:25  
2:7 Mt 9:9, Mt 21:6, Mt 26:19, Jn 2:3  
2:8 Jn 2:9  
2:9 Jn 4:46  
2:10 2Sa 6:19; Lk 12:45; Jn 2:3; Eph 5:18  
2:11 Jn 1:14, Jn 2:23, Jn 3:2, Jn 4:54, Jn 20:30  
2:12 Mt 4:13, Mt 12:46; Jn 6:17  
2:13 Dt 16:1; Lk 2:41; Jn 2:23; Jn 5:1, Jn 11:55  
2:14 Mt 21:12; Mk 11:15; Lk 19:45, Lk 19:46

<sup>d</sup>Or Son of Man

1:51 *I assure you:* or "Amen, amen, I say to you." This is a solemn formula Jesus uses 25 times in this Gospel (always with the double "Amen," or "truly, truly" in the Greek). *God's angels going up to heaven and down to earth on the Human One:* Like Jacob at Bethel (Gen 28:10), Jesus sees himself at the bottom of a staircase to heaven, enjoying unbroken communication with the Father (see John 8:29; 11:42).  
2:1-12 Jesus performs his *first miraculous sign*, turning a great quantity of water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee  
2:1 *On the third day:* two days later, bringing the number of days being counted to at least six (cf. John 1:29, 35, 43).  
2:4 *Woman:* implies no disrespect (cf. John 19:26). *what does that have to do with me:* Jesus isn't so much distancing himself from his mother as distancing them both from worries about a wine shortage. *My time hasn't come yet:* He isn't refusing to act, but assuring her this won't be his decisive time, or "hour." This is merely a beginning, "the first" of his signs (John 2:11).

2:5 *"Do whatever he tells you":* His mother understands he isn't refusing to act.  
2:6 *twenty or thirty gallons:* Together, the six huge jars, used for purification rituals, would hold 120 to 180 gallons.  
2:9 *that had become wine:* In just four words we learn a miracle has taken place.  
2:10 *drinking freely:* drunk. *You kept the good wine:* The bridegroom, by his silence, takes credit for the abundance.  
2:11 *the first miraculous sign:* Jesus does many others (John 2:23; 3:2; 6:2; 7:31; 12:37; 20:30), but only the first two are numbered (cf. John 4:54). *He revealed his glory:* not to everyone at the wedding, only to his disciples, who, like "the servants who had drawn the water" (John 2:9), knew where the wine had come from.  
2:12 *for a few days:* the only instance in any of the Gospels in which Jesus' disciples spend time with his family. We aren't told exactly how much time they spend in Capernaum.  
2:13-25 Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival, where he forcibly drives money changers out of the

## Miracle Stories in the Gospels

### A. Miracles Performed Directly on Persons

#### 1. Exorcisms

#1 Throwing out the Demon in the Synagogue in Capernaum

\_\_\_\_\_ Mark 1:21-28 Luke 4:31-34 \_\_\_\_\_

#2 Demon-possessed Man/Men in the Country of the Gadarenes

Matt 8:28-34 Mark 5:1-20 Luke 8:26-39 \_\_\_\_\_

#3 The Syrophenician (Canaanite) Woman

Matt 15:21-28 Mark 7:24-30 \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. Exorcisms/Healings

#4 The Demon-possessed Man who Couldn't Speak

Matt 9:32-34 \_\_\_\_\_ Luke 11:14-15 \_\_\_\_\_

#5 On Collusion with Satan

Matt 12:22-30 (cf. Mark 3:22-27) Luke 11:14-15 \_\_\_\_\_

#6 Jesus Heals a Boy Possessed by a Demon

Matt 17:14-21 Mark 9:14-29 Luke 9:37-43a \_\_\_\_\_

#### 3. Healings

#7 Jesus Heals a Deaf Man (and Many Others)

\_\_\_\_\_ Mark 7:31-37 \_\_\_\_\_

#8 A Blind Man Is Healed at Bethsaida

\_\_\_\_\_ Mark 8:22-26 \_\_\_\_\_

#9 Cleansing of the Man with a Skin Disease

Matt 8:1-4 Mark 1:40-45 Luke 5:12-16 \_\_\_\_\_

#10 The Centurion of Capernaum

Matt 8:5-13 \_\_\_\_\_ Luke 7:1-10 John 4:46b-54

#11 The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-law

Matt 8:14-15 Mark 1:29-31 Luke 4:38-39 \_\_\_\_\_

#12 The Healing of the Man who Was Paralyzed

Matt 9:1-8 Mark 2:1-12 Luke 5:17-26 \_\_\_\_\_

#13 (Jairus' Daughter and) the Bleeding Woman

Matt 9:18-26 Mark 5:21-43 Luke 8:40-56 \_\_\_\_\_

#14 Two Blind Men

Matt 9:27-31 (cf. Mark 10:46-52) (cf. Luke 18:35-43) \_\_\_\_\_

#15 Healing the Withered Hand

Matt 12:9-14 Mark 3:1-6 Luke 6:6-11 \_\_\_\_\_

#16 The Healing of the Blind Man/Men

Matt 20:29-34 Mark 10:46-52 Luke 18:35-43 \_\_\_\_\_

#17 The Healing of the Disabled Woman on the Sabbath

\_\_\_\_\_ Luke 13:10-17 \_\_\_\_\_

## Miracle Stories in the Gospels

#18 The Healing of the Man with Swelling		Luke 14:1-6	
#19 The Cleansing of the Ten Men with Skin Diseases		Luke 17:11-19	
#20 The Healing at the Pool			John 5:2-47
#21 Jesus Heals the Man Born Blind			John 9:1-41
<b>4. Raising the Dead</b>			
#22 Jairus' Daughter (and the Bleeding Woman)		Matt 9:18-26	Mark 5:21-43
		Luke 8:40-56	
#23 The Widow's Son at Nain		Luke 7:11-17	
#24 The Raising of Lazarus			John 11:1-44
<b>B. Miracles Performed on Nature</b>			
<b>5. Sea Miracles</b>			
#25 Calming the Storm		Matt 8:23-27	Mark 4:35-41
		Luke 8:22-25	
#26 Walking on the Water		Matt 14:22-23	Mark 6:45-52
			John 6:16-21
<b>6. Miraculous Provision</b>			
#27 Five Thousand Are Fed		Matt 14:13-21	Mark 6:32-34
		Luke 9:10b-17	John 6:1-15
#28 Four Thousand Are Fed		Matt 15:32-39	Mark 8:1-10
#29 Payment of the Temple Tax		Matt 17:24-27	
#30 The Miraculous Catch of Fish (cf. Matt 4:18-22)	(cf. Mark 1:16-20)	Luke 5:1-11	John 21:1-11
#31 The Wedding at Cana			John 2:1-11
<b>7. Curse Miracles</b>			
#32 The Cursing of the Fig Tree; the Fig Tree Is Withered		Matt 21:18-19	Mark 11:12-14
		Matt 21:20-22	Mark 11:20-26

2:15 Mt 21:12;  
 2:16 Mt 21:12,  
 Mt 21:13;  
 Lk 2:49  
 2:17 Ps 69:9;  
 Lk 2:49  
 2:18 Mt 12:38;  
 Jn 1:19, Jn 4:48;  
 Jn 6:30  
 2:19 Mt 16:21,  
 Mt 26:61,  
 Mt 27:40;  
 Mk 14:58,  
 Mk 15:29  
 2:20 Eze 5:16;  
 Lk 21:5  
 2:21 1Co 6:19  
 2:22 Ps 16:10,  
 Lk 24:8, Jn 12:16,  
 Jn 14:26, Jn 20:9  
 2:23 Jn 2:13,  
 Jn 7:31  
 2:24 Mt 9:4;  
 Jn 6:64, Jn 16:30,  
 Jn 21:17; Ac 1:24  
 2:25 Jn 13:11  
 3:1 Jn 7:50,  
 Jn 19:39  
 3:2 Jn 1:38,  
 Jn 2:11; Ac 2:22,  
 Ac 10:38  
 3:3 Jn 1:13,  
 Jn 3:5; Ga 6:15;  
 1Pt 1:3, 1Pt 1:23  
 3:4 Jn 4:11,  
 Jn 6:60  
 3:5 Mk 16:16;  
 Jn 3:3; Ac 2:38;  
 Eph 5:26; Ti 3:5  
 3:6 1Co 15:50  
 3:7 Jn 3:3  
 3:8 Ecc 11:5,  
 Eze 37:9,  
 1Co 12:11

exchanging currency sitting there. <sup>15</sup>He made a whip from ropes and chased them all out of the temple, including the cattle and the sheep. He scattered the coins and overturned the tables of those who exchanged currency. <sup>16</sup>He said to the dove sellers, "Get these things out of here! Don't make my Father's house a place of business." <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it is written, *Passion for your house consumes me.*<sup>a</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Then the Jewish leaders asked him, "By what authority are you doing these things? What miraculous sign will you show us?"

<sup>19</sup>Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it up."

<sup>20</sup>The Jewish leaders replied, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and you will raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup>But the temple Jesus was talking about was his body. <sup>22</sup>After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered what he had said, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

<sup>23</sup>While Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover Festival, many believed in his name because they saw the miraculous signs that he did. <sup>24</sup>But Jesus didn't trust himself to them because he knew all people. <sup>25</sup>He didn't need anyone to tell him about human nature, for he knew what human nature was.

### Jesus and Nicodemus

**3** There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a Jewish leader. <sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could do these miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him."

<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, "I assure you, unless someone is born anew,<sup>f</sup> it's not possible to see God's kingdom."

<sup>4</sup>Nicodemus asked, "How is it possible for an adult to be born? It's impossible to enter the mother's womb for a second time and be born, isn't it?"

<sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "I assure you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, it's not possible to enter God's kingdom. <sup>6</sup>Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Don't be surprised that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.' <sup>8</sup>God's Spirit<sup>g</sup> blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It's the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

<sup>a</sup>Ps 69:9 <sup>f</sup>Or from above <sup>g</sup>Or wind

temple. When the Jews ask him on what authority he does this, he gives them a riddle about rebuilding the temple in three days. He performs more *miraculous signs*, and *many believed* (2:23); but he isn't convinced their faith is genuine. 2:15 *chased them all out*: There's no reason to assume he uses the whip (or threatens to do so) only on the *cattle and the sheep*.

2:17 *His disciples remembered*: probably "after he was raised from the dead," as in John 2:22. *Passion for your house consumes me*: quoting from Psalm 69:9. The Greek verb is in the future tense, "will consume" or "will destroy," foreshadowing Jesus' death.

2:19 *Destroy this temple*: the basis of a legal charge against Jesus at his trial in two other Gospels (Matt 26:61; Mark 14:58).

2:20-21 *the temple... was his body*: This explanation is consistent with the use of the Greek verb "to raise" rather than "to build" (2:20). It's also consistent with *in three days*, which is used repeatedly in connection with Jesus' resurrection (e.g., 1 Cor 15:4; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34).

2:22 *his disciples remembered*: In light of Jesus' resurrection, they come to understand what he meant. *the scripture*: Psalm 69:9. *the word that Jesus had spoken*: This refers to the entire quote in John 2:19, a reference to his body. The disciples' post-resurrection faith moves well beyond what they "believed" after his first sign (John 2:11).

2:23 *miraculous signs*: not specified, but many are likely to have been healings (John 6:2; see John 5:1-8; 9:1-7).

2:24 *Jesus didn't trust himself to them*: The word translated here as "trust" is the same Greek verb translated as "believed" in John 2:23. They believe in Jesus, but he doesn't believe in them.

3:1-21 Nicodemus comes to Jesus but is baffled by the necessity of having to be *born anew* (3:3), or "from above" (see translation note). All that comes out of Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus is a series of impossibilities (3:3, 4, 5, 9, 12). Only when Nicodemus has left the scene does Jesus go on to explain how this new birth is possible (3:13-21).

3:1 *Pharisee*: The Greek phrase is "man of the Pharisees." "Man," or "person," links Nicodemus closely to those just mentioned, people Jesus knows all about and doesn't trust (John 2:24-25). His reference to "miraculous signs" (John 3:2) confirms this (cf. John 2:23).

3:3 *born anew*: the ultimate expression of becoming like a "little child" (Matt 18:3). This dialogue is difficult to represent in English. In Greek the same term can mean "anew" or "from above." The new birth isn't physical birth (John 1:13), but birth "from above" because Jesus himself is "from above."

3:5 *born of water and the Spirit*: further explains "born anew" (John 3:3). The accent is on "the Spirit" (John 3:6, 8), already introduced as "coming down" on Jesus (i.e., "from above"; see note on John 3:3), empowering him to baptize "with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33). But he also baptizes with water (John 3:22, 26; 4:1); and "water" here probably refers to water baptism.

<sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said, "How are these things possible?"

<sup>10</sup>Jesus answered, "You are a teacher of Israel and you don't know these things? <sup>11</sup>I assure you that we speak about what we know and testify about what we have seen, but you don't receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you about earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Human One. <sup>14</sup>Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so must the Human One<sup>1</sup> be lifted up <sup>15</sup>so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. <sup>16</sup>God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him isn't judged; whoever doesn't believe in him is already judged, because they don't believe in the name of God's only Son.

<sup>19</sup>"This is the basis for judgment: The light came into the world, and people loved darkness more than the light, for their actions are evil. <sup>20</sup>All who do wicked things hate the light and don't come to the light for fear that their actions will be exposed to the light. <sup>21</sup>Whoever does the truth comes to the light so that it can be seen that their actions were done in God."

### John's final witness

<sup>22</sup>After this Jesus and his disciples went into Judea, where he spent some time with them and was baptizing. <sup>23</sup>John was baptizing at Aenon near Salem because there was a lot of water there, and people were coming to him and being baptized. (<sup>24</sup>John hadn't yet been thrown into prison.)

<sup>25</sup>A debate started between John's disciples and a certain Jew about cleansing rituals. <sup>26</sup>They came to John and said, "Rabbi, look! The man who was with you across the Jordan, the one about whom you testified, is baptizing and everyone is flocking to him."

<sup>27</sup>John replied, "No one can receive anything unless it is given from heaven. <sup>28</sup>You yourselves can testify that I said that I'm not the Christ but that I'm the one sent before him. <sup>29</sup>The groom is the one who is getting married. The friend of the groom stands close by and, when he hears him, is overjoyed at the groom's voice. Therefore, my joy is now complete. <sup>30</sup>He must increase and I must decrease. <sup>31</sup>The one who comes from above is above all things. The one who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all things. <sup>32</sup>He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. <sup>33</sup>Whoever accepts his testimony confirms that God is true.

<sup>b</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>1</sup>Or Son of Man

3:29 Mt 9:15; Mt 25:1; Jn 17:13; Phi 2: 3:30 Ps 72:17; Dn 2:35; Dn 2:44; Mt 13:31; Rev 11:15 3:31 Jn 3:13; Jn 8:23; 1Co 15:47 3:32 Jn 1:11; Jn 3:11 3:33 Eph 1:13

3:11 *we speak*: Jesus refers to himself in the plural ("we"). This is unexpected because Jesus is speaking only about himself (see John 3:32). Aside from the introductory formula, *I assure you* (as in John 1:51; 3:3, 5), he's still avoiding the emphatic "I" he'll freely use later.

3:13 *No one has gone up to heaven except... the Human One*: Jesus speaks as if he has already gone up to heaven (some ancient manuscripts even add "who is in heaven"). This is consistent with John the Baptist's testimony that Jesus is "above all things" (John 3:31).

3:14 *Just as Moses lifted up the snake*: See Numbers 21:8-9. The reference is to Jesus' crucifixion (John 12:33).

3:16 *gave his only Son*: in death on the cross (John 3:14). The traditional rendering "only begotten Son" is based on the Greek having both the word for "Son" and the word for "one and only," where either by itself would be enough.

3:19 *The light came into the world*: Jesus reverts to the image of light (cf. John 1:4-11). Here, too, as in John 1:10-11, *the world prefers darkness to the light*.

3:21 *does the truth*: lives in obedience to God. *comes to the light*: Those who *come to the light* (i.e., come to Jesus in faith) are those who don't fear exposure. By coming, they prove their faithful obedience.

3:22-36 Jesus and his disciples move out into Judea, where Jesus baptizes. John's disciples ask John about Jesus' success. John again testifies, *I'm not the Christ* (3:28). Jesus is *from heaven*, while John is *from the earth* (3:31). Finally, John testifies to Jesus as God's Son, as in John 1:34, who alone can give life (3:32-36).

3:23 *Aenon near Salem*: These places can't be located, but they're clearly on the west bank, "across the Jordan" (John 3:26) from where John has baptized before. "Aenon" means "a spring" or "a well," and the mention of water there (i.e., natural springs) implies John's baptisms weren't limited to the Jordan River.

3:24 (*John hadn't yet been thrown into prison*): The Gospel's author knows of John's imprisonment (Mark 1:14; Luke 3:19-20), even though he doesn't record it.

3:29 *my joy is now complete*: John's testimony makes him, in effect, a disciple of Jesus (cf. John 15:11; 16:24; 17:13). This is consistent with his statement "He must increase and I must decrease" (John 3:30).

3:31 *The one who is from the earth*: John himself. As Jesus does in John 3:13-21 when he refers to himself as "the Human One" and the "Son," John is speaking of himself in the third person.

3:33 *Whoever accepts his testimony*: or "The one who

3:9 Jn 3:4;  
Jn 6:52; Jn 6:60  
3:10 Ps 73:1;  
Is 9:14; Is 29:10;  
Is 56:10; Lk 2:46  
3:11 Jn 3:32  
3:12 Jn 3:31  
3:13 Prr 30:4;  
Jn 6:38; Ac 2:34;  
Eph 4:9  
3:14 Nm 21:8;  
Nm 21:9;  
Jn 8:28; Jn 12:32;  
Jn 12:34  
3:15 Jn 3:36;  
Jn 5:24; Jn 6:40;  
Jn 20:31  
3:16 Jn 6:40;  
Ro 5:8; Ro 8:32;  
1Jn 4:9; 1Jn 4:10  
3:17 Lk 2:11;  
Lk 19:10;  
Jn 6:57; Jn 12:47;  
1Jn 4:14  
3:18 Mk 16:16;  
Jn 1:18; Jn 3:36;  
Jn 5:24; 1Jn 4:9  
3:19 Jn 1:4;  
Jn 1:5; Jn 7:7;  
Jn 8:12  
3:20 Job 24:13;  
Eph 5:11;  
Eph 5:13  
3:21 1Jn 1:6  
3:22 Jn 4:1;  
Jn 4:2  
3:23 Mk 1:4  
3:24 Mt 4:12;  
Mt 14:3;  
Mk 6:17; Lk 3:20  
3:25 Jn 2:6  
3:26 Jn 1:7  
3:27 Mt 21:25;  
1Co 4:7; Heb 5:4;  
Jas 1:17  
3:28 Mal 3:1;  
Jn 1:20; Jn 1:23

3:34 Lk 4:18;  
Jn 3:17;  
Ac 10:38  
3:35 Mt 11:27;  
Mt 28:18;  
Jn 5:20

3:36 Jn 3:15,  
Jn 3:16, Jn 3:18,  
Jn 5:24, Jn 6:47

4:1 Jn 3:22,  
Jn 3:26

4:2 Jn 3:22

4:3 Jn 3:22

4:4 Lk 9:52

4:5 Gn 33:19,  
Gn 48:22;  
Josh 24:32;  
Jn 4:12

4:6 Gn 43:16;  
Ex 15:27;  
Mt 4:2, Mt 8:24;  
Jn 19:28

4:7 Jn 19:28

4:8 Jn 4:5

4:9 Mt 10:5,  
Lk 9:52,  
Lk 9:53, Jn 8:48;  
Ac 10:28

4:10 Jer 2:13;  
Jn 3:16, Jn 4:14,  
Jn 7:37, Jn 7:38

4:11 Jn 3:4

4:12 Jn 4:6,  
Jn 8:53

4:14 Jn 6:35,  
Jn 7:38

4:15 Jn 6:34

4:16 Mt 9:4,  
Mt 12:25;  
Jn 1:48, Jn 2:24,  
Jn 21:17

4:17 Mt 22:18;  
Jn 1:47, Jn 2:24,  
Jn 4:18, Jn 6:64

4:18 Jn 4:17

4:19 Mt 21:11;  
Lk 7:16, Jn 6:14,  
Jn 7:40, Jn 9:17

4:20 Dt 11:29;  
Josh 8:33

<sup>34</sup>The one whom God sent speaks God's words because God gives the Spirit generously. <sup>35</sup>The Father loves the Son and gives everything into his hands. <sup>36</sup>Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever doesn't believe in the Son won't see life, but the angry judgment of God remains on them."

### Jesus leaves Judea

**4** Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was making more disciples and baptizing more than John (<sup>2</sup>although Jesus' disciples were baptizing, not Jesus himself). <sup>3</sup>Therefore, he left Judea and went back to Galilee.

### Jesus in Samaria

<sup>4</sup>Jesus had to go through Samaria. <sup>5</sup>He came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, which was near the land Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob's well was there. Jesus was tired from his journey, so he sat down at the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup>A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me some water to drink." <sup>8</sup>His disciples had gone into the city to buy him some food.

<sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman asked, "Why do you, a Jewish man, ask for something to drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (Jews and Samaritans didn't associate with each other.)

<sup>10</sup>Jesus responded, "If you recognized God's gift and who is saying to you, 'Give me some water to drink,' you would be asking him and he would give you living water."

<sup>11</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, you don't have a bucket and the well is deep. Where would you get this living water? <sup>12</sup>You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave this well to us, and he drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

<sup>13</sup>Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but whoever drinks from the water that I will give will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give will become in those who drink it a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life."

<sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will never be thirsty and will never need to come here to draw water!"

<sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, "Go, get your husband, and come back here."

<sup>17</sup>The woman replied, "I don't have a husband."

"You are right to say, 'I don't have a husband,'" Jesus answered. <sup>18</sup>"You've had five husbands, and the man you are with now isn't your husband. You've spoken the truth."

<sup>19</sup>The woman said, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you and your people say that it is necessary to worship in Jerusalem."

<sup>21</sup>Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you and your people will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup>You and your people

4:21 Mal 1:11; Jn 4:23, Jn 5:25, Jn 16:2; 1 Ti 2:8 4:22 Is 2:3; Ro 9:4, Ro 9:5

accepted" (i.e., John himself). But what is true of John is equally true of anyone else who accepts his testimony.

**3:34 generously:** or "without measure." Whether on Jesus or on the believer, *the Spirit* comes to stay (cf. John 1:32-33).

**4:1-42** Passing through Samaria on his way back to Galilee, Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well in Sychar and carries on a conversation with her about *living water* (4:11), true worship, and himself as the Christ. The woman summons the men of the village, many of whom come to believe in Jesus as *the savior of the world* (4:42).

**4:2** *Jesus' disciples were baptizing, not Jesus himself:* a technicality. They are doing the actual baptizing, but the responsibility is Jesus' alone.

**4:3** *Therefore, he left Judea:* Jesus may want to avoid being questioned by the Jerusalem authorities (as John had been) because he's been baptizing (John 1:19-28).

**4:4** *Jesus had to go through Samaria:* This doesn't indicate divine necessity; it's the natural route.

**4:6** *about noon:* or "about the sixth hour" (see note on John 1:39). Compare with John 19:14, another sixth hour when Jesus would again be "thirsty" (John 19:28).

**4:7** *A Samaritan woman:* recalls biblical stories of a man

meeting his future bride at a well (Gen 24:1-27; 29:1-12; Exod 2:15-21).

**4:9** *didn't associate:* or "don't associate." We can't tell for sure if the woman said this or if the narrator added it for clarification.

**4:10** *living water:* fresh running water, but a play on words that hints at the water of "eternal life" (John 4:14).

**4:14** *never be thirsty again:* a clear signal that the water represents *eternal life*.

**4:16** *Go, get your husband:* not "your father," as it would have been if this were about finding a bride at a well (see Gen 24:23; 29:12). Jesus is seeking access to a whole village.

**4:18** *You've had five husbands:* Jesus knows all about the woman, just as he had known all about Nathanael (John 1:47; cf. John 2:24).

**4:20** *this mountain:* Mount Gerizim, visible from Jacob's well, was where the Samaritan temple once stood (see Deut 11:29).

**4:21** *neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem:* The Jerusalem temple was destroyed in 70 CE. It may have already been destroyed when John was written.

**4:22** *salvation is from the Jews:* Jesus, a Jew (John 4:9),

worship what you don't know; we worship what we know because salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>But the time is coming—and is here!—when true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. The Father looks for those who worship him this way. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and it is necessary to worship God in spirit and truth."

<sup>25</sup>The woman said, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one who is called the Christ. When he comes, he will teach everything to us."

<sup>26</sup>Jesus said to her, "I Am—the one who speaks with you."

<sup>27</sup>Just then, Jesus' disciples arrived and were shocked that he was talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" <sup>28</sup>The woman put down her water jar and went into the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup>"Come and see a man who has told me everything I've done! Could this man be the Christ?" <sup>30</sup>They left the city and were on their way to see Jesus.

<sup>31</sup>In the meantime the disciples spoke to Jesus, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

<sup>32</sup>Jesus said to them, "I have food to eat that you don't know about."

<sup>33</sup>The disciples asked each other, "Has someone brought him food?"

<sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, "I am fed by doing the will of the one who sent me and by completing his work. <sup>35</sup>Don't you have a saying, 'Four more months and then it's time for harvest'? Look, I tell you: open your eyes and notice that the fields are already ripe for the harvest. <sup>36</sup>Those who harvest are receiving their pay and gathering fruit for eternal life so that those who sow and those who harvest can celebrate together. <sup>37</sup>This is a true saying, that one sows and another harvests. <sup>38</sup>I have sent you to harvest what you didn't work hard for; others worked hard, and you will share in their hard work."

<sup>39</sup>Many Samaritans in that city believed in Jesus because of the woman's word when she testified, "He told me everything I've ever done." <sup>40</sup>So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup>Many more believed because of his word, <sup>42</sup>and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this one is truly the savior of the world."

**Jesus arrives in Galilee**

<sup>43</sup>After two days Jesus left for Galilee. (<sup>44</sup>Jesus himself had testified that prophets have no honor in their own country.) <sup>45</sup>When he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him because they had seen all the things he had done in Jerusalem during the festival, for they also had been at the festival.

<sup>1</sup>Or *It is I, the one who speaks with you.*

naturally sides with the Jews (cf. Rom 9:4-5). Yet if *salvation is from the Jews*, it is for the whole world (see John 4:42).

4:23 *the time is coming—and is here!*: For Jesus and the woman this is a future time, but for the Gospel's author it is present time. *in spirit and truth*: The two are almost the same thing, as in "the Spirit of Truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13) and "the Spirit is the truth" (1 John 5:6).

4:24 *God is spirit*: Compare with John 1:18. The Jews know this, as Jesus has just acknowledged (John 4:22), but the "true worshippers" who "will worship" God "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23) are a new people, neither Jew nor Samaritan.

4:26 *I Am*: or "It is I." This is Jesus' first use of this expression in the Gospel (cf. John 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5). The implied predicate noun here (i.e., "is the Christ") describes Jesus as the woman visualized him: the one "who will teach everything to us" (John 4:25).

4:28 *put down her water jar*: The urgency is such that she hurries back to the village without taking what she'd come for (cf. Mark 1:18, 20).

4:29 *everything I've done*: an exaggeration but an understandable one, given that she was expecting a Christ who

would make everything known (John 4:25). *Could this man be the Christ?*: not a confession of faith because it anticipates a negative answer. It's significant, however, that she even raises the possibility.

4:35 *already ripe for the harvest*: The *harvest* takes place within the story as the Samaritans come to faith (cf. John 4:23).

4:38 *I have sent you to harvest*: when he authorized them to baptize (John 4:2). *others worked hard*: The *others* are undefined. No one soul winner brings about conversion, for a multitude of factors work together to produce faith.

4:42 *heard for ourselves*: The point isn't to downplay the woman's testimony but to confirm it. *savior of the world*: The Samaritans aren't just a rival sect but viewed as Gentiles representing the whole *world* (cf. John 3:16-17).

4:43-54 Jesus continues to Galilee where he heals a royal official's dying son, bringing a whole household to faith.

4:44 *their own country*: translated in the other Gospels as "hometown" (Matt 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24). To stay here more than "two days" (John 4:40, 43) would wear out his welcome, as if he would be making this village his hometown. Prophets are expected to stay on the move.

4:23 Jn 5:25; Phi 3:3  
 4:24 Lv 10:3; 2Ki 17:36; 1Ch 16:29; 2Co 3:17; Phi 3:3  
 4:25 Mt 1:16; Jn 1:41, Jn 4:29  
 4:26 Mt 26:63; Jn 8:28, Jn 9:37  
 4:27 Jn 4:8  
 4:28 Mt 28:8  
 4:29 Jn 4:17; Jn 4:18, Jn 4:25; Jn 7:31  
 4:31 Jn 1:38  
 4:32 Job 23:12; Jn 4:34  
 4:33 Lk 9:45; Jn 3:4, Jn 4:11; Jn 6:52, Jn 11:12  
 4:34 Jn 5:30; Jn 5:36, Jn 6:38; Jn 17:4, Jn 19:30  
 4:35 Mt 9:37; Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2  
 4:36 Ro 1:13  
 4:37 Job 31:8; Mi 6:15  
 4:38 Jn 1:7  
 4:39 Jn 4:5; Jn 4:29  
 4:40 Lk 19:5  
 4:41 Jn 4:42; Ac 1:8  
 4:42 Lk 2:11; Jn 1:29; Jn 4:14  
 4:43 Jn 4:40  
 4:44 Mt 13:57; Mk 6:4; Lk 4:24  
 4:45 Jn 2:23

4:46 Jn 2:1

4:47 Mt 4:25;  
Lk 5:17; Jn 4:3,  
Jn 4:544:48 Jn 2:18;  
Ac 2:22;  
1Co 12:2;  
2Co 12:124:49 Mk 5:23;  
Mk 5:35

4:50 Mt 8:13

4:51 Jn 4:50

4:53 Ac 11:14;  
Ac 16:34

4:54 Jn 2:11

5:1 Jn 2:13

5:2 Neh 3:1;  
Neh 3:32;

Neh 12:39;

Jn 19:20;

Ac 21:40

5:5 Jn 9:1

5:6 Mk 10:51;  
Lk 19:5; Jn 11:33;  
Jn 21:175:7 Ps 142:4;  
Jn 5:4; Ro 5:65:8 Mt 9:6;  
Mk 2:11; Lk 5:24

5:9 Jn 9:14

5:10 Mt 12:2;  
Lk 6:2; Jn 7:23

5:13 Jn 8:59

5:14 Jn 8:11

**Jesus' second miraculous sign in Galilee**

<sup>46</sup>He returned to Cana in Galilee where he had turned the water into wine. In Capernaum there was a certain royal official whose son was sick. <sup>47</sup>When he heard that Jesus was coming from Judea to Galilee, he went out to meet him and asked Jesus if he would come and heal his son, for his son was about to die. <sup>48</sup>Jesus said to him, "Unless you see miraculous signs and wonders, you won't believe."

<sup>49</sup>The royal official said to him, "Lord, come before my son dies."

<sup>50</sup>Jesus replied, "Go home. Your son lives." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and set out for his home.

<sup>51</sup>While he was on his way, his servants were already coming to meet him. They said, "Your son lives!" <sup>52</sup>So he asked them at what time his son had started to get better. And they said, "The fever left him yesterday at about one o'clock in the afternoon." <sup>53</sup>Then the father realized that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son lives." And he and his entire household believed in Jesus. <sup>54</sup>This was the second miraculous sign Jesus did while going from Judea to Galilee.

**Sabbath healing**

**5** After this there was a Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>In Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate in the north city wall is a pool with the Aramaic name Bethesda. It had five covered porches, <sup>3</sup>and a crowd of people who were sick, blind, lame, and paralyzed sat there. <sup>4</sup>A certain man was there who had been sick for thirty-eight years. <sup>5</sup>When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing that he had already been there a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"

<sup>7</sup>The sick man answered him, "Sir, I don't have anyone who can put me in the water when it is stirred up. When I'm trying to get to it, someone else has gotten in ahead of me."

<sup>8</sup>Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." <sup>9</sup>Immediately the man was well, and he picked up his mat and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.

<sup>10</sup>The Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, "It's the Sabbath; you aren't allowed to carry your mat."

<sup>11</sup>He answered, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"

<sup>12</sup>They inquired, "Who is this man who said to you, 'Pick it up and walk?'" <sup>13</sup>The man who had been cured didn't know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away from the crowd gathered there.

<sup>14</sup>Later Jesus found him in the temple and said, "See! You have been made well. Don't sin

<sup>k</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament do not include the following addition *waiting for the water to move*.

<sup>4</sup>Sometimes an angel would come down to the pool and stir up the water. Then the first one going into the water after it had been stirred up was cured of any sickness. <sup>1</sup>Or Lord

4:46 *royal official*: a servant, military or otherwise, of either the emperor or of Herod Antipas. Herod was the tetrarch, or king, of Galilee. The *official* could be a Gentile, but we can't be sure.

4:48 *Unless you see miraculous signs*: Jesus is suspicious of these Galileans because "they had seen all the things he had done in Jerusalem" (John 4:45), and he fears their faith is as shallow as the faith of those to whom he "didn't trust himself" (John 2:24).

4:50 *"Go home. Your son lives"*: Jesus heals from a distance, as in Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10, but this time he takes the initiative. *The man believed the word*: Compare with John 20:29.

4:53 *he and his entire household believed*: The book of Acts speaks of the faith and baptism of entire households (Acts 10:2; 11:4; 16:5, 31, 33, 34; 18:8).

4:54 *the second miraculous sign*: not second overall, but the second in Galilee (Cana specifically, where Jesus spoke the healing words). The numbered sequence of signs doesn't continue (see John 2:11).

5:1-18 Jesus heals a sick man next to a pool in Jerusalem known for its healing powers. Ignoring the pool, Jesus

simply tells the man to take his mat and walk, and he does. The man is questioned by the religious authorities for carrying his mat on the Sabbath, and he finally identifies Jesus as the one who told him to do this. Jesus is then questioned for breaking the Sabbath. Because he claims God as his Father, they set out to kill him.

5:1 *a Jewish festival*: In contrast to John 2:13; 7:2; 10:22; 11:55, this festival isn't named; it's mentioned only to explain why Jesus is in Jerusalem.

5:3-4 See translation note. The long addition in certain later manuscripts represents an attempt by scribes to explain why the water was periodically stirred up (John 5:7).

5:8 *Pick up your mat*: Compare with Mark 2:11, where the Sabbath isn't an issue. In John the command appears to be a deliberate provocation on Jesus' part (see John 5:9).

5:10 *you aren't allowed to carry your mat*: This law isn't in the Law of Moses but comes from Jewish oral law.

5:14 *Don't sin anymore*: the first mention of sin in this Gospel. Jesus knows the man's true nature (John 2:25). It's as if *you have been made well* is somehow equivalent to "Your sins are forgiven" (cf. Mark 2:9-12). *something worse*: unspecified, but quite possibly death (see John 8:21, 24).



anymore in case something worse happens to you.”<sup>15</sup>The man went and proclaimed to the Jewish leaders that Jesus was the man who had made him well.

<sup>16</sup>As a result, the Jewish leaders were harassing Jesus, since he had done these things on the Sabbath. <sup>17</sup>Jesus replied, “My Father is still working, and I am working too.” <sup>18</sup>For this reason the Jewish leaders wanted even more to kill him—not only because he was doing away with the Sabbath but also because he called God his own Father, thereby making himself equal with God.

### Work of the Father and the Son

<sup>19</sup>Jesus responded to the Jewish leaders, “I assure you that the Son can’t do anything by himself except what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. <sup>20</sup>The Father loves the Son and shows him everything that he does. He will show him greater works than these so that you will marvel. <sup>21</sup>As the Father raises the dead and gives life, so too does the Son give life to whomever he wishes. <sup>22</sup>The Father doesn’t judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to the Son<sup>23</sup> so that everyone will honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever doesn’t honor the Son doesn’t honor the Father who sent him.

<sup>24</sup>“I assure you that whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and won’t come under judgment but has passed from death into life.

<sup>25</sup>“I assure you that the time is coming—and is here!—when the dead will hear the voice of God’s Son, and those who hear it will live. <sup>26</sup>Just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. <sup>27</sup>He gives the Son authority to judge, because he is the Human One.<sup>m</sup> <sup>28</sup>Don’t be surprised by this, because the time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice. <sup>29</sup>Those who did good things will come out into the resurrection of life, and those who did wicked things into the resurrection of judgment. <sup>30</sup>I can’t do anything by myself. Whatever I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just. I don’t seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me.

### Witnesses to Jesus

<sup>31</sup>“If I testify about myself, my testimony isn’t true. <sup>32</sup>There is someone else who testifies about me, and I know his testimony about me is true. <sup>33</sup>You sent a delegation to John, and

<sup>m</sup>Or Son of Man

5:30 Mt 26:39; Jn 4:34, Jn 5:19, Jn 6:38, Jn 8:16 5:31 Jn 8:14 5:32 Mt 3:17, Mt 17:5; Jn 5:37, Jn 8:18; 1Jn 5:9 5:33 Jn 1:7, Jn 1:15, Jn 1:19, Jn 1:29, Jn 3:26

5:15 *proclaimed to the Jewish leaders*: The verb “proclaimed” suggests a testimony of faith (cf. 1 John 1:5), but instead the man reports Jesus to the religious authorities as *the man who had made him well* on the Sabbath.

5:16 *these things*: suggests the healing at the pool was only one instance of Jesus’ activity on the Sabbath.

5:17 *My Father... working too*: God’s work didn’t stop when God “rested” on the seventh day (Gen 2:2). God merely ceased the work of creation in order to do other things. Jesus claims the same authority for himself as God’s Son (cf. Mark 2:28).

5:18 *making himself equal with God*: God is, in fact, what Jesus is (John 1:1, 18), but the Jewish leaders view any claim to be *God or equal with God* as a terrible insult to God (John 10:33; cf. Phil 2:6).

5:19-30 Jesus addresses his relation to God, whom he claims as his Father. He does nothing *by himself*, only what he sees or hears from the Father. This includes all that the Father does: granting eternal life, raising the dead, and carrying out judgment, now and at the last day.

5:19 *responded*: not to any question directly asked. No setting is given, nor is there any reply to the discourse that follows. It’s simply what he has to say in response to such charges.

5:25 *the time is coming—and is here!*: Jesus is looking not just at the resurrection at the last day, as in John 5:28-29, but at the awakening of those who are spiritually dead even now (cf. John 4:23).

5:27 *because he is the Human One*: Given his distrust of “human nature” (John 2:25), it’s unlikely Jesus has authority to judge simply because he’s human. Rather, *the Human One* has the authority to judge because he is first of all *the Son* who “came down from heaven” (John 3:13; cf. Dan 7:13-14).

5:28 *Don’t be surprised*: because Jesus’ view of the resurrection is similar to theirs, differing only in that the voice summoning the dead will be his voice, “the voice of God’s Son” (John 5:25). *all who are in their graves*: not just the spiritually dead, as in John 5:25, but those who are literally dead.

5:29 *Those who did good things... wicked things*: Judgment is on the basis of works, but Jesus has already stated that one’s good works are displayed when one “comes to the light” (John 3:21), that is, when one believes in him.

5:31-47 As if he were in a trial, Jesus calls his witnesses: John the Baptist, his own works, the Father, his accusers’ own scriptures, and *the writings of Moses*. No response or verdict is given.

5:31-32 *If I testify about myself, my testimony isn’t true*: Jesus seems to say just the opposite in John 8:14. There he adds, “since I know where I came from and where I’m going,” a reference to the Father. *someone else*: the Father (John 5:37). The point being made here is actually the same as in John 8:18, where “the Father who sent me is the other.”

5:15 Mk 1:45; Jn 1:19, Jn 5:16, Jn 9:11

5:16 Lk 6:11; Jn 7:1

5:17 Mt 8:29, Mt 16:17; Jn 6:32, Jn 14:23; 2Co 1:3

5:18 Jn 10:30, Jn 10:33, Jn 19:7; Phi 2:6

5:19 Jn 5:30, Jn 8:28

5:20 Mt 3:17; Jn 3:35, Jn 14:12

5:21 Jn 11:25; Ro 4:17, Ro 8:11

5:22 Jn 5:27, Jn 9:39;

Ac 10:42, Ac 17:31;

Ro 14:10

5:23 Lk 10:16; Jn 15:23; 1Jn 2:23

5:24 Jn 3:15, Jn 3:18, Jn 3:36;

Jn 20:31; 1Jn 3:14

5:25 Jn 4:21, Jn 4:23

5:26 Jn 1:4, Jn 6:57

5:27 Jn 5:22

5:28 Jn 4:21, Jn 5:29, Jn 6:39;

Jn 6:40, Ac 24:15

5:29 Dn 12:2; Mt 25:46;

Lk 14:14; Jn 5:28; Ac 24:15

5:34 1Jn 5:9  
 5:35 Mt 13:20;  
 2Pt 1:19  
 5:36 Mt 11:4;  
 Jn 4:34, Jn 10:25,  
 Jn 14:11,  
 Jn 15:24  
 5:37 Mt 3:17;  
 Jn 1:18, Jn 8:18,  
 1Pt 1:17  
 5:38 Is 53:1;  
 Lk 12:46; Jn 1:11,  
 Jn 3:17; 1Jn 2:13  
 5:39 Lk 24:27;  
 Jn 7:52;  
 Ac 17:11  
 5:40 Ps 81:11;  
 Is 50:2, Is 53:1;  
 Mt 23:37;  
 Jn 3:19  
 5:41 Jn 5:34,  
 Jn 7:18, 1Th 2:6  
 5:42 Lk 11:42;  
 Jn 2:25  
 5:43 Mt 24:5;  
 Jn 1:11, Jn 10:25  
 5:44 Jn 12:43,  
 Jn 17:3; Ro 2:29  
 5:45 Jn 9:28  
 5:46 Lk 24:27;  
 Ac 26:22  
 5:47 Lk 16:29,  
 Lk 16:31  
 6:1 Mt 4:18,  
 Mt 14:13,  
 Mk 6:32;  
 Lk 9:10; Jn 21:1  
 6:2 Jn 2:11  
 6:3 Jn 6:15  
 6:4 Jn 2:13,  
 Jn 11:55  
 6:5 Jn 1:43  
 6:6 Dt 8:2  
 6:7 Mk 6:37  
 6:8 Mt 4:18;  
 Jn 1:40  
 6:9 2Ki 4:42  
 6:10 Mk 6:39  
 6:11 Mt 15:36;  
 Jn 6:23

he testified to the truth. <sup>34</sup>Although I don't accept human testimony, I say these things so that you can be saved. <sup>35</sup>John was a burning and shining lamp, and, at least for a while, you were willing to celebrate in his light.

<sup>36</sup>"I have a witness greater than John's testimony. The Father has given me works to do so that I might complete them. These works I do testify about me that the Father sent me. <sup>37</sup>And the Father who sent me testifies about me. You have never even heard his voice or seen his form, <sup>38</sup>and you don't have his word dwelling with you because you don't believe the one whom he has sent. <sup>39</sup>Examine the scriptures, since you think that in them you have eternal life. They also testify about me, <sup>40</sup>yet you don't want to come to me so that you can have life.

<sup>41</sup>"I don't accept praise from people, <sup>42</sup>but I know you, that you don't have God's love in you. <sup>43</sup>I have come in my Father's name, and you don't receive me. If others come in their own name, you receive them. <sup>44</sup>How can you believe when you receive praise from each other but don't seek the praise that comes from the only God?

<sup>45</sup>"Don't think that I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, the one in whom your hope rests. <sup>46</sup>If you believed Moses, you would believe me, because Moses wrote about me. <sup>47</sup>If you don't believe the writings of Moses, how will you believe my words?"

### Feeding of the five thousand

**6** After this Jesus went across the Galilee Sea (that is, the Tiberias Sea). <sup>2</sup>A large crowd followed him, because they had seen the miraculous signs he had done among the sick. <sup>3</sup>Jesus went up a mountain and sat there with his disciples. <sup>4</sup>It was nearly time for Passover, the Jewish festival.

<sup>5</sup>Jesus looked up and saw the large crowd coming toward him. He asked Philip, "Where will we buy food to feed these people?" <sup>6</sup>Jesus said this to test him, for he already knew what he was going to do.

<sup>7</sup>Philip replied, "More than a half year's salary<sup>a</sup> worth of food wouldn't be enough for each person to have even a little bit."

<sup>8</sup>One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, <sup>9</sup>"A youth here has five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that for a crowd like this?"

<sup>10</sup>Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass there. They sat down, about five thousand of them. <sup>11</sup>Then Jesus took the bread. When he had given thanks, he distributed it to those who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish, each getting as much as they wanted. <sup>12</sup>When they had plenty to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather up the leftover pieces, so that nothing will be wasted." <sup>13</sup>So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves that had been left over by those who had eaten.

<sup>a</sup>Or two hundred denaria

5:34 *so that you can be saved*: John's testimony means little to Jesus because it's mere *human testimony*, but it's good if it convinces these Jews to believe.

5:35 *for a while*: until his imprisonment (John 3:24), to *celebrate in his light*: Evidently, the delegation sent to John (John 1:19-28) liked his answers.

5:37 *never even heard his voice or seen his form*: Compare with Israel at Sinai, "You heard the sound of words, but you didn't see any form" (Deut 4:12). Jesus' accusers, by contrast, neither see nor hear God, for they refuse to believe in Jesus (John 5:38).

5:39 *Examine the scriptures*: or "You examine the scriptures," recognizing that they already do this.

5:46 *Moses wrote about me*: Compare with John 1:45. To deny Jesus was to deny their own scriptures (John 5:39) and, above all, Moses, "in whom your hope rests" (John 5:45).

6:1-15 Jesus is abruptly back in Galilee, followed by *A large crowd that had seen the miraculous signs he had done among the sick*. After coming down from a mountain where he had been sitting with his disciples, Jesus feeds a crowd of 5,000 with five barley loaves and two fish. When some of them try to make him king, he hides alone on the mountain.

6:1 *After this*: Compare with John 5:1; 7:1. We don't learn how the discourse to the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem ended or how they responded. *across the Galilee Sea*: north to south, from Capernaum to the vicinity of Tiberias.

6:4 *Passover*: This is the only time in John's Gospel when Jesus isn't in Jerusalem for a festival (cf. John 2:23; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1). It's mentioned here to anticipate his discourse on "bread from heaven" (John 6:32) and himself as "the bread of life" (John 6:35).

6:9 *A youth*: The youth's age and gender aren't specified. 6:10 *They sat down*: or "The men sat down," implying the 5,000 people were, in fact, just the men (cf. Matt 14:21, "About five thousand men plus women and children had eaten"). This number may not even have taken into account all the "youth" who were present, including the one who had supplied the food (John 6:9)!

6:11 *given thanks*: The giving of thanks (cf. John 6:23) accomplishes the miracle (cf. John 11:41-42). The language recalls the Last Supper and the Christian Eucharist, or "giving thanks" (see Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24).

6:13 *twelve baskets*: the first hint of 12 chosen disciples (John 6:67, 70).

<sup>14</sup>When the people saw that he had done a miraculous sign, they said, "This is truly the prophet who is coming into the world."<sup>15</sup> Jesus understood that they were about to come and force him to be their king, so he took refuge again, alone on a mountain.

### Jesus walks on water

<sup>16</sup>When evening came, Jesus' disciples went down to the lake. <sup>17</sup>They got into a boat and were crossing the lake to Capernaum. It was already getting dark and Jesus hadn't come to them yet. <sup>18</sup>The water was getting rough because a strong wind was blowing. <sup>19</sup>When the wind had driven them out for about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the water. He was approaching the boat and they were afraid. <sup>20</sup>He said to them, "I Am.<sup>o</sup> Don't be afraid." <sup>21</sup>Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and just then the boat reached the land where they had been heading.

<sup>22</sup>The next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the lake realized that only one boat had been there. They knew Jesus hadn't gone with his disciples, but that the disciples had gone alone. <sup>23</sup>Some boats came from Tiberius, near the place where they had eaten the bread over which the Lord had given thanks. <sup>24</sup>When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. <sup>25</sup>When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

### Bread of life

<sup>26</sup>Jesus replied, "I assure you that you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate all the food you wanted. <sup>27</sup>Don't work for the food that doesn't last but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Human One<sup>p</sup> will give you. God the Father has confirmed him as his agent to give life."

<sup>28</sup>They asked, "What must we do in order to accomplish what God requires?"

<sup>29</sup>Jesus replied, "This is what God requires, that you believe in him whom God sent."

<sup>30</sup>They asked, "What miraculous sign will you do, that we can see and believe you? What will you do?" <sup>31</sup>Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, *He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*<sup>q</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Jesus told them, "I assure you, it wasn't Moses who gave the bread from heaven to you, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>The bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

<sup>o</sup>Or It is I. <sup>p</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>q</sup>Ps 78:24

6:14-15 *the prophet*: like Moses, as in John 1:21 (see Deut 18:15-18). *force him to be their king*: Jewish tradition regarded Moses as both a king and a prophet (cf. Matt 11:12).

6:16-25 Jesus' disciples cross the lake again in a boat to Capernaum. On their way they see Jesus walking toward them on the water, and they're afraid. But he identifies himself, and, as they are about to take him into the boat, they discover they have reached shore. Meanwhile, when the crowd on the other side of the lake realize Jesus has gone, they come in boats to Capernaum. Finding Jesus, the crowd members ask him how he got there.

6:17 *Jesus hadn't come to them yet*: a signal in advance of what is going to happen.

6:20 *I Am*: or "It is I!" Compare with Matthew 14:27; Mark 6:50, where the same Greek words are translated as "It's me."

6:23 *Some boats*: They're in the story only to get the enormous crowd across the lake.

6:25 *when did you get here*: The puzzled question testifies to the miraculous crossing.

6:26-71 Jesus' audience keeps changing throughout this discourse, from "the crowd" (John 6:24) to *the Jews* (6:41, 52) to *the disciples* (6:60-61); but the responses are always much the same. Jesus speaks of *food that*

*endures for eternal life* (6:27) and responds to a question based on Psalm 78:24, *He gave them bread from heaven to eat* (6:31). The discussion centers first on the words "bread from heaven" and then on the verb "to eat." Jesus presents himself as *the bread of life* (6:35) that *came down from heaven* (6:41), with his flesh being understood as something to *eat* (6:52) and his blood as something to drink. His language offends even his disciples, and many of them leave. Only *the Twelve* (6:67), with Peter as spokesman, remain faithful, and even one of them is suspect.

6:27 *food*: Compare with John 4:32-34, where Jesus' own *food* was "doing the will of the one who sent me" and "completing his work."

6:29 *what God requires*: or "God's work." Just as Jesus' calling is to complete God's work (John 4:34), theirs is to believe in him who has done this.

6:30 *What miraculous sign will you do*: Jesus doesn't perform miraculous signs for those who want proof of his authority (cf. John 2:18).

6:32 *true bread from heaven*: Jesus shifts the discussion away from Moses and the manna in the wilderness (e.g., Exod 16). It isn't a question of what Jesus can do (e.g., perform a sign comparable to that of manna from heaven) but of who he is.

6:14 Mt 11:3.  
Mt 21:11;  
Lk 24:19; Jn 1:21.  
Jn 4:19  
6:15 Mt 14:22;  
Jn 18:36  
6:16 Mt 14:22  
6:17 Jn 2:12.  
Jn 4:46; Jn 6:24.  
Jn 6:59  
6:18 Ps 107:25  
6:19 Mt 14:25  
6:20 Mt 14:27  
6:22 Mt 14:22;  
Jn 6:2; Jn 6:15;  
Jn 6:17  
6:23 Jn 6:1.  
Jn 6:11  
6:24 Jn 6:17  
6:25 Jn 1:38  
6:26 Jn 6:24.  
Ro 16:18  
6:27 Is 55:2.  
Jn 6:54; Jn 10:28  
6:28 Mt 19:16  
6:29 1Jn 3:23  
6:30 Mt 12:38  
6:31 Ex 16:4.  
Ex 16:15.  
Neh 9:15.  
Ps 78:24; Jn 6:49  
6:32 Jn 6:33.  
Jn 6:35  
6:33 Jn 6:50

6:34 Jn 4:15

6:35 Jn 4:14,  
Jn 6:48, Jn 6:51,  
Jn 7:37, Jn 11:25  
6:36 Lk 16:31;  
Jn 6:26, Jn 6:64,  
Jn 12:37,  
Jn 15:246:37 Jn 6:39,  
Jn 17:3, Jn 17:6,  
Jn 17:9, Jn 17:246:38 Mt 26:39;  
Jn 3:13, Jn 4:34,  
Jn 5:306:39 Jn 6:40,  
Jn 6:44, Jn 6:54,  
Jn 17:12, Jn 18:96:40 Jn 3:15,  
Jn 3:16, Jn 6:27,  
Jn 6:47, Jn 6:546:41 Lk 15:2,  
Lk 19:7, Jn 6:33,  
Jn 6:51, Jn 6:526:42 Mt 13:55;  
Lk 4:22; Jn 7:27,  
Jn 7:286:43 Mt 16:8;  
Jn 6:64, Jn 16:196:44 Jer 31:3;  
Hos 11:4;  
Jn 6:39, Jn 6:65,  
Jn 12:326:45 Is 54:13;  
Jer 31:33,  
Jer 31:34;  
1Th 4:9; Heb 8:116:46 Jn 1:18,  
Jn 7:296:47 Jn 3:36,  
Jn 5:246:48 Jn 6:35,  
Jn 6:516:49 Jn 6:31,  
Jn 6:586:50 Jn 6:33,  
Jn 6:51, Jn 6:58,  
Jn 11:266:51 Lk 22:19;  
Jn 6:33, Jn 6:35,  
Jn 6:48, Jn 6:586:52 Jn 3:4,  
Jn 3:9, Jn 6:41,  
Jn 9:16, Jn 10:19

<sup>34</sup>They said, "Sir,<sup>f</sup> give us this bread all the time!"

<sup>35</sup>Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>36</sup>But I told you that you have seen me and still don't believe. <sup>37</sup>Everyone whom the Father gives to me will come to me, and I won't send away anyone who comes to me. <sup>38</sup>I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup>This is the will of the one who sent me, that I won't lose anything he has given me, but I will raise it up at the last day. <sup>40</sup>This is my Father's will: that all who see the Son and believe in him will have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

<sup>41</sup>The Jewish opposition grumbled about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

<sup>42</sup>They asked, "Isn't this Jesus, Joseph's son, whose mother and father we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

<sup>43</sup>Jesus responded, "Don't grumble among yourselves. <sup>44</sup>No one can come to me unless they are drawn to me by the Father who sent me, and I will raise them up at the last day. <sup>45</sup>It is written in the Prophets, And they will all be taught by God.<sup>g</sup> Everyone who has listened to the Father and learned from him comes to me. <sup>46</sup>No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God. He has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup>I assure you, whoever believes has eternal life.

<sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness and they died. <sup>50</sup>This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that whoever eats from it will never die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

<sup>52</sup>Then the Jews debated among themselves, asking, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

<sup>53</sup>Jesus said to them, "I assure you, unless you eat the flesh of the Human One<sup>h</sup> and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup>Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. <sup>55</sup>My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup>Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in them. <sup>57</sup>As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me lives because of me. <sup>58</sup>This is the bread that came down from heaven. It isn't like the bread your ancestors ate, and then they died. Whoever eats this bread will live forever." <sup>59</sup>Jesus said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

<sup>60</sup>Many of his disciples who heard this said, "This message is harsh. Who can hear it?"

<sup>61</sup>Jesus knew that the disciples were grumbling about this and he said to them, "Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup>What if you were to see the Human One<sup>a</sup> going up where he was before?"

<sup>f</sup>Or Lord <sup>g</sup>Isa 54:13 <sup>h</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>a</sup>Or Son of Man

6:53 Mt 8:20; Jn 6:27 6:54 Jn 6:39; Jn 6:40 6:56 Jn 15:4; 1Jn 3:24, 1Jn 4:15 6:57 Jn 3:17; Jn 5:26 6:58 Jn 6:33; Jn 6:49 6:59 Jn 6:24 6:60 Jn 6:52; Jn 6:66 6:61 Mt 11:6; Jn 2:24; Jn 6:64 6:62 Mk 16:19; Jn 3:13; Jn 17:5

6:34 "Sir, give us this bread all the time!": Compare with the Samaritan woman's request for water (John 4:15).

6:35 will never be thirsty: Compare with John 4:14.

6:36 But I told you: Jesus' discourses are written as if his audience is always the same, whether in Galilee or Jerusalem (cf. John 5:37-44).

6:37 I won't send away anyone who comes to me: The promise is given on Jesus' assumption that those who come to him are, in fact, those whom the Father gives to me (cf. John 6:39; 10:29; 17:6-19, 24).

6:38 I have come down from heaven: He who "was with God in the beginning" (John 1:2) must necessarily have come down from heaven (cf. John 3:13, 31).

6:39 that I won't lose anything he has given me: Just as none of the fragments of bread are "wasted," or lost (John 6:12), so none who belong to Jesus will be lost (John 10:28-29; 17:12), because "eternal life" is theirs (John 6:40).

6:44-45 unless they are drawn to me by the Father: "Drawn" is defined in 6:45 as being "taught by God" so as to come to Jesus. *be taught by God*: a quotation from Isaiah 54:13, where the CEB translates the phrase that could be "be taught by" as "be disciples of."

6:46 the one who is from God: Jesus himself. He speaks of himself in the third person, remembering his preexistence with the Father (cf. John 1:18; 3:11, 32; 8:38).

6:51 my flesh: Jesus' flesh for the life of the world is his flesh given in death (cf. Luke 22:19). "Flesh," like "blood," becomes a metaphor for death (see Eph 2:13-14; Col 1:22).

6:53 eat the flesh... drink his blood: While the language Jesus uses (eating flesh and drinking blood) recalls the Lord's Supper ("This is my body... This is my blood"), it never became part of the liturgy.

6:57 As... I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me lives because of me: Eating the flesh of Jesus parallels his own claim that he himself is "fed" by doing the Father's will (John 4:34). Similarly, a disciple is fed by following him, even to death if necessary (see John 12:24-26).

6:59 in the synagogue: The discussion has moved from the lakeshore to the Capernaum synagogue (cf. John 18:20).

6:62 going up where he was before: This would prove he has come "down from heaven" (John 6:33, 38; cf. John 3:13). Later he will, in fact, go up where he was before (John 20:17).

<sup>63</sup>The Spirit is the one who gives life and the flesh doesn't help at all. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. <sup>64</sup>Yet some of you don't believe." Jesus knew from the beginning who wouldn't believe and the one who would betray him. <sup>65</sup>He said, "For this reason I said to you that none can come to me unless the Father enables them to do so." <sup>66</sup>At this, many of his disciples turned away and no longer accompanied him.

<sup>67</sup>Jesus asked the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"

<sup>68</sup>Simon Peter answered, "Lord, where would we go? You have the words of eternal life.

<sup>69</sup>We believe and know that you are God's holy one."

<sup>70</sup>Jesus replied, "Didn't I choose you twelve? Yet one of you is a devil." <sup>71</sup>He was speaking of Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

6:63 2Co 3:6  
6:64 Jn 2:25,  
Jn 6:66, Jn 13:11  
6:65 Mt 13:11,  
Jn 3:27, Jn 6:37,  
Jn 6:44, Jn 6:45  
6:66 Jn 6:60,  
Jn 6:64  
6:67 Mt 10:2,  
Jn 20:24  
6:68 Mt 16:16  
6:69 Mt 16:16;  
Mk 1:24,  
Mk 8:29;  
Lk 9:20; Jn 11:27

6:70 Jn 13:27  
6:71 Jn 12:4,  
Jn 13:2, Jn 13:26  
7:1 Jn 5:16,  
Jn 5:18, Jn 7:19,  
Jn 8:37, Jn 8:40  
7:2 Lv 23:34;  
Dt 16:13;  
Zec 14:16

7:3 Mt 12:46;  
Jn 7:5, Jn 7:10  
7:4 Jn 18:20  
7:5 Mk 3:21;  
Jn 7:3  
7:6 Mt 26:18;  
Jn 2:4, Jn 7:8,  
Jn 7:30

7:7 Jn 3:19,  
Jn 15:18  
7:8 Jn 7:6  
7:10 Jn 2:23,  
Jn 5:1, Jn 7:3,  
Jn 7:5, Jn 11:54  
7:11 Jn 11:56

7:12 Jn 7:40,  
Jn 9:16  
7:13 Prv 29:25;  
Jn 9:22, Jn 12:42,  
Jn 19:38,  
Jn 20:19  
7:14 Mt 26:55;  
Jn 7:28

### Jesus goes to Jerusalem

**7** After this Jesus traveled throughout Galilee. He didn't want to travel in Judea, because the Jewish authorities wanted to kill him. <sup>2</sup>When it was almost time for the Jewish Festival of Booths, <sup>3</sup>Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee. Go to Judea so that your disciples can see the amazing works that you do. <sup>4</sup>Those who want to be known publicly don't do things secretly. Since you can do these things, show yourself to the world." <sup>5</sup>His brothers said this because even they didn't believe in him.

<sup>6</sup>Jesus replied, "For you, anytime is fine. But my time hasn't come yet. <sup>7</sup>The world can't hate you. It hates me, though, because I testify that its works are evil. <sup>8</sup>You go up to the festival. I'm not going to this one because my time hasn't yet come." <sup>9</sup>Having said this, he stayed in Galilee. <sup>10</sup>However, after his brothers left for the festival, he went too—not openly but in secret.

<sup>11</sup>The Jewish leaders were looking for Jesus at the festival. They kept asking, "Where is he?" <sup>12</sup>The crowds were murmuring about him. "He's a good man," some said, but others were saying, "No, he tricks the people." <sup>13</sup>No one spoke about him publicly, though, for fear of the Jewish authorities.

### Jesus teaches in the temple

<sup>14</sup>Halfway through the festival, Jesus went up to the temple and started to teach. <sup>15</sup>Astonished, the Jewish leaders asked, "He's never been taught! How has he mastered the Law?"

<sup>16</sup>Jesus responded, "My teaching isn't mine but comes from the one who sent me. <sup>17</sup>Whoever wants to do God's will can tell whether my teaching is from God or whether I speak on my own. <sup>18</sup>Those who speak on their own seek glory for themselves. Those who seek the glory of him who sent me are people of truth; there's no falsehood in them. <sup>19</sup>Didn't Moses give you the Law? Yet none of you keep the Law. Why do you want to kill me?"

7:15 Mt 13:54 7:16 Jn 3:34; Jn 8:28, Jn 14:24 7:17 Ps 25:9; Dn 12:10; Jn 8:32 7:18 Jn 5:41, Jn 8:50 7:19 Jn 1:17, Jn 7:1

6:63 *The Spirit . . . gives life; raises the dead* (see Rom 8:11). *the flesh doesn't help at all*: Death accomplishes nothing unless it's followed by resurrection (see John 6:40, 44, 54).  
6:64 *Jesus knew . . . who would betray him*: That is, it will be "Judas, Simon Iscariot's son" (John 6:71). Nothing that happens takes Jesus by surprise.

6:67 *the Twelve*: In contrast to the other Gospels (Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16), *the Twelve* aren't all listed by name. John identifies only Simon Peter (John 6:68); Judas (John 6:71); and Thomas (John 20:24).

6:69 *God's holy one*: Ironically, "a person with an evil spirit" (Mark 1:23) once called Jesus "the holy one from God" in this same Capernaum synagogue (Mark 1:24).

6:70 *a devil*: The devil will take possession of Judas Iscariot just before he betrays Jesus (John 13:2, 27; cf. Luke 22:3).

7:1-13 Jesus continues for an indefinite time in Galilee, leaving Judea because he's wanted by the Jewish authorities (cf. John 5:18). His brothers urge him to go to Jerusalem for the Festival of Booths. Jesus refuses to go at their initiative but then does so on his own. The Jewish authorities are expecting him.

7:3 *so that your disciples can see*: Jesus' brothers are the only disciples we know who have already seen what Jesus

has done (John 2:11), but they're asking for a public display in Jerusalem.

7:5 *even they didn't believe in him*: despite the time spent together in John 2:12. At some point, however, they come to believe (Acts 1:14).

7:6 *my time hasn't come yet*: Jesus' itinerary is solely in God's hands; his brothers' isn't (John 7:5).

7:7 *The world can't hate you*: Contrast with John 15:18-19.  
7:10 *in secret*: the opposite of what his brothers want (John 7:4). We aren't told how Jesus maintained his secrecy.

7:14-52 Jesus arrives at the festival but isn't immediately recognized as the person the Jewish authorities want to arrest. When he's finally noticed, guards are sent to arrest him but without success. *On the last and most important day of the festival* (7:37), Jesus presents himself publicly as *living water*, leading to a division or dispute in the crowd and among the religious authorities.

7:15 *He's never been taught!*: But Jesus has been called Rabbi from the beginning (John 1:38; 3:2; cf. Acts 4:13). In light of the notice that he has come to the festival "in secret" (John 7:10), it appears his identity as a qualified teacher is concealed in some way.

7:18 *Those who seek . . . sent me*: or "He who seeks the glory

7:20 Mt 11:18;  
Mk 3:22; Jn 8:48,  
Jn 8:52; Jn 10:20

7:21 Jn 5:2,  
Jn 7:23

7:22 Gn 17:10;  
Lv 12:3; Jn 7:23;  
Ac 7:8

7:23 Mt 12:5;  
Jn 5:9; Jn 7:22

7:24 Is 11:3;  
Jn 8:15

7:25 Jn 7:1

7:26 Jn 7:48

7:27 Jn 6:42,  
Jn 7:42; Jn 9:29

7:28 Jn 7:14,  
Jn 8:19; Jn 8:26;  
Jn 8:42

7:29 Mt 11:27;  
Jn 3:17; Jn 8:20;  
Jn 8:55; Jn 17:25

7:30 Jn 7:32,  
Jn 7:44; Jn 8:20;  
Jn 10:39

7:31 Jn 2:11,  
Jn 2:23; Jn 8:30,  
Jn 10:42,  
Jn 12:42

7:32 Jn 7:45

7:33 Jn 12:35,  
Jn 13:33; Jn 16:5,  
Jn 16:16,  
Jn 20:17

7:34 Jn 8:21,  
Jn 13:33

7:35 Is 11:12;  
Zep 3:10;  
Jn 12:20; Jas 1:1;  
1Pt 1:1

7:36 Jn 7:34

7:37 Lv 23:36;  
Nm 29:35;  
Is 55:1; Jn 4:14,  
Jn 6:35

7:38 Is 44:3,  
Is 58:1; Jn 4:10,  
Jn 4:14

7:39 Jl 2:28;  
Jn 13:31,  
Jn 14:16,  
Jn 20:22; Ac 2:33

7:40 Mt 21:11;  
Lk 24:19; Jn 1:21,  
Jn 4:19; Jn 6:14

<sup>20</sup>The crowd answered, "You have a demon. Who wants to kill you?"

<sup>21</sup>Jesus replied, "I did one work, and you were all astonished. <sup>22</sup>Because Moses gave you the commandment about circumcision (although it wasn't Moses but the patriarchs), you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. <sup>23</sup>If a man can be circumcised on the Sabbath without breaking Moses' Law, why are you angry with me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath? <sup>24</sup>Don't judge according to appearances. Judge with right judgment."

<sup>25</sup>Some people from Jerusalem said, "Isn't he the one they want to kill? <sup>26</sup>Here he is, speaking in public, yet they aren't saying anything to him. Could it be that our leaders actually think he is the Christ? <sup>27</sup>We know where he is from, but when the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from."

<sup>28</sup>While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he exclaimed, "You know me and where I am from. I haven't come on my own. The one who sent me is true, and you don't know him. <sup>29</sup>I know him because I am from him and he sent me." <sup>30</sup>So they wanted to seize Jesus, but they couldn't because his time hadn't yet come.

<sup>31</sup>Many from that crowd believed in Jesus. They said, "When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man does?" <sup>32</sup>The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about Jesus, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent guards to arrest him.

<sup>33</sup>Therefore, Jesus said, "I'm still with you for a little while before I go to the one who sent me. <sup>34</sup>You will look for me, but you won't find me, and where I am you can't come."

<sup>35</sup>The Jewish opposition asked each other, "Where does he intend to go that we can't find him? Surely he doesn't intend to go where our people have been scattered and are living among the Greeks! He isn't going to teach the Greeks, is he? <sup>36</sup>What does he mean when he says, 'You will look for me, but you won't find me, and where I am you can't come?'"

<sup>37</sup>On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and shouted, "All who are thirsty should come to me!

<sup>38</sup>All who believe in me should drink!

As the scriptures said concerning me,<sup>v</sup>

*Rivers of living water will flow out from within him.*"

<sup>39</sup>Jesus said this concerning the Spirit. Those who believed in him would soon receive the Spirit, but they hadn't experienced the Spirit yet since Jesus hadn't yet been glorified.

<sup>40</sup>When some in the crowd heard these words, they said, "This man is truly the prophet."

<sup>41</sup>Others said, "He's the Christ." But others said, "The Christ can't come from Galilee, can he?"

<sup>42</sup>Didn't the scripture say that the Christ comes from David's family and from Bethlehem, David's village?" <sup>43</sup>So the crowd was divided over Jesus. <sup>44</sup>Some wanted to arrest him, but no one grabbed him.

<sup>45</sup>The guards returned to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked, "Why didn't you bring him?"

<sup>46</sup>The guards answered, "No one has ever spoken the way he does."

<sup>v</sup>Or *Whoever is thirsty should come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, just as the scriptures said, rivers of living water will flow out from within them.*

7:41 Jn 1:46; Jn 7:52 7:42 Mt 5:2; Mt 1:1; Mt 2:5; Lk 2:4 7:43 Jn 7:12; Jn 9:16; Jn 10:19 7:44 Jn 7:30 7:45 Jn 7:32 7:46 Mt 7:28; Mt 7:29; Lk 4:22

of the one who sent him," probably referring to Jesus himself. If so, Jesus is the person of *truth* who has *no falsehood* about him.

**7:20** *You have a demon:* or "You're crazy" (cf. John 10:20). *Who wants to kill you?:* They don't recognize Jesus as the person the authorities want to kill (see John 5:18).

**7:25** *Isn't he the one they want to kill?:* not a rhetorical question but a moment of recognition triggered by Jesus' claim that he made a man well on the Sabbath (John 7:23). It's also Jesus' pointed warning not to "judge according to appearances" (John 7:24).

**7:30** *So they wanted to seize Jesus:* In John 7:31-36, 45-46, we learn how this attempt is carried out and why it fails. *his time hadn't yet come:* his time to be arrested and put to death (cf. John 8:20).

**7:35** *teach the Greeks:* This is absurd at one level because

Jesus means he's going to the Father. It's also prophetic because he who is "the savior of the world" (John 4:42) will, by his crucifixion, *teach the Greeks* after all (John 12:20-24, 32).

**7:38** *As the scriptures said:* The source of this quotation is unknown. *from within him:* According to the CEB text, the *Rivers of living water* are *from within* Jesus (cf. John 19:34). The translation note identifies them as coming *from within* the believer (cf. John 4:14).

**7:39** *they hadn't experienced the Spirit yet:* The promise isn't for Jesus' immediate hearers at the festival but for his disciples after he has been *glorified* in his death and resurrection.

**7:42** *from David's family and from Bethlehem:* They don't realize this is, in fact, true of Jesus (see Matt 1-2; Luke 1-2).

<sup>47</sup>The Pharisees replied, "Have you too been deceived? <sup>48</sup>Have any of the leaders believed in him? Has any Pharisee? <sup>49</sup>No, only this crowd, which doesn't know the Law. And they are under God's curse!"

<sup>50</sup>Nicodemus, who was one of them and had come to Jesus earlier, said, <sup>51</sup>"Our Law doesn't judge someone without first hearing him and learning what he is doing, does it?"

<sup>52</sup>They answered him, "You are not from Galilee too, are you? Look it up and you will see that the prophet doesn't come from Galilee."

7:47 Jn 7:12  
7:48 Jn 7:26,  
Jn 12:42  
7:50 Jn 3:1,  
Jn 19:39  
7:51 Dt 19:15;  
Prv 18:13  
7:52 Jn 1:46,  
Jn 7:41  
8:1 Mt 21:1  
8:2 Mt 5:1,  
Mt 26:55;  
Lk 21:38  
8:5 Lv 20:10;  
Dt 22:22;  
Eze 16:38  
8:6 Mt 19:3,  
Mt 22:18;  
Lk 10:25  
8:7 Dt 17:7;  
Mt 7:1; Ro 2:1  
8:9 Job 9:20;  
Mt 14:1,  
Mt 23:31;  
Mk 6:14;  
Lk 19:22  
8:10 Jn 8:11  
8:11 Jn 3:17,  
Jn 5:14  
8:12 Jn 1:4,  
Jn 1:9, Jn 9:5,  
Jn 12:35,  
Jn 12:46  
8:13 Jn 5:31  
8:14 Jn 7:28,  
Jn 9:29, Jn 13:3,  
Jn 16:28,  
Jn 18:37

### Pharisees test Jesus

<sup>53</sup>They each went to their own homes,

**O** And Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup>Early in the morning he returned to the temple. All the people gathered around him, and he sat down and taught them.

<sup>3</sup>The legal experts and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery. Placing her in the center of the group, <sup>4</sup>they said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of committing adultery. <sup>5</sup>In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone women like this. What do you say?" <sup>6</sup>They said this to test him, because they wanted a reason to bring an accusation against him. Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground with his finger.

<sup>7</sup>They continued to question him, so he stood up and replied, "Whoever hasn't sinned should throw the first stone." <sup>8</sup>Bending down again, he wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup>Those who heard him went away, one by one, beginning with the elders. Finally, only Jesus and the woman were left in the middle of the crowd.

<sup>10</sup>Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Is there no one to condemn you?"

<sup>11</sup>She said, "No one, sir."<sup>w</sup>

Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on, don't sin anymore."<sup>x</sup>

*The Stoning That Doesn't Happen* John 7:53–8:11 is missing from our most reliable early manuscripts, but these early manuscripts weren't available to the translators of either the Protestant or the Catholic authorized versions. Consequently, the verses were routinely printed as part of John's Gospel. Modern versions right up to that of the CEB recognize that they're not original, but still print them (with an accompanying footnote) because of tradition and the universal appeal of the story. When they are omitted, everything from John 7:37 to John 8:59 happens on the last day of the Festival of Booths (John 7:37). When they're retained, this last festival day is followed by one more in which Jesus returns to the temple "Early in the morning" (John 8:1–2; cf. Luke 21:37–38). While he's teaching in the temple, the Pharisees bring in a woman caught in adultery to be stoned. "Whoever hasn't sinned should throw the first stone," Jesus tells them (John 8:7; see Deut 17:7), and her accusers file out. Left alone with her, Jesus refuses to condemn her. The story can be read as a comment on the whole of John 7–8, with the woman as a kind of stand-in for Jesus: Just as his accusers are judged and found wanting (John 8:46), so, too, are hers. Her story ends with a stoning that never happens, as does the whole discourse (John 8:59).

### Jesus continues to teach in the temple

<sup>12</sup>Jesus spoke to the people again, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me won't walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

<sup>13</sup>Then the Pharisees said to him, "Because you are testifying about yourself, your testimony isn't valid."

<sup>14</sup>Jesus replied, "Even if I testify about myself, my testimony is true, since I know where I came from and where I'm going. You don't know where I come from or where I'm going.

<sup>w</sup>Or *Lord* <sup>x</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament do not contain 7:53–8:11.

7:50 *Nicodemus, who was one of them:* His abrupt appearance answers the rhetorical question in John 7:48, "Have any of the leaders believed in him?" (cf. John 3:1; 12:42–43).  
7:52 *the prophet:* as in "the prophet" like Moses (John 1:21; 6:14).  
7:53–8:11 See sidebar, "The Stoning That Doesn't Happen."

8:12–30 Jesus presents himself as *the light of the world* (8:12), resulting in more extended controversy with the Pharisees until finally many *came to believe in him* (8:30).  
8:12 *the light of the world:* Compare with John 1:9–10; 3:19–21; 9:5; 12:35.  
8:14 *where I came from and where I'm going:* from the

8:15 1Sa 16:7;  
Jn 3:17, Jn 7:24  
8:16 Jn 5:30,  
Jn 8:29, Jn 16:32  
8:17 Dt 17:6,  
Dt 19:15,  
Mt 18:16,  
2Co 13:1

8:18 Jn 5:37  
8:19 Jn 7:28,  
Jn 8:55, Jn 14:7,  
Jn 14:9, Jn 16:3  
8:20 Mt 27:6;  
Mk 12:41;  
Jn 7:30

8:21 Jn 7:34,  
Jn 8:24  
8:22 Jn 7:35,  
Jn 8:48, Jn 8:52,  
Jn 10:20  
8:23 Jn 3:31,  
Jn 17:14,  
Jn 17:16; 1Jn 4:5

8:24 Jn 8:21,  
Jn 16:9  
8:25 Mt 8:34,  
Mt 17:17,  
Mt 26:31,  
Mt 26:63,  
Mt 26:64

8:26 Jn 3:32,  
Jn 7:28, Jn 8:40,  
Jn 12:49,  
Jn 15:15

8:27 Is 6:9,  
Is 42:18, Jn 8:43,  
2Co 4:3, 2Co 4:4

8:28 Jn 3:14,  
Jn 4:26, Jn 5:19,  
Jn 12:32

8:29 Jn 4:34,  
Jn 5:30, Jn 6:38,  
Jn 8:16, Jn 16:32

8:30 Jn 7:31,  
Jn 10:42

8:31 Jn 15:7,  
2Jn 9

8:32 Jn 8:36,  
Ro 8:2, Ga 5:1,  
Ga 5:13,  
1Pt 2:16

8:33 Mt 3:9,  
Lk 3:8, Jn 8:37,  
Jn 8:39

8:34 Ac 8:23,  
Ro 6:16,  
2Pt 2:19

**15**You judge according to human standards, but I judge no one. **16**Even if I do judge, my judgment is truthful, because I'm not alone. My judgments come from me and from the Father who sent me. **17**In your Law it is written that the witness of two people is true. **18**I am one witness concerning myself, and the Father who sent me is the other."

**19**They asked him, "Where is your Father?"

Jesus answered, "You don't know me and you don't know my Father. If you knew me, you would also know my Father." **20**He spoke these words while he was teaching in the temple area known as the treasury. No one arrested him, because his time hadn't yet come.

**21**Jesus continued, "I'm going away. You will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I'm going, you can't come."

**22**The Jewish leaders said, "He isn't going to kill himself, is he? Is that why he said, 'Where I'm going, you can't come'?"

**23**He said to them, "You are from below; I'm from above. You are from this world; I'm not from this world. **24**This is why I told you that you would die in your sins. If you don't believe that I Am, you will die in your sins."

**25**"Who are you?" they asked.

Jesus replied, "I'm exactly who I have claimed to be from the beginning. **26**I have many things to say in judgment concerning you. The one who sent me is true, and what I have heard from him I tell the world." **27**They didn't know he was speaking about his Father. **28**So Jesus said to them, "When the Human One<sup>7</sup> is lifted up,<sup>8</sup> then you will know that I Am.<sup>9</sup> Then you will know that I do nothing on my own, but I say just what the Father has taught me. **29**He who sent me is with me. He doesn't leave me by myself, because I always do what makes him happy." **30**While Jesus was saying these things, many people came to believe in him.

### Children of Abraham

**31**Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teaching. **32**Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

**33**They responded, "We are Abraham's children; we've never been anyone's slaves. How can you say that we will be set free?"

**34**Jesus answered, "I assure you that everyone who sins is a slave to sin. **35**A slave isn't a permanent member of the household, but a son is. **36**Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you really will be free. **37**I know that you are Abraham's children, yet you want to kill me because you don't welcome my teaching. **38**I'm telling you what I've seen when I am with the Father, but you are doing what you've heard from your father."

**39**They replied, "Our father is Abraham."

Jesus responded, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do Abraham's works. **40**Instead, you want to kill me, though I am the one who has spoken the truth I heard from God. Abraham didn't do this. **41**You are doing your father's works."

They said, "Our ancestry isn't in question! The only Father we have is God!"

<sup>7</sup>Or *Son of Man* <sup>8</sup>Or *exalted* <sup>9</sup>Or *that I am he*

8:35 Gn 21:10, Lk 15:31; Ga 4:30 8:36 Jn 8:32 8:37 Jn 7:1, Jn 8:40 8:38 Jn 5:19, Jn 8:41, Jn 8:44 8:39 Mt 3:9; Jn 8:33, Jn 8:37; Ga 3:7 8:40 Jn 7:1, Jn 8:26, Jn 8:37 8:41 Dt 32:6; Is 63:16, Is 64:8, Jn 8:38, Jn 8:44

Father and to the Father (see John 16:28), who turns out to be Jesus' supporting witness (John 8:16, 18).

**8:17** the *witness of two people is true*: It's unclear whether the two witnesses must be men (cf. Deut 17:6; 19:15).

**8:19** "Where is your Father?": or "Where is your father?" They're asking Jesus to produce his second witness, and they don't know that Jesus is referring to God.

**8:22** *kill himself*: another major misunderstanding, like the one in John 7:35, and again prophetic. Jesus won't kill himself, but he will give up his life (see John 10:17-18).

**8:24, 28** *that I Am*: that Jesus is who he claims to be. Jesus is making a connection with the divine name (see Exod 3:14).

**8:28** *When the Human One is lifted up*: or "When you lift up the Human One." The responsibility for crucifying Jesus will be theirs (see John 19:16; cf. Acts 2:36; 4:10).

**8:31-51** Jesus engages those *who believed in him* in a debate over what it means to be Abraham's children, exposing to them instead as children of the devil but promising eternal life to all who keep Jesus' word.

**8:31** *Jews who believed in him*: In light of what follows (John 8:23-59), their belief turns out not to be genuine (cf. John 2:22-25).

**8:33** *we've never been anyone's slaves*: not true. They have been constantly reminded they had been slaves in Egypt (see Deut 5:15; 15:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22).

**8:37** *Abraham's children*: or "seed." The Greek word translated as "children" here isn't the same word that is translated as "children" in John 8:39, where Jesus denies they are Abraham's "children" because they don't behave as Abraham did.

**8:38** *you are doing what you've heard from your father*:



<sup>42</sup>Jesus replied, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God. Here I am. I haven't come on my own. God sent me. <sup>43</sup>Why don't you understand what I'm saying? It's because you can't really hear my words. <sup>44</sup>Your father is the devil. You are his children, and you want to do what your father wants. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has never stood for the truth, because there's no truth in him. Whenever that liar speaks, he speaks according to his own nature, because he's a liar and the father of liars. <sup>45</sup>Because I speak the truth, you don't believe me. <sup>46</sup>Who among you can show I'm guilty of sin? Since I speak the truth, why don't you believe me? <sup>47</sup>God's children listen to God's words. You don't listen to me because you aren't God's children."

<sup>48</sup>The Jewish opposition answered, "We were right to say that you are a Samaritan and have a demon, weren't we?"

<sup>49</sup>"I don't have a demon," Jesus replied. "But I honor my Father and you dishonor me."

<sup>50</sup>I'm not trying to bring glory to myself. There's one who is seeking to glorify me, and he's the judge. <sup>51</sup>I assure you that whoever keeps my word will never die."

### Abraham and Jesus

<sup>52</sup>The Jewish opposition said to Jesus, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham and the prophets died, yet you say, 'Whoever keeps my word will never die.' <sup>53</sup>Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died and the prophets died, so who do you make yourself out to be?"

<sup>54</sup>Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is meaningless. My Father, who you say is your God, is the one who glorifies me. <sup>55</sup>You don't know him, but I do. If I said I didn't know him, I would be like you, a liar. But I do know him, and I keep his word. <sup>56</sup>Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see my day. He saw it and was happy."

<sup>57</sup>"You aren't even 50 years old!" the Jewish opposition replied. "How can you say that you have seen Abraham?"

<sup>58</sup>"I assure you," Jesus replied, "before Abraham was, I Am." <sup>59</sup>So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and left the temple.

### Jesus heals a blind man

**9**As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who was blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned so that he was born blind, this man or his parents?"

<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents. This happened so that God's mighty works might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup>While it's daytime, we must do the works of him who sent me.

8:59 Jn 10:31, Jn 11:8, Jn 12:36 9:1 Mt 9:27 9:2 Ex 20:5, Lk 13:2, Jn 9:34, Ac 28:4 9:3 Jn 11:4, Jn 11:40 9:4 Ecc 9:10, Jn 4:34, Jn 11:9, Jn 12:35

Jesus is saying the devil is their father (see John 8:44). But it can also be translated as "So do now what you have heard from the Father" (i.e., from God, through Jesus' lips).

8:44 *a murderer from the beginning*: Compare with 1 John 3:12.

8:47 *God's children*: or "the one who is from God" or "belongs to God."

8:48 *you are a Samaritan and have a demon*: Jews regarded Samaritans as demon-possessed, figuratively, if not literally, because they worshipped strange gods (2 Kgs 17:24-41). Jesus is "a Jewish man" to the Samaritans (John 4:9) and a *Samaritan* to the Jews—yet also "the savior of the world" (John 4:42).

8:51 *will never die*: They don't seem to understand it isn't a matter of physical death but of being eternally "lost" (e.g., John 3:16; 6:39; 17:12).

8:52-59 *Challenged over his claim to give eternal life*, Jesus asserts he existed before Abraham as Abraham's God.

8:52 *Abraham . . . died*: This is true (Gen 25:8), and yet Abraham is not dead (see Luke 20:37-38).

8:56 *overjoyed that he would see my day*: See Genesis 12:1-3; 17:15-17. *He saw it and was happy*: It's unclear whether Jesus is referring to Isaac's birth (Gen 21:1-7) or Isaac's deliverance (Gen 22:13; cf. John 1:29).

8:58 *before Abraham was, I Am*: Jesus claims to be God

(John 1:1, 18), the God of Israel (see Exod 3:6; 3:14; cf. Deut 32:39; Isa 41:4; 43:11, 25; 45:18-19; 51:12; 52:6).

8:59 *So they picked up stones*: because they regard what Jesus has just said as a terrible insult to God (cf. John 10:33). *Jesus hid himself*: He revealed himself in the temple (John 7:14-8:58), but now he goes back into hiding (John 7:10). See sidebar, "The Stoning That Doesn't Happen" at John 8. 9:1-7 Jesus heals a man who has been *blind from birth* by making a ball of mud and spittle, putting it on the man's eyes, and sending him to wash in the pool of Siloam. This undoing of a birth defect stands as the Gospel's prime example of being "born anew" (cf. John 3:3, 5).

9:2 *who sinned*: Many Jews assumed human misfortune was traceable to sin. Normally, the victim was blamed, but in the case of someone who was born blind, the parents were also considered to be possibly at fault.

9:3 *that God's mighty works might be displayed in him*: or "that God's mighty works in him might be displayed," that is, the work of God already in his life (cf. John 3:21), displayed not by the healing he experienced but finally by his faith in Jesus (John 9:38).

9:4 *While it's daytime*: Jesus expresses a sense of urgency in view of his approaching death (cf. John 11:9-10; 12:35). *we must do the works of him who sent me*: "We" could mean either Jesus and his disciples or Jesus and the man who

8:42 Jn 7:28, Jn 13:3, Jn 16:28, Jn 17:8; 1Jn 5:1

8:43 Ps 92:6; Prv 28:5; Is 6:9, Is 44:18; Jn 8:33

8:44 Gn 3:4; Mt 13:38; Jn 8:38, Jn 8:41; 1Jn 3:8

8:45 Jn 18:37

8:46 2Co 5:21; Heb 4:15; Heb 7:26; 1Pt 2:22

8:47 Jn 10:27; 1Jn 4:6

8:48 Mt 10:5; Jn 4:9, Jn 7:20, Jn 8:52

8:49 Mt 3:15; Mt 11:25; Mt 16:17; Mt 26:49; Jn 11:4

8:50 Jn 5:41; Jn 8:54

8:51 Jn 5:24; Jn 11:26

8:52 Zec 1:5; Mk 3:22; Jn 7:20, Jn 8:33, Jn 8:48

8:53 Jn 4:12, Jn 10:33

8:54 Jn 8:50; Jn 17:1; Ac 3:13

8:55 Mt 11:27; Jn 7:28, Jn 7:29; Jn 8:19, Jn 8:44

8:56 Mt 13:17; Jn 8:37; Jn 8:39; Heb 11:13

8:58 Ex 3:14; Jn 1:1, Jn 17:5, Jn 17:24

9:5 Jn 1:4,  
Jn 8:12  
9:6 Mk 7:33,  
Mk 8:23  
9:7 Neh 3:15;  
Is 35:5; Lk 13:4;  
Jn 9:11, Jn 11:37

9:8 Ac 3:2,  
Ac 3:10

9:11 Jn 9:7

9:14 Mt 12:11;  
Jn 5:9

9:15 Jn 9:10

9:16 Mt 12:2;  
Jn 2:11, Jn 7:12,  
Jn 7:43, Jn 10:19

9:17 Mt 21:11;  
Lk 24:19; Jn 4:19,  
Jn 6:14; Ac 3:22

9:18 Jn 1:19,  
Jn 9:22

9:22 Jn 7:13,  
Jn 9:34, Jn 12:42,  
Jn 16:2

9:23 Jn 9:21

9:24 Josh 7:19,  
Jn 9:16

9:25 Jn 9:24,  
Jn 9:30, Jn 9:33

9:27 Jn 9:15

9:28 Jn 5:45,  
Jn 8:33

9:29 Jn 8:14

Night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup>While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” <sup>6</sup>After he said this, he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and smeared the mud on the man’s eyes. <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (this word means *sent*). So the man went away and washed. When he returned, he could see.

### Disagreement about the healing

<sup>8</sup>The man’s neighbors and those who used to see him when he was a beggar said, “Isn’t this the man who used to sit and beg?”

<sup>9</sup>Some said, “It is,” and others said, “No, it’s someone who looks like him.”

But the man said, “Yes, it’s me!”

<sup>10</sup>So they asked him, “How are you now able to see?”

<sup>11</sup>He answered, “The man they call Jesus made mud, smeared it on my eyes, and said, ‘Go to the Pool of Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and then I could see.”

<sup>12</sup>They asked, “Where is this man?”

He replied, “I don’t know.”

<sup>13</sup>Then they led the man who had been born blind to the Pharisees. <sup>14</sup>Now Jesus made the mud and smeared it on the man’s eyes on a Sabbath day. <sup>15</sup>So Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.

The man told them, “He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I see.”

<sup>16</sup>Some Pharisees said, “This man isn’t from God, because he breaks the Sabbath law.” Others said, “How can a sinner do miraculous signs like these?” So they were divided. <sup>17</sup>Some of the Pharisees questioned the man who had been born blind again: “What do you have to say about him, since he healed your eyes?”

He replied, “He’s a prophet.”

### Conflict over the healing

<sup>18</sup>The Jewish leaders didn’t believe the man had been blind and received his sight until they called for his parents. <sup>19</sup>The Jewish leaders asked them, “Is this your son? Are you saying he was born blind? How can he now see?”

<sup>20</sup>His parents answered, “We know he is our son. We know he was born blind. <sup>21</sup>But we don’t know how he now sees, and we don’t know who healed his eyes. Ask him. He’s old enough to speak for himself.” <sup>22</sup>His parents said this because they feared the Jewish authorities. This is because the Jewish authorities had already decided that whoever confessed Jesus to be the Christ would be expelled from the synagogue. <sup>23</sup>That’s why his parents said, “He’s old enough. Ask him.”

<sup>24</sup>Therefore, they called a second time for the man who had been born blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner.”

<sup>25</sup>The man answered, “I don’t know whether he’s a sinner. Here’s what I do know: I was blind and now I see.”

<sup>26</sup>They questioned him: “What did he do to you? How did he heal your eyes?”

<sup>27</sup>He replied, “I already told you, and you didn’t listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?”

<sup>28</sup>They insulted him: “You are his disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. <sup>29</sup>We know that God spoke to Moses, but we don’t know where this man is from.”

was blind. Jesus does the works of God by healing and the man by believing (John 9:38; cf. John 6:29).

9:5 *I am the light of the world*: Compare with John 8:12.

9:6 *made mud with the saliva*: Jesus’ action can be compared to God’s act of forming the first human being (Gen 2:7).

9:7 *Siloam* (this word means *sent*): The pool’s name implies the water in the pool was sent “from above” (as it is to this day, flowing downward through Hezekiah’s Tunnel in Jerusalem), signaling a new birth “from above” (see note on John 3:3).

9:8-17 The man born blind is questioned repeatedly. This gives him the opportunity to recount over and over again, and ever more briefly, what has just happened to him. He

tells his story to his neighbors and spectators (9:8-11) and to the Pharisees, who don’t believe him.

9:9 “Yes, it’s me!”, or “I Am”, echoing Jesus’ repeated use of this expression. Here it’s a simple self-identification, yet it confirms Jesus’ identity as the divine “I Am” (John 8:58) by testifying to his status as a miracle worker.

9:14 *on a Sabbath day*: As in John 5:9, we learn this after the fact.

9:18-34 The Pharisees question the former blind man’s parents, who reply that he can speak for himself. When they question him again, he challenges their authority and is thrown out of the synagogue.

9:27 *Do you want to become his disciples too?*: evident sarcasm. But the use of “too” signals he himself does want to

**Expelled from the Synagogue** The expression “expelled from the synagogue”—found in John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2, but nowhere else in ancient literature—is sometimes said to refer to the so-called *Birkath ha-minim*. This was a curse added to the central prayer of Jewish liturgy near the end of the 1st century CE to exclude Jewish Christians from the synagogues. If this is so, it couldn’t have been in effect in Jesus’ day. The phrase probably doesn’t refer to a formal policy of expulsion of those who “confessed Jesus to be the Christ” (John 9:22) but to certain temporary exclusions, enforced only rarely by local synagogues. Jesus himself, after all, spoke publicly in the Capernaum synagogue (John 6:59) and once told the Jewish high priest, “I’ve always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews gather” (John 18:20). Of the three expulsion references in this Gospel, the first (John 9:22) simply sets the stage for the man born blind being “expelled” (John 9:34); the second applies to Jewish “leaders” (John 12:42) who may have feared expulsion because of their potential influence on others; while the third (John 16:2) is more prophetic, pointing to a future time when a final break with the synagogue is closer at hand.

<sup>30</sup>The man answered, “This is incredible! You don’t know where he is from, yet he healed my eyes! <sup>31</sup>We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners. God listens to anyone who is devout and does God’s will. <sup>32</sup>No one has ever heard of a healing of the eyes of someone born blind. <sup>33</sup>If this man wasn’t from God, he couldn’t do this.”

<sup>34</sup>They responded, “You were born completely in sin! How is it that you dare to teach us?” Then they expelled him.

### Jesus finds the man born blind

<sup>35</sup>Jesus heard they had expelled the man born blind. Finding him, Jesus said, “Do you believe in the Human One?”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>36</sup>He answered, “Who is he, sir?<sup>c</sup> I want to believe in him.”

<sup>37</sup>Jesus said, “You have seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

<sup>38</sup>The man said, “Lord,<sup>d</sup> I believe.” And he worshipped Jesus.

### Jesus teaches the Pharisees

<sup>39</sup>Jesus said, “I have come into the world to exercise judgment so that those who don’t see can see and those who see will become blind.”

<sup>40</sup>Some Pharisees who were with him heard what he said and asked, “Surely we aren’t blind, are we?”

<sup>41</sup>Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you wouldn’t have any sin, but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

<sup>b</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>c</sup>Or Lord <sup>d</sup>Or Sir

be Jesus’ disciple, as the Jewish leaders have recognized (John 9:28).

9:31 *God doesn’t listen to sinners*: not necessarily true (Luke 18:13-14), but the point is that the prayer itself must be *devout* and according to *God’s will*. Somehow the man knows Jesus works his miraculous signs through prayer (cf. John 6:11; 11:22, 41-42).

9:34 *born completely in sin*: They draw this conclusion both from his blindness (John 9:2) and from his allegiance to Jesus, who in their eyes is “a sinner” (John 9:16, 24).

9:35-38 On learning that the man who was born blind has been thrown out of the synagogue, Jesus finds him and asks if he believes in *the Human One*. This is the only place in the Bible this title is used explicitly as the object of faith. Since “the Human One” can refer simply to “a human being,” this man seems to have heard the question as “Do you believe in the one who healed you?” He knows Jesus’ name (John 9:11); considers him *a prophet* (John 9:17); and wants to be his disciple (John 9:27, 28, 38). Yet he has never laid eyes on Jesus, for he received his sight only later, by himself, at the pool. Now he thinks he’s talking to an anonymous stranger. Then

Jesus reveals himself, and the man believes and worships him.

9:37 *In fact, he is the one speaking with you*: We might have expected “I Am,” as in John 4:26; but instead Jesus speaks of himself in the third person, as he has done all along with such titles as “the Human One” and “the Son.”

9:38 *Lord*: the same Greek word translated as “sir” in John 9:36. “Sir” is appropriate when addressing a stranger (cf. John 4:11), but “Lord” is called for when speaking to someone to whom one owes allegiance.

9:39-10:6 The man who was born blind disappears from the scene, and Jesus takes up the debate with the Pharisees. Because they haven’t acknowledged their own blindness, he tells them, their *sin remains* (9:39-41). Changing the metaphor, he then tells a parable that contrasts a shepherd’s legitimate entrance into a sheep pen with the illegitimate intrusion of a thief climbing over its wall. The Pharisees fail to understand.

9:39 *so that . . . those who see will become blind*: a rebuke to the Pharisees, who have just thrown the formerly blind man out of the synagogue.

9:41 *your sin remains*: In the end, it’s the Pharisees

9:30 Jn 3:10,

Jn 12:37

9:31 Ps 34:15,

Ps 66:18,

Ps 145:19;

Prv 15:29,

Prv 28:9

9:33 Jn 3:2,

Jn 9:16

9:34 Jn 9:2,

Jn 9:22; Jn 9:35

9:35 Mk 1:1;

Jn 10:36

9:36 Ro 10:14

9:37 Jn 4:26

9:38 Mt 8:2,

Mt 28:9

9:39 Mt 13:13;

Lk 4:18; Jn 5:22,

Jn 8:12

9:40 Ro 2:19

9:41 Jn 15:22,

Jn 15:24

10:1 Jn 10:8,  
Jn 10:10  
10:2 Jn 10:11  
10:3 Ps 23:3,  
Jn 10:4, Jn 10:14,  
Jn 10:16,  
Jn 10:27  
10:4 Jn 10:3,  
Jn 10:5, Jn 10:16,  
Jn 10:27  
10:5 Jn 10:4  
10:6 Mk 9:32;  
Jn 16:25  
10:7 Jn 6:35,  
Jn 10:9, Jn 14:6;  
Eph 2:18,  
Heb 10:19  
10:8 Jn 10:1  
10:9 Jn 14:6;  
Ro 5:2;  
Heb 10:19  
10:10 Jn 3:17,  
Jn 5:40  
10:11 Ps 23:1;  
Is 40:11;  
Eze 34:23;  
Jn 10:14;  
Heb 13:20  
10:12 Zec 11:17;  
Mt 7:15,  
Mt 10:16;  
Ac 20:29  
10:13 Job 7:1  
10:14 Jn 10:11,  
Jn 10:27  
10:15 Mt 11:27;  
Jn 10:41,  
Jn 10:17-18  
10:16 Is 56:8;  
Eze 34:23;  
Jn 10:27,  
Jn 11:52;  
1 Pt 2:25  
10:17 Is 53:7,  
Is 53:12; Jn  
10:11,  
Jn 10:15,  
Jn 10:18  
10:18 Mt 26:53;  
Jn 2:19, Jn 14:31,  
Jn 15:10  
10:19 Jn 7:43,  
Jn 9:16

**10**<sup>1</sup>I assure you that whoever doesn't enter into the sheep pen through the gate but climbs over the wall is a thief and an outlaw. <sup>2</sup>The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>The guard at the gate opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>Whenever he has gathered all of his sheep, he goes before them and they follow him, because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>They won't follow a stranger but will run away because they don't know the stranger's voice." <sup>6</sup>Those who heard Jesus use this analogy didn't understand what he was saying.

### *I am the gate*

<sup>7</sup>So Jesus spoke again, "I assure you that I am the gate of the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who came before me were thieves and outlaws, but the sheep didn't listen to them. <sup>9</sup>I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>The thief enters only to steal, kill, and destroy. I came so that they could have life—indeed, so that they could live life to the fullest.

### *I am the good shepherd*

<sup>11</sup>"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>When the hired hand sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away. That's because he isn't the shepherd; the sheep aren't really his. So the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them. <sup>13</sup>He's only a hired hand and the sheep don't matter to him.

<sup>14</sup>"I am the good shepherd. I know my own sheep and they know me, <sup>15</sup>just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. I give up my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup>I have other sheep that don't belong to this sheep pen. I must lead them too. They will listen to my voice and there will be one flock, with one shepherd.

<sup>17</sup>"This is why the Father loves me: I give up my life so that I can take it up again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes it from me, but I give it up because I want to. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it up again. I received this commandment from my Father."

<sup>19</sup>There was another division among the Jews because of Jesus' words. <sup>20</sup>Many of them said, "He has a demon and has lost his mind. Why listen to him?" <sup>21</sup>Others said, "These aren't the words of someone who has a demon. Can a demon heal the eyes of people who are blind?"

### *Jesus at the Festival of Dedication*

<sup>22</sup>The time came for the Festival of Dedication\* in Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup>and Jesus was in the temple, walking in the covered porch named for Solomon. <sup>24</sup>The Jewish opposition circled around him and asked, "How long will you test our patience? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

<sup>25</sup>Jesus answered, "I have told you, but you don't believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, <sup>26</sup>but you don't believe because you don't belong to my sheep.

\*Hanukkah

10:20 Mk 3:21; Jn 7:20 10:21 Ex 4:11 10:23 Ac 3:11, Ac 5:12 10:24 Mt 26:63; Lk 3:15, Lk 22:66; Jn 1:19, Jn 16:25 10:25 Jn 5:36, Jn 8:58, Jn 10:38, Jn 12:37 10:26 Jn 8:47

themselves who are judged as sinners, not the formerly blind man (John 9:2, 34) or Jesus (John 9:16, 24).

10:3 *He calls his own sheep by name:* as Jesus will do: "Lazarus" (John 11:43); "Philip" (John 14:9); "Mary" (John 20:16); and "Simon son of John" (John 21:15, 16, 17).

10:6 *Those who heard Jesus use this analogy:* those "Pharisees who were with him" (John 9:40).

10:7-21 Jesus presents himself twice as the only true *gate of the sheep* (10:7, 9) and twice more as the *good shepherd* (10:11, 14) who freely gives his life for the sheep. In the end, his hearers are divided among themselves over his words.

10:8 *All who came before me:* not in a temporal sense (e.g., Moses and the prophets) but spatially, as *before* a gate (cf. Acts 12:6, 14), in order to gain entrance, in this case illegitimately.

10:11 *lays down his life:* that is, risks his life. But the same Greek expression in John 10:15, 18 comes to mean "give up" his life in death.

10:16 *I have other sheep:* probably Gentile believers (cf. John 11:52). That he already has such sheep is evident from John 4:39. *one shepherd:* It doesn't matter whether the *one shepherd* is the Father or the Son (see John 10:30).

10:17 *take it up again:* or "receive it back" (i.e., in the resurrection).

10:22-39 At the *Festival of Dedication*, some Jews ask Jesus to tell them *plainly* whether he is the Christ. He replies that what matters aren't titles but the works the Father has given him to do. After all, he claims, *I and the Father are one* (10:30). The Jews take up rocks to stone him for claiming to be God. Again he insists titles don't matter, because even scripture uses the word "god" very loosely; what counts instead are his works. They try to arrest him, but again, as in John 8:59, he escapes.

10:22 *Festival of Dedication . . . winter:* the only instance in which we're told what Jesus was doing during the season now celebrated by Christians as his birthday.

<sup>27</sup>My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me. <sup>28</sup>I give them eternal life. They will never die, and no one will snatch them from my hand. <sup>29</sup>My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them from my Father's hand. <sup>30</sup>I and the Father are one."

<sup>31</sup>Again the Jewish opposition picked up stones in order to stone him. <sup>32</sup>Jesus responded, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of those works do you stone me?"

<sup>33</sup>The Jewish opposition answered, "We don't stone you for a good work but for insulting God. You are human, yet you make yourself out to be God."

<sup>34</sup>Jesus replied, "Isn't it written in your Law, *I have said, you are gods?*"<sup>f</sup> <sup>35</sup>Scripture calls those to whom God's word came *gods*, and scripture can't be abolished. <sup>36</sup>So how can you say that the one whom the Father has made holy and sent into the world insults God because he said, 'I am God's Son'? <sup>37</sup>If I don't do the works of my Father, don't believe me. <sup>38</sup>But if I do them, and you don't believe me, believe the works so that you can know and recognize that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." <sup>39</sup>Again, they wanted to arrest him, but he escaped from them.

**Jesus at the Jordan**

<sup>40</sup>Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had baptized at first, and he stayed there. <sup>41</sup>Many people came to him. "John didn't do any miraculous signs," they said, "but everything John said about this man was true." <sup>42</sup>Many believed in Jesus there.

**Lazarus is ill**

**11** A certain man, Lazarus, was ill. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (<sup>2</sup>This was the Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped his feet with her hair. Her brother Lazarus was ill.) <sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent word to Jesus, saying, "Lord, the one whom you love is ill."

<sup>4</sup>When he heard this, Jesus said, "This illness isn't fatal. It's for the glory of God so that God's Son can be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup>Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup>When he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was. After two days, <sup>7</sup>he said to his disciples, "Let's return to Judea again."

<sup>8</sup>The disciples replied, "Rabbi, the Jewish opposition wants to stone you, but you want to go back?"

<sup>f</sup>Ps 82:6

11:2 Mk 14:3; Lk 7:38; Jn 12:3 11:3 Jn 11:5; Jn 11:36 11:4 Jn 2:11; Jn 9:3; Jn 11:40 11:5 Mt 14:14; Mt 15:32; Jn 11:1; Jn 11:36; Jn 13:23 11:7 Jn 10:40 11:8 Jn 8:59; Jn 10:31

10:29 *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all*: Some ancient manuscripts have instead, "What my Father has given me is greater than all else," implying that because the Giver is *greater than all*, the gift (i.e., believers) is also *greater than all*.

10:30 *I and the Father are one*: because "my hand" (John 10:28) and "my Father's hand" (John 10:29) are the same hand doing the same work (cf. John 10:16).

10:34 *written in your Law... you are gods*: quoting from Psalm 82:6, which adds, "But you will die like mortals; you will fall down like any prince" (Ps 82:7).

10:35 *those to whom God's word came*: that is, just as "the Word" (John 1:14) has come to them. *scripture can't be abolished*: What he has just called "your Law" (John 10:34) is his as well, with binding authority (cf. Matt 5:17-18).

10:36 *the one whom the Father has made holy*: that is, Jesus (cf. John 6:69). To be "made holy" means to be set apart for the mission on which he has been *sent into the world* (cf. John 17:17-19).

10:38-39 *the Father is in me and I am in the Father*: another way of saying "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). This is known on the basis of Jesus' works, and the reaction of the "Jewish opposition" is similar to their earlier reaction (see John 10:31, 39).

10:40-11:16 Jesus flees Jerusalem and takes refuge *where John had baptized at first* (i.e., "across the Jordan in Bethany," John 1:28), and where Jesus had stayed before (John 1:38-39) and called his first disciples. Here many confirm John's testimony and believe in Jesus, but he receives word his friend Lazarus is ill in the other Bethany, near Jerusalem. After two days, and against their advice, Jesus and his disciples journey there.

10:41 *everything John said about this man was true*: a belated validation of John's testimonies in John 1; 3. In this sense, John the Baptist speaks for the author of the Gospel.

10:42 *Many believed in Jesus there*: The purpose of John's ministry, that "everyone would believe in the light" (John 1:7), is fulfilled right where he had once baptized.

11:2 *the Mary who anointed the Lord*: See John 12:3-8. The author assumes some version of an anointing story is already known. This isn't surprising, because it was told again and again "in memory of her" (Matt 26:13; Mark 14:9).

11:4 *This illness isn't fatal*: It was fatal (John 11:14), but it ended in resurrection. *so that God's Son can be glorified*: Jesus will be *glorified* not simply in performing a miracle but in his own death on the cross.

10:27 Jn 10:4.  
Jn 10:14.  
Jn 10:16  
10:28 Jn 6:27.  
Jn 6:37; Jn 6:39;  
1Jn 2:25  
10:29 Jn 6:37.  
Jn 14:28; Jn 17:2  
10:30 Jn 10:38.  
Jn 14:9; Jn 17:21  
10:31 Jn 8:59  
10:32 Ac 10:38  
10:33 Lv 24:16;  
Jn 5:18  
10:34 Ps 82:6;  
Jn 12:34.  
Jn 15:25;  
1Co 14:21  
10:35 Mt  
5:17-18;  
Lk 16:17;  
Jn 19:28; Ac 1:16  
10:36 Jer 1:5;  
Jn 3:17; Jn 5:17.  
Jn 10:30  
10:37 Jn 10:25.  
Jn 10:38.  
Jn 15:24  
10:38 Jn 5:36.  
Jn 10:30.  
Jn 14:11.  
Jn 14:20; Jn  
17:21  
10:39  
Lk 4:29-30.  
Jn 7:30; Jn 8:59  
10:40 Jn 1:28  
10:41 Jn 1:29.  
Jn 1:34; Jn 2:11.  
Jn 5:33  
10:42 Jn 7:31.  
Jn 8:30; Jn 12:42  
11:1 Mt 21:17;  
Lk 10:38-39;  
Jn 11:5

9 In 9:4;  
 In 12:35  
 10 Prv 4:19;  
 Jer 13:16  
 11 Dt 1:11-16;  
 Mt 9:24; Mk 5:39;  
 Ac 7:60  
 12 In 4:33  
 13 Mt 9:24;  
 Mt 16:8;  
 Mt 16:21;  
 Mk 8:17;  
 Mk 10:14  
 14 In 11:42;  
 In 12:30  
 15 Mt 10:3;  
 Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15;  
 In 20:24; In 21:2  
 16 In 11:39  
 17 In 11:1  
 Job 2:11;  
 In 11:31  
 18 Lk 10:38-39  
 19 In 11:32;  
 In 11:37  
 20 In 9:31;  
 In 11:42  
 21 In 11:4  
 In 11:40;  
 In 11:44; Ac 4:2;  
 Ac 17:18  
 22 Dn 12:2;  
 In 5:29; In 6:39;  
 Ac 24:15  
 23 In 14;  
 In 3:36; In 6:35;  
 In 6:40; In 14:6  
 24 In 6:50-51  
 25 Mt 16:16;  
 Lk 2:11; In 6:14;  
 In 6:69; In 20:31  
 26 Mt 26:18;  
 In 13:13  
 27 In 11:20  
 28 In 11:19  
 29 In 11:21  
 30 In 11:35;  
 In 11:38;  
 In 12:27;  
 In 13:21

9 Jesus answered, "Aren't there twelve hours in the day? Whoever walks in the day doesn't stumble because they see the light of the world. 10 But whoever walks in the night does stumble because the light isn't in them."

11 He continued, "Our friend Lazarus is sleeping, but I am going in order to wake him up."

12 The disciples said, "Lord, if he's sleeping, he will get well." 13 They thought Jesus meant that Lazarus was in a deep sleep, but Jesus had spoken about Lazarus' death.

14 Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died. 15 For your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there so that you can believe. Let's go to him."

16 Then Thomas (the one called Didymus) said to the other disciples, "Let us go too so that we may die with Jesus."

### *Jesus with Martha and Mary*

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

18 Bethany was a little less than two miles from Jerusalem. 19 Many Jews had come to comfort Martha and Mary after their brother's death. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, while Mary remained in the house. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. 22 Even now I know that whatever you ask God, God will give you."

23 Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 Martha replied, "I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die. 26 Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

27 She replied, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, God's Son, the one who is coming into the world."

28 After she said this, she went and spoke privately to her sister Mary, "The teacher is here and he's calling for you." 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to Jesus. 30 He hadn't entered the village but was still in the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who were comforting Mary in the house saw her get up quickly and leave, they followed her. They assumed she was going to mourn at the tomb.

32 When Mary arrived where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died."

33 When Jesus saw her crying and the Jews who had come with her crying also, he was deeply disturbed and troubled. 34 He asked, "Where have you laid him?"

They replied, "Lord, come and see."

11:9 *light of the world*: or "the light of this world" (i.e., not Jesus but sunlight, as in John 8:12; 9:5). The point is that it's safe to go to Lazarus, because Jesus' "time hadn't yet come" to be seized and crucified (cf. John 7:30; 8:20).

11:11 *Lazarus is sleeping*: the first hint that Jesus will raise Lazarus from the dead.

11:15 *I'm glad I wasn't there*: He could have healed Lazarus without going to him (cf. John 4:50-53), but this time his goal is not to heal the sick but to bring a dead man back to life, so that you can believe: The disciples are never said to believe, nor even to be present when Lazarus is raised. Instead, Martha and "many of the Jews" believe (John 11:27, 45).

11:16 *with Jesus*: or "with him." The Greek version doesn't identify Jesus by name. Jesus' announcement, "Lazarus has died" (John 11:14), could suggest Thomas means "with Lazarus" instead of "with Jesus."

11:17-46 On arriving in Bethany, Jesus is met first by Lazarus' sister Martha, who responds to his promise of eternal life by expressing her belief in him as the Christ and God's Son. She then brings her sister, Mary, to Jesus, but the encounter is sidetracked by the presence of a number of Jews crying and trying to comfort the two sisters. Jesus, now troubled and angry, goes to the tomb, asks that the

stone be removed, and, after a short prayer of thanksgiving, calls Lazarus from the tomb.

11:17 *When Jesus... four days*: This sentence must be a heading for the whole section. Jesus doesn't go to the tomb at once (see John 11:34), and only after his arrival does he learn about what happened during the previous "four days" (John 11:39).

11:18 *if you had been here*: Because the distance involved is unknown, it isn't certain he could have been there even if he had left immediately (cf. John 11:32, 37).

11:22 *whatever you ask God*: Like the man born blind (John 9:31), Martha knows Jesus performs his miracles by prayer (see John 11:41-42).

11:24 *resurrection on the last day*: See John 5:28-29; 6:39, 40, 44, 54.

11:26 *will never die*: Compare with John 8:51.

11:27 *I believe that you are the Christ, God's Son*: This is exactly what John's Gospel wants every reader to believe (John 20:31).

11:28 *he's calling for you*: Jesus hasn't explicitly called for Mary but has done so implicitly by remaining outside the village (John 11:30) so that the two sisters might escort him in together.

11:33 *deeply disturbed and troubled*: The Greek suggests

<sup>35</sup>Jesus began to cry. <sup>36</sup>The Jews said, "See how much he loved him!" <sup>37</sup>But some of them said, "He healed the eyes of the man born blind. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"

11:35 Lk 19:41;  
Jn 11:33

11:36 Jn 11:3

11:37 Jn 9:6-7

11:38 Mt 27:60;  
Lk 24:2; Jn 11:33,  
Jn 20:1

11:39 Jn 11:17

11:40 Jn 11:4,  
Jn 11:23

11:41 Mt 11:25;  
Jn 17:1

11:42 Jn 3:17,  
Jn 12:30,  
Jn 17:21

11:43 Jn 11:1,  
Jn 12:10

11:44 Jn 19:40,  
Jn 20:7

11:45 Jn 2:23,  
Jn 7:31, Jn 11:19,  
Jn 12:11

11:46 Mt 7:28,  
Mt 8:34, Mt 9:27,  
Mt 14:13,  
Mt 17:17

11:47 Mt 5:22,  
Mt 26:3; Jn 2:11,  
Jn 11:57

11:49 Mt 26:3;  
Lk 3:2;  
Jn 18:13-14;  
Ac 4:6

11:50 Jn 18:14  
11:51 Ex 28:30;  
1Sa 23:9;  
Mt 21:31;  
Mk 2:17; Lk 5:31

11:52 Jn 10:16  
11:53 Mt 12:14,  
Mt 26:4;  
Jn 11:47

11:54 2Sa 13:23;  
2Ch 13:19;  
Jn 7:1

11:55 2Ch  
30:17; Jn 2:13, Jn  
18:28

11:56 Jn 7:11

### Jesus at Lazarus' tomb

<sup>38</sup>Jesus was deeply disturbed again when he came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone covered the entrance. <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, "Remove the stone."

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said, "Lord, the smell will be awful! He's been dead four days."

<sup>40</sup>Jesus replied, "Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you will see God's glory?" <sup>41</sup>So they removed the stone. Jesus looked up and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. <sup>42</sup>I know you always hear me. I say this for the benefit of the crowd standing here so that they will believe that you sent me." <sup>43</sup>Having said this, Jesus shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup>The dead man came out, his feet bound and his hands tied, and his face covered with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go."

<sup>45</sup>Therefore, many of the Jews who came with Mary and saw what Jesus did believed in him. <sup>46</sup>But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

### Caiaphas prophesies

<sup>47</sup>Then the chief priests and Pharisees called together the council<sup>6</sup> and said, "What are we going to do? This man is doing many miraculous signs! <sup>48</sup>If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him. Then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our people."

<sup>49</sup>One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, told them, "You don't know anything! <sup>50</sup>You don't see that it is better for you that one man die for the people rather than the whole nation be destroyed." <sup>51</sup>He didn't say this on his own. As high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would soon die for the nation—<sup>52</sup>and not only for the nation. Jesus would also die so that God's children scattered everywhere would be gathered together as one. <sup>53</sup>From that day on they plotted to kill him.

### The Passover draws near

<sup>54</sup>Therefore, Jesus was no longer active in public ministry among the Jewish leaders. Instead, he left Jerusalem and went to a place near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

<sup>55</sup>It was almost time for the Jewish Passover, and many people went from the countryside up to Jerusalem to purify themselves through ritual washing before the Passover. <sup>56</sup>They were looking for Jesus. As they spoke to each other in the temple, they said, "What do you

<sup>6</sup>Or Sanhedrin

that he "got angry," so angry that he "shook himself," possibly because of the mourners' invasion of his privacy with the two sisters (see also John 11:38).

*Jesus began to cry:* a different Greek word from the one used for the formal mourning or "crying" of Mary and the Jews (John 11:33). He simply sheds tears.

*"Didn't I tell you . . . you will see God's glory?":* Compare with John 11:4.

*so that they will believe that you sent me:* The prayer signals to the crowd that Jesus is doing this on the Father's authority, not his own.

*"Lazarus, come out!":* See John 5:28; 10:3.

*But some of them:* even some of those who "believed in him" (John 11:45). It's yet another example of false or inadequate faith (cf. John 2:23; 8:30).

When the Pharisees learn what has happened, the Jewish ruling council takes action out of fear that everyone will believe in him, so that the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our people (11:48). On the advice of Caiaphas, the high priest, they decide it's better that one man die for the people rather than the whole nation be destroyed (11:50), and they plot to kill Jesus.

*As high priest that year, he prophesied:* Although

priests weren't necessarily prophets, this notice implies God is somehow speaking through the high priest, so that his words have a deeper meaning than he intends. *die for the nation:* not merely to appease the Romans but as a sacrifice for Israel's sins.

<sup>51-52</sup> *God's children scattered everywhere:* all those, present and future, "who believed in his name" (John 1:12), particularly Gentiles, his "other sheep," gathered together as one. See John 10:16; compare with John 17:21.

<sup>53-54</sup> *plotted to kill him:* their intention all along (John 5:18), now confirmed by formal resolution.

<sup>55-56</sup> *Ephraim:* The exact location is unknown, but it's likely northeast of Jerusalem. Jesus seems to have wanted time alone with his disciples, who were noticeably absent at the tomb of Lazarus.

<sup>55-56</sup> *12:11* Amid uncertainty over whether Jesus will come to Jerusalem for Passover, he returns to Bethany, where Lazarus and his sisters host a dinner for him. There Mary abruptly anoints his feet with very expensive perfume, and Jesus commends her for it, hinting at a connection with his death and burial.

<sup>55-56</sup> *countryside:* The same Greek word is translated as "place" in John 11:54, where the place is "a city called

11:57 Mt 12:14;  
Jn 5:16, Jn 8:59,  
Jn 10:39,  
Jn 11:47

think? He won't come to the festival, will he?"<sup>57</sup> The chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where he was should report it, so they could arrest him.

### Mary anoints Jesus' feet

12:1 Mt 21:17,  
Mt 26:6; Jn 11:1,  
Jn 11:55

**12** Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, home of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup>Lazarus and his sisters hosted a dinner for him. Martha served and Lazarus was among those who joined him at the table. <sup>3</sup>Then Mary took an extraordinary amount, almost three-quarters of a pound,<sup>b</sup> of very expensive perfume made of pure nard. She anointed Jesus' feet with it, then wiped his feet dry with her hair. The house was filled with the aroma of the perfume. <sup>4</sup>Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), complained, <sup>5</sup>"This perfume was worth a year's wages!<sup>1</sup> Why wasn't it sold and the money given to the poor?" (<sup>6</sup>He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He carried the money bag and would take what was in it.)

12:2 Lk 10:38,  
Lk 10:40

12:3 Song 4:10;  
Mk 14:3;  
Lk 7:37-38;  
Jn 11:2

12:4 Mt 10:4,  
Mt 26:14;  
Jn 6:71, Jn 13:2,  
Jn 13:26

12:5 Mt 26:8

12:6 Mt 26:15;  
Jn 12:5, Jn 13:29

12:7 Jn 19:40

12:8 Dr 15:11

12:9 Mk 12:37;  
Jn 11:43, Jn 12:1

12:10 Jn 11:43

12:11 Jn 11:45,  
Jn 12:18

12:12 Mt 7:28,  
Mt 21:4;  
Mk 11:7;  
Lk 19:35; Jn 12:1

<sup>7</sup>Then Jesus said, "Leave her alone. This perfume was to be used in preparation for my burial, and this is how she has used it. <sup>8</sup>You will always have the poor among you, but you won't always have me."

<sup>9</sup>Many Jews learned that he was there. They came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup>The chief priests decided that they would kill Lazarus too. <sup>11</sup>It was because of Lazarus that many of the Jews had deserted them and come to believe in Jesus.

### Jesus enters Jerusalem

12:13

<sup>12</sup>The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>They took palm branches and went out to meet him. They shouted,

Ps 118:25-26;  
Jn 1:49

"Hosanna!

*Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*<sup>1</sup>

*Blessings on the king of Israel!*"

12:14 Zec 9:9;  
Mt 21:1,  
Mt 21:16,  
Mt 21:42,  
Mt 26:31

<sup>14</sup>Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

12:15 Zec 9:9

<sup>15</sup>Don't be afraid, Daughter Zion.

*Look! Your king is coming,*

*sitting on a donkey's colt.*<sup>h</sup>

12:16 Mk 9:32;  
Jn 2:22, Jn 7:39,  
Jn 12:23,  
Jn 14:26

12:17 Jn 11:42

12:18 Jn 12:9,  
Jn 12:11

12:19 Jn 11:47

<sup>16</sup>His disciples didn't understand these things at first. After he was glorified, they remembered that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.

<sup>17</sup>The crowd who had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead were testifying about him. <sup>18</sup>That's why the crowd came to meet him, because they had heard about this miraculous sign that he had done. <sup>19</sup>Therefore, the Pharisees said to each other, "See! You've accomplished nothing! Look! The whole world is following him!"

<sup>b</sup>Or a *litra*, a Roman pound, approximately twelve ounces <sup>1</sup>Or *three hundred denaria* <sup>h</sup>Ps 118:26 <sup>k</sup>Zec 9:9

Ephraim." This helps explain why the *many people* are familiar with Jesus, as well as their curiosity over whether he will come to the Passover (John 11:56).

12:3 *pure nard*: aromatic oil of the spikenard plant. *She anointed Jesus' feet*: not his head, as in Mark 14:3, anticipating Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet (John 13:5).

12:6 *because he was a thief*: Even though greed is Judas' motivation, the other disciples may have the same question in mind (cf. Mark 14:4-5).

12:7 *to be used in preparation for my burial, and this is how she has used it*: Recognizing that "you won't always have me" (John 12:8), Mary anoints him ahead of time for his death and burial.

12:8 *You will always have the poor among you*: In Deuteronomy 15:11 this is a reason for giving generously to the poor (cf. Mark 14:7). Jesus isn't asking his disciples to choose between himself and the poor.

12:9 *Many Jews*: or "a great crowd." It could be this crowd

that later keeps "testifying about him" to an even larger crowd of worshippers at the festival (see John 12:17-18).

12:10 *that they would kill Lazarus too*: a footnote to John 11:53, not a later decision by the council.

12:12-19 As the Passover Festival draws near, Jesus is welcomed into Jerusalem by a great crowd carrying palm branches. This confirms the Pharisees' worst fears.

12:13 *Blessings on the king of Israel!*: Compare with John 1:49.

12:16 *After he was glorified, they remembered*: Compare with John 2:22.

12:18 *That's why the crowd came to meet him*: There seem to be two distinct crowds, one "testifying" about Jesus (John 12:17) and the other responding to him (12:18).

12:19 *The whole world is following him!*: an exaggeration, like John 3:26 ("everyone is flocking to him") and John 11:48 ("everyone will believe in him"). In reality, *The whole world* is following "this world's ruler" (John 12:31).



**Jesus teaches about his death**

<sup>20</sup>Some Greeks were among those who had come up to worship at the festival. <sup>21</sup>They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and made a request: "Sir, we want to see Jesus."

<sup>22</sup>Philip told Andrew, and Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

<sup>23</sup>Jesus replied, "The time has come for the Human One<sup>1</sup> to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>I assure you that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it can only be a single seed. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>Those who love their lives will lose them, and those who hate their lives in this world will keep them forever. <sup>26</sup>Whoever serves me must follow me. Wherever I am, there my servant will also be. My Father will honor whoever serves me.

<sup>27</sup>"Now I am *deeply troubled*.<sup>m</sup> What should I say? 'Father, save me from this time'? No, for this is the reason I have come to this time. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

<sup>29</sup>The crowd standing there heard and said, "It's thunder." Others said, "An angel spoke to him."

<sup>30</sup>Jesus replied, "This voice wasn't for my benefit but for yours. <sup>31</sup>Now is the time for judgment of this world. Now this world's ruler will be thrown out. <sup>32</sup>When I am lifted up<sup>n</sup> from the earth, I will draw everyone to me." (<sup>33</sup>He said this to show how he was going to die.)

<sup>34</sup>The crowd responded, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Human One<sup>o</sup> must be lifted up? Who is this Human One?"<sup>p</sup>

<sup>35</sup>Jesus replied, "The light is with you for only a little while. Walk while you have the light so that darkness doesn't overtake you. Those who walk in the darkness don't know where they are going. <sup>36</sup>As long as you have the light, believe in the light so that you might become people whose lives are determined by the light." After Jesus said these things, he went away and hid from them.

**Fulfillment of prophecy**

<sup>37</sup>Jesus had done many miraculous signs before the people, but they didn't believe in him.

<sup>38</sup>This was to fulfill the word of the prophet Isaiah:

*Lord, who has believed through our message?*

*To whom is the arm of the Lord fully revealed?*<sup>q</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>m</sup>Ps 6:2 <sup>n</sup>Or exalted <sup>o</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>p</sup>Or Son of Man <sup>q</sup>Isa 53:1

12:36 Lk 16:8; Jn 8:59; Jn 12:46; 1Th 5:5 12:37 Ps 78:19; Is 53:1; Mt 13:58; Jn 10:25; Jn 15:24 12:38 Is 53:1; Ro 10:16

12:20-36 *Some Greeks* ask to see Jesus, who speaks at length (not to them but to his disciples and the crowd) about his impending death by crucifixion. Finally he takes leave of them and goes into hiding again (12:36).

12:23 *for the Human One to be glorified*: in his death, not by falling "into the earth" like "a grain of wheat" (John 12:24) but by being "lifted up from the earth" (John 12:32-33).

12:25 *those who hate their lives in this world*: Compare with Luke 14:26. To *hate* one's life *in this world* is to value eternal life more (see Matt 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33).

12:26 *Whoever serves me*: Only Martha has explicitly been said to have "served" Jesus (John 12:2), but Mary is the more obvious example (John 12:3-8). *Wherever I am, there my servant will also be*: Compare with John 14:3; 17:24.

12:27 *What should I say?*: Compare with Romans 8:26. *Father, save me from this time?*: Compare with Mark 14:36.

12:28 *Father, glorify your name!*: Compare with the beginning of the Lord's Prayer according to Luke (Luke 11:2). *a voice came from heaven*: the only time the Father speaks, aside from John 1:33, which is reported secondhand. *I have glorified it*: God glorifies God's name by glorifying Jesus (John 8:54).

12:31 *this world's ruler*: or "the devil" (John 14:30; 16:11), elsewhere called "the ruler of demons" (Mark 3:22). *will be thrown out*: just as Jesus drives out demons in the other

Gospels, only there's just one exorcism in John instead of many.

12:32 *I will draw everyone to me*: Compare with John 6:44. Once Jesus has been *lifted up*, he himself will do the drawing.

12:34 *The Christ remains forever*: Compare with 2 Samuel 7:13; Psalms 89:36; 110:4; Isaiah 9:6-7. *Who is this Human One?*: The crowd responds as if he had said, "The Human One must be lifted up" (John 3:14). It assumes he means *the Christ* and is offended by the notion that the Messiah must die.

12:35 *only a little while*: In contrast to John 9:4; 11:9, time is now running out (cf. John 12:8).

12:36 *people . . . light*: or "children of light" (cf. Eph 5:8; 1 Thess 5:5).

12:37-43 *The outcome of Jesus' ministry* so far has been unbelief (John 12:37-41) or, at best, a timid faith on the part of some Jewish leaders who believe but won't take a stand publicly for fear of the Pharisees (12:42-43).

12:37 *many miraculous signs*: The unmistakable lesson is that *miraculous signs* don't necessarily produce faith, despite the one in John 2:11.

12:38 *Lord, who has believed through our message?*: or "Who has believed what we have heard?" Either way, the implied answer is no one (John 12:37, 39).

12:20 Jn 7:35; Ac 17:4  
12:21 Jn 1:44  
12:22 Mk 13:3; Jn 1:40; Jn 6:8  
12:23 Jn 2:4; Jn 13:1; Jn 13:31-32; Jn 17:1  
12:24 Ps 72:16; Ro 14:9; 1Co 15:36; Heb 2:9  
12:25 Mt 10:39; Mt 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 14:26; Lk 17:33  
12:26 Jn 14:3; Jn 17:24; 2Co 5:8; Phi 1:23; 1Th 4:17  
12:27 Mt 11:25; Mt 26:38-39; Lk 22:44; Jn 11:33  
12:28 Mt 3:17  
12:29 Ac 23:9  
12:30 Jn 11:42  
12:31 Jn 14:30; Jn 16:11; 2Co 4:4; Eph 2:2; Eph 6:12  
12:32 Jn 3:14; Jn 6:44; Jn 8:28  
12:33 Jn 18:32; Jn 21:19  
12:34 Ps 110:4; Is 9:7; Eze 37:25; Jn 3:14; Jn 10:34  
12:35 Jn 7:33; Jn 8:12; Jn 12:46; Eph 5:8; 1Jn 1:6

12:39 Jn 5:44  
 12:40 Is 6:10,  
 Jn 29:10,  
 Mt 13:14-15  
 12:41 Is 6:1  
 12:42 Jn 7:13,  
 Jn 7:48, Jn 9:22,  
 Jn 12:11  
 12:43 Jn 5:41,  
 Jn 5:44  
 12:44 Mt 10:10;  
 Jn 5:24, Jn 7:28,  
 Jn 13:20  
 12:45 Jn 10:30,  
 Jn 10:38, Jn 14:7,  
 Jn 14:9  
 12:46 Jn 1:4,  
 Jn 8:12, Jn 12:36  
 12:47 Lk 19:10;  
 Jn 3:17  
 12:48 Lk 10:16  
 12:49 Jn 8:26,  
 Jn 14:10,  
 Jn 14:24, Jn 17:8  
 12:50 Mt 25:46;  
 Jn 3:34, Jn 6:68,  
 Jn 8:28, Jn 14:24  
 13:1 Jn 12:23,  
 Jn 13:3, Jn 13:34,  
 Jn 16:28, Jn 17:1  
 13:2 Lk 22:3;  
 Jn 6:71, Jn 13:27;  
 Ac 3:3  
 13:3 Mt 28:18,  
 Jn 3:35, Jn 8:42,  
 Jn 16:28  
 13:4 Jk 12:37,  
 Lk 22:27; Jn 13:5  
 13:5 Gn 18:4,  
 Gn 19:2, Lk 7:44  
 13:6 Mt 4:18,  
 Mt 16:16,  
 Mt 16:22,  
 Mt 17:34,  
 Mt 18:21  
 13:7 Mt 8:13,  
 Mt 9:22,  
 Mt 14:27,  
 Jn 12:16,  
 Jn 13:12  
 13:8 Mt 16:22;  
 LCo 6:11,  
 Heb 10:22  
 13:9 Ps 51:2,  
 Ps 51:7,  
 Mt 26:75,  
 Jn 21:15  
 13:10 Jn 15:3

<sup>f</sup>Isa 6:10

<sup>39</sup>Isaiah explains why they couldn't believe:

<sup>40</sup>*He made their eyes blind  
 and closed their minds  
 so that they might not see with their eyes,  
 understand with their minds,  
 and turn their lives around—  
 and I would heal them.<sup>f</sup>*

<sup>41</sup>Isaiah said these things because he saw Jesus' glory; he spoke about Jesus. <sup>42</sup>Even so, many leaders believed in him, but they wouldn't acknowledge their faith because they feared that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue. <sup>43</sup>They believed, but they loved human praise more than God's glory.

### Summary of Jesus' teaching

<sup>44</sup>Jesus shouted, "Whoever believes in me doesn't believe in me but in the one who sent me. <sup>45</sup>Whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. <sup>46</sup>I have come as a light into the world so that everyone who believes in me won't live in darkness. <sup>47</sup>If people hear my words and don't keep them, I don't judge them. I didn't come to judge the world but to save it. <sup>48</sup>Whoever rejects me and doesn't receive my words will be judged at the last day by the word I have spoken. <sup>49</sup>I don't speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me regarding what I should speak and say. <sup>50</sup>I know that his commandment is eternal life. Therefore, whatever I say is just as the Father has said to me."

### Foot washing

**13** Before the Festival of Passover, Jesus knew that his time had come to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them fully.

<sup>2</sup>Jesus and his disciples were sharing the evening meal. The devil had already provoked Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup>Jesus knew the Father had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God. <sup>4</sup>So he got up from the table and took off his robes. Picking up a linen towel, he tied it around his waist. <sup>5</sup>Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing. <sup>6</sup>When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup>Jesus replied, "You don't understand what I'm doing now, but you will understand later."

<sup>8</sup>"No!" Peter said. "You will never wash my feet!"

Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't have a place with me."

<sup>9</sup>Simon Peter said, "Lord, not only my feet but also my hands and my head!"

<sup>10</sup>Jesus responded, "Those who have bathed need only to have their feet washed, because

12:40 *He made their eyes blind:* Compare with John 9:39-41.

12:41-42 *Isaiah said . . . Jesus' glory:* See Isaiah 6:1-4, where "God's glory" (Isa 6:3) is understood as *Jesus' glory*. See sidebar, "Expelled from the Synagogue" at John 9.

12:43 *human praise . . . God's glory:* or "the glory of humans rather than the glory of God" (cf. John 5:44). *God's glory* is invested solely in Jesus.

12:44-50 Because Jesus "went away and hid from them" (John 12:36), he isn't saying these things to anyone in particular. Instead, they summarize his whole mission and message to the world.

12:44 *shouted:* as in John 7:28, 37 (cf. John 1:15). *Whoever believes in me doesn't believe in me:* The paradoxical language underscores Jesus' repeated claim that he speaks and acts only on the initiative of the one who sent me (cf. John 12:49).

12:46 *I have come as a light into the world:* This is the last mention in John of Jesus as the light (cf. John 1:5, 7-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35).

12:50 *whatever I say:* from now on, in the chapters to follow. Like all he has said thus far, it will be just what the Father has said to him.

13:1-20 At an evening meal together, Jesus unexpectedly washes his disciples' feet. He tells them they, too, must wash each other's feet and warns them ahead of time to expect betrayers in their midst.

13:1, 3 *Jesus knew:* He knows all that will happen to him from here on out (cf. John 6:64; 18:4).

13:1 *loved them fully:* or "to the end." Indeed, the end is near, for *his time had come to leave this world and go to the Father*.

13:2 *the evening meal:* not the Passover meal, as in the other Gospels (see Matt 26:19; Mark 14:18; Luke 22:13). That is still in the future (see John 13:1; 18:28; 19:14).

13:7 *you will understand later:* Understanding will come in stages (see John 13:12, 17; 15:15; 17:8). Some things won't be understood until his resurrection (cf. John 2:22; 12:16).

13:8 *Unless . . . place with me:* To refuse Jesus' love offered in the washing of feet would prove Peter isn't one of "his own" (John 13:1).

13:10 *Those who have bathed:* After washing in a public bath and walking home, one would need to have only one's feet washed. But Jesus may also have baptism in

they are completely clean. You disciples are clean, but not every one of you.”<sup>11</sup> He knew who would betray him. That’s why he said, “Not every one of you is clean.”

<sup>12</sup>After he washed the disciples’ feet, he put on his robes and returned to his place at the table. He said to them, “Do you know what I’ve done for you? <sup>13</sup>You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you speak correctly, because I am. <sup>14</sup>If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other’s feet. <sup>15</sup>I have given you an example: Just as I have done, you also must do. <sup>16</sup>I assure you, servants aren’t greater than their master, nor are those who are sent greater than the one who sent them. <sup>17</sup>Since you know these things, you will be happy if you do them. <sup>18</sup>I’m not speaking about all of you. I know those whom I’ve chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture, *The one who eats my bread has turned against me.*”

<sup>19</sup>“I’m telling you this now, before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I Am. <sup>20</sup>I assure you that whoever receives someone I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

### Announcement of the betrayal

<sup>21</sup>After he said these things, Jesus was deeply disturbed and testified, “I assure you, one of you will betray me.”

<sup>22</sup>His disciples looked at each other, confused about which of them he was talking about. <sup>23</sup>One of the disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was at Jesus’ side. <sup>24</sup>Simon Peter nodded at him to get him to ask Jesus who he was talking about. <sup>25</sup>Leaning back toward Jesus, this disciple asked, “Lord, who is it?”

<sup>26</sup>Jesus answered, “It’s the one to whom I will give this piece of bread once I have dipped into the bowl.” Then he dipped the piece of bread and gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot’s son. <sup>27</sup>After Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” <sup>28</sup>No one sitting at the table understood why Jesus said this to him. <sup>29</sup>Some thought that, since Judas kept the money bag, Jesus told him, “Go, buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. <sup>30</sup>So when Judas took the bread, he left immediately. And it was night.

*The Disciple Jesus Loved* The disciple “whom Jesus loved” is first introduced in connection with the identification of Judas as Jesus’ betrayer (John 13:23). This loved disciple is identified at the end of the Gospel as “the disciple who testifies concerning these things and who wrote them down” and whose “testimony is true” (John 21:24). In between he is seen at the cross, taking Jesus’ mother into his care (John 19:26-27); running with Peter to Jesus’ tomb (John 20:2-5); entering the tomb and believing (John 20:8); and recognizing the risen Jesus at the Sea of Galilee (John 21:7). Some interpreters think he’s the unnamed first disciple who appears alongside Andrew (John 1:40); the disciple who brings Peter into the high priest’s courtyard (John 18:15-16); or the eyewitness who testifies to the reality of Jesus’ crucifixion (John 19:35), but there’s no evidence for any of this. Nor is he likely to be identified with any of the disciples named within the Gospel. The nearest clue we have to knowing his identity is that Jesus’ mother was, or became, his mother (John 19:27), making him either Jesus’ brother or a kind of honorary brother (see Acts 1:14). As the Gospel’s author, he has chosen to remain anonymous.

<sup>8</sup>Ps 41:9

mind. If the disciples baptize (John 4:2), they themselves are likely to have been baptized, whether by John or by Jesus. In that sense they are clean.

**13:14** *wash each other’s feet*: It’s likely this was practiced in congregations known to the Gospel’s author, or the author wanted it introduced (cf. John 13:17). Mutual forgiveness may well be implied.

**13:18** *turned against me*: or “raised his heel against me.” In ancient Hebrew culture this was an obscene gesture, as if to trample someone underfoot.

**13:19-20** *now, before it happens*: not just moments before—as if Judas’ betrayal were all he was talking about—but years before and in connection with betrayals among Christian believers (see Matt 10:21; Mark 13:12; cf. John 14:29; 16:4).

**13:21-30** Jesus now explicitly predicts that one of those

present at the table will betray him, but he reveals that person’s identity only to the disciple right beside him, the *one whom Jesus loved* (13:23). He does this with a signal, giving a piece of bread to Judas and telling him, “*What you are about to do, do quickly.*” When Judas leaves, none of the other disciples understand that he is the betrayer.

**13:23** *at Jesus’ side*: just as the Son is “at the Father’s side” (John 1:18). See sidebar, “The Disciple Jesus Loved.”

**13:27** *Satan entered into him*: This isn’t something anyone could see but something that can be inferred from the fact that he *took the bread* (cf. John 13:2, 18).

**13:28** *No one... understood*: other than Jesus and the disciple whom he loved. This is that disciple’s own observation.

**13:30** *it was night*: or “Night is coming” (John 9:4) and is drawing ever nearer (John 11:9-10).

13:11 Jn 2:25;  
Jn 6:64; Jn 13:2  
13:12 Jn 13:4;  
Jn 13:7  
13:13 Jn 11:28;  
1Co 12:3;  
Phi 2:11  
13:14 1Pt 5:5  
13:15 Mt 11:29;  
1Ti 4:12;  
1Pt 2:21  
13:16 Mt 10:24;  
Lk 6:40; Jn 15:20  
Lk 11:28;  
Jas 1:22; Jas 1:25  
13:18 Ps 41:9;  
Mt 26:23;  
Jn 6:70; Jn 15:19;  
Jn 17:12  
13:19 Jn 8:24;  
Jn 14:29; Jn 16:4  
13:20 Mt 10:40;  
Jn 12:44  
13:21 Mt 26:21;  
Mk 14:18;  
Jn 11:33;  
Jn 12:27;  
Jn 13:18  
13:22 1k 22:23  
13:23 Jn 11:5;  
Jn 19:26; Jn 20:2;  
Jn 21:7; Jn 21:20  
13:25 Jn 21:20  
13:26 Jn 6:71;  
Jn 12:4  
13:27 Lk 22:3;  
Jn 13:2  
13:29 Jn 12:5-6;  
Jn 13:1  
13:30 Lk 22:53

13:31 Mt 8:20;  
Jn 7:39, Jn 12:23,  
Jn 14:13;  
1Pt 4:11

### Love commandment

<sup>31</sup>When Judas was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Human One<sup>e</sup> has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. <sup>32</sup>If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify the Human One<sup>e</sup> in himself and will glorify him immediately. <sup>33</sup>Little children, I'm with you for a little while longer. You will look for me—but, just as I told the Jewish leaders, I also tell you now—'Where I'm going, you can't come.'

13:32 Jn 17:1  
13:33  
Jn 7:33-34,  
Jn 8:21, Jn 16:16;  
1Jn 2:1

<sup>34</sup>"I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. <sup>35</sup>This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."

13:34 1v 19:18,  
Jn 15:12;  
Eph 5:2, 1Th 4:9;  
1Jn 3:23

### Announcement of Peter's denial

13:35 1Jn 3:14,  
1Jn 4:20

<sup>36</sup>Simon Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, where are you going?"

13:36 Jn 13:33,  
Jn 14:2,  
Jn 21:18-19;  
2Pt 1:14

Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you can't follow me now, but you will follow later."

13:37 Mt 26:33,  
Mk 14:29,  
Lk 22:33-34

<sup>37</sup>Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I'll give up my life for you."

13:38 Mk 14:30;  
Jn 18:27

<sup>38</sup>Jesus replied, "Will you give up your life for me? I assure you that you will deny me three times before the rooster crows."

14:1 Ps 42:5;  
Jn 12:44,  
Jn 14:27,  
Jn 16:22

### The way, the truth, and the life

14:2 Jn 13:33,  
Jn 13:36, 2Co 5:1

**14** "Don't be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. <sup>2</sup>My Father's house has room to spare. If that weren't the case, would I have told you that I'm going to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>When I go to prepare a place for you, I will return and take you to be with me so that where I am you will be too. <sup>4</sup>You know the way to the place I'm going."

14:3 Jn 12:26,  
Jn 14:18,  
Jn 14:28;  
1Th 4:17

<sup>5</sup>Thomas asked, "Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

14:5 Jn 11:16

<sup>6</sup>Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you have really known me, you will also know the Father. From now on you know him and have seen him."

14:6 Jn 1:14,  
Jn 10:9, Jn 11:25;  
Eph 2:18;  
Heb 10:20

<sup>8</sup>Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father; that will be enough for us."

14:7 Jn 8:19  
14:8 Jn 1:43,  
Jn 6:5, Jn 12:21

<sup>9</sup>Jesus replied, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been with you all this time? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup>Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I have spoken to you I don't speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup>Trust me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or at least believe on account of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup>I assure you that whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. They will do even greater works than these because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>I will do whatever you

14:10 Jn 5:19,  
Jn 10:38,  
Jn 12:49,  
Jn 14:20,  
Jn 14:24

14:11 Jn 5:36,  
Jn 10:38

<sup>e</sup>Or *Son of Man*    <sup>o</sup>Or *Son of Man*

14:12 Mt 21:21; Jn 14:28    14:13 Mt 7:7; Jn 13:31, Jn 15:16, Jn 16:23-24

13:31-35 Jesus formally announces his glorification (13:31-32) and impending departure (13:33), and he commands his disciples to *love each other* (13:34-35).

13:31-32 *God has been glorified. . . God will also glorify.* The present and future glorification echoes the voice from heaven in answer to Jesus' prayer (John 12:28).

13:33 *just as I told the Jewish leaders:* Compare with John 7:33-34; 8:21.

13:34 *new commandment:* It is *new* in that the disciples' love for each other is based specifically on Jesus' love for them (John 13:1), just as their obligation to wash each other's feet is based on Jesus' washing their feet (John 13:14).

13:36-14:31 Jesus replies to four questions from four disciples about his departure from the world and where he is going: Peter first, then Thomas, Philip, and a Judas other than Judas Iscariot. He tells them he's going to the Father and promises them that the Holy Spirit, or the *Spirit of Truth*, will be their *Companion* in his absence (14:17). Finally, instead of leaving them he summons them to leave with him (14:31).

13:36 *you will follow later.* Compare with John 21:18-19.

13:37 *I'll give up my life for you:* as the shepherd gives up his life for his sheep (John 10:11, 15, 18).

14:2 *My Father's house:* not the temple, as in John 2:16, but heaven. *would I have told you . . . place for you:* He hasn't told them this in so many words. It can also be read as a statement, "I would have told you that I am going," the point being that he hasn't told them before but is telling them now.

14:3 *I will return and take you to be with me:* at the last day (cf. John 6:40, 44, 54; Mark 13:27; 1 Thess 4:15-17). *where I am you will be too:* Compare with John 12:26; 17:24.

14:6 *No one comes to the Father except through me:* the sequel to John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless they are drawn to me by the Father."

14:9 *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father:* Compare with John 1:18; 12:45.

14:12 *greater works:* *greater* because the Father is greater (John 14:18); *greater* in scope (e.g., reaching "other sheep," John 10:16), perhaps because Jesus' time on earth is limited (see John 9:4).

ask for in my name, so that the Father can be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>When you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.

### *I won't leave you as orphans*

<sup>15</sup>"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup>I will ask the Father, and he will send another Companion,<sup>v</sup> who will be with you forever. <sup>17</sup>This Companion is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world can't receive because it neither sees him nor recognizes him. You know him, because he lives with you and will be with you.

<sup>18</sup>"I won't leave you as orphans. I will come to you. <sup>19</sup>Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. <sup>20</sup>On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. <sup>21</sup>Whoever has my commandments and keeps them loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

<sup>22</sup>Judas (not Judas Iscariot) asked, "Lord, why are you about to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?"

<sup>23</sup>Jesus answered, "Whoever loves me will keep my word. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. <sup>24</sup>Whoever doesn't love me doesn't keep my words. The word that you hear isn't mine. It is the word of the Father who sent me.

<sup>25</sup>"I have spoken these things to you while I am with you. <sup>26</sup>The Companion,<sup>w</sup> the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I told you.

<sup>27</sup>"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don't be troubled or afraid. <sup>28</sup>You have heard me tell you, 'I'm going away and returning to you.' If you loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than me. <sup>29</sup>I have told you before it happens so that when it happens you will believe. <sup>30</sup>I won't say much more to you because this world's ruler is coming. He has nothing on me. <sup>31</sup>Rather, he comes so that the world will know that I love the Father and do just as the Father has commanded me. Get up. We're leaving this place.

### *I am the true vine*

**15**"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vineyard keeper. <sup>2</sup>He removes any of my branches that don't produce fruit, and he trims any branch that produces fruit so

14:14 Dt 4:29;  
Ps 91:15; Is 58:9;  
Jn 14:13;  
Jn 15:16

14:15 Jn 14:21;  
Jn 14:23;  
Jn 15:10; 1Jn 2:3;  
1Jn 5:3

14:16 Jn 7:39;  
Jn 14:26;  
Jn 15:26; 16:7

14:17 Jn 14:16;  
Jn 15:26;  
Jn 16:13;  
1Co 2:14;  
1Jn 4:6

14:18 Jn 14:3;  
Jn 14:28

14:19 Jn 7:33;  
Jn 16:16

14:20 Jn 10:38;  
Jn 16:23;  
Jn 17:21

14:21 Jn 14:15;  
Jn 14:23;  
Jn 15:14;  
Jn 16:27

14:22 Lk 6:16;  
Ac 1:13;  
Ac 10:41

14:23 Jn 5:17;  
Jn 14:15;  
Jn 14:21;  
2Co 6:16;  
1Jn 2:24

14:24 Jn 7:16;  
Jn 8:26; Jn 8:28;  
Jn 12:49;  
Jn 14:10

14:25 Jn 15:11;  
Jn 16:1

14:26 Jn 2:22;  
Jn 14:16;  
Jn 15:26;  
Jn 16:13;  
1Jn 2:20

14:27 Jn 14:1; 16:33; Jn 20:19; Phi 4:7; Col 3:15 14:28 Jn 10:29; Jn 14:2; Jn 14:12; Jn 14:18; Phi 2:6 14:29 Jn 13:19; Jn 16:4 14:30 Jn 12:31  
14:31 Jn 10:18; Jn 12:49; Heb 5:8 15:1 Ps 80:8; 1Co 3:9 15:2 Mt 3:10; Jn 15:6 15:3 Jn 13:10; Jn 17:17; Eph 5:26; 1Pt 1:22

14:14 *I will do it*: Here Jesus answers prayer. Elsewhere the Father does so (John 15:16; 16:23).

14:16 *another Companion*: someone called in to help or support. *another* implies Jesus, too, has been their Companion, or Advocate (see 1 John 2:1).

14:19 *you will see me*: at Jesus' resurrection (John 20:20), signaled here by the assertion *Because I live, you will live too*.

14:20 *I am in... in you*: Even the disciples will be drawn into the close relationship between Father and Son (cf. John 10:38; 14:11).

14:22 *why... to us and not to the world*: The question presupposes an expectation of a visible and public return from heaven (e.g., Matt 24:30; Mark 13:26; Rev 1:7).

14:24 *Whoever doesn't love me*: Jesus will reveal himself as redeemer only to "those who love him" (cf. 1 Cor 2:9; Jas 1:12; 2:5; 1 Pet 1:7-8).

14:26 *remind you*: that is, will enable them to remember and understand all that was unclear to them before (e.g., John 2:22; 12:16).

14:28 *the Father is greater than me*: As Jesus has repeatedly said, he says and does only what the Father has told him to. The Father sent the Son, not the other way around.

14:30 *I won't say much more*: His words take up three more

chapters, but this is simply a reminder that he is leaving "Soon" (cf. John 14:19; 16:16). *this world's ruler*: the devil. *nothing on me*: has no valid claim against Jesus (cf. John 8:44-46).

14:31 *so that the world will know*: Jesus' own intention, entirely apart from the devil's activity (cf. John 17:21, 23). *leaving this place*: It's unknown whether they are leaving to escape "this world's ruler" (John 14:30; cf. John 8:59; 12:31) or to go out to meet him (see John 18:1-3).

15:1-17 Jesus doesn't stop speaking, and John's Gospel doesn't say Jesus and his disciples have left the room. Rather, Jesus continues without a break, developing the notion his disciples are *in* him and he is *in* them (John 14:20). He does this by using the metaphor of a vine and its branches. He commands his disciples to remain in him as branches remain attached to the vine. This means remaining in his love by loving each other as he has loved them.

15:1 *my Father is the vineyard keeper*: Jesus is *the true vine*, first in relation to his Father and only then in relation to his disciples (see John 15:5).

15:2 *He removes... he trims*: The Greek words rhyme. *fruit*: grapes on the vine, which are images for converts, the results of evangelism, or the effects of their love for each other (cf. Gal 5:22).

Jn 6:56;  
 Jn 2:6  
 Jn 15:16  
 Jn 15:2  
 Mt 7:7;  
 Jn 14:13,  
 Jn 15:16  
 Mt 5:16;  
 Jn 8:31; Phi 1:11  
 Jn 17:26  
 Jn 8:29,  
 Jn 14:15  
 Jn 3:29,  
 Jn 16:24,  
 Jn 17:13  
 Jn 13:34,  
 Jn 15:17;  
 Jn 3:23  
 Jn 10:11;  
 Eph 5:2  
 Mt 12:50;  
 Lk 12:4; Jn 14:15;  
 Jn 14:21,  
 Jn 15:10  
 Jn 8:26  
 Jn 13:18,  
 Jn 14:13, Jn 15:7,  
 Jn 15:19,  
 Jn 16:23  
 Jn 15:12  
 Jn 7:7;  
 Jn 3:13  
 Jn 15:16,  
 Jn 17:14  
 Jn 13:16;  
 2Ti 3:12

that it will produce even more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You are already trimmed because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Remain in me, and I will remain in you. A branch can't produce fruit by itself, but must remain in the vine. Likewise, you can't produce fruit unless you remain in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, then you will produce much fruit. Without me, you can't do anything. <sup>6</sup>If you don't remain in me, you will be like a branch that is thrown out and dries up. Those branches are gathered up, thrown into a fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified when you produce much fruit and in this way prove that you are my disciples.

### Love each other

<sup>9</sup>As the Father loved me, I too have loved you. Remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy will be in you and your joy will be complete. <sup>12</sup>This is my commandment: love each other just as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than to give up one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I don't call you servants any longer, because servants don't know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because everything I heard from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup>You didn't choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you could go and produce fruit and so that your fruit could last. As a result, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. <sup>17</sup>I give you these commandments so that you can love each other.

### If the world hates you

<sup>18</sup>If the world hates you, know that it hated me first. <sup>19</sup>If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. However, I have chosen you out of the world, and you don't belong to the world. This is why the world hates you. <sup>20</sup>Remember what I told you, 'Servants aren't greater than their master.' If the world harassed me, it will harass you too. If it kept

*Jesus' Farewell Speech* Jesus' farewell speech extends from John 13:31 to John 17:26, after which we are told, "Jesus went out with his disciples" (John 18:1). But less than halfway through his speech, he tells his disciples to "Get up" and leave (John 14:31), making it look as if John 18:1 should immediately follow John 14:31 and John 15–17 might have been inserted between those two verses later. Some interpreters see here two distinct discourses that pick up on the themes introduced in John 13:31–35. The first (John 13:36–14:31) focuses on the single theme of Jesus' impending departure from the world (introduced in John 13:33); while the second discourse (John 15:1–17:26) looks more broadly at the love command (introduced in John 13:34–35) and being hated by the world (John 15:1–16:4); the theme of departure again (John 16:5–33); and the theme of Jesus' glorification (introduced in John 13:31–32) in his long prayer for himself and his disciples (John 17:1–26). Such theories can help teach us how the Gospel took shape but should never be used to suggest that one discourse is either more original or more mature and well-developed than the other. The Gospel as it stands embraces both, and indeed Jesus speaks without interruption all the way from John 14:23 to John 16:16. It's his longest continuous speech in the entire Gospel.

15:3 *You are already trimmed*: or "clean" (cf. John 13:10).  
 15:4 *Remain in me*: something they can choose to do or not, unlike branches on a real vine.  
 15:6 *like a branch that is thrown out*: because it's already dead, no longer drawing life from the vine (cf. John 15:2). *Those branches*: the dead branches of actual vines, not the disciples. Gathering and burning are simply part of the image.  
 15:7 *ask for whatever you want*: Jesus himself will do exactly that (John 17:24).  
 15:8 *prove that you are my disciples*: or "become my disciples."  
 15:9 *Remain in my love*: defining what is meant by "remain in me" (John 15:4).  
 15:12 *my commandment*: Jesus' "commandments" (John 14:15; 15:10) are not enumerated, but they all come down

to his one "new commandment" (John 13:34): "Love each other. Just as I have loved you."  
 15:14 *You are my friends*: those whom he loves (e.g., Lazarus in John 11:3, 11).  
 15:15 *servants don't know what their master is doing*: Contrast with John 5:20.  
 15:16 *I chose you*: their selection as the Twelve (John 6:70; 13:18). *go and produce fruit*: evangelism (cf. John 17:20).  
 15:18–16:4 In contrast to their love for each other, the disciples will face hatred and harassment in the world. Their calling, with the help of the *Spirit of Truth*, is to testify (15:26) to the world about Jesus.  
 15:18 *If the world hates you*: They are never told to hate the world, only "their lives in this world" (John 12:25).  
 15:20 *If it kept my word, it will also keep yours*: It didn't, and it won't.

my word, it will also keep yours. <sup>21</sup>The world will do all these things to you on account of my name, because it doesn't know the one who sent me.

<sup>22</sup>If I hadn't come and spoken to the people of this world, they wouldn't be sinners. But now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>23</sup>Whoever hates me also hates the Father. <sup>24</sup>If I hadn't done works among them that no one else had done, they wouldn't be sinners. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. <sup>25</sup>This fulfills the word written in their Law, *They hated me without a reason.*<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>26</sup>When the Companion<sup>†</sup> comes, whom I will send from the Father—the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me. <sup>27</sup>You will testify too, because you **16** have been with me from the beginning. <sup>1</sup>I have said these things to you so that you won't fall away. <sup>2</sup>They will expel you from the synagogue. The time is coming when those who kill you will think that they are doing a service to God. <sup>3</sup>They will do these things because they don't know the Father or me. <sup>4</sup>But I have said these things to you so that when their time comes, you will remember that I told you about them.

**I go away**

"I didn't say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. <sup>5</sup>But now I go away to the one who sent me. None of you ask me, 'Where are you going?' <sup>6</sup>Yet because I have said these things to you, you are filled with sorrow. <sup>7</sup>I assure you that it is better for you that I go away. If I don't go away, the Companion<sup>\*</sup> won't come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup>When he comes, he will show the world it was wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment. <sup>9</sup>He will show the world it was wrong about sin because they don't believe in me. <sup>10</sup>He will show the world it was wrong about righteousness because I'm going to the Father and you won't see me anymore. <sup>11</sup>He will show the world it was wrong about judgment because this world's ruler stands condemned.

**I still have many things to say**

<sup>12</sup>I have much more to say to you, but you can't handle it now. <sup>13</sup>However, when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you in all truth. He won't speak on his own, but will say whatever he hears and will proclaim to you what is to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and proclaim it to you. <sup>15</sup>Everything that the Father has is mine. That's why I said that the Spirit takes what is mine and will proclaim it to you. <sup>16</sup>Soon you won't be able to see me; soon after that, you will see me."

<sup>\*</sup>Pss 35:19; 69:4 <sup>†</sup>Or Advocate <sup>\*</sup>Or Advocate

<sup>1</sup> Jn 14:17, Jn 14:26, Jn 15:26    <sup>2</sup> Jn 7:39, 2Co 4:6; 1Jn 5:20    <sup>3</sup> Jn 10:30, Jn 17:10    <sup>4</sup> Ps 35:19; Jn 7:33, Jn 16:22

*works ... no one else had done:* Compare with John 9:32.

*Companion ... will testify about me:* The Spirit is promised, especially in times of harassment, as in Matthew 10:19-20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11-12.

*You will testify too:* Compare with Luke 12:12. *with me from the beginning:* Compare with 1 John 1:1.

*those who kill you:* even as they repeatedly try to kill Jesus (John 5:18; 7:1; 11:53). *doing a service:* or "offering worship." Compare with Phinehas (Num 25:6-13) and Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:3; 9:1). See sidebar, "Expelled from the Synagogue" at John 9.

Jesus once more, as in John 13:36-14:31, addresses the matter of his impending departure from the world. He provides additional (and some of the same) reasons why it's better for them if he goes away, and he promises them joy upon his return.

*because I was with you:* Jesus speaks as if he has already gone away (cf. John 17:11, 12) or been raised from the dead (Luke 24:44).

*16:5 None of you ask me, "Where are you going?":* in striking contrast to John 13:36; 14:5, 8, where three of them asked essentially that very question.

*16:9 He will show the world it was wrong:* or "convict the world," a simpler translation that goes well with "sin" but not so well with "righteousness" and "judgment."

*16:10 ... sin because they don't believe in me:* Sin is defined as disbelief in Jesus (cf. John 15:22-24).

*16:10 ... righteousness because I'm going to the Father:* Going to the Father will prove Jesus right and his opponents wrong (cf. Rom 4:25).

*16:11 ... this world's ruler stands condemned:* or "the devil" (cf. John 12:31).

*16:12 ... I have much more to say to you:* that is, through the Companion, or "the Spirit of Truth" (see John 16:13-14).

*16:13 ... what is to come:* either the events of the end time (e.g., Rev 1:1) or the events that are even then unfolding (see John 18:4).

*16:16 ... Soon you won't be able to see me:* In contrast to John 14:19, for a time even his disciples won't see him.

15:21 Mt 10:22, Mt 24:9; Jn 8:19, Jn 16:3  
15:22 Jn 9:41; Ro 1:20  
15:23 Jn 5:23  
15:24 Mt 11:20; Jn 5:36  
15:25 Ps 35:19, Ps 69:4; Jn 10:34  
15:26  
Jn 14:16-17, Jn 14:26, Jn 16:7; 1Jn 5:7  
15:27 Lk 1:1-2, Lk 24:48; Jn 21:24, 1Jn 1:2  
16:1 Mt 11:6; Jn 15:18  
16:2 Jn 9:22, Jn 12:42; Ac 26:9  
16:3 Jn 8:19, Jn 8:55; Jn 15:21, Jn 17:25; 1Jn 3:1  
16:4 Mt 9:15; Jn 13:19, Jn 14:29  
16:5 Jn 7:33, Jn 13:36; Jn 14:5, Jn 16:10, Jn 16:28  
16:6 Jn 14:1, Jn 16:22  
16:7 Jn 7:39, Jn 14:16, Jn 14:26, Jn 15:26; Ac 2:33  
16:8 Jn 16:9  
16:9 Jn 8:24, Jn 15:22  
16:10 Jn 16:5  
16:11 Jn 12:31  
16:12 Mk 4:33; 1Co 3:1-2

16:17 Mk 9:10,  
Mk 9:32; Jn 16:5,  
Jn 16:16

16:18 Mt 16:9;  
Jn 14:5

16:19 Jn 2:24

16:20 Mk 16:16

16:21 Gn 3:16;  
Is 13:8, Is 21:3,  
Is 26:17; 1Th 5:3

16:22 Jn 16:6,  
Jn 16:16,  
Jn 16:20

16:23 Mt 7:7;

Jn 14:13,

Jn 14:20,

Jn 15:16,

Jn 16:26

16:24 Mt 7:7;

Jn 14:13,

Jn 15:11

16:25 Mt 13:34;

Jn 10:6, Jn 16:2,

Jn 16:29

16:26 Jn 16:23

16:27 Jn 8:42,

Jn 14:21,

Jn 14:23,

Jn 16:30,

Jn 17:23

16:28 Jn 13:3,

Jn 16:5, Jn 16:10

16:29 Jn 16:25

16:30 Jn 2:24,

Jn 16:27,

Jn 21:17

16:31 Jn 13:38

16:32 Mt 26:31;

Jn 4:23, Jn 8:16,

Jn 8:29

16:33 Jn 14:1,

Jn 14:27;

Ac 14:22;

1Jn 5:4; Rev 3:21

17:1 Jn 7:39,

Jn 11:41,

Jn 12:23, Jn 13:1,

Jn 13:31

17:2 Jn 6:37,

Jn 6:39, Jn 17:6,

Jn 17:9, Jn 17:24

17:3 Jer 10:10;

Jn 3:17, Jn 17:8,

Jn 17:25;

1Jn 5:20

### **I will see you again**

<sup>17</sup>Some of Jesus' disciples said to each other, "What does he mean: 'Soon you won't see me, and soon after that you will see me' and 'Because I'm going to the Father'?" <sup>18</sup>What does he mean by 'soon'? We don't understand what he's talking about."

<sup>19</sup>Jesus knew they wanted to ask him, so he said, "Are you trying to find out from each other what I meant when I said, 'Soon you won't see me, and soon after that you will see me'?" <sup>20</sup>I assure you that you will cry and lament, and the world will be happy. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. <sup>21</sup>When a woman gives birth, she has pain because her time has come. But when the child is born, she no longer remembers her distress because of her joy that a child has been born into the world. <sup>22</sup>In the same way, you have sorrow now; but I will see you again, and you will be overjoyed. No one takes away your joy. <sup>23</sup>In that day, you won't ask me anything. I assure you that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. <sup>24</sup>Up to now, you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive so that your joy will be complete.

### **I have conquered the world**

<sup>25</sup>"I've been using figures of speech with you. The time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in such analogies. Instead, I will tell you plainly about the Father. <sup>26</sup>In that day you will ask in my name. I'm not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. <sup>27</sup>The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and believed that I came from God. <sup>28</sup>I left the Father and came into the world. I tell you again: I am leaving the world and returning to the Father."

<sup>29</sup>His disciples said, "See! Now you speak plainly; you aren't using figures of speech. <sup>30</sup>Now we know that you know everything and you don't need anyone to ask you. Because of this we believe you have come from God."

<sup>31</sup>Jesus replied, "Now you believe? <sup>32</sup>Look! A time is coming—and is here!—when each of you will be scattered to your own homes and you will leave me alone. I'm not really alone, for the Father is with me. <sup>33</sup>I've said these things to you so that you will have peace in me. In the world you have distress. But be encouraged! I have conquered the world."

### **Jesus prays**

**17**When Jesus finished saying these things, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, so that the Son can glorify you. <sup>2</sup>You gave him authority over everyone so that he could give eternal life to everyone you gave him. <sup>3</sup>This is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent. <sup>4</sup>I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup>Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I shared with you before the world was created.

<sup>6</sup>"I have revealed your name to the people you gave me from this world. They were yours and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything

17:4 Jn 4:34, Jn 13:31, Jn 14:13, Jn 19:30 17:5 Jn 1:1, Jn 8:58, Jn 17:24; Phi 2:6 17:6 Jn 17:2, Jn 17:9, Jn 17:26 17:7 Jn 12:50

16:20 *your sorrow will turn into joy*: Compare with John 20:20.

16:23 *In that day, you won't ask me anything*: Their questions will all have been answered (cf. John 16:30). In the next sentence and the next verse a different Greek verb is used for "to ask" in prayer.

16:25 *figures of speech . . . analogies*: The meaning of these terms is broad enough to include both the riddle of John 16:16 and the full parable of John 16:21.

16:29 *Now you speak plainly*: "The time is coming," Jesus says in John 16:25, when he will speak "plainly," and the disciples reply that it is *Now* (cf. John 4:23; 5:25; 16:32). Speaking *plainly* is the opposite of using "analogies" (John 16:25) and parables (cf. John 11:14).

16:30 *you don't need anyone to ask you*: because he reveals everything freely (cf. John 16:23), *we believe you have come from God*: just as he said (John 16:28).

16:31 *Now you believe? or "Now you believe!"* (cf. John 17:8).

16:32 *scattered*: as in Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27. Yet they will become "one" (cf. John 11:52; 17:11, 21). *the Father is with me*: Compare with John 8:29.

16:33 *I have conquered the world*: Compare with 1 John 5:4. 17:1-26 Jesus turns to the Father in prayer, speaking about the disciples rather than to the disciples. He prays for glorification in the Father's presence and gives an accounting of his ministry in the world. He then intercedes, first for the disciples to whom he has just been speaking, then for all, both present and future, *who believe in me because of their word* (17:20).

17:3 *This is eternal life*: The definition of eternal life is for the reader's benefit (not God's!), but it's attributed to Jesus himself. While he speaks of himself in the third person as "the Human One" and "the Son," only here does he identify himself as *Jesus Christ*.

17:5 *before the world was created*: Compare with John 1:1-3.



you have given me comes from you. <sup>8</sup>This is because I gave them the words that you gave me, and they received them. They truly understood that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

<sup>9</sup>"I'm praying for them. I'm not praying for you and for those you gave me, because they are yours. <sup>10</sup>Everything that is mine is yours and everything that is yours is mine; I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>I'm no longer in the world, but they are in the world, even as I'm coming to you. Holy Father, watch over them in your name, the name you gave me, that they will be one just as we are one. <sup>12</sup>When I was with them, I watched over them in your name, the name you gave to me, and I kept them safe. None of them were lost, except the one who was destined for destruction, so that scripture would be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup>Now I'm coming to you and I say these things while I'm in the world so that they can share completely in my joy. <sup>14</sup>I gave your word to them and the world hated them, because they don't belong to this world, just as I don't belong to this world. <sup>15</sup>I'm not asking that you take them out of this world but that you keep them safe from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>They don't belong to this world, just as I don't belong to this world. <sup>17</sup>Make them holy in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>I made myself holy on their behalf so that they also would be made holy in the truth.

<sup>20</sup>"I'm not praying only for them but also for those who believe in me because of their word. <sup>21</sup>I pray they will be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. I pray that they also will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me. <sup>22</sup>I've given them the glory that you gave me so that they can be one just as we are one. <sup>23</sup>I'm in them and you are in me so that they will be made perfectly one. Then the world will know that you sent me and that you have loved them just as you loved me.

<sup>24</sup>"Father, I want those you gave me to be with me where I am. Then they can see my glory, which you gave me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

<sup>25</sup>"Righteous Father, even the world didn't know you, but I've known you, and these believers know that you sent me. <sup>26</sup>I've made your name known to them and will continue to make it known so that your love for me will be in them, and I myself will be in them."

### Arrest in the garden

**18** After he said these things, Jesus went out with his disciples and crossed over to the other side of the Kidron Valley. He and his disciples entered a garden there. <sup>2</sup>Judas, his betrayer, also knew the place because Jesus often gathered there with his disciples.

17:24 Mt 25:34; Jn 1:14, Jn 12:26, Jn 17:5 17:25 Jn 7:29, Jn 8:55, Jn 10:15, Jn 15:21, Jn 16:27 17:26 Jn 15:9, Jn 17:6 18:1 2Sa 15:23; 1Ki 15:13; Mt 26:36; Mk 14:32; Lk 22:39 18:2 Lk 21:37, Lk 22:39

17:8 *understood that I came from you*: on the basis of John 16:30, "we believe you have come from God."

17:9 *not praying for the world*: not directly but indirectly. All his plans for the world are channeled through the disciples (John 17:18, 21-23).

17:11 *I'm no longer in the world*: Jesus' departure from the world has already begun but isn't complete (cf. John 20:17). *the name you gave me*: either the divine name "I Am" (John 8:58) or simply the divine "authority" that is his (John 17:2).

17:12 *one who was destined for destruction*: or "the son of destruction" (i.e., Judas Iscariot). *scripture would be fulfilled*: Psalm 41:9 in particular (quoted in John 13:18) or *scripture* in general. The point is that Judas' fate is unavoidable.

17:15 *keep them safe from the evil one*: Compare with Matthew 6:13.

17:17 *Make them holy*: as Jesus was "made holy" for his mission (John 10:36).

17:19 *made myself holy*: or "I make myself holy," using the present tense. Jesus now sets himself apart as a sacrifice so that they also would be made holy. This is why the church has often called this his high priestly prayer (cf. Heb 2:11; 10:14).

17:20 *those who believe in me because of their word*:

future generations of believers, including the readers of this Gospel.

17:21 *just as you are in me and I am in you*: Compare with John 10:38; 14:11, 20.

17:22 *I've given them the glory that you gave me*: just now, in setting them apart for their mission.

17:23 *that you have loved them*: Compare with John 14:21, 23; 16:27.

17:24 *I want*: Compare with John 15:7; contrast with Mark 14:36. *before the creation of the world*: Compare with John 1:1-3; 17:4.

17:26 *make it known*: Compare with John 16:12.

18:1-14 Jesus and his disciples go out to a garden across the Kidron Valley where they're met by a company of Roman soldiers and servants of the Jewish priests and Pharisees who've been led there by Judas Iscariot. Literally bowled over by Jesus' presence, they're powerless to arrest him until he commands them to let his disciples go. When Peter cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant, Jesus rebukes him and heals the ear. Then Jesus is taken into custody.

18:2 *because Jesus often gathered there*: John's Gospel tells us nothing else of these gatherings (but see Luke 21:37; 22:39).

17:8 Jn 8:42;  
Jn 12:49;  
Jn 16:27;  
Jn 17:14;  
Jn 17:25

17:9 Lk 22:32;  
Jn 17:2, Jn 17:6  
17:10 Jn 10:30,  
Jn 16:15

17:11 Jn 10:30,  
Jn 13:1,  
Jn 17:21-22

17:12 Jn 6:39,  
Jn 6:70, Jn 13:18,  
Jn 18:9, 2Th 2:3

17:13 Jn 3:29,  
Jn 15:11

17:14 Jn 8:23,  
Jn 15:19,  
Jn 17:16

17:15 1Ch 4:10;  
Mt 6:13; Lk 11:4,  
Lk 22:31

17:16 Jn 17:14  
17:17 Jn 15:3,  
Eph 5:26

17:18 Mt 10:5;  
Jn 4:38, Jn 17:3,  
Jn 17:21,  
Jn 20:21

17:19 Jn 17:17;  
1Co 1:2;  
Heb 2:11

17:20 Jn 17:21;  
Ac 4:4; Ro 10:14,  
Ro 10:17,  
Ro 16:26

17:21 Jn 17:8,  
Jn 17:11,  
Jn 17:23

17:22 Jn 1:14,  
Jn 14:20,  
Jn 17:24

17:23 Jn 16:27,  
Jn 17:21;  
Ro 8:10

18:3 Mt 26:47;  
Mk 14:43;  
Lk 22:47;  
Jn 18:12; Ac 1:16

18:4 Jn 6:64;  
Jn 13:1, Jn 13:11,  
Jn 18:7

18:5 Mt 21:11,  
Mt 26:47;  
Mk 1:24,  
Mk 14:43,  
Mk 14:67

18:6 Rev 1:17

18:7 Jn 18:4

18:8 Mt 8:3,  
Mt 14:14,  
Mt 15:32,  
Mt 18:2; Jn 13:1

18:9 Jn 6:39,  
Jn 17:12

18:10 Mt 26:51;  
Mk 14:47;  
Jn 18:26

18:11 Mt 20:22,  
Mt 26:39;  
Mk 14:36

18:12 Mt 26:57;  
Jn 18:3

18:13 Mt 26:3,  
Mt 26:57; Lk 3:2;  
Jn 18:24; Ac 4:6

18:14 Mt 26:3,  
Jn 11:49,  
Jn 11:50

18:15 Mt 26:58;  
Mk 14:54;  
Lk 22:54

18:16 Mt 26:69;  
Mk 14:66;  
Lk 22:55

18:17 Mt 26:69;  
Mk 14:66;  
Lk 22:54;  
Jn 18:25;  
Ac 12:13

18:18 Mk 14:54,  
Mk 14:67;  
Lk 22:55;  
Jn 18:25

18:19 Jn 26:59;  
Mk 14:55;  
Lk 22:63

<sup>3</sup>Judas brought a company of soldiers<sup>a</sup> and some guards from the chief priests and Pharisees. They came there carrying lanterns, torches, and weapons. <sup>4</sup>Jesus knew everything that was to happen to him, so he went out and asked, "Who are you looking for?"

<sup>5</sup>They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene."

He said to them, "I Am."<sup>b</sup> (Judas, his betrayer, was standing with them.) <sup>6</sup>When he said, "I Am," they shrank back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup>He asked them again, "Who are you looking for?"

They said, "Jesus the Nazarene."

<sup>8</sup>Jesus answered, "I told you, 'I Am.'<sup>c</sup> If you are looking for me, then let these people go."

<sup>9</sup>This was so that the word he had spoken might be fulfilled: "I didn't lose anyone of those whom you gave me."

<sup>10</sup>Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) <sup>11</sup>Jesus told Peter, "Put your sword away! Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?" <sup>12</sup>Then the company of soldiers, the commander, and the guards from the Jewish leaders took Jesus into custody. They bound him <sup>13</sup>and led him first to Annas. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. (<sup>14</sup>Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it was better for one person to die for the people.)

### Peter denies Jesus

<sup>15</sup>Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Because this other disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard. <sup>16</sup>However, Peter stood outside near the gate. Then the other disciple (the one known to the high priest) came out and spoke to the woman stationed at the gate, and she brought Peter in. <sup>17</sup>The servant woman stationed at the gate asked Peter, "Aren't you one of this man's disciples?"

"I'm not," he replied. <sup>18</sup>The servants and the guards had made a fire because it was cold. They were standing around it, warming themselves. Peter joined them there, standing by the fire and warming himself.

### Jesus testifies

<sup>19</sup>Meanwhile, the chief priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. <sup>20</sup>Jesus answered, "I've spoken openly to the world. I've always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews gather. I've said nothing in private. <sup>21</sup>Why ask me? Ask those who heard what I told them. They know what I said."

<sup>22</sup>After Jesus spoke, one of the guards standing there slapped Jesus in the face. "Is that how you would answer the high priest?" he asked.

<sup>23</sup>Jesus replied, "If I speak wrongly, testify about what was wrong. But if I speak correctly, why do you strike me?" <sup>24</sup>Then Annas sent him, bound, to Caiaphas the high priest.

<sup>a</sup>Or cohort (approximately six hundred soldiers) <sup>b</sup>Or It is I <sup>c</sup>Or It is I

18:20 Mt 4:23, Mt 26:55; Jn 7:14, Jn 7:26 18:22 Mt 26:67; Ac 23:2 18:23 Mt 5:39, Mt 20:22, Mt 26:4; Jn 18:22; Ac 23:2 18:24 Mt 26:3, Mt 26:57; Jn 18:13

18:4 *Jesus knew everything that was to happen:* Compare with John 6:6, 64; 13:1, 3; 16:30.

18:5-6 *Judas, his betrayer, was standing with them:* a reminder that Judas is no longer with Jesus' disciples, who are about to be set free (John 18:8-9). *shrank back and fell to the ground:* The power of the divine "I Am" (cf. John 8:58) is strikingly evident.

18:8 *let these people go:* Jesus' disciples are "scattered" (John 16:32), but on Jesus' own initiative as he voluntarily gives up his life for his "sheep" (John 10:15).

18:9 *the word he had spoken:* Not just scripture, but Jesus' own words are fulfilled (see John 17:12; 6:39). Judas has already been introduced as the exception (John 18:5).

18:11 *Am I not to drink the cup:* In contrast to Mark 14:36, Jesus accepts *the cup* (i.e., death on the cross) without question in John (cf. John 12:27).

18:13 *first to Annas:* implying he'll be sent on to someone else, presumably Caiaphas (see John 18:24).

18:15-27 The scene in the high priest's courtyard

alternates between Peter and his three denials of Jesus and the high priest's interrogation of Jesus.

18:15 *this other disciple:* an anonymous disciple, probably Judean rather than Galilean. He's in the story only to explain how Peter has gotten into the high priest's courtyard and possibly to be an eyewitness to Peter's three denials.

18:19 *his disciples and his teaching:* not two separate questionings. The main interest is in Jesus' disciples so they can be rounded up and questioned about his teaching.

18:20 *I've spoken openly:* His teaching is a matter of public record, so there's no need to question his disciples. Anyone who has heard him can testify to what he has said (John 18:21). Again, as in John 18:8, Jesus is protecting his disciples. *synagogues and in the temple:* See John 6:59; 8:20, respectively.

18:23 *wrongly:* or "badly"; this is a reference to Exodus 22:28, where "don't curse" can also be translated as "don't speak badly" (cf. Paul in Acts 23:5).

18:24 *Then Annas sent him:* This implies that Annas (John

**Peter denies Jesus again**

<sup>25</sup>Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing with the guards, warming himself. They asked, "Aren't you one of his disciples?"

Peter denied it, saying, "I'm not."

<sup>26</sup>A servant of the high priest, a relative of the one whose ear Peter had cut off, said to him, "Didn't I see you in the garden with him?" <sup>27</sup>Peter denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

**Trial before Pilate**

<sup>28</sup>The Jewish leaders led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Roman governor's palace.<sup>4</sup> It was early in the morning. So that they could eat the Passover, the Jewish leaders wouldn't enter the palace; entering the palace would have made them ritually impure.

<sup>29</sup>So Pilate went out to them and asked, "What charge do you bring against this man?"

<sup>30</sup>They answered, "If he had done nothing wrong, we wouldn't have handed him over to you."

<sup>31</sup>Pilate responded, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your Law."

The Jewish leaders replied, "The Law doesn't allow us to kill anyone." (<sup>32</sup>This was so that Jesus' word might be fulfilled when he indicated how he was going to die.)

**Pilate questions Jesus**

<sup>33</sup>Pilate went back into the palace. He summoned Jesus and asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

<sup>34</sup>Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others spoken to you about me?"

<sup>35</sup>Pilate responded, "I'm not a Jew, am I? Your nation and its chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?"

<sup>36</sup>Jesus replied, "My kingdom doesn't originate from this world. If it did, my guards would fight so that I wouldn't have been arrested by the Jewish leaders. My kingdom isn't from here."

<sup>37</sup>"So you are a king?" Pilate said.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this reason: to testify to the truth. Whoever accepts the truth listens to my voice."

<sup>38</sup>"What is truth?" Pilate asked.

**Release of Barabbas**

After Pilate said this, he returned to the Jewish leaders and said, "I find no grounds for any charge against him. <sup>39</sup>You have a custom that I release one prisoner for you at Passover. Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?"

<sup>40</sup>They shouted, "Not this man! Give us Barabbas!" (Barabbas was an outlaw.)

<sup>4</sup>Or *praetorium*

18:13) is the chief priest who has just questioned Jesus (John 18:19-23). It is also possible to read it retrospectively: "Annas had sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest." If that's the case, then Caiaphas, who elsewhere is called the "high priest that year" (John 11:49; 18:13), is the interrogator. "chief priest" (John 18:19) and *high priest* are translated from the same Greek word.

**18:27** *Peter denied...crowed*: This third denial (cf. John 18:17, 25) fulfills Jesus' prediction (John 13:38). In contrast to the other three Gospels, Peter's reaction isn't given.

**18:28–19:16** Jesus is taken to the Roman governor's palace. Because the Jewish leaders won't enter the palace, the scene shifts back and forth between the outside, where Pilate, the governor, presents Jesus to them; and the inside, where Pilate twice interviews Jesus privately. Finally, Pilate gives Jesus over to the Jewish leaders to be crucified.

**18:28** *So that they could eat the Passover*: Because ritual purity is required for Passover (cf. John 11:55), they won't enter the house of a Gentile.

**18:31** *"The Law doesn't allow us to kill anyone"*: See Exodus

20:13. This is ironic and hypocritical because they've been trying to kill Jesus all along (e.g., John 5:18; 11:53).

**18:32** *indicated how he was going to die*: Again, as in John 18:9, Jesus' own words are fulfilled. Jesus will be "lifted up" (see John 3:14; 12:32), that is, crucified, a distinctly Roman method of execution. If the Jews were to have killed him, it would have been by stoning (see John 8:59; 10:31).

**18:33** *"Are you the king of the Jews?"*: It's unclear why Pilate asks this, since the Jews have brought no such specific charge (John 18:30; but see Luke 23:2). Jesus notices this and asks him, "have others spoken to you about me?" (John 18:34).

**18:36** *My kingdom... world*: What's true of Jesus himself is equally true of his kingdom: It's not *from this world* but "from above" (see John 8:23).

**18:37** *You say that I am a king*: The whole of John 18:34–37 is this Gospel's expansion of Jesus' nonanswer, "That's what you say," in the other three Gospels (Matt 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3).

**18:38** *"What is truth?"*: answered already in John 17:17,

18:25 Lk 22:58.

Jn 18:17–18

18:26 Jn 18:1.

Jn 18:10

18:27 Jn 13:38

18:28 Mt 27:2.

Mt 27:27;

Mk 15:1;

Jn 18:33; Jn 19:9

18:29 Mt 27:2.

Mt 27:11;

Mk 15:1–2;

Lk 23:3

18:30 Ac 3:13

18:31 Jn 19:6

18:32 Mt 20:19.

Mt 26:2; Jn 3:14.

Jn 12:32–33

18:33 Lk 23:3;

Jn 18:28; Jn 19:9.

Jn 19:12.

Jn 19:19

18:34 Jn 18:33.

Jn 18:36

18:35 Mt 27:2.

Mt 27:13.

Mt 27:24.

Mk 15:2.

Mk 15:15

18:36 Lk 17:21;

Jn 6:15

18:37 Mt 27:11;

Jn 3:32; Jn 8:14.

Jn 8:47; Jn 14:6

18:38 Lk 23:4;

Jn 19:4; Jn 19:6

18:39 Mt 27:15;

Mk 15:6;

Jn 18:40

18:40 Mt 27:16;

Mk 15:7;

Lk 23:18;

Ac 3:14

19:1 Mt 27:26;  
Mk 15:15  
19:2 Mt 27:27  
19:3 Mt 27:29  
19:4 Lk 23:4;  
Jn 18:33, Jn 18:38, Jn 19:6  
19:5 Jn 1:29,  
Jn 19:2  
19:6 Jn 19:4;  
Ac 3:13

19:7 Lv 24:16;  
Mt 26:63; Jn 5:18,  
Jn 10:33, Jn 10:36  
19:8 Mt 27:2,  
Mt 27:13,  
Mt 27:24;  
Mk 15:2,  
Mk 15:15

19:9 Mt 26:63;  
Jn 18:28, Jn 18:33  
19:10 Jn 18:31,  
Jn 18:39, Jn 19:11

19:11 Ac 3:13;  
Ro 13:1

19:12 Lk 23:2;  
Jn 18:33

19:13 Mt 27:19

19:14 Mt 27:62;  
Mk 15:25;  
Mk 15:42;  
Jn 19:31, Jn 19:42

19:15 Mk 12:14,  
Mk 15:1,  
Mk 15:14;  
Lk 23:18; Jn 19:6

19:16 Mt 27:26;  
Mk 15:15;  
Lk 23:25

19:17 Mt 27:33;  
Mk 15:22;  
Lk 14:27,  
Lk 23:26,  
Lk 23:33

19:18 Mk 15:24;  
Lk 23:32

19:19 Mt 27:37;  
Mk 15:26;  
Lk 23:38;  
Jn 18:33

### Jesus is whipped and mocked as king

**19**Then Pilate had Jesus taken and whipped. <sup>2</sup>The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and dressed him in a purple robe. <sup>3</sup>Over and over they went up to him and said, "Greetings, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.

<sup>4</sup>Pilate came out of the palace again and said to the Jewish leaders, "Look! I'm bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no grounds for a charge against him." <sup>5</sup>When Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here's the man."

<sup>6</sup>When the chief priests and their deputies saw him, they shouted out, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate told them, "You take him and crucify him. I don't find any grounds for a charge against him."

<sup>7</sup>The Jewish leaders replied, "We have a Law, and according to this Law he ought to die because he made himself out to be God's Son."

### Pilate questions Jesus again

<sup>8</sup>When Pilate heard this word, he was even more afraid. <sup>9</sup>He went back into the residence and spoke to Jesus, "Where are you from?" Jesus didn't answer. <sup>10</sup>So Pilate said, "You won't speak to me? Don't you know that I have authority to release you and also to crucify you?"

<sup>11</sup>Jesus replied, "You would have no authority over me if it had not been given to you from above. That's why the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin." <sup>12</sup>From that moment on, Pilate wanted to release Jesus.

However, the Jewish leaders cried out, saying, "If you release this man, you aren't a friend of the emperor! Anyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes the emperor!"

<sup>13</sup>When Pilate heard these words, he led Jesus out and seated him on the judge's bench at the place called Stone Pavement (in Aramaic, *Gabbatha*). <sup>14</sup>It was about noon on the Preparation Day for the Passover. Pilate said to the Jewish leaders, "Here's your king."

<sup>15</sup>The Jewish leaders cried out, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

Pilate responded, "What? Do you want me to crucify your king?"

"We have no king except the emperor," the chief priests answered. <sup>16</sup>Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.

### Crucifixion

The soldiers took Jesus prisoner. <sup>17</sup>Carrying his cross by himself, he went out to a place called Skull Place (in Aramaic, *Golgotha*). <sup>18</sup>That's where they crucified him—and two others with him, one on each side and Jesus in the middle. <sup>19</sup>Pilate had a public notice written and

"your word is truth." Pilate here signals he doesn't know the truth.

**19:1 taken and whipped:** not in the presence of the Jews but back inside the palace (see John 19:4).

**19:5 "Here's the man":** said to the Jews. This is a reference to the one who's been contemptuously referred to as "this man" (e.g., John 5:12; 9:16, 24; 11:47; 18:17) and the "one man" who must "die for the people" (John 11:50); to the reader it's a reference to "the Human One" or "Son of Man," soon to be "lifted up" (John 3:14; 8:28).

**19:6 I don't find any grounds for a charge against him:** the third time Pilate says this (see John 18:38; 19:4; cf. Luke 23:22).

**19:10 authority:** echoes John 10:18, "I have the right [authority] to give it up, and I have the right [authority] to take it up again." Jesus' claim and Pilate's are on a collision course.

**19:11 the one who handed:** either Caiaphas, the high priest (see John 18:28); or Judas Iscariot (see John 6:71; 13:27; 17:12).

**19:13 seated him on the judge's bench:** as if mocking Jesus' kingship. But the phrase can also be translated as "sat down on the Judge's bench," as Pilate positions himself to deliver his final insult to the Jewish leaders (John 19:14). *Gabbatha*: an Aramaic word of uncertain meaning,

possibly "ridge" or "platform." It's not the Aramaic equivalent of "Stone Pavement."

**19:14 about noon:** Compare with John 4:6 in contrast to Mark 15:25. The other Gospels say noon is when darkness began to cover the earth (Matt 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44; see note on John 1:39). *on the Preparation Day:* Jesus will die on the very day the lambs for the Passover meal are being sacrificed (cf. John 1:29). "Here's your king": The mockery of Jesus is over (John 19:2-5). Pilate is now mocking the Jewish leaders.

**19:15 no king except the emperor:** The Jewish leaders embrace Rome and the empire rather than claim allegiance to God.

**19:16-42 Jesus is crucified.** On the cross he parts with his clothes, with his closest human relationships, and finally with life itself (19:28-30). When he's dead, his legs aren't broken, but his side is pierced with a spear so that blood and water flow out in fulfillment of the scripture. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus take his body and bury it in a garden, wrapped with spices inside a linen cloth.

**19:16 handed Jesus over:** to the Jewish authorities, who are held responsible for the crucifixion (see note on John 8:28), even though it was Roman soldiers who actually drove the nails in (John 19:18, 23). *The soldiers took Jesus prisoner:* or "So they took Jesus." This could refer either to

posted on the cross. It read “Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews.” <sup>20</sup>Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city and it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. <sup>21</sup>Therefore, the Jewish chief priests complained to Pilate, “Don’t write, ‘The king of the Jews’ but ‘This man said, ‘I am the king of the Jews.’”

<sup>22</sup>Pilate answered, “What I’ve written, I’ve written.”

<sup>23</sup>When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and his sandals, and divided them into four shares, one for each soldier. His shirt was seamless, woven as one piece from the top to the bottom. <sup>24</sup>They said to each other, “Let’s not tear it. Let’s cast lots to see who will get it.” This was to fulfill the scripture,

*They divided my clothes among themselves,  
and they cast lots for my clothing.\**

That’s what the soldiers did.

<sup>25</sup>Jesus’ mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood near the cross. <sup>26</sup>When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” <sup>27</sup>Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

<sup>28</sup>After this, knowing that everything was already completed, in order to fulfill the scripture, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” <sup>29</sup>A jar full of sour wine was nearby, so the soldiers soaked a sponge in it, placed it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. <sup>30</sup>When he had received the sour wine, Jesus said, “It is completed.” Bowing his head, he gave up his life.

**Witness at the cross**

<sup>31</sup>It was the Preparation Day and the Jewish leaders didn’t want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath, especially since that Sabbath was an important day. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of those crucified broken and the bodies taken down. <sup>32</sup>Therefore, the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men who were crucified with Jesus. <sup>33</sup>When they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead so they didn’t break his legs. <sup>34</sup>However, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. <sup>35</sup>The one who saw this has testified, and his testimony is true. He knows that he speaks the truth, and he has testified so that you also can believe. <sup>36</sup>These things happened to fulfill the scripture, *They won’t break any of his bones.* <sup>37</sup>And another scripture says, *They will look at him whom they have pierced.*<sup>5</sup>

\*Ps 22:18 <sup>5</sup>Exod 12:46 <sup>5</sup>Zech 12:10

the soldiers or the Jewish authorities. *The soldiers aren’t explicitly mentioned in the Greek until John 19:23.*

19:24 *fulfill the scripture*: a literal fulfillment. The first half of the quotation from Psalm 22:18 (dividing up the clothes) is fulfilled in John 19:23, the latter half (casting lots) in 19:24.

19:25 *and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas*: These are two different women, making four in all. It’s unlikely that two sisters would both be named Mary.

19:26 *the disciple whom he loved*: This person appears quite abruptly. In the verse before, only the four women are identified as being present. See sidebar, “The Disciple Jesus Loved” at John 13.

19:27 *into his home*: as in John 16:32, where Jesus tells all the disciples “you will be scattered to your own homes.”

19:28 *fulfill the scripture*: probably, as in John 17:12, no particular scripture but rather scripture in general, whether referring to thirst for water (Ps 22:15) or a thirst for God (Pss 42:1-2; 63:1). “*I am thirsty*”: He who promised to quench all thirst forever (John 4:13-14) is himself thirsty again, as in John 4:7.

19:29 *hyssop branch*: Because a hyssop branch couldn’t have borne the weight of a wet sponge, some translators have emended the text to read “a javelin,” a word that’s similar to “hyssop” in Greek. Other Gospels speak of a “pole” (Matt 27:48; Mark 15:36).

19:30 *Bowing his head*: Jesus finally finds his place of rest on the cross (cf. Matt 8:50; Luke 9:58).

19:31 *It was the Preparation Day*: Friday, the day before the Sabbath (cf. John 19:42). But it also happens to be “the Preparation Day for the Passover” (John 19:14). So it’s a particularly important Sabbath day.

19:34 *blood and water*: Normally, a dead body doesn’t bleed, but the event is confirmed by an eyewitness (John 19:35). Blood signals Jesus’ death, while water refers to the new life that results from his death. He who was “thirsty” (John 19:28) is the source of water that quenches all thirst forever (John 4:13-14). Compare with 1 John 5:6, where the emphasis is on the blood.

19:35 *The one who saw this*: The eyewitness isn’t identified, though it’s possibly one of the Roman soldiers (see John 19:37; Mark 15:39). The disciple whom Jesus loved has already left the scene (John 19:27). *you also*: meaning you who read this Gospel (cf. John 20:31).

19:36 *They won’t break any of his bones*: referring either to the Passover lamb (Exod 12:46; Num 9:12) or to those who are righteous according to Psalm 34:20.

19:37 *They will look at him whom they have pierced*: If the one who “pierced” (John 19:34) and “The one who saw” (John 19:35) are the same person (i.e., a Roman soldier), the scripture (Zech 12:10) is literally fulfilled.

19:20 Jn 5:2,  
Jn 19:13;  
Ac 21:40,  
Ac 22:2, Ac 26:14  
19:21 Jn 19:14,  
Jn 19:19  
19:22 Gn 43:14;  
Est 4:16;  
Mt 27:2,  
Mt 27:13,  
Mt 27:24  
19:23 Mt 27:35;  
Mk 15:24;  
Lk 23:34  
19:24 Ps 22:18;  
Jn 19:28  
19:25 Mt 12:46,  
Mt 27:55-56;  
Mk 15:40;  
Lk 8:2  
19:26 Jn 2:4,  
Jn 13:23  
19:27 Jn 16:32  
19:28 Ps 69:21;  
Jn 13:1, Jn 19:24,  
Jn 19:30  
19:29 Ps 69:21;  
Mt 27:48;  
Mk 15:36;  
Lk 23:36  
19:30 Mt 27:50;  
Lk 23:46; Jn 4:34,  
Jn 17:4, Jn 19:28  
19:31 Dt 21:23;  
Josh 8:29;  
Mt 27:62;  
Jn 19:14,  
Jn 19:42  
19:32 Jn 19:18  
19:34 1Jn 5:6  
19:35 Jn 15:27,  
Jn 20:31,  
Jn 21:24; 1Jn 1:1  
19:36 Ex 12:46;  
Nm 9:12;  
Ps 34:20;  
Jn 19:24,  
Jn 19:28  
19:37 Zec 12:10;  
Rev 1:7

19:38 Mt 27:57;  
Mk 15:42-43;  
Lk 23:50; Jn 7:13

19:39 Ps 45:8;  
Song 4:14;  
Jn 3:1; Jn 7:50;  
Jn 19:40

19:40  
2Ch 16:14;  
Lk 24:12;  
Jn 11:44;  
Jn 19:39; Jn 20:5

19:41 2Ki 21:18;  
2Ki 21:26;  
Lk 23:53

19:42 Jn 19:14;  
Jn 19:20;  
Jn 19:31;  
Jn 19:41

20:1 Mt 27:60;  
Mt 27:66;  
Mt 28:1;  
Mk 16:1; Lk 24:1

20:2 Jn 13:23;  
Jn 20:13

20:3 Lk 24:12

20:5 Jn 19:40

20:6 Mt 16:16;  
Lk 22:31;  
Jn 18:17;

Jn 18:25; Jn 21:7

20:7 Jn 11:44

20:8 Jn 20:4

20:9 Mt 22:29

20:11 Mt 27:56;  
Mt 27:61;

Mt 28:1;  
Mk 15:40;  
Mk 16:1

20:12 Mt 28:2;  
Mk 16:5; Lk 24:4

20:13 Jn 20:2;  
Jn 20:15

20:14 Mt 28:9;  
Mk 16:9;  
Lk 24:16; Jn 21:4

20:15 Jer 29:5;  
Jn 1:38; Jn 18:4;  
Jn 18:7; Jn 20:13

20:16 Jn 1:38

### Jesus' body is buried

<sup>38</sup>After this Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate if he could take away the body of Jesus. Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one because he feared the Jewish authorities. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and took the body away. <sup>39</sup>Nicodemus, the one who at first had come to Jesus at night, was there too. He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloë, nearly seventy-five pounds in all.<sup>h</sup> <sup>40</sup>Following Jewish burial customs, they took Jesus' body and wrapped it, with the spices, in linen cloths. <sup>41</sup>There was a garden in the place where Jesus was crucified, and in the garden was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. <sup>42</sup>Because it was the Jewish Preparation Day and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus in it.

### Empty tomb

**20**Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup>She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they've put him." <sup>3</sup>Peter and the other disciple left to go to the tomb. <sup>4</sup>They were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and was the first to arrive at the tomb. <sup>5</sup>Bending down to take a look, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn't go in. <sup>6</sup>Following him, Simon Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. <sup>7</sup>He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus' head. It wasn't with the other clothes but was folded up in its own place. <sup>8</sup>Then the other disciple, the one who arrived at the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. <sup>9</sup>They didn't yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup>Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

### Jesus appears to Mary

<sup>11</sup>Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying. As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb. <sup>12</sup>She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. <sup>13</sup>The angels asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

She replied, "They have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've put him." <sup>14</sup>As soon as she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn't know it was Jesus.

<sup>15</sup>Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him."

<sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabbouni" (which means *Teacher*).

<sup>h</sup>Or one hundred litra; that is, one hundred Roman pounds

**19:38** a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one: This is a step toward true discipleship for both Joseph and Nicodemus (John 19:39; cf. John 12:42-43).

**19:39** seventy-five pounds: The enormous amount of spices for burial matches in its own way Mary's "three-quarters of a pound of very expensive perfume" in preparation for his burial (see John 12:3, 7).

**19:41** garden: The story of Jesus' suffering and death begins and ends in a garden (cf. John 18:1).

**20:1-18** Mary Magdalene comes early to the tomb and finds the stone in front of it rolled away. Thinking the body has been removed, she runs to Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved and summons them to the tomb. Peter enters and finds it empty, with the linen cloths and the face cloth lying separately. The disciple whom Jesus loved then enters the tomb, sees, and believes. He and Peter leave together. Mary finally looks into the tomb and sees two angels standing where Jesus' body should have been lying. Still thinking the body stolen, she turns and sees Jesus himself but mistakes him for the gardener. He reveals himself to her by speaking her name and sends her to tell the disciples he's on his way to the Father. (See sidebar, "The Disciple Jesus Loved" at John 13.)

**20:1** Mary Magdalene: one of the four women at the cross (John 19:25; Luke 8:2).

**20:2** we don't know: The "we" here doesn't necessarily imply that other women are accompanying Mary (as there were in the other Gospels; see Matt 27:61; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10). She simply speaks for Jesus' disciples, implying an indefinite "they" who might have taken the body.

**20:6** linen cloths lying there: The body hasn't been stolen. Who would bother to unwrap a corpse when taking it away for reburial?

**20:8** He saw and believed: He's seen either what Peter had just a moment before (John 20:6-7) or what Mary will see shortly afterward (John 20:12). He believes Jesus has gone to the Father (see John 14:29).

**20:9** They didn't yet understand the scripture: scripture as a whole, as in Luke 24:45-47, not a particular text. The other disciple's belief is based on Jesus' words and what he's just seen, not on scripture.

**20:10** the place where they were staying: either their "homes" (John 16:32; 19:27) or temporary quarters in Jerusalem.

**20:12** one at the head and one at the foot: dramatizing that the body is gone.

**20:16** "Mary": instead of "Woman" (John 20:15), identifying

<sup>17</sup>Jesus said to her, "Don't hold on to me, for I haven't yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, 'I'm going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

<sup>18</sup>Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, "I've seen the Lord." Then she told them what he said to her.

### Jesus appears to the disciples

<sup>19</sup>It was still the first day of the week. That evening, while the disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you."<sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you."<sup>22</sup>Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you don't forgive them, they aren't forgiven."

### Jesus appears to Thomas and the disciples

<sup>24</sup>Thomas, the one called Didymus,<sup>i</sup> one of the Twelve, wasn't with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>The other disciples told him, "We've seen the Lord!"

But he replied, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger in the wounds left by the nails, and put my hand into his side, I won't believe."

<sup>26</sup>After eight days his disciples were again in a house and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus entered and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you."<sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand into my side. No more disbelief. Believe!"

<sup>28</sup>Thomas responded to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!"

<sup>29</sup>Jesus replied, "Do you believe because you see me? Happy are those who don't see and yet believe."

<sup>30</sup>Then Jesus did many other miraculous signs in his disciples' presence, signs that aren't recorded in this scroll. <sup>31</sup>But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that believing, you will have life in his name.

<sup>i</sup>Or the twin

her as one of "his own sheep" (John 10:3). "*Rabbouni*": She recognizes him not by sight but by his speaking of her name (cf. John 10:4). "*Rabbouni*" and "*Rabbi*" (John 1:38) both mean the same thing.

20:17 *Don't hold on to me*: Compare with Matthew 28:9. *Go to my brothers and sisters*: or "Go to my brothers," which would refer to the male disciples gathered in John 20:19-29. Jesus expresses urgency that she go quickly and tell his disciples. *I'm going up to my Father and your Father*: explaining why Jesus calls them his siblings: They share the same Father.

20:18 *"I've seen the Lord"*: Mary is the first to see the Lord (cf. John 20:25; 21:7). *Then she told them what he said to her*: reminding them that "my Father and your Father" was said to her first, so that if these men are Jesus' "brothers," she is one of his "sisters" (John 20:17).

20:19-31 That same evening Jesus appears to his disciples, who have gathered *behind closed doors*. He gives them a greeting of peace, shows them his wounds, and breathes on them, conferring on them the Holy Spirit before sending them on their mission. A week later he appears to them again, this time with Thomas present. Thomas asks to see his wounds, and, when Jesus agrees, he professes his belief in Jesus as Lord and God. Jesus pronounces a blessing on all who have not seen and yet believe, and the Gospel's author makes an appeal to the reader to believe.

20:19 *closed doors*: or "locked" doors, as in John 20:26. *because... authorities*: They aren't expecting Jesus, because Mary told them he was going away (John 20:18; cf. John 12:42; 19:38). "*Peace be with you*": a routine greeting

(Luke 10:5; cf. John 20:21, 26), but one that fulfills Jesus' promises (cf. John 14:27; 16:33).

20:20 *his hands and his side*: They must have known of his wounds, possibly through Joseph and Nicodemus, even though they hadn't seen them.

20:21 *As the Father sent me, so I am sending you*: Compare with John 17:18.

20:22 *breathed on them*: proving that he's alive once more (cf. John 14:19, "Because I live, you will live too"). *Receive the Holy Spirit*: Compare with John 1:33, designating Jesus as "the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit."

20:23 *If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven*: Compare with Matthew 16:19; 18:18. *if you don't forgive them, they aren't forgiven*: or "if you hold them, they are held." Even Jesus sometimes withholds forgiveness (John 8:21, 24; 9:41; 15:22; 19:11).

20:25 *"We've seen the Lord!"*: echoing what Mary said to them (John 20:18).

20:27 *No more disbelief. Believe!*: Compare with Matthew 28:17; Mark 9:24.

20:28 *"My Lord and my God!"*: Compare with John 1:1.

20:29 *don't see and yet believe*: like the royal official at Capernaum (John 4:50), but above all like the readers of this Gospel (see John 20:31).

20:30 *many other miraculous signs*: This could refer to the miraculous signs done throughout his ministry, as in John 12:37, but they are just as likely to be the signs done right here in the course of his resurrection appearances (cf. Acts 1:3).

20:31 *written so that you will believe*: so that readers might

20:17 Mt 28:10;  
Mk 16:19;  
Jn 7:33; Eph 1:17  
20:18 Mk 16:9;  
Mk 16:10;  
Lk 24:10;  
Lk 24:23; Jn 20:1  
20:19 Lk 24:36;  
Jn 7:13; Jn 14:27;  
Jn 20:21; Jn 20:26

20:20  
Lk 24:39-40;  
Jn 16:20;  
Jn 16:22;  
Jn 19:34

20:21 Lk 24:36;  
Jn 17:18; Jn 20:19

20:22 Jn 7:39;  
Ac 2:38; Ga 3:2

20:23 Mt 16:19;  
Mt 18:18; 1Co 5:4

20:24 Jn 6:67;  
Jn 11:16; Jn 20:19;  
Jn 21:2

20:25 Mk 16:11;  
Jn 20:20

20:26 Jn 20:19;  
Jn 20:21

20:27 Mt 17:17;  
Lk 24:39; Jn  
20:20;

Jn 20:25; 1Jn 1:1  
20:28 Ps 43:6;  
Ps 102:24;  
Is 7:14; Is 40:9;  
Jn 21:2

20:29 1Pt 1:8  
20:30 Jn 2:11;  
Jn 21:25

20:31 Jn 3:15-16, Jn 11:27; Ac 10:43; 2Ti 3:15

21:1 Jn 6:1, Jn 20:19, Jn 20:26, Jn 21:14

21:2 Mt 4:21; Jn 1:45, Jn 2:1, Jn 11:16

21:3 Mt 4:18; Lk 5:5

21:4 Lk 24:16; Jn 20:14

21:5 Lk 24:41

21:6 Lk 5:4, Lk 5:6

21:7 Jn 13:23, Jn 21:20

21:9 Lk 24:42

21:10 Jn 6:11, Jn 21:13

21:11 Lk 5:6

21:12 Mt 16:8, Mt 16:21;

Mk 8:17;

Mk 9:32;

Jn 21:15

*The Ending of John* The conclusion of John 20 sounds like the end of the Gospel. "But these things are written" (John 20:31) conveys finality, as if the author finally turns to the readers and expresses the hope that they will believe. Because of this, some scholars insist that the Gospel once ended here, and that John 21 was added later, either by the author or by someone else. Even those who don't accept this idea often treat the ending of John 20 as if it's the ending of the Gospel, with John 20:31 ("so that you will believe") as the definitive statement of the Gospel's purpose. Clearly, this is its purpose, yet it's no more true of this Gospel than of the other three. All four were written to encourage faith. And caution is necessary because there is no evidence that John's Gospel ever circulated without John 21. If the "miraculous signs" mentioned in John 20:30 are resurrection signs (e.g., Jesus appearing in a locked room, breathing once more, and baptizing in the Holy Spirit), they can be understood to also include the enormous catch of fish recounted in John 21:1-14. This "third time" (John 21:14) Jesus appears certainly belongs with the two appearances he makes to Mary (John 20:14-17) and the male disciples (John 20:19-30).

### Jesus appears again to the disciples

**21** Later, Jesus himself appeared again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberius. This is how it happened: <sup>2</sup>Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus<sup>1</sup>), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two other disciples were together. <sup>3</sup>Simon Peter told them, "I'm going fishing."

They said, "We'll go with you." They set out in a boat, but throughout the night they caught nothing. <sup>4</sup>Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn't realize it was Jesus.

<sup>5</sup>Jesus called to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?"

They answered him, "No."

<sup>6</sup>He said, "Cast your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."

So they did, and there were so many fish that they couldn't haul in the net. <sup>7</sup>Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he wrapped his coat around himself (for he was naked) and jumped into the water. <sup>8</sup>The other disciples followed in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they weren't far from shore, only about one hundred yards.

<sup>9</sup>When they landed, they saw a fire there, with fish on it, and some bread. <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you've just caught." <sup>11</sup>Simon Peter got up and pulled the net to shore. It was full of large fish, one hundred fifty-three of them. Yet the net hadn't torn, even with so many fish. <sup>12</sup>Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples could bring themselves to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

<sup>1</sup>Or the twin

either believe in Jesus for the first time or, like Thomas, be assured of the truth of what they already believe (cf. John 19:35). *Jesus is the Christ, God's Son*: exactly what Martha believed (John 11:27).

21:1-14 Jesus appears to several of his disciples on the shore of the lake in Galilee. They've been fishing all night and caught nothing. He appears to them as a stranger; like Mary, they don't recognize him. At his prompting they let down their net once again and this time pull in an enormous catch of fish (cf. Luke 5:1-11). At this, the disciple whom he loved recognizes him. Jesus then prepares a meal of bread and fish for the disciples beside the lake, and they all know he is the Lord.

21:1 *Sea of Tiberius*: the Sea of Galilee (cf. John 6:1).

21:2 *two other disciples*: Andrew and Philip are noticeably absent. See note on John 21:7.

21:3 *caught nothing*: Compare with John 15:5.

21:4 *the disciples didn't realize it was Jesus*: just as Mary Magdalene hadn't (John 20:14).

21:6 *and you will find some*: or "and you will find" (cf. Luke 11:9; Matt 7:7).

21:7 *the disciple whom Jesus loved*: This disciple may have been one of the disciples mentioned in John 21:2. If not, this brings the total number of disciples in this story to eight. "It's the Lord!": Aside from "Lord, who is it?" (John 13:25; cf. John 20:18, 25; 21:20), these are the only words the disciple whom Jesus loved ever speaks. *naked*: or "naked under the coat he was wearing." Instead of shedding the coat, he secures it. (See sidebar, "The Disciple Jesus Loved" at John 13.)

21:9 *a fire*: as in John 18:18; a charcoal fire. The scene of Peter's reinstatement (John 21:15-17) matches the scene of his denial.

21:10 *Bring some of the fish*: not necessarily to eat, for fish are already cooking (John 21:9), but possibly as a kind of offering.

21:11 *one hundred fifty-three*: It's futile to look for a symbolic meaning in this number. The point is simply that it's a very large number of fish—not an approximation, as in John 2:6; 6:10; 19:39, but an exact number, as if they've been counted. *net hadn't torn*: Compare with Luke 5:6.

21:12 *None... ask him*: They're embarrassed that they didn't recognize him (cf. John 4:27; 16:5, 16-19). *They knew*



<sup>13</sup>Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup>This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

### Jesus and Peter

<sup>15</sup>When they finished eating, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

Simon replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." <sup>16</sup>Jesus asked a second time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Simon replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Take care of my sheep." <sup>17</sup>He asked a third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was sad that Jesus asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" He replied, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup>I assure you that when you were younger you tied your own belt and walked around wherever you wanted. When you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and another will tie your belt and lead you where you don't want to go." <sup>19</sup>He said this to show the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. After saying this, Jesus said to Peter, "Follow me."

### Jesus and the disciple whom he loved

<sup>20</sup>Peter turned around and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them. This was the one who had leaned against Jesus at the meal and asked him, "Lord, who is going to betray you?" <sup>21</sup>When Peter saw this disciple, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?"

<sup>22</sup>Jesus replied, "If I want him to remain until I come, what difference does that make to you? You must follow me." <sup>23</sup>Therefore, the word spread among the brothers and sisters that this disciple wouldn't die. However, Jesus didn't say he wouldn't die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what difference does that make to you?" <sup>24</sup>This is the disciple who testifies concerning these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. <sup>25</sup>Jesus did many other things as well. If all of them were recorded, I imagine the world itself wouldn't have enough room for the scrolls that would be written.

21:13 Jn 21:9  
21:14 Jn 20:19,  
Jn 20:26  
21:15 Is 40:11;  
Mt 26:33;  
Mk 14:29;  
Lk 22:31;  
Jn 13:37  
21:16 Ac 20:28;  
1Pt 5:2  
21:17 Jn 2:24,  
Jn 13:38,  
Jn 16:30,  
Jn 21:15-16  
21:18 Jn 13:36;  
Ac 21:11  
21:19 Mt 16:24;  
Jn 12:33,  
Jn 13:36,  
Jn 21:22;  
2Pt 1:14  
21:20 Jn 13:23,  
Jn 13:25, Jn 21:7  
21:21 Mt 24:4;  
Jn 21:22  
21:22 Jn 21:19  
21:23 Mt 11:25;  
Ac 1:15-16;  
Ro 1:6; 1Co 4:5  
21:24 Jn 15:27,  
Jn 19:35  
21:25 Jn 20:30

*it was the Lord* because the disciple whom Jesus loved had told them (John 21:7). Unlike Mary (John 20:16) and Thomas (John 20:28), however, they say nothing.

21:13 *bread... fish*: Here the prayer of thanksgiving is omitted, but it's probably implied (cf. John 6:11).

21:14 *third time*: Either the first was in John 20:19-23 and the second was in John 20:24-29; or, more likely, the first was to Mary Magdalene in John 20:14-18 and the second was the two-stage appearance to the gathered disciples in John 20:19-29.

21:15-25 Jesus asks Peter, *do you love me?*, three times (21:15, 16, 17), corresponding to Peter's threefold denial of Jesus in John 18. Peter affirms his love each time, and each time Jesus charges him with a shepherd's care over his fellow disciples. Jesus then commands Peter to follow him, as Peter had once said he would do, even to the point of martyrdom. Seeing the disciple whom Jesus loved, Peter asks Jesus about that disciple's destiny and is told it's none of Peter's concern. The disciple whom Jesus loved is then identified as both the witness to and the author of the things written in this Gospel. Jesus is acknowledged to have said and done much more than is written here.

21:15 *love me more than these*: that is, more than these other disciples love me (cf. Matt 26:33; Mark 14:29). *you know I love you*: Peter uses a different Greek word for "love" than Jesus, but there's no difference in its meaning. Note that Peter doesn't claim to love Jesus *more than these*. *my lambs*: same as "my sheep" (John 21:16, 17).

21:16 *do you love me*: This time Jesus omits the phrase "more than these" (John 21:15). *my sheep*: Jesus' sheep are his followers, Peter's fellow disciples (cf. Luke 22:32).

21:17 *do you love me*: This time Jesus uses the same Greek word for "love" that Peter has been using, without changing its meaning (see note on John 21:15). *Peter was sad*: not because Jesus has used a different word for "love," but because it's the third time Jesus has asked him this question, as if Jesus doesn't believe him. Or perhaps Jesus' questioning reminds him of his three denials (John 18:25-27).

21:18 *where you don't want to go*: a clue that Jesus isn't speaking simply of helpless old age but of martyrdom. Unlike Jesus (John 10:17-18), and in contrast to his own claim (John 13:37), Peter will be an unwilling martyr; yet his death will "glorify God" (John 21:19).

21:22 *remain until I come*: live until Christ's return at the last day.

21:23 *Jesus didn't say he wouldn't die*: a disclaimer that is made necessary either by the death of the disciple whom Jesus loved or by the prospect that this disciple might die very soon.

21:24 *wrote them down*: Something beyond *testimony* is implied here. The disciple is the author of this Gospel.

21:25 *Jesus did many other things as well*: In contrast to John 20:30, no reference is made to "this scroll" (i.e., John's Gospel) in particular. This final verse is a fitting conclusion to all four Gospels as they've been collected in the NT.

1.  $\frac{1}{x^2} = x^{-2}$   
 $\frac{d}{dx} x^{-2} = -2x^{-3} = -\frac{2}{x^3}$

2.  $\frac{d}{dx} \frac{1}{x^3} = \frac{d}{dx} x^{-3} = -3x^{-4} = -\frac{3}{x^4}$

3.  $\frac{d}{dx} \frac{1}{x^4} = \frac{d}{dx} x^{-4} = -4x^{-5} = -\frac{4}{x^5}$

4.  $\frac{d}{dx} \frac{1}{x^5} = \frac{d}{dx} x^{-5} = -5x^{-6} = -\frac{5}{x^6}$

Acts is a companion volume to the Gospel of Luke, continuing the story of Jesus' followers and tracking the church's growth after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Both books are written by the same author and addressed to Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). The writer's name isn't given in either book, but early tradition names the author as Luke, doctor and companion of Paul (Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11). Whoever the actual author was, these works contain no specialized medical language or otherwise reflect a doctor's touch. They do reveal an educated writer of considerable literary skill and extensive knowledge of Jewish and Greco-Roman history, religion, and society.

Theophilus was likely a prominent Roman citizen who supported Luke's project. He may have funded Luke's research, writing, and publication. Luke dedicates his work to Theophilus but by no means writes only for him. The broad range of characters and places within the story of Acts suggests a wide audience of Greek-speaking Jews and God-worshipping Gentiles

who want to know more about the Christian faith and community.

Acts could have been written any time from the early 60s CE to the early 2nd century. The early 60s date is tied to the book's abrupt ending with Paul's imprisonment in Rome, suggesting that Luke wrote Acts before Paul's death in Rome (around 64). But hints of Paul's impending death (Acts 20:24, 31; 21:11-13; 25:11) and the general sense of the narrative as a later historical reflection suggest a date somewhat removed from the events it reports. Many scholars favor 80–90 as the most likely period.

Acts is a historical-theological narrative. It interprets the significance of God's work through Jesus Christ and his followers in the power of the Holy Spirit (on the Spirit's vital role, see sidebars, "Receiving the Spirit at Pentecost"; "God's Gift of the Holy Spirit"). The story includes several key speeches by four early Christian leaders: Peter (Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 10:34-43), Stephen (Acts 7:2-53), James (Acts 15:13-21), and Paul (Acts 13:16-41; 17:22-31; 20:18-35; 22:1-21;



Caesarea, the site of major building projects by Herod the Great. Paul was held in prison here after his arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 23:33; 24:27).  
*Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com*

24:10-21; 26:1-23). These speeches don't give us what was said word for word but are Luke's carefully crafted summaries of the leaders' messages in various settings. Recurring themes include (1) Jesus' role as Israel's Christ, Savior of the world, and Lord of creation; (2) the key place of Jesus' death and resurrection in God's plan of salvation; and (3) Jesus as the fulfillment of OT hopes and promises.

Other themes revolve around the treatment of key groups or individuals, particularly Jews, Romans, and Paul. Luke's perspective on Jews and Romans is complex. Some Jews (mostly religious leaders) oppose the Christian message, but Luke reports that "many thousands of Jews have become believers" (Acts 21:20; cf. Acts 2:41; 4:4). Overall, Acts presents a divided Jewish response (see Acts 14:1-5; 18:5-8; 28:23-25). Likewise, while some Roman officials support the Jesus movement, others remain indifferent

(Acts 18:12-17; 24:24-27; 25:13-21). Further, Acts doesn't forget that Jesus died on a Roman cross (Acts 2:23; 4:25-27). Luke's story never calls for a revolution against Rome, but repeated references to Jesus' status as the world's true Savior and King certainly question Caesar's authority (cf. Acts 17:7-8; Luke 2:1, 11; 20:22-25; 23:1-3). The early church in Acts makes its way in a lively environment that both embraces and opposes its mission.

Acts holds a strategic place within the NT as a bridge between the Gospels and the Letters. It picks up where the Gospels' (especially Luke's) stories of Jesus leave off. And it introduces the main church leaders—Paul, Peter, John, and James—associated with the Letters that follow. The connections are strongest with Luke's first volume (the Gospel of Luke), as Luke shows that the church follows Jesus' teaching and example and carries on his mission in the world.

### **I. Beginning the Mission in Jerusalem (1:1–8:1)**

- A. Jesus' farewell instructions to his disciples (1:1-11)
- B. The believing community's unity in prayer (1:12-14)
- C. Judas' replacement as the 12th apostle (1:15-26)
- D. God's powerful work on Pentecost Day (2:1-41)
  - 1. Pouring out the Holy Spirit on Jesus' followers (2:1-13)
  - 2. Inspiring Peter's speech (2:14-40)
  - 3. Adding thousands to the community (2:41)
- E. The believing community's fellowship (2:42-47)
- F. Peter and John's ministry in the temple (3:1-4:22)
  - 1. Healing a crippled man (3:1-10)
  - 2. Addressing the crowd (3:11-26)
  - 3. Addressing the temple authorities (4:1-22)
- G. The believing community's prayer for confidence (4:23-31)
- H. The believing community's fellowship (4:32-5:11)
  - 1. Evidenced by sharing everything (4:32-35)
  - 2. Illustrated by Barnabas (4:36-37)
  - 3. Violated by Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11)
- I. The apostles' working of miracles (5:12-16)
- J. The apostles' arrest and harassment by temple authorities (5:17-42)
- K. The church's selection of seven servants (6:1-7)

### **L. Stephen's ministry and martyrdom (6:8–8:1)**

- 1. Opposition and arrest (6:8-7:1)
- 2. Defense speech (7:2-53)
- 3. Death by stoning (7:54-8:1)

### **II. Extending the Mission into Judea, Samaria, and Syria (8:1–12:25)**

- A. The church's scattering due to Saul's harassment (8:1-3)
- B. Philip the evangelist's mission (8:4-40)
  - 1. Preaching, baptizing, and performing miracles in Samaria (8:4-25)
  - 2. Preaching to and baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch on the road to Gaza (8:26-40)
- C. Saul the harasser's change of mission (9:1-31)
  - 1. Meeting the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus (9:1-19)
  - 2. Preaching in Damascus (9:20-25)
  - 3. Preaching in Jerusalem (9:26-31)
- D. Peter the apostle's mission (9:32-11:18)
  - 1. Healing a paralyzed man named Aeneas in Lydda (9:32-35)
  - 2. Raising from the dead a disciple named Tabitha in Joppa (9:36-43)
  - 3. Preaching in the home of a Roman officer named Cornelius in Caesarea (10:1-48)
  - 4. Defending his preaching to Gentiles before the church in Jerusalem (11:1-18)
- E. The scattered church's mission in Syrian Antioch (11:19-30)
  - 1. Preaching by missionaries from Cyprus and Cyrene (11:19-21)
  - 2. Teaching by Barnabas and Saul (11:22-30)

- F. Herod's harassment of the church (12:1-25)
  1. James' execution and Peter's imprisonment (12:1-5)
  2. Peter's miraculous escape from prison (12:6-19)
  3. Herod's sudden death (12:20-23)
  4. The church's continued growth (12:24-25)

**III. Expanding the Mission across Asia Minor and Greece (13:1–20:38)**

- A. Paul and Barnabas' mission in Asia Minor (13:1–16:5)
  1. Sending by the church at Syrian Antioch (13:1-3)
  2. Preaching to Governor Sergius Paulus and confronting a false prophet in Cyprus (13:4-12)
  3. Preaching to Jews and Gentile God-worshippers in Pisidian Antioch (13:13-52)
  4. Preaching to Jews and Greeks, and performing miracles in Iconium (14:1-7)
  5. Healing a crippled man and resisting hero worship in Lystra (14:8-20)
  6. Preaching in Derbe, appointing church leaders, and returning to Syrian Antioch (14:21-28)
  7. Evaluating and approving the Gentile mission at a major conference in Jerusalem (15:1-35)
  8. Splitting the partnership between Paul and Barnabas (15:36-41)
  9. Returning to the churches of Asia Minor and adding Timothy to the mission (16:1-5)
- B. Paul's mission in Greece (16:6–18:17)
  1. Receiving a special call to go to Macedonia (16:6-10)
  2. Preaching to a businesswoman named Lydia and a jailer in Philippi (16:11-40)
  3. Preaching to and receiving a mixed reception from Jews and Gentile God-worshippers in Thessalonica (17:1-9)
  4. Preaching to more receptive Jews and Greeks in Beroea (17:10-15)
  5. Preaching against idol worship in Athens (17:16-34)
  6. Preaching to Jews and Greeks in Corinth and being brought to trial before Governor Gallio (18:1-17)
- C. Paul's mission in Ephesus (18:18–19:41)
  1. Visiting briefly at first and leaving Aquila and Priscilla to continue his work (18:18-23)
  2. Aquila and Priscilla's teaching to a visiting preacher named Apollos (18:24-28)

3. Returning for an extended mission and beginning with imparting the Spirit to a group of John the Baptist's disciples (19:1-7)
  4. Preaching, teaching, and performing miracles (19:8-12)
  5. Confronting a group of Jewish exorcists and others who practiced sorcery (19:13-20)
  6. Planning a future trip to Jerusalem and Rome (19:21-22)
  7. Sparking a riot led by silversmiths who made models of Artemis' temple (19:23-41)
- D. Paul's travels back and forth across the Aegean Sea (20:1-12)
    1. Visiting Macedonia and southern Greece (20:1-6)
    2. Teaching and raising from the dead a young man named Eutychus in Troas (20:7-12)
  - E. Paul's final meeting with the Ephesian leaders (20:13-38)

**IV. Concluding the Mission from Jerusalem to Rome (21:1–28:31)**

- A. Paul's journey to Jerusalem (21:1-17)
- B. Paul's trials in Jerusalem (21:18–23:11)
  1. Meeting with James and other church leaders (21:18-26)
  2. Seized by an angry mob in the temple (21:27-36)
  3. Presenting a defense before the temple crowd and Roman soldiers (21:37–22:29)
  4. Appearing before the Jerusalem Council (22:30–23:10)
  5. Receiving the Lord's encouragement (23:11)
- C. Paul's trials in Caesarea (23:12–26:32)
  1. Transferred to Caesarea for his protection (23:12-35)
  2. Appearing before Governor Felix (24:1-27)
  3. Appearing before Governor Festus and appealing to Caesar (25:1-22)
  4. Appearing before King Agrippa (25:23–26:32)
- D. Paul's journey to Rome (27:1–28:16)
  1. Setting out to sea (27:1-6)
  2. Battling a raging storm around Crete (27:7-38)
  3. Running aground at Malta (27:39–28:10)
  4. Arriving in Italy (28:11-16)
- E. Paul's witness in Rome (28:17-31)
  1. Meeting with Jewish leaders (28:17-28)
  2. Welcoming, preaching to, and teaching visitors in his rented residence (28:30-31)

1:1 Lk 1:3

1:2 Mt 28:19;  
Mk 16:19;  
Jn 13:18; Ac 1:91:3 Lk 24:36;  
Jn 14:16;  
Jn 14:26;

1:4 Lk 24:49;

1:5 Mt 3:11;  
Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16;  
Ac 2:1; Ac 11:161:6 Mt 17:11;  
Lk 17:20;  
Lk 19:11;  
Ac 3:211:7 D1 29:29;  
Dn 2:21;  
Mt 24:36;  
Mk 13:32;  
1Th 5:11:8 Mt 3:8;  
Mt 28:19;  
Mk 16:15;  
Lk 24:48; Ac 8:11:9 Jn 6:81B;  
Mk 16:19;  
Lk 24:50;  
Lk 24:51; Ac 1:21:10 Lk 24:4;  
Jn 20:121:11 Mt 16:27;  
Lk 21:27; Ac 2:7;  
1Th 1:101:12 Mt 21:1;  
Lk 24:50;  
Lk 24:521:13 Mt 10:2;  
Mk 3:16;  
Lk 6:14-15;  
Ac 9:371:14 Mt 12:46;  
Lk 8:2; Ac 2:42;  
Ac 4:24; Ac 6:41:15 Mt 4:18;  
Mt 16:16;  
Mt 17:24;  
Mt 18:21;  
Jn 21:15

### The risen Jesus with his disciples

**1** Theophilus, the first scroll I wrote concerned everything Jesus did and taught from the beginning, right up to the day when he was taken up into heaven. Before he was taken up, working in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus instructed the apostles he had chosen. **2** After his suffering, he showed them that he was alive with many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days, speaking to them about God's kingdom. **3** While they were eating together, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. He said, "This is what you heard from me: **4** John baptized with water, but in only a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

**5** As a result, those who had gathered together asked Jesus, "Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now?"

**7** Jesus replied, "It isn't for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by his own authority. **8** Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

**9** After Jesus said these things, as they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. **10** While he was going away and as they were staring toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood next to them. **11** They said, "Galileans, why are you standing here, looking toward heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you saw him go into heaven."

### Jesus' followers in Jerusalem

**12** Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem—a sabbath day's journey away. **13** When they entered the city, they went to the upstairs room where they were staying. Peter, John, James, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James, Alphaeus' son; Simon the zealot; and Judas, James' son—all were united in their devotion to prayer, along with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

### A replacement for Judas

**15** During this time, the family of believers was a company of about one hundred twenty persons. Peter stood among them and said, **16** "Brothers and sisters, the scripture that the Holy Spirit announced beforehand through David had to be fulfilled. This was the scripture concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus. **17** This happened even though he was one of us and received a share of this ministry." (**18** In fact, he bought a field with the payment he received for his injustice. Falling headfirst, he burst open in the middle

1:1-11 The final instructions of the risen Jesus to his disciples before going away to heaven.

1:1 *Theophilus, the first scroll*: Luke's Gospel was the earlier volume dedicated to Theophilus (Luke 1:3). Theophilus' name means "lover of God." He may have financially sponsored Luke's writings.

1:3 *forty days*: an important time period in the Bible, recalling Moses' meeting with God on the mountain (Exod 34:27-28), Elijah's refreshment by God's messenger in the desert (1 Kgs 19:5-9), and Jesus' testing in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-2). *God's kingdom*: the experience of God's rule of peace and justice in Israel (cf. Acts 1:6), the world, and the entire universe.

1:5 See Luke 3:16.

1:6 *the kingdom*: See note on Acts 1:3.

1:8 *Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*: previews a broad outline for the book of Acts based on geography: the city of Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), expanding to the neighboring regions of Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12), and out to the wider Greco-Roman world (Acts 13-28).

1:10 *two men in white robes*: Similar figures addressed the women at Jesus' empty tomb (Luke 24:4-7).

1:12 *a sabbath day's journey*: a half mile or so. Jewish

tradition limited the distance one should travel on the Sabbath (see note on Acts 13:14).

1:13 *the upstairs room*: likely the same place where Jesus and the disciples ate their last Passover meal (Luke 22:11-12).

1:14 *all were united in their devotion to prayer*: The spirit of unity and the practice of prayer are major features of community life (cf. Acts 2:1, 42-44; 3:1; 4:23-32; 6:6; 13:1-3; 16:13, 16; 20:36-37; 21:5).

1:15-26 The first order of business for the Jerusalem congregation is replacing Judas among the 12 apostles. Judas had arranged for Jesus' arrest (Luke 22:1-6, 47-53) and later died in a gruesome manner (Acts 1:18-19). It's important to fill the vacant slot quickly because of the symbolic connection between these 12 leaders and Israel's 12 tribes (cf. Luke 22:30).

1:16 *the scripture . . . had to be fulfilled*: The texts are quoted in Acts 1:20. During times of crisis, the early believers seek comfort and guidance from the OT.

1:18 *payment*: the money Judas received for handing Jesus over to the religious authorities (Luke 22:3). Matthew 26:14-15 identifies the amount as 30 pieces of silver. *Falling headfirst, he burst open in the middle*: The setting and circumstances of this gory death are otherwise unknown (cf. Matt 27:3-5).

1:16 Mt 26:47; Mk 14:43; Lk 22:47; Jn 13:18; Ac 1:20 1:17 Jn 6:70-71; Ac 1:25; Ac 20:24; Ac 21:19 1:18 Mt 26:14; Mt 27:3; Mt 27:5

and all his intestines spilled out. <sup>19</sup>This became known to everyone living in Jerusalem, so they called that field in their own language Hakeldama, or "Field of Blood.") <sup>20</sup>"It is written in the Psalms scroll,

*Let his home become deserted and let there be no one living in it;<sup>a</sup>  
and  
Give his position of leadership to another.<sup>b</sup>*

<sup>21</sup>"Therefore, we must select one of those who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus lived among us, <sup>22</sup>beginning from the baptism of John until the day when Jesus was taken from us. This person must become along with us a witness to his resurrection." <sup>23</sup>So they nominated two: Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias.

<sup>24</sup>They prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's deepest thoughts and desires. Show us clearly which one you have chosen from among these two <sup>25</sup>to take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas turned away to go to his own place." <sup>26</sup>When they cast lots, the lot fell on Matthias. He was added to the eleven apostles.

*Receiving the Spirit at Pentecost* As Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit fills his followers (Acts 1:5) and enables them to bear witness to what they've seen and heard (Acts 1:8). The Spirit plays a major role in Luke's writings, inspiring powerful preaching of God's message to various audiences (Luke 1:41-45, 67-79; 2:25-35; 4:14-21; Acts 2:17-21; 4:31; 5:32; 6:10; 10:44-47; 11:28; 19:6-7; 21:4, 10-11). In Acts 2 a key cross-cultural component also emerges, as Spirit-filled believers miraculously "speak in other languages" (Acts 2:4) or tongues, they've never learned. These are "native languages" (Acts 2:6) known to the many different groups of "Jews from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) assembled in Jerusalem at Pentecost. Later outpourings of the Spirit in other places also lead to speaking in other languages (Acts 11:44-47; 19:6-7).

This experience of speaking known earthly languages that native speakers readily understand isn't the same as the experience Paul describes in 1 Corinthians. There Paul is concerned with speaking in an unknown spiritual or heavenly language that must be divinely interpreted (1 Cor 12:10-11, 28-30; 13:1, 8; 14:1-40); he is thinking about a special, ecstatic language of prayer and worship. In Acts the Spirit-empowered ability to speak in other known languages serves more as a means of proclamation and witness.

**Pentecost**

**2** When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them. <sup>4</sup>They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

<sup>a</sup>Ps 69:25 <sup>b</sup>Ps 109:8

1:19 *in their own language*: Aramaic, which is related to Hebrew.

1:20 *the Psalms*: The context for each psalm reference (Pss 69:25; 109:8) is a prayer of rescue for God's mistreated servant.

1:23 *Joseph . . . and Matthias*: their only appearance in the NT. After Matthias has been selected (Acts 1:26), he's never mentioned again.

1:25 *apostleship*: The term "apostle" is typically limited in Acts to the Twelve. They qualify because they followed Jesus from the beginning of his ministry until the day he was taken up from earth (see Acts 1:21-22).

1:26 *cast lots*: similar to throwing dice (Esth 3:7; 9:24; Prov 16:33) or drawing straws to make a decision. This is a common means in the Bible of finding out God's will (cf. Lev 16:8; Num 26:55-56; 1 Chron 25:8-9; Jon 1:7). It wasn't understood to be a magical process. Here casting lots is combined with

the community's prayer that the all-knowing God reveal to them his chosen candidate (Acts 1:24).

2:1-13 The early believers are filled with the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had promised.

2:1 *Pentecost Day*: a Jewish festival, also known as the Feast of Weeks (Exod 34:22; Lev 23:15-16; Num 28:26-31; Deut 16:9-12) that occurs 50 days after Passover. Pentecost marks a holiday to thank God for the grain harvest and to remember God's giving of the Law at Mount Sinai/Horeb.

2:12 *fierce wind*: a symbol of God's powerful presence, like that involved in creating the world (Gen 1:1-2) and parting the Red Sea to free Israel from slavery in Egypt (Exod 13:18; 14:21-22).

2:3 *flames of fire*: another symbol of God's powerful presence, like that shown to Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai/Horeb (Exod 3:1-3; 19:16-18).

1:19 Mt 27:8;  
Ac 21:40  
1:20 Ps 69:25,  
Ps 109:8  
1:21 Nm 27:17;  
Dt 31:2;  
Mt 20:25;  
Lk 24:3; Jn 15:27  
1:22 Lk 24:48;  
Ac 1:8, Ac 2:32,  
Ac 4:33  
1:23 Ac 1:26  
1:24 1Sa 16:7;  
Jer 17:10; Ac 6:6,  
Ac 13:3, Ac 15:8  
1:25 Ac 1:17  
1:26 Lv 16:8;  
1Sa 14:41;  
Prov 16:33;  
Ac 1:23, Ac 2:14  
2:1 Lv 23:15;  
Ac 20:16;  
1Co 16:8  
2:2 1Ki 19:11;  
Eze 37:9;  
Ac 4:31,  
Ac 16:26  
2:3 Ac 2:4  
2:4 Mk 16:17;  
Ac 4:8, Ac 4:31,  
Ac 9:17, Ac 19:6

2:5 Lk 2:25;  
Ac 8:2  
2:6 Ac 2:2-3  
2:7 Ac 1:11-12  
2:9 Ac 16:6,  
Ac 18:2,  
Ac 19:10; 1Pt 1:1  
2:10 Ac 13:13,  
Ac 14:24,  
Ac 15:38,  
Ac 16:6,  
Ac 18:23  
2:11 2Ch 17:11,  
2Ch 26:7;  
Ga 1:17; Ti 1:12  
2:12 Ac 2:7  
2:13 Ac 17:32;  
1Co 14:23  
2:14 Is 40:9;  
Mt 4:18,  
Mt 16:16,  
Mt 17:24;  
Ac 1:26  
2:15 1Th 5:7  
2:16 J1 1:1,  
J1 2:28  
2:17 J1 2:28;  
Ac 10:45  
2:19 J1 2:30-31  
2:20 Mt 24:29;  
Lk 21:25;  
2Pt 3:10  
2:21 J1 2:28;  
Ro 10:12-13;  
1Co 1:2  
2:22 Jn 3:2,  
Jn 4:48; Ac 4:10,  
Ac 10:38  
2:23 Lk 22:22,  
Lk 24:20;  
Ac 3:13, Ac 3:18,  
Ac 4:28

<sup>5</sup>There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages. <sup>7</sup>They were surprised and amazed, saying, "Look, aren't all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them? <sup>8</sup>How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; as well as residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Libya bordering Cyrene; and visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!" <sup>12</sup>They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup>Others jeered at them, saying, "They're full of new wine!"

<sup>14</sup>Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared, "Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my words! <sup>15</sup>These people aren't drunk, as you suspect; after all, it's only nine o'clock in the morning!" <sup>16</sup>Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup>*In the last days, God says,*

*I will pour out my Spirit on all people.*

*Your sons and daughters will prophesy.*

*Your young will see visions.*

*Your elders will dream dreams.*

<sup>18</sup>*Even upon my servants, men and women,*

*I will pour out my Spirit in those days,*

*and they will prophesy.*

<sup>19</sup>*I will cause wonders to occur in the heavens above*

*and signs on the earth below,*

*blood and fire and a cloud of smoke.*

<sup>20</sup>*The sun will be changed into darkness,*

*and the moon will be changed into blood,*

*before the great and spectacular day of the Lord comes.*

<sup>21</sup>*And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*<sup>c</sup>

<sup>22</sup>"Fellow Israelites, listen to these words! Jesus the Nazarene was a man whose credentials God proved to you through miracles, wonders, and signs, which God performed through him among you. You yourselves know this. <sup>23</sup>In accordance with God's established plan and

<sup>c</sup>Joel 2:28-32

2:5 *pious Jews from every nation*: Jews scattered throughout the world were expected, if possible, to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost.

2:7 *Galileans*: Jews from Galilee, a region north of Jerusalem. Jesus of Nazareth and his first followers were Galileans. Some other Jews looked down on Galileans as backward and uneducated (cf. Acts 4:13; John 1:46; 7:41). 2:8 *our native language*: the local dialects of the various nations from which the Pentecost travelers came. Most, if not all, would also speak Greek (see note on Acts 6:1).

2:9-10 *Parthians, Medes, and Elamites*: a long list of nations surrounding Jerusalem, extending as far as Parthia and Media to the east, Arabia and Libya (northern Africa) to the south, Rome to the west, and Pontus (near the Black Sea) to the north. Jews regarded Jerusalem as the center of the world. *converts to Judaism*: Gentiles who had fully accepted the faith and practices of Judaism.

2:13 *new wine*: the most intoxicating kind, with the highest alcohol content.

2:14-36 Peter's speech to the crowd at Pentecost. This is the first of several addresses in Acts by key leaders of the early church. For other major sermons by Peter, see Acts 3:11-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 10:34-48; 11:1-18; 15:7-11. A central feature of this preaching is explaining the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in light of the OT.

2:15 *These people aren't drunk*: Note the contrast between being drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18.

2:16-18 Peter interprets the events at Pentecost as fulfilling what Joel 2:28-32 predicted: the outpouring of God's Spirit on "all people" regardless of gender (*sons and daughters*), age (*young and old*), and social class (*slave and free*). 2:17 *In the last days*: an addition to Joel in the LXX. It stresses a time of climax and fulfillment of God's plan (cf. Acts 2:23) rather than the end of earthly life. *prophesy*: the act of speaking God's word, inspired by the Spirit. It may include, but isn't limited to, previewing the future.

2:19-20 *wonders . . . and signs*: dramatic changes in the sky *above* and the land *below*. These events signal the Spirit's shaking up the normal order of things (cf. Acts 4:31). In the rest of Acts, the phrase "wonders and signs" refers mainly to miracles of restoring disabled people (Acts 2:22, 43; 4:16, 22, 30; 6:8; 8:6-7, 13; 14:3; 15:12).

2:22 *Nazarene*: from the village of Nazareth in Galilee (cf. Luke 2:39, 51; 4:16).

2:23 *In accordance with God's established plan . . . he was betrayed*: Peter views Jesus' death as a result of both divine will and human responsibility. Jesus was betrayed by Judas (Acts 1:16; Luke 22:3-6, 47-53), who unknowingly served God's larger purpose. *wicked men*: or ones who are



foreknowledge, he was betrayed. You, with the help of wicked men, had Jesus killed by nailing him to a cross. <sup>24</sup>God raised him up! God freed him from death's dreadful grip, since it was impossible for death to hang on to him. <sup>25</sup>David says about him,

*I foresaw that the Lord was always with me;  
because he is at my right hand I won't be shaken.*

<sup>26</sup>Therefore, my heart was glad  
and my tongue rejoiced.

Moreover, my body will live in hope,  
<sup>27</sup>because you won't abandon me to the grave,  
nor permit your holy one to experience decay.

<sup>28</sup>You have shown me the paths of life;  
your presence will fill me with happiness.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>29</sup>"Brothers and sisters, I can speak confidently about the patriarch David. He died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this very day. <sup>30</sup>Because he was a prophet, he knew that God promised him with a solemn pledge to seat one of his descendants on his throne. <sup>31</sup>Having seen this beforehand, David spoke about the resurrection of Christ, that *he wasn't abandoned to the grave, nor did his body experience decay.*<sup>b</sup> <sup>32</sup>This Jesus, God raised up. We are all witnesses to that fact. <sup>33</sup>He was exalted to God's right side and received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit. He poured out this Spirit, and you are seeing and hearing the results of his having done so. <sup>34</sup>David didn't ascend into heaven. Yet he says,

*The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right side,  
<sup>35</sup>until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'*<sup>c</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Therefore, let all Israel know beyond question that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

<sup>37</sup>When the crowd heard this, they were deeply troubled. They said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

<sup>38</sup>Peter replied, "Change your hearts and lives. Each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy

2:24 Ac 3:15;  
Ac 17:31;  
Ro 8:11;  
Eph 1:20;  
Col 2:12  
2:25 Ps 16:8  
2:26 Ps 16:9  
2:27 Mk 11:23;  
Lk 16:23;  
Ac 2:31;  
Ac 13:35;  
Rev 1:18  
2:28 Ps 16:8  
2:29 1 Ki 2:10;  
Neh 3:16;  
Ac 7:8, Ac 13:36;  
Heb 7:4  
2:30 Ps 132:11;  
Ro 1:3  
2:31 Ps 16:10;  
Ac 2:27  
2:32 Ac 1:8,  
Ac 1:22, Ac 2:24,  
Ac 3:15, Ac 4:33  
2:33 Mk 16:19;  
Jn 7:39, Jn 16:7;  
Ac 1:4, Ac 5:31  
2:34 Ps 110:1;  
Lk 20:42  
2:35 Ps 110:1  
2:36 Mt 28:18;  
Ac 2:23  
2:37 Lk 3:10;  
Ac 16:30  
2:38 Ac 3:19,  
Ac 8:12, Ac 8:16,  
Ac 10:48,  
Ac 22:16

<sup>a</sup>Ps 16:8-11 <sup>b</sup>Ps 16:10 <sup>c</sup>Ps 110:1

"lawless" or "outside the [Jewish] Law," referring to Gentiles. The men who crucified Jesus were Roman soldiers under the command of Governor Pilate; however, their actions were supported by Jewish leaders and crowds in Jerusalem (see Luke 23:13-43).

2:24 *God raised him up*: God's ultimate plan for Jesus was bringing him back to life, thereby reversing the aim of those who unjustly killed him.

2:25 *David says*: According to popular tradition, David was the main composer of the Psalms, including these lines quoted from Psalm 16.

2:26 *my tongue rejoiced*: continues the emphasis on inspired speaking in tongues, or "languages," in Acts 2:4, 11. Here David speaks of a lively future hope of resurrection from the dead, which Peter applies to Jesus.

2:27 *the grave*: *Hades* (Gk.) or *Sheol* (Heb.), the shadowy residence of all who have died, a place with no necessary distinction made between good and bad persons. However, see Luke 16:23, where "the place of the dead" (*Hades/Sheol*) is viewed as a site of torment for a deceased rich man who had not aided the poor during his life.

2:29 *his tomb is with us*: David's burial place in Jerusalem is mentioned in 1 Kings 2:10; Nehemiah 3:16. The fact that David's tomb was still known to contain his remains suggests David hadn't been speaking about himself when he foresaw one who would escape decaying in the grave (cf. Ps 16:10; Acts 2:25-26, 31).

2:30 *solemn pledge*: the covenant promise God made to David that a member of his family would always be king of Israel (see 2 Sam 7:11-16; Ps 132:11-12).

2:32 *witnesses to that fact*: The first disciples didn't simply hear reports about Jesus' resurrection; they saw and spent time with the risen Jesus himself. Bearing witness to this personal experience is central to the 12 apostles' and Paul's missions in Acts (Acts 1:8; 4:33; 5:29-32; 10:39-42; 13:30-31; 22:14-15; 26:15-16; cf. Luke 1:2; 24:45-48).

2:34-35 Peter quotes another psalm (110:1) from David. He applies this one to Jesus' ascension to the honored position of God's *right side* and continues a similar line of argument: Just as David didn't rise from his grave, so he *didn't ascend into heaven*. Therefore, David must be referring to someone other than himself, namely, to *my Lord* (Jesus).

2:36 *Christ*: important title for Jesus first used by Peter in Acts (cf. Acts 2:31, 38). From the Greek *Christos*, it means "anointed one," corresponding to the Hebrew term for "Messiah." Jesus had been anointed by God's Spirit throughout his earthly ministry (see Luke 3:21-22; 4:18; Acts 10:38). God confirmed this anointed role by raising Jesus from the dead and exalting him to God's right side.

2:38 *Change your hearts and lives*: key sign of turning to God and preparing to receive God's blessings of salvation (Acts 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 13:24; 17:30; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20; Luke 3:3, 8-14; 5:32; 13:3; 5: 15:7, 10; 17:3-4; 24:47). *baptized in the name of Jesus Christ*: ritual of immersion in water in Jesus' name. This is distinct from, though related to, both John's baptism in water (Acts 1:5, 22) and baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), which the believers have just experienced. Baptism in Jesus' name becomes a key practice in Acts. It binds new believers together and prepares them

2:39 Is 44:3;  
Is 57:19; Jt 2:32;  
Eph 2:13

2:40 Dt 32:5;  
Mt 3:7; Mt 17:17;  
Phi 2:15

2:41 Ac 2:47;  
Ac 4:4; Ac 11:21

2:42 Ac 1:14;  
Ac 2:46; Ac 20:7;  
1Co 10:16

2:43 Ac 5:12

2:44 Ac 4:32

2:45 Lk 12:33;  
Lk 18:22;

Ac 4:34; Ac 5:1

2:46 Lk 24:53;  
Ac 2:42; Ac 3:1;  
Ac 5:42

2:47 Ac 2:41;  
Ac 5:14;  
Ac 11:24

3:1 Ps 55:17;  
Mt 17:1;  
Lk 22:8;  
Lk 24:53;  
Ac 2:46

3:2 Lk 16:20;  
Jn 9:8; Ac 14:8

3:3 Lk 22:8;  
Ac 3:1; Ac 3:4;  
Ac 3:6; Ac 3:11

3:4 Ac 3:12

3:6 Mt 10:9;  
Ac 2:22; Ac 3:16;  
Ac 4:10;  
Ac 16:18

3:7 Mk 1:31;  
Ac 9:41

Spirit. <sup>39</sup>This promise is for you, your children, and for all who are far away—as many as the Lord our God invites.” <sup>40</sup>With many other words he testified to them and encouraged them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” <sup>41</sup>Those who accepted Peter’s message were baptized. God brought about three thousand people into the community on that day.

### Community of believers

<sup>42</sup>The believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. <sup>43</sup>A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All the believers were united and shared everything. <sup>45</sup>They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. <sup>46</sup>Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. <sup>47</sup>They praised God and demonstrated God’s goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.

### Healing of a crippled man

**3** Peter and John were going up to the temple at three o’clock in the afternoon, the established prayer time. <sup>2</sup>Meanwhile, a man crippled since birth was being carried in. Every day, people would place him at the temple gate known as the Beautiful Gate so he could ask for money from those entering the temple. <sup>3</sup>When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he began to ask them for a gift. <sup>4</sup>Peter and John stared at him. Peter said, “Look at us!” <sup>5</sup>So the man gazed at them, expecting to receive something from them. <sup>6</sup>Peter said, “I don’t have any money, but I will give you what I do have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, rise up and walk!” <sup>7</sup>Then he grasped the man’s right hand and raised him up. At once his feet and ankles became strong. <sup>8</sup>Jumping up, he began to walk around. He entered the temple with them, walking, leaping, and praising God. <sup>9</sup>All the people saw him walking and praising God. <sup>10</sup>They recognized him as the same one who used to sit at the temple’s Beautiful Gate asking for money. They were filled with amazement and surprise at what had happened to him.

3:8 Is 35:6; Lk 17:15; Ac 14:10 3:9 Ac 4:16; Ac 4:21 3:10 Ac 3:2

to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:41; 8:12-17; 8:36-38; 9:17-18; 10:44-48; 11:15-17; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:1-7). 2:39 all who are far away: refers to Gentiles (cf. Acts 22:21), distinguishing them from the nearer audience of Jews (you, your children) and also from the Jews who’ve drifted far away from God’s ways and people (Luke 15:13; cf. Isa 57:19; Sir 24:32).

2:40 this perverse generation: the present evil age challenged by God’s kingdom of goodness and justice. Jesus referred to this “faithless and crooked generation” (Luke 9:41), “evil generation” (Luke 11:29-32), and sometimes simply “this generation” in a negative context (Luke 11:50-51; 17:25; 21:32; cf. Deut 32:4-5; Ps 78:6-8; Phil 2:13-15).

2:42-47 A summary section describing the continuing pattern of growth, fellowship, and various practices of teaching, prayer, worship, and ministry characterizing the early church (cf. Acts 4:32-35; 5:12-16, 42; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5).

2:42 community: *koinōnia* in Greek, stressing the strong “common” (*kainon*) bond among the early followers of Jesus. This fellowship involves sharing everything—food, shelter, property, possessions—to meet each other’s needs (see Acts 2:44-46; 4:32-35).

2:46 they met together in the temple and ate in their homes: The believing communities don’t have their own separate buildings. In Jerusalem they continue to gather and worship in the temple and in members’ homes (cf. Acts 5:42). Eating together is an important part of community life.

2:47 everyone: An emphasis on everyone and all runs through Acts 2:42-47, indicating a concern for the welfare not only of every believer but also of the wider society.

3:1-4:31 Peter and John healing a crippled man in the temple sparks the people’s amazement and the Jewish authorities’ alarm. This is the first miraculous sign (4:22) performed by the apostles in the name of Jesus Christ (3:6, 16; 4:10-12).

3:1 established prayer time: Twice daily the people offered prayers in the temple, while a designated priest burned incense (Luke 1:8-10; cf. Exod 29:39; Lev 6:20; Jdt 9:1). Three o’clock was the appointed time for evening prayer. Jesus’ followers continue to observe Jewish religious practices.

3:2 ask for money: Compare with Jesus’ command to his disciples, “Give to everyone who asks [of you]” (Luke 6:30). Beautiful Gate: This temple landmark isn’t mentioned in any other ancient sources. Beautiful Gate could be the name of any one of nine gates. It may have been covered with silver and gold. More likely, it was plated with Corinthian bronze but was the largest of the gates.

3:4 stared at him: an intense focus on the crippled beggar. Such fixed attention frequently marks important encounters with people and God in Acts (Acts 1:10; 3:12; 6:15; 7:55; 10:4; 11:6; 13:9; 14:9; 23:1).

3:6 rise up: the same language used for God’s raising Jesus from the dead (Acts 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 37; 26:8; cf. Luke 9:22; 11:31; 20:37; 24:6, 34) and Jesus’ raising the deceased son of a widow and Jairus’ daughter from the dead (Luke 7:14; 8:54; cf. 7:22).

3:8 leaping: recalls Isaiah’s picture of Israel’s restoration and homecoming from exile (Isa 35:6).

3:10 amazement and surprise: a common first response

<sup>11</sup>While the healed man clung to Peter and John, all the people rushed toward them at Solomon's Porch, completely amazed. <sup>12</sup>Seeing this, Peter addressed the people: "You Israelites, why are you amazed at this? Why are you staring at us as if we made him walk by our own power or piety? <sup>13</sup>The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of our ancestors—has glorified his servant Jesus. This is the one you handed over and denied in Pilate's presence, even though he had already decided to release him. <sup>14</sup>You rejected the holy and righteous one, and asked that a murderer be released to you instead. <sup>15</sup>You killed the author of life, the very one whom God raised from the dead. We are witnesses of this. <sup>16</sup>His name itself has made this man strong. That is, because of faith in Jesus' name, God has strengthened this man whom you see and know. The faith that comes through Jesus gave him complete health right before your eyes.

<sup>17</sup>"Brothers and sisters, I know you acted in ignorance. So did your rulers. <sup>18</sup>But this is how God fulfilled what he foretold through all the prophets: that his Christ would suffer. <sup>19</sup>Change your hearts and lives! Turn back to God so that your sins may be wiped away. <sup>20</sup>Then the Lord will provide a season of relief from the distress of this age and he will send Jesus, whom he handpicked to be your Christ. <sup>21</sup>Jesus must remain in heaven until the restoration of all things, about which God spoke long ago through his holy prophets. <sup>22</sup>Moses said, *The Lord your God will raise up from your own people a prophet like me. Listen to whatever he tells you.* <sup>23</sup>Whoever doesn't listen to that prophet will be totally cut off from the people.<sup>8</sup> <sup>24</sup>All the prophets who spoke—from Samuel forward—announced these days. <sup>25</sup>You are the heirs of the prophets and the covenant that God made with your ancestors when he told Abraham, *Through your descendants, all the families on earth will be blessed.*<sup>h</sup> <sup>26</sup>After God raised his servant, he sent him to you first—to bless you by enabling each of you to turn from your evil ways."

<sup>8</sup>Deut 18:15, 19 <sup>h</sup>Gen 22:18; 26:4

<sup>1</sup>1:5 Gn 12:3, Gn 22:18, Gn 26:4; Ac 2:39; Ga 3:8 <sup>2</sup>1:5 Ac 3:22, Ac 13:46

<sup>3</sup>1:1 Lk 22:8; In 10:23; Ac 5:12  
<sup>3</sup>1:7 Gn 41:16; Ex 3:11; Ac 2:14, Ac 2:22; 2Co 3:5  
<sup>3</sup>1:2 Ex 3:6; Mt 22:32, Mt 27:2; Ac 5:30, Ac 7:32  
<sup>3</sup>1:4 Mk 1:24; Lk 23:18; Ac 4:27; Ac 7:52, Ac 22:14  
<sup>3</sup>1:7 Ac 1:22, Ac 2:24; Ac 5:31  
 Ac 3:6  
 Lk 23:34; Ac 13:27; 1Ti 1:13  
<sup>3</sup>1:7 Is 44:22; Ac 2:38, Ac 26:20  
<sup>3</sup>2:2 Dt 18:15; Mt 16:16, Mt 16:27; 1Ti 6:14; Heb 9:28  
<sup>3</sup>3:1 Mt 17:11; Lk 13:70; Ac 1:11; Ro 8:21; 2Pt 3:2  
<sup>3</sup>1:1 Dt 18:15; Dt 18:18; Ac 7:37  
<sup>3</sup>2:2 Lw 23:29; Dt 18:19; Heb 2:3  
<sup>3</sup>2:5 1Sa 3:20; Ac 13:20

to miraculous events. Amazement doesn't guarantee faith and understanding but may lead to these on further reflection.

<sup>3:11</sup> *Solomon's Porch*: large plaza or mall area on the eastern side of the temple complex, surrounded by magnificent columns.

<sup>3:12-26</sup> Peter's speech to the excited crowd about the risen Jesus. Peter makes clear that the God who raised Jesus enabled the crippled man to rise and walk.

<sup>3:13</sup> *God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*: a common way of referring to the one God of Israel, going back to the first three generations of Israel's ancestors (Gen 28:13; 32:9; 48:15-16; Exod 3:14-16; 4:5; Deut 6:10; Luke 13:28; 20:37-38; Acts 7:32). *servant Jesus*: the Greek term for "servant" (*pais*) also means "child," suggesting Jesus' identity as God's Servant-Son (Acts 3:26; 4:27, 30). This role recalls that of Israel's King David (Acts 4:25; Luke 1:69) and the collective people of Israel in Isaiah's Servant Songs (Isa 41:8-9; 42:1, 19; 43:10; 44:1-2, 21, 26; 45:4; 49:6; 50:10; 52:13; cf. Luke 1:54). *Pilate's presence*: Pontius Pilate was the Roman military governor of Judea (Luke 3:1). He gave the final order for Jesus' crucifixion (Luke 23:1-25).

<sup>3:14</sup> *holy and righteous one*: Jesus was completely innocent of all charges against him; his death penalty was a miscarriage of justice (Acts 7:52; 22:14; Luke 23:47). The servant in Isaiah 53:11 is also called "the righteous one;" *a murderer be released*: a prisoner named Barabbas, who had caused a riot (Luke 23:18-19).

<sup>3:16</sup> *Jesus' name*: a shorthand reference to the character

and power of the risen Jesus. His name stands for all that Jesus is and does.

<sup>3:17</sup> *ignorance*: Compare with Jesus' words from the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing" (Luke 23:34).

<sup>3:18</sup> *foretold through all the prophets ... Christ would suffer*: Compare with Luke 24:25-27, 44-47.

<sup>3:19</sup> *Change your hearts and lives!*: See note on Acts 2:38.

<sup>3:20</sup> *he will send Jesus*: a reference to Jesus' return to earth from heaven (cf. Acts 1:9-11).

<sup>3:21</sup> *restoration of all things*: climactic renewal of the entire universe in line with the good purpose of God for everything God created.

<sup>3:22</sup> *raise up ... a prophet like me*: Peter identifies the risen Jesus as the ultimate prophet like Moses, as promised in Deuteronomy 18:15 (cf. Acts 7:37).

<sup>3:24</sup> *Samuel*: leading judge, statesman, and prophet of Israel. Under God's direction, Samuel appointed Israel's first two kings, Saul and David (1 Sam 10:1; 16:12-13). In a book that bears Samuel's name, God promised that a descendant of David would always rule Israel (2 Sam 7:12-16).

<sup>3:25</sup> *all the families on earth*: stresses the universal scope of God's original covenant with Abraham. God's choosing of Abraham's descendants (Israelites) was designed from the beginning to bless them so that they in turn would spread God's blessing to the whole world (Gentiles) (Gen 12:3; 22:18; 26:4).

<sup>3:26</sup> *he sent him to you first*: the typical order of God's saving outreach to humanity: first to Israel (Jews) and then to the rest of the world (Gentiles) (see Rom 1:16).

4:1 Mt 3:7;  
 Mt 22:23;  
 Lk 22:4; Ac 5:17;  
 Ac 5:24  
 4:2 Ac 17:18  
 4:3 Lk 21:12;  
 Ac 5:18; Ac 8:3  
 4:4 Ac 2:41  
 4:5 Lk 23:13;  
 Ac 4:8; Ac 6:12  
 4:6 Mt 26:3;  
 Lk 3:2; Jn 11:49;  
 Jn 18:13;  
 Jn 18:24  
 4:8 Lk 1:15;  
 Ac 2:4  
 4:9 Ac 3:7  
 4:10 Ac 2:22;  
 Ac 2:24; Ac 3:6  
 4:11 Pt 1:18; 2:2;  
 Is 48:16;  
 Mt 21:42;  
 Eph 2:20; 1Pt 2:6  
 4:12 Mt 1:21;  
 Ac 10:43;  
 1Ti 2:5  
 4:13 Mt 11:25  
 4:16 Jn 11:47;  
 Ac 3:9-10

### Peter and John questioned

**4** While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees confronted them. <sup>2</sup>They were incensed that the apostles were teaching the people and announcing that the resurrection of the dead was happening because of Jesus. <sup>3</sup>They seized Peter and John and put them in prison until the next day. (It was already evening.) <sup>4</sup>Many who heard the word became believers, and their number grew to about five thousand.

<sup>5</sup>The next day the leaders, elders, and legal experts gathered in Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup>along with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and others from the high priest's family. <sup>7</sup>They had Peter and John brought before them and asked, "By what power or in what name did you do this?"

<sup>8</sup>Then Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, answered, "Leaders of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup>are we being examined today because something good was done for a sick person, a good deed that healed him? <sup>10</sup>If so, then you and all the people of Israel need to know that this man stands healthy before you because of the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead. <sup>11</sup>This Jesus is the stone you builders rejected; he has become the cornerstone! <sup>12</sup>Salvation can be found in no one else. Throughout the whole world, no other name has been given among humans through which we must be saved."

<sup>13</sup>The council was caught by surprise by the confidence with which Peter and John spoke. After all, they understood that these apostles were uneducated and inexperienced. They also recognized that they had been followers of Jesus. <sup>14</sup>However, since the healed man was standing with Peter and John before their own eyes, they had no rebuttal. <sup>15</sup>After ordering them to wait outside, the council members began to confer with each other. <sup>16</sup>"What should we do with these men? Everyone living in Jerusalem is aware of the sign performed through them. It's obvious to everyone and we can't deny it. <sup>17</sup>To keep it from spreading further among the people, we need to warn them not to speak to anyone in this name." <sup>18</sup>When they called Peter and John back, they demanded that they stop all speaking and teaching in the name of Jesus.

4:1-22 The first of several trial scenes in which the apostles and other witnesses to Christ defend their beliefs and actions before Jewish or Roman authorities (Acts 5:17-42; 7:1-53; 16:20-40; 17:5-8; 18:12-17; 19:23-40; 21:27-22:29; 22:30-23:10; 24:1-23; 26:1-32; 28:17-28).

4:1 *captain of the temple guard*: high-ranking Jewish official in charge of maintaining order on the temple grounds and safeguarding the temple treasury (see also Acts 5:24, 26). A squad of officers from the temple guard participated in Jesus' arrest (Luke 22:4, 52). *Sadducees*: elite Jewish group of major influence among temple leaders (Acts 5:17). In contrast to the Pharisees and other parties, the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead (Luke 20:27-38; Acts 23:6-10). This became a sharp bone of contention with the early Jesus movement (Acts 4:2).

4:4 *their number grew to about five thousand*: expanding from the 3,000 baptized on Pentecost (Acts 2:41). Continued church growth in the face of conflict marks a pattern in Acts (Acts 5:14; 6:7; 8:3-8; 11:19-21; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20).

4:5 *leaders, elders, and legal experts*: members of the Jerusalem Council, the chief governing body of Jewish affairs in Jerusalem (Luke 22:66; Acts 4:13, 15; 5:41; 6:12; 22:30; 23:1, 15, 28; 24:20). It was led by the high priest (Acts 4:6; 5:17, 21; 7:1; 23:2-5).

4:6 *Annas the high priest, Caiaphas*: Annas was the high priest from 6 to 15 CE (Luke 3:2). He kept the title after his son-in-law Caiaphas assumed the office (18-37 CE). Caiaphas was the high priest at the time of Jesus' death (Matt 26:3-4, 57-58; John 11:49-53; 18:12-14, 22-24, 28).

4:11 *the stone you builders rejected... has become the*

*cornerstone*: quoting Psalm 118:22. The early Christians applied this image to Jesus: Though Jesus was rejected by many of his own people, God established the risen Jesus as the cornerstone of God's work (Matt 21:42; Luke 20:17; 1 Pet 2:7). Stonework would also recall the building of God's temple (1 Kgs 5:15-18; 6:7; Luke 21:5; 1 Cor 3:9-17; 1 Pet 2:4-7).

4:12 *Salvation... be saved*: the heart of God's work in Luke's writings. The saving God seeks to make suffering humanity and all creation whole again. Salvation addresses a wide range of needs, such as forgiving sin, defeating evil, restoring health and ability, and promoting peace and justice. *no one else... no other name*: The saving purpose of God for the whole world is uniquely fulfilled in the person and work (name) of Jesus Christ.

4:13 *confidence*: the typical manner with which the early believers bore witness to Christ (Acts 2:29; 4:29, 31; 9:27-28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31). Speaking with conviction and boldness was valued; such speech was designed to inspire and persuade. *uneducated and inexperienced*: Peter and John were Galilean fishermen by trade (Luke 5:1-10), not trained public speakers. *recognized that they had been followers of Jesus*: When Peter was earlier recognized as a disciple at Jesus' trial, he strongly denied he knew Jesus (Luke 22:54-60). Now he shows remarkable loyalty and courage.

4:17 *To keep it from spreading*: the first of many opponents' attempts to stop the spread of the Christian message. Typically, resistance proves futile. In fact, it sparks further growth! (See Acts 4:20-21, 29-31; 5:40-42; 8:1-4; 9:23-32; 12:24-25; 13:44-52; 14:1-7; 16:25-34; 28:17-31.)

<sup>19</sup>Peter and John responded, “It’s up to you to determine whether it’s right before God to obey you rather than God. <sup>20</sup>As for us, we can’t stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” <sup>21</sup>They threatened them further, then released them. Because of public support for Peter and John, they couldn’t find a way to punish them. Everyone was praising God for what had happened, <sup>22</sup>because the man who had experienced this sign of healing was over 40 years old.

**The believers pray**

<sup>23</sup>After their release, Peter and John returned to the brothers and sisters and reported everything the chief priests and elders had said. <sup>24</sup>They listened, then lifted their voices in unison to God, “Master, you are the one who created the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them. <sup>25</sup>You are the one who spoke by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant:

*Why did the Gentiles rage,  
and the peoples plot in vain?*

<sup>26</sup>*The kings of the earth took their stand  
and the rulers gathered together as one  
against the Lord and against his Christ.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>27</sup>Indeed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with Gentiles and Israelites, did gather in this city against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. <sup>28</sup>They did what your power and plan had already determined would happen. <sup>29</sup>Now, Lord, take note of their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with complete confidence. <sup>30</sup>Stretch out your hand to bring healing and enable signs and wonders to be performed through the name of Jesus, your holy servant.” <sup>31</sup>After they prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking God’s word with confidence.

**Sharing among the believers**

<sup>32</sup>The community of believers was one in heart and mind. None of them would say, “This is mine!” about any of their possessions, but held everything in common. <sup>33</sup>The apostles continued to bear powerful witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and an abundance of grace was at work among them all. <sup>34</sup>There were no needy persons among them. Those who owned properties or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds from the sales, <sup>35</sup>and place them in the care and under the authority of the apostles. Then it was distributed to anyone who was in need.

<sup>36</sup>Joseph, whom the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (that is, “one who encourages”), was a

4:19 Ac 4:20,  
Ac 5:29  
4:20 Jer 20:9;  
Am 3:8; Ac 4:19;  
Ac 5:29;  
1Co 9:16  
4:22 Jn 5:5;  
Ac 3:2, Ac 9:33  
4:23 Ac 12:12,  
Ac 16:40  
4:24 Ex 20:11;  
Neh 9:6;  
Ps 146:6;  
Ac 1:14,  
Ac 14:15  
4:25 Ps 2:1;  
Ac 1:16  
4:26 Ps 2:1-2;  
Lk 4:18; Heb 1:9  
4:27 Mt 27:2;  
Lk 23:1; Ac 3:13,  
Ac 4:30, Ac  
10:38  
4:28 Ac 2:23  
4:29 Ac 4:13,  
Ac 4:31, Ac  
9:27, Ac 13:46,  
Ac 14:3  
4:30 Ac 3:6,  
Ac 4:27  
4:31 Ac 2:2,  
Ac 2:4; Phi 1:14  
4:32 Ac 2:44  
4:33 Lk 24:48;  
Ac 1:8, Ac 1:22,  
Ac 2:32, Ac 3:15  
4:34 Ac 2:45  
4:35 Ac 2:45,  
Ac 4:37, Ac 5:2,  
Ac 6:1  
4:36 Ac 9:27,  
Ac 11:22,  
Ac 11:30,  
Ac 12:25,  
Ac 13:1

<sup>1</sup>Or anointed one; Ps 2:1-2

4:19 to obey you rather than God: Even religious authorities may be in conflict with God’s will (see Acts 5:29).

4:22 the man... was over 40 years old: the final reference to the crippled man healed in Jesus’ name (Acts 3:6-8). His age recalls the period of time the Israelites wandered in the wilderness before entering the promised land (cf. Acts 7:36).

4:24-30 In response to Peter and John’s release from prison (Acts 4:23), the believers pray for strength to continue speaking God’s word with confidence.

4:24 the one who created: Jesus’ followers worshipped and prayed to the one Creator God who made everything in heaven and earth (cf. Acts 14:15; 17:24-28; Gen 1:1; 2:1-4; Ps 146:6; Luke 10:21).

4:25-26 Another quotation from David’s Psalms (cf. Acts 2:25-31, 34-35). This one, from Psalm 2:1-2, forecasts the hostility of Gentile rulers against Christ.

4:27 Herod and Pontius Pilate: Herod Antipas ruled in Galilee under Roman authority. He had John the Baptist beheaded (Luke 3:19-20; 9:7-9) and violently opposed Jesus’ work (Luke 13:31-33). He “became friends” with Pontius Pilate (Luke 23:12), the governor of Judea (see note on Acts 3:13), during Jesus’ trial. Like Pilate, Herod didn’t find Jesus worthy of death, but he still “treated

Jesus with contempt” and allowed him to be crucified (Luke 23:6-25). *holy servant Jesus*: See note on Acts 3:13; compare with Acts 4:30.

4:28 what your power and plan had already determined: See note on Acts 2:23 and sidebar, “Who Killed Jesus?” at Acts 6.

4:30 Stretch out your hand: an image recalling God’s mighty parting of the Red Sea to rescue the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (see Exod 14:21-31; 15:4-6; Ps 136:11-15).

4:31 all filled with the Holy Spirit: a fresh experience of spiritual renewal, like that which occurred on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

4:32-5:11 Describes the communal sharing of money and possessions, beginning with a summary in 4:32-35 that is similar to Acts 2:42-47. Then follow two examples: one positive, featuring Barnabas (4:36-37), and the other negative, involving the married couple, Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11). The apostles are the authorized distributors of community funds (4:35, 37; 5:2).

4:36 Joseph... nicknamed Barnabas: his first of many appearances, and hereafter he’s referred to only by his nickname (Acts 9:27; 11:22-26, 29-30; 13:1-13, 42-43, 51-52; 14:1-27; 15:12-13, 30-31, 35-41). Barnabas consistently lives up to his name as *one who encourages*. *Levite from*

4:17 Ac 4:35,  
Ac 4:36, Ac 5:2  
5:1 Ac 5:2

5:2 Josh 7:11,  
Ac 4:35, Ac 4:37

5:3 Lk 22:3;  
Jn 13:2, Jn 13:27;  
Ac 5:4, Ac 5:9

5:4 Ac 5:3,  
Ac 5:9

5:5 Ac 5:10-11

5:6 Jn 19:40

5:9 Ac 5:2

5:9 Ac 5:3-4

5:10 Ac 5:5

5:11 Ac 5:5

5:12 Jn 10:23;  
Ac 1:14, Ac 2:43,  
Ac 3:11, Ac 14:3

5:13 Ac 2:47,  
Ac 4:21

5:14 Ac 2:41,  
Ac 2:47, Ac 4:4,  
Ac 11:24

5:15 Mk 6:56;  
Ac 19:11,  
Ac 19:12

5:16 Mk 16:17

Levite from Cyprus. <sup>37</sup>He owned a field, sold it, brought the money, and placed it in the care and under the authority of the apostles.

### Pretenders of sharing

**5** However, a man named Ananias, along with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property. <sup>5</sup>With his wife's knowledge, he withheld some of the proceeds from the sale. He brought the rest and placed it in the care and under the authority of the apostles. <sup>3</sup>Peter asked, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has influenced you to lie to the Holy Spirit by withholding some of the proceeds from the sale of your land? <sup>4</sup>Wasn't that property yours to keep? After you sold it, wasn't the money yours to do with whatever you wanted? What made you think of such a thing? You haven't lied to other people but to God!" <sup>5</sup>When Ananias heard these words, he dropped dead. Everyone who heard this conversation was terrified. <sup>6</sup>Some young men stood up, wrapped up his body, carried him out, and buried him.

<sup>7</sup>About three hours later, his wife entered, but she didn't know what had happened to her husband. <sup>8</sup>Peter asked her, "Tell me, did you and your husband receive this price for the field?"

She responded, "Yes, that's the amount."

<sup>9</sup>He replied, "How could you scheme with each other to challenge the Lord's Spirit? Look! The feet of those who buried your husband are at the door. They will carry you out too." <sup>10</sup>At that very moment, she dropped dead at his feet. When the young men entered and found her dead, they carried her out and buried her with her husband. <sup>11</sup>Trepidation and dread seized the whole church and all who heard what had happened.

### Responses to the church

<sup>12</sup>The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. They would come together regularly at Solomon's Porch. <sup>13</sup>No one from outside the church dared to join them, even though the people spoke highly of them. <sup>14</sup>Indeed, more and more believers in the Lord, large numbers of both men and women, were added to the church. <sup>15</sup>As a result, they would even bring the sick out into the main streets and lay them on cots and mats so that at least Peter's shadow could fall on some of them as he passed by. <sup>16</sup>Even large numbers of persons from towns around Jerusalem would gather, bringing the sick and those harassed by unclean spirits. Everyone was healed.

**Cyprus:** A Levite was a member of the priestly tribe of Israel. Cyprus is an island in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Barnabas had migrated to Jerusalem.

4:37 Selling property and turning all the proceeds over to the apostles for distribution represents the ideal model of community service (cf. Acts 2:45; 4:34-35).

5:1-2 In contrast to Barnabas, Ananias and Sapphira hold back some of the money from a land sale. This recalls Achan's withholding of "some of the things reserved for God" in Joshua 7:1-2. The community now faces its first crisis since dealing with Judas' betrayal (Acts 1:15-26). Judas' problem also involved the misuse of money and property (Acts 1:18-19).

5:3-4 *lie to the Holy Spirit . . . lied . . . to God!*: The sin of Ananias and Sapphira is that of deception more than stinginess. They pretended to give the full price of the land sale when they had given only part. In the process they lied not only to the community but also to the divine Holy Spirit—a most serious offense (cf. Acts 5:9; Luke 12:10).

5:3 *Satan has influenced you*: as Satan prompted Judas to betray Jesus (Luke 22:3-6). Satan, another name for the devil (Luke 4:2-13) and Beelzebul (Luke 11:18-19), is the archenemy and accuser of God and God's people (Luke 10:18-19; 11:18; 13:16; 22:3, 31; Acts 26:18).

5:5 *dropped dead*: Compare with Acts 5:20; 12:23; 28:6.

5:6 *wrapped up his body . . . and buried him*: Compare with Acts 5:10. Immediate wrapping in cloth and burying the

dead was a common practice among the Jews (Tob 2:3-8; Luke 23:50-56).

5:11 *Trepidation and dread seized the whole church*: Compare with Acts 5:5. The sudden deaths of two members naturally come as a terrible shock to the community. Their dropping dead stands in dramatic contrast to the celebration of resurrection and healing that has characterized Acts up to this point. *church*: the first use of this term for the believing community in Acts. The Greek word *ekklesia* can refer to a congregation or assembly gathered for various religious, social, and political purposes.

5:12-16 Summary of the apostles' continued miracle-working and attracting more believers.

5:12 *Solomon's Porch*: See note on Acts 3:11.

5:13-14 A mixed response, as occurs elsewhere in Acts (Acts 5:33-39; 13:42-52; 14:1-4; 17:1-9; 18:4-8; 28:23-25). On the one hand, outsiders remain wary of gathering with the church in public (perhaps because of the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira); on the other hand, a number of new believers are drawn to Jesus' community.

5:15 *Peter's shadow*: Peter has said he has no personal power to heal (Acts 3:12), but desperate people hope that even his shadow can cure the sick.

5:16 *unclean spirits*: harmful spiritual forces or demons resisted by Jesus' followers, as Jesus himself had done (see Luke 4:33-36, 41; 8:2, 26-33; 9:1, 37-43; 10:17-19; 11:14-20; 13:10-16; Acts 8:7; 19:11-17).

**The Jerusalem Council harasses the apostles**

<sup>17</sup>The high priest, together with his allies, the Sadducees, was overcome with jealousy. <sup>18</sup>They seized the apostles and made a public show of putting them in prison. <sup>19</sup>An angel from the Lord opened the prison doors during the night and led them out. The angel told them, <sup>20</sup>"Go, take your place in the temple, and tell the people everything about this new life." <sup>21</sup>Early in the morning, they went into the temple as they had been told and began to teach.

When the high priest and his colleagues gathered, they convened the Jerusalem Council, that is, the full assembly of Israel's elders. They sent word to the prison to have the apostles brought before them. <sup>22</sup>However, the guards didn't find them in the prison. They returned and reported, <sup>23</sup>"We found the prison locked and well-secured, with guards standing at the doors, but when we opened the doors we found no one inside!" <sup>24</sup>When they received this news, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were baffled and wondered what might be happening. <sup>25</sup>Just then, someone arrived and announced, "Look! The people you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" <sup>26</sup>Then the captain left with his guards and brought the apostles back. They didn't use force because they were afraid the people would stone them.

<sup>27</sup>The apostles were brought before the council where the high priest confronted them: <sup>28</sup>"In no uncertain terms, we demanded that you not teach in this name. And look at you! You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching. And you are determined to hold us responsible for this man's death."

<sup>29</sup>Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than humans! <sup>30</sup>The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. <sup>31</sup>God has exalted Jesus to his right side as leader and savior so that he could enable Israel to change its heart and life and to find forgiveness for sins. <sup>32</sup>We are witnesses of such things, as is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

<sup>33</sup>When the council members heard this, they became furious and wanted to kill the apostles. <sup>34</sup>One council member, a Pharisee and teacher of the Law named Gamaliel, well-respected by all the people, stood up and ordered that the men be taken outside for a few moments. <sup>35</sup>He said, "Fellow Israelites, consider carefully what you intend to do to these people. <sup>36</sup>Some time ago, Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and some four hundred men joined him. After he was killed, all of his followers scattered, and nothing came of that. <sup>37</sup>Afterward, at the time of the census, Judas the Galilean appeared and got some people to follow him in a revolt. He was killed too, and all his followers scattered far and wide. <sup>38</sup>Here's my

5:17 Ac 4:1.  
Ac 4:6, Ac 15:5  
5:18 Lk 21:12;  
Ac 4:3  
5:19 Mt 1:20;  
Ac 8:26, Ac 10:3.  
Ac 12:7.  
Ac 12:23  
5:20 Jn 6:63,  
Jn 6:68  
5:21 Jn 8:2;  
Ac 4:6  
5:22 Mt 26:58  
5:24 Ac 4:1.  
Ac 5:26  
5:25 Ac 5:21  
5:26 Ac 4:21,  
Ac 5:13, Ac 5:24  
5:27 Mt 5:22;  
Lk 22:66  
5:28 Mt 23:35,  
Mt 27:25;  
Ac 2:23, Ac 4:18,  
Ac 7:52  
5:29 Ac 4:19-20  
5:30 Ac 2:24,  
Ac 3:13,  
Ac 10:39;  
Ga 3:13;  
1Pt 2:24  
5:31 Lk 2:11,  
Lk 24:47;  
Ac 2:33, Ac 2:38,  
Ac 3:15  
5:32 Lk 24:48;  
Jn 15:26-27;  
Ac 1:8, Ac 15:28  
5:33 Ac 2:37,  
Ac 7:54  
5:34 Lk 2:46,  
Lk 5:17, Ac 22:3  
5:35 Mt 27:19;  
Ac 2:22  
5:36 Ac 8:9  
5:37 Lk 2:1-2  
5:38 Job 5:12;  
Ps 33:10;  
Is 8:9-10;  
Lam 3:37

5:17-42 The apostles offer another spirited defense before the Jerusalem Council (cf. Acts 4:1-22).

5:17 *Sadducees*: See note on Acts 4:1. *jealousy*: the motive for opposition (cf. Acts 13:45; 17:5). The temple authorities are worried that their power base among the people is being threatened by the growing popularity of the apostles.

5:19-21 *angel from the Lord*: a powerful divine agent; the Greek word *angelos* also means "messenger." The Lord's angel will break Peter out of jail again in Acts 12:7-11. For other appearances of angel-messengers, see Acts 8:26; 10:3-7, 22; 27:23-24.

5:21 *Jerusalem Council*: See note on Acts 4:5.

5:23 *found no one inside*: recalls the women's surprise over Jesus' empty tomb (Luke 24:1-4).

5:24-26 A humorous scene at the expense of the confused temple authorities.

5:24 *captain of the temple guard*: See note on Acts 4:1.

5:25 *afraid the people would stone them*: Jealousy over the apostles' popularity (Acts 5:17) grows into fear that the people will violently turn against the authorities. However, in the course of Acts, it's Christian leaders, not temple officials, who become targets of stoning by angry mobs (Acts 7:46-50; 14:19-20).

5:28 See sidebar, "Who Killed Jesus?"

5:30 *hanging him on a tree*: an image of Jesus' execution on a wooden cross. It uses the language of Deuteronomy 21:22-23, which refers to the curse of capital punishment by hanging (cf. Gal 3:13).

5:31 *leader*: The same Greek word (*archēgos*) identifies Jesus as leader here and as "the author of life" in Acts 3:15 (cf. Heb 2:10; 12:2). *savior*: See Luke 2:11; Acts 13:23. *change its heart and life*: See note on Acts 2:38.

5:34 *Pharisee... named Gamaliel*: Pharisees were a Jewish group of laymen dedicated to the strict study and practice of God's Law. In contrast to the Sadducees, they believed in the resurrection of the dead. In Luke and Acts the Pharisees have a mixed relationship with Jesus and the early church. Sometimes they're in agreement and fellowship, and sometimes they're in argument and conflict (Luke 5:17-39; 6:1-11; 7:30-50; 11:37-54; 12:1-3; 13:31; 14:1-24; 15:1-2; 16:14-18; 17:20-21; 18:9-14; 19:39-40; Acts 15:5; 23:6-10; 26:4-8). Gamaliel was a highly respected member of the Jerusalem Council and a Pharisaic teacher (cf. Acts 22:2-3). He adopts a wait-and-see approach to the Jesus movement, leaving the final judgment to God (Acts 5:38-39).

5:36-37 *Theudas... Judas the Galilean*: two leaders of failed Jewish rebel movements in the 1st century, brutally

5:39 Prv 21:30;  
Is 46:10;  
Ac 11:17

5:40 Mt 10:17;  
Mk 13:9;  
Ac 4:18

5:41 In 15:21;  
1Pt 4:14,  
1Pt 4:16

5:42 Ac 2:46,  
Ac 8:35,  
Ac 11:20

6:1 Ac 2:41,  
Ac 4:35, Ac 9:29,  
Ac 9:39; Phi 3:5

6:3 Dt 1:13;  
Mt 23:8; Lk 1:15,  
Lk 4:1; Ac 2:4

6:4 Ac 1:14

6:5 Ac 6:8,  
Ac 8:5, Ac 11:19,  
Ac 11:24,  
Ac 21:8

6:6 Ac 1:24,  
Ac 9:17, Ac 13:3,  
1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6

6:7 Ac 12:24,  
Ac 13:8,  
Ac 14:22,  
Ac 19:20; Ro 1:5

recommendation in this case: Distance yourselves from these men. Let them go! If their plan or activity is of human origin, it will end in ruin. <sup>39</sup>If it originates with God, you won't be able to stop them. Instead, you would actually find yourselves fighting God!" The council was convinced by his reasoning. <sup>40</sup>After calling the apostles back, they had them beaten. They ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, then let them go. <sup>41</sup>The apostles left the council rejoicing because they had been regarded as worthy to suffer disgrace for the sake of the name. <sup>42</sup>Every day they continued to teach and proclaim the good news that Jesus is the Christ, both in the temple and in houses.

### Selection of seven to serve

**6**About that time, while the number of disciples continued to increase, a complaint arose. Greek-speaking disciples accused the Aramaic-speaking disciples because their widows were being overlooked in the daily food service. <sup>2</sup>The Twelve called a meeting of all the disciples and said, "It isn't right for us to set aside proclamation of God's word in order to serve tables. <sup>3</sup>Brothers and sisters, carefully choose seven well-respected men from among you. They must be well-respected and endowed by the Spirit with exceptional wisdom. We will put them in charge of this concern. <sup>4</sup>As for us, we will devote ourselves to prayer and the service of proclaiming the word." <sup>5</sup>This proposal pleased the entire community. They selected Stephen, a man endowed by the Holy Spirit with exceptional faith, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. <sup>6</sup>The community presented these seven to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. <sup>7</sup>God's word continued to grow. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased significantly. Even a large group of priests embraced the faith.

squashed by the Romans. Judas was a common name, and this Judas shouldn't be confused with the disciple who betrayed Jesus.

5:39 *fighting God*: a misguided act doomed to fail (cf. Acts 11:17).

5:41 *rejoicing . . . as worthy to suffer disgrace for the sake of the name*: See Luke 6:22-23; Acts 9:16; 16:25; 20:23-24; 21:13.

6:1-7 Another internal conflict disrupting the fellowship of the early Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 5:1-11). In this case a group of needy widows aren't being given their daily share of food. The problem is resolved by appointing seven servants to oversee this ministry.

6:1 *Greek-speaking . . . Aramaic-speaking disciples*: Greek was the common language of business and government in the Mediterranean world at this time. Aramaic was the version of Hebrew spoken by Jews in Jerusalem and surrounding areas. Many 1st-century Jews were bilingual to some degree. But some Jews who had migrated to Jerusalem from distant lands would have been more fluent in Greek. Language divisions could also reflect various cultural differences. *widows*: Concern for the care and well-being of widows is a prominent theme in the OT (Exod 22:22; Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:11,14; 24:17-21; 25:5-10;

*Who Killed Jesus?* Who killed Jesus is an important, recurring issue in the early chapters of Acts. Roman soldiers nailed him to the cross, but blame is spread more widely among Jesus' disloyal disciple Judas (Acts 1:16-17; 2:23), Roman and Jewish authorities, and Jewish crowds (Acts 2:23, 36; 3:13-15, 17; 4:10-11, 25-27). Luke's Gospel associates Peter with Jesus' death because Peter denied all knowledge of Jesus after his arrest (Luke 22:54-62).

Peter fully recovers his role as an apostle (cf. Luke 22:31-34), though, and this holds out hope for others who opposed Jesus. They, too, can change their hearts and lives, and receive God's forgiveness and gift of the Holy Spirit (see note on Acts 2:38). Peter also balances human responsibility with two important observations regarding those who called for and participated in Jesus' death: (1) they acted "in accordance with God's established plan" (see Acts 4:25-28; see note on Acts 2:23); and (2) they "acted in ignorance" (see note on Acts 3:17), not knowing the full significance of what they were doing (cf. Luke 23:34).

26:12-13; 27:19; 1 Kgs 17:8-24; 2 Kgs 4:1-9; Pss 68:5; 146:9; Prov 15:25; Isa 1:17; Jer 7:6; 22:3) and in Luke's writings (Luke 2:36-38; 4:25-26; 7:11-17; 18:1-8; 20:47; 21:1-4; Acts 9:36-43).

6:2-4 *serve tables . . . the service of proclaiming the word*: Providing food and preaching God's word are both necessary and valuable forms of service (Gk. *diakonia*) or ministry (cf. Luke 9:10-17; 22:25-27).

6:5 *Stephen . . . Philip*: All seven selected servants have Greek names. This suggests they are representatives of the Greek-speaking group whose widows have been neglected. Stephen and Philip become the main characters in the following chapters. Their ministry branches out beyond serving tables to include preaching and miracle-working. *Nicolaus from Antioch*: On Antioch in Syria, see note on Acts 11:20.

6:6-7 *laid their hands on them*: a gesture of assignment for special service and a pledge of support and fellowship (cf. Acts 8:14-17; 9:17; 13:1-3; 19:6-7). *God's word continued to grow*: See note on Acts 4:4. *large group of priests embraced the faith*: remarkable change of heart by a group that had opposed the apostles' message. The high priest and other council members aren't among these converts (see Acts 6:12-15; 7:1, 54).



**Arrest and murder of Stephen**

<sup>8</sup>Stephen, who stood out among the believers for the way God's grace was at work in his life and for his exceptional endowment with divine power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup>Opposition arose from some who belonged to the so-called Synagogue of Former Slaves. Members from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia entered into debate with Stephen. <sup>10</sup>However, they couldn't resist the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. <sup>11</sup>Then they secretly enticed some people to claim, "We heard him insult Moses and God." <sup>12</sup>They stirred up the people, the elders, and the legal experts. They caught Stephen, dragged him away, and brought him before the Jerusalem Council. <sup>13</sup>Before the council, they presented false witnesses who testified, "This man never stops speaking against this holy place and the Law. <sup>14</sup>In fact, we heard him say that this man Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and alter the customary practices Moses gave us." <sup>15</sup>Everyone seated in the council stared at Stephen, and they saw that his face was radiant, just like an angel's.

**7** The high priest asked, "Are these accusations true?" <sup>2</sup>Stephen responded, "Brothers and fathers, listen to me. Our glorious God appeared to our ancestor Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he settled in Haran. <sup>3</sup>God told him, 'Leave your homeland and kin, and go to the land that I will show you.'<sup>4</sup> So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After Abraham's father died, God had him resettle in this land where you now live. <sup>5</sup>God didn't give him an inheritance here, not even a square foot of land. However, God did promise to give the land as his possession to him and to his descendants, even though Abraham had no child. <sup>6</sup>God put it this way: *His descendants will be strangers in a land that belongs to others, who will enslave them and abuse them for four hundred years.* <sup>7</sup>And I will condemn the nation they serve as slaves, God said, and afterward they will leave that land and serve me in this place. <sup>8</sup>God gave him the covenant

6:8 Ac 6:5  
6:9 Ac 15:23, Ac 18:24, Ac 21:39, Ac 27:5  
6:13 Ps 27:12; Mt 24:15; Ac 6:11, Ac 7:58, Ac 21:28  
6:14 Mt 26:61; Ac 15:1, Ac 21:21  
6:15 Ecc 8:1; Mt 17:2  
7:2 Gn 11:31, Gn 15:7; Neh 9:7; Ps 29:3; Ac 22:1  
7:3 Gn 12:1  
7:4 Gn 11:31, Gn 12:4, Gn 12:5  
7:5 Gn 12:7, Gn 13:15, Gn 15:18, Gn 17:8  
7:6 Gn 15:13-14; Ex 12:40  
7:7 Gn 15:13-14; Ex 3:12  
7:8 Gn 17:9-10, Gn 21:2, Gn 25:26, Gn 35:23

<sup>1</sup>Gen 12:1 <sup>k</sup>Gen 15:13 <sup>l</sup>Gen 15:14

6:8-8:1 Stephen sparks opposition from a local synagogue in Jerusalem, whose members prosecute him before the Jerusalem Council (6:8-7:1). Stephen gives an extended defense speech, the longest in Acts (7:2-53). However, he angers the council and is stoned to death for his alleged violations of God's Law (7:54-8:1).

6:9 *Synagogue of Former Slaves*: group of Jewish slaves who had obtained their freedom from Roman masters and gathered together to pray, study the Law, and worship God in a local congregation (synagogue). They are Greek-speaking immigrants who have come to Jerusalem from various regions in northern Africa (Cyrene, Alexandria) and Asia Minor (Cilicia, Asia), or modern-day Turkey. 6:10 *couldn't resist the wisdom... as he spoke*: Compare with Luke 21:15.

6:11 *Moses*: leader of Israel out of slavery in Egypt and giver of God's Law. Stephen will devote the largest section of his speech to reviewing Moses' story (Acts 7:17-44).

6:13 *this holy place*: the Jerusalem temple, the magnificent "house for God" (Acts 7:47) originally built by Solomon and remodeled in grand fashion by Herod the Great beginning in 20 BCE.

6:14 *Jesus... will destroy this place*: See Luke 21:5-7, 20-24; 23:27-30 (cf. Matt 26:60-61; Mark 14:56-59; John 2:19-22).

6:15 *his face was radiant, just like an angel's*: sign of divine spotlighting and approval like that experienced by Moses (see Exod 34:29-30; 2 Cor 3:7).

7:2-53 Stephen's speech doesn't directly address the charges brought against him. It presents a sweeping review of Israel's history, focusing on God's dealings with Abraham (7:2-8), Joseph (7:9-16), Moses (7:17-44), Joshua (7:45), David (7:46), and Solomon (7:47-50). Two themes are relevant to Stephen's case: (1) God's gracious pattern of working with his people in lands and places

beyond Israel and the temple (7:2, 5-7, 9-16, 30-38, 44, 48-50) and (2) Israel's tragic pattern of rejecting leaders and prophets like Joseph, Moses, and Jesus (7:9-10, 25-29, 35-42, 51-52).

7:2-8 See Abraham's story in Genesis chapters 12-25.

7:2 *glorious God*: a common way of referring to the majestic, mighty presence of God revealed to God's people (see Exod 16:7, 10; 24:16-17; 29:43; 33:18, 22; 40:34-35; Lev 9:6, 23; Num 14:10, 21-22; 16:19; 20:6; 1 Kgs 8:11; Pss 24:7-10; 57:6; 138:5; Isa 6:3; 40:5; 60:1-2; Luke 2:9, 14; 9:31-32; Acts 7:55; 12:23).

7:4 *land of the Chaldeans... this land where you now live*: contrast between Abraham's Chaldean land of origin in Mesopotamia, where God first appeared to him (Acts 7:2-3), and this land of Israel (as it came to be known) promised to Abraham.

7:5 *not even a square foot*: The only property Abraham owned in the promised land was a field with a cave he bought from Ephron the Hittite near Hebron. Abraham made this purchase after his wife Sarah died; he buried her in the cave (Gen 23:1-20), *no child*: Abraham and Sarah were well beyond normal childbearing years when God promised they would have numerous descendants living in the land (Gen 11:30; 17:15-17).

7:6 *strangers in a land*: the land of Egypt, where Abraham's descendants would be oppressed slaves for centuries (Gen 15:13).

7:7 *this place*: The first holy site where the Israelites worshipped God after leaving Egypt was at Mount Sinai/Horeb in the Sinai desert (Exod 3:22; 19:1-25). However, Stephen's audience would most immediately associate *this place* of service with the Jerusalem temple (Acts 6:14).

7:8 *covenant confirmed through circumcision*: See Genesis 17:9-27; Leviticus 12:3. Both John the Baptist and

7:14 Gn 45:9;  
Gn 46:26-27;  
Ex 1:5; Dt 10:22  
7:15 Gn 46:1,  
Gn 46:5,  
Gn 49:33; Ex 1:6;  
Ps 105:23  
7:16 Gn 23:16,  
Gn 33:19,  
Gn 50:13;  
Ex 13:19;  
Josh 24:32  
7:17 Ex 1:9-10,  
Ex 1:16, Ex 1:22  
7:19 Ex 2:2;  
Heb 11:23  
7:22 1Ki 4:30;  
Is 19:11  
7:22 Ex 2:11-12  
7:29 Ac 7:35  
7:29 Ex 2:15,  
Ex 2:22, Ex 18:3,  
Ex 18:4  
7:30 Ex 3:2  
7:31 Ex 2:14,  
Ex 3:1, Ex 3:3-4,  
Ex 3:6  
7:32 Ex 3:6;  
Mt 22:32;  
Ac 3:13

confirmed through circumcision. Accordingly, eight days after Isaac's birth, Abraham circumcised him. Isaac did the same with Jacob, and Jacob with the twelve patriarchs.

<sup>9</sup>Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him into slavery in Egypt. God was with him, however, <sup>10</sup>and rescued him from all his troubles. The grace and wisdom he gave Joseph were recognized by Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler over Egypt and over his whole palace. <sup>11</sup>A famine came upon all Egypt and Canaan, and great hardship came with it. Our ancestors had nothing to eat. <sup>12</sup>When Jacob heard there was grain in Egypt, he sent our ancestors there for the first time. <sup>13</sup>During their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family. <sup>14</sup>Joseph sent for his father Jacob and all his relatives—seventy-five in all—and invited them to live with him. <sup>15</sup>So Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our ancestors died. <sup>16</sup>Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had purchased for a certain sum of money from Hamor's children, who lived in Shechem.

<sup>17</sup>When it was time for God to keep the promise he made to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt had greatly expanded. <sup>18</sup>But then *another king rose to power over Egypt who didn't know anything about Joseph.* <sup>19</sup>He exploited our people and abused our ancestors. He even forced them to abandon their newly born babies so they would die. <sup>20</sup>That's when Moses was born. He was highly favored by God, and for three months his parents cared for him in their home. <sup>21</sup>After he was abandoned, Pharaoh's daughter adopted and cared for him as though he were her own son. <sup>22</sup>Moses learned everything Egyptian wisdom had to offer, and he was a man of powerful words and deeds.

<sup>23</sup>When Moses was 40 years old, he decided to visit his family, the Israelites. <sup>24</sup>He saw one of them being wronged so he came to his rescue and evened the score by killing the Egyptian. <sup>25</sup>He expected his own kin to understand that God was using him to rescue them, but they didn't. <sup>26</sup>The next day he came upon some Israelites who were caught up in an argument. He tried to make peace between them by saying, "You are brothers! Why are you harming each other?" <sup>27</sup>The one who started the fight against his neighbor pushed Moses aside and said, "Who appointed you as our leader and judge?" <sup>28</sup>Are you planning to kill me like you killed that Egyptian yesterday?" <sup>29</sup>When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he lived as an immigrant and had two sons.

<sup>30</sup>Forty years later, an angel appeared to Moses in the flame of a burning bush in the wilderness near Mount Sinai. <sup>31</sup>Enthralled by the sight, Moses approached to get a closer look and he heard the Lord's voice: <sup>32</sup>*I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and*

<sup>m</sup>Exod 1:8 <sup>n</sup>Exod 2:14

Jesus were circumcised on the eighth day after birth, according to Jewish Law (Luke 1:57-59; 2:21). The question of whether Gentiles need to be circumcised becomes a major issue in Acts (see Acts 10:44-11:3; 15:1-5; 16:1-3). 7:9-16 See Joseph's story in Genesis 37-50.

7:9 *patriarchs were jealous*: Joseph's 10 older brothers became jealous of the special favor shown him by their father, Jacob, and by God (Gen 37:1-10). Compare with the jealousy of the priestly leaders against the apostles in Acts 5:17.

7:10 *grace and wisdom*: the same qualities that characterized Jesus (Luke 2:40, 52), Stephen (Acts 6:3, 5, 8-10), and Moses (Acts 7:20, 22).

7:16 *Shechem*: a major Samaritan center. This reference may anticipate the mission to Samaria in Acts 8:4-25 (cf. Acts 1:8; 15:3). On Shechem as the burial place for Israel's ancestors, see Joshua 24:32. For different burial traditions linked with Mamre in Hebron, see Genesis 23:1-20; 25:9; 49:29-33; 50:13-14.

7:17-44 See Moses' extensive story in Exodus through Deuteronomy. Stephen recounts Moses' career in three 40-year segments: (1) born and raised in Egypt through age 40, when he was forced to flee to Midian (7:17-29); (2) called by God *Forty years later* to lead the Israelites out

of Egypt (7:30-35); and (3) led the Israelites on a 40-year journey through the wilderness (7:36-44).

7:19 *exploited our people*: Moses was born during hard times for his people in Egypt. The new pharaoh had enslaved the Israelites (Hebrews) and ordered all newborn Israelite boys to be drowned in the Nile River (Exod 1:8-22). 7:20-21 *favored by God*: As with Abraham and Joseph, God watched over Moses and blessed him in a land outside of Israel. *Pharaoh's daughter adopted and cared for him*: Not all Egyptians wanted to destroy the Israelites. Pharaoh's own daughter rescued the baby Moses from the Nile and raised him as her own son (Exod 2:1-10).

7:25 *expected his own kin to understand . . . but they didn't*: the start of the Israelites' habit of rejecting Moses as their God-appointed leader and deliverer.

7:29 *Midian*: desert region in the Sinai Peninsula. As Joseph was forced away from his family by jealous brothers, so Moses had to flee from resentful kinfolk who resisted his leadership.

7:30 *angel appeared to Moses*: Angels continued to help Moses in delivering his people (Acts 7:35) and giving them God's word (Acts 7:38, 53).

7:32 *God of your ancestors*: See note on Acts 3:13. *Trembling with fear*: typical human response to a surprising

Jacob.<sup>60</sup> Trembling with fear, Moses didn't dare to investigate any further. <sup>33</sup>The Lord continued, 'Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. <sup>34</sup>I have clearly seen the oppression my people have experienced in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning. I have come down to rescue them. Come! I am sending you to Egypt.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>35</sup>'This is the same Moses whom they rejected when they asked, 'Who appointed you as our leader and judge?' This is the Moses whom God sent as leader and deliverer. God did this with the help of the angel who appeared before him in the bush. <sup>36</sup>This man led them out after he performed wonders and signs in Egypt at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness. <sup>37</sup>This is the Moses who told the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own people.'<sup>9</sup> <sup>38</sup>This is the one who was in the assembly in the wilderness with our ancestors and with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai. He is the one who received life-giving words to give to us. <sup>39</sup>He's also the one whom our ancestors refused to obey. Instead, they pushed him aside and, in their thoughts and desires, returned to Egypt. <sup>40</sup>They told Aaron, 'Make us gods that will lead us. As for this Moses who led us out of Egypt, we don't know what's happened to him!'<sup>41</sup> That's when they made an idol in the shape of a calf, offered a sacrifice to it, and began to celebrate what they had made with their own hands. <sup>42</sup>So God turned away from them and handed them over to worship the stars in the sky, just as it is written in the scroll of the Prophets:

*Did you bring sacrifices and offerings to me for forty years in the wilderness, house of Israel?*

<sup>43</sup>No! Instead, you took the tent of Moloch with you, and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made in order to worship them.

*Therefore, I will send you far away, farther than Babylon.<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>44</sup>'The tent of testimony was with our ancestors in the wilderness. Moses built it just as he had been instructed by the one who spoke to him and according to the pattern he had seen. <sup>45</sup>In time, when they had received the tent, our ancestors carried it with them when, under Joshua's leadership, they took possession of the land from the nations whom God expelled. This tent remained in the land until the time of David. <sup>46</sup>God approved of David, who asked

<sup>6</sup>Exod 3:6 <sup>9</sup>Exod 3:5, 7 <sup>4</sup>Deut 18:15 <sup>4</sup>Exod 32:1 <sup>4</sup>Amos 5:25-27

encounter with God and angels. It combines a swirl of emotions involving sheer terror as well as awe and respect (cf. Luke 1:12, 29-30; 2:8-10; 8:47; 24:4-5, 36-37).

7:33 *the place... is holy ground:* near Mount Sinai (Acts 7:30), another sacred site outside the land of Israel (see note on Acts 7:7).

7:34 *I am sending you:* The Lord directly sent Moses on a mission, as he did with Abraham (Acts 7:2-3) and as Jesus did with his followers (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8).

7:35 *Who appointed you:* See Acts 7:27.

7:36 *wonders and signs:* The same language describes the miraculous works of Moses, Jesus (Acts 2:22), the apostles (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12), and Stephen (Acts 6:8). *wilderness:* or "desert," off the beaten path; an important site of ministry, learning, and warning for God's people (see Num 24:20-22; Deut 2:7; 8:2-4, 29:5; 1 Kgs 19:3-15; Neh 9:21; Ps 95:8-11; Luke 3:2-6; 4:1-2; Acts 8:26; Heb 3:7-19).

7:37 *raise up for you a prophet like me:* See Acts 3:13-23, where Peter identifies this Moses-like prophet (promised in Deut 18:15) with the risen and returning Jesus.

7:38 *life-giving words:* God's Law for Israel. On the role of angels in helping Moses mediate this Law, see Acts 7:53; Deuteronomy 33:2-4 LXX; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2.

7:40 *Aaron:* brother of Moses and his chief spokesman to the people (Exod 4:10-16). *we don't know what's happened to him!:* Over the 40 straight days and nights Moses spent talking with God on Mount Sinai, the people increasingly worried about whether he would ever return to lead them (see Exod 24:18; 32:1, 23).

7:41 *made an idol... with their own hands:* Making an image of another god and worshipping it marked an obvious violation of the first two of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:3-5; Deut 5:7-9). By offering a sacrifice to a human-made object, people were serving themselves and their own creation rather than the Creator God who had made them and everything in the world (cf. Acts 17:22-29).

7:42 *scroll of the Prophets:* The 12 shortest prophetic writings in the Jewish scriptures were gathered into a single book. The quotation that follows is from Amos 5:25-27 in this collection.

7:43 *Moloch... Rephan:* Moloch (or Molech) was a Canaanite god associated in the OT with despicable practices of child sacrifice (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; 2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 32:35). The god Rephan is otherwise unknown. *Babylon:* a change from "Damascus" in Amos 5:27. Babylon was the capital of a powerful empire that destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in 587 BCE and took many of Judah's citizens into exile.

7:44 *tent of testimony:* Contrast with "tent of Moloch" in Acts 7:43. The tent of testimony was the portable structure, built according to God's specifications, that the Israelites carried on their wilderness journey (Acts 7:45). Here Moses would meet and talk with God on the people's behalf (see Exod 33:7-11).

7:45 *Joshua's leadership:* Joshua was Moses' immediate successor. The OT book of Joshua describes how he led the Israelites' entry and settlement in the promised land.

7:46-47 *dwelling place for the God of Jacob... house for*

7:33 Ex 3:5;  
Josh 5:15

7:34 Ex 3:7-8;  
Ex 3:10

7:35 Ac 7:27

7:36 Ex 12:41;  
Ex 14:21;

Ex 33:1

7:37 Dt 18:15;  
Ac 3:22

7:38 Ac 7:53;  
Ro 3:2; Heb 5:12;  
1Pt 4:11

7:39 Ex 16:3;  
Nm 11:5;  
Nm 14:3-4

7:40 Ex 32:1;  
Ex 32:23

7:41 Ex 32:4;  
Ex 32:6; Dt 9:16;

Neh 9:16;  
Ps 106:19

7:42 Dt 4:19;  
2Ki 21:3;  
Jer 19:13;

Eze 20:39;  
Am 5:25

7:43 Lv 18:21;  
Am 5:25-26

7:44 Ex 25:8-9;  
Ex 25:40;  
Ex 38:21;

Heb 8:5

7:45 Josh 18:1;  
Josh 23:9;

Josh 24:18;  
Heb 4:8

7:47 1Ki 6:1,  
1Ki 8:20; 2Ch 3:1  
7:48 1Ki 8:27;  
2Ch 2:6;  
Ac 17:24

7:49 Ps 11:4;  
Is 66:1, 2;  
Mt 5:34-35

7:51 Ex 32:9,  
Ex 33:5; Lv 26:41;  
Jer 6:10; Jer 9:26

7:52 Mt 5:12,  
Mt 23:31;  
Ac 3:14; 1Th 2:15

7:53 Dt 32:2;  
Ps 68:17;  
Ac 7:38; Ga 3:19;  
Heb 2:2

7:54 Job 16:9;  
Ps 35:16,  
Ps 37:12;  
Ac 5:33

7:55 Mk 16:19;  
Jn 11:41; Ac 6:5

7:56 Mt 8:20

7:57 Ps 58:4

7:58 Lv 24:14;  
Dt 17:7; Lk 4:29;  
Ac 8:1; Ac 22:20

7:59 Ps 31:5;  
1k 23:46; 1Co 1:2

7:60 Mt 5:44;  
Lk 22:41;

1k 23:34;  
Ac 9:40,  
Ac 13:36

8:1 Ac 1:8,  
Ac 7:58; Ac 8:4,

Ac 11:19,  
Ac 22:20

8:2 Ac 6:5

8:3 Ac 7:58,  
Ac 9:1; Ac 22:4;

1Co 15:9;  
Ga 1:13

8:4 Ac 8:1,  
Ac 11:19

8:5 Ac 6:5,  
Ac 8:35; Ac 9:20;

1Co 1:23

8:6 Jn 4:39

that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.<sup>47</sup> But it was Solomon who actually built a house for God.<sup>48</sup> However, the Most High doesn't live in houses built by human hands. As the prophet says,

<sup>49</sup>Heaven is my throne,  
and the earth is my footstool.

'What kind of house will you build for me,' says the Lord,  
'or where is my resting place?'

<sup>50</sup>Didn't I make all these things with my own hand?<sup>51</sup>

"You stubborn people! In your thoughts and hearing, you are like those who have had no part in God's covenant! You continuously set yourself against the Holy Spirit, just like your ancestors did.<sup>52</sup> Was there a single prophet your ancestors didn't harass? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the righteous one, and you've betrayed and murdered him!<sup>53</sup> You received the Law given by angels, but you haven't kept it."

<sup>54</sup>Once the council members heard these words, they were enraged and began to grind their teeth at Stephen.<sup>55</sup> But Stephen, enabled by the Holy Spirit, stared into heaven and saw God's majesty and Jesus standing at God's right side.<sup>56</sup> He exclaimed, "Look! I can see heaven on display and the Human One<sup>57</sup> standing at God's right side!"<sup>57</sup> At this, they shrieked and covered their ears. Together, they charged at him,<sup>58</sup> threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses placed their coats in the care of a young man named Saul.<sup>59</sup> As they battered him with stones, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, accept my life!"<sup>60</sup> Falling to his knees, he shouted, "Lord, don't hold this sin against them!" Then he died.<sup>1</sup> Saul was in full agreement with Stephen's murder.

### The church scatters

At that time, the church in Jerusalem began to be subjected to vicious harassment. Everyone except the apostles was scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.<sup>2</sup> Some pious men buried Stephen and deeply grieved over him.<sup>3</sup> Saul began to wreak havoc against the church. Entering one house after another, he would drag off both men and women and throw them into prison.

### Philip in Samaria

<sup>4</sup>Those who had been scattered moved on, preaching the good news along the way.<sup>5</sup> Philip went down to a city in Samaria<sup>6</sup> and began to preach Christ to them.<sup>6</sup> The crowds were

<sup>1</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament read *house of Jacob*. <sup>2</sup>Isa 66:1-2 <sup>3</sup>Or *Son of Man* <sup>4</sup>Or *the city of Samaria*

God: the fixed temple structure in Jerusalem proposed by David and built by his son Solomon. It replaced the moveable tent of testimony as the center of Israelite worship.

7:48 *houses built by human hands*: Stephen associates the Jerusalem temple with human-made idols like the golden calf (Acts 7:41), unworthy of the Most High Creator God (cf. Acts 17:24; 19:26). This would have been a serious challenge to the beliefs and practices of his council audience.

7:49-50 This quotation (Isa 66:1-2) stresses that God lives in the entire universe God created. Therefore, no human-made structure can contain God.

7:51-53 Stephen shifts from telling Israel's history to accusing his council audience of stubbornly rejecting God's covenant and killing Jesus, *the righteous one* (see note on Acts 3:14).

7:52 Jesus had also been sad about Israel's habit of violently resisting God's prophets (Luke 11:47-51; 13:33-34).

7:53 *Law given by angels*: See note on Acts 7:38.

7:54-8:1 The council's hostile reaction to Stephen's testimony, prompting his death by stoning. The scene appears to be more like a mob lynching than a legal act of capital punishment.

7:54 *grind their teeth*: gesture of vicious opposition to God and God's messengers (cf. Pss 35:16; 112:10; Luke 13:28).

7:55-56 *Jesus... the Human One standing at God's right*

*side*: On Jesus' exalted position at God's right side, the place of highest honor and power, see Acts 2:33; 5:31. Stephen's vision of Jesus standing in this place is unusual; typically, Jesus is seen as seated at God's right side (Luke 20:42; 22:69; Acts 2:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:1; 12:2).

7:58 *young man named Saul*: the first appearance of a major character, also known as Paul (Acts 13:9). Saul supports the brutal death of Stephen (cf. Acts 8:1), either as supervisor of the proceedings or simply as caretaker of the executioners' coats.

7:59-60 Stephen's dying words recall Jesus' prayers from the cross in Luke 23:34, 46.

8:1-3 Saul launches a terrorist campaign against the church (cf. Acts 9:1-2), forcing believers to flee from Jerusalem.

8:4-25 The forced flight from Jerusalem yields positive results, as those who scatter begin to preach in outlying areas. Philip, one of the seven chosen to oversee the church's food service (Acts 6:5), proclaims the good news in Samaria. This fulfills Jesus' outreach plan in Acts 1:8.

8:5 *Samaria*: center of the Samaritans, a faction within Israel in sharp conflict with most Jews (see Luke 9:51-56; 10:25-37; 17:11-19). A major source of tension was over holy ground. Samaritans worshipped God on Mount

united by what they heard Philip say and the signs they saw him perform, and they gave him their undivided attention. <sup>7</sup>With loud shrieks, unclean spirits came out of many people, and many who were paralyzed or crippled were healed. <sup>8</sup>There was great rejoicing in that city.

<sup>9</sup>Before Philip's arrival, a certain man named Simon had practiced sorcery in that city and baffled the people of Samaria. He claimed to be a great person. <sup>10</sup>Everyone, from the least to the greatest, gave him their undivided attention and referred to him as "the power of God called Great." <sup>11</sup>He had their attention because he had baffled them with sorcery for a long time. <sup>12</sup>After they came to believe Philip, who preached the good news about God's kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. <sup>13</sup>Even Simon himself came to believe and was baptized. Afterward, he became one of Philip's supporters. As he saw firsthand the signs and great miracles that were happening, he was astonished.

<sup>14</sup>When word reached the apostles in Jerusalem that Samaria had accepted God's word, they commissioned Peter and John to go to Samaria. <sup>15</sup>Peter and John went down to Samaria where they prayed that the new believers would receive the Holy Spirit. (<sup>16</sup>This was because the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) <sup>17</sup>So Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

<sup>18</sup>When Simon perceived that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money. <sup>19</sup>He said, "Give me this authority too so that anyone on whom I lay my hands will receive the Holy Spirit."

<sup>20</sup>Peter responded, "May your money be condemned to hell along with you because you believed you could buy God's gift with money! <sup>21</sup>You can have no part or share in God's word because your heart isn't right with God. <sup>22</sup>Therefore, change your heart and life! Turn from your wickedness! Plead with the Lord in the hope that your wicked intent can be forgiven, <sup>23</sup>for I see that your bitterness has poisoned you and evil has you in chains."

<sup>24</sup>Simon replied, "All of you, please, plead to the Lord for me so that nothing of what you have said will happen to me!" <sup>25</sup>After the apostles had testified and proclaimed the Lord's word, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the good news to many Samaritan villages along the way.

8:7 Mt 4:24; Mk 16:17; Ac 5:16  
 8:8 Ac 8:39  
 8:9 R:9 Ac 5:36, Ac 8:11, Ac 8:18, Ac 13:6  
 8:10 Ac 14:11, Ac 28:6  
 8:11 Ac 8:9  
 8:12 Ac 1:3, Ac 2:38  
 8:13 Ac 8:6, Ac 8:7, Ac 19:11  
 8:14 Lk 22:8; Ac 3:1, Ac 8:1  
 8:15 Ac 2:38, Ac 19:2  
 8:16 Mt 28:19; Ac 2:38, Ac 10:44, Ac 19:2, Ac 19:5  
 8:17 Ac 6:6, Ac 8:18, Ac 9:17, Ac 19:6  
 8:18 Ac 8:9  
 8:20 2Ki 5:16; Dn 5:17; Mt 10:8; Ac 2:38  
 8:21 Ps 78:37  
 8:22 Dn 4:27; Ac 2:38, Ac 3:19, Ac 17:30, 2Ti 2:25  
 8:23 Dt 29:18, Dt 32:32; Jn 8:34  
 8:24 Gn 20:7; Ex 8:8, Ex 10:17; Nm 21:7; Ki 21:6

*God's Gift of the Holy Spirit* When the apostles lay their hands (see note on Acts 6:6) on people to impart the Holy Spirit, this signifies the bond between the Jewish church in Jerusalem and these new Samaritan believers (Acts 8:14-17). The Samaritans receive the same Spirit that Jesus' earliest followers did on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Similar outpourings of the Spirit show God's blessing of Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-17) and disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-7). The Spirit serves as the primary agent of unity across social and cultural lines (see sidebar, "Receiving the Spirit at Pentecost" at Acts 2).

The Spirit operates in various ways to bring unity. The basic pattern links receiving the Spirit with having faith and being baptized in Jesus' name (Acts 2:38), but the timing is flexible. The Samaritans receive the Spirit some time after being baptized (Acts 8:16), while some Gentiles suddenly receive the Spirit in the middle of Peter's sermon, before they are baptized (Acts 10:44-45; 11:15). These differences stress the element of surprise and freedom of the Holy Spirit as God's gift.

Gerizim (near Shechem) and rejected the Jerusalem temple (cf. John 4:19-20).

8:9-10 *claimed to be a great person . . . "the power of God called Great"*: amounts to an arrogant claim to be like a god. Philip preaches Christ to the Samaritans (Acts 8:5), but Simon promotes himself.

8:9 *Simon had practiced sorcery*: Simon had become a popular local figure (Acts 8:10-11) by practicing magical arts. These included works of healing, fortune-telling, cursing enemies, and other assorted tricks (cf. Acts 13:6-10; 16:16-18; 19:18-20).

8:12 *God's kingdom*: the righteous rule of God established in Christ (see note on Acts 1:3).

8:13 *saw firsthand the signs and great miracles*: Above all Simon is impressed by Philip's miraculous works. This attitude brings into question the sincerity of Simon's baptism

and support of Philip's message. See Acts 8:18-24 for Simon's true motive.

8:18-24 Peter clashes with Simon the sorcerer over the ability to give the Holy Spirit, which Simon tries to buy.

8:20 *May your money be condemned*: The danger of misusing money is a major theme in Luke's writings (Luke 3:13-14; 11:42; 12:13-34; 16:1-14, 19-31; 18:18-30; 19:8-9, 11-27, 45-46; 20:20-26, 47; 21:1-4; 22:3-5; Acts 1:18-19; 5:1-11; 16:16-24; 19:18-20, 23-28). Simon's error is presuming he can purchase and control God's power for his own ends. Peter makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is God's gift and isn't for sale.

8:21 *no part or share in God's word*: like the greedy Judas, who forfeited his "share of this ministry" (Acts 1:17).

8:22 *change your heart and life*: See note on Acts 2:38.

8:23 *your bitterness has poisoned you*: See Deuteronomy

1:26; Ac 5:19,  
Ac 27:23  
9:27 1Ki 8:41;  
Ps 68:31, Ps 87:4;  
Is 56:3; Jn 12:20  
9:29 1k 3:4,  
1k 4:17; Ac 28:25

9:29 Ac 8:39,  
Ac 10:19;  
Ac 11:12,  
Ac 13:2,  
Ac 21:11

9:30 Mt 13:19;  
Mt 15:10;  
Jn 4:34; Ac 8:12,  
Ac 8:35

9:31 2Ki 10:15;  
Ro 10:14

9:32 Is 53:7,  
Is 53:8

8:23 Is 53:7,  
Is 53:8; Phi 2:7,  
Phi 2:8

9:33 Mt 5:2;  
Lk 24:27;  
Ac 17:2,  
Ac 18:28,  
Ac 20:23

9:36 Ac 10:47  
9:37 Ac 2:38;  
1Jn 5:1

9:38 Ac 8:39  
9:39 1Ki 18:12;  
2Ki 2:16;  
Eze 3:12,  
Eze 11:24;  
2Co 12:2

9:40 Ac 8:25,  
Ac 21:8,  
Ac 23:23

9:41 Ac 8:3,  
Ac 22:3, Ac 22:4,  
Ac 26:9,  
Ac 26:10

9:42 Ac 19:9,  
Ac 19:23,  
Ac 22:4,  
Ac 24:14,  
Ac 24:22

9:43 Ac 26:13;  
1Co 15:8

### Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch

<sup>26</sup>An angel from the Lord spoke to Philip, "At noon, take<sup>a</sup> the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) <sup>27</sup>So he did. Meanwhile, an Ethiopian man was on his way home from Jerusalem, where he had come to worship. He was a eunuch and an official responsible for the entire treasury of Candace. (Candace is the title given to the Ethiopian queen.) <sup>28</sup>He was reading the prophet Isaiah while sitting in his carriage. <sup>29</sup>The Spirit told Philip, "Approach this carriage and stay with it."

<sup>30</sup>Running up to the carriage, Philip heard the man reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you really understand what you are reading?"

<sup>31</sup>The man replied, "Without someone to guide me, how could I?" Then he invited Philip to climb up and sit with him. <sup>32</sup>This was the passage of scripture he was reading:

*Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter  
and like a lamb before its shearer is silent  
so he didn't open his mouth.*

<sup>33</sup>In his humiliation justice was taken away from him.

*Who can tell the story of his descendants  
because his life was taken from the earth?"*

<sup>34</sup>The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, about whom does the prophet say this? Is he talking about himself or someone else?" <sup>35</sup>Starting with that passage, Philip proclaimed the good news about Jesus to him. <sup>36</sup>As they went down the road, they came to some water.

The eunuch said, "Look! Water! What would keep me from being baptized?" <sup>38</sup>He ordered that the carriage halt. Both Philip and the eunuch went down to the water, where Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup>When they came up out of the water, the Lord's Spirit suddenly took Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing. <sup>40</sup>Philip found himself in Azotus. He traveled through that area, preaching the good news in all the cities until he reached Caesarea.

### Saul encounters the risen Jesus

**9** Meanwhile, Saul was still spewing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest, <sup>2</sup>seeking letters to the synagogues in Damascus. If he found persons who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, these letters would authorize him to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>During the journey, as he approached Damascus,

<sup>a</sup>Or *travel south along* <sup>b</sup>Isa 53:7-8 <sup>c</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament do not include 8:37 *Philip said to him, "If you believe with all your heart, you can be."* *The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son."*

29:13, a warning to those who turn away from Israel's Lord to false gods.

8:26 4:3 Philip meets and baptizes a eunuch from Ethiopia.

9:26 At noon, take the road... a desert road: an unlikely time (the hottest part of the day) and place to meet a traveler. This is a special meeting arranged by the Lord's angel and Spirit (8:26, 29). See note on Acts 7:36. *Gaza*: city southwest of Jerusalem in lower Judea, four miles from the Mediterranean coast.

8:27 *Ethiopian*: resident of the African land of Ethiopia, located south of Egypt. It was also known in biblical times as Cush and Nubia, and regarded as a distant land at the ends of the earth. *from Jerusalem, where he had come to worship*: Many Gentiles in the ancient world were attracted to Israel's God and Jewish moral teachings, without becoming converts (cf. Acts 10:1-4, 22, 35; 13:16, 26, 50; 16:14; 17:4; 18:7). *eunuch*: As a castrated male, a eunuch was unable to participate fully in temple worship and Israel's covenant community (Lev 21:18-20; Deut 23:1). However, two biblical texts held out hope for the restoration and inclusion of devout eunuchs (Isa 56:3-4; Wis 3:14). *official... of Candace*: Eunuchs could rise to high positions in ancient courts, especially in the service of female rulers.

8:28 *carriage*: or "chariot"; a horse-drawn mode of travel appropriate for a person of wealth and authority.

8:30 *heard... reading the prophet Isaiah*: People typically

read aloud in the ancient world. Jesus read aloud and commented on a passage from Isaiah at the beginning of his ministry (Luke 4:16-21; Isa 66:1-2; 58:6). Isaiah is an important book in Luke's writings.

8:32-35 Philip applies the passage the eunuch is reading (Isa 53:7-8) to Jesus. What Philip says, however, isn't reported. A likely connection would have been the shared shame and rejection suffered by the eunuch, the figure in Isaiah 52:13-53:12, and the crucified Jesus.

8:39 *the Lord's Spirit suddenly took Philip away*: recalls the miraculous transport of Elijah (1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 2:11) and Jesus (Luke 24:31, 36-37, 51; Acts 1:9).

8:40 *Caesarea*: Caesarea Maritima was a port city built by Herod the Great and dedicated to the Roman emperor (Caesar). It became the provincial capital of Roman Judea.

9:1-31 In a remarkable change of course, the hostile Saul is confronted by the risen Jesus, becomes a disciple, and begins to preach the good news about Jesus.

9:1-2 Continuation of Saul's terror campaign against the early church (cf. Acts 8:1-3).

9:2 *Damascus*: major city in Syria, northeast of Israel. *the Way*: a designation for Jesus' followers (Acts 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; cf. 18:25-26). It may refer to their belief that Jesus reveals the way to God (cf. John 14:6) and the way that God's people should live (cf. Deut 10:12; 30:16; Prov 3:5-6).

suddenly a light from heaven encircled him. <sup>4</sup>He fell to the ground and heard a voice asking him, "Saul, Saul, why are you harassing me?"

<sup>5</sup>Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord?"

"I am Jesus, whom you are harassing," came the reply. <sup>6</sup>"Now get up and enter the city. You will be told what you must do."

<sup>7</sup>Those traveling with him stood there speechless; they heard the voice but saw no one.

<sup>8</sup>After they picked Saul up from the ground, he opened his eyes but he couldn't see. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. <sup>9</sup>For three days he was blind and neither ate nor drank anything.

<sup>10</sup>In Damascus there was a certain disciple named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

He answered, "Yes, Lord."

<sup>11</sup>The Lord instructed him, "Go to Judas' house on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is resting. <sup>12</sup>In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias enter and put his hands on him to restore his sight."

<sup>13</sup>Ananias countered, "Lord, I have heard many reports about this man. People say he has done horrible things to your holy people in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>He's here with authority from the chief priests to arrest everyone who calls on your name."

<sup>15</sup>The Lord replied, "Go! This man is the agent I have chosen to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. <sup>16</sup>I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

<sup>17</sup>Ananias went to the house. He placed his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord sent me—Jesus, who appeared to you on the way as you were coming here. He sent me so that you could see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup>Instantly, flakes fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again. He got up and was baptized. <sup>19</sup>After eating, he regained his strength.

He stayed with the disciples in Damascus for several days. <sup>20</sup>Right away, he began to preach about Jesus in the synagogues. "He is God's Son," he declared.

<sup>21</sup>Everyone who heard him was baffled. They questioned each other, "Isn't he the one who was wreaking havoc among those in Jerusalem who called on this name? Hadn't he come here to take those same people as prisoners to the chief priests?"

<sup>22</sup>But Saul grew stronger and stronger. He confused the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

<sup>23</sup>After this had gone on for some time, the Jews hatched a plot to kill Saul. <sup>24</sup>However, he

9:4 Ac 22:7.  
Ac 26:14  
9:5 Mt 14:14,  
Mt 15:32,  
Mt 18:2,  
Mt 28:10; Ac 9:4  
9:6 Ac 9:16  
9:7 Dn 10:7;  
Ac 22:9  
Ac 26:14  
9:8 Ac 9:18,  
Ac 22:11  
9:9 Est 4:16  
9:10 Ac 10:3,  
Ac 16:9, Ac 18:9,  
Ac 22:12  
9:11 Ac 9:30,  
Ac 11:25,  
Ac 21:39,  
Ac 22:3  
9:12 Mk 5:23;  
Ac 6:6, Ac 9:10,  
Ac 9:17  
9:13 Ac 8:3,  
Ac 26:10;  
Ro 15:25,  
Ro 15:26,  
Ro 15:31  
9:14 Ac 2:21,  
Ac 7:59, Ac 9:2,  
Ac 9:21; 1 Co 1:2  
9:15 Ac 13:2,  
Ac 26:1;  
Ro 1:1, Ro 11:13;  
Ga 1:15  
9:16 Ac 20:23,  
Ac 21:11;  
2 Co 11:23  
9:17 Ac 2:4,  
Ac 6:6, Ac 9:12,  
Ac 22:13  
9:18 Ac 2:38,  
Ac 22:16  
9:19 Ac 26:20  
9:20 Ac 9:32,  
Ac 13:5, Ac 14:1,  
Ac 17:10,  
Ac 17:17  
9:21 Ac 8:3,  
Ac 9:13, Ac 9:14,  
Ga 1:13, Ga 1:23

Ac 5:42, Ac 17:3, Ac 18:5, Ac 18:28 1 Th 2:15 Ac 20:3, Ac 20:19, Ac 23:12, Ac 23:30, Ac 25:3

9:4 *I am Jesus, whom you are harassing*: a direct appearance of the risen Jesus to Saul. Even after his ascension to heaven (Acts 1:9-11), Jesus remains concerned about events on earth. In particular, he strongly identifies with his harassed followers and moves to help them (cf. Acts 7:55-60).

9:9 *For three days he was blind*: reflects the intensity of Saul's life-changing vision of the risen Jesus. The three-day period may recall Jesus' time in the grave before his resurrection (Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 46). From now on, Saul will see Jesus and the world differently. *neither ate nor drank anything*: Fasting was a common spiritual practice, particularly for focusing attention at times of crisis and decision making (Judg 20:26; 2 Sam 1:12; 12:16-22; Jdt 4:13; 8:6; Luke 4:1-2; Acts 13:2-3; 14:23).

9:10 *In Damascus... certain disciple named Ananias*: Some of the scattered members of the Jerusalem church (Acts 8:1, 4) had probably settled in Damascus. But Acts gives no report of Ananias' or any other disciples' settling there. In Saul's flashback in Acts 22:12, we learn that Ananias is a pious observer of the Law and well respected by the Jewish community. *vision*: The Lord appears to Ananias soon after appearing to Saul. In this way, the Lord prepares Ananias for

Saul's visit. For other examples of this way of using two visions to bring people together, see Acts 9:12; 10:1-33.

9:11 *Straight Street*: This was likely a real roadway in ancient Damascus, but it may also carry symbolic significance in the story as the place where Saul's life was straightened out (cf. Luke 3:4-5). *Tarsus*: Saul's hometown, "an important city" (Acts 21:39) and port in the province of Cilicia in southeastern Asia Minor.

9:13 *holy people*: those set apart for serving God, applied to Jesus' disciples here and in Acts 9:32, 41; 26:10.

9:15 *agent I have chosen*: The risen Lord not only stops Saul's campaign of harassing the church, he also calls Saul to the new work of preaching about Jesus before Gentiles as well as Jews. For Saul/Paul's own account of his commission to the Gentiles, see Galatians 1:13-16.

9:17 *filled with the Holy Spirit*: Compare with Acts 2:4; 4:31; 6:3, 5.

9:23-24 See Saul/Paul's own account in 2 Corinthians 11:32-33.

9:23 *hatched a plot to kill Saul*: The harasser becomes the harassed. This fulfills the Lord's forecast in Acts 9:16 concerning "how much [Saul] must suffer for the sake of my name."

9:25 Josh 2:15;  
1Sa 19:12;  
2Co 11:32;  
2Co 11:33

9:26 Ac 22:17;  
Ac 26:20;  
Ga 1:17, Ga 1:18

9:27 Ac 4:36,  
Ac 9:20

9:28 Ac 1:21

9:29 Ac 6:1

9:30 Ac 8:40,  
Ac 9:11,  
Ac 11:25;  
Ga 1:21

9:31 Ac 8:1

9:32 Ac 9:13

9:33 Ac 9:34

9:34 Ac 3:6,  
Ac 4:10,  
Ac 16:18

9:36 Josh

19:46; 2Ch 2:16;

Ezr 3:7;

Jon 1:3; Ac 10:5

9:37 Ac 1:13,  
Ac 20:8

9:38 Ac 9:32,  
Ac 11:26

9:39 Ac 6:1,  
Ac 9:36

9:40 Mt 9:25;  
Mk 5:41;

Lk 22:41;

Jn 11:43; Ac 7:60

9:41 Mk 1:31;

Ac 3:7, Ac 6:1,  
Ac 9:13

9:42 Ac 9:35

9:43 Ac 10:6,  
Ac 10:32

found out about their scheme. They were keeping watch at the city gates around the clock so they could assassinate him. <sup>25</sup>But his disciples took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the city wall.

<sup>26</sup>When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. They didn't believe he was really a disciple. <sup>27</sup>Then Barnabas brought Saul to the apostles and told them the story about how Saul saw the Lord on the way and that the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them about the confidence with which Saul had preached in the name of Jesus in Damascus. <sup>28</sup>After this, Saul moved freely among the disciples in Jerusalem and was speaking with confidence in the name of the Lord. <sup>29</sup>He got into debates with the Greek-speaking Jews as well, but they tried to kill him. <sup>30</sup>When the family of believers learned about this, they escorted him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

<sup>31</sup>Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. God strengthened the church, and its life was marked by reverence for the Lord. Encouraged by the Holy Spirit, the church continued to grow in numbers.

### **Peter heals and raises the dead**

<sup>32</sup>As Peter toured the whole region, he went to visit God's holy people in Lydda. <sup>33</sup>There he found a man named Aeneas who was paralyzed and had been confined to his bed for eight years. <sup>34</sup>Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up and make your bed." At once he got up. <sup>35</sup>Everyone who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

<sup>36</sup>In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas). Her life overflowed with good works and compassionate acts on behalf of those in need. <sup>37</sup>About that time, though, she became so ill that she died. After they washed her body, they laid her in an upstairs room. <sup>38</sup>Since Lydda was near Joppa, when the disciples heard that Peter was there, they sent two people to Peter. They urged, "Please come right away!" <sup>39</sup>Peter went with them. Upon his arrival, he was taken to the upstairs room. All the widows stood beside him, crying as they showed the tunics and other clothing Dorcas made when she was alive.

<sup>40</sup>Peter sent everyone out of the room, then knelt and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up!" She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. <sup>41</sup>He gave her his hand and raised her up. Then he called God's holy people, including the widows, and presented her alive to them. <sup>42</sup>The news spread throughout Joppa, and many put their faith in the Lord.

<sup>43</sup>Peter stayed for some time in Joppa with a certain tanner named Simon.

9:26 *didn't believe he was really a disciple*: Ananias (Acts 9:13-14) and the Jews in Damascus (Acts 9:21) also doubt at first the sincerity of Saul's faith in Jesus.

9:27 *Barnabas*: recalls Acts 4:36-37. Here Barnabas lives up to his nickname as "one who encourages" (Acts 4:36).

9:29 *debates with the Greek-speaking Jews... but they tried to kill him*: ironically similar to the opposition Stephen faced earlier from Saul and Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9-14; 7:54-8:1).

9:31 Another summary statement of the church's peace and progress after a time of conflict.

9:32-42 Peter performs two uplifting miracles in the coastal area of Judea: (1) healing a paralyzed man named Aeneas at Lydda (9:32-35); and (2) resuscitating a dead woman named Tabitha/Dorcas in Joppa (9:36-42).

9:32 *God's holy people*: also in Acts 9:41; see note on Acts 9:13. *Lydda*: important Jewish commercial and academic center in a fertile region of Judea about 10 miles from the Mediterranean coast.

9:33 *paralyzed*: See Luke 5:17-26; Acts 3:1-10; 8:7; 14:8-10.

9:34 *Jesus Christ heals you! Get up*: Compare with Acts 3:6.

9:36 *Joppa*: important Mediterranean port in Israel 35 miles northwest of Jerusalem. In Jewish tradition Joppa (or Jaffa) is best known as the place where the prophet Jonah boarded a ship in his attempt to avoid his God-ordered mission to the Gentiles (Ninevites) (see Jon 1:1-3). *disciple named Tabitha... Dorcas*: Her Aramaic (Tabitha) and Greek (Dorcas) names both mean "gazelle."

9:37 *upstairs room*: Compare with Acts 1:13; 9:39; 20:8; Luke 22:12.

9:39 *widows... showed the tunics and other clothing Dorcas made*: On the care of widows, see note on Acts 6:1; on the vital work of clothing the needy, see Matthew 25:36-46; Luke 3:11; 12:27-28.

9:40-41 Compare with the miracles of raising the dead performed by Elijah (1 Kgs 17:17-24), Elisha (2 Kgs 4:17-37), Jesus (Luke 7:11-17; 8:49-56; John 11:38-44), and Paul (Acts 20:7-12).

9:43 *tanner*: one who processed animal skins for use in making clothes, tents, writing tablets, and other materials. Tanning was messy, smelly work. In Jewish society tanners would have been ritually unclean most of the time because of their contact with dead animals (cf. Lev 11:24-28; Num 5:1-3; 9:6-10; 19:11-22).



*Peter, Cornelius, and the Gentiles*

**10** There was a man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion in the Italian Company.<sup>a</sup> **2**He and his whole household were pious, Gentile God-worshippers. He gave generously to those in need among the Jewish people and prayed to God constantly. **3**One day at nearly three o'clock in the afternoon, he clearly saw an angel from God in a vision. The angel came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

**4**Startled, he stared at the angel and replied, "What is it, Lord?"

The angel said, "Your prayers and your compassionate acts are like a memorial offering to God. **5**Send messengers to Joppa at once and summon a certain Simon, the one known as Peter. **6**He is a guest of Simon the tanner, whose house is near the seacoast." **7**When the angel who was speaking to him had gone, Cornelius summoned two of his household servants along with a pious soldier from his personal staff. **8**He explained everything to them, then sent them to Joppa.

**9**At noon on the following day, as their journey brought them close to the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. **10**He became hungry and wanted to eat. While others were preparing the meal, he had a visionary experience. **11**He saw heaven opened up and something like a large linen sheet being lowered to the earth by its four corners. **12**Inside the sheet were all kinds of four-legged animals, reptiles, and wild birds.<sup>b</sup> **13**A voice told him, "Get up, Peter! Kill and eat!"

**14**Peter exclaimed, "Absolutely not, Lord! I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

**15**The voice spoke a second time, "Never consider unclean what God has made pure." **16**This happened three times, then the object was suddenly pulled back into heaven.

**17**Peter was bewildered about the meaning of the vision. Just then, the messengers sent by Cornelius discovered the whereabouts of Simon's house and arrived at the gate. **18**Calling out, they inquired whether the Simon known as Peter was a guest there.

**19**While Peter was brooding over the vision, the Spirit interrupted him, "Look! Three people are looking for you. **20**Go downstairs. Don't ask questions; just go with them because I have sent them."

**21**So Peter went downstairs and told them, "I'm the one you are looking for. Why have you come?"

**22**They replied, "We've come on behalf of Cornelius, a centurion and righteous man, a God-worshipper who is well-respected by all Jewish people. A holy angel directed him to summon you to his house and to hear what you have to say." **23**Peter invited them into the house as his guests.

<sup>a</sup>Or cohort (approximately six hundred soldiers) <sup>b</sup>Or birds in the sky

10:1 Ac 8:40, Ac 27:1  
 10:2 Ac 10:22, Ac 13:16, Ac 13:26  
 10:3 Ac 3:1, Ac 5:19, Ac 9:10, Ac 10:17, Ac 10:30  
 10:4 Mt 26:13, Ac 10:31, Heb 6:10, Rev 8:4  
 10:5 Mk 3:16, Ac 9:36, Ac 10:32  
 10:6 Ac 9:43  
 10:7 Ac 10:1  
 10:8 Ac 9:36  
 10:9 Zep 1:5, Mt 24:17, Ac 9:40, Ac 11:5  
 10:10 Ac 22:17  
 10:11 Mt 3:16, Jn 1:51, Ac 7:56, Rev 19:11  
 10:14 Eze 4:14  
 10:15 Mt 15:11, Mk 7:19, Ro 14:14, 1Co 10:25, Ti 1:15  
 10:16 Gn 41:32, Jn 21:17, 2Co 13:1  
 10:17 Ac 9:43, Ac 10:3, Ac 10:7, Ac 10:8  
 10:18 Ac 10:5  
 10:19 Ac 8:29, Ac 10:20, Ac 13:2  
 10:20 Is 48:16, Ac 10:19, Ac 13:4, Ac 15:7  
 10:22 Mk 8:38, Ac 10:1, Ac 10:2, Ac 11:14  
 10:23 Ac 1:15, Ac 10:45, Ac 11:12

10:1-48 God arranges for Peter to visit the home of Cornelius, a Roman officer. During that meeting, the Holy Spirit is poured out on this Gentile household, just as on the Jewish believers at Pentecost (10:44-48).

10:1 centurion: Roman military commander over 100 soldiers (see Acts 22:25-26; 23:23; 24:23; 27:1-6; Luke 7:1-10; 23:47). Italian Company: larger military unit of about 600 soldiers. A centurion in this regiment was likely a Roman citizen of ample wealth and standing.

10:2 whole household: included servants and staff (Acts 10:7) as well as family members (Acts 10:24). Gentile God-worshippers: like the Ethiopian eunuch; see note on Acts 8:27 (cf. Acts 10:22).

10:3 three o'clock in the afternoon: a set hour of daily prayer for pious Jews; see note on Acts 3:1. angel from God in a vision: For similar encounters with angelic figures, see Acts 1:9-11; 5:19-20; 12:7-11; 27:23-24; Luke 1:10-20, 26-38; 9:28-34; 24:4-7.

10:4 memorial offering: prompting God to remember Cornelius and treat him favorably.

10:5 Simon, the one known as Peter: the first mention in Acts of his birth name, Simon (cf. Luke 4:38; 5:3-10; 6:14; 22:31). Peter, meaning "rock," was the nickname Jesus gave him (Matt 16:17-18; Luke 6:14). Here Simon Peter is distinguished from "Simon the tanner" (Acts 10:6).

10:6 tanner: See note on Acts 9:43.

10:9 roof: typically flat and covered with some mixture of mud, clay, and straw. Housetops were common places for rest and privacy.

10:10 visionary experience: Peter's experience pairs with Cornelius' vision to bring the two characters together, as with Saul and Ananias in Acts 9:3-12 (see note on Acts 9:10).

10:12 Common classifications of the animal world (cf. Gen 1:20-25; 6:20; Lev 11:46-47; Rom 1:23). Jews were forbidden to eat some, but not necessarily all, of the creatures shown to Peter (cf. Acts 10:14).

10:14 impure or unclean: not a moral category applied to something sinful or dirty, but a ritual description of things outside the center of God's holy presence. Kosher laws that prohibited eating certain unclean foods (Lev 11:1-47; Deut 14:3-21) reminded the Jews of their covenant relationship with God, of being set apart for God's service.

10:19 On the guidance of the Spirit, see Acts 8:29; 11:12; 15:28; 16:6-7; 19:21; 20:22-23; 21:4, 11; Luke 4:1, 14.

10:22 righteous man: precisely what another centurion called Jesus at the cross in Luke 23:47. well-respected by all Jewish people: like the centurion who had built a synagogue for the Jews in Capernaum (Luke 7:4).

10:23 some of the believers from Joppa: These fellow Jewish believers accompanying Peter are witnesses to the

10:24 Ac 8:40,  
Ac 10:1  
10:25 Dn 2:46;  
Mt 8:2

10:25 Ac 14:15;  
Rev 19:10,  
Rev 22:8,  
Rev 22:9

10:27 Ac 10:24  
10:29 Jn 4:9,  
Jn 18:28;  
Ac 10:15,  
Ac 11:3, Ac 15:9

10:27 Ac 10:3,  
Ac 10:7,  
Ac 10:24

10:21 Ac 10:4  
10:12 Ac 9:43,  
Ac 10:5, Ac 10:6,  
Ac 10:17

10:27 Ac 10:2  
10:29 Dt 10:17;  
2Ch 19:7;  
Ro 2:11; Ga 2:6;  
Eph 6:9

10:27 Prv 1:7;  
Ac 10:2,  
Ac 10:34,  
Ac 15:9; Eph 1:6

10:26 Mt 28:18;  
Lk 24:4; Ac 2:36;  
Ro 5:1; Eph 2:17

10:37 Mt 4:12,  
Mt 21:25;  
Mk 14; Mk 11:14;  
Lk 7:29

10:37 Mt 3:16,  
Mt 4:23; Lk 4:18;  
Jn 3:2; Ac 2:22

10:19 Lk 24:48;  
Ac 1:22, Ac 3:15,  
Ac 5:30,  
Ac 10:41

10:40 Ac 2:24  
10:41 Lk 24:43;  
Jn 14:22

10:22 Jn 5:22;  
Ac 17:31;  
Ro 14:10;  
2Ti 4:1; 1Pt 4:5

10:21 Jn 20:31;  
Ac 2:38, Ac 15:9

The next day he got up and went with them, together with some of the believers from Joppa. <sup>24</sup>They arrived in Caesarea the following day. Anticipating their arrival, Cornelius had gathered his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup>As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in order to honor him. <sup>26</sup>But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Get up! Like you, I'm just a human." <sup>27</sup>As they continued to talk, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. <sup>28</sup>He said to them, "You all realize that it is forbidden for a Jew to associate or visit with outsiders. However, God has shown me that I should never call a person impure or unclean. <sup>29</sup>For this reason, when you sent for me, I came without objection. I want to know, then, why you sent for me."

<sup>30</sup>Cornelius answered, "Four days ago at this same time, three o'clock in the afternoon, I was praying at home. Suddenly a man in radiant clothing stood before me. <sup>31</sup>He said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayers, and your compassionate acts are like a memorial offering to him. <sup>32</sup>Therefore, send someone to Joppa and summon Simon, who is known as Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, located near the seacoast.' <sup>33</sup>I sent for you right away, and you were kind enough to come. Now, here we are, gathered in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has directed you to say."

<sup>34</sup>Peter said, "I really am learning that God doesn't show partiality to one group of people over another. <sup>35</sup>Rather, in every nation, whoever worships him and does what is right is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup>This is the message of peace he sent to the Israelites by proclaiming the good news through Jesus Christ: He is Lord of all! <sup>37</sup>You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism John preached. <sup>38</sup>You know about Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit and endowed with power. Jesus traveled around doing good and healing everyone oppressed by the devil because God was with him. <sup>39</sup>We are witnesses of everything he did, both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup>but God raised him up on the third day and allowed him to be seen, <sup>41</sup>not by everyone but by us. We are witnesses whom God chose beforehand, who ate and drank with him after God raised him from the dead. <sup>42</sup>He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup>All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

<sup>44</sup>While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on everyone who heard the word. <sup>45</sup>The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup>They heard them speaking in other languages and praising God. Peter asked, <sup>47</sup>"These people have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. Surely no one can stop them from being baptized with water, can they?"

10:41 Ac 11:15, Ac 15:8, Ac 19:6 10:15 Ac 2:33, Ac 2:38, Ac 10:23, Ac 11:2, Ac 15:7 10:46 Mk 16:17; Ac 2:4, Ac 19:6 10:47 Ac 8:12, Ac 8:36, Ac 11:17, Ac 15:8

surprising events that occur in Cornelius' house (Acts 10:45-46; 11:12).

10:25 *Cornelius ... fell at his feet*: an extraordinary act of submission to an ordinary Jew (Peter) by a Roman officer accustomed to giving orders and exerting authority (cf. Luke 7:6-8).

10:28 *forbidden for a Jew to associate ... with outsiders*: a narrow policy of social relations not shared by all Jews. Outside Israel, Jews routinely associated with Gentiles in their daily lives. Gentiles were welcome in Jewish synagogues, and the Jerusalem temple provided space (the Court of the Gentiles) where Jews and Gentiles mingled. Perhaps Peter's extreme statement here reflects his particular aversion to visiting the home of a Roman officer. *never call a person impure or unclean*: The real point of Peter's vision wasn't to change his diet and view of animals but to change his attitude toward people. In God's eyes, all people are clean and worthy of respect.

10:30-33 Cornelius retells his vision and response to it (cf. Acts 10:3-8).

10:33 *gathered in the presence of God*: Cornelius affirms his and Peter's common faith in and fellowship with God.

10:34-43 Peter's speech to Cornelius and his household,

focusing on God's impartial acceptance of people from all nations. Peter also repeats themes from previous speeches concerning Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

10:34-35 God doesn't play favorites but instead treats everyone, including immigrants from other nations, with fairness and justice (cf. Deut 10:17-19; Rom 2:6-11).

10:39 *hanging him on a tree*: crucifying Jesus (Acts 13:29; see note on Acts 5:30).

10:41 *ate and drank with him after God raised him*: See Luke 24:36-43; Acts 1:3-4.

10:42 *commanded us to preach*: See Luke 24:44-48; Acts 1:8. *the one whom God appointed as judge*: See Acts 17:31.

10:44-48 The Holy Spirit is poured on the Gentiles in Cornelius' house, and they're baptized in Jesus' name. This experience, including *speaking in other languages*, mirrors that of the early Jewish believers on Pentecost (see sidebar, "Receiving the Spirit at Pentecost" at Acts 2).

10:44 *While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell*: See sidebar, "God's Gift of the Holy Spirit" at Acts 8.

10:45 *circumcised believers who had come with Peter*: Compare with Acts 10:23; 11:12. Noting their circumcised status distinguishes these Jewish believers from the uncircumcised Gentile God-worshippers (Acts 11:2).

<sup>48</sup>He directed that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited Peter to stay for several days.

### Jerusalem church questions Peter

**11** The apostles and the brothers and sisters throughout Judea heard that even the Gentiles had welcomed God's word. <sup>2</sup>When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him. <sup>3</sup>They accused him, "You went into the home of the uncircumcised and ate with them!"

<sup>4</sup>Step-by-step, Peter explained what had happened. <sup>5</sup>"I was in the city of Joppa praying when I had a visionary experience. In my vision, I saw something like a large linen sheet being lowered from heaven by its four corners. It came all the way down to me. <sup>6</sup>As I stared at it, wondering what it was, I saw four-legged animals—including wild beasts—as well as reptiles and wild birds. <sup>7</sup>I heard a voice say, 'Get up, Peter! Kill and eat!' <sup>8</sup>I responded, 'Absolutely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' <sup>9</sup>The voice from heaven spoke a second time, 'Never consider unclean what God has made pure.' <sup>10</sup>This happened three times, then everything was pulled back into heaven. <sup>11</sup>At that moment three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were staying. <sup>12</sup>The Spirit told me to go with them even though they were Gentiles. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered that man's house. <sup>13</sup>He reported to us how he had seen an angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and summon Simon, who is known as Peter. <sup>14</sup>He will tell you how you and your entire household can be saved.' <sup>15</sup>When I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as the Spirit fell on us in the beginning. <sup>16</sup>I remembered the Lord's words: 'John will baptize with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>17</sup>If God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then who am I? Could I stand in God's way?"

<sup>18</sup>Once the apostles and other believers heard this, they calmed down. They praised God and concluded, "So then God has enabled Gentiles to change their hearts and lives so that they might have new life."

### The Antioch church

<sup>19</sup>Now those who were scattered as a result of the trouble that occurred because of Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. They proclaimed the word only to Jews. <sup>20</sup>Among them were some people from Cyprus and Cyrene. They entered Antioch and began to proclaim the good news about the Lord Jesus also to Jews who spoke Greek. <sup>21</sup>The Lord's power was with them, and a large number came to believe and turned to the Lord.

<sup>6</sup>Or birds in the sky

10:48 *directed that they be baptized*: The baptized group is drawn from the "large gathering" of friends and relatives in Cornelius' home (Acts 10:24, 27). For other baptisms of entire households, see Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8. *invited Peter to stay*: sign of continuing fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers. Peter's extended visit no doubt included sharing many meals with Cornelius and his household (cf. Acts 11:3).

11:1-18 Circumcised Jewish believers in the Jerusalem church criticize Peter's fellowship with the Gentiles. In his defense, Peter tells them about his visionary experience and visit to Cornelius' house, stressing that these events were caused by God and God's Spirit.

11:2 *went up to Jerusalem*: In Jewish tradition travel from any direction toward Jerusalem is upward. This fits the concept of the temple mount as the place of highest importance on earth.

11:12 *six brothers also went with me*: specifying the number of circumcised believers from Joppa who accompanied Peter to Cornelius' home (Acts 10:23, 45-46). These Jewish brothers in Christ could provide eyewitness confirmation of Peter's testimony.

11:16 See Acts 1:4-5.

11:18 *change their hearts and lives*: See note on Acts 2:38.

11:19-30 Unnamed missionaries establish a church in Antioch of Syria. Barnabas and Saul come and teach the new believers for a year. During a time of famine, the disciples in Antioch send financial aid to their Christian brothers and sisters in Judea.

11:19 *those who were scattered*: See Acts 8:1, 4.

11:20 *Cyprus and Cyrene*: Cyprus, an island in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, was the homeland of Barnabas (Acts 4:36) and another disciple named Mnason (Acts 21:16). Cyrene was a region in northern Africa near Libya. Jews from this area were represented at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). *Antioch*: third-largest city in the Roman Empire and capital of the province of Syria. It was a busy commercial and multicultural center, and had a sizable Jewish community.

11:21 *large number came to believe*: In addition to Greek-speaking Jews (Acts 11:20), the diverse population of Antioch and the developing plot of Acts suggest that Gentiles are also included among this large group of new believers. The Antioch church is a mixed Jewish-Gentile congregation.

10:48 Ac 2:38,  
Ac 8:16

11:1 Ac 1:8,  
Ac 8:14,  
Ac 10:45,  
Ac 11:29,  
Ac 13:48

11:2 Ac 10:45

11:3 Ac 10:28;  
Ga 2:12

11:4 Lk 1:3

11:5 Ac 9:10,  
Ac 10:9

11:9 Ac 10:15

11:11 Ac 8:40

11:12 Ac 8:29,  
Ac 10:23,  
Ac 15:9

11:13 Ac 12:11

11:14 Jn 4:53;

Ac 10:2,

Ac 16:15,

Ac 16:31,

Ac 18:8

11:15 Ac 2:2,

Ac 2:4, Ac 10:44

11:16 Lk 3:16,  
Ac 1:5

11:17 Ac 2:38,  
Ac 10:47

11:18 Ac 5:31,  
Ac 21:20;

2Co 7:10

11:19 Ac 4:36,

Ac 8:1, Ac 8:4,

Ac 11:26,

Ac 15:3

11:20 Mt 27:32;

Ac 2:10,

Ac 5:42,

Ac 11:19,  
Ac 13:1

11:21 Lk 1:66;

Ac 2:41, Ac 2:47,  
Ac 4:4, Ac 9:35

11:22 Ac 4:36,  
Ac 13:1  
11:24 Ac 5:14,  
Ac 6:5, Ac 11:21  
11:25 Ac 9:11,  
Ac 9:30  
11:26 Ac 26:28;  
1 Pt 4:16  
11:27 Ac 13:1,  
Ac 15:32;  
1 Co 12:28,  
1 Co 14:32;  
Eph 4:11

11:28 Ac 18:2,  
Ac 21:10,  
Ac 21:11

11:29 Ac 11:1;  
Ro 15:26

11:30 Ac 4:36,  
Ac 12:25;  
Tit 5:17, Tit 1:5;  
Jas 5:14

12:1 Ac 12:20

12:2 Mt 4:21

12:3 Ex 12:15,  
Ex 23:15;  
Ac 20:6,  
Ac 24:27,  
Ac 25:9

12:4 Jn 19:23;  
Ac 5:18

12:5 2 Co 1:11;  
Eph 6:18;  
Heb 13:3

12:6 Ps 3:5;  
Ac 5:23,  
Ac 21:33,  
Ac 28:20;  
2 Ti 1:16

12:7 1 Ki 19:5;  
Ac 5:19,  
Ac 16:26;  
Heb 1:14

12:8 Mk 6:9  
12:9 Ac 9:10

<sup>22</sup>When the church in Jerusalem heard about this, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. <sup>23</sup>When he arrived and saw evidence of God's grace, he was overjoyed and encouraged everyone to remain fully committed to the Lord. <sup>24</sup>Barnabas responded in this way because he was a good man, whom the Holy Spirit had endowed with exceptional faith. A considerable number of people were added to the Lord. <sup>25</sup>Barnabas went to Tarsus in search of Saul. <sup>26</sup>When he found him, he brought him to Antioch. They were there for a whole year, meeting with the church and teaching large numbers of people. It was in Antioch where the disciples were first labeled "Christians."

<sup>27</sup>About that time, some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. <sup>28</sup>One of them, Agabus, stood up and, inspired by the Spirit, predicted that a severe famine would overtake the entire Roman world. (This occurred during Claudius' rule.) <sup>29</sup>The disciples decided they would send support to the brothers and sisters in Judea, with everyone contributing to this ministry according to each person's abundance. <sup>30</sup>They sent Barnabas and Saul to take this gift to the elders.

### Herod imprisons Peter

**12** About that time King Herod began to harass some who belonged to the church. <sup>2</sup>He had James, John's brother, killed with a sword. <sup>3</sup>When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he arrested Peter as well. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. <sup>4</sup>He put Peter in prison, handing him over to four squads of soldiers, sixteen in all, who guarded him. He planned to charge him publicly after the Passover. <sup>5</sup>While Peter was held in prison, the church offered earnest prayer to God for him.

<sup>6</sup>The night before Herod was going to bring Peter's case forward, Peter was asleep between two soldiers and bound with two chains, with soldiers guarding the prison entrance. <sup>7</sup>Suddenly an angel from the Lord appeared and a light shone in the prison cell. After nudging Peter on his side to awaken him, the angel raised him up and said, "Quick! Get up!" The chains fell from his wrists. <sup>8</sup>The angel continued, "Get dressed. Put on your sandals." Peter did as he was told. The angel said, "Put on your coat and follow me." <sup>9</sup>Following the angel, Peter left the prison. However, he didn't realize the angel had actually done all this. He thought he was seeing a vision. <sup>10</sup>They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself. After leaving the prison, they proceeded the length of one street, when abruptly the angel was gone.

12:10 Ac 5:19, Ac 16:26

11:22-23 *Barnabas... encouraged everyone:* Barnabas continues to live up to his nickname (Acts 4:36-37; 9:27).

11:25-26 Barnabas goes to Saul's hometown of Tarsus (Acts 9:11, 30) and brings him back to Antioch to help with the ministry there. Barnabas continues to act as Saul's supporter and mentor.

11:26 *disciples were first labeled "Christians":* or "ones belonging to Christ." The term appears elsewhere in the NT only in Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16. Originally, it seems to have been a label applied to Jesus' followers by outsiders.

11:28 *Agabus:* Judean prophet with a gift for Spirit-inspired predictions (see also Acts 21:10-11). *severe famine... the entire Roman world:* an exaggerated forecast. However, during this period local famines afflicted certain regions, including Judea. *Claudius' rule:* as emperor of Rome from 41 to 54 CE.

11:29-30 Providing financial aid to the needy continues to strengthen the bond of early Christian communities.

12:1-19 Peter's imprisonment by Herod and miraculous release by an angel from the Lord. After his escape, Peter goes to Mary's house where many believers have gathered in prayer.

12:1 *King Herod:* Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, ruled over Judea as Rome's agent from 41 to 44 CE.

12:2-3 *James, John's brother:* sons of Zebedee, two of Jesus' 12 apostles and fishing partners with Simon Peter (Luke 5:10-11; 6:13-14; 9:28, 37, 54-55). *the Jews:* a

shorthand label applied here to those Jerusalem Jews who opposed Jesus' followers (cf. Acts 12:11). But Peter, James, John, and the other earliest witnesses to Christ were also Jews, and many other Jews joined the Jerusalem church (Acts 2:41; 4:4). *Festival of Unleavened Bread:* another name for Passover (see Acts 12:4); a weeklong celebration of the Israelites' release from slavery in Egypt. Eating flatbread without leaven, or yeast, symbolizes readiness for escape: there's no time to wait for bread to rise (Exod 12:14-28, 33-39; 13:3-8). Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples on the night before his death (Luke 22:1, 7-13).

12:4 *four squads of soldiers:* probably working in shifts to guard Peter round-the-clock. This is a large security force for one prisoner.

12:5 *the church offered earnest prayer:* See Acts 12:12; compare with Acts 4:23-30, where the Jerusalem church prayed for courage after Peter and John were released from prison.

12:7-10 An angel leads Peter out of jail (cf. Acts 5:19-20).

12:7-8 *"Quick! Get up!... Get dressed. Put on your sandals":* echoing the Lord's instructions at the first Passover (Exod 12:11).

12:7 *light shone:* sign of a divine encounter (cf. Acts 9:3; 22:6, 11; 26:13).

12:9 *thought he was seeing a vision:* as in Acts 10:9-17; 11:5-10.

<sup>11</sup>At that, Peter came to his senses and remarked, "Now I'm certain that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod and from everything the Jewish people expected." <sup>12</sup>Realizing this, he made his way to Mary's house. (Mary was John's mother; he was also known as Mark.) Many believers had gathered there and were praying. <sup>13</sup>When Peter knocked at the outer gate, a female servant named Rhoda went to answer. <sup>14</sup>She was so overcome with joy when she recognized Peter's voice that she didn't open the gate. Instead, she ran back in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate.

<sup>15</sup>"You've lost your mind!" they responded. She stuck by her story with such determination that they began to say, "It must be his guardian angel." <sup>16</sup>Meanwhile, Peter remained outside, knocking at the gate. They finally opened the gate and saw him there, and they were astounded.

<sup>17</sup>He gestured with his hand to quiet them down, then recounted how the Lord led him out of prison. He said, "Tell this to James and the brothers and sisters." Then he left for another place.

<sup>18</sup>The next morning the soldiers were flustered about what had happened to Peter. <sup>19</sup>Herod called for a thorough search. When Peter didn't turn up, Herod interrogated the guards and had them executed. Afterward, Herod left Judea in order to spend some time in Caesarea.

<sup>20</sup>Herod had been furious with the people of Tyre and Sidon for some time. They made a pact to approach him together, since their region depended on the king's realm for its food supply. They persuaded Blastus, the king's personal attendant, to join their cause, then appealed for an end to hostilities. <sup>21</sup>On the scheduled day Herod dressed himself in royal attire, seated himself on the throne, and gave a speech to the people. <sup>22</sup>Those assembled kept shouting, over and over, "This is a god's voice, not the voice of a mere human!" <sup>23</sup>Immediately an angel from the Lord struck Herod down, because he didn't give the honor to God. He was eaten by worms and died.

<sup>24</sup>God's word continued to grow and increase. <sup>25</sup>Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch from Jerusalem<sup>d</sup> after completing their mission, bringing with them John, who was also known as Mark.

### Barnabas and Saul sent to minister

**13**The church at Antioch included prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon (nicknamed Niger), Lucius from Cyrene, Manaen (a childhood friend of Herod the ruler),

<sup>d</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament read *returned to Jerusalem*.

12:12 *Mary's house*: This Mary was the mother of John Mark, not the mother of Jesus. She was the head of her household. The fact that *Many believers had gathered* in her Jerusalem home suggests Mary was a leader in this community.

12:13 *outer gate*: feature of a large house or villa. A courtyard would lie between the outer gate and the main residence. *Rhoda*: the only named female servant in Luke's writings (cf. Luke 22:56; Acts 2:18; 16:16).

12:15 *guardian angel*: divine messenger appointed to care for and protect individual human beings (see Gen 48:16; Job 33:23; Tob 5:21-22; 12:15-22; Matt 18:10).

12:17 *James*: Jesus' brother and a prominent leader of the Jerusalem church. His importance becomes clear in Acts 15:13-21; 21:18-26 (cf. Acts 1:14; 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 2:9, 12).

12:19 *Herod... had them executed*: another example of Herod's rash and ruthless behavior (cf. Acts 12:1-4).

12:20-23 *Death of Herod (Agrippa)*. The 1st-century Jewish historian Josephus associates the king's death with festivities in Caesarea, where the crowds hailed him as a divine figure. Agrippa accepted the praise without qualification. In Josephus' report Agrippa saw an owl sitting on a rope above his head, which he took as a bad omen; he began to feel severe stomach pain and died five days later.

12:20 *Tyre and Sidon*: prominent coastal cities in the region of Phoenicia, north of Caesarea.

12:21 *royal attire*: The Jewish historian Josephus reports the king wore shimmering silver robes. These reflected the sunlight in such brilliant fashion that the crowd shouted that he was a god. On Jesus' criticism of fancy-dressing royal figures, see Luke 7:24-28.

12:23 *angel... struck Herod down*: Contrast with the angel's "nudging" Peter to awaken him in Acts 12:7. Ironically, the same Greek verb (*patassō*) underlies the actions of both "nudging" and striking in Acts 12:7, 23. *because he didn't give the honor to God*: Contrast with the humble honoring of God by Peter and John (Acts 3:11-13; 10:25-26) and Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:11-15) when certain people treat them like gods. *eaten by worms*: gruesome image of death resulting from divine judgment (see Jdt 16:17; 2 Macc 9:9).

12:24 *God's word continued to grow*: See note on Acts 4:4. 12:25 *Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch from Jerusalem*: picking up the story from Acts 11:27-30. *John... known as Mark*: See Acts 12:12; 13:5, 13; 15:37-39; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24; 1 Peter 5:13. 13:1-3 The Antioch church sends two of its leaders, Barnabas and Saul, on their first missionary journey.

13:1 *Barnabas... Saul*: Among the five leaders, Barnabas holds the senior position while Saul, mentioned last, remains a junior partner at this stage. *Niger*: meaning "black or dark-skinned," suggesting Simeon was of African origin.

12:11 Ps 34:7;  
Dn 3:28;  
Dn 6:22;  
Lk 15:17;  
2Co 1:10

12:12 Ac 12:25;  
Ac 13:5;  
Ac 13:13;  
Ac 15:37;  
Col 4:10

12:13 Jn 18:16;  
Jn 18:17

12:14 Lk 24:41

12:15 Mt 18:10

12:18 Ac 12:3;  
Ac 19:23

12:19 Ac 8:40;  
Ac 16:27;  
Ac 27:42

12:23 1Sa 25:38;  
2Sa 24:16;  
2Ki 19:35

12:25 Ac 4:36;  
Ac 11:30;  
Ac 12:12;

Ac 13:5;  
Ac 13:13

13:1 Mt 14:1;  
Ac 4:36;  
Ac 11:20;  
Ac 11:22;  
Ac 11:27

13:2 Ac 8:29,  
Ac 9:15,  
Ac 14:26;  
Ro 15:16

13:3 Ac 6:6,  
Ac 13:2,  
Ac 14:23,  
Ac 14:26

13:4 Ac 4:36,  
Ac 13:2

13:5 Ac 9:20,  
Ac 12:12,  
Ac 12:25,  
Ac 13:14,  
Ac 14:1

13:6 Mt 7:15;  
Ac 8:9

13:7 Ac 13:8,  
Ac 13:12,  
Ac 18:12,  
Ac 19:38

13:8 Ac 6:7,  
Ac 13:6, Ac 13:7  
13:9 Lk 1:15;  
Ac 2:4, Ac 4:8,  
Ac 4:31, Ac 13:7

13:10 Hos 14:9;  
Mt 13:38;  
In 8:44

13:11 Gn 19:11;  
Ex 9:3; Isa 5:6;  
Ps 32:4, Ac 9:8

13:12 Ac 13:7

13:13 Ac 2:10,  
Ac 12:12,  
Ac 13:5,  
Ac 14:24,  
Ac 15:38

and Saul. <sup>2</sup>As they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Appoint Barnabas and Saul to the work I have called them to undertake." <sup>3</sup>After they fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on these two and sent them off.

### Serving in Cyprus

<sup>4</sup>After the Holy Spirit sent them on their way, they went down to Seleucia. From there they sailed to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup>In Salamis they proclaimed God's word in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their assistant. <sup>6</sup>They traveled throughout the island until they arrived at Paphos. There they found a certain man named Bar-Jesus, a Jew who was a false prophet and practiced sorcery. <sup>7</sup>He kept company with the governor of that province, an intelligent man named Sergius Paulus. The governor sent for Barnabas and Saul since he wanted to hear God's word. <sup>8</sup>But Elymas the sorcerer\* (for that's what people understood his name meant) opposed them, trying to steer the governor away from the faith. <sup>9</sup>Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Saul, also known as Paul, glared at Bar-Jesus and <sup>10</sup>said, "You are a deceiver and trickster! You devil! You attack anything that is right! Will you never stop twisting the straight ways of the Lord into crooked paths?" <sup>11</sup>Listen! The Lord's power is set against you. You will be blind for a while, unable even to see the daylight." At once, Bar-Jesus' eyes were darkened, and he began to grope about for someone to lead him around by the hand. <sup>12</sup>When the governor saw what had taken place, he came to believe, for he was astonished by the teaching about the Lord.

### Paul and Barnabas in Pisidian Antioch

<sup>13</sup>Paul and his companions sailed from Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia. John deserted them there and returned to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>They went on from Perga and arrived at Antioch

\*Or *magician* (Gk *magos*)

*Cyrene*: See note on Acts 11:20. *childhood friend*: can also mean foster brother. *Herod the ruler*: Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. He ruled over Galilee and Perea (4 BCE–39 CE), had John the Baptist beheaded, and opposed Jesus' ministry (Luke 3:19–20; 9:7–9; 13:31–33; 23:9–11). One of Jesus' followers, named Joanna, was married to Herod's servant (Luke 8:3).

13:2–3 *worshipping the Lord and fasting...fasted and prayed*: On fasting, see note on Acts 9:9; on prayer and fasting connected with the selection of church leaders, see note on Acts 14:23.

13:2 *the Holy Spirit said*: Barnabas and Saul's call to missionary service comes directly from God's Spirit (cf. Acts 13:4). The church endorses the Spirit's decision and follows the Spirit's leadership (cf. Acts 15:28).

13:4–14:28 Barnabas and Saul/Paul's first missionary journey extends the Christian movement westward to the island of Cyprus and into the southeastern mainland of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

13:4–12 On Cyprus, Barnabas and Saul/Paul preach to Jews in the synagogues and encounter a Jewish false prophet and sorcerer (Bar-Jesus) and the island's Roman governor (Sergius Paulus).

13:4 *Seleucia*: seaport near Antioch. *Cyprus*: Barnabas' homeland (Acts 4:36; cf. Acts 11:19–20; 21:16).

13:5 *Salamis*: port on the eastern shore of Cyprus. *John was with them*: John Mark, who had been brought from Jerusalem (Acts 12:12, 25), accompanies Barnabas and Saul as an apprentice.

13:6 *Paphos*: port on the southwestern shore of Cyprus. *Bar-Jesus... false prophet and practiced sorcery*: The name literally means "son of Jesus." As a false prophet he arrogantly pretends to speak for God with no real authority or truth (cf. Deut 18:20–22). Like Simon the Samaritan sorcerer (Acts 8:9–11), Bar-Jesus attracts attention through

magical acts passed off as divine miracles. On the common practice of sorcery in the ancient world, see also Acts 16:16–18; 19:18–20.

13:8 *Elymas*: another name for Bar-Jesus, of uncertain meaning, though the people associate it with his sorcery. His false claims to represent God become evident as he opposes Barnabas and Saul and tries to block the local governor from hearing God's word (Acts 13:7).

13:9 See sidebar, "Saul/Paul."

13:10 *You devil!*: The practice of sorcery, or magic, was thought to derive from the power of the devil rather than from God (cf. Luke 11:15–20). *twisting the straight ways... into crooked paths*: Recall that Paul himself had been on an evil path until he was confronted by the Lord and brought to Straight Street in Damascus (Acts 9:3–11).

13:11 Being struck blind and led by the hand recalls Paul's own experience in Acts 9:8–9. *for a while*: Paul holds out hope that Bar-Jesus will regain his sight and change his life, as Paul did.

13:13–52 Paul and Barnabas sail north to Asia Minor, travel inland, and preach about Jesus in Pisidian Antioch.

13:13 *Perga in Pamphylia*: Located near the Mediterranean coast, Perga was the main city of the region of Pamphylia in southern Asia Minor. Pamphylia means "land of all tribes." It had a sizable number of Jews, some of whom traveled to Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2:10). *John deserted them*: The motive for John Mark's departure isn't specified. Perhaps he returned home to Jerusalem because he wasn't ready or suited for outreach to the wider Gentile world.

13:14–15 For a similar synagogue order of service, see Luke 4:16–21 (cf. Acts 13:27).

13:14 *Antioch in Pisidia*: Roman colony in the region of Pisidia, located due north of Pamphylia. Pisidian Antioch, distinguished from Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:19–30; 13:1–3), was located on a major east-west Roman road.

in Pisidia. On the Sabbath, they entered and found seats in the synagogue there. <sup>15</sup>After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue leaders invited them, "Brothers, if one of you has a sermon for the people, please speak."

<sup>16</sup>Standing up, Paul gestured with his hand and said, "Fellow Israelites and Gentile God-worshippers, please listen to me. <sup>17</sup>The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors. God made them a great people while they lived as strangers in the land of Egypt. With his great power, he led them out of that country. <sup>18</sup>For about forty years, God put up with them in the wilderness. <sup>19</sup>God conquered seven nations in the land of Canaan and gave the Israelites their land as an inheritance. <sup>20</sup>This happened over a period of about four hundred fifty years.

"After this, he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. <sup>21</sup>The Israelites requested a king, so God gave them Saul, Kish's son, from the tribe of Benjamin, and he served as their king for forty years. <sup>22</sup>After God removed him, he raised up David to be their king. God testified concerning him, 'I have found David, Jesse's son, a man who shares my desires.' Whatever my will is, he will do." <sup>23</sup>From this man's descendants, God brought to Israel a savior, Jesus, just as he promised. <sup>24</sup>Before Jesus' appearance, John proclaimed to all the Israelites a baptism to show they were changing their hearts and lives. <sup>25</sup>As John was completing his mission, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I'm not the one you think I am, but he is coming after me. I'm not worthy to loosen his sandals.'

<sup>26</sup>Brothers, children of Abraham's family, and you Gentile God-worshippers, the message about this salvation has been sent to us. <sup>27</sup>The people in Jerusalem and their leaders didn't recognize Jesus. By condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read

*Saul/Paul* *Saul, also known as Paul:* Saul was his Jewish name, one that recalls Israel's first king and hero of the tribe of Benjamin (cf. Acts 13:32; Phil 3:5). Paul (Lat. *Paulos*), his Roman name, associated him with the wider Mediterranean world and people like Sergius Paulus (a variant of *Paulos*), "an intelligent man" and Roman governor of Cyprus (Acts 13:7). He'll now be called Paul (as he is in all his NT letters) and begin to emerge as the leading missionary and principal character throughout the rest of Acts.

Saul/Paul's two names remind us of his background in two worlds. He (1) spoke both Aramaic and Greek (Acts 21:37–22:2; 26:14); (2) was born in the leading Greek city of Tarsus (Acts 21:39) and schooled in Jerusalem under the prominent Jewish teacher Gamaliel (see Acts 22:2–3; 26:4–5; see note on Acts 5:34); and (3) enjoyed Roman citizenship from birth (see notes on Acts 16:37; 22:25–29). This background suits him well for fulfilling the mission assigned by the risen Jesus "to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites" (Acts 9:15).

13:15 Mk 5:22;  
Ac 13:27;  
Ac 15:21  
13:16 Ac 10:2;  
Ac 12:17;  
Ac 13:26  
13:17 Ex 1:7;  
Ex 6:6; Dt 7:6  
13:18 Nm  
14:34; Ac 7:36  
13:19 Dt 7:1;  
Josh 14:1;  
Josh 19:51;  
Ps 78:55;  
Ac 7:45  
13:21 1Sa 8:5;  
1Sa 9:1; 1Sa 9:2;  
1Sa 10:1;  
1Sa 10:21  
13:22 1Sa 13:14;  
1Sa 15:23;  
1Sa 16:1;  
1Sa 16:13;  
Ps 89:20  
13:23 2Sa 7:12;  
Mt 1:1; Lk 2:11;  
Ac 5:31; Ro 1:3  
13:24 Ac 4:12;  
Ac 28:28  
13:25 Mt 22:29;  
Ac 3:17;  
Ac 13:15;  
Ac 15:21

<sup>†</sup>Tg 1 Sam 13:14

*Sabbath:* seventh day of the week (Friday evening–Saturday evening), a holy day of worship and rest for Jews commanded by God (cf. Acts 13:27, 42, 44; 15:21). It recalls: God's completed work of creation (Gen 2:1–4; Exod 20:8–11) and God's rescue of Israel from slavery in Egypt (Deut 5:12–15).

13:16–41 Paul's first extended speech in Acts, echoing themes in previous speeches. Like Stephen, Paul begins with a survey of Israel's history; however, Paul's account is much briefer and culminates in David's role as Jesus' royal ancestor (13:17–22). Then, like Peter, Paul proclaims the good news of salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection (13:23–41).

13:16 *Gentile God-worshippers:* See note on Acts 8:27; compare with Acts 13:26, 50.

13:17–22 Paul tracks Israel's history from the exodus out of Egypt to the reign of King David, stressing the power of God in directing these events.

13:17 *God... chose our ancestors:* See Deuteronomy 4:37; 7:6; 10:15.

13:18 *God put up with them:* Some early Greek manuscripts have a different verb (varying by only a single letter) meaning God "took care" of the Israelites (cf. Deut 1:31).

13:20 *prophet Samuel:* See note on Acts 3:24.

13:21 *Israelites requested a king:* See 1 Samuel 8:1–22. *Saul... of Benjamin:* Israel's first king and Paul's Jewish namesake (see sidebar, "Saul/Paul"). On God's initial choice of Saul as ruler, see 1 Samuel 9:1–10:17.

13:22 *God removed him:* God ultimately rejected Saul as king because of his disobedience to God's commands (1 Sam 13:1–14; 15:1–35). *he raised up David to be their king:* See 1 Samuel 16:1–13; 2 Samuel 5:1–5.

13:23 On Jesus as David's royal descendant and Israel's true savior, see Luke 1:32–33; 2:11; 18:38; 20:41–42; Acts 2:29–36; 13:34–37.

13:24–29 On John's mission of baptism and repentance, preparing the people for Jesus' coming, see Luke 3:1–18; 7:24–29; 20:1–8; Acts 1:5, 21–22; 11:16.

13:26 Paul shifts from reflecting on Israel's past to a direct appeal to his present audience. *Gentile God-worshippers:* See note on Acts 8:27 (cf. Acts 13:16, 50).

13:27–37 Paul quickly rehearses the events surrounding Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and appearances to his disciples. He stresses that these events fulfill the message of the OT prophets (13:27) and psalms (13:33–37).

13:27 *fulfilled the words of the prophets:* Compare with Acts 3:17–24; Luke 24:25–27, 44–48. *Sabbath:* See note on Acts 13:14.

Jesus' crucifixion	ca. 30
Paul's call	ca. 34
Paul's ministry in Arabia/Nabatea	34–37
Paul's escape from Damascus ruled by an ethnarch, presumably Aretas IV of Nabatea	37/38
First trip to Jerusalem (two-week stay)	37/38
Mission in Syria and Cilicia (Paul's home province)	38–47
Second trip to Jerusalem; council endorses Paul's Gentile mission	ca. 47 (between 46 and 48)
Edict of Claudius expelling Jews from Jerusalem	49
First mission in Europe (Philippi, Thessalonica, and Achaia)	48–52
Ministry in Achaia, including Corinth	fall 50–summer 52
Arraignment before proconsul Gallio	summer/fall 52
Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians	summer/fall 52
Paul in Ephesus	fall 52–56
Lost letter written to Corinth	52
Paul wrote 1 Corinthians	53
Letter from Ephesus and Macedonia collected in fragmentary form in 2 Corinthians	54–57
Paul wrote Galatians	ca. 55
Imprisonment	late 55 into early 56
Philippian correspondence from prison, probably in Ephesus	ca. 56
Philemon possibly written during imprisonment	ca. 56
The "painful letter" to Corinth	ca. 56
Reconciling letter to Corinthians from Macedonia	fall 56
Circular letter to churches in Achaia urging completion of offering	fall 56
Paul winters in Corinth preparing the offering and delegation for delivery to Jerusalem	56–57
Paul departs with delegation for Jerusalem with offering for the "poor among God's people" and final visit to Jerusalem	spring 57
Arrest, imprisonment, and transfer to Rome	57–59
Execution	60–64



every Sabbath. <sup>28</sup>Even though they didn't find a single legal basis for the death penalty, they asked Pilate to have him executed. <sup>29</sup>When they finished doing everything that had been written about him, they took him down from the cross<sup>a</sup> and laid him in a tomb. <sup>30</sup>But God raised him from the dead! <sup>31</sup>He appeared over many days to those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people.

<sup>32</sup>"We proclaim to you the good news. What God promised to our ancestors, <sup>33</sup>he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it was written in the second psalm, *You are my son; today I have become your father.*<sup>b</sup>

<sup>34</sup>"God raised Jesus from the dead, never again to be subjected to death's decay. Therefore, God said, *I will give to you the holy and firm promises I made to David.*<sup>1</sup> <sup>35</sup>In another place it is said, *You will not let your holy one experience death's decay.*<sup>1</sup> <sup>36</sup>David served God's purpose in his own generation, then he died and was buried with his ancestors. He experienced death's decay,<sup>37</sup> but the one whom God has raised up didn't experience death's decay.

<sup>38</sup>"Therefore, brothers and sisters, know this: Through Jesus we proclaim forgiveness of sins to you. From all those sins from which you couldn't be put in right relationship with God through Moses' Law, <sup>39</sup>through Jesus everyone who believes is put in right relationship with God. <sup>40</sup>Take care that the prophets' words don't apply to you:

<sup>41</sup>*Look, you scoffers,  
marvel and die.*

*I'm going to do work in your day —  
a work you won't believe even if someone told you.*<sup>k</sup>

<sup>42</sup>As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people urged them to speak about these things again on the next Sabbath. <sup>43</sup>When the people in the synagogue were dismissed, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism accompanied Paul and Barnabas, who urged them to remain faithful to the message of God's grace.

<sup>44</sup>On the next Sabbath, almost everyone in the city gathered to hear the Lord's word. <sup>45</sup>When the Jews saw the crowds, they were overcome with jealousy. They argued against what Paul was saying by slandering him. <sup>46</sup>Speaking courageously, Paul and Barnabas said, "We had to speak God's word to you first. Since you reject it and show that you are unworthy to receive eternal life, we will turn to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup>This is what the Lord commanded us:

*I have made you a light for the Gentiles,  
so that you could bring salvation to the end of the earth.*<sup>l</sup>

<sup>48</sup>When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and honored the Lord's word. Everyone who was appointed for eternal life believed, <sup>49</sup>and the Lord's word was broadcast throughout the entire region. <sup>50</sup>However, the Jews provoked the prominent women among the Gentile God-worshippers, as well as the city's leaders. They instigated others to harass Paul and Barnabas, and threw them out of their district. <sup>51</sup>Paul and Barnabas shook the dust from their feet and went to Iconium. <sup>52</sup>Because of the abundant presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, the disciples were overflowing with happiness.

<sup>a</sup>Or tree <sup>b</sup>Ps 2:7 <sup>1</sup>Isa 55:3 <sup>1</sup>Ps 16:10 <sup>k</sup>Hab 1:5 <sup>l</sup>Isa 49:6

13:32-37 For a similar appeal to David's psalms, see Acts 2:24-36.

13:38-41 Paul concludes his sermon with a direct entreaty, challenging his audience to believe in Jesus and not to reject God's word as their ancestors did.

13:38-39 The limited ability of Moses' Law to bring sinful people into a right relationship with God isn't a common theme in Acts. It's developed more fully in Paul's letters (see Rom 3:21-31; 8:1-11; Gal 3:19-24).

13:38 *forgiveness of sins*: connected with faith in Jesus in Acts 2:38; 5:31; 13:43; 26:18 (cf. Luke 5:20-24; 24:47).

13:40-41 Along with predicting the good news of salvation in Jesus, the prophets also foresaw the failure of some Jews to accept Jesus. This quotation (Hab 1:5) warns against not believing the message they've been clearly told.

13:42-44 Many Jews and Gentile converts initially show great interest in Paul and Barnabas' message.

13:43 *urged them to remain faithful*: Compare with Acts 11:22-23; 14:21-22.

13:45 *the Jews... were overcome with jealousy*: probably refers to the Jewish leaders who became jealous of Paul and Barnabas' growing influence among the people (cf. Acts 5:17; 17:5).

13:46 This begins a missionary pattern of turning to more receptive Gentile audiences after first preaching to Jews in the synagogue, some of whom resist the message (Acts 14:1-7; 17:1-5; 18:4-11; 19:8-10; 28:23-28). *eternal life*: also in Acts 13:48; compare with Luke 10:25; 18:18, 30.

13:47 *light for the Gentiles*: See Isaiah 49:6; Luke 2:32; Acts 26:16-18, 23. *end of the earth*: goal of the mission announced by Jesus in Acts 1:8, fulfilling the plan of Isaiah 49:6.

13:50 *prominent women*: See a more positive response from such women in Acts 17:4, 12, 34. *Gentile God-worshippers*: See note on Acts 8:27.

13:51 *shook the dust from their feet*: gesture of protest

13:28 Ac 3:14  
13:29 Lk 18:31.  
Lk 23:53  
13:30 Mt 28:6;  
Ac 2:24, Ac 3:15  
13:31 Lk 24:48;  
Ac 1:3, Ac 1:8,  
Ac 1:22  
13:32 Ac 26:6;  
Ro 4:13, Ro 9:4  
13:33 Ps 2:7;  
Ac 2:24  
13:34 Is 55:3  
13:35 Ps 16:10;  
Ac 2:27  
13:36 1Ki 2:10;  
Ac 2:29,  
Ac 13:22  
13:37 Ac 2:24,  
Ac 13:30  
13:38 Lk 24:47;  
Ac 2:38, Ac 5:31  
13:39 In 5:24;  
Ac 10:43;  
Ro 3:28, Ro 5:1;  
Ga 2:16  
13:40 Heb 3:12  
13:41 Hab 1:5  
13:42 Ac 13:14  
13:46 Ac 3:26,  
Ac 18:6,  
Ac 26:20,  
Ac 28:28  
13:47 Is 49:6;  
Lk 2:32  
13:48 Mt 19:16;  
In 10:27,  
Ac 2:41, Ac 2:47,  
Ac 10:45

1:1-13 Ac 13:5,  
Ac 18:4  
1:4-9 Ac 14:14,  
Ac 17:4,  
Ac 28:24

1:4-6 Mt 10:23;  
Ac 14:11,  
Ac 14:20,  
Ac 16:1;  
2Ti 3:11

1:7-8 Ac 3:2

1:4-9 Mt 9:28,  
Mt 13:58; Ac 3:4

1:1-10 Ac 3:8,  
Ac 9:34

1:3-7 Ac 8:10,  
Ac 14:6,  
Ac 14:12,  
Ac 28:6

1:4-12 Ex 7:1;  
Ac 4:36; Ac 9:27,  
Ac 14:11,  
Ac 19:35

1:4-13 Dn 2:46;  
Ac 14:12

1:4-14 Gn 37:29;  
Mt 26:65

1:4-15 Ex 20:11;  
1Sa 12:21;  
Ps 146:6;  
Ac 4:24,  
Ac 10:26

1:4-16 Ps 81:12;  
Mt 4:5,  
Ac 17:30;

Eph 2:12; 1Pt 4:3

1:4-17 Dt 11:14;  
Job 5:10, Jl 2:23;  
Mt 5:45; Ro 1:20

### Paul and Barnabas in Iconium

**14**The same thing happened in Iconium. Paul and Barnabas entered the Jewish synagogue and spoke as they had before. As a result, a huge number of Jews and Greeks believed. <sup>2</sup>However, the Jews who rejected the faith stirred up the Gentiles, poisoning their minds against the brothers. <sup>3</sup>Nevertheless, Paul and Barnabas stayed there for quite some time, confidently speaking about the Lord. And the Lord confirmed the word about his grace by the signs and wonders he enabled them to perform. <sup>4</sup>The people of the city were divided—some siding with the Jews, others with the Lord’s messengers. <sup>5</sup>Then some Gentiles and Jews, including their leaders, hatched a plot to mistreat and stone Paul and Barnabas. <sup>6</sup>When they learned of it, these two messengers fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area, <sup>7</sup>where they continued to proclaim the good news.

### Healing a crippled man in Lystra

<sup>8</sup>In Lystra there was a certain man who lacked strength in his legs. He had been crippled since birth and had never walked. Sitting there, he <sup>9</sup>heard Paul speaking. Paul stared at him and saw that he believed he could be healed.

<sup>10</sup>Raising his voice, Paul said, “Stand up straight on your feet!” He jumped up and began to walk.

<sup>11</sup>Seeing what Paul had done, the crowd shouted in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have taken human form and come down to visit us!” <sup>12</sup>They referred to Barnabas as Zeus and to Paul as Hermes, since Paul was the main speaker. <sup>13</sup>The priest of Zeus, whose temple was located just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates. Along with the crowds, he wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

<sup>14</sup>When the Lord’s messengers Barnabas and Paul found out about this, they tore their clothes in protest and rushed out into the crowd. They shouted, <sup>15</sup>“People, what are you doing? We are humans too, just like you! We are proclaiming the good news to you: turn to the living God and away from such worthless things. He made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them.” <sup>16</sup>In the past, he permitted every nation to go its own way. <sup>17</sup>Nevertheless, he hasn’t left himself without a witness. He has blessed you by giving you rain from above as well as seasonal harvests, and satisfying you with food and happiness.” <sup>18</sup>Even with these words, they barely kept the crowds from sacrificing to them.

<sup>m</sup> Ps 146:6

against and separation from a territory that rejects God’s message (cf. Acts 18:6; Luke 9:5; 10:10-11).

14:1-7 Paul and Barnabas head east to continue their mission in Iconium. They receive a divided response from both Jews and Gentiles: a huge number believed (14:1), while some hatched a plot to kill them (14:5).

14:1 *Iconium*: Roman colony established in the 1st century CE alongside the older Greek city of Pisidian Antioch. A mix of various Greek and Roman religions thrived here along with Judaism.

14:3 *confidently speaking*: continuing the pattern of bold, persistent preaching in the face of opposition (cf. Acts 2:29; 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27-28; 13:46; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31). *word about his grace*: See Acts 4:33; 13:43; 20:24, 32. *signs and wonders*: See note on Acts 2:19 (cf. Acts 15:12).

14:5 *plot to mistreat and stone*: Opposition escalates to violent schemes and actions against Christian witnesses, as in Acts 5:33, 40-41; 7:54-8:3; 9:1-2, 23, 29; 12:1-4; 14:5, 19-20; 16:19-24; 17:5-6; 19:30-31; 21:27-36; 23:10, 12-21.

14:6 *Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe*: Lycaonia was a region east of Phrygia and Pisidia in south-central Asia Minor, retaining its own distinctive language (see Acts 14:11). Lystra and Derbe were two cities along the west-east highway through the region.

14:8-20 At Lystra Paul performs his first healing. As with Peter and John’s first miracle, this one enables a man crippled from birth to walk and jump (Acts 3:2-8; 14:8-10) and

sparks enthusiasm among the crowds (Acts 3:9-12; 14:11-13). However, the people in Lystra later turn against Paul and stone him outside the city (14:19-20).

14:9 *stared at him*: See note on Acts 3:4. *saw that he believed*: as Jesus saw the faith of a paralyzed man and his carriers before curing him (Luke 5:20, 23-25).

14:11 Popular shouts attributing divine status to human beings recall the crowd’s reaction to Herod in Acts 12:22.

14:12-13 *Zeus and Hermes* were major gods in Greek mythology. Their Roman counterparts were Jupiter and Mercury. Hermes was the chief messenger god. By identifying Barnabas and Paul with these gods and wanting to offer them sacrifices in the local temple, it’s clear that the priest and people of Lystra practice a religion separate from Judaism.

14:14 *tore their clothes*: an act of extreme shock and protest (cf. Gen 37:29; Judg 11:35; 2 Sam 1:2, 11; 2 Kgs 2:12; Jdt 14:16, 19; 1 Macc 2:14; 13:45).

14:15 *We are humans too, just like you!*: See Acts 10:26. *turn to the living God and away from such worthless things*: a common appeal to turn away from useless gods and idols to the one true Creator God (Acts 11:21; 15:19; 17:29-30; 26:17-20; cf. Wis 13:10-19; Rom 1:20-25; Gal 4:8-9; 1 Thess 1:9).

14:16 Compare with Acts 17:30.

14:17 *a witness*: God has given everyone evidence of God’s sustaining power and love through the world God

<sup>19</sup>Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived and won the crowds over. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing he was dead. <sup>20</sup>When the disciples surrounded him, he got up and entered the city again. The following day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

**Returning to Antioch**

<sup>21</sup>Paul and Barnabas proclaimed the good news to the people in Derbe and made many disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, where <sup>22</sup>they strengthened the disciples and urged them to remain firm in the faith. They told them, “If we are to enter God’s kingdom, we must pass through many troubles.” <sup>23</sup>They appointed elders for each church. With prayer and fasting, they committed these elders to the Lord, in whom they had placed their trust.

<sup>24</sup>After Paul and Barnabas traveled through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. <sup>25</sup>They proclaimed the word in Perga, then went down to Attalia. <sup>26</sup>From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been entrusted by God’s grace to the work they had now completed. <sup>27</sup>On their arrival, they gathered the church together and reported everything that God had accomplished through their activity, and how God had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles. <sup>28</sup>They stayed with the disciples a long time.

**The Jerusalem Council**

**15** Some people came down from Judea teaching the family of believers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom we’ve received from Moses, you can’t be saved.” <sup>2</sup>Paul and Barnabas took sides against these Judeans and argued strongly against their position.

The church at Antioch appointed Paul, Barnabas, and several others from Antioch to go up to Jerusalem to set this question before the apostles and the elders. <sup>3</sup>The church sent this delegation on their way. They traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, telling stories about the conversion of the Gentiles to everyone. Their reports thrilled the brothers and sisters. <sup>4</sup>When they arrived in Jerusalem, the church, the apostles, and the elders all welcomed them. They gave a full report of what God had accomplished through their activity. <sup>5</sup>Some believers from among the Pharisees stood up and claimed, “The Gentiles must be circumcised. They must be required to keep the Law from Moses.”

<sup>6</sup>The apostles and the elders gathered to consider this matter. <sup>7</sup>After much debate, Peter stood and addressed them, “Fellow believers, you know that, early on, God chose me from among you as the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and come to believe. <sup>8</sup>God, who knows people’s deepest thoughts and desires, confirmed this by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. <sup>9</sup>He made no distinction between us and

14:19 Ac 13:45, Ac 13:50, Ac 14:5, 2Co 11:25, 2Ti 3:11  
14:20 Ac 11:26, Ac 14:6, Ac 14:22  
14:21 Mt 28:19, Ac 13:51  
14:22 In 16:33, Ac 11:23, Ac 13:43, Ac 15:32, 2Ti 3:12  
14:23 Ac 11:30, Ac 13:3, Ac 20:32, Ti 1:5  
14:24 Ac 13:13, Ac 13:14  
14:27 Ac 15:12, Ac 21:19, 1Co 16:9, 2Co 2:12, Col 4:3  
15:1 Lv 12:3, Ac 6:14, Ac 15:5, Ac 15:24, Ac 15:24, 1Co 7:18  
15:2 Ac 11:30, Ac 15:4, Ac 15:7, Ac 15:22, Ga 2:1  
15:3 Ac 11:19, Ac 14:27, Ro 15:24, 1Co 16:6, 1Co 16:11  
15:4 Ac 14:27, Ac 15:12  
15:5 Mt 3:7, Ac 5:17, Ac 15:1, Ac 26:5  
15:6 Ac 15:4, Ac 15:25  
15:7 Ac 10:45  
15:8 Ac 1:24, Ac 10:44  
15:9 Ac 10:28, Ac 10:34, Ac 10:43, Ac 26:18

has made for them. People thus have every reason to worship the one Creator God (cf. Acts 17:24-28; Wis 13:1-9; Rom 1:19-21).

14:19-20 Some antagonistic Jews from Paul’s previous stops in Pisidian Antioch and Iconium pursue him in Lystra, as Paul (Saul) himself had earlier tracked down Christians. Whereas Paul had once backed those who stoned Stephen to death (Acts 7:54-8:1), now Paul is dragged out of town and stoned. Although left for dead, he’s attended by disciples and able to recover.

14:21-28 Paul and Barnabas retrace their steps from Derbe, heading back through Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, and Perga. They nurture the young churches and appoint local leaders. They then sail back to their home base in Syrian Antioch.

14:22 *strengthened the disciples*: See Acts 15:32, 41; 16:5; 18:23. *enter God’s kingdom... through many troubles*: On the difficulties and challenges of entering God’s kingdom, see Luke 9:61-62; 16:14-16; 18:16-17, 24-30.

14:23 *elders*: a common term for leaders in the Jewish community (Luke 7:3-5; 9:22). It also designates associates of the apostles in the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4) and leaders of the Ephesus church (20:17; cf. 1 Tim 5:17-19; Titus 1:5-6; 1 Pet 5:1-4). *prayer and fasting*:

These actions mark the beginning and end of Paul’s first missionary journey (see Acts 13:2-3).

14:25 *Attalia*: Mediterranean seaport near Perga.

14:27 *door of faith*: an image of open opportunity for preaching and receiving the message of Christ (1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3; Rev 3:8, 20). The emphasis is on the door God has opened for Gentiles, but many Jews also believed in Jesus during Paul and Barnabas’ mission trip (Acts 13:5, 14-15, 42-43; 14:1).

15:1-35 A major church conference is held in Jerusalem. After much debate, it unanimously affirms the Gentile mission of Paul and Barnabas and encourages the Gentiles to avoid certain practices offensive to Jews.

15:1 *Unless you are circumcised*: Circumcision was a prime marker of Jewish identity and covenant membership (see note on Acts 7:8).

15:5 *believers from among the Pharisees*: On the Pharisee movement in general, see note on Acts 5:34. Some Pharisees who believe in Christ and have joined the church argue that Gentile believers must become Jews and follow the whole Law, including circumcision.

15:7-11 Peter summarizes his God-arranged meeting with Cornelius. This is the third report of that pioneering breakthrough to the Gentiles (see Acts 10:1-48; 11:1-18).

15:10 Mt 23:4;  
Ac 5:9; Ga 5:1  
15:11 Ro 3:24,  
Ro 5:15; Ga 2:16;  
Eph 2:5; Eph 2:8  
15:12 Ac 14:27,  
Ac 15:4  
15:13 Ac 12:17,  
Ac 21:18;  
Ga 1:19;  
Ga 2:9; Ga 2:12  
15:14 Is 43:21;  
Ac 15:7; 2Pt 1:1

15:16 Am 9:11,  
Am 9:12  
15:17 Nm 6:27;  
Is 43:7; Am 9:11,  
Am 9:12

15:18 Is 45:21,  
Is 46:10

15:19 Ac 15:28  
15:20 Gn 9:4;  
Lv 3:17, Lv 17:10;  
Dt 12:16;  
Ac 15:29

15:21 Ac 13:15,  
Ac 13:27

15:22 Ac 15:27,  
Ac 15:40,  
Ac 16:19;  
Ac 17:4; 1Th 1:1

15:23 Ac 6:9,  
Ac 15:41,  
Ac 23:26;  
Ga 1:21; Jas 1:1

15:24 Ac 15:1;  
Ga 1:7; Ga 2:4,  
Ga 5:10; Ga 6:12

15:25 Ac 1:14,  
Ac 15:22;  
2Pt 3:15

them, but purified their deepest thoughts and desires through faith. <sup>10</sup>Why then are you now challenging God by placing a burden on the shoulders of these disciples that neither we nor our ancestors could bear? <sup>11</sup>On the contrary, we believe that we and they are saved in the same way, by the grace of the Lord Jesus.”

<sup>12</sup>The entire assembly fell quiet as they listened to Barnabas and Paul describe all the signs and wonders God did among the Gentiles through their activity. <sup>13</sup>When Barnabas and Paul also fell silent, James responded, “Fellow believers, listen to me. <sup>14</sup>Simon reported how, in his kindness, God came to the Gentiles in the first place, to raise up from them a people of God. <sup>15</sup>The prophets’ words agree with this; as it is written,

<sup>16</sup>After this I will return,  
and I will rebuild David’s fallen tent;  
I will rebuild what has been torn down.  
I will restore it

<sup>17</sup>so that the rest of humanity will seek the Lord,  
even all the Gentiles who belong to me.

The Lord says this, the one who does these things<sup>a</sup>

<sup>18</sup>known from earliest times.

<sup>19</sup>“Therefore, I conclude that we shouldn’t create problems for Gentiles who turn to God. <sup>20</sup>Instead, we should write a letter, telling them to avoid the pollution associated with idols, sexual immorality, eating meat from strangled animals, and consuming blood. <sup>21</sup>After all, Moses has been proclaimed in every city for a long time, and is read aloud every Sabbath in every synagogue.”

### Letter to the Gentile believers

<sup>22</sup>The apostles and the elders, along with the entire church, agreed to send some delegates chosen from among themselves to Antioch, together with Paul and Barnabas. They selected Judas Barsabbas and Silas, who were leaders among the brothers and sisters. <sup>23</sup>They were to carry this letter:

The apostles and the elders, to the Gentile brothers and sisters in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Greetings! <sup>24</sup>We’ve heard that some of our number have disturbed you with unsettling words we didn’t authorize. <sup>25</sup>We reached a united decision to select some delegates

<sup>a</sup>Amos 9:11-12

15:10 *challenging God*: See Acts 5:9; Exodus 17:2; Psalm 78:41. *burden on the shoulders*: or “yoke,” like that placed on the neck and shoulders of work animals to direct their course. In the Bible it serves as both a positive image of God’s guiding wisdom (Sir 6:23-29; 51:26; Matt 11:28-30) and a negative image of judgment and slavery (Deut 28:47-48; Isa 14:25; Jer 27:12; 1 Macc 13:41).

15:11 *saved... by the grace of the Lord Jesus*: Salvation is the gift God freely gives to Jews and Gentiles through Jesus (cf. Rom 3:22-24; 4:16; 5:15-17, 20-21; Eph 2:7-8).

15:12 A brief statement noting Barnabas and Paul’s report concerning everything God did for the Gentiles during their first missionary journey. Luke provides no direct speech, but he has recounted details in Acts 13–14.

15:13-21 Jesus’ brother James (first mentioned in passing in Acts 12:17) demonstrates his respected position of leadership in the Jerusalem church. He evaluates the evidence concerning the Gentile mission and proposes the decision that carries the day.

15:14 *Simon*: Simon Peter (see note on Acts 10:5). The name used in the Greek here is Simeon, another form of Simon. This may recall the prophet Simeon, who rejoiced in God’s plan of salvation for the Gentiles in Luke 2:28-32.

15:16-17 James’ quotation from the prophet Amos emphasizes the Gentiles’ place within David’s restored kingdom.

15:19-21 James proposes that Gentiles need not submit to circumcision and observing the whole Jewish Law. However, he recommends sending a letter to the Gentile

believers, urging them not to engage in idolatrous and immoral conduct. The list of forbidden practices is similar to that imposed on Jews and Gentile immigrants to Israel in Leviticus chapters 17–18.

15:19 *turn to God*: away from idols (see note on Acts 14:15).

15:20 *pollution associated with idols*: The letter is particularly concerned with eating meat that has been sacrificed to false gods (cf. Acts 15:29; 21:25; 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:14-33; Rev 2:20). *sexual immorality*: For various examples, see Leviticus 18:6-23. *eating... strangled animals, and consuming blood*: eating meat from animals that have been improperly slaughtered and from which the blood hasn’t been fully drained. Such dietary laws are based on the principle that “a creature’s life is in the blood” (Lev 17:11, 14; cf. Lev 17:3-16).

15:21 *Moses... is read*: the Law of Moses contained in the first five books of the Bible (Genesis–Deuteronomy), which are called the Torah.

15:22 *Judas Barsabbas and Silas*: leading prophets from the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 15:32-33) who deliver the letter to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. Silas will later replace Barnabas as Paul’s principal missionary partner (Acts 15:40; 16:19, 25, 29; 17:4, 10, 14-15; 18:5).

15:25 *united decision*: Along with the reference to “the entire church” in Acts 15:22, this implies that the Christian Pharisees have changed their minds (cf. Acts 15:1, 5) and endorse this letter to the Gentiles.

*The Jerusalem Council* The Jerusalem Council is a major event reported here in the middle of Acts (Acts 15:1-35). Luke tells the story of a large assembly that meets in Jerusalem to discuss the place of Gentiles in the church. One group argues that Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5). After hearing from Peter, Barnabas, Paul, and James, the council reaches a united decision that faith in Christ is sufficient for Gentiles' salvation; they aren't required to keep the whole Law, though it's recommended they observe a few vital Jewish restrictions (Acts 15:28). A letter is written to spell out the council's opinion (Acts 15:22-29). Accompanied by delegates from Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas take the letter to Antioch, where it's warmly received (Acts 15:30-35).

Paul's account of these events in Galatians 2:1-14 includes some distinctive elements. He affirms that the Jerusalem church leaders approved of his Gentile mission, but he says nothing about a letter reporting this decision and urging Gentiles to avoid certain practices. The only extra item is a request that Gentiles remember the poor, which Paul gladly supports (Gal 2:10). As for how this news was received in Antioch, Paul presents a much less rosy picture than Acts. He describes a bitter incident in which he sternly opposed representatives of James, Peter, and even Barnabas because they refused to eat with uncircumcised Gentile believers (Gal 2:11-14).

and send them to you along with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul. <sup>26</sup>These people have devoted their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>27</sup>Therefore, we are sending Judas and Silas. They will confirm what we have written. <sup>28</sup>The Holy Spirit has led us to the decision that no burden should be placed on you other than these essentials: <sup>29</sup>refuse food offered to idols, blood, the meat from strangled animals, and sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid such things. Farewell.

<sup>30</sup>When Barnabas, Paul, and the delegates were sent on their way, they went down to Antioch. They gathered the believers and delivered the letter. <sup>31</sup>The people read it, delighted with its encouraging message. <sup>32</sup>Judas and Silas were prophets, and they said many things that encouraged and strengthened the brothers and sisters. <sup>33</sup>Judas and Silas stayed there awhile, then were sent back with a blessing of peace from the brothers and sisters to those who first sent them. <sup>34</sup>Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, where, together with many others, they taught and proclaimed the good news of the Lord's word.

**Paul and Barnabas part company**

<sup>36</sup>Some time later, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go back and visit all the brothers and sisters in every city where we preached the Lord's word. Let's see how they are doing." <sup>37</sup>Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. <sup>38</sup>Paul insisted that they shouldn't take him along, since he had deserted them in Pamphylia and hadn't continued with them in their work. <sup>39</sup>Their argument became so intense that they went their separate ways. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. <sup>40</sup>Paul chose Silas and left, entrusted by the brothers and sisters to the Lord's grace. <sup>41</sup>He traveled through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

**Paul adds Timothy**

**16** Paul reached Derbe, and then Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy. He was the son of a believing Jewish woman and a Greek father. <sup>2</sup>The brothers and sisters in Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. <sup>3</sup>Paul wanted to take Timothy with him, so he

<sup>o</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament do not include 15:34 *Silas decided to remain there.*

15:28 *The Holy Spirit has led us:* See note on Acts 13:2. The Holy Spirit does not impose the divine will on the church but works through debate to build consensus.

15:29 Compare with Acts 15:20; 21:25.

15:33 *blessing of peace:* another sign of mutual fellowship between the churches at Antioch and Jerusalem (cf. Acts 11:22-24, 27-30).

15:36-41 In an ironic twist after a unifying church conference, a sharp disagreement over John Mark causes Paul and Barnabas to separate from each other. Barnabas gives Mark a second chance, while Paul takes on a new partner, Silas. This is Barnabas' last appearance in Acts.

15:36 Compare with Acts 14:21-25; 16:1-5.

15:38 *he had deserted them:* See note on Acts 13:13.

15:39 Barnabas heads to his homeland of Cyprus (Acts 4:36) with Mark. Colossians 4:10 indicates that Barnabas and Mark are cousins.

15:40 *Silas:* Compare with Acts 15:22, 32-33.

15:41 *Syria and Cilicia:* provinces addressed in the letter to Gentile believers (see Acts 15:23).

16:1-5 Paul recruits Timothy to his missionary team. The group revisits the churches established on the first journey and reports the decision of the Jerusalem conference.

16:1 *Timothy:* See Acts 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:24. Paul's letters portray Timothy as a key supporter of Paul's work (Rom 16:21; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor 1:1, 19; Phil 1:1; 2:19-22; 1 Thess 1:1; 3:2-6; Phlm 1).

16:3 *he circumcised him:* Timothy had a Gentile (Greek)

15:26 Ac 14:19  
 15:27 Ac 15:22,  
 Ac 15:32  
 15:28 Ac 5:32,  
 Ac 15:8,  
 Ac 15:19  
 15:29 Ac 15:20,  
 Ac 21:25  
 15:30 Ac 6:2  
 15:32 Ac 13:1,  
 Ac 14:22  
 15:33 Ac 16:36;  
 1Co 16:11;  
 Heb 11:31  
 15:35 Ac 13:1  
 15:36 Ac 13:13  
 15:37 Ac 12:12,  
 Ac 12:25,  
 Ac 13:5,  
 Ac 13:13;  
 Col 4:10  
 15:38 Ac 13:13  
 15:39 Ac 4:36,  
 Ac 13:4;  
 Col 4:10  
 15:40 Ac 14:26,  
 Ac 15:22  
 15:41 Ac 15:23,  
 Ac 15:32,  
 Ac 16:5  
 16:1 Ac 17:14,  
 Ac 18:5,  
 Ac 19:22,  
 Ac 20:4; 2Ti 1:5  
 16:2 Ac 6:3,  
 Ac 13:51  
 16:3 Ga 2:3

16:4 Ac 11:30;  
Ac 15:2,  
Ac 15:28,  
Ac 15:29  
16:7 Ac 16:6;  
Ro 8:9; Ga 4:6;  
Phi 1:19;  
1Pi 1:11

16:8 Ac 16:11,  
Ac 20:5,  
2Co 2:12,  
2Ti 4:13

16:10 Ac 20:5,  
Ac 21:1, Ac 27:1,  
Ac 28:16

16:13 Mt 5:1;  
Ac 13:14,  
Ac 17:2, Ac 18:4,  
Ac 20:7

16:14 Lk 24:45;  
Ac 16:40,  
Rev 1:11,  
Rev 2:18

16:15 Ac 11:14

circumcised him. This was because of the Jews who lived in those areas, for they all knew Timothy's father was Greek. <sup>4</sup>As Paul and his companions traveled through the cities, they instructed Gentile believers to keep the regulations put in place by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>So the churches were strengthened in the faith and every day their numbers flourished.

### ***Vision of the Macedonian***

<sup>6</sup>Paul and his companions traveled throughout the regions of Phrygia and Galatia because the Holy Spirit kept them from speaking the word in the province of Asia. <sup>7</sup>When they approached the province of Mysia, they tried to enter the province of Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus wouldn't let them. <sup>8</sup>Passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas instead. <sup>9</sup>A vision of a man from Macedonia came to Paul during the night. He stood urging Paul, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" <sup>10</sup>Immediately after he saw the vision, we prepared to leave for the province of Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

### ***Lydia's conversion***

<sup>11</sup>We sailed from Troas straight for Samothrace and came to Neapolis the following day. <sup>12</sup>From there we went to Philippi, a city of Macedonia's first district and a Roman colony. We stayed in that city several days. <sup>13</sup>On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the riverbank, where we thought there might be a place for prayer. We sat down and began to talk with the women who had gathered. <sup>14</sup>One of those women was Lydia, a Gentile God-worshipper from the city of Thyatira, a dealer in purple cloth. As she listened, the Lord enabled her to embrace Paul's message. <sup>15</sup>Once she and her household were baptized, she urged, "Now that you have decided that I am a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house." And she persuaded us.

father and hadn't been circumcised as a baby. Paul now has him undergo this operation, an action that may appear to contradict the church's decision in the previous chapter. However, Timothy's mother was a Jewish believer in Christ, and Paul doesn't want to offend his Jewish brothers and sisters. The Jerusalem conference only addressed the Gentiles' situation and didn't question the requirement of circumcision for Jews (cf. Acts 21:18-26).

16:4 *regulations*: See Acts 15:20, 29.

16:5 On the strengthening and growth of the church, see Acts 2:41; 4:4 (and note); 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 11:21-24; 12:24-25; 14:22; 19:20.

16:6-18:23 Paul's second missionary journey, spreading the gospel to major cities in Greece.

16:6-10 Paul receives a vision, directing him to start a new mission in Macedonia.

16:6-7 Phrygia, Galatia, Asia, Mysia, and Bithynia designate various regions within the wider territory of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Paul's plans to preach in the northern provinces of Asia and Bithynia are blocked by the Holy Spirit.

16:7 *Spirit of Jesus*: another name for the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:33 Jesus is credited with pouring out the Holy Spirit, which he received from the Father, on the early believers.

16:8 *Troas*: main seaport in northwestern Asia Minor. Paul will return here in Acts 20:5-12 (cf. 2 Cor 2:12; 2 Tim 4:13).

16:9 *vision*: a common means of revelation and guidance (Acts 2:17; 9:3-12; 10:1-20, 30-33; 11:4-14; 12:9; 18:9-11; 22:6-11, 17-21; 26:12-19; 27:23-24). *Macedonia*: Roman province in northern Greece stretching between the Adriatic and Aegean Seas.

16:10 *we*: sudden shift in the narrative viewpoint from third to first person, continuing through Acts 16:17 and picking up again in Acts 20:6-16; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16. This

use of "we" gives the sense of an eyewitness report and draws the reader more personally into the events.

16:11-40 The mission in Philippi. Paul and his group are welcomed by a businesswoman named Lydia, who believes and is baptized (16:11-15, 40). But Paul and Silas are imprisoned by local authorities until God arranges for their miraculous escape (16:19-28). The jailer in charge of their custody also accepts Jesus as Lord and is baptized (16:29-34).

16:11 *Troas... to Neapolis*: heading northwest across the Aegean Sea to Greece, passing by the island of Samothrace.

16:12 *Philippi*: city in northeastern Macedonia named after the father of Alexander the Great, Philip of Macedon. In the 1st century it was a Roman colony with a large settlement of war veterans. It was located on the Egnatian Way, a major east-west thoroughfare across Greece. Paul's letter to the Philippians was addressed to the church here.

16:13 *Sabbath*: See note on Acts 13:14. *place for prayer*: gathering place for Jewish teaching and prayer, like a synagogue.

16:14 *Gentile God-worshipper*: See note on Acts 8:27. *Thyatira*: city in west-central Asia Minor known for its manufacture of purple-dyed fabrics. On the early church at Thyatira, see Revelation 2:18-29. *dealer in purple cloth*: Lydia is a merchant who trades in expensive clothing worn by royalty and other rich clients (cf. Luke 16:19; Mark 15:17, 20; John 19:2, 5). She's thus a woman of some wealth but not necessarily of high social status.

16:15 *she and her household were baptized*: Compare with Acts 10:47-48; 16:31-34; 18:8. Lydia is portrayed as the head of her household (cf. Acts 16:40), like Mary in Jerusalem (see note on Acts 12:12). It's possible that Lydia had been married but is now widowed or divorced.

**Paul and Silas in prison**

<sup>16</sup>One day, when we were on the way to the place for prayer, we met a slave woman. She had a spirit that enabled her to predict the future. She made a lot of money for her owners through fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup>She began following Paul and us, shouting, "These people are servants of the Most High God! They are proclaiming a way of salvation to you!" <sup>18</sup>She did this for many days.

This annoyed Paul so much that he finally turned and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to leave her!" It left her at that very moment.

<sup>19</sup>Her owners realized that their hope for making money was gone. They grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the officials in the city center. <sup>20</sup>When her owners approached the legal authorities, they said, "These people are causing an uproar in our city. They are Jews <sup>21</sup>who promote customs that we Romans can't accept or practice." <sup>22</sup>The crowd joined in the attacks against Paul and Silas, so the authorities ordered that they be stripped of their clothes and beaten with a rod. <sup>23</sup>When Paul and Silas had been severely beaten, the authorities threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to secure them with great care. <sup>24</sup>When he received these instructions, he threw them into the innermost cell and secured their feet in stocks.

<sup>25</sup>Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup>All at once there was such a violent earthquake that it shook the prison's foundations. The doors flew open and everyone's chains came loose. <sup>27</sup>When the jailer awoke and saw the open doors of the prison, he thought the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword and was about to kill himself. <sup>28</sup>But Paul shouted loudly, "Don't harm yourself! We're all here!"

<sup>29</sup>The jailer called for some lights, rushed in, and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup>He led them outside and asked, "Honorable masters, what must I do to be rescued?"

16:16 1Sa 28:7; Ac 16:13  
 16:17 Mk 5:7  
 16:19 Mk 16:17; Ac 3:6, Ac 9:34  
 16:19 Ac 8:3, Ac 15:22, Ac 15:40, Ac 21:30  
 16:22 Ac 5:40, 2Co 11:25, 1Th 2:2  
 16:23 Ac 5:18, Ac 16:27, 2Co 6:5  
 16:24 Job 13:27, Job 33:11, Jer 20:2, Jer 20:3, Jer 29:26  
 16:25 Ps 119:55, Ps 119:62, Eph 5:19  
 16:26 Ac 4:31, Ac 5:19, Ac 12:7, Ac 12:10  
 16:27 Ac 12:19, Ac 16:23  
 16:28 Ac 13:50, Ac 14:19, Ac 15:12, Ac 15:40, Ac 16:9  
 16:29 Is 60:14, Ac 2:37, Ac 9:6, Ac 15:22, Ac 16:19  
 16:30 Ac 2:37, Ac 9:6, Ac 16:17, Ac 22:10

*Paul's Arrests* This marks the first of five conflict scenes in which Paul is arrested and accused of breaking Roman or Jewish law:

1. In Philippi, Gentile owners of a fortune-telling slave woman, whom Paul frees, accuse Paul of disturbing the peace and violating Roman customs (Acts 16:19-24).
2. In Thessalonica, jealous Jewish leaders stir up a mob that charges Paul with disturbing the peace and violating Caesar's orders (Acts 17:5-8).
3. In Corinth, Jewish opponents accuse Paul before the Roman governor Gallio of encouraging unlawful worship practices (Acts 18:12-13).
4. In Ephesus, Gentile workers accuse Paul of hindering the practice of religious freedom in the Roman Empire (Acts 19:23-27).
5. In Jerusalem, Jews from Asia stir up a mob that charges Paul with threatening the Jewish Law and defiling the holy temple (Acts 21:27-28).

Recurring elements in these scenes include: (1) grabbing Paul and his companions and dragging them before the authorities; (2) mob violence; (3) declaring specific charges that have no basis; and (4) Paul's ultimate escape, release, or protection by Roman authorities.

16:13-19 Paul frees a slave woman who is oppressed in two ways: by a spirit that uses her voice to tell fortunes and by owners who take advantage of her ability for profit.

16:16 *a spirit*: or "a python-spirit." In Greek mythology Apollo killed a python or serpent that guarded the holy place at Delphi, thought to be the navel of the earth. A temple dedicated to Apollo was built at Delphi. The female priest who presided there was believed to channel Apollo's voice and predict the future. People came from far and wide to consult her supernatural oracle. A similar fortune-telling spirit possesses the slave woman Paul encounters in Philippi.

16:17 *Most High God*: exalted title used by Jews for their God (Luke 1:32, 35, 76; 8:28; cf. Pss 57:2; 78:56; Dan 3:26; Jdt 13:18; Sir 7:9; 24:23) but also applied by Gentiles to various non-Jewish deities.

16:18 Paul's first exorcism. Casting out evil spirits was a

major part of Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:31-37, 41; 8:26-39; 9:1, 37-43; 10:17-20; 13:10-17). For other examples in Acts, see Acts 8:7; 19:12-17.

16:19-21 The slave woman's owners accuse Paul and Silas of anti-Roman political activity (16:21), but their main concern is financial loss. When Paul expelled the woman's fortune-telling spirit, he ruined her moneymaking value for her handlers (Acts 16:16, 19).

16:23-24 On tight prison security, see Acts 12:4, 6.

16:25-26 The earthquake that opens the prison doors and loosens the prisoners' chains is an act of God for this situation, not an area-wide natural disaster. The narrative implies that God responds to the prayers and hymns of Paul and Silas.

16:25 *midnight*: Compare with Acts 20:7; 27:27.

16:27 *jailer... was about to kill himself*: See Acts 12:19, where Herod had the prison guards executed after Peter's escape.

16:31 Mk 16:16;  
In 3:36,  
In 11:25;  
Ac 11:14;  
Ro 10:9

16:32 Col 1:28;  
1Th 2:8

16:33 Ac 2:38,  
Ac 16:25,  
Ac 16:34

16:34 Ac 8:39

16:35 Ac 16:20

16:36 Ac 15:33,

Ac 16:27

16:37 Ac 22:25,  
Ac 25:10

16:38 Ac 22:29

17:1 Phi 4:16;

1Th 1:1; 2Ti 4:10

17:2 Ac 8:35,

Ac 9:20,

Ac 13:14,

Ac 17:10,

Ac 18:4

17:3 Lk 24:26,

Lk 24:46;

Ac 2:24, Ac 3:18,

Ac 9:22

17:5 Ac 13:45,

Ac 17:7,

Ac 17:13;

Ro 16:21;

1Th 2:14

17:6 Mt 24:14;

Ac 16:19;

Ac 24:5

17:7 Lk 23:2;

In 19:12

<sup>31</sup>They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your entire household." <sup>32</sup>They spoke the Lord's word to him and everyone else in his house. <sup>33</sup>Right then, in the middle of the night, the jailer welcomed them and washed their wounds. He and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. <sup>34</sup>He brought them into his home and gave them a meal. He was overjoyed because he and everyone in his household had come to believe in God.

<sup>35</sup>The next morning the legal authorities sent the police to the jailer with the order "Release those people."

<sup>36</sup>So the jailer reported this to Paul, informing him, "The authorities sent word that you both are to be released. You can leave now. Go in peace."

<sup>37</sup>Paul told the police, "Even though we are Roman citizens, they beat us publicly without first finding us guilty of a crime, and they threw us into prison. And now they want to send us away secretly? No way! They themselves will have to come and escort us out." <sup>38</sup>The police reported this to the legal authorities, who were alarmed to learn that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. <sup>39</sup>They came and consoled Paul and Silas, escorting them out of prison and begging them to leave the city.

<sup>40</sup>Paul and Silas left the prison and made their way to Lydia's house where they encouraged the brothers and sisters. Then they left Philippi.

### More troubles for Paul

**17** Paul and Silas journeyed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, then came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. <sup>2</sup>As was Paul's custom, he entered the synagogue and for three Sabbaths interacted with them on the basis of the scriptures. <sup>3</sup>Through his interpretation of the scriptures, he demonstrated that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. He declared, "This Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ." <sup>4</sup>Some were convinced and joined Paul and Silas, including a larger number of Greek God-worshippers and quite a few prominent women.

<sup>5</sup>But the Jews became jealous and brought along some thugs who were hanging out in the marketplace. They formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They attacked Jason's house, intending to bring Paul and Silas before the people. <sup>6</sup>When they didn't find them, they dragged Jason and some believers before the city officials. They were shouting, "These people who have been disturbing the peace throughout the empire have also come here. <sup>7</sup>What is

**16:31-34** The jailer's hospitality to Christian messengers and the baptism of his household recall the activities of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48; 11:14-17) and Lydia (Acts 16:14-16).

**16:33** *washed their wounds*: See Luke 10:34.

**16:37** *we are Roman citizens*: important new information about Paul. Here and later in Acts, Paul's Roman citizenship accords him protective legal rights in the face of opposition (Acts 16:37-39; 22:25-29; 23:26-30; 25:10-12, 16, 21, 25-27).

**16:40** *Lydia's house*: Lydia's residence also functions as a house church, made up of Christian brothers and sisters in Philippi. Lydia is probably a leader of the church as well as head of her household.

**17:1-14** Paul's mission in Thessalonica and Berea, opposed in both places by some rabble-rousing Jews from Thessalonica. The response of the Berean Jews is more favorable (17:11-12).

**17:1** *Amphipolis and Apollonia... to Thessalonica*: Paul and Silas head southwest along the Egnatian Way (see Acts 16:12 and note), remaining near the Aegean coast. Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia at this time. Paul addressed two letters, 1-2 Thessalonians, to the church in this city (cf. Acts 20:4; 27:2; Phil 4:16; 2 Tim 4:10).

**17:2-3** On using the OT to demonstrate the necessity of Jesus' death and resurrection, see Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; Acts 3:18; 13:27-30.

**17:3** *Jesus... is the Christ*: See note on Acts 2:36.

**17:4-5** Another divided response to Paul's message in the synagogue (cf. Acts 13:42-50; 14:1-5).

**17:4** *Greek God-worshippers*: See note on Acts 8:27. *prominent women*: In contrast with those who were hostile toward Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:50, these leading God-worshipping women welcome Paul and his message (see also Acts 17:12, 34).

**17:5** *the Jews became jealous*: some Jews, probably driven by their leaders; on jealousy, see notes on Acts 5:17; 13:45. *thugs*: or some bad or evil men, standing around looking for a fight. *Jason's house*: Jason welcomes Paul and Silas into his home, and the rioting mob hopes to find the missionaries there (Acts 17:6-7). Jason's residence is also a gathering place (house church) for believers in Thessalonica. Nothing else is known about him.

**17:6** *disturbing the peace throughout the empire*: similar to the charge against Paul and Silas at Philippi (Acts 16:20-21). On one level the charge is false. Paul doesn't directly attack Roman law and customs, and his influence hasn't yet spread across the empire. On another level Paul does promote a completely different way of life in Christ, and the impact of his mission is growing.

**17:7** *someone else as king*: Jesus: Paul doesn't encourage people to overthrow Caesar as emperor, but his proclamation of Jesus as the Christ (Acts 17:3) implicitly challenges Caesar's royal authority. On Christ as king, see Luke 23:1-5, 36-43.



more, Jason has welcomed them into his home. Every one of them does what is contrary to Caesar's decrees by naming someone else as king: Jesus." <sup>8</sup>This provoked the crowd and the city officials even more. <sup>9</sup>After Jason and the others posted bail, they released them.

<sup>10</sup>As soon as it was dark, the brothers and sisters sent Paul and Silas on to Bereoa. When they arrived, they went to the Jewish synagogue. <sup>11</sup>The Berean Jews were more honorable than those in Thessalonica. This was evident in the great eagerness with which they accepted the word and examined the scriptures each day to see whether Paul and Silas' teaching was true. <sup>12</sup>Many came to believe, including a number of reputable Greek women and many Greek men.

<sup>13</sup>The Jews from Thessalonica learned that Paul also proclaimed God's word in Bereoa, so they went there too and were upsetting and disturbing the crowds. <sup>14</sup>The brothers and sisters sent Paul away to the seacoast at once, but Silas and Timothy remained at Bereoa. <sup>15</sup>Those who escorted Paul led him as far as Athens, then returned with instructions for Silas and Timothy to come to him as quickly as possible.

<sup>16</sup>While Paul waited for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to find that the city was flooded with idols. <sup>17</sup>He began to interact with the Jews and Gentile God-worshippers in the synagogue. He also addressed whoever happened to be in the marketplace each day. <sup>18</sup>Certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers engaged him in discussion too. Some said, "What an amateur! What's he trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods." (They said this because he was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) <sup>19</sup>They took him into custody and brought him to the council on Mars Hill. "What is this new teaching? Can we learn what you are talking about?" <sup>20</sup>You've told us some strange things and we want to know what they mean." (<sup>21</sup>They said this because all Athenians as well as the foreigners who live in Athens used to spend their time doing nothing but talking about or listening to the newest thing.)

<sup>22</sup>Paul stood up in the middle of the council on Mars Hill and said, "People of Athens, I see that you are very religious in every way. <sup>23</sup>As I was walking through town and carefully observing your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: 'To an unknown God.' What you worship as unknown, I now proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup>God, who made the world and everything in it, is Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn't live in temples made with human hands. <sup>25</sup>Nor is God served by human hands, as though he needed something, since he is the one who gives life, breath, and everything else. <sup>26</sup>From one person God created every human nation to live on the whole earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup>God made the nations so they would seek him, perhaps even reach out to him and find him. In fact, God isn't far away from any of us. <sup>28</sup>In God we live, move, and exist. As some of your own poets said, 'We are his offspring.'

17:10 Bereoa: sizable city 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica. The journey now moves off the Egnatian Way (see Acts 16:12 and note).

17:11 examined the scriptures: admirable distinguishing mark of the Berean Jews. Paul's teaching about Christ invites confirmation by careful study of the OT.

17:12 reputable Greek women: Compare with Acts 13:50; 17:4, 34.

17:15-34 Paul's mission in Athens in the synagogue, the marketplace, and before the council on Mars Hill.

17:16 Athens: major city on the southeastern end of the Greek peninsula in the Roman province of Achaia. It had been the center of classical Greek philosophy, politics, and culture in the days of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Zeno. flooded with idols: Built on a large rock (Gk. *acropolis*) overlooking the city was the Parthenon, the magnificent temple of Athena. Athens also had numerous other temples and statues honoring other gods and powers.

17:17 marketplace: The Athens *agora* (Gk.) was the main public square and center of Greek cultural life (cf. Acts 16:19; 17:5). It was surrounded by open porches and columns, which served as gathering places for philosophical discussion and debate.

17:18 Epicurean and Stoic philosophers: two prominent

schools of Greek thought. Epicureans opposed religious ideas associated with fear of death, judgment, and divine control of the world. They promoted a life of peace, pleasure, and avoidance of pain. Stoics believed in a principle of divine reason (Gk. *logos*) guiding the world, and they strived to live a life of virtue and self-control. *amateur*: or "seed picker," a sarcastic image of unqualified teachers who pick up odd bits of information and spit them out without thinking. *the resurrection*: Some may have thought Paul was proclaiming a new god named Anastasis, which means "resurrection."

17:19 council on Mars Hill: supreme judicial court in Athens that convened on a hill dedicated to the Roman war god Mars.

17:22-31 Paul's speech before the Athenian council, focusing on the one Creator God worthy of devotion. As a Jew, Paul identified the Creator God with the God of Israel. But since he now addresses a non-Jewish Greek audience, Paul makes no reference to the OT or Israel's history.

17:24 On God as Lord and Creator of heaven and earth, see Luke 10:21; Acts 4:24; 7:49-50; 14:15. On not confining God to human-made structures, see Acts 7:41, 48-50; 19:26.

17:28 'We are his offspring': quoting the 3rd-century BCE Greek poet Aratus, who was speaking of Zeus' offspring.

17:9 Ac 17:5  
 17:10 Ac 17:2,  
 Ac 17:13,  
 Ac 17:14,  
 Ac 20:4  
 17:11 Is 34:16;  
 Jn 5:39  
 17:14 Ac 16:1,  
 Ac 17:10  
 17:16 Ac 13:16,  
 Ac 16:17,  
 Ac 17:2, Ac 17:4,  
 Ac 17:15  
 17:17 Ac 9:20,  
 Ac 17:2, Ac 17:4  
 17:18 Ac 4:2,  
 Ac 17:31,  
 Ac 17:32  
 17:20 Hos 8:12;  
 1Pt 4:4  
 17:21 2Th 3:11;  
 1Ti 5:13  
 17:22 Ac 17:16  
 17:23 Jn 4:22  
 17:24 Dt 10:14;  
 Mt 11:25;  
 Ac 4:24, Ac 7:48,  
 Ac 14:15  
 17:25 Gn 2:7;  
 Job 27:3; Is 42:5  
 17:26 Dt 32:8;  
 Job 12:23;  
 Ps 31:15;  
 Mal 2:10  
 17:27 Dt 4:7;  
 Jer 23:23,  
 Jer 23:24  
 17:28 Job 12:10,  
 Dn 5:23

17:29 Ro 1:23  
 17:30 1K 24:47;  
 Ac 3:19,  
 Ac 14:16,  
 Ac 26:20,  
 Ro 3:25  
 17:31 Ps 9:8,  
 Ps 98:9,  
 Ac 2:24,  
 Ac 10:42;  
 Ro 2:16  
 17:32 2Ch 36:16;  
 Ac 2:13,  
 Ac 17:18  
 17:33 Ac 17:19,  
 Ac 17:22  
 18:1 Ac 17:15,  
 Ac 19:1, 1Co 1:2,  
 2Co 1:1,  
 2Ti 4:20  
 18:2 Ac 11:28,  
 Ac 18:26;  
 Ro 16:3,  
 1Co 16:19,  
 2Ti 4:19  
 18:3 Ac 20:34,  
 1Co 4:12,  
 1Co 9:15;  
 1Th 2:9; 2Th 3:8  
 18:4 Ac 13:14,  
 Ac 14:1, Ac 17:2  
 18:7 Ac 16:14  
 18:8 Ac 11:14,  
 1Co 1:14  
 18:9 Ac 9:10,  
 Ac 16:9,  
 Ac 22:18,  
 Ac 23:11  
 18:10 Mt 28:20;  
 Jn 10:16; Ac 18:9

<sup>29</sup>"Therefore, as God's offspring, we have no need to imagine that the divine being is like a gold, silver, or stone image made by human skill and thought. <sup>30</sup>God overlooks ignorance of these things in times past, but now directs everyone everywhere to change their hearts and lives. <sup>31</sup>This is because God has set a day when he intends to judge the world justly by a man he has appointed. God has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

<sup>32</sup>When they heard about the resurrection from the dead, some began to ridicule Paul. However, others said, "We'll hear from you about this again." <sup>33</sup>At that, Paul left the council.

<sup>34</sup>Some people joined him and came to believe, including Dionysius, a member of the council on Mars Hill, a woman named Damaris, and several others.

### Paul In Corinth

**18** After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup>There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus. He had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul visited with them. <sup>3</sup>Because they practiced the same trade, he stayed and worked with them. They all worked with leather. <sup>4</sup>Every Sabbath he interacted with people in the synagogue, trying to convince both Jews and Greeks. <sup>5</sup>Once Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself fully to the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. <sup>6</sup>When they opposed and slandered him, he shook the dust from his clothes in protest and said to them, "You are responsible for your own fates! I'm innocent! From now on I'll go to the Gentiles!" <sup>7</sup>He left the synagogue and went next door to the home of Titius Justus, a Gentile God-worshipper. <sup>8</sup>Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household came to believe in the Lord. Many Corinthians believed and were baptized after listening to Paul.

<sup>9</sup>One night the Lord said to Paul in a vision, "Don't be afraid. Continue speaking. Don't be silent. <sup>10</sup>I'm with you and no one who attacks you will harm you, for I have many people in this city." <sup>11</sup>So he stayed there for eighteen months, teaching God's word among them.

<sup>12</sup>Now when Gallio the governor of the province of Achaia, the Jews united in their

17:30 *change their hearts and lives*: See note on Acts 2:38.

17:31 *man he has appointed*: anonymous reference to Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. God has authorized Jesus to make the world right at a set day of final judgment (cf. Acts 10:42).

17:32 *resurrection from the dead*: resurrection of dead bodies. While some Greek thinkers believed in the soul's immortality, most mocked the idea of bodily existence after death.

17:34 *Dionysius . . . Damaris*: Luke's writings often pair male and female characters, for example, Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25-38), the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian (Luke 4:25-27), Aeneas and Tabitha (Acts 9:32-43), Lydia and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:11-34). Some ancient Greek manuscripts omit Damaris, while others indicate her high social standing (cf. Acts 13:50; 17:4, 12).

18:1-17 Paul's mission in Corinth. The pattern continues of sabbath preaching in the synagogue, receiving a mixed response from Jews and Gentile God-worshippers, and being charged with misconduct before the local court.

18:1 *Corinth*: located about 50 miles southwest of Athens across a narrow strip of land surrounded by water. Corinth was the capital of the region of Achaia and a bustling commercial center with a diverse population. Paul wrote the letters of 1-2 Corinthians to the church here.

18:2 *Aquila . . . Priscilla*: married couple who teams up with Paul in his leatherworking trade (Acts 18:3) and missionary work (Acts 18:18-19, 26). In his letters Paul uses Priscilla's more formal name, Prisca (Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19). *Pontus*: region in northern Asia Minor bordering the Black Sea. Jews from Pontus were among the pilgrims at Pentecost (Acts 2:9). *Claudius had ordered all Jews*

*to leave Rome*: The Roman historian Suetonius reports that Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome in 49 CE because of conflicts over Chrestus, perhaps referring to Christus, or Christ.

18:3 *worked with leather*: making and repairing various goods, such as sandals, coverings, and tents. They likely also worked with other materials, like canvas and linen. Paul supported himself as a manual laborer so he wouldn't be a financial burden on his churches (see Acts 20:34-35; 1 Cor 4:12; 9:6-15; 1 Thess 2:5-9).

18:5 *Silas and Timothy*: See Acts 17:14-15. *Jesus was the Christ*: See note on Acts 2:36.

18:6 *shook the dust from his clothes*: act of protest similar to shaking the dust from one's feet (see note on Acts 13:51; cf. Acts 22:23). *I'm innocent*: Paul's experience of being falsely charged by some of his fellow Jews recalls that of Jesus (Luke 23:1-5, 13-23) and of Stephen (Acts 6:11-15).

18:7 *Titius Justus, a Gentile God-worshipper*: See note on Acts 8:27. Titius Justus is otherwise unknown.

18:8 *Crispus, the synagogue leader*: In contrast to some Jews who forced Paul out of the synagogue, the leader became a believer together with his household (see note on Acts 10:48). In 1 Corinthians 1:14 Paul mentions that he personally baptized Crispus.

18:9-10 For other visions encouraging Paul during times of crisis, see Acts 9:12; 23:11; 27:23-25.

18:11 *eighteen months*: Paul's longest stay in a city thus far during his missionary travels.

18:12-17 Jewish opponents charge Paul before the main city court, which has no interest in dealing with the case.

18:12 *Gallio*: leading government official in the region appointed by Rome.

opposition against Paul and brought him before the court. <sup>13</sup>"This man is persuading others to worship God unlawfully," they declared.

<sup>14</sup>Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, "If there had been some sort of injury or criminal behavior, I would have reason to accept your complaint. <sup>15</sup>However, since these are squabbles about a message, names, and your own Law, deal with them yourselves. I have no desire to sit in judgment over such things." <sup>16</sup>He expelled them from the court, <sup>17</sup>but everyone seized Sosthenes, the synagogue leader, and gave him a beating in the presence of the governor. None of this mattered to Gallio.

<sup>18</sup>After Paul stayed in Corinth for some time, he said good-bye to the brothers and sisters. At the Corinthian seaport of Cenchræe he had his head shaved, since he had made a solemn promise. Then, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila, he sailed away to Syria. <sup>19</sup>After they arrived in Ephesus, he left Priscilla and Aquila and entered the synagogue and interacted with the Jews. <sup>20</sup>They asked him to stay longer, but he declined. <sup>21</sup>As he said farewell to them, though, he added, "God willing, I will return." Then he sailed off from Ephesus. <sup>22</sup>He arrived in Caesarea, went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch.

<sup>23</sup>After some time there he left and traveled from place to place in the region of Galatia and the district of Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

**Apollos and his ministry**

<sup>24</sup>Meanwhile, a certain Jew named Apollos arrived in Ephesus. He was a native of Alexandria and was well-educated and effective in his use of the scriptures. <sup>25</sup>He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and spoke as one stirred up by the Spirit. He taught accurately the things about Jesus, even though he was aware only of the baptism John proclaimed and practiced. <sup>26</sup>He began speaking with confidence in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they received him into their circle of friends and explained to him God's way more accurately. <sup>27</sup>When he wanted to travel to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples so they would open their homes to him. Once he arrived, he was

18:13 Ac 21:28  
18:17 Ac 18:8;  
1Co 1:1  
18:19 Nm 6:18;  
Ac 18:2;  
Ac 21:24;  
Ro 16:1  
18:19 Ac 18:4;  
Ac 18:24;  
Ac 19:1;  
Ac 19:17;  
1Ti 1:3  
18:23 Ac 14:22;  
Ac 15:41;  
Ac 16:6  
18:24 Ac 19:1;  
1Co 1:12;  
1Co 3:5;  
1Co 16:12;  
Ti 3:13  
18:25 Lk 7:29;  
Ac 9:2, Ac 19:3;  
Ac 19:4;  
Ro 12:11  
18:26 Ac 18:2;  
Ac 18:18;  
Ro 16:3;  
2Ti 4:19  
18:27 Ac 11:23;  
Ac 18:12;  
Ac 18:18;  
Ac 19:1; 1Co 3:6

18:13 *worship God unlawfully*: a vague charge; it isn't clear whether Paul's opponents accuse him of violating Jewish or Roman law.

18:15 Gallio dismisses the case against Paul as an internal Jewish dispute about fine points of religious law (cf. Acts 25:19).

18:17 *everyone seized Sosthenes, the synagogue leader*: Some Greek manuscripts limit *everyone* to either "all the Jews" or "all the Greeks." It isn't clear why they have turned against Sosthenes. Perhaps he had followed Crispus (another synagogue leader) in supporting Paul (Acts 18:8). Paul mentions "Sosthenes our brother" in 1 Corinthians 1:1, but this may not be the same person.

18:18-23 Paul leaves Corinth with Priscilla and Aquila and sails to Ephesus, where he stays for a short time. He then travels on his own to revisit Jerusalem, Antioch of Syria, and the regions of Galatia and Phrygia in Asia Minor. The trip is briefly reported with few details.

18:18 *Cenchræe*: In Romans 16:1 Paul refers to a church at Cenchræe and a female leader there named Phoebe. *head shaved, since he had made a solemn promise*: likely refers to a nazirite promise of special dedication to the Lord for a set period of time (see Num 6:1-21). As a sign of the promise, no haircutting was permitted. Paul's head shaving marks the fulfillment of his promise. *Priscilla and Aquila*: It was unusual for a woman to be named before her husband. Priscilla's first position here suggests her leading role in Paul's mission (see also Acts 18:19, 26; Rom 16:3; 2 Tim 4:19).

18:19 *Ephesus*: major city of about a quarter-million people, the fourth largest in the Roman Empire. It was located east of Corinth on the western coast of Asia Minor. It served as the capital of the province of Asia, the center

of worship of "the great goddess Artemis" (Acts 19:27), and a hub for business and commerce. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 15:32; 16:8, 19), and possibly other letters, from Ephesus.

18:21 *God willing*: Compare with Luke 22:42; Acts 21:14. *I will return*: Paul comes back to Ephesus for an extended mission in Acts 19:1.

18:23 *Galatia and . . . Phrygia*: See Acts 16:6. *strengthening all the disciples*: See Acts 14:22; 15:32, 41; 16:5.

18:24-28 Apollos preaches about Jesus in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila welcome and instruct him, and the believers send him to Corinth in Achaia (cf. Acts 18:1; 19:1).

18:24 *Apollos*: a gifted, persuasive preacher who becomes an influential leader in the church at Corinth after Paul's departure (cf. 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4-6, 21-22; 4:6; 16:12). *Alexandria*: major city on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt, founded by and named after Alexander the Great in 331 BCE. It became a leading educational center for Greek language and philosophy. A sizable Jewish community also settled here, examining the relationship between the OT and Greek thought. The ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (known as the LXX) and numerous Greek writings of the Jewish scholar Philo Judaeus came from Alexandria.

18:25-26 *the way of the Lord . . . God's way*: See note on Acts 9:2. In relation to John the Baptist's message, see Luke 3:3-18 (especially "Prepare the way for the Lord" in 3:4).

18:26 *speaking with confidence*: See note on Acts 4:13. *more accurately*: Apollos has spoken *accurately* about Jesus (Acts 18:25), but he needs further instruction. The details aren't reported, but they likely include teaching about the practice of baptism in Jesus' name, since Apollos knows only about John's baptism (Acts 18:25; cf. Acts 19:4-5).

18:28 In 5:39;  
Ac 8:35, Ac 9:22,  
Ac 18:5;  
1Co 15:3

19:1 Ac 18:1,  
Ac 18:19,  
Ac 18:24;  
1Co 13:12,  
1Co 3:4

19:7 In 7:39;  
Ac 2:38, Ac 8:15  
19:11 Lk 7:29;  
Ac 18:25

19:4 Mt 3:11;  
Mk 1:4, In 1:7;  
Ac 13:24

19:5 Ac 2:38,  
Ac 8:12, Ac 8:16

19:6 Mk 16:17;  
Ac 2:4, Ac 6:6,  
Ac 8:17,  
Ac 10:46

19:8 Ac 1:3,  
Ac 9:20, Ac 18:4,  
Ac 28:23,  
Ac 28:31

19:9 Ac 9:2,  
Ac 14:4,  
Ac 19:23

19:10 Ac 16:6,  
Ac 20:31

19:11 Ac 5:15,  
Ac 8:13, Ac 14:3,  
Ac 15:12,  
Ac 16:18

19:12 Mk 16:17;  
Ac 5:15,  
Ac 19:11

19:13 Mt 12:27,  
Mt 26:63;  
Mk 5:7

19:14 Ac 19:13

of great help to those who had come to believe through grace. <sup>20</sup>He would vigorously defeat Jewish arguments in public debate, using the scriptures to prove that Jesus was the Christ.

### Paul in Ephesus

**19** While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul took a route through the interior and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. <sup>2</sup>He asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you came to believe?”

They replied, “We’ve not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

<sup>3</sup>Then he said, “What baptism did you receive, then?”

They answered, “John’s baptism.”

<sup>4</sup>Paul explained, “John baptized with a baptism by which people showed they were changing their hearts and lives. It was a baptism that told people about the one who was coming after him. This is the one in whom they were to believe. This one is Jesus.” <sup>5</sup>After they listened to Paul, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in other languages and prophesying. <sup>7</sup>Altogether, there were about twelve people.

<sup>8</sup>Paul went to the synagogue and spoke confidently for the next three months. He interacted with those present and offered convincing arguments concerning the nature of God’s kingdom. <sup>9</sup>Some people had closed their minds, though. They refused to believe and publicly slandered the Way. As a result, Paul left them, took the disciples with him, and continued his daily interactions in Tyrannus’ lecture hall. <sup>10</sup>This went on for two years, so that everyone living in the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the Lord’s word.

<sup>11</sup>God was doing unusual miracles through Paul. <sup>12</sup>Even the small towels and aprons that had touched his skin were taken to the sick, and their diseases were cured and the evil spirits left them.

<sup>13</sup>There were some Jews who traveled around throwing out evil spirits. They tried to use the power of the name of the Lord Jesus against some people with evil spirits. They said, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you!” <sup>14</sup>The seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

18:28 Like Paul in Acts 17:2-3, Apollos demonstrates through scripture that Jesus was the Christ.

19:1–20:38 Paul’s three-year stay in Ephesus (see 20:31), the focal point of his final missionary journey. After various experiences in Ephesus (19:1-41), Paul goes to Greece for three months (20:1-3), comes back to Asia Minor at Troas (20:4-12), and then heads to Miletus, where he meets the elders of the Ephesian church and gives a moving good-bye speech (20:13-38).

19:1 7 Paul encounters a group who has received only John’s baptism. He teaches them about faith in Jesus, baptizes them in Jesus’ name, and enables them to receive the Holy Spirit.

19:1 *through the interior*: across inland Asia Minor from the central regions of Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23), westward to Ephesus. *disciples*: a term normally used for followers of Jesus, but it could also designate followers of John the Baptist (Luke 5:33; 7:18; 11:1; John 1:35, 40), some of whom may have believed he was the Christ (Luke 3:15; 9:18-19).

19:2-4 On John’s baptism, see Luke 3:1-19; 7:24-30; 20:3-7; Acts 13:24-25. It’s surprising these disciples knew nothing about the Holy Spirit, since John announced that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16; Acts 1:4-5; 11:16) and Apollos was inspired by the Spirit, even though he had received only John’s baptism (Acts 18:25).

19:6 *the Holy Spirit came on them*: recalls the experience of the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), and the Gentiles in Cornelius’ house at Caesarea (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-17). See sidebar, “God’s Gift of the Holy Spirit” at Acts 8.

19:7 *about twelve people*: the same number as Jesus’ select group of disciples, symbolizing the restored people of Israel (see Luke 6:12-16; 22:28-30; see note on Acts 1:15-26). Perhaps these Ephesian disciples viewed themselves in a similar special light.

19:8-12 Paul preaches, teaches, and works miracles among Jews and Greeks from Ephesus and the surrounding province of Asia.

19:8 *spoke confidently*: See note on Acts 4:13. *God’s kingdom*: See notes on Acts 1:3; 8:12.

19:9 *the Way*: See note on Acts 9:2; compare with Acts 19:23. *Tyrannus’ lecture hall*: an auditorium, probably connected with some sort of school. Paul likely rented this space from its owner, Tyrannus, who may have also been a philosopher or teacher. It’s uncertain whether Tyrannus supported Paul’s cause. Some Greek manuscripts specify that Paul used the facility from eleven to four o’clock in the middle of the day.

19:11-12 The method of these *unusual miracles* is unparalleled in the NT, though somewhat similar to the apparent healing by contact with Peter’s shadow in Acts 5:15-16.

19:12 *evil spirits left them*: See note on Acts 16:18.

19:13-20 Paul’s conflict with a traveling group of exorcists and those who practice sorcery.

19:13 These exorcists are trying to use Jesus’ name for their own aims without any true knowledge of Jesus as Lord and Christ. For a similar case of attempting to manipulate the power of God in Christ, see Simon’s actions in Acts 8:18-24.

19:14 *Sceva, a Jewish chief priest*: We have no other evidence of a high priest by this name. It’s possible that Sceva

<sup>15</sup>The evil spirit replied, "I know Jesus and I'm familiar with Paul, but who are you?" <sup>16</sup>The person who had an evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all with such force that they ran out of that house naked and wounded. <sup>17</sup>This became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus. Everyone was seized with fear and they held the name of the Lord Jesus in the highest regard.

<sup>18</sup>Many of those who had come to believe came, confessing their past practices. <sup>19</sup>This included a number of people who practiced sorcery. They collected their sorcery texts and burned them publicly. The value of those materials was calculated at more than someone might make if they worked for one hundred sixty-five years.<sup>p</sup> <sup>20</sup>In this way the Lord's word grew abundantly and strengthened powerfully.

<sup>21</sup>Once these things had come to an end, Paul, guided by the Spirit, decided to return to Jerusalem, taking a route that would carry him through the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. He said, "After I have been there, I must visit Rome as well." <sup>22</sup>He sent two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he remained awhile in the province of Asia.

<sup>23</sup>At that time a great disturbance erupted about the Way. <sup>24</sup>There was a silversmith named Demetrius. He made silver models of Artemis' temple, and his business generated a lot of profit for the craftspeople. <sup>25</sup>He called a meeting with these craftspeople and others working in related trades and said, "Friends, you know that we make an easy living from this business. <sup>26</sup>And you can see and hear that this Paul has convinced and misled a lot of people, not only in Ephesus but also throughout most of the province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands aren't really gods. <sup>27</sup>This poses a danger not only by discrediting our trade but also by completely dishonoring the great goddess Artemis. The whole province of Asia—the entire civilized world—worships her, but her splendor will soon be extinguished."

<sup>28</sup>Once they heard this, they were beside themselves with anger and began to shout, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

<sup>29</sup>The city was thrown into turmoil. They rushed as one into the theater. They seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from the province of Macedonia. <sup>30</sup>Paul wanted to appear before the assembly, but the disciples wouldn't allow him. <sup>31</sup>Even some officials of the province of Asia, who were Paul's friends, sent word to him, urging him not to risk going into the theater. <sup>32</sup>Meanwhile, the assembly was in a state of confusion. Some shouted one thing, others shouted something else, and most of the crowd didn't know why they

19:15 Mt 8:29;  
Mk 1:24; Lk 8:28  
19:18 Mt 3:6  
19:21 Ac 16:9,  
Ac 18:12,  
Ac 20:16,  
Ac 23:11;  
Ro 15:25  
19:23 Ac 9:2,  
Ac 19:9; 2Co 1:8  
19:24 Ac 16:16,  
Ac 19:27,  
Ac 19:28,  
Ac 19:35  
19:25 Ac 16:19,  
Ac 19:24  
19:26 Ps 115:4;  
Is 44:10;  
Jer 10:3;  
Ac 17:29;  
1Co 8:4  
19:27 Ac 19:24  
19:28 Ac 19:24,  
Ac 19:27,  
Ac 19:35  
19:29 Ac 20:4,  
Ac 27:2;  
Ro 16:23;  
Col 4:10;  
Phm 1:24  
19:30 2Sa 21:17;  
Ac 14:14,  
Ac 17:22,  
Ac 21:39  
19:32 Ac 21:34

<sup>p</sup>Or *fifty thousand silver drachmen* (a drachme is equivalent in value to a denarion, a typical day's wage).

or his sons falsely claimed some sort of priestly status to enhance their reputation.

19:15 *I know Jesus*: On evil spirits' awareness of Jesus' authority, see Luke 4:33-34; 8:28.

19:16 A scene both humorous and humiliating, showing the failure of Sceva's seven sons as exorcists.

19:17 *seized with fear*: Compare with Acts 5:5, 11.

19:19 *practiced sorcery*: See notes on Acts 8:9; 13:6. *The value of those materials*: The moneymaking potential of sorcery recalls the case of the fortune-telling slave woman in Acts 16:16, 19.

19:20 *the Lord's word grew*: See note on Acts 4:4.

19:21 Paul's ambitious future plans, guided by the Spirit, to return to Jerusalem and then make the long westward trek to Rome. He will reach Jerusalem (Acts 21:17) and eventually make it to Rome—as a prisoner (Acts 27:1–28:31). More immediately, his plans are threatened by a riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:23–41). *Macedonia and Achaia*: provinces of Greece.

19:22 *Timothy*: See note on Acts 16:1. *Erastus*: Paul mentions an associate named Erastus who was the city treasurer at Corinth (Rom 16:23; cf. 2 Tim 4:22). This may be the same person mentioned here, but we can't be certain.

19:23–41 A major riot breaks out in Ephesus, sparked by a group of silversmiths who think Paul is disrupting their business. The mob assembles in the city's theater and

seizes two of Paul's companions. After much shouting and confusion, the crowd disperses without violence.

19:23 *the Way*: See note on Acts 9:2; compare with Acts 19:9.

19:24–25 Paul's mission again creates a stir by cutting into the financial profits of local businessmen (cf. Acts 16:16–19).

19:24 *Artemis' temple*: Artemis was a popular and prominent Greek mother goddess associated with fertility. The temple dedicated to her at Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and served as a religious, social, and commercial hub for the province of Asia (cf. Acts 19:27).

19:26 *gods made by human hands aren't really gods*: Compare with Acts 7:41, 48; 17:24–29; 1 Cor 8:4–6.

19:29 *theater*: large arena for public entertainment, including dramatic productions, circus acts, athletic games, and other popular and cultural events. *Gaius and Aristarchus*: associates of Paul from Macedonia. This Gaius should be distinguished from others of the same name from different places (Acts 20:4 [from Derbe]; Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14; 3 John 1). Aristarchus appears again with Paul in Acts 20:4 and Acts 27:2 as a Macedonian from Thessalonica (cf. Phm 24).

19:31 *some officials*: high-ranking officials known as Asiarchs, drawn from elite families in the province of Asia.

19:33 Ac 12:17  
 19:34 Ac 19:28  
 19:35 Ac 14:12,  
 Ac 19:24,  
 Ac 19:28  
 19:37 Ro 2:22  
 19:38 Ac 13:7,  
 Ac 18:12,  
 Ac 19:24  
 19:40 Ac 17:5  
 20:1 Ac 16:9,  
 Ac 19:21  
 20:3 Ac 9:23,  
 Ac 9:24,  
 Ac 20:19  
 20:4 Ac 16:1,  
 Ac 19:29,  
 Ac 21:29;  
 Eph 6:21;  
 Col 4:7  
 20:5 Ac 16:8,  
 Ac 16:10;  
 2Co 2:12;  
 2Ti 4:13  
 20:6 Ac 12:3,  
 Ac 16:8,  
 Ac 16:12  
 20:7 Ac 2:42;  
 1Co 16:2;  
 Rev 1:10  
 20:8 Ac 1:13,  
 Ac 9:37  
 20:9 2Ki 1:2;  
 Ac 14:19

had gathered. <sup>33</sup>The Jews sent Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd directed their words toward him. He gestured that he wanted to offer a defense before the assembly, <sup>34</sup>but when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" This continued for about two hours.

<sup>35</sup>The city manager brought order to the crowd and said, "People of Ephesus, doesn't everyone know that the city of Ephesus is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? <sup>36</sup>Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you must calm down. Don't be reckless. <sup>37</sup>The men you brought here have neither robbed the temple nor slandered our goddess. <sup>38</sup>Therefore, if Demetrius and the craftspeople with him have a charge against anyone, the courts are in session and governors are available. They can press charges against each other there. <sup>39</sup>Additional disputes can be resolved in a legal assembly. <sup>40</sup>As for us, we are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since we can't justify this unruly gathering." <sup>41</sup>After he said this, he dismissed the assembly.

### Paul visits Macedonia and Greece

**20** When the riot was over, Paul sent for the disciples, encouraged them, said good-bye, and left for the province of Macedonia. <sup>2</sup>He traveled through that region with a message of encouragement. When he came to Greece, <sup>3</sup>he stayed for three months. Because the Jews hatched a plot against Paul as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided instead to return through Macedonia. <sup>4</sup>He was accompanied by Sopater, Pyrrhus' son from Beroea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. <sup>5</sup>They went on ahead and waited for us in Troas. <sup>6</sup>We sailed from Philippi after the Festival of Unleavened Bread and met them five days later in Troas, where we stayed for a week.

### Meeting with believers in Troas

<sup>7</sup>On the first day of the week, as we gathered together for a meal, Paul was holding a discussion with them. Since he was leaving the next day, he continued talking until midnight. <sup>8</sup>There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we had gathered. <sup>9</sup>A young man named

As a controversial figure, Paul makes some friends as well as enemies in high places.

**19:33** *The Jews sent Alexander.* Beyond being a Jew (cf. Acts 19:34), Alexander's identity is unknown, and it's unclear what kind of *defense* he wanted to offer and whether he supported Paul. This uncertainty contributes to the scene's "state of confusion" (Acts 19:32).

**19:34** *when they realized he was a Jew:* All Jews, including Paul, would have opposed worshipping the goddess Artemis.

**19:35-41** The city manager calms the crowd, defends Paul, and instructs the agitators to take proper legal action in the courts rather than acting as an unruly mob.

**19:35** *temple of the great Artemis:* See note on Acts 19:24. *her image, which fell from heaven:* a local legend of Artemis' divine origin, in contrast to Paul's view of the human manufacture of idols (Acts 19:26).

**19:37** Although Paul preaches Christ and doesn't support pagan worship, he doesn't launch a negative campaign against Artemis or her temple. The Jewish historian Josephus reports that Jewish custom didn't permit slandering other gods or defiling their temples.

**20:1-6** Paul revisits believers in Greece for a few months and then comes back to the Asian province at Troas.

**20:3** *The Jews hatched a plot:* Compare with Acts 9:23; 14:5; 17:5-6, 13; 18:12; 20:19; 23:12-15.

**20:4** *Sopater... from Beroea:* Sopater and Pyrrhus are otherwise unknown. On Beroea, see note on Acts 17:10. *Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica:* See notes on Acts 19:29 (Aristarchus); 17:1 (Thessalonica). Secundus is otherwise unknown. The pair may have accompanied Paul in bringing funds from the churches in Macedonia for

the poor in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 24:17; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15). *Gaius from Derbe:* See notes on Acts 19:29 (Gaius); 14:6 (Derbe). *Timothy:* See note on Acts 16:1. *Tychicus and Trophimus from... Asia:* possible custodians of the Asian churches' collection for the poor in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 24:17; 1 Cor 16:1-4). Tychicus appears to be the bearer of Paul's letters to the Colossians (Col 4:7-9) and Ephesians (Eph 6:21-22) and is also mentioned as Paul's associate in 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12. "Trophimus the Ephesian" appears later in Acts in connection with conflict in the temple (Acts 21:29) and in 2 Timothy 4:12.

**20:5-6** *us... We:* On the use of "we" (which continues through Paul's arrival in Jerusalem in Acts 21:18), see note on Acts 16:10.

**20:5** *Troas:* See note on Acts 16:8.

**20:6** *Philippi:* See note on Acts 16:12. *Festival of Unleavened Bread:* See note on Acts 12:2.

**20:7-12** Paul speaks all night with believers in Troas and resuscitates an unfortunate young man who falls to his death during the evening.

**20:7** *first day of the week:* Saturday evening to Sunday evening (after the Sabbath), the day of Jesus' resurrection (Luke 24:1). *meal:* or "breaking bread," possibly including a reenactment of Jesus' last Passover meal (Luke 22:7-20; see note on Acts 2:46). *midnight:* Compare with Acts 16:25; 27:27.

**20:8** *many lamps:* a random detail, possibly symbolizing Paul's enlightening teaching and the need to pay close attention to it (cf. Luke 8:16-18; 11:33-36). *upstairs room:* Compare with Luke 22:12; Acts 1:13; 9:37, 39 (where Peter raised Tabitha from the dead).

**20:9** *Eutychus:* an ironic name in the present scene,

Eutychus was sitting in the window. He was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell from the third floor and died. <sup>10</sup>Paul went down, fell on him and embraced him, then said, “Don’t be alarmed. He’s alive!” <sup>11</sup>Then Paul went back upstairs and ate. He talked for a long time—right up until daybreak—then he left. <sup>12</sup>They took the young man away alive, and they were greatly comforted.

### **Farewell to the Ephesian leaders**

<sup>13</sup>We went on to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we intended to take Paul on board. Paul had arranged this, since he intended to make his way there by land. <sup>14</sup>When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. <sup>15</sup>The next day we sailed from there and arrived opposite Chios. On the day after, we sailed to Samos, and on the following day we came to Miletus. <sup>16</sup>Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he wouldn’t need to spend too much time in the province of Asia. He was hurrying to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by Pentecost Day.

<sup>17</sup>From <sup>17</sup>Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus calling for the church’s elders to meet him. <sup>18</sup>When they arrived, he said to them, “You know how I lived among you the whole time I was with you, beginning with the first day I arrived in the province of Asia. <sup>19</sup>I served the Lord with great humility and with tears in the midst of trials that came upon me because of the Jews’ schemes. <sup>20</sup>You know I held back nothing that would be helpful so that I could proclaim to you and teach you both publicly and privately in your homes. <sup>21</sup>You know I have testified to both Jews and Greeks that they must change their hearts and lives as they turn to God and have faith in our Lord Jesus. <sup>22</sup>Now, compelled by the Spirit, I’m going to Jerusalem. I don’t know what will happen to me there. <sup>23</sup>What I do know is that the Holy Spirit testifies to me from city to city that prisons and troubles await me. <sup>24</sup>But nothing, not even my life, is more important than my completing my mission. This is nothing other than the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus: to testify about the good news of God’s grace.

<sup>25</sup>I know that none of you will see me again—you among whom I traveled and proclaimed the kingdom. <sup>26</sup>Therefore, today I testify to you that I’m not responsible for anyone’s fate. <sup>27</sup>I haven’t avoided proclaiming the entire plan of God to you. <sup>28</sup>Watch yourselves and the whole flock, in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as supervisors, to shepherd God’s church, which he obtained with the death of his own Son. <sup>29</sup>I know that, after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you and won’t spare the flock. <sup>30</sup>Some of your own people will distort the word in order to lure followers after them. <sup>31</sup>Stay alert! Remember that for three years I constantly and tearfully warned each one of you. I never stopped warning you! <sup>32</sup>Now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you

<sup>9</sup>Or with the death of his own, or with his own death

meaning “lucky.” *deep sleep*: On sleep as a perilous sign of inattentiveness, see Luke 22:45-46.

**20:10 Paul . . . fell on him**: For similar action in bringing a deceased boy back to life, see the work of Elijah (1 Kgs 17:19-23) and Elisha (2 Kgs 4:32-37).

**20:11** Paul’s nonchalant return to eating and teaching (until daybreak!) after resuscitating Eutychus adds humor to the scene.

**20:13-15** Paul and his party sail south along the western coast of Asia Minor, from Troas to Assos, to Mitylene (on the island of Lesbos), around the islands of Chios and Samos, and then to Miletus, some 30 miles south of Ephesus.

**20:16** *hurrying to reach Jerusalem*: as planned in Acts 19:21. *Pentecost Day*: late-spring Jewish festival (see note on Acts 2:1).

**20:17-38** Paul’s emotional good-bye speech to the leaders of the Ephesian church, stressing his honorable dealings throughout his three-year ministry and warning them to care for the vulnerable congregation in his absence.

**20:17 church’s elders**: See note on Acts 14:23.

**20:19** *the Jews’ schemes*: On Jewish opposition at Ephesus,

see Acts 19:9, 13-16 (and maybe Acts 19:33), though most of Paul’s troubles came from Gentiles (Acts 19:23-34).

**20:20** *publicly and privately in your homes*: Acts 19 reports only Paul’s public activity. On the combination of public and home-based ministries, see Acts 2:46; 5:42; 16:11-40; 18:1-8.

**20:21** *testified to both Jews and Greeks*: See Acts 19:10, 17. *change their hearts and lives*: See note on Acts 2:38.

**20:22-23** Paul’s Spirit-driven course to Jerusalem (Acts 19:21-22) includes a foreboding sense of the hostility he’ll encounter there (cf. Acts 20:38; 21:13).

**20:24** *the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus*: See Acts 9:15-16; 22:10, 14-21; 26:15-20.

**20:26** *I’m not responsible for anyone’s fate*: Compare with Acts 18:6.

**20:27** *plan of God*: Compare with Acts 2:23; 4:28; 13:36.

**20:28-30** Paul pictures the elders as shepherds (pastors) tending God’s flock of sheep. Sheep need protection from wolves and other predators. Paul warns about internal attackers in sheep’s clothing. On pastoral images for the church, see Luke 12:32; John 10:1-16; 21:15-17; 1 Peter 5:1-4.

**20:32** *inheritance*: likely refers to an eternal, heavenly

**20:10** 1Ki 17:21;  
2Ki 4:34; Mt  
9:24;  
Mk 5:39

**20:11** Ac 20:7

**20:16** Ac 2:4,  
Ac 18:19,  
Ac 19:21;  
1Co 16:8

**20:17** Ac 11:30

**20:18** Ac 18:19,  
Ac 19:1  
Ac 19:10, 1Th 1:5

**20:19** Ac 20:3,  
Ac 20:31;  
Ro 12:11;  
2Co 2:4; Phi 3:18

**20:20** Ac 20:7

**20:21** Mk 1:15,  
Ac 2:38,  
Ac 1:18,  
Ac 18:5;  
Eph 1:15

**20:22** Jas 4:14

**20:23** Ac 8:29,  
Ac 9:16,  
Ac 14:22,  
Ac 21:4; Ac 21:33

**20:24** Ac 20:32,  
Ac 21:13; Ga 1:1;  
Tit 4:7; Ti 1:3

**20:25** Mt 4:23;  
Ac 28:31

**20:26** Ac 18:6

**20:27** Ac 2:23,  
Ac 20:20

**20:28** In 21:15;  
1Co 10:32;  
Eph 1:7;  
1Pt 1:19; Rev 5:9

**20:29** Mt 7:15,  
Mt 10:16;  
In 10:12;  
Ac 20:28

**20:30** Mk 13:22;  
1Co 11:19,  
1Ti 1:19; 2Ti 4:3;  
2Pt 2:1

**20:31** Ac 19:8,  
Ac 19:10,  
Ac 20:19

**20:32** Ac 14:3,  
Ac 26:18;  
Col 1:12,  
Col 3:24; 1Pt 1:4

20:33 1Co 9:12;  
2Co 7:2,  
2Co 11:9,  
2Co 12:14

20:34 Ac 18:3,  
Ac 19:22;  
1Co 4:12;  
1Th 2:9; 2Th 3:8

20:35 Ro 15:1,  
2Co 8:9;  
Eph 4:28;  
1Th 5:14

20:38 Ac 15:3,  
Ac 20:25,  
Ac 21:5

21:1 Ac 16:10,  
Ac 16:11  
21:2 Ac 11:19,  
Ac 15:3

21:3 Is 23:1;  
Ac 4:36,  
Ac 12:20,  
Ac 13:4, Ac 27:4

21:5 Lk 22:41,  
Ac 9:40,  
Ac 20:36,  
Ac 20:38

21:8 Ac 6:5,  
Ac 8:5,  
Ac 8:40;  
Eph 4:11; 2Ti 4:5

21:9 Jgs 4:4;  
Lk 2:36; Ac 2:17;  
1Co 11:5

21:10 Ac 11:28

21:11 Jer 13:1;  
Mt 20:19;  
Ac 8:29,  
Ac 21:33

21:12 Mt 16:21

21:13 Ac 9:16,  
Ac 20:24;  
Phi 2:17

21:14 Mt 6:10,  
Mt 26:39;  
Lk 22:42

an inheritance among all whom God has made holy. <sup>33</sup>I haven't craved anyone's silver, gold, or clothing. <sup>34</sup>You yourselves know that I have provided for my own needs and for those of my companions with my own hands. <sup>35</sup>In everything I have shown you that, by working hard, we must help the weak. In this way we remember the Lord Jesus' words: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

<sup>36</sup>After he said these things, he knelt down with all of them to pray. <sup>37</sup>They cried uncontrollably as everyone embraced and kissed Paul. <sup>38</sup>They were especially grieved by his statement that they would never see him again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

### Paul travels to Jerusalem

**21** After we tore ourselves away from them, we set sail on a straight course to Cos, reaching Rhodes the next day, and then Patara. <sup>2</sup>We found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, boarded, and put out to sea. <sup>3</sup>We spotted Cyprus, but passed by it on our left. We sailed on to the province of Syria and landed in Tyre, where the ship was to unload its cargo. <sup>4</sup>We found the disciples there and stayed with them for a week. Compelled by the Spirit, they kept telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>When our time had come to an end, we departed. All of them, including women and children, accompanied us out of town where we knelt on the beach and prayed. <sup>6</sup>We said good-bye to each other, then we boarded the ship and they returned to their homes.

<sup>7</sup>Continuing our voyage, we sailed from Tyre and arrived in Ptolemais. We greeted the brothers and sisters there and spent a day with them. <sup>8</sup>The next day we left and came to Caesarea. We went to the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven, and stayed with him. <sup>9</sup>He had four unmarried daughters who were involved in the work of prophecy. <sup>10</sup>After staying there for several days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. <sup>11</sup>He came to us, took Paul's belt, tied his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In Jerusalem the Jews will bind the man who owns this belt, and they will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" <sup>12</sup>When we heard this, we and the local believers urged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.

<sup>13</sup>Paul replied, "Why are you doing this? Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I'm ready not only to be arrested but even to die in Jerusalem for the sake of the name of the Lord Jesus."

<sup>14</sup>Since we couldn't talk him out of it, the only thing we could say was, "The Lord's will be done."

reward in God's kingdom (cf. Luke 6:23; 12:31-34; 18:29-30; Eph 1:11, 14, 18; 5:5; Col 3:24; Heb 9:15; 1 Pet 1:4).

**20:33-34** See note on Acts 18:3.

**20:35** *Jesus' words*: This precise quotation doesn't appear in the Gospels, but it fits well with Jesus' teaching (Luke 6:30, 38; 14:33; 18:22; 21:3-4).

**20:36** *knelt... to pray*: typical posture for prayer in emotionally charged situations (cf. Luke 5:8; 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; 21:5).

**20:38** *they would never see him again*: a worrisome statement, recalling Paul's forecast of life-threatening troubles in Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-24; cf. Acts 21:13).

**21:1-14** Paul and his companions travel to Jerusalem. They sail in one ship around the southwestern coast of Asia Minor via the islands of Cos and Rhodes to the port of Patara. From there they take another ship to the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea at Tyre in Syrophenicia. They then head south along the coast to Ptolemais and Caesarea, spending some time with local believers before going overland to Jerusalem.

**21:3** *Tyre*: major Phoenician commercial center in the province of Syria. The origin of the church at Tyre may be traced to early missionaries who scattered from Jerusalem to Phoenicia after Stephen's death (Acts 11:19).

**21:4** *the Spirit... telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem*: A

conflict of interest arises between the Tyrian disciples' view that the Spirit isn't leading Paul to Jerusalem and Paul's own sense that the Spirit is directing him there, despite the hardships that await him (cf. Acts 19:21; 20:22-23).

**21:5** *knelt... prayed*: See note on Acts 20:36.

**21:7** *Ptolemais*: major Mediterranean port city in Galilee, about 20 miles south of Tyre.

**21:8** *Caesarea*: See note on Acts 8:40 (where Philip was last mentioned). *Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven*: "Evangelist" means "one who proclaims the good news" of Jesus Christ. On Philip's evangelistic work, see Acts 8:4-13, 26-40; on his role as one of the seven servants (with Stephen) in Jerusalem, see Acts 6:1-6.

**21:9** *daughters... in the work of prophecy*: Compare with Acts 2:17-18.

**21:10-11** On Agabus, see Acts 11:28. OT prophets often illustrated their messages with dramatic displays. Here Agabus' action (binding himself with Paul's belt) confirms the Spirit's forecast of Paul's pending troubles in Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-23).

**21:12** The believers try again to persuade Paul to stay away from Jerusalem. However, this time they aren't said to speak through the Spirit (see note on Acts 21:4).

**21:14** *"The Lord's will be done"*: Compare with Luke 22:42; Acts 18:21.



<sup>15</sup>After this, we got ready and made our way up to Jerusalem. <sup>16</sup>Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and led us to Mnason's home, where we were guests. He was from Cyprus and had been a disciple a long time. <sup>17</sup>When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters welcomed us warmly.

**Meeting the Jerusalem church leaders**

<sup>18</sup>On the next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James. All of the elders were present. <sup>19</sup>After greeting them, he gave them a detailed report of what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. <sup>20</sup>Those who heard this praised God. Then they said to him, "Brother, you see how many thousands of Jews have become believers, and all of them keep the Law passionately. <sup>21</sup>They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to reject Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to live according to our customs. <sup>22</sup>What about this? Without a doubt, they will hear that you have arrived. <sup>23</sup>You must therefore do what we tell you. Four men among us have made a solemn promise. <sup>24</sup>Take them with you, go through the purification ritual with them, and pay the cost of having their heads shaved. Everyone will know there is nothing to those reports about you but that you too live a life in keeping with the Law. <sup>25</sup>As for the Gentile believers, we wrote a letter about what we decided, that they avoid food offered to idols, blood, the meat from strangled animals, and sexual immorality." <sup>26</sup>The following day Paul took the men with him and went through the purification ritual with them. He entered the temple and publicly announced the completion of the days of purification, when the offering would be presented for each one of them.

**Paul seized by the people**

<sup>27</sup>When the seven days of purification were almost over, the Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the temple. Grabbing him, they threw the whole crowd into confusion by shouting, <sup>28</sup>"Fellow Israelites! Help! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people, the Law, and this place. Not only that, he has even brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place." (<sup>29</sup>They said this because they had seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him earlier, and they assumed Paul had brought him into the temple.) <sup>30</sup>The entire city was stirred up. The people came rushing, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple. Immediately the gates were closed. <sup>31</sup>While they were trying to kill him, a report reached the commander of a company of soldiers that all Jerusalem was in a state of confusion. <sup>32</sup>Without a moment's hesitation, he took some soldiers and officers and ran down to the mob. When the mob saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. <sup>33</sup>When the commander arrived, he arrested Paul and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Only then did he begin to ask who Paul was and what he had done.

21:15–23:22 Paul's experience in Jerusalem, beginning with a warm welcome by the Jerusalem church but ending with Paul's arrest in the temple and trial before the Jerusalem Council. Throughout this section, Paul defends himself as a faithful keeper of the Jewish Law.

21:15 up to Jerusalem: See note on Acts 11:2.

21:16 Paul's host, Mnason, is otherwise unknown; for other disciples from Cyprus, see Acts 4:36 (Barnabas); Acts 11:20.

21:18–26 A scene similar to the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15:6–35, with the key distinction being that now the issue focuses on whether Jewish believers in Christ should continue circumcising their children. Paul confirms his support for Jewish obedience to the Law.

21:18 James . . . the elders: leaders in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 13–21). On James, see note on Acts 12:17.

21:19 The "we" group drops out until Acts 27:1. The spotlight falls on Paul alone during his upcoming trials.

21:20 many thousands: Along with the growth of the Gentile mission, numerous Jews continue to believe in Christ (cf. Acts 2:41; 4:4).

21:21 A false report. On Paul's continuing personal practice of the Jewish Law, see Acts 16:1–3 (circumcising Timothy) and Acts 18:18 (completing a vow).

21:23–26 Paul personally completed a solemn promise by shaving his head (see note on Acts 18:18). Now he supports four other Jewish believers fulfilling a similar vow.

21:25 a letter: the same letter to the Gentile believers quoted in Acts 15:20, 23–29, though strangely reported as if Paul is just now learning about it.

21:27–39 Commotion surrounds Paul in the temple, prompting his arrest.

21:27–28 Similar false charges were brought by some Jews from Asia against Stephen in Acts 6:9–14.

21:28 brought Greeks into the temple: Non-Jews were prohibited from going into the temple area beyond the outer Court of the Gentiles. The Jewish historian Josephus reports that Gentiles could be killed for crossing this boundary.

21:29 Trophimus the Ephesian: Compare with Acts 20:4; he'd been seen with Paul in the city, not in the temple.

21:30–36 For similar mob action against Paul, see Acts 14:19; 16:19–23; 17:5–8; 19:28–36.

21:31 commander of . . . soldiers: high-ranking Roman military officer in charge of up to 1,000 men. This commander is later identified as Claudius Lysias (Acts 23:26).

21:33 bound with two chains: fulfilling Agabus' prophecy in Acts 21:11. Paul will remain a prisoner throughout the rest of Acts.

21:17 Ac 15:4  
 21:18 Ac 11:30,  
 Ac 12:17,  
 Ac 15:13;  
 Ga 1:19, Ga 2:9  
 21:19 Ac 1:17,  
 Ac 14:27  
 21:20 Ac 11:18,  
 Ac 15:1, Ac 22:3,  
 Ro 10:2; Ga 1:14  
 21:21 Ac 6:14,  
 Ac 15:1,  
 Ac 21:28  
 21:23 Nm 6:2;  
 Ac 18:18  
 21:24 Ac 18:18,  
 Ac 21:26,  
 Ac 24:18  
 21:25 Ac 15:20,  
 Ac 15:29  
 21:26 Nm 6:13;  
 Ac 21:24,  
 Ac 24:18  
 21:28 Mt 24:15,  
 Ac 6:13, Ac 24:5,  
 Ac 24:6  
 21:29 Ac 18:19,  
 Ac 20:4,  
 Ac 21:20;  
 2Ti 4:20  
 21:31 Ac 10:1,  
 Ac 23:23  
 21:32 Ac 23:27  
 21:33 Ac 12:6,  
 Ac 20:23,  
 Ac 21:11,  
 Ac 28:20,  
 Eph 6:20

21:38 Mt 24:26;

Ac 5:36

21:39 Ac 6:9,

Ac 9:11,

Ac 16:37,

Ac 22:3,

Ac 22:25

21:40 In 5:2;

Ac 12:17,

Ac 22:2,

Ac 26:14

22:1 Ac 7:2

22:3 Ac 5:34,

Ac 9:11,

Ac 21:20,

Ac 21:39,

Ac 26:5

22:5 Lk 22:66;

Ac 9:1, Ac 9:2

22:8 Ac 26:9

22:9 Ac 9:7

22:11 Ac 9:8

22:13 Ac 9:17

22:14 Ac 3:13,

Ac 3:14,

Ac 7:52;

1Co 9:1,

1Co 15:8

22:15 In 15:27;

Ac 1:8, Ac 22:14,

Ac 23:11,

Ac 26:16

22:16 Ac 2:38;

1Co 6:11;

Heb 10:22

22:17 Ac 3:1,

Ac 9:26,

Ac 10:10

22:18 Ac 9:29,

Ac 18:9

22:19 Mt 10:17;

Ac 8:3, Ac 22:4,

Ac 26:11

<sup>34</sup>Some in the crowd shouted one thing, others shouted something else. Because of the commotion, he couldn't learn the truth, so he ordered that Paul be taken to the military headquarters. <sup>35</sup>When Paul reached the steps, he had to be carried by the soldiers in order to protect him from the violence of the crowd. <sup>36</sup>The mob that followed kept screaming, "Away with him!"

<sup>37</sup>As Paul was about to be taken into the military headquarters, he asked the commander, "May I speak with you?"

He answered, "Do you know Greek? <sup>38</sup>Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists into the desert some time ago?"

<sup>39</sup>Paul replied, "I'm a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of an important city. Please, let me speak to the people." <sup>40</sup>With the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and gestured to the people. When they were quiet, he addressed them in Aramaic.

### Paul's defense before his accusers

**22** "Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense." <sup>2</sup>When they heard him address them in Aramaic, they became even more quiet. <sup>3</sup>Paul continued, "I'm a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia but raised in this city. Under Gamaliel's instruction, I was trained in the strict interpretation of our ancestral Law. I am passionately loyal to God, just like you who are gathered here today. <sup>4</sup>I harassed those who followed this Way to their death, arresting and delivering both men and women into prison. <sup>5</sup>The high priest and the whole Jerusalem Council can testify about me. I received letters from them, addressed to our associates in Damascus, then went there to bring those who were arrested to Jerusalem so they could be punished.

<sup>6</sup>"During that journey, about noon, as I approached Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven encircled me. <sup>7</sup>I fell to the ground and heard a voice asking me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you harassing me?' <sup>8</sup>I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are harassing,' he replied. <sup>9</sup>My traveling companions saw the light, but they didn't hear the voice of the one who spoke to me. <sup>10</sup>I asked, 'What should I do, Lord?' 'Get up,' the Lord replied, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told everything you have been appointed to do.' <sup>11</sup>I couldn't see because of the brightness of that light, so my companions led me by the hand into Damascus.

<sup>12</sup>"There was a certain man named Ananias. According to the standards of the Law, he was a pious man who enjoyed the respect of all the Jews living there. <sup>13</sup>He came and stood beside me. 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' he said. Instantly, I regained my sight and I could see him. <sup>14</sup>He said, 'The God of our ancestors has selected you to know his will, to see the righteous one, and to hear his voice. <sup>15</sup>You will be his witness to everyone concerning what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup>What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized, and wash away your sins as you call on his name.'

<sup>17</sup>"When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I had a visionary experience. <sup>18</sup>I saw the Lord speaking to me. 'Hurry!' he said. 'Leave Jerusalem at once because they won't accept your testimony about me.' <sup>19</sup>I responded, 'Lord, these people know I used to go from one synagogue to the next, beating those who believe in you and throwing them

**21:36** "Away with him!": Compare with Acts 22:2 and the cry of the Jerusalem crowd against Jesus in Luke 23:18.

**21:38** the Egyptian: The Jewish historian Josephus mentions an Egyptian prophet who led an unsuccessful Jewish rebellion against Roman rule in Jerusalem. While most of his men were killed, the Egyptian escaped. The Roman commander's initial identification of Paul with this Egyptian puts Paul in serious trouble.

**21:39–22:21** Paul offers a defense before a hostile temple audience. Much of this speech parallels Luke's account of Paul's call to follow Jesus in Acts 9:1–19 (cf. Acts 26:1–23).

**21:39** Jew from Tarsus... a citizen: Paul's birth citizenship in the leading Greek city of Tarsus (Acts 22:3), coupled with his ability to speak Greek (Acts 21:37), proves he is not the uneducated Egyptian terrorist the commander takes him to be (Acts 21:38).

**21:40** Aramaic: local Jewish language (see note on Acts 6:1). By addressing the crowd in Aramaic rather than Greek, Paul hopes for a sympathetic hearing (cf. Acts 22:2).

**22:3** Under Gamaliel's instruction: On the respected Jewish teacher Gamaliel, see note on Acts 5:34. Paul's strict education as a youth under Gamaliel certifies his devotion to God and God's Law.

**22:6** about noon: A time reference is added to the story told in Acts 9:3 (cf. Acts 26:13; 8:27; 10:9).

**22:9** Curious reversal of Acts 9:7, where Paul's companions "heard the voice but saw no one."

**22:12** To emphasize his commitment to the Jewish Law, Paul stresses Ananias' piety (see note on Acts 9:10).

**22:17–21** Adding to the earlier report of his experience in Jerusalem after meeting the risen Lord (Acts 9:26–30), Paul now tells of another vision he had while praying in the temple. He proves his devotion to this holy place.

*Paul's Defense Speeches* This marks the beginning of five defense speeches Paul offers while he's a prisoner. These are given to a variety of audiences:

1. Roman commander Claudius Lysias (cf. Acts 23:26) and temple crowds in Jerusalem (Acts 21:37–22:29)
2. High priest Ananias and the Jewish council of Sadducees and Pharisees in Jerusalem (Acts 22:30–23:10)
3. Roman governor Antonius Felix, high priest Ananias, and Jewish prosecutors, in Caesarea (Acts 24:1–23)
4. Roman governor Porcius Festus and Jewish chief priests in Caesarea (Acts 25:1–12)
5. King Agrippa II, his sister Bernice, Roman governor Porcius Festus, and other military and public officials in Caesarea (Acts 25:23–26:32)

Recurring elements in these speeches include: (1) Paul's identity as a Roman citizen with rights to protection and due process, his appeal to Caesar, and his insistence that he hasn't violated Roman law (Acts 22:25–29; 25:8–11); (2) his upbringing as a dedicated Jew and his continuing observance of the Jewish Law and respect for the Jerusalem temple (Acts 22:3–5, 17; 23:1–5; 24:10–13, 16–20; 25:8–10; 26:2–8, 22); (3) his life-changing encounter with the risen Jesus (Acts 22:6–16; 26:9–20); and (4) his belief in the hope of resurrection (see sidebar, "Hope in the Resurrection" at Acts 24).

22:20 Ac 7:58,  
Ac 8:1; Ro 1:32  
22:21 Ac 9:15  
22:25 Ac 16:37,  
Ac 23:17  
22:28 Ac 16:37,  
Ac 22:25  
22:29 Ac 16:38,  
Ac 21:33,  
Ac 22:24,  
Ac 22:25  
23:1 Ac 22:30,  
Ac 24:16,  
Ac 24:16,  
2Co 1:12,  
2Ti 1:3,  
Heb 13:18  
23:2 1Ki 22:24,  
Jn 18:22; Ac 24:1  
23:3 Dt 25:1,  
Dt 25:2,  
Mt 23:27,  
Jn 7:51

into prison. <sup>20</sup>When Stephen your witness was being killed, I stood there giving my approval, even watching the clothes that belonged to those who were killing him.' <sup>21</sup>Then the Lord said to me, 'Go! I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'

<sup>22</sup>The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they shouted, "Away with this man! He's not fit to live!" <sup>23</sup>As they were screaming, throwing off their garments, and flinging dust into the air, <sup>24</sup>the commander directed that Paul be taken into the military headquarters. He ordered that Paul be questioned under the whip so that he could find out why they were shouting at him like this.

<sup>25</sup>As they were stretching him out and tying him down with straps, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Can you legally whip a Roman citizen who hasn't been found guilty in court?"

<sup>26</sup>When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. He asked, "What are you about to do? This man is a Roman citizen!"

<sup>27</sup>The commander went to Paul and demanded, "Tell me! Are you a Roman citizen?" He said, "Yes."

<sup>28</sup>The commander replied, "It cost me a lot of money to buy my citizenship."

Paul said, "I'm a citizen by birth." <sup>29</sup>At once those who were about to examine him stepped away. The commander was alarmed when he realized he had bound a Roman citizen.

### Paul appears before the Jewish council

<sup>30</sup>The commander still wanted to know the truth about why Paul was being accused by the Jews. Therefore, the next day he ordered the chief priests and the entire Jerusalem Council to assemble. Then he took Paul out of prison and had him stand before them.

**23** Paul stared at the council and said, "Brothers, I have lived my life with an altogether clear conscience right up to this very day." <sup>2</sup>The high priest Ananias ordered those standing beside Paul to strike him in the mouth. <sup>3</sup>Then Paul said to him, "God is about to strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit and judge me according to the Law, yet disobey the Law by ordering that I be struck."

22:20 On Paul's participation in Stephen's death, see Acts 7:58; 8:1.

22:21 *far away to the Gentiles*: Compare with Acts 2:39. Paul's first mention of his Gentile mission in this speech provokes the crowd's anger (Acts 22:22).

22:22 "*Away with this man!*": Compare with Acts 21:36; Luke 23:18.

22:23 *flinging dust*: See notes on Acts 13:51; 18:6.

22:25–29 To guarantee his protection and legal rights, Paul announces that he is a citizen of Rome (cf. Acts 16:37–39), as well as of Tarsus (Acts 21:39). The fact that Paul was born a Roman citizen suggests a life of greater privilege than that of the commander, who had to buy his citizenship (22:28).

22:26 *centurion... went to the commander*: On these Roman military ranks, see notes on Acts 10:1; 21:31.

22:30–23:10 Paul is brought before the Jerusalem Council, recalling the earlier trials of Jesus (Luke 22:66–71), Peter and John (Acts 4:1–22; 5:17–42), and Stephen (Acts 6:12–7:54) before the same judicial body.

22:30 *Jerusalem Council*: See note on Acts 4:5.

23:1 *stared*: Compare with Paul's intense look in his dealings with Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:9) and a crippled man (Acts 14:9). *clear conscience*: Compare with Acts 24:16; Romans 9:1; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 4:2; 5:11; 2 Timothy 1:3.

23:2 *high priest Ananias*: appointed by Herod Agrippa II (see Acts 25:13) around 48 CE.

23:3 *whitewashed wall*: an insulting image applied to

23:5 Ex 22:28;  
Ecc 10:20;  
Ac 23:1; Jud 1:8

23:6 Ac 24:15;  
Ac 24:21;  
Ac 26:5;

Ac 28:20; Phi 3:5

23:8 Mt 22:23;  
Mk 12:18;

Lk 20:27; Ac 4:1;  
1Co 15:12

23:9 Mk 2:16;  
Lk 5:30; In 12:29;

Ac 22:7;  
Ac 23:29

23:11 Mt 14:27;  
Ac 18:9;

Ac 19:21;  
Ac 28:23

23:12 Ac 23:14;  
Ac 23:21;  
Ac 23:30

23:14 Ac 23:12

23:15 Ac 22:30;  
Ac 23:1

23:16 Ac 21:34;  
Ac 23:10;  
Ac 23:32

23:17 Mt 8:5;  
Mt 8:8; Ac 21:32;

Ac 22:25;  
Ac 27:11

23:18 Ac 28:17;  
Eph 3:1

23:20 Ac 23:1;  
Ac 23:12;

Ac 23:14;  
Ac 23:15

23:21 Ac 23:12;  
Ac 23:14

23:23 Ac 8:40

<sup>4</sup>Those standing near him asked, "You dare to insult God's high priest?"

<sup>5</sup>Paul replied, "Brothers, I wasn't aware that he was the high priest. It is written, *You will not speak evil about a ruler of your people.*"

<sup>6</sup>Knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, Paul exclaimed in the council, "Brothers, I'm a Pharisee and a descendant of Pharisees. I am on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead!"

<sup>7</sup>These words aroused a dispute between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. <sup>8</sup>This is because Sadducees say that there's no resurrection, angel, or spirit, but Pharisees affirm them all. <sup>9</sup>Council members were shouting loudly. Some Pharisees who were legal experts stood up and insisted forcefully, "We find nothing wrong with this man! What if a spirit or angel has spoken to him?" <sup>10</sup>The dispute became so heated that the commander feared they might tear Paul to pieces. He ordered soldiers to go down and remove him by force from their midst. Then they took him back to the military headquarters.

<sup>11</sup>The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Be encouraged! Just as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so too you must testify in Rome."

### ***A murder plot discovered***

<sup>12</sup>The next morning some Jewish leaders formulated a plot and solemnly promised that they wouldn't eat or drink until they had killed Paul. <sup>13</sup>More than forty people were involved in the conspiracy. <sup>14</sup>They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have solemnly promised to eat nothing until we have killed Paul. <sup>15</sup>You and the council must explain to the commander that you need Paul brought down to you. Pretend that you want to examine his case more closely. We're prepared to kill him before he arrives."

<sup>16</sup>Paul's sister had a son who heard about the ambush and he came to the military headquarters and reported it to Paul. <sup>17</sup>Paul called for one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander because he has something to report to him."

<sup>18</sup>He took him to the commander and said, "The prisoner Paul asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to tell you."

<sup>19</sup>The commander took him by the hand and withdrew to a place where they could speak privately. He asked, "What do you have to report to me?"

<sup>20</sup>He replied, "The Jewish leaders have conspired to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow. They will pretend that they want to investigate his case more closely.

<sup>21</sup>Don't fall for it! More than forty of them are waiting to ambush him. They have solemnly promised not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, awaiting your consent."

<sup>22</sup>The commander dismissed the young man, ordering him, "Don't tell anyone that you brought this to my attention."

<sup>23</sup>The commander called two centurions and said, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to leave for Caesarea at nine o'clock tonight.

<sup>†</sup>Exod 22:28

religious leaders who promise false security (Ezek 13:10-16) and try to cover up corrupt schemes and actions (Matt 23:27).

23:5 *I wasn't aware that he was the high priest*: Since the high priest was a well-known figure, it's likely that Paul's cagey response has a critical undertone. In Paul's judgment, Ananias isn't acting as a true high priest should.

23:6 *Sadducees and... Pharisees*: On these religious groups, see notes on Acts 4:1; 5:34. *I'm a Pharisee*: new information about Paul, though not surprising in light of his early instruction by Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; 5:34; cf. Phil 3:5). See sidebar, "Hope in the Resurrection" at Acts 24.

23:11 *you must testify in Rome*: Compare with Acts 19:21.

23:12-22 Some Jewish leaders hatch a plot against Paul's life (cf. Acts 9:23, 29; 14:5, 19-20).

23:12-15 The plot to assassinate Paul is driven by extreme

religious zeal, as shown in the solemn promise of the conspirators to fast (23:12, 14, 21) until their mission has been completed.

23:16-22 Paul's nephew gets wind of the murder plot, which he reports to Paul and then the commander.

23:16 *Paul's sister had a son*: These and other members of Paul's family are otherwise unknown.

23:23-26:32 Paul's trials in Caesarea before the Roman governor, Felix, and the Jewish king (appointed by Rome), Agrippa.

23:23-35 Paul's transfer to Caesarea for his safety.

23:23-25 The commander orders a large military squad, about half of his forces, to escort Paul to Caesarea. This excessive response shows how seriously the commander takes his duty to protect a Roman citizen (cf. Acts 22:29; 23:27).

23:23 *Caesarea*: See note on Acts 8:40.

<sup>24</sup>Have horses ready for Paul to ride, so they may take him safely to Governor Felix.” <sup>25</sup>He wrote the following letter:

<sup>26</sup>Claudius Lysias, to the most honorable Governor Felix: Greetings. <sup>27</sup>This man was seized by the Jews and was almost killed by them. I was nearby with a unit of soldiers, and I rescued him when I discovered that he was a Roman citizen. <sup>28</sup>I wanted to find out why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their council. <sup>29</sup>I discovered that they were accusing him about questions related to their Law. I found no charge deserving of death or imprisonment. <sup>30</sup>When I was informed of a conspiracy against his life, I sent him to you at once and ordered his accusers to bring their case against him before you.

<sup>31</sup>Following their orders, the soldiers took Paul during the night and brought him to Antipatris. <sup>32</sup>The following day they let the horsemen continue on with Paul while they returned to the military headquarters in Jerusalem. <sup>33</sup>The horsemen entered Caesarea, delivered the letter to the governor, and brought Paul before him. <sup>34</sup>After he read the letter, he asked Paul about his home province. When he learned that he was from Cilicia, <sup>35</sup>the governor said, “I will hear your case when your accusers arrive.” Then he ordered that Paul be kept in custody in Herod’s palace.

**Paul’s trial before Felix**

**24** Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus. They pressed charges against Paul before the governor. <sup>2</sup>After the governor summoned Paul, Tertullus began to make his case against him. He declared, “Under your leadership, we have experienced substantial peace, and your administration has brought reforms to our nation. <sup>3</sup>Always and everywhere, most honorable Felix, we acknowledge this with deep gratitude. <sup>4</sup>I don’t want to take too much of your time, so I ask that you listen with your usual courtesy to our brief statement of the facts. <sup>5</sup>We have found this man to be a troublemaker who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the empire. He’s a ringleader of the Nazarene faction <sup>6</sup>and even tried to defile the temple. That’s when we arrested him.” <sup>8</sup>By examining him yourself, you will be able to verify the allegations we are bringing against him.” <sup>9</sup>The Jews reinforced the action against Paul, affirming the truth of these accusations.

<sup>\*</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament do not include *We wanted to put him on trial according to our Law,* <sup>7</sup>but *Lysias the commander arrived and took him from our hands with great force.* <sup>8</sup>Then he ordered his accusers to appear before you.

23:24 Ac 23:26.  
Ac 23:33.  
Ac 24:1.  
Ac 24:10.  
Ac 25:14  
23:26 Lk 1:3;  
Ac 15:23,  
Ac 24:3,  
Ac 26:25  
23:27 Ac 21:32,  
Ac 21:33,  
Ac 22:25  
23:28 Ac 22:30  
23:29 Ac 18:15.  
Ac 23:9.  
Ac 25:19,  
Ac 25:25,  
Ac 26:31  
23:30 Ac 23:20.  
Ac 23:35,  
Ac 24:18,  
Ac 25:16  
23:31 Ac 23:24  
23:32 Ac 23:10  
23:33 Ac 23:24  
23:34 Ac 21:39.  
Ac 25:1  
24:1 Ac 23:2.  
Ac 23:24.  
Ac 25:2  
24:5 Lk 23:2;  
Ac 17:6,  
Ac 24:14,  
Ac 28:22

23:24 *Felix*: A former slave of Emperor Claudius’ wife, Antonius Felix became governor of the Roman province of Judea. Felix held this office during a period of increasing Jewish resistance (52–59 CE) that he failed to control.

23:25-30 The Roman commander Claudius Lysias sends a formal letter to Governor Felix, endorsing Paul’s legal innocence and Roman citizenship. He conveniently omits that he arrested and chained Paul and was about to have him whipped before learning Paul is a citizen (Acts 21:33; 22:22-29). The commander blames the Jews for Paul’s mistreatment.

23:25 *letter*: Letters were the primary means of authorizing official actions and conveying important information (cf. Acts 9:2; 15:20-29; 18:27; 21:25; 22:5; 23:33-34; 25:26; 28:21).

23:27 *he was a Roman citizen*: Compare with Acts 16:37-39; 22:25-29.

23:29 *I found no charge deserving of death or imprisonment*: Compare with Luke 23:4, 14-15; Acts 18:14-15; 25:25; 26:31-32.

23:31 *Antipatris*: city with a Roman military base northwest of Jerusalem, about halfway toward Caesarea. It was expanded by Herod the Great and renamed after his father, Antipater, in 9 BCE.

23:35 *Herod’s palace*: royal residence built by Herod the

Great that now serves as the headquarters of Roman government in Judea.

24:1-22 Paul’s trial before Governor Felix is the most orderly judicial proceeding thus far in Acts. A lawyer retained by the Jewish leaders presents the case for the prosecution (24:1-9), followed by Paul’s self-defense (24:10-21). Both sides address the governor with due respect (24:2-4, 10).

24:1 *Ananias*: See note on Acts 23:2. *lawyer named Tertullus*: With his Latin name, speaking skills, and knowledge of Roman and Jewish law (Acts 24:2-8), Tertullus is well suited to represent Jewish interests before a Roman court. He is unknown beyond this text.

24:2-4 Praising the judge was a common way to begin trial speeches and gain his favor. However, historical reports about Felix’s character are much more negative.

24:5 *stirs up riots . . . throughout the empire*: serious charge against Paul of trying to overthrow the government (cf. Acts 16:20-21; 17:6). *Nazarene faction*: believers in Jesus of Nazareth as Lord and Christ. Jesus’ Nazarene identity is frequently mentioned (Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:6; 6:14; 22:8; 26:9), but this is the only NT text that labels the movement surrounding him in this way.

24:6 *when we arrested him*: Notice Tertullus’ identification (“we”) with the Roman commander and soldiers who arrested Paul in the temple (Acts 21:27-33).

24:15 Dn 12:2;  
Jn 5:28; Ac 23:6;  
Ac 28:20;  
Rev 20:13

24:17 Ac 11:29;  
Ro 15:25;  
1Co 16:1;  
2Co 8:1; Ga 2:10

24:18 Ac 21:26;  
Ac 21:27

24:19 Ac 23:30

24:22 Ac 9:2;  
Ac 24:7;  
Ac 24:14

24:23 Ac 27:3;  
Ac 28:16

24:25 Ac 10:42;  
Ga 5:23; Ti 2:12;  
2Pt 1:6

24:26 Ps 26:9;  
Pv 17:23;  
Is 1:23; Mi 3:11;  
Mt 7:3

<sup>10</sup>The governor nodded at Paul, giving him permission to speak.

He responded, "I know that you have been judge over this nation for many years, so I gladly offer my own defense. <sup>11</sup>You can verify that I went up to worship in Jerusalem no more than twelve days ago. <sup>12</sup>They didn't find me arguing with anyone in the temple or stirring up a crowd, whether in the synagogue or anywhere else in the city. <sup>13</sup>Nor can they prove to you the allegations they are now bringing against me. <sup>14</sup>I do admit this to you, that I am a follower of the Way, which they call a faction. Accordingly, I worship the God of our ancestors and believe everything set out in the Law and written in the Prophets.

<sup>15</sup>The hope I have in God I also share with my accusers, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.

<sup>16</sup>On account of this, I have committed myself to maintaining a clear conscience before God and with all people. <sup>17</sup>After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring gifts for the poor of my nation and to offer sacrifices. <sup>18</sup>When they found me in the temple, I was ritually pure. There was no crowd and no disturbance. <sup>19</sup>But there were some Jews from the province of Asia. They should be here making their accusations, if indeed they have something against me. <sup>20</sup>In their absence, have these people who are here declare what crime they found when I stood before the Jerusalem Council. <sup>21</sup>Perhaps it concerns this one statement that I blurted out when I was with them: 'I am on trial before you today because of the resurrection of the dead.'

<sup>22</sup>Felix, who had an accurate understanding of the Way, adjourned the meeting. He said, "When Lysias the commander arrives from Jerusalem, I will decide this case." <sup>23</sup>He arranged for a centurion to guard Paul. He was to give Paul some freedom, and his friends were not to be hindered in their efforts to provide for him.

<sup>24</sup>After several days, Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and summoned Paul. He listened to him talk about faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup>When he spoke about upright behavior, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became fearful and said, "Go away for now! When I have time, I'll send for you." <sup>26</sup>At the same time, he was hoping that Paul would offer him some money, so he often sent for him and talked with him.

### Paul in custody

<sup>24</sup>After several days, Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and summoned Paul. He listened to him talk about faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup>When he spoke about upright behavior, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became fearful and said, "Go away for now! When I have time, I'll send for you." <sup>26</sup>At the same time, he was hoping that Paul would offer him some money, so he often sent for him and talked with him.

**24:10-21** Paul's defense summarizes the events of Acts 21:27-22:29 in the temple and his statement in Acts 23:6 before the Jerusalem Council, insisting that he didn't defile the temple or deliberately stir up trouble.

**24:10** Paul's opening statement of respect for Felix is less gushy than the one Tertullus offered (Acts 24:2-4).

**24:14** *The Way*: Paul freely admits he's part of Jesus' movement; but he prefers to call it "the Way" (cf. Acts 22:4; 24:22; see note on Acts 9:2) rather than "the Nazarene faction," Tertullus' more dismissive term (Acts 24:5).

**24:15** *The hope I have*: See sidebar, "Hope in the Resurrection" (cf. Acts 24:21). *resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous*: Compare with Daniel 12:2.

**24:16** *clear conscience*: Compare with Acts 23:1.

**24:17** *I came . . . to bring gifts for the poor*: new information about Paul's visit to Jerusalem. This corresponds with reports in Paul's letters about funds he collected from

*Hope in the Resurrection* Paul refers to the resurrection at the end of the present age of all who have died (Acts 23:6). This belief is shared by many Jews, including the Pharisees, but not the Sadducees (cf. Acts 4:1-2). Paul deliberately drives a wedge between these two groups.

Paul's hope in the resurrection becomes a major point of his testimony to the end of Acts (Acts 24:15, 21; 25:19; 26:6-8, 23; 28:20). His notion of a general resurrection is closely linked with two specific ideas. The first is the past resurrection (and continuing life) of Jesus Christ (Acts 25:19), which guarantees that God will one day raise everyone from the dead and justly judge them (Acts 17:31). Jesus is "the first to rise from the dead" (Acts 26:23), and his personal resurrection anticipates the general resurrection (cf. Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:20-28; Rev 1:5). The second is the future restoration of Israel as God's people saved from sin, death, and exile (Acts 26:6-8; 28:20). This in turn guarantees God's ultimate renewal of the entire world through Israel's Christ, the risen and returning Jesus (see Acts 3:19-21).

churches in Greece and Asia Minor for the poor in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-28; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15; Gal 2:10).

**24:21** See Acts 23:6.

**24:22** *accurate understanding of the Way*: basic familiarity with the Christian faith. We can assume that like Apollos, if not more so, Felix needs instruction to understand Jesus "more accurately" (cf. Acts 18:25-26).

**24:23** *provide for him*: Imprisonment in the ancient world, even for citizens, didn't typically include state provision of food and other necessities. Prisoners' survival depended on the care of family, friends, and charity workers (cf. Acts 27:3; Phil 1:7; 2:25; 4:15-18; Phlm 13).

**24:24** *Drusilla*: daughter of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1), known for her great beauty. Felix broke up her previous marriage to a Syrian king to take her as his wife.

**24:25-26** Felix's discomfort with Paul's message may stem from Felix's well-known corrupt and immoral behavior,

<sup>27</sup>When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. Since Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

**25:1** Ac 23:34  
**25:2** Ac 24:1,  
 Ac 25:15  
**25:3** Ac 23:12  
**25:11** Ac 25:10,  
 Ac 25:12,  
 Ac 25:21,  
 Ac 26:32,  
 Ac 28:19  
**25:16** Ac 23:30,  
 Ac 25:4, Ac 25:5

### Paul appeals to Caesar

**25** Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. <sup>2</sup>The chief priests and Jewish leaders presented their case against Paul. Appealing to him, <sup>3</sup>they asked as a favor from Festus that he summon Paul to Jerusalem. They were planning to ambush and kill him along the way. <sup>4</sup>But Festus responded by keeping Paul in Caesarea, since he was to return there very soon himself. <sup>5</sup>"Some of your leaders can come down with me," he said. "If he's done anything wrong, they can bring charges against him."

<sup>6</sup>He stayed with them for no more than eight or ten days, then went down to Caesarea. The following day he took his seat in the court and ordered that Paul be brought in. <sup>7</sup>When he arrived, many Jews who had come down from Jerusalem surrounded him. They brought serious charges against him, but they couldn't prove them. <sup>8</sup>In his own defense, Paul said, "I've done nothing wrong against the Jewish Law, against the temple, or against Caesar."

<sup>9</sup>Festus, wanting to put the Jews in his debt, asked Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem to stand trial before me concerning these things?"

<sup>10</sup>Paul replied, "I'm standing before Caesar's court. I ought to be tried here. I have done nothing wrong to the Jews, as you well know. <sup>11</sup>If I'm guilty and have done something that deserves death, then I won't try to avoid death. But if there is nothing to their accusations against me, no one has the authority to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

<sup>12</sup>After Festus conferred with his advisors, he responded, "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go."

### King Agrippa informed about Paul

<sup>13</sup>After several days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived in Caesarea to welcome Festus. <sup>14</sup>Since they were staying there for many days, Festus discussed the case against Paul with the king. He said, "There is a man whom Felix left in prison. <sup>15</sup>When I was in Jerusalem, the Jewish chief priests and elders brought charges against him and requested a guilty verdict in his case. <sup>16</sup>I told them it is contrary to Roman practice to hand someone over before they have faced their accusers and had opportunity to offer a defense against the charges. <sup>17</sup>When they came here, I didn't put them off. The very next day I took my seat in the court and ordered that the man be brought before me. <sup>18</sup>When the accusers took the floor, they didn't charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. <sup>19</sup>Instead, they quibbled with him about their own religion and about some dead man named Jesus, who Paul claimed was alive. <sup>20</sup>Since I had no idea how to investigate these matters, I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to stand trial there on these issues. <sup>21</sup>However, Paul appealed that he be held in custody pending a decision from His Majesty the emperor, so I ordered that he be held until I could send him to Caesar."

which he demonstrates in his repeated efforts to get Paul to offer him a bribe.

**24:27** *Porcius Festus*: Roman governor of Judea from 59 to 62 CE. In contrast to his negative portrait of Felix, the Jewish historian Josephus presents Festus more favorably as one who kept the peace and remained sensitive to Jewish concerns.

**25:1-12** Paul appears before Festus and appeals his case to the emperor Nero.

**25:3** *planning to ambush and kill him*: another unsuccessful plot to murder Paul, hatched by Jewish officials (cf. Acts 9:23, 29; 14:5, 19-20; 23:12-22).

**25:7** Those who bring charges against Paul fail to produce trustworthy witnesses or any solid evidence (cf. Acts 18:14-15; 19:37-39; 22:30; 23:9, 28-29; 24:12-13).

**25:8** This verse neatly summarizes the three main institutions Paul is falsely accused of attacking in Acts.

**25:9** On rulers' attempts to please their Jewish subjects, see also Acts 12:3 (Herod) and Acts 24:17 (Felix).

**25:10-12** Exercising his right as a Roman citizen, Paul appeals his case to Caesar in Rome rather than risking

another trial in Jerusalem. The emperor at this time is Nero (54-68 CE), who Paul seems to think will give him a fairer hearing than the chief priests of his own people.

**25:13-22** Festus discusses Paul's case with King Agrippa II. **25:13** *King Agrippa and Bernice*: Agrippa II was the son of Agrippa I (see note on Acts 12:1). He ruled over areas formerly controlled by Herod Philip (Luke 3:1) and parts of Galilee and Perea. Although loyal to Rome, he maintained sympathetic interest in Jewish beliefs and customs (Acts 26:2-3, 26-27) and retained his father's authority to appoint high priests in Jerusalem. Bernice was the sister of Agrippa II. After her first husband died, she came to live with her unmarried brother, sparking scandalous gossip about their relationship. They often appeared together at court.

**25:14-21** Festus tells about the recent events of Acts 25:1-12.

**25:19** *they quibbled with him about their own religion*: Compare with Governor Gallio's response in Acts 18:14-15. *some dead man named Jesus, who Paul claimed was alive*: Part of Paul's defense of his core "hope in the resurrection"

25:23 Ac 25:13.

Ac 26:30

26:1 Ac 24:10

26:2 Ac 25:7.

Ac 26:7

26:3 Ac 6:14.

Ac 25:19

26:5 Ac 22:3.

Ac 23:6. Ac 24:5;

Phi 3:5

26:6 Ac 13:32.

Ac 23:6.

Ac 24:15.

Ac 28:20

26:7 Ac 26:2.

Jas 1:1

26:8 Ac 4:2.

Ac 23:6.

1Co 15:12

26:12 Ac 9:1.

Ac 9:3. Ac 22:5.

Ac 22:6.

Ac 26:10

26:13 Ac 9:3

26:14 Jn 5:2.

Ac 9:4. Ac 9:7.

Ac 21:40.

Ac 22:2

<sup>22</sup>Agrippa said to Festus, "I want to hear the man myself."

"Tomorrow," Festus replied, "you will hear him."

<sup>23</sup>The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great fanfare. They entered the auditorium with the military commanders and the city's most prominent men. Festus then ordered that Paul be brought in. <sup>24</sup>Festus said, "King Agrippa and everyone present with us: You see this man! The entire Jewish community, both here and in Jerusalem, has appealed to me concerning him. They've been calling for his immediate death. <sup>25</sup>I've found that he has done nothing deserving death. When he appealed to His Majesty, I decided to send him to Rome. <sup>26</sup>I have nothing definite to write to our lord emperor. Therefore, I've brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after this investigation, I might have something to write. <sup>27</sup>After all, it would be foolish to send a prisoner without specifying the charges against him."

### Paul's defense before Agrippa

**26** Agrippa said to Paul, "You may speak for yourself."

So Paul gestured with his hand and began his defense. <sup>2</sup>King Agrippa, I consider myself especially fortunate that I stand before you today as I offer my defense concerning all the accusations the Jews have brought against me. <sup>3</sup>This is because you understand well all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I ask you to listen to me patiently. <sup>4</sup>Every Jew knows the way of life I have followed since my youth because, from the beginning, I was among my people and in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>They have known me for a long time. If they wanted to, they could testify that I followed the way of life set out by the most exacting group of our religion. I am a Pharisee. <sup>6</sup>Today I am standing trial because of the hope in the promise God gave our ancestors. <sup>7</sup>This is the promise our twelve tribes hope to receive as they earnestly worship night and day. The Jews are accusing me, King Agrippa, because of this hope! <sup>8</sup>Why is it inconceivable to you that God raises the dead?

<sup>9</sup>I really thought that I ought to oppose the name of Jesus the Nazarene in every way possible. <sup>10</sup>And that's exactly what I did in Jerusalem. I locked up many of God's holy people in prison under the authority of the chief priests. When they were condemned to death, I voted against them. <sup>11</sup>In one synagogue after another—indeed, in all the synagogues—I would often torture them, compelling them to slander God. My rage bordered on the hysterical as I pursued them, even to foreign cities.

<sup>12</sup>On one such journey, I was going to Damascus with the full authority of the chief priests. <sup>13</sup>While on the road at midday, King Agrippa, I saw a light from heaven shining around me and my traveling companions. That light was brighter than the sun. <sup>14</sup>We all fell

this time focuses on the risen Jesus (see sidebar, "Hope in the Resurrection" at Acts 24). This is all strange news to Festus, who has no previous knowledge of Jesus.

**25:23–26:32** Paul defends himself before King Agrippa II in Festus' court.

**25:23–24** The setting surrounding Paul's appearance before Agrippa and Festus features much pomp and circumstance, and touches of exaggeration. For example, it's the priestly leaders, not *The entire Jewish community*, who have brought charges against Paul.

**25:26** *something to write*: Roman law required careful documentation of specific charges against citizens (see note on Acts 23:25).

**26:1–32** Paul's address to Agrippa, relating for the third time the events surrounding his life-changing visionary encounter with Christ (cf. Acts 9:1–19; 21:39–22:21).

**26:1** *gestured with his hand*: a common movement to quiet the audience and signal the beginning of an important speech (cf. Acts 12:17; 13:16; 21:40).

**26:4–5** Compare with Acts 22:3; 23:6.

**26:4** *Every Jew knows*: an exaggerated way of speaking

(cf. Acts 25:24), stressing Paul's lifelong loyalty to his Jewish faith.

**26:5** *I am a Pharisee*: Compare with Acts 23:6; see note on Acts 5:34.

**26:6–8** Paul continues to defend his hope of resurrection (see sidebar, "Hope in the Resurrection" at Acts 24), stressing here God's promise to revive God's covenant people from all 12 tribes of Israel (cf. Ezek 37:1–14).

**26:9–11** On Paul's former harassment of Jesus' followers, see Acts 8:1–3; 9:1–2; 22:4–5; 1 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13–14, 23; Philippians 3:6; 1 Timothy 1:13. Here Paul confesses the extreme zeal that drove him to torture the early Christians.

**26:14** *We all fell to the ground*: in contrast to Acts 9:4, 8, and Acts 22:7, where only Paul fell in response to the heavenly light. *Aramaic*: Only here do we learn that the risen Jesus spoke to Paul in the Jews' native language (see notes on Acts 6:1; 21:40). *It's hard for you to kick against a spear*: a common saying (not included in the previous accounts), used here to remind Paul that it's useless to resist God's will. The image is of a work animal



to the ground, and I heard a voice that said to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why are you harassing me? It's hard for you to kick against a spear.'<sup>c</sup> 15Then I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' The Lord replied, 'I am Jesus, whom you are harassing.' 16Get up! Stand on your feet! I have appeared to you for this purpose: to appoint you as my servant and witness of what you have seen and what I will show you. 17I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you 18to open their eyes. Then they can turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, and receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are made holy by faith in me.'

19'So, King Agrippa, I wasn't disobedient to that heavenly vision. 20Instead, I proclaimed first to those in Damascus and Jerusalem, then to the whole region of Judea and to the Gentiles. My message was that they should change their hearts and lives and turn to God, and that they should demonstrate this change in their behavior. 21Because of this, some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to murder me. 22God has helped me up to this very day. Therefore, I stand here and bear witness to the lowly and the great. I'm saying nothing more than what the Prophets and Moses declared would happen: 23that the Christ would suffer and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to my people and to the Gentiles."

24At this point in Paul's defense, Festus declared with a loud voice, "You've lost your mind, Paul! Too much learning is driving you mad!"

25But Paul replied, "I'm not mad, most honorable Festus! I'm speaking what is sound and true. 26King Agrippa knows about these things, and I have been speaking openly to him. I'm certain that none of these things have escaped his attention. This didn't happen secretly or in some out-of-the-way place. 27King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

28Agrippa said to Paul, "Are you trying to convince me that, in such a short time, you've made me a Christian?"

29Paul responded, "Whether it is a short or a long time, I pray to God that not only you but also all who are listening to me today will become like me, except for these chains."

30The king stood up, as did the governor, Bernice, and those sitting with them. 31As they left, they were saying to each other, "This man is doing nothing that deserves death or imprisonment."

32Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been released if he hadn't appealed to Caesar."

<sup>c</sup>Or *goads*

being poked and prodded by a pointed instrument to go in the right direction.

26:15-18 Unlike earlier accounts, where Ananias first conveyed Paul's mission to proclaim Christ (Acts 9:13-16; 22:12-15), here Christ himself directly appoints Paul for service (cf. Acts 22:17-21).

26:18 *from darkness to light*: Compare with Acts 26:23, *from the power of Satan to God*: On Satan, see note on Acts 5:3. On Jesus' power to set free those who have fallen under Satan's harmful control, see Luke 10:18-19; 13:11-13, 16.

26:20 On Paul's early ministry in Damascus and Jerusalem, see Acts 9:20-30. *change their hearts and lives*: See note on Acts 2:38.

26:21 *some Jews seized me in the temple*: See Acts 21:27-36. 26:22-23 *the Prophets and Moses declared... that the Christ would suffer and... rise from the dead*: Compare with Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; Acts 3:18-22; 10:43; 13:27-41; 17:2-3.

26:22 *bear witness to the lowly and the great*: suitable summary of the breadth of Paul's mission, including both the poor and weak (cf. Acts 20:24-25) and the powerful and wealthy.

26:23 *Christ... as the first to rise from the dead*: See

sidebar, "Hope in the Resurrection" at Acts 24. *proclaim light*: The light-bearing mission to both Jews and Gentiles that Christ ordered Paul to carry out (Acts 13:47; 26:17-18; cf. Luke 2:30-32) is now presented as being first practiced by Christ himself.

26:24-28 Festus blurts out that Paul's learning is making him talk crazy nonsense (cf. Acts 12:15). However, by making this groundless charge, Festus only indicates how incomplete his presumed "accurate understanding of the Way" (Acts 24:22) really is (cf. Acts 24:24-26). Paul quickly dismisses Festus' remarks and returns to addressing Agrippa, the more knowledgeable and sympathetic judge.

26:28 *you've made me a Christian?*: On the term "Christian," see note on Acts 11:26. Agrippa's question can be taken sarcastically (Do you really think I would ever become a Christian?) or seriously (You're starting to persuade me; can you tell me more?).

26:31 *nothing that deserves death or imprisonment*: confirming yet again Paul's innocence (cf. Acts 23:29; 25:7-11, 25).

26:32 *This man could have been released*: Evidently, once the appeal process to Caesar is set in motion, it must be carried out.

26:16 Eze 2:1;  
Dn 10:11;  
Ac 22:14;  
Ac 22:15  
26:17 Jer 1:8;  
Jer 1:19; Ac 9:15  
26:18 Is 35:5;  
Is 42:7; Ac 20:32;  
Col 1:12;  
1Pt 2:9  
26:22 Lk 24:27;  
Lk 24:44;  
Ac 10:43;  
Ac 24:14;  
Ac 28:23  
26:23 Lk 2:32;  
Ac 3:18;  
1Co 15:20;  
Col 1:18; Rev 1:5  
26:24 In 10:20;  
1Co 4:10  
26:25 Ac 23:26  
26:26 Ac 26:3  
26:28 Ac 11:26;  
1Pt 4:16  
26:29 Ac 21:33  
26:30 Ac 25:23  
26:31 Ac 23:29;  
Ac 25:25  
26:32 Ac 25:11;  
Ac 25:12;  
Ac 28:18;  
Ac 28:19

27:1 Ac 10:1.

Ac 16:10.

Ac 18:2.

Ac 25:12.

Ac 25:25.

27:2 Jon 1:3.

Ac 19:29.

Ac 20:4.

Col 4:10.

Phm 1:24.

27:5 Ac 2:10.

Ac 6:9, Ac 13:13.

**Paul's voyage to Rome**

**27**When it was determined that we were to sail to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were placed in the custody of a centurion named Julius of the Imperial Company.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>2</sup>We boarded a ship from Adramyttium that was about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia. So we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, came with us. <sup>3</sup>The next day we landed in Sidon. Julius treated Paul kindly and permitted him to go to some friends so they could take care of him. <sup>4</sup>From there we sailed off. We passed Cyprus, using the island to shelter us from the headwinds. <sup>5</sup>We sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, and landed in Myra in Lycia. <sup>6</sup>There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship headed for Italy and put us on board. <sup>7</sup>After many days of slow and difficult sailing, we arrived off the coast of Cnidus. The wind wouldn't allow us to go farther, so we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone. <sup>8</sup>We sailed along the coast only with difficulty until we came to a place called Good Harbors,<sup>b</sup> near the city of Lasea.

<sup>9</sup>Much time had been lost, and the voyage was now dangerous since the Day of Reconciliation had already passed. Paul warned them, <sup>10</sup>"Men, I see that our voyage will suffer damage and great loss, not only for the cargo and ship but also for our lives." <sup>11</sup>But the centurion was persuaded more by the ship's pilot and captain than by Paul's advice. <sup>12</sup>Since the harbor was unsuitable for spending the winter, the majority supported a plan to put out to sea from there. They thought they might reach Phoenix in Crete and spend the winter in its harbor, which faced southwest and northwest.

<sup>13</sup>When a gentle south wind began to blow, they thought they could carry out their plan. They pulled up anchor and sailed closely along the coast of Crete. <sup>14</sup>Before long, a hurricane-strength wind known as a northeaster swept down from Crete. <sup>15</sup>The ship was caught in the storm and couldn't be turned into the wind. So we gave in to it, and it carried us along. <sup>16</sup>After sailing under the shelter of an island called Cauda, we were able to control the lifeboat only with difficulty. <sup>17</sup>They brought the lifeboat aboard, then began to wrap the ship with cables to hold it together. Fearing they might run aground on the sandbars of the Gulf of Syrtis, they lowered the anchor and let the ship be carried along. <sup>18</sup>We were so battered by the violent storm that the next day the men began throwing cargo overboard. <sup>19</sup>On the third day, they picked up the ship's gear and hurled it into the sea. <sup>20</sup>When neither the sun nor the moon appeared for many days and the raging storm continued to pound us, all hope of our being saved from this peril faded.

<sup>a</sup>Or *cohort* (approximately six hundred soldiers) <sup>b</sup>Or *Fair Havens*

27:1–28:16 Paul is transferred with other prisoners to Rome. The long voyage across the Mediterranean Sea is complicated by stormy weather and a shipwreck. Shipwrecks were a common threat in the ancient world (Wis 14:1–7) and for Paul in particular (2 Cor 11:25–26).

27:1 *we were to sail*: The text reintroduces the "we" group of Paul's traveling companions, last seen in Acts 21:18. This continues through Acts 28:16. *Paul and some other prisoners*: Up to this point Paul has been treated as a special, isolated prisoner; here his being lumped in with other prisoners recalls the dying Jesus' association with criminals (Luke 23:32–43). *centurion . . . of the Imperial Company*: See note on Acts 10:1. The Imperial Company was a military unit established by Emperor Augustus.

27:2 *Adramyttium*: port on the Aegean Sea in northwest-ern Asia Minor. *Aristarchus*: See note on Acts 19:29.

27:3 *Sidon*: port on the Mediterranean Sea in Syrophenicia, north of Caesarea and Tyre. On the Christian community in the area, see Acts 11:19; 21:2–6. *Julius treated Paul kindly*: continuing the generally positive portrayal of Roman military officers (Acts 27:43; 10:1–8, 24–33; 22:26–29; 23:16–35; Luke 7:1–10; 23:47). For Paul's dependence on the care of friends while he was in custody, see note on Acts 24:23.

27:4–14 The course of the voyage runs along the southern coast of Asia Minor and then southwest toward the island of Crete in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. The cities

of Salmone, Good Harbors, Lasea (Acts 27:8), and Phoenix (Acts 27:12) are all on Crete.

27:6 *Alexandrian ship*: probably carrying grain from Egypt, which provided much of Rome's food supply.

27:7 *slow and difficult sailing*: the first hint of a dangerous voyage. Even for experienced sailors, sea travel in the ancient world was risky.

27:9 *Day of Reconciliation*: annual Jewish observance (Yom Kippur) on the tenth day of the seventh month (late September/early October), focusing on rituals of forgiveness and fasting. Weather conditions at this time of year make for rough sailing on the Mediterranean Sea.

27:10–11 Paul will prove to be a better guide on the voyage than the ship's captain (see Acts 27:21). The story stresses Paul's leadership, inspired by God (see Acts 27:23–25), even though he's a prisoner.

27:14 *hurricane-strength wind . . . swept down*: The sudden eruption of a violent sea storm recalls the dangerous boating experience of Jesus and his disciples on Lake Gennesaret (Luke 8:22–25).

27:17 *Gulf of Syrtis*: shallow waters off the northern coast of Africa, unsuitable for sailing.

27:18–19 Lightening the ship's load makes for easier navigation (cf. Acts 27:38; Jon 1:5).

27:20 *neither the sun nor the moon appeared*: recalls the world-shaking signs associated with the Spirit's climatic

<sup>21</sup>For a long time no one had eaten. Paul stood up among them and said, “Men, you should have complied with my instructions not to sail from Crete. Then we would have avoided this damage and loss. <sup>22</sup>Now I urge you to be encouraged. Not one of your lives will be lost, though we will lose the ship. <sup>23</sup>Last night an angel from the God to whom I belong and whom I worship stood beside me. <sup>24</sup>The angel said, ‘Don’t be afraid, Paul! You must stand before Caesar! Indeed, God has also graciously given you everyone sailing with you.’ <sup>25</sup>Be encouraged, men! I have faith in God that it will be exactly as he told me. <sup>26</sup>However, we must run aground on some island.”

<sup>27</sup>On the fourteenth night, we were being carried across the Adriatic Sea. Around midnight the sailors began to suspect that land was near. <sup>28</sup>They dropped a weighted line to take soundings and found the water to be about one hundred twenty feet deep. After proceeding a little farther, we took soundings again and found the water to be about ninety feet deep. <sup>29</sup>Afraid that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they hurled out four anchors from the stern and began to pray for daylight. <sup>30</sup>The sailors tried to abandon the ship by lowering the lifeboat into the sea, pretending they were going to lower anchors from the bow. <sup>31</sup>Paul said to the centurion and his soldiers, “Unless they stay in the ship, you can’t be saved from peril.” <sup>32</sup>The soldiers then cut the ropes to the lifeboat and let it drift away.

<sup>33</sup>Just before daybreak, Paul urged everyone to eat. He said, “This is the fourteenth day you’ve lived in suspense, and you’ve not had even a bite to eat. <sup>34</sup>I urge you to take some food. Your health depends on it. None of you will lose a single hair from his head.” <sup>35</sup>After he said these things, he took bread, gave thanks to God in front of them all, then broke it and began to eat. <sup>36</sup>Everyone was encouraged and took some food. (<sup>37</sup>In all, there were two hundred seventy-six of us on the ship.) <sup>38</sup>When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

<sup>39</sup>In the morning light they saw a bay with a sandy beach. They didn’t know what land it was, but they thought they might possibly be able to run the ship aground. <sup>40</sup>They cut the anchors loose and left them in the sea. At the same time, they untied the ropes that ran back to the rudders. They raised the foresail to catch the wind and made for the beach. <sup>41</sup>But they struck a sandbar and the ship ran aground. The bow was stuck and wouldn’t move, and the stern was broken into pieces by the force of the waves. <sup>42</sup>The soldiers decided to kill the prisoners to keep them from swimming to shore and escaping. <sup>43</sup>However, the centurion wanted to save Paul, so he stopped them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and head for land. <sup>44</sup>He ordered the rest to grab hold of planks or debris from the ship. In this way, everyone reached land safely.

*On the Island of Malta*

**28** After reaching land safely, we learned that the island was called Malta. <sup>2</sup>The islanders showed us extraordinary kindness. Because it was rainy and cold, they built a fire and

outpouring (Joel 2:30-31; see note on Acts 2:19-20). *all hope of our being saved*: Although tied here to a specific crisis, the ideas of “hope” and “saved” (salvation) carry wide religious significance in Acts (cf. Acts 27:31; see note on Acts 4:12).  
 27:21-25 Paul serves as an agent of God’s salvation in the midst of the storm (cf. Luke 8:22-25; Acts 16:25-34 [after an earthquake]).  
 27:21 *no one had eaten*: not for lack of food (see Acts 27:33-38). Perhaps they’re fasting or just seasick.  
 27:23 *angel from . . . God*: See note on Acts 5:19-20.  
 27:24 *You must stand before Caesar!*: Compare with Acts 19:21; 23:11; 25:11.  
 27:26 Exactly what will happen in Acts 27:41.  
 27:27 *Adriatic Sea*: extension of the Mediterranean Sea between the peninsulas of Italy and Greece. *midnight*: Compare with Acts 16:25; 20:7.  
 27:29 *they . . . began to pray*: In desperation the sailors pray to some unspecified deity (cf. Jonah 1:5). Their panic stands in contrast to Paul’s calm assurance, anchored in his faith in the true God (Acts 27:25).  
 27:31 On Paul’s leadership in this story as an agent of salvation, see note on Acts 27:10-11.

27:34 *None of you will lose a single hair*: Compare with Luke 12:7.  
 27:35 *he took bread, gave thanks to God . . . broke it*: recalls Jesus’ Last Supper (Passover) with his disciples in Luke 22:19.  
 27:38 *eaten as much as they wanted*: recalls the crowd’s eating “until they were full” of Jesus’ provision of bread and fish in Luke 9:16-17.  
 27:39-28:10 The ship stalls on the coast of Malta, all the passengers are saved, and Paul ministers to the population there.  
 27:41 *the ship ran aground*: as Paul had predicted in Acts 27:26.  
 27:42-43 The soldiers’ plan to kill the prisoners contrasts with Paul’s aim to save everyone on board. The centurion’s intention to protect Paul fits the pattern noted in Acts 27:3.  
 27:44 *everyone reached land safely*: as Paul had promised in Acts 27:34; it’s repeated for emphasis in Acts 28:1.  
 28:1 *Malta*: island south of Sicily and Italy.  
 28:2 *showed us extraordinary kindness*: as the centurion Julius had shown Paul in Acts 27:3.

27:23 Ac 5:19.  
 Ac 18:9.  
 Ac 23:11; Ro 1:9  
 27:24 Ac 18:9.  
 Ac 23:11  
 27:30 Ac 27:16.  
 Ac 27:32  
 27:31 Ac 27:43  
 27:33 Ac 27:9.  
 Ac 27:21  
 27:35 1Sa 9:13.  
 Mt 14:19.  
 Mt 15:36.  
 Mk 8:6; Jn 6:11  
 27:37 Ac 2:41  
 27:40 Ac 27:29  
 28:1 Ac 27:26.  
 Ac 27:39  
 28:2 Ac 28:4.  
 Ro 1:14;  
 1Co 14:11;  
 Col 3:11

28:3 Ac 13:50,  
Ac 14:19,  
Ac 15:12,  
Ac 15:40,  
Ac 16:9

28:4 Lk 13:2,  
Lk 13:4; Jn 9:2;  
Ac 28:2

28:5 Mk 16:18;  
Lk 10:19

28:7 Ac 28:2,  
Ac 28:8

28:10 1Ti 5:17

28:11 Ac 27:6

28:13 Ac 27:13

28:14 Gn 7:4;  
Jn 21:23;  
Ac 20:6; Ac 21:4

28:15 Ps 68:19;  
Dn 2:23; 1Ti  
1:12

28:17 Ac 6:14,  
Ac 25:2; Ac 25:8

28:18 Ac 22:24,  
Ac 26:31,  
Ac 26:32

28:19 Ac 25:10,  
Ac 25:11,  
Ac 25:21,  
Ac 26:32

28:20 Ac 21:33,  
Ac 23:6; Ac 26:6;  
Ac 26:7

welcomed all of us. <sup>3</sup>Paul gathered a bunch of dry sticks and put them on the fire. As he did, a poisonous snake, driven out by the heat, latched on to his hand. <sup>4</sup>When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer! He was rescued from the sea, but the goddess Justice hasn't let him live!" <sup>5</sup>Paul shook the snake into the fire and suffered no harm. <sup>6</sup>They expected him to swell up with fever or suddenly drop dead. After waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and began to claim that he was a god.

<sup>7</sup>Publius, the island's most prominent person, owned a large estate in that area. He welcomed us warmly into his home as his guests for three days. <sup>8</sup>Publius' father was bedridden, sick with a fever and dysentery. Paul went to see him and prayed. He placed his hand on him and healed him. <sup>9</sup>Once this happened, the rest of the sick on the island came to him and were healed. <sup>10</sup>They honored us in many ways. When we were getting ready to sail again, they supplied us with what we needed.

### Paul makes it to Rome

<sup>11</sup>After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had spent the winter at the island. It was an Alexandrian ship with carvings of the twin gods Castor and Pollux as its figurehead. <sup>12</sup>We landed in Syracuse where we stayed three days. <sup>13</sup>From there we sailed to Rhegium. After one day a south wind came up, and we arrived on the second day in Puteoli. <sup>14</sup>There we found brothers and sisters who urged us to stay with them for a week. In this way we came to Rome. <sup>15</sup>When the brothers and sisters there heard about us, they came as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. When Paul saw them, he gave thanks to God and was encouraged. <sup>16</sup>When we entered Rome, Paul was permitted to live by himself, with a soldier guarding him.

### Paul meets Jewish leaders in Rome

<sup>17</sup>Three days later, Paul called the Jewish leaders together. When they gathered, he said, "Brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, I'm a prisoner from Jerusalem. They handed me over to the Romans, <sup>18</sup>who intended to release me after they examined me, because they couldn't find any reason for putting me to death. <sup>19</sup>When the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar. Don't think I appealed to Caesar because I had any reason to bring charges against my nation. <sup>20</sup>This is why I

28:4 *goddess Justice*: a divine personification of justice and judgment in Greco-Roman mythology.

28:5 Authority over snakes was associated with defeating demonic powers of evil (cf. Luke 10:17-19; Mark 16:18).

28:6 *suddenly drop dead*: This actually happened to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5, 10) and Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:23) in situations of misconduct and judgment. *claim that he was a god*: recalls the Lystrans' worship of Paul (and Barnabas) as a Greek god, which Paul strongly denounced (Acts 14:11-18).

28:7 *most prominent person*: probably indicates Publius' position as the Roman governor of Malta, like Sergius Paulus in Cyprus (Acts 13:7). *welcomed us warmly into his home*: For other examples of hospitality shown to Paul, see Acts 16:15, 33-34, 40; 17:7; 18:2-3, 7; 21:4-17; 27:3; 28:14.

28:8-9 Even as a prisoner, Paul continues his ministry of healing. Compare with Jesus' healing of one of the men who arrested him (Luke 22:50-51).

28:8 Compare with Jesus' relieving the high fever of Simon's mother-in-law in Luke 4:38-39.

28:11-16 The final leg of the journey: northward by sea to Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli, then overland to Rome.

28:11 *Alexandrian ship*: See note on Acts 27:6. *Castor and Pollux*: sons of Zeus whose images were carved on the prows of ships to guide and protect sailors. In Paul's voyage, however, only his God (not represented by any image) provides safety through the storm (cf. Acts 27:23-25).

28:12 *Syracuse*: port with a large natural harbor on the southeast side of Sicily.

28:13 *Rhegium*: port on the boot tip of Italy, across the Strait of Messina from Sicily. *Puteoli*: port on the Tyrrhenian Sea in western Italy. The origins of the Christian community here (Acts 28:14) are unknown.

28:15 *brothers and sisters... came... to meet us*: The roots of the church at Rome may trace back to Jewish pilgrims returning from celebrating Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:10). Although Paul has never visited the Christians in Rome, his reputation has preceded him, perhaps helped by reports from associates Aquila and Priscilla, who had lived there (see Acts 18:2-3; Rom 1:8-14; 15:22-24; 16:3-4). *Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns*: market towns 34 miles from Rome on the Appian Way, the major road connecting Rome with southern Italy.

28:16 Paul's relative freedom while awaiting trial (cf. Acts 24:23) reflects his status as a Roman citizen and allows him to continue meeting people and witnessing to them (Acts 28:17-31).

28:17-31 Paul's testimony in Rome before local Jewish leaders (28:17-28) and anyone who comes to visit him (28:30-31). However, Acts ends rather abruptly without reporting Paul's trial before Caesar.

28:17-20 Paul invites the (non-Christian) Jewish leaders to his residence. He briefly summarizes his trial history and stresses his innocence on all counts.

28:20 *hope of Israel*: See sidebar, "Hope in the Resurrection" at Acts 24.

asked to see you and speak with you: it's because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain."

<sup>21</sup>They responded, "We haven't received any letters about you from Judea, nor have any of our brothers come and reported or said anything bad about you. <sup>22</sup>But we think it's important to hear what you think, for we know that people everywhere are speaking against this faction."

<sup>23</sup>On the day scheduled for this purpose, many people came to the place where he was staying. From morning until evening, he explained and testified concerning God's kingdom and tried to convince them about Jesus through appealing to the Law from Moses and the Prophets. <sup>24</sup>Some were persuaded by what he said, but others refused to believe. <sup>25</sup>They disagreed with each other and were starting to leave when Paul made one more statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke correctly when he said to your ancestors through Isaiah the prophet,

<sup>26</sup>*Go to this people and say:*

*You will hear, to be sure, but never understand;  
and you will certainly see but never recognize what you are seeing.*

<sup>27</sup>*This people's senses have become calloused,*

*and they've become hard of hearing,  
and they've shut their eyes  
so that they won't see with their eyes  
or hear with their ears*

*or understand with their minds,  
and change their hearts and lives that I may heal them.<sup>28</sup>*

<sup>28</sup>"Therefore, be certain of this: God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen!"<sup>29</sup>

### Paul's ministry in Rome

<sup>30</sup>Paul lived in his own rented quarters for two full years and welcomed everyone who came to see him. <sup>31</sup>Unhindered and with complete confidence, he continued to preach God's kingdom and to teach about the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>28</sup>Isa 6:9-10 <sup>29</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament do not include 28:29 *After he said this, the Jews left, debating among themselves.*

28:21-22 Bad publicity continues to haunt Paul (cf. Acts 21:20-21; 24:5-9), even though the Jews in Rome have received no direct word about him.

28:21 *letters*: See note on Acts 23:25.

28:22 *this faction*: splinter group of Jews and Gentiles following Jesus of Nazareth (see note on Acts 24:5).

28:23-28 Paul speaks about Jesus all day long with a large audience (*many people*) of Jews (more than just the leaders) who come to his quarters. He connects Jesus with two familiar themes: God's kingdom (see notes on Acts 1:3; 8:12; cf. Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:31) and God's word through Moses and the prophets (cf. Acts 13:26-27, 38-40; 17:3; 26:22-23, 27).

28:24-25 Continued divided response and debate among Jews to Paul's message (cf. Acts 13:42-44; 14:1-4; 17:1-15; 18:4-17).

28:25-27 The Gospels also cite Isaiah 6:9-10 to help explain the failure of some Jews to understand Jesus' parables (Matt 13:13-14; Mark 4:11-12; Luke 8:10) and believe his miraculous signs (John 12:37-41).

28:28 *God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles*: major

theme from the beginning of Luke's Gospel (Acts 2:30-32; 3:6) to the end of Acts. It doesn't mean that salvation has been transferred from the Jews to the Gentiles; instead, it acknowledges Israel's calling to be a "light to the nations," announced in Isaiah 49:6 (cited in Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47; 26:23). On previous occasions, Paul forcefully proclaimed his intention to turn from Jews who resisted his message to more receptive Gentiles (Acts 13:46-47; 18:6); but thereafter he continued to preach to both Jews (first) and Gentiles in other cities.

28:30 See note on Acts 28:16.

28:31 *Unhindered*: This is the very last word in the Greek text, because Greek sentence structure is different from that of English. Ending with *unhindered* suggests that Acts ends on a note of openness and opportunity. Although the story has anticipated Paul's trial and possible death in Rome (Acts 20:23-24; 21:11-13; 25:11, 21, 25; 26:31-32), it stops before relating those events. *complete confidence*: See note on Acts 4:13. *God's kingdom*: Compare with Acts 28:23; see notes on Acts 1:3; 8:12.

28:21 Ac 22:5

28:22 Lk 2:34;

Ac 24:5;

Ac 24:14;

1Pt 2:12;

1Pt 4:14

28:23 Lk 24:27;

Ac 8:35, Ac 17:3;

Ac 19:8;

Ac 26:22

28:24 Ac 14:4;

Ac 17:4, Ac 17:5;

Ac 18:6, Ac 19:9

28:25 Mt 15:7

28:26 Is 6:9;

Is 6:10;

Eze 12:2;

Mt 13:15;

Lk 8:10

28:27 Is 6:9;

Is 6:10

28:28 Lk 2:30;

Ac 13:26;

Ac 13:46

28:30 Ac 28:16

28:31 Mt 4:23;

Ac 28:23

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee. The names are listed in alphabetical order. The addresses are listed in the order in which they appear in the document.

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# ROMANS

Paul's letter to the early Christian believers in Rome is surely the most significant letter in the history of Christianity. It's also quite possibly the most influential letter in all of human history. The impact of the book of Romans on Christian belief, behavior, spirituality, and worship has been profound. It's also been important for relations among Christians, as well as relations between Christians and Jews. Romans has ignited movements with far-reaching implications for the Christian church, for culture, and even for politics. As the longest of Paul's letters, it's the bridge between the stories about Paul in Acts and the rest of Paul's letters. For many people, therefore, Romans has become the guide to interpreting Paul's letters as a whole.

Romans continues to raise many questions about its original purpose and its ongoing significance. It's called Paul's Letter to the Romans, but Martin Luther's collaborator, Melancthon, called it a handbook of the Christian religion. Can it somehow be both? Romans was written to the believers in Rome, who were probably assembled in various house churches (Rom

16:5), to address one or more of the concrete issues facing them. Yet it has an obvious systematic quality to it that's unlike any of the other letters bearing Paul's name. This blending of forms has led some to call it a letter-essay. To compose it, Paul drew on the OT, early Christian traditions, and even his own letters (especially Galatians and 1–2 Corinthians).

The subject matter of Romans is as complex as its literary form. Over the centuries many themes in the letter have been recognized. Some of these have been proposed as *the* theme of the letter: the gospel of God, salvation for both Jews and non-Jews, justification (or righteousness) by faith, the righteousness or justice of God, freedom from sin and death, dying and rising with Christ, resurrection, hope for the glory of God, unity in Christ, and others. All of these themes are present, and each one expresses some aspect of the multilayered yet unified message Paul sent to the believers in Rome.

These features of Romans are due in part to the fact that Paul was writing to a community he had neither founded nor visited, though he



The Temple of Saturn in Rome  
*iStockPhoto*

knew a number of people there (Rom 16). Paul wrote the letter, in part, to introduce himself and his gospel to the house churches in Rome before paying them a visit (Rom 15:22-33). This planned visit may have been both pastoral and practical, taken in part to raise support for his mission trip westward to Spain. This was to follow a trip east to Jerusalem with funds collected from (largely) Gentile churches for the poor Jewish believers in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-29).

Paul's letter was likely prompted also by tensions between groups of (largely) Gentile and (largely) Jewish believers in Rome, perhaps in different house churches. Some Gentile believers seem to have developed a sense of superiority toward Jews. It's possible that this situation arose after the emperor Claudius expelled members of the Jewish community from Rome in 49 CE (Acts 18:2). If so, it's also possible that new tensions arose when Jews returned to the city, and thus also to the churches, in 54. Since so few Jews had believed the gospel, some Gentile believers may have felt that God had given up on the chosen people. At the same time, many Jewish believers may have wondered if God was fair and just. Had God in fact rejected them?

Writing from Corinth (16:1 refers to Cenchreae, one of Corinth's ports) in the winter of 56–57 or 57–58, Paul explains that the gospel of God's liberating and transforming salvation in Christ is for all people, both Jews and non-Jews. Romans contains the good news of God's faithfulness and mercy shown in the faithful death of Christ to bring about our response of faith and faithfulness. Christ's death and resurrection free us from the power of sin and death, reconciling us to God and to each other as we believe the gospel. When we come to faith, we die and rise with Christ into a new Spirit-led life in a multicultural community. Believing Gentiles and Jews—that is, people of all ethnic groups and races—are united in Christ, restored to humanity's lost righteousness and glory in order to praise God together.

The great themes of Romans, then, were not meant merely to address issues of doctrine, or even to answer burning individual questions such as, "How can I be right with God?" They are, rather, part of Paul's response to questions about God's purposes for Israel, humanity, and the entire creation. The ultimate purpose of Romans is to invite us to share in, and to pass on, that good news.

### **I. Opening (1:1-14)**

- A. Greeting (1:1-7)
- B. Thanksgiving and hope for a visit (1:8-14)

### **II. Theme: The Gospel as the Power of God for the Salvation of All (1:15-17)**

#### **III. God's Faithful and Merciful Response to Human Sin (1:18-4:25)**

- A. Universal human sin and God's unbiased judgment (1:18-3:20)
  1. The Gentile situation (1:18-32)
  2. God's judgment according to deeds (2:1-16)
  3. The Jewish situation (2:17-3:8)
  4. The verdict and its scriptural evidence (3:9-20)
- B. God's faithfulness and mercy in Christ's faithful death (3:21-31)
- C. Righteousness and resurrection from the dead: The witness of Abraham (4:1-25)

#### **IV. The New Reality Created by Christ's Death and Resurrection (5:1-8:39)**

- A. Overview: Reconciliation and righteousness through Christ's death (5:1-11)

#### **B. From Adam to Christ: Freed from sin and bound to grace (5:12-21)**

- C. From sin and death to righteousness and life: Crucified and raised with Christ (6:1-7:6)
- D. From selfish desire to life in the Spirit (7:7-8:39)

#### **V. God's Faithfulness and the Future of Israel (9:1-11:36)**

- A. Jewish unbelief, Paul's sadness, and God's faithfulness (9:1-29)
- B. Restatement of the theme: Salvation for all through the gospel (9:30-10:21)
- C. God's mysterious mercy for Gentiles and Jews (11:1-36)

#### **VI. Faithful Living before the Faithful God (12:1-15:13)**

- A. An overview of life in the Christian community (12:1-13:14)
- B. Christlike hospitality: Inclusion and respect for the weak (14:1-15:13)

#### **VII. Paul's Mission and God's Plan (15:14-33)**

#### **VIII. Greetings and Closing (16:1-27)**



**Greeting**

**1** From Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for God's good news. <sup>2</sup>God promised this good news about his Son ahead of time through his prophets in the holy scriptures. His Son was descended from David. <sup>4</sup>He was publicly identified as God's Son with power through his resurrection from the dead, which was based on the Spirit of holiness. This Son is Jesus Christ our Lord. <sup>5</sup>Through him we have received God's grace and our appointment to be apostles. This was to bring all Gentiles to faithful obedience for his name's sake. <sup>6</sup>You who are called by Jesus Christ are also included among these Gentiles.

<sup>7</sup>To those in Rome who are dearly loved by God and called to be God's people. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Thanksgiving and Paul's plans to visit**

<sup>8</sup>First of all, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because the news about your faithfulness is being spread throughout the whole world. <sup>9</sup>I serve God in my spirit by preaching the good news about God's Son, and God is my witness that I continually mention you <sup>10</sup>in all my prayers. I'm always asking that somehow, by God's will, I might succeed in visiting you at last. <sup>11</sup>I really want to see you to pass along some spiritual gift to you so that you can be strengthened. <sup>12</sup>What I mean is that we can mutually encourage each other while I am with you. We can be encouraged by the faithfulness we find in each other, both your faithfulness and mine.

<sup>13</sup>I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that I planned to visit you many times, although I have been prevented from coming until now. I want to harvest some fruit among you, just as I have done among the other Gentiles. <sup>14</sup>I have a responsibility both to Greeks and to those who don't speak Greek, both to the wise and to the foolish.

**God's righteousness is revealed**

<sup>15</sup>That's why I'm ready to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. <sup>16</sup>I'm not ashamed of the gospel: it is God's own power for salvation to all who have faith in God, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup>God's righteousness is being revealed in the gospel, from faithfulness<sup>a</sup> for faith,<sup>b</sup> as it is written, *The righteous person will live by faith.*<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Or faith <sup>b</sup>Or faithfulness <sup>c</sup>Hab 2:4

1:1-7 Paul introduces himself, the *good news* (or "gospel") he proclaims, Jesus as the content of the good news, and his readers' participation in it.

1:1 *slave of Christ*: Paul is like Christ himself (Phil 2:6-8) and like other key figures in Israel and the early church who saw themselves as the Lord's servant. *apostle*: authorized and commissioned representative. For Paul, an apostle is someone who's seen the risen Jesus (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8) and been *set apart* to proclaim the good news (Gal 1:15).

1:2-3 Paul points out the Jewishness of the gospel: It was promised by the OT prophets and is about Jesus, who is both God's Son and David's "descendant," or son. The Christ (Messiah) was often expected to be a royal descendant of David and, like Israel's earlier kings, would be called God's son (Pss 2:7; 110:1). Paul implies that the Roman emperor isn't God's Son.

1:4 *the resurrection of Jesus is God's act*—through the power of the *Spirit of holiness*, or Holy Spirit (Eph 1:19-20)—of demonstrating that Jesus is, in fact, God's Son, the promised Christ, and *Lord*.

1:5 *we*: Paul, or Paul and his fellow apostles. The source of Paul's apostleship is *God's grace* (1 Cor 15:8-10); its primary focus is *Gentiles*, or non-Jews (Rom 11:13; 15:15-18); and its goal is their *faithful obedience*, or obedient faith (Rom 6:15-20; 10:16; 15:18; 16:26). Faith and faithfulness, or obedience, are inseparable because Jesus was faithful and obedient (Rom 3:21-26; 5:12-21).

1:6-7 God's gracious call has included the believers living in Rome. It reveals that they are God's *dearly loved*.

1:7 *Grace . . . peace*: divine favor and harmony (Heb. *shalom*), Paul's standard letter greeting. It initiates an atmosphere of prayer. *God's people*: or, "God's holy ones."

1:8-12 In the letter's thanksgiving Paul affirms the authenticity of his readers' call and explains how his own call has prevented him from visiting them.

1:8 *faithfulness*: The evidence that the gospel has truly reached Rome is the church's reputation not merely for belief but also for faithfulness (see Rom 1:5).

1:10 *somehow, by God's will*: Paul wants to be clear that it's his ministry, not disinterest, that has stopped him from visiting Rome, and he's waiting for God to create an opportunity for him to go there (cf. Rom 1:13).

1:11-12 Sharing the gospel's spiritual benefits isn't a one-way street but a mutual sharing. Paul promotes mutuality within the churches in Rome (Rom 12:1-15:13) and shows his own practice of it in ministry (Rom 16). *spiritual gift*: not a specific gift but mutual encouragement (1:12).

1:13-15 *prevented*: by ministry commitments and, therefore, by God (Rom 15:22-24). *harvest some fruit*: proclaim the gospel in a way that both strengthens believers and brings in new converts.

1:14 *don't speak Greek*: or "barbarians," the simple and uneducated.

1:16-17 Paul announces the letter's theme. *not*

1:1 Ro 15:16;  
1Co 1:1; 1Co 9:1;  
2Co 1:1; Ga 1:1  
1:2 Lk 1:70;  
Ro 3:21;  
Ro 16:26; Ti 1:2  
1:3 Mt 1:1;  
Jn 1:14; Jn 7:42;  
Ac 2:30; Ro 9:5  
1:4 Mt 4:3;  
Ac 2:24; Ac 13:33  
1:5 Ac 6:7;  
Ac 9:15;  
Ro 16:26  
1:6 Rev 17:14  
1:7 1Co 1:3;  
2Co 1:2; Ga 1:3;  
Eph 1:2; Phi 1:2  
1:8 Ro 16:19;  
1Co 1:4  
1:9 Job 16:19;  
Ro 9:1;  
2Co 1:23;  
Eph 1:16; 2Ti 1:3  
1:10 Ac 18:21;  
Ro 15:32  
1:11 Ac 19:21;  
Ro 15:23  
1:12 Ps 119:63;  
Mal 3:16;  
Ro 15:24;  
Ro 15:32; 2Pt 1:1  
1:13 Ro 11:25;  
Ro 15:22  
1:14 1Co 9:16;  
Col 3:11  
1:15 Ro 12:18;  
Ro 15:20;  
Ac 9:17  
1:16 Mk 8:38;  
Ro 2:9; 1Co 1:18;  
1Co 1:24;  
2Ti 1:8  
1:17 Hab 2:4;  
Ro 3:21;  
Ga 3:11;  
Phi 3:9;  
Heb 10:38

1:18 Eph 5:6;  
Col 3:6  
1:19 Ac 14:17;  
Ro 1:20  
1:20 Ps 19:1;  
Is 40:26; Ro 2:1  
1:21 Gn 6:5;  
Gn 8:21;  
2Ki 17:15;  
Jer 2:5; Eph 4:17  
1:22 Jer 10:14;  
1Co 1:20  
1:23 Dt 4:16;  
Ps 106:20;  
Jer 2:11;  
Ac 17:29;  
1Co 12:2  
1:24 Ro 1:26;  
Ro 1:28;  
Eph 4:19  
1:25 Is 44:20;  
Jer 10:14; Ro 9:5;  
2Co 11:31  
1:26 Lv 18:22;  
Ro 1:24; Ro 1:28;  
1Th 4:5  
1:27 Lv 18:22;  
Lv 20:13; 1Co 6:9  
1:28 Ro 1:24  
1:29 2Co 12:20  
1:30 2Ti 3:2  
1:31 2Ti 3:3  
1:32 Ps 50:18;  
Ac 8:1; Ac 22:20;  
Ro 6:21  
2:1 2Sa 12:5;  
Mt 7:1; Ro 1:20

### Gentiles are without excuse

<sup>18</sup>God's wrath is being revealed from heaven against all the ungodly behavior and the injustice of human beings who silence the truth with injustice. <sup>19</sup>This is because what is known about God should be plain to them because God made it plain to them. <sup>20</sup>Ever since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—God's eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, because they are understood through the things God has made. So humans are without excuse. <sup>21</sup>Although they knew God, they didn't honor God as God or thank him. Instead, their reasoning became pointless, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>While they were claiming to be wise, they made fools of themselves. <sup>23</sup>They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images that look like mortal humans: birds, animals, and reptiles. <sup>24</sup>So God abandoned them to their hearts' desires, which led to the moral corruption of degrading their own bodies with each other. <sup>25</sup>They traded God's truth for a lie, and they worshipped and served the creation instead of the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

<sup>26</sup>That's why God abandoned them to degrading lust. Their females traded natural sexual relations for unnatural sexual relations. <sup>27</sup>Also, in the same way, the males traded natural sexual relations with females, and burned with lust for each other. Males performed shameful actions with males, and they were paid back with the penalty they deserved for their mistake in their own bodies. <sup>28</sup>Since they didn't think it was worthwhile to acknowledge God, God abandoned them to a defective mind to do inappropriate things. <sup>29</sup>So they were filled with all injustice, wicked behavior, greed, and evil behavior. They are full of jealousy, murder, fighting, deception, and malice. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup>they slander people, and they hate God. They are rude and proud, and they brag. They invent ways to be evil, and they are disobedient to their parents. <sup>31</sup>They are without understanding, disloyal, without affection, and without mercy. <sup>32</sup>Though they know God's decision that those who persist in such practices deserve death, they not only keep doing these things but also approve others who practice them.

### Jews are without excuse

**2**So every single one of you who judge others is without any excuse. You condemn yourself when you judge another person because the one who is judging is doing the same things.

**ashamed:** The gospel of the crucified, resurrected Christ is the focus of Paul's life and the source of his honor (1 Cor 1:18-25). **power... salvation:** The gospel is God's means of rescuing humans from sin and death and restoring them to the life for which we have been created. **faith in God:** "in God" is implied in the Greek, as it is in Romans 3:22. **Jew... Greek:** non-Jew, or Gentile, the letter's refrain (Rom 2:9-10; 3:9, 28-30; 10:12; 11:11-14; 15:8-9). **God's righteousness:** or saving justice, a key term for Paul that refers to God's holy character and covenant faithfulness—God's integrity and determination to set things right (e.g., Ps 98; Isa 45:20-25; 51:1-8). **faithfulness:** either God's or Christ's (see Rom 3:21-26). **for faith:** not merely belief but faithfulness (see alternative in the translation note), as in Romans 1:8. God's faithfulness manifested in Christ's faithful death is proclaimed as good news and has as its goal the response of faith and faithfulness in all who hear it (Rom 1:5; 15:26). In this way human beings receive and share in God's own faithfulness and righteousness. **written:** The OT quotation (Hab 2:4) sums up the key elements of the theme of Romans: righteousness, faith/faithfulness, and life.

**1:18-4:25** From the perspective of being in Christ, Paul uses OT testimony (4:1-25) to describe humanity's terrible situation (1:18-3:20) and God's faithful and merciful response (3:21-31).

**1:18-3:20** Paul portrays the hopeless, unrighteous situation of humanity outside Christ, summarized in Romans 3:9, 23: under the power of sin, like slaves, all people have sinned and missed out on God's glory. This charge reminds believers, whether Gentile or Jewish, of the mess from which God has delivered them.

**1:18-32** Humanity's terrible situation before God, with special focus on Gentile idolatry and immorality. When people don't recognize, honor, and thank God, it leads to foolishness, idolatry, immorality, and various unjust and unrighteous practices. Their minds, hearts, and bodies are all affected, and they live in a state of deception. Similar perspectives appear in Wisdom of Solomon 13-15.

**1:18** is *being revealed*: God's wrath is revealed in the present consequences of turning from God. *ungodly behavior*: or "impiety," humanity's improper treatment of God (Rom 1:19-23, 25). *injustice*: or "unrighteousness," people's improper treatment of each other (Rom 1:24, 26-32).

**1:23-25** Worship of the creator becomes worship of the creature, whether in idolatry or immorality or both (Exod 32; Ps 106:19-20). *exchanged*: See also *traded* in Romans 1:25-27. *God abandoned them*: God lets humans reap the consequences of their foolish decisions (cf. Rom 1:26, 28; Ps 81:11-12).

**1:26-27** Like other Jews of his time, Paul sees sexual activity between persons of the same sex as an expression of deception and disorder in human relations. Its place in the discussion suggests that sexual sin negatively affects one's relationship both with God and with other people. *natural... unnatural*: according to the structure of reality given in the creation account in Genesis.

**1:28-32** The list of unrighteous and unjust practices is almost poetic in its description of the human condition. Paul later quotes the OT to make the same point (Rom 3:10-18).

**1:32** *deserve death*: don't deserve eternal life (Rom 3:23; 6:22-23).

**2:1-16** God's way of unbiased judgment according to

*Righteousness* “Righteousness” is one of the most important words in Paul’s vocabulary. When he speaks of God’s righteousness, he is naming God’s most basic character quality. This quality includes God’s holiness, faithfulness (especially to the covenant with Israel), integrity, deliverance, saving activity, and life-giving power. The word may also be translated as God’s “justice,” but this doesn’t mean God’s revenge or punishment. Rather, it means God’s restoration of people and all creation to peace and wholeness. God’s righteousness in action sets things right.

According to Paul, humans were created to share in God’s righteousness. Left to themselves, however, they are unrighteous. They fail to live in right relationship with God and with each other. The gospel is the message that the righteous God of Israel is now re-creating a righteous people consisting of both Jews and Gentiles. God’s righteousness comes by grace through Christ’s righteous death for unrighteous humanity.

Those who believe the gospel are set right with God, share in Christ’s righteousness, and are given new life in him. (Other translations use words like “justify” and “justification” to translate the same family of Greek words.) They become part of the righteous people of God. By the power of God’s Spirit, they practice God’s kind of righteousness and generous justice in their daily lives.

<sup>2</sup>We know that God’s judgment agrees with the truth, and his judgment is against those who do these kinds of things. <sup>3</sup>If you judge those who do these kinds of things while you do the same things yourself, think about this: Do you believe that you will escape God’s judgment? <sup>4</sup>Or do you have contempt for the riches of God’s generosity, tolerance, and patience? Don’t you realize that God’s kindness is supposed to lead you to change your heart and life? <sup>5</sup>You are storing up wrath for yourself because of your stubbornness and your heart that refuses to change. God’s just judgment will be revealed on the day of wrath. <sup>6</sup>God will repay everyone based on their works. <sup>7</sup>On the one hand, he will give eternal life to those who look for glory, honor, and immortality based on their patient good work. <sup>8</sup>But on the other hand, there will be wrath and anger for those who obey wickedness instead of the truth because they are acting out of selfishness and disobedience. <sup>9</sup>There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. <sup>10</sup>But there will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does what is good, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. <sup>11</sup>God does not have favorites.

<sup>12</sup>Those who have sinned outside the Law will also die outside the Law, and those who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law. <sup>13</sup>It isn’t the ones who hear the Law who are righteous in God’s eyes. It is the ones who do what the Law says who will be treated as righteous. <sup>14</sup>Gentiles don’t have the Law. But when they instinctively do what the Law requires they are a Law in themselves, though they don’t have the Law. <sup>15</sup>They show the proof of the Law written on their hearts, and their consciences affirm it. Their conflicting thoughts will accuse them, or even make a defense for them, <sup>16</sup>on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the hidden truth about human beings through Christ Jesus.

<sup>4</sup>Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12

people’s deeds—not merely knowing about the good and right, but doing it.

2:1-5 A stinging critique of hypocrites who judge others while taking God’s favor and grace toward themselves for granted. The singular “you” isn’t directed at a specific person but is meant to include anyone and everyone.

2:2 these kinds of things: See Romans 1:18-32.

2:4 change your heart and life: the meaning of repentance.

2:5 day of wrath: Judgment Day (Rom 5:9; 12:19; 14:10).

2:6-11 The scriptural principle of God’s universal judgment according to deeds. This doesn’t undermine Paul’s later statements about righteousness by God’s grace. Rather, it’s the foundation for grace, because all have sinned.

2:6 Paul quotes from Psalms (28:4; 62:12) and Proverbs (24:12).

2:7-10 Paul applies the OT text to both Gentiles (*the Greek*) and Jews. He’s already said that Gentiles don’t seek honor or do good, and he’s about to accuse Jews of being in the

same boat. He’ll later conclude that no one seeks honor or does good (Rom 3:9-20). Therefore the righteousness and proper glory that humans need, but don’t seek, comes by God’s grace in Christ.

2:7 eternal life: See Romans 5:21; 6:22-23.

2:11 A summary of Paul’s main point.

2:12-16 Paul restates his principle: What matters isn’t having the Law but doing it, or not.

2:12 outside the Law: Gentiles. under the Law: Jews.

2:14-16 Paul raises the possibility of Gentiles who seek glory and righteousness by performing the requirements of the Law without having the Law. His main point isn’t to suggest the existence of countless righteous Gentiles, but to strengthen the principle that God will judge people on the basis of doing, not just knowing, God’s will. *a Law in themselves . . . written on their hearts:* an internal, unwritten testimony to God’s will that is written in the Jewish Law.

2:2 Gn 18:25; Ps 96:13; Is 45:21; Zep 3:5; Rev 15:3  
2:3 Prv 11:21; Prv 16:5; Mt 23:33; Ro 2:1; 1Th 5:3  
2:4 Ex 34:6; Ro 3:25; Ro 9:22; Ro 9:23; 2Pt 3:9  
2:5 Ps 110:5; Jud 1:6; Rev 6:17  
2:6 Ps 62:12; Prv 24:12; Jer 32:19; Mt 16:27  
2:7 Mt 25:46; Lk 8:15; 1Co 15:53; Ga 6:9; 2Ti 1:10  
2:8 Ro 1:18; 2Th 3:12  
2:9 Ro 1:16; 1Pt 4:17  
2:10 Job 22:21; Ps 15:2; Is 57:19; Ro 2:7; 1Pt 1:7  
2:11 Dt 10:17; Ac 10:34; Ga 2:6; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25  
2:12 1Co 9:21  
2:13 Mt 7:21; Jas 1:22  
2:14 Ac 10:35; Ro 1:19; Ro 2:15  
2:15 Jer 31:33; Ac 23:1; Ro 2:14; Ro 9:1; 1Co 8:7  
2:16 Ac 10:42; Ac 17:31; Ro 14:10; Ro 16:25; 1Co 4:5

2:17 Mt 3:11;  
In 5:45; Ro 2:23,  
Ro 9:4

2:18 Ps 147:19;  
Phi 1:10

2:19 Mt 15:14,  
Mt 23:16

2:20 2Ti 1:13

2:21 Mt 23:3

2:22 Ac 19:37

2:23 Ro 2:17

2:24 2Sa 12:14;

Is 52:5;

Eze 36:20;

2Pi 2:2

2:25 Jer 4:4,  
Jer 9:26; Ga 5:3

2:26 Ro 8:4;

1Co 7:19

2:27 Mt 12:41;

Ro 7:6; 2Co 3:6

2:28 Ro 9:6;

Ga 6:15

2:29 Dt 10:16;

Dt 30:6;

2Co 10:18;

Phi 3:3; Col 2:11

3:1 Ro 3:2,  
Ro 9:4

3:2 Dt 4:8;

Ps 147:19;

Ac 7:38; Ro 9:4;

1Pt 4:11

3:3 Ro 10:16;

2Ti 2:13; Heb 4:2

3:4 Ps 51:4,  
Ps 116:11

3:5 Ro 6:19;

1Co 9:8;

Ga 3:15

3:6 Gn 18:25;

Ro 2:16

### *Jews will be judged as well*

- <sup>17</sup>But,  
if you call yourself a Jew;  
if you rely on the Law;  
if you brag about your relationship to God;  
<sup>18</sup>if you know the will of God;  
if you are taught by the Law so that you can figure out  
the things that really matter;  
<sup>19</sup>if you have persuaded yourself that you are:  
a guide for the blind;  
a light to those who are in darkness;  
<sup>20</sup>an educator of the foolish;  
a teacher of infants (since you have the full content of knowledge  
and truth in the Law);  
<sup>21</sup>then why don't you who are teaching others teach yourself?  
If you preach, "No stealing," do you steal?  
<sup>22</sup>If you say, "No adultery," do you commit adultery?  
If you hate idols, do you rob temples?  
<sup>23</sup>If you brag about the Law, do you shame God by breaking the Law? <sup>24</sup>As it is written: *The name of God is discredited by the Gentiles because of you.*<sup>e</sup>  
<sup>25</sup>Circumcision is an advantage if you do what the Law says. But if you are a person who breaks the Law, your status of being circumcised has changed into not being circumcised.  
<sup>26</sup>So if the person who isn't circumcised keeps the Law, won't his status of not being circumcised be counted as if he were circumcised? <sup>27</sup>The one who isn't physically circumcised but keeps the Law will judge you. You became a lawbreaker after you had the written Law and circumcision. <sup>28</sup>It isn't the Jew who maintains outward appearances who will receive praise from God, and it isn't people who are outwardly circumcised on their bodies. <sup>29</sup>Instead, it is the person who is a Jew inside, who is circumcised in spirit, not literally. That person's praise doesn't come from people but from God.

### *God's faithfulness and justice*

- 3** So what's the advantage of being a Jew? Or what's the benefit of circumcision? <sup>2</sup>Plenty in every way. First of all, the Jews were trusted with God's revelations. <sup>3</sup>What does it matter, then, if some weren't faithful? Their lack of faith won't cancel God's faithfulness, will it? <sup>4</sup>Absolutely not! God must be true, even if every human being is a liar, as it is written:  
*So that it can show that you are right in your words;  
and you will triumph when you are judged.*<sup>f</sup>  
<sup>5</sup>But if our lack of righteousness confirms God's justice, what will we say? That God, who brings wrath upon us, isn't just (I'm speaking rhetorically)? <sup>6</sup>Absolutely not! If God weren't

<sup>e</sup>Isa 52:5 LXX <sup>f</sup>Ps 51:4

2:17–3:8 The Jewish situation before God, balancing the emphasis on the Gentiles (Rom 1:18–32). Although Paul may exaggerate in order to make his point, he's serious about the extent of the human problem.

2:17–24 This stinging charge is written in the poetic style of a prophet like Amos. Paul applies the principles of Romans 2:1–16 to his own people. "You" (singular) is both any of his fellow Jews and his people as a whole. Paul accuses them of pride and especially hypocrisy, discrediting God's reputation.

2:17–20 The "if" phrases reflect certain aspects of Jewish self-understanding in Paul's day.

2:18 *the things that really matter*: the essential rather than the nonessential aspects of Jewish Law.

2:19 *guide... darkness*: representatives of God to the Gentiles (Rom 2:19–21; Isa 42:6–7).

2:21–24 Paul claims that, in breaking their own commandments, his fellow Jews are hypocrites, bring God public shame (Ezek 36:16–24), and fail to keep the covenant.

2:22 *rob temples*: perhaps a reference to occasional attacks on non-Jewish temples.

2:25–29 Paul redefines "Jew" in terms of inward rather than outward circumcision.

2:25–27 The mark of the covenant, *circumcision*, is valuable and valid only when the covenant is actually kept.

2:29 *Jew inside... circumcised in spirit*: Paul draws on themes from Deuteronomy (10:16; 30:6), Jeremiah (4:4; 9:23–26; 31:31–34), and Ezekiel (36:25–27) about a new covenant in which the Law will be written on people's hearts so that they'll keep their covenant responsibilities. Paul is preparing the way for his emphasis on the Spirit (Rom 5:5; 7:6; 8).

3:1–8 By creating an imaginary dialogue, Paul raises and answers possible objections to the claims of Romans 2:17–29. Being Jewish does have advantages, and the Jews' unfaithfulness doesn't mean that God is unfaithful.

3:2 *Plenty*: See Romans 9:4–5.

3:4 The quotation from Psalm 51:4 is spoken to God.

just, how could he judge the world? <sup>7</sup>But if God's truth is demonstrated by my lie and it increases his glory, why am I still judged as a sinner? <sup>8</sup>Why not say, "Let's do evil things so that good things will come out of it"? (Some people who slander us accuse us of saying that, but these people deserve criticism.)

**All are under the power of sin**

<sup>9</sup>So what are we saying? Are we better off? Not at all. We have already stated the charge: both Jews and Greeks are all under the power of sin. <sup>10</sup>As it is written,

*There is no righteous person, not even one.*

<sup>11</sup>*There is no one who understands.*

*There is no one who looks for God.*

<sup>12</sup>*They all turned away.*

*They have become worthless together.*

*There is no one who shows kindness.*

*There is not even one.<sup>a</sup>*

<sup>13</sup>*Their throat is a grave that has been opened.*

*They are deceitful with their tongues,  
and the poison of vipers is under their lips.<sup>b</sup>*

<sup>14</sup>*Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.<sup>c</sup>*

<sup>15</sup>*Their feet are quick to shed blood;*

*<sup>16</sup>destruction and misery are in their ways;*

*<sup>17</sup>and they don't know the way of peace.<sup>d</sup>*

<sup>18</sup>*There is no fear of God in their view of the world.<sup>e</sup>*

<sup>19</sup>Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, in order to shut every mouth and make it so the whole world has to answer to God. <sup>20</sup>It follows that no human being will be treated as righteous in his presence by doing what the Law says, because the knowledge of sin comes through the Law.

**God's righteousness through faithfulness of Christ**

<sup>21</sup>But now God's righteousness has been revealed apart from the Law, which is confirmed by the Law and the Prophets. <sup>22</sup>God's righteousness comes through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who have faith in him. There's no distinction. <sup>23</sup>All have sinned and fall short of God's glory, <sup>24</sup>but all are treated as righteous freely by his grace because of a ransom that was

<sup>a</sup>Ps 14:1-3 <sup>b</sup>Ps 5:9 <sup>c</sup>Ps 10:7 <sup>d</sup>Isa 59:7-8 <sup>e</sup>Ps 36:1

3:7-8 The imaginary speaker draws a completely misguided conclusion. Apparently some people had reached this conclusion from Paul's teaching.

3:9-20 Paul concludes the discussion that began in Romans 1:18. He provides a chain of OT quotations to support his claim about universal human sin.

3:9 All people share a wide range of symptoms that reveal an underlying disease. Their practices or sins (plural) show that they share a common problem: like slaves, humans are under the dominion of a power that Paul calls *sin* (singular). Today the singular form is sometimes capitalized (i.e., "Sin") to highlight its difference from "sins."

3:10-18 The texts Paul quotes from Ecclesiastes, the Psalms, and Isaiah indicate the extent of sin's effects throughout the human race (*no... not even one... no one... no one... all... no one... not even one*). The texts also attest to the variety of humanity's evil practices. Misusing various parts of their bodies (*throat... tongues... lips... mouths... feet*), they are fearlessly (3:18) sinful from head to toe. Humanity's sins include especially violence in speech and action, the opposite of the OT vision of *peace* (3:17).

3:19-20 The ultimate conclusion of the argument that started in Romans 1:18. The Law (OT) confirms that the *whole world* is under God's judgment; God will consider *no human being* righteous (Ps 143:2; Gal 2:16) by doing

the Law. Jews as well as Gentiles need the new life that comes from freedom; the Law provides only knowledge of sin (Rom 7:7-12).

3:21-26 Paul expands on the letter's theme (Rom 1:16-17), presented now as the solution to humanity's hopeless situation described in Romans 1:18-3:20. What humans lack and cannot attain on their own is provided by God in Christ. God's righteousness, grace, mercy, and faithfulness have been revealed in Jesus' faithful death. All who respond in faith receive that righteousness.

3:21 *confirmed*: Although the Law isn't the means of receiving God's righteousness, both the Law and the Prophets (the whole OT) actually confirm the good news Paul summarizes. OT quotations therefore abound in Romans. 3:22 *God's righteousness*: either God's saving work that restores sinners to right relations with him, or the gift of right relations and behavior that results from God's saving work. *faithfulness of Jesus Christ*: his saving death as an act of faithfulness and obedience (Rom 5:18-19). *in him*: in God (implied). *no distinction*: The means of salvation is the same for all, whether Jew or Gentile (Rom 2:10-11; 10:11-13).

3:23 *God's glory*: the eternal splendor and holiness of God that humans were created to recognize, confess, and share (cf. Rom 1:23; 2:7, 10; 5:2; 8:17, 21, 30).

3:24 *treated as righteous*: God's gracious salvation restores

3:7 Ro 3:4,  
Ro 9:19  
3:8 Ro 6:1,  
Ro 6:15  
3:9 Ro 2:1,  
Ro 3:19,  
Ro 3:23,  
Ro 11:32,  
Ga 3:22  
3:10 Ps 14:1,  
Ps 53:1  
3:11 Ps 142:3  
3:12 Ecc 7:20,  
Mt 25:30  
3:13 Ps 5:9,  
Ps 140:3  
3:14 Ps 10:7,  
Ps 59:12  
3:15 Prv 1:16,  
Is 59:7-8  
3:17 Is 59:7-8  
3:18 Ps 36:1  
3:19 Ps 107:42,  
Eze 16:63,  
Jn 10:34,  
Ro 2:12, Ro 3:9  
3:20 Ps 143:2,  
Ac 13:39, Ro 7:7,  
Ro 9:32, Ga 2:16  
3:21 Ac 10:43,  
Ro 1:2, Ro 1:17  
3:22 Ro 5:1,  
Ro 10:12,  
Ga 2:16, Ga 3:28,  
Col 3:11  
3:23 Ro 3:9  
3:24 Ac 15:11,  
Ro 4:16,  
1Co 1:30,  
Eph 1:7,  
Col 1:14

3:25 Ac 17:30;  
Ro 2:4, Ro 5:9;  
1In 2:2, 1In 4:10  
3:26 Ps 85:10;  
Is 45:21  
3:27 Ro 2:17,  
Ro 2:23, Ro 4:2;  
1Co 1:29

3:28  
Ac 13:38-39;  
Ro 3:20-21;  
Ga 2:16  
3:29 Ro 9:24,  
Ro 10:12,  
Ro 15:9  
3:30 Ga 3:8  
3:31 Mt 5:17;  
Ro 3:4

4:1 Mt 3:9

4:2 Ro 3:27;  
1Co 1:31  
4:3 Gn 15:6;  
Ro 4:9, Ro 4:22;  
Ga 3:6; Jas 2:23

4:4 Ro 11:6

4:5 Ro 3:22,  
Ro 4:3, Ro 4:24

4:6 Ps 32:1

4:7 Ps 32:1-2

4:8 Ps 32:1-2;  
2Co 5:19

4:9 Gn 15:6;  
Ro 3:30, Ro 4:3,  
Ro 4:13; Ga 3:6

4:11 Gn 17:10,  
Gn 17:11;  
Lk 19:9; Ro 3:22,  
Ro 4:16

paid by Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup>Through his faithfulness, God displayed Jesus as the place of sacrifice where mercy is found by means of his blood. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness in passing over sins that happened before, <sup>26</sup>during the time of God's patient tolerance. He also did this to demonstrate that he is righteous in the present time, and to treat the one who has faith in Jesus as righteous.

<sup>27</sup>What happens to our bragging? It's thrown out. With which law? With what we have accomplished under the Law? <sup>28</sup>No, not at all, but through the law of faith. We consider that a person is treated as righteous by faith, apart from what is accomplished under the Law. <sup>29</sup>Or is God the God of Jews only? Isn't God the God of Gentiles also? Yes, God is also the God of Gentiles. <sup>30</sup>Since God is one, then the one who makes the circumcised righteous by faith will also make the one who isn't circumcised righteous through faith. <sup>31</sup>Do we then cancel the Law through this faith? Absolutely not! Instead, we confirm the Law.

### Abraham's faith was credited as righteousness

**4** So what are we going to say? Are we going to find that Abraham is our ancestor on the basis of genealogy? <sup>2</sup>Because if Abraham was made righteous because of his actions, he would have had a reason to brag, but not in front of God. <sup>3</sup>What does the scripture say? *Abraham had faith in God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.*<sup>1</sup> <sup>4</sup>Workers' salaries aren't credited to them on the basis of an employer's grace but rather on the basis of what they deserve. <sup>5</sup>But faith is credited as righteousness to those who don't work, because they have faith in God who makes the ungodly righteous. <sup>6</sup>In the same way, David also pronounces a blessing on the person to whom God credits righteousness apart from actions:

<sup>7</sup>*Happy are those whose actions outside the Law are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*

<sup>8</sup>*Happy are those whose sin isn't counted against them by the Lord.*<sup>m</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Is this state of happiness only for the circumcised or is it also for those who aren't circumcised? We say, "Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness." <sup>10</sup>So how was it credited? When he was circumcised, or when he wasn't circumcised? In fact, it was credited while he still wasn't circumcised, not after he was circumcised. <sup>11</sup>He received the sign of circumcision

<sup>1</sup>Gen 15:6 <sup>m</sup>Ps 32:1-2

sinners (Rom 3:23) to right relations with God and makes them righteous (Rom 4:5, 13). God's treatment isn't a fiction but the beginning of a new reality, *ransom that was paid*: not a payoff to someone (whether Satan or God) but an act of liberation from slavery.

3:25 Christ's death is the demonstration of God's *faithfulness, mercy, and righteousness. place of sacrifice... mercy... blood*: the mercy seat in the holy of holies (Lev 16:12-16). The emphasis is on grace, not punishment.

3:26 *who has faith in Jesus*: or "shares in the faithfulness of Jesus" by accepting and identifying with his faithful, saving death (cf. Rom 4:16).

3:27-31 There's no room for pride in a community made righteous solely by God's grace and the response of faith.

3:27-28 *With which law?*: a play on words (cf. Rom 8:2-3). Paul asks, "Which principle (law), or way, of attaining righteousness excludes pride?" He responds, "The way of grace and faith, rather than the way of following the Law."

3:29-30 The one God has only one way of making people, both Jews and Gentiles, righteous. This is a summary of Paul's gospel (Rom 3:22; 1:16-17; 10:11-13).

3:31 Paul expects to be charged with disregard for the Law, either the books of Moses or the OT as a whole. Chapter 4 is part of his proof that the gospel actually upholds the Law, and vice versa.

4:1-25 The story of Abraham and Sarah, with support from David, serves as OT testimony (see Rom 3:31) to the gospel. Paul focuses on three things: (1) God's grace as the source of Abraham's righteousness; (2) Abraham's faithful

trust in God's promise—not in his circumcision, his deeds, or the Law—as the basis for his being considered righteous; and (3) the story of Abraham and Sarah as a story of death and resurrection. All who share in this kind of faith in the gospel's promise of new life through death and resurrection with Christ (Rom 6) are Abraham's descendants, whether circumcised or not (cf. Gal 3:6-18).

4:1-8 Paul cites two OT texts (Gen 15:6; Ps 32:1-2) to show that righteousness comes from God's grace, not human action.

4:1 *genealogy*: or "the flesh." The point of Paul's question is that what matters is being a spiritual descendant of Abraham by faith, not a physical descendant.

4:2 *made righteous*: The CEB translation stresses the fact that when God "credited" Abraham's faith as righteousness (Rom 4:3), God wasn't misrepresenting reality but creating a new reality (Rom 3:24).

4:3 Paul and James use the word "faith" in different ways, but they agree that belief and action are inseparable (Gen 15:6; cf. Gal 3:6-9; Jas 2:21-24).

4:4-5 *credited*: Paul draws on the accounting language of the Greek translation of Genesis 15:6 to show that righteousness is an unearned gift of God's grace given to the unrighteous. Righteousness isn't something earned, like wages. *ungodly*: Compare with Romans 1:18; 5:6.

4:6-8 David's words in Psalm 32:1-2 are a second witness, again using an accounting image, to God's undeserved grace, specifically God's forgiveness.

4:9-12 See Romans 4:3. Because God regarded Abraham's

as a seal of the righteousness that comes from the faith he had while he still wasn't circumcised. It happened this way so that Abraham could be the ancestor of all those people who aren't circumcised, who have faith in God, and so are counted as righteous. <sup>12</sup>He could also be the ancestor of those circumcised people, who aren't only circumcised but who also walk in the path of faith, like our ancestor Abraham did while he wasn't circumcised.

**Abraham's promise is received through faith**

<sup>13</sup>The promise to Abraham and to his descendants, that he would inherit the world, didn't come through the Law but through the righteousness that comes from faith. <sup>14</sup>If they inherit because of the Law, then faith has no effect and the promise has been canceled. <sup>15</sup>The Law brings about wrath. But when there isn't any law, there isn't any violation of the law. <sup>16</sup>That's why the inheritance comes through faith, so that it will be on the basis of God's grace. In that way, the promise is secure for all of Abraham's descendants, not just for those who are related by Law but also for those who are related by the faith of Abraham, who is the father of all of us. <sup>17</sup>As it is written: *I have appointed you to be the father of many nations.* <sup>18</sup>So Abraham is our father in the eyes of God in whom he had faith, the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that don't exist into existence. <sup>19</sup>When it was beyond hope, he had faith in the hope that he would become the father of many nations, in keeping with the promise God spoke to him: *That's how many descendants you will have.* <sup>20</sup>Without losing faith, Abraham, who was nearly 100 years old, took into account his own body, which was as good as dead, and Sarah's womb, which was dead. <sup>21</sup>He didn't hesitate with a lack of faith in God's promise, but he grew strong in faith and gave glory to God. <sup>22</sup>He was fully convinced that God was able to do what he promised. <sup>23</sup>Therefore, it was credited to him as righteousness.

<sup>24</sup>But the scripture that says *it was credited to him*<sup>p</sup> wasn't written only for Abraham's sake. <sup>25</sup>It was written also for our sake, because it is going to be credited to us too. It will be credited to those of us who have faith in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. <sup>26</sup>He was handed over because of our mistakes, and he was raised to meet the requirements of righteousness for us.

**Therefore, we have peace with God**

**5** Therefore, since we have been made righteous through his faithfulness<sup>q</sup> combined with our faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup>We have access by

<sup>m</sup>Gen 17:5 <sup>n</sup>Gen 15:5 <sup>p</sup>Gen 15:6 <sup>q</sup>Or faith

faith as proof of his righteousness before Abraham was circumcised (Gen 17:9-14), circumcision wasn't required for righteousness. Nor is it required now.

**4:11-12 seal:** confirmation. Abraham is the ancestor, or "father" (Gal 3:7-9), of Gentiles (the uncircumcised), who share his faith in God; and of Jews (the circumcised), who also share his faith. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters (cf. Gal 5:6).

**4:13-17** Just as Abraham's descendants aren't defined by being circumcised, neither are they defined by possessing the Law.

**4:13 inherit the world:** have many descendants throughout the world (see Gen 17:5; 15:5, which are both quoted in Rom 4:17, 18). The promise to Abraham came before the Law was given to Moses.

**4:15 wrath:** rather than life (cf. Rom 3:20). *isn't any law:* See Romans 5:13.

**4:16** Grace and faith have become the new way of defining who is part of Abraham's family, his descendants and heirs of the promise made to him (Gal 3:18, 23-29).

**4:17** The promise from Genesis 17:5 means that Gentiles (*many nations*) will be Abraham's descendants. *the God who gives life:* the God who brings resurrection out of death, whether for Abraham, for Jesus, or for believers.

**4:18-22** Abraham's hope and trust in God's promise (Gen 15:5-6).

**4:18 beyond hope:** beyond the age for childbearing.

**4:19** The "deadness" of Abraham's body and Sarah's womb emphasizes God's resurrection power, demonstrated in the birth of Isaac (Gen 21:1-8). Paul assumes his readers know the story.

**4:20-22** Abraham's faith was robust and full of hope, trust, and praise. *credited:* See Romans 4:3, 9 (Gen 15:6).

**4:23-25** The story of Abraham's faith and righteousness points ahead to the gospel and to believers in Paul's own day.

**4:24 faith in the one who raised:** As with Abraham (Rom 4:17), the faith that leads to righteousness is faith in the God of resurrection (Rom 8:34; 10:9).

**4:25** Compare with Isaiah 53. *handed over:* to death (Rom 8:32). *mistakes:* sins. *was raised:* See Romans 6:4; 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:4. Sinners who, by faith, share in Jesus' death and resurrection (Rom 6) are made righteous by God, just like Abraham.

**5:1-8:39** This section of Romans contains some of Paul's most significant teaching on the salvation and new life that come through Christ's death and resurrection. Paul isn't presenting a sequential outline of phases in the Christian life. Rather, he looks at new life in Christ from a variety of angles. A succinct overview in Romans 5:1-11 is followed by three passages that contrast life outside of Christ with new life in Christ. Concrete practices of the new life are discussed in Romans 12:1-15:13.

**5:1-11** This artfully constructed passage is a bridge from

**4:12** Mt 3:9; Lk 16:23; Jn 8:39; Jn 8:40; Ro 9:7  
**4:13** Gn 17:4; Ga 3:16; Ga 3:29  
**4:14** Ga 3:18  
**4:15** Ro 3:20; Ro 5:13; Ro 7:7; 1Co 15:56; Ga 3:10  
**4:16** Ro 3:24; Ro 4:11  
**4:17** Gn 17:5; Jn 5:21; 1Co 1:28  
**4:18** Gn 15:5; Ro 4:17  
**4:19** Gn 17:17; Gn 18:11; Heb 11:11; Heb 11:12  
**4:20** Mt 9:8  
**4:21** Gn 18:14; Mt 19:26; Heb 11:19  
**4:22** Ro 4:3  
**4:23** Ro 15:4; 1Co 9:10; 1Co 10:11  
**4:24** Ac 2:24; Ro 10:9; 1Pt 1:21  
**4:25** Is 53:5; Ro 5:6; Ro 5:8; Ro 8:32; 1Co 15:17  
**5:1** Ac 10:36; Ac 13:39; Ro 3:22; Ro 3:28; Ga 2:16  
**5:2** 1Co 15:1; Eph 2:18; Eph 3:12; Heb 10:19; 1Pt 3:18

5:3 Lk 21:19;  
Jas 1:3  
5:4 Jas 1:12;  
1Pt 1:7  
5:5 Ps 119:116;  
Ac 2:33; Ga 4:6;  
Phi 1:20; Ti 3:6  
5:6 Ro 4:25;  
Ro 5:8; Ga 4:4  
5:7 2Sa 23:14;  
Ro 16:4  
5:8 Jn 3:16;  
In 15:13; Ro 5:6;  
1Pt 3:18; 1Jn 4:9  
5:9 Ro 1:18;  
Ro 3:25;  
1Th 1:10  
5:10 2Co 5:18;  
2Co 5:19;  
Col 1:20;  
Col 1:21;  
Heb 7:25  
5:11 Ro 5:10;  
2Co 5:18;  
2Co 5:19;  
Phi 3:3  
5:12 Gn 2:17;  
Gn 3:6, Gn 3:19;  
Ro 6:23;  
1Co 15:21  
5:13 Ro 4:15  
5:14 Hos 6:7;  
1Co 15:22;  
1Co 15:45  
5:15 Ac 15:11;  
Ro 5:12; Ro 5:17;  
Ro 5:19; Ro 6:23  
5:16 1Co 11:32  
5:17 Ro 5:15;  
Rev 22:5

faith into this grace in which we stand through him, and we boast in the hope of God's glory. <sup>3</sup>But not only that! We even take pride in our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>endurance produces character, and character produces hope. <sup>5</sup>This hope doesn't put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

<sup>6</sup>While we were still weak, at the right moment, Christ died for ungodly people. <sup>7</sup>It isn't often that someone will die for a righteous person, though maybe someone might dare to die for a good person. <sup>8</sup>But God shows his love for us, because while we were still sinners Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>So, now that we have been made righteous by his blood, we can be even more certain that we will be saved from God's wrath through him. <sup>10</sup>If we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son while we were still enemies, now that we have been reconciled, how much more certain is it that we will be saved by his life? <sup>11</sup>And not only that: we even take pride in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, the one through whom we now have a restored relationship with God.

### Grace now rules

<sup>12</sup>So, in the same way that sin entered the world through one person, and death came through sin, so death spread to all human beings with the result that all sinned. <sup>13</sup>Although sin was in the world, since there was no Law, it wasn't taken into account until the Law came. <sup>14</sup>But death ruled from Adam until Moses, even over those who didn't sin in the same way Adam did—Adam was a type of the one who was coming.

<sup>15</sup>But the free gift of Christ isn't like Adam's failure. If many people died through what one person did wrong, God's grace is multiplied even more for many people with the gift—of the one person Jesus Christ—that comes through grace. <sup>16</sup>The gift isn't like the consequences of one person's sin. The judgment that came from one person's sin led to punishment, but the free gift that came out of many failures led to the verdict of acquittal. <sup>17</sup>If death ruled because of one person's failure, those who receive the multiplied grace and the gift of righteousness will even more certainly rule in life through the one person Jesus Christ.

chapters 1–4 to chapters 5–8. Paul summarizes the past, present, and future aspects of the new life of reconciliation and righteousness (see also 2 Cor 5:14–21). This life is the result of God's gracious love to sinful humanity, which was demonstrated in Christ's death. Continued now in the gift of the Spirit, this new life is the source of certain hope for future salvation. The language about the saving activity of God, Christ, and the Spirit anticipates the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (see also Rom 8:9–11; 15:17–19, 30). **5:1** *made righteous*: restored to right relations with God and made to share in God's righteousness; this phrase summarizes Romans 3:21–4:25. *through his faithfulness combined with our faith*: The Greek text has only "through faith," which could mean the human response of faith (the ordinary interpretation) or Christ's faithfulness in his death. The CEB translation includes both, since that seems to be precisely the point Paul has been making (see notes on Rom 1:16–17; 3:21–26).

**5:2** *this grace*: the new situation of peace and favor with God. *God's glory*: God's eternal splendor, which those outside of Christ lack (Rom 3:23) and which is believers' destiny. *boast*: the opposite of bragging about deserving God's favor (Rom 3:27–28). In the honor-shame culture of Rome, which celebrated its own eternal glory and power, the gospel's hope of God's glory is the source of "pride" (honor), not shame (Rom 5:3; 1:16).

**5:3–5** *problems*: sufferings that, in Christ, strengthen character and increase hope (2 Cor 11:30).

**5:5** *love of God*: See Romans 8:39. *Holy Spirit*: See Romans 8.

**5:6–8** Christ's death shows God's gracious, surprising love for the undeserving but needy. *weak . . . ungodly . . . sinners*: Compare with Romans 3:25; 4:25; 8:32.

**5:9–10** God's past action to make enemies into friends

(*made righteous . . . reconciled*) guarantees that those friends (believers) *will be saved* from the coming divine wrath (1 Thess 1:10). *the death of his Son . . . his life*: God's salvation comes through both the death and the resurrection of Jesus (Rom 4:25; 6:1–11).

**5:11** *restored relationship*: restates the themes of peace, reconciliation, and being made righteous.

**5:12–21** In the first of three passages that contrast life outside Christ and in Christ, Paul carefully analyzes the differences between the unrighteous disobedience of Adam (see Gen 3) and the righteous obedience of Christ (his death), including the *consequences* (5:16) of each.

**5:12** Paul summarizes the story of Adam in terms of its consequences. *sin . . . death*: the two powers unleashed by Adam's disobedience that enslave the human race and from which Christ provides liberation. *with the result that*: Sinful acts are the consequence of the powers of sin and death at work in the world.

**5:13–14** The power of death ruled humanity after Adam, even though sins weren't counted before Moses gave the Law. *type*: a figure that foreshadows another. Adam foreshadows Christ in his differences (Rom 5:15–19).

**5:15–19** Paul describes Adam's act as a *failure* (or transgression), a *wrong*, a *sin*, and a *disobedience*. The consequences for the human race are *death*, *judgment*, *punishment*, and being *made sinners*. Paul describes Christ's act as a *free gift*, an act of *divine grace*, a *righteous act*, and *obedience*. Its consequences for humanity are *acquittal*, *righteousness*, *life*, and being *made righteous*. *grace*: the undeserved, saving mercy of God, which is the unifying theme in Paul's treatment of Christ's death here, as in Romans 3:24; 5:6–8.

**5:17–18** The righteousness needed for full and eternal life (Rom 2:1–16), but not attainable by humans enslaved to



*Life/Eternal Life* God's desire for humans is that they experience the fullness of life intended for them, both now and forever. This life consists of sharing in God's character (righteousness) and God's glory (eternal splendor). But the power of sin in the world and the reality of human evil have created a culture of death, rather than life. That death is both present and future.

In Christ's death and resurrection, God has defeated both sin and death. The resurrection creates a new reality of life that, like death, is both present and future. Believers are already raised to new life in the present, a life that is lived to and for God. They'll also be raised to eternal life in the future as part of the renewal of the entire creation.

For this reason, all present human activity in the body should reflect God's will. Individually and together, believers offer every aspect of their lives to God as a holy act of daily worship. By glorifying God in this way, they recover in part the glory that humanity had lost, even as they suffer with Christ and the whole creation in the present. Their certain hope is that this suffering will soon give way to eternal glory.

<sup>18</sup>So now the righteous requirements necessary for life are met for everyone through the righteous act of one person, just as judgment fell on everyone through the failure of one person. <sup>19</sup>Many people were made righteous through the obedience of one person, just as many people were made sinners through the disobedience of one person. <sup>20</sup>The Law stepped in to amplify the failure, but where sin increased, grace multiplied even more. <sup>21</sup>The result is that grace will rule through God's righteousness, leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, just as sin ruled in death.

**Our new life in Christ**

**6** So what are we going to say? Should we continue sinning so grace will multiply? <sup>2</sup>Absolutely not! All of us died to sin. How can we still live in it? <sup>3</sup>Or don't you know that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore, we were buried together with him through baptism into his death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too can walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>If we were united together in a death like his, we will also be united together in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup>This is what we know: the person that we used to be was crucified with him in order to get rid of the corpse that had been controlled by sin. That way we wouldn't be slaves to sin anymore, <sup>7</sup>because a person who has died has been freed from sin's power. <sup>8</sup>But if we died with Christ, we have faith that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup>We know that Christ has been raised from the dead and he will never die again. Death no longer has power over him. <sup>10</sup>He died to sin once

sin (Rom 3:9-20), is displayed in Christ's death (see Rom 3:21-26; 8:3-4).

5:20-21 The Law of Moses meant the increase of sin because sin was now identified as such (see Rom 5:13). But God's response to greater sin was greater grace: Christ's gracious death. This statement was probably misunderstood as giving humans freedom to sin in order to elicit more of God's grace; Paul squashes this misinterpretation in Romans 6. *grace will rule*: The rule of grace has already begun, displacing the reign of sin among those who believe. One power (*sin*) leads to death, while the other (*grace*) leads to eternal life (cf. Rom 6:22-23).

6:1-7:6 Paul builds on the end of chapter 5, continuing to see sin and grace each as powerful masters. He contrasts life without Christ as slavery to sin with life in Christ as slavery to God and righteousness. He does this by expounding on the meaning of baptism and the pattern of life it inaugurates. Both baptism itself and the life that follows mean sharing in Christ's righteous death and his resurrection, the key events in the gospel (1 Cor 15:3-5). Freedom from "the power of sin" (Rom 3:9), or death to it, is followed by resurrection to new life now (6:4) and to eternal life later (6:8, 23). In this new life, the master *sin* is replaced by the master *righteousness* (6:18). Those who have been made righteous by Christ's obedient,

righteous death will lead a life of righteousness and obedience to God.

6:1-11 In baptism believers are immersed into Christ (cf. Gal 3:27). They are co-crucified (6:5, 6) and co-buried (6:4) with Jesus. They are already raised to new life (6:4) and will be co-raised (6:5, 8) with Jesus to live with him. Sharing in Jesus' defeat of the powers of sin and death, they are freed from the power of sin now, and they will be freed from the power of death in the future.

6:1-2 Paul's tone and questions indicate the foolishness of the position he opposes and the logic of what he will propose. *multiply*: See Romans 5:20. Apparently, Paul's emphasis on grace wrongly led some to think he didn't take sin seriously, or even promoted it (Rom 3:8). *died to sin*: ended the relationship to sin as master (Rom 6:6).

6:4 *glory of the Father*: God's splendor and power (Col 2:12; Eph 1:20). *newness of life*: We share in Christ's resurrection now by living a new life of faith and righteousness.

6:6 *person that we used to be . . . corpse*: the former self who was dead with respect to God. Sharing in Christ's death and resurrection creates a new person (Gal 2:19-20).

6:10-11 *once and for all*: one time. *he lives*: now and continually. Like Jesus, those who have died once in relation to sin (in baptism) are permanently dead to sin as their master and permanently alive for God.

5:18 Ro 5:12;  
1Co 15:22  
5:19 Ro 5:12;  
Phi 2:7  
5:20 Ro 3:20,  
Ro 6:1, Ro 7:7;  
Ga 3:19;  
1Ti 1:14  
5:21 In 1:17;  
Ro 5:12, Ro 5:14,  
Ro 6:23  
6:1 Ro 3:5,  
Ro 3:8, Ro 6:15  
6:2 Ro 6:11,  
Ro 7:4; Col 2:20,  
Col 3:3; 1Pt 2:24  
6:3 Mt 18:19;  
Ro 6:4; Ga 2:20,  
Ga 3:27;  
1Pt 3:21  
6:4 Ro 6:9;  
2Co 5:17;  
Ga 6:15;  
Col 2:12,  
Col 3:10  
6:5 Ro 6:8;  
2Co 4:10;  
Phi 3:10;  
Col 2:12, Col 3:1  
6:6 Ro 7:24;  
Ga 5:24;  
Ga 6:14;  
Eph 4:22;  
Col 3:9  
6:7 Ro 6:18;  
1Pt 4:1  
6:8 2Ti 2:11  
6:9 Ac 2:24;  
Ro 6:4; Rev 1:18  
6:10 2Co 5:15;  
Heb 7:27

6:11 In 20:31;  
Ro 6:2; Ga 2:19;  
Col 3:3

6:12 Ps 19:13

6:13 Ro 6:16,  
Ro 6:19, Ro 7:5,  
Ro 12:1; Col 3:5

6:14 Ro 6:12,  
Ro 7:4, Ro 8:2;  
Ga 4:21

6:15 Ro 6:1

6:16 In 8:34;  
Ro 6:21;  
2Pt 2:19

6:17 Ro 1:8;  
2Ti 1:13

6:18 In 8:32;  
Ro 6:7; Ro 6:22,  
Ro 8:2

6:19 Ro 3:5,  
Ro 6:13

6:20 Ro 6:16

6:21 Prv 14:12;  
Ro 1:32; Ro 6:16;  
Ro 6:23; Ga 6:8

6:22 Mt 25:46;  
Ro 6:18;  
1Pt 2:16

6:23 Eze 18:4;  
Ro 2:7; Ro 5:12,  
Ro 5:21; Ga 6:8

7:1 Ro 1:13

7:2 1Co 7:39

7:3 Mt 5:32

7:4 Ro 7:6,  
Ro 8:2; 2Co 11:2;  
Ga 2:19, Ga 5:18

7:5 Ro 6:13,  
Ro 7:23; Ga 5:24

and for all with his death, but he lives for God with his life. <sup>11</sup>In the same way, you also should consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

<sup>12</sup>So then, don't let sin rule your body, so that you do what it wants. <sup>13</sup>Don't offer parts of your body to sin, to be used as weapons to do wrong. Instead, present yourselves to God as people who have been brought back to life from the dead, and offer all the parts of your body to God to be used as weapons to do right. <sup>14</sup>Sin will have no power over you, because you aren't under Law but under grace.

### Freedom from sin

<sup>15</sup>So what? Should we sin because we aren't under Law but under grace? Absolutely not! <sup>16</sup>Don't you know that if you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, that you are slaves of the one whom you obey? That's true whether you serve as slaves of sin, which leads to death, or as slaves of the kind of obedience that leads to righteousness. <sup>17</sup>But thank God that although you used to be slaves of sin, you gave wholehearted obedience to the teaching that was handed down to you, which provides a pattern. <sup>18</sup>Now that you have been set free from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness. <sup>19</sup>(I'm speaking with ordinary metaphors because of your limitations.) Once, you offered the parts of your body to be used as slaves to impurity and to lawless behavior that leads to still more lawless behavior. Now, you should present the parts of your body as slaves to righteousness, which makes your lives holy. <sup>20</sup>When you were slaves of sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. <sup>21</sup>What consequences did you get from doing things that you are now ashamed of? The outcome of those things is death. <sup>22</sup>But now that you have been set free from sin and become slaves to God, you have the consequence of a holy life, and the outcome is eternal life. <sup>23</sup>The wages that sin pays are death, but God's gift is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### Freedom from the Law

**7** Brothers and sisters, I'm talking to you as people who know the Law. Don't you know that the Law has power over someone only as long as he or she lives? <sup>2</sup>A married woman is united with her husband under the Law while he is alive. But if her husband dies, she is released from the Law concerning her husband. <sup>3</sup>So then, if she lives with another man while her husband is alive, she's committing adultery. But if her husband dies, she's free from the Law, so she won't be committing adultery if she marries someone else. <sup>4</sup>Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you also died with respect to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you could be united with someone else. You are united with the one who was raised from the dead so that we can bear fruit for God. <sup>5</sup>When we were self-centered, the sinful passions

**6:12-14** The consequences of what Paul has said in Romans 6:1-11. Freedom from sin requires ongoing resistance to it and active self-offering to God (6:12-13). *under grace*: under its power (Rom 5:21). Grace acts like a force, bringing victory over sin and power for righteousness.

**6:13** *present... offer*: The body and its various parts are instruments for serving God (Rom 6:16-19; 12:1-2; 1 Cor 6:12-20). *weapons*: Obedience is a form of spiritual struggle and combat.

**6:14** See Galatians 5:18.

**6:15-21** A description of the old life and the new life in the language of slavery. Slavery to sin leads to death; slavery to God leads to righteousness and life.

**6:15** Paul addresses another foolish misunderstanding of his teaching. *Should*: May.

**6:17** *used to be*: before faith and baptism. *teaching... pattern*: Even though the believers in Rome heard the gospel from someone other than Paul, the story of Christ always provides a pattern of death and resurrection like what Paul has presented in Romans 6:1-11.

**6:18** See Galatians 5:13.

**6:19** *Once... Now*: before and after faith and baptism; part of the common pattern of early Christian teaching (Rom 6:17; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Gal 4:8-9; Eph 2:2-5; 5:8; Col 1:21-22;

Titus 3:3-7; 1 Pet 2:10). *holy*: dedicated to God and sharing God's righteous character.

**6:22-23** The contrast between the results of slavery to sin and slavery to God. Like wages, *death*—separation from God, now and forever—is deserved, but eternal life is God's gracious gift in Christ (see also Rom 4:4-5).

**7:1-6** Paul offers another image for the freedom of those who are in Christ. Death ends a marriage relationship and frees a person to remarry. In the same way, Christ's death and believers' sharing in it has ended their relationship to the Jewish Law and freed them to belong to Christ.

**7:1** *Law*: the Law from Moses, or Jewish law more generally.

**7:2-3** Jewish marriage laws obviously apply only when both spouses are living.

**7:4-6** *with respect to the Law* is deliberately parallel to the language of death to sin (Rom 6:11). Paul sees sin and the Law as partners (Rom 7:7-25), though sin is the main culprit (Rom 7:11-12). *body of Christ*: his death. Christ's death frees people from their marriage to sin so that they may be united with Christ to have children (*bear fruit*) for God. This is the righteous *fruit* produced when one lives in God's Spirit (Rom 8:1-17; Gal 5:16-26). It's in contrast to the *fruit for death* produced when one lives a *self-centered* existence, or "in the flesh" (i.e., in opposition to God's Spirit).

aroused through the Law were at work in all the parts of our body, so that we bore fruit for death. <sup>6</sup>But now we have been released from the Law. We have died with respect to the thing that controlled us, so that we can be slaves in the new life under the Spirit, not in the old life under the written Law.

**The function of the Law**

<sup>7</sup>So what are we going to say? That the Law is sin? Absolutely not! But I wouldn't have known sin except through the Law. I wouldn't have known the desire for what others have if the Law had not said, *Don't desire to take what others have.* <sup>8</sup>But sin seized the opportunity and used this commandment to produce all kinds of desires in me. Sin is dead without the Law. <sup>9</sup>I used to be alive without the Law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life, <sup>10</sup>and I died. So the commandment that was intended to give life brought death. <sup>11</sup>Sin seized the opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and killed me. <sup>12</sup>So the Law itself is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good.

**Living under the Law**

<sup>13</sup>So did something good bring death to me? Absolutely not! But sin caused my death through something good so that sin would be exposed as sin. That way sin would become even more thoroughly sinful through the commandment. <sup>14</sup>We know that the Law is spiritual, but I'm made of flesh and blood, and I'm sold as a slave to sin. <sup>15</sup>I don't know what I'm doing, because I don't do what I want to do. Instead, I do the thing that I hate. <sup>16</sup>But if I'm doing the thing that I don't want to do, I'm agreeing that the Law is right. <sup>17</sup>But now I'm not the one doing it anymore. Instead, it's sin that lives in me. <sup>18</sup>I know that good doesn't live in me—that is, in my body. The desire to do good is inside of me, but I can't do it. <sup>19</sup>I don't do the good that I want to do, but I do the evil that I don't want to do. <sup>20</sup>But if I do the very thing that I don't want to do, then I'm not the one doing it anymore. Instead, it is sin that lives in me that is doing it.

<sup>21</sup>So I find that, as a rule, when I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup>I gladly agree with the Law on the inside, <sup>23</sup>but I see a different law at work in my body. It wages a war against the law of my mind and takes me prisoner with the law of sin that is in

<sup>6</sup>Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21

**7:7-8:39** Paul contrasts life under the Law, enslaved to sin and self-centered desire, with life in Christ, which is also life in the Spirit. The slave-master sin has been replaced by the Spirit as the internal power that drives human action. The Spirit enables believers to do the righteousness that the Law demands but doesn't empower people to perform. The slavery to righteousness portrayed in Romans 6:1-7:6 is made possible and real by the indwelling Spirit (see Rom 7:6).

**7:7-12** Paul explains how the good Law and the power he calls sin worked together to deliver humanity to death and keep them from life. He draws on the story of the sin of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:15-17; 3:1-24). He sees that story as true for all who are outside Christ, facing God's command but seduced and mastered by sin.

**7:7** Paul speaks for all people outside Christ (i.e., in Adam). The Law isn't evil, but it does name sinful desires, making them known as sin. *Don't desire*: See Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21.

**7:8-9** Sin and the Law work together to increase human disobedience, resulting in spiritual death. *seized... sprang to life*: vivid images for the reality of sin as a powerful master and force.

**7:10** *I died*: with respect to God (Rom 6:13, 21; Eph 2:1). *intended to give life*: The Law was (and is) disabled by sin and cannot provide the life with God it was meant to provide (see Rom 8:3-4).

**7:11** *seized... deceived... killed*: The actions of sin resemble those of the serpent in Genesis (Gen 3:1-5, 13).

**7:12** Paul reemphasizes that the Law and its commandments aren't sin or evil (Rom 7:7).

**7:13-20** Paul presents the ongoing reality of the power of sin in human life outside of Christ. He again uses "I" and "me" in order to speak for the situation of all those under the power of sin.

**7:13** Even more emphatically, Paul again puts the primary blame on sin, not the Law.

**7:14** *sold... sin*: a succinct summary of the human condition outside Christ. Those in Christ are no longer sin's slaves (Rom 6).

**7:15-16** Paul insightfully describes the real human struggles that result from slavery to sin.

**7:17-20** For Paul, the desire to do good but the inability to accomplish it reveals that humans are in the grip of the powerful master sin. This slave master is not only over them but is actually within them. Paul doesn't excuse humans, however. This is because they've gotten themselves into this mess (Rom 1:18-3:20). The solution will be the replacement of indwelling sin by the indwelling Spirit.

**7:21-23** Paul describes this situation of desire but inability as a war (7:23). Although primarily meant to describe the situation of those outside Christ, the internal struggles named in this passage may also be experienced by

7:6 Eze 11:19; Ro 2:29; Ro 6:4; Ro 7:4; 2Co 3:6  
7:7 Ex 20:17; Dt 5:21; Ro 3:5; Ro 3:20; Ro 13:9  
7:8 Ro 4:15; Ro 7:11; 1Co 15:56  
7:10 Lv 18:5; Ro 10:5; Ga 3:12  
7:11 Gn 3:13; Ro 7:8; Eph 4:22; Heb 3:13  
7:12 Ps 19:7; Ro 7:7; Ro 7:14; Ro 7:16; 1Ti 1:8  
7:13 Ro 5:20  
7:14 1Ki 21:20; 1Ki 21:25; 2Ki 17:17; Is 50:1; 1Co 3:1  
7:15 Ps 101:3; Ps 119:104; Ps 119:113; Ro 7:19; Ga 5:17  
7:16 Ro 7:12  
7:17 Ro 7:20  
7:18 Gn 6:5; Gn 8:21; Ro 7:25  
7:19 Ro 7:15  
7:20 Ro 7:17  
7:21 Ro 7:23  
7:22 Ps 1:2; Ps 40:8; 2Co 4:16; Eph 3:16; 1Pt 3:4  
7:23 Ro 6:16; Ro 6:19; Ro 7:5; Ga 5:17; 1Pt 2:11

7:24 Ro 6:6.  
Ro 8:2; Col 2:11  
7:25 1Co 15:57;  
2Co 12:9

8:1 Jn 5:24;  
Ro 8:34, Ro 8:39;  
2Co 5:17

8:2 Jn 8:32,  
Jn 8:36, Ro 6:18,  
Ro 7:4, Ro 7:25

8:3 Phi 2:7;  
Heb 2:14,  
Heb 7:18,  
Heb 10:1

8:4 Ro 2:26;  
Ga 5:16

8:5 Ga 5:19,  
Ga 5:22

8:6 Ro 6:21,  
Ro 8:13, Ga 6:8

8:7 Col 1:21;  
Jas 4:4

8:8 Ro 7:5  
8:9 Jn 14:17;  
Ro 8:11,  
1Co 3:16,  
1Co 6:19,  
2Ti 1:14

8:10 2Co 13:5;  
Eph 3:17;  
Col 1:27

8:11 Ac 2:24;  
Ro 4:24, Ro 6:4;  
Eph 1:20;  
1Pt 3:18

8:12 Ro 8:4;  
1Co 6:19,  
1Co 6:20;  
Ga 5:24; 1Pt 4:2

my body.<sup>24</sup>I'm a miserable human being. Who will deliver me from this dead corpse?<sup>25</sup>Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then I'm a slave to God's Law in my mind, but I'm a slave to sin's law in my body.

### Set free by the Spirit

So now there isn't any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup>The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.<sup>3</sup>God has done what was impossible for the Law, since it was weak because of selfishness. God condemned sin in the body by sending his own Son to deal with sin in the same body as humans, who are controlled by sin.<sup>4</sup>He did this so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us. Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness.<sup>5</sup>People whose lives are based on selfishness think about selfish things, but people whose lives are based on the Spirit think about things that are related to the Spirit.<sup>6</sup>The attitude that comes from selfishness leads to death, but the attitude that comes from the Spirit leads to life and peace.<sup>7</sup>So the attitude that comes from selfishness is hostile to God. It doesn't submit to God's Law, because it can't.<sup>8</sup>People who are self-centered aren't able to please God.

<sup>9</sup>But you aren't self-centered. Instead you are in the Spirit, if in fact God's Spirit lives in you. If anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, they don't belong to him.<sup>10</sup>If Christ is in you, the Spirit is your life because of God's righteousness, but the body is dead because of sin.<sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also, through his Spirit that lives in you.

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness.<sup>13</sup>If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live.<sup>14</sup>All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters.<sup>15</sup>You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you

8:13 Col 3:5 8:14 Hos 1:10; Jn 1:12; Ga 3:26, Ga 5:18; 1Jn 3:1 8:15 Mk 14:36; Ga 4:5, Ga 4:6; 2Ti 1:7

believers. But they have the Spirit to give them success in the battle.

7:24-25 *miserable* . . . *Thank God*: a request of great despair because of the human condition, and of great hope because of God's gracious provision in Christ (Rom 8). *corpse*: See note on Romans 6:6.

8:1-39 New life in Christ as life in the Spirit (Rom 7:6). The Spirit replaces sin and self-centered desire as the driving force within believers. This new life in the Spirit continues to be shaped by dying and rising with Christ (Rom 6). It's also a life of hope; being conformed to Christ in his death guarantees a future share in his resurrection glory. Already believers have a foretaste of that glory, knowing God's love in Christ through the Spirit.

8:1-8 Paul contrasts life in the Spirit with life governed by sin and selfishness (Rom 7:7-25). The word "selfishness" (or "flesh") throughout the passage refers (as in Rom 7:5, 14) to the core of the human who opposes God's Spirit. The word "you" in the Greek is consistently plural ("all of you"), indicating all who are addressed, both each individually and all together as a community.

8:1 *condemnation*: the results, or "wages," of sin, both present (misery, as in Rom 7:24) and future ("death," Rom 6:23). Compare with Romans 5:16, 18.

8:2-3 *law* . . . *law* . . . *Law*: A play on words (see also Rom 3:27-28), this sentence doesn't contrast two legal systems but summarizes the difference between the principle (law), or way of life inside Christ and outside Christ. *impossible for the Law*: a summary of Romans 7:7-25. Although the Law was intended to give righteousness and life, it was disabled by sin and human selfish desire. *condemned . . . deal with sin*: This complex phrase seems primarily to indicate

that God sent Christ to live, and especially die, to forgive sins and to disable the power of sin (cf. Rom 3:21-26; 2 Cor 5:21). *controlled by sin*: See Romans 7:13-25.

8:4 *righteous requirement* . . . *might be fulfilled*: The covenant responsibilities, summarized in the word "love" (Rom 13:8-10), that humans couldn't fulfill while under the power of sin and selfish desire can now be fulfilled in Christ by the work of the Spirit.

8:6 *life and peace*: The Spirit provides what humans seek and need (Rom 2:10) but cannot achieve on their own.

8:9-11 Paul summarizes the new condition of being in the Spirit of God and having the Spirit of God within. This also means being "in Christ" (Rom 8:1) and having Christ within, because the Spirit of God is also the *Spirit of Christ* (8:9). Paul's language anticipates later Christian language about the Trinity.

8:10 *body is dead*: Human life without the Spirit is dead toward God.

8:11 *will give life*: As in Romans 6:1-11, the life mentioned here is probably both the present new life of righteousness and the future, eternal life.

8:12-13 Although empowered by the Spirit, believers have an *obligation* to terminate actions that are rooted in their old life of *selfishness*. *actions of the body*: those motivated by selfishness. The positive counterpart to this prohibition is the self-offering described in Romans 6:12-23; 12:1-2.

8:14-16 All who are in Christ and *led by God's Spirit* are God's adopted children, not slaves (Gal 4:7). *fear*: of rejection and "condemnation" (Rom 8:1). "*Abba, Father*": The way Jesus addressed God as father in Aramaic (Mark 14:36) was used in churches Paul founded (cf. Gal 4:6).

are adopted as his children. With this Spirit, we cry, “Abba, Father.” <sup>16</sup>The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God’s children. <sup>17</sup>But if we are children, we are also heirs. We are God’s heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with him so that we can also be glorified with him.

### *Our suffering and our hope*

<sup>18</sup>I believe that the present suffering is nothing compared to the coming glory that is going to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>The whole creation waits breathless with anticipation for the revelation of God’s sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup>Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice—it was the choice of the one who subjected it—but in the hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from slavery to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of God’s children. <sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now. <sup>23</sup>And it’s not only the creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free. <sup>24</sup>We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn’t hope. Who hopes for what they already see? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we don’t see, we wait for it with patience.

<sup>26</sup>In the same way, the Spirit comes to help our weakness. We don’t know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans. <sup>27</sup>The one who searches hearts knows how the Spirit thinks, because he pleads for the saints, consistent with God’s will. <sup>28</sup>We know that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>We know this because God knew them in advance, and he decided in advance that they would be conformed to the image of his Son. That way his Son would be the first of many brothers and sisters. <sup>30</sup>Those who God decided in advance would be conformed to his Son, he also called. Those whom he called, he also made righteous. Those whom he made righteous, he also glorified.

<sup>31</sup>So what are we going to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

8:16 Mt 5:9;  
Jn 1:12; Ro 8:14;  
2Co 1:22;  
Eph 1:13  
8:17 Ga 3:29;  
Ga 4:7; Eph 3:6;  
2Ti 2:12; Ti 3:7  
8:18 2Co 4:17;  
Col 3:4; 1Pt 1:5;  
1Pt 4:13; 1Pt 5:1  
8:19 Phi 1:20;  
1In 3:2  
8:20 Gn 3:17;  
Gn 5:29  
8:21 Ac 3:21;  
2Pt 3:13;  
Rev 21:1  
8:22 Jer 12:4;  
Jer 12:11  
8:23 Ro 8:19;  
2Co 5:2  
8:24 1Th 5:8;  
Heb 11:1  
8:25 1Th 1:3  
8:26 In 14:16;  
Eph 6:18  
8:27 1Ch 28:9;  
Pv 17:3;  
Jer 17:10;  
Ro 8:34;  
Rev 2:23  
8:28 Ro 9:24;  
1Co 1:9;  
Ga 1:15;  
Eph 3:11; 2Ti 1:9

8:29 Ro 11:2; 1Co 15:49; Eph 1:5; Phi 3:21; 1Pt 1:2 8:30 1Co 6:11 8:31 Ps 118:6; Ro 4:1

8:17 By Roman law, adopted children, unlike slaves, were full heirs of the father’s estate. The inheritance Paul refers to is the glory, or eternal life in God’s presence, that God intended for humanity (Rom 2:7, 10; 3:23; 5:2) and that Christ has already received. Sharing in Christ’s glory (receiving the inheritance) first requires sharing in his suffering. Paul explains all of this with words that mean being co-heirs, enduring co-suffering, and being co-glorified.

8:18-39 Paul explains that suffering is a normal part of sharing in Christ, but that it can be experienced with hope and the assurance of God’s love.

8:18-25 Paul puts the suffering of believers into the larger context of the suffering of the entire creation and the hope of future salvation. Paul here sees the story of the universe as a dramatic sequence: human sin, creation’s subjection and decay, believers’ present experience of the Spirit, believers’ salvation, salvation of the universe.

8:18 See Romans 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 4:17.

8:19-21 *breathless with anticipation*: a dramatic image of hope. *revelation*: at the second coming of Christ, when God’s heirs will be made known.

8:20-21 *Creation was subjected*: probably the cursing of the earth (Gen 3:17-19). *the one who subjected it*: a reference to Adam/humanity or, possibly, God. The fates of humanity and of all creation are inseparable. As with believers, God’s intention for all of creation is freedom from slavery.

8:22 Paul joins other Jewish writers in using the image of labor pains to indicate both the suffering and the joyful hope associated with the birth of the renewed creation promised by the prophets (Isa 65:17-22; Mark 13:8).

8:23 Believers share in the suffering of the entire creation. *first crop of the harvest*: The Spirit is the believers’ share in

the first portion of God’s promised salvation, even in the midst of suffering (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:14).

8:24-25 Salvation isn’t yet complete; believers wait in hope for the future glory.

8:26-27 The ministry of the Spirit is to help believers pray, and even to pray for them, especially that they can know and do God’s will (cf. Rom 12:1-2). Jesus also prays for believers (Rom 8:34). *The one who searches hearts*: God the Father. *pleads*: a courtroom image.

8:28-30 Paul describes God’s will (see Rom 8:27) for all believers.

8:28 *all things*: even suffering, as the biblical stories of figures like Joseph (Gen 50:20) and Jesus testify. *for good*: spiritual welfare. *those who are called*: all believers (Rom 1:6-7).

8:29 Paul isn’t making a general statement about predestination to salvation or damnation. Instead, this text affirms that the ultimate purpose of God’s call is for believers to become like Christ (Phil 3:10-11). *conformed to the image*: See Genesis 1:26. Christ is the second Adam (1 Cor 15:45-49). True humanity means becoming like Jesus in his faithfulness in suffering and dying, and especially in his resurrection glory (Rom 8:17).

8:30 *called... made righteous... glorified*: not an orderly sequence, but three aspects of God’s saving activity. God is creating a family (Rom 8:29) of Christlike siblings who already partially share in God’s righteousness and glory.

8:31-39 Paul eloquently concludes the first half of Romans with a flurry of questions. They communicate God’s constant love for believers no matter what sufferings and other difficulties come their way.

8:31 *these things*: especially the suffering and groaning described in Romans 8:18-25.

8:32 In 3:16;  
Ro 4:25

8:33 Is 50:8,  
Is 50:9; Lk 18:7

8:34 Mk 16:19;  
Ro 5:6, Ro 8:1,  
Ro 8:27; Heb 7:25

8:35 1Co 4:11

8:36 Ps 44:22;  
2Co 4:11,  
2Co 11:23

8:37 1Co 15:57;  
Eph 5:2; Rev 1:5

8:38 Ro 8:39,  
1Co 3:22;  
Eph 1:21;  
2Ti 1:12; 1Pt 3:22

8:39 Ro 5:8

9:1 Ro 1:9,  
Ro 2:15,  
2Co 11:10;  
Ga 1:20; 1Ti 2:7

9:2 Lk 19:41

9:3 Ex 32:32;  
Ro 1:3; Ro 11:14;  
1Co 12:3,  
1Co 16:22

9:4 Gn 17:2;  
Ex 4:22;  
Ps 147:19;  
Ac 13:32; Ro 9:6

9:5 Mt 1:1;  
In 1:1; Ro 1:3,  
Ro 1:25; Ro 11:28

9:6 Ga 6:16

9:7 Gn 21:12;  
In 8:33;  
In 8:33

9:8 Ro 8:14;  
Ga 3:29; Ga 4:28

9:9 Gn 18:10,  
Gn 18:14;  
Heb 11:11

9:10 Gn 25:21;  
Ro 5:3

9:11 Ro 4:17,  
Ro 8:28

9:12 Gn 25:23

<sup>32</sup>He didn't spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. Won't he also freely give us all things with him?

<sup>33</sup>Who will bring a charge against God's elect people? It is God who acquits them. <sup>34</sup>Who is going to convict them? It is Christ Jesus who died, even more, who was raised, and who also is at God's right side. It is Christ Jesus who also pleads our case for us.

<sup>35</sup>Who will separate us from Christ's love? Will we be separated by trouble, or distress, or harassment, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written,  
*We are being put to death all day long for your sake.*

*We are treated like sheep for slaughter.*<sup>a</sup>

<sup>37</sup>But in all these things we win a sweeping victory through the one who loved us. <sup>38</sup>I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers <sup>39</sup>or height or depth, or any other thing that is created.

### The tragedy of Israel's unbelief

**G**'m speaking the truth in Christ—I'm not lying, as my conscience assures me with the Holy Spirit: <sup>2</sup>I have great sadness and constant pain in my heart. <sup>3</sup>I wish I could be cursed, cut off from Christ if it helped my brothers and sisters, who are my flesh-and-blood relatives. <sup>4</sup>They are Israelites. The adoption as God's children, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship, and the promises belong to them. <sup>5</sup>The Jewish ancestors are theirs, and the Christ descended from those ancestors. He is the one who rules over all things, who is God, and who is blessed forever. Amen.

### Israel and God's choice

<sup>6</sup>But it's not as though God's word has failed. Not all who are descended from Israel are part of Israel. <sup>7</sup>Not all of Abraham's children are called Abraham's descendants, but instead *your descendants will be named through Isaac.* <sup>8</sup>That means it isn't the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children from the promise who are counted as descendants. <sup>9</sup>The words in the promise were: *A year from now I will return, and Sarah will have a son.*<sup>b</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Not only that, but also Rebecca conceived children with one man, our ancestor Isaac. <sup>11</sup>When they hadn't been born yet and when they hadn't yet done anything good or bad, it was shown that God's purpose would continue because it was based on his choice. <sup>12</sup>It wasn't

<sup>a</sup>Ps 44:22 <sup>b</sup>Gen 21:12 <sup>c</sup>Gen 18:10, 14

**8:32** See Romans 3:21–26; 5:6–8; 8:3–4; John 3:16. *all things*: everything needed for faithfulness in suffering, as well as future glory.

**8:33–34** Paul uses the language of the courtroom to stress that God and Christ, like the Spirit (Rom 8:26–27), are on the believers' side, especially in suffering. Suffering isn't a sign of divine judgment. *died . . . was raised*: See Romans 4:23–25; 6:1–11. *pleads our case*: as the Spirit does (Rom 8:27).

**8:35** Paul answers his own question in Romans 8:38. No suffering can separate believers from Christ's love. Paul speaks from experience (2 Cor 11:21–12:10).

**8:36** Paul sees himself and all believers in the text he quotes from Psalm 44:22.

**8:37** *win a sweeping victory*: Believers conquer suffering not by avoiding or denying it, but by enduring it with the confidence of God's love and the certain hope of God's glory.

**8:38** Here's Paul's answer to the question in Romans 8:35: No power in the universe and no earthly, political power can separate believers from God's love in Christ (Rom 5:6–8).

**9:1–11:36** In this long section Paul raises and addresses a question that is at once deeply theological and highly practical. Since so few Jews have believed the good news about the Jewish Messiah ("Messiah" is the Hebrew word

for "Christ"), does their unfaithfulness mean that God has abandoned them and now cares only about Gentiles? Is God unfaithful, unfair, or even unrighteous? Paul answers this question with a forceful no by citing and interpreting more than 30 OT texts, many from Isaiah. He understands Israel's current unbelief within the larger context of God's purposes for Gentiles as well as Jews. He concludes with reflections about, and praise for, the mystery and magnificence of God's mercy.

**9:1–5** Paul's deep sadness and frustration over the general failure of his fellow Jews to believe the gospel.

**9:3** Like Moses (see Exod 32:32) and like Christ's self-giving death for others, Paul would be willing to sacrifice his own salvation for the sake of his fellow Jews (cf. Rom 10:1).

**9:4–5** The irony of Jewish advantages (Rom 3:1–2), culminating in the coming of Christ himself. *who is God*: The unclear Greek grammar could mean either God the Father or Jesus the Christ.

**9:6–29** Paul makes his central claim: Despite appearances to the contrary, God isn't unfaithful but merciful.

**9:6–9** Paul picks up themes from Romans 2:25–29 and Romans 4: Being *descendants* or *children* of Abraham—and *God's children*—isn't a matter of biology but of being connected to God's promise (cf. Gal 3:29; 4:28). *son*: Isaac.

**9:10–13** God's promise continued through Isaac and Rebecca, but only through one son, Jacob. The choice of

because of what was done but because of God's call. This was said to her: *The older child will be a slave to the younger one.*<sup>v</sup> <sup>13</sup>As it is written, *I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau.*<sup>w</sup>

<sup>14</sup>So what are we going to say? Isn't this unfair on God's part? Absolutely not! <sup>15</sup>He says to Moses, *I'll have mercy on whomever I choose to have mercy, and I'll show compassion to whomever I choose to show compassion.*<sup>x</sup> <sup>16</sup>So then, it doesn't depend on a person's desire or effort. It depends entirely on God, who shows mercy. <sup>17</sup>Scripture says to Pharaoh, *I have put you in this position for this very thing: so I can show my power in you and so that my name can be spread through the entire earth.*<sup>y</sup> <sup>18</sup>So then, God has mercy on whomever he wants to, but he makes resistant whomever he wants to.

<sup>19</sup>So you are going to say to me, "Then why does he still blame people? Who has ever resisted his will?" <sup>20</sup>You are only a human being. Who do you think you are to talk back to God? *Does the clay say to the potter, "Why did you make me like this?"*<sup>z</sup> <sup>21</sup>Doesn't the potter have the power over the clay to make one pot for special purposes and another for garbage from the same lump of clay? <sup>22</sup>What if God very patiently puts up with pots made for wrath that were designed for destruction, because he wanted to show his wrath and to make his power known? <sup>23</sup>What if he did this to make the wealth of his glory known toward pots made for mercy, which he prepared in advance for glory? <sup>24</sup>We are the ones God has called. We don't come only from the Jews but we also come from the Gentiles.

<sup>25</sup>As it says also in Hosea,  
*I will call "my people" those who aren't my people,  
and the one who isn't well loved, I will call "loved one."*<sup>aa</sup>

<sup>26</sup>And in the place where it was said to them,  
*"You aren't my people,"  
there they will be called "the living God's children."*<sup>ab</sup>

<sup>27</sup>But Isaiah cries out for Israel,  
*Though the number of Israel's children will be like the sand of the sea,  
only a remaining part will be saved,*

<sup>28</sup>*because the Lord does what he says completely and quickly.*<sup>c</sup>

<sup>29</sup>As Isaiah prophesied,  
*If the Lord of the heavenly forces had not left descendants for us,  
we would have been like Sodom,  
and we would have become like Gomorrah.*<sup>d</sup>

### Israel and God's righteousness

<sup>30</sup>So what are we going to say? Gentiles who weren't striving for righteousness achieved righteousness, the righteousness that comes from faith. <sup>31</sup>But though Israel was striving for a Law of righteousness, they didn't arrive. <sup>32</sup>Why? It's because they didn't go for it by faith but they went for it as if it could be reached by doing something. They have tripped over a stumbling block. <sup>33</sup>As it is written:

<sup>v</sup>Gen 25:23 <sup>w</sup>Mal 1:2-3 <sup>x</sup>Exod 33:19 <sup>y</sup>Exod 9:16 <sup>z</sup>Isa 29:16; 45:9 <sup>aa</sup>Hos 2:23 <sup>ab</sup>Hos 1:10 <sup>c</sup>Isa 10:22-23 LXX <sup>d</sup>Isa 1:9

Jacob over Esau wasn't due to the goodness or evilness of either one but solely to God's call.

**9:13** *loved... hated:* not divine emotions but decisions (Mal 1:2-3).

**9:14-18** Paul responds to the charge of divine unfairness that can be found in Malachi 1:2-3 by quoting more scripture. The texts from Exodus (Exod 33:19; 9:16) speak of God's freedom and God's mercy in salvation (cf. Rom 11:31-32).

**9:19-23** Paul now responds to the charge of divine unfairness in holding people accountable that can be seen in the texts from Exodus. Once again he quotes the OT (Isa 29:16; 45:9), explaining that God's freedom isn't random because it serves a greater purpose. It's part of God's plan to share God's glory with humans.

**9:24-29** *We are the ones:* The point of Paul's use of the OT now becomes clear: The God revealed in scripture has freely and mercifully (in Christ) called both Jews and Gentiles to be God's children.

**9:25-26** Paul applies the words of Hosea (Hos 1:10), first spoken to disobedient Israelites, to the calling of the Gentiles.

**9:27-29** Paul interprets Isaiah's theme of a *remaining part*, or remnant (9:27; cf. Rom 11:1-6; Isa 10:20-23), as testimony not only to God's past faithfulness to Israel, but also to God's ongoing faithfulness. Some Jews have, in fact, believed the gospel.

**9:30-10:21** Paul restates his theme: the good news of salvation for Jews and non-Jews. He also again raises the question of Jewish unbelief in the gospel.

**9:30-10:4** Paul describes Jewish unbelief in the gospel as a failed attempt to achieve righteousness by doing the Law rather than receiving it from God through Christ.

**9:32-33** *stumbling block:* Jesus, the crucified Christ (Isa 28:16; 1 Cor 1:23; Gal 5:11). *not be put to shame:* See Romans 10:11; 1:16; Isaiah 8:14.

9:13 Mal 1:2; Mal 1:3  
9:14 2Ch 19:7  
9:15 Ex 33:19  
9:16 Eph 2:8; Ti 3:5  
9:17 Ex 9:16  
9:18 Ex 4:21; Ex 7:3; Dt 2:30; Josh 11:20; Ro 9:15  
9:19 2Ch 20:6; Job 9:12; Dn 4:35; 1Co 15:35  
9:20 Job 33:13; Job 40:2; Is 29:16; Is 45:9; Ro 2:1  
9:21 Is 64:8; Jer 18:6; 2Ti 2:20  
9:22 Prv 16:4; Ro 2:4; 1Pt 2:8; 1Pt 3:20  
9:23 Ro 2:4; Eph 3:16  
9:24 Ro 3:29; Ro 8:28  
9:25 Hos 2:23; 1Pt 2:10  
9:26 Hos 1:10  
9:27 Is 10:22; Hos 1:10; Ro 11:5  
9:28 Is 10:22; Is 10:23  
9:29 Dt 29:23; Is 1:9; Is 13:19; Jer 49:18; Jer 50:40  
9:30 Ro 1:17; Ro 3:22; Ro 10:6; Phi 3:9; Heb 11:7  
9:31 Ro 11:7; Ga 5:4  
9:32 Is 8:14; 1Pt 2:8  
9:33 Is 8:14; Is 28:16; Ro 10:11; 1Pt 2:6; 1Pt 2:8

10:1 Ex 32:13;  
Ex 32:32;  
Nm 10:29;  
Nm 10:36;  
Ru 2:12

10:2 Ac 21:20;  
Ga 1:14

10:3 Lk 18:9;  
Ro 1:17

10:4 Ro 3:22;  
Ga 3:24

10:5 Lv 18:5;  
Neh 9:29;  
Eze 20:11;  
Eze 20:13;  
Ga 3:12

10:6 Dt 30:12;  
Ro 9:30

10:7 Heb 13:20

10:8 Dt 30:14

10:9 Mt 10:32;  
Lk 12:8;  
Ac 16:31;  
1Co 12:3;  
Phi 2:11

10:10 Ro 10:9

10:11 Is 28:16;  
Ro 9:33

10:12 Ac 10:36;  
Ro 3:22, Ro 3:29;  
Ga 3:28

10:13 Jl 2:32;  
Ac 2:21

10:14 Ac 8:31;  
Ti 1:3

10:15 Is 52:7;  
Na 1:15;  
Eph 6:15

10:16 Is 53:1;  
Jn 12:38; Ro 3:3

10:17 Jer 23:28;  
Jer 23:29; Ga 3:2;  
Ga 3:5; Col 3:16

10:18 Ps 19:4;  
Mt 24:14;  
Ro 1:8; Col 1:6;  
Col 1:23

10:19 Dt 32:21;  
Ro 11:11

*Look! I'm putting a stumbling block in Zion,  
which is a rock that offends people.*

*And the one who has faith in him will not be put to shame.\**

**10** Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire is for Israel's salvation. That's my prayer to God for them. <sup>2</sup>I can vouch for them: they are enthusiastic about God. However, it isn't informed by knowledge. <sup>3</sup>They don't submit to God's righteousness because they don't understand his righteousness, and they try to establish their own righteousness. <sup>4</sup>Christ is the goal of the Law, which leads to righteousness for all who have faith in God.

<sup>5</sup>Moses writes about the righteousness that comes from the Law: *The person who does these things will live by them.*<sup>6</sup> But the righteousness that comes from faith talks like this: *Don't say in your heart, "Who will go up into heaven?"<sup>a</sup> (that is, to bring Christ down) or "Who will go down into the region below?"<sup>b</sup> (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).* <sup>8</sup>But what does it say? *The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart<sup>c</sup>* (that is, the message of faith that we preach). <sup>9</sup>Because if you confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord" and in your heart you have faith that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>Trusting with the heart leads to righteousness, and confessing with the mouth leads to salvation. <sup>11</sup>The scripture says, *All who have faith in him won't be put to shame.*<sup>1</sup> <sup>12</sup>There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord is Lord of all, who gives richly to all who call on him. <sup>13</sup>*All who call on the Lord's name will be saved.*<sup>h</sup>

<sup>14</sup>So how can they call on someone they don't have faith in? And how can they have faith in someone they haven't heard of? And how can they hear without a preacher? <sup>15</sup>And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, *How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the good news.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>16</sup>But everyone hasn't obeyed the good news. As Isaiah says, *Lord, who has had faith in our message?*<sup>m</sup> <sup>17</sup>So, faith comes from listening, but it's listening by means of Christ's message.

<sup>18</sup>But I ask you, didn't they hear it? Definitely! *Their voice has gone out into the entire earth, and their message has gone out to the corners of the inhabited world.*<sup>n</sup> <sup>19</sup>But I ask you again, didn't Israel understand? First, Moses says, *I will make you jealous of those who aren't a people,*

*Jews and Gentiles in Christ* "Both Jew and Gentile" is one way of stating the theme of Romans. Paul understood his call to be primarily as an apostle to the Gentiles, or nations. His message centered on the crucified and resurrected Jesus as the Jewish Christ who is also Lord of all. But Paul was also deeply concerned about his own people, who hadn't embraced the good news about Jesus. In Romans he explains his strong conviction that God's mercy to the Gentiles is united with God's faithfulness to God's chosen people.

Paul's vision of community in Christ shows his passion for God's grace extended to all people. He believes that Jews and Gentiles, the cultured and the uncultured, men and women are called to a Spirit-filled unity in which they live Christ-like lives and worship God together. In such a community they must respect cultural differences while holding on to the essentials of the gospel. Paul hopes to see this unity and solidarity expressed not only among the house churches in Rome but also between the largely Gentile churches he has founded and the Jewish church in Jerusalem.

\*Isa 28:16; 8:14 <sup>f</sup>Lev 18:5 <sup>g</sup>Deut 9:4; 30:12 <sup>h</sup>Deut 30:13 <sup>i</sup>Deut 30:14 <sup>j</sup>Isa 28:16 <sup>k</sup>Joel 2:32 <sup>l</sup>Isa 52:7; Nah 1:15 <sup>m</sup>Isa 53:1 <sup>n</sup>Ps 19:4

**10:1** *my heart's desire:* See Romans 9:1-3.

**10:2** *enthusiastic about:* or "zealous for."

**10:4** *goal:* See Galatians 3:24. The Law's purpose was to point people to Christ as the source of righteousness (Rom 8:3-4).

**10:5-13** The gospel Paul preaches is summarized in the form of a chain of OT texts that are linked together with brief remarks by Paul.

**10:5-8** The message of righteousness from faith rather than from the Law has been preached and is within reach.

**10:9-10** Paul names the essential message of the gospel and the need for both inner trust and public confession of faith. "Jesus is Lord": See 1 Corinthians 12:3; Philippians 2:11. *will be saved:* on the future day of judgment. For Paul, salvation isn't yet final (Rom 8:24).

**10:11-13** The context makes it clear that Paul applies OT texts about believing in and calling on "the Lord" (Isa 28:16; Joel 2:32) to Jesus. *no distinction:* See Romans 3:22 and the note on Romans 1:16-17.

**10:14-15** Four questions and an OT quotation (Isa 52:7) emphasize the importance of preachers to spreading the good news.

**10:16-21** Paul again wrestles with Jewish unbelief and Gentile belief, citing OT texts to interpret the situation. Not all (Jews) have believed and obeyed (10:16-17, 21) even though the gospel has *gone out* (10:18). However, those who aren't God's people have understood and believed (10:19-20). Yet God is persistent and faithful (10:21). Paul's use of Isaiah 65:1-2 (10:20-21) as a reference to both Gentiles and Jews is striking.



of a people without understanding.<sup>o</sup> <sup>20</sup>And Isaiah even dares to say, *I was found by those who didn't look for me; I revealed myself to those who didn't ask for me.*<sup>21</sup> But he says about Israel, *All day long I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.*<sup>q</sup>

**Israel and God's faithfulness**

**11** So I ask you, has God rejected his people? Absolutely not! I'm an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup>God hasn't rejected his people, whom he knew in advance. Or don't you know what the scripture says in the case of Elijah, when he pleads with God against Israel? <sup>3</sup>Lord, *they have killed your prophets, and they have torn down your altars. I'm the only one left, and they are trying to take my life.*<sup>4</sup> But what is God's reply to him? *I have kept for myself seven thousand people who haven't bowed their knees to Baal.*<sup>5</sup> So also in the present time there is a remaining group by the choice of God's grace. <sup>6</sup>But if it is by grace, it isn't by what's done anymore. If it were, God's grace wouldn't be grace.

<sup>7</sup>So what? Israel didn't find what it was looking for. Those who were chosen found it, but the others were resistant. <sup>8</sup>As it is written, *God gave them a dull spirit, so that their eyes would not see and their ears not hear, right up until the present day.*<sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup>And David says,

*Their table should become a pitfall and a trap, a stumbling block and payback to them for what they have done.*

<sup>10</sup> *Their eyes should be darkened so they can't see, and their backs always bent.*<sup>a</sup>

<sup>11</sup>So I'm asking you: They haven't stumbled so that they've fallen permanently, have they? Absolutely not! But salvation has come to the Gentiles by their failure, in order to make Israel jealous. <sup>12</sup>But if their failure brings riches to the world, and their defeat brings riches to the Gentiles, how much more will come from the completion of their number! <sup>13</sup>I'm speaking to you Gentiles. Considering that I'm an apostle to the Gentiles, I publicize my own ministry <sup>14</sup>in the hope that somehow I might make my own people jealous and save some of them. <sup>15</sup>If their rejection has brought about a close relationship between God and the world, how can their acceptance mean anything less than life from the dead?

<sup>16</sup>But if part of a batch of dough is offered to God as holy, the whole batch of dough is holy too. If a root is holy, the branches will be holy too. <sup>17</sup>If some of the branches were broken off, and you were a wild olive branch, and you were grafted in among the other branches and shared the root that produces the rich oil of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup>then don't brag like you're better than the other branches. If you do brag, be careful: it's not you that sustains the root, but it's the root that sustains you. <sup>19</sup>You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." <sup>20</sup>Fine. They were broken off because they weren't faithful, but you stand only by your faithfulness.<sup>o</sup> So don't think in a proud way; instead be afraid. <sup>21</sup>If God didn't spare the natural branches, he won't spare you either. <sup>22</sup>So look at God's kindness and harshness.

10:20 Is 65:1; Ro 9:30  
10:21 Is 65:2  
11:1 Isa 12:22; Jer 31:37; Jer 33:24; 2Co 11:22; Phi 3:5  
11:2 Ps 94:14; Ro 8:29  
11:3 1Ki 19:10; 1Ki 19:14  
11:4 1Ki 19:18  
11:5 Ro 9:27  
11:6 Ro 4:4; 2Ti 1:9; Ti 3:5  
11:7 Ro 9:18; Ro 9:31; Ro 11:25  
11:8 Dt 29:4; Is 6:9; Is 29:10; Eze 12:2  
11:9 Ps 69:22; Ps 69:23  
11:10 Ps 69:22; Ps 69:23; Ro 11:8  
11:11 Ac 13:46; Ac 28:28; Ro 10:19; Ro 11:14  
11:12 Ro 11:25  
11:13 Ac 9:15; Ro 15:16  
11:14 Ro 11:11; 1Co 7:16; 1Co 9:22  
11:15 Lk 15:24; Ro 5:10; Ro 5:11  
11:16 Ex 22:29; Nm 15:18; Dt 18:4; Neh 10:35; Neh 10:37  
11:17 Jgs 9:9; Ps 52:8; Jer 11:16; Zec 4:3; Is 15:2  
11:18 In 4:22  
11:20 Prv 28:14; Ro 12:16; 1Co 10:12; 2Co 1:24; 1Pt 1:17  
11:21 Ro 11:17  
11:22 In 15:2; Ro 2:4; 1Co 15:2; Heb 3:6; Heb 3:14

<sup>o</sup>Deut 32:21 <sup>p</sup>Isa 65:1 <sup>q</sup>Isa 65:2 <sup>r</sup>1 Kgs 19:10, 14 <sup>s</sup>1 Kgs 19:18 <sup>t</sup>Deut 29:4; Isa 29:10 <sup>u</sup>Ps 69:22-23 <sup>v</sup>Or faith

11:1-36 Paul reaffirms God's faithfulness and outlines God's mysterious plan of mercy and salvation for all.

11:1-6 The critical issue for Paul is whether Jewish unbelief in the gospel means that God has rejected the Jews. His answer is an emphatic no. He offers himself (11:1) and a *remaining group*, or remnant (11:5; cf. Rom 9:27), as proof.

11:2-5 The story of Elijah (1 Kgs 19) is an example of how God has saved a part of God's people when it appears that all have been faithless.

11:7-10 Paul once again uses OT texts to understand Jewish unbelief in the gospel as part of a larger divine plan (see Rom 10:16-21).

11:11-15 Paul stresses that Jewish unbelief is temporary (cf. Rom 11:25) and part of God's plan to bring salvation to the Gentiles. Gentile belief in the gospel, Paul hopes, will make Israel jealous and bring some Jews to faith.

11:11-12 *stumbled*: over the gospel of a crucified Christ (Rom 9:33). *failure... defeat*: unbelief.

11:13 *you Gentiles*: Paul wants to make sure that Gentile

believers understand that their salvation is due to God's mysterious mercy.

11:15 *their acceptance... life from the dead*: God's faithfulness guarantees that Jews will also share in the new life promised in the gospel.

11:16-24 With the olive tree image, Paul portrays the salvation of Jews and Gentiles in terms of the OT image of God's people as his planting (Isa 5:1-7; 60:21; Jer 11:16; Ezek 19:10-14).

11:16 *part of a batch... root*: either the original Jews (the patriarchs) or the "remaining group" of believing Jews (Rom 11:1-6; 9:27). *holy*: set apart as God's people and not rejected.

11:17 *some of the branches were broken off*: Jews who haven't believed the gospel are currently removed from God's people. *grafted in*: Believing Gentiles are like branches grafted onto the tree that is God's people.

11:18-22 A warning against Gentile pride. (cf. Rom 11:25; 3:27-31).

11:20-21 Although salvation is by "God's kindness" (Rom

11:23 2Co 3:16  
 11:24 Ro 11:17  
 11:25 Lk 21:24;  
 Ro 11:7;  
 Ro 12:16;  
 Ro 16:25;  
 2Co 3:14

11:26 Is 45:17;  
 Is 59:20

11:27 Is 27:9;  
 Is 59:21;  
 Jer 31:31;  
 Heb 8:8

11:28 Dt 7:8;  
 Dt 10:15;  
 Jer 31:3; Ro 5:10;  
 Ro 9:5

11:29 Ro 8:28;  
 2Pt 1:10

11:30 Eph 2:2;  
 Ti 3:3

11:32 Ro 3:9;  
 Ga 3:22

11:33 Job 5:9;  
 Job 11:7;  
 Is 40:28;  
 Eph 3:10;  
 Col 2:3

11:34 Is 40:13;  
 1Co 2:16

11:35 Job 35:7;  
 Job 41:11

11:36 Ro 16:27;  
 1Co 8:6;  
 Eph 3:21;  
 Phi 4:20;  
 Jud 1:25

12:1 Ro 6:13;  
 Ro 6:16; Ro 6:19;  
 1Co 6:20;  
 1Pt 2:5

It's harshness toward those who fell, but it's God's kindness for you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise, you could be cut off too. <sup>23</sup>And even those who were cut off will be grafted back in if they don't continue to be unfaithful, because God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup>If you were naturally part of a wild olive tree and you were cut off from it, and then, contrary to nature, you were grafted into the cultivated olive tree, won't these natural branches stand an even better chance of being grafted back onto their own olive tree?

### All Israel will be saved

<sup>25</sup>I don't want you to be unaware of this secret,<sup>W</sup> brothers and sisters. That way you won't think too highly of yourselves. A part of Israel has become resistant until the full number of the Gentiles comes in. <sup>26</sup>In this way, all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

*The deliverer will come from Zion.*

*He will remove ungodly behavior from Jacob.*

<sup>27</sup>*This is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.<sup>M</sup>*

<sup>28</sup>According to the gospel, they are enemies for your sake, but according to God's choice, they are loved for the sake of their ancestors. <sup>29</sup>God's gifts and calling can't be taken back.

<sup>30</sup>Once you were disobedient to God, but now you have mercy because they were disobedient. <sup>31</sup>In the same way, they have also been disobedient because of the mercy that you received, so now they can receive mercy too. <sup>32</sup>God has locked up all people in disobedience, in order to have mercy on all of them.

<sup>33</sup>God's riches, wisdom, and knowledge are so deep! They are as mysterious as his judgments, and they are as hard to track as his paths!

<sup>34</sup>*Who has known the Lord's mind?*

*Or who has been his mentor?<sup>N</sup>*

<sup>35</sup>*Or who has given him a gift and has been paid back by him?<sup>N</sup>*

<sup>36</sup>All things are from him and through him and for him.

May the glory be to him forever. Amen.

### Living sacrifice and transformed lives

**12** So, brothers and sisters, because of God's mercies, I encourage you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God. This is your appropriate

<sup>W</sup>Or mystery <sup>M</sup>Isa 59:20-21; 27:9; Jer 31:33-34 <sup>N</sup>Isa 40:13 <sup>N</sup>Job 41:11

11:22), human *faithfulness* is required, as the story of Israel's unfaithfulness demonstrates.

11:23-24 Paul's final words about God's people as an olive tree hint at the next section: God will, in fact, graft the branches back on. That is, God will restore those Jews who currently don't believe the gospel.

11:25-32 Paul draws his discussion to a close. God's faithfulness means Israel will be saved.

11:25 *secret*: a mystery that's now being revealed (Rom 16:25). *won't think too highly*: Paul aims to eliminate pride on the part of Gentile believers (*you*). *A part . . . until*: Jewish unbelief is partial (Rom 11:1-6) and temporary (Rom 11:11). *full number*: either a set number or, more likely, the spread of the gospel to all peoples.

11:26-27 *all Israel will be saved*: This phrase raises difficult questions: Who is "all Israel"? When will they be saved, and how? The context of Romans 9-11 suggests that "all Israel" means ethnic Jews. The OT quotation suggests that it will occur at the (second) coming of the *deliverer*, Christ.

11:28-32 *you . . . they*: Paul reminds believers, especially Gentiles, that God will be faithful and merciful to unbelieving Israel, just as God has been merciful to them.

11:29 This statement about God is the foundation for the entire discussion in Romans 9-11.

11:33-36 Paul now concludes his heart-wrenching struggle with Jewish unbelief in the gospel, scripture, and

God's faithfulness by writing a hymn of praise to God's mysterious mercy.

12:1-15:13 Paul urges faithful and merciful living before the faithful and merciful God revealed in Christ. He calls the Roman believers to reflect God's love and hospitality in their life together, with special attention to Gentile-Jewish relations.

12:1-13:14 An overview of new life in the community of those who are in Christ.

12:1-2 A summary of, and preface to, the last major section of the letter. The transformation of believers' minds and bodies reverses the disorder of minds and bodies portrayed in Romans 1:18-32. So . . . *because of God's mercies*: The logical consequence of hearing the good news of God's mercy to all, as set forth in the first 11 chapters. *present your bodies*: See Romans 6:12-19. *living sacrifice . . . priestly service*: Every believer, and all believers together, exercise a new kind of priesthood by offering not animals but themselves, including the concrete activities of their bodies, to God (cf. Rom 6:11, "alive for God"). *conformed . . . transformed*: suggests external forces at work (the spirit of this age or the Spirit of God) and also human cooperation with those forces. *this world*: or "this age." *renewing of your minds . . . God's will*: Transformation of the mind makes possible the discerning and doing (12:1) of God's intentions for human life.

priestly service. <sup>2</sup>Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.

### Transformed relationships

<sup>3</sup>Because of the grace that God gave me, I can say to each one of you: don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Instead, be reasonable since God has measured out a portion of faith to each one of you. <sup>4</sup>We have many parts in one body, but the parts don't all have the same function. <sup>5</sup>In the same way, though there are many of us, we are one body in Christ, and individually we belong to each other. <sup>6</sup>We have different gifts that are consistent with God's grace that has been given to us. If your gift is prophecy, you should prophesy in proportion to your faith. <sup>7</sup>If your gift is service, devote yourself to serving. If your gift is teaching, devote yourself to teaching. <sup>8</sup>If your gift is encouragement, devote yourself to encouraging. The one giving should do it with no strings attached. The leader should lead with passion. The one showing mercy should be cheerful.

<sup>9</sup>Love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honor to each other. <sup>11</sup>Don't hesitate to be enthusiastic—be on fire in the Spirit as you serve the Lord! <sup>12</sup>Be happy in your hope, stand your ground when you're in trouble, and devote yourselves to prayer. <sup>13</sup>Contribute to the needs of God's people, and welcome strangers into your home. <sup>14</sup>Bless people who harass you—bless and don't curse them. <sup>15</sup>Be happy with those who are happy, and cry with those who are crying. <sup>16</sup>Consider everyone as equal, and don't think that you're better than anyone else. Instead, associate with people who have no status. Don't think that you're so smart. <sup>17</sup>Don't pay back anyone for their evil actions with evil actions, but show respect for what everyone else believes is good.

<sup>18</sup>If possible, to the best of your ability, live at peace with all people. <sup>19</sup>Don't try to get revenge for yourselves, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. It is written, *Revenge belongs to me; I will pay it back, says the Lord.*<sup>a</sup> <sup>20</sup>Instead, *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. By doing this, you will pile burning coals of fire upon his head.*<sup>b</sup> <sup>21</sup>Don't be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good.

**13** Every person should place themselves under the authority of the government. There isn't any authority unless it comes from God, and the authorities that are there have

<sup>a</sup>Deut 32:35 <sup>b</sup>Prov 25:21-22

12:15 Job 20:5; 1Co 12:26; Heb 13:3 12:16 Ps 131:1; Prv 3:7; Ro 11:25; Ro 12:3; Ro 15:5 12:18 Mk 9:50; Ro 14:19; Heb 12:14 12:19 Dt 32:35; Ps 94:1; Prv 24:29; Ro 12:17; Heb 10:30 In 19:11; Ti 3:1; 1Pt 2:13-14

12:17 Prv 20:22; Prv 24:29; Mt 5:39; 2Co 8:21; 1Pt 3:9

12:20 Ex 23:4-5; Prv 25:21-22; Mt 5:44 13:1 Dn 2:21;

12:2 Ro 12:1; Eph 4:2,3; Ti 3:5; 1Pt 1:14; 1Jn 2:15

12:3 Ro 11:20; Ro 12:16; Ro 15:15; Ga 2:9; Eph 4:7

12:4 1Co 12:12; Eph 4:4; Eph 4:16

12:5 1Co 10:17; 1Co 12:12; 1Co 12:20; 1Co 12:27; Eph 4:25

12:6 Ro 12:3; 1Co 7:7; 1Co 12:4; 1Co 12:10; 1Pt 4:10

12:7 Ac 6:1

12:8 2Co 9:7

12:9 Ps 97:10; Am 5:15; 2Co 6:6; 1Th 5:22; 1Ti 1:5

12:10 Phi 2:3; 1Th 4:9; Heb 13:1; 1Pt 2:17; 2Pt 1:7

12:11 Ac 18:25

12:12 Lk 21:19; Ro 5:2; Heb 10:36; Jas 1:4; Jas 5:7

12:13 Ac 20:35; 1Ti 3:2; Heb 6:10; Heb 13:2; 1Pt 4:9

12:14 Mt 5:44; Lk 6:28; 1Co 4:12; 1Pt 3:9

12:3-8 In a text echoing 1 Corinthians 12 and preparing for the difficult subject of divisions (Rom 14:1–15:13), Paul urges all to fulfill their role in the community, the one body of Christ, by exercising their gifts with humility, devotion, and mutual dependence.

12:3 *don't think . . . more highly*: See Philippians 2:1-5. *portion of faith*: not differing quantities of faith but various manifestations of it.

12:4-5 See 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

12:5 *belong to each other*: Individuals in the church, like individual parts of the body, depend on each other and work together as one unit.

12:6 *grace*: See 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. *different gifts*: Compare with 1 Corinthians 12:28-30; Ephesians 4:11-13.

12:8 *no strings attached*: or "generously."

12:9-21 Paul outlines practices of genuine love (cf. 1 Cor 13), including goodness and peacemaking, for the community to put into action. Elsewhere he calls these the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22). These practices aren't to be directed only toward those in the church but also toward those outside. In addition to love, he also mentions faith and hope (12:11-12).

12:10-11 The body of believers is a family in which the Roman quest for surpassing others in acquiring *honor* is

transformed into a quest for giving honor to others. *be enthusiastic*: a new form of zeal (cf. Rom 10:2).

12:12 *stand your ground . . . in trouble*: a call for those in the church to remain faithful when they suffer for their faith (Rom 5:3; 8:35-39).

12:14 See Romans 12:17-21; Luke 6:27-28.

12:16 See Romans 12:3. The good news of God's love for sinners (Rom 5:6-8) translates into believers' treatment of each other as equals, giving special attention not to those with high status but also to those with no status (Rom 15:1-4; 1 Cor 1:26-31).

12:17-18 See Romans 12:14; Matthew 5:38-42. *everyone else . . . all people*: those outside the church (Gal 6:10; 1 Thess 5:15).

12:19 Retaliation infringes on God's judgment of the enemies of God's people. *It is written*: See Deuteronomy 32:35.

12:20 Doing good rather than evil to enemies is based on the example and teaching of Jesus (Rom 12:14, 17), the certainty of divine judgment (Rom 12:19), and the hope of prompting enemies to change their hearts and lives (*pile burning coals of fire*).

13:1-7 This difficult text has received many interpretations and misinterpretations. It's neither a full-blown treatise on church-state relations nor the only passage

13:2 1Pr 2:13  
 13:3 1Pr 2:14  
 13:4 1Th 4:6  
 13:5 1Pr 2:13  
 13:6 Mt 22:17  
 13:7 Mt 17:25;  
 Mt 22:21;  
 Lk 20:25  
 13:8 Jn 13:34;  
 Ro 13:10;  
 Ga 5:14; Jas 2:8  
 13:9 Ex 20:13;  
 Ex 20:15;  
 Ex 20:17;  
 Lv 19:18;  
 Dt 5:17  
 13:10 Ro 13:8;  
 Ga 5:14; Jas 2:8  
 13:11 1Co  
 15:34; 1Th 5:6;  
 1Pr 4:7  
 13:12 2Co 6:7;  
 Eph 5:11;  
 Eph 6:11;  
 1Th 5:8; 1Jn 2:8  
 13:13 Lk 21:34;  
 Ga 5:21;  
 Eph 5:18;  
 1Th 4:12; 1Pr 4:3  
 13:14 Ga 3:27;  
 Ga 5:16; Ga 5:24;  
 Eph 4:24;  
 1Pr 2:11

been put in place by God. <sup>2</sup>So anyone who opposes the authority is standing against what God has established. People who take this kind of stand will get punished. <sup>3</sup>The authorities don't frighten people who are doing the right thing. Rather, they frighten people who are doing wrong. Would you rather not be afraid of authority? Do what's right, and you will receive its approval. <sup>4</sup>It is God's servant given for your benefit. But if you do what's wrong, be afraid because it doesn't have weapons to enforce the law for nothing. It is God's servant put in place to carry out his punishment on those who do what is wrong. <sup>5</sup>That is why it is necessary to place yourself under the government's authority, not only to avoid God's punishment but also for the sake of your conscience. <sup>6</sup>You should also pay taxes for the same reason, because the authorities are God's assistants, concerned with this very thing. <sup>7</sup>So pay everyone what you owe them. Pay the taxes you owe, pay the duties you are charged, give respect to those you should respect, and honor those you should honor.

<sup>8</sup>Don't be in debt to anyone, except for the obligation to love each other. Whoever loves another person has fulfilled the Law. <sup>9</sup>The commandments, *Don't commit adultery, don't murder, don't steal, don't desire what others have,*<sup>c</sup> and any other commandments, are all summed up in one word: *You must love your neighbor as yourself.*<sup>d</sup> <sup>10</sup>Love doesn't do anything wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is what fulfills the Law.

### *The day is near*

<sup>11</sup>As you do all this, you know what time it is. The hour has already come for you to wake up from your sleep. Now our salvation is nearer than when we first had faith. <sup>12</sup>The night is almost over, and the day is near. So let's get rid of the actions that belong to the darkness and put on the weapons of light. <sup>13</sup>Let's behave appropriately as people who live in the day, not in partying and getting drunk, not in sleeping around and obscene behavior, not in fighting and obsession. <sup>14</sup>Instead, dress yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ, and don't plan to indulge your selfish desires.

<sup>c</sup>Exod 20:13-15, 17; Deut 5:17-19, 21 <sup>d</sup>Lev 19:18

in Paul with political overtones. It should be read with attention to its immediate context in the letter, the letter's overall purpose, the political and religious situation in Rome, Paul's convictions and practices more broadly, and other biblical passages, including Revelation 13. It isn't a call to uncritical obedience to authority, government or otherwise; for challenging power when it opposes God is part of the biblical tradition. The primary purpose of this passage is narrow: a call for the believers in Rome to pay their taxes (13:6-7) rather than resist paying them (13:2, 4), as some Jewish revolutionaries advocated. Such tax resistance could be understood as a form of retaliation against authorities that *have been put in place by God* (13:1), a reference to the OT and Jewish tradition that God has put order into the public realm for the common good (Prov 8:15-16).

13:7 *taxes . . . duties*: various kinds of taxes. *respect . . . honor*: gospel values that contribute to living peaceably with all (Rom 12:18), but without implying uncritical devotion or worship (Mark 12:13-17).

13:8-10 Paul returns to the subject of love begun in Romans 12:9 by picking up on the language of debt in Romans 13:7. Believers' only ultimate debt is their obligation to love and thereby to fulfill the Law (Rom 8:3-4; Gal 5:14; Mark 12:28-34). The *commandments* are from the second table of the Ten Commandments, which focus on love of neighbor. Paul doesn't say that love replaces these commandments, but that the commandments are *summed up* in the word "love."

13:11-14 To conclude the overview of life in Christ that

began at Romans 12:1, Paul offers a collection of rich images and specific instructions (cf. 1 Thess 5:11-22). It's time to *wake up* (13:11), *dress yourself* with Christ (13:14), and engage in practices appropriate to the *light of day* (13:12-13). These images draw on end-time beliefs that Paul shared with many other Jews, now reworked in light of the coming of Christ. In him the coming age of God's kingdom (see Rom 14:17; Mark 1:15) has begun. Its light has already started to shine, and the darkness of this age (see Rom 12:2) will soon give way to the fullness of day, the fullness of God's kingdom (Rom 13:12).

13:12 *weapons*: the Christ-like practices expected of believers, understood as sharing in a spiritual battle against the forces of this age as well as their own "selfish desires" (Rom 13:14). Compare with 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Ephesians 6:10-17.

13:13 *behave appropriately*: The negative practices associated with the night, which believers are to replace with daytime practices, are both literal and figurative. For instance, *sleeping around* may refer both to literal sexual immorality and to spiritual unfaithfulness (as in Hosea). *fighting and obsession*: Hints at the subject that begins in Romans 14:1.

13:14 *dress yourself*: Those baptized into Christ (Rom 6) and therefore in Christ (Rom 8) must still continually put on Christ by adopting the Christ-like practices Paul has urged since Romans 12:1. Life in Christ, or life in the Spirit (Rom 8:1-17), is the opposite of a life ruled by *selfish desires* (Rom 7:7-25).

Welcoming each other like Christ

**14** Welcome the person who is weak in faith—but not in order to argue about differences of opinion. <sup>2</sup>One person believes in eating everything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>Those who eat must not look down on the ones who don't, and the ones who don't eat must not judge the ones who do, because God has accepted them. <sup>4</sup>Who are you to judge someone else's servants? They stand or fall before their own Lord (and they will stand, because the Lord has the power to make them stand). <sup>5</sup>One person considers some days to be more sacred than others, while another person considers all days to be the same. Each person must have their own convictions. <sup>6</sup>Someone who thinks that a day is sacred, thinks that way for the Lord. Those who eat, eat for the Lord, because they thank God. And those who don't eat, don't eat for the Lord, and they thank the Lord too. <sup>7</sup>We don't live for ourselves and we don't die for ourselves. <sup>8</sup>If we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to God. <sup>9</sup>This is why Christ died and lived: so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. <sup>10</sup>But why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you look down on your brother or sister? We all will stand in front of the judgment seat of God. <sup>11</sup>Because it is written,

*As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God.<sup>a</sup>*

<sup>12</sup>So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

<sup>13</sup>So stop judging each other. Instead, this is what you should decide: never put a stumbling block or obstacle in the way of your brother or sister. <sup>14</sup>I know and I'm convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is wrong to eat in itself. But if someone thinks something is wrong to eat, it becomes wrong for that person. <sup>15</sup>If your brother or sister is upset by your food, you are no longer walking in love. Don't let your food destroy someone for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup>And don't let something you consider to be good be criticized as wrong. <sup>17</sup>God's kingdom

14:1 Ro 15:1, Ro 15:7, 1Co 8:9, 1Co 9:22, 1Th 5:14  
14:2 Prv 15:17; Ro 14:14  
14:3 Lk 18:9; Ro 14:10, Ro 14:13; Col 2:16  
14:4 Mt 7:1, Ro 9:20, 1Co 4:5; Jas 4:12; Jud 1:24  
14:5 Ro 14:23; Ga 4:10  
14:6 Mt 14:19, Mt 15:36, 1Co 10:30-31; 1Ti 4:3  
14:7 2Co 5:15; Ga 2:19; 1Th 5:10  
14:8 Phi 1:20, 1Th 5:10; Rev 14:13  
14:9 Mt 28:18; Ac 10:42; Rev 1:18  
14:10 In 5:22; Ac 10:42; Ro 2:16, Ro 14:3; 2Co 5:10  
14:11 Is 45:23, Is 49:18, Phi 2:10-11

<sup>a</sup>Isa 45:23

14:12 Mt 12:36; Pt 4:5 14:13 Mt 7:1; 1Co 8:9 14:14 Ac 10:15; Ro 14:2, Ro 14:20; 1Co 8:7; Ti 1:15 14:15 1Co 8:11; Eph 5:2 14:16 1Co 10:30 14:17 Ro 15:13; 1Co 8:8; Ga 5:22

14:1-15:13 The climax of Paul's pastoral concerns about the churches in Rome. It appears (14:2, 5) that some believers, or perhaps particular house churches, follow certain Jewish practices (the *weak* noted in Rom 14:1-2; 15:1) while others don't (the *powerful*, or *strong*, noted in Rom 15:1). The two factions are highly critical of each other, with the nonobservant, mostly Gentile group probably being especially judgmental. Paul wants the church to live out the letter's theme of Jews and Gentiles as one body in Christ, equally in need of God's grace and equally recipients of it. This will happen only if they lovingly welcome each other, including their cultural differences—matters that ultimately don't matter in Christ. Then they'll be able to worship God together harmoniously as one body, a small but powerful example of God's intentions for the whole world (15:5-13). In other words, they are to welcome each other as God in Christ has loved and welcomed them in their need and even weakness (Rom 5:6-8; 14:1, 3; 15:7). Paul therefore puts the greater responsibility on the nonobservant, powerful believers (14:1, 13-21; 15:1-4; 1 Cor 8:1-13; 11:17-34).

14:1-12 Paul describes the behaviors of the two culturally different groups, chastising each for lacking hospitality, but already hinting in Romans 14:1 that admonishing the *powerful* (Rom 15:1) is the focus of his concern.

14:1 *weak in faith*: not in the gospel's essential claims or in commitment to Christ, but in convictions about disputed practices.

14:2 *only vegetables*: The exact reasons for this diet are unknown.

14:3 God's hospitable welcome of sinners from all cultures

is the basis of mutual respect of culturally different practices in the church.

14:4-12 All are God's *servants*, each responsible to their Lord and called to do everything in life for the Lord Christ, who died for them (14:7-9; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 5:15). Paul is advocating individual devotion to Christ and individual accountability about nonessential practices, not self-rule or freedom from responsibility to others. In fact, every person will be accountable to God face-to-face (14:11, citing Isa 45:23).

14:13-23 Without discarding his commitment to welcoming culturally different practices, Paul emphasizes the special responsibility of those whose practices could do harm to others (cf. Rom 15:1-4; 1 Cor 8:1-13).

14:13 *stumbling block or obstacle*: See also Romans 14:20; 1 Corinthians 8:9, 13. *brother or sister*: fellow believer.

14:14 Paul rejects the idea that, in and of themselves, some foods are unacceptable for those in Christ to eat. He does allow, however, for different convictions about specific dietary practices that might still negatively affect someone's total devotion to the Lord.

14:15 *upset*: seriously distressed or grieved, not mildly displeased. Christ-like, self-denying *love* is the standard even for decisions about everyday, normally acceptable practices that could threaten another's salvation (cf. 1 Cor 8).

14:16 Paul again insists that a practice, such as eating meat, that one leaves behind out of love for others isn't wrong in and of itself.

14:17 An important summary of the themes of the gospel of God's kingdom proclaimed in Romans and therefore of the things that actually do matter. Paul's relatively

14:18 2Co 8:21

14:19 Ps 34:14;

Ro 12:18,

Ro 15:2;

1Co 14:26;

2Co 12:19

14:20 Ac 10:15;

Ro 14:14-15;

1Co 8:9

14:21 1Co 8:13,

1Co 10:24

14:23 Lk 18:8;

Ro 14:5; Ti 1:15;

Heb 11:6; Jas 1:6

15:1 Ro 14:1;

Ga 6:1-2;

1Th 5:14

15:2 Ro 14:19;

1Co 10:24

15:3 Ps 69:9;

2Co 8:9

15:4 Ro 4:23

15:5 Ro 12:16;

1Co 1:10;

2Co 1:3; Phi 2:2;

Phi 2:5

15:6 In 20:17;

1Pt 1:3

15:8 Mt 15:24;

Ac 3:26;

2Co 1:20

15:9 2Sa 22:50;

Ps 18:49;

Ac 28:28;

Ro 3:29

15:10 Dt 32:43

15:12 Is 11:1;

Is 11:10;

Mt 12:21;

Rev 5:5

15:13 Ro 14:17;

Ro 15:19

isn't about eating food and drinking but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup>Whoever serves Christ this way pleases God and gets human approval.

<sup>19</sup>So let's strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.

<sup>20</sup>Don't destroy what God has done because of food. All food is acceptable, but it's a bad thing if it trips someone else. <sup>21</sup>It's a good thing not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything that trips your brother or sister. <sup>22</sup>Keep the belief that you have to yourself—it's between you and God. People are blessed who don't convict themselves by the things they approve.

<sup>23</sup>But those who have doubts are convicted if they go ahead and eat, because they aren't acting on the basis of faith. Everything that isn't based on faith is sin.

**15** We who are powerful need to be patient with the weakness of those who don't have power, and not please ourselves. <sup>2</sup>Each of us should please our neighbors for their good in order to build them up. <sup>3</sup>Christ didn't please himself, but, as it is written, *The insults of those who insulted you fell on me.*<sup>f</sup> <sup>4</sup>Whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction so that we could have hope through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures. <sup>5</sup>May the God of endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude toward each other, similar to Christ Jesus' attitude. <sup>6</sup>That way you can glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ together with one voice.

<sup>7</sup>So welcome each other, in the same way that Christ also welcomed you, for God's glory. <sup>8</sup>I'm saying that Christ became a servant of those who are circumcised for the sake of God's truth, in order to confirm the promises given to the ancestors, <sup>9</sup>and so that the Gentiles could glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

*Because of this I will confess you among the Gentiles,  
and I will sing praises to your name.*<sup>g</sup>

<sup>10</sup>And again, it says,

*Rejoice, Gentiles, with his people.*<sup>h</sup>

<sup>11</sup>And again,

*Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,  
and all the people should sing his praises.*<sup>i</sup>

<sup>12</sup>And again, Isaiah says,

*There will be a root of Jesse,  
who will also rise to rule the Gentiles.*

*The Gentiles will place their hope in him.*<sup>j</sup>

<sup>13</sup>May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>f</sup>Ps 69:9 <sup>g</sup>Ps 18:49 <sup>h</sup>Deut 32:43 <sup>i</sup>Ps 117:1 <sup>j</sup>Isa 11:10

rare use of Jesus' term *God's kingdom* captures the spirit of his words about devotion to God and Christ the Lord throughout this chapter. *righteousness... Spirit*: See Romans 5:1-11; 8:1-17.

14:19-21 Paul recalls his general admonitions to peace and love (Rom 12:3-21; 13:8-14) and applies them to the situation at hand, summarizing his position. *All food*: See Mark 7:19.

14:22-23 Individual convictions about specific non-essential practices should be rooted in faith as expressions of individual faithfulness to the Lord (as in Rom 14:1-9). *Everything*: all habits and practices, but especially those about which there are cultural differences among believers.

15:1-6 Paul urges Christ-like love, especially for the weaker members of the body, to create a harmonious community. The good news of God's love for the weak, seen in Christ's death (Rom 5:6-8), is the basis for Paul's request.

15:1-2 *powerful... don't have power*: those with and without status, in this case due to their different cultural practices. *please*: seek the other's good (cf. 1 Cor 10:33-11:1).

15:3-6 *Christ didn't please himself*: His death on the cross wasn't self-serving but was for the benefit of others, specifically sinners. Paul writes as though Jesus himself spoke

the words of Psalm 69:9. The words of the psalm and Jesus' death are the standard for believers. Christ-like love that takes its pattern from Jesus' selfless death on the cross creates harmony (cf. Phil 2:1-11).

15:6-9 *glorify... glory... glorify*: In Christ, humanity's first sin, failure to glorify God (Rom 1:18-25), has been reversed. When Gentiles and Jews join Paul (Rom 11:36; 16:25, 27) in glorifying God together in Christ, they also, like Christ and like their common father-in-the-faith, Abraham (Rom 6:4; 4:20), share in God's promised glory that will soon come in fullness (Rom 2:7, 10; 5:2; 8:17-18, 21, 29). Humanity had sought but failed to attain this glory on its own (see Rom 1:23; 3:23).

15:7-13 The dramatic pastoral conclusion of the letter: Jews and Gentiles together.

15:7 *So welcome*: summarizes the whole point since Romans 14:1.

15:8-12 *God's truth*, or integrity, is demonstrated in Christ's mission to Jews and Gentiles alike (15:8-9). The chain of OT citations (15:9-12) focuses on God's promise to include the Gentiles.

15:13 A concluding prayer for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (see Rom 5:5; 14:17; Gal 5:22), meaning especially the power to show Christ-like hospitality.

**Paul's ministry to the Gentiles**

<sup>14</sup>My brothers and sisters, I myself am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and are able to teach each other. <sup>15</sup>But I've written to you in a sort of daring way, partly to remind you of what you already know. I'm writing to you in this way because of the grace that was given to me by God. <sup>16</sup>It helps me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. I'm working as a priest of God's gospel so that the offering of the Gentiles can be acceptable and made holy by the Holy Spirit. <sup>17</sup>So in Christ Jesus I brag about things that have to do with God. <sup>18</sup>I don't dare speak about anything except what Christ has done through me to bring about the obedience of the Gentiles. He did it by what I've said and what I've done, <sup>19</sup>by the power of signs and wonders, and by the power of God's Spirit. So I've completed the circuit of preaching Christ's gospel from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum. <sup>20</sup>In this way, I have a goal to preach the gospel where they haven't heard of Christ yet, so that I won't be building on someone else's foundation. <sup>21</sup>Instead, as it's written, *Those who hadn't been told about him will see, and those who hadn't heard will understand.*<sup>k</sup>

**Travel plans to visit Rome**

<sup>22</sup>That's why I've been stopped so many times from coming to see you. <sup>23</sup>But now, since I don't have any place to work in these regions anymore, and since I've wanted to come to see you for many years, <sup>24</sup>I'll visit you when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while I'm passing through. And I hope you will send me on my way there, after I have first been reenergized by some time in your company.

<sup>25</sup>But now I'm going to Jerusalem, to serve God's people. <sup>26</sup>Macedonia and Achaia have been happy to make a contribution for the poor among God's people in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup>They were happy to do this, and they are actually in debt to God's people in Jerusalem. If the Gentiles got a share of the Jewish people's spiritual resources, they ought to minister to them with material resources. <sup>28</sup>So then after I have finished this job and have safely delivered the final amount of the Gentiles' offering to them, I will leave for Spain, visiting you on the way. <sup>29</sup>And I know that when I come to you I will come with the fullest blessing of Christ.

<sup>30</sup>Brothers and sisters, I urge you, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggles in your prayers to God for me. <sup>31</sup>Pray that I will be rescued from the people in Judea who don't believe. Also, pray that my service for Jerusalem will be acceptable to God's people there <sup>32</sup>so that I can come to you with joy by God's will and be reenergized with your company. <sup>33</sup>May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

<sup>k</sup>Isa 52:15

15:14 Col 3:16  
 15:15 Ro 12:3;  
 1Co 3:10; Ga 2:9  
 15:16 Ro 1:1,  
 Ro 11:13,  
 Ro 15:19;  
 1Co 4:1  
 15:17 Phi 3:3;  
 Heb 2:17;  
 Heb 5:1  
 15:18 Ac 15:12;  
 Ac 21:19; Ro 1:5  
 15:19 Jn 4:48;  
 Ac 19:11;  
 2Co 12:12  
 15:20 1Co 3:10;  
 Eph 2:20  
 15:21 Is 52:15  
 15:22 Ro 1:13;  
 1Th 2:18  
 15:23 Ac 19:21;  
 Ro 1:11,  
 Ro 15:32  
 15:24 Ac 15:3;  
 Ro 1:12,  
 Ro 15:28  
 15:25 Ac 19:21;  
 Ac 24:17  
 15:26 Ac 16:9,  
 2Co 8:1, 2Co 9:2  
 15:27 1Co 9:11;  
 Ga 6:6  
 15:28 Ro 15:24  
 15:29 Ps 16:11;  
 Jn 1:17;  
 Ac 10:36;  
 Ro 1:11; Eph 3:8  
 15:30 2Co 1:11;  
 Eph 6:19;  
 Phi 2:1;  
 Col 1:8; Col 4:12  
 15:33 Ro 16:20;  
 2Co 13:11;  
 Phi 4:9;  
 1Th 5:23;  
 Heb 13:20

15:14-33 Paul describes his mission work as part of God's plan to bring the gospel to the Gentiles and to unite Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

15:14-21 Paul explains his ministry to the Gentiles, perhaps in part to gather support for his planned trip to Spain (Rom 15:24).

15:14-16 Paul clarifies the purpose of this rather *daring*, or bold, letter to a community he didn't found. It's to remind them of what they could teach each other and to explain his ministry among the Gentiles.

15:16 *priest*... *offering of the Gentiles*: Paul's ministry is like that of a priest in the temple. His sacrifice consists of presenting to God those Gentiles who have believed the good news (Isa 66:18-23; see also "living sacrifice" in Rom 12:1-2).

15:17-21 Paul credits the success of his ministry to *God, Christ, and God's Spirit*, an early expression of belief in the Trinity (cf. 15:30; see note on 5:1-11).

15:17 *brag*: The source of Paul's satisfaction and pride in ministry isn't what he has done but what God has done.

15:19 *Illyricum*: a region across the Adriatic Sea from Italy.  
 15:20-21 Paul sees his specific call in the words of Isaiah 52:15: proclaiming the gospel where it's unknown.

15:22-29 Paul's description of his upcoming ministry begins with an explanation for his not yet having visited the churches in Rome (15:22-23; Rom 1:13-15) and his plan to be reenergized (cf. Rom 1:11-12) by a visit with them on his way to Spain, once he takes a financial collection from (largely) Gentile churches to the poor Jewish believers in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9). The collection is a concrete expression of Gentile and Jewish unity in Christ.

15:26 *Macedonia*: a Roman province in northern Greece that included Philippi and Thessaloniki. *Achaia*: a Roman province in southern Greece that included Athens and Corinth.

15:27 *in debt*: as those who have received the gospel, which started in Jerusalem.

15:30-33 Paul's words about prayer are another early expression of belief in the Trinity (cf. Rom 15:17-21). His request for prayer reveals concern about possible opposition from unbelieving Jews (cf. 1 Thess 2:14-16; Acts 21:27-39) and rejection by believing ones.

15:33 A prayer of blessing before the greetings. *God of peace*: summarizes God's character and activity of reconciling people to God and to each another (Rom 1:7; 2:10; 5:1; 8:6; 12:18; 14:17, 19; 15:13; 16:20).

16:1 Ac 18:18;  
Ro 16:2; 2Co 3:1  
16:2 Ro 16:1;  
Phi 2:29; 3Jn 5  
16:3 Ac 18:2,  
Ac 18:26;  
Ro 16:9;  
1Co 16:19;  
2Ti 4:19

16:4 1Jn 3:16  
16:5 1Co 16:15,  
1Co 16:19;  
2Co 1:1;  
Col 4:15;  
Phm 1:2

16:6 Ro 16:12  
16:7 Col 4:10;  
Phm 1:23

16:11 Ro 9:3,  
Ro 16:7,  
Ro 16:21

16:12 Ro 16:6  
16:15 Ro 16:2

16:16 1Co  
16:20; 2Co  
13:12;  
1Th 5:26;  
1Pt 5:14

16:17 2Th 3:6;  
1Ti 1:3; 1Ti 6:3;  
2Ti 3:5; 2Jn 10

16:18 Ro 14:18;  
Phi 3:19; Col 2:4;  
2Pt 2:3

16:19 Mt 10:16;  
Ro 1:8;  
1Co 14:20

16:20 Ro 15:33;  
2Co 13:14;  
Ga 6:18;  
1Th 5:28;  
Rev 22:21

16:21 Ac 13:1,  
Ac 16:1, Ac 17:5,  
Ac 20:4

16:22 Ga 6:11

### Introduction to Phoebe

**16** I'm introducing our sister Phoebe to you, who is a servant<sup>1</sup> of the church in Cencreae. <sup>2</sup>Welcome her in the Lord in a way that is worthy of God's people, and give her whatever she needs from you, because she herself has been a sponsor of many people, myself included.

### Greetings to Roman Christians

<sup>3</sup>Say hello to Prisca and Aquila, my coworkers in Christ Jesus, <sup>4</sup>who risked their own necks for my life. I'm not the only one who thanks God for them, but all the churches of the Gentiles do the same. <sup>5</sup>Also say hello to the church that meets in their house. Say hello to Epänetus, my dear friend, who was the first convert<sup>2</sup> in Asia for Christ. <sup>6</sup>Say hello to Mary, who has worked very hard for you. <sup>7</sup>Say hello to Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and my fellow prisoners. They are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. <sup>8</sup>Say hello to Ampliatius, my dear friend in the Lord. <sup>9</sup>Say hello to Urbanus, our coworker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. <sup>10</sup>Say hello to Apelles, who is tried and true in Christ. Say hello to the members of the household of Aristobulus. <sup>11</sup>Say hello to my relative Herodion. Say hello to the members of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Say hello to Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who are workers for the Lord. Say hello to my dear friend Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Say hello to Rufus, who is an outstanding believer, along with his mother and mine. <sup>14</sup>Say hello to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters who are with them. <sup>15</sup>Say hello to Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. <sup>16</sup>Say hello to each other with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ say hello to you.

### Warning against divisions

<sup>17</sup>Brothers and sisters, I urge you to watch out for people who create divisions and problems against the teaching that you learned. Keep away from them. <sup>18</sup>People like that aren't serving the Lord. They are serving their own feelings. They deceive the hearts of innocent people with smooth talk and flattery. <sup>19</sup>The news of your obedience has reached everybody, so I'm happy for you. But I want you to be wise about what's good, and innocent about what's evil. <sup>20</sup>The God of peace will soon crush Satan<sup>3</sup> under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

### Greetings from Paul's coworkers

<sup>21</sup>Timothy my coworker says hello to you, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my relatives. <sup>22</sup>I'm Tertius, and I'm writing this letter to you in the Lord—hello! <sup>23</sup>Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, says hello to you. Erastus the city treasurer says hello to you, along with our brother Quartus.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Or *deacon* <sup>2</sup>Or *is the firstfruits* <sup>3</sup>Or *the Adversary* <sup>4</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament do not include 16:24 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

**16:1-16** This chapter reveals both Paul's personal connections to the believers in Rome and his collaborative style of ministry. Especially clear is his deep respect for women believers generally and women ministers of the good news in particular. The names reflect a wide range of social strata and both Gentiles and Jews.

**16:1-2** Paul introduces *Phoebe*, who will deliver the letter. She will therefore probably also interpret it to the Roman believers. *servant*... *sponsor*: a servant to the church, perhaps in an official capacity, and a financial supporter of Paul and others. *Cencreae*: the eastern port for Corinth.

**16:3** *Prisca and Aquila*: according to Acts, Jewish coworkers of Paul and fellow tentmakers (Acts 18:1-3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19).

**16:5** *first convert*: or "first fruits" (of Paul's mission work). *Asia*: a Roman province, inclusive of Ephesus, in what is now western Turkey.

**16:7** *Andronicus and Junia*: Perhaps a married couple, this man and woman were at some time jailed with Paul. *relatives*: either blood relatives or siblings in Christ. *apostles*:

See note on Romans 1:1. Both men and women could be God's authorized representatives of the good news.

**16:10** *tried and true*: probably refers to harassment.

**16:11** *members of the household*: would include slaves.

**16:12** *Tryphaena and Tryphosa*: perhaps sisters.

**16:13** *his mother and mine*: Paul's spiritual, not physical, mother.

**16:14-15** These two groups may represent two different house churches.

**16:16** *All the churches of Christ*: the various house churches in and around Corinth and Cencreae.

**16:17-20** Paul approves of the original message proclaimed to those in Rome but opposes certain current teachers. His letter may be intended, in part, to affirm the original message they heard and to show the errors of the new teachers. *crush Satan*: possibly a reference to the downfall of the teachers, but more likely to the final victory over Satan that will occur at Christ's return.

**16:21** *Timothy*: one of Paul's most trusted coworkers (e.g., 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor 1:1, 19; Phil 1:1; 2:19-24; 1 Thess 1:1; 3:1-7). *relatives*: See note on Romans 16:7.



**Final prayer**

<sup>25</sup>May the glory be to God who can strengthen you with my good news and the message that I preach about Jesus Christ. He can strengthen you with the announcement of the secret<sup>P</sup> that was kept quiet for a long time. <sup>26</sup>Now that secret is revealed through what the prophets wrote. It is made known to the Gentiles<sup>Q</sup> in order to lead to their faithful obedience based on the command of the eternal God. <sup>27</sup>May the glory be to God, who alone is wise! May the glory be to him through Jesus Christ forever! Amen.

**16:24** Ro 1:7,  
Ro 15:5, Ro 15:6,  
Ro 16:20;  
1Th 5:28

**16:25** Ro 2:16;  
1Co 2:7; Eph 1:9,  
Eph 3:3; Eph 3:9

**16:26** Ro 1:2,  
Ro 1:5; Col 1:26;  
2Ti 1:10

**16:27** Ro 11:36;  
1Ti 1:17

<sup>P</sup>Or *mystery*    <sup>Q</sup>Or *all the Gentiles*

**16:22** *Tertius*: Paul's secretary.

**16:23** *Gaius*: See 1 Corinthians 1:14. *Erastus the city treasurer*: See 2 Timothy 4:20.

**16:25-27** Paul's final prayer of blessing and burst of praise reminds the believers in Rome that the good news Paul

preaches is for their good and God's glory. *secret*: or *mystery* revealed, the good news of God's grace that includes Gentiles.

**16:26** *faithful obedience*: echoes Romans 1:5, restating the goal of the good news Paul preaches.



# 1 CORINTHIANS

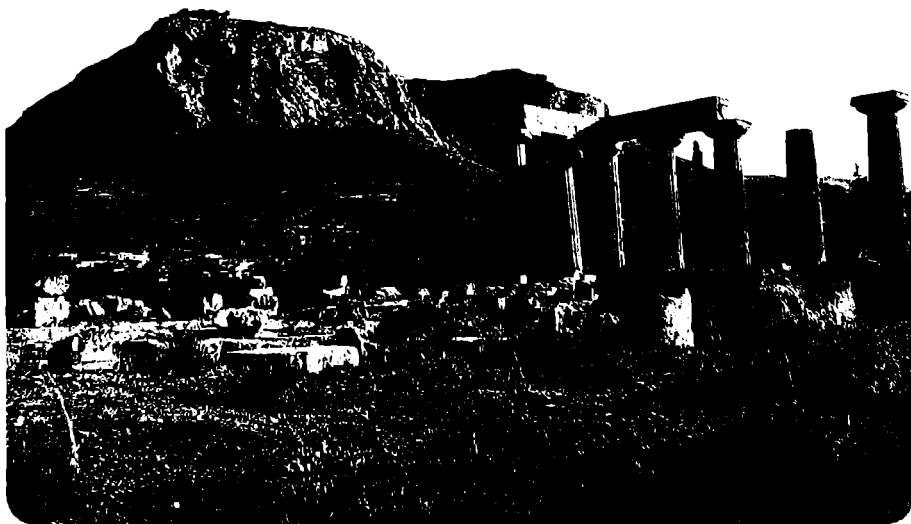
Sometime around 51 CE, the apostle Paul—the best-known of the early Christian missionaries—arrived in the flourishing commercial city of Corinth, a major city located on the narrow neck of land between the Greek mainland and the Peloponnese Peninsula. Because of its location, Corinth was a major trading port linking the eastern Mediterranean Sea with Italy and Rome to its west. Corinth had been destroyed in 146 BCE during a revolt against Rome. Just over a hundred years later, in 44 BCE, Julius Caesar reestablished the city as a major Roman colony in Greece. As a result, in Paul's day it was more Roman than Greek in terms of its dominant culture and social classes. Its size, strategic location, and the extent of its commercial activities made it one of the most important Roman cities outside Italy itself. These factors, along with a significant Jewish population, also made it an attractive center for Paul's missionary activity.

While Paul gives us limited details about his mission to Corinth (see 1 Cor 1:14-18;

2:1-5; 9:1-23), Acts 18:1-11 says that he spent 18 months in Corinth establishing and developing the Christian community there. According to Acts, Paul began by preaching to members of the Jewish synagogue community, but then he was rejected by them and turned to preaching to the Gentiles. The length of Paul's stay suggests that he sought to build a flourishing Christian community in and around Corinth.

From 1 Corinthians itself we can conclude that Paul and those who worked with him managed to bring people from a variety of social classes into the church. Paul indicates that most of them weren't educated or socially powerful (1 Cor 1:26). We learn that the church included both slaves and freed persons (i.e., people who had been slaves but had been freed; see 1 Cor 7:21-22). Some, perhaps a majority, lived in poverty (1 Cor 11:22).

At the same time, some members of the Corinthian church were of high social status (see 1 Cor 1:26). For example, in the Roman legal



Temple of Apollo in Corinth  
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system, only people with a degree of wealth and social standing could take others to court. This was happening among church members in Corinth (see 1 Cor 6:1-8). The person Paul wanted expelled from the church (1 Cor 5:1-5) must have been socially powerful in civil society, since only such a person could have gotten away with living with his stepmother—an obvious violation of Roman law at the time. Socially important and powerful members also competed with each other for influence and recognition in the church (1 Cor 1:10-13; 3:3-4; 11:18).

After establishing the Corinthian church, Paul left the city to continue his missionary work, but he maintained close contact with the church in Corinth through visitors (1 Cor 1:11-12; 16:17-18) and the exchange of letters (see 1 Cor 5:9-11; 7:1). Paul received at least two sets of visitors from Corinth before writing 1 Corinthians from Ephesus sometime before Pentecost (see 1 Cor 16:8), probably in either 54 or 55 CE.

The news he received from Corinth led Paul to write 1 Corinthians. The first group Paul mentions visiting him were probably slaves or freed slaves from the household of a woman named Chloe. They told Paul that people from different groups in the church were engaged in conflict with each other, and that this conflict had created divisions (1 Cor 1:11-12). They may have told him of other related problems in the

church. For example, Paul learned that a certain man was living with his stepmother as his wife (see 1 Cor 5:1-5) and that some Christians were suing each other in the civil courts (1 Cor 6:1-8). He also learned of abuses during the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-22).

At the time of writing the letter, Paul had three other visitors from Corinth: Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus. Stephanas and his household were the first to become new believers under Paul's missionary work in Corinth. Through service to the church, they became leaders (1 Cor 16:15-16). These three probably brought the letter from the church whose concerns Paul refers to (1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12). This letter raised several troubling issues. These included questions around marriage and divorce (1 Cor 7:1-40); eating food sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8:1-11:1); and the use and abuse of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:1-14:40). In addition, either from the letter or from oral reports, Paul learned that some in Corinth were denying the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12-19). In each case the church, or a group within the church, sought Paul's help. Thus 1 Corinthians represents Paul's attempt to resolve questions and serious problems in the life of the church at Corinth. It's likely that Stephanas and his people took Paul's letter back to Corinth and presented it to the church as Paul's representatives.

### **I. Letter Opening (1:1-9)**

- A. Greeting (1:1-3)
- B. Thanksgiving report (1:4-9)

### **II. Introduction: Church Divisions and Paul's Preaching (1:10-17)**

#### **III. Paul's Message, Ministry, and Authority (1:18-4:21)**

- A. God's wisdom versus human wisdom (1:18-31)
  - 1. Divine wisdom versus human foolishness in the cross (1:18-25)
  - 2. God's choice of the weak and insignificant (1:26-31)
- B. Paul's preaching of the cross in weakness and simplicity (2:1-5)
- C. Paul's wisdom for the mature (2:6-16)
- D. Images of ministry and apostolic authority (3:1-17)
  - 1. Paul as nursing mother to the spiritually immature (3:1-4)

#### 2. Paul the farmer (3:5-9)

#### 3. Paul the master builder (3:10-17)

- E. Instruction regarding acquiring true wisdom (3:18-23)
- F. Paul the servant and premature judgment (4:1-5)
- G. Paul's model of leadership (4:6-13)
- H. Paul the father of the Corinthians (4:14-21)

#### **IV. Immorality and Lawsuits in the Church (5:1-6:20)**

- A. Immorality and exclusion from the church (5:1-13)
  - 1. Expulsion for gross sexual immorality (5:1-8)
  - 2. Applying the expulsion principle to other forms of immorality (5:9-13)
- B. Lawsuits among believers condemned (6:1-8)
- C. Exclusion from God's kingdom (6:9-11)
- D. Avoiding sexual immorality (6:12-20)

**V. Practical Issues around Marriage and Divorce (7:1-40)**

- A. Sex in marriage and avoiding immorality (7:1-7)
- B. Instruction about marriage and divorce for believers (7:8-11)
- C. Marriage and divorce in mixed marriages (7:12-16)
- D. Living the life assigned by the Lord (7:17-24)
- E. To marry or not to marry at the end of the age (7:25-40)

**VI. The Problem of Food Sacrificed to Idols (8:1-11:1)**

- A. Knowledge and arrogance (8:1-3)
- B. Paul's belief in one God (8:4-6)
- C. Paul's criticism of eating food sacrificed to idols (8:7-13)
- D. Paul's right to support, and his refusal to use his right (9:1-18)
- E. Paul's flexibility in preaching (9:19-23)
- F. Paul's self-discipline to achieve salvation (9:24-27)
- G. The exodus experience as a warning for the spiritually arrogant (10:1-13)
- H. The Lord's Supper versus supper with demons (10:14-22)
- I. Practical advice regarding food sacrificed to idols (10:23-11:1)

**VII. Questions and Problems Regarding Worship (11:2-34)**

- A. Covering women's heads in public worship (11:2-16)

- B. Correcting the abuse of the Lord's Supper (11:17-34)

**VIII. The Gifts of the Spirit and the Power of Love (12:1-14:40)**

- A. The gifts of the Spirit for the well-being of the community (12:1-11)
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1:1 Ro 1:1;  
 2Co 1:1; Ga 1:1;  
 Eph 1:1; 2Ti 1:1  
 1:2 Ac 7:59;  
 Ac 18:1;  
 Ro 1:7; 1Co 1:30;  
 2Co 1:1  
 1:3 Ro 1:7  
 1:4 Ro 1:8  
 1:5 Ro 15:14;  
 2Co 8:7;  
 2Co 9:11  
 1:6 1Ti 2:6;  
 2Ti 1:8; Rev 1:2  
 1:7 Lk 17:30;  
 Phi 3:20;  
 1Th 1:10;  
 7i 2:13; 3Ph 3:12  
 1:8 1Co 5:5;  
 2Co 1:14;  
 Phi 1:6; Phi 2:16;  
 1Th 3:13  
 1:9 Dt 7:9;  
 Is 49:7;  
 1Co 10:13;  
 1Th 5:24; 1Jn 1:3  
 1:10 Ro 15:5;  
 1Co 11:18;  
 2Co 13:11;  
 Phi 1:27  
 1:11 1Co 3:3  
 1:12 Jn 1:42;  
 Ac 18:24;  
 Ac 19:1; 1Co 3:4;  
 1Co 3:22

## Greeting

**1** From Paul, called by God's will to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, and from Sosthenes our brother.

**2** To God's church that is in Corinth:

To those who have been made holy to God in Jesus Christ, who are called to be God's people. Together with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place— he's their Lord and ours!

**3** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Thanksgiving for the Corinthians

**4** I thank my God always for you, because of God's grace that was given to you in Jesus Christ. **5** That is, you were made rich through him in everything: in all your communication and every kind of knowledge, **6** in the same way that the testimony about Christ was confirmed with you. **7** The result is that you aren't missing any spiritual gift while you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. **8** He will also confirm your testimony about Christ until the end so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God is faithful, and you were called by him to partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Rival groups in Corinth

**10** Now I encourage you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: Agree with each other and don't be divided into rival groups. Instead, be restored with the same mind and the same purpose. **11** My brothers and sisters, Chloe's people gave me some information about you, that you're fighting with each other. **12** What I mean is this: that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," "I belong to Apollos," "I belong to Cephas," "I belong to Christ."

1:1 *From Paul, called... an apostle... from Sosthenes our brother.* Paul regularly identifies himself as an apostle or divinely appointed missionary (1 Cor 9:2; 15:9; Rom 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1). An apostle must be a witness to the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor 15:7-8); demonstrate signs of his apostleship (2 Cor 12:12); and prove himself through turning people to the faith (1 Cor 9:2). Sosthenes may be the secretary to whom Paul dictated the letter.

1:3 *Grace to you and peace:* Grace refers to the benefits given by a patron or sponsor. God and the Lord Jesus Christ are the patrons of the community, and they grant favors and gifts, including peace or general well-being.

1:4-9 These verses report Paul's thanks for the Corinthians.

1:4 *I thank my God:* The greeting of Paul's letters is often followed by a report of him giving thanks to God for the readers (Rom 1:5-12; Phil 1:3-8; 1 Thess 1:2-10). The report is intended to invite their goodwill. *because of God's grace:* expresses the reason that Paul gave thanks. The Corinthians have received God's special favor.

1:5 *you were made rich:* explains the nature of the favor granted by God (see 1 Cor 4:8). *in all your communication:* a reference to spiritual communication through such things as prophecy, speaking in tongues, and the interpretation of tongues (see 1 Cor 14:1-33a). *every kind of knowledge:* They have a deep spiritual knowledge about God and various religious matters, though this is later questioned (see 1 Cor 8:1-3).

1:7 *spiritual gift:* See 1 Corinthians 12:7-10, 28-31. Spiritual gifts seem to have contributed to divisions in the community (1 Cor 12:12-31). *while you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed:* refers to the public return of Christ from heaven at the end of the age. Paul expected this to happen during his lifetime (1 Cor 7:29-31; 1 Thess 4:15-17).

1:8 *you will be blameless:* That is, the community, not individual members, will be free from divine condemnation. *the day of our Lord Jesus Christ:* the day of judgment at the end of the age (Amos 5:18; Rom 2:5, 16; 1 Thess 5:2-4).

1:9 *God is faithful:* God can be trusted to deliver on God's promises. *you were called... to partnership with his Son... our Lord:* God had chosen and invited the Corinthian Christians to share in their special relationship of partnership with Christ.

1:10-17 These verses introduce one of the major issues that led to Paul's writing 1 Corinthians. He had received a report that the church was divided into competing groups (1:11). These divisions don't appear to have been based on theological differences, because Paul makes no attempt to connect particular groups to specific theological positions. Instead, he identifies the division between rich and poor, those of high social status and those of low status, as a significant problem in the church (1 Cor 1:26-31; 11:17-22).

1:10 Paul regularly refers to his readers as *brothers and sisters* to indicate that they should act as family members toward each other. *Agree... don't be divided into rival groups:* Paul calls for them to speak with one voice as a cure for the divisions that had formed. *be restored... same mind... same purpose:* These words emphasize that Paul wanted them to return to their previous condition of unity in how they viewed themselves and how they acted toward each other (see Phil 2:1-11).

1:11 *Chloe's people:* slaves or freed persons (i.e., former slaves) from the household of a woman named Chloe. She would have been a person of some wealth. *fighting with each other:* Rivalry between groups led to fighting in the community.

1:12 *each one of you says, "I belong to Paul":* The basic problem was hostility, which resulted when groups that were joined to wealthy patrons or sponsors competed with each other. This was how people behaved in the city of Corinth, and these Christ-followers seem to have brought this practice into the church. Competing groups identified with different Christian leaders, like Paul; *Apollos* (see Acts 18:24-28); and *Cephas* (the apostle Peter) as their spiritual patrons.

<sup>13</sup>Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were you baptized in Paul's name? <sup>14</sup>Thank God that I didn't baptize any of you, except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup>so that nobody can say that you were baptized in my name! <sup>16</sup>Oh, I baptized the house of Stephanas too. Otherwise, I don't know if I baptized anyone else. <sup>17</sup>Christ didn't send me to baptize but to preach the good news. And Christ didn't send me to preach the good news with clever words so that Christ's cross won't be emptied of its meaning.

### Human wisdom versus the cross

<sup>18</sup>The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are being destroyed. But it is the power of God for those of us who are being saved. <sup>19</sup>It is written in scripture: *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will reject the intelligence of the intelligent.* <sup>20</sup>Where are the wise? Where are the legal experts? Where are today's debaters? Hasn't God made the wisdom of the world foolish? <sup>21</sup>In God's wisdom, he determined that the world wouldn't come to know him through its wisdom. Instead, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of preaching. <sup>22</sup>Jews ask for signs, and Greeks look for wisdom. <sup>23</sup>But we preach Christ crucified, which is a scandal to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. <sup>24</sup>But to those who are called—both Jews and Greeks—Christ is God's power and God's wisdom. <sup>25</sup>This is because the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

<sup>26</sup>Look at your situation when you were called, brothers and sisters! By ordinary human standards not many were wise, not many were powerful, not many were from the upper class. <sup>27</sup>But God chose what the world considers foolish to shame the wise. God chose what the world considers weak to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup>And God chose what the world considers

1:13 Mt 28:19;  
Ac 2:38  
1:14 Ac 18:8;  
Ro 16:23  
1:16 1Co 16:15;  
1Co 16:17  
1:17 1Co 2:1;  
1Co 2:4;  
1Co 2:13  
1:18 Ro 1:16;  
1Co 1:21;  
1Co 1:23-25  
1:19 Job 5:13;  
Is 29:14;  
1Co 3:19  
1:20 Ro 1:22;  
1Co 3:19  
1:21 Mt 11:25;  
Lk 10:21;  
1Co 1:18;  
1Co 6:2;  
1Co 11:32  
1:22 Mt 12:38;  
Mk 8:11; Jn 4:48  
1:23 1Co 1:18;  
1Co 2:2; Ga 3:1;  
Ga 5:11; 1Pt 2:8  
1:24 Ro 1:16;  
1Co 1:18;  
1Co 1:30; Col 2:3  
1:25 Ro 11:33;  
1Co 1:18;  
2Co 1:34

<sup>a</sup>Isa 29:14

1:26 Mt 11:25; 1Co 1:20 1:27 Ps 8:2; Jas 2:5 1:28 Job 34:19; Ro 4:17; 1Co 2:6

1:13 *Has Christ been divided?*: The term "Christ" refers to the whole church, since the church is the body of Christ (see 1 Cor 12:12-13, 27).

1:14 *Crispus*: See Acts 18:8. *Gaius*: See Romans 16:23.

1:16 *Stephanas*: See 1 Corinthians 16:15-18.

1:17 *Christ didn't send me to preach the good news with clever words*: Paul contrasts true preaching of the gospel with speeches employing the clever words of specialists trained in speech-making. Such speakers were more interested in impressing people than in changing their lives for the better.

1:18-25 Paul sets out six contrasts to show how different groups of people in his culture perceived the message of Christ crucified.

1:18 *The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are being destroyed*: Crucifixion was a dehumanizing form of torture and death. To preach that a crucified Jew was God's means of saving the world would have seemed complete nonsense to Greeks. Instead, they valued learning, philosophy, and high social status. By way of contrast, *it is the power of God for those... being saved*: The message of the cross is experienced as powerful because it is able to transform people's lives, bringing about their salvation.

1:19 Paul quotes Isaiah 29:14 as a scriptural proof for God's judgment against the wise and learned, the elite who fail to understand God and God's wisdom.

1:20-21 *Where are the wise?*: the wealthy and educated elite. *the legal experts*: Jewish scholars of the Law of Moses. *today's debaters*: people trained in public speaking who engaged in public performances to demonstrate their skills. *wisdom of the world*: the knowledge and values of the educated elite who trusted in their own cleverness. This wisdom stands in contrast to *God's wisdom* for human salvation through believing in what unbelievers see as the *foolishness of preaching the cross of Christ*.

1:22 *signs*: indications of God's involvement in the world. *wisdom*: the understanding and knowledge of how the world works from a human perspective.

1:23 *a scandal to Jews*: because the "Christ" wasn't supposed to be executed. Some Jews would have viewed Jesus as cursed by God because of his death on a cross (or tree; see Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13). *foolishness to Gentiles*: They would have found it ridiculous that one dying a slave's death could be a savior figure.

1:24 *But to those who are called*: Those who respond to the invitation of the gospel in complete trust see Christ for who he really is. He is the power and wisdom of God for human salvation.

1:26-31 The Corinthian Christians received God's call and experienced changed hearts and lives. This shows how God's wisdom differs from human wisdom. God turns human expectations upside down about who and what is important, to shame those who consider themselves wise and powerful.

1:26 *not many... wise... powerful... upper class*: The majority of Corinthian Christians were from the urban poor, but this verse suggests that some were from the upper classes of the city.

1:27 *God chose what the world considers foolish to shame the wise... weak to shame the strong*: A person's worth was determined by the social respect they possessed and received from others. The poor and powerless members of the society were considered to be foolish and weak by their social superiors. By choosing the weak to receive salvation, God shamed the wise and the socially superior members of that society, turning the tables on them (see Mark 10:37).

1:28 *God chose what the world considers low-class*: God overthrows the way the world values people by choosing the powerless and poor to receive salvation in Christ.

1:29 Ro 3:27;  
Eph 2:9  
1:30 Jer 23:5;  
Ro 3:24;  
1Co 1:2;  
2Co 5:2;  
Phi 3:21;

1:31 Jer 9:23-24;  
2Co 10:17

2:1 1Co 1:17;  
1Co 2:4;  
1Co 2:13

2:2 1Co 1:23;  
Ga 6:14

2:3 1Co 4:10;  
2Co 11:30;  
2Co 12:5;  
2Co 13:9;  
Ga 4:13

2:4 Ro 15:13;  
Ro 15:19;  
1Co 2:1;  
1Co 4:20;  
1Th 1:5

2:5 2Co 4:7;  
2Co 6:7

2:6 Phi 3:15

2:7 Ro 16:25;  
1Co 2:1; Col 1:26

2:8 Ps 24:7;  
Ac 7:2; Jas 2:1

2:9 Is 64:4;  
Is 65:17;  
Mt 25:34;  
Ro 8:28;  
Heb 11:16

low-class and low-life—what is considered to be nothing—to reduce what is considered to be something to nothing.<sup>29</sup> So no human being can brag in God's presence.<sup>30</sup> It is because of God that you are in Christ Jesus. He became wisdom from God for us. This means that he made us righteous and holy, and he delivered us.<sup>31</sup> This is consistent with what was written: *The one who brags should brag in the Lord!*<sup>b</sup>

**2** When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I didn't come preaching God's secrets to you like I was an expert in speech or wisdom. <sup>2</sup> I had made up my mind not to think about anything while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and to preach him as crucified. <sup>3</sup> I stood in front of you with weakness, fear, and a lot of shaking. <sup>4</sup> My message and my preaching weren't presented with convincing wise words but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. <sup>5</sup> I did this so that your faith might not depend on the wisdom of people but on the power of God.

### Definition of wisdom

<sup>6</sup> What we say is wisdom to people who are mature. It isn't a wisdom that comes from the present day or from today's leaders who are being reduced to nothing. <sup>7</sup> We talk about God's wisdom, which has been hidden as a secret. God determined this wisdom in advance, before time began, for our glory. <sup>8</sup> It is a wisdom that none of the present-day rulers have understood, because if they did understand it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory! <sup>9</sup> But this is precisely what is written: *God has prepared things for those who love him that no eye has seen, or ear has heard, or that haven't crossed the mind of any human being.*<sup>c</sup> <sup>10</sup> God has revealed these things to us through the Spirit. The Spirit searches everything, including the depths of God. <sup>11</sup> Who knows a person's depths except their own spirit that lives in them? In the same way, no one has known the depths of God except God's Spirit. <sup>12</sup> We haven't received the world's spirit but God's Spirit so that we can know the things given to us by God. <sup>13</sup> These are the things we are talking about—not with words taught by human wisdom but with words taught by the Spirit—we are interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people.

<sup>b</sup> Jer 9:24 <sup>c</sup> Isa 64:4

2:10 Mt 13:11, Mt 16:17; Jn 14:26; Eph 3:3, Eph 3:5 2:11 Prv 20:27 2:12 Ro 8:15; 1Co 1:27 2:13 Lk 12:12; 1Co 1:17, 1Co 2:1, 1Co 2:4

**1:29** *So no human being can brag:* If God had primarily chosen the wise and the socially powerful for salvation, then such people would claim that they deserved this gift from God because of their elite status. The poor know they don't deserve such gifts.

**1:31** *The one who brags:* See Jeremiah 9:23-24. Church members aren't to brag about their own virtues or social position, but only about what God has done for them in Christ Jesus.

**2:1-5** Paul reminds the Corinthians of his own behavior and his preaching of the message of the cross in weakness and with simple speech.

**2:1** *God's secrets:* Paul preached the relevance of Christ and the cross for human salvation, something clearly hidden from unbelievers (see 1 Cor 2:7).

**2:3** *weakness, fear, and a lot of shaking:* Public speakers were judged on their self-presentation as strong and confident, since audiences believed that this contributed to the impressiveness and validity of their message. Paul claimed to have been the opposite kind of speaker when he preached to the Corinthians.

**2:4** *convincing wise words:* Good speakers won over their audiences with their persuasive words, but Paul denies that he did this. *demonstration of the Spirit and of power:* Because Paul refused to play the part of a polished public speaker, he was forced to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to turn the Corinthians toward following Christ.

**2:5** *faith . . . on the power of God:* Paul's purpose was to persuade people to trust in God and God's power rather than in his ability as a flashy public speaker.

**2:6-16** Paul explains the nature of the divine wisdom he taught to the spiritually mature. This wisdom has its

origins in God, and is revealed by the Holy Spirit to the spiritual, but remains hidden to the unspiritual.

**2:6** *What we say is wisdom to people who are mature:* Paul's preaching and teaching were based on God's wisdom (see 1 Cor 1:18-25). The maturity he speaks of is a maturity that comes from having God's Spirit (however, see 1 Cor 3:1-3). *It isn't a wisdom . . . from today's leaders who are being reduced to nothing:* The political rulers of Paul's day were responsible for Jesus' crucifixion, and therefore rejected God's wisdom. But Paul saw ahead of time that they would be reduced to a state of complete powerlessness (see 1 Cor 15:23-28).

**2:7** *God determined this wisdom . . . before time began:* God had a plan for human salvation through the death of Jesus Christ from before time began. *for our glory:* God's plan will bring great honor or respect to those trusting in Christ for their salvation (see 1 Cor 6:2-3).

**2:8** *a wisdom that none of the present-day rulers have understood:* These are the human rulers of the world who haven't understood how God could use the death of Jesus Christ to bring about salvation for all.

**2:9** *what is written:* This phrase introduces an OT quotation. *God has prepared:* The passage quoted is probably Isaiah 64:4, but Paul paraphrases the original text so that it makes sense in this new context.

**2:10** *revealed these things:* the secret of God's salvation through Christ that was unavailable to human wisdom. *through the Spirit:* Christians understand God's secret plan because they have received the Holy Spirit in their lives. *depths of God:* God's inner thoughts that planned salvation ahead of time for those trusting in Christ.

**2:13** *interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people:* Only



<sup>14</sup>But people who are unspiritual don't accept the things from God's Spirit. They are foolishness to them and can't be understood, because they can only be comprehended in a spiritual way. <sup>15</sup>Spiritual people comprehend everything, but they themselves aren't understood by anyone. <sup>16</sup>*Who has known the mind of the Lord, who will advise him?*<sup>a</sup> But we have the mind of Christ.

### Wisdom applied to divisions in the church

**3** Brothers and sisters, I couldn't talk to you like spiritual people but like unspiritual people, like babies in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I gave you milk to drink instead of solid food, because you weren't up to it yet. <sup>3</sup>Now you are still not up to it because you are still unspiritual. When jealousy and fighting exist between you, aren't you unspiritual and living by human standards? <sup>4</sup>When someone says, "I belong to Paul," and someone else says, "I belong to Apollos," aren't you acting like people without the Spirit? <sup>5</sup>After all, what is Apollos? What is Paul? They are servants who helped you to believe. Each one had a role given to them by the Lord: <sup>6</sup>I planted, Apollos watered, but God made it grow. <sup>7</sup>Because of this, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but the only one who is anything is God who makes it grow. <sup>8</sup>The one who plants and the one who waters work together, but each one will receive their own reward for their own labor. <sup>9</sup>We are God's coworkers, and you are God's field, God's building.

<sup>10</sup>I laid a foundation like a wise master builder according to God's grace that was given to me, but someone else is building on top of it. Each person needs to pay attention to the way they build on it. <sup>11</sup>No one can lay any other foundation besides the one that is already laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup>So, whether someone builds on top of the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, or hay, <sup>13</sup>each one's work will be clearly shown. The day will make it clear, because it will be revealed with fire—the fire will test the quality of each one's work. <sup>14</sup>If anyone's work survives, they'll get a reward. <sup>15</sup>But if anyone's work goes up in flames, they'll lose it. However, they themselves will be saved as if they had gone through a fire. <sup>16</sup>Don't you know that you are God's temple and God's Spirit lives in you? <sup>17</sup>If someone

<sup>a</sup>Isa 40:13

3:11 Is 28:16; Eph 2:20 3:12 Ac 20:30; Ro 16:17; 2Co 2:17; Col 2:8; Col 2:18 3:13 1Co 4:5; 2Th 1:7 3:14 1Co 3:8, 1Co 9:17 3:15 Jud 1:23 3:16 In 14:17; Ro 8:9; 1Co 6:19; 2Co 6:16; Eph 2:21 3:17 Is 64:11; Eph 2:21

those with the Spirit in them are spiritual and are able to understand the spiritual things that Paul is explaining.

**2:16** *Who has known the mind of the Lord:* Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13. *we have the mind of Christ:* Spiritual Christians possess the attitude that Christ demonstrated through his life and death (see Phil 2:4-11).

**3:1-17** Paul employs a series of images to explain his ministry to the church in Corinth. Each image emphasizes his apostolic authority in relation to the Corinthians and other church leaders, including Apollos.

**3:1-4** Paul explains why he was unable to give the Corinthians more advanced teachings, blaming the problem on their spiritual immaturity.

**3:2** *I gave you milk to drink:* Paul's image suggests that he was like a nursing mother who decides when her infants are ready to start taking solid food. While he was with them, they remained in a childish spiritual state that prevented him from telling them the secret wisdom of God discussed in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

**3:4** *"I belong to Paul" and ... "I belong to Apollos":* See 1 Corinthians 1:10-13.

**3:5-9** Paul draws on agricultural practices in order to explain the different roles played by himself and Apollos.

**3:5** *They are servants ... a role given to them by the Lord:* Paul downplays the differences between himself and Apollos by labeling them both as servants of God, each fulfilling the roles given to them by the Lord.

**3:6** *I planted, Apollos watered:* Though this may not be immediately obvious, Paul's image actually positions him ahead of Apollos. This is because the planter was considered more skillful and important than those tending the crops.

**3:10-17** Paul introduces, explains, and applies a complex set of images based on builders and buildings.

**3:10** *I laid a foundation like a wise master builder:* Paul compares himself to the head of a building project who sets out the foundations for the building. Other builders then build on those foundations and are accountable to the master builder for the quality of their work. *according to God's grace:* Paul was the lead missionary because of God's favor. To challenge Paul was to challenge God.

**3:11** *No one can lay any other foundation ... which is Jesus Christ:* Paul claims a unique position in establishing the church (see also 1 Cor 4:14-15). No one can start over again to replace his work or change his foundation, since his foundation was the good news regarding Jesus Christ.

**3:12-15** *whether someone builds ... each one's work will be clearly shown:* Paul is speaking about the work of local leaders and possibly teachers and missionaries who arrived after he left. We know that Paul thought these outsiders were troublemakers (see 2 Cor 11:4-27). This is why he warns of *The Day*, the day of final judgment, when God will test such people's work.

**3:16** *Don't you know that:* Paul uses this expression 10 times in 1 Corinthians when he wishes to express himself strongly about something that should be obvious (see 1 Cor 5:6; 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 9:13, 24). *you are God's temple:* This image refers to the church community as a whole, not its individual members, as the holy place of God's presence. Since the community is the temple, it follows that *God's Spirit lives in the community* (cf. 1 Cor 6:19).

**3:17** *If someone destroys God's temple:* Paul threatens

2:14 In 14:17;

1Co 1:18

2:15 Prv 28:5;

1Co 3:1;

1Co 14:37;

Ga 6:1

2:16 Is 40:13;

Ro 11:34; Phi 2:5

3:1 Ro 7:14;

1Co 2:6;

1Co 2:14-15

3:2 In 16:12;

1Co 3:1;

Heb 5:12-13;

1Pt 2:2

3:3 Ro 13:13;

1Co 1:11;

1Co 11:18;

2Co 12:20

3:4 Ac 18:24;

Ac 19:1;

1Co 1:12;

1Co 3:3, 1Co 4:6

3:5 2Co 6:4

3:6 Ac 18:4;

Ac 18:24;

1Co 4:15;

1Co 9:1;

1Co 15:1

3:7 Ga 6:3

3:8 1Co 4:5

3:9 Mk 16:20;

1Co 3:16;

2Co 6:1;

Eph 2:20; 1Pt 2:5

3:10 Ro 12:3;

Ro 15:20;

1Co 15:10

3:18 Prv 3:7;  
Is 5:21; 1Co 1:20,  
1Co 8:2; Ga 6:3

3:19 Job 5:13;  
Is 29:14; Ro 1:22;  
1Co 1:19,  
1Co 1:20

3:20 Ps 94:11  
3:21 Ro 9:28,  
Ro 8:32; 1Co 3:4,  
1Co 4:6

3:22 Ro 8:38,  
1Co 1:12,  
1Co 3:5-6

3:23 1Co 11:3,  
1Co 15:23;  
2Co 10:7;  
Ga 3:29

4:1 Ro 16:25;  
1Co 9:17; Ti 1:7;  
JPI 4:10

4:2 Lk 12:42,  
Lk 16:10

4:3 Jn 7:24;  
1Co 3:13

4:4 Ps 143:2;  
Ac 23:1;  
2Co 1:12

4:5 Ecc 12:14;  
Mt 7:1; Ro 2:1,  
Ro 2:16;  
1Co 3:13

4:6 1Co 1:12,  
1Co 3:4,  
1Co 13:4

destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person, because God's temple is holy, which is what you are.

<sup>18</sup>Don't fool yourself. If some of you think they are worldly-wise, then they should become foolish so that they can become wise. <sup>19</sup>This world's wisdom is foolishness to God. As it's written, *He catches the wise in their cleverness.*<sup>6</sup> <sup>20</sup>And also, *The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are silly.*<sup>7</sup> <sup>21</sup>So then, no one should brag about human beings. Everything belongs to you—<sup>22</sup>Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life, death, things in the present, things in the future—everything belongs to you, <sup>23</sup>but you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

### Paul's role as an apostle

**4** So a person should think about us this way—as servants of Christ and managers of God's secrets. <sup>2</sup>In this kind of situation, what is expected of a manager is that they prove to be faithful. <sup>3</sup>I couldn't care less if I'm judged by you or by any human court; I don't even judge myself. <sup>4</sup>I'm not aware of anything against me, but that doesn't make me innocent, because the Lord is the one who judges me. <sup>5</sup>So don't judge anything before the right time—wait until the Lord comes. He will bring things that are hidden in the dark to light, and he will make people's motivations public. Then there will be recognition for each person from God.

<sup>6</sup>Brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit. I've done this so that you can learn what it means not to go beyond what has been written and so none of you will become arrogant by supporting one of us against the other. <sup>7</sup>Who says that you are better than anyone else? What do you have that you didn't receive? And if you received it, then why are you bragging as if you didn't receive it? <sup>8</sup>You've been filled already! You've become rich already! You rule like kings without us! I wish you did rule so that we could be kings with you! <sup>9</sup>I suppose that God has shown that we apostles are at the end of the line. We are like prisoners sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle in

<sup>6</sup>Job 5:13 <sup>7</sup>Ps 94:11

4:7 Jn 3:27; Ro 12:6; 1Pt 4:10 4:8 Rev 3:17 4:9 Ro 8:36; 2Co 11:23; Heb 10:33

divine judgment and destruction on any person who would destroy the church community, because God's temple is holy. It is dedicated to the service of God.

**3:18-23** These verses offer instruction about acquiring true wisdom.

**3:18** This verse summarizes aspects of the theme of wisdom and foolishness found in 1 Corinthians 1:18-27; 2:6-8, 14. *If some of you think they are worldly-wise, then they should become foolish so that they can become wise:* This is an instruction or command. The "worldly-wise" were those of higher social status who considered themselves culturally sophisticated and, therefore, superior to the poor and the weak. Paul tells them to reject their feelings of cultural and social superiority in favor of the true wisdom that comes from God.

**3:19-20** Paul supports his argument that the world's wisdom is foolishness to God with references to Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11.

**3:21** *no one should brag about human beings:* As in 1 Corinthians 3:18, this is a command. In the ancient world, the role of clients, who came from the poor and socially insignificant, was publicly to boost their patrons' status. From this emerged divisions within the church. Paul instructs the poor not to engage in activities that further lift up the status of the socially prominent or that reinforce the divisions in the church. See 1 Corinthians 1:28-31.

**3:22** *Paul, Apollos, Cephas . . . everything belongs to you:* The Corinthians were wrong to claim to belong to one or another group associated with Paul, Apollos, or Peter. These people belonged to them as their servants in Christ.

**3:23** *you belong to Christ:* They were wrong to belong to groups within the church since they should belong only to Christ.

**4:1-5** Paul identifies himself and Apollos as servants of Christ whose work and motivations can be judged only when Christ comes and everyone's thoughts and deeds are put under divine examination.

**4:1** *managers of God's secrets:* Paul compares Christian preachers and teachers to household managers or estate managers, who were often slaves. On *God's secrets*, see notes on 1 Corinthians 2:1, 7.

**4:2** *prove to be faithful:* prove to be worthy of God's trust through thoughts and actions.

**4:5** *recognition . . . from God:* Leaders such as Paul will receive praise from God according to their intentions as well as their achievements (see 1 Cor 3:13-15). Recognition or praise was the highest reward possible in a society built on public honor and public shame.

**4:6-13** In 4:6, Paul summarizes the major point he has been trying to make in 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:5. In 4:7-13 he presents his apostolic experience as a true model of leadership. True leadership is based on loyalty to Christ and self-sacrifice in the face of constant hardship and abuse.

**4:6** See sidebar, "The Source of the Divisions at Corinth."

**4:7** Paul's three questions in this verse belittle those who are self-important and therefore arrogant toward others in the community.

**4:8** *You've been filled already!:* Paul is ironic and belittling toward those who have misled themselves about their own spiritual maturity (see 1 Cor 3:1-3) and who have an inflated sense of their status as Christians.

**4:9** *we apostles are at the end of the line . . . like prisoners sentenced to death:* Paul plainly contrasts the situation of himself and other apostles with the misguided self-importance of the Corinthian Christians.

*The Source of the Divisions at Corinth* 1 Corinthians 4:6 is one of the most difficult verses in the letter to understand. Recent insights have clarified matters, though. When Paul says, "I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit," the words "these things" refer back to 1 Corinthians 3:1-5, and probably include the whole of 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:5. In 1 Corinthians 3:4-5 Paul accuses the Corinthians of being unspiritual because some claim loyalty to him and others to Apollos. This suggests that Paul and Apollos were somehow the source of the divisions in the community mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:3 (see also 1 Cor 1:11). But this can't be the case, since the problem of divisions arose after they both had left. When Paul referred to himself and Apollos in 1 Corinthians 3:3-5, then, he was really talking about local leaders who were encouraging divisions among the members of the church. These were the people whose work would be judged (1 Cor 3:12-15). They were the ones warned about destroying God's temple (1 Cor 3:17). Paul doesn't mention anyone by name, probably because their high social status prevented direct criticism. The readers, however, were to make the correct application for themselves.

The words "not to go beyond what has been written" (1 Cor 4:6) refer to the OT texts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:19, 31; 2:9, 16; 3:19-20. Taken together, these texts point to the uselessness of human wisdom when compared with God's wisdom. From Paul's perspective, the human pride and arrogance of some of the local leaders and their supporters was the real source of the divisions in the community.

the world, both to angels and to humans. <sup>10</sup>We are fools for Christ, but you are wise through Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, but we are dishonored! <sup>11</sup>Up to this very moment we are hungry, thirsty, wearing rags, abused, and homeless. <sup>12</sup>We work hard with our own hands. When we are insulted, we respond with a blessing; when we are harassed, we put up with it; <sup>13</sup>when our reputation is attacked, we are encouraging. We have become the scum of the earth, the waste that runs off everything, up to the present time.

<sup>14</sup>I'm not writing these things to make you ashamed but to warn you, since you are my loved children. <sup>15</sup>You may have ten thousand mentors in Christ, but you don't have many fathers. I gave birth to you in Christ Jesus through the gospel, <sup>16</sup>so I encourage you to follow my example. <sup>17</sup>This is why I've sent Timothy to you; he's my loved and trusted child in the Lord; he'll remind you about my way of life in Christ Jesus. He'll teach the same way as I teach everywhere in every church. <sup>18</sup>Some have become arrogant as if I'm not coming to see you. <sup>19</sup>But, if the Lord is willing, I'll come to you soon. Then I won't focus on what these

**4:10** *wise, strong, and honored* are terms characterizing the socially powerful of secular Corinth. These characteristics stand in obvious contrast to Paul's public status, as well as to God and God's way for human salvation (see 1 Cor 1:18-2:5).

**4:11** *we are hungry, thirsty, wearing rags, abused, and homeless:* Paul presents himself as someone held in low esteem by others, as one who is worthy of no respect according to the world's value system.

**4:12a** *We work hard with our own hands:* See 1 Thessalonians 2:9; Acts 18:1-3. Working with one's hands was considered undignified by those of high social status because manual labor was viewed as dishonorable.

**4:12b-13** Paul lists his unexpected response to three different types of attack on his honor or social standing. In each case his response is the complete opposite of what the socially powerful would have expected and wanted from a true leader. *We have become the scum of the earth:* Paul portrays himself as offensive and without honor or dignity in human terms.

**4:14-21** Paul develops an elaborate image based on the relation between fathers and children to claim his rightful authority over his Corinthian converts.

**4:14** *these things:* This refers back to 1 Corinthians 4:6-13, which should have caused the Corinthians to feel ashamed about their behavior and attitude. In a world where people sought status through social recognition

of their virtue, Paul's self-description would have caused social embarrassment. *since you are my loved children:* Paul claims to have a parent-like relationship with the Corinthians. Such a relationship suggests a great deal of power on Paul's part. Fathers in the ancient world literally had the right of life or death over their children.

**4:15** *I gave birth to you in Christ Jesus:* They may have countless Christian mentors who direct them, but they have only one Christian parent. Paul's relation with them is unique. He has the power of a father over them (see 1 Cor 4:21), and they should obey him.

**4:16** *follow my example:* Children were expected to model their attitudes and behavior on that of their parents, particularly their fathers. To follow Paul's example means not to follow others who challenge or contradict Paul.

**4:17** *I've sent Timothy... my loved and trusted child:* Paul sent Timothy as his representative. In doing so, he was sending his spiritual son to continue educating the Corinthians in his ways.

**4:18** *Some have become arrogant:* Paul refers to the problem of arrogance in this letter more than any of his other letters (1 Cor 4:6, 19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4). This suggests that some had an exaggerated sense of their own self-importance when Paul was absent.

**4:19** *I'll find out what power they possess:* Power is the ability to impose one's will on others. In Paul's world it was closely connected to one's honor. Paul issues a strong

4:10 Ac 17:18.

Ac 26:24.

1Co 1:18.

1Co 2:3.

1Co 3:18.

4:11 Ro 8:35;

2Co 6:5.

2Co 11:23.

2Co 11:27.

4:12 Jn 15:20;

Ac 18:3;

Ro 12:14; 1Pt 3:9

4:13 Lam 3:45

4:14 1Co 6:5.

1Co 15:34;

1Th 2:11

4:15 Ga 4:19;

Phm 1:10

4:16 1Co 11:1;

Phi 3:17; Phi 4:9;

1Th 1:6; 2Th 3:9

4:17 Ac 16:1;

1Co 7:17;

1Co 16:10;

1Ti 1:2; 2Ti 1:2

4:18 1Co 4:6.

1Co 4:21

4:19 Ac 18:21;

1Co 16:5.

2Co 1:15

4:20 Ro 14:17;  
1Co 2:4

4:21 2Co 1:23,  
2Co 2:1,  
2Co 12:20,  
2Co 13:2,  
2Co 13:10

5:1 Lv 18:8;  
Dt 22:30,  
Dt 27:20;  
2Co 12:21

5:2 Eze 10:1-1;  
1Co 4:6,  
1Co 5:13,  
2Co 7:7

5:3 Col 2:5;  
1Th 2:17

5:4 Jn 20:23;  
2Co 2:10,  
2Co 13:3,  
2Co 13:10;  
2Th 3:6

5:5 1Co 1:8,  
1Ti 1:20

5:6 Mt 16:6;  
1Co 5:2,  
1Co 15:33;  
Ga 5:9; Jas 4:16

5:7 Heb 9:28;  
1Pt 1:19

5:8 Ex 12:15;  
Dt 16:3;  
2Co 1:12;  
1Pt 2:1

arrogant people say, but I'll find out what power they possess. <sup>20</sup>God's kingdom isn't about words but about power. <sup>21</sup>Which do you want? Should I come to you with a big stick to punish you, or with love and a gentle spirit?

### Confronting sexual immorality in the church

**5** Everyone has heard that there is sexual immorality among you. This is a type of immorality that isn't even heard of among the Gentiles—a man is having sex with his father's wife! <sup>2</sup>And you're proud of yourselves instead of being so upset that the one who did this thing is expelled from your community. <sup>3</sup>Though I'm absent physically, I'm present in the spirit and I've already judged the man who did this as if I were present. <sup>4</sup>When you meet together in the name of our Lord Jesus, I'll be present in spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus. <sup>5</sup>At that time we need to hand this man over to Satan to destroy his human weakness so that his spirit might be saved on the day of the Lord.

<sup>6</sup>Your bragging isn't good! Don't you know that a tiny grain of yeast makes a whole batch of dough rise? <sup>7</sup>Clean out the old yeast so you can be a new batch of dough, given that you're supposed to be unleavened bread. Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed, <sup>8</sup>so let's celebrate the feast with the unleavened bread of honesty and truth, not with old yeast or with the yeast of evil and wickedness.

<sup>9</sup>I wrote to you in my earlier letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. <sup>10</sup>But I wasn't talking about the sexually immoral people in the outside world by any means—or the greedy, or the swindlers, or people who worship false gods—otherwise, you would have to leave the world entirely! <sup>11</sup>But now I'm writing to you not to associate with anyone who calls themselves “brother” or “sister” who is sexually immoral, greedy, someone who worships

5:9 2Co 6:14; Eph 5:11; 2Th 3:6, 2Th 3:14 5:10 Jn 17:15; 1Co 10:27; Eph 5:5 5:11 Ro 16:17; 2Th 3:6

social challenge to those who oppose his leadership at Corinth. He claims that he will test whether they can impose their will in his presence. This is a challenge to their social standing.

4:20 *God's kingdom isn't about words but about power:* Paul ties the social challenge of 1 Corinthians 4:19 to his claim to power based on his role as the mediator of God's kingdom to the Corinthians.

4:21 *Should I come to you with a big stick to punish you, or with love...?:* Paul returns to his “father” image, used in 1 Corinthians 4:14-15.

5:1-13 Paul's threat in 1 Corinthians 4:21 paves the way for demanding obedience from the Corinthians in 5:1-8. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-8, Paul calls for the church to expel a person of high social status who was guilty of outrageous sexual immorality. He then applies the principle of expulsion to other forms of immorality in 5:9-13.

5:1 *Everyone has heard:* The behavior was so scandalous that it would have been a matter of gossip in Corinth and beyond. *a type of immorality that isn't even heard of among the Gentiles:* It was socially offensive as well as an offense under Roman law. *having sex with his father's wife:* The man had taken his father's wife, almost certainly his stepmother, for his own wife or mistress, probably after his father had died.

5:2 *you're proud of yourselves:* The Corinthians' pride probably came from having a person of high social standing as a patron of the community. Because of this man's power, status, and support, the church was unwilling and unable to take appropriate action against him. They would have feared his retaliation should he be offended by those beneath his social rank.

5:3 *I'm present in the spirit:* Paul probably means that he is present through his connection with the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, who is present in the church community (see 1 Cor 6:17).

5:5 *we need to hand this man over to Satan:* Satan is portrayed as assisting God's purpose in this passage since he is to *destroy the human weakness* of the man practicing outrageous sexual immorality (see Gal 5:24), *so that his spirit might be saved:* Paul takes a pastoral interest in the wrongdoer, whose life as a Christian can still be rescued. *on the day of the Lord:* the day of judgment (see 1 Tim 1:19-20).

5:6 *Your bragging isn't good!:* See 1 Corinthians 5:2.

5:7 *Clean out the old yeast:* Paul uses three images from the Jewish Passover (see Exod 12:1-27; Deut 16:1-8): (1) The first stresses the need to purify the community through expelling the sinful man whose presence is like the contaminating effect of yeast on bread dough (see Exod 12:15). *you're supposed to be unleavened bread:* (2) The Corinthians are to be pure and uncontaminated, like the Passover bread (see 1 Cor 5:8; Exod 12:15). *Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed:* (3) This is the first reference in Christian literature to Jesus as the lamb sacrificed for humans (see John 1:29; Rev 5:6). The Passover lamb wasn't a sacrifice for sin. Its blood was a source of salvation from the angel of death at the time of the exodus from Egypt.

5:9-13 Paul calls for moral purity in the church community and the exclusion of any who are immoral in their practices. 5:9 *I wrote to you in my earlier letter:* We don't have this letter, nor do we know anything about it other than what Paul says here. This reference tells us something about the lively exchange and complicated relationship between Paul and the Corinthians.

5:11 *But now I'm writing to you:* Paul interprets what he meant in his earlier letter, applying it to members of the community who may be guilty of various types of immoral behavior. It isn't about outsiders. *Don't even eat:* Meals were important for social bonding. Paul doesn't want Christians interacting with those in the church who engage in immoral behavior. Not interacting with them serves to exclude them from the community.

false gods, an abusive person, a drunk, or a swindler. Don't even eat with anyone like this. <sup>12</sup>What do I care about judging outsiders? Isn't it your job to judge insiders? <sup>13</sup>God will judge outsiders. *Expel the evil one from among you!*<sup>18</sup>

### Confronting lawsuits in the church

**G**When someone in your assembly has a legal case against another member, do they dare to take it to court to be judged by people who aren't just, instead of by God's people? <sup>2</sup>Or don't you know that God's people will judge the world? If the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to judge trivial cases? <sup>3</sup>Don't you know that we will judge angels? Why not ordinary things? <sup>4</sup>So then if you have ordinary lawsuits, do you appoint people as judges who aren't respected by the church? <sup>5</sup>I'm saying this because you should be ashamed of yourselves! Isn't there one person among you who is wise enough to pass judgment between believers? <sup>6</sup>But instead, does a brother or sister have a lawsuit against another brother or sister, and do they do this in front of unbelievers? <sup>7</sup>The fact that you have lawsuits against each other means that you've already lost your case. Why not be wronged instead? Why not be cheated? <sup>8</sup>But instead you are doing wrong and cheating—and you're doing it to your own brothers and sisters.

<sup>9</sup>Don't you know that people who are unjust won't inherit God's kingdom? Don't be deceived. Those who are sexually immoral, those who worship false gods, adulterers, both participants in same-sex intercourse,<sup>b</sup> <sup>10</sup>thieves, the greedy, drunks, abusive people, and swindlers won't inherit God's kingdom. <sup>11</sup>That is what some of you used to be! But you were washed clean, you were made holy to God, and you were made right with God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

<sup>8</sup>Deut 17:7; 19:19; 22:21, 24; 24:7 <sup>b</sup>Or *submissive and dominant male sexual partners*

5:12 Mk 4:11; 1Co 6:1

5:13 Dt 13:5, Dt 17:7, Dt 21:21, Dt 22:21, Dt 22:24

6:1 Mt 18:17; 1Co 1:2

6:2 Dn 7:22; Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Rev 20:4

6:3 1k 21:34; 2Pt 2:4

6:4 1Co 5:12

6:5 1Co 4:14, 1Co 15:34

6:6 1Co 1:11; 1Ti 5:8

6:7 Pm 20:22; Mt 5:39; Mt 5:40

6:8 Lv 19:13; 1Th 4:6

6:9 1Co 15:50; Ga 5:19; Ga 5:21; Eph 5:5; Rev 22:15

6:10 1Co 5:11; Ga 5:21; Eph 4:28; Eph 5:5; 1Pt 4:15

6:11 Ac 22:16; Ro 5:1; Ro 8:30; 1Co 1:2; Eph 5:26

5:12 *outsiders*: those who aren't members of the Christian community. *insiders*: members of the Christian community.

5:13 *Expel the evil one from among you!*: This quotation represents a common theme in Deuteronomy (Deut 13:5; 17:7; 19:19; 22:21, 24). Paul uses it to authorize and demand the expulsion of immoral persons from the community.

6:1-11 Paul introduces yet another problem that likely had its roots in the divisive competition to become leaders of the church. Some members of the church community were engaged in lawsuits against their fellow believers. Lawsuits in Roman courts were frequently used by people who wanted to claim their own superior social position over others whom they sought to humiliate in the public setting of a courtroom.

6:1 *do they dare*: Paul uses strong language to claim that lawsuits of believers against each other are completely scandalous. *people who aren't just*: In this context, this phrase refers to wicked, morally corrupt unbelievers who were unlikely to hand out real justice. It contrasts with *God's people*, who are (or should be) devout and above reproach in their decisions.

6:2 *don't you know*: See note on 1 Corinthians 3:16. *God's people will judge the world*: They will judge with Christ, who is judge of the world (see Rom 2:16; Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:1; Matt 19:28; Rev 20:4). *are you incompetent to judge trivial cases? If they are to judge the world with Christ (the greater)*, then surely they should be able to settle minor disputes among themselves (the lesser).

6:3 *angels*: These are perhaps the fallen angels associated with the devil (Matt 25:41; 2 Pet 2:4). This verse has the same structure as 1 Corinthians 6:2: If they will judge angels (the greater), why can't they judge the ordinary things of everyday life (the lesser)?

6:6 *in front of unbelievers*: Paul is concerned with the impression outsiders will have about the community when they see one member of the church suing another member (see 1 Cor 14:23).

6:7 *you've already lost your case*: Regardless of who wins or loses the legal case, they've all lost because the unity and love of the church family will be broken.

6:8 *you are doing wrong and cheating . . . your own brothers and sisters*: For Paul the Corinthians were guilty of serious moral and spiritual failure. That's because they were acting unjustly toward each other, thereby destroying the very basis of their relation as brothers and sisters in the family of God.

6:9-10 *people who are unjust won't inherit God's kingdom*: The phrase "God's kingdom" occurs regularly in the Gospels and generally refers to God's just and merciful rule that was at the heart of Jesus' teaching. For Paul, God's kingdom is still in the future and will come about when Christ returns and destroys all opposition to God (1 Cor 15:24-25). Because God is righteous and just, those who are unjust won't receive access to God's kingdom when Christ returns. *both participants in same-sex intercourse*: Paul's language is difficult to translate, though it clearly refers to forms of same-sex intercourse. Some interpreters think he refers to male prostitution or sexual relations between an adult male and a boy. It seems likely that a Jew, like Paul, found all kinds of same-sex intercourse offensive (see Rom 1:26-27), based on passages like Leviticus 18:22; 20:13.

6:11 *you were washed clean . . . made holy to God . . . made right with God*: While some of the Corinthians may have engaged in sins like those listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 in the past, their faith in Christ completely transformed them and brought them into a new relation with God through Christ.

6:12 1Co 10:23

6:13 Mt 15:17;  
1Co 6:15,  
1Co 6:19;  
Col 2:22

6:14 Ac 2:24;

Eph 1:19;  
Eph 1:20

6:15 Ro 12:5;

1Co 6:13,  
1Co 12:27;  
Eph 5:306:16 Gn 2:24;  
Mt 19:5, Mk 10:8;  
Eph 5:31

6:17 1Jn 17:21

6:18 2Co 12:21;  
Eph 5:3; 1Th 4:36:19 1Jn 2:21;  
1Co 3:16;  
2Co 6:16

6:20 Ac 20:28;

Ro 12:1;  
1Co 7:23;  
Phi 1:20;

1Pt 1:18

7:1 1Co 7:8;

1Co 7:26

7:2 Prv 18:22;

Prv 19:14

**Avoid sexual immorality**

<sup>12</sup>I have the freedom to do anything, but not everything is helpful. I have the freedom to do anything, but I won't be controlled by anything. <sup>13</sup>Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, and yet God will do away with both. The body isn't for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. <sup>14</sup>God has raised the Lord and will raise us through his power. <sup>15</sup>Don't you know that your bodies are parts of Christ? So then, should I take parts of Christ and make them a part of someone who is sleeping around?<sup>1</sup> No way! <sup>16</sup>Don't you know that anyone who is joined to someone who is sleeping around is one body with that person? The scripture says, *The two will become one flesh.*<sup>1</sup> <sup>17</sup>The one who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. <sup>18</sup>Avoid sexual immorality! Every sin that a person can do is committed outside the body, except those who engage in sexual immorality commit sin against their own bodies. <sup>19</sup>Or don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you? Don't you know that you have the Holy Spirit from God, and you don't belong to yourselves?<sup>2</sup> <sup>20</sup>You have been bought and paid for, so honor God with your body.

**Marriage and celibacy**

**7**Now, about what you wrote: "It's good for a man not to have sex with a woman."<sup>2</sup> Each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband because

<sup>1</sup>Or a prostitute; commonly, women who sell their bodies to multiple sex partners but includes those who are sexually immoral <sup>2</sup>Gen 2:24

6:12-20 This paragraph focuses on sexual immorality, particularly sexual relations with prostitutes. The Greek term *porneia* refers to "forbidden sexual intercourse," which in a context like Corinth would have been expressed above all in prostitution. Paul condemns and calls on Christians to avoid the behavior, because sexual immorality is against one's own body and because the body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within.

6:12 *I have the freedom to do anything:* This reflects a general Greek and Roman cultural view that a man (not a woman) is free to do what he wants sexually. Paul rejects the notion of uninhibited freedom on two grounds: (1) *not everything is helpful:* for one's own self or for others; for a church to flourish people must think of what is good for others, above what is in their own interest (see 1 Cor 8:4-13). (2) *I won't be controlled by anything:* such as sexual desire and other bodily appetites, but also other personal desires like social status.

6:13 *The body isn't for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body:* For Paul, both food and stomach belong to the present age, but the body belongs to the Lord Jesus. Therefore, those who think that they can do anything they want because their bodies will be destroyed haven't understood the gospel. If the body belongs to the Lord, it shouldn't be given to prostitutes. After all, the body isn't destined for destruction but for resurrection (see 1 Cor 15:50-57).

6:15 *Don't you know:* See 1 Corinthians 3:16. *your bodies are parts of Christ:* In their bodily existence Christians are individually part of Christ's total presence in the world (see 1 Cor 12:27). *should I take parts of Christ:* This is a delicate way of referring to one's sexual organs, which are part of the whole of our bodies that belong to Christ. *make them a part of someone who is sleeping around:* In the ancient world prostitutes were the people who slept around, since sexual access was generally controlled outside prostitution. For many in today's world, sex has become much more casual, and such behavior isn't confined to prostitutes. This explains the translation of the

Greek word *pornê* as someone "sleeping around" rather than as "prostitute."

6:16 *The two will become one flesh:* Genesis 2:24 (see Mark 10:7-8).

6:17 *The one who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him:* As with the joining of bodies through sexual intercourse, when one is joined to the Lord Jesus through faith, that person is united with him (see Rom 8:9-11).

6:18 *Every sin... is committed outside the body, except... sexual immorality:* Paul argues that sexual immorality differs from other sins for the Christian. It contaminates the person's body, a body that has been redeemed by Christ's death and is destined for a resurrection like his (see 1 Cor 6:20; 15:49-58).

6:19 *your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you:* Individual Christians are united with the Lord (1 Cor 6:17) through the presence of God's Spirit in them. This makes the human body a temple for God's presence through the Spirit. (In 1 Cor 3:16-17 the reference is to the community, not the individual, as the temple.)

6:20 *honor God with your body:* This phrase serves as a fitting conclusion to 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, and even to 5:1-13. Sexual immorality dishonors God, since it contaminates the body in which God's own Spirit dwells.

7:1-39 Paul takes up a variety of issues around marriage and divorce in the context of living at the end of the present age. From 7:1-25 it is apparent that some of the issues were raised by the Corinthians themselves in a letter they sent to Paul.

7:1-7 Sexual activity within marriage is permitted in order to avoid sexual immorality.

7:1 *Now, about what you wrote:* Beginning at this point in his letter, Paul addresses questions and issues raised by the Corinthians in a letter that they sent to him (see 1 Cor 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). "It's good for a man not to have sex with a woman": Some Corinthians seem to have believed that it was an honorable decision not to have sex with a woman (probably a reference to one's wife).

7:2 Paul sees marriage as a safeguard against the kind

of sexual immorality. <sup>3</sup>The husband should meet his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should do the same for her husband. <sup>4</sup>The wife doesn't have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband doesn't have authority over his own body, but the wife does. <sup>5</sup>Don't refuse to meet each other's needs unless you both agree for a short period of time to devote yourselves to prayer. Then come back together again so that Satan might not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. <sup>6</sup>I'm saying this to give you permission; it's not a command. <sup>7</sup>I wish all people were like me, but each has a particular gift from God: one has this gift, and another has that one.

<sup>8</sup>I'm telling those who are single and widows that it's good for them to stay single like me. <sup>9</sup>But if they can't control themselves, they should get married, because it's better to marry than to burn with passion. <sup>10</sup>I'm passing on the Lord's command to those who are married: A wife shouldn't leave her husband, <sup>11</sup>but if she does leave him, then she should stay single or be reconciled to her husband. And a man shouldn't divorce his wife.

<sup>12</sup>I'm telling everyone else (the Lord didn't say this specifically): If a believer has a wife who doesn't believe, and she agrees to live with him, then he shouldn't divorce her. <sup>13</sup>If a woman has a husband who doesn't believe and he agrees to live with her, then she shouldn't divorce him. <sup>14</sup>The husband who doesn't believe belongs to God because of his wife, and the wife who doesn't believe belongs to God because of her husband. Otherwise, your children would be contaminated by the world, but now they are spiritually set apart. <sup>15</sup>But if a spouse who doesn't believe chooses to leave, then let them leave. The brother or sister isn't tied down in these circumstances. God has called you to peace. <sup>16</sup>How do you know as a wife if you will save your husband? Or how do you know as a husband if you will save your wife?

<sup>17</sup>Nevertheless, each person should live the kind of life that the Lord assigned when he called each one. This is what I teach in all the churches. <sup>18</sup>If someone was circumcised when

7:3 Ex 21:10;  
1Pt 3:7  
7:5 Ex 19:15;  
1Sa 21:4; 1Th 3:5  
7:6 1Co 7:12;  
1Co 7:25; 2Co 8:8  
7:7 Ro 12:6;  
1Co 7:8, 1Co 9:5,  
1Co 12:4,  
1Co 12:11  
7:8 1Co 7:1,  
1Co 7:7,  
1Co 7:26,  
1Co 9:5  
7:9 1Ti 5:14  
7:10 Mt 5:32;  
Lk 16:18  
7:11 Ro 7:2;  
1Co 7:10  
7:12 1Co 7:6,  
1Co 7:10,  
2Co 11:17  
7:14 Efr 9:2;  
Mal 2:15  
7:15 Ro 12:18,  
Ro 14:19;  
2Co 13:11;  
Heb 12:14  
7:16 Ro 11:14;  
1Pt 3:1, 1Pt 3:2  
7:17 Ro 12:3;  
1Co 4:17,  
1Co 14:33;  
2Co 8:18,  
2Co 11:28  
7:18 Ac 15:1,  
Ac 15:5; Ga 5:2

of sexual immorality that he criticized in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 12-19.

7:3-4 Paul calls for sexual equality between husbands and wives by recognizing the sexual needs of both.

7:5 *unless you both agree*: A decision to avoid sex for a time in marriage, even for the purpose of devoting oneself to prayer, requires the agreement of both marriage partners. *so that Satan might not tempt you*: Paul recognizes that sexual desire is a powerful force for temptation to sin. He sees sex within marriage as a safeguard against immorality.

7:6 *I'm saying this to give you permission*: The "this" seems to refer back to 1 Corinthians 7:2 and concerns permission for people to marry.

7:7 *I wish all people were like me*: Paul was unmarried (see 1 Cor 7:8). In order to help people avoid sexual immorality (1 Cor 7:2), he allowed for marriage. *each has a particular gift from God*: The ability to remain unmarried and refrain from sexual intercourse is a divine gift that only some are given. 7:8-11 Paul offers advice to Christians who are single or widows, as well as to those who are married but separated.

7:8 *it's good for them to stay single*: not for reasons of self-denial, but because of the approaching crisis that will lead to judgment day (see 1 Cor 7:25-31).

7:10-11 *I'm passing on the Lord's command*: This, along with 1 Corinthians 7:25 and 9:14, is one of the few direct references in Paul to commands of Jesus. What follows carries the direct authority of Jesus. *a wife shouldn't leave her husband*: See Mark 10:2-12; Matthew 19:3-9. This specific statement seems to be directed to married Christian women who wanted to be freed from their marriages to serve the Lord more fully. *she should stay single or be reconciled*: See Mark 10:11-12. Paul doesn't allow Christians to divorce or to remarry.

7:12-16 Paul gives instructions about marriage and divorce when one partner is a Christian and the other isn't.

7:12-13 *the Lord didn't say this specifically*: Paul doesn't

have a word from the Lord about believers married to unbelievers. But he offers his view that believers should stay married to unbelievers if possible.

7:14 *The husband who doesn't believe belongs to God because of his wife*: The woman's spiritual state positively affects her husband's spiritual state. Most likely the husband's acceptance of her faith and Christian lifestyle makes up for his own unbelief (see 1 Cor 7:13). The same is true regarding a believing husband and an unbelieving wife. The spiritual setting-apart of both partners has the important consequence that their children are also *spiritually set apart*.

7:15 *The brother or sister isn't tied down in these circumstances*: When an unbelieving spouse rejects and separates from the believing spouse, the believer is freed from the marriage bond. *God has called you to peace*: Marriage shouldn't be a place of conflict for the Christian but a place of harmony and wholeness. Thus if a marriage leads to conflict with an unbelieving partner, peace shouldn't be sacrificed in order to maintain this kind of marriage.

7:16 *How do you know... if you will save your husband [or] wife?*: A Christian doesn't have to remain in a conflict-ridden marriage in the hopes of changing the heart and life of the unbelieving partner.

7:17-24 Three times Paul states the general principle that people should live the kind of life that the Lord assigned to them when they became Christians (7:17, 20, 24). He then deals with two specific cases, circumcision and slavery, as examples of the principle.

7:17 *Nevertheless*: What follows is the general principle. Paul recognizes marriage as a special case, though, since he recognizes that not everyone has the divine gift to remain unmarried and to refrain from sexual intercourse (see 1 Cor 7:7).

7:18 *reverse it*: circumcision. Jewish circumcision (see Gen 17:10-12) was sometimes reversed through an operation

7:19 Ro 2:25;  
Ga 5:6, Ga 6:15;  
Col 3:11

7:20 1Co 7:21,  
1Co 7:24

7:21 Heb 13:5

7:22 In 8:32;

Eph 6:6;

Col 3:24;

Phm 1:16;

1Pt 2:16

7:23 Lv 25:42;

1Co 6:20

7:24 1Co 7:20

7:25 1Co 7:6,

1Co 7:40,

2Co 4:1;

1Ti 1:13,

1Ti 1:16

7:26 1Co 7:1,

1Co 7:8

7:27 1Co 7:20

7:28 1Co 7:36

7:29 Ro 13:11;

1Co 7:31

7:31 1Co 7:29;

1In 2:17

7:32 Mt 6:25,

Mt 13:22;

Phi 4:6; 1Ti 5:5

7:33 1Co 7:3,

1Co 7:32,

Col 3:19, 1Ti 5:8;

1Pt 3:7

7:34 Lk 2:37;

1Co 6:20;

1Th 5:23

called, he shouldn't try to reverse it. If someone wasn't circumcised when he was called, he shouldn't be circumcised. <sup>19</sup>Circumcision is nothing; not being circumcised is nothing. What matters is keeping God's commandments. <sup>20</sup>Each person should stay in the situation they were in when they were called. <sup>21</sup>If you were a slave when you were called, don't let it bother you. But if you are actually able to be free, take advantage of the opportunity. <sup>22</sup>Anyone who was a slave when they were called by the Lord has the status of being the Lord's free person. In the same way, anyone who was a free person when they were called is Christ's slave. <sup>23</sup>You were bought and paid for. Don't become slaves of people. <sup>24</sup>So then, brothers and sisters, each of you should stay with God in the situation you were in when you were called.

<sup>25</sup>I don't have a command from the Lord about people who have never been married,<sup>h</sup> but I'll give you my opinion as someone you can trust because of the Lord's mercy. <sup>26</sup>So I think this advice is good because of the present crisis: Stay as you are. <sup>27</sup>If you are married, don't get a divorce. If you are divorced, don't try to find a spouse. <sup>28</sup>But if you do marry, you haven't sinned; and if someone who hasn't been married gets married, they haven't sinned. But married people will have a hard time, and I'm trying to spare you that. <sup>29</sup>This is what I'm saying, brothers and sisters: The time has drawn short. From now on, those who have wives should be like people who don't have them. <sup>30</sup>Those who are sad should be like people who aren't crying. Those who are happy should be like people who aren't happy. Those who buy something should be like people who don't have possessions. <sup>31</sup>Those who use the world should be like people who aren't preoccupied with it, because this world in its present form is passing away.

<sup>32</sup>I want you to be free from concerns. A man who isn't married is concerned about the Lord's concerns—how he can please the Lord. <sup>33</sup>But a married man is concerned about the world's concerns—how he can please his wife. <sup>34</sup>His attention is divided. A woman who isn't married or who is a virgin is concerned about the Lord's concerns so that she can be dedicated to God in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the world's concerns—how she can please her husband. <sup>35</sup>I'm saying this for your own advantage. It's not to restrict you but rather to promote effective and consistent service to the Lord without distraction.

<sup>h</sup>Or virgins

called "epispasm," because circumcised males couldn't otherwise participate in various Greek activities such as athletic contests. To reverse circumcision was to reject one's Jewish identity. *shouldn't be circumcised*: Gentiles converting to Christianity shouldn't be circumcised in order to become Jews (see Gal 5:2-12).

7:21 *If you were a slave . . . don't let it bother you*: Roman society was built on slavery. Paul doesn't attack the institution of slavery itself. Instead he claims that being a slave doesn't affect the person's status as a Christian. *if you are actually able to be free, take advantage of the opportunity*: This contradicts the general principle, but it is reasonable. 7:22 Paul uses a play on words to claim that all are free and all are slaves. In this way Paul rejects social status, since this is determined in the outside world and should not have any significance in the church.

7:23 *You were bought and paid for*: Whatever a person's status in the world, they have been set free by Christ's death on the cross. Paul borrows language from the buying and selling of slaves in order to emphasize the cost of purchasing the freedom of believers.

7:25-31 Following the principle set out in 1 Corinthians 7:17-24, Paul calls for a similar response in relation to marriage and divorce. This time, however, the perceived crisis situation leading to the end of the present age motivates his views. Normal affairs and actions are no longer appropriate because of the crisis.

7:25 *people who have never been married*: The Greek text refers to young, unmarried women.

7:26 *the present crisis*: Paul believed that he lived at the end of the age, a time characterized by severe disasters (see Mark 13:5-27). Christ would return soon to exercise the dominion given to him by God before finally subjecting himself to God's rule (see 1 Cor 15:20-28). *Stay as you are*: This is a restatement of the principle from 1 Corinthians 7:17, 20, but now applied to marriage.

7:28 *if you do marry, you haven't sinned*: Paul addresses men here. Men had the active role in making marriages. *if someone who hasn't been married gets married, they haven't sinned*: The Greek text refers to a female "virgin" who marries. Thus the apostle addressed both men and young, unmarried women. Even though Paul advises people not to marry, should anyone decide to get married, they aren't guilty of disobedience to God. *married people will have a hard time*: because their loyalties are divided between Christ and their marriage partner (see 1 Cor 7:32-35).

7:29-31 *The time has drawn short*: The general resurrection is coming soon (1 Cor 15:20-24). Thus, Paul says, *this world in its present form is passing away* (7:31; see 1 Cor 10:11). The nearness of the end requires people to be focused on the things of Christ (see 1 Cor 7:32) rather than on everyday human experiences such as marriage, sorrow, joy, and possessions.

7:32-35 Paul maintains that unmarried men or women can focus solely on the Lord, while married men and women have divided commitments between their spouses and the Lord. Paul's goal isn't to limit people's life



<sup>36</sup>If someone thinks he is acting inappropriately toward an unmarried woman whom he knows, and if he has strong feelings and it seems like the right thing to do, he should do what he wants—he's not sinning—they should get married. <sup>37</sup>But if a man stands firm in his decision, and doesn't feel the pressure, but has his own will under control, he does right if he decides in his own heart not to marry the woman. <sup>38</sup>Therefore, the one who marries the unmarried woman does right, and the one who doesn't get married will do even better. <sup>39</sup>A woman is obligated to stay in her marriage as long as her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry whomever she wants, only it should be a believer in the Lord. <sup>40</sup>But in my opinion, she will be happier if she stays the way she is. And I think that I have God's Spirit too.

### Meat sacrificed to false gods

**O** Now concerning meat that has been sacrificed to a false god: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes people arrogant, but love builds people up. <sup>2</sup>If anyone thinks they know something, they don't yet know as much as they should know. <sup>3</sup>But if someone loves God, then they are known by God.

<sup>4</sup>So concerning the actual food involved in these sacrifices to false gods, we know that a false god isn't anything in this world, and that there is no God except for the one God. <sup>5</sup>Granted, there are so-called "gods," in heaven and on the earth, as there are many gods and many lords. <sup>6</sup>However, for us believers,

There is one God the Father.

All things come from him, and we belong to him.

And there is one Lord Jesus Christ.

All things exist through him, and we live through him.

options but to encourage people to serve the Lord with undivided attention.

**7:36-40** This paragraph deals with male choices about whether to marry based on control of sexual passions. It also deals with the situation of married women who are to remain married and widows who may marry a Christian.

**7:36** *unmarried woman whom he knows*: The Greek text refers to a man's fiancée. *If someone thinks he is acting inappropriately, or "dishonorably,"* a reference to a man who may have decided not to fulfill his engagement promise to marry his fiancée (see 1 Cor 7:37). *if he has strong feelings*: experiences strong sexual desire for his fiancée. *he's not sinning*: Some may have come to the conclusion that getting married—and thus not being fully committed to the Lord and his work—was the same as committing sin. Paul rejects this view.

**7:37** *doesn't feel the pressure*: doesn't experience the social pressure to fulfill his promise to marry the woman. *has his own will under control*: is in control of his sexual desires. *he does right... not to marry the woman*: He shouldn't be blamed for breaking his engagement, nor should he feel guilty for doing so.

**7:38** *the unmarried woman*: or "his fiancée" (see note on 1 Cor 7:36).

**7:40** *And I think that I have God's Spirit too*: Perhaps someone other than Paul was making claims based on their experience of God's Spirit. Paul offers his advice in this verse based on his own claim to possessing the Spirit.

**8:1-13** Paul addresses another issue raised by the Corinthians (see 1 Cor 7:1). What attitude should Christians have toward meat sacrificed to idols? He devotes the whole of 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1 to this problem. Food sacrificed in Greek and Roman temples was a difficult problem for Gentiles who had become Christians (see Acts 15:1-29; Rev 2:14-17, 20). Since it was assumed that people would eat in temples, and since the Corinthian Christians had undoubtedly done so prior to their coming to faith, this

practice raised questions about their social identity and their relationship to their pre-Christian culture. Eating in temples was more about social belonging than religious conviction.

**8:1-3** Paul deals with the basic problem of arrogance on the part of some, probably members of the social elite, who claimed superior knowledge in order to justify the continued practice of eating food sacrificed to idols.

**8:1** *Now concerning*: This introduces another issue raised by the Corinthians (see 1 Cor 7:1). *we all have knowledge*: Paul may be quoting the words of some Corinthians, who thus claimed special spiritual knowledge that made them superior and allowed them to eat in Greek and Roman temples. *Knowledge makes people arrogant*: This is a clear criticism of people who value their knowledge too highly. *love builds people up*: love contrasted with knowledge. Love builds relations in the community rather than dividing the community (see 1 Cor 13:1-13).

**8:3** *if someone loves God, then they are known by God*: The arrogant don't understand the importance of loving God and being known by God. These things are more important than the knowledge that they think makes them superior to other believers.

**8:4-6** Paul offers a clear statement of Christian belief in one God, over against Greek and Roman claims regarding many gods.

**8:4** *a false god isn't anything in this world*: The gods worshipped in Greek and Roman temples don't actually exist. *there is no God except for the one God*: This assertion, along with 1 Corinthians 8:6, is Paul's most powerful statement of his Jewish and Christian belief that there is only one true God (see Deut 6:4-5).

**8:5** *Granted, there are so-called "gods"*: See 1 Corinthians 10:20, where false gods are identified as demons.

**8:6** *There is one God the Father... And there is one Lord Jesus Christ*: This carefully balanced statement sounds like a confession of faith for the early church.

**7:36** 1Co 7:28;  
1Co 7:37  
**7:38** Heb 13:4  
**7:39** Ro 7:2;  
Ro 7:3; 2Co 6:14  
**7:40** 1Co 7:6;  
1Co 7:25  
**8:1** Ac 15:20;  
Ro 14:19;  
1Co 8:4, 1Co 8:7;  
1Co 8:10  
**8:2** 1Co 3:18;  
1Co 13:8; Ga 6:3;  
1Ti 6:4  
**8:3** Ro 8:29;  
Ga 4:9  
**8:4** Dt 6:4;  
Ac 14:15;  
1Co 8:6;  
1Co 10:19;  
Eph 4:6  
**8:5** Ga 4:8;  
2Th 2:4  
**8:6** Mal 2:10;  
In 1:3; Ro 11:36;  
Eph 4:6; 1Ti 2:5

8:7 Ac 23:1;  
Ro 14:14;  
1Co 10:28,  
1Co 10:29  
8:8 Ro 14:17  
8:9 Ro 14:1,  
Ro 14:13,  
Ro 14:21;  
Ga 5:13

8:10 1Co 8:1,  
1Co 8:4  
8:11 Ro 14:15,  
Ro 14:20

8:12 Mt 25:45  
8:13 Ro 14:21;  
2Co 11:29

9:1 Ro 1:1;  
1Co 1:1, 1Co 3:6,  
1Co 4:15,  
1Co 15:8

9:2 2Co 3:2

9:4 1Co 9:14;  
1Th 2:6, 2Th 3:9

9:5 Mt 8:14,  
Mt 12:46,  
Mt 13:55;  
Jn 14:2;  
1Co 1:12

9:6 Ac 4:36

9:7 Dt 20:6,  
Prv 27:18;  
1Co 3:6, 2Ti 2:3

9:9 Dt 25:4;  
1Ti 5:18

9:10 Ro 4:23,  
Ro 4:24, Ro 15:4;  
2Ti 2:6

9:11 Ro 15:27;  
Ga 6:6

<sup>7</sup>But not everybody knows this. Some are eating this food as though it really is food sacrificed to a real idol, because they were used to idol worship until now. Their conscience is weak because it has been damaged. <sup>8</sup>Food won't bring us close to God. We're not missing out if we don't eat, and we don't have any advantage if we do eat. <sup>9</sup>But watch out or else this freedom of yours might be a problem for those who are weak. <sup>10</sup>Suppose someone sees you (the person who has knowledge) eating in an idol's temple. Won't the person with a weak conscience be encouraged to eat the meat sacrificed to false gods? <sup>11</sup>The weak brother or sister for whom Christ died is destroyed by your knowledge. <sup>12</sup>You sin against Christ if you sin against your brothers and sisters and hurt their weak consciences this way. <sup>13</sup>This is why, if food causes the downfall of my brother or sister, I won't eat meat ever again, or else I may cause my brother or sister to fall.

### Waiving rights for the gospel

**9** Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord? Aren't you my work in the Lord? <sup>2</sup>If I'm not an apostle to others, at least I am to you! You are the seal that shows I'm an apostle. <sup>3</sup>This is my defense against those who criticize me. <sup>4</sup>Don't we have the right to eat and drink? <sup>5</sup>Don't we have the right to travel with a wife who believes like the rest of the apostles, the Lord's brothers, and Cephas? <sup>6</sup>Or is it only I and Barnabas who don't have the right to not work for our living? <sup>7</sup>Who joins the army and pays their own way? Who plants a vineyard and doesn't eat its fruit? Who shepherds a flock and doesn't drink its milk? <sup>8</sup>I'm not saying these things just based on common sense, am I? Doesn't the Law itself say these things? <sup>9</sup>In Moses' Law it's written: *You will not muzzle the ox when it is threshing.*<sup>1</sup> Is God worried about oxen, <sup>10</sup>or did he say this entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake because the one who plows and the one who threshes should each do so with the hope of sharing the produce. <sup>11</sup>If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it so much to ask to harvest some material things from you?

<sup>1</sup>Deut 25:4

**8:7-13** Paul warns of the dangerous consequences of eating food sacrificed in Greek and Roman temples, both for the people eating and for those seeing them eat.

**8:7** *Their conscience is weak:* Their understanding of right and wrong is immature because they have only recently come to believe in the one true God.

**8:9** *this freedom of yours:* the knowledge that the gods represented by idols don't exist and have no power; also that food sacrificed to idols presents no dangers. *those who are weak:* those mentioned in 1 Corinthians 8:7, who have weak consciences and therefore lack moral understanding and judgment.

**8:11** *The weak brother or sister for whom Christ died is destroyed by your knowledge:* Those with immature moral judgment may be led back into the very idolatry from which Christ had rescued them. This would lead to their eternal condemnation.

**8:13** *I won't eat meat ever again:* Since almost all meat was sacrificed to idols, the issue Paul addresses is especially important. Even meat eaten at home was contaminated by idolatry and therefore might cause a weak Christian to fall.

**9:1-18** Paul shows how he has set aside his rights as an apostle in order to win as many as possible to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This provides evidence for those with superior knowledge (1 Cor 8:1-2, 10) that Paul has made significant personal sacrifices for the sake of others. They should do so as well by giving up meat sacrificed to idols.

**9:1** *Am I not free?:* In a world filled with slaves, to be free meant that a person didn't have to answer to others for their actions or seek their approval. *Am I not an apostle?:*

See 1 Corinthians 1:1. *Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord?:* See 1 Corinthians 15:8.

**9:2** *You are the seal:* A "seal" designates ownership or certifies that something is real. When the Corinthians turned to Christ and changed their hearts and lives in response to Paul's preaching, they certified that his apostleship was authentic. This was true whatever others might say.

**9:4** *Don't we have the right to eat and drink?:* that is, to receive hospitality from those who responded to Paul's preaching.

**9:5** *the Lord's brothers:* See Mark 6:3. The best-known brother was James, one of the key leaders of the church in Jerusalem (Gal 1:19; 2:9; Acts 15:13-21). *Cephas:* the apostle Peter.

**9:6** *Barnabas:* For his relationship with Paul, see Acts 9:7; 13:1-3; 15:1-3, 39; Galatians 2:1, 9, 13. *to not work for our living?:* Paul and Barnabas, unlike other apostles and missionaries, worked for their living rather than asking for support from the churches they had established (see 1 Thess 2:9-10; Acts 18:1-4).

**9:8** *common sense:* The three examples in 1 Corinthians 9:7 are common sense, but Paul also speaks with the divine authority of *Moses' Law* found in the first five books of the OT. These books contain the teaching and expectations governing the Jewish people.

**9:9-10** *You will not muzzle the ox:* Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 (see 1 Tim 5:17-18) and applies it to his own situation as a worker for the gospel.

**9:11** *sowed spiritual things:* that is, preached the gospel of Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor 3:5-9). *harvest some material things*

<sup>12</sup>If others have these rights over you, don't we deserve them all the more? However, we haven't made use of this right, but we put up with everything so we don't put any obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. <sup>13</sup>Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get to eat food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share part of what is sacrificed on the altar? <sup>14</sup>In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who preach the gospel should get their living from the gospel. <sup>15</sup>But I haven't taken advantage of this. And I'm not writing this so that it will be done for me. It's better for me to die than to lose my right to brag about this! <sup>16</sup>If I preach the gospel, I have no reason to brag, since I'm obligated to do it. I'm in trouble if I don't preach the gospel. <sup>17</sup>If I do this voluntarily, I get rewarded for it. But if I'm forced to do it, then I've been charged with a responsibility. <sup>18</sup>What reward do I get? That when I preach, I offer the good news free of charge. That's why I don't use the rights to which I'm entitled through the gospel.

<sup>19</sup>Although I'm free from all people, I make myself a slave to all people, to recruit more of them. <sup>20</sup>I act like a Jew to the Jews, so I can recruit Jews. I act like I'm under the Law to those under the Law, so I can recruit those who are under the Law (though I myself am not under the Law). <sup>21</sup>I act like I'm outside the Law to those who are outside the Law, so I can recruit those outside the Law (though I'm not outside the law of God but rather under the law of Christ). <sup>22</sup>I act weak to the weak, so I can recruit the weak. I have become all things to all people, so I could save some by all possible means. <sup>23</sup>All the things I do are for the sake of the gospel, so I can be a partner with it.

<sup>24</sup>Don't you know that all the runners in the stadium run, but only one gets the prize? So run to win. <sup>25</sup>Everyone who competes practices self-discipline in everything. The runners

9:12 1Co 4:15;  
1Co 9:15;  
1Co 9:18;  
2Co 6:3;  
2Co 11:7  
9:13 Lv 6:16;  
Lv 6:26; Lv 7:6;  
Nm 18:8;  
Dt 18:1  
9:14 Mt 10:10;  
Lk 10:7; 1Co 9:4;  
1Ti 5:18  
9:15 Ac 18:3;  
Ac 20:33;  
Ac 20:34;  
1Co 9:12;  
2Co 11:10  
9:16 Ac 4:20;  
Ac 9:15;  
Ac 26:16;  
Ro 1:14  
9:17 1Co 3:14;  
1Co 4:1; Ga 2:7;  
Col 1:25  
9:18 1Co 9:12;  
2Co 11:7;  
2Co 12:13  
9:19 Mt 18:15;  
1Co 9:1; 2Co 4:5;  
Ga 5:13; 1Pt 3:1  
9:20 Ac 16:3  
9:21 Ro 2:12;  
Ro 2:14;  
1Co 7:22; Ga 2:3;  
Ga 6:2

9:22 Ro 11:14; Ro 14:1; Ro 15:1; 1Co 10:33; 2Co 11:29 9:23 Mk 8:35; Ac 21:13; 1Co 9:12; 1Co 9:25; 1Co 10:24 9:24 Ga 2:2, Ga 5:7; Phi 2:16; Phi 3:14; Heb 12:1 9:25 2Ti 2:5; 2Ti 4:8; Jas 1:12; 1Pt 5:4; Rev 3:11

from you?: food, shelter, and other material necessities (see Rom 15:27).

**9:12** *If others:* possibly Jewish Christian missionaries whom Paul calls "false apostles" in 2 Corinthians 11:12-23. *have these rights over you:* claims to hospitality and payments of money. *don't we deserve them all the more?:* as the founding apostle of the church in Corinth and not merely as a missionary newly arrived on the scene.

**9:13** See Leviticus 6:16-18; Deuteronomy 18:1-5.

**9:15** *I haven't taken advantage of this:* of Paul's right to receive his living from the churches he had established for preaching the gospel to them. *to lose my right to brag about this:* Paul took pride in the fact that he didn't burden his churches for support the way other missionaries did (see 1 Cor 9:4-6; 2 Cor 11:7-12).

**9:16** *If I preach . . . I'm obligated to:* Paul understands himself to be called by God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal 1:15-16). This is why he has a duty to preach the gospel. As a result he can't brag about preaching the gospel. He can brag, however, about doing so without asking for any material support for his ministry. *I'm in trouble:* Not to preach would be to fail in carrying out God's commission.

**9:17-18** *If I do this voluntarily, I get rewarded:* Paul recognizes that he deserves no reward for preaching because he preaches out of the necessity of fulfilling his divine commission. *What reward do I get? . . . That's why I don't use the rights:* Since Paul is obligated to preach, the only way to gain a benefit is to go beyond what other preachers do. They receive their livelihood by preaching (1 Cor 9:14), but he sets this right aside in order to have a grounds for boasting (1 Cor 9:15). His boast is that his own commitment to God exceeds that of other missionaries. He doesn't specify the reward, but it is probably divine praise. **9:19-23** Paul explains the flexibility he has exercised in order to successfully present the gospel of Jesus Christ to various groups of people who hold very different values from each other.

**9:19** *Although I'm free from all people:* See 1 Corinthians 9:1. **9:20** *I act like a Jew:* Paul was Jewish by birth (Rom 9:3-5; Phil 3:5-6). But even after turning to Christ, he placed himself under Jewish authority. This is demonstrated by the number of times he was whipped in Jewish synagogues (2 Cor 11:24). *I act like I'm under the Law . . . (though I myself am not under the Law):* For Paul the Law of Moses had served its purpose and was no longer binding on him as a Christian. Salvation understood as righteousness was available only through faith in Christ, not through the Law (see Gal 2:15-21; 3:19-25).

**9:21** *I act like I'm outside the Law to those who are outside the Law:* Paul acted like a Gentile in order to proclaim the good news to Gentiles. He refused to yield on this point when faced by challenges from Jewish Christians, including the apostle Peter (Gal 2:11-21). *though I'm not outside the law of God but rather under the law of Christ:* Paul stresses that he isn't lawless as a Christian. Rather, he is subject to the law of Christ, which is based on the gospel and rooted in love (see Rom 8:2; Gal 6:2). But it isn't a specific set of commandments that must be obeyed.

**9:22** *I act weak to the weak:* The weak were the poor, slaves, and others in socially dependent relations who made up the majority of the population in ancient society, but were largely powerless. *all things to all people:* Paul didn't try to deceive people, but he did try to identify with the social and ethnic experiences of all those whom he attempted to win for Christ.

**9:24-27** To win the Christian victory crown requires self-discipline, even to the extent of subduing one's own body and its desires. Paul practiced this rigorous self-control to ensure that even after preaching the gospel he wasn't disqualified for some reason.

**9:25** *practices self-discipline:* The Corinthians think they have knowledge (1 Cor 8:7-13) about eating food sacrificed to idols, but Paul wants them to practice self-restraint with their freedom. *to receive a crown that never dies:* The

9:26 1Co 14:9  
 9:27 Ro 8:13  
 10:1 Ex 13:21,  
 Ex 14:22; Ps 66:6  
 10:2 Ro 6:3;  
 1Co 1:13  
 10:3 Ex 16:4,  
 Ex 16:35;  
 Neh 9:20;  
 In 6:31  
 10:4 Ex 17:6  
 10:5 Nm 14:29,  
 Nm 26:65;  
 Heb 3:17;  
 Jud 1:5  
 10:6 Nm 11:4;  
 Ps 106:14;  
 1Co 10:11  
 10:7 Ex 32:4,  
 Ex 32:6, Ex  
 32:19; 1Co 5:11,  
 1Co 10:14  
 10:8 Nm 25:1,  
 Nm 25:9;  
 1Co 6:18  
 10:9 Nm 21:5,  
 Nm 21:6;  
 Dt 6:16  
 10:10 Ex 12:23;  
 Nm 14:2;  
 1Ch 21:15;  
 Phi 2:14

do this to get a crown of leaves that shrivel up and die, but we do it to receive a crown that never dies. <sup>26</sup>So now this is how I run—not without a clear goal in sight. I fight like a boxer in the ring, not like someone who is shadowboxing. <sup>27</sup>Rather, I'm landing punches on my own body and subduing it like a slave. I do this to be sure that I myself won't be disqualified after preaching to others.

### Warning from the wilderness generation

**10** Brothers and sisters, I want you to be sure of the fact that our ancestors were all under the cloud and they all went through the sea. <sup>2</sup>All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. <sup>3</sup>All ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup>and all drank the same spiritual drink. They drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup>However, God was unhappy with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness. <sup>6</sup>These things were examples for us, so we won't crave evil things like they did. <sup>7</sup>Don't worship false gods like some of them did, as it is written, *The people sat down to eat and drink and they got up to play.*<sup>m</sup> <sup>8</sup>Let's not practice sexual immorality, like some of them did, and twenty-three thousand died in one day. <sup>9</sup>Let's not test Christ, like some of them did, and were killed by the snakes. <sup>10</sup>Let's not grumble, like some of them did, and were killed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup>These things happened to them as an example and were written as a warning for us to whom the end of time has come. <sup>12</sup>So those who think they are standing need to watch out or else they may fall. <sup>13</sup>No temptation has seized you that isn't common for people. But God is faithful. He won't allow you to be tempted beyond your abilities. Instead, with the temptation, God will also supply a way out so that you will be able to endure it.

<sup>m</sup>Exod 32:6

10:11 Ro 4:23, Ro 13:11; 1Co 9:10, 1Co 10:6 10:12 Ro 11:20; 2Pt 1:17 10:13 1Co 1:9; 2Pt 2:9

crown Paul has in mind is a heavenly one that symbolizes the triumph of life over death through the resurrection (1 Cor 15:50-57).

10:1-13 Paul uses the OT exodus to warn the Corinthians about how they could be excluded from Christ's salvation. He does this by showing parallels between Israelite and Christian experiences. In 10:1-4 he shows parallels in the experience of salvation. In 10:5-10 he warns of possible parallels between the deeds that disqualified the Israelites from entering the promised land and the possible moral and religious failures by the Corinthians that might lead to their rejection by Christ.

10:1 *our ancestors*: Through faith in Christ, Gentile believers are connected to the redemptive experience of Israel in the OT. *under the cloud*: The cloud signified God's protective presence for the people of Israel during the exodus (Exod 13:21). *all went through the sea*: the place where God saved the Israelites from their Egyptian oppressors (Exod 14:21-31).

10:2 *All were baptized into Moses*: Paul portrays the journey through the Reed Sea (see Exod 14:21-31) as a model for understanding Christian baptism into Christ.

10:3-4 *spiritual food... spiritual drink*: The food and drink were spiritual because they pointed to God as the source of what physically sustained Israel in the wilderness (see Exod 16:4, 35; 17:5-6; Num 20:11). At the same time, the wilderness food and drink point to the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 10:16). *They drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ*: Christ was the source of the life-sustaining water during the wilderness journey.

10:5 *However, God was unhappy with most of them, and they were struck down*: See Numbers 14:26-35; 26:63-65.

10:6 *These things were examples for us*: God may act to bring about salvation, but when God's people reject God they will be punished. *so we won't crave evil things like they did*: See Psalm 106:14; 1 Corinthians 10:7-10.

10:7 *Don't worship false gods like some of them did*: See

Exodus 32:1-6. *The people sat down to eat*: See Exodus 32:6. Paul chose this passage because it concerns eating food sacrificed to idols. The Israelites craved idols and were destroyed. Similarly, the Corinthians were in danger of rejection by God if they participated in idolatry through eating food sacrificed to idols.

10:8 *Let's not practice sexual immorality*: See Numbers 25:1-9. This passage combines the themes of sexual immorality with idolatry (on sexual immorality at Corinth, see 1 Cor 5:1-13; 6:12-20).

10:9 See Numbers 21:5-9; Psalm 78:17-18. *Let's not test Christ, like some of them did*: Because Christ is identified as the spiritual rock that followed Israel in the wilderness (1 Cor 10:4), Paul can say that these people of God in the OT tested Christ instead of God. This, then, provides a warning to those Corinthians engaged in idolatry through what they eat (1 Cor 8:7-11).

10:10 *Let's not grumble, like some of them did, and were killed*: Israel constantly grumbled against Moses and God in the wilderness, leading to the deaths of many (see Exod 17:1-7; 32:1-10; Num 14:26-35; 16:41-49; 25:1-9). This serves as a warning to those who might grumble against Paul's instruction regarding the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

10:11 *These things happened... as an example and were written as a warning for us*: Paul interprets the exodus as a warning intended for the people of his own generation.

10:12 *So those who think they are standing need to watch out*: The "so" indicates that this is the conclusion to the argument in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11. Those with superior knowledge may think that they are secure in Christ's salvation (1 Cor 8:7-13). However, they are deceiving themselves if they cause weaker Christians to sin through following their example (1 Cor 8:11-12). *they may fall*: They may lose their own salvation if they cause others to fall away from the faith.

10:13 *No temptation has seized you that isn't common for people*: Paul is dealing with the problem of idolatry and

**Avoid false gods to glorify God**

<sup>14</sup>So then, my dear friends, run away from the worship of false gods! <sup>15</sup>I'm talking to you like you are sensible people. Think about what I'm saying. <sup>16</sup>Isn't the cup of blessing that we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Isn't the loaf of bread that we break a sharing in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup>Since there is one loaf of bread, we who are many are one body, because we all share the one loaf of bread. <sup>18</sup>Look at the people of Israel. Don't those who eat the sacrifices share from the altar? <sup>19</sup>What am I saying then? That food sacrificed to a false god is anything, or that a false god is anything? <sup>20</sup>No, but this kind of sacrifice is sacrificed to demons and not to God. I don't want you to be sharing in demons. <sup>21</sup>You can't drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you can't participate in the table of the Lord and the table of demons. <sup>22</sup>Or should we make the Lord jealous? We aren't stronger than he is, are we?

<sup>23</sup>Everything is permitted, but everything isn't beneficial. Everything is permitted, but everything doesn't build others up. <sup>24</sup>No one should look out for their own advantage, but they should look out for each other. <sup>25</sup>Eat everything that is sold in the marketplace, without asking questions about it because of your conscience. <sup>26</sup>*The earth and all that is in it belong to the Lord.* <sup>27</sup>If an unbeliever invites you to eat with them and you want to go, eat whatever is served, without asking questions because of your conscience. <sup>28</sup>But if someone says to you, "This meat was sacrificed in a temple," then don't eat it for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. <sup>29</sup>Now when I say "conscience" I don't mean yours but the other person's. Why should my freedom be judged by someone else's conscience? <sup>30</sup>If I

10:14 1Co 10:7;  
Heb 6:9; 1Jn 5:21  
10:15 1Co 4:10;  
1Co 8:1;  
1Co 11:13  
10:16 Mt 26:26;  
Lk 22:19;  
Ac 2:42;  
1Co 11:23;  
1Co 11:25  
10:17 Ro 12:5;  
1Co 12:12;  
Col 3:15  
10:18 Lv 7:6;  
Ro 1:3  
10:19 1Co 8:4  
10:20 Lv 17:7;  
Dt 32:17;  
2Ch 11:15;  
Ps 106:37;  
Rev 9:20  
10:21 Is 65:11;  
2Co 6:15;  
2Co 6:16  
10:22 Dt 32:21;  
Ecc 6:10  
10:23 Ro 14:19;  
1Co 6:12;  
1Co 8:1

<sup>28</sup>Ps 24:1

10:24 Ro 15:2; 1Co 10:33; 1Co 13:5; Phi 2:4; Phi 2:21 10:25 1Co 8:7 10:26 Ex 9:29; Ex 19:5; Job 41:11; Ps 24:1; Ps 50:12 10:27 Lk 10:7; Lk 10:8 10:28 1Co 8:7; 1Co 8:10 10:29 Ro 14:16; 1Co 8:9; 1Co 9:19; 1Co 10:32 10:30 Ro 14:6; 1Ti 4:3

faithlessness (see 1 Cor 10:14), not temptation in general. The temptation for some was to maintain their social positions and relationships through participation in the normal religious practices of Corinthian public life. This included eating in the temples of false gods or eating food that had been sacrificed to idols. Refusal to do so might have had terrible social and even economic consequences for them. *God is faithful*: See Deuteronomy 7:9; 1 Corinthians 1:8-9. God can be relied upon in the situation of temptation to *supply a way out so that you... endure it*: Those worried about losing their social status or assistance from unbelievers are promised other options so that they don't have to participate in idolatrous practices. 10:14-23 Paul calls for avoiding idolatry on the grounds that one can't participate in the Lord's Supper and share in food sacrificed to false gods. False gods are actually demons or evil spirits that seek to take over God's position. 10:14 *my dear friends*: Paul uses affectionate language to remind his readers that he doesn't want to condemn them but to encourage them.

10:16-17 *the cup of blessing that we bless*: These two verses, along with 1 Corinthians 10:21, provide one of only two references to the Lord's Supper in the writings of Paul (see 1 Cor 11:17-34). *one body, because we all share the one loaf of bread*: This emphasizes the unity of the community since the *one body* refers to the church. Those with superior knowledge and those who are weak share a common identity and existence in Christ (1 Cor 8:7-13).

10:18 See Leviticus 7:6.

10:20 *this kind of sacrifice is sacrificed to demons*: Paul has denied the existence of the gods represented by idols (1 Cor 8:4-5; 10:19), but now he identifies idols with second-rate spirits. Demons are hostile, evil spirits who are opposed to God and God's rule. *sharing in demons*: To participate in idolatrous sacrifices and to eat food sacrificed to idols is to participate with the evil spirits who oppose God. Those with superior knowledge may know that idols

don't really exist. But there is an evil force behind them that Christians must take seriously and avoid.

10:23-11:1 Paul makes the point that Christians must consider the needs and views of their brothers and sisters ahead of their own interests and desires (10:23-24). He then offers practical advice on how to deal with the problem of avoiding food sacrificed to idols or at least avoiding a bad conscience regarding it. He ends with a request not to offend Jews, Greeks, or God's church but to imitate Paul as he imitates Christ (10:25-11:1).

10:23 *Everything is permitted, but everything isn't beneficial... everything doesn't build others up*: See 1 Corinthians 6:12 for a slightly different version of this saying. Paul places a limit on individual freedom by suggesting that it must benefit others. Thus he recalls 1 Corinthians 8:7-13. On building up others, see 1 Corinthians 8:1; 14:3-5, 17, 26; Romans 14:19.

10:24 See Philippians 2:3-4.

10:25 *Eat everything that is sold... without asking questions*: Almost all meat in the marketplace came from sacrifices in Greco-Roman temples, as did other foods. Paul recommends that Christians not ask about the origins of the food they purchase in order to avoid an ethical conflict.

10:26 Paul quotes Psalm 24:1 to make the point that even food sacrificed to idols actually belongs to God.

10:27-28 *If an unbeliever invites you*: Paul didn't expect Christians to live in social isolation from unbelievers or to cut themselves off from their previous social circles. *don't eat it for the sake of the one who told you*: The host may be expecting the Christian to refuse the sacrificed food as an act of faithfulness to the Christian God. Or the host may be trying to trick the Christian into supporting idolatry. In these cases the Christian shouldn't eat the food for the sake of the one telling them.

10:29-30 *Why should my freedom be judged by someone else's conscience?*: This question relates to 1 Corinthians

10:31 Col 3:17;  
1Pt 4:11

10:32 Ac 20:28;  
2Co 6:3

10:33 1Co 9:22;  
1Co 10:14;  
Ga 1:10

11:1 1Co 4:16;  
Phi 3:17

11:2 1Co 4:17;  
1Co 11:17;  
1Co 11:22;  
1Co 15:2;  
2Th 2:15

11:3 Gn 3:16;  
1Co 3:23;  
Eph 1:22;  
Eph 4:15;  
Eph 5:23

11:4 1Co 14:1;  
11:5 Dt 12:12;  
Lk 2:36; Ac 21:9;  
1Co 14:34

11:7 Gn 1:26,  
Gn 1:27, Gn 5:1,  
Gn 9:6; Jas 3:9

participate with gratitude, why should I be blamed for food I thank God for? <sup>31</sup>So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, you should do it all for God's glory. <sup>32</sup>Don't offend either Jews or Greeks, or God's church. <sup>33</sup>This is the same thing that I do. I please everyone in **11** everything I do. I don't look out for my own advantage, but I look out for many people so that they can be saved. <sup>1</sup>Follow my example, just like I follow Christ's.

### Appropriate dress in worship

<sup>2</sup>I praise you because you remember all my instructions, and you hold on to the traditions exactly as I handed them on to you. <sup>3</sup>Now I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. <sup>4</sup>Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered shames his head. <sup>5</sup>Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered disgraces her head. It is the same thing as having her head shaved. <sup>6</sup>If a woman doesn't cover her head, then she should have her hair cut off. If it is disgraceful for a woman to have short hair or to be shaved, then she should keep her head covered. <sup>7</sup>A man shouldn't have his head covered, because he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is man's glory. <sup>8</sup>Man didn't have his origin from woman, but woman from man; <sup>9</sup>and man wasn't created for the sake of the woman, but the woman for the sake of the man. <sup>10</sup>Because of this a woman should have authority over her head, because of the angels. <sup>11</sup>However, woman isn't independent from man, and man isn't independent from woman

11:8 Gn 2:21; 1Ti 2:13 11:9 Gn 2:18 11:11 1Co 7:10; Ga 3:28

10:27. If someone wants to eat with unbelievers, that person shouldn't be discouraged from doing so for the sake of other people's consciences. *If I participate with gratitude, why should I be blamed for food I thank God for?* If a person eats in the home of an unbeliever, and offers thanksgiving to God for the food, then other Christians shouldn't blame that person for eating with unbelievers.

**10:31** *do it all for God's glory*: The ultimate test of whether something is right or wrong is whether it honors God. Knowingly eating food sacrificed to idols and thereby causing a weaker brother or sister to be destroyed can never honor God (1 Cor 8:11).

**10:32-33** *Don't offend either Jews or Greeks, or God's church*: The first two groups include people with whom the good news needs to be shared. The third group includes people who might be led away from the faith through ill-considered participation in meals where food sacrificed to idols is knowingly consumed. *This is the same thing that I do. I please everyone . . . so that they can be saved*: See 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

**11:1** *Follow my example, just like I follow Christ's*: Paul's final word on the subject. If everyone—including those with superior knowledge (1 Cor 8:7-13)—followed Paul's example, then the problem of food sacrificed to idols would no longer exist. To imitate Paul is to imitate Christ, a reference to a life oriented sacrificially toward the good of others (see 1 Thess 1:6).

**11:2-16** Paul introduces a new issue that has come to his attention. Some women were participating in worship with their hair uncovered. For Paul this was completely unacceptable because it raised cultural questions about the place of women in relation to men within the worship life of the church.

**11:2** *I praise you*: Paul appeals to the goodwill of his audience before raising an issue where, intentionally or unintentionally, they weren't following his teaching and the church traditions that he had given to them (see 1 Cor 11:16).

**11:3** *I want you to know*: The introduction suggests that what follows is an important principle. The principle is that men, women, and even Christ have someone in a position of authority over them.

**11:4** On the function of prophetic speech, see 1 Corinthians 14:3-4, 24-25. *with his head covered shames his head*: In Greco-Roman religions male worshippers covered their heads with their clothing as a mark of respect for the god. For a Christian man to do this would dishonor his head, Christ, by treating him as though he were one of those gods.

**11:5** *Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered disgraces her head*: Women were free to speak in the worship service of the church (but see 1 Cor 14:33-35). However, they had to do so with their heads covered as a mark of their public virtue and modesty. In doing so they were simply putting into practice the cultural values of the wider society. Respectable women were expected to present themselves modestly in public with their heads covered. This was to prevent sexual interest from males. For a woman not to cover her head was to bring dishonor to her head, that is, to her husband or father.

**11:6** *If a woman doesn't cover her head, then she should have her hair cut off*: Uncovered hair in public was a cultural sign of sexual looseness and shamefulness. In Roman law an adulteress was to have her hair shaved as a sign of her shamefulness. So if a woman in the church service refused to cover her hair, then she should be publicly shamed by having her hair cut off. This would have shamed not only her but also her family.

**11:7** *because he is the image and glory of God*: According to the contemporary understanding of Genesis 1:27, males were created in the image of God and therefore exhibited God's glory. *the woman is man's glory*: The first woman was created from the rib of the first man, Adam (Gen 2:21-23), and therefore is a reflection of male glory. Paul implies this is the reason women should worship with their heads covered.

**11:8-9** See Genesis 2:18-23.

**11:10** *a woman should have authority over her head*: By wearing a head covering, an ancient woman exercised control over her hair, preventing men from thinking about her sexually because of the beauty of her hair.

**11:11** *woman isn't independent from man, and man isn't*

in the Lord. <sup>12</sup>As woman came from man so also man comes from woman. But everything comes from God. <sup>13</sup>Judge for yourselves: Is it appropriate for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? <sup>14</sup>Doesn't nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him; <sup>15</sup>but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? This is because her long hair is given to her for a covering. <sup>16</sup>But if someone wants to argue about this, we don't have such a custom, nor do God's churches.

### The community meal

<sup>17</sup>Now I don't praise you as I give the following instruction because when you meet together, it does more harm than good. <sup>18</sup>First of all, when you meet together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it. <sup>19</sup>It's necessary that there are groups among you, to make it clear who is genuine. <sup>20</sup>So when you get together in one place, it isn't to eat the Lord's meal. <sup>21</sup>Each of you goes ahead and eats a private meal. One person goes hungry while another is drunk. <sup>22</sup>Don't you have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you look down on God's churches and humiliate those who have nothing? What can I say to you? Will I praise you? No, I don't praise you in this.

<sup>23</sup>I received a tradition from the Lord, which I also handed on to you: on the night on which he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread. <sup>24</sup>After giving thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this to remember me." <sup>25</sup>He did the same thing with the cup, after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Every time you drink it, do this to remember me." <sup>26</sup>Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you broadcast the death of the Lord until he comes.

11:12 Ro 11:36;  
2Co 5:18  
11:13 Lk 12:57  
11:14 2Sa 14:26  
11:16 1Co 7:17;  
1Ti 6:3  
11:17 1Co 11:2;  
1Co 11:22  
11:18 1Co 1:10;  
1Co 1:11;  
1Co 3:3  
11:19 Dt 13:3;  
Mt 18:7; 1Ti 4:1;  
2Pt 2:1; 1Jn 2:19  
11:21 2Pt 2:13;  
Jud 1:12  
11:22 1Co 10:32;  
1Co 11:2; Jas 2:6  
11:23 Mt 26:26;  
Mk 14:22;  
1Co 15:3;  
Ga 1:12  
11:24 1Sa 9:13;  
Mt 14:19;  
Mt 15:36;  
Mt 26:26;  
Lk 22:19  
11:25 Lk 22:20;  
1Co 10:16  
11:26 Jn 21:22;  
1Co 4:5

*independent from woman:* Who women are and what they do affect men and vice versa. *in the Lord:* In the sphere where Christ is Lord, there is a mutual interdependence of women and men that differs from the created order and the social order of the day.

11:13-15 The answer to the question in 11:13 should now be a forceful "No." *Doesn't nature itself teach you:* Paul is actually referring to the social norms of the day. He assumes that these are set forth by nature. *if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him:* Men with long hair were considered weak, womanly, and morally confusing in Paul's culture.

11:17-34 Paul deals with abuses at the Lord's meal.

11:17-22 People of higher social status made a mockery of the Lord's meal by humiliating the poor. They ate private meals in the church assembly while the poor went hungry. This reflects a common practice associated with Roman banquets. The rich used banquet meals to reinforce social distinctions between themselves and the poor.

11:17 *I don't praise you:* because of the seriousness of the abuses around eating practices and inappropriate and careless participation in the church's meal.

11:18 *I hear that there are divisions among you:* 1 Corinthians 11:22 makes it clear that social divisions existed between rich and poor. These divisions were expressed in the church's meal (see 1 Cor 1:10-13).

11:19 *It's necessary that there are groups . . . to make it clear who is genuine:* This implies that a process of judgment was beginning to reveal who the true believers were.

11:20 *it isn't to eat the Lord's meal:* The eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup of wine that constitute what we today call the Lord's Supper were part of a larger banquet meal. The well-off distinguished themselves from the poorer members of the community by the food they ate and the wine they drank. The following two verses explain why Paul thought that their meeting and eating together didn't honor the Lord.

11:21 *Each of you goes ahead and eats a private meal:* People bringing their own food to social gatherings and eating it without sharing with others was a common practice outside the church. Naturally this reinforced the social distinctions between those of means and those with little or no means. Apparently, this practice was brought into the church assembly, so that some went hungry while others got drunk.

11:23-26 Paul reminds his readers of the tradition that he had passed on to them regarding Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples, which provided the basis for the church's practice of the Lord's Supper.

11:23 *I received a tradition from the Lord:* The origin of the tradition goes back to the Last Supper on the night of Jesus' betrayal. What follows is the only direct quotation by Paul of a tradition from the ministry of Jesus also found in the Gospels (see Luke 22:19-20; Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24).

11:24 *This is my body, which is for you:* Christ offered up his life for the salvation of his followers (1 Thess 5:9-10).

11:25 *after they had eaten:* This phrase refers to the eating of a meal, not simply to the eating of the bread. The following may represent the order of the Lord's meal at Corinth: (1) the thanksgiving and breaking of bread that represented Christ's body; (2) a self-catered meal in which those with food didn't necessarily share with those who had no food (see 1 Cor 11:21); (3) the thanksgiving and drinking of a cup of wine, which represented the blood shed by Christ for human salvation. *This cup is the new covenant in my blood:* The cup represented Christ's blood, which signified a new declaration from God about God's relationship to humans (see Jer 31:31-34).

11:26 *you broadcast the death of the Lord until he comes:* The Lord's Supper announces the meaning and significance of the redemptive death of the Lord Jesus. It will do so until the day of his return from heaven (see 1 Cor 15:52-55; 1 Thess 4:13-18).

11:27 Heb 10:19

11:28 Lam 3:40;

1Co 11:31;

2Co 13:5; Ga 6:4

11:31 1Co 11:28;

1Jn 1:9

11:32 Dt 8:5;

Ps 94:12;

Prv 3:12;

Heb 12:7;

Rev 3:19

11:34 1Co 4:19;

1Co 7:17;

1Co 11:21;

1Co 11:22;

Ti 1:5

12:1 1Co 14:1

12:2 Ps 115:5;

Hab 2:18;

Hab 2:19;

1Co 6:11;

1Pt 4:3

12:3 Ro 9:3;

Ro 10:9; 1Co 8:6;

1Jn 4:2; 1Jn 4:3

12:4 Ro 12:6;

Eph 4:11;

Heb 2:4

12:5 1Co 8:6;

Eph 4:11

12:6 Eph 1:23;

Phi 2:13

<sup>27</sup>This is why those who eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord inappropriately will be guilty of the Lord's body and blood. <sup>28</sup>Each individual should test himself or herself, and eat from the bread and drink from the cup in that way. <sup>29</sup>Those who eat and drink without correctly understanding the body are eating and drinking their own judgment. <sup>30</sup>Because of this, many of you are weak and sick, and quite a few have died. <sup>31</sup>But if we had judged ourselves, we wouldn't be judged. <sup>32</sup>However, we are disciplined by the Lord when we are judged so that we won't be judged and condemned along with the whole world. <sup>33</sup>For these reasons, my brothers and sisters, when you get together to eat, wait for each other. <sup>34</sup>If some of you are hungry, they should eat at home so that getting together doesn't lead to judgment. I will give directions about the other things when I come.

### Spiritual gifts

**12** Brothers and sisters, I don't want you to be ignorant about spiritual gifts. <sup>2</sup>You know that when you were Gentiles you were often misled by false gods that can't even speak. <sup>3</sup>So I want to make it clear to you that no one says, "Jesus is cursed!" when speaking by God's Spirit, and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup>There are different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup>and there are different ministries and the same Lord; <sup>6</sup>and there are different activities but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. <sup>7</sup>A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good. <sup>8</sup>A word of wisdom is given by the Spirit to one person, a word of knowledge to another according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>faith to still another by the same Spirit, gifts of healing to another in the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup>performance of miracles to another, prophecy to another, the ability to tell spirits apart to another, different kinds of tongues<sup>o</sup> to another, and the interpretation of

<sup>o</sup>Or *ecstatic speech* or *languages* could be used for *tongues* or *tongue* throughout chaps 12–14.

12:7 1Co 14:12; 1Co 14:26 12:8 1Co 2:6 12:9 1Co 12:28; 1Co 12:30; 1Co 13:2 12:10 Mk 16:17; Ac 10:46; 1Co 12:28; 1Co 12:30; 1Co 14:26

11:27–34 Paul warns those who mistreat the poor during the shared meal that they dishonor the Lord's body and blood and bring God's judgment upon themselves. He closes by offering some basic instructions regarding how the Corinthians should behave with respect to the shared meal.

11:27 *inappropriately*: This refers to the behavior Paul criticized in 1 Corinthians 11:17–22. They eat a "private meal" instead of the "Lord's meal," since they eat selfishly and without concern for the poor among them.

11:28 *test himself or herself*: People should prepare for participating in the Lord's Supper by a critical self-examination of their own motives and behavior toward each other to see if their lives are shaped by the selfless sacrifice of Christ.

11:29 *the body*: the body of Christ sacrificed on the cross and represented in the bread of the Lord's Supper, and the church, which gains its identity from Christ's sacrifice.

11:30 *Because of this*: Paul blames physical weakness, illness, and even death on inappropriate participation in the Lord's meal.

11:31 See 1 Corinthians 11:28–29.

11:33 See 1 Corinthians 11:20–22.

12:1–14:40 Paul discusses the nature and significance of the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit to believers for the sake of the community. The gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues and their use in the church's worship receive special treatment in chapter 14. But in 13:1–13 Paul emphasizes that communal love is far more important than gifts of the Spirit. This is because love is the core Christian value that binds and holds the community together. Love has the power to overcome the divisions within the Corinthian church that have led to many of the problems Paul has discussed.

12:1–11 Paul focuses on the gifts that God's Spirit gives to

individual Christians for the well-being of the community. Paul stresses that all of the gifts come from one and the same Spirit. Therefore, they aren't in opposition to or in competition with each other.

12:1 *I don't want you to be ignorant about spiritual gifts*: Paul addresses this issue because it had been raised by the letter addressed to him by the Corinthians (see 1 Cor 7:1; 8:1; 16:1).

12:2 *when you were Gentiles you were often misled by false gods*: Many, if not most, of the Corinthians, like others in Paul's churches (1 Thess 1:9), were Gentiles who worshipped the gods of the Greco-Roman religions. This accounts for many of the issues that Paul deals with in this letter (e.g., the problem of food sacrificed to idols), since he was attempting to form them fully into a Christian community.

12:3 *no one says, "Jesus is cursed!" when speaking by God's Spirit*: It's hard to imagine that any Christian would willingly say, "Jesus is cursed!" when speaking in the Spirit! The Greek simply has "Jesus curse." The reader must supply the verb in the Greek. Based on ancient curse formulas, perhaps the missing verb is "Jesus grant a curse." Perhaps Christians were using the name of Jesus in an attempt to put a curse on other people or their rivals in the community.

12:4–6 The NT doesn't have a fully developed doctrine of the Trinity, but passages like this provided building blocks for Trinitarian theology since the Spirit, the Lord Jesus, and God appear in the same context with different functions.

12:7 *A demonstration of the Spirit*: that is, a gift of the Spirit for the common good: The gifts of the Spirit are to support and sustain the Christian community. They aren't personal entitlements for the sake of the person possessing the gift.

12:10 *prophecy*: Paul values prophecy more highly than tongues because it builds people up and gives



the tongues to another. <sup>11</sup>All these things are produced by the one and same Spirit who gives what he wants to each person.

<sup>12</sup>Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. <sup>13</sup>We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup>Certainly the body isn't one part but many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot says, "I'm not part of the body because I'm not a hand," does that mean it's not part of the body? <sup>16</sup>If the ear says, "I'm not part of the body because I'm not an eye," does that mean it's not part of the body? <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, what would happen to the hearing? And if the whole body were an ear, what would happen to the sense of smell? <sup>18</sup>But as it is, God has placed each one of the parts in the body just like he wanted. <sup>19</sup>If all were one and the same body part, what would happen to the body? <sup>20</sup>But as it is, there are many parts but one body. <sup>21</sup>So the eye can't say to the hand, "I don't need you," or in turn, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." <sup>22</sup>Instead, the parts of the body that people think are the weakest are the most necessary. <sup>23</sup>The parts of the body that we think are less honorable are the ones we honor the most. The private parts of our body that aren't presentable are the ones that are given the most dignity. <sup>24</sup>The parts of our body that are presentable don't need this. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the part with less honor <sup>25</sup>so that there won't be division in the body and so the parts might have mutual concern for each other. <sup>26</sup>If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it. <sup>27</sup>You are the body of Christ and parts of each other. <sup>28</sup>In the church, God has appointed first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, the ability to help others, leadership skills, different kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup>All aren't apostles, are they? All aren't prophets, are they? All aren't teachers, are they? All don't perform miracles, do they? <sup>30</sup>All don't have gifts of healing, do they? All don't speak in different tongues, do they? All don't interpret, do they? <sup>31</sup>Use your ambition to try to get the greater gifts. And I'm going to show you an even better way.

12:11 Jn 3:8;  
1Co 12:4  
12:12 Ro 12:4,  
Ro 12:5;  
1Co 10:17,  
1Co 12:27;  
Ga 3:28  
12:13 Jn 7:37;  
Ro 6:3; Ga 3:28;  
Eph 3:11  
Col 3:1  
12:14 1Co 12:12,  
1Co 12:20  
12:18 1Co 12:11,  
1Co 12:28  
12:20 1Co 12:12  
12:24 1Co 12:25  
12:25 Jn 17:21;  
1Co 12:24  
12:26 Ro 12:15  
12:27 Ro 12:5;  
1Co 12:12;  
Eph 4:23;  
Eph 4:12;  
Col 1:24  
12:28 Ac 13:1;  
1Co 12:9,  
1Co 12:10;  
Eph 4:11  
12:30 1Co 12:10  
12:31 1Co 14:1,  
1Co 14:39

encouragement and comfort (see 1 Cor 14:3). *the ability to tell spirits apart*: This gift involves evaluating claims to prophetic inspiration. People may claim to prophesy without doing so under the influence of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor 12:3). *different kinds of tongues . . . and the interpretation of the tongues*: Spirit-inspired speech in languages unknown to the gathered community have no meaning unless they are interpreted by someone inspired by the Spirit (see 1 Cor 14:27-28).

12:12-27 Paul compares the church community, the body of Christ, with the human body and its separate parts. Just as each part of the human body is necessary and interconnected with every other part of the body, so are the members of the church. His goal is to stress unity in the community, over against the apparent divisions (1 Cor 1:10-12; 11:18).

12:12 *Christ is just like the human body*: Christ is a shortened way of referring to the "body of Christ" (see 1 Cor 12:27). The human body provides an image for understanding the character of the church community.

12:13 *We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free*: It's unclear whether this refers to water baptism or to some form of Spirit baptism. Whatever the case, baptism creates a unity among people from highly diverse and even conflicting social backgrounds (see Gal 3:27-28). Paul uses the image of the body to discourage divisions in the church.

12:22 *the parts of the body that people think are the weakest are the most necessary*: Paul seeks to raise the status of the socially weak members of the community, the slaves and the poor. He does so by suggesting that they are the most important in the community through their similarity to weak or less powerful parts of the human body.

12:23 *The parts of the body . . . less honorable are the ones we honor the most*: By comparison to the body, the powerless members of the community who have little social standing and, therefore, receive little or no respect, should receive greater respect and be treated with dignity.

12:24 *greater honor to the part with less honor*: Covering our genitals with clothing gives greater dignity to parts of the body that are considered to have less dignity and that even bring shame on us when they are publicly exposed.

12:25 *so that there won't be division in the body and so the parts might have mutual concern for each other*: This is the real goal of the body image. Paul wants to end divisions in the church and create mutual care among its members.

12:27 *parts of each other*: Mutual interdependence of the members of Christ's body is stressed as an antidote to the divisions that destroy the unity of the community.

12:28 *God has appointed first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles . . . different kinds of tongues*: The first three suggest a ranking based on their functions within the church. However, those on the list beginning with "then miracles" don't seem to be ranked in terms of importance. The church requires a variety of ministries or works of service (see Eph 4:11) and all come from God for the well-being of the community. None exist for their own sake. All are intended to enable the church to function as a whole.

12:31 *Use your ambition . . . to get the greater gifts*: Some gifts are more important than others. In 1 Corinthians 14:5 Paul identifies prophecy as more important than speaking in tongues, unless tongues are accompanied with interpretation. But 12:31 makes it clear that people may seek the more important gifts, regardless of their social position within the community. *I'm going to show you an*

13:1 Ps 150:5;  
1Co 8:1; Ga 5:6;  
1Th 1:5; 1Pt 4:8

13:2 Mt 7:22;  
Mt 17:20;  
1Co 12:9;  
1Co 14:1

13:3 Lk 19:8

13:4 1Co 4:6;  
Ga 5:22;  
Eph 4:32;  
Col 3:12;  
1Th 5:14

13:5 1Co 10:24

13:6 2Th 2:12;  
2Jn 4:3; 3Jn 3

13:7 1Co 9:12

13:8 1Co 12:10;  
1Co 13:1;  
1Co 14:39

13:9 1Co 8:2;  
1Co 13:12

13:10 1Co  
13:12; Rev 22:4;  
Rev 22:5

13:11 1Co 3:1;  
1Co 14:20

13:12 Nm 12:8;  
1Co 8:3;  
2Co 3:18;  
Jas 1:23; 1Jn 3:2

### Love: the universal spiritual gift

**13**If I speak in tongues of human beings and of angels but I don't have love, I'm a clanging gong or a clashing cymbal. <sup>2</sup>If I have the gift of prophecy and I know all the mysteries and everything else, and if I have such complete faith that I can move mountains but I don't have love, I'm nothing. <sup>3</sup>If I give away everything that I have and hand over my own body to feel good about what I've done but I don't have love, I receive no benefit whatsoever.

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind, it isn't jealous, it doesn't brag, it isn't arrogant, <sup>5</sup>it isn't rude, it doesn't seek its own advantage, it isn't irritable, it doesn't keep a record of complaints, <sup>6</sup>it isn't happy with injustice, but it is happy with the truth. <sup>7</sup>Love puts up with all things, trusts in all things, hopes for all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup>Love never fails. As for prophecies, they will be brought to an end. As for tongues, they will stop. As for knowledge, it will be brought to an end. <sup>9</sup>We know in part and we prophesy in part; <sup>10</sup>but when the perfect comes, what is partial will be brought to an end. <sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, reason like a child, think like a child. But now that I have become a man, I've put an end to childish things. <sup>12</sup>Now we see a reflection in a mirror; then we will see face-to-face. Now I know partially, but then I will know completely in the same way that I have been completely known. <sup>13</sup>Now faith, hope, and love remain—these three things—and the greatest of these is love.

### Spiritual gifts and church order

**14**Pursue love, and use your ambition to try to get spiritual gifts but especially so that you might prophesy. <sup>2</sup>This is because those who speak in a tongue don't speak to

13:13 Ga 5:6; Col 1:5 14:1 1Co 12:1, 1Co 12:31, 1Co 13:2, 1Co 14:39, 1Co 16:14 14:2 Mk 16:17; 1Co 12:10, 1Co 12:28, 1Co 12:30, 1Co 13:1

*even better way:* the way of love. Love is more important than all the other gifts combined, because it builds unity and commitment within the community.

**13:1-13** The beauty and the spiritual power of this passage make it one of the most remarkable texts Paul ever wrote. It offers a poem to perhaps the most important core value of the Christian faith: love. In Paul, as with other writers of the Bible, love is primarily about attachment or bonding to God and to one's own group. This attachment may include warm emotional affection, but it doesn't have to. Most important, love involves commitment to and concern for the well-being of others to whom one is attached. In the context of a community torn apart by divisions, such as the church at Corinth, love offers a "better way" (1 Cor 12:31). Love does so by marking out the key characteristic necessary for the members of a church community to function smoothly and harmoniously.

**13:2** *the mysteries:* secret, divine knowledge that surpasses human knowledge and understanding, *if I have... faith that I can move mountains:* See Mark 11:23. *Faith* is complete and unquestioning trust, loyalty, and commitment to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**13:3** *give away everything that I have:* The Greek text suggests giving, bit by bit, all one's possessions to the poor and needy.

**13:4-7** Paul beautifully defines the very nature of love by its positive attributes, but also by what it isn't and doesn't do. As defined here, love would lead to the unity and well-being of the community.

**13:8** *Love never fails:* Love, like God's love for us, can never be destroyed, nor can the true love of Christians for their fellow believers ever be destroyed. *prophecies... will be brought to an end:* Paul pronounces the ultimate inadequacy of the gifts of the Spirit that the Corinthians seem to have valued so highly (see 1 Cor 12:7-11). Unlike love, those gifts have no place in the perfected world to come.

**13:9** *We know... and we prophesy in part:* Full knowledge of God, of God's will, and of God's purposes can be obtained

only in the age to come (see 1 Cor 13:10). Prophecy continues to be necessary until the end of the current age, but in the age to come it will have achieved its purpose.

**13:10** *when the perfect comes:* This refers to the coming age when God's purposes for this world will have been completed. Then God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:24-28). When the new age comes, then knowledge, prophecy, and everything else that is incomplete *will be brought to an end.*

**13:12** *Now we see a reflection in a mirror; then we will see face-to-face:* In the present age we don't see God directly, but we see reflections of God and God's kingdom. In the age to come, we will see God and God's kingdom directly. *Now I know partially, but then I will know completely:* We have only partial knowledge of God's purposes now. But in the age to come, we will have complete knowledge regarding God. *in the same way that I have been completely known:* known by God.

**13:13** *faith:* the loyalty and commitment that bind one to God regardless of the external circumstances. *hope:* the confident expectation that God will fulfill God's promises regarding the resurrection and future salvation (see Rom 8:24). *love:* the unbreakable attachment that Christians should have to God and to each other. The triad of *faith, hope, and love* represents the enduring values that Paul places at the heart of the Christian faith (see Rom 5:1-5; Gal 5:5-6; 1 Thess 1:3). They bind Christians to God and to each other. *the greatest of these is love:* Love is the glue that binds Christians to God and to each other, leading to loyalty and commitment (faith) and confident expectation in God's future salvation (hope).

**14:1-40** Paul evaluates the importance of the gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues in the life of the church. He clearly favors prophecy over the Spirit-inspired speech of tongues because intelligible speech can build up the community. If messages spoken in tongues can be interpreted, then they can have a place in worship. Paul's primary concern becomes apparent in 14:26-40: He wants

people but to God; no one understands it—they speak mysteries by the Spirit. <sup>3</sup>Those who prophesy speak to people, building them up, and giving them encouragement and comfort. <sup>4</sup>People who speak in a tongue build up themselves; those who prophesy build up the church. <sup>5</sup>I wish that all of you spoke in tongues, but I'd rather you could prophesy. Those who prophesy are more important than those who speak in tongues, unless they are able to interpret them so that the church might be built up. <sup>6</sup>After all, brothers and sisters, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I help you unless I speak to you with a revelation, some knowledge, a prophecy, or a teaching? <sup>7</sup>Likewise, things that aren't alive like a harp or a lyre can make a sound, but if there aren't different notes in the sounds they make, how will the tune from the harp or the lyre be recognized? <sup>8</sup>And if a trumpet call is unrecognizable, then who will prepare for battle? <sup>9</sup>It's the same way with you: If you don't use language that is easy to understand when you speak in a tongue, then how will anyone understand what is said? <sup>10</sup>It will be as if you are speaking into the air! There are probably many language families in the world, and none of them are without meaning. <sup>11</sup>So if I don't know the meaning of the language, then I will be like a foreigner to those who speak it, and they will be like foreigners to me. <sup>12</sup>The same holds true for you: since you are ambitious for spiritual gifts, use your ambition to try to work toward being the best at building up the church.

<sup>13</sup>Therefore, those who speak in a tongue should pray to be able to interpret. <sup>14</sup>If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind isn't productive. <sup>15</sup>What should I do? I'll pray in the Spirit, but I'll pray with my mind too; I'll sing a psalm in the Spirit, but I'll sing the psalm with my mind too. <sup>16</sup>After all, if you praise God in the Spirit, how will the people who aren't trained in that language say "Amen!" to your thanksgiving, when they don't know what you are saying? <sup>17</sup>You may offer a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving, but the other person is not being built up. <sup>18</sup>I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. <sup>19</sup>But in the church I'd rather speak five words in my right mind than speak thousands of words in a tongue so that I can teach others.

<sup>20</sup>Brothers and sisters, don't be like children in the way you think. Well, be babies when it comes to evil, but be adults in your thinking. <sup>21</sup>In the Law it is written: *I will speak to this people with foreign languages and foreigners' lips, but they will not even listen to me this way,*<sup>P</sup> says the Lord. <sup>22</sup>So then, tongues are a sign for those who don't believe, not for those who

<sup>P</sup>Isa 28:11-12

order maintained in worship, and he gives instructions to ensure that it is.

**14:1-19** Paul argues that tongues, unlike prophecy, are not intelligible to the human mind, nor do they build up the church community. He concludes that intelligible speech is better than tongues in the church's worship gatherings. If people speak in tongues, what is spoken must be interpreted for the community.

**14:2-4** Paul compares the value of prophecy to tongues. *building them up:* Those who prophesy increase the knowledge and understanding of God and God's ways in the community. *build up themselves:* Those who speak in tongues enhance their own spiritual lives without causing the church to grow in maturity.

**14:5** *I'd rather you could prophesy:* Prophecy is valued over speaking in tongues because it builds up the church. *unless they are able to interpret them:* Tongues have value for the church only if someone is able to interpret them in order to build up the church.

**14:6** *revelation:* a divine disclosure of some hidden knowledge, truth, or future happening. 1 Corinthians 14:29-31 suggests that revelation is often given in the form of prophecy.

**14:12** *since you are ambitious for spiritual gifts:* Apparently, the Corinthians competed with each other in seeking the gifts that were considered more impressive. *try to work toward being the best at building up the church:* More important than what gift a person receives is how they use the

gift. The gifts of the Spirit should be used for the social and spiritual development of the church community.

**14:13** *pray to be able to interpret:* Speaking in tongues can build up the church only if it is accompanied by an interpretation that allows it to be understood in everyday language. Prayer is the spiritual activity that can lead to the gift of interpretation for the person speaking in tongues.

**14:16** *'Amen!':* This is one of the earliest Christian references we have to the use of the word "amen" in worship. It was familiar in Jewish worship (see Pss 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48). In this context it means "Let it be so."

**14:17** *You may offer a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving, but the other person is not being built up:* Even prayer must build up the church or it is of no value in the context of worship.

**14:18** *I speak in tongues more than all of you:* Paul is clearly not opposed to Spirit-inspired speech or tongues, but he doesn't want it to control and twist the worship life of the church, where everything should build up the community.

**14:20-25** Paul explains the impact that tongues and prophecy may have on outsiders or unbelievers who may visit a church worship gathering. He clearly favors prophecy for the positive impact that it can have in convincing an unbeliever to worship God.

**14:22** *tongues are a sign for those who don't believe:* Unbelievers will interpret tongues as madness (1 Cor 14:23). As a result, they won't receive the message of the gospel. *But prophecy is a sign for believers:* Prophecy is a positive sign

14:5 Nm 11:29;  
1Co 12:10,  
1Co 12:30,  
1Co 14:13,  
1Co 14:26

14:6 Ro 6:17;  
1Co 12:8,  
1Co 14:26;  
Eph 1:17

14:8 Nm 10:9;  
Job 39:24;  
Jer 4:19;  
Eze 33:3; 11:21

14:9 1Co 9:26  
14:11 Ac 28:2;  
Ro 1:14; Col 3:11

14:13 1Co 14:5  
14:14 1Co 14:2,  
1Co 14:19

14:15 Ps 47:7;  
Eph 5:19;  
Col 3:16;  
Jas 5:13

14:16 Dt 27:15;  
1Ch 16:36;  
Neh 8:6;  
Ps 106:48;  
Rev 5:14

14:19 1Co 14:4

14:20 Ps 131:2;  
Mt 18:3;  
Ro 16:19;

Eph 4:14; 1Pt 2:2  
14:21 Dt 28:49;  
Is 28:11; Is 28:12;  
Jn 10:34

14:22 1Co 14:1

14:23 Ac 2:13;  
1Co 11:18  
14:24 Ac 2:37;  
1Co 14:1  
14:25 Is 45:14;  
Zec 8:23;  
Lk 17:16  
14:26 Ro 14:19;  
1Co 12:7;  
1Co 12:10;  
1Co 14:5;  
1Co 14:6  
14:29 1Co 12:10  
14:30 1Th 5:19;  
1Th 5:20  
14:31 1Co 14:3;  
1Th 4:18;  
1Th 5:11;  
1Th 5:14  
14:32 Isa 10:10;  
Job 32:8;  
Jer 20:9; 1Jn 4:1  
14:33 1Co 7:17;  
1Co 14:40  
14:34 Gn 3:16;  
1Co 11:5;  
1Ti 2:11;  
1Ti 2:12; 1Pt 3:1  
14:35 1Co 14:34  
14:37 1Co 2:15;  
2Co 10:7;  
1In 4:6  
14:38 1Ti 6:3

believe. But prophecy is a sign for believers, not for those who don't believe. <sup>23</sup>So suppose that the whole church is meeting and everyone is speaking in tongues. If people come in who are outsiders or unbelievers, won't they say that you are out of your minds? <sup>24</sup>But if everyone is prophesying when an unbeliever or outsider comes in, they are tested by all and called to account by all. <sup>25</sup>The secrets of their hearts are brought to light. When that happens, they will fall on their faces and worship God, proclaiming out loud that truly God is among you!

<sup>26</sup>What is the outcome of this, brothers and sisters? When you meet together, each one has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. All these things must be done to build up the church. <sup>27</sup>If some speak in a tongue, then let two or at most three speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. <sup>28</sup>However, if there is no interpreter, then they should keep quiet in the meeting. They should speak privately to themselves and to God. <sup>29</sup>In the case of prophets, let two or three speak and have the rest evaluate what is said. <sup>30</sup>And if some revelation comes to someone else who is sitting down, the first one should be quiet. <sup>31</sup>You can all prophesy one at a time so that everyone can learn and be encouraged. <sup>32</sup>The spirits of prophets are under the control of the prophets. <sup>33</sup>God isn't a God of disorder but of peace. Like in all the churches of God's people, <sup>34</sup>the women should be quiet during the meeting. They are not allowed to talk. Instead, they need to get under control, just as the Law says. <sup>35</sup>If they want to learn something, they should ask their husbands at home. It is disgraceful for a woman to talk during the meeting.

<sup>36</sup>Did the word of God originate with you? Has it come only to you? <sup>37</sup>If anyone thinks that they are prophets or "spiritual people," then let them recognize that what I'm writing to you is the Lord's command. <sup>38</sup>If someone doesn't recognize this, they aren't recognized.

*Women in Worship* Today in Western cultures, notions of male domination of women and female subordination to men are widely rejected. For some contemporary Christians, what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 is a cause for debate. Some readers claim that Paul didn't actually write these words; that a later writer added them to the text. However, we have no manuscript evidence to suggest that this is correct. Language and cultural considerations are crucial for interpreting these two verses. In 1 Corinthians 14:34 the Greek term translated as "women," *gynaikes*, can refer to either an adult female or a married female. Thus verse 34 may be translated either as "the women should be quiet during the meeting" (most English translations) or "the wives should be quiet during the meeting." In any case, the meaning "wives," is implied by verse 35, which says: "If they want to learn something, they should ask their husbands at home." Accordingly, Paul's remark in verse 34 isn't directed to women in general but to married women. If married women have questions and want to talk about something discussed in the church gathering, they should ask their questions in their homes. Why? In Paul's culture, married women could bring shame to their husbands and their families by speaking out of turn in public. This shame was particularly true if a wife seemed to challenge or contradict her husband's authority or that of other men in public discussions. It's in this kind of setting and cultural context, then, that Paul prevented women from participating in discussions during worship. As 1 Corinthians 11:5 indicates, women with covered heads could pray and prophesy in the worship service.

because it has the power to convince unbelievers of the truth of the Christian gospel, thereby confirming Christians in their own faith (1 Cor 14:24-25).

**14:24** *tested by all and called to account by all:* That is, those prophesying will expose and convince unbelievers of their sins.

**14:26-40** Paul insists on exercising proper order in the church's worship and gives instructions on how this is to be done.

**14:26** This verse gives us a very good idea of the activities that took place in the worship service of the earliest Christians. *psalm:* This may refer to OT psalms or more generally to songs praising God. *revelation:* See 1 Corinthians 14:6.

**14:29** *the rest:* This may refer to other prophets, but more likely it refers to the community as a whole (see 1 Thess 5:20-21). *evaluate what is said:* They are to assess the value of the prophecy, since people may claim to prophesy while speaking only their own views.

**14:32-33a** *The spirits of prophets are under the control of the prophets:* To avoid disorder in the worship meeting, prophets must exercise self-control so that no one prophet controls the church's gathering for worship. This is because *God isn't a God of disorder but of peace.*

**14:33b-35** A new matter is introduced, regarding the behavior of wives in the worship service. The interpretation of these verses is debated. See sidebar, "Women in Worship."

**14:36** *Did the word of God originate with you? Has it come only to you?:* The Corinthians mustn't think that they have a special right to set their own standards regarding worship and in the process turn away from the practices of other churches.

**14:37-38** *the Lord's command:* Paul calls on the Lord Jesus as the source of authority for what he has written about prophecy, tongues, and married women keeping silent in 1 Corinthians 14:26-35. To reject what Paul has written is to reject the Lord.

<sup>39</sup>So then, brothers and sisters, use your ambition to try to get the gift of prophecy, but don't prevent speaking in tongues. <sup>40</sup>Everything should be done with dignity and in proper order.

### The resurrection

**15** Brothers and sisters, I want to call your attention to the good news that I preached to you, which you also received and in which you stand. <sup>2</sup>You are being saved through it if you hold on to the message I preached to you, unless somehow you believed it for nothing. <sup>3</sup>I passed on to you as most important what I also received: Christ died for our sins in line with the scriptures, <sup>4</sup>he was buried, and he rose on the third day in line with the scriptures. <sup>5</sup>He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve, <sup>6</sup>and then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at once—most of them are still alive to this day, though some have died. <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup>and last of all he appeared to me, as if I were born at the wrong time. <sup>9</sup>I'm the least important of the apostles. I don't deserve to be called an apostle, because I harassed God's church. <sup>10</sup>I am what I am by God's grace, and God's grace hasn't been for nothing. In fact, I have worked harder than all the others—that is, it wasn't me but the grace of God that is with me. <sup>11</sup>So then, whether you heard the message from me or them, this is what we preach and this is what you have believed.

<sup>12</sup>So if the message that is preached says that Christ has been raised from the dead, then how can some of you say, "There's no resurrection of the dead"? <sup>13</sup>If there's no resurrection of the dead, then Christ hasn't been raised either. <sup>14</sup>If Christ hasn't been raised, then our preaching is useless and your faith is useless. <sup>15</sup>We are found to be false witnesses about God, because we testified against God that he raised Christ, when he didn't raise him if it's the case that the dead aren't raised. <sup>16</sup>If the dead aren't raised, then Christ hasn't been raised either. <sup>17</sup>If Christ hasn't been raised, then your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins,

14:40 1Co 11:34,  
1Co 14:33;  
Col 2:5; Ti 1:5  
15:1 Ro 5:2;  
2Co 1:24  
15:2 Ga 3:4  
15:3 Jn 1:29;  
1Co 11:23;  
Ga 1:4, Ga 1:12;  
1Pt 2:24  
15:4 Ac 2:24  
15:5 Mk 16:14;  
Lk 24:34;  
Lk 24:36;  
Jn 20:19;  
1Co 1:12  
15:6 Ac 7:60;  
Ac 13:36;  
1Co 15:18  
15:7 Ac 1:3;  
Ac 12:17;  
Ac 15:13;  
Ga 1:19  
15:8 Ac 9:3;  
1Co 9:1  
15:9 Ac 8:3;  
2Co 12:11;  
Eph 3:8  
15:10 2Co 3:5;  
2Co 11:23;  
Phi 2:13;  
Col 1:29

15:12 Ac 17:32, Ac 23:8; 2Ti 2:18 15:13 Ro 1:3, Ro 8:11; 1Co 15:12, 1Co 15:14, 1Co 15:20 15:14 1Co 15:17 15:15 Ac 2:24 15:17 Ro 4:25; 1Pt 1:3

14:40 *with dignity and in proper order*: Paul's primary concern is that the worship meeting be conducted in a way that doesn't invite criticism from outsiders.

15:1-58 For Paul and the early Christians, the resurrection of Christ was at the heart of the gospel because it confirmed the claim that Jesus' death was for our sins (15:17). Here he presents the nature, meaning, and significance of the resurrection for Christians.

15:1-11 Paul introduces the theme of the resurrection by reminding the Corinthians of its central place in his own missionary preaching and his own experience as a Christian.

15:1 *the good news that I preached*: The gospel about Jesus Christ. (The words "gospel" and "good news" translate the Greek word *euangelion*, which also translates into our English word "evangelism.")

15:2 *You are being saved through it*: Paul conceives of salvation as a process connected with receiving the gospel or good news (see Rom 1:16).

15:3-4 *I passed on to you... what I also received*: Paul received the gospel message from those who were Christians before him. *Christ died for our sins... rose on the third day in line with the scriptures*: the core message of Paul's preaching. *scriptures*: This refers exclusively to the OT since the NT didn't exist. Christ's death and resurrection are seen in alignment with the OT (see Isa 53:1-12; Ps 110:1).

15:5-8 These verses list the resurrection appearances known by Paul. He believed that the risen Jesus was visibly seen by the various people and groups that he mentions. *Cephas*: the apostle Peter. *the Twelve*: the 12 disciples of Jesus (see Mark 3:16, though according to Acts 1:15-26, Judas was replaced by Matthias). Paul, however, didn't think the Twelve were the only apostles (see 15:7). *James*: the brother of Jesus (see Gal 1:19). *all the apostles*: For Paul, the term "apostle" designated the missionaries who were sent out by various churches to preach the gospel. *last*

*of all... to me, as if I were born at the wrong time*: Christ's appearance to Paul was the last of his resurrection appearances and came much later in time than the other appearances Paul mentions here (see Acts 9:1-16; 22:6-11; 26:12-18).

15:9 *because I harassed God's church*: See Galatians 1:13-14; Acts 7:54-8:1; 9:2-3.

15:10 *I am what I am*: an apostle of Jesus Christ in spite of his having harassed the church of God. *by God's grace*: God chose to act as Paul's divine patron, giving him favor to make him an apostle (see 1 Cor 1:3-4). *God's grace hasn't been for nothing*: Paul accomplished a great deal for his patron by winning many for Christ in response to the favor God gave him when making him an apostle.

15:11 *this is what we preach and... what you have believed*: See 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

15:12-19 Paul presents the negative consequences if there is no resurrection of the dead.

15:12 *how can some of you say, "There's no resurrection of the dead"?*: Some Corinthians accepted the notion of Christ's resurrection as preached, but didn't believe in their own future resurrection. They probably believed in the immortality of the soul, holding that the soul would be separated from the body at death. This idea was widely held in the 1st-century Greco-Roman world. Another widely held belief claimed that death was the end of all human existence, with no afterlife at all.

15:13 *If there's no resurrection... then Christ hasn't been raised either*: Paul doesn't allow an argument that separates Christ's resurrection from the more general phenomenon of bodily resurrection. He argues that if there is no general resurrection, then Christ cannot have been raised from the dead.

15:17 *you are still in your sins*: They haven't been freed from the consequences of their past disobedience to God if Christ hasn't been raised from the dead.

15:18 1Co 15:6;  
1Th 4:14,  
1Th 4:16;  
Rev 14:13

15:19 1Co 4:9;  
2Ti 3:12

15:20 Ac 26:23;  
1Co 15:23;  
1Pt 1:3; Rev 1:5

15:21 Ga 3:19;  
Jn 11:25;  
Ro 5:12;  
1Co 15:22

15:22 Ro 5:14;  
1Co 15:45

15:23 Ac 26:23;  
1Co 3:23,  
1Co 15:20;  
1Th 2:19;  
1Th 4:16

15:24 Dn 2:44,  
Dn 7:14, Dn 7:27

15:25 Ps 110:1;  
Mt 22:44

15:26 Is 25:8;  
Hos 13:14;  
2Ti 1:10;  
Rev 20:14,  
Rev 21:4

15:27 Ps 8:6;  
Mt 11:27;  
Mt 28:18;  
Eph 1:22;  
Heb 2:8

<sup>18</sup>and what's more, those who have died in Christ are gone forever. <sup>19</sup>If we have a hope in Christ only in this life, then we deserve to be pitied more than anyone else.

<sup>20</sup>But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead. He's the first crop of the harvest<sup>a</sup> of those who have died. <sup>21</sup>Since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came through one too. <sup>22</sup>In the same way that everyone dies in Adam, so also everyone will be given life in Christ. <sup>23</sup>Each event will happen in the right order: Christ, the first crop of the harvest,<sup>b</sup> then those who belong to Christ at his coming, <sup>24</sup>and then the end, when Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he brings every form of rule, every authority and power to an end. <sup>25</sup>It is necessary for him to rule until *he puts all enemies under his feet.*<sup>c</sup> <sup>26</sup>Death is the last enemy to be brought to an end, <sup>27</sup>since he has brought everything under control under his feet. When it says that everything has been brought under his control, this clearly means everything except for the one who placed everything under his control. <sup>28</sup>But when all things have been brought under his control, then the Son himself will also be under the control of the one who gave him control over everything so that God may be all in all.

<sup>29</sup>Otherwise, what are those who are getting baptized for the dead doing? If the dead aren't raised, then why are they being baptized for them? <sup>30</sup>And what about us? Why are we in danger all day every day? <sup>31</sup>Brothers and sisters, I swear by the pride I have in you in Christ Jesus our Lord, I'm facing death every day. <sup>32</sup>From a human point of view, what good does it do me if I fought wild animals in Ephesus? If the dead aren't raised, *let's eat and drink because tomorrow we'll die.*<sup>d</sup> <sup>33</sup>Don't be deceived, bad company corrupts good character. <sup>34</sup>Sober up by

<sup>a</sup>Or *firstfruits* <sup>b</sup>Or *firstfruits* <sup>c</sup>Ps 110:1 <sup>d</sup>Isa 22:13

15:28 1Co 3:23, 1Co 11:3; 1Pt 3:21 15:29 Ro 6:3, Rom 6:4; 1Co 15:16 15:30 2Co 11:26 15:31 Ro 8:36; 2Co 4:10; 1Th 2:19 15:32 1J 2:13, Is 56:12; Lk 12:19; Ac 18:19; 2Co 1:8 15:33 1Co 5:6, 1Co 6:9; Ga 6:7; Eph 5:6 15:34 Ro 13:11; 1Co 6:5

**15:18** *those who have died in Christ are gone forever.* If there is no resurrection, then death is the final end of Christians (and of all humanity).

**15:20-28** Paul presents the positive consequences of Jesus' resurrection, since his resurrection did happen.

**15:20** *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead:* Paul rejects all of the claims in 1 Corinthians 15:13-19 as contrary to fact. *He's the first crop of the harvest of those who have died:* Paul doesn't see Christ's resurrection as a solitary event. Rather, it's the beginning of the general resurrection (see 1 Cor 15:23; cf. Dan 12:1-3). In the OT "the first crop of the harvest" refers to the portion of the crop ("early produce") dedicated to God and given to the priests (see Num 18:8-15).

**15:21-22** *death came through a human being:* See Genesis 3:17-24; Romans 5:12-14. *the resurrection of the dead came through one too:* See Romans 5:15-18.

**15:23-24** Paul provides us with the order of the events associated with the end of the age (see 1 Thess 4:13-18). *Christ, the first crop of the harvest, then those who belong to Christ at his coming:* Christ's resurrection is the beginning of the general resurrection of the dead. The word "coming" translates the Greek term *parousia*, which refers to the coming of a king or emperor for an official visit. Christ's coming is the visitation of the heavenly king to gather his people, both the living and the dead (see 1 Thess 4:16-17). *he brings every form of rule, every authority and power to an end:* This may refer to earthly rulers (e.g., the Roman emperor), or spiritual forces opposed to God (e.g., Satan), or both.

**15:25** *he puts all enemies under his feet:* a paraphrase of Psalm 110:1. This is a well-known image for conquering one's enemies. It refers to Christ's activity in defeating God's enemies.

**15:26** *Death is the last enemy.* Mortality, which is connected to human sin (see 1 Cor 15:56; Rom 5:12), is mankind's final and unwavering enemy until the resurrection.

**15:27** *the one who placed everything under his control:* that is, God, the Father, who has placed everything under Christ's control.

**15:28** *brought under his control:* that is, under the control of Jesus Christ, God's Son. *the one who gave him control:* that is, God, the Father. *that God may be all in all:* This represents the final goal and end of the process begun with Christ's resurrection and concluding with his defeat of all human and spiritual rule, authority, and power (see Phil 2:9-11). God will be *all in all* when all creation is reconciled to God and acknowledges its dependence on God.

**15:29-34** Paul offers arguments for the reality of the resurrection from Christian experience.

**15:29** *what are those who are getting baptized for the dead doing?* It's unclear to what Paul refers. The most obvious interpretation is that Christians were being baptized on behalf of deceased people, like parents or spouses, so that they could be joined together again in the resurrection. This practice isn't mentioned anywhere else in the Bible.

**15:30** *Why are we in danger all day every day?:* See 2 Corinthians 11:22-33. If there is no salvation, no hope of the resurrection and future life with God, why would Paul constantly put himself at risk?

**15:32** *what good does it do me if I fought wild animals in Ephesus?:* "Wild animals" is an image for the human opposition Paul faced in the city of Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8-9; see Acts 19:21-41). If there is no resurrection, what reward would there be for the danger that Paul experienced in preaching the gospel in Ephesus? *let's eat and drink because tomorrow we'll die:* quoted from Isaiah 22:13. If there is no resurrection, then this life is all there is. And if this life is all there is, then enjoy it while it lasts.

**15:33** *Don't be deceived, bad company corrupts good character:* This warning flows from the viewpoint Paul mentions (and rejects) in 1 Corinthians 15:32. Paul deals with this issue in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 more extensively. The

acting like you should and don't sin. Some of you are ignorant about God—I say this because you should be ashamed of yourselves!

<sup>35</sup>But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? What kind of body will they have when they come back?" <sup>36</sup>Look, fool! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't come back to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup>What you put in the ground doesn't have the shape that it will have, but it's a bare grain of wheat or some other seed. <sup>38</sup>God gives it the sort of shape that he chooses, and he gives each of the seeds its own shape. <sup>39</sup>All flesh isn't alike. Humans have one kind of flesh, animals have another kind of flesh, birds have another kind of flesh, and fish have another kind. <sup>40</sup>There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. The heavenly bodies have one kind of glory, and the earthly bodies have another kind of glory. <sup>41</sup>The sun has one kind of glory, the moon has another kind of glory, and the stars have another kind of glory (but one star is different from another star in its glory). <sup>42</sup>It's the same with the resurrection of the dead: a rotting body is put into the ground, but what is raised won't ever decay. <sup>43</sup>It's degraded when it's put into the ground, but it's raised in glory. It's weak when it's put into the ground, but it's raised in power. <sup>44</sup>It's a physical body when it's put into the ground, but it's raised as a spiritual body.

If there's a physical body, there's also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup>So it is also written, *The first human, Adam, became a living person,*<sup>a</sup> and the last Adam became a spirit that gives life. <sup>46</sup>But the physical body comes first, not the spiritual one—the spiritual body comes afterward. <sup>47</sup>The first human was from the earth made from dust; the second human is from heaven. <sup>48</sup>The nature of the person made of dust is shared by people who are made of dust, and the nature of the heavenly person is shared by heavenly people. <sup>49</sup>We will look like<sup>b</sup> the heavenly person in the same way as we have looked like the person made from dust.

<sup>50</sup>This is what I'm saying, brothers and sisters: Flesh and blood can't inherit God's kingdom. Something that rots can't inherit something that doesn't decay. <sup>51</sup>Listen, I'm telling you a secret: All of us won't die, but we will all be changed—<sup>52</sup>in an instant, in the blink of an

15:35 Exe 37:3;  
Ro 9:19  
15:36 Jn 12:24  
15:38 Gn 1:11  
15:41 Ps 8:3  
15:42 Dn 12:3;  
Mt 13:43;  
1Co 15:50  
15:43 Phi 3:21;  
Col 3:4  
15:44 1Co 2:14;  
1Co 15:50  
15:45 Gn 2:7;  
Jn 5:21; Ro 5:14;  
Ro 8:2  
15:47 Gn 2:7;  
Gn 3:19; Jn 3:13;  
Jn 3:31  
15:48 Phi 3:20  
15:49 Gn 5:3;  
Ro 8:29;  
2Co 3:18;  
1In 3:2  
15:50 Mt 16:17;  
1Co 6:9  
15:51 1Co 13:2;  
2Co 5:4;  
Phi 3:21;  
1Th 4:15;  
1Th 4:17  
15:52 Mt 24:31;  
Jn 5:25; 1Th 4:16

<sup>a</sup>Gen 2:7 <sup>b</sup>Or bear the image of

warning is a well-known moral proverb from a now-lost play by Menander (died 292 BCE).

15:34 *Sober up by acting like you should:* Essentially, Paul is saying that his readers should come to their senses and act responsibly. *Some of you are ignorant about God:* a charge that some lacked spiritual insight, having no knowledge or understanding of God's ways.

15:35–49 Paul deals with the nature of the resurrection body.

15:35 *What kind of body will they have when they come back?:* in the resurrection. This question has two parts: What is the relation of the resurrection body to the mortal human body? And what is the nature of the resurrection body? The verses that follow answer these questions.

15:36–38 These verses use seeds to suggest something about the mortal human body and the resurrection body. Seeds have a particular form, but when they are planted and grow they have a different form. In the same way, our bodies, when dead and buried, will rise in a different form.

15:40 Paul distinguishes between earthly bodies and heavenly bodies by suggesting that they have different types of glory. "Glory" refers to the radiance of a particular body, and naturally Paul thought of heavenly bodies as possessing greater radiance.

15:44 *a physical body... a spiritual body:* Paul refers to one kind of body suited for life in this world and to another kind of body suited for life in the world to come. Whether in this world or the next, human life is embodied. *spiritual body:* a transformed body no longer subject to the power of sin and death, and therefore fit to inherit God's kingdom, where sin and death no longer reign (see 1 Cor 15:50; 15:53–56).

15:45 *The first human, Adam, became a living person:* See Genesis 2:7. By way of contrast, Paul maintains that *the last Adam* (Jesus Christ) *became a spirit that gives life.* For the contrast between Adam and Christ, see also Romans 5:12–21. *the last Adam:* the risen Christ who is the source of resurrection life for all who are being saved (Phil 3:20–21).

15:47–49 *The first human (Adam) was from the earth made from dust.* See Genesis 2:7. *the second human (the risen Christ) is from heaven:* These two figures have a representative function. Mortal humans share the mortal nature of the first Adam, while heavenly people will share the heavenly nature of the second Adam.

15:50–58 Paul writes about the end of the age, the general resurrection, and transformation of the body.

15:50 *Flesh and blood can't inherit God's kingdom:* For Jesus, God's kingdom referred primarily to God's authority and rule in human history (see Luke 17:20–21). For Paul, the Kingdom of God comes into our possession through the resurrection body. Unlike the decaying and dying human body, the resurrection body doesn't wear out and die and is therefore fit for the place where God reigns forever.

15:51–52 *a secret:* God's hidden plans for the future of those who belong to Christ, both the living and the dead. *All of us won't die, but we all will be changed:* If only the dead are raised with a heavenly body that can't be destroyed, what of those who haven't died at Christ's coming? They will be transformed so that they possess imperishable heavenly bodies as well. *the final trumpet:* associated with the day on which the Lord God acts to save God's people (see Isa 27:12–13; Zech 9:14; Matt

15:53 Ro 2:7;  
2Co 5:2, 2Co 5:4  
15:54 Is 25:8;  
Hos 13:14;  
Heb 2:14;  
Rev 20:14;  
Rev 21:4

15:55 Hos 13:14

15:56 Ro 4:15;  
Ro 5:12

15:57 Ro 7:25;  
Ro 8:37;  
2Co 2:14;  
1Jn 5:4

15:58 1Co 16:10;  
Ga 6:9; 2Pt 3:14  
16:1 Ac 16:6;  
Ac 24:17

16:2 Ac 20:7;  
2Co 8:11;  
Rev 1:10

16:3 2Co 3:1,  
2Co 8:18,  
2Co 8:19

16:5 Ac 19:21;  
1Co 4:19

16:6 Ac 15:3;  
1Co 16:11

16:7 Ac 18:21;  
1Co 4:19;  
Isa 4:15

16:8 Ac 2:1,  
Ac 20:16

16:9 Ac 14:27,  
Ac 19:9; Rev 3:8

16:10 Ac 16:1;  
Ro 16:21;  
1Co 4:17;  
1Co 15:58;  
1Th 3:2

16:11 Ac 15:33;  
1Co 16:6;  
1Th 4:12; 2:15

eye, at the final trumpet. The trumpet will blast, and the dead will be raised with bodies that won't decay, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup>It's necessary for this rotting body to be clothed with what can't decay, and for the body that is dying to be clothed in what can't die. <sup>54</sup>And when the rotting body has been clothed in what can't decay, and the dying body has been clothed in what can't die, then this statement in scripture will happen:

*Death has been swallowed up by a victory.*<sup>w</sup>

<sup>55</sup>Where is your victory, Death?

*Where is your sting, Death?*<sup>m</sup>

(<sup>56</sup>Death's sting is sin, and the power of sin is the Law.) <sup>57</sup>Thanks be to God, who gives us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! <sup>58</sup>As a result of all this, my loved brothers and sisters, you must stand firm, unshakable, excelling in the work of the Lord as always, because you know that your labor isn't going to be for nothing in the Lord.

### Collection for Jerusalem

**16** Concerning the collection of money for God's people: You should do what I have directed the churches in Galatia to do. <sup>2</sup>On the first day of the week, each of you should set aside whatever you can afford from what you earn so that the collection won't be delayed until I come. <sup>3</sup>Then when I get there, I'll send whomever you approve to Jerusalem with letters of recommendation to bring your gift. <sup>4</sup>If it seems right for me to go too, they'll travel with me.

### Plans to visit

<sup>5</sup>I'll come to you after I go through Macedonia, and because I'm going through Macedonia, <sup>6</sup>I may stay with you or even spend the winter there in Corinth so that you can send me on my way to wherever I'm off to next. <sup>7</sup>I don't want to make a quick visit to you, since I hope to spend some time with you if the Lord lets it happen. <sup>8</sup>I'll stay here in Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost. <sup>9</sup>In spite of the fact that there are many opponents, a big and productive opportunity has opened up for my mission here.

<sup>10</sup>If Timothy comes to you, be sure that he has no reason to be afraid while he's with you, because he does the work of the Lord just like I do. <sup>11</sup>So don't let anyone disrespect him, but send him on in peace so he can join me. I'm waiting for him along with the brothers and

<sup>w</sup>Isa 25:8 <sup>m</sup>Hos 13:14

24:29-31; 1 Thess 4:16). *the dead will be raised . . . and we will be changed:* The order is fixed. The dead are raised with heavenly bodies, and then those who are alive will have their bodies transformed into heavenly bodies (see 1 Thess 4:13-17).

15:54-55 Paul draws on two OT texts, Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14, though he modifies them to create his taunt against death. The taunt shows that death is humankind's final and greatest enemy. Paul's point is that the resurrection overthrows the power of death to corrupt and destroy the human body.

15:56 See Romans 5:12-14; 7:7-13.

15:57 Christ's victory over death achieved through his resurrection offers certainty for Christians of their own victory over death through the resurrection.

15:58 The resurrection and immortality of the transformed body are here seen as the reward for faithful Christian living.

16:1-24 Paul deals briefly with three concluding matters before his final greeting to the church.

16:1-4 First, Paul gives directions for the collection to aid Christians in Jerusalem.

16:1 *the collection of money for God's people:* The leaders of the church in Jerusalem asked Paul and Barnabas to help the poor of the church (Gal 2:10). This collection was the means of doing so (see Rom 15:22-28; 2 Cor 8-9).

16:2 *the first day of the week:* The Greek idiom is "the first

of the Sabbath," which is Sunday, the meeting day of the early church. This is our earliest reference to the church's practice of gathering on Sunday.

16:5-12 Paul sets out his intended travel plans as well as the plans of others.

16:5-6 *Macedonia:* the northern part of Greece where Paul established several churches, including the churches of Philippi and Thessalonica.

16:7 *if the Lord lets it happen:* Christ is the one in control of Paul's life (cf. Jas 4:13-16).

16:8 *I'll stay here in Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost:* Pentecost was 50 days after the Passover (see Lev 23:15-16), so Paul was planning to stay until late spring when sea travel was safer.

16:9 *many opponents:* those opposed to Paul's preaching of the gospel in Ephesus. See 1 Corinthians 15:32; Acts 19:23-41.

16:10 *If Timothy comes to you:* The uncertainty surrounding Timothy's coming to the Corinthians is a bit surprising in light of 1 Corinthians 4:17. *be sure that he has no reason to be afraid while he's with you:* Perhaps Paul thought Timothy, in carrying out his instructions (1 Cor 4:17), might be subject to arrogant and even hostile behavior from some in the community (1 Cor 4:18; 16:11).

16:11 Paul seems to be worried about the reception Timothy will receive as his ambassador, and with good reason given what was to happen to Paul on his second visit (see 2 Cor 2:5; 10:2; 13:1-2). *along with the brothers and sisters:*



sisters. <sup>12</sup>Concerning Apollos our brother: I strongly encouraged him to visit you with the brothers and sisters, but he didn't want to go now. He'll come when he has an opportunity.

### Final greeting

<sup>13</sup>Stay awake, stand firm in your faith, be brave, be strong. <sup>14</sup>Everything should be done in love.

<sup>15</sup>Brothers and sisters, I encourage you to do something else. You know that the people in Stephanas' household were the first crop of the harvest to come from the mission to Achaia. They have dedicated themselves to the service of God's people. <sup>16</sup>So accept the authority of people like them and of anyone who cooperates and works hard. <sup>17</sup>I'm so happy that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have arrived; they've made up for my missing you. <sup>18</sup>Indeed they've provided my spirit<sup>a</sup> and yours with a much-needed rest. Therefore, give them proper recognition.

<sup>19</sup>The churches in the province of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you warmly in the Lord, together with the church that meets in their house. <sup>20</sup>All the brothers and sisters greet you. You in turn should greet each other with a holy kiss. <sup>21</sup>Here is my greeting in my own handwriting—Paul.

<sup>22</sup>A curse on anyone who doesn't love the Lord. Come, Lord! <sup>23</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. <sup>24</sup>My love is with all of you in Christ Jesus.

16:12 Ac 18:24;  
Ac 19:1;  
1Co 1:12

16:13 Mt 24:42;  
Ga 5:1; Eph 6:10;  
Phi 4:1; 1Th 3:8  
16:14 1Co 14:1

16:15 Ro 16:5;  
1Co 1:16,  
1Co 16:17;  
2Co 1:1

16:18 Ro 15:32;  
2Co 7:13;  
Phi 2:29;  
1Th 5:12;  
Phm 1:7

16:19 Ac 18:2;  
Ro 16:5

16:20 Ro 16:16

16:21 Ga 6:11;  
Col 4:18;  
2Th 3:17;  
Phm 1:19

16:22 Ro 9:3;  
Eph 6:24

16:23 Ro 16:20

probably those traveling with Timothy since group travel was important for safety.

16:12 Some have thought that there was conflict and rivalry between Paul and Apollos (see 1 Cor 3:4), but this suggests that they worked together cooperatively (see sidebar, "The Source of the Divisions at Corinth" at 1 Cor 4). 16:13-18 Paul gives final instructions.

16:13 *Stay awake*: Be watchful for threats and dangers to the community.

16:14 *Everything should be done in love*: Paul calls for love in the sense of the community being bound together in mutual support and commitment. For him this is the solution to the problems and divisions destroying the church. Love is the greatest of the three core Christian virtues, according to 1 Corinthians 13:13.

16:15-16 *the first crop of the harvest*: See note on 1 Corinthians 15:20. *So accept the authority of people like them and of anyone who cooperates and works hard*: that is, anyone who cooperates and works hard *with them*. His goal is to affirm the leadership role played by Stephanas' household, as well as those who work together with them.

16:17 *I'm so happy that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have arrived*: These three probably brought the letter mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:1 as well as gave an oral report about the troubled situation in the church at Corinth. 16:18 *give them proper recognition*: Stephanas and his companions almost certainly took 1 Corinthians as a letter

back to Corinth. These words, along with 1 Corinthians 16:15-16, give them the status and authority necessary to deliver Paul's message to the church. They would have read the letter to the community and expanded on what Paul had written. This was the practice in the Roman world.

16:19-24 Paul's final greetings to the church in Corinth.

16:19-21 *Aquila and Prisca*: See Acts 18:1-5, 18, 26; Romans 16:3-5. *greet each other with a holy kiss*: This was a standard practice in the early church (Rom 16:16; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14). It was intended to show that in Christ a close-knit community was being formed among people who previously had not been socially connected. *Here is my greeting in my own handwriting*: Paul didn't write his own letters but used a trained secretary to whom he dictated the letters. His signature showed that his letters were really his (2 Thess 3:17).

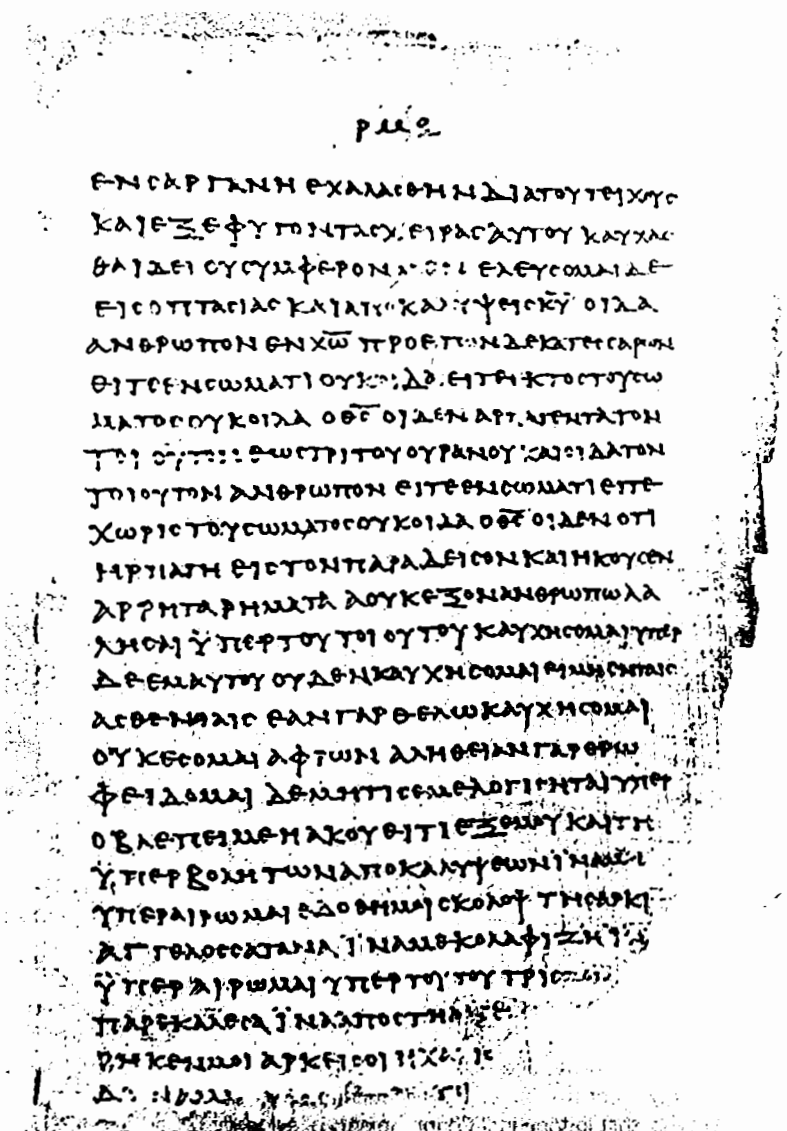
16:22 *A curse on anyone who doesn't love the Lord*: This curse is directed toward any who show a lack of love for the Lord by causing problems in the community. *Come, Lord!*: This is the translation of an Aramaic phrase, *marana tha*, which appears in the Greek text. The use of a word borrowed from the Aramaic language indicates that this expression came from the Jewish homeland and was a prayer for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven. Paul implies that those who cause problems in the community will be judged and condemned by the Lord Jesus at his coming.

	Date	Description	Amount
1891	1891	Wrote for 1891	100
1892	1892	Wrote for 1892	100
1893	1893	Wrote for 1893	100
1894	1894	Wrote for 1894	100
1895	1895	Wrote for 1895	100
1896	1896	Wrote for 1896	100
1897	1897	Wrote for 1897	100
1898	1898	Wrote for 1898	100
1899	1899	Wrote for 1899	100
1900	1900	Wrote for 1900	100
1901	1901	Wrote for 1901	100
1902	1902	Wrote for 1902	100
1903	1903	Wrote for 1903	100
1904	1904	Wrote for 1904	100
1905	1905	Wrote for 1905	100

# 2 CORINTHIANS

2 Corinthians is one of Paul's most personal and heartfelt letters. Paul was the founder of the congregation at Corinth, the capital city of Roman Achaia. But he and the Corinthian

congregation had a serious conflict that enabled rival missionaries to question his ministry and lead the Corinthian church in directions he didn't like. Paul wrote this letter to defend his



A portion of 2 Corinthians from Papyrus 46, one of the oldest surviving NT manuscripts, dating from around 200 CE.  
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ministry as “an apostle of Christ Jesus” (2 Cor 1:1) and to direct the congregation in the way he thought they should go.

The conflict between Paul and the Corinthian church had something to do with the fact that Paul changed his plans after he sent them the letter we call 1 Corinthians. At the time he wrote 1 Corinthians, Paul was apparently on good terms with the believers in Corinth, as he could tell them to start a relief fund for the poor believers in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1-4). Writing from Ephesus, Paul said he planned to visit Macedonia and then Corinth, where he would pick up the collection to send to Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:3-8). But he changed his plans and went to Corinth first, intending to travel from there north to Macedonia and then back south to Corinth before leaving for Jerusalem (2 Cor 1:15-16; 12:14; 13:1-2). This change seems to have upset the Corinthians (2 Cor 1:23; 2:1; 7:12). As a result, Paul left Corinth for Asia Minor, probably first for Ephesus, his base of operations in the region for several years (Acts 19:1-40; 20:31), and then for Troas (2 Cor 2:12). After leaving Corinth he wrote the Corinthians a letter, marked with his tears, about his recent painful visit with them (2 Cor 2:3-4). Unfortunately, we don’t have this letter. By the time he wrote 2 Corinthians, Paul had left Asia Minor for Macedonia (2 Cor 2:13), where he received a report from his associate Titus that the Corinthians had welcomed Paul’s “letter of tears” and were reconciled to Paul. The news greatly encouraged the apostle (2 Cor 7:5-16).

Writing in this context of newly mended fences, Paul begins 2 Corinthians by explaining why he had to change his travel plans (2 Cor 1:15-20), and he spends the first seven chapters defending his ministry. In the letter’s remaining chapters Paul discusses two topics: the relief fund and his conflict with rival missionaries. First he encourages the Corinthians to begin contributing again to the Jerusalem relief fund, an activity they had apparently stopped during their dispute with the apostle (2 Cor 8-9). Next he attacks the rival missionaries and defends his apostolic authority (2 Cor 10-13).

There’s a noticeable shift in tone in 2 Corinthians 10-13 away from the generally warm

language of 2 Corinthians 1-9. Some scholars have proposed that 2 Corinthians 10-13 is from a different letter. These chapters could be from the tearful letter mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:4, or maybe they were written after 2 Corinthians 1-9 had already been sent to Corinth. A growing number of scholars, however, think the 2 Corinthians we have is just as Paul wrote it. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 1-7 Paul refers to criticisms of his apostolic authority (cf. 2 Cor 3:1; 4:1-6; 5:11-13). So perhaps he opens the letter with an extended defense of his ministry (2 Cor 2:14-7:4) in order to pave the way later in the letter for a more pointed response to the criticism of the rival missionaries, whom he sarcastically labels “super-apostles” (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11). Since Paul’s letters were generally written (or dictated) over a period of days or weeks, it could be that Paul drafted 2 Corinthians 1-9 just before he received news of a worsening situation in Corinth, a state of affairs that called for the severe response in 2 Corinthians 10-13. Those who delivered Paul’s letters would have been able, and expected, to share with the Corinthians additional information not included in the letter itself (cf. Col 4:7-9; Eph 6:21-22).

2 Corinthians seems to have successfully defended Paul’s ministry and reconciled the church (once again) to its apostle. The best evidence for this is in Paul’s letter to the Romans, where he reports he’s preparing to travel to Jerusalem with a contribution for the poor believers there from “Macedonia and Achaia” (Rom 15:25-27). In the end, and in spite of much disagreement over the fund-raising effort, the Corinthians appear to have supported Paul’s collection for Jerusalem.

Since the major theme of 2 Corinthians centers on Paul’s defense of his missionary work in the face of conflict and criticism, the letter’s theology is deeply tied to Paul’s understanding of his apostolic ministry. A significant concern is the paradoxical relationship between suffering and power. Paul’s opponents point to his physical suffering as a sign of his weakness (2 Cor 10:10; 11:5-6, 21). But Paul says his suffering and weakness—of which there is plenty of evidence (2 Cor 1:5-6; 4:7-12, 16; 6:4-10; 11:22-33; 12:8-10)—show he’s an authentic

apostle. Indeed, Paul's suffering points to his identification with the crucified Jesus. It's through the embodiment of Jesus' death that Paul and his associates bear witness to Jesus' life and are used by God to extend life and grace to others (2 Cor 4:7-15). Paul's own ministry of reconciliation (including his attempt to reconcile with the Corinthians) is a testimony to the reconciliation God has accomplished for sinners through Christ (2 Cor 5:18-19). This is not an abstract theological confession; it is a claim that has profound implications for the ethics of the Corinthians, especially as Paul maintains that those who have experienced the grace of Christ (2 Cor 8:9) are called and enabled to extend grace to others. Paul develops this theme in 2 Corinthians 8-9 with particular reference to the tangible "grace" of

sharing in the collection for the poor believers in Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians is Paul's defense of his apostolic work to the Corinthians, but it isn't narrowly focused on his own work. It's a theologically rooted review of his ministry among the Corinthians as "an apostle of Christ Jesus" (2 Cor 1:1), one that invites his readers to understand the close connection between the Christlike suffering of those who work for the gospel, the enabling grace of God, and the transformed lives of those who have received God's grace. As Paul reminds the Corinthians near the end of the letter, "Have you been thinking up to now that we are defending ourselves to you? Actually, we are speaking in the sight of God and in Christ. Dear friends, everything is meant to build you up" (2 Cor 12:19).

### **I. Introduction (1:1-11)**

- A. Greeting (1:1-2)
- B. The blessing of God's comfort (1:3-7)
- C. Report of deliverance from suffering (1:8-11)

### **II. Defense of Paul's Recent Actions (1:12-2:13)**

- A. Explanation of Paul's change of travel plans (1:12-2:2)
- B. The painful letter and its results (2:3-13)

### **III. The Nature and Integrity of the Apostolic Ministry (2:14-7:4)**

- A. Paul's divine credentials (2:14-3:6)
- B. The ministries of Moses and Paul (3:7-18)
- C. The integrity of Paul and the gospel (4:1-6)
- D. Apostolic suffering and hope (4:7-5:10)
- E. The ministry of reconciliation (5:11-6:10)
- F. Appeal for reconciliation and ethical exhortation (6:11-7:4)

### **IV. Paul's Joy and Comfort at the Corinthians' Response (7:5-16)**

### **V. Appeal to Complete the Collection for Jerusalem (8:1-9:15)**

- A. The example of the Macedonians (8:1-6)
- B. Plea for generous giving (8:7-12)
- C. The aim of equality (8:13-15)
- D. Recommendation of delegates (8:16-24)
- E. Boasting and appeal (9:1-5)
- F. Generosity that comes from God (9:6-10)
- G. Generosity that glorifies God (9:11-15)

### **VI. Defense against Paul's Critics and Plans for Paul's Future Visit to Corinth (10:1-13:10)**

- A. Paul's response to personal critiques (10:1-11)
- B. Paul's ministry in Corinth (10:12-18)
- C. Paul's critique of "super-apostles" (11:1-15)
- D. Paul's boasting as a "fool" (11:16-12:13)
- E. Paul's plans for a third visit (12:14-13:10)

### **VII. Closing Greetings and Blessing (13:11-13)**

1:1 Ac 16:1;  
1Co 1:1; Eph 1:1;  
Col 1:1; 2Ti 1:1  
1:2 Ro 1:7  
1:3 Ro 15:5;  
Eph 1:3; 1Pt 1:3

1:4 Is 51:12;  
Is 66:13; 2Co 7:6

1:5 2Co 4:10;  
Phi 3:10;  
Col 1:24

1:6 2Co 4:15;  
2Ti 2:10

1:7 Ro 8:17;  
2Ti 2:12

1:8 Ac 19:23;  
1Co 15:32

1:9 Jer 17:5;  
Lk 18:9;  
2Co 4:14

1:10 Isa 17:37;  
Ro 15:31;  
1Ti 4:10

1:11 Ro 15:30;  
2Co 4:15;  
2Co 9:11;  
Phi 1:19;  
Phm 1:22

1:12 Ac 23:1;  
1Co 1:17;  
1Co 2:4;  
1Co 2:13;  
2Co 2:17

1:14 1Co 1:8

1:15 Ro 1:11;  
Ro 15:29;  
1Co 4:19

1:16 Ac 19:21;  
1Co 16:5

## Greeting

**1** From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy our brother.  
To God's church that is in Corinth, along with all of God's people throughout Achaia.  
**2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

## God's comfort in trouble

**3** May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be blessed! He is the compassionate Father and God of all comfort. **4** He's the one who comforts us in all our trouble so that we can comfort other people who are in every kind of trouble. We offer the same comfort that we ourselves received from God. **5** That is because we receive so much comfort through Christ in the same way that we share so many of Christ's sufferings. **6** So if we have trouble, it is to bring you comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is to bring you comfort from the experience of endurance while you go through the same sufferings that we also suffer. **7** Our hope for you is certain, because we know that as you are partners in suffering, so also you are partners in comfort.

**8** Brothers and sisters, we don't want you to be unaware of the troubles that we went through in Asia. We were weighed down with a load of suffering that was so far beyond our strength that we were afraid we might not survive. **9** It certainly seemed to us as if we had gotten the death penalty. This was so that we would have confidence in God, who raises the dead, instead of ourselves. **10** God rescued us from a terrible death, and he will rescue us. We have set our hope on him that he will rescue us again, **11** since you are helping with your prayer for us. Then many people can thank God on our behalf for the gift that was given to us through the prayers of many people.

## Paul explains his change of plans

**12** We have conducted ourselves with godly sincerity and pure motives in the world, and especially toward you. This is why we are confident, and our conscience confirms this. We didn't act with human wisdom but we relied on the grace of God. **13** We don't write anything to you except what you can read and also understand. I hope that you will understand totally **14** since you have already understood us partly. Understand that in the day of our Lord Jesus, we will make you proud as you will also make us proud.

**15** Because I was sure of this, I wanted to visit you first so that you could have a second opportunity to see me. **16** I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and then come to you again on my way back from Macedonia, at which point I was hoping you would help me on my way to Judea.

1:1-2 The letter opens with a customary greeting, including an indication of the senders and the recipients (1:1). In most of his letters Paul identifies himself as an *apostle* (cf. "slaves of Christ Jesus" in Phil 1:1; "prisoner for the cause of Christ Jesus" in Phm 1). Paul understands his role as apostle to be closely tied to his commission by the risen Jesus to bring the good news to the Gentiles (see Rom 11:13; 1 Cor 9:1-2; 15:1-9; Gal 1:11-17; 2 Tim 1:8-12).

1:1 *Timothy*, a close associate of Paul, often traveled with the apostle and to the Pauline churches on Paul's behalf (see Acts 16-20; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; Phil 1:1; 2:19-24; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 3:1-6; 2 Thess 1:1; Phm 1). Paul calls Timothy his "son" (Phil 2:22) and his "true child in the faith" (1 Tim 1:2; cf. 2 Tim 1:2), and Paul addresses the letters of 1 and 2 Timothy to this younger and cherished partner in ministry. *Achaia*: Corinth was the capital city of the Roman province of Achaia, which included the Peloponnese (a large peninsula in southern Greece) and southern mainland Greece (see map 21).

1:2 *Grace to you and peace*: Paul's standard letter greeting (cf. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; Titus 1:4; Phm 3). In 1 Timothy 1:2 and 2 Timothy 1:2 Paul adds "mercy" to "grace" and "peace." 1:3-7 The letter's opening blesses the *God of all comfort* (1:3), who gives consolation in the midst of suffering.

Sharing in the sufferings of Christ (1:5) allows Paul to experience divine comfort and enables him to comfort others.

1:8-11 Paul cites a specific example of his suffering, perhaps the threat of death during an instance of intense harassment in Asia Minor (cf. 1 Cor 15:32; Acts 19:23-40).

1:12 This verse introduces the body of the letter and marks the beginning of Paul's extended defense of his actions and his apostolic ministry (2 Cor 1:12-7:4). The section of Paul's defense starts with a summary of and response to recent events (2 Cor 1:12-2:13). *grace of God*: Paul refers to the grace of God several times in the letter (2 Cor 4:15; 6:1; 8:1; 9:8, 14; 12:9; cf. 2 Cor 1:2; 8:9; 13:13).

1:14 *the day of our Lord Jesus*: a phrase adopted from OT prophets' references to a coming day of God's judgment (Isa 13:1-13; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; Amos 5:18-20; Mal 4:5). In Paul's letters it refers to Christ's future return in judgment (1 Cor 4:4-5; 5:5; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Tim 1:18; cf. 2 Pet 3:10), when, according to Paul, believers will be declared blameless (1 Cor 1:8; 2 Tim 4:8).

1:15-16 *second opportunity*: Although this might refer to a second opportunity to see Paul (as the CEB indicates), it may also refer to a second opportunity to contribute to the relief fund for the poor believers in Jerusalem. The Greek word Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 1:15 to refer to this

<sup>17</sup>So I wasn't unreliable when I planned to do this, was I? Or do I make decisions with a substandard human process so that I say "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time? <sup>18</sup>But as God is faithful, our message to you isn't both yes and no. <sup>19</sup>God's Son, Jesus Christ, is the one who was preached among you by us—through me, Silvanus, and Timothy—he wasn't yes and no. In him it is always yes. <sup>20</sup>All of God's promises have their yes in him. That is why we say Amen through him to the glory of God.

<sup>21</sup>God is the one who establishes us with you in Christ and who anointed us. <sup>22</sup>God also sealed us and gave the Spirit as a down payment in our hearts. <sup>23</sup>I call on God as my witness—I didn't come again to Corinth because I wanted to spare you. <sup>24</sup>It isn't that we are trying to control your faith, but we are working with you for your happiness, because you stand firm in your faith. <sup>25</sup>So I decided that, for my own sake, I wouldn't visit you again while I was upset. <sup>26</sup>If I make you sad, who will be there to make me glad when you are sad because of me?

**Paul's former letter**

<sup>3</sup>That's why I wrote this very thing to you, so that when I came I wouldn't be made sad by the ones who ought to make me happy. I have confidence in you, that my happiness means your happiness. <sup>4</sup>I wrote to you in tears, with a very troubled and anxious heart. I didn't write to make you sad but so you would know the overwhelming love that I have for you.

<sup>5</sup>But if someone has made anyone sad, that person hasn't hurt me but all of you to some degree (not to exaggerate). <sup>6</sup>The punishment handed out by the majority is enough for this person. <sup>7</sup>This is why you should try your best to forgive and to comfort this person now instead, so that this person isn't overwhelmed by too much sorrow. <sup>8</sup>So I encourage you to show your love for this person.

<sup>9</sup>This is another reason why I wrote you. I wanted to test you and see if you are obedient in everything. <sup>10</sup>If you forgive anyone for anything, I do too. And whatever I've forgiven (if I've forgiven anything), I did it for you in the presence of Christ. <sup>11</sup>This is so that we won't be taken advantage of by Satan, because we are well aware of his schemes.

**Paul's ministry**

<sup>12</sup>When I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, the Lord gave me an opportunity to preach. <sup>13</sup>But I was worried because I couldn't find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia.

2:9 2Co 7:15, 2Co 10:6; Phi 2:22 2:10 1Co 5:4 2:11 1Ch 21:1; Lk 22:31; 2Co 11:14; 1Pt 5:8; Rev 12:9 2:12 Ac 14:27; Ac 16:8; Ro 1:1; 1Th 3:2 2:13 2Co 7:5, 2Co 7:6, 2Co 8:6; Ga 2:1; Ti 1:4

1:17 2Co 10:2, 2Co 10:3, 2Co 11:18 1:18 1Co 1:9 1:19 Mt 4:5, Mt 16:16, Mt 26:63; 1Th 1:1; Heb 13:8 1:20 Ro 15:8 1:21 1Co 1:8; 1In 2:20, 1In 2:27 1:22 In 6:27; 2Co 5:5; Eph 1:13, Eph 1:14, Eph 4:30 1:23 Ro 1:9; 1Co 4:21; 2Co 2:1, 2Co 2:3; Ga 1:20 1:24 Ro 11:20; 1Co 15:1; 2Co 4:5; 1Pt 5:3 2:1 1Co 4:21; 2Co 1:23, 2Co 12:21 2:2 2Co 7:8 2:3 2Co 2:9, 2Co 8:22, 2Co 12:21; Ga 5:10; 2Th 3:4 2:4 2Co 7:8, 2Co 7:12 2:5 1Co 5:1, 1Co 5:2 2:6 1Co 5:4, 1Co 5:5; 2Co 7:11 2:7 Ga 6:1; Eph 4:32 2:8 Ga 5:13

"opportunity" (elsewhere often translated as "grace") is used three times in 2 Corinthians 8 in reference to the collection for Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:6, 7, 19).

1:17-22 Theological support for Paul's defense of his ministry: The faithfulness of Paul and his message are rooted in the faithfulness of God and of God's Son.

1:19 *Silvanus* is the Latin name of a man called "Silas" in Acts (for Silvanus, see 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Pet 5:12; for Silas, see Acts 15-18). Silvanus/Silas accompanied Paul on the missionary journeys described in Acts 15:40-18:5. For Timothy, see 2 Corinthians 1:1.

1:22 *Spirit as a down payment*: God has established, anointed, and sealed Paul and the Corinthians in Christ and given them the Spirit as a down payment (i.e., a sign that the Spirit is the first installment of what God will give to believers at the resurrection). See 2 Corinthians 5:5; see note on 2 Corinthians 5:1.

1:23-2:2 After a brief digression (2 Cor 1:17-22), Paul returns to the narration of recent events between him and the Corinthians. After leaving Corinth for Macedonia, Paul decided to change his plans and not make another visit to the Corinthians (see 2 Cor 1:15-16).

2:3-13 Instead of returning to Corinth, Paul went to Troas, where he wrote the Corinthians a letter marked with tears and a troubled and anxious heart (2:3-4). Later he'll admit the letter caused the Corinthians sorrow as well (2 Cor 7:8). The letter seems to have dealt with the actions

of someone who offended Paul during his recent visit to Corinth and whom Paul wants the Corinthians to forgive (2 Cor 2:5-11; 7:12). Unfortunately, we no longer have this "letter of tears."

2:7 *to forgive and to comfort*: Paul was in favor of communal discipline among his congregations but often with the accompanying hope of restoration (see 1 Cor 5:1-5).

2:11 *Satan*: originally a Hebrew word that means "adversary" or "accuser." In the OT the noun "satan" can refer to adversaries who are either humans (1 Sam 29:4; 2 Sam 19:22; 1 Kgs 5:4; Pss 71:13; 109) or divine beings (Num 22:22, 32; 1 Chron 21:1; Job 1-2; Zech 3:1-2). In the NT Satan is an enemy of God and God's people. Satan is also called "the tempter" (Matt 4:3; 1 Thess 3:5); "this world's ruler" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11); "the god of this age" (2 Cor 4:4); and "the devil" (Matt 4:1-11; Rev 12:9; 20:2).

2:12 *Troas*: the city where Paul came to preach the gospel (perhaps following a brief stay in Ephesus) after the conflict in Corinth. Troas was an important commercial hub near the coast of the Aegean Sea in northwest Asia Minor. It was in Troas that Paul received a vision to extend his missionary activity from Asia Minor into Macedonia (Acts 16:7-12).

2:13 *Titus* was a Gentile convert and a valued missionary associate of Paul (see Gal 2:1-10). Paul gave Titus the difficult task of visiting Corinth, most probably to deliver the "letter of tears" mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4, in the

2:14 Song 1:3;  
1Co 15:57;  
2Co 9:15;  
Eph 5:2;  
Phi 4:18

2:15 1Co 1:18;  
Eph 5:2

2:16 Lk 2:34;  
In 9:39; 2Co 3:5;  
2Co 3:6

2:17 2Co 1:12;  
2Co 4:2;  
2Co 12:19;  
1Pi 4:11

3:1 Ac 18:27;  
1Co 16:3;  
2Co 5:12;  
2Co 10:12;  
2Co 12:11

3:2 1Co 9:2

3:3 Ex 24:12;  
Prr 3:3; Prr 7:3;  
1r 31:33;  
Mt 16:16

3:4 Eph 3:12

3:5 1Co 15:10;  
2Co 2:16

3:6 1r 13:1;  
Lk 22:20; In 6:63;  
Ro 7:6; 1Co 3:5

3:7 Ex 34:29;  
2Co 3:9;  
2Co 3:13

3:8 Is 11:2;  
Is 44:3; Is 59:21;  
Jl 2:28; Jl 2:29

3:9 Dt 27:26;  
Ro 1:17; Ro 3:21;  
2Co 3:7;  
Heb 12:18

3:10 Hg 2:3;  
Hg 2:7; 2Co 3:9

<sup>14</sup>But thank God, who is always leading us around through Christ as if we were in a parade. He releases the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere through us. <sup>15</sup>We smell like the aroma of Christ's offering to God, both to those who are being saved and to those who are on the road to destruction. <sup>16</sup>We smell like a contagious dead person to those who are dying, but we smell like the fountain of life to those who are being saved.

Who is qualified for this kind of ministry? <sup>17</sup>We aren't like so many people who hustle the word of God to make a profit. We are speaking through Christ in the presence of God, as those who are sincere and as those who are sent from God.

**3** Are we starting to commend ourselves again? We don't need letters of introduction to you or from you like other people, do we? <sup>2</sup>You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. <sup>3</sup>You show that you are Christ's letter, delivered by us. You weren't written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. You weren't written on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

<sup>4</sup>This is the confidence that we have through Christ in the presence of God. <sup>5</sup>It isn't that we ourselves are qualified to claim that anything came from us. No, our qualification is from God. <sup>6</sup>He has qualified us as ministers of a new covenant, not based on what is written but on the Spirit, because what is written kills, but the Spirit gives life.

### *Ministers of the new covenant*

<sup>7</sup>The ministry that brought death was carved in letters on stone tablets. It came with such glory that the Israelites couldn't look for long at Moses' face because his face was shining with glory, even though it was a fading glory. <sup>8</sup>Won't the ministry of the Spirit be much more glorious? <sup>9</sup>If the ministry that brought condemnation has glory, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness? <sup>10</sup>In fact, what was glorious isn't glorious now, because of the glory that is brighter. <sup>11</sup>If the glory that fades away was glorious, how much more glorious is the one that lasts!

<sup>12</sup>So, since we have such a hope, we act with great confidence. <sup>13</sup>We aren't like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the Israelites couldn't watch the end of what was fading away. <sup>14</sup>But their minds were closed. Right up to the present day the same veil remains

3:13 Ex 34:33; 2Co 3:7 3:14 Ac 13:15; Ro 11:7; Ro 11:25; 2Co 3:6, 2Co 4:4

wake of Paul's painful visit there (2 Cor 7:5-16). After reuniting with Paul in Macedonia, Titus was sent back to Corinth to help with the collection for Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:6, 16-18; see sidebar, "The Collection for Jerusalem" at 2 Cor 8). Later Titus served the Pauline mission on the island of Crete (see Titus 1:5). Titus was a trusted companion, and Paul refers to him as his "partner and coworker" (2 Cor 8:23) and "my true child in a common faith" (Titus 1:4). *Macedonia*: a Roman province in the northern part of Greece.

2:14-3:6 This passage opens a long section in which Paul defends his understanding of his apostolic calling and ministry (2 Cor 2:14-7:4). He opens with a summary of his sacrificial ministry (2:14-17) and then reminds the Corinthians, who know his work firsthand (3:1-3), that his qualification comes from God (3:4-6).

2:14 *parade*: a triumphal parade of military victory led by a Roman general or emperor. The unusual aspect of this image is that Paul and his fellow apostles aren't the conquerors but the captives. In this image, God is the victorious power who leads Paul and his associates as captives.

2:15 *offering*: Drawing on OT references that speak of the pleasing smell of burned sacrificial offerings (Gen 8:21; Exod 29:18, 25, 41; Lev 1:2-17; Num 28:1-6), Paul pictures himself and his associates as sweet-smelling offerings. To those who are dying, they smell like death; but to those who are being saved, they smell like life (2 Cor 2:15-16).

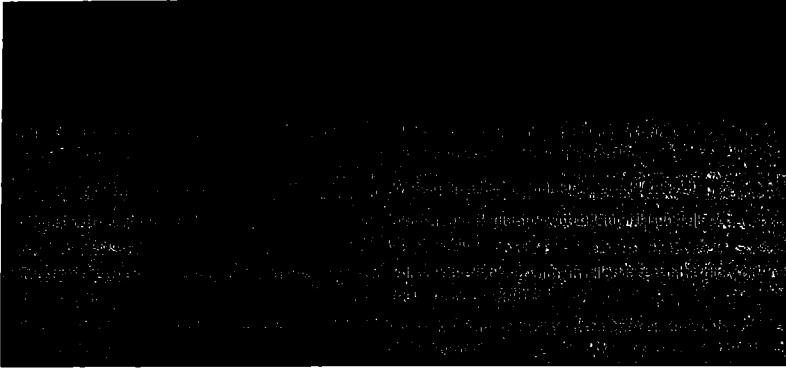
2:17 *We aren't like so many... profit*: Paul indirectly critiques his opponents in Corinth and anticipates several defenses of his own financial practices that he'll make later in the letter (2 Cor 8:19-24; 11:7-9; 12:14-18).

3:1-6 Careful at this point to avoid the charge that he's boastfully commending himself (cf. 2 Cor 5:12; 6:4; 10:12). Paul reminds the Corinthians he doesn't need letters of commendation. The Corinthians themselves are that letter (3:1-3). The statement that the Corinthians are a human letter from Christ leads Paul to reflect on the distinction between writing in ink on stone, on the one hand, and writing by the Spirit on human hearts, on the other (3:3). Paul recalls God's writing of the Mosaic Law on stone tablets (Exod 24:12; 31:18; 34:1-5; Deut 4:13; 5:22; 9:9-11; 1 Kgs 8:9). The reference to writing with the *Spirit of the living God* on human hearts recalls Ezekiel 11:19.

3:6 *new covenant*: The concept of a new covenant written on human hearts is taken from Jeremiah 31:31-34. In the NT the language of "new covenant" is used by Jesus (Luke 22:20); Paul (1 Cor 11:25); and the author of Hebrews (Heb 8:8; 13; 9:15; 12:24). According to Paul, this new covenant isn't based on *what is written* ("letters on stone tablets," 2 Cor 3:7) but on God's life-giving Spirit. *the Spirit gives life*: recalls Ezekiel 37, which speaks of God's Spirit bringing life to a valley full of dry bones (especially Ezek 37:5-6, 14).

3:7-18 This section contrasts the ministries of Moses and Paul (see sidebar, "Moses and Paul"). The first part (3:7-11) compares the temporary glory of the one with the lasting glory of the other. The second part (3:12-18) comments on Exodus 34:33-35, a passage that describes Moses' practice of veiling his face when speaking with the Israelites. With this commentary Paul shows his actions aren't hidden but are clear to everyone (the phrase *great confidence* in 3:12 could also be translated as "frank





3:15 Ac 13:27  
 3:16 Ex 34:34;  
 Is 25:7; Ro 11:23  
 3:17 Is 61:1;  
 Jn 8:32; Ga 4:6,  
 Ga 5:13  
 3:18 Jn 17:22;  
 Ro 8:29;  
 1Co 13:12;  
 2Co 4:4, 2Co 4:6  
 4:1 1Co 7:25;  
 2Co 3:6,  
 2Co 4:16,  
 2Co 5:18  
 4:2 Ro 6:21;  
 1Co 4:5,  
 2Co 2:17,  
 2Co 5:11  
 4:3 1Co 1:18;  
 2Co 2:12,  
 2Co 2:15,  
 2Co 3:14,  
 2Co 4:4  
 4:4 Jn 12:31;  
 2Co 3:14,  
 2Co 4:6,  
 Col 1:15; Heb 1:3  
 4:5 1Co 1:13,  
 1Co 1:23,  
 1Co 9:19  
 4:6 Gn 1:3;  
 Jn 8:12; 2Co 4:4;  
 2Pt 1:19  
 4:7 Jgs 7:2;  
 Job 4:19,  
 Job 10:9,  
 2Co 5:1;  
 2Ti 2:20  
 4:8 2Co 1:8,  
 2Co 7:5  
 4:9 Ps 37:24;  
 Prv 24:16;  
 Jn 15:20;  
 Heb 13:5  
 4:10 Ro 6:5;  
 Ga 6:7  
 4:11 Ps 141:7;  
 Mt 16:21,  
 Mt 17:22;  
 Ro 8:11, Ro 8:36

when the old covenant is read. The veil is not removed because it is taken away by Christ. <sup>15</sup>Even today, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. <sup>16</sup>But whenever someone turns back to the Lord, the veil is removed. <sup>17</sup>The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Lord's Spirit is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup>All of us are looking with unveiled faces at the glory of the Lord as if we were looking in a mirror. We are being transformed into that same image from one degree of glory to the next degree of glory. This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

**4** This is why we don't get discouraged, given that we received this ministry in the same way that we received God's mercy. <sup>2</sup>Instead, we reject secrecy and shameful actions. We don't use deception, and we don't tamper with God's word. Instead, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God by the public announcement of the truth. <sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are on the road to destruction. <sup>4</sup>The god of this age has blinded the minds of those who don't have faith so they couldn't see the light of the gospel that reveals Christ's glory. Christ is the image of God.

<sup>5</sup>We don't preach about ourselves. Instead, we preach about Jesus Christ as Lord, and we describe ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>God said that light should shine out of the darkness. He is the same one who shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

#### *Physical bodies and eternal glory*

<sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in clay pots so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn't come from us. <sup>8</sup>We are experiencing all kinds of trouble, but we aren't crushed. We are confused, but we aren't depressed. <sup>9</sup>We are harassed, but we aren't abandoned. We are knocked down, but we aren't knocked out.

<sup>10</sup>We always carry Jesus' death around in our bodies so that Jesus' life can also be seen in our bodies. <sup>11</sup>We who are alive are always being handed over to death for Jesus' sake so that

openness"; cf. 2 Cor 4:2). He also shows that the Spirit brings freedom and transformation for those who turn to the Lord, both in the act of reading the OT (3:16-17) and in all of life (3:18).

**3:16-17 turns back to the Lord... The Lord is the Spirit:** If the Lord of 2 Corinthians 3:16 to whom individuals turn is the risen Jesus, then Paul appears to be drawing a very close connection between Christ and the Holy Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3:17. This connection may lie in their shared role in bringing about redemption (cf. Gal 4:6; Rom 8:9-11; Phil 1:19). Paul often distinguishes clearly between the risen Jesus and the Spirit of God (see, e.g., Rom 1:4; 1 Cor 6:11; 12:3-6; 2 Cor 13:13). Perhaps, then, 2 Corinthians 3:17 clarifies Paul's interpretation of Exodus in 2 Corinthians 3:16: "the Lord" in Exodus 34:34 (i.e., the Lord to whom individuals return) is the same Spirit whose presence brings freedom to Paul's readers.

**3:18 transformed into that same image:** Believers not only clearly see the glory of the Lord, but their gaze is as if it's

fixed upon a mirror because they see and share in that glory as they are transformed into that same image (see Rom 6:3-8; 8:16-29; Gal 2:19-20; as well as many of the 83 instances of the phrase "in Christ" in Paul's letters).

**4:1-6** Having compared his ministry with that of Moses (2 Cor 3:7-18; see sidebar, "Moses and Paul"), Paul now returns to the defense of his apostolic ministry. His defense highlights the divine approval of his mission (4:1) and the honest and public nature of his behavior (4:2).

**4:4 The god of this age:** Satan (see 2 Cor 2:11; cf. Rom 16:20; 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11; 6:15; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thess 2:18; 2 Thess 2:9; 1 Tim 1:20; 5:15).

**4:7-12** Three times in the letter Paul lists the hardships he's experienced in the course of his apostolic ministry (2 Cor 4:8-10; 6:4-10; 11:22-33; see 2 Cor 1:5). Here Paul emphasizes that his own sufferings bear witness to his union with the crucified Jesus.

**4:7 clay pots:** The treasure of the gospel message (or of the knowledge of God's glory) is held within the inferior vessel

4:12 2Co 13:9

4:13 Ps 116:10;  
1Co 12:94:14 Ac 2:24;  
1Th 4:14;  
Jud 1:244:15 Ro 8:28;  
2Co 1:11,  
2Co 9:114:16 Is 40:31;  
Ro 7:22; 2Co 4:1;  
Col 3:104:17 Ps 30:5;  
Ro 8:18; 1Pt 1:64:18 Ro 8:24;  
2Co 5:7;  
Heb 11:15:1 Job 4:19;  
Job 19:25;  
2Co 4:7;  
Heb 11:10;  
2Pt 1:135:2 Ro 8:23;  
1Co 15:53;  
1Co 15:54;  
2Co 5:45:3 Rev 3:18;  
Rev 16:155:4 1Co 15:53;  
1Co 15:54;  
2Co 5:25:5 Ro 8:23;  
2Co 1:22;  
Eph 1:14

5:6 2Co 5:8

5:7 1Co 13:12;  
2Co 4:185:8 Jn 12:26;  
Phi 1:235:9 Col 1:10;  
1Th 4:15:10 Mt 16:27;  
Mt 25:31;  
Ac 10:42;  
Ro 2:16;  
Ro 14:10

Jesus' life can also be seen in our bodies that are dying. <sup>12</sup>So death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

<sup>13</sup>We have the same faithful spirit as what is written in scripture: *I had faith, and so I spoke.*<sup>a</sup> We also have faith, and so we also speak. <sup>14</sup>We do this because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus, and he will bring us into his presence along with you. <sup>15</sup>All these things are for your benefit. As grace increases to benefit more and more people, it will cause gratitude to increase, which results in God's glory.

<sup>16</sup>So we aren't depressed. But even if our bodies are breaking down on the outside, the person that we are on the inside is being renewed every day. <sup>17</sup>Our temporary minor problems are producing an eternal stockpile of glory for us that is beyond all comparison. <sup>18</sup>We don't focus on the things that can be seen but on the things that can't be seen. The things that can be seen don't last, but the things that can't be seen are eternal.

**5** We know that if the tent that we live in on earth is torn down, we have a building from God. <sup>1</sup>It's a house that isn't handmade, which is eternal and located in heaven. <sup>2</sup>We groan while we live in this residence. We really want to dress ourselves with our building from heaven—<sup>3</sup>since we assume that when we take off this tent, we won't find out that we are naked. <sup>4</sup>Yes, while we are in this tent we groan, because we are weighed down. We want to be dressed not undressed, so that what is dying can be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup>Now the one who prepared us for this very thing is God, and God gave us the Spirit as a down payment for our home.

<sup>6</sup>So we are always confident, because we know that while we are living in the body, we are away from our home with the Lord. <sup>7</sup>We live by faith and not by sight. <sup>8</sup>We are confident, and we would prefer to leave the body and to be at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup>So our goal is to be acceptable to him, whether we are at home or away from home. <sup>10</sup>We all must appear before Christ in court so that each person can be paid back for the things that were done while in the body, whether they were good or bad.

### Ministry of reconciliation

<sup>11</sup>So we try to persuade people, since we know what it means to fear the Lord. We are well known by God, and I hope that in your heart we are well known by you as well. <sup>12</sup>We aren't trying to commend ourselves to you again. Instead, we are giving you an opportunity to be proud of us so that you could answer those who take pride in superficial appearance, and not in what is in the heart.

<sup>a</sup>Ps 116:10 (115:1 LXX)

5:11 2Co 4:2; Heb 10:31; Jud 1:23 5:12 2Co 1:14, 2Co 3:1

of Paul's weak body. His inglorious body is compared to an earthenware pot, an image that stresses the fragility and brokenness of the afflicted apostle. Yet though Paul and his associates possess no outward splendor, their bodies contain "the light of the gospel that reveals Christ's glory" (2 Cor 4:4).

**4:13–18** Continuing the link between himself and Jesus, Paul quotes Psalm 116:10 (LXX 115:1): *I had faith, and so I spoke* (4:13). It's likely that Paul understands Jesus as the speaker of this psalm. This interpretation fits with other references in the Pauline Letters to Jesus' own faith (or faithfulness) or trusting obedience, particularly during his crucifixion (see Gal 2:16; 3:22; Rom 3:22; 5:19; Phil 2:6–11; 3:9; 2 Tim 3:15; cf. Mark 14:34–36). Paul and his associates possess the same faithful spirit as Jesus (this is attested by Jesus in the psalm), and so they, too, speak, confident they'll share in Jesus' resurrection.

**4:16–5:10** Throughout this section Paul contrasts the passing nature of earthly existence with the permanent nature of resurrection existence. His discussion of his suffering for Jesus' sake and his expression of hope that he and the Corinthians will share in Jesus' resurrection lead him to reflect on the weakness and the future of the body of Christians. Framing his present apostolic suffering in an

eternal perspective (4:17–18), Paul reflects on the nature of life beyond death for those in Christ (5:1–10).

**5:1 if the tent . . . we have a building from God:** This may be a reference to the resurrection body of Christ (or to a heavenly temple, see Mark 14:58). But more likely it refers to the resurrected body of believers (see 1 Cor 15:35–58). *we have:* refers to a future reality. Those in Christ will inhabit this heavenly house (i.e., a spiritual body) after the return of Jesus, as Paul also indicates in 1 Corinthians 15.

**5:5 Spirit as a down payment:** The Spirit is the first installment, as the guaranty, of what God will give to Christians at the resurrection. See the same expression in 2 Corinthians 1:22.

**5:10 We all must appear before Christ:** The notion of a future judgment of believers according to deeds occurs here and in several other places in Paul's letters (see Rom 2:6–16; 14:10–12; 1 Cor 3:13–15; 4:1–5; 2 Cor 11:15; Col 3:22–25; cf. 1 Cor 6:2–3 for the idea that believers will judge the world and angels).

**5:11–6:10** Paul moves toward the conclusion of the discussion of his apostolic ministry by describing his work as that of an ambassador who represents Christ. Opening with another brief defense of his actions (5:11–13), Paul turns to a summary of the good news, highlighting two points. First,

<sup>13</sup>If we are crazy, it's for God's sake. If we are rational, it's for your sake. <sup>14</sup>The love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: one died for the sake of all; therefore, all died. <sup>15</sup>He died for the sake of all so that those who are alive should live not for themselves but for the one who died for them and was raised.

<sup>16</sup>So then, from this point on we won't recognize people by human standards. Even though we used to know Christ by human standards, that isn't how we know him now. <sup>17</sup>So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!

<sup>18</sup>All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. <sup>19</sup>In other words, God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, by not counting people's sins against them. He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation.

<sup>20</sup>So we are ambassadors who represent Christ. God is negotiating with you through us. We beg you as Christ's representatives, "Be reconciled to God!" <sup>21</sup>God caused the one who didn't know sin to be sin for our sake so that through him we could become the righteousness of God. <sup>1</sup>Since we work together with him, we are also begging you not to receive the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>He says, *I listened to you at the right time, and I helped you on the day of salvation.* <sup>b</sup>Look, now is the right time! Look, now is the day of salvation!

<sup>3</sup>We don't give anyone any reason to be offended about anything so that our ministry won't be criticized. <sup>4</sup>Instead, we commend ourselves as ministers of God in every way. We did this with our great endurance through problems, disasters, and stressful situations. <sup>5</sup>We went through beatings, imprisonments, and riots. We experienced hard work, sleepless nights, and hunger. <sup>6</sup>We displayed purity, knowledge, patience, and generosity. We served with the Holy Spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup>telling the truth, and God's power. We carried the weapons of righteousness in our right hand and our left hand. <sup>8</sup>We were treated with honor and dishonor and with verbal abuse and good evaluation. We were seen as both fake and real, <sup>9</sup>as unknown and well known, as dying—and look, we are alive! We were seen as punished but not killed, <sup>10</sup>as going through pain but always happy, as poor but making many rich, and as having nothing but owning everything.

### Call to relationship and holiness

<sup>11</sup>Corinthians, we have spoken openly to you, and our hearts are wide open. <sup>12</sup>There are no limits to the affection that we feel for you. You are the ones who placed boundaries on your affection for us. <sup>13</sup>But as a fair trade—I'm talking to you like you are children—open your hearts wide too.

<sup>b</sup>Isa 49:8

6:7 Ro 13:12; 1Co 2:5; 2Co 4:2; 2Co 10:4; Eph 6:11; 6:18 Mt 27:63; Ro 3:8; 1Co 4:10; 1Co 4:13; 6:9 Ro 8:36; 2Co 1:8; 2Co 4:10; 2Co 4:11; 6:10 Jn 16:22; Ac 3:6; 2Co 7:4; 2Co 8:9; Phi 4:4; 6:11 Ps 119:32; 2Co 7:3; 6:12 2Co 7:2; 6:13 1Co 4:14; Ga 4:12

Christ's death for all people has resulted in a new creation for those in Christ (5:14-17). Second, God's reconciliation with sinners through Christ has resulted in the ministry of Paul and his colleagues, as they represent Christ in bringing people into reconciled relationships with God (5:18-21). The next section (6:1-10) contains a charge for the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain (6:1-2) and an additional defense of Paul's ministry (6:3-10), including the second of three lists of the hardships Paul endured during the course of his mission (6:4-10; cf. 2 Cor 4:8-10; 11:22-33; see 2 Cor 1:5).

**5:17 if anyone is in Christ... new creation:** The new reality created for those united to Christ in faith is individual, communal, and cosmic. The language of "new creation" reflects passages in Isaiah that speak of the "new things" God will do in restoring Israel (Isa 42:9; 43:18-19; 48:6; 65:17-18) and in renewing the entire created order (Isa 65:17; cf. 2 Pet 3:13). Here and in Galatians 6:15, Paul's language of "new creation" emphasizes the transformation of the individual and the believing community (see Eph 2:15; 4:22-24). Elsewhere Paul anticipates the renewal of all creation (Rom 8:18-25).

**5:18 ministry of reconciliation:** the restoration of friendly relations among those who've been divided. It's an important image that Paul uses to describe God's saving activity (see Rom 5:1-11; 11:13-16; Col 1:20-22), including the end of hostility among Jews and Gentiles as the result of the good news of peace (Eph 2:11-22). The image is both vertical (i.e., restored relations between God and sinners) and horizontal (i.e., restored relations among humans).

**5:21 God caused... the righteousness of God:** This densely packed statement describes a divine interchange whereby the sinless Christ assumes the human condition so that sinful humans might become the righteousness of God. In the words of the 2nd-century bishop Irenaeus, "Christ became what we are, in order that we might become what he is." For this idea of interchange in Paul's letters, see also 2 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 3:13-14; Romans 8:3-4.

**6:2 I listened to you:** a quotation of Isaiah 49:8. Paul believes the *day of salvation* spoken of by Isaiah has arrived in Christ.

**6:11-7:4** Paul draws the defense of his ministry to a conclusion with a personal appeal, reminding the Corinthians of the fatherly role he's played in their lives

5:13 2Co 11:1.

2Co 11:16,  
2Co 11:17,  
2Co 12:11

5:14 Ro 5:15;  
Col 3:3

5:15 Ro 6:11.  
Ro 14:7

5:16 Mt 1:1;  
2Co 11:18;  
Phi 3:7; Phi 3:8;  
1Ti 5:21

5:17 Is 65:17;  
Jn 3:3; Ro 6:4,  
Ro 16:7; Ga 6:15

5:18 Ro 5:10.  
Ro 5:11;  
2Co 5:19;  
Col 1:20;  
Heb 2:17

5:19 Ro 4:8;  
2Co 5:18

5:20 Mal 2:7;  
2Co 6:1; Eph 6:20

5:21 Ro 1:17;  
1Co 1:30;  
Heb 7:26;

1Pt 2:22; 1Jn 3:5

6:1 1Co 3:9;  
2Co 5:20

6:2 Ps 69:13,  
Ps 95:7; Is 49:8,  
Is 55:6; Lk 4:19

6:3 1Co 8:9,  
1Co 8:13,  
1Co 9:12,  
1Co 10:32,  
1Co 10:33

6:4 1Co 3:5,  
2Co 11:23,  
2Co 12:10,  
2Co 12:12;  
2Ti 2:24

6:5 Ac 16:23;  
1Co 4:11;  
2Co 11:23

6:6 Ro 12:9;  
1Co 2:4;  
2Co 11:6;  
1Th 1:5

6:14 Dt 7:3;  
1Co 5:9; Eph 5:7;  
Eph 5:11; 1In 1:6

6:15 1Co 10:21

6:16 Ex 29:45;

Lv 26:12;

Eze 37:27;

1Co 3:16;

1Co 6:19

6:17 Is 52:11;

Eze 20:41;

Rev 18:4

6:18 2Sa 7:14;

Hos 1:10;

Ro 8:14

7:1 1Jn 3:3

7:2 Ac 20:33

7:3 2Co 6:11;

Phi 1:7

7:4 2Co 1:4;

2Co 6:10;

2Co 8:24

7:5 Dt 32:25;

2Co 2:13;

2Co 4:8

7:6 2Co 1:3;

2Co 1:4;

2Co 2:13;

2Co 7:13

7:7 Ps 126:5;

Ps 126:6;

Ro 1:12;

2Co 1:14; Col 2:5

7:8 2Co 2:2;

2Co 2:4

7:9 Ps 38:18;

Jer 31:18;

Lk 15:7;

Lk 15:17;

2Co 7:10

7:10 Ac 11:18

7:11 2Co 2:6;

2Co 7:7

7:13 Ro 15:32;

1Co 16:18;

2Co 2:13;

2Co 7:6;

2Co 7:14

<sup>14</sup>Don't be tied up as equal partners with people who don't believe. What does righteousness share with that which is outside the Law? What relationship does light have with darkness? <sup>15</sup>What harmony does Christ have with Satan?<sup>c</sup> What does a believer have in common with someone who doesn't believe? <sup>16</sup>What agreement can there be between God's temple and idols? Because we are the temple of the living God. Just as God said, *I live with them, and I will move among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*<sup>d</sup> <sup>17</sup>Therefore, *come out from among them and be separated, says the Lord. Don't touch what is unclean. Then I will welcome you.*<sup>e</sup> <sup>18</sup>*I will be a father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord*

**7** *Almighty.*<sup>f</sup> <sup>1</sup>My dear friends, since we have these promises, let's cleanse ourselves from anything that contaminates our body or spirit so that we make our holiness complete in the fear of God.

<sup>2</sup>Make room in your hearts for us. We didn't do anything wrong to anyone. We didn't ruin anyone. We didn't take advantage of anyone. <sup>3</sup>I'm not saying this to make you feel guilty. I've already said that you are in our hearts so that we die and live together with you. <sup>4</sup>I have every confidence in you. I'm terribly proud of you. I'm filled with encouragement. I'm overwhelmed with happiness while in the middle of our problems.

### Titus' good report

<sup>5</sup>Even after we arrived in Macedonia, we couldn't rest physically. We were surrounded by problems. There was external conflict, and there were internal fears. <sup>6</sup>However, God comforts people who are discouraged, and he comforted us by Titus' arrival. <sup>7</sup>We weren't comforted only by his arrival but also by the comfort he had received from you. He told us about your desire to see me, how you were sorry, and about your concern for me, so that I was even happier.

<sup>8</sup>Even though my letter hurt you, I don't regret it. Well—I did regret it just a bit because I see that that letter made you sad, though only for a short time. <sup>9</sup>Now I'm glad—not because you were sad but because you were made sad enough to change your hearts and lives. You felt godly sadness so that no one was harmed by us in any way. <sup>10</sup>Godly sadness produces a changed heart and life that leads to salvation and leaves no regrets, but sorrow under the influence of the world produces death. <sup>11</sup>Look at what this very experience of godly sadness has produced in you: such enthusiasm, what a desire to clear yourselves of blame, such indignation, what fear, what purpose, such concern, what justice! In everything you have shown yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

<sup>12</sup>So although I wrote to you, it wasn't for the sake of the one who did wrong, or for the sake of the one who was wronged, but to show you your own enthusiasm for us in the sight of God. <sup>13</sup>Because of this we have been encouraged. And in addition to our own encouragement, we were even more pleased at how happy Titus was. His mind has been put at rest by

<sup>c</sup>Or *Beliah* <sup>d</sup>Lev 26:11-12 <sup>e</sup>Isa 52:11; Ezek 20:34, 41 <sup>f</sup>2 Sam 7:14

(6:11-13; see 1 Cor 4:14-15; 1 Thess 2:11; for instances of motherly imagery used to describe Paul's relationship with his churches, see Gal 4:19; 1 Thess 2:7; 1 Cor 3:1-2). Since 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 seems to interrupt the flow of thought from 2 Corinthians 6:13 to 2 Corinthians 7:2, some scholars suggest, though there's no actual manuscript evidence for it, that Paul or someone else must have inserted the section sometime later. However, the ethical encouragement and call to holiness in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 may simply function as a short detour for reminding the Corinthians not to be closely aligned with the values of pagan society.

**6:16** *Just as God said:* Paul puts together several different OT texts in 2 Corinthians 6:16-18: Leviticus 26:11-12 (see Ezek 37:27); Isaiah 52:11 (see LXX Ezek 20:34, 41); 2 Samuel 7:14 (see Isa 43:6). He alters the wording of these passages to show their significance to the believers in Corinth.

**7:2-4** Paul ends his extended defense of his apostolic

ministry with an appeal (7:2a); a summary of his appropriate actions (7:2b); a reminder of the close bond he shares with the Corinthians (7:3); and an expression of hope and encouragement (7:4).

**7:5-16** After a long digression to defend his apostolic ministry (2 Cor 2:14-7:4), Paul returns to the narration of the events related to his change of travel plans that caused the conflict with the Corinthians. He begins this section by describing the physical and emotional sufferings he experienced in Macedonia (7:5). He then reports how the positive news about the Corinthian believers, which Titus had brought back to him, comforted and delighted him. The Corinthians' change of heart seems to have been aroused by the tearful letter Paul sent them after his difficult visit to Corinth (7:8, 12; see 2 Cor 2:3-4). For Titus, see note on 2 Corinthians 2:13.

**7:12** *the one who did wrong:* Paul never mentions the name of this person. Earlier, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to forgive this person (2 Cor 2:5-8).

all of you. <sup>14</sup>If I've bragged about you to him in any way, I haven't been embarrassed. Instead, our bragging to Titus has also been proven to be true, just like everything we said to you was true. <sup>15</sup>His devotion to you is growing even more as he remembers how all of you were obedient when you welcomed him with fear and trembling. <sup>16</sup>I'm happy, because I can completely depend on you.

**Encouragement to give generously**

**O** Brothers and sisters, we want to let you know about the grace of God that was given to the churches of Macedonia. <sup>2</sup>While they were being tested by many problems, their extra amount of happiness and their extreme poverty resulted in a surplus of rich generosity. <sup>3</sup>I assure you that they gave what they could afford and even more than they could afford, and they did it voluntarily. <sup>4</sup>They urgently begged us for the privilege<sup>6</sup> of sharing in this service for the saints. <sup>5</sup>They even exceeded our expectations, because they gave themselves to the Lord first and to us, consistent with God's will. <sup>6</sup>As a result, we challenged Titus to finish this work of grace with you the way he had started it.

<sup>7</sup>Be the best in this work of grace in the same way that you are the best in everything, such as faith, speech, knowledge, total commitment, and the love we inspired in you. <sup>8</sup>I'm not giving an order, but by mentioning the commitment of others, I'm trying to prove the authenticity of your love also. <sup>9</sup>You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Although he was rich, he became poor for our sakes, so that you could become rich through his poverty.

<sup>10</sup>I'm giving you my opinion about this. It's to your advantage to do this, since you not only started to do it last year but you wanted to do it too. <sup>11</sup>Now finish the job as well so that you finish it with as much enthusiasm as you started, given what you can afford. <sup>12</sup>A gift is appreciated because of what a person can afford, not because of what that person can't afford, if it's apparent that it's done willingly. <sup>13</sup>It isn't that we want others to have financial ease and you financial difficulties, but it's a matter of equality. <sup>14</sup>At the present moment, your surplus can fill their deficit so that in the future their surplus can fill your deficit. In this way there is equality. <sup>15</sup>As it is written, *The one who gathered more didn't have too much, and the one who gathered less didn't have too little.*<sup>b</sup>

7:15 1Co 2:3;  
2Co 2:9,  
2Co 10:6;  
Phi 2:12  
8:1 Ac 16:9;  
Ro 15:26  
8:2 2Co 9:11  
8:3 1Co 16:2;  
2Co 8:11  
8:4 Ac 24:17;  
Ro 15:25;  
2Co 9:1  
8:5 Ro 6:13;  
Ro 12:1; 1Co 1:1;  
2Co 8:1  
8:6 2Co 2:13,  
2Co 7:13,  
2Co 8:16,  
2Co 8:17,  
2Co 12:18  
8:7 Ro 15:14;  
1Co 1:5; 2Co 9:8  
8:8 Ro 12:9;  
1Co 7:6;  
2Co 8:24;  
1Pt 1:22  
8:9 Mt 20:28;  
2Co 6:10,  
2Co 13:14;  
Phi 2:6  
8:10 1Co 7:25,  
1Co 7:40;  
2Co 9:2  
8:11 2Co 8:12  
8:12 Mk 12:43;  
2Co 9:7  
8:14 Ac 4:34;  
2Co 9:12  
8:15 Ex 16:18

<sup>6</sup>Or *grace* <sup>b</sup>Exod 16:18

8:1-9:15 Having defended his ministry and expressed happiness about his restored relations with the Corinthians, Paul urges the Corinthians to contribute to a relief fund for poor believers in Jerusalem (see 1 Cor 16:1-4; Rom 15:22-33; see sidebar, "The Collection for Jerusalem").

8:1-6 Paul begins his appeal for the relief fund by pointing to the example of the churches in the Roman province of Macedonia, a group that likely included the congregations Paul founded in Berea, Thessalonica, and Philippi (see Phil 4:10-20). He emphasizes *the grace of God* shown in the generosity of the Macedonians. The Greek word translated as "grace" in 2 Corinthians 8:1 is used with a variety of meanings in 2 Corinthians 8-9: "grace" (2 Cor 8:1, 9; 9:8, 14); "privilege" (8:4); "work of grace" (or "benefit"; 2 Cor 8:6, 7, 19); "thank" (or "thank God"; 2 Cor 8:16; 9:15). The implied challenge to the letter's readers is clear: Because the Macedonians showed generosity in the midst of *extreme poverty*, the Corinthians have no excuse not to contribute from "their surplus" (2 Cor 8:14). Paul notes that Titus has been sent to Corinth to see to the completion of a *work of grace* the Corinthians had stopped (see 1 Cor 16:1-4).

8:2 *extreme poverty*: Although the financial position of the Corinthians (or at least some of them) appears to have been relatively more secure than that of the believers in Jerusalem and Macedonia, many of the Corinthians lived subsistence-level lives (i.e., with enough resources to obtain the minimum number of daily calories for survival) (see 1 Cor 12:26-28; 11:17-34, especially the reference to

"those who have nothing" in 1 Cor 11:22). According to some estimates, more than 90 percent of the general population of the Roman Empire lived at, near, or below subsistence level.

8:7-12 Paul commends the Corinthians for their Spirit-empowered faith, speech, knowledge, total commitment, and love (see 1 Cor 12:8-9; 13:2, 8, 13; 14:6, 9). Wanting to be clear that he isn't issuing a command, Paul notes that he's *trying to prove* (or, perhaps, "testing") the sincerity of the Corinthians' love by mentioning the genuine eagerness of others (8:8). He then points to the example of Jesus (8:9). Throughout this section, Paul maintains a careful balance between getting the Corinthians to do what he wants them to do and insisting their participation is entirely voluntary.

8:9 *Although he was rich . . . his poverty*: Paul refers to Jesus' willingness to leave his heavenly state for the (comparable) poverty of human existence, a self-giving act that brought spiritual riches to the Corinthians. The belief that the preexistent, divine Christ took on human form is known as the "incarnation" (see Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; John 1:14).

8:13-15 Paul indicates that one goal of the collection for the saints was financial equality (see sidebar, "The Collection for Jerusalem"). *The one who gathered . . . too little*: Communities of Jesus-worshippers should have an equal balance of material goods, just as the Israelites in the wilderness did (Exod 16:18).

8:16 2Co 2:13,  
2Co 2:14,  
2Co 8:6;  
Rev 17:17

8:17 2Co 8:6

8:18 1Co 7:17,  
2Co 12:18

8:19 Ac 14:23;  
1Co 16:3,  
1Co 16:4;  
2Co 8:6

8:21 Ro 12:17,  
Ro 14:18,  
Phi 4:8; 1Pt 2:12

8:23 2Co 2:13;  
Phm 1:17

9:1 2Co 8:4,  
2Co 9:12;  
1Th 4:9

9:2 2Co 8:10,  
2Co 8:19

9:4 Ro 15:26

9:5 Gn 33:11;  
Phi 4:17

*The Collection for Jerusalem* The fund-raising effort called “the collection of money for God’s people” (1 Cor 16:1) had a complicated history, both in Corinth and in other churches of Paul’s mission. The Corinthians knew about the project before they received 1 Corinthians. In that letter Paul provided them with directions on how to gather funds, with the implication that he wasn’t introducing a new idea to them (1 Cor 16:1-4). The Corinthians were instructed to follow the example of the Galatians: “On the first day of the week, each of you should set aside whatever you can afford from what you earn so that the collection won’t be delayed until I come” (1 Cor 16:2). In the midst of the conflict between Paul and the Corinthians that resulted in the writing of 2 Corinthians, the believers in Corinth seem to have stopped their fund-raising efforts. Paul encourages them in 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15 to renew their support of the collection. It appears his appeal is successful, for in Romans 15:26, written as he was planning to depart Corinth for Jerusalem to deliver the money, Paul reports, “Macedonia and Achaia have been happy to make a contribution for the poor among God’s people in Jerusalem.”

Paul attaches a variety of meanings to the collection for the saints: (1) It will alleviate very real financial need among poor believers in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:13-15; Rom 15:26; see Gal 2:10); (2) it will create some degree of financial equality among followers of Jesus, especially since Corinthian contributors to the fund might someday find themselves in need of financial assistance from Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:14); (3) it will serve the goal of uniting the Gentile believers with Jewish followers of Jesus in Jerusalem and strengthening bonds among the geographically diverse Gentile churches of Paul’s mission (Rom 15:27); and (4) it will provide donors with the opportunity to offer worship to God and produce thanksgiving—not for themselves but for the God who has graciously enabled their generosity (2 Cor 9:5-15).

### Plans for the Collection

<sup>16</sup>But thank God, who put the same commitment that I have for you in Titus’ heart. <sup>17</sup>Not only has he accepted our challenge but he’s on his way to see you voluntarily, and he’s excited. <sup>18</sup>We are sending the brother who is famous in all the churches because of his work for the gospel along with him.

<sup>19</sup>In addition to this, he is chosen by the churches to be our traveling companion in this work of grace, which we are taking care of for the sake of the glory of the Lord himself, and to show our desire to help. <sup>20</sup>We are trying to avoid being blamed by anyone for the way we take care of this large amount of money. <sup>21</sup>We care about doing the right thing, not only in the Lord’s eyes but also in the eyes of other people.

<sup>22</sup>We are sending our brother with them. We have tested his commitment in many ways and many times. Now he’s even more committed, because he has so much confidence in you. <sup>23</sup>If there is any question about Titus, he is my partner and coworker among you. If there is any question about our brothers, they are the churches’ apostles and an honor to Christ. <sup>24</sup>So show them the proof of your love and the reason we are so proud of you, in such a way that the churches can see it.

**9** It’s unnecessary for me to write to you about this service for God’s people. <sup>2</sup>I know about your willingness to help. I brag about you to the Macedonians, saying, “Greece has been ready since last year,” and your enthusiasm has motivated most of them.

<sup>3</sup>But I’m sending the brothers so that our bragging about you in this case won’t be empty words, and so that you can be prepared, just as I keep telling them you will be. <sup>4</sup>If some Macedonians should come with me and find out that you aren’t ready, we (not to mention you) would be embarrassed as far as this project goes.

<sup>5</sup>This is why I thought it was necessary to encourage the brothers to go to you ahead of time and arrange in advance the generous gift you have already promised. I want it to be a real gift from you. I don’t want you to feel like you are being forced to give anything.

**8:16-24** This section includes Paul’s recommendation of three delegates—Titus (8:16, 23) and two unnamed brothers (8:18-19, 22-23)—whom the apostle sends to Corinth, along with this letter, in order to coordinate the fund-raising effort there. Letters and notes of commendation, such as this section functions as, were a common means of introducing and ensuring hospitality for travelers within the broad geographical networks of the early

Christian mission (see Acts 15:25-27; 18:27; Rom 16:1-2; 1 Cor 16:10-11; Eph 6:21-22; Phil 2:25-30; Col 4:7-10; Phlm 17-19; 3 John 5-7; for Paul’s figurative use of this convention, see 2 Cor 3:1-3).

**9:1-5** Having emphasized the generosity of the Macedonians (2 Cor 8:1-6), Paul now points out that he has been boasting in Macedonia of the Corinthians’ willingness to support the relief fund (2 Cor 9:1-2). The not-so-subtle

<sup>6</sup>What I mean is this: the one who sows a small number of seeds will also reap a small crop, and the one who sows a generous amount of seeds will also reap a generous crop.

<sup>7</sup>Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart. They shouldn't give with hesitation or because of pressure. God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>God has the power to provide you with more than enough of every kind of grace. That way, you will have everything you need always and in everything to provide more than enough for every kind of good work. <sup>9</sup>As it is written, *He scattered everywhere; he gave to the needy; his righteousness remains forever.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>10</sup>The one who supplies seed for planting and bread for eating will supply and multiply your seed and will increase your crop, which is righteousness. <sup>11</sup>You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous in every way. Such generosity produces thanksgiving to God through us. <sup>12</sup>Your ministry of this service to God's people isn't only fully meeting their needs but it is also multiplying in many expressions of thanksgiving to God. <sup>13</sup>They will give honor to God for your obedience to your confession of Christ's gospel. They will do this because this service provides evidence of your obedience, and because of your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone. <sup>14</sup>They will also pray for you, and they will care deeply for you because of the outstanding grace that God has given to you. <sup>15</sup>Thank God for his gift that words can't describe!

### Paul's personal request for obedience

**10**I, Paul, make a personal request to you with the gentleness and kindness of Christ. <sup>1</sup>I'm shy when I'm with you, but I'm bossy when I'm away from you! <sup>2</sup>I beg you that when I'm with you in person, I won't have to boss you around. I'm afraid that I may have to use that kind of behavior with those people who think we live by human standards. <sup>3</sup>Although we live in the world, we don't fight our battles with human methods. <sup>4</sup>Our weapons that we fight with aren't human, but instead they are powered by God for the destruction of fortresses. They destroy arguments, <sup>5</sup>and every defense that is raised up to oppose the knowledge of God. They capture every thought to make it obedient to Christ. <sup>6</sup>Once your obedience is complete, we are ready to punish any disobedience.

<sup>7</sup>Look at what is right in front of you! If anyone is sure about belonging to Christ, that person should think again. We belong to Christ just like that person. <sup>8</sup>Even if I went on to brag about our authority, I wouldn't be ashamed of it. The Lord gave us that authority to build you up and not to destroy you.

<sup>9</sup>I don't want it to seem like I'm trying to intimidate you with my letters. <sup>10</sup>I know what some people are saying: "His letters are severe and powerful, but in person he is weak and his speech is worth nothing." <sup>11</sup>These people need to think about this—that when we are with you, our actions will show that we are the same as the words we wrote when we were away from you. <sup>12</sup>We won't dare to place ourselves in the same league or to compare ourselves with

<sup>1</sup>Ps 112:9

10:10 1Co 1:17, 1Co 2:3; 2Co 10:1, 2Co 11:6; Ga 4:13 10:12 Prv 26:12, Prv 27:2; 2Co 3:1, 2Co 10:18

warning is that, should the delegates arrive and find the Corinthians unprepared to contribute, both Paul and the Corinthians will be embarrassed (2 Cor 9:3-5).

**9:6-10** While assuring them that their giving is voluntary (2 Cor 9:5, 7), Paul stresses that as they do good work, so shall they be rewarded. The agricultural image of sowing and reaping is drawn from Jewish wisdom tradition (see Job 4:8; Prov 11:26; Sir 7:3; cf. Gal 6:7-9) and emphasizes God's enabling grace. God's provision of *every kind of grace* (or "every benefit") allows the Corinthians to help others through their good works (9:8).

**9:10** Paul recalls Isaiah 55:10 to make the claim that God will not only provide for the material needs of the Corinthians, God will also increase spiritual benefits (i.e., *righteousness*) to those who support the poor in Jerusalem. God is responsible for multiplying both the seed for sowing and the increase of the harvest.

**9:11-15** The extended section on the Jerusalem collection ends with a reminder that Corinthian participation in the relief fund will result in thanksgiving—not to those

who contribute, but to God. In 1st-century Greco-Roman society, people usually donated financial gifts for the purpose of receiving public praise for their contribution. Paul challenges these cultural assumptions by insisting it is God, not human gift givers, who will receive thanksgiving for the Corinthians' generosity.

**10:1-13:10** A marked shift in tone occurs at the beginning of 2 Corinthians 10, as Paul provides an energetic defense against personal attacks.

**10:1-11** *shy . . . bossy*: Paul returns once again to the defense of his ministry, responding to the charge that there's a difference between his weak personal appearance and the sternness and power of his letters (10:1, 10). He insists his authority comes from the Lord (10:8) and his letters are consistent with his actions in Corinth (10:11).

**10:1** *I, Paul*: The opening of this section is personal and forceful (see Gal 5:2).

**10:2** *by human standards*: See also 2 Corinthians 1:17; 5:16.

**10:12-18** Paul sarcastically says he and his associates won't compare themselves with those people who

9:6 Prv 11:24;

Prv 11:25;

Prv 22:9;

1k 6:38; Ga 6:7

9:7 Ex 25:2;

Dt 15:10;

1Ch 29:17;

Ro 12:8;

2Co 8:12

9:8 Mal 3:10;

Eph 3:20;

Phi 4:19;

Col 1:10;

2Th 2:17

9:9 Ps 112:9

9:10 Lk 55:10;

Hos 10:12;

Phi 1:11

9:11 1Co 4:5;

2Co 4:11;

2Co 4:15;

2Co 8:2

9:12 2Co 8:14

9:13 1Heb 3:1

9:14 Prv 11:26;

Ro 1:11;

2Co 1:11;

2Co 8:1

9:15 In 3:16;

Ro 5:15;

2Co 2:14

10:1 Mt 11:29;

Mt 21:5;

2Co 10:10;

Ga 5:2; Eph 3:1

10:2 1Co 4:21;

2Co 13:2;

2Co 13:10

10:3 Ro 8:4;

2Co 1:17;

1Th 1:18;

Heb 12:1;

1Pt 4:1

10:4 Jer 1:10;

2Co 6:7

10:5 Is 2:11;

2Co 9:13

10:6 2Co 2:9;

2Co 7:15

10:7 In 7:24;

1Co 1:12;

1Co 3:23;

1Co 9:1;

2Co 5:12

10:8 2Co 7:4;

2Co 12:19;

2Co 13:10

10:13 Ro 12:3;  
2Co 10:15  
10:14 2Co 2:12  
10:15 Ro 15:20;  
2Co 10:13;  
2Th 1:3  
10:16 Ac 19:21  
10:17 Jer 9:23;  
Jer 9:24;  
1Co 1:31  
10:18 Ro 2:29;  
1Co 4:5;  
2Co 10:12  
11:1 2Co 5:13;  
2Co 11:4;  
2Co 11:16;  
2Co 11:17;  
2Co 11:21  
11:2 Ro 7:4;  
Col 1:28  
11:3 Gn 3:1;  
Gn 3:4, Gn 3:13;  
1Ti 2:14;  
Rev 12:9

11:4 1Co 3:11;  
Ga 1:6  
11:5 2Co 12:11;  
Ga 2:6

11:6 1Co 1:17;  
2Co 4:2;  
2Co 10:10;  
Eph 3:4

11:7 Ro 1:1;  
1Co 9:12;  
1Co 9:18;  
2Co 12:13

11:8 Phi 4:15

11:9 2Co 12:13;  
2Co 12:14;  
2Co 12:16;  
Phi 4:15

**Paul's Opponents in Corinth** In the final three chapters of 2 Corinthians, Paul responds to attacks on him and his ministry in Corinth by those whom he twice sarcastically labels "super-apostles" (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11; it's possible Paul also indirectly addresses these opponents and their criticism of him earlier in the letter, see, e.g., 2 Cor 1:12; 2:17; 3:1-3; 4:2-3; 7:2). Since Paul is writing to people who need no introduction to these opponents, the letter gives few details about their message or the reason for their criticism of Paul. They seem to have come to Corinth from outside Greece, because Paul believes they have invaded his own missionary territory (2 Cor 10:13-15). Their critique appears to be focused on charges related to Paul's personal weakness (2 Cor 10:2, 10; 11:21, 29; 13:3-4); his lack of knowledge and power as an orator (2 Cor 11:6); problems with his financial practices (2 Cor 11:7-9; 12:13-18); and, perhaps, his lack of signs and wonders (2 Cor 12:12). Paul pulls no punches in his response: His opponents are given to self-promotion (2 Cor 10:12); they preach "a different gospel" (2 Cor 11:4); they are false apostles and servants of Satan (2 Cor 11:14-15); and they are involved in enslaving, exploiting, and abusing the Corinthians (2 Cor 11:20). Whatever the nature of the message of Paul's opponents, we see Paul in 2 Corinthians 10-13 waging a heartfelt battle to defend the legitimacy and the integrity of his apostolic activity, and we catch a glimpse of the diversity and the conflict that existed in the early Christian movement.

some of those who are promoting themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they have no understanding.

<sup>13</sup>We won't take pride in anything more than what is appropriate. Let's look at the boundaries of our work area that God has assigned to us. It's an area that includes you. <sup>14</sup>We aren't going out of bounds, as if our work area doesn't extend as far as you. We were the first ones to travel as far as Corinth with the gospel of Christ. <sup>15</sup>We don't take pride in what other people do outside of our boundaries. We hope that our work will be extended even more by you as your faith grows, until it expands fully (within the boundaries, of course). <sup>16</sup>We hope that our work grows even to the point of the gospel being preached in places beyond Corinth, without bragging about what has already been done in another person's work area. <sup>17</sup>But, *the one who brags should brag in the Lord.*<sup>18</sup>It isn't the person who promotes himself or herself who is approved but the person whom the Lord commends.

### Confrontation of the super-apostles

**11** I hope that you will put up with me while I act like a fool. Well, in fact, you are putting up with me! <sup>2</sup>I'm deeply concerned about you with the same concern that God has. As your father, I promised you in marriage to one husband. I promised to present you as an innocent virgin to Christ himself. <sup>3</sup>But I'm afraid that your minds might be seduced in the same way as the snake deceived Eve with his devious tricks. You might be unable to focus completely on a genuine and innocent commitment to Christ.

<sup>4</sup>If a person comes and preaches some other Jesus than the one we preached, or if you receive a different Spirit than the one you had received, or a different gospel than the one you embraced, you put up with it so easily! <sup>5</sup>I don't consider myself as second-rate in any way compared to the "super-apostles." <sup>6</sup>But even if I'm uneducated in public speaking, I'm not uneducated in knowledge. We have shown this to you in every way and in everything we have done. <sup>7</sup>Did I commit a sin by humbling myself to give you an advantage because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? <sup>8</sup>I robbed other churches by taking a salary from them in order to serve you! <sup>9</sup>While I was with you, I didn't burden any of you even though I needed things. The believers who came from Macedonia gave me everything I

<sup>1</sup>Jer 9:24

promote and use themselves as a standard of measurement (10:12). He reminds the Corinthians that he has ministered only in the area God assigned to him, faithfully keeping the boundaries of ministry (10:13-16).

**10:17** *the one . . . Lord:* a verse from Jeremiah 9:24 that Paul has already used with the Corinthians (see 1 Cor 1:31).

**11:1-15** Concerned the Corinthians are being deceived by his opponents, rival missionaries (11:1-3), Paul turns to address more directly the different message being proclaimed by those he ironically labels *super-apostles* (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11). The statement that he is acting *like a*

*fool* (11:1) introduces and anticipates the "fool's speech" in 2 Corinthians 11:21-12:10. See sidebar, "Paul's Opponents in Corinth."

**11:7** *Did I commit a sin . . . free of charge?:* Paul usually didn't request or accept financial support from the churches where he was actively doing his missionary work. In 1 Corinthians 9:1-23 he provided an extended defense of this policy; although as an apostle he possessed the right to receive pay for his work among the Corinthians, he chose not to do so in order that he might "offer the good news free of charge" (1 Cor 9:18). Another reason



needed. I kept myself from being a financial drain on you in any way, and I will continue to keep myself from being a burden.

<sup>10</sup>Since Christ's truth is in me, I won't stop telling the entire area of Greece that I'm proud of what I did. <sup>11</sup>Why? Is it because I don't love you? God knows that I do! <sup>12</sup>But I'm going to continue to do what I'm doing. I want to contradict the claims of the people who want to be treated like they are the same as us because of what they brag about. <sup>13</sup>Such people are false apostles and dishonest workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup>It is no great surprise then that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

### Paul defends himself

<sup>16</sup>I repeat, no one should take me for a fool. But if you do, then allow me to be a fool so that I can brag like a fool for a bit. <sup>17</sup>I'm not saying what I'm saying because the Lord tells me to. I'm saying it like I'm a fool. I'm putting my confidence in this business of bragging. <sup>18</sup>Since so many people are bragging based on human standards, that is how I'm going to brag too. <sup>19</sup>Because you, who are so wise, are happy to put up with fools. <sup>20</sup>You put up with it if someone enslaves you, if someone exploits you, if someone takes advantage of you, if someone places themselves over you, or if someone hits you in the face. <sup>21</sup>I'm ashamed to say that we have been weak in comparison! But in whatever they challenge me, I challenge them (I'm speaking foolishly).

<sup>22</sup>Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. <sup>23</sup>Are they ministers of Christ? I'm speaking like a crazy person. What I've done goes well beyond what they've done. I've worked much harder. I've been imprisoned much more often. I've been beaten more times than I can count. I've faced death many times. <sup>24</sup>I received the "forty lashes minus one" from the Jews five times. <sup>25</sup>I was beaten with rods three times. I was stoned once. I was shipwrecked three times. I spent a day and a night on the open sea. <sup>26</sup>I've been on many journeys. I faced dangers from rivers, robbers, my people, and Gentiles. I faced dangers in the city, in the desert, on the sea, and from false brothers and sisters. <sup>27</sup>I faced these dangers with hard work and heavy labor, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, and in the cold without enough clothes.

<sup>28</sup>Besides all the other things I could mention, there's my daily stress because I'm concerned about all the churches. <sup>29</sup>Who is weak without me being weak? Who is led astray without me being furious about it? <sup>30</sup>If it's necessary to brag, I'll brag about my weaknesses. <sup>31</sup>The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, the one who is blessed forever, knows that I'm not lying. <sup>32</sup>At Damascus the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to capture me, <sup>33</sup>but I got away from him by being lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall.

11:10 Ro 9:1;  
1Co 9:15;  
2Co 1:1  
11:11 2Co 11:31,  
2Co 12:15  
11:12 1Co 9:12  
11:13 Ga 1:7,  
Ga 2:4; Phi 1:15;  
Ti 1:10, Rev 2:2  
11:14 Mt 4:10  
11:15 Phi 3:19  
11:16 2Co 11:1,  
2Co 12:6  
11:17 1Co 7:12;  
2Co 11:21  
11:18 2Co 5:16;  
Phi 3:4  
11:19 1Co 4:10  
11:20 2Co 1:24;  
Ga 2:4; Ga 4:3,  
Ga 4:9; Ga 5:1  
11:21 2Co 10:10,  
2Co 11:17  
11:22 Gn 40:15;  
Ac 6:1; Ro 9:4,  
Ro 11:1; Phi 3:5  
11:23 Ac 16:23;  
Ro 8:36;  
1Co 3:5,  
1Co 15:10;  
2Co 6:5  
11:24 Dt 25:3  
11:25 Ac 14:19,  
Ac 16:22  
11:26 Ac 9:23,  
Ac 17:5; Ac 20:3,  
Ac 20:19  
11:27 1Co 4:11;  
2Co 6:5;  
Phi 4:12;  
1Th 2:9; 2Th 3:8  
11:28 1Co 7:17  
11:29 1Co 8:13,  
1Co 9:22  
11:30 1Co 2:3;  
2Co 11:16,  
2Co 12:5,  
2Co 12:9  
11:31 Ro 9:5;  
2Co 11:11  
11:32 Ac 9:24  
11:33 Ac 9:25

for Paul's refusal of pay from the Corinthians seems to be his worry of becoming obligated to the Corinthian church (1 Cor 9:15-16, 19). But there's a problem now because Paul, against his usual policy, has accepted pay from believers in Macedonia (2 Cor 11:8-9; 12:13; see Phil 4:10-20). To Paul's opponents this could have appeared inconsistent or, worse, insulting, for to refuse a gift was to refuse friendship. See sidebar, "Paul's Opponents in Corinth." 11:16-12:13 The section has three parts. The first contains another appeal for the Corinthians to put up with Paul as he prepares to respond to the challenge of his opponents in Corinth (11:16-21a). The second represents the "fool's speech" (11:21b-12:10). The third concludes the speech with an acknowledgment of Paul's foolishness and a final defense of his actions toward the Corinthians (12:11-13).

11:21b-12:10 The "fool's speech." Paul has portrayed himself as one forced into a corner. Although he has reason to brag (2 Cor 10:7, 13), he doesn't want to engage in a boastful contest with his opponents (2 Cor 10:12, 16-17; 11:17), whom he believes are all too willing to brag about their achievements (2 Cor 10:12; 11:12, 18). As a

way of resolving this dilemma, Paul assumes the character of a fool, reluctantly agreeing to play the game of foolish boasting his opponents have introduced. There follows in 2 Corinthians 11:21b-12:10 a list of Paul's achievements, including his Jewish heritage (11:22); apostolic credentials (11:23a); hard work (11:23b); imprisonments, beatings, and sufferings (11:23c-25); difficulties in travel (11:25b-26); physical hardships (11:27); worry about his churches (11:28); a dangerous experience in Damascus (11:32); and visions and revelations from the Lord (12:1-9).

11:22 *Are they Hebrews?*: Paul often indicated pride in his Jewish heritage (see Phil 3:4-5; Gal 1:13-14).

11:24 *"forty lashes minus one"*: The punishment of 39 lashes for offenders of the Jewish synagogue originates in Deuteronomy 25:2-3 (see Matt 10:17; 23:34). Although none of these floggings are mentioned in Acts, Paul does frequently experience hostility from leaders of synagogues in Acts (see Acts 13:50-51; 14:1-7; 17:5-15; 18:1-8). 11:32 *King Aretas*: Aretas IV was ruler of Nabatea, a region to the southeast of Judea (also called "Arabia" in Gal 1:17) from 9 BCE to 39 CE. Since Aretas IV took over

12:1 Ga 2:2

12:2 Ac 8:39;  
2Co 11:11,  
2Co 12:4;  
1Th 4:17;  
Rev 12:512:4 Lk 23:43,  
2Co 12:2;  
Rev 2:712:5 1Co 2:3;  
2Co 11:30,  
2Co 12:912:6 2Co 11:16,  
2Co 12:1112:7 Nm 33:55;  
Lk 13:16;  
1Co 5:512:8 Mt 26:39,  
Mt 26:44;  
2Co 12:912:9 1Co 2:5;  
2Co 12:10,  
Phi 4:1312:10 2Co 6:4,  
2Co 12:9,  
2Co 13:4;  
Phi 1:29, 2Th 1:412:11 1Co 3:7,  
1Co 15:9,  
1Co 15:10;  
2Co 11:512:12 Jn 4:48;  
Ro 15:19;  
1Co 9:1; 2Co 6:412:13 1Co 9:12;  
2Co 11:7,  
2Co 11:9,  
2Co 12:1412:14 Prv 19:14;  
1Co 4:14,  
1Co 4:15,  
1Co 10:33;  
2Co 13:112:15 2Co 1:6;  
2Co 2:17;  
Cal 1:24;

1Th 2:8; 2Ti 2:10

12:16 2Co 11:9

12:17 2Co 9:5

**Paul's visions and revelations from the Lord**

**12** It is necessary to brag, not that it does any good. I'll move on to visions and revelations from the Lord. <sup>2</sup>I know a man in Christ who was caught up into the third heaven fourteen years ago. I don't know whether it was in the body or out of the body. God knows. <sup>3-4</sup>I know that this man was caught up into paradise and that he heard unspeakable words that were things no one is allowed to repeat. I don't know whether it was in the body or apart from the body. God knows. <sup>5</sup>I'll brag about this man, but I won't brag about myself, except to brag about my weaknesses.

<sup>6</sup>If I did want to brag, I wouldn't make a fool of myself because I'd tell the truth. I'm holding back from bragging so that no one will give me any more credit than what anyone sees or hears about me. <sup>7</sup>I was given a thorn in my body because of the outstanding revelations I've received so that I wouldn't be conceited. It's a messenger from Satan sent to torment me so that I wouldn't be conceited.

<sup>8</sup>I pleaded with the Lord three times for it to leave me alone. <sup>9</sup>He said to me, "My grace is enough for you, because power is made perfect in weakness." So I'll gladly spend my time bragging about my weaknesses so that Christ's power can rest on me. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, I'm all right with weaknesses, insults, disasters, harassments, and stressful situations for the sake of Christ, because when I'm weak, then I'm strong.

<sup>11</sup>I've become a fool! You made me do it. Actually, I should have been commended by you. I'm not inferior to the super-apostles in any way, even though I'm a nonentity. <sup>12</sup>The signs of an apostle were performed among you with continuous endurance through signs, wonders, and miracles. <sup>13</sup>How were you treated worse than the other churches, except that I myself wasn't a financial burden on you? Forgive me for this wrong!

**Paul's plans to visit and a warning**

<sup>14</sup>Look, I'm ready to visit you a third time, and I won't be a burden on you. I don't want your things; I want you. It isn't the children's responsibility to save up for their parents but parents for children. <sup>15</sup>I will very gladly spend and be spent for your sake. If I love you more, will you love me less?

<sup>16</sup>We all know that I didn't place a burden on you, but in spite of that you think I'm a con artist who fooled you with a trick. <sup>17</sup>I haven't taken advantage of you through any of the people I sent to you, have I? <sup>18</sup>I strongly encouraged Titus to go to you and sent the brother with him. Titus didn't take advantage of you, did he? Didn't we live by the same Spirit? Didn't we walk in the same footsteps?

12:18 Ro 4:12; 2Co 2:13, 2Co 8:6, 2Co 8:16, 2Co 8:18

Damascus in 36 CE and surrendered control by 37 CE, Paul's dramatic escape from the city can reasonably be dated sometime between late 36 and early summer 37. The incident is reported with slightly different details in Acts 9:23-25.

**12:2** *I know a man*: Although Paul speaks in the third person about a *man in Christ*, he's certainly referring to his own experience of heavenly ascent. Since Paul is uncomfortable with the boastful contest in which he's engaged with his opponents, this may explain his reluctance to speak of his visionary ascent in the first person.

**12:7** *thorn in my body*: It's impossible to know for sure what Paul's thorn was. Suggestions have included spiritual anguish, opposition to his mission (perhaps especially his struggles in Corinth), or some physical ailment. *messenger from Satan*: It isn't clear whether Paul is saying the thorn was given to him by God or by Satan (or Satan's messenger). For Satan, see note on 2 Corinthians 2:11. The point isn't the specific identity or the source of Paul's "thorn" but the extent to which the grace and power of Christ dwells in Paul in spite of the apostle's weakness (2 Cor 12:8-9).

**12:11-13** Conclusion of the "fool's speech." First, Paul

justifies his foolish boasting by insisting he's been forced to do so. Second, summarizing his speech, he emphasizes he's in no way inferior to his rival missionaries.

**12:14-13:10** Paul plans his forthcoming, and third, visit to Corinth (12:14; 13:1). The first was his founding visit (see Acts 18:1-18). The second was the visit that caused the conflict with the Corinthians that led to Paul's retreat to Asia Minor and the composition of the "letter of tears" (see 2 Cor 1:15-16; 2:3-4).

**12:14-18** Preparing for his forthcoming visit, Paul again addresses the touchy issue of his refusal to accept financial assistance from the Corinthians (see 1 Cor 9:1-23). On the one hand, Paul insists he won't continue to burden the Corinthians; as a parental figure to them (2 Cor 6:13; see 1 Cor 3:1-2; 4:14-15), he shouldn't take their money. On the other hand, Paul seems to be aware that his efforts to raise money for poor believers in Jerusalem opens him to the charge of inappropriate behavior with regard to finances, and he insists he isn't involved in any trickery (12:17-18). He's sending Titus and the other delegates to Corinth precisely to ensure the funds are gathered properly and honestly (2 Cor 8:20-21; see sidebar, "The Collection for Jerusalem" at 2 Cor 8).

<sup>19</sup>Have you been thinking up to now that we are defending ourselves to you? Actually, we are speaking in the sight of God and in Christ. Dear friends, everything is meant to build you up. <sup>20</sup>I'm afraid that maybe when I come you will be different from the way I want you to be, and that I'll be different from the way you want me to be. I'm afraid that there might be fighting, obsession, losing your temper, competitive opposition, backstabbing, gossip, conceit, and disorderly conduct. <sup>21</sup>I'm afraid that when I come again, my God may embarrass me in front of you. I might have to go into mourning over all the people who have sinned before and haven't changed their hearts and lives from what they used to practice: moral corruption, sexual immorality, and doing whatever feels good.

**13** This is the third time that I'm coming to visit you. Every matter is settled on the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>2</sup>When I was with you on my second visit, I already warned those who continued to sin. Now I'm repeating that warning to all the rest of you while I'm at a safe distance: if I come again, I won't spare anyone. <sup>3</sup>Since you are demanding proof that Christ speaks through me, Christ isn't weak in dealing with you but shows his power among you. <sup>4</sup>Certainly he was crucified because of weakness, but he lives by the power of God. Certainly we also are weak in him, but we will live together with him, because of God's power that is directed toward you.

<sup>5</sup>Examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Don't you understand that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless, of course, you fail the test. <sup>6</sup>But I hope that you will realize that we don't fail the test. <sup>7</sup>We pray to God that you don't do anything wrong, not because we want to appear to pass the test but so that you might do the right thing, even if we appear to fail.

<sup>8</sup>We can't do anything against the truth but only to help the truth. <sup>9</sup>We are happy when we are weak but you are strong. We pray for this: that you will be made complete. <sup>10</sup>This is why I'm writing these things while I'm away. I'm writing so that I won't need to act harshly when I'm with you by using the authority that the Lord gave me. He gave it to me so that I could build you up, not tear you down.

#### Final greeting

<sup>11</sup>Finally, brothers and sisters, good-bye. Put things in order, respond to my encouragement, be in harmony with each other, and live in peace—and the God of love and peace will be with you.

<sup>12</sup>Say hello to each other with a holy kiss.<sup>k</sup> All of God's people say hello to you.

<sup>13</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

12:19 Ro 9:1.

Ro 14:19;

2Co 2:17.

2Co 10:8;

Eph 4:12.

12:20 Ro 1:29.

Ro 1:30;

1Co 1:11;

1Co 3:3; 2Co 2:4

12:21 1Co 5:1;

2Co 13:2

13:1 Nm 35:30;

Dt 17:6;

Dt 19:15;

Mt 18:16;

2Co 12:14

13:2 1Co 4:21;

2Co 1:23;

2Co 10:1;

2Co 12:21;

2Co 13:10

13:3 Mt 10:20;

1Co 5:4

13:4 Ro 6:4.

Ro 6:8; 1Co 6:14;

1Pt 3:18

13:5 1am 3:40;

Ro 8:10.

1Co 6:15;

1Co 11:28;

Ga 6:4

13:7 Phi 1:9.

Phi 4:8;

1Th 5:23;

1Ti 2:2; 1Pt 2:12

13:9 2Co 13:11;

1Th 3:10

13:10 2Co 2:3;

2Co 10:8;

Ti 1:13

13:11 Mk 9:50;

Ro 12:16;

Ro 15:33;

1Co 1:10;

1Th 5:13

13:12 Ro 16:16;

1Co 16:20;

1Pt 5:14

13:13 Mt 28:19;

Ro 5:5; Ro 16:20;

Phi 2:1; Jud 1:21

<sup>k</sup>2 Cor 13:12-13 is in some versions equivalent to 13:12-14.

12:19-21 Paul expresses his apostolic concern that he may find, when visiting Corinth, those believers who are still practicing inappropriate behaviors (12:20-21).

12:19 *we are speaking . . . to build you up*: Although he's been defending himself throughout this letter, Paul insists his defense isn't for his own benefit but for the building up of the Corinthians (for the language of "building up" or "edifying" others, see 2 Cor 13:10; 1 Cor 8:1; 10:23; 14:4, 12, 26).

13:1-10 Paul sternly warns the Corinthian congregation that, upon his arrival, he'll exercise his apostolic authority on those who are behaving inappropriately to the faith. He finishes the main body of his letter by highlighting this warning; to direct the Corinthians in the way they should go is his very purpose for writing this letter (13:10).

13:3-4 *Since you are demanding proof . . . by the power of God*: Paul returns to the language of weakness and power to restate the point that his own suffering isn't a sign of his weakness but of his sharing in the power of Christ. Since he's in Christ, who was crucified in weakness but lives (in

resurrection) by the power of God, Paul, too, shares in the weakness of Christ (2 Cor 4:10) but also in Christ's power. Thus, Christ's power is shown to the Corinthians through Paul (13:3).

13:11-13 The letter concludes, as is common in Paul's letters, with greetings (13:11-12) and a final blessing (13:13).

13:11 *the God of love and peace*: This portrait of God both emphasizes how the Corinthians are to act toward each other and toward Paul (*be in harmony with each other, and live in peace*) and reminds readers of the reconciliation they've experienced with God through the love of Christ (2 Cor 5:14, 19).

13:13 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . all*: The three-part blessing—which calls upon the Lord Jesus Christ, God, and the Holy Spirit—is larger than the customary blessing Paul gives at the end of his letters (see Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 16:23; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:16; Phlm 25; cf. Eph 6:23-24; shorter blessings are found in Col 4:18; 1 Tim 6:21; 2 Tim 4:22; Titus 3:15). This verse became important for the later development of Trinitarian theology.

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# GALATIANS

Paul's letter to the Galatians has had an immense impact on the Christian understanding of the role of faith in our being made right before God. Responding to a severe challenge to his gospel and apostleship, Paul defends "the truth of the gospel" (Gal 2:5, 14): A person is made right before God on the basis of what God has done in the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ rather than on the basis of doing the works of Moses' Law. The letter's thesis is found in Galatians 2:16: "We know that a person isn't made righteous by the works of the Law but rather through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ." Salvation is God's gift; it cannot be earned.

The identity of the Galatians and the date of the letter are disputed. If Paul wrote to the congregations he and Barnabas established on their first missionary journey (see Acts 13–14), he may have written Galatians as early as 49 CE. According to this scenario, Paul was writing to congregations in the southern part of the

Roman province of Galatia (part of modern-day Turkey): Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. But if Paul was writing to the Celtic tribes that had settled in the northern part of the province of Galatia (also part of modern-day Turkey), he was writing in the mid-50s to congregations around Ancyra, which he established on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6).

Either way, the letter was occasioned by the appearance of Jewish-Christian missionaries who came to Galatia and questioned Paul's apostolic authority and the gospel he preached. That gospel didn't require the Galatians, who were Gentiles, to be circumcised or to adopt Moses' Law. These missionaries, however, insisted that if the Galatians were to become Abraham's children and enjoy the benefits of the Jewish Messiah, they must be circumcised and do what the Law required. Paul maintained that the Galatians were already in a right relation with God because of their faith in what



The Pisidian Antioch Church of St. Paul, allegedly built on the site of the synagogue where Paul preached  
*Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com*

God had done in Christ; but these missionaries were adamant that the Galatians must be circumcised and adopt a Jewish way of life in addition to believing in Christ. Here's the question Paul addresses: Is faith in what God has done in Christ sufficient for salvation, or is something else required?

Paul responds to the crisis at Galatia in three ways: First, he reviews the events of his past to show the Galatians he received his gospel and apostleship from God and Jesus Christ rather

than from humans (Gal 1:10–2:21). Therefore, the Galatians can rely on the gospel he preached to them. Second, he explains that the Galatians are Abraham's children because they've been baptized into Christ and received the gift of the Spirit (Gal 3:1–5:12). Therefore, they don't need to be circumcised. Finally, Paul argues that even though the Galatians are not under the Law's authority, they fulfill the Law by practicing the love commandment through the power of the Spirit (Gal 5:13–6:10).

### I. The Letter Opening (1:1-9)

- A. Paul greets the Galatians (1:1-5)
- B. Paul expresses his astonishment at what has happened (1:6-9)

### II. The Events of Paul's Life Verify the Truth of the Gospel He Preaches (1:10–2:21)

- A. The origin of Paul's gospel (1:10-12)
- B. Paul's former way of life in Judaism (1:13-14)
- C. Paul was called to bring the gospel to the Gentiles (1:15-17)
- D. Three years after his call, Paul visited Jerusalem (1:18-20)
- E. Paul went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia (1:21-24)
- F. Paul didn't compromise the truth of the gospel at Jerusalem (2:1-10)
- G. Peter compromised the truth of the gospel at Antioch (2:11-14)
- H. Paul summarizes the truth of the gospel he preaches (2:15-21)

### III. God's Promise to Abraham Verifies the Truth of the Gospel Paul Preaches (3:1–5:12)

- A. The Galatians received the Spirit on the basis of faith (3:1-5)
- B. Scripture announced the blessings of the gospel to Abraham (3:6-9)

- C. Christ freed humanity from the curse (3:10-14)
- D. The Law doesn't cancel the promise God made to Abraham (3:15-18)
- E. Paul explains the Law's purpose (3:19-24)
- F. Those baptized into Christ are Abraham's descendants (3:25-29)
- G. The Galatians shouldn't regress to their former state (4:1-11)
- H. Paul appeals to the Galatians to become as he is (4:12-20)
- I. The Galatians belong to the line of Abraham's free descendants (4:21–5:1)
- J. The Galatians must not have themselves circumcised (5:2-12)

### IV. The Spirit Enables Those Who Believe to Fulfill the Law (5:13–6:10)

- A. Those who believe fulfill the Law through the love commandment (5:13-15)
- B. Those who believe live according to the Spirit (5:16-26)
- C. Those who believe live according to the Law of Christ (6:1-10)

### V. The Letter Closing (6:11-18)

**Greeting**

**1** From Paul, an apostle who is not sent from human authority or commissioned through human agency, but sent through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead; **2**and from all the brothers and sisters with me.  
 To the churches in Galatia.

**3**Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **4**He gave himself for our sins, so he could deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father. **5**To God be the glory forever and always! Amen.

1:1 Ac 2:24;  
 Ac 9:15; Ro 1:1;  
 1Co 1:1; 2Co 1:1  
 1:2 Ac 16:6;  
 1Co 16:1;  
 Phi 4:21  
 1:3 Ro 1:7;  
 1Co 1:3  
 1:4 Mt 20:28;  
 Ro 4:25;  
 1Co 15:3;  
 Eph 5:2; 1Jn 2:2  
 1:5 Ro 11:36  
 1:6 2Co 11:4;  
 Ga 1:7; Ga 5:8  
 1:7 Ac 15:24;  
 Ga 5:10  
 1:8 Ro 9:3;  
 1Co 16:22;  
 2Co 11:14;  
 Ga 1:9  
 1:9 Ga 1:8  
 1:10 Ro 1:1;  
 1Co 10:33;  
 1Th 2:4  
 1:11 1Co 15:1  
 1:12 1Co 11:23;  
 1Co 15:3; Ga 1:1  
 1:13 Ac 8:3;  
 Ac 9:1; Ac 22:4;  
 Ac 26:4; Phi 3:6  
 1:14 Mt 15:2;  
 Mk 7:3; Ac 21:20;  
 Ac 22:3; Ro 10:2  
 1:15 Is 49:1;  
 Is 49:5; Jer 1:5;  
 Ro 1:1  
 1:16 Ac 9:15  
 1:17 Ac 9:2

**The gospel challenged in Galatia**

**6**I'm amazed that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ to follow another gospel. **7**It's not really another gospel, but certain people are confusing you and they want to change the gospel of Christ. **8**However, even if we ourselves or a heavenly angel should ever preach anything different from what we preached to you, they should be under a curse. **9**I'm repeating what we've said before: if anyone preaches something different from what you received, they should be under a curse!

**Paul's leadership**

**10**Am I trying to win over human beings or God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I wouldn't be Christ's slave. **11**Brothers and sisters, I want you to know that the gospel I preached isn't human in origin. **12**I didn't receive it or learn it from a human. It came through a revelation from Jesus Christ.

**13**You heard about my previous life in Judaism, how severely I harassed God's church and tried to destroy it. **14**I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my peers, because I was much more militant about the traditions of my ancestors. **15**But God had set me apart from birth and called me through his grace. He was pleased **16**to reveal his Son to me, so that I might preach about him to the Gentiles. I didn't immediately consult with any human being. **17**I didn't go up to Jerusalem to see the men who were apostles before me either, but I went

1:1-5 The letter begins with a greeting in which Paul emphasizes the divine origin of his apostleship.

1:1 *an apostle*: one sent by another with a specific message. *not sent from human authority or commissioned through human agency*: Paul wasn't commissioned by the church at Jerusalem. *through Jesus Christ and God the Father*: Paul received a divine call (see Rom 1:1, 5).

1:2 *the churches in Galatia*: either the congregations in the south or the north of the Roman province of Galatia.

1:3 *Grace*: God's unmerited favor manifested in Christ. *peace*: the new relationship between God and humanity that results from God's grace in Christ.

1:4 *present evil age*: the period before Christ, under the domination of sin and hostile cosmic powers (see Gal 4:9).

1:6-9 Instead of beginning with his usual prayer of thanksgiving, Paul expresses how surprised and frustrated he is with the Galatians.

1:6 *deserting the one who called you*: The Galatians are like deserters from an army. The one who called them is God. *another gospel*: a gospel that requires circumcision and obeying Moses' Law.

1:7 *certain people*: the missionaries who have come to Galatia who required the Galatians to adopt a Jewish way of life. *the gospel of Christ*: the good news of what God has done in Christ.

1:8-9 *under a curse*: the opposite of blessing. Blessing and curse play an important role in Galatians 3:6-14.

1:10-2:21 Paul uses his autobiography to explain the divine origin of the gospel he preaches and how he defended it at Jerusalem and Antioch.

1:10-12 Just as Paul insisted on the divine origin of his

apostleship (Gal 1:1), so he insists on the divine origin of his gospel.

1:10 *Christ's slave*: See Romans 1:1; Titus 1:1.

1:12 *through a revelation from Jesus Christ*: Paul's call/conversion, which Luke describes in Acts 9; 22; 26; and to which Paul alludes in Galatians 1:16.

1:13-14 Paul describes his pre-Christian life to show the dramatic reversal that's taken place in his life. See 1 Timothy 1:12-17 for another description of his past.

1:13 *I harassed God's church*: See 1 Corinthians 15:9. According to Acts 8:3; 9:1-2, Paul tried to destroy the church in Jerusalem and intended to do the same to the church in Damascus.

1:14 *traditions of my ancestors*: the special traditions regarding observance of the Law that Paul practiced as a Pharisee (see Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:4-5).

1:15-17 Paul's account of his call/conversion shows that he received his apostleship—to bring the gospel to the Gentiles—directly from God and Jesus Christ.

1:15 *set me apart from birth*: The language echoes the call of Jeremiah (Jer 1:5) and the Servant (Isa 49:1). *called me through his grace*: Just as God called the Galatians by grace (Gal 1:6), so God called Paul by grace.

1:16 *to reveal his Son*: Paul learns that Jesus, whom he viewed as being under God's curse because he had been crucified (see Deut 21:23), is God's Son. *to the Gentiles*: The purpose of the call is to make Paul the apostle to the Gentiles. *I didn't immediately consult*: It wasn't necessary to ask about the revelation; its meaning was apparent to him.

1:17 *Jerusalem*: He didn't consult with the Jerusalem apostles. *Arabia*: the territory of Nabatea, east of the Dead Sea. *Damascus*: a city in Syria near where he was called.

1:18 Ac 9:26  
 1:19 Mt 13:55;  
 Mk 6:3; Ac 12:17;  
 1Co 9:5; Ga 2:9  
 1:20 Ro 9:1  
 1:21 Ac 6:9,  
 Ac 9:30, Ac 15:23,  
 Ac 15:41  
 1:22 Ro 16:7;  
 1Th 2:14  
 1:23 Ac 6:7  
 1:24 Ac 11:18;  
 2Co 9:13  
 2:1 Ac 4:36,  
 Ac 15:2; Ga 2:13  
 2:2 Phi 2:16  
 2:3 Ac 16:3;  
 1Co 9:21;  
 2Co 2:13; Ga 2:1,  
 Ga 5:2  
 2:4 Ac 15:24;  
 2Co 11:20,  
 2Co 11:26;  
 Ga 5:1; Jud 1:4  
 2:5 Ga 2:14;  
 Col 1:5  
 2:6 Dt 10:17;  
 Ac 10:34;  
 Ro 2:11;  
 2Co 11:5,  
 2Co 12:11  
 2:7 Ac 9:15;  
 1Co 9:17;  
 Ga 1:16; 1Th 2:4;  
 1Ti 1:11  
 2:8 Ac 1:25  
 2:9 Ro 12:3;  
 Ga 1:18, Ga 1:19,  
 Ga 2:1; Rev 3:12  
 2:10 Ac 24:17  
 2:11 Ac 11:19,  
 Ga 1:18, Ga 2:7,  
 Ga 2:9, Ga 2:14  
 2:12 Ac 10:28,  
 Ac 11:3; Ga 2:9

away into Arabia and I returned again to Damascus. <sup>18</sup>Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup>But I didn't see any other of the apostles except James the brother of the Lord. <sup>20</sup>Before God, I'm not lying about the things that I'm writing to you! <sup>21</sup>Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, <sup>22</sup>but I wasn't known personally by the Christian churches in Judea. <sup>23</sup>They only heard a report about me: "The man who used to harass us now preaches the faith that he once tried to destroy." <sup>24</sup>So they were glorifying God because of me.

### Confirmation of Paul's leadership

**2**Then after fourteen years I went up to Jerusalem again with Barnabas, and I took Titus along also. <sup>2</sup>I went there because of a revelation, and I laid out the gospel that I preach to the Gentiles for them. But I did it privately with the influential leaders to make sure that I wouldn't be working or that I hadn't worked for nothing. <sup>3</sup>However, not even Titus, who was with me and who was a Greek, was required to be circumcised. <sup>4</sup>But false brothers and sisters, who were brought in secretly, slipped in to spy on our freedom, which we have in Christ Jesus, and to make us slaves. <sup>5</sup>We didn't give in and submit to them for a single moment, so that the truth of the gospel would continue to be with you.

<sup>6</sup>The influential leaders didn't add anything to what I was preaching—and whatever they were makes no difference to me, because God doesn't show favoritism. <sup>7</sup>But on the contrary, they saw that I had been given the responsibility to preach the gospel to the people who aren't circumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. <sup>8</sup>The one who empowered Peter to become an apostle to the circumcised empowered me also to be one to the Gentiles. <sup>9</sup>James, Cephas, and John, who are considered to be key leaders, shook hands with me and Barnabas as equals when they recognized the grace that was given to me. So it was agreed that we would go to the Gentiles, while they continue to go to the people who were circumcised. <sup>10</sup>They asked only that we would remember the poor, which was certainly something I was willing to do.

### The Jewish-Gentile controversy

<sup>11</sup>But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was wrong. <sup>12</sup>He had been eating with the Gentiles before certain people came from James. But when they came, he began to back out and separate himself, because he was afraid of the people

1:18–20. Paul recounts his first visit to Jerusalem after his call.

1:18 *after three years*: three years after his call, probably about 36 CE. *Cephas*: Peter's Aramaic name.

1:19 *James the brother of the Lord*: This James isn't one of the Twelve. He's identified as Jesus' brother (Mark 6:3) and the head of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 21:18).

1:21–24 Paul describes what he did in the period between his first and second visits to Jerusalem. According to Galatians 2:1, this was a period of 14 years.

1:21 *the regions of Syria and Cilicia*: The church of Antioch, mentioned in Galatians 2:11, was located in Syria. Paul was a citizen of Tarsus, a city in the Roman province of Cilicia (Acts 21:39). He preached the gospel in these locations for about 14 years after his call.

1:22 *churches in Judea*: the congregations around Jerusalem.

2:1–10 Paul describes his second visit to Jerusalem after his call. Acts 15 recounts a similar incident. During this visit Paul defends the truth of the gospel.

2:1 *after fourteen years*: about 49–50 CE. *Barnabas*: Paul's companion on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:1–3). *Titus*: Paul's missionary companion who plays a prominent role in 2 Corinthians. Paul addresses a letter to him.

2:2 *because of a revelation*: Paul wasn't summoned; he took the initiative. *the gospel that I preach to the Gentiles*: a gospel that doesn't require Gentiles to be circumcised. *the influential leaders*: James, Cephas (Peter), and John, who are mentioned in Galatians 2:9.

2:3 *not even Titus*: Paul brought Titus to Jerusalem as an example of an uncircumcised Gentile who believes in Christ.

2:4 *false brothers and sisters*: people who supported the position of the missionaries who came to Galatia. *our freedom*: from circumcision and the Law.

2:5 *the truth of the gospel*: A person is made righteous through Christ's faithfulness rather than by doing the works of the Law.

2:6 *didn't add anything*: They didn't require the Gentiles to become circumcised and follow a Jewish way of life.

2:8 *The one who empowered Peter*: God.

2:9 *James*: the head of the Jerusalem church. *Cephas*: Peter, the most important member of the Twelve. *John*: one of the Twelve. *the grace that was given to me*: the grace to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

2:10 *remember the poor*: Paul was involved in taking up a collection among his Gentile congregations for the poor Christians in Jerusalem (see 2 Cor 8–9).

2:11–14 Paul recounts an episode that occurred at Antioch in Syria, during which he defended the truth of the gospel against certain people who supported James, whereas Peter, Barnabas, and others betrayed it.

2:11 *Cephas came to Antioch*: He came to see the new expression of Christian faith that was developing there among the Gentiles.

2:12 *certain people came from James*: These supporters of James interpreted the agreement made at Jerusalem differently than Paul did.



who promoted circumcision. <sup>13</sup>And the rest of the Jews also joined him in this hypocrisy so that even Barnabas got carried away with them in their hypocrisy. <sup>14</sup>But when I saw that they weren't acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of everyone, "If you, though you're a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you require the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

<sup>15</sup>We are born Jews—we're not Gentile sinners. <sup>16</sup>However, we know that a person isn't made righteous by the works of the Law but rather through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. We ourselves believed in Christ Jesus so that we could be made righteous by the faithfulness of Christ and not by the works of the Law—because no one will be made righteous by the works of the Law. <sup>17</sup>But if it is discovered that we ourselves are sinners while we are trying to be made righteous in Christ, then is Christ a servant of sin? Absolutely not! <sup>18</sup>If I rebuild the very things that I tore down, I show that I myself am breaking the Law. <sup>19</sup>I died to the Law through the Law, so that I could live for God. <sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in my body, I live by faith, indeed, by the faithfulness of God's Son, who loved me and gave himself for me. <sup>21</sup>I don't ignore the grace of God, because if we become righteous through the Law, then Christ died for no purpose.

### Works versus the Spirit

**3**You irrational Galatians! Who put a spell on you? Jesus Christ was put on display as crucified before your eyes! <sup>2</sup>I just want to know this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the Law or by believing what you heard? <sup>3</sup>Are you so irrational? After you started with the Spirit, are you now finishing up with your own human effort? <sup>4</sup>Did you experience so much for nothing? I wonder if it really was for nothing. <sup>5</sup>So does the one providing you with the Spirit and working miracles among you do this by you doing the works of the Law or by you believing what you heard?

### Abraham: an example of righteousness

<sup>6</sup>Understand that in the same way that Abraham *believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness,* <sup>7</sup>those who believe are the children of Abraham. <sup>8</sup>But when it saw ahead of

2:13 Ac 4:36;  
Ga 2:1  
2:14 Ga 2:5,  
Ga 2:11, Ga 2:12  
2:15 1Sa 15:18;  
Eph 2:12  
2:16 Ps 143:2;  
Ro 3:20, Ro 3:28,  
Ro 5:1; Ga 3:11  
2:17 Ro 3:4,  
Ro 6:1, Ro 7:4;  
Ga 2:15, Ga 3:21  
2:19 Ro 6:2,  
Ro 6:11, Ro 7:4;  
2Co 5:15  
2:20 Ro 6:6,  
Ro 8:10, Ro 8:37;  
Ga 1:4, Ga 5:24  
2:21 Ga 3:21  
3:1 1Co 1:23;  
Ga 5:7  
3:3 Ga 5:4  
3:4 1Co 15:2;  
2In 1:8  
3:5 1Co 12:10;  
Ga 3:2  
3:6 Gn 15:6;  
Ro 4:3, Ro 4:9  
3:7 Lk 19:9;  
Jn 8:39; Ga 3:9,  
Ga 3:26  
3:8 Gn 12:3,  
Gn 18:18,  
Gn 22:18;  
Ac 3:25

<sup>a</sup>Gen 15:6

2:13 *the rest of the Jews:* Jewish believers in Christ. *joined him in this hypocrisy:* by withdrawing from table fellowship with the Gentiles when James' supporters arrived.

2:14 *weren't acting consistently with the truth of the gospel:* by separating from the Gentile believers with whom they had formerly eaten. *how can you require the Gentiles to live like Jews?:* Peter changed the way he acted among the Gentiles. Now he requires them to adopt a Jewish way of life.

2:15-21 Paul explains what he means by the truth of the gospel.

2:15 *we're not Gentile sinners:* The Gentiles are sinners because they don't possess God's Law, which reveals how one should behave. Jews are in a more advantageous position (Rom 3:1-2).

2:16 *made righteous:* put in a right relation with God. *by the works of the Law:* the prescriptions of the Law, especially circumcision, sabbath observance, and dietary regulations. *through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ:* Jesus' obedience to God is the basis of salvation. *We ourselves believed in Christ Jesus:* Even Jews like Paul have believed in Christ so that they can be righteous before God.

2:17 *But if it is discovered that we ourselves are sinners:* Those who follow Paul appear to be like Gentile sinners since they rely on faith rather than on doing what the Law requires. *is Christ a servant of sin?:* Has Christ become an excuse to do away with the Law and become like Gentile sinners?

2:18 *If I rebuild the very things that I tore down:* Paul set aside the Law that divided Gentiles and Jews. *I show that I myself am breaking the Law:* If he restored the Law that divided Gentiles and Jews, Paul would betray the gospel.

2:19 *I died to the Law:* Paul set aside his loyalty to the Law to give his loyalty to God through Christ.

2:20 The new center of Paul's being is Christ rather than himself.

2:21 That Christ died for sins (Gal 1:4) indicates that righteousness cannot come through doing what the Law requires. Otherwise, why did God send God's Son into the world?

3:1-5:12 Paul provides the Galatians with several scriptural arguments to show that they are Abraham's descendants by believing in the gospel. Consequently, there's no need to be circumcised and embrace the Law. In Christ they are already made righteous.

3:1-5 Paul argues that since the Galatians have already received the gift of the Spirit on the basis of faith, there's no need for them to do what the Law requires in order to be made right before God.

3:1 *was put on display as crucified:* Paul recalls how he preached Christ crucified to them.

3:2 *doing the works of the Law:* the requirements of the Law, especially circumcision, sabbath observance, and dietary regulations. *believing what you heard:* the message of the crucified Christ.

3:5 *the one providing you with the Spirit:* God.

3:6-9 Paul argues that God previously announced the gospel to Abraham, the gospel that promised the Gentiles would be made right before God.

3:6 In Genesis 15 God established a covenant with Abraham. The quotation of Genesis 15:6 shows that Abraham was made right before God because of his faith.

3:8 The quotation of Genesis 12:3 is part of God's promise

3:9 Ro 4:16;  
Ga 3:7; Ga 3:8  
3:10 Dt 27:26;  
Jer 11:3; Ro 4:15

3:11 Hab 2:4;  
Ro 1:17; Ga 2:16;  
Heb 10:38

3:12 Lv 18:5;  
Ro 10:5

3:13 Dt 11:21;  
Ac 3:30; Ro 3:24;  
Ga 4:5; Heb 9:28

3:14 J1 2:8;  
Jn 7:39; Ac 2:33;  
Ga 3:2; Eph 1:13

3:15 Ro 3:5;  
Heb 9:17

3:16 Gn 12:7,  
Gn 13:15,  
Gn 17:7,  
Gn 22:18;  
Ac 3:25

3:17 Gn 15:13;  
Ex 12:40,  
Ex 12:41; Ac 7:6

3:18 Ro 4:13,  
Ro 4:14; Heb 6:14

3:19 Ex 20:19;  
Dt 5:5; Ac 7:53;  
Ro 5:20; Ga 3:16

3:20 1Ti 2:5;  
Heb 8:6,  
Heb 9:15,  
Heb 12:24

3:21 Ga 2:17,  
Ga 2:21

3:22 Ro 3:9,  
Ro 11:32

3:23 Ro 11:32;  
Ga 3:25; Ga 4:4,  
Ga 4:5; Ga 4:21

3:24 Ro 10:4;  
1Co 4:15; Ga 2:16

3:25 Ro 7:4;  
Ga 4:1

3:26 Jn 1:12;  
Ro 8:14; Ga 4:5;  
Eph 1:5

3:27 Mt 28:19;  
Ro 6:3; Ro 13:14;  
1Co 12:13;  
1Pt 3:21

time that God would make the Gentiles righteous on the basis of faith, scripture preached the gospel in advance to Abraham: *All the Gentiles will be blessed in you.*<sup>b</sup> Therefore, those who believe are blessed together with Abraham who believed.

<sup>10</sup>All those who rely on the works of the Law are under a curse, because it is written, *Everyone is cursed who does not keep on doing all the things that have been written in the Law scroll.*<sup>c</sup>

<sup>11</sup>But since no one is made righteous by the Law as far as God is concerned, it is clear that *the righteous one will live on the basis of faith.*<sup>d</sup> <sup>12</sup>The Law isn't based on faith; rather, *the one doing these things will live by them.*<sup>e</sup> <sup>13</sup>Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us—because it is written, *Everyone who is hung on a tree is cursed.*<sup>f</sup> <sup>14</sup>He redeemed us so that the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, and that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

<sup>15</sup>Brothers and sisters, I'll use an example from human experience. No one ignores or makes additions to a validated will. <sup>16</sup>The promises were made to Abraham and to his descendant. It doesn't say, "and to the descendants," as if referring to many rather than just one. It says, "and to your descendant," who is Christ. <sup>17</sup>I'm saying this: the Law, which came four hundred thirty years later, doesn't invalidate the agreement that was previously validated by God so that it cancels the promise. <sup>18</sup>If the inheritance were based upon the Law, it would no longer be from the promise. But God has given it graciously to Abraham through a promise.

### The Law's origin and purpose

<sup>19</sup>So why was the Law given? It was added because of offenses, until the descendant would come to whom the promise had been made. It was put in place through angels by the hand of a mediator. <sup>20</sup>Now the mediator does not take one side; but God is one. <sup>21</sup>So, is the Law against the promises of God? Absolutely not! If a Law had been given that was able to give life, then righteousness would in fact have come from the Law. <sup>22</sup>But scripture locked up all things under sin, so that the promise based on the faithfulness of Jesus Christ might be given to those who have faith. <sup>23</sup>Before faith came, we were guarded under the Law, locked up until faith that was coming would be revealed, <sup>24</sup>so that the Law became our custodian until Christ so that we might be made righteous by faith.

### God's children are heirs in Christ

<sup>25</sup>But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian.

<sup>26</sup>You are all God's children through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup>All of you who were baptized

<sup>b</sup>Gen 12:3 <sup>c</sup>Deut 27:26 <sup>d</sup>Hab 2:4 <sup>e</sup>Lev 18:5 <sup>f</sup>Deut 21:23

to Abraham. For Paul the promise foreshadows the gospel he preaches to the Gentiles.

**3:10-14** Paul employs a scriptural argument to show that, because those under the Law are under the threat of a curse, those who are made righteous have been freed from the curse by Christ.

**3:10** Deuteronomy 27:26 pronounces a curse on those who don't do everything the Law requires.

**3:11** Alluding to Habakkuk 2:4, Paul says that righteousness is based on faith.

**3:12** Leviticus 18:5 shows that the Law is based on doing what it requires rather than on faith.

**3:13** By dying on the cross, Christ took on himself the curse mentioned in Deuteronomy 21:23.

**3:14** *the blessing of Abraham*: The blessing is the gift of the Spirit (see Gal 3:9).

**3:15-18** The Law, which came after God's promise to Abraham, doesn't cancel the promise based on faith.

**3:16** *and to his descendant*: Paul refers to Genesis 12:7. Both here and in Genesis, the Greek text uses the term *sperma*. This is a singular noun, but it can be used either for a single descendant or for all of one's descendants. Here Paul understands it as a reference to a single descendant, allowing him to identify Christ as the one to whom the Lord made promises.

**3:17** *which came four hundred thirty years later*: Having

compared the promise to a will (Gal 3:15), Paul argues that the Law can't alter the will's stipulations (faith) since the Law came later.

**3:18** *the inheritance*: the promised gift of the Spirit.

**3:19-24** After affirming that the Law doesn't cancel the promise, Paul must explain why God gave the Law.

**3:19** *because of offenses*: The Law was given to deal with sins. *until the descendant*: Christ. *by the hand of a mediator*: Moses.

**3:21** *If a Law had been given that was able to give life*: The Law wasn't intended to give life but to control sins until Christ came (cf. Gal 2:21).

**3:22** *But scripture locked up all things under sin*: Scripture reveals that all are under the power of sin (cf. Rom 3:9).

**3:23** *Before faith came*: faith in Christ. *guarded under the Law*: The Law was intended to keep people from transgressing. *until faith*: The role of the Law was temporary.

**3:24** *the Law became our custodian until Christ*: Paul compares the Law to a household slave in charge of a young boy who will become the master of the household. Once Christ comes, the role of the Law ends.

**3:25-29** Paul concludes the first part of his argument by noting that those baptized into Christ are Abraham's descendants.

**3:25** *now that faith has come*: The appearance of Christ marks the end of the role of the Law (see Rom 10:4).

into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>Now if you belong to Christ, then indeed you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise.

**4** I'm saying that as long as the heirs are minors, they are no different from slaves, though they really are the owners of everything. <sup>2</sup>However, they are placed under trustees and guardians until the date set by the parents. <sup>3</sup>In the same way, when we were minors, we were also enslaved by this world's system. <sup>4</sup>But when the fulfillment of the time came, God sent his Son, born through a woman, and born under the Law. <sup>5</sup>This was so he could redeem those under the Law so that we could be adopted. <sup>6</sup>Because you are sons and daughters, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father!" <sup>7</sup>Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son or daughter, and if you are his child, then you are also an heir through God.

**Paul's concern for the Galatians**

<sup>8</sup>At the time, when you didn't know God, you were enslaved by things that aren't gods by nature. <sup>9</sup>But now, after knowing God (or rather, being known by God), how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless world system? Do you want to be slaves to it again? <sup>10</sup>You observe religious days and months and seasons and years. <sup>11</sup>I'm afraid for you! Perhaps my hard work for you has been for nothing.

<sup>12</sup>I beg you to be like me, brothers and sisters, because I have become like you! You haven't wronged me. <sup>13</sup>You know that I first preached the gospel to you because of an illness. <sup>14</sup>Though my poor health burdened you, you didn't look down on me or reject me, but you welcomed me as if I were an angel from God, or as if I were Christ Jesus! <sup>15</sup>Where then is the great attitude that you had? I swear that, if possible, you would have dug out your eyes and given them to me. <sup>16</sup>So then, have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? <sup>17</sup>They are so concerned about you, though not with good intentions. Rather, they want to shut you out so that you would run after them. <sup>18</sup>However, it's always good to have people concerned about you with good intentions, and not just when I'm there with you. <sup>19</sup>My little children, I'm going through labor pains again until Christ is formed in you. <sup>20</sup>But I wish I could be with you now and change how I sound, because I'm at a loss about you.

**Slave versus free**

<sup>21</sup>Tell me—those of you who want to be under the Law—don't you listen to the Law? <sup>22</sup>It's written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and one by the free woman.

4:16 Am 5:10 4:17 2Pt 2:3, 2Pt 2:18 4:18 Ps 69:9, Ps 119:139; Phi 1:27; Ti 2:14; Rev 3:19 4:19 1Co 4:15; Eph 4:13 4:21 Lk 16:29; Ro 9:30; Ga 2:14, Ga 3:23-24 4:22 Gn 16:15, Gn 21:2

**3:28 neither Jew nor Greek:** Christ overcomes all ethnic barriers. **slave nor free:** Christ overcomes all social barriers. **male and female:** Christ overcomes all sexual barriers.

**3:29 you are Abraham's descendants:** because they are in Christ, who is Abraham's singular descendant. **heirs according to the promise:** See Galatians 3:8.

**4:1-11 Paul reminds the Galatians they are now adults and shouldn't act like children by placing themselves under the Law.**

**4:2 until the date set by the parents:** the date when they'll receive their inheritance.

**4:3 when we were minors:** when they were under the Law's authority and the powers of the present age (Gal 1:4) from which Christ freed them.

**4:4 God sent his Son:** Paul alludes to the preexistence of the Son (see Rom 8:3). **born under the Law:** This highlights Jesus' Jewish origin.

**4:5 so that we could be adopted:** as God's sons and daughters through Christ (see Rom 8:15-17).

**4:6 Abba:** the Aramaic word for "father" (see Mark 14:36; Rom 8:15).

**4:8 when you didn't know God:** the period before their conversion, when they didn't know Israel's God, the Father of Jesus Christ.

**4:9 how can you turn back:** by doing what the Law requires and being circumcised.

**4:10 You observe religious days:** The Galatians are following Jewish festivals.

**4:12-20 Paul makes a personal appeal based on his friendship with the Galatians.**

**4:12 be like me:** They ought to imitate Paul, who relies on Christ's faithfulness rather than on doing what the Law requires. **I have become like you:** He lived as a Gentile when he was among them (see 1 Cor 9:21).

**4:13 because of an illness:** An illness caused Paul to remain with the Galatians.

**4:15 you would have dug out your eyes and given them to me:** The Galatians would have given Paul what was most precious to them.

**4:16 by telling you the truth:** that a person is made righteous through Christ's faithfulness rather than by doing what the Law requires.

**4:17 They are so concerned about you:** the missionaries who would require them to become circumcised. **they want to shut you out:** They desire the Galatians for themselves.

**4:19 My little children:** Paul is the father of the Galatians because he brought the gospel to them. **until Christ is formed in you:** Like a mother, Paul must give birth anew to the community.

**4:21-5:1 Paul employs a scriptural argument to show the Galatians there are two lines of descent from Abraham. One leads to slavery, the other to freedom.**

**4:22 It's written:** Paul alludes to the birth stories of Ishmael (Gen 16) and Isaac (Gen 21). **the slave woman:** Hagar. **the free woman:** Sarah.

3:28 Jn 17:11; Ro 10:12; 1Co 12:12; 1Co 12:13; Col 3:11 3:29 Ro 4:13, Ro 8:17; 1Co 3:23; Ga 4:7; Eph 3:6 4:1 2Ki 10:1; Ga 4:2 4:2 2Ki 10:1; Ga 4:1 4:3 Ga 2:4; Ga 4:9; Col 2:8; Col 2:20 4:4 Gn 3:15; Mk 1:15; Jn 1:14; Eph 1:10 4:5 Jn 1:12; Ga 3:13; Ga 3:26; Eph 1:5 4:6 Ac 16:7; Ro 5:5, Ro 8:15 4:7 Ro 8:17; Ga 3:29 4:8 Is 37:19; Jer 2:11; 1Co 1:21; 1Th 4:5; 2Th 1:8 4:9 1Co 8:3; Ga 4:3; Col 2:20 4:10 Ro 14:5; Col 2:16 4:11 2Co 12:20; Ga 2:21; Ph 2:16; 1Th 3:5 4:12 2Co 2:5; 2Co 6:13; Ga 6:18 4:13 1Co 2:3; 2Co 12:7 4:14 Mt 10:40; 2Co 5:20 4:15 Ps 106:12; Ps 106:13; Mt 24:12; Ro 10:2; Rev 2:4

4:23 Gn 18:10;  
Gn 21:1;  
Ro 9:7, 8;  
Heb 11:11  
4:24 Ga 4:25  
4:25 Ga 4:24  
4:26 Heb 12:22;  
Rev 3:12;  
Rev 21:2;  
Rev 21:10  
4:27 Is 54:1  
4:28 Ro 9:8;  
Ga 3:29, Ga 4:23  
4:29 Gn 21:9;  
Ga 5:11  
4:30 Gn 21:10;  
In 8:35  
4:31 Ga 4:22  
5:1 In 8:32;  
Ac 15:10;  
1Co 16:13;  
Ga 2:4, Ga 5:13  
5:2 Ac 15:1;  
2Co 10:1; Ga 5:6  
5:3 Ro 2:25;  
Ga 3:10  
5:4 Ga 2:21;  
Heb 12:15;  
2Pt 3:17  
5:5 Ro 8:23;  
Ro 8:24, Ro 8:25  
5:6 1Co 7:19;  
Ga 6:15; 1Th 1:3  
5:7 1Co 9:24;  
Ga 3:1  
5:8 Ga 1:6  
5:9 Lk 13:21;  
1Co 5:6;  
1Co 15:33  
5:10 2Co 2:3;  
Ga 1:7, Ga 5:12;  
Phi 3:15  
5:11 1Co 1:23;  
Ga 4:29, Ga 6:12  
5:12 Ga 5:10  
5:13 1Co 8:9;  
1Co 9:19; Ga 5:1;  
1Pt 2:16

<sup>23</sup>The son by the slave woman was conceived the normal way, but the son by the free woman was conceived through a promise. <sup>24</sup>These things are an allegory: the women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, which gives birth to slave children; this is Hagar. <sup>25</sup>Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and she corresponds to the present-day Jerusalem, because the city is in slavery with her children. <sup>26</sup>But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. <sup>27</sup>It's written:

*Rejoice, barren woman,  
you who have not given birth.  
Break out with a shout,  
you who have not suffered labor pains;  
because the woman who has been deserted  
will have many more children  
than the woman who has a husband.<sup>6</sup>*

<sup>28</sup>Brothers and sisters, you are children of the promise like Isaac. <sup>29</sup>But just as it was then, so it is now also: the one who was conceived the normal way harassed the one who was conceived by the Spirit. <sup>30</sup>But what does the scripture say? *Throw out the slave woman and her son, because the slave woman's son won't share the inheritance with the free woman's son.<sup>h</sup>*

<sup>31</sup>Therefore, brothers and sisters, we aren't the slave woman's children, but we are the free woman's children. <sup>1</sup>Christ has set us free for freedom. Therefore, stand firm and don't submit to the bondage of slavery again.

#### **Arguments against being circumcised**

<sup>2</sup>Look, I, Paul, am telling you that if you have yourselves circumcised, having Christ won't help you. <sup>3</sup>Again I swear to every man who has himself circumcised that he is required to do the whole Law. <sup>4</sup>You people who are trying to be made righteous by the Law have been estranged from Christ. You have fallen away from grace! <sup>5</sup>We eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness through the Spirit by faith. <sup>6</sup>Being circumcised or not being circumcised doesn't matter in Christ Jesus, but faith working through love does matter.

<sup>7</sup>You were running well—who stopped you from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup>This line of reasoning doesn't come from the one who calls you. <sup>9</sup>A little yeast works through the whole lump of dough. <sup>10</sup>I'm convinced about you in the Lord that you won't think any other way. But the one who is confusing you will pay the penalty, whoever that may be. <sup>11</sup>Brothers and sisters, if I'm still preaching circumcision, why am I still being harassed? In that case, the offense of the cross would be canceled. <sup>12</sup>I wish that the ones who are upsetting you would castrate themselves!

<sup>13</sup>You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only don't let this freedom be an

<sup>6</sup>Isa 54:1 <sup>h</sup>Gen 21:10

4:23 *the normal way*: Hagar was young and able to bear children, *through a promise*: Sarah was old and barren.

4:24 *an allegory*: a figure of speech in which one set of characters and events represents another set of characters and events.

4:25 *the present-day Jerusalem*: that portion of Israel that hasn't believed in Christ, *in slavery with her children*: They're still under the Law's authority.

4:26 *the Jerusalem that is above*: Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ.

4:27 Paul uses Isaiah 54:1 to identify the *barren woman* with "the Jerusalem that is above" (Gal 4:26), and her *children* with those who believe in Christ.

4:30 Paul uses Genesis 21:10 to exhort the Galatians to expel the intruding missionaries.

4:31 *we are the free woman's children*: The Galatians belong to the line of Isaac.

5:1 *Christ has set us free*: from being under the Law's authority.

5:2-12 Paul brings his argument to a close by urging the Galatians not to have themselves circumcised.

5:3 *required to do the whole Law*: Those who accept circumcision place themselves under the Law's authority.

5:4 *fallen away from grace*: the favor God revealed in Christ.

5:5 *the hope of righteousness*: God's declaration of acceptance at the final judgment.

5:6 *faith working through love*: Faith expresses itself in love.

5:10 *the one who is confusing you*: the leader of the intruding missionaries.

5:11 *the offense of the cross*: the scandal of a crucified Messiah (see 1 Cor 1:22-24).

5:13-6:10 Although not under the Law's authority, those

## *The Allegory of Abraham's Two Sons*

Slave woman	Free woman
Hagar	Sarah
Conceived the normal way	Conceived through the promise
Ishmael	Isaac
Hagar	Sarah
Old covenant	New covenant
Present-day Jerusalem	Jerusalem above
Slave children	Free children
Under the Law	Led by the Spirit

opportunity to indulge your selfish impulses, but serve each other through love. <sup>14</sup>All the Law has been fulfilled in a single statement: *Love your neighbor as yourself.*<sup>15</sup> But if you bite and devour each other, be careful that you don't get eaten up by each other!

**Two different ways of living**

<sup>16</sup>I say be guided by the Spirit and you won't carry out your selfish desires. <sup>17</sup>A person's selfish desires are set against the Spirit, and the Spirit is set against one's selfish desires. They are opposed to each other, so you shouldn't do whatever you want to do. <sup>18</sup>But if you are being led by the Spirit, you aren't under the Law. <sup>19</sup>The actions that are produced by selfish motives are obvious, since they include sexual immorality, moral corruption, doing whatever feels good, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, drug use and casting spells, hate, fighting, obsession, losing your temper, competitive opposition, conflict, selfishness, group rivalry, <sup>21</sup>jealousy, drunkenness, partying, and other things like that. I warn you as I have already warned you, that those who do these kinds of things won't inherit God's kingdom.

<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this. <sup>24</sup>Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified self with its passions and its desires.

<sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let's follow the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let's not become arrogant, make each other angry, or be jealous of each other.

**Caring and sharing**

**6** Brothers and sisters, if a person is caught doing something wrong, you who are spiritual should restore someone like this with a spirit of gentleness. Watch out for yourselves so you won't be tempted too. <sup>2</sup>Carry each other's burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>If anyone thinks they are important when they aren't, they're fooling themselves. <sup>4</sup>Each person should test their own work and be happy with doing a good job and not compare themselves with others. <sup>5</sup>Each person will have to carry their own load.

<sup>6</sup>Those who are taught the word should share all good things with their teacher. <sup>7</sup>Make no mistake, God is not mocked. A person will harvest what they plant. <sup>8</sup>Those who plant only for their own benefit will harvest devastation from their selfishness, but those who plant for the benefit of the Spirit will harvest eternal life from the Spirit. <sup>9</sup>Let's not get tired of doing good, because in time we'll have a harvest if we don't give up. <sup>10</sup>So then, let's work for the good of all whenever we have an opportunity, and especially for those in the household of faith.

**Final greeting**

<sup>11</sup>Look at the large letters I'm making with my own handwriting! <sup>12</sup>Whoever wants to look good by human standards will try to get you to be circumcised, but only so they won't be harassed for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup>Those who are circumcised don't observe the Law themselves, but they want you to be circumcised, so they can boast about your physical body.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lev 19:18 <sup>1</sup>In Gk the word traditionally rendered as *flesh* is rendered here as *physical body*, but it has a wide range of meaning. Gal 5:13-25; 6:8, 12 contain nine close occurrences of the same word in Gk, but it is rendered as *selfish* in regard to impulses, desires, motives, or benefit, and *human standards* in 6:12.

6:7 Job 4:8; Hos 10:12; 1Co 6:9; 1Co 15:33; 2Co 9:6 6:8 Job 4:8; Prv 22:8; Hos 8:7; Ga 6:7; Jas 3:18 6:9 Ro 2:7; 1Co 15:58; 2Co 4:1; 2Th 3:13; Heb 12:3 6:10 Prv 3:27; Jn 12:35; Eph 2:19 6:11 1Co 16:21 6:12 Ac 15:1; Ga 23, Ga 5:11 6:13 Ro 2:25

in the Spirit fulfill the Law through keeping the love commandment.

5:13-15 The Law is fulfilled through keeping the love commandment.

5:13 called to freedom: from being under the Law's authority.

5:14 Paul quotes Leviticus 19:18 (see Rom 13:8-10).

5:16-26 Paul contrasts two ways of living: living according to God's Spirit and living according to one's selfish desires.

5:18 you aren't under the Law: Since those who are made righteous are guided by the power of the Spirit, they are no longer under the Law's authority.

5:22 the fruit of the Spirit: The morally good life is the outcome of the Spirit's working in the lives of believers.

5:23 There is no law against things like this: The fruit of the Spirit doesn't break the Law.

6:1-10 Paul describes how believers should live their lives in community with each other.

6:1 you who are spiritual: those guided by God's Spirit.

6:2 the law of Christ: Christ's love command, which he followed in his own life.

6:11-18 Paul summarizes the main themes of his letter.

6:11 with my own handwriting: Paul writes the last portion of the letter to show that the letter is really his.

6:13 don't observe the Law themselves: Paul accuses the intruders of failing to observe the Law they would impose on the Galatians.

5:14 Lv 19:18; Mt 7:12; Mt 19:19; Ro 13:8; Ro 13:10  
5:15 1Co 3:3; 2Co 12:20; Phi 3:2; Jas 3:14; Jas 4:1  
5:16 Ro 8:4; Ro 13:14; Ga 5:24-25; Eph 2:3  
5:17 Ro 7:15; Ro 7:18; Ro 7:23; Ro 8:5  
5:18 Ro 6:14; Ro 8:14; Ga 5:16  
5:19 1Co 6:9; 2Co 12:21  
5:20 Ga 5:19  
5:21 Ro 13:13; 1Co 6:9-10; Eph 5:5; Rev 22:15  
5:22 Ro 14:17; 1Co 13:4; 2Co 6:6; Eph 5:9; Col 3:12  
5:23 Ac 24:25; Ga 5:18; Ga 5:22; Eph 4:2; Ti 2:2  
5:24 Ro 6:6; Ro 7:5; Ro 8:13; Ro 13:14; Ga 5:16  
5:25 Ga 5:16  
5:26 Phi 2:3; Jas 3:14  
6:1 Ro 15:1; 1Co 2:15; 1Co 4:21; 2Th 3:15; Heb 12:13  
6:2 Ro 15:1; 1Co 9:21; 1Th 5:14  
6:3 1Co 3:18; 1Co 8:2  
6:4 1Co 11:28; 2Co 13:5  
6:5 Prv 9:12; Is 3:10; 11; Jer 17:10; 1Co 3:8  
6:6 Mt 10:10; Ro 15:27; 1Co 9:11; 1Co 9:14; 1Ti 5:18

6:14 Ro 6:6;  
1Co 2:2; Ga 2:20,  
Ga 5:24; Phi 3:3  
6:15 1Co 7:19;  
2Co 5:17;  
Ga 5:6;  
Eph 2:10;  
Col 3:10

6:16 Ps 125:5;  
Ro 9:6  
6:17 2Co 11:23

**14**But as for me, God forbid that I should boast about anything except for the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world has been crucified to me through him, and I have been crucified to the world. **15**Being circumcised or not being circumcised doesn't mean anything. What matters is a new creation. **16**May peace and mercy be on whoever follows this rule and on God's Israel.

**17**From now on, no one should bother me because I bear the marks of Jesus on my body.

**18**Brothers and sisters, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

**6:14** *The world has been crucified to me:* The world is dead to Paul, and Paul is dead to the world.

**6:15** *a new creation:* the new reality created in Christ (see 2 Cor 5:17).

**6:16** *this rule:* the new creation mentioned in 6:15. *God's Israel:* Jews and Gentiles who believe in Christ.

**6:17** *the marks of Jesus:* the scars from Paul's sufferings (see 2 Cor 11:22–12:12).

# EPHESIANS

According to Acts, Paul spent more time in Ephesus than anywhere else (Acts 19). He would have known this church more intimately than any other. But this letter is his least personal and most general. It isn't written to address any specific problem, and there aren't many references to people in the church. It's likely, therefore, that Ephesians was sent to the churches Paul knew about in Asia Minor, including the church in Ephesus. Over the years the letter became closely associated with the Ephesian Christians, so it has come to have this title. A great benefit of the letter's general character is that it gives us a good summary of Paul's basic understanding of Christian thought and Christian living.

Some NT scholars note unusual features like these and question whether Paul is its author. Perhaps someone else wrote it using his name. It makes good sense, however, to regard this

letter as genuinely from Paul. Church leaders in the generations that followed the apostles assumed Paul wrote it, and it fits well within a reconstruction of Paul's life and ministry. Moreover, it contains much personal information that reads most naturally with Paul as its author.

The letter contains a basic presentation of Paul's gospel, meant for teaching and worship among Christian gatherings. It begins with a celebration of Christian identity, where Paul lists all the blessings believers enjoy in their salvation (Eph 1:3-14). Paul's prayer (Eph 1:15-19) leads him into his main theme, which he states in Ephesians 1:20-23: God has triumphed over the powers of darkness by raising Jesus from the dead and making him the Lord over all creation. Paul then discusses God's activities in salvation. God is transforming people's lives from slavery and oppression to freedom and empowerment for obedience (Eph 2:1-10).



Harbor Street in Ephesus  
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Furthermore, God is uniting humanity together, especially former enemies (Eph 2:11-22).

God isn't limited by Paul's being in prison either. God still works through Paul the prisoner to make the gospel known (Eph 3:1-13). This leads to Paul's second prayer of praise for God's mighty power to work in any situation (Eph 3:14-21).

In the second half of Ephesians (Eph 4-6), Paul gives instructions for Christians to live out God's salvation. Each church community should consider itself a "body of Christ" and live as if they are the presence of Jesus on earth. Their unity is a major priority, and God gave gifted people to each community to bring about their growth in maturity (Eph 4:1-16). Christians should also be different. They should identify and then avoid ways of life that destroy relationships and harm the community's health. They should think about behaviors that would be good for community health and develop habits of doing these kinds of things (Eph 4:17-24). Paul gives some examples of how they can do this (Eph 4:25-32).

Because God has transformed believers into children, they are to imitate God's love. This is especially seen in self-sacrificial actions toward others (Eph 5:1-5). Paul then contrasts two general ways of living. Christians should live as light and not as darkness (Eph 5:6-14). They should

live wisely in the world and not foolishly (Eph 5:15-21). Paul means that they are to avoid the destructive behaviors that are part of the surrounding culture. He doesn't say specifically what these are. He leaves it up to each community to determine which behaviors and habits are harmful and which ones will bring about goodness for others and from others.

The final major section of the letter (Eph 5:22-6:9) gives a concrete example of how Christians should live as communities. Paul uses the model of a household, which in the ancient world would have included the basic family unit and also servants, slaves, and a number of other family relatives. The model household functions well when everyone serves, loves, and honors one another. This is how churches should live as communities that are Christ's body on earth.

Paul closes Ephesians with a call to spiritual warfare (Eph 6:10-17) and some final greetings (Eph 6:18-21). Evil spiritual beings, he warns, tempt people to engage in the destructive behaviors we encounter in the world. Paul isn't calling for believers to engage evil spirits directly but rather to use God's power to resist the spirits' temptations and to develop communities of love and service to others. That's how Christians wage war against the "forces of cosmic darkness" (Eph 6:12).

### I. God's Victory in Christ (1:1-3:21)

- A. Paul's greeting (1:1-2)
- B. Celebration of blessings (1:3-14)
- C. Paul's prayer (1:15-19)
- D. God's victorious power (1:20-3:13)
  - 1. God changes lives (2:1-10)
  - 2. God unites enemies (2:11-22)
  - 3. God empowers ministers (3:1-13)
- E. Paul's second prayer (3:14-21)

### II. Living as God's Victorious People in Christ (4:1-6:24)

- A. Living in unity (4:1-16)
- B. Living transformed lives (4:17-32)
- C. Behaving as God's children (5:1-14)
- D. Living wisely (5:15-21)
- E. God's new community (5:22-6:9)
- F. Living in God's victory (6:10-17)
- G. Conclusion (6:18-24)



**Greeting**

**1** From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will.  
**1** To the holy and faithful people in Christ Jesus in Ephesus.<sup>a</sup>  
**2** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

**The believers' blessings**

**3** Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing that comes from heaven. **4** God chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in God's presence before the creation of the world. **5** God destined us to be his adopted children through Jesus Christ because of his love. This was according to his goodwill and plan **6** and to honor his glorious grace that he has given to us freely through the Son whom he loves. **7** We have been ransomed through his Son's blood, and we have forgiveness for our failures based on his overflowing grace, **8** which he poured over us with wisdom and understanding. **9** God revealed his hidden design<sup>b</sup> to us, which is according to his goodwill and the plan that he intended to accomplish through his Son. **10** This is what God planned for the climax of all times:<sup>c</sup> to bring all things together in Christ, the things in heaven along with the things on earth. **11** We have also received an inheritance in Christ. We were destined by the plan of God, who accomplishes everything according to his design. **12** We are called to be an honor to God's glory because we were the first to hope in Christ. **13** You too heard the word of truth in Christ, which is the good news of your salvation. You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit because you believed in Christ. **14** The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance, which is applied toward our redemption as God's own people, resulting in the honor of God's glory.

**Paul's prayer for the Ephesians**

**15** Since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, this is the reason that **16** I don't stop giving thanks to God for you when I remember you in my prayers. **17** I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation that makes God known to you. **18** I pray that the eyes of your heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God's call, what is the richness of God's glorious inheritance among believers, **19** and what is the overwhelming greatness of God's power that is working among us believers. This power is conferred by the energy of

<sup>a</sup>The location of Ephesus was added in some later manuscripts, probably to make the opening of this letter similar to the others in the collection of Paul's letters. <sup>b</sup>Or *mystery* <sup>c</sup>Or *the fullness of times*

1:1 Ro 1:1;  
 1Co 1:1; 2Co 1:1;  
 Ga 1:1; Col 1:2  
 1:3 2Co 1:3;  
 Eph 1:20;  
 Eph 2:6; Eph 3:10;  
 1Pt 1:3  
 1:4 Mt 25:34;  
 Ro 8:29; Eph 2:10;  
 Eph 4:15; Eph 5:27  
 1:5 In 1:12;  
 Ro 8:29-30;  
 Ga 4:5; Eph 1:11  
 1:6 Mt 3:17;  
 Eph 1:12; Eph 1:14  
 1:7 Ac 20:28;  
 Ro 2:4; Ro 3:24;  
 Eph 2:7; Col 1:14  
 1:8 Eph 3:10  
 1:9 Ro 16:25;  
 Eph 1:10; Eph 3:3  
 1:10 Mk 1:15;  
 Ga 4:4; Eph 3:15;  
 Col 1:16; Col 1:20  
 1:11 Eph 1:5;  
 Heb 6:17  
 1:12 Eph 1:6;  
 Eph 1:14  
 1:13 Ac 2:33;  
 2Co 1:22;  
 Eph 4:30; Col 1:5  
 1:14 Ac 20:32;  
 2Co 1:22;  
 2Co 5:5; Eph 1:6;  
 Eph 1:12  
 1:15 Col 1:4;  
 Phm 1:5  
 1:16 Ro 1:9;  
 Eph 3:14; Phi 1:4;  
 Col 1:9; 1Th 1:2  
 1:17 Is 11:2;  
 In 20:17; Ro 15:6;  
 Col 1:9  
 1:18 Ac 26:18;  
 2Co 4:6; Eph 1:7;  
 Eph 4:4; Col 1:12  
 1:19 Eph 3:7;  
 Eph 3:20; Eph 6:10;  
 Col 1:29

1:3-14 Paul opens by celebrating all that God has done among his readers in salvation. Paul wants them to think of themselves in these new and wonderful ways.

1:4 *God chose us*: God set God's love on these people from *before the creation of the world*. This is true of anyone who joins the church by receiving Christ. It is how believers ought to regard themselves in relation to God. They shouldn't think of those outside the church in terms of God's choosing, however. If those outside the church join God's people, then being God's chosen becomes their identity, too.

1:9 *God revealed*: Paul's audience is mostly lower-class people, including many slaves. They haven't enjoyed many privileges, but God has chosen to share with them the eternal plan for summing up history.

1:10 *things ... earth*: God's salvation has to do with setting everything right, including things on earth and things in heaven. On earth, God is fixing people's lives and bringing people together in healed communities. In the heavenly realm, God is working to defeat rebellious spiritual powers, including the devil, that are trying to ruin God's creation (Eph 2:2; 6:11-12).

1:12 *first ... Christ*: Paul refers to himself and his ministry

team. They were the first to hope in Christ from the beginning of the Christian movement. In the next verse he then refers to "you," his readers. The great blessings named in this passage belong equally to longtime Christians and to new ones as well.

1:13 *sealed*: The Holy Spirit puts a spiritual mark on Christians, indicating God's ownership of them and guaranteeing their final salvation. *promised*: Israel's prophets promised that God would restore the nation from exile by sending the Spirit of God to give them new hearts (e.g., Ezek 11:19; 26:26). God's presence would come to them, bring the blessings of salvation, and give them power to live renewed lives.

1:14 *down payment*: Paul sees salvation as occurring mainly at the end of history. God's salvation rests on Christians now, though, because God's Spirit lives among them. The Spirit's presence guarantees that they will enjoy the fullness of salvation in the future.

1:17 *spirit ... revelation*: "Wisdom" and "revelation" are common words in biblical texts that speak of a heavenly kind of knowledge. Paul wants his readers to see the world and their lives from the perspective of heaven, from the realm where God reigns and rules over all creation.

1:20 Mk 16:19;  
Ac 2:24, Ac 4:10;  
Ro 8:34; Eph 1:13  
1:21 Mt 12:32;  
Eph 3:10; Phi 2:9;  
Col 1:16, Col 2:10

1:22 1Co 11:3;  
Eph 4:15;  
Eph 5:23;  
Col 1:18;  
Col 2:19

1:23 Jn 1:16;  
1Co 12:27;  
Eph 3:19;  
Col 1:18;  
Col 1:24

2:1 Eph 2:5;  
Col 2:13, Col 3:1  
2:2 Jn 12:31;  
Ac 5:3; 1Co 6:11;  
Eph 2:3; Eph 5:6

2:3 Ro 5:12;  
Ga 5:16

2:4 Jn 3:16  
2:5 Ac 15:11;  
Ro 5:8; Eph 2:1,  
Eph 2:8; Col 2:13

2:6 Eph 1:3,  
Eph 1:20,  
Col 2:12, Col 3:1

2:7 Ro 2:4;  
Eph 1:7; Eph 2:4;  
Ti 3:4

2:8 Jn 4:10;  
Eph 2:5; 2Ti 1:9;  
1Pt 1:5

2:9 Ro 3:20,  
Ro 3:28; 1Co 12:9;  
2Ti 1:9; Ti 3:5

2:10 2Co 5:17;  
Ga 6:15; Eph 4:24;  
Col 3:10; Ti 2:14

2:11 Col 2:11  
2:12 Ga 3:17;  
Eph 4:18;

Col 1:21;  
1Th 4:13

2:13 Ac 2:39;  
Eph 2:17;  
Col 1:20;  
1Pt 3:18

God's powerful strength. <sup>20</sup>God's power was at work in Christ when God raised him from the dead and sat him at God's right side in the heavens, <sup>21</sup>far above every ruler and authority and power and angelic power, any power that might be named not only now but in the future. <sup>22</sup>God put everything under Christ's feet and made him head of everything in the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body. His body, the church, is the fullness of Christ, who fills everything in every way.

### Saved from sin to life

**2**At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. <sup>2</sup>You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God's will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience. <sup>3</sup>At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else.

<sup>4-5</sup>However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that he has for us. You are saved by God's grace! <sup>6</sup>And God raised us up and seated us in the heavens with Christ Jesus. <sup>7</sup>God did this to show future generations the greatness of his grace by the goodness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>You are saved by God's grace because of your faith. <sup>9</sup>This salvation is God's gift. It's not something you possessed. <sup>9</sup>It's not something you did that you can be proud of. <sup>10</sup>Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

### The reconciliation of God's people

<sup>11</sup>So remember that once you were Gentiles by physical descent, who were called "uncircumcised" by Jews who are physically circumcised. <sup>12</sup>At that time you were without Christ. You were aliens rather than citizens of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of God's promise. In this world you had no hope and no God. <sup>13</sup>But now, thanks to Christ Jesus, you who once were so far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup>Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us. <sup>15</sup>He canceled the detailed rules of the Law

<sup>4</sup>Or through his faithfulness

2:14 Lk 2:14; 1Co 12:13; Ga 3:28; Col 1:20; Col 3:11 2:15 Col 2:14; Col 2:20

**1:20-23** These verses contain the main point of this letter: God has achieved a great victory. God defeated death by raising Christ from the dead and has begun to defeat the evil powers that have corrupted the world. God has given Christ the position of ruling Lord over all creation.

**1:21 ruler . . . power:** See sidebar, "The Powers and Authorities" at Ephesians 3.

**1:22 put . . . feet:** Christ is now ruler over all creation, but he isn't yet finished defeating the evil powers that have corrupted the world. In the meantime, Christ is the ruler of the church.

**1:23 his body:** While Jesus was on earth, his physical body was where Christ was located. Now that Jesus is in heaven, the church is Christ's earthly body. The Spirit lives among Christians so that the presence of Jesus is there. The church should have the same effect on earth as Jesus did when he was here.

**1:23 fullness . . . fills:** "Fullness" expresses the idea of Jesus' presence filling the church. God's presence used to fill the temple in Jerusalem. Now God's presence fills the church whenever Christians are together.

**2:1 dead person:** This is spiritual death. People fail to respond to God because they're trapped in repeated patterns of disobedience. They're unable to live rightly.

**2:2 destructive . . . power:** Paul refers to the devil (see Eph 6:11-12), sometimes known as Satan, God's chief spiritual

enemy and agent of evil who's trying to destroy humanity and creation. *spirit of disobedience:* People are responsible for their choices, but evil powers have taken control of creation. An evil spirit is at work among humans to draw their wills away from God and doing what's right.

**2:6 with Christ:** Believers are with Christ, so that what God has done to Christ (brought him to life, raised him up, and seated him) God has also done to believers.

**2:8-9 possessed . . . proud of:** Nothing that we possess or don't possess, nothing that we do or don't do moves God to save people. God saves because of God's love.

**2:10 God planned:** Paul reminds his readers that they can't brag about the good things they do. God planned for them to do those things. Therefore, if they do good things, that doesn't make them any better than anyone else. God saves people, and God saves them so that they will do good things to others.

**2:11 Gentiles . . . "uncircumcised":** Paul reminds them of the racial hostility that used to exist between them and Jews, who'd been part of God's people for ages.

**2:14 our peace:** All believers, Jewish and non-Jewish, are made into one new people in Christ. God unites them so that their new common bond is their faith in Christ, despite their ethnic identity.

**2:15 detailed rules:** The Law of Moses distinguished between Jews and non-Jews. Being Jewish no longer defines

so that he could create one new person out of the two groups, making peace. <sup>16</sup>He reconciled them both as one body to God by the cross, which ended the hostility to God.

<sup>17</sup>When he came, he announced the good news of peace to you who were far away from God and to those who were near. <sup>18</sup>We both have access to the Father through Christ by the one Spirit. <sup>19</sup>So now you are no longer strangers and aliens. Rather, you are fellow citizens with God's people, and you belong to God's household. <sup>20</sup>As God's household, you are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. <sup>21</sup>The whole building is joined together in him, and it grows up into a temple that is dedicated to the Lord. <sup>22</sup>Christ is building you into a place where God lives through the Spirit.

### Paul, apostle to the Gentiles

**3** This is why I, Paul, am a prisoner of Christ for you Gentiles.

<sup>2</sup>You've heard, of course, about the responsibility to distribute God's grace, which God gave to me for you, right? <sup>3</sup>God showed me his secret plan<sup>e</sup> in a revelation, as I mentioned briefly before (<sup>4</sup>when you read this, you'll understand my insight into the secret plan<sup>f</sup> about Christ). <sup>5</sup>Earlier generations didn't know this hidden plan that God has now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets through the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>This plan is that the Gentiles would be co-heirs and parts of the same body, and that they would share with the Jews in the promises of God in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>7</sup>I became a servant of the gospel because of the grace that God showed me through the exercise of his power.

<sup>8</sup>God gave his grace to me, the least of all God's people, to preach the good news about the immeasurable riches of Christ to the Gentiles. <sup>9</sup>God sent me to reveal the secret plan<sup>g</sup> that had been hidden since the beginning of time by God, who created everything. <sup>10</sup>God's purpose is now to show the rulers and powers in the heavens the many different varieties of his wisdom through the church. <sup>11</sup>This was consistent with the plan he had from the beginning

2:16 2Co 5:18;  
Eph 3:14;  
Col 1:20-21;  
Col 2:14  
2:17 Is 57:19;  
Ro 5:1;  
Eph 3:13-14  
2:10 In 10:7;  
Ro 5:2; 1Co 12:13;  
Eph 3:12; Eph 4:4  
2:19 Ga 6:10;  
Eph 2:12;  
Eph 3:6; Phm 3:20;  
Heb 12:22

2:20 Ps 118:22;  
Is 28:16;  
Mt 16:18;  
1Co 3:11;  
Rev 21:14

2:21 1Co 3:16-17

2:22 1Co 3:16;  
Eph 3:17; 1Pt 2:5

3:1 Ac 23:18;  
Eph 4:1;  
2Ti 1:8; Phm 1:1;  
Phm 1:9

3:2 Eph 1:10;  
Col 1:25

3:3 Ro 16:25;  
Ga 1:12; Eph 1:9

3:4 2Co 11:6;  
Col 4:3

3:5 Eph 2:20;  
Eph 4:11

3:6 Ga 3:29;  
Eph 2:16

3:7 Eph 1:19;  
Col 1:23; Col 1:25

3:8 1Co 15:9

3:9 Ro 16:25;  
Eph 3:3; Col 1:26

3:10 Ro 11:33;  
1Co 2:7; Eph 1:3;  
Eph 1:21; 1Pt 1:12

3:11 Prv 16:4;  
Mt 11:25; Eph 1:4;  
Eph 1:10; 2Ti 1:9

*The Powers and Authorities* These figures show up at key places in Ephesians. God has exalted Christ as triumphant Lord far above these "angelic power[s]" in Ephesians 1:21. In Ephesians 3:10 God's work in building the church becomes a lesson for "the rulers and powers" of God's great wisdom. And in Ephesians 6:12 these are the church's enemies in the cosmic battle. According to Paul's Jewish understanding of the world, God had originally created these spiritual rulers to ensure justice and the proper ordering of creation. But they rebelled against God and now hold creation in their enslaving grip of oppression. They're responsible for the varieties of sinful and destructive patterns of life in which people engage. People are responsible for their own actions, but these figures have made available within creation various idolatrous practices, hostilities between ethnic groups, and conflicts between social classes. God overcomes these angelic powers by putting hostility to death (Eph 2:14-16) and creating a space where groups can be reconciled to each other and make peace. This is the purpose of the church, which is made up of various ethnicities in Christ. Further, the church battles against these angelic powers (Eph 6:11, 13). The church resists destructive practices, seeks peace, and celebrates together reconciliation with God. In this way, the church enjoys God's victory over the evil powers.

<sup>e</sup>Or mystery <sup>f</sup>Or mystery <sup>g</sup>Or mystery

God's people. This part of the Law is no longer effective. *new person*: All believers take part in a new humanity. They make up a new person, and that new person should function on earth the way Jesus did.

2:18 *both... access*: The former situation is reversed in Christ. Jews and non-Jews are both near to God, and they've been united to one another in God's new people. 2:21-22 *building... temple*: God's new people don't gather at the temple to worship God. They gather as the temple. They're the building itself, and God dwells among them. This reality is ongoing, becoming more and more effective.

3:2 *to distribute*: Along with other apostles and preachers, Paul had the great responsibility of announcing to the world the gospel of Jesus. God's plan of salvation was

dependent on the messengers' getting the word out. That's why Paul speaks of this as a great responsibility.

3:3 *revelation*: The scriptures didn't reveal God's plan of uniting Jews and non-Jews in one community. God revealed it to Paul. This may be a reference to Paul's encounter with the Lord on the Damascus road (Acts 9).

3:5 *Earlier generations*: Israel's prophets speak of God saving the nations along with Israel (e.g., Isa 42:6; 49:6; 60:3), but it wasn't revealed until Paul's day that this would happen through uniting Jews and non-Jews in the church as equals.

3:10 *to show*: Paul stresses his humiliating circumstances in this passage. He's in prison, and he's "the least of all God's people" (Eph 3:8). The growth of the church through humble ministers serves as a demonstration to the evil

3:13 2Co 1:6;  
Eph 3:1  
3:14 Eph 1:16;  
Phi 2:10  
3:15 Eph 1:10  
3:16 Ro 7:22;  
Eph 1:18; Eph 3:8;  
Phi 4:13; Col 1:11  
3:17 Ga 2:20,  
Ga 5:6; Col 1:23,  
Col 2:7  
3:18 Job 11:8;  
Eph 1:15,  
Eph 3:19  
3:19 Eph 1:23;  
Phi 4:7; Col 2:10  
3:20 Ro 16:25;  
2Co 9:8; Eph 3:7  
3:21 Ro 11:36,  
Ro 16:27  
4:1 Eph 3:1;  
Phi 1:27; Col 1:10  
4:2 1Co 13:7;  
Col 3:12-13  
4:3 Ro 14:17;  
Ro 14:19;  
1Co 1:10;  
2Co 13:11;  
1Th 5:13  
4:4 Ro 12:5;  
Eph 1:18,  
Eph 2:18;  
Col 3:15  
4:5 1Co 11:3,  
1Co 8:6  
4:6 Dt 6:4;  
1Co 8:6  
4:7 Ro 12:3  
4:8 Ps 68:18;  
Col 2:15  
4:9 Jn 3:13  
4:10 Heb 4:14,  
Heb 7:26  
4:11 Jer 3:15;  
Ac 13:1; Ac 21:8;  
1Co 12:28; 2Th 4:5  
4:12 1Co 12:27;  
2Co 12:19;  
Eph 4:16; Eph 4:29  
4:13 Jn 1:16;  
Eph 1:23; Eph 4:3;  
Eph 4:5; Col 1:28

of time that he accomplished through Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>12</sup>In Christ we have bold and confident access to God through faith in him.<sup>b</sup> <sup>13</sup>So then, I ask you not to become discouraged by what I'm suffering for you, which is your glory.

#### **Paul's prayer for the Ephesians**

<sup>14</sup>This is why I kneel before the Father. <sup>15</sup>Every ethnic group in heaven or on earth is recognized by him. <sup>16</sup>I ask that he will strengthen you in your inner selves from the riches of his glory through the Spirit. <sup>17</sup>I ask that Christ will live in your hearts through faith. As a result of having strong roots in love, <sup>18</sup>I ask that you'll have the power to grasp love's width and length, height and depth, together with all believers. <sup>19</sup>I ask that you'll know the love of Christ that is beyond knowledge so that you will be filled entirely with the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup>Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us; <sup>21</sup>glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations, forever and always. Amen.

#### **Unity of the body of Christ**

**4** Therefore, as a prisoner for the Lord, I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God. <sup>2</sup>Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love, <sup>3</sup>and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together. <sup>4</sup>You are one body and one spirit, just as God also called you in one hope. <sup>5</sup>There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>and one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.

<sup>7</sup>God has given his grace to each one of us measured out by the gift that is given by Christ. <sup>8</sup>That's why scripture says, *When he climbed up to the heights, he captured prisoners, and he gave gifts to people.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>9</sup>What does the phrase "he climbed up" mean if it doesn't mean that he had first gone down into the lower regions, the earth? <sup>10</sup>The one who went down is the same one who climbed up above all the heavens so that he might fill everything.

<sup>11</sup>He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup>His purpose was to equip God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ <sup>13</sup>until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of God's Son. God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of

<sup>b</sup>Or through his faithfulness <sup>1</sup>Ps 68:18

*The Heavens* Paul refers to "heaven" and activity in "the heavens" five times in Ephesians. God's blessings flow "from heaven" (Eph 1:3). Christ has been raised to sit at God's right side "in the heavens" (Eph 1:20). Believers are also raised up and placed "in the heavens" with Christ (Eph 2:6). In Ephesians 3:10 the powers and authorities "in the heavens" learn about God's wisdom. Paul refers again to these evil powers "in the heavens" against whom believers struggle (Eph 6:12). All of this activity that occurs in the heavenly realm indicates the cosmic scope of Paul's message. The gospel relates to the whole of creation, including all that is in the heavens and on earth. Paul sees a direct connection between the earthly and heavenly spheres, so that everything that happens on earth reflects heavenly realities. This is especially important for the nature of the conflict described in Ephesians. Although God's people live on earth, they're also united with God in heaven, and they engage in conflict with the evil cosmic powers in the heavenly realm. The evil powers want to make humans see earthly reality in ways that will tempt us to live in rebellion against God. These behaviors will keep us in spiritual death (Eph 2:1). Believers battle against the heavenly powers by living in obedience to Jesus, by loving one another, by being gentle and patient with each other, and by being united (Eph 4:2-4).

**4:8 climbed... people:** The imagery here is taken from Psalm 68, where God has won victories, proceeds to the throne, and then showers Israel with gifts. In the same way, Christ has defeated the evil powers in his death and resurrection. When he proceeds to his heavenly throne, he gives gifts to the church. These gifts are actually gifted people (Eph 4:11) who'll help to lead churches to maturity in Christ.

**4:9 What... earth?:** Christ's heavenly enthronement is a triumphant climbing up to the throne because his victory was achieved through his coming to earth, dying, and

powers of how great God's wisdom is. God can use people in very bad circumstances to do great work.

**3:13 discouraged:** Paul's readers may have been alarmed to hear that he was in prison when he wrote this. He's encouraging them that God is still working out the plan of salvation despite Paul's humiliating circumstances.

**3:18 love's:** This is God's love for the church. Paul says in Ephesians 3:19 that this love can't be fully understood, but if they increasingly get to know this love as a church, they'll be a community that truly enjoys God's presence and fullness.

the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup>As a result, we aren't supposed to be infants any longer who can be tossed and blown around by every wind that comes from teaching with deceitful scheming and the tricks people play to deliberately mislead others. <sup>15</sup>Instead, by speaking the truth with love, let's grow in every way into Christ, <sup>16</sup>who is the head. The whole body grows from him, as it is joined and held together by all the supporting ligaments. The body makes itself grow in that it builds itself up with love as each one does its part.

### The old and new life

<sup>17</sup>So I'm telling you this, and I insist on it in the Lord: you shouldn't live your life like the Gentiles anymore. They base their lives on pointless thinking, <sup>18</sup>and they are in the dark in their reasoning. They are disconnected from God's life because of their ignorance and their closed hearts. <sup>19</sup>They are people who lack all sense of right and wrong, and who have turned themselves over to doing whatever feels good and to practicing every sort of corruption along with greed.

<sup>20</sup>But you didn't learn that sort of thing from Christ. <sup>21</sup>Since you really listened to him and you were taught how the truth is in Jesus, <sup>22</sup>change the former way of life that was part of the person you once were, corrupted by deceitful desires. <sup>23</sup>Instead, renew the thinking in your mind by the Spirit <sup>24</sup>and clothe yourself with the new person created according to God's image in justice and true holiness.

<sup>25</sup>Therefore, after you have gotten rid of lying, *Each of you must tell the truth to your neighbor*<sup>3</sup> because we are parts of each other in the same body. <sup>26</sup>*Be angry without sinning.*<sup>4</sup> Don't let the sun set on your anger. <sup>27</sup>Don't provide an opportunity for the devil. <sup>28</sup>Thieves should no longer steal. Instead, they should go to work, using their hands to do good so that they will have something to share with whoever is in need.

<sup>29</sup>Don't let any foul words come out of your mouth. Only say what is helpful when it is needed for building up the community so that it benefits those who hear what you say. <sup>30</sup>Don't make the Holy Spirit of God unhappy—you were sealed by him for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Put aside all bitterness, losing your temper, anger, shouting, and slander, along with every other evil. <sup>32</sup>Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other, in the same way God forgave you in Christ.

**5** Therefore, imitate God like dearly loved children. <sup>2</sup>Live your life with love, following the example of Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us. He was a sacrificial offering that smelled sweet to God.

<sup>3</sup>Sexual immorality, and any kind of impurity or greed, shouldn't even be mentioned among you, which is right for holy persons. <sup>4</sup>Obscene language, silly talk, or vulgar jokes aren't acceptable for believers. Instead, there should be thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup>Because you know

<sup>3</sup>Zech 8:16 <sup>4</sup>Ps 4:4

4:32 Mt 6:14; 1Co 13:4; Col 3:12-13; 1Ph 3:8 5:1 Mt 5:45; Mt 5:48; Lk 6:36; Jn 1:12; Eph 4:32 5:2 Jn 13:34; Ga 1:4; Ga 2:20; Eph 5:25; Heb 10:10 5:3 1Co 6:18; Eph 4:19; Col 3:5; Heb 13:5 5:4 Ro 1:28; Eph 4:29; Eph 5:20 5:5 1Co 6:9; Ga 5:21; Col 3:5; Rev 22:15

being buried in the lower regions, the grave. His resurrection was a victory that gives him the right to ascend his heavenly throne as cosmic champion.

**4:14** *aren't . . . infants:* Gifted people help believers grow spiritually so that they aren't captive to fads. Paul sees growth as increasing in discernment and discretion, which helps believers avoid being taken in by false shortcuts to growth.

**4:16** *body:* Personal growth and community growth work together here so that mature believers contribute to a mature church. The energy for each aspect of this is supplied by Christ.

**4:17** *Gentiles:* Paul isn't referring to non-Jews in the churches to which he writes (see Eph 2:11). He's referring to the destructive ways of life that are found in the wider culture. This is a way of talking among Jews like Paul, but he doesn't intend to speak in a way that makes Jews superior to non-Jews.

**4:26** *Be angry:* Paul isn't commending anger. Anger is natural in communities because people hurt each other in various ways. But when this happens, Paul wants them

to deal with it right away so that no one sins against another by feeding on that anger and doing further damage.

**4:27** *opportunity . . . devil:* One of the ways the church loses ground to spiritual powers of darkness is by failing to deal with anger-causing problems. This creates division and is an opening for evil powers to destroy relationships and communities.

**4:30** *Holy Spirit . . . unhappy:* The church is where God's Spirit dwells, and the Spirit is causing the growth of individuals and the community. The Spirit is unhappy when believers speak destructive words about others and when people divide against one another.

**5:2** *smelled . . . God:* an expression for Israel's sacrifices that were especially pleasing to God because they came from sincere hearts (Exod 29:18; Lev 2:9; Ezek 20:41). Paul uses this expression to describe the gift the Philippians sent him in prison (Phil 4:18).

**5:4** *language . . . thanksgiving:* This verse refers specifically

4:14 Ro 16:18; 1Co 14:20; Heb 13:9; Jas 1:6

4:15 Eph 1:22; Eph 5:21; Gal 1:18; Col 2:19

4:16 Eph 1:4; Eph 4:15; Col 2:19

4:17 Ro 1:21; Eph 2:1; 1Pt 4:3

4:18 Ro 1:21; Ro 11:25; 2Co 3:14; 2Co 4:4; Eph 2:12

4:19 Ro 1:24; Col 3:5; 1Ti 4:2; 1Pt 4:3

4:20 Mt 11:29; Ro 6:1; Ro 7:4; Ro 8:1; 1Co 5:7

4:21 Mk 5:19-20; Lk 8:35; Eph 1:13; Col 2:7

4:22 Ro 6:6; Eph 4:25; Col 3:8-9; Heb 3:13

4:23 Ps 51:10; Ro 12:2; Col 3:10

4:24 Ro 6:4; Ro 13:14; Eph 2:10; Col 3:10

4:25 Zec 8:16; Ro 12:5; Gal 3:9

4:26 Dt 24:15; Ps 4:1; Ps 37:8

4:27 2Co 2:11; Eph 6:11; Jas 4:7; 1Pt 5:8

4:28 Ac 20:35; Ga 6:10; 1Th 4:11

4:29 Ecc 10:12; Mt 12:34; Eph 5:4; Col 3:8; Col 4:6

4:30 Is 63:10; Eph 1:13-14; 1Th 5:19

4:31 Ro 3:14; Col 3:8; Jas 4:11; 1Pt 2:1

5:6 Ro 1:18;  
Eph 2:2; 1Co 2:8;  
Gal 3:6

5:7 Ps 50:18;  
Prv 1:10; Prv 9:6;  
Prv 13:20; Rev 18:4

5:8 1K 16:8;  
Jn 8:12; Jn 12:36;  
Ac 26:18; Eph 2:2

5:9 Ro 15:14;  
Ga 5:22-23;  
Phi 1:11

5:10 Ro 12:2;  
1Th 5:21

5:11 1v 19:17;  
Ro 13:12; 1Co 5:9;  
2Co 6:14; 1Ti 5:20

5:12 Eph 5:3  
5:13 Jn 3:20-21

5:14 Is 26:19;  
Is 51:17; Is 52:1;  
Is 60:1; Ro 13:11

5:15 Col 4:5  
5:16 Ecc 12:1;  
Am 5:13; 1Co 7:29;  
Eph 6:13; Col 4:5

5:17 Ro 12:2;  
Col 1:9; 1Th 4:3;  
1Th 5:18

5:18 Prv 20:1;  
Prv 23:20; 1k 1:15;  
Ro 13:13; 1Th 5:7

5:19 Ac 16:25;  
1Co 14:15;  
1Co 14:26;  
Col 3:16; Jas 5:13

5:20 Jn 14:13;  
Eph 5:4; Col 3:17;  
1Th 5:18;  
Heb 13:15

5:21 2Co 7:1;  
Phi 2:3; 1Pt 5:5

5:22 Gn 3:16;  
1Co 14:34;  
Eph 6:5; Col 3:18;  
1Pt 3:1

5:23 1Co 11:3;  
Eph 1:22; Eph 4:15;  
Gal 1:18

for sure that persons who are sexually immoral, impure, or greedy—which happens when things become gods—those persons won't inherit the kingdom of Christ and God.

### Be children of light

<sup>6</sup>Nobody should deceive you with stupid ideas. God's anger comes down on those who are disobedient because of this kind of thing. <sup>7</sup>So you shouldn't have anything to do with them. <sup>8</sup>You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord, so live your life as children of light. <sup>9</sup>Light produces fruit that consists of every sort of goodness, justice, and truth. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, test everything to see what's pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup>and don't participate in the unfruitful actions of darkness. Instead, you should reveal the truth about them. <sup>12</sup>It's embarrassing to even talk about what certain persons do in secret. <sup>13</sup>But everything exposed to the light is revealed by the light. <sup>14</sup>Everything that is revealed by the light is light. Therefore, it says, *Wake up, sleeper!*<sup>1</sup> *Get up from the dead,*<sup>m</sup> *and Christ will shine on you.*<sup>n</sup>

### Be filled with the Spirit

<sup>15</sup>So be careful to live your life wisely, not foolishly. <sup>16</sup>Take advantage of every opportunity because these are evil times. <sup>17</sup>Because of this, don't be ignorant, but understand the Lord's will. <sup>18</sup>Don't get drunk on wine, which produces depravity. Instead, be filled with the Spirit in the following ways: <sup>19</sup>speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; sing and make music to the Lord in your hearts; <sup>20</sup>always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>21</sup>and submit to each other out of respect for Christ. <sup>22</sup>For example, wives should submit to their husbands as if to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>A husband is the head of his wife like Christ is head of the church, that is, the savior of the

*The Household Code* Paul gives instructions to various family members in Ephesians 5:22–6:9. The sets of relationships among the family members made up a household in the ancient world. Paul is doing something a little different here than just talking about how families should operate. In the ancient world philosophers would talk about the ideal society by discussing the basic unit that made up societies. That was the household, made up of a patriarch and his wife, their children, and all the household slaves. In ancient thought the patriarch ruled his household in such a way that his wife furthered his public reputation, his children were controlled and regarded as less than fully human, and his slaves were seen as being subhuman. This was a system that served the patriarch. Paul's instruction assumes the same form (husband and wife, parents and children, masters and slaves), but differs in important ways. Paul uses the household unit to talk about how the church (God's ideal society) is supposed to operate. In contrast to ancient thinkers, Paul addresses the weaker member of each pair first, indicating that the church includes and serves all its members, not just one person at the top. Each member has dignity and a role to play. No one is to be controlled or manipulated. Husbands must love their wives, parents must treat their children with dignity, and masters and slaves are both responsible to the Lord Christ. Paul doesn't overthrow ancient social structures, and he doesn't call for slaves to be freed. But his instruction to treat slaves with dignity as equals probably paved the way for the eventual elimination of this dehumanizing practice.

<sup>1</sup>Isa 26:19; 51:17; 52:1; 60:1 <sup>m</sup>Isa 26:19 <sup>n</sup>Isa 60:1

to the conduct of the church gathering. Believing communities should focus on praising God and giving thanks rather than on destructive talk that doesn't build up community life.

**5:6 stupid ideas:** Paul said in Ephesians 5:5 that destructive behaviors will lead to judgment. The stupid ideas here are those that lead Christians to believe that this isn't the case. What is *stupid* is the notion that a person can live in a destructive pattern of behavior and doing so won't have any consequences.

**5:14 revealed:** When a community that practices goodness and justice comes into contact with people who behave destructively, the community's behavior is shown for what it truly is. The hope, then, is that the people who

behave destructively will be exposed by the light and transformed to become part of the community that is light—the believing and renewed community.

**5:17 Lord's will:** The church is to live out the Lord's will, which is that people trapped in destructive behaviors will turn and join communities of goodness and justice. The Lord's will is that creation will be renewed, and this should be seen in renewed communities. Churches need to live in view of this will, finding out how that should look in each location that reads this letter.

**5:18 following ways:** In Ephesians 5:19-21 Paul sketches actions that indicate how churches show they are places on earth where God dwells by the Spirit. This includes everyone "submit[ting] to each other" (5:21).

body. <sup>24</sup>So wives submit to their husbands in everything like the church submits to Christ. <sup>25</sup>As for husbands, love your wives just like Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. <sup>26</sup>He did this to make her holy by washing her in a bath of water with the word. <sup>27</sup>He did this to present himself with a splendid church, one without any sort of stain or wrinkle on her clothes, but rather one that is holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup>That's how husbands ought to love their wives—in the same way as they do their own bodies. Anyone who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>No one ever hates his own body, but feeds it and takes care of it just like Christ does for the church <sup>30</sup>because we are parts of his body. <sup>31</sup>*This is why a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two of them will be one body.* <sup>32</sup>Marriage is a significant allegory,<sup>o</sup> and I'm applying it to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup>In any case, as for you individually, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and wives should respect<sup>q</sup> their husbands.

**6**As for children, obey your parents in the Lord, because it is right. <sup>2</sup>The commandment *Honor your father and mother* is the first one with a promise attached: <sup>3</sup>*so that things will go well for you, and you will live for a long time in the land.*<sup>r</sup> <sup>4</sup>As for parents, don't provoke your children to anger, but raise them with discipline and instruction about the Lord.

<sup>5</sup>As for slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling and with sincere devotion to Christ. <sup>6</sup>Don't work to make yourself look good and try to flatter people, but act like slaves of Christ carrying out God's will from the heart. <sup>7</sup>Serve your owners enthusiastically, as though you were serving the Lord and not human beings. <sup>8</sup>You know that the Lord will reward every person who does what is right, whether that person is a slave or a free person. <sup>9</sup>As for masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Stop threatening them, because you know that both you and your slaves have a master in heaven. He doesn't distinguish between people on the basis of status.

### Put on the armor of God

<sup>10</sup>Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and his powerful strength. <sup>11</sup>Put on God's armor so that you can make a stand against the tricks of the devil. <sup>12</sup>We aren't fighting against human enemies but against rulers, authorities, forces of cosmic darkness, and spiritual powers of evil in the heavens. <sup>13</sup>Therefore, pick up the full armor of God so that you can stand your ground on the evil day and after you have done everything possible to still stand. <sup>14</sup>So stand with the belt of truth around your waist, justice as your breastplate, <sup>15</sup>and put shoes on your feet so that you are ready to spread the good news of peace. <sup>16</sup>Above all, carry the shield of faith so that you can extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup>Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word.

<sup>18</sup>Offer prayers and petitions in the Spirit all the time. Stay alert by hanging in there and praying for all believers. <sup>19</sup>As for me, pray that when I open my mouth, I'll get a message that confidently makes this secret plan<sup>o</sup> of the gospel known. <sup>20</sup>I'm an ambassador in chains for the sake of the gospel. Pray so that the Lord will give me the confidence to say what I have to say.

<sup>o</sup>Gen 2:24 <sup>q</sup>Or *mystery* <sup>r</sup>Or *fear* <sup>s</sup>Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16 <sup>o</sup>Or *mystery*

6:9 Lv 25:43; Job 31:13; Jn 13:13; Ac 10:34; Col 4:1 6:10 1Co 16:13; Eph 1:19; 2Ti 2:1 6:11 Ro 13:12; 2Co 6:7, 2Co 10:4; Eph 6:13; 1Th 5:8 6:12 Jn 12:31; Eph 1:3; Eph 1:21; Eph 2:2; Col 1:13 6:13 Eph 5:16; Eph 6:11 6:14 Is 11:5; Is 59:17; Lk 12:35; 1Th 5:8; 1Pt 1:13 6:15 Is 52:7; Ro 10:15 6:16 Ps 120:4; Mt 5:37; 1Th 5:8; 1Jn 5:4 6:17 Is 59:17; Mt 4:4; 1Th 5:8; Heb 4:12 6:18 Mt 26:41; Lk 18:11; Phi 4:6; Col 4:2; 1Ti 2:1 6:19 Ac 4:29; Ro 15:30; Eph 3:3; Col 4:3; 1Th 5:25 6:20 2Co 5:20

5:25 *husbands...wives*: See sidebar, "The Household Code." Husbands and wives related to one another in the ancient world in ways that weren't equal. Paul's instruction here calls for greater justice in this standard relationship.

6:9 *slaves in the same way*: Paul doesn't call for masters to free their slaves, but his instruction is still radical in the ancient world. Masters are to realize that they will give an account to God for how they treat their slaves. They are to relate to their slaves in the same way as slaves are to relate to their masters. Although Paul's words used to be used to support the practice of slavery, they are, in fact, instruction

that lays the groundwork for the eventual elimination of slavery.

6:11 *the devil*: Paul sees the devil as God's spiritual enemy, and his *tricks* are to tempt the church to live in destructive patterns of communal behavior so that the church is unjust, lacks goodness, and doesn't do anything to bless the surrounding culture.

6:13 *armor of God*: These are virtuous practices the church should cultivate, such as justice, peacemaking, righteousness, and faithfulness. Living in these ways is a way of putting on God's armor, which protects local communities of Jesus-followers.

5:24 Ro 7:4; Eph 5:22; Eph 5:23; Eph 5:32; Col 3:20  
5:25 Ac 20:28; Eph 5:2; Col 3:18; 1Pt 3:7; Rev 1:5  
5:26 In 15:3; Jn 17:17; Ti 3:5; Heb 10:10; Heb 13:12  
5:27 2Co 4:14; 2Co 11:2; Eph 1:4  
5:28 Eph 5:25; Eph 5:33; Col 3:19  
5:29 Is 40:11; Mt 23:37  
5:30 Ro 12:5; 1Co 6:15; 1Co 12:27; Eph 1:23  
5:31 Gn 2:24; Mt 19:5; Mk 10:7-8; 1Co 6:16  
5:32 Ps 45:9; Ro 7:4; Ro 8:1; 2Co 11:2; Col 2:2; 1Co 6:16  
5:33 Eph 5:25; Eph 5:28; Col 3:19; 1Pt 3:2  
6:1 Prv 1:8; Prv 6:20; Prv 23:22; Col 3:20  
6:2 Ex 20:12  
6:3 Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16; Eph 6:2  
6:4 Gn 18:19; Dt 6:7; Prv 22:6; Prv 29:17; Col 3:21  
6:5 2Co 11:3; Col 3:22; 1Ti 6:1; Ti 2:9; 1Pt 2:18  
6:6 1Co 7:22; Ga 1:10; Col 3:22  
6:7 Col 3:23  
6:8 Mt 16:27; 1Co 12:13; Ga 3:28; Col 3:11; Col 3:24

6:21 Ac 20:4;  
Col 4:7; 2Ti 4:12;  
Ti 3:12

6:22 Col 2:2,  
Col 4:7-8

6:23 Ga 5:6,  
Ga 6:16; 2Th 3:16;  
1Ph 5:14

6:24 2Co 13:14

### *Final greeting*

<sup>21</sup>Tychicus, my loved brother and faithful servant of the Lord, can inform you about my situation and what I'm doing. <sup>22</sup>I've sent him for this reason—so that you will know about us. He can reassure you.

<sup>23</sup>May there be peace with the brothers and sisters as well as love with the faith that comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>May grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ forever.

**6:21** *Tychicus*: He was likely a ministry partner of Paul who carried this letter and read it aloud to various church communities around Asia Minor, including Ephesus. He

could have helped explain anything in the letter that was unclear and answer any questions about Paul's condition while in prison.



# PHILIPPIANS

PHILIPPIANS: THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

APRIL 1

Paul writes Philippians from prison (Phil 1:7, 13-19). He's to appear in court soon to face the charges against him. While the verdict could lead to execution, he expects he'll be released (Phil 1:24-26). According to Acts, Paul was in prison in Rome at the end of his life and in Caesarea just before that. He was in prison in other places, too, because he says in another letter that he's been in prison multiple times (2 Cor 11:23-27, 30-33). Since he lived in Ephesus for a few years, that may be one of the places he was imprisoned. If Philippians was written from Ephesus, it could have been written as early as 55 CE. Otherwise, it was written between 57 and 62 (the likely date of Paul's death), probably from Rome. So the letter comes from the later years of his ministry.

Philippians is known for its emphasis on joy. This joy or gladness isn't just happiness of the moment. It's a confident disposition rooted in hope. It shows trust in God's faithfulness to preserve believers for salvation. Believers have this gladness because they know that

having problems, or even enduring harassment, doesn't mean God has deserted them. This joy helps the Philippians overcome fear and put aside their quarrels. Because of his confidence in God, Paul is able to put aside his personal needs and wants, even to suffer or to die, for their benefit—and to maintain Christian joy while doing it (Phil 2:17-18). Paul calls the Philippians to be glad about his suffering for them, because of the salvation they share. So this gladness is a steady and hopeful disposition that shapes believers' lives as they rely on God's love for their salvation.

Even more central than its emphasis on joy is the letter's focus on problems in the Philippian church. Paul gives instructions about a dispute between two church leaders, likely the leaders of different house churches in Philippi. Paul doesn't mention the problem directly until Philippians 4:2-3, where he calls these women by name and urges them to resolve their differences. Knowing that this dispute is disturbing the church, however, sheds a different light on



Ruins of Basilica B in Philippi. The ruins date from the 5th century CE.  
*Shutterstock*

Paul's calls for the Philippians to be united and to agree with each other (Phil 2:1-4). His mention of people who want to make his life difficult (Phil 1:15-17) shows that he knows what he's asking when he encourages them to get along.

In addition, the Philippian church faces harassment. Like other early churches, they need help understanding why. Paul's discussion of his imprisonment both comforts them about his conditions and helps them think about the harassment they're experiencing. Paul's hardships show that such difficulties don't mean that God is angry. Instead, believers should expect this kind of treatment from those who reject the gospel. Paul is also worried that teachers who require non-Jewish church members to be circumcised will visit Philippi. He warns against this teaching by assuring the Philippians that they receive the fullness of God's blessings through faith in Christ.

The letter serves a very practical purpose as well: Paul thanks the church for sending money to support him and his ministry. He describes this gift as participation in the proclamation of the gospel, borrowing the language Leviticus uses to speak of sacrifices in the temple (Phil 4:17-18). Their gift to him is an offering to God.

One of the outstanding features of Philippians is the hymn-like passage in Philippians 2:6-11. This text was in use, probably even in Philippi, before Paul inserted it into this letter. It reveals something of what the early church confessed about Christ. These verses acknowledge his preexistence, his coming to earth, and his dying in obedience to God. They also proclaim that God has given Christ authority over all things. From this position, Christ is the source of salvation.

Paul doesn't use this hymn-like piece to teach something new about Christ but to encourage the Philippians to follow Christ's example of putting others before themselves (Phil 2:3-5). This encouraging word is the primary ethical message of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Putting the good of others before their own is the central way that Paul calls them to achieve unity. He presents Timothy and Epaphroditus as people who imitate Christ by putting others' needs first (Phil 2:19-30). They're examples for the Philippians to emulate. Paul's an example, too, because he willingly endures suffering for their good (Phil 1:23-26). Much of Philippians, then, is an appeal for the readers to imitate Christ by putting the good of others above themselves so that the church can live in unity.

## I. Introduction (1:1-11)

- A. Greeting (1:1-2)
- B. Thanksgiving and prayer (1:3-11)

## II. Body (1:12-4:20)

- A. Paul's imprisonment and its consequences (1:12-26)
- B. Call to follow Christ's example (1:27-2:18)
  - 1. The church's life must be shaped by the salvation they have received (1:27-30)
  - 2. Call for unity (2:1-5)
  - 3. The story of Christ's work (2:6-11)
  - 4. Call to follow Christ's example in their relations with one another (2:12-18)

## C. Good and bad examples of imitating Christ (2:19-3:16)

- 1. Timothy and Epaphroditus, examples to imitate (2:19-30)
- 2. Those who demand circumcision, an example to avoid (3:1-16)
- D. Calls to living the Christian life (3:17-4:9)
  - 1. Call to imitate the faithful (3:17-4:1)
  - 2. Appeal for unity between leaders (4:2-3)
  - 3. Appeal for preparedness and virtue (4:4-9)
- E. Thanking the Philippians for their gift (4:10-20)

## III. Closing Greetings (4:21-23)

**Greeting**

1 From Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus.  
 1 To all those in Philippi who are God's people in Christ Jesus, along with your supervisors<sup>a</sup> and servants.<sup>b</sup>  
 2 May the grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**Thanksgiving and prayer**

3 I thank my God every time I mention you in my prayers. 4 I'm thankful for all of you every time I pray, and it's always a prayer full of joy. 5 I'm glad because of the way you have been my partners in the ministry of the gospel from the time you first believed it until now. 6 I'm sure about this: the one who started a good work in you will stay with you to complete the job by the day of Christ Jesus. 7 I have good reason to think this way about all of you because I keep you in my heart. You are all my partners in God's grace, both during my time in prison and in the defense and support of the gospel. 8 God is my witness that I feel affection for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.

9 This is my prayer: that your love might become even more and more rich with knowledge and all kinds of insight. 10 I pray this so that you will be able to decide what really matters and so you will be sincere and blameless on the day of Christ. 11 I pray that you will then be filled with the fruit of righteousness, which comes from Jesus Christ, in order to give glory and praise to God.

**Priority of the gospel**

12 Brothers and sisters, I want you to know that the things that have happened to me have actually advanced the gospel. 13 The whole Praetorian Guard and everyone else knows that I'm in prison for Christ. 14 Most of the brothers and sisters have had more confidence through the Lord to speak the word boldly and bravely because of my jail time. 15 Some certainly preach Christ with jealous and competitive motives, but others preach with good motives. 16 They are motivated by love, because they know that I'm put here to give a defense of the gospel; 17 the others preach Christ because of their selfish ambition. They are insincere, hoping to cause me more pain while I'm in prison.

18 What do I think about this? Just this: since Christ is proclaimed in every possible way, whether from dishonest or true motives, I'm glad and I'll continue to be glad. 19 I'm glad because I know that this will result in my release through your prayers and the help of the

<sup>a</sup>Or overseers, bishops <sup>b</sup>Or deacons

1:1 *slaves*: Paul sometimes identifies himself as a slave of Christ (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10) and sometimes of his congregations (2 Cor 4:5). *God's people*: or "holy ones," a title Paul often uses for Christians. *supervisors and servants*: church leaders.

1:5 *my partners in the ministry*: refers primarily to their financial contributions to support his mission work (see 1:7), but also encompasses wider support of Paul, including their love and prayers for him.

1:6 *day of Christ Jesus*: the end of time with the final judgment.

1:7 *because I keep you in my heart*: The CEB translation credits Paul's care for them as the reason for his certainty. Alternatively, the original Greek can be translated so that the parties are reversed: "because you have me in your heart." The alternative shifts the focus to the way the Philippians remember Paul. *my time in prison*: Paul has been imprisoned several times for his preaching (see 2 Cor 11:23-27, 30-33).

1:8 *God is my witness*: a solemn promise to emphasize the statement. *with the compassion of Christ*: Throughout Philippians, Paul uses examples as instruction on how they should live (see intro.). He follows the example of Christ's compassion in the way he loves the Philippians; just as Christ was moved to accept disadvantage for others (see

Phil 2:6-7), so Paul loves the Philippians so much that he's willing to suffer for their good. Paul wants them to follow this example in the ways they relate to each other.

1:10 *decide what really matters*: the ability to discern God's will. *day of Christ*: See Philippians 1:6.

1:11 *to give glory and praise to God*: The ultimate purpose of their salvation is to give glory to God.

1:12-14 Surprisingly, rather than hindering Paul's spread of the gospel, his imprisonment has caused the word to spread more widely.

1:13 *Praetorian Guard*: an elite group under the command of the emperor that served as his bodyguards. They were present only where there were imperial palaces and provincial governors.

1:15-20 Differing reactions to Paul's imprisonment.

1:15 *jealous and competitive motives*: Some missionaries teach the same things Paul does, but they dislike him and see themselves in competition with him for church members.

1:18 *whether from dishonest or true motives*: Paul's attention is on the result of the proclamation rather than the motives of the preachers. The spread of the gospel is more important than what other preachers think of him or whether their intentions are pure. *I'm glad*: Paul's joy as a Christian is strengthened when the gospel brings

1:1 Ac 16:1;  
 Ro 1:1; 2Co 1:1;  
 1Ti 3:1, 1Ti 3:8  
 1:2 Ro 1:7;  
 1Th 1:1  
 1:3 Ro 1:8  
 1:4 Ro 1:9  
 1:5 Ac 2:42,  
 Ac 16:12;  
 Phi 4:15; 1In 1:7  
 1:6 Ps 138:8;  
 1Co 1:8;  
 Phi 1:10,  
 Phi 2:16  
 1:7 2Co 7:3;  
 Phi 1:13,  
 Phi 1:16-17  
 1:8 Ro 1:9,  
 Ro 9:1; Phi 4:1  
 1:9 Col 1:9;  
 1Th 3:12; 2Th 1:3  
 1:10 Ac 24:16;  
 Phi 1:6;  
 1Th 3:13,  
 1Th 5:23  
 1:11 In 15:8;  
 2Co 9:10;  
 Eph 1:12;  
 Col 1:10;  
 Jas 3:18  
 1:12 Ac 8:4,  
 Ac 11:19; 2Ti 2:9  
 1:13 Eph 3:1;  
 Phi 1:7; Col 4:3;  
 2Ti 2:9  
 1:14 Ac 4:31  
 1:15 Phi 1:16  
 1:16 Phi 2:3  
 1:17 Phi 1:7,  
 Phi 1:12,  
 Phi 1:27; 1ud 1:3  
 1:18 Mk 9:38;  
 Lk 9:50;  
 Ac 5:42; Ac 8:12;  
 Phi 1:15  
 1:19 Ac 16:7;  
 2Co 1:11

1:20 Ro 8:19,

Ro 14:8;

1Co 6:20

1:21 Phi 1:20

1:22 2Co 10:3;

Col 2:1; 1Pt 4:2

1:23 1k 23:43;

Jn 12:26;

2Co 5:8;

1Th 4:17; 2Ti 4:6

1:24 Jn 16:7

1:25 Phi 2:24

1:26 2Co 1:14;

Phi 2:16

1:27 1Co 1:10;

1Co 16:13;

Eph 4:1; Phi 4:1;

Jud 1:3

1:28 2Th 1:5

1:29 Ac 5:41

1:30 Ac 16:19;

Col 2:1; 1Th 2:2;

Heb 10:32

2:1 2Co 13:14;

Col 3:12

2:2 Jn 3:29;

Ro 12:16;

Ro 15:5; Phi 4:2

2:3 Ro 12:10;

Ga 5:26;

Eph 5:21;

Phi 1:16; 1Pt 5:5

2:4 1Co 10:24;

1Co 10:33;

1Co 13:5

2:5 Mt 11:29;

Ro 15:3; Ro 15:5;

1Pt 2:21; 1Pt 4:1

2:6 Jn 1:1;

Jn 5:18; Jn 10:33;

2Co 4:4; Col 1:15

2:7 Mt 20:28;

Lk 22:27; Jn 1:14;

Ro 8:3; 2Co 8:9

Spirit of Jesus Christ. <sup>20</sup>It is my expectation and hope that I won't be put to shame in anything. Rather, I hope with daring courage that Christ's greatness will be seen in my body, now as always, whether I live or die. <sup>21</sup>Because for me, living serves Christ and dying is even better. <sup>22</sup>If I continue to live in this world, I get results from my work. <sup>23</sup>But I don't know what I prefer. I'm torn between the two because I want to leave this life and be with Christ, which is far better. <sup>24</sup>However, it's more important for me to stay in this world for your sake. <sup>25</sup>I'm sure of this: I will stay alive and remain with all of you to help your progress and the joy of your faith, <sup>26</sup>and to increase your pride in Christ Jesus through my presence when I visit you again.

### Live worthy of the gospel

<sup>27</sup>Most important, live together in a manner worthy of Christ's gospel. Do this, whether I come and see you or I'm absent and hear about you. Do this so that you stand firm, united in one spirit and mind as you struggle together to remain faithful to the gospel. <sup>28</sup>That way, you won't be afraid of anything your enemies do. Your faithfulness and courage are a sign of their coming destruction and your salvation, which is from God. <sup>29</sup>God has generously granted you the privilege, not only of believing in Christ but also of suffering for Christ's sake. <sup>30</sup>You are having the same struggle that you saw me face and now hear that I'm still facing.

### Imitate Christ

**2**Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort in love, any sharing in the Spirit, any sympathy, <sup>2</sup>complete my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, being united, and agreeing with each other. <sup>3</sup>Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others. <sup>5</sup>Adopt the attitude that was in Christ Jesus:

<sup>6</sup>Though he was in the form of God,  
he did not consider being equal with God something to exploit.

<sup>7</sup>But he emptied himself  
by taking the form of a slave  
and by becoming like human beings.

salvation to more people, even if those who preach have bad motives.

1:20 *I won't be put to shame:* He won't deny his faith under pressure. *whether I live or die:* Paul thinks about his death. At this time, he doesn't think he'll live until Christ's second coming.

1:21-26 Paul chooses to continue living for the good of the Philippians. He seems to think he can influence the outcome of his trial. His comments about the end of his life recall those of ancient philosophers who discussed whether a life of suffering was better than dying. Paul determines that if he can help others live a proper life he should remain alive.

1:23 *leave this life and be with Christ:* to die. Paul envisions being immediately in the presence of Christ after death.

1:25 *to help your progress:* Paul chooses to remain alive in order to strengthen the Philippians' faith.

1:26 *when I visit you again:* Paul assumes he'll be released from prison if he isn't executed.

1:27-30 The church's life must conform to the example of Christ.

1:27 *live together in a manner worthy of Christ's gospel:* The phrase "live together" is drawn from the noun that means "citizen." Paul calls them to live as citizens of Christ's realm rather than as Roman citizens. *united in one spirit and mind:* Paul calls them to cease their inner-church disputes (see Phil 4:2-3). *to remain faithful:* One goal of unity is to help them maintain their faith in the face of harassment.

1:28 *your enemies:* the non-Christians who are harassing them. Such harassment usually involved treating

Christians as social outcasts or refusing to do business with them, rather than imprisonment or execution.

1:29 *the privilege... of suffering for Christ's sake:* Harassment isn't a sign that God is unhappy; rather, such suffering is the result of being faithful.

1:30 *the same struggle that you saw me face:* Paul's harassment confirms that this kind of suffering comes because a believer is faithful, not as a punishment.

2:1-5 A call for unity and harmony in the church. *if there is any:* The word "if" doesn't express doubt but means "since." The blessings listed here serve as the basis for the church's unity.

2:2 *complete my joy:* Paul's experience of the blessings given through Christ grows when he sees the church follow Christ's example by working for others instead of for themselves. *thinking the same way... being united, and agreeing:* These terms are taken from the political context, where they were used to call citizens to come together for the common good.

2:4 *watch out for what is better for others:* the central message of Philippians. Christians are to work for the good of others rather than putting their own good first. The following discussions of Christ, Paul, and other Christians provide examples of those who have put the good of others ahead of their own.

2:5 *Adopt the attitude... Jesus:* This verse introduces the confession of Philippians 2:6-11 and calls readers to follow the example of Jesus seen in those verses.

2:6-11 The church was already familiar with this hymn-like confession before Paul wrote it in his letter. The hymn

When he found himself in the form of a human,

<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore, God highly honored him and gave him a name above all names,

<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might bow

<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Carry out your salvation**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my loved ones, just as you always obey me, not just when I am present but now even more while I am away, carry out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

<sup>13</sup> God is the one who enables you both to want and to actually live out his good purposes. <sup>14</sup> Do everything without grumbling and arguing <sup>15</sup> so that you may be blameless and pure, innocent children of God surrounded by people who are crooked and corrupt. Among these people you shine like stars in the world <sup>16</sup> because you hold on to the word of life. This will allow me to say on the day of Christ that I haven't run for nothing or worked for nothing. <sup>17</sup> But even if I am poured out like a drink offering upon the altar of service for your faith, I am glad. I'm glad with all of you. <sup>18</sup> You should be glad about this in the same way. Be glad with me!

**Sending Timothy and Epaphroditus**

<sup>19</sup> I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to see you soon so that I may be encouraged by hearing about you. <sup>20</sup> I have no one like him. He is a person who genuinely cares about your well-being. <sup>21</sup> All the others put their own business ahead of Jesus Christ's business. <sup>22</sup> You know his character, how he labors with me for the gospel like a son works with his father.

traces the work of Christ from his preexistence to his resurrection and exaltation.

2:6 *in the form of God*: The preexistent Christ shared God's glory. *something to exploit*: Instead of using his position to gain things for himself, Christ used it to give to others.

2:7 *emptied himself*: Christ himself chooses to give up his place of honor. *form of a slave... human beings*: Christ's status before the incarnation was so high that becoming human is compared here to accepting the position of a slave.

2:8 *becoming obedient*: While Christ chose to give himself, that decision was made in obedience to God's will. *even death on a cross*: shows the extreme that Christ was willing to endure to obey God and bring salvation.

2:9 *God highly honored him*: God's response to Christ's obedience. *name above all names*: has the highest status, position, and influence.

2:10 *everyone... might bow*: All beings in all regions of the universe are to submit to Christ's authority.

2:11 *confess... Christ is Lord*: All must acknowledge Christ's power and position. *to the glory of God*: The ultimate goal of the work of Christ is to bring honor to God.

2:12-18 An appeal to imitate Christ's example in their relations with each other.

2:12 *carry out your own salvation*: Live in a way that reflects the grace and salvation you receive through Christ. *with fear and trembling*: Believers face God's evaluation, even though their salvation is from God.

*Worship and Christology* Poetic rhythm sets Philippians 2:6-11 apart as one of our earliest examples of the church's worship. This passage, which is perhaps a hymn, shows that the early Pauline churches understood Christ to be a preexistent being who was obedient to God. His extreme obedience and humiliation are seen in his death on the cross. God responds to that obedience by exalting Christ to the highest position in the universe. There Christ defeats the powers of evil and is in a position to grant salvation to those who have faith in him. Paul quotes this worship text to remind the Philippians of Christ's willingness to accept disadvantage for the good of others and to set up Christ as the example of the way they should relate to one another.

PHILIPPIANS 2:22

2:13 *God... enables you*: God enables believers to live as they should. *to want and to actually live*: God helps believers change both what they desire and how they live.

2:14 *without grumbling*: Paul compares the disputes in the church with the grumbling Israelites in the desert (Exod 16:2, 7-8; Num 18:5).

2:15 *innocent children... surrounded by... crooked and corrupt*: a dramatic contrast between those who have faith and those who don't.

2:16 *word of life*: the gospel. *day of Christ*: See Philippians 1:6.

2:17 *drink offering... for your faith*: Paul's willing to die for God in order to strengthen their faith. *I am glad*: because they are children of God, and maybe because Paul's able to imitate Christ by putting their good above his own.

2:18 *be glad about this*: Paul wants the Philippians to celebrate their identity as children of God and to recognize that the blessings they receive as God's children are a cause for joy, even if the blessings come at the expense of Paul's suffering.

2:19-30 Examples of people who imitate Christ by putting the good of others above their own.

2:19 *Timothy*: a regular missionary companion of Paul and named as the cowriter of this letter (Phil 1:1).

2:21 *others put their own business ahead*: Timothy is their example because he doesn't do this.

- 2:8 Mt 26:39;
- In 10:18;
- Ac 8:33;
- Heb 5:8;
- Heb 12:2
- 2:9 Is 52:13;
- Is 53:12;
- Mt 28:18;
- Eph 1:20;
- Heb 2:9
- 2:10 Is 45:23;
- Mt 28:18;
- Ro 14:11;
- Eph 1:10
- 2:11 In 13:13;
- Ro 10:9, Ro 14:9
- 2:12 2Co 7:15;
- Heb 5:9
- 2:13 Is 26:12;
- 1Co 12:6;
- 1Co 15:10;
- Eph 1:5;
- Heb 13:21
- 2:14 1Co 10:10;
- 1Pt 4:9
- 2:15 Dt 32:5;
- Mt 5:14, Mt 5:45;
- Eph 5:1, Eph 5:8
- 2:16 Ga 2:2;
- Ga 4:11;
- 1Th 2:19, 1Th 3:5
- 2:17 Ro 12:1;
- Ro 15:16;
- 2Co 12:15;
- Col 1:24; 2Ti 4:6
- 2:18 Phi 3:1
- 2:19 Ac 16:1;
- 1Co 4:17;
- Phi 1:1, Phi 2:23;
- 1Th 3:2
- 2:20 1Co 16:10
- 2:21 1Co 10:24
- 2:22 1Co 4:17;
- 1Ti 1:2; 2Ti 1:2

2:23 Phi 2:19

2:24 Phi 1:25

2:25 Phi 4:3,  
Phi 4:18,  
Phlm 1:2

2:26 Phi 1:8

2:27 2Ki 20:1,  
Ac 9:37,  
Phi 2:302:29 Ro 16:2;  
1Co 16:18;  
1Th 5:12-13;  
1Ti 5:172:30 1Co 16:17;  
Phi 4:103:1 Ps 32:11;  
Phi 2:18, Phi 4:4;  
1Th 5:163:2 Ps 22:16;  
2Co 11:13;  
Ga 5:15;  
Rev 22:153:3 Ro 2:29,  
Ro 5:11;  
Ga 6:14-15;  
Col 2:11

3:4 2Co 11:18

3:5 Ac 23:6;  
Ro 11:1;  
2Co 11:223:6 Ac 8:3,  
Ac 22:3-4;  
Ga 1:13; Phi 3:93:7 Lk 14:33;  
Phi 3:83:8 Jn 17:3;  
Ac 20:24; Phi 3:73:9 Ro 1:17,  
Ro 9:30,  
Ro 10:4-5;  
1Co 1:30

<sup>23</sup>So he is the one that I hope to send as soon as I find out how things turn out here for me.

<sup>24</sup>I trust in the Lord that I also will visit you soon.

<sup>25</sup>I think it is also necessary to send Epaphroditus to you. He is my brother, coworker, and fellow soldier; and he is your representative who serves my needs. <sup>26</sup>He misses you all, and he was upset because you heard he was sick. <sup>27</sup>In fact, he was so sick that he nearly died. But God had mercy on him—and not just on him but also on me, because his death would have caused me great sorrow. <sup>28</sup>Therefore, I am sending him immediately so that when you see him again you can be glad and I won't worry. <sup>29</sup>So welcome him in the Lord with great joy and show great respect for people like him. <sup>30</sup>He risked his life and almost died for the work of Christ, and he did this to make up for the help you couldn't give me.

### Values and priorities

**3** So then, my brothers and sisters, be glad in the Lord. It's no trouble for me to repeat the same things to you because they will help keep you on track. <sup>2</sup>Watch out for the "dogs." Watch out for people who do evil things. Watch out for those who insist on circumcision, which is really mutilation. <sup>3</sup>We are the circumcision. We are the ones who serve by God's Spirit and who boast in Christ Jesus. We don't put our confidence in rituals performed on the body, <sup>4</sup>though I have good reason to have this kind of confidence. If anyone else has reason to put their confidence in physical advantages, I have even more:

<sup>5</sup>I was circumcised on the eighth day.

I am from the people of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin.

I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

With respect to observing the Law, I'm a Pharisee.

<sup>6</sup>With respect to devotion to the faith, I harassed the church.

With respect to righteousness under the Law, I'm blameless.

<sup>7</sup>These things were my assets, but I wrote them off as a loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even beyond that, I consider everything a loss in comparison with the superior value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have lost everything for him, but what I lost I think of as sewer trash, so that I might gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him. In Christ I have a righteousness that is not my own and that does not come from the Law but rather from the

*Paul and Judaism* Paul, who was born a Jew and remained one his entire life, lists the benefits he sees of being a Jew (Phil 3:5-6). He counts his covenant relationship with God and his keeping of the Law as real advantages. While these former things were indeed genuine assets to him (Phil 3:7), Paul has found a fuller way to be related to God. With his relationship with God now founded on Christ instead of on the Mosaic Law, Paul knows that nothing is as valuable as what he receives from Christ. Paul isn't opposed to Jewish Christians who continue to keep the Law. Rather, his reaction to "the dogs" (Phil 3:2) is against those who require non-Jewish church members to keep the Law in the same way Jews do. He argues that non-Jews experience a full relationship with God without adopting those elements of the Law that were intended only for Jews.

**3:5 eighth day:** the traditional day for Jewish babies to be circumcised. *Hebrew of the Hebrews:* All the things Paul claims in this verse are proof that he is thoroughly and fully Jewish.

**3:6 righteousness under the Law:** Paul observed the Jewish Law fully.

**3:7 my assets:** His Jewish descent and faithfulness to the Law are valuable and good. *loss for the sake of Christ:* Paul gave up these goods as primary identity markers to be identified by his faith in Christ.

**3:8 superior value of knowing Christ:** Nothing is as valuable as what one receives through Christ. *sewer trash:* Paul uses strong language to compare everything else to the blessings he receives in Christ.

**3:9 the faithfulness of Christ:** Christ's firm obedience to God's will in his incarnation, ministry, and death. Christ's faithfulness is the basis of Paul's relationship with God. *righteousness . . . based on faith:* Paul trusts, puts his faith in, God to identify him with the faithfulness of Christ and so grant him right relationship and salvation.

**2:25-30** The second example of imitating Christ.

**2:25 Epaphroditus:** a member of the Philippian church, perhaps the same person as Epaphras (Phlm 23). *coworker, and fellow soldier:* He served as a minister in Paul's mission work. *serves my needs:* Epaphroditus brought a gift from the Philippians.

**2:30 help you couldn't give me:** The Philippians couldn't help because Paul isn't in Philippi.

**3:1-11** Paul cites an example of not imitating Christ.

**3:1 brothers and sisters:** Paul includes all members of the church. *be glad in the Lord:* Even in the face of false teaching that threatens the church, Paul calls the church to stay joyful as they remember God's blessings.

**3:2 "dogs":** This insulting term refers to people who require Gentile church members to become fully Jewish in order to be full members of the church. *circumcision:* the sign that a man has converted to Judaism. Paul sees it as mutilation only if non-Jews receive it with that meaning.

**3:3 We are the circumcision:** Paul claims that believers in Christ are now God's people.

faithfulness of Christ. It is the righteousness of God that is based on faith. <sup>10</sup>The righteousness that I have comes from knowing Christ, the power of his resurrection, and the participation in his sufferings. It includes being conformed to his death <sup>11</sup>so that I may perhaps reach the goal of the resurrection of the dead.

<sup>12</sup>It's not that I have already reached this goal or have already been perfected, but I pursue it, so that I may grab hold of it because Christ grabbed hold of me for just this purpose. <sup>13</sup>Brothers and sisters, I myself don't think I've reached it, but I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. <sup>14</sup>The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup>So all of us who are spiritually mature should think this way, and if anyone thinks differently, God will reveal it to him or her. <sup>16</sup>Only let's live in a way that is consistent with whatever level we have reached.

**Imitate Paul**

<sup>17</sup>Brothers and sisters, become imitators of me and watch those who live this way—you can use us as models. <sup>18</sup>As I have told you many times and now say with deep sadness, many people live as enemies of the cross. <sup>19</sup>Their lives end with destruction. Their god is their stomach, and they take pride in their disgrace because their thoughts focus on earthly things. <sup>20</sup>Our citizenship is in heaven. We look forward to a savior that comes from there—the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>21</sup>He will transform our humble bodies so that they are like his glorious body, by the power that also makes him able to subject all things to himself.

**Stand firm in the Lord**

**4** Therefore, my brothers and sisters whom I love and miss, who are my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord.

Loved ones, <sup>21</sup>I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to come to an agreement in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, and I'm also asking you, loyal friend, to help these women who have struggled together with me in the ministry of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the scroll of life.

<sup>4</sup>Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad! <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness show in your treatment of all people. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. <sup>7</sup>Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>From now on, brothers and sisters, if anything is excellent and if anything is admirable, focus your thoughts on these things: all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise. <sup>9</sup>Practice these things: whatever you learned, received, heard, or saw in us. The God of peace will be with you.

**3:10 participation in his sufferings:** Believers can expect to suffer for their faith because they reject the values of the dominant culture. *conformed to his death:* The acceptance of disadvantage in order to be faithful is a way of imitating Christ's willingness to die in obedience to God.

**3:12-16** Striving to live for God.

**3:12 this goal:** The goal is knowing Christ fully and the blessings that come through him. *been perfected:* or "become mature." Paul's still growing in his faith. *Christ grabbed... me:* Paul strives to know Christ because Christ initiated their relationship.

**3:13 the things ahead:** his deepening experience of knowing Christ, including the resurrection.

**3:14 upward call:** a call that has God as its source or that invites Paul to life with God.

**3:17-4:1** A call to imitate the faithful.

**3:17 become imitators:** In Philippians imitation is a central way of learning how to live the Christian life. *those who live this way:* Christians other than Paul are also models of how to live the Christian life.

**3:18 enemies of the cross:** nonbelievers who oppose the church.

**3:19 Their god is their stomach:** an image for people who are self-centered and reject the gospel and Christ's example.

**3:20-21 Our citizenship is in heaven:** The true home of Christians is where the values of the gospel govern life. *like his glorious body:* The resurrected body of Christians will be like Christ's resurrected body. *the power that also makes him able:* Christ's power continues to come from God.

**4:1 stand firm:** remain faithful because of the promise of the resurrection.

**4:2-9** Paul appeals for unity, preparedness, and virtue.

**4:2 Euodia and... Syntyche:** two women who are leaders in Philippian churches. We don't know what their dispute is about, but it's causing trouble in the church.

**4:3 these women... in the ministry:** They serve in ministry roles in Paul's mission efforts. *Clement:* an otherwise unknown associate of Paul.

**4:9 saw in us:** a return to the theme of imitation as a way to learn the Christian life.

3:10 Ro 6:5;  
Ro 8:17; 2Co 1:5;  
2Ti 2:12  
3:11 Ac 26:7  
3:12 1Ti 6:12  
3:13 Lk 9:62;  
Phi 3:14  
3:14 Ro 8:28;  
1Co 9:24;  
Heb 3:1; 1Pt 5:10  
3:15 1Co 2:6;  
Ga 5:10  
3:16 Ga 6:16  
3:17 1Co 4:16;  
1Co 11:1; Phi 4:9;  
1Th 4:12; 1Pt 5:3  
3:18 Ac 20:31  
3:19 Ro 6:21;  
Ro 16:18;  
2Co 11:15;  
Col 3:2; Jud 1:13  
3:20 Ac 1:11;  
1Co 1:7;  
Eph 2:19;  
Col 3:1; Ti 2:13  
3:21 Ro 8:29;  
1Co 15:43;  
Eph 1:19;  
Col 3:4; 1Jn 3:2  
4:1 1Co 16:13;  
Phi 1:8, Phi 1:27;  
1Th 2:19;  
2Th 2:15  
4:2 Phi 2:2  
4:3 Ps 69:28;  
Lk 10:20;  
Rev 20:12  
4:4 Phi 3:1  
4:5 Jas 5:8;  
1Pt 4:7  
4:6 Mt 6:25;  
Mt 7:7; Mt 13:22;  
1Co 7:32;  
Eph 6:18  
4:7 Is 26:3;  
Jn 14:27;  
Eph 3:19;  
Col 3:15; 1Pt 1:5  
4:8 Prv 11:1;  
Ro 2:29;  
2Co 8:21;  
Jas 3:17;  
1Pt 2:12  
4:9 Ro 15:33;  
Phi 3:17

4:10 2Co 11:9

4:11 Lk 3:14;

1Ti 6:6, 1Ti 6:8;

Heb 13:5

4:12 1Co 4:11;

2Co 11:9

4:13 2Co 12:9;

Eph 3:16;

1Ti 1:12;

2Ti 4:17

4:14 Phi 1:7;

Rev 1:9

4:15 2Co 11.8.

2Co 11:9;

Phi 1:5

4:16 Ac 17:1;

1Th 2:9

4:17 1Co 9:12

4:18 Ro 12:1;

Eph 5:2;

Phi 2:25;

Heb 13:16

4:19 Ps 23:1;

Ro 2.4; 2Co 9:8;

Eph 2:7

4:22 Phi 1:13

**Paul's thanks for gifts**

<sup>10</sup>I was very glad in the Lord because now at last you have shown concern for me again. (Of course you were always concerned but had no way to show it.) <sup>11</sup>I'm not saying this because I need anything, for I have learned how to be content in any circumstance. <sup>12</sup>I know the experience of being in need and of having more than enough; I have learned the secret to being content in any and every circumstance, whether full or hungry or whether having plenty or being poor. <sup>13</sup>I can endure all these things through the power of the one who gives me strength. <sup>14</sup>Still, you have done well to share my distress.

<sup>15</sup>You Philippians know from the time of my first mission work in Macedonia how no church shared in supporting my ministry except you. <sup>16</sup>You sent contributions repeatedly to take care of my needs even while I was in Thessalonica. <sup>17</sup>I'm not hoping for a gift, but I am hoping for a profit that accumulates in your account. <sup>18</sup>I now have plenty and it is more than enough. I am full to overflowing because I received the gifts that you sent from Epaphroditus. Those gifts give off a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice that pleases God. <sup>19</sup>My God will meet your every need out of his riches in the glory that is found in Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup>Let glory be given to God our Father forever and always. Amen.

**Final greeting**

<sup>21</sup>Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters with me send you their greeting. <sup>22</sup>All God's people here, especially those in Caesar's household, send you their greeting. <sup>23</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits.

4:10-20 Paul thanks the Philippians for their financial support of his mission.

4:13 *endure all these things*: Paul retains his faith in spite of the hardships he encounters in his ministry. *power . . . gives me strength*: Paul doesn't maintain his faith through his own willpower; God enables his faithfulness. 4:15 *Macedonia*: the region in northern Greece that includes Philippi. *no church . . . except you*: Paul didn't accept support from a church while on his founding visit, and then he accepted support only from churches who wouldn't misunderstand what support meant for the relationship between apostle and congregation. Financial support symbolizes a partnership in Paul's

mission. It shouldn't mean that Paul owes the Philippians anything.

4:18 *Epaphroditus*: See 2:25. *fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice*: Paul uses the language of offering a sacrifice at the temple to describe their contribution to his mission (Lev 1:9, 13, 17; 2:20).

4:21-23 Ancient letters often close with greetings to and from people known to the writer and the recipients.

4:21 *God's people*: See Philippians 1:1. *brothers and sisters*: See Philippians 3:1.

4:22 *God's people*: See Philippians 1:1. *Caesar's household*: the network of relatives, slaves, and dependents associated with the emperor's family.



# COLOSSIANS

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Colossians begins by identifying Paul and Timothy as its authors (Col 1:1) and ends with a reference to Paul's imprisonment (Col 4:18). Thus, the letter has often been grouped with Philemon, Philippians, and Ephesians as a prison letter. Paul would have written these letters during his imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:16), or possibly during an earlier imprisonment in Ephesus or Caesarea (Acts 24–26). Several factors, however, have caused scholars to question whether Paul is the author. In contrast to other letters bearing Paul's name, Colossians says that the church extends throughout the world (Col 1:18, 24). It depicts Christ as ruler of the earth because of his preexistence (Col 1:16-17), not because of his resurrection (see Rom 1:4). Finally, the believer's resurrection is spoken of as a present reality (Col 3:1) rather than as a future hope (see Rom 6:5, 8).

Colossians shares a good deal of material with Ephesians. Colossians also stands in close proximity to Paul's letter to Philemon. In both,

Paul is in prison, Timothy is a co-sender, and Epaphras, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, and Onesimus are Paul's current companions.

The city of Colossae is approximately 135 miles east of Ephesus. It's quite close to the city of Laodicea, and Paul anticipates that believers in the two cities will share with each other the letters he writes (Col 4:16). Paul himself has never been to either city (Col 2:1). Epaphras seems to be the person who first preached the gospel in Colossae (Col 1:6-7), and he's with Paul when Colossians is being written (Col 4:12).

Most important for understanding Colossians are the circumstances to which Paul's responding. Colossians 2:8-23 indicates that the Colossians are facing temptation to turn to distinctively Jewish practices, such as circumcision (Col 2:11), food laws (Col 2:16), and sabbath keeping (Col 2:16). Some scholars propose that these verses suggest a form of early Jewish Gnosticism. Gnosticism is a religion that seeks special knowledge in order to escape from this corrupt world.



Ruins of Colossae, Turkey  
Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

However, the material in Colossians 2 is better explained by the potential appeal of Judaism to non-Jewish converts to Christianity.

Throughout, the letter demonstrates that Christ is better than all alternative means of salvation. It insists that Christ is enough for salvation: no additional knowledge or special Jewish practices are needed. Christ created the universe and set it free from hostile powers. His story shapes the story of the world and of all

the people in it. Those who wish to know the great secret of how God will restore the world need only listen to the openly declared gospel of Christ (Col 2:2). The future hope for the whole universe (Col 1:20), and everyone in it (Col 1:27-28), is known in Christ. Freedom from enslaving powers (Col 1:16) and transformed lives that please God (Col 3:1-17) are known only in Christ. The death and resurrection of Christ decide the fate of the universe.

### **I. Opening (1:1-8)**

- A. Greeting (1:1-2)
- B. Gratitude for the Colossians' faith, love, and hope (1:3-8)

### **II. The Kingdom of the Son (1:9-2:5)**

- A. Prayer for the Colossians to fulfill their calling (1:9-14)
- B. Hymn of the preexistent and risen king (1:15-20)
  - 1. Christ as king at creation (1:15-17)
  - 2. Christ as king through the resurrection (1:18-20)
- C. Colossians reconciled through Christ (1:21-23)
- D. Paul, a minister of this mystery of Christ (1:24-29)
- E. Paul's hope that the Colossians benefit from his ministry (2:1-5)

### **III. Living in Christ (2:6-4:6)**

- A. Living in the Crucified Christ (2:6-23)
  - 1. Not enslaved, but freed in Christ (2:6-16)
  - 2. Not the shadow, but the body that is Christ (2:17-19)
  - 3. Not human regulations, but dying with Christ (2:20-23)
- B. Living in the Resurrected Christ (3:1-4:6)
  - 1. Not worldly matters, but rising with Christ (3:1-5)
  - 2. Not the old humanity, but the image of Christ (3:6-11)
  - 3. A community living the life of Christ (3:12-17)
  - 4. Household life in the Lord (3:18-4:1)
  - 5. Speaking to God and to others (4:2-6)

### **IV. Greetings and Blessings (4:7-18)**

*J. R. Daniel Kirk*

**Greeting**

**1** From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy our brother.  
**2** To the holy and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae.  
 Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

**Thanksgiving and prayer for the Colossians**

**3** We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. **4** We've done this since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all God's people. **5** You have this faith and love because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. You previously heard about this hope through the true message, the good news, **6** which has come to you. This message has been bearing fruit and growing among you since the day you heard and truly understood God's grace, in the same way that it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world. **7** You learned it from Epaphras, who is the fellow slave we love and Christ's faithful minister for your sake. **8** He informed us of your love in the Spirit.

**9** Because of this, since the day we heard about you, we haven't stopped praying for you and asking for you to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. **10** We're praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way: by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; **11** by being strengthened through his glorious might so that you endure everything and have patience; **12** and by giving thanks with joy to the Father. He made it so you could take part in the inheritance, in light granted to God's holy people. **13** He rescued us from the control of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. **14** He set us free through the Son and forgave our sins.

**Hymn about Christ's work**

**15** The Son is the image of the invisible God, the one who is first over all creation,<sup>a</sup>

**16** Because all things were created by him: both in the heavens and on the earth,

<sup>a</sup>Or *firstborn of all creation*

1:1-2 Writing to a church he neither founded nor visited (see Col 2:1), Paul mentions his unique role as an apostle but focuses on their shared family bonds: God is our Father, and they are all siblings.

1:3-8 A paragraph of thanksgiving like this is a common feature of ancient letters. It can be found in almost all of Paul's letters (e.g., Rom 1:8-12; 1 Cor 1:4-9; Phil 1:3-8).

1:3 *Father of our Lord*: In Colossians 1:2 Paul called God "our Father." Jesus is the firstborn and oldest brother in God's family (Col 1:15; see Rom 8:29).

1:4-5 *faith... love... hope*: Receiving the gospel doesn't mean just accepting and believing in Jesus, but also loving God's family and looking forward to God's future action (see 1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 1:3).

1:4 *in Christ*: indicates Christ as the one to whom believers look as well as the place in which Christian life unfolds (see Col 2:20; 3:1). This means that we participate in his story. Christ died to the enslaving powers of the world, and in him Christians die to those powers, too (Col 2:20-23; 3:5-11). Christ is raised up to sit in the presence of God, and this is where Christians are to envision themselves as well (Col 3:1-4). It also means that as Christ is the image of God, so we bear that image now (Col 3:10-11).

1:6 The continuing growth of the Colossians' faith is an important theme of the letter (see Col 2:6-7).

1:9-14 Paul's prayer connects understanding what God wants concerning good works in the world with a patient endurance that looks forward to a future inheritance.

1:10 *good work*: Across Paul's letters, work is an important part of Christian faith and faithfulness (see 1 Thess 1:3; Rom 1:5).

1:12 Colossians looks forward to a future inheritance (see Rom 8:17). In the OT, God's people understand the land of Israel as their inheritance (e.g., Exod 23:20; Num 34:2; Deut 15:4). Paul transforms this expectation. Now inheritance refers to "the kingdom of the Son" (Col 1:13), *in light*: God's people don't live under the control of "darkness" (Col 1:13), an image of evil and ignorance. Rather, God's people live in and inherit the Son's kingdom. Light is a metaphor image for knowledge. It indicates that one has what is necessary to walk without stumbling.

1:13-14 Sin is an enslaving debt (see Col 2:14-15). The problem here isn't guilt or wrath, for example, but slavery. Therefore, the solution to sin is liberation.

1:15-20 Probably an early Christian hymn. It uses language for humanity from Genesis 1 to describe the preexistent Christ. Paul reflects on the authority of the preexistent Christ in Colossians 1:15-17, and in Colossians 1:18-20 he celebrates Christ's authority as the first human raised from the dead.

1:15 The OT describes Adam (translated in the CEB as "humanity") as the firstborn of God's children, as the bearer of God's image, and as creation's ruler (see Gen 1:26-27). Here we discover that Jesus comes before Adam as image-bearing, first-born ruler (cf. Wis 7:26). See sidebar, "Christ as New Adam" at Colossians 2.

1:16 The preexistent Christ plays the role of God's agent

1:1 Ac 16:1;  
 Ro 1:1; 1Co 1:1;  
 2Co 1:1; Eph 1:1  
 1:2 Ro 1:7;  
 Eph 1:1  
 1:3 Ro 1:8;  
 1Co 1:4;  
 Eph 1:15;  
 Eph 3:14;  
 1Th 1:2  
 1:4 Ga 5:6;  
 Eph 1:15;  
 1Th 1:3; Phm 1:5  
 1:5 Ac 23:6;  
 Eph 1:13;  
 Col 1:23; 2Ti 4:8;  
 1Pt 1:4  
 1:6 Ro 10:18;  
 Col 1:23  
 1:7 1Co 4:17;  
 Col 4:7; Col 4:12;  
 Phm 1:23  
 1:8 Ro 15:30;  
 Ga 5:22  
 1:9 Eph 1:15-17;  
 Phi 1:9; Col 1:4  
 1:10 Eph 4:1  
 1:11 Eph 3:16;  
 Eph 4:2  
 1:12 Ac 20:32;  
 Ac 26:18;  
 Eph 5:20  
 1:13 Ac 26:18;  
 Eph 1:6;  
 Eph 6:12;  
 2Pt 1:11  
 1:14 Ro 3:24;  
 Eph 1:7  
 1:15 Jn 1:18;  
 Ro 8:29; 2Co 4:4;  
 1Ti 1:17; Heb 1:3  
 1:16 Jn 1:3;  
 Ro 11:36;  
 1Co 8:6;  
 Eph 1:21;  
 Col 2:10

1:17 Mt 5:2;  
Jn 1:1, Jn 8:58;  
Heb 1:3

the things that are visible and the things that are invisible.

Whether they are thrones or powers,  
or rulers or authorities,  
all things were created through him and for him.

1:18 Ac 26:23;  
Ro 8:29;  
Eph 1:22-23;  
Col 1:24

<sup>17</sup>He existed before all things,  
and all things are held together in him.

1:19 Jn 1:16;  
Eph 1:5;  
Eph 1:23;  
Col 2:9

<sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body, the church,  
who is the beginning,  
the one who is firstborn from among the dead<sup>b</sup>  
so that he might occupy the first place in everything.

1:20 Ro 5:1;  
2Co 5:18;  
Eph 1:10;  
Eph 2:13-14

1:21 Ro 5:10;  
Ro 8:7; Eph 2:12;  
Ti 1:15

<sup>19</sup>Because all the fullness of God was pleased to live in him,  
<sup>20</sup>and he reconciled all things to himself through him—  
whether things on earth or in the heavens.  
He brought peace through the blood of his cross.

1:22 Ro 7:4;  
Eph 1:4;  
Eph 5:27

1:23 Mk 16:15;  
Eph 3:7;  
Eph 3:17;  
Col 1:5-6

1:24 2Co 1:5;  
Eph 1:23;  
Phi 2:17;  
Col 1:18;  
2Ti 2:10

<sup>21</sup>Once you were alienated from God and you were enemies with him in your minds, which was shown by your evil actions. <sup>22</sup>But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death, to present you before God as a people who are holy, faultless, and without blame. <sup>23</sup>But you need to remain well established and rooted in faith and not shift away from the hope given in the good news that you heard. This message has been preached throughout all creation under heaven. And I, Paul, became a servant of this good news.

1:25 Eph 3:2;  
Col 1:23

1:26 Mt 13:11;  
Ro 16:25-26;  
1Co 2:7

1:27 Ro 5:2;  
Ro 8:10;  
Eph 1:18;  
Eph 3:16; 1Ti 1:1

#### *Paul's service for the church*

<sup>24</sup>Now I'm happy to be suffering for you. I'm completing what is missing from Christ's sufferings with my own body. I'm doing this for the sake of his body, which is the church. <sup>25</sup>I became a servant of the church by God's commission, which was given to me for you, in order to complete God's word. <sup>26</sup>I'm completing it with a secret plan<sup>c</sup> that has been hidden for ages and generations but which has now been revealed to his holy people. <sup>27</sup>God wanted to make the glorious riches of this secret plan<sup>d</sup> known among the Gentiles, which is Christ living in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup>This is what we preach as we warn and teach every person with all wisdom so that we might present each one mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup>I work hard and struggle for this goal with his energy, which works in me powerfully.

1:28 Mt 5:48;  
Ac 20:31;  
Eph 4:13;  
Col 3:16;  
Heb 13:21

2:1 Ga 4:19;  
Col 1:29;  
Col 4:12-13;  
Rev 1:11

2:2 Ro 16:25;  
Eph 6:22;  
Col 1:27, Col 4:3;  
Col 4:8

**2**I want you to know how much I struggle for you, for those in Laodicea, and for all who haven't known me personally. <sup>2</sup>My goal is that their hearts would be encouraged and

<sup>b</sup>Or *first over the dead* <sup>c</sup>Or *mystery* <sup>d</sup>Or *mystery*

in creation. Elsewhere that role belongs to Wisdom (see Prov 8:22-36).

1:19-20 Humans and, in fact, the whole universe were set against God, but now they're restored to peace through Jesus' death. As in Romans 5:18-19, universal language shows that Jesus' saving work reaches everyone (*reconciled all things*), but people must be united to Christ for his saving death to be applied to them (see Col 1:21-23; 2:10-12).

1:19 *fullness*: Both God (Jer 23:24) and Wisdom (Wis 1:6-7) fill the earth, showing God's universal presence and supreme power. Here that filling is focused on Christ, who is God's presence and saving, supreme power (see Col 2:9-10).

1:21-22 The reconciling action Paul spoke of in the hymn to Christ (Col 1:15-20) is applied to the Colossians. Those in Christ are no longer under "the control of darkness" (Col 1:14) but are free to walk in a way that pleases God.

1:23 Paul's desire that the Colossians continue in what they learned is a constant theme of this letter (e.g., Col 1:6; 2:7). The good news includes a past act of reconciliation as

well as hope for the future. *all creation*: The breadth of the gospel's proclamation has already equaled the extent of Christ's actions in creation (Col 1:15-16) and redemption (Col 1:20). See Romans 10:18.

1:24 Paul sees his own suffering in ministry as an extension of Christ's work on the cross (see 2 Cor 4:10-12). He's *completing, or "filling up,"* the work of reconciliation by creating communities that share in the reconciliation Christ has already accomplished.

1:25 *complete*: The "completing" of Christ's afflictions (Col 1:24) has as its goal the completing of God's larger plan to bring everyone into God's family.

1:26-27 *secret plan*: or, "mystery." This secret has now been made known. It's that God intended all people, both Jews and Gentiles, to receive Christ. Just as God's "fullness" dwells in Christ (Col 1:19), so Christ dwells in all God's people. All anyone could want of God is therefore available to all who are reconciled to God through Christ.

2:1 Paul's *struggle[s]* (see Col 1:29) aren't merely for the churches he planted. He probably means that he's struggling through prayer (see Col 4:12).

united together in love so that they might have all the riches of assurance that come with understanding, so that they might have the knowledge of the secret plan\* of God, namely Christ. <sup>3</sup>All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in him. <sup>4</sup>I'm telling you this so that no one deceives you with convincing arguments, <sup>5</sup>because even though I am absent physically, I'm with you in spirit. I'm happy to see the discipline and stability of your faith in Christ.

**Error threatening the church**

<sup>6</sup>So live in Christ Jesus the Lord in the same way as you received him. <sup>7</sup>Be rooted and built up in him, be established in faith, and overflow with thanksgiving just as you were taught. <sup>8</sup>See to it that nobody enslaves you with philosophy and foolish deception, which conform to human traditions and the way the world thinks and acts rather than Christ. <sup>9</sup>All the fullness of deity lives in Christ's body. <sup>10</sup>And you have been filled by him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. <sup>11</sup>You were also circumcised by him. This wasn't performed by human hands—the whole body was removed through this circumcision by Christ. <sup>12</sup>You were buried with him through baptism and raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup>When you were dead because of the things you had done wrong and because your body wasn't circumcised, God made you alive with Christ and forgave all the things you had done wrong. <sup>14</sup>He destroyed the record of the debt we owed, with its requirements that worked against us. He canceled it by nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>When he disarmed the rulers and authorities, he exposed them to public disgrace by leading them in a triumphal parade.

<sup>16</sup>So don't let anyone judge you about eating or drinking or about a festival, a new moon observance, or sabbaths. <sup>17</sup>These religious practices are only a shadow of what was coming—the body that cast the shadow is Christ. <sup>18</sup>Don't let anyone who wants to practice harsh self-denial and worship angels rob you of the prize. They go into detail about what they have seen in visions and have become unjustifiably arrogant by their selfish way of thinking. <sup>19</sup>They don't stay connected to the head. The head nourishes and supports the whole body through the joints and ligaments, so the body grows with a growth that is from God.

\*Or *mystery*

2:3 Is 11:2;  
Lk 2:40;  
Ro 11:33;  
1Co 1:24,  
1Co 1:30  
2:4 Ro 16:18  
2:5 1Co 5:3,  
1Co 14:40,  
1Pt 5:9  
2:6 1Th 4:1  
2:7 Eph 2:20,  
Eph 3:17,  
Eph 4:21  
2:8 Ga 4:3;  
Eph 5:6;  
Col 2:20;  
1Ti 6:20  
2:9 Col 1:19  
2:10 Eph 1:21;  
Col 1:16  
2:11 Dt 30:6;  
Ro 2:29;  
Eph 2:11; Phi 3:3  
2:12 Ac 2:24;  
Ro 6:4-5;  
Eph 1:20;  
Col 3:1  
2:13 Eph 2:1,  
Eph 2:5  
2:14 Eph  
2:14-15;  
Col 2:20;  
1Pt 2:24  
2:15 Jn 12:31  
2:16 Ro 14:3,  
Ro 14:5,  
Ro 14:17;  
Ga 4:10;  
Heb 9:10  
2:17 Heb 8:5,  
Heb 10:1  
2:18 Ro 8:7;  
1Co 9:24;  
Col 2:23  
2:19 Eph 1:22,  
Eph 4:15-16;  
Col 1:18

2:2 God's *secret plan* is Christ. This is why love, not intellectual argument (see Col 2:4), is the way to both assurance and knowledge.

2:3 Because *wisdom and knowledge* are in Christ, and Christ is in us, we don't need to seek far and wide for God's special knowledge. Nor do we have to turn to ourselves. Instead, we turn to Christ in us and among us.

2:6-7 Rather than turning away from Christ to pursue knowledge elsewhere, Paul encourages the Colossians to continue a life built on faith in Christ that leads to thanksgiving.

2:6 *live in Christ Jesus*: This begins an extensive section on being in Christ (see sidebar, "Christ as New Adam"), a life that involves both dying and living with Christ.

2:8 *traditions*: may refer to Jewish traditions the Colossians were considering (see intro).

2:9-10 The Colossians share in the story of Christ, who ruled over all things from the beginning of creation and who rules over them now as the resurrected king (see Col 1:16, 19, 20 and notes for Col 1:16, 19). *fullness*: See Colossians 1:19 and its note.

2:11-13 Union with Christ happens at baptism (see Rom 6:3-4). Baptism is into Christ's death and resurrection. Therefore, it involves dying to the old humanity's way of life and rising again to the new humanity that Jesus brings (see Col 1:19-22 and notes for Col 1:19-20; 1:21-22).

2:11 *circumcision*: The Jewish custom of circumcision, the removal of foreskin, is a way of marking God's people and

signifying their unity with God. Paul uses circumcision as an expression of being in union with Christ, showing that the Colossians don't need to keep Jewish laws.

2:13-14 Believers are joined to the resurrected Christ and therefore experience God's resurrection power. This power enables them to live faithfully.

2:14-15 Forgiveness of sins brings freedom from hostile, enslaving powers (see Col 1:13-14).

2:14 *record of the debt*: likely a reference to heavenly books recording what people have done on earth (see Rev 20:12). God wipes clean this record of debt. *nailing it to the cross*: The certificate of debt itself is nailed. In the crucifixion, Christ's power wasn't destroyed. Instead, those powers that enslave humanity lost their power.

2:15 Victorious Roman generals would lead captives in parade to shame Rome's enemies and show their own glory. The word translated as "disarmed" means to be stripped of everything, even one's clothes. This emphasizes the shame experienced by the defeated enemies. Paul probably thinks this happened at Jesus' resurrection. 2:16 Food laws, sabbath days, and circumcision (see Col 2:11) were the three primary markers of Jewish identity in the ancient world.

2:17 *body that cast the shadow*: Christ is the true substance of the OT Law, laws that God's people no longer have to keep. The Law looked forward to Christ's work.

2:18-19 Some 1st-century Jews saw their worship as bringing them into heaven. The Colossians, however, should

2:20 Ro 6:2;  
Ga 4:9; Col 2:8;  
Col 2:14,  
Col 2:16  
2:21 1Ti 4:3  
2:22 Is 29:13;  
Mt 15:9;  
1Co 6:13;  
Ti 1:14

2:23 Col 2:18;  
1Ti 4:8

3:1 Mk 16:19;  
Ro 6:4, Ro 8:34;  
Eph 1:20;  
Col 2:12

3:2 Mt 16:23;  
Phi 3:19

3:3 Ro 6:2,  
Ro 6:11;  
Ga 2:20;  
Col 2:20, Col 3:4

3:4 Jn 11:25;  
Ga 2:20;  
Phi 3:21;  
1Pt 1:13; 1Jn 3:2

3:5 Ro 8:13;  
Ga 5:24;  
Eph 4:19;  
Eph 5:3, Eph 5:5

3:6 Ro 1:18;  
Eph 2:2, Eph 5:6  
3:7 Eph 2:2;  
Ti 3:3

3:8 Eph 4:22,  
Eph 4:29,  
Eph 4:31; 1Pt 2:1

3:9 Lv 19:11;  
Ro 6:6; Eph 4:22,  
Eph 4:25

3:10 Ro 8:29,  
Ro 12:2;  
Eph 2:10,  
Eph 4:23-24

3:11 Ro 10:12;  
1Co 12:13;  
Ga 3:28, Ga 5:6;  
Eph 1:23

3:12 Eph 4:2,  
Eph 4:32; 1Pt 2:1

3:13 Mk 11:25;  
Ro 15:7; Eph 4:2,  
Eph 4:32;  
1Pt 2:21

3:14 1Co 13:1;  
Eph 4:3, Eph 5:2;  
Heb 6:1

3:15 Jn 14:27;  
Phi 4:7

3:16 1Co 14:15;  
Eph 5:19;  
Col 1:28

<sup>20</sup>If you died with Christ to the way the world thinks and acts, why do you submit to rules and regulations as though you were living in the world? <sup>21</sup>"Don't handle!" "Don't taste!" "Don't touch!" <sup>22</sup>All these things cease to exist when they are used. Such rules are human commandments and teachings. <sup>23</sup>They look like they are wise with this self-made religion and their self-denial by the harsh treatment of the body, but they are no help against indulging in selfish immoral behavior.

### Your life hidden in Christ

**3**Therefore, if you were raised with Christ, look for the things that are above where Christ is sitting at God's right side. <sup>2</sup>Think about the things above and not things on earth. <sup>3</sup>You died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

<sup>5</sup>So put to death the parts of your life that belong to the earth, such as sexual immorality, moral corruption, lust, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). <sup>6</sup>The wrath of God is coming upon disobedient people because of these things. <sup>7</sup>You used to live this way, when you were alive to these things. <sup>8</sup>But now set aside these things, such as anger, rage, malice, slander, and obscene language. <sup>9</sup>Don't lie to each other. Take off the old human nature with its practices <sup>10</sup>and put on the new nature, which is renewed in knowledge by conforming to the image of the one who created it. <sup>11</sup>In this image there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all things and in all people.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. <sup>13</sup>Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. <sup>14</sup>And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. <sup>15</sup>The peace of Christ must control your hearts—a peace into which you were called in one body. And be thankful people. <sup>16</sup>The word of Christ must live in you richly. Teach and warn each other with all wisdom

*Christ as New Adam* The idea of Christ as a second Adam is found throughout Colossians. Adam stands for all humanity. He was created in God's glorious image, and he represents the sin and death to which all people are subject. As second Adam, Jesus turns sin and death into forgiveness and life (Col 1:15, 18).

As an Adam figure, Jesus represents humanity before God. His death embodies the death of the old humanity (Col 2:11). His resurrection signals the creation of a new humanity (Col 3:10). This new humanity is reconciled to God, whereas the old was hostile to God (Col 1:20, 21).

In Genesis the first people are given rule over all creation. Therefore, when they disobey God, the effects extend throughout the whole created order. As an Adam figure, Jesus' obedience also extends to all creation. He reconciles humanity but also establishes a new, redeemed order in the universe (Col 1:20; 2:15) and rules on God's behalf (Col 1:18).

This Adam theology underlies Paul's language of being in Christ. One must be crucified with Christ in order to die to the old humanity. When we die with Christ, we die to an old, sinful way of life (Col 2:11-12, 20-23; 3:5-9). One must be raised with Christ in order to participate in the new humanity, of which Christ is the first member (Col 2:9, 13; 3:1, 10-11).

Finally, this Adam theology means that Christians aren't merely saved individuals but are a saved people. People who belong to Christ are members of his body. God calls people to live as communities that reflect the reconciliation, love, and forgiveness that reflect the work of Christ (Col 3:12-17).

hold fast to Christ. Note the contrast between *arrogant* and *selfish* here with "united" and "love" in Colossians 2:2.

2:20-23 Dying with Christ joins believers to the true power that God provides for overcoming sin's mastery.

3:1-4 This isn't a denial of the earth's goodness (recall that in Col 1:20 all things have been reconciled). Instead, it's a reminder that the place to look for power and fulfillment is the resurrected Christ, with whom believers have been raised.

3:5-11 Living in Christ's resurrection-life requires putting to death the old sinful way of life.

3:9-11 *human nature... image... image*: Christ is a new Adam (see Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:22, 44-49; Col 1:15-20). His death puts to death the *old* humanity, marked by sin and death. And his resurrection brings about a *new* humanity that redefines what it means to bear the image of God (see Rom 8:29). See sidebar, "Christ as New Adam."

3:11 *Greek... uncircumcised*: It isn't necessary to adopt Jewish practices. Christ is sufficient.

3:12-17 The Colossians are called to a new life in community. This life reflects their identity as the loved, forgiven, reconciled people of God in Christ.

by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup>Whatever you do, whether in speech or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through him.

<sup>18</sup>Wives, submit to your husbands in a way that is appropriate in the Lord. <sup>19</sup>Husbands, love your wives and don't be harsh with them. <sup>20</sup>Children, obey your parents in everything, because this pleases the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Parents, don't provoke your children in a way that ends up discouraging them.

<sup>22</sup>Slaves, obey your masters on earth in everything. Don't just obey like people pleasers when they are watching. Instead, obey with the single motivation of fearing the Lord. <sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, do it from the heart for the Lord and not for people. <sup>24</sup>You know that you will receive an inheritance as a reward. You serve the Lord Christ. <sup>25</sup>But evildoers will receive their reward for their evil actions. There is no discrimination.

**4** Masters, be just and fair to your slaves, knowing that you yourselves have a master in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>Keep on praying and guard your prayers with thanksgiving. <sup>3</sup>At the same time, pray for us also. Pray that God would open a door for the word so we can preach the secret plan<sup>f</sup> of Christ—which is why I'm in chains. <sup>4</sup>Pray that I might be able to make it as clear as I ought to when I preach. <sup>5</sup>Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. <sup>6</sup>Your speech should always be gracious and sprinkled with insight so that you may know how to respond to every person.

**Final greeting**

<sup>7</sup>Tychicus, our dearly loved brother, faithful minister, and fellow slave in the Lord, will inform you about everything that has happened to me. <sup>8</sup>This is why I sent him to you, so that you'll know all about us and so he can encourage your hearts. <sup>9</sup>I sent him with Onesimus, our faithful and dearly loved brother, who is one of you. They will let you know about everything here.

<sup>10</sup>Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, says hello to you. So does Mark, Barnabas' cousin (you received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him). <sup>11</sup>Jesus, called Justus, also says hello. These are my only fellow workers for God's kingdom who are Jewish converts. They have been an encouragement to me. <sup>12</sup>Epaphras, who is one of you, says hello. He's a slave of Christ Jesus who always wrestles for you in prayers so that you will stand firm and be fully mature and complete in the entire will of God. <sup>13</sup>I can vouch for him that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup>Luke, the dearly loved physician, and Demas say hello.

<sup>15</sup>Say hello to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea, along with Nympha and the church

<sup>f</sup>Or *mystery*

4:13 Col 2:1 4:14 2Ti 4:10-11; Phm 1:24 4:15 Ro 16:5; Phm 1:2

3:18-4:1 This is a common type of instruction from the ancient world known as a household code. The instruction was given to pairs of people. In the ancient world, one member of the pair (husband, parent, master) was assumed to be inherently superior. The other (wife, child, slave) was thought to be inherently inferior. Both members were to act their parts. Paul may have used this form of instruction to show how important life in the household was for the church and for wider society. Or, it may have been a way to show a world hostile to Christians that Christians were respectable. However, hierarchy doesn't have the last word. Paul has taught the Colossians that everyone is equal in Christ (Col 3:11). See Ephesians sidebar, "The Household Code."

4:2-6 These verses weave together the community's practice of prayer with Christian attitudes and behavior toward people outside the church. They should pray for

Paul's part in fulfilling the ministry of uniting Gentiles to the people of God (see Col 1:27), and their own words to outsiders should be courteous and timely.

4:7-13 These verses indicate that Colossians was written at about the same time as both Ephesians (Eph 6:21-22) and Philemon (Phm 17, 23). All three may have been carried at the same time.

4:10 This may be an example of reconciliation. Paul speaks in support of the same Mark whose actions resulted in a broken relationship between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36-41.

4:11 *Jewish converts*: This may refer to a conservative, law-keeping, Jewish party in early Christianity (see Acts 10:45; 11:2; Gal 2:12).

4:12 *Epaphras*: See Colossians 1:7-8.

4:15 *Nympha... house*: As host to the church, this early Christian woman was a leader and authority in the church.

3:17 Ro 1:8;  
1Co 10:31;  
Eph 5:20;  
Col 1:12;  
1Th 5:18  
3:18 Est 1:20;  
Eph 5:22; 1Pt 3:1  
3:19 Eph 5:25,  
Eph 5:28,  
Eph 5:33; 1Pt 3:7  
3:20 Prv 6:20;  
Eph 6:1  
3:21 Eph 6:4  
3:22 Eph 6:5-6;  
1Pt 2:18  
3:23 Eph 6:7;  
Col 3:17  
3:24 Ac 20:32;  
1Co 7:22; Eph 6:8  
3:25 Dt 10:17;  
Ac 10:34; Ro 2:11;  
Eph 6:9; 1Pt 1:17  
4:1 Job 31:13;  
Eph 6:9  
4:2 Lk 18:1;  
Ro 12:12;  
Eph 6:18; Phl 4:6  
4:3 Ac 14:27;  
Ro 16:25;  
Eph 6:19-20;  
Col 2:2  
4:4 Eph 6:20  
4:5 Mk 4:11;  
Eph 5:15-16  
4:6 Mk 9:50;  
Eph 4:29;  
1Pt 3:15  
4:7 Ac 20:4;  
Eph 6:21-22;  
Col 1:7; 2Ti 4:12  
4:8 Eph 6:22;  
Col 2:2  
4:9 Phm 1:10  
4:10 Ac 15:37;  
Ac 19:29;  
Ac 27:2; 2Ti 4:11;  
Phm 1:24  
4:12 Ro 15:30;  
Col 1:7; Col 1:28;  
Phm 1:23

4:16 1Th 5:27

4:17 2Ti 4:5;

Phm 1:2

4:18 1Co 16:21;

2Th 3:17;

1Ti 6:21;

2Ti 4:22;

Heb 13:3

that meets in her house. <sup>16</sup>After this letter has been read to you publicly, make sure that the church in Laodicea reads it and that you read the one from Laodicea. <sup>17</sup>And tell Archippus, "See to it that you complete the ministry that you received in the Lord."

<sup>18</sup>I, Paul, am writing this greeting personally. Remember that I'm in prison. Grace be with you.

4:16 Circular letters were meant to be read in multiple locations.

4:17 Paul regularly wrote his own greeting on letters that otherwise were written by a secretary (see Gal 6:11).



# 1 THESSALONIANS

1 Thessalonians is written to Christians in the city of Thessalonica in the Roman province of Macedonia. The letter's greeting names Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus as its authors. This team also wrote a letter to Corinth (2 Cor 1:1, 19), and some think they wrote a second letter to Thessalonica (2 Thess 1:1) as well. That Paul took the most active role in composing the letter is indicated by the use of the first person pronoun "I" at several points in the letter (1 Thess 2:18; 3:5; 5:27). Timothy is identified as Paul's companion in Paul's letters and in Acts (Rom 16:21; 1 Cor 4:17; Acts 16:9-40; 1 Tim 1:2, 18; 6:20; 2 Tim 1:2). With Paul, Timothy is a coauthor of Philippians, Philemon, and Colossians. As for Silas, we learn the most about him from the book of Acts, where he is called "Silvanus" (Acts 15:22-40; 16:19, 25, 29; 17:4, 10, 15; 18:5). Although it's difficult to relate some of the details of Paul's

ministry in Acts to Paul's own letters, the two agree that Silas and Timothy were Paul's close companions in ministry.

Many believe that 1 Thessalonians is among the earliest of Paul's letters, if not the very first. Paul probably wrote it in 51 CE, just two decades after Jesus' death and resurrection, making 1 Thessalonians the earliest book in the NT. The letter is addressed to the Gentile Christians of Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:14), who had left pagan gods and practices for the worship of the God of Jesus Christ (1 Thess 1:9; 4:5). Paul had an especially close relationship with these Christians and with the church he founded in Philippi, also located in the province of Macedonia (1 Thess 1:7; 2 Cor 8:1-5; Rom 15:26; Phil 4:15-16).

Ancient letters often served as a stand-in for a visit, and this one certainly fits that description. Shortly after Paul left Thessalonica and



Ancient Roman marketplace at Thessalonica  
*Shutterstock*

arrived in Athens (1 Thess 3:1), he became anxious that their troubles would cause the Thessalonian Christians to leave the church (1 Thess 2:14; 3:2c). These followers of Christ were experiencing pressure from their neighbors because of their Christian beliefs and practices. Timothy visited them for news, and Paul wrote this letter after hearing Timothy's report. This letter is one of the most intimate in the NT, full of love, prayer, thanksgiving, and images of the Christian family. Clearly, Paul uses it to renew his relationship with them. Above all, he exhorts them to remain faithful to Christ and to the Christian community under trying circumstances. He encourages the community to continue in love for each other and in faithful labor.

Paul frequently mentions Christ's return in this letter (1 Thess 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23). This may be because Christians in Thessalonica are concerned about those believers who die before Christ's return. So Paul describes the sequence of events surrounding Christ's coming in order to assure them that believers who die won't be excluded from the gathering of the church at the end time (1 Thess 4:13–5:11). The letter ends with a series of teachings about living holy lives. Paul wants to strengthen the Christian community at Thessalonica and to solidify its friendship with him and his team. He encourages them to stand firm during times of intense opposition and to maintain love for each other.

## I. Introduction (1:1–10)

- A. Address (1:1)
- B. Thanksgiving: The church's faithfulness in Jesus (1:2–10)

## II. Paul's Relationship with the Thessalonians (2:1–3:13)

- A. Remembering the initial ministry in Thessalonica (2:1–12)
- B. Comforted by news about the congregation (2:13–3:10)
  - 1. Thanksgiving: How the church received the gospel (2:13–16)
  - 2. Desire for news (2:17–20)

## 3. Sending for news (3:1–5)

- 4. Receiving news (3:6–10)
- C. Concluding prayer (3:11–13)

## III. Main Instructions (4:1–5:24)

- A. About community life (4:1–12)
  - 1. Living in holiness (4:1–8)
  - 2. Living in love for each other (4:9–12)
- B. About the end time (4:13–5:11)
  - 1. Concerning Jesus' return (4:13–18)
  - 2. Concerning the day of the Lord (5:1–11)
- C. About community relationships (5:12–22)
- D. Concluding prayer (5:23–24)

## IV. Greetings, Remarks, and Benediction (5:25–28)

*Love L. Sechrest*

## Greeting

**1** From Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.  
To the Thessalonians' church that is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Grace and peace to all of you.

## Thanksgiving to God

<sup>2</sup>We always thank God for all of you when we mention you constantly in our prayers. <sup>3</sup>This is because we remember your work that comes from faith,<sup>a</sup> your effort that comes from love, and your perseverance that comes from hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father. <sup>4</sup>Brothers and sisters, you are loved by God, and we know that he has chosen you. <sup>5</sup>We know this because our good news didn't come to you just in speech but also with power and the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know as well as we do what kind of people we were when we were with you, which was for your sake. <sup>6</sup>You became imitators of us and of the Lord when you accepted the message that came from the Holy Spirit with joy in spite of great suffering. <sup>7</sup>As a result you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. <sup>8</sup>The message about the Lord rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia but in every place. The news about your faithfulness to God has spread so that we don't even need to mention it. <sup>9</sup>People tell us about what sort of welcome we had from you and how you turned to God from idols. As a result, you are serving<sup>b</sup> the living and true God, <sup>10</sup>and you are waiting for his Son from heaven. His Son is Jesus, who is the one he raised from the dead and who is the one who will rescue us from the coming wrath.

## Paul's ministry in Thessalonica

**2** As you yourselves know, brothers and sisters, our visit with you wasn't a waste of time. <sup>2</sup>On the contrary, we had the courage through God to speak God's good news in spite of a lot of opposition, although we had already suffered and were publicly insulted, as you know. <sup>3</sup>Our appeal isn't based on false information, the wrong motives, or deception. <sup>4</sup>Rather, we have been examined and approved by God to be trusted with the good news, and that's exactly how we speak. We aren't trying to please people, but we are trying to please God, who continues to examine our hearts. <sup>5</sup>As you know, we never used flattery, and God is our witness that we didn't have greedy motives. <sup>6</sup>We didn't ask for special treatment from people—not from you or from others—<sup>7</sup>although we could have thrown our weight around as Christ's apostles. Instead, we were gentle with you like a nursing mother caring for her

<sup>a</sup>Or *faithfulness* <sup>b</sup>Or *to become slaves of*

1:1 *Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy*: On the identity of the authors, see the introduction.

1:3-5 Paul prays and gives thanks for the Thessalonians' faithfulness and the way God's love has led to God's choosing them (cf. Rom 11:28).

1:3 These three phrases are especially important for understanding the goals of 1 Thessalonians: *work that comes from faith*: For Paul, "work" usually refers to labor in ministry (1 Cor 3:13-15; 9:1; 16:10; Gal 6:4; Phil 2:30; 1 Thess 5:13). *effort... from love*: anticipates Paul's pleas that the congregation will continue in their love "for each other and for everyone" (1 Thess 3:12). Paul is especially concerned that the congregation will continue to pursue unity and faithful action. *hope in our Lord Jesus*: Paul refers to Jesus' return several times in the letter (1 Thess 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 5:23), and this phrase hints at this theme. The main section of the letter tells readers that the fact that some of them have died before Christ's return shouldn't cause them to lose hope (1 Thess 4:13-5:11).

1:6 *imitators... Lord*: Paul encourages Christians to imitate Jesus' faithfulness in the midst of trials.

1:9 *turned to God from idols*: This verse recalls how the church rejected pagan gods. Clearly, this is a Gentile congregation (cf. Acts 17:1-4).

1:10 *waiting for his Son*: Paul will discuss Jesus' return and

the day of the Lord in the body of the letter (1 Thess 4:13-5:11). Each major section of the letter ends by mentioning Jesus' return.

2:1-12 This chapter begins by recollecting the earliest days of Paul's visit to the Thessalonians. Paul hopes that if they remember their earliest attachment to the gospel, they will continue in it.

2:1-2 *suffered... publicly insulted*: Words for "suffering" occur three times in 1 Thessalonians (1 Thess 2:1-2, 14; 3:4; cf. 2 Cor 1:5-7; Phil 1:29). The situation probably involved insults and public pressure rather than outright physical abuse.

2:3-4 *aren't trying... please people, but... please God*: Paul is focused on winning the approval of the God who tests human hearts (cf. 1 Thess 4:8).

2:5-7 *gentle... like a... mother... children*: Paul assumes a humble, socially inferior manner rather than throwing his weight around. The Greek word translated as "gentle" appears as "infants" in some important Greek manuscripts, which would mean "we were infants among you" instead of "we were gentle with you." Paul uses many family metaphors in the letter: mother (1 Thess 2:7), children (1 Thess 2:7), father (1 Thess 2:11), orphans (1 Thess 2:17), and brothers and sisters (1 Thess 1:4; 2:1, 9, 14, 17; 3:2, 7; 4:1, 6, 10, 13; 5:1, 4, 12, 14, 25-27).

2:7 *apostles*: Paul refers to the whole team as apostles.

1:1 Ac 16:1.  
Ac 17:1.  
Ro 1:7; 2Co 1:19;  
2Th 1:1.  
1:2 Ro 1:8-9;  
Eph 1:16;  
Eph 5:20;  
Col 1:3.

1:3 Ro 8:25;  
1Co 13:13;  
Ga 5:6; 2Th 1:3;  
2Th 1:11.

1:5 Ro 1:16;  
Ro 15:19;  
1Co 2:4; Col 2:2;  
2Th 2:14.

1:6 Ac 13:52;  
Ac 17:5;  
1Co 4:16;  
1Co 11:1;  
Ga 5:22.

1:8 Ro 1:8;  
Ro 10:18;  
Ro 16:19;  
2Th 3:1.

1:9 Ac 14:15;  
1Co 12:2.

1:10 Mt 3:7;  
Ac 2:24; Ro 5:9;  
1Co 1:7; 1Th 5:9.

2:1 1Th 1:9;  
2Th 1:10.

2:3 2Co 2:17;  
2Co 4:2; 1Th 4:7.

2:4 Ro 8:27;  
Ga 1:10; Ga 2:7;  
1Ti 1:11.

2:5 Ac 20:33;  
Ro 1:9; 1Th 2:10.

2:6 In 5:41;  
1Co 9:1; 2Co 4:5.

2:7 1Th 2:11;  
2Ti 2:24.

2:8 Ro 1:1;  
2Co 12:15;  
1Jn 3:16  
2:9 Ac 18:3;  
Ac 20:34;  
2Co 11:9;  
2Th 3:8  
2:10 2Co 1:12;  
1Th 1:5, 1Th 1:25  
2:11 1Co 4:14  
2:12 Ro 8:28;  
Eph 4:1;  
1Th 5:24;  
2Th 2:14;  
1Pr 5:10  
2:13 Ro 10:17;  
1Th 1:2;  
Heb 4:12  
2:14 Ac 8:1;  
Ac 17:5; Ga 1:22;  
1Th 1:6, 1Th 3:4  
2:15 Mt 5:12;  
Ac 7:52  
2:16 Ac 13:50;  
Ac 17:5; 1Th 1:10  
2:17 1Co 5:3;  
Col 2:5;  
1Th 3:10  
2:18 Zec 3:1;  
Ro 1:13;  
Ro 15:22  
2:19 2Co 1:14;  
Phi 4:1;  
1Th 3:13;  
1Th 5:23; 2Th 2:1  
2:20 2Co 1:14;  
1Th 2:19  
3:1 Ac 17:15;  
1Th 3:5  
3:2 Ac 16:1;  
1Co 16:10;  
2Co 1:1;  
Phi 2:19; Col 1:1  
3:3 Ac 9:16;  
Ac 14:22; Ro 5:3  
3:4 1Th 2:14  
3:5 Mt 4:3;  
1Co 7:5;  
2Co 11:3;  
Phi 2:16; 1Th 3:1

own children. <sup>8</sup>We were glad to share not only God's good news with you but also our very lives because we cared for you so much. <sup>9</sup>You remember, brothers and sisters, our efforts and hard work. We preached God's good news to you, while we worked night and day so we wouldn't be a burden on any of you. <sup>10</sup>You and God are witnesses of how holy, just, and blameless we were toward you believers. <sup>11</sup>Likewise, you know how we treated each of you like a father treats his own children. <sup>12</sup>We appealed to you, encouraged you, and pleaded with you to live lives worthy of the God who is calling you into his own kingdom and glory.

### *How the Thessalonians received God's message*

<sup>13</sup>We also thank God constantly for this: when you accepted God's word that you heard from us, you welcomed it for what it truly is. Instead of accepting it as a human message, you accepted it as God's message, and it continues to work in you who are believers. <sup>14</sup>Brothers and sisters, you became imitators of the churches of God in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus. This was because you also suffered the same things from your own people as they did from the Jews. <sup>15</sup>They killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and drove us out. They don't please God, and they are hostile to the entire human race <sup>16</sup>when they try to stop us from speaking to the Gentiles so they can be saved. Their sins are constantly pushing the limit.<sup>6</sup> God's wrath has caught up with them in the end.

### *Paul's desire to visit*

<sup>17</sup>Brothers and sisters, we were separated from you for a while physically but not in our hearts. We made every effort in our desire to see you again face-to-face. <sup>18</sup>We wanted to come to you—I, Paul, tried over and over again—and Satan stopped us. <sup>19</sup>What is our hope, joy, or crown that we can brag about in front of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Isn't it all of you? <sup>20</sup>You are our glory and joy!

**3** So when we couldn't stand it any longer, we thought it was a good idea to stay on in Athens by ourselves, <sup>2</sup>and we sent you Timothy, who is our brother and God's coworker in the good news about Christ. We sent him to strengthen and encourage you in your faithfulness. <sup>3</sup>We didn't want any of you to be shaken by these problems. You know very well that we were meant to go through this. <sup>4</sup>In fact, when we were with you, we kept on predicting that we were going to face problems exactly like what happened, as you know. <sup>5</sup>That's why I sent Timothy to find out about your faithfulness when I couldn't stand it anymore. I was worried that the tempter might have tempted you so that our work would have been a waste of time.

<sup>6</sup>*Or They constantly fill up the measure of their sin.*

**2:8-9** *cared for you so much:* Paul describes his love for this church repeatedly (1 Thess 1:3-4; 2:8; 3:6, 12; 4:9; 5:8, 13). 1 Thessalonians is one of the most intimate letters in the NT.

**2:9-12** *worked night and day... live lives... worthy of... God:* Paul points to his labor among them as an illustration of his love for them. He didn't ask for support but worked for free. In this way, he set an example of a work ethic that would prevent bad habits from forming. People in this church may have felt that manual labor was beneath their status. Paul wants them to remember his work habits so that they will continue to work for good.

**2:14-16** Many interpreters believe these verses were added to the letter long after Paul's death, since their perspective is very different from his positive attitude about Jews in Romans 9-11. He doesn't want believers in Thessalonica to think that such conflicts are out of the ordinary; believers can expect a degree of opposition from their non-Christian neighbors (1 Pet 2:12; 4:3-4; Matt 5:10-12). Paul's later positive comments about Jews show that he doesn't harbor lasting hostility toward them as a result of these conflicts (Rom 9:2-5; 11:25-26).

**2:16** *pushing the limit:* This traditional language about sinfulness describes the seriousness of actions that prevent evangelism (cf. Dan 8:23). *God's wrath has caught up with them:* What event does Paul have in mind that exhibits the wrath of God on the opposing Jews? Some think this verse refers to the death of King Agrippa in 44 CE. Others point to the revolt in Judea in 44-46 CE, a famine in 46-47 CE, or the expulsion of Jews from Rome in 49 CE.

**2:17-20** These verses show Paul's great love for the Thessalonians. They also reveal his anxiety about them and his deep desire to see them. According to Paul, the faith of this church is important evidence of his apostleship (cf. 1 Cor 9:1-2; 2 Cor 1:14).

**3:1-2** *encourage you:* more evidence of Paul's concern for this congregation. Paul says it's unbearable to be apart from them because he's worried about their faith. *faithfulness:* A form of the word appears five times in this chapter alone (1 Thess 3:2, 5, 6, 7, 10). Paul is worried that the pressure they're experiencing will cause them to leave Christ and the church.

**3:3-4** *predicting... face problems:* Paul sets new expectations about what Christians can face. He reminds them

**Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians**

<sup>6</sup>Now Timothy has returned to us from you and has given us good news about your faithfulness and love! He says that you always have good memories about us and that you want to see us as much as we want to see you. <sup>7</sup>Because of this, brothers and sisters, we were encouraged in all our distress and trouble through your faithfulness. <sup>8</sup>For now we are alive if you are standing your ground in the Lord. <sup>9</sup>How can we thank God enough for you, given all the joy we have because of you before our God? <sup>10</sup>Night and day, we pray more than ever to see all of you in person and to complete whatever you still need for your faith. <sup>11</sup>Now may our God and Father himself guide us on our way back to you. <sup>12</sup>May the Lord cause you to increase and enrich your love for each other and for everyone in the same way as we also love you. <sup>13</sup>May the love cause your hearts to be strengthened, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his people. Amen.

**Living that pleases God**

**4** So then, brothers and sisters, we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus to keep living the way you already are and even do better in how you live and please God—just as you learned from us. <sup>2</sup>You know the instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. <sup>3</sup>God's will is that your lives are dedicated to him. <sup>4</sup>This means that you stay away from sexual immorality <sup>4a</sup>and learn how to control your own body in a pure <sup>4b</sup>and respectable way. <sup>5</sup>Don't be controlled by your sexual urges like the Gentiles who don't know God. <sup>6</sup>No one should mistreat or take advantage of their brother or sister in this issue. The Lord punishes people for all these things, as we told you before and sternly warned you. <sup>7</sup>God didn't call us to be immoral but to be dedicated to him. <sup>8</sup>Therefore, whoever rejects these instructions isn't rejecting a human authority. They are rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

<sup>9</sup>You don't need us to write about loving your brothers and sisters because God has already taught you to love each other. <sup>10</sup>In fact, you are doing loving deeds for all the brothers and sisters throughout Macedonia. Now we encourage you, brothers and sisters, to do so even more. <sup>11</sup>Aim to live quietly, mind your own business, and earn your own living, just as I told you. <sup>12</sup>That way you'll behave appropriately toward outsiders, and you won't be in need.

<sup>4a</sup>Or *holy, sanctified* <sup>4b</sup>Or *holy, sanctified* <sup>4c</sup>Or *holy, sanctified*

that he experienced trouble just as other churches have and just as Jesus himself did (1 Thess 2:14-16; 1:6).

3:6 Paul encourages the Thessalonians to maintain good relationships with him and with other Christians. These relationships will help the church resist temptation and social pressure from its neighbors.

3:7-8 Here Paul says that his life stands and falls as the Thessalonians' lives stand or fall (cf. 1 Cor 12:26). His very life is tied up with theirs. Unity with other Christians will help the community resist the lure of cultural values that are opposed to Christ.

3:10-13 *complete whatever you still need for your faith*: This phrase summarizes a key aim of the letter: to strengthen the church's ability to resist local social pressure.

3:12 *love... each other and... everyone*: This verse reinforces the community's boundaries while also enlarging them. Paul thinks believers should live lives of service to others inside and outside of the church (cf. Gal 6:10).

4:1 *So then*: a transition from the section of the letter that focuses on the relationship with Paul to the main instruction portion of the letter.

4:3-7 *lives... dedicated to him*: Paul emphasizes the importance of holiness (1 Thess 4:3, 4, 7). Sexual immorality begins the list of sins that must be avoided. This is probably because many Jews of the day saw sexual immorality as a

standard feature of Gentile society (cf. 1 Cor 5:1; 6:13, 18; 7:2). Here Paul commands self-control in a way that avoids sexual exploitation (see 1 Cor 7:1-5, 8-9).

4:8 *Holy Spirit*: The Spirit gives believers the power to resist immorality (cf. Gal 5:16-26). The God who gives the Holy Spirit is also the one who gives commands about sexual immorality. Those who reject these moral ideals reject God.

4:9-12 The best way to achieve a community of holiness is by strengthening the bonds of love within the community, and those bonds are strengthened by caring for each other.

4:10 *do so even more*: Paul calls for a love that overflows the boundaries of the church and the region, even reaching beyond the Christian community (cf. 1 Thess 3:12).

4:11-12 *Aim*: The Greek word translated as "aim" can refer to the kind of grasping for honor and privilege that was common among the upper classes in Paul's time. But Paul uses it to commend a peaceful and responsible life as a member of society. *earn your own living*: Many interpreters think this phrase implies that some in Thessalonica had quit their jobs because they expected Jesus to return soon. Another possibility is that they quit working to devote themselves to evangelism. The thought that they were taking advantage of other believers is speculative.

3:6 Ac 18:5;  
1Co 11:2;  
1Th 1:3; 2Th 1:3  
3:7 2Co 1:4  
3:8 1Co 16:13  
3:10 Lk 2:37;  
2Co 13:9;  
1Th 2:17; 2Th 1:3  
3:11 1Th 3:13;  
2Th 2:16, 2Th 3:5  
3:12 Phi 1:9;  
1Th 4:9-10;  
2Th 1:3  
3:13 1Co 1:8;  
Phi 2:15;  
1Th 2:19;  
1Th 3:11;  
1Th 5:23  
4:1 Eph 4:1;  
Col 2:6; 1Th  
3:12, 2Th 2:1  
4:2 Mt 11:1;  
Mt 22:29;  
Mk 12:24;  
Jn 2:22; Jn 8:31  
4:3 Ac 15:20;  
1Co 6:18;  
1Th 5:23  
4:4 1Pt 3:7  
4:5 Ro 1:26;  
Ga 4:8; Eph 4:17;  
Col 3:5  
4:6 Ro 12:19  
4:7 Lv 11:44;  
Eph 4:19;  
1Th 2:3;  
2Th 2:13;  
1Pt 1:15  
4:8 1Jn 3:24  
4:9 Jn 6:45;  
Jn 13:34;  
Ro 12:10;  
1Th 5:1;  
Heb 13:1  
4:10 1Th 1:7;  
1Th 3:12  
4:11 Eph 4:28;  
2Th 3:12  
4:12 Mk 4:11;  
Ro 13:13; Col 4:5

4:13 Eph 2:12  
 4:14 1Co 15:18;  
 2Co 4:14;  
 1Th 4:13  
 4:15 1Co  
 15:51-52;  
 1Th 2:19  
 4:16 Mt 24:31;  
 1Co 15:23,  
 1Co 15:52;  
 2Th 1:7, Jud 1:9  
 4:17 Jn 12:26,  
 Jn 14:3, Ac 1:9;  
 Phi 1:23;  
 Rev 11:12

4:18 1Th 5:11,  
 1Th 5:14;  
 Heb 10:25

5:1 Ac 1:7;  
 1Th 4:9

5:2 1Co 10:8;  
 2Pt 3:10, Rev 3:3,  
 Rev 16:15

5:3 Prov 29:1;  
 Jer 6:14;  
 Lk 21:34;  
 2Th 1:9

5:4 Eph 5:8;  
 Col 1:13; 1Pt 2:9;  
 1Jn 2:8

5:5 Lk 16:8;  
 Jn 12:36;  
 Ac 26:18;  
 Eph 5:8

5:6 Ro 13:11;  
 1Pt 1:13; 1Pt 4:7

5:7 Ac 2:15;  
 Ro 13:13;  
 2Pt 2:13

5:8 Is 59:17;  
 Ro 8:24,  
 Ro 13:12;  
 Eph 6:14;  
 Eph 6:17

5:10 Ro 14:9

5:11 Ro 14:19,  
 Ro 15:2;  
 Eph 4:29;  
 1Th 4:18;  
 1Th 5:14

### Believers who have died

<sup>13</sup>Brothers and sisters, we want you to know about people who have died<sup>a</sup> so that you won't mourn like others who don't have any hope. <sup>14</sup>Since we believe that Jesus died and rose, so we also believe that God will bring with him those who have died in Jesus. <sup>15</sup>What we are saying is a message from the Lord: we who are alive and still around at the Lord's coming definitely won't go ahead of those who have died. <sup>16</sup>This is because the Lord himself will come down from heaven with the signal of a shout by the head angel and a blast on God's trumpet. First, those who are dead in Christ will rise. <sup>17</sup>Then, we who are living and still around will be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet with the Lord in the air. That way we will always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup>So encourage each other with these words.

*The "Rapture"* 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 describes the reunion of Christ and the church at Jesus' return, which is sometimes called "the Rapture" (from the Latin term *raptus*, "a carrying off"; see 1 Thess 4:17: "will be taken up"). Here Paul uses trumpets, angels, and clouds, traditional images of the end time, to describe the splendor of Jesus' return (Dan 7:13; 10:6; Rev 14:14-16; 19:11-16; cf. Exod 19:18-19). The image of meeting the Lord in the air also contributes to the majesty of the scene, pointing to Jesus' lordship over heaven and earth. Given the early date of 1 Thessalonians, it's likely that the congregation hadn't expected believers to die before Jesus' return. Indeed, Paul's response maintains the sense that Jesus would return in the near future. He's answering a question raised by the congregation about whether dead Christians will remain separated from Christ (1 Thess 4:17: "That way we will always be with the Lord"). Paul insists that, far from being left behind, Christians who have died will be the first to be reunited with the Lord when he returns.

### The Lord's coming

**5** We don't need to write to you about the timing and dates, brothers and sisters. <sup>2</sup>You know very well that the day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup>When they are saying, "There is peace and security," at that time sudden destruction will attack them, like labor pains start with a pregnant woman, and they definitely won't escape. <sup>4</sup>But you aren't in darkness, brothers and sisters, so the day won't catch you by surprise like a thief. <sup>5</sup>All of you are children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to night or darkness. <sup>6</sup>So then, let's not sleep like the others, but let's stay awake and stay sober. <sup>7</sup>People who sleep sleep at night, and people who get drunk get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup>Since we belong to the day, let's stay sober, wearing faithfulness and love as a piece of armor that protects our body<sup>b</sup> and the hope of salvation as a helmet. <sup>9</sup>God didn't intend for us to suffer his wrath but rather to possess salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>10</sup>Jesus died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with him. <sup>11</sup>So continue encouraging each other and building each other up, just like you are doing already.

<sup>a</sup>Or *fallen asleep* <sup>b</sup>Or *breastplate*

In any case, Paul insists on the value of work as a public witness.

**4:13-18** This section describes Jesus' return and responds to a concern raised by the congregation.

**4:13** *people who have died*: Paul consoles the church's grief about its members' deaths by reminding them that their hope in Jesus is based on his resurrection (1 Cor 15:16-18; 2 Cor 4:14).

**4:15-17** *message from the Lord*: This phrase usually refers to a message from God through Paul (Rom 9:28; cf. 1 Thess 1:8). Does the message refer to the teaching in 1 Thessalonians 4:14, or the teaching in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, or both? Most likely, Paul is summarizing Jesus' teaching from Matthew 24:30-31.

**5:1-11** This section continues Paul's teaching on the end times by describing the day of the Lord (see sidebar, "The Day of the Lord").

**5:2-3** *thief in the night... labor pains... pregnant woman*:

These are common images for the suddenness of the end of this present age (Matt 24:19, 43-44; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; cf. Isa 13:8).

**5:4-5** *darkness... children of light*: Paul uses common end-time contrasts (day/light, night/dark) to refer to the division of this age from the age to come. Believers behave in a way that suits their identity as members of the next age.

**5:6** *sleep*: This refers to those who are morally lax (see Matt 25:5-13; 26:40-42; Mark 13:34-36; Luke 22:44-46).

**5:8-10** *possess salvation*: Hebrews 10:39 is similar to 1 Thessalonians 5:8-9. Both authors highlight faithfulness and salvation as the believer's destiny. *live together with him*: This verse describes the purpose of Christ's death for us in terms of community.

**5:8** *faithfulness and love... hope of salvation*: Believers focus on faithful action, mutual love, and hope, the same three elements identified in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 (cf. 1 Cor

**Final instructions and blessing**

<sup>12</sup>Brothers and sisters, we ask you to respect those who are working with you, leading you, and instructing you. <sup>13</sup>Think of them highly with love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. <sup>14</sup>Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are disorderly. Comfort the discouraged. Help the weak. Be patient with everyone. <sup>15</sup>Make sure no one repays a wrong with a wrong, but always pursue the good for each other and everyone else. <sup>16</sup>Rejoice always. <sup>17</sup>Pray continually. <sup>18</sup>Give thanks in every situation because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. <sup>19</sup>Don't suppress the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Don't brush off Spirit-inspired messages, <sup>21</sup>but examine everything carefully and hang on to what is good. <sup>22</sup>Avoid every kind of evil. <sup>23</sup>Now, may the God of peace himself cause you to be completely dedicated to him; and may your spirit, soul, and body be kept intact and blameless at our Lord Jesus Christ's coming. <sup>24</sup>The one who is calling you is faithful and will do this.

**Final greeting**

<sup>25</sup>Brothers and sisters, pray for us. <sup>26</sup>Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. <sup>27</sup>By the Lord's authority, I order all of you to have this letter read aloud to all the brothers and sisters. <sup>28</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.

13:13). *armor... helmet*: These images recall the divine warrior who fights for God's people (Isa 59:17; cf. Eph 6:14-17), though here they refer to believers who act as God's agents.

5:12-22 The final set of instructions focuses on strengthening the bonds of community.

5:12-13 *working... leading... instructing*: These three activities identify the duties of those who work in congregations. *because of their work*: Paul tells church members to love their leaders, not in order to set them on a pedestal but for the sake of their service (1 Cor 16:16).

5:14-15 Paul encourages harmony in the church and

*The Day of the Lord* Paul uses several images in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 to describe the abrupt end of this present age. The image of the day of the Lord draws on OT texts from the Prophets. These include Joel 2, where judgment comes through like an invading army, and Isaiah 13:6-8 and Amos 5:18-24, where the Lord God judges sin. In the NT, writers use OT images to describe the day of the Lord as sneaking up on people "like a thief in the night" (1 Thess 5:2) and as coming suddenly, like a woman's labor pains (1 Thess 5:2; 1 Cor 5:5; cf. 2 Pet 3:10). According to these images, many will be unaware of its coming and unprepared for the Lord's wrath and the sudden destruction (1 Thess 5:6-9). Like the prophets, Paul uses these images to call people to greater moral watchfulness so that they will be prepared to greet the Lord Jesus at his return.

community. The virtues of discipline, mercy, patience, and good works are directed toward the needy inside and outside of the church.

5:19-22 Believers shouldn't reject Spirit-inspired prophecy. Instead, the church must identify what is good and what is bad in each case.

5:23-24 Paul believes this congregation will grow in holiness. He hopes God will keep them unified and faithful (see Heb 6:9).

5:25 *pray for us*: Paul asks for prayer from his friends in Thessalonica. He makes this request only one other time, before facing hostilities in Jerusalem (Rom 15:30-31).

5:12 1Co 15:10.  
1Co 16:16.  
1Co 16:18.  
1Ti 5:17.  
Heb 13:17

5:13 Mk 9:50.  
2Co 13:11.  
2Ti 2:22

5:14 Is 35:4.  
Ac 20:35.  
Ro 14:1.  
Ro 15:1.  
1Co 13:4

5:15 Lv 19:18.  
Prv 24:29.  
Ro 12:17.  
Ga 6:10; 1Pt 3:9

5:16 Lk 10:20.  
Phi 4:4

5:17 Lk 18:1.  
Eph 6:18; Col 4:2

5:18 Eph 5:20

5:19 Is 63:10.  
Ac 7:51.  
Eph 4:30

5:20 1Co 11:4.  
1Co 14:1

5:21 1Jn 4:1

5:22 Job 28:28.  
Ps 97:10.  
Ro 12:9.

1Co 10:31.  
Phi 4:8

5:23 Ro 15:33.  
1Th 2:19.

1Th 3:13.  
Heb 4:12.  
Heb 13:20

5:24 1Co 1:9.  
2Th 3:3; 2Ti 2:13

5:26 Ro 16:16

5:28 Ro 16:20.  
2Th 3:18





# 2 THESSALONIANS

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In 2 Thessalonians the author writes to encourage the congregation to continue in faithful action as they await the return of Christ. The author uses material from the OT and early Christian traditions about the day of the Lord to help people understand where they stand in relationship to Jesus' return (2 Thess 2:1-12). Perhaps as the result of false teaching (2 Thess 2:2), some in Thessalonica mistakenly think that the day of the Lord has already come.

Although it's similar to 1 Thessalonians, many scholars doubt that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy wrote 2 Thessalonians. First, some claim that the author overemphasizes his identity in 2 Thessalonians 3:17 in a way Paul wouldn't have. Second, the author knows about letters that weren't written by Paul but list him as their author (2 Thess 2:2). This situation wouldn't have happened until long after Paul's death. Third, the author of 2 Thessalonians seems to have used the outline of 1 Thessalonians. Fourth, both letters address the topic of the day of the Lord, but the problem in one is the opposite of the problem in the other. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 the problem is that the day of the Lord hasn't come yet, which causes worry

that the Christians who have already died will miss the Lord's return. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 the congregation is worried that the day of the Lord has already occurred. Furthermore, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-8 says the day of the Lord comes suddenly and without warning, while 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 lists signs that will precede the arrival of that day. If the author isn't Paul, he writes to correct or supplement the earlier letter as a way of continuing Paul's legacy.

When was this letter written? If Paul is its author, he must have written it near the end of his life in the early 60s CE, years after writing 1 Thessalonians early in his ministry. A long separation between the writing of 1 and 2 Thessalonians helps to account for the different ways these two letters talk about the end time. If Paul didn't write it, then the letter probably appeared long after his death. In this case, the unknown author wrote it perhaps as late as the end of the 1st century or early in the 2nd century.

Regarding the subject of the return of Christ, the author explains that Jesus' second coming won't happen until after a period of increased immorality, a period that, he says, has already



begun. A figure called “the person who is lawless” (2 Thess 2:3, 8) will emerge. He will try to deceive believers and cause them to fall away from God, but Christ will defeat him. The letter frequently issues apostolic commands (2 Thess

3:4, 6, 10, 12, 14), especially when addressing the topic of a Christian work ethic. A mistaken belief about the day of the Lord may have led some followers of Christ in Thessalonica to quit working.

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### **I. Introduction (1:1-12)**

- A. Greeting (1:1-2)
- B. Thanksgiving and encouragement (1:3-12)

### **II. The Day of the Lord (2:1-17)**

- A. Events that precede the day of the Lord (2:1-9)
- B. The return of the Lord Jesus Christ (2:10-12)
- C. Prayer of thanks (2:13-17)

### **III. Community Instructions (3:1-15)**

- A. Prayer request (3:1-5)
- B. Discipline for the disorderly (3:6-15)

### **IV. Final Greetings and Benediction (3:16-18)**

*Love L. Sechrest*

**Greeting**

1 From Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy:  
 1 To the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God our Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.  
 2 Grace and peace to all of you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Thanksgiving and encouragement**

3 Brothers and sisters, we must always thank God for you. This is only right because your faithfulness is growing by leaps and bounds, and the love that all of you have for each other is increasing. 4 That's why we ourselves are bragging about you in God's churches. We tell about your endurance and faithfulness in all the harassments and trouble that you have put up with. 5 This shows that God's judgment is right, and that you will be considered worthy of God's kingdom for which you are suffering. 6 After all, it's right for God to pay back the ones making trouble for you with trouble 7 and to pay back you who are having trouble with relief along with us. This payback will come when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his powerful angels. 8 He will give justice with blazing fire to those who don't recognize God and don't obey the good news of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the Lord's presence and away from his mighty glory. 10 This will happen when he comes on that day to receive honor from his holy people and to be admired by everyone who has believed—and our testimony to you was believed.

11 We are constantly praying for you for this: that our God will make you worthy of his calling and accomplish every good desire and faithful work by his power. 12 Then the name of our Lord Jesus will be honored by you, and you will be honored by him, consistent with the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Day of the Lord**

2 Brothers and sisters, we have a request for you concerning our Lord Jesus Christ's coming and when we are gathered together to be with him. 2 We don't want you to be easily confused in your mind or upset if you hear that the day of the Lord is already here, whether you hear it through some spirit, a message, or a letter supposedly from us. 3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way.

*The Lawless Person*

The main concern of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 is how to identify a person who is to appear before Jesus' return. The text is similar to Jesus' warnings in Matthew 24, which in turn resemble those in Daniel 11 (cf. Matt 24:4, 10-12, 14-15; Dan 9:26-27; 11:31-39). All three passages describe the end time and warn about someone who will lead God's people off track and cause them to fall away from the Lord. In addition, these passages use language that recalls the Maccabean uprising in 166-160 BCE, a time when Jewish people led by Judas Maccabeus rebelled against a foreign ruler who was known as Antiochus IV Euphianes. In 2 Thessalonians the author describes the rise of an antichrist figure who will precede the return of Christ. He prophesies that the lawless one will act like Antiochus did in the Maccabean period. Like Antiochus, the lawless person will deceive the people, take God's place by sitting in the temple, and cause many to fall away in rebellion.

1:1 Ac 16:1;  
 2Co 1:19;  
 1Th 1:1  
 1:2 Ro 1:7  
 1:3 Jo 1:8;  
 1Th 1:2-3,  
 1Th 3:12;  
 2Th 2:13  
 1:4 1Th 2:14,  
 1Th 2:19,  
 1Th 3:3; Jas 5:11  
 1:5 Lk 20:35;  
 Ac 14:22;  
 Phi 1:28;  
 2Th 1:11  
 1:6 Col 3:25;  
 Rev 6:10,  
 Rev 19:2  
 1:7 Mt 25:31;  
 Mk 8:38,  
 1Th 4:16;  
 2Th 1:8; Jud 1:14  
 1:8 Ps 79:6;  
 Is 66:15;  
 Mt 25:41; Ro 2:8;  
 Ga 4:8  
 1:9 Is 2:10,  
 Is 2:19; Phi 3:19;  
 1Th 5:3; 2Th 2:8  
 1:10 Is 49:3;  
 Jo 17:10;  
 1Co 1:6,  
 1Co 3:13;  
 1Th 2:13  
 1:11 Ro 1:9;  
 Col 1:9;  
 1Th 1:2-3;  
 2Th 1:5  
 2:1 Mk 13:27;  
 1Th 2:19,  
 1Th 4:15  
 2:2 1Co 1:8;  
 1Th 5:2; 2Th 2:15  
 2:3 Dn 7:25;  
 Jo 17:12; Eph 5:6;  
 2Th 2:8; 1Ti 4:1

1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy: For more on who wrote this letter, see the introduction.

1:2 Grace and peace to all of you: This is a common greeting in Paul's letters (see 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Phlm 1:3).

1:5-10 At the end of the age, when Jesus returns, God will do justice on behalf of suffering believers. God will grant them relief from harassment and repay their enemies for what they've done to God's people. The thought here is similar to the "eye for an eye" model of justice in Deuteronomy 19:16-21 (cf. Jer 16:5-6).

1:5 This shows: The believer's endurance is a sign that points forward to God's judgment on the church's enemies (cf. Phil 1:27-28). worthy of God's kingdom: Christians can demonstrate their faith by standing strong during troubling times.

1:6-8a Jesus is revealed... powerful angels... blazing fire: These images are traditional in descriptions of the day of the Lord at the end of the age. They depict the invasion

of divine power that disrupts the normal order of life (see Mark 13:24-27; Jer 19:11-16).

1:9-10 God will take vengeance on the church's enemies when Jesus comes. By contrast, believers will honor and admire Jesus. eternal destruction: The penalty for lack of belief is eternal separation from Jesus' presence (cf. 1 Thess 4:17; 5:10).

1:11 accomplish... by his power: God accomplishes good in the lives of believers and empowers their faithful action. make you worthy: Faithful action is what makes the believer worthy of God's call (cf. 1 Thess 2:12; Phil 1:27; Eph 4:1; Col 1:10), and believers need God's help in order to be faithful.

2:1-2 To comfort believers who worry that they have missed Jesus' return, the author describes events that will precede the day of the Lord.

2:3-4 the person who is lawless: This lawless person will stir up rebellion against God and claim divine status. The author predicts that this person will appear before Jesus'

2:4 Is 14:13-14;  
Eze 28:2; 1Co 8:5  
2:5 1Th 3:4  
2:6 2Th 2:7  
2:7 2Th 2:6;  
Rev 17:5;  
Rev 17:7  
2:8 Is 11:4;  
2Th 2:3;  
1Ti 6:14; 2Ti 4:1;  
Ti 2:13  
2:9 Mt 4:10;  
Mt 24:24;  
2Co 11:14;  
Rev 12:9;  
Rev 13:13  
2:10 1Co 1:18  
2:11 Ro 1:28  
2:12 Ro 1:32;  
Ro 2:8

2:13 Eph 1:4;  
1Th 1:4, 1Th 4:7;  
2Th 1:3; 1Pt 1:2

2:15 1Co 11:2;  
1Co 15:58;  
1Co 16:13;  
Phi 4:1; 2Th 2:2

2:16 Jn 3:16;  
1Th 3:11;  
1Pt 1:3; Rev 1:5  
2:17 1Th 3:13;  
2Th 3:3

That day won't come unless the rebellion comes first and the person who is lawless is revealed, who is headed for destruction. <sup>4</sup>He is the opponent of every so-called god or object of worship and promotes himself over them. So he sits in God's temple, displaying himself to show that he is God. <sup>5</sup>You remember that I used to tell you these things while I was with you, don't you? <sup>6</sup>Now you know what holds him back so that he can be revealed when his time comes. <sup>7</sup>The hidden plan to live without any law is at work now, but it will be secret only until the one who is holding it back is out of the way. <sup>8</sup>Then the person who is lawless will be revealed. The Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath from his mouth. When the Lord comes, his appearance will put an end to him. <sup>9</sup>When the person who is lawless comes, it will happen through Satan's effort, with all kinds of fake power, signs, and wonders. <sup>10</sup>It will happen with every sort of wicked deception of those who are heading toward destruction because they have refused to love the truth that would allow them to be saved. <sup>11</sup>This is why God will send them an influence that will mislead them so that they will believe the lie. <sup>12</sup>The result will be that everyone will be judged who is not convinced by the truth but is happy with injustice.

**What Holds Back Lawlessness?** The identity of the force that holds back lawlessness isn't clear in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8. Possibilities include God, the Holy Spirit, the preaching of the gospel, the church, Rome, or Caesar. Perhaps God delays the final events to give time for worldwide evangelism. Whoever or whatever the force is, most people think that it holds evil at bay before the coming of the lawless person but withdraws right before Jesus comes to defeat evil. Other people focus on 2 Thessalonians 2:6b, which says that this force helps to reveal the lawless person. If that is the case, then this force will be yet another agent of lawlessness. Suggestions for who this other agent might be include Satan, a false teacher (one who teaches that the Lord has already returned), or evil in general. This interpretation holds that this force helps to create the rebellious conditions that favor the coming of "the person who is lawless." The author isn't as clear as we might want on this point because his main concern lies elsewhere. He wants believers to know that they haven't missed Jesus' return. After all, there hasn't yet been a widespread falling away from the faith, an evil period, he says, that will precede the coming of the lawless person and the final victory of Jesus.

### Prayer of thanks and encouragement

<sup>13</sup>But we always must thank God for you, brothers and sisters who are loved by God. This is because he chose you from the beginning to be the first crop of the harvest. This brought salvation, through your dedication to God by the Spirit and through your belief in the truth. <sup>14</sup>God called all of you through our good news so you could possess the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>15</sup>So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold on to the traditions we taught you, whether we taught you in person or through our letter. <sup>16</sup>Our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and a good

return. *temple:* The author uses traditions about ungodly leaders who defile the temple to describe the end of the age (cf. Matt 24:4-6, 10-13, 15; Dan 11:31; 12:11; 9:27). He prophesies the coming of a leader who promotes immorality through deception (cf. 2 Thess 2:9; see sidebar, "The Lawless Person").

2:6-7 *holds him back...* *The hidden plan:* a force that precedes or perhaps prepares for the coming of the person who is lawless (see sidebar, "What Holds Back Lawlessness?").

2:9 *Satan's effort:* "The person who is lawless" (2 Thess 2:3-4) acts as Satan's agent. The author prophesies that Satan will help this person deceive the church by duplicating the signs and wonders that normally accompany God's prophets (cf. Jer 12:9; 13:11-18; 20:1-3).

2:10-12 *refused to love the truth... to be saved:* The letter emphasizes that people are responsible for their unbelief. Unbelievers also mislead others in turn. *God*

*will... mislead:* The author maintains that God controls events that lead to unbelief (cf. Exod 8:32; 9:12; Rom 1:18-32).

2:10 *those... heading toward destruction:* At the end of the age, humanity will be divided into those who are saved and those who are perishing.

2:13 *he chose you:* God's choice of those who are being saved is evidence of God's love (see Col 3:12; Titus 1:1). *first crop:* This verse may indicate that this congregation was one of Paul's first churches.

2:15 *traditions:* Traditions are rules and practices handed down by a community's elders (Mark 7:3; 1 Cor 11:2). Believers should cling to Paul's traditions and to this letter's instructions.

2:16-17 The thanksgiving and prayer in these verses anticipate the instructions in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. Together they urge the congregation to do good works that honor the Lord.

hope. <sup>17</sup>May he encourage your hearts and give you strength in every good thing you do or say.

### Prayer request

**3** Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us so that the Lord's message will spread quickly and be honored, just like it happened with you. <sup>2</sup>Pray too that we will be rescued from inappropriate and evil people since everyone that we meet won't respond with faith. <sup>3</sup>But the Lord is faithful and will give you strength and protect you from the evil one. <sup>4</sup>We are confident about you in the Lord—that you are doing and will keep doing what we tell you to do. <sup>5</sup>May the Lord lead your hearts to express God's love and Christ's endurance.

### Discipline for the undisciplined

<sup>6</sup>Brothers and sisters, we command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to stay away from every brother or sister who lives an undisciplined life that is not in line with the traditions that you received from us. <sup>7</sup>You yourselves know how you need to imitate us because we were not undisciplined when we were with you. <sup>8</sup>We didn't eat anyone's food without paying for it. Instead, we worked night and day with effort and hard work so that we would not impose on you. <sup>9</sup>We did this to give you an example to imitate, not because we didn't have a right to insist on financial support. <sup>10</sup>Even when we were with you we were giving you this command: "If anyone doesn't want to work, they shouldn't eat." <sup>11</sup>We hear that some of you are living an undisciplined life. They aren't working, but they are meddling in other people's business. <sup>12</sup>By the Lord Jesus Christ, we command and encourage such people to work quietly and put their own food on the table. <sup>13</sup>Brothers and sisters, don't get discouraged in doing what is right. <sup>14</sup>Take note of anyone who doesn't obey what we have said in this letter. Don't associate with them so they will be ashamed of themselves. <sup>15</sup>Don't treat them like enemies, but warn them like you would do for a brother or sister.

### Final greeting

<sup>16</sup>May the Lord of peace himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with all of you. <sup>17</sup>I, Paul, am writing this greeting with my own hand. This verifies that the letter is from me, as in every letter of mine. This is how I write. <sup>18</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.

3:1 Ro 15:30;  
Eph 6:19;  
1Th 1:8, 1Th 4:1,  
1Th 5:25  
3:2 Ro 15:31  
3:3 1Co 1:9;  
1Th 5:24;  
Jud 1:24  
3:4 2Co 2:3  
3:5 1Th 3:11  
3:6 Ro 16:17;  
1Co 5:4,  
1Co 5:11;  
1Th 5:14;  
2Th 3:11  
3:7 Ac 20:35;  
1Co 4:16,  
1Co 11:1;  
1Th 1:6, 2Th 3:9  
3:8 Ac 18:3,  
Ac 20:34, 1Th 2:9  
3:9 1Co 9:4;  
1Th 1:6, 1Th 2:6;  
2Th 3:7, 1Pt 5:3  
3:10 1Th 3:4,  
1Th 4:11  
3:11 2Th 3:6;  
1Ti 5:13;  
1Pt 4:15  
3:12 Eph 4:28;  
1Th 4:1, 1Th  
4:11  
3:13 Ro 2:7;  
2Co 4:1; Ga 6:9  
3:14 Ro 16:17;  
1Co 4:14,  
1Co 5:9,  
1Co 5:11;  
2Th 3:6  
3:15 Ga 6:1;  
1Th 5:14; Ti 3:10  
3:17 1Co 16:21;  
Col 4:18  
3:18 Ro 16:20;  
1Th 5:28

3:3 *the Lord is faithful*: The letter stresses Jesus' faithfulness in order to emphasize the need for keeping the faith in anticipation of the end of the age (2 Thess 3:5; cf. 1 Thess 5:24). Christ's faithfulness is a model for the believer's faithful endurance. *the evil one*: The author refers either to Satan or to one of his agents (2 Thess 2:3-4, 9; cf. Matt 6:13), or to the kind of person who does evil (2 Thess 3:2; cf. Matt 12:35).

3:4 *what we tell you to do*: The author is confident that readers will be obedient to the traditions handed down to them. Words and phrases that are synonyms of "command" appear four times in this section (2 Thess 3:4, 6, 10, 12).

3:6 *undisciplined*: Had the local people stopped working because they thought the end had already come? Believers should remain separate from idle people; this will

motivate the idle to return to the community (2 Thess 3:14b-15; cf. 1 Cor 5:4-5, 11).

3:8-12 Christians should imitate Paul's work habits (cf. 1 Thess 2:9; 4:11). The emphasis isn't on refusing to care for those who can't work but on promoting the attitudes found in 1 Thessalonians 4:11.

3:12 *work quietly*: This command also echoes the concerns of 1 Thessalonians 4:11 (see 1 Tim 2:11-12).

3:15 *Don't treat them like enemies*: This verse is similar to the advice found in Matthew 18:15-17.

3:17 *with my own hand . . . the letter is from me . . . every letter of mine. This is how I write*: Some think this verse confirms that the author is Paul, who offers his handwriting as proof of his identity. Others suggest that Paul wouldn't need to offer such proof. See the introduction for a discussion about authorship.



# 1 TIMOTHY

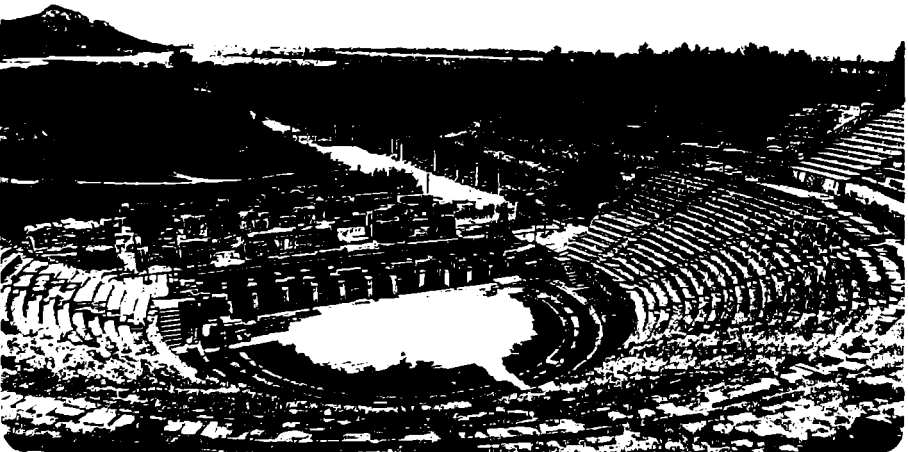
## *The Pastoral Letters*

The Pastoral Letters—1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus—are placed as a collection at the end of Paul's letters. They have been called "pastoral" for the past 200 years because they talk about issues that concern a pastor: running the Christian community, how believers live their lives together, how the community is managed, how members are expected to behave, and how the church should behave as a whole. However, they weren't written to pastors. They are addressed to two core members of Paul's ministry team—two letters (1 and 2 Timothy) are written to Timothy, who was sent by Paul to Ephesus to deal with false teaching; and one letter is written to Titus, who was sent by Paul to deal with similar problems in the church on the island of Crete. These three letters include commissions for Timothy and Titus to work with the churches as Paul's representatives.

All three letters say that they are written by Paul, but this is debated today. The three stand out as more similar to each other than to the rest of the Pauline letters. All three include events that can't be found in Acts or the other Pauline letters, and that would seem to require Paul's release from prison (rather than his death) after the

end of Acts. 1 Timothy and Titus are especially similar in style, arrangement, setting, and theology, but all three letters share distinctive vocabulary and style. All three are concerned with guarding the teaching that has been entrusted to Paul, Timothy, and Titus, and with regulating life in Christian communities. All three letters also share extensive themes with the rest of the Pauline letters and material in Acts. However, characteristic ideas found among Paul's other letters—including justification by faith and the church as the body of Christ—are missing here.

Most scholars think that the letters were written by someone else in Paul's name sometime after his death. They think that the differences with the rest of the Pauline letters show that he didn't write them. They also believe that the letters reflect a church organization that was more advanced than it could have been in Paul's time. These comments refer more to 1 Timothy and Titus than to 2 Timothy, however. Others support the view that Paul wrote these letters. They note claims about Pauline authorship in the texts themselves as well as in church traditions. They account for the differences in topics, vocabulary, and style by recognizing that Paul used secretaries, by referring to changes



The amphitheater at Ephesus  
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in Paul's age and circumstances, by drawing attention to the fact that in these letters he was writing to individuals rather than communities, by recognizing that he had close relationships with Timothy and Titus, and by noting that these three letters share goals and purposes that were distinct from the other Pauline letters.

Whatever one thinks about the question of authorship, it's still helpful to read each letter on its own terms to appreciate what each one contributes to the life of following Jesus as part of a community.

### 1–2 Timothy

In 1 and 2 Timothy the author identifies himself as Paul in the first verse of each letter. This would indicate the same Paul who wrote well-known letters such as Romans and 1 Corinthians.

Both letters are addressed to Timothy. According to Acts and the Pauline letters, Timothy was part of Paul's inner circle and probably the most loyal and valuable member of his mission team (Phil 2:19-23). He was born in Lystra and met Paul there during Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-3). His mother and grandmother were Jewish followers of Jesus, and they raised him in the faith (2 Tim 1:5), but his father was Greek. Paul had him circumcised, and he joined Paul's team. Timothy often acts as Paul's representative to churches (Acts 17:14; 19:22; 1 Cor 4:17; 1 Thess 3:2), and he is named as a coauthor of six of Paul's letters (2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; Phlm 1:1).

Both letters were written to Timothy at Ephesus. The two letters have so many common ties

that they are clearly related to each other. In organization and style, though, 1 Timothy is more like Titus, while 2 Timothy is more personal. Most scholars believe that 1 Timothy reflects an earlier time in Paul's ministry, right after he sent Timothy to Ephesus, and 2 Timothy reflects Paul's circumstances directly before his death.

### 1 Timothy

How does 1 Timothy fit into what we know of Paul's life? Paul includes a description of the harassment of the church that fits the accounts of his life and his change of heart and life in Acts (Acts 9:1-4; 22:4-5, 19-20; 26:10-11). However, the travel described in 1 Timothy 1:3, where Paul leaves Timothy in Ephesus and goes to Macedonia, isn't recorded in Acts. If 1 Timothy was written by Paul, then this journey would have happened after the events reported in Acts, when Paul would have been released from prison.

This letter was written to help Timothy correct problems in Ephesus with false teaching, which is why Paul left Timothy there in the first place (1 Tim 1:3). The opening and closing of the letter (1 Tim 6:20-21) indicate that specific issues of false teaching explain the content of the letter. Throughout, the letter contrasts the sound teaching that Paul entrusted to Timothy with false teaching. This false teaching concerned the Law, myths, genealogies, arguments and disagreements, exploitation of the church for money, materialism, and slander. Paul's sound teaching has a heavy focus on ethics and behavior as well as on having a good conscience.

## I. Introduction (1:1-20)

- A. Greeting (1:1-2)
- B. Timothy's purpose in Ephesus: correction of false teaching (1:3-11)
- C. Thanksgiving (1:12-17)
- D. Importance of faith and a good conscience (1:18-20)

## II. Body (2:1–6:19)

- A. First steps for correction (2:1-15)
  - 1. Prayer for everyone (2:1-7)
  - 2. Instructions for men and women (2:8-15)

## B. Instructions for God's household (3:1-13)

- 1. Supervisors in God's household (3:1-7)
- 2. Servants in God's household (3:8-13)

## C. Instructions to Timothy as a leader (3:14–6:19)

- 1. Leading God's household (3:14–4:7a)
- 2. Practices of spiritual leadership (4:7b-16)
- 3. Caring for God's family (5:1-16)
- 4. Instructions for elders (5:17-25)
- 5. Conduct of Christian slaves (6:1-2)
- 6. Warning about false teachers (6:3-16)
- 7. Wealth of good works (6:17-19)

## III. Letter Closing: Protect the Tradition (6:20-21)



## Greeting

**1** From Paul, who is an apostle of Jesus Christ by the command of God our savior and of Christ Jesus our hope.

**2** To Timothy, my true child in the faith.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus our Lord.

## Timothy's purpose in Ephesus

**3** When I left for Macedonia, I asked you to stay behind in Ephesus so that you could instruct certain individuals not to spread wrong teaching. **4** They shouldn't pay attention to myths and endless genealogies. Their teaching only causes useless guessing games instead of faithfulness to God's way of doing things. **5** The goal of instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. **6** Because they missed this goal, some people have been distracted by talk that doesn't mean anything. **7** They want to be teachers of Law without understanding either what they are saying or what they are talking about with such confidence. **8** Now we know that the Law is good if used appropriately. **9** We understand this: the Law isn't established for a righteous person but for people who live without laws and without obeying any authority. They are the ungodly and the sinners. They are people who are not spiritual, and nothing is sacred to them. They kill their fathers and mothers, and murder others. **10** They are people who are sexually unfaithful, and people who have intercourse with the same sex. They are kidnappers, **11** liars, individuals who give false testimonies in court, and those who do anything else that is opposed to sound teaching. **11** Sound teaching agrees with the glorious gospel of the blessed God that has been trusted to me.

<sup>a</sup>Or slave dealers

1:1-2 The greeting follows the typical pattern of a letter by Paul, giving the sender, the receiver(s), and the greeting.

1:1 *Paul*: For a discussion of the identity of Paul and the question of authorship, see the introduction. *apostle of Jesus Christ*: sent by Christ. *by the command*: a divine command that results in the special authority of the apostle Paul. *of God our savior*: a focus on God's purposes in deliverance from illness and tragedy. *and of Christ Jesus our hope*: the source of eternal life (Col 1:27) and future glory (Titus 1:2).

1:2 *Timothy*: For a discussion of Timothy's identity and relationship to Paul, see the introduction. Timothy is also the recipient of 2 Timothy. *my true child in the faith*: This indicates a close spiritual relationship, not that Paul is his birth father or that he led him to Christ, since his mother and grandmother brought him up in the faith, and Timothy was a believer when they met (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim 1:5; 3:15). *mercy*: only found here and in 2 Timothy 1:2 in the Pauline greetings. This may indicate Timothy's need, whether personally or in view of the crisis he faces.

1:3-11 In the opening of the letter before the typical thanksgiving, Paul discusses the purpose of Timothy's ministry in Ephesus. This is to deal with the problem of people who are teaching wrong information about the faith.

1:3 *When I left for Macedonia*: The journey that Paul describes isn't recorded in Acts. It could have taken place after the events recorded by Luke if Paul was released from prison rather than put to death in Rome. *stay behind in Ephesus*: Timothy is in Ephesus, the most important city in Asia Minor (see map 21). Paul established a church there during his second missionary journey (Acts 19). *not to spread wrong teaching*: The prevention of wrong teaching is both the context and theme of the letter.

1:4 *myths and endless genealogies*: Incorrect teaching is associated with myths in the Pastoral Letters (see 1 Tim 4:7;

2 Tim 4:5; Titus 1:14; 3:9). In this context, myths and genealogies probably refer to speculations based on family trees in the OT (1 Tim 1:7-9). *God's way of doing things*: This refers to management or planning under God's direction (1 Tim 1:5), though some scholars think it refers to God's plan of redemption.

1:5 *The goal of instruction*: The goal or purpose of God's way of doing things is ethical. *love... a good conscience, and a sincere faith*: This is a variation of Paul's typical formula of faith, love, and hope (1 Thess 1:3; 5:8; 1 Cor 13:13). Here Paul mentions a good conscience instead of hope. "Good conscience" is a key theme in the letter and occurs in all three Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 1:19; 3:9; 4:2; 2 Tim 1:3; Titus 1:15). One's conscience guides, evaluates, and controls behavior. 1:6 *missed this goal*: This description of the mistakes of the false teachers frames the letter (see 1 Tim 6:21).

1:7 *teachers of the Law*: The OT Law (called the "instruction" in the OT) plays a central role in the wrong teaching.

1:8 *the Law is good*: The OT isn't criticized, but wrong interpretations of it are rejected. The appropriate use of the Law is given in 1 Timothy 1:9: It reveals wrong behavior.

1:9-10 This series of bad behaviors is called a "vice list." Such lists are common in Greek literature concerned with right and wrong ways of life. They include attitudes and actions that that are considered immoral and should be avoided (see Rom 1:29-31; 1 Cor 5:10-11; 6:9-10; 2 Cor 12:20-21; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 4:31; 5:3-5; Col 3:5, 8; 2 Tim 3:2-5; Rev 21:8; 22:15). Sometimes a vice list will occur in contrast with a "virtue list" (e.g., Gal 5:19-26).

1:10 *sound teaching*: Teaching, faith, and speech that are "sound" or "healthy" is a theme in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1-2). Sound teaching has an ethical goal that contrasts with the vice list in 1:9-10.

1:11 *the glorious gospel*: The gospel is the whole Christian message or good news. It reflects God's glory.

1:1 Ro 1:1;  
2Co 1:1; Ga 1:1;  
Col 1:27; Ti 1:3

1:2 Ac 16:1;  
Ro 1:7; 1Co 4:17;  
2Ti 1:2; Ti 1:4

1:3 Ac 18:19;  
Ga 1:6; 1Ti 6:3

1:4 1Ti 4:7;  
1Ti 6:4; 2Ti 4:4;  
Ti 1:14; Ti 3:9

1:5 Ac 23:1;  
Ga 5:6; 1Ti 1:19;  
2Ti 1:5; 2Ti 2:22

1:6 1Ti 6:20-21;  
Ti 1:10; Ti 3:9

1:7 Mt 5:19;  
Mt 15:9; Lk 2:46;  
Lk 5:17; Ti 1:11

1:8 Ps 19:7;  
Ro 7:12; Ro 7:16

1:9 Ga 5:23;  
1Ph 4:18

1:10 1Co 6:9;  
1Ti 6:3; 2Ti 4:3;  
Ti 2:1; Rev 21:8

1:11 2Co 4:4;  
Ga 2:7; 1Th 2:4;  
1Ti 6:15; Ti 1:3

1:12 Phi 4:13  
 1:13 Ac 3:17,  
 Ac 8:3, Ac 26:9;  
 Ga 1:13  
 1:14 1Th 1:3;  
 2Ti 1:13  
 1:15 Mk 2:17;  
 1Co 15:9;  
 Eph 3:8, 1Ti 4:9;  
 2Ti 2:11  
 1:16 Jn 3:15;  
 Eph 2:7; 1Ti 1:13  
 1:17 Jn 1:18;  
 Col 1:15;  
 1Ti 6:15-16;  
 Jud 1:25  
 1:18 1Ti 1:2,  
 1Ti 4:14,  
 1Ti 6:12,  
 1Ti 6:20, 2Ti 4:7  
 1:19 1Ti 1:5,  
 1Ti 3:9, 1Ti 6:12  
 1:20 1Co 5:5;  
 2Ti 2:17,  
 2Ti 4:14  
 2:1 Eph 6:18;  
 1Ti 2:2  
 2:2 Eze 6:10;  
 Ro 13:1

### Thanksgiving

<sup>12</sup>I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength because he considered me faithful. So he appointed me to ministry <sup>13</sup>even though I used to speak against him, attack his people, and I was proud. But I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and without faith. <sup>14</sup>Our Lord's favor poured all over me along with the faithfulness and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup>This saying is reliable and deserves full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I'm the biggest sinner of all. <sup>16</sup>But this is why I was shown mercy, so that Christ Jesus could show his endless patience to me first of all. So I'm an example for those who are going to believe in him for eternal life. <sup>17</sup>Now to the king of the ages, to the immortal, invisible, and only God, may honor and glory be given to him forever and always! Amen.

### Importance of faith and a good conscience

<sup>18</sup>Timothy, my child, I'm giving you these instructions based on the prophecies that were once made about you. So if you follow them, you can wage a good war <sup>19</sup>because you have faith and a good conscience. Some people have ruined their faith because they refused to listen to their conscience, <sup>20</sup>such as Hymenaeus and Alexander. I've handed them over to Satan so that they can be taught not to speak against God.

### Prayer for everyone

**2** First of all, then, I ask that requests, prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving be made for all people. <sup>2</sup>Pray for kings and everyone who is in authority so that we can live a quiet and

1:12-17 A thanksgiving section that is a prayer in the introduction of the letter is typical, but the content of this thanksgiving is unusual. Usually Paul thanks God for those to whom the letter is addressed. Here, though, he thanks God for God's favor and mercy toward him by calling him to ministry even though he was the worst sinner of all. Paul is a positive example of the goal of love, a good conscience, and faith (1 Tim 1:5), in contrast with Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim 1:18-20).

1:12 *Christ... has given me strength:* That we need Christ to give us strength is a Pauline theme (see Eph 3:16-17, 6:10; Col 1:11). Even more, Paul claims in his prayer that Christ gives us strength precisely at points of personal weakness (see Phil 4:13; 2 Cor 12:9-10; 2 Tim 4:17).

1:13 *speak against him, attack his people, and I was proud:* See Acts 9:1-4; 22:4-5, 19-20; 26:10-11. Pride or arrogance is a character flaw that leads to violence or being out of control.

1:14 *faithfulness and love:* Two parts of the goal of instruction (1 Tim 1:5) are "poured" over Paul. This emphasizes that the supply is unlimited or abundant.

1:15 *This saying is reliable:* This phrase occurs also in 1 Timothy 3:1; 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8. It emphasizes and places authority on a shared saying or key teaching. Typically, this saying or teaching refers to traditional material that either comes just before or after in the text (Titus 3:8). Here this phrase emphasizes the saying that Jesus came into the world to save sinners. *I'm the biggest sinner of all:* Paul claims that a good conscience is a gift of Christ's grace and mercy through salvation, even though (or because) Paul was the worst sinner of all.

1:16 *So I'm an example:* Paul concludes that he is a pattern of how God shows favor and mercy to sinners for all those who believe.

1:17 This is a traditional and formal conclusion (sometimes called a "doxology") for Paul's prayer. The use of such doxologies was a common practice in the synagogue and in the early church (see 1 Tim 6:16; 2 Tim 4:18; Rom 11:36, 16:27; Gal 1:5; Eph 3:2; Phil 4:20, 1 Pet 4:11, 5:11).

1:18-20 The letter opening ends with a reminder to

Timothy of the importance of faith and a good conscience through negative examples.

1:18 *prophecies that were once made about you:* Timothy was commissioned for leadership and ministry, prophecies were made about him. This probably took place when the elders laid hands on him and he received the gift that defined his ministry (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; see sidebar, "God's Gift" at 2 Timothy 1). *wage a good war:* The use of images of war and competition to describe ministry is common in the letters to Timothy (1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 2:3, 4:7) and represents a familiar Pauline theme (2 Cor 10:3-6; Eph 6:10-17).

1:19 *faith and a good conscience:* See 1 Timothy 1:5. These are the essential weapons for the war (1 Tim 1:18), and are vital for both ministry and spiritual life. When a good conscience is rejected, faith is ruined, because the conscience guides, evaluates, and controls behavior (see 1 Tim 3:9; 4:2; Titus 1:15).

1:20 *Hymenaeus* (see 2 Tim 2:17) and *Alexander* (see Acts 19:33; 2 Tim 4:14) are negative examples of people who have ruined their faith because they missed the goal of a good conscience (1 Tim 1:5). They stand in contrast with Paul. *handed them over to Satan:* This is most likely a form of discipline where divine protection is removed from wrongdoers by prayer or isolation from the community, so that Satan is free to harm them (see 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 12:7; cf. the purpose of the Adversary in Job 2:6). Paul's intention, though, is for wrongdoers to learn and stop their behavior. Satan, the devil, and demons are mentioned frequently in the letters to Timothy (1 Tim 3:6-7; 4:1; 5:15; 2 Tim 2:26). Some scholars think that Paul is referring to the formal dismissal of a wrongdoer from the church (see Titus 3:10).

2:1-15 The first steps for correcting the problems in the church at Ephesus include the goal and priority of prayer (2:1-7), and parallel instructions for men and women (2:8-15). 2:1-7 See sidebar, "Prayer." Prayer for everyone is Paul's first priority when addressing the issues in Ephesus. This is one way he wants to correct false teaching, in terms of both content and behavior. The goals of prayer are a peaceful life for the Christian community and the salvation of all people. Paul relates the salvation of all people directly to his ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles (see 1 Tim 2:7).

peaceful life in complete godliness and dignity. <sup>3</sup>This is right and it pleases God our savior, <sup>4</sup>who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup>There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the human Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a payment to set all people free. This was a testimony that was given at the right time. <sup>7</sup>I was appointed to be a preacher and apostle of this testimony—I'm telling the truth and I'm not lying! I'm a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

### Instructions for men and women

<sup>8</sup>Therefore, I want men to pray everywhere by lifting up hands that are holy, without anger or argument. <sup>9</sup>In the same way, I want women to enhance their appearance with clothing that is modest and sensible, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive clothes. <sup>10</sup>They should make themselves attractive by doing good, which is appropriate for women who claim to honor God.

*Prayer* Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman practices of prayer, whether in groups or as individuals, weren't limited to specific sacred places (temples, shrines, or synagogues) or restricted to worship services. Prayer took place in all sorts of public places or outdoors, such as on the street or by a river. Prayer took place at various times during the month or week, as well as daily, in such places as the temple, synagogues, and homes (see Matt 6:5-6; Acts 2:42-47; 16:13). The command to pray everywhere follows the Pauline practice of praying and giving thanks constantly—on all occasions and in every situation (Rom 1:10; Eph 1:16; 6:18; Phil 1:4; 4:6; Col 1:9; 1 Thess 5:17, 18; 2 Thess 1:11; 2 Thess 1:3; Phlm 4). In addition, during the first three centuries of Christianity, regular church meetings took place in the home. This was a domestic context, unlike public meetings in forums, temples, or synagogues. Although someone might imagine that the reference to prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1, 8 signals instructions for a public weekly worship service, this wouldn't really fit the language Paul uses, nor the practices of prayer in the Greco-Roman world, in Judaism, or in early Christianity.

2:1 *First of all*: After the letter opening, Paul gives prayer as the first step and priority in addressing the issues that Timothy faces. *requests, prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving*: This covers the entire scope of prayers that believers are to offer on behalf of all human beings.

2:2 *kings and everyone who is in authority*: "All people" specifically includes the Roman emperor and officials at every level. *can live a quiet and peaceful life*: The goal of prayer for those in government is practical: so that the Christian community can live in peace, which pleases God (1 Tim 2:3). *in complete godliness and dignity*: This description of a peaceful life reflects two concerns of the Pastoral Letters, and particularly of 1 Timothy (for godliness see 1 Tim 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:1; for dignity see 1 Tim 3:4, 8, 11; Titus 2:2, 7).

2:3-4 *God... wants all people to be saved*: Prayers for all people and peace in the Christian community provide the best conditions for all people to be saved, which is what God wants (1 Tim 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet 3:9).

2:5 *one God... one mediator*: Paul modifies Israel's great confession, which is known as the *Shema* and found in Deuteronomy 6:4 (see 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:5-6), by adding Jesus' role as the one mediator. Jesus is the only representative between God and humanity (see John 14:6; Heb 8:6).

2:6 *a payment to set all people free*: This is a reference to a price (or ransom) paid for the release of a slave, prisoner, or captive (see Matt 20:28; 26:28; Titus 2:14). It is for all people so it is linked to the command to pray for all people (1 Tim 2:1) and to God's desire for all people to be saved (1 Tim 2:3). *testimony*: This refers to the content of the Christian message, summarized in 1 Timothy 2:5-6a. It supports the universal nature of the prayer (1 Tim 2:1).

2:7 *preacher and apostle... teacher of the Gentiles*: Paul's role, calling, and ministry to the Gentiles (see Acts 9:15;

Rom 11:13; 15:15, 16; Gal 1:16; 2:7, 8) directly support the universal nature of the prayer and testimony.

2:8-15 Instructions for men and women focus on problems connected with false teaching at Ephesus that are gender-related and threaten the action and goals of prayer outlined in 1 Timothy 2:1-3. First, Paul speaks of behavior among men that threatens holiness and a quiet and peaceful life (2:8). Then he addresses behavior among women that threatens godliness and dignity (2:9-10). Finally, he addresses the relationship between a husband and wife (2:11-15).

2:8 *I want men*: Paul first addresses men's behavior. *pray everywhere*: This includes all the locations and contexts in which prayer took place (see sidebar, "Prayer"). *lifting up hands*: a position of prayer. *without anger or argument*: Paul specifically attributes the problems of anger and conflict in Ephesus to men (1 Tim 1:3; 3:3; 6:3-5; 2 Tim 2:14, 23-24). Anger and conflict threaten the goal of prayer for a quiet and peaceful life (1 Tim 2:2).

2:9 *In the same way, I want women*: Second, Paul addresses the behaviors of women that threaten the goals of prayer (1 Tim 2:1-3), focusing on behavior that threatens godliness (1 Tim 2:2, 10). *enhance their appearance*: Paul refers to the ways 1st-century women worked to improve their appearance: *elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls... expensive clothes* (see 1 Pet 3:1-7). He criticizes popular notions of beauty and the methods used to attain it, but supports the goal of being attractive. *modest and sensible*: The way women make themselves attractive should be the opposite of using clothing, hair, and jewelry to make one appear seductive and extravagant. (This concern reflects particular problems with widows in 1 Tim 5:6 and with general greed in 1 Tim 6:5b-10.)

2:10 *doing good*: Paul's notion of women's beauty is a

2:3 Lk 1:47;  
1Ti 1:1, 1Ti 4:10,  
1Ti 5:4  
2:4 Eze 18:23;  
1Ti 4:10;  
2Ti 2:25, 2Ti 3:7;  
Ti 2:11  
2:5 Dt 6:4;  
Mk 12:29;  
Ro 3:30; 1Co 8:6;  
Ga 3:20  
2:6 Mt 20:28;  
1Co 1:6; Ga 4:4;  
1Ti 6:15, Ti 1:3  
2:7 Ac 9:15;  
Ro 9:1; 1Co 9:1;  
Eph 3:8; 2Ti 1:11  
2:8 Ps 24:4,  
Ps 63:4; Jn 4:21;  
Ti 3:8  
2:9 1Pr 3:3  
2:10 Ac 9:36;  
1Ti 5:10, Ti 2:14

2:11 Gn 3:16;  
1Co 11:3,  
1Co 14:34-35  
2:12 1Co 14:34  
2:13 Gn 2:7,  
Gn 2:22  
2:14 Gn 3:1,  
Gn 3:6, Gn 3:13;  
2Co 11:3

2:15 1Ti 1:14  
3:1 Ac 20:28;  
Phi 1:1; 1Ti 1:15;  
Ti 1:7  
3:2 Ro 12:13;  
2Ti 2:24; Ti 1:6,  
Ti 1:8, Ti 2:2  
3:3 1Ti 3:8;  
2Ti 2:24; Ti 1:7,  
Ti 3:2; Heb 13:15  
3:4 1Ti 3:12;  
Ti 1:6  
3:5 1Ti 3:15  
3:6 1Ti 6:4;  
2Ti 3:4

<sup>11</sup>A wife<sup>b</sup> should learn quietly with complete submission. <sup>12</sup>I don't allow a wife<sup>c</sup> to teach or to control her husband.<sup>d</sup> Instead, she should be a quiet listener. <sup>13</sup>Adam was formed first, and then Eve. <sup>14</sup>Adam wasn't deceived, but rather his wife<sup>e</sup> became the one who stepped over the line because she was completely deceived. <sup>15</sup>But a woman<sup>f</sup> will be kept safe through childbirth<sup>g</sup> provided she continues in faith, love, and holiness, combined with self-control.

### Supervisors in God's household

**3**This saying is reliable: if anyone has a goal to be a supervisor<sup>h</sup> in the church, they want a good thing. <sup>2</sup>So the church's supervisor must be without fault. They should be faithful to their spouse, sober, modest, and honest. They should show hospitality and be skilled at teaching. <sup>3</sup>They shouldn't be addicted to alcohol or be a bully. Instead, they should be gentle, peaceable, and not greedy. <sup>4</sup>They should manage their own household well—they should see that their children are obedient with complete respect, <sup>5</sup>because if they don't know how to manage their own household, how can they take care of God's church? <sup>6</sup>They shouldn't be

<sup>b</sup>Or a woman <sup>c</sup>Or a woman <sup>d</sup>Or a man <sup>e</sup>Or the woman <sup>f</sup>Or a wife <sup>g</sup>Or saved through childbearing  
<sup>h</sup>Or bishop, overseer

life devoted to service. *claim to honor God:* According to Paul, godliness or piety is one of the primary purposes of prayer (1 Tim 2:2). Working to be seductive and/or extravagant in terms of appearance would be inconsistent with a confession of faith or a claim to virtue (1 Tim 6:3, 5b-10, 17-19).

2:11-15 Paul instructs Timothy on how to deal with the false teaching circulating among women and being passed from home to home through informal stories (see sidebar, "Women"). He addresses the problem by setting out instruction for each wife in the home. Specifically he corrects the inappropriate behavior of a wife toward her husband, and addresses fears connected with childbirth.

2:11 *A wife should learn:* Paul indicates how a wife or woman should receive personal instruction in the faith. See sidebar, "Women" at 1 Timothy 3, to understand why the CEB prefers "wife" to "woman" in this passage. Paul's instruction parallels 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Both passages may indicate that the early church expected men to teach their wives about the Christian faith at home, particularly if there were divisive problems among the men and women, as there were in Ephesus and Corinth. *quietly with complete submission:* This is the appropriate attitude for learning for any disciple.

2:12 *I don't allow a wife to teach or to control her husband:* This prohibits a wife from treating her husband inappropriately. This probably indicates a problem with false teaching and behavior, particularly in the light of the wider culture's expectations. Some Christians take this assertion as a universal and permanent prohibition of women teaching and exercising authority in the worship service or in other groups with men, but the text refers to a one-on-one relationship, with no indication of a worship context. The Greek word translated as *control* isn't used for the way a leader in the church correctly behaves toward another person either in the NT or the corpus of ancient Greek literature. When a person does this to another person, they act like they are their master, and it often involves force, some kind of injury, or dishonor.

2:13-14 *Adam was formed first:* See Genesis 2. Paul may be correcting wrong teaching spreading among the women through stories about creation ("myths and genealogies"—1 Tim 1:4 and note; 4:7; 2 Tim 4:5), especially those passed down from the older women in 1 Timothy 4:7. *his wife... was completely deceived:* See Genesis 3. Paul may

be referring to Eve as an illustration of the kind of deception going on among the women at Ephesus that needs to be corrected.

2:15 *a woman will be kept safe through childbirth:* Following verse 14, with its reference to Eve, this verse assumes an increase in women's pain in childbirth and number of childbirths (see Gen 3:16). Other references to issues about marriage, sex, and having children in Ephesus (1 Tim 4:3; 5:14) indicate that women are rightly concerned about death and illness from childbirth and the danger of a high number of childbirths. These were major life concerns for women in preindustrial cultures, and remain central concerns in many areas of the world. Paul's promise is comparable to other promises of healing (e.g., Jas 5:15) or rescue from disaster (e.g., Ps 7:11) in the Bible. *faith, love, and holiness, combined with self-control:* This expands on the qualities of godliness and dignity, which are the goals of prayer in 1 Timothy 2:2.

3:1-13 Paul gives instructions in God's household for supervisors and servants, the people who manage and take care of the church. The CEB prefers the terms "supervisors" and "servants" instead of church titles such as "bishops" and "deacons" because these terms reflect what the Greek words meant at the time that 1 Timothy was written. The terms became formal church titles that mean something quite different in various traditions than they meant in the early church.

3:1-7 Paul gives instructions for supervisors who manage the affairs of the church.

3:1 *This saying is reliable:* This expression indicates that the statement about the goal of being a supervisor is a common saying and gives it emphasis and authority. See note on 1 Timothy 1:15. *a supervisor in the church:* a person who looks after church affairs.

3:2 *faithful to their spouse:* "Faithful" translates the Greek expression, "a one-woman man."

3:4 *respect:* Respect is directly linked to the quality of dignity and to the act of giving honor to God. It's an important quality for believers according to 1 Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 2:2; 3:8, 11; Titus 2:2, 7).

3:6 *They shouldn't be new believers:* See 1 Timothy 5:22. Paul wanted Timothy to be careful about selecting anyone to lead who wasn't mature in the faith, and who hadn't been tested before giving authority.

3:6-7 *the devil's spell... the devil's trap:* The danger is that

**Women** Although Paul's instructions could refer to women's roles in a church service, the language of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 fits specific practices in the home much better. The Greek term *gynē* (used throughout this section) could simply refer to "a woman," but it's often used more specifically to refer to "a woman who is married" – that is, "a wife." The best translation is indicated by the context, usually by the mention of a man, her husband (in Paul, see 1 Cor 5:1; 7:2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 33; 9:5; Eph 5:23, 28, 31, 33). The context in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 indicates that Paul is referring to "a wife" (and husband). First, Paul's language refers to an individual woman (singular) and an individual man. In the Greco-Roman world, such language wouldn't be appropriate in references to persons outside of close family members. Second, this text involves specific directions regarding the instruction of a woman in the faith, which is the responsibility of her husband in the home (see 1 Cor 14:35). Third, Paul's instruction is supported by a reference to the classic passage concerning marriage, Genesis 2:18-24. Fourth, this text ends with a focus on childbirth, which is clearly a domestic issue. Finally, the letter as a whole indicates that false teaching among women was being discussed in the day-to-day activities of the home. Through private storytelling, myths, genealogies, gossip, and slander, false teaching was spreading from house to house (1 Tim 3:11; 4:7; 5:13; cf. 1 Tim 1:4). In part, this false teaching attacked marriage and marital relations (1 Tim 4:3; 5:14). Moreover, 2 Timothy 3:6-7 indicates that men who were false teachers in Ephesus were targeting women in their homes. In contrast, women aren't singled out for violations in public teaching in either 1 Timothy or 2 Timothy.

If instructions for men to "pray everywhere" in 1 Timothy 2:8 shouldn't be limited to public worship services, and if the instructions concerning women's dress wouldn't have been limited to worship services, then Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 would be best read as the apostle's attempt to deal with false teaching that was being spread (more privately) among women from home to home. As in Corinth (1 Cor 14:35), it was necessary for wives to receive instruction about the Christian faith in the home in order to solve these problems.

new believers so that they won't become proud and fall under the devil's spell. <sup>7</sup>They should also have a good reputation with those outside the church so that they won't be embarrassed and fall into the devil's trap.

### **Servants in God's household**

<sup>8</sup>In the same way, servants<sup>1</sup> in the church should be dignified, not two-faced, heavy drinkers, or greedy for money. <sup>9</sup>They should hold on to the faith that has been revealed with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup>They should also be tested and then serve if they are without fault. <sup>11</sup>In the same way, women who are servants<sup>2</sup> in the church should be dignified and not gossip. They should be sober and faithful in everything they do. <sup>12</sup>Servants<sup>3</sup> must be faithful to their spouse and manage their children and their own households well. <sup>13</sup>Those who have served well gain a good standing and considerable confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

### **Leading God's household**

<sup>14</sup>I hope to come to you quickly. But I'm writing these things to you so that <sup>15</sup>if I'm delayed, you'll know how you should behave in God's household. It is the church of the living God and the backbone and support of the truth. <sup>16</sup>Without question, the mystery of godliness is

<sup>1</sup>Or deacons <sup>2</sup>Or wives, omit who are servants <sup>3</sup>Or deacons

the readers might fall victim to the plan that the devil has for them or that they might fall under his control. The devil or Satan is mentioned frequently in the letters to Timothy (1 Tim 1:20; 5:15; 2 Tim 2:26; see also 1 Tim 4:1).

3:8-13 Paul gives instructions for servants, both men (3:9-10) and women (3:11-12), who serve by looking after the practical needs of the church.

3:8 *dignified*: This is a defining quality for servants and believers in general in 1 Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 2:2; see notes on 1 Tim 3:4; 3:11; Titus 2:2, 7).

3:9 *clear conscience*: The *conscience* is a key concern in 1 Timothy and is mentioned in all three Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 1:5, 19; 4:2; 2 Tim 1:3; Titus 1:15). The conscience guides, evaluates, and controls behavior (see 1 Tim 1:5).

3:11 *dignified*: This is repeated (see 1 Tim 3:8) as an

important quality for women servants in the church. Indeed, it's important for believers in general in 1 Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 2:2; see notes on 1 Tim 3:4, 8; Titus 2:2, 7). *not gossip*: "Gossip" here is directly related to acting like the "devil" as in 1 Timothy 3:6-7, because the devil spreads lies and destroys reputations. This is a concern about the women/widows in 1 Timothy 5:13-15.

3:14-4:7 Paul instructs Timothy on how to lead God's household.

3:15 *if I'm delayed*: The letter takes Paul's place in instructing Timothy on how to lead God's household.

3:16 *mystery of godliness*: Godliness or a holy life is a major concern in the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 2:2; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:1). The following phrases about Jesus may be a quotation from an early Christian hymn or creed.

3:7 Mk 4:11;  
2Co 8:21;  
1Ti 6:9; 2Ti 2:26  
3:8 Phi 1:1;  
1Ti 3:3; Ti 1:7;  
Ti 2:3; 1Pt 5:2  
3:9 Ac 23:1;  
1Ti 1:5, 1Ti 1:19;  
1Ti 3:16  
3:10 1Ti 5:22  
3:11 1Ti 3:2;  
2Ti 3:3; Ti 2:3  
3:12 1Ti 3:2;  
1Ti 3:4-5  
3:13 Mt 25:21  
3:14 1Ti 4:13  
3:15 1Ti 3:5;  
1Pt 2:5  
3:16 Mk 16:19;  
Jn 1:14; Ro 1:3;  
Ro 16:25; Col  
1:23

4:1 2Th 2:3;  
2Ti 3:1  
4:2 Eph 4:19;  
2Ti 3:5; 2Pt 2:1  
4:3 Gn 1:29;  
Gn 9:3; Ro 14:6;  
1Ti 4:4; Heb 13:4  
4:4 Gn 1:31;  
Ro 14:6  
4:5 Gn 1:25;  
Gn 1:31;  
Ecc 3:13;  
Ecc 5:19-20  
4:6 1Ti 1:10;  
2Ti 3:15  
4:7 1Ti 1:4;  
2Ti 4:4; Ti 1:14  
4:8 Ps 37:9;  
Mt 6:33;  
Mk 10:30;  
1Ti 6:6  
4:10 1Ti 2:4  
4:11 1Ti 5:7;  
1Ti 6:2  
4:12 1Co 16:11;  
2Th 3:9; Ti 2:7;  
Ti 2:15; 1Pt 5:3  
4:13 1Ti 3:14  
4:14 Ac 6:6;  
Ac 11:30;  
1Ti 1:18;  
1Ti 5:22; 2Ti 1:6  
4:15 Josh 1:8;  
Ps 19:14; Phi 1:12  
4:16 Ac 20:28;  
Ro 11:14  
5:1 Lv 19:32;  
Ti 2:2; Ti 2:6  
5:2 1Ti 4:12  
5:3 1Ti 5:5;  
1Ti 5:16  
5:4 Mt 15:4;  
Eph 6:1-2;  
1Ti 2:3

great: he was revealed as a human, declared righteous by the Spirit, seen by angels, preached throughout the nations, believed in around the world, and taken up in glory.

**4** The Spirit clearly says that in latter times some people will turn away from the faith. <sup>1</sup>They will pay attention to spirits that deceive and to the teaching of demons. <sup>2</sup>They will be controlled by the pretense of lying, and their own consciences will be seared. <sup>3</sup>They will prohibit marriage and eating foods that God created—and he intended them to be accepted with thanksgiving by those who are faithful and have come to know the truth. <sup>4</sup>Everything that has been created by God is good, and nothing that is received with thanksgiving should be rejected. <sup>5</sup>These things are made holy by God's word and prayer. <sup>6</sup>If you point these things out to the believers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus who has been trained by the words of faith and the good teaching that you've carefully followed. <sup>7</sup>But stay away from the goddess myths that are passed down from the older women.

### Practices of spiritual leadership

Train yourself for a holy life! <sup>8</sup>While physical training has some value, training in holy living is useful for everything. It has promise for this life now and the life to come. <sup>9</sup>This saying is reliable and deserves complete acceptance. <sup>10</sup>We work and struggle for this: "Our hope is set on the living God, who is the savior of all people, especially those who believe." <sup>11</sup>Command these things. Teach them. <sup>12</sup>Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young. Instead, set an example for the believers through your speech, behavior, love, faith, and by being sexually pure. <sup>13</sup>Until I arrive, pay attention to public reading, preaching, and teaching. <sup>14</sup>Don't neglect the spiritual gift in you that was given through prophecy when the elders laid hands on you. <sup>15</sup>Practice these things, and live by them so that your progress will be visible to all. <sup>16</sup>Focus on working on your own development and on what you teach. If you do this, you will save yourself and those who hear you.

### Caring for God's family

**5** Don't correct an older man, but encourage him like he's your father; treat younger men like your brothers, <sup>2</sup>treat older women like your mother, and treat younger women like your sisters with appropriate respect.

<sup>3</sup>Take care of widows who are truly needy. <sup>4</sup>But if a particular widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn to respect their own family and repay their parents, because

**4:1-5** Paul describes the content of false teaching that characterizes the last days and the false teaching in Ephesus.

**4:1** *in latter times*: Since false teaching is already happening, the Ephesian Christians are already living in the last days. *spirits that deceive and . . . the teaching of demons*: Like the devil, demonic powers deceive and are the source of false teaching (1 Tim 1:20; 3:6-7; 5:15; 2 Tim 2:26).

**4:3** *They will prohibit marriage and eating foods*: The false teaching in Ephesus attacks marriage (see 1 Tim 2:15) and wrongly associates good things that God created with evil.

**4:6** *good teaching that you've carefully followed*: See 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15. Paul portrays Timothy as someone who was taught the faith from childhood by his mother and grandmother.

**4:7** *goddess myths that are passed down from the older women*: The false teaching stems partly from stories handed down among the women around the fireplace, stories that come from non-Christian origins. False teaching is associated with myths in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (see 1 Tim 1:4; 2 Tim 4:5; Titus 1:14).

**4:7b-16** Paul instructs Timothy on the practical activities of spiritual leadership.

**4:7b-10** *Train yourself . . . physical training . . . training in holy living . . . We work and struggle for this*: Paul compares Timothy's spiritual training as a leader to training for an athletic competition (1 Tim 6:11-12; 2 Tim 2:5; 4:7; 1 Cor 9:24-27; Phil 2:16; Heb 12:1-17).

**4:7b-8** *a holy life . . . holy living*: This is the same as

godliness, a central theme in the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:1).

**4:9** *This saying is reliable*: This expression refers back to 1 Timothy 4:8 (on training in holy living) as a common saying, which gives it emphasis and authority. See note on 1 Timothy 1:15.

**4:12** *because you are young*: The culture didn't respect people under age 40 as leaders. They preferred older leaders.

**4:13** *public reading, preaching, and teaching*: These are the key elements in an early worship service.

**4:14** *laid hands on you*: a practice used for the transfer of various kinds of power and authority in biblical tradition (1 Tim 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6; Acts 6:6; 13:3). See sidebar, "God's Gift" at 2 Timothy 1.

**4:16** *you will save yourself and those who hear you*: By full commitment to personal and spiritual progress, Timothy will be able to help himself and the Ephesian church reach final salvation.

**5:1-16** In this passage, Paul does two things: (1) he gives instructions to Timothy on how to take care of God's family—older men as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters; (2) he focuses on instructions about older widows and younger widows (5:3-16).

**5:3** *truly needy*: The widows who are to receive support are genuinely destitute and have no options because they have lost their husbands and are without relatives or the possibility of remarriage.

this pleases God. <sup>5</sup>A widow who is truly needy and all alone puts her hope in God and keeps on going with requests and prayers, night and day. <sup>6</sup>But a widow who tries to live a life of luxury is dead even while she is alive. <sup>7</sup>Teach these things so that the families<sup>1</sup> will be without fault. <sup>8</sup>But if someone doesn't provide for their own family, and especially for a member of their household, they have denied the faith. They are worse than those who have no faith.

<sup>9</sup>Put a widow on the list who is older than 60 years old and who was faithful to her husband. <sup>10</sup>She should have a reputation for doing good: raising children, providing hospitality to strangers, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in distress, and dedicating herself to every kind of good thing. <sup>11</sup>But don't accept younger widows for the list. When their physical desires distract them from Christ, they will want to get married. <sup>12</sup>Then they will be judged for setting aside their earlier commitment. <sup>13</sup>Also, they learn to be lazy by going from house to house. They are not only lazy, but they also become gossips and busybodies, talking about things they shouldn't. <sup>14</sup>So I want younger widows to marry, have children, and manage their homes so that they won't give the enemy any reason to slander us. (<sup>15</sup>Some have already turned away to follow Satan.) <sup>16</sup>If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should take care of them and not burden the church, so that it can help other widows who are truly needy.

### Instructions for elders

<sup>17</sup>Elders who lead well should be paid double, especially those who work with public speaking and teaching. <sup>18</sup>The scripture says, *Don't put a muzzle on an ox while it treads grain,*<sup>m</sup> and *Workers deserve their pay.*<sup>n</sup> <sup>19</sup>Don't accept an accusation made against an elder unless it

<sup>1</sup>Or they <sup>m</sup>Deut 25:4 <sup>n</sup>Luke 10:7

5:6 *live a life of luxury*: While some widows are destitute, other widows in Ephesus might have access to wealth (1 Tim 2:9; 6:17-19). Paul condemns using wealth for selfish consumption instead of doing good.

5:4 *repay their parents*: Those in the wider Roman culture believed in giving back to those from whom they had received, particularly in the case of children who owe their parents their lives.

5:8 *worse than those who have no faith*: This condemns believers who don't take care of their responsibilities to their families, which would also be condemned in the wider culture. Their condition is worse than if they had never believed.

5:9 *on the list*: The church maintained a list of widows over age 60 who were supported by the Christian community.

5:10 *washing the feet of the saints*: This is a humble, dirty job that was necessary because people wore sandals and the roads were filthy. It was usually performed by slaves or women, but Jesus did it for his disciples as an example, and told his disciples that they should wash each others' feet as well (John 13:14).

5:12 *setting aside their earlier commitment*: Paul is concerned that the young widows' sexual frustration may lead them to behavior or a marriage that violates their faith and leads them away from Christ (1 Tim 5:11). They may even "follow Satan" (1 Tim 5:15), which is linked to a devotion to false teaching about sex and marriage (see 1 Tim 4:1, 3; 2 Tim 2:26), or gossip and slander that destroy the reputation of the church (1 Tim 3:7, 11; 5:14). Some scholars think that widows on the list (1 Tim 5:9) were required to make a solemn pledge of celibacy.

5:13 *lazy... gossips and busybodies, talking about things they shouldn't*: This is a stereotypical criticism of women in the wider Roman world. Its importance here stems from the probability that myths were being passed on by old women in Ephesus (see note on 1 Tim 4:7) informally through idle talk rather than more formally in the worship service.

5:14 *I want younger widows to marry*: Elsewhere, in 1 Corinthians 7:25-35, Paul says that he prefers widows to stay single (see especially 1 Cor 7:39). In 1 Corinthians 7:9, however, he states that it is better to marry than to "burn with passion." This is his present concern with younger widows in Ephesus (1 Tim 5:11; see note on 1 Tim 5:12). *manage their homes*: In the ancient world, men managed public/outdoor affairs, and women managed the home. *the enemy... slander*: Paul makes a number of connections between women in Ephesus and slander, which has its source in the devil, demons, and the demonic (1 Tim 3:7, 11; 5:14-15).

5:15 *follow Satan*: Satan and demonic powers are described as actively working against church leaders' attitudes and reputation (1 Tim 3:6-7), trapping opponents who need correction (2 Tim 2:26), serving as the source of false teaching and deception (1 Tim 4:1), and serving as the source of slander and gossip (1 Tim 3:7, 11; 5:14). All of these things could be at play here.

5:16 *If any woman who is a believer*: Ephesian women were responsible to manage their homes and to make these domestic arrangements, particularly for other women (see 1 Tim 5:14).

5:17-25 Paul gives instructions for elders who are leaders in general and for Timothy personally.

5:17 *Elders who lead well*: This group includes both older supervisors and servants of the church who do a good job. *paid double*: Honor is given to them by doubling the normal financial or material support.

5:18 See 1 Corinthians 9:7-9, where Paul draws on Deuteronomy 25:4 to support his case for his rights to support as an apostle. The second quotation is from a saying of Jesus recorded in Luke 10:7, which Paul also refers to in 1 Corinthians 9:14.

5:19 *two or three witnesses*: See Deuteronomy 17:6 where two or three witnesses were necessary for the death penalty. The misbehavior of a leader is taken seriously (1 Tim

5:5 Lk 2:37;  
1Co 7:34;  
1Ti 5:3, 1Ti 5:16;  
1Pt 3:5  
5:6 Lk 15:24;  
Jas 5:5; Rev 3:1  
5:8 2Co 12:14;  
Ti 1:16, 2Pt 2:1  
5:9 1Ti 3:2  
5:10 Gn 18:4;  
Lk 7:44;  
Ac 9:36;  
1Ti 2:10,  
1Ti 6:18  
5:11 Rev 18:7  
5:12 Rev 2:4  
5:13 2Th 3:11;  
1Pt 4:15  
5:14 1Co 7:9;  
1Ti 6:1, Ti 2:5  
5:15 1Ti 1:20  
5:16 1Ti 5:3-4  
5:17 Ac 11:30;  
Phi 2:29;  
1Th 5:12-13  
5:18 Lv 19:13;  
Dt 25:4;  
Mt 10:10;  
Lk 10:7; 1Co 9:9  
5:19 Dt 17:6;  
Dt 19:15;  
Mt 18:16;  
2Co 13:1;  
Heb 10:28

5:20 Lv 19:17;  
Dt 13:11; 2Ti 4:2;  
Ti 1:13; Ti 2:15

5:21 1Ti 6:13;  
2Ti 2:14, 2Ti 4:1

5:22 Ac 6:6;  
Eph 5:11;  
1Ti 4:14

5:23 Pv 104:15;  
1Ti 3:8

5:25 Ps 37:6;  
Pv 10:9

6:1 Eph 6:5;  
Ti 2:5; Ti 2:9

6:2 1Ti 4:11;  
Phm 1:16

6:3 1Ti 1:3,  
1Ti 1:10;  
2Ti 1:13; Ti 1:1

6:4 1Ti 1:4,  
1Ti 3:6; 2Ti 2:14,  
2Ti 2:23; 2Ti 3:4

6:5 2Ti 3:5,  
2Ti 3:8; Ti 1:11,  
Ti 1:15; 2Pt 2:3

6:6 Ps 37:16;  
Pv 15:16;  
Phi 4:11; 1Ti 4:8;  
Heb 13:5

6:7 Job 1:21;  
Pv 49:17;  
Ecc 5:15

6:8 Pv 30:8;  
Heb 13:5

6:9 Pv 15:27,  
Pv 28:20;  
1Ti 3:7

6:10 1Ti 3:3,  
1Ti 6:9; 1Ti 6:21

is confirmed by two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup>Discipline those who are sinning in front of everyone so that all the others will be afraid. <sup>21</sup>I charge you before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels to follow these practices without bias, and without playing favorites. <sup>22</sup>Don't rush to commission anyone to leadership, and don't participate in the sins of others. Keep yourself morally pure.

<sup>23</sup>Don't drink water anymore, but use a little wine because of your stomach problems and your frequent illnesses. <sup>24</sup>The sins of some people are obvious, and the sins are judged before the people must face judgment, but the sins of other people show up later. <sup>25</sup>In the same way, the good that people do is also obvious and can't be hidden.

### Conduct of Christian slaves

**6** Those who are under the bondage of slavery should consider their own masters as worthy of full respect so that God's name and our teaching won't get a bad reputation. <sup>2</sup>And those who have masters who are believers shouldn't look down on them because they are brothers. Instead, they should serve them more faithfully, because the people who benefit from your good service are believers who are loved. Teach and encourage these things.

### Warning about false teachers

<sup>3</sup>If anyone teaches anything different and doesn't agree with sound teaching about our Lord Jesus Christ and teaching that is consistent with godliness, <sup>4</sup>that person is conceited. They don't understand anything but have a sick obsession with debates and arguments. This creates jealousy, conflict, verbal abuse, and evil suspicions. <sup>5</sup>There is constant bickering between people whose minds are ruined and who have been robbed of the truth. They think that godliness is a way to make money! <sup>6</sup>Actually, godliness is a great source of profit when it is combined with being happy with what you already have. <sup>7</sup>We didn't bring anything into the world and so we can't take anything out of it: <sup>8</sup>we'll be happy with food and clothing. <sup>9</sup>But people who are trying to get rich fall into temptation. They are trapped by many stupid and harmful passions that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup>The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some have wandered away from the faith and have impaled themselves with a lot of pain because they made money their goal.

5:20), but this procedure guards against unjust slander, which is also taken seriously.

5:22 *Don't rush to commission anyone to leadership:* Commission is by laying hands on someone to be an elder (supervisor or servant); see sidebar, "God's Gift" at 2 Timothy 1. Emergencies, pressures, or good impressions shouldn't shorten due process, or Timothy may *participate in the sins of others*. This would be any ethical violation and abuse of power and position. See 1 Timothy 3:6.

5:23 *use a little wine:* See 1 Timothy 4:1-3. Unlike some of his opponents, Paul isn't in favor of rules against food and drink (see 1 Tim 6:17). See also Colossians 2:16, where leaders might open themselves to being judged and slandered if they don't follow their opponents' prohibitions. This meaning probably explains Paul's comments in 1 Timothy 5:24-25 about the concealment of some sins, and how good is obvious. Even though drunkenness may have been a problem with the elders (1 Tim 3:3, 8; cf. Titus 1:7), and Paul's opponents argued for abstinence (1 Tim 4:1-3), Paul suggests that Timothy openly drink a moderate amount of wine for his health. Drinking alcohol in excess in secret might be in contrast with open moderation, which is a model of good behavior.

6:1-2 Paul addresses the conduct of Christian slaves and their relationships to their masters.

6:1 *slavery:* See Ephesians 6:5-9, Colossians 3:22-4:1, and Philemon for directions on slaves and masters. However, unlike those other passages, here masters aren't given any mutual commands or obligations.

6:3-16 The main part of the letter closes with the same

topic that it opened with (1 Tim 1:1-11). Thus it warns against false teachers (6:3-10) and contrasts them with Paul's commission to Timothy (6:11-16).

6:3-5 This is a portrait of a false teacher. Compare with Paul's description of those who were spreading wrong teaching in 1 Timothy 1:3-7.

6:3, 5, 6 *godliness:* Godliness is the focus of this paragraph and a major theme in 1 Timothy and the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:1; see notes on 1 Tim 4:7-8; 6:11).

6:3 Teaching, faith, and speech that are "sound" or "healthy"—these make up an important theme in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (see note on 1 Tim 1:10).

6:4 *sick obsession with debates and arguments:* See 1 Timothy 2:8, where Paul emphasizes anger and arguing as a particular problem among men.

6:5 *robbed of the truth. They think that godliness is a way to make money!* This is ironic. False teachers try to make money through holy living, but they are robbed instead. See Acts 20:33; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 11:7 for Paul's rejection of making a profit from ministry.

6:6-10 Paul addresses the problem of false teachers who try to make a profit from the church and the gospel or who have wealth as their life goal.

6:10 *love of money is the root of all kinds of evil:* See 1 Timothy 3:3. Note that money itself isn't evil, but an improper relationship with money involves evil. For criticisms of the love of money, see Proverbs 23:4; Ecclesiastes 5:10. For a description of money's dangers, see 1 Kings 9:4-5; Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13; Mark 4:19; 10:21; Luke 12:33; Acts 5:1-10; 8:18-23.



<sup>11</sup>But as for you, man of God, run away from all these things. Instead, pursue righteousness, holy living, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness. <sup>12</sup>Compete in the good fight of faith. Grab hold of eternal life—you were called to it, and you made a good confession of it in the presence of many witnesses. <sup>13</sup>I command you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and Christ Jesus, who made the good confession when testifying before Pontius Pilate. <sup>14</sup>Obey this order without fault or failure until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>15</sup>The timing of this appearance is revealed by God alone, who is the blessed and only master, the King of kings and Lord of lords. <sup>16</sup>He alone has immortality and lives in light that no one can come near. No human being has ever seen or is able to see him. Honor and eternal power belong to him. Amen.

### Wealth of good works

<sup>17</sup>Tell people who are rich at this time not to become egotistical and not to place their hope on their finances, which are uncertain. Instead, they need to hope in God, who richly provides everything for our enjoyment. <sup>18</sup>Tell them to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, and to share with others. <sup>19</sup>When they do these things, they will save a treasure for themselves that is a good foundation for the future. That way they can take hold of what is truly life.

### Protect the tradition

<sup>20</sup>Timothy, protect what has been given to you in trust. Avoid godless and pointless discussions and the contradictory claims of so-called “knowledge.” <sup>21</sup>When some people adopted this false knowledge, they missed the goal of faith.

May grace be with you all.

6:11 Dt 33:1;  
2Ti 4:22;  
2Ti 3:17  
6:12 Phi 3:12;  
1Ti 1:18-19;  
1Ti 6:19  
6:13 1n 18:37;  
1Ti 5:21; 2Ti 4:1;  
Rev 1:5  
6:14 1Th 3:13;  
2Th 2:8; 2Ti 4:1;  
Ti 2:13  
6:15 1Ti 1:11;  
1Ti 1:17; 1Ti 2:6;  
Rev 17:14;  
Rev 19:16  
6:16 Ex 33:20;  
Ps 104:2; 1n 1:18;  
1Ti 1:17; 1n 1:5  
6:17 Job 31:24;  
Ps 62:10;  
Mk 10:24;  
Lk 12:20;  
Ro 11:20  
6:18 Ro 12:8;  
Ro 12:13;  
1Ti 5:10; Ti 3:8  
6:19 Mt 6:20;  
1Ti 6:12  
6:20 1Ti 1:6;  
2Ti 1:14;  
2Ti 2:16; Ti 3:9

6:21 Col 4:18; 1Ti 1:6; 1Ti 1:19; 1Ti 6:10; 2Ti 2:18

6:11-16 This is a formal commission or charge of Timothy that includes a hymn to God.

6:11-12 *Compete in the good fight*: An athletic image is used for ministry: *run away... pursue... Compete... Grab hold*. See 2 Timothy 4:7 for a parallel description of Paul's behavior. See also 1 Timothy 4:7b-10; 2 Timothy 2:5; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Philemon 2:16; Hebrews 12:1-17. *you made a good confession of it in the presence of many witnesses*: This probably relates to the time when the elders and Paul laid hands on Timothy and made prophecies about him, when he received a spiritual gift or calling (1 Tim 1:18; 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6). However, it could also refer to an earlier confession or even to his baptism.

6:11 *holy living*: This is the same as godliness, which defines sound teaching in 1 Timothy 6:3, and is one of Timothy's primary goals. It is a major theme in the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:1; see notes on 1 Tim 4:7-8; 6:3, 5, 6).

6:13-16 Timothy is given a solemn and formal command or commission about his relationship to the good confession in 1 Timothy 6:12. Paul calls his own witnesses: God and Jesus Christ. See 2 Timothy 4:1-2 for a similar commission.

6:13 *Christ Jesus, who made the good confession when testifying before Pontius Pilate*: Paul ties Timothy's own confession of faith to Jesus' testimony and confession in his trial before Pilate (John 18:33-38; 19:11). This is the only place that Pilate is mentioned in the NT outside of the Gospels and Acts (Matt 27:11-26; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:6-12; John 18:33-38; Acts 3:13, 4:27).

6:14 *appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ*: Timothy is to follow that command until the second coming of Christ (see 1 Thess 3:13; 5:23; 1 Cor 1:8; Phil 2:16-18).

6:15-16 Paul's commission of Timothy is backed by one of the most elegant descriptions of the nature, rule, and glory of God in the NT (see Rev 19:16; Exod 33:20; Rom 1:23; Col 1:15; John 1:18).

6:17-19 The rich are given instructions, which show the same values as 1 Timothy 6:3-10.

6:17 *rich at this time*: Here the rich aren't those who are trying to cheat the church for its money. Apparently, the Ephesian church has a significant group of wealthy members. See 1 Timothy 2:9; 5:6. *hope in God*: Paul wants them to depend on God rather than wealth. *everything for our enjoyment*: While Paul condemns selfish consumerism, he also repeats the conviction that there are no rules against the good things God has created (1 Tim 4:1-3; 5:23).

6:19 *treasure*: Using wealth to store up treasure in heaven with God is a biblical theme (Matt 6:19-21; Luke 12:21; 2 Esdr 7:77).

6:20-21 Timothy is given a final charge to protect the tradition.

6:20 *protect what has been given to you in trust*: Timothy is to use the teaching in this letter to guard himself and others against false teaching (see 2 Tim 1:12). *so-called "knowledge"*: This could be a criticism against a particular kind of false teaching called “gnosticism,” which claimed to have a special and secret knowledge and insight.

6:21 *missed the goal of faith*: The letter ends with this final criticism of the false teachers. See 2 Timothy 2:18.

英	德	法	意	西	葡	俄	日	韩	越	泰	越
1. 开始	beginnen	commencer	iniziare	comenzar	começar	начинать	始める	시작하다	bắt đầu	เริ่ม	เริ่ม
2. 结束	enden	terminer	terminare	terminar	terminar	заканчивать	終わる	종료하다	kết thúc	จบ	จบ
3. 继续	weitergehen	continuer	continuare	continuar	continuar	продолжать	続ける	계속하다	tiếp tục	계속	계속
4. 中断	unterbrechen	interrompre	interrompere	interromper	interromper	прекращать	中断する	중단하다	ngừng	중단	중단
5. 完成	enden	terminer	terminare	terminar	terminar	заканчивать	完了する	완료하다	hoàn thành	완료	완료
6. 失败	versagen	échouer	fallere	fracasar	fracassar	провалиться	失敗する	실패하다	thất bại	실패	실패
7. 成功	erfolgreich sein	réussir	riuscire	tercer	tercer	успешно завершить	成功する	성공하다	thành công	성공	성공

英	德	法	意	西	葡	俄	日	韩	越	泰	越
1. 开始	beginnen	commencer	iniziare	comenzar	começar	начинать	始める	시작하다	bắt đầu	เริ่ม	เริ่ม
2. 结束	enden	terminer	terminare	terminar	terminar	заканчивать	終わる	종료하다	kết thúc	จบ	จบ
3. 继续	weitergehen	continuer	continuare	continuar	continuar	продолжать	続ける	계속하다	tiếp tục	계속	계속
4. 中断	unterbrechen	interrompre	interrompere	interromper	interromper	прекращать	中断する	중단하다	ngừng	중단	중단
5. 完成	enden	terminer	terminare	terminar	terminar	заканчивать	完了する	완료하다	hoàn thành	완료	완료
6. 失败	versagen	échouer	fallere	fracasar	fracassar	провалиться	失敗する	실패하다	thất bại	실패	실패
7. 成功	erfolgreich sein	réussir	riuscire	tercer	tercer	успешно завершить	成功する	성공하다	thành công	성공	성공

# 2 TIMOTHY

This letter portrays Paul as an old man near death. Paul's first court hearing has taken place (2 Tim 4:16). He is a prisoner waiting for a second hearing and expecting to die (2 Tim 4:6). The letter follows the movements of members of Paul's mission team, including Demas, Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark and Tychicus, Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila, Onesiphorus, Erastus, and Trophimus (2 Tim 4:9-12, 19-22). Paul is particularly interested in telling Timothy, who has supported Paul, about those who have failed to support him at his time of need, and about

those who have opposed him. (For more information about the author and about Timothy, see the introduction to 1 Timothy.)

Second Timothy is written from Paul's perspective at the end of his life. He offers himself as a model for Timothy to follow and identify with in suffering and in partnership with the gospel. Timothy is advised regarding teaching, speech, and how to handle his opponents. Paul ends the letter with a dramatic charge and a commission, saying that the time of his death has arrived.

## I. Introduction (1:1-7)

- A. Greeting (1:1-2)
- B. Thanksgiving and prayer (1:3-7)

## II. Body (1:8-4:8)

- A. Don't be ashamed of the testimony about the Lord or Paul (1:8-18)
- B. Pass on the message, and share the suffering (2:1-21)
- C. Avoid behavior that causes conflict with opponents (2:22-26)

- D. Avoid ungodly people (3:1-9)

- E. Take Paul as your model (3:10-17)

- F. Timothy's commission and Paul's departure (4:1-8)

## III. Letter closing (4:9-22)

- A. Final instructions (4:9-18)
- B. Final greetings (4:19-22)

*Cynthia Long Westfall*



A champion's wreath (2 Tim 4:8)

*iStockPhoto*

1:1 Ro 1:1;  
1Co 1:1; 2Co 1:1;  
Eph 1:1; Eph 3:6

1:2 Ro 1:7;  
1Co 4:17;  
1Ti 1:2

1:3 Ac 23:1;  
Ac 24:14;  
Ro 1:8-9

1:4 Ac 20:37;  
Phi 1:8; 2Ti 4:9;  
2Ti 4:21

1:5 Ac 16:1;  
1Ti 1:5; 2Ti 3:15

1:6 1Ti 4:14

1:7 Ro 8:15

1:8 Mk 8:38;  
Eph 3:1;  
2Ti 1:12;  
2Ti 1:16; 2Ti 2:9

1:9 Ro 8:28;  
Eph 2:8-9; Ti 1:2;  
Ti 3:5

1:10 Lk 2:11;  
Ro 2:7; Ro 16:26;  
1Co 15:26;  
1Co 15:54

## Greeting

**1** From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, to promote the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.

**2**To Timothy, my dear child.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

## Thanksgiving and prayer

**3**I'm grateful to God, whom I serve with a good conscience as my ancestors did. I constantly remember you in my prayers day and night. **4**When I remember your tears, I long to see you so that I can be filled with happiness. **5**I'm reminded of your authentic faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice. I'm sure that this faith is also inside you. **6**Because of this, I'm reminding you to revive God's gift that is in you through the laying on of my hands. **7**God didn't give us a spirit that is timid but one that is powerful, loving, and self-controlled.

## Don't be ashamed of the testimony

**8**So don't be ashamed of the testimony about the Lord or of me, his prisoner. Instead, share the suffering for the good news, depending on God's power. **9**God is the one who saved and called us with a holy calling. This wasn't based on what we have done, but it was based on his own purpose and grace that he gave us in Christ Jesus before time began. **10**Now his

**God's Gift** When Paul desires to "revive God's gift that is in you" (2 Tim 1:6), the gift here could refer to (1) Timothy's spiritual office or responsibilities, (2) his God-given abilities for ministry (his spiritual gift), or (3) receiving the Holy Spirit. Since 2 Timothy focuses on Timothy's spiritual role and responsibilities, the first option fits the context best. The "laying on of hands" refers to a practice used for the transfer of authority or power in the biblical tradition (e.g., Num 27:18-23). In Jesus' ministry and the early church, it was related to blessing, healing, receiving the Holy Spirit, and appointment for a task or ministry (Matt 19:15; Mark 6:5; 8:23-25; 10:16; Luke 4:40; 13:13; Acts 6:6; 8:17; 9:17; 13:3; 19:6; Heb 6:2). 1 Timothy 4:14 indicates that a group of elders laid hands on Timothy, he received a gift, and a prophecy was made about him (see also 1 Tim 1:18). Similarly, prophets, prophecy, and the laying on of hands had a central role when the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas on their mission to the Gentiles (Acts 13:1-3).

1:1-2 The greeting follows a pattern found in other letters by Paul.

1:1 *Paul*: On the identity of Paul and the authorship of the Pastoral Letters, see the introduction to 1 Timothy. *apostle of Christ Jesus*: chosen and sent by Christ and by God's will. *to promote the promise of life*: a description of Paul's commission.

1:2 *Timothy*: one of Paul's closest associates on his mission team (Acts 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:1-6; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; Phlm 1). He is also the recipient of 1 Timothy. *my dear child*: This is an indication of a close spiritual and personal relationship with Paul, which Paul also had with Titus (Titus 1:4) and Onesimus (Phlm 10). *Grace, mercy, and peace*: Grace and peace are common in Pauline greetings, but mercy is an added element here and in 1 Timothy 1:2, perhaps reflecting Paul's concern for Timothy's personal needs or problems (see note on 1 Tim 1:2).

1:3-7 Gratitude to God, thanksgiving, and instruction are linked together with what Paul remembers about Timothy, including their close relationship and Timothy's journey of faith. Paul's desire to see Timothy is connected to the prayer, which is written down in order to motivate Timothy to come and visit (2 Tim 4:9). The instruction relates to how Paul wants Timothy to remember with him.

1:3 *a good conscience*: a theme in the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; Titus 1:15). The conscience guides, evaluates, and controls behavior (see 1 Tim 1:5).

1:5 Timothy's mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois were believers and had been responsible for his faith.

According to Acts 16:1, Timothy was a Christian Jew with a Greek father.

1:6 *revive God's gift that is in you*: Timothy needs to keep God's gift that he received in the past fully active (see 1 Tim 4:14).

1:7 *a spirit that is timid*: or a "timid attitude," in contrast to an attitude that is powerful, loving, and self-controlled. Paul expressed concern about Timothy's tendency to be intimidated in 1 Corinthians 16:10-11.

1:8-13 Paul urges Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony about the Lord or of Paul through direct command (1:8), through Paul's presentation of himself as a model (1:12), and through Onesiphorus' example (1:16). Paul encourages Timothy to share his suffering (1:8), to hold on to the pattern of sound teaching (1:13), and to protect what has been placed in his trust (1:14).

1:9-10 This is a summary of the message about Jesus that Paul preaches, which includes the elements of God's initiative, Jesus as savior, salvation by grace rather than what we have done, Jesus' destruction of death, eternal life, and Christ's second coming.

1:9 *a holy calling*: This calling includes what God has done for the believer in salvation and also God's purpose for each believer, including a holy life. *before time began*: See Titus 1:2; John 1:2-3. Christ existed before the world began, and grace was given in eternity because it was contained in him.

1:10 *the appearance of our savior*: Christ's second coming (see 1 Tim 6:14). *destroyed death*: Death is no longer a

grace is revealed through the appearance of our savior, Christ Jesus. He destroyed death and brought life and immortality into clear focus through the good news. <sup>11</sup>I was appointed a messenger, apostle, and teacher of this good news. <sup>12</sup>This is also why I'm suffering the way I do, but I'm not ashamed. I know the one in whom I've placed my trust. I'm convinced that God is powerful enough to protect what he has placed in my trust until that day. <sup>13</sup>Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you heard from me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup>Protect this good thing that has been placed in your trust through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

<sup>15</sup>You know that everyone in Asia has turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. <sup>16</sup>May the Lord show mercy to Onesiphorus' household, because he supported me many times and he wasn't ashamed of my imprisonment. <sup>17</sup>After I arrived in Rome, he quickly looked for me and found me. <sup>18</sup>May the Lord allow him to find his mercy on that day (and you know very well how much he served me in Ephesus).

### Pass on the message and share suffering

**2** So, my child, draw your strength from the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>Take the things you heard me say in front of many other witnesses and pass them on to faithful people who are also capable of teaching others.

<sup>3</sup>Accept your share of suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup>Nobody who serves in the military gets tied up with civilian matters, so that they can please the one who recruited them. <sup>5</sup>Also in the same way, athletes don't win unless they follow the rules. <sup>6</sup>A hardworking farmer should get the first share of the crop. <sup>7</sup>Think about what I'm saying; the Lord will give you understanding about everything.

<sup>8</sup>Remember Jesus Christ, who was raised from the dead and descended from David. This is my good news. <sup>9</sup>This is the reason I'm suffering to the point that I'm in prison like a common criminal. But God's word cannot be imprisoned. <sup>10</sup>This is why I endure everything for the sake of those who are chosen by God so that they too may experience salvation in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. <sup>11</sup>This saying is reliable:

2:8 Mt 1:1; Ac 2:24; Ro 1:3, Ro 2:16 2:9 Ph 1:7; 2Ti 1:8, 2Ti 4:17 2:10 2Co 1:6, 2Co 4:17; Col 1:24; 2Ti 2:3; 1Pt 5:10 2:11 Ro 6:8; Ga 2:20; 1Th 5:10; 1Ti 1:15

punishment for sins, and it will eventually be done away with (1 Cor 15:26, 54-57).

1:11 *I was appointed*: Paul's specific calling as a messenger, apostle, and teacher is the type of trust that he is passing to Timothy.

1:12 *what he has placed in my trust*: The testimony about the Lord is described as a collection of valuable possessions (like gold and jewelry) left in Paul's care by God. Paul has confidence that God is able to protect or guard the valuable things under his care (see 2 Tim 1:14; 1 Tim 6:20). This is a major theme in the letter. Paul could be referring to his own well-being as he experiences suffering as prisoner in the face of death. *until that day*: Christ's second coming. 1:13 *sound teaching*: Paul's message is helpful or "healthy" for faith. Teaching, faith, and speech that are "sound" or "healthy"—these make up a theme found throughout 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (see note on 1 Tim 1:10).

1:14 *this good thing that has been placed in your trust*: Valuable possessions (2 Tim 1:12) are passed on to Timothy's care, and Timothy is expected to pass them on to faithful people (2 Tim 2:2).

1:15-18 In order to motivate Timothy, Paul gives positive and negative examples of how people have treated him while he is in prison.

1:15 *Asia*: the Roman province in which Ephesus was located. It corresponds roughly to modern-day western Turkey. See map 21. *turned away from me*: Paul expresses his experience of abandonment and loneliness (2 Tim 4:9-16). *Phygelus* and *Hermogenes* appear only here in the NT; they are negative examples.

1:16 *Onesiphorus' household*: Onesiphorus is a positive example because he wasn't ashamed of Paul and who supported him. He and his household are in the same city as Timothy (2 Tim 4:19). *my imprisonment*: Paul writes from prison.

2:1-13 A description of Timothy's appointment to pass on the message and accept the suffering that comes with that appointment.

2:1 *my child*: indicates Paul's close relationship with Timothy (see note on 1 Tim 1:2).

2:2 *pass them on to faithful people*: As Paul has passed the message on to Timothy, he commands Timothy to pass it on to others, who would pass it on to an even wider circle of believers (2 Tim 1:12, 14).

2:4-6 Paul illustrates dedication, submission to discipline, and hard work in the ministry with the common occupations of soldier, athlete, and farmer (2 Tim 4:7; 1 Cor 9:7, 24-27; 1 Tim 4:7b-10; 6:11-12; Heb 12:1-17).

2:8 *descended from David*: Christ's identity as a member of David's family is a key part of the message (see Rom 1:3; John 4:42). *This is my good news*: a summary of Paul's message (see 2 Tim 1:9-10; Rom 1:3).

2:9 *in prison like a common criminal*: See 2 Timothy 1:16.

2:11-13 This is probably part of a hymn or creed of the early church. It contains familiar Pauline and traditional material that ties the good news together with shared suffering: *died together . . . live together* (Rom 6:5-11; 2 Cor 5:14-15); *rule together* (1 Cor 4:8); *if we deny him, he will also deny us* (Matt 10:33; Mark 8:38; 1 John 2:22-23).

2:11 *This saying is reliable*: This expression is used to

1:11 Eph 3:7; 1Ti 1:12, 1Ti 2:7  
1:12 1Ti 6:20; 2Ti 1:8, 2Ti 1:18, 2Ti 4:8; 1Pt 4:19  
1:13 Ro 6:17; 1Ti 1:10, 1Ti 1:14;  
2Ti 2:2; Ti 1:9  
1:14 Ro 8:9; 1Ti 6:20  
1:15 Ac 2:9, Ac 19:10; 2Ti 4:10, 2Ti 4:11, 2Ti 4:16  
1:16 Ac 21:33, Ac 28:20; Eph 6:20; 2Ti 1:8, 2Ti 4:19  
1:17 Ac 28:30  
1:18 Ac 18:19; 1Ti 1:3; 2Ti 1:12; Heb 6:10  
2:1 Eph 6:10; 2Ti 1:2  
2:2 1Ti 1:18, 1Ti 6:12; 2Ti 1:13  
2:3 1Ti 1:18; 2Ti 1:8, 2Ti 2:10, 2Ti 4:5  
2:4 Lk 8:14; 1Th 2:4; 2Pt 2:20  
2:5 1Co 9:25; 2Ti 4:8  
2:6 1Co 9:10  
2:7 Nm 27:16-17; 1Ch 22:12, 1Ch 29:19; Ps 119:73

2:12 Mt 10:33;  
Ro 8:17; Rev 20:4  
2:13 Nm 23:19;  
Ro 3:3; 1Co 1:9;  
1Th 5:24; Ti 1:2

2:14 1Ti 1:4,  
1Ti 5:21, 1Ti 6:4;  
2Ti 2:23; Ti 3:9

2:15 Eph 1:13;  
Gal 1:5; 1Ti 4:6;  
Jas 1:18

2:16 1Ti 6:20;  
2Ti 2:14,  
2Ti 3:13; Ti 3:9

2:17 1Ti 1:20  
2:18 1Co 15:12;  
1Ti 1:19,  
1Ti 6:21

2:19 Nm 16:5;  
Is 28:16;  
In 10:14;  
1Co 1:2, 1Co 8:3

2:20 Ro 9:21  
2:21 2Co 9:8;  
Eph 2:10;

2Ti 3:17; Ti 3:1  
2:23 1Ti 1:4,  
1Ti 6:4; 2Ti 2:14;  
Ti 3:9

2:24 1Ti 3:2-3  
2:25 Ac 8:22;  
Ga 6:1; 1Ti 2:4;  
Ti 3:2; 1Pi 3:15

2:26 1Ti 3:7  
3:1 1Ti 4:1;  
2Ti 4:3; 2Pi 3:3

3:2 Lk 6:35;  
Ro 1:30;  
Phi 2:21

3:3 Ro 1:31;  
1Ti 3:11;  
2Pi 2:10

3:4 Phi 3:19;  
1Ti 3:6; 1Ti 5:6;  
Ti 3:3

3:5 Is 29:13;  
Mt 7:15;  
Ro 16:17;  
2Th 3:6; 1Ti 6:5

"If we have died together, we will also live together.

<sup>12</sup>If we endure, we will also rule together.

If we deny him, he will also deny us.

<sup>13</sup>If we are disloyal, he stays faithful"

because he can't be anything else than what he is.

### Speak, instruct, and act correctly

<sup>14</sup>Remind them of these things and warn them in the sight of God not to engage in battles over words that aren't helpful and only destroy those who hear them. <sup>15</sup>Make an effort to present yourself to God as a tried-and-true worker, who doesn't need to be ashamed but is one who interprets the message of truth correctly. <sup>16</sup>Avoid their godless discussions, because they will lead many people into ungodly behavior, <sup>17</sup>and their ideas will spread like an infection. This includes Hymenaeus and Philetus, <sup>18</sup>who have deviated from the truth by claiming that the resurrection has already happened. This has undermined some people's faith.

<sup>19</sup>God's solid foundation is still standing with this sign: *The Lord knows the people who belong to him,*<sup>a</sup> and *Everyone who confesses the Lord's name must avoid wickedness.*<sup>b</sup> <sup>20</sup>In a mansion, there aren't just gold and silver bowls but also some bowls that are made of wood and clay. Some are meant for special uses, some for garbage.<sup>c</sup> <sup>21</sup>So if anyone washes filth off themselves, they will be set apart as a "special bowl." They will be useful to the owner of the mansion for every sort of good work.

### Avoid conflict with opponents

<sup>22</sup>Run away from adolescent cravings. Instead, pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace together with those who confess the Lord with a clean heart. <sup>23</sup>Avoid foolish and thoughtless discussions, since you know that they produce conflicts. <sup>24</sup>God's slave shouldn't be argumentative but should be kind toward all people, able to teach, patient, <sup>25</sup>and should correct opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will change their mind and give them a knowledge of the truth. <sup>26</sup>They may come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap that holds them captive to do his will.

### Avoid people like this

**3** Understand that the last days will be dangerous times. <sup>2</sup>People will be selfish and love money. They will be the kind of people who brag and who are proud. They will slander others, and they will be disobedient to their parents. They will be ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>unloving, contrary, and critical. They will be without self-control and brutal, and they won't love what is good. <sup>4</sup>They will be people who are disloyal, reckless, and conceited. They will love pleasure instead of loving God. <sup>5</sup>They will look like they are religious but deny God's power.

<sup>a</sup>Num 16:5 LXX <sup>b</sup>Possibly modeled on Isa 26:13 <sup>c</sup>Or *dishonorable purposes*

emphasize the authority of the two quotations in 2:11-13. It indicates that the quotations are expected to be familiar to the reader. See note on 1 Timothy 1:15.

2:14-21 Paul stresses moral and honorable behavior in speech, teaching, and actions.

2:17 *spread like an infection*: The ideas of Paul's opponents are compared to an infection that grows out of control, like gangrene. *Hymenaeus and Philetus* provide negative examples. Hymenaeus is mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20.

2:18 *claiming that the resurrection has already happened*: They may have denied bodily resurrection and taught a spiritual resurrection. If that were true, what happened to the body wouldn't matter anymore and would allow believers to engage in immorality.

2:19 *God's solid foundation*: The foundation is most likely the church (1 Tim 3:15), but some suggest it is God or Christ (Rom 9:33; Eph 2:20). *sign*: The sign is a seal on a scroll with two quotations on it.

2:21 *So if anyone washes filth off themselves*: The image of bowls is similar to the pottery image in Romans 9:19-23. In Romans, however, God (the potter) decides the function

of the bowl when he creates it, while here, cleaning the bowl changes its function.

2:22-26 Paul commands Timothy to avoid arguments with his opponents and to resist getting involved in silly debates.

2:22 *adolescent cravings*: immature, rash, and hot-headed behavior that leads to conflict—not necessarily lust.

2:24 *God's slave*: Paul's description of himself (Titus 1:1) and any Christian leader. As God's slave, a leader belongs to God and represents God.

2:26 *the devil's trap that holds them captive to do his will*: Those in this situation are under the devil's control. They are caught up in doing what the devil wants instead of pleasing God. References to the devil or Satan occur frequently in 1 Timothy (1 Tim 1:20; 3:6-7; 5:15).

3:1-9 Paul describes people who are becoming more and more ungodly, and urges Timothy to avoid them.

3:1 *the last days*: Paul talks about behavior "in the last days" that Timothy must avoid. Here "the last days" are present already when Paul writes.

3:2-5 This is a "vice list" of wrong attitudes and behaviors. See note on 1 Timothy 1:9-10.

**Scripture** Paul states that “every scripture is inspired by God” to emphasize the purpose scripture serves among those who follow Christ. Because of its divine origin, it is useful for divine purposes. The focus here is on God’s purpose in equipping God’s servant to do the work of ministry, which is relevant to the entire message of 2 Timothy. It is consistent with and directly relevant to the divine purpose of salvation. “Scripture” refers primarily to the Jewish scriptures (which we call the Old Testament), since the New Testament wasn’t yet a recognized collection. These Jewish scriptures would have included the “Septuagint,” (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, which is often abbreviated as LXX). The LXX was the version of the OT used by the early church and usually quoted in the NT.

Paul indicates that “every” scripture is useful, which suggests that all types of literature found in the Jewish scriptures are useful for theology, character formation, and practice. This emphasizes the importance and value of the OT for the early church.

Avoid people like this. <sup>6</sup>Some will slither into households and control immature women who are burdened with sins and driven by all kinds of desires. <sup>7</sup>These women are always learning, but they can never arrive at an understanding of the truth. <sup>8</sup>These people oppose the truth in the same way that Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. Their minds are corrupt and their faith is counterfeit. <sup>9</sup>But they won’t get very far. Their foolishness will become obvious to everyone like those others.

### Take Paul as your model

<sup>10</sup>But you have paid attention to my teaching, conduct, purpose, faithfulness, patience, love, and endurance. <sup>11</sup>You have seen me experience physical abuse and ordeals in places such as Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. I put up with all sorts of abuse, and the Lord rescued me from it all! <sup>12</sup>In fact, anyone who wants to live a holy life in Christ Jesus will be harassed. <sup>13</sup>But evil people and swindlers will grow even worse, as they deceive others while being deceived themselves.

<sup>14</sup>But you must continue with the things you have learned and found convincing. You know who taught you. <sup>15</sup>Since childhood you have known the holy scriptures that help you to be wise in a way that leads to salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character, <sup>17</sup>so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good.

### Timothy’s commission and Paul’s departure

**4** I’m giving you this commission in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is coming to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearance and his kingdom. <sup>2</sup>Preach the word. Be ready to do it whether it is convenient or inconvenient. Correct, confront, and encourage with patience and instruction. <sup>3</sup>There will come a time when people will not tolerate sound teaching. They will collect teachers who say what they want to hear because they

3:6-7 The climax of the vice list portrays men who target and take advantage of any women who are morally immature and naïve (*burdened with sins and driven by all kinds of desires*). Such women have a tendency to accept false teaching. These men prey on these vulnerable women in their homes. As a result some Ephesian households have become hubs of false teaching.

3:7 *an understanding of the truth*: Morally immature and naïve people can never arrive at an understanding of the truth, which is the goal for all believers (1 Tim 2:4).

3:8 *Jannes and Jambres*: These Egyptian magicians are examples of ungodly opponents. These two men, whose names are known to us from other Jewish documents from the period, were the opponents of Moses referred to in Exodus 7:3-13.

3:10-17 The focus here switches to Timothy. He is urged to take his past teachers (his mother and grandmother) and Paul as his models, in contrast with the ungodly opponents.

3:11 For the events in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, see

Acts 13:14–14:23. Acts recounts the harassment and rescue that Paul experienced. Timothy was from Lystra (Acts 16:1).

3:14-15 *You know who taught you*: recalls the faith and teaching of Timothy’s mother Eunice and his grand-mother Lois (1 Tim 4:6; 2 Tim 1:5).

3:16-17 *Every scripture is inspired by God*: Paul claims that all scripture has God as its ultimate source. See sidebar, “Scripture.”

4:1-8 Paul commissions Timothy to his ministry, and indicates that Paul expects to die. See 1 Timothy 6:13-16.

4:1 *I’m giving you this commission*: Paul’s commission of Timothy is formal and forceful to show its importance. He appeals to the presence of God and to Jesus in his role of judge (Acts 10:42), his second coming (1 Tim 6:14), and his kingdom (2 Tim 4:18).

4:2 *Preach . . . Correct, confront, and encourage*: a summary of Timothy’s ministry activities.

4:3 *sound teaching*: People will reject sound teaching that is good for them, or “healthy.” Teaching, faith, and

3:6 Ti 1:11;  
2Pt 2:18; Jud 1:4  
3:7 1Ti 2:4  
3:8 Ex 7:11;  
Ac 13:8; 2Co 13:5;  
1Ti 6:5; Ti 1:16  
3:9 Ex 7:12,  
Ex 8:18; Ex 9:11  
3:11 Ac 13:14,  
Ac 13:50,  
Ac 14:1; Ac 14:6,  
Ac 14:19  
3:12 Jn 15:20;  
Ac 14:22  
3:13 2Ti 2:16  
3:14 2Ti 1:13;  
Ti 1:9  
3:15 Jn 5:39,  
Jn 20:31; 2Ti 1:5  
3:16 Ro 15:4;  
2Pt 1:21  
3:17 1Ti 6:11;  
2Ti 2:21  
4:1 Ac 10:42;  
1Ti 5:21,  
1Ti 6:13-14;  
2Ti 4:8  
4:2 1Ti 4:13,  
1Ti 5:20; Ti 1:13,  
Ti 2:15  
4:3 1Ti 1:10;  
2Ti 3:1

4:4 1Ti 1:4,  
1Ti 4:7; Ti 1:14;  
2Ph 1:16  
4:5 Ac 21:8;  
Eph 4:11;  
Col 4:17;  
2Ti 1:8, 2Ti 2:3  
4:6 Phi 1:23,  
Phi 2:17; 2Ph 1:14  
4:7 Ac 20:24;  
1Co 9:24;  
1Ti 1:18,  
1Ti 6:12; 2Ti 4:8  
4:8 1Co 9:25;  
Col 1:5; 2Ti 1:12,  
2Ti 4:3; Jas 1:12  
4:9 2Ti 1:4,  
2Ti 4:21; Ti 3:12  
4:10 Ac 17:1;  
2Co 2:13;  
Col 4:14; Ti 1:4;  
Phm 1:24  
4:11 Ac 12:12,  
Ac 12:25;  
Col 4:10,  
Col 4:14;  
Phm 1:24  
4:12 Ac 18:19,  
Ac 20:4;  
Eph 6:21;  
Col 4:7; Ti 3:12

are self-centered. <sup>4</sup>They will turn their back on the truth and turn to myths. <sup>5</sup>But you must keep control of yourself in all circumstances. Endure suffering, do the work of a preacher of the good news, and carry out your service fully.

<sup>6</sup>I'm already being poured out like a sacrifice to God, and the time of my death is near. <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>At last the champion's wreath that is awarded for righteousness<sup>a</sup> is waiting for me. The Lord, who is the righteous<sup>a</sup> judge, is going to give it to me on that day. He's giving it not only to me but also to all those who have set their heart on waiting for his appearance.

### Final instructions

<sup>9</sup>Do your best to come to me quickly. <sup>10</sup>Demas has fallen in love with the present world and has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus has gone to Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup>Only Luke is with me. Get Mark, and bring him with you. He has been a big help to me in the ministry. <sup>12</sup>I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. <sup>13</sup>When you come, bring along the coat I left with Carpus in Troas. Also bring the scrolls and especially the parchments. <sup>14</sup>Alexander, the craftsman who works with metal, has really hurt me. The Lord will pay him back for what he has done. <sup>15</sup>But watch out for him, because he opposes our teaching.

<sup>16</sup>No one took my side at my first court hearing. Everyone deserted me. I hope that God doesn't hold it against them! <sup>17</sup>But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that the entire message would be preached through me and so all the nations could hear it. I was also rescued from the lion's mouth! <sup>18</sup>The Lord will rescue me from every evil action and will save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and always. Amen.

<sup>a</sup>Or justice <sup>a</sup>Or just

4:13 Ac 16:8, Ac 20:5 4:14 Ph 2:8, Ph 6:21; Ac 19:33; Ro 2:6; 1Ti 1:20 4:15 2Ti 3:8 4:16 Ac 7:60 4:17 1Sa 17:37; Ph 2:21; Ac 9:15, Ac 23:11; 2Ti 3:11 4:18 Ro 11:36

speech that are "sound" or "healthy"—these make up a theme found throughout 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (see 1 Tim 1:10).

4:4 *turn to myths*: False teaching (the opposite of sound teaching) is associated with myths in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (see 1 Tim 1:4; 4:7; Titus 1:14).

4:5 *preacher of the good news*: or "evangelist" Philip is the only other person with this title in the Bible (Acts 21:8; see Eph 4:11).

4:6 *poured out like a sacrifice to God*: Paul compares his coming death with offering wine as a sacrifice (Num 15:1-12; 28:7). See also Philipians 2:17.

4:7 *I have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith*: Paul sums up his career as an apostle by comparing his ministry with athletic contests. See a parallel command to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:12 (see 2 Tim 2:5; 1 Cor 9:24-27; Phil 2:16; 1 Tim 4:7b-10; 6:11-12; Heb 12:1-17).

4:8 *the champion's wreath*: The prize for the winner of an athletic contest. *awarded for righteousness*: Here the prize is given for a righteous life. *that day*: The Lord (Jesus) will award the prize on the day of his second coming, which is his appearance.

4:9-18 Paul's final instructions contain personal material typical of a personal letter. He asks Timothy to visit soon, and asks him to take care of some errands for him.

4:10-12 *Demas, Luke, Mark*: These three are also mentioned together in Colossians 4:10-14 and Philemon 24.

4:10 *deserted me*: Paul describes himself as lonely in the end because most of his ministry team either deserted him (like Demas) or took other assignments (2 Tim 4:12). *Titus*: See the introduction to Titus.

4:11 *Only Luke is with me*: Paul isn't completely alone (the people in 2 Tim 4:21 are also with him), and Luke may have assisted him in writing this letter. *Get Mark, and bring him with you*: Luke states that Mark deserted Paul and Barnabas on Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:13).

Therefore, Paul refused to take Mark on the second missionary journey, and this led to an argument and split between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). Here Paul claims that Mark *has been a big help to me in the ministry*. This would indicate that, in contrast to those who deserted Paul (2 Tim 4:10, 16), Mark changed from being a deserter to being a loyal member of the team.

4:12 *Tychicus*: a member of the ministry team that traveled with Paul (Acts 20:4), and one of Paul's letter-carriers and messengers (Col 4:7; Eph 6:21-22; Titus 3:12).

4:13 *coat... scrolls... parchments*: Paul asks Timothy to pick up some personal belongings. This request is typical in personal letters. The coat would be necessary for the coming Roman winter (2 Tim 4:12), and the scrolls and parchments may have been scriptures and personal documents. *in Troas*: the port on the main road from Asia Minor to Greece. Paul stayed there at least once (Acts 16:8-12; 2 Cor 2:12-13).

4:14-15 *Alexander*: In 1 Timothy 1:20, Alexander ruined his faith, and Paul handed him over to Satan to teach him not to speak against God. However, his spiritual condition got worse so that he has become a strong opponent who has hurt Paul.

4:16 *first court hearing*: a reference to Paul's defense in his first trial, which is probably his first trial in Rome (not his trial in Acts 28). *No one took my side*: Paul faced his trial without any support. This marked a failure on the part of Paul's team and supporters. However, Paul believes that this failure was forgivable and even understandable, so he prays that it wouldn't be held against them.

4:17 *But the Lord stood by me*: Paul claimed that God, rather than human help, was his support and witness for his defense. *gave me strength*: See note on 1 Timothy 1:12. *the lion's mouth*: an image of death (Ps 22:21; Dan 6:21; 1 Macc 2:60). Roman citizens weren't thrown to the lions.



**Final greetings**

<sup>19</sup>Say hello to Prisca and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. <sup>20</sup>Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus in Miletus because of his illness. <sup>21</sup>Try hard to come to me before winter. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers and sisters say hello.

<sup>22</sup>The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all.

4:20 Ac 19:22, Ac 20:4, Ac 20:15, Ac 21:29; Ro 16:23 4:21 2Ti 4:9; Ti 3:12

4:19-22 These verses form a closing section in which Paul and those with him exchange greetings with friends. This was typical of personal letters.

4:19 *Prisca and Aquila*: Prisca is a nickname for Priscilla. The two are part of the inner circle of Paul's ministry team. He lived with them and worked alongside them as a leatherworker; they hosted house churches in their home (Acts 18:2, 18; Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19). *Onesiphorus*: See 2 Timothy 1:16-18.

4:20 *Erastus*: the city treasurer of Corinth and a member of Paul's ministry team (Acts 19:22; Rom 16:23). *Trophimus*: a travel companion and member of Paul's ministry team (Acts 20:4). He wasn't a Jew, and his presence with Paul in Jerusalem caused the riot that led to Paul's arrest (Acts 21:29).

4:21 *Try hard to come to me before winter*: Travel became especially difficult in the winter months (see 1 Tim 4:9).

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# TITUS

Titus 1:1 names Paul as its author. However, the events in the letter don't fit easily into the chronology of Paul's life that we follow in the book of Acts. Traditionally, scholars place the letter's events after Acts 28. This date assumes Paul was released from prison rather than executed in Rome. However, many scholars think Titus was written by someone later under Paul's name. They believe it belongs to a group of letters that address interests and issues of church government and false teaching after Paul's death, and that the author chose Crete as the letter's destination because of a tradition that associates Titus with Crete. Whether Paul wrote it or not, the church has placed Titus in its current position as one of Paul's letters and in relationship to Paul's other two letters to an individual, 1 and 2 Timothy. So it's important to read this letter on its own terms. (For more discussion of the authorship of this letter, see the introduction to 1 Tim.)

The letter is addressed to Titus, a Gentile who was one of Paul's converts. Titus was

also a member of Paul's missionary team and Paul's representative to Corinth during a tense and difficult time in his relationship with that church (see 2 Cor 7:6-7, 13-16; 12:12-18; 8:6-7, 16-21). Titus isn't mentioned in Acts, but it's clear from Galatians and 2 Corinthians that he was an important participant in Paul's work, and that he was a member of Paul's entourage during part of Paul's third missionary journey. Titus was a test case for Paul's gospel. Paul took Titus with him from Antioch to Jerusalem when Paul presented his gospel to the Gentiles and to the Jerusalem leadership (Gal 2:1-2). When they accepted Titus as a Gentile believer, this indicated their approval of the gospel Paul proclaimed (Gal 2:3). The Pauline letters show that Titus was both a diplomatic and committed member of the team. He was able to cope successfully with confrontation and controversy when others couldn't.

The letter was sent to Titus in Crete, which is the fourth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, just south of the Aegean Sea. The letter



Crete harbor (Titus 1:5)  
Shutterstock

indicates that Paul and Titus worked together briefly in Crete (Titus 1:5), before Paul left Titus behind as his representative to organize the church (Titus 1:5-9) and to deal with opposition that included Jewish myths, genealogies, fights about the Law, and exploitation for money. The purpose of the letter is to commission Titus for those tasks, and to give him instructions.

The themes of the letter include the need for

the Christian community to do good (Titus 1:8, 16; 2:3, 7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14) and the importance of respectful behavior among believers toward each other as well as outsiders (Titus 2:1-3:2). Such behavior contrasts with the reputation of the people of Crete and with the behavior of Paul's opponents (Titus 1:10-16). The letter's important themes include church organization and roles, the correction of problems in Crete, and summaries of Christian teaching.

### **I. Letter Greeting (1:1-4)**

#### **II. Letter Body (1:5-3:8)**

- A. Appointing elders (1:5-9)
- B. Correcting rebellious people (1:10-16)
- C. Teaching all people how to be godly (2:1-3:8)
  - 1. Instructions for members of the household (2:1-9)
  - 2. Instructions for all people (2:10-14)
  - 3. Instructions for Titus (2:15-3:8)

### **III. Conclusion of the Letter (3:9-15)**

- A. Closing instructions for conflict (3:9-11)
- B. Travel plans (3:12-14)
- C. Final greetings and blessing (3:15)

*Cynthia Long Westfall*

## Greeting

**1** From Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. I'm sent to bring about the faith of God's chosen people and a knowledge of the truth that agrees with godliness. **2** Their faith and this knowledge are based on the hope of eternal life that God, who doesn't lie, promised before time began. **3** God revealed his message at the appropriate time through preaching, and I was trusted with preaching this message by the command of God our savior.

**4** To Titus, my true child in a common faith.

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our savior.

## Appointing elders

**5** The reason I left you behind in Crete was to organize whatever needs to be done and to appoint elders in each city, as I told you. **6** Elders should be without fault. They should be faithful to their spouse,<sup>a</sup> and have faithful children who can't be accused of self-indulgence or rebelliousness. **7** This is because supervisors<sup>b</sup> should be without fault as God's managers: they shouldn't be stubborn, irritable, addicted to alcohol, a bully, or greedy. **8** Instead, they should show hospitality, love what is good, and be reasonable, ethical, godly, and self-controlled. **9** They must pay attention to the reliable message as it has been taught to them so that they can encourage people with healthy instruction and refute those who speak against it.

## Correcting rebellious people

**10** In fact, there are many who are rebellious people, loudmouths, and deceivers, especially some of those who are Jewish believers.<sup>c</sup> **11** They must be silenced because they upset entire households. They teach what they shouldn't to make money dishonestly. **12** Someone who is one of their own prophets said, "People from Crete are always liars, wild animals, and lazy gluttons." **13** This statement is true. Because of this, correct them firmly, so that they can be healthy in their faith. **14** They shouldn't pay attention to Jewish myths and commands from

<sup>a</sup>Or they should be a one-woman man. <sup>b</sup>Or overseers, bishops <sup>c</sup>Or from the circumcision

1:1 Paul: On the identity of Paul, see the introduction to 1 Timothy. *slave of God*: a term that shows that the author is completely obedient and committed to God, and that he is God's representative. Paul describes himself elsewhere as Christ's slave (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1). *apostle of Jesus Christ*: one who is chosen and sent by Christ. *to bring about the faith... and a knowledge... that agrees with godliness*: This introduces a primary theme of the letter: namely, that correct doctrine agrees with doing good. Ancient letters often mentioned their primary themes at the beginning of the letter. Godliness is a major theme of the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 3:5).

1:2 God, who doesn't lie: in contrast with rebellious people in Crete (Titus 1:10-16; especially 1:12).

1:4 Titus: a trusted and valuable member of Paul's mission team (Gal 2:1-3; 2 Cor 12:12-13, 18; 7:6-7, 13-16; 8:6-7, 16-21; 12:18). *my true child*: an indication of a close spiritual and personal relationship with Paul, which the apostle also shared with Timothy (see 1 Tim 1:2) and Onesimus (Phlm 10). *Christ Jesus our savior*: The reference to Jesus as Christ and savior is repeated elsewhere in the letter (Titus 2:13; 3:6). 1:5-9 Titus was left behind in Crete to organize the church and appoint elders. The list of requirements for elders is similar to the one in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. The differences reflect the different situations the letters address.

1:5 I left you behind in Crete: Paul stopped in Crete when he was under arrest on the way to Rome (Acts 27:7-8). The reference would require that Paul went to Crete another time, together with Titus, and this isn't recorded in Acts. However, Acts ends before Paul dies, and some early church tradition refers to Paul's later missionary journeys. *appoint elders*: The selection of leadership in the church in Crete was left for Titus to complete (see Acts 14:23).

1:6 faithful to their spouse: or "a one-woman man," a way of talking about marital faithfulness. The focus is on sexual faithfulness, most clearly shown by conduct in the marriage relationship. It involves avoiding all forms of sexual immorality. Paul doesn't here require that elders must be men, nor that elders must be married (note that Paul himself was single, according to 1 Cor 7:7). Paul doesn't forbid remarriage either (see 1 Cor 7:39; 1 Tim 5:14).

1:9 healthy instruction: correct or "sound teaching" (1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Titus 2:1) that contrasts with the teaching of some Jewish Christians who were fighting about the Law and genealogies (Titus 3:9), and spreading myths (Titus 1:10, 14; 3:9; 1 Tim 1:4). Teaching, faith, and speech that are "sound" or "healthy"—these make up a theme in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (see note on 1 Tim 1:10). 1:12 one of their own prophets: Paul quotes the poet Epimenides from 6th-century BCE Crete in order to criticize the people of Crete. (Epimenides is here called a prophet because he's credited with making several predictions that were fulfilled.) *People from Crete are always liars, wild animals and lazy gluttons*: Like Corinth, Crete has a bad reputation. This is one of the most obvious examples in the NT of the use of the cultural values of honor and shame. The group identity and behavior of believers in Crete receives honor by contrasting them with the bad reputation of Crete and the behavior of the opponents. Their identity as believers is further defined with reference to God's character (God doesn't lie; Titus 1:2), by the nature of the requirements for elders (Titus 2:1-7), and by teaching about godliness (Titus 2:1-3:8).

1:14 Jewish myths: The content of these myths is uncertain, but they are opposed to "the reliable message" (Titus 1:9). The problems in Crete were associated more closely

1:1 Ro 1:1;  
1Ti 2:4, 1Ti 6:3;  
Jas 1:1  
1:2 Nm 23:19;  
2Ti 1:1, 2Ti 1:9;  
Ti 3:7; Heb 6:18  
1:3 1Ti 1:1;  
1Ti 1:11, 1Ti 2:6;  
1Ti 2:10, Ti 3:4  
1:4 Ro 1:7;  
2Co 2:13;  
2Co 8:23; Ga 2:3;  
1Ti 1:2  
1:5 Ac 11:30;  
Ac 14:23;  
Ac 27:7;  
1Co 11:34  
1:6 Mal 2:15;  
1Ti 3:2;  
1Ti 3:4-5;  
Ti 1:10  
1:7 1Co 4:1;  
1Ti 3:1-3;  
1Ti 3:8  
1:8 Ro 12:13;  
1Ti 3:2; 2Ti 3:3;  
Ti 2:2, Ti 2:12  
1:9 2Th 2:15;  
1Ti 1:10;  
2Ti 1:13; Ti 2:1  
1:10 Ac 11:2;  
1Ti 1:6  
1:11 1Ti 6:5;  
2Ti 3:6  
1:12 Ac 2:10;  
Ac 17:28;  
2Pt 2:12  
1:13 2Co 13:10;  
1Ti 5:20; 2Ti 4:2;  
Ti 2:2, Ti 2:15  
1:14 Mt 15:9;  
Col 2:22; 1Ti 4:4;  
1Ti 4:7; 2Ti 4:4

1:15 Ro 14:14,  
Ro 14:20,  
Ro 14:23; 1Ti 6:5

1:16 2Ti 3:8;  
Ti 3:3; 1Jn 2:4

2:1 1Ti 1:10;  
Ti 1:9

2:2 1Ti 3:2;  
Ti 1:8, Ti 1:13;  
2Pt 1:6

2:3 1Ti 2:9,  
1Ti 3:8, 1Ti 3:11

2:4 1Ti 5:2

2:5 Eph 5:22;  
1Ti 5:14, 1Ti 6:1

2:7 1Ti 4:12

2:8 2Th 3:14;  
1Pt 2:12

2:9 Eph 6:5;  
Col 3:22, 1Ti 6:1;  
1Pt 2:18

people who reject the truth. <sup>15</sup>Everything is clean to those who are clean, but nothing is clean to those who are corrupt and without faith. Instead, their mind and conscience are corrupted. <sup>16</sup>They claim to know God, but they deny God by the things that they do. They are detestable, disobedient, and disqualified to do anything good.

### Teaching all people how to be godly

**2**But you should talk in a way that is consistent with sound teaching. <sup>2</sup>Tell the older men to be sober, dignified, sensible, and healthy in respect to their faith, love, and patience.

<sup>3</sup>Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in their behavior, teaching what is good, rather than being gossips or addicted to heavy drinking. <sup>4</sup>That way they can mentor young women to love their husbands and children, <sup>5</sup>and to be sensible, morally pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, so that God's word won't be ridiculed. <sup>6</sup>Likewise, encourage the younger men to be sensible <sup>7</sup>in every way. Offer yourself as a role model of good actions. Show integrity, seriousness, <sup>8</sup>and a sound message that is above criticism when you teach, so that any opponent will be ashamed because they won't find anything bad to say about us.

<sup>9</sup>Tell slaves to submit to their own masters and please them in everything they do. They shouldn't talk back <sup>10</sup>or steal. Instead, they should show that they are completely reliable in everything so that they might make the teaching about God our savior attractive in every way.

with Jewish controversies than were the issues in 1 and 2 Timothy (see 1 Tim 1:4).

1:15 *clean*: an indication that some Jewish Christians were trying to encourage or enforce their purity code on Gentiles. See the parallel in Romans 14:20, where Jewish food laws are in view. *conscience*: a theme in the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; 2 Tim 1:3). The conscience guides, evaluates, and controls behavior (see 1 Tim 1:5).

1:16 *anything good*: or good works (see Titus 1:8; 2:3, 7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14). True knowledge of God results in good moral service.

2:1–3:8 The majority of the letter to Titus is about teaching all people to be godly. Paul teaches Titus to instruct the various members of the household (2:1–10), then he provides Titus with general instructions for promoting respectful behavior in the Christian community toward Titus as a leader and toward outsiders (2:11–3:8).

2:1–10 Paul instructs Titus to speak to the members of the household—older men, older women, young women, young men, and slaves—in a way that is consistent with sound teaching (see Eph 5:22–6:9; Col 3:18–4:1; 1 Tim 5:1–16; 1 Pet 2:18–3:7). The desired qualities in character contrast with the reputation of the people of Crete and the opponents (Titus 1:10–16). On these points, believers should live respectable lives as measured according to the wider culture's standards. The respectable behavior of young women, young men, and slaves is particularly emphasized as important for the mission of the Christian community. This would keep the Christian message from being ridiculed, silence the opponents, and make Christian teaching attractive.

2:1 *sound teaching*: See Titus 1:9. For "healthy" or "sound" faith, see Titus 1:13.

2:2 *older men*: not referring to the church's leaders, but

*Leaders* The CEB prefers to call the appointed church leaders "supervisors" (sometimes translated as bishops) because the Greek words meant "supervisor" in the 1st century. The terms "elders" and "supervisors" in Titus 1:6–7 may refer to the same position, or they may refer to separate positions whose responsibilities overlap somewhat (Acts 20:17, 28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1–7; 5:17–19). Supervisors are further described as managers (or stewards) in Titus 1:7. In Acts 14:23, Paul and Barnabas appoint elders in every church on their journey back during the first missionary journey.

the expectations are similar. *dignified*: This is an important quality for believers in general and especially for church leaders in the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 2:2; 3:4, 8, 11; Titus 2: 7). 2:3 *older women*: reverent behavior with the further responsibility to teach what is good.

2:4 *mentor young women*: The instruction for young women is indirect. Older women should instruct younger women in appropriate conduct as wives and mothers.

2:5 *submissive to their own husbands, so that God's word won't be ridiculed*: The outsiders' expectations, and the moral code for the household, motivate and shape godly behavior. Any disrespectful behavior among wives would weaken the Christian message in the eyes of those outside the community of Jesus' followers. The same principle is stated positively in 1 Peter 3:1: submission can be effective in winning others to the faith (see also Eph 5:22; Col 3:18).

2:6–8 *younger men*: Much of Titus' instruction of younger men would be indirect, coming through Titus' own example as a role model. *seriousness*: This refers to dignity, a defining quality for church leaders and, indeed, for all believers according to the Pastoral Letters (see 1 Tim 2:2; 3:4, 8, 11; Titus 2:2, 7).

2:8 Behavior of Titus and the young men that is *above criticism* silences opponents.

2:9–10 *slaves*: Slaves were numerous in Greco-Roman society and were counted among the household. Many were attracted to Christianity, and it was important for the survival of the Christian community that Christian slaves wouldn't be suspected of disobedient behavior (see Eph 6:5; Col 3:22–25; 1 Pet 3:18–25).

2:10 *make the teaching about God our savior attractive in every way*: This gives the role of the slave higher status and honor in the Christian community, even though slaves had few rights and little honor in Greco-Roman culture.

<sup>11</sup>The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. <sup>12</sup>It educates us so that we can live sensible, ethical, and godly lives right now by rejecting ungodly lives and the desires of this world. <sup>13</sup>At the same time we wait for the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of our great God and savior Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>He gave himself for us in order to rescue us from every kind of lawless behavior, and cleanse a special people for himself who are eager to do good actions.

<sup>15</sup>Talk about these things. Encourage and correct with complete authority. Don't let anyone disrespect you. <sup>1</sup>Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities. They should be obedient and ready to do every good thing. <sup>2</sup>They shouldn't speak disrespectfully about anyone, but they should be peaceful, kind, and show complete courtesy toward everyone. <sup>3</sup>We were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, and slaves to our desires and various pleasures too. We were spending our lives in evil behavior and jealousy. We were disgusting, and we hated other people. <sup>4</sup>But "when God our savior's kindness and love appeared, <sup>5</sup>he saved us because of his mercy, not because of righteous things we had done. He did it through the washing of new birth and the renewing by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup>which God poured out upon us

2:11 1Ti 2:4;  
2Ti 1:10; Ti 3:4  
2:12 2Ti 3:12;  
Ti 1:8, Ti 2:2,  
Ti 3:3  
2:13 1Co 1:7;  
Phi 3:20;  
2Th 2:8;  
1Ti 6:14; 2Pt 1:1  
2:14 Ex 19:5;  
Dt 14:2;  
Ps 130:8;  
Eph 2:10; Ti 3:8  
2:15 1Ti 4:12,  
1Ti 5:20; 2Ti 4:2;  
Ti 1:13  
3:1 Ro 13:1;  
2Ti 2:21;  
1Pt 2:13  
3:2 Eph 4:31;  
1Ti 3:3; 2Ti 2:25  
3:3 Eph 2:2;  
Col 3:7; Ti 1:16  
3:4 Ro 2:4;  
Ti 1:3, Ti 2:11  
3:5 Ro 12:2;  
Eph 2:9;  
Eph 5:26;  
2Ti 1:9; 1Pt 1:3  
3:6 J1 2:28;  
Ac 2:33; Ro 5:5

*Doing Good* There is repeated emphasis in Titus (and in all the Pastoral Letters) on loving what is good, teaching what is good, and particularly doing good actions. This is in contrast with the people who are corrupt and unfit for doing anything good (Titus 1:16), or who live unproductive lives (Titus 3:14). In Titus 2:14, Jesus Christ offered himself to create a people who are eager to do good actions. In Titus 3:8, doing good is the result of being saved from our terrible situation, being made righteous and inheriting the hope of eternal life described in Titus 3:3-7. In summary, Titus indicates that the experience of salvation results in a life of service (cf. 2 Cor 9:8; Eph 2:10; Col 1:10; 2 Thes 2:17). Doing good must be a distinctive mark of leadership (Titus 1:8), teaching (Titus 2:3), and setting an example (Titus 2:7). As the letter closes, and Paul gives practical instructions about assisting his co-workers, he looks at it as an opportunity for the people of Crete to learn to devote themselves to doing good (Titus 3:14). Paul indicates that doing good is a goal that characterizes the Christian life.

2:11-14 Paul provides the basis for the previous instruction: God's grace, which educates believers to live respectable lives and engage in good moral service.

2:11 *grace of God*: the undeserved favor that God shows all people by bringing salvation to them and cleansing a special people for God's purposes (Titus 2:14). Here salvation includes the rejection of ungodly lives and selfish desires (Titus 2:12) and rescue from lawless behavior (Titus 2:14).

2:12 *educates*: the process of training a child. God's grace (Titus 2:11) isn't simply God's attitude toward people, but includes God's activity for and in God's people.

2:13 *our great God and savior Jesus Christ*: One of the few places in the NT that refers to Jesus as God (see also John 1:18; 20:28; Rom 9:5).

2:14 *rescue*: See note on 1 Timothy 2:6. This rescue (or ransom, redemption) is from slavery to the power of evil/lawless behavior and its consequences (Rom 7:21-24).

2:15-3:8 Paul instructs Titus to encourage respectful and courteous behavior in the Christian community—toward Titus' own authority, toward governmental authority, and toward outsiders more generally. The basis for believers' attitudes toward outsiders in the Greco-Roman world was that believers, though guilty of the same behavior, were saved because of God's mercy, not because believers were somehow better than others.

2:15 *Talk about these things*: "These things" refers back to the instructions in Titus 2:1-10, but also looks forward to the following instructions (see Titus 3:8). This includes teaching respectful behavior to the Christian community in Crete. *Encourage and correct with complete authority. Don't let anyone disrespect you*: Paul tells Titus to assume the position of a leader in the Christian

community. He's entitled to the respect given to an authority figure.

3:1 *rulers and authorities*: This refers to all forms of state government. As one with authority in the Christian community, Titus in turn should teach submission to governmental authorities. *every good thing*: It's assumed that obedience to authority will result in good behavior on the parts of those holding authority (see 1 Pet 2:13-15).

3:2 *disrespectfully*: Paul prohibits abusive speech; that is, speech that isn't peaceful, kind, and courteous. Respect should be shown to everyone.

3:3 *We were once*: The wrongdoing in which Paul, Titus, and these believers participated before they were saved is just as bad as or even worse than the behavior of any of the outsiders or opponents (cf. Titus 1:10-16). Accordingly, the believers in Crete have no reason to look down on anyone.

3:4-5 *kindness... love... mercy*: a full description of grace (see Titus 2:10, 11; 3:7). God saved believers because of God's kindness, love, and mercy, not because of their righteous actions.

3:5 *through the washing of new birth and the renewing by the Holy Spirit*: God saved believers from the old way of life (Titus 3:3) to a new life. This transformation is described as a new birth (see John 3:3; 1 Pet 1:3, 23) that is put on display by the physical washing of baptism and by a changed life brought about by the Holy Spirit (see Rom 12:2). See John 3:5, where being born of water and the Spirit are combined.

3:6 *poured out upon us generously*: The outpouring of the Holy Spirit (see Rom 5:5) enables a transformed life. See Ephesians 1:7-8, where Paul describes God's overflowing grace poured over us.

3:7 Ro 3:24,  
Ro 8:17, Ro 8:24;  
Ti 1:2, Ti 2:11

3:8 1Ti 1:15;  
Ti 2:14, Ti 3:14

3:9 1Ti 1:4,  
1Ti 6:20;  
2Ti 2:14,  
2Ti 2:16,  
2Ti 2:23

3:10 Mt 18:15;  
Ro 16:17;  
2In 1:10

3:11 1Ti 1:19,  
1Ti 1:20;  
2Ti 2:14; Ti 1:11,  
Ti 1:14

3:12 Ac 20:4;  
Col 4:7; 2Ti 4:9,  
2Ti 4:12,  
2Ti 4:21

3:13 Ac 18:24;  
1Co 16:12

generously through Jesus Christ our savior. <sup>7</sup>So, since we have been made righteous by his grace, we can inherit the hope for eternal life.” <sup>8</sup>This saying is reliable. And I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have come to believe in God might give careful attention to doing good. These things are good and useful for everyone.

### Final Instructions and greetings

<sup>9</sup>Avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, and fights about the Law, because they are useless and worthless. <sup>10</sup>After a first and second warning, have nothing more to do with a person who causes conflict, <sup>11</sup>because you know that someone like this is twisted and sinful—so they condemn themselves.

<sup>12</sup>When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, try to come to me in Nicopolis, because I’ve decided to spend the winter there. <sup>13</sup>Help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with enthusiasm so that they won’t need anything. <sup>14</sup>But our people should also learn to devote themselves to doing good in order to meet pressing needs so they aren’t unproductive.

<sup>15</sup>Everyone with me greets you; greet those who love us faithfully.

Grace be with all of you.

3:14 Phi 1:11; Col 1:10; Ti 3:8 3:15 1Ti 1:2; Heb 13:25

3:7 *made righteous by his grace*: A summary of Titus 3:4-5.

3:8 *This saying is reliable*: This expression emphasizes and gives authority to the statement above it (Titus 3:4-7) and identifies it as a common saying (see note on 1 Tim 1:15). *I want you to insist on these things*: a link back to Titus 2:15. *doing good*: a summary of an important theme of the letter (Titus 1:8, 16; 2:3, 7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14).

3:9-15 This passage addresses Titus with final instructions and greetings, focusing on instructions for dealing with opponents (3:9-10), travel plans (3:12-13), instructions for believers to do good (3:14), and a typical letter closing with an exchange of greetings and blessing (3:15).

3:9 *genealogies*: This probably involves speculations about the genealogies in biblical texts (see 1 Tim 1:4). *fights about the Law*: The application of the Law to Gentiles can refer to a general problem with Jewish Christians, but see note on Titus 1:15 for a particular problem with purity requirements. 3:10-11 Strict boundaries are set against opponents in the letter to Titus, in contrast with 2 Timothy 2:24-26. See also 1 Timothy 6:3-5.

3:10 *have nothing more to do with a person*: Social

isolation is a form of church discipline for both Jesus and Paul (cf. Matt 18:15-17; Rom 16:17-18; 1 Cor 5:3, 9-11; 2 Thess 3:6, 14).

3:12 *Tychicus* is another member of Paul’s mission team (Acts 20:4; 2 Tim 4:12). He’s been one of Paul’s letter-carriers and messengers (Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7). *spend the winter there*: The nature of the travel plans to spend the winter in Nicopolis suggest that this letter was written just as winter was beginning, and that Paul was free to travel.

3:13 *Apollos* is another member of Paul’s mission team (Acts 18:24-28; 19:1; 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4-6:22; 16:12). Apparently he is in Crete with *Zenas*.

3:14 *devote themselves to doing good*: Though Paul depends on Titus to give assistance, the *pressing needs* of Apollos and Zenas are an opportunity for the Christian community in Crete to apply one of the themes of the letter and do good by providing assistance and hospitality (Titus 1:8, 16; 2:3, 7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14).

3:15 *Grace*: refers to God’s gracious and loving presence—a closing blessing that extends to the Christian community (see 1 Tim 6:21; 2 Tim 4:22).



# PHILEMON

Philemon is Paul's shortest letter, containing only 335 words in the Greek text, and it was probably his last. Paul wrote it to prominent members—Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and others—of a house church in Asia Minor in the mid-1st century CE. He addressed Philemon in particular, because Paul's concern was really about Philemon's treatment of Onesimus, whom Philemon had enslaved. Paul wanted a safe welcome for Onesimus when Onesimus returned home.

Through this letter readers see Paul's ability to frame an argument and persuade, see how church leaders might have negotiated difficult issues, and observe the social aspects of slavery in 1st-century Christianity. The shortness of the letter, however, leaves many unanswered questions: How did Onesimus meet Paul? Did he escape to seek Paul's assistance? If Onesimus has run away, why did he do so? Is Paul asking for Onesimus' freedom? Or is he simply hoping

Philemon won't punish Onesimus? Is this letter dealing with the larger question of slavery in the Roman world? Or is it primarily wrestling with the possible punishment or even death of Onesimus? Readers of this letter often try to fill in the background by providing answers to these kinds of questions, but Paul doesn't tell us much about the past here. Instead, his focus is on how Philemon will receive Onesimus.

The Roman world had firm laws regarding slavery. Slaves had no civil rights in Roman society. While laws were in place to check awful abuse of the enslaved, the Roman government rarely got involved with the property rights of owners. At the same time, Rome had severe laws against interfering with slavery. Assisting a runaway slave was illegal. Once recaptured, escaped slaves normally received harsh punishment. Heads of households, like Philemon (Phlm 1-2), could legally execute returned slaves.



Traditional location of Paul's prison cell in Philippi  
Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

Slavery was also an ancient Israelite practice. Despite Israel's exodus from slavery in Egypt, slavery was allowed but it was considered a type of punishment for foreign captives (cf. Lev 25:44-46). If fellow Hebrews were enslaved, their enslavement was to last for a six-year period only, and liberation was to follow in the seventh year (Deut 15:12-15). The teaching that seems like it would have been most relevant to Paul's letter is that escaped slaves (if that's what Onesimus was) should *not* be returned to their master (Deut 23:15). But Paul did not use that teaching in his letter—possibly because that law was no longer understood in absolute terms. For instance, Philo (20–54 CE), a Jewish philosopher and Paul's contemporary,

interprets Deuteronomy 23:15 as saying that the runaway shouldn't be returned to a *cruel* master.

Slavery was clearly part of the milieu of early Christianity. Early Christians didn't defend the system directly, but they didn't attack it either. Slavery was simply assumed. So, in this brief letter to one prominent Christian and the members of a house church, Paul wrote from under house arrest (Phlm 1, 9, 10, 13, 23) in the early 60s CE with a plea and a request: that Philemon receive Onesimus "as a dearly loved brother" (Phlm 16). Paul didn't base his appeal on the demands of the Instruction (or *Torah*, cf. Deut 23:15). Instead, his appeal, this letter of subtle protest, was based on love.

### I. Introduction (1-7)

- A. Opening greetings (1-3)
- B. Paul's prayer of thanks for Philemon (4-7)

### II. Body of the Letter (8-22)

- A. The appeal for Onesimus (8-16)
- B. Encouragement to do what is right (17-21)
- C. A potential visit (22)

### III. Conclusion (23-25)

- A. Final greetings (23-24)
- B. Closing benediction (25)

*Emerson B. Poverly*

**Greeting**

<sup>1</sup>From Paul, who is a prisoner for the cause of Christ Jesus, and our brother Timothy.

To Philemon our dearly loved coworker, <sup>2</sup>Apphia our sister, Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church that meets in your house.

<sup>3</sup>May the grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

1:1 2Co 1:1;  
Eph 3:1;  
Phi 2:25;  
Phm 1:9

1:2 Ro 16:5;  
Phi 2:25;  
Col 4:15;  
Col 4:7; 2Ti 2:3

1:3 Ro 1:7  
1:4 Ro 1:8-9;  
1Th 1:2; 2Ti 1:3

1:5 Ga 5:6;  
Eph 1:15;  
Col 1:4

1:6 Phm 1:9  
1:8 1Th 2:6  
1:9 Phm 1:1

1:10 1Co 4:15;  
Col 4:9

1:12 Eph 4:32

1:13 Phi 1:7;  
Phm 1:10

1:14 2Co 9:7;  
1Pt 5:2

1:15 Gn 45:5

1:16 Mt 23:8;  
1Co 7:22;  
Eph 6:5;  
Col 3:22;  
1Ti 6:2

**Paul's prayer for Philemon**

<sup>4</sup>Philemon, I thank my God every time I mention you in my prayers <sup>5</sup>because I've heard of your love and faithfulness, which you have both for the Lord Jesus and for all God's people.

<sup>6</sup>I pray that your partnership in the faith might become effective by an understanding of all that is good among us in Christ. <sup>7</sup>I have great joy and encouragement because of your love, since the hearts of God's people are refreshed by your actions, my brother.

**Paul's appeal for Onesimus**

<sup>8</sup>Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to command you to do the right thing, <sup>9</sup>I would rather appeal to you through love. I, Paul—an old man, and now also a prisoner for Christ Jesus—<sup>10</sup>appeal to you for my child Onesimus. I became his father in the faith during my time in prison. <sup>11</sup>He was useless to you before, but now he is useful to both of us. <sup>12</sup>I'm sending him back to you, which is like sending you my own heart. <sup>13</sup>I considered keeping him with me so that he might serve me in your place during my time in prison because of the gospel. <sup>14</sup>However, I didn't want to do anything without your consent so that your act of kindness would occur willingly and not under pressure. <sup>15</sup>Maybe this is the reason that Onesimus was separated from you for a while so that you might have him back forever—<sup>16</sup>no longer as a slave but more than a slave—that is, as a dearly loved brother.

**1-3 Greeting.**

**1 prisoner:** Usually, Paul prefers to refer to himself as an "apostle" (cf. Phlm 9, 10, 13, 23; Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1) or "slave of Christ Jesus" at the opening of his letters (cf. Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1). Here he writes from a prison cell. **cause of Christ Jesus:** Compare with Philemon 9. **brother:** term used for fellow Christians, indicating they're viewed as being members of God's family. **Timothy:** Paul's close associate, who is frequently a cosponsor of Paul's letters (cf. 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1). **Philemon:** Mentioned only here in the NT, he's addressed first because he's the primary focus of Paul's letter (see Phlm 4). **coworker:** Paul uses this term regularly for those who assist in his mission (cf. Phlm 24; Rom 16:3, 9, 21; 1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25; 4:3; 1 Thess 3:2).

**2 Apphia:** possibly Philemon's wife or sister, but more likely a leader in this local house church. Paul rarely addresses a woman in the opening of his letters, which may suggest Apphia's prominence (cf. 1 Cor 1:11; Rom 16:1, 3, 6, 7). **Archippus:** Compare with Colossians 4:17. **fellow soldier:** implies he's another leader of this local Christian community. Paul uses this term only one other time for another "coworker," Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25). **your house:** Paul uses the Greek singular "you," which may refer to Philemon's household, Apphia's (as a prominent matron) house, or Archippus' house. The letter is written to the entire church community. **3 grace and peace:** a common greeting in the NT (cf. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Phil 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1). **Lord Jesus:** "Jesus" is never used on its own in this letter; it always occurs with the title "Lord" and/or "Christ."

4-7 Paul's prayer for Philemon.

**4 thank my God:** a customary prayer of thanksgiving in letter openings (Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4; Phil 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2).

**5 love and faithfulness:** or "love and faith." These characteristics are made visible in Philemon's actions (cf. Phlm 7).

**6 become effective:** suggests Philemon's response to Paul's request will make Philemon's earlier work among God's people energized and productive.

**7 love:** Compare with Philemon 5, 9. **refreshed:** may refer to a (financial?) contribution that allowed God's people a reprieve and a period of rest. **brother:** See note on Philemon 1. **8-22 Paul's appeal for Onesimus.**

**8 enough confidence . . . to command:** Paul never uses this type of "command" language elsewhere, and he only rarely invokes the language of bold confidence (cf. 2 Cor 3:12; 7:4; Phil 1:20). Here this language is the result either of his status as apostle or it's an attempt to claim the role of *pater familias* ("head of the family").

**9 appeal . . . through love:** Compare with the use of "love" elsewhere (Phlm 5, 7). **old man:** Paul is probably 56 or 57 when he writes his last letter. **prisoner:** See note on Philemon 1.

**10 Onesimus:** the first mention of Onesimus, who is Philemon's slave and the subject of this letter. **his father in the faith:** Paul uses feminine imagery (the Greek means "I give birth to") to describe this spiritual relationship (cf. 1 Cor 4:15; Rom 9:11; Gal 4:23-24).

**11 useless . . . useful:** This is a play on the name "Onesimus," which means "useful, beneficial."

**12 sending him back:** Interference in the social order is a criminal activity (see intro.). **my own heart:** Compare with Philemon 7.

**13 serve me:** When Paul uses this verb he has in mind the careful attention given to funds provided to care for the poor (cf. Rom 15:25; 2 Cor 8:19-20). Onesimus was probably responsible for managing the gifts that Christians sent to take care of Paul's physical needs during his imprisonment. **14** It isn't clear what this *act of kindness* might entail: (1) send Onesimus to Paul for service (Phlm 13), (2) accept Onesimus back without penalty (Phlm 15, 17), or (3) release Onesimus from slavery (Phlm 16).

**16 no longer as a slave:** may imply that Paul requests the release of Onesimus. **loved brother:** Paul uses the same term of association he uses for Timothy (see Phlm 1 and note) and Philemon (Phlm 7, 20). **brother to you . . . spiritually:** may imply that Paul wants Onesimus to be treated fairly, though perhaps not released from slavery.

1:17 2Co 8:23  
 1:19 1Co 16:21;  
 Ga 5:2  
 1:20 Phm 1:7  
 1:22 2Co 1:11;  
 Phi 1:19,  
 Phi 1:25,  
 Phi 2:24;  
 Heb 13:19  
 1:23 Ro 16:7;  
 Col 1:7, Col 4:12;  
 Phm 1:1  
 1:24 Ac 19:29,  
 Ac 27:2;  
 Col 4:10,  
 Col 4:14;  
 2Ti 4:10  
 1:25 Ga 6:18;  
 2Ti 4:22

He is especially a dearly loved brother to me. How much more can he become a brother to you, personally and spiritually in the Lord!

<sup>17</sup>So, if you really consider me a partner, welcome Onesimus as if you were welcoming me. <sup>18</sup>If he has harmed you in any way or owes you money, charge it to my account. <sup>19</sup>I, Paul, will pay it back to you (I'm writing this with my own hand). Of course, I won't mention that you owe me your life.

<sup>20</sup>Yes, brother, I want this favor from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. <sup>21</sup>I'm writing to you, confident of your obedience and knowing that you will do more than what I ask. <sup>22</sup>Also, one more thing—prepare a guest room for me. I hope that I will be released from prison to be with you because of your prayers.

### **Final greeting**

<sup>23</sup>Epaphras, who is in prison with me for the cause of Christ Jesus, greets you, <sup>24</sup>as well as my coworkers Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke.

<sup>25</sup>May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

17 *partner*: Compare with Philemon 6.

18 *harmed you . . . owes you*: Paul assumes any debts Onesimus owes Philemon.

19 *my own hand*: Paul didn't usually write out his own letters (cf. Rom 16:22; 1 Cor 1:1), though he occasionally provided a final greeting as a signature (cf. 1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11). *owe me your life*: Paul may have shared the gospel with Philemon.

20 *I want this favor*: The Greek verb *oninēmi* ("to receive benefit" or "to be useful") is wordplay on "Onesimus." *Refresh my heart*: Compare with Philemon 7, 12.

21 It's unclear what Paul is asking (see note on Phlm 14), but he wants *more than what I ask*.

22 *prepare a guest room*: Paul plans to check in with

Philemon to ensure Philemon did the right thing. *released from prison*: See note on Philemon 1.

23-25 *Final greeting*.

23 *Epaphras*: Compare with Colossians 1:7; 4:12. *in prison*: See note on Philemon 1.

24 *coworkers*: Paul often traveled with a team of missionaries who assisted him. This is also a term he uses for Philemon (Phlm 1). *Mark*: Compare with Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11. *Aristarchus*: Compare with Colossians 4:10. *Demas*: Compare with Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:10. *Luke*: Compare with Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11.

25 *grace of the Lord*: a common closing in Paul's letters (cf. Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 16:23; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 5:28).

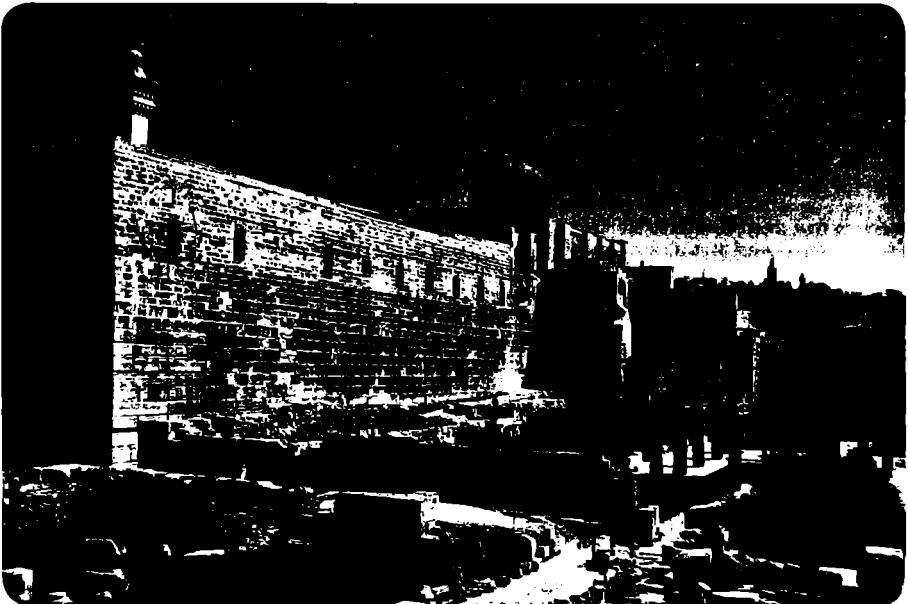
# HEBREWS

Hebrews is well known for what we don't know about it. We don't know with any certainty its author, date, destination, or the place from which it was written. We can say that its author was almost certainly male because of the Greek grammar used in Hebrews 11:32. He was likely a Greek-speaking Jew who was connected in some way to the Pauline mission (cf. Heb 13:23), but we don't know much more. Some of the most prominent suggestions include Apollos and Barnabas, but these are only guesses. Experts agree that it probably wasn't Paul because of the letter's significant stylistic and theological differences from the letters we know Paul wrote. In addition, the author of Hebrews doesn't consider himself a direct witness to Christ (Heb 2:3).

Hebrews calls itself a "message of encouragement" (Heb 13:22; cf. Acts 13:15), a sermon of sorts. It was a sermon sent as a letter to an audience at some distance (cf. Heb 13). Italy seems to be either the sermon's point of origin

or, perhaps more likely, its destination (Heb 13:24). Although the evidence isn't clear, Rome holds first place among suggestions for the location of the audience. We know the audience had believed for some time (Heb 5:11–6:12). We also know that they went through an earlier time of harassment on account of their faith, a time during which at least some of them lost property (Heb 10:34). They supported individuals in prison (Heb 10:33–34), and it's even possible that some of their leaders were killed (Heb 13:7).

If Hebrews addresses some church or churches in Rome, two principal options emerge for dating this earlier time of harassment. Those who date Hebrews to the early 60s CE point to the time when the emperor Claudius expelled Christian Jews from Rome (cf. Acts 18:2). Those who date Hebrews even later often think of the persecution under Emperor Nero around the year 64 as that earlier time of harassment.



The Temple Mount in Jerusalem  
*Shutterstock*

The evidence is also divided on whether the audience was mostly Jewish or Gentile. One might think that the audience must have been Jewish in order to understand the author's complex use of the OT. However, Gentile believers would also have embraced these as their own scriptures, and many of the earliest converts to the Christian movement may have been "God-fearers" already worshipping in synagogues. Galatians also has an intricate argument of this sort, and its audience was primarily Gentile. The nature of the foundations the Hebrews author wants his audience to relearn in Hebrews 6:1-3 may actually point more to a Gentile audience, since a Jew would have known these things well before confessing Jesus as God's Son.

It's impossible to determine the precise situation facing the audience, but the sermon certainly gives us strong hints. Hebrews clearly means to strengthen both the confidence of its audience in the saving significance of Christ's death (e.g., Heb 10:13) and to move them to

endure in faithfulness until the end (e.g., Heb 3:14; 10:36-39). Many have suggested the audience was tempted to return to mainstream Judaism and its system of reconciliation with God, assuming that the temple stood in some way behind the author's argument. The sermon gives hints throughout that social pressures had begun to weigh on them in some way as believers (e.g., Heb 11; 12:4).

Others note that Hebrews' argument is more philosophical and concerns the wilderness tabernacle of Moses rather than the temple itself. Apart from the puzzling aside of Hebrews 13:9-10, Hebrews doesn't tell its audience to stop using the means of reconciliation with God that's been spelled out in Leviticus. Rather, this sermon tells them positively to rely on the saving significance of Christ's death. This has led some to suggest that the audience may have been more discouraged and confused by the temple's destruction in 70 CE than tempted to turn back to an existing temple system (e.g., Heb 13:14).

### **I. Sermon Introduction (1:1–2:18)**

- A. Call to worship (1:1-4)
- B. Celebration of Christ (1:5-14)
- C. Initial warning (2:1-4)
- D. Recounting the story (2:5-18; key verses are 2:17-18)

### **II. Sermon Body (3:1–12:29)**

- A. The argument (3:1–10:18)
  - 1. Faithful to the end (3:1–4:13)
  - 2. Jesus, our high priest (4:14–10:18)
    - a. Priest by God's appointment (4:14–6:20; central warning is 5:11–6:20)

- b. Superior priest (7:1-28)

- c. Superior sacrifice and sanctuary (8:1–10:18)

### **B. The implications (10:19–12:29)**

- 1. The need for faith (10:19–11:40)
- 2. Enduring the Father's discipline (12:1-29)

### **III. Sermon Conclusion (13:1-25)**

- A. Closing encouragement (13:1-17)
- B. Closing greetings (13:18-25)

**The Son is God's ultimate messenger**

**1** In the past, God spoke through the prophets to our ancestors in many times and many ways. <sup>2</sup>In these final days, though, he spoke to us through a Son. God made his Son the heir of everything and created the world through him. <sup>3</sup>The Son is the light of God's glory and the imprint of God's being. He maintains everything with his powerful message. After he carried out the cleansing of people from their sins, he sat down at the right side of the highest majesty. <sup>4</sup>And the Son became so much greater than the other messengers, such as angels, that he received a more important title than theirs.

**Speaking to the Son and angels**

<sup>5</sup>After all, when did God ever say to any of the angels:

*You are my Son.*

*Today I have become your Father?<sup>a</sup>*

Or, even,

*I will be his Father,*

*and he will be my Son?<sup>b</sup>*

<sup>6</sup>But then, when he brought his firstborn into the world, he said, *All of God's angels must worship him.<sup>c</sup>*

<sup>7</sup>He talks about the angels:

*He's the one who uses the spirits for his messengers and who uses flames of fire as ministers.<sup>d</sup>*

<sup>8</sup>But he says to his Son,

*God, your throne is forever*

*and your kingdom's scepter is a rod of justice.*

<sup>9</sup>*You loved righteousness and hated lawless behavior.*

*That is why God, your God,*

*has anointed you with oil instead of your companions.<sup>e</sup>*

<sup>10</sup>And he says,

*You, Lord, laid the earth's foundations in the beginning, and the heavens are made by your hands.*

<sup>11</sup>*They will pass away, but you remain.*

*They will all wear out like old clothes.*

<sup>12</sup>*You will fold them up like a coat.*

*They will be changed like a person changes clothes,*

1:1 Nm 12:6;  
Jl 2:28  
1:2 Ps 2:8;  
Mt 28:18; Jn 1:3;  
1Co 8:6; Col 1:16  
1:3 Mk 16:19;  
Jn 1:14;  
2Co 4:4; Col 1:15;  
Col 1:17  
1:4 Eph 1:21;  
Phi 2:9  
1:5 2Sa 7:14;  
Ps 2:7; Ps 89:26;  
Ac 13:33;  
Heb 5:5  
1:6 Dt 32:43;  
Ps 97:7; Ro 8:29;  
Heb 10:5  
1:7 Ps 104:4;  
Heb 1:14  
1:8 Ps 45:6-7  
1:9 Ps 45:6-7;  
Is 61:1; Is 61:3  
1:10 Ps 102:25  
1:11 Is 51:6  
1:12 Ps 102:25;  
Heb 13:8

<sup>a</sup>Ps 2:7 <sup>b</sup>2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chron 17:13 <sup>c</sup>Deut 32:43 and Ps 97:7 LXX <sup>d</sup>Ps 104:4 <sup>e</sup>Ps 45:6-7

1:1-2a *In the past:* Hebrews divides the history of God's revelation to humanity into two parts. In the past, God spoke through the prophets. In the past, God spoke in many times and many ways. These previous ways contrast with the definitive way God has spoken in these final days. These are the days in which God has spoken through a Son, Jesus the king.

1:2b *heir of everything ... created the world:* Jesus stands at the beginning and end of creation. He's the one through whom God made the world and the one who will rule over it in the end.

1:3a *light of God's glory ... imprint of God's being ... maintains everything:* Hebrews here borrows from a contemporary Jewish book, the Wisdom of Solomon (Wis 7:26), in order to compare Jesus to God's wisdom and God's "word," God's will for the world in action.

1:3b *carried out the cleansing:* We see for the first time the primary teaching point of Hebrews: the fact that Christ's death has definitively cleansed the sins of all who confess Jesus.

1:3c *he sat down at the right side:* Hebrews draws on Psalm 110:1 numerous times (e.g., Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2)

in reference to Jesus' enthronement as cosmic king in heaven at God's side.

1:4a *greater than the other messengers, such as angels:* Hebrews argues repeatedly that Jesus is greater than a number of figures and aspects of the old covenant. At this point, the superiority of Christ to the angels is in view.

1:4b *more important title than theirs:* most likely, Son of God. The rest of the chapter expands and celebrates Christ's superiority to the angels.

1:5 *when did God ever say:* When did this proclamation of Jesus as God's Son take place? It may relate to Christ's exaltation to God's right hand; this would be in keeping with the train of thought from Hebrews 1:3-4. Or it may refer to Jesus as the eternal Son of the Father.

1:8 *God, your throne is forever:* Hebrews directly refers to Jesus as God by way of Psalm 45:6, a royal psalm for the wedding of a king. However, the focus of the quotation is the contrast between the never-ending nature of Christ's kingship and the angels' temporary service in Hebrews 1:7.

1:10-12 *You, Lord, laid the earth's foundations:* As in Hebrews 1:2, the author points to the role Christ had in the world's creation. The quotation from Psalm 102:25-27

1:13 Ps 110:1;  
Mt 22:44;  
Heb 1:3;  
Heb 10:13

but you stay the same,  
and the years of your life won't come to an end.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>13</sup>When has he ever said to any of the angels,

Sit at my right side

until I put your enemies under your feet like a footstool?<sup>g</sup>

1:14 Ps 91:11;  
Ps 103:20;  
Dn 7:10;  
Mt 25:34; Ti 3:7

<sup>14</sup>Aren't all the angels ministering spirits who are sent to serve those who are going to inherit salvation?

2:1 Dt 4:23;  
Heb 12:25

### Listen to the Son's message

**2**This is why it's necessary for us to pay more attention to what we have heard, or else we may drift away from it. <sup>2</sup>If the message that was spoken by angels was reliable, and every offense and act of disobedience received an appropriate consequence, <sup>3</sup>how will we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? It was first announced through the Lord, and then it was confirmed by those who heard him. <sup>4</sup>God also vouched for their message with signs, amazing things, various miracles, and gifts from the Holy Spirit, which were handed out the way he wanted.

2:2 Ac 7:53;

Ga 3:19;

Heb 10:28;

Heb 10:35;

Heb 11:26

2:3 Lk 1:2;

Heb 10:29;

Heb 12:25

2:4 Mk 16:20;

Ac 14:3;

Ro 15:19;

1Co 12:4;

Eph 1:5

2:5 Heb 6:5

2:6 Ps 8:4;

Heb 4:4

2:7 Ps 8:5

2:8 1Co 15:27

2:9 Jn 1:29;

Jn 8:52; Ac 2:33;

Ac 3:13; Phi 2:7

2:10 Lk 24:26;

Ro 11:36;

Heb 5:8;

Heb 5:9;

Heb 7:28

2:11 Mt 25:40;

Mt 28:10;

Jn 20:17;

Heb 10:10;

Heb 13:12

### Jesus is the enthroned human being

<sup>5</sup>God didn't put the world that is coming (the world we are talking about) under the angels' control. <sup>6</sup>Instead, someone declared somewhere,

What is humanity that you think about them?

Or what are the human beings that you care about them?

<sup>7</sup>For a while you made them lower than angels.

You crowned the human beings with glory and honor.

<sup>8</sup>You put everything under their control.<sup>h</sup>

When he puts everything under their control, he doesn't leave anything out of control. But right now, we don't see everything under their control yet. <sup>9</sup>However, we do see the one who was made lower in order than the angels for a little while—it's Jesus! He's the one who is now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of his death. He suffered death so that he could taste death for everyone through God's grace.

### Qualified to be a high priest

<sup>10</sup>It was appropriate for God, for whom and through whom everything exists, to use experiences of suffering to make perfect the pioneer of salvation. This salvation belongs to many sons and daughters whom he's leading to glory. <sup>11</sup>This is because the one who makes people holy and the people who are being made holy all come from one source. That is why Jesus isn't ashamed to call them brothers and sisters when he says,

<sup>f</sup>Ps 102:25-27 <sup>g</sup>Ps 110:1 <sup>h</sup>Ps 8:4-6

highlights the nature of Christ's perpetual lordship in contrast to the coming destruction of the created realm (cf. Heb 12:25-29).

1:14 *ministering spirits*: Unlike Christ's eternal kingship, the angels' function in relation to humanity is transient. They minister to us in the time leading up to our final salvation, after which we will rule with Christ.

2:1 *pay more attention*: Hebrews 2:1-4 is the first of several places where the author interrupts his train of thought in order to warn his audience of their need to persist in faith (cf. Heb 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:20). This sermon cautions many times about the possibility of *drift[ing]* away from faith.

2:2 *message that was spoken by angels*: This is the Jewish Law (cf. Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19).

2:3 *how will we escape*: If something was true in relation to the past age, then how much more will it be true in these days after Jesus! Chapter 1 shows that Christ is greater than the angels. If those who disobey the law delivered by angels experience the consequences of their actions, then how much more will those who don't remain true to the word spoken through Jesus experience the consequences of their actions?

2:5-8 *the world that is coming*: The author quotes Psalm 8:4-6 to show who will rule in the coming world. It won't be angels. The author may be referring to Christ, or perhaps to both Christ *and* humanity. Psalm 8 refers to humanity as those whom God created to rule over creation. 2:8 *we don't see everything under their control*: Hebrews initially speaks of humanity as those intended to rule over creation. The problem is that humanity's sin has prevented it from having this position of "glory and honor" (Heb 2:7; cf. Rom 3:23).

2:9 *it's Jesus*: Jesus has entered into the human condition. He has suffered death so that the rest of humanity might not face eternal death. He has fulfilled the psalm (see Heb 2:5-8) and attained the "glory and honor" (Heb 2:7) first intended for humanity.

2:10 *make perfect the pioneer of salvation*: In Hebrews, for Jesus to become perfect is for him to be ready to bring about salvation. This doesn't mean he was in some way morally imperfect before then.

2:11 *a makes people holy*: Christ cleanses us of our sins and sets us apart as people who belong to God.

2:11b *call them brothers and sisters*: Even though Jesus



<sup>12</sup>I will publicly announce your name to my brothers and sisters.

*I will praise you in the middle of the assembly.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>13</sup>He also says,  
*I will rely on him.<sup>1</sup>*

And also,  
*Here I am with the children whom God has given to me.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he also shared the same things in the same way. He did this to destroy the one who holds the power over death—the devil—by dying. <sup>15</sup>He set free those who were held in slavery their entire lives by their fear of death. <sup>16</sup>Of course, he isn't trying to help angels, but rather he's helping Abraham's descendants. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way. This was so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, in order to wipe away the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup>He's able to help those who are being tempted, since he himself experienced suffering when he was tempted.

**We are Jesus' house**

**3** Therefore, brothers and sisters who are partners in the heavenly calling, think about Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession. <sup>2</sup>Jesus was faithful to the one who appointed him just like Moses was faithful in God's house. <sup>3</sup>But he deserves greater glory than Moses in the same way that the builder of the house deserves more honor than the house itself. <sup>4</sup>Every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. <sup>5</sup>Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant in order to affirm the things that would be spoken later. <sup>6</sup>But Jesus was faithful over God's house as a Son. We are his house if we hold on to the confidence and the pride that our hope gives us.

**Respond to Jesus' voice now**

<sup>7</sup>So, as the Holy Spirit says,

*Today, if you hear his voice,*

*<sup>8</sup>don't have stubborn hearts as they did in the rebellion, on the day when they tested me in the desert.*

*<sup>9</sup>That is where your ancestors challenged and tested me, though they had seen my work for forty years.*

<sup>10</sup>So I was angry with them.

*I said, "Their hearts always go off course, and they don't know my ways."*

<sup>11</sup>Because of my anger I swore:  
*"They will never enter my rest!"<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Ps 22:22 <sup>1</sup>Isa 8:17 LXX <sup>1</sup>Isa 8:18 <sup>1</sup>Ps 95:7-11

was fully God, he was also fully human. He's our brother. As fellow humans, we all are born of God the Father.

2:14 *he also shared the same things*: This verse reminds us of the incarnation of John 1, where Jesus is God's Word taking on flesh. Jesus' participation in humanity enables him to break the power of death, held by the devil over humanity. It's possible these brief statements recall the story of Adam and his sin, similar to what Paul says in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15.

2:17-18 *merciful and faithful high priest*: The theme of Jesus as high priest appears here for the first time. It stands at the very center of the sermon's argument (cf. Heb 8:1) and will dominate the central part of the sermon.

3:1 *Therefore... think about Jesus*: The connecting word, "therefore," between the two chapters tells us that this new section naturally follows the chapters that have come before. If Jesus is so great—the solution to the human problem—then we must reflect in greater depth on who he is and what he has done.

3:2a *Jesus was faithful... like Moses*: In the first two chapters, the author uses a contrast between Jesus and the angels to encourage its audience to endure in faith. In

Hebrews 3, he does the same thing by contrasting Jesus with Moses. Both Moses and the angels were God's servants under the old covenant.

3:2b *faithful in God's house*: These verses can be confusing because Hebrews uses the word "house" in two different ways. The house in which Moses was faithful should be read as the household of Israel. This ancient household included not only the parents and children but also the extended family, servants, and all who worked for the family.

3:3 *builder of the house*: Here, Hebrews shifts to a different meaning of the word "house." Now it's a structure someone might build.

3:6a *as a Son*: Jesus is greater than Moses because Moses was only a servant in God's household, while Jesus has the status of a son. As in Hebrews 1, the word "Son" also has the sense of "being king."

3:6b *if we hold on*: For the second time, Hebrews warns its audience of the necessity of continuing in faith (cf. Heb 3:14).

3:7-11 *Today, if you hear his voice*: These verses are an extended quotation from Psalm 95:7-11 and relate to Israel,

2:12 Ps 22:22  
2:13 Is 8:17,  
Is 8:18  
2:14 Gn 3:15;  
Jn 1:14;  
1Co 15:54;  
2Ti 1:10; 1fn 3:8  
2:15 Ro 8:15;  
2Co 1:10  
2:16 Is 41:8;  
Ga 3:16  
2:17 Dn 9:24;  
Phi 2:7;  
Heb 2:14,  
Heb 3:1, Heb 5:1  
2:18 Mt 4:1;  
1Co 10:13;  
Heb 4:15;  
2Pt 2:9; Rev 3:10  
3:1 2Co 9:13;  
Phi 3:14;  
2Th 2:14;  
Heb 2:17,  
Heb 4:14  
3:2 Nm 12:7;  
Heb 3:5  
3:3 Col 1:18  
3:4 Gn 1:1;  
Eph 3:9; Heb 1:2,  
Heb 3:3  
3:5 Ex 14:31;  
Nm 12:7;  
Heb 3:2  
3:6 1Co 3:16;  
1Ti 3:15;  
Heb 3:14,  
Heb 4:14;  
1Pt 2:5  
3:7 Ps 95:7;  
Ac 28:25;  
Heb 3:15,  
Heb 4:7  
3:8 Ps 95:8;  
Heb 4:7  
3:9 Ac 7:36  
3:10 Ps 95:10  
3:11 Heb 4:3,  
Heb 4:5

3:12 Dt 13:13;  
Mt 16:16;  
Heb 4:11;  
Heb 12:25;  
2Pt 3:17

3:13 Is 44:20;  
Ro 7:11;  
Eph 4:22;  
Heb 10:24;  
Heb 10:25

3:14 Heb 3:6

3:15 Ps 95:7;  
Ps 95:8; Heb 3:7;  
Heb 3:8; Heb 4:7

3:17 Nm 14:29;  
1Co 10:5

4:2 Ro 10:17;  
1Th 2:13

4:7 Ps 95:7;  
Ps 95:8; Heb 3:7;  
Heb 3:8

4:8 Josh 22:4;  
Ac 7:45

4:9 Is 57:2;  
1Pt 2:10;  
Rev 14:13

4:10 Heb 4:4;  
Rev 14:13

<sup>12</sup>Watch out, brothers and sisters, so that none of you have an evil, unfaithful heart that abandons the living God. <sup>13</sup>Instead, encourage each other every day, as long as it's called "today," so that none of you become insensitive to God because of sin's deception. <sup>14</sup>We are partners with Christ, but only if we hold on to the confidence we had in the beginning until the end.

<sup>15</sup>When it says,

*Today, if you hear his voice, don't have stubborn hearts as they did in the rebellion.*<sup>m</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Who was it who rebelled when they heard his voice? Wasn't it all of those who were brought out of Egypt by Moses? <sup>17</sup>And with whom was God angry for forty years? Wasn't it with the ones who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? <sup>18</sup>And against whom did he swear that they would never enter his rest, if not against the ones who were disobedient? <sup>19</sup>We see that they couldn't enter because of their lack of faith.

### Enter the rest

**4** Therefore, since the promise that we can enter into rest is still open, let's be careful so that none of you will appear to miss it. <sup>2</sup>We also had the good news preached to us, just as the Israelites did. However, the message they heard didn't help them because they weren't united in faith with the ones who listened to it. <sup>3</sup>We who have faith are entering the rest. As God said,

*And because of my anger I swore:*

*"They will never enter into my rest!"<sup>n</sup>*

And yet God's works were completed at the foundation of the world. <sup>4</sup>Then somewhere he said this about the seventh day of creation: *God rested on the seventh day from all his works.*<sup>o</sup> <sup>5</sup>But again, in the passage above, God said, *They will never enter my rest!*<sup>p</sup> <sup>6</sup>Therefore, it's left open for some to enter it, and the ones who had the good news preached to them before didn't enter because of disobedience. <sup>7</sup>Just as it says in the passage above, God designates a certain day as "today," when he says through David much later,

*Today, if you hear his voice, don't have stubborn hearts.*<sup>q</sup>

<sup>8</sup>If Joshua gave the Israelites rest, God wouldn't have spoken about another day later on.

<sup>9</sup>So you see that a sabbath rest is left open for God's people. <sup>10</sup>The one who entered God's rest also rested from his works, just as God rested from his own.

<sup>m</sup>Ps 95:7-8 <sup>n</sup>Ps 95:11 <sup>o</sup>Gen 2:2 <sup>p</sup>Ps 95:11 <sup>q</sup>Ps 95:7-8

the household in which Moses was a servant. The rest of the chapter unpacks the meaning of this quotation.

**3:13** *as long as it's called "today":* The author begins his comparison with faithless Israel in the quotation from Psalm 95:7-11 (see Heb 3:7-11). Every day is *today* for the audience of Hebrews. Every day is a day when they must continue to trust in God's promises. Every day is a day when they mustn't forsake "the living God" (Heb 3:12).

**3:14** *if we hold on:* Like the wilderness generation under Moses, those who abandon their course won't make it to the promised land (cf. Heb 3:6).

**3:16** *those who were brought out of Egypt by Moses:* The parallel is with those who have started their Christian pilgrimage but haven't yet finished it. The author may have been familiar with the similar image in 1 Corinthians 10:1-14, where Israel's crossing of the Red Sea is compared to baptism.

**3:17-19** *because of their lack of faith:* The reason the wilderness generation didn't enter God's rest, the promised land of Canaan, was because they didn't keep their faith to the very end. Instead, their *bodies fell in the desert*.

**4:1** *Therefore, ... let's be careful:* The power of the comparison now comes with full force. The audience doesn't want to be like the wilderness generation.

**4:2-3** *We also had the good news:* Like the wilderness generation, the Hebrews audience has started a journey toward a promised destination. The wilderness generation didn't reach it because they didn't continue in faith. The

Hebrews audience will enter if they maintain their faith in the promise.

**4:4** *God rested:* Hebrews uses a Jewish interpretation technique in which two passages with similar words or themes are brought together. Psalm 95:11 speaks of God's rest, and Genesis 2:2 speaks of God resting. The Hebrews author is building toward an even more important kind of rest than when Joshua led Israel into Canaan (cf. Heb 4:8). It's a rest like the one God has taken since finishing the work of creation.

**4:9** *a sabbath rest is left open:* The argument finally comes together. The audience has a promise of rest just like Israel did. Those under Moses' care didn't make it because of "disobedience" (Heb 4:6). Since Jesus is greater than Moses (Heb 3:2-6), how much more serious it will be for those who turn away from Jesus' good news! Believers enter God's rest every "today" and then enter God's *sabbath rest* when they reach their final destination of God's coming kingdom (cf. Heb 12:28), "the world that is coming" (Heb 2:5).

**4:10** *from his works:* The author is probably not contrasting faith and works; that issue doesn't come up in Hebrews. After all, "effort" is part of remaining in faith (cf. Heb 4:11), and God's *works* are positive rather than something to be avoided. Following the imagery of the section, the final sabbath rest from works may refer to the final end of pursuing the goal that will take place when God's kingdom finally arrives.

**First summary of the message**

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, let's make every effort to enter that rest so that no one will fall by following the same example of disobedience, <sup>12</sup>because God's word is living, active, and sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates to the point that it separates the soul from the spirit and the joints from the marrow. It's able to judge the heart's thoughts and intentions. <sup>13</sup>No creature is hidden from it, but rather everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of the one to whom we have to give an answer.

<sup>14</sup>Also, let's hold on to the confession since we have a great high priest who passed through the heavens, who is Jesus, God's Son; <sup>15</sup>because we don't have a high priest who can't sympathize with our weaknesses but instead one who was tempted in every way that we are, except without sin.

<sup>16</sup>Finally, let's draw near to the throne of favor with confidence so that we can receive mercy and find grace when we need help.

**Introduction to a deeper teaching**

**5** Every high priest is taken from the people and put in charge of things that relate to God for their sake, in order to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. <sup>2</sup>The high priest is able to deal gently with the ignorant and those who are misled since he himself is prone to weakness. <sup>3</sup>Because of his weakness, he must offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as for the people. <sup>4</sup>No one takes this honor for themselves but takes it only when they are called by God, just like Aaron.

<sup>5</sup>In the same way Christ also didn't promote himself to become high priest. Instead, it was the one who said to him,

*You are my Son.*

*Today I have become your Father,*

<sup>6</sup>as he also says in another place,

*You are a priest forever,*

*according to the order of Melchizedek.\**

<sup>7</sup>During his days on earth, Christ offered prayers and requests with loud cries and tears as his sacrifices to the one who was able to save him from death. He was heard because of his godly devotion. <sup>8</sup>Although he was a Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

\*Ps 110:4

4:12 *God's word*: Here, this phrase doesn't refer to scripture. Instead, it draws on rich Jewish traditions about the *logos*, "word" (cf. Heb 1:3). The *logos* is God's word that accomplishes God's will in the world; in the context of Hebrews 4:12, it's God's will in relation to judgment. Our true intentions are known to God. Therefore, Hebrews 4:11-13 provides an appropriate conclusion to a section that warns the audience not to be like the wilderness generation.

4:14-16 *hold on to the confession*: The words and themes of this section are strikingly similar to those of Hebrews 10:19-25. This suggests that these two sections mark the beginning and end of the central argument of Hebrews. Both sections mention holding on to a confession, which Hebrews 10:23 clarifies is a confession of hope. Hebrews encourages people to persist in faith in several different ways; indeed, this is the main point of Hebrews, as far as what the author is trying to move his audience to do.

4:15a *because... a high priest*: If the primary words of encouragement in Hebrews are "hold on," the primary way the author backs up this challenge is by strengthening the audience's faith in Christ as high priest. This becomes clear in the chapters that follow.

4:15b *tempted in every way*: This is an important verse for Christian theology, since Christians believe that Jesus was fully human, even to the point of experiencing the full range of human temptation. This means that the human condition isn't determined by sin.

4:16 *draw near*: The audience may be tempted to abandon

their faith, but Christ stands ready in heaven as the high priest to show mercy and to give strength to endure.

5:1 *Every high priest*: Hebrews 5:1-10 begins the sermon's argument about Christ's high priesthood by describing what a high priest does. A high priest offers sacrifices for sins.

5:3 *Because of his weakness*: A central difference between Christ the high priest and earthly high priests is that earthly high priests must achieve reconciliation with God for their own sins, whereas Christ hasn't sinned.

5:4 *No one takes this honor*: Another key difference between Christ the high priest and earthly high priests is that priesthood is by God's appointment. God decides who will be high priest.

5:5-6 *Christ also didn't promote himself*: In Hebrews 1:5 the author quotes the OT to show that God has appointed Christ king. Now he quotes Psalm 110:4 to show that God has also appointed Christ high priest.

5:7a *During his days on earth*: Many readers of Hebrews hear an echo of Jesus praying on the night before his death (cf. Luke 22:39-46).

5:7b *He was heard*: God didn't answer Jesus' request to be saved from death by preventing the crucifixion; instead, God raised him from the dead.

5:8 *he learned obedience*: Since Jesus was "without sin" (Heb 4:15), he wasn't disobedient at any point. He obeyed even though he would have preferred to avoid the cross. The author returns to the theme of enduring a father's discipline in Hebrews 12.

4:11 Heb 3:12,  
Heb 3:18  
4:12 Jer 23:29;  
Eph 6:17;  
1Th 2:13;  
1Pr 1:23;  
Rev 1:16  
4:13 2Ch 16:9;  
Job 26:6;  
Job 34:21;  
Ps 33:13  
4:14 Heb 2:17,  
Heb 3:1,  
Heb 6:20,  
Heb 9:24,  
Heb 10:23  
4:15 2Co 5:21;  
Heb 2:18,  
Heb 7:26;  
1Pt 2:22; 1Jn 3:5  
4:16 Eph 3:12;  
Heb 7:19,  
Heb 10:19  
5:1 Ex 28:1;  
Heb 2:17,  
Heb 8:3, Heb 9:9,  
Heb 10:11  
5:2 Heb 2:18,  
Heb 4:15,  
Heb 7:28, Heb 9:7  
5:3 Lv 9:7,  
Lv 16:8; Heb 7:27,  
Heb 9:7  
5:4 Ex 28:1;  
Nm 16:40,  
Nm 18:7,  
1Ch 23:13,  
2Ch 26:18  
5:5 Ps 2:7,  
Jn 8:54; Heb 1:5  
5:6 Gn 14:18;  
Ps 110:4,  
Heb 5:10,  
Heb 6:20,  
Heb 7:17  
5:7 Mt 26:39,  
Mt 27:46,  
Mt 27:50;  
Mk 14:36,  
Mk 15:34  
5:8 Phi 2:7,  
Phi 2:8; Heb 1:2

5:9 Heb 2:10  
 5:10 Heb 2:17;  
 Heb 5:5,  
 Heb 5:6,  
 Heb 6:20,  
 Heb 7:1  
 5:11 2Pt 3:16  
 5:12 Ac 7:38;  
 1Co 3:2; Heb 6:1;  
 1Pt 2:2  
 5:13 1Co 3:1;  
 1Co 14:20;  
 1Pt 2:2  
 5:14 1Ki 3:9;  
 Is 7:15; 1Co 2:6;  
 Eph 4:13  
 6:1 Phi 3:12;  
 Col 1:28;  
 Heb 5:12,  
 Heb 9:14;  
 1Pt 5:10  
 6:2 Ac 6:6,  
 Ac 17:32  
 6:3 Ac 18:21;  
 1Co 16:7  
 6:4 Jn 4:10;  
 Ga 3:2; Eph 2:8;  
 Heb 2:4,  
 Heb 10:32  
 6:5 Heb 2:5;  
 1Pt 2:3  
 6:6 Heb 10:29;  
 1Jn 5:16  
 6:7 Ps 65:10;  
 Prv 15:17;  
 Ro 14:2; 2Ti 2:6  
 6:8 Gn 3:17;  
 Gn 3:18  
 6:9 Heb 6:10  
 6:10 Mt 10:42;  
 Mk 9:41; 1Th 1:3

<sup>9</sup>After he had been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for everyone who obeys him. <sup>10</sup>He was appointed by God to be a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

<sup>11</sup>We have a lot to say about this topic, and it's difficult to explain, because you have been lazy and you haven't been listening. <sup>12</sup>Although you should have been teachers by now, you need someone to teach you an introduction to the basics about God's message. You have come to the place where you need milk instead of solid food. <sup>13</sup>Everyone who lives on milk is not used to the word of righteousness, because they are babies. <sup>14</sup>But solid food is for the mature, whose senses are trained by practice to distinguish between good and evil.

### Let's press on to maturity

**6** So let's press on to maturity, by moving on from the basics about Christ's word. Let's not lay a foundation of turning away from dead works, of faith in God, <sup>2</sup>of teaching about ritual ways to wash with water, laying on of hands, the resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgment—all over again. <sup>3</sup>We're going to press on, if God allows it.

<sup>4</sup>Because it's impossible to restore people to changed hearts and lives who turn away once they have seen the light, tasted the heavenly gift, become partners with the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup>and tasted God's good word and the powers of the coming age. <sup>6</sup>They are crucifying God's Son all over again and exposing him to public shame. <sup>7</sup>The ground receives a blessing from God when it drinks up the rain that regularly comes and falls on it and yields a useful crop for those people for whom it is being farmed. <sup>8</sup>But if it produces thorns and thistles, it's useless and close to being cursed. It ends up being burned.

### Make your hope sure

<sup>9</sup>But we are convinced of better things in your case, brothers and sisters, even though we are talking this way—things that go together with salvation. <sup>10</sup>God isn't unjust so that he forgets your efforts and the love you have shown for his name's sake when you served and continue to serve God's holy people. <sup>11</sup>But we desperately want each of you to show the same effort to make your hope sure until the end. <sup>12</sup>This is so you won't be lazy but follow the example of the ones who inherit the promises through faith and patience.

6:11 Heb 3:6; Heb 10:22 6:12 Ro 12:11; Heb 10:36; Heb 13:7; Rev 13:10

5:9-10 *After he had been made perfect*: As in Hebrews 2:10, perfection for Christ means being ready to bring about salvation; in this context, it's being complete as a priest. After his suffering, Christ is fully appointed as priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

5:11 *you have been lazy*: Hebrews 5:11-6:20, which is written in a way that's been designed to get the audience's attention, is the author's most abrupt break in the flow of the sermon and his harshest words of disapproval. The fact that he launches this exhortation while identifying Jesus as high priest probably implies that the reconciliation to God provided by Christ stands at the heart of the audience's wavering faith.

5:12 *by now*: The author indicates that the audience has believed in Christ for some time; for such a long time, in fact, that they should be teaching others the kinds of things they must now learn from this sermon.

5:14 *solid food is for the mature*: Ancient philosophers use this common image to urge students of wisdom to grow up and move on to the next level. The Hebrews audience should be able to tell the difference between good and bad teaching by now.

6:1a *moving on from the basics*: Hebrews 6:1-2 gives a list of elementary Christian teachings, particularly ones that a Gentile convert would need to learn for the first time. The audience should know these thoroughly by now.

6:1b *turning away from dead works*: This phrase probably

refers to the kinds of actions that lead to death—sins—rather than trying to earn one's salvation.

6:2 *ritual ways to wash with water*: baptisms.

6:4a *impossible to restore people*: Hebrews 6:4-6 contains verses difficult to understand. Can an individual be truly part of God's people and then depart? Once someone has departed, can that person never return? The translation leans toward the sense that people who have abandoned faith in Christ and definitively turned away will never change their hearts.

6:4b *tasted the heavenly gift*: This is probably a reference to the Holy Spirit, which Hebrews 6:5 makes more clear.

6:7-8 *It ends up being burned*: The intensity of the author's warning is clear from this image of a field that produces only thorns and thistles after regular rain from God. So the author warns of the consequences of failing to respond with gratitude to God's grace for those who, in effect, crucify Jesus "all over again" (Heb 6:6).

6:9 *convinced of better things*: The previous verses are harsh and must be taken seriously. Now, though, the author makes it clear that he has made things seem a little worse than they are. The audience hasn't crossed the line the author has just so starkly drawn.

6:10 *the love you have shown*: Compare with Hebrews 10:32-34.

6:11 *make your hope sure*: by continuing in faith until the end. The audience's faithfulness in the past is

**Our hope in Jesus' priesthood**

<sup>13</sup>When God gave Abraham his promise, he swore by himself since he couldn't swear by anyone greater. <sup>14</sup>He said, *I will certainly bless you and multiply your descendants.* <sup>15</sup>So Abraham obtained the promise by showing patience. <sup>16</sup>People pledge by something greater than themselves. A solemn pledge guarantees what they say and shuts down any argument. <sup>17</sup>When God wanted to further demonstrate to the heirs of the promise that his purpose doesn't change, he guaranteed it with a solemn pledge. <sup>18</sup>So these are two things that don't change, because it's impossible for God to lie. He did this so that we, who have taken refuge in him, can be encouraged to grasp the hope that is lying in front of us. <sup>19</sup>This hope, which is a safe and secure anchor for our whole being, enters the sanctuary behind the curtain. <sup>20</sup>That's where Jesus went in advance and entered for us, since he became a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

**7**This Melchizedek, who was king of Salem and priest of the Most High God, met Abraham as he returned from the defeat of the kings, and Melchizedek blessed him. <sup>2</sup>Abraham gave a tenth of everything to him. His name means first "king of righteousness," and then "king of Salem," that is, "king of peace." <sup>3</sup>He is without father or mother or any family. He has no beginning or end of life, but he's like God's Son and remains a priest for all time.

**A priest like Melchizedek**

<sup>4</sup>See how great Melchizedek was! Abraham, the father of the people, gave him a tenth of everything he captured. <sup>5</sup>The descendants of Levi who receive the office of priest have a commandment under the Law to collect a tenth of everything from the people who are their brothers and sisters, though they also are descended from Abraham. <sup>6</sup>But Melchizedek, who isn't related to them, received a tenth of everything from Abraham and blessed the one who had received the promises. <sup>7</sup>Without question, the less important person is blessed by the more important person. <sup>8</sup>In addition, in one case a tenth is received by people who die, and in the other case, the tenth is received by someone who continues to live, according to the record. <sup>9</sup>It could be said that Levi, who received a tenth, paid a tenth through Abraham <sup>10</sup>because he was still in his ancestor's body when Abraham paid the tenth to Melchizedek.

<sup>11</sup>So if perfection came through the levitical office of priest (for the people received the Law under the priests), why was there still a need to speak about raising up another priest according to the order of Melchizedek rather than one according to the order of Aaron?

<sup>a</sup>Gen 22:17

meaningful to God, but it's no guarantee of their eternal salvation.

6:15 *Abraham obtained the promise:* In Hebrews 6:13-20, after his stern warning, the author eases back to his main point his audience simply needs to be patient until God's promises are fulfilled.

6:17 *he guaranteed it:* God guaranteed the promise of salvation with a pledge. Surely the audience doesn't want to call into question God's faithfulness, do they?

6:18a *two things that don't change:* The author refers to the fact that not only has God sworn an oath, but God cannot lie.

6:18b *we... can be encouraged:* Because God has also sworn that Christ is "a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:10; cf. 7:21), the same certainty applies to the reconciliation with God provided by Christ when applied to God's promise to bless Abraham.

6:19-20 *enters the sanctuary:* The break in the author's argument that began in Hebrews 5:11 comes to an end as he eases back to where his train of thought left off. He had been writing about Christ as "a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek" (cf. Heb 5:10). The author fully engages the subject of the heavenly sanctuary in Hebrews 8.

7:1-2 *This Melchizedek:* If Jesus is "a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:10), then surely Genesis 14 can shed light on the nature of Christ's high priesthood. In the form of an allegory, two of the words from

Genesis 14 already do so: Melchizedek (meaning, a "king of righteousness") and Salem (meaning, a "king of peace"). <sup>7:3</sup> *without father or mother:* Assuming that the author continues to interpret Genesis 14, this verse gathers evidence from the silence of Genesis. Since Genesis gives no priestly ancestry for Melchizedek, we can assume that a priest in his order also wouldn't have a priestly genealogy. Genesis doesn't mention a time when Melchizedek began or stopped serving as priest, so a priest in his order would remain a priest forever. This is exactly the kind of priest Christ is.

7:4-10 *how great Melchizedek was:* The author makes the case that a priest in Melchizedek's order is greater than the priests we read about in Leviticus. First, Melchizedek was greater than Abraham because he blessed Abraham and Abraham gave a tenth to him. Since Levi, a descendant of Abraham, *was still in his ancestor's body*, Melchizedek must be greater than Levi.

7:8 *someone who continues to live:* Throughout Hebrews 7, the central feature of a priest in Melchizedek's order is the fact that such a priest (i.e., Christ) serves forever (cf. Heb 7:3, 8, 16, 24-25).

7:11a *if perfection came:* For Christ to be perfected means for him to be complete and ready to serve as high priest. For the rest of humanity, though, perfection has to do with the cleansing of our sins (cf. Heb 10:1-2).

7:11b *why was there still a need:* The author is going to

6:13 Gn 22:16;  
Lk 1:73  
6:14 Gn 22:17  
6:15 Heb 6:12  
6:16 Ex 22:11  
6:17 Ps 133:1;  
Prv 19:21;  
Heb 6:18,  
Heb 11:9  
6:18 Nm 23:19;  
Ti 1:2; Heb 3:6  
6:19 Lv 16:2;  
Ac 27:29;  
Heb 9:3; Heb 9:7,  
Heb 10:20  
6:20 Ps 110:4;  
Heb 4:14,  
Heb 5:6,  
Heb 5:10,  
Heb 7:1  
7:1 Gn 14:18;  
Ps 76:2; Mk 5:7;  
Heb 5:6,  
Heb 6:20  
7:2 Gn 14:20  
7:3 Mt 4:3;  
Heb 7:6  
7:4 Gn 14:20;  
Ac 2:29; Ac 7:8  
7:6 Gn 14:20;  
Ro 4:13;  
Heb 6:13,  
Heb 7:3  
7:9 Gn 29:34;  
Heb 7:4  
7:11 Heb 5:6,  
Heb 7:17,  
Heb 7:18,  
Heb 7:19,  
Heb 8:7

7:13 Heb 7:11,  
Heb 7:14  
7:14 Is 11:1;  
Mt 5:2; Mt 1:3,  
Mt 2:6; Rev 5:5  
7:15 Ps 110:4;  
Heb 5:6,  
Heb 6:20,  
Heb 7:17

7:16 Heb 9:10  
7:17 Ps 110:4;  
Heb 5:6,  
Heb 6:20,  
Heb 7:15,  
Heb 7:21

7:18 Ro 8:3;  
Heb 7:11,  
Heb 10:1

7:19 Ro 3:20;  
Heb 4:16,  
Heb 7:25,  
Heb 9:9; Jas 4:8

7:21 Ps 110:4;  
Heb 5:6,  
Heb 7:17

7:22 Heb 8:6

7:23 Heb 7:20

7:24 Heb 7:28

7:25 Jn 14:6;  
Ro 8:34;  
Heb 7:19,  
Heb 9:24

7:26 2Co 5:21;  
Heb 4:14,  
Heb 4:15;  
1Pt 2:22; 1Jn 3:5

7:27 Eph 5:2;  
Heb 5:3,  
Heb 9:12,  
Heb 9:28,  
Heb 10:10

7:28 Heb 1:2,  
Heb 2:10,  
Heb 5:2; Heb 5:9,  
Heb 7:21

8:1 Heb 1:3,  
Heb 2:17

8:2 Heb 9:11,  
Heb 9:24

8:3 Eph 5:2;  
Heb 5:1

<sup>12</sup>When the order of the priest changes, there has to be a change in the Law as well. <sup>13</sup>The person we are talking about belongs to another tribe, and no one ever served at the altar from that tribe. <sup>14</sup>It's clear that our Lord came from the tribe of Judah, but Moses never said anything about priests from that tribe. <sup>15</sup>And it's even clearer if another priest appears who is like Melchizedek. <sup>16</sup>He has become a priest by the power of a life that can't be destroyed, rather than a legal requirement about physical descent. <sup>17</sup>This is confirmed:

*You are a priest forever,  
according to the order of Melchizedek.\**

### **Able to save completely**

<sup>18</sup>On the one hand, an earlier command is set aside because it was weak and useless <sup>19</sup>(because the Law made nothing perfect). On the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. <sup>20</sup>And this was not done without a solemn pledge! The others have become priests without a solemn pledge, <sup>21</sup>but this priest was affirmed with a solemn pledge by the one who said,

*The Lord has made a solemn pledge  
and will not change his mind:*

*You are a priest forever.<sup>†</sup>*

<sup>22</sup>As a result, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. <sup>23</sup>The others who became priests are numerous because death prevented them from continuing to serve. <sup>24</sup>In contrast, he holds the office of priest permanently because he continues to serve forever. <sup>25</sup>This is why he can completely save those who are approaching God through him, because he always lives to speak with God for them.

<sup>26</sup>It's appropriate for us to have this kind of high priest: holy, innocent, incorrupt, separate from sinners, and raised high above the heavens. <sup>27</sup>He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day like the other high priests, first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people. He did this once for all when he offered himself. <sup>28</sup>The Law appoints people who are prone to weakness as high priests, but the content of the solemn pledge, which came after the Law, appointed a Son who has been made perfect forever.

### **Meeting tents, sacrifices, and covenants**

**O** Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We have this kind of high priest. He sat down at the right side of the throne of the majesty in the heavens. <sup>2</sup>He's serving as a priest in the holy place, which is the true meeting tent that God, not any human being, set up. <sup>3</sup>Every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices. So it's necessary for this high

<sup>†</sup>Ps 110:4 <sup>‡</sup>Ps 110:4

argue that the very fact that God has pledged to bring a king-priest in the Messiah means that the OT priesthood wasn't effective at cleansing the sins of those who made use of it.

**7:12 change in the Law as well:** Hebrews almost always has the sacrificial system in view when it speaks of the Jewish Law. A change in priesthood implies a change in the sacrificial system.

**7:14 from the tribe of Judah:** Jesus, therefore, would not qualify as a priest such as we read about in Leviticus, but he qualifies as "a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:10).

**7:16-17 a life that can't be destroyed:** As in Hebrews 7:8, the primary characteristic of a priest in Melchizedek's order is the ability to remain in service forever.

**7:18-19 a better hope:** These verses repeat that the OT Law, the OT sacrificial system, wasn't effective when it came to perfecting its participants. It didn't cleanse their sins. In contrast, Christ as priest provides access to God.

**7:20-21 a solemn pledge:** As God gave Abraham a solemn pledge (cf. Heb 6:13-16), God has also pledged that Christ's priesthood will endure forever.

**7:22 a better covenant:** The word "covenant" appears here for the first time in Hebrews. The old covenant was the arrangement "in the past" (Heb 1:1) that God had with God's people through the Law. Jesus introduces a new, better arrangement.

**7:24-25 always lives to speak with God:** Once again we read about the permanence of Christ's priesthood (cf. Heb 7:8, 16). Christ's intercession in heaven here relates especially to reconciliation with God.

**7:27 He doesn't need:** Not only does Christ remain a priest forever, but he's superior to the OT priests in other ways as well. For one, he doesn't need to offer sacrifices for his own sins like they do, for he was "without sin" (Heb 4:15). Second, his offering is so effective that he had to do it only once.

**8:1 the main point:** If the main point of the sermon's message of encouragement, "hold on" (Heb 4:14), is that the audience needs to persist in their faith, the main reason for holding fast is the definitiveness of what Christ has done as high priest.

**8:2 the true meeting tent:** If Christ's priesthood is the truly effective one, then his heavenly sanctuary is the truly effective sanctuary, the one that God built. It isn't clear

priest also to have something to offer. <sup>4</sup>If he was located on earth, he wouldn't be a priest because there are already others who offer gifts based on the Law. <sup>5</sup>They serve in a place that is a copy and shadow of the heavenly meeting tent. This is indicated when Moses was warned by God when he was about to set up the meeting tent: *See that you follow the pattern that I showed you on the mountain in every detail.* <sup>6</sup>But now, Jesus has received a superior priestly service just as he arranged a better covenant that is enacted with better promises.

<sup>7</sup>If the first covenant had been without fault, it wouldn't have made sense to expect a second. <sup>8</sup>But God did find fault with them, since he says,

*Look, the days are coming, says the Lord,  
when I will make a covenant with the house of Israel,  
and I will make a new covenant with the house of Judah.*

<sup>9</sup>*It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors  
on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt,  
because they did not continue to keep my covenant,  
and I lost interest in them, says the Lord.*

<sup>10</sup>*This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel  
after those days, says the Lord.*

*I will place my laws in their minds,  
and write them on their hearts.*

*I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.*

<sup>11</sup>*And each person won't ever teach a neighbor  
or their brother or sister, saying, "Know the Lord,"  
because they will all know me,  
from the least important of them to the most important;*

<sup>12</sup>*because I will be lenient toward their unjust actions,  
and I won't remember their sins anymore.*<sup>w</sup>

<sup>13</sup>When it says new, it makes the first obsolete. And if something is old and outdated, it's close to disappearing.

8:5 Ex 25:40,  
Ex 26:30;  
Col 2:17;  
Heb 9:23,  
Heb 10:1  
8:7 Heb 7:11  
8:8 Jer 31:31;  
Lk 22:20  
8:9 Ex 19:5;  
Jer 22:9  
8:10 Jer 31:33;  
Ro 11:27;  
2Co 3:3;  
Heb 10:16  
8:11 Is 54:13;  
Jer 31:34;  
In 6:45; 1In 2:27  
8:12 Is 43:25;  
Jer 31:34;  
Jer 50:20;  
Heb 10:17  
8:13 2Co 5:17;  
Heb 7:18,  
Heb 8:8

*Old and New Covenants* The "old" covenant in Hebrews was the arrangement God made with Israel involving sacrifices in order to help them picture what God was eventually going to do through Christ. "In the past, God spoke through the prophets to our ancestors in many times and many ways" (Heb 1:1). In the new covenant, God has spoken to us in a singular way, through Christ his Son. The old covenant gave only gave a shadowy image of the reality that was to come in Christ (Heb 8:5; 10:1). It didn't actually make it possible for a person to "draw near to God" (Heb 7:19). Furthermore, Israel didn't even keep the first covenant (Heb 8:7-8). By contrast, God has written God's Law on our hearts in the new covenant (Heb 8:10-11) so that we keep it from the inside. This new covenant is an arrangement by which we can actually "draw near" to God by means of Jesus' death (e.g., Heb 10:19-22).

<sup>w</sup>Exod 25:40 <sup>w</sup>Jer 31:31-34

whether the author is referring to an actual structure in heaven or to heaven itself.

8:4 *he wouldn't be a priest*: Christ's high priesthood is a heavenly priesthood rather than one that functions in an earthly sanctuary.

8:5a *copy and shadow*: The word translated as "copy" here is translated as "example" in Hebrews 4:11. The earthly sanctuary is only a shadowy illustration of the true sanctuary.

8:5b *follow the pattern*: God planned for the earthly sanctuary to be an illustration of the true, heavenly sanctuary. He revealed to Moses the pattern to use in building it.

8:6 *superior priestly service*: This verse declares three ways in which what Christ has done is far better than the old system: *a superior priestly service... a better covenant... and better promises.*

8:7-8 *God did find fault*: Although one might get the impression that God changed covenant arrangements because the first one didn't work, it's clear from what the author says later that God never intended for the first arrangement to take away sins (e.g., Heb 10:3-4).

8:8-12 *days are coming*: This is the longest quotation of the OT in the NT (Jer 31:31-34). The brief summary in Hebrews 10:16-17 points to the author's main interest in this quotation, namely the fact that the new covenant will do away with sins.

8:13 *old and outdated*: The earthly sacrificial system is no longer needed since Christ has accomplished true reconciliation with God. The fact that it is *close to disappearing* might suggest that the Jerusalem temple was still standing, or it might recall the temple's recent destruction in 70 CE.

9:1 Ex 25:8;

Heb 8:2;

Heb 9:10

9:2 Ex 25:23,

Ex 25:30,

Ex 25:31,

Ex 26:1; Lv 24:5

9:3 Ex 26:31,

Ex 26:33,

Ex 40:3,

Ex 40:21

9:4 Ex 16:33,

Ex 16:34,

Ex 25:10,

Ex 25:16,

Nm 17:10

9:5 Ex 25:17,

Ex 25:18;

Lv 16:2; 1Ki 8:6,

1Ki 8:7

9:7 Ex 30:10;

Lv 16:34;

Heb 5:3, Heb 9:3

9:8 In 14:6;

Heb 3:7;

Heb 10:19,

Heb 10:20

9:10 Lv 11:2,

Lv 11:25;

Nm 19:7

9:11 Heb 2:17,

Heb 8:2;

Heb 9:24,

Heb 10:1

9:12 Ac 20:28;

Heb 7:27,

Heb 9:15,

Heb 9:19,

Heb 9:24

9:13 Nm 19:2,

Nm 19:9

9:14 Eph 5:2;

Heb 6:1;

Heb 10:2;

Heb 10:22;

1Pt 3:18

9:15 Ac 20:32;

Ro 3:24, Ro 8:28;

Heb 8:6,

Heb 12:24

### Christ's service in the heavenly meeting tent

**9** So then the first covenant had regulations for the priests' service and the holy place on earth. <sup>2</sup>They pitched the first tent called the holy place. It contained the lampstand, the table, and the loaves of bread presented to God. <sup>3</sup>There was a tent behind the second curtain called the holy of holies. <sup>4</sup>It had the gold altar for incense and the chest containing the covenant, which was covered with gold on all sides. In the chest there was a gold jar containing manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. <sup>5</sup>Above the chest there were magnificent winged creatures<sup>a</sup> casting their shadow over the seat of the chest, where sin is taken care of. Right now we can't talk about these things in detail. <sup>6</sup>When these things have been prepared in this way, priests enter the first tent all the time as they perform their service. <sup>7</sup>But only the high priest enters the second tent once a year. He never does this without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins the people committed in ignorance. <sup>8</sup>With this, the Holy Spirit is showing that the way into the holy place hadn't been revealed yet while the first tent was standing. <sup>9</sup>This is a symbol for the present time. It shows that the gifts and sacrifices that are being offered can't perfect the conscience of the one who is serving. <sup>10</sup>These are superficial regulations that are only about food, drink, and various ritual ways to wash with water. They are regulations that have been imposed until the time of the new order.

<sup>11</sup>But Christ has appeared as the high priest of the good things that have happened. He passed through the greater and more perfect meeting tent, which isn't made by human hands (that is, it's not a part of this world). <sup>12</sup>He entered the holy of holies once for all by his own blood, not by the blood of goats or calves, securing our deliverance for all time. <sup>13</sup>If the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkled ashes of cows made spiritually contaminated people holy and clean, <sup>14</sup>how much more will the blood of Jesus wash our consciences clean from dead works in order to serve the living God? He offered himself to God through the eternal Spirit as a sacrifice without any flaw.

### Christ's death and the new covenant

<sup>15</sup>This is why he's the mediator of a new covenant (which is a will): so that those who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance on the basis of his death. His death occurred to set them free from the offenses committed under the first covenant.

<sup>a</sup>Heb cherubim

9:1 *the first covenant*: The author expands on the nature and function of the system of atonement in the former age.

9:2-5 Compare with Exodus 25-27.

9:3 *a tent behind*: Uniquely, the author discusses the wilderness sanctuary of Israel in terms of two tents rather than two rooms in a single tent. He uses the two parts as an allegory for two ages and two covenants. The first tent in this scheme was the outer room, or the "holy place" (Heb 9:2). The second tent was the inner room, or *the holy of holies*.

9:5 *we can't talk*: This verse isn't clear. It might mean that we can't talk about the details because these items are no longer around (cf. 1 Kgs 14:25-26) or, more likely, it means that the sermon's space constraints don't permit a fuller interpretation of their significance.

9:6-7 *priests enter*: After describing the structure of the wilderness tabernacle, the author now summarizes its function.

9:7 *in ignorance*: The function of the sacrificial system was to make reconciliation in cases of accidental wrongdoing rather than in cases of premeditated crimes (e.g., Num 15:22-31). Nevertheless, the author also views the time before the audience confessed Christ as a time of ignorance (e.g., Heb 6:4) and strongly warns his audience about intentional disobedience after one has confessed Christ (cf. Heb 10:26).

9:8-9 *while the first tent was standing*: The first tent was

the first room of the two-part sanctuary. The author is interpreting the wilderness sanctuary, with the first room representing the present age and the second room representing the age of the new covenant. "Standing" can mean having status or being in force.

9:9 *can't perfect the conscience*: As the author has argued (e.g., Heb 7:11) and will argue again (Heb 10:1-2), the OT system of making reconciliation with God was not actually effective at removing sins.

9:10 *until the time*: which has now arrived.

9:11 *not a part of this world*: The greater and more perfect tent is a heavenly sanctuary, the true tent in heaven that provided the model for the earthly one. When Jesus ascended to heaven, he passed through this one.

9:12 *securing our deliverance*: What the OT system that provided reconciliation with God was unable to do, Christ did with his superior blood. He can actually cleanse our sins (e.g., Heb 9:14) rather than merely clean our skin (e.g., Heb 9:10, 13).

9:14a *from dead works*: that is, from sins, actions that lead to death (cf. Heb 6:1). For "conscience" in Hebrews, see note on Hebrews 10:2b.

9:14b *through the eternal Spirit*: perhaps the key to the effectiveness of Christ's offering over and against the OT sacrifices. His was as much a spiritual sacrifice as one of flesh and blood.

9:15 *which is a will*: The word for "covenant" in Greek has



<sup>16</sup>When there is a will, you need to confirm the death of the one who made the will. <sup>17</sup>This is because a will takes effect only after a death, since it's not in force while the one who made the will is alive. <sup>18</sup>So not even the first covenant was put into effect without blood. <sup>19</sup>Moses took the blood of calves and goats, along with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the Law scroll itself and all the people after he had proclaimed every command of the Law to all the people. <sup>20</sup>While he did it, he said, *This is the blood of the covenant that God established for you.* <sup>21</sup>And in the same way he sprinkled the meeting tent and also all the equipment that would be used in the priests' service with blood. <sup>22</sup>Almost everything is cleansed by blood, according to the Law's regulations, and there is no forgiveness without blood being shed.

9:17 Ga 3:15  
9:18 Ex 24:6;  
Heb 9:7  
9:19 Ex 24:5;  
Ex 24:6; Lv 14:4;  
Nm 19:6;  
Heb 9:12  
9:20 Ex 24:8;  
Mt 26:28  
9:21 Lv 8:15;  
Lv 8:19;  
Lv 16:14  
9:22 Lv 17:11  
9:23 Heb 8:5;  
Heb 9:14  
9:24 Ro 8:34;  
Heb 4:14;  
Heb 7:25;  
Heb 8:2;  
Heb 9:12  
9:25 Heb 9:7;  
Heb 9:12;  
Heb 9:26;  
Heb 10:19  
9:26 Heb 7:27;  
Heb 9:12;  
Heb 9:14;  
Heb 10:12;  
1In 3:5  
9:27 Ga 3:19;  
2Co 5:10  
9:28 Is 53:12;  
Ac 1:11; Ti 2:13;  
1Pt 2:24;  
1Pt 3:18  
10:1 Col 2:17;  
Heb 7:19;  
Heb 8:5;  
Heb 9:11;  
Heb 10:11

<sup>23</sup>So it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be cleansed with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things had to be cleansed with better sacrifices than these. <sup>24</sup>Christ didn't enter the holy place (which is a copy of the true holy place) made by human hands, but into heaven itself, so that he now appears in God's presence for us. <sup>25</sup>He didn't enter to offer himself over and over again, like the high priest enters the earthly holy place every year with blood that isn't his. <sup>26</sup>If that were so, then Jesus would have to suffer many times since the foundation of the world. Instead, he has now appeared once at the end of the ages to get rid of sin by sacrificing himself. <sup>27</sup>People are destined to die once and then face judgment. <sup>28</sup>In the same way, Christ was also offered once to take on himself the sins of many people. He will appear a second time, not to take away sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

**Christ's once-for-all sacrifice**

**10**The Law is a shadow of the good things that are coming, not the real things themselves. It never can perfect the ones who are trying to draw near to God through the same sacrifices that are offered continually every year. <sup>2</sup>Otherwise, wouldn't they have

**OT Sacrifices** Almost everyone in the ancient world sacrificed animals to the gods. Usually, the priests and person making the offering ate part of the sacrifice, while the god also received a portion. Israel also had a sacrifice called the "entirely burned offering" (e.g., Lev. 1:3), in which the whole animal was burned. For the author of Hebrews, all OT sacrifices point toward Christ's death. They didn't actually take away sin but rather helped Israel picture what was to come with Christ. Ironically, while Hebrews says that "there is no forgiveness without blood being shed" (Heb 9:22), it also says that "it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb 10:4). Hebrews thus sees in Christ the end of the need for animal sacrifices. With Christ's death, all sins can truly be cleansed.

<sup>†</sup>Exod 24:8

more than one meaning. In Hebrews 9:15-17 the author plays on the fact that the Greek word for "covenant" can also mean a will. When the writer of a will dies, the heirs receive an inheritance. Even so, the author argues, we can enter the *new covenant* now that Jesus has died.

9:18-21 *first covenant was put into effect*: These verses have to do with the induction of the first covenant under Moses and the installation of the earthly sanctuary.

9:19 *Moses... sprinkled*: A keen eye will notice that this verse mixes together a number of different events from the Jewish Law. Moses sprinkles the people in Exodus 24:8, but he doesn't sprinkle the book, and the tabernacle isn't completed until Exodus 40. The ceremonies involving hyssop and the red cow come from Leviticus 14:4 and Numbers 19:2. The author combines all these ceremonies to indicate that the sacrifice of Jesus is the equivalent of all the sacrifices of the old covenant.

9:22 *no forgiveness without blood*: The blood shed in the old covenant wasn't effective in bringing about forgiveness.

9:23 *heavenly things had to be cleansed*: The idea that the

heavenly sanctuary might need to be cleansed is difficult, even though the author refers to its inauguration. It helps to remember that the author is playing out a comparison and may not actually have a literal, heavenly structure in mind.

9:24 *into heaven itself*: The heavenly sanctuary for the Hebrews audience is none other than heaven itself.

9:26 *since the foundation of the world*: The problem of sin goes back to the very beginning of the world's story.

9:28 *He will appear a second time*: This is the verse from which we get the term "Second Coming." When Jesus comes again, he will save those in his household from God's judgment on the world.

10:1 *Law is a shadow of... things that are coming*: perhaps better called a foreshadowing. The many elements of the Law correspond to the one Christ event.

10:2a *wouldn't they have stopped*: The author sees the repeated offering of sacrifices under the old covenant as an indication of the sacrifices' inability to take away sins, that is, their inability to "perfect" (Heb 10:1) or "cleanse" those wanting to draw near to God.

10:4 Heb 9:13;  
Heb 10:11  
10:5 Ps 40:6;  
Heb 1:6  
10:7 Exr 6:2;  
Ps 40:6, Ps 40:8;  
Jer 36:2;  
Mt 26:39  
10:8 Ps 40:6;  
Mk 12:33  
10:9 Ps 40:7,  
Ps 40:8;  
Heb 10:7  
10:10 Jn 17:19;  
Heb 2:11,  
Heb 7:27,  
Heb 10:14,  
Heb 13:12  
10:11 Heb 5:1,  
Heb 10:1,  
Heb 10:4  
10:12 Heb 1:3  
10:13 Ps 110:1;  
Mt 22:44;  
JCo 15:25;  
Heb 1:13  
10:14 Heb 10:1,  
Heb 10:10  
10:15 Heb 3:7  
10:16 Jer 31:33;  
Ro 11:27;  
Heb 8:10  
10:19 Jn 10:7,  
Jn 14:6;  
Eph 2:18,  
Eph 3:12;  
Heb 4:16  
10:20 2Ch 3:14;  
Jn 14:6;  
Heb 6:19,  
Heb 9:3, Heb 9:8  
10:21 1Ti 3:15;  
Heb 2:17,  
Heb 3:6

stopped being offered? If the people carrying out their religious duties had been completely cleansed once, no one would have been aware of sin anymore. <sup>3</sup>Instead, these sacrifices are a reminder of sin every year, <sup>4</sup>because it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

<sup>5</sup>Therefore, when he comes into the world he says,  
*You didn't want a sacrifice or an offering,  
but you prepared a body for me;*

<sup>6</sup>*you weren't pleased with entirely burned offerings or a sin offering.*

<sup>7</sup>*So then I said,*

*"Look, I've come to do your will, God.  
This has been written about me in the scroll."*<sup>a</sup>

<sup>8</sup>He says above, *You didn't want* and *you weren't pleased with a sacrifice or an offering or with entirely burned offerings or a purification offering,*<sup>a</sup> which are offered because the Law requires them. <sup>9</sup>Then he said, *Look, I've come to do your will.*<sup>b</sup> He puts an end to the first to establish the second. <sup>10</sup>We have been made holy by God's will through the offering of Jesus Christ's body once for all.

<sup>11</sup>Every priest stands every day serving and offering the same sacrifices over and over, sacrifices that can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup>But when this priest offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right side of God. <sup>13</sup>Since then, he's waiting until his enemies are made into a footstool for his feet, <sup>14</sup>because he perfected the people who are being made holy with one offering for all time.

<sup>15</sup>The Holy Spirit affirms this when saying,

<sup>16</sup>*This is the covenant that I will make with them.*

*After these days, says the Lord,  
I will place my laws in their hearts  
and write them on their minds.*

<sup>17</sup>*And I won't remember their sins and their lawless behavior anymore.*<sup>c</sup>

<sup>18</sup>When there is forgiveness for these things, there is no longer an offering for sin.

### Second summary of the message

<sup>19</sup>Brothers and sisters, we have confidence that we can enter the holy of holies by means of Jesus' blood, <sup>20</sup>through a new and living way that he opened up for us through the curtain, which is his body, <sup>21</sup>and we have a great high priest over God's house.

<sup>a</sup>Ps 40:6-8 <sup>b</sup>Ps 40:6 <sup>c</sup>Jer 31:33-34

**10:2b aware of sin:** or having a consciousness of sin. "Conscience" in Hebrews is that part of a person that is aware, or conscious, of sin (cf. Heb 9:14).

**10:4 impossible:** The author has never believed that the OT system of sacrifices is capable of truly cleansing sin or that God ever intended it to. It was meant to foreshadow Christ's one true sacrifice.

**10:5-9 you prepared a body:** The author interprets Psalm 40:6-8 to reflect the changing of the covenants. The fact that God wasn't pleased with sacrifices but instead sent Jesus into the world indicates the taking away of the first system and its replacement by Christ's sacrificial death (10:9). The author bases this interpretation on the Greek translation of the psalm, since the Hebrew text of Psalm 40:6 reads, "you have given me ears."

**10:10 been made holy:** In order to belong to God and to be set apart as God's, we must be cleansed. God has accomplished this through Christ's body.

**10:12 he sat down:** Christ's sitting down on God's right side is a theme throughout Hebrews based on Psalm 110:1 (e.g., Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 12:2). Here, it indicates the finality and definitiveness of the reconciling work Christ has done for all time.

**10:13 until his enemies:** Psalm 110:1 also mentions the

defeat of the king's enemies. In 1 Corinthians 15:16, the last enemy is death. The Hebrews author seems to think of the final defeat more in terms of the final judgment (cf. Heb 10:27).

**10:14 he perfected:** This magnificent verse captures the entire high priestly argument of Hebrews.

**10:15-18 This is the covenant:** The author ends the new covenant argument from Hebrews 8:1-10:18, where it began with a summary of his quotation of Jeremiah in Hebrews 8. With sins unequivocally forgiven through Christ, there's no need for continued sacrifices in an earthly sanctuary. The audience no longer needs to worry about participating in the Jerusalem temple (if Hebrews was written before 70 CE) or be troubled by its destruction (if Hebrews was written after).

**10:19 we can enter:** These verses are similar to Hebrews 4:14-16, indicating that the central high priestly argument of the sermon has come to an end. We have definitive access to God's presence by means of Jesus' blood.

**10:20 through the curtain:** The image of Christ's body as the curtain or veil between the two parts of the sanctuary is difficult if one thinks of a curtain as a hindrance. It's better to think of the curtain more as an entrance.

**10:21 over God's house:** With the mention of Christ as high

<sup>22</sup>Therefore, let's draw near with a genuine heart with the certainty that our faith gives us, since our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies are washed with pure water.

<sup>23</sup>Let's hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, because the one who made the promises is reliable.

<sup>24</sup>And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds.

<sup>25</sup>Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near.

**Judgment for intentional sin**

<sup>26</sup>If we make the decision to sin after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there isn't a sacrifice for sins left any longer. <sup>27</sup>There's only a scary expectation of judgment and of a burning fire that's going to devour God's opponents. <sup>28</sup>When someone rejected the Law from Moses, they were put to death without mercy on the basis of the testimony of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup>How much worse punishment do you think is deserved by the person who walks all over God's son, who acts as if the blood of the covenant that made us holy is just ordinary blood, and who insults the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup>We know the one who said,

*Judgment is mine; I will pay people back.<sup>d</sup>*

And he also said,

*The Lord will judge his people.<sup>e</sup>*

<sup>31</sup>It's scary to fall into the hands of the living God!

**Confidence and faith to endure**

<sup>32</sup>But remember the earlier days, after you saw the light. You stood your ground while you were suffering from an enormous amount of pressure. <sup>33</sup>Sometimes you were exposed to insults and abuse in public. Other times you became partners with those who were treated that way. <sup>34</sup>You even showed sympathy toward people in prison and accepted the confiscation of your possessions with joy, since you knew that you had better and lasting possessions. <sup>35</sup>So don't throw away your confidence—it brings a great reward. <sup>36</sup>You need to endure so that you can receive the promises after you do God's will.

<sup>37</sup>In a little while longer,

*the one who is coming will come and won't delay;*

<sup>38</sup>but my righteous one will live by faith,

*and my whole being won't be pleased with anyone who shrinks back.<sup>f</sup>*

<sup>d</sup>Deut 32:35 <sup>e</sup>Deut 32:36; Ps 135:14 <sup>f</sup>Hab 2:3-4

priest, the word "house" now takes on the sense of God's temple in addition to its earlier images as a household and a building in Hebrews 3:2-3.

10:22 *evil conscience*: that is, an awareness of sin (cf. Heb 10:2). *bodies are washed*: probably a reference to Christian baptism (cf. Heb 6:2).

10:23 *hold on to the confession*: the central charge of Hebrews, repeated here as in Hebrews 4:14 to indicate the end of the author's central high priestly argument.

10:24 *consider each other*: Mutual care is especially important for a community experiencing harassment. *sparking*: or "provoking" *good deeds*: See the examples in Hebrews 13.

10:25a *Don't stop meeting together*: perhaps a sign of declining confidence. Some who had formerly believed were beginning to stop meeting together regularly for worship.

10:25b *the day drawing near*: Hebrews still anticipates the imminent return of Christ from heaven. The audience might very well expect to be alive when it happens.

10:26 *the decision to sin*: Like Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-31 doesn't express optimism about those who turn away from Christ. Christ's sacrifice for our sins primarily targeted the audience's past sins and would no longer remain in force if they abandoned faith.

10:27 *God's opponents*: Those who abandon Christ rejoin God's opponents, who will face a fiery judgment when Christ returns.

10:29a *How much worse*: Yet another argument that moves from lesser to greater offenses (cf. Heb 2:2-3; 3:5-6).

10:29b *insults the Spirit*: God's grace is God's willingness to be our patron. This means that God gives us gifts for which we aren't able to pay. These gifts include forgiveness and the reconciliation with God that Christ achieved. At the same time, no patron will continue to give if those who received the gifts fail to respond in gratitude.

10:31 *It's scary to fall*: Even those who currently confess Christ as king can end up as targets of God's judgment if they abandon faith.

10:32-34 *remember the earlier days*: As in Hebrews 6:10, we learn that the audience has not only confessed Christ for some time but that they had been model Christians at one time (see intro.). In a previous crisis, they endured public disgrace, abuse, and even loss of possessions by associating with individuals in prison.

10:36 *You need to endure*: This is Hebrews' central message of encouragement (see Heb 8:1).

10:37 *the one who is coming will come*: perhaps indicating that the delay of Christ's return is one factor in the audience's fading confidence.

10:38 *will live by faith*: The author interprets Habakkuk 2:4 in terms of continuing in faithfulness. (This differs from Paul's reading of the verse from Habakkuk, in which the

10:22 Eze 36:25; 1Co 6:11; Heb 7:19; Heb 9:14; 1Pt 1:2  
10:23 1Co 1:9; 1Th 5:24; Heb 3:6; Heb 4:14; Heb 11:11  
10:24 Ti 3:8  
10:25 Ac 2:42; 1Co 3:13; Heb 3:13

10:26 Nm 15:30; Heb 6:4; 2Pt 2:20; 1Jn 5:16  
10:27 Heb 9:27  
10:28 Dt 17:6; Dt 19:15; Mt 18:16; Heb 2:2  
10:29 Zec 12:10; Eph 4:30; Heb 2:3; Heb 6:6; Heb 13:20

10:30 Dt 32:35; Dt 32:36; Ps 94:1; Ps 135:14; Ro 12:19

10:31 Heb 10:27  
10:32 Phi 1:29; Phi 1:30; Heb 6:4  
10:33 1Co 4:9; Phi 4:14; 1Th 2:14

10:34 Mt 5:12; 1Pt 1:4

10:35 Mt 5:12; Heb 2:2

10:36 Lk 21:19; Heb 6:12; Heb 6:15; Heb 12:1; Jas 1:4

10:37 Hab 2:3; Rev 22:20

10:38 Hab 2:3; Hab 2:4; Ro 1:17; Ga 3:11

10:39 Ps 44:18;  
Prv 14:14;  
Zep 1:4; Jn 17:12;  
2Th 2:3

11:1 Ro 8:24;  
2Co 4:18  
11:2 Heb 11:4,  
Heb 11:39

11:3 Gn 1:1;  
Ps 33:6; Ro 4:17;  
Heb 1:2; 2Pt 3:5

11:4 Gn 4:3;  
Gn 4:4; Mt 23:35;  
Heb 12:24;  
Jn 3:12

11:5 Gn 5:21,  
Gn 5:22,  
Gn 5:24;  
2Ki 2:11;  
1k 3:37

11:6 Heb 7:19  
11:7 Gn 6:9,  
Gn 6:11, Gn 7:1;  
Eze 14:14;  
1Pt 3:20

11:8 Gn 12:1,  
Gn 12:7;  
Neh 9:7;  
Ac 7:2;  
Heb 11:17

11:9 Gn 12:8,  
Gn 13:18,  
Gn 18:1,  
Gn 18:9;  
Heb 6:17

11:10 2Co 5:1;  
Heb 11:16,  
Heb 12:22,  
Heb 13:14;  
Rev 21:2

11:11 Gn 17:17,  
Gn 18:11,  
Gn 21:2;  
Heb 10:23;  
1Pt 3:6

11:12 Gn 15:5,  
Gn 22:17,  
Gn 32:12;  
Ro 4:19;  
Rev 20:8

11:13 Gn 23:4;  
1Ch 29:15;  
Ps 39:12;  
Heb 11:39;  
1Pt 2:11

<sup>39</sup>But we aren't the sort of people who timidly draw back and end up being destroyed. We're the sort of people who have faith so that our whole beings are preserved.

### Description of faith

**11** Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don't see. <sup>2</sup>The elders in the past were approved because they showed faith.

### Acts of faith by God's people

<sup>3</sup>By faith we understand that the universe has been created by a word from God so that the visible came into existence from the invisible.

<sup>4</sup>By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice to God than Cain, which showed that he was righteous, since God gave approval to him for his gift. Though he died, he's still speaking through faith.

<sup>5</sup>By faith Enoch was taken up so that he didn't see death, and *he wasn't found because God took him up*.<sup>6</sup> He was given approval for having pleased God before he was taken up. <sup>6</sup>It's impossible to please God without faith because the one who draws near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards people who try to find him.

<sup>7</sup>By faith Noah responded with godly fear when he was warned about events he hadn't seen yet. He built an ark to deliver his household. With his faith, he criticized the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes from faith.

<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was going to receive as an inheritance. He went out without knowing where he was going.

<sup>9</sup>By faith he lived in the land he had been promised as a stranger. He lived in tents along with Isaac and Jacob, who were coheirs of the same promise. <sup>10</sup>He was looking forward to a city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

<sup>11</sup>By faith even Sarah received the ability to have a child, though she herself was barren and past the age for having children, because she believed that the one who promised was faithful. <sup>12</sup>So descendants were born from one man (and he was as good as dead). They were as many as the number of the stars in the sky and as countless as the grains of sand on the seashore. <sup>13</sup>All of these people died in faith without receiving the promises, but they saw the promises from a distance and welcomed them. They confessed that they were strangers and immigrants on earth. <sup>14</sup>People who say this kind of thing make it clear that they are looking for a homeland. <sup>15</sup>If they had been thinking about the country that they had left, they would have had the opportunity to return to it. <sup>16</sup>But at this point in time, they are longing

<sup>8</sup>Gen 5:24

11:14 Phi 1:23; Heb 11:16, Heb 13:14 11:15 Gn 24:6 11:16 Gn 26:24; Ex 3:6; Heb 11:10, Heb 13:14

focus becomes trust in what God has done through Christ; cf. Rom 1:17.)

**10:39** *the sort of people*: The author believes the audience will persist in faith to the end. To do otherwise will lead to destruction.

**11:1** *Faith is the reality*: It's what we have now instead of what we believe will eventually come to pass. This is not a definition of faith but a description of how it functions.

**11:2** *The elders*: namely, those whom the rest of the chapter presents as faithful examples to be imitated.

**11:3** *visible... from the invisible*: Even though we may not see what is promised, we know God can make it happen.

**11:4** *better sacrifice*: like Christ's is a better sacrifice than those of the OT sacrificial system. Abel's blood still speaks as a witness in the scriptures.

**11:6** *without faith*: The verse gives two crucial elements of faith: belief that God exists and belief that God does in fact come through with his promises, termed here as *rewards*.

**11:7** *Noah responded*: Noah demonstrated faith in God's promises even when they weren't yet seen (see Heb 11:1).

God considered Noah right with God because of Noah's trust in God's word.

**11:8** *without knowing*: Abraham also trusted God's promise and continued on with faith in something he couldn't see.

**11:9-10** *as a stranger*: A theme we will see in the remainder of this sermon is the idea that the audience doesn't belong to this world. They're foreigners awaiting a heavenly country (cf. Heb 11:16), a city God built (cf. Heb 13:14).

**11:12** *he was as good as dead*: because Abraham was so old. The point is that God can raise the dead. God can give life to those who die from harassment and rescue those facing death.

**11:13a** *All of these people died*: before the promise of Christ and his reconciliation came about, to be sure. The audience may also face death before Christ's return.

**11:13b-16** *strangers and immigrants*: These verses carry on the theme introduced in Hebrews 11:9, that God's people are not truly citizens of this earthly realm. The audience's *homeland* is in heaven (11:14); it isn't the earthly city of Jerusalem (cf. Heb 13:14) or Rome. Such comments would be particularly appropriate if the audience was

for a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God isn't ashamed to be called their God—he has prepared a city for them.

<sup>17</sup>By faith Abraham offered Isaac when he was tested. The one who received the promises was offering his only son. <sup>18</sup>He had been told concerning him, *Your legitimate descendants will come from Isaac.* <sup>19</sup>He figured that God could even raise him from the dead. So in a way he did receive him back from the dead.

<sup>20</sup>By faith Isaac also blessed Jacob and Esau concerning their future.

<sup>21</sup>By faith Jacob blessed each of Joseph's sons as he was dying and bowed in worship over the head of his staff.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>22</sup>By faith Joseph recalled the exodus of the Israelites at the end of his life, and gave instructions about burying his bones.

<sup>23</sup>By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months when he was born, because they saw that the child was beautiful and they weren't afraid of the king's orders.

<sup>24</sup>By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter when he was grown up. <sup>25</sup>He chose to be mistreated with God's people instead of having the temporary pleasures of sin. <sup>26</sup>He thought that the abuses he suffered for Christ were more valuable than the treasures of Egypt, since he was looking forward to the reward.

<sup>27</sup>By faith he left Egypt without being afraid of the king's anger. He kept on going as if he could see what is invisible.

<sup>28</sup>By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, in order that the destroyer could not touch their firstborn children.

<sup>29</sup>By faith they crossed the Red Sea as if they were on dry land, but when the Egyptians tried it, they were drowned.

<sup>30</sup>By faith Jericho's walls fell after the people marched around them for seven days.

<sup>31</sup>By faith Rahab the prostitute wasn't killed with the disobedient because she welcomed the spies in peace.

<sup>32</sup>What more can I say? I would run out of time if I told you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. <sup>33</sup>Through faith they conquered kingdoms, brought about justice, realized promises, shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup>put out raging fires, escaped from the edge of the sword, found strength in weakness, were mighty in war, and routed foreign armies. <sup>35</sup>Women received back their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured and refused to be released so they could gain a better resurrection.

<sup>36</sup>But others experienced public shame by being taunted and whipped; they were even put in chains and in prison. <sup>37</sup>They were stoned to death, they were cut in two, and they died by being murdered with swords. They went around wearing the skins of sheep and goats, needy, oppressed, and mistreated. <sup>38</sup>The world didn't deserve them. They wandered around in deserts, mountains, caves, and holes in the ground.

<sup>39</sup>All these people didn't receive what was promised, though they were given approval

<sup>b</sup>Gen 21:12 <sup>i</sup>Gen 47:31 LXX

11:37 1Ki 19:10; 2Ki 18:2Ch 24:21; Jer 26:23 11:38 Jgs 6:2; 1Sa 22:1; 1Ki 18:4, 1Ki 19:9 11:39 Heb 11:2, Heb 11:13

facing increasing disgrace and pressure in Rome, or if Hebrews had been written shortly after 70 CE, the date of Jerusalem's destruction.

11:17-19 *God could even raise him*: These verses, like those about Enoch (Heb 11:5) and Abraham's descendants (Heb 11:12), fall into the category of God's being able to rescue those who face potential death caused by harassment. God can rescue them from impending death and raise those who die.

11:20-22 *bowed in worship*: Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph all looked toward things God would do after their deaths because they had faith in God's promises. Jacob worshipped God for what he believed God would do.

11:23 *the king's orders*: This statement might be especially relevant if the audience perceived itself to be in danger from a political figure like the Roman emperor.

11:27 *what is invisible*: The sequence would point toward the time when Moses fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian,

although it is difficult to see how this would be an example of not fearing the king's anger. Nevertheless, seeing the invisible reminds the audience again of the nature of faith identified in Hebrews 11:1.

11:29 *they were drowned*: Echoes of possible harassment continue, along with the reminder that God can defeat any enemy.

11:32-35a *Through faith they conquered*: The first examples the author gives have to do with instances when God granted victory to the people of Israel.

11:35b *Others . . . refused to be released*: This may recall the Maccabean brothers who died as martyrs in 2 Maccabees 7.

11:36-38 *cut in two*: The list continues, referring now to individuals whom God did not save from hardship and death. A Jewish tradition held that Isaiah died by being sawed in two.

11:39-40 *they were given approval*: The wording here

11:17 Gn 22:1; Gn 22:2; Heb 11:8; Jas 2:21; 1Pt 1:7 11:18 Gn 21:12; Ro 9:7 11:19 Gn 4:4; Gn 22:2; Gn 22:13; Ro 4:17; Ro 4:21 11:20 Gn 27:27 11:21 Gn 47:31 11:22 Gn 50:24; Gn 50:25; Ex 13:19; Josh 24:32 11:23 Ex 1:16; Ex 1:22; Ex 2:2; Ac 7:20 11:24 Ex 2:10; Ex 2:11 11:25 Job 21:12; Job 21:13; Ps 84:10; Ro 8:17; Heb 11:24 11:26 Heb 13:13; 1Pt 4:14 11:27 Ex 2:15; 1Ti 1:17; Heb 11:1; Heb 11:13 11:28 Ex 12:7; Ex 12:21; Ex 12:23; 1Co 10:10; Heb 12:24 11:29 Ex 14:21; Ex 14:22 11:30 Josh 6:20 11:31 Josh 2:1; Josh 6:17; Josh 6:23; Josh 6:25; Jas 2:25 11:32 Jgs 4:1; Jgs 5:1; 1Sa 1:20; 1Sa 16:1; 1Sa 16:13 11:33 Jgs 14:6 11:34 Ex 18:4; Jgs 7:21; Jgs 15:8; Ps 144:10 11:35 1Ki 17:22; 1Ki 17:23 11:36 Gn 39:20; 1Ki 22:27; Jer 20:2; Jer 37:15

11:40 Rev 6:11

12:1 1Co 9:24;  
Eph 4:22;  
Heb 10:3612:2 Phi 2:8;  
Heb 1:3, Heb 2:9,  
Heb 2:1012:3 Ga 6:9;  
Rev 2:312:4 Heb 10:32;  
Heb 13:1312:5 Job 5:17;  
Prv 3:11;Prv 3:12;  
Heb 12:3

12:6 Ps 119:75;

Prv 3:11;  
Prv 3:12;  
Rev 3:1912:7 Dt 8:5;  
2Sa 7:14;Prv 13:24;  
Prv 19:18;  
Prv 23:13

12:8 1Pt 5:9

12:9 Nm 16:22;  
Nm 27:16

12:10 2Pt 1:4

12:11 Is 32:17;  
Heb 12:10;Jas 5:17; Jas 3:18;  
1Pt 1:6

12:12 Is 35:3

12:13 Prv 4:26;  
Ga 6:1; Jas 5:1612:14 Mt 5:8;  
Ro 6:22;Ro 12:18;  
Ro 14:19;

2Co 7:1

12:15 Dt 29:18;  
Ga 5:4; Heb 4:112:16 Gn 25:29;  
Gn 25:30;  
Gn 25:31;  
Gn 25:33;  
Heb 13:4

for their faith. <sup>40</sup>God provided something better for us so they wouldn't be made perfect without us.

### Let's also run the race

**12** So then let's also run the race that is laid out in front of us, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Let's throw off any extra baggage, get rid of the sin that trips us up, <sup>2</sup>and fix our eyes on Jesus, faith's pioneer and perfecter. He endured the cross, ignoring the shame, <sup>3</sup>and for the sake of the joy that was laid out in front of him, and sat down at the right side of God's throne.

### Run the race with discipline

<sup>3</sup>Think about the one who endured such opposition from sinners so that you won't be discouraged and you won't give up. <sup>4</sup>In your struggle against sin, you haven't resisted yet to the point of shedding blood, <sup>5</sup>and you have forgotten the encouragement that addresses you as sons and daughters:

*My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline  
or give up when you are corrected by him,*

*<sup>6</sup>because the Lord disciplines whomever he loves,  
and he punishes every son or daughter whom he accepts.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>7</sup>Bear hardship for the sake of discipline. God is treating you like sons and daughters! What child isn't disciplined by his or her father? <sup>8</sup>But if you don't experience discipline, which happens to all children, then you are illegitimate and not real sons and daughters. <sup>9</sup>What's more, we had human parents who disciplined us, and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and life? <sup>10</sup>Our human parents disciplined us for a little while, as it seemed best to them, but God does it for our benefit so that we can share his holiness. <sup>11</sup>No discipline is fun while it lasts, but it seems painful at the time. Later, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness for those who have been trained by it.

<sup>12</sup>So strengthen your drooping hands and weak knees! <sup>13</sup>Make straight paths for your feet so that if any part is lame, it will be healed rather than injured more seriously. <sup>14</sup>Pursue the goal of peace along with everyone—and holiness as well, because no one will see the Lord without it. <sup>15</sup>Make sure that no one misses out on God's grace. Make sure that no root of bitterness grows up that might cause trouble and pollute many people. <sup>16</sup>Make sure that no one becomes sexually immoral or ungodly like Esau. He sold his inheritance as the oldest son for one meal. <sup>17</sup>You know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected because he couldn't find a way to change his heart and life, though he looked for it with tears.

<sup>1</sup>Prov 3:11-12

repeats the theme that began the chapter in Hebrews 11:2 and thus signals the end of the chapter. What none of these heroes of faith received was the reconciliation with God that has now been provided through Christ. Now that Christ's saving death is complete, both those who lived and had faith in the past and those who live and have faith now can finally be perfected, or cleansed of their sins. **12:1** *run the race*: So then indicates that the next verses are the conclusion the audience should draw for their lives, given the examples in the previous chapter. The audience needs to persist in faith and continue on their journey, just like the examples of faith in Hebrews 11. Like an athlete, they need to get rid of all their extra weight, especially sin. **12:2** *fix our eyes on Jesus*: Jesus is also an example of faith for the audience to follow.

**12:4** *point of shedding blood*: Although they are in a crisis of some sort, no one yet has been put to death.

**12:5** *the Lord's discipline*: Discipline can be punishment, but the discipline of a parent is more formative, like training. It's for our benefit.

**12:8** *then you are illegitimate*: True fathers and mothers

discipline their children so that they'll begin life on a good path.

**12:9** *Father of spirits*: God is the Father of us in terms of what really makes us who we are for all eternity.

**12:10** *share his holiness*: so we can be pure and without sin as God is and Christ was.

**12:11** *fruit of righteousness*: God's discipline steers us toward a path of right conduct and living.

**12:13** *injured more seriously*: Taking the wrong path only leads farther and farther away from the right path.

**12:14** *holiness as well*: Hebrews leaves little hope for the future of a person whose life is full of sin.

**12:16** *like Esau*: Sexual immorality is a concrete example of sin for the author in addition to abandoning the confession of faith, which would be the equivalent of Esau selling his inheritance (Heb 12:17).

**12:17** *couldn't find a way*: Esau recognized his need for a blessing, but he couldn't repent; he couldn't change his heart even though he desperately wanted to. We might say that his heart at that point was hardened and couldn't soften to change.

**Priestly service in heavenly Jerusalem**

<sup>16</sup>You haven't drawn near to something that can be touched: a burning fire, darkness, shadow, a whirlwind, <sup>19</sup>a blast of a trumpet, and a sound of words that made the ones who heard it beg that there wouldn't be one more word. <sup>20</sup>They couldn't stand the command, *If even a wild animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned.* <sup>21</sup>The sight was so frightening that Moses said, "I'm terrified and shaking!"

<sup>22</sup>But you have drawn near to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, to countless angels in a festival gathering, <sup>23</sup>to the assembly of God's firstborn children who are registered in heaven, to God the judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous who have been made perfect, <sup>24</sup>to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks better than Abel's blood.

<sup>25</sup>See to it that you don't resist the one who is speaking. If the people didn't escape when they refused to listen to the one who warned them on earth, how will we escape if we reject the one who is warning from heaven? <sup>26</sup>His voice shook the earth then, but now he has made a promise: *Still once more I will shake not only the earth but heaven also.* <sup>27</sup>The words "still once more" reveal the removal of what is shaken—the things that are part of this creation—so that what isn't shaken will remain. <sup>28</sup>Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that can't be shaken, let's continue to express our gratitude. <sup>29</sup>With this gratitude, let's serve<sup>n</sup> in a way that is pleasing to God with respect and awe, <sup>29</sup>because our God really is a consuming fire.

**Our acts of service and sacrifice**

**13** Keep loving each other like family. <sup>2</sup>Don't neglect to open up your homes to guests, because by doing this some have been hosts to angels without knowing it. <sup>3</sup>Remember prisoners as if you were in prison with them, and people who are mistreated as if you were in their place. <sup>4</sup>Marriage must be honored in every respect, with no cheating on the relationship, because God will judge the sexually immoral person and the person who commits adultery. <sup>5</sup>Your way of life should be free from the love of money, and you should be content with what you have. After all, he has said, *I will never leave you or abandon you.* <sup>6</sup>This is why we can confidently say,

*The Lord is my helper,  
and I won't be afraid.*

*What can people do to me?*<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Remember your leaders who spoke God's word to you. Imitate their faith as you consider the way their lives turned out. <sup>8</sup>Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

<sup>k</sup>Exod 19:12-13 <sup>l</sup>Exod 19:18 <sup>m</sup>Or hold on to grace <sup>n</sup>Or offer priestly service <sup>o</sup>Deut 31:6; Gen 28:15 <sup>p</sup>Ps 118:6

12:18 Ex 19:12, Ex 20:18; Dt 4:11, Dt 5:22  
12:19 Ex 19:16, Ex 20:18, Ex 20:19; Dt 4:12, Dt 18:16  
12:20 Ex 19:12, Ex 19:13  
12:21 Dt 9:19  
12:22 Ga 4:26; Heb 11:10; Rev 5:11, Rev 14:1, Rev 21:2  
12:23 Gn 18:25; Ex 4:22; Ps 94:2; Lk 10:20  
12:24 Gn 4:10; 1Ti 2:5; Heb 8:6, Heb 11:4; 1Pt 1:2  
12:26 Ex 19:18; Hg 2:6  
12:27 Ps 102:26; Is 34:4, Is 54:10, 1Co 7:31; Eph 2:15  
12:28 Ps 2:11; Dn 2:44  
12:29 Dt 4:24, Dn 9:3; Ps 97:3; Is 33:14; Heb 10:27  
13:1 Ro 12:10; 1Th 4:9; 1Pt 1:22  
13:2 Gn 19:2; Mt 25:35; Ro 12:13; 1Pt 4:9  
13:3 Mt 25:36; Col 4:18; Heb 10:34  
13:4 1Co 6:9; 1Ti 4:3; Rev 22:15  
13:5 Dt 31:6; Josh 1:5; Eph 5:3; Phi 4:1; 1Ti 3:3  
13:7 Heb 6:12; Heb 13:17; Heb 13:24  
13:8 2Co 1:19; Heb 1:12

**12:18-21** *You haven't drawn near:* In these verses the author presents first the mountain to which the audience has not drawn near. This is the mountain of the first covenant, Mount Sinai. The picture he describes is that of Exodus 19 just before Moses delivered the Ten Commandments.

**12:22-24** *you have drawn near:* This picture is of heaven and the heavenly Jerusalem. In Revelation 21:2 this Jerusalem descends to the earth. Hebrews itself says nothing about an eventual descent (cf. Heb 12:27).

**12:23** *spirits of the righteous... made perfect:* Now that Christ's saving death is in place, all the faithful dead from the past have been cleansed (cf. Heb 11:40).

**12:25** *people didn't escape:* another argument that moves from lesser to greater. Those who rejected the covenant under Moses didn't escape. Neither will those who abandon the covenant that Jesus has mediated (cf. Heb 12:24).

**12:27** *removal of what is shaken:* Hebrews looks to the removal of the created realm, similar to the destruction of the world by fire in 2 Peter 3:12. Hebrews doesn't say whether God will then create a new heaven and earth thereafter.

**12:28a** *a kingdom that can't be shaken:* This is the rest toward which the audience is journeying, the end of the race.

**12:28b** *gratitude:* a hint at the fundamental issue. God has graciously given Christ's death as a means of reconciling humanity with God. God has graciously forgiven the audience their sins. To abandon faith after such a gift would be an insult to God as their patron (cf. Heb 10:29). *let's serve:* The Greek text suggests sacrificial worship, the kind that God now wants from us.

**13:1** *Keep loving:* The final chapter is less like a sermon and more like a conclusion to a letter, and it's filled with a variety of encouraging words.

**13:2** *hosts to angels:* Hospitality to strangers was a major value of the ancient world. This instruction reminds us of the angels who appeared to Abraham in Genesis 18, as well as of Roman stories of gods who visit the earth disguised as humans.

**13:3** *Remember prisoners:* individuals like Timothy in 13:23, who had just been released.

**13:4** *the sexually immoral:* Here's a concrete example of what the author had in mind in Hebrews 12:16.

**13:5** *I will never leave you:* God is our patron, so we know God will give us what we truly need.

**13:7-8** *the way their lives turned out:* The way the author words this statement might imply that these former leaders are dead, perhaps even martyred for their faith. The author

13:10 1Co 9:13,  
1Co 10:18

13:11 Ex 29:14;  
Lv 4:12, Lv 4:21,  
Lv 9:11,  
Lv 16:27

13:12 Jn 19:17;  
Eph 5:26;  
Heb 2:11,  
Heb 9:12,  
Heb 10:10

13:13 1k 6:22,  
1k 9:23;  
Heb 11:26,  
1Pt 4:14

13:14 Heb  
11:10, Heb  
11:16,  
Heb 12:22

13:15 Ps 107:22,  
Ps 116:17,  
Hos 14:2

13:16 Ro 12:13,  
Phi 4:18

13:17 Is 62:6;  
Eze 3:17,  
Ac 20:28;  
1Co 16:16;  
Heb 13:7

13:20 Is 55:3;  
Eze 37:26;  
Jn 10:11;  
Ac 2:24,  
Ro 15:33

13:21 Phi 2:13;  
Heb 10:36;  
1Pt 5:10,  
1In 3:22

13:22 1Pt 5:12

13:23 Ac 16:1;  
Col 1:1; 1Th 3:2;  
Phm 1:1

13:24 Ac 18:2;  
Heb 13:7,  
Heb 13:17

<sup>9</sup>Don't be misled by the many strange teachings out there. It's a good thing for the heart to be strengthened by grace rather than by food. Food doesn't help those who live in this context. <sup>10</sup>We have an altar, and those who serve as priests in the meeting tent don't have the right to eat from it. <sup>11</sup>The blood of the animals is carried into the holy of holies by the high priest as an offering for sin, and their bodies are burned outside the camp. <sup>12</sup>And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy with his own blood.

<sup>13</sup>So now, let's go to him outside the camp, bearing his shame. <sup>14</sup>We don't have a permanent city here, but rather we are looking for the city that is still to come.

<sup>15</sup>So let's continually offer up a sacrifice of praise through him, which is the fruit from our lips that confess his name. <sup>16</sup>Don't forget to do good and to share what you have because God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices.

### **Closing greeting and blessing**

<sup>17</sup>Rely on your leaders and defer to them, because they watch over your whole being as people who are going to be held responsible for you. They need to be able to do this with pleasure and not with complaints about you, because that wouldn't help you. <sup>18</sup>Pray for us. We're sure that we have a good conscience, and we want to do the right thing in every way. <sup>19</sup>I'm particularly asking you to do this so that I can be returned to you quickly.

<sup>20</sup>May the God of peace,

who brought back the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus,  
from the dead by the blood of the eternal covenant,

<sup>21</sup>equip you with every good thing to do his will,  
by developing in us what pleases him through Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory forever and always. Amen.

<sup>22</sup>I urge you, brothers and sisters, to put up with this message of encouragement, since I've only written a short letter to you! <sup>23</sup>You should know that our brother Timothy has been set free. If he comes soon, we will travel together to see you.

<sup>24</sup>Greet your leaders and all of God's holy people. The group from Italy greets you.

<sup>25</sup>May grace be with all of you.

reminds his audience that the same Jesus who was faithful to their leaders in their trials will be faithful to them as well. 13:9-10 *by grace rather than by food*: The issue is probably not whether to eat meat that's been sacrificed to an idol (cf. 1 Cor 8-10). Rather, mention of our *altar* in contrast to *those... in the meeting tent* points to a contrast between the OT system of sacrifices and the sacrifice of Christ. The Jerusalem temple could hardly be numbered among the *many strange teachings*, so it isn't clear what specific teaching is intended.

13:11-13 *let's go... outside the camp*: The author builds on the image of priests offering the sacrifices in the sanctuary and then taking the animals' corpses outside the camp's boundaries, just as Jesus was crucified outside the city gate of Jerusalem. The point is that the audience must be ready to bear the shame of being expelled, both for their association with Christ and their refusal to participate in the OT system for achieving reconciliation with God.

13:14 *don't have a permanent city here*: especially

Jerusalem, in this context. This statement would be particularly meaningful if Hebrews was being written not long after the temple's destruction in 70 CE.

13:15-16 *sacrifice of praise*: These are the kinds of sacrifices the audience is now to offer, rather than animal sacrifices. 13:17 *they watch over*: an excellent picture of what the leaders of the ancient church were charged to do.

13:19 *returned to you*: The author of Hebrews has ministered to this audience before.

13:20-21 *May the God of peace*: lovely words of praise to God before the author's closing. God will equip the audience to do *his will*. It isn't an impossible task.

13:22 *message of encouragement*: Hebrews is in the form of a brief sermon (cf. Acts 13:15, where the same Greek phrase is translated as "sermon") with a conclusion like that found in a letter.

13:24 *The group from Italy*: The strongest indication that Hebrews was written to some church or set of churches in Italy, perhaps Rome.



# JAMES

In James 1:1 the author identifies himself as “James.” Three important people in the early Christian community were named James: (1) James, brother of John, son of Zebedee (Mark 1:19), and an apostle; (2) James, son of Alphaeus and also an apostle (Mark 3:18); and (3) James, “brother of the Lord” (Gal 1:19), and leader of the church in Jerusalem.

An examination of the letter points to James “brother of the Lord” as its likely author. The letter shows that its author, who writes with authority and calls himself a teacher (Jas 3:1), is comfortable in the worlds of both Judaism and early Christianity. He demonstrates a detailed understanding of the OT, and his message reflects Jesus’ teaching, especially the Sermon on

the Mount. The fact that the writer is at home in the world of Judaism suggests the letter was written early in the development of the church, when the Christian community was still largely Jewish. The writing doesn’t reflect any church structures, such as apostles, overseers, and deacons (cf. Phil 1:1); instead, it refers to “elders” (Jas 5:14) and “teachers” (Jas 3:1) as roles, not offices. Further, the letter makes no reference to Gentiles or pagans, and it presumes the readers are all Jewish Christians. From the Jewish historian Josephus we know that James, “brother of the Lord,” died in 62 CE, which fits the time frame indicated by the letter’s content and writing style.

To whom was this letter addressed? The only direct reference to its readers is found in

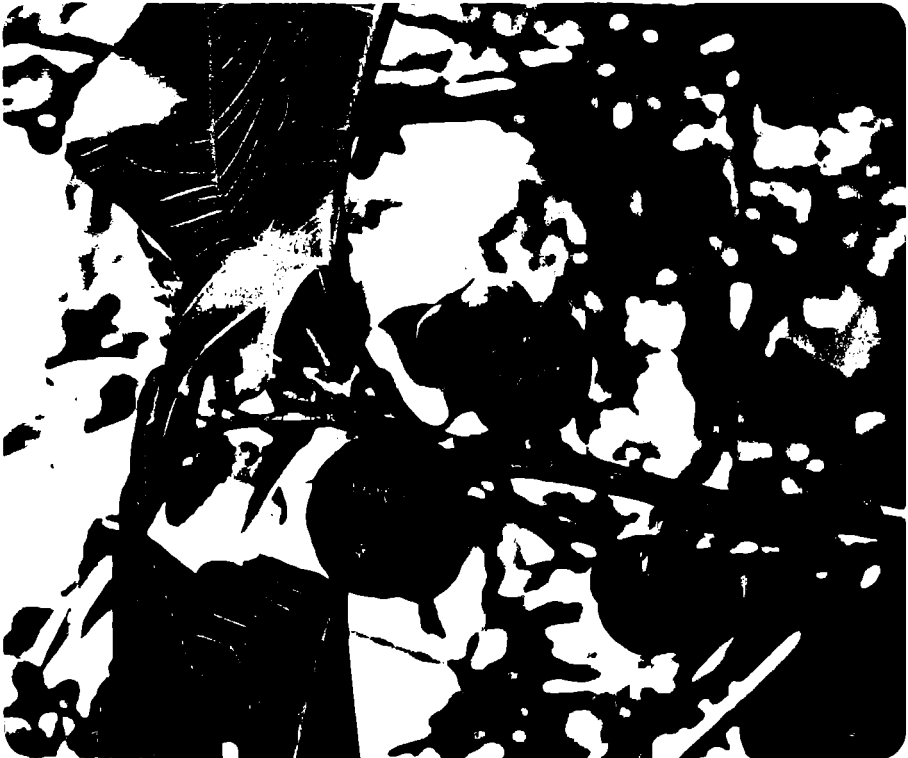


Fig tree (Jas 3:12)  
Shutterstock

James 1:1: "To the twelve tribes who are scattered outside the land of Israel." In the OT the phrase "the twelve tribes" refers to the people of Israel. The scattering of the people of Israel outside their homeland began at the time of the exile, when the Babylonians destroyed their nation in 587 BCE. The prophets looked to a time when their 12-tribe kingdom would be restored. James writes as a teacher, a concerned pastor, and a leader of the Jerusalem church to instruct and encourage Jewish Christians outside Palestine who are facing trials and difficulties.

What is the literary genre of the letter? Besides conforming to the format of a letter with its opening address, this writing also belongs to the category of Wisdom literature that was widespread throughout the Middle East during the 1st century CE. Wisdom literature communicated instructions to its readers on how to live happily under God's rule. The letter of James contains many sayings expressing such wise instructions. These sayings go further by forming part of the well-constructed arguments that appear throughout the letter (e.g., Jas 2:14-26, where James argues that faith must be expressed in good actions). This type of argument shows its readers the values they

should embrace to live as faithful members of the "twelve tribes who are scattered outside the land of Israel" (Jas 1:1). When reading this letter, pay attention to the wisdom sayings and follow the argument the writer is making in each section of the letter.

A number of themes are woven throughout the letter. Probably the most significant is the argument that faith on its own has to be alive by expressing itself in good actions (Jas 2:14-16). Throughout the letter James outlines for his readers various values and actions they should express in their lives because these values and actions give expression to their faith. Another central theme is the importance of choosing friendship with God over "friendship with the world" (Jas 4:4). For James, "the world" symbolizes whatever is ethically opposed to God. A series of contrasts runs throughout the letter: asking in faith versus asking with doubt (Jas 1:6); poverty versus riches (Jas 1:9-11); being "doers of the word" versus only hearers (Jas 1:22-26); faith that's dead versus faith that's alive (Jas 2:14-26); wisdom "from above" versus wisdom that's earthly (Jas 3:12-18); and friendship with God versus "friendship with the world" (Jas 4:1-10).

## I. Introduction (1:1-27)

- A. Greetings (1:1)
- B. Announcement of major themes (1:2-27)
  1. Testing, wisdom, and the poor (1:2-11)
  2. Testing, and hearers and doers of the word (1:12-27)

## II. Body (2:1-5:6)

- A. Forbidding favoritism (2:1-13)
- B. Faith and good deeds (2:14-26)
- C. Taming the tongue (3:1-12)

## D. Friendship with God (3:13-4:10)

- E. Speaking evil against another (4:11-12)
- F. Judgment on the rich (4:13-5:6)

## III. Conclusion (5:7-20)

- A. Call to endurance (5:7-11)
- B. Call to avoid oaths (5:12)
- C. Call to pray in faith (5:13-18)
- D. Call to bring back the sinner to the community (5:19-20)

**Greeting**

**1** From James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the twelve tribes who are scattered outside the land of Israel. Greetings!

**Stand firm**

<sup>2</sup>My brothers and sisters, think of the various tests you encounter as occasions for joy. <sup>3</sup>After all, you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup>Let this endurance complete its work so that you may be fully mature, complete, and lacking in nothing. <sup>5</sup>But anyone who needs wisdom should ask God, whose very nature is to give to everyone without a second thought, without keeping score. Wisdom will certainly be given to those who ask. <sup>6</sup>Whoever asks shouldn't hesitate. They should ask in faith, without doubting. Whoever doubts is like the surf of the sea, tossed and turned by the wind. <sup>7</sup>People like that should never imagine that they will receive anything from the Lord. <sup>8</sup>They are double-minded, unstable in all their ways.

<sup>9</sup>Brothers and sisters who are poor should find satisfaction in their high status. <sup>10</sup>Those who are wealthy should find satisfaction in their low status, because they will die off like wildflowers. <sup>11</sup>The sun rises with its scorching heat and dries up the grass so that its flowers fall and its beauty is lost. Just like that, in the midst of their daily lives, the wealthy will waste away. <sup>12</sup>Those who stand firm during testing are blessed. They are tried and true. They will receive the life God has promised to those who love him as their reward.

**Our cravings versus God's gifts**

<sup>13</sup>No one who is tested should say, "God is tempting me!" This is because God is not tempted by any form of evil, nor does he tempt anyone. <sup>14</sup>Everyone is tempted by their own cravings; they are lured away and enticed by them. <sup>15</sup>Once those cravings conceive, they give birth to sin; and when sin grows up, it gives birth to death.

<sup>16</sup>Don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup>Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes from above. These gifts come down from the Father, the creator of the heavenly lights, in whose character there is no change at all. <sup>18</sup>He chose to give us birth by his true word, and here is the result: we are like the first crop from the harvest of everything he created.

1:1 Jn 7:35; Ac 12:17; Ac 15:23; Ro 1:1; Ti 1:1  
 1:2 Mt 5:12; Heb 10:34; Jas 1:12; 1Pt 1:6  
 1:4 Mt 5:48; Lk 21:19  
 1:5 Prv 2:3; Mt 7:7; Jas 3:17  
 1:6 Mt 21:21; Eph 4:14  
 1:7 Jas 1:6  
 1:8 1Ki 18:21; Hos 10:2; Mt 6:24; Jas 4:8; 2Pt 2:14  
 1:9 Lk 14:11  
 1:10 Is 40:6; Is 40:7; 1Co 7:31; 1Pt 1:24  
 1:11 Ps 102:11; Is 40:6; Is 40:7; Mt 20:12  
 1:12 1Co 9:25; Jas 1:2; Jas 2:5; Jas 5:11; Rev 2:10  
 1:14 Gn 3:6; Josh 7:21; Job 31:9; Prv 4:23; Is 44:20  
 1:15 Gn 3:6; Job 15:35; Is 59:4; Ro 5:12; Ro 6:23  
 1:16 1Co 6:9; Jas 1:19; Jas 2:5  
 1:17 Nm 23:19; Mal 3:6; Jas 3:15; Jas 3:17; 1Jn 1:5  
 1:18 Jer 2:3; Jn 1:13; 1Pt 1:3; 1Pt 1:23; Rev 14:4

1:1 *James*: On the identity of the author, see the introduction. *slave of God*: Significant leaders in the biblical tradition—such as Moses (1 Kgs 8:53), David (1 Kgs 8:66), and the prophets (Jer 7:25)—were identified in this way. *twelve tribes*: See the introduction.

1:2 *Tests... occasions for joy*: a frequent insight gained from Jesus' sufferings (Matt 5:10-12; Acts 5:41).

1:3-8 *testing of... faith... endurance... fully mature*: The first theme of the letter is the testing of faith. Testing produces steadfastness, which in turn leads to wholeness and integrity, a sequence that shows the path to spiritual maturity. James uses language that recalls Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7).

1:4 *mature*: also means being perfect, complete, whole. It isn't clear in English, but James uses this word five times: James 1:4, 17, 25; 3:2.

1:5 *wisdom*: God's gift that supports Christians in times of trial. God is the source of all wisdom. The gift of wisdom is more about enabling people to act insightfully than giving them information.

1:8 *double-minded*: to have divided loyalty. A double-minded person is drawn in two directions (see Matt 6:24).

1:9-11 A common theme throughout the letter is the contrast between rich and poor (Jas 2:5; 4:10, 13-16; 5:1-6). This reflects Jesus' teaching that worldly possessions can be an obstacle to being close to God (Luke

6:20-25; 12:16-21; 16:19-31). *Brothers and sisters who are poor... high status*: Those who live in poverty should rejoice in their new status as Jesus' followers. Those who are wealthy should rejoice not in their possessions but in their new status with God.

1:10 *die off like wildflowers*: See Job 14:2; Isaiah 40:6-7.

1:11 *will waste away*: See James 4:14; 1 Peter 1:24.

1:13 "God is tempting me!": God is not the source of evil but the source of all that's good (see Jas 1:16-17). God isn't tempted by evil because God is the all-holy one.

1:14-15 The consequence of evil desires is compared to the process of giving birth: Cravings lead to sin, and sin matures and results in death. Here are the three stages of sin: evil desires, sin, and death (see 2 Sam 11:2-17).

1:14 *their own cravings*: Temptation comes from within, where everyone's own evil desires entice them.

1:17 All good things come as gifts from God. *Father, the creator of the heavenly lights*: creator of the sun, moon, and stars (Gen 1:3, 14-19). Light from these heavenly bodies changes, but God's love for humanity is always constant.

1:18 *first crop from the harvest*: The Israelites offered the first parts of their harvest (called "firstfruits") to God (Lev 23:9-14); *first* implies that many more will follow. In a similar way, the first followers of Jesus are the first of a new creation.

1:19 Prv 10:19,  
Prv 13:3,  
Prv 16:32;  
Ecc 5:1; Ecc 7:9

1:20 Mt 5:22  
1:21 Eph 1:13,  
Eph 4:22,  
Jas 3:13; 1Pt 2:1

1:22 Mt 7:21,  
Mt 7:24,  
Jn 13:17;  
Ro 2:13; Jas 2:14

1:23 1Co 13:12  
1:24 Jas 1:23  
1:25 Jn 8:32,  
Jn 13:17; Jas 2:12

1:26 Ps 34:13,  
Ps 39:1, Ps 141:3;  
Jas 3:2; 1Pt 3:10

1:27 Dt 14:29;  
Job 31:16;  
Is 1:17; Mt 25:36;  
Jas 4:4

2:1 Prv 24:23;  
1Co 2:8; Jas 2:9  
2:2 Zec 3:3;  
Lk 23:11

2:4 Jn 7:24  
2:5 Job 34:19;  
Mt 5:3; Mt 25:34;  
Lk 6:20; Jas 1:12

2:6 Ac 16:19;  
Jas 5:4; Jas 5:6  
2:7 Ac 11:26  
2:8 Lv 19:18;  
Mt 22:39;  
Ga 5:14

2:9 Jas 2:1

### Welcoming and doing the word

<sup>19</sup>Know this, my dear brothers and sisters: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to grow angry. <sup>20</sup>This is because an angry person doesn't produce God's righteousness. <sup>21</sup>Therefore, with humility, set aside all moral filth and the growth of wickedness, and welcome the word planted deep inside you—the very word that is able to save you.

<sup>22</sup>You must be doers of the word and not only hearers who mislead themselves. <sup>23</sup>Those who hear but don't do the word are like those who look at their faces in a mirror. <sup>24</sup>They look at themselves, walk away, and immediately forget what they were like. <sup>25</sup>But there are those who study the perfect law, the law of freedom, and continue to do it. They don't listen and then forget, but they put it into practice in their lives. They will be blessed in whatever they do.

<sup>26</sup>If those who claim devotion to God don't control what they say, they mislead themselves. Their devotion is worthless. <sup>27</sup>True devotion, the kind that is pure and faultless before God the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their difficulties and to keep the world from contaminating you.

### Don't show favoritism

**2**My brothers and sisters, when you show favoritism you deny the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been resurrected in glory. <sup>2</sup>Imagine two people coming into your meeting. One has a gold ring and fine clothes, while the other is poor, dressed in filthy rags. <sup>3</sup>Then suppose that you were to take special notice of the one wearing fine clothes, saying, "Here's an excellent place. Sit here." But to the poor person you say, "Stand over there"; or, "Here, sit at my feet." <sup>4</sup>Wouldn't you have shown favoritism among yourselves and become evil-minded judges?

<sup>5</sup>My dear brothers and sisters, listen! Hasn't God chosen those who are poor by worldly standards to be rich in terms of faith? Hasn't God chosen the poor as heirs of the kingdom he has promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup>But you have dishonored the poor. Don't the wealthy make life difficult for you? Aren't they the ones who drag you into court? <sup>7</sup>Aren't they the ones who insult the good name spoken over you at your baptism?

<sup>8</sup>You do well when you really fulfill the royal law found in scripture, *Love your neighbor as yourself.* <sup>9</sup>But when you show favoritism, you are committing a sin, and by that same

\*Lev 19:18

1:19-25 *quick to listen*: James urges his audience to hear the gospel message, accept it, and act on it—to remove from one's whole being or mind what opposes God.

1:21 *word planted deep inside*: This is the gospel planted in the hearts of believers when they are reborn as God's creatures. It leads to salvation.

1:25 *perfect law*: The Law of Moses (see Ps 19:7) as fulfilled by Jesus (Matt 5:17; Rom 10:4) brings freedom.

1:27 *True devotion*: True dedication to and worship of God are demonstrated by actions. *orphans and widows* in the OT symbolize the most unfortunate members of society (see Exod 22:22-24). *the world*: This is not the beautiful world of nature but the world of human beings who have rejected God.

2:1 *the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ*: not our faith in Jesus but the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to the will of the Father. Jesus' whole life and death on the cross witness to his faithfulness to the Father's will. *who has been resurrected in glory*: The Father raised Jesus to life in response to Jesus' obedience to the Father throughout his life and his death. Paul's hymn in Philippians 2:6-11 follows the same thought: Faithfulness/obedience leads to resurrected life. *glory* is a traditional NT way of referring to Jesus' resurrection (see Luke 24:26; John 17:5; Phil 2:11; 3:21; 1 Pet 1:11). *when you show favoritism*: Acts of favoritism, or discrimination, against others must be avoided.

The faithfulness of Jesus to his Father's will is an example for all believers to follow. The faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ is shown in his obedience to the Father's will. This obedience led to the Father's raising Jesus from the dead. Christians are called to imitate Jesus' faithfulness in their lives.

2:2 *your meeting*: The reference here is to a meeting in a synagogue.

2:4 When believers show favoritism to the rich, they discriminate against the poor. They act like judges who judge according to their own prejudices and interests, not according to God's Law.

2:5-13 Three reasons to avoid discriminating against the poor are: (1) God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith (2:5); (2) discrimination goes against the law of love (2:8); and (3) those who show mercy have no need to be afraid of judgment (see Matt 25:31-46).

2:5 *Hasn't God chosen those who are poor by worldly standards*: The poor are those whom God has specially chosen, but the world judges them as worthless (see 1 Cor 1:27-28). *heirs of the kingdom*: God's rule in the life of the believer begins with new birth (Jas 1:18) and is fulfilled in the future (see Matt 25:34). Jesus makes the same promise in Matthew 5:3.

2:8 *royal law*: This is the law of love of neighbor (see Lev 19:18). When Jesus preached God's kingdom, he taught

law you are exposed as a lawbreaker. <sup>10</sup>Anyone who tries to keep all of the Law but fails at one point is guilty of failing to keep all of it. <sup>11</sup>The one who said, *Don't commit adultery*, also said, *Don't commit murder*.<sup>b</sup> So if you don't commit adultery but do commit murder, you are a lawbreaker. <sup>12</sup>In every way, then, speak and act as people who will be judged by the law of freedom. <sup>13</sup>There will be no mercy in judgment for anyone who hasn't shown mercy. Mercy overrules judgment.

**Showing faith**

<sup>14</sup>My brothers and sisters, what good is it if people say they have faith but do nothing to show it? Claiming to have faith can't save anyone, can it? <sup>15</sup>Imagine a brother or sister who is naked and never has enough food to eat. <sup>16</sup>What if one of you said, "Go in peace! Stay warm! Have a nice meal!"? What good is it if you don't actually give them what their body needs? <sup>17</sup>In the same way, faith is dead when it doesn't result in faithful activity.

<sup>18</sup>Someone might claim, "You have faith and I have action." But how can I see your faith apart from your actions? Instead, I'll show you my faith by putting it into practice in faithful action. <sup>19</sup>It's good that you believe that God is one. Ha! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble with fear. <sup>20</sup>Are you so slow? Do you need to be shown that faith without actions has no value at all? <sup>21</sup>What about Abraham, our father? Wasn't he shown to be righteous through his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup>See, his faith was at work along with his actions. In fact, his faith was made complete by his faithful actions. <sup>23</sup>So the scripture was fulfilled that says, *Abraham believed God, and God regarded him as righteous*.<sup>c</sup> What is more, Abraham was called God's friend. <sup>24</sup>So you see that a person is shown to be righteous through faithful actions and not through faith alone. <sup>25</sup>In the same way, wasn't Rahab the prostitute shown to be righteous when she received the messengers as her guests and then sent them on by another road? <sup>26</sup>As the lifeless body is dead, so faith without actions is dead.

*Faith and Works* Some have argued that James' teaching contradicts Paul's teaching. However, Paul and James have different concerns. For Paul, works of the Jewish Law do not lead to faith and justification. Such a view would deny the importance of Jesus Christ, who alone attained our salvation (Gal 2:15-16). Paul does not deny the need for believers, once they have the gift of faith, to express their faith by doing good deeds (e.g., Rom 2:6; Phil 1:21-22; Eph 4:12). James is concerned that faith be alive by responding with good deeds (Jas 2:14-26). In fact, he expresses what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, "Not everybody who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will get into the kingdom of heaven. Only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter" (Matt 7:21).

2:10 Dt 17:26; Mt 5:19; Ga 3:10; Ga 5:3; Jas 3:2  
 2:11 Ex 20:13; Ex 20:14; Dt 5:17; Dt 5:18  
 2:12 Jas 1:25  
 2:13 Prv 21:13; Mt 5:7; Mt 6:15; Mt 18:32  
 2:14 Mt 7:21; Mt 7:26; Jas 1:22  
 2:15 Mt 25:35; Mt 25:36; Lk 3:11  
 2:16 1Jn 3:17  
 2:17 Ga 5:6; Jas 2:20; Jas 2:26  
 2:18 Mt 7:17; Ro 3:28; Ga 5:6; Heb 11:33; Jas 3:13  
 2:19 Dt 6:4; Mt 8:29; Mk 12:29; Lk 4:34  
 2:20 Jas 2:17; Jas 2:26  
 2:21 Gn 22:9; Gn 22:12; Heb 11:17  
 2:22 Heb 11:17  
 2:23 Gn 15:6; 2Ch 20:7; Is 41:8; Ro 4:3; Ga 3:6  
 2:25 Josh 2:1; Josh 6:17; Heb 11:31  
 2:26 Ecc 12:7; Ac 7:59; Jas 2:17; Jas 2:20

<sup>b</sup>Exod 20:13, 15 LXX (English: 20:13-14); Deut 5:17-18 <sup>c</sup>Gen 15:6

that this law embraced all the other OT instruction (see Matt 22:39-40; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27).  
 2:10-12 *fails at one point is guilty of failing to keep all of it*: The law expresses God's will. To break one law is to go against God's will; in this way a person breaks every law.  
 2:11 *adultery... murder*: These two laws are part of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:13, 14). James follows the sequence *adultery... murder*, which comes from the Greek translation of the OT. The sequence in the Hebrew Bible is *murder... adultery*.  
 2:12 *judged*: God's judgment will be carried out according to the law of freedom (see Jas 1:25; 2:8), which is the law of love.  
 2:13 *Mercy overrules judgment*: Jesus taught that a person who shows mercy shares in God's own mercy and includes forgiveness for all who wrong us (Matt 5:7; 6:12, 14-15; 18:21-35).  
 2:14-26 James addresses the relationship between faith and good works. He argues that for faith to be alive, it has to be expressed in good works.

2:19 *God is one*: This is the Jewish profession of faith known as the Shema Israel: "Israel, listen!" (Deut 6:4).  
 2:21 *Wasn't he shown to be righteous through his actions*: James states clearly that righteous actions point to genuine faith, not that they lead to faith and give salvation.  
 2:23 *Abraham believed God, and God regarded him as righteous*: James quotes Genesis 15:6 (see Rom 4:23). Abraham's faithful act takes place before he offers his son Isaac on the altar. Abraham's willingness to offer his son was proof of his genuine faith in God. *God's friend*: Abraham's relationship with God shows his closeness to God (see also 2 Chron 20:7). This description of Abraham is significant because in James 4:4 James demands that believers make a choice between friendship with God and "friendship with the world."  
 2:25 *Rahab the prostitute*: She helped the Israelite spies escape safely (Josh 2:1-21). James praises her faith, which was shown in her deeds of hospitality (see Heb 11:31).

3:1 Mt 23:8;  
Ro 2:21  
3:2 1Ks 8:46;  
Ecc 7:20;  
Mt 12:37;  
Jas 1:26; 1Jn 1:8

3:4 Ac 27:14

3:5 Ps 12:3;  
Ps 73:8

3:6 Prv 16:27;  
Mt 5:22;  
Mt 15:11

3:7 Gn 1:26;  
Gn 9:2

3:8 Ps 140:3;  
Ecc 10:11;  
Ro 3:13

3:9 Gn 1:26;  
Gn 1:27; Gn 5:1;  
1Co 11:7

3:10 Ro 12:14

3:13 Jas 1:21;  
Jas 2:18;  
1Pt 2:12

3:14 Ro 13:13;  
2Co 12:20;  
Phi 2:3; Jas 3:16

3:15 1Co 2:6;  
1Ti 4:1; Jas 1:17

3:16 Ac 19:29;  
1Co 14:33;  
2Co 12:20;  
Ga 5:20; Jas 3:14

3:17 1k 6:36;  
Ro 12:9; Ti 3:2;  
Heb 12:11;  
Jas 1:17

4:1 Ro 7:23;  
1Pt 2:11

4:3 Ps 18:41;  
Ps 66:18;

1Jn 3:22;  
1Jn 5:14

4:4 Jn 15:19;  
Ro 8:7; 1Jn 2:15

### Taming the tongue

**3** My brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers, because we know that we teachers will be judged more strictly. <sup>2</sup>We all make mistakes often, but those who don't make mistakes with their words have reached full maturity. Like a bridled horse, they can control themselves entirely. <sup>3</sup>When we bridle horses and put bits in their mouths to lead them wherever we want, we can control their whole bodies.

<sup>4</sup>Consider ships: they are so large that strong winds are needed to drive them. But pilots direct their ships wherever they want with a little rudder. <sup>5</sup>In the same way, even though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts wildly.

Think about this: a small flame can set a whole forest on fire. <sup>6</sup>The tongue is a small flame of fire, a world of evil at work in us. It contaminates our entire lives. Because of it, the circle of life is set on fire. The tongue itself is set on fire by the flames of hell.

<sup>7</sup>People can tame and already have tamed every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish. <sup>8</sup>No one can tame the tongue, though. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup>With it we both bless the Lord and Father and curse human beings made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup>Blessing and cursing come from the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, it just shouldn't be this way!

<sup>11</sup>Both fresh water and salt water don't come from the same spring, do they? <sup>12</sup>My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree produce olives? Can a grapevine produce figs? Of course not, and fresh water doesn't flow from a saltwater spring either.

### Wisdom from above

<sup>13</sup>Are any of you wise and understanding? Show that your actions are good with a humble lifestyle that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup>However, if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, then stop bragging and living in ways that deny the truth. <sup>15</sup>This is not the wisdom that comes down from above. Instead, it is from the earth, natural and demonic.

<sup>16</sup>Wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and everything that is evil. <sup>17</sup>What of the wisdom from above? First, it is pure, and then peaceful, gentle, obedient, filled with mercy and good actions, fair, and genuine. <sup>18</sup>Those who make peace sow the seeds of justice by their peaceful acts.

### Conflict with people and God

**4** What is the source of conflict among you? What is the source of your disputes? Don't they come from your cravings that are at war in your own lives? <sup>2</sup>You long for something you don't have, so you commit murder. You are jealous for something you can't get, so you struggle and fight. You don't have because you don't ask. <sup>3</sup>You ask and don't have because you ask with evil intentions, to waste it on your own cravings.

<sup>4</sup>You unfaithful people! Don't you know that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? <sup>5</sup>Or do you suppose that scripture is meaningless? Doesn't God long for our

3:1-12 James considers the responsibility of the role of teacher in the church.

3:1 *we teachers will be judged more strictly*: In the early church the teacher held an important ministry (e.g., Acts 13:1; 1 Cor 12:29; Eph 4:11). Because teachers influence others, especially in their understanding of their faith, they have a serious responsibility to teach the truth.

3:6 *a world of evil*: The tongue brings the *world of evil* into our bodies. *circle of life*: The tongue's destructive power is such that it affects the whole of life, from the cradle to the grave. *set on fire by the flames of hell*: Evil ultimately comes from hell, which specifically implies the devil.

3:9 *God's likeness*: Human beings are created in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27). The basis for not cursing another person is because they are in God's image and likeness. To curse a human being is, in effect, to curse God (Gen 9:6).

3:13-18 The qualities of a wise person (described in 3:17-18; see Gal 5:22-23) come *from above*. Contrasted to these qualities are those of earthly wisdom (described in 3:14-16; see 2 Cor 12:20).

3:18 *the seeds of justice*: Moral action is described in agricultural terms (sowing and reaping; see Prov 22:8; 1 Cor

9:11; Gal 6:7-8). Justice is the outcome of the actions of those who make peace. This is a reminder of Jesus' saying "Happy are people who make peace, because they will be called God's children" (Matt 5:9).

4:1-10 The theme of this section centers on jealousy. James' reference to conflicts and wars (4:1) is characteristic of this type of theme. James doesn't say that wars and conflicts have occurred in his community; rather, he's using a rhetorical device to draw attention to the consequences of jealousy.

4:2 Murder, wars, and conflicts originate in jealousy and envy.

4:4 This is the heart of James' letter. The readers are given a choice: friendship with God or *friendship with the world*. The person with divided loyalty, who desires friendship with both God and the world, is "double-minded" (Jas 1:8). *You unfaithful people!*: refers to spiritual unfaithfulness. The bond of marriage is a common biblical image for the covenant between God and God's people (see Hosea). Breaking the covenant with God is similar to being an unfaithful spouse.

4:5 James cites two scriptural passages to illustrate what he has said. The first is a verse we cannot identify. Perhaps

faithfulness in<sup>d</sup> the life he has given to us?<sup>e</sup> <sup>6</sup>But he gives us more grace. This is why it says, *God stands against the proud, but favors the humble.*<sup>f</sup> <sup>7</sup>Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will run away from you. <sup>8</sup>Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup>Cry out in sorrow, mourn, and weep! Let your laughter become mourning and your joy become sadness. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

<sup>11</sup>Brothers and sisters, don't say evil things about each other. Whoever insults or criticizes a brother or sister insults and criticizes the Law. If you find fault with the Law, you are not a doer of the Law but a judge over it. <sup>12</sup>There is only one lawgiver and judge, and he is able to save and to destroy. But you who judge your neighbor, who are you?

**Warning the proud and wealthy**

<sup>13</sup>Pay attention, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such-and-such a town. We will stay there a year, buying and selling, and making a profit." <sup>14</sup>You don't really know about tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for only a short while before it vanishes. <sup>15</sup>Here's what you ought to say: "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." <sup>16</sup>But now you boast and brag, and all such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup>It is a sin when someone knows the right thing to do and doesn't do it.

**5** <sup>2</sup>Pay attention, you wealthy people! Weep and moan over the miseries coming upon you. <sup>3</sup>Your riches have rotted. Moths have destroyed your clothes. <sup>4</sup>Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you. It will eat your flesh like fire. Consider the treasure you have hoarded in the last days. <sup>5</sup>Listen! Hear the cries of the wages of your field hands. These are the wages you stole from those who harvested your fields. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of heavenly forces. <sup>6</sup>You have lived a self-satisfying life on this earth, a life of luxury. You have stuffed your hearts in preparation for the day of slaughter. <sup>7</sup>You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who doesn't oppose you.

**Courageous patience**

<sup>7</sup>Therefore, brothers and sisters, you must be patient as you wait for the coming of the Lord. Consider the farmer who waits patiently for the coming of rain in the fall and

4:6 Ps 138:6; Prv 3:34; Mt 23:12; 1Pt 5:5  
 4:7 Eph 4:27; Eph 6:11; 1Pt 5:8; 1Pt 5:9  
 4:8 Is 1:16; Jer 4:14; Zec 1:3; Heb 7:19; Jas 1:8  
 4:9 Prv 14:13; Ecc 7:26; Lk 6:25  
 4:11 Mt 7:1; Ro 2:13; 2Co 12:20; Jas 1:22; 1Pt 2:1  
 4:12 Is 33:22; Mt 7:1; Mt 10:28; Ro 14:4; Jas 5:9  
 4:13 Prv 27:1; Lk 12:18  
 4:14 Job 7:7; Ps 102:3; Ps 144:4  
 4:15 Prv 19:21; Ac 18:21; 1Co 4:19; 1Co 16:7  
 4:16 Ps 52:1; Prv 25:14; Prv 27:1; 1Co 5:6  
 4:17 Lk 12:47; Lk 12:48; Jn 9:41; 2Pt 2:21  
 5:1 Is 13:6; Lk 6:24; 1Ti 6:9  
 5:2 Job 13:28; Is 50:9; Mt 6:19; Mt 6:20  
 5:3 Jas 5:8  
 5:4 Lv 19:13; Dt 24:15; Jer 22:13; Mal 3:5; Ro 9:29  
 5:5 Jer 12:3; Lk 16:19; 1Ti 5:6

<sup>d</sup>Or *jealously longs for* <sup>e</sup>Or *Doesn't the spirit that God placed in us have jealous desires?* <sup>f</sup>Prov 3:34

it refers to Exodus 20:5: "because I, the LORD your God, am a passionate God." If so, then James is probably quoting it from memory. God desires intensely the fidelity of God's people.

4:6 The second scriptural passage echoes Proverbs 3:34, "He mocks mockers, but he shows favor to the humble." The spirit of humility is the opposite of the spirit of jealousy and envy.

4:7-10 A remedy for this jealousy: *submit to God. Resist the devil... Come near to God... Wash your hands... Purify your hearts.* Psalm 24:4 speaks of "clean hands and a pure heart." This phrase draws attention to both thoughts and actions.

4:11 *insults or criticizes a brother or sister insults and criticizes the Law:* The action of speaking evil of another is at the heart of condemning another and thus is a condemnation of the law of love.

4:12 *one lawgiver and judge:* The OT stresses the role of God as Judge. Human beings must be careful not to take over God's role.

4:13-5:6 This section contains two warnings similar to those that the prophets of the OT used to utter against the evil nations of the world. Here James addresses traveling merchants and the rich.

4:13-17 The first warning is for merchants: Life is uncertain. We are totally dependent on God. James warns merchants about making plans without reference to God's will. He concludes with a proverb that implies responsibility for one's actions.

4:15 *If the Lord wills:* The condition for all our plans.

5:1-6 The second warning is for rich landowners. They have amassed their fortunes on the backs of workers.

5:1 *Weep and moan over the miseries coming upon you:* James isn't addressing the wealthy directly. He's exhorting his own community to remain faithful by showing what will happen to those wealthy people outside the community.

5:2-3 James attacks their wealth by showing that it has no value. He describes their future bad luck as already having taken place. Their clothes are damaged, and their gold and silver have been ruined.

5:4 *cries of the wages of your field hands:* the first of three accusations against the wealthy. They have defrauded the day laborer of his wages.

5:5 *a self-satisfying life:* The second accusation is that the wealthy have lived a life of self-indulgence and luxury (see Luke 16:19-31). *the day of slaughter:* the Judgment Day. The wealthy landowners are like cattle who continue to eat, unaware that their time of slaughter has arrived.

5:6 *condemned and murdered the righteous one:* The third accusation is not a reference to Jesus. (We have no tradition that the wealthy were responsible for Jesus' death.) It refers to the type of person the wealthy oppress and kill: the innocent, righteous person oppressed by the rich (as in Jas 5:4). This passage concludes the body of the letter.

5:7 *Therefore, brothers and sisters:* James ends with the theme of endurance, urging those being oppressed by

5:8 Ro 13:11;  
1Th 3:13; 1Pt 4:7  
5:9 Mt 24:33;  
Lk 4:5; Jas 4:11  
5:11 Ex 34:6;  
Job 1:21,  
Job 1:22,  
Job 2:10,  
Job 42:10  
5:12 Ex 20:7;  
Mt 5:34  
5:13 Ps 50:15;  
1Co 14:15;  
Eph 5:19;  
Col 3:16  
5:14 Mk 6:13,  
Mk 16:18;  
Ac 11:30; Ti 1:5  
5:15 Ps 103:3,  
Ps 130:4; Mt 9:2;  
Mk 2:5; Jas 1:6  
5:16 Gd 18:23;  
Mt 3:6; Jn 9:31;  
Ac 19:18  
5:17 1Ki 17:1;  
1Ki 18:1;  
Lk 4:25;  
Ac 14:15  
5:18 1Ki 18:41;  
1Ki 18:42,  
1Ki 18:45  
5:19 Dn 12:3;  
Mt 18:15; Ga 6:1;  
Jas 3:14; Jas 5:20  
5:20 Prv 10:12;  
Prv 11:30;  
Ro 11:14;  
Jas 5:19; 1Pt 4:8

spring, looking forward to the precious fruit of the earth. <sup>8</sup>You also must wait patiently, strengthening your resolve, because the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup>Don't complain about each other, brothers and sisters, so that you won't be judged. Look! The judge is standing at the door!

<sup>10</sup>Brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of patient resolve and steadfastness. <sup>11</sup>Look at how we honor those who have practiced endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job. And you have seen what the Lord has accomplished, for the Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

### Final instructions

<sup>12</sup>Most important, my brothers and sisters, never make a solemn pledge—neither by heaven nor earth, nor by anything else. Instead, speak with a simple “Yes” or “No,” or else you may fall under judgment.

<sup>13</sup>If any of you are suffering, they should pray. If any of you are happy, they should sing. <sup>14</sup>If any of you are sick, they should call for the elders of the church, and the elders should pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup>Prayer that comes from faith will heal the sick, for the Lord will restore them to health. And if they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup>For this reason, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous person is powerful in what it can achieve. <sup>17</sup>Elijah was a person just like us. When he earnestly prayed that it wouldn't rain, no rain fell for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup>He prayed again, God sent rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

<sup>19</sup>My brothers and sisters, if any of you wander from the truth and someone turns back the wanderer, <sup>20</sup>recognize that whoever brings a sinner back from the wrong path will save them from death and will bring about the forgiveness of many sins.

the wealthy to have patience while awaiting the Lord's return. *coming of rain in the fall and spring:* In Israel the fall rains come in October and November, just after the fields have been sown. The spring rains come in March and April, just before the harvest (see Deut 11:14; Jer 5:24).

5:8 *the coming of the Lord is near:* The expectation is that the Lord's return at the end of time is coming at any moment. This is supported by James 5:9: “The judge is standing at the door!”

5:10 *take the prophets . . . as an example of patient resolve and steadfastness:* James stresses the patient endurance of the prophets, not their suffering. They remained faithful to the Lord.

5:11 *the endurance of Job:* another example of endurance. Job is not patient (Job 3; 12:1-3; 16:1-3; 21:4), but he did endure (Job 1:20-22). James challenges his readers to be like Job, to lead lives of endurance when faced with suffering. This is the only place in the NT that Job is mentioned.

5:12 This is a call to avoid making pledges because of the way they have been abused. *neither by heaven nor earth:* These words would have been used intentionally to avoid making the pledge binding as well as to avoid pronouncing God's name. Jesus teaches in a similar way about avoiding pledges (Matt 5:33-37).

5:14 *elders:* a leadership role in the community (e.g., Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Tim 5:17-19; Titus 1:5-6). Elders derive from the heads of households in the Jewish and Greek worlds. They are to pray over the sick,

*Jesus in the Letter of James* The letter of James refers directly to the name of Jesus only twice (Jas 1:1; 2:1). There are also a few implied references to Jesus when the term “Lord” is used (Jas 2:1; 5:14-15). However, the letter's thought and expression show a distinct closeness to the thought and sayings of Jesus, especially as found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7). James' allusions to the sayings of Jesus, as well as his use of quotations from the OT, show that they form the foundation for his teaching. He has rephrased them in his own way to speak to his community; they are essential to his argument.

*anointing them with oil,* which was used for healing (see Isa 1:6; Luke 10:34). In Mark 6:7 Jesus sent “the Twelve” out on a mission; by anointing with oil, they cured those who were sick. *in the name of the Lord:* calling on the Lord Jesus to heal those who are sick.

5:15 The result of praying is that the sick person is restored to complete health.

5:17 *Elijah . . . prayed:* Elijah was a prophet of Israel; his miracles took place as a result of his earnest prayer (1 Kgs 18:36-37). *three and a half years:* Half of seven, which symbolized completeness and perfection (see Luke 4:25). Three and a half years represents a period of limited judgment, suffering, and evil. Sometimes this period is also referred to as “for a period of time, periods of time, and half a period of time” (Dan 7:25; see Dan 12:7; Rev 11:2; 12:14).

5:19-20 The conclusion differs from the way Paul ends his letters but is similar to those of 1 John 5:16-20 and Jude 22-23. The endings of all three letters—James, 1 John, and Jude—call on the community to pray for those who sin so that they will change their evil ways. *bring about the forgiveness of many sins:* or, “will cover over a multitude of sins.” This phrase reflects Proverbs 10:12: “Hate stirs up conflict, but love covers all offenses.” 1 Peter 4:8 has a similar phrase: “love brings about the forgiveness of many sins.” The CEB translation here gives the full meaning: God will forgive the sins of one who wanders from the truth. The letter ends by professing belief in God's work of salvation.



# 1 PETER

1 Peter is a letter written to encourage Gentile Christians to embrace their identity as Christ-followers. The author wants his audience to understand who they are in relationship to the OT people of God, and he wants them to remain faithful to Christ in the face of pressures to conform to the larger world's social and religious values.

The author of the letter identifies himself as the apostle Peter (1 Pet 1:1), "a witness of Christ's sufferings" (1 Pet 5:1). Whether the letter was written by Peter or a later Christian in Peter's name is debated. If the apostle Peter wrote the letter, it would date from sometime in the 60s CE, since early church tradition dates Peter's death around 65.

The letter is addressed to "God's chosen strangers in the world of the diaspora, who live in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Pet 1:1). These regions are located in the northern part of 1st-century Asia Minor

(modern-day Turkey). The term "diaspora" referred to Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean world, including numerous Jewish communities in Asia Minor. This doesn't mean 1 Peter was written primarily to Jews, though. Throughout the letter images and language from the Jewish scriptures are used to identify the letter's *Gentile* audience as God's people in line with Israel. The primarily Gentile make-up of the audience is especially clear when Peter refers to the emptiness and idols of their former lives (1 Pet 1:14, 18; 2:10; 4:3-4).

Telling its readers *You will be holy* (1 Pet 1:16) and *you are... a royal priesthood* (1 Pet 2:9), the letter alludes to key scriptures (Lev 19:2; Exod 19:5-6) to encourage its Gentile audience to find their identity in the OT story of God's people, Israel. The letter also uses words like "chosen strangers" (1 Pet 1:1) and "immigrants" (1 Pet 2:11; see 1 Pet 1:17; Gen 15:13; 23:4) to tell the audience who they are. Peter affirms his



Building in Sepphoris, Galilee, with a Roman sarcophagus for a cornerstone (1 Pet 2:6)

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audience's identity as God's chosen people living as strangers in their current context.

According to 1 Peter, God's people live in tension. They are to live "honorably" (1 Pet 2:12) in the larger world, but they are to live distinctly as those who follow Jesus Christ. This is illustrated most vividly by the presence of a household code as the central portion of the letter (1 Pet 2:13–3:7). This code is traditional since, throughout the Roman world, paragraphs like these told everyone in a household—parents, children, slaves, masters, husbands, wives—what their roles were supposed to be. The household code in 1 Peter is similar to those but also different. In fact, at key points it violates standard expectations. For example, the basis for behaviors rests on the believer's relationship with God in Christ (1 Pet 2:13, 21–25; 3:4). Additionally, in the larger world we might have expected that the Christian wives of unbelieving husbands would have been encouraged to

worship the gods of their husbands. In 1 Peter, though, these wives are encouraged to relate to their husbands in ways that might result in their coming to faith in Jesus (1 Pet 3:1). This is one of the clearest statements of mission in the entire letter of 1 Peter. It illustrates the tension between living honorably in society and living distinctively for Christ.

Central themes of 1 Peter include (1) living honorably and ethically in spite of hostility from unbelievers, especially verbal hostility (1 Pet 1:14–17; 2:11–12, 20; 3:2, 8–10, 12, 13–17; 4:14–16); (2) the return of Jesus as a basis for Christian hope (1 Pet 1:3, 7, 13, 21; 3:5, 15; 4:13, 17; 5:4); and (3) the continuity between the audience of primarily Gentile believers and the Israel of old (1 Pet 1:2, 10–12, 16; 2:4–10; 3:6, 8–12). In addition, when Peter turns to how the believing community should live in relation to one another (1 Pet 1:22–25; 4:7–11), he emphasizes the importance of love and unity.

## I. Introduction (1:1–12)

- A. Greeting (1:1–2)
- B. Thanksgiving and hope in suffering (1:3–12)

## II. Living Distinctly in Spite of Suffering (1:13–5:11)

- A. Right behavior and identity (1:13–2:10)
  - 1. Living in hope, holiness, love, and maturity (1:13–2:3)
  - 2. Living as God's chosen people (2:4–10)
- B. Right behavior in society and household (2:11–4:11)
  - 1. Good behavior as testimony (2:11–12)
  - 2. Submission to emperor and governors (2:13–17)
  - 3. Submission to masters (2:18–25)
  - 4. Submission to husbands (3:1–6)

- 5. Responsibility to wives (3:7)

- 6. Call to give blessing in spite of opposition (3:8–22)

- 7. Right behavior among unbelievers (4:1–6)

- 8. Right behavior in the believing community (4:7–11)

## C. Concluding words of encouragement (4:12–5:11)

- 1. Summary: Joy and trust in suffering (4:12–19)
- 2. Call to elders to lead by example (5:1–4)
- 3. Call to community to humility (5:5)
- 4. Call to trust God in suffering (5:6–11)

## III. Closing Greetings (5:12–14)

## Greeting

**1** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To God's chosen strangers in the world of the diaspora, who live in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

**2** God the Father chose you because of what he knew beforehand. He chose you through the Holy Spirit's work of making you holy and because of the faithful obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

May God's grace and peace be multiplied to you.

## Thanksgiving

**3** May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be blessed! On account of his vast mercy, he has given us new birth. You have been born anew into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. **4** You have a pure and enduring inheritance that cannot perish—an inheritance that is presently kept safe in heaven for you. **5** Through his faithfulness, you are guarded by God's power so that you can receive the salvation he is ready to reveal in the last time.

**6** You now rejoice in this hope, even if it's necessary for you to be distressed for a short time by various trials. **7** This is necessary so that your faith may be found genuine. (Your faith is more valuable than gold, which will be destroyed even though it is itself tested by fire.) Your genuine faith will result in praise, glory, and honor for you when Jesus Christ is revealed. **8** Although you've never seen him, you love him. Even though you don't see him now, you trust him and so rejoice with a glorious joy that is too much for words. **9** You are receiving the goal of your faith: your salvation.

**10** The prophets, who long ago foretold the grace that you've received, searched and explored, inquiring carefully about this salvation. **11** They wondered what the Spirit of Christ within them was saying when he bore witness beforehand about the suffering that would happen to Christ and the glory that would follow. They wondered what sort of person or what sort of time they were speaking about. **12** It was revealed to them that in their search they were not serving themselves but you. These things, which even angels long to examine, have now been proclaimed to you by those who brought you the good news. They did this in the power of the Holy Spirit, who was sent from heaven.

## Response of obedience

**13** Therefore, once you have your minds ready for action and you are thinking clearly, place your hope completely on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed. **14** Don't be conformed to your former desires, those that shaped you when you were ignorant. But, as obedient children, **15** you must be holy in every aspect of your lives, just as the one who called you is holy. **16** It is written, *You will be holy, because I am holy.* **17** Since you

<sup>a</sup>Lev 19:2

**1:1 diaspora:** a word used by Jews in the 1st century to describe their fellow Jews who were scattered across the Mediterranean world. While this might suggest that the audience is Jewish, other clues in the letter point to a primarily Gentile audience, invited to understand themselves as deeply connected to Israel's story.

**1:3** The theme of hope is introduced here and will reappear throughout the first chapter (1 Pet 1:6, 13, 21; 3:15). Peter refers to a *living hope* that comes from Christ's resurrection. **1:5** *the last time:* Peter points ahead to the final day when God makes all things right at Jesus' return (see 1 Pet 1:13; 2:12).

**1:6** *trials:* Peter's audience is experiencing opposition in the form of verbal attacks. Those outside the church interpret their behavior as immoral; this is because obeying Christ leads believers to behave in ways that seem strange and undermine social expectations (1 Pet 2:11-12; 4:3-4). In the face of this opposition, their behavior needs to be exemplary and honorable (1 Pet 3:13-17; 4:12-16).

**1:10-12** Not only did the OT prophets point ahead to the

suffering and glory of Christ, they were also guided by the Spirit of Christ to write about the time of God's final restoration. Present suffering doesn't contradict hope in God's restoration.

**1:13-2:4** Peter begins the body of the letter with five words of encouragement (1 Pet 1:13, 15, 17, 22; 2:2): Christians are to (1) *hope* in final-day grace, (2) be *holy*, (3) live reverently (*reverence*) in the present time, (4) *love* one another, and (5) *desire* what will make them grow into salvation.

**1:13** Peter again encourages his audience to hope (see 1 Pet 1:3). They are to hope in the grace to be received at the final day when Jesus is revealed. This hope has an active quality; it depends on a prepared mind and clear thinking.

**1:15-16** *You will be holy.* The quotation of Leviticus 19:2 shows Peter's Gentile audience that they are to find their identity in the OT story of Israel. God's call to Israel to be distinctive and set apart is the same call God has given these Christians in Asia Minor.

**1:17** The identity of Christians as God's "chosen strangers"

**1:1** Ac 2:9;  
Ac 16:6; Ac 16:7;  
Jas 1:1; 2Pt 1:1

**1:2** Ro 1:7;  
Ro 8:29;  
2Co 13:14;  
Heb 12:24;  
2Pt 1:2

**1:3** 1Co 15:20;  
2Co 1:3;  
Eph 1:3;  
1Pt 1:23;  
1Pt 3:21

**1:4** Ac 20:32;  
Col 1:5; 2Ti 4:8;  
1Pt 5:4

**1:5** Eph 2:8;  
Jud 1:24

**1:6** Jas 1:2;  
1Pt 1:7;  
1Pt 4:12;  
1Pt 4:13;  
1Pt 5:10

**1:7** Job 23:10;  
Ps 66:10;  
Zec 13:9; Jas 1:3;  
1Pt 1:13

**1:8** Jn 20:29  
**1:9** Ro 6:22;  
Jas 1:21

**1:10** Mt 13:17  
**1:11** Mt 26:24;  
Ro 8:9; 1Pt 3:18;  
2Pt 1:21

**1:12** Eph 3:10;  
1Ti 3:16

**1:13** Lk 12:35;  
1Th 5:6; 1Th 5:8;  
1Pt 4:7; 1Pt 5:8

**1:14** Ro 12:2;  
Eph 4:18;  
1Th 4:5; Ti 3:3;  
1Pt 4:2

**1:15** 1Th 4:7

**1:16** Lv 11:44;  
Lv 11:45; Lv 19:2;  
Lv 20:7

**1:17** Jer 3:19;  
Mt 6:9; Mt 16:27;  
2Co 7:1;  
Heb 12:28

1:18 1 Co 6:20;  
Eph 4:17; Ti 2:14  
1:19 Ex 12:5;  
Jn 1:29; Ac 20:28;  
Heb 9:14;  
Rev 5:9  
1:20 Mt 25:34;  
Eph 1:4;  
Heb 9:26;  
Rev 13:8  
1:21 Ac 2:24;  
Ro 4:24; Ro 10:9;  
Heb 2:9; 1 Pt 1:3  
1:22 Jn 13:34;  
Ro 12:9;  
Ro 12:10;  
1 Ti 1:5;  
Heb 13:1  
1:23 Jn 1:13;  
Heb 4:12;  
Jas 1:18; 1 Pt 1:3  
1:24 Ps 90:5;  
Is 40:6; Is 40:7;  
Jas 1:10; Jas 1:11  
1:25 Is 40:6;  
Is 40:8  
2:1 1 Co 5:8;  
Eph 4:22;  
Eph 4:31;  
Col 3:8; Jas 4:11  
2:2 1 Co 3:2,  
1 Co 14:20;  
Eph 4:15;  
Heb 5:12;  
Heb 5:13  
2:3 Ps 34:8;  
Heb 6:5  
2:4 1 Pt 2:7  
2:5 Is 61:6;  
Ro 12:1;  
Eph 2:20;  
Heb 3:6; Rev 1:6  
2:6 Is 28:16;  
Ro 9:33;  
Ro 10:11;  
Eph 2:20  
2:7 Ps 118:22  
2:8 Is 8:14;  
Ro 9:22;  
Ro 9:32; Ro 9:33;  
1 Co 1:23  
2:9 Ex 19:5;  
Ex 19:6; Dt 7:6;  
Dt 10:15;  
Ac 26:18  
2:10 Hos 1:10;  
Hos 2:23;  
Ro 9:25; Ro 9:26

call upon a Father who judges all people according to their actions without favoritism, you should conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your dwelling in a strange land. <sup>18</sup>Live in this way, knowing that you were not liberated by perishable things like silver or gold from the empty lifestyle you inherited from your ancestors. <sup>19</sup>Instead, you were liberated by the precious blood of Christ, like that of a flawless, spotless lamb. <sup>20</sup>Christ was chosen before the creation of the world, but was only revealed at the end of time. This was done for you, <sup>21</sup>who through Christ are faithful to the God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory. So now, your faith and hope should rest in God.

<sup>22</sup>As you set yourselves apart by your obedience to the truth so that you might have genuine affection for your fellow believers, love each other deeply and earnestly. <sup>23</sup>Do this because you have been given new birth—not from the type of seed that decays but from seed that doesn't. This seed is God's life-giving and enduring word.

<sup>24</sup>Thus,

*All human life on the earth is like grass,  
and all human glory is like a flower in a field.*

*The grass dries up and its flower falls off,*

*<sup>25</sup>but the Lord's word endures forever.<sup>b</sup>*

This is the word that was proclaimed to you as good news.

### Your identity as believers

**2** Therefore, get rid of all ill will and all deceit, pretense, envy, and slander. <sup>2</sup>Instead, like a newborn baby, desire the pure milk of the word. Nourished by it, you will grow into salvation, <sup>3</sup>since you have tasted that the Lord is good.

<sup>4</sup>Now you are coming to him as to a living stone. Even though this stone was rejected by humans, from God's perspective it is chosen, valuable. <sup>5</sup>You yourselves are being built like living stones into a spiritual temple. You are being made into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>Thus it is written in scripture, *Look! I am laying a cornerstone in Zion, chosen, valuable. The person who believes in him will never be shamed.<sup>c</sup>* <sup>7</sup>So God honors you who believe. For those who refuse to believe, though, the stone the builders tossed aside has become the capstone. <sup>8</sup>This is a stone that makes people stumble and a rock that makes them fall. Because they refuse to believe in the word, they stumble. Indeed, this is the end to which they were appointed. <sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God's own possession. You have become this people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light. <sup>10</sup>Once you weren't a people, but now you are God's people. Once you hadn't received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

<sup>b</sup>Isa 40:6-8 <sup>c</sup>Isa 28:16

(1 Pet 1:1) is emphasized with the reference to *the time of your dwelling in a strange land*. The present time is like being on a journey. It's a kind of homelessness. The final day of restoration will usher in the time when all creation will be restored. Then Christians will share in the secure dwelling God has for his people (see 2 Pet 3:13).

**1:18 empty lifestyle:** Peter's audience is primarily Gentiles. They are called to live holy lives rather than lives of waste. (It is unlikely that Peter would use the phrase "empty lifestyle" to refer to the former lives of the Jewish people.)

**1:19 spotless lamb:** Peter wants his audience to think about the Passover lamb from Exodus 12. The blood of the Christ is the basis for the liberation of believers, just as the blood of the Passover lamb was associated with Israel's liberation from slavery in Egypt (see 1 Pet 2:9 for other Exodus ties).

**1:22-23** Peter encourages a deep and earnest love for other believers. The basis for loving each other is twofold: they have been given new birth and they have set themselves apart by their obedience. New life, given by God (see 1 Pet 1:3), and obedience, which is the believers' response to God, produce active love within the church.

**1:24-25** Peter quotes Isaiah 40:6-8 to identify "God's life-giving and enduring word" (1 Pet 1:23) with the "word"

described by Isaiah that *endures forever*. In Isaiah this "word" is linked to the good news proclaimed about the return of God to Zion (Isa 40:9). In the same way, Peter defines the word of the Lord as the *good news* that has been proclaimed to his readers.

**2:2** Given 1 Peter 1:23-25, *the pure milk of the word* refers to the gospel message, which nourishes believers' growth into salvation.

**2:3** *tasted that the Lord is good:* an allusion to Psalm 34:8 ("Taste and see how good the Lord is"). Peter draws on a longer quotation from Psalm 34 in 1 Peter 3:10-12. The context of Psalm 34 fits the situation of 1 Peter well. In both, righteous persons are wrongly harassed, yet they're encouraged to remain faithful and full of hope.

**2:4-8** The author pictures Jesus as the *cornerstone* of a human temple, constructed of those who believe, who are themselves *living stones*. (A cornerstone determines the shape and strength of the building.) The purpose of this *spiritual temple* of believers is to *offer up spiritual sacrifices*. This is probably a reference to the exemplary way of life commended in the letter.

**2:9-10** Peter uses OT words and images to apply Israel's special identity to his Gentile audience. Israel is God's

*Life as strangers in the world*

<sup>11</sup>Dear friends, since you are immigrants and strangers in the world, I urge that you avoid worldly desires that wage war against your lives. <sup>12</sup>Live honorably among the unbelievers. Today, they defame you, as if you were doing evil. But in the day when God visits to judge they will glorify him, because they have observed your honorable deeds.

<sup>13</sup>For the sake of the Lord submit to every human institution. Do this whether it means submitting to the emperor as supreme ruler, <sup>14</sup>or to governors as those sent by the emperor. They are sent to punish those doing evil and to praise those doing good. <sup>15</sup>Submit to them because it's God's will that by doing good you will silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. <sup>16</sup>Do this as God's slaves, and yet also as free people, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil. <sup>17</sup>Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Have respectful fear of God. Honor the emperor.

<sup>18</sup>Household slaves, submit by accepting the authority of your masters with all respect. Do this not only to good and kind masters but also to those who are harsh. <sup>19</sup>Now, it is commendable if, because of one's understanding of God, someone should endure pain through suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup>But what praise comes from enduring patiently when you have sinned and are beaten for it? But if you endure steadfastly when you've done good and suffer for it, this is commendable before God.

<sup>21</sup>You were called to this kind of endurance, because Christ suffered on your behalf. He left you an example so that you might follow in his footsteps. <sup>22</sup>He committed no sin, nor did he ever speak in ways meant to deceive. <sup>23</sup>When he was insulted, he did not reply with insults. When he suffered, he did not threaten revenge. Instead, he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. <sup>24</sup>He carried in his own body on the cross the sins we committed. He did this so that we might live in righteousness, having nothing to do with sin. By his wounds you were healed. <sup>25</sup>Though you were like straying sheep, you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your lives.

2:11 Ro 13:14;  
Ga 5:16,  
Ga 5:24;  
Heb 11:13;  
Jas 4:1  
2:12 Is 10:3;  
Mt 5:16;  
Lk 19:44;  
Phi 2:15;  
1Pt 3:15  
2:13 Ro 13:1;  
Ti 3:1  
2:14 Ro 13:1,  
Ro 13:3, Ro 13:4;  
1Pt 2:13  
2:15 1Pt 2:12,  
1Pt 3:17  
2:16 Jn 8:32,  
Jn 15:22,  
Ro 6:22; Ga 5:13;  
Jas 1:25  
2:17 Prv 24:21;  
Ro 12:10,  
Ro 13:7;  
1Pt 1:22  
2:18 Eph 6:5;  
Col 3:22;  
Jas 3:17  
2:20 1Pt 3:17,  
1Pt 4:16  
2:21 Mt 11:29;  
Mt 16:24;  
Ac 14:22;  
1Pt 3:18, 1Pt 4:1  
2:22 Is 53:9;  
Jn 8:46;  
2Co 5:21;  
Heb 4:15;  
1Jn 3:5  
2:23 Is 53:7;  
Lk 23:46;  
Heb 12:3  
2:24 Is 53:4,  
Is 53:5, Is 53:11;  
Ro 6:2, Ro 6:11

*The Use of an Ancient Household Code in 1 Peter* Household codes regarding male headship over wives, children, and slaves were common among Greeks, Romans, and Jews of the ancient world. In this cultural setting, 1 Peter 2:13–3:7 would have been recognized as a version of a common way of teaching the importance of following social expectations for household relationships. Because Peter adapts this tradition in significant ways, this section of the letter also calls for a distinctive lifestyle based on loyalty to Jesus Christ.

We hear an emphasis on distinctiveness of lifestyle in a number of ways. First, ancient household codes typically addressed the male head of the house in his relationships with those over whom he exercised authority. In contrast, Peter directly addresses slaves and wives (1 Pet 2:18; 3:1). Second, there is an implied but clear assumption in 1 Peter 3:1–6 that the believing wife of an unbelieving husband should not worship her husband's gods, despite widespread pressure for her to do so (1 Pet 3:6). Instead, according to 1 Peter 3:1, wives are to witness to Jesus through their culturally appropriate submission and respectful conduct. Finally, although it would be expected for wives to show honor to their husbands, in 1 Peter the husband is also called to honor his wife. When it comes to blessings from God, she is his equal, his coheir (1 Pet 3:7).

*chosen race* (Isa 43:20), *royal priesthood* (Exod 19:6), *holy nation* (Exod 19:6), and *a people who are God's own possession* (Exod 19:5). The same can now be said of these believers in Jesus. Peter invokes Hosea 2:23 to show that Gentiles are now a part of God's chosen people.

2:11–12 The letter shifts to focus attention on the relationship of believers to society. Neighbors who are unbelievers are speaking against the behavior of these Christians. What is good has been judged to be immoral. The household code that follows (1 Pet 2:13–3:7; see intro.) encourages loyalty to key social values while also pressing for obedience to Christ and formation in Christ (see sidebar, "The Use of an Ancient Household Code in 1 Peter").

2:13–17 The first section of the household code calls for submission to the emperor (Caesar) and regional governors. Submission to the state and submission within the household were closely related in the ancient world. For

example, disobeying one's master called into question one's obedience to the state. Early Christians sometimes faced charges like these (e.g., Acts 16:16–24), just as Jesus had (e.g., Luke 23:1–5). What's surprising is that Peter calls on his audience to *Honor the emperor* and to *Honor everyone* (1 Pet 2:17). This puts the emperor on the same level as everyone else.

2:18–25 The second section of the household code addresses *Household slaves*. Their submission comes from their awareness of God (1 Pet 2:19) and is expected whether their master is kind or harsh, a believer or an unbeliever (see 1 Pet 3:1). The basis for their obedience in the face of wrongful suffering is drawn from Christ's example (1 Pet 2:21–25). Even if a slave has a cruel master, Peter focuses on the care that they now experience from God in Christ, who is *the shepherd and guardian* of their lives.

2:22–25 Isaiah 53, especially Isaiah 53:4–9, informs these

3:1 Gn 3:16;  
1Co 7:16,  
1Co 9:19;  
Eph 5:22;  
Col 3:18

3:2 Eph 6:5;  
1Pt 2:12, 1Pt 3:1,  
1Pt 3:15

3:3 Ex 33:4;  
Is 3:18; 1Ti 2:9,  
1Ti 2:10

3:4 Ro 7:22

3:5 1Ti 5:5

3:6 Gn 18:12;  
Heb 11:11;  
1Pt 3:14

3:7 Eph 5:25;  
Col 3:19, 1Th 4:4

3:8 Ro 12:16,  
Ro 15:5;  
1Co 1:10;  
Eph 4:2,  
Eph 4:32

3:9 Ro 12:14,  
Ro 12:17;  
1Co 4:12;  
1Th 5:15;  
1Pt 2:21

3:10 Ps 34:12,  
Ps 34:13;  
Jas 1:26

3:11 Ps 34:14

3:12 Ps 34:15

3:13 Prv 16:7

3:14 Is 8:12;  
Is 8:13; Mt 5:10;  
1Pt 2:19,  
1Pt 2:20

3:15 Is 29:23;  
Col 4:6; 2Ti 2:25;  
Heb 3:6; 1Pt 1:3

3:16 Ro 9:1;  
1Ti 1:5;  
Heb 13:18;  
1Pt 2:12,  
1Pt 3:21

3:17 1Pt 2:15,  
1Pt 2:20,  
1Pt 4:16,  
1Pt 4:19

3:18 Col 1:21;  
Heb 9:26,  
Heb 9:28;

1Pt 2:21, 1Pt 4:1  
3:19 1Pt 4:6

**3**Wives, likewise, submit to your own husbands. Do this so that even if some of them refuse to believe the word, they may be won without a word by their wives' way of life. **2**After all, they will have observed the reverent and holy manner of your lives. **3**Don't try to make yourselves beautiful on the outside, with stylish hair or by wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes. **4**Instead, make yourselves beautiful on the inside, in your hearts, with the enduring quality of a gentle, peaceful spirit. This type of beauty is very precious in God's eyes. **5**For it was in this way that holy women who trusted in God used to make themselves beautiful, accepting the authority of their own husbands. **6**For example, Sarah accepted Abraham's authority when she called him *master*. You have become her children when you do good and don't respond to threats with fear.

**7**Husbands, likewise, submit by living with your wife in ways that honor her, knowing that she is the weaker partner. Honor her all the more, as she is also a coheir of the gracious care of life. Do this so that your prayers won't be hindered.

**8**Finally, all of you be of one mind, sympathetic, lovers of your fellow believers, compassionate, and modest in your opinion of yourselves. **9**Don't pay back evil for evil or insult for insult. Instead, give blessing in return. You were called to do this so that you might inherit a blessing. **10**For

*those who want to love life*

*and see good days*

*should keep their tongue from evil speaking*

*and their lips from speaking lies.*

**11***They should shun evil and do good;*

*seek peace and chase after it.*

**12***The Lord's eyes are on the righteous*

*and his ears are open to their prayers.*

*But the Lord cannot tolerate those who do evil.<sup>d</sup>*

**13**Who will harm you if you are zealous for good? **14**But happy are you, even if you suffer because of righteousness! Don't be terrified or upset by them. **15**Instead, regard Christ as holy in your hearts. Whenever anyone asks you to speak of your hope, be ready to defend it. **16**Yet do this with respectful humility, maintaining a good conscience. Act in this way so that those who malign your good lifestyle in Christ may be ashamed when they slander you.

**17**It is better to suffer for doing good (if this could possibly be God's will) than for doing evil.

**18**Christ himself suffered on account of sins, once for all, the righteous one on behalf of the unrighteous. He did this in order to bring you into the presence of God. Christ was put to death as a human, but made alive by the Spirit. **19**And it was by the Spirit that he went

<sup>d</sup>Ps 34:12-16

verses. For Peter, Jesus embodies Isaiah's image of the servant of God who wrongly suffers.

**3:1-7** The third section of the household code addresses wives and husbands. 1 Peter 3:1 provides a significant missional statement in 1 Peter. Wives of unbelieving husbands are encouraged to submit. This is expected behavior in the 1st-century world, but here it has the goal of winning unbelieving husbands over to Christ.

**3:3-4** In Peter's world it was common for authors to encourage women to wear the "clothing" of virtue rather than to depend on the beauty of jewels, hairdos, and fine fabrics. Peter adopts a similar approach, focusing on the inner qualities of the heart, which would be on display in one's behavior in the world.

**3:6** *threats*: likely from their unbelieving husbands. Unbelieving husbands in the Roman world would have had good reason to expect that wives would worship the gods of their husbands.

**3:8-12** Peter's quotation of Psalm 34:12-16 calls on his audience to resist payback when they are mistreated and to bless those who are hostile toward them.

**3:13-17** Peter informs his audience that they cannot truly

be hurt if they are suffering on account of their good attitudes and behavior. But they need to be sure that their suffering is a result of their righteousness.

**3:15** *regard Christ as holy in your hearts*: Live a life of genuine obedience to Jesus Christ.

**3:18-22** The example of Christ is given for believers who are suffering under opposition (also 4:1). Christ didn't suffer because he was evil; rather, he suffered so that others might escape the power of sin (see 1 Pet 2:24-25). Furthermore, he was resurrected and is now at *God's right side*, where he reigns over all. In the same way, the wrongful suffering of Christians can bring people to faith (see 1 Pet 2:12; 3:1), and Christians can look ahead to the time when God will honor them for their faithfulness in the midst of wrongful suffering.

**3:19** The identification of *the spirits in prison* is difficult. It may be that Peter draws on the picture of disobedient spirits from a Jewish writing called 1 Enoch; if so Christ might be depicted as announcing his victory to fallen angels. Early church interpretation associated these *spirits in prison* with "the dead" to whom the good news was preached in 1 Peter 4:6. Christ, it was believed, descended

to preach to the spirits in prison. <sup>20</sup>In the past, these spirits were disobedient—when God patiently waited during the time of Noah. Noah built an ark in which a few (that is, eight) lives were rescued through water. <sup>21</sup>Baptism is like that. It saves you now—not because it removes dirt from your body but because it is the mark of a good conscience toward God. Your salvation comes through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup>who is at God's right side. Now that he has gone into heaven, he rules over all angels, authorities, and powers.

**4** Therefore, since Christ suffered as a human, you should also arm yourselves with his way of thinking. This is because whoever suffers is finished with sin. <sup>2</sup>As a result, they don't live the rest of their human lives in ways determined by human desires but in ways determined by God's will. <sup>3</sup>You have wasted enough time doing what unbelievers desire—living in their unrestrained immorality and lust, their drunkenness and excessive feasting and wild parties, and their forbidden worship of idols. <sup>4</sup>They think it's strange that you don't join in these activities with the same flood of unrestrained wickedness. So they slander you. <sup>5</sup>They will have to reckon with the one who is ready to judge the living and the dead. <sup>6</sup>Indeed, this is the reason the good news was also preached to the dead. This happened so that, although they were judged as humans according to human standards, they could live by the Spirit according to divine standards.

<sup>7</sup>The end of everything has come. Therefore, be self-controlled and clearheaded so you can pray. <sup>8</sup>Above all, show sincere love to each other, because love brings about the forgiveness of many sins. <sup>9</sup>Open your hearts to each other without complaining. <sup>10</sup>And serve each other according to the gift each person has received, as good managers of God's diverse gifts. <sup>11</sup>Whoever speaks should do so as those who speak God's word. Whoever serves should do so from the strength that God furnishes. Do this so that in everything God may be honored through Jesus Christ. To him be honor and power forever and always. Amen.

### Stand firm in the last times

<sup>12</sup>Dear friends, don't be surprised about the fiery trials that have come among you to test you. These are not strange happenings. <sup>13</sup>Instead, rejoice as you share Christ's suffering. You share his suffering now so that you may also have overwhelming joy when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup>If you are mocked because of Christ's name, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory—indeed, the Spirit of God—rests on you.

<sup>15</sup>Now none of you should suffer as a murderer or thief or evildoer or rebel. <sup>16</sup>But don't be ashamed if you suffer as one who belongs to Christ. Rather, honor God as you bear Christ's name. Give honor to God, <sup>17</sup>because it's time for judgment to begin with God's own household. But if judgment starts with us, what will happen to those who refuse to believe God's

into the place of the dead in order to declare victory over death and the devil.

**3:20-21** Those saved with Noah during the flood are examples of righteous persons whom God saved through water. Similarly, believers in Jesus are saved through the water of baptism, which marks them as loyal to God.

**4:1** *finished with sin*: Suffering purifies the believing community (1 Pet 1:7; 4:12, 17-19).

**4:3-4** The audience's circumstances are clearly stated. Unbelievers are attacking these Christians with their words because Christians refuse to participate in immoral activities, including the worship of the gods, because of their loyalty to Christ. Not participating in these activities could have been perceived as a threat to Roman social, religious, and economic stability.

**4:6** The phrase *the good news was also preached to the dead* has been interpreted in various ways. Early church tradition took this phrase as a reference to Christ's going to the place of the dead to proclaim good news as he defeated death and the devil (see 1 Pet 3:19). It may refer to Christians who had already died at the time of the writing of 1 Peter, Christians whose death might have called into question the truth of the gospel (see 1 Thess 4:13-18). The preaching of the gospel allowed the dead to begin living

by the Spirit, proving instead that the gospel is true and brings life.

**4:7-11** This section addresses the topic of behavior and loyalties within the believing community. *love* (1 Pet 4:8; see 1 Pet 1:22) is expressed in hospitality (1 Pet 4:9) and service (1 Pet 4:10-11).

**4:8** *love brings about the forgiveness of many sins*: The traditional rendering is "love covers a multitude of sins." Christian love creates a community where forgiveness is freely given and received among God's people.

**4:13** Peter returns to the example of Christ's suffering and glory to encourage his audience to look ahead with hope in spite of their present suffering.

**4:15** Peter lists wrong behaviors, or vices, including obvious crimes (*murderer or thief*) but also the more general *evildoer*. The final vice, *rebel*, probably reflects back to the household code of 1 Peter 2:13-3:7, where social and political relationships are discussed. There Christians are encouraged to act within the limits of social conventions in order to avoid unnecessary charges of rebellion. The highest loyalty was not to Rome, though, but to Christ.

**4:17** *judgment to begin with God's own household*: God's final judgment will result in God's rescuing and honoring his people. According to some ancient texts, some Jews

**3:20** Gn 6:3;  
Gn 6:14; Gn 8:18;  
Heb 11:7; 2Pt 2:5

**3:21** Ro 6:3;  
Ga 3:27; Ti 3:5;  
1Pt 1:3

**3:22** Mk 16:19;  
Ro 8:34;  
Eph 1:20;  
Eph 1:21;  
Heb 4:14

**4:1** Ro 6:7;  
Ga 5:24; Phi 2:5;  
Col 3:3; 1Pt 3:18

**4:2** 1Pt 1:14;  
1Pt 2:11

**4:3** Ro 13:13;  
1Co 12:2;  
Eph 2:2;  
Eph 4:17

**4:4** Eph 5:18;  
1Pt 3:15

**4:6** 1Pt 3:19

**4:7** Ro 13:11;  
Phi 4:5; 1Th 5:6;  
Jas 5:8; 1Pt 1:13

**4:8** Prv 10:12;  
Jas 5:20; 1Pt 1:22

**4:9** Ro 12:13;  
Phi 2:14; 1Ti 3:2;  
Ti 1:8; Heb 13:2

**4:10** Ro 12:6;  
1Co 4:1; 1Co 4:2

**4:11** Ac 7:38;  
Ro 3:2; Ro 11:36;  
1Pt 5:11; Rev 1:6

**4:12** 1Pt 1:6;  
1Pt 1:7

**4:13** Mt 5:12;  
Ro 8:17; Phi 3:10;  
1Pt 1:7; 1Pt 5:1

**4:14** Is 11:2;  
Mt 5:11;  
Jn 15:21;

Heb 11:26;  
1Pt 3:14

**4:15** 2Th 3:11;  
1Ti 5:13

**4:16** Ac 5:41;  
Ac 11:26

**4:17** Jer 25:29;  
Eze 9:6; Am 3:2;  
Ro 1:1; 2Th 1:8

4:18 Prv 11:31;  
Lk 23:31  
4:19 Ps 31:5;  
2Ti 1:12;  
1Pt 3:17  
5:1 Lk 24:46;  
Ac 11:30;  
1Pt 4:13; 3Jn 1;  
Rev 1:9  
5:2 Jn 21:16;  
Ac 20:28;  
1Ti 3:3, 1Ti 3:8;  
Ti 1:7  
5:3 Eze 34:4;  
Mt 20:25;  
Phi 3:17;  
2Th 3:9; 1Ti 4:12  
5:4 1Co 9:25;  
2Ti 4:8; Jas 1:12;  
1Pt 1:4; 1Pt 2:25  
5:5 Prv 3:34;  
Eph 5:21; Jas 4:6;  
1Pt 3:8  
5:6 Lk 14:11;  
Jas 4:10  
5:7 Ps 37:5;  
Ps 55:2;  
Mt 6:25; Phi 4:6  
5:8 Job 1:7;  
Mt 24:42;  
Lk 22:31; Jas 4:7;  
1Pt 1:13  
5:9 Ac 14:22;  
Col 2:5; Jas 4:7  
5:12 1Co 15:1;  
2Co 1:9;  
Heb 13:22  
5:13 Ac 12:12;  
Ac 12:25;  
Col 4:10;  
Phm 1:24  
5:14 Ro 8:1;  
Ro 16:16;  
Eph 6:23

good news? <sup>18</sup>If the righteous are barely rescued, what will happen to the godless and sinful? <sup>19</sup>So then, those who suffer because they follow God's will should commit their lives to a trustworthy creator by doing what is right.

**5** Therefore, I have a request for the elders among you. (I ask this as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings, and as one who shares in the glory that is about to be revealed.) I urge the elders: <sup>2</sup>Like shepherds, tend the flock of God among you. Watch over it. Don't shepherd because you must, but do it voluntarily for God. Don't shepherd greedily, but do it eagerly. <sup>3</sup>Don't shepherd by ruling over those entrusted to your care, but become examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup>And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive an unfading crown of glory.

<sup>5</sup>In the same way, I urge you who are younger: accept the authority of the elders. And everyone, clothe yourselves with humility toward each other. God stands against the proud, but he gives favor to the humble.

<sup>6</sup>Therefore, humble yourselves under God's power so that he may raise you up in the last day. <sup>7</sup>Throw all your anxiety onto him, because he cares about you. <sup>8</sup>Be clearheaded. Keep alert. Your accuser, the devil, is on the prowl like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup>Resist him, standing firm in the faith. Do so in the knowledge that your fellow believers are enduring the same suffering throughout the world. <sup>10</sup>After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, the one who called you into his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will himself restore, empower, strengthen, and establish you. <sup>11</sup>To him be power forever and always. Amen.

### Final greeting

<sup>12</sup>I have written and sent these few lines to you by Silvanus. I consider him to be a faithful brother. In these lines I have urged and affirmed that this is the genuine grace of God. Stand firm in it. <sup>13</sup>The fellow-elect church in Babylon greets you, and so does my son Mark. <sup>14</sup>Greet each other with the kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ.

thought that the final judgment would be preceded by a time of troubles when God's true followers would be tested and purged. For Peter, Christians are already experiencing these troubles. He assures them in the present time of trouble that God will rescue and honor them in the future.

**4:18** Peter quotes Proverbs 11:31 to emphasize the troubles that accompany salvation of God's people, as well as the warning of punishment to come for "those who refuse to believe God's good news" (1 Pet 4:17).

**4:19** A summary of much of 1 Peter, with its themes of trusting God by doing good in spite of wrongful suffering. **5:1-5** Peter encourages God's household, the church. First, he addresses the *elders*, a term that likely refers to the Jewish pattern of entrusting leadership to those with the wisdom of age rather than to a specific church office. This is affirmed by the address to those who are *younger* (1 Pet 5:5), whom he instructs to follow the direction and shepherding of the elders. *everyone*: Both elders and the younger ones are called to mutual humility.

**5:5** Humility was most often associated with status

categories (humble versus high status). It wasn't considered a virtue in Greek and Roman circles. Peter's encouragement, then, goes against cultural expectations.

**5:8** The warning to be *clearheaded* is repeated for a third time. In 1 Peter 1:13 clear thinking leads to hope. In 1 Peter 4:7 the call to be clearheaded is for the purpose of prayer. Here, being clearheaded is a way of resisting the devil's schemes.

**5:9** Peter assures his readers that what they are experiencing is not unique but is being experienced by others who are loyal to Jesus throughout the Roman Empire.

**5:11** The body of the letter concludes with praise to God (see 1 Pet 4:11).

**5:12-14** *Silvanus*: either the secretary who wrote the letter or the letter carrier, or both. *Mark*: See Acts 12; 15. *fellow-elect church in Babylon*: From the time of the 6th century, when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, Babylon was often used as a reference to Israel's archenemies. In the 1st century Jews and Christians would have heard "Babylon" as a reference to Rome.



# 2 PETER

In 2 Peter 1:1 the author identifies himself as “Simon Peter,” and the first two lines indicate that he is, in fact, the apostle Peter. However, several aspects of the letter suggest it was written after Peter’s death (tradition says he was put to death as a martyr by the emperor Nero around 64–65 CE). These include mentioning the death of the original apostles and making a reference to the Pauline letters as scripture. The extensive use of rare Greek words and the advanced style seem to reflect an educational background beyond what we know of the apostle Peter. Add to this how slow the church was to accept 2 Peter as scripture, and the problem of authorship becomes serious indeed. At the same time, the text shows significant influence from the apostle Peter, even if he didn’t actually write it himself. It seems more likely that a disciple close to the apostle applied his teachings to a later situation. 2 Peter, then, is like a will, or testament,

from Peter, written in the form of a letter by one of his close associates. In 2 Peter 3:1 the author calls this letter his “second letter to you.” This is a reference to 1 Peter and suggests that the intended audience of 2 Peter is composed of Christians in “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (see 1 Pet 1:1).

2 Peter addresses a problem that emerged when teachers within the church began to challenge the truth of Jesus’ second coming; uncertainty about Jesus’ return began to influence their behavior. They seem to have been wondering, if there is no coming judgment, does it matter how we live in the present? These false teachers were challenging the inspiration of scripture and the reliability of prophecy. 2 Peter addresses issues like this by reminding Christians of Peter’s teaching and defending the Christian message that goes back to the apostles.



Refining fire (2 Pet 3:10-11)  
iStockPhoto

**I. Greetings (1:1-2)****II. Grace: The Basis of the Godly (Righteous) Life (1:3-11)****III. Apostolic Reminder (1:12-21)**

- A. First issue: Jesus' second coming
- B. Second issue: The challenge to prophecy
- C. Third issue: Uncertainty about coming judgment

**IV. Apostolic Answer to Issues: Recall Words of the Lord (3:1-14)****V. Final Encouragement of the Faithful (3:15-18)**

*Rebecca Skaggs*

**Greeting**

1 From Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ.

To those who received a faith equal to ours through the justice of our God and savior Jesus Christ.

2 May you have more and more grace and peace through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

**Christian life in outline**

3 By his divine power the Lord has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of the one who called us by his own honor and glory. 4 Through his honor and glory he has given us his precious and wonderful promises, that you may share the divine nature and escape from the world's immorality that sinful craving produces.

5 This is why you must make every effort to add moral excellence to your faith; and to moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, endurance; and to endurance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, affection for others; and to affection for others, love. 8 If all these are yours and they are growing in you, they'll keep you from becoming inactive and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 Whoever lacks these things is shortsighted and blind, forgetting that they were cleansed from their past sins.

10 Therefore, brothers and sisters, be eager to confirm your call and election. Do this and you will never ever be lost. 11 In this way you will receive a rich welcome into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

**Reminder of the Christian life**

12 So I'll keep reminding you about these things, although you already know them and stand secure in the truth you have. 13 I think it's right that I keep stirring up your memory, as long as I'm alive. 14 After all, our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I am about to depart from this life. 15 I'm eager for you always to remember these things after my death.

**Christ's return is true**

16 We didn't repeat crafty myths when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Quite the contrary, we witnessed his majesty with our own eyes. 17 He received honor and glory from God the Father when a voice came to him from the magnificent glory, saying, "This is my dearly loved Son, with whom I am well-pleased." 18 We ourselves heard this voice from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain. 19 In addition, we have a most reliable prophetic word, and you would do well to pay attention to it, just as you would to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises

1:1 *Simon*: This typical Greek letter begins with the name of the sender. *slave and apostle of Jesus Christ* conveys a close relationship with Jesus of Nazareth. The letter's addressees are identified not with a particular church but by the faith they have received. This faith is brought about by God's justice; this is important because a major issue for the letter is the fairness of God's judgment.

1:2 This is a customary blessing (see 1 Pet 1:2; 2 John 3). *grace*: blessings of prosperity given by a benefactor.

1:3-4 This is a summary of the main ideas of Peter's teaching. Faithful readers are promised a share in God's promises concerning the present and the future. The faithful have been given everything they need to live whole and complete lives.

1:5-7 *make every effort*: Faithfulness is a necessary response to God's good gifts. The author lists a series of virtues that are grounded in faith. (Virtues in the Roman world were qualities of one's character that were on display in one's behavior.) *faith* provides the basis for, and enables the practice of, these virtues. *knowledge* of Jesus, not some sort of mystical or secret knowledge, is necessary for eternal life. *self-control*: The final two virtues, *affection for others* and *love*, are related. Love is the ultimate virtue, the sum of them all, and is not only for God but for one another; it includes and perfects all of the virtues. Since God

has given these virtues as gifts, believers should live in a way that is pleasing to God, a lifestyle of practicing these virtues. See the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

1:8 It isn't enough to possess the virtues; they must keep growing to ensure effective fruitfulness.

1:9 *shortsighted and blind*: These two terms inform each other, indicating that deliberately closing one's eyes to God's truth results in forgetting the gift of God's forgiveness.

1:10-11 *be eager*: Again, the author emphasizes the joint effort between receiving God's virtues and pursuing them. Human activity doesn't bring about salvation but reflects that we have been called by God. The practice of the godly life confirms one's *call and election* and ensures that one is welcomed into a life, now and forever, under Christ's dominion.

1:12-15 The purpose of the letter is to remind the readers of what they already know. The author emphasizes his desire for his disciples to pass on his words, to keep *reminding* people of them even after his death. 2 Peter 1:14 probably refers to Jesus' prediction of Peter's death (John 21:18-19).

1:16-18 Peter bases the certainty of Jesus' second coming on Jesus' words, God's affirmation of Jesus, and the reliability of OT prophecy.

1:1 Ro 1:1,  
Ro 3:21; Ti 1:4,  
Ti 2:13; 1Pt 1:1

1:4 2Co 7:1;  
Eph 4:24;  
Heb 12:10;  
2Pt 2:18; Jhn 3:2

1:5 Phi 4:8

1:9 Eph 5:26;  
Heb 9:14;  
Jhn 2:11

1:17 Mt 3:17,  
Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7;  
Lk 9:35

1:18 Ex 3:5;  
Josh 5:15

1:19 Ps 119:105;  
Prv 6:23;  
Lk 1:78; 2Co 4:6;  
Rev 22:16

1:20 2Pt 3:3  
 1:21 2Sa 23:2;  
 Ac 1:16;  
 Ac 3:18;  
 2Ti 3:16;  
 1Pt 1:11  
 2:1 Mt 7:15;  
 1Co 6:20;  
 Ga 2:4; 1Ti 4:1;  
 Jud 1:4  
 2:2 Ac 16:17;  
 Ro 2:24;  
 2Pt 2:21  
 2:3 1Th 2:5;  
 1Ti 6:5; Ti 1:11;  
 2Pt 2:14  
 2:4 Mt 25:41;  
 Jud 1:6; Jud 1:13;  
 Rev 20:10  
 2:5 Gn 6:8;  
 Gn 7:1;  
 Heb 11:7;  
 1Pt 3:20; 2Pt 3:6  
 2:6 Gn 19:24;  
 Jud 1:7  
 2:7 Gn 19:16;  
 Gn 19:29  
 2:8 Heb 11:4;  
 2Pt 2:7  
 2:9 Mt 10:15;  
 1Co 10:13;  
 2Pt 3:7; Rev 3:10  
 2:10 Ex 22:28;  
 Jud 1:8; Jud 1:16;  
 Jud 1:18  
 2:11 Jud 1:9  
 2:12 Ps 49:12;  
 Jer 12:3; Jud 1:10  
 2:13 Ro 13:13;  
 1Co 11:21;  
 1Th 5:7; Jud 1:12  
 2:14 Eph 3:2;  
 2Pt 2:3; 2Pt 2:18;  
 2Pt 3:16  
 2:15 Nm 22:5;  
 Nm 22:7;  
 Dt 23:4; Jud 1:11;  
 Rev 2:14  
 2:16 Nm 22:21;  
 Nm 22:28  
 2:17 Mt 22:13;  
 Jud 1:12;  
 Jud 1:13  
 2:18 2Pt 1:4;  
 2Pt 2:20;  
 Jud 1:16

in your hearts. <sup>20</sup>Most important, you must know that no prophecy of scripture represents the prophet's own understanding of things, <sup>21</sup>because no prophecy ever came by human will. Instead, men and women led by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

### Appearance of false teachers

**2** But false prophets also arose among the people. In the same way, false teachers will come among you. They will introduce destructive opinions and deny the master who bought them, bringing quick destruction on themselves. <sup>2</sup>Many will follow them in their unrestrained immorality, and because of these false teachers the way of truth will be slandered. <sup>3</sup>In their greed they will take advantage of you with lies. The judgment pronounced against them long ago hasn't fallen idle, nor is their destruction sleeping.

### Active judgment of God

<sup>4</sup>God didn't spare the angels when they sinned but cast them into the lowest level of the underworld and committed them to chains of darkness, keeping them there until the judgment. <sup>5</sup>And he didn't spare the ancient world when he brought a flood on the world of ungodly people, even though he protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, along with seven others. <sup>6</sup>God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to total destruction, reducing them to ashes as a warning to ungodly people. <sup>7</sup>And he rescued righteous Lot, who was made miserable by the unrestrained immorality of unruly people. (<sup>8</sup>While that righteous man lived among them he felt deep distress every day on account of the immoral actions he saw and heard.) <sup>9</sup>These things show that the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from their trials, and how to keep the unrighteous for punishment on the Judgment Day. <sup>10</sup>This is especially true for those who follow after the corrupt cravings of the sinful nature and defy the Lord's authority.

### Evil character of the false teachers

These reckless, brash people aren't afraid to insult the glorious ones, <sup>11</sup>yet angels, who are stronger and more powerful, don't use insults when pronouncing the Lord's judgment on them. <sup>12</sup>These false teachers are like irrational animals, mere creatures of instinct, born to be captured and destroyed. They slander what they don't understand and, like animals, they will be destroyed. <sup>13</sup>In this way, they will receive payment for their wrongdoing.

They even enjoy unruly parties in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, taking delight in their seductive pleasures while feasting with you. <sup>14</sup>They are always looking for someone with whom to commit adultery. They are always on the lookout for opportunities to sin. They ensnare people whose faith is weak. They have hearts trained in greed. They are under God's curse. <sup>15</sup>Leaving the straight path, they have gone off course, following the way of Balaam son of Bosor, who loved the payment of doing wrong. <sup>16</sup>But Balaam was rebuked for his wrongdoing. A donkey, which has no voice, spoke with a human voice and put a stop to the prophet's madness.

<sup>17</sup>These false teachers are springs without water, mists driven by the wind. The underworld has been reserved for them. <sup>18</sup>With empty, self-important speech, they use sinful cravings and unrestrained immorality to ensnare people who have only just escaped life with

1:20-21 The second coming is affirmed further by the nature of prophecy itself. Both prophecy and interpretation of prophecy originate in God and therefore are certain.

2:1 The author predicts the coming of false teachers who are dishonest and sneaky. By teaching *destructive opinions*, they bring about their own *destruction*. *deny the master who bought them*: portrays slaves who reject the very ones who gave them freedom.

2:2 People are following this behavior rather than Christ, and so they bring dishonor on *the way of truth* (cf. Isa 52:5).

2:3 These false teachers are taking advantage of people for their own gain. Note the shift from the future tense (a prediction of what will happen) in the first part of the verse to the present tense (a description of the situation) in the second half.

2:4-9 Three examples of God's judgment of the wicked and God's rescue of the righteous: the angels, the flood,

and Sodom and Gomorrah. These show that God is able to exercise end-time judgment and salvation, too.

2:10-11 Angels are more powerful than false teachers, yet angels show restraint. This emphasizes the false teachers' arrogance.

2:12-13 These false teachers behave like animals, so they will suffer an animal's fate. Animals used for sacrifice must have no blemishes, but these false teachers are themselves *blemishes*.

2:14 *ensnare people*: to bait or catch, a term used in hunting. *trained in greed*: an athletic term used to emphasize a teacher's expertise when compared with a student's inexperience. *under God's curse*: the certainty of destruction.

2:15-16 *Balaam* is an example of the greed, deceit, immorality, and disobedience of the teachers.

2:17-18 The author emphasizes the false teachers' instability and lack of power, as well as their coming judgment.

those who have wandered from the truth. <sup>19</sup>These false teachers promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of immorality; whatever overpowers you, enslaves you. <sup>20</sup>If people escape the moral filth of this world through the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, then get tangled up in it again and are overcome by it, they are worse off than they were before. <sup>21</sup>It would be better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, having come to know it, to turn back from the holy commandment entrusted to them. <sup>22</sup>They demonstrate the truth of the proverb: "A dog returns to its own vomit, and a washed sow wallows in the mud."

### Delay of Christ's coming in judgment

**3** My dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both letters to stir up your sincere understanding with a reminder. <sup>2</sup>I want you to recall what the holy prophets foretold as well as what the Lord and savior commanded through your apostles. <sup>3</sup>Most important, know this: in the last days scoffers will come, jeering, living by their own cravings, <sup>4</sup>and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? After all, nothing has changed—not since the beginning of creation, nor even since the ancestors died."

<sup>5</sup>But they fail to notice that, by God's word, heaven and earth were formed long ago out of water and by means of water. <sup>6</sup>And it was through these that the world of that time was flooded and destroyed. <sup>7</sup>But by the same word, heaven and earth are now held in reserve for fire, kept for the Judgment Day and destruction of ungodly people.

<sup>8</sup>Don't let it escape your notice, dear friends, that with the Lord a single day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a single day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord isn't slow to keep his promise, as some think of slowness, but he is patient toward you, not wanting anyone to perish but all to change their hearts and lives. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will pass away with a dreadful noise, the elements will be consumed by fire, and the earth and all the works done on it will be exposed.

2:19 In 8:34;  
Ro 6:16; Ga 5:13;  
1 Pt 2:16  
2:20 Mt 12:45;  
2 Pt 1:2, 2 Pt 1:11;  
2 Pt 3:18  
2:21 Eze 18:24  
2:22 Prv 26:11;  
Mt 7:6  
3:2 Lk 1:70;  
Ac 3:21;  
2 Pt 2:21;  
Jud 1:17  
3:3 1 Ti 4:1;  
2 Pt 2:10;  
Jud 1:18  
3:4 Is 5:19;  
Jer 17:15;  
Eze 12:22;  
1 Th 2:19  
3:5 Gn 1:6;  
Gn 1:9; Ps 24:2;  
Ps 136:6;  
Heb 11:3  
3:6 Gn 7:11;  
Gn 7:21; 2 Pt 2:5  
3:7 Mt 10:15;  
2 Pt 2:9, 2 Pt 3:10;  
2 Pt 3:12  
3:8 Ps 90:4  
3:9 Hab 2:3;  
Ro 2:4; 1 Ti 2:4;  
Heb 10:37;  
Rev 2:21  
3:10 Is 34:4;  
Mt 24:35;  
1 Th 5:2; 2 Pt 3:7;  
Rev 21:1

**Righteousness** Righteousness (sometimes translated "justice") is significant for 2 Peter. Every issue addressed in this letter is rooted in God's justice. The false teachers were challenging God's ability to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. They questioned whether the Second Coming would take place, since it didn't come before the death of the last of the apostles. As a result, these false teachers argued that it doesn't matter how we live since there won't be a future judgment. The author's entire response to these challenges is grounded in his understanding of God's justice. Even the faith of his audience is received through God's justice (2 Pet 1:1). He quotes OT examples (2 Pet 2) in which God made clear distinctions between the righteous and the wicked (e.g., Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah). The righteous life (a life characterized by the virtues, 2 Pet 1:5-7) contrasts with the false teachers' behavior (2 Pet 2) and their denial of the Lord as master (2 Pet 2:1). In fact, God is more than able to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, both now and at the final judgment. The author grounds the certainty of the coming judgment in God's righteousness. Because God is just, God judges fairly.

2:20-21 Knowing Jesus enables the faithful to escape from the world's stains. Those who return to their previous lifestyles deny Jesus' salvation and are "worse off at the end than at the beginning" (Matt 12:45). *holy commandment* refers to Jesus' words.

2:22 The author cites two proverbs to show the awful situation of the false teachers. Dogs and pigs were despised animals because, like the teachers, they made their lives among filthy things.

3:1-3 *My dear friends*: addresses the faithful audience directly, reminding them of the words of the prophets and apostles concerning the end time. In a strange twist, the author holds that the false teachers' attempts through their words and lives to deny the second coming actually prove the truth of what the prophets and apostles foretold.

3:4 The false teachers base their disbelief on the delay of Jesus' second coming.

3:5-7 The author responds to the false teachers by referring to the flood. It was predicted, it came, and it destroyed the ancient world. In the same way, the world's end will certainly come. This truth is grounded in the words of the prophets and the apostles (2 Pet 1:17-21; 3:2), God's promises (2 Pet 1:4; 3:4, 9, 13), and the scriptures (2 Pet 2:4-8, 15-16, 22).

3:7 God's word originally brought the heavens and earth into being, and that same word will announce final judgment.

3:8-10 God experiences time differently from the way we do, so it shouldn't be surprising that God allows more time for people to *change their hearts and lives*. The timing of the end can't be predicted.

3:11 Ex 19:6;  
1Ti 4:12;  
1Ti 6:11;  
1Pi 1:15;  
1Pi 2:12

3:12 Is 34:4;  
1Co 1:7;  
2Pi 3:10;  
Jud 1:21

3:13 Is 60:21;  
Is 65:17, Is 66:22;  
Rev 21:1;  
Rev 21:27

3:14 1Co 15:58;  
Phi 2:15;  
1Th 3:13;  
1Th 5:23;  
Jas 1:27

3:15 Ac 15:25;  
Ro 2:4; Eph 3:3;  
1Pi 3:20; 2Pi 3:9

3:16 Jer 23:36;  
Heb 5:11;  
2Pi 2:14

<sup>11</sup>Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be? You must live holy and godly lives, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming day of God. Because of that day, the heavens will be destroyed by fire and the elements will melt away in the flames. <sup>13</sup>But according to his promise we are waiting for a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

### **Preparing for Christ's coming in judgment**

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found by him in peace—pure and faultless. <sup>15</sup>Consider the patience of our Lord to be salvation, just as our dear friend and brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, <sup>16</sup>speaking of these things in all his letters. Some of his remarks are hard to understand, and people who are ignorant and whose faith is weak twist them to their own destruction, just as they do the other scriptures.

### **Final instruction**

<sup>17</sup>Therefore, dear friends, since you have been warned in advance, be on guard so that you aren't led off course into the error of sinful people, and lose your own safe position. <sup>18</sup>Instead, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. To him belongs glory now and forever. Amen.

**3:11-12** The certainty of the final judgment ought to affect the way people live. The faithful should *live holy and godly lives*, pleasing to God (see 2 Pet 1), in alert expectation of God's final judgment.

**3:14** Destruction is not the last word. God renews his creation. *in peace* means completeness and wholeness (cf. 2 Pet 1:2).

**3:15-16** The problem presented by the false teachers may represent a misreading of Paul, as though Paul taught that the freedom we have in Christ is a freedom to live without rules. Peter doesn't blame Paul for this but insists that

the false teachers can't read Paul or the other scriptures accurately because of their ignorance. They twist Paul's words and the other scriptures to fit their own mistaken ideas.

**3:17-18** Final instructions to the faithful include the need to *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ*. Knowledge is a major theme of the letter. It's the means through which the Holy Spirit enables believers to develop the virtues (2 Pet 1:5-7); it's grounded in the understanding of salvation and depends on the grace of Jesus, freely received.

# 1 JOHN

Although traditionally called “The First Letter of St. John,” this book’s author isn’t mentioned and it has few of the features of an ancient letter. Moreover, while scripture locates John’s three letters in its collection of seven Catholic Letters, they’re typically studied with the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation because their similar vocabulary and ideas suggest they all came from a common tradition or community. The ancient church attached the apostle John, “the one whom Jesus loved” (John 20:2), to this tradition because John’s intimate witness of Jesus was thought to supply authoritative materials of the community’s theological understanding.

The importance of attributing anonymous writings to the apostle John may be explained

by the letter’s prologue (1 John 1:1-4). It claims that the community’s message and fellowship with God is ensured “from the beginning” by those who personally witnessed Jesus as the “word of life” (1 John 1:1). This opening announcement puts readers on notice that 1 John is written for those whose knowledge about God, secured and shaped by the apostle’s testimony of Jesus, has been challenged by others who “went out from us” (1 John 2:18-23; cf. 4:2-3). To know this Jesus—the Jesus John knew—is to know God (1 John 3:16; 4:2).

1 John has little interest in identifying or responding directly to this rival form of Christianity. Its members are simply dismissed as antichrists because they reject the apostolic witness to Jesus’ mission and therefore the



Copper inkwell from Qumran (1 John 2:10)  
Amman Museum/BiblePlaces.com

promise of eternal life that comes with it. The letter's principal purpose is to clarify the practical importance of the apostolic message that "Jesus Christ has come as a human" (1 John 4:2; cf. 1 John 2:22) to disclose the truth about God (1 John 1:2-3), to deal with the world's sins (1 John 2:2; cf. 4:9-10), and to provide an example of Christian living (1 John 2:3-6; cf. 1 John 3:3-6). Eternal life depends on remaining in the knowledge of this truth (1 John 5:13).

The apostolic message about God's way of salvation is shaped by two core beliefs: "God is light" (1 John 1:5) and "God is love" (1 John 4:8). If God is light, then fellowship with God requires the community to live as Jesus lived (1 John 2:6; 3:3). Its members must cleanse themselves of all sin, sin no more, and reject the lies of rival groups. If God is love, then God's children must love each other as Jesus loved: self-sacrificially and "with action and truth" (1 John 3:16-18).

The repetition of dramatic opposites throughout the letter (e.g., light/darkness, truth/error, know/deceive) helps to mark the community's theological and moral boundaries, as well as its core beliefs and their practical application. Whether disclosed by an "anointing" experience (1 John 2:20, 27) or by written correspondence (1 John 2:1, 7, 12, 26; 5:13), these boundaries and beliefs agree with what the apostles witnessed of Jesus, and they form the basis of eternal fellowship with God and each other.

The structure of 1 John is difficult to follow. Many interpreters, ancient and modern, have suggested that it reads more like a sermon than a letter. The term "letter," found in the book's traditional title, doesn't designate its literary form but rather indicates its religious function within a congregation. This function is similar to every other NT letter: to impart knowledge of eternal life (1 John 5:13; cf. 2 Tim 3:15) and to encourage a holy life.

**I. Prologue: Apostolic Witness Safeguards Fellowship with God (1:1-4)**

**II. God Is Light, So Christians Must Live without Sin (1:5-3:10)**

**III. God Is Love, So Christians Must Love Each Other Self-Sacrificially (3:11-5:12)**

**IV. Epilogue: Affirmations of Truth about Eternal Life (5:13-21)**

*Robert W. Wall*



### Announcement about the word of life

**1** We announce to you what existed from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have seen and our hands handled, about the word of life. **2**The life was revealed, and we have seen, and we testify and announce to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us. **3**What we have seen and heard, we also announce it to you so that you can have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. **4**We are writing these things so that our joy can be complete.

### The message: God is light

**5**This is the message that we have heard from him and announce to you: "God is light and there is no darkness in him at all." **6**If we claim, "We have fellowship with him," and live in the darkness, we are lying and do not act truthfully. **7**But if we live in the light in the same way as he is in the light, we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin. **8**If we claim, "We don't have any sin," we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. **9**But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we've done wrong. **10**If we claim, "We have never sinned," we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

### Living in the light

**2**My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you don't sin. But if you do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. **2**He is God's way of dealing with our sins, not only ours but the sins of the whole world. **3**This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commandments. **4**The one who claims, "I know him," while not keeping his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in this person. **5**But the love of God is truly perfected in whoever keeps his word. This is how we know we are in him. **6**The one who claims to remain in him ought to live in the same way as he lived.

**7**Dear friends, I'm not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the message you heard. **8**On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light already shines. **9**The one who claims to be in the light while hating a brother or sister is in the darkness even now.

2:5 Jn 14:23; 1Jn 2:3, 1Jn 4:12, 1Jn 4:13; 2:6 Mt 11:29; Jn 13:15, 1Jn 15:4; 1Pt 2:21; 1Jn 3:6; 2:7 Jn 13:34; 1Jn 2:24, 1Jn 3:11; 2Jn 1:5-6; 2:8 Jn 1:9, Jn 8:12, 1Jn 13:34; Ro 13:12; Eph 5:8; 2:9 1Jn 2:11, 1Jn 3:15, 1Jn 4:20

1:1-4 The letter's prologue establishes that what is written agrees with what the apostles witnessed and proclaimed from the beginning about the word of life, who is God's Son, Jesus Christ (cf. John 1:1-18). His actual life—heard . . . seen, and handled—reveals the terms of eternal life, or a life with God (cf. 1 John 2:25; 3:15; 5:13, 20) that "remains forever" (1 John 2:17). *fellowship*: A close partnership between God and the community is mediated by the apostolic witness.

1:5-3:10 The letter's first theme is *God is light* (1 John 1:5), an OT metaphor of a holy God who alone saves creation from the "darkness" of death and sin (cf. Ps 27:1; Isa 9:1-7; Ezra 9:8) and reveals the truth that exposes the "darkness" of theological falsehood (cf. 2 Sam 22:29) and hatred of one another.

1:5 *message*: a report of what is heard from those who witnessed Jesus (cf. 1 John 3:11; John 8:12).

1:6-2:2 *If we claim*: an expression that introduces a series of three false boasts (1 John 1:6, 8, 10) to which responses are made (1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2). This clarifies the need for Christians in order to live in the light of God to be rid of every sin.

1:9 *we confess our sins*: The public admission of one's sins within a congregational setting assures the forgiveness of a faithful and just God.

2:1 *you don't sin*: Although recognizing that believers can sin, 1 John assumes that God's children are reborn to live a sinless life (cf. 1 John 3:3-10). *the righteous one*: refers to

Isaiah's suffering servant (Isa 53:11). 1 John applies advocate to Jesus' present ministry (cf. Rom 8:34) rather than to the Holy Spirit (see John 14:16, 26; 15:26).

2:2 *not only ours*: Christ's sacrifice for sin extends specifically to Christians, whose sins undermine their relationship with God. His blood "cleanses us from every sin" (1 John 1:7; 4:9-10; cf. Lev 16:16; Rom 3:25; Heb 9:14).

2:3-11 *The one who claims*: an expression that introduces three spiritual tests (1 John 2:4, 6, 9), the passing of which determines whether God's word truly remains in one who professes the faith.

2:4 *"I know him"*: The claim to know Jesus, and therefore the word of God he revealed (cf. 1 John 4:8), is tested by whether his commandments are kept (cf. John 13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:12-17).

2:5 *love of God*: The believer's love for God is perfected by obedience to God's word.

2:6 *remain in him*: The claim to experience Jesus' presence is tested by whether one imitates his faithful life (cf. Jas 2:1; 1 Pet 2:18).

2:8 *The new commandment*, which is to love one another (see John 13:34), is applied to a community whose love supplies evidence that the true light of God has already been experienced.

2:9 *to be in the light while hating*: Covenant keeping is tested by whether the community loves one another.

1:1 Lk 24:39;  
Jn 1:1, Jn 1:14,  
Jn 20:27;  
2Pt 1:16  
1:2 Jn 1:1, Jn 1:4,  
Jn 11:25, Jn 14:6;  
1Jn 3:5  
1:3 1Co 1:9;  
1Jn 1:1, 1Jn 1:7  
1:4 Jn 3:29,  
Jn 15:11,  
Jn 16:24; 1Jn 2:1,  
2Jn 1:12  
1:5 Ps 27:1;  
Jn 8:12;  
1Ti 6:16;  
Jas 1:7, 1Jn 3:11  
1:6 Ps 82:5;  
Prv 4:19,  
1Jn 2:4, 1Jn 2:11,  
1Jn 4:20  
1:7 Is 2:5;  
Eph 1:7;  
Heb 9:14;  
Rev 1:5,  
Rev 7:14  
1:8 Job 15:14;  
Prv 20:9;  
Ecc 7:20; Jas 3:2;  
1Jn 2:4  
1:9 Ps 32:5;  
Prv 28:13  
1:10 1Jn 5:38;  
1Jn 1:8, 1Jn 2:13,  
1Jn 5:10  
2:1 Jn 5:14,  
Jn 8:11, Jn 14:16;  
Ro 8:34; 1Ti 2:5  
2:2 Jn 1:29,  
Jn 4:42; Ro 3:25;  
2Co 5:18;  
1Jn 4:10  
2:3 Jn 14:15,  
Jn 15:10, 1Jn 2:4,  
1Jn 2:5, 1Jn 4:13  
2:4 1Ti 1:6;  
1Jn 1:6, 1Jn 1:8,  
1Jn 3:6, 1Jn 4:20

2:10 1Jn 2:11;  
1Jn 3:14  
2:11 1Jn 12:35;  
2Co 4:4; 2Pt 1:9;  
1Jn 1:6, 1Jn 2:9

2:12 Ac 10:43;  
Ac 13:38;  
1Jn 1:9, 1Jn 2:1

2:13 1Jn 1:1,  
1Jn 14:7, 1Jn 1:1,  
1Jn 2:14,  
1Jn 3:12

2:14 1Jn 1:1,  
1Jn 5:38, 1Jn 8:31;  
Eph 6:10;  
1Jn 2:13

2:15 Ro 12:2;  
Jas 4:4

2:16 Prv 27:20;  
Ro 13:14;  
Eph 2:3

2:17 1Co 7:31

2:18 Mt 24:5,  
Mt 24:24;  
1Jn 2:22, 1Jn 4:3;  
2Jn 7

2:19 Dt 13:13;  
Ac 20:30;  
1Co 11:19

2:20 Mt 13:11;  
Mk 1:24;  
1Jn 14:26;  
2Co 1:21;  
1Jn 2:27

2:21 2Pt 1:12

2:22 1Jn 2:18,  
1Jn 4:3, 2Jn 7

2:23 1Jn 8:19;  
1Jn 4:15; 2Jn 9

<sup>10</sup>The person loving a brother and sister stays in the light, and there is nothing in the light that causes a person to stumble. <sup>11</sup>But the person who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and lives in the darkness, and doesn't know where to go because the darkness blinds the eyes.

### Motivations for writing

<sup>12</sup>Little children, I'm writing to you because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus' name. <sup>13</sup>Parents, I'm writing to you because you have known the one who has existed from the beginning. Young people, I'm writing to you because you have conquered the evil one. <sup>14</sup>Little children, I write to you because you know the Father. Parents, I write to you because you have known the one who has existed from the beginning. Young people, I write to you because you are strong, the word of God remains in you, and you have conquered the evil one.

### Warning about the world

<sup>15</sup>Don't love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in them. <sup>16</sup>Everything that is in the world—the craving for whatever the body feels, the craving for whatever the eyes see and the arrogant pride in one's possessions—is not of the Father but is of the world. <sup>17</sup>And the world and its cravings are passing away, but the person who does the will of God remains forever.

### Remaining in the truth

<sup>18</sup>Little children, it is the last hour. Just as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. This is how we know it is the last hour. <sup>19</sup>They went out from us, but they were not really part of us. If they had been part of us, they would have stayed with us. But by going out from us, they showed they all are not part of us. <sup>20</sup>But you have an anointing from the holy one, and all of you know the truth. <sup>21</sup>I don't write to you because you don't know the truth but because you know it. You know that no lie comes from the truth. <sup>22</sup>Who is the liar? Isn't it the person who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This person is the antichrist: the one who denies the Father and the Son. <sup>23</sup>Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father, but the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

**2:10** *stumble*: Hate includes actions that cause others to sin (cf. Matt 18:7; Rom 14:13; 1 Pet 2:8).

**2:12-27** Christians are addressed in two parallel sections (1 John 2:13-14a; 14b-27) as the *Little children* of a spiritual "household" (cf. 1 Tim 3:15). This household is organized according to spiritual maturity by three family metaphors: parents, young people, and little children.

**2:13a, 14b** *Parents*: The first to accept the apostolic witness of Jesus from the *beginning* are the community's spiritual leaders (cf. 1 John 1:1-2).

**2:13b, 14c-17** *Young people*: The indicator of spiritual strength is their defeat of the *evil one*. *evil one*: also known as "the devil" (1 John 3:8, 10), God's chief adversary, and ruler of "the whole world" (1 John 5:19; cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Rev 12-13). The conquest of the evil one is interpreted as the effect of the *word of God* [that] *remains in you* (1 John 2:14c). *the word of God* is the apostolic witness to Jesus' revelation of God (cf. 1 John 1:1-3; see intro.). This spiritual warfare pits *Everything that is in the world* (1 John 2:16; see 1 John 3:1), which is *passing away* (1 John 2:17a), against this word about God, which *remains forever* (1 John 2:17b). *The cravings* of a worldly life—what *the body feels and sees*], and *pride in one's possessions* (1 John 2:16)—may echo the three temptations of Jesus (cf. Matt 4:1-11). To "live in the same way as he lived" (1 John 2:6) means that those who know Jesus must resist the same temptations he resisted.

**2:14a, 18-27** *Little children*: The congregation's newest members have a relationship with God but are also

the most vulnerable to the false claims of rival Christian groups. In 1 John 2:18-27 this concern is elaborated on as an urgent response to the threat of *antichrists*.

**2:18** *the last hour*: comes before "the last day" when Jesus returns to resurrect true believers for eternal life (see 1 John 2:28; cf. John 6:39-40; 11:24); it's characterized by theological error and internal conflict (cf. Matt 24:11, 24; Mark 13:21-22; 2 Tim 3:1-9). *antichrists*: those who claim to be Christians but reject the apostolic message about Jesus (1 John 2:22-23). The prophecy of a coming *antichrist* may refer to the unnamed leader of this group or one who falsely claims to be the messiah (see 2 John sidebar, "The Antichrist").

**2:19** *They went out from us*: refers to a departure from the apostolic message about Jesus rather than to a division within the community (cf. Deut 13:13; Acts 1:16).

**2:20** *anointing*: either a shared experience of Spirit baptism that imparts knowledge of the truth, or a public rite of initiation based on the teaching received by new converts (see 1 John 2:27; cf. 2 John 1). The divine source and holy effect of either are the same: God discloses truth to believers so they can "remain in relationship" to God (1 John 2:27).

**2:22** *liar*: The *antichrist*[s] lie is that Jesus isn't God's Son, the Christ. To accept the apostolic testimony about Jesus is to accept his revelation of God's word (see 1 John 1:1-2).

**2:23** *confesses*: public acceptance of the apostolic message about Jesus "from the beginning" (1 John 2:24; see 1 John 1:1; cf. Rom 10:9), which delivers God's promise of eternal life (1 John 2:25; see 1 John 1:2).

<sup>24</sup>As for you, what you heard from the beginning must remain in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you will also remain in relationship to the Son and in the Father. <sup>25</sup>This is the promise that he himself gave us: eternal life. <sup>26</sup>I write these things to you about those who are attempting to deceive you. <sup>27</sup>As for you, the anointing that you received from him remains on you, and you don't need anyone to teach you the truth. But since his anointing teaches you about all things (it's true and not a lie), remain in relationship to him just as he taught you.

### Remaining until Jesus appears

<sup>28</sup>And now, little children, remain in relationship to Jesus, so that when he appears we can have confidence and not be ashamed in front of him when he comes. <sup>29</sup>If you know that he is righteous, you also know that every person who practices righteousness is born from him.

**3** See what kind of love the Father has given to us in that we should be called God's children, and that is what we are! Because the world didn't recognize him, it doesn't recognize us.

<sup>3</sup>Dear friends, now we are God's children, and it hasn't yet appeared what we will be. We know that when he appears we will be like him because we'll see him as he is. <sup>3</sup>And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure. <sup>4</sup>Every person who practices sin commits an act of rebellion, and sin is rebellion. <sup>5</sup>You know that he appeared to take away sins, and there is no sin in him. <sup>6</sup>Every person who remains in relationship to him does not sin. Any person who sins has not seen him or known him.

### Sinny/Not Sinny

After calling those who say they don't sin self-deluded liars (see 1 John 1:8, 10), it seems like a stunning flip-flop when 1 John asserts that God's children "don't practice sin" (1 John 3:4-10). This same tension is found again in the letter's concluding affirmations about the Christian life. While God forgives the believer's sins in response to the congregation's prayers (1 John 5:16-17; cf. 1 John 1:8-9), those born of God don't sin (1 John 5:18; cf. 1 John 3:6, 9). This tension between sinning and not sinning is characteristic of the Christian life. It describes the experience of those who live in the in-between time, the time following Jesus' sacrifice for sin but preceding his return, when true believers will become like him and be incapable of sin (1 John 3:9). The different levels of spiritual maturity within the congregation acknowledged by 1 John (1 John 2:12-14a, 14b-27), together with the use of present tenses (e.g., "does not sin") in this passage, suggest that this inward tension is resolved progressively during this in-between time among those who remain in loving fellowship with a faithful God (1 John 3:6, 9; cf. 1 John 4:16-21) and with one another (cf. 1 John 3:18-24). The congregation achieves this resolution of discord by cultivating the spiritual discipline of not sinning until Christ's return, when they will "be like him" (1 John 3:2) and can't sin (1 John 3:9; cf. 1 John 3:5).

2:26 *deceive you*: 1 John is written not to initiate readers into the truth already but to call out liars or antichrists who want to deceive them. They belong to the devil, "the deceiver" (cf. Rev 12:9; 20:10), rather than to God (see 1 John 3:7; 2 John 7).

2:28-3:10 This climactic section of the letter's exposition that "God is light" (see 1 John 1:5) proclaims the future victory of God over sin and falsehood (1 John 2:28-3:2). 1 John encourages Christians to live without sin (1 John 3:3-6, 9) and deception (1 John 3:7).

2:28 *when he appears... when he comes*: Jesus' second coming will prove the truth of the apostolic message based on his first appearance (see 1 John 1:2; cf. 1 John 2:24-27). *confidence*: The community's heartfelt awareness of being forgiven by God (cf. 1 John 3:21) anticipates their participation in God's coming victory (cf. 1 John 4:17; 5:14).

2:29 *born from him*: Christians are reborn as God's children with a new capacity to live righteous lives, free from the guilt and power of sin. *practices righteousness*: New birth is marked by purifying oneself (see 1 John 3:3) to "live in the same way as [Jesus] lived" (1 John 2:6).

3:1 *the world*: the comprehensive system of beliefs, values, and practices organized by the "evil one" (1 John 5:19) in opposition to God's word and will (cf. 1 John 2:17; 3:13; 4:5-6), but whose "works" have now been "destroyed" (see 1 John 3:8) and whose influence is "passing away" (cf. 1 John 2:17, 28; 5:18) since the arrival of God's Son (1 John 3:5, 8).

3:2 *now... hasn't yet*: This tension between the present and the future shapes NT teaching about one's experience of God's salvation and human frailty (cf. John 5:24-29). *we will be like him... see him as he is*: God's coming victory over sin promises transformation into Christlikeness (cf. 2 Cor 3:18; Phil 3:21; Col 3:4).

3:3 *purifies himself even as [Jesus] is pure*: Each believer proclaims the future prospect of personal transformation (1 John 3:2) by faithfully following Jesus' example. In Jesus the love of God is "truly perfected" (cf. 1 John 2:5-6; 3:16; 4:17) and there's "no sin" (cf. 1 John 3:5, 7).

3:4-10 *Every person*: God's children are contrasted with the devil's children in four ways (1 John 2:29b+3:4; 3:6; 3:7b+3:8a; 3:9a+3:10b). God's children purify themselves to be like Jesus (see 1 John 3:3), while the devil's children

2:24 Jn 14:23;  
1Jn 1:3, 1Jn 2:7;  
2Jn 9

2:25 Ti 1:2

2:26 Mk 13:22;  
Ac 20:30;  
1Ti 4:1; 1Jn 3:7;  
2Jn 7

2:27 Jn 14:26;  
1Jn 2:20

2:28 Col 3:4;  
1Th 2:19; 1Jn 3:2,  
1Jn 3:21,  
1Jn 4:17

2:29 Jn 1:13;  
1Jn 3:7, 1Jn 3:9,  
1Jn 4:7, 1Jn 5:1

3:1 Jn 1:12,  
Jn 3:16, 1Jn 16:3;  
1Jn 3:2

3:2 Jn 17:24;  
Ro 8:29;  
2Co 3:18;

2Pt 1:4; 1Jn 3:1

3:3 2Co 7:1;  
2Pt 3:14

3:4 Ro 4:15;  
1Jn 5:17

3:5 Jn 1:29;  
Jn 8:46;  
2Co 5:21;  
Heb 4:15;  
1Pt 2:22

3:6 1Jn 2:4,  
1Jn 3:9, 1Jn 5:18;  
3Jn 11

3:7 1Jn 2:1,  
1Jn 2:26, 1Jn 2:29  
3:8 Gn 3:15;  
Mt 13:38;  
Jn 8:44, Jn 12:31;  
Heb 2:14  
3:9 Jn 1:13;  
1Pt 1:23; 1Jn 2:29,  
1Jn 4:7, 1Jn 5:18  
3:10 Mt 13:38;  
Jn 8:44, Jn 11:52;  
Ac 13:10; 1Jn 4:8  
3:11 1Jn 13:34;  
1Jn 1:5, 1Jn 2:7,  
1Jn 4:7, 2Jn 5:5  
3:12 Gn 4:8;  
Ps 38:20;  
Pv 29:10;  
Heb 11:4;  
Jud 11  
3:13 Lk 6:22;  
Jn 15:18-19,  
Jn 17:14  
3:14 1Jn 5:24;  
1Jn 2:9-10  
3:15 Mt 5:21-22;  
Rev 21:8  
3:16 Jn 10:11,  
Jn 15:13; Eph 5:2;  
Phi 2:17  
3:17 Dt 15:7;  
1Jn 4:20  
3:18 Eze 33:31;  
Ro 12:9  
3:19 Heb 10:22;  
1Jn 3:14  
3:20 Heb 4:13  
3:21 2Co 1:12;  
1Jn 2:28, 1Jn 5:14  
3:22 Mt 7:7,  
Mt 21:22;  
Jn 8:29, Jn 15:7;  
Heb 13:21  
3:23 Jn 6:29,  
Jn 13:34, Jn 15:12;  
1Jn 3:11  
3:24 Ro 8:9,  
1Th 4:8, 1Jn 2:6,  
1Jn 4:13

### Practicing sin or righteousness

<sup>7</sup>Little children, make sure no one deceives you. The person who practices righteousness is righteous, in the same way that Jesus is righteous. <sup>8</sup>The person who practices sin belongs to the devil, because the devil has been sinning since the beginning. God's Son appeared for this purpose: to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup>Those born from God don't practice sin because God's DNA<sup>a</sup> remains in them. They can't sin because they are born from God. <sup>10</sup>This is how God's children and the devil's children are apparent: everyone who doesn't practice righteousness is not from God, including the person who doesn't love a brother or sister. <sup>11</sup>This is the message that you heard from the beginning: love each other. <sup>12</sup>Don't behave like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he kill him? He killed him because his own works were evil, but the works of his brother were righteous.

### Loving each other

<sup>13</sup>Don't be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. <sup>14</sup>We know that we have transferred from death to life, because we love the brothers and sisters. The person who does not love remains in death. <sup>15</sup>Everyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. <sup>16</sup>This is how we know love: Jesus laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup>But if a person has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need and that person doesn't care—how can the love of God remain in him?

<sup>18</sup>Little children, let's not love with words or speech but with action and truth. <sup>19</sup>This is how we will know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts in God's presence. <sup>20</sup>Even if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things. <sup>21</sup>Dear friends, if our hearts don't condemn us, we have confidence in relationship to God. <sup>22</sup>We receive whatever we ask from him because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. <sup>23</sup>This is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love each other as he commanded us. <sup>24</sup>The person who keeps his commandments remains in God and God remains in him; and this is how we know that he remains in us, because of the Spirit that he has given to us.

<sup>a</sup>Or *genetic character*

are of the world. Since God is light and doesn't tolerate darkness (=sin, falsehood) of any kind (see 1 John 1:5), those who remain in God are recognized by their practices of not sinning (cf. Rom 6:1-14, 20-23), of loving one another (cf. 1 John 3:11-5:12), and of remaining in the truth (cf. 1 John 3:19).

3:9 *God's DNA*: or "God's nature." The Greek term *sperma* can refer to "genetic character" and is used here as a metaphor for the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet 1:3; Gen 4:1, 25). New birth (see 1 John 2:29-3:1) transforms a person into God's child with a natural capacity for righteousness. *don't practice sin . . . can't sin*: This abrupt shift from the practice of not sinning to an inability to sin points readers to the coming victory of God (cf. 1 John 2:28), when God's children will be like Jesus (1 John 3:2), in whom there's "no sin" (1 John 3:5).

3:10 *who doesn't love a brother or sister*: conclusion of the letter's commentary on "God is light": those who walk in the light will love rather than hate a brother or sister.

3:11-5:12 The letter's second theme is *God is love* (1 John 4:8, 16). God's love is revealed in Jesus' self-sacrifice (1 John 4:10) and experienced by those who remain in fellowship with God. 1 John's development of this theme demonstrates that God's self-giving love and the community's mutual love are inseparable. Those who are reborn of God and remain in God will love as God loves (1 John 4:7-12).

3:11 *message*: See 1 John 1:5. *from the beginning*: See 1 John 1:1-4. *love each other*: probably love for other

believers (see 1 John 4:20-5:2) rather than for everyone (cf. Matt 5:43-48); this is the principal application of the community's belief that God is love (1 John 2:10; 3:18, 23; 4:7-12; 2 John 5; John 13:33-35; 15:12-17; 21:15-17).

3:12 *Cain*: negative example of those who do "the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8), because he hated his brother (1 John 3:10), despised his righteousness (1 John 3:12), and murdered him (1 John 3:15; see Gen 4:1-16; cf. John 8:39-44). *evil one*: See 1 John 2:13b.

3:16-19 *This is how we know . . . This is how we will know*: The practice of self-sacrificial love for each other reassures believers of God's love for them.

3:19-21 *hearts*: metaphor of one's conscience that prompts good (*reassure(s)*) or bad (*condemn(s)*) choices. When true believers doubt their relationship with God, God overrides their self-condemnation through the community's selfless love for each other and obedience to God's commandments (cf. Jas 1:5-8; 4:8-12; Rom 8:1).

3:22-24 *We receive whatever we ask*: an important theme in John's Gospel (John 14:14-16; 15:7, 16; 16:23-26). Abiding in God and obeying God are of a piece (1 John 3:24; see 1 John 1:5-7). God's command to love each other is combined with belief in the apostolic witness to Jesus (see 1 John 2:12, 18-27).

3:24 *Spirit*: God's Spirit is given to those who remain in God because of their obedience to God's commandments (see 1 John 3:23; 4:13). The Spirit's role in 1 John is to testify to a covenant relationship with God.

**Testing the spirits**

**4** Dear friends, don't believe every spirit. Test the spirits to see if they are from God because many false prophets have gone into the world. **2**This is how you know if a spirit comes from God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come as a human<sup>b</sup> is from God, **3**and every spirit that doesn't confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and is now already in the world. **4**You are from God, little children, and you have defeated these people because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. **5**They are from the world. So they speak from the world's point of view and the world listens to them. **6**We are from God. The person who knows God listens to us. Whoever is not from God doesn't listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

**Love and God**

**7**Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. **8**The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love. **9**This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him. **10**This is love: it is not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as the sacrifice that deals with our sins.

**11**Dear friends, if God loved us this way, we also ought to love each other. **12**No one has ever seen God. If we love each other, God remains in us and his love is made perfect in us. **13**This is how we know we remain in him and he remains in us, because he has given us a measure of his Spirit. **14**We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the savior of the world. **15**If any of us confess that Jesus is God's Son, God remains in us and we remain in God. **16**We have known and have believed the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who remain in love remain in God and God remains in them. **17**This is how love has been perfected in us, so that we can have confidence on the Judgment Day, because we are exactly the same as God is in this world. **18**There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear expects punishment. The person who is afraid has not been

<sup>b</sup>Or come in the flesh

4:1 Jer 29:8;  
Mt 7:15;  
1Th 5:21;  
2Pt 2:1; 1Jn 2:18  
4:2 Jn 1:14;  
1Co 12:3;  
1Jn 2:23, 1Jn 4:3;  
2Jn 7  
4:3 1Jn 2:18,  
1Jn 2:22; 2Jn 7  
4:4 Jn 12:31  
4:5 Jn 8:23,  
Jn 15:19; 1Jn 17:14;  
Jn 17:16  
4:6 Jn 8:47,  
Jn 14:17,  
Jn 15:26,  
Jn 18:37;  
1Co 14:37  
4:7 1Jn 2:29,  
1Jn 3:11, 1Jn 5:1  
4:8 2Co 13:11;  
1Jn 4:16  
4:9 Jn 3:16;  
Ro 5:8; 1Jn 4:10,  
1Jn 5:11  
4:10 Ro 3:25,  
Ro 5:8, Ro 5:10;  
1Jn 2:2, 1Jn 4:9  
4:11 1Jn 13:34,  
Jn 15:12,  
1Jn 3:11,  
1Jn 3:23  
4:12 Ex 33:20;  
Jn 1:18; 1Ti 6:16;  
1Jn 2:5, 1Jn 4:20  
4:13 1Jn 3:24  
4:14 Lk 2:11;  
Jn 3:17; Jn 4:42,  
Jn 15:27  
4:15 Ro 10:9;  
1Jn 2:23, 1Jn 4:2,  
1Jn 5:1, 1Jn 5:5  
4:16 1Jn 4:8,  
1Jn 4:12  
4:17 Mt 10:15;  
1Jn 2:5, 1Jn 2:28  
4:18 Ro 8:15

4:1-6 According to Jewish teaching, God the creator allows two cosmic spirits to compete for a community's allegiance—one whose impulse is toward God's truth and life, the other toward error and death (1 John 4:6). The influence of each spirit on the community is largely determined by teachers. Those taught by false prophets (1 John 4:1; cf. 1 John 2:18-19) are inspired by the spirit of error; then the world's point of view wins out (1 John 4:5; see 1 John 2:15; 3:1). Those taught from God will listen to teachers who are inspired by the Spirit of truth (1 John 4:6); these teachers bear the apostolic message (see 1 John 1:1-5).

4:2 confesses that Jesus Christ: A hallmark of God's people is their Spirit-prompted confession that Jesus is from God and so is inseparable from God in the revelation of truth, the forgiveness of sin, and the victory over death (see 1 John 1:1-4; 5:6-12; cf. 1 Cor 12:3), all of which are secured by acts of divine love.

4:4 defeated these people: See 1 John 5:4-5. The community's confession of faith in Jesus (1 John 4:2) is a public announcement that God's victory over the world (and thus over error, sin, and hatred) has already been won with Jesus Christ (1 John 4:2).

4:6 listens to us: the message of what the apostles saw and heard of Jesus (see 1 John 1:1-5). Spirit of truth: See 1 John 5:6; cf. John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13.

4:7-12 The pivotal passage in the letter's elaboration of its second theme: God is love. God's love, revealed in the Son's self-sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:10), is inseparable

from the love of God's children for each other (1 John 4:7-8). Since No one has ever seen God, the love of believers for each other provides real evidence of their relationship with and belief in God, who is love (1 John 4:12).

4:13-16 God's sending of God's Son provides knowledge of divine love and is also an example of love in action. Jesus is God's Son, who forms an inseparable whole with his Father to reveal God's truth and to save the world for God from sin, the evil one, and death.

4:13 Spirit: See 1 John 3:24.

4:14-15 seen... testify: The community's acceptance of the apostolic testimony that Jesus is God's Son, whom God sent to be the savior of the world, is the condition of remaining in fellowship with God (see 1 John 1:1-3; 4:6).

4:17-21 The perfection of the community's experience of God's love prepares it for the future Judgment Day without fear of rejection (see 1 John 2:28-3:2).

4:17 love has been perfected in us: The Greek word for "perfect" refers to the goal of a process. The goal of God's love is the community's self-sacrificial love for each other. Judgment Day: The biblical idea of Judgment Day is that God will judge every person's works against the standard of God's word to determine whether that person will receive eternal life or destruction (1 John 2:28; cf. Zeph 1:14-18; Rom 2:5-11; Rev 20:11-15). According to 1 John, these works include loving one another and a confession that Jesus is God's Son (see 1 John 3:23; cf. Rev 14:4-5).

4:18 There is no fear in love: that is, fear of God's negative judgment.

4:19 1Jn 4:10  
 4:20 1Jn 1:6,  
 1Jn 2:4, 1Jn 2:9,  
 1Jn 3:17, 1Jn 4:12  
 4:21 1Jn 3:34;  
 1Jn 3:11  
 5:1 1Jn 8:42;  
 Ac 8:37; 1Jn 2:22,  
 1Jn 2:29, 1Jn 4:15  
 5:2 1Jn 2:5,  
 1Jn 3:14  
 5:3 Mt 11:30;  
 1Jn 14:15; 1Jn 2:3;  
 2Jn 6  
 5:4 1Jn 16:33;  
 1Jn 4:4, 1Jn 5:5  
 5:5 1Jn 4:15,  
 1Jn 5:1  
 5:6 1Jn 14:17,  
 1Jn 15:26, 1Jn 16:13,  
 1Jn 19:34  
 5:7 1Jn 1:1;  
 Rev 19:13  
 5:8 Heb 13:12;  
 1Jn 5:6  
 5:9 Mt 3:17;  
 1Jn 5:32, 1Jn 5:34,  
 1Jn 5:37, 1Jn 8:18  
 5:10 1Jn 3:33;  
 Ro 8:16; Ga 4:6;  
 1Jn 1:10  
 5:11 1Jn 1:4,  
 1Jn 17:3; 1Jn 2:25,  
 1Jn 4:9, 1Jn 5:13  
 5:12 1Jn 3:36,  
 1Jn 5:24  
 5:13 1Jn 20:31;  
 1Jn 3:23, 1Jn 16:11  
 5:14 Mt 7:7;  
 1Jn 14:13;  
 1Jn 3:21-22  
 5:16 Jer 7:16,  
 Jer 14:11;  
 Heb 6:4,  
 Heb 10:26;  
 Jas 5:15  
 5:17 1Jn 3:4,  
 1Jn 5:16

made perfect in love. <sup>19</sup>We love because God first loved us. <sup>20</sup>If anyone says, I love God, and hates a brother or sister, he is a liar, because the person who doesn't love a brother or sister who can be seen can't love God, who can't be seen. <sup>21</sup>This commandment we have from him: Those who claim to love God ought to love their brother and sister also.

**5** Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God. Whoever loves someone who is a parent loves the child born to the parent. <sup>2</sup>This is how we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep God's commandments. <sup>3</sup>This is the love of God: we keep God's commandments. God's commandments are not difficult, <sup>4</sup>because everyone who is born from God defeats the world. And this is the victory that has defeated the world: our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who defeats the world? Isn't it the one who believes that Jesus is God's Son?

### Testimony about Jesus

<sup>6</sup>This is the one who came by water and blood: Jesus Christ. Not by water only but by water and blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. <sup>7</sup>The three are testifying—<sup>8</sup>the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and the three are united in agreement. <sup>9</sup>If we receive human testimony, God's testimony is greater, because this is what God testified: he has testified about his Son. <sup>10</sup>The one who believes in God's Son has the testimony within; the one who doesn't believe God has made God a liar, because that one has not believed the testimony that God gave about his Son. <sup>11</sup>And this is the testimony: God gave eternal life to us, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup>The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn't have God's Son does not have life.

### Confidence in prayer

<sup>13</sup>I write these things to you who believe in the name of God's Son so that you can know that you have eternal life. <sup>14</sup>This is the confidence that we have in our relationship with God: If we ask for anything in agreement with his will, he listens to us. <sup>15</sup>If we know that he listens to whatever we ask, we know that we have received what we asked from him. <sup>16</sup>If anyone sees a brother or sister committing a sin that does not result in death, they should pray, and God will give life to them—that is, to those who commit sins that don't result in death. There is a sin that results in death—I'm not saying that you should pray about that. <sup>17</sup>Every unrighteous action is sin, but there is a sin that does not result in death.

**4:19** *We love because God first loved us:* God is the source and example of true love, which is the necessary condition and principal motivation of the community's mutual love (see 1 John 4:21).

**4:20** *liar:* the so-called Christian, whose public actions and personal confession don't match. The test of faith is loving others (see 1 John 2:22; cf. 1 John 1:10; 2:4; 5:10; 1 Cor 5:11). **5:1-5** Right belief in Jesus as God's Son (1 John 5:4-5; see 1 John 5:6-12) and the possession of mutual love (1 John 5:1-2; see 1 John 4:7-21) are the twin marks of new birth (see 1 John 2:29-3:1; 3:23).

**5:1** *Jesus is the Christ:* See 1 John 2:22.

**5:3** *love of God ... keep God's commandments:* recalls the OT Shema (Deut 6:4-5): to confess God as the only God obligates the covenant community to "love God" as an act of its obedience.

**5:4** *defeats the world:* See 1 John 4:4.

**5:6-12** The confession that "Jesus is the Christ" (1 John 5:1) is elaborated on here: Jesus is God's Son by whom we have eternal life with God, his Father (see 1 John 1:2-3; 3:13-14; 5:11-12).

**5:6** *water and blood:* probably refers to Jesus' entire mission from beginning (*water*=baptism) to end (*blood*=crucifixion; see 1 John 1:7). *Spirit ... testifies:* The

Spirit's witness secures the truth that Jesus is God's Son (cf. Rom 1:4), which is confirmed by apostolic ("human") testimony (see 1 John 5:9).

**5:10** *testimony within:* inward experience of the Spirit's witness to Jesus (1 John 5:6; cf. Rom 8:9-17). *liar:* See 1 John 2:22; 4:20.

**5:11-12** *this is the testimony:* The apostolic testimony of Jesus as "the word of life" (1 John 1:1-2) discloses the nature and terms of *eternal life*. The present tense of the verbs *has life ... does not have* tells us that *eternal life* is a way of living rather than an expression of longevity.

**5:13-21** Similar to the benedictions in other NT letters, 1 John concludes with a series of affirmations and exhortations about the Christian life.

**5:13** *I write these things:* The purpose for writing, and therefore for reading, 1 John is to *know that you have eternal life* (see 1 John 5:11-12). See also 1 John 1:4; 2:1; 2:7-8; 2:13-14; 2:26.

**5:14-17** *sin that results in death:* See 1 John 1:5-2:2. The community's prayers include petitions of forgiveness for members who sin. Excluded are petitions for those engaged in mortal sins, because such acts indicate those members hate others (1 John 3:14) or have deserted the faith.

**Be on guard**

<sup>18</sup>We know that everyone born from God does not sin, but the ones born from God guard themselves,<sup>c</sup> and the evil one cannot touch them. <sup>19</sup>We know we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. <sup>20</sup>We know that God's Son has come and has given us understanding to know the one who is true. We are in the one who is true by being in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. <sup>21</sup>Little children, guard yourselves from idols!

**5:18** Jas 1:27;  
1Jn 2:13, 1Jn 3:9;  
Jud 1:21  
**5:19** Jn 12:31  
**5:20** Lk 24:45;  
Jn 14:9, Jn 17:3;  
1Jn 5:11; Rev 3:7  
**5:21** 1Co 10:14;  
1Jn 2:1

<sup>c</sup>Or *but the one who is born from God guards him from sin*

**5:18-20a** *everyone born from God does not sin*: See sidebar, "Sinning/Not Sinning" at 1 John 3. *evil one*: See 1 John 2:13b; 3:12. Believers are *from God* and therefore *are in the one who is true by being in his Son*; as such, they are out of range as a target of the evil one's influence.

**5:20b-21** *guard yourselves from idols*: The letter's concluding benediction recalls God's way of salvation disclosed on Mount Sinai: If the *true God* is the God who alone gives *eternal life* (see Exod 20:2), then the community should worship nothing else (see Exod 20:3; cf. Acts 15:19-20).

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# 2 JOHN

2 John is written in the literary form of most Pauline letters: It opens with a greeting (2 John 1-3) followed by a thanksgiving for the recipients that suggests a hint of their spiritual crisis (2 John 4); its body offers instruction and encouragement for dealing with this crisis (2 John 5-11), before concluding with a benediction (2 John 12-13). This letter's special vocabulary (e.g., "truth," "love," "remains") and occasion (a congregation divided by false teaching) remind us of 1 John, and the church has read the two letters together since the second century.

The author's identity as "the elder" (2 John 1; cf. 3 John 1) suggests he holds a position of leadership within the community. 2 John was written by someone who wanted to safeguard the apostolic message he has passed on to his readers (see 1 John 1:5; 3:11). The promise of a future

"face-to-face" conversation (2 John 12) is an exercise in spiritual authority, since the implied purpose of the elder's house call is to make certain his letter's warning (2 John 7-11) is heeded!

The letter is written to alert readers to the potential threat of "deceivers" (2 John 7), and one in particular called "the antichrist" (2 John 7), whose refusal to confess the apostolic "teaching about Christ" (2 John 9; see 1 John 1:1-2) could influence real Christians and undermine the future prospect of their "full reward" (2 John 8; cf. 1 John 3:2). In fact, in an effort to curb the influence of the group that has deserted the faith, the elder now limits the community's command to love one another (2 John 5-6) by instructing them not to extend hospitality to anyone who doesn't affirm this apostolic rule of faith (2 John 10-11).

## **I. Greeting Those Who Remain in the Truth (1-3)**

## **II. Thanksgiving for Those Who Remain in the Truth (4)**

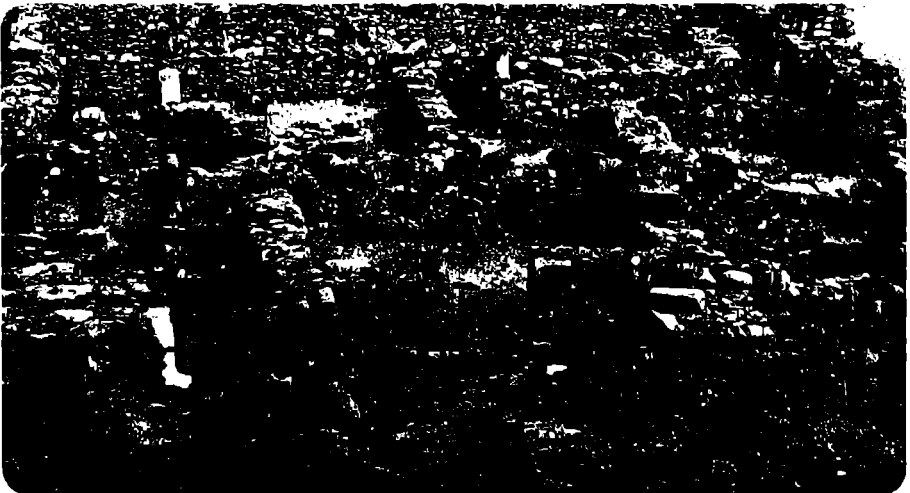
## **III. Body of Instruction (5-11)**

## **A. God's command: Live in love (5-6)**

## **B. Elder's warning: But don't love deceivers (7-11)**

## **IV. Benediction (12-13)**

*Robert W. Wall*



Houses in Capernaum  
Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

1 In 8:32;  
1Ti 2:4; 1Ph 5:1;  
2Jn 13; 3Jn 1

7 1In 2:18,  
1Jn 2:22,  
1Jn 4:1-3

8 Mt 24:4;  
Mk 13:9;  
1Co 3:8;  
Heb 10:35

9 1n 7:16;  
1Jn 2:23

10 Ro 16:17;  
1Co 5:11;  
2Th 3:6; 1Ti 3:10

## Greeting

<sup>1</sup>From the elder.

To the chosen gentlewoman and her children, whom I truly love (and I am not the only one, but also all who know the truth), <sup>2</sup>because of the truth that remains with us and will be with us forever.

<sup>3</sup>Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, will be ours who live in truth and love.

## Love each other

<sup>4</sup>I was overjoyed to find some of your children living in the truth, just as we had been commanded by the Father. <sup>5</sup>Now, dear friends, I am requesting that we love each other. It's not as though I'm writing a new command to you, but it's one we have had from the beginning. <sup>6</sup>This is love: that we live according to his commands. This is the command that you heard from the beginning: live in love.

## Reject false teachers

<sup>7</sup>Many deceivers have gone into the world who do not confess that Jesus Christ came as a human being. This kind of person is the deceiver and the antichrist. <sup>8</sup>Watch yourselves so that you don't lose what we've worked for but instead receive a full reward. <sup>9</sup>Anyone who goes too far and does not continue in the teaching about Christ does not have God. Whoever continues in this teaching has both the Father and the Son. <sup>10</sup>Whoever comes to you who does not affirm this teaching should

*The Antichrist* Popular visions of the end time that feature a deceitful yet powerful figure who conspires against but is ultimately destroyed by God draw creatively from 1–2 John's references to "the antichrist" (1 John 2:18–19; 2 John 7–8; cf. Matt 24:11; 2 Thess 2:3–4, 8–9; Rev 13). As a personal agent of the evil one (see Rev 13), this "antichrist" seeks to deceive people into thinking that the gospel is a lie (cf. Rev 12:9; 1 John 2:26; 2 John 7). The biblical profile of "the antichrist" drawn from 1–2 John would include: (1) he rejects the apostolic testimony of Jesus "as a human" (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7), which defines truth for the church (see 1 John 1:1–4); (2) he's a Christian insider who "went out from us" (1 John 2:19) to head a global movement of "many deceivers" (2 John 7); (3) his teaching, if accepted, makes it impossible to remain in God for eternal life; but (4) his attempt to influence believers who remain in God fails (see 1 John 5:18–19; cf. Rev 12:13–17).

1-3 The letter's greeting establishes the nature of the letter that follows. The sender is an *elder* (see intro.) whose love for the letter's recipients is based on a shared commitment to the apostolic testimony of Jesus. This is *the truth that remains with us... forever* (see 1 John 1:1–4, 5–6; 2:20–25, 26–27; cf. John 14:16–17). *chosen gentlewoman and her children*: The address is probably a metaphor for a leader and members of a Christian congregation, following the practice of referring to God's people as a female (see Rev 12:1–17; 21:2–9; cf. Isa 54; 1 Pet 5:13).

4 *some... children*: hints that the congregation is divided over the truth... *commanded by the Father* (see 1 John 3:23).

5-11 The letter's main body confronts the problem of a congregation divided over differing conceptions of the truth.

5 *new command*: See 1 John 2:3–11; cf. John 13:33–35. *from the beginning*: that is, from the beginning of the apostolic testimony about Jesus (see 1 John 1:1–4; 2:7, 24; 3:11; cf. Acts 1:21–22).

6 *live in love*: "live" translates from the Greek word for "walk" and refers to a way of daily living. The Christian way of life is focused by the daily practice of loving each other in the manner of Jesus (see 1 John 2:3–6; 5:2–3).

7 *deceivers... do not confess that Jesus Christ came as a human being*: that is, the one whom the apostles "heard... seen and our hands handled" (1 John 1:1; see 1 John 2:18–27). The Greek text uses the present tense

("Jesus Christ is coming as a human being"), but the CEB translates this phrase so that it parallels 1 John 4:2: "Jesus Christ has come as a human." The use of the present tense could indicate that the opponents also reject his future return (see 1 John 3:2; John 6:14; cf. 2 Pet 3:1–7). Whether past, present, or future, though, the primary emphasis falls on the crucial importance of confessing the incarnation of God's Son. *gone into the world*: The deceivers who first "went out from us" (1 John 2:19) now have gone into the world and thus pose an even greater threat to the mission of an expanding church. *the antichrist*: The addition of the definite article "the" to "antichrist" may refer to the leader of many antichrists or deceivers.

8 *lose... receive a full reward*: God's blessing extends beyond this life into the coming age. This blessing is given in proportion to good works, which include confession of Jesus and obedience to God's command to love each other (see 1 John 3:23; cf. John 5:17; 6:17–18; 1 Cor 3:14; Ruth 2:11–12).

9 *teaching about Christ*: a formal body of beliefs based on the apostles' eyewitness accounts of Jesus (see 1 John 1:1–2) and used as a guide for what people should teach about the Christian faith.

10 *should neither be received nor welcomed into your home*: The command to love each other does not extend to those who have deserted the faith, whose false beliefs may contaminate the community's "teaching about Christ" (2 John 9; see 3 John 5–8; cf. 1 Cor 5; 1 Tim 1:18–20).

neither be received nor welcomed into your home, <sup>11</sup>because welcoming people like that is the same thing as sharing in their evil actions.

***Plans to visit***

<sup>12</sup>I have a lot to tell you. I don't want to use paper and ink, but I hope to visit you and talk with you face-to-face, so that our joy can be complete.

***Final greeting***

<sup>13</sup>Your chosen sister's children greet you.

**12** *visit you*: a leader's site-visit to evaluate a community's spiritual progress (see 3 John 13; cf. Rom 1:10-11; 2 Cor 12:13-3:10; 1 Tim 3:14).

1995

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# 3 JOHN

3 John is a letter written by an anonymous spiritual leader who calls himself “the elder” (see intro. to 2 John). Its first recipient is another congregational leader named “Gaius,” whom he greets as someone “I truly love” (3 John 1; cf. 2 John 1) and as one of his “children” (3 John 4). These terms suggest a close working relationship. Gaius is elaborately praised as a model of hospitality, the moral signature of those who embrace the gospel’s “truth” (3 John 3-4) and remain faithful to God for eternal life. Nothing more is known of Gaius, or of Diotrephes (3 John 9), his combatant in what is plainly a power struggle with the elder for congregational leadership. (The struggle doesn’t appear to be over correct doctrine, unlike the elder’s battle with the antichrists of 2 John.)

3 John’s similar vocabulary and topics naturally place it alongside the other two Johannine letters in a grouping of seven NT books that’s often called the Catholic Letters. The enduring importance of 3 John within the church has been more practical than theological. The elder’s commendation of Gaius for extending hospitality and support to strangers provides a pattern for loving others, especially in caring for traveling missionaries (3 John 5-8). The elder’s admonition for choosing sides in an internal disagreement with Diotrephes (3 John 9-12), apparently over a particular application of hospitality outlined in 2 John 10-11, has provided an example of church discipline in settling internal disagreements between church leaders that might otherwise divide a congregation (cf. 1 Tim 5:17-25).



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**I. Greeting Gaius, Who Is Truly Loved (1-2)****II. Thanksgiving for Gaius' Faithfulness to the Truth (3-4)****III. Body of Exhortation (5-12)**

- A. The elder praises Gaius for his hospitality to coworkers (5-8)

- B. The elder denounces Diotrephes for his lack of selfless love (9-11)

- C. The elder commends the support of Demetrius (12)

**IV. Benediction (13-15)**

*Robert W. Wall*

**Greeting**

<sup>1</sup>From the elder.

To my dear friend Gaius, whom I truly love.

<sup>2</sup>Dear friend, I'm praying that all is well with you and that you enjoy good health in the same way that you prosper spiritually.

1 Ac 11:30,  
Ac 19:29,  
Ac 20:4,  
Ro 16:23; 2Jn 1:1

8 Mt 10:14,  
Mt 10:40;  
2Co 8:23

9 Mk 9:34;  
Lk 22:24; Phi 2:3

11 Ps 34:14,  
Ps 37:27;  
1In 2:29, 1In 3:6,  
1Jn 3:10

**Encouragement for Gaius**

<sup>3</sup>I was overjoyed when the brothers and sisters arrived and spoke highly of your faithfulness to the truth, shown by how you live according to the truth. <sup>4</sup>I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are living according to the truth. <sup>5</sup>Dear friend, you act faithfully in whatever you do for our brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers. <sup>6</sup>They spoke highly of your love in front of the church. You all would do well to provide for their journey in a way that honors God, <sup>7</sup>because they left on their journey for the sake of Jesus Christ without accepting any support from the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup>Therefore, we ought to help people like this so that we can be coworkers with the truth.

**Criticism of Diotrophes**

<sup>9</sup>I wrote something to the church, but Diotrophes, who likes to put himself first, doesn't welcome us. <sup>10</sup>Because of this, if I come, I will bring up what he has done—making unjustified and wicked accusations against us. And as if that were not enough, he not only refuses to welcome the brothers and sisters but stops those who want to do so and even throws them out of the church! <sup>11</sup>Dear friend, don't imitate what is bad but what is good. Whoever practices what is good belongs to God. Whoever practices what is bad has not seen God.

**Approval of Demetrius**

<sup>12</sup>Everyone speaks highly of Demetrius, even the truth itself. We also speak highly of him, and you know that what we say is true.

*Hospitality* The books of 2 and 3 John present some of scripture's most striking examples of the Christian practice of hospitality. Welcoming a stranger into the community "not... with words... but with action" (1 John 3:18) embodies the self-sacrificial love for another, exemplified by Christ and commanded by God (see 1 John 4:9-11). Moreover, the generous support Gaius gives traveling missionaries follows the social custom of his Mediterranean world, where people provided guests with a level of support that attended to all their needs in a way that brought the stranger more fully into the household's life. In response, guests were expected to repay their hosts by making a public report that honored their virtue (3 John 6). Since religious disagreements made it impossible to bring a stranger fully into a Christian household, the practice of hospitality was typically withheld from opponents (see 2 John 10-11). The household's support of a rival would also have drawn it into an act of aiding the enemy, thus dishonoring its members. When Diotrophes refuses "to welcome the brothers and sisters" (3 John 10), the elder's stern rebuke is not because Diotrophes has excluded strangers from his love, but because he withholds support and falsely accuses other Christians for self-centered reasons and so betrays the example of the crucified Christ.

1-2 *Gaius*: a common Roman name (cf. Acts 19:29; Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14). The elder's wish for good health is often used to open ancient letters as a way of establishing good rapport with the recipient. The added wish for his spiritual prosperity expresses a concern for the whole person.

3-4 *according to the truth*: that is, according to the apostolic testimony of Jesus (see 1 John 1:1-4).

5 *act faithfully... for our brothers and sisters*: The elder's joy for Gaius (3 John 3-4) links his faithfulness toward others with his faithfulness to the truth. *strangers*: Paul calls Gaius "host" in Romans 16:23, which translates the same Greek word as "stranger."

6 *in front of the church*: probably refers to a specific element of Christian worship when testimony is made of a believer's good works or need for discipline (see 3 John 10). *provide for their journey*: traveling missionaries who drew their financial support and personal encouragement from local congregations.

7 *the Gentiles*: nonbelievers.

8 *coworkers with the truth*: See 2 John 10-11.

9-11 Although the reason for the elder's dispute with Diotrophes is unstated, the accusation leveled against him concerns an abuse of power to serve his selfish ambition, a judgment common in ancient arguments against one's enemy. *I wrote something*: an earlier letter not preserved and now lost. *doesn't welcome us... refuses to welcome the brothers and sisters*: recalls the practice advised in 2 John 10-11, but the reason for doing so in this case is unstated. *throws them out of the church*: may refer to excluding from the congregation those who support the elder and his allies. *Whoever practices what is good belongs to God... bad has not seen God*: See 1 John 3:9-10; 4:1-7.

12 *Demetrius*: 3 John is written, in part, to introduce this unknown Christian, who perhaps carried this letter to Gaius. Demetrius' trustworthiness is especially important to winning Gaius over to the elder's side in his dispute with Diotrophes.

***Final greeting***

<sup>13</sup>I have a lot to say to you, but I don't want to use pen and ink. <sup>14</sup>I hope to see you soon, and we will speak face-to-face.

<sup>15</sup>Peace be with you. Your friends here greet you. Greet our friends there by name.

13-15 *I hope to see you soon*: See the note on 2 John 12. *greetings* is a typical element of a letter's benediction (cf. *friends here greet you* . . . *Greet our friends*: the exchange of Rom 16; 1 Cor 16).



The author identifies himself as “a slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James.” In the early church, only one Jude had a well-known brother named James. This is Jude, the brother of Jesus and also the eventual leader of the Jerusalem church (see Acts 15). Church tradition supports the identification of this Jude as the author of this letter. We know little about him, except that he was one of Jesus’ four brothers, he was younger than James (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3), he did not follow Jesus until after the resurrection (Acts 1:14), and he was a traveling missionary (1 Cor 9:5). He was obviously familiar with the OT and later Jewish literature (this includes a book we know as 1 Enoch). The letter is carefully crafted and filled with colorful imagery, and its style is lively and vigorous.

Little is known about the date or destination of the letter. Syria, Asia Minor, Palestine, and Egypt are all possibilities, and it could have been written as early as the 50s or as late as the 90s CE. The audience is probably made up of Jewish Christians living in a Gentile environment. The problem Jude addresses is the idea that, since they are free in Christ, Christians don’t need to abide by laws or rules. (This notion is also reflected in the Corinthian letters and Revelation.)

Jude powerfully emphasizes God’s judgment on godless people. Love, mercy, and security (being “kept safe”) are important themes, too, but these stand in contrast with promises of punishment for ungodly behavior.

## I. Greeting (1-2)

## II. Purpose (3-4a)

## III. Body of the Letter: Problems and Warnings (4b-16)

- A. The charges (4)
- B. Examples of punishment (5-7)
- C. The charges (8)

## D. Prediction of punishment (9-10)

- E. Examples of punishment (11)
- F. Images of godless people (12-13)
- G. Prediction of punishment (14-16)

## VI. Encouragement for the Faithful (17-23)

## V. Concluding Praise (24-25)

*Rebecca Skaggs*



Ruins of a first-century synagogue in Gamla, an ancient Jewish city in the Golan Heights  
 Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

1 Jn 17:11;  
Ac 1:13; Ro 1:1;  
Ro 1:7; 1Th 5:23

3 Phi 1:27;  
1Ti 6:12; Ti 1:4;  
Jud 20

5 Heb 3:16;  
2Pt 1:12

6 2Pt 2:4;  
2Pt 2:9;  
Rev 20:10

7 Gn 19:24;  
Dt 29:23;  
Mt 25:41;  
2Pt 2:6

8 Ex 22:28;  
Ecc 10:20;  
Ac 23:5;  
2Pt 2:10

9 Dn 10:13;  
Dn 12:1;  
Zec 3:2;  
1Th 4:16;  
Rev 12:7

10 2Pt 2:12

11 Gn 4:3;  
Nm 16:1;  
Heb 11:4;  
2Pt 2:15;  
1Jn 3:12

12 Prv 25:14;  
Eze 34:8;  
Mt 15:13;  
2Pt 2:13;  
2Pt 2:17

13 Is 57:20;  
Phi 3:19;  
2Pt 2:17

14 Gn 5:18;  
Gn 5:21; Dt 33:2;  
Dn 7:10;  
Mt 16:27

15 Jn 5:22;  
1Co 4:5; 1Ti 1:9;  
2Ti 4:1; Jud 4

16 1Co 10:10;  
2Pt 2:10;  
2Pt 2:18;  
Jud 18

## Greeting

<sup>1</sup>Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James.

To those who are called, loved by God the Father and kept safe by Jesus Christ.

<sup>2</sup>May you have more and more mercy, peace, and love.

## Certain judgment of the false teachers

<sup>3</sup>Dear friends, I wanted very much to write to you concerning the salvation we share. Instead, I must write to urge you to fight for the faith delivered once and for all to God's holy people. <sup>4</sup>Godless people have slipped in among you. They turn the grace of our God into unrestrained immorality and deny our only master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Judgment was passed against them a long time ago.

<sup>5</sup>I want to remind you of something you already know very well. The Lord, who once saved a people out of Egypt, later destroyed those who didn't maintain their faith. <sup>6</sup>I remind you too of the angels who didn't keep their position of authority but deserted their own home. The Lord has kept them in eternal chains in the underworld until the judgment of the great day. <sup>7</sup>In the same way, Sodom and Gomorrah and neighboring towns practiced immoral sexual relations and pursued other sexual urges. By undergoing the punishment of eternal fire, they serve as a warning.

<sup>8</sup>Yet, even knowing this, these dreamers in the same way pollute themselves, reject authority, and slander the angels. <sup>9</sup>The archangel Michael, when he argued with the devil about Moses' body, did not dare charge him with slander. Instead, he said, "The Lord rebuke you!" <sup>10</sup>But these people slander whatever they don't understand. They are destroyed by what they know instinctively, as though they were irrational animals.

## Prophecies about the false teachers

<sup>11</sup>They are damned, for they follow in the footsteps of Cain. For profit they give themselves over to Balaam's error. They are destroyed in the uprising of Korah. <sup>12</sup>These people are like jagged rocks just below the surface of the water waiting to snag you when they join your love feasts. They feast with you without reverence. They care only for themselves. They are waterless clouds carried along by the winds; fruitless autumn trees, twice dead, uprooted; <sup>13</sup>wild waves of the sea foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom the darkness of the underworld is reserved forever.

<sup>14</sup>Enoch, who lived seven generations after Adam, prophesied about these people when he said, "See, the Lord comes with his countless holy ones, <sup>15</sup>to execute judgment on everyone and to convict everyone about every ungodly deed they have committed in their ungodliness as well as all the harsh things that sinful ungodly people have said against him." <sup>16</sup>These are

1 Like most Greek letters, this one begins by naming its sender and addressees. *slave of Jesus*: Jude identifies himself with service, in contrast to the teachers' arrogance. The audience consists of those who are *loved by God*. To be *called* is more than being summoned into a belief system; it is to be held in God's love, embraced, and kept safe. **2** This peace blessing is typical of Greek letters, except that *love* is included. *mercy, peace, and love*—these themes appear again at the end of the letter.

**3** Jude blends two purposes throughout the letter: (1) *the salvation we share*: a salvation that isn't only individual but is shared by the whole community of God's holy people, and (2) *to fight for the faith*: a term from athletic contests (1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 4:7; Heb 12:4) or military conquests (Eph 6:12; John 18:36).

**4** Jude's opponents have *slipped in* (from outside the community). *They turn the grace... immorality*: This suggests that their behavior (rather than their system of beliefs) denies the Lordship of Jesus.

**5-7** The author identifies three things his audience *already know(s)*: (1) the Lord *saved* Israel in the wilderness, and he *destroyed* those who didn't keep their faith; (2) since angels *didn't keep their... own home*, they have been *kept* for judgment (these are probably the angels who rejected God's authority, a story told in a Jewish book called 1

Enoch); and (3) *Sodom and Gomorrah* were destroyed (the author's reference to this familiar story of punishment might suggest that the problem Jude is addressing includes immorality).

**8** The false teachers base their actions and lifestyle on dreams by which they claim to know God's will. *pollute themselves*: Such language is used in the OT to refer to immorality (e.g., Gen 34:5, 13, 27; Lev 18:24-28; Jer 3:2; Hos 5:3; 6:10). *slander the angels*: may refer to the understanding of angels as guardians of the Law (Gal 3:19; Acts 7:38, 53; Heb 2:2).

**9** Even *Michael*, a ruler among angels (see Dan 10:13), doesn't rely on his own authority for judgment. Instead, he relies on the Lord's (see Zech 3:2).

**10** The false teachers are not acting on the basis of special insight into God's will (see Jude 8), but, like animals, they simply follow their instincts.

**11-14** Three OT examples shed light on the false teachers: Like *Cain* (Gen 4:1-16) and *Korah* (Num 16), they challenge God's authority; like *Balaam* (Num 22-24), they are leading people in the wrong direction for their own profit.

**15** Jude focuses attention on the false teachers' behavior, which directly opposes God.

**16** The problem Jude addresses also involves habits of speech that go against God's ways.

faultfinding grumblers, living according to their own desires. They speak arrogant words and they show partiality to people when they want a favor in return.

<sup>17</sup>But you, dear friends, remember the words spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>They said to you, "In the end time scoffers will come living according to their own ungodly desires." <sup>19</sup>These people create divisions. Since they don't have the Spirit, they are worldly.

**A strategy for the faithful**

<sup>20</sup>But you, dear friends: build each other up on the foundation of your most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, <sup>21</sup>keep each other in the love of God, wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will give you eternal life. <sup>22</sup>Have mercy on those who doubt. <sup>23</sup>Save some by snatching them from the fire. Fearing God, have mercy on some, hating even the clothing contaminated by their sinful urges.

**Blessing**

<sup>24</sup>To the one who is able to protect you from falling, and to present you blameless and rejoicing before his glorious presence, <sup>25</sup>to the only God our savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, belong glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time, now and forever. Amen.

17-19 *dear friends*: provides a transition in the letter. The faithful don't depend on dreams (see Jude 8) but instead *remember the words spoken beforehand by the apostles*.

20-21 In contrast to the ungodly behavior of the false teachers, the faithful should *keep each other in the love of God* and *wait*—not in the sense of standing still but in alert expectation of eternal life. The phrase "keep each other in the love of God" recalls that this letter is addressed

*Ungodly People* The images we find in Jude 12-13 shed light on the problem of ungodly people joining the love feasts. The imagery is borrowed from the natural world: air ("clouds"), earth ("trees"), sea ("waves"), and space ("stars"), "Waterless clouds" and "trees, twice dead" ("fruitless" and "uprooted") suggest empty promises. "Wild waves . . . foaming up their own shame" refers to the muck and slime tossed about by raging seas. The ancients considered stars to be the most stable aspect of nature, so "wandering stars" (i.e., falling or shooting stars) were feared and couldn't be used to guide travel. Jude uses natural hazards to warn his audience about godless people.

to "those who are . . . loved by God . . . and kept safe by Jesus Christ" (Jude 1).

22-23 Jude exhorts his audience to respond with mercy to those who doubt. In doing so, though, they should take care not to get involved in ungodly behavior themselves.

24-25 The closing words of praise remind us of the letter's main theme: God can and will protect the faithful, and God can and will keep the wicked for punishment. Jude recognizes God's ultimate authority and Jesus' lordship.

17 2Pt 3:2  
 18 2Pt 3:3;  
 Jud 16  
 19 Ro 8:9;  
 1Co 2:14  
 22 Ga 6:1  
 23 Am 4:11;  
 Zec 3:2;  
 1Co 3:15;  
 Rev 3:4  
 24 Ro 16:25;  
 2Co 4:14;  
 Col 1:21;  
 1Pt 4:13

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# REVELATION

For many modern readers, reading the book of Revelation is a challenging experience. Most of us are unfamiliar with this kind of literature, and we find its imagery strange and even grotesque at times. The book doesn't have a straightforward story line or a clear order of events, and this makes it difficult for us to keep track of what's going on. And it's so full of violence that a first-time reader might be tempted to think of it as some sort of science-fiction horror story designed to do little more than frighten and entertain.

In fact, Revelation has much to teach us about how Christians ought to live in today's often-troubled world. Before we look at its major themes, let's briefly review what scholars say about its author, date of composition, and original audience.

The author identifies himself as John, God's "servant" (Rev 1:1) and a "brother" to those who share with him the hardships and the kingdom they have in Jesus (Rev 1:9). He writes that he was living on the island of Patmos at the time "because of the word of God and my witness about Jesus" (Rev 1:9). For this reason some scholars think John wrote the book of Revelation while in exile. However, he may simply have gone there to preach the message of Jesus Christ.

Early Christian writers thought this book was written by the apostle John, who was also the author of the Gospel of John. Today, though, most scholars believe it was written by an otherwise unknown early Jewish-Christian prophet named John toward the end of Emperor Domitian's reign (approximately 95–96 CE). This was when Domitian launched a persecution of Christians, who were charged with a variety of crimes, including atheism (i.e., a failure to support the worship of the Roman emperor) and drifting into "Jewish ways." Most scholars feel John's original audience lived in the eastern Mediterranean.

Revelation is a form of literature called apocalypse. Like other writings of this genre, Revelation has a visionary, or seer (in this case, John), who receives visions through a go-between of some sort (usually an angel) and later writes them down. These visions are filled with symbolic language. Sometimes the seer is given an interpreter to help him understand the visions. Usually they reveal secrets about how the universe operates or secrets about the meaning of future political and historical events. In some apocalypses the seer journeys into the heavenly realm to see these things for himself. In others, revelations come only through a mediator.



The island called Patmos (Rev 1:9)

*iStockPhoto*

Apocalypses share some important similarities with the literature of the OT prophets. In fact, John calls his book a “prophecy” (Rev 1:3). Although we tend to think of prophets as predictors of the future, their primary role was to call people to change their hearts and lives so they could be God’s holy ones. When the people found themselves in trouble, the prophet’s role was to comfort and to help them remember that God is always faithful even when they are not. We see similar themes in the book of Revelation. The messages to the churches of Asia Minor (Rev 2–3) contain numerous warnings to their members to change their hearts, give up their indifferent ways, stay true to the faith, and get in touch once again with the faith they once had. The messages also contain words of comfort for those who suffer harassment.

Apocalypses share important similarities with Wisdom literature (e.g., Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, and Wisdom of Solomon) as well. Although it covers a variety of topics, Wisdom literature is primarily concerned about questions of universal truth, the meaning of life and death, and the problem of evil. Revelation gives considerable attention to the problem of evil: Why do the righteous suffer without reason? Why aren’t the wicked punished? What is the meaning of human suffering? Where is God’s justice?

Revelation addresses such questions in grand fashion, using highly charged, symbolic

imagery and dramatic speech. A scene associated with the opening of the fifth seal is key to unlocking this theme. John saw, under God’s altar, those who had been slaughtered on account of the word of God: “They cried out with a loud voice, ‘Holy and true Master, how long will you wait before you pass judgment? How long before you require justice for our blood, which was shed by those who live on earth?’” (Rev 6:10). Clearly, these voices recognize and confess God’s supreme authority, but they want to know about God’s justice. When will God punish the wicked? How will God show that the righteous are, in fact, innocent? These holy ones are given robes of victory but told to wait, even as more like them are killed (Rev 6:11).

From this point on, in vision after vision, God punishes those who allied themselves with the dragon (an image for Satan). But God’s justice is held in check by God’s mercy because, in the earlier parts of the book at least, always some are spared in the hope they’ll change their hearts and lives. Likewise, in vision after vision, holy ones are honored and victorious. All the while, heavenly worship continues with loud and lively prayers in praise of God’s supreme authority and justice. The book reaches its climax in the stunning, powerful vision of the New Jerusalem. Here there is no more evil or sadness or hunger or suffering. Here all God’s holy ones get to see God and the Lamb face-to-face (Rev 21–22). This is truly good news.

## I. Introduction (1:1–8)

### II. First Major Cycle of Visions (1:9–11:19)

- A. Vision of Christ appearing to John (1:9–20)
- B. Messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor (2:1–3:22)
- C. Vision of the appearance of God (4:1–5:14)
  1. God’s throne (4:1–11)
  2. The Lamb and the scroll (5:1–14)
- D. Vision of the opening of the seven seals (6:1–8:1)
  1. Six seals are opened (6:1–17)
  2. God’s people are marked (7:1–8)
  3. God’s people worship and praise God (7:9–17)
  4. The seventh seal is opened (8:1)
- E. Vision of the blowing of the seven trumpets (8:2–11:19)

1. The first four trumpets announce four plagues (8:2–13)
2. The fifth and sixth trumpets announce two horrors (8:13–9:21)
  - a. John receives the open scroll and measuring rod and sees two witnesses (10:1–11:14)
3. The seventh trumpet opens God’s heavenly temple (11:15–19)

### III. Second Major Cycle of Visions (12:1–16:21)

- A. Vision of the woman and the dragon (12:1–17)
  1. The woman gives birth (12:1–6)
  2. Michael defeats the dragon (12:7–12)
  3. The dragon chases the woman (12:13–17)
- B. Two visions of the beasts of the sea and the land (12:18–13:18)

1. The beast of the sea (12:18–13:10)
2. The beast of the land (13:11-18)
- C. Three visions of the Lamb and the approaching day of judgment (14:1-20)
  1. The first offering of God's harvest for redemption (14:1-5)
  2. Three angels warn of God's coming judgment (14:6-13)
  3. The two harvests (14:14-20)
- D. Vision of the Song of Moses and the Lamb (15:1-4)
- E. Vision of the pouring of the seven bowls (15:5–16:21)

**IV. Fall of Babylon (17:1–18:24)**

- A. Vision of the great prostitute and the beast (17:1-18)
- B. Vision of the punishment of Rome (18:1-24)

**V. Visions of the Last Things (19:1–20:15)**

- A. Vision of the rejoicing crowd in heaven (19:1-10)
- B. Six visions of Christ's victory over evil and God's judgment (19:11–20:15)
  1. Heaven's armies (19:11-16)
  2. God's supper (19:17-18)
  3. Gathering for war at Harmagedon (19:19-21)
  4. Capturing and destroying Satan (20:1-3, 7-10)
  5. The first resurrection (20:4-6)
  6. The final judgment (20:11-15)

**VI. Vision of the New Jerusalem (21:1–22:5)**

**VII. Concluding Materials (22:6-21)**

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*Catherine A. Cory*

1:1 Dn 2:28;  
Rev 1:4, Rev 22:6;  
Rev 22:8;  
Rev 22:16

1:2 1Co 1:6;  
Rev 1:9, Rev 6:9;  
Rev 12:17;  
Rev 19:10

1:3 Lk 11:28;  
Ro 13:11;  
Rev 22:7;  
Rev 22:10

1:4 Rev 1:8;  
Rev 1:11;  
Rev 3:1, Rev 4:5;  
Rev 5:6

1:5 Ps 89:27;  
Col 1:18;  
Rev 3:14;  
Rev 17:14;  
Rev 19:16

1:6 Ex 19:6;  
Ro 11:36;  
1Pt 2:5, Rev 5:10;  
Rev 20:6

1:7 Dn 7:13;  
Zec 12:10;  
Mt 24:30;  
Mt 26:64;  
In 19:37

1:8 Is 41:4;  
Rev 1:4, Rev 4:8;  
Rev 21:6;  
Rev 22:13

1:9 Phi 4:14;  
2Th 3:5; Rev 1:2;  
Rev 3:10;  
Rev 14:12

1:10 Ac 20:7;  
Rev 4:1-2;  
Rev 17:3, Rev  
21:10

1:11 Rev 2:12;  
Rev 2:18;  
Rev 3:1, Rev 3:7;  
Rev 3:14

1:12 Ex 25:31;  
Ex 25:37;  
Zec 4:2;  
Rev 1:20, Rev 2:1

1:13 Dn 7:13;  
Dn 10:5;  
Dn 10:16;  
Rev 14:14;  
Rev 15:6

1:14 Dn 7:9;  
Dn 10:6;  
Rev 2:18;  
Rev 19:12

1:15 Eze 1:7;  
Eze 43:2;  
Dn 10:6;  
Rev 14:2;  
Rev 19:6

## Greetings

**1** A revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. Christ made it known by sending it through his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup>who bore witness to the word of God and to the witness of Jesus Christ, including all that John saw. <sup>3</sup>Favored is the one who reads the words of this prophecy out loud, and favored are those who listen to it being read, and keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

<sup>4</sup>John, to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace and peace to you from the one who is and was and is coming, and from the seven spirits that are before God's throne, <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Christ—the faithful witness, the firstborn from among the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To the one who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup>who made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—to him be glory and power forever and always. Amen.

<sup>7</sup>Look, he is coming with the clouds! Every eye will see him, including those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him. This is so. Amen. <sup>8</sup>"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "the one who is and was and is coming, the Almighty."

## Christ appears to John

<sup>9</sup>I, John, your brother who shares with you in the hardship, kingdom, and endurance that we have in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and my witness about Jesus. <sup>10</sup>I was in a Spirit-inspired trance on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice that sounded like a trumpet. <sup>11</sup>It said, "Write down on a scroll whatever you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea."

<sup>12</sup>I turned to see who was speaking to me, and when I turned, I saw seven oil lamps burning on top of seven gold stands. <sup>13</sup>In the middle of the lampstands I saw someone who looked like the Human One.<sup>a</sup> He wore a robe that stretched down to his feet, and he had a gold sash around his chest. <sup>14</sup>His head and hair were white as white wool—like snow—and his eyes were like a fiery flame. <sup>15</sup>His feet were like fine brass that has been purified in a furnace, and his voice sounded like rushing water. <sup>16</sup>He held seven stars in his right hand, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword. His appearance was like the sun shining with all its power.

<sup>17</sup>When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man. But he put his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid. I'm the first and the last, <sup>18</sup>and the living one. I was dead, but look! Now I'm alive forever and always. I have the keys of Death and the Grave. <sup>19</sup>So write down what you have seen, both the scene now before you and the things that are about to unfold after this. <sup>20</sup>As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and the seven gold lampstands, here is what they mean: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

<sup>a</sup>Or Son of Man

1:16 Mt 17:2; Heb 4:12; Rev 1:20, Rev 2:1, Rev 2:12 1:17 Is 41:4, Is 44:6, Is 48:12; Rev 2:8, Rev 22:13 1:18 Mt 16:19; Ro 6:9; Rev 9:1, Rev 20:1  
1:20 Rev 1:4, Rev 1:11-12, Rev 1:16, Rev 2:1

1:1-2 *A revelation of Jesus Christ:* This book is a revelation about Christ, or it came from Christ and ultimately from God.

1:3 *Favored is:* the first of seven blessings, or beatitudes, in the book (see Rev 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).

1:4 *Grace and peace* is a standard greeting in Paul's letters. *the one who is... coming:* God (cf. Exod 3:14). The *seven spirits* probably refer to God's activity in the world (see Tob 12:15; Zech 4:2, 10).

1:7 *Look... pierced him:* John describes Jesus Christ, but the imagery comes from Daniel 7:13; Zechariah 12:10.

1:8 *I am:* God is speaking. *Alpha and the Omega:* the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.

1:9 *your brother... Jesus:* John expresses his solidarity with his fellow ministers.

1:10 *Lord's day* is the Christian day of worship, probably Sunday. John is about to describe a vision he received.

1:12 *seven gold stands:* The symbolism is explained in Revelation 1:20.

1:13 *someone who looked like the Human One:* Compare with Daniel 7:13, where a heavenly figure who looks like a human being stands before God, and is given dominion over all things. *robe... sash:* Perhaps this clothing represents Christ's high priestly role (see Exod 28:4; 39:29; Wis 18:24).

1:14-15 *His head... water:* The white hair, fiery eyes, and powerful voice of the one who looked like the Human One remind the reader of the Human One's role as God's agent.

1:16 *seven stars:* The symbolism is described in Revelation 1:20. *from his mouth... sword:* Traditionally a symbol of warfare, here the sword is a symbol of prophetic judgment (see Isa 49:1-3; Heb 4:12).

1:17-18 *I'm... the living one:* the risen and exalted Christ.



**Message to Ephesus**

2<sup>a</sup> Write this to the angel of the church in Ephesus: These are the words of the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven gold lampstands: <sup>2</sup>I know your works, your labor, and your endurance. I also know that you don't put up with those who are evil. You have tested those who say they are apostles but are not, and you have found them to be liars. <sup>3</sup>You have shown endurance and put up with a lot for my name's sake, and you haven't gotten tired. <sup>4</sup>But I have this against you: you have let go of the love you had at first. <sup>5</sup>So remember the high point from which you have fallen. Change your hearts and lives and do the things you did at first. If you don't, I'm coming to you. I will move your lampstand from its place if you don't change your hearts and lives. <sup>6</sup>But you have this in your favor: you hate what the Nicolaitans are doing, which I also hate. <sup>7</sup>If you can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. I will allow those who emerge victorious to eat from the tree of life, which is in God's paradise.

**Message to Smyrna**

<sup>8</sup> Write this to the angel of the church in Smyrna: These are the words of the one who is the first and the last, who died and came back to life: <sup>9</sup>I know your hardship and poverty (though you are actually rich). I also know the hurtful things that have been spoken about you by those who say they are Jews (though they are not, but are really Satan's synagogue). <sup>10</sup>Don't be afraid of what you are going to suffer. Look! The devil is going to throw some of you into prison in order to test you. You will suffer hardship for ten days. Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. <sup>11</sup>If you can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Those who emerge victorious won't be hurt by the second death.

**Message to Pergamum**

<sup>12</sup> Write this to the angel of the church in Pergamum: These are the words of the one who has the sharp, two-edged sword: <sup>13</sup>I know that you are living right where Satan's throne is. You are holding on to my name, and you didn't break faith with me even at the time that Antipas, my faithful witness, was killed among you, where Satan lives. <sup>14</sup>But I have a few things against you, because you have some there who follow Balaam's teaching. Balaam had taught Balak to trip up the Israelites so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and commit sexual immorality. <sup>15</sup>In the same way, you have some who follow the Nicolaitans' teaching. <sup>16</sup>So change your hearts and lives. If you don't, I am coming to you soon, and I will make war on them with the sword that comes from my mouth. <sup>17</sup>If you can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. I will give those who emerge victorious some of the hidden manna to eat. I will also give to each of them a white stone with a new name written on it, which no one knows except the one who receives it.

2:1 Rev 1:13, Rev 1:16, Rev 1:20  
 2:2 2Co 11:13; 1Jn 4:1; Rev 2:19, Rev 3:1, Rev 3:8  
 2:3 Jn 15:21  
 2:4 Jer 2:2; Mt 24:12  
 2:5 Rev 2:16, Rev 2:22, Rev 3:3, Rev 3:19  
 2:6 Rev 2:15  
 2:7 Gn 2:9, Rev 2:11, Rev 2:17, Rev 2:29, Rev 2:22  
 2:8 Rev 1:11, Rev 1:17-18, Rev 2:1, Rev 22:13  
 2:9 2Co 6:10; Jas 2:5, Rev 2:13, Rev 2:24, Rev 3:9  
 2:10 Dn 1:12; Mt 10:22; Jas 1:12; 1Pt 5:4, Rev 2:13  
 2:11 Rev 2:7, Rev 2:29, Rev 20:6, Rev 20:14, Rev 21:8  
 2:12 Rev 1:11, Rev 1:16, Rev 2:16  
 2:13 Ac 22:20; 1Ti 5:8, Rev 2:9-10, Rev 2:24  
 2:14 Nm 25:1, Nm 31:16; Ac 15:29; 2Pt 2:15, Rev 2:20  
 2:15 Rev 2:6  
 2:16 2Th 2:8; Rev 1:16, Rev 2:5  
 2:17 Is 62:2; Is 65:15; Rev 2:7, Rev 2:11, Rev 19:12

2:1-7 *Ephesus* was the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor and an important religious, cultural, and commercial center.

2:6 *Nicolaitans*: Little is known about this group, but apparently they were a sect of fellow Christians (see Rev 2:15, 20-23).

2:7 *tree of life*: This tree recalls the creation story in Genesis 2:8-9, but it may be included here as a counterpoint to the sacred tree of the Greek goddess Artemis, whose temple was in Ephesus.

2:8-11 *Smyrna* was a prosperous seaport and trade center. It was located north of Ephesus and at the end of a major east-west road through Asia Minor. It was the first city of the province to build a temple to the goddess Roma (Rome). Roma provides the imagery of the great prostitute in Revelation 17.

2:9 *Satan's synagogue*: John sounds especially harsh here, but he may simply be expressing his frustration with fellow Jews who opposed those who followed Jesus.

2:10 *The devil*: also known as Satan, "the accuser" or "the

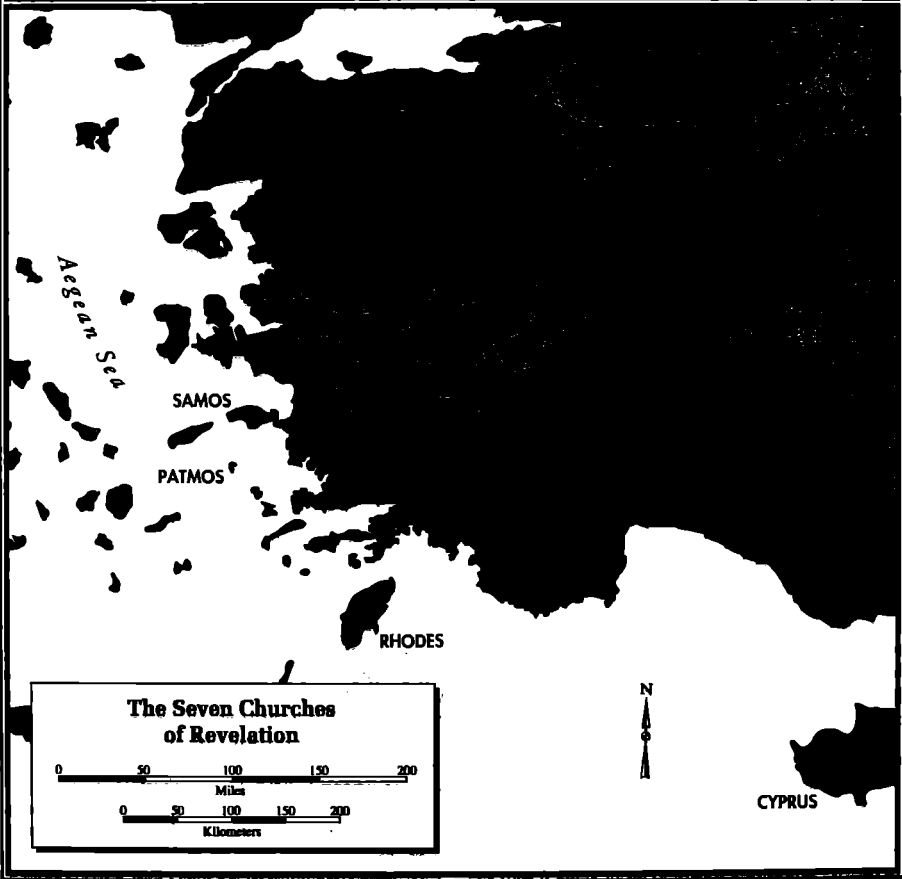
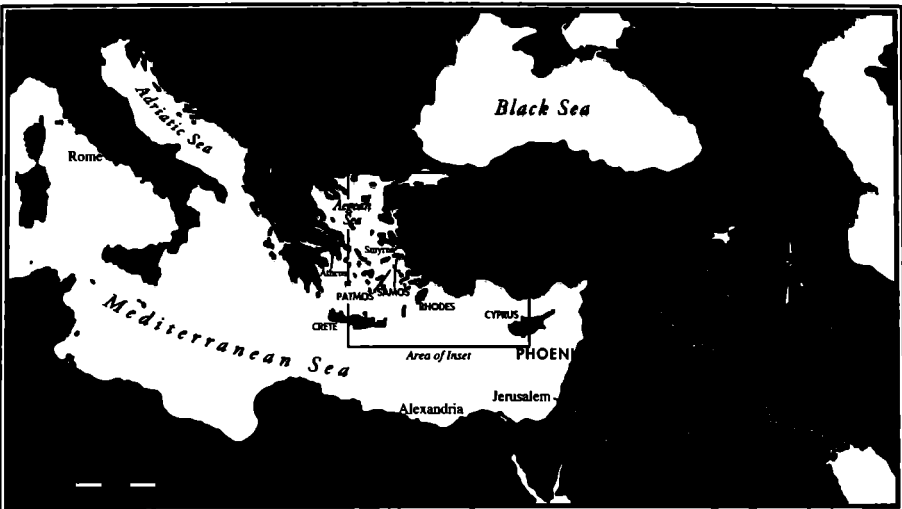
slander." See Revelation 12:1-17 for more on John's interpretation of Satan's role in the world.

2:12-17 *Pergamum* was an imperial city and—together with Ephesus, Smyrna, and Sardis—one of four centers of the Provincial Assembly of Asia Minor, the regional governing authority of the Roman Empire. It was also an important center for the worship of Zeus and Asclepius, as well as the emperor.

2:13 *Satan's throne*: John associates the Roman Empire with Satan and describes Pergamum as the place of Satan's throne. *Antipas... witness*: Nothing more is known about this person, but the context suggests he was interrogated and executed by the Roman governor in Pergamum.

2:14-15 *Balaam... Balak*: See Numbers 22-24. John considers the *Nicolaitans' teaching* to be as much of a threat to the Christians in Pergamum as Balaam was to ancient Israelites.

2:17 *hidden manna*: possibly refers to a Jewish tradition about how the manna of the exodus wilderness experience would reappear at the end time (see 2 Macc 2:4-8).



**Message to Thyatira**

<sup>18</sup>Write this to the angel of the church in Thyatira:

These are the words of God's Son, whose eyes are like a fiery flame, and whose feet are like fine brass. <sup>19</sup>I know your works, your love and faithfulness, your service and endurance. I also know that the works you have done most recently are even greater than those you did at first. <sup>20</sup>But I have this against you: you put up with that woman, Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. You allow her to teach and to mislead my servants into committing sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup>I gave her time to change her heart and life, but she refuses to change her life of prostitution. <sup>22</sup>Look! I'm throwing her onto a sickbed. I am casting those who have committed adultery with her into terrible hardship—if they don't change their hearts from following her practices—<sup>23</sup>and I will even put her children to death with disease. Then all the churches will know that I'm the one who examines minds and hearts, and that I will give to each of you what your actions deserve. <sup>24</sup>As for the rest of you in Thyatira—those of you who don't follow this teaching and haven't learned the so-called "deep secrets" of Satan—I won't burden you with anything else. <sup>25</sup>Just hold on to what you have until I come. <sup>26</sup>To those who emerge victorious, keeping my practices until the end, I will give authority over the nations—<sup>27</sup>to rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like pottery—<sup>28</sup>just as I received authority from my Father. I will also give them the morning star. <sup>29</sup>If you can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

**Message to Sardis**

<sup>3</sup>Write this to the angel of the church in Sardis:

These are the words of the one who holds God's seven spirits and the seven stars: I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, and you are in fact dead. <sup>2</sup>Wake up and strengthen whatever you have left, teetering on the brink of death, for I've found that your works are far from complete in the eyes of my God. <sup>3</sup>So remember what you received and heard. Hold on to it and change your hearts and lives. If you don't wake up, I will come like a thief, and you won't know what time I will come upon you. <sup>4</sup>But you do have a few people in Sardis who haven't stained their clothing. They will walk with me clothed in white because they are worthy. <sup>5</sup>Those who emerge victorious will wear white clothing like this. I won't scratch out their names from the scroll of life, but will declare their names in the presence of my Father and his angels. <sup>6</sup>If you can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

**Message to Philadelphia**

<sup>7</sup>Write this to the angel of the church in Philadelphia:

These are the words of the one who is holy and true, who has the key of David. Whatever he opens, no one will shut; and whatever he shuts, no one opens. <sup>8</sup>I know your works. Look! I

2:18 Mt 4:3;  
Rev 1:11,  
Rev 1:14-15  
2:20 Mk 16:31,  
1Ks 21:25;  
2Ks 9:7;  
Rev 2:14  
2:21 Ro 2:4-5;  
2Pt 2:9; Rev 9:20,  
Rev 16:4  
2:22 Nm 33:56;  
Josh 23:13;  
1Ks 15:2,  
Rev 17:2,  
Rev 18:9  
2:23 Ps 7:9,  
Ps 62:12;  
Jer 17:10;  
Mt 16:27;  
Ro 8:27  
2:24 Ac 15:28  
2:25 Jn 21:22;  
Rev 3:11  
2:26 Ps 2:8;  
Mt 10:22;  
Heb 3:6; Rev 2:7,  
Rev 3:21  
2:27 Ps 2:9,  
Is 30:14;  
Jer 19:11;  
Rev 12:5,  
Rev 19:15  
2:29 Rev 2:7,  
Rev 2:11  
3:1 1Ti 5:6;  
Rev 1:4,  
Rev 1:11,  
Rev 1:16; Rev 2:2  
3:2 1Pt 5:8  
3:4 Jud 1:23;  
Rev 3:18;  
Rev 4:4  
Rev 6:11; Rev 7:9  
3:5 Mt 10:32;  
Rev 13:8,  
Rev 17:8,  
Rev 20:12,  
Rev 21:27  
3:6 Rev 2:7  
3:7 Is 22:22;  
Mt 16:19;  
1In 5:20;  
Rev 1:11,  
Rev 3:14  
3:8 Ac 14:27;  
1Co 16:9;  
2Co 2:12;  
Rev 2:2,  
Rev 2:13

2:18-29 *Thyatira* was located approximately 40 miles southeast of Pergamum and is the least known of the seven cities mentioned in Revelation. Apparently it was a trade city with many professional religious guilds devoted to metalworking and wool production.

2:20 *Jezebel* may be a prophetess in Thyatira, or her name may be used here to recall the earlier Jezebel who brought Baal worship to Israel (1 Kgs 16:31-34; 19:1-3; 2 Kgs 9:30-37). Either way, John wants to warn his audience about the punishment that awaits those who follow the Nicolaitans (see 2 Kgs 10:7). *sexual immorality... idols*: Sexual immorality here is an image for the worship of idols.

2:24 *so-called... Satan*: John may be mocking the Nicolaitans, who claimed their teachings were especially deep and mysterious.

2:27 See Psalm 2:9; Jeremiah 18:1-11.

2:28 *morning star*: probably refers to Jesus, who's later described as "the bright morning star" (Rev 22:16).

3:1-6 *Sardis* was located approximately 30 miles southeast of Thyatira and 60 miles inland from Ephesus and Smyrna in Asia Minor. Like Ephesus, Sardis was a

commercial center and had shrines for the worship of Cybele and Artemis.

3:4 *stained their clothing*: a metaphorical image for not living a holy and virtuous life.

3:5 *white clothing*: Jewish literature associates the color white with festive celebrations (Eccl 9:8); the heavenly realm (Dan 7:9); and victory over the forces of evil (2 Macc 11:8). In the NT Gospels the transfigured Christ is dressed in white (Matt 17:2); as are the messenger(s) at the tomb of the resurrected Christ (Matt 28:3). *scroll of life*: an image for God's list of all the righteous. The names that are scratched out represent the ones destined for destruction (see Exod 32:32-33; Ps 69:28; Isa 4:3; Mal 3:16).

3:7-13 *Philadelphia* was located in western Asia Minor on a route between Smyrna and Sardis. It had been a prosperous city and a center of Greek culture, but it suffered considerable destruction from an earthquake in the early part of the 1st century CE.

3:7 *key of David*: The key is a symbol of authority (cf. Rev 1:18). That Christ possesses the key of David means he has authority over the royal household of David (see Isa 22:22).

3:8 *you have kept... name*: The context suggests a time

3:10 Mt 24:14;  
2Pt 2:9; Rev 6:10,  
Rev 8:13,  
Rev 11:10

3:11 Rev 2:10,  
Rev 2:25,  
Rev 22:7,  
Rev 22:12,  
Rev 22:20

3:12 Ga 2:9,  
Ga 4:26;  
Rev 14:1,  
Rev 21:2,  
Rev 21:10

3:13 Rev 2:7  
3:14 Jn 1:3;  
Rev 1:5,  
Rev 1:11,  
Rev 3:7,  
Rev 19:11

3:15 Ro 12:11;  
Rev 2:2

3:17 Hos 12:8;  
Zec 11:5;  
1Co 4:8

3:18 Is 55:1;  
Mt 13:44;  
1Pt 1:7; Rev 3:4,  
Rev 16:15

3:19 Dt 8:5;  
Pv 3:12;  
1Co 11:32;  
Heb 12:5-6

3:20 Mt 24:33;  
Lk 12:36;  
Jn 14:23; Jas 5:9

3:21 Mt 19:28;  
Jn 16:33;  
2Ti 2:12; Rev 5:5,  
Rev 17:14

3:22 Rev 2:7  
4:1 Rev 1:10,  
Rev 1:19,  
Rev 11:12,  
Rev 22:6

have set in front of you an open door that no one can shut. You have so little power, and yet you have kept my word and haven't denied my name. <sup>9</sup>Because of this I will make the people from Satan's synagogue (who say they are Jews and really aren't, but are lying)—I will make them come and bow down at your feet and realize that I have loved you. <sup>10</sup>Because you kept my command to endure, I will keep you safe through the time of testing that is about to come over the whole world, to test those who live on earth. <sup>11</sup>I'm coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one takes your crown. <sup>12</sup>As for those who emerge victorious, I will make them pillars in the temple of my God, and they will never leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from my God. I will also write on them my own new name. <sup>13</sup>If you can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

### Message to Laodicea

<sup>14</sup>Write this to the angel of the church in Laodicea:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler<sup>b</sup> of God's creation. <sup>15</sup>I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. <sup>16</sup>So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I'm about to spit you out of my mouth. <sup>17</sup>After all, you say, 'I'm rich, and I've gotten wealthy, and I don't need a thing.' You don't realize that you are miserable, pathetic, poor, blind, and naked. <sup>18</sup>My advice is that you buy gold from me that has been purified by fire so that you may be rich, and white clothing to wear so that your nakedness won't be shamefully exposed, and ointment to put on your eyes so that you may see. <sup>19</sup>I correct and discipline those whom I love. So be earnest and change your hearts and lives. <sup>20</sup>Look! I'm standing at the door and knocking. If any hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to be with them, and will have dinner with them, and they will have dinner with me. <sup>21</sup>As for those who emerge victorious, I will allow them to sit with me on my throne, just as I emerged victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. <sup>22</sup>If you can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches."

### John sees God's heavenly throne

**4**After this I looked and there was a door that had been opened in heaven. The first voice that I had heard, which sounded like a trumpet, said to me, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." <sup>2</sup>At once I was in a Spirit-inspired trance and I saw

<sup>b</sup>Or beginning

when this Christian community was harassed and challenged to deny its faith in Christ. The threat may have come from local Jews (see Rev 3:9).

3:9 *Satan's synagogue*: See note on Revelation 2:9.

3:10 *time of testing*: refers here to end-time suffering that will affect the whole world (see Dan 12:1, 10).

3:11 *your crown*: an athletic image. A crown or wreath was given to winners of contests. Philadelphia was known for its athletic contests and festivals.

3:12 *pillars in the temple*: A pillar is a symbol of strength. The names inscribed on the pillars indicate to whom the Christian community belongs: God, Christ, and the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem.

3:14-22 *Laodicea* was located 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia. In the 1st century CE it was a wealthy commercial and banking city. The city produced clothing and carpets from a special kind of wool available in the area, and it had a medical school that specialized in healing eye diseases. Laodicea's water flowed down from the hot springs of nearby Hierapolis. By the time it got to the city, it was probably of very poor quality—neither hot and medicinal, nor cold and clean.

3:18 *gold... fire*: In the OT the refiner's fire is an image for the purifying effects of suffering (see Zech 13:9). It can also refer to getting rid of the contaminants of life

(see Job 23:10; Prov 27:21). *white clothing*: See note on Revelation 3:5.

3:20 *I'm standing at the door*: Christ is portrayed as the bridegroom preparing to enter his bride's private quarters. This is an invitation to enter into deeper relationship with Christ. It may be an allusion to Song of Songs 5:2.

3:21 *those... victorious*: refers to those who endure and remain faithful as witnesses of Christ, even to the point of death. They'll be rewarded, as Christ was rewarded, in the resurrection of the dead. *sit with me on my throne*: Only those who bear witness to Christ's name and follow him to death may sit beside him on the throne (see Rev 20:4).

4:1-5:14 This vision of God's throne is an appearance of God. It consists of two scenes. The first is a vision of God seated on the throne (4:1-11). The second is a vision of the Lamb (5:1-14).

4:1 *After this I looked*: a standard way to introduce a vision. *a door... heaven*: According to an ancient Hebrew way of picturing the world, openings in the sky separated the waters above the earth from the waters below. *The first voice*: See Revelation 1:10.

4:2 *someone... throne*: a reference to God. Throne imagery is political imagery. By situating God's throne in the heavenly realm, John claims that God is king over everything in the heavens, on earth, and under the earth.

a throne in heaven, and someone was seated on the throne. <sup>3</sup>The one seated there looked like jasper and carnelian, and surrounding the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald. <sup>4</sup>Twenty-four thrones, with twenty-four elders seated upon them, surrounded the throne. The elders were dressed in white clothing and had gold crowns on their heads. <sup>5</sup>From the throne came lightning, voices, and thunder. In front of the throne were seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God. <sup>6</sup>Something like a glass sea, like crystal, was in front of the throne.

In the center, by the throne, were four living creatures encircling the throne. These creatures were covered with eyes on the front and on the back. <sup>7</sup>The first living creature was like a lion. The second living creature was like an ox. The third living creature had a face like a human being. And the fourth living creature was like an eagle in flight. <sup>8</sup>Each of the four living creatures had six wings, and each was covered all around and on the inside with eyes. They never rest day or night, but keep on saying,

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is coming.”

<sup>9</sup>Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to the one seated on the throne, who lives forever and always, <sup>10</sup>the twenty-four elders fall before the one seated on the throne. They worship the one who lives forever and always. They throw down their crowns before the throne and say,

<sup>11</sup>“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, because you created all things. It is by your will that they existed and were created.”

**The Lamb takes the scroll**

**5**Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the one seated on the throne. It had writing on the front and the back, and it was sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup>I saw a powerful angel, who proclaimed in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” <sup>3</sup>But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or look inside it. <sup>4</sup>So I began to weep and weep, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look inside it. <sup>5</sup>Then one of the elders said to me, “Don’t weep. Look! The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has emerged victorious so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

4:3 *The one... emerald:* Humans cannot experience God directly but only by comparison to created things. The gemstones show that God is radiant and gleaming like light. *rainbow:* calls to mind the promise God made to Noah when God restored creation after the flood (Gen 9:12-17), a promise to never again destroy all creatures with floodwaters (see Ezek 1:28).

4:4 *twenty-four elders:* These elders aren’t angels but rather God’s human servants. Twenty-four is a symbolic number. It’s double the number 12 (the number of Israel’s tribes and the number of Jesus’ apostles) and represents fullness or completion.

4:5 *Fire, thunder, and lightning*—features like these are common in scenes in which God appears (see Exod 19:16-20; Ezek 1:4-28; Dan 7:9-14).

4:6 *four living creatures:* These are like the winged heavenly creatures who are present at God’s throne in Ezekiel 1:4-28; 10:1-22.

4:8 *Holy, holy, holy:* John may have borrowed this prayer from Isaiah 6:3.

*John as a Student of the OT* John was thoroughly steeped in Israel’s scriptures. The words and images of these sacred texts can be found everywhere in his book. These include his repeated references to Exodus 7-12; 37-40; Daniel 7; Ezekiel 37; 40-48; Jeremlah 51; and Zechariah.

4:3 Eze 1:28; Rev 10:1; Rev 21:11; Rev 21:19-20  
4:4 Rev 3:4-5; Rev 4:10; Rev 11:16; Rev 19:4  
4:5 Ex 19:16; Rev 1:4; Rev 8:5; Rev 11:19; Rev 16:18  
4:6 Eze 1:5; Eze 1:22; Rev 5:6; Rev 6:1; Rev 15:2  
4:7 Eze 1:10; Eze 10:14  
4:8 Is 6:2-3; Rev 1:4; Rev 1:8; Rev 4:6  
5:1 Is 29:11; Eze 2:9-10; Dn 12:4  
5:2 Rev 10:1; Rev 18:21  
5:3 Rev 5:13  
5:5 Gn 49:9; Is 11:10; Ro 15:12; Heb 7:14; Rev 22:16

4:10 *the one who lives forever and always:* God. The phrase “forever and always” shows that this is a worship setting.

5:1-14 *Scene 2* of this throne vision focuses on the Lamb, who stands in the midst of God’s throne and is found worthy to open the scroll. John follows the sequence of events in the divine throne visions of Ezekiel 1:4-2:10; Daniel 7:9-14.

5:1 *scroll... throne:* The right hand was seen as the hand of power and authority. John’s message is clear: The revelation belongs to God. *writing... back:* The scroll has no empty space remaining (see Ezek 2:9-10). *sealed... seals:* A seal is an image impressed on wax or clay; the image is the identifying mark of its owner. Seven symbolizes fullness or completeness.

5:2 *Who is worthy:* Here worthiness is more than moral goodness. It’s about having sufficient status before God to be allowed to take up God’s property.

5:5 *The Lion... victorious:* In Genesis 49:8-12 Judah, the ancestor of David, is like a lion who will rule over his people (see Isa 11:1-10).

5:6 Zec 3:9,  
Zec 4:10;  
In 1:29; Rev 5:12,  
Rev 13:8

5:7 Rev 5:1

5:8 Ps 141:2;

Rev 8:3-4;

Rev 14:2;

Rev 15:2

5:9 Ps 33:3;

1Co 6:20;

Ti 2:14; Rev 7:9;

Rev 14:3

5:10 Ex 19:6;

Rev 1:6;

Rev 3:21;

Rev 20:4;

Rev 20:6

5:11 Dn 7:10;

Heb 12:22;

Rev 4:4;

Rev 7:11

5:12 Rev 4:11;

Rev 5:9

5:13 Phi 2:10;

Rev 7:10

5:14 Rev 4:4;

Rev 4:10;

Rev 5:8;

Rev 19:4

6:1 Rev 4:6-7;

Rev 5:1; Rev 5:6;

Rev 14:2

6:2 Zec 1:8;

Zec 6:3;

Zec 6:11;

Rev 14:14;

Rev 19:11

6:4 Zec 1:8;

Zec 6:2; Mt 10:34

6:8 Hos 13:14;

Zec 6:3;

Rev 1:18;

Rev 20:13

<sup>6</sup>Then, in between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb, standing as if it had been slain. It had seven horns and seven eyes, which are God's seven spirits, sent out into the whole earth. <sup>7</sup>He came forward and took the scroll from the right hand of the one seated on the throne. <sup>8</sup>When he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each held a harp and gold bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup>They took up a new song, saying,

"You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals,  
because you were slain,  
and by your blood you purchased for God  
persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation.

<sup>10</sup>You made them a kingdom and priests to our God,  
and they will rule on earth."

<sup>11</sup>Then I looked, and I heard the sound of many angels surrounding the throne, the living creatures, and the elders. They numbered in the millions—thousands upon thousands.

<sup>12</sup>They said in a loud voice,

"Worthy is the slaughtered Lamb  
to receive power, wealth, wisdom, and might,  
and honor, glory, and blessing."

<sup>13</sup>And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea—I heard everything everywhere say,

"Blessing, honor, glory, and power  
belong to the one seated on the throne  
and to the Lamb  
forever and always."

<sup>14</sup>Then the four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshipped.

### Opening the first six seals

**6**Then I looked on as the Lamb opened one of the seven seals. I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" <sup>2</sup>So I looked, and there was a white horse. Its rider held a bow and was given a crown. And he went forth from victory to victory.

<sup>3</sup>When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!"

<sup>4</sup>Out came another horse, fiery red. Its rider was allowed to take peace from the earth so that people would kill each other. He was given a large sword.

<sup>5</sup>When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" So I looked, and there was a black horse. Its rider held a balance for weighing in his hand. <sup>6</sup>I heard what sounded like a voice from among the four living creatures. It said, "A quart of wheat for a denarion,<sup>c</sup> and three quarts of barley for a denarion, but don't damage the olive oil and the wine."

<sup>7</sup>When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" <sup>8</sup>So I looked, and there was a pale green horse. Its rider's name was Death, and the Grave was following right behind. They were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill by sword, famine, disease, and the wild animals of the earth.

<sup>c</sup>A denarion was a day's pay for a laborer.

**5:6** *Lamb... slain*: The Lamb clearly refers to Christ, but note the combination of images. The Lion of Judah stands and presents himself as a *slain* Lamb. In Revelation 6:16 he's described as a wrathful Lamb. *seven horns and seven eyes*: Horns represent power, eyes represent insight or knowing, and seven is the number of perfection or completion. Hence, the Lamb is all-powerful and all-knowing. **5:9** *a new song*: refers to a new reality brought about by the slaughtering of the Lamb. Through the Lamb's blood, humanity was redeemed and purchased for God to be kings and priests in God's kingdom.

**5:11-14** This scene ends with every created thing in every realm of the universe joining together in praise and confession of God's and the Lamb's supreme authority (see Dan 7:13-14).

**6:1-17; 8:1** The vision of the seven seals directly follows the throne vision. When the four living creatures speak,

they speak on God's authority. Likewise, when the four horsemen act, it's because God allows them to act (see Zec 1:7-17; 6:1-8). John isn't saying that God is responsible for evil but that God has supreme authority in all things.

**6:2** *white horse*: White is the color of victory.

**6:4** *another... red*: Red is the symbol of bloodshed, and the horseman's sword is a symbol of war.

**6:5** *black... weighing*: This horse and rider, who carries a scale for buying and selling goods, symbolize the huge rise in cost of everyday items that comes with war.

**6:6** "A quart of wheat... wine": This measure of wheat amounted to a person's daily food intake. A *denarion* was a laborer's daily wage in the 1st century CE. John doesn't explain why wine and oil were spared. Perhaps it's to suggest God's mercy in preserving some of the essentials of life.

**6:8** *pale green... Death*: This horse and rider symbolize the famine, disease, and death that are the result of war.

<sup>9</sup>When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar those who had been slaughtered on account of the word of God and the witness they had given. <sup>10</sup>They cried out with a loud voice, "Holy and true Master, how long will you wait before you pass judgment? How long before you require justice for our blood, which was shed by those who live on earth?" <sup>11</sup>Each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to rest a little longer, until their fellow servants and brothers and sisters—who were about to be killed as they were—were finished.

<sup>12</sup>I looked on as he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became black as funeral clothing, and the entire moon turned red as blood. <sup>13</sup>The stars of the sky fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its fruit when shaken by a strong wind. <sup>14</sup>The sky disappeared like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved from its place. <sup>15</sup>Then the kings of the earth, the officials and the generals, the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in caves and in the rocks of the mountains. <sup>16</sup>They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the Lamb's wrath!" <sup>17</sup>The great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

**One hundred forty-four thousand sealed**

**7**After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth. They held back the earth's four winds so that no wind would blow against the earth, the sea, or any tree. <sup>2</sup>I saw another angel coming up from the east, holding the seal of the living God. He cried out with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given the power to damage the earth and sea. <sup>3</sup>He said, "Don't damage the earth, the sea, or the trees until we have put a seal on the foreheads of those who serve our God."

<sup>4</sup>Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed from every tribe of the Israelites:

<sup>5</sup>From the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed;

from the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand;

from the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand;

<sup>6</sup>from the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand;

from the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand;

from the tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand;

<sup>7</sup>from the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand;

from the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand;

from the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand;

<sup>8</sup>from the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand;

from the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand;

from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.

7:7 Gn 29:34, Gn 30:18, Gn 35:23, Gn 49:5; Ex 6:16

**6:9** *under the altar*... *God*: These are dead believers. They were killed like sacrificial animals on account of their faithfulness (see Lev 4:7).

**6:10** The opening of the fifth seal can be summed up as a request for God to hurry up and show supreme authority and justice by affirming the righteousness of those under the altar who had died, and by punishing the wicked.

**6:11-17** The events that take place when the sixth seal is opened—earthquake, solar and lunar eclipses, falling stars, and other events in the sky—are God's response to the request in Revelation 6:10 for quick justice (see Joel 2:31; Isa 34:4; Zeph 1:14-15).

**6:11** *rest a little longer*: refers to the rest of the deceased; this is also a call for patience.

**6:16** *the Lamb's wrath*: The image is intentionally contradictory. We can easily think about a lamb being innocent and defenseless. It's harder to think of a lamb having wrath toward another. See Revelation 5:5, where the Lamb is described as "The Lion of the tribe of Judah."

**7:1-17** Two brief visions interrupt the opening of the seven seals. The first is a scene of election in which God's people are marked for all to see as belonging to God

(7:1-8). The second is a victory scene in which God's holy ones praise God for his supreme authority (7:9-17). They then worship in heaven through the shedding of their blood.

**7:1** *four angels*... *earth*: John's understanding of the earth as four-cornered and of its elements (i.e., wind, water, fire) being controlled by angels was typical of the time (see Matt 24:31; Isa 11:12; Ezek 7:2).

**7:2** *another angel*: a messenger and agent of God's will, but not the same angel as the one mentioned in Revelation 5:2. In Ezekiel's vision of God's return to the temple, he describes God's glory as coming from the east (Ezek 43:1-2). *seal of the living God*: God's signet ring; everything that's marked with it becomes God's property.

**7:4** *one hundred forty-four thousand*: This expression means "too many to count." It's 1,000 multiplied by 12 and multiplied again by 12. Twelve recalls the 12 tribes of Israel as well as the 12 apostles. These two images are joined together in the vision of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:12-14). *from every tribe of the Israelites*: Like Paul and others of the 1st century CE, John identifies the church with Israel (see Gal 6:16; Eph 2:11-22; 1 Pet 2:9).

6:9 Lv 4:7; Rev 14:18; Rev 16:7; Rev 20:4  
 6:10 Zec 1:12; Lk 18:7; Rev 3:7; Rev 3:10; Rev 19:2  
 6:11 2Th 1:7; Heb 11:40; Rev 3:4; Rev 7:9; Rev 14:13  
 6:12 Is 50:3; Mt 24:29; Rev 8:5; Rev 11:13; Rev 16:18  
 6:13 Is 34:4; Mt 24:29; Mk 13:25; Rev 8:10, Rev 9:1  
 6:14 Is 34:4; 2Pt 3:10; Rev 16:20; Rev 20:11; Rev 21:1  
 6:15 Is 2:10; Is 2:19; Is 2:21  
 6:16 Hos 10:8; Lk 23:30; Rev 4:2  
 6:17 Ps 76:7; Jl 2:11; Jl 2:31; Zep 1:14; Mal 3:2  
 7:1 Jer 49:36; Dn 7:2; Mt 24:31  
 7:2 Rev 9:4  
 7:3 Eze 9:4; Rev 6:6; Rev 9:4; Rev 14:1; Rev 22:4  
 7:4 Lk 22:30; Rev 9:16; Rev 14:1; Rev 14:3  
 7:5 Gn 35:22-23; Gn 35:26; Ex 1:2; Nm 13:4  
 7:6 Lk 2:36

7:9 Lv 23:40;

Rev 3:4.

Rev 5:9.

Rev 6:11.

Rev 7:14

7:10 Ps 3:8.

Rev 12:10.

Rev 19:1

7:11 Rev 4:4.

Rev 4:6.

Rev 4:10.

Rev 5:11.

Rev 11:16

7:12 Rev 5:12.

Rev 5:14.

Rev 7:11.

Rev 11:17

7:13 Rev 3:4.

Rev 4:4, Rev 7:9

7:14 Mt 24:21;

Heb 9:14.

Jlm 1:7, Rev 1:5.

Rev 22:14

7:15 Is 4:5-6;

Rev 7:9.

Rev 21:3.

Rev 22:3

7:16 Ps 121:6;

Is 49:10

7:17 Is 25:8;

Mt 2:6; Jn 10:11;

Rev 5:6.

Rev 21:4

8:2 Rev 8:6.

Rev 9:1.

Rev 9:13.

Rev 11:15.

Rev 15:1

8:3 Ea 30:1;

Heb 9:4.

Rev 5:8, Rev 8:4.

Rev 9:13

8:4 Ps 141:2;

Rev 8:3

### The great crowd and seventh seal

<sup>9</sup>After this I looked, and there was a great crowd that no one could number. They were from every nation, tribe, people, and language. They were standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They wore white robes and held palm branches in their hands.

<sup>10</sup>They cried out with a loud voice:

“Victory belongs to our God  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb.”

<sup>11</sup>All the angels stood in a circle around the throne, and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell facedown before the throne and worshipped God, <sup>12</sup>saying,

“Amen! Blessing and glory  
and wisdom and thanksgiving  
and honor and power and might  
be to our God forever and always. Amen.”

<sup>13</sup>Then one of the elders said to me, “Who are these people wearing white robes, and where did they come from?”

<sup>14</sup>I said to him, “Sir, you know.”

Then he said to me, “These people have come out of great hardship. They have washed their robes and made them white in the Lamb’s blood. <sup>15</sup>This is the reason they are before God’s throne. They worship him day and night in his temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them. <sup>16</sup>They won’t hunger or thirst anymore. No sun or scorching heat will beat down on them, <sup>17</sup>because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them. He will lead them to the springs of life-giving water,<sup>d</sup> and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” <sup>18</sup>Then, when the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

### The first four trumpet plagues

<sup>2</sup>Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. <sup>3</sup>Another angel came and stood at the altar, and he held a gold bowl for burning incense. He was given a large amount of incense, in order to offer it on behalf of the prayers of all the saints on the gold altar in front of the throne. <sup>4</sup>The smoke of the incense offered for the prayers of the saints rose up before God from the angel’s hand. <sup>5</sup>Then the angel took the

<sup>d</sup>Or the water of life

7:9 a *great crowd*: the same group as the 144,000 described in 7:1-8. *white robes*... *branches*: White is the color of victory. Palm branches also symbolize victory and rejoicing after war (see 1 Macc 13:51; 2 Macc 10:7; see note on Rev 3:5). The scene recalls the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths), which commemorates the 40 years the Israelites lived in tents, or huts, in the wilderness. It’s a festival of great rejoicing because of God’s blessings.

7:10 A victory prayer (see Rev 12:10; 19:1).

7:11-12 See Revelation 5:11-12.

7:13-14 Dialogues between a seer and an elder or an angel who interprets the vision are a standard feature of Jewish apocalyptic writings like the book of Revelation (see Ezek 37:3; Zech 1:9, 21; 4:4-5; 6:4-5).

7:14 *washed*... *white*: martyrs who followed the Lamb to death and now enjoy a share in his victory (see Rev 22:14).

7:15 *the one*... *shelter them*: refers to the Feast of Tabernacles (see Rev 7:9).

7:16-17 See Revelation 21:3-4; Isaiah 25:8; 49:10.

8:1 *silence in heaven*: The opening of the seventh seal results in a dramatic pause in the heavenly worship,

**Symbolic Numbers** Symbolic numbers are found throughout the book of Revelation. Here are the ones that appear most frequently:

- Three, meaning a few, a limited number, or a limited time
- Four, representing universality (as in the four corners of the earth)
- Seven, meaning perfection and fullness
- Ten, representing completion of a cycle or perfect order
- Twelve, meaning fullness or completeness
- A thousand, meaning a number too big to count

Multiples and fractions of symbolic numbers are also symbolic. For example, 42 months (or 3½ years), which is half of 7, represents a limited time of harassment.

preparing the reader for what’s about to happen in the next series of visions.

8:2-13 The opening of the seven seals is followed by the blowing of seven trumpets. The first four trumpet blasts (8:6-12) occur one after the other, much like the opening of the first four seals (Rev 6:1-8). The last three trumpets (Rev 8:13-9:21; 11:15-19) appear in a separate vision that’s introduced by a bird crying, *Horror, horror, oh!* suggesting that what follows is very, very troubling.

8:2 *seven angels*: These are the angels of God’s presence (cf. Isa 63:9), also known in Jewish tradition as the seven archangels of God: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Sariel, and Remiel. *seven trumpets*: In the OT trumpets were used for a variety of purposes: to call together the assembly, to give directions in battle, to accompany festivals in the temple, and to announce God’s judgment. For examples of this last purpose, see Isaiah 27:13; Joel 2:1, 15; Zephaniah 1:16; Zechariah 9:14.

8:3 *Another angel*: See Revelation 7:2 and note. Concerning the golden bowls of incense, see Revelation 5:9.

8:5 *He threw*... *earth*: The angel is God’s agent. God



incense container and filled it with fire from the altar. He threw it down to the earth, and there were thunder, voices, lightning, and an earthquake.

<sup>6</sup>Then the seven angels who held the seven trumpets got ready to blow them. <sup>7</sup>The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood appeared, and was thrown down to the earth. A third of the earth was burned up. A third of the trees were burned up. All the green grass was burned up. <sup>8</sup>Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain burning with fire was thrown down into the sea. A third of the sea became blood, <sup>9</sup>a third of the creatures living in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. <sup>10</sup>Then the third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star, burning like a torch, fell from heaven. It fell on a third of the rivers and springs of water. <sup>11</sup>The star's name is Wormwood, and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it became so bitter. <sup>12</sup>Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars so that a third of them became dark. The day lost a third of its light, and the night lost a third of its light too.

<sup>13</sup>Then I looked and I heard an eagle flying high overhead. It said with a loud voice, "Horror, horror, oh! The horror for those who live on earth because of the blasts of the remaining trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"

**The fifth and sixth trumpet plagues**

<sup>1</sup>Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the abyss. <sup>2</sup>He opened the shaft of the abyss; and smoke rose up from the shaft, like smoke from a huge furnace. The sun and air were darkened by the smoke from the shaft. <sup>3</sup>Then locusts came forth from the smoke and onto the earth. They were given power like the power that scorpions have on the earth. <sup>4</sup>They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree. They could only hurt the people who didn't have the seal of God on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>The locusts weren't allowed to kill them, but only to make them suffer for five months—and the suffering they inflict is like that of a scorpion when it strikes a person. <sup>6</sup>In those days people will seek death, but they won't find it. They will want to die, but death will run away from them.

<sup>7</sup>The locusts looked like horses ready for battle. On their heads were what seemed to be gold crowns. Their faces were like human faces, <sup>8</sup>their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. <sup>9</sup>In front they had what seemed to be iron armor upon their chests, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of many chariots and horses racing into battle. <sup>10</sup>They also have tails with stingers, just like scorpions; and in their tails is their power to hurt people for five months. <sup>11</sup>Their king is an angel from the abyss, whose Hebrew name is Abaddon,<sup>e</sup> and whose Greek name is Apollyon.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>12</sup>The first horror has passed. Look! Two horrors are still coming after this.

<sup>13</sup>Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the gold altar that is before God. <sup>14</sup>It said to the sixth angel, who had the trumpet, "Release the

8:9 Is 2:16; Rev 8:7  
9:1 Rev 1:18, Rev 8:10, Rev 9:2, Rev 9:11, Rev 20:1  
9:3 Ex 10:12; Eze 2:6; Rev 9:5, Rev 9:10  
9:4 Eze 9:4; Rev 6:6, Rev 7:2-3, Rev 8:7  
9:6 Job 3:21, Job 7:15, Jer 8:3, Rev 6:16  
9:7 Dn 7:8; Jl 2:4  
9:10 Rev 9:3, Rev 9:5, Rev 9:19  
9:13 Rev 8:3  
9:14 Gn 15:18; Rev 7:1, Rev 16:12

<sup>e</sup>Destruction <sup>f</sup>Destroyer

answers the prayers of the saints (Rev 8:3) by casting down fire on the earth (see Ezek 10:1-7). The thunder and other signs in the sky are announcements of God's visitation (see Exod 19:16-18; Ps 77:18-19; Isa 29:6; Wis 19:13).

8:6-12 The plagues that accompany the blowing of the first four trumpets are both like and unlike the plagues of the exodus story: hail and fire mixed with blood (Exod 9:13-25); sea turning to blood (Exod 7:14-25); rivers and springs becoming bitter (Exod 7:14-25); and darkness in the sky and on earth (Exod 10:21-23). Like the plagues of the exodus, these plagues demonstrate God's supreme authority.

8:13 *eagle flying high*: a bird of prey and therefore an omen of terrible things to come.

9:1 *star... fallen*: The fallen star is a fallen, or disobedient, angel. John most likely refers to Jewish legends based on Genesis 6:1-4, which attempt to explain how sin entered the world. *he was given... abyss*: another claim of God's

supreme authority. Although the abyss is elsewhere associated with Sheol, the place of the dead, in Revelation it's the temporary prison of Satan and his servants (see Rev 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3).

9:3 *locusts*: recalls the eighth plague of the exodus story (Exod 10:12-20; Wis 16:9).

9:7-10 See Joel 1:2; 2:1-11; Jeremiah 8:16-18.

9:11 The Hebrew name of the angel who is king of the abyss means "destruction," and his Greek name means "destroyer" (see Rev 11:18).

9:12 Recall the eagle's cry, "Horror, horror, oh!" (Rev 8:13). The events that accompany the blowing of the last three trumpets are the three horrors.

9:13 *voice from... altar*: This is likely the angel who offered up the prayers of the saints at the altar of incense in Revelation 8:2-5.

9:14 *Euphrates*: The Euphrates River was the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire in the 1st century CE.

9:15 Rev 8:7,

Rev 9:18,

Rev 20:7

9:16 Ps 68:17;

Rev 7:4

9:17 Rev 9:18,

Rev 14:10,

Rev 19:20,

Rev 21:8

9:18 Rev 9:15,

Rev 9:17

9:19 Rev 9:10

9:20 Ps 115:4,

Ps 135:15;

Dn 5:23;

1Co 10:20;

Rev 2:21

9:21 Is 47:9,

Is 47:12;

Rev 2:21,

Rev 9:20,

Rev 17:2

10:1 Eze 1:28;

Mt 17:2;

Rev 1:15-16,

Rev 4:3

10:4 Dn 8:26,

Dn 12:4,

Dn 12:9,

Rev 1:11,

Rev 22:10

10:9 Jer 15:16;

Eze 2:8, Eze 3:1

four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”<sup>15</sup>Then the four angels who had been made ready for that hour, day, month, and year were released to kill a third of humankind.<sup>16</sup>The number of cavalry troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.<sup>17</sup>And this is the way I saw the horses and their riders in the vision: they had breastplates that were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The horses’ heads were like lions’ heads, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and sulfur.<sup>18</sup>By these three plagues a third of humankind was killed: by the fire, smoke, and sulfur coming out of their mouths.<sup>19</sup>The horses’ power

is in their mouths and their tails, for their tails are like snakes with heads that inflict injuries.<sup>20</sup>The rest of humankind, who weren’t killed by these plagues, didn’t change their hearts and lives and turn from their handiwork. They didn’t stop worshipping demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that can’t see or hear or walk.<sup>21</sup>They didn’t turn away from their murders, their spells and drugs, their sexual immorality, or their stealing.

### John receives the open scroll

**10**Then I saw another powerful angel coming down from heaven. He was robed with a cloud, with a rainbow over his head. His face was like the sun, and his feet were like fiery pillars.<sup>2</sup>He held an open scroll in his hand. He put his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land.<sup>3</sup>He called out with a loud voice like a lion roaring, and when he called out, the seven thunders raised their voices.<sup>4</sup>When the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven say, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and don’t write it down.”

<sup>5</sup>Then the angel I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven.<sup>6</sup>He swore by the one who lives forever and always, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, and said, “The time is up.<sup>7</sup>In the days when the seventh angel blows his trumpet, God’s mysterious purpose will be accomplished, fulfilling the good news he gave to his servants the prophets.”

<sup>8</sup>Then the voice I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, “Go, take the opened scroll from the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land.”<sup>9</sup>So I went to the angel and told him to give me the scroll. He said to me, “Take it and eat it. It will make you

*Symbolic Colors* Like its numbers, the colors in the book of Revelation are usually symbolic. Here are the ones that appear most frequently:

- White, representing victory
- Red, representing violence and bloodshed
- Scarlet, representing royalty and bloodshed
- Purple, representing royalty
- Pale green, representing death

White and red, in particular, mark out the two sides of Revelation’s great battle between good and evil.

The Parthians resided to the east, as did the Assyrians and Babylonians before them.

**9:16** *two hundred million*: The number, being multiples of 10 and 1,000, is symbolic of a very large army. Those who don’t have God’s seal (i.e., the hard-hearted) should be very afraid!

**9:17-19** *The horses’ heads . . . snakes*: John’s description of this army is remarkably similar to the locusts in Revelation 9:7-10. These are horrible images of the evil forces at work here.

**9:17** *fiery red, dark blue, and yellow*: These are the colors of fire, smoke, and sulfur, the three plagues that accompany the blowing of the sixth trumpet.

**9:20** *The rest . . . hearts*: The plagues are designed to bring the hard-hearted to change their hearts and lives. The plagues’ failure shows how deeply *The rest of humankind* resists God’s ways (see Wis 12:10, 19-21; Exod 7:22; 8:11, 15, 28; 9:7, 12, 34-35).

**9:21** John uses a Greek term, *pharmakon*, associated with the use of drugs and magic potions in casting spells.

**10:1-11** This is the first scene of a three-part vision that interrupts the blowing of the seventh trumpet. The vision ends at Revelation 11:14.

**10:1** *another powerful angel*: The word “powerful” is used to describe an angel only three times in this book (Rev 5:2; 10:1; 18:21), and this is a truly extraordinary angel. *his feet . . . pillars*: Pillars of fire recall the fire and cloud that accompanied the Israelites in their wilderness journey (Exod 14:19-24).

**10:2** *open scroll*: Unlike the sealed scroll of Revelation 5:1-5, this one is ready to be read.

**10:3** *seven thunders*: Thunder is often used as an image for God’s voice (see Exod 19:19; 1 Sam 2:10; 7:10; Job 26:14; Ps 104:7).

**10:4** *Seal up*: The meaning of this command is unclear. It may be an indirect way of saying that, despite the many revelations John receives, God’s mysterious purpose remains hidden.

**10:5** *standing . . . hand*: This hand gesture shows that the angel is about to swear a solemn promise by God, who is the creator of all things in the heavens (where the angel’s hand is pointing), on the earth (where his left foot is placed), and in the sea (where his right foot is placed).

**10:9** *“Take . . . mouth”*: The scroll is an image for God’s word. When John eats it, the word becomes part of his

sick to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth.”<sup>10</sup> So I took the scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. And it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I swallowed it, it made my stomach churn. <sup>11</sup> I was told, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings.”

**Two witnesses**

**11** Then I was given a measuring rod, which was like a pole. And I was told, “Get up and measure God’s temple, the altar, and those who worship there. <sup>2</sup> But don’t measure the court outside the temple. Leave that out, because it has been given to the nations, and they will trample the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

<sup>3</sup> And I will allow my two witnesses to prophesy for one thousand two hundred sixty days, wearing mourning clothes. <sup>4</sup> These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. <sup>5</sup> If anyone wants to hurt them, fire comes out of their mouth and burns up their enemies. So if anyone wants to hurt them, they have to be killed in this way. <sup>6</sup> They have the power to close up the sky so that no rain will fall for as long as they prophesy. They also have power over the waters, to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with any plague, as often as they wish.

<sup>7</sup> “When they have finished their witnessing, the beast that comes up from the abyss will make war on them, gain victory over them, and kill them. <sup>8</sup> Their dead bodies will lie on the street of the great city that is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. <sup>9</sup> And for three and a half days, members of the peoples, tribes, languages, and nations will look at their dead bodies, but they won’t let their dead bodies be put in a tomb. <sup>10</sup> Those who live on earth will rejoice over them. They will celebrate and give each other gifts, because these two prophets had brought such pain to those who live on earth.

<sup>11</sup> “But after three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet. Great fear came over those who saw them. <sup>12</sup> Then they heard a loud voice from heaven say to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies watched them. <sup>13</sup> At that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed by the earthquake, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.”

<sup>14</sup> The second horror is over. The third horror is coming soon.

10:10 Rev 10:9  
 11:1 Eze 40:3;  
 Zec 2:1;  
 Rev 21:15  
 11:2 Eze 40:17;  
 Lk 21:24;  
 Rev 12:6,  
 Rev 13:5,  
 Rev 21:2  
 11:3 Gn 37:34;  
 Rev 12:6  
 11:4 Ps 52:8;  
 Jer 11:16;  
 Zec 4:3;  
 Zec 4:11,  
 Zec 4:14  
 11:5 Nm 16:29;  
 Nm 16:35;  
 2Ki 1:10;  
 Jer 5:14  
 11:6 Ex 7:17;  
 1Sa 4:8; 1Ki 17:1;  
 Lk 4:25; Jas 5:17  
 11:7 Dn 7:21;  
 Rev 9:1,  
 Rev 13:1,  
 Rev 13:7,  
 Rev 17:8  
 11:8 Is 1:9;  
 Jer 23:14  
 11:9 Ps 79:2-3  
 11:10 Neh 8:10;  
 Neh 8:12;  
 Est 9:19,  
 Est 9:22;  
 Rev 3:10  
 11:11 Eze 37:5,  
 Eze 37:9-10,  
 Eze 37:14  
 11:12 2Ki 2:11;  
 Ac 1:9; Rev 3:21,  
 Rev 4:1

very being. John’s commissioning is similar to that of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek 3:1-4).

11:1-2 The second scene of this three-part vision describes John’s first symbolic action as a newly commissioned prophet. *measuring rod*: a surveying instrument. John is to mark off as God’s property the Jerusalem temple proper, leaving out the outer Court of the Gentiles. Like the sealing of the 144,000 in Revelation 7:1-8, this action doesn’t mean the temple will be spared destruction. Instead, God will watch over it in the coming troubles.

11:2 *forty-two months*: This number and its equivalents, three and a half years and 1,260 days, is a symbol for a period of harassment in Daniel 7. It’s half of seven, the number of fullness. This provides John’s audience with encouragement that their harassment won’t last forever.

11:3-14 The third scene of this three-part vision is highly symbolic and difficult to understand. It appears to be an image of the church living out its ministry of witness, suffering the consequences, and ultimately enjoying its reward.

11:3 *two witnesses*: John appears to use “witnesses” and “prophets” interchangeably in this section. The number two may derive from Deuteronomy 19:15-21, which says that at least two witnesses are needed in a courtroom. *one thousand two hundred sixty days*: See Revelation 11:2 and note.

11:4 *two olive trees... two lampstands*: John appears to be

drawing on Zechariah’s vision of the two olive trees that stand beside the golden lampstand of God in the New Jerusalem (Zech 4:1-3, 11-14).

11:6 *They have... plague*: John identifies the two witnesses with Elijah (1 Kgs 17:1) and Moses (Exod 7:14-25).

11:7 *beast... abyss*: See Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:1-8.

11:8 *great city... crucified*: John states clearly that the great city is not an actual historical city but an image for something like Sodom and Egypt, where innocent blood was shed and God’s people were harassed; or Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified. John will later associate this great city with Rome (Rev 17:18).

11:9 *three and a half days*: See Revelation 11:2 and note. *they won’t let... tomb*: In the ancient world, to leave a corpse unburied was a huge indignity. It was a way of shaming one’s enemies (see 1 Sam 17:44, 46; 2 Kgs 9:10; Tob 2:3-8; Isa 14:19-20; Jer 8:1-2; 16:4-6; 22:19).

11:11 See Ezekiel 37:10.

11:12 *they went up to heaven in a cloud*: After resurrection comes ascension into heaven, which is how God vindicates the two witnesses and shames their enemies.

11:13 *the rest... God*: This shows that they changed their hearts and lives. *Seven thousand*: symbolic, not literal. They’re what remained of the hard-hearted who weren’t marked with the seal of the living God.

11:14 *The second horror*: See Revelation 9:12 and note. John doesn’t say what the third horror is.

11:15 Dn 2:44;  
Dn 7:14;  
Dn 7:27; Lk 1:33;  
Rev 12:10

11:16 Rev 4:4;  
Rev 4:10;  
Rev 7:11

11:17 Rev 1:4;  
Rev 1:8; Rev 4:8;  
Rev 19:6

11:19 Heb 9:4;  
Rev 4:5; Rev 8:5;  
Rev 15:5;  
Rev 16:21

12:1 Ps 104:2;  
Ga 4:26;  
Rev 11:19;  
Rev 12:3;  
Rev 15:1

12:2 Is 26:17;  
Ga 4:19

12:3 Dn 7:7;  
Rev 12:1;  
Rev 13:1;  
Rev 17:3;  
Rev 17:12

12:4 Dn 8:10;  
Mt 2:16; Rev 8:7

12:5 Ps 2:9;  
Rev 2:27;  
Rev 19:15

12:6 Rev 11:2-3

12:7 Dn 10:13;  
Dn 10:21;  
Dn 12:1;  
Mt 25:41;  
Jud 1:9

### Seventh trumpet

<sup>15</sup>Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he will rule forever and always."

<sup>16</sup>Then the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God. <sup>17</sup>They said,

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and was,

for you have taken your great power and enforced your rule.

<sup>18</sup>The nations were enraged, but your wrath came.

The time came for the dead to be judged.

The time came to reward your servants, the prophets and saints,

and those who fear your name, both small and great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

<sup>19</sup>Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the chest containing his covenant appeared in his temple. There were lightning, voices, thunder, an earthquake, and large hail.

### A woman, her child, and the dragon

**12** Then a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. <sup>2</sup>She was pregnant, and she cried out because she was in labor, in pain from giving birth. <sup>3</sup>Then another sign appeared in heaven: it was a great fiery red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven royal crowns on his heads. <sup>4</sup>His tail swept down a third of heaven's stars and threw them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth so that when she gave birth, he might devour her child. <sup>5</sup>She gave birth to a son, a male child who is to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was snatched up to God and his throne. <sup>6</sup>Then the woman fled into the desert, where God has prepared a place for her. There she will be taken care of for one thousand two hundred sixty days.

### Michael and the dragon

<sup>7</sup>Then there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, <sup>8</sup>but they did not prevail, and there was no longer any place for them

11:15-19 The blowing of the seventh trumpet recalls Revelation 7:9-12, where all of the heavenly creatures surrounding God's throne are singing in praise of God's supreme authority and celebrating the arrival of the time when the prayers of those under the altar will be answered (see Rev 6:9-11; 8:2-5).

11:17 *Lord God Almighty, who is and was*: In Revelation 1:4 God is "the one who is and was and is coming." Here John shows that God has come and justice will be given to God's holy ones.

11:19 *chest... temple*: The chest containing the covenant, the symbol of God's presence during the exodus, was once housed in the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem temple. However, it disappeared when the temple was destroyed during the period leading to the Babylonian exile. Now the heavens are opened so that everyone can see the chest in its heavenly dwelling.

12:1-17 This vision of the woman and the dragon marks the beginning of the second half of the book of Revelation. There are two scenes, one sandwiched inside the other. In the inner vision (12:7-12), the archangel Michael battles the dragon and throws him out of heaven. In the outer vision (12:1-6, 13-17), the dragon attempts to devour the heavenly woman's child as it's about to be born. When he fails, he stomps off to make war on the rest of her offspring.

12:1 *woman clothed with the sun*: John appears to be drawing on a variety of sources here, including the myth of Apollo. The myth describes how Apollo's mother, Leto,

was forced to roam the earth in search of a place to give birth and how the child, once it had been born, slayed the great dragon Pytho (python). Recall also the OT story of Eve and the serpent (Gen 3:14-15).

12:2 *pregnant... birth*: In the Bible a woman in childbirth can have many meanings: the people's suffering when they break covenant with God, the chaos and struggle that would usher in the end time, and the joy that Judah and Jerusalem will know when God's people are restored to life (see Isa 26:17-19; Mic 4:10; Jer 4:31; Matt 24:8; Mark 13:8; John 16:21; 1 Thess 5:3).

12:3-4 Fiery red is the color of bloodshed. Seven and 10 are numbers of fullness. Horns and heads signify power, and crowns are images of kingship. Hence this mythic dragon is a symbol of violence and unchecked power, capable of ripping the stars from the sky and destroying God's people.

12:5 *son... with an iron rod*: The son is Israel's Christ. John's description is influenced by Psalm 2:9. *snatched up to God*: referring to the Lamb's exaltation to God's throne after his crucifixion and resurrection.

12:6 *fled into the desert*: Although the desert is a place of danger, it was also a place of safety for Moses and the Israelites when they escaped from Egypt.

12:7 *Michael*: one of the angels of God's presence (see Rev 8:2). In the book of Daniel, he's the angelic prince who protects God's people by fighting the Persians (see Dan 10:13-21; 12:1-2).

in heaven. <sup>9</sup>So the great dragon was thrown down. The old snake, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world, was thrown down to the earth; and his angels were thrown down with him. <sup>10</sup>Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say,

“Now the salvation and power and kingdom of our God,  
and the authority of his Christ have come.

The accuser of our brothers and sisters,  
who accuses them day and night before our God,  
has been thrown down.

<sup>11</sup>They gained the victory over him on account of the blood of the Lamb  
and the word of their witness.

Love for their own lives didn't make them afraid to die.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them.

But oh! The horror for the earth and sea!

The devil has come down to you with great rage,  
for he knows that he only has a short time.”

12:9 Gn 3:1;  
Lk 10:18;  
Jn 12:31;  
2Co 11:3;  
Rev 20:2  
12:10 Job 1:9;  
Job 2:5; Zec 3:1;  
Rev 7:10;  
Rev 11:15  
12:14 Ex 19:4;  
Dt 32:11;  
Dn 7:25;  
Dn 12:7;  
Rev 12:6  
12:15 Is 8:7;  
Is 59:19;  
Rev 12:9;  
Rev 17:15  
12:17 Gn 3:15;  
1Jn 2:3; Rev 1:2;  
Rev 6:9;  
Rev 14:12  
13:1 Dn 11:36;  
Rev 11:7;  
Rev 12:3;  
Rev 17:3  
13:2 Dn 7:4-6;  
Rev 2:13;  
Rev 16:10  
13:3 Rev 13:14;  
Rev 17:8

### The dragon pursues the woman

<sup>13</sup>When the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he chased the woman who had given birth to the male child. <sup>14</sup>But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she could fly to her place in the desert. There she would be taken care of—out of the snake's reach—for a time and times and half a time. <sup>15</sup>Then from his mouth the snake poured a river of water after the woman so that the river would sweep her away. <sup>16</sup>But the earth helped the woman. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon poured out of his mouth. <sup>17</sup>So the dragon was furious with the woman, and he went off to make war on the rest of her children, on those who keep God's commandments and hold firmly to the witness of Jesus.

### The beast from the sea

<sup>18</sup>Then the dragon stood on the seashore,

**13** and I saw a beast coming up out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads. Each of its horns was decorated with a royal crown, and on its heads were blasphemous names. <sup>2</sup>The beast I saw was like a leopard. Its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. The dragon gave it his power, throne, and great authority. <sup>3</sup>One of its heads appeared to have been slain and killed, but its deadly wound was healed. So the whole earth was amazed and followed the beast. <sup>4</sup>They worshipped the dragon because it had given the

12:9 *old snake... the deceiver*: In Genesis 3 the serpent is merely a crafty creature. In Wisdom of Solomon 2:24, he's identified as the devil, whose envy brings death into the world. In the book of Job, he's an angelic being who tests the faithfulness of God's people and accuses them before God (e.g., Job 1:6-12). John appears to have all of these pictures of Satan in mind.

12:10-11 Another victory prayer (see Rev 7:10; 19:1).

12:12 *But oh! The horror for the earth and sea!*: This may be the third horror mentioned in Revelation 11:14.

12:14 *two wings... eagle*: This image recalls God's words to the Israelites as they entered the wilderness of Sinai: "I lifted you up on eagles' wings and brought you to me" (Exod 19:4). *for a time and times and half a time*: three and a half years, symbolic of a (limited) time of harassment.

12:15-16 The war of good against evil has extended to the whole universe. The dragon, perhaps modeled on the sea serpent Leviathan, uses water in an attempt to capture the heavenly woman. But the earth is on God's side and helps to protect her (see Dan 7:2-8; Ps 74:14; Job 3:8; 7:12; 41:1; Isa 27:1; Num 16:30).

12:17 *the rest of her children*: the church.

12:18-13:18 The next two visions in this series follow directly after the first. John uses images to write about the troubles that await his 1st-century audience.

13:1-2 John's description of the beast from the sea in the

second vision draws heavily on Daniel 7:2-8. The numbers 7 and 10 are symbolic of fullness. Horns and heads signify power, and crowns are images of kingship (see Rev 12:3-4). 13:1 *coming... sea*: Although ancient people appreciated the value and necessity of water for life, they also knew its dangers. The sea was generally thought to be a hostile place, the home of monsters and water serpents. *on its heads... names*: The imperial religion claimed that the emperor's authority was divinely given, and it bestowed titles like Lord, God, Augustus (the revered one), and Savior on Roman emperors.

13:2 *power... authority*: John shows that the dragon is a poor imitation of the one seated on the throne, that is, God (see Rev 4:2-6). As such, the dragon is a creature to be scorned and ridiculed.

13:3 *One of its heads... healed*: a parody on the Lamb who was slain but now lives (see Rev 5:6-7). The head's nearly fatal wound may refer to the period of civil strife that followed Emperor Nero's suicide in 68 CE. The empire regained its authority when Vespasian took the throne a year later.

13:4 *They worshipped... the beast*: Emperor worship was an ever-present aspect of Roman life. John says it is worship of Satan (see 1 Cor 10:20). *Who is like the beast*: perhaps a spoof on Exodus 15:11: "Who is like you among the gods, LORD?" Recall that Michael and his angels have already defeated the dragon (Rev 12:7-12).

13:5 Dn 7:8,  
Dn 7:11, Dn 7:20,  
Dn 11:36,  
Rev 11:2

13:6 Rev 12:12

13:8 Mt 25:34,  
In 1:29, Rev 3:5,  
Rev 5:6, Rev 17:8

13:10 Jer 15:2,  
Jer 43:11,  
Heb 6:12,  
Rev 14:12

13:11 Dn 8:3,  
Rev 13:1,  
Rev 16:13

13:12 Rev 13:3,  
Rev 13:4,  
Rev 13:14,  
Rev 14:9,  
Rev 16:2

13:13 1Ki 18:38;  
Mt 24:24;  
Lk 9:54; 2Th 2:9;  
Rev 16:14

13:14 2Th 2:9;  
Rev 12:9,  
Rev 13:3,  
Rev 13:12,  
Rev 19:20

13:15 Rev 16:2,  
Rev 19:20,  
Rev 20:4

13:16 Rev 7:3,  
Rev 11:18,  
Rev 14:9,  
Rev 19:5,  
Rev 19:18

13:17 Rev 14:11,  
Rev 15:2

13:18 Rev 17:9,  
Rev 21:17

14:1 Heb  
12:22; Rev 3:12,  
Rev 5:6,  
Rev 7:3-4

beast its authority. They worshipped the beast and said, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

<sup>5</sup>The beast was given a mouth that spoke boastful and blasphemous things, and it was given authority to act for forty-two months. <sup>6</sup>It opened its mouth to speak blasphemies against God. It blasphemed God's name and his dwelling place (that is, those who dwell in heaven).

<sup>7</sup>It was also allowed to make war on the saints and to gain victory over them. It was given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. <sup>8</sup>All who live on earth worshipped it, all whose names hadn't been written—from the time the earth was made—in the scroll of life of the Lamb who was slain. <sup>9</sup>Whoever has ears must listen: <sup>10</sup>If any are to be taken captive, then into captivity they will go. If any are to be killed by the sword, then by the sword they will be killed. This calls for endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

### *The beast from the land*

<sup>11</sup>Then I saw another beast coming up from the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it was speaking like a dragon. <sup>12</sup>It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence. It also makes the earth and those who live in it worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. <sup>13</sup>It does great signs so that it even makes fire come down from heaven to earth in the presence of the people. <sup>14</sup>It deceives those who live on earth by the signs that it was allowed to do in the presence of the beast. It told those who live on earth to make an image for the beast who had been wounded by the sword and yet came to life again. <sup>15</sup>It was allowed to give breath to the beast's image so that the beast's image would even speak and cause anyone who didn't worship the beast's image to be put to death. <sup>16</sup>It forces everyone—the small and great, the rich and poor, the free and slaves—to have a mark put on their right hand or on their forehead. <sup>17</sup>It will not allow anyone to make a purchase or sell anything unless the person has the mark with the beast's name or the number of its name. <sup>18</sup>This calls for wisdom. Let the one who understands calculate the beast's number, for it's a human being's number. Its number is six hundred sixty-six.

### *The Lamb and the one hundred forty-four thousand*

**14** Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion. With him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. <sup>2</sup>I heard a sound from heaven that was like the sound of rushing water and

**13:5-7** John continues to claim God's supreme authority. This doesn't mean, however, that God is responsible for the evil deeds of the dragon and the beast of the sea.

**13:5** *forty-two months*: See Revelation 11:2 and note.

**13:7** *It was given... nation*: In the 1st century CE, Rome was thought to control the entire inhabited world.

**13:8** *all whose names... life*: See Revelation 3:5 and note. We shouldn't read later doctrines of predestination into John's notion of a *scroll of life*. He simply has in mind those who didn't bear witness on behalf of the Lamb and didn't endure the suffering that leads to victory.

**13:11-18** This vision of the beast that comes from the land is the third in this series of visions and closely related to the first two. In ancient lore, Behemoth, a monster of the land, is the counterpart to the sea monster Leviathan (see Job 40:15-24).

**13:11** *two horns like a lamb*: John continues his parody from the previous vision (see Rev 13:3-4). Recall that the crucified and exalted Lamb has seven horns (Rev 5:6), signifying that it is all-powerful.

**13:12** *exercises... presence*: This second beast's power derives from the first beast (Rome or the Roman Empire), but both get their authority from Satan. Based on the content of Revelation 13:13-15, John may want his readers to understand the second beast as a symbol of emperor worship and its promoters.

**13:14** *signs... do*: Again John claims God's supreme authority. The beast couldn't do anything except what God

allowed. *make... beast*: probably refers to the statues of emperors found in Roman temples.

**13:15** *allowed... image*: Priests and servants in Greco-Roman shrines would make images speak through a variety of tricks, such as placing a temple priest inside a hollowed-out statue.

**13:16-17** The economic system was set up in such a way that Christians couldn't take an active part in the market economy without also taking part in pagan religions.

**13:18** *beast's number... is six hundred sixty-six*: John uses an ancient form of numerology that involved adding together the numerical value assigned to each letter of a name. We can be quite certain that John's audience already knew the name Neron Kaisar (Emperor Nero), whose numerological value happened to be 666. Emperor Nero (reigned 54-68 CE) was known as a vicious persecutor of Christians. According to legend, he was expected to come back from the dead to again take control of the Roman Empire.

**14:1-5** The fourth in this series of visions contrasts with the three that precede it. The Lamb is the exact opposite of the dragon and the two beasts that get their authority from him. Likewise, the 144,000 are the opposite of those who have the mark of the beast on their hands or their foreheads.

**14:1** *Mount Zion*: God's holy mountain. The term is used for the earthly city Jerusalem and also for a future city reserved for the remnant of God's holy ones (see Ps 2:6; Isa 4:2-6; Mic 4:6-8).

loud thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. <sup>3</sup>They sing a new song in front of the throne, the four living creatures, and the elders. And no one could learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. <sup>4</sup>They weren't defiled with women, for these people who follow the Lamb wherever he goes are virgins. They were purchased from among humankind as early produce for God and the Lamb. <sup>5</sup>No lie came from their mouths; they are blameless.

**Messages of three angels**

<sup>6</sup>Then I saw another angel flying high overhead with eternal good news to proclaim to those who live on earth, and to every nation, tribe, language, and people. <sup>7</sup>He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come. Worship the one who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

<sup>8</sup>Another angel, a second one, followed and said, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She made all the nations drink the wine of her lustful passion."

<sup>9</sup>Then another angel, a third one, followed them and said in a loud voice, "If any worship the beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or their hands, <sup>10</sup>they themselves will also drink the wine of God's passionate anger, poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will suffer the pain of fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. <sup>11</sup>The smoke of their painful suffering goes up forever and always. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, and those who receive the mark of its name."

<sup>12</sup>This calls for the endurance of the saints, who keep God's commandments and keep faith with Jesus.

<sup>13</sup>And I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Favored are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."

"Yes," says the Spirit, "so they can rest from their labors, because their deeds follow them."

**Two harvests of the earth**

<sup>14</sup>Then I looked, and there was a white cloud. On the cloud was seated someone who looked like the Human One.<sup>8</sup> He had a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

<sup>15</sup>Another angel came out of the temple, calling in a loud voice to the one seated on the cloud:

<sup>8</sup>Or *Son of Man*

**14:3** *They sing a new song:* In Revelation 5:9-10 John gives his readers the words of this new song. It's a song of praise to the Lamb, who, by his blood, redeemed humankind.

**14:4** *They weren't defiled with women:* John uses an OT image to refer to members of the Lamb's army readying themselves for holy war (Deut 23:9-10; 1 Sam 21:5; 2 Sam 11:8-11) or keeping themselves ritually pure for priestly ministry in God's heavenly temple (Lev 15:18). *early produce:* associated with Jewish harvest feasts. When part of the harvest was offered to God and accepted as holy, then the entire harvest was considered holy. John says that the 144,000 are the first offering of God's harvest of redemption.

**14:6-13** This fifth vision in the series is a kind of flash-forward. That is, it anticipates the visions of judgment still to come. It has three short scenes, one for each angel messenger, and three brief concluding statements. This vision is similar to the vision of the open scroll in Revelation 10:1-11.

**14:6** *with eternal good news to proclaim:* The term "good news" can be misleading, because what follows—warnings of more suffering and destruction—isn't happy news. However, when we consider the request of those under the altar (Rev 5:10), this is very good news indeed. The time has come and is already here for God to defend and honor God's holy ones and bring judgment on the wicked!

**14:8** *Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great:* After the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE, "Babylon" became a code word for "Rome." This is because Babylon had similarly destroyed Jerusalem in the 6th century BCE (see

1 Pet 5:12). *She made... passion:* Israel viewed Babylon as an ungodly and oppressive empire in which idolatry and immorality were everywhere. The prophets warned that Babylon, in turn, wouldn't escape destruction (see Isa 47:1-9; Jer 51:7-8; Hab 2:15-16).

**14:10** *anger... wrath:* John isn't saying that God is furious and unpredictably emotional in God's response to humans; rather, wrath is God's just response to human sin. If humanity's sin is great, the consequences will be great as well (see Pss 60:3; 75:8; Isa 51:17-19; Jer 25:15-18). *pain of fire and sulfur:* The final fate of the dragon, the two beasts, and their servants is the fiery lake of sulfur (see Rev 19:19-21; 20:7-10).

**14:12** *This calls for... saints:* John repeatedly calls his readers to stand strong in the face of suffering (see Rev 13:10, 18; 17:9).

**14:14-20** The sixth in this series of visions consists of two scenes: One involves Jesus Christ, the central character of the first vision of this book (Rev 1:9-20), and an angel; and the second involves two angels. The two scenes are joined together by the theme of harvest, which is an image for judgment.

**14:14** *a sharp sickle... hand:* A sickle is a curved cutting tool used for harvesting grain. Reaping with a sickle is a common biblical image for judgment (see Isa 17:4-6; 27:12-13; Jer 51:33; Joel 3:11-13; Matt 13:24-30, 36-43).

**14:15** *Another angel... voice:* While it may seem strange to think of an angel commanding Christ to do something,

**14:2** Rev 1:15, Rev 5:8, Rev 6:1, Rev 15:2

**14:3** Rev 4:4, Rev 4:6, Rev 5:9

**14:4** 2Co 11:2, Jas 1:18, Rev 3:4, Rev 5:9, Rev 17:14

**14:5** Ps 32:2, Zep 3:13, In 1:47, 1Pt 2:22, Jud 1:24

**14:6** Mk 16:15, 1Pt 1:25, Rev 8:13

**14:7** Ecc 12:13, Rev 4:11, Rev 8:10, Rev 10:6, Rev 15:4

**14:9** Rev 13:12, Rev 13:16, Rev 14:11

**14:10** Ps 75:8, Is 51:17, Jer 25:15, Rev 16:19, Rev 20:10

**14:11** Is 34:10, Rev 4:8, Rev 19:3, Rev 20:10

**14:13** 1Co 15:18, 1Th 4:16, Heb 4:9, Rev 2:7, Rev 6:11

14:17 Rev 14:15

15:1 Rev 12:1.

Rev 15:6.

Rev 16:1.

Rev 17:1.

Rev 21:9

15:2 Rev 4:6.

Rev 5:8.

Rev 12:11.

Rev 13:17.

Rev 14:2.

15:3 Ex 15:1.

Dt 32:4.

Ps 111:2.

Ps 139:14.

Ps 145:17

15:4 Ps 86:9.

Ps 99:5, Ps 99:9.

Is 66:23.

Rev 14:7

"Use your sickle to reap the harvest, for the time to harvest has come, and the harvest of the earth is ripe." <sup>16</sup>So the one seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

<sup>17</sup>Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.

<sup>18</sup>Still another angel, who has power over fire, came out from the altar. He said in a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Use your sharp sickle to cut the clusters in the vineyard of the earth, because its grapes are ripe." <sup>19</sup>So the angel swung his sickle into the earth, and cut the vineyard of the earth, and he put what he reaped into the great winepress of God's passionate anger. <sup>20</sup>Then the winepress was trampled outside the city, and the blood came out of the winepress as high as the horses' bridles for almost two hundred miles.<sup>h</sup>

### Song of Moses and the Lamb

**15** Then I saw another great and awe-inspiring sign in heaven. There were seven angels with seven plagues—and these are the last, for with them God's anger is brought to an end. <sup>2</sup>Then I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mixed with fire. Those who gained victory over the beast, its image, and the number of its name were standing by the glass sea, holding harps from God. <sup>3</sup>They sing the song of Moses, God's servant, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

"Great and awe-inspiring are your works,  
Lord God Almighty.

Just and true are your ways,  
king of the nations.

<sup>4</sup>Who won't fear you, Lord, and glorify your name?

You alone are holy.

All nations will come and fall down in worship before you,  
for your acts of justice have been revealed."

<sup>h</sup>Or one thousand six hundred stades

these angels are God's messengers. All are described as coming from God's throne room. *the harvest . . . ripe*: God, who has supreme authority in all things, determines when the gathering in of the harvest will take place. The vision that describes this end-time judgment is found in Revelation 20:11-15.

14:19 *great winepress . . . anger*: Isaiah 63:1-6 provides a fuller and more graphic explanation of the image of the winepress as judgment. The juice of the grapes is an image for the blood of those whom God crushes in judgment. God wears their blood on his clothes while stomping out the wicked in victory (see Lam 1:15). We find this same image in Revelation 19:11-16.

14:20 *outside the city*: The OT prophets wrote about how Israel's enemies would be destroyed before they could enter the holy city of Jerusalem (see Ezek 38:17-23; Joel 3:12-16; Zech 14:1-5, 9-15). But John's audience would have also recognized that Jesus was crucified outside the city (see Matt 21:29; Luke 20:15; Heb 13:12-13). *as high as . . . miles*: The number is 1,600 stadia, which is 40 multiplied by 40. Forty is a symbolic number that points to a change from one state to another (e.g., the Israelites' 40 years in the wilderness was a time of change from slavery to freedom). This extremely gruesome scene is a metaphor for the extent to which God's judgment will bring about a change or transformation on the earth. No longer will it be a place where evil and sin dominate; rather, it will become a fitting home for God's holy ones (see Rev 21:1-22:5).

15:1-4 Like the first vision in this series (Rev 12:1-18), this seventh is called a *sign*. John is permitted to witness once

again the divine worship that continues throughout the book of Revelation. This vision also serves as an introduction to the next series of visions, the visions of the seven plagues.

15:1 *seven plagues . . . last*: These seven plagues won't be the final visions of destruction in the book of Revelation; rather, seven symbolizes completion. When these plagues are finished, God's anger will have reached its full measure. However, we shouldn't think of God's anger in human terms but as God's just response to human sin (see Rev 14:10).

15:2 *sea . . . fire*: This is the same sea of glass mentioned in Revelation 4:6. In the OT fire can be a symbol of God's presence and also a symbol of judgment (e.g., Deut 4:24, 33; 5:24-26; 9:3, 10; 2 Kgs 1:10-12; Job 1:16; Jer 5:14; Ezek 20:47; 28:14; Amos 7:4). John intends the latter here. *Those who gained victory*: These are the 144,000 of Revelation 7:1-8; 14:1-5.

15:3-4 The OT is the source of this song in praise of God's supreme authority and justice (see Pss 92:6; 98:1; Deut 32:4; Pss 145:17; 86:9-10; Jer 10:7).

15:3 *Moses, God's servant*: This title is frequently applied to Moses in the OT (e.g., Exod 14:31; Josh 1:13, 15; 9:24; 22:4-5; 1 Kgs 8:53; 2 Kgs 18:12; Neh 10:29; Dan 9:11; Heb 3:5). *song of Moses . . . Lamb*: For John the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb are one song, not two. This is because the event that led to the original song of Moses (Exod 15)—God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt—has reached its fullest expression in the deliverance brought about by the Lamb's blood (see Rev 7:14; 12:11).



**Seven bowl plagues**

<sup>5</sup>After this I looked, and the temple in heaven—that is, the tent of witness—was opened. <sup>6</sup>The seven angels, who have the seven plagues, came out of the temple. They were clothed in pure bright linen and had gold sashes around their waists. <sup>7</sup>Then one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven gold bowls full of the anger of the God who lives forever and always. <sup>8</sup>The temple was filled with smoke from God's glory and power, and no one could go into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven last angels were brought to an end.

**16**Then I heard a loud voice from the temple say to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the seven bowls of God's anger on the earth." <sup>2</sup>So the first angel poured his bowl on the earth, and a nasty and terrible sore appeared on the people who had the beast's mark and worshipped its image. <sup>3</sup>The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and the sea turned into blood, like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing in the sea died. <sup>4</sup>The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers and springs of water, and they turned into blood. <sup>5</sup>Then I heard the angel of the waters say,

"You are just, holy one, who is and was, because you have given these judgments.

<sup>6</sup>They poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. They deserve it!"

<sup>7</sup>And I heard the altar say,

"Yes, Lord God Almighty, your judgments are true and just."

<sup>8</sup>The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to burn people with fire.

<sup>9</sup>The people were burned by intense heat, and they cursed the name of the God who had power over these plagues. But they didn't change their hearts and lives and give him glory.

<sup>10</sup>The fifth angel poured his bowl over the beast's throne, and darkness covered its kingdom. People bit their tongues because of their pain, <sup>11</sup>and they cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores; but they didn't turn away from what they had done.

<sup>12</sup>Then the sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphrates. Its water was dried up so that the way was ready for the kings from the east. <sup>13</sup>Then I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, come from the dragon's mouth, the beast's mouth, and the mouth of the false prophet. <sup>14</sup>These are demonic spirits that do signs. They go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. (<sup>15</sup>Look! I'm coming like a thief! Favored are those who stay awake and clothed so that they don't go around

15:6 Rev 1:13, Rev 15:1  
 16:1 Ps 79:6; Jer 10:25; Zep 3:8; Rev 15:1, Rev 15:7  
 16:5 In 17:25; Rev 1:4, Rev 11:17, Rev 15:4  
 16:7 Rev 18, Rev 6:9, Rev 14:18, Rev 15:3, Rev 19:2  
 16:13 Ex 8:2; Rev 12:3, Rev 13:1, Rev 19:20, Rev 20:10  
 16:15 Lk 12:37; 1Th 5:2; Rev 3:3, Rev 3:18

15:5–16:21 The visions of the seven bowls of plagues were introduced in Revelation 15:1. They are, as John has already made clear, the last (or the fullness) of the plagues. When they are finished, God's just response to human sin will be complete.

15:5 *temple... witness*: Although the phrasing is a bit confusing, John is probably referring to the sanctuary of the heavenly temple. Its earthly copy was the *tent of witness*, or the "meeting tent" of the exodus, which held the chest containing the covenant, the golden altar of incense, the altar for entirely burned offerings, and the other furnishings appropriate to God's dwelling place on earth (see Exod 40:1-38).

15:6 *pure bright linen... sashes*: Recall the description of "someone who looked like the Human One" in the first vision of this book (Rev 1:13). These angels are similarly dressed, apparently for temple service.

15:7 *four living creatures... bowls*: These are likely the same bowls John mentioned in Revelation 5:8. They contained incense, a symbol for the prayers of the saints (see Rev 8:3-5).

15:8 *smoke... power*: Like thunder, lightning, and earthquake, smoke indicates God's presence. *no one... temple*: Exodus 40:35 explains how Moses couldn't enter the meeting tent when God's glory was present.

16:1-4 Like the first four trumpet visions (Rev 8:6-12), the first three bowl visions are patterned after the exodus plagues against the Egyptians (see Exod 9:8-12 [sixth

plague]; 7:20-21 [first plague]). This time, however, the plagues are intended to affect anyone who wears the sign of the beast.

16:5 *angel of the waters*: It was a common belief among ancient peoples that angels controlled the elements of creation (see Rev 7:1). *holy one, who is and was*: See note on Revelation 11:17.

16:7 *heard the altar say*: Maybe the voice is that of those under the altar who had earlier pleaded, "how long will you wait before you pass judgment?" (Rev 6:10). Now they declare with confidence that God rules with justice.

16:9 *didn't change their hearts*: The purpose of the plagues is revealed. They were intended to cause people to change their hearts and lives (see Rev 9:20; 11:13).

16:10-12 The pouring out of the fifth and sixth bowls parallels the ninth and second plagues of the exodus (see Exod 8:5-6; 10:21-22). These are directed specifically at those who wear the sign of the beast (see Rev 13:2).

16:13 *unclean spirits... false prophet*: Significantly, these unclean spirits come out of the mouths of the dragon (Satan); the beast of the sea (the Roman Empire); and the beast of the land (those who enforced the imperial religion [see Rev 13]), who is also called the false prophet. The spirits emerge from these monsters, because they are lying spirits who deceive people and place them under their spell. Calling them frog-like recalls the second plague of the exodus (Exod 8:5-6).

16:15 Christ, the exalted Lamb, speaks in this verse. This

17:1 Jer 51:13;  
Rev 15:1;  
Rev 15:7;  
Rev 17:15;  
Rev 19:2

17:2 Rev 3:10;  
Rev 14:8;  
Rev 18:3;  
Rev 18:9

17:3 Rev 12:3;  
Rev 12:6;  
Rev 12:14;  
Rev 13:1;  
Rev 17:7

17:4 Jer 51:7;  
Rev 18:6;  
Rev 18:12;  
Rev 18:16

17:5 2Th 2:7;  
Rev 14:8;  
Rev 16:19;  
Rev 17:7

17:6 Rev 16:6

17:8 Rev 3:5;  
Rev 9:1;  
Rev 11:7;  
Rev 13:3;  
Rev 13:8

17:9 Rev 13:18;  
Rev 17:3

naked and exposed to shame.) <sup>16</sup>The spirits gathered them at the place that is called in Hebrew, Harmagedon.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Then the seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out from the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" <sup>18</sup>There were lightning strikes, voices, and thunder, and a great earthquake occurred. The earthquake was greater than any that have occurred since there have been people on earth. <sup>19</sup>The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. God remembered Babylon the great so that he gave her the wine cup of his furious anger. <sup>20</sup>Every island fled, and the mountains disappeared. <sup>21</sup>Huge hailstones weighing about one hundred pounds came down from heaven on the people. They cursed God for the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

### **Babylon and the beast**

**17** Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls spoke with me. "Come, he said, I will show you the judgment upon the great prostitute, who is seated on deep waters. <sup>2</sup>The kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality with her, and those who live on earth have become drunk with the wine of her whoring."

<sup>3</sup>Then he brought me in a Spirit-inspired trance to a desert. There I saw a woman seated on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names. It had seven heads and ten horns. <sup>4</sup>The woman wore purple and scarlet clothing, and she glittered with gold and jewels and pearls. In her hand she held a gold cup full of the vile and impure things that came from her activity as a prostitute. <sup>5</sup>A name—a mystery—was written on her forehead: "Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes and the vile things of the earth." <sup>6</sup>I saw that the woman was drunk on the blood of the saints and the blood of Jesus' witnesses. I was completely stunned when I saw her.

<sup>7</sup>Then the angel said to me, "Why are you amazed? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and the seven-headed, ten-horned beast that carries her. <sup>8</sup>The beast that you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. Those who live on earth, whose names haven't been written in the scroll of life from the time the earth was made, will be amazed when they see the beast, because it was and is not and will again be present. <sup>9</sup>This calls for an understanding mind. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated. They are also seven kings. <sup>10</sup>Five kings have fallen, the one is, and the other hasn't

<sup>i</sup>Or *Armageddon*

is a warning to Christian believers that they will not know when Christ will return, so they must stay awake and remain faithful (i.e., clothed in the white robes of victory).

**16:16 Harmagedon:** Meaning "mountain of Megiddo," this place in the northern part of Palestine (now Israel) was the site of many battles with Israel's enemies. After King Josiah's terrible defeat at Megiddo (2 Kgs 23:29-30), it was remembered as a place of unthinkable disaster.

**16:17 "It is done!":** The pouring of the seventh bowl is an image for the fullness or completion of God's righteous response to human sin (see Rev 15:1, 7).

**16:18** See note on Revelation 4:5.

**16:19 The great city... Babylon:** Rome. *God remembered:* God didn't forget the request of those under the altar, "how long will you wait before you pass judgment?" (Rev 6:10). *wine cup of his furious anger:* God's righteous response is consistent with Rome's sin (see Rev 14:8, 10; 16:6).

**16:21 Huge hailstones:** The seventh plague of the exodus involved hail (see Exod 9:23-24).

**17:1-18** This vision of the great prostitute and the beast expands on the theme of God's just punishment of Rome mentioned in Revelation 16:17-21.

**17:1-2 the great prostitute... immorality:** This is Rome. In the OT the language of prostitution was used in warnings and judgment against cities that were led astray by idol worship and extreme wealth (see Ezek 23; Isa 23:15-17; Nah 3:1-7).

**17:1 seated on deep waters:** The word "waters" is symbolic

of the peoples and nations that were subject to Rome (see Rev 17:15; Jer 51:13).

**17:3 scarlet beast... horns:** This is a symbol of the Roman Empire, which got its power from the dragon (see Rev 13:1-10).

**17:4 purple and scarlet... pearls:** the dress of royalty. John probably intends for his readers to see this woman as a contrast to the heavenly woman in Revelation 12:1-6 or the bride of the Lamb in Revelation 19:6-9.

**17:5 A name—a mystery:** John is reminding his audience that he isn't talking about the historical city Babylon. It's a symbol for another city they know well, namely, Rome.

**17:6 drunk on the blood... witnesses:** Rome is guilty of killing God's holy ones.

**17:8 scroll of life:** See notes on Revelation 3:5; 13:8. *was and is not, and is about to come... to destruction:* This is a sarcastic play on the title of God the Almighty, "who is and was and is coming" (Rev 1:8).

**17:9 This calls for... mind:** See Revelation 13:9. *seven heads... kings:* Rome is traditionally described as a city seated on seven hills. The *seven kings* are likely a reference to seven emperors of Rome; but since seven is a symbolic number, there's no need to come up with a historically accurate list of Roman emperors to understand the vision (see Dan 7:4-7).

**17:10-11** This part of the angel's interpretation is confusing, but it may refer to a late 1st-century legend about the emperor Nero (reigned 54–68 CE), who was expected (or

yet come. When that king comes, he must remain for only a short time. <sup>11</sup>As for the beast that was and is not, it is itself an eighth king that belongs to the seven, and it is going to destruction. <sup>12</sup>The ten horns that you saw are ten kings, who haven't yet received royal power. But they will receive royal authority for an hour, along with the beast. <sup>13</sup>These kings will be of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. <sup>14</sup>They will make war on the Lamb, but the Lamb will emerge victorious, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those with him are called, chosen, and faithful."

<sup>15</sup>Then he said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples, crowds, nations, and languages. <sup>16</sup>As for the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will destroy her and strip her bare. They will devour her flesh and burn her with fire <sup>17</sup>because God moved them to carry out his purposes. That is why they will be of one mind and give their royal power to the beast, until God's words have been accomplished. <sup>18</sup>The woman whom you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

**Babylon's fall**

**18**After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was filled with light because of his glory. <sup>2</sup>He called out with a loud voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a home for demons and a lair for every unclean spirit. She is a lair for every unclean bird, and a lair for every unclean and disgusting beast <sup>3</sup>because all the nations have fallen<sup>1</sup> due to the wine of her lustful passion. The kings of the earth committed sexual immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth became rich from the power of her loose and extravagant ways."

<sup>4</sup>Then I heard another voice from heaven say, "Come out of her, my people, so that you don't take part in her sins and don't receive any of her plagues. <sup>5</sup>Her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God remembered her unjust acts. <sup>6</sup>Give her what she has given to others. Give her back twice as much for what she has done. In the cup that she has poured, pour her twice as much. <sup>7</sup>To the extent that she glorified herself and indulged her loose and extravagant ways, give her pain and grief. In her heart she says, 'I sit like a queen! I'm not a widow. I'll never see grief.' <sup>8</sup>This is why her plagues will come in a single day—deadly disease, grief, and hunger. She will be consumed by fire because the Lord God who judges her is powerful.

<sup>9</sup>"The kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality with her and shared her loose and extravagant ways, will weep and mourn over her when they see the smoke from her burning. <sup>10</sup>They will stand a long way off because they are afraid of the pain she suffers, and they will say, 'Oh, the horror! Babylon, you great city, you powerful city! In a single hour your judgment has come.'

<sup>11</sup>"The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their cargoes anymore—<sup>12</sup>cargoes of gold, silver, jewels, and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet; all

17:11 Rev 17:8  
 17:12 1Dn 7:24;  
 Rev 12:3,  
 Rev 13:1,  
 Rev 18:10,  
 Rev 18:17  
 17:14 Dt 10:17;  
 Mt 22:14;  
 1Ti 6:15; Rev 1:5,  
 Rev 19:16  
 17:15 Is 8:7;  
 Rev 17:1  
 18:1 Eze 43:2;  
 Rev 10:1,  
 Rev 17:1  
 18:2 Is 34:11;  
 Jer 50:39,  
 Jer 51:37;  
 Rev 14:8,  
 Rev 16:13  
 18:4 Is 48:20;  
 Jer 51:6,  
 Jer 51:45;  
 2Co 6:17;  
 2In 11  
 18:5 2Ch 28:9;  
 Eze 9:6; Jer 51:9;  
 Jon 1:2;  
 Rev 16:19  
 18:6 Ps 137:8;  
 Is 40:2; Jer 50:15;  
 Jer 50:29;  
 Rev 17:4  
 18:7 Is 47:7-8;  
 Eze 28:2;  
 Zep 2:15  
 18:8 Is 47:9;  
 Rev 17:16,  
 Rev 18:10  
 18:9  
 Eze 26:16-17;  
 Rev 17:2,  
 Rev 18:18,  
 Rev 19:3

<sup>1</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament read *have drunk*.

feared) to return to life and continue his violent reign. Regardless of how we interpret the numbers, John's primary message is that the Roman emperors are symbolic representations of the beast, who stands in direct contrast with God the Almighty (see Rev 17:8).

17:14 *called, chosen, and faithful*: These are the 144,000 who make up the Lamb's heavenly army (see Rev 14:1-5).

18:1-24 This vision continues the theme of God's just punishment of Rome.

18:1 *another angel... glory*: This angel isn't the angel interpreter of Revelation 17. His authority and radiance suggest he came from the sanctuary of the temple where God's glory dwells (see note on Rev 15:8).

18:2 *Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!*: The visions of the seven bowls have already described the destruction of Babylon (Rome) (see Rev 16:17-21). Similar descriptions of fallen Babylon can be found in Jeremiah 50:38-39; 51:8-9.

18:3 *wine... passion*: idol worship and excessive wealth.

18:4 *another voice... Come out of her*: perhaps another angel from God's throne room. The invitation to come out recalls Jeremiah 51:6, 45; but here it serves as a call

for God's people to escape Rome, the source of evil and treachery, before it's too late.

18:6 *Give her back twice as much*: On Babylon's being paid back for her crimes, see Jeremiah 50: 15; 29. Isaiah and Jeremiah also include statements about Jerusalem and Judea having paid double for their sins (see Isa 40:1-2; Jer 16:18).

18:7 *I sit like a queen*: an ironic statement. Rome thinks she is secure, but she is clueless about what will soon happen to her. Recall the claim made by the Laodiceans: "I'm rich, and I've grown wealthy, and I don't need a thing" (Rev 3:17).

18:8 *the Lord... powerful*: John's preoccupation with Rome's destruction is really a claim about God's supreme authority.

18:9-10 **What follows is a satire consisting of three songs of lament over Rome's destruction. This first song is spoken by the kings of the earth. They participated in her idol worship and enjoyed her extreme wealth until they saw her destruction. Now they keep themselves at a safe distance and pretend to weep over her loss of power (see Ezek 26:15-18).**

18:11-17a This second song of lament is spoken by the

19:4 Rev 4:4,  
Rev 4:6,  
Rev 4:10,  
Rev 5:14  
19:6 Ps 93:1,  
Ps 97:1;  
Rev 1:15,  
Rev 11:15,  
Rev 19:1

those things made of scented wood, ivory, fine wood, bronze, iron, and marble; <sup>13</sup>cinnamon, incense, fragrant ointment, and frankincense; wine, oil, fine flour, and wheat; cattle, sheep, horses, and carriages; and slaves, even human lives. <sup>14</sup>The fruit your whole being craved has gone from you. All your glitter and glamour are lost to you, never ever to be found again.’

<sup>15</sup>“The merchants who sold these things, and got so rich by her, will stand a long way off because they fear the pain she suffers. They will weep and mourn, and say, <sup>16</sup>“Oh, the horror! The great city that wore fine linen, purple, and scarlet, who glittered with gold, jewels, and pearls—<sup>17</sup>in just one hour such great wealth was destroyed.’

“Every sea captain, every seafarer, sailors, and all who make their living on the sea stood a long way off. <sup>18</sup>They cried out as they saw the smoke from her burning and said, ‘What city was ever like the great city?’ <sup>19</sup>They threw dust on their heads, and they cried out, weeping and mourning. They said, ‘Oh, the horror! The great city, where all who have ships at sea became so rich by her prosperity—in just one hour she was destroyed. <sup>20</sup>Rejoice over her, heaven—you saints, apostles, and prophets—because God has condemned her as she condemned you.’”

<sup>21</sup>Then a powerful angel picked up a stone that was like a huge millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “With such violent force the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, and it won’t be found anymore. <sup>22</sup>The sound of harpists and musicians, of pipers and trumpeters, will never be heard among you again. No craftsman of any kind will ever be found among you again. The sound of the hand mill will never be heard among you again. <sup>23</sup>The light of a lamp will never shine among you again. The sound of a bridegroom and bride will never be heard among you again because your merchants ran the world, because all the nations were deceived by the spell you cast, and because <sup>24</sup>the blood of prophets, of saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on the earth was found among you.”<sup>k</sup>

### Celebration in heaven

**19** After this I heard what sounded like a huge crowd in heaven. They said,  
“Hallelujah! The salvation and glory and power of our God!

<sup>2</sup>His judgments are true and just,  
because he judged the great prostitute,  
who ruined the earth by her whoring,  
and he exacted the penalty for the blood of his servants from her hand.”

<sup>3</sup>Then they said a second time,  
“Hallelujah! Smoke goes up from her forever and always.”

<sup>4</sup>The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who is seated on the throne, and they said, “Amen. Hallelujah!”

<sup>5</sup>Then a voice went out from the throne and said,  
“Praise our God, all you his servants,  
and you who fear him, both small and great.”

<sup>6</sup>And I heard something that sounded like a huge crowd, like rushing water and powerful thunder. They said,

“Hallelujah! The Lord our God, the Almighty,  
exercised his royal power!

<sup>k</sup>Or her

merchants who eagerly bought and sold Rome’s luxuries. Now they keep themselves at a safe distance and pretend to say how terrible it is that Rome’s glitter, glamour, and great wealth are destroyed. Similar themes can be found in Ezekiel 27.

18:17b-19 This third song of lament is spoken by the sailors and sea captains who got rich from Rome’s shipping trade. Now they keep themselves at a safe distance and pretend to mourn the loss of such a great city as Rome (see Ezek 27).

18:20 The call to rejoice is directed at God’s holy ones and is similar to the one given earlier when the archangel Michael defeated the dragon (Rev 12:7-12).

18:21 *powerful angel*... *stone*: Throwing a stone into the

sea is a prophetic action against Rome. Jeremiah 51:60-64 describes a similar prophetic action against Babylon.

18:22-23a Rome’s destruction will be so complete that all evidence of civilized society will cease to exist. There will be no more music, art, craftsmanship, nor even any home life in Rome.

19:1-10 This vision appears to be a response to the angel’s call in Revelation 18:20 to rejoice. The crowd’s prayer in praise of God’s supreme authority and justice is similar to those found in Revelation 4:11; 5:12-13; 7:10-12; 12:10.

19:1 *Hallelujah!*: a Hebrew phrase meaning “Praise God.”

19:2 *the great prostitute*: Rome (see note on Rev 17:1-2).

19:5 *all you... who fear him*: All living creatures who honor God as their God and creator.

19:7 Hos 2:19;  
 Mi 22:2;  
 Mt 25:10;  
 Rev 21:2;  
 Rev 21:9  
 19:8 Is 61:10;  
 Rev 3:4;  
 Rev 19:14  
 19:10 Mt 4:10;  
 Ac 10:26;  
 Rev 1:2;  
 Rev 22:8-9  
 19:11 Ps 96:13;  
 Is 11:4; Rev 3:14;  
 Rev 6:2  
 19:12 Rev 1:14;  
 Rev 2:17;  
 Rev 6:2;  
 Rev 12:3;  
 Rev 19:16  
 19:13 Is 63:2;  
 Is 63:3; In 1:1;  
 In 1:14; 1Jn 5:7  
 19:14 Rev 3:4;  
 Rev 7:9;  
 Rev 19:8

<sup>7</sup>Let us rejoice and celebrate, and give him the glory,  
 for the wedding day of the Lamb has come,  
 and his bride has made herself ready.

<sup>8</sup>She was given fine, pure white linen to wear,  
 for the fine linen is the saints' acts of justice."

<sup>9</sup>Then the angel said to me,  
 "Write this: Favored are those  
 who have been invited to the  
 wedding banquet of the Lamb."  
 He said to me, "These are the true  
 words of God." <sup>10</sup>Then I fell at his  
 feet to worship him. But he said,  
 "Don't do that! I'm a servant just  
 like you and your brothers and  
 sisters who hold firmly to the  
 witness of Jesus. Worship God!  
 The witness of Jesus is the spirit  
 of prophecy!"

**Christ defeats the beast**

<sup>11</sup>Then I saw heaven opened,  
 and there was a white horse.  
 Its rider was called Faithful and  
 True, and he judges and makes  
 war justly. <sup>12</sup>His eyes were like  
 a fiery flame, and on his head  
 were many royal crowns. He has  
 a name written on him that no  
 one knows but he himself. <sup>13</sup>He  
 wore a robe dyed<sup>1</sup> with blood, and  
 his name was called the Word of  
 God. <sup>14</sup>Heaven's armies, wear-  
 ing fine linen that was white and

Roman Emperors 49 BCE–138 CE	
Julius Caesar	49–44 BCE
Augustus (Octavian)	31 BCE–14 CE
Tiberius	14–37 CE
Gaius (Caligula)	37–41
Claudius	41–54
Nero	54–68
Galba	68–69
Otho	69
Vitellius	69
Vespasian	69–79
Titus	79–81
Domitian	81–96
Nerva	96–98
Trajan	98–117
Hadrian	117–138

<sup>1</sup>Critical editions of the Gk New Testament read *dipped* or *covered with*.

19:7 *wedding day of the Lamb*: The notion of Israel as God's bride can be found in the Prophets (e.g., Isa 54:6; Ezek 16:7-8; Hos 2:16). In the NT the image is further refined so that Christ is the bridegroom and the church is his bride (e.g., Mark 2:19-20; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25). *his bride . . . ready*: The bride is an image for God's holy ones (see Rev 5:9-10; 7:14-15; 14:3-4; Eph 5:26-27).

19:8 *She was given . . . justice*: The bride's wedding gown is a gift from God. The fabric is expensive linen from Egypt that was sought for its brightness. It symbolizes the righteous deeds of God's holy ones.

19:9 *wedding banquet of the Lamb*: The marriage feast, or the messianic banquet, is a traditional symbol associated with the end time and the reward of the righteous (see Isa 25:1-9; 55:1-5; Matt 22:1-14; Luke 14:7-24).

19:10 *Don't do that!*: The angel's command that John not worship him is consistent with John's overall theme of avoiding idol worship in all its forms (see Rev 1:17; 22:8-9). *witness of Jesus . . . prophecy*: John appears to be saying that Jesus' witness (what he said and did) is the substance of the message of the Christian prophet.

19:11-20:15 Here begins a series of six visions about Christ's triumphant victory over evil and God's judgment of the living and the dead. Most of these visions are further elaborations of visions we have seen earlier.

19:11 *I saw heaven opened*: This is the third time heaven has been opened for humans to see inside (see Rev 4:1; 11:19). *white horse . . . True*: White is a symbol of victory. The rider is Christ. *makes war justly*: Christ's war-making is righteous, because it's directed against the dragon, the beasts of the land and sea, and their supporters (see Rev 13).

19:12 *His eyes . . . crowns*: On Christ's eyes, see note on Revelation 1:14-15. See also the opening of the message to Thyatira (Rev 2:18). Regarding his crowns, recall that the dragon had 7 (Rev 12:3) and the beast had 10 (Rev 13:1). Christ's royal power exceeds both of these forces of evil. *name . . . knows*: Other characters in the book of Revelation have names—the beast of the sea, his supporters, and the great prostitute—so Christ must have a name too. But his name is truly mysterious. For ancient peoples, names were important for identifying a person's place in society, but Christ cannot be known in that way.

19:13 *dyed with blood*: signifying fierceness in battle (see Isa 63:1-4). *his name . . . Word of God*: In Wisdom of Solomon 18:14-16, God's word is described as "a fierce warrior" bounding into a doomed world.

19:14 *Heaven's armies . . . linen*: the companions of the Lamb who are called, chosen, and faithful (Rev 17:14). These are the 144,000 of Revelation 7:1-8; 14:1-5.

19:15 Ps 2:9;  
Is 11:4; 2Th 2:8;  
Rev 1:16;  
Rev 2:27

19:16 Phi 2:9;  
1Ti 6:15; Rev 1:5;  
Rev 17:14;  
Rev 19:12

19:17 Jer 12:9;  
Eze 39:17;  
Rev 8:13;  
Rev 19:21

19:20 [Dn 7:11];  
Rev 13:14;  
Rev 16:13;  
Rev 20:10;  
Rev 21:8

19:21 Rev 19:11;  
Rev 19:15;  
Rev 19:17

20:1 Rev 1:18;  
Rev 9:1;  
Rev 10:1;  
Rev 18:1

20:2 Gn 3:1;  
2Pt 2:4; Jud 1:6;  
Rev 12:9;  
Rev 20:7

20:3 Mt 27:66;  
Rev 12:9;  
Rev 20:1;  
Rev 20:8;  
Rev 20:10

20:4 Mt 19:28;  
Rev 3:21;  
Rev 6:9;  
Rev 20:6;  
Rev 22:5

20:5 Lk 14:14;  
Phi 3:11;  
1Th 4:16

20:6 Rev 1:6;  
Rev 2:11;  
Rev 5:10;  
Rev 14:13;  
Rev 20:4

pure, were following him on white horses. <sup>15</sup>From his mouth comes a sharp sword that he will use to strike down the nations. He is the one who will rule them with an iron rod. And he is the one who will trample the winepress of the Almighty God's passionate anger. <sup>16</sup>He has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: King of kings and Lord of lords.

<sup>17</sup>Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he called out with a loud voice and said to all the birds flying high overhead, "Come and gather for God's great supper. <sup>18</sup>Come and eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of generals, the flesh of the powerful, and the flesh of horses and their riders. Come and eat the flesh of all, both free and slave, both small and great." <sup>19</sup>Then I saw that the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies had gathered to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. <sup>20</sup>But the beast was seized, along with the false prophet who had done signs in the beast's presence. (He had used the signs to deceive people into receiving the beast's mark and into worshipping the beast's image.) The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake that burns with sulfur. <sup>21</sup>The rest were killed by the sword that comes from the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds ate their fill of their flesh.

### Satan confined

**20** Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the abyss and a huge chain. <sup>2</sup>He seized the dragon, the old snake, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. <sup>3</sup>He threw him into the abyss, then locked and sealed it over him. This was to keep him from continuing to deceive the nations until the thousand years were over. After this he must be released for a little while.

### The saints rule with Christ

<sup>4</sup>Then I saw thrones, and people took their seats on them, and judgment was given in their favor. <sup>5</sup>They were the ones who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and God's word, and those who hadn't worshipped the beast or its image, who hadn't received the mark on their forehead or hand. They came to life and ruled with Christ for one thousand years. <sup>6</sup>The rest of the dead didn't come to life until the thousand years were over. This is the first resurrection. <sup>7</sup>Favored and holy are those who have a share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will rule with him for one thousand years.

<sup>m</sup>Or to them

**19:15 mouth ... sword:** See note on Revelation 1:16 and the opening of the message to the community at Pergamum (Rev 2:12). *He ... will rule ... rod:* See the prophecy made about the child-savior in the vision of the heavenly woman (Rev 12:5) and the description of the reward awaiting those who obey the message to the community at Thyatira (Rev 2:27). *winepress of ... anger:* See Revelation 16:19; see note on Revelation 14:19.

**19:17-18** This second vision is gruesome but not to be taken literally. God's great supper is the wedding feast of the Lamb mentioned in Revelation 19:9, 19. The invitation list includes the companions of the Lamb (i.e., the 144,000), and the menu consists of all those who had allied themselves with the dragon and the beasts of land and sea. The image is ghastly, but for those who suffered harassment from evil forces, this would have been a delicious way to imagine God's vindication (see Ezek 39:17-20).

**19:19-21** This third vision describes the gathering for war at Harmagedon (see Rev 16:16). The forces of evil line up for battle against Christ and his army, but Christ is victorious without even a fight. The beast of the sea and the *false prophet* (or the beast of the land) are thrown into the place of final punishment. The rest are killed by Christ's sword (see Rev 19:15; see note on Rev 1:16), and they now await final judgment.

**20:1-10** This fourth vision of the confinement, release, and destruction of Satan (Rev 20:1-3, 7-10) is interrupted by the fifth vision of the saints who reign with Christ

(20:4-6). The number 1,000 is symbolic and shouldn't be understood to mean an actual passage of time. John's primary message is that God will indeed reward those who witness to Christ even to the point of death.

**20:1 key ... chain:** The abyss is the place where the scorpion-like locusts and other demonic spirits live (see Rev 9:1). The angel received the key from God, and therefore God has authority over this place.

**20:3 keep him ... nations:** Chained and locked in the abyss, the dragon is securely confined, and, for a time, his role as "deceiver of the whole world" (Rev 12:9) is curtailed. *After this ... while:* Just as God has the power to confine Satan, God also has the power to release him. Satan's release is necessary so that ultimately he can be destroyed forever in the same way the beasts of the sea and land were destroyed (Rev 19:19-20).

**20:4 judgment was given in their favor:** John's meaning is unclear. This probably means God judged the ones who'd been beheaded for their witness to Christ and ruled in their favor. However, it could also mean the power to judge was given to them. This scene has parallels in Daniel 7:9, 21-27. *They came to life:* For their witness, God grants these holy ones a special resurrection before the others. The victorious Lamb is their example. He's the firstborn from among the dead (Rev 1:5; 2:8; 11:7-11).

**20:5-6 first resurrection ... second death:** John is unique among NT authors in writing about two resurrections. However, see Daniel 12:1-3, which seems to suggest an

**Satan's defeat**

<sup>7</sup>When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison. <sup>8</sup>He will go out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog. He will gather them for battle. Their number is like the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup>They came up across the whole earth and surrounded the saints' camp, the city that God loves. But fire came down from heaven and consumed them. <sup>10</sup>Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet also were. There painful suffering will be inflicted upon them day and night, forever and always.

**Final judgment**

<sup>11</sup>Then I saw a great white throne and the one who is seated on it. Before his face both earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup>I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. Another scroll was opened too; this is the scroll of life. And the dead were judged on the basis of what was written in the scrolls about what they had done. <sup>13</sup>The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and Death and the Grave gave up the dead that were in them, and people were judged by what they had done. <sup>14</sup>Then Death and the Grave were thrown into the fiery lake. This, the fiery lake, is the second death. <sup>15</sup>Then anyone whose name wasn't found written in the scroll of life was thrown into the fiery lake.

**New heaven and new earth**

**21** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "Look! God's dwelling is here with humankind. He will dwell with them, and they will be his peoples. God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." <sup>5</sup>Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look! I'm making all things new." He also said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." <sup>6</sup>Then he said to me, "All is done. I am the Alpha

**20:9** Eze 38:9, Eze 38:16, Eze 38:22, Eze 39:6, Rev 13:13  
**20:10** Mt 25:41; Rev 14:10-11, Rev 19:20, Rev 20:3  
**20:11** Rev 4:2, Rev 6:14, Rev 12:8, Rev 21:1  
**20:12** Dn 7:10, Dn 12:1, Mt 16:27, Rev 2:23, Rev 3:5  
**20:13** Jn 5:28-29, Rev 1:18, Rev 6:8  
**20:14** 1Co 15:26; Rev 19:20, Rev 20:6, Rev 21:4  
**20:15** Rev 20:12  
**21:1** Is 65:17, Is 66:22; 2Pt 3:13, Rev 20:11  
**21:2** Is 52:1, Is 61:10, Heb 11:10, Rev 19:7, Rev 21:10  
**21:3** Lv 26:11-12; Eze 37:27; Jn 14:23; 2Co 6:16  
**21:4** Is 25:8, Is 35:10, Is 65:19; 1Co 15:26; Rev 7:17  
**21:5** 2Co 5:17; Rev 4:2, Rev 4:9, Rev 30:11, Rev 22:6

21:6 Is 55:1; Jn 4:10, Rev 1:8, Rev 22:13, Rev 22:17

early resurrection for the wise and a later resurrection and punishment for the wicked. The second death is complete destruction in the "fiery lake that burns with sulfur" (Rev 19:20; 20:14).

**20:7** *Satan ... prison*: See Revelation 20:4-6; 19:11-22. Satan was already bound, but now he will be utterly destroyed.

**20:8** *He will go out ... battle*: This is the same battle John mentions in Revelation 16:12-16; 17:14; 19:17-21. *Gog and Magog*: Ezekiel writes about Gog "in the land of Magog" (Ezek 38:2). However, Jewish literature dating from the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE variously identifies Gog and Magog with persons or places. John introduces them as symbols of powerful forces allied with Satan.

**20:9** *the saints' camp, the city that God loves*: Two places are linked together here. The city is Jerusalem, and the camp is Israel's temporary home as they wandered in the wilderness during the exodus.

**20:11-15** The sixth in this series of visions, which began in Revelation 19:11, is of the final judgment. When this vision comes to its conclusion, everything of the present creation—the heavens and the earth, even *Death and the Grave*—have either fled or been destroyed in the *fiery lake*.

**20:12** *scrolls were opened*: the books that list the deeds of those awaiting judgment (see Dan 7:10). The message is clear: People will be judged on the basis of their actions.

**20:12, 15** *scroll of life*: See notes on Revelation 3:5; 13:8.

**20:13** *sea gave up the dead*: Ancient peoples believed the dead went into a place under the earth called Sheol. However, those who died at sea were thought to be lost because they couldn't get to Sheol. Now everyone, whether

in the sea or in Sheol, is raised in order to share in the final judgment.

**20:14** *Death and the Grave*: Death and the place of the dead are personified (see Rev 6:8).

**21:1-22:5** The vision of the New Jerusalem is the seventh vision in this series and the final vision of the book. Highly detailed and dramatic in its images, this vision is a fitting climax to Revelation.

**21:1** *a new heaven and a new earth*: John isn't being transported to an otherworldly place; rather, he's experiencing a new, transformed heaven and earth that replace the ones that fled from God's presence in Revelation 20:11 (see Isa 65:17-19). *the sea was no more*: Ancient peoples thought of the sea as a place of chaos and danger (e.g., Ezek 29:3; 32:3; Dan 7:2-3; see note on Rev 13:1).

**21:2** *holy city ... from God*: This city is new because it replaces the old creation that was marked by evil and sin. It won't grow old, and it will have continuous access to its builder, God. Ezekiel uses a similar idea when he writes about his vision of a city being built before his eyes (Ezek 40:2). *made ready as a bride*: See Isaiah 49:18; 61:10; see notes on Revelation 19:7, 8.

**21:3** *He will dwell with them ... God*: This is the language of covenant (see Gen 17:8; Exod 6:7; Jer 7:23; 11:4; Ezek 37:27). John may also be recalling the tent of witness, where God came to dwell with the people in the exodus (see Rev 15:5-8).

**21:4** *He will wipe away every tear*: The restoration of a time before evil and suffering entered the world is envisioned here (see Isa 25:4-8; 65:17-19).

**21:6** *All is done*: The establishment of the new world order

21:7 2Sa 7:14;  
Rev 2:7; Rev 21:3  
21:8 1Co 6:9;  
Rev 2:11,  
Rev 19:20,  
Rev 20:14,  
Rev 22:15  
21:9 Rev 15:1,  
Rev 15:7,  
Rev 19:7,  
Rev 21:2

21:10 Eze 40:2;  
Heb 12:22;  
Rev 1:10,  
Rev 17:3,  
Rev 21:2

21:11 Is 60:1-2;  
Rev 4:3, Rev 4:6,  
Rev 21:23

21:12 Eze 48:31;  
Rev 21:21,  
Rev 21:25

21:14 Mt 16:18;  
Ac 1:26;  
1Co 3:11;  
Eph 2:20;  
Heb 11:10

21:15 Eze 40:3;  
Rev 11:1

21:16 Eze 40:3;  
21:17 Dt 3:11;  
Rev 13:18

21:18 Rev 21:11,  
Rev 21:21

21:19 Ex 28:17;  
Is 54:11, Is 54:12;  
Eze 28:13;  
Rev 4:3

21:20 Ex 28:19;  
Rev 4:3

21:21 Mt 13:45;  
Rev 17:4,  
Rev 21:2,  
Rev 21:18

21:22 Rev 5:6

21:23 Is 24:23,  
Is 60:19-20,  
Rev 21:11,  
Rev 22:5

and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will freely give water from the life-giving spring. <sup>7</sup>Those who emerge victorious will inherit these things. I will be their God, and they will be my sons and daughters. <sup>8</sup>But for the cowardly, the faithless, the vile, the murderers, those who commit sexual immorality, those who use drugs and cast spells, the idolaters and all liars—their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. This is the second death.”

### New Jerusalem

<sup>9</sup>Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues spoke with me. “Come,” he said, “I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” <sup>10</sup>He took me in a Spirit-inspired trance to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. <sup>11</sup>The city had God’s glory. Its brilliance was like a priceless jewel, like jasper that was as clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup>It had a great high wall with twelve gates. By the gates were twelve angels, and on the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel’s sons. <sup>13</sup>There were three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. <sup>14</sup>The city wall had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the Lamb’s twelve apostles.

<sup>15</sup>The angel who spoke to me had a gold measuring rod with which to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. <sup>16</sup>Now the city was laid out as a square. Its length was the same as its width. He measured the city with the rod, and it was fifteen hundred miles.<sup>a</sup> Its length and width and height were equal. <sup>17</sup>He also measured the thickness of its wall. It was two hundred sixteen feet<sup>b</sup> thick, as a person—or rather, an angel—measures things. <sup>18</sup>The wall was built of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like pure glass. <sup>19</sup>The city wall’s foundations were decorated with every kind of jewel. The first foundation was jasper, the second was sapphire, the third was chalcedony, and the fourth was emerald. <sup>20</sup>The fifth was sardonyx, the sixth was carnelian, the seventh was chrysolite, and the eighth was beryl. The ninth was topaz, the tenth was chrysoprase, the eleventh was jacinth, and the twelfth was amethyst. <sup>21</sup>The twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was made from a single pearl. And the city’s main street was pure gold, as transparent as glass.

<sup>22</sup>I didn’t see a temple in the city, because its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup>The city doesn’t need the sun or the moon to shine on it, because God’s glory is its

<sup>a</sup>Or *twelve thousand stades* <sup>b</sup>Or *one hundred forty-four pechon* (cubits)

is complete. *water from the life-giving spring*: Many of the prophets who wrote about the end time or the age of restoration mention the promise of life-giving water (see Isa 12:3; 41:17-18; 44:3-4; 55:1; Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 13:1; 14:8; John 7:37-38).

21:7 *Those who emerge victorious*: See note on Revelation 3:21.

21:8 *But for the cowardly . . . death*: This is John’s way of saying the new city will be entirely free of sin.

21:9 *the bride, the Lamb’s wife*: An image of God’s holy ones (see Rev 19:7-8; 5:9-10; 7:14-15; 14:3-4).

21:10 *high mountain*: John is probably thinking of Ezekiel’s vision of a city being built on a very high mountain (Ezek 40:2). Ezekiel said the city will be named “The Lord Is There” (Ezek 48:35).

21:11 *The city had God’s glory*: God is present there (see Rev 15:8; 18:1). *jasper*: In the throne vision, the one seated on the throne is described as looking like jasper (see Rev 4:3).

21:12 *twelve gates . . . sons*: John probably has Ezekiel’s vision of the new city in mind. It, too, had 12 gates representing the 12 tribes of Israel (see Ezek 48:30-35).

21:14 *twelve apostles*: See Matthew 19:28, in which Jesus answers Peter, “when everything is made new . . . you also will sit on twelve thrones overseeing the twelve tribes of Israel.”

21:15 *gold measuring rod*: In an earlier vision John was given a measuring rod to mark off the Jerusalem temple as God’s property (Rev 11:1). See Ezekiel 40:3 and Zechariah

2:5-6, where a measuring rod was used to mark out the city and the temple.

21:16 *fifteen hundred miles*: John refers to 12,000 stadia. A cube of this size is architecturally impossible, but the number is symbolic: a perfect number (12) multiplied by a number too big to count (1,000).

21:17 *two hundred sixteen feet thick*: A city wall of this thickness is impressive, but such a thickness could never support a wall 1,500 miles high. What John wrote was 144 cubits—again, a symbolic number. A cubit is determined by the length of the forearm from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger. John suggests this cubit is longer because it’s based on the length of an angel’s forearm.

21:18-21 Although the Bible contains similar lists of jewels (e.g., Exod 28:15-21; Tob 13:16-17; Isa 54:11-12), it’s impossible to determine why John chose these for his description. But the point is clear: This new city is a stunningly beautiful place! Some of its materials—enormous pearls and transparent gold, for example—exist nowhere else on earth.

21:22 *I didn’t see a temple in the city*: Because God dwells with the people, there’s no need for someone or something to mediate God’s presence. Jeremiah prophesied a future time when the people wouldn’t miss the temple or long for the chest containing the covenant because Jerusalem would be Christ God’s throne (Jer 3:16-17; Hag 2:9; Isa 65:7).

21:23 *God’s glory*: God’s presence (see Rev 15:8; 18:1). *its lamp is the Lamb*: Christ, the Lamb, reflects God’s glory.



light, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>24</sup>The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. <sup>25</sup>Its gates will never be shut by day, and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup>They will bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. <sup>27</sup>Nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is vile and deceitful, but only those who are registered in the Lamb's scroll of life.

**22** Then the angel showed me the river of life-giving water,<sup>P</sup> shining like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb <sup>2</sup>through the middle of the city's main street. On each side of the river is the tree of life, which produces twelve crops of fruit, bearing its fruit each month. The tree's leaves are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup>There will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. <sup>4</sup>They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>Night will be no more. They won't need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shine on them, and they will rule forever and always.

**Jesus is coming soon**

<sup>6</sup>Then he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.

<sup>7</sup>"Look! I'm coming soon. Favored is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy contained in this scroll."

<sup>8</sup>I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. When I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had shown them to me. <sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "Don't do that! I'm a servant just like you and your brothers and sisters, the prophets, and those who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!" <sup>10</sup>Then he said to me, "Don't seal up the words of the prophecy contained in this scroll, because the time is near. <sup>11</sup>Let those who do wrong keep doing what is wrong. Let the filthy still be filthy. Let those who are righteous keep doing what is right. Let those who are holy still be holy.

<sup>12</sup>"Look! I'm coming soon. My reward is with me, to repay all people as their actions deserve. <sup>13</sup>I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. <sup>14</sup>Favored are those who wash their robes so that they may have the right of access to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. <sup>15</sup>Outside are the dogs, the drug users and spell-casters, those who commit sexual immorality, the murderers, the idolaters, and all who love and practice deception.

<sup>16</sup>"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to bear witness to all of you about these things for the churches. I'm the root and descendant of David, the bright morning star. <sup>17</sup>The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' Let the one who hears say, 'Come!' And let the one who is thirsty come! Let the one who wishes receive life-giving water<sup>Q</sup> as a gift."

<sup>P</sup>Or *the water of life* <sup>Q</sup>Or *the water of life*

22:16 Nm 24:17; Mt 1:1; Rev 1:1; Rev 1:4; Rev 5:5 22:17 Is 55:1; Jn 4:14; Jn 7:37; Rev 21:2; Rev 21:6

John is comparing God to the sun and the Lamb to the moon; together, they give light by day and by night.

21:24 *The nations . . . light*: God and the Lamb will be like a beacon to the world (see Isa 60:11).

21:25 *Its gates . . . no night there*: In the ancient world, walls and gates were designed to protect the city and keep out marauding armies. This city doesn't need such protection. Similarly, night was thought to be a dangerous time, when bad people and bad spirits had free reign; but this city will have no night (see also Zech 14:7).

22:1 *river of life-giving water*: John appears to be drawing heavily on Ezekiel's vision of the water flowing from the temple in the new city, which will be called "The Lord Is There" (Ezek 47:1-12; 48:35).

22:2 *tree of life . . . fruit*: See Revelation 2:7. John refers to the tree of life that stood in the middle of the garden in Eden and to the other trees that provided food whenever Adam and Eve wanted it (Gen 2:9). *The tree's leaves . . . nations*: See Ezekiel 47:12. John's image shows that the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, who come from

all over the world, will never again suffer from hunger or illness.

22:4 *They will see his face*: The hope of the Jewish people as they went to worship in Jerusalem was that they might "see God's face" (Pss 11:7; 17:15; 42:2; cf. Exod 24:10; 33:7-11). In the New Jerusalem God of direct encounter with God is a reality, *his name . . . foreheads*: in contrast with those who wear the mark of the beast (see Rev 13:6; 14:9; 20:4).

22:5 *they will rule forever and always*: The request of those under the altar, "How long before you require justice for our blood" (Rev 6:10), is answered once and for all. They now have their permanent place in the city that is God's throne on earth, and evil has been destroyed (see Rev 20:4-6).

22:6-17 A collection of short sayings serves as an epilogue to the book. Some are delivered by an angel (e.g., 22:9-11); and others come from Jesus (e.g., 22:12-13, 16). Some are warnings (e.g., 22:15); while others are words of blessing (e.g., 22:14; see note on Rev 1:3); words of encouragement to right living (e.g., 22:11); and invitations to worship (e.g., 22:17).

21:25 Is 60:11;  
Zec 14:7;  
Rev 21:12;  
Rev 22:5  
22:1 Ps 36:8,  
Ps 46:4;  
Eze 47:1;  
Zec 14:8; Rev 4:6  
22:2 Gn 2:9;  
Eze 47:12;  
Rev 2:7;  
Rev 22:14  
22:4 Ps 17:15;  
Mt 5:8;  
1Co 13:12;  
Rev 7:3;  
Rev 14:1  
22:5 Ps 36:9;  
Dn 7:18;  
Dn 7:27;  
Rev 20:4;  
Rev 21:25  
22:7 Rev 1:3;  
Rev 3:11;  
Rev 22:12;  
Rev 22:20  
22:8 Rev 1:1;  
Rev 1:4; Rev 1:9;  
Rev 19:10  
22:9 Col 2:18;  
Rev 19:10;  
Rev 22:8  
22:10 Dn 8:26;  
Rev 1:3;  
Rev 10:4  
22:11 Prv 4:18;  
Eze 3:27;  
Dn 12:10  
22:12 Is 40:10;  
Is 62:11;  
Mt 16:27;  
Rev 22:7  
22:13 Is 44:6;  
Is 48:12;  
Rev 1:8;  
Rev 1:17;  
Rev 21:6  
22:14 Rev 2:7;  
Rev 7:14;  
Rev 21:27;  
Rev 22:2  
22:15 Mt 7:6;  
1Co 6:9; Phi 3:2;  
Rev 21:8;  
Rev 21:27

22:18 Dt 4:2,  
Dt 12:32;  
Prv 30:6;  
Rev 1:3,  
Rev 15:6

22:19 Dt 4:2,  
Dt 12:32;  
Prv 30:6;  
Rev 21:2

22:20 Rev 3:11,  
Rev 22:7,  
Rev 22:12

<sup>18</sup>Now I bear witness to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy contained in this scroll: If anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues that are written in this scroll. <sup>19</sup>If anyone takes away from the words of this scroll of prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and the holy city, which are described in this scroll.

<sup>20</sup>The one who bears witness to these things says, "Yes, I'm coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

<sup>21</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

**22:18-21** John concludes the book with two claims about its importance: a warning to future editors not to alter this book in any way (22:18); and a reminder that Jesus is the one who witnessed to *these things* (22:20; see Rev 1:1-2).

# THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

Joel B. Green

Around the world and across time, millions of Christians have gathered and continue to gather regularly to hear the scriptures read in worship. When the reading is finished, the worship leader recites the familiar words and God's people respond.

*Leader:* This is the Word of the Lord.

*People:* Thanks be to God.

These words, simple as they are, bear profound witness to the church's belief that, in the reading and proclaiming of scripture, we encounter God's own voice. The word spoken at creation (Gen 1), the word that is "sweeter than honey in my mouth" (Ps 119:103), the word that doesn't return empty but accomplishes what the Lord intends (Isa 55:10-11), the word that John identifies with Jesus (John 1:1-14), the word that sometimes leads to the harassment of God's people (Rev 1:9) and yet continues to grow (Acts 12:24)—this is the word we embrace as we attend to the scriptural voice of God. And the liturgy reminds us that we attend to scripture most faithfully when we do so together in worship.

Of course, the Bible can be read in many ways. The Bible is a collection of books, an anthology. We find in its pages poetry and letters, historical narratives and visions, proverbs and oracles. For good reason, then, we might turn to the Bible as *literature*. Or we might turn to it as *history*. We find among the biblical writings a keen interest in the beginnings of Abraham and Sarah's people, the gathering of a tribal people as a nation, the rise and fall of leaders and kings, the movements and counter-movements of nations, the story of Jesus' life and ministry, as well as the origins of the church and its spread across the Roman Empire. When we attend to these books as the church's Book, however, we do so because of our shared belief that this collection of documents is nothing less than the Christian scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Together, the Old and New Testaments make up the authoritative witness to God's work in the world.

We ought to consider the literary qualities of these documents. We need to reflect on the many ways that these books refer to the realities of ancient communities and cultures. Respecting the books of the Bible requires that we take seriously their literary artistry, their literary forms, and their literary purpose. Respecting the books of the Bible requires us to study them against the background of ancient customs, institutions, and geography. Reading the Old and New Testaments as scripture includes but also surpasses these kinds of methodological concerns, however. We come to scripture with ears attuned and hearts open to what the Holy Spirit is saying to God's people. Reading and hearing these words as the church's scriptures, we seek not only to understand the Bible's message but also to "stand under" its authority. We seek not only to know but to be known. We put into practice the famed words of Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752): "Apply yourself wholly to the text; apply the text wholly to yourself." We open our lives, corporately and individually, to the ways, through scripture, we might grow in Christ-likeness and come to reflect more faithfully God's own image.

## Embracing Scripture's Authority

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Although the biblical books might be read for many reasons, the simple fact that these particular books have been gathered into this particular collection has nothing to do with the Bible's status as a compilation of literary works or a history book. We open the Bible as God's people and return again and again to its pages because of its special status as the church's scriptures. We give the Bible to those who are baptized and confirmed, and we gather in circles around the Bible for study, because we believe that in and through the Bible we encounter God. Let's think together about what it means when we agree that the Bible is the authoritative witness to God's work in the world.

### Reading the Bible with the Church

First, it means that we locate ourselves within the church, which finds its true identity in scripture. It is the church that affirms that the Bible is God's Word, and in doing so the church recognizes the origin, role, and aim of these texts in God's self-communication. We also recognize that the biblical documents were written by God's people for God's people, so that it is with and among God's people that we are best positioned to read the scriptures faithfully.

When we speak of the church, we naturally refer to God's people today as they gather for worship and fellowship and then are sent forth for mission and service. But we also refer to the church as it has heard

and read the Bible over time, from the church's beginnings some two thousand years ago until today. Jesus' disciples learned to read the scriptures in the synagogues of their youth. They then became apprentices to Jesus himself, who led them further into the truth of scripture. These Christ-followers were filled with the Spirit at Pentecost, and believed that the Spirit guided them further in their understanding and proclamation of the scriptures. This is how the long history of the church begins—a history that can rightly be understood as the story of how Christians have read the Bible and learned to practice its teaching. Among the ways we take seriously the character of scripture as the church's Book, then, is to take seriously the ways Christians throughout the ages have found their lives shaped through their reading and engagement with the Bible.

We recognize that the church has not always provided good examples of how to read its scriptures. The Bible has been used to support injustices of many kinds, whether the persecution of the Jewish people, the institution of slavery, practices of racism, or the abuse of women. Our increased awareness of how the church has misused the Bible can be instructive, too, however. By keeping in mind some of the ways the Bible has been badly interpreted and misappropriated, we stay alert to the ways in which we allow our own assumptions and allegiances to hijack the Bible's message of liberation and love, holiness and hope.

### Struggling with Scripture

Embracing scripture's authority doesn't mean that we turn a blind eye to those parts of the Bible that seem strange to us, or that seem to run counter to its overall message. The biblical documents were written in cultures that were male-dominated, so it shouldn't surprise us to discover that they often portray authority in families and social groups as generally reserved for men. But this doesn't mean that the church that acknowledges scripture's authority should likewise reserve positions of authority for men. And the same could be said for those parts of the Bible that presume various forms of institutional slavery, for example, or those biblical stories in which God's people take up and wield instruments of war. To embrace scripture's authority sometimes means struggling with scripture. In fact, it is precisely because we affirm scripture's authority that we sometimes must struggle with it, rather than ignore or dismiss texts that trouble us.

How might we struggle with scripture? To return to the question of the place of women, for example, we might do so by taking special notice of those texts that promote the status of women in positions of leadership in families, tribal groups, and churches. We might account for the historical contexts within which these documents were written. We might listen to how the global church, and the church across time, has listened to these texts. And we might work to understand individual texts within the whole of scripture's testimony.

Here's another example: We can recognize that scripture calls us to participate in actions that show that God has made us one people in spite of our racial, national, social, and other differences without thinking that the only way to do so is to "say hello to each other with a holy kiss." This is true even though several biblical texts direct us to do just that! (See Rom 16:16; 2 Cor 13:12; see also 1 Cor 16:20; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14.)

### Scripture Is Never Alone

Since the 16th century, Christians in the Protestant tradition of the church have used the slogan, *sola scriptura*, "by scripture alone." This is a useful reminder of the central, authoritative role of the Bible in the life and faith of the church. But it can be problematic when we take it to mean either that scripture is the only way God has revealed God's character and ways to us or that all we need to be faithful to God is the Bible. Scripture itself teaches that something of God's character is known through what God has made (e.g., Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:20). And practically from the beginning of the church we have example after example of how easy it is to read the Bible in ways that aren't at all faithful to the God of the Bible. As the saying goes, even the devil can read the Bible (see Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13)!

Irenaeus, the 2nd-century Christian theologian, offers this analogy: Someone might collect from Homer's poetry phrases and names, then use them to write a poem that might actually fool some people into thinking that it had been written by Homer. After all, it sounds like Homer. (Today, we might say the same thing about Shakespeare.) In the same way, Irenaeus wrote, people who hold to beliefs that differ markedly from those held by the Christian church try to collect terms, phrases, and names scattered throughout scripture, then use them to tell their own story. The result might sound like scripture, but it wouldn't have any genuine relation to the story scripture itself tells. This is because those people disregard what Irenaeus calls the "order and connection" of the scriptures. For Irenaeus—and for the church across time—the medicine needed to fend off these bad readings of scripture is not only careful reading of biblical texts (though this is certainly needed). We also need what the early church often called the Rule of

Faith, which would soon take form in the great creeds that all branches of the church—Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant—affirm. We share three creeds: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. And the purpose of these creeds is to teach us how to read scripture faithfully by reminding us of the Bible's order and connection. Part of what it means to read scripture within the church is that our readings of scripture take seriously what we might call the plotline of scripture as this is represented in the church's great creeds.

### Authority as Invitation

Notice that the Bible doesn't spend a lot of time simply telling us what to do. This is mostly because the Bible isn't like an antiquated book of manners; it isn't really a handbook for living or a moral codebook. This is obvious enough when we recognize how often it addresses issues that don't concern us much (like whether to eat meat sacrificed to idols) and how often it doesn't address issues that do concern us (like where we should relocate Aunt Sue who is suffering from severe dementia—at home with us or in a healthcare facility). Scripture does call on God's people, but it does so in less direct ways. For example, scripture invites us to find the history of our people, God's people, and, therefore, our true identity in its story of God's relationship with Israel and the early church. The story we are telling or writing with our lives, then, wouldn't be tied to "the American dream." Instead, our life stories would continue the story of exodus and reconciliation in Christ, of the coming of the Spirit and the gathering of Christ's followers in communities of faith concerned with God's mission in the world. Scripture shapes our imaginations (what we take to be real and possible and true), reminds us of our commitments, asks us to consider reasoned arguments, and urges us to reflect on the goodness of God and the nature of our responses to God's goodness. It molds and persuades, but rarely demands.

As we give ourselves to life in the Holy Spirit and to engagement with scripture, God works in our lives. God leads us further into scripture, and we find the Bible more and more to be true. This means that what is needed most are people deeply rooted in faithful communities of discipleship, people in whom the Spirit is making real God's Word, people who are learning firsthand that scripture gives us true access to God's voice.

God speaks, and this is the basis for scripture's authority. Through scripture, God convinces us that things between God and humanity—indeed, between God and all creation—are just as we find them described in scripture. By embracing scripture's authority, we are drawn into the story of scripture, and especially more deeply into relationship with scripture's primary character, that is, with God.

What does it mean to affirm the authority of the Bible, then? When we acknowledge scripture's authority, we reject attempts at revising its words so as to make them match our reality. Instead, we make sense of our reality, our lives, within its pages and according to its story. To embrace scripture's authority is to allow ourselves to be shaped by it thoroughly and fully. This shaping means that scripture's authority is less demand and more invitation. "Taste and see how good the LORD is!" (Ps 34:8). In scripture, we are invited to come and make our home in this story of God's ongoing and gracious purpose for God's people.

### Attitudes and Postures

As with other books, Christians read the biblical documents by taking account of their literary forms, getting a sense of their historical background, and taking seriously the words on these pages. But Christians also read the Bible quite differently than they read other books. We don't come to scripture first and foremost in order to assess its historical basis or origins. We don't come to scripture primarily in order to summarize and organize its statements about God. Christians may do all of these things and more, but none of these represents a particularly Christian approach to scripture. Rather, Christians come to scripture to hear God's voice. They want to hear and do God's Word. Therefore, affirming scripture's authority can never be reduced to an academic exercise or logical argument by which we count the Bible as trustworthy. Our job isn't to prove or otherwise to protect the Bible. Indeed, attempts to protect the Bible assume that scripture's aims depend on human activity rather than on God's. What we need instead are attitudes of openness, humility, submission, and obedience. Christian readers of the Bible want to become familiar with ancient peoples and their cultures. We honor being schooled in the biblical languages. We want to cultivate good skills for reading the Bible. But, even more, we bring to the Bible our attitudes of acceptance, devotion, attention, and trust.

To affirm scripture's authority is to embrace habits of prayerful reading that lead to the conformity of our thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors to God's character and purpose as these are revealed in scripture. We find here in the pages of scripture who we are and what we are to become. We acknowledge and invite the ongoing work of scripture's divine author, the One who desires to shape us as a community, the church, God's people.

## The Nature of Scripture

When we acknowledge scripture's authority, we recognize that the books gathered together in the Bible are special. The ancient world knew many books. Today, literally tens of millions of titles are cataloged, with some half-million new books added each year—in English alone! What makes this collection of books unique is its status as scripture. We can understand better what this means by thinking about the church's Book in the categories the Nicene Creed uses to describe the church: "We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church."

### Scripture Is One

Although the books of the Bible are many, the church affirms scripture's unity. This unity is not a simple one, as though every book spoke with the same voice in the same way about the same things. Clearly, this isn't the case. For example, we have four Gospels in the New Testament. They all speak truthfully about the significance of Jesus of Nazareth, God's Son, but they do so in different ways. Mark and John have no stories of Jesus' birth, but Matthew and Luke do. Matthew, Mark, and Luke relate Jesus' teaching in parables, but we find no parables in John. All paint a portrait of Jesus, but these portraits aren't identical.

Instead, scripture's unity is a theological claim about the origins and aims of scripture, and especially about the God concerning whom scripture testifies. Unity rests in the church's recognition that the Bible finds its origins in the purpose and voice of the one God. The Bible tells the story of the Triune God as a single story, the plotline of which is set out in the church's creeds. The Bible reveals the one God: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom Jesus called Father, who raised Jesus from the dead. And the Bible's message is interpreted to us with the help of the one Holy Spirit. The Bible's oneness can't and shouldn't be reduced to a statement about its historical contexts, its teaching on a given subject, or its literary character. Its unity is found in its witness to God.

### Scripture Is Holy

We use the term "holy" to refer to a person or thing set aside for a particular purpose in service to God, for something or someone dedicated to God. This is a good way to think about authoritative scripture. On the one hand, these documents are like other ancient documents. Their authors are sometimes unknown. Some of these books reached their present form through down-to-earth processes of passing on and editing traditional stories and sayings. These documents were prepared with the usual writing materials, and the books of the Bible can be studied like any other document. On the other hand, these documents together form Holy Scripture. Through the work of God's Spirit they have come to us as something more. God's Spirit was involved in the production of these texts. The church was led by God's Spirit to recognize these (and not other) documents as scripture. The church is enabled by God's Spirit to grasp the meaning of scripture, and to be grasped by it. We affirm that God has set these books aside to form the church's Book for the purpose of directing us into greater Christ-likeness.

### Scripture Is Catholic

"Catholic" is another word for "universal." To affirm the catholicity of scripture is to affirm that all scripture is written for all of God's people in all times and in all places. The Christian scriptures aren't the possession of Americans only but are to be heard, read, and interpreted among Asians and Africans, and indeed throughout the world. The Christian scriptures aren't the possession of scholars only but belong to the whole church that gathers and scatters in the name of Jesus Christ. Nor are the Christian scriptures for Methodists or Baptists only but are the scriptures of all who call on the name of the Lord. Even if we always read the Bible in a local context, we remember that others throughout the church's history and around the world have turned and continue to turn to these same texts. God's Spirit empowers their reading, too, so what can we learn by hearing from these other students of scripture?

### Scripture Is Apostolic

With the term "apostolic," we remind ourselves that Jesus and the band of apostles he gathered around himself were Jews who searched Israel's scriptures to learn of the nature and ways of God. We could hardly have a more firm affirmation of the significance of those scriptures, which we know as the Old Testament. Early Christians had no scriptures other than Israel's scriptures, which they read in relation to traditions about Jesus and letters from missionary leaders that would eventually be gathered into the New Testament. The books of the New Testament were included in the New Testament largely because of their conformity with the gospel handed down by the apostles. Together, the Old and New Testaments bear witness to the eternal aims and particular workings of God. And they bear witness to the God who

draws near to save and lead, both in exodus and in Jesus Christ. In the scriptures, then, we encounter the heart of our faith.

## What Is Scripture For?

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Christians have traditionally turned to 2 Timothy 3:16-17 as a way of talking about the nature of scripture's authority. "Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character, so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good." This text is helpful for anyone thinking about scripture's authority, for two reasons. First, it reminds us of the claim of our faith, that scripture has its origins in the aims and voice of God. Like the Old Testament prophets, scripture speaks because God has first spoken. Scripture bears witness to God because God enables speech about God and God's activity in the world. Second, it reminds us of the purpose or direction of scripture's authority. The role of scripture isn't really to teach us lessons about history, medicine, archeology, architecture, science, geography, and so on. The Bible has things to say about all of these subjects, and others besides, but this isn't the focus of the Bible's authority in the church. Instead, engagement with scripture should produce this: "that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good." We exhibit best our beliefs about the Bible not so much by what we say about the Bible but through scripture-shaped hearts and lives.

# THE BIBLE'S UNITY

Marianne Meye Thompson

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When Christians speak of “the Bible,” they have a generally shared understanding of what they mean. In the Protestant tradition the Bible refers to sixty-six books, thirty-nine in the “Old Testament” and twenty-seven in the “New Testament.” Together, these sixty-six books—ranging from Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, to Revelation, the last book of the New Testament—make up “the Bible.” Other traditions, such as the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, include the books of the Old Testament Apocrypha (e.g., Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, Judith, Tobit, 1 and 2 Maccabees) in “the Bible.” All Christians agree that the Old and New Testaments are the main parts of the Bible, so that is how we will use the term here.

The Bible is a collection of many kinds of different books, including narratives, psalms, proverbs, poetry, prophetic oracles, and letters. It was written over hundreds of years by a number of different authors. Many of these books come to us anonymously. We don't know when or why some of them were written. Some were written by and for ancient Israelites, a largely agricultural people who lived on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea and spoke Hebrew or Aramaic. Other parts of the Bible were directed to educated Greek-speaking people living in the larger cities of the ancient world, such as Rome and Corinth.

The practices and customs of the people who are written about, and for whom these books are written, vary widely. For example, ancient Israelites and Jews traced their ancestry to Abraham, identified themselves as part of the people of Israel largely by birth, and practiced male circumcision as a sign of their belonging to this people. They offered animal sacrifices, eventually locating these sacrifices in a single temple in Jerusalem. They observed Moses' instruction, which included many purity laws regulating what one could touch, eat, and do. These purity laws forbade the eating of certain foods, especially pork and shellfish, and commanded that the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath day, be observed by resting and doing no work. The Israelites did all this to honor and obey Yahweh, Israel's God. But many early believers in Jesus were Gentiles, that is, they weren't Jews by birth. As Gentile Christians they were included as part of God's people, even though they hadn't descended from Abraham and didn't circumcise themselves, worship in the Jerusalem temple, or observe food laws or the Sabbath.

So the books of the Bible were written for different kinds of people and about different kinds of people. We might wonder, then, what holds this diverse collection together. Why do we continue to read these many books not only as a collection of books but also as a single book? Why do we read books directed to ancient Israelites as relevant to contemporary Christian faith? For this is precisely what the Christian church has done. It hasn't thrown out the Old Testament as an outdated set of documents without significance to the faith and practice of Christians. Indeed, for Jesus himself and for the earliest believers in him, the only “Bible” was what we now call the Old Testament. After the various documents of the New Testament were written, they were eventually gathered into a collection. But this “New Testament” didn't then replace the “Old Testament.” Early Christians kept both testaments as one Bible.

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## Challenges to the Bible's Unity

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What holds this diverse collection of books together as a single book? We can approach the question of the Bible's unity from various angles. First is the matter of the relationship of the Old and New Testaments. Nowhere in the text of the Bible itself is either of the designations “old” or “new” testament found. The books of the Bible—whether the separate books of the Old or New Testaments, or the two testaments combined—weren't put together by those who wrote them but by others who followed after them.

This means that the designations “old” and “new” testaments arose after these two parts of the Bible had already been collected. The first person to use the terms in this way was probably Melito, the bishop of the church of Sardis (in Asia Minor, the western part of modern-day Turkey) in the late 2nd century. Melito spoke of two covenants, using the Greek word *diathēkē*. God's promise to make a new covenant (Jer 31:31) was understood by the authors of various New Testament writings to be fulfilled in the events that surround Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8, 13; 9:15; 12:24). The designations “old covenant” and “new covenant” were then transferred to the written collections that contain these covenants. In the late 4th century, when the Bible was translated into Latin by Jerome, the word *testamentum* was used for the word “covenant.” And that is the word that has come into use in English. The designations “old” and “new” indicate that these two collections were understood to relate and belong to each other.



But in the history of the church some have thought that the New Testament should simply replace the Old Testament and that the Old Testament should be discarded. Indeed, the designation of the first part of the biblical canon as “old” sounds pejorative to many, implying that the “old” testament is worn out, outdated, old-fashioned. Such an evaluation might raise a serious challenge to the unity of the Bible. Why keep something that’s no longer relevant or useful? Some scholars prefer to speak of the “first” and “second,” or even the “older” and “newer,” testaments to show that these two collections really do belong together. One is the older, or first, witness to God’s actions in and toward the world; the other is the newer, or second, witness to that same God.

The belief that the two testaments of the Bible bear witness to one and the same God raises a second important challenge to the Bible’s unity. This challenge has to do with how God is portrayed in the various parts of the Bible. In the 2nd century a man named Marcion argued that the depiction of God in the Old Testament was so different from the picture of God proclaimed and written in the Christian message that Christians shouldn’t use the Old Testament. The God of the Old Testament, he argued, was judicial and harsh, while the God revealed by Jesus was a God of love. He thought these weren’t the same God, so he called for Christians to abandon the Old Testament.

But other Christians felt differently. Early church theologians, such as Tertullian and Irenaeus, argued against throwing out the Old Testament. They read the scriptures, both the Old Testament and certain early Christian writings, collectively. They insisted that, together, these writings provide a coherent narrative about one and the same God. The God who made the world was also the God of Israel, as well as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The God who made the world and everything and everyone in it was particularly the God of Israel, who through his Son Jesus Christ reconciled and redeemed the entire world.

The unity of the Bible and the unity of God stand or fall together. If God is divided, then so is the Bible, and if the Bible is divided, then so is God. In other words, scripture is an account of God’s saving purposes for the whole world. It begins with the creation of the world; leads to the calling of the people of Israel; comes to its climax in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and anticipates a new heaven and a new earth.

One final, important challenge to the Bible’s unity has to do more specifically with what is said in each book. The books of the Bible often seem to say different things. For example, Deuteronomy promises God’s blessings and rewards to those who obey God’s will (Deut 30:16; 32:47), but Jeremiah wonders why evildoers are happy and guilty persons enjoy success (Jer 12:1), and the book of Job denies any direct relationship between human goodness and God’s blessing. If various books seem to say different things, how can we say that the books of the Bible belong together? That’s the question we’ll take up next.

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## The Bible’s Unity and the Bible’s Narrative

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One persistent view of the church throughout the centuries is that the Bible is held together by a single narrative and that the central figure in this narrative is the Triune God. The Bible is about God and what God has done, is doing, and will do. In other words, the Bible tells one story. It doesn’t say only one thing or speak in only one way, but it should be read as telling one continuous story. If the Bible’s unity is conceived of as a narrative, then each part of that narrative has its own significance, and each part must be taken seriously as contributing to the whole. A narrative has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Some things stay the same throughout; but some things change, develop, and even offer interesting twists and turns in the development of the story—twists and turns that surprise the reader. We can expect both continuity and surprises.

The biblical narrative begins with God’s creation of the world (Genesis) and ends with God’s creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation). Beginning with God’s creation of the world and all its inhabitants, this narrative continues through God’s calling of the people of Israel and their life together and with God. The narrative comes to a decisive turn with the mission of God’s Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, and his life, death, and resurrection. The Bible anticipates the completion of this narrative in God’s creation of a new heaven and a new earth, and in the final redemption of all God’s people to inhabit that new world.

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## Creation: The World and Its Inhabitants

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Genesis, the first book of the Bible, begins with God’s creation of the world. Here we read that when the world was without shape or form, when there was only darkness, God created the entire universe and all

the living things that inhabit it. God *spoke*, and the world and all living things came to be: light and darkness, heavens and earth, waters and dry land, plants and seasons, birds and fish, wildlife and livestock, and, finally, human beings. Reflecting on God's creation of the world, the psalmist writes, "The skies were made by the Lord's word" (Ps 33:6).

These accounts in Genesis point to a God who is the source of life, an emphasis that recurs in the Bible. The God who is the source of all life stands in contrast to the idols people make out of wood and stone. Hence, the phrase "the living God" (and phrases like it) recur in the Old Testament (Deut 5:26; 32:39-40; Pss 18:47; 41:14; 106:48; Isa 40:28; 48:12; Jer 10:10; Dan 12:7). God is the only creator of the world (Isa 44:24) and of all that is (Isa 40:28; 45:7). God's uniqueness and God's creation of all things are closely tied together. The Bible isn't a collection of stories about many gods, but the narrative of the one Lord God who created the world by speaking it into existence and breathing the wind or breath of life into it (Gen 1:3; 2:7).

In the books of the New Testament the emphasis on God as the creator and the living one is repeated and developed. We find references to "the living God" (Matt 16:16; 26:63; John 6:57; Rom 9:26; 2 Cor 3:3; 6:16; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Tim 3:15; 4:10; Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev 7:2) as well as the God "of the living" (Matt 22:32; Mark 12:27; Luke 20:38; Rom 14:9). In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul testifies to "the living God" who "made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them" (Acts 14:15).

In the New Testament the word by which God made the heavens is identified as God's Word, or God's Son. Hence, the opening of John's Gospel reminds us of the opening words of Genesis, when God began to create the heavens and the earth. John says, "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1) and goes on to affirm the creation of all things "through the Word" (John 1:3). The affirmation that God created the world through the Word (or by means of the Son) is echoed elsewhere in the New Testament (1 Cor 9:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). The prepositions "through" or "by means of" are important, because they reaffirm God's identity as the creator of all things but assert that God created through or by means of the Son. Not only does this involve the Son in the creation of the world, but it also maintains the unique identity of the one creator. There is only one God, and this God works *through* the Son and the Spirit to bring life to the world.

## The People of God and the Peoples of the World

The God who created the world also created human beings as part of that world. The Bible is the story of the one God's dealings with the people God created. This story includes what God expects of them, how God responds to obedience and disobedience, and what God has done and will do for them. We can divide the story of humankind into several parts in the Bible: the creation of humankind, the choosing of Israel, the mission of Jesus as the one faithful Israelite and as the savior of Israel and the world, and finally the gathering of all peoples of the world into the new heaven and new earth that God will create.

The first part of the biblical narrative, then, is the creation of humankind. Human beings are the only living things created "in God's own image" (Gen 1:27). All humans share in the human mission to care for creation. This is part of what it means to be created in God's image and to take charge of all the living things and of the earth (Gen 1:28). Not only are human beings given the task to care for the world, but they are to do so by depending on and obeying their creator. Moreover, they are to live in community with each other. Indeed, from the very beginning God saw that it wasn't good for the human to be alone (Gen 2:18). So God created another human, and together Adam and Eve and all their descendants were to take care of the earth and each other as part of their obedience to and worship of the one God.

However, the story of Genesis is a story of things gone wrong. According to Genesis, God's original purposes for human beings to live together in harmony with God, with each other, and with the world fell apart when the humans refused to take their proper role as created beings. Rather than living in harmony with God's will or commands, Adam and Eve disobeyed God's word. Disobedience to God's commands meant that the human beings were cast out from the garden of Eden into a world that was more difficult and hostile (Gen 3:17-19). Later the apostle Paul wrote, "Creation was subjected to frustration" (Rom 8:20). Not only were relationships with God and the earth disrupted but so were human relationships with each other. This was already evident when Cain turned against his brother Abel and killed him (Gen 4:8). These stories in Genesis make it clear that, according to the Bible, the world isn't the way it was created to be or the way it's supposed to be.

But God doesn't simply let go of the world or its inhabitants; God's purposes continue to be worked out. The next chapter in the narrative has to do with the calling of the people of Israel. This part of the narrative is marked by God's calling of Abraham, the forefather of the people of Israel (Gen 12:1). Out of all the peoples of the world, God called Israel to be God's covenant people and to bear witness to God's

identity, holiness, and will. This people was to be holy as God is holy (Lev 19:2; 20:26), to worship God alone (Deut 6:4-5), to live together in justice and peace with each other, and so to become a light, a testimony, to all the peoples of the world to draw them to God. They were to fulfill the purposes for which God created human beings.

The people of Israel were to do God's will as found in the Instruction God gave to Moses. This Instruction is represented in Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21), which require sole worship of the Lord God, as well as relationships to fellow human beings that are governed by justice, integrity, truth, and seeking the welfare of others. The Old Testament also contains numerous instructions regarding holiness before God, including laws prohibiting the consumption of certain foods and regulations regarding purification, clothing, sacrifice, the furnishings of the temple, and numerous other things. All of life was to be governed by God's will.

But the biblical account of Israel's communal life and witness in the world wasn't always very promising. The prophet Isaiah notes that human beings failed to acknowledge their creator with appropriate worship. Thus, in a lengthy attack on idol worship, Isaiah remarks on how someone will cut down a tree and use it for fuel. "He cuts down cedars for himself, or chooses a cypress or oak. . . . He plants a pine, and the rain makes it grow. It becomes suitable to burn for humans, so he takes some of the wood and warms himself. He kindles fire and bakes bread. He fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol. . . . and he bows down, worships, and prays to it, saying, 'Save me, for you are my god!'" (Isa 44:14-17).

In his letter to the Romans, Paul makes the same point while speaking of Gentiles. He writes that, even though God's "eternal power and divine nature" (Rom 1:20) can be perceived in the things that are made, human beings have made a mess of things. "They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images that look like mortal humans: birds, animals, and reptiles" (Rom 1:23). Like Isaiah, Paul believed that human beings don't properly worship God, and so they betray their creator and the purposes for which they were created. The creation is magnificent, and it witnesses to the magnificence of God; but human beings have perverted what it means to live in keeping with the good purposes of the creator.

What's more, people don't live together in the justice and integrity God calls for. Thus the shared life of Israel and, indeed, of all human beings, is marked by injustice, warfare, and idolatry. Israel's rulers don't always govern wisely. They don't guide Israel in living according to God's will. They don't demonstrate the rule of justice and integrity in Israel. The prophets, God's spokespersons to God's people, warn of the consequences of failing to do God's will, focusing particularly on the failure to worship God alone and to treat each other with justice and integrity. The consequences are exile from the land God gave to them. The prophets also offer a vision of a better day, when justice and righteousness, peace and health will characterize the life of God's people with each other, and true worship and obedience will characterize their relationship with God. Sometimes the prophets hope for a future time when all people, and with them all of creation will be set right with God and each other.

The other nations of the world are also part of the biblical narrative. These peoples can serve God's purposes and experience God's judgments and blessings. In fact, the biblical narrative always envisions the ultimate unity of all the inhabitants of the world. Everyone will dwell together in peace and harmony on a hospitable earth, worshipping the one creator God.

## Jesus and the People of God

The biblical narrative takes a decisive turn with the mission of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of Israel. According to the Gospel accounts—and indeed, all the New Testament—Jesus was a faithful Israelite descended from David. He was the king God promised to Israel to deliver it from its enemies and to restore Israel to its proper and rightful place. However, Jesus' vision of Israel's proper place wasn't that Israel would rule the world but that it would be God's servant to the whole world, just as Jesus himself was. Following Jesus in this way, God's people are to be a light to all the peoples of the world.

According to the Gospel accounts, Jesus' mission was to gather the people of Israel and call them to be the people God wished them to be. Jesus was to find "the lost sheep" of the house of Israel (Matt 15:24); to seek out the one sheep who was lost and to bring it back to the fold with the other ninety-nine (Luke 15:6); to welcome home the younger brother, and then to reconcile the older and younger brothers so that they might celebrate together at the table of fellowship (Luke 15:11-32); to gather together the children of God who were scattered abroad (John 11:52).

In keeping with his mission, Jesus interpreted the Law of Moses by summarizing it with two commands: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind" and "You must love your neighbor as you love yourself" (Matt 22:34-46). The heart of what God calls all

the peoples of the world to be and to do is here, in Israel's scriptures, as summarized by these commands. God's people are to love God and their neighbors; they are to offer proper worship to God and to "do justice" and "embrace faithful love" (Mic 6:8).

Thus God's people would serve as a light to the nations, a city on a hill, so that the nations would be drawn to God. In the biblical account of things, however, this expectation gets turned on its head in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Instead of the world's peoples coming to join God's people, the risen Jesus instructs his followers to go to the world's peoples. Following Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples are commissioned to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19). Jesus' apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit, likewise carry the news about Jesus from Jerusalem to "the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

So the biblical story begins broadly with the creation of all people, narrows to the calling of Israel to be a people holy and faithful to God, narrows still further to the calling of those who follow Jesus, and then broadens out again to include all the peoples of the earth, "persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation" (Rev 5:9). God told Israel they would be "a kingdom of priests" (Exod 19:6), but later this designation is given to Jesus' followers (1 Pet 2:9), including those who come from every corner of the earth (Rev 5:9-10). These people are holy as God is holy (1 Pet 1:16; Lev 19:2; 20:26).

## Re-creation and Redemption

The death and resurrection of Jesus are the climax of the story, and they show the lengths to which God was willing to go in order to call a holy people. Jesus' ministry—his life, death, and resurrection—show both the continuity and discontinuity that exists between God's actions as portrayed in the Old and New Testaments. God in Christ reverses the disobedience of Adam, fulfills God's promises to Abraham to make of him a great and numerous people, and accomplishes a new exodus, a new release from slavery in the form of release from all the powers of sin that enslave human life. Even as Moses sealed God's covenant with the people of Israel with blood, so Jesus' blood seals the new covenant with God's people that God makes through him. Even as a king could be expected to care for and protect his people, so Jesus the good shepherd-king willingly gives his life to protect his people from death (John 10:1-18). God's dwelling in the wilderness and then in the Jerusalem temple were symbols of God's holy presence with Israel; the risen Jesus embodies God's everlasting holy presence with God's people (John 2:19-22; 4:22-23; Rev 21:3-5).

God disciplined the people Israel for their disobedience by sending them into exile but restored them again to their inheritance. According to the New Testament, however, Jesus bore the consequences of human disobedience and sin. He was the one truly faithful Israelite, and in his faithfulness, even to the point of death on the cross, he faithfully carried out God's will (Phil 2:5-11). Through his death and resurrection he restored his people to life. Israel regularly brought sacrifices to the temple for purification of the people and for reconciliation with God; Jesus' death both purifies the world's sin and reconciles the world to God. All the people of the world may be brought into one people who love God with all their heart, being, strength, and mind, and who love their neighbors, and indeed their enemies, as themselves. God ultimately deals with human disobedience through Jesus Christ, reconciling the world through Jesus' death and resurrection. This work will be completed when Christ returns, when all things, including all people, will be made new.

The hope for the renewal of the world and its peoples runs throughout the Bible. It's highlighted especially in the book of Isaiah. Here God's people worship God in holiness and with joy, and all the peoples of the world stream to Jerusalem to worship God with them. The world becomes a hospitable place, without threat to human life. In poetic imagery Isaiah asserts "The wolf will live with the lamb" (Isa 11:6; 65:25). There will be no harm done, no destruction, on God's "holy mountain" (Isa 11:9; 65:25). Human beings will live in harmony together. People "will beat their swords into iron plows and their spears into pruning tools," and there will be no more war (Isa 2:4; Mic 4:3). Indeed, God "will swallow up death forever" and "wipe tears from every face" (Isa 25:8).

This is the same vision given by Jesus in his promise of God's kingdom. God's kingdom is that reality in which God's commanding and gracious rule extends over all the earth, so that God's purposes are accomplished. God's kingdom is God's new world in which people from every tongue, nation, and tribe gather together to worship God and the Lamb, to feast at the end-time banquet, to live together in peace in God's holy city. In the coming of the kingdom everything that disrupts the peace and harmony of God's good creation is removed. In the kingdom, God's will is done, people are fed their daily bread, their sins are forgiven, and they walk in God's righteous ways.

The vision of God's new world is shown in various ways in the New Testament. Paul speaks of creation's being "subjected to frustration" and in "slavery to decay," "groaning" and "suffering labor pains" (Rom 8:20-22). But that isn't all there is. Creation "waits breathless" until all God's children are revealed in glory, and then it will join in their freedom and life (Rom 8:1-39). Paul can thus write of the hope of a new creation that entails both the remaking of the world and the renewal of individuals (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). In the book of Colossians the world is said to be "created" and "held together" through Christ who is God's image (Col 1:15-17). But even so, "all things" (Col 1:17) in this world need to be reconciled—and they are reconciled to God by means of the one through whom they were also made. Human beings, too, are being restored in their creator's image (Col 3:10). In everything, God works for the renewal of the world God has made but which has become marred by sin and its consequences.

Fittingly, the last book and the last chapters of the Bible contain a grand vision of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1), when God lives on earth with God's people and removes every source of mourning and pain. Everything that has spoiled the creation and separated humans from God and from each other—injustice, immorality, idolatry—is removed from the world, having been destroyed finally and fully by God. The world is now as it should be.

The Bible anticipates the end of this story but doesn't actually narrate it. Throughout the scriptures, the story looks forward to the future. One might even say that the Bible is full of hope for the future realm of blessedness. The unity of the Bible lies in the creating, redeeming, and recreating work of God, who made the world, loves it, and will one day bring it and its inhabitants to the fullness of life.

# HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

Daniel G. Reid

When e-books became popular, we saw the greatest change in books since the invention of the printing press in the 15th century. What if e-books completely replace printed books? Think about how strange printed books and the whole process of producing them will seem then. If we could transport ourselves to the 25th century, we might have much to explain about the format and content of our reading materials, and our descendants would have much to imagine. That is how it is for us when we try to imagine books and their readers in ancient Israel.

We are separated from the writing of the final books of the NT by 1,900 years. This may seem like a long time, but consider the extensive period of time before the time of Christ—certainly hundreds of years, if not a thousand—during which the OT books were written. From the time of early Israel to the 1st century CE of Paul, John, and Peter, there were significant changes in language, writing, writing materials, and the making of texts.

## Ancient Books and Writing

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Books as we know them—with clearly established authorship and composed as single volumes, bound, and sold to individuals—were unknown in ancient Israel. Books were too expensive for all but a few to own, and there was no book business in the modern sense of that concept. Nor were there many competent readers.

Let's think about the origin of the OT. People often imagine a period when the material of the Bible—stories and prophecies, poetry and traditions—was handed down orally (around the campfire, so to speak), followed by a period when this material was put into writing and handed down in printed form. But it's more accurate to say that written texts circulated *alongside* spoken tradition and oral performance. Written texts supported the passing on of information and traditions by word of mouth in two ways. First, the texts aided the memories of the people who recited stories and traditions. Second, the texts were read aloud and, in time, included aids for readers, who read them to an audience. (Silent reading was rare and even regarded as strange.)

Relatively few people could read beyond the basic level required for everyday business. That left the reading of more serious texts, like the scriptures, to the experts. This was especially true in Babylon and Egypt, where complicated writing systems set a high bar for readers. Fortunately, the situation was much better in Palestine, where speakers of Hebrew or related languages enjoyed the benefit of a simple 22-letter alphabet. Scholars estimate that only about 5 to 7 percent of Babylonians and Egyptians could read and write; but in Palestine the figure would have been significantly higher, though how high isn't known.

In Babylon and some other places, clay tablets were used for writing. These were typically small enough to hold in one hand. People made wedge-shaped characters with a stylus (a pointed, pen-shaped instrument) in the soft clay surface, and the tablets were then hardened by baking or drying in the sun. It could take a scribe about 50 hours to copy the 3,000 lines of the great Babylonian poem *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

Evidence for everyday reading and writing in Palestine has come to us through random archeological discoveries. For instance, archeologists have found many notes and records on pieces of broken pottery called *ostraca*, a sort of ancient notepaper used for everyday notes and administrative purposes. These suggest that at least some of the common people were able to read and write simple texts.

More important documents in Palestine were written in ink on scrolls made of papyrus (a writing material made from thin strips of the papyrus plant; the plural is "papyri"), parchment (specially prepared animal skins), or leather. Unfortunately, the dampness of Palestinian winters has destroyed these fragile materials. Interesting bits of evidence of their existence remain, however. For instance, scrolls often had a clay seal attached to them, indicating their ownership (see Jer 36:1-10). Archeologists have found more than 1,000 of these seals in Palestine. A good number of them, dating as far back as the 7th century BCE, carry the phrase "belonging to the king" written in Hebrew. While this tends to confirm that many of these documents were for royal use, such seals have been found throughout Palestine. So it's probably safe to conclude that someone in each location could read the writing on the scrolls.

A scroll wasn't a book as we think of it, with bound pages, a cover, and a title advertising its contents. It was more like a rolled-up text-storage device. Later, in the Christian era, the book, or codex, came into use. Whereas, like our books today, the length of a text tended to determine the size of a codex, the

practical length of the scroll set the limit for its text. A typical scroll consisted of about 20 sheets of papyrus glued together, making it about 11 feet long. A longer scroll might have 40 or even 60 joined sheets; but at 60 sheets (30 or more feet), a scroll became very awkward to use.

Currently we think of texts as the works of individuals who present research or express their own creativity through writing. Most authors expect to have their written work protected by copyright law and to receive payment for their efforts. These ideas were foreign to people of the OT world. Important texts were typically the property of a ruler, a dynasty, a people, or a religious community. These people edited, preserved, and passed texts on from one generation to the next. For example, when we read the word “I” in a biblical psalm, we naturally assume it refers to its author. But OT psalms come to us from a long tradition of worship in Israel. Certainly, the psalm originated with *someone*, but its ancient Israelite audience understood the original writer’s “I” to refer to the community and represent common human experience before God.

Scribes were the key agents in composing, editing, updating, and preserving texts. More than secretaries, they were scholars trained in writing, reading, memorizing, and handling texts. Scribes were often employed by the royal palace or the temple. Some rose above the routine work to become highly educated scholars who, among other things, composed and collected proverbs and other wisdom literature.

## The Writing of the OT

The history of the writing of the OT books is complex and mostly hidden from our eyes. Some of this history can be pieced together by paying careful attention to details. It helps to remember the four broad periods of Israelite and Jewish history:

- Earliest Israel (to the period before c. 1000 BCE)
- The Israelite kingdoms before the exile (1000–587 BCE)
- The period of the Babylonian exile (587–538 BCE)
- The post-exilic period (538–400 BCE)

The OT covers this entire span of time, but the actual writing of the OT texts was a process that grew with the establishment of the Israelite kingdoms and reached its climax in the exilic and post-exilic periods.

Some evidence of how the OT was written is relatively easy to find. For instance, some historical books mention such sources as “the official records of Israel’s and Judah’s kings” (2 Chron 35:27) and “the Jashar scroll” (Josh 10:12-13; 2 Sam 1:18). These books refer to legal sources like “the instruction scroll from Moses” (2 Kgs 14:6; Neh 8:1). In the book of Proverbs we find mention of the “Proverbs of Solomon,” the “Sayings of the Wise,” the “Words of Agur,” and the “Words of King Lemuel.” The book of Psalms is a collection from various sources (psalms of Korah, of Asaph, of David). In other cases we find two accounts that are nearly identical, such as Isaiah 36–39 and 2 Kings 18:13–20:19. This suggests either that one text depends on the other or that they share a common source. We also have the parallel histories of 1 Samuel through 2 Kings, on the one hand, and 1–2 Chronicles on the other, with the Chronicles providing a later interpretation of the earlier history.

At one point, the book of Jeremiah pulls back a curtain on the writing process. Jeremiah dictates to his scribe, Baruch, a warning to Judah. This warning is then read publicly, but the king disapproves of the message and destroys the scroll. Jeremiah then dictates the message to Baruch again, adding “many similar words” to it (Jer 36:32). In this basic way, the book of Jeremiah shows how the texts developed in stages.

Some sources aren’t mentioned as clearly but may be detected from features of the biblical text. These features have led scholars to produce a variety of theories about how some texts were crafted. The most famous theories are those for explaining how we got the Pentateuch, the first five books of the OT. Although there’s no clear agreement on the details of how, when, and why the Pentateuch reached its present form, today very few scholars hold the traditional view that it was written by Moses. Instead, these books were written over a long period of time and draw on multiple sources. The Pentateuch itself speaks of some written sources (e.g., Gen 5:1; Exod 17:14; 24:4 34:27; Num 21:14-15; 33:2; Deut 31:9, 22, 24). No matter how these books were written, it seems clear that this great collection has an overall unity of purpose, even if it isn’t uniform in its texture and authorship. It’s more like a collage that reached its present form before the 6th century BCE.

The Pentateuch shares a storyline with the books of Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, and 1–2 Kings. Sometimes called the Primary History, this work would have been widely available after 561 BCE, when the last king of Judah, Jehoiachin, was released from prison (2 Kgs 25:27). These books recount the entire stretch of history, from creation to the fall of David’s dynasty and the exile of many Judeans to Babylon. They tell

why Israel's judgment and exile occurred, and they offer cautious hope for a future descendant of David who would arise to bless the earth. It's likely that the fall of Jerusalem, the end of the Davidic kingship, and the unfolding exile led to the collection of the materials that make up this history of Israel.

When we think about the composition of the OT, we need to think in corporate terms. Some individuals were involved in these writings. In fact, some individual names were attached to books. This is especially true of the Prophets (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos). However, we must think of the community of God's people as the means by which God speaks through scripture. Apart from the period of Israel's exile (after the Babylonians destroyed the temple in 587 BCE), it's helpful to think in terms of the temple as the center of scribal and priestly activity. Even the audience of these books would have been the community of God's people. The king was supposed to be familiar with the Instruction (Deut 17:18-19), as were the priests and the scribes, but it was the common people who heard it read aloud (Exod 24:7; Deut 31:11; Josh 8:32-35; 2 Kgs 23:1-3; Neh 8; Jer 36:8-10).

The shock of Babylonian exile—and the loss of temple, ruler, and city—led God's people to preserve texts and shape them into the books that make up our OT today. In the post-exilic period many of God's people and their leaders returned to the land of Israel. Alongside the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, there was a renewed emphasis on pulling together the nation's heritage of scriptures and letting them speak to the new situation in which Israel found itself (Neh 8).

## The Emergence of the OT Canon

The texts of the OT shaped the life and worship of the Jewish people that emerged after the exile. These texts were recognized, honored, and received as having been given by God and speaking with God's authority. Many were edited to address the new situation of life after exile. This editing was a long process carried out by trained scribes. In fact, the final editorial work wasn't completed until just before the first Christian century. By the 1st century BCE, Jews in Roman Palestine had settled on a collection of scriptures made up of the same books found in the OT today.

The 1st-century Jews in Alexandria, Egypt, recognized a broader selection of books, including what we today call the OT Apocrypha. This collection comes down to us in what was certainly the greatest translation project of the ancient world—the translation of Israel's Hebrew scriptures into Greek, called the Septuagint (abbreviated as LXX). Because most early Christians spoke Greek, the Bible of early Christianity was this Greek OT. Today the Orthodox Church retains the Greek Bible as its authorized version of the OT and assumes the canonicity of the Apocrypha (1 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, 1–3 Maccabees, Wisdom, Ben Sira, Baruch, and the Letter of Jeremiah). The Western (or Roman) Church also includes the books of the Apocrypha (consisting of a slightly different collection), considering them to be deuterocanonical (i.e., the second canon).

Israel's Hebrew scriptures have the same 39 books we find in the Christian OT. However, they're grouped together in 24 books (e.g., without the "firsts" and "seconds" of Kings and Chronicles) and in an order that differs from that of the Christian OT. In the Hebrew scriptures we find three divisions: Torah (Instruction), Prophets, and Writings. Torah consists of the five "Books from Moses," or the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Prophets includes the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, and 1–2 Kings) and the Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 Minor Prophets treated as one book, The Twelve). Writings is comprised of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, a grouping of five books known as The Scrolls (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther), Daniel, Ezra–Nehemiah (as one book), and Chronicles.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 tore a small opening in the curtain of history to show us how similar the texts in Israel's Hebrew scriptures and the Christian OT are to the ancient texts. The remains of a library of a strict Jewish community were found stashed in caves. Texts on leather and papyrus scrolls had been preserved in the hot, dry climate along the Dead Sea. Representing a period running from about 250 BCE to 68 CE, this treasury included the community's own writings as well as many bits and pieces, and even whole texts, of every book in our present OT except for Esther. The biblical texts preserved among the Dead Sea Scrolls are remarkably close to the OT text that Judaism has preserved over the centuries, the Masoretic Text. Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the earliest full copy of the Masoretic Text was the Leningrad Codex, which dates from around 1000 CE.

The Masoretic Text shows us what mainstream Judaism regarded as its authoritative scriptures from at least the 1st century BCE. Evidence leads us to think this text was carefully preserved in the Jerusalem temple by trained scribes. It was painstakingly edited by each successive generation and copied when a manuscript showed signs of wear and the need for replacing. Beginning in the 1st century CE, there



was a concerted effort to standardize the Hebrew language in the texts. After the Romans attacked and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 CE, such care with the text was even more important because Judaism had truly become a religion of The Book.

A succession of scribal schools devoted themselves to overseeing the preservation of the text of the OT. The most famous of these was the Masoretes, a school of scribes who were responsible for producing the Masoretic Text and carried the task forward from about 500 CE to 1000 CE. Even before the Masoretes, however, specific quality-control guidelines had been established among the scribal schools. These included the choice of writing materials, the spacing between characters, the length of lines, and the rule that no letter or word could be written from memory.

The Masoretes, in turn, made careful notes in the margins that accompanied the text whenever it was copied. They added vowels in order to preserve for later generations the proper reading of words in the text. They also standardized a system of verse divisions, first introduced in the early Common Era but whose practice varied, that separated the text into 23,100 verses. (Chapters were introduced later, probably in the 13th century by Hugh of St. Cher.) In order to ensure the text was copied accurately, the Masoretes counted verses, words, and letters, and they noted which word fell in the exact middle of the text being copied. This data always accompanied the copied texts so they could be checked and rechecked by later generations of scribes.

As Christians used the Septuagint more and more, Judaism rejected it (when the Jews needed a Greek translation, they made a new one from the Hebrew). By the late 4th century an authoritative Latin translation of the OT was also required. Jerome (c. 345–420), a Christian scholar, translated the OT from the Hebrew text into Latin. While he was critical of the Greek and Latin translations that preceded his, he showed confidence in the Hebrew text, which most likely represented the Masoretic Text. This confidence in the Masoretic Text has continued over the centuries, and it remains the basis for our modern translations of the OT.

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## The Writing of the NT

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The writing and composition of the NT took place during a much shorter time period. Instead of the hundreds of years it took for the development of the OT, we're now speaking of 50 to 70 years, a human lifetime, for the writing of the NT. We also know more about how texts were composed during this period. The NT books were written in the common Greek of a single time period and show a greater uniformity in the language and writing materials used to create them. Unlike the OT, for which our witnesses to the text come from a period much later than its original composition, we enjoy an abundance of NT texts (papyri) that have been preserved, even if mostly in fragments, from as early as the 2nd century CE.

The earliest NT books to be written were Paul's letters, which date from the late 40s to the early 60s. Paul used a secretary, as was the custom in his day for any lengthy work. Writing with pen and ink on papyrus was not as simple as we might imagine, and a secretary was someone who had been trained and was practiced in this skill. Paul's secretary would have first taken down dictation, possibly in a form of shorthand, on a notepad consisting of wooden tablets with recessed surfaces covered with wax. Dictating a letter, particularly a long one, probably involved several daily sessions. From this first copy his secretary would produce a good copy on papyrus, which Paul could review and correct. Then Paul would add his final greetings in his own hand (Gal 6:11; 1 Cor 16:21; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:17). When composing his letters Paul might have invited input from his team members, like Timothy, Sosthenes, and Silvanus (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). He also included in his letters hymns, creeds, sayings of Jesus, and other material used in church worship and teaching.

Paul would keep a copy of the letter, while a good copy would be carried to the addressee, whether that might be a church (such as Philippi or Corinth) or a person (such as Philemon, Timothy, or Titus). The letter carrier would have been a trusted person (such as Tychicus, Eph 6:21; Col 4:7-9), who would know not only *what* the letter said but *why*, and could also help explain it as needed. Once the letter was received and read aloud, copies would have been made for further distribution to Christian communities in the area (Col 4:16; cf. Gal 1:2). And so would begin a broadcast of copies, and copies of copies, resulting in some of the texts that have been discovered over recent centuries.

How the four Gospels were composed is more difficult to determine. Luke comments on the process at the beginning of his Gospel: "Many people have already applied themselves to the task of compiling an account of the events . . . They used what the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed down to us." Having "investigated everything carefully from the beginning," Luke says he has "decided to write a carefully ordered account" (Luke 1:1-3). Clearly Luke recognizes he's standing on

the shoulders of others, and, with sources and traditions of Jesus to work with, he's gone about his task with deliberate care.

Luke's testimony fits well with the fact that three of our Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—have much in common with each other. And it's clear the origins of these “synoptic” Gospels (so called because they have a “similar view”) are connected in some way. John's Gospel is most different from the other three, with longer speeches by Jesus and different stories and themes. Yet John has important points of similarity with the synoptic Gospels.

We must recall that Jesus himself left no written record of his life or teaching. After his resurrection his disciples deliberately began to recall his words and deeds and share them orally, and probably in writing as well. Within early Christian communities the memories of Jesus' words and deeds would have been subject to the informal quality control of eyewitnesses and other reliable sources. From the Gospels themselves we can detect units of tradition—such as parables, miracle stories, and stories—that lead up to an important saying of Jesus. The extended story of Jesus' death, called the passion narrative, seems to have been a much larger unit of tradition. Before the first full gospel was written, there may have been several partial and varied collections of Jesus' sayings.

The Gospel writers took this material and constructed narratives of Jesus that came to be called gospels. (The term “gospel” wasn't used as a name for these texts until the 2nd century.) When they were written, they most resembled Roman biographies. The main reason for writing the gospels was to give believers a particular historical and theological perspective on the person and teaching of Jesus. No doubt there was also some concern that eyewitnesses were dying off. So these gospels were written for instruction and proclamation within the life of the church.

## The Emergence of the NT Canon

Did the NT authors think they were writing scripture? We can't know for certain, but it's interesting to note how the four Gospel writers anchored their narratives in Israel's scriptural story and extended the story forward. For example, Matthew's Gospel starts with a genealogy of Jesus reaching back to Abraham. In his birth narrative Luke uses hymns that have an OT ring to them, and he provides a genealogy going back to Adam. Mark begins by echoing the words of OT prophets (Isa 40; Mal 3:1), and John opens with language and themes that recall Genesis 1. In his letters Paul speaks with a self-conscious apostolic authority, sometimes even like a prophet, and includes numerous appeals to the OT and its fulfillment. At the very least, NT writers understood that Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection were the climax of God's covenant relationship with Israel. This was worthy of a written memorial in the scriptural tradition, which included story as well as instruction.

More pointedly, 2 Peter 3:15-16 speaks of Paul's letters collectively as “scripture.” Then there is the curious case of 1 Timothy 5:18, which says: “The scripture says, *Don't put a muzzle on an ox while it treads grain, and Workers deserve their pay.*” The first part of the quotation is from Deuteronomy 25:4, which is clearly scripture. But the second, stated with equal authority, is a saying of Jesus from Luke 10:7. Depending on how we date the writing of 2 Peter and 1 Timothy, we may have evidence that a portion of the NT was regarded as scripture by some Christians as early as the late 1st century.

Some people think the authoritative collection, or canon, of NT books didn't attain scriptural status throughout the church until the 4th century. They also imagine this was the result of the political triumph of right belief (orthodoxy) over beliefs judged to be erroneous (heresy). Some think that in the 2nd century those gospels that were later regarded as noncanonical were nearly as common as the four Gospels we read in our NT. But there's interesting evidence this view is wrong, and that evidence comes from a town dump.

Some of our earliest fragments of gospel papyri come from the dump for the ancient town of Oxyrhynchus in Egypt. This area has produced thousands of fragments of all sorts of ancient literature. Of the fragments identified as being from any kind of gospel text dated to 200 CE or earlier, it's estimated that canonical Gospels outnumber noncanonical ones by about three to one. This is, of course, a random sampling of a purely incidental nature. Nevertheless, those who favor the so-called Lost Gospels rightly point out that Egypt was a hotbed of early Gnosticism (an ancient Christian heresy), one of the so-called Lost Christianities. But if that is so, why does the evidence from Oxyrhynchus show a preference for our canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John?

The evidence from Oxyrhynchus becomes more interesting when we realize Christians were early adopters of a new technology: the codex, or book (rather than a scroll). There were probably several reasons for this preference, including the fact that the codex allowed quicker access to passages, had greater holding

capacity, could be carried around more easily, and was cheaper. But some have suggested the codex was also adopted because it could hold the four Gospels in one “book.” One thing seems certain: while Jews and other religious groups used the scroll for their religious texts, Christians overwhelmingly preferred the codex for their scriptural texts. (Christians favored scrolls for texts other than scripture.) The result was that the codex distinguished these texts, perhaps the Gospels first, as Christian scriptural texts.

Now, when the evidence of gospel texts from the town dump of Oxyrhynchus is categorized by whether they come from a codex or scroll, the evidence tilts even more radically toward our canonical Gospels being regarded as scripture (codex)—by a ratio of seven canonical Gospels to one non-canonical gospel. It is clear then that at this one significant location, the evidence shows that the non-canonical gospels were not as popular as the canonical Gospels. And this fits with other persuasive evidence that the Gnostic gospels represented an elitist and sectarian movement that did not win the hearts and minds of common people.

All in all, it seems the church’s wide acceptance of the NT canon was not the result of the trickling down of pronouncements from the seats of power. Rather, the NT we know today took shape as it bubbled up from the broad-based spiritual wisdom, insight, and devotion of the church. The books selected to be in the NT impressed themselves on the church and so were received as scripture and then accepted as canonical. Because they carried Jesus’ authority, the imprint of apostolic tradition, and the ring of truth and had proven their worth in the church, they were recognized as inspired scripture.

In the late 2nd century the church father Irenaeus could speak confidently of a “fourfold gospel.” The earliest discussion of the NT books received as canon by the universal church is the Muratorian Fragment, which is also often dated to the late 2nd century. As the name suggests, it has been only partially preserved for us. After a damaged beginning it mentions the third and fourth Gospels, Luke and John (likely having already named Matthew and Mark as the first and second Gospels). The fragment goes on to cover Acts, Paul’s letters, the letter of Jude, two letters of John, and Revelation. In all, 21 of our 27 books are listed; some others are given marginal status, while Gnostic and other heretical works are condemned.

In 367 the bishop Athanasius, in his Easter letter to the church, devoted much space to naming the books of the NT. This is the first time we know of someone plainly listing exactly the 27 books that make up our NT today. But it’s also clear Athanasius was not stating a new decision but simply sketching in what was already the established understanding by his day.

The order of the NT books has varied over the centuries. The Gospels typically came first, sometimes followed by Acts. The letters of Paul were grouped together and usually included Hebrews, because it was widely thought to have been authored by Paul. The catholic letters (James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, 1–3 John) were usually grouped together but may have been placed before or after Paul’s letters. Revelation most often came at the end but occasionally followed the Gospels, since it’s a revelation of Jesus Christ. In the NT we use today, Paul’s letters are ordered from the longest to the shortest letter to a church (Galatians, which precedes Ephesians, is slightly shorter than Ephesians, though in certain copies Galatians may have looked longer), then runs from the longest to the shortest letter to an individual. The present ordering of the NT books wasn’t really fixed until the printed English translations of the 16th century.

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## Establishing the Text of Scripture

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Clearly the Bible we open and read today has a long history. Among the main Christian traditions, the contents of its canon range beyond the core of the 66 books found in Protestant churches. Except for those used by the Eastern Orthodox Church, translations rely on the Hebrew Masoretic Text for the OT and the Greek text of the NT. The Eastern Orthodox Church depends on the Septuagint for its OT. But no single text, Hebrew or Greek, is fully, 100 percent, the original text. This is because errors have crept in over centuries of copying the text by hand. In fact, the age of the printing press introduced its own errors and broadcast them more rapidly and broadly than the slow process of hand copying. And whereas Israel’s scriptures in Hebrew were for centuries copied in the most careful fashion, the Greek texts of the NT were handed down with less discipline, particularly during the earliest centuries.

From early times right up to the present, then, we have needed to study the manuscripts carefully in order to root out errors and find the most reliable text of the Bible. Early Christian scholars, such as Origen (185–254) and Jerome (345–420), carefully weighed the various readings of the texts they encountered. However, the modern science of what is called textual criticism (the discipline of judging which “reading,” or text, is authentic) got its start with Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536), who published a Greek text of the NT based on the best manuscripts available to him.

Since the time of Erasmus, textual criticism has grown into a specialized field of study. Simultaneously, the number of available NT manuscripts, from fragments to whole texts, has increased significantly. The

number of papyri now stands at 125, with the earliest dated to the 2nd century CE and numerous others from the 3rd and 4th centuries CE. In addition there are ancient translations of the Greek text and other types of early Christian literature that quote the NT. The result is that the text of the NT is far better supported than any other ancient literature of the period. Moreover, the work of text critics inspires a great deal of confidence that the text used in Bible translations today is extremely close to the original text. We can see some of this work in contemporary English translations. For example, the CEB points out in a footnote for John 8:11 that “Critical editions of the Greek NT do not contain 7:53–8:11” (see also the CEB footnote for Acts 8:36).

Following in ancient footsteps, modern editions of the Bible have continued to offer readers help. Chapter and verse divisions have been inserted, poetry is arranged in verse structure, headings and subheadings mark topics, footnotes explain obscure references or important alternate textual readings, cross-references point to relevant biblical texts, and extensive notes and essays accompany study Bibles. These features all support the reading and use of the Bible. But while they’re rooted in the best of scholarship, they shouldn’t be confused with the Bible itself. They are like a framework around an ancient but living text.

The Bible was not lowered from heaven on a golden strand. It has come down to us through the course of history, accumulating layers of wisdom, spiritual insight, and surprising events orchestrated by its divine author. In its writing and its preservation the Bible is true to its message, which speaks of a God who took up residence in the midst of Israel, a nomadic tribal people, and who finally comes to us as a young Jewish man from Nazareth, in the hill country of Galilee.

# THE BIBLE AND ITS CHRONOLOGY

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Events in the Bible take place in a region that extends from modern-day Iran to Italy. Within these limits a series of empires centered in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Europe exerted their power over God's people: Israel—the Jews—and the early Christians. The order in which these imperial powers appear in the Bible corresponds to the order known from sources outside the Bible: Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman. The written records of these ancient empires enable historians to assign dates to many occasions in the Bible, but only imprecise or disputed dates can be given for many other events. As a result, the completion date for each of the biblical books is also imprecise. What follows here is an overview of the biblical story and an introduction to the methods and challenges involved in dating events and books of the Bible.

## Overview of Events in the Bible

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### Canaan: The Ancestors

The Bible begins with family stories about ordinary people, not royalty. When families had filled the earth, God chose Abraham and Sarah and promised them descendants and land (Gen 12). Their son Isaac, grandson Jacob, and their wives and children, lived in various places in central and southern Canaan, supporting themselves by farming and keeping flocks. Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, obtained a high position in the Egyptian pharaoh's court, and the rest of the family moved to northeast Egypt during a regional drought (Gen 36–50).

### Egyptian Slavery

The descendants of Jacob, who was also named Israel, flourished in Egypt until a later pharaoh forced them into slave labor on his city-building projects. Under the leadership of Moses, God delivered the Israelites from bondage and started them on their way back to the land of Canaan, the land God promised to give to Abraham and his descendants. Somewhere in the Sinai wilderness, east of Egypt, God made a covenant with the Israelites, establishing a God-given way of life and worship for their occupation of the land toward which they were traveling. After a generation of delay in the wilderness, the Israelites crossed the Jordan River into Canaan, the promised land.

### Canaan: From Tribes to Kingdom

With Joshua in command—and military leaders and other leaders later on—the Israelites laid claim to the land by conquest and settlement. The earliest mention of Israel outside of the Bible is in an Egyptian inscription, dated approximately 1210 BCE, that celebrates a victorious military campaign of Pharaoh Merneptah in the land of Canaan. In it Israel is listed as a group, not a kingdom. However, Joshua and Judges, the biblical books that cover this time period, say nothing about an Egyptian invasion.

A weakening of Egyptian control over the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea allowed for the growth of Philistine settlements and royal cities on the southern part of the coast and, in the late 11th and early 10th centuries, for the expansion of the united Israelite kingdom, located further inland. In response to the ongoing threat from the Philistines at the end of the 11th century, Israel asked for a king and received Saul. Where Saul failed, his successor, David, succeeded. Israel enjoyed rest from its enemies, and David made Jerusalem the capital city for a united Israel (in approximately 1000 BCE). No extrabiblical inscriptions about the reigns of Saul, David, or Solomon have been found; they're known to us only from the Bible.

God's promise to David of an everlasting dynasty (2 Sam 7) begins with David's son, Solomon, who succeeded David as king and built the Lord's first temple in Jerusalem (perhaps in 958 BCE). Near the beginning of the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam (1 Kgs 14:25–26; 2 Chron 12:2–12), Pharaoh Shishak invaded Israel, collected taxes, and seized possessions (925 BCE). The biblical author barely mentions this event, however, because, in the author's view, Solomon's worship of other deities was the factor that determined later events (1 Kgs 11). The majority of Israel, the ten northern tribes, revolted from the rule of Solomon's son and established a kingdom ruled by Jeroboam, who had been one of Solomon's officials (1 Kgs 12). This northern kingdom retained the name Israel, while the southern kingdom was called

Judah because it included the territory of the tribe of Judah, David's tribe, in addition to the territory of the smaller tribe of Benjamin. The two kingdoms continued, sometimes as allies, sometimes in conflict, for the next two centuries.

## Northern and Southern Kingdoms

The Bible tells the story of both kingdoms in 1 and 2 Kings, and in a different form it connects with the royal story in the books of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. The larger northern kingdom, Israel, had its own worship shrines at Bethel, Dan, and Samaria (the capital), and the prophets spoke against all three of these altars (1 Kgs 12–14; Amos 7). Israel's kings competed for territory with the Arameans and Moabites and, from the mid-9th century, resisted the Assyrian Empire. Throughout the northern kingdom's existence, the Neo-Assyrian Empire expanded its control in the region and required the payment of taxes from Israelite kings until Shalmaneser III finally conquered Samaria at some point during 723–721 BCE. The Assyrians transported many of the Israelites east to remote regions of the empire, and prisoners of war from other Assyrian-conquered areas were resettled in what had been the kingdom of Israel. The Bible says nothing more about these Israelite refugees (commonly referred to as the ten lost tribes of Israel), but the new arrivals and the Israelites who hadn't been deported became the ancestors of the Samaritans (see John 4; Acts 8:4-8).

At the same time in Judah, the southern kingdom, God's promise of a stable dynasty was fulfilled. Every king, from Solomon to Zedekiah, was a descendant of David. When the northern kingdom tried to force Judah to join a military alliance to resist Assyria, Judah's King Ahaz decided to pay tribute to Assyria instead. Assyria wasn't content with this arrangement for long, however. In 701 BCE Sennacherib of Assyria conquered all of Judah except for Jerusalem. The city, the temple, and Hezekiah (the king who followed Ahaz) were saved, but they paid a heavy tax. The Bible (2 Kgs 18–19; Isa 36–37) and the Assyrian royal archives give accounts of these events.

The late 7th century brought a rapid end to the Neo-Assyrian Empire. The Bible describes a religious reform and political revival in Judah during its brief period of relative freedom from foreign control (2 Kgs 22–23). King Josiah restored the worship of the one God, Yahweh, in Jerusalem, in Judah, and even in the old northern kingdom's holy city of Bethel, in keeping with the Book of the Instruction from Moses (probably a form of Deuteronomy) that was discovered in the temple (620 BCE). Josiah's goal was to restore the united kingdom of Israel by bringing the formerly Assyrian-administered territory of the northern kingdom under the rule of Jerusalem. But Babylon, Media, and Egypt were toying with Josiah for possession of this territory.

The armies of Babylon and Media conquered the Assyrian capital city of Nineveh in 612 BCE and then moved west on their way to claim more of the Assyrian imperial lands. Egypt had its eye on the same territory, and in 609 Pharaoh Neco led his army north along the coast next to Josiah's kingdom. When Josiah attempted to stop the Egyptians' advance, he was killed (2 Kgs 23:29; 2 Chron 35:20–24). Neco continued north and battled the Babylonian king. On his return trip to Egypt, the Pharaoh removed Josiah's son Jehoahaz from the throne in Jerusalem and replaced him with another one of Josiah's sons, Jehoiakim (2 Kgs 23:34–35). The king was now under the authority of Pharaoh, and Judah was no longer free.

## Babylonian Rule and Exile

Four years later, in 605, Egypt and Babylon had a rematch. The Babylonian forces, led by the king's son Nebuchadnezzar, won control of the eastern Mediterranean lands, including Judah. Jehoiakim skillfully switched his loyalties, submitted to Babylon, and retained his throne. Just months after his victory, Nebuchadnezzar became king in Babylon. His realm never grew as large as the Assyrian Empire had been and was much smaller than the Persian, Greek, and Roman empires that followed, but Nebuchadnezzar became a symbol of evil power in the Bible because of what he did to Judah.

At the beginning of the 6th century, Jehoiakim rebelled, and Nebuchadnezzar responded by bringing his army against Jerusalem (597 BCE). He seized the portable objects in the temple, the king, the king's household, and the leading citizens and sent them all to Babylon (2 Kgs 24; Jer 24). This marked the beginning of the Babylonian exile. Jehoiakim had died during the siege, so his successor, Jehoiachin, and Jehoiachin's family were taken. The last king of Judah, Zedekiah, a son of Josiah, was made king as Nebuchadnezzar's puppet. A decade later he also rebelled, but this time the Davidic kingship didn't survive. The Babylonians burned the temple and the city in 587 or 586. They exiled even more prisoners and chopped up the large bronze objects in the temple for transport to Babylon. The Jewish exiles were settled together in communities in the area surrounding Babylon's capital city and worked as forced laborers on the king's projects. Elders provided leadership, and prophets spoke among them. Meanwhile, back in the land of Judah, the Babylonians appointed governors and redistributed the land among those Jews who had been

left behind (Jer 40). The land promised to Abraham, the dynasty promised to David, the temple itself, and the Israelites' identity as God's covenant people seemed to be lost.

The Babylonian conquest and exile began a new era. From that point on, the Israelites never again lived together in a geographically defined kingdom. Instead, the Jews (from the Hebrew for "people of Judah") lived as a minority group within the Persian, Greek, and Roman empires, and spread out in scattered communities in what became known as the "diaspora" ("dispersion"). By the end of the time covered in the Old Testament, Jews were well established in North Africa, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Greece, the Italian peninsula, and as far away as Spain. Nevertheless, the Old Testament chronology generally follows the story of Jerusalem and the area around that city.

## Persian Rule

In the mountains and highlands to the north and east of Babylon, King Cyrus II began building his Persian Empire, with victories over the Medes, Elamites, and Lydians. Nabonidus, the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, had left his son Belshazzar in charge of Babylon. Cyrus was able to enter Babylon and claim the throne and the territory of the Babylonian Empire, including Jerusalem. His proclamation of 538, which supported migration by Jewish exiles back to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple, marked the end of the exile (2 Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4) and the completion of the seventy-year prophecy of Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10.

Conflicts within the Jewish community and opposition from non-Jewish neighbors delayed work on the second Jerusalem temple, but the building was completed during Darius' reign (522-486 BCE) and with his support (Ezra 6). Zechariah 1:7 implies a different calculation of the seventy years prophesied in Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10: The period would end when the second temple was finished (the first temple had been destroyed in 587, the second was completed in 515). The restoration of Jewish life in the Persian province of Yehud (Jerusalem and parts of the tribal territories of Judah and Benjamin) continued in the 5th century with additional Jewish immigrants returning from the land of exile (Babylon), the teaching and application of the Instruction from Moses by Ezra (Neh 8-10), and the rebuilding of the city wall, led by Nehemiah (Neh 12). The book of Esther is also set in the 5th century, during the reign of Xerxes (485-465 BCE). He is the last foreign emperor named in the OLD TESTAMENT. The Persian Empire survived for almost two centuries more, and Jewish communities grew in Jerusalem and throughout the surrounding region.

## Greek Rule

In only eleven years (332-323 BCE), Alexander the Great of Macedon conquered all of the Persian Empire, including Egypt, and added it to his inherited realm in Greece. Then he died, leaving his successors to fight over the division of his empire. By the time he'd been dead for twenty-five years the borders of four hellenistic (or Greek) kingdoms had become relatively stable (see Dan 8:8). At first, Jerusalem and the surrounding area fell within the kingdom of Ptolemy, with its capital in Alexandria. A century later, the Seleucid (Greek-Macedonian) king, Antiochus III, won his war with Ptolemy V, and the eastern Mediterranean became part of the Seleucid kingdom.

By the mid-2nd century all of the books that are now part of the Hebrew Bible had been recognized as scripture within the Jewish community. In Egypt the Jewish community produced the first complete translation of the Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint, or LXX). The Septuagint includes additional books now known by Protestant Christians as the Apocrypha and by the Roman Catholic Church as the Deuterocanon. The visions in the book of Daniel describe Alexander and the Hellenistic kingdoms, and narratives of Greek rule can be found in the Apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees.

The high priests at the Jerusalem temple had been the leaders of the Jewish community since the Persian period. Their position and influence depended on the approval and cooperation of the Hellenistic kings. Pressure on the Jews in and around Jerusalem to adapt to Greek culture increased in the 2nd century, dividing the community. The Seleucid king, Antiochus IV, put a stop to the sacrifices to God in the temple in 167 (1 Macc 1:41-63). He didn't allow Jews to circumcise their sons, keep food kosher, keep the Sabbath, or possess scrolls of the Law (the Torah, called the Instruction in the Old Testament)—on pain of death. He gave himself the title Epiphanes, which means "god revealed." He defiled the altar in the temple. His acts seemed to be pure evil: "desolating monstrosities" (Dan 9:27).

The violent oppression begun under Antiochus IV inspired a Jewish military revolt led by brothers from the Hasmonean family of priests. In 164 BCE they were able to drive the Seleucid troops out of the temple and the city of Jerusalem so that the altar and temple could be purified and restored to the worship of the Lord. The Jewish kingdom that emerged from the conflict continued the war against the Seleucids in Judea, Idumea, Samaria, Galilee, and the east side of the Jordan River. By the end of the reign

of Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BCE), the territory of the Hasmonean kingdom was nearly the size of the kingdom of David and Solomon. After his death, however, the kingdom quickly fell into disorder.

## Roman Rule

The Romans conquered the area of the kingdom of Israel, which they called Palestine, in 63 BCE. Julius Caesar installed the Hasmonean descendant Hyrcanus as high priest and also granted special privileges to Jews in the diaspora, allowing them to observe their ancestral practices. Herod, an Idumean whose father had converted to Judaism, established his kingdom as a client of Rome. Roman Palestine was at the edge of the empire and served as an important defense against the Parthian kingdom to the northeast. Cities, palaces, fortresses, and temples were built during Herod's long and prosperous reign (37–4 BCE), including a complete remodeling of the second Jerusalem temple. Three generations of Herod's descendants ruled parts of his kingdom.

Dating events during the period covered by the New Testament involves reading not only the NT documents themselves but also other writings from the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE. Especially important are the writings of the 1st-century CE Jewish historian Josephus. According to Matthew 2, Jesus' birth occurred during the reign of Herod the Great, who according to Josephus, died in early 4 BCE. This means Jesus was born sometime between 6 and 4 BCE. Luke 3:1-2 dates the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry in the fifteenth year of Emperor Tiberius' rule. This would have occurred during 27–29 CE, and Jesus would have begun his ministry about the same time. Jesus' death took place in either 30 or 33 CE. The Gospels name local rulers but no other Roman emperors. The son of Herod who put John the Baptist to death and who tried Jesus was Herod Antipas (4 BCE–39 CE), the ruler of Galilee. Pontius Pilate ruled Judea for Rome from 26 CE to 36 CE. Roman officials and local priests and royalty continued a complex competition to control and profit from the land and its people and resources.

The book of Acts narrates selected episodes from the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church during the three decades following Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and Peter's sermon brought thousands of Jews from around the world into the community of baptized believers. The church in Jerusalem experienced harassment and martyrdom at the hands of the Jewish leaders and Roman rulers. Philip and Peter, two of Jesus' disciples, took the gospel to Gentiles in Judea and Samaria. Saul encountered the risen Christ and was converted from someone who harassed Christians to a believer himself (Acts 9). Several years later, Saul, also known as Paul, began his journeys, preaching the gospel and nurturing believers in Asia Minor and Europe (Acts 15–20). Paul's final journey in Acts—from Jerusalem to Rome, by way of Caesarea—was as a prisoner who appealed to the emperor to hear his case (Acts 21–28). The traditional date for the executions of Paul and Peter by Nero in Rome is 64 CE.

The Bible doesn't describe the first Jewish revolt against Rome in 66–74 CE, but some passages in Matthew, Luke, and John may reflect knowledge of the revolt. Pressure to accept emperor worship, local leaders who supported the emperor, unjust punishments, and burdensome taxation echoed conditions from the 2nd century BCE. The Roman governor, Florus, provoked rebellion among the Jews and brought Roman troops to Jerusalem. The rebellion spread throughout the country and was finally put down by the army led by Vespasian and his son Titus. In 70 CE the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. It has not been rebuilt. Jews fled from Judea in every direction, and others were taken as prisoners of war to Rome and other parts of the empire.

## Dating Events in the Bible

Synchronism between the stories of the Bible and other ancient sources make it possible to date many events in the Old Testament. Several ancient sources outside the Bible can be combined to produce a continuous timeline of the ancient Near Eastern kings from the 8th century BCE to the 2nd century CE. Two of the sources mention eclipses of the sun and moon. Astronomers have calculated the dates of those eclipses on the Western calendar. By working forward and backward from the dates of the eclipses, other events in the timeline of the ancient Near East can be dated as well. A few of those events also appear in the Bible, dated according to the reign of an Israelite or Judean king. The books of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings provide continuous timelines of their reigns, allowing historians to work from one or two of the dates to calculate dates for all of the kings. Dates in the reigns of Babylonian and Persian kings also appear in some Old Testament books. Emperors, kings, and officials named in the New Testament can be dated from other ancient sources.



The task of determining the dates of a ruler's reign, however, is more difficult than it sounds. There was no common calendar among competing nations. Dates used in the ancient Near East were regnal years, the years of the reign of the king in whose realm one lived. Jeremiah 25:1, for example, coordinates the fourth regnal year of Judah's King Jehoiakim with the first regnal year of his overlord, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. The regnal year officially began at the new year. Since a new king's first months on the throne could be designated as his first year, or his first year could be counted from the first new year after he began to reign—and it isn't always possible to know which method was used. To complicate matters further, over the course of a thousand years through changing practices, it appears that a new year in the Old Testament could begin in the spring or in the fall. The Romans began the new year on January 1. Furthermore, the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek translation of the Old Testament sometimes have different dates or numbers.

The dates of events before the appearance of kings in Israel are even less certain. Two theories exist for the date of the exodus from Egypt, based on different biblical texts. The names and locations of the cities the Israelite slaves were building—Pithom and Rameses in the eastern Nile River Delta (Exod 1:11)—support a 13th-century BCE date, since pharaohs of that time had their capital in the delta. Others argue that the exodus must have occurred in the 15th century in order to fit in the 480 years from the exodus to the building of the temple (10th century) indicated in 1 Kings 6:1. The Bible offers several different possible time spans for Israel's stay in Egypt: 430 years (Exod 12:40), 400 years (Gen 15:13), and four generations (Gen 15:16). In Galatians 3:17 and the Septuagint version of Exodus 12:40, the 430 years begin with Abraham. No source outside the Bible exists for providing a direct link for dating any of the events in Genesis.

## Dating Biblical Books

None of the biblical books specifies its publication date. Various kinds of internal evidence point to likely times of composition, but there's room for disagreement. The range of possible dates for New Testament books is a matter of decades. Non-biblical Christian sources begin to refer to New Testament books early in the 2nd century CE. No original copies are known, but 2nd-century fragments of copies of some New Testament books have survived. Theories about the dates of Old Testament books sometimes differ by centuries.

Some biblical books include references to datable events. The most recent event indicates the earliest possible date by which a book could have been completed. For example, Acts dates Paul's final arrest to the time Felix was the governor of Judea (Acts 24), but Paul wasn't sent on to Rome until after Festus had replaced Felix as governor in 60 CE. This means Acts couldn't have been written before 60 CE. Moreover, Acts provides something of a timeline of Paul's missionary travels that helps to date his letters. For instance, Acts 18:11-12 puts Paul in Corinth while Gallio was governor. The years Gallio held that office, 51-52, are known from Roman sources. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth after his stay there, so the date of 1 Corinthians has been calculated as 53 or 54.

This method of linking to a ruler's reign isn't precise, however. The most recent date in the book of Jeremiah is 562 BCE, the first year of Babylon's King Awil-merodach (Jer 52:31-34); but the rest of the book is set early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign, which was from 605 to 562. Was the whole book first written after 562, or was Jeremiah 52 added at the last stage in the book's development? Since Jeremiah 52 almost duplicates part of 2 Kings 24-25, the latter theory seems more likely.

Dating the composition of biblical books often depends on internal evidence for the circumstances of the original readers. For instance, some passages in Matthew, Luke, and John hint that their authors were aware of the temple's destruction in 70 CE, but they don't describe that event. The book of Malachi mentions no regnal year, but it uses the Persian title for a "governor" to whom taxes must be paid (Mal 1:8) and addresses abuses in worship at the temple. These features fit the Persian period.

Attention to the circumstances of the original audience implied by the biblical text points to the conclusion that some books grew to their present form over a long period of time. The Gospels weren't completed until three or more decades after Jesus' resurrection, yet they originated with the remembered words of Jesus and stories about his ministry. Similarly, the Old Testament prophetic books were based on the prophets' spoken words, which were probably collected by disciples. The book of Isaiah, for example, includes material addressed to audiences in the midst of the Assyrian threats of the 8th century BCE and the Babylonian exile during the 6th century BCE, although it's named for the 8th-century prophet Isaiah with whose words the collection begins. It may be helpful to think of the traditional author of an Old Testament book as the person from whose work the book grew.

## Why the Story Matters

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It's important to know the biblical story, even if its precise dates elude us, and individual parts of the Bible make better sense when their place in the Bible's chronology is known. The long story of God's deeds and the survival of God's people is an important aspect of biblical theology, as expressed in prayer (Pss 105; 106; 136; Neh 9; Dan 9), genealogy (Matt 1), and sermon (Acts 7). The Bible interprets events as the result of God's will to save and to bring about justice. The intersection of biblical events with world history underscores the Bible's claim that God the creator is actively involved in the life of the creation and its inhabitants. The Bible doesn't give an account of its own composition, yet the writing and preservation of the biblical books should also be counted as the acts of a loving and gracious God.

# GUIDELINES FOR READING THE BIBLE

Brian D. Russell

Learning to read the scriptures well involves nurturing attitudes that support our study and gaining technical skills that make it possible to participate in a close reading of the biblical texts. Both elements are necessary for becoming skilled and inspired readers who are able to engage the Bible as Christian scripture.

The goals of reading the scriptures are to hear God's Word and to be shaped by their message. Reading the scriptures is an opportunity to enter into the world imagined by the biblical writers and to experience personal transformation so that we as modern readers may then serve as witnesses to their good news for humanity and all creation.

History testifies to the power of the scriptures to shape the individuals and communities of faith who devote themselves to their study. This witness begins within the pages of the Bible and continues to the present day.

- The book of Psalms opens with this description of the "happy person," in contrast to the ways of the wicked: "these persons love the LORD's Instruction, and they recite God's Instruction day and night!" (Ps 1:2). The psalmist reminds us of the power of intentional and consistent reading of the scriptures.
- In Luke 4:16-21 Jesus began his public ministry by reading from the prophet Isaiah, and he lived out his life and mission in fulfillment of the Old Testament scriptures. After his resurrection Jesus taught his disciples from the scriptures. Luke 24:45 says Jesus "opened their minds to understand the scriptures." Scripture shaped the story of Jesus' life, and we read scripture to find the grand story of God so that we may align our lives with it as Jesus did.
- The apostle Paul reminded his coworker Timothy of the crucial role the scriptures played in the life of the early church: "Since childhood you have known the holy scriptures that help you to be wise in a way that leads to salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character, so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good" (2 Tim 3:15-17).
- St. Augustine of Hippo, the prominent 4th and 5th-century bishop and theologian, famously recounted his own conversion in which he interpreted the sound of children saying *tolle, lege* ("Take and read") as a sign to pick up the Bible. He opened to a passage from Romans and began to experience transformation in his life with the gospel.
- John Wesley, an 18th-century evangelist and reformer, wrote this about the Bible: "I want to know one thing: the way to heaven, how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri* [a man of one book]."

As we study the Bible we open ourselves up to the same deep and life-giving influence. Perhaps we too may add our voice to this chorus of witnesses as a result of our study of scripture.

## Attitudes for Reading Scripture

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*Study the Bible prayerfully.* Prayer can enhance our study by putting us in touch with the subject of the Bible—God. Prayer can help to shape and create in us a proper mindset for engaging the scriptures as God's word. Begin each Bible study with a prayer for illumination, such as, "Lord, surprise and astonish me anew with the beauty and power of your Word." The word "astonish" captures the potential power that we readers may find in the Bible. When we come away astonished, we know that we have been in the presence of the divine. When we pray for astonishment rather than mastery of the material, we learn a key truth about reading the Bible as Christian scripture: it's less important that we learn about the text and more important for the text to shape our lives.

*Study the Bible expectantly.* We read the Bible in the expectation of encountering the living God. Open the scriptures not merely to learn but to be transformed by the words you find. Come to the Bible to gain wisdom and to be shaped by its message. When you read, be grateful for the opportunity for study and anticipate the life-giving insights you'll find in the Bible's pages.

*Study the Bible persistently.* Learning to read the Bible well is a habit to be nurtured over the course of our lives. Wise interpreters are not born but formed over time through consistent, careful study. In other words, if you find yourself struggling with reading the Bible, stay with it and give it time. Like a farmer

who methodically prepares the field, sows seeds, waters, pulls weeds, protects the fledging plants from insects, and applies fertilizer—all in the hope for a bountiful yield at the harvest—so we as readers must be patient and persistent in doing the work necessary for receiving the benefits of the scriptures. Think of scripture study as a behavior to practice faithfully rather than as a skill to be mastered.

*Study the Bible intelligently.* Christians read the Bible as God's Word, but we cannot forget that it was written by other human beings in the living languages spoken by the people of God in the ancient world (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek). The Bible isn't a code to be deciphered but literature crafted carefully and intentionally to communicate its message clearly to its audience. As modern readers we must use all of the tools available to us for understanding it, including our minds. We've affirmed the need to read prayerfully, but this doesn't mean we should turn off our intellect. As thoughtful Christians, we profess the need for prayer *and* the importance of close and serious study of the text. In doing so, we not only gain fresh and profound insight from the Bible, but we also learn the meaning of Jesus' command to love God with our minds (Matt 22:37).

*Study the Bible confidently.* Bible study can sometimes be intimidating. On occasion we may not feel worthy or qualified to decide about the meaning of the text. Yet as generations of faithful and persistent readers bear witness, the scriptures remain vital, offer profound insights, and speak words of life. Bring a sense of anticipation and expectation to your reading of the Bible, and you won't be disappointed.

## Reading in Context

The key to understanding any passage in the Bible is learning to read it in its literary context. Reading scripture is a dance between the reader, the text, and the text's wider context. Just as a dancer must maintain awareness of both music and dance partner, so must the reader keep in view both the details of the passage being studied and the wider movements of the passages surrounding it. In biblical interpretation, literary context is everything. By literary context we mean the interlocking levels of immediate context, wider context, historical context, and the context provided by related texts.

*Immediate context.* The most important information about a passage is its immediate context. In most cases this is the text we're studying and the paragraphs immediately before and after it. For example, if we're studying the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-13), it's important to notice that it occurs within a block of text that focuses on prayer (Matt 6:6-15). The verses just before the Lord's Prayer contrast it with prayers that emphasize many words and religious formulas, and the verses just after it focus on the necessity of forgiveness. Our reading of the Lord's Prayer must be informed by and account for these elements.

*Wider context.* Each passage has a wider context in the book in which it's found. To get a sense of the book's context, we can take a few minutes to read the introduction to the book we are studying in the CEB Study Bible and look at the written outline of the entire book. This will help us gain an understanding of the role the passage we're working with plays in the overall message of the book. Looking at the Lord's Prayer again, we may observe that it falls within a larger segment (Matt 6:1-18) that serves to warn against public acts of godliness (almsgiving, prayer, and fasting) as a means of gaining rewards from God. Widening our lens a little more, we see that this text falls within a larger block of teaching materials traditionally known as the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7). Within this larger block, Jesus trains his disciples for the ministry of announcing the good news of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 4:17-11:1).

Reading in the immediate context of the book is a vital protection against misreading the meaning of a passage. A truism about reading in context is, "A text without a context is a pretext." When we don't read in context, it's easy to make a text say what we want it to mean rather than to hear the message of the text. A reader must remember to read a text in the light of its literary context. This practice alone will prevent many errors.

The next two kinds of literary contexts can add more time to the study of a scripture passage, but being attentive to them will further increase our understanding of the text.

*Historical context.* Having information about a text's historical context, or background, helps us gain a richer appreciation of that text. The study notes in this Bible draw attention to important historical details. We may also find it helpful to use a Bible dictionary or a full-length commentary. If, for example, we study Paul's letter to the Philippians, we'll notice that he mentions opponents harassing the Philippian Christ followers (e.g., Phil 1:28; 3:2, 18). Who are these opponents? Is there only one group of opponents, or are there several? What's the nature of their opposition? Finding answers to these questions will provide us with helpful historical background for understanding Paul's words to the Philippians.

*Related texts.* We want to be aware of the related texts the passage we're studying alludes to and/or other texts that may allude to that passage. Psalm 8 models both of these situations. This hymn of praise

to the Lord reflects on the status and mission of humanity in light of the majestic nature of God. Its final verses focus on the stewardship role that women and men play over creation (Ps 8:6-8), and the psalmist is clearly referring to the creation story in Genesis 1:1-2:3. If we're going to fully understand the message of Psalm 8, we need to study how the psalmist uses the material from Genesis. We'll also want to know that Hebrews 2:6-8 quotes Psalm 8:4-6 because that will help us understand the full biblical meaning of Psalm 8. The cross reference system in this Bible connects related texts, including leading from Psalm 8 to Genesis and Hebrews. Many of the study notes also point to related texts.

## Reading with the Big Picture in Mind

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Reading the Bible also involves understanding each individual passage and book within the overall context of the Bible. The Christian Bible proclaims an overarching narrative when viewed as a whole. We may observe the following framework holding the elements of the Bible together: Creation, Fall, Israel, Jesus the Christ, Church, New Creation. The Bible begins with the story of the Creation of the world (Gen 1-2) and ends with the description of a future New Creation (Rev 20-21). The biblical story opens with a very good world and ends with the re-creation of very goodness. In between these bookends we find the story of the salvation of the people and all creation.

The need for salvation is first described in Genesis 3-11, which identifies the fundamental problem in the world: human alienation and sin. This problem has fractured the very good creation described in Genesis 1-2. God responds to the problem by calling a people through whom God will bless all nations (Gen 12-Mal). This people is named Israel.

God calls Israel's ancestors in Genesis 12-50 to be the start of God's own people. God rescues them from slavery in Egypt, establishes a covenant relationship with them as a means of preparing them to serve as a people of blessing to the world, and leads them through the wilderness to the promised land of Canaan (Exod-Deut). The books of Joshua through Esther narrate Israel's life in Canaan and its times of obedience/disobedience, exile, and return. The Wisdom books (Job-Song) include the prayers of God's people and their reflections on the good life within God's creation. The Old Testament ends with the Prophetic books (Isa-Mal), which serve to call God's people back to their roots as the holy, redeemed people through whom God will bless the nations. The Prophets also envision a radical future act of salvation.

The New Testament opens with the four Gospels, which tell the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He announces the inbreaking of God's future and fulfills the hopes and expectations of Israel's scriptures. Jesus' death and resurrection mark the climax of God's saving work and serve to announce God's final victory. The books of Acts through Revelation 19 tell the story of the church, under the power of the Holy Spirit, witnessing to all nations about the good news of Jesus. Revelation 20-21 brings the story full circle by envisioning the complete consummation of God's victory in a New Creation.

Keep in mind this broader story as a means of understanding much smaller portions of the Bible. Again, we need to maintain a balance. If we focus only on this broad summary, we risk missing the many fine points that individual biblical books and passages within them offer. We're also in danger of flattening out the Bible by forcing its individual pieces to conform to our assumptions about the big picture. But if we focus on just the specific details of shorter passages, we may miss the overall message of the Bible. Paying attention to only an assortment of brief passages is like having all of our clothing piled randomly in a closet without any obvious organizing principle. The big picture serves as hangers and dividers that help us make sense of our wardrobe. Be aware of the broader narratives and themes of the Bible, while also hearing the witness of the individual passage under current consideration.

## Suggestions for a Close Reading of the Text

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There are three core elements in learning to study a text closely: observing details, asking questions, and seeking answers.

*Observe the details in the text and record your observations.* A good interpreter continually captures insights and observations through careful note taking. Read slowly. Take your time. This is particularly true for familiar passages. Don't assume you already know the meaning of any text. Instead, think about the words and phrases you find in it. Savor the images and the language used to convey its message. Notice how the individual words are connected to each other. You may find it helpful to read a couple of different translations and write down their differences as a means of reflecting on the text. Stay put within the

confines of that passage, however, and resist the temptation to flip to another part of the Bible until after you've carefully engaged the text you're studying. Describe it. Paraphrase it. Analyze it. Observe recurring words, phrases, ideas, and themes. Establish an outline or create a chart to organize its content. Above all, don't give up. Persist in the process of collecting your own observations and insights. This process will produce insights, and new questions will emerge.

*Write out questions your observations lead you to ask.* Engaged reading requires this. The best interpreters of the scripture are those who ask the best questions. This process of reading the text carefully and recording a series of observations and questions is the secret to engaging the Bible at a deep level. Observations lead to questions, and questions guide the interpreter to new insights. Ask questions that engage the text on two levels: *defining questions* and *questions about function*. Defining questions attempt to gain a full description of the content of the text: What's here? What's the meaning of each element that's present? Functional questions focus on the So what? and attempt to probe beneath the surface to look for the deep meaning and implications. For example, if you're studying Exodus 19:4-6, you'll encounter a phrase that's unique in the Old Testament: "You will be a kingdom of priests for me and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). The twin phrases "a kingdom of priests" and "a holy nation" are important for the interpretation of this text. You may ask the following defining questions about them: What's the meaning of those phrases? What's the relationship between them? Follow your definitional questions with functional ones: Why are these particular phrases being used here? What's their significance?

*Answer key questions.* In many ways biblical interpretation is nothing more or less than the answering of interpretive questions the reader asks about the text. Review your observations and questions. Select the handful of questions whose answers are necessary for making sense of the text, and begin answering those questions by looking at the observations you've already made. What evidence have you found through your close reading to begin to develop possible answers? Consult the study notes in this Bible. If you need additional help in answering your questions, you may find it useful to read other commentaries, look up subjects in a Bible dictionary, or use the concordance to study key words as they're used elsewhere in the scriptures. Also consider studying the Bible with others and work on answering questions about the text together. Once you've collected the necessary information, summarize your answers to the key questions along with the strongest evidence that supports those answers.

## Reflecting on the Text's Implications and Function

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Once you've answered the key questions raised in your close reading of the text you'll want to begin to draw out the broader truths and ideas that are explicit and implicit in it. The goal here is to move from the specific details and facts in a passage to an understanding of how they work together to present a deeper message.

In light of your study, reflect on questions like these: If this were the only passage of scripture I had, what would I know? What broad truths emerge from reflecting on this portion of scripture? What does this passage teach me about God? What does it teach me about life in God's creation? What does it teach me about humanity and the role of God's people?

After reflecting on these questions, it's important to try to assess how the teaching of a given portion of scripture relates to the whole. Are there other places in the Bible where similar teachings or ideas are found? Reflect on how the text adds to, affirms, or critiques other biblical texts. The purpose of this step is to understand the contribution of the text to the biblical message.

## Make Specific Applications

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The goal of reading the Bible is to come away from it with changed hearts and lives. The power of scripture to shape us depends on our willingness to push beyond merely engaging the Bible with our minds but also putting its words into practice in our world. Once we understand the message of a passage in light of the biblical message as a whole, we're able to explore how it may impact our lives in the present.

Here are a few questions you may find helpful for guiding you in this process: How does this passage understand God's mission in the world, and how do we fit into God's purposes? What kind of people does this text imagine us to be if we were to live out its message? How would my life be different if I took the truths of this text seriously? How would my community of faith need to change in light of what I've discovered during my study of the text?

Try to be as specific to your own life situation as possible when making applications.

## Suggestions for Group Study

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Reading the Bible with others is a long-established practice, provides the opportunity for honest conversation and spiritual growth, and can greatly enhance the process of careful study. The following suggestions for ways to approach a text as a group will help make the experience a rewarding one.

*Focus on the text.* Work on making observations and asking questions together. Having an able facilitator will help keep the group on track and away from debates. It's also important for the facilitator to attempt to draw out the insights of all who'd like to contribute.

*Reflect on implications.* Make sure the group doesn't get so bogged down in the details of a passage that it isn't able to move forward to reflect on what the text is attempting to teach.

*Make specific applications.* As a group, challenge yourselves to agree on a few concrete ways in which you can appropriate into your lives the message of the text you're studying. Save time during each meeting to share how the group's study during previous meetings has impacted each of you.





# CONCORDANCE

## Aa

### AARON

your brother **A** the Levite? I know . . . . . Ex 4:14  
The sons of **A** the priest will light . . . . . Lv 1:7  
These you and **A** will enlist . . . . . Nm 1:3  
was furious with **A**—he was going to . . . . . Dt 9:20  
The descendants of **A** the priest . . . . . Josh 21:4  
like sheep under the care of Moses and **A** . . . . . Ps 77:20  
I sent Moses, **A**, and Miriam . . . . . Mic 6:4  
His wife Elizabeth was a descendant of **A** . . . . . Lk 1:5  
They told **A**, "Make us gods that will . . . . . Ac 7:40  
when they are called by God, just like **A** . . . . . Heb 5:4  
the descendants of **A**. I would give the . . . . . Tob 1:7  
The Lord exalted **A**, a holy person like . . . . . Sir 45:6  
is descended from **A** has come with the . . . . . 1Macc 7:14  
of Phinehas son of **A**; Jeshua son of . . . . . 1Esd 5:5  
son of **A** from the tribe of Levi. Ezra was . . . . . 2Esd 1:3  
Our father **A** ran into the midst of the . . . . . 4Macc 7:11

### AARON AND HIS SONS

Ex 27:21; 28:1, 4, 43; 29:4, 9, 10, 15, 19, 20, 24, 27, 28, 32, 35, 44;  
30:19, 30; 39:27; 40:12, 31; Lv 2:3, 10; 6:9, 16, 20, 25; 7:31, 35; 8:2,  
6, 14, 18, 22, 31, 36; 10:6; 22:2; 24:9; Nm 3:9, 10, 38, 48, 51; 4:5,  
15, 19, 27; 6:23; 8:13, 19, 22; 1Ch 6:49

### AARON THE PRIEST

Ex 31:10; 35:19; Lv 1:7; 7:34; 21:21; Nm 3:6, 32; 4:16, 28, 33; 18:28;  
26:64; 33:38; Josh 21:4, 13

### ABANDON

#### ABANDON YOU

Dt 31:6, 8; Ru 1:16; 2Ch 15:2; Heb 13:5

### ABEDNEGO

Mishael "Meshach," and Azariah "**A**" . . . . . Dn 1:7  
Meshach, and **A** walked around in . . . . . PrAz 1

### ABEL

Cain's brother **A**. Abel cared for . . . . . Gn 4:2  
that righteous man **A** to the blood of . . . . . Mt 23:35  
from **A** to Zechariah . . . . . Lk 11:51  
By faith **A** offered a better sacrifice. . . . . Heb 11:4  
read to you about **A**, who was killed by. . . . . 4Macc 18:11

### ABIATHAR

His name was **A**, and he fled to . . . . . 1Sa 22:20  
the time when **A** was high priest, . . . . . Mk 2:26

### ABIGAIL

wife's name was **A**. . . . . 1Sa 25:3

### ABIHU

birth to Nadab, **A**, Eleazar, and . . . . . Ex 6:23  
Now Nadab and **A**, two of Aaron's sons, . . . . . Lv 10:1  
the oldest, and **A**, Eleazar, and . . . . . Nm 3:2  
Nadab, **A**, Eleazar, and. . . . . 1Ch 6:3

### ABIJAH

the second was **A**. They served as . . . . . 1Sa 8:2  
the father of **A**. Abijah was the . . . . . Mt 1:7  
division of **A**. His wife . . . . . Lk 1:5

### ABIMELECH

King **A** of Gerar took her . . . . . Gn 20:2  
bore him a son, and he named him **A**. . . . . Jgs 8:31  
to be crazy before **A**, who banished him . . . . . Ps 34:1

### ABINADAB

Jesse called for **A**, who presented . . . . . 1Sa 16:8

### ABISHAI

Joab's brother **A**, Zeruah's son, . . . . . 1Sa 26:6

### ABNER

his general was **A**, Ner's son . . . . . 1Sa 14:50

### ABRAHAM

your name will no longer be Abram but **A** . . . . . Gn 17:5  
my covenant with **A**. And I will. . . . . Lv 26:42  
the offspring of **A**, his servant, and. . . . . Ps 105:6  
who redeemed **A**. Jacob won't be . . . . . Is 29:22  
faithful love to **A**, as you swore to . . . . . Mic 7:20  
Jesus Christ, son of David, son of **A**: . . . . . Mt 1:1  
our ancestors, to **A** and to Abraham's . . . . . Lk 1:55  
Our father is **A**." Jesus responded . . . . . Jn 8:39  
going to find that **A** is our ancestor on . . . . . Ro 4:1  
When God gave **A** his promise, he swore by . . . . . Heb 6:13  
what he did with **A**, how he tested. . . . . Jdt 8:26  
God, King, God of **A**, spare your . . . . . GkEst C:8  
**A** was the great father of a multitude of . . . . . Sir 44:19  
it for the sake of **A**, whom you loved,. . . . . PrAz 12  
Wasn't **A** found faithful when he was . . . . . 1Macc 2:52  
the descendants of **A**, upon the children . . . . . 3Macc 6:3  
children of **A**, die well for the . . . . . 4Macc 6:22

### ABRAHAM ISAAC AND JACOB

Ex 2:24; 6:3, 8; 33:1; Nm 32:11; Dt 1:8; 6:10; 9:5, 27; 29:13; 30:20;  
34:4; 2Kgs 13:23; Jer 33:26; Ac 3:13; 7:32; Tob 4:12; Bar 2:34;  
2Macc 1:2; PrMan 8; 2Esd 1:39; 4Macc 7:19; 13:17

### ABRAM

became the father of **A**, Nahor, and Haran. . . . . Gn 11:26  
and **A**, that is, Abraham . . . . . 1Ch 1:27

### ABSALOM

the third was **A**, by Maacah, who . . . . . 2Sa 3:3  
fled from his son **A**. . . . . Ps 3:1  
John and **A**, the men you sent, . . . . . 2Macc 11:17

### ABUSE

not be afraid to **a** the widow. Let's . . . . . Wis 2:10  
Don't **a** household slaves who work hard or . . . . . Sir 7:20  
have suffered **a**, our priests have. . . . . 2Esd 10:22  
savage! You don't **a** me like this . . . . . 4Macc 9:15

### ACACIA

skins dyed red; beaded leather; **a** wood; . . . . . Ex 25:5  
a chest out of **a** wood and carved . . . . . Dt 10:3  
the desert cedar, **a**, myrtle, and olive . . . . . Is 41:19

### ACHISH

from Saul. He went to **A**, Gath's king. . . . . 1Sa 21:10

### ADAM

The man **A** knew his wife Eve intimately. . . . . Gn 4:1  
you born the first **A**, brought forth . . . . . Job 15:7  
But like **A** they broke the covenant; then . . . . . Hos 6:7  
of Enos son of Seth son of **A** son of God. . . . . Lk 3:38  
death ruled from **A** until Moses . . . . . Ro 5:14  
generations after **A**, prophesied about . . . . . Jude 14  
You created **A** and you created Eve his . . . . . Tob 8:6  
the ground, and **A** was created out of . . . . . Sir 33:10  
and it gave you **A**, a lifeless body? But . . . . . 2Esd 3:5

### ADONIJAH

the fourth was **A**, by Haggith; the fifth . . . . . 2Sa 3:4  
**A**, Haggith's son, bragged about himself . . . . . 1Ki 1:5

### ADULTERY

into confusion. **a** and promiscuity . . . . . Wis 14:26  
she's committed **a** by her illicit. . . . . Sir 23:23

**COMMIT ADULTERY**

Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18; Jer 7:9; 23:14; Hos 4:13, 14; Mt 5:27, 32; 19:18;  
Mk 10:19; Lk 18:20; Ro 2:22; 13:9; Jas 2:11; 2Pt 2:14

**COMMITTS ADULTERY**

Lv 20:10; Prv 6:32; Eze 33:26; Mt 5:32; 19:9; Mk 10:11, 12; Lk  
16:18; Heb 13:4

**COMMITTED ADULTERY**

Jer 3:2; 5:7; Eze 23:37; Mt 5:28; Rev 2:22

**ADVERSARY**

messenger stood in the road as his **a** . . . . . Nm 22:22  
A heavenly **a** arose against Israel and . . . . . 1Ch 21:1  
the **LORD**, and the **a** also came among . . . . . Job 1:6  
was poised like an **a**. He killed every . . . . . Lam 2:4  
the **LORD**, and the **a** was standing by . . . . . Zec 3:1  
me just in this case against my **a**! . . . . . Lk 18:3  
remove the **a**, destroy the . . . . . Sir 36:9

**ADVISORS****POLITICAL ADVISORS**

GkEst 1:13; 2:18; 3:1; Bel 2; 1Macc 2:18; 3:38; 6:10, 28; 7:6, 8;  
10:60, 65; 11:26, 27, 57; 12:43; 14:39; 15:28; 2Macc 1:14, 8, 9;  
10:13; 14:11; 1Esd 8:26; 4Macc 17:17

**AFRAID**

the garden; I was **a** because I was . . . . . Gn 3:10  
Then Moses was **a** when he realized . . . . . Ex 2:14  
So why aren't you **a** to criticize . . . . . Nm 12:8  
Don't be **a** of anyone because. . . . . Dt 1:17  
Joshua, "Don't be **a** or terrified. Take. . . . . Josh 8:1  
Because I was **a** of something awful, and  
I won't be **a** of thousands of people . . . . . Ps 3:6  
trust and won't be **a** Yah, the **LORD**, is . . . . . Is 12:2  
Don't be **a**, animals of the field, for. . . . . Jl 2:22  
of David, don't be **a** to take Mary as . . . . . Mt 1:20  
leader, "Don't be **a**; just keep . . . . . Mk 5:36  
said, "Don't be **a**, Zechariah. Your . . . . . Lk 1:13  
was approaching the boat and they were **a**. . . . . Jn 6:19  
because they were **a** the people would . . . . . Ac 5:26  
don't think in a proud way, instead be **a**. . . . . Ro 11:20  
and they weren't **a** of the king's . . . . . Heb 11:23  
said, "Don't be **a**. I'm the first and . . . . . Rev 1:17  
Is he no longer **a** that he will be . . . . . Tob 2:8  
they weren't **a** of him and. . . . . Jdt 1:11  
the Jews. They were **a** of Mordecai, . . . . . GkEst 9:3  
Let's not be **a** to abuse the . . . . . Wis 2:10  
all living beings of them, so that . . . . . Sir 17:4  
they are no gods, so don't be **a** of them. . . . . LJer 14  
because they were **a** of you. But this . . . . . Sus 57  
Lawbreakers were **a** of him and retreated. . . . . 1Macc 3:6  
the enemy was **a**, especially when . . . . . 2Macc 12:22  
Don't be **a** if the place on which you . . . . . 2Esd 6:14  
a person who isn't **a** of your violence,. . . . . 4Macc 5:37

**AGAG**

be higher than **A**, and his kingdom . . . . . Nm 24:7  
He captured **A** the Amalekite king alive. . . . . 1Sa 15:8

**AGRIPPA**

had passed, King **A** and Bernice. . . . . Ac 25:13

**AHAB**

His son **A** succeeded him as . . . . . 1Ki 16:28  
concerning **A**, Koliah's son, . . . . . Jer 29:21  
of the house of **A**; you have followed. . . . . Mic 6:16

**AHASUERUS**

In the rule of **A**, at the beginning of . . . . . Eze 4:6

**AHAZ**

His son **A** succeeded him as . . . . . 2Ki 15:38  
kings Uzziah, Jotham, **A**, and Hezekiah. . . . . Is 1:1  
Uzziah, Jotham, **A**, and Hezekiah, and . . . . . Hos 1:1  
was the father of **A**. Ahaz was the . . . . . Mt 1:9

**AHAZIAH**

His son **A** succeeded him as . . . . . 1Ki 22:40

**AHIJAH**

including **A**, the son of Ahitub, who was . . . . . 1Sa 14:3  
son of **A** son of Phinehas son of Eli son . . . . . 2Esd 1:2

**AHIMAAZ**

your son **A** and Abiathar's son. . . . . 2Sa 15:27

**AHIMELECH**

came to Nob where **A** was priest. . . . . 1Sa 21:1

**AHITHOPHEL**

David's advisor **A**, who was from. . . . . 2Sa 15:12  
**A** was the king's counselor, and Hushai . . . . . 1Ch 27:33

**AJ**

on the west and **A** on the east. There. . . . . Gn 12:8  
from Jericho to **A**, which is near . . . . . Josh 7:2  
people of Heshbon; **A** has been. . . . . Jer 49:3

**AIJALON**

at Gibeon! and Moon, at the **A** Valley!" . . . . . Josh 10:12

**ALEXANDER**

**A** was Philip's son, a Macedonian, one of . . . . . 1Macc 1:1

**ALMIGHTY**

me Mara, for the **A** has made me very . . . . . Ru 1:20  
despairs, or do they stop fearing the **A**? . . . . . Job 6:14  
When the **A** scattered the kings there, . . . . . Ps 68:14  
Like destruction from the **A** it will come. . . . . Is 13:6  
is near; it comes like chaos from the **A**. . . . . Jl 1:15  
right side of the **A** and coming on the . . . . . Mt 26:64  
right side of the **A** and coming on the . . . . . Mk 14:62  
one who is and was and is coming, the **A**. . . . . Rev 1:8  
the only just, **a**, and eternal one. . . . . 2Macc 1:25  
High, the God of heavenly forces, the **a**. . . . . 1Esd 9:46  
ones, only ruler, **a**. Pay attention to. . . . . 3Macc 2:2

**ALMIGHTY GOD**

Sir 50:17; Bar 3:1, 4; 2Macc 7:35; 8:18; PrMan 1; 3Macc 6:2

**ALMIGHTY LORD**

2Macc 3:22, 30; 3Macc 5:7; 2Esd 1:33; 2:9

**GOD ALMIGHTY**

Gn 28:3; 43:14; 48:3; Eze 6:3; Eze 10:5; Rev 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7;  
21:22

**LORD ALMIGHTY**

Jdt 4:13; 8:13; 15:10; 16:5, 17; Sir 42:17; Bar 3:1, 4; PrMan 1

**LORD GOD ALMIGHTY**

Rev 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22

**ALTAR**

Noah built an **a** to the **LORD**. He took some . . . . . Gn 8:20  
Moses built an **a** there and called it, . . . . . Ex 17:15  
every side of the **a** at the meeting . . . . . Lv 1:5  
tent and the **a**, and its . . . . . Nm 3:26  
**LORD** your God's **a**. The blood from . . . . . Dt 12:27  
Joshua built an **a** on Mount Ebal to . . . . . Josh 8:30  
innocent! I walk all around your **a**, **LORD**, . . . . . Ps 26:6  
that he had taken from the **a** with tongs. . . . . Is 6:6  
ministers of the **a**. Come, spend the . . . . . Jl 1:13  
your gift to the **a** and there remember . . . . . Mt 5:23  
to the right of the **a** of incense. . . . . Lk 1:11  
I even found an **a** with this . . . . . Ac 17:23  
who serve at the **a** share part of what. . . . . 1Co 9:13  
one ever served at the **a** from that tribe. . . . . Heb 7:13  
I saw under the **a** those who had been . . . . . Rev 6:9  
things at the **a** to the priests, . . . . . Tob 1:7  
together with its **a** and equipment had . . . . . Jdt 4:3  
temple and your **a**. They want . . . . . GkEst C:20  
mountain and an **a** in the city in . . . . . Wis 9:8  
enriches the **a**, and its pleasing . . . . . Sir 35:8  
and offer them on the Lord our God's **a**. . . . . Bar 1:10  
He took the gold **a**, the lampstand for . . . . . 1Macc 1:21

after he had built the temple and the **a**. . . . . 2Macc 1:18  
 on the Lord's **a** according to King . . . . . 1Esd 1:16  
 is laid waste, our **a** is demolished, our . . . . . 2Esd 10:21

**ALTARS**

tear down their **a**, smash their . . . . . Ex 34:13  
 down your incense **a**, and pile your . . . . . Lv 26:30  
 the lampstand, the **a**, the equipment of. . . . . Nm 3:31  
 rip down their **a**, smash their . . . . . Dt 7:5  
 break down their **a**! But you didn't. . . . . Jgs 2:2  
 young beside your **a**, LORD of heavenly . . . . . Ps 64:3  
 have no regard for **a**, the work of their . . . . . Is 17:8  
 Ephraim added more **a** to take away sin . . . . . Hos 8:11  
 torn down your **a**. I'm the only one. . . . . Ro 11:3  
 should build new **a**, together with . . . . . 1Macc 1:47  
 demolished the **a** that the . . . . . 2Macc 10:2

**AMALEK**

she gave birth to **A** for Eliphaz. . . . . Gn 36:12  
**A** came and fought with Israel. . . . . Ex 17:8  
 He looked at **A** and raised his voice . . . . . Nm 24:20  
 after all, what **A** did to you . . . . . Dt 25:17  
 Philistines, and **A**, including the . . . . . 2Sa 8:12  
 Gebal, Ammon, **A**, Philistia along with . . . . . Ps 83:7

**AMALEKITE**

the land of Ephraim, in the **A** highlands. . . . . Jgs 12:15

**AMALEKITES**

territory of the **A**, as well as the . . . . . Gn 14:7  
 The **A** live in the land of the arid. . . . . Nm 13:29  
 Arad. They went and lived with the **A**. . . . . Jgs 1:16

**AMARIAH**

Meraioth of **A**, Amariah of Ahitub . . . . . 1Ch 6:7  
 of Ahitub son of **A** son of Uzzi son of . . . . . 1Esd 8:2  
 son of Eli son of **A** son of Aziah son . . . . . 2Esd 1:2

**AMASA**

Absalom had put **A** in charge of the army. . . . . 2Sa 17:25  
 Ner's son, and **A**, Jether's. . . . . 1Ki 2:5

**AMAZIAH**

His son **A** succeeded him as . . . . . 2Ki 12:21  
 Then **A**, the priest of Bethel. . . . . Am 7:10

**AMEN**

all the people say, "A!" Praise the LORD! . . . . . 1Ch 16:36  
 from forever to forever! **A** and Amen! . . . . . Ps 41:13  
 by the God called **A**; those who make a . . . . . Is 65:16  
 eternal salvation. **A** . . . . . Mk 16:9  
 the creator, who is blessed forever. **A** . . . . . Ro 1:25  
 him be the glory forever and always. **A** . . . . . Heb 13:21  
 be glory and power forever and always. **A** . . . . . Rev 1:6  
 Together they said, "**A**, amen . . . . . Tob 8:8  
 God." And all the people said, "**A**, amen." . . . . . Jdt 13:20  
 crowd responded, "**A**." They lifted up . . . . . 1Esd 9:47  
 the glory is yours forever and always. **A** . . . . . PrMan 15  
 rescuer of Israel from now to eternity! **A** . . . . . 3Macc 7:23  
 belongs the glory forever and always. **A** . . . . . 4Macc 18:24

**AMMINADAB**

the father of Ram, Ram the father of **A** . . . . . Ru 4:19  
 son of **A**, son of Admin, son of Arni . . . . . Lk 3:33

**AMMON**

mother's name was Naamah from **A** . . . . . 1Ki 14:21  
 Gebal, **A**, Amalek, Philistia . . . . . Ps 83:7  
 of Edom, Moab, **A**, Tyre, and Sidon . . . . . Jer 27:3  
 the children of **A**, all of Judea, and. . . . . Jdt 1:12

**AMMONITE**

didn't go near the **A** lands or hillside . . . . . Dt 2:37  
 ruled in Heshbon, as far as the **A** border. . . . . Josh 13:10  
 you, Achior, you **A** mercenary, what . . . . . Jdt 6:5  
 again fled as a fugitive into **A** country. . . . . 2Macc 5:7

**AMMONITES**

He is the ancestor of today's **A** . . . . . Gn 19:38  
 as far as the **A**, for the border of . . . . . Nm 21:24  
 close to the **A**. Don't aggravate . . . . . Dt 2:19  
 the border of the **A**. This was half of . . . . . Josh 12:2  
 the **A** will be their . . . . . Is 11:14  
 crimes of the **A**, and for four . . . . . Am 1:13

**AMNON**

His oldest son was **A**, by Ahinoam . . . . . 2Sa 3:2  
 Hebron: the oldest **A**, with Ahinoam . . . . . 1Ch 3:1

**AMORITE**

the oaks of the **A** Mamre . . . . . Gn 14:13  
 sent messengers to Sihon the **A** king . . . . . Nm 21:21  
 of Sihon, the **A** king who ruled in . . . . . Dt 1:4  
 All the **A** kings on the west side of the . . . . . Josh 5:1  
 Sihon, the **A** king, Og, the king of . . . . . Ps 135:11  
 Your father was an **A**, your mother . . . . . Eze 16:3  
 I destroyed the **A** before . . . . . Am 2:9

**AMORITES**

the Jebusites, the **A**, the Girschaites . . . . . Gn 10:16  
 the Hittites, the **A**, the Perizzites, . . . . . Ex 3:8  
 Jebusites, and **A** live in the . . . . . Nm 13:29  
 the hills of the **A** and the . . . . . Dt 1:7  
 two kings of the **A** on the other side . . . . . Josh 2:10  
 Hivites and the **A**, abandoned because. . . . . Is 17:9  
 in the land of the **A** and destroyed all . . . . . Jdt 5:15

**ANAKIM**

numerous and tall—just like the **A** . . . . . Dt 2:10  
 wiped out the **A** from the. . . . . Josh 11:21

**ANANIAS**

a man named **A**, along with his . . . . . Ac 5:1  
 of Eliah son of **A** son of Gideon son . . . . . Jdt 8:1  
 Matthiah, Shema, **A**, Azariah, Uriah, . . . . . 1Esd 9:43

**ANATHOTH**

**A** and its pastures, and Almon . . . . . Josh 21:18  
 Gallim! Listen, Laishah! Answer her, **A**! . . . . . Is 10:30  
 Those from **A** 158 Those from . . . . . 1Esd 5:18

**ANCESTORS**

*GOD OF OUR ANCESTORS*

1Ch 29:18; 2Ch 20:6; Ezr 7:27; Ac 3:13; 5:30; 22:14; 24:14; Tob 8:5;  
 Jdt 10:8; Wis 9:1; PrAz 3, 29; 1Esd 9:8; PrMan 1; 4Macc 12:17

**ANDREW**

called Peter, and **A**, throwing fishing . . . . . Mt 4:18  
 Simon and **A**, throwing fishing . . . . . Mk 1:16  
 Peter; his brother **A**; James: John . . . . . Lk 6:14  
 followed Jesus was **A**, the brother of . . . . . Jn 1:40  
 John, James, and **A**; Philip and . . . . . Ac 1:13

**ANGEL**

an **a** from the Lord. . . . . Mt 1:20  
 An **a** from the Lord appeared . . . . . Lk 1:11  
 Others said, "An **a** spoke to him." . . . . . Jn 12:29  
 An **a** from the Lord opened the prison . . . . . Ac 5:19  
 Satan disguises himself as an **a** of light. . . . . 2Co 11:14  
 it through his **a** to his servant . . . . . Rev 1:1  
 out and found the **a** Raphael standing . . . . . Tob 5:4  
 For God's **a** is with you, examining your. . . . . LJer 6  
 But the Lord's **a** came down among Azariah. . . . . PrAz 26  
 Already God's **a** has orders to . . . . . Sus 55  
 But the Lord's **a** said to Habakkuk, "Take . . . . . Bel 34  
 with words, your **a** went out and . . . . . 1Macc 7:41  
 and tears to send a good **a** to save Israel. . . . . 2Macc 11:6  
 and I asked an **a**, "Who are these people . . . . . 2Esd 2:44  
 and had the victory over a liery **a**. . . . . 4Macc 7:11

*ANGEL BLEW HIS TRUMPET*

Rev 8:7, 8, 10, 12; 9:1, 13; 11:15

*ANGEL FROM THE LORD*

Mt 1:20; 2:13, 19; 28:2; Lk 1:11; Ac 5:19; 8:26; 12:7, 23

**ANGEL OF THE CHURCH**

Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14

**ANGEL Poured HIS BOWL**

Rev 16:2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 17

**ANGELS**

I will command my **a** concerning you, . . . . . Mt 4:6  
 wild animals, and the **a** took care . . . . . Mk 1:13  
 When the **a** returned to heaven . . . . . Lk 2:15  
 God's **a** going up to heaven . . . . . Jn 1:51  
 the Law given by **a**, but you haven't . . . . . Ac 7:53  
 death or life, not **a** or rulers, not . . . . . Ro 8:38  
 such as **a**, that he received . . . . . Heb 1:4  
 stars are the **a** of the seven . . . . . Rev 1:20  
 may all his holy **a** be praised . . . . . Tob 11:14  
 with the food from **a**. Again and again, . . . . . Wis 16:20  
**A** serving the Lord, bless the Lord, sing . . . . . PrAz 36  
 Two glorified **a** of frightful . . . . . 3Macc 6:18  
 Habakkuk, and twelve **a** carrying flowers. . . . . 2Esd 1:40  
 seize the money, **a** on horseback . . . . . 4Macc 4:10

**GOD'S ANGELS**

Mk 12:25; Lk 12:8, 9; 15:10; Jn 1:51; Heb 1:6

**ANGER**

your brother's **a** at you goes away . . . . . Gn 27:45  
 send out your hot **a**; it burns them up . . . . . Ex 15:7  
 will die and bring **a** upon the whole . . . . . Lv 10:6  
 the eyes of the LORD your God and **a** him, . . . . . Dt 4:25  
 he said this, their **a** against him passed. . . . . Jgs 8:3  
 Surely **a** can kill the foolish . . . . . Job 5:2  
 because his **a** ignites in an . . . . . Ps 2:12  
 Fools reveal their **a** right away, but the . . . . . Prv 12:16  
 I will vent my **a** against my foes; I . . . . . Is 1:24  
 I will pour out my **a** like water upon . . . . . Hos 5:10  
 at them with **a**, deeply grieved at . . . . . Mk 3:5  
 in the synagogue was filled with **a** . . . . . Lk 4:28  
 themselves with **a** and began to . . . . . Ac 19:28  
 will be wrath and **a** for those who obey . . . . . Ro 2:8  
 Because of my **a** I swore: "They will never . . . . . Heb 3:11  
 God's passionate **a**, poured full . . . . . Rev 14:10  
 I grew red with **a** at her. But she . . . . . Tob 2:14  
 Filled with **a**, he called together all. . . . . Jdt 5:2  
 The king was furious, boiling with **a**. . . . . GkEst 1:12  
 sharpen his fierce **a** into a sword. The . . . . . Wis 5:20  
 Unjust **a** won't be justified, for the . . . . . Sir 1:22  
 Lord's wrath and **a** haven't turned . . . . . Bar 1:13  
 A great **a** came against Israel . . . . . 1Macc 1:64  
 Burning with **a**, he immediately stripped . . . . . 2Macc 4:38  
 God, with divine **a**, brought the . . . . . 1Esd 1:49  
 The king's **a** was changed into pity and . . . . . 3Macc 6:22  
 preoccupied me and responded to her in **a**. . . . . 2Esd 10:5  
 with courage, such as **a**, fear, and pain. . . . . 4Macc 1:4

**GOD'S ANGER**

Nm 1:53; Dt 6:15; 2Sa 22:8; Ps 18:7; 78:31; Is 5:25; 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4; Eph 5:6; Rev 15:1; 16:1

**ANOINT**

his sons with him, **a** them with oil, . . . . . Ex 28:41  
 trees went out to **a** a king over . . . . . Jgs 9:8  
 to **a** the most holy . . . . . Dn 9:24  
 but you don't **a** with oil; you . . . . . Mi 6:15  
 they could go and **a** Jesus' dead body. . . . . Mk 16:1  
 didn't **a** my head with oil . . . . . Lk 7:46

**ANOINTED****ANOINTED ONE**

1Sa 2:10, 35; 12:5; 2Sa 22:51; 2Ch 6:42; Ps 2:2; 18:50; 20:6; 28:8; 84:9; 89:38, 51; 132:10, 17; Dn 9:26

**LORD'S ANOINTED**

1Sa 16:6; 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2Sa 1:14, 16; 19:21

**ANOINTING****ANOINTING OIL**

Ex 25:6; 29:7, 21; 30:25, 31; 31:11; 35:8, 15, 28; 37:29; 39:38; 40:9; Lv 8:2, 10, 12, 30; 10:7; 21:10, 12; Nm 4:16

**ANTIOCH**

Nicolaus from **A**. . . . . Ac 6:5  
 Cephas came to **A**, I opposed him to . . . . . Ga 2:11  
 left his capital **A** in the year 147. . . . . 1Macc 3:37  
 living in Jerusalem as citizens of **A**. . . . . 2Macc 4:9

**ANTIOCHUS**

was a son of King **A**, and he had been . . . . . 1Macc 1:10  
 Since **A** came in order to marry the . . . . . 2Macc 1:14  
 had returned that **A** had captured some . . . . . 3Macc 1:1  
 died, his son **A** Epiphanes came to . . . . . 4Macc 4:15

**APOLLOS**

certain Jew named **A** arrived in . . . . . Ac 18:24  
 I belong to **A**," "I belong to . . . . . 1Co 1:12

**APOSTLE**

called to be an **a** and set apart for . . . . . Ro 1:1  
 about Jesus, the **a** and high priest of . . . . . Heb 3:1

**APOSTLES**

of the twelve **a**: first, Simon, who. . . . . Mt 10:2  
 and called them **a**. He appointed them . . . . . Mk 3:14  
 He chose twelve of them whom he called **a**. . . . . Lk 6:13  
 Jesus instructed the **a** he had chosen . . . . . Ac 1:2  
 appointment to be **a**. This was to bring . . . . . Ro 15:7  
 Lord and savior commanded through your **a** . . . . . 2Pt 3:2  
 who say they are **a** but are not, and . . . . . Rev 2:2  
 The **a** will joyfully testify to the coming . . . . . 2Esd 1:37

**APOSTLES AND THE ELDERS**

Ac 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23

**APPOINT**

Pharaoh should **a** administrators. . . . . Gn 41:34  
 You will **a** Aaron and his sons to be. . . . . Nm 3:10  
 I will **a** them as your . . . . . Dt 1:13  
 saying: "Please **a** me to some . . . . . 1Sa 2:36  
 hereby **a** my king on Zion, my holy . . . . . Ps 2:6  
 Hence, I will also **a** you as light to . . . . . Is 49:6  
 I am about to **a** a shepherd in the . . . . . Zec 11:16  
 Holy Spirit said, "**a** Barnabas and Saul . . . . . Ac 13:2  
 lawsuits, do you **a** people as judges . . . . . 1Co 6:4

**APPOINTED****APPOINTED TIME**

Ex 13:10; 23:15; Nm 9:2, 3, 7, 13; 28; Dt 31:10; 1Sa 13:11; Jer 10:15; Dn 8:19; Hab 2:3

**APPOINTED TIMES**

Lv 23:2, 4, 37, 44; Nm 29:39; Ezr 10:14; Neh 10:34; 13:31; Ac 17:26

**ARABIA**

all the kings of **A** and the nomadic. . . . . Jer 25:24  
 I went away into **A** and I returned . . . . . Ga 1:17  
 Japheth, to the south along the edge of **A**. . . . . Jdt 2:25  
 fled into **A** to seek protection . . . . . 1Macc 11:16  
 of the serpents of **A** will go out with . . . . . 2Esd 15:29

**ARAM**

Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and **A**. . . . . Gn 10:22  
 his address: "From **A** Balak led me, the . . . . . Nm 23:7  
 was told that **A** had become allies . . . . . Is 7:2  
 to the land of **A**; there Israel . . . . . Hos 12:12  
 of Hezron. Hezron was the father of **A**. . . . . Mt 1:3

**ARAMAIC**

your servants in **A** because we . . . . . 2Ki 18:26  
 your servants in **A**, because we . . . . . Is 36:11  
 is a pool with the **A** name Bethesda . . . . . Jn 5:2  
 accused the **A**-speaking disciples . . . . . Ac 6:1

**ARAMEAN**

of Bethuel the **A** and the sister of . . . . . Gn 25:20  
 was a starving **A**. He went down to . . . . . Dt 26:5  
 them to all the Hittite and **A** kings . . . . . 1Ki 10:29  
 Babylonian and **A** armies. . . . . Jer 35:11

**ARK**

so make a wooden **a**. Make the ark with . . . . . Gn 6:14  
 until the day Noah entered the **a**. . . . . Mt 24:38  
 Noah entered the **a** and the flood came . . . . . Lk 17:27  
 He built an **a** to deliver his . . . . . Heb 11:7  
 Noah's **a**, which carried the future of . . . . . 4Macc 15:31

**ARNON**

camped across the **A** in the desert that . . . . . Nm 21:13  
 going. Cross the **A** ravine. I have . . . . . Dt 2:24  
 This ran from the **A** Valley as far as . . . . . Josh 12:1  
 the fords of the **A** are like orphaned . . . . . Is 16:2

**AROER**

Gadites built Dibon, Ataroth, **A** . . . . . Nm 32:34  
 From **A**, which is on the edge of the . . . . . Dt 2:36  
 He ruled from **A** by the rim of . . . . . Josh 12:2  
 villages of **A** are abandoned forever. . . . . Is 17:2

**ARREST**

he put them under **a** with the commander . . . . . Gn 40:3  
 sent messengers to **a** David, but she . . . . . 1Sa 19:14  
 Abdeel's son, to **a** the scribe Baruch . . . . . Jer 36:26  
 were trying to **a** him, but they . . . . . Mt 21:46  
 They wanted to **a** Jesus because they knew . . . . . Mk 12:12  
 priests wanted to **a** him right then . . . . . Lk 20:19  
 Pharisees sent guards to **a** him. . . . . Jn 7:32  
 chief priests to **a** everyone who calls . . . . . Ac 9:14

**ARROGANCE**

look at their **a** and have mercy on . . . . . Jdt 6:19  
**A** is hateful to God and people, and . . . . . Sir 10:7  
 population, and turn her **a** into grief. . . . . Bar 4:34  
 With **a** he went into the sanctuary. He . . . . . 1Macc 1:21  
 in his pride and **a** that it was . . . . . 2Macc 5:21  
 man, caught up in his own **a** and power. . . . . 3Macc 2:2

**ARTAXERXES**

In the days of **A**, Bishlam, Mithredath, . . . . . Ezz 4:7  
 of the rule of **A** the Great, on the . . . . . GKEst A:1  
 the time of King **A** of the Persians, . . . . . 1Esd 2:12  
 during the rule of King **A** of the Persians. . . . . 2Esd 1:3

**ASA**

His son **A** succeeded him as . . . . . 1Ki 15:8  
 that King **A** had made to defend . . . . . Jer 41:9

**ASAHIEL**

Joab, Abishai, and **A**. Asahiel was as . . . . . 2Sa 2:18  
 Abishai, Joab, and **A**—three in all. . . . . 1Ch 2:16

**ASAPH**

His relative was **A**, who stood on his . . . . . 1Ch 6:39  
 A psalm of **A**. From the rising of the . . . . . Ps 50:1  
 Abijah was the father of **A**. . . . . Mt 1:7  
 by David and by **A**, Zechariah, and . . . . . 1Esd 1:15

**ASHAMED**

were completely **a**. The king said, . . . . . 2Sa 10:5  
 are frightened and **a**. They've become . . . . . 2Ki 19:26  
 They are **a** that they trusted; they arrive . . . . . Job 6:20  
 enemies will be **a** and completely . . . . . Ps 6:10  
 You will be **a** of the oaks you once . . . . . Is 1:29  
 they will be **a** of their. . . . . Hos 4:19  
 Whoever is **a** of me and my words in this . . . . . Mk 8:38  
 Whoever is **a** of me and my words, the . . . . . 1Co 6:1  
 I'm not **a** of the gospel: it is God's own . . . . . Ro 1:16  
 is why Jesus isn't **a** to call them . . . . . Heb 2:11  
 the beds that were **a** of their owners' . . . . . Jdt 9:3  
 to plot. It is **a** to be found in the . . . . . Wis 1:5  
 against evil, and don't be **a** of yourself. . . . . Sir 4:20  
 Their servants are **a**, since the idols . . . . . LJer 25  
 because they were **a** to admit how they. . . . . Sus 11  
 I was **a** to ask the king for infantry, . . . . . 1Esd 8:51  
 being weren't you **a**? You are a wild . . . . . 4Macc 12:13

**ASHDOD**

survived only in Gaza, Gath, and **A**. . . . . Josh 11:22

his general to **A**, he fought against. . . . . Is 20:1  
 the people from **A**, the one who rules . . . . . Am 1:8

**ASHER**

women call me happy." So she named him **A**. . . . . Gn 30:13  
 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and **A**. . . . . Ex 1:4  
 from **A**, Pagiel, Ochran's son . . . . . Nm 1:13  
 Reuben, Gad, **A**, Zebulun, Dan, and . . . . . Dt 27:13  
 Manasseh ran from **A** to Michmethath, . . . . . Josh 17:7  
 to the western border: **A**, one portion. . . . . Eze 48:2  
 to the tribe of **A**. She was very old. . . . . Lk 2:36  
 from the tribe of **A**, twelve thousand;. . . . . Rev 7:6

**ASHERAH**

and cut down the **a** that is beside it. . . . . Jgs 6:25

**ASHES**

Take handfuls of **a** from a furnace and . . . . . Ex 9:8  
 of the altar, into the place for the **a**. . . . . Lv 1:16  
 will remove the **a** from the altar and . . . . . Nm 4:13  
 broken apart, and its **a** will spill out. . . . . 1Ki 13:3  
 himself and sat down on a mound of **a**. . . . . Job 2:8  
 I've been eating **a** instead of bread . . . . . Ps 102:9  
 He's feeding on **a**, his deluded mind has . . . . . Is 40:20  
 with mourning clothes, and sat in **a**. . . . . Jon 3:6  
 on funeral clothes and **a** a long time ago . . . . . Mt 11:21  
 have sat around in funeral clothes and **a** . . . . . Lk 10:13  
 and the sprinkled **a** of cows made . . . . . Heb 9:13  
 temple, putting **a** on their heads and . . . . . Jdt 4:11  
 clothes, and put **a** on his head. Then . . . . . GKEst 4:1  
 be turned into **a**. The spirit will . . . . . Wis 2:3  
 How can dust and **a** be arrogant? Even when . . . . . Sir 10:9  
 servants to bring **a** and sprinkle the . . . . . Bel 14  
 clothes, sprinkled **a** on their heads, . . . . . 1Macc 3:47  
 took handfuls of **a**—and they hurled . . . . . 2Macc 4:41  
 were torn, and there were **a** on her head. . . . . 2Esd 9:38

**ASHKELON**

for Gaza, Ashdod, **A**, Gath, and Ekron. . . . . Josh 13:3  
 silence will cover **A**, the few left in . . . . . Jer 47:5  
 one who rules from **A**. I will turn my . . . . . Am 1:8  
 and camped against **A**, and the people of . . . . . 1Macc 10:86

**ASIA**

Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and **A**. . . . . Ac 2:9  
 was the first convert in **A** for Christ . . . . . Ro 16:5  
 Galatia, Cappadocia, **A**, and Bithynia. . . . . 1Pt 1:1  
 that are in **A**: Grace and peace . . . . . Rev 1:4  
 the Great, king of **A**, who went to fight . . . . . 1Macc 8:6  
 the king of **A** even supplied all . . . . . 2Macc 3:3  
 campaign against **A** Minor came to a . . . . . 3Macc 3:14  
 You, **A**—you who share in Babylon's . . . . . 2Esd 15:46  
 Nicanor, king of **A**, set apart money . . . . . 4Macc 3:20

**ASSEMBLY**

desert to starve this whole **a** to death. . . . . Ex 16:3  
 becomes known, the **a** must present . . . . . Lv 4:14  
 To gather the **a**, blow a long blast, not . . . . . Nm 10:7  
 to your entire **a** with a loud voice . . . . . Dt 5:22  
 sunshine; I rise in the **a** and cry out . . . . . Job 30:28  
 will sinners in the **a** of the righteous . . . . . Ps 1:5  
 the calling of an **a**—I can't stand. . . . . Is 1:13  
 according to the report made to their **a**. . . . . Hos 7:12  
 Suddenly a great **a** of the heavenly forces . . . . . Lk 2:13  
 someone in your **a** has a legal case . . . . . 1Co 6:1  
 I will praise you in the middle of the **a** . . . . . Heb 2:12  
 women ran to the **a**. They set Achior . . . . . Jdt 6:16  
 pleasantly in the **a**, and bow your head . . . . . Sir 4:7  
 we swear." The **a** believed them . . . . . Sus 41  
 in the land because he testified in the **a**. . . . . 1Macc 2:56

**ASSEMBLY OF ISRAEL**

Lv 16:17; Dt 31:30; Josh 8:35; 1Kgs 8:14; 2Ch 6:3, 13

**ASSHUR**

**A** left that land and built Nineveh . . . . . Gn 10:11  
 will burn when **A** takes you away. . . . . Nm 24:22  
 Elam, **A**, Arpachshad, Lud, . . . . . 1Ch 1:17

**ASSYRIA**

flowing east of **A**; and the name of . . . . . Gn 2:14  
 He sent the people into exile to **A** . . . . . 2Ki 15:29  
**A** too has joined them—they are the . . . . . Ps 83:8  
 broke away from Judah—the king of **A** . . . . . Is 7:17  
 Ephraim went to **A**, and Ephraim sent . . . . . Hos 5:13  
 taken captive to **A** and came to . . . . . Tob 1:10  
 will be for you, **A**—you who are . . . . . 2Esd 2:8  
 three young men in **A** who refused to . . . . . 4Macc 13:9

**ASSYRIAN**

The **A** king heard the request and marched . . . . . 2Ki 16:9  
 he will punish the **A** king's arrogant . . . . . Is 10:12  
 captains, and commanders of the **A** army. . . . . Jdt 2:14

**ASSYRIANS**

three years the **A** captured the city. . . . . 2Ki 18:10  
 to Assyria. The **A** will come to . . . . . Is 19:23  
 king of the **A**, he was captured . . . . . Tob 1:2  
 who ruled the **A** in the great city. . . . . Jdt 1:1  
 the camp of the **A**, and his messenger . . . . . Sir 48:21  
 the king of the **A** insulted us with . . . . . 1Macc 7:41  
 of the king of the **A** toward them, to . . . . . 1Esd 7:15  
 cruel king of the **A**, prided himself in . . . . . 3Macc 6:5  
 Shalmaneser of the **A** took across the . . . . . 2Esd 13:40

**ASTARTES**

from the LORD and served Baal and the **A**. . . . . Jgs 2:13

**ATHALIAH**

mother's name was **A**; she was the . . . . . 2Ki 8:26

**AUTHORITY**

man and give him **a** over the land of . . . . . Gn 41:33  
 live under your **a** is too small for . . . . . 2Ki 6:1  
 king's word has **a**, no one can say to . . . . . Ecc 8:4  
 given to us, and **a** will be on his . . . . . Is 9:6  
 like someone with **a** and not like their . . . . . Mt 7:29  
 teaching them with **a**, not like the . . . . . Mk 1:22  
 because he delivered his message with **a** . . . . . Lk 4:32  
 him, "By what **a** are you doing . . . . . Jn 2:18  
 that the Father has set by his own **a** . . . . . Ac 1:7  
 under the **a** of the government. . . . . Ro 13:1  
 by accepting the **a** of your masters. . . . . 1Pt 2:18  
 the end, I will give **a** over the nations . . . . . Rev 2:26

**AWESOME**

The Lord is **a** and very great, and his . . . . . Sir 43:29  
 authority made an **a** display, so that . . . . . 2Macc 3:24

**AWESOME DEEDS**

Ex 15:11; Dt 6:22; Ps 45:4; 65:5; 106:22; 145:6

**AWESOME GOD**

Dt 7:21; 10:17; Neh 9:32; Ps 68:35; Dn 9:4

**GREAT AND AWESOME**

Dt 6:22; 7:21; 10:21; 2Sa 7:23; 1Ch 17:21; Neh 4:14; Ps 99:3; Dn 9:4

**AZARIAH**

his officials: the priest **A**, Zadok's son . . . . . 1Ki 4:2  
**A**, Hoshai's son, and Johanan, Kareah's . . . . . Jer 43:2  
 he answered, "I'm **A**, the great . . . . . Tob 5:13  
 the middle of the fire, **A** spoke like this: . . . . . PrAz 2  
 Hananiah, **A**, and Mishael believed, and . . . . . 1Macc 2:59  
 of Seraiah son of **A** son of Hilkiyah son . . . . . 1Esd 8:1  
 of Saraiah son of **A** son of Hilkiyah son . . . . . 2Esd 1:1  
 and Hananiah, **A**, and Mishael were . . . . . 4Macc 16:21

**Bb****BAAL**

attached to the **B** of Peor, and the . . . . . Nm 25:3  
 did concerning the **B** of Peor. The LORD . . . . . Dt 4:3  
 in the name of **B**, going after what . . . . . Jer 2:8  
 silver, and gold that they used for **B**. . . . . Hos 2:8

who haven't bowed their knees to **B** . . . . . Ro 11:4

**BAAL-ZEBUB**

Go to Ekron's god **B**, and ask if I will . . . . . 2Ki 1:2

**BAASHA**

and Israel's King **B** throughout their . . . . . 1Ki 15:16  
 Israel's King **B** Ishmael, . . . . . Jer 41:9

**BABYLON**

an people from **B**, Cuth, Avva, . . . . . 2Ki 17:24  
 An oracle about **B**, which Isaiah, Amoz's . . . . . Is 13:1  
 you will go to **B**. There you will be . . . . . Mic 4:10  
 This was at the time of the exile to **B**. . . . . Mt 1:11  
 I will send you far away, farther than **B**. . . . . Ac 7:43  
 church in **B** greets you, and so . . . . . 1Pt 5:13  
 Fallen, fallen is **B** the great! . . . . . Rev 14:8  
 in Assyria and **B**. I know then and . . . . . Tob 14:4  
 Nebuchadnezzar of **B** had brought from . . . . . GkEst A:3  
 the ones who lived in **B** by the Sud River. . . . . Bar 1:4  
 as prisoners to **B** because of the . . . . . LJer 1  
 A man named Joakim once lived in **B**. . . . . Sus 1  
 this lunch to **B**, to Daniel in the . . . . . Bel 34  
 disappointment, he planned to return to **B**. . . . . 1Macc 6:4  
 bronze chains, and took him away to **B**. . . . . 1Esd 1:38  
 three friends in **B** voluntarily gave . . . . . 3Macc 6:6  
 also Ezra, was in **B**. I was disturbed. . . . . 2Esd 3:1

**DAUGHTER BABYLON**

Ps 137:8; Is 47:1; Jer 50:42; 51:33; Zec 2:7

**BABYLONIAN**

robe in the **B** style, two hundred. . . . . Josh 7:21  
 the army of the **B** king had . . . . . Jer 32:2

**BABYLONIANS**

Next the **B** burned God's temple down, . . . . . 2Ch 36:19  
 of Babylon and the **B** who have . . . . . Jer 21:4  
 and burning the **B** who stood near the . . . . . PrAz 25  
 Now the **B** had an idol named Bel. Each day . . . . . Bel 3

**BALAAM**

sent messengers to **B**, Beor's son . . . . . Nm 22:5  
 because they hired **B**, Beor's son . . . . . Dt 23:4  
 the fortune-teller **B**, Beor's son . . . . . Josh 13:22  
 planned, and how **B**, Beor's son . . . . . Mic 6:5  
 the way of **B** son of Bosor . . . . . 2Pt 2:15  
 Balaam's teaching. **B** had taught Balak . . . . . Rev 2:14

**BALAK**

**B**, Zippor's son, saw everything that he . . . . . Nm 22:2  
 Then Moab's King **B**, Zippor's son . . . . . Josh 24:9  
 what Moab's King **B** had planned . . . . . Mic 6:5  
 Balaam had taught **B** to trip up the . . . . . Rev 2:14

**BANQUET**

at a wine **b**, and don't show. . . . . Sir 31:31  
 He threw a great **b** for them, but he . . . . . 1Macc 16:15  
 easy to prepare a **b** for the enjoyment . . . . . 2Macc 2:27  
 gave a great **b** for all his . . . . . 1Esd 3:1  
 the time of the **b** was already . . . . . 3Macc 5:15

**BAPTISM**

cup I drink or receive the **b** I receive? . . . . . Mk 10:38  
 I have a **b** I must experience. How I am . . . . . Lk 12:50  
 beginning from the **b** of John until the . . . . . Ac 1:22  
 with him through **b** into his death, so . . . . . Ro 6:4  
 the good name spoken over you at your **b**? . . . . . Jas 2:7

**BAPTIZE**

I **b** with water those of you who have . . . . . Mt 3:11  
 I **b** you with water, but he will baptize. . . . . Mk 1:8  
 to them all, "I **b** you with water, . . . . . Lk 3:16  
 asked, "Why do you **b** if you aren't the . . . . . Jn 1:25  
 words: "John will **b** with water, but . . . . . Ac 11:16  
 I didn't **b** any of you . . . . . 1Co 1:14

**BAPTIZED**

their sins, he **b** them in the Jordan . . . . . Mt 3:6

for people to be **b** to show that they . . . . . Mk 1:4  
 for people to be **b** to show that they . . . . . Lk 3:3  
 people were coming to him and being **b**. . . . . Jn 3:23  
 John **b** with water, but in only a few days . . . . . Ac 1:5  
 that all who were **b** into Christ Jesus . . . . . Ro 6:3

**BARABBAS**  
 well-known prisoner named Jesus **B**. . . . . Mt 27:16  
 A man named **B** was locked up with the . . . . . Mk 15:7  
 Away with this man! Release **B** to us. . . . . Lk 23:18  
 this man! Give us **B**! . . . . . Jn 18:40

**BARAK**  
 She sent word to **B**, Abinoam's son . . . . . Jgs 4:6  
 Gideon, **B**, Samson, Jephthah, . . . . . Heb 11:32

**BARNABAS**  
 apostles nicknamed **B**. . . . . Ac 4:36  
 is it only I and **B** who don't have the . . . . . 1Co 9:6

**BARTHOLOMEW**  
 Philip; and **B**, Thomas; and Matthew . . . . . Mt 10:3  
 Andrew; Philip; **B**, Matthew, Thomas . . . . . Mk 3:18  
 brother Andrew; James; John; Philip; **B** . . . . . Lk 6:14  
 Philip and Thomas; **B** and Matthew . . . . . Ac 1:13

**BARUCH**  
 After him, **B**, Zabbai's son. . . . . Neh 3:20  
 and gave it to **B**, Neriah's son and . . . . . Jer 32:12  
 of the scroll that **B**—son of Neriah son . . . . . Bar 1:1

**BASHAN**  
 the road of **B**. . . . . Nm 21:33  
 along the road to **B**. Og, Bashan's . . . . . Dt 3:1  
 and all of **B** as far as the . . . . . Josh 12:5  
 me; mighty bulls from **B** encircle me. . . . . Ps 22:12  
 and lofty, against all the oaks of **B**, . . . . . Is 2:13  
 you cows of **B**, who are on Mount . . . . . Am 4:1

**BATHSHEBA**  
**B**, the wife of Uriah . . . . . 2Sa 11:3  
 Nathan said to **B**, Solomon's mother, . . . . . 1Ki 1:11  
 he had been with **B**. . . . . Ps 51:1

**BEARS**  
 Then two **b** came out . . . . . 2Ki 2:24  
 to send a host of **b** and fierce lions. . . . . Wis 11:17

**BEAST**  
 But then a wild **b** in Lebanon came . . . . . 2Ki 14:9  
 The wild **b** enters its lair, lies down in . . . . . Job 37:8  
 I will cut off from you human and **b**. . . . . Eze 29:8  
 witnessing, the **b** that comes up from . . . . . Rev 11:7  
 cruel tyrant and the wrath of a savage **b**. . . . . 2Macc 4:25

**BEASTS**  
 of the king of **b**—yet the teeth of . . . . . Job 4:10  
 a warrior among **b**, which doesn't . . . . . Prv 30:30  
 fat of well-fed **b**. I don't want the . . . . . Is 1:11  
 humanity and the **b**; I will destroy . . . . . Zep 1:3  
 wild **b**—as well as . . . . . Ac 11:6  
 temperaments of **b**, the extraordinary . . . . . Wis 7:20  
 bitten? Or anyone who goes near wild **b**? . . . . . Sir 12:13  
 in battle order, **b** sent to strategic . . . . . 2Macc 15:20  
 had outfitted the **b** and started them. . . . . 3Macc 5:23  
 frequently. Wild **b** will roam beyond . . . . . 2Esd 5:8

**BEAUTIFUL**  
 God grew every **b** tree with edible . . . . . Gn 2:9  
 was healthy and **b**, so she hid him . . . . . Ex 2:2  
 How **b** are your tents, Jacob, your camps, . . . . . Nm 24:5  
 beyond it: those **b** highlands . . . . . Dt 3:25  
 I saw a single **b** robe . . . . . Josh 7:21  
 the land were as **b** as Job's . . . . . Job 42:15  
 total celebration. **b** things are always . . . . . Ps 16:11  
 a pig's nose is a **b** woman who lacks . . . . . Prv 11:22  
 branch will become **b** and glorious. . . . . Is 4:2  
 On that day the **b** young women and the . . . . . Am 8:13  
 tombs. They look **b** on the outside. . . . . Mt 23:27

was decorated with **b** stones and . . . . . Lk 21:5  
 gate known as the **B** Gate so he could . . . . . Ac 3:2  
 it is written, How **b** are the feet of . . . . . Ro 10:15  
 that the child was **b** and they weren't. . . . . Heb 11:23  
 and very **b**; moreover, her . . . . . Tob 6:12  
 She was very **b** and lovely to stare at. . . . . Jdt 8:7  
 palace and a **b** royal crown from . . . . . Wis 5:16  
 people for their **b** looks, and don't . . . . . Sir 11:2  
 daughter, was very **b** and honored the . . . . . Sus 2  
 decked out with a **b** saddle. While . . . . . 2Macc 3:25  
 and then see a desirable and **b** woman, . . . . . 1Esd 4:18  
 tall, their hair **b**, but the LORD God . . . . . Ps 151:1-6  
 with the most extraordinary and **b** gifts, . . . . . 3Macc 3:17  
 before **b** flowers were seen, before the . . . . . 2Esd 6:3  
 to join with something **b** is defeated? . . . . . 4Macc 2:1

**BEAUTY**  
 stones for **b**, the gold was from . . . . . 2Ch 3:6  
 I love the **b** of your house, LORD; I love . . . . . Ps 26:8  
 Don't desire her **b** in secret; don't let . . . . . Prv 6:25  
 as mourning clothes; instead of **b**, shame. . . . . Is 3:24  
 spread out; his **b** will be like the . . . . . Hos 14:6  
 fall and its **b** is lost. Just like. . . . . Jas 1:11  
 astonished by her **b**. They said to her: . . . . . Jdt 10:7  
 to show off her **b** to his important . . . . . GkEst 1:11  
 than health or **b**. I chose her above . . . . . Wis 7:10  
 and don't stare at **b** belonging to . . . . . Sir 9:8  
 to be removed so they could soak in her **b**. . . . . Sus 32  
 and men became faint. The women's **b** faded. . . . . 1Macc 1:26  
 of superb **b**, and with . . . . . 2Macc 3:26  
 made heaven and earth with all their **b**. . . . . PrMan 2  
 with amazement at its brilliance and **b**. . . . . 3Macc 1:9  
 her glory and the **b** with which she is . . . . . 2Esd 10:50  
 for the size and **b** of your family. . . . . 4Macc 8:5

**BEELZEBUL**  
 head of the house **B**, it's certain that . . . . . Mt 10:25  
 He's possessed by **B**. He throws out . . . . . Mk 3:22  
 the authority of **B**, the ruler of . . . . . Lk 11:15

**BEER-SHEBA**  
 and wandered through the desert near **B**. . . . . Gn 21:14  
 Hazar-shual, **B** and its dependent cities. . . . . Josh 15:28  
 or cross over to **B**, for Gilgal will . . . . . Am 5:5

**DAN TO BEER-SHEBA**  
 Jgs 20:1; 1Sa 3:20; 2Sa 17:11; 24:2, 15; 1Ch 21:2

**BELIEVE**  
 nearly failed, and he didn't **b** them. . . . . Gn 45:26  
 what if they don't **b** me or pay. . . . . Ex 4:1  
 I didn't **b** it until I came and saw it . . . . . 1Ki 10:7  
 me, I couldn't **b** that he heard my . . . . . Job 9:16  
 The naive **b** anything, but the prudent . . . . . Prv 14:15  
 If you don't **b** this, you can't be . . . . . Is 7:9  
 days that you wouldn't **b** even if told. . . . . Hab 1:5  
 to them, "Do you **b** I can do this?"; . . . . . Mt 9:28  
 little ones who **b** in me to trip and . . . . . Mk 9:42  
 because you didn't **b**, you will remain . . . . . Lk 1:20  
 him everyone would **b** in the light. . . . . Jn 1:7  
 After they came to **B** Philip, who preached . . . . . Ac 8:12  
 about this: Do you **b** that you will . . . . . Ro 2:3  
 near to God must **b** that he exists and . . . . . Heb 11:6  
 my pay." I didn't **b** her and demanded . . . . . Tob 2:14  
 free from their wickedness and **b** in you. . . . . Wis 12:2  
 reason at all to **b** in them or call . . . . . LJer 63  
 said to him, "You **b** Bel is a living . . . . . Bel 6  
 words, they didn't **b** or accept them. . . . . 1Macc 10:46  
 I firmly **b** he will follow my example . . . . . 2Macc 9:27  
 Now don't you **b** me? Isn't the king great . . . . . 1Esd 4:30  
 know me will **b** me, and those to . . . . . 2Esd 1:35  
 foods. We **b** that God gave us . . . . . 4Macc 5:25

**BELIEVE HIM**  
 2Ch 32:15; Mt 21:25; 21:32; Mk 11:31; Lk 20:5  
**BELIEVE IN HIM**  
 Mt 27:42; Jn 3:18; 6:29, 40; 7:5; 8:30; 9:36; 11:48; 12:37; 1Ti 1:16

**BELIEVED**

The people **b**. When they heard that the  
people of Nineveh **b** God. . . . . Jon 3:5  
just as you have **b**. And his servant . . . . . Mt 8:13  
Happy is she who **b** that the Lord would  
those who **b** in his name, he . . . . . Lk 1:45  
because you **b** you could buy . . . . . Ac 8:20  
unless somehow you **b** it for nothing . . . . . 1Co 15:2  
because she **b** that the one who . . . . . Heb 11:11  
had done, he **b** in God. . . . . Jdt 14:10  
The assembly **b** them because they . . . . . Sus 41  
and the Jews **b** him, but he was . . . . . 1Macc 1:30  
who had previously **b** that the Jews . . . . . 3Macc 6:34  
What tribes have **b** your covenants as . . . . . 2Esd 3:32

**BELIEVED IN HIM**

Jn 2:11; 7:39, 48; 8:31; 11:45; 12:42

**BELIEVERS**

these **b** know that you sent . . . . . Jn 17:25  
the family of **b** was a company of . . . . . Ac 1:15  
wise enough to pass judgment between **b**? . . . . . 1Co 6:5  
with other **b**, which some people . . . . . Heb 10:25

**FELLOW BELIEVERS**

Ac 15:7, 13; 1Pt 1:22; 3:8; 5:9

**BELIEVES**

doesn't waver but **b** that what is said . . . . . Mk 11:23  
that everyone who **b** in him will have . . . . . Jn 3:15  
that everyone who **b** in him receives . . . . . Ac 10:43  
respect for what everyone else **b** is good. . . . . Ro 12:17  
The person who **b** in him will never . . . . . 1Pt 2:6

**BELLY**

On your **b** you will crawl. . . . . Gn 3:14  
that moves on its **b** or anything that . . . . . Lv 11:42  
existed, taken from the **b** to the grave. . . . . Job 10:19  
he's filled his **b** with our . . . . . Jer 51:34  
Jonah was in the **b** of the fish for . . . . . Jon 1:17  
was in the whale's **b** for three days and . . . . . Mt 12:40  
a thigh, so is a word in the **b** of a fool. . . . . Sir 19:12  
away in the **b** of a sea monster . . . . . 3Macc 6:8  
will flow as high as the **b** of a horse. . . . . 2Esd 15:35

**BELONG****BELONG TO CHRIST**

Mk 9:41; 1Co 1:12; 3:23; 15:23; 2Co 10:7; Ga 5:24

**BELONG TO HIM**

Ps 95:4; 100:3; Hab 2:6; 3:6; Ro 8:9; 1Co 8:6; 1Ti 6:16; 2Ti 2:19

**BELONG TO THE LORD**

Ex 13:12; Lv 27:30; 1Sa 2:8; 2Kgs 11:17; Zec 9:1; Mal 3:3; 1Co 10:26

**BELSHAZZAR**

King **B** threw a huge party . . . . . Dn 5:1  
and his son **B** that their days on . . . . . Bar 1:11

**BELTESHAZZAR**

He named Daniel "**B**." . . . . . Dn 1:7

**BEN-HADAD**

Aram's King **B**, Tabrimmon's son . . . . . 1Ki 15:18  
it will burn up the fortresses of **B**. . . . . Jer 49:27  
Hazael; it will devour the palaces of **B**. . . . . Am 1:4

**BENAIAH**

Jehoiada's son **B** was in command . . . . . 2Sa 8:18  
Jehoiada's son **B**, the prophet. . . . . 1Ki 1:8  
Mijamin, Eleazar, Asibias, and **B**. . . . . 1Esd 9:26

**BENEFIT**

matters so you can **b** from the LORD's . . . . . 2Sa 21:3  
a word that has no **b** and with . . . . . Job 15:3  
it is to your **b**, if you are . . . . . Prv 9:12  
for your own **b** on earth, where . . . . . Mt 6:19  
I say this for the **b** of the crowd . . . . . Jn 11:42  
a Jew? Or what's the **b** of circumcision? . . . . . Ro 3:1

does it for our **b** so that we can . . . . . Heb 12:10  
again in order to **b** those who have put . . . . . Wis 16:24  
it will be of no **b** when you are in. . . . . Sir 5:8  
him for the **b** of the safety of . . . . . 2Macc 12:25  
to Judea, for the **b** of their freedom, . . . . . 1Esd 4:49  
What does it **b** everyone to live in . . . . . 2Esd 7:117

**BENJAMIN**

Ben-oni, but his father named him **B**. . . . . Gn 35:18  
Issachar, Zebulun, and **B**. . . . . Ex 1:3  
from **B**, Abidan, Gideon's son. . . . . Nm 1:11  
Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and **B**. . . . . Dt 27:12  
from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and **B**. . . . . Josh 21:4  
There's **B** leading them. . . . . Ps 68:27  
priests from Anathoth in the land of **B**. . . . . Jer 1:1  
at Beth-aven: "Look behind you, **B**!" . . . . . Hos 5:8  
from the tribe of **B**, and he served as . . . . . Ac 13:21  
of Abraham, from the tribe of **B**. . . . . Ro 11:1  
from the tribe of **B**, twelve thousand . . . . . Rev 7:8  
from the tribe of **B**. He was a . . . . . GkEst A:1  
from the tribe of **B**, who had been . . . . . 2Macc 3:4  
of Judah and **B** rose up. The . . . . . 1Esd 2:5

**BENJAMINITE**

the clans of the **B** tribe appeared . . . . . Josh 18:11  
LORD about Cush, a **B**. I take refuge in . . . . . Ps 7:1  
line of Shimei and Kish; he was a **B**. . . . . GkEst 2:5

**BENJAMITES**

Gibeah, the people of that place being **B**. . . . . Jgs 19:16

**BETH-HORON**

on the way up to **B** and struck them . . . . . Josh 10:10  
and to Kona, **B**, Belmain, Jericho, . . . . . Jdt 4:4  
ascend to go up to **B**, Judas went out to . . . . . 1Macc 3:16

**BETH-SHEAN**

and in Asher were **B** and its dependent. . . . . Josh 17:11

**BETH-SHEMESH**

went down to **B**, and passed by . . . . . Josh 15:10

**BETHANY**

out of the city to **B** and spent the . . . . . Mt 21:17  
to Bethphage and **B** at the Mount of . . . . . Mk 11:1  
to Bethphage and **B** on the Mount of . . . . . Lk 19:29  
the Jordan in **B** where John was . . . . . Jn 1:28  
as Jerusalem and **B** and Chelous and . . . . . Jdt 1:9

**BETHEL**

mountains east of **B**, and pitched his . . . . . Gn 12:8  
to the east of **B**. He said to them, . . . . . Josh 7:2  
on account of **B**, in which they. . . . . Jer 48:13  
happen to you, **B**, because of your. . . . . Hos 10:15  
pronounced against **B**. Your festivals . . . . . Tob 2:6  
Beth-horon, **B**, Timnath, . . . . . 1Macc 9:50

**BETHELEHEM**

near the road to Ephrath, that is, **B**. . . . . Gn 35:19  
(that is, **B**), Peor, Etam, . . . . . Josh 15:59  
on the way at Geruth Chimham near **B**. . . . . Jer 41:17  
As for you, **B** of Ephrathah, though you . . . . . Mic 5:2  
Jesus was born in **B** in the territory . . . . . Mt 2:1  
to David's city, called **B**, in Judea. . . . . Lk 2:4  
family and from **B**, David's village? . . . . . Jn 7:42

**BETHSAIDA**

will be for you, **B**. For if the . . . . . Mt 11:21  
the lake, toward **B**, while he. . . . . Mk 6:45  
withdrew privately to a city called **B**. . . . . Lk 9:10  
Philip was from **B**, the hometown of . . . . . Jn 1:44  
the city of **B** for your sake? . . . . . 2Esd 1:11

**BETHUEL**

Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and **B**. . . . . Gn 22:22  
**B**, Hormah, Ziklag. . . . . 1Ch 4:30

**BETRAY**

you to have Rachel? Why did you **b** me? . . . . . Gn 29:25



Why could you **b** me like this, . . . . . 1Sa 19:17  
 love from him. I won't **b** my faithfulness. . . . . Ps 89:33  
 doomed! Betrayers **b**, treacherously . . . . . Is 24:16  
 They will **b** each other and . . . . . Mt 24:10  
 one of you will **b** me—someone eating. . . . . Mk 14:18  
 Judas, would you **b** the Human One with . . . . . Lk 22:48  
 believe and the one who would **b** him. . . . . Jn 6:64

**BILDAD**  
 Eliphaz of Teman, **B** of Shu'ah, and. . . . . Job 2:11

**BILHAH**  
 given his servant **B** to his daughter. . . . . Gn 29:29  
**B**, Ezem, Tolad . . . . . 1Ch 4:29

**BLESS**  
 his sons: You will **b** the Israelites as. . . . . Nm 6:23  
 the **LORD** has taken; **b** the **LORD**'s name. . . . . Job 1:21  
 Because you, **LORD**, **b** the righteous. You . . . . . Ps 5:12  
 grain, but they **b** those who sell it. . . . . Prv 11:26  
 this blessing: **b** Egypt my people; . . . . . Is 19:25  
 so that he would **b** them. But the . . . . . Mk 10:13  
 to you first—to **b** you by enabling . . . . . Ac 3:26  
**B** people who harass you—bless and don't . . . . . Ro 12:14  
 Tobit answered, "b you, brother!" Then . . . . . Tob 5:17  
 People will **b** those who are generous with . . . . . Sir 31:23  
 They can't curse or **b** ruler . . . . . LJer 65  
 works of the Lord, **b** the Lord, sing . . . . . PrAz 34  
 the greatness of all ages. **b** God's truth!" . . . . . 1Esd 4:40  
**B** the rescuer of Israel from now to . . . . . 3Macc 7:23

**BLESS GOD**  
 2Sa 22:47; Ps 18:46; 66:20; 68:26, 35; 134:1

**BLESS THE LORD**  
 Gn 9:26; 24:27; Ex 18:10; Dt 8:10; Jgs 5:2, 9; 1Sa 25:32; 25:39; 2Sa  
 18:28; 1Kgs 10:9; 1Ch 16:36; 29:20; 2Ch 2:12; 6:4; 9:8; Ezr 7:7; Ps  
 16:7; 26:12; 28:6; 31:21; 34:1; 41:13; 68:19; 26; 72:18; 89:52; 103:1,  
 2, 20, 21, 22; 104:1, 35; 106:48; 115:18; 124:6; 134:1, 2; 135:19, 20,  
 21; 144:1; Lk 1:68; Jas 3:9; Sir 39:14; PrAz 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39,  
 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57,  
 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65; 1Esd 8:25

**BLESS YOU**  
 Gn 12:2, 3, 22:17; 26:3, 24; 27:4, 7, 10, 25, 29; 28:3; Ex 20:24; Nm  
 6:24; Dt 1:11; 7:13; 12:15; 14:24; 29; 15:4, 18; 16:15; 24:13; 28:8;  
 30:16; Jgs 17:2; Ru 2:4; 1Sa 15:13; 23:21; 25:33; 26:25; 2Sa 2:5; Ps  
 63:4; 128:5; 129:8; 134:3; 145:2, 10; Jer 31:23; Hg 2:19; Ac 3:26;  
 Heb 6:14

**I WILL BLESS YOU**  
 Gn 22:17; 26:24; 27:7; Ps 63:4; 145:2; Hg 2:19

**BLESSED**  
 Then God **b** them: "Be fertile and multiply . . . . . Gn 1:22  
 is why the **LORD b** the Sabbath day. . . . . Ex 20:11  
 the people and **b** them. . . . . Lv 9:22  
 you bless is **b** and whomever you . . . . . Nm 22:6  
**LORD** your God has **b** you in all that . . . . . Dt 2:7  
 So Joshua **b** him. He gave Hebron to Caleb, . . . . . Josh 14:13  
 all he has—and **b** the work of his . . . . . Job 1:10  
 Those **b** by God will possess the land, but . . . . . Ps 37:22  
 May your spring be **b**. Rejoice in the . . . . . Prv 5:18  
 the righteous how **b** they are; they . . . . . Is 3:10  
 them will say, "**b** is the **LORD**, for I . . . . . Zec 11:5  
 up to heaven, **b** them and broke the . . . . . Mt 14:19  
 up to heaven, **b** them, broke the. . . . . Mk 6:41  
 God has **b** you above all . . . . . Lk 1:42  
 of the kings, and Melchizedek **b** him. . . . . Heb 7:1  
 prayed: "You are **b**, merciful God, and . . . . . Tob 3:11  
 with one voice, "**b** are you, our God, . . . . . Jdt 13:17  
 sin. She will be **b**. When God inspects . . . . . Wis 3:13  
 Lord. They will be **b** at the time of . . . . . Sir 1:13  
 Israel, we are **b** because we know what is . . . . . Bar 4:4  
**B** are you, Lord God of our ancestors. You . . . . . PrAz 3  
 Then he **b** them and joined his ancestor . . . . . 1Macc 2:69  
 known, saying, "**b** is the one who . . . . . 2Macc 15:34  
 stood up. Ezra **b** the Lord God Most . . . . . 1Esd 9:46

of God's throne and live a **b** life forever. . . . . 4Macc 17:18  
**BLESSED ARE YOU**  
 Tob 8:5, 15, 16, 17; Jdt 13:17; 14:7; PrAz 3, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33;  
 1Macc 4:30

**BLESSED BY THE LORD**  
 Gn 26:29; Ru 2:20; 3:10; Ps 115:15; Is 61:9; 65:23

**BLESSED FOREVER**  
 2Sa 7:29; 1Ch 17:27; Ro 1:25; 9:5; 2Co 11:31

**BLESSED THE LORD**  
 Gn 24:48; 1Ch 29:10; 29:20; 2Ch 20:26; 31:8;  
 Neh 8:6

**YOU WILL BE BLESSED**  
 Gn 27:29; Nm 24:9; Dt 28:3, 6; Lk 14:14

**BLESSING**  
 your name respected, and you will be a **b** . . . . . Gn 12:2  
 Just go! And bring a **b** on me as well! . . . . . Ex 12:32  
 I will send my **b** on you in the sixth year. . . . . Lv 25:21  
 I received a **b**, and he blessed. I can't. . . . . Nm 23:20  
 I am setting **b** and curse before . . . . . Dt 11:26  
 commanded for the **b** of the Israelite. . . . . Josh 8:33  
 The **b** of the perishing reached me; I made . . . . . Job 29:13  
 the **LORD**! May your **b** be on your people! . . . . . Ps 3:8  
 the righteous is a **b**, but the name of . . . . . Prv 10:7  
 and Assyria, a **b** at the center of . . . . . Is 19:24  
 heart and leave a **b** behind him . . . . . Jl 2:14  
 give it your **b** of peace. . . . . Mt 10:13  
 fish. He said a **b** over them, then. . . . . Mk 8:7  
 If not, your **b** will return to you. . . . . Lk 10:6  
 sent back with a **b** of peace from the . . . . . Ac 15:33  
 also pronounces a **b** on the person to . . . . . Ro 4:6  
 ground receives a **b** from God when it . . . . . Heb 6:7  
 and might, and honor, glory, and **b**. . . . . Rev 5:12  
 with every pure **b**; may people bless . . . . . Tob 8:15  
 joined together in **b** her and said, "You . . . . . Jdt 15:19  
 have neither the praise nor the **b** of God. . . . . Wis 15:9, 20  
 and word so that a **b** will come from his . . . . . Sir 3:8  
 flames, singing hymns to God, **b** the Lord. . . . . PrAz 1

**BLESSINGS**  
 will pronounce **b**, saying, 'May God . . . . . Gn 48:20  
 him, and to offer **b** in his name. . . . . Dt 10:8  
 him, and to give **b** in his name . . . . . 1Ch 23:13  
 You bring rich **b** right to him; you put a . . . . . Ps 21:3  
**B** cover the head of the righteous . . . . . Prv 10:6  
 will enjoy God's **b**; they will boast . . . . . Jer 4:2  
 I will curse your **b**, and I mean really . . . . . Mal 2:2  
 the Son of David! **b** on the one who . . . . . Mt 21:9  
 Hosanna! **b** on the one who . . . . . Mk 11:9  
 They said, "**b** on the king who comes in . . . . . Lk 19:38  
 shouted, "Hosanna! **b** on the one who . . . . . Jn 12:13  
 with them the **b** of the land. But . . . . . Wis 19:16  
 like an orchard of **b**, and an act of . . . . . Sir 40:17

**BLIND**  
 sighted or **b**? Isn't it I, the. . . . . Ex 4:11  
 in front of a **b** person that would. . . . . Lv 19:14  
 who misleads a **b** person on a road. . . . . Dt 27:18  
 Now Ahijah had become **b** in his old age. . . . . 1Ki 14:4  
 I was eyes to the **b**, feet to the lame . . . . . Job 29:15  
 who makes the **b** see. The **LORD** . . . . . Ps 146:8  
 those who turn a **b** eye will be. . . . . Prv 28:27  
 and their eyes **b**, so they can't see . . . . . Is 6:10  
 will walk like the **b** because they . . . . . Zep 1:17  
 departed, two **b** men followed . . . . . Mt 9:27  
 of sight to the **b**, to liberate the . . . . . Lk 4:18  
 who were sick, **b**, lame, and. . . . . Jn 5:3  
 three days he was **b** and neither ate . . . . . Ac 9:9  
 a guide for the **b**, a light to those . . . . . Ro 2:19  
 shortsighted and **b**, forgetting that . . . . . Rp 1:13  
 miserable, pathetic, poor, **b**, and naked. . . . . Rev 3:17  
 man has been made **b**!" He embraced his . . . . . Tob 7:7  
 they were struck **b**, just like those . . . . . Wis 19:17  
 and gifts will **b** the eyes of the. . . . . Sir 20:29  
 sight to the **b** or rescue a person . . . . . LJer 36

instead. Help the **b** to see a vision of . . .

**BLIND MAN**

Mk 8:22; 10:49, 51; Lk 18:35; 18:38

**BLIND PEOPLE**

Dt 28:29; Is 43:8; Mt 15:14; 23:17, 19; Lk 7:21

**BLOOD**

of your brother's **b** is crying to me . . . Gn 4:10  
 Nile will turn into **b** on the dry ground. . . . Ex 4:9  
 will present the **b** and toss it . . . Lv 1:5  
 must dash their **b** on the altar and . . . Nm 18:17  
 of the animals' **b**. Pour it out on . . . Dt 12:16  
 And remember that I'm your flesh and **b**! . . . Jgs 9:2  
 don't cover my **b**; let my outcry . . . Job 16:18  
 in their **b** offerings; I won't . . . Ps 16:4  
 feet run to evil; they hurry to spill **b**. . . . Prv 1:16  
 I don't want the **b** of bulls, lambs, . . . Is 1:11  
 of Jehu for the **b** of Jezreel, and I . . . Hos 1:4  
 all the righteous **b** that has been . . . Mt 23:35  
 new covenant by my **b**, which is poured . . . Lk 22:20  
 born not from **b** nor from human desire or . . . Jn 1:13  
 own language Hakedama, or "Field of **b**." . . . Ac 1:19  
 Their feet are quick to shed **b**. . . . Ro 3:15  
 share in flesh and **b**, he also shared . . . Heb 2:14  
 drunk with their **b**, and their fields . . . Jdt 6:4  
 shape from her **b**, built up out of a . . . Wis 7:2  
 because spilling **b** is nothing to . . . Sir 8:16  
 loud, "I'm innocent of this woman's **b**!" . . . Sus 46  
 shed innocent **b** all around the . . . 1Macc 1:37  
 listen to the shed **b** of those who had . . . 2Macc 8:3  
 hands stained with **b**. Your feet aren't . . . 2Esd 1:26  
 equal value to the **b** of the men who . . . 4Macc 3:15

**BLOOD OF THE COVENANT**

Ex 24:8; Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Heb 9:20; 10:29

**BOAZ**

family of Elimelech. His name was **B**. . . . Ru 2:1  
 the father of **B**, whose mother was . . . Mt 1:5  
 son of Obed, son of **B**, son of Sala . . . Lk 3:32

**BODY**

emerge from your **b**. One people . . . Gn 25:23  
 apart and its torn **b** is brought as . . . Ex 22:13  
 the dead **b** of an unclean wild. . . . Lv 5:2  
 and bathe his **b** in water. . . . Nm 19:7  
 distances to the cities nearest the **b**. . . . Dt 21:2  
 and they took his **b** down from the . . . Josh 8:29  
 pain of their **b**, and they mourn . . . Job 14:22  
 My whole **b** is completely terrified! But . . . Ps 6:3  
 Then your **b** will be healthy and your . . . Prv 3:8  
 dwindle; his sleek **b** will waste away. . . . Is 17:4  
 dead, picks up the **b** to bring it out of . . . Am 6:10  
 a part of your **b** than that . . . Mt 5:29  
 she sensed in her **b** that her illness . . . Mk 5:29  
 the lamp of your **b**. When your eye . . . Lk 11:34  
 temple Jesus was talking about was his **b**. . . . Jn 2:21  
 Moreover, my **b** will live in hope, . . . Ac 2:26  
 account his own **b**, which was as good . . . Ro 4:19  
 in his ancestor's **b** when Abraham paid . . . Heb 7:10  
 his strangled **b** is just lying . . . Tob 2:3  
 she washed her **b** with water, put on . . . Jdt 10:3  
 make her home in a **b** that is devoted to . . . Wis 1:4  
 than a rich person whose **b** is afflicted. . . . Sir 30:14  
 or to a dead **b** thrown out into . . . LJer 70  
 be clothed in full **b** armor made of gold. . . . 2Macc 3:25  
 be branded on the **b** by fire with the . . . 3Macc 2:29  
 Adam, a lifeless **b**? But it was the . . . 2Esd 3:5  
 different ways in the **b** and in the soul. . . . 4Macc 1:20

**BONES**

you, you must bring up your **b** out of here. . . . Gn 50:25  
 the house, and you shouldn't break the **b**. . . . Ex 12:46  
 break any of its **b**. They will keep . . . Nm 9:12  
 had brought up the **b** of Joseph from . . . Josh 24:32  
 and strike his **b** and flesh. Then he . . . Job 2:5

**LORD**, because my **b** are shaking in . . . Ps 6:2

2Esd 2:21

will be healthy and your **b** strengthened. . . . Prv 3:8  
 God crushes all my **b**. Between daybreak . . . Is 38:13  
 Can these **b** live again? . . . Eze 37:3  
 burned to lime the **b** of the king of . . . Am 2:1  
 are full of dead **b** and all kinds of . . . Mt 23:27  
 have flesh and **b** like you see I . . . Lk 24:39  
 scripture, They won't break any of his **b**. . . . Jn 19:36  
 gave instructions about burying his **b**. . . . Heb 11:22  
 and her skill will put fat on his **b**. . . . Sir 26:13  
 the prophets. The **b** of our rulers and . . . Bar 2:4  
 someone to get the **b** of Jonathan his . . . 1Macc 13:25  
 burned down to his **b** and on the edge of . . . 4Macc 6:26

**BREAD**

face you will eat **b**—until you return . . . Gn 3:19  
 and even into your ovens and **b** pans. . . . Ex 8:3  
 as unleavened **b** in a holy place; . . . Lv 6:16  
 offering. The usual **b** will be on it . . . Nm 4:7  
 don't live on **b** alone. No, they . . . Dt 8:3  
 the land: unleavened **b** and roasted grain. . . . Josh 5:11  
 groans become my **b**, my roars pour out . . . Job 3:24  
 they are eating **b** but never calling . . . Ps 14:4  
 They eat the **b** of evil, and they drink . . . Prv 4:17  
 will eat our own **b** and wear our own . . . Is 4:1  
 they give me my **b** and my water, my . . . Hos 2:5  
 Son, command these stones to become **b** . . . Mt 4:3  
 this stone to become a loaf of **b**. . . . Lk 4:3  
 Jesus took the **b**. When he had given . . . Jn 6:11  
 to be unleavened **b**. Christ our . . . 1Co 5:7  
 and the loaves of **b** presented to God. . . . Heb 9:2  
 Place your **b** and wine on the tombs of . . . Tob 4:17  
 fig cake, and fine **b**. She wrapped this . . . Jdt 10:5  
 your people with a **b** that had been . . . Wis 16:20  
 around glorifying themselves but lack **b**. . . . Sir 10:27  
 a stew, put some **b** in a bowl, and was . . . Bel 33  
 for the sacred **b**, drink-offering . . . 1Macc 1:22  
 the unleavened **b**, stood in the . . . 1Esd 1:11  
 by night they ate **b**; however, I spoke . . . 2Esd 14:43

**BREAD OF THE PRESENCE**

Ex 25:30; 35:13; 39:36; 15a 21:6; 1Kgs 7:48; 2Ch 4:19; Mt 12:4; Mk 2:26; Lk 6:4

**FESTIVAL OF UNLEAVENED BREAD**

Ex 12:17; 23:15; 34:18; Lv 23:6; Dt 16:16; 2Ch 30:13; 30:21; 35:17; Eze 6:22; Mt 26:17; Mk 14:1, 12; Lk 22:1; Ac 12:3; 20:6

**BRIDE**

Make the **b** price and marriage gifts as . . . Gn 34:12  
 marry her and pay the **b**-price for her. . . . Ex 22:16  
 from Lebanon, my **b**—if only you . . . Song 4:8  
 on like ornaments, bind them on like a **b** . . . Is 49:18  
 leave his room and the **b** her chamber . . . Jl 2:16  
 a bridegroom and **b** will never be . . . Rev 18:23  
 can take her as a **b** for you. And when . . . Tob 6:13  
 to make her my **b**. I burned within . . . Wis 8:2  
 and she will await them like a young **b**. . . . Sir 15:2  
 are bringing the **b**, a daughter of one . . . 1Macc 9:37  
 appearing as a **b**, and the land that . . . 2Esd 7:26

**BROTHER**

time to Cain's **b** Abel. Abel cared . . . Gn 4:2  
 What about your **b** Aaron the Levite? . . . Ex 4:14  
 Tell your **b** Aaron that he cannot come . . . Lv 16:2  
 father, mother, **b**, or sister . . . Nm 6:7  
 Instead, her **b**-in-law should go . . . Dt 25:5  
 of Kenaz, Caleb's **b**, captured it, and . . . Josh 15:17  
 I have become a **b** to jackals, a companion . . . Job 30:29  
 a friend or a **b**. I was weighed . . . Ps 35:14  
 him, saying, "My **b**, my sister!" They . . . Jer 22:18  
 Say to your **B**, My People, and to your . . . Hos 2:1  
 of Zebedee and his **b** John. They were in . . . Mt 4:21  
 God's will is my **b**, sister, and . . . Mk 3:35  
 over Galilee, his **b** Philip was ruler . . . Lk 3:1  
 Jesus was Andrew, the **b** of Simon Peter . . . Jn 1:40  
 on Saul and said, "**b** Saul, the Lord. . . . Ac 9:17  
 do you judge your **b** or sister? . . . Ro 14:10  
 neighbor or their **b** or sister, saying, . . . Heb 8:11

I, John, your **b** who shares with you in . . . . . Rev 1:9

**Cc**

**CAESAR**

allow people to pay taxes to **C**or not? . . . . . Mt 22:17  
to pay taxes to **C**or not? Should we . . . . . Mk 12:14  
In those days **C**Augustus declared that . . . . . Lk 2:1  
Law, against the temple, or against **C** . . . . . Ac 25:8

**CAIN**

gave birth to **C**, and said, "I have . . . . . Gn 4:1  
to God than **C**, which showed that . . . . . Heb 11:4  
who was killed by **C**, and about Isaac, . . . . . 4Macc 18:11

**CALEB**

the tribe of Judah, **C**, Jephunneh's son; . . . . . Nm 13:6  
only exception is **C**, Jephunneh's son. . . . . Dt 1:36  
approached Joshua. **C** son of Jephunneh . . . . . Josh 14:6  
of mercy, he and **C**, Jephunneh's son. . . . . Sir 46:7  
**C**received an inheritance in the land. . . . . 1Macc 2:56

**CALF**

female **c**, a three-year-old . . . . . Gn 15:9  
image of a bull **c**, and the people . . . . . Ex 32:4  
made yourselves a **c**, an idol made of . . . . . Dt 9:16  
had a fattened **c** in the house, and . . . . . 1Sa 28:24  
They made a **c** at Horeb, bowing down to a . . . . . Ps 106:19  
with love than a plump **c** with hate. . . . . Prv 15:17  
young goat; the **c** and the young lion . . . . . Is 11:6  
Your **c**s rejected, Samaria. My anger. . . . . Hos 8:5  
Fetch the fattened **c** and slaughter it. We . . . . . Lk 15:23  
in the shape of a **c**, offered a . . . . . Ac 7:41  
to the image of a **c** that Israel's King . . . . . Tob 1:5

**CALL**

you will no longer **c** her Sarai. . . . . Gn 17:15  
said to you. Don't **c** on the names of . . . . . Ex 23:13  
Sidonians **c** Hermon ("Sirion," but the . . . . . Dt 3:9  
Ammonites and not **c** us to go with you? . . . . . Jgs 12:1  
**C**out. Will anyone answer you? To which . . . . . Job 5:1  
him for help, and my **c** reached his ears. . . . . Ps 18:6  
Then they will **c** me, but I won't answer. . . . . Prv 1:28  
Doom to those who **c** evil good and good . . . . . Is 5:20  
the **LORD**, you will **c** me, "My husband," . . . . . Hos 2:16  
her, he decided to **c** off their . . . . . Mt 1:19  
I didn't come to **c** righteous people, . . . . . Mk 2:17  
father to see what he wanted to **c** him. . . . . Lk 1:62  
The man they **c** Jesus made mud, . . . . . Jn 9:11  
I should never **c** a person impure or . . . . . Ac 10:28  
But, if you **c** yourself a Jew; if you rely . . . . . Ro 2:17  
isn't ashamed to **c** them brothers and . . . . . Heb 2:11

**CALL OUT**

Job 5:1; Ps 55:16; 57:2; 116:2; 145:18; Prv 2:3; 21:13; Is 40:6; 43:22; Jer 31:7; Lam 3:8; Eze 8:18; Zec 1:17

**CALL UPON**

1Sa 12:17; Ps 105:1; Jer 11:12; Hos 7:7, 11; Am 5:16; Jon 3:8; 1Co 1:2; 1Pt 1:17

**CALLED**

**CALLED OUT**

Gn 22:11; 22:15; Dt 5:1; 22:27; Josh 8:16; Jgs 7:20; 7:23, 24; 9:7; 10:17; 15:18; 16:9; 12, 14, 20, 28; 18:23; 15a 15:4; 25a 18:25; 18:28; 1Kgs 17:10; 20:39; 2Kgs 7:10; Song 5:6; Is 21:8; Eze 9:1; 38:8; Dn 6:20; 8:16; Jon 2:2; Zec 1:14; 6:8; Lk 8:8, 54; Rev 10:3; 18:2; 19:17

**CALLED TOGETHER**

Ex 4:29; 7:11; 12:21; 19:7; 36:2; Mk 15:16; Lk 6:13; 19:13; 23:13; Jn 11:47

**CALLED YOU**

Is 42:6; 43:1; 45:4; Jer 7:13; Jn 1:48; 1Co 7:15; Ga 1:6; Eph 4:4; 1Pt 1:15; 2:9; 5:10

**YOU WERE CALLED**

1Co 1:9; 26; 7:21, 24; Ga 5:13; Col 3:15; 1Ti 6:12; 1Pt 2:21; 3:9

**CALLING**

**CALLING OUT**

Ps 50:1; 88:9; Mt 11:16; Lk 7:32; Ac 10:18

**CALLS**

lie down. If he **c** you, say 'Speak, . . . . . 1Sa 3:9  
power! If justice—who **c** God to meet me? . . . . . Job 9:19  
God **c** out to the skies above and to the . . . . . Ps 50:4  
noisy crowd, she **c** out. At the . . . . . Prv 1:21  
that this people **c** conspiracy. . . . . Is 8:12  
But everyone who **c** on the **LORD**'s name . . . . . Jl 2:32  
If David **c** him Lord, how can he be. . . . . Mt 22:45  
David himself **c** him 'Lord,' so how can he. . . . . Mk 12:37  
arrives home, he **c** together his . . . . . Lk 15:6  
to his voice. He **c** his own sheep by . . . . . Jn 10:3  
And everyone who **c** on the name of the . . . . . Ac 2:21  
to the dead and **c** things that don't . . . . . Ro 4:17  
Jezebel, who herself a prophet. . . . . Rev 2:20  
of God. He even **c** himself the **LORD**'s . . . . . Wis 2:13  
advanced with trumpet **c** and battle cries. . . . . 2Macc 15:25  
The whole earth **c** on truth, and heaven. . . . . 1Esd 4:36  
righteous blood **c** out to me, and the. . . . . 2Esd 15:8  
love, warning their young with their **c** . . . . . 4Macc 14:17

**CANAAN**

said, "Cursed be **C**: the lowest . . . . . Gn 9:25  
them the land of **C** where they lived . . . . . Ex 6:4  
enter the land of **C**, which I am giving . . . . . Lv 14:34  
the land of **C**, which I'm giving . . . . . Nm 13:2  
at the land of **C**, which I'm giving . . . . . Dt 32:49  
year they ate the crops of the land of **C**. . . . . Josh 5:12  
you the land of **C** as your allotted . . . . . Ps 105:11  
the language of **C** and swear loyalty . . . . . Is 19:18  
is against you, **C**, land of the . . . . . Zep 2:5  
upon all Egypt and **C**, and great . . . . . Ac 7:11  
go to the land of **C**. They settled . . . . . Jdt 5:9  
been heard of in **C** or seen in Teman. . . . . Bar 3:22  
great officials of **C**, from Nadabath. . . . . 1Macc 9:37

**CANAANITE**

After this the **C** clans were . . . . . Gn 10:18  
and Shaul, a **C**woman's son. These . . . . . Ex 6:15  
When the **C**king of Arad, who ruled in the . . . . . Nm 21:1  
Jordan and all the **C**kings near the sea. . . . . Josh 5:1  
the king of Bashan, and all the **C**kings. . . . . Ps 135:11  
A **C**woman from those territories came out . . . . . Mt 15:22  
to him, "You're a **C** and not from . . . . . Sus 56

**CANAANITES**

oak of Moreh. The **C** lived in the land. . . . . Gn 12:6  
a place where the **C**, the Hittites, the . . . . . Ex 3:8  
mountains; and the **C**live by the sea . . . . . Nm 13:29  
land of the **C**—and the Lebanon. . . . . Dt 1:7  
remove the **C**, Hittites, . . . . . Josh 3:10  
the land of the **C** as far as. . . . . Obad 20  
Tell me, you **C**: Who are these. . . . . Jdt 5:3  
peoples: the **C**, the Hittites, the . . . . . 1Esd 8:66  
lands. I drove out **C**, Hittites, . . . . . 2Esd 1:21

**CAPERNAUM**

and settled in **C**, which lies . . . . . Mt 4:13  
went into **C**. Immediately on . . . . . Mk 1:21  
hometown what we've heard you did in **C**. . . . . Lk 4:23  
went down to **C** and stayed there . . . . . Jn 2:12

**CARMEL**

Kedesh one the king of Jokneam in **C**one . . . . . Josh 12:22  
you like Mount **C**, and your hair, . . . . . Song 7:5  
and Bashan and **C**were dropping . . . . . Is 33:9  
wither, and the top of **C**dries up. . . . . Am 1:2  
the nations of **C** and Gilead, and . . . . . Jdt 1:8

**CAVALRY**

chariots, his **c**, and his army . . . . . Ex 14:9

chariots and his **c** and as runners for . . . . . 1Sa 8:11  
 Charging **c**, flashing sword, and . . . . . Na 3:3  
 The number of **c** troops was two hundred. . . . . Rev 9:16  
 armies, all of his **c**, and all of his . . . . . Jdt 1:13  
 elephants, as well as **c** and a large fleet. . . . . 1Macc 1:17  
 companies of **c**, each attacking . . . . . 2Macc 5:3  
 immediately, with **c** and a large group . . . . . 1Esd 2:25

### CENSUS

When you take a **c** of the Israelites to. . . . . Ex 30:12  
 Take a **c** of the entire Israelite . . . . . Nm 1:2  
 and take a **c** of the people so I . . . . . 1Ch 21:2  
 at the time of the **c**, Judas the. . . . . Ac 5:37

### CENTURION

Jesus went to Capernaum, a **c** approached, . . . . . Mt 8:5  
 When the **c**, who stood facing Jesus, saw . . . . . Mk 15:39  
 A **c** had a servant who was very important. . . . . Lk 7:2  
 named Cornelius, a **c** in the Italian . . . . . Ac 10:1

### CHAINS

along with two **c** of pure gold, twisted . . . . . Ex 28:14  
 him with bronze **c**, and he worked the . . . . . Jgs 16:21  
 you bind Pleiades' **c** or loosen the . . . . . Job 38:31  
 off their ropes and throw off their **c**! . . . . . Ps 2:3  
 the splendid ankle **c**, headbands and. . . . . Is 3:18  
 his yoke from you and tear off your **c** . . . . . Na 1:13  
 with leg irons and **c**, but he broke the . . . . . Mk 5:4  
 with leg irons and **c** and placed under . . . . . Lk 8:29  
 has poisoned you and evil has you in **c** . . . . . Ac 8:23  
 an ambassador in **c** for the sake of. . . . . Eph 6:20  
 they were even put in **c** and in prison. . . . . Heb 11:36  
 and foot, and immediately put him in **c** . . . . . Tob 8:3  
 him when he was in **c**. In the end, she . . . . . Wis 10:14  
 him with bronze **c**, and took him away . . . . . 1Esd 1:38  
 held down by iron **c** so that I can't . . . . . PrMan 10  
 and bind them on all sides in iron **c**. . . . . 3Macc 3:25  
 boy was already in **c**, the tyrant felt. . . . . 4Macc 12:2

### CHALDEA

a throne, Daughter **C**, because they will . . . . . Is 47:1  
 gods of their ancestors in the land of **C**. . . . . Jdt 5:7

### CHALDEAN

The **LORD** sent **C**, Aramean, Moabite, and . . . . . 2Ki 24:2  
 to teach them the **C** language and its . . . . . Dn 1:4  
 The **C** is dreadful and fearful. He makes . . . . . Hab 1:7  
 anger, brought the **C** kings against his . . . . . 1Esd 1:49

### CHALDEANS

Terah in his native land, in Ur of the **C**. . . . . Gn 11:28  
 king's garden. The **C** were surrounding . . . . . 2Ki 25:4  
 arrived and said: " **C** set up three . . . . . Job 1:17  
 at the land of the **C**, the people who . . . . . Is 23:13  
 about to rouse the **C**, that bitter and . . . . . Hab 1:6  
 the land of the **C** and settled in . . . . . Ac 7:4  
 These people are descended from the **C**. . . . . Jdt 5:6  
 the time when the **C** took Jerusalem and . . . . . Bar 1:2  
 addition, even the **C** dishonor them. . . . . LJer 40  
 The **C** killed the young people around the . . . . . 1Esd 1:50

### CHANGE

#### CHANGE THEIR HEARTS

1Ki 8:33; 18:37; 2Ch 6:24; Mt 11:20; 13:15; Mk 6:12; Lk 5:32; 15:7;  
 16:30; 17:3; Ac 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; 28:27; 2Pt 3:9; Rev 2:22;  
 9:20; 16:9; Sir 48:15; Wis 12:19

#### CHANGE YOUR HEARTS

Mt 3:2; 4:17; 21:32; Mk 1:15; Lk 13:3; 5; Ac 2:38; 3:19; 2Co 7:9;  
 Rev 2:5; 16; 3:3, 19

### CHARIOT

of fire and in a **c** of fiery horses. . . . . Sir 48:9  
 So he ordered his **c** driver to keep . . . . . 2Macc 9:4  
 return to his **c** but resolved to . . . . . 1Esd 1:26

### CHEST

setting in the priest's vest and **c**piece. . . . . Ex 25:7

Moses placed the **c**piece on Aaron and . . . . . Lv 8:8  
 for the **c**, the table, the. . . . . Nm 3:31  
 to me. Construct a wooden **c** as well. . . . . Dt 10:1

**LORD** your God's **c** containing the . . . . . Josh 3:3  
 heart pounds in my **c** because death's . . . . . Ps 55:4

**LORD**'s covenant **c**, they won't recall . . . . . Jer 3:16  
 and new things out of their treasure **c** . . . . . Mt 13:52  
 struck his **c** and said, "God, . . . . . Lk 18:13  
 incense and the **c** containing the . . . . . Heb 9:4  
 a gold sash around his **c**. . . . . Rev 1:13  
 tent and the **c** containing the . . . . . 2Macc 2:4  
 the **LORD**'s holy **c** in the house that . . . . . 1Esd 1:13  
 extinguished, the **c** containing our . . . . . 2Esd 10:22

### CHIEF

Esau's oldest son: **C** Teman, Chief Omar, . . . . . Gn 36:15  
 God, and don't curse your people's **c**. . . . . Ex 22:28  
 units. The **c** of the people of . . . . . Nm 2:3  
 from Hachmon was **c** of the Three. He . . . . . 2Sa 23:8  
 These were the **c** officers over Solomon's . . . . . 1Ki 9:23  
 their path, sat as **c**. I lived like a . . . . . Job 29:25  
 The **c** of Aram is Damascus; the chief of . . . . . Is 7:8  
 son, and to the **c** priest Joshua, . . . . . Hg 2:2  
 gathered all the **c** priests and the . . . . . Ps 2:3  
 by the elders, **c** priests, and the . . . . . Mk 8:31  
 the elders, **c** priests, and the . . . . . Lk 9:22  
 Jesus, and the **c** priests and. . . . . Jn 7:32  
 everything the **c** priests and elders. . . . . Ac 4:23  
 And when the **c** shepherd appears, you will . . . . . 1Pt 5:4  
 had been the **c** officer, the . . . . . Tob 1:22  
 Antiochus sent his **c** officer, who came . . . . . 1Macc 1:29  
 The king chose his **c** administrator . . . . . 2Macc 3:7  
 and Jehiel (the **c** officials of the . . . . . 1Esd 1:8  
 but only the **c** priest, who was in . . . . . 3Macc 1:11  
 or to the powerful **c** of their great men. . . . . 2Esd 15:16  
 to the Law and to Moses our **c** advisor. . . . . 4Macc 9:2

### CHIEFS

are the tribal **c** from Esau's sons. . . . . Gn 36:15  
 Then Edom's tribal **c** were terrified; . . . . . Ex 15:15  
 the community, **c** of their ancestral. . . . . Nm 1:16  
 all the **c** of your tribes and . . . . . Dt 5:23  
 leaders, and the **c** of Israel's clans . . . . . 1Ki 8:1  
 the tribal **c** have led Egypt . . . . . Is 19:13  
 Mount Samaria, the **c** of the nations, to. . . . . Am 6:1

### CHILD

given me another **c** in place of Abel . . . . . Gn 4:25  
 tar. She put the **c** in the basket and . . . . . Ex 2:3  
 woman conceives a **c** and gives birth to. . . . . Lv 12:2  
 an unweaned **c**, to the fertile . . . . . Nm 11:12  
 carried you just as a parent carries a **c** . . . . . Dt 1:31  
 them their oldest **c**. Setting up its . . . . . Josh 6:26  
 a human, a worm, a person's **c**, a grub. . . . . Job 25:6  
 woman's stillborn **c**, let them never. . . . . Ps 58:8  
 of Solomon: A wise **c** makes a father . . . . . Prv 10:1  
 A **c** is born to us, a son is given to us. . . . . Is 9:6  
 When Israel was a **c**, I loved him, and . . . . . Hos 11:1  
 wife, because the **c** she carries was. . . . . Mt 1:20  
 to the paralytic, " **c**, your sins are. . . . . Mk 2:5  
 greeting, the **c** leaped in her . . . . . Lk 1:41  
 come. But when the **c** is born, she no . . . . . Jn 16:21  
 even though Abraham had no **c**. . . . . Ac 7:5  
 to her: The older **c** will be a slave to . . . . . Ro 9:12  
 ability to have a **c**, though she. . . . . Heb 11:11  
 she gave birth, he might devour her **c**. . . . . Rev 12:4  
 my father's only **c**. He has no other. . . . . Tob 3:15  
 I was a clever **c** and had been born with a . . . . . Wis 8:19  
 My **c**, if you come to serve the **LORD**, . . . . . Sir 2:1  
 gave her to his **c** Jacob, to Israel, . . . . . Bar 3:36  
 I beg you, **c**, to look at heaven and. . . . . 2Macc 7:28  
 person to a **c** to nursing . . . . . 3Macc 3:27  
 your one and only **c**, those who are . . . . . 2Esd 6:58  
 flesh of one **c** piling up on the. . . . . 4Macc 15:20

### CHILDREN

pain you will bear **c**. You will desire. . . . . Gn 3:16

This must be one of the Hebrews' **c** . . . . . Ex 2:6  
 both you and your **c** as a permanent . . . . . Lv 10:15  
 Our wives and our **c** will be taken by . . . . . Nm 14:3  
 on to him and his **c** for this reason: . . . . . Dt 1:36  
 Your wives, **c**, and cattle may remain in . . . . . Josh 1:14  
 and purify his **c**. Getting up early . . . . . Job 1:5  
 ones; let their **c** be filled full so . . . . . Ps 17:14  
 Hear, **c**, fatherly instruction; pay . . . . . Prv 4:1  
 spoken: I reared **c**; I raised them, . . . . . Is 1:2  
 and have **c** of prostitution, . . . . . Hos 1:2  
 kill all the male **c** in Bethlehem and . . . . . Mt 2:16  
 He responded, "The **c** have to be fed . . . . . Mk 7:27  
 They had no **c** because Elizabeth was . . . . . Lk 1:7  
 name, he authorized to become God's **c**, . . . . . Jn 1:12  
 is for you, your **c**, and for all who . . . . . Ac 2:39  
 are adopted as his **c**. With this Spirit, . . . . . Ro 8:15  
 Here I am with the **c** whom God has given . . . . . Heb 2:13  
 will even put her **c** to death with . . . . . Rev 2:23  
 tribe, for we are **c** of the prophets. . . . . Tob 4:12  
 including the **c** of Ammon, all of . . . . . Jdt 1:12  
 people. Their **c** will be wicked. . . . . Wis 3:12  
 father's warning, **c**, and act . . . . . Sir 3:1  
 since Israel and her **c** carry your name. . . . . Bar 2:15  
 gods' clothing to dress their wives and **c**. . . . . LJer 32  
 her parents, her **c**, and all her . . . . . Sus 30  
 seventy priests plus their wives and **c**. . . . . Bel 9  
 took women and **c** as prisoners and . . . . . 1Macc 1:32  
 women and **c**, and slaughtered . . . . . 2Macc 5:13  
 they and their **c** and all the . . . . . 1Esd 4:53  
 Isaac, Jacob, and their righteous **c**. . . . . PrMan 1  
 people, ruler over the **c** of his covenant. . . . . Ps 151 1:7  
 and their **c** and wives, and . . . . . 3Macc 1:4  
 crimes. Tell their **c** about the sins . . . . . 2Esd 1:5  
 It rules love for **c** by punishing them . . . . . 4Macc 2:12

**CHOSE**

**CHOOSE YOU**

Dt 7:6, 7; Is 41:9; Jn 15:16; 2Th 2:13; 1Pt 1:2

**CHOSEN**

Look, I have **c** Bezalel, Uri's son and . . . . . Ex 31:2  
 of the community, **c** by the assembly. . . . . Nm 16:2  
 that you have **c** to serve the . . . . . Josh 24:22  
 evil because you've **c** it over affliction. . . . . Job 36:21  
 that God has **c** as his possession, . . . . . Ps 33:12  
 Jacob, whom I have **c**, offspring of . . . . . Is 41:8  
 are invited, but few people are **c**. . . . . Mt 22:14  
 service, he was **c** by lottery to go . . . . . Lk 1:9  
 those whom I've **c**. But this is to . . . . . Jn 13:18  
 Jesus instructed the apostles he had **c**. . . . . Ac 1:2  
 Those who were **c** found it, but the . . . . . Ro 11:7  
 listen! Hasn't God **c** those who are poor . . . . . Jas 2:5  
 with him are called, **c**, and faithful. . . . . Rev 17:14

**CHOSEN ONE**

Ps 89:3; 106:23; Lam 4:20; Lk 9:35; 23:35

**CHOSEN ONES**

1Ch 16:13; Ps 105:6, 43; 106:5; Is 43:20; 65:9, 15; Mt 24:31; Mk 13:20; Tob 13:8; Wis 3:9; 4:15; Sir 46:1; 2Esd 15:21, 53, 56; 16:74, 75

**CHOSEN YOU**

1Ch 28:10; 2Ch 29:11; Is 49:7; Hg 2:23; Jn 15:19; 1Th 1:4

**MY CHOSEN**

2Esd 15:21, 53, 56; 16:74, 75

**CHRIST**

**APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST**

1Co 1:1; 1Ti 1:1; Ti 1:1; 1Pt 1:1; 2Pt 1:1

**BELONG TO CHRIST**

Mk 9:41; 1Co 1:12; 3:23; 15:23; 2Co 10:7; Ga 5:24

**CHRIST DIED**

Ro 5:6, 8; 14:9, 15; 1Co 8:11; 15:3; Ga 2:21

**CHRIST JESUS**

Ac 24:24; Ro 1:1; 2:16; 3:24; 6:3, 11, 23; 8:1, 2, 34, 38; 15:16, 17; 16:3; 1Co 1:2, 4, 30; 4:15, 17; 15:31; 16:24; 2Co 1:1; Ga 2:4, 16;

3:14, 26, 28; 4:14; 5:6, 24; Eph 1:1; 2:6, 7, 10, 13, 20; 3:6, 11, 21; Phi 1:1, 6, 8, 26; 2:5; 3:3, 8, 14; 4:7, 19, 21; Col 1:1, 4; 2:6, 4:12; 1Th 2:14; 5:18; 1Ti 1:1, 2, 12, 14, 15, 16; 2:5; 3:13; 4:6; 5:21; 6:13; 2Ti 1:1, 2, 9, 10, 13; 2:1, 3, 10; 3:12, 15, 4:1; Ti 1:4; Phm 1, 9, 23; 1Pt 5:10

**CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD**

Ro 6:23; 8:38; 1Co 15:31; Eph 3:11; 1Ti 1:2, 12; 2Ti 1:2

**JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD**

Ro 1:4; 5:21; 7:25; 1Co 1:9; Jude 25

**JESUS IS THE CHRIST**

Jn 20:31; Ac 5:42; 9:22; 1Jn 2:22; 5:1

**LORD JESUS CHRIST**

Ac 11:17; 15:26; 28:31; Ro 1:7; 5:1, 11; 13:14; 15:6, 30; 16:20; 1Co 1:2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 6:11; 8:6; 15:57; 2Co 1:2, 3; 8:9; 13:13; Ga 1:3; 6:14, 18; Eph 1:2, 3, 17; 5:20; 6:23, 24; Phi 1:2; 3:20; 4:23; Col 1:3; 1Th 1:1, 3; 5:9, 28; 2Th 1:1, 2, 12; 2:14, 16; 3:6, 12, 18, 1Ti 6:3, 14; Phm 3, 25; Jas 1:1; 2:1; 1Pt 1:3; 2Pt 1:8, 14, 16; Jude 4, 17, 21

**NAME OF JESUS CHRIST**

Ac 2:38; 3:6; 4:10; 8:12; 10:48; 16:18

**SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST**

Ti 2:13; 2Pt 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:18

**SON JESUS CHRIST**

1Co 1:9; 2Co 1:19; 1Jn 1:3; 3:23; 5:20

**THROUGH CHRIST**

Ro 2:16; 1Co 4:10; 2Co 1:5; 2:14, 17, 3:4; 5:18, 19; Ga 3:14; Eph 2:18; 3:11; 1Pt 1:21

**THROUGH JESUS CHRIST**

Jn 1:17; Ac 10:36; Ro 1:8; 5:21; 7:25; 16:27; Ga 1:1; Eph 1:5; Ti 3:6; Heb 13:21; 1Pt 2:5; 4:11; Jude 25

**YOU ARE THE CHRIST**

Mt 16:16; 26:63; Mk 8:29; Lk 22:67; Jn 10:24; 11:27

**YOU IN CHRIST**

1Co 4:4; 4:15; 15:31; 16:24; 2Co 1:21; Eph 4:32; 1Th 5:18

**YOU IN CHRIST JESUS**

1Co 4:4; 4:15; 15:31; 16:24; 1Th 5:18

**CHURCH**

I'll build my **c** on this rock. . . . . Mt 16:18  
 seized the whole **c** and all who heard. . . . . Ac 5:11  
 who is a deacon of the **c** in Cenchræe. . . . . Ro 16:1  
 the elders of the **c**, and the elders . . . . . Jas 5:14

**ANGEL OF THE CHURCH**

Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14

**GOD'S CHURCH**

Ac 20:28; 1Co 1:2; 10:32; 15:9; 2Co 1:1; Ga 1:13; 1Ti 3:5

**CHURCHES**

Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the **c**. . . . . Ac 15:41  
 John, to the seven **c** that are in Asia: . . . . . Rev 1:4

**ALL THE CHURCHES**

Ro 16:4, 16; 1Co 7:17; 14:33; 2Co 8:18; 11:28; Rev 2:23

**CIRCUMCISED**

generation must be **c**. . . . . Gn 17:12  
 been bought may eat it after he's been **c**. . . . . Ex 12:44  
 flesh of the boy's foreskin must be **c**. . . . . Lv 12:3  
 for himself. He **c** the Israelites at . . . . . Josh 5:3  
 deal with everyone who is physically **c**. . . . . Jer 9:25  
 Jesus' parents **c** him and gave him. . . . . Lk 2:21  
 If a man can be **c** on the Sabbath without . . . . . Jn 7:23  
 Abraham **c** him. Isaac did the . . . . . Ac 7:8  
 status of being **c** has changed into. . . . . Ro 2:25  
 So he was **c** and joined the . . . . . Jdt 14:10  
 had themselves **c** and became Jews . . . . . GkEst 8:17  
 they killed women who had **c** their sons. . . . . 1Macc 1:60  
 two women who had **c** their sons, with . . . . . 2Macc 6:10

**CMES**

The most important **c** in his kingdom were . . . . . Gn 10:10  
 to build storage **c** named Pithom and . . . . . Ex 1:11  
 in the levitical **c** that are part of . . . . . Lv 25:32  
 in the land. The **c** have huge . . . . . Nm 13:28

a report about the **c** that we'll be . . . . . Dt 1:22  
and came to their **c** Gibeon, . . . . . Josh 9:17  
lived in ruined **c**, unoccupied houses . . . . . Job 15:28  
torn down their **c**—even the memory. . . . . Ps 9:6  
is deserted, your **c** burned with fire, . . . . . Is 1:7  
multiplied walled **c**, but I will send a . . . . . Hos 8:14  
among all the **c** and villages, . . . . . Mt 9:35  
in the Ten **c** all that Jesus had . . . . . Mk 5:20  
went to their own **c** to be enrolled. . . . . Lk 2:3  
news in all the **c** until he reached . . . . . Ac 8:40  
God condemned the **c** of Sodom and Gomorrah . . . . . 2Pt 2:6  
parts, and the **c** of the nations . . . . . Rev 16:19

### FORTIFIED CITIES

Nm 32:17; 32:36; Josh 10:20; 14:12; 19:35; 15a 6:18; 25a 20:6;  
2Kgs 17:9; 18:13; 19:25; 2Ch 11:10; 12:4; 14:6; 17:2; 19; 19:5; 21:3;  
32:1; 33:14; Neh 9:25; Is 36:1; 37:26

### REFUGE CITIES

Nm 35:6, 11, 13, 14; Josh 20:2; 1Ch 6:57; 6:67

### CITY

Cain built a **c** and named the city . . . . . Gn 4:17  
as I've left the **c**, I'll spread out . . . . . Ex 9:29  
outside the **c** in an unclean area . . . . . Lv 14:40  
are in Kadesh, a **c** on the edge of . . . . . Nm 20:16  
there wasn't a **c** that could resist . . . . . Dt 2:36  
outer side of the **c** wall, and she . . . . . Josh 2:15  
From the **c**, the dying cry out; the . . . . . Job 24:12  
to me when I was like a **c** under siege! . . . . . Ps 31:21  
entrances of the **c** gates, she has her . . . . . Prv 1:21  
in a cucumber field, like a **c** besieged. . . . . Is 1:8  
Gilead is a **c** of wicked people, tracked . . . . . Hos 6:8  
He settled in a **c** called Nazareth so that . . . . . Mt 2:23  
the story in the **c** and in the . . . . . Mk 5:14  
Gabriel to Nazareth, a **c** in Galilee, . . . . . Lk 1:26  
to a Samaritan **c** called Sychar, . . . . . Jn 4:5  
they entered the **c**, they went to the . . . . . Ac 1:13  
you. Erastus the **c** treasurer says . . . . . Ro 16:23  
forward to a **c** that has . . . . . Heb 11:10  
the name of the **c** of my God, the New . . . . . Rev 3:12

### FORTIFIED CITY

Josh 19:29; 2Kgs 10:2; 18:8; 2Ch 11:23; Ps 60:9; 108:10; Is 27:10

### HOLY CITY

Tob 13:9; PrAz 5; 1Macc 2:7; 2Macc 1:12; 3:1; 9:14; 15:14; 3Macc 6:5

### REFUGE CITY

Nm 35:25; 35:26, 27, 28, 32; Josh 21:13; 21:21, 27, 32, 38

### CLEAN

From every **c** animal, take seven pairs, a . . . . . Gn 7:2  
will be taken to a **c** location outside . . . . . Lv 4:12  
persons who are **c** and not on a trip, . . . . . Nm 9:13  
You are allowed to eat any **c** bird . . . . . Dt 14:11  
he restored me because my hands are **c**, . . . . . 2Sa 22:21  
is pure, and I'm **c** in God's eyes. . . . . Job 11:4  
he restored me because my hands are **c**, . . . . . Ps 18:20  
oxen, the stall is **c**, but when there is . . . . . Prv 14:4  
Wash! Be **c**! Remove your ugly deeds from . . . . . Is 1:16  
He said, "Put a turban upon his head." . . . . . Zec 3:5  
his hands. He will **c** out his threshing . . . . . Mt 3:12  
begged, "If you want, you can make me **c**." . . . . . Mk 1:40  
his hands. He will **c** out his threshing . . . . . Lk 3:17  
are completely **c**. You disciples are . . . . . Jn 13:10  
**C** out the old yeast so you can be a new . . . . . 1Co 5:7  
contaminated people holy and **c**. . . . . Heb 9:13

### CLOTHES

#### MOURING CLOTHES

2Sa 14:2; 1Ks 20:31, 32; 21:27; 2Ks 6:30; 19:1, 2; 1Ch 21:16; Est  
4:1, 2, 3, 4; Ps 30:11; Is 3:24; 15:3; 20:2; 22:12; 32:11; 37:1, 2; Jer  
48:37; Lam 2:10; Eze 7:18; 27:31; Dn 9:3; Am 8:10; Jon 3:5, 6, 8;  
Rev 11:3; GkEst 4:1, 2, 3, 4; D; 1; Bar 5:1; 1Macc 2:14; 3:47; 2Macc  
3:19; 10:25; 2Esd 16:2

### CLOTHING

#### FUNERAL CLOTHING

Lv 11:32; 25a 21:10; Neh 9:1; Is 50:3; Jer 4:8; 49:3; Jl 1:13; Rev  
6:12; Jdt 4:10, 11, 12, 14; 8:5; 9:1; 10:3

### CLOUD

I am present in the **c** above the cover. . . . . Lv 16:2  
was erected, the **c** covered the . . . . . Nm 9:15  
were taking, and in **c** during the daytime. . . . . Dt 1:33  
they sent up a big **c** of smoke from the . . . . . Jgs 20:38  
claim it and a **c** linger over it . . . . . Job 3:5  
his covering was dark water and dense **c**. . . . . Ps 18:11  
favor is like a **c** that brings spring . . . . . Prv 16:15  
its assembly a **c** by day and smoke . . . . . Is 4:5  
is like a morning **c**, like the dew that . . . . . Hos 6:4  
look, a bright **c** overshadowed them. . . . . Mt 17:5  
Then a **c** overshadowed them, and a voice . . . . . Mk 9:7  
speaking when a **c** overshadowed them. . . . . Lk 9:34  
lifted up and a **c** took him out of . . . . . Ac 1:9  
were all under the **c** and they all went . . . . . 1Co 10:1  
have such a great **c** of witnesses. . . . . Heb 12:1  
was robbed with a **c**, with a rainbow. . . . . Rev 10:1  
last wisps of a **c**. Our lives will be . . . . . Wis 2:4  
and my throne was in a pillar of **c**. . . . . Sir 24:4  
appear with the **c**, as they were . . . . . 2Macc 2:8  
Jews saw the dust **c** created by the . . . . . 3Macc 5:48  
And after this a **c** full of water passed. . . . . 2Esd 4:49

#### COLUMN OF CLOUD

Ex 13:21; 13:22; 14:19; 33:9, 10; Nm 12:5; 14:14; Neh 9:19

### CLOUDS

my bow in the **c**, it will be the . . . . . Gn 9:13  
you, rides majestically through the **c**. . . . . Dt 33:26  
sky poured down, the **c** poured down water. . . . . Jgs 5:4  
heaven and their heads touch the **c**, . . . . . Job 20:6  
God's **c** went ahead of the brightness . . . . . Ps 18:12  
he thickened the **c** above, when he . . . . . Prv 8:28  
I will command the **c** not to rain on it. . . . . Is 5:6  
no light, a day of **c** and thick . . . . . Jl 2:2  
in the heavenly **c** with power and . . . . . Mt 24:30  
One coming in the **c** with great power . . . . . Mk 13:26  
with them in the **c** to meet with the . . . . . 1Th 4:17  
They are waterless **c** carried along by . . . . . Jude 12  
is coming with the **c**! Every eye will . . . . . Rev 1:7  
will leap from the **c** as if shot from a . . . . . Wis 5:21  
and their prayer will reach to the **c**. . . . . Sir 35:20  
Wisdom, and brought her down from the **c**. . . . . Bar 3:29  
God commands the **c** to move across the . . . . . LJer 61  
Lightning and **c**, bless the Lord, sing . . . . . PrAz 50  
from behind the **c**, a great fire. . . . . 2Macc 1:22  
toward it, and the **c** gathered around it. . . . . 2Esd 11:2

### GOALS

full of burning **c** from the altar, . . . . . Lv 16:12  
baked on glowing **c** and a jar of water . . . . . 1Ks 19:6  
His breath lights **c**, a flame shoots from . . . . . Job 41:21  
will rain fiery **c** and sulfur on the . . . . . Ps 11:6  
a man walks on hot **c**, don't his feet . . . . . Prv 6:28  
works it over **c**, and shapes it . . . . . Is 44:12  
will pile burning **c** of fire upon his . . . . . Ro 12:20  
the warm incense **c**. This will let off . . . . . Tob 6:17  
Don't stoke up the **c** of a sinner, and . . . . . Sir 8:10  
for God will burn **c** of fire over the . . . . . 2Esd 16:54  
and burning **c**. The tyrant. . . . . 4Macc 8:13

### COAT

hand inside your **c**." So Moses put his . . . . . Ex 4:6  
for the four corners of the **c** you wear. . . . . Dt 22:12  
gear, putting a **c** of armor on him . . . . . 1Sa 17:38  
me, righteousness as my **c** and turban; . . . . . Job 29:14  
wore courses like a **c**, let them seep . . . . . Ps 109:18  
put on a shaggy **c** in order to . . . . . Zec 13:4  
your shirt, let them have your **c** too. . . . . Mt 5:40  
Throwing his **c** to the side, he jumped up . . . . . Mk 10:50  
someone takes your **c**, don't withhold . . . . . Lk 6:29  
he wrapped his **c** around himself . . . . . Jn 21:7

said, "Put on your **c** and follow me." . . . . . Ac 12:8  
 bring along the **c** I left with Carpus. . . . . 2Ti 4:13  
 them up like a **c**. They will be . . . . . Heb 1:12

**COLUMN**

the day in a **c** of cloud to guide . . . . . Ex 13:21  
 descended in a **c** of cloud, stood at . . . . . Nm 12:5  
 But then the **c** of smoke began to rise . . . . . Jgs 20:40  
 Each **c** was about twenty-seven feet high . . . . . Jer 52:21  
 I gave you a **c** of lightning for light. . . . . 2Esd 1:14

**COLUMNS**

four rows of cedar **c** with cedar . . . . . 1Ki 7:2  
 read three or four **c** of the scroll, the . . . . . Jer 36:23  
 the earth—blood and fire and **c** of smoke. . . . . Jl 2:30

**COMMAND**

will obey your **c**. Only as the . . . . . Gn 41:40  
 everything that I **c** you, and your. . . . . Lv 7:2  
**C**Aaron and his sons: This is the. . . . . Ex 6:9  
 will be at the **c** of Aaron and his . . . . . Nm 4:27  
**C** the people as follows: You are about to. . . . . Dt 2:4

Remember the **c** that Moses the **LORD**'s. . . . . Josh 1:13  
 Or at your **c** does the eagle soar. . . . . Job 39:27  
 up, my God; you **c** that justice be . . . . . Ps 7:6  
 keep your father's **c**, don't abandon . . . . . Prv 6:20  
 grow up. I will **c** the clouds not to . . . . . Is 5:6  
 But now, this **c** is for you, priests. . . . . Mal 2:1  
 you are God's Son, **c** these stones to . . . . . Mt 4:3  
 and deaf spirit, I **c** you to come out of . . . . . Mk 9:25  
 you are God's Son, **c** this stone to . . . . . Lk 4:3  
 are my friends if you do what I **c** you. . . . . Jn 15:14  
 of Jesus Christ, I **c** you to leave her! . . . . . Ac 16:18  
 based on the **c** of the eternal God. . . . . Ro 16:26  
 hand, an earlier **c** is set aside . . . . . Heb 7:18  
 you kept my **c** to endure, I will. . . . . Rev 3:10

**COMMANDED**

The **LORD** God **c** the human, "Eat your fill . . . . . Gn 2:16  
 same day Pharaoh **c** the people's slave . . . . . Ex 5:6  
 The **LORD c** that these things be given to . . . . . Lv 7:36  
 the Sinai desert just as the **LORD c** him. . . . . Nm 1:19  
 what the **LORD** had **c** him for them. . . . . Dt 1:3  
 Moses my servant **c** you. Don't deviate . . . . . Josh 1:7  
 lifetime have you **c** the morning. . . . . Job 38:12  
 it happened! When he **c**, there it was! . . . . . Ps 33:9  
 I have **c** my holy ones; I have called my . . . . . Is 13:3  
 drink wine, and **c** the prophets. . . . . Am 2:12  
 an angel from God **c** and took Mary as . . . . . Mt 1:24  
 that Moses **c**. This will be a . . . . . Mk 1:44  
 Jesus had already **c** the unclean spirit . . . . . Lk 8:29  
 In the law, Moses **c** us to stone women. . . . . Jn 8:5  
 He **c** us to preach to the people and to . . . . . Ac 10:42  
 same way, the **LORD c** that those who . . . . . 1Co 9:14  
**LORD** and savior **c** through your . . . . . 2Pt 3:2

**COMMANDMENT**

to do all this **c** before the **LORD** . . . . . Dt 6:25  
 to carry out the **c** and Instruction . . . . . Josh 22:5  
 has a limit, but your **c** is boundless. . . . . Ps 119:96  
 The **c** is a lamp and instruction a light; . . . . . Prv 6:23  
 what is the greatest **c** in the Law? . . . . . Mt 22:36  
 You ignore God's **c** while holding on to . . . . . Mk 7:8  
 on the Sabbath in keeping with the **c**. . . . . Lk 23:56  
 Moses gave you the **c** about circumcision . . . . . Jn 7:22  
 and used this **c** to produce all. . . . . Ro 7:8  
 of priest have a **c** under the Law. . . . . Heb 7:5  
 Joseph kept the **c** in the time of his . . . . . 1Macc 2:53  
 keeping with the **c** that they make . . . . . 1Esd 4:52  
 have neglected my **c**, and have done. . . . . 2Esd 1:34  
 sons to die rather than disobey God's **c**. . . . . 4Macc 16:24

**COMMANDMENTS**

kept my orders, my **c**, my statutes, and . . . . . Gn 26:5  
 attention to his **c**, and keep all of . . . . . Ex 15:26  
 These are the **c** and the case laws . . . . . Nm 36:13

you to do—the Ten **C**—and wrote them . . . . . Dt 4:13  
 ways and obey his **c**. Hold on to him . . . . . Josh 22:5  
 kept the **c** from his lips and not . . . . . Job 23:12  
 God's deeds, but keeping God's **c**. . . . . Ps 78:7  
 Mt 19:17  
 You know the **c**. Don't commit murder. . . . . Mk 10:19  
 of all the **LORD**'s **c** and regulations. . . . . Lk 1:6  
 If you love me, you will keep my **c**. . . . . Jn 14:15  
 The **c**. Don't commit adultery, don't . . . . . Ro 13:9  
 know that we know him: if we keep his **c**. . . . . 1Jn 2:3  
 who keep God's **c** and hold firmly to . . . . . Rev 12:17  
 I disregarded your **c**. So you have . . . . . Tob 3:4  
 what someone needs to do to follow your **c**. . . . . Wis 9:9  
 then keep the **c**, and the **LORD** will . . . . . Sir 1:26  
 so as to keep the **c** that he gave to us. . . . . Bar 1:18  
 our lives and our **c**, they will soon . . . . . 1Macc 2:40  
 the **LORD** or the **c**, but he taught . . . . . 1Esd 8:7  
 to whom I gave **c**. But they were . . . . . 2Esd 2:1  
 sin against the **c** handed down by our . . . . . 4Macc 9:1

**COMPASSION**

and I will have **c** to whomever I wish . . . . . Ex 33:19  
 them! Don't have **c** on them and don't . . . . . Dt 13:8  
 to Israel and had **c** on them, turning . . . . . 2Ki 13:23  
 so that God has **c** on that person and . . . . . Job 33:24  
 remember your **c** and faithful . . . . . Ps 25:6  
 but even the **c** of the wicked is . . . . . Prv 12:10  
 The **LORD** will have **c** on Jacob, will again . . . . . Is 14:1  
 Name her No **c**, because I will no . . . . . Hos 1:6  
 the crowds, he had **c** for them because . . . . . Mt 9:36  
 crowd, he had **c** on them because . . . . . Mk 6:34  
 of our God's deep **c**, the dawn from . . . . . Lk 1:78  
 and I'll show **c** to whomever I . . . . . Ro 9:15  
 for the **LORD** is full of **c** and mercy. . . . . Jas 5:11  
 be pardoned out of **c**, but the powerful. . . . . Wis 6:6  
 Don't say, "His **c** is great; he will . . . . . Sir 5:6  
 with your great kindness and your great **c**. . . . . Bar 2:27  
 and to pray and ask for mercy and **c**. . . . . 1Macc 3:44  
 God will have **c** on his servants." . . . . . 2Macc 7:6  
 the winds, and reveal your **c** in this hour. . . . . 3Macc 2:19  
 order has shown us **c** by giving us the . . . . . 4Macc 5:25

**COMPASSIONATE**

make the man **c** toward you so that . . . . . Gn 43:14  
 out to me, I'll listen, because I'm **c**. . . . . Ex 22:27  
**LORD** your God is a **c** God. He won't let . . . . . Dt 4:31  
 is merciful and **c**. He won't withdraw . . . . . 2Ch 30:9  
 But God, being **c**, kept forgiving their . . . . . Ps 78:38  
 Be **c** just as your Father is. . . . . Lk 6:36  
 good works and **c** acts on behalf of . . . . . Ac 9:36  
 blessed! He is the **c** Father and God of . . . . . 2Co 1:3  
 fellow believers, **c**, and modest in . . . . . 1Pt 3:8  
 all, the **LORD** is **c** and merciful; he . . . . . Sir 2:11  
 to our credit, then you will be called **c**. . . . . 2Esd 8:32

**MERCIFUL AND COMPASSIONATE**

2Ch 30:9; Neh 9:17; 9:31; Ps 145:8; Jl 2:13; Jon 4:2

**CONCEIVED**

of time, Hannah **c** and gave birth to . . . . . 1Sa 1:20  
 night someone said, "A boy has been **c**" . . . . . Job 3:3  
 in sin, from the moment my mother **c** me. . . . . Ps 51:5  
 muttering lying words **c** in our minds. . . . . Is 59:13  
 she who **c** them has behaved . . . . . Hos 2:5  
 she carries was **c** by the Holy Spirit. . . . . Mt 1:20  
 Elizabeth has **c** a son. This woman . . . . . Lk 1:36  
 but also Rebecca **c** children with one . . . . . Ro 9:10

**CONFESS**

ways, you must **c** how you have sinned . . . . . Lv 5:5  
 Such persons will **c** the sin they have . . . . . Nm 5:7  
 of Israel. "I **c** the sins of the . . . . . Neh 1:6  
 my guilt. "I'll **c** my sins to the . . . . . Ps 32:5  
 but those who **c** and give them up. . . . . Prv 28:13  
 knee will bow and every tongue will **c**. . . . . Is 45:23  
 Because if you **c** with your mouth "Jesus . . . . . Ro 10:9  
 the fruit from our lips that **c** his name. . . . . Heb 13:15

## CONFIDENCE

your duties with **ε**, and may the **LORD** . . . . . 2Ch 19:11  
 the source of your **ε**, the integrity of . . . . . Job 4:6  
**LORD** will be your **ε**, he will guard . . . . . Prv 3:26  
 I want you to have **ε** in the soundness of . . . . . Lk 1:4  
 by surprise by the **ε** with which Peter . . . . . Ac 4:13  
 that we would have **ε** in God, who raises . . . . . 2Co 1:9  
 we hold on to the **ε** and the pride that . . . . . Heb 3:6

## CONSCIENCE

## GOOD CONSCIENCE

1Ti 1:5, 19; 2Ti 1:3; Heb 13:18; 1Pt 3:16; 3:21

## COVENANT

against your **ε**, your sacred . . . . . Jdt 9:13  
 will endure, since God's **ε** is far off?" . . . . . Sir 16:22  
 make an eternal **ε** with them that I . . . . . Bar 2:35  
 over permanently! Don't set aside your **ε**. . . . . PrAz 11  
 the holy **ε**. They joined with . . . . . 1Macc 1:15  
 and remember the **ε** with Abraham, . . . . . 2Macc 1:2  
 people, ruler over the children of his **ε**. . . . . Ps 151:1-7  
 those who were unwilling to keep your **ε**. . . . . 2Esd 2:5

## BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

Ex 24:8; Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Heb 9:20; 10:29

## BREAK MY COVENANT

Jgs 2:1; Ps 89:34; Jer 33:20; 33:25; Zec 11:10

## CHEST CONTAINING THE COVENANT

Ex 25:22; 26:33, 34; 30:6, 26; 31:7; 39:35; 40:3, 5, 21; Nm 4:5; 7:89;  
 10:33; 14:44; 17:4, 10; Josh 3:3; 8:33; 1Sa 4:4; Heb 9:4; 1Macc 2:4

## COVENANT CHEST

Josh 3:6, 8, 11, 14, 17; 4:7, 9, 18; 6:6, 8; Ps 132:8; Jer 3:16; 2Macc  
 2:5

## COVENANT DOCUMENT

Ex 16:34; 25:16, 21; 27:21; 30:6, 36; 40:20; Lv 16:13; 24:3

## COVENANT TABLES

Ex 31:18; 32:15; 34:29; Dt 9:9, 11, 15

## COVENANT WITH YOU

Gn 6:18; 9:9, 11; 17:7; Ex 34:27; Lv 26:9; Jgs 2:1; 1Sa 20:8; 2Sa  
 3:13; 3:21; Is 55:3; Eze 16:8, 60, 62

## ENDURING COVENANT

Gn 9:16; 17:7, 13, 19; Is 61:8

## GOD'S COVENANT

Lv 2:13; Dt 17:2; 29:12; 31:26; Jgs 20:27; 1Sa 4:4; 2Sa 15:24; 1Ch  
 16:6; Ps 78:10; Ac 7:51

## NEW COVENANT

Jer 31:31; Lk 22:20; 1Co 11:25; 2Co 3:6; Heb 8:8; 9:15; 12:24

## COVENANTS

Don't make any **ε** with them or their gods. . . . . Ex 23:32  
 Don't make any **ε** with them, and . . . . . Dt 7:2  
 despising solemn pledges and breaking **ε**. . . . . Eze 16:59  
 when making **ε**, so judgment . . . . . Hos 10:4  
 the glory, the **ε**, the giving of the. . . . . Ro 9:4  
 promises by means of solemn pledges and **ε**? . . . . . Wis 12:21  
 stand by the **ε**, and their . . . . . Sir 44:12  
 the sake of the **ε** with their . . . . . 2Macc 8:15  
 have believed your **ε** as have these . . . . . 2Esd 3:32

## CREATE

When God began to **ε** the heavens and the . . . . . Gn 1:1  
 He will be able to **ε** designs; do . . . . . Ex 31:4  
 Jerusalem and to **ε** a disturbance in . . . . . Neh 4:8  
**ε** a clean heart for me, God; put a new. . . . . Ps 51:10  
 to do evil; they **ε** controversies all . . . . . Prv 6:14  
 then the **LORD** will **ε** over the whole site . . . . . Is 4:5  
 victory. He will **ε** calm with his . . . . . Zep 3:17  
 that we shouldn't **ε** problems for. . . . . Ac 15:19  
 out for people who **ε** divisions and. . . . . Ro 16:17  
 These people **ε** divisions. Since they . . . . . Jude 19

## CREATED

the sanctuary, **LORD**, that your hand **ε** . . . . . Ex 15:17

the day God first **ε** human beings on . . . . . Dt 4:32  
 idols, but it is the **LORD** who **ε** heaven! . . . . . 1Ch 16:26  
 and south—you **ε** them! The . . . . . Ps 89:12  
 The **LORD** **ε** me at the beginning of his . . . . . Prv 8:22  
 forces has **ε** a plan; who can . . . . . Is 14:27  
 of us, one God who **ε** us? Why does . . . . . Mal 2:10  
 The Sabbath was **ε** for humans; humans . . . . . Mk 2:27  
 I shared with you before the world was **ε**. . . . . Jn 17:5  
 are the one who **ε** the heaven, the . . . . . Ac 4:24  
 or depth, or any other thing that is **ε**. . . . . Ro 8:39  
 of everything and **ε** the world through . . . . . Heb 1:2  
 power, because you **ε** all things. It is . . . . . Rev 4:11  
 You **ε** Adam and you created Eve his wife . . . . . Tob 8:6  
 God **ε** everything so that it might exist. . . . . Wis 1:14  
 Wisdom was **ε** before everything else. . . . . Sir 1:4  
 the living God who **ε** heaven and earth . . . . . Bel 5  
 from nothing, and **ε** humankind in the . . . . . 2Macc 7:28  
 of the Lord who **ε** the heaven and the . . . . . 1Esd 6:12  
 you, King, **ε** the whole wide. . . . . 3Macc 2:9  
 of the hot sun, I **ε** trees covered with . . . . . 2Esd 1:20  
 Godly thinking **ε** in her a masculine . . . . . 4Macc 15:23

## GOD CREATED

Gn 1:21; 1:27; 5:1; Ac 17:26; 1Ti 4:3

## CREATION

on it God rested from all the work of **ε**. . . . . Gn 2:3  
 performs an act of **ε**, and the ground. . . . . Nm 16:30  
 Then all **ε** will rejoice over Babylon, . . . . . Jer 51:48  
 the beginning of **ε**, God made them . . . . . Mk 10:6  
 you loved me before the **ε** of the world. . . . . Jn 17:24  
 Ever since the **ε** of the world, God's . . . . . Ro 1:20  
 the seventh day of **ε** God rested on the . . . . . Heb 4:4  
 and true witness, the ruler of God's **ε**. . . . . Rev 3:14  
 heavens and all your **ε** bless you forever! . . . . . Tob 8:5  
 king of all your **ε**, hear my prayer! . . . . . Jdt 9:12  
 now. Let's enjoy **ε** to the fullest as . . . . . Wis 2:6  
 for what am I in such a vast **ε**? . . . . . Sir 16:17  
 and master of all **ε**, holy among the . . . . . 3Macc 2:2  
 to me, "The **ε** can't run ahead of. . . . . 2Esd 5:44  
 the seven days of **ε** that danced. . . . . 4Macc 14:7

## CREATURE

and every kind of **ε** that crawls on the . . . . . Gn 1:25  
 winged heavenly **ε** at one end and one . . . . . Ex 25:19  
 unclean swarming **ε**—but the fact goes. . . . . Lv 5:2  
 Any clean winged **ε** can be eaten, however . . . . . Dt 14:20  
 the first winged **ε** were each seven . . . . . 1Kj 6:24  
 voice; some winged **ε** could report what . . . . . Ecc 10:20  
 entire earth; no **ε** fluttered a wing . . . . . Is 10:14  
 and proclaim the good news to every **ε**. . . . . Mk 16:15  
 No **ε** is hidden from it, but rather . . . . . Heb 4:13  
 The first living **ε** was like a lion. . . . . Rev 4:7  
 some miserable **ε**. He covers it with . . . . . Wis 13:14  
 useless to every living **ε** for all time. . . . . 3Macc 3:29  
 it, not a single **ε** that lives on the. . . . . 2Esd 11:6

## CREATURES

stationed winged **ε** wielding flaming . . . . . Gn 3:24  
 winged heavenly **ε** of hammered gold, . . . . . Ex 25:18  
 These are the **ε** that you are. . . . . Lv 11:2  
 the two winged **ε**. In this way he . . . . . Nm 7:89  
 winged heavenly **ε**. Eli's two sons . . . . . 1Sa 4:4  
 the heavenly **ε** and flew; he . . . . . Ps 18:10  
 Ants as **ε** aren't strong, but they store . . . . . Prv 30:25  
 Winged **ε** were stationed around him. Each . . . . . Is 6:2  
 and the creeping **ε** of the fertile . . . . . Hos 2:18  
 magnificent winged **ε** casting their . . . . . Heb 9:5  
 were four living **ε** encircling the . . . . . Rev 4:6  
 humans might rule the **ε** that you made, . . . . . Wis 9:2  
 small among flying **ε**, but its produce. . . . . Sir 11:3  
 on the winged **ε**, looking down into . . . . . PrAz 31  
 kept two living **ε** in reserve; one . . . . . 2Esd 6:49

## CROSS

take up their **ε**, and follow me. . . . . Mt 16:24  
 Carrying his **ε** by himself, he went out to . . . . . Jn 19:17



had Jesus killed by nailing him to a **c**. . . . . Ac 2:23  
 so that Christ's **c** won't be emptied. . . . . 1Co 1:17  
 He endured the **c**, ignoring the . . . . . Heb 12:2

**CROWD**

A diverse **c** also went up with them along . . . . . Ex 12:38  
 at Jezreel saw a **c** of people coming . . . . . 2Ki 9:17  
 I feared the large **c**, the clan's . . . . . Job 31:34  
 I will praise you in a huge **c** of people. . . . . Ps 35:18  
 Above the noisy **c**, she calls out. At the . . . . . Prv 1:21  
 that of a great **c**. Listen! An uproar. . . . . Is 13:4  
 They don't **c** each other; each keeps to . . . . . Jl 2:8  
 when Jesus saw the **c**, he ordered his . . . . . Mt 8:18  
 him through the **c** so they tore off . . . . . Mk 2:4  
 passed through the **c** and went on his . . . . . Lk 4:30  
 and a **c** of people who were sick, blind, . . . . . Jn 5:3  
 this sound, a **c** gathered. . . . . Ac 2:6  
 there was a great **c** that no one could . . . . . Rev 7:9  
 this great buzzing **c** will certainly. . . . . Bar 2:29  
 To see the whole **c** on its knees and faces . . . . . 2Macc 3:21  
 even though the **c** was blowing the . . . . . 1Esd 5:62  
 Now the **c** in front of the temple was . . . . . 3Macc 1:24  
 Mount Zion a great **c**, which I couldn't . . . . . 2Esd 2:42

**CROWN**

head and place the holy **c** on the turban. . . . . Ex 29:6  
 ornament, the holy **c**, on the turban's . . . . . Lv 8:9  
 head, on the **c** of that prince . . . . . Dt 33:16  
 took Micom's **c** from his head. He . . . . . 1Ch 20:2  
 from me, removed the **c** from my head, . . . . . Job 19:9  
 to him; you put a **c** of pure gold on . . . . . Ps 21:3  
 head; she will give you a glorious **c**. . . . . Prv 4:9  
 to give them a **c** in place of ashes, . . . . . Is 61:3  
 gold and make a **c**. Place it on the . . . . . Zec 6:11  
 twisted together a **c** of thorns and put . . . . . Mt 27:29  
 twisted together a **c** of thorns and put . . . . . Mk 15:17  
 twisted together a **c** of thorns and put . . . . . Jn 19:2  
 do this to get a **c** of leaves that . . . . . 1Co 9:25  
 you will receive an unfading **c** of glory. . . . . 1Pt 5:4  
 death, and I will give you the **c** of life. . . . . Rev 2:10  
 place the royal **c** upon her head. She . . . . . GkEst 1:11  
 Let's **c** ourselves with rosebuds before . . . . . Wis 2:8  
 boasting, gladness, and **c** of rejoicing. . . . . Sir 1:11  
 eternal one's glory on your head like a **c**. . . . . Bar 5:2  
 He gave him the **c**, his robe, and the . . . . . 1Macc 6:15  
 him a gold **c**, a palm tree, and. . . . . 2Macc 14:4  
 She took the **c** from the king's head and . . . . . 1Esd 4:30  
 my judgment to a **c**. Just as there is . . . . . 2Esd 5:42

**CRUCIFIED**

tortured, and **c**. But he will be . . . . . Mt 20:19  
 whipped, then handed him over to be **c** . . . . . Mk 15:15  
 that Jesus be **c**. Their voices won . . . . . Lk 23:23  
 Jesus over to be **c**. The soldiers took . . . . . Jn 19:16  
 Jesus, whom you **c**, both Lord and . . . . . Ac 2:36  
 we used to be **c** with him in order . . . . . Ro 6:6  
 and Egypt, where also their Lord was **c** . . . . . Rev 11:8

**CRUCIFIED HIM**

Mt 27:35; Mk 15:24; 15:25; Lk 23:33; 24:20; Jn 19:18

**CRUCIFY**

you will kill and **c**. And some you will . . . . . Mt 27:34  
 They shouted back, "**C** him! . . . . . Mk 15:13  
 kept shouting out, "**C** him! Crucify him!" . . . . . Lk 23:21  
 they shouted out, "**C**, crucify!" Pilate. . . . . Jn 19:6  
 feet high. " **C** Haman on it!" the . . . . . GkEst 7:9

**CURSE**

I will not **c** the fertile land. . . . . Gn 8:21  
 Don't say a **c** against God, and don't. . . . . Ex 22:28  
 that brings the **c** will be in the . . . . . Nm 5:18  
 blessing and **c** before you right . . . . . Dt 11:26  
 both blessing and **c**, in agreement with . . . . . Josh 8:34  
 He will certainly **c** you to your face. . . . . Job 1:11  
 of me; those who mock me **c** using my name! . . . . . Ps 102:8  
 The **L**ORD's **c** is on the house of the . . . . . Prv 3:33  
 enraged and will **c** their king and . . . . . Is 8:21

me, "This is the **c** going out across. . . . . Zec 5:3  
 name can quickly turn around and **c** me. . . . . Mk 9:39  
 Bless those who **c** you. Pray for those who . . . . . Lk 6:28  
 the Law. And they are under God's **c**! . . . . . Jn 7:49  
 who harass you—bless and don't **c** them. . . . . Ro 12:14  
 and Father and **c**—human beings made . . . . . Jas 3:9  
 no longer be any **c**. The throne of God . . . . . Rev 22:3  
 but a mother's **c** undermines their . . . . . Sir 23:9  
 upon us, even the **c** that the Lord . . . . . Bar 1:20  
 They can't **c** or bless ruler. . . . . LJer 65  
 by the eternal **c** that will come on . . . . . 4Macc 10:15

**CURSED**

you are the one **c** out of all the . . . . . Gn 3:14  
 They have **c** their own father . . . . . Lv 20:9  
 is blessed and whomever you curse is **c**. . . . . Nm 22:6  
**C** is anyone who makes an idol or an . . . . . Dt 27:15  
 of Jericho will be **c** before the **L**ORD. . . . . Josh 6:26  
 sinned and then **c** God in their . . . . . Job 1:5  
 land, but those **c** by God will be cut . . . . . Ps 37:22  
 who turn a blind eye will be greatly **c**. . . . . Prv 28:27  
 earlier time, God **c** the land of. . . . . Is 9:1  
 You are being **c** with a curse, and you, . . . . . Mal 3:9  
 Then he **c** and swore, "I don't know the . . . . . Mt 26:74  
 how the fig tree you **c** has dried up. . . . . Mk 11:21  
 I wish I could be **c**, cut off from Christ. . . . . Ro 9:3  
 and close to being **c**. It ends up being . . . . . Heb 6:8  
 heat, and they **c** the name of the . . . . . Rev 16:9  
 slandered you be **c**! Cursed are all . . . . . Tob 13:2  
 wicked. Their whole family line will be **c**. . . . . Wis 3:12  
 their mothers have been **c** by the Lord. . . . . Sir 3:16  
 the Philistine, who **c** me by his idols. . . . . Ps 151 2:1  
 of Shechem, saying, "Their anger is **c**?" . . . . . 4Macc 2:19

**CURTAIN**

Each **c** should be forty-two feet long and . . . . . Ex 26:2  
 the **L**ORD, toward the sanctuary's inner **c**. . . . . Lv 4:6  
 down the screening **c**, and they will . . . . . Nm 4:5  
 Then he made the **c** out of fine linen and . . . . . 2Ch 3:14  
 like a robe; you open the skies like a **c**. . . . . Ps 104:2  
 the skies like a **c** and spreads it out. . . . . Is 40:22  
 Look, the **c** of the sanctuary was torn in . . . . . Mt 27:51  
 The **c** of the sanctuary was torn in two . . . . . Mk 15:38  
 shining. Then the **c** in the sanctuary . . . . . Lk 23:45  
 being, enters the sanctuary behind the **c** . . . . . Heb 6:19  
 from behind the **c** and left the. . . . . Sir 50:5  
 gold censers, a **c**, crowns, and the . . . . . 1Macc 1:22

**CUSH**

It flows around the entire land of **C**. . . . . Gn 2:13  
 Ham's family: **C**, Egypt, Put, and Canaan . . . . . 1Ch 1:8  
 to the **L**ORD about **C**, a Benjaminite. . . . . Ps 7:1  
 from Pathros, **C**, Elam, Shinar, . . . . . Is 11:11  
**C** and Egypt constituted her strength, . . . . . Na 3:9  
 from India to **C**, one hundred . . . . . GkEst 8:9

**CUSHITE**

on account of the **C** woman whom he had . . . . . Nm 12:1  
 Libyan, Sukkite, and **C** warriors. . . . . 2Ch 12:3  
**C** topaz won't compare with her; she can't . . . . . Job 28:19  
 Can a **C** change his skin or a leopard its . . . . . Jer 13:23

**CYPRUS**

returning from **C**, they heard about . . . . . Is 23:1  
 was a Levite from **C**. . . . . Ac 4:36  
 Aradus, Gortyna, Cnidus, **C**, and Cyrene. . . . . 1Macc 15:23  
 who was commander of the troops from **C**. . . . . 2Macc 4:29

**CYRENE**

Simon, a man from **C**. They forced him . . . . . Mt 27:32  
 Simon, a man from **C**, Alexander . . . . . Mk 15:21  
 Simon, a man from **C**, who was coming in . . . . . Lk 23:26  
 of Libya bordering **C**, and visitors from . . . . . Ac 2:10  
 Aradus, Gortyna, Cnidus, Cyprus, and **C**. . . . . 1Macc 15:23  
 Jason of **C** recorded all of these things . . . . . 2Macc 2:23

## CYRUS

In the first year of King **C** . . . . . Ezr 1:1  
 of Persia's King **C**, to carry out the . . . . . 2Ch 36:22  
 who say about **C**. "My shepherd—he will . . . . . Is 44:28  
 his ancestors, **C** the Persian took . . . . . Bel 1  
 the first year of **C** as king of the . . . . . 1Esd 2:1

**Dd**

## DAGON

to their god **D** and to hold a . . . . . Jgs 16:23  
 down the temple of **D** and those who had . . . . . 1Macc 10:84

## DAMASCUS

and chased them to Hobah, north of **D** . . . . . Gn 14:15  
 them. They went to **D**, stayed there, and . . . . . 1Ki 11:24  
 tower of Lebanon, looking out toward **D** . . . . . Song 7:4  
 chief of Aram is **D**, the chief of . . . . . Is 7:8  
 three crimes of **D**, and for four, I . . . . . Am 1:3  
 the synagogues in **D**. If he found . . . . . Ac 9:2  
 At **D** the governor under King Aretas was . . . . . 2Co 11:32  
 lived in Cilicia, **D**, Lebanon, and . . . . . Jdt 1:7  
 he passed through the country as far as **D** . . . . . 1Macc 11:62

## DAN

and went after them as far as **D** . . . . . Gn 14:14  
**D** and Naphtali, Gad and Asher . . . . . Ex 1:4  
 Dibri's daughter from the tribe of **D** . . . . . Lv 24:11  
 from **D**, Ahiezer, Ammishaddai's son . . . . . Nm 1:12  
 Gad, Asher, Zebulun, **D**, and Naphtali . . . . . Dt 27:13  
 of the people of **D** was lost to them . . . . . Josh 19:47  
 declares from **D**, someone proclaims . . . . . Jer 4:15  
 your god lives, **D**," and, "As the way . . . . . Am 8:14  
 Israel's King Jeroboam had set up in **D** . . . . . Tob 1:5

## DAN TO BEER-SHEBA

Jgs 20:1; 1Sa 3:20; 2Sa 17:11; 24:2, 15; 1Ch 21:2

## DANIEL

second **D**, with Abigail the . . . . . 1Ch 3:1  
 three men, Noah, **D**, and Job, lived . . . . . Eze 14:14  
 thing that **D** talked about . . . . . Mt 24:15  
 up the holy spirit of a young man named **D** . . . . . Sus 45  
**D** was a companion of the king, honored . . . . . Bel 2  
**D** was delivered from the lions' mouths . . . . . 1Macc 2:60  
 Because **D** was envied and slandered, he . . . . . 3Macc 6:7  
 Isaiah, and **D** to help you. It . . . . . 2Esd 2:18  
 that surrounded **D** weren't as wild, . . . . . 4Macc 16:3

## DANITE

These are the **D** clans according to . . . . . Nm 26:42  
 out seventh for the clans of the **D** tribe . . . . . Josh 19:40

## DANITES

the tribe of the **D**, a chief, Bukki, . . . . . Nm 34:22  
 The **D** sent five men from their whole . . . . . Jgs 18:2

## DARIUS

Cyrus until the rule of Persia's King **D** . . . . . Ezr 4:5  
**D** the Mede received the kingdom at the . . . . . Dn 5:31  
 year of King **D**, in the sixth . . . . . Hg 1:1  
 he defeated King **D**, who ruled the . . . . . 1Macc 1:1  
 year of the rule of Persia's King **D** . . . . . 1Esd 2:26

## DAUGHTER

was Milchah the **d** of Haran, father . . . . . Gn 11:29  
 Pharaoh's **d** came down to bathe in the . . . . . Ex 2:5  
 gives birth to a **d**, she will be . . . . . Lv 12:5  
 was Cozbi the **d** of Zur, a tribal . . . . . Nm 25:15  
 Don't give your **d** to one of their . . . . . Dt 7:3  
 give Achsah my **d** in marriage to . . . . . Josh 15:16  
 in your salvation in the gates of **d** Zion . . . . . Ps 9:14  
**D** Zion is left like a small shelter in a . . . . . Is 1:8  
 Gomer, Diblaim's **d**, and she became . . . . . Hos 1:3  
 him, saying, "My **d** has just died. But . . . . . Mt 9:13  
 with him, "My **d** is about to die . . . . . Mk 5:28  
 prophet, Anna the **d** of Phanuel, who . . . . . Lk 2:36

Don't be afraid, **d** Zion. Look! Your king . . . . . Jn 12:15  
 Pharaoh's **d** adopted and cared . . . . . Ac 7:21  
 slave but a son or **d**, and if you are . . . . . Ga 4:7  
 son of Pharaoh's **d** when he was grown . . . . . Heb 11:24  
 Sarah, Raguei's **d**, also heard . . . . . Tob 3:7  
 She was the **d** of Merari son of . . . . . Jdt 8:1  
 Give a **d** in marriage, and you will have . . . . . Sir 7:25  
 Susanna, Hilkiah's **d**, was very . . . . . Sus 2  
 the bride, a **d** of one of the . . . . . 1Macc 9:37  
 his mistress, the **d** of the eminent . . . . . 1Esd 4:29  
 This **d** of devout Abraham remembered her . . . . . 4Macc 15:28

## DAUGHTERS

lived 800 years; he had other sons and **d** . . . . . Gn 5:4  
 who had seven **d**. The daughters . . . . . Ex 2:16  
 and your sons and **d**. These things are . . . . . Lv 10:14  
 sons, and your **d**. I'm giving you . . . . . Nm 18:11  
 you, your sons or **d**, your male or . . . . . Dt 5:14  
 bar, his sons and **d**, his cattle . . . . . Josh 7:24  
 He had seven sons and three **d** . . . . . Job 1:2  
 their own sons and **d** to demons! . . . . . Ps 106:37  
 The leech has two **d**. "Give, give!" There . . . . . Prv 30:15  
 Because Zion's **d** applaud . . . . . Is 3:16  
 Therefore, your **d** act like . . . . . Hos 4:13  
 women and said, "**d** of Jerusalem . . . . . Lk 23:28  
 Your sons and **d** will prophesy . . . . . Ac 2:17  
 led by God's Spirit are God's sons and **d** . . . . . Ro 8:14  
 to many sons and **d** of whom he's leading . . . . . Heb 2:10  
 God, and they will be my sons and **d** . . . . . Rev 21:7  
 as booty and their **d** as prisoners. You . . . . . Jdt 9:4  
 and to be a judge of your sons and **d** . . . . . Wis 9:7  
 Do you have **d**? Be attentive to their . . . . . Sir 7:24  
 of us ate the flesh of our sons and **d** . . . . . Bar 2:3  
 their wives, sons, **d**, their male and . . . . . 1Esd 5:1  
 and mothers to **d**. Other women had . . . . . 3Macc 5:49  
 a mother with her **d**, and like a nurse . . . . . 2Esd 1:28

## DAVID

of Jesse, and Jesse the father of **D** . . . . . Ru 4:22  
 The LORD's spirit came over **D** . . . . . 1Sa 16:13  
 A psalm of **D**, when he fled from his son . . . . . Ps 3:1  
 When the house of **D** was told that Aram . . . . . Is 7:2  
 LORD their God and **D** their king; they . . . . . Hos 3:5  
 you ever read what **D** did when he was . . . . . Mk 2:25  
 will give him the throne of **D** his father . . . . . Lk 1:32  
 beforehand through **D** had to be . . . . . Ac 1:16  
 His Son was descended from **D** . . . . . Ro 1:3  
 he says through **D** much later, Today . . . . . Heb 4:7  
 who has the key of **D**. Whatever he . . . . . Rev 3:7  
 of my ancestor **D** and stayed away . . . . . Tob 1:4  
 a covenant with **D**, Jesse's son, from . . . . . Sir 45:25  
**D** inherited the throne of the kingdom . . . . . 1Macc 2:57  
 and the scrolls of **D** and letters of . . . . . 2Macc 2:13  
 the plan of King **D** and the greatness . . . . . 1Esd 1:4  
 [A hallelujah of **D**, Jesse's son.] I was . . . . . Ps 151:1:1  
 raised up for yourself a servant named **D** . . . . . 2Esd 3:23  
 by the story of when King **D** was thirsty . . . . . 4Macc 3:6

## SON OF DAVID

Mt 1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; Mk 10:47; 10:48;  
 Lk 3:31; 18:38, 39

## DEAD

because they thought, We'll all be **d** . . . . . Ex 12:33  
 unclean thing—the **d** body of an unclean . . . . . Lv 5:2  
 Your **d** bodies will fall in this desert . . . . . Nm 14:29  
 servant Moses is **d**. Now get ready to . . . . . Josh 1:2  
 The **d** writhe, the inhabitants beneath the . . . . . Job 26:5  
 you when they are **d**. Who gives you . . . . . Ps 6:5  
 and her paths go down to the shadowy **d** . . . . . Prv 2:18  
 Consult the **d** on behalf of the . . . . . Is 8:19  
 who touch the **d**, all who eat of it . . . . . Hos 9:4  
 who were trying to kill the child are **d** . . . . . Mt 2:20  
 The child isn't **d**. She's only . . . . . Mk 5:39  
 the city gate, a **d** man was being . . . . . Lk 7:12  
 raised from the **d**, his disciples . . . . . Jn 2:22  
 raised from the **d**. We are witnesses . . . . . Ac 3:15

from the **d**, which was based . . . . . Ro 1:4  
 turning away from **d** works, of faith in . . . . . Heb 6:1  
 from among the **d**, and the ruler of . . . . . Rev 1:5  
 but now look: he is burying the **d** again!" . . . . . Tob 2:8  
 will be filled, overflowing with their **d** . . . . . Jdt 2:8  
 So the **d** who did what's right will . . . . . Wis 4:16  
 don't withhold kindness from the **d** . . . . . Sir 7:33  
 us. Surely the **d** who are in the . . . . . Bar 2:17  
 as people place gifts in front of the **d**! . . . . . LJer 26  
 about this, they deeply mourned for the **d** . . . . . 1Macc 2:39  
 behavior and good conduct of the **d** man. . . . . 2Macc 4:37  
 I will raise the **d** from their places and . . . . . 2Esd 2:16  
 fell down half **d** in the temple . . . . . 4Macc 4:11

**DEAD SEA**

Gn 14:3; Nm 34:3, 12; Dt 3:17; 4:49; Josh 3:16; 12:3; 15:2, 5;  
 18:9; 2Kgs 14:25; Eze 47:8, 18; Zec 14:8

**RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD**

Mk 12:26; Lk 20:35; Ac 17:32; Ro 1:4; Heb 6:2

**RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD**

Mt 22:31; Ac 4:2; 23:6; 24:21; 1Co 15:12; 15:13, 21, 42; Phi 3:11;  
 2Macc 12:44

**RISE FROM THE DEAD**

Mk 8:31; 12:25; Lk 24:46; Jn 20:9; Ac 17:3; 26:23

**DEATH**

you really put an innocent nation to **d**? . . . . . Gn 20:4  
 Egyptians, won't they stone us to **d**? . . . . . Ex 8:26  
 After the **d** of Aaron's two sons . . . . . Lv 16:1  
 person who approaches will be put to **d** . . . . . Nm 1:51  
 him even though a **d** sentence was not . . . . . Dt 19:6  
 will be put to **d**. Be brave and . . . . . Josh 1:18  
 in vain for **d**, who search for it . . . . . Job 3:21  
 brings me back from the very gates of **d** . . . . . Ps 9:13  
 sinks down to **d**, and her paths go . . . . . Prv 2:18  
 of King Uzziah's **d**, I saw the Lord . . . . . Is 6:1  
 I will put to **d** their much loved . . . . . Hos 9:16  
 lived in the region and in shadow of **d** . . . . . Mt 4:16  
 or mother will certainly be put to **d** . . . . . Mk 7:10  
 in the shadow of **d**, to guide us on . . . . . Lk 1:79  
 judgment but has passed from **d** into life. . . . . Jn 5:24  
 was impossible for **d** to hang on to him. . . . . Ac 2:24  
 practices deserve **d**, they not only . . . . . Ro 1:32  
 suffering of his **d**. He suffered death . . . . . Heb 2:9  
 I have the keys of **d** and the Grave. . . . . Rev 1:18  
 But now, **d** will soon fall upon them, so . . . . . Jdt 11:11  
 Don't seek **d** through the error of your . . . . . Wis 1:12  
 They will be blessed at the time of **d** . . . . . Sir 1:13  
 is sentenced to **d** for doing wrong . . . . . LJer 17  
 and saved us from **d**. God pulled us out . . . . . PrAz 65  
 If I do this, it's **d**, but if I don't, I . . . . . Sus 22  
 fortresses, and put to **d** many kings. . . . . 1Macc 1:2  
 up the immoral to **d** be praised in . . . . . 2Macc 1:17  
 whether by **d** or some other . . . . . 1Esd 8:24  
 prepared to accept **d** instead of making . . . . . 3Macc 1:29  
 appointed **d** for him and for . . . . . 2Esd 3:7  
 to the point of **d**, all of these . . . . . 4Macc 1:9

**DECREE**

Let copies of this **d** be displayed . . . . . GkEst 8:13  
 delay, and the **d** of the grave . . . . . Sir 14:12  
 person was condemned to death by royal **d** . . . . . 1Macc 1:57  
 issued a public **d** that all Jews . . . . . 2Macc 10:8  
 of the written **d** from King . . . . . 1Esd 8:8  
 Wherever this **d** was read, a feast was . . . . . 3Macc 4:1  
 If you declare the **d** of God to be just, . . . . . 2Esd 10:16

**DEDICATED**

but hasn't yet **d** it? He can leave . . . . . Dt 20:5  
 Then they **d** Eleazar, . . . . . 1Sa 7:1  
 Every **d** thing in Israel . . . . . Eze 44:29  
 her for the days **d** to the Baals. . . . . Hos 2:13  
 so that she can be **d** to God in both . . . . . 1Co 7:34

**DEDICATED TO THE LORD**

Lv 22:3; Nm 6:2; 18:6; 2Ch 31:6; Lk 2:23; Eph 2:21

**DEDICATION**

at that season the **d** of the altar . . . . . 1Macc 4:59  
 For the **d** of the Lord's temple, they . . . . . 1Esd 7:7

**DEEDS**

**AWESOME DEEDS**

Ex 15:11; Dt 6:22; Ps 45:4; 65:5; 106:22; 145:6

**EVIL DEEDS**

1Sa 24:13; Eze 9:13; Ps 28:4; Jer 4:4; 5:28; 11:15; 21:12; 33:5; Eze  
 33:13; Mic 3:4; Zec 1:4; Lk 3:20

**RIGHTEOUS DEEDS**

Ps 11:7; 71:16; Is 64:6; Eze 3:20; 18:24; 33:13

**DELIVER**

**I WILL DELIVER**

Ex 25:22; 2Ch 12:7; Ps 50:15; Jer 15:9, 13; 21:7; 30:10; 46:27; Eze  
 37:23; Zep 3:19; Zec 8:13

**DEMETRIUS**

In the year 151, **D** the son of Seleucus . . . . . 1Macc 7:1  
 during the rule of **D**, we Jews wrote to . . . . . 2Macc 1:7

**DEMON**

hyenas, the goat **d** will call to his. . . . . Is 34:14  
 many who were **d**-possessed . . . . . Mt 8:16  
 harshly to the **d**. "Come out of him!" . . . . . Mk 1:25  
 the spirit of an unclean **d**. He screamed,  
 You have a **d**. Who wants to kill . . . . . Jn 7:20  
 Asmodeus, an evil **d**, killed them . . . . . Tob 3:8

**DEMON-POSSESSED**

many who were **d**. He threw the . . . . . Mt 8:16  
 to Jesus those who were sick or **d** . . . . . Mk 1:32  
 told them how the **d** man had been . . . . . Lk 8:36

**DEMONS**

to the goat **d** that they follow . . . . . Lv 17:7  
 They sacrificed to **d**, not to God . . . . . Dt 32:17  
 their own sons and daughters to **d**! . . . . . Ps 106:37  
 live there, and goat **d** will dance there . . . . . Is 13:21  
 those possessed by **d**, those with . . . . . Mt 4:24  
 he threw out many **d**. But he didn't let . . . . . Mk 1:34  
**D** also came out of many people . . . . . Lk 4:41  
 is sacrificed to **d** and not to God. . . . . 1Co 10:20  
 Even the **d** believe this, and . . . . . Jas 2:19  
 stop worshipping **d** and idols made of . . . . . Rev 9:18  
 when you sacrificed to **d** and not to God. . . . . Bar 4:7

**THROW OUT DEMONS**

Mt 10:8; 12:27, 28; Mk 3:15; 16:17; Lk 11:18; 11:19, 20

**DENIED**

and he hasn't **d** me anything except . . . . . Gn 39:9  
 you, but the LORD has **d** you any honor. . . . . Nm 24:11  
 pain; for I've not **d** the words of the . . . . . Job 6:10  
 you haven't **d** what his lips . . . . . Ps 21:2  
 They've oppressed and **d** justice. . . . . Eze 22:29  
 with the sword, **d** all compassion, . . . . . Am 1:11  
 But he **d** it in front of all of them, . . . . . Mt 26:70  
 But he **d** it, saying, "I don't know what . . . . . Mk 14:68  
 When everyone **d** it, Peter said, . . . . . Lk 8:45  
 disciples?" Peter **d** it, saying, "I'm . . . . . Jn 18:25  
 handed over and **d** in Pilate's . . . . . Ac 3:13  
 they have **d** the faith. They . . . . . 1Ti 5:8  
 have kept my word and haven't **d** my name. . . . . Rev 3:8

**DENY**

you must **d** yourselves . . . . . Lv 16:29  
 You will **d** yourselves and not . . . . . Nm 29:7  
 I'll be full and **d** you, and say, "Who . . . . . Prv 30:9  
 immigrants and **d** the rights of . . . . . Eze 22:7  
 I also will **d** before my Father . . . . . Mt 10:33  
 Sadducees, who **d** that there is a . . . . . Mk 12:18  
 Sadducees, who **d** that there's a . . . . . Lk 20:27  
 (he didn't **d** but confessed), . . . . . Jn 1:20  
 obvious to everyone and we can't **d** it. . . . . Ac 4:16  
 if we **d** him, he will also. . . . . 2Ti 2:12

favoritism you **d** the faithfulness . . . . . Jas 2:1

## DESERT

of Seir as far as El-paran near the **d** . . . . . Gn 14:6  
to the edge of the **d**, and he came to  
offerings to the LORD, in the Sinai **d**.  
Moses in the Sinai **d** in the meeting  
River, in the **d**, on the plain  
stretch from the **d** and the Lebanon as  
wind came from the **d** and struck the  
run so far away! I'd live in the **d**. Selah  
Don't **d** your friend or a friend of your  
Sela through the **d** to the mountain of  
make her like a **d**, and turn her into  
appeared in the **d** of Judea.  
Jerusalem to Gaza. (This is a **d** road.)  
the city, in the **d**, on the sea, and  
on the day when they tested me in the **d**.  
fled into the **d**, where God has  
the edge of the **d** to the south of  
whole earth into a **d**. Evildoing will  
travel through the **d** with them, because  
will live, but those who **d** her will die.  
was as barren as a **d**. Her feasts turned  
the Egyptians than to die in this **d**.  
a person does not **d** moral values . . . . . 4Macc 2:10

## DEVIL

wilderness so that the **d** might tempt him. . . . . Mt 4:1  
forty days by the **d**. He ate nothing  
you twelve? Yet one of you is a **d**. . . . . Jn 6:70  
oppressed by the **d** because God was  
Don't provide an opportunity for the **d**.  
the power over death—the **d**—by dying.  
Look! The **d** is going to throw . . . . . Rev 2:10

## DIE

on the day you eat from it, you will **d**.  
Nile are going to **d**, the Nile will . . . . . Ex 7:18  
so you don't **d** because that's  
lest they **d**. These are the . . . . . Nm 4:35  
I will **d** here in this land. I won't cross  
wasn't the only one to **d** for his crime.  
to your integrity? Curse God, and **d**.  
they fall down and **d** right in front of  
The immature will **d** because they turn  
by the sword; they didn't **d** in battle.  
a dry land, and make her **d** of thirst.  
here won't **d** before they see . . . . . Mt 16:28  
is about to **d**. Please, come and . . . . . Mk 5:23  
that he wouldn't **d** before he had seen  
heal his son, for his son was about to **d**.  
their newly born babies so they would **d**.  
the Law will also **d** outside the Law,  
by people who **d**, and in the other . . . . . Heb 7:8  
They will want to **d**, but death will  
better for me to **d** than to live, for  
You won't **d** until you are destroyed along.  
If they **d** young, they will have no hope  
a doctor; today's king will **d** tomorrow.  
do, but those who desert her will **d**.  
Look, I'm going to **d**, although I didn't  
provisions, you **d**! But if you can . . . . . Bel 8  
Whoever didn't obey the king would **d**.  
people of how to **d** a good death with  
weapons and to **d** courageously for  
the Egyptians than to **d** in this desert."  
he **d**eserved to **d**, but he promised . . . . . 4Macc 4:12

## DIED

In all, Adam lived 930 years, and he **d** . . . . . Gn 5:5  
and everyone in his generation **d**. . . . . Ex 1:6  
an animal that has **d** naturally or the . . . . . Lv 7:24  
Nadab and Abihu **d** before the LORD when  
in the camp, had **d**, just as the LORD  
the LORD's servant **d**, the LORD spoke to . . . . . Josh 1:1

people, and they **d**. I alone escaped . . . . . Job 1:19  
so hard I nearly **d**, but the LORD . . . . . Ps 118:13  
prophet Hananiah **d** in the seventh  
but he became guilty through Baal and **d**.  
there until Herod **d**. This fulfilled. . . . . Mt 2:15  
Your daughter has **d**. Why bother the  
waves. The storm **d** down and it was . . . . . Lk 8:24  
ate manna in the wilderness and they **d**.  
David. He **d** and was buried, . . . . . Ac 2:29  
gift. Though he **d**, he's still . . . . . Heb 11:4  
and the last, who **d** and came back to  
(for my father had **d** and left me an  
her family, had **d** during the barley . . . . . Jdt 8:2  
as if they have **d**. Their departure  
someone has **d**, remember that we  
of the night. They **d** by many horrors.  
Then Alexander **d**, having ruled for  
After Seleucus **d** and Antiochus (who was  
to Jerusalem, he **d** and was buried in . . . . . 1Esd 1:29  
his wedding chamber, he fell down and **d**.  
of those who **d** to preserve their . . . . . 4Macc 1:8

## CHRIST DIED

Ro 5:6, 8; 14:9, 15; 1Co 8:11; 15:3; Ga 2:21

## DISCIPLE

been trained as a **d** for the kingdom of . . . . . Mt 13:52  
One young man, a **d**, was wearing nothing . . . . . Mk 14:51  
even one's own life—cannot be my **d**. . . . . Lk 14:26  
him: "You are his **d**, but we are Moses' . . . . . Jn 9:28  
was a certain **d** named Ananias. The . . . . . Ac 9:10

## DISCIPLES

seal up the teaching among my **d**. . . . . Is 8:16  
He sat down and his **d** came to him. . . . . Mt 5:1  
with Jesus and his **d**. Indeed, many of  
against his **d**. They said, "Why.  
was standing again with two of his **d**.  
the number of **d** continued to . . . . . Ac 6:1

## JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES

Mt 9:10; 9:19; 20:29; Mk 2:15; 5:1; 6:53; 8:22, 27; 10:32; 11:19, 20,  
27; 14:32; Lk 8:22; 8:26; 9:57; 10:38; Jn 2:3; 2:22; 13:2

## JESUS' DISCIPLES

Mt 13:10; 28:13; Mk 8:14; Jn 4:2, 27; 6:16; 9:2; 16:17

## JOHN'S DISCIPLES

Mt 9:14; 11:7; 14:12; Mk 2:18; 6:29; Lk 7:18; 7:22; Jn 3:25

## DISEASE

his hand had a skin **d** flaky like snow. . . . . Ex 4:6  
infection of skin **d** on their skin, . . . . . Lv 13:2  
anyone with a skin **d**, an oozing . . . . . Nm 5:2  
outbreaks of skin **d** by being very . . . . . Dt 24:8  
was old, Asa developed a severe foot **d**.  
cattle over to **d**, their herds to . . . . . Ps 78:48  
will devour them with war, famine, and **d**.  
I struck you with **d** and mildew. I . . . . . Am 4:9  
and healed every **d** and sickness among . . . . . Mt 4:23  
A man with a skin **d** approached Jesus,  
with a skin **d**. When he saw . . . . . Lk 5:12  
to death with **d**. Then all the . . . . . Rev 2:23  
with some terrible **d** or even that they  
sword, catastrophes, famine, ruin, and **d**.  
The **d** became permanent; the Law was in . . . . . 2Esd 3:22

## DISEASES

on you any of the **d** that I brought on.  
things: wasting **d** and fevers that  
dreadful Egyptian **d** you experienced,  
die of horrible **d**. No one will mourn  
where are your **d**? Grave, where is . . . . . Hos 13:14  
various kinds of **d**, those in pain, . . . . . Mt 4:24  
with all kinds of **d**, and he threw out  
persons with skin **d** in Israel during . . . . . Mk 1:34  
sick, and their **d** were cured and the  
suffer trials and **d**, that only he is. . . . . 2Macc 7:37

**DIVINE**

own image, in the *d* image God created him with the *d* spirit, with . . . Gn 1:27  
 do not set up any *d* image or sacred slightly less than *d*, crowning them. . . . Ps 8:5  
 is human and not *d*, their horses are endowment with *d* power, was doing, eternal power and *d* nature—have been by the Spirit according to *d* standards. . . . 1Pt 4:6  
 He overcame *d* anger not by bodily the Law is as trustworthy as *d* oracles. . . . Wis 18:22  
 creations. There's nothing *d* about them. . . . LJer 50  
 with a solemn *d* pronouncement, . . . 2Macc 2:4  
 Finally, God, with *d* anger, brought the who had broken *d* laws for the sake the knowledge of *d* and human behavior. . . . 4Macc 1:16

**DIVINE BEINGS**

Gn 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; 41:25; Ps 29:1

**DIVINE IMAGES**

Gn 31:19; 31:32, 34, 35; Jgs 17:5; 18:14, 17, 18, 20; 2Sa 5:21; 1Ch 14:12; Eze 21:21; Hos 3:4; Zec 10:2

**DIVINERS**

sign readers and *d*, but the LORD your priests and the *d*. "What should we the omens of *d* and makes a . . . ashamed, and the *d* disgraced; they . . . Dt 18:14  
 1Sa 6:2  
 Is 44:25  
 Mi 3:7

**DIVORCE**

his wife; he is never allowed to *d* her. . . . Dt 22:19  
 your mother's *d* decree, with which . . . Is 50:1  
 because he hates *d*, says the LORD God of his wife must give her a *d* certificate. . . . Mal 2:16  
 Mt 5:31  
 Does the Law allow a man to *d* his wife? husband. And a man shouldn't *d* his wife. . . . Mk 10:2  
 1Co 7:11  
 a soul mate? Don't *d* her, and don't this matter, to *d* all of our foreign . . . Sir 7:26  
 1Esd 8:90

**DIVORCED**

they marry a woman *d* from her husband, . . . Lv 21:7  
 of a widow or *d* woman who makes a who originally *d* this woman is not . . . Nm 30:9  
 Dt 24:4  
 of Moab after he *d* his wives Hushim . . . 1Ch 8:8  
 marry widows or *d* women, but only whoever marries a *d* woman commits marries a woman *d* from her husband If you are *d*, don't try to find women, and they *d* them, along with . . . Eze 44:22  
 Mt 5:32  
 Lk 16:18  
 1Co 7:27  
 1Esd 9:36

**DIVORCES**

If a man *d* his wife, and after she leaves . . . Jer 3:1  
 was said, "Whoever *d* his wife must give to them, "Whoever *d* his wife and . . . Mt 5:31  
 Mk 10:11  
 Any man who *d* his wife and marries . . . Lk 16:18

**DOOR**

be waiting at the *d* ready to strike! . . . Gn 4:7  
 the beam over the *d* of the houses in. . . . Ex 12:7  
 go to the front *d*, and quarantine young woman to the *d* of her father's. . . . Lv 14:38  
 Dt 22:21  
 pounding on the *d*. They said to the, and I have lurked at my neighbor's *d*, close watch over the *d* that is my lips. . . . Jgs 19:22  
 Job 31:9  
 Ps 141:3  
 As a *d* turns on its hinge, so do lazy . . . Prv 26:14  
 Behind the *d* and the doorstep you placed the Achor Valley a *d* of hope. There she room, shut the *d*, and pray to your . . . Hos 2:15  
 Mt 6:6  
 The whole town gathered near the *d*. . . . Mk 1:33  
 bother me. The *d* is already locked, . . . Lk 11:7  
 husband are at the *d*. They will carry . . . Ac 5:9  
 God would open a *d* for the word so we Look! The judge is standing at the *d*. . . . Col 4:3  
 Jas 5:9  
 of you an open *d* that no one can . . . Rev 3:8

**DOVE**

Then he sent out a *d* to see if the waters . . . Gn 8:8

I had wings like a *d*! I'd fly away and . . . Ps 55:6  
 My *d*—in the rock crevices, hidden in. . . . Song 2:14  
 I moan like a *d*. My eyes have . . . Is 38:14  
 has become like a *d*, silly and without coming down like a *d* and resting on him. . . . Hos 7:11  
 Mt 3:16  
 the Spirit, like a *d*, coming down on bodily form like a *d*. And there was a from heaven like a *d*, and it rested on them joy, like a *d* that brings up its. . . . Mk 1:10  
 Lk 3:22  
 Jn 1:32  
 2Esd 2:15

**DREAM**

that night in a *d* and said to him, . . . Gn 20:3  
 if a prophet or a *d* interpreter . . . Dt 13:1  
 his friend about a *d*. He said, "Get, disappear like a *d*, and none will. . . . Jgs 7:13  
 Job 20:8  
 As quickly as a *d* departs from someone will be like a *d*, a vision of the . . . Ps 73:20  
 Is 29:7  
 your old men will *d* dreams, and you to him in a *d* and said, "Joseph see visions. Your elders will *d* dreams. . . . Mt 1:20  
 Ac 2:17  
 Mordecai had a *d*. He was Jair's . . . GkEst A:1  
 What one sees in a *d* is a reflection, a a trustworthy *d*—a kind of waking . . . 2Macc 15:11  
 will show you in *d* visions what the tortured only in a *d*. He didn't change . . . 2Esd 10:59  
 4Macc 6:5

**DREAMS**

even more because of the *d* he told them. . . . Gn 37:8  
 to him in visions. I speak to him in *d*. . . . Nm 12:6  
 answer him—not by *d*, not by the Urim, . . . 1Sa 28:6  
 You scare me with *d*, frighten me with a hungry person *d* of eating but . . . Job 7:14  
 Is 29:8  
 old men will dream *d*, and your young see visions. Your elders will dream *d*. . . . Jl 2:28  
 Ac 2:17  
 The *d* that had so bothered them had empty and false hopes, and *d* excite fools. . . . Wis 18:19  
 Sir 34:1  
 many kinds of distress, as these *d* show. . . . 2Esd 13:19

**DRINK**

our father wine to *d*, lie down with . . . Gn 19:32  
 so that their father's flock could *d*. . . . Ex 2:16  
 your sons must not *d* wine or beer when container for the *d* offering. The . . . Lv 10:9  
 Nm 4:7  
 Dt 26:6  
 and also water with money so you can *d*. . . . Jgs 4:19  
 a little water to *d*. I'm thirsty." So three sisters to eat and *d* with them. . . . Job 1:4  
 Ps 36:8  
 you let them *d* from your river of of evil, and they *d* the wine of . . . Prv 4:17  
 of wine: "Eat and *d*. Tomorrow we will and my linen cloth, my oil and my *d*. . . . Hos 2:5  
 eat or what you'll *d*, or about your . . . Mt 6:25  
 a cup of water to *d* because you belong eyes. He must not *d* wine and liquor. . . . Mk 9:41  
 Lk 1:15  
 said to her, "Give me some water to *d*." wouldn't eat or *d* until they had . . . Jn 4:7  
 Ac 23:12  
 give him a *d*. By doing this, . . . Ro 12:20  
 only about food, *d*, and various . . . Heb 9:10  
 all the nations *d* the wine of her young man, "Eat, *d*, and be happy. . . . Rev 14:8  
 Tob 7:10  
 on no day did anyone have enough to *d*. Let's *d* our fill of expensive wines and wine ages, you will *d* it with good cheer. . . . Jdt 7:21  
 Wis 2:7  
 Sir 9:10  
 the sacred bread, *d*-offering cups, . . . 1Macc 1:22  
 2Macc 15:39  
 it is harmful to *d* wine or water clothed in purple, *d* from gold cups, quantity of *d* had driven them. . . . 1Esd 3:6  
 3Macc 5:2  
 my soul, and *d* your fill of . . . 2Esd 8:4  
 and courageously brought the king a *d*. . . . 4Macc 3:14

**DRUNK**

the wine, became *d*, and took off his . . . Gn 9:21  
 eaten bread nor *d* wine or beer . . . Dt 29:6  
 was silent, so Eli thought she was *d*. . . . 1Sa 1:13  
 like they were *d*. None of their all the time; always be *d* on her love. . . . Ps 107:27  
 Prv 5:19  
 my honey; I have *d* my wine and my it does, just as a *d* stumbles in his . . . Song 5:1  
 Is 19:14

Bring drinks, so we can get **d**.  
 a glutton and a **d**, a friend of tax.  
 a glutton and a **d**, a friend of tax.  
 people aren't **d**, as you suspect;  
 and getting **d**, not in sleeping.  
 earth have become **d** with the wine of  
 no one. Don't get **d** with wine, and  
 hills will be **d** with their blood.  
 she will make people **d** with her fruits.  
 It hasn't eaten or **d** anything, ever!"  
 his sons became **d**. Ptolemy and his  
 savage elephants **d** so that they were  
 and when I had **d** it my heart poured  
 who tends to get **d**, learn a better way?

Am 4:1  
 Mt 11:19  
 Lk 7:34  
 Ac 2:15  
 Ro 13:13  
 Rev 17:2  
 Tob 4:15  
 Jdt 6:4  
 Sir 1:16  
 Bel 7  
 1Macc 16:16  
 3Macc 5:10  
 2Esd 14:40  
 4Macc 2:7

## DUST

words, shake the **d** off your feet as . . .  
 leave, shake the **d** off your feet as a  
 city, shake the **d** off your feet as a  
 Bamabas shook the **d** from their feet.  
 earth made from **d**, the second human  
 earth and become **d**. It is better for  
 of locusts, like the **d** of the earth.  
 disappears like **d** in the wind, like  
 How can **d** and ashes be arrogant? Even  
 because of the **d** in the temple that  
 returned to the **d** and their plans  
 their heads with **d**, wrapping  
 weeping in the **d** before the temple,  
 their hair with **d** and began to fill  
 who sleep, and the **d** will give back in

Mt 10:14  
 Mk 6:11  
 Lk 9:5  
 Ac 13:51  
 1Co 15:47  
 Tob 3:6  
 Jdt 2:20  
 Wis 5:14  
 Sir 10:9  
 LJer 11  
 1Macc 2:63  
 2Macc 10:25  
 1Esd 8:88  
 3Macc 1:18  
 2Esd 7:32

## DWELLING

There God's own **d** place, the temple,  
 to pollute the **d** where your . . .  
 said, "Make your **d** in Jacob, and let  
 The city became a **d** place for . . .  
 nothing, made the temple your **d** among us.  
 was trying to spare them and his **d** place.  
 can't enter your **d** place, the heaven  
 them the eternal **d** places I had

Tob 1:4  
 Jdt 9:8  
 Sir 24:8  
 1Macc 1:38  
 2Macc 14:35  
 1Esd 1:48  
 3Macc 2:15  
 2Esd 2:11

## Ee

### EAGLE

a dream. I saw an **e**, with twelve . . .

2Esd 11:1

### EARS

the rings in their **e**, and Jacob buried.  
 the barley had **e** of grain and the  
 you can pluck **e** by hand, but you  
 glean among the **e** of grain behind  
 up on me; my **e** caught a hint of  
 me. So tilt your **e** toward me now

Gn 35:4  
 Ex 9:31  
 Dt 23:25  
 Ru 2:2  
 Job 4:12  
 Ps 17:6

**E**t to hear and eyes to see—the **L**ORD made  
 dull. Make their **e** deaf and their  
 cover their mouths; their **e** will be deaf.  
 Let the person who has **e**, hear  
 said, "Whoever has **e** to listen should  
 Everyone who has **e** should pay  
 and covered their **e**. Together, they  
 not see and their **e** not hear, right up  
 have reached the **e** of the Lord of  
 Whoever has **e** must listen  
 breathing air, no **e** for hearing, no  
 a tongue and eyes, **e** and a mind for  
 I'll give them a heart and **e** that listen.  
 story delight the **e** of those who  
 the innumerable **e** of grain are sown,

Prv 20:12  
 Is 6:10  
 Mt 7:16  
 Mt 11:15  
 Mk 4:9  
 Lk 8:8  
 Ac 7:57  
 Ro 11:8  
 Jas 5:4  
 Rev 13:9  
 Wis 15:15  
 Sir 17:6  
 Bar 2:31  
 2Macc 15:39  
 2Esd 4:32

### EARTH

you would have disappeared from the **e**.  
 that swarms on the **e** is detestable; it.  
 was humble, more so than anyone on **e**.  
 in heaven or on **e** can act as you do

Ex 9:15  
 Lv 11:41  
 Nm 12:3  
 Dt 32:4

is God in heaven above and on **e** below.  
**L**ORD, "From wandering throughout the **e**."  
 far corners of the **e** will be your  
 foundations of the **e** with wisdom,  
 and listen **e** for the **L**ORD has  
 the heavens and they will answer the **e**.  
 humble, because they will inherit the **e**.  
 authority on the **e** to forgive sins.  
 in heaven, and on **e** peace among those  
 heaven and down to **e** on the Human One.  
 and Samaria, and to the end of the **e**.  
 name can be spread through the entire **e**.  
 During his days on **e**, Christ offered  
 the kings of the **e**. To the one who  
 set free from the **e** and become dust.  
 You who judge the **e**, love what is right.  
 Authority over the **e** belongs to the Lord,  
 that their days on **e** may be like the  
 vermin from the **e** have eaten them  
 Let the **e** bless the Lord. Let it sing.  
 created heaven and **e** and has authority  
 ends of the known **e**, plundering nation  
 temple of all the **e**, guided by . . .  
 women strong? The **e** is great, heaven  
 made heaven and **e** with all their  
 the whole wide **e**, you chose this  
 wiped out from the **e** because they  
 was punished on **e**, and he continues

Josh 2:11  
 Job 1:7  
 Ps 2:8  
 Prv 3:19  
 Is 1:2  
 Hos 2:21  
 Mt 5:5  
 Mk 2:10  
 Lk 2:14  
 Jn 1:51  
 Ac 1:8  
 Ro 9:17  
 Heb 5:7  
 Rev 1:5  
 Tob 3:6  
 Wis 1:1  
 Sir 10:4  
 Bar 1:11  
 LJer 19  
 PrAz 51  
 Bel 5  
 1Macc 3:1  
 2Macc 5:15  
 1Esd 4:34  
 PrMan 2  
 3Macc 2:9  
 2Esd 2:7  
 4Macc 18:5

### ABOVE THE EARTH

Gn 1:20; 7:17; Ps 103:11; Eze 1:19; 1:21; 10:16

### ALL NATIONS ON EARTH

Dt 28:1; Jer 15:4; 26:6; 29:18; 33:9; 34:17

### ALL THE EARTH

Gn 1:26; 11:4; 9; 18:25; Josh 23:14; 1Ch 16:23; 16:30; Ps 33:8;  
 57:5; 11; 66:1; 4; 72:19; 83:18; 96:1; 9; 97:9; 98:4; 100:1; 108:5; Is  
 6:3; 12:5; 14:7; 26; 54:5; Jer 51:49; Lam 2:15; Eze 34:6; Dn 2:39;  
 Mic 4:13; Hab 2:20; Zep 3:8; Zec 4:14; 6:5; Jdt 2:5; 6:4; 11:1; Bar  
 2:15; 1Macc 15:9; 2Macc 5:15

### ENDS OF THE EARTH

Dt 28:49; 33:17; Job 28:24; Ps 19:4; 59:13; 61:2; 67:7; 72:8; Prv  
 30:4; Is 24:16; 40:28; 41:5; 9; 42:10; 45:22; 52:10; Jer 6:22; 10:13;  
 16:19; 25:32; 31:8; 50:41; 51:16; Zec 9:10; Tob 13:11; Jdt 2:9;  
 1Macc 3:9; 8:4; 14:10; 2Esd 16:13

### HEAVEN AND EARTH

Gn 14:19; 14:22; 24:3; Dt 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 2Kgs 19:15; 2Ch  
 2:12; Ezr 5:11; Ps 69:34; 113:6; 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6;  
 Is 37:16; Jer 23:24; 32:17; 33:25; Mt 5:18; 11:25; 24:35; Mk 13:31;  
 Lk 10:21; 16:17; 21:33; Ac 17:24; 2Pt 3:5; 7; Rev 14:7; Tob 10:13;  
 Jdt 7:28; 9:12; Bel 5; 1Macc 2:37; 2Macc 7:28; PrMan 2; 2Esd  
 2:14; 6:38

### HEAVEN AND ON EARTH

1Ch 29:11; Dn 6:27; Mt 28:18; Lk 2:14; Rev 5:13

### HEAVENS AND THE EARTH

Gn 2:1; 4; Ex 20:11; Jer 10:11; Jl 3:16; Hg 2:21

### WHOLE EARTH

Tob 14:6; Jdt 11:7; Wis 5:23; Sir 48:15; 1Esd 4:36; 2Esd 11:2, 12,  
 32, 46; 15:5, 6, 40

### EAT

the human, " **e** your fill from all . . .  
 man? Invite him to **e** a meal with us.  
 live: you must not **e** any fat or blood.  
 any grape juice or **e** grapes, whether . . .  
 money so you can **e**, and also water . . .  
 or brandy or to **e** anything that is  
 three sisters to **e** and drink with . . .  
 on fire. God will **e** them whole in his . . .  
 They will **e** from the fruit of their way.  
 and obey, you will **e** the best food of . . .  
 forest, and the wild animals will **e** them.  
 moth and rust **e** them and where . . .  
 Jesus sat down to **e** at Levi's house. Many . . .  
 and others sat down to **e** with them.

Gn 2:16  
 Ex 2:20  
 Lv 3:17  
 Nm 6:3  
 Dt 2:6  
 Jgs 13:4  
 Job 1:4  
 Ps 21:9  
 Prv 1:31  
 Is 1:19  
 Hos 2:12  
 Mt 6:19  
 Mk 2:15  
 Lk 5:29

spoke to Jesus, saying, "Rabbi, **e**." . . . . . Jn 4:31  
 with it. Our ancestors had nothing to **e**. . . . . Ac 7:11  
 Those who **e** must not look down on the . . . . . Ro 14:3  
 tent don't have the right to **e** from it. . . . . Heb 13:10  
 victorious to **e** from the tree of . . . . . Rev 2:7

**EBER**

fathered Shelah, and Shelah fathered **E**. . . . . Gn 10:24  
 they will attack **E**, and even he will . . . . . Nm 24:24  
 sons were born to **E**: one was named. . . . . 1Ch 1:19  
 Reu son of Peleg son of **E**son of Shelah . . . . . Lk 3:35

**EDOM**

red stuff." That's why his name is **E**. . . . . Gn 25:30  
 to the king of **E**. "This is what . . . . . Nm 20:14  
 to the border of **E** The Zin wasteland . . . . . Josh 15:1  
 and defeated **E**, killing twelve . . . . . Ps 60:1  
 to the east. **E** and Moab will be . . . . . Is 11:14  
 desolate and **E** a desolate . . . . . Jl 3:19

**EGYPT**

Ham's sons: Cush, **E**, Put, and Canaan . . . . . Gn 10:6  
 who came to **E** with Jacob along . . . . . Ex 1:1  
 from the land of **E** to be your God. . . . . Lv 11:45  
 year after they left the land of **E**. . . . . Nm 1:1  
 brought us out of **E**—to hand us over . . . . . Dt 1:27  
 you when you left **E**. We have also . . . . . Josh 2:10  
 come from **E**; let Cush stretch . . . . . Ps 68:31  
 covers, with colored linens from **E**. . . . . Prv 7:16  
 streams of **E** and for the bees . . . . . Is 7:18  
 time when she came out of the land of **E**. . . . . Hos 2:15  
 and escape to **E**. Stay there until. . . . . Mt 2:13  
 and Pamphylia, **E** and the regions of . . . . . Ac 2:10  
 those who were brought out of **E** by Moses? . . . . . Heb 3:16  
 called Sodom and **E**, where also their . . . . . Rev 11:8  
 to the region of **E**. Raphael went. . . . . Tob 8:3  
 and the river of **E**, and Tahpanhes and . . . . . Jdt 1:9  
 I had arrived in **E** and stayed awhile, . . . . . Sir 1:1  
 and sisters in **E**. Greetings! Your . . . . . 2Macc 1:1  
 The king of **E** sent a message to Josiah: . . . . . 1Esd 1:24  
 arrogant ruler of **E** enslaved your holy . . . . . 3Macc 2:6  
 with Ptolemy in **E**, he heard that the . . . . . 4Macc 4:22

**DOWN TO EGYPT**

Gn 26:2, 37:25; 39:1; 43:15; 46:3, 4; Nm 20:15; Dt 10:22; 26:5;  
 Josh 24:4; Is 30:2, 31:1; Ac 7:15

**OUT OF EGYPT**

Jdt 6:5; GkEst C:9; Bar 1:20; 2Esd 3:17; 14:4

**EGYPTIAN**

Since she had an **E** servant named . . . . . Gn 16:1  
 didn't obey the **E** king's order. . . . . Ex 1:17  
 mother and an **E** father came out . . . . . Lv 24:10  
 all those dreadful **E** diseases you . . . . . Dt 7:15  
 They found an **E** in the countryside and . . . . . 1Sa 30:11  
 the tongue of the **E** sea. God will wave . . . . . Is 11:15  
 learned everything **E** wisdom had to . . . . . Ac 7:22  
 Antiochus met the **E** king Ptolemy in . . . . . 1Macc 1:18  
 a report that the **E** king was hostile . . . . . 2Macc 4:21

**EGYPTIANS**

When the **E** see you, they will say, "This . . . . . Gn 12:12  
 As a result, the **E** put foremen of forced . . . . . Ex 1:11  
 to the LORD. "The **E** will hear, for. . . . . Nm 14:13  
 Don't detest **E** because you were . . . . . Dt 23:7  
 to the sea. The **E** chased you. . . . . Josh 24:6  
 became dark, but the **E** rejected his word. . . . . Ps 105:28  
 On that day, the **E** will be like women and . . . . . Is 19:16  
 land, but when the **E** tried it, they . . . . . Heb 11:29  
 Egypt, so that the **E** drove them out of . . . . . Jdt 5:12  
 the Moabites, the **E**, and the Edomites. . . . . 1Esd 8:66  
 us to serve the **E** than to die in . . . . . 2Esd 1:18

**EHUD**

for them, **E**, Gera's son . . . . . Jgs 3:15

**EKRON**

as far as the **E** territory is . . . . . Josh 13:3

Gaza, **E**, and what's left. . . . . Jer 25:20  
 my hand against **E**, and the . . . . . Am 1:8  
 He also gave him **E** and all its . . . . . 1Macc 10:89

**ELAM**

Shem's sons: **E**, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, . . . . . Gn 10:22  
 Shem's family: **E**, Asshur, Arpachshad, . . . . . 1Ch 1:17  
 Pathros, Cush, **E**, Shinar, Hamath, . . . . . Is 11:11  
 The family of **E** 1,254 The family of Zattu . . . . . 1Esd 5:12

**ELDERS**

and get Israel's **e** together and say . . . . . Ex 3:16  
 The community **e** will press their hands on . . . . . Lv 4:15  
 men from Israel's **e**, whom you know as . . . . . Nm 11:16  
 chiefs of your tribes and your **e** came. . . . . Dt 5:23  
 He, along with the **e** of Israel, lay . . . . . Josh 7:6  
 and praise God in the assembly of the **e**. . . . . Ps 107:32  
 when he sits with the **e** of the land. . . . . Prv 31:23  
 judgment with the **e** and princes of his . . . . . Is 3:14  
 Hear this, **e**, pay attention, everyone in . . . . . Jl 1:2  
 things from the **e**, chief priests, . . . . . Mt 16:21  
 observing the rules handed down by the **e**. . . . . Mk 7:3  
 sent some Jewish **e** to Jesus to ask . . . . . Lk 7:3  
 beginning with the **e**. Finally, only . . . . . Ac 2:17  
 see visions. Your **e** will dream dreams. . . . . Jn 8:9  
 prophecy when the **e** laid hands on you. . . . . 1Ti 4:14  
 The **e** in the past were approved because . . . . . Heb 11:2  
 with twenty-four **e** seated upon . . . . . Rev 4:4  
 together all the **e** of the city, and . . . . . Jdt 6:16  
 care less for the gray hair of our **e**. . . . . Wis 10:2  
 company with the **e**, and stuck closely . . . . . Sir 6:34  
 rulers' sons, the **e**, and all the . . . . . Bar 1:4  
 Two **e** among the people had been appointed . . . . . Sus 5  
 Rulers and **e** groaned; young women and men . . . . . 1Macc 1:26  
 the council of **e**, and Judas send. . . . . 2Macc 1:20  
 Yet the **e** of the Judeans enjoyed the . . . . . 1Esd 6:5  
 The Jews had sent **e** and members of the . . . . . 3Macc 1:8

**APOSTLES AND THE ELDERS**

Ac 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23

**CHIEF PRIESTS AND ELDERS**

Mt 21:23; 26:3, 47; 27:3, 12; Ac 4:23; 23:14; 25:15

**PRIESTS AND ELDERS**

Mt 21:23, 26:3, 47; 27:3, 12; Ac 4:23; 23:14; 25:15

**ELEAZAR**

birth to Nadab, Abihu, **E**, and Ithamar. . . . . Ex 6:23  
 and his sons, **E** and Ithamar, . . . . . Lv 10:6  
 the oldest, and Abihu, **E**, and Ithamar. . . . . Nm 3:2  
 buried. His son **E** succeeded him in . . . . . Dt 10:6  
 land of Canaan. **E** the priest, Joshua . . . . . Josh 14:1  
 was the father of **E**. Eleazar was the . . . . . Mt 1:15  
 and grandson of **E** the Jerusalemite. . . . . Sir 50:27  
**E**, called Avaran; and Jonathan, called . . . . . 1Macc 2:5  
 A certain **E**, one of the leading scribes, . . . . . 2Macc 6:18  
 of Phinehas son of **E**son of the high . . . . . 1Esd 8:2  
 Now a certain **E** was a distinguished . . . . . 3Macc 6:1  
 moral character: **E**, the seven . . . . . 4Macc 1:8

**ELEPHANTS**

in chariots and on **e**, as well as . . . . . 1Macc 1:17  
 thousands of cavalry, and his eighty **e**. . . . . 2Macc 11:4  
 to drug all the **e**—five hundred in . . . . . 3Macc 5:2

**EU**

the LORD. (Now **E** the priest was . . . . . 1Sa 1:9  
 a loud shout, "**E**, Eli, lama . . . . . Mt 27:46  
 of Phinehas son of **E** son of Amariah son . . . . . 2Esd 1:2

**ELIAB**

from Zebulun, **E**, Helon's son . . . . . Nm 1:9  
 the descendants of **E** the Reubenite, . . . . . Dt 11:6  
 Samuel looked at **E** and thought . . . . . 1Sa 16:6  
 of Hilkiah son of **E** son of Nathanael . . . . . Jdt 8:1

**ELIAKIM**

Hilkiah's son **E**, who was the. . . . . 2Ki 18:18  
 I will call my servant **E**, Hilkiah's son. . . . . Is 22:20

father of **E** Eliakim was the . . . . . Mt 1:13  
 Judah son of Joseph son of Jonam son of **E**. . . . . Lk 3:30

**ELIASHIB**

Hodaviah, **E** Pelaiah, Akkub . . . . . 1Ch 3:24  
 Of the temple singers: **E** and Zaccur . . . . . 1Esd 9:24

**ELIEZER**

of my household is **E**, a man from . . . . . Gn 15:2  
 other was named **E** because he said, . . . . . Ex 18:4  
 Zemirah, Joash, **E**, Elioenai, Omri, . . . . . 1Ch 7:8  
 of Joshua son of **E** son of Jorim son . . . . . Lk 3:29

**ELIJAH**

**E** from Tishbe, who was one of the. . . . . 1Ki 17:1  
 I am sending **E** the prophet to you, . . . . . Mal 4:5  
 to accept it, he is **E** who is to come. . . . . Mt 11:14  
 saying, "He is **E**." Still others . . . . . Mk 6:15  
 and power of **E**. He will turn the . . . . . Lk 1:17  
 Are you **E**?" John said, "I'm. . . . . Jn 1:21  
 in the case of **E**, when he pleads. . . . . Ro 11:2  
**E** was a person just like us. . . . . Jas 5:17  
 of Ahitub son of **E** son of Hilkiyah son . . . . . Jdt 8:1  
 Then **E** the prophet rose up like fire, and . . . . . Sir 48:1  
**E** was taken up into heaven because he had. . . . . 1Macc 2:58  
 Jezrielus, Abdi, Jeremoth, and **E**. . . . . 1Esd 9:27  
 Isaac, and Jacob, **E** and Enoch, . . . . . 2Esd 1:39

**ELIPHAZ**

Adah gave birth to **E** for Esau, Basemath . . . . . Gn 36:4  
 Esau's family: **E**, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam, . . . . . 1Ch 1:35  
 Then **E**, a native of Teman, responded . . . . . Job 4:1

**ELISHA**

Israel, and anoint **E** from Abel-meholah, . . . . . 1Ki 19:16  
 of the prophet **E**, but none of them . . . . . Lk 4:27  
 the whirlwind, and **E** was filled with . . . . . Sir 48:12

**ELISHAMA**

from Ephraim, **E**, Ammihud's son; . . . . . Nm 1:10  
 and Jekamiah was the father of **E**. . . . . 1Ch 2:41  
 meeting together: **E** the scribe; . . . . . Jer 36:12

**ELIZABETH**

Abijah. His wife **E** was a descendant . . . . . Lk 1:5

**ELKANAH**

Korahites: Assir, **E**, and Abiasaph. . . . . Ex 6:24  
 whose name was **E**. He was from the . . . . . 1Sa 1:1

**ELYON**

the priest of El **E** had brought bread . . . . . Gn 14:18

**EN-GEDI**

Nibshan (the Salt City), and **E**. . . . . Josh 15:62  
 my love to me in the desert gardens of **E**. . . . . Song 1:14  
 beside it, from **E** to En-eglayim, and . . . . . Eze 47:10

**ENEMIES**

sin and injustice are their own worst **e**. . . . . Tob 12:10  
 ground, and their **e** took possession of . . . . . Jdt 5:18  
 him from his **e** and kept him safe . . . . . Wis 10:12  
 you; it will make you a joke to your **e**. . . . . Sir 6:4  
 were taken as a flock snatched away by **e**. . . . . Bar 4:26  
 can't stand up against kings or **e** in war. . . . . LJer 55  
 us over to our **e**, immoral rebels . . . . . PrAz 9  
 now against our **e** and fight them. . . . . 1Macc 4:16  
 became their **e** and inflicted . . . . . 2Macc 4:18  
 When the **e** of the tribe of Judah and . . . . . 1Esd 5:63  
 out that the **e** were destroyed in. . . . . 3Macc 1:5  
 So you handed your city over to your **e**. . . . . 2Esd 3:27  
 hatred between **e**. Because of the . . . . . 4Macc 2:14

**ALL YOUR ENEMIES**

Ex 23:27; Dt 6:19; 12:10; Jgs 5:31; 2Sa 7:9, 11; 1Ch 17:8, 10; Ps  
 21:8; Lam 2:16; Mic 5:9

**ENEMY**

your strong hand, **LORD**, shatters the **e**. . . . . Ex 15:2

and you will be handed over to the **e**. . . . . Lv 26:25  
 land against an **e** who is attacking . . . . . Nm 10:9  
 that your **e** has brought on you. . . . . Dt 28:53  
 and hadn't been an **e** in the past. . . . . Josh 20:5  
 the hand of my **e**? Ransom me from . . . . . Job 6:23  
 then let my **e** not only chase but catch . . . . . Ps 7:5  
 friend; excessive are the kisses of an **e**. . . . . Prv 27:6  
 turned into their **e**—he fought . . . . . Is 63:10  
 from the good; the **e** will pursue him. . . . . Hos 8:3  
 must love your neighbor and hate your **e**. . . . . Mt 5:43  
 the power of the **e**. Nothing will harm . . . . . Lk 10:19  
 Instead, if your **e** is hungry, feed him; . . . . . Ro 12:20  
 with the world makes you an **e** of God? . . . . . Jas 4:4  
 Don't become an **e** instead of a friend. If . . . . . Sir 6:1

**ENOCH**

and gave birth to **E** Cain built a city . . . . . Gn 4:17  
**E**, Methuselah, Lamech . . . . . 1Ch 1:3  
 Methuselah, son of **E**, son of Jared. . . . . Lk 3:37  
 By faith **E** was taken up so that he didn't . . . . . Heb 11:5  
**E** pleased the Lord and was transferred, . . . . . Sir 44:16  
 Jacob, Elijah and **E**, Zechariah and. . . . . 2Esd 1:39

**EPHAAH**

Midian's sons were **E**, Ephra, Enoch, . . . . . Gn 25:4

**EPHESUS**

they arrived in **E**, he left Priscilla . . . . . Ac 18:19  
 wild animals in **E**? If the dead . . . . . 1Co 15:32  
 seven churches: to **E**, Smyrna, Pergamum, . . . . . Rev 1:11

**EPHRAIM**

named the second **E**, "because," he . . . . . Gn 41:52  
 sons: from **E**, Elishama, . . . . . Nm 1:10  
 with the land of **E** and Manasseh, as . . . . . Dt 34:2  
 Manasseh and **E**, The Levites . . . . . Josh 14:4  
 Manasseh is mine; **E** is my helmet. . . . . Ps 60:7  
 become allies with **E**, their hearts and . . . . . Is 7:2  
**E** is associated with idols—let him . . . . . Hos 4:17  
 to a city called **E**, where he stayed . . . . . Jn 11:54  
 from **E**, that you prophesy . . . . . Jdt 6:2  
 and a rival kingdom sprang up out of **E**. . . . . Sir 47:21

**EPHRAIMITE**

the legacy for the clans of the **E** tribe. . . . . Josh 16:8

**EPHRAIMITES**

the tribe of the **E**, a chief, Kemuel, . . . . . Nm 34:24  
 Then the **E** said to him, "Why did you . . . . . Jgs 8:1

**EPHRON**

listen to me and ask **E**, Zohar's son, . . . . . Gn 23:8  
 Mount **E**. The border turned . . . . . Josh 15:9  
 They came to **E**, a large and secure town . . . . . 1Macc 5:46  
 made war also on **E**, a fortified city. . . . . 2Macc 12:27

**EQUIPMENT**

you for the dwelling and for all its **e**. . . . . Ex 25:9  
 altar and all its **e**, as well as the . . . . . Lv 8:11  
 to all its **e**, and to everything . . . . . Nm 1:50  
 bronze and iron **e**, are holy to the . . . . . Josh 6:19  
 to Migron. At Michmash he stored his **e**. . . . . Is 10:28  
 yourself again the **e** of a foolish . . . . . Zec 11:15  
 and also all the **e** that would be used. . . . . Heb 9:21  
 with its altar and **e** had been newly. . . . . Jdt 4:3  
 they give shape to **e** and images that . . . . . Wis 15:13  
 Baruch took the **e** from the Lord's . . . . . Bar 1:8  
 lampstand for the light, and all its **e**. . . . . 1Macc 1:21  
 the temple's gold **e**, and made them a . . . . . 2Macc 4:32

**HOLY EQUIPMENT**

1Macc 4:49; 14:15; 2Macc 5:16; 1Esd 1:39, 43, 51; 2:7; 4:44, 57;  
 8:17, 55

**ESAU**

clothed with hair, and she named him **E**. . . . . Gn 25:25  
 I gave Jacob and **E**. I gave Mount Seir . . . . . Josh 24:4  
 disaster on **E** its day of . . . . . Jer 49:8  
 How **E** has been looted, his treasures . . . . . Obad 6



I loved Jacob, but I hated **E** . . . . . Ro 9:13  
 blessed Jacob and **E** concerning their . . . . . Heb 11:20  
 the descendants of **E** in Idumea at . . . . . 1Macc 5:3  
 the family of **E**, the family of . . . . . 1Esd 5:29  
 Isaac, and you gave Jacob and **E** to Isaac. . . . . 2Esd 3:15

**ESTHER**  
 Hadassah (that is, **E**), though she . . . . . Est 2:7  
 foster child named **E**. . . . . GkEst 2:7

**ETERNAL**  
 blessings of the **e** mountains, the . . . . . Gn 49:26  
 mountains, with the gifts of **e** hills . . . . . Dt 33:15  
 Israel with an **e** love, the **LORD**. . . . . 1Ki 10:9  
 divine throne is **e** and everlasting. . . . . Ps 45:6  
 There is no **e** memory of the wise any more . . . . . Ecc 2:16  
 Mighty God, **e** Father, Prince of . . . . . Is 9:6  
 of the **LORD**! Hear, **e** foundations of the . . . . . Mi 6:2  
 be thrown into the **e** fire with two . . . . . Mt 18:8  
 what must I do to obtain **e** life? . . . . . Mk 10:17  
 he said, "what must I do to gain **e** life?" . . . . . Lk 10:25  
 who believes in him will have **e** life. . . . . Jn 3:15  
 to receive **e** life, we will turn . . . . . Ac 13:46  
 qualities—God's **e** power and divine . . . . . Ro 1:20  
 from the dead, and **e** judgment—all over . . . . . Heb 6:2  
 high overhead with **e** good news to . . . . . Rev 14:6  
 free to go to the **e** place. Don't turn . . . . . Tob 3:6  
 shines forth from **e** light. She's a . . . . . Wis 7:26  
 human beings as an **e** foundation, and . . . . . Sir 1:15  
 I'll make an **e** covenant with them that I . . . . . Bar 2:35  
 screamed out: " **E** God, you know what . . . . . Sus 4:2  
 give to them the **e** dwelling places I . . . . . 2Esd 2:11  
 suffered, by the **e** curse that will . . . . . 4Macc 10:15

**ETERNAL ONE**  
 Bar 4:10, 14, 20, 22, 24, 35; 2Macc 1:25; 3Macc 6:12

**ETERNITY**  
 from today until **e**. And tonight may . . . . . Tob 7:11  
 a plan that had been prepared for all **e**. . . . . Wis 17:2  
 seas, the drops of rain, or the days of **e**? . . . . . Sir 1:2  
 the rescuer of Israel from now to **e**! Amen. . . . . 3Macc 7:23  
 shine on you, and **e** is prepared for you. . . . . 2Esd 2:35

**EUNUCH**  
 Hegai the king's **e** in charge of the . . . . . Est 2:3  
 And don't let the **e** say, "I'm just a . . . . . Is 56:3  
 He was a **e** and an official. . . . . Ac 8:27  
 said to Bagoas the **e**, who looked after . . . . . Jdt 12:11  
 care of the king's **e** in charge of the . . . . . GkEst 2:3  
 Even the **e** who doesn't break the Law with . . . . . Wis 3:14  
 groaning like a **e** who embraces a . . . . . Sir 30:20

**EUNUCHS**  
 They will become **e** in the palace of . . . . . 2Ki 20:18  
 be taken to become **e** in the king of . . . . . Is 39:7  
 For there are **e** who have been eunuchs . . . . . Mt 19:12  
 questioned the two **e**. Once they had . . . . . GkEst A:14  
 Like **e** desiring to violate a girl, so are . . . . . Sir 20:4

**EUPHRATES**  
 the name of the fourth river is the **E**. . . . . Gn 2:14  
 range, all the way to the great **E** River. . . . . Dt 1:7  
 far as the great **E** River, including . . . . . Josh 1:4  
 shoots went all the way to the **E** River. . . . . Ps 80:11  
 from beyond the **E**—with the king of . . . . . Is 7:20  
 who are bound at the great river **E**. . . . . Rev 9:14  
 lived along the **E**, the Tigris, the . . . . . Jdt 1:6  
 as deep as the **E**, or like the. . . . . Sir 24:26  
 affairs from the **E** River to the . . . . . 1Macc 3:32  
 Carchemish on the **E**. Josiah went out . . . . . 1Esd 1:23  
 the narrow passages of the **E** River. . . . . 2Esd 13:43

**EVERLASTING**  
 the wealth of the **e** hills. May they . . . . . Gn 49:26  
 your God. From **e** to everlasting. . . . . Neh 9:5  
 is eternal and **e**. Your royal . . . . . Ps 45:6  
 Who among us can live with the **e** blaze? . . . . . Is 33:14

the nations. The **e** mountains . . . . . Hab 3:6  
 welcome into the **e** kingdom of our . . . . . 2Pt 1:11

**EVIL**  
**DID EVIL**  
 1Macc 1:52; 1Esd 1:42, 45; 3Macc 2:4; 2Esd 14:31

**DO EVIL**  
 Dt 31:29; 1Sa 12:25; Job 34:10; Ps 14:1; 28:3; 34:16; 50:19; Prv  
 4:16; 6:14; 10:29; 21:15; Ecc 8:11; Mk 3:4; Lk 6:9; Ro 3:8; Phi 3:2;  
 1Pt 3:12; Sir 7:1; 12:3; 19:28; 31:10; 2Esd 3:20, 26; 7:48; 8:27

**DOING EVIL**  
 1Kgs 16:19; 21:20, 25; Neh 9:28; Prv 2:14; Jer 1:16; 13:23; Mic 7:3;  
 Mal 2:17; 3:15; 4:1; 1Pt 2:12; 2:14; 3:17

**EVIL ACTIONS**  
 Is 43:24; Mk 7:22; Ro 12:17; Col 1:21; 3:25; 2Jn 11

**EVIL DEEDS**  
 1Sa 24:13; Ezz 9:13; Ps 28:4; Jer 4:4; 5:28; 11:15; 21:12; 33:5; Eze  
 33:13; Mic 3:4; Zec 1:4; Lk 3:20

**EVIL IN THE LORD'S EYES**  
 Nm 32:13; Dt 31:29; 1Sa 15:19; 2Sa 11:27; 1Kgs 11:6; 14:22; 15:26;  
 34; 16:7, 19; 25, 30; 21:20, 25; 22:52; 2Kgs 3:2; 8:18, 27; 13:2, 11;  
 14:24; 15:9, 18; 24, 28; 17:2, 17; 21:2, 6, 16, 20; 23:32, 37; 24:9, 19;  
 2Ch 21:6; 22:4; 33:2, 6, 22; 36:5, 9, Jer 52:2

**EVIL ONE**  
 Mt 5:37; 6:13; 13:19, 38; Jn 17:15; 1Co 5:13; Eph 6:16; 2Th 3:3;  
 1Jn 2:13; 2:14; 3:12; 5:18, 19

**EVIL PEOPLE**  
 Ex 23:1; 2Sa 4:11; Job 34:36; Ps 22:16; 140:1; Prv 4:14; 19;  
 17:11; 24:1, 19; 28:5; Mt 12:35; 13:49; 2Th 3:2; 2Ti 3:13

**EVIL SPIRIT**  
 1Sa 16:14; 16:15, 16, 23; 18:10; 19:9; Mk 1:23; 3:30; 5:2; Ac 19:15;  
 19:16

**EVIL SPIRITS**  
 Mk 3:11; Lk 7:21; 8:2; Ac 19:12; 19:13

**EVIL THING**  
 Gn 19:7; Dt 13:11; 17:5; 19:20; Neh 13:17

**EVIL THINGS**  
 1Sa 25:3; 2Kgs 17:11; Ps 14:1; 140:2; 141:4; Lam 3:38; Hos 4:8;  
 6:9; Mt 9:4; 12:35; Mk 7:23; Ro 3:8; 1Co 10:6; Phi 3:2; Jas 4:11;  
 Wis 14:22; Sir 7:1, 3; 11:33; 2Macc 8:4; 1Esd 1:42; 1:45

**EVIL WAYS**  
 2Sa 3:25; 1Kgs 13:33; 2Kgs 17:13; Jer 18:11; 23:22; 25:5; 26:3;  
 35:15; 36:3, 7; 44:3, 5; Eze 13:22; 36:31; Zec 1:4; Ac 3:26

**GOOD AND EVIL**  
 Gn 2:9, 17; 3:5; 22; 5a 14:17; Heb 5:14

**TURN FROM YOUR EVIL**  
 2Kgs 17:13; Jer 18:11; 25:5; 35:15; Zec 1:4; Ac 3:26

**EVILDOERS**  
 deeds come from **e**! but I won't lift . . . . . 1Sa 24:13  
 darkness, where **e** can hide . . . . . Job 34:22  
 last long in your sight; you hate all **e**, . . . . . Ps 5:5  
 the house of **e** and against the . . . . . Is 31:2  
 walk in them, but **e** will stumble in . . . . . Hos 14:9  
 are from. Go away from me, all you **e**! . . . . . Lk 13:27  
 But **e** will receive their reward for their . . . . . Col 3:25  
 Beware of **e**, for they plan evil things. . . . . Sir 11:33  
 and retreated. All **e** were in turmoil. . . . . 1Macc 3:6

**EXILE**  
 Danite tribe until the land went into **e**. . . . . Jgs 18:30  
 in the walls, no **e**, no outcries in . . . . . Ps 144:14  
 my people go into **e** since they didn't . . . . . Is 5:13  
 will go into **e**, and Bethel . . . . . Am 5:5  
 This was at the time of the **e** to Babylon. . . . . Mt 1:11  
 from captivity in **e**. All the people of . . . . . Jdt 4:3  
 It has led to the **e** of the powerful, . . . . . Sir 29:18  
 And the people in **e** said: We have sent . . . . . Bar 1:10  
 taken away into **e**. Her babies have . . . . . 1Macc 2:9  
 their captivity in **e**, whom King . . . . . 1Esd 5:7  
 in sins during our **e**, rescue us from . . . . . 3Macc 6:10  
 to you while it is **e** in this land? . . . . . 2Esd 5:17

He went into **e** and planned to . . . . . 4Macc 4:1

**EXILED**

So Israel was **e** from its land to . . . . . 2Ki 17:23  
its dusk; happiness is **e** from the earth. . . . . Is 24:11

**EXILES**

thousand **e**s as well as all the . . . . . 2Ki 24:14  
Jerusalem, gathering up Israel's **e** . . . . . Ps 147:2  
of Egypt and the **e** of Cush, both . . . . . Is 20:4  
and gold from the **e** who came from . . . . . Zec 6:10

**EXPERTS**

with authority, not like the legal **e** . . . . . Mk 1:22  
The legal **e** and Phansées brought a woman  
elders, and legal **e** gathered in . . . . . Jn 8:3  
Ac 4:5  
are the legal **e**? Where are today's . . . . . 1Co 1:20  
a group of legal **e** came before . . . . . 1Macc 7:12

**PHARISEES AND LEGAL EXPERTS**

Mt 15:1; Mk 7:5; Lk 5:17; 7:30; 15:2

**PRIESTS AND LEGAL EXPERTS**

Mt 16:21; 20:18; 21:15; Mk 11:18; 14:1; Lk 22:66

**RELIGIOUS EXPERTS**

Gn 41:8, 24; Ex 7:11; 7:22; 8:7, 18, 19; 9:11

**EYE**

an **e** for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a . . . . . Ex 21:24  
anyone who has an **e** disease, a rash, . . . . . Lv 21:20  
son; the oracle of a man whose **e** is open.  
life for life, **e** for eye, tooth for . . . . . Nm 24:3  
Dt 19:21  
Timnah, a Philistine woman caught his **e**.  
The **e** that sees me now will no longer . . . . . Jgs 14:1  
Job 7:8  
very pupil of your **e**! Hide me in the  
my instruction like the pupil of your **e**. . . . . Ps 17:8  
Prv 7:2  
has perceived, no **e** has seen any god  
doesn't escape my **e**, for now Ephraim . . . . . Is 64:4  
Hos 5:3  
And if your right **e** causes you to fall  
If your **e** causes you to fall into sin,  
sat down. Every **e** in the synagogue  
love him that no **e** has seen, or ear . . . . . Mt 5:29  
Mk 9:47  
Lk 4:20  
1Co 2:9  
the clouds! Every **e** will see him, . . . . . Rev 1:7  
and don't let your **e** begrudge what . . . . . Tob 4:7  
Turn your **e** away from a shapely woman, . . . . . Sir 9:8

**EYES**

God opened her **e**, and she saw a . . . . . Gn 21:19  
that make the **e** fail and drain . . . . . Lv 26:16  
camp in the desert, and you can be our **e**. . . . . Nm 10:31  
saw with your own **e** what the LORD did . . . . . Dt 4:3  
and thorns in your **e**, until you vanish . . . . . Josh 23:13  
womb, didn't hide trouble from my **e**. . . . . Job 3:10  
people; their **e** spot those who are . . . . . Ps 10:8  
approval in the **e** of God and . . . . . Prv 3:4  
I'll hide my **e** from you. Even . . . . . Is 1:15  
Compassion is hidden from my **e**. . . . . Hos 13:14  
touched their **e** and said, "It will . . . . . Mt 9:29  
Mk 8:18  
Don't you have **e**? Why can't you see?  
in the Lord's **e**. He must not drink . . . . . Lk 1:15  
you: open your **e** and notice that  
him complete health right before your **e**. . . . . Jn 4:35  
Ac 3:16  
righteous in God's **e**. It is the ones . . . . . Ro 2:13  
and exposed to the **e** of the one to whom . . . . . Heb 4:13  
like snow—and his **e** were like a fiery . . . . . Rev 1:14

**HIS EYES**

Tob 3:17; 11:7, 8, 17; Jdt 16:9; Sir 15:19; 17:19; 39:19; 2Macc 5:17;  
3Macc 5:33; 4Macc 6:6, 26

**MY EYES**

Tob 2:10; 3:12; 5:10; 10:5; 11:13; 1Macc 6:10; 2Esd 1:31; 2:29;  
9:38; 4Macc 5:30

**THEIR EYES**

Wis 11:18; 17:10; Sir 12:16; 38:28; LJer 16; 2Macc 8:17; 4Macc  
17:10; 18:21

**EZRA**

King Artaxerxes, **E**, son of Seraiah . . . . . Ezr 7:1

of the Persians, **E** arrived. He was . . . . . 1Esd 8:1  
of the prophet **E** son of Saraiah son . . . . . 2Esd 1:1

**EZRA THE PRIEST**

Ezr 17:11, 12; 10:10, 16; Neh 8:2, 9; 1Esd 8:8, 9, 19; 9:16, 42

**Ff****FACE**

the sweat of your **f** you will eat . . . . . Gn 3:19  
Moses hid his **f** because he was . . . . . Ex 3:6  
I will set my own **f** against such a . . . . . Lv 20:3  
The LORD make his **f** shine on you and be . . . . . Nm 6:25  
spoke with you **f**-to-face on the . . . . . Dt 5:4  
fell flat on his **f** and worshipped . . . . . Josh 5:14  
He will certainly curse you to your **f**. . . . . Job 1:11  
The light of your **f** has left us, LORD!  
kisses him. Her **f** is brazen as she . . . . . Ps 4:6  
who has hidden his **f** from the house of . . . . . Is 8:17  
who they are, right in front of my **f**. . . . . Hos 7:2  
don't put on a sad **f** like the . . . . . Mt 6:16  
Some covered his **f** and hit him, . . . . . Mk 14:65  
he fell on his **f** and begged, "Lord, . . . . . Lk 5:12  
tied, and his **f** covered with a . . . . . Jn 11:44  
they saw that his **f** was radiant, just . . . . . Ac 6:15  
then we will see **f**-to-face. Now I . . . . . 1Co 13:12  
destined to die once and then **f** judgment.  
creature had a **f** like a human . . . . . Rev 4:7  
wall, with my **f** uncovered because . . . . . Tob 2:9  
to cover the whole **f** of the earth to  
ungodly from the **f** of the earth all . . . . . Wis 12:9  
and don't turn your **f** away from the poor . . . . . Sir 4:4  
but they themselves met him **f**-to-face. . . . . 1Macc 11:68  
be ungodly in the **f** of the divine laws . . . . . 2Macc 4:17  
he lifted up his **f** to heaven toward . . . . . 1Esd 4:58  
in front of your **f**, setting up false . . . . . PrMan 10  
and his eyes and **f** showed his dismay. . . . . 3Macc 5:33  
realm beyond corruption?" I fell on my **f**. . . . . 2Esd 4:11  
His **f** dripping with sweat and gasping for . . . . . 4Macc 6:11

**FAITH**

thus breaking **f** with the LORD, . . . . . Nm 5:6  
But you had no **f** in the LORD your God . . . . . Dt 1:32  
with my family. Give me a sign of good **f**. . . . . Josh 2:12  
But I have sure **f** that I will experience . . . . . Ps 27:13  
nation enter, a nation that keeps **f** . . . . . Is 26:2  
then they acted in bad **f** against me . . . . . Hos 6:7  
much more for you, you people of weak **f** . . . . . Mt 6:30  
Jesus saw their **f**, he said to the . . . . . Mk 2:5  
Jesus saw their **f**, he said, "Friend, . . . . . Lk 5:20  
acknowledge their **f** because they . . . . . Jn 12:42  
is, because of **f** in Jesus' name, . . . . . Ac 3:16  
to all who have **f** in God, to the Jew . . . . . Ro 1:16  
enter because of their lack of **f**. . . . . Heb 3:19  
you didn't break **f** with me even at . . . . . Rev 2:13  
they persevere in **f**, they will inherit  
continue to keep **f** with us, and we . . . . . 1Macc 10:27  
the land will be barren and devoid of **f** . . . . . 2Esd 5:1

**FAITH HAS HEALED YOU**

Mt 9:22; Mk 5:34; 10:52; Lk 8:48; 17:19; 18:42

**FAITH IN GOD**

Ps 78:22; Mk 11:22; Ac 27:25; Ro 1:16; 4:3, 5, 11; 10:4; Heb 6:1

**THROUGH FAITH**

Ac 15:9; Ro 3:30; 4:16; Ga 3:14; 3:26; Eph 3:12; 3:17; Col 2:12; 2Ti  
3:15; Heb 6:12; 11:4, 33, Jas 2:24

**YOU HAVE FAITH**

Mt 17:20; 21:21, 22; Mk 4:40; Ro 10:9; 1Ti 1:19; Jas 2:18

**FAITHFUL**

you're loyal and **f** to my master, tell . . . . . Gn 24:49  
God! He is the **f** God, who keeps the . . . . . Dt 7:9  
the feet of his **f** ones, but the . . . . . 1Sa 2:9

care of the *f*. The LORD will . . . . . Ps 4:3  
 This *f*town has become a prostitute! She . . . . . Is 1:21  
 Who then are the *f*and wise servants. . . . . Mt 24:45  
 Who are the *f*and wise managers . . . . . Lk 12:42  
 disciples if you remain *f*to my teaching. . . . . Jn 8:31  
 them to remain *f*to the message of . . . . . Ac 13:43  
 all Gentiles to *f*obedience for his . . . . . Ro 1:5  
 a merciful and *f*high priest in . . . . . Heb 2:17  
 Jesus Christ—the *f*wtiness, the . . . . . Rev 1:5  
 Those who are *f*will always be . . . . . Wis 3:9  
 is joined to the *f*even within the . . . . . Sir 1:14  
 Abraham found *f*when he was . . . . . 1Macc 2:52  
 Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, his *f*servants. . . . . 2Macc 1:2  
 Indeed, you are *f*and tru . . . . . 3Macc 2:11  
 They weren't *f*to his statutes, . . . . . 2Esd 7:24  
 life that the *f*seal of death made . . . . . 4Macc 7:15

### FAITHFUL LOVE

2Sa 7:15; 9:1, 7; 22:51; 1Ch 16:34; 16:41; 17:13; Ps 5:7; 6:4; 13:5; 17:7; 18:50; 21:7; 23:6; 25:6, 7; 26:3; 31:7, 16, 21, 23; 32:10; 33:5, 18, 22; 36:7, 10; 42:8; 44:26; 48:9; 51:1, 52:1, 8; 57:10; 59:16; 62:12; 63:3; 66:20; 69:13, 16; 77:8; 85:7, 10; 86:5, 13, 15; 88:11; 90:14; 94:18; 101:1; 103:4, 8, 11, 17; 106:1, 7, 45; 107:8, 15, 21, 31, 43; 108:4; 109:12, 16, 21, 26; 117:2; 119:41, 64, 76, 88, 124, 149, 159; 130:7; 143:8, 12; 145:8; 147:11; Is 54:10; Lam 3:22; Hos 4:1; 6:6; 10:12; 12:6; Jl 2:13; Jon 4:2; Mic 6:8; 7:18, 20

### FAITHFUL ONES

1Sa 2:9; Ps 85:8; 97:10; 145:10; 148:14; Mic 7:2

### GOD'S FAITHFUL LOVE

2Ch 5:13; 7:3, 6; Ps 52:1, 8; 103:11; 117:2; 118:2, 3, 4; 136:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26

### FAITHFULLY

So now, if you *f*obey me and stay true to . . . . . Ex 19:5  
 Keep them *f*because that will show your . . . . . Dt 6:4  
 deal loyally and *f*with you when the . . . . . Josh 2:14  
 You deal *f*with the faithful; you show . . . . . Ps 18:25  
 Instead, they will *f*depend on the . . . . . Is 10:20  
 serve them more *f*, because the . . . . . 1Ti 6:2  
 friend, you act *f*in whatever you do . . . . . 3Jn 5  
 and we haven't behaved *f*toward you. . . . . Tob 3:5  
 those who have *f*commanded the . . . . . 3Macc 6:25

### FAITHFULNESS

loyalty and his *f*to my master. The . . . . . Gn 24:27  
 full of great loyalty and *f*. . . . . Ex 34:6  
 abandoned his *f*with the living or . . . . . Ru 2:20  
 dust thank you? Does it proclaim your *f*? . . . . . Ps 30:9  
 let loyalty and *f*leave you. . . . . Prv 3:3  
 and *f*the belt around . . . . . Is 11:5  
 for my wife in *f*, and you will know . . . . . Hos 2:20  
 falter in your *f*to me. It is . . . . . Mk 14:27  
 will he find *f*on earth? . . . . . Lk 18:8  
 news about your *f*is being spread . . . . . Ro 1:8  
 you deny the *f*of our Lord Jesus. . . . . Jas 2:1  
 your love and *f*, your service and . . . . . Rev 2:19  
 He is pleased with *f*and gentleness. . . . . Sir 1:27  
 people saw Simon's *f*and the honor that . . . . . 1Macc 14:35  
 these things because of her *f*toward God. . . . . 4Macc 15:24

### LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS

2Sa 2:6; 15:20; Ps 40:11; 57:3; 61:7; 89:14; 98:3; 115:1; 138:2; Prv 16:6; Phm 5; Rev 2:19

### LOYAL LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS

2Sa 2:6; 15:20; Ps 40:11; 57:3; 89:14; 98:3; 115:1; 138:2

### FALL

heaviest hail to *f*on Egypt that has. . . . . Ex 9:18  
 of these creatures *f*into a pottery . . . . . Lv 11:33  
 the night, the manna would *f*with it. . . . . Nm 11:9  
 woman, and you *f*in love with her . . . . . Dt 21:11  
 die of thirst and *f*into the hands of. . . . . Jgs 15:18  
 scare you and dread of him *f*on you? . . . . . Job 13:11  
 will lie down and *f*asleep in peace. . . . . Ps 4:8  
 many corpses to *f*, she has killed. . . . . Prv 7:26  
 Your men will *f*by the sword, your . . . . . Is 3:25

officials will *f*by the sword . . . . . Hos 7:16  
 overflowing—will *f*into your lap. The . . . . . Lk 6:38  
 shadow could *f*on some of them as . . . . . Ac 5:15  
 have sinned and *f*short of God's . . . . . Ro 3:23  
 that no one will *f*by following the . . . . . Heb 4:11  
 twenty-four elders *f*before the one . . . . . Rev 4:10

### FALL AWAY

Mt 13:21; 13:41; 24:10; 26:31; Mk 4:17; Lk 8:13; Jn 16:1

### FALL INTO SIN

Mt 5:29; 5:30; 18:6, 7, 8, 9; Mk 9:42; 9:43, 45, 47; Lk 17:1, 2

### FAMILY

your land, your *f*, and your father's . . . . . Gn 12:1  
 number in Jacob's *f* was seventy. . . . . Ex 1:5  
 community. Your *f*—all of Israel's. . . . . Lv 10:6  
 Mount Seir to Esau's *f*as their property. . . . . Dt 2:5  
 loyally with my *f*. Give me a sign of. . . . . Josh 2:12  
 told and have not concealed from their *f*. . . . . Job 15:18  
 to the LORD; every *f*among all the . . . . . Ps 22:27  
 who trouble their *f*will inherit the . . . . . Prv 11:29  
 will seize a *f*member, saying, . . . . . Is 3:6  
 against the whole *f*that I brought out . . . . . Am 3:1  
 When his *f*heard what was happening, they . . . . . Mk 3:21  
 David's house and *f*line, he went up . . . . . Lk 2:4  
 comes from David's *f*and from . . . . . Jn 7:42  
 this time, the *f*of believers was a . . . . . Ac 1:15  
 members of your *f*. Be the best at . . . . . Ro 12:10  
 or mother or any *f*. He has no . . . . . Heb 7:3  
 of Raguel, and her *f*came from Asiel, . . . . . Tob 1:1  
 her tribe and her *f*, had died during . . . . . Jdt 8:2  
 wicked. Their whole *f*line will be cursed. . . . . Wis 3:12  
 and make you a stranger to your own *f*. . . . . Sir 11:34  
 If you don't, we'll kill you and your *f*! . . . . . Bel 29  
 a member of the *f*of the anointed . . . . . 2Macc 1:10  
 he died, and was buried in his *f*tomb. . . . . 1Esd 1:29  
 you restored him unharmed to all his *f*. . . . . 3Macc 6:8  
 never abandon his *f*line. You gave him . . . . . 2Esd 3:15

### FAST

Demand a *f*, request a special assembly. . . . . Jl 1:14  
 And when you *f*, don't put on a sad face . . . . . Mt 6:16  
 Pharisees' disciples *f*, but yours don't? . . . . . Mk 2:18  
 disciples of John *f*often and pray . . . . . Lk 5:33

### FASTING

mourned for days, *f*and praying before . . . . . Neh 1:4  
 legs are weak from *f*, my body is skin . . . . . Ps 109:24  
 on the next day of *f*, and read the . . . . . Jer 36:6  
 your hearts, with *f*, with weeping, and . . . . . Jl 2:12  
 will know they are *f*. I assure you that . . . . . Mt 6:16  
 had a habit of *f*. Some people asked . . . . . Mk 2:18  
 God with *f*and prayer night. . . . . Lk 1:27  
 the Lord and *f*, the Holy Spirit. . . . . Ac 13:2

### FATHER

a man leaves his *f*and mother and. . . . . Gn 2:24  
 home to their *f*Reuel, he asked, . . . . . Ex 2:18  
 priest after his *f*will perform the . . . . . Lv 16:32  
 during the lifetime of their *f*Aaron. . . . . Nm 3:4  
 Honor your *f*and your mother, exactly as . . . . . Dt 5:16  
 the lives of my *f*, mother, brothers, . . . . . Josh 2:13  
 with us; those much older than your *f*. . . . . Job 15:10  
 are my son, today I have become your *f*. . . . . Ps 2:7  
 like a *f*who treats his son . . . . . Prv 3:12  
 Mighty God, Eternal *f*, Prince of Peace. . . . . Is 9:6  
 out of the way. *f*and son have. . . . . Am 2:7  
 Abraham was the *f*of Isaac. . . . . Mt 1:2  
 him, leaving their *f*Zebedee in the . . . . . Mk 1:20  
 will give him the throne of David his *f*. . . . . Lk 1:32  
 The *f*loves the Son and gives everything . . . . . Jn 3:35  
 wait for what the *f*had promised. . . . . Ac 1:4  
 peace from God our *f*and the Lord Jesus. . . . . Ro 1:7  
 I have become your *f*? Or, even, I will . . . . . Heb 1:5  
 to his God and *f*—to him be glory . . . . . Rev 1:6  
 right. He even boasts that God is his *f*. . . . . Wis 2:16  
 of place to a *f*above his children . . . . . Sir 3:2

Always listen to him. He will be your *f*. . . . 1Macc 2:65  
 through John the *f* of Eupolemus (the . . . . 2Macc 4:11  
 23 years old, as king to succeed his . . . . 1Esd 1:32  
 things, the first *f* of all, holy among. . . . 3Macc 2:21  
 you like a *f* with his sons. . . . 2Esd 1:28  
 Our *f* Eleazar's clear thinking was like a . . . . 4Macc 7:1

### FATHER-IN-LAW

was told, "Your *f* is now on his way. . . . Gn 38:13  
 the flock for his *f* Jethro, Midian's . . . . Ex 3:1  
 son and Moses' *f*. "We're marching . . . . Nm 10:29  
 of Moses' *f* the Kenite went up . . . . Jgs 1:16  
 Annas. He was the *f* of Caiaphas, the. . . . Jn 18:13

### FATHERED

to Enoch. Irad *f* Mehujael, Mehujael . . . . Gn 4:18  
 clan. Machir *f* Gilead. From . . . . Nm 26:29  
 in Jerusalem and *f* more sons and . . . . 1Ch 14:3  
 whom you *f* will be taken to . . . . Is 39:7

### FATHERS

I lie down with my *f*, carry me from . . . . Gn 47:30  
 When their *f*or brothers come to us to . . . . Jgs 21:22  
 I mock me, whose *f* I refused to put . . . . Job 30:1  
 will succeed your *f*, you will appoint . . . . Ps 45:16  
 gather wood, the *f*light the fire. . . . Jer 7:18  
 turn the hearts of *f*back to their. . . . Lk 1:17  
 Brothers and *f*, listen to me. Our. . . . Ac 7:2  
 don't have many *f*. I gave birth to . . . . 1Co 4:15

### FEAR

on the earth will *f*you and dread . . . . Gn 9:2  
 all of Canaan's inhabitants melted in *f*. . . . Ex 15:15  
 they will learn to *f*me every day of. . . . Dt 4:10  
 land has melted down in *f*because of you. . . . Josh 2:9  
*F*and dread struck me; all of my bones . . . . Job 4:14  
 Strike them with *f*, LORD. Let the. . . . Ps 9:20  
 stay calm. Don't *f*, and don't lose . . . . Is 7:4  
 peoples shake with *f*, all faces turn . . . . Jl 2:6  
 away hungry for *f*they won't have . . . . Mt 15:32  
 The woman, full of *f*and trembling, came. . . . Mk 5:33  
 he was startled and overcome with *f*. . . . Lk 1:12  
 to the light for *f*that their actions . . . . Jn 3:20  
 Trembling with *f*, Moses didn't dare . . . . Ac 7:32  
 their entire lives by their *f*of death. . . . Heb 2:15  
 their feet. Great *f*came over those. . . . Rev 11:11  
 put to death, I fled from the city in *f*. . . . Tob 1:19  
*F*and dread of Holofernes fell upon the . . . . Jdt 2:28  
 tremble with great *f*when they see him. . . . Wis 5:2  
*F*of the Lord is a person's glory. . . . Sir 1:11  
 Gentiles, letting *f*of these gods grip . . . . LJer 4  
 Don't *f* the words of sinners, for their. . . . 1Macc 2:62  
*F*and trembling seized the man, making . . . . 2Macc 3:17  
 Don't all countries *f*to touch him? . . . . 1Esd 4:28  
 All things *f*you and tremble in your . . . . PrMn 4  
 most wretched *f*, they gave. . . . 3Macc 5:49  
 Don't *f*, mother of the children: I have . . . . 2Esd 2:17  
 with courage, such as anger, *f*, and pain. . . . 4Macc 1:4

### FEAR GOD

Dt 25:18; Ecc 5:7; 8:12; Lk 18:4; 23:40; Rev 14:7

### FEAR OF GOD

2Sa 23:3; 2Ch 20:29; 26:5; Ps 36:1; Ro 3:18; 2Co 7:1; 1Pt 2:17

### FEAR OF THE LORD

1Sa 11:7; Ps 111:10; Pvr 1:7, 29; 2:5; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26, 27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; Is 11:2; 33:6; Sir 1:11, 12, 28; 9:16; 10:22; 25:11; 40:27; 45:23; 50:29

### FEAR THE LORD

Dt 6:2; 14:23; 1Sa 12:14; 12:24; Pvr 3:7; 14:2; 24:21; Jer 5:24; 26:19; Am 3:8; 2Co 5:11; Jdt 16:16; Sir 1:13; 2:7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17; 6:16, 17; 7:31; 10:19, 20; 21:6; 26:25; 32:16; 33:1; 34:14, 16, 17; 40:26; 2Esd 16:71, 72

### FEAR YOUR GOD

Lv 19:14; 19:32; 25:17, 36, 43

### FEAST

You will have a *f*there, each of you and. . . . Dt 12:7  
 Samson put on a *f*there, as was the . . . . Jgs 14:10  
 his sons hosted a *f*in his own house . . . . Job 1:4  
 They *f*on the bounty of your house; you . . . . Ps 36:8  
 but a happy heart has a continual *f*. . . . Pvr 15:15  
 all peoples a rich *f*, a feast of choice . . . . Is 25:6  
 away, and the *f*of those who . . . . Am 6:7  
 happen during the *f*so there wouldn't . . . . Mt 26:5  
 he had prepared a *f*for his . . . . Mk 6:21  
 are those who will *f*in God's kingdom. . . . Lk 14:15  
 we need for the *f*," or that he . . . . Jn 13:29  
 celebrate the *f*with the . . . . 1Co 5:8  
 dangerous. They *f*with you without . . . . Jude 12  
 bring it with you back to the wedding *f*. . . . Tob 9:2  
 house and made a *f*for the elders. . . . Jdt 6:21  
 rule he hosted a *f*for all his. . . . GkEst 1:3  
 for them a tasty delicacy—a *f*of quail! . . . . Wis 16:2  
 The sign for a *f*comes from the moon, a . . . . Sir 43:7  
 as some do at a funeral *f*for the dead. . . . LJer 31  
 the observance of sabbaths and *f*days. . . . 1Macc 1:45  
 decree was read, a *f*was arranged for . . . . 3Macc 4:1  
 I have prepared a *f*for them, and I . . . . 2Esd 2:10

### FESTIVAL

they can hold a *f*for me in the. . . . Ex 5:1  
 On your *f*days, your appointed feasts, . . . . Nm 10:10  
 point, perform the *f*of Weeks for the. . . . Dt 16:10  
 said, "the annual *f*of the LORD is. . . . Jgs 21:19  
 songs—a huge crowd celebrating the *f* . . . . Ps 42:4  
 people celebrate a *f*. The heart will be . . . . Is 30:29  
 day of appointed *f*, on the day of the. . . . Hos 9:5  
 went to Jerusalem for the Passover *f*. . . . Lk 2:41  
 for the Passover *f*, many believed in . . . . Jn 2:23  
 here in Ephesus until the *f*of Pentecost. . . . 1Co 16:8  
 to countless angels in a *f*gathering. . . . Heb 12:22

### FESTIVAL OF BOOTHS

Lv 23:34; Dt 16:13; 16:16; 31:10; Ezr 3:4; Zec 14:16; 14:18, 19; Jn 7:2; 1Macc 10:21; 2Macc 1:9, 18; 10:6; 1Esd 5:50

### FESTIVAL OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

Ex 12:17; 23:15; 34:18; Lv 23:6; Dt 16:16; 2Ch 30:13; 30:21; 35:17; Ezr 6:22; Mt 26:17; Mk 14:1, 12; Lk 22:1; Ac 12:3; 20:6; 1Esd 1:17

### FESTIVALS

the new moons, and *f*, a designated . . . . 1Ch 23:31  
 new moons and your *f*. They've become a . . . . Is 1:14  
 celebrations, her *f*, her new moons, . . . . Hos 2:11  
 Bethel: Your *f*will be. . . . Tob 2:6  
 holiday among your *f*so that it will be . . . . GkEst E:23  
 between different seasons and *f*. . . . Sir 33:8  
 All the *f*will be days of immunity and . . . . 1Macc 10:34  
 or the ancestral *f*, or even simply to . . . . 2Macc 6:6

### FESTUS

Porcius *F*. Since Felix . . . . Ac 24:27

### FIG

So they sewed *f*leaves together. . . . Gn 3:7  
 and barley, vines, *f*trees, and . . . . Dt 8:8  
 trees said to the *f*tree, "You come . . . . Jgs 9:10  
 vines and their *f*trees; shattered. . . . Ps 105:33  
 Those who tend a *f*tree will eat its . . . . Pvr 27:18  
 fruit is on the *f*tree, and the . . . . Song 2:13  
 be like an early *f*before the summer . . . . Is 28:4  
 her vines and her *f*trees, of which . . . . Hos 2:12  
 He saw a *f*tree along the road, but when . . . . Mt 21:19  
 away, he noticed a *f*tree in leaf, so . . . . Mk 11:13  
 A man owned a *f*tree planted in . . . . Lk 13:6  
 called you, I saw you under the *f*tree. . . . Jn 1:48  
 and sisters, can a *f*tree produce . . . . Jas 3:12  
 to the earth as a *f*tree drops its . . . . Rev 6:13  
 bag with grain, a *f*cake, and fine . . . . Jdt 10:5  
 own vines and *f*trees. No one made . . . . 1Macc 14:12

### FIGHT

of a man; he will *f*everyone, and they . . . . Gn 16:12

join our enemies, *f* against us, and . . . Ex 1:10  
 the Israelites. A *f* broke out between . . . Lv 24:10  
 I'll be able to *f* against them and . . . Nm 22:11  
 you. He will *f* for you just as he . . . Dt 1:30  
 men old enough to *f* who went out from . . . Josh 5:6  
 who argue with me, *f* with those who . . . Ps 35:1  
 to back off from a *f*, but fools jump . . . Prv 20:3  
 and they will *f* one against . . . Is 19:2  
 their beds; they *f* over grain and . . . Hos 7:14  
 and kingdoms will *f* against each . . . Mt 24:7  
 my guards would *f* so that I wouldn't . . . Jn 18:36  
 who started the *f* against his . . . Ac 7:27  
 goal in sight. I *f* like a boxer in . . . 1Co 9:26  
 you struggle and *f*. You don't have . . . Jas 4:2  
 the beast, and who can *f* against it? . . . Rev 13:4  
 Master, don't *f* them in the usual . . . Jdt 7:11  
 itself for the *f* against his foes . . . Wis 5:7  
*F* to the death on behalf of truth, and . . . Sir 4:28  
 done and refuse to *f* against the . . . 1Macc 2:40  
 unpunished after trying to *f* against God." . . . 2Macc 7:19  
 but resolved to *f*. He didn't pay . . . 1Esd 1:26  
 that they would *f* by their side and . . . 3Macc 3:10  
 will begin to *f* each other. Reason . . . 2Esd 5:9  
 clear thinking can *f* alongside you so . . . 4Macc 3:4

**FIRE**

Isaac. He took the *f* and the knife in . . . Gn 22:6  
 him in a flame of *f* in the middle of a . . . Ex 3:2  
 light the altar and lay wood on the *f* . . . Lv 1:7  
 and put it in the funder the . . . Nm 6:18  
 should camp, in *f* by night, so you . . . Dt 1:33  
 burned them with *f* and stoned them . . . Josh 7:25  
 said: "A raging *f* fell from the sky . . . Job 1:16  
 came a devouring *f*, flaming coals . . . Ps 18:8  
 Can a man scoop *f* into his lap and his . . . Prv 6:27  
 cities burned with *f*, your . . . Is 1:7  
 need to stoke the *f* from the kneading . . . Hos 7:4  
 be chopped down and tossed into the *f* . . . Mt 3:10  
 thrown him into a *f* for into water . . . Mk 9:22  
 be chopped down and tossed into the *f* . . . Lk 3:9  
 gathered up, thrown into a *f*, and burned . . . Jn 15:6  
 flames of *f*ighting on each . . . Ac 2:3  
 on *f* in the Spirit as . . . Ro 12:11  
 and who uses flames of *f*as ministers . . . Heb 1:7  
 been purified by *f* so that you may be . . . Rev 3:18  
 in mourning, will be destroyed by *f* . . . Tob 14:4  
 yet tested us with *f*, as he did them to . . . Jdt 8:27  
 flee from the *f* that descended on . . . Wis 10:6  
 is tested with *f*, and acceptable . . . Sir 2:5  
 one will send *f* on her for many . . . Bar 4:35  
 When a *f* breaks out in the home of their . . . LJer 54  
 middle of the *f*, Azariah spoke . . . PrAz 2  
 in it, plundered it, and burned it with *f* . . . 1Macc 5:35  
 of Booths and *f*, when Nehemiah . . . 2Macc 1:18  
 Passover lamb over *f*as required. They . . . 1Esd 1:13  
 them with *f* and sulfur, making . . . 3Macc 2:5  
 and Sidon, with *f* and kill those . . . 2Esd 1:11  
 though he was on *f* with thirst, David . . . 4Macc 3:15

**FISH**

take charge of the *f* of the sea, the . . . Gn 1:26  
 The *f* in the Nile are going to die, the . . . Ex 7:18  
 We remember the *f*we ate in Egypt for . . . Nm 11:5  
 on the earth, or a *f* that lives in the . . . Dt 4:18  
 that crawls on the ground, and *f* . . . 1Ki 4:33  
 teach you; the *f* of the sea will . . . Job 12:8  
 in the sky, the *f* of the ocean, . . . Ps 8:8  
 Those who *f* will lament; all who cast . . . Is 19:8  
 the sky, even the *f* of the sea are . . . Hos 4:3  
 and I'll show you how to *f* for people . . . Mt 4:19  
 take the first *f* you catch . . . Mt 17:27  
 because of the number of *f* they caught . . . Lk 5:9  
 loaves and two *f*. But what good is . . . Jn 6:9  
 large *f*, one hundred fifty-three . . . Jn 21:11  
 kind of flesh, and *f* have another kind . . . 1Co 15:39  
 kind of animal, bird, reptile, and *f* . . . Jas 3:7  
 a massive *f* leaped up out of . . . Tob 6:3

Sodom will cast up *f*, it will utter . . . 2Esd 5:7

**FLESH**

of his ribs and closed up the *f* over it . . . Gn 2:21  
 and all of its *f*, along with its . . . Lv 4:11  
 stillborn, whose *f* is half eaten as . . . Nm 12:12  
 any decayed animal *f* because you are a . . . Dt 14:21  
 And remember that I'm your *f* and blood! . . . Jgs 9:2  
 his bones and *f*. Then he will . . . Job 2:5  
 be afraid. What can mere *f* do to me? . . . Ps 56:4  
 end when your body and *f* are exhausted . . . Prv 5:11  
 They devoured the *f* of their own . . . Is 9:20  
 though they eat *f*, the LORD doesn't . . . Hos 8:13  
 his wife, and the two will be one *f* . . . Mt 19:5  
 two will be one *f*. So they are no . . . Mk 10:8  
 ghost doesn't have *f* and bones like you . . . Lk 24:39  
 The Word became *f* and made his home among . . . Jn 1:14  
 but I'm made of *f* and blood, and I'm . . . Ro 7:14  
 children share in *f* and blood, he also . . . Heb 2:14  
 will devour her *f* and burn her with . . . Rev 17:16  
 worms into their *f*, and they will . . . Jdt 16:17  
 out of earth. My *f* was molded into . . . Wis 7:1  
 All *f* grows old like a garment; the . . . Sir 14:17  
 Some of us ate the *f* of our sons and . . . Bar 2:3  
 The *f* of your faithful ones... and their . . . 1Macc 7:17  
 and in agony, his *f* was rotting away, . . . 2Macc 9:9  
 will eat their own *f* and drink their . . . 2Esd 15:58  
 tore into his *f*, ripped his sides, . . . 4Macc 6:6

**FLOOD**

The *f* remained on the earth for forty . . . Gn 7:17  
 calamity, sword, *f*, plague, or famine . . . 2Ch 20:9  
 of water that distill rain from his *f*, . . . Job 36:27  
 so that a great *f* of water won't . . . Ps 32:6  
 your fountains *f* outside, streams . . . Prv 5:16  
 has ceased! How the *f* has receded! . . . Is 14:4  
 the seas, and the *f* surrounds me . . . Jon 2:3  
 don't pour out a *f* of empty words, as . . . Mt 6:7  
 bedrock. When the *f* came, the rising . . . Lk 6:48  
 with the same *f* of unrestrained . . . 1Pt 4:4  
 but you destroyed them in a great *f* . . . 3Macc 2:4  
 you brought the *f* over the world and . . . 2Esd 3:9  
 of it during the *f* that swallowed up . . . 4Macc 15:31

**FOLLOWED**

the camels, and *f* the man. So the . . . Gn 24:61  
 army that had *f* them into the sea . . . Ex 14:28  
 with them who faithfully *f* Molech . . . Lv 20:5  
 command. They *f* the LORD's . . . Nm 9:23  
 everyone who *f* the Baal of Peor, . . . Dt 4:3  
 trumpets. The LORD's covenant chest *f* . . . Josh 6:8  
 if my heart has *f* my eyes . . . Job 31:7  
 wilful hearts; they *f* their own advice . . . Ps 81:12  
 bride, how you *f* me in the . . . Jer 2:2  
 common; bloody crime *f* by bloody crime . . . Hos 4:2  
 away, they left their nets and *f* him . . . Mt 4:20  
 away, they left their nets and *f* him . . . Mk 1:18  
 The mob that *f* kept screaming, "Away with . . . Ac 21:36  
 rock that *f* them, and the rock . . . 1Co 10:4  
 whole earth was amazed and *f* the beast . . . Rev 13:3

**FOLLOWED JESUS**

Mt 27:55; Lk 5:11; 23:27; Jn 1:37; 1:40; 18:15

**FOLLOWERS**

you and all your *f*! After that I'll . . . Ex 11:8  
 Athaliah and her *f* had broken into . . . 2Ch 24:7  
 authority do you *f* throw them out? . . . Mt 12:27  
 Jesus and his *f* went into Capernaum . . . Mk 1:21  
 him because he isn't in our group of *f* . . . Lk 9:49  
 recognized that they had been *f* of Jesus . . . Ac 4:13

**FOLLOWING**

and everybody *f* the herds . . . Gn 32:19  
 Israelites: Do the *f* whenever someone . . . Lv 4:2  
 explain this Instruction. He said the *f* . . . Dt 1:5  
 the Levites the *f* cities and their . . . Josh 21:3

they turned from **f**him and didn't . . . . . Job 34:27  
 women servants **f**her, are presented . . . . . Ps 45:14  
 a way that isn't good, **f**their own plans . . . . . Is 65:2  
 said to the people **f**him, "I say to you . . . . . Mt 8:10  
 of people were **f**Jesus, crowding in . . . . . Mk 5:24  
**F**the customs of priestly service, he was . . . . . Lk 1:9  
 and saw them **f**, he asked, "What . . . . . Jn 1:38  
 At noon on the **f**day. . . . . Ac 10:9  
 you as I give the **f**instruction . . . . . 1Co 11:17  
 one will fall by **f**the same example. . . . . Heb 4:11  
 their hearts from **f**her practices . . . . . Rev 2:22

**FOLLOWING THE LORD**

Josh 22:16; 22:18, 23, 29; 1Sa 12:20

**FOLLY**

Woman **f**is noisy; she's stupid and . . . . . Prv 9:13  
 madness and **f**, I realized that . . . . . Ecc 1:17  
 Fools speak **f**, their minds deceive . . . . . Is 32:6  
 to accomplish his **f**. Finally. . . . . 2Macc 14:5  
 people who never cease from their **f**. . . . . 3Macc 3:16

**FOOD**

seeds within it. These will be your **f**. . . . . Gn 1:29  
 for preparing the **f**that everyone is . . . . . Ex 12:16  
 burned offering, a **f**gift of soothing . . . . . Lv 1:9  
 and you make a **f**gift to the **LORD** as a . . . . . Nm 15:3  
 course you may buy **f**from them with . . . . . Dt 2:6  
 Passover, they ate **f**produced in the . . . . . Josh 5:11  
 Is tasteless **F**eatens without salt, or . . . . . Job 6:6  
 who shared my **f**, has kicked me . . . . . Ps 41:9  
 so, it gets its **f**in summer; gathers . . . . . Prv 6:8  
 you will eat the best **f**of the land. . . . . Is 1:19  
 and in Assyria they will eat unclean **f**. . . . . Hos 9:3  
 life more than **f**and the body more . . . . . Mt 6:25  
 disciples eating **f**with unclean . . . . . Mk 7:2  
 and whoever has **f**must do the same. . . . . Lk 3:11  
 had gone into the city to buy him some **f**. . . . . Jn 4:8  
 homes. They shared **f**with gladness and . . . . . Ac 2:46  
 is upset by your **f**, you are no longer . . . . . Ro 14:15  
 where you need milk instead of solid **f**. . . . . Heb 5:12  
 they would eat **f**sacrificed to . . . . . Rev 2:14  
 fellow Jews there were eating Gentile **f**. . . . . Tob 1:10  
 be able to stomach **f**because of the . . . . . Wis 16:3  
 than magnificent **f**in foreign . . . . . Sir 29:22  
 like wild animals: they ate grass for **f**. . . . . 2Macc 5:27  
 way, eat the rich **f**and drink the . . . . . 1Esd 9:51  
 to eat forbidden **f**. Eleazar asked to . . . . . 4Macc 5:14

**FOOL**

Now you've acted like a **f**. . . . . Gn 31:28  
 You made a **f**out of me and lied. . . . . Jgs 16:10  
 you, or can you **f**him as you fool . . . . . Job 13:9  
 but the mouth of a **f**brings on ruin. . . . . Prv 10:14  
 Then a **f**will no longer be called. . . . . Is 32:5  
 The prophet is a **f**, the spiritual man . . . . . Hos 9:7  
 if they say, "You **f**," they will be in . . . . . Mt 5:22  
 God said to him, "**f**, tonight you will . . . . . Lk 12:20  
 Don't **f**yourself. If some of you . . . . . 1Co 3:18  
 yourself before a **f**, and don't show . . . . . Sir 4:27

**FOREHEAD**

head, on the **f**of the one set . . . . . Gn 49:26  
 a reminder on your **f**so that you will . . . . . Ex 13:9  
 the sides of the **f**, the person has a . . . . . Lv 13:41  
 smashing Moab's **f**, the head of all . . . . . Nm 24:17  
 They should be on your **f**as a symbol. . . . . Dt 6:8  
 Philistine on his **f**. The stone . . . . . 1Sa 17:49  
 is made of iron, and your **f**is bronze. . . . . Is 48:4  
 put on their right hand or on their **f**. . . . . Rev 13:16  
 He put special oil on my **f**to anoint me. . . . . Ps 151:3:4

**FOREIGN**

been an immigrant living in a **f**land. . . . . Ex 2:22  
 holy offerings. No **f**guest or hired . . . . . Lv 22:10  
**LORD** alone led Israel; no **f**god assisted. . . . . Dt 32:12  
 There must be no **f**god among you . . . . . Ps 81:9

woman, from the **f**woman with her . . . . . Prv 2:16  
 speech and a **f**tongue, he will . . . . . Is 28:11  
 and the names of the priests of **f**gods . . . . . Zep 1:4  
 this people with **f**languages and . . . . . 1Co 14:21  
 were mighty in war, and routed **f**armies. . . . . Heb 11:34  
 and don't take a **f**woman who isn't . . . . . Tob 4:12  
 as prisoners to a **f**land. The temple . . . . . Jdt 5:18  
 and they have wandered among **f**nations. . . . . Sir 29:18  
 enemies' land, growing old in a **f**land, . . . . . Bar 3:10  
 of bitter disappointment, in a **f**land. . . . . 1Macc 6:13  
 the adoption of **f**customs increased . . . . . 2Macc 4:13  
 they refuse to pay **f**taxes, but they . . . . . 1Esd 2:15  
 by the cruel treatment of a **f**nation. . . . . 3Macc 4:6  
 me and offered sacrifices to **f**gods! . . . . . 2Esd 1:6  
 to adopt a **f**way of life and to . . . . . 4Macc 18:5

**FOREIGN GODS**

Gn 35:2, 4; Josh 24:20; 24:23; Jgs 10:16; 1Sa 7:3; 2Ch 33:15; Jer 2:25; 5:19; 7:18; 8:19; Zep 1:4; Ac 17:18

**FOREIGNERS**

and those purchased with silver from **f** . . . . . Gn 17:12  
 you can sell it to **f**. Don't cook a lamb . . . . . Dt 14:21  
 into a city of **f**who aren't . . . . . Jgs 19:12  
 me, they obey me; **f**grovel before me . . . . . Ps 18:44  
 sight. It's a wasteland, as when **f**raid . . . . . Is 1:7  
 his wealth, and **f**entered his gates . . . . . Obad 11  
 as well as the **f**who live in Athens . . . . . Ac 17:21  
 speak it, and they will be like **f** to me . . . . . 1Co 14:11  
 in the presence of all the assembled **f**. . . . . Jdt 6:1  
 The **f**looked up and saw the Israelites . . . . . 1Macc 4:12  
 altars that the **f**built near the . . . . . 2Macc 10:2  
 with the land's **f**. The leaders and . . . . . 1Esd 8:67  
**F**will gather their fruits, plunder their . . . . . 2Esd 16:47

**FOREVER****ABOVE ALL OTHERS FOREVER**

PrAz 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65

**BLESSED FOREVER**

2Sa 7:29; 1Ch 17:27; Ro 1:25; 9:5; 2Co 11:31

**FAITHFUL LOVE LASTS FOREVER**

2Ch 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21; Ps 107:1; 118:1, 2, 3, 4, 29; 136:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26; 138:8

**LIVE FOREVER**

Gn 3:22; 1Kgs 1:31; 8:13; 2Ch 6:2; Neh 2:3; Ps 22:26; 49:9; Zec 1:5; Jn 6:51; 6:58; Tob 14:7; Wis 2:23; 5:15; 6:18, 19; Sir 37:26

**FORGIVE**

Joseph, "Please, **f**your brothers' . . . . . Gn 50:17  
 Please **f**my sin this time. Pray to the . . . . . Ex 10:17  
 Please **f**the wrongs of these people . . . . . Nm 14:19  
 the **LORD** won't **f**anyone who uses . . . . . Dt 5:11  
 Please **f**me, **LORD**. What can I say now . . . . . Josh 7:8  
 Why not **f**my sin, overlook my iniquity? . . . . . Job 7:21  
 good name, **LORD**, **f**my sins, which are . . . . . Ps 25:11  
**LORD**; for I will **f**their wrongdoing . . . . . Jer 31:34  
 on the house of Israel or **f**them. . . . . Hos 1:6  
**F**us for the ways we have wronged you, . . . . . Mt 6:12  
 and lives and wanted God to **f**their sins. . . . . Mk 1:4  
 and lives and wanted God to **f**their sins. . . . . Lk 3:3  
 If you **f**anyone's sins, they are . . . . . Jn 20:23  
 try your best to **f**and to comfort . . . . . 2Co 2:7  
 and just to **f**us our sins and . . . . . 1Jn 1:9  
 is great; he will **f**the whole heap of . . . . . Sir 5:6  
 begging you: **f**me, Lord, forgive . . . . . PrMan 13

**FORGIVE SINS**

Mt 9:6; Mk 2:7, 10; Lk 5:21; 5:24

**I WILL FORGIVE**

Nm 14:20; Jer 31:34; 33:8; 36:3; 50:20; Jl 3:21

**FORGIVEN**

for them, and they will be **f**. . . . . Lv 4:20

just as you've **f** these people from . . . . . Nm 14:19  
 Then the bloodguilt will be **f** them. . . . . Dt 21:8  
 wrongdoing is **f**, whose sin is . . . . . Ps 32:1  
 iniquity won't be **f** you until you die, . . . . . Is 22:14  
 which I had not **f**. I will act on . . . . . Jl 3:21  
 sins, they are **f**, if you don't . . . . . Jn 20:23  
 hope that your wicked intent can be **f**, . . . . . Ac 8:22  
 the Law are **f**, and whose sins . . . . . Ro 4:7  
 And if they have sinned, they will be **f**. . . . . Jas 5:15  
 confident of being **f**, adding sin upon . . . . . Sir 5:5  
 so that the dead would be **f** of their sin. . . . . 2Macc 12:45

**YOU WILL BE FORGIVEN**

Lv 4:35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; Lk 6:37

**YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN**

Mt 9:2, 5; Mk 2:5, 9; Lk 5:20; 5:23; 7:48; Is 43:24; 44:22; 50:1; 59:2;  
 65:7; Jer 15:13; 30:14, 15; Lam 4:22; Eze 16:52; 18:30, 21:24; Dn  
 4:27; Am 5:12; Mic 6:13; 6:15; 9:2, 5; 2:5, 9; 5:20, 23; 7:48; Jn 8:24;  
 Ac 2:38; 3:19; 22:16; 1Co 15:17; Jas 5:16; 1Jn 2:12

**FORTIFIED**

**FORTIFIED CITIES**

Nm 32:17, 32:36; Josh 10:20; 14:12; 19:35; 15a 6:18; 25a 20:6;  
 2Kgs 17:9; 18:13; 19:25; 2Ch 11:10; 12:4; 14:6; 17:2, 19; 19:5; 21:3;  
 32:1; 33:14; Neh 9:25; Is 36:1; 37:26

**FORTIFIED CITY**

Josh 19:29; 2Kgs 10:2; 18:8; 2Ch 11:23; Ps 60:9; 108:10; Is 27:10

**FORTRESS**

powerful towers, and it became their **f**. . . . . 1Macc 1:33

**ELEVATED FORTRESS**

1Macc 3:45; 4:2, 41; 6:18, 26, 32; 9:52, 53; 10:6, 7, 9, 32; 11:20, 21,  
 41, 12:36; 13:21, 49, 50, 52; 14:7, 36, 37; 15:28, 2Macc 4:12; 4:28;  
 5:5; 15:31, 35

**FREE**

you, you will be **f** from this . . . . . Gn 24:8  
 them. I'll set you **f** with great power . . . . . Ex 6:6  
 who set the goat **f** for Azazel must . . . . . Lv 16:26  
 The man will be **f** from guilt, but the . . . . . Nm 5:31  
 feel **f** to do so whenever . . . . . Dt 12:20  
 and shake myself **f**. But he didn't . . . . . Jgs 16:20  
 there; a servant is **f** from his masters. . . . . Job 3:19  
 God! Set me **f** from my troubles! . . . . . Ps 4:1  
 Get yourself **f** like a gazelle from a . . . . . Prv 6:5  
 and set my exiles **f**, not for a price . . . . . Is 45:13  
 you are set **f** from your . . . . . Lk 13:12  
 the truth, and the truth will set you **f**. . . . . Jn 8:32  
 But the **f** gift of Christ isn't like . . . . . Ro 5:15  
 He set **f** those who were held in slavery. . . . . Heb 2:15  
 slave and **f**, hid themselves in . . . . . Rev 6:15  
 I might be set **f** from the earth and . . . . . Tob 3:6  
 trusted servant **f** and died in . . . . . Jdt 16:23  
 they kept their whole beings **f** from stain. . . . . Wis 2:22  
 Set the wronged **f** from the hand of the . . . . . Sir 4:9  
 own sake, set us **f** and give us favor . . . . . Bar 2:14  
 She is no longer **f**, but is instead a . . . . . 1Macc 2:11  
 scattered people, **f** the ones enslaved . . . . . 2Macc 1:27  
 the slave and the **f**, of the poor and . . . . . 1Esd 3:19  
**F** the children of the almighty, living . . . . . 3Macc 6:28  
 me: "They will be **f** for seven days so . . . . . 2Esd 7:101  
 you can be set **f** from these. . . . . 4Macc 9:16

**FREEDOM**

or given her **f**, there must. . . . . Lv 19:20  
 and water. But you brought us out to **f** . . . . . Ps 66:12  
 to give Paul some **f**, and his friends . . . . . Ac 24:23  
 into the glorious **f** of God's children. . . . . Ro 8:21  
 law, the law of **f**, and continue to . . . . . Jas 1:25

**FRIEND**

your brother, your **f**, and . . . . . Ex 32:27  
 spouse or best **f** entices you . . . . . Dt 13:6  
 a man telling his **f** about a dream. He . . . . . Jgs 7:13  
 over an orphan, barter away your **f**? . . . . . Job 6:27  
 if I have repaid a **f** with evil or . . . . . Ps 7:4  
 are my sister"; call understanding "**f**." . . . . . Prv 7:4

say to me, "My father, my **f** since youth, . . . . . Jer 3:4  
 Don't rely on a **f**, put no trust in a . . . . . Mt 7:5  
 and a drunk, a **f** of tax collectors. . . . . Mt 11:19  
 faith, he said, "**f**, your sins are . . . . . Lk 5:20  
 married. The **f** of the groom . . . . . Jn 3:29  
 a childhood **f** of Herod the . . . . . Ac 13:1  
 Epænetus, my dear **f**, who was the first. . . . . Ro 16:5  
 What is more, Abraham was called God's **f**. . . . . Jas 2:23  
 death was their **f**, they lost their . . . . . Wis 1:16  
 enemy instead of a **f**. If you get a bad . . . . . Sir 6:1  
 this? We should make him our **f** and ally. . . . . 1Macc 10:16  
 Gerizim for Zeus, **f** of Strangers, just . . . . . 2Macc 6:2  
 or a faithful **f** a dear confidant, . . . . . 2Esd 7:104  
 me, you will be my **f**, and you will be . . . . . 4Macc 12:5

**FRIENDS**

and let me and my **f** wander the hills . . . . . Jgs 11:37  
 When Job's three **f** heard about all this . . . . . Job 2:11  
 talk nice to their **f** while evil . . . . . Ps 28:3

**L**ORD, but the virtuous are his close **f**. . . . . Prv 3:32  
 will call to his **f**, and there Lilit . . . . . Is 34:14  
 Be sure to make **f** quickly with your . . . . . Mt 5:25  
 looking for him among their family and **f**. . . . . Lk 2:44  
 than to give up one's life for one's **f**. . . . . Jn 15:13  
 had gathered his relatives and close **f**. . . . . Ac 10:24  
 my dear **f**, but leave room . . . . . Ro 12:19  
 Dear **f**, since you are immigrants and . . . . . 1Pt 2:11  
 ready to be God's **f**, commended for the . . . . . Wis 7:14  
 speech gains more **f** for itself, and a . . . . . Sir 6:5  
 Azariah and his **f** and waved the . . . . . PrAz 26  
 Matthias and his **f** learned about. . . . . 1Macc 2:39  
 even with their **f** and relatives, and . . . . . 1Esd 3:22  
 His **f** and bodyguards saw that the . . . . . 3Macc 2:23  
 of freshwater. **f** everywhere will . . . . . 2Esd 5:9  
 the affection for **f**, and it challenges . . . . . 4Macc 2:13

**FRUIT**

**BEAR FRUIT**

2Kgs 19:30; Ps 92:14; Is 37:31; 45:8; Jer 12:2; 17:8; Eze 17:8, 23;  
 34:27; Mt 13:23; 21:19; Mk 4:20; Lk 8:15; Ro 7:4

**PRODUCE FRUIT**

Eze 47:12; Mt 3:8; Lk 3:8; 13:9; Jn 15:2, 4, 16

**PRODUCE GOOD FRUIT**

Mt 3:10; 7:18, 19; Lk 3:9; 6:43

**YOUR FRUIT**

Eze 25:4; 36:8; Hos 14:8; Mk 11:14; Jn 15:16

**FULFILL**

or a sacrifice to **f** a solemn promise, . . . . . Nm 15:3  
 to Hebron so I can **f** a promise I made . . . . . 2Sa 15:7  
 hear you; you will **f** your solemn . . . . . Job 22:27  
 is in your heart and **f** all your plans. . . . . Ps 20:4  
 I will **f** my solemn pledge that I made to . . . . . Jer 11:5  
 festivals, Judah! **f** your solemn . . . . . Na 1:15  
 is necessary to **f** all . . . . . Mt 3:15  
 the Lord would **f** the promises he . . . . . Lk 1:45  
 This was to **f** the word of the prophet . . . . . Jn 12:38  
 and so you will **f** the law of Christ. . . . . Ga 6:2  
 when you really **f** the royal law. . . . . Jas 2:8  
 the beginning, and **f** the prophecies . . . . . Sir 36:20  
 of King Cyrus to **f** the Lord's word . . . . . 1Esd 2:1  
 intended plan or **f** what he had in mind. . . . . 3Macc 1:22

**FUNERAL**

**FUNERAL CLOTHING**

Jdt 4:10, 11, 12, 14; 8:5; 9:1; 10:3

**FURNACE**

thrown into a **f** of flaming fire . . . . . Dn 3:11  
 like gold in the **f**, he accepted them . . . . . Wis 3:6  
 are tested in the **f** of humiliation. . . . . Sir 2:5  
 them into the **f**, were constantly . . . . . PrAz 23  
 the fiery **f** with dew, such . . . . . 3Macc 6:6  
 there a burning **f** passed before me, . . . . . 2Esd 4:48  
 Mishael's fiery **f** wasn't as burning . . . . . 4Macc 16:3

## FUTURE

you, on behalf of every *f* generation . . . . . Gn 9:12  
 When in the *f* your child asks you, "What  
 rule for your *f* generations, . . . . . Ex 13:14  
 to you in the *f*, you will return . . . . . Lv 3:17  
 among you. In the *f* your children may  
 was ordinary, your *f* will be . . . . . Dt 4:30  
*F* descendants will serve him; generations  
 so you might grow wise in the *f* . . . . . Josh 4:6  
 scroll, so in the *f* it will endure as . . . . . Job 8:7  
 her to predict the *f*. She made a lot of  
 present things or *f* things, not powers . . . . . Ps 22:30  
 Jacob and Esau concerning their *f*. . . . . Prv 19:20  
 . . . . . Is 30:8  
 . . . . . Ac 16:16  
 . . . . . Ro 8:38  
 . . . . . Heb 11:20

**Gg**

## GABRIEL

It called out: "*G*, help this person . . . . . Dn 8:16  
 replied, "I am *G*. I stand in God's . . . . . Lk 1:19

## GAD

What good luck!" So she named him *G*. . . . . Gn 30:11  
 Dan and Naphtali, *G* and Asher . . . . . Ex 1:4  
 from *G*, Eliasaph, Deuel's son . . . . . Nm 1:14

## PEOPLE OF GAD

Nm 2:14; Josh 4:12; 22:9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 21

## GADITES

Reubenites and the *G* were unusually . . . . . Nm 32:1  
 its cities, to the Reubenites and the *G*. . . . . Dt 3:12  
 Reubenites, the *G*, and half the . . . . . Josh 1:12

## GALATIA

of Phrygia and *G* because the Holy . . . . . Ac 16:6  
 I have directed the churches in *G* to do . . . . . 1Co 16:1  
 live in Pontus, *G*, Cappadocia, Asia, . . . . . 1Pt 1:1

## GALILEAN

"You were also with Jesus the *G*." . . . . . Mt 26:69  
 one of them, because you are also a *G*. . . . . Mk 14:70  
 been with him, because he is a *G* too. . . . . Lk 22:59  
 Judas the *G* appeared and got . . . . . Ac 5:37

## GALILEANS

Jesus about the *G* whom Pilate had . . . . . Lk 13:1  
 to Galilee, the *G* welcomed him . . . . . Jn 4:45  
 They said, "*G*, why are you standing . . . . . Ac 1:11  
 Gileadites and the *G* outflanked the . . . . . Jdt 15:5

## GALILEE

and meet the eastern slope of the *G* Sea. . . . . Nm 34:11  
 boundary, from the *G* Sea down to the . . . . . Dt 3:17  
 apart Kedesh in *G* in the highlands. . . . . Josh 20:7  
 of the Jordan, and the *G* of the nations. . . . . Is 9:1  
 in a dream, he went to the area of *G*. . . . . Mt 2:22  
 from Nazareth of *G*, and John baptized. . . . . Mk 1:9  
 angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in *G*, . . . . . Lk 1:26  
 wanted to go into *G*, and he found . . . . . Jn 1:43  
 throughout Judea, *G*, and Samaria. . . . . Ac 9:31  
 the upper hills of *G*, northwest of . . . . . Tob 1:2  
 Gilead, and upper *G* and the great . . . . . Jdt 1:8  
 messengers from *G*, with torn . . . . . 1Macc 5:14

## GAMALIEL

from Manasseh, *G*, Pedahzur's son; . . . . . Nm 1:10  
 of the Law named *G*, well-respected by. . . . . Ac 5:34

## GARDEN

LORD God planted a *g* in Eden in the . . . . . Gn 2:8  
 irrigated it by hand like a vegetable *g*. . . . . Dt 11:10  
 my vegetable *g*, because it is . . . . . 1Ki 21:2  
 An enclosed *g* is my sister, my bride; an . . . . . Song 4:12  
 withering leaves, like a *g* without water. . . . . Is 1:30  
 flourish like a *g*; they will blossom . . . . . Hos 14:7  
 mint, rue, and *g* herbs of all. . . . . Lk 11:42

He and his disciples entered a *g* there. . . . . Jn 18:1  
 met in the walled *g* of the royal palace. . . . . GKEst 1:5  
 irrigation channel, I went out into a *g*. . . . . Sir 24:30  
 a large private *g* next to his home. . . . . Sus 4

## GATH

survived only in Gaza, *G*, and Ashdod. . . . . Josh 11:22  
 seized him in *G*! God, have mercy . . . . . Ps 56:1  
 then go down to *G* of the . . . . . Am 6:2

## GAZA

by way of Gerar to *G* and by way of . . . . . Gn 10:19  
 settlements around *G*, were completely . . . . . Dt 2:23  
 Kadesh-barnea to *G*, and the whole . . . . . Josh 10:41  
*G*, Ekron, and what's . . . . . Jer 25:20  
 three crimes of *G*, and for four, I . . . . . Am 1:6  
 from Jerusalem to *G*. . . . . Ac 8:26  
 there, he went to *G*, but the people . . . . . 1Macc 11:61

## GEBA

Ophni, and *G* in total: twelve . . . . . Josh 18:24  
 We'll camp at *G*!" Ramah trembles; . . . . . Is 10:29  
 the desert from *G* to Rimmon, south . . . . . Zec 14:10  
 up camp between *G* and Scythopolis. . . . . Jdt 3:10  
 Ammidians 422 Those from Kirama and *G* 621. . . . . 1Esd 5:20

## GEDALIAH

Nebuchadnezzar put *G*, Ahikam's son and . . . . . 2Ki 25:22  
 Mattan's son; *G*, Pashhur's son; . . . . . Jer 38:1  
 Ishmael, Nathanael, *G*, and Salthas. . . . . 1Esd 9:22

## GEHAZI

to his servant *G*, . . . . . 2Ki 4:12

## GENTILES

sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the *G*, . . . . . Mt 4:15  
 him to death and hand him over to the *G*. . . . . Mk 10:33  
 revelation to the *G* and a glory for . . . . . Lk 2:32  
 Why did the *G* rage, and the . . . . . Ac 4:25  
 was to bring all *G* to faithful. . . . . Ro 1:5  
 without accepting any support from the *G*. . . . . 3Jn 7  
 and widows, and to *G* who had joined . . . . . Tob 1:8  
 Many of the *G* had themselves . . . . . GKEst 8:17  
 become like the *G*, letting fear of . . . . . LJer 4  
 agreement with the *G* around us, because . . . . . 1Macc 1:11  
 The *G* filled the temple with wild . . . . . 2Macc 6:4  
 arranged for the *G* at public expense . . . . . 3Macc 4:1  
 handed over to the *G* to our shame? Why. . . . . 2Esd 4:23

## ALL THE GENTILES

1Macc 2:18; 3:25; 4:11; 5:38, 43, 63; 3Macc 6:15

## AMONG THE GENTILES

Mt 10:5; Ac 15:12; 21:19, 21; Ro 15:9; 1Co 5:1;  
 Col 1:27

## GEZER

the king of Eglon one the king of *G* on . . . . . Josh 12:12

## GIBEAH

Kain, *G*, and Timnah. In total: ten . . . . . Josh 15:57  
 Ramah trembles; *G* of Saul has fled. . . . . Is 10:29  
 Blow a horn in *G*, blow a trumpet in . . . . . Hos 5:8

## GIBEON

the population of *G* heard what Joshua. . . . . Josh 9:3  
 rise up; as in the *G* Valley he will . . . . . Is 28:21

## GIBEONITES

a treaty with the *G*, the Israelites. . . . . Josh 9:16

## GIDEON

Abiezrite. His son *G* was threshing . . . . . Jgs 6:11  
 I told you about *G*, Barak, Samson . . . . . Heb 11:32  
 of Ananias son of *G* son of Raphain son. . . . . Jdt 8:1

## GILEAD

set out directly for the mountains of *G*. . . . . Gn 31:21  
 Machir fathered *G*. From Gilead, the . . . . . Nm 26:29  
 even as far as *G*, there wasn't a . . . . . Dt 2:36



of the Ammonites. This was half of **G**. . . . . Josh 12:2  
**G** is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is . . . . . Ps 60:7  
of goats as they stream down Mount **G**. . . . . Song 4:1  
there no balm in **G**? Is there no . . . . . Jer 8:22  
**G** is a city of wicked people, tracked . . . . . Hos 6:8  
of Carmel and **G**, and upper Galilee . . . . . Jdt 1:8  
the Gentiles in **G** gathered together . . . . . 1Macc 5:9

**GILGAL**

plain, across from **G**, next to the Moreh. . . . . Dt 11:30  
They camped at **G** on the east border . . . . . Josh 4:19  
Don't enter into **G**, or go up to . . . . . Hos 4:15

**GLORIFIED**

power is great, and he is **g** by the humble. . . . . Sir 3:20  
gates. Two **g** angels of . . . . . 3Macc 6:18  
to receive a reward now that they are **g**. . . . . 2Esd 7:98

**GLORIFY**

Don't **g** yourself in your father's . . . . . Sir 3:10  
the place and **g** the temple by . . . . . 2Macc 3:2  
king's heart, to **g** his house in . . . . . 1Esd 8:25

**GLORY**

Then the **LORD**'s **g** appeared in the . . . . . Nm 14:10  
has shown us his **g** and greatness. . . . . Dt 5:24  
shield! You are my **g**! You are the one . . . . . Ps 3:3  
A king's **g** is a large population, but a . . . . . Prv 14:28  
riches, and **g** so that they lack . . . . . Ecc 6:2  
the **LORD**, defying his brilliant **g**. . . . . Hos 4:7  
me; they exchanged their **g** for shame. . . . . Hos 4:7  
the kingdoms of the world and their **g**. . . . . Mt 4:8  
in the Father's **g** with the holy . . . . . Mk 8:38  
them, the Lord's **g** shone around them. . . . . Lk 2:9  
We have seen his **g**, glory like that . . . . . Jn 1:14  
They exchanged the **g** of the immortal God. . . . . Ro 1:23  
Father—to him be **g** and power forever . . . . . Rev 1:6  
offspring see your **g** and acknowledge . . . . . Tob 13:16  
and turned its **g** into disgrace. . . . . Jdt 1:14  
one's pure **g**. Therefore, . . . . . Wis 7:25  
Lord is a person's **g**, boasting, . . . . . Sir 1:11  
acknowledge the Lord's **g** and justice! . . . . . Bar 2:17  
as great as her **g** had been. Her joy . . . . . 1Macc 1:40  
things. The Lord's **g** will appear with . . . . . 2Macc 2:8  
To you belongs the **g**. I'm your . . . . . 1Esd 4:59  
brightness of your **g**. No one can resist . . . . . PrMan 5  
lyre. Let me give **g** to the **LORD**, I . . . . . Ps 151 1:2  
pleased for your **g** to rest among your . . . . . 3Macc 2:16  
will take Israel's **g** for them and give . . . . . 2Esd 2:11  
story, giving **g** to God, who . . . . . 4Macc 1:12

**GIVE GLORY**

Josh 7:19; Ps 115:1; Jn 9:24; Phi 1:11; Rev 4:9; Sir 10:5, 23; 51:17; 1Esd 9:8; Ps 151 1:2

**GLORY OF GOD**

Prv 25:2; Jn 11:4; 1Co 11:7; 2Co 1:20; Phi 2:11

**GLORY OF ISRAEL'S GOD**

Eze 8:4; 9:3; 10:19; 11:22; 43:2

**GOD'S GLORY**

1Ch 16:24; Ps 19:1; 96:3; 113:4; Is 6:3; 59:19; 60:2; Jn 11:40; 12:43; Ro 3:23; 5:2; 15:7; 1Co 10:31; 2Co 4:6, 15; Eph 1:12; 1:14; Heb 1:3; Rev 15:8; 21:11, 23

**GOAT**

female **g**, a three-year-old . . . . . Gn 15:9  
Don't boil a young **g** in its mother's . . . . . Ex 23:19  
sheep or **g**—you must present . . . . . Lv 1:10  
one male **g** for a purification offering. . . . . Nm 7:16  
you are allowed to eat: ox, sheep, **g**. . . . . Dt 14:4  
prepared a young **g** and used an ephah . . . . . Jgs 6:19  
rooster or a male **g**, and a king with . . . . . Prv 30:31  
with the young **g**, the calf and the . . . . . Is 11:6  
as much as a young **g** so I could . . . . . Lk 15:29  
along with a young **g** from their herd. . . . . Tob 2:12

**GOATS**

two healthy young **g** so I can prepare . . . . . Gn 27:9

may take it from the sheep or from the **g**. . . . . Ex 12:5  
community two male **g** for a purification . . . . . Lv 16:5  
rams, five male **g**, and five male . . . . . Nm 7:17  
three young **g**, one carrying. . . . . 1Sa 10:3  
know when mountain **g** give birth; do you. . . . . Job 39:1  
from your house or **g** from your corrals . . . . . Ps 50:9  
clothes, and the **g** will be the price. . . . . Prv 27:26  
want the blood of bulls, lambs, and **g**. . . . . Is 1:11  
I will punish the **g**. The **LORD** of . . . . . Zec 10:3  
shepherd separates the sheep from the **g**. . . . . Mt 25:32  
by the blood of **g** or calves. . . . . Heb 9:12

**GOD**

**ALMIGHTY GOD**

Sir 50:17; Bar 3:1, 4; 2Macc 7:35; 8:18; PrMan 1; 3Macc 6:2

**AWESOME GOD**

Dt 7:21; 10:17; Neh 9:32; Ps 68:35; Dn 9:4

**BELONGS TO GOD**

Dt 1:17; 2Ch 20:15; Ps 62:11; Mt 22:21; Mk 12:17; Lk 20:25; 1Co 3:23; 7:14; 2Co 4:7; 2Ti 3:17; 3Jn 11

**GOD ALMIGHTY**

Gn 28:3; 43:14; 48:3; Ex 6:3; Eze 10:5; Rev 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22

**GOD CREATED**

Gn 1:21; 1:27; 5:1; Ac 17:26; 1Ti 4:3

**GOD HIGH ABOVE ALL**

PrAz 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65

**GOD IS MY ROCK**

2Sa 22:3; Ps 18:2; 62:2; 6; 94:22

**GOD IS WITH YOU**

Gn 21:22; Dt 7:21; Josh 1:9; 1Sa 10:7; 1Ch 17:2; 22:18; 28:20; Is 45:14; Zec 8:23

**GOD OF HEAVEN**

Gn 24:3; 7; 2Ch 36:23; Eze 1:2; 5:11, 12; 6:9; 10; 7:12, 21, 23; Neh 1:4; 5; 2:4, 20; Ps 136:26; Dn 2:18; 2:19, 37, 44; Jon 1:9; Rev 11:13; 16:11

**GOD OF HEAVENLY FORCES**

1Kgs 19:10; 19:14; Ps 59:5; 69:6; 80:4, 7, 14, 19; 84:8; 89:8; Is 1:24; 3:1, 15; 10:16, 23, 24, 33; 19:4; 22:5, 12, 14, 15; 28:22; Jer 5:14; 15:16; 46:10; 50:31; Hos 12:5; Am 3:13; 4:13; 5:14, 15, 16, 27; 6:8, 14; 9:5; Zec 12:5

**GOD OF OUR ANCESTORS**

1Ch 29:18; 2Ch 20:6; Eze 7:27; Ac 3:13; 5:30; 22:14; 24:14; Tob 8:5; Jdt 10:8; Wis 9:1; PrAz 3, 29; 1Esd 9:8; PrMan 1; 4Macc 12:17

**GOD OF PEACE**

Ro 15:33; 16:20; Phi 4:9; 1Th 5:23; Heb 13:20

**GOD OUR FATHER**

Ro 1:7; 1Co 1:3; 2Co 1:2; Eph 1:2; Phi 1:2; 4:20; Col 1:2; 2Th 1:1, 2; 2:16; Phm 3

**GOD OUR SAVIOR**

1Ch 16:35; 1Ti 1:1; 2:3; 2Ti 1:3; 2:10; Jude 25

**GOD THE FATHER**

Jn 6:27; 1Co 8:6; 15:24; Ga 1:1, 3; Eph 5:20; 6:23; Phi 2:11; Col 1:3; 3:17; 1Th 1:1; 1Ti 1:2; 2Ti 1:2; Ti 1:4; Jas 1:27; 1Pt 1:2; 2Pt 1:17; 2Jn 3; Jude 1

**GRACE OF GOD**

1Co 15:10; 2Co 1:12; 6:1; 8:1; Ga 2:21; Ti 2:11; 1Pt 5:12

**GREAT GOD**

Eze 5:8; Neh 8:6; Ps 35:27; 95:3; Dn 2:45; Ti 2:13

**HOPE IN GOD**

Ps 42:5, 11; 43:5; 78:7; Is 8:17; 1Ti 5:5; 6:17

**I AM GOD**

Ps 46:10; 50:7; Is 43:12; 45:22; 46:9; Eze 28:2; Hos 11:9

**KNOW GOD**

2Ch 25:16; Job 18:21; Ga 4:8; 1Th 4:5; Ti 1:16; 1Jn 4:8

**KNOWLEDGE OF GOD**

Prv 2:5; Hos 4:1; 6:6; 2Co 10:5; Col 1:10; 2Pt 1:2

**LIVING GOD**

Josh 3:10; 1Sa 17:26; 17:36; 2Kgs 19:16; Ps 42:2; 84:2; Is 37:4, 17; Jer 4:2; 10:10; 23:36; Dn 6:20; 6:26; Hos 1:10; Mt 16:16; 26:63; Ac 14:15; 2Co 3:3; 6:16; 1Ti 3:15; 4:10; Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev 7:2; GkEst 6:13; 8:12; Bel 5, 6, 24, 25; 3Macc 6:28

**LORD GOD ALMIGHTY**

Rev 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22

**LORD GOD OF ISRAEL**

Jdt 12:8; 13:7; GkEst C:14; Bar 2:11; 2Macc 9:5; 1Esd 5:64; 6:1; 7:4, 9, 15; 8:63; 9:39

**LORD MY GOD**

Nm 22:18; Dt 4:5; 26:3; Josh 14:8, 9; 2Sa 24:24; 1Kgs 3:7; 5:3, 4, 5; 8:28; 17:20, 21; 1Ch 21:17; 22:7; 2Ch 2:4; 6:19; Ps 7:1, 3; 13:3; 18:28; 30:2, 12; 35:24; 38:15; 40:5; 86:12; 104:1; 109:26; Is 40:27; Jer 31:18; Dn 9:4, 20; Am 3:11; Zec 11:4; 14:5

**LORD OUR GOD**

Ex 8:10; 8:26, 27; 10:25, 26; Dt 1:6, 19, 20, 25; 2:33, 36, 37; 3:3; 4:7; 5:24, 27; 6:20, 24, 25; 29:15, 18; Josh 18:6; 22:19, 29; 24:24; Jgs 11:24; 1Sa 7:8; 1Kgs 8:57; 8:59, 61, 65; 2Kgs 18:22; 19:19; 1Ch 13:2; 15:13; 29:16; 2Ch 2:4; 13:11; 14:7, 11; 19:7; 32:8, 11; Ps 90:17; 94:23; 99:5, 8, 9; 106:47; 113:5; 123:2; Is 26:13; 36:7; 37:20; Jer 3:22; 3:23; 25:5; 5:19, 24; 8:14; 14:22; 16:10; 26:16; 31:6; 37:3; 42:6, 20; 43:2; 50:28; 51:10; Dn 9:9, 10, 13, 14, 15; Mic 4:5; 7:17; Ac 2:39; Rev 19:6

**LORD THEIR GOD**

Ex 10:7; Lv 26:44; Jgs 3:7; 8:34; 1Sa 12:9; 1Kgs 9:9; 2Kgs 17:7, 9, 14, 16, 19; 18:12; 2Ch 31:6; Neh 9:3, 4; Ps 146:5; Jer 3:21; 22:9; 30:9; 43:1; 50:4; Eze 34:30; 39:28; Hos 1:7; 3:5; 7:10; Zep 2:7; Hg 1:12; Zec 9:16; 10:6; 12:5; Lk 1:16

**LORD YOUR GOD**

Gn 27:20; Ex 8:28; 10:8, 16, 17; 15:26; 16:12; 20:2, 5, 10, 12; 34:24; Lv 11:44; 18:2, 4, 30; 19:2, 3, 4, 10, 25, 31, 36; 20:7; 23:22, 28, 40, 43; 24:22; 25:17, 38, 55; 26:1, 13; Nm 10:9, 10; 15:41; Dt 1:10; 1:21, 30, 31; 2:7, 30; 3:20, 21, 22; 4:2, 3, 10, 19, 23, 24, 29, 30, 31, 40; 5:6, 9, 12, 15, 16, 32; 6:1, 2, 5, 10, 13, 15, 16; 7:1, 2, 6, 12, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25; 8:2, 7, 10, 11, 18; 9:4, 5, 6, 7, 16; 10:9, 12, 17, 20, 22; 11:1, 13, 22, 25, 29, 31; 12:4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 15, 18, 20, 29, 31; 13:3, 5, 10, 12, 16; 14:2, 21, 23, 24, 25, 29; 15:4, 6, 7, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21; 16:1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22; 17:1, 2, 8, 12, 15; 18:5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16; 19:1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10; 20:1, 13, 16, 17, 18; 21:1, 5, 23; 22:5; 23:5, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 4, 13, 18, 19; 25:15, 16, 19; 26:1, 2, 10, 19; 27:2, 3, 9; 28:1, 52, 53, 58; 29:6, 10, 12; 30:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 16, 20; 31:3, 6, 11, 12, 13; Josh 1:9, 11, 13, 15, 17; 2:11; 3:9; 4:23, 24; 8:7; 9:9, 24; 10:19; 22:3, 4, 5; 23:3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16; Jgs 6:10; 6:26; 1Sa 12:12; 12:14, 19; 13:13; 15:15, 21, 30; 25:29; 2Sa 14:11; 14:17; 18:28; 24:3, 23; 1Kgs 1:17; 2:3, 10, 9; 13:6, 21; 17:12; 18:10; 2Kgs 17:39; 19:4; 23:21; 1Ch 11:2; 22:11, 12, 18, 19; 28:8; 29:20; 2Ch 9:8; 16:7; 20:20; 30:8, 9; Neh 8:9; Ps 76:11; 81:10; Is 7:11; 37:4; 41:13; 43:3; 48:17; 51:15; 55:5; 60:9; Jer 2:17; 2:19; 3:13; 13:16; 26:13; 40:2; 42:2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 20, 21; Eze 20:5, 7, 19, 20; Hos 12:9; 13:4; 14:1; Jl 1:14; 2:13, 14, 23, 26, 27; 3:17; Am 9:15; Mic 7:10; Zep 3:17; Zec 6:15; Mt 4:7, 10; 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 4:8, 12; 10:27; Ac 3:22

**LOVE GOD**

Ps 48:9; Mk 12:33; Ro 8:28; 1Jn 4:20; 4:21; 5:2

**LOVE OF GOD**

Ro 5:5; 2Co 13:13; 1Jn 2:5; 3:17; 4:9; 5:3; Jude 21

**MOST HIGH GOD**

Ps 78:56; Dn 3:26; 4:2; 5:18, 21; Mk 5:7; Lk 8:28; Ac 16:17; Heb 7:1; Jdt 13:18; Sir 24:23; 1Esd 6:30; 8:19, 21; 3Macc 7:9

**MY GOD**

Gn 28:21; Ex 15:2; Nm 22:18; Dt 4:5; 26:3; Josh 14:8, 9; Ru 1:16; 2Sa 22:3, 7, 22, 30, 47; 24:24; 1Kgs 3:7; 5:3, 4, 5; 8:28; 17:20, 21; 1Ch 17:25; 21:17; 22:7; 28:20; 29:17; 2Ch 2:4; 6:19, 40; Exr 9:6; Neh 2:8, 12, 18; 5:19; 6:14; 7:5; 13:14, 22, 29, 31; Ps 37:5; 52:7; 7:1, 3, 6; 13:3; 18:2, 6, 21, 28, 29; 22:1, 2, 10; 25:2; 30:2, 12; 31:14; 35:23, 24; 38:15, 21; 40:5, 8, 17; 42:6, 11; 43:2, 4, 5; 59:1; 63:1; 68:24; 69:3; 71:4, 12, 22; 83:13; 84:3; 86:2, 12; 89:26; 91:2; 94:22; 102:24; 104:1, 33; 109:26; 118:28; 140:6; 143:10; 145:1; 146:2; Is 7:13; 25:1; 40:27; 44:17; 49:4, 5; 57:21; 61:10; Jer 31:18; Dn 4:8; 6:22; 9:4, 18,

19, 20; Hos 2:23; 8:2; 9:17; Jl 1:13; Am 3:11; Mic 7:7; Hab 1:12; Zec 11:4; 14:5; Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34; Jn 20:17; 20:28; Ro 1:8; 1Co 1:4; 2Co 12:21; Phi 1:3; 4:19; Phm 4; Rev 3:2, 12; Tob 13:7; Jdt 9:4; 11:23; 16:1, 13; Bel 25

**NO OTHER GOD**

Dt 4:35; 1Kgs 8:60; Is 45:14; 45:21; Dn 3:29

**ONE GOD**

Ps 20:6; Mal 2:10; Mk 2:7; 10:18; Lk 18:19; 1Co 8:4, 6; Eph 4:6; 1Ti 2:5

**ONLY GOD**

Ex 8:19; Dt 4:35; 4:39; 2Sa 22:33; Ps 18:32; 62:2, 6; 139:19; Lk 5:21; Jn 5:44; 1Ti 1:17; Jude 25

**PRESENCE OF GOD**

Ac 10:33; 2Co 2:17; 3:4; 1Ti 6:13; 2Ti 4:1; 1Pt 3:18

**SEEK GOD**

1Ch 21:30; 2Ch 19:3; Job 5:8; Ps 104; 69:32; 119:2

**SENT FROM GOD**

Dn 5:24; Lk 9:20; 23:35; Jn 1:6; 2Co 2:17

**SING TO GOD**

1Ch 16:9; Ps 68:4, 32; 105:2; Col 3:16

**SPIRIT FROM GOD**

1Sa 16:15, 16, 23; 18:10; 1Co 6:19

**SUPREME GOD**

3Macc 1:9, 16; 3:11; 4:16; 5:25; 7:22

**THANK GOD**

Ro 6:17; 7:25; 14:6; 1Co 1:14; 10:30; 14:18; 2Co 1:11; 2:14; 8:16; 9:15; 1Th 1:2; 2:13; 3:9; 2Th 1:3; 2:13

**THANKS TO GOD**

Neh 12:46; Ac 27:35; 28:15; Eph 1:16; 5:20; Col 1:3; 3:17

**TRUE GOD**

Dt 7:9; 2Kgs 19:19; 2Ch 15:3; 30:19; 33:13; Ps 78:20; Jer 10:10; Dn 5:23; Jn 17:3; 1Th 1:9; 1Jn 5:20

**WORSHIP GOD**

Ex 3:12; 2Sa 15:32; Ps 55:19; Ecc 12:13; Jn 4:24; Ac 18:13; 1Co 14:25; Rev 19:10; 22:9

**YOU ARE MY GOD**

Ps 31:14; 43:2; 91:2; 118:28; 140:6; 143:10; Is 25:1; 44:17; Hos 2:23

**GODLESS**

to God: the **g** craftsmen and the . . . . . Wis 14:9  
a strong army of **g** men went up with . . . . . 1Macc 3:15  
priests committed **g** and immoral acts . . . . . 1Esd 1:47  
When the **g** Philopator learned of this, he . . . . . 3Macc 3:1  
their countless **g** acts. I have seen . . . . . 2Esd 3:29

**GODLY****GODLY THINKING**

4Macc 1:1; 6:31; 7:16; 13:1; 15:23; 16:1; 18:2

**GODS****ALL OTHER GODS**

1Ch 16:25; 2Ch 2:5; Ps 95:3; 96:4; 97:9; 135:5; 138:1

**ALL THE GODS**

Ex 12:12; 18:11; 1Ch 16:26; Ps 96:5; Zep 2:11

**CALL THEM GODS**

Wis 14:8; LJer 29, 39, 44, 56, 63

**FALSE GODS**

Ps 106:36, 38; Is 10:11; Jer 14:22; 1Co 5:10; 5:11; 6:9; 8:4, 10; 10:7, 14; 12:2

**FOLLOW OTHER GODS**

Dt 6:14; 8:19; 13:2; 1Kgs 11:10; Hos 4:12

**FOREIGN GODS**

Gn 35:2, 4; Josh 24:20; 24:23; Jgs 10:16; 1Sa 7:3; 2Ch 33:15; Jer 2:25; 5:19; 7:18; 8:19; Zep 1:4; Ac 17:18

**GODS OF THE NATIONS**

2Kgs 19:12; 1Ch 16:26; 2Ch 32:17; Ps 96:5; Is 36:18; 37:12; Jer 14:22

**OTHER GODS**

Ex 20:3; 23:13; Dt 4:28; 5:7; 6:14; 7:4; 8:19; 11:16; 28; 13:2, 6, 13; 17:3; 18:20; 28:14, 36, 64; 29:26; 30:17; 31:18, 20; 32:39; Josh 23:16; 24:2, 16; Jgs 2:12; 2:17, 19; 10:13; 1Sa 8:8; 26:19; 1Kgs 9:6, 9; 11:4, 10; 14:9; 2Kgs 5:17; 17:7, 35, 37, 38; 22:17; 1Ch 16:25; 2Ch 2:5; 7:19; 22; 28:25; 34:25; Ps 95:3; 96:4; 97:9; 135:5; 138:1; Is 36:18; Jer 1:16; 7:6, 9; 11:10; 13:10; 16:11, 13; 19:4, 13; 22:9; 25:6; 32:29; 35:15; 44:3, 5, 8, 15, 21, 23; Hos 3:1; 4:12; 13:4

**SERVE OTHER GODS**

Dt 28:64; Josh 23:16; 24:16; 1Kgs 9:6; 2Ch 7:19; Jer 16:13; 35:15

**WORSHIP OTHER GODS**

Dt 4:28; 13:6, 13; 28:36; 1Sa 26:19; 2Kgs 17:35; 17:37, 38; Jer 25:6

**GOLD**

entire land of Havilah, where there is **g** . . . . . Gn 2:11  
 silver and their **g** jewelry as well as . . . . . Ex 3:22  
 head and put the **g** flower ornament, . . . . . Lv 8:9  
 blue cloth on the **g** altar and cover it . . . . . Nm 4:11  
 the silver or the **g** that is on them . . . . . Dt 7:25  
 All silver and **g**, along with bronze and . . . . . Josh 6:19  
 princes who have **g**, who fill their . . . . . Job 3:15  
 desirable than **g**—than tons of . . . . . Ps 19:10  
 than silver, and her gain better than **g** . . . . . Prv 3:14  
 full of silver and **g**; they have . . . . . Is 2:7  
 much silver, and **g** that they used for . . . . . Hos 2:8  
 him with gifts of **g**, frankincense, and . . . . . Mt 2:11  
 being is like a **g** silver, or stone . . . . . Ac 17:29  
 foundation with **g** silver, precious . . . . . 1Co 3:12  
 It had the **g** altar for incense and the . . . . . Heb 9:4  
 lamps burning on top of seven **g** stands. . . . . Rev 1:12  
 to the poor is better than storing up **g**. . . . . Tob 12:8  
 tested them like **g** in the furnace; he . . . . . Wis 3:6  
 because **g** is tested with fire, and . . . . . Sir 2:5  
 gods of silver, **g**, and wood paraded . . . . . LJer 3  
 He took the **g** altar, the . . . . . 1Macc 1:21  
 when they saw **g** and silver idols . . . . . 2Macc 2:2

**GOLIATH**

A champion named **G** from Gath came out . . . . . 1Sa 17:4  
 a sling and struck down the arrogant **G**? . . . . . Sir 47:4  
 when he fought **G** in single combat.] . . . . . Ps 151:3:1

**GOMER**

Japheth's sons: **G**, Magog, Madai, Javan, . . . . . Gn 10:2  
 Japheth's family: **G**, Magog, Madai, . . . . . 1Ch 1:5  
**G** and all his troops, Beth-to-garmah from . . . . . Eze 38:6  
 went and took **G**, Diblaim's . . . . . Hos 1:3

**GOMORRAH**

by way of Sodom, **G**, Admah, and . . . . . Gn 10:19  
 Sodom and **G**, Admah and . . . . . Dt 29:23  
 be like Sodom; we would resemble **G**. . . . . Is 1:9  
 Sodom and **G**. You were like a . . . . . Am 4:11  
 Sodom and **G** on Judgment Day . . . . . Mt 10:15  
 Sodom, and we would have become like **G**. . . . . Ro 9:29  
 Sodom and **G** to total . . . . . 2Pt 2:6

**GOSHEN**

in the land of **G**, so you will be . . . . . Gn 45:10  
 apart the land of **G**, where my people . . . . . Ex 8:22  
 and the whole land of **G** as far as Gibeon. . . . . Josh 10:41  
 and Raamses, and all the land of **G**, . . . . . Jdt 1:9

**GOSPEL**

This **g** of the kingdom will be proclaimed . . . . . Mt 24:14  
 word of the **g** and come to . . . . . Ac 15:7

**PREACH THE GOSPEL**

Ro 1:15; 15:20; 1Co 9:14; 9:16; Ga 2:7

**GRACE**

Jedidiah because of the LORD's **g**. . . . . 2Sa 12:25  
 handsome of men; **g** has been poured . . . . . Ps 45:2  
 the sword found **g** in the wilderness. . . . . Jer 31:2  
 out a spirit of **g** and mercy on . . . . . Zec 12:10  
 a father's only son, full of **g** and truth. . . . . Jn 1:14  
 an abundance of **g** was at work among . . . . . Ac 4:33

is full of divine **g**." But while . . . . . GkEst D:14  
 good wife, for her **g** is worth more than. . . . . Sir 7:19  
 to your gentle **g**, promised . . . . . PrMan 7

**GOD'S GRACE**

Ac 6:8; 11:23; 13:43; 14:26; 20:24; Ro 1:5; 4:16; 5:15; 11:5, 6; 12:6;  
 1Co 1:4; 3:10; 15:10; Eph 2:5, 8; 3:2; Phi 1:7; Col 1:6; Heb 2:9;  
 12:15; 1Pt 1:2

**GRACE AND PEACE**

Ga 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phi 1:2; Col 1:2; 1Th 1:1; 2Th 1:2; Ti 1:4; Phm 3;  
 1Pt 1:2; 2Pt 1:2; Rev 1:4

**GRACE OF GOD**

1Co 15:10; 2Co 1:12; 6:1; 8:1; Ga 2:21; Ti 2:11;  
 1Pt 5:12

**GRACE OF OUR LORD**

Ro 16:20; 2Co 8:9; Ga 6:18; 1Th 5:28; 2Th 3:18

**GRACE OF THE LORD**

Ac 15:11; 1Co 16:23; 2Co 13:13; Phi 4:23; Phm 25

**GRACIOUS**

told me about? God be **g** to you, my son. . . . . Gn 43:29  
 But I am loyal and **g** to the thousandth . . . . . Ex 20:6  
 his face shine on you and be **g** to you. . . . . Nm 6:25  
 But I am loyal and **g** to the thousandth . . . . . Dt 5:10  
 But the LORD was **g** to Israel and had . . . . . 2Ki 13:23  
 They are always **g** and generous. Their . . . . . Ps 37:26  
 A **g** woman gains honor; violent men gain . . . . . Prv 11:16  
 the one who formed them won't be **g**. . . . . Is 27:11  
 forces will be **g** to what is left of . . . . . Am 5:15  
 were they by the **g** words flowing from . . . . . Lk 4:22  
 should always be **g** and sprinkled with a . . . . . Col 4:6  
 coheir of the **g** care of life. . . . . 1Pt 3:7  
 And both come from a person who is **g**. . . . . Sir 18:17  
 begged God to be **g** to them, to be . . . . . 2Macc 10:26  
 enjoyed the **g** protection of the . . . . . 1Esd 6:5  
**g**, since he has mercy on those who . . . . . 2Esd 7:133

**GRASS**

an ox eats up the **g** in the field. . . . . Nm 22:4  
 gentle rains on **g**, like spring . . . . . Dt 32:2  
 we can find some **g** to keep our horses . . . . . 1Ki 18:5  
 will be like the **g** of the earth. . . . . Job 5:25  
 fade fast, like **g**, they will wither . . . . . Ps 37:2  
 lion; his favor is like the dew on the **g**. . . . . Prv 19:12  
 are used up. **g** has withered; . . . . . Is 15:6  
 the time the late **g** began to sprout. . . . . Am 7:1  
 If God dresses **g** in the field so . . . . . Mt 6:30  
 were having a banquet on the green **g**. . . . . Mk 6:39  
 If God dresses **g** in the field so . . . . . Lk 12:28  
 was plenty of **g** there. They sat . . . . . Jn 6:10  
 silver, precious stones, wood, **g**, or hay, . . . . . 1Co 3:12  
 and dries up the **g** so that its . . . . . Jas 1:11  
 burned up. All the green **g** was burned up. . . . . Rev 8:7

**GRAVE**

up a pillar on her **g**. It's the pillar. . . . . Gn 35:20  
 a human bone or a **g**, will be unclean. . . . . Nm 19:16  
 the depths of the **g**, it will destroy . . . . . Dt 32:22  
 life, takes down to the **g**, and raises up! . . . . . 1Sa 2:6  
 who are thrilled when they find a **g**? . . . . . Job 3:22  
 dead. Who gives you thanks from the **g**? . . . . . Ps 6:5  
 living like the **g**—whole, like . . . . . Prv 1:12  
 Therefore, the **g** opens wide its jaws, . . . . . Is 5:14  
 the power of the **g** Heb Sheol Will I . . . . . Hos 13:14  
 order the **g** to be sealed until . . . . . Mt 27:64  
 abandon me to the **g**, nor permit you . . . . . Ac 2:27  
 Their throat is a **g** that has been opened. . . . . Ro 3:13  
 I have the keys of Death and the **g**. . . . . Rev 1:18  
 father down to the **g** in sorrow. It is. . . . . Tob 3:10  
 go straight to the **g** in a single day. . . . . GkEst B:7  
 death; no one has come back from the **g**. . . . . Wis 2:1  
 be considered righteous, even in the **g**. . . . . Sir 9:12  
 who are in the **g**, whose spirit has . . . . . Bar 2:17  
 us from the **g**, and saved us from . . . . . PrAz 6:5  
 to them to send him to the **g** immediately: . . . . . 2Macc 6:23  
 seeing the **g** already yawning at . . . . . 3Macc 4:8

**GRAVES**

there enough **g** in Egypt that you . . . . . Ex 14:11  
 alive to their **g**, then you'll know . . . . . Nm 16:30  
 them over the **g** of those who had . . . . . 2Ch 34:4  
 carried to their **g**, someone keeps . . . . . Job 21:32  
 throats are open **g**, their tongues . . . . . Ps 5:9  
 of Jerusalem will be taken from their **g** . . . . . Jer 8:1  
 and decorate the **g** of the righteous. . . . . Mt 23:29  
 are like unmarked **g** and people walk on . . . . . Lk 11:44  
 who are in their **g** will hear his . . . . . Jn 5:28  
 down to their **g** with grief over . . . . . Tob 6:15  
 laments at the **g** of their dead, . . . . . Wis 19:3

**GREEK**

everyone, including the **G** kingdom. . . . . Dn 11:2  
 The woman was **G**, Syrophoenician by . . . . . Mk 7:26  
 it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and **G**. . . . . Jn 19:20  
 a complaint arose. **G**-speaking disciples . . . . . Ac 6:1  
 who don't speak **G**, both to the wise . . . . . Ro 1:14  
 Abaddon, and whose **G** name is Apollyon. . . . . Rev 9:11  
 to the calendar of the **G** kingdom. . . . . 1Macc 1:10  
 citizens change to the **G** way of life. . . . . 2Macc 4:10  
 He constructed a **G** school and athletic. . . . . 4Macc 4:20

**GUILT**

on himself any **g** connected with the . . . . . Ex 28:38  
 their ancestors' **g** for the wrongdoing . . . . . Lv 26:40  
 payment for his **g**, add one-fifth . . . . . Nm 5:7  
 Don't put the **g** of innocent. . . . . Dt 21:8  
 sure to return a **g** offering to him. . . . . 1Sa 6:3  
 exposes their **g**, earth opposes . . . . . Job 20:27  
 didn't conceal my **g**. "I'll confess my . . . . . Ps 32:5  
 reconcile **g**, the fear of the . . . . . Prv 16:6  
 to those who drag **g** along with cords . . . . . Is 5:18  
 because of their **g**, Judah staggers. . . . . Hos 5:5  
 not without **g**. Yet perhaps we. . . . . Wis 13:6

**BEAR THEIR GUILT**

Is 53:11; Eze 14:10, 44:10, 12; Hos 10:2

**GUILTY**

sweep away the innocent with the **g**? . . . . . Gn 18:23  
 occurs, then the **g** party will be . . . . . Ex 21:22  
 with the LORD, that person becomes **g**. . . . . Nm 5:6  
 way you are not **g** because you didn't . . . . . Jgs 21:22  
 myself am thought **g**, why have I tried . . . . . Job 9:29  
 doesn't consider **g**—in whose spirit . . . . . Ps 32:2  
 people and **g** people go around . . . . . Prv 6:12  
 as a nation aren't **g**, it is better that . . . . . Jdt 5:21  
 old codger who is **g** of sexual . . . . . Sir 42:8  
 and letting the **g** go, even though . . . . . Sus 53  
 Here anyone **g** of temple robbery or other . . . . . 2Macc 13:6  
 the house of the **g**, who then should . . . . . 1Esd 6:31

**GUILTY OF SIN**

Lv 4:3, 13, 22, 27; 5:2, 3, 4, 5, 6; 4; Dt 15:9; Jn 8:46

**Hh****HADAD**

**H**, Tema; Jetur; Naphish; and Kedemah . . . . . Gn 25:15  
 for Solomon: **H** the Edomite from . . . . . 1Ki 11:14

**HADADEZER**

Zobah's King **H**, Rehob's son, as . . . . . 2Sa 8:3  
 son, who had escaped from Zobah's King **H**. . . . . 1Ki 11:23

**HAGAR**

she had an Egyptian servant named **H**. . . . . Gn 16:1  
 gives birth to slave children; this is **H**. . . . . Ga 4:24

**HAGGAI**

Then the prophet **H** and the prophet . . . . . Eze 5:1  
 word came through **H** the prophet in the . . . . . Hg 1:1  
 rule, the prophets **H** and Zechariah . . . . . 1Esd 6:1

**HAIR**

over, clothed with **h**, and she named him . . . . . Gn 25:25  
 and deep red yarns; fine linen; goats' **h**, . . . . . Ex 25:4  
 dishevel your **h** and don't rip your . . . . . Lv 10:6  
 the LORD, let the **h** of the woman hang . . . . . Nm 5:18  
 When **h** is long in Israel, when people . . . . . Jgs 5:2  
 by my face; the **h** of my skin. . . . . Job 4:15  
 old age with gray **h**, don't abandon me, . . . . . Ps 71:18  
 Gray **h** is a crown of glory; it is found . . . . . Prv 16:31  
 instead of styled **h**, shaved heads; . . . . . Is 3:24  
 and cut off your **h** because of your . . . . . Mi 1:16  
 made of camel's **h**, with a leather . . . . . Mt 3:4  
 made of camel's **h**, with a leather . . . . . Mk 1:6  
 them with her **h**, kissed them, and . . . . . Lk 7:38  
 his feet with her **h**. Her brother . . . . . Jn 11:2  
 you will lose a single **h** from his head. . . . . Ac 27:34  
 should have her **h** cut off. If it is . . . . . 1Co 11:6  
 with stylish **h** or by wearing gold. . . . . 1Pt 3:3  
 His head and **h** were white as white . . . . . Rev 1:14  
 combed her **h**, tied a headband. . . . . Jdt 10:3  
 care less for the gray **h** of our elders. . . . . Wis 2:10  
 makes a person's **h** stand on end, and . . . . . Sir 27:14  
 cooking grease and **h**. He boiled them . . . . . Bel 27  
 age and the gray **h** he had acquired, . . . . . 2Macc 6:23  
 robe. I pulled out **h** from my head and . . . . . 1Esd 8:68  
 tall, their **h** beautiful, but the . . . . . Ps 151:1,6  
 cries and with her **h** all in disarray. . . . . 3Macc 1:4  
 Tear out your **h** and hurl every . . . . . 2Esd 1:8  
 you have had gray **h** for a long time, . . . . . 4Macc 5:7

**HAMAN**

Ahasuerus promoted **H**, Hammedatha the . . . . . Est 3:1  
 But **H**, Hammedatha's son, . . . . . GkEst A:17

**HAMATH**

Damascus and **H** to Judah in Israel. . . . . 2Ki 14:28  
 Carchemish? Isn't **H** like Arpad? Isn't . . . . . Is 10:9  
 from there go to **H** the great, then go . . . . . Am 6:2  
 in the region of **H**. He didn't allow . . . . . 1Macc 12:25

**HANANIAH**

**H**, Omri, Elam, Anthonijah . . . . . 1Ch 8:24  
 the prophet **H**, Azzur's son from . . . . . Jer 28:1  
 heritage. I knew **H** and Nathan, the . . . . . Tob 5:14  
**H**, Azariah, and Mishaël, bless the Lord, . . . . . PrAz 65  
**H**, Azariah, and Mishaël believed, and . . . . . 1Macc 2:59  
 from the family of **H**, and their family, . . . . . 1Esd 8:47  
 to the lions and **H**, Azariah, and . . . . . 4Macc 16:21

**HAND**

stretch out his **h** and take also from . . . . . Gn 3:22  
 that in your **h**?" Moses replied, . . . . . Ex 4:2  
 must press your **h** on the head of the . . . . . Lv 1:4  
 Moses raised his **h** and struck the . . . . . Nm 20:11  
 out of Egypt—to **h** us over to the . . . . . Dt 1:27  
 If anyone lays a **h** on those who are . . . . . Josh 2:19  
 stretch out your **h** and strike all he . . . . . Job 1:11  
 things are always in your right **h**. . . . . Ps 16:11  
 I stretched out my **h** to you, but you . . . . . Prv 1:24  
 and I will turn my **h** against you. I will . . . . . Is 1:25  
 stretched out his **h** to those who. . . . . Hos 7:5  
 And if your right **h** causes you to fall . . . . . Mt 5:30  
 took her by the **h**, and raised her . . . . . Mk 1:31  
 reached out his **h**, touched him, and . . . . . Lk 5:13  
 he is at my right **h** I won't be shaken. . . . . Ac 2:25  
 stars in his right **h**, and from his . . . . . Rev 1:16  
 his strong **h** with solemn . . . . . 2Macc 4:34  
 and slapped the king with her left **h**. . . . . 1Esd 4:30

**STRONG HAND**

Sir 36:7; 2Macc 4:34; 14:33; 15:15; 3Macc 5:13; 2Esd 3:6; 10:30; 15:22

**HANG**

and planned to **h** herself. But she . . . . . Tob 3:10  
 Take this head and **h** it from the . . . . . Jdt 14:1  
 so that they may **h** Haman's ten sons." . . . . . GkEst 9:13  
 Don't **h** around with a female musician, . . . . . Sir 9:4

the threats that **h** over your head, . . . . . 4Macc 9:32

**HANNAH**

wives, one named **H** and the other. . . . . 1Sa 1:2

**HAPPINESS**

it was a day of light, **h**, joy, and honor. . . . . Est 8:16  
 free with **h**, but the . . . . . Ps 68:6  
 Joy and **h** have been harvested from the . . . . . Is 16:10  
 Son whom I dearly love; I find **h** in him. . . . . Mt 3:17  
 whom I dearly love; in you I find **h**. . . . . Mk 1:11  
 whom I dearly love; in you I find **h**. . . . . Lk 3:22  
 life; your presence will fill me with **h**. . . . . Ac 2:28  
 Is this state of **h** only for the. . . . . Ro 4:9  
 gladness is better than **h** in one's heart. . . . . Sir 30:16  
 with joy and **h** for eight days, . . . . . 1Macc 4:59

**HAPPY**

Leah said, "I'm **h** now because women . . . . . Gn 30:13  
**H** are you, Israel! Who is like you? You . . . . . Dt 33:29  
 gods and humans **h**, so that I can go . . . . . Jgs 9:13  
 childless; may no **h** singing come in it. . . . . Job 3:7  
 The truly **h** person doesn't follow wicked . . . . . Ps 1:1  
**H** are those who find wisdom and those who . . . . . Prv 3:13  
 a God of justice; **h** are all who wait . . . . . Is 30:18  
 misery. Jonah was very **h** about the shrub. . . . . Jon 4:6  
**H** are people who are hopeless, because . . . . . Mt 5:3  
**H** is she who believed that the Lord would . . . . . Lk 1:45  
 because I always do what makes him **h**. . . . . Jn 8:29  
**H** are those whose actions outside the Law . . . . . Ro 4:7  
 if any of you are **h**, they should sing. . . . . Jas 5:13  
 drink, and be **h** tonight! There is. . . . . Tob 7:10  
 will be made **h** by their own. . . . . Sir 3:5  
 the king replied, **h** was the day on . . . . . 1Macc 10:55  
 sad, but you will be **h** and have plenty. . . . . 2Esd 2:27  
 why are we **h** to make useless resolutions? . . . . . 4Macc 8:18

**HARAN**

became the father of Abram, Nahor, and **H**. . . . . Gn 11:26  
 my fathers-Gozan, **H**, Rezepth, or the . . . . . 2Ki 19:12  
 the gods of Gozan, **H**, Rezepth, or the . . . . . Is 37:12  
 in Mesopotamia, before he settled in **H**. . . . . Ac 7:2

**HARASS**

the Israelites to **h** them with hard . . . . . Ex 1:11  
 side. They will **h** you in the land in . . . . . Nm 33:55  
 How long will you **h** me and crush me with . . . . . Job 19:2  
 bring disaster on me and **h** me furiously. . . . . Ps 55:3  
 of Judah, and Judah won't **h** Ephraim. . . . . Is 11:13  
 insult you and **h** you and speak all . . . . . Mt 5:11  
 Don't cheat or **h** anyone, and be. . . . . Lk 3:14  
 me, it will **h** you too. If it . . . . . Jn 15:20  
 ancestors didn't **h**? They even killed . . . . . Ac 7:52  
 Bless people who **h** you—bless and don't. . . . . Ro 12:14

**HASHABIAH**

son of **H**son of Amaziah son of Hilkia . . . . . 1Ch 6:45

**HATE**

which made them **h** him even more. . . . . Gn 37:5  
 and fourth generations of those who **h** me. . . . . Ex 20:5  
 You must not **h** your fellow Israelite in . . . . . Lv 19:17  
 scatter, and those who **h** you flee. . . . . Nm 10:35  
 and fourth generations of those who **h** me. . . . . Dt 5:9  
 and said, "You **h** me! You don't love . . . . . Jgs 14:16  
 Those who **h** you will be clothed with. . . . . Job 8:22  
 long in your sight; you **h** all evildoers. . . . . Ps 5:5  
 mocking dear, and fools **h** knowledge? . . . . . Prv 1:22  
 I **h** your new moons and your festivals. . . . . Is 1:14  
 there I came to **h** them. Because of . . . . . Hos 9:15  
 must love your neighbor and **h** your enemy. . . . . Mt 5:43  
 Everyone will **h** you because of my name. . . . . Mk 13:13  
 and from the power of all those who **h** us. . . . . Lk 1:71  
 do wicked things **h** the light and. . . . . Jn 3:20  
 people, and they **h** God. They are rude. . . . . Ro 1:30  
 in your favor; you **h** what the . . . . . Rev 2:6  
 What you yourself **h**, do that to no one. . . . . Tob 4:15  
 gods, and came to **h** them. In the end, . . . . . Wis 12:27

Don't **h** hard work and farming, which were . . . . . Sir 7:15  
 immoral rebels who **h** God's laws, and to . . . . . PrAz 9  
 deal with those among our people who **h** us. . . . . 1Macc 9:29  
 So you who **h** arrogance, most merciful. . . . . 3Macc 6:9  
 If you really **h** your people, they should . . . . . 2Esd 5:20  
 food that we **h** just so you can. . . . . 4Macc 5:27

**HATED**

his brothers, they **h** him and couldn't. . . . . Gn 37:4  
 without having **h** that person . . . . . Dt 19:4  
 you the ones who **h** me and drove me . . . . . Jgs 11:7  
 changed so they **h** his people and . . . . . Ps 105:25  
 because they **h** knowledge and didn't . . . . . Prv 1:29  
 So I **h** life, because the things that . . . . . Ecc 2:17  
 being abandoned, **h**, and forbidden, I . . . . . Is 60:15  
 His citizens **h** him, so they sent a . . . . . Lk 19:14  
 world hates you, know that it **h** me first. . . . . Jn 15:18  
 is written, I loved Jacob, but I **h** Esau. . . . . Ro 9:13  
 righteousness and **h** lawless behavior. . . . . Heb 1:9  
 zeal for you and **h** the pollution of . . . . . Jdt 9:4  
 have made. If you **h** it, you wouldn't . . . . . Wis 11:24  
 who are reckless in speech will be **h**. . . . . Sir 9:18  
 princes who **h** and despised . . . . . 1Macc 7:26  
 priest, who was devoted to God and **h** evil, . . . . . 2Macc 3:1  
 no unrest. You **h** those who spoke . . . . . 2Esd 11:42

**HATES**

to someone who **h** you and it's lying . . . . . Ex 23:5  
 like, "The LORD **h** us! That's why he. . . . . Dt 1:27  
 A man who **h**, an enemy . . . . . Est 7:6  
 Will one who **h** justice rule; will you . . . . . Job 34:17  
 his very being **h** anyone who loves. . . . . Ps 11:5  
 that the LORD **h**, seven things . . . . . Prv 6:16  
 because he **h** divorce, says the LORD God . . . . . Mal 2:16  
 can't hate you. It **h** me though, because . . . . . Jn 7:7  
 No one ever **h** his own body, but feeds it . . . . . Eph 5:29  
 But the person who **h** a brother or sister . . . . . 1Jn 2:11  
 the God who **h** wrongdoing was. . . . . Jdt 5:17  
 something that God **h**. They have . . . . . Wis 14:11  
 the Lord." What the Lord **h**, he won't do. . . . . Sir 15:11  
 his Law and who **h** those who fear God, . . . . . 2Esd 7:79

**HAZAEAL**

to Damascus and anoint **H** as king of Aram. . . . . 1Ki 19:15  
 on the house of **H**; it will devour. . . . . Am 1:4

**HAZOR**

King Jabin of **H** heard about this. So he. . . . . Josh 11:1  
 the kingdoms of **H**, which Babylon's . . . . . Jer 49:28  
 Galilee, northwest of **H** and north of Peor. . . . . Tob 1:2  
 morning they marched to the plain of **H**. . . . . 1Macc 11:67

**HEAL**

cried to the LORD, "God, please **h** her!" . . . . . Nm 12:13  
 now I'm going to **h** you. Three days . . . . . 2Ki 20:5  
 he binds up; he strikes, but his hands **h**. . . . . Job 5:18  
 because I'm frail, **h** me, LORD, because . . . . . Ps 6:2  
 who will hear their pleas and **h** them. . . . . Is 19:22  
 But he could not **h** them; nor could he . . . . . Hos 5:13  
 Jesus responded, "I'll come and **h** him. . . . . Mt 8:7  
 to see if he would **h** on the Sabbath. . . . . Mk 3:2  
 to me. "Doctor, **h** yourself. Do here. . . . . Lk 4:23  
 he would come and **h** his son, for his . . . . . Jn 4:47  
 their hearts and lives that I may **h** them. . . . . Ac 28:27  
 was sent to **h** the two of them: . . . . . Tob 3:17  
 but pray to the Lord, and he will **h** you. . . . . Sir 38:9

**HEAL THE SICK**

Eze 34:4; Mt 10:8; Lk 9:2; 10:9; Jas 5:15

**I WILL HEAL**

Dt 32:39; Is 57:18; 57:19; Jer 3:22; 30:17; 33:6; Hos 14:4

**HEALED**

the scabies has **h**. The person is . . . . . Lv 13:37  
 Then you will be **h**, and it will . . . . . 1Sa 6:3  
 cried out to you for help, and you **h** me. . . . . Ps 30:2

with their minds, and turn, and be **h** . . . . . Is 6:10  
 but they did not know that I **h** them. . . . . Hos 11:3  
 of the kingdom and **h** every disease and . . . . . Mt 4:23  
 He **h** many who were sick with all kinds of . . . . . Mk 1:34  
 his hands on each of them, he **h** them. . . . . Lk 4:40  
 man who had been **h**. "It's the. . . . . Jn 5:10  
 While the **h** man clung to Peter and John, . . . . . Ac 3:11  
 lame, it will be **h** rather than . . . . . Heb 12:13  
 deadly wound was **h**. So the whole. . . . . Rev 13:3  
 to doctors to be **h**, but the more they . . . . . Tob 2:10  
 mercy traveled along with them and **h** them. . . . . Wis 16:10

### FAITH HAS HEALED YOU

Mt 9:22; Mk 5:34; 10:52; Lk 8:48; 17:19; 18:42

### HEALED YOU

Mt 9:22; Mk 5:34; 10:52; Lk 8:48; 17:19; 18:42

### HEALING

who find them, and **h** for their entire . . . . . Prv 4:22  
 and a time for **h**, a time for . . . . . Ecc 3:3  
 striking and then **h**. They will return . . . . . Is 19:22  
 revering my name; **h** will be in its . . . . . Mal 4:2  
 the kingdom, and **h** every disease and . . . . . Mt 9:35  
 him to place his hand on the man for **h**. . . . . Mk 7:32  
 going out from him and he was **h** everyone. . . . . Lk 6:19  
 ever heard of a **h** of the eyes of . . . . . Jn 9:32  
 this sign of **h** was over 40 years . . . . . Ac 4:22  
 Spirit, gifts of **h** to another in the . . . . . 1Co 12:9  
 leaves are for the **h** of the nations. . . . . Rev 22:2  
 of plants, and the **h** powers of roots. . . . . Wis 7:20  
 There's no **h** for the distress of arrogant. . . . . Sir 3:28  
 in which there is plenty and **h**. . . . . 2Esd 7:123

### HEALTHY

the cattle, took a **h** young calf, and, . . . . . Gn 18:7  
 that the baby was **h** and beautiful, so. . . . . Ex 2:2  
 Their young are **h**; they grow up in the . . . . . Job 39:4  
 your body will be **h** and your bones . . . . . Prv 3:8  
 once they were a **h** and numerous . . . . . Na 1:12  
 if your eye is **h**, your whole body. . . . . Mt 6:22  
 he said to them, "If people don't need . . . . . Mk 2:17  
 Jesus answered, "If people don't need a . . . . . Lk 5:31  
 this man stands **h** before you because . . . . . Ac 4:10  
 people with **h** instruction and . . . . . Ti 1:9  
 who are alive and **h** will praise the . . . . . Sir 17:28  
 it that safe and **h** dwelling places . . . . . 2Esd 7:121

### HEART

the young woman and tried to win her **h**. . . . . Gn 34:3  
 the LORD's word to **h** left their . . . . . Ex 9:21  
 Israelite in your **h**. Rebuke your . . . . . Lv 19:17  
 the lusts of your own **h** or your eyes. . . . . Nm 15:39  
 hard and his **h** inflexible so that . . . . . Dt 2:30  
 made the people's **h** melt. But I . . . . . Josh 14:8  
 you hid in your **h**. I know this is . . . . . Job 10:13  
 you have filled my **h** with more joy than . . . . . Ps 4:7  
 instruction. Let your **h** guard my commands . . . . . Prv 3:1  
 head throbs, and everyone's **h** fails. . . . . Is 1:5  
 the desert, and speak tenderly to her **h**. . . . . Hos 2:14  
 has already committed adultery in his **h**. . . . . Mt 5:28  
 enter into the **h** but into the. . . . . Mk 7:19  
 Therefore, my **h** was glad and my tongue . . . . . Ac 2:26  
 to lead you to change your **h** and life? . . . . . Ro 4:24  
 evil, unfaithful **h** that abandons the. . . . . Heb 3:12  
 time to change her **h** and life, but she . . . . . Rev 2:21  
 If in your **h** you really do hope that they . . . . . Jdt 6:9  
 in goodness. Seek him with a sincere **h**. . . . . Wis 1:1  
 will cheer the **h**, and it will give . . . . . Sir 1:12  
 I'll give them a **h** and ears that . . . . . Bar 2:31  
 will with a whole **h** and a willing . . . . . 2Macc 1:3  
 because his **h** was devoted to God. . . . . 1Esd 1:21  
 provide a change **h** and life for those . . . . . PrMan 8  
 didn't change his **h** and mind at all, . . . . . 3Macc 2:24  
 in the people's **h** along with the . . . . . 2Esd 3:22  
 complex in the **h** of the city and . . . . . 4Macc 4:20

### ALL MY HEART

Ps 9-1; 86:12; 111:1; 119:10, 34, 58, 69, 145; 138:1; Song 1:7; 3:1, 2, 3, 4; Jer 32:41; Lk 1:46; Tob 1:12

### ALL YOUR HEART

Tob 13:6; Wis 6:11, 17, 20; Sir 7:27; 39:35; 2Esd 10:50

### WHOSE HEART IS RIGHT

Ps 7:10; 11:2, 7; 36:10; 37:37; 94:15; 97:11

### HEARTS

in my sack." Their **h** stopped. . . . . Gn 42:28  
 despair into the **h** of those of you . . . . . Lv 26:36  
 have made our **h** sick by saying. . . . . Dt 1:28  
 heard this and our **h** turned to water. . . . . Josh 2:11  
 God in their **h**. Job did this . . . . . Job 1:5  
 are the one who examines **h** and minds. . . . . Ps 7:9  
 Their **h** are corrupt and determined to do. . . . . Prv 6:14  
 Ephraim, their **h** and the hearts of . . . . . Is 7:2  
 people; they set their **h** on evil things. . . . . Hos 4:8  
 changing their **h** and lives and . . . . . Lk 1:4  
 He will turn the **h** of fathers back to . . . . . Mt 1:17  
 and their foolish **h** were darkened. . . . . Ro 1:21  
 have stubborn **h** as they did in the . . . . . Heb 3:8  
 to examine their **h**, nor has he taken . . . . . Jdt 8:27  
 is just a spark in the beating of our **h**. . . . . Wis 2:2  
 be for cowardly **h** and idle hands and . . . . . Sir 2:12  
 of our own evil **h**, serving other . . . . . Bar 1:22  
 say that their **h** melt before them. . . . . LJer 19  
 you with our **h**, honor you, and . . . . . PrAz 18  
 resolved in their **h** not to eat impure . . . . . 1Macc 1:62  
 to God with their **h** and rejoicing in . . . . . 2Macc 15:27  
 It fattens all **h**, makes one remember . . . . . 1Esd 3:21  
 boast in their **h** or rejoice in the . . . . . 3Macc 2:17  
 their birth. The **h** of those who live . . . . . 2Esd 6:26  
 God with all our **h**. He gave us our . . . . . 4Macc 13:13

### CHANGE THEIR HEARTS

1Kgs 8:33; 18:37; 2Ch 6:24; Mt 11:20; 13:15; Mk 6:12; Lk 5:32; 15:7; 16:30; 17:3; Ac 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; 28:27; 2Pt 3:9; Rev 2:22; 9:20; 16:9; Wis 11:23; 12:10, 19; Sir 48:15; Bar 2:30; 2Esd 7:82

### CHANGE YOUR HEARTS

Mt 3:2; 4:17; 21:32; Mk 1:15; Lk 13:3; 5; Ac 2:38; 3:19; 2Co 7:9; Rev 2:5, 16; 3:3, 19

### CHANGED THEIR HEARTS

Zec 1:6; Mt 11:21; 12:41; Lk 10:13; 11:32; 2Co 12:21

### HEAVEN

yourself how I spoke with you from **h** . . . . . Ex 20:22  
 hand. What god in **h** or on earth can . . . . . Dt 3:24  
 your God is God in **h** above and on earth. . . . . Josh 2:11  
 witness stands in **h**, my advocate is on . . . . . Job 16:19  
 one who rules in **h** laughs; my Lord . . . . . Ps 2:4  
 Who has gone up to **h** and come down? Who . . . . . Prv 30:4  
 it as deep as the grave or as high as **h**. . . . . Is 7:11  
 LORD, the God of **h**—who made the sea . . . . . Jon 1:9  
 and lives! Here comes the kingdom of **h**! . . . . . Mt 3:2  
 water, Jesus saw **h** splitting open and . . . . . Mk 1:10  
 the dawn from **h** will break upon us, . . . . . Lk 1:78  
 coming down from **h** like a dove, and . . . . . Jn 1:32  
 was taken up into **h**. Before he was. . . . . Ac 1:2  
 revealed from **h** against all the . . . . . Ro 1:18  
 are registered in **h**, to God the judge. . . . . Heb 12:23  
 comes down out of **h** from my God. I . . . . . Rev 3:12  
 been prepared in **h**. It was a bread. . . . . Wis 16:20  
 the vault of **h** and walked in the . . . . . Sir 24:5  
 days on earth may be like the days of **h**. . . . . Bar 1:11  
 neither looking to **h** nor caring about . . . . . Sus 9  
 God who created **h** and earth and has . . . . . Bel 5  
 in our innocence. **h** and earth testify . . . . . 1Macc 2:37  
 earth is great, **h** is high, and the . . . . . 1Esd 4:34  
 you made **h** and earth with all their . . . . . PrMan 2  
 your dwelling place, the **h** of heavens. . . . . 3Macc 2:15  
 I call **h** and earth as witnesses: I have . . . . . 2Esd 2:14  
 appeared from **h** with flashing. . . . . 4Macc 4:10

**DOWN FROM HEAVEN**

2Ch 7:1; Ps 14:2; 33:13; 53:2; 80:14; 85:11; Is 63:15; Dn 4:13; 4:23; Mt 28:2; Lk 9:54; 17:29; Jn 1:32; 3:13; 6:33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 51, 58; 1Th 4:16; Rev 10:1; 13:13; 16:21; 18:1; 20:1, 9

**GOD OF HEAVEN**

Gn 24:3, 7; 2Ch 36:23; Ezr 1:2; 5:11, 12; 6:9, 10; 7:12, 21, 23; Neh 1:4, 5; 2:4, 20; Ps 136:26; Dn 2:18; 2:19, 37, 44; Jon 1:9; Rev 11:13; 16:11; Tob 7:12; 8:15; Jdt 5:8; 6:19; 11:17; 3Macc 6:28

**HEAVEN AND EARTH**

Gn 14:19; 14:22; 24:3; Dt 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 2Kgs 19:15; 2Ch 12:2; Ezr 5:11; Ps 69:34; 113:6; 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6; Is 37:16; Jer 23:24; 32:17; 33:25; Mt 5:18; 11:25; 24:35; Mk 13:31; Lk 10:21; 16:17; 21:33; Ac 17:24; 2Pt 3:5, 7; Rev 14:7; Tob 10:13; Jdt 7:28; 9:12; Bel 5, 1Macc 2:37; 2Macc 7:28; PrMan 2; 2Esd 2:14; 6:38

**HEAVEN AND ON EARTH**

1Ch 29:11; Dn 6:27; Mt 28:18; Lk 2:14; Rev 5:13

**KING OF HEAVEN**

Tob 1:18; 13:7, 11, 16; 1Esd 4:46, 58

**KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**

Mt 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11, 12; 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52; 16:19; 18:1, 3, 4, 23; 19:12, 14, 23; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1, 14; 1Co 15:50

**LORD OF HEAVEN**

Tob 6:18; 7:11, 16; 10:11, 13

**UNDER HEAVEN**

GkEst C:3; Bar 2:2; 5:3; 2Macc 2:18; 2Esd 1:6

**VOICE FROM HEAVEN**

Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22; Ac 11:9; 2Pt 1:18; Rev 10:4; 11:12; 14:13; 18:4

**HEAVENLY**

**HEAVENLY BODIES**

Dt 4:19; 17:3; 2Kgs 17:16; 23:4, 5; Mt 24:29; Mk 13:25; Lk 21:26; 1Co 15:40

**HEAVENLY CREATURES**

2Sa 22:11; Ps 18:10

**HEAVENLY FATHER**

Mt 5:48; 6:14, 26, 32; 7:11; 15:13; 18:35; Lk 11:13

**WINGED HEAVENLY CREATURES**

Ex 25:18; 25:19, 20; 22:26; 1, 31; 36:8, 35; 37:7, 8, 9; 15a 4:4; Ps 80:1; 99:1

**YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER**

Mt 5:48; 6:14, 26, 32; 7:11

**HEAVENS**

sky, the highest **H**, the earth, and . . . . . Dt 10:14  
 heads, and our guilt has grown to the **h** . . . . . Ezr 9:6  
 stretched out the **h** alone and trod on the . . . . . Job 9:8  
 establishing the **h** with understanding. . . . . Prv 3:19  
 Hear you **h**, and listen earth, for the . . . . . Is 1:2  
 I will answer the **h** and they will . . . . . Hos 2:21  
 in heaven and glory in the highest **h** . . . . . Lk 19:38  
 to occur in the **h** above and signs on . . . . . Ac 2:19  
 and sat him at God's right side in the **h**,  
 beginning, and the **h** are made by your. . . . . Eph 1:20  
 rejoice, you **h** and you who dwell . . . . . Heb 1:10  
 May the **h** and all your . . . . . Tob 8:5  
 me from your holy **h**. Send her from . . . . . Wis 9:10  
 is praised to the **h**. The poor speak, . . . . . Sir 13:23  
**H**, bless the Lord, sing hymns, and lift . . . . . PrAz 35  
 Now ruler of the **h**, send a good angel in . . . . . 2Macc 15:23  
 for it circles the **h** and returns again . . . . . 1Esd 4:34  
 Lord, king of the **h** and master of all . . . . . 3Macc 2:2  
 You bent down the **h**, you shook the . . . . . 2Esd 3:18

**HEAVENS AND THE EARTH**

Gn 2:1, 4; Ex 20:11; 31:17; Jer 10:11; Jl 3:16; Hg 2:21; Jdt 13:18; GkEst C:3;

**HEBREW**

he told Abram the **H**, who lived near . . . . . Gn 14:13  
 Egypt spoke to two **H** midwives named. . . . . Ex 1:15

shouting in the **H** camp about?" When . . . . . 1Sa 4:6  
 speak with us in **H**, because the . . . . . Is 36:11  
 to them, "I'm a **H**. I worship the . . . . . Jon 1:9  
 Benjamin. I am a **H** of the Hebrews. . . . . Phil 3:5  
 the abyss, whose **H** name is Abaddon, . . . . . Rev 9:11  
 and persuade the **H** woman who is in . . . . . Jdt 12:11  
 purim in the **H** language. Mordecai . . . . . GkEst 9:26  
 expressed in **H** does not have the . . . . . Sir 1:1  
 and ordered other **H** prisoners to be . . . . . 4Macc 8:2

**HEBREWS**

the land of the **H**, and here too I've . . . . . Gn 40:15  
 boy born to the **H** into the Nile . . . . . Ex 1:22  
 any of your fellow **H**, male or female, . . . . . Dt 15:12  
 you'll serve the **H** like they've been . . . . . 1Sa 4:9  
 you must free any **H** who have been sold . . . . . Jer 34:14  
 Are they **H**? So am I. Are they . . . . . 2Co 11:22  
 a daughter of the **H**, and I'm escaping . . . . . Jdt 10:12  
 heard that the **H** were benefiting . . . . . Wis 11:13  
 evil against the **H**, will by no means . . . . . 2Macc 7:31  
 he begged the **H** to pray for him . . . . . 4Macc 4:11

**HEBRON**

oaks of Mamre in **H**. There he built an . . . . . Gn 13:18  
 Amram, Izhar, **H**, and Uzziel. . . . . Ex 6:18  
 their clans: Amram, Izhar, **H**, and Uzziel. . . . . Nm 3:19  
 of Jerusalem, **H**, Jarmuth, Lachish, . . . . . Josh 10:5  
 He struck **H** and its villages. . . . . 1Macc 5:65

**HELL**

my life from the lowest part of **h** . . . . . Ps 86:13  
 fool,' they will be in danger of fiery **h**. . . . . Mt 5:22  
 into the fire of **h**, which can't be . . . . . Mk 9:43  
 to throw you into **h**. Indeed, I tell . . . . . Lk 12:5  
 be condemned to **h** along with you . . . . . Ac 8:20  
 itself is set on fire by the flames of **h** . . . . . Jas 3:6  
 even as far as **h** below. For this . . . . . Tob 4:19  
 to the gates of **h**, and you bring . . . . . Wis 16:13  
 with stones, but its end is the pit of **h**. . . . . Sir 21:10  
 all the way to **h**. I will do the. . . . . 2Esd 2:9

**HEMAN**

sons are Hori and **H**, and Lotan's. . . . . Gn 36:22  
 or Mahol's sons: **H**, Calcol, and . . . . . 1Ki 4:31  
 A maski of **H** the Ezrahite.]. . . . . Ps 88:1

**HERMON**

way from the Arnon ravine to Mount **H**. . . . . Dt 3:8  
 at the foot of **H** in the land of . . . . . Josh 11:3  
 land of Jordan and **H**, from Mount Mizar. . . . . Ps 42:6  
 peaks of Senir and **H**. . . . . Song 4:8  
 in Lebanon, like a cypress on Mount **H**. . . . . Sir 24:13  
 called for **H** the elephant keeper. . . . . 3Macc 5:1

**HEROD**

the rule of King **H**, magi came from . . . . . Mt 2:1  
 the supporters of **H** to plan how to. . . . . Mk 3:6  
 the rule of King **H** of Judea there was . . . . . Lk 1:5  
 Indeed, both **H** and Pontius Pilate, with. . . . . Ac 4:27

**HERODIAS**

prison because of **H**, the wife of . . . . . Mt 14:3  
 prison because of **H**, the wife of . . . . . Mk 6:17  
 by John because of **H**, Herod's brother's . . . . . Lk 3:19

**HESHBON**

the Amorites, in **H** and all its . . . . . Nm 21:25  
 king who ruled in **H**, and Og, Bashan's . . . . . Dt 1:4  
 who lived in **H**. He ruled from . . . . . Josh 12:2  
 eyes, pools in **H**, by the gate of . . . . . Song 7:4  
**H** and Elealeh cry out; as far as Jahaz. . . . . Is 15:4

**HEZEKIAH**

City. His son **H** succeeded him as . . . . . 2Ki 16:20  
 copied by the men of **H**, king of Judah: . . . . . Prv 25:1  
 kings Uziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and **H**. . . . . Is 1:1  
 Jotham, Ahaz, and **H**, and in the days . . . . . Hos 1:1  
 father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of **H**. . . . . Mt 1:9

**HEZRON**

sons were Hanoch, Pallu, *H*, and Carmi. . . . Gn 46:9  
 Hanoch, Pallu, *H*, and Carmi. These . . . . Ex 6:14  
 from *H*, the Hezronite clan; from Carmi. . . . Nm 26:6  
 It passed on to *H*, went up to Addar. . . . Josh 15:3  
 was the father of *H*. Hezron was the . . . . Mt 1:3

**HILKIAH**

to the high priest *H*. Have him . . . . 2Ki 22:4  
 of Elijah son of *H*son of Eliab son . . . . Jdt 8:1  
 son of Hasadiah son of *H*—wrote in Babylon . . . . Bar 1:1  
*H* and his wife gave thanks that their . . . . Sus 6:3  
*H*, Zechariah, and Jehiel (the chief . . . . 1Esd 1:8  
 of Azariah son of *H*son of Shallum son . . . . 2Esd 1:1

**HIN**

a quarter of a *h* of oil from . . . . Ex 29:40  
 and an accurate *h*. I am the LORD . . . . Lv 19:36  
 mixed with one-fourth of a *h* of oil. . . . Nm 15:4  
 a sixth of a *h* at fixed times . . . . Eze 4:11

**HIRAM**

Tyre's King *H* sent messengers to David. . . . 2Sa 5:11  
 Because King *H* of Tyre was loyal to . . . . 1Ki 5:1

**HITTITE**

was a native *H*. So Ephron the. . . . Gn 23:10  
 including all *H*land, up to the. . . . Josh 1:4  
 father was an Amorite, your mother a *H*. . . . Eze 16:3

**HITTITES**

the *H*, the Perizzites, the Rephaim . . . . Gn 15:20  
 Canaanites, the *H*, the Amorites, the . . . . Ex 3:8  
 plain; the *H*, Jebusites, and . . . . Nm 13:29  
 before you—the *H*, the Girschites, . . . . Dt 7:1  
 the Canaanites, *H*, Hivites, . . . . Josh 3:10  
 Canaanites, the *H*, the Perizzites, . . . . 1Esd 8:66  
 out Canaanites, *H*, Perizzites, and . . . . 2Esd 1:21

**HIVITES**

the *H*, the Arkites, the Sinites . . . . Gn 10:17  
 Perizzites, the *H*, and the Jebusites . . . . Ex 3:8  
 Perizzites, the *H*, and the . . . . Dt 7:1  
 Hittites, *H*, Perizzites, . . . . Josh 3:10  
 abandoned by the *H* and the Amorites; . . . . Is 17:9

**HOLINESS**

you, foremost in *h*, worthy of highest . . . . Ex 15:11  
 you to show my *h* before the . . . . Nm 20:12  
 his majestic *h*. They were to. . . . 2Ch 20:21  
 of your house, by the *h* of your temple. . . . Ps 65:4  
 I live on high, in *h*, and also with the . . . . Is 57:15  
 promised by his *h*. The days are . . . . Am 4:2  
 is in heaven, uphold the *h* of your name. . . . Mt 6:9  
 in *h* and righteousness in God's eyes, for . . . . Lk 1:75  
 on the Spirit of *h*. This Son is Jesus. . . . Ro 1:4  
 our benefit so that we can share his *h*. . . . Heb 12:10  
 the reward that *h* brings. They. . . . Wis 2:22  
 as they saw your *h* made visible in . . . . Sir 36:4  
 who trusted in the *h* of the place and. . . . 2Macc 3:12  
 the house of *h* just as the houses . . . . 3Macc 2:18

**HOLY**

day and made it *h*, because on it God . . . . Gn 2:3  
 because you are standing on *h* ground. . . . Ex 3:5  
 his sons as a most *h* portion from the. . . . Lv 2:3  
 in the meeting tent: the most *h* things. . . . Nm 4:4  
 and treat it as *h*, exactly as the . . . . Dt 5:12  
 Make yourselves *h*! Tomorrow the LORD . . . . Josh 3:5  
 answer you? To which *h* one will you turn? . . . . Job 5:1  
 appoint my king on Zion, my *h* mountain! . . . . Ps 2:6  
 prophets in the *h* scriptures. His . . . . Ro 1:3  
 of the one who is *h* and true, who has . . . . Rev 3:7  
 which is the *h* Festival of Weeks, . . . . Tob 2:1  
 who burned with *h* zeal for you and . . . . Jdt 9:4  
 A *h*, instructive spirit will flee deceit . . . . Wis 1:5  
 her will serve the *h* one; the Lord . . . . Sir 4:14

on us from your *h* house and think of. . . . Bar 2:16  
 God stirred up the *h* spirit of a young . . . . Sus 45  
 abandoning the *h* covenant. They . . . . 1Macc 1:15  
 revolted from the *h* land and the . . . . 2Macc 1:7  
 placing the Lord's *h* chest in the house . . . . 1Esd 1:3  
 anointed me with *h* oil; God made me . . . . Ps 151 1:7  
 a notion to enter into the *h* place. . . . 3Macc 1:10  
 I have made you *h*. I will prepare. . . . 2Esd 2:18  
 to function as a *h* governor over them . . . . 4Macc 2:22

**HOLY CITY**

Tob 13:9; PrAz 5; 1Macc 2:7; 2Macc 1:12; 3:1; 9:14; 15:14; 3Macc 6:5

**HOLY EQUIPMENT**

1Macc 4:49; 14:15; 2Macc 5:16; 1Esd 1:39, 43, 51; 2:7; 4:44, 57; 8:17; 55

**HOLY NAME**

Tob 13:11; 13:18; Wis 10:20; Sir 17:10; 47:10

**HOLY ONE**

2Kgs 19:22; Job 5:1; 6:10; Ps 22:3; 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; 106:16; Prv 9:10; 30:3; Is 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:17, 20; 12:6; 17:7; 19:29, 23; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 40:25; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14, 15; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14; Jer 50:29; 51:5; Dn 8:13; Hos 11:9, 12; Hab 1:12; 3:3; Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34; Jn 6:69; Ac 2:27; 13:35; 1Jn 2:20; Rev 16:5; Tob 13:11; 13:18; Wis 10:20; Sir 17:10; 47:10

**HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL**

2Kgs 19:22; Ps 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Is 1:4; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14; Jer 50:29; 51:5

**HOLY ONES**

Dt 33:2, 3; Job 15:15; 36:14; Ps 16:3; 34:9; 89:5, 7; Is 13:3; Dn 7:18; 7:21, 22, 25, 27; 8:24; Zec 14:5; Jude 14; Wis 3:9; 4:15; 10:17; 18:1, 2; Sir 42:17; 45:2; 3Macc 2:2, 21

**HOLY PEOPLE**

Ex 22:31; Is 62:12; Mt 27:52; Ac 9:13; 9:32, 41; 26:10; Col 1:12; 1:26; 2Th 1:10; Heb 6:10; 13:24; Jude 3

**HOLY PLACE**

Ex 29:31; Lv 6:16; 6:26, 27, 30; 7:6; 10:13; 16:24; 24:9; 1Kgs 6:5, 16; 7:50; 8:6, 8, 10; 2Ch 3:8, 10; 4:22; 5:7, 9, 11; 26:18; Ezr 9:8; Ecc 8:10; Is 63:18; Jer 25:30; Eze 41:4, 21, 23; 44:13, 27; 45:3, 4; 48:12; Dn 8:11; 9:24; Am 7:13; Mal 2:11; Mt 24:15; Lk 11:51; Ac 6:13; 21:28; Heb 8:2; 9:1, 2, 8, 24, 25; 1Macc 2:12; 2Macc 1:29; 2:17, 18; 3:30; 5:16; 8:17; 15:34; 1Esd 8:75; 3Macc 1:10, 23, 29; 2:10, 14; 4Macc 4:9, 12

**HOLY SPIRIT**

Ps 51:11; Is 63:10; 63:11; Mt 1:18; 1:20; 3:11; 12:31, 32; 22:43; 28:19; Mk 1:8; 3:29; 12:36; 13:11; Lk 1:15; 1:35, 41, 67; 2:25, 26; 3:16, 22; 4:1; 10:21; 11:13; 12:10, 12; Jn 1:33; 14:26; 20:22; Ac 1:2, 5, 8, 16; 2:4, 33, 38; 4:8, 25, 31; 5:3, 32; 6:5; 7:51, 55; 8:15, 16, 17, 19; 9:17, 31; 10:38, 44, 45, 47; 11:15, 16, 24; 13:2, 4, 9, 52; 15:8, 28; 16:6; 19:2, 6; 20:23, 28; 21:11; 28:25; Ro 5:9; 14:17; 15:13, 16; 1Co 6:19; 12:3; 2Co 6:16; 13:13; Eph 1:13; 1:14; 4:30; 1Th 1:5, 6; 4:8; 2Ti 1:14; Ti 3:5; Heb 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15; 1Pt 1:12; 2Pt 1:21; Jude 20

**HOLY TEMPLE**

1Ch 29:3; Ps 5:7; 11:4; 79:1; 138:2; Jon 2:4, 7; Mic 1:2; Hab 2:20; Sir 49:12; PrAz 30; 2Macc 5:17; 9:16; 13:10; 14:31; 15:18; 1Esd 1:50

**HOLY TO THE LORD**

Ex 28:36; 30:10, 37; 31:15; 39:30; Lv 19:8; 27:21, 28, 30, 32; Nm 6:8; Dt 14:2, 21; 26:19; Josh 6:19; 2Ch 30:17; 35:3; Ezr 8:28; Neh 8:9; Eze 48:14; Zec 14:20; 14:21

**YOU MUST BE HOLY**

Lv 11:45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 1Pt 1:15

**HOME**

Jacob became a quiet man who stayed at *h*. . . . Gn 25:27  
 they went back *h* to their father . . . . Ex 2:18  
 a person sells a *h* in a walled city. . . . Lv 25:29  
 out of here and go *h*. I told you I'd. . . . Nm 24:11  
 her into your *h*, she must shave . . . . Dt 21:12  
 killer may return *h*, back to the city. . . . Josh 20:6  
 each one from his *h*—Eliphaz of Teman, . . . . Job 2:11



for me; yes, I have a lovely **h** . . . . . Ps 16:6  
 but he blesses the **h** of the righteous . . . . . Prv 3:33  
 and wouldn't let his prisoners go **h?** . . . . . Is 14:17  
 You bring it **h**, and I blow it . . . . . Hg 1:9  
 on his back at **h**, paralyzed, and . . . . . Mt 8:6  
 and John went **h** with Simon and . . . . . Mk 1:29  
 of his priestly service, he returned **h** . . . . . Lk 1:23  
 flesh and made his **h** among us. We have . . . . . Jn 1:14  
 scroff, Let his **h** become deserted . . . . . Ac 1:20  
 and welcome strangers into your **h** . . . . . Ro 12:13  
 a new earth, where righteousness is at **h** . . . . . 2Pt 3:13  
 She has become a **h** for demons and a . . . . . Rev 18:2  
 after fleeing **h** from Judea, at the . . . . . Tob 1:18  
 women and children **h**. They were in . . . . . Jdt 7:32  
 won't make her **h** in a body that is . . . . . Wis 1:4  
 allotted territory should I make my **h?** . . . . . Sir 24:7  
 this land far from **h**, for we have put . . . . . Bar 3:7  
 breaks out in the **h** of their wooden . . . . . LJer 54  
 garden next to his **h**. The Jews came to . . . . . Sus 4  
 a vineyard or were fainthearted to go **h** . . . . . 1Macc 3:56  
 his body **h**. But he was . . . . . 2Macc 9:29  
 kept secluded at **h** rushed out with . . . . . 3Macc 1:18  
 Now go **h**, each of you, and I will come . . . . . 2Esd 12:49

**HONOR**

my husband will **h** me since I've . . . . . Gn 30:20  
 even came to **h** Moses as a great . . . . . Ex 11:3  
 for I'll greatly **h** you and I'll do . . . . . Nm 22:17  
**h** your father and your mother, exactly as . . . . . Dt 5:16  
 taking won't bring **h** to you, because . . . . . Jgs 4:9  
 children achieve **h**, and they don't . . . . . Job 14:21  
 be a throne of **h** for his ancestors' . . . . . Is 22:23  
 where is my **h?** Or if I'm a . . . . . Mal 1:6  
 in the east, and we've come to **h** him . . . . . Mt 2:2  
 Moses said, **h** your father and your . . . . . Mk 7:10  
 Why do I have this **h**, that the mother of . . . . . Lk 1:43  
 prophets have no **h** in their own . . . . . Jn 4:44  
 and fell at his feet in order to **h** him . . . . . Ac 10:25  
 God, they didn't **h** God as God or . . . . . Ro 1:21  
 crowned the human being with glory and **h** . . . . . Heb 2:7  
 give glory, **h**, and thanks to the . . . . . Rev 4:9  
 a proper burial. **h** your mother and . . . . . Tob 4:3  
 source of **h** for you and give . . . . . Jdt 13:20  
 In their old age they will have no **h** . . . . . Wis 3:17  
 Those who **h** their fathers will make up . . . . . Sir 3:3  
 Don't give your **h** to another or your . . . . . Bar 4:3  
 with our hearts, **h** you, and seek your . . . . . PrAz 18  
 He said, "I don't **h** idols made by humans, . . . . . Bel 5  
 sabbaths into shame, her **h** into contempt . . . . . 1Macc 1:39  
 the kings used to **h** the place and glorify . . . . . 2Macc 3:2  
 his **h**, his understanding . . . . . 1Esd 1:31  
 are denied this **h**, I shouldn't be." . . . . . 3Macc 1:12  
 ones who made my **h** to prevail now and . . . . . 2Esd 7:60  
 because of the **h** in which they are . . . . . 4Macc 1:10

**HONOR THE LORD**

Ex 12:42; Ps 15:4; 25:12; 34:11; 112:1; 115:11, 13; 118:4; 135:20;  
 Prv 3:9; Is 24:15; Jer 13:16

**HOPE**

to say that I have **h**, even if I had a . . . . . Ru 1:12  
 of your conduct, the source of your **h?** . . . . . Job 4:6  
 forever, the **h** of those who . . . . . Ps 9:18  
 wicked die, their **h** perishes. Yes, any . . . . . Prv 11:7  
 Valley a door of **h**. There she will . . . . . Hos 2:15  
 Gentiles will put their **h** in his name . . . . . Mt 12:21  
 is Moses, the one in whom your **h** rests . . . . . Jn 5:45  
 Moreover, my body will live in **h** . . . . . Ac 2:26  
 When it was beyond **h**, he had faith in . . . . . Ro 4:18  
 and the pride that our **h** gives us . . . . . Heb 3:6  
 you really do **h** that they won't be . . . . . Jdt 6:9  
 plan. They didn't **h** for the reward . . . . . Wis 2:22  
 make your ways straight, and **h** in him . . . . . Sir 2:6  
 I have placed **h** in the eternal one for . . . . . Bar 4:22  
 to the God who saves those who **h** in him . . . . . Sus 60  
 peoples. Yet there is **h** for Israel . . . . . 1Esd 8:89  
 time people will **h** but not get what . . . . . 2Esd 5:12

**HOPE IN GOD**

Ps 42:5, 11; 43:5; 78:7; Is 8:17; 1Ti 5:5; 6:17; 2Macc 2:18; 4Macc  
 17:4

**HOPE IN THE LORD**

Ps 27:14; 33:20; 37:9, 34; 40:1; Is 40:31; Phi 2:19

**HOREB**

and he came to God's mountain called **H** . . . . . Ex 3:1  
 eleven days from **H** to Kadesh-barnea . . . . . Dt 1:2  
 there while at **H**, where the **LORD** . . . . . 1Ki 8:9  
 made a calf at **H**, bowing down to a . . . . . Ps 106:19  
 and rules for all Israel at **H** . . . . . Mal 4:4  
 at Sinai and decrees of punishment at **H** . . . . . Sir 48:7  
 the Lord on Mount **H** for Israel, but . . . . . 2Esd 2:33

**HOSANNA**

him shouted, "**H** to the Son of . . . . . Mt 21:9  
 were shouting, "**H** Blessings on the . . . . . Mk 11:9  
 They shouted, "**H**! Blessings on the . . . . . Jn 12:13

**HOSHEA**

from the tribe of Ephraim, **H**, Nun's son . . . . . Nm 13:8  
 Then **H**, Elah's son, plotted against . . . . . 2Ki 15:30  
 the days of King **H**, whom King . . . . . 2Esd 13:40

**HOUSE**

**GOD'S HOUSE**

Tob 13:16; 14:4, 5; Jdt 9:1; Bar 3:24; 1Esd 2:2; 5:56

**HOUSE IN JERUSALEM**

Jdt 9:1; 1Esd 2:2; 6:17, 25; 8:25

**HOUSE OF ISRAEL**

Jdt 4:15; 6:17; 8:6; 13:14; 14:5, 10, 16:24; 3Macc 2:10

**LORD'S HOUSE**

Bar 1:8, 14; 1Esd 1:52; 5:59; 6:2, 19, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 32; 8:45;  
 55, 58, 61, 76

**LORD'S HOUSE IN JERUSALEM**

1Esd 6:2, 19, 21, 23, 32

**HUMAN**

there was still no **h** being to farm the . . . . . Gn 2:5  
 womb belongs to me, whether **h** or animal . . . . . Ex 13:2  
 or by touching **h** uncleanness . . . . . Lv 5:3  
 is mine, whether **h** or animal. When I . . . . . Nm 8:17  
 wood and stone by **h** hands—gods that . . . . . Dt 4:28  
 responded to a **h** voice. The **LORD** . . . . . Josh 10:14  
 Can a **h** be more righteous than God, a . . . . . Job 4:17  
 what are **h** beings that you think about . . . . . Ps 8:4  
 earth and delighting in the **h** race . . . . . Prv 8:31  
 brought down and **h** arrogance . . . . . Is 2:17  
 blood nor from **h** desire or passion, . . . . . Jn 1:13  
 or activity is of **h** origin, it will . . . . . Ac 5:38  
 the injustice of **h** beings who silence . . . . . Ro 1:18  
 Or what is the **h** being that you . . . . . Heb 2:6  
 the sound of **h** beings without . . . . . Tob 5:10  
 God isn't like a **h** being who can be . . . . . Jdt 8:16  
 I'm just a **h** like everyone else. I'm a . . . . . Wis 7:1  
 aren't gods but **h** creations. There's . . . . . LJer 50  
 You **h** beings, bless the Lord, sing hymns, . . . . . PrAz 59  
 the punishment of **h** beings for the . . . . . 2Macc 6:26  
 trust women. No **h** beings are . . . . . 1Esd 4:37  
 For **h** beings can't enter your dwelling . . . . . 3Macc 2:15  
 one who doesn't live among **h** beings? . . . . . 2Esd 5:38  
 of divine and **h** behavior and what . . . . . 4Macc 1:16

**HUMAN ONE**

Eze 2:1, 3, 6, 8; 3:1, 3, 4, 10, 17, 25; 4:1, 16; 5:1, 6; 7:2; 8:5, 6,  
 8, 12, 15, 17; 11:2, 4, 15; 12:2, 3, 9, 18, 22, 27; 13:2, 17; 14:3, 13;  
 15:2; 16:2; 17:2; 20:3, 4, 27, 46; 21:2, 6, 9, 12, 14, 19, 28; 22:2, 18,  
 24; 23:2, 36; 24:2, 16, 25; 25:2; 26:2; 27:2; 28:2, 12, 21; 29:2, 18;  
 30:2, 21; 31:2; 32:2, 18; 33:2, 7, 10, 12, 24, 30; 34:2; 35:2; 36:1,  
 17; 37:3, 9, 11, 16; 38:2, 14; 39:1, 17; 40:4; 43:7, 10, 18; 44:5; 47:6;  
 Dn 8:17; Mic 6:8; Mt 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37,  
 41; 16:13, 27, 28; 17:9, 12, 22; 18:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27, 30, 33, 37,  
 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24, 45, 64; Mk 2:10; 2:28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31;  
 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 62; Lk 5:24; 6:5, 22; 7:34; 9:22, 26, 44,

58; 11:30; 12:8, 10, 40; 17:22, 24, 26, 30; 18:8, 31; 19:10; 21:27, 36; 22:22, 48, 49; 24:7; Jn 1:51; 3:13, 14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34; 13:31, 32; Ac 7:56; Rev 1:13; 14:14

### SEE THE HUMAN ONE

Mt 16:28; 24:30; 26:64; Mk 13:26; 14:62; Lk 21:27; Jn 6:62

### HUMANITY

said, "Let us make *h* in our image to . . . Gn 1:26  
eyes see—his vision examines all of *h* . . . Ps 11:4  
and approval in the eyes of God and *h* . . . Prv 3:4  
the sun, and it weighs heavily upon *h* . . . Ecc 6:1  
*H* will be brought down; each person laid . . . Is 2:9  
one among *h*. All of them lie . . . Mic 7:2  
that the rest of *h* will seek the . . . Ac 15:17  
between God and *h*, the human Christ . . . 1Ti 2:5  
somewhere, What is *h* that you think . . . Heb 2:6  
You gave shape to *h* through your wisdom . . . Wis 9:2  
He created *h* at the beginning, and he . . . Sir 15:14  
them and blot out their memory from *h*. . . 1Macc 12:53  
the beginning of *h* and searched out . . . 2Macc 7:23  
one ten-thousandth part of *h* could live. . . 2Esd 7:138

### ALL HUMANITY

Is 40:5; 66:16, 23; Jer 45:5; Lk 3:6

### HUMANS

will not remain in *h* forever, because . . . Gn 6:3  
of Egypt, both *h* and animals. I'll . . . Ex 12:12  
*h*, animals, or . . . Lv 27:28  
in Israel, both *h* and animals. They . . . Nm 3:13  
is how gods and *h* are honored, so . . . Jgs 9:9  
Surely *h* are born to distress, just as . . . Job 5:7  
from heaven on *h* to see if anyone . . . Ps 14:2  
I will make *h* scarcer than fine gold; . . . Is 13:12  
Let *h* and animals alike put on mourning . . . Jon 3:8  
flesh. Therefore, *h* must not pull . . . Mt 19:6  
was created for *h*, humans weren't . . . Mk 2:27  
me before *h*, the Human One . . . Lk 12:21  
been given among *h* through which we . . . Ac 4:12  
God has made. So *h* are without excuse. . . Ro 1:20  
was rejected by *h*, from God's . . . 1Pt 2:4  
only do *h* serve him because . . . Jdt 11:7  
what is best for *h*. Wisdom won't . . . Wis 1:6  
*H* were not created to be arrogant, nor . . . Sir 10:18  
and gold, in which *h* have trusted? . . . Bar 3:17  
idols made by *h*, rather the living . . . Bel 5  
at the hands of *h* is preferable, . . . 2Macc 7:14

### HUSBAND

gave some to her *h*, who was with her, . . . Gn 3:6  
what the woman's *h* demands, as . . . Ex 21:22  
divorced from her *h*, because priests . . . Lv 21:7  
her unknown to her *h* and that she has . . . Nm 5:13  
You will be her *h*, and she will be . . . Dt 21:13  
went and told her *h*, "A man of God . . . Jgs 13:6  
For my *h* isn't home; he's gone far away . . . Prv 7:19  
LORD, for I'm your *h*. I'll gather you . . . Jer 3:14  
and I am not her *h*. Let her remove . . . Hos 2:2  
of Joseph, the *h* of Mary . . . Mt 1:16  
wife divorces her *h* and marries . . . Mk 10:12  
she lived with her *h* for seven years. . . Lk 2:36  
her, "Go, get your *h*, and come back . . . Jn 4:16  
didn't know what had happened to her *h* . . . Ac 5:7  
is united with her *h* under the Law . . . Ro 7:2  
as a bride beautifully dressed for her *h*. . . Rev 21:8  
marriage to seven *h*, and Asmodeus, an . . . Tob 3:8  
Their *h*, in the prime of their youth, . . . 3Macc 4:8  
mourn, having no *h*; their daughters . . . 2Esd 16:34

### HYMNS

praying and singing *h* to God . . . Ac 16:25  
speak to each other with psalms, *h*. . . Eph 5:19  
by singing psalms, *h*, and spiritual . . . Col 3:16  
song with joyful *h*, and all her . . . Tob 13:18  
wearing wreaths of victory, and singing *h*. . . Jdt 15:13  
together they sang *h* to your holy name, . . . Wis 10:20  
And now, sing *h* with all your heart and . . . Sir 39:35

flames, singing *h* to God, blessing . . . PrAz 1  
they sang *h* and songs of . . . 1Macc 4:24  
The priests sang the *h*. . . 2Macc 1:30  
They sang *h*, praising the Lord, "God's . . . 1Esd 5:58  
and beautiful *h* to the God of . . . 3Macc 7:16  
been musical when it praised God with *h*!" . . . 4Macc 10:21

## ii

### IDOL

Do not make an *f* for yourself . . . Ex 20:4  
and make an *f* for yourself: a . . . Dt 4:16  
they found the *f* in the bed with . . . 1Sa 19:16  
call at Horeb, bowing down to a metal *f* . . . Ps 106:19  
An *f*? A craftsman pours it, a . . . Is 40:19  
Israel will be ashamed of his own *f* . . . Hos 10:6  
when they made an *f* in the shape of a . . . Ac 7:41  
to a real *f*, because they were . . . 1Co 8:7  
of fruit to an *f*? It can't eat or . . . Sir 30:19  
One *f* has a royal staff, like a person . . . LJer 12  
Babylonians had an *f* named Bel. Each . . . Bel 3  
the temple of their *f*, to seek safety. . . 1Macc 10:83

### IDOLATRY

like the evil of *i*. Because you have . . . 1Sa 15:23  
images speak *i*, and diviners see . . . Zec 10:2  
*i*, drug use and casting spells, hate, . . . Ga 5:20  
In this way *i* becomes a trap for one's . . . Wis 14:21  
and he removed unlawful displays of *i*. . . Sir 49:2

### IDOLS

Do not turn to *i* or make gods of cast . . . Lv 19:4  
down their sacred poles, and burn their *i* . . . Dt 7:5  
to follow useless *i* that can't help . . . 1Sa 12:21  
shrines; they angered him with their *i*. . . Ps 78:58  
is filled with *i*, they worship . . . Is 2:8  
is associated with *f*—let him alone! . . . Hos 4:17  
associated with *i*, sexual . . . Ac 15:20  
If you hate *i*, do you rob . . . Ro 2:22  
and their forbidden worship of *i*. . . 1Pt 4:3  
food sacrificed to *i* and commit sexual . . . Rev 2:14  
leave behind their *i* that have deceived. . . Tob 14:6  
But *f* made by human hands are cursed, as . . . Wis 14:8  
the tongues of the *i*. They are covered . . . LJer 7  
I don't honor *f* made by humans, . . . Bel 5  
They sacrificed to *i* and violated the . . . 1Macc 1:43  
gold and silver *i* and how they were . . . 2Macc 2:2  
Jerusalem and placed in his temple of *i* . . . 1Esd 2:7  
the Philistine, who cursed me by his *i*. . . Ps 151 2:1  
just as the houses of *f* are trampled." . . . 3Macc 2:18  
to feed you meat that was sacrificed to *i* . . . 2Esd 16:69  
and meat from animals sacrificed to *i* . . . 4Macc 5:2

### IMAGE

humanity in our *f* to resemble us so . . . Gn 1:26  
he made a metal *f* of a bull calf, . . . Ex 32:4  
set up any divine *f* or sacred pillar. . . Lv 26:1  
a form of any *f*, any . . . Dt 4:16  
with the asherah *f* that had been. . . Jgs 6:28  
I will be filled full by seeing your *f*. . . Ps 17:15  
one who sets up an *i* chooses wood that . . . Is 40:20  
idol and cast *f* from the house of. . . Na 1:14  
Whose *i* and inscription is this?" he . . . Mt 22:20  
What's a good *f* for God's kingdom? . . . Mk 4:30  
me a coin. Whose *f* and inscription. . . Lk 20:24  
silver, or stone *f* made by human. . . Ac 17:29  
conformed to the *f* of his Son. That . . . Ro 8:29  
earth to make an *f* for the beast who . . . Rev 13:14  
of Galilee, the *f* of a calf that . . . Tob 1:5  
She's the perfect *f* of God's goodness. . . Wis 7:26  
his, and he made them according to his *f*. . . Sir 17:3  
and named in your *f*, because they are . . . 2Esd 8:44

**IMAGES**

all their cast *i* You will . . . Nm 33:52  
 Burn the *i*of their gods. Don't desire . . . Dt 7:25  
 those who worship *i*, those who are . . . Ps 97:7  
 kingdoms with more *i* than Jerusalem and . . . Is 10:10  
 a priestly vest or household divine *i*. . . Hos 3:4  
 god Rephan, the *i* that you made in . . . Ac 7:43  
 immortal God for *i* that look like . . . Ro 1:23  
 the people to worship these carved *i*. . . Wis 14:16  
 being troubled by *i* in their mind, as . . . Sir 40:6  
 burned the carved *i* of their gods with . . . 1Macc 5:68

**DIVINE IMAGES**

Gn 31:19; 31:32, 34, 35; Jgs 17:5; 18:14, 17, 18, 20; 25a 5:21; 1Ch 14:12; Eze 21:21; Hos 3:4; Zec 10:2

**IMMIGRANT**

to live as an *i* since the famine. . . Gn 12:10  
 I've been an *i* living in a . . . Ex 2:22  
 the citizen or the *i* who lives among . . . Lv 16:29  
 If an *i* resides among you and wishes to . . . Nm 9:14  
 or between a tribe member and an *i*. . . Dt 1:16  
 He was a Levite residing there as an *i*. . . Jgs 17:7  
 a foreigner—an *i* staying with you, . . . Ps 39:12  
 Don't let the *i* who has joined with the . . . Is 56:3  
 where he lived as an *i* and had two sons. . . Ac 7:29  
 cattle, and every *i*, hired worker, and . . . Jdt 4:10  
 you are an *i*, don't open your . . . Sir 29:24

**IMMIGRANTS**

will live as *i* in a land that . . . Gn 15:13  
 the land of Canaan where they lived as *i*. . . Ex 6:4  
 house or from the *i* who live with you. . . Lv 17:8  
 for Israelites, *i*, and temporary. . . Nm 35:15  
 and he loves *i*, giving them food. . . Dt 10:18  
 They included both *i* and full citizens. . . Josh 8:33  
 kill widows and *i*, they murder. . . Ps 94:6  
 in their own land. *i* will join them, . . . Is 14:1  
 that they were strangers and *i* on earth. . . Heb 11:13  
 for their hatred of the *i* in their midst. . . Wis 19:13  
 abroad to live as *i* nor travel about. . . Sir 38:32

**INCENSE**

**BURNED INCENSE**

Nm 16:47; 1Kgs 3:3; 11:8; 2Kgs 16:4; 17:11; 22:17; 23:5; 2Ch 25:14; 28:4; 34:25; Is 65:7; Hos 11:2; 1Macc 1:55

**BURNING INCENSE**

Ex 30:1; 40:5; 1Kgs 13:1; 2Kgs 12:3; 14:4; 15:4; 18:4; 23:8; 2Ch 28:3, 25; 29:7; Is 65:3; Jer 44:8, 18; Rev 8:3; 4Macc 7:11

**INCENSE ALTAR**

Ex 30:6, 7, 27; 31:8; 35:15; 37:25; 1Ch 28:18; 2Ch 26:16; 26:19; 2Macc 2:5

**INCENSE ALTARS**

Lv 26:30; 2Ch 14:5; 30:14; 34:4, 7; Is 27:9; Eze 6:4, 6

**INHERIT**

But they will not *i* land among the . . . Nm 18:23  
 one who will help Israel *i* the land. . . Dt 1:38  
 about me, make me *i* my youthful . . . Job 13:26  
 But the weak will *i* the land; they will . . . Ps 37:11  
 their family will *i* the wind. The fool. . . Ps 11:29  
 refuge in me will *i* the land and . . . Is 57:13  
 humble, because they will *i* the earth. . . Mt 5:5  
 that he would *i* the world, didn't . . . Ro 4:13  
 serve those who are going to *i* salvation? . . . Heb 1:14  
 victorious will *i* these things. . . Rev 21:7  
 Tobias' right to *i* her before all the . . . Tob 3:17  
 possess her will *i* glory. The Lord. . . Sir 4:13  
 day, and you will *i* great honor and . . . 1Macc 2:51  
 that the just will *i* these things, but . . . 2Esd 7:17

**INHERITANCE**

son won't share the *i* with my son Isaac. . . Gn 21:10  
 your children as *i* that they can own . . . Lv 25:46  
 nor given us the *i* of field and . . . Nm 16:14  
 the LORD your God is giving you as an *i*. . . Dt 4:21

You won't get an *i* in our father's. . . Jgs 11:2  
 with God, the *i* that the ruthless . . . Job 27:13  
 He chooses our *i* for us: the heights of . . . Ps 47:4  
 grandchildren an *i*, but the wealth of . . . Psv 13:22  
 Assyria my handiwork; and Israel my *i*. . . Is 19:25  
 don't make your *i* a disgrace, an. . . Jl 2:17  
 on, let's kill him and we'll have his *i*! . . . Mt 21:38  
 Let's kill him, and the *i* will be ours.' . . Mk 12:7  
 tell my brother to divide the *i* with me. . . Lk 12:13  
 didn't give him an *i* here, not even a . . . Ac 7:5  
 That's why the *i* comes through faith, so . . . Ro 4:16  
 of the eternal *i* on the basis of. . . Heb 9:15  
 the regulation for *i* makes it fitting . . . Tob 6:13  
 destruction of our *i* down upon our . . . Jdt 8:22  
 prostitutes, since you might lose your *i*. . . Sir 9:6  
 Caleb received an *i* in the land because . . . 1Macc 2:56  
 ascended to see the *i* that God promised. . . 2Macc 2:4  
 pass it on as an *i* to your children . . . 1Esd 8:82  
 set apart as your *i*, who are strangers. . . 3Macc 6:3  
 our world as an *i*? How long will . . . 2Esd 6:59

**INSTRUCTION**

There will be one *i* for the native and. . . Ex 12:49  
 sons: This is the *i* for the entirely. . . Lv 6:9  
 This is the *i* for the nazirite. When the . . . Nm 6:13  
 to explain this *i*. He said the . . . Dt 1:5  
 obey all of the *i* that Moses my . . . Josh 1:7  
 so don't reject the Almighty's *i*. . . Job 5:17  
 love the LORD's *i*, and they recite. . . Ps 1:2  
 provide insightful *i*, which is. . . Psv 1:3  
 in God's paths. " *i* will come from . . . Is 2:3  
 have forgotten the *i* of your God, so . . . Hos 4:6  
 the soundness of the *i* you have received. . . Lk 1:4  
 Under Gamaliel's *i*, *i* was trained in . . . Ac 22:3  
 written for our *i* so that we could. . . Ro 15:4  
 according to the *i* recorded in Moses' . . . Tob 1:8  
 for wisdom and *i* will be miserable. . . Wis 3:11  
 you will learn *i* from them, how to . . . Sir 8:8  
 order; give solemn *i* to your people. . . 2Esd 14:13  
 comes from the *i* provided by the . . . 4Macc 1:17

**INSTRUCTIONS**

my commandments, my statutes, and my *i*. . . Gn 26:5  
 you refuse to obey my commandments and *i*. . . Ex 16:28  
 This concludes the *i* for the entirely . . . Lv 7:37  
 These are the *i* about jealousy, when a . . . Nm 5:29  
 command and your *i*. I was afraid of . . . 1Sa 15:24  
 laws and observe his *i*. Praise the LORD! . . . Ps 105:45  
 a thing—I gave no *i*—about entirely . . . Jer 7:22  
 large number of my *i*, they are regarded . . . Hos 8:12  
 since they teach *i* that are human . . . Mt 15:9  
 since they teach *i* that are human . . . Mk 7:7  
 Master, your *i* have been followed . . . Lk 14:22  
 he received these *i*, he threw them. . . Ac 16:24  
 remember all my *i*, and you hold on . . . 1Co 11:2  
 his life, and gave *i* about burying his . . . Heb 11:22  
 remember these *i*, and don't let . . . Tob 4:19  
 If you follow the *i* of your female. . . Jdt 11:6  
 according to the *i* set down by David. . . 1Esd 1:15  
 I followed your *i*, and I went out . . . 2Esd 10:32  
 had given these *i*, seven brothers . . . 4Macc 8:3

**ISAAC**

you will name him *i*. I will set up my . . . Gn 17:19  
 your descendants will be named through *i*. . . Ro 9:7  
 how he tested *i*, and what happened. . . Jdt 8:26  
 same commitment to *i* because of Abraham . . . Sir 44:22  
 you loved, and *i*, your servant, and . . . PrAz 12  
 with clear thinking, such as *i* had shown. . . 4Macc 7:14

**ABRAHAM ISAAC AND JACOB**

Ex 2:24; 6:3, 8; 33:1; Nm 32:11; Dt 1:8; 6:10; 9:5, 27; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4; 2Kgs 13:23; Jer 33:26; Ac 3:13; 7:32; Tob 4:12; Bar 2:34; 2Macc 1:2; PrMan 8; 2Esd 1:39; 4Macc 7:19; 13:17

**ISAIAH**

to the prophet *i*, Amoz's son. They. . . 2Ki 19:2

and Jerusalem that *I*, Amoz's son, saw . . . . . Is 1:1  
 the one of whom *I* the prophet spoke . . . . . Mt 3:3  
 in the prophecy of *I*. Look, I am . . . . . Mk 1:2  
 of the words of *I* the prophet, A . . . . . Lk 3:4  
 straight just as the prophet *I* said. . . . . Jn 1:23  
 the prophet *I* while sitting in . . . . . Ac 8:28  
 But *I* cries out for Israel, Though the . . . . . Ro 9:27  
 heaven, and he rescued them through *I*. . . . . Sir 48:20  
 servants Jeremiah, *I*, and Daniel to . . . . . 2Esd 2:18  
 the scripture in *I* that says, Even if . . . . . 4Macc 18:14

**ISHBOSHETH**

army had taken *I*, Saul's son, and . . . . . 2Sa 2:8

**ISHMAEL**

You will name him *I* because the LORD . . . . . Gn 16:11  
 The officers were *I*, Nethaniah's son . . . . . 2Ki 25:23  
 at Mizpah: *I*, Nethaniah's son; . . . . . Jer 40:8  
 Maaseiah, *I*, Nathanael, . . . . . 1Esd 9:22

**ISHMAELITES**

saw a caravan of *I* coming from . . . . . Gn 37:25  
 worn gold earrings because they were *I*. . . . . Jgs 8:24  
 of Edom and the *I*, Moab and the . . . . . Ps 83:6  
 of Rassis and the *I* along the edge of . . . . . Jdt 2:23

**ISRAEL**

any longer, but *I*, because you. . . . . Gn 32:28  
 what the LORD says: *I* is my oldest son. . . . . Ex 4:22

**ALL ISRAEL**

Ex 18:25; Dt 1:1; 5:1; 11:6; 13:11; 21:21; 27:9; 29:2; 31:1, 7, 11;  
 32:45; Josh 3:7, 17; 4:14; 7:24, 25; 8:15, 21, 24, 33; 10:15, 29, 31,  
 34, 36, 38, 43; 23:2; Jgs 8:27; 1Sa 3:20; 4:1, 5; 7:5; 11:2; 12:1; 13:4;  
 14:40; 17:11; 19:5; 24:2; 25:1; 28:3, 4; 2Sa 2:9; 3:12, 19, 21, 37; 4:1;  
 5:5; 8:15; 10:17; 12:12; 16:18, 21, 22; 17:10, 13; 1Kgs 1:20; 2:15;  
 3:28; 4:1, 7; 8:62, 63, 65; 11:42; 12:1, 16, 18, 20; 14:13, 18; 15:27,  
 33; 18:19; 22:17; 2Kgs 3:6; 1Ch 9:1; 11:4, 10; 12:38; 13:5, 6, 8, 14; 8;  
 15:3, 28; 18:14; 19:17; 21:4, 5; 28:4; 29:23, 25, 26; 2Ch 1:2; 7:6, 8;  
 9:30; 10:1, 3, 16; 11:3, 13; 12:1; 13:4, 15; 18:16; 24:5; 28:23; 29:24;  
 30:1, 5, 6; 35:3; Ezr 2:70; 6:17; 8:25, 35; 10:5; Neh 7:73; 12:47;  
 13:26; Dn 9:7, 11; Mal 4:4; Ac 2:36; Ro 11:26; Jdt 15:14; GkEst  
 C:11; 1Macc 2:70; 5:63; 9:20; 12:52; 13:26; 1Esd 7:8; 8:55, 63, 92

**ASSEMBLY OF ISRAEL**

Lv 16:17; Dt 31:30; Josh 8:35; 1Kgs 8:14; 2Ch 6:3, 13

**HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL**

2Kgs 19:22; Ps 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Is 1:4; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19;  
 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4;  
 48:17, 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14; Jer 50:29; 51:5

**HOUSE OF ISRAEL**

Jdt 4:15; 6:17; 8:6; 13:14; 14:5, 10; 16:24; 3Macc 2:10

**PEOPLE OF ISRAEL**

Jdt 9:14; 1Macc 5:61; 13:42; 1Esd 8:66; 9:37; 3Macc 6:9

**ISRAELITE**

his people, "The *I* people are now . . . . . Ex 1:9  
 it is the entire *I* community that has . . . . . Lv 4:13  
 of the entire *I* community by their . . . . . Nm 1:2  
 the rest of your *I* relatives as a . . . . . Dt 3:18  
 for the blessing of the *I* people. . . . . Josh 8:33  
 all you families of the *I* household. . . . . Jer 2:4  
 Here is a genuine *I* in whom there is . . . . . Jn 1:47  
 not! I'm an *I*, a descendant of . . . . . Ro 11:1  
 for every *I* for all time. . . . . Tob 1:6  
 And all the *I* men, women, and children . . . . . Jdt 4:11  
 sentenced an *I* woman to death. . . . . Sus 48  
*I* children, all you who are descended . . . . . 4Macc 18:1

**ISRAELITES**

Therefore, *I* don't eat the tendon . . . . . Gn 32:32  
 the names of the *I* who came to Egypt . . . . . Ex 1:1  
 Speak to the *I* and say to them: When any . . . . . Lv 1:2  
 All the *I* 20 years old and above eligible . . . . . Nm 1:45  
 Moses spoke to the *I* precisely what the . . . . . Dt 1:3  
 land that I am going to give to the *I*. . . . . Josh 1:2  
 to Moses; made his deeds known to the *I*. . . . . Ps 103:7

the glory of the *I*, says the LORD of . . . . . Is 17:3  
 Similarly, the *I* will remain many days . . . . . Hos 3:4  
 price had been set by some of the *I*. . . . . Mt 27:9  
 He will bring many *I* back to the Lord. . . . . Lk 1:16  
 Fellow *I*, listen to these words! Jesus . . . . . Ac 2:22  
 They are *I*. The adoption as God's . . . . . Ro 9:24  
 to us, just as the *I* did. However, the . . . . . Heb 4:2  
 to trip up the *I* so that they would . . . . . Rev 2:14  
 killed many *I*. However, I would . . . . . Tob 1:18  
 The *I* living in Judea heard about . . . . . Jdt 4:1  
 this way, all the *I* could see that it . . . . . Sir 46:10  
 Law in the presence of the *I*. You said: . . . . . Bar 2:28  
 some renegade *I* emerged. These . . . . . 1Macc 1:11  
 groups, serving before your people the *I*. . . . . 1Esd 1:5  
 head. So I removed the shame from the *I*. . . . . Ps 151:2-2  
 you that the *I* alone can't be . . . . . 4Macc 9:18

**AMONG THE ISRAELITES**

Ex 28:1; 29:45; Lv 24:10; 25:33; Nm 2:33; 8:17, 18; 13:3; 18:20, 23,  
 24; 25:8; 26:62; 35:34; Josh 18:2; 1Kgs 6:13; 14:24; Eze 43:7; 44:9

**ISSACHAR**

to my husband." So she named him *I*. . . . . Gn 30:18  
*I*, Zebulun, and Benjamin . . . . . Ex 1:3  
 from *I*, Nethanel, Zuar's son. . . . . Nm 1:8  
 Levi, Judah, *I*, Joseph, and . . . . . Dt 27:12  
 Asher on the north and *I* on the east. . . . . Josh 17:10  
 to the western border: *I*, one portion. . . . . Eze 48:25  
 from the tribe of *I*, twelve thousand; . . . . . Rev 7:7

**ITHAMAR**

birth to Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and *I*. . . . . Ex 6:23  
 sons, Eleazar and *I*, "Don't dishevel . . . . . Lv 10:6  
 the oldest, and Abihu, Eleazar, and *I*. . . . . Nm 3:2  
 family: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and *I*. . . . . 1Ch 6:3  
 From the family of *I*, Gamael. From the . . . . . 1Esd 8:29

**Ji****JABESH-GILEAD**

was! No one from *J* had come to the . . . . . Jgs 21:8

**JACOB**

and she named him *J*. Isaac was 60 . . . . . Gn 25:26  
 came to Egypt with *J* along with their . . . . . Ex 1:1  
 my covenant with *J*. I will also . . . . . Lv 26:42  
 Come, curse *J* for me; come, . . . . . Nm 23:7  
 To Isaac I gave *J* and Esau. I gave Mount . . . . . Josh 24:4  
 for the better, *J* will rejoice; . . . . . Ps 14:7  
 Come, house of *J*, let's walk by the . . . . . Is 2:5  
 Judah will plow; *J* will turn the soil . . . . . Hos 10:11  
 was the father of *J*. Jacob was the . . . . . Mt 1:2  
 was near the land *J* had given to his . . . . . Jn 4:5  
 is written, I loved *J*, but I hated Esau. . . . . Ro 9:13  
 with Isaac and *J*, who were coheirs. . . . . Heb 11:9  
 what happened to *J* while he was in . . . . . Jdt 8:26  
 your dwelling in *J*, and let Israel . . . . . Sir 24:8  
 he brought joy to *J* by his deeds. His . . . . . 1Macc 3:7  
 children of sacred *J*, father, a people . . . . . 3Macc 6:3  
 will I do to you, *J*, Judah, you . . . . . 2Esd 1:24  
 the case, why did *J* our wise ancestor . . . . . 4Macc 2:19

**ABRAHAM ISAAC AND JACOB**

Ex 2:4; 6:3, 8; 33:1; Nm 32:11; Dt 1:8; 6:10; 9:5, 27; 29:13; 30:20;  
 34:4; 2Kgs 13:23; Jer 33:26; Ac 3:13; 7:32; Tob 4:12; Bar 2:34;  
 2Macc 1:2; PrMan 8; 2Esd 1:39; 4Macc 7:19; 13:17

**JAMES**

set of brothers, *J* the son of Zebedee . . . . . Mt 4:21  
 further, he saw *J* and John, . . . . . Mk 1:19  
*J* and John, Zebedee's sons, were Simon's . . . . . Lk 5:10  
 Peter, John, *J*, and Andrew. . . . . Ac 1:13  
 he appeared to *J*, then to all the . . . . . 1Co 15:7  
 From *J*, a slave of God and of the Lord . . . . . Jas 1:1

**JAPHETH**

became the father of Shem, Ham, and *J*. . . . . Gn 5:32

Noah; Noah's family; Shem, Ham, and J . . . . . 1Ch 1:4  
to the region of J, to the south . . . . . Jdt 2:25

**JEBUSITE**  
the slope of the J city, Jerusalem, . . . . . Josh 15:8  
in Judah; Ekron will be like a J. . . . . Zec 9:7

**JEBUSITES**  
the J, the Amorites, the Gergashites . . . . . Gn 10:16  
the Hivites, and the J all live. . . . . Ex 3:8  
the Hittites, J, and Amorites live. . . . . Nm 13:29  
Hivites, and the J seven nations. . . . . Dt 7:1  
Gergashites, Amorites, and J before you. . . . . Josh 3:10  
Perizzites, the J, the Shechemites, . . . . . Jdt 5:16  
Perizzites, the J, the Moabites, the. . . . . 1Esd 8:66

**JEDIAIAH**  
of Allon son of J son of Shimri son . . . . . 1Ch 4:37  
Tobiah, and from J. As for you, go . . . . . Zec 6:10  
family of J, Jeshua's son, of . . . . . 1Esd 5:24

**JEHOAHAZ**  
Samaria. His son J succeeded him as . . . . . 2Ki 10:35

**JEHOASH**  
took Ahaziah's son J from the rest of . . . . . 2Ki 11:2

**JEHOIACHIN**  
ancestors. His son J succeeded him as . . . . . 2Ki 24:6  
in the LORD's eyes just as J had done. . . . . Jer 52:2  
His son J ruled in his place. When he was . . . . . 1Esd 1:41

**JEHOIADA**  
the seventh year J sent for the . . . . . 2Ki 11:4  
temple instead of J. You are . . . . . Jer 29:26

**JEHOIAKIM**  
Eliakim's name to J. Neco took . . . . . 2Ki 23:34  
of Judah's King J, Josiah's son, . . . . . Jer 1:3  
to the priest J, Hilkiyah's son, . . . . . Bar 1:7  
his own brother J as king of Judea. . . . . 1Esd 1:35

**JEHORAM**  
City. His son J succeeded him as . . . . . 1Ki 22:50

**JEHOSHAPHAT**  
of the army; Ahilud's son J was recorder; . . . . . 2Sa 8:16  
bring them to the J Valley. There I . . . . . Jl 3:2  
was the father of J. Jehoshaphat was. . . . . Mt 1:8

**JEHU**  
word came to J, Hanani's son, . . . . . 1Ki 16:1  
the house of J for the blood of . . . . . Hos 1:4

**JEPHTHAH**  
Now J the Gileadite was a mighty warrior. . . . . Jgs 11:1  
Barak, Samson, J, David, Samuel, . . . . . Heb 11:32

**JEREMIAH**  
Eliel, Azriel, J, Hodaviah, and . . . . . 1Ch 5:24  
are the words of J, Hilkiyah's son, . . . . . Jer 1:1  
the word spoken through J the prophet: . . . . . Mt 2:17  
and made its streets desolate, as J said. . . . . Sir 49:6  
that the prophet J commanded those . . . . . 2Macc 2:1  
of the prophet J, which came from. . . . . 1Esd 1:26  
send my servants J, Isaiah, and . . . . . 2Esd 2:18

**JERICOH**  
plains of Moab across the Jordan from J. . . . . Nm 22:1  
of Moab opposite J. Take a good look . . . . . Dt 32:49  
land, especially J." They set out and . . . . . Josh 2:1  
in the plains of J. They arrested him . . . . . Jer 39:5  
were going out of J a large crowd . . . . . Mt 20:29  
came into J. As Jesus was . . . . . Mk 10:46  
from Jerusalem to J. He encountered . . . . . Lk 10:30  
the fortress in J, Emmaus, . . . . . 1Macc 9:50  
who caused J to fall in . . . . . 2Macc 12:15

**JEROBOAM**  
Now Nebat's son J was an Ephraimite from . . . . . 1Ki 11:26  
the days of Israel's King J Joash's son. . . . . Hos 1:1  
that Israel's King J had set up in Dan. . . . . Tob 1:5  
his policy, led by J, Nebat's son, who . . . . . Sir 47:23

**JERUSALEM**  
were the kings of J, Hebron, Jarmuth, . . . . . Josh 10:5  
your temple above J, where kings bring . . . . . Ps 68:29  
of the Assembly, David's son, king in J. . . . . Ecc 1:1  
about Judah and J that Isaiah, . . . . . Is 1:1  
Mount Zion and in J there will be . . . . . Jl 2:32  
King Herod, magi came from the east to J. . . . . Mt 2:10  
all the people of J went out to the . . . . . Mk 1:5  
Jesus up to J to present him to . . . . . Lk 2:22  
Jewish leaders in J sent priests and . . . . . Jn 1:19  
them not to leave J but to wait for . . . . . Ac 1:4  
gospel from J all the way around . . . . . Ro 15:19  
God, heavenly J, to countless . . . . . Heb 12:22  
of my God, the New J that comes down . . . . . Rev 3:12  
stayed away from J, the city chosen . . . . . Tob 1:4  
Jordan as far as J and Bethany and . . . . . Jdt 1:9  
place and established my authority in J. . . . . Sir 24:11  
the Chaldeans took J and burned it down. . . . . Bar 1:2  
done to us and to J, our ancestors' . . . . . PrAz 5  
a gymnasium in J, following Gentile . . . . . 1Macc 1:4  
and sisters in J and in the country . . . . . 2Macc 1:1  
to the Lord in J. He sacrificed the . . . . . 1Esd 1:1  
So he traveled to J, sacrificed to the . . . . . 3Macc 1:9  
the kingdom of J, which I was about . . . . . 2Esd 2:10  
that the people in J had celebrated . . . . . 4Macc 4:22

**DAUGHTER JERUSALEM**  
2Kgs 19:21; Is 37:22; Lam 2:13; 2:15; Zep 3:14; Zec 9:9

**JESHUA**  
the ninth to J, the tenth to Shecaniah . . . . . 1Ch 24:11  
son of Aaron; J son of Jozadak son . . . . . 1Esd 5:5

**JESSE**  
Obed the father of J, and Jesse the . . . . . Ru 4:22  
from the stump of J, a branch will . . . . . Is 11:1  
was Ruth. Obed was the father of J. . . . . Mt 1:5  
son of J son of Obed son of Boaz son of . . . . . Lk 3:32  
will be a root of J, who will also . . . . . Ro 15:12

**JESUS**  
**APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST**  
1Co 1:1; 1Ti 1:1; Ti 1:1; 1Pt 1:1; 2Pt 1:1

**CHRIST JESUS**  
Ac 24:24; Ro 1:1; 2:16; 3:24; 6:3, 11, 23; 8:1, 2, 34, 38; 15:16, 17;  
16:3; 1Co 1:2, 4, 30; 4:15, 17; 15:31; 16:24; 2Co 1:1; Ga 2:4, 16;  
3:14, 26, 28; 4:14; 5:6, 24; Eph 1:1; 2:6, 7, 10, 13, 20; 3:6, 11, 21;  
Phi 1:1, 6, 8, 26; 2:5; 3:3, 8, 14; 4:7, 19, 21; Col 1:1, 4; 2:6, 4:12;  
1Th 2:14; 5:18; 1Ti 1:1, 2, 12, 14, 15, 16; 2:5; 3:13; 4:6; 5:21; 6:13;  
2Ti 1:1, 2, 9, 10, 13; 2:1, 3, 10; 3:12, 15; 4:1; Ti 1:4; Phm 1, 9, 23;  
1Pt 5:10

**CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD**  
Ro 6:23; 8:38; 1Co 15:31; Eph 3:11; 1Ti 1:2, 12; 2Ti 1:2  
**FOLLOWED JESUS**  
Mt 27:55; Lk 5:11; 23:27; Jn 1:37; 1:40, 18:15

**JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES**  
Mt 9:10; 9:19; 20:29; Mk 2:15; 5:1; 6:53; 8:22, 27; 10:32; 11:19, 20,  
27; 14:32; Lk 8:22; 8:26; 9:57; 10:38; Jn 2:2; 3:22; 13:2

**JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD**  
Ro 1:4; 5:21; 7:25; 1Co 1:9; Jude 25

**JESUS IS THE CHRIST**  
Jn 20:31; Ac 5:42; 9:22; 1Jn 2:22; 5:1

**JESUS OF NAZARETH**  
Mk 1:24; 10:47; 16:6; Lk 4:34; 24:19; Ac 6:14; 10:38

**JESUS OUR LORD**  
Ro 4:24; 6:23; 8:38; 1Co 9:1; 15:31; Eph 3:11; 1Ti 1:2, 12; 2Ti 1:2;  
2Pt 1:2

**LOOKING FOR JESUS**

Mt 28:5; Mk 16:6; Jn 6:24; 7:11; 11:56

**LORD JESUS**

Mk 16:19; Lk 17:37; 24:3; Ac 1:21; 4:33; 7:59; 8:16; 11:17; 20; 15:11, 26; 16:31; 19:5, 13, 17; 20:21, 24; 21:13; 28:31; Ro 1:7; 5:1, 11; 13:14; 14:14; 15:6, 30; 16:20; 1Co 1:2, 3, 7, 8, 10; 5:4; 6:11; 8:6; 11:23; 15:57; 16:23; 2Co 1:2, 3, 14; 4:14; 8:9; 11:31; 13:13; Ga 1:3; 6:14, 18; Eph 1:2, 3, 15, 17; 5:20; 6:23, 24; Phi 1:2; 2:19; 3:20; 4:23; Col 1:3; 3:17; 1Th 1:1, 3; 2:15, 19; 3:13; 4:1, 2; 5:9, 23, 28; 2Th 1:1, 2, 7, 8, 12; 2:1, 8, 14, 16; 3:6, 12, 18; 1Ti 6:3, 14; Phm 3, 5, 25; Heb 13:20; Jas 1:1, 2; 1Pt 1:3; 2Pt 1:8, 14, 16; Jude 4, 17, 21; Rev 22:20

**LORD JESUS CHRIST**

Ac 11:17; 15:26; 28:31; Ro 1:7; 5:1, 11; 13:14; 15:6, 30; 16:20; 1Co 1:2, 3, 7, 8, 10; 6:11; 8:6; 15:57; 2Co 1:2, 3; 8:9; 13:13; Ga 1:3; 6:14, 18; Eph 1:2, 3, 17; 5:20; 6:23, 24; Phi 1:2; 3:20; 4:23; Col 1:3; 1Th 1:1, 3; 5:9, 28; 2Th 1:1, 2, 12; 2:14, 16; 3:6, 12, 18; 1Ti 6:3, 14; Phm 3, 25; Jas 1:1, 2; 1Pt 1:3; 2Pt 1:8, 14, 16; Jude 4, 17, 21

**NAME OF JESUS**

Mk 6:14; Ac 2:38; 3:6; 4:10, 18, 30; 5:40; 8:12; 9:27; 10:48; 16:18; 26:9; Phi 2:10

**NAME OF JESUS CHRIST**

Ac 2:38; 3:6; 4:10; 8:12; 10:48; 16:18

**SAVIOR JESUS**

Ac 13:23; Ti 2:13; 2Pt 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:18

**SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST**

Ti 2:13; 2Pt 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:18

**SON JESUS**

1Co 1:9; 2Co 1:19; 1Jn 1:3; 3:23; 5:20

**SON JESUS CHRIST**

1Co 1:9; 2Co 1:19; 1Jn 1:3; 3:23; 5:20

**THROUGH JESUS**

Jn 1:17; Ac 3:16; 10:36; 13:38, 39; Ro 1:8; 5:21; 7:25; 16:27; Ga 1:1; Eph 1:5; Ti 3:6; Heb 13:21; 1Pt 2:5; 4:11; Jude 25

**THROUGH JESUS CHRIST**

Jn 1:17; Ac 10:36; Ro 1:8; 5:21; 7:25; 16:27; Ga 1:1; Eph 1:5; Ti 3:6; Heb 13:21; 1Pt 2:5; 4:11; Jude 25

**THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS**

Ro 5:1, 11; 15:30; 1Co 15:57; 1Th 5:9

**YOU IN CHRIST JESUS**

1Co 1:4; 4:15; 15:31; 16:24; 1Th 5:18

**JETHRO**his father-in-law *J*, Midian's priest. . . . . Ex 3:1**JEW**

Now there was a *J* in the fortified part . . . . . Est 2:5  
and a certain *J* about cleansing . . . . . Jn 3:25  
is forbidden for a *J* to associate or . . . . . Ac 10:28  
in God, to the *J* first and also to . . . . . Ro 1:16  
He was a *J* living in the city . . . . . GkEst A:2  
king has become a *J*. He's torn down . . . . . Bel 28  
or even simply to profess to be a *J*. . . . . 2Macc 6:6

**JEWISH****JEWISH AUTHORITIES**

Jn 7:1, 13; 9:22; 19:38; 20:19

**JEWISH LEADERS**

Jn 1:19; 2:18, 20; 5:10, 15, 16, 18, 19; 7:11, 15; 8:22; 9:18, 19; 11:54; 13:33; 18:12, 14, 28, 31, 36, 38; 19:4, 7, 12, 14, 15, 31; Ac 23:12; 23:20; 25:2; 28:17

**JEWISH NATION**

1Macc 6:25; 12:3; 3Macc 2:27, 33; 3:2

**JEWISH OPPOSITION**

Jn 6:41; 7:35; 8:48, 52, 57; 10:24, 31, 33; 11:8

**JEWISH PEOPLE**

1Macc 1:52; 8:18, 20, 29; 12:6; 14:20; 15:17; 2Macc 14:40; 3Macc 3:7

**JEWS****ALL THE JEWS**

Tob 11:17; GkEst 3:6, 13; 4:16; 8:13; 10:3; 1Macc 10:29; 10:34; 3Macc 2:28; 4:17

**BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS**

Ac 18:4; 19:10, 20:21; Ro 3:9; 1Co 1:24

**JEWS AND GREEKS**

Ac 14:1; 18:4; 19:10, 17; 20:21; Ro 3:9; 1Co 1:24

**KING OF THE JEWS**

Mt 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37; Mk 15:2, 9, 12, 18, 26; Lk 23:3, 37, 38; Jn 18:33; 18:39; 19:3, 19, 21

**NATION OF THE JEWS**

1Macc 8:23, 27; 10:25; 11:30, 33; 13:36; 15:2; 2Macc 15:12

**JEZEBEL**

son. He married *J* the daughter of . . . . . 1Ki 16:31  
with that woman, *J*, who calls herself . . . . . Rev 2:20

**JEZREEL**

*J*, Jokdeam, Zanoah . . . . . Josh 15:56  
to him, "Name him *J*, for in a little . . . . . Hos 1:4

**JOAB**

*J*, Zeruah's son, and David's soldiers . . . . . 2Sa 2:13  
and when *J* returned and . . . . . Ps 60:1  
of the family of Jeshua and *J* 2, 8, 12. . . . . 1Esd 5:11

**JOASH**that belonged to *J* the Abiezrite. His . . . . . Jgs 6:11**JOB**

of Uz was named *J*. That man was . . . . . Job 1:1  
the endurance of *J*. And you have seen . . . . . Jas 5:11

**JOEL**

his oldest son was *J*, the name of the . . . . . 1Sa 8:2  
word that came to *J*, Pethuel's son: . . . . . Jl 1:1  
is what was spoken through the prophet *J*. . . . . Ac 2:16  
Momdus, Maerus, *J*, Mamdai, Bedeiah, . . . . . 1Esd 9:34  
and Hosea, Amos, *J*, Micah, Obadiah, . . . . . 2Esd 1:39

**JOHANAN**

Nethaniah's son *J*, Kareah's son; . . . . . 2Ki 25:23  
Nethaniah's son; *J* and Jonathan, . . . . . Jer 40:8  
family of Azgad, *J*, Hakkatan's son . . . . . 1Esd 8:38

**JOHN**

In those days *J* the Baptist appeared in . . . . . Mt 3:1  
son of Zebedee and his brother *J*. . . . . Mt 4:21  
*J* the Baptist was in the wilderness . . . . . Mk 1:4  
to your son and you must name him *J*. . . . . Lk 1:13  
A man named *J* was sent from God . . . . . Jn 1:6  
*J* baptized with water, but in only a few . . . . . Ac 1:5  
James, Cephas, and *J*, who are considered . . . . . Ga 2:9  
it through his angel to his servant *J*. . . . . Rev 1:1

**JONAH**

the prophet *J*, Amittai's son, . . . . . 2Ki 14:25  
The LORD's word came to *J*, Amittai's son . . . . . Jon 1:1  
Just as *J* was in the whale's belly for . . . . . Mt 12:40  
Just as *J* became a sign to the people of . . . . . Lk 11:30  
who was Kelita, Pethahiah, Judah, and *J*. . . . . 1Esd 9:23  
looked upon *J*, when he was . . . . . 3Macc 6:8  
Nahum, *J*, Malachi, Habakkuk, and twelve . . . . . 2Esd 1:40

**JONATHAN**

themselves, and *J* son of Gershom and . . . . . Jgs 18:30  
*J* loved David as much as himself . . . . . 1Sa 18:1  
of the scribe *J*, which had been . . . . . Jer 37:15  
called Avaran; and *J*, called Apphus. . . . . 1Macc 2:5  
all the people. *J* took the lead. . . . . 2Macc 1:23  
*J*, Asahel's son, and Jahzeiah, Tikvah's . . . . . 1Esd 9:14

**JOPPA**

along with the territory opposite *J*. . . . . Josh 19:46  
In *J* there was a disciple named Tabitha. . . . . Ac 9:36

camped in front of *J*. But the people of . . . . . 1Macc 10:75  
 after sailing to *J*, he came to . . . . . 2Macc 4:21  
 to the harbor of *J*, according to the . . . . . 1Esd 5:53

**JORAM**

he sent his son *J* to King David to wish . . . . . 2Sa 8:10  
 had no son, *J* became king after . . . . . 2Ki 1:17  
 was the father of *J*. Joram was the . . . . . Mt 1:8  
 Ochiel, and *J*, military . . . . . 1Esd 1:9

**JORDAN**

and saw the entire *J* Valley . . . . . Gn 13:10  
 live by the sea and along the *J* . . . . . Nm 13:29  
 Israel across the *J* River, in the . . . . . Dt 1:1  
 to cross over the *J* with this entire . . . . . Josh 1:2  
 even though the *J* gushes into his . . . . . Job 40:23  
 from the land of *J* and Hermon, from . . . . . Ps 42:6  
 far side of the *J*, and the Galilee . . . . . Is 9:1  
 the pride of the *J* has been . . . . . Zec 11:3  
 and all around the *J* River came to him. . . . . Mt 3:5  
 went out to the *J* River and were . . . . . Mk 1:5  
 the region of the *J* River, calling for . . . . . Lk 3:3  
 place across the *J* in Bethany where . . . . . Jn 1:28  
 and beyond the *J*s as far as . . . . . Jdt 1:9  
 or like the *J* at the time of the . . . . . Sir 24:26  
 crossed the *J* and traveled for . . . . . 1Macc 5:24

**JOSEPH**

She named him *J*, saying to herself, May . . . . . Gn 30:24  
 was seventh, *J* was already in . . . . . Ex 1:5  
 from the tribe of *J*, from the tribe of . . . . . Nm 13:11  
 Levi, Judah, Issachar, *J*, and Benjamin. . . . . Dt 27:12  
 The people of *J* consisted of two tribes, . . . . . Josh 14:4  
 the children of Jacob and *J*. Selah . . . . . Ps 77:15  
 belonging to *J* and every one of . . . . . Eze 37:16  
 the house of *J*. The fire will . . . . . Am 5:6  
 was the father of *J*, the husband of . . . . . Mt 1:16  
*J* from Arimathea dared to approach Pilate . . . . . Mk 15:43  
 to a man named *J*, a descendant of . . . . . Lk 1:27  
 the land Jacob had given to his son *J* . . . . . Jn 4:5  
 nominated two: *J* called Barsabbas, . . . . . Ac 1:23  
 By faith *J* recalled the exodus of the . . . . . Heb 11:22  
 from the tribe of *J*, twelve thousand; . . . . . Rev 7:8  
 man been born like *J*, a leader of his . . . . . Sir 49:15  
*J* kept the commandment in the time of his . . . . . 1Macc 2:53  
*J*, an example of self-control, is . . . . . 4Macc 2:2

**JOSHUA**

Moses said to *J*, "Choose some men for us . . . . . Ex 17:9  
*J*, Nun's son and Moses' assistant since . . . . . Nm 11:28  
 But Nun's son *J*, your assistant, will . . . . . Dt 1:38  
 the LORD spoke to *J*, Nun's son. He had . . . . . Josh 1:1  
 to the High Priest *J*, Jehozadak's son: . . . . . Hg 1:1  
 son of *J* son of Eliezer son of Jorim son . . . . . Lk 3:29  
 If *J* gave the Israelites rest, God . . . . . Heb 4:8  
*J*, Nun's son, was powerful in battle, . . . . . Sir 46:1  
*J* became a judge in Israel because he . . . . . 1Macc 2:55  
 and *J*, who came after him, for Israel, . . . . . 2Esd 7:107

**JOSIAH**

His name will be *J*. He will sacrifice. . . . . 1Ki 13:2  
 year of Judah's King *J*, Amon's son, . . . . . Jer 1:2  
 the days of Judah's King *J*, Amon's son. . . . . Zep 1:1  
 father of Amos. Amos was the father of *J*. . . . . Mt 1:10  
 The memory of *J* is like a blend of . . . . . Sir 49:1  
*J* celebrated the Passover to the Lord in . . . . . 1Esd 1:1

**JOTHAM**

single stone. Only *J* the youngest of . . . . . Jgs 9:5  
 kings Uziah, *J*, Ahaz, and . . . . . Is 1:1  
 Kings Uziah, *J*, Ahaz, and . . . . . Hos 1:1  
 was the father of *J*. Jotham was the . . . . . Mt 1:9

**JOY**

They shouted for *J* and fell face down. . . . . Lv 9:24  
 so he can bring *J* to his new wife. . . . . Dt 24:5  
 with shouts of *J*, accompanied by . . . . . 1Ch 15:28  
 its way is a *J*, for from the dust . . . . . Job 8:19

my heart with more *J* than when their . . . . . Ps 4:7  
 result in *J*, but the hopes of . . . . . Prv 10:28  
 have increased its *J*. They rejoiced . . . . . Is 9:3  
 glad, and give *J* to the officials. . . . . Hos 7:3  
 saw the star, they were filled with *J*. . . . . Mt 2:10  
 He will be a *J* and delight to you, and . . . . . Lk 1:14  
 Therefore, my *J* is now complete. . . . . Jn 3:29  
 so overcome with *J* when she . . . . . Ac 12:14  
 peace, and *J* in the Holy Spirit. . . . . Ro 14:17  
 possessions with *J*, since you knew . . . . . Heb 10:34  
 life, one full of celebration and *J*. . . . . Wis 8:16  
 will give gladness, *J*, and a long life. . . . . Sir 1:12

**JUBILEE**

It will be a *J* year for you: each . . . . . Lv 25:10  
 At the Israelite *J*, their inheritance . . . . . Nm 36:4

**JUDAH**

So she named him *J*. Then she stopped . . . . . Gn 29:35  
 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and *J* . . . . . Ex 1:2  
 from *J*, Nahshon, Amminadab's son . . . . . Nm 1:7  
 Simeon, Levi, *J*, Issachar, Joseph, . . . . . Dt 27:12  
 from the tribe of *J*. He took some of . . . . . Josh 7:1  
 let the towns of *J* rejoice because of . . . . . Ps 48:11  
 copied by the men of Hezekiah, king of *J*. . . . . Prv 25:1  
 The vision about *J* and Jerusalem that . . . . . Is 1:1  
 on the house of *J*, I, the LORD their . . . . . Hos 1:7  
 was the father of *J* and his brothers. . . . . Mt 1:2  
 of Simeon son of *J* son of Joseph son . . . . . Lk 3:30  
 from the tribe of *J*, but Moses never . . . . . Heb 7:14  
 of the tribe of *J*, the Root of . . . . . Rev 5:5  
 every dwelling of *J*. In every nation, . . . . . Jdt 14:7  
 from the tribe of *J*, the king's . . . . . Sir 45:25  
 son, had made—to return it to *J*. ( . . . . . Bar 1:8  
 and not from *J*. Beauty seduced . . . . . Sus 56  
 Habakkuk was in *J*. He had boiled a . . . . . Bel 33  
 towns of *J*. He directed Jews . . . . . 1Macc 1:44  
 king could enter *J* and take control . . . . . 2Macc 13:13  
 of the families of *J* and Benjamin rose . . . . . 1Esd 2:5  
 do to you, Jacob? *J*, you wouldn't obey. . . . . 2Esd 1:24

**JUDAS**

*J*, called Maccabeus . . . . . 1Macc 2:4  
 of elders, and *J* send greetings and . . . . . 2Macc 1:10

**JUDAS ISCARIOT**

Mt 26:14; Mk 3:19; 14:10; Lk 6:16; Jn 12:4; 14:22

**JUDEA**

and to give us a wall in *J* and Jerusalem. . . . . Ezz 9:9  
 the territory of *J* during the rule of . . . . . Mt 2:1  
 Everyone in *J* and all the people of . . . . . Mk 1:5  
 of King Herod of *J* there was a priest . . . . . Lk 1:5  
 went into *J*, where he spent . . . . . Jn 3:22  
 Jerusalem, in all *J* and Samaria, and . . . . . Ac 1:8  
 from the people in *J* who don't believe. . . . . Ro 15:31  
 fleeing home from *J*, at the time when . . . . . Tob 1:18  
 of Ammon, all of *J*, and everyone in . . . . . Jdt 1:12  
 of the inhabitants of *J* and Jerusalem. . . . . 1Macc 3:34  
 in the country of *J* wish you . . . . . 2Macc 1:1  
 What do you want with me, King of *J*? . . . . . 1Esd 1:24  
 march against *J* and swiftly burn . . . . . 3Macc 5:43

**JUDEAN**

Palm City into the *J* desert, which was . . . . . Jgs 1:16  
 when he was in the *J* desert. . . . . Ps 63:1  
 son, and the *J* officials, as well . . . . . Jer 24:1  
 and hurried to a city in the *J* highlands. . . . . Lk 1:39  
 belongs to the *J* people, and you've . . . . . GkEst 6:13  
 tribute from the *J* cities, King . . . . . 1Macc 1:29  
 Rhodocus from the *J* ranks gave . . . . . 2Macc 13:21  
 records of the *J* kings. All of . . . . . 1Esd 1:31

**JUDEANS**

driving the *J* out of Elath. The . . . . . 2Ki 16:6  
 are Egyptians or *J*, Edomites or . . . . . Jer 9:26  
 and declared, "*J* and everyone . . . . . Ac 2:14  
 all his forces and gave orders to the *J*. . . . . 1Macc 9:63

the Levites, the *J*, and all of Israel . . . . . 1Esd 1:19

## JUDGMENT

he stands before the community for *J* . . . . . Nm 35:12  
 you and your good *J* for preventing me . . . . . 1Sa 25:33  
 sword. You should know that there is *J* . . . . . Job 19:29  
 completely correct when you issue your *J* . . . . . Ps 51:4  
 eyes; hold on to sound *J* and discretion. . . . . Prv 3:21  
 Their bias in *J* gives them away; like . . . . . Is 3:9  
 of the king! The *J* concerns you . . . . . Hos 5:1  
 from the angry *J* that is coming . . . . . Mt 3:7  
 from the angry *J* that is coming . . . . . Lk 3:7  
 is the basis for *J*. The light came . . . . . Jn 3:19  
 no desire to sit in *J* over such things. . . . . Ac 18:15  
 We know that God's *J* agrees with the . . . . . Ro 2:2  
 the dead, and eternal *J*—all over again. . . . . Heb 6:2  
 before you pass *J*? How long before . . . . . Rev 6:10  
 advance, and your *J* is known ahead of . . . . . Jdt 9:6  
 the time comes for *J*, the godly will . . . . . Wis 3:7  
 and many will talk about their good *J* . . . . . Sir 1:24  
 at all escaped the *J* of the almighty. . . . . 2Macc 7:35  
 deeds. There's nothing unjust in its *J* . . . . . 1Esd 4:39  
 to speak, since he was struck by a just *J*. . . . . 3Macc 2:22  
 comprehend my *J* or the goal of the . . . . . 2Esd 5:40  
 moral trait—I'm talking about good *J*. . . . . 4Macc 1:2

## JUDGMENT DAY

Hos 5:9; Mt 7:22; 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36; Lk 10:12; 2Pt 2:9; 3:7;  
 1Jn 4:17; Jdt 16:17; Wis 3:18; 2Esd 7:38, 102, 104, 113; 12:34

## JUSTICE

power and with momentous events of *J* . . . . . Ex 6:6  
 He enacts *J* for orphans and widows, and . . . . . Dt 10:18  
 accepted bribes, and they perverted *J*. . . . . 1Sa 8:3  
 Does God pervert *J*, or does the Almighty. . . . . Job 8:3  
 in the court of *J*—neither will . . . . . Ps 1:5  
 the paths of *J* and guards the way . . . . . Prv 2:8  
 to do good. Seek *J*; help the . . . . . Is 1:17  
 escape notice. *J* will expose them . . . . . Wis 1:8  
 gives *J* for the righteous, and executes . . . . . Sir 35:22  
 You will say: *J* is on the side of the . . . . . Bar 1:15  
 looking to heaven nor caring about *J*. . . . . Sus 9  
 with no regard for *J*, he did away with. . . . . 2Macc 4:34  
 its neighbor, 'Has *J* passed through . . . . . 2Esd 5:11  
 that resist *J*, courage, and. . . . . 4Macc 1:6

## RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE

Ps 33:5; 89:14; 97:2; Prv 2:9; 21:3; 1Macc 2:29

# Kk

## KADESH

(that is, *K*), and attacked the . . . . . Gn 14:7  
 Paran desert at *K*. They brought back . . . . . Nm 13:26  
 yes, the LORD shakes the wilderness of *K*. . . . . Ps 29:8  
 and Chelous and *K*, and the river of . . . . . Jdt 1:9  
 had come to *K* in Galilee with a . . . . . 1Macc 11:63

## KADESH-BARNEA

I sent them from *K* to inspect the . . . . . Nm 32:8  
 days from Horeb to *K* along the Mount. . . . . Dt 1:2  
 them down from *K* to Gaza, and the . . . . . Josh 10:41  
 way of Sinai and *K*. They drove out. . . . . Jdt 5:14

## KEILAH

*K*, Achzib, and Mareshah. In total: nine . . . . . Josh 15:44

## KIDRON

king crossed the *K* Valley, and all . . . . . 2Sa 15:23  
 day you cross the *K* Valley you will . . . . . 1Ki 2:37  
 as far as the *K* Valley and the . . . . . Jer 31:40  
 other side of the *K* Valley. He and his. . . . . Jn 18:1

## KIKKARS

was twenty-nine *K* and seven hundred . . . . . Ex 38:24  
 one hundred twenty gold *K*, nevertheless. . . . . 1Ki 9:14

## KINDNESS

Jacob said, "To ask for my master's *k*." . . . . . Gn 33:8  
 because you showed *k* to the Israelites. . . . . 1Sa 15:6  
 Life and *k* you gave me, and you oversaw. . . . . Job 10:12  
 Let the *k* of the Lord our God be over us. . . . . Ps 90:17  
*K* and faithfulness protect the king; he . . . . . Prv 20:28

LORD who acts with *k*, justice, and . . . . . Jer 9:24  
 bands of human *k*, with cords of. . . . . Hos 11:4  
 how, in his *k*, God came to the . . . . . Ac 15:14  
 realize that God's *k* is supposed to . . . . . Ro 2:4  
 overflowing with *k*, delighting in. . . . . Wis 7:23  
 The *k* of a gift stands before all who are . . . . . Sir 7:33  
 with your great *k* and your great. . . . . Bar 2:27  
 us in line with your *k* and great mercy. . . . . PrAz 19  
 the Lord with all *k* was merciful to . . . . . 2Macc 2:22  
 deep within my heart, begging for your *k*. . . . . PrMan 11  
 fairness and much *k*, eagerly treating. . . . . 3Macc 3:15

## KING

While Amraphel was *k* of Shinar, Ellasar's . . . . . Gn 14:1  
 Now a new *k* came to power in Egypt who . . . . . Ex 1:8  
 from Kadesh to the *k* of Edom: "This is . . . . . Nm 20:14  
 Sihon, the Amorite *k* who ruled in . . . . . Dt 1:4  
 Someone told the *k* of Jericho, "Men from . . . . . Josh 2:2  
 and snarl of the *k* of beasts . . . . . Job 4:10  
 hereby appoint my *k* on Zion, my holy . . . . . Ps 2:6  
 of Solomon, *K* David's son, from. . . . . Prv 1:1  
 In the year of *K* Uzziah's death, I saw . . . . . Is 6:1  
 days of Israel's *K* Jeroboam Joash's . . . . . Hos 1:1  
 of David the *k*. David was the . . . . . Mt 1:6  
 Herod the *k* heard about these things, . . . . . Mk 6:14  
 During the rule of *K* Herod of Judea there . . . . . Lk 1:5  
 are God's Son. You are the *k* of Israel. . . . . Jn 1:49  
 by Pharaoh, *k* of Egypt, who . . . . . Ac 7:10  
 the governor under *K* Aretas was . . . . . 2Co 11:32  
 who was *k* of Salem and . . . . . Rev 9:11  
 Their *k* is an angel from the abyss, whose . . . . . Heb 7:7  
 No *k* has ever begun life any differently. . . . . Wis 7:5  
 Babylon's *k*, will bring you as . . . . . LJer 1  
 and to an unjust *k*, the most evil one . . . . . PrAz 9  
 When *K* Astyages was buried with his . . . . . Bel 1  
 Alexander became *k* of Greece, he . . . . . 1Macc 1:10  
 teacher of *K* Ptolemy and a . . . . . 2Macc 1:10  
 that David's son *K* Solomon built. You . . . . . 1Esd 1:3  
 on account of the evil plot of the *k*. . . . . 3Macc 1:21

## KING OF THE JEWS

Mt 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37; Mk 15:2, 9, 12, 18, 26; Lk 23:3, 37, 38; Jn  
 18:33; 18:39, 19:3, 19, 21

## KINGDOM

cities in his *k* were Babel, Erech, . . . . . Gn 10:10  
 You will be a *k* of priests for me and a . . . . . Ex 19:6  
 than Agag, and his *k* will be lifted up. . . . . Nm 24:7  
 of Argob, the whole *k* of Og in Bashan. . . . . Dt 3:4  
 the entire *k* of Og in Bashan, who ruled. . . . . Josh 13:12  
 in heaven, and his *k* rules over all. . . . . Ps 103:19  
 throne and for his *k*, establishing and . . . . . Is 9:7  
 I will destroy the *k* of the house of . . . . . Hos 1:4  
 and there will be no end to his *k*. . . . . Lk 1:33  
 we are receiving a *k* that can't be . . . . . Heb 12:28  
 who made *us* a *k*, priests to his God and . . . . . Rev 1:6

## ENTER GOD'S KINGDOM

Mt 19:24; Mk 9:47; 10:23, 24, 25; Lk 18:24; 18:25; Jn 3:5; Ac 14:22

## GOD'S KINGDOM

Ps 145:12; Mt 6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43; Mk 1:15; 4:11, 26, 30;  
 9:1, 47; 10:14, 15, 23, 24, 25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43; Lk 4:43; 6:20;  
 7:28; 8:1, 10; 9:2, 11, 27, 60, 62; 10:9, 11; 11:20; 13:18, 20, 28, 29;  
 14:15; 16:16; 17:20, 21; 18:16, 17, 24, 25, 29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16;  
 18; 23:51; Jn 3:3, 5; Ac 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 31; Ro 14:17;  
 1Co 4:20; 6:9, 10; Ga 5:21; Col 4:11; 2Th 1:5

## KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Mt 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19, 20, 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11, 12; 13:11, 24,  
 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52; 16:19; 18:1, 3, 4, 23; 19:12, 14, 23; 20:1; 22:2;  
 23:13; 25:1, 14; 1Co 15:50



**KINGDOMS**

will do to all the *k* where you're going! Dt 3:21  
 been the head of all those *k* in the past. Josh 11:10  
 Nations roar; *k* crumble. God utters his Ps 46:6  
 of idolatrous *k* with more images Is 10:10  
 better than these *k*? Or is your Am 6:2  
 showed him all the *k* of the world and Mt 4:8  
 Nations and *k* will fight against each Mk 13:8  
 a single instant all the *k* of the world. Lk 4:5  
 they conquered *k*, brought about Heb 11:33

**KINGS**

These latter *k* formed an alliance in the Gn 14:3  
 They killed the *k* of Midian: Evi, Rekem, Nm 31:8  
 to the two Amorite *k* beyond the Jordan, Dt 3:8  
 and Og, the two *k* of the Amorites on Josh 2:10  
 with *k* and earth's advisors, who rebuild. Job 3:14  
 So *k*, wise up! Be warned, you rulers of Ps 2:10  
 By me *k* rule, and princes issue righteous Prv 8:15  
 days of Judah's *k* Uzziah, Jotham, Is 1:1  
 days of Judah's *k* Uzziah, Jotham, Hos 1:1  
 governors and even *k* because of me so Mt 10:18  
 governors and *k* because of me so. Mk 13:9  
 many prophets and *k* wanted to see what. Lk 10:24  
 The *k* of the earth took their stand and Ac 4:26  
 You rule like *k* without us! I wish 1Co 4:8  
 the defeat of the *k*, and Melchizedek. Heb 7:1  
 the ruler of the *k* of the earth. To Rev 1:5

**KINGSHIP**

uncle what Samuel had said about the *k*. 1Sa 10:16  
 Your kingdom is a *k* that lasts forever; Ps 145:13  
 heaven has given *k*, power, might, and Dn 2:37

**KIRIATH-JEARIM**

Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and *k*. Josh 9:17  
 son from *k*. He prophesied the Jer 26:20

**KISH**

of Benjamin named *k*. He was the son of 1Sa 9:1  
 line of Shimei and *k*; he was a. GkEst 2:5

**KNOWLEDGE**

and the tree of the *k* of good and evil. Gn 2:9  
 the same thing by using their secret *k*. Ex 7:11  
 without the *k* of the community, Nm 15:24  
 which they had no *k*—new gods only. Dt 32:17  
 had no firsthand *k* of the wars of. Jgs 3:1  
 respond with windy *k* and fill their Job 15:2  
 begins; sure *k* is for all who Ps 111:10  
 their mocking dear, and fools hate *k*? Prv 1:22  
 a spirit of *k* and fear of the Is 11:2  
 away the key of *k*. You didn't enter. Lk 11:52  
 With his wife's *k*, he withheld some of Ac 5:2  
 full content of *k* and truth in the Ro 2:20  
 we receive the *k* of the truth, Heb 10:26  
 and insightful *k*, and she raised up. Sir 1:19  
 earth, but they didn't know the way of *k*. Bar 3:20  
 with his sacred *k* that, although I. 2Macc 6:30  
 my soul, and drink your fill of *k*. 2Esd 8:4  
 wisdom is the *k* of divine and. 4Macc 1:16

**KNOWLEDGE OF GOD**

Prv 2:5; Hos 4:1; 6:6; 2Co 10:5; Col 1:10; 2Pt 1:2; Wis 2:13

**KOHATH**

Levi's sons were Gershon, *k*, and Merari Gn 46:11  
 Gershon, *k*, and Merari. Levi Ex 6:16  
 sons by name: Gershon, *k*, and Merari. Nm 3:17  
 the descendants of *k* acquired ten. Josh 21:5

**KOHATHITES**

The *k* Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. Ex 6:18  
 These were the clans of the *k*. Nm 3:27  
 the clans of the *k*. The descendants Josh 21:4

**KORAH**

Jeush, Jalam, and *k*. These are Esau's Gn 36:5  
 The Izharites: *k*, Nepheg, and Zichri Ex 6:21

*k*—Izhar's son, Kohath's grandson, and Nm 16:1  
 Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam, and *k*. 1Ch 1:35  
 They are destroyed in the uprising of *k*. Jude 11  
 and the company of *k* assembled in anger Sir 45:18

**KORAHITES**

The *k*: Assir, Elkannah, and Abiasaph. Ex 6:24  
 his household, the *k*, served as. 1Ch 9:19  
 A maskil of the *k*! Just like a deer. Ps 42:1

**LI**

**LABAN**

a brother named *L*, and Laban ran to. Gn 24:29  
 Paran and Tophel, *L*, Hazeroth, and Dt 1:1

**LACHISH**

Hebron, Jarmuth, *L*, and Eglon. They. Josh 10:5  
 commander from *L*, together with a Is 36:2  
 inhabitants of *L*! It was the Mi 1:13

**LAMB**

but where is the *f* for the entirely. Gn 22:7  
 they must take a *f* for each Ex 12:3  
 a one-year-old *f* as an entirely Lv 12:6  
 one-year-old male *f* for a compensation Nm 6:12  
 Don't cook a *f* in its own Dt 14:21  
 took a suckling *f* and offered it as 1Sa 7:9  
 will live with the *f*, and the leopard. Is 11:6

them, as the LORD tends a *f* in a pasture. Hos 4:16  
 when the Passover *f* was sacrificed. Mk 14:12  
 said, "Look! The *L* of God who takes. Jn 1:29  
 and like a *f* before its shearer Ac 8:32  
 our Passover *f* has been 1Co 5:7  
 like that of a flawless, spotless *f*. 1Pt 1:19  
 elders, I saw a *f*, standing as if Rev 5:6  
 in common with a *f*. So sinners have Sir 13:17  
 the Passover *f* on the fourteenth. 1Esd 1:1

**LAMECH**

Methushael, and Methushael fathered *L*. Gn 4:18  
 Enoch, Methuselah, *L*. 1Ch 1:3  
 Arphaxad son of Shem son of Noah son of *L*. Lk 3:36

**LAMP**

light so that the *f* may be set up to. Ex 27:20  
 oil to you for the *f*, to keep a light Lv 24:2  
 God's *f* hadn't gone out yet, and Samuel 1Sa 3:3  
 dark, and their *f* above doesn't Job 18:6

one who lights my *f*—the LORD my God. Ps 18:28  
 commandment is a *f* and instruction a Prv 6:23  
 the light of the *f*. The king saw the Dn 5:5  
 do people light a *f* and put it under a. Mt 5:15  
 anyone bring in a *f* in order to put it Mk 4:21  
 No one lights a *f* and then covers it Lk 8:16  
 and shining *f*, and, at least for Jn 5:35  
 as you would to a *f* shining in a dark 2Pt 1:19  
 The light of a *f* will never shine among Rev 18:23  
 As a *f* shines on the holy lampstand, so Sir 26:17  
 and like a *f* in a dark place, 2Esd 12:42

**LAMPSTAND**

shines on the holy *f*, so also is a Sir 26:17  
 gold altar, the *f* for the light, and. 1Macc 1:21  
 the light of our *f* is extinguished. 2Esd 10:22

**LAW**

So Joseph made a *f* that still exists. Gn 47:26  
 this same case *f* applies to the. Ex 21:31  
 and a case *f* for the Nm 27:11  
 a regulation and a *f* in Israel, which. 1Sa 30:25  
 He established a *f* for Jacob and set up. Ps 78:5  
 and forged the *f*, and violate the Prv 31:7  
 swept aside *f*, and broken the Is 24:5  
 do away with the *L* and the Prophets. Mt 5:17

Why are they breaking the Sabbath? . . . . . Mk 2:24  
 with the **L** from Moses, they . . . . . Lk 2:22  
 as the **L** was given through Moses, so . . . . . Jn 1:17  
 and teacher of the **L** named Gamaliel, . . . . . Ac 5:34  
 sinned outside the **L** will also die . . . . . Ro 2:12  
 holidays, as the **L** commanded for . . . . . Tob 1:6  
 be our only **I** and determine . . . . . Wis 2:11  
 to us through the **L**, the Prophets, and . . . . . Sir 1:1  
 just as was written in the **L** from Moses. . . . . Bar 2:2  
 daughter according to the **L** from Moses. . . . . Sus 3  
 them forget the **L** and change its . . . . . 1Macc 1:49  
 your heart to his **L** and commands, and . . . . . 2Macc 1:4  
 of the **L** of the Lord, all . . . . . 1Esd 1:31  
 Even after the **L** was read to him, he . . . . . 3Macc 1:12  
 haven't obeyed my **L**. Undisciplined . . . . . 2Esd 1:8  
 provided by the **L**, through which we . . . . . 4Macc 1:17

### UNDER THE LAW

Lk 2:27; Ro 2:12; 3:19, 27, 28; 7:2; 1Co 9:20; 9:21; Ga 3:23; 4:4, 5, 21; 5:18; Phi 3:6; Heb 7:5

### LAWS

and observing his **I**, his commands, his . . . . . 1Ki 2:3  
 you know heaven's **I**, or can you impose . . . . . Job 38:33  
 I haven't turned away from any of his **I**. . . . . Ps 18:22  
 decrees, and keep writing harmful **I** . . . . . Is 10:1  
 haven't kept his **I**. They have been . . . . . Am 2:4  
 who live without **I** and without . . . . . 1Ti 1:9  
 I will place my **I** in their minds. . . . . Heb 8:10  
 that God, by his **I**, has commanded . . . . . Jdt 11:12  
 who hate God's **I**, and to an unjust . . . . . PrAz 9  
 and broke the **I** of the Lord, the . . . . . 1Esd 1:46  
 who have kept your **I**, but nations you . . . . . 2Esd 3:36

### CASE LAWS

Ex 21:1; 24:3; Nm 35:24; 35:29; 36:13; Dt 4:1, 5, 8, 14, 45; 5:1, 31; 6:1, 20; 7:11, 12; 8:11; 11:1, 32; 12:1; 26:16, 17; 30:16; 33:10; 1Kgs 9:4; 2Kgs 17:34; 17:37; 1Ch 22:13, 28:7; 2Ch 7:17; 19:10; 33:8; Eze 5:6, 7, 10, 15; 11:12, 20; 18:9, 17; 20:11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25; 36:27; 37:24; 44:24

### LAZARUS

poor man named **L** who was covered. . . . . Lk 16:20  
 A certain man, **L**, was ill. He was from . . . . . Jn 11:1

### LEAH

older was named **L** and the younger . . . . . Gn 29:16  
 Rachel and like **L**, both of whom . . . . . Ru 4:11

### LEBANON

the **L** range, all the way. . . . . Dt 1:7  
 the desert and the **L** as far as the . . . . . Josh 1:4  
 yes, the **LORD** shatters the cedars of **L** . . . . . Ps 29:5  
 couch for himself from the trees of **L** . . . . . Song 3:9  
 all the cedars of **L**, high and lofty; . . . . . Is 2:13  
 cast out his roots like the forests of **L** . . . . . Hos 14:5  
 Cilicia, Damascus, **L**, and Anti-Lebanon, . . . . . Jdt 1:7  
 like a cedar in **L**, like a cypress on . . . . . Sir 24:13  
 and to those in **L**, to bring cedar. . . . . 1Esd 4:48  
 the east and from **L**. I am stirring. . . . . 2Esd 15:20

### LEVI

three sons for him." So she named him **L**. . . . . Gn 29:34  
 Reuben, Simeon, **L**, and Judah . . . . . Ex 1:2  
 the tribe of **L**, nor should you . . . . . Nm 1:49  
 the tribe of **L** to carry the chest . . . . . Dt 10:8  
 to the tribe of **L** that he gave no . . . . . Josh 13:14  
 House of **L**, bless the **LORD**! You who . . . . . Ps 135:20  
 one gate for Judah, and one gate for **L** . . . . . Eze 48:31  
 my covenant with **L** can continue to . . . . . Mal 2:4  
 along, he saw **L**, Alphaeus' son, . . . . . Mk 2:14  
 of Matthai son of **L** son of Melchi son . . . . . Lk 3:24  
 The descendants of **L** who receive the . . . . . Heb 7:5  
 from the tribe of **L**, twelve thousand; . . . . . Rev 7:7  
 Moses, his brother from the tribe of **L** . . . . . Sir 45:6  
 and Meshullam and **L** and Shabbethai . . . . . 1Esd 9:14  
 from the tribe of **L**. Ezra was a . . . . . 2Esd 1:3  
 of Simeon and **L** for the . . . . . 4Macc 2:19

### LEVIATHAN

those with enough skill to awaken **L** . . . . . Job 3:8  
 ships on it, and **L**, which you made, . . . . . Ps 104:26  
 and will punish **L** the fleeing . . . . . Is 27:1  
 Behemoth, and the second you named **L** . . . . . 2Esd 6:49

### LEVITE

from Levi's household married a **L** woman. . . . . Ex 2:1  
**L** property that can be bought . . . . . Lv 25:33  
 These are the **L** clans: the Libnite clan, . . . . . Nm 26:58  
 servant, and the **L** who lives in your . . . . . Dt 12:18  
 clan. He was a **L** residing there as . . . . . Jgs 17:7  
 Likewise, a **L** came by that spot, saw the . . . . . Lk 10:32  
 who encourages"), was a **L** from Cyprus. . . . . Ac 4:36  
 was a priest and **L**, and his son . . . . . GkEst F:11

### LEVITES

to me!" All the **L** gathered around . . . . . Ex 32:26  
**L** will always have the right to buy back . . . . . Lv 25:32  
 But the **L**, belonging to their own . . . . . Nm 1:47  
 That's why the **L** don't have a stake or . . . . . Dt 10:9  
 he gave no legacy among them to the **L** . . . . . Josh 14:3  
 He will purify the **L** and refine them . . . . . Mal 3:3  
 sent priests and **L** to ask him, "Who . . . . . Jn 1:19

### PRIESTS AND LEVITES

1Ch 13:2; 24:6; 28:13; 2Ch 23:4, 18; 29:4; 31:9; Eze 3:12; 7:24; Neh 13:30; Is 66:21; Jn 1:19

### PRIESTS AND THE LEVITES

1Kgs 8:4; 1Ch 15:14; 23:2; 28:21; 2Ch 5:5; 11:13; 24:5; 30:15, 25; 31:2, 4; 34:30; 35:8, 10; Eze 1:5; 3:8; 6:16, 20; 7:7; 8:30; 9:1; Neh 8:13; 11:20; 12:1, 30, 44; 13:29; 1Esd 2:5; 7:9, 10; 8:59, 66

### LEVITICAL

back to the homes in the **I** cities that are . . . . . Lv 25:32  
 Go to the **I** priests and to the head judge . . . . . Dt 17:9  
 covenant and the **I** priests carrying . . . . . Josh 3:3  
 And the **I** priests will always have . . . . . Jer 33:18  
 came through the **I** office of priest . . . . . Heb 7:11  
 associates and the **I** priests and all . . . . . 1Esd 5:54

### LIBNAH

from Rimmon-perez and camped at **L** . . . . . Nm 33:20  
 from Makkedah to **L**. They attacked . . . . . Josh 10:29  
 to the king and found him attacking **L** . . . . . Is 37:8

### LIFE

earth grow plant **I**, plants yielding . . . . . Gn 1:11  
 so that your **I** will be long on . . . . . Ex 20:12  
 A creature's **I** is in the blood. I have . . . . . Lv 17:11  
 a ransom for the **I** of a killer, who . . . . . Nm 35:31  
 so that your **I** will be long and . . . . . Dt 5:16  
 had revered Moses during all of his **I** . . . . . Josh 4:14  
 your power; only preserve his **I** . . . . . Job 2:6  
 me, trampling my **I** into the ground, . . . . . Ps 7:5  
 shield for those who live a blameless **I** . . . . . Prv 2:7  
 I will add fifteen years to your **I** . . . . . Is 38:5  
 of this man's **I**, and don't blame . . . . . Jon 1:14  
 worry about your **I**, what you'll eat . . . . . Mt 6:25  
 do evil, to save **I** or to kill?" But . . . . . Mk 3:4  
 to do evil, to save **I** or to destroy it? . . . . . Lk 6:9  
 the Word was **I**, and the life was . . . . . Jn 1:4  
 me the paths of **I**, your presence. . . . . Ac 2:28  
 to lead you to change your heart and **I** . . . . . Ro 2:4  
 the years of your **I** won't come to an . . . . . Heb 1:12  
 from the tree of **I**, which is in God's . . . . . Rev 2:7  
 in the cosmos are **I** giving. There is . . . . . Wis 1:14  
 it will give gladness, joy, and a long **I** . . . . . Sir 1:12  
 Most High to give **I** to the one who was . . . . . 2Macc 3:31  
 changed heart and **I** for those who do . . . . . PrMan 8  
 The tree of **I** will provide them with . . . . . 2Esd 2:12  
 plain logic to choose the **I** of wisdom. . . . . 4Macc 1:15

### FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

Prv 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22; 2Co 2:16

### SCROLL OF LIFE

Ps 69:28; Phi 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27

**WAY OF LIFE**

Ps 16:11; Prv 5:6; Jer 21:8; Ac 26:4, 5; 1Co 4:17; Eph 4:22; Heb 13:5; 1Pt 3:1

**LIGHT**

Let there be *l*! And so light . . . Gn 1:3  
 Israelites all had *l* where they lived. . . Ex 10:23  
 the priest will *l* the altar and lay . . . Lv 1:7  
 lampstand used for *l*, its lamps, its . . . Nm 4:9  
 Now, Israel, in *l* of all that, listen to . . . Dt 4:1  
 kill him at the first *l* in the morning. . . Jgs 16:2  
 above ignore it, and *l* not shine on it. . . Job 3:4  
 anywhere. The *l* of your face has . . . Ps 4:6  
 is like morning *l* that gets brighter . . . Prv 4:18  
 of Jacob, let's walk by the **LORD's** *l* . . . Is 2:5  
 and my judgment goes forth like a *l* . . . Hos 6:5  
 have seen a great *l*, and a light has . . . Mt 4:16  
 dark, and the moon won't give its *l* . . . Mk 13:24  
 to give *l* to those who are sitting in. . . Lk 1:79  
 and the life was the *l* for all people. . . Jn 1:4  
 suddenly a *l* from heaven. . . Ac 9:3  
 for the blind, a *l* to those who are . . . Ro 2:19  
 The Son is the *l* of God's glory and the . . . Heb 1:3  
 a third of its *l*, and the night. . . Rev 8:12  
 eyes to see God's *l* with his eyes. . . Tob 3:17  
 have seen the *l* and lived on the . . . Bar 3:20  
 The priests *l* more lamps for the idols . . . LJer 18  
*l* and darkness, bless the Lord, sing . . . PrAz 47  
 lampstand for the *l*, and all its . . . 1Macc 1:21  
 presence of the *l* shining from the . . . 2Macc 1:32  
 to uncover a *l* for us in the Lord's . . . 1Esd 8:76

**SEE THE LIGHT**

Ps 49:19; Lk 8:16; 11:33; Jn 11:9; 2Co 4:4

**LIGHTNING**

and hail, and *l* struck the earth. . . Ex 9:23  
 cloud appeared with *l* over the dwelling. . . Nm 9:15  
 how he spreads *l* across it and . . . Job 36:30  
 enemy; he sent the *l* and threw them . . . Ps 18:14  
 He sends the *l* with the rain, the . . . Jer 10:13  
 torches; they dart like bolts of *l*. . . Na 2:4  
 Just as the *l* flashes from the east to . . . Mt 24:27  
 and his clothes flashed white like *l* . . . Lk 9:29  
 the throne came *l*, voices, and . . . Rev 4:5  
 Shafts of *l* will strike with precision. . . Wis 5:21  
*l* comes before thunder, and good favor . . . Sir 32:10  
 Also *l*'s widely seen when it flashes and . . . LJer 60  
*l* and clouds, bless the Lord, sing hymns, . . . PrAz 50  
 like a bolt of *l*. After . . . 2Macc 1:16

**COLUMN OF LIGHTNING**

Ex 13:21; 13:22; 14:24; Nm 14:14; Neh 9:12; 9:19; 2Esd 1:14

**LIVE**

earth and all who *l* in them were . . . Gn 2:1  
 But if it's a girl, you can let her *l*. . . Ex 1:16  
 wherever you *l* you must not eat . . . Lv 3:17  
 camp, where *l* among them, . . . Nm 5:3  
 taller than we *l* there, and the . . . Dt 1:28  
 the prostitute *l*, her family, and . . . Josh 6:25  
 I don't want to *l* long; leave me . . . Job 7:16  
 you alone, **LORD**, let me *l* in safety. . . Ps 4:8  
 shield for those who *l* a blameless life. . . Prv 2:7  
 So now, you who *l* in Jerusalem, you . . . Is 5:3  
 sick, and all who *l* on it grow weak. . . Hos 4:3  
 People won't *l* only by bread, but . . . Mt 4:4  
 on her so that she can be healed and *l* . . . Mk 5:23  
 in God's eyes, for as long as we *l*. . . Lk 1:75  
 God's Son, and those who hear it will *l*. . . Jn 5:25  
 Moreover, my body will *l* in hope, . . . Ac 2:26  
 The righteous person will *l* by faith. . . Ro 1:17  
 you continues to *l*, according to the . . . Heb 7:8  
 world, to test those who *l* on earth. . . Rev 3:10  
 me to die than to *l*, for I have heard . . . Tob 3:6  
 created humans to *l* forever. He made . . . Wis 2:23  
 preparing their character to *l* by the Law. . . Sir 1:1  
 created good, because *l*, says the Lord. . . 2Esd 2:14

**LIVE FOREVER**

Gn 3:22; 1Kgs 1:31; 8:13; 2Ch 6:2; Neh 2:3; Ps 22:26; 49:9; Zec 1:5; Jn 6:51, 58; Tob 14:7; Wis 2:23; 5:15; 6:18, 19; Sir 37:26

**LIVES**

she is the mother of everyone who *l*. . . Gn 3:20  
 They made their *l* miserable with hard . . . Ex 1:14  
 citizen or the immigrant who *l* among you. . . Lv 16:29  
 Now our *l* are wasting away. There is . . . Nm 11:6  
 every day of their *l* on the fertile . . . Dt 4:10  
 Spare the *l* of my father, mother, . . . Josh 2:13  
 they have in exchange for their *l*. . . Job 2:4  
 to the **LORD**, who *l* in Zion! Proclaim . . . Ps 9:11  
 ambush; they lie in wait for their own *l*. . . Prv 1:18  
 who change their *l* by righteousness. . . Is 1:27  
 and don't swear, "As the **LORD** *l*. . . Hos 4:15  
 your hearts and *l* Here comes the . . . Mt 3:2  
 their hearts and *l* and wanted God to . . . Mk 1:4  
 their hearts and *l* and wanted God to . . . Lk 3:3  
 Go home. Your son *l*!" The man believed . . . Jn 4:50  
 your hearts and *l*. Each of you must . . . Ac 2:38  
 his death, but he *l* for God with his. . . Ro 6:10  
 their entire *l* by their fear of . . . Heb 2:15  
 your hearts and *l* and do the things . . . Rev 2:5

**SAVE THEIR LIVES**

Prv 23:14; Eze 14:20; Am 2:14; Mt 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24

**LIVING**

**ALL LIVING THINGS**

Gn 6:19; Nm 16:22; 27:16; Ps 65:2; 136:25; Jer 32:27; Dn 4:12

**LIVING GOD**

Josh 3:10; 1Sa 17:26; 17:36; 2Kgs 19:16; Ps 42:2; 84:2; Is 37:4, 17; Jer 4:2; 10:10; 23:36; Dn 6:20; 6:26; Hos 1:10; Mt 16:16; 26:63; Ac 14:15; 2Co 3:3; 6:16; 1Ti 3:15; 4:10; Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev 7:2; Bel 5

**LIVING WATER**

Jer 2:13; 17:13; Jn 4:10; 4:11; 7:38

**LOAVES**

unleavened thin *l* spread with oil, . . . Lv 7:12  
 and a basket of *l* of unleavened bread . . . Nm 6:15  
 Please give some *l* of bread to those . . . Jgs 8:5  
 here except five *l* of bread and two . . . Mt 14:17  
 they said, "Five *l* of bread and two . . . Mk 6:38  
 no more than five *l* of bread and two . . . Lk 9:13  
 has five barley *l* and two fish. But . . . Jn 6:9  
 the table, and the *l* of bread presented . . . Heb 9:2  
 lit the lamps, and set out the sacred *l*. . . 2Macc 1:8

**LORD**

**ABANDONED THE LORD**

1Sa 12:10; 2Ch 7:22; 21:10; 24:20, 24; 28:6; Is 1:4; Jer 17:13

**AGAINST THE LORD**

Wis 3:10, 14; Sir 10:12; Bar 1:13, 17; 2:5; 1Esd 6:14; 8:89

**ALMIGHTY LORD**

2Macc 3:22, 30; 3Macc 5:7; 2Esd 1:33; 2:9

**ALTAR TO THE LORD**

Gn 8:20; 12:8; 13:18; Jgs 6:26; 1Sa 7:17; 14:35; 2Sa 24:18; 24:21; 1Ch 21:22; Is 19:19

**ANGEL FROM THE LORD**

Mt 1:20; 2:13, 19; 28:2; Lk 1:11; Ac 5:19; 8:26; 12:7, 23

**ANGERED THE LORD**

Dt 9:8; Jgs 2:12; 1Kgs 15:30; 22:53; 2Ch 29:8

**BELONG TO THE LORD**

Ex 13:12; Lv 27:30; 1Sa 2:8; 2Kgs 11:17; Zec 9:1; Mal 3:3; 1Co 10:26

**BELONGS TO THE LORD**

Ex 9:29; Lv 3:16; 7:20, 21; 27:26; Ps 22:28; 115:16; Prv 21:31; Jer 46:10; Jon 2:9; Zec 14:1

**BLESS THE LORD**

Gn 9:26; 24:27; Ex 18:10; Dt 8:10; Jgs 5:2, 9; 1Sa 25:32; 25:39; 2Sa 18:28; 1Kgs 10:9; 1Ch 16:36; 29:20; 2Ch 2:12; 6:4; 9:8; Ezz 7:27; Ps

16:7; 26:12, 28:6; 31:21; 34:1; 41:13; 68:19, 26, 72:18; 89:52; 103:1, 2, 20, 21, 22; 104:1, 35; 106:48; 115:18; 124:6; 134:1, 2, 135:19, 20, 21; 144:1; Lk 1:68; Jas 3:9; Sir 39:14; PrAz 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65; 1Esd 8:25

**BLESSED BY THE LORD**

Gn 26:29; Ru 2:20; 3:10; Ps 115:15; Is 61:9; 65:23

**BLESSED THE LORD**

Gn 24:48; 1Ch 29:10; 29:20; 2Ch 20:26; 31:8; Neh 8:6

**CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD**

Ro 6:23; 8:38; 1Co 15:31; Eph 3:11; 1Ti 1:2, 12; 2Ti 1:2

**DAY OF THE LORD**

Is 13:6, 9; Eze 13:5; 30:3; Jl 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Am 5:18; 5:20; Obad 15; Zep 1:7, 14; Mal 4:5; Ac 2:20; 1Co 5:5; 1Th 5:2; 2Th 2:2; 2Pt 3:10

**DEDICATED TO THE LORD**

Lv 22:3; Nm 6:18; 6:2; 2Ch 31:6; Lk 2:23; Eph 2:21

**FEAR OF THE LORD**

1Sa 11:7; Ps 111:10; Prv 1:7, 29; 2:5; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26, 27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; Is 11:2; 33:6; Sir 1:11, 12, 28; 9:16; 10:22; 25:11; 40:27; 45:23; 50:29

**FEAR THE LORD**

Dt 6:2; 14:23; 1Sa 12:14; 12:24; Prv 3:7; 14:2; 24:21; Jer 5:24; 26:19; Am 3:8; 2Co 5:11; Jdt 16:16; Sir 1:13; 2:7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17; 6:16, 17; 7:31; 10:19, 20; 21:6; 26:25; 32:16; 33:1; 34:14, 16, 17; 40:26; 2Esd 16:71, 72

**FOLLOWING THE LORD**

Josh 22:16; 22:18, 23, 29; 1Sa 12:20

**GIFT FOR THE LORD**

Ex 29:18; 29:25; Lv 2:11; 2:16; 3:9, 11, 14; 7:5; 8:21, 28; 22:22, 27; 23:13; 24:7

**GIFT TO THE LORD**

Ex 30:20; 35:29; Lv 7:14; 23:25, 27, 36; Nm 6:14; 15:3, 25; 28:13; 29:6; Eze 3:5; 8:28; Eze 46:12

**GIVE TO THE LORD**

Lv 23:38; Nm 18:12; 1Ch 16:28; 16:29; Ps 29:1, 2; 96:7, 8

**GRACE OF OUR LORD**

Ro 16:20; 2Co 8:9; Ga 6:18; 1Th 5:28; 2Th 3:18

**GRACE OF THE LORD**

Ac 15:11; 1Co 16:23; 2Co 13:13; Phi 4:23; Phm 25

**HOLY TO THE LORD**

Ex 28:36; 30:10, 37; 31:15; 39:30; Lv 19:8; 27:21, 28, 30, 32; Nm 6:8; Dt 14:2, 21; 26:19; Josh 6:19; 2Ch 30:17; 35:3; Eze 8:28; Neh 8:9; Eze 48:14; Zec 14:20; 14:21

**HONOR THE LORD**

Ex 12:42; Ps 15:4; 25:12; 34:11; 112:1; 115:11, 13; 118:4; 135:20; Prv 3:9; Is 24:15; Jer 13:16

**HOPE IN THE LORD**

Ps 27:14; 33:20; 37:9, 34; 40:1; Is 40:31; Phi 2:19

**I AM THE LORD**

Gn 15:7; 28:13; Ex 6:2, 6, 8, 29; 7:5, 17; 10:2; 12:12; 14:4, 18; 15:26; 16:12; 20:2; Lv 11:44; 11:45; 18:2, 4, 5, 6, 21, 30; 19:3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 36, 37; 20:7, 8; 21:12, 15, 23; 22:2, 3, 8, 9, 16, 30, 31, 32, 33; 23:42, 43; 24:22; 25:17, 38, 55; 26:1, 2, 13, 44, 45; Nm 3:13; 3:41, 45; 10:10; 15:41; Dt 5:6; 29:6; Jgs 6:10; 1Kgs 20:13; 20:28; Ps 81:10; Is 41:13; 42:8; 43:3, 11, 15; 44:24; 45:3, 5, 6, 7, 19; 48:17; 49:23; 51:15; 60:16, 22; Jer 9:24; 16:21; 24:7; 32:27; Eze 6:7, 10, 13, 14; 7:4, 27; 11:10, 12; 12:15, 16, 20, 25; 13:9, 14, 21, 23; 14:8; 15:7; 16:62; 20:5, 7, 19, 20, 26, 38, 42, 44; 22:14, 16; 23:49; 24:24, 27; 25:5, 7, 11, 17, 26; 28:22, 23, 24; 29:6, 9, 16, 21; 30:8, 19, 25, 26; 32:15; 33:29; 34:27; 35:4, 9, 12, 15; 36:11, 23, 38; 37:6, 13, 14; 38:23; 39:6, 28; Hos 12:9; Jl 2:27; 3:17; Zec 10:6; Mal 3:6

**JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD**

Ro 1:4; 5:21; 7:25; 1Co 1:9; Jude 25

**JESUS OUR LORD**

Ro 4:24; 6:23; 8:38; 1Co 9:1; 15:31; Eph 3:11; 1Ti 1:2, 12; 2Ti 1:2; 2Pt 1:2

**KNOW THE LORD**

Jgs 2:10; 1Sa 2:12; 3:7; Is 19:21; Jer 31:34; Hos 2:20; 5:4; 6:3; Heb 8:11

**LORD ALMIGHTY**

Jdt 4:13; 8:13; 15:10; 16:5, 17; Sir 42:17; Bar 3:1, 4; PrMn 1

**LORD GOD ALMIGHTY**

Rev 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22

**LORD JESUS**

Mk 16:19; Lk 17:37; 24:3; Ac 1:21; 4:33; 7:59; 8:16; 11:17, 20; 15:11, 26; 16:31; 19:5, 13, 17, 20, 21, 24, 21:13; 28:31; Ro 1:7; 5:1, 11; 13:14; 14:14; 15:6, 30; 16:20; 1Co 1:2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 5:4; 6:11; 8:6; 11:23; 15:57; 16:23; 2Co 1:2, 3, 4, 14; 8:9; 11:31; 13:13; Ga 1:3; 6:14, 18; Eph 1:2, 3, 15, 17; 5:20; 6:23, 24; Phi 1:2; 2:19; 3:20; 4:23; Col 1:3; 3:17; 1Th 1:1, 3; 2:15, 19; 3:13; 4:1, 2; 5:9, 23, 28; 2Th 1:1, 2, 7, 8, 12, 2:1, 8, 14, 16; 3:6, 12, 18; 1Ti 6:3, 14; Phm 3, 5, 25; Heb 13:20; Jas 1:1; 2:1; 1Pt 1:3; 2Pt 1:8, 14, 16; Jude 4, 17, 21; Rev 22:20

**LORD JESUS CHRIST**

Ac 11:17; 15:26; 28:31; Ro 1:7; 5:1, 11; 13:14; 15:6, 30; 16:20; 1Co 1:2, 3, 7, 8, 10; 6:11; 8:6; 15:57; 2Co 1:2, 3; 8:9; 13:13; Ga 1:3; 6:14, 18; Eph 1:2, 3, 17; 5:20; 6:23, 24; Phi 1:2; 3:20; 4:23; Col 1:3; 1Th 1:1, 3; 5:9, 28; 2Th 1:1, 2, 12; 2:14, 16; 3:6, 12, 18; 1Ti 6:3, 14; Phm 3, 25; Jas 1:1; 2:1; 1Pt 1:3; 2Pt 1:8, 14, 16; Jude 4, 17, 21

**LORD MY GOD**

Nm 22:18; Dt 4:5; 26:3; Josh 14:8, 9; 2Sa 24:24; 1Kgs 3:7; 5:3, 4, 5; 8:28; 17:20, 21; 1Ch 21:17; 22:7; 2Ch 2:4; 6:19; Ps 7:1, 3; 13:3; 18:28; 30:2, 12; 35:24; 38:15; 40:5; 86:12; 104:1; 109:26; Is 40:27; Jer 31:18; Dn 9:4, 20; Am 3:11; Zec 11:4; 14:5

**LORD OF HEAVEN**

Tob 6:18; 7:11, 16; 10:11, 13

**LORD OF HEAVENLY FORCES**

1Sa 1:3, 11; 4:4; 15:2; 17:45; 2Sa 5:10; 6:2, 18; 7:8, 26, 17; 1Kgs 18:15; 2Kgs 3:14; 19:31; 1Ch 11:9; 17:7, 24; Ps 24:10; 46:7, 11; 48:8; 84:1, 3, 12; Is 9:2; 12:5; 7, 9, 16, 24; 6:3, 5; 8:13, 18; 9:7, 13, 19; 10:26; 13:4, 13; 14:22, 23, 24, 27; 17:3; 18:7; 19:12, 16, 17, 18, 20, 25; 21:10; 22:14, 25; 23:9; 24:23; 25:6; 28:5, 29; 29:6; 31:4, 5; 37:16, 32; 39:5; 44:6; 45:13; 47:4; 48:2; 51:15; 54:5; Jer 2:19; 6:6, 9; 7:3, 21; 8:3; 9:7, 15, 17; 10:16; 11:17, 20, 22; 16:9; 19:3, 11, 15; 20:12; 23:15, 36; 25:8, 27, 28, 29, 32; 26:18; 27:4, 18, 19, 21; 28:2, 14; 29:4, 8, 17, 21, 25; 30:8; 31:23, 35; 32:14, 15, 18; 33:11, 12; 35:13, 17, 18, 19; 38:17; 39:16; 42:15, 18; 43:10; 44:2, 7, 11, 25; 46:18, 25; 48:15; 49:5, 7, 26, 35; 50:13, 33, 34; 51:5, 14, 19, 33, 57; 58; Mic 4:4; Na 2:13; 3:5; Hab 2:13; Zep 2:9, 10; Hg 1:2, 5, 7, 9, 14; 2:4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 23; Zec 1:3, 4, 6, 12, 14, 16, 17; 2:8, 9, 11; 3:7, 9, 10; 4:6, 9; 5:4; 6:12, 15; 7:3, 4, 9, 12, 13; 8:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23; 9:15; 10:3; 13:2, 7; 14:16, 17, 21; Mal 1:4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14; 2:2, 4, 7, 8, 12, 16; 3:1, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17; 4:1, 3; Jas 5:4

**LORD OF ISRAEL**

1Esd 2:2, 3; 5:68; 6:14; 8:13, 69, 86

**LORD OUR GOD**

Ex 8:10; 8:26, 27; 10:25, 26; Dt 1:6, 19, 20, 25; 2:33, 36, 37; 3:3; 4:7; 5:24, 27; 6:20, 24, 25; 29:15, 18; Josh 18:6; 22:19, 29; 24:24; Jgs 11:24; 15a 7:8, 1Kgs 8:57; 8:59, 61, 65; 2Kgs 18:22; 19:19; 1Ch 13:2; 15:13; 29:16; 2Ch 2:4; 13:11; 14:7, 11; 19:7; 32:8, 11; Ps 90:17; 94:23; 99:5, 8, 9; 106:47; 113:5; 123:2; Is 26:13; 36:7; 37:20; Jer 3:22; 3:23, 25; 5:19, 24; 8:14; 14:22; 16:10; 26:16; 31:6; 37:3; 42:6, 20; 43:2; 50:28; 51:10; Dn 9:9, 10, 13, 14, 15; Mic 4:5; 7:17; Ac 2:39; Rev 19:6; Jdt 7:30; 8:14, 16, 23, 25; Bar 1:13, 19; 2:5, 6, 12, 15, 19, 27; 3:8; 1Esd 5:67

**LORD THEIR GOD**

Ex 10:7; Lv 26:44; Jgs 3:7; 8:34; 15a 12:9; 1Kgs 9:9; 2Kgs 17:7, 9, 14, 16, 19, 18; 2Ch 31:6; Neh 9:3, 4; Ps 146:5; Jer 3:21; 22:9; 30:9; 43:1; 50:4; Eze 34:30; 39:28; Hos 1:7; 3:5; 7:10; Zep 2:7; Hg 1:12; Zec 9:16; 10:6; 15:2; Lk 1:16

**LORD YOUR GOD**

Gn 27:20; Ex 8:28; 10:8, 16, 17; 15:26; 16:12; 20:2, 5, 10, 12; 34:24; Lv 11:44; 18:2, 4, 30; 19:2, 3, 4, 10, 25, 31, 36; 20:7; 23:22, 28, 40, 43; 24:22; 25:17, 38, 55; 26:1, 13; Nm 10:9, 10; 15:41; Dt 1:10; 1:21, 30, 31; 2:7, 30; 3:20, 21, 22; 4:2, 3, 10, 19, 23, 24, 29, 30, 31, 40; 5:6, 9, 12, 15, 16, 32; 6:1, 2, 5, 10, 13, 15, 16; 7:1, 2, 6, 12, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25; 8:2, 7, 10, 11, 18; 9:4, 5, 6, 7, 16; 10:9, 12, 17,

20, 22; 11:1, 13, 22, 25, 29, 31; 12:4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 15, 18, 20, 29, 31; 13:3, 5, 10, 12, 16; 14:2, 21, 23, 24, 25, 29; 15:4, 6, 7, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21; 16:1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22; 17:1, 2, 8, 12, 15; 18:5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16; 19:1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10; 20:1, 13, 16, 17, 18; 21:1, 5, 23; 22:5; 23:5, 18, 20, 21, 23; 24:4, 13, 18, 19; 25:15, 16, 19; 26:1, 2, 10, 19; 27:2, 3, 9; 28:1, 52, 53, 58; 29:6, 10, 12; 30:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 16, 20; 31:3, 6, 11, 12, 13; Josh 1:9, 11, 13, 15, 17; 2:11; 3:9; 4:23, 24; 8:7; 9:9, 24; 10:19; 22:3, 4, 5; 23:3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16; Jgs 6:10; 6:26; 1Sa 12:12; 12:14, 19; 13:13; 15:5, 21, 30, 25; 29; 25a 14:11; 14:17; 18:28; 24:3, 23; 1Kgs 1:17; 2:3; 10:9; 13:6, 21; 17:12; 18:10; 2Kgs 17:39; 19:4; 23:21; 1Ch 11:2; 22:11, 12, 18, 19; 28:8; 29:20; 2Ch 9:8; 16:7; 20:20; 30:8, 9; Neh 8:9; Ps 76:11; 81:10; Is 7:11; 37:4; 41:13; 43:3; 48:17; 51:15; 55:5; 60:9; Jer 2:17; 2:19; 3:13; 13:16; 26:13; 40:2; 42:2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 20, 21; Eze 20:5, 7, 19, 20; Hos 12:9; 13:4; 14:1; Jl 1:14; 2:13, 14, 23, 26, 27; 3:17; Am 9:15; Mic 7:10; Zep 3:17; Zec 6:15; Mt 4:7, 10; 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 4:8, 12; 10:27; Ac 3:22

**LOVE THE LORD**

Dt 6:5; 11:1, 30:6; Josh 22:5; 23:11; 1Kgs 10:9; Ps 31:23; 97:10; 116:1; Hos 10:3; Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27; 1Co 16:22

**LOVING THE LORD**

Dt 11:13; 11:22; 19:9; 30:16, 20

**NAME OF OUR LORD**

Ac 15:26; 1Co 1:2, 10; Eph 5:20; 2Th 1:12; 3:6

**NAME OF THE LORD**

Gn 21:33; Dt 28:58; 1Sa 17:45; 2Sa 6:2, 18; 1Kgs 5:3, 5; 8:17, 20; 18:24; 22:16; 2Kgs 5:11; 1Ch 22:7; 2Ch 4:6, 7, 10; 33:18; Ps 7:17; 124:8; Is 18:7; 24:15; 60:9; Jer 26:16; Jl 2:26; Am 6:10; Mic 4:5; 5:4; Zep 3:9, 12; Zec 13:3; Mt 21:9; Mk 11:9; Lk 19:38; Jn 12:13; Ac 2:21; 8:16; 9:28; 19:5, 13, 17; 21:13; 1Co 6:11; Col 3:17; Jas 5:10; 5:14

**OBEY THE LORD**

Ex 15:26; Dt 8:20; 11:28; 27:10; 28:1, 2, 13, 45, 62; 30:16; 1Sa 12:15; 15:19, 20; Jer 26:13; 38:20; 42:6; 43:7; 44:23

**PRAISE THE LORD**

Gn 29:35; 1Ch 16:4; 23:30; 2Ch 20:19; 20:22; 29:30; Ps 27:6; 34:2; 56:10; 102:18; 104:35; 105:45; 106:1, 48; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1, 9; 115:17, 18; 116:19; 117:1, 2; 135:1, 3, 21; 146:1, 2, 10; 147:1, 20; 148:1, 7, 14; 149:1, 9; 150:1, 6; 162:9; Jer 20:13; Ro 15:11; Tob 12:20; 13:6, 8, 10, 15; Sir 17:28

**PRAY TO THE LORD**

Ex 8:8, 29; 9:28; 10:17; 1Sa 7:5; 1Kgs 8:44; Jer 29:7; 42:2, 4

**PRAYED TO THE LORD**

Gn 25:21; Ex 8:30; 10:18; Nm 11:2; Dt 9:26; 15a 1:10; 8:6; 15:11; 2Kgs 4:33; 6:18; 19:15; 20:2; 2Ch 32:24; Is 37:15; 38:2; Jer 32:16; Dn 9:4; Jon 2:1; 4:2

**PRESENCE OF THE LORD**

Ex 16:10; Dt 14:23; 15:20; 16:16; 29:10; 1Sa 12:3; 1Kgs 8:65; Eze 46:3

**REMEMBER THE LORD**

Dt 8:18; Jgs 8:34; 1Sa 26:23; 2Sa 14:11; Jer 51:50; Ac 20:35

**RETURN TO THE LORD**

Dt 4:30; 30:2; 2Ch 19:4; 30:6, 9; Is 19:22; 55:7; Lam 3:40; Hos 6:1; 7:10; 14:2; Jl 2:13

**REVERE THE LORD**

Dt 6:13; 10:12, 20; 17:19; 31:12, 13; Josh 4:24; 24:14; Ps 22:23

**SABBATH TO THE LORD**

Ex 16:23; 16:25; 20:10; Lv 23:3; 25:4

**SEE THE LORD**

Ex 19:21; Josh 3:3; 2Kgs 6:20; Ps 146:8; Prv 20:12; Is 38:11; 52:8; Heb 12:14; Jude 14

**SEEK THE LORD**

Dt 4:29; 2Ch 11:16; 14:15; 12, 13; 16:12; Ps 22:26; 34:10; Prv 28:5; Is 9:13; 31:1; 51:1; 55:6; Jer 50:4; Hos 3:5; 5:6; 10:12; Am 5:6; Zep 1:6; 2:3; Zec 8:22; Ac 15:17

**SERVE THE LORD**

Lv 7:35; Josh 24:14; 24:15, 18, 19, 22, 24; 1Sa 12:20; 2Ch 30:8; Ps 2:11; 100:2; 102:22; 113:1; 134:1; 135:1; Jer 30:9; Eze 40:46; Ro 12:11; Col 3:24

**SERVED THE LORD**

Josh 24:31; Jgs 2:7; 10:16; 1Sa 2:11; Ac 20:19

**SERVING THE LORD**

Dt 10:12; 17:12; 1Sa 2:18; 3:1; Ro 16:18; Eph 6:7

**SING TO THE LORD**

Ex 15:1, 21; 1Ch 16:23; Ps 13:6; 96:1, 2; 98:1, 104:33; 147:7; 149:1; Is 12:5; 42:10; Jer 20:13

**SINNED AGAINST THE LORD**

Ex 10:16; Nm 32:23; Dt 1:41; 9:16; Josh 7:20; 1Sa 7:6; 2Sa 12:13; 2Kgs 17:7; Jer 3:25; 8:14; 16:10; 40:3; 44:23; 50:7, 14; Zep 1:17; Bar 1:13, 17; 2:5; 1Esd 6:14; 8:89

**STAND BEFORE THE LORD**

Nm 5:16; 5:18, 30; Dt 19:17; 1Sa 6:20; 2Kgs 16:14; Rev 11:4

**SUPREME LORD**

2Esd 3:4; 4:38; 5:23, 38; 6:11; 7:17, 58; 12:7; 13:51

**THANK THE LORD**

Dt 32:6; 2Ch 5:13; Ps 7:17; 107:8, 15, 21, 31; 111:1; Is 12:4; Ro 14:6

**THANKS TO THE LORD**

1Ch 16:7, 8, 34, 41; 2Ch 7:3, 6; 20:21; Ezr 3:11; Ps 33:2, 92:1; 105:1; 106:1; 107:1; 109:30; 118:1, 19, 29; 136:1, 3; Jer 33:11

**TRUST IN THE LORD**

2Kgs 18:22; Ps 40:4; 115:9, 10, 11; 125:1; Is 26:4; 36:7; Jer 17:7; Zep 3:2; Phi 2:24

**TRUST THE LORD**

2Kgs 6:33; 17:14; 18:30; 2Ch 20:20; Ps 4:5; 31:6; 37:3; 40:3; Prv 16:20; 28:25; 29:25; Is 36:15

**UNFAITHFUL TO THE LORD**

1Ch 10:13; 2Ch 12:2; 28:19, 22; 30:7

**VOICE OF THE LORD**

Jer 3:25; Dn 9:10; Mic 6:9; Hg 1:12; Zec 6:15

**WAIT FOR THE LORD**

Ps 31:24; 130:7; 131:3; Prv 20:22; Is 8:17

**WORSHIP THE LORD**

Ex 10:7, 8, 11, 24, 26; 12:31; 1Sa 15:25; 15:30; 2Sa 15:8; 2Kgs 17:25; 17:28, 34, 41; 2Ch 33:16; Ezr 6:21; Ps 147:12; Jer 7:2; Jon 1:9; Mt 4:10; Lk 4:8

**WORSHIPED THE LORD**

Gn 24:48; 1Sa 1:19; 7:4; 15:31; 2Kgs 17:32; 17:33; Neh 9:3; Jon 1:16

**LOT**

and Haran. Haran became the father of **L** . . . . . Gn 11:27  
in the days of **L**, people were . . . . . Lk 17:28

**LOTS**

**CAST LOTS**

Lv 16:8; Josh 18:10; 1Ch 24:31; 25:8; 26:13, 14; Neh 10:34; 11:1; Ps 22:18; Jl 3:3; Obad 11; Jon 1:7; Na 3:10; Jn 19:24; Ac 1:26

**LOVE**

only son whom you **I**, Isaac, and go to . . . . . Gn 22:2  
of those who **I** me and keep my . . . . . Ex 20:6  
instead, you must **I** your neighbor as . . . . . Lv 19:18  
of those who **I** me and keep my . . . . . Dt 5:10  
these persons **I** the **LORD**'s . . . . . Ps 1:2  
clueless people **I** your naivete, . . . . . Prv 1:22  
along with both **I** and hate. People. . . . . Ecc 9:1  
for my loved one a **I** song for his . . . . . Is 5:1  
in justice, in devoted **I**, and in mercy. . . . . Hos 2:19  
Son whom **I** dearly **I**, I find happiness. . . . . Mt 3:17  
Son, whom **I** dearly **I**, in you **I** find . . . . . Mk 1:11  
Son, whom **I** dearly **I**, in you **I** find . . . . . Lk 3:22  
you, that you don't have God's **I** in you. . . . . Jn 5:42  
shame, because the **I** of God has been . . . . . Ro 5:5  
efforts and the **I** you have shown for . . . . . Heb 6:10  
have let go of the **I** you had at first. . . . . Rev 2:4  
now, my child, **I** your relatives and . . . . . Tob 4:13  
The king fell in **I** with Esther, and she . . . . . GkEst 2:17  
judge the earth, **I** what is right. Set. . . . . Wis 1:1  
also for those who **I** learning to be of . . . . . Sir 1:1  
You don't abandon the people who **I** you." . . . . . Bel 3:8  
sword of those who **I** you, and let all . . . . . 1Macc 4:33  
Because you **I** the house of Israel, you . . . . . 3Macc 2:10  
Israel, or do you **I** him more than the . . . . . 2Esd 5:33

show up as pride, *I* of money, thirst . . . . . 4Macc 1:26

### FAITHFUL LOVE LASTS FOREVER

2Ch 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21; Ps 107:1; 118:1, 2, 3, 4, 29; 136:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26; 138:8

### GOD'S FAITHFUL LOVE

2Ch 5:13; 7:3, 6; Ps 52:1, 8; 103:11; 117:2; 118:2, 3, 4; 136:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26

### LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS

2Sa 2:6; 15:20; Ps 40:11; 57:3; 61:7; 89:14; 98:3; 115:1; 138:2; Prv 16:6; Phm 5; Rev 2:19

### LOVE EACH OTHER

Jn 13:34; 13:35; 15:12, 17; Ro 12:10; 13:8; 1Th 4:9; 1Pt 1:22; 1Jn 3:11; 3:23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2Jn 5

### LOVE GOD

Ps 48:9; Mk 12:33; Ro 8:28; 1Jn 4:20; 4:21; 5:2

### LOVE OF GOD

Ro 5:5; 2Co 13:13; 1Jn 2:5; 3:17; 4:9; 5:3; Jude 21

### LOVE THE LORD

Dt 6:5; 11:1; 30:6; Josh 22:5; 23:11; 1Kgs 10:9; Ps 31:23; 97:10; 116:1; Hos 10:3; Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27; 1Co 16:22

### LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

Lv 19:18; Mt 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mk 12:31; Lk 10:27; Ro 13:9; Ga 5:14; Jas 2:8

### LOYAL LOVE

2Sa 2:6; 15:20; 16:17; Ps 36:5; 40:10, 11; 57:3; 89:1, 2, 14, 24, 28, 33; 92:2; 98:3; 100:5; 115:1; 138:2

### LOYAL LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS

2Sa 2:6; 15:20; Ps 40:11; 57:3; 89:14; 98:3; 115:1; 138:2

### LOVED

Rebekah and *I* her. So Isaac . . . . . Gn 24:67  
And because he *I* your ancestors and chose . . . . . Dt 4:37  
me, the ones *I* have *I* turn against me . . . . . Job 19:19  
My *I* Jones and friends keep their distance . . . . . Ps 38:11  
Let me sing for *I* Jones a love song for . . . . . Is 5:1  
him carefully and *I* him. He said, "You . . . . . Mk 10:21  
God so *I* the world that he gave his only . . . . . Jn 3:16  
who are dearly *I* by God and called . . . . . Ro 1:7  
You *I* righteousness and hated lawless . . . . . Heb 1:9  
your feet and realize that *I* have *I* you. . . . . Rev 3:9

### DEARLY LOVED

Ecc 9:9; Is 22:4; Ro 1:7; Eph 5:1; Col 4:7, 9, 14; Phm 1, 16; 2Pt 1:17; Tob 3:10; 10:12; Jdt 9:4; Sir 9:1; 20:13; 24:11; 45:1; 46:13; 47:16; Bar 4:16; 3Macc 6:11

### LOVING

### LOVING THE LORD

Dt 11:13; 11:22; 19:9; 30:16, 20

### LOYAL

### LOYAL LOVE

2Sa 2:6; 15:20; 16:17; Ps 36:5; 40:10, 11; 57:3; 89:1, 2, 14, 24, 28, 33; 92:2; 98:3; 100:5; 115:1; 138:2

### LOYAL LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS

2Sa 2:6; 15:20; Ps 40:11; 57:3; 89:14; 98:3; 115:1; 138:2

### LUKE

*L*, the dearly loved physician . . . . . Col 4:14  
Only *L* is with me . . . . . 2Ti 4:11  
Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and *L* . . . . . Phm 24

### LYSIAS

The king appointed *L*, a distinguished . . . . . 1Macc 3:32  
a certain *L* as supreme . . . . . 2Macc 10:11

### LYSTRA

cities of *L* and Derbe and the . . . . . Ac 14:6  
Iconium, and *L*. *L* put up with all . . . . . 2Ti 3:11

## Mm

### MAACAH

birth to Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and *M* . . . . . Gn 22:24  
mother's name was *M*, and she was . . . . . 1Ki 15:2

### MAASEIAH

Eliab, Benaiah, *M*, Mattithiah, . . . . . 1Ch 15:18  
above the room of *M*, Shallum's son, . . . . . Jer 35:4  
and his brothers *M*, Eleazar, Jarib, . . . . . 1Esd 9:19

### MACEDONIA

of a man from *M* came to Paul . . . . . Ac 16:9  
*M* and Achaia have been happy to make a . . . . . Ro 15:26

### MACHIR

The children of *M*, Manasseh's son, . . . . . Gn 50:23  
descendants: from *M*, the Machirite . . . . . Nm 26:29  
*I* also gave Gilead to *M* . . . . . Dt 3:15  
to the people of *M* son of Manasseh. . . . . Josh 13:31

### MAGDALENE

them were Mary *M*, Mary the mother, . . . . . Mt 27:56  
including Mary *M* and Mary the . . . . . Mk 15:40  
them were Mary *M* (from whom seven . . . . . Lk 8:2  
Clopas, and Mary *M* stood near the . . . . . Jn 19:25

### MAGOG

sons: Gomer, *M*, Madai, Javan, . . . . . Gn 10:2  
family: Gomer, *M*, Madai, Javan, . . . . . 1Ch 1:5  
Gog in the land of *M*, chief prince of . . . . . Eze 38:2  
the earth—Gog and *M*. He will gather . . . . . Rev 20:8

### MAHANAIM

camp," and he named that sacred place *M* . . . . . Gn 32:2  
Betonim, and from *M* as far as the . . . . . Josh 13:26

### MAJESTY

the royal crown upon his head was your *m* . . . . . Wis 18:24  
They saw the *m* of his glory with their . . . . . Sir 17:13  
be taken in, Your *m*! This is clay on . . . . . Bel 7  
some part of her *m* and seized upon . . . . . 1Macc 2:10  
To Your *m*, King Artaxerxes, your . . . . . 1Esd 2:13  
prepared, Your *m*, according to your . . . . . 3Macc 5:29

### GOD'S MAJESTY

Ps 148:13; Is 2:10; 2:19, 21; Ac 7:55

### MANASSEH

the oldest son *M*, "because," he . . . . . Gn 41:51  
son; from *M*, Gamaliel, . . . . . Nm 1:10  
half the tribe of *M*. (Now the whole . . . . . Dt 3:13  
the Gadites, and half the tribe of *M*. . . . . Josh 1:12  
Gilead is mine; *M* is mine; Ephraim is my . . . . . Ps 60:7  
*M* devoured Ephraim and Ephraim Manasseh; . . . . . Is 9:21  
was the father of *M*. Manasseh was the . . . . . Mt 1:10  
from the tribe of *M*, twelve thousand; . . . . . Rev 7:6  
Her husband *M*, who was from her tribe . . . . . Jdt 8:2  
Zabad, Eliphelet, *M*, and Shimei. . . . . 1Esd 9:33

### MANNA

people called it *m*. It was like . . . . . Ex 16:31  
There is nothing but *m* in front of us. . . . . Nm 11:6  
feeding you the *m* that neither you . . . . . Dt 8:3  
The *m* stopped on that next day, when they . . . . . Josh 5:12  
and rained *m* on them so they could eat. . . . . Ps 78:24  
Our ancestors ate *m* in the wilderness, . . . . . Jn 6:31  
jar containing *m*, Aaron's rod that . . . . . Heb 9:4  
some of the hidden *m* to eat. *I* will . . . . . Rev 2:17  
your groans. *I* gave you *m*, and you ate. . . . . 2Esd 1:19

### MANOAH

whose name was *M*. His wife was . . . . . Jgs 13:2

### MARK

was also known as *M*). Many believers . . . . . Ac 12:12  
to you. So does *M*, Barnabas' cousin . . . . . Col 4:10

**MARRIAGE**

bride price and **m** gifts as large as . . . Gn 34:12  
 may consummate the **m**. You will be her . . . Dt 21:13  
 my daughter in **m** to whoever strikes . . . Josh 15:16  
 they be given in **m**. Instead, they . . . Mt 22:30  
 they be given in **m**. Instead, they . . . Mk 12:25  
 promised to him in **m** and who was . . . Lk 2:5  
 to stay in her **m** as long as her . . . 1Co 7:39  
**M** must be honored in every respect, with  
 had been given in **m** to seven husbands; . . . Heb 13:4  
 for his **m**, for his children . . . Tob 3:8  
 Wis 13:17  
 Give a daughter in **m**, and you will have  
 prepared for the **m** night. Neglecting . . . Sir 7:25  
 for him and set the day of the **m** feast. . . 3Macc 1:19  
 2Esd 9:47

**MARRIED**

were, so they **m** the ones they . . . Gn 6:2  
 from Levi's household **m** a Levite woman.  
 adultery with a **m** woman, committing  
 defiled while **m** to your husband,  
 but not yet **m**? He may leave and  
 daughters. He **m** his thirty . . . Dt 20:7  
 Jgs 12:9  
 men who had **m** foreign wives. . . Ezr 10:17  
 Neh 13:23  
 Jews who had **m** women of . . . Prv 6:26  
 the children of the **m**, hunts the LORD. . . Is 54:1  
 God loved, and **m** the daughter of a . . . Mal 2:11  
 before they were **m**, she became . . . Mt 1:18  
 Herod's brother Philip. Herod had **m** her,  
 old. After she **m**, she lived with . . . Mk 6:17  
 Lk 2:36  
 one who is getting **m**. The friend of the . . . Jn 3:29  
 A **m** woman is united with her husband.  
 became an adult, I **m** a woman from our  
 ever sit with a **m** woman, and don't  
 were about to get **m** or were planting a . . . 1Macc 3:56  
 Some aren't **m**, others are . . . 4Macc 16:9

**MARRIES**

women. If Jacob **m** one of the Hittite . . . Gn 27:46  
 If a man **m** a woman and her mother as . . . Lv 20:14  
 if she **m** while her solemn promise is in . . . Nm 30:6  
 Let's say a man **m** a woman, but she isn't . . . Dt 24:1  
 As a young man **m** a young woman . . . Is 62:5  
 And whoever **m** a divorced woman . . . Mt 5:32  
 his wife and **m** another commits . . . Mk 10:11  
 his wife and **m** another commits . . . Lk 16:18  
 adultery if she **m** someone else. . . Ro 7:3

**MARRY**

these orders: "Don't **m** a Canaanite woman.  
 with her, he must **m** her and pay the . . . Gn 28:1  
 Ex 22:16  
 You will not **m** her son's daughter . . . Lv 18:17  
 into which they **m**. Then it will be . . . Nm 36:3  
 of their sons to **m**, and don't take . . . Dt 7:3  
 came back again to **m** her. He turned  
 so your sons will **m** you. With the joy . . . Jgs 14:8  
 Is 62:5  
 said to him, "Go, **m** a prostitute, and  
 it's against the law for you to **m** her.  
 the law for you to **m** your brother's . . . Mt 14:4  
 Mk 6:18  
 the brother must **m** the widow and . . . Lk 20:28  
 it's better to **m** than to burn with . . . 1Co 7:9  
 right for you to **m** her. So listen to  
 They will **m** foolish people. Their . . . Tob 6:13  
 Wis 3:12  
 you my daughter to **m**, Alexander's wife.  
 came in order to **m** the goddess, he . . . 1Macc 11:9  
 2Macc 1:14  
 those who don't **m** as though they . . . 2Esd 16:45

**MARTHA**

a woman named **M** welcomed him as a . . . Lk 10:38  
 the village of Mary and her sister **M**. . . Jn 11:1

**MARY**

the husband of **M**—of whom Jesus was  
 including **M** Magdalene and Mary . . . Mt 15:40  
 David's house. The virgin's name was **M**.  
 the village of **M** and her sister . . . Jn 11:1  
 women, including **M** the mother of . . . Ac 1:14

Say hello to **M**, who has worked very hard. . . Ro 16:6

**MASTER**

fill the earth and **m** it. Take charge of . . . Gn 1:28  
 If his **m** gave him a wife and she bore him . . . Ex 21:4  
 responded, "My **m** Moses, stop them!" . . . Nm 11:28  
 him, "What is my **m** saying to his . . . Josh 5:14  
 stress scare them, **m** then like a king. . . Job 15:24  
 Because he is your **m**, bow down to him . . . Ps 45:11  
 beside him as a **m** of crafts. I was . . . Prv 8:30  
 over to a harsh **m**, a strong king . . . Is 19:4  
 the house of their **m** with violence and . . . Zep 1:9  
 and slaves aren't greater than their **m**. . . Mt 10:24  
 this?" say, "Its **m** needs it, and he . . . Mk 11:3  
 Now, **m**, let your servant go in peace . . . Lk 2:29  
 greater than their **m**, nor are those who . . . Jn 13:16  
 in union to God, "**M**, you are the one . . . Ac 4:24  
 like a wise **m** builder according . . . 1Co 3:10  
 she called him **m**. You have become . . . 1Pt 3:6  
 Holy and true **m**, how long will you . . . Rev 6:10  
 You know, **M**, that I'm pure from any . . . Tob 3:14  
 great king, the **m** of all the earth, . . . Jdt 2:5  
 her life with God. The **m** of all loves her.  
 Lord, Father, and **m** of my life, don't . . . Sir 23:1  
 Our **m** the king, may you know that the . . . 1Esd 2:14  
 of the heavens and **m** of all creation, . . . 3Macc 2:2  
 the parent, or a **m** his servant, or a . . . 2Esd 7:104  
 godly thinking is the **m** of the emotions. . . 4Macc 16:1

**MATTANIAH**

king made **M**, Jehoiachin's . . . 2Ki 24:17  
 family of Elam: **M**, Zechariah, . . . 1Esd 9:27

**MATTHEW**

he saw a man named **M** sitting at the kiosk . . . Mt 9:9  
**M** the tax collector . . . Mt 10:3  
 Philip; Bartholomew; **M**; Thomas . . . Mk 3:18  
**M**; Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus . . . Lk 6:15  
 Thomas; Bartholomew and **M**. . . Ac 1:13

**MEDITERRANEAN**

ravine. Its limit will be at the **M** Sea . . . Nm 34:5  
 Euphrates River all the way to the **M** Sea . . . Dt 11:24  
 land, up to the **M** Sea on the west . . . Josh 1:4  
 will be like the **M** Sea, having all . . . Eze 47:10  
 half of it to the **M**; this will happen . . . Zec 14:8  
 kingdoms and the **M** islands also . . . 1Macc 6:29

**MEGIDDO**

the king of Taanach one the king of **M** on . . . Josh 12:21  
 mourning of Hadad-Rimmon in the **M** Valley . . . Zec 12:11  
 in the plain of **M**, and Pharaoh's . . . 1Esd 1:27

**MELCHIZEDEK**

Now **M** the king of Salem and the priest of . . . Gn 14:18  
 are a priest forever in line with **M**. . . Ps 110:4  
 forever, according to the order of **M**. . . Heb 5:6

**MEPHIBOSHETH**

he fell and was injured. His name was **M**. . . 2Sa 4:4

**MERARI**

Levi's sons were Gershon, Kohath, and **M**. . . Gn 46:11  
 Kohath, and **M**. Levi lived 137 . . . Ex 6:16  
 sons by name: Gershon, Kohath, and **M**. . . Nm 3:17  
 The descendants of **M** acquired twelve . . . Josh 21:7  
 the daughter of **M** son of Ox son of . . . Jdt 8:1

**MERCIFUL**

compassionate and **m**, very patient, . . . Ex 34:6  
 with them, and don't be **m** to them. . . Dt 7:2  
 of Israel are **m** kings. Allow us to . . . 1Ki 20:31  
 compassionate and **m**, very patient, and . . . Ps 103:8  
 is waiting to be **m** to you, and will . . . Is 30:18  
 God, for he is **m** and compassionate. . . Jt 2:13  
 he could become a **m** and faithful high . . . Heb 2:17  
 You are blessed, **m** God, and your name . . . Tob 3:11  
 compassionate and **m**, he forgives sins . . . Sir 2:11

of the kingdom forever because he was **m** . . . . . 1Macc 2:57  
 mighty, just, and **m**. You are the only . . . . . 2Macc 1:24  
 kind, patient, and **m**, and you feel . . . . . PrMan 7  
 almighty Lord and **m** God and father, . . . . . 3Macc 5:7  
 show mercy, because I am **m**, says the Lord. . . . . 2Esd 2:31  
 might become **m** toward our nation . . . . . 4Macc 9:24

### MERCY

he begged us for **m**, but we didn't . . . . . Gn 42:21  
 Don't have any **m** on them! Don't . . . . . Dt 13:8  
 Without **m**, they wiped out everything in . . . . . Josh 6:21  
 on them without **m**, they flee . . . . . Job 27:22  
 my troubles! Have **m** on me! Listen to . . . . . Ps 4:1  
 he'll show no **m** on his day of . . . . . Prv 6:34  
 and widows no **m**, for everyone was . . . . . Is 9:17  
 in justice, in devoted love, and in **m**. . . . . Hos 2:19  
 done for you and how he has shown you **m**. . . . . Mk 5:19  
 He shows **m** to everyone, from one . . . . . Lk 1:50  
 without affection, and without **m**. . . . . Ro 1:31  
 we can receive **m** and find grace. . . . . Heb 4:16  
 deeds are just; **m** and truth mark all . . . . . Tob 3:2  
 But show no **m** to any who continue to . . . . . Jdt 2:11  
 in love. Favor and **m** belong to the holy. . . . . Wis 3:9  
 Lord, wait for his **m**, and don't turn . . . . . Sir 2:7  
 our prayer for **m** on any righteous . . . . . Bar 2:19  
 Don't turn your **m** away from us! Hold to . . . . . PrAz 12  
 and to pray and ask for **m** and compassion. . . . . 1Macc 3:44  
 the people together again and shows **m**. . . . . 2Macc 2:7  
 about these things, and we obtained **m**. . . . . 1Esd 8:53  
 In your great **m**, you allowed . . . . . PrMan 7  
 all power to have **m** on them by . . . . . 3Macc 5:51  
 Have **m** on your people. Make our . . . . . 4Macc 6:28

### RECEIVE MERCY

2Ch 30:9; Prv 28:13; Mt 5:7; Ro 11:31; Heb 4:16

### SHOW ME MERCY

Mt 15:22; Mk 10:47; 10:48; Lk 18:38; 18:39

### SHOW MERCY

Ps 102:14; 119:29; Mt 5:7; 17:15; Lk 18:13; 2Ti 1:16; LJer 37

### MESHACH

Mishael "**M**," and Azariah . . . . . Dn 1:7  
 Shadrach, **M**, and Abednego walked around . . . . . PrAz 1

### MESHULLAM

family: **M**, Han-aniah, and . . . . . 1Ch 3:19

### MESSAGE

This is the **m** of your servant . . . . . Gn 32:4  
 to you with this **m**. Let my people go . . . . . Ex 7:16  
 Zippor's son, sent them to me with the **m**. . . . . Nm 22:10  
 I have a secret **m** for you, king. So . . . . . Jgs 3:19  
 he explain the **m**? To those just . . . . . Is 28:9  
 We have heard a **m** from the LORD . . . . . Obad 1  
 his wife sent this **m** to him, "Leave . . . . . Mt 27:19  
 sacred and undying **m** of eternal . . . . . Mk 16:9  
 he delivered his **m** with authority. . . . . Lk 4:32  
 this said, "This **m** is harsh. Who can . . . . . Jn 6:60  
 accepted Peter's **m** were baptized. God . . . . . Ac 2:41  
 (that is, the **m** of faith that we . . . . . Ro 10:8  
 with his powerful **m**. After he carried . . . . . Heb 1:3  
 Assyrians sent a **m** to everyone who . . . . . Jdt 1:7  
 them a peaceful **m**. "Let us pass. . . . . 1Macc 5:48  
 he sent a **m** into the coastal. . . . . 2Macc 8:11  
 of Egypt sent a **m** to Josiah: "What . . . . . 1Esd 1:24  
 be an appropriate **m** that could be. . . . . 4Macc 17:18

### MESSANGER

#### GOD'S MESSENGER

Gn 21:17; 31:11; Ex 14:19; Jgs 6:20; 13:6, 9

#### LORD'S MESSENGER

Ex 16:7, 9, 10, 11; 22:11, 15; Ex 3:2; Nm 22:22; 22:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 34, 35; Jgs 2:1, 4; 5:23; 6:11, 12, 21, 22; 13:13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21; 2Sa 24:16; 1Kgs 19:7; 2Kgs 1:3, 15; 19:35; 1Ch 21:12, 21:15, 16, 18, 30; Ps 34:7; 35:5, 6; Is 37:36; Hg 1:13; Zec 1:11; 1:12; 3:5, 6; 12:8

### MESSENGRS

The two **m** entered Sodom in the evening. . . . . Gn 19:1  
 Moses sent **m** from Kadesh to the king of . . . . . Nm 20:14  
 I then sent **m** from the Kedemoth desert to . . . . . Dt 2:26  
 This is because she hid the **m** we sent. . . . . Josh 6:17  
 the command—many **m** are bringing good . . . . . Ps 68:11  
 Wicked **m** fall into trouble, but a . . . . . Prv 13:17  
 to that nation's **m**? The LORD has. . . . . Is 14:32  
 the voice of your **m** will never again . . . . . Na 2:13  
 speaking with her, **m** came from the . . . . . Mk 5:35  
 After John's **m** were gone, Jesus spoke to . . . . . Lk 7:24  
 Send **m** to Joppa at once and summon a . . . . . Ac 10:5  
 than the other **m**, such as angels, . . . . . Heb 1:4  
 with me. I'll send **m** to Tobit your . . . . . Tob 10:8  
 they sent away his **m** empty-handed and . . . . . Jdt 1:11  
 The king sent **m** carrying letters to . . . . . 1Macc 1:44  
 you need them, send **m** to carry them back. . . . . 2Macc 2:15  
 they mocked the **m** and made fun of . . . . . 1Esd 1:49

### MESSIAH

We have found the **M** . . . . . Jn 1:41  
 I know that the **M** is coming. . . . . Jn 4:25

### MICAH

was a man named **M** who lived . . . . . Jgs 17:1  
**M** of Moresheth, who prophesied during . . . . . Jer 26:18  
 word that came to **M** of Moresheth in . . . . . Mic 1:1  
 Hosea, Amos, Joel, **M**, Obadiah, Zephaniah, . . . . . 2Esd 1:39

### MICAHIAH

His name is **M**, Imlah's son. . . . . 1Ki 22:8  
 When **M**, Gemariah's son and Shaphan's . . . . . Jer 36:11

### MICHAEL

their households: **M**, Meshullam, Sheba, . . . . . 1Ch 5:13  
 my way. But then **M**, one of the . . . . . Dn 10:13  
 The archangel **M**, when he argued with the . . . . . Jude 9  
 was war in heaven: **M** and his angels . . . . . Rev 12:7

### MICHAL

the oldest, and **M**, the younger . . . . . 1Sa 14:49

### MIDIAN

Jokshan, Medan, **M**, Ishbak, and Shuah. . . . . Gn 25:2  
 in the land of **M**. One day Moses was . . . . . Ex 2:15  
 to the elders of **M**. . . . . Nm 22:4  
 the leaders of **M**. They had lived in. . . . . Josh 13:21  
 what you did to **M**, to Sisera, and to . . . . . Ps 83:9  
 As on the day of **M**, you've shattered the . . . . . Is 9:4  
 curtains of the land of **M** were quaking. . . . . Hab 3:7  
 this, he fled to **M**, where he lived as . . . . . Ac 7:29

### MIDIANITE

When some **M** traders passed by, they . . . . . Gn 37:28  
 Now there was a **M** priest who had seven . . . . . Ex 2:16  
 said to Hobab the **M**, Reuel's son . . . . . Nm 10:29  
 rolling into the **M** camp. It came to a . . . . . Jgs 7:13

### MIDIANITES

Meanwhile the **M** had sold Joseph to the . . . . . Gn 37:36  
 Go after the **M** and destroy the . . . . . Nm 25:17  
 them over to the **M** for seven years. . . . . Jgs 6:1  
 all of the **M**, burned their . . . . . Jdt 2:26

### MILCAH

Nahor's wife was **M** the daughter of . . . . . Gn 11:29  
 were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, **M**, and Tirzah. . . . . Nm 26:33  
 Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, **M**, and Tirzah. . . . . Josh 17:3

### MIND

#### CHANGED HIS MIND

Ex 32:14; 2Kgs 24:1; 1Ch 21:15; Ps 106:45; Mt 21:29; 2Macc 4:46

### MINISTER

the altar to **m** as priests in the . . . . . Ex 28:43  
 which they would **m**, and the . . . . . Nm 3:31  
 covenant, to **m** before the LORD. . . . . Dt 10:8



LORD's chest and to *m* to him forever. . . . 1Ch 15:2  
 now! All you who *m* in the LORD's . . . . Ps 134:1  
 priests who *m* before me be . . . . Jer 33:21  
 helps me to be a *m* of Christ Jesus to . . . . Ro 15:16

**MINISTERS**

the robe when he *m* as a priest. Its . . . . Ex 28:35  
 and *m* in the LORD his God's name, just . . . . Dt 18:7  
 namely, to send us *m* for God's house. . . . Ezr 8:17  
 you make fire and flame your *m*. . . . Ps 104:4  
 of the LORD: *m* of Our God, they. . . . Is 61:6  
 The priests and the LORD's *m* mourn. . . . Jl 1:9  
 qualified us as *m* of a new covenant. . . . 2Co 3:6  
 and who uses flames of fire as *m*. . . . Heb 1:7

**MINISTRY**

delighted with the *m* of the priests and. . . . Neh 12:44  
 until he began his public *m* to Israel. . . . Lk 1:80  
 active in public *m* among the Jewish . . . . Jn 11:54  
 of us and received a share of this *m*. . . . Ac 1:17  
 to the Gentiles, I publicize my own *m* . . . . Ro 11:13

**MIRACLES**

using tests, *m*, wonders, war, a . . . . Dt 4:34  
 the signs and *m* that the Most High . . . . Dn 4:2  
 your name and do lots of *m* in your name? . . . . Mt 7:22  
 unable to do any *m* there, except that . . . . Mk 6:5  
 Bethesda. If the *m* done among you had . . . . Lk 10:13  
 to you through *m*, wonders, and. . . . Ac 2:22  
 performance of *m* to another, prophecy to . . . . 1Co 12:10  
 things, various *m*, and gifts from. . . . Heb 2:4

**MIRIAM**

Then the prophet *M*, Aaron's sister, took . . . . Ex 15:20  
 were in Hazeroth, *M* and Aaron . . . . Nm 12:1  
 your God did to *M* on your departure . . . . Dt 24:9  
 was the father of *M*, Shammai, and . . . . 1Ch 4:17  
 I sent Moses, Aaron, and *M* before you. . . . Mic 6:4

**MISSION**

thigh and gave him his word about this *m*. . . . Gn 24:9  
 had said about his *m* and all the signs . . . . Ex 4:28  
 don't reveal our *m*, we will deal . . . . Josh 2:14  
 the light, but his *m* was to testify. . . . Jn 1:8  
 completing their *m*, bringing with . . . . Ac 12:25  
 opportunity has opened up for my *m* here. . . . 1Co 16:9

**MIZPAH**

He also named it *M*, because he said, . . . . Gn 31:49  
 at the foot of Hermon in the land of *M*. . . . Josh 11:3  
 Ahikam's son at *M*, and he stayed . . . . Jer 40:6  
 been a trap at *M*, and a net spread . . . . Hos 5:1  
 and went to *M*, across from. . . . 1Macc 3:46

**MOAB**

son and named him *M*. He is the . . . . Gn 19:37  
 on the border of *M* toward the east. . . . Nm 21:11  
 in the land of *M*, Moses began to . . . . Dt 1:5  
 when he was in the *M* plains on the . . . . Josh 13:32  
 But *M* is my washbowl; I'll throw my shoe . . . . Ps 60:8  
 the east. Edom and *M* will be under . . . . Is 11:14  
 three crimes of *M*, and for four, I. . . . Am 2:1  
 everyone living in *M*, including the. . . . Jdt 1:12

**MOABITE**

the valley in the *M* countryside, to . . . . Nm 21:20  
 hiked up from the *M* plains to Mount. . . . Dt 34:1  
 They never entered *M* territory, because . . . . Jgs 11:18

**MOABITES**

Moab. He is the ancestor of today's *M*. . . . Gn 19:37  
 The *M* greatly feared the people, for they . . . . Nm 22:3  
 were. But the *M* called them "Emim." . . . . Dt 2:11  
 your enemies the *M*. So they followed. . . . Jgs 3:28  
 or Ammonites, *M* or the desert . . . . Jer 9:26  
 Achior and all the *M* in the presence of. . . . Jdt 6:1  
 the Jebusites, the *M*, the Egyptians, . . . . 1Esd 8:66

**MOLECH**

offer them over to *M* so that you do not . . . . Lv 18:21  
 of Moab, and to *M*, the detestable. . . . 1Ki 11:7  
 You went down to *M* with oil, and you . . . . Is 57:9

**MORDECAI**

Seraiah, Reelaiah, *M*, Bilshan, Mispal, . . . . Ezr 2:2  
 day of Nisan, *M* had a dream. He . . . . GkEst A:1  
 Resaiah, Eneneus, *M*, Beelsarus,. . . . 1Esd 5:8

**MOSES**

She named him *M*. . . . Ex 2:10  
 the LORD called to *M* and said. . . . Jl 1:9  
 The LORD spoke to *M* in the Sinai desert . . . . Nm 1:1  
 are the words that *M* spoke to all . . . . Dt 1:1  
 After *M* the LORD's servant died . . . . Josh 1:1  
 like sheep under the care of *M* and Aaron. . . . Ps 77:20  
 Even if *M* and Samuel stood . . . . Jer 15:1  
 of slavery. I sent *M*, Aaron, and Miriam . . . . Mic 6:4  
 the gift that *M* commanded. . . . Mt 8:4  
 cleansing that *M* commanded. . . . Mk 1:44  
 with the Law of *M*, they brought. . . . Lk 2:22  
 was given through *M*, so grace and . . . . Jn 1:17  
*M* said, The Lord your God will raise up. . . . Ac 3:22  
 from Adam until *M*, even over those . . . . Ro 5:14  
 him just like *M* was faithful in . . . . Heb 3:2  
 sing the song of *M*, God's servant,. . . . Rev 15:3  
 of the scroll from *M*. He knows that the . . . . Tob 6:13  
 God, the Law that *M* commanded us, the. . . . Sir 24:23  
 ordered through *M* his servant in the. . . . Bar 1:20  
 daughter according to the Law from *M*. . . . Sus 3  
 in your holy place, just as *M* said. . . . 2Macc 1:29  
 to the rules that the Lord gave to *M*. . . . 1Esd 1:6  
 and left? I gave *M* and Aaron to you . . . . 2Esd 1:13  
 When *M* was angry at Dathan and Abiram, he . . . . 4Macc 2:17

**MOTHER**

his father and *m* and embraces his. . . . Gn 2:24  
 the girl went and called the child's *m*. . . . Ex 2:8  
 days the *m* will be in a state. . . . Lv 12:4  
 whether father, *m*, brother, or sister. . . . Nm 6:7  
 father and your *m*, exactly as the . . . . Dt 5:16  
 of my father, *m*, brothers, and . . . . Josh 2:13  
 my father," the worm, "my *m* and sister." . . . . Job 17:14  
 if my father and *m* left me all alone, . . . . Ps 27:10  
 a foolish child brings sorrow to his *m*. . . . Prv 10:1  
 father' and 'my *m*,' the wealth of. . . . Is 8:4  
 against your *m*, plead with her! . . . . Hos 2:2  
 and Zerah, whose *m* was Tamar. Perez . . . . Mt 1:3  
 Simon's *m*-in-law was in bed, sick with a . . . . Mk 1:30  
 honor, that the *m* of my Lord should . . . . Lk 1:43  
 Cana of Galilee. Jesus' *m* was there, and . . . . Jn 2:1  
 including Mary the *m* of Jesus, and his . . . . Ac 1:14  
 believer, along with his *m* and mine. . . . Ro 16:13  
 without father or *m* or any family. He . . . . Heb 7:3  
 the great, the *m* of prostitutes and. . . . Rev 17:5  
 Honor your *m* and take care of . . . . Tob 4:3  
 who praise their *m* are like people . . . . Sir 3:4  
 for his father and *m* and four brothers. . . . 1Macc 13:28  
 along with their *m*. The king was. . . . 2Macc 7:1  
 no memory of his father or *m* or country. . . . 1Esd 4:21  
 his sons, like a *m* with her. . . . 2Esd 1:28  
 Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their *m*. . . . 4Macc 1:8

**MOUNT**

**MOUNT OF OLIVES**

2Sa 15:30; Zec 14:4; Mt 21:1; 24:3; 26:30; Mk 11:1; 13:3; 14:26; Lk 19:29; 19:37; 21:37; 22:39; Jn 8:1; Ac 1:12

**MOUNT SINAI**

Ex 19:11; 19:18, 20, 23; 24:16; 31:18; 34:2, 4, 29, 32; Lv 7:38; 25:1; 26:46; 27:34; Nm 3:1; 28:6; Neh 9:13; Ac 7:30; 7:38; Ga 4:24; 4:25

**MOUNT ZION**

2Kgs 19:31; Ps 48:2, 11; 74:2; 125:1; Is 4:5; 8:18; 10:12; 18:7; 24:23; 29:8; 31:4; 37:32; Lam 5:18; Jl 2:32; Obad 17; 1:21; Mic 4:7; Heb 3:30

12:22; Rev 14:1; Jdt 9:13; 1Macc 4:37, 60; 5:54; 6:48, 62; 7:33;  
10:11; 14:26; 2Esd 2:40, 42; 13:35

**MOUNTAIN**

of the tenth month the **m** peaks appeared . . . . . Gn 8:5  
from the **LORD's m** for three days . . . . . Nm 10:33  
us: You've been at this **m** long enough . . . . . Dt 1:6  
to the top of the **m** that is opposite . . . . . Josh 15:8  
But an eroding **m** breaks up, and rock is  
appoint my king on Zion, my holy **m!** . . . . . Ps 2:6  
days to come the **m** of the **LORD's** . . . . . Is 2:2  
a shout on my holy **m!** Let all the  
him to a very high **m** and showed him all . . . . . Mt 4:8  
Jesus went up on a **m** and called those he  
filled, and every **m** and hill will be  
worshipped on this **m**, but you and your . . . . . Jn 4:20  
I showed you on the **m** in every detail . . . . . Heb 8:5  
up, and every **m** and island was . . . . . Rev 6:14  
on your holy **m** and an altar in . . . . . Wis 9:8  
ordered every high **m** and the eternal . . . . . Bar 5:7  
like stones from a **m**. Their servants  
went out and hid under cover of the **m**. . . . . 1Macc 9:38  
he went to the **m** that Moses . . . . . 2Macc 2:4  
march and overcome **m** fortresses, walls, . . . . . 1Esd 4:4  
he carved a great **m** for himself and . . . . . 2Esd 13:6  
their nests on **m** peaks, in steep . . . . . 4Macc 14:16

**GOD'S MOUNTAIN**

Ex 3:1; 4:27; 18:5; 24:13; 1Kgs 19:8; Eze 28:16

**MURDER**

from Athaliah so she couldn't **m** him . . . . . 2Ch 22:11  
widows and immigrants; they **m** orphans, . . . . . Ps 94:6  
feels guilty about **m**, don't hold them  
offspring to death, and **m** all who remain. . . . . Prv 28:17  
Swearing, lying, **m**, together with  
charged with the **m** of all the . . . . . Is 14:30  
with Stephen's **m**. At that time, the . . . . . Hos 4:2  
full of jealousy, **m**, fighting, . . . . . Lk 11:50  
He will bring the **m** of our families, the  
along with his desire to **m** his brother. . . . . Ac 8:1  
takes away a neighbor's living commits **m**, . . . . . Ro 1:29  
land. He committed **m** and spoke very . . . . . Jdt 8:22  
and angry over the wicked **m** of this man. . . . . Wis 10:3  
They **m** and are murdered, but they don't. . . . . Sir 34:26  
1Macc 1:24  
2Macc 4:35  
1Esd 4:5

**COMMIT MURDER**

Eze 11:6; Mt 5:21; 19:18; Mk 10:19; Jas 2:11; 4:2; 2Esd 1:26

**MUSIC**

sing. I will make **m** to the **LORD**. . . . . Jgs 5:3  
For the **m** leader. With stringed . . . . . Ps 4:1  
and we will make **m** at the **LORD's** . . . . . Is 38:20  
the house and heard **m** and dancing. . . . . Lk 15:25  
sing and make **m** to the Lord in . . . . . Eph 5:19  
talk is like party **m** during mourning, . . . . . Sir 22:6  
celebrated with **m** and enthusiasm for . . . . . 1Esd 4:63

**Nn****NAAMAN**

Ashbel, Gera, **N**, Ehi, Rosh, . . . . . Gn 46:21  
were Ard and **N** from Ard, the . . . . . Nm 26:40  
**N**, a general for the king of Aram, was a  
cleansed. Instead, **N** the Syrian was . . . . . 2Ki 5:1  
Lk 4:27

**NABAL**

The man's name was **N**, and his wife's . . . . . 1Sa 25:3

**NABOTH**

**N** from Jezreel had a vineyard. . . . . 1Ki 21:1

**NADAB**

She gave birth to **N**, Abihu, Eleazar, . . . . . Ex 6:23  
Now **N** and Abihu, two of Aaron's sons, . . . . . Lv 10:1  
of Aaron's sons: **N** the oldest, and . . . . . Nm 3:2

ancestors. His son **N** succeeded him as . . . . . 1Ki 14:20  
Ahikar and **N**, Tobit's nephews, were also . . . . . Tob 11:18

**NAHOR**

30 years old, he became the father of **N**. . . . . Gn 11:22  
was Terah, the father of Abraham and **N**. . . . . Josh 24:2  
son of Abraham son of Terah son of **N** . . . . . Lk 3:34

**NAME**

What's this God's **n**? What am I . . . . . Ex 3:13  
not defile your God's **n**! I am the **LORD**. . . . . Lv 18:21  
recording the **n** of every male, . . . . . Nm 1:2  
**LORD** your God's **n** as if it were of . . . . . Dt 5:11  
us and make our **n** disappear from the . . . . . Josh 7:9  
the **LORD** has taken; bless the **LORD's n**. . . . . Job 1:21  
all who love your **n** can rejoice in you. . . . . Ps 5:11  
a blessing, but the **n** of the wicked rots. . . . . Prv 10:7  
let us take your **n**, take away our . . . . . Is 4:1  
in heaven, uphold the holiness of your **n**. . . . . Mt 6:9  
twelve: Peter, a **n** he gave Simon . . . . . Mk 3:16  
to your son and you must **n** him John. . . . . Lk 1:13  
believed in his **n**, he authorized to . . . . . Jn 1:12  
who calls on the **n** of the Lord will . . . . . Ac 2:21  
it is written: The **n** of God is . . . . . Ro 2:24  
announce your **n** to my brothers and . . . . . Heb 2:12  
holding on to my **n**, and you didn't. . . . . Rev 2:13  
The Lord is your **n**. Destroy their . . . . . Jdt 9:8  
hymns to your holy **n**, Lord. They . . . . . Wis 10:20  
If you get a bad **n**, you will also . . . . . Sir 6:1  
you have made your **n** famous to this. . . . . Bar 2:11  
in the Lord's **n**, he swore falsely . . . . . 1Esd 1:46  
sealed it by your powerful and glorious **n**. . . . . PrvMan 3  
apart for your **n**, though you don't . . . . . 3Macc 2:9  
at the bitter river and insulting my **n**. . . . . 2Esd 1:22

**NAOMI**

of his wife was **N**, and the names of . . . . . Ru 1:2

**NAPHTALI**

and now I've won." So she named him **N**. . . . . Gn 30:8  
Dan and **N**, Gad and Asher . . . . . Ex 1:4  
from **N**, Ahira, Enan's son. . . . . Nm 1:15  
Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and **N** . . . . . Dt 27:13  
For the people of **N**, the lot went out. . . . . Josh 19:32  
princes of Zebulun and the princes of **N** . . . . . Ps 68:27  
and the land of **N**, but later . . . . . Is 9:1  
the sea in the area of Zebulun and **N** . . . . . Mt 4:13  
from the tribe of **N**, twelve thousand . . . . . Rev 7:6  
family came from Asiel, of the **N** tribe. . . . . Tob 1:1

**NATHAN**

as follows: Shammua, Shobab, **N**, Solomon, . . . . . 2Sa 5:14  
when the prophet **N** came to him just . . . . . Ps 51:1  
son of Mattatha son of **N** son of David . . . . . Lk 3:31  
knew Hananiah and **N**, the two sons of . . . . . Tob 5:14  
After him, **N** rose up to prophesy at the . . . . . Sir 47:1  
Sheamaiah, Jarib, **N**, Elnathan. . . . . 1Esd 8:43

**NATHANAEL**

Philip found **N** and said to him, "We have . . . . . Jn 1:45  
of Eliab son of **N** son of Salamiel . . . . . Jdt 8:1  
Maaseiah, Ishmael, **N**, Gedaliah, and . . . . . 1Esd 9:22

**NAZARENE**

be fulfilled: He will be called a **N**. . . . . Mt 2:23  
said, "You were also with the **N**, Jesus." . . . . . Mk 14:67  
told him, "Jesus the **N** is passing by." . . . . . Lk 18:37  
Jesus the **N**." He said to them, . . . . . Jn 18:5  
words! Jesus the **N** was a man whose . . . . . Ac 2:22

**NAZARETH**

in a city called **N** so that what was . . . . . Mt 2:23  
Jesus came from **N** of Galilee, and . . . . . Mk 1:9  
angel Gabriel to **N**, a city in Galilee, . . . . . Lk 1:26  
Prophets: Jesus, Joseph's son, from **N**. . . . . Jn 1:45  
this man Jesus of **N** will destroy this . . . . . Ac 6:14

**NAZIRITE**

promise to be a **N** in order to be . . . . . Nm 6:2  
 is going to be a **N** for God from . . . . . Jgs 13:5

**NEBO**

Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, **N**, and Beon is . . . . . Nm 32:3  
 to Mount **N**, which is in the . . . . . Dt 32:49  
 in Aroer, as far as **N** and Baal-meon. . . . . 1Ch 5:8  
 Moab wails over **N** and over Medeba. . . . . Is 15:2

**NEBUCHADNEZZAR**

King **N** of Babylon. . . . . 2Ki 24:1  
 Babylon's King **N** is attacking us. . . . . Jer 21:2  
 of the rule of **N**, who ruled the . . . . . Jdt 1:1  
 of war whom King **N** of Babylon had . . . . . GkEst A:3  
 Babylon's King **N** removed Jeconiah. . . . . Bar 1:9  
**N**, Babylon's king, will bring you as. . . . . LJer 1  
 Babylon's King **N** went up against . . . . . 1Esd 1:38  
 Ezra, Chusi's son, in the days of King **N**. . . . . 2Esd 1:4

**NEBUZARADAN**

Nebuchadnezzar, **N** arrived. . . . . 2Ki 25:8  
**N** the captain of the special guard . . . . . Jer 39:9

**NECO**

king Pharaoh **N** marched against . . . . . 2Ki 23:29  
 army of Pharaoh **N**, Egypt's king. . . . . Jer 46:2

**NEEDY**

money to the **n** is a good gift in . . . . . Tob 4:11  
 and don't avoid looking the **n** in the eyes. . . . . Sir 4:1

**POOR AND NEEDY**

Job 24:14; Ps 70:5, 74:21; 109:16, 22; Jer 22:16; Eze 18:12

**NEIGHBOR**

he and his **n** Hirah the . . . . . Gn 38:12  
 woman will ask her **n** along with the . . . . . Ex 3:22  
 Do not testify falsely against your **n** . . . . . Dt 5:20  
 struck down the **n** by accident and . . . . . Josh 20:5  
 no harm to a friend, doesn't insult a **n**. . . . . Ps 15:3  
 Don't say to your **n**, "Go and come back; . . . . . Prv 3:28  
 against the other, **n** against neighbor. . . . . Is 3:5  
 I set everyone against their own **n**. . . . . Zec 8:10  
 fight against the **n** pushed Moses aside. . . . . Ac 7:27  
 won't ever teach a **n** or their brother . . . . . Heb 8:11  
 answer your **n**, but if you don't, . . . . . Sir 5:12  
 that they had plotted to treat their **n**. . . . . Sus 6:1  
 wife or anything that belongs to your **n**." . . . . . 4Macc 2:5

**LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR**

Lv 19:18; Mt 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mk 12:31; Lk 10:27; Ro 13:9; Ga 5:14; Jas 2:8

**NETHANEL**

from Issachar, **N**, Zuar's son . . . . . Nm 1:8  
**N** his fourth, Raddai his fifth. . . . . 1Ch 2:14  
 and his brother **N**, Hashabiah. . . . . 1Esd 1:9

**NICANOR**

son, as well as **N** and Gorgias, two . . . . . 1Macc 3:38  
**N**, Patroclus' son, one of the king's. . . . . 2Macc 8:9  
 Law. Even Seleucus **N**, king of Asia, set . . . . . 4Macc 3:20

**NICODEMUS**

was a Pharisee named **N**, a Jewish leader. . . . . Jn 3:1

**NILE**

dreamed that he was standing near the **N**. . . . . Gn 41:1  
 Hebrews into the **N** River, but you can . . . . . Ex 1:22  
 Tyre and the **N** will be darkened. . . . . Is 5:30  
 overflows like the **N**, and then falls. . . . . Am 8:8

**NIMROD**

Cush fathered **N**, the first great warrior . . . . . Gn 10:8  
**N** was the father of **N**, the first warrior . . . . . 1Ch 1:10  
 sword, the land of **N** with the drawn . . . . . Mic 5:6

**NINEVEH**

land and built **N**, Rehoboth City. . . . . Gn 10:11

returning to **N**, where he stayed. . . . . 2Ki 19:36  
 left and went back to **N**, where he stayed. . . . . Is 37:37  
 Get up and go to **N**, that great city. . . . . Jon 1:2  
 The citizens of **N** will stand up at the . . . . . Mt 12:41  
 to the people of **N**, so the Human One . . . . . Lk 11:30  
 taken with me to **N** in the country of . . . . . Tob 1:3  
 the great city of **N**. In those days, . . . . . Jdt 1:1

**NOAH**

and named him **N**, saying, "This one will . . . . . Gn 5:29  
 were Mahlah, **N**, Hoglah, Milcah, . . . . . Nm 26:33  
 were named Mahlah, **N**, Hoglah, Milcah, . . . . . Josh 17:3  
 like the days of **N** for me, when I . . . . . Is 54:9  
 was in the time of **N**, so it will be at . . . . . Mt 24:37  
 son of Shem son of **N** son of Lamech . . . . . Lk 3:36  
 By faith **N** responded with godly fear when . . . . . Heb 11:7  
 of the prophets. **N** was first a . . . . . Tob 4:12  
**N** was found perfect and righteous; in a . . . . . Sir 44:17  
 left one of them, **N**, with his. . . . . 2Esd 3:11

**Oo**

**OBADIAH**

Ahab had called **O**, who was in charge of . . . . . 1Ki 18:3  
 The vision of **O**. The **LORD** God proclaims . . . . . Obad 1  
 family of Joab, **O**, Jehiel's son and . . . . . 1Esd 8:35  
 Hosea, Amos, Joel, Micah, **O**, Zephaniah. . . . . 2Esd 1:39

**OBEY**

all my people will **o** your command. Only . . . . . Gn 41:40  
 God so they didn't **o** the Egyptian . . . . . Ex 1:17  
 But if you do not **o** me and do not carry . . . . . Lv 26:14  
 accident you don't **o** all these commands. . . . . Nm 15:22  
**LORD** your God and you will **o** his voice, . . . . . Dt 4:30  
 as you carefully **o** all of the . . . . . Josh 1:7  
 about me, they **o** me; foreigners. . . . . Ps 18:44  
 Those who **o** me will dwell securely. . . . . Prv 1:33  
 It is better to **o** the reprimand of the . . . . . Ecc 7:5  
 If you agree and **o**, you will eat the . . . . . Is 1:19  
 are those who **o** his word. The day . . . . . Jl 2:11  
 Even the winds and the lake **o** him! . . . . . Mt 8:27  
 commands unclean spirits and they **o** him! . . . . . Mk 1:27  
 the winds and the water, and they **o** him! . . . . . Lk 8:25  
 before God to **o** you rather than. . . . . Ac 4:19  
 for those who **o** wickedness instead . . . . . Ro 2:8  
 that the peoples of the world would **o** me. . . . . Wis 8:14  
 and if they don't **o**, make their. . . . . Sir 33:30  
 and they willingly **o** when given an order. . . . . LJer 59  
 We didn't **o** your commands; we didn't keep . . . . . PrAz 7  
 Whoever didn't **o** the king would di . . . . . 1Macc 1:50  
 I don't intend to **o** the king's order. . . . . 2Macc 7:30  
 say to them they **o** as soon as they . . . . . 1Esd 4:3  
 you wouldn't **o** me. I will turn to . . . . . 2Esd 1:24  
 kept calling out, "**o** the king's orders!" . . . . . 4Macc 6:4

**OBEY THE LORD**

Ex 15:26; Dt 8:20; 11:28; 27:10; 28:1, 2, 13, 45, 62; 30:16; 1Sa 12:15; 15:19, 20; Jer 26:13; 38:20; 42:6; 43:7; 44:23

**OFFERING**

**COMPENSATION OFFERING**

Lv 5:15; 5:16, 18, 19; 6:6, 17; 7:1, 2, 5, 7, 37; 14:12, 13, 14, 17, 21, 24, 25, 28; 19:21, 22; Nm 6:12; 15a 6:4, 8, 17; Ezr 10:19; Prv 14:9; Eze 42:13

**DRINK OFFERING**

Ex 29:40, 41; 30:9; Lv 23:13; Nm 4:7; 6:15, 17; 15:5, 7, 10, 24; 28:7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 24; 29:16, 22, 25, 28, 33, 34, 38; 2Kgs 16:13; Is 57:6; Jl 1:9, 13; 2:14; Phi 2:17

**ENTIRELY BURNED OFFERING**

Gn 22:2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 13; Ex 18:12; 29:18, 25, 42; 30:9; 40:29; Lv 1:3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 17; 3:5; 4:24, 33; 5:7, 10; 6:9, 10, 12, 25; 7:2, 8, 37; 8:18, 21, 28; 9:2, 3, 7, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 22, 24; 12:6, 8; 14:13, 19, 20, 22, 31; 15:15, 30; 16:3, 5; 17:8; 22:18; 23:12, 18; Nm 6:11; 6:14; 7:15, 21, 27, 33, 39, 45, 51, 57, 63, 69, 75, 81, 87; 8:12, 15, 3

5, 8, 24; 23:3, 6, 15, 17; 28:3, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 19, 23, 24, 27, 31; 29:2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 36, 38; Dt 13:16; 33:10; Josh 22:23; 22:26, 29; Jgs 6:26; 11:31; 13:16, 23; 15a 6:14; 7:9, 10; 13:9, 10, 12; 25a 24:22; 2Kgs 3:27; 10:25; 16:13, 15; 1Ch 21:24, 26; 2Ch 7:1; 29:18, 27, 28, 29; Ezr 8:35; Neh 10:33; Job 42:8; Ps 51:16; Is 40:16; 43:23; Eze 40:38; 40:42; 45:17, 23; 46:4, 12, 13, 15; Jdt 4:14; 16:16, 18; Bar 1:10; PrAz 16; 1Macc 1:45, 54, 59; 4:44, 53, 56; 5:54; 2Macc 2:10; 1Esd 4:52; 5:48, 49

**GIFT OFFERING**

Ex 29:27; 29:28, 41; 30:13, 14, 15; 35:24; Lv 10:14; Nm 5:9; 6:20; 15:19, 20, 21; 18:24, 26, 27, 28, 29; 31:29, 41, 52; Josh 22:23; 22:29

**GRAIN OFFERING**

Ex 29:41; 30:9; 40:29; Lv 2:1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15; 5:13; 6:14, 15, 20, 21, 23; 7:9, 10, 37; 9:4, 17; 10:12; 14:10, 20, 21, 31; 23:13, 16; Nm 4:16; 5:15, 18, 25, 26; 6:15, 17; 7:13, 19, 25, 31, 37, 43, 49, 55, 61, 67, 73, 79, 87; 8:8; 15:4, 6, 9; 28:5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 20, 26, 28, 31; 29:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38; Jgs 13:19; 13:23; 2Kgs 3:20; 16:13, 15; 1Ch 21:23; Neh 10:33; 13:5, 9; Is 57:6; 66:3; Eze 42:13; 45:17; 46:5, 7, 11, 14, 15; Jl 1:9, 13; 2:14; Mal 1:10; 1:11, 13

**OFFERINGS****COMPENSATION OFFERINGS**

Nm 18:9; Ps 40:6; Eze 40:39; 44:29; 46:20

**DRINK OFFERINGS**

Ex 25:29; 27:16; Lv 23:18; 23:37; Nm 28:14; 28:31; 29:6, 11, 18, 19, 21, 27, 30, 31, 37, 39; 2Kgs 16:15; 1Ch 29:21; 2Ch 29:35; Ezr 7:17; Jer 7:18; 19:13; 32:29; 44:17, 18, 19, 25; Eze 20:28; 45:17

**ENTIRELY BURNED OFFERINGS**

Gn 8:20; Ex 10:25; 20:24; 24:5; 30:28; 31:9; 32:6; 35:16; 38:1; 40:6, 10, 29; Lv 4:7, 10, 18, 25, 29, 30, 34; 10:19; 16:24; 23:37; Nm 6:16; 10:10; 29:39; Dt 12:6, 11, 13, 14; Josh 8:31; 22:27, 28; Jgs 20:6; 21:4; 15a 6:15; 10:8; 15:22; 25a 6:17; 6:18; 24:24, 25; 1Kgs 3:24, 15; 8:64; 9:25; 10:5; 2Kgs 5:17; 10:24; 16:15; 1Ch 6:49; 16:1, 2, 40; 21:23, 26, 29; 22:1; 23:31; 29:21; 2Ch 1:6; 2:4; 4:6; 7:7; 8:12; 9:4; 13:11; 24:14; 29:7, 31, 32, 34, 35; 30:15; 31:2, 3; 35:12, 14, 16; Ezr 3:2, 3, 4, 5, 6; 6:9; 8:35; Job 1:5; Ps 20:3; 40:6; 50:8; 51:19; 66:13, 15; Is 1:11; 56:7; Jer 6:20; 7:21, 22; 14:12; 17:26; 33:18; Eze 40:39; 43:18, 24, 27; 44:11; 45:15, 17, 25; 46:2; Hos 4:13; 6:6; Am 5:22; Mic 6:6; Mk 12:33; Heb 10:6, 8

**GIFT OFFERINGS**

Ex 25:2, 3; 35:5, 21; 36:3, 6; Nm 18:11; 18:19; 2Ch 35:8

**GRAIN OFFERINGS**

Lv 2:13; 23:18, 37; Nm 18:9; 29:39; 25a 1:21; 1Kgs 8:64; 1Ch 23:29; 2Ch 7:7; Ezr 7:17; Ps 20:3; Jer 14:12; 17:26; 33:18; 41:5; Eze 44:29; 45:15, 17, 24, 25; 46:20

**OMRI**

army made their general **O** king of Israel. . . . . 1Ki 16:16  
the policies of **O**, all the practices . . . . . Mic 6:16

**ORACLE**

his address: "The **o** of Balaam, Beor's . . . . . Nm 24:3  
speech is like an **o**, in a judgment, . . . . . Prv 16:10  
An **o** about Babylon, which Isaiah, Amoz's . . . . . Is 13:1  
An **o** about Nineveh: the scroll containing. . . . . Na 1:1  
with the **o** of judgment for . . . . . Sir 45:10

**ORPHAN**

Don't treat any widow or **o** badly . . . . . Ex 22:22  
of an immigrant or **o**. Don't take a . . . . . Dt 24:17  
Yet he rescues the **o** from the sword of . . . . . Job 5:15  
justice for the **o** and the oppressed, . . . . . Ps 10:18  
defend the **o**, plead for the . . . . . Is 1:17  
hands. In you the **o** finds compassion. . . . . Hos 14:3  
widow, nor can they do any good for an **o**. . . . . LJer 37  
as that of the **o**, likewise of the . . . . . 1Esd 3:19  
in need. Protect the **o**. Clothe the naked. . . . . 2Esd 2:20

**ORPHANS**

be widows, and your children will be **o**. . . . . Ex 22:24  
who cried out, the **o** who lacked help. . . . . Job 29:12  
Father of **o** and defender of widows is God . . . . . Ps 68:5  
marker; don't invade the fields of **o**. . . . . Prv 23:10  
won't leave you as **o**. I will come to. . . . . Jn 14:18

like a parent to **o**, and take care of . . . . . Sir 4:10  
these were the deposits of widows and **o**. . . . . 2Macc 3:10

**ORPHANS AND THE WIDOWS**

Dt 16:11; 16:14; 24:19, 20, 21; 26:12, 13

**ORPHANS AND WIDOWS**

Dt 10:18; 14:29; Ps 146:9; Is 9:17; Eze 22:7; Jas 1:27; Tob 1:8

**OTHNIEL**

So **O** son of Kenaz, Caleb's brother, . . . . . Josh 15:17

**Pp****PADDAN-ARAM**

the sister of Laban the Aramean, from **P**. . . . . Gn 25:20

**PARENTS**

Your **p** and even your . . . . . Ex 10:6  
when the **p** discipline him, he . . . . . Dt 21:18  
will ask their **p**. 'What about these . . . . . Josh 4:21  
and the glory of children is their **p**. . . . . Prv 17:6  
as I do today, **p** will tell children . . . . . Is 38:19  
spare them just as **p** spare a child who . . . . . Mal 3:17  
will defy their **p** and have them . . . . . Mt 10:21  
taking the child's **p** and his disciples . . . . . Mk 5:40  
had passed, Jesus' **p** circumcised him . . . . . Lk 2:21  
he was born blind, this man or his **p**? . . . . . Jn 9:2  
three months his **p** cared for him in . . . . . Ac 7:20  
and they are disobedient to their **p**. . . . . Ro 1:30  
was hidden by his **p** for three months . . . . . Heb 11:23  
So the bride's **p** led the young man . . . . . Tob 8:1  
customs of their **p** and worshipped the . . . . . Jdt 5:8  
the same way that **p** warn their . . . . . Wis 11:10  
they will serve their **p** as their masters. . . . . Sir 3:7

**PASSOVER**

meal in a hurry. It is the **P** of the LORD. . . . . Ex 12:11  
The LORD's **P** is on the fourteenth day of . . . . . Lv 23:5  
keep the **P** at its appointed . . . . . Nm 9:2  
must perform the **P** for the LORD your . . . . . Dt 16:1  
They celebrated **P** on the evening of. . . . . Josh 5:10  
Your **P** will be on the fourteenth day of . . . . . Eze 45:21  
You know that the **P** is two days from . . . . . Mt 26:2  
two days before **P** and the Festival. . . . . Mk 14:1  
went to Jerusalem for the **P** Festival. . . . . Lk 2:41  
for the Jewish **P**, and Jesus went up . . . . . Jn 2:13  
to charge him publicly after the **P**. . . . . Ac 12:4  
bread. Christ our **P** lamb has been . . . . . 1Co 5:7  
faith he kept the **P** and the sprinkling. . . . . Heb 11:28  
celebrated the **P** to the Lord in . . . . . 1Esd 1:1

**EAT THE PASSOVER**

Nm 9:11; Mt 26:17; Mk 14:12; 14:14; Lk 22:8, 11; Jn 18:28

**PASSOVER MEAL**

2Ch 30:18; Ezr 6:21; Mt 26:17; Mk 14:12; 14:14, 16; Lk 22:8, 11, 13

**PATIENCE**

against another human; why is my **p** short? . . . . . Job 21:4  
**P** leads to abundant understanding, but . . . . . Prv 14:29  
Is the LORD's **p** cut short? Are . . . . . Mic 2:7  
will you test our **p**? If you are the. . . . . Jn 10:24  
tolerance, and **p**? Don't you realize . . . . . Ro 2:4  
inherit the promises through faith and **p**. . . . . Heb 6:12  
their planning and **p**, even though the . . . . . 1Macc 8:4  
keeping with the **p** that we show . . . . . 3Macc 7:6  
mercy will pass away, **p** will be withdrawn. . . . . 2Esd 7:33

**PATIENT**

and merciful, very **p**, full of great. . . . . Ex 34:6  
The LORD is very **p** and absolutely loyal. . . . . Nm 14:18  
very **p**, and truly. . . . . Neh 9:17  
you are very **p** and full of . . . . . Ps 86:15  
up conflict, but **p** people calm down . . . . . Prv 15:18  
very **p**, full of faithful. . . . . Jl 2:13  
said, 'Please, be **p** with me, and I'll. . . . . Mt 18:26

immortality based on their **p** good work . . . . . Ro 2:7  
 you must be **p** as you wait for . . . . . Jas 5:7  
 You are very **p**. You govern . . . . . Wis 15:1  
**P** people will hold themselves back until . . . . . Sir 1:23  
 Lord, kind, **p**, and merciful, and . . . . . PrMn 7  
 and **p**, because he shows patience to . . . . . 2Esd 7:134  
 their courage and **p** endurance. What's . . . . . 4Macc 1:11

**PAUL**  
 also known as **P**, glared at . . . . . Ac 13:9  
 From **P**, a slave of Christ Jesus, called . . . . . Ro 1:1  
 friend and brother **P** wrote to you . . . . . 2Pt 3:15

**PEACE**  
 your ancestors in **p** and be buried . . . . . Gn 15:15  
 living." Jethro said to Moses, "Go in **p**." . . . . . Ex 4:18  
 I will grant **p** in the land so that you . . . . . Lv 26:6  
 lift up his face to you and grant you **p** . . . . . Nm 6:26  
 Sihon, Heshbon's king, with words of **p** . . . . . Dt 2:26  
 Joshua made **p** with them. He made a treaty . . . . . Josh 9:15  
 of the field will be at **p** with you. . . . . Job 5:23  
 and fall asleep in **p** because you alone, . . . . . Ps 4:8  
 but there is joy for those who advise **p** . . . . . Prv 12:20  
 Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of **p** . . . . . Is 9:6  
 and then proclaim "**p**!" but stir up war . . . . . Mi 3:5  
 people who make **p**, because they will . . . . . Mt 5:9  
 healed you; go in **p**, healed from your . . . . . Mk 5:34  
 of death, to guide us on the path of **p** . . . . . Lk 1:79  
**P** I leave with you. My peace I give you. . . . . Jn 14:27  
 He tried to make **p** between them by . . . . . Ac 7:26  
 Grace to you and **p** from God our . . . . . Ro 1:7  
 king of Salem," that is, "king of **p**." . . . . . Heb 7:2  
 in Asia: Grace and **p** to you from the . . . . . Rev 1:4  
 may he shower you both with mercy and **p**." . . . . . Tob 7:11  
 messengers to Holofernes, requesting **p** . . . . . Jdt 3:1  
 destruction, but in reality they are at **p** . . . . . Wis 3:3  
 sprouting forth **p** and restorative . . . . . Sir 1:18  
 of God, you would be living in **p** forever. . . . . Bar 3:13  
 greeted them in **p** and related all . . . . . 1Macc 5:25  
 country of Judea wish you prosperous **p** . . . . . 2Macc 1:1  
 in Jerusalem in **p**. With the music of . . . . . 1Esd 5:2  
 crushed in their spirits, granting us **p** . . . . . 3Macc 2:20  
 High may give you **p** and rest from your . . . . . 2Esd 10:24  
 were enjoying **p** and success . . . . . 4Macc 3:20

**GOD OF PEACE**  
 Ro 15:33; 16:20; Phi 4:9; 1Th 5:23; Heb 13:20

**GRACE AND PEACE**  
 Ga 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phi 1:2; Col 1:2; 1Th 1:1; 2Th 1:2; Ti 1:4; Phm 3;  
 1Pt 1:2; 2Pt 1:2; Rev 1:4

**PEACE FROM GOD**  
 Ro 1:7; 1Co 1:3; 2Co 1:2; Phi 1:2; 1Ti 1:2; 2Ti 1:2; Ti 1:4; Phm 3;  
 2Jn 3

**PEACE TO YOU**  
 1Sa 25:6; Ga 1:3; Eph 1:2; 2:17; Col 1:2; 1Pt 5:14; Rev 1:4

**PEACEFUL**  
 you should first extend **p** terms to it. . . . . Dt 20:10  
 and the land was **p** for forty years, until . . . . . Jgs 3:11  
 ways are pleasant; all her paths are **p** . . . . . Prv 3:17  
 will live in a **p** dwelling, in. . . . . Is 32:18  
 earth. The whole earth is **p** and quiet. . . . . Zec 1:11  
 live a quiet and **p** life in complete . . . . . 1Ti 2:2  
 it yields the **p** fruit of. . . . . Heb 12:11  
 poor, and reply with **p** and gentle speech. . . . . Sir 4:8  
 Judas sent them a **p** message: "Let us pass . . . . . 1Macc 5:48  
 not return to a **p** state, and Simon . . . . . 2Macc 4:6  
 in organized groups as a sign of **p** joy. . . . . 3Macc 6:32  
 understanding the **p** rest that they now . . . . . 2Esd 7:95

**PEKAH**  
**P**, Remaliah's son and Pekahiah's . . . . . 2Ki 15:25  
 and Israel's King **P** (Remaliah's son). . . . . Is 7:1

**PEOR**  
 to the top of **P**, which overlooks . . . . . Nm 23:28  
 stayed in the valley across from Beth-**P** . . . . . Dt 3:29

is, Bethlehem), **P**, Etam, Koulon, . . . . . Josh 15:59  
 northwest of Hazor and north of **P**. . . . . Tob 1:2

**PEREZ**  
 out on your own." So he was named **P** . . . . . Gn 38:29  
 clan; from **P**, the Perezite . . . . . Nm 26:20  
 the household of **P**, whom Tamar bore . . . . . Ru 4:12  
 was the father of **P** and Zerah, whose. . . . . Mt 1:3  
 Arni son of Herzon son of **P** son of Judah . . . . . Lk 3:33

**PERIZZITES**  
 Canaanites and the **P** lived in the land. . . . . Gn 13:7  
 the Amorites, the **P**, the Hivites, and . . . . . Ex 3:8  
 Canaanites, the **P**, the Hivites, and . . . . . Dt 7:1  
 Hittites, Hivites, **P**, Girsghashites, . . . . . Josh 3:10  
 Canaanites, the **P**, the Jebusites, . . . . . Jdt 5:16  
 the Hittites, the **P**, the Jebusites, . . . . . 1Esd 8:66  
 Hittites, **P**, and their . . . . . 2Esd 1:21

**PERSIA**  
 of his children until **P** came to power. . . . . 2Ch 36:20  
**P**, Cush, and Put are with you, all of . . . . . Eze 38:5  
 who lived in **P**, to everyone who . . . . . Izt 1:7  
 The leaders of **P** and Media. . . . . GkEst 1:3  
 decided to go to **P** and collect . . . . . 1Macc 3:31  
 that went into **P** seemed invincible. . . . . 2Macc 1:13  
 house, all the officials of Media and **P** . . . . . 1Esd 3:1  
 left Jerusalem and marched out against **P** . . . . . 4Macc 18:5

**PERSIAN**  
 of families in the rule of Darius the **P** . . . . . Neh 12:22  
 and during the rule of Cyrus the **P** . . . . . Dn 6:28  
 Cyrus the **P** took over his . . . . . Bel 1  
 the rise of the **P** kingdom, which. . . . . 1Esd 1:54

**PETER**  
 who is called **P**, and Andrew, . . . . . Mt 4:18  
 appointed twelve: **P**, a name he gave . . . . . Mk 3:16  
 When Simon **P** saw the catch, he fell at . . . . . Lk 5:8  
 Jesus was Andrew, the brother of Simon **P** . . . . . Jn 1:40  
 they were staying. **P**, John, James, and . . . . . Ac 1:13  
 just as **P** had been to the . . . . . Ga 2:7  
**P**, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's . . . . . 1Pt 1:1

**PHARAOH**  
 praised her to **P**, and the woman was . . . . . Gn 12:15  
 cities named Pithom and Rameses for **P** . . . . . Ex 1:11  
 against Egypt, **P**, and his entire . . . . . Dt 6:22  
 were slaves in Egypt to the house of **P** . . . . . 1Sa 2:27  
 of Egypt—against **P** and all his . . . . . Ps 135:9  
 How can you say to **P**, "I'm a wise . . . . . Is 19:11  
 were recognized by **P**, king of Egypt. . . . . Ac 7:10  
 Scripture says to **P**, I have put you in . . . . . Ro 9:17  
 the Red Sea, when **P** was pursuing them . . . . . 1Macc 4:9  
 Josiah's actions, **P**, Egypt's king, . . . . . 1Esd 1:23  
**P**, the former ruler of this land of . . . . . 3Macc 6:4  
 sakes. I plunged **P** together with his . . . . . 2Esd 1:10

**PHARISEE**  
 Blind **P**. First clean the inside of the . . . . . Mt 23:26  
 When the **P** who had invited Jesus saw what . . . . . Lk 7:39  
 There was a **P** named Nicodemus, a Jewish . . . . . Jn 3:1  
 council member, a **P** and teacher of the . . . . . Ac 5:34  
 respect to observing the Law, I'm a **P**. . . . . Phil 3:5

**PHARISEES**  
**CHIEF PRIESTS AND PHARISEES**  
 Jn 7:32; 7:45; 11:47; 57; 18:3

**PHARISEES AND LEGAL EXPERTS**  
 Mt 15:1; Mk 7:5; Lk 5:17; 7:30; 15:2

**PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES**  
 Mt 3:7; 16:1, 6, 11, 12; Ac 23:7

**PHILIP**  
**P**, and Bartholomew; Thomas; and Matthew. . . . . Mt 10:3  
 and Andrew; **P**, Bartholomew; Matthew; . . . . . Mk 3:18  
 his brother **P** was ruler over . . . . . Lk 3:1

and he found **P**. Jesus said to . . . . . Jn 1:43  
 James, and Andrew; **P** and Thomas; . . . . . Ac 1:13  
 the son of **P**, the first. . . . . 1Macc 6:2  
 there was **P** of the Phrygians, . . . . . 2Macc 5:22

**PHILIPPI**

area of Caesarea **P**, he asked his. . . . . Mt 16:13  
 near Caesarea **P**. On the way he. . . . . Mk 8:27  
 there we went to **P**, a city of. . . . . Ac 16:12  
 To all those in **P** who are God's . . . . . Phil 1:1

**PHILISTIA**

The army was camped at Gibbethon in **P**. . . . . 1Ki 16:15  
 shoe at Edom. I shout in triumph over **P**. . . . . Ps 60:8  
 on the slopes of **P** to the west; . . . . . Is 11:14  
 all the regions of **P**? Are you paying me. . . . . Jl 3:4

**PHILISTINE**

Reed Sea to the **P** Sea and from the . . . . . Ex 23:31  
 was in Timnah, a **P** woman caught his . . . . . Jgs 14:1  
 passions of the **P** women who had been . . . . . Ez 16:27  
 out to attack the **P**, who cursed me by . . . . . Ps 151 2:1

**PHILISTINES**

and Caphtorim, from which the **P** came. . . . . Gn 10:14  
 of the land of the **P**, even though that . . . . . Ex 13:17  
 districts of the **P** and all those of. . . . . Josh 13:2  
 of David, when the **P** seized him in. . . . . Ps 56:1  
 like the **P**, they hold hands . . . . . Is 2:6  
 Ekron, and the **P** who remain will . . . . . Am 1:8  
 of Tyre and all the rulers of the **P**. . . . . Sir 46:18  
 The rest fled into the land of the **P**. . . . . 1Macc 3:24

**PHINEHAS**

She gave birth to **P**. These were the . . . . . Ex 6:25  
 When **P** (Elezar's son and Aaron the . . . . . Nm 25:7  
 Israelites sent **P** son of Eleazar the . . . . . Josh 22:13  
 Then **P** stood up and prayed, and the . . . . . Ps 106:30  
**P**, Eleazar's son, comes third in glory, . . . . . Sir 45:23  
 the Law, just like **P** did against Zimri, . . . . . 1Macc 2:26  
 the sons of **P** son of Aaron; . . . . . 1Esd 5:5  
 of Ahijah son of **P** son of Eli son of. . . . . 2Esd 1:2

**PILATE**

and turned him over to **P** the governor. . . . . Mt 27:2  
 led him away, and turned him over to **P**. . . . . Mk 15:1  
 Pontius **P** was governor over . . . . . Lk 3:1  
 So **P** went out to them and asked, "What . . . . . Jn 18:29  
 Herod and Pontius **P**, with Gentiles and . . . . . Ac 4:27  
 when testifying before Pontius **P**. . . . . 1Ti 6:13

**PLAGUES**

Pharaoh and his household with severe **p**. . . . . Gn 12:17  
 send all my **p** on you. . . . . Ex 9:14  
 By these three **p** a third of humankind . . . . . Rev 9:18  
 he sent incurable **p** upon the entire . . . . . Jdt 5:12  
 strike Egypt with **p** as before, and I. . . . . 2Esd 15:11

**POOR**

my people who are **p** among you, don't . . . . . Ex 22:25  
 if the person is **p** and cannot afford . . . . . Lv 14:21  
 the land rich or **p**? Are there trees . . . . . Nm 13:20  
 there won't be any **p** persons among you . . . . . Dt 15:4  
 Were we invited here just to become **p**? . . . . . Jgs 14:15  
 so the **p** have hope and violence shuts its . . . . . Job 5:16  
 Because the **p** won't be forgotten forever. . . . . Ps 9:18  
 city, the ruin of the **p** is their poverty. . . . . Prv 10:15  
 stolen from the **p** are in your houses. . . . . Is 3:14  
 the head of the **p** into the dust of . . . . . Am 2:7  
 you give to the **p**, don't blow your . . . . . Mt 6:2  
 the money to the **p**. Then you will . . . . . Mk 10:21  
 good news to the **p**, to proclaim. . . . . Lk 4:18  
 it sold and the money given to the **p**? . . . . . Jn 12:5  
 gifts for the **p** of my nation and . . . . . Ac 24:17  
 for the **p** among God's people . . . . . Ro 15:26  
 sisters who are **p** should find . . . . . Jas 1:9  
 miserable, pathetic, **p**, blind, and naked. . . . . Rev 3:17  
 left to find some **p** person among our . . . . . Tob 2:3

gifts of food to friends and to the **p**. . . . . GkEst 9:22  
 Don't deprive a **p** person's life, and . . . . . Sir 4:1  
 share it with the **p** or disabled. . . . . 1Ler 27  
 it was told in a **p** and mediocre . . . . . 2Macc 15:38  
 slave and the free, of the **p** and the rich. . . . . 1Esd 3:19

**POOR AND NEEDY**

Job 24:14; Ps 70:5; 74:21; 109:16, 22; Jer 22:16; Eze 18:12

**POWER**

of the sea's fish. They are in your **p**. . . . . Gn 9:2  
 a new king came to **p** in Egypt who . . . . . Ex 1:8  
 your prideful **p**. I will turn you. . . . . Lv 26:19  
 Is the **L**ORD's **p** too weak? Now you. . . . . Nm 11:23  
 fact, the **L**ORD's **p** was against them, . . . . . Dt 2:15  
 land into our **p**. In addition, all . . . . . Josh 2:24  
 has is within your **p**, only don't . . . . . Job 1:12  
 him from the **p** of all his enemies . . . . . Ps 18:1  
 it, when it is in your **p** to do so. . . . . Prv 3:27  
 with terrible **p**. The loftiest ones . . . . . Is 10:33  
 them from the **p** of the grave Heb . . . . . Hos 13:14  
 out demons by the **p** of God's Spirit, . . . . . Mt 12:28  
 recognized that **p** had gone out from . . . . . Mk 5:30  
 the spirit and **p** of Elijah. He will . . . . . Lk 1:17  
 up, working in the **p** of the Holy . . . . . Ac 1:2  
 as God's Son with **p** through his . . . . . Ro 1:4  
 one who holds the **p** over death . . . . . Heb 2:14  
 him be glory and **p** forever and . . . . . Rev 1:6  
 and make known his **p** and greatness to a . . . . . Tob 13:6  
 I live, and by the **p** of my kingdom, I . . . . . Jdt 2:12  
 from God. His **p** exposes the . . . . . Wis 1:3  
 not have the same **p** when translated. . . . . Sir 1:1  
 with great **p** and an extended . . . . . Bar 2:11  
 the Law from the **p** of the Gentiles . . . . . 1Macc 2:48  
 terrified and awestruck by God's **p**. . . . . 2Macc 3:24  
 of David's **p** after the prophet . . . . . Ps 151 2:1  
 man, caught up in his own arrogance and **p**. . . . . 3Macc 2:2  
 Lord's sovereign **p** that your people . . . . . 2Esd 2:41  
 clear thinking has **p** over emotions and . . . . . 4Macc 1:7

**PRAISE**

God, whom I will **p**, the God of my. . . . . Ex 15:2  
 He is your **p**, and he is your God. . . . . Dt 10:21  
 Remember to **p** his work that all of us . . . . . Job 36:24  
 No one is going to **p** you when they are . . . . . Ps 6:5  
 Let another person **p** you, and not your. . . . . Prv 27:2  
 exalt you; I will **p** your name, for you . . . . . Is 25:1  
 and you will **p** the name of the . . . . . Jt 2:26  
 things you do and **p** your Father who is. . . . . Mt 5:16  
 singing songs of **p**, they went out to . . . . . Mk 14:26  
 I don't accept **p** from people . . . . . Jn 5:41  
 who will receive **p** from God, and it . . . . . Ro 2:28  
 sisters. I will **p** you in the middle . . . . . Heb 2:12  
 throne and said, "**p** our God, all you . . . . . Rev 19:5  
 forever! May all your works forever **p** you! . . . . . Tob 3:11  
 Everyone will **p** the fruit of good work. . . . . Wis 3:15  
 it is necessary to **p** Israel for. . . . . Sir 1:1  
 They will **p** me in the land of their . . . . . Bar 2:32  
 hymns and songs of **p** to heaven: "God is. . . . . 1Macc 4:24  
 You are worthy of **p**, you who have given . . . . . 1Esd 4:60  
 I will **p** you continuously all the days of . . . . . PrMan 15  
 people **p** their empty gods . . . . . 3Macc 6:11  
 world." I began to **p** and celebrate the . . . . . 2Esd 2:47  
 also includes the **p** of the highest . . . . . 4Macc 1:2

**GIVE PRAISE**

Dt 32:3; 1Ch 16:10; Ps 63:11; 64:10; 105:3; Ro 14:11

**GOD'S PRAISE**

Ps 106:12; 111:10; 149:1, 3; Is 42:12

**PRAISE GOD**

Ps 33:1; 48:10; 69:34; 107:32; 109:30; 135:1; 148:1, 2, 3, 4; 150:1, 2, 3, 4, 5; Lk 2:38; 17:18; 1Co 14:16; Tob 4:19; 12:6, 17; 14:2; Jdt 13:14; 2Macc 1:11

**PRAISE THE LORD**

Gn 29:35; 1Ch 16:4; 23:30; 2Ch 20:19, 22; 29:30; Ps 27:6; 34:2; 56:10; 102:18; 104:35; 105:45; 106:1, 48; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1, 9;

115:17, 18; 116:19; 117:1, 2; 135:1, 3, 21; 146:1, 2, 10; 147:1, 20; 148:1, 7, 14; 149:1, 9; 150:1, 6; Is 62:9; Jer 20:13; Ro 15:11; Tob 12:20; 13:6, 8, 10, 15; Sir 17:28

**PRAYSE THE LORD'S NAME**

Ps 20:7; 113:1; 135:1; 148:5, 13

**WORTHY OF PRAISE**

1Co 16:25; Ps 48:1; 96:4; 145:3; Phi 4:8; PrAz 29

**PRASED**

**PRASED GOD**

Mt 9:8; Mk 2:12; Lk 2:28; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43; 19:37; 23:47; Ac 2:47; 11:18; 21:20

**PRASES**

**SING PRASES**

2Sa 22:50; 1Ch 16:9; Ps 7:17; 9:2, 11; 18:49; 30:4, 12; 33:2; 47:6, 7; 59:17; 61:8; 66:2; 68:4, 32; 75:9; 92:1; 104:33; 105:2; 135:3; 144:9; 146:2; 147:7; Ro 15:9

**PRAY**

I **p** that Reuben lives, doesn't die, Dt 33:6  
 You will **p** to him, and he will hear you; Job 22:27  
 psalm of David.] I **p** that the LORD Ps 20:1  
 you. Even when you **p** for a long time, I Is 1:15  
 your enemies and **p** for those who Mt 5:44  
 them, Jesus went up onto a mountain to **p**. Mk 6:46  
 fast often and **p** frequently. The Lk 5:33  
 I **p** they will be one, Father, just as you Jn 17:21  
 the city, Peter went up on the roof to **p**. Ac 10:9  
 what we should **p**, but the Spirit Ro 8:26  
 sighed and wept and began to **p** with sighs. Tob 3:1  
 a godly woman. So **p** for us, and the Jdt 8:31  
 I **p** that God will allow me to speak. Wis 7:15  
 and they will be heard when they **p**. Sir 3:5  
**P** for the lives of King Nebuchadnezzar of. Bar 1:11  
 for battle, and to **p** and ask for mercy 1Macc 3:44  
 to ask Onias to **p** to the Most High. 2Macc 3:31  
 signs, and if you **p** again and continue 2Esd 5:13  
 the Hebrews to **p** for him and to. 4Macc 4:11

**PRAY FOR US**

1Sa 12:19; Jer 37:3; 42:20; Col 4:3; 1Th 5:25; 2Th 3:1; Heb 13:18

**PRAY FOR YOU**

Gn 20:7; Ex 8:9; 1Sa 12:23; Job 42:8; 2Co 9:14; Col 1:3

**PRAY TO THE LORD**

Ex 8:8, 29; 9:28; 10:17; 1Sa 7:5; 1Kgs 8:44; Jer 29:7; 42:2, 4

**PRAYED**

Abraham **p** to God, and God restored Gn 20:17  
 him out! So I also **p** hard for Aaron at Dt 9:20  
 fortune when he **p** for his friends, Job 42:10  
 Because I **p**. "Don't let them celebrate Ps 38:16  
 on his face and **p**. "My Father, if Mt 26:39  
 to the ground. He **p** that, if possible, Mk 14:35  
 to pray, and he **p** to God all night Lk 6:12  
 They **p**. "Lord, you know everyone's Ac 1:24  
 When he earnestly **p** that it wouldn't Jas 5:17  
 the window and **p**. "You are blessed, Tob 3:11  
 Because of this, I **p**, and the ability to. Wis 7:7  
 They wept, fasted, and **p** before the Lor Bar 1:5  
 their army was, he **p**. Blessed are you, 1Macc 4:30  
 the priests **p**, the priests and, 2Macc 1:23  
 So we **p** to our Lord about these things, 1Esd 8:53  
 holy place and **p** whenever we 3Macc 2:10  
 I **p** and said, "Do you think I will live 2Esd 4:51

**PRAYED TO THE LORD**

Gn 25:21; Ex 8:30; 10:18; Nm 11:2; Dt 9:26; 1Sa 1:10; 8:6; 15:11; 2Kgs 4:33; 6:18; 19:15; 20:2; 2Ch 32:24; Is 37:15; 38:2; Jer 32:16; Nm 9:4; Jon 2:1, 4; 2

**PRAYER**

was moved by his **p**, and his wife Gn 25:21  
 cried out in **p** to the LORD for 1Sa 7:9  
 violence in my hands, and my **p** is pure. Job 16:17

Have mercy on me! Listen to my **p**! Ps 4:1  
 heard. Offer up a **p** for those few Is 37:4  
 the LORD, and my **p** came to you, to Jon 2:7  
 called a house of **p**. But you've made Mt 21:13  
 place where he could be alone in **p**. Mk 1:35  
 God with fasting and **p** night and day. Lk 2:37  
 their devotion to **p**, along with some Ac 1:14  
 salvation. That's my **p** to God for them. Ro 10:1  
**P** that comes from faith will heal the Jas 5:15  
**P** with fasting is good, and so is giving Tob 12:8  
 king of all your creation, hear my **p**! Jdt 9:12  
 fight. He took up **p** and the Wis 18:21  
 the one who made them will hear their **p**. Sir 4:6  
 listen to our **p** and our pleading. Bar 2:14  
 used to have a place of **p** there. 1Macc 3:46  
 The **p** went like this: Lord, Lord God, 2Macc 1:24  
 them at last to the same stance of **p**. 3Macc 1:23  
 the subject of my **p**? Who is there of 2Esd 7:46

**HEARD YOUR PRAYER**

1Kgs 9:3; 2Kgs 19:20; 20:5; 2Ch 7:12; Is 38:5

**PRAYERS**

done, God responded to **p** for the land. 2Sa 21:14  
 ears attentive to the **p** of this place. 2Ch 6:40  
 The **p** of David, Jesse's son, are ended Ps 72:20  
 but favors the **p** of those who do Prv 15:28  
 they poured out **p** to you when you Is 26:16  
 off they say long **p**. They will be Mk 12:40  
 Zechariah. Your **p** have been heard. Lk 1:13  
 to their shared meals, and to their **p**. Ac 2:42  
 in all my **p**. I'm always asking that Ro 1:10  
 Christ offered **p** and requests with Heb 5:7  
 very moment, the **p** of both Sarah and Tob 3:16  
 along with the **p** and spontaneous. Jdt 4:14  
 sin behind; offer **p** in his presence, Sir 17:25  
 listen now to the **p** of those who have Bar 3:4  
 offer, and in our **p**—as it is right 1Macc 12:11  
 God listen to your **p** and be reconciled 2Macc 1:5  
 his children, and **p** be offered for 1Esd 6:30  
 all kinds of **p** on account of the 3Macc 1:21

**PRAYING**

As she kept **p** before the LORD, Eli 1Sa 1:12  
 king and my God, because I am **p** to you! Ps 5:2  
 came upon Daniel **p** and seeking mercy Dn 6:11  
 to worship were **p** outside during Lk 1:10  
 I'm **p** for them. I'm not praying for the Jn 17:9  
 a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is **p**. Ac 9:11  
 hanging in there and **p** for all believers. Eph 6:18  
 Dear friend, I'm **p** that all is well with 3Jn 2  
 and don't repeat yourself when **p**. Sir 7:14  
 While Ezra was **p** and offering up his 1Esd 8:88  
 crying and tears, **p** to the supreme God 3Macc 1:16  
 After **p** against the tyrant, he threw 4Macc 12:19

**PREACH**

one, face Teman, **p** against the south, Eze 20:46  
 Israel, and don't **p** against the house Am 7:16  
 there to teach and **p** in their cities. Mt 11:1  
 so that I can **p** there too. That's Mk 1:38  
 He has sent me to **p** good news to the Lk 4:18  
 in Samaria and began to **p** Christ to them. Ac 8:5  
 that he went to **p** to the spirits in 1Pt 3:19

**PREACH THE GOSPEL**

Ro 1:15; 15:20; 1Co 9:14; 9:16; Ga 2:7

**PREACHED**

former prophets **p**. The LORD of Zec 1:4  
 up. And good news is **p** to the poor. Lk 7:22  
 Philip, who **p** the good news Ac 8:12  
 good news that I **p** to you, which you. 1Co 15:1  
 had the good news **p** to us, just as they Heb 4:2

**PREACHING**

to Jonah's **p**. And look, someone Mt 12:41  
 throughout Galilee **p** in their Mk 1:39

So he continued **p** in the Judean . . . . . Lk 4:44  
 moved on, **p** the good news . . . . . Ac 8:4  
 in my spirit by **p** the good news . . . . . Ro 1:9

**PRIDE**

and because your **p** has reached my . . . . . 2Ki 19:28  
 them from a deed and to smother human **p**. . . . . Job 33:17  
 the righteous with **p** and contempt! . . . . . Ps 31:18  
 hate evil. I hate **p** and arrogance, the . . . . . Pvr 8:13  
 People's **p** will be brought down and human . . . . . Is 2:17  
 indeed, they "love"; shame is their **p**. . . . . Hos 4:18  
 that! We even take **p** in our problems, . . . . . Ro 5:3  
 confidence and the **p** that our hope . . . . . Heb 3:6  
 as your wife. In **p** there is much ruin . . . . . Tob 4:13  
 Break their **p** by the hand of a . . . . . Jdt 9:10  
 What good did our **p** do us? What good were . . . . . Wis 5:8  
 The Lord gives **p** of place to a father . . . . . Sir 3:2  
 us with a lot of **p** and evil. They . . . . . 1Macc 3:20  
 Father, look with **p** and see the people . . . . . 2Esd 1:38  
 habits show up as **p**, love of money, . . . . . 4Macc 1:26

**PRIEST**

of Salem and the **p** of El Elyon had. . . . . Gn 14:18  
 was a Midianite **p** who had seven . . . . . Ex 2:16  
 sons of Aaron the **p** will light the . . . . . Lv 1:7  
 before Aaron the **p**. They will assist . . . . . Nm 3:6  
 listening to the **p** who is in office. . . . . Dt 17:12  
 Eleazar the **p**, Joshua son of . . . . . Josh 14:1  
 mind: "You are a **p** forever in line . . . . . Ps 110:4  
 people, Uriah the **p** and Zechariah, . . . . . Is 8:2  
 complain. Listen, **p**, I am angry with . . . . . Hos 4:4  
 yourself to the **p** and offer the gift . . . . . Mt 8:4  
 yourself to the **p** and offer the . . . . . Mk 1:44  
 Judea there was a **p** named Zechariah . . . . . Lk 1:5  
 who was high **p** that year, told. . . . . Jn 11:49  
 Annas the high **p**, Caiaphas, John, . . . . . Ac 4:6  
 I'm working as a **p** of God's gospel so . . . . . Ro 15:16  
 and faithful high **p** in things relating . . . . . Heb 2:17  
 Lord and honor the **p**. Give the priest . . . . . Sir 7:31  
 until a high **p** arrives wearing . . . . . 1Esd 5:40  
 but only the chief **p**, who was in charge. . . . . 3Macc 1:11

**AARON THE PRIEST**

Ex 31:10, 35:19; Lv 1:7; 7:34; 21:21; Nm 3:6, 32; 4:16, 28, 33; 18:28;  
 26:64; 33:38; Josh 21:4, 13

**CHIEF PRIEST**

2Kgs 25:18; 1Ch 27:5; 2Ch 19:11; 24:6; 26:20; 31:10; Ezr 7:5; Hg  
 2:2; Jn 18:19; Ac 19:14

**EZRA THE PRIEST**

Ezr 17:11, 12, 10:10, 16; Neh 8:2, 9; 1Esd 8:8, 9, 19; 9:16, 42

**HIGH PRIEST**

Lv 21:10, 21:13; Nm 35:25; Josh 20:6; 2Kgs 12:10; 22:4, 8; 23:4;  
 2Ch 24:11; 34:9; Neh 3:1, 20; 13:28; Jer 52:24; Hg 1:1, 12, 14, 24;  
 Zec 3:1, 8; 6:11; Mt 26:3, 57, 62, 63, 65; Mk 2:26; 14:53, 60, 61, 63;  
 Jn 11:49; 11:51; 18:13, 15, 16, 22, 24, 26; Ac 4:6; 5:17, 21, 27; 7:1;  
 9:1; 22:5; 23:2, 4, 5; 24:1; Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14, 15; 5:1, 2, 5, 10, 6:20;  
 7:26; 8:1, 3, 9, 7, 11, 25; 10:21; 13:11; Jdt 4:6, 8, 14; 15:8; Sir 50:1;  
 1Macc 7:5, 9; 10:20, 32, 38, 69; 12:3, 6, 7, 20; 13:36, 42; 14:17, 20,  
 23, 27, 30, 35, 38, 41, 47; 15:2, 17, 21, 24; 16:24; 2Macc 3:1, 4, 9,  
 10, 16, 21, 32, 33; 4:13; 14:3, 13; 15:12; 1Esd 5:40; 8:2; 3Macc 2:1,  
 4Macc 4:1, 13, 16, 17, 18

**PRIESTS****AARON'S SONS THE PRIESTS**

Lv 1:5, 8, 11; 2:2; 3:2; Nm 10:8

**CHIEF PRIESTS**

Mt 2:4; 16:21; 20:18; 21:15, 23, 45; 26:3, 14, 47, 59; 27:1, 3, 6, 12,  
 20, 41, 62; 28:11; Mk 8:31; 10:33; 11:18, 27; 14:1, 10, 43, 53, 55;  
 15:1, 3, 10, 11, 31; Lk 9:22; 19:47; 20:1, 19, 20, 22:2, 4, 52, 66; 23:4,  
 10, 13; 24:20; Jn 7:32; 7:45; 11:47, 57; 12:10; 18:3, 35; 19:6, 15, 21;  
 Ac 4:23; 5:24; 9:14, 21; 22:30; 23:14; 25:2, 15; 26:10, 12

**CHIEF PRIESTS AND ELDERS**

Mt 21:23; 26:3, 47; 27:3, 12; Ac 4:23; 23:14; 25:15

**CHIEF PRIESTS AND PHARISEES**

Jn 7:32; 7:45; 11:47, 57; 18:3

**PRIESTS AND ELDERS**

Mt 21:23; 26:3, 47; 27:3, 12; Ac 4:23; 23:14; 25:15

**PRIESTS AND LEGAL EXPERTS**

Mt 16:21; 20:18; 21:15; Mk 11:18; 14:1; Lk 22:66

**PRIESTS AND LEVITES**

1Ch 13:2; 24:6; 28:13; 2Ch 23:4, 18; 29:4; 31:9; Ezr 3:12; 7:24; Neh  
 13:30; Is 66:21; Jn 1:19

**PRIESTS AND PHARISEES**

Jn 7:32; 7:45; 11:47, 57; 18:3

**PRIESTS AND THE LEVITES**

1Kgs 8:4; 1Ch 15:14; 23:2; 28:21; 2Ch 5:5; 11:13; 24:5; 30:15, 25;  
 31:2, 4; 34:30; 35:8, 10; Ezr 1:5; 3:8; 6:16, 20; 7:7; 8:30; 9:1; Neh  
 8:13; 11:20; 12:1, 30, 44; 13:29; 1Esd 2:5; 7:9, 10; 8:59, 66

**PRIESTS AND THE PROPHETS**

2Kgs 23:2; Jer 8:1; 26:8, 11, 16; 29:1

**PRINCE**

and the country's **p** saw her, he took . . . . . Gn 34:2  
 and on the crown of that **p** among brothers. . . . . Dt 33:16  
 no, Israel! Your **p** lies dead on your . . . . . 2Sa 1:19  
 of my steps, approach him like a **p**. . . . . Job 31:37  
 mortals; you will fall down like any **p**. . . . . Ps 82:7  
 A **p** without understanding is a cruel . . . . . Pvr 28:16  
 Mighty God, Eternal Father, **P** of Peace. . . . . Is 9:6  
 without king or **p**, without sacrifice. . . . . Hos 3:4  
 and mother, of lying before a **p** or leader, . . . . . Sir 41:17

**PRISCILLA**

with his wife **p** because Claudius . . . . . Ac 18:2

**PRISON**

Pharaoh, so he sets me free from this **p**. . . . . Gn 40:14  
 and he worked the grinding mill in the **p**. . . . . Jgs 16:21  
 Get me out of this **p** so I can give thanks . . . . . Ps 142:7  
 He emerged from **p** to become king, even . . . . . Ecc 4:14  
 a pit, shut into a **p**, and punished . . . . . Is 24:22  
 the court, and you will be thrown into **p**. . . . . Mt 5:25  
 and put in **p** because of . . . . . Mk 6:17  
 his evil deeds: he locked John up in **p**. . . . . Lk 3:20  
 John hadn't yet been thrown into **p**. . . . . Jn 3:24  
 and put them in **p** until the next . . . . . Ac 4:3  
 during my time in **p** and in the defense. . . . . Phil 1:7  
 toward people in **p** and accepted the . . . . . Heb 10:34  
 some of you into **p** in order to test . . . . . Rev 2:10  
 the officials in **p**. He seized his. . . . . 1Esd 1:36  
 burned sacrifice, and about Joseph in **p**. . . . . 4Macc 18:11

**PROCLAIM**

of you, and I'll **p** before you the . . . . . Ex 33:19  
 that you will **p** as holy occasions,. . . . . Lv 23:37  
 because I **p** the LORD's name: Give praise . . . . . Dt 32:3  
 announces it; even cattle **p** its rising. . . . . Job 36:33  
 who lives in Zion! **p** his mighty acts . . . . . Ps 9:11  
 on God's name; **p** God's deeds among . . . . . Is 12:4  
**P** it to the palaces of Ashdod and to the . . . . . Am 3:9  
 away and began to **p** in the Ten Cities . . . . . Mk 5:20  
 to the poor, to **p** release to the . . . . . Lk 4:18  
 he hears and will **p** to you what is to . . . . . Jn 16:13  
 to teach and **p** the good news that . . . . . Ac 5:42  
 good news to **p** to those who live . . . . . Rev 14:6  
 one the power to **p** his works. Who can . . . . . Sir 18:4  
 from heaven must **p** the great power of . . . . . 2Macc 3:34  
 the hills cannot **p** him. But the trees . . . . . Ps 151:1-3

**PROMISE****ACCORDING TO YOUR PROMISE**

Ps 119:25, 28, 41, 65, 107, 170

**GOD'S PROMISE**

1Ch 25:5; Ps 106:24; 130:5; Ro 4:20; Eph 2:12

**SOLEMN PROMISE**

Gn 28:20; 31:13; Lv 7:16; 22:18, 21, 23; 27:2, 9, 11; Nm 6:21; 15:3,  
 8; 21:2; 30:2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13; Dt 23:18; Jgs 11:30; 1Sa 1:21;  
 1Kgs 2:43; Eze 16:8; Ac 18:18; 21:23; Sir 18:22; LJer 34



**PROMISED**

**SOLEMNLY PROMISED**

Nm 14:16; Dt 12:11; 12:17; 1Sa 20:3; Am 4:2; Ac 23:12; 23:14, 21

**PROMISES**

**SOLEMN PROMISES**

Lv 23:38; Nm 29:39; 30:4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 14; Dt 12:6, 26; Job 22:27; Prv 7:14; 31:2; Is 19:21; Jon 1:16; Na 1:15; 1Macc 3:49; 2Macc 2:13

**PROPHESY**

the same thing they say and **p** success. . . . . 1Ki 22:13  
 The prophets **p** falsely, the priests rule . . . . . Jer 5:31  
 daughters will **p**, your old men will . . . . . Jl 2:28  
 Lord, didn't we **p** in your name and . . . . . Mt 7:22  
 hit him, saying, "**p**!" Then the guards . . . . . Mk 14:65  
 asked him repeatedly, "**p**! Who hit you?" . . . . . Lk 22:64  
 and daughters will **p**. Your young will . . . . . Ac 2:17  
 you should **p** in proportion to . . . . . Ro 12:6  
 told, "You must **p** again about many . . . . . Rev 10:11  
 Ephraim, that you **p** to us as you have . . . . . Jdt 6:2  
 all go mad. They **p** lies. They live in . . . . . Wis 14:28  
 Nathan rose up to **p** at the time of . . . . . Sir 47:1

**PROPHET**

man's wife. He's a **p**; he will pray for . . . . . Gn 20:7  
 and your brother Aaron will be your **p**. . . . . Ex 7:1  
 If there is a **p** of the LORD among . . . . . Nm 12:6  
 Now if a **p** or a dream interpreter . . . . . Dt 13:1  
 Now Deborah, a **p**, the wife of Lappidoth, . . . . . Jgs 4:4  
 of David, when the **p** Nathan came to him . . . . . Ps 51:1  
 warrior; judge and **p**; fortune-teller. . . . . Is 3:2  
 so will your **p**, and I will. . . . . Hos 4:5  
 spoken through the **p** would be fulfilled: . . . . . Mt 1:22  
 saying, "He is a **p** like one of the . . . . . Mk 6:15  
 will be called a **p** of the Most High, . . . . . Lk 1:76  
 not." "Are you the **p**?" John answered, . . . . . Jn 1:21  
 is what was spoken through the **p** Joel: . . . . . Ac 2:16  
 calls herself a **p**. You allow her to . . . . . Rev 2:20  
 word that Amos the **p** pronounced against . . . . . Tob 2:6  
 to prosper by the hand of the holy **p**. . . . . Wis 11:1  
 by his Lord. As a **p** from the Lord, he . . . . . Sir 46:13  
 have no ruler or **p** or leader, no . . . . . PrAz 15  
 the same time, the **p** Habakkuk was in . . . . . Bel 33  
 mount until a **p** should arise who . . . . . 1Macc 4:46  
 records that the **p** Jeremiah commanded . . . . . 2Macc 2:1  
 in Israel since the time of the **p** Samuel. . . . . 1Esd 1:18  
 God sent his **p** to anoint me; Samuel to . . . . . Ps 151 1:5  
 scroll of the **p** Ezra son of. . . . . 2Esd 1:1

**PROPHETS**

**FALSE PROPHETS**

Mt 7:15, 24:11, 24; Mk 13:22; Lk 6:26; 2Pt 2:1; 1Jn 4:1

**PRIESTS AND THE PROPHETS**

2Kgs 23:2; Jer 8:1; 26:8, 11, 16; 29:1

**PROSTITUTE**

didn't he treat our sister like a **p**? . . . . . Gn 34:31  
 land. When they **p** themselves with . . . . . Ex 34:15  
 the house of a **p** named Rahab. They. . . . . Josh 2:1  
 for a **p** costs a loaf of bread, but a . . . . . Prv 6:26  
 town has become a **p**! She was full of . . . . . Is 1:21  
 him, "Go, marry a **p** and have children . . . . . Hos 1:2  
 By faith Rahab the **p** wasn't killed with . . . . . Heb 11:31  
 upon the great **p**, who is seated on . . . . . Rev 17:1  
 The fee due a **p** is in your lap. Because . . . . . 2Esd 15:55

**PTOLEMAIS**

that the people of **P**, Tyre, Sidon, and . . . . . 1Macc 5:15  
 made Hegermonides governor from **P** to Gerar. . . . . 2Macc 13:24  
 Jews arrived at **P**, named. . . . . 3Macc 7:17

**PTOLEMY**

of the rule of **P** and Cleopatra, . . . . . GkEst 5:11  
 the Egyptian king **P** in battle. Ptolemy . . . . . 1Macc 1:18

teacher of King **P** and a member of . . . . . 2Macc 1:10  
 Now **P** Philopator learned from those who . . . . . 3Macc 1:1  
 was at war with **P** in Egypt, he heard . . . . . 4Macc 4:22

**Qq**

**QUEEN**

set up for the **q** mother. She sat to . . . . . 1Ki 2:19  
 jewels; the **q** stands at your . . . . . Ps 45:9  
 will no longer call you **Q** of Kingdoms. . . . . Is 47:5  
 The **q** of the South will be raised up by . . . . . Mt 12:42  
 The **q** of the South will rise up at the . . . . . Lk 11:31  
 is the title given to the Ethiopian **q** . . . . . Ac 8:27  
 I sit like a **q**! I'm not a widow. . . . . Rev 18:7  
 At the same time, **Q** Vashti also held a . . . . . GkEst 1:9

**Rr**

**RABBAH**

Ammonite town of **R**. By standard . . . . . Dt 3:11  
 of the Ammonites as far as Aroer near **R**. . . . . Josh 13:25  
 alarm against **R**, the capital city . . . . . Jer 49:2  
 at the wall of **R**, the fire will . . . . . Am 1:14

**RABBI**

the markets and to be addressed as '**r**'. . . . . Mt 23:7  
 saying to Jesus, "**R**; it's good that . . . . . Mk 9:5  
 for?" They said, "**R** . . . . . Jn 1:38

**RACHEL**

is his daughter **R** now, coming with . . . . . Gn 29:6  
 household be like **R** and like Leah, . . . . . Ru 4:11  
 and wailing. It's **R** crying for her . . . . . Jer 31:15  
 and much grieving. **R** weeping for her . . . . . Mt 2:18

**RAHAB**

a prostitute named **R**. They bedded down . . . . . Josh 2:1  
 anger; the helpers of **R** bow beneath him . . . . . Job 9:13  
 I count **R** and Babel among those who know . . . . . Ps 87:4  
 Therefore, I call her **R** Who Sits Still. . . . . Is 30:7  
 whose mother was **R**. Boaz was the . . . . . Mt 1:5  
 By faith **R** the prostitute . . . . . Heb 11:31

**RAM**

a three-year-old **r**, a dove, and a . . . . . Gn 15:9  
 Then slaughter the **r**. Take its blood and . . . . . Ex 29:16  
 a flawless **r** from the flock, . . . . . Lv 5:15  
 in addition to the **r** of reconciliation . . . . . Nm 5:8  
 the father of **R**, Ram the father of . . . . . Ru 4:19  
 from the clan of **R** was angry, angry . . . . . Job 32:2  
 his battering **r** against your . . . . . Eze 26:9  
 slaughtered a **r** from his flock and . . . . . Tob 7:9

**RAMAH**

Gibeon, **R**, Beeroth . . . . . Josh 18:25  
 camp at Geba!" **R** trembles; Gibeah . . . . . Is 10:29  
 blow a trumpet in **R**. Sound the warning . . . . . Hos 5:8  
 voice was heard in **R**, weeping and much . . . . . Mt 2:18

**RAMOTH-GILEAD**

Ben-geber in **R**, who controlled the . . . . . 1Ki 4:13

**RANSOM**

donkey you should **r** with a sheep . . . . . Ex 13:13  
 may not accept a **r** for the life of a . . . . . Nm 35:31  
 In famine he will **r** you from death; in . . . . . Job 5:20  
 It can't pay a life's **r**-price to God. . . . . Ps 49:7  
 Wealth can **r** a person's life, but the . . . . . Prv 13:8  
 Egypt as your **r**, Cush and Seba in . . . . . Is 43:3  
 Will I **r** them from the power of the grave . . . . . Hos 13:14  
 grace because of a **r** that was paid by . . . . . Ro 3:24

**RAPHAEL**

of Gabael son of **R** son of Raguel, . . . . . Tob 1:1

**REBEKAH**

the father of **R**. These are the . . . . . Gn 22:23

**RECONCILIATION**

offering for **r**. You should remove . . . . . Ex 29:36  
 be accepted for you, to make **r** for you. . . . . Lv 1:4  
 to the ram of **r**by which the . . . . . Nm 5:8  
 place, to make **r** for Israel, just. . . . . 1Ch 6:49  
 sacrifices to make **r** for them. This is . . . . . Eze 45:15  
 since the Day of **r**had already. . . . . Ac 27:9  
 Christ and who gave us the ministry of **r**. . . . . 2Co 5:18  
 Lord didn't seek **r**with the ancient . . . . . Sir 16:7  
 the sacrifice for **r**, the same two . . . . . 2Macc 3:33  
 to offer rams as **r** for their error in . . . . . 1Esd 9:20

**RED****RED SEA**

Ac 7:36; Heb 11:29; Jdt 5:13; Wis 10:18; 19:7; 1Macc 4:9

**REDEEM**

However, you will **r** the oldest males . . . . . Nm 18:15  
 morning, if he'll **r**you—good, let him . . . . . Ru 3:13  
 Come close to me! Save me because . . . . . Ps 69:18  
 hand too small to **r**you? Don't I have . . . . . Is 50:2  
 me. I would **r**them, but they . . . . . Hos 7:13  
 the one who would **r**Israel. All these . . . . . Lk 24:21  
 was so he could **r**those under the . . . . . Ga 4:5

**REDEEMED**

out of Egypt, who **r**you from the house. . . . . Dt 13:5  
 earth, that God **r**as his own people. . . . . 1Ch 17:21  
 long ago, that you **r**to be the tribe of . . . . . Ps 74:2  
 Zion will be **r**by justice, and those who . . . . . Is 1:27  
 land of Egypt; I **r**you from the house. . . . . Mi 6:4  
 Christ **r**us from the curse of the Law by . . . . . Ga 3:13

**REDEEMER**

over your servant, because you are a **r**. . . . . Ru 3:9  
 But I know that my **r**is alive and . . . . . Job 19:25  
 pleasing to you, **LORD**, my rock and my **r**. . . . . Ps 19:14  
 for their **r**is strong. He will bring. . . . . Prv 23:11  
**LORD**. The holy one of Israel is your **r**. . . . . Is 41:14

**REED****REED SEA**

Ex 10:19; 13:18; 15:4, 22; 23:31; Nm 14:25; 21:4; 33:10, 11; Dt  
 1:40; 2:1; 11:4; Josh 2:10; 4:23; 24:6; Jgs 11:16; 1Kgs 9:26; Neh  
 9:9; Ps 106:7, 9, 22; 136:13, 15; Jer 49:21

**REFUGE****REFUGE CITIES**

Nm 35:6, 11, 13, 14; Josh 20:2; 1Ch 6:57; 6:67

**REFUGE CITY**

Nm 35:25; 35:26, 27, 28, 32; Josh 21:13; 21:21, 27, 32, 38

**REHOBOAM**

David's City, and **R**his son succeeded . . . . . 1Ki 11:43  
 was the father of **R**. Rehoboam was the . . . . . Mt 1:7  
 of his offspring—**R**, a foolish man . . . . . Sir 47:23

**REJECT**

if you **r**my rules and despise my . . . . . Lv 26:15  
 them and I will **r**the temple that I . . . . . 1Ki 9:7  
 corrects; so don't **r**the Almighty's . . . . . Job 5:17  
 cravings; the greedy **r**the **LORD**, cursing. . . . . Ps 10:3  
 Don't **r**the instruction of the **LORD**, my . . . . . Prv 3:11  
 and learn to **r**evil and choose. . . . . Is 7:15  
 so I will **r**you from serving . . . . . Hos 4:6  
 people hate you, **r**you, insult you, . . . . . Lk 6:22  
 first. Since you **r**it and show that . . . . . Ac 13:46  
 wise, and I will **r**the intelligence. . . . . 1Co 1:19  
 we escape if we **r**the one who is . . . . . Heb 12:25  
 beside you. Don't **r**me, out of all . . . . . Wis 9:4  
 and welcome my opinion. Don't **r**my advice. . . . . Sir 6:23  
 his companions who **r**the king's command." . . . . 1Macc 3:14

to stand fast and **r**what isn't lawful. . . . . 2Macc 6:20  
 in the body and **r**the emotions' . . . . . 4Macc 3:18

**REJOICE**

the streams, and **r**before the **LORD**. . . . . Lv 23:40  
 Then you will **r**in the **LORD** your God's . . . . . Dt 12:12  
 enemies because I **r**in you. . . . . 1Sa 2:1  
 who **r**ecitedly, who are thrilled when . . . . . Job 3:22  
 that all who love your name can **r**in you. . . . . Ps 5:11  
 spring be blessed. **r**in the wife of . . . . . Prv 5:18  
 harvest, as those who divide plunder **r**. . . . . Is 9:3  
 Don't **r**, Israel! Don't celebrate as . . . . . Hos 9:1  
 you, and many people will **r**at his birth, . . . . . Lk 1:14  
 again, it says, **r**, Gentiles, with . . . . . Ro 15:10  
 You now **r**in this hope, even if it's . . . . . 1Pt 1:6  
 live on earth will **r**over them. They. . . . . Rev 11:10  
 and my soul will **r**all the days of my . . . . . Tob 13:7  
 our fathers might **r**and put their . . . . . Wis 18:6  
 children, don't **r**over them unless . . . . . Sir 16:2  
 Don't any of you **r**over me, a widow . . . . . Bar 4:12  
 We have heard and **r**that you have kept . . . . . 1Macc 10:26  
 and drink and to **r**, and to share with . . . . . 1Esd 9:54  
 in their hearts or **r**in the arrogance . . . . . 3Macc 2:17  
 and employees **r**, and your whole . . . . . 2Esd 2:22

**REJOICING**

with tambourines, **r**, and musical . . . . . 1Sa 18:6  
 that the **r**of the wicked is short, the . . . . . Job 20:5  
 he pleasing to him; I'm **r**in the **LORD**! . . . . . Ps 104:34  
 enjoy doing evil, **r**in their twisted . . . . . Prv 2:14  
 disciples began **r**. They praised God . . . . . Lk 19:37  
 left the council **r**because they had. . . . . Ac 5:41  
 you blameless and **r**before his . . . . . Jude 24  
 in good health, **r**and praising the . . . . . Tob 10:13  
 glory, boasting, gladness, and crown of **r**. . . . . Sir 1:11  
 the east and the west, **r**in God's glory. . . . . Bar 4:37  
 owned, and led them to Judea with great **r**. . . . . 1Macc 5:23  
 their hearts and **r**in God's . . . . . 2Macc 15:27  
 Bread for seven days, **r**before the Lord, . . . . . 1Esd 7:14  
 to him. Some were **r**and some were sad, . . . . . 2Esd 13:13

**RELIGIOUS****RELIGIOUS EXPERTS**

Gn 41:8, 24; Ex 7:11; 7:22; 8:7, 18, 19; 9:11

**REMEMBER**

I will **r**the covenant between me and you. . . . . Gn 9:15  
 this is how all generations will **r**me. . . . . Ex 3:15  
 then I will **r**my covenant with Jacob . . . . . Lv 26:42  
 We **r**the fish we ate in Egypt for free . . . . . Nm 11:5

**R** that day when you stood before the **LORD** . . . . . Dt 4:10

**R** the command that Moses the **LORD**'s . . . . . Josh 1:13  
**R** that my life is wind; my eyes won't see . . . . . Job 7:7  
 of the earth will **r**and come back to . . . . . Ps 22:27  
 their poverty and no longer **r**their toil. . . . . Prv 31:7  
 you, and didn't **r**the rock who. . . . . Is 17:10  
 hearts that I **r**all their . . . . . Hos 7:2  
 altar and there **r**that your brother . . . . . Mt 5:23  
 ears? Why can't you hear? Don't you **r**? . . . . . Mk 8:18  
 said, 'Child, **r** that during your . . . . . Lk 16:25  
**R** what I told you, 'Servants aren't . . . . . Jn 15:20  
 Stay alert! **r** that for three years I . . . . . Ac 20:31  
 you because you **r**all my . . . . . 1Co 11:2  
 and I won't **r**their sins anymore. . . . . Heb 8:12  
 Rev 2:5  
 So **r** the high point from which you have . . . . . Tob 3:3  
 Now, Lord, **r** me and look upon me. Don't . . . . . Jdt 8:26  
**R** what he did with Abraham, how he tested. . . . . Wis 2:4  
 No one will **r**our deeds. Our . . . . . Sir 7:16  
 group of sinners; **r** that God's anger . . . . . 1Macc 2:51  
**R** the deeds of the ancestors, which they . . . . . 2Macc 1:2  
 good for you and **r**the covenant with . . . . . 2Esd 2:8  
 midst! Evil city, **r** what I did to . . . . . 4Macc 13:12  
 reminded them, "**r** where you came . . . . . 4Macc 13:12

**REMEMBER THE LORD**

Dt 8:18; Jgs 8:34; 1Sa 26:23; 2Sa 14:11; Jer 51:50; Ac 20:35

**REPHAIM**

and attacked the **R** in . . . . . Gn 14:5  
 the Emim were **R**, like the Anakim . . . . . Dt 2:11  
 the last of the **R**. He lived in . . . . . Josh 12:4  
 one who gathers grain in the **R**Valley. . . . . Is 17:5

**RESCUE**

**ABLE TO RESCUE**

2Kgs 18:29, 33; 2Ch 32:13, 14, 15, 17; Is 36:14; 46:2; Eze 14:16;  
 14:18, 20; Dn 3:17; 6:20

**I WILL RESCUE YOU**

Jgs 7:7; 2Kgs 20:6; Is 38:6; Jer 15:21; 39:17; Ac 26:17; 2Esd 2:30

**RESURRECTION**

deny that there is a **r**, came to Jesus. . . . . Mt 22:23  
 that there is a **r**, came to Jesus and . . . . . Mk 12:18  
 that there's a **r**, came to Jesus and . . . . . Lk 20:27  
 come out into the **r** of life, and those. . . . . Jn 5:29  
 become along with us a witness to his **r**. . . . . Ac 1:22  
 years were over. This is the first **r**. . . . . Rev 20:5  
 But for you there will be no **r** to life." . . . . . 2Macc 7:14  
 front seat at the **r** I will bring about. . . . . 2Esd 2:23

**RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD**

Mk 12:26; Lk 20:35; Ac 17:32; Ro 1:4; Heb 6:2

**RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD**

Mt 22:31; Ac 4:2; 23:6; 24:21; 1Co 15:12; 15:13, 21, 42; Phi 3:11

**REUBEN**

son. She named him **R** because she said, . . . . . Gn 29:32  
**R**, Simeon, Levi, and Judah . . . . . Ex 1:2  
 assist you: from **R**, Elizur, Shedeur's. . . . . Nm 1:5  
 for the cursing: **R**, Gad, Asher, . . . . . Dt 27:13  
 The people of **R**, the people of Gad, and . . . . . Josh 4:12  
 to the western border: **R**, one portion. . . . . Eze 48:6  
 from the tribe of **R**, twelve thousand; . . . . . Rev 7:5

**REUBENITES**

owned by the **R** and the Gadites . . . . . Nm 32:1  
 its cities, to the **R** and the Gadites. . . . . Dt 3:12  
 addressed the **R**, the Gadites, and . . . . . Josh 1:12

**RIGHTEOUS**

said, "She's more **r** than I am, because . . . . . Gn 38:26  
 and case laws as **r**as all this. . . . . Dt 4:8  
 a human be more **r** than God, a person. . . . . Job 4:17  
 will sinners in the assembly of the **r**. . . . . Ps 1:5  
 which is **r**, just, and full of. . . . . Prv 1:3  
 you will be called **r**City, Faithful . . . . . Is 1:26  
 are right, and the **r** will walk in them, . . . . . Hos 14:9  
 They were both **r** before God, blameless in . . . . . Lk 1:6  
**R** Father, even the world didn't know. . . . . Jn 17:25  
 Let those who are **r** keep doing what is . . . . . Rev 22:11  
 over to the **r**or because you . . . . . Wis 12:9  
 won't be considered **r**, even in the grave. . . . . Sir 9:12  
 for mercy on any **r**actions of our. . . . . Bar 2:19  
 He gave way to his **r**anger, and he ran . . . . . 1Macc 2:24  
 your arrogance by the **r** judgment of God. . . . . 2Macc 7:36  
 Isaac, Jacob, and their **r**children, . . . . . PrMan 1  
 and all the **r** descended from him. . . . . 2Esd 3:11

**RIGHTEOUS ACTS**

1Sa 12:7; Ps 71:15; Dn 9:16, 18; Mic 6:5

**RIGHTEOUS DEEDS**

Ps 11:7; 71:16; Is 64:6; Eze 3:20; 18:24; 33:13; Tob 2:14

**RIGHTEOUS MAN**

Mt 1:19; 23:35; 27:19; Lk 23:50; Ac 10:22; 2Pt 2:6; 4Macc 16:21

**RIGHTEOUS ONE**

Job 34:17; Prv 21:12; Is 24:16; 53:11; 57:1; Mic 7:2; Ac 3:14; 7:52;  
 22:14; Ga 3:11; Heb 10:38; Jas 5:6; 1Pt 3:18; 1Jn 2:1

**RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE**

Eze 3:20; Mt 9:13; 13:17, 49; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:32; 15:7

**RIGHTEOUS PERSON**

2Sa 4:11; Ps 11:3; 97:11; Prv 25:26; Ecc 7:15; Is 57:1; Hab 2:4; Mt  
 10:41; Ro 1:17; 3:10; 5:7; 1Ti 1:9; Jas 5:16; LJer 72

**YOU ARE RIGHTEOUS**

Dt 9:5; Eze 9:15; Neh 9:8; Job 35:7; Ps 119:137

**RIGHTEOUSNESS**

on account of your **r**—because you are a . . . . . Dt 9:6  
 person for their **r** and loyalty, and I. . . . . 1Sa 26:23  
 and it clothed me, **r** as my coat and . . . . . Job 29:14  
 lead me in your **r**. Make your way . . . . . Ps 5:8  
 will understand **r** and justice, as . . . . . Prv 2:9  
 full of justice; **r** lived in her . . . . . Is 1:21  
 you for my wife in **r** and in justice, in . . . . . Hos 2:19  
 to fulfill all **r**." So John agreed. . . . . Mt 3:15  
 in holiness and **r**in God's eyes, for as. . . . . Lk 1:75  
 who practices **r**, make donations . . . . . Tob 4:7  
 are turned from **r** to sin—the Lord. . . . . Sir 26:28  
 one will acknowledge your glory and **r**. . . . . Bar 2:18  
 many who sought **r** and justice went . . . . . 1Macc 2:29

**GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Ps 22:31; 97:6; 103:17; 111:3; Mt 6:33; Ro 1:17; 3:21, 22; 5:21; 8:10;  
 10:3; Jas 1:20

**PURSE RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Dt 16:20; Prv 15:9; 21:21; 1Ti 6:11; 2Ti 2:22

**RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE**

Ps 33:5; 89:14; 97:2; Prv 2:9; 21:3

**ROBE**

and Japheth took a **r**, threw it over. . . . . Gn 9:23  
 pendant, a vest, a **r**, a woven tunic, a . . . . . Ex 28:4  
 dress in his linen **r**, with linen . . . . . Lv 6:10  
 a single beautiful **r**in the Babylonian . . . . . Josh 7:21  
 in pearls, her **r** embroidered with . . . . . Ps 45:13  
 the edges of his **r** filling the temple. . . . . Is 6:1  
 himself of his **r**, covered himself . . . . . Jon 3:6  
 If I only touch his **r** I'll be healed. . . . . Mt 9:21  
 him up in a purple **r** and twisted . . . . . Mk 15:17  
 bring out the best **r** and put it on him! . . . . . Lk 15:22  
 his head, and dressed him in a purple **r**. . . . . Jn 19:2  
 One. He wore a **r** that stretched . . . . . Rev 1:13  
 out a fine linen **r** that the king . . . . . GkEst 6:8  
 On his long **r** could be seen the whole of . . . . . Wis 18:24  
 you, and her collar will be a glorious **r**. . . . . Sir 6:29  
 stripped off the **r** of peace and put. . . . . Bar 4:20  
 him the crown, his **r**, and the seal so . . . . . 1Macc 6:15  
 Andronicus' purple **r**, tore off his. . . . . 2Macc 4:38  
 and my priest's **r**. I pulled out hair . . . . . 1Esd 8:68

**ROCK**

Hit the **r**. Water will come out . . . . . Ex 17:6  
 Moses raised his hand and struck the **r**. . . . . Nu 20:11  
 I split open the **r**so that water. . . . . 2Esd 1:20

**GOD IS MY ROCK**

2Sa 22:3; Ps 18:2; 62:2, 6; 94:22

**ROMANS**

Then the **R** will come and take away . . . . . Jn 11:48  
 They handed me over to the **R** . . . . . Ac 28:17  
 But the **R** became aware of this, so they . . . . . 1Macc 8:10  
 alliance with the **R**. He abolished the . . . . . 2Macc 4:11

**ROME**

I must visit **R** as well . . . . . Ac 19:21  
 In this way we came to **R**. . . . . Ac 28:14  
 To those in **R** who are dearly loved. . . . . Ro 1:7  
 After I arrived in **R**. . . . . 2Ti 1:17  
 been brought up in **R** as a hostage. . . . . 1Macc 1:10

**Ss**

**SABBATH**

It will be a **S** of special rest for you, . . . . . Lv 16:31  
 not a new moon or **S**." She said, "Don't . . . . . 2Ki 4:23  
 me. New moon, **S**, and the calling . . . . . Is 1:13  
 fields on the **S**. His disciples. . . . . Mt 12:1  
 Immediately on the **S** Jesus entered the . . . . . Mk 1:21

raised. On the **S** he went to the . . . . . Lk 4:16  
 mat and walked. Now that day was the **S** . . . . . Jn 5:9  
 near Jerusalem—a **S** day's journey away. . . . . Ac 1:12  
 So you see that a **S** rest is left open for . . . . . Heb 4:9  
 the day before the **S** and the Sabbath . . . . . Jdt 8:6  
 sacrificed to idols and violated the **S** . . . . . 1Macc 1:43  
 until the holy **S** day to take . . . . . 2Macc 5:25  
 has enjoyed its **S** rest, it will . . . . . 1Esd 1:55

### SABBATH DAY

Ex 20:8, 11; 31:15; 35:3; Nm 15:32; 28:9; Dt 5:12; 5:15; Neh 13:22;  
 Ps 92:1; Jer 17:21; 17:22, 24, 27; Eze 46:4, 12, Mt 24:20; Lk 13:14;  
 13:16; 14:5; Jn 9:14

### SABBATH TO THE LORD

Ex 16:23; 16:25; 20:10; Lv 23:3; 25:4

### SACRIFICE

**LORD** looked favorably on Abel and his **s** . . . . . Gn 4:4  
 is the Passover **s** to the **LORD**, for. . . . . Ex 12:27  
 one flawless ram as a well-being **s** . . . . . Nm 6:14  
 you must not eat it to the **LORD** . . . . . Dt 15:21  
 an entirely burned offering or for **s**' . . . . . Josh 22:26  
 those who made a covenant with me by **s** . . . . . Ps 50:5  
 I've made a **s** of well-being; today I . . . . . Prv 7:14  
 offer the fools' **s**—they have no idea . . . . . Ecc 5:1  
 for the **LORD** has a **s** in Bozrah, a great . . . . . Is 34:6  
 or prince, without **s** or sacred standing . . . . . Hos 3:4  
 want mercy and not **s**. I didn't come to . . . . . Mt 9:13  
 and offer the **s** for your cleansing . . . . . Mk 1:44  
 They offered a **s** in keeping with what's . . . . . Lk 2:24  
 a calf, offered a **s** to it, and began . . . . . Ac 7:41  
 as the place of **s** where mercy is . . . . . Ro 3:25  
 eternal Spirit as a **s** without any flaw. . . . . Heb 9:14  
 offered secret **s** of the very best . . . . . Wis 18:9  
 who brings a **s** that comes from . . . . . Sir 34:24  
 burned offering or **s**, no special gift . . . . . PrAz 15  
 idols. They should **s** pigs and other . . . . . 1Macc 1:47  
 provisions for the **s**, Nehemiah . . . . . 2Macc 1:21  
**S** the Passover lamb and prepare . . . . . 1Esd 1:6  
 None who refuse to **s** are to enter into . . . . . 3Macc 2:28  
 moved quickly to **s** Isaac his son, who . . . . . 4Macc 16:20

### COMMUNAL SACRIFICE

Lv 3:1, 3, 6, 9; 4:10, 26, 31, 35; 7:11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 29, 32, 37;  
 9:18; 17:8; 19:5; 22:21, 29, 23:19

### DAILY SACRIFICE

Dn 8:11; 8:12, 13; 11:31; 12:11

### SACRIFICES

There he offered **s** to his father . . . . . Gn 46:1  
 that we can offer **s** to the **LORD** our . . . . . Ex 3:18  
 your well-being **s**. They will serve . . . . . Nm 10:10  
 offerings, your **s**, your tenth-part. . . . . Dt 12:6  
 perform well-being **s** on it, let the . . . . . Josh 22:23  
 and I will offer **s** in God's tent . . . . . Ps 27:6  
**LORD** detests the **s** of the wicked, but . . . . . Prv 15:8  
 about all your **s**? says the **LORD**. . . . . Is 1:11  
 sweet-smelling **s** to them and . . . . . Hos 2:13  
 of entirely burned offerings and **s** . . . . . Mk 12:33  
 had killed while they were offering **s** . . . . . Lk 13:1  
 Did you bring **s** and offerings to . . . . . Ac 7:42  
 involved in these **s** to false gods, we . . . . . 1Co 8:4  
 in order to offer gifts and **s** for sins. . . . . Heb 5:1  
 for offering **s** on behalf of all . . . . . Tob 1:4  
 When someone **s** something unjustly gotten, . . . . . Sir 34:21  
 priests misse the **s** by selling them . . . . . LJer 27  
 burned offerings, **s**, and drink . . . . . 1Macc 1:45  
 us. We offered **s** and fine flour, . . . . . 2Macc 1:18  
 lamb and prepare **s** for your people, . . . . . 1Esd 1:6  
 it forever of those who performed **s** there. . . . . 3Macc 5:43  
 forgot me and offered **s** to foreign gods! . . . . . 2Esd 1:6

### COMMUNAL SACRIFICES

Lv 7:34; 10:14; 17:5, 7; 23:37; Eze 40:42

### SAINTS

it pleads for the **s**, consistent with . . . . . Ro 8:27  
 incense, which are the prayers of the **s**. . . . . Epi 1:18  
 it that he's now considered one of the **s**? . . . . . Wis 5:5

### SALEM

the king of **S** and the priest of . . . . . Gn 14:18  
 place became **S**, his habitation . . . . . Ps 76:2  
 at Aenon near **S** because there was . . . . . Jn 3:23  
 who was king of **S** and priest of the . . . . . Heb 7:1  
 and to Choba, Aesora, and the **S** Valley. . . . . Jdt 4:4

### SALT

back, she turned into a pillar of **s**. . . . . Gn 19:26  
 incense, seasoned with **s**, pure and holy. . . . . Ex 30:35  
 offerings with **s**. Do not omit the. . . . . Lv 2:13  
 is a covenant of **s** forever in the . . . . . Nm 18:19  
 by sulfur and **s**, unsuitable . . . . . Dt 29:23  
 Nibshan (the **S** City), and En-gedi. In . . . . . Josh 15:62  
 food eaten without **s**, or does egg white . . . . . Job 6:6  
 thousand in the **S** Valley.] God, you . . . . . Ps 60:1  
 or rubbed with **s**, and you weren't . . . . . Eze 16:4  
 a plot of weeds, **s** pits, and . . . . . Zep 2:9  
 You are the **s** of the earth. . . . . Mt 5:13  
**S** is good; but if salt loses its . . . . . Mk 9:50  
**S** is good. But if salt loses its flavor, . . . . . Lk 14:34  
 fresh water and **s** water don't come . . . . . Jas 3:11  
 fruit. A pillar of **s** still stands there . . . . . Wis 10:7  
 Sand, **s**, and a lump of iron are easier. . . . . Sir 22:15  
 of tribute as well as **s** and royal taxes. . . . . 1Macc 10:29  
 given for wheat, **s**, wine, and oil, . . . . . 1Esd 6:29  
**S** waters will be found in sources of . . . . . 2Esd 5:9

### SALVATION

he has become my **s**. This is my God . . . . . Ex 15:2  
 thought the rock of his **s** was worthless . . . . . Dt 32:15  
 be clothed with **s**; may those loyal . . . . . 2Ch 6:41  
 rejoice in your **s** in the gates of . . . . . Ps 9:14  
 God is indeed my **s**; I will trust and . . . . . Is 12:2  
 for the God of my **s**; my God will hear . . . . . Mic 7:7  
 message of eternal **s**. Amen.]] [(After . . . . . Mk 16:9  
 He has brought **s** from our enemies and . . . . . Lk 1:71  
 what we know because **s** is from the Jews. . . . . Jn 4:22  
**S** can be found in no one else. Throughout . . . . . Ac 4:12  
 own power for **s** to all who have . . . . . Ro 1:16  
 serve those who are going to inherit **s**? . . . . . Heb 1:14  
 say, "Now the **s** and power and . . . . . Rev 12:10  
 the sign of their **s** as a reminder of . . . . . Wis 16:6  
 one for your **s**, the holy one has . . . . . Bar 4:22  
 to turn from their sins and find **s**. . . . . PrMan 7  
 performed mighty deeds for their **s**. . . . . 3Macc 7:22  
 be joy over those for whom **s** is sure." . . . . . 2Esd 7:131

### SAMARIA

in the towns of **S** will most . . . . . 1Ki 13:32  
 of Ephraim is **S**, and the chief of . . . . . Is 7:9  
 wicked deeds of **S**; for they deceive . . . . . Hos 7:1  
 along the border between **S** and Galilee. . . . . Lk 17:11  
 Jesus had to go through **S** . . . . . Jn 4:4  
 in all Judea and **S**, and to the end of . . . . . Ac 1:8  
 will be deserted. **S** and Jerusalem will . . . . . Tob 14:4  
 and everyone in **S** and its cities, and . . . . . Jdt 1:9  
 a large force from **S** to fight against . . . . . 1Macc 3:10  
 in the region of **S**, so he wanted to . . . . . 2Macc 15:1  
 them living in **S** and other places . . . . . 1Esd 2:12

### SAMARITAN

go among the Gentiles or into a **S** city. . . . . Mt 10:5  
 they entered a **S** village to prepare . . . . . Lk 9:52  
 He came to a **S** city called Sychar, which . . . . . Jn 4:5  
 good news to many **S** villages along the . . . . . Ac 8:25  
 and the three **S** districts from the . . . . . 1Macc 11:28

### SAMSON

son and named him **S**. The boy grew up . . . . . Jgs 13:24  
 Gideon, Barak, **S**, Jephthah, David. . . . . Heb 11:32

**SAMUEL**

son. She named him **S**, which means "I . . . . . 1Sa 1:20  
 among his priests, **S** too among . . . . . Ps 99:6  
 Even if Moses and **S** stood before me . . . . . Jer 15:1  
 who spoke—from **S** forward—announced. . . . . Ac 3:24  
 Jephthah, David, **S**, and the prophets . . . . . Heb 11:32  
**S** was dearly loved by his Lord. As a . . . . . Sir 46:13  
 in Israel since the time of the prophet **S**. . . . . 1Esd 1:18  
 to anoint me, **S** to make me great. . . . . Ps 151:1-5  
 and **S** in the days of Saul; and David for. . . . . 2Esd 7:108

**SANBALLAT**

When **S** the Horonite and Tobiah the . . . . . Neh 2:10

**SANCTUARY**

your power you guided them to your **s**. . . . . Ex 15:13  
 the front of the **s** to a place outside . . . . . Lv 10:4  
 perform duties for the **s**, was 8,600. . . . . Nm 3:28  
 there under the oak in the **s** of the LORD. . . . . Josh 24:26  
 to you from the **s** and support you . . . . . Ps 20:2  
 God will become a **s**—but he will be a . . . . . Is 8:14  
 the curtain of the **s** was torn in two. . . . . Mt 27:51  
 The curtain of the **s** was torn in two from . . . . . Mk 15:38  
 to go into the Lord's **s** and burn incense . . . . . Lk 1:9  
 being, enters the **s** behind the curtain . . . . . Heb 6:19  
 destroyed and the **s** polluted and . . . . . Jdt 4:12  
 city where your **s**; on Jerusalem, . . . . . Sir 36:18  
 he went into the **s**. He took the gold . . . . . 1Macc 1:21  
 that very day, the **s** was purified, on . . . . . 2Macc 10:5  
 to enter their **s** and to honor it . . . . . 3Macc 3:17  
 plague; and Solomon for those in the **s** . . . . . 2Esd 7:108

**GOD'S SANCTUARY**

Lv 21:12; Jgs 18:31; 2Ch 30:8; Ps 73:17; 114:2

**SARAH**

call her Sarai. Her name will now be **S** . . . . . Gn 17:15  
 ancestor, and to **S**, who gave you . . . . . Is 51:2  
 now I will return, and **S** will have a son . . . . . Ro 9:9  
 By faith even **S** received the ability to . . . . . Heb 11:11  
 Ecbatana of Media, **S**, Raguel's . . . . . Tob 3:7

**SARAI**

Abrahm's wife was **S**, and Nahor's wife. . . . . Gn 11:29

**SATAN**

Go away, **S**, because it's . . . . . Mt 4:10  
 days, tempted by **S**. He was among the . . . . . Mk 1:13  
 replied, "I saw **S** fall from heaven . . . . . Lk 10:18  
 took the bread, **S** entered into him. . . . . Jn 13:27  
 how is it that **S** has influenced you . . . . . Ac 5:3  
 will soon crush **S** under your feet. . . . . Ro 16:20  
 was killed among you, where **S** lives . . . . . Rev 2:13

**SAUL**

He had a son named **S**, who was . . . . . 1Sa 9:2  
 enemies and from **S**.) He said: I love . . . . . Ps 18:1  
 Ramah trembles; Gibeah of **S** has fled. . . . . Is 10:29  
 coats in the care of a young man named **S**. . . . . Ac 7:58  
 in the days of **S**; and David for the . . . . . 2Esd 7:108

**SAVE**

**SAVE THEIR LIVES**

Prv 23:14; Eze 14:20; Am 2:14; Mt 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24

**SAVE US**

Jgs 10:15; 1Sa 4:3; 7:8; 10:27; 11:3; 2Kgs 19:19; 1Ch 16:35; 2Ch  
 20:9; Ps 44:26; 60:5; 80:2; 85:4; 106:47; 118:25; Is 37:20; Jer 2:27;  
 Hos 14:3

**SAVE YOU**

Dt 20:4; 23:14; 28:31; 1Sa 12:21; Ps 91:3; 91:15; Prv 20:22; Is 35:4;  
 47:13; 15; 57:13; Jer 42:11; Eze 36:29; Hos 13:10; Jas 1:21

**SAVE YOURSELF**

Mt 27:40; Mk 15:30; Lk 23:37; 23:39; 1Ti 4:16

**SAVED**

**SAVED YOU**

Dt 7:8; 15:15; 24:18; 1Sa 10:19; Lk 7:50; Ac 16:31

**YOU WILL BE SAVED**

1Sa 11:9; 2Kgs 19:11; Is 30:15; 37:11; Ac 16:31; Ro 10:9

**SAVIOR**

and taken advantage of without any **s**. . . . . Dt 28:29  
 LORD sent Israel a **s**, and they escaped . . . . . 2Ki 13:5  
 will send them a **s** and defender to . . . . . Is 19:20  
 gods but me; there is no **s** besides me. . . . . Hos 13:4  
 depths of who I am I rejoice in God my **s**. . . . . Lk 1:47  
 this one is truly the **s** of the world. . . . . Jn 4:42  
 side as leader and **s** so that he could . . . . . Ac 5:31  
 the church, that is, the **s** of the body. . . . . Eph 5:23  
 those who despair, **s** of those without . . . . . Jdt 9:11  
 all-seeing God and **s**, she appeared in . . . . . GkEst D:2  
 by what they saw but by you, the **s** of all. . . . . Wis 16:7  
 praise you, God my **s**. I give thanks to . . . . . Sir 51:1  
 your eternal **s** will soon have . . . . . Bar 4:22  
 Blessed are you, **S** of Israel, who . . . . . 1Macc 4:30  
 promises to the **s** for sparing his . . . . . 2Macc 3:35  
 their holy God and **s**, since they had . . . . . 3Macc 6:29  
 I testify that my **s** has been . . . . . 2Esd 2:36

**GOD OUR SAVIOR**

1Ch 16:35; 1Ti 1:1; 2:3; Ti 1:3; 2:10; Jude 25

**SAVIOR JESUS**

Ac 13:23; Ti 2:13; 2Pt 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:18

**SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST**

Ti 2:13; 2Pt 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:18

**SCRIPTURE**

you read this **S**, The stone . . . . . Mk 12:10  
 them, "Today, this **s** has been fulfilled . . . . . Lk 4:21  
 they believed the **s** and the word that . . . . . Jn 2:22  
 and sisters, the **s** and the Holy . . . . . Ac 1:16  
 What does the **s** say? Abraham had faith in . . . . . Ro 4:3  
 royal law found in **s**, Love your . . . . . Jas 2:8  
 you about the **s** in Isaiah that . . . . . 4Macc 18:14

**SCROLL**

a reminder on the **s** and read it to . . . . . Ex 17:14  
 curses in the **s** and wipe them off . . . . . Nm 5:23  
 Instruction on a **s** in the presence of . . . . . Dt 17:18  
 this Instruction **s**. Recite it day and . . . . . Josh 1:8  
 words were written down, inscribed on a **s** . . . . . Job 19:23  
 I come! I'm inscribed in the written **s**. . . . . Ps 40:7  
 words of a sealed **s**. When they give it . . . . . Is 29:11  
 about Nineveh; the **s** containing the . . . . . Na 1:1  
 you read in the **s** from Moses, in the . . . . . Mk 12:26  
 was written in the **s** of the words of. . . . . Lk 3:4  
 signs that aren't recorded in this **s**. . . . . Jn 20:30  
 the first **s** I wrote concerned . . . . . Ac 1:1  
 that have been written in the Law **s**. . . . . Ga 3:10  
 both the Law **s** itself and all the . . . . . Heb 9:19  
 Write down on a **s** whatever you see. . . . . Rev 1:11  
 This **s** is a story told by Tobit. He was . . . . . Tob 1:1  
 things down in a **s** and sent copies to . . . . . GkEst 9:20  
 a copy of this **s** to contain no . . . . . Sir 1:1  
 the words of the **s** that Baruch—son . . . . . Bar 1:1  
 of the covenant **s** or if anyone kept. . . . . 1Macc 1:57  
 This **s** is about the stories of Judas the . . . . . 2Macc 2:19  
 The Lord according to the **s** from Moses. . . . . 1Esd 1:12  
 The second **s** of the prophet Ezra son of . . . . . 2Esd 1:1

**SCROLL FROM MOSES**

Tob 6:13; 7:11, 12, 13; 1Esd 1:12; 5:48; 7:6, 9

**SCROLL OF LIFE**

Ps 69:28; Phi 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27

**SEA**

**RED SEA**

Ac 7:36; Heb 11:29; Jdt 5:13; Wis 10:18; 19:7; 1Macc 4:9

**REED SEA**

Ex 10:19; 13:18; 15:4, 22; 23:31; Nm 14:25; 21:4; 33:10, 11; Dt  
 1:40; 2:1; 11:4; Josh 2:10; 4:23; 24:6; Jgs 11:16; 1Kgs 9:26; Neh  
 9:9; Ps 106:7, 9, 22; 136:13, 15; Jer 49:21

## SEEK

## SEEK GOD

1Ch 21:30; 2Ch 19:3; Job 5:8; Ps 10:4; 69:32; 119:2

## SEEK THE LORD

Dt 4:29; 2Ch 11:16; 14:4; 15:12, 13; 16:12; Ps 22:26; 34:10; Prv 28:5; Is 9:13; 31:1; 51:1; 55:6; Jer 50:4; Hos 3:5; 5:6; 10:12; Am 5:6; Zep 1:6; 2:3; Zec 8:22; Ac 15:17

## SEER

Let's go to the **seer**, "because" . . . . . 1Sa 9:9  
Then the **seer** called out: "Upon a . . . . . Is 21:8  
words he became known as a trustworthy **seer** . . . . . Sir 46:15

## SEIR

the mountains of **Seir** as far as El-paran . . . . . Gn 14:6  
a possession, **Seir** a possession of . . . . . Nm 24:18  
Kadesh-barnea along the Mount **Seir** route. . . . . Dt 1:2  
goes up toward **Seir**, as far as . . . . . Josh 11:17  
calling to me from **Seir**, "Guard, how long. . . . . Is 21:11

## SENNACHERIB

Assyria's King **Sennacherib** marched against all of . . . . . 2Ki 18:13  
Assyria's King **Sennacherib** marched against all of . . . . . Is 36:1  
Sennacherib died, **Sennacherib** his son ruled in . . . . . Tob 1:15  
During his rule, **Sennacherib** moved on Jerusalem. . . . . Sir 48:18  
of the enemy died during the time of **Sennacherib**. . . . . 2Macc 8:19  
**Sennacherib**, the cruel king of the Assyrians, . . . . . 3Macc 6:5  
in the days of **Sennacherib**, and many for many . . . . . 2Esd 7:110

## SERAIAH

Abiathar were priests; **Seraiah** was secretary; . . . . . 2Sa 8:17  
also took away **Seraiah** the chief priest, . . . . . 2Ki 25:18  
son, along with **Seraiah**, Azriel's son, and . . . . . Jer 36:26  
of Jozadak son of **Seraiah**, and Joakim son of . . . . . 1Esd 5:5

## SERVANT

Canaan: the lowest **servant** he will be for his . . . . . Gn 9:25  
talking to you **servant**. I have a slow. . . . . Ex 4:10  
priest purchases a **servant**, that person can . . . . . Lv 22:11  
you treated your **servant** so badly? And why . . . . . Nm 11:11  
began to show you **servant** your greatness and. . . . . Dt 3:24  
Moses the **LORD's** **servant** died, the **LORD** . . . . . Josh 1:1  
thought about my **servant** Job; surely there. . . . . Job 1:8  
David the **LORD's** **servant** who spoke the . . . . . Ps 18:1  
the wind. The fool will be **servant** to the wise. . . . . Prv 11:29  
said, "Just as my **servant** Isaiah has walked . . . . . Is 20:3  
Look, my **servant** will succeed . . . . . Is 52:13  
son, my **servant**, says the **LORD**; I . . . . . Hg 2:23  
him, "Lord, my **servant** is flat on. . . . . Mt 8:6  
must be least of all and the **servant** of all. . . . . Mk 9:35

## GOD'S SERVANT

2Kgs 8:4; 1Ch 6:49; 2Ch 24:9; Neh 10:29; Dn 9:11; Ro 13:4; Rev 15:3

## SERVE

## SERVE OTHER GODS

Dt 28:64; Josh 23:16; 24:16; 1Kgs 9:6; 2Ch 7:19; Jer 16:13; 35:15

## SERVE THE LORD

Lv 7:35; Josh 24:14; 24:15, 18, 19, 22, 24; 1Sa 12:20; 2Ch 30:8; Ps 2:11; 100:2; 102:22; 113:1; 134:1; 135:1; Jer 30:9; Eze 40:46; Ro 12:11; Col 3:24; Sir 2:1; PrAz 62

## SERVED

## SERVED THE LORD

Josh 24:31; Jgs 2:7; 10:16; 1Sa 2:11; Ac 20:19

## SERVING

## SERVING THE LORD

Dt 10:12; 17:12; 1Sa 2:18; 3:1; Ro 16:18; Eph 6:7

## SETH

She named him **Seth** "because God has. . . . . Gn 4:25  
Adam, **Seth**, Enosh. . . . . 1Ch 1:1  
son of Enos, son of **Seth**, son of Adam . . . . . Lk 3:38  
Seth and **Seth** were honored among human . . . . . Sir 49:16

## SHADRACH

Hananiah "**Shadrach**," Mishael. . . . . Dn 1:7  
**Shadrach**, Meshach, and Abednego walked around . . . . . PrAz 1

## SHARON

boundaries of all the open lands of **Sharon**. . . . . 1Ch 5:16  
I'm a rose of the **Sharon** plain, a lily of the . . . . . Song 2:1  
it withered. **Sharon** became like . . . . . Is 33:9  
lived in Lydda and **Sharon** saw him and turned . . . . . Ac 9:35

## SHEBA

and Sabteca. Raamah's sons: **Sheba** and Dedan. . . . . Gn 10:7  
in their legacy: Beer-sheba, **Sheba**, Moladah, . . . . . Josh 19:2  
Tema look; merchants from **Sheba** hope for it. . . . . Job 6:19  
let the kings of **Sheba** and Seba present . . . . . Ps 72:10  
will all come from **Sheba**, carrying gold and . . . . . Is 60:6

## SHECHEM

sacred place at **Shechem**, at the oak of . . . . . Gn 12:6  
clan; from **Shechem**, the Shechemite . . . . . Nm 26:31  
Helek, Asriel, **Shechem**, and . . . . . Josh 17:2  
as I divide up **Shechem** and portion out . . . . . Ps 60:6  
arrived from **Shechem**, Shiloh, and . . . . . Jer 41:5  
on the road to **Shechem**, they have done . . . . . Hos 6:9  
brought back to **Shechem** and placed in the . . . . . Ac 7:16  
and the foolish people who dwell in **Shechem**. . . . . Sir 50:26  
whole nation of **Shechem**, saying, "Their. . . . . 4Macc 2:19

## SHEEP

## SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD

1Kgs 22:17; 2Ch 18:16; Is 13:14; Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34

## SHELAH

fathered **Shelah**, and Shelah . . . . . Gn 10:24  
their clans: from **Shelah**, the Shelanite. . . . . Nm 26:20  
Shelah's father, and **Shelah** was Eber's father. . . . . 1Ch 1:18  
of Reu son of Peleg son of Eber son of **Shelah**. . . . . Lk 3:35

## SHEMAIAH

But God's word came to **SHEMAIAH** the man of God . . . . . 1Ki 12:22  
Tell **SHEMAIAH** the Nehelamite . . . . . Jer 29:24  
Jecooniah, **SHEMAIAH** and his brother Nethanel, . . . . . 1Esd 1:9

## SHEPHERD

## SHEPHERD WITHOUT A SHEPHERD

1Kgs 22:17; 2Ch 18:16; Is 13:14; Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34

## SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE

2Sa 5:2; 7:7; 1Ch 11:2; 17:6; Mt 2:6

## SHILOH

assembled at **Shiloh** and set up the . . . . . Josh 18:1  
the sanctuary at **Shiloh**, the tent where he . . . . . Ps 78:60  
to my sanctuary in **Shiloh**, where I let my . . . . . Jer 7:12

## SHIMEI

Gershonites: Libni and **Shimei** and their clans. . . . . Ex 6:17  
sons by their clans: Libni and **Shimei**. . . . . Nm 3:18  
prophet Nathan, **Shimei** and his friends, . . . . . 1Ki 1:8  
the family line of **Shimei** and Kish; he was a . . . . . GkEst 2:5  
Levites: Jozabad, **Shimei**, Kelaiah who was . . . . . 1Esd 9:23

## SHRINES

all their **shrines** and cut down their . . . . . Jdt 3:8  
precincts and **shrines** for idols. They . . . . . 1Macc 1:47  
for their sacred **shrines**, he reassured his . . . . . 3Macc 1:7

## BUILT SHRINES

1Kgs 14:23; 2Kgs 17:9; Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:35

## SICK

made our hearts **sick** by saying, "People. . . . . Dt 1:28  
to arrest David, but she said, "He's **sick**." . . . . . 1Sa 19:14  
touch them; they resemble food for the **sick**. . . . . Job 6:7  
But when they were **sick**, I wore clothes for . . . . . Ps 35:13  
makes the heart **sick**, longing fulfilled. . . . . Prv 13:12  
as when a **sick** person wastes away, . . . . . Is 10:18  
itself becomes **sick**, and all who live . . . . . Hos 4:3  
a word. He healed everyone who was **sick**. . . . . Mt 8:16

-in-law was in bed, **s** with a fever, . . . . . Mk 1:30  
 mother-in-law was **s** with a high fever, . . . . . Lk 4:38  
 a certain royal official whose son was **s**, . . . . . Jn 4:46  
 was done for a **s** person, a good . . . . . Ac 4:9  
 you are weak and **s**, and quite a few . . . . . 1Co 11:30  
 If any of you are **s**, they should call . . . . . Jas 5:14  
 It will make you to your stomach, . . . . . Rev 10:9  
 plans. Just to look at him makes us **s**. . . . . Wis 2:14  
 to visit the **s**, because you will. . . . . Sir 7:35  
 Alexander fell **s** and was confined . . . . . 1Macc 1:5

**HEAL THE SICK**

Eze 34:4; Mt 10:8; Lk 9:2; 10:9; Jas 5:15

**SICK PEOPLE**

Mt 9:12; Mk 2:17; 6:5, 13, 55; Lk 5:31

**SIDON**

Canaan fathered **S** his oldest son, and . . . . . Gn 10:15  
 as far as Great **S** and . . . . . Josh 11:8  
 coast, traders of **S**, whose messengers . . . . . Is 23:2  
 to me, Tyre and **S**, and all the . . . . . Jl 3:4  
 done in Tyre and **S**, they would have . . . . . Mt 11:21  
 and the area surrounding Tyre and **S** . . . . . Mk 3:8  
 the city of Zarephath in the region of **S** . . . . . Lk 4:26  
 people of Tyre and **S** for some time . . . . . Ac 12:20  
 the seacoast, in **S** and Tyre, those . . . . . Jdt 2:28  
 Ptolemais, Tyre, **S**, and all Galilee . . . . . 1Macc 5:15  
 of you, Tyre and **S**, with fire and . . . . . 2Esd 1:11

**SIDONIANS**

**S** call Hermon "Sirion," but the Amorites . . . . . Dt 3:9  
 belongs to the **S**, as far as Aphek . . . . . Josh 13:4  
 there, and all the **S** who went down with . . . . . Eze 32:30  
 gave gifts to the **S** and the Tyrians, . . . . . 1Esd 5:53

**SIGHT**

In God's **s**, the earth had become corrupt. . . . . Gn 6:11  
 out this amazing **s** and find out why . . . . . Ex 3:3  
 be cut off in the **s** of their people. . . . . Lv 20:17  
 Mount Hor in the **s** of the entire . . . . . Nm 20:27  
 good in the LORD's **s** so that things . . . . . Dt 6:18  
 up. He caught **s** of a man standing. . . . . Josh 5:13  
 we considered beasts, ignorant in your **s**? . . . . . Job 18:3  
 last long in your **s**, you hate all . . . . . Ps 5:5  
 useless to cast a net in the **s** of a bird. . . . . Prv 1:17  
 it in plain **s**. It's a wasteland. . . . . Is 1:7  
 they hide from my **s** at the bottom of . . . . . Am 9:3  
 a person in God's **s**. It's what comes . . . . . Mt 15:11  
 a person in God's **s**; rather, the . . . . . Mk 7:15  
 and recovery of **s** to the blind, to . . . . . Lk 4:18  
 and received his **s** until they called. . . . . Jn 9:18  
 up and a cloud took him out of their **s**. . . . . Ac 1:9  
 a clear goal in **s**. I fight like a . . . . . 1Co 9:26  
 The **s** was so frightening that Moses said, . . . . . Heb 12:21  
 is a good gift in the **s** of the Most High. . . . . Tob 4:13  
 the Egyptians drove them out of their **s**. . . . . Jdt 5:12  
 enemies. Just the **s** of them would have . . . . . Wis 11:19  
 who fear the Lord are honored in his **s**. . . . . Sir 10:20  
 They can't restore **s** to the blind or . . . . . LJer 36  
 your hands, than sin in the Lord's **s**." . . . . . Su 3  
 forward in plain **s** to offer sacrifice . . . . . 1Macc 2:23  
 dread of the high priest was a pitiful **s**. . . . . 2Macc 3:21  
 and tremble at the **s** of it, and there's . . . . . 1Esd 4:36  
 manner. At the **s** of these unusual . . . . . 3Macc 4:4  
 God and have done bad things in his **s**. . . . . 2Esd 2:3

**SIGN**

The LORD put a **s** on Cain so that no . . . . . Gn 4:15  
 to the first **s**, they may believe. . . . . Ex 4:8  
 they bear the **s** of their. . . . . Nm 6:7  
 on your hand as a **s**. They should be on . . . . . Dt 6:8  
 my family. Give me a **s** of good faith. . . . . Josh 2:12  
 Show me a **s** of your goodness so that . . . . . Ps 86:17  
 Ask a **s** from the LORD your God. Make it . . . . . Is 7:11  
 early rain as a **s** of righteousness; . . . . . Jl 2:23  
 we would like to see a **s** from you. . . . . Mt 12:38  
 test him, they asked for a **s** from heaven. . . . . Mk 8:11

This is a **s** for you: you will find a . . . . . Lk 2:12  
 is aware of the **s** performed through . . . . . Ac 4:16  
 He received the **s** of circumcision as a . . . . . Ro 4:11  
 Then a great **s** appeared in heaven: a . . . . . Rev 12:1  
 there's no **s** in the air that . . . . . Wis 5:11  
 to be known. He saw the **s** of the age, . . . . . Sir 42:18  
 hoped that the visions were a good **s**. . . . . 2Macc 5:4  
 that he was wrong to speak of this as a **s**. . . . . 3Macc 1:14  
 The quails were a **s** for you. I gave . . . . . 2Esd 1:15  
 food. Isn't this a **s** that your rule of . . . . . 4Macc 11:25

**MIRACULOUS SIGN**

2Ch 32:24; 32:31; Jn 2:11; 2:18; 4:54; 6:14, 30; 12:18

**SIGNS**

**MIRACULOUS SIGNS**

Jn 2:23; 3:2; 4:48; 6:2, 26; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:37; 20:30

**SIGNS AND WONDERS**

Dt 7:19; 26:8; 29:3; 34:11; Neh 9:10; Ps 135:9; Is 8:18; Jer 32:20;  
 32:21; Mt 24:24; Mk 13:22; Jn 4:48; Ac 4:30; 5:12; 14:3; 15:12; Ro  
 15:19; 2Th 2:9; Wis 8:8; Bar 2:11

**SIHON**

sent messengers to **S** the Amorite king . . . . . Nm 21:21  
 the defeat of **S**, the Amorite king . . . . . Dt 1:4  
 what you did to **S** and Og, the two. . . . . Josh 2:10  
**S**, the Amorite king, Og, the king of . . . . . Ps 135:11  
 from the house of **S**. It has burned up . . . . . Jer 48:45

**SILAS**

Barsabbas and **S**, who were leaders . . . . . Ac 15:22

**SILVANUS**

by us—through me, **S**, and Timothy—he . . . . . 2Co 1:19  
 lines to you by **S**. I consider him to . . . . . 1Pt 5:12

**SIMEON**

me this son too," and she named him **S**. . . . . Gn 29:33  
 Reuben, **S**, Levi, and Judah . . . . . Ex 10:17  
 from **S**, Shelumiel, Zurishaddai's son . . . . . Nm 1:6  
 bless the people: **S**, Levi, Judah, . . . . . Dt 27:12  
 second lot fell to **S**. The legacy . . . . . Josh 19:1  
 to the western border: **S**, one portion. . . . . Eze 48:24  
 A man named **S** was in Jerusalem. He was . . . . . Lk 2:25  
 Barnabas, **S** (nicknamed Niger), . . . . . Ac 13:1  
 from the tribe of **S**, twelve thousand; . . . . . Rev 7:7  
 from the tribe of **S**, and Chabris, . . . . . Jdt 6:15  
 and grandson of **S**, moved from . . . . . 1Macc 2:1  
 the households of **S** and Levi for the . . . . . 4Macc 2:19

**SIMON**

saw two brothers, **S**, who is called . . . . . Mt 4:18  
 saw two brothers, **S** and Andrew, . . . . . Mk 1:16  
 went home with **S**. . . . . Lk 4:38  
 Jesus was Andrew, the brother of **S** Peter. . . . . Jn 1:40  
 Alphaeus's son; **S** the zealot; and . . . . . Ac 1:13  
 From **S** Peter, a slave and apostle of . . . . . 2Pt 1:1  
**S**, Onias' son, was a great high priest. . . . . Sir 50:1  
**S**, called Thass . . . . . 1Macc 2:3  
 But a certain **S** from the tribe of . . . . . 2Macc 3:4  
 Melchias, Sabbaias, and **S** Chosamaeus. . . . . 1Esd 9:32  
 the high priest **S** knelt in front of. . . . . 3Macc 2:1  
 A man named **S** was a political opponent of. . . . . 4Macc 4:1

**SIN**

the right thing, **s** will be waiting at . . . . . Gn 4:7  
 Please forgive my **s** this time . . . . . Ex 10:17  
 woman commits any **s** against anyone . . . . . Nm 5:6  
 all because of the **s** that you had . . . . . Dt 9:18  
 from that **s**, when there was a . . . . . Josh 12:27  
 In all this, Job didn't **s** or blame God . . . . . Job 1:11  
 afraid, and don't **s**! Think hard about . . . . . Ps 4:4  
 grabbed by the ropes of their own **s** . . . . . Prv 5:22  
 of fraud, and haul **s** as if with cart . . . . . Is 5:18  
 They feed on the **s** of my people; they set . . . . . Hos 4:8  
 is guilty of a **s** with consequences . . . . . Mk 3:29  
 of God who takes away the **s** of the world!  
 don't hold this **s** against them!" . . . . . Ac 7:60

Greeks are all under the power of **♯** . . . . . Ro 3:9  
 every way that we are, except without **♯** . . . . . Heb 4:15  
 it your desire to **♯** or to disobey his . . . . . Tob 4:5  
 her home in a body that is devoted to **♯** . . . . . Wis 1:4  
 that brings about **♯**, and there's a . . . . . Sir 4:21  
 offerings and **♯** offerings. Buy . . . . . Bar 1:10  
 your hands, than **♯** in the Lord's . . . . . Sus 23  
 male goats for the **♯** of all Israel. . . . . 1Esd 7:8  
 of those who now **♯** were alienated, . . . . . 2Esd 6:5  
 he had committed a **♯** for which he. . . . . 4Macc 4:12

**FALL INTO SIN**

Mt 5:29; 5:30, 18:6, 7, 8, 9; Mk 9:42; 9:43, 45, 47; Lk 17:1, 2

**GUILTY OF SIN**

Lv 4:3, 13, 22, 27; 5:2, 3, 4, 5, 6; Dt 15:9; Jn 8:46

**SIN AGAINST**

Jdt 5:17, 20; Sir 7:7; 10:29; 38:15; 2Macc 7:2; PrMan 8; 2Esd  
 15:26; 4Macc 9:1

**SINAI**

between Elim and **S**. They set out on . . . . . Ex 16:1  
 to Moses in the **S** desert in the . . . . . Nm 1:1

The **LORD** came from **S**, from Seir . . . . . Dt 33:2

**LORD**, the one from **S**, before the **LORD** . . . . . Jgs 5:5  
 God, the one from **S**—before God, the . . . . . Ps 68:8  
 led them by way of **S** and Kadesh-barnea. . . . . Jdt 5:14  
 heard a rebuke at **S** and decrees of . . . . . Sir 48:7

**MOUNT SINAI**

Ex 19:11; 19:18, 20, 23; 24:16; 31:18; 34:2, 4, 29, 32; Lv 7:38; 25:1;  
 26:46; 27:34; Nm 3:1; 28:6; Neh 9:13; Ac 7:30; 7:38; Ga 4:24; 4:25;  
 2Esd 3:17

**SINFUL**

were very evil and **♯** against the **LORD** . . . . . Gn 13:13  
 a group of **♯** men, to intensify . . . . . Nm 32:14  
 And as for that **♯** thing you made . . . . . Dt 9:21  
 Go, and put the **♯** Amalekites under . . . . . 1Sa 15:18  
 the ancient way traveled by **♯** persons, . . . . . Job 22:15  
 David. I know the **♯** utterance of the . . . . . Ps 36:1  
 and the lamp of the wicked are all **♯**. . . . . Prv 21:4  
 Doom! **♯** nation, people weighed down with . . . . . Is 1:4  
 God is eyeing the **♯** kingdom . . . . . Am 9:8  
 unfaithful and **♯** generation, the . . . . . Mk 8:38  
 they were more **♯** than all the other . . . . . Lk 13:2  
 self-centered, the **♯** passions aroused . . . . . Ro 7:5  
 what will happen to the goddess and **♯**? . . . . . 1Pt 4:18  
 and greatness to a **♯** nation. So turn . . . . . Tob 13:6  
 not proper to give glory to a **♯** person. . . . . Sir 10:23  
 sprouted a **♯** root—Antiochus . . . . . 1Macc 1:10

**SING****SING HYMNS**

Sir 39:35; PrAz 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47,  
 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65,  
 67; 2Macc 12:37

**SING PRAISES**

2Sa 22:50; 1Ch 16:9; Ps 7:17; 9:2, 11; 18:49; 30:4, 12; 33:2; 47:6, 7;  
 59:17; 61:8; 66:2; 68:4, 32; 75:9; 92:1; 104:33; 105:2; 135:3; 144:9;  
 146:2; 147:7; Ro 15:9

**SING TO GOD**

1Ch 16:9; Ps 68:4, 32; 105:2; Col 3:16

**SING TO THE LORD**

Ex 15:1, 21; 1Ch 16:23; Ps 13:6; 96:1, 2; 98:1; 104:33; 147:7; 149:1;  
 Is 12:5; 42:10; Jer 20:13

**SINGING**

King Saul with **♯** and dancing . . . . . 1Sa 18:6  
 be childless; may no happy **♯** come in it. . . . . Job 3:7  
**♯** a song to a troubled heart is like . . . . . Prv 25:20  
 There will be **♯** for you as on the night . . . . . Is 30:29  
 and all your **♯** into a funeral . . . . . Am 8:10  
 Then, after **♯** songs of praise, they went. . . . . Mt 26:30  
 After **♯** songs of praise, they went out to . . . . . Mk 14:26  
 were playing and **♯** hymns to God, and . . . . . Ac 16:25  
 with all wisdom by **♯** psalms, hymns, and . . . . . Col 3:16

**SINNED****SINNED AGAINST THE LORD**

Ex 10:16; Nm 32:23; Dt 1:41; 9:16; Josh 7:20; 1Sa 7:6; 2Sa 12:13;  
 2Kgs 17:7; Jer 3:25; 8:14; 16:10; 40:3; 44:23; 50:7, 14; Zep 1:17;  
 Bar 1:13, 17; 2:5; 1Esd 6:14; 8:89

**SINNED AGAINST YOU**

Jgs 10:10; 11:27; 1Kgs 8:33; 8:35, 50; 2Ch 6:24; 6:26, 39; Ps 41:4;  
 51:4; Jer 14:7, 20; Dn 9:8

**YOU HAVE SINNED**

Lv 5:5, 16; 6:4; Jer 40:3; Hos 10:9; 1Pt 2:20

**SINNERS**

say God destroys the blameless and the **♯** . . . . . Job 9:22  
 on the road of **♯**, and doesn't sit . . . . . Ps 1:1  
 My son, don't let **♯** entice you . . . . . Prv 1:10  
 shatter rebels and **♯** alike; those who . . . . . Is 1:28  
 All the **♯** of my people will die by the . . . . . Am 9:10  
 doesn't listen to **♯**. God listens to . . . . . Jn 9:31  
 while we were still **♯** Christ died for us. . . . . Ro 5:8  
 separate from **♯**, and raised high. . . . . Heb 7:26  
 righteous, but don't give anything to **♯**. . . . . Tob 4:17  
 taken away from living in the midst of **♯** . . . . . Wis 4:10  
 treasures, but **♯** avoid godliness. . . . . Sir 1:25  
 they struck down **♯** and renegades. . . . . 1Macc 2:44  
 Stabbing **♯** left and right, he . . . . . 2Macc 12:23  
 resist the fury of your threat against **♯**. . . . . PrMan 5  
 I have seen many **♯** during these. . . . . 2Esd 3:29

**TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS**

Mt 9:10; 9:11; 11:19; Mk 2:15; Lk 5:30; 7:34; 15:1

**SINS**

your brothers' **♯** and misdeeds . . . . . Gn 50:17  
 for their parents' **♯** even to the third . . . . . Ex 20:5  
 whenever someone **♯** unintentionally. . . . . Lv 4:2  
 If an individual **♯** unintentionally, that . . . . . Nm 15:27  
 for their parents' **♯**—even to the third . . . . . Dt 5:9  
 won't forgive your rebellion and your **♯**. . . . . Josh 24:19  
 my offenses and **♯**? Inform me about . . . . . Job 13:23  
 out for their many **♯** because they've . . . . . Ps 5:10  
 who hide their **♯** won't succeed, but . . . . . Prv 28:13  
**LORD**. Though your **♯** are like scarlet, . . . . . Is 1:18  
 and punish their **♯**, they will return . . . . . Hos 8:13  
 he will save his people from their **♯**. . . . . Mt 1:21  
 lives and wanted God to forgive their **♯**. . . . . Mk 1:4  
 saved through the forgiveness of their **♯** . . . . . Lk 1:77  
 in passing over **♯** that happened. . . . . Ro 3:25  
 people from their **♯**, he sat down at . . . . . Heb 1:3  
 us and freed us from our **♯** by his blood, . . . . . Rev 1:5  
 punish me for my **♯** and the mistakes I . . . . . Tob 3:3  
 us for our **♯** and the sins of . . . . . Jdt 7:28  
 cower when their **♯** are counted up. . . . . Wis 4:20  
 he forgives **♯** and rescues people . . . . . Sir 2:11  
 so I was stripped bare because of their **♯**. . . . . Bar 4:12  
 because of the **♯** that you committed. . . . . Jer 1  
 all these things to us because of our **♯**. . . . . PrAz 5  
 said to him, "The **♯** you did earlier . . . . . Sus 52  
 because of the **♯** of those who lived . . . . . 2Macc 5:17  
 Our **♯** are greater than what we imagined. . . . . 1Esd 8:72  
 sorry for their **♯**. In your great . . . . . PrMan 7  
 because of our many and great **♯**. . . . . 3Macc 2:13  
 children about the **♯** they committed. . . . . 2Esd 1:5

**FORGIVE SINS**

Mt 9:6; Mk 2:7, 10; Lk 5:21; 5:24

**YOUR SINS**

Lv 16:30; 26:18, 21, 24, 28; Josh 24:19; Job 15:5; Ps 103:3; Is 1:18;  
 Mt 6:15; Sir 3:14, 15; 4:26; 28:2, 8; 2Esd 16:66, 67, 77

**YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN**

Is 43:24; 44:22; 50:1; 59:2; 65:7; Jer 15:13; 30:14, 15; Lam 4:22; Eze  
 16:52; 18:30; 21:24; Dn 4:27; Am 5:12; Mic 6:13; 6:15; 9:2, 5; 2:5, 9;  
 5:20; 23: 7:48; Mt 9:2, 5; Mk 2:5, 9; Lk 5:20; 5:23; 7:48; Jn 8:24; Ac  
 2:38; 3:19; 22:16; 1Co 15:17; Jas 5:16; 1Jn 2:12

**SISERA**

of his army was **S**, and he was . . . . . Jgs 4:2



did to Midian, to **S**, and to Jabin at . . . . . Ps 83:9

**SISTER**

and iron. Tubal-cain's **s** was Naamah. . . . . Gn 4:22  
 The baby's older **s** stood watch nearby to  
 contact with your **s**—regardless of . . . . . Lv 18:9  
 brother, or **s**. Nazirites should . . . . . Nm 6:7  
 want to marry his **s**-in-law, she can go  
 think her younger **s** is even better? . . . . . Dt 25:7  
 Jgs 15:2  
 my father," the worm, "my mother and **s**."  
 You are my **r**," call. . . . . Job 17:14  
 Prv 7:4  
 didn't. Her disloyal **s** Judah saw this. . . . . Jer 3:7  
 My People, and to your **s**, Compassion:  
 their brother or **s** will be in danger . . . . . Mt 5:22  
 God's will is my brother, **s**, and mother. . . . . Mk 3:35  
 to your brother or **s**, 'Brother, Sister,  
 the village of Mary and her **s** Martha. . . . . Jn 11:1  
 Paul's **s** had a son who heard about the . . . . . Ac 23:16  
 your brother or **s**? Or why do you . . . . . Ro 14:10  
 their brother or **s**, saying, "Know the  
 and don't be afraid for them, my **s**!  
 accompanied by his **s** Arsinoë, he set . . . . . 3Macc 1:1

**SKILLED**

**SKILLED WORKERS**

Ex 36:4, 8; 2Kgs 24:14; 24:16; 1Ch 4:14; 29:5; Jer 52:15

**SLAVE**

thing: "The Hebrew **s** whom you brought . . . . . Gn 39:17  
 because of their **s** masters. I know . . . . . Ex 3:7  
 a woman who is a **s** engaged to another  
 that you were a **s** in Egypt, but the . . . . . Lv 19:20  
 Dt 5:15  
 asked him, "Whose **s** are you? Where do . . . . . 1Sa 30:33  
 Like a **s** we pant for a shadow, await our  
 them, who was sold as a **s** it was Joseph. . . . . Ps 105:17  
 the poor; a borrower is a **s** to a lender. . . . . Prv 22:7  
 priest; for the **s** and for his . . . . . Is 24:2  
 or returning. A **s** driver will no . . . . . Zec 9:8  
 to be first among you will be your **s** . . . . . Mt 20:27  
 be first among you will be the **s** of all . . . . . Mk 10:44  
 you that everyone who sins is a **s** to sin. . . . . Jn 8:34  
 prayer, we met a **s** woman. She had a  
 From Paul, a **s** of Christ Jesus, called to . . . . . Ac 16:16  
 From James, a **s** of God and of the Lord  
 and everyone, **s** and free, hid . . . . . Rev 6:15  
 hired worker, and **s** put funeral . . . . . Jdt 4:10  
 fell on both **s** and ruler. Both . . . . . Wis 18:11  
 as a household **s** who is constantly . . . . . Sir 23:10  
 She is no longer free, but is instead a **s**. . . . . 1Macc 2:11  
 likewise of the **s** and the free, of . . . . . 1Esd 3:19

**SLAVERY**

you from your **s** to them. I'll set . . . . . Ex 6:6  
 you out of Egypt, out of the house of **s**. . . . . Dt 5:6  
 and I led you out of the house of **s**. . . . . Jgs 6:8  
 Isn't **s** everyone's condition on earth, . . . . . Job 7:1  
 the land of Egypt, out of the house of **s**. . . . . Jer 34:13  
 from the house of **s**. I sent Moses, . . . . . Mic 6:4  
 they sold him into **s** in Egypt. God was  
 a spirit of **s** to lead you back . . . . . Ro 8:15  
 who were held in **s** their entire lives . . . . . Heb 2:15  
 Our **s** won't bring us favor. Rather, the  
 with our bitter **s**, so they shook . . . . . GkEst C:19  
 was sold into **s**, she didn't . . . . . Wis 10:13  
 but to sell the women and children into **s**. . . . . 2Macc 5:24  
 give us nourishment in the time of our **s**. . . . . 1Esd 8:76  
 they lived in **s**? Why then have . . . . . 2Esd 1:7

**SLAVES**

will be oppressed **s** for four hundred . . . . . Gn 15:13  
 have turned into **s**, and I've . . . . . Ex 6:5  
 Egypt's land. They must not be sold as **s**. . . . . Lv 25:42  
 We were Pharaoh's **s** in Egypt. But the  
 when they were **s** in Egypt to the . . . . . 1Sa 2:21  
 I even had **s** born in my house. . . . . Ecc 2:7  
 as male and female **s** in the LORD's . . . . . Is 14:2  
 out my spirit on the male and female **s**. . . . . Jl 2:29

their teacher, and **s** aren't greater . . . . . Mt 10:24  
 been anyone's **s**. How can you say . . . . . Jn 8:33  
 of Former **s**. Members from. . . . . Ac 6:9  
 That way we wouldn't be **s** to sin anymore. . . . . Ro 6:6  
 Do this as God's **s**, and yet also as free . . . . . 1Pt 2:16  
 poor, the free and **s**—to have a mark . . . . . Rev 13:16  
 there are your **s**. Come down and  
 so far as to make **s** of people who were . . . . . Wis 19:14  
 putting on airs among your household **s**. . . . . Sir 4:30  
 Israelites for **s**. A force from . . . . . 1Macc 3:41  
 than those slaughtered were sold as **s**. . . . . 2Macc 5:14  
 and have become **s** on account of them. . . . . 1Esd 4:26  
 them harshly as **s**, or rather, as . . . . . 3Macc 7:5  
 for us not to be **s** to our emotions. . . . . 4Macc 3:2

**SNAKE**

The **s** was the most intelligent of all the . . . . . Gn 3:1  
 turned into a **s**. Moses jumped back . . . . . Ex 4:3  
 Make a poisonous **s** and place it on a  
 their wine is **s** poison, venom from a  
 crushed the bronze **s** that Moses made, . . . . . Dt 32:33  
 it can't hear the **s** charmer's voice or  
 it bites like a **s** and poisons like a  
 through a wall may be bitten by a **s**. . . . . Prv 23:32  
 There the **s** will nest and lay eggs and  
 against the wall, and was bitten by a **s**. . . . . Is 34:15  
 Or give them a **s** when they ask for fish . . . . . Am 5:19  
 you would give a **s** to your child if . . . . . Mt 7:10  
 lifted up the **s** in the wilderness, . . . . . Lk 11:11  
 did, a poisonous **s**, driven out by the . . . . . Ac 28:3  
 same way as the **s** deceived Eve with . . . . . 2Co 11:3  
 down. The old **s**, who is called the . . . . . Rev 12:9  
 Who pities a **s** charmer who gets bitten?  
 there was a big **s** that the . . . . . Sir 12:13  
 Bel 23  
 destructive, lying **s** didn't ruin my . . . . . 4Macc 18:8

**SODOM**

Gaza and by way of **S**, Gomorrah, Admah, . . . . . Gn 10:19  
 as devastated as **S** and Gomorrah, . . . . . Dt 29:23  
 we would be like **S**; we would resemble . . . . . Is 1:9  
 when God destroyed **S** and Gomorrah. You . . . . . Am 4:11  
 for the land of **S** and Gomorrah on . . . . . Mt 10:15  
 I assure that **S** will be better off on . . . . . Lk 10:12  
 have been like **S**, and we would have . . . . . Ro 9:29  
 the cities of **S** and Gomorrah to  
 spiritually called **S** and Egypt, where . . . . . 2Pt 2:6  
 Rev 11:8  
 The people of **S** acted arrogantly and were . . . . . 3Macc 2:5  
 remember what I did to **S** and Gomorrah. . . . . 2Esd 2:8

**SOLOMON**

as follows: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, **S**, . . . . . 2Sa 5:14  
 David's veterans, or his brother **S**. . . . . 1Ki 1:10  
 [Of **S**] God, give your judgments to the . . . . . Ps 72:1  
 Prv 1:1  
 The proverbs of **S**, King David's son, . . . . . Prv 1:1  
 The Song of Songs, which is for **S** . . . . . Song 1:1  
 all of which **S** had made for the . . . . . Jer 52:20  
 was the father of **S**, whose mother had . . . . . Mt 1:6  
 And look, someone greater than **S** is here.  
 walking in the covered porch named for **S**. . . . . Lk 11:31  
 Jn 10:23  
**S** reigned at a time of peace. God gave . . . . . Sir 47:13  
 of Moses and when **S** prayed that the . . . . . 2Macc 2:8  
 David's son King **S** built. You don't . . . . . 1Esd 1:3  
 the plague; and **S** for those in the . . . . . 2Esd 7:108

**SON**

and named the city after his **s** Enoch. . . . . Gn 4:17  
 gave birth to a **s**. She saw that the . . . . . Ex 2:2  
 Lv 7:33  
 you: from Reuben, Elizur, Shedeur's  
 Caleb, Jephunneh's **s**. He will see it. I . . . . . Nm 1:5  
 to Joshua, Nun's **s**. He had been . . . . . Dt 1:36  
 Josh 1:1  
 Elihu **s** of Barachel the Buzite from the . . . . . Job 32:2  
 to me, "You are my **s**, today I have . . . . . Ps 2:7  
 of Solomon, King David's **s**, from Israel: . . . . . Prv 1:1  
 Isaiah, Amoz's **s**, saw in the days . . . . . Is 1:1  
 to Hosea, Beeri's **s**, in the days of . . . . . Hos 1:1  
 of Jesus Christ, **s** of David, son of . . . . . Mt 1:1

good news about Jesus Christ, God's **S**, . . . . . Mk 1:1  
 give birth to your **s** and you must name. . . . . Lk 1:13  
 of a father's only **s**, full of grace and . . . . . Jn 1:14  
 James, Alphaeus's **s**, Simon the zealot; . . . . . Ac 1:13  
 news about his **S** ahead of time . . . . . Ro 1:3  
 to us through a **S**. God made his Son. . . . . Heb 1:2  
 the words of God's **S**, whose eyes are . . . . . Rev 2:18  
 is indeed God's **s**, then God will. . . . . Wis 2:18  
 An uneducated **s** is a disgrace to a . . . . . Sir 22:3  
 house that David's **s** King Solomon. . . . . 1Esd 1:3

**SONG**

sang this **s** to the **LORD** . . . . . Ex 15:1  
 sang this **s**: "Well, flow up! . . . . . Nm 21:17  
 wake up, sing a **s**! Arise, Barak! . . . . . Jgs 5:12  
 And now I'm their **s**, I'm their cliché . . . . . Job 30:9  
 music leader. A **s** of David.) How . . . . . Ps 13:1  
 Singing a **s** to a troubled heart is like . . . . . Prv 25:20  
 loved one a love **s** for his vineyard. . . . . Is 5:1  
 word—a funeral **s**—that I am lifting . . . . . Am 5:1  
 We sang a funeral **s** and you didn't. . . . . Mt 11:17  
 We sang a funeral **s** and you didn't. . . . . Lk 7:32  
 They took up a new **s**, saying, "You are . . . . . Rev 5:9  
 will burst into **s** with joyful hymns, . . . . . Tob 13:18  
 this thanksgiving **s** in front of all . . . . . Jdt 15:14  
 just as Moses' **s** personally bore . . . . . 2Macc 7:6  
 to sing a funeral **s** together in place . . . . . 3Macc 4:6  
 singing or the **s** of swans captures . . . . . 4Macc 15:21

**SONGS**

celebration, with **s** and tambourines . . . . . Gn 31:27  
 The sound of party **s** is what I hear. . . . . Ex 32:18  
 proverbs and one thousand live **s**. . . . . 1Ki 4:32  
 God my maker, who gives **s** in the night; . . . . . Job 35:10  
 You surround me with **s** of rescue! Selah . . . . . Ps 32:7  
 well, sing many **s**, so they'll . . . . . Is 23:16  
 the noise of your **s**; I won't listen to . . . . . Am 5:23  
 after singing **s** of praise, they . . . . . Mt 26:30  
 After singing **s** of praise, they went out . . . . . Mk 14:26  
 and spiritual **s**, sing and make . . . . . Eph 5:19  
 and all your **s** into sorrowful. . . . . Tob 2:6  
 praise him with **s** on your lips and . . . . . Sir 39:15  
 sang hymns and **s** of praise to. . . . . 1Macc 4:24  
 singing their sad **s** of lament and took . . . . . 3Macc 6:32  
 all praising the Lord together with **s**. . . . . 2Esd 2:42  
 sons with funeral **s**. She didn't try to . . . . . 4Macc 16:12

**SOUL**

of Reuben there was deep **s**-searching. . . . . Jgs 5:15  
 hard worker, life to those bitter of **s**, . . . . . Job 3:20  
 as I bare my **s**; how I made my way . . . . . Ps 42:4  
 but can't kill the **s**. Instead . . . . . Mt 10:28  
 may your spirit, **s**, and body be kept . . . . . 1Th 5:23  
 it separates the **s** from the spirit . . . . . Heb 4:12  
 bring joy to my daughter's troubled **s**. . . . . Tob 8:20  
 avoid a deceptive **s** that plans evil. . . . . Wis 1:4  
 If you have a bad **s**, it will destroy . . . . . Sir 6:4  
 God of Israel, a **s** under great stress . . . . . Bar 3:1  
 beating, yet in my **s** I cheerfully . . . . . 2Macc 6:30  
 greatly agitated, and my **s** was troubled. . . . . 2Esd 6:37  
 different ways in the body and in the **s**. . . . . 4Macc 1:20

**SPIRIT**

Command that my **s** be taken from me . . . . . Tob 3:6  
 and your cunning **s**, and it was . . . . . Jdt 11:8  
 changed the king's **s** to tenderness. He . . . . . GKEst D:8  
 holy, instructive **s** will flee deceit . . . . . Wis 1:5  
 who is bitter in **s**; for there's one . . . . . Sir 7:11  
 the grave, whose **s** has been taken. . . . . Bar 2:17  
 up the holy **s** of a young man . . . . . Sus 45  
 with zeal, and his **s** was stirred up. He . . . . . 1Macc 2:24  
 will with a whole heart and a willing **s**. . . . . 2Macc 1:3  
 Lord motivated the **s** of King Cyrus to . . . . . 1Esd 2:1  
 would be kept in a **s** of celebration, . . . . . 3Macc 6:36  
 believe in their **s**. They have heard . . . . . 2Esd 1:37  
 young again in a through clear . . . . . 4Macc 7:14

**EVIL SPIRIT**

1Sa 16:14; 16:15, 16, 23; 18:10; 19:9; Mk 1:23; 3:30; 5:2; Ac 19:15; 19:16

**GOD'S SPIRIT**

Nm 24:2; 1Sa 10:10; 11:6; 19:20, 23; 2Ch 15:1; Job 33:4; Is 61:1; Mt 12:28; Jn 3:8; Ro 8:9, 14; 15:19; 1Co 2:11; 2:12, 14; 3:16; 7:40; 12:3; Phi 3:3

**HOLY SPIRIT**

Ps 51:11; Is 63:10; 63:11; Mt 1:18; 1:20; 3:11; 12:31, 32; 22:43; 28:19; Mk 1:8; 3:29; 12:36; 13:11; Lk 1:15; 1:35, 41, 67; 2:25, 26; 3:16, 22; 4:1; 10:21; 11:13; 12:10, 12; Jn 1:33; 14:26; 20:22; Ac 1:2, 5, 8, 16; 2:4, 33, 38; 4:8, 25, 31; 5:3, 32; 6:5; 7:51, 55; 8:15, 16, 17, 19; 9:17, 31; 10:38, 44, 45, 47; 11:15, 16, 24; 13:2, 4, 9, 52; 15:8, 28; 16:6; 19:2, 6; 20:23, 28; 21:11; 28:25; Ro 5:5; 9:1; 14:17; 15:13, 16; 1Co 6:19; 12:3; 2Co 6:6; 13:13; Eph 1:13; 1:14; 4:30; 1Th 1:5, 6; 4:8; 2Ti 1:14; Ti 3:5; Heb 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15; 1Pt 1:12; 2Pt 1:21; Jude 20

**LORD'S SPIRIT**

Jgs 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1Sa 10:6; 16:13, 14; 2Sa 23:2; 1Kgs 18:12; 22:24; 2Kgs 2:16; 2Ch 18:23; 20:14; Is 11:2; 40:13; 63:14; Eze 11:5; 37:1; Ac 5:9; 8:39; 2Co 3:17

**POUR OUT MY SPIRIT**

Prv 1:23; Is 44:3; Jl 2:28; 2:29; Ac 2:17; 2:18

**SPIRIT FROM GOD**

1Sa 16:15; 16:16, 23; 18:10; 1Co 6:19

**THROUGH THE SPIRIT**

1Co 2:10; Ga 5:5; Eph 2:22; 3:5, 16

**UNCLEAN SPIRIT**

Mt 12:43; Mk 1:26; 5:8; 7:25; 9:25; Lk 8:29; 9:42; 11:24; Rev 18:2

**SPIRITS****EVIL SPIRITS**

Mk 3:11; Lk 7:21; 8:2; Ac 19:12; 19:13

**UNCLEAN SPIRITS**

Mt 10:1; Mk 1:27; 5:13; 6:7; Lk 4:36; 6:18; Ac 5:16; 8:7; Rev 16:13

**SPIRITUAL**

is a fool, the **s** man is mad! . . . . . Hos 9:7  
 to pass along some **s** gift to you so . . . . . Ro 1:11  
 stones into a **s** temple. You are . . . . . 1Pt 2:5

**STATUTES**

commandments, my **s**, and my . . . . . Gn 26:5  
 commandments, the **s**, and the . . . . . Neh 1:7  
 if they treat my **s** like dirt, stop . . . . . Ps 89:31  
 faithful to his **s**, and didn't . . . . . 2Esd 7:24

**TEACH ME YOUR STATUTES**

Ps 119:12; 119:26, 64, 68, 124, 135

**STEAL**

so much, but why did you **s** my gods? . . . . . Gn 31:30  
 Do not **s**. . . . . Ex 20:15  
 You must not **s** nor deceive nor lie to. . . . . Lv 19:11  
 Do not **s**. . . . . Dt 5:19  
 Drought and heat **s** melted snow, just as . . . . . Job 24:19  
 back what I didn't **s** in the first place? . . . . . Ps 69:4  
 Don't **s** from the poor, because they are . . . . . Prv 22:22  
 widows their loot; to **s** from orphans! . . . . . Is 10:2  
 like raiders who **s** the land; I will . . . . . Hos 5:10  
 and where thieves break in and **s** them. . . . . Mt 6:19  
 adultery. Don't **s**. Don't give false . . . . . Mk 10:19  
 murder. Don't **s**. Don't give false . . . . . Lk 18:20  
 enters only to **s**, kill, and . . . . . Jn 10:10  
 If you preach, "No stealing," do you **s**? . . . . . Ro 2:21  
 abroad to raid, **s**, and sail the sea . . . . . 1Esd 4:23

**SUCCOTH**

Jacob traveled to **S**. He built a house. . . . . Gn 33:17  
 from Rameses to **S**. They numbered . . . . . Ex 12:37  
 from Rameses and they camped at **S**. . . . . Nm 33:5  
 Beth-nimrah, **S**, and Zaphon. This . . . . . Josh 13:27  
 up Shechem and portion out the **S** Valley. . . . . Ps 60:6

**SUSA**

the people of **S** . . . . . Ezr 4:9  
 the walled city of **S** in the province of . . . . . Dn 8:2  
 in the city of **S**, an important man . . . . . GkEst A:2

**SWORD**

will live by your **s**, you will serve . . . . . Gn 27:40  
 them. I'll draw my **s**, my hand will . . . . . Ex 15:9  
 the land, and no **s** will pass through . . . . . Lv 26:6  
 to fall by the **s**? Our wives and our . . . . . Nm 14:3  
 that city with the **s**. Place it and all . . . . . Dt 13:15  
 of him with his **s** drawn. Joshua went . . . . . Josh 5:13  
 orphan from the **s** of their mouth, . . . . . Job 5:15  
 will sharpen his **s**, will bend his . . . . . Ps 7:12  
 as gall, sharp as a double-edged **s** . . . . . Prv 5:4

be devoured by the **s**. The **LORD** has said . . . . . Is 1:20  
 them by bow, or by **s**, or by war, or by . . . . . Hos 1:7  
 I haven't come to bring peace but a **s**. . . . . Mt 10:34  
 bystanders drew a **s** and struck the . . . . . Mk 14:47  
 be revealed. And a **s** will pierce your . . . . . Lk 2:35  
 Peter, who had a **s**, drew it and . . . . . Jn 18:10  
 James, John's brother, killed with a **s** . . . . . Ac 12:2  
 or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or **s**? . . . . . Ro 8:35  
 than any two-edged **s**. It penetrates to . . . . . Heb 4:12  
 a sharp, two-edged **s**. His appearance . . . . . Rev 1:16  
 kill them with his **s**, as well as . . . . . Jdt 1:12  
 anger into a **s**. The cosmos itself. . . . . Wis 5:20  
 is a two-edged **s**, and there's no . . . . . Sir 21:3  
 many horrors, from famine, **s**, and exile. . . . . Bar 2:25  
 waits with his **s** to hew you down . . . . . Sus 59  
 the snake without using a **s** or stick!" . . . . . Bel 25  
 her young people by the enemy's **s**. . . . . 1Macc 2:9  
 on every side, so he fell on his own **s**. . . . . 2Macc 14:41  
 A man takes his **s**, goes out to travel . . . . . 1Esd 4:23  
 uncovered his own **s**, I cut off his. . . . . Ps 151:2:2  
 two who are left, the **s** will destroy them. . . . . 2Esd 12:27  
 when he saw the **s** in his father's . . . . . 4Macc 16:20

**SWORDS**

wielding flaming **s** to guard the way . . . . . Gn 3:24  
 down with their **s** and took . . . . . Nm 21:24  
 people with their **s** and set the city. . . . . Jgs 1:8  
 the young men with **s**. I alone escaped . . . . . Job 1:15  
 wicked draw their **s** and bend their. . . . . Ps 37:14  
 whose teeth are **s**; their jaw is a . . . . . Prv 30:14  
 will beat their **s** into iron plows . . . . . Is 2:4  
 of your plows into **s** and your pruning . . . . . Jl 3:10  
 crowd carrying **s** and clubs. They . . . . . Mt 26:47  
 a mob carrying **s** and clubs. They . . . . . Mk 14:43  
 look, here are two **s**." He replied, . . . . . Lk 22:38  
 murdered with **s**. They went around . . . . . Heb 11:37  
 have armor and **s** such as they would. . . . . 1Macc 4:6  
 with drawn **s**. They organized companies . . . . . 2Macc 5:3  
 and after a while they draw their **s**. . . . . 1Esd 3:22  
 their houses with **s**, to pillage their . . . . . 2Esd 15:19

**SYNAGOGUE**

left that place and went into their **s**. . . . . Mt 12:9  
 Jesus entered the **s** and started . . . . . Mk 1:21  
 he went to the **s** as he normally did . . . . . Lk 4:16  
 he was teaching in the **s** in Capernaum. . . . . Jn 6:59  
 to the so-called **s** of Former Slaves. . . . . Ac 6:9  
 they are not, but are really Satan's **s** . . . . . Rev 2:9

**SYRIA**

spread throughout **S**. People brought to . . . . . Mt 4:24  
 occurred when Quirinius governed **S**. . . . . Lk 2:2  
 in Antioch, **S**, and Cilicia. . . . . Ac 15:23  
 I went into the regions of **S** and Cilicia, . . . . . Ga 1:21  
 Damascus, and **S**. He would kill . . . . . Jdt 1:12  
 set out for **S**, speaking peacefully. . . . . 1Macc 2:19  
 living in Samaria, **S**, and Phoenicia, as . . . . . 1Esd 2:11:2  
 Asia! How terrible for you, Egypt and **S**! . . . . . 2Esd 16:1  
 the governor of **S**, Phoenicia, and . . . . . 4Macc 4:2

**Tt**

**TABLETS**

give you the stone **t** with the . . . . . Ex 24:12  
 and wrote them on two stone **t**. . . . . Dt 4:13  
 the two stone **t** Moses had placed . . . . . 1Ki 8:9  
 point on the **t** of their hearts . . . . . Jer 17:1  
 weren't written on **t** of stone but on . . . . . 2Co 3:3  
 budded, and the stone **t** of the covenant. . . . . Heb 9:4  
 in reply on bronze **t**, which they sent . . . . . 1Macc 8:22  
 up many writing **t**, and take with you . . . . . 2Esd 14:24

**COVENANT TABLETS**

Ex 31:18; 32:15; 34:29; Dt 9:9, 11, 15

**TAMAR**

his oldest son Er to a woman named **T**. . . . . Gn 38:6  
 of Perez, whom **T** bore to. . . . . Ru 4:12  
 limit runs from **T** to the waters of . . . . . Eze 47:19  
 whose mother was **T**. Perez was the . . . . . Mt 1:3

**TARSHISH**

sons: Elishah, **T**, Kittim, and . . . . . Gn 10:4  
 The royal fleet of **T**-style ships was at . . . . . 1Ki 10:22  
 east wind when it smashes the ships of **T**. . . . . Ps 48:7  
 all the ships of **T**, against all the . . . . . Is 2:16  
 got up—to flee to **T** from the **LORD**! He . . . . . Jon 1:3

**TARSUS**

ask for a man from **T** named Saul. He is . . . . . Ac 9:11  
 the people of **T** and Mallus . . . . . 2Macc 4:30

**TAX**

collect the annual **t** of silver due from . . . . . 2Ch 24:5  
 and because you **t** their grain, you . . . . . Am 5:11  
 empire should be enrolled in the **t** lists . . . . . Lk 2:1  
 revenues, will be holy and free from **t** . . . . . 1Macc 10:31  
 Also no foreign **t** or any other fine . . . . . 1Esd 8:22

**TAX COLLECTOR**

Mt 10:3; 18:17; Lk 5:27; 18:10, 11, 13

**TAX COLLECTORS**

Mt 5:46; 21:31, 32; Mk 2:16; Lk 3:12; 5:29; 7:29; 19:2

**TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS**

Mt 9:10; 9:11; 11:19; Mk 2:15; Lk 5:30; 7:34; 15:1

**TEACH**

**TEACH ME YOUR STATUTES**

Ps 119:12, 26, 64, 68, 124, 135

**TEKOA**

sent someone to **T** and brought a wise . . . . . 2Sa 14:2  
 the trumpet in **T**, sound the alarm . . . . . Jer 6:1  
 the shepherds of **T**. He perceived . . . . . Am 1:1  
 and fled into the **T** wilderness. They . . . . . 1Macc 9:33

**TEMPLE**

of silver from the **t** of Baal-berith, . . . . . Jgs 9:4  
 the edges of his robe filling the **t** . . . . . Is 6:1  
 from the **LORD**'s **t**. The priests and . . . . . Jl 1:9  
 highest point of the **t**. He said to him, . . . . . Mt 4:5  
 and went into the **t**. After he looked . . . . . Mk 11:11  
 a vision in the **t**, for he gestured . . . . . Lk 1:22  
 He found in the **t** those who were selling . . . . . Jn 2:14  
 together in the **t** and ate in their. . . . . Ac 2:46  
 into a spiritual **t**. You are being . . . . . 1Pt 2:5  
 pillars in the **t** of my God, and. . . . . Rev 3:12  
 place, the **t**, was built and . . . . . Tob 1:4  
 Jerusalem and the **t** of the Lord their. . . . . Jdt 4:2  
 deeds, and fill your **t** with your glory. . . . . Sir 36:19  
 removed from the **t**—the silver . . . . . Bar 1:8  
 of the dust in the **t** that thickly. . . . . LJer 11  
 glorious, holy **t**, worthy of hymns . . . . . PrAz 30  
 The king went with Daniel to Bel's **t**. . . . . Bel 10  
 on the front of the **t**. He stripped it all. . . . . 1Macc 1:22  
 goddess Nanea's **t**, when Nanea's . . . . . 2Macc 1:13  
 for the **t**. As he entered the . . . . . 3Macc 1:9

altar is demolished, our **†** is destroyed, . . . . . 2Esd 10:21  
 help support the **†**worship and . . . . . 4Macc 3:20

### BUILD A TEMPLE

2Sa 7:13; 1Kgs 5:3, 5; 8:17, 18; 1Ch 22:6, 7, 8, 10; 28:2, 3, 10; 2Ch  
 2:1, 4, 12; 6:7, 8; 36:23

### BUILD THE LORD'S TEMPLE

1Kgs 9:15; 1Ch 22:5; 2Ch 3:1; Zec 6:12; 6:13, 15

### BUILD THE TEMPLE

2Sa 7:5; 1Kgs 5:5; 8:19; 1Ch 17:4; 22:11; 29:19; 2Ch 3:3; 6:9

### GOD'S TEMPLE

Ex 23:19; 34:26; Dt 23:18; Jgs 9:27; 1Ch 10:10; 22:1, 2; 23:28;  
 25:6; 26:20; 28:12, 21; 29:2, 3, 7; 2Ch 4:11; 4:19; 5:1, 14; 7:5; 15:18;  
 22:12; 23:3, 9; 24:5, 7, 13, 16, 27; 25:24; 28:24; 31:13, 21; 33:7;  
 34:8, 9; 35:8; 36:18, 19; Ps 135:2; Dn 1:2; Mt 26:61; 1Co 3:16; 3:17;  
 2Co 6:16; 2Th 2:4; Rev 11:1, 19; 1Esd 5:43, 52, 54, 55, 57; 8:17, 18

### HOLY TEMPLE

1Ch 29:3; Ps 5:7; 11:4; 79:1; 138:2; Jon 2:4, 7; Mic 1:2; Hab 2:20;  
 Sir 49:12; PrAz 30; 2Macc 5:17; 9:16; 13:10; 14:31; 15:18; 1Esd  
 1:50

### LORD'S TEMPLE

Wis 3:14; 1Esd 1:2, 47; 2:4; 6:18; 7:7; 8:13, 59, 64, 78

### TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM

1Macc 10:43; 2Macc 6:2; 1Esd 2:4, 26; 5:43, 54; 6:18; 8:13, 17

### TENT

drunk, and took off his clothes in his **†** . . . . . Gn 9:21  
 doing, and then they went into the **†** . . . . . Ex 18:7  
 Moses and said to him from the meeting **†**, . . . . . Lv 1:1  
 in the meeting **†** on the first day . . . . . Nm 1:1  
 at the meeting **†** so I can command . . . . . Dt 31:14  
 ground inside my **†**, with the silver . . . . . Josh 7:21  
 Isn't their **†** cord pulled up? They die . . . . . Job 4:21  
 can live in your **†**, LORD? Who can . . . . . Ps 15:1  
 destroyed, but the **†** flourishes for . . . . . Prv 14:11  
 securely like a **†** peg, and he will . . . . . Is 22:23  
 up the meeting **†** of David that has . . . . . Am 9:11  
 you took the **†** of Moloch with . . . . . Ac 7:43  
 know that if the **†** that we live in on . . . . . 2Co 5:1  
 the true meeting **†** that God, not any . . . . . Heb 8:2  
 the **†** of witness . . . . . Rev 15:5  
 around in the **†** began to grumble. . . . . Jdt 5:22  
 a copy of the holy **†** that you had . . . . . Wis 9:8  
 will also fasten a **†** peg in her walls. . . . . Sir 14:24  
 that the meeting **†** and the chest . . . . . 2Macc 2:4  
 night to Ptolemy's **†** intending to put . . . . . 3Macc 1:2  
 to his royal **†**, dripping with . . . . . 4Macc 3:8

### TERAH

29 years old, he became the father of **T**. . . . . Gn 11:24  
 They marched from Tahath and camped at **T** . . . . . Nm 33:27  
 Among them was **T**, the father of . . . . . Josh 24:2  
 son of Abraham son of **T** son of Nahor . . . . . Lk 3:34

### TESTIMONY

be executed on the basis of only one **†** . . . . . Dt 17:6  
 containing the **†** to come up out of. . . . . Josh 4:16  
 A **†** A miktam of . . . . . Ps 60:1  
 Bind up the **†**, seal up the teaching. . . . . Is 8:16  
 commanded. This will be a **†** to them. . . . . Mt 8:4  
 commanded. This will be a **†** to them. . . . . Mk 1:44  
 instructed. This will be a **†** to them. . . . . Lk 5:14  
 This is John's **†** when the Jewish leaders . . . . . Jn 1:19  
 The tent of **†** was with our ancestors in . . . . . Ac 7:44  
 same way that the **†** about Christ was. . . . . 1Co 1:6  
 the basis of the **†** of two or three. . . . . Heb 10:28  
 they give reliable **†** to the excellence . . . . . Sir 31:23  
 their hands on Susanna's head to give **†** . . . . . Sus 34  
 order—seeing the **†** that their maker . . . . . 2Esd 7:94

### FALSE TESTIMONY

Dt 19:18; Mt 19:18; 26:59; Mk 10:19; 14:56; Lk 18:20

### THANKSGIVING

offering it for **†**, you must offer. . . . . Lv 7:12  
 who began the **†** with prayer, and . . . . . Neh 11:17

joyous shouts and **†** songs . . . . . Ps 42:4  
 incense, and **†** offerings to the. . . . . Jer 17:26  
 Offer a **†** sacrifice of leavened bread, . . . . . Am 4:5  
 Amen!" to your **†**, when they don't. . . . . 1Co 14:16  
 and wisdom and **†** and honor and . . . . . Rev 7:12  
 Judith began this **†** song in front of all . . . . . Jdt 15:14  
 From the dead **†** has perished, since they . . . . . Sir 17:28  
 in celebration with cheerful **†** psalms. . . . . 3Macc 6:35

### THESSALONICA

then came to **T**, where there was a . . . . . Ac 17:1  
 care of my needs even while I was in **T**. . . . . Phil 4:16

### THINKING

#### CLEAR THINKING

4Macc 1:3, 5, 7, 9, 13, 14, 15, 19, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35; 2:3, 4, 6, 7,  
 9, 14, 15, 17, 20, 24; 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 18, 19; 6:32, 33, 34, 35; 7:14;  
 8:15; 11:27; 13:3, 16; 14:2, 11; 15:1, 11; 16:4

#### GODLY THINKING

4Macc 1:1; 6:31; 7:16; 13:1; 15:23; 16:1; 18:2

### THRONE

He swore by his **†** and his kingdom. . . . . Jdt 1:12  
 and over any **†** in comparison to . . . . . Wis 7:8  
 wise, greatly feared, seated upon his **†**. . . . . Sir 1:8  
 carried aloft with glory as on a royal **†** . . . . . Bar 5:6  
 you on your royal **†**, worthy of hymns . . . . . PrAz 3:2  
 inherited the **†** of the kingdom . . . . . 1Macc 2:57  
 be revealed on the **†** of judgment, and . . . . . 2Esd 7:33  
 the mind on the **†** in the middle of . . . . . 4Macc 2:22

### GOD'S THRONE

Mt 5:34; 23:22; Heb 12:2; Rev 1:4; 7:15

### THUMMIM

the Urim and the **T**, so they will be . . . . . Ex 28:30  
 set the Urim and **T** into the chest . . . . . Lv 8:8  
 Levi: "Give your **T** to Levi, your Urim . . . . . Dt 33:8  
 respond with **T**." Jonathan and . . . . . 1Sa 14:41

### THUNDER

and the LORD sent **†** and hail, and . . . . . Ex 9:23  
 the LORD to send **†** and rain. Then you . . . . . 1Sa 12:17  
 cloud and the **†** of his pavilion, . . . . . Job 36:29  
 the skies cracked **†**, your arrows were . . . . . Ps 77:17  
 seas they **†** Doom to the roar . . . . . Is 17:12  
 Boanerges, which means "sons of **†**". . . . . Mk 3:17  
 and said, "It's **†**." Others said . . . . . Jn 12:29  
 voices, and **†**. In front of the. . . . . Rev 4:5

### THYATIRA

from the city of **T**, a dealer in . . . . . Ac 16:14  
 Smyrna, Pergamum, **T**, Sardis, . . . . . Rev 1:11

### TIGLATH-PILESER

Assyria's King **T** marched against . . . . . 2Ks 15:19

### TIMOTHY

a disciple named **T**. He was the son of . . . . . Ac 16:1  
**T** my coworker says hello to you, and . . . . . Ro 16:21  
 that our brother **T** has been set free. . . . . Heb 13:23  
 people and a man named **T** as their leader. . . . . 1Macc 5:6  
 the supporters of **T** and Bacchides, . . . . . 2Macc 8:30

### TIRZAH

were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and **T** . . . . . Nm 26:33  
 the king of **T** . . . . . Josh 12:24  
 my dearest, as **T**, as lovely as . . . . . Song 6:4

### TITUS

find my brother **T** there. . . . . 2Co 2:13  
 Quintus Memmius, **T** Manius, . . . . . 2Macc 11:34

### TOBIAS

the family of Delaiah, **T**, and Nekoda, 65 . . . . . Ezz 2:60

### TOBIAS

Together we had a son, whom I named **T**. . . . . Tob 1:9

**TRUMPET**

a holy occasion marked by a **t** signal . . . . . Lv 23:24  
 as you hear that **t** blast, have all . . . . . Josh 6:5  
 will see! When the **t** blasts, you will . . . . . Is 18:3  
 in Gibeah; blow a **t** in Ramah . . . . . Hos 5:8  
 don't blow your **t** as the hypocrites. . . . . Mt 6:2  
 And if a **t** call is unrecognizable . . . . . 1Co 14:8  
 a blast of a **t**, and a sound of words . . . . . Heb 12:19  
 me a loud voice that sounded like a **t** . . . . . Rev 1:10  
 is like a battle **t** sounding an . . . . . Sir 26:27  
 heaven. There were **t** blasts and loud . . . . . 1Macc 5:31  
 advanced with **t** calls and battle . . . . . 2Macc 15:25  
 A **t** will sound with a blast; when all . . . . . 2Esd 6:23

**ANGEL BLEW HIS TRUMPET**

Rev 8:7, 8, 10, 12; 9:1, 13; 11:15

**TRUST**

He makes himself known to those who **t** him. . . . . Wis 1:2  
**T**him, and he will help you; make your . . . . . Sir 2:6  
 you continues to **t** God will lack . . . . . 1Macc 2:61  
 those who didn't **t** God's judgment ran . . . . . 2Macc 8:13  
 You can't **t** wine; you can't trust the . . . . . 1Esd 4:37  
 and to say to you: **t** confidently, and . . . . . 2Esd 6:33  
 deposited money in **t** in the sacred . . . . . 4Macc 4:7

**TRUST IN THE LORD**

2Kgs 18:22; Ps 40:4; 115:9, 10, 11; 125:1; Is 26:4; 36:7; Jer 17:7;  
 Zep 3:2; Phi 2:24

**TRUST THE LORD**

2Kgs 6:33; 17:14; 18:30; 2Ch 20:20; Ps 4:5; 31:6; 37:3; 40:3; Psv  
 16:20; 28:25; 29:25; Is 36:15

**TRUTH**

don't stretch the **t** to favor important. . . . . Ex 23:2  
 No! **T** is we did this out of concern . . . . . Josh 22:24  
 Because there's no **t** in my enemies' . . . . . Ps 5:9  
 mouth utters the **t**, my lips despise. . . . . Prv 8:7  
 before you in **t** and sincerity . . . . . Is 38:3  
 and they reject the one who speaks the **t** . . . . . Am 5:10  
 I tell you the **t**, I don't know you.' . . . . Mt 25:12  
 front of Jesus and told him the whole **t**. . . . . Mk 5:33  
 a father's only son, full of grace and **t**. . . . . Jn 1:14  
 couldn't learn the **t**, so he ordered . . . . . Ac 21:34  
 beings who silence the **t** with injustice . . . . . Ro 1:18  
 knowledge of the **t** there isn't a . . . . . Heb 10:26  
 just; mercy and **t** mark all your. . . . . Tob 3:2  
 will tell you the **t** about this people . . . . . Jdt 5:5  
 to their thoughts. **T** examines the heart . . . . . Wis 1:6  
 contradict the **t**, but don't be . . . . . Sir 4:25  
 Women are superior, but **t** conquers all." . . . . 1Esd 3:12  
 far from the **t** and with a . . . . . 3Macc 4:16  
 terror. The way of **t** will be hidden. . . . . 2Esd 5:1  
 sake of your brainless ideas about the **t**. . . . . 4Macc 5:10

**KNOW THE TRUTH**

Jn 8:32; Ac 22:30; 1Ti 4:3; 1Jn 2:20; 2:21; 2Jn 1

**TYRE**

fortified city of **T**. The border turned . . . . . Josh 19:29  
 The city of **T**, the wealthiest of all, . . . . . Ps 45:12  
 there's darkness. **T** and the Nile will . . . . . Is 5:30  
 I looked toward **T**, Ephraim was . . . . . Hos 9:13  
 had been done in **T** and Sidon, they . . . . . Mt 11:21  
 and the area surrounding **T** and Sidon . . . . . Mk 3:8  
 the area around **T** and Sidon joined . . . . . Lk 6:17  
 with the people of **T** and Sidon for some . . . . . Ac 12:20  
 in Sidon and **T**, those living in . . . . . Jdt 2:28  
 of the people of **T** and all the rulers . . . . . Sir 46:18  
 of Ptolemais, **T**, Sidon, and all. . . . . 1Macc 5:15  
 games they held every five years in **T**, . . . . . 2Macc 4:18  
 south of you, **T** and Sidon, with . . . . . 2Esd 1:11

**Uu**

**UNCIRCUMCISED**

Any **u** male whose flesh of his foreskin . . . . . Gn 17:14

of the land. But no **u** person may eat it . . . . . Ex 12:48  
 if their **u** hearts are humbled . . . . . Lv 26:41  
 place. They were **u** because they . . . . . Josh 5:7  
 holy city; for the **u** and unclean will . . . . . Is 52:1  
 the home of the **u** and ate with them! . . . . . Ac 11:3  
 who were called "**u**" by Jews who are . . . . . Eph 2:11  
 the bed of this **u** king or indeed of . . . . . GkEst C:26  
 whom they found **u** within the borders . . . . . 1Macc 2:46

**UNCLEAN**

and from every **u** animal, take one . . . . . Gn 7:2  
 by touching some **u** thing—the dead. . . . . Lv 5:2  
 or who has become **u** from contact with . . . . . Nm 5:2  
 own property is **u** land, then cross . . . . . Josh 22:19  
 made themselves **u** . . . . . Ps 106:39  
 I'm a man with **u** lips, and I live . . . . . Is 6:5  
 and in Assyria they will eat **u** food . . . . . Hos 9:3  
 the spirit of an **u** demon. He screamed . . . . . Lk 4:33  
 touch what is **u**. Then I will . . . . . 2Co 6:17  
 as though we're **u**. Instead, he . . . . . Wis 2:16  
 from something "**u**"! And what will be . . . . . Sir 34:4  
 to God by doing **u** and improper acts. . . . . 1Macc 1:48  
 with polluted and **u** hands, Antiochus . . . . . 2Macc 5:16

**UNCLEAN SPIRIT**

Mt 12:43; Mk 1:26; 5:8; 7:25; 9:25; Lk 8:29; 9:42; 11:24; Rev 18:2

**UNCLEAN SPIRITS**

Mt 10:1; Mk 1:27; 5:13; 6:7; Lk 4:36; 6:18; Ac 5:16; 8:7; Rev 16:13

**UNDERWORLD**

Deeper than the **u**—what can you . . . . . Job 11:8  
 in the grave, your faithfulness in the **u**? . . . . . Ps 88:11  
 The grave and the **u** lie open before the . . . . . Prv 15:11  
 The **u** beneath becomes restless to greet . . . . . Is 14:9  
 through into the **u**, from there my . . . . . Am 9:2  
 The gates of the **u** won't be able to . . . . . Mt 16:18  
 level of the **u** and committed them . . . . . 2Pt 2:4  
 people down to the **u** below the earth, . . . . . Tob 13:2  
 in them. The **u** doesn't rule on . . . . . Wis 1:14  
 said to me: "The **u** and the resting . . . . . 2Esd 4:41

**UNFAITHFUL**

two of you were **u** toward me in front. . . . . Dt 32:51  
 because they were **u**, following other. . . . . Jgs 2:17  
 I would have been **u** to your children. . . . . Ps 73:15  
 you noticed what **u** Israel has done? . . . . . Jer 3:6  
 An evil and **u** generation . . . . . Mt 12:39  
 my words in this **u** and sinful . . . . . Mk 8:38  
 and assign them a place with the **u**. . . . . Lk 12:46  
 continue to be **u**, because God is . . . . . Ro 11:23  
 you have an evil, **u** heart that . . . . . Heb 3:12  
 woman when she is **u** to her husband and. . . . . Sir 23:22

**UNFAITHFUL TO THE LORD**

1Ch 10:13; 2Ch 12:2; 28:19, 22; 30:7

**UNLEAVENED**

**FESTIVAL OF UNLEAVENED BREAD**

Ex 12:17; 23:15; 34:18; Lv 23:6; Dt 16:16; 2Ch 30:13; 30:21; 35:17;  
 Ezr 6:22; Mt 26:17; Mk 14:1, 12; Lk 22:1; Ac 12:3; 20:6; 1Esd 1:17;  
 7:14

**UR**

his native land, in **U** of the Chaldeans. . . . . Gn 11:28  
 brought him out of **U** of the Chaldeans. . . . . Neh 9:7

**URIAH**

Bathsheba, the wife of **U** the Hittite? . . . . . 2Sa 11:3  
 in the matter of **U** the Hittite. . . . . 1Ki 15:5  
 trusted people, **U** the priest and. . . . . Is 8:2  
 whose mother had been the wife of **U**. . . . . Mt 1:6  
 Ananias, Azariah, **U**, Hezekiah, and. . . . . 1Esd 9:43

**URIM**

decisions the **U** and the Thummim, . . . . . Ex 28:30  
 Aaron and set the **U** and Thummim into . . . . . Lv 8:8  
 to Levi, your **U** to your faithful . . . . . Dt 33:8  
 respond with **U**, but if the . . . . . 1Sa 14:41

## UZZIAH

of Judah's king **U**. He ruled for one . . . . . 2Ki 15:13  
 of Judah's kings **U**, Jotham, Ahaz, and . . . . . Is 1:1  
 of Judah's Kings **U**, Jotham, Ahaz, and . . . . . Hos 1:1  
 of Joram. Joram was the father of **U**. . . . . Mt 1:8  
 the rulers were **U**, Micah's son, from . . . . . Jdt 6:15  
 son of Arna son of **U** son of Borith son . . . . . 2Esd 1:2

## Vv

## VASHTI

same time, Queen **V** held a feast for . . . . . Est 1:9  
 same time, Queen **V** also held a wine . . . . . GKEst 1:9

## VICTORY

who gave you the **v** over your . . . . . Gn 14:20  
 for an overflowing **v**! Horse and rider. . . . . Ex 15:1  
 When I return in **v**, I'll break down . . . . . Jgs 8:9  
 exalts the lowly, raises mourners to **v**. . . . . Job 5:11  
 is a bad bet for **v**; it can't save. . . . . Ps 33:17  
 fall, but there is **v** with many . . . . . Prv 11:14  
 you bullheaded people who are far from **v**. . . . . Is 46:12  
 your horses or rode your chariots to **v**. . . . . Hab 3:8  
 we win a sweeping **v** through the one . . . . . Ro 8:37  
 And this is the **v** that has defeated. . . . . 1Jn 5:4  
 And he went forth from **v** to victory. . . . . Rev 6:2  
 wearing wreaths of **v**, and singing hymns. . . . . Jdt 15:13  
 It wears the **v** crown, riding in . . . . . Wis 4:2  
 army that brings **v** in battle, because . . . . . 1Macc 3:19  
 While celebrating **v** in their homeland, . . . . . 2Macc 8:33  
 will be given the **v** according to . . . . . 1Esd 3:9  
 he sailed into the harbor of immortal **v**. . . . . 4Macc 7:3

## VINE

dream there was a **v** right in front of . . . . . Gn 40:9  
 trees said to the **v**, "You come and be . . . . . Jgs 9:12  
 like the **v**, they will drop early grapes. . . . . Job 15:33  
 You brought a **v** out of Egypt. You drove . . . . . Ps 80:8  
 wine dries up; the **v** withers; all the . . . . . Is 24:7  
 is a growing **v** that yields its. . . . . Hos 10:1  
 the fruit of the **v** until God's. . . . . Lk 22:18  
 I am the true **v**, and my Father is the . . . . . Jn 15:1  
 I put forth like a **v**, and honor and . . . . . Sir 24:17  
 you chose one **v** from every forest . . . . . 2Esd 5:23

## VIRGIN

priest must marry a woman who is a **v**. . . . . Lv 21:13  
 find any proof that she was a **v**. . . . . Dt 22:14  
 with my eyes; how could I look at a **v**? . . . . . Job 31:1  
 violated **v** Daughter Sidon. . . . . Is 23:12  
 more to rise, is **v** Israel, deserted . . . . . Am 5:2  
 Look! A **v** will become pregnant and give. . . . . Mt 1:23  
 to a **v** who was engaged to a man named. . . . . Lk 1:27  
 or who is a **v** is concerned about . . . . . 1Co 7:34  
 while she's a **v**, that she not be seduced . . . . . Sir 42:10  
 I was a **v** who was sexually pure: I . . . . . 4Macc 18:7

## VISION

came to Abram in a **v**, "Don't be afraid, . . . . . Gn 15:1  
 according to the **v** that the **LORD** had. . . . . Nm 8:4  
 bribery blinds the **v** of the wise and . . . . . Dt 16:19  
 Samuel was afraid to tell the **v** to Eli. . . . . 1Sa 3:15  
 them, carried away like a nighttime **v**. . . . . Job 20:8  
 My **v** fails because of my grief; it's weak. . . . . Ps 6:7  
 When there's no **v**, the people get out of . . . . . Prv 29:18  
 The **v** about Judah and Jerusalem . . . . . Is 1:1  
 The **v** of Obadiah. The **LORD** God proclaims . . . . . Obad 1  
 the **v** until the Human . . . . . Mt 17:9  
 he had seen a **v** in the temple, for . . . . . Lk 1:22  
 spoke to him in a **v**, "Ananias!" He . . . . . Ac 9:10  
 riders in the **v**; they had . . . . . Rev 9:17  
 anything. Instead, you were seeing a **v**. . . . . Tob 12:19  
 the appearance of the sky in a **v** of glory. . . . . Sir 43:1  
 strength and clear **v**. We'll live under . . . . . Bar 1:12  
 kind of waking **v**—which raised . . . . . 2Macc 15:11

Help the blind to see a **v** of my glory. . . . . 2Esd 2:21

## VISIONS

known to him in **v**. I speak to him in . . . . . Nm 12:6  
 at that time, and **v** weren't widely . . . . . 1Sa 3:1  
 profound thoughts, **v** of night, when . . . . . Job 4:13  
 err when receiving **v**; they stumble when . . . . . Is 26:7  
 and I multiplied **v**, and through them. . . . . Hos 12:10  
 young will see **v**. Your elders will. . . . . Ac 2:17  
 I'll move on to **v** and revelations. . . . . 2Co 12:1  
 by fear, and spooked by nightmarish **v**. . . . . Wis 17:3  
 great and whose **v** were reliable, had. . . . . Sir 48:22  
 days, there were **v** of soldiers on. . . . . 2Macc 5:2  
 show you in dream **v** what the Most High . . . . . 2Esd 10:59

## VOICE

to your wife's **v** and you ate from . . . . . Gn 3:17  
 responded with one **v**. "Everything that . . . . . Ex 19:8  
 he would hear the **v** speaking to him. . . . . Nm 7:89  
 didn't see any form. There was only a **v**. . . . . Dt 4:12  
 Don't let your **v** be heard. Don't. . . . . Josh 6:10  
 at ease; they don't hear a boss's **v**. . . . . Job 3:18  
 you hear my **v**. In the morning. . . . . Ps 5:3  
 in the public square she raises her **v**. . . . . Prv 1:20  
 I heard the Lord's **v** saying, "Whom . . . . . Is 6:8  
**LORD** utters his **v** at the head of his. . . . . Jl 2:11  
 A **v** was heard in Ramah, weeping and much . . . . . Mt 2:18  
 a **v** shouting in the wilderness: "Prepare . . . . . Mk 1:3  
 With a loud **v** she blurted out, "God has . . . . . Lk 1:42  
 replied, "I am a **v** crying out in the . . . . . Jn 1:23  
 He raised his **v** and declared, . . . . . Ac 2:14  
 Definitely! Their **v** has gone out into . . . . . Ro 10:18  
 Spirit says, Today, if you hear his **v**. . . . . Heb 3:7  
 behind me a loud **v** that sounded like . . . . . Rev 1:10  
 heard his glorious **v** with their own ears. . . . . Sir 17:13  
 to the Lord God's **v** so as to keep the . . . . . Bar 1:18  
 Then with one **v** the three began singing . . . . . PrAz 28  
 utter sounds in a **v** that many don't . . . . . 2Esd 5:7  
 together with one **v** and with the same . . . . . 4Macc 8:29

## Ww

## WAGES

The **w** of the righteous lead to life; the . . . . . Prv 10:16  
 Her profits and **w** will be sacred to the . . . . . Is 23:18  
 to pieces; all her **w** will be burned; I . . . . . Mic 1:7  
 give them their **w**, beginning with . . . . . Mt 20:8  
 days' worth of **w** and gave them to . . . . . Lk 10:35  
 was worth a year's **w**! Why wasn't it . . . . . Jn 12:5  
 The **w** that sin pays are death, but God's . . . . . Ro 6:23  
 the cries of the **w** of your field. . . . . Jas 5:4  
 gave her the full **w**, along with a . . . . . Tob 2:12  
 the godly person's **w**, and God's good . . . . . Sir 11:22  
 city should be supplied with land and **w**. . . . . 1Esd 4:56

## WAR

declared **w** on Sodom's King Bera. . . . . Gn 14:2  
 in number. And if **w** breaks out, they . . . . . Ex 1:10  
 When you go to **w** in your land against an . . . . . Nm 10:9  
 would be taken in **w**, and your young . . . . . Dt 1:39  
 organized for **w**, must cross over . . . . . Josh 1:14  
 you from death; in **w**, from the power of . . . . . Job 5:20  
 my hands for **w** so my arms can . . . . . Ps 18:34  
 You should make **w** with guidance; victory . . . . . Prv 24:6  
 they will no longer learn how to make **w**. . . . . Is 2:4  
 or by sword, or by **w**, or by horses, or . . . . . Hos 1:7  
 involved in civil **w** becomes a . . . . . Mt 12:25  
 involved in civil **w** will collapse . . . . . Mk 3:24  
 involved in civil **w** becomes. . . . . Lk 11:17  
 It wages a **w** against the law of . . . . . Ro 7:23  
 were mighty in **w**, and routed. . . . . Heb 11:34  
 and I will make **w** on them with the . . . . . Rev 2:16  
 join him in the **w** because they . . . . . Jdt 1:11  
 the midst of great **w**, people call such . . . . . Wis 14:22  
 the cowardly about **w**, or with a . . . . . Sir 37:11

who were very large and experts in **w**. . . . . Bar 3:26  
 it can't defend itself from **w** or robbers. . . . . LJer 13  
 He strapped on his **w** armor and waged . . . . . 1Macc 3:3  
 because of the **w**, so that those . . . . . 2Macc 2:14  
 went to start a **w** at Carchemish on . . . . . 1Esd 1:23  
 put an end to the **w** by killing him . . . . . 3Macc 1:2  
 let's go and make **w** on the sea so that . . . . . 2Esd 4:14  
 enemy's orchard in **w**, but instead we . . . . . 4Macc 2:14

**WATER**

flows from Eden to **w** the garden, and . . . . . Gn 2:10  
 she said, "I pulled him out of the **w**." . . . . . Ex 2:10  
 be washed with **w**. The priest will . . . . . Lv 1:9  
 will take holy **w** in a clay jar, and . . . . . Nm 5:17  
 can eat, and also **w** with money so you . . . . . Dt 2:6  
**LORD** dried up the **w** of the Reed Sea in. . . . . Josh 2:10  
 my bread; my roars pour out like **w** . . . . . Job 3:24  
 by streams of **w**, which bears fruit. . . . . Ps 1:3  
 Drink **w** from your own cistern, gushing. . . . . Prv 5:15  
 impure; your beer is diluted with **w** . . . . . Is 1:22  
 me my bread and my **w**, my wool and my . . . . . Hos 2:5  
 I baptize with **w** those of you who have . . . . . Mt 3:11  
 I baptize you with **w**, but he will . . . . . Mk 1:8  
 baptize you with **w**, but the one who . . . . . Lk 3:16  
 I baptize with **w**. Someone greater. . . . . Jn 1:26  
 John baptized with **w**, but in only a few. . . . . Ac 1:5  
 washing her in a bath of **w** with the word . . . . . Eph 5:26  
 ways to wash with **w**, laying on of . . . . . Heb 6:2  
 and his voice sounded like rushing **w**. . . . . Rev 1:15  
 up out of the **w** and tried to . . . . . Tob 6:3  
 prepare earth and **w**, for I'm coming . . . . . Jdt 2:7  
 you. You gave them **w** from a sharp rock. . . . . Wis 11:4  
**W** will put out a blazing fire, and giving . . . . . Sir 3:30  
 that swarm in the **w**, bless the Lord, . . . . . PrAz 56  
 to the stream of **w**. Timothy told the . . . . . 1Macc 5:40  
 to drink wine or **w** alone while wine . . . . . 2Macc 15:39  
 bread nor drank **w**, as he was . . . . . 1Esd 9:2  
 the rock so that **w** flowed in. . . . . 2Esd 1:20  
 were plenty of **w** springs in the . . . . . 4Macc 3:10

**WEALTH**

serve, they will leave it with great **w**. . . . . Gn 15:14  
 home with great **w** and many cattle. . . . . Josh 22:8  
 Offer a bribe from your **w** for me? . . . . . Job 6:22  
 than the overabundant **w** of the wicked. . . . . Ps 37:16  
 sorts of precious **w**, we'll fill our . . . . . Prv 1:13  
 my mother, the **w** of Damascus and . . . . . Is 8:4  
 rich, I've gained **w** for myself, in all. . . . . Hos 12:8  
 the other. You cannot serve God and **w**. . . . . Mt 6:24  
 false appeal of **w**, and the desire . . . . . Mk 4:19  
 he wasted his **w** through . . . . . Lk 15:13  
 this to make the **w** of his glory known . . . . . Ro 9:23  
 to receive power, **w**, wisdom, and . . . . . Rev 5:12  
 sight, he lived in **w** and gave to the . . . . . Tob 14:2  
 us? What good were our **w** and pretension? . . . . . Wis 5:8  
 people will be honored because of their **w**. . . . . Sir 10:30  
 can't give either **w** or money. If . . . . . LJer 34  
 they could catch. Now they've taken our **w**. . . . . 1Macc 6:24  
 to take the great **w** as payment for her . . . . . 2Macc 1:14  
 plunder your **w**, and put an end to. . . . . 2Esd 15:63

**WEALTHY**

Abram was very **w** in livestock, silver, . . . . . Gn 13:2  
 There was a **w** man from the tribe of . . . . . 1Sa 9:1  
**W** people? They just don't understand . . . . . Ps 49:20  
 The riches of the **w** are their strong . . . . . Prv 10:15  
 the excess of the **w** won't let them . . . . . Ecc 5:12  
 in a city whose **w** are full of violence . . . . . Mic 6:12  
 very hard for the **w** to enter God's . . . . . Mk 10:23  
 even when someone is very **w**. . . . . Lk 12:15  
 Those who are **w** should find satisfaction . . . . . Jas 1:10  
 and I've grown **w**, and I don't need . . . . . Rev 3:17

**WEDDING**

men, and his young women had no **w** songs . . . . . Ps 78:63  
 on the day of his **w**, on the day of his. . . . . Song 3:11  
 or a bride her **w** dress? Yet you . . . . . Jer 2:32

responded, "The **w** guests can't mourn. . . . . Mt 9:15  
 Jesus said, "The **w** guests can't fast . . . . . Mk 2:19  
 can't make the **w** guests fast while . . . . . Lk 5:34  
 day there was a **w** in Cana of . . . . . Jn 2:1  
 the glory, for the **w** day of the Lamb . . . . . Rev 19:7  
 will celebrate her **w**. I know that . . . . . Tob 6:13  
 a great **W**. They are bringing . . . . . 1Macc 9:37  
 in place of a **w** song, as they were . . . . . 3Macc 4:6  
 son went into his **w** chamber, he fell . . . . . 2Esd 10:1

**WIDOW**

Stay as a **w** in your father's . . . . . Gn 38:11  
 Don't treat any **w** or orphan badly . . . . . Ex 22:22  
 He cannot marry a **w**, a divorced woman, . . . . . Lv 21:14  
 promise of a **w** or a divorced . . . . . Nm 30:9  
 and Abigail, Nabal's **w** from Carmel . . . . . 1Sa 27:3  
 the childless, do nothing good for the **w**. . . . . Job 24:21  
 orphans; let his wife turn into a **w** . . . . . Ps 109:9  
 defend the orphan; plead for the **w** . . . . . Is 1:17  
 Don't oppress the **w**, the orphan, the . . . . . Zec 7:10  
 no children he left his **w** to his brother . . . . . Mt 22:25  
 dies, leaving a **w** but no children, . . . . . Mk 12:19  
**w**. She never left . . . . . Lk 2:37  
 if a particular **w** has children or . . . . . ITJ 5:4  
 a queen! I'm not a **w**. I'll never see . . . . . Rev 18:7  
 had lived as a **w** in her house for. . . . . Jdt 8:4  
 to abuse the **w**. Let's show that . . . . . Wis 2:10  
 nor that of a **w** when she pours out . . . . . Sir 35:17  
 rejoice over me, a **w** deserted by many. . . . . Bar 4:12  
 show mercy to a **w**, nor can they do . . . . . LJer 37  
 do for you? I am a **w** and abandoned by . . . . . 2Esd 2:4  
 and now I'm a **w** and left all alone . . . . . 4Macc 16:10

**WIDOWS**

your wives will be **w**, and your children . . . . . Ex 22:24  
 You have sent **w** away empty; crushed . . . . . Job 22:9  
 and defender of **w** is God in his holy . . . . . Ps 68:5  
 the ones who cheat **w** out of their . . . . . Mk 12:40  
 there were many **w** in Israel during . . . . . Lk 4:25  
 because their **w** were being . . . . . Ac 6:1  
 who are single and **w** that it's good for . . . . . 1Co 7:8

**ORPHANS AND THE WIDOWS**

Dt 16:11, 16:14; 24:19, 20, 21; 26:12, 13

**ORPHANS AND WIDOWS**

Dt 10:18, 14:29; Ps 146:9; Is 9:17; Eze 22:7; Jas 1:27; Tob 1:8

**WIFE**

and embraces his **w**, and they become . . . . . Gn 2:24  
 of your father's **w**, it is your . . . . . Lv 18:8  
 suspect that his **w** has had an affair . . . . . Nm 5:12  
 your neighbor's **w**. Do not crave your. . . . . Dt 5:21  
 Achsah as a **w** to the one who. . . . . Jgs 1:12  
 orphans; let his **w** turn into a widow. . . . . Ps 109:9  
 blessed. Rejoice in the **w** of your youth. . . . . Prv 5:18  
 children of the **w** who has been . . . . . Is 54:1  
 her! She is not my **w**, and I am not her . . . . . Hos 2:2  
 man is having sex with his father's **w**! . . . . . 1Co 5:1  
 living with your **w** in ways that honor . . . . . 1Pt 3:7  
 will show you the bride, the Lamb's **w**. . . . . Rev 21:9  
 as for your own **w** or husband. Do . . . . . Sir 4:10  
 daughter to be my **w**, and I will become . . . . . 1Macc 10:54  
 gift to Antiochis, the king's secondary **w**. . . . . 2Macc 4:30  
 his own country, and clings to his own **w**. . . . . 1Esd 4:20  
 I came to take a **w** for him and set . . . . . 2Esd 9:47  
 your neighbor's **w** or anything that . . . . . 4Macc 2:5

**WINE**

drank some of the **w**, became drunk, and. . . . . Gn 9:21  
 of a hin of **w** for a drink . . . . . Ex 29:40  
 must not drink **w** or beer when you . . . . . Lv 10:9  
 must refrain from **w** and brandy. He or . . . . . Nm 6:3  
 your grain, your **w**, your oil, and the . . . . . Dt 7:13  
 stop providing my **w** that makes gods . . . . . Jgs 9:13  
 and drinking **w** in their oldest . . . . . Job 1:13  
 when their wheat and **w** are everywhere! . . . . . Ps 4:7  
 plenty, and your vats will burst with **w**. . . . . Prv 3:10  
 it, and dug out a **w** vat in it. He . . . . . Is 5:2

He must not drink **w** and liquor . . . . . Lk 1:15  
 tenth of my grain, **w**, olive oil, . . . . . Tob 1:7  
 a container of **w** and a flask of . . . . . Jdt 10:5  
 held a six-day **w** festival for . . . . . GkEst 1:5  
 or indulge in **w** with her, since . . . . . Sir 9:9  
 food and mix the **w**. Lock the door and . . . . . Bel 11  
 harmful to drink **w** or water alone . . . . . 2Macc 15:39  
 The first wrote, "**w** is superior . . . . . 1Esd 3:10  
 and much unmixed **w** on the following . . . . . 3Macc 5:2  
 and don't drink **w**, but eat only . . . . . 2Esd 9:24

**NEW WINE**

Gn 27:28; Nm 18:12; 2Kgs 18:32; 2Ch 31:5; Is 36:17; 65:8; Hos  
 2:8, 22; 4:11; 9:2; Jl 1:10; 2:19, 24; Mt 9:17; Mk 2:22; Lk 5:37; 5:38,  
 39; Ac 2:13

**WISDOM**

tree would provide **w**, so she took some . . . . . Gn 3:6  
 will show your **w** and insight to the . . . . . Dt 4:6  
 tent cord pulled up? They die without **w**. . . . . Job 4:21  
 righteous recite **w**, their tongues . . . . . Ps 37:30  
 is to teach **w** and discipline, to . . . . . Prv 1:2  
 it, and by my **w**, since I'm so . . . . . Is 10:13  
 out to the city; **w** appears when one . . . . . Mic 6:9  
 and sinners.' But **w** is proved to be . . . . . Mt 11:19  
 this? What's this **w** he's been given? . . . . . Mk 6:2  
 He was filled with **w**, and God's favor . . . . . Lk 2:40  
 with exceptional **w**. We will put them . . . . . Ac 6:3  
 God's riches, **w**, and knowledge are so . . . . . Ro 11:33  
 anyone who needs **w** should ask God, . . . . . Jas 1:5  
 power, wealth, **w**, and might, and . . . . . Rev 5:12  
 deplended, **w** is required . . . . . Jdt 8:29  
**W** will avoid a deceptive soul that plans . . . . . Wis 1:4  
 for education and **w**. It is also . . . . . Sir 1:1  
 carefully, and you'll come to know **w**. . . . . Bar 3:9  
 Solomon possessed **w**, he offered up a . . . . . 2Macc 2:9  
 on account of his **w** and will be called . . . . . 1Esd 3:7  
 in your Law, and reproved him in your **w**. . . . . 2Esd 8:12  
 giving glory to God, who possesses all **w**. . . . . 4Macc 1:12

**GOD'S WISDOM**

1Kgs 3:28; Lk 11:49; 1Co 1:21; 1:24; 2:7

**WITNESS**

you and me, and let something be our **w**. . . . . Gn 31:44  
 with evil people to act as a lying **w**. . . . . Ex 23:1  
 though you are a **w**, knowing . . . . . Lv 5:1  
 witnesses. But one **w** alone cannot. . . . . Nm 35:30  
 A solitary **w** against someone in any . . . . . Dt 19:15  
 But it is to be a **w** between us and you . . . . . Josh 22:27  
 My leanness rises to bear **w** against me . . . . . Job 16:8  
 the moon, a faithful **w** in the sky. Selah . . . . . Ps 89:37  
 a false **w** who breathes lies, and one who . . . . . Prv 6:19  
 Zechariah, Jeberechiah's son, to **w** it. . . . . Is 8:2  
 pride is a **w** against him; both . . . . . Hos 5:5  
 dust off your feet as a **w** against them. . . . . Mk 6:11  
 dust off your feet as a **w** against them. . . . . Lk 9:5  
 He came as a **w** to testify concerning the . . . . . Jn 1:7  
 along with us a **w** to his . . . . . Ac 1:22  
 Son, and God is my **w** that I continually . . . . . Ro 1:9  
 when he bore **w** beforehand about . . . . . 1Pt 1:11  
 who bore **w** to the word of God and to the . . . . . Rev 1:2  
 works and bear **w** to them with due . . . . . Tob 12:7  
 Jerusalem came to **w** the good things . . . . . Jdt 15:8  
 them. God is **w** to their thoughts. . . . . Wis 1:6  
 giving accurate **w** to the wickedness . . . . . Sir 31:24  
 personally bore **w** against them. . . . . 2Macc 7:6  
 mountains cannot **w** to God; the hills . . . . . Ps 151:1:3  
 He wanted to **w** with steely heart . . . . . 3Macc 5:47

**FALSE WITNESS**

Prv 6:19; 12:17; 14:5; 19:5; Mk 14:57

**WITNESSES**

of my people's **w**, I will give it to . . . . . Gn 23:11  
 there are no **w** and she isn't. . . . . Nm 5:13  
 and earth as my **w** against you today; . . . . . Dt 4:26  
 after us. It **w** that we too . . . . . Josh 22:27  
 to send your **w** against me and . . . . . Job 10:17

because false **w** and violent . . . . . Ps 27:12  
 False **w** won't go unpunished, and liars . . . . . Prv 19:9  
 them bring their **w** as a defense; let . . . . . Is 43:9  
 by the mouth of two or three **w**. . . . . Mt 18:16  
 and said, "Why do we need any more **w**? . . . . . Mk 14:63  
 You are **w** of these things. . . . . Lk 24:48  
 and you will be my **w** in Jerusalem, in . . . . . Ac 1:8  
 basis of the testimony of two or three **w**. . . . . Heb 10:28  
 will allow my two **w** to prophesy for . . . . . Rev 11:3  
 will be called as **w** against their . . . . . Wis 4:6  
 and earth as **w**. I have dismissed. . . . . 2Esd 2:14

**FALSE WITNESSES**

Ps 27:12; Prv 19:9; Mt 26:60; Ac 6:13; 1Co 15:15; Sus 6:1

**WOMAN**

God fashioned a **w** and brought her to . . . . . Gn 2:22  
 from Levi's household married a Levite **w**. . . . . Ex 2:1  
 Israelites: If a **w** conceives a child . . . . . Lv 12:2  
 When a man or a **w** commits any sin . . . . . Nm 5:6  
 out the man or **w** who has done this . . . . . Dt 17:5  
 But the **w** had taken the two men and . . . . . Josh 2:4  
 like a foolish **w**. Will we receive . . . . . Job 2:10  
 them right there—like a **w** giving birth, . . . . . Ps 48:6  
 the mysterious **w**, from the foreign . . . . . Prv 2:16  
 a sign. The young **w** is pregnant and is . . . . . Is 7:14  
 make love to a **w** who has a lover . . . . . Hos 3:1  
 man who looks at a **w** lustfully has . . . . . Mt 5:28  
 A **w** was there who had been bleeding for . . . . . Mk 5:25  
 a son. This **w** who was labeled . . . . . Lk 1:36  
 Jesus replied, "**w**, what does that have . . . . . Jn 2:4  
 a believing Jewish **w** and a Greek father. . . . . Ac 16:1  
 A married **w** is united with her husband . . . . . Ro 7:2  
 put up with that **w**, Jezebel, who . . . . . Rev 2:20  
 You are a godly **w**. So pray for us, and . . . . . Jdt 8:31  
 Perhaps the young **w** who pleases you the . . . . . GkEst 2:4  
 to the barren **w** who has kept . . . . . Wis 3:13  
 trust yourself to a **w** whom you hate. . . . . Sir 7:26  
 deprived the lonely **w** of her daughters. . . . . Bar 4:16  
 neither man nor **w**, young nor old. . . . . 1Esd 1:50  
 Go ask a pregnant **w** whether her womb . . . . . 2Esd 4:40  
 How the **w** gave birth alone to such . . . . . 4Macc 15:17

**WOMEN**

these human **w** were, so they . . . . . Gn 6:2  
 helping the Hebrew **w** give birth and you . . . . . Ex 1:16  
**w** during their menstruation, men or women . . . . . Lv 15:33  
 by having illicit sex with Moabite **w** . . . . . Nm 25:1  
 every town—men, **w**, and . . . . . Dt 23:4  
 thousand men and **w** died that day, all . . . . . Josh 8:25  
 of us are born of **w**, have few days. . . . . Job 14:1  
 the young **w** servants following . . . . . Ps 45:14  
 your house, and to nourish your young **w**. . . . . Prv 27:27  
 Seven **w** will grab one man on that day. . . . . Is 4:1  
 dashed, and their pregnant **w** ripped open. . . . . Hos 13:16  
 thousand men plus **w** and children had . . . . . Mt 14:21  
 at that time for **w** who are pregnant . . . . . Mk 13:17  
 you above all **w**, and he has . . . . . Lk 1:42  
 us to stone **w** like this. What do . . . . . Jn 8:5  
 along with some **w**, including Mary . . . . . Ac 1:14  
 the **w** should be quiet during the meeting. . . . . 1Co 14:34  
**W** received back their dead by . . . . . Heb 11:35  
 defiled with **w**, for these people . . . . . Rev 14:4  
 the Israelite men, **w**, and children . . . . . Jdt 4:11  
 of her own for **w** in King . . . . . GkEst 1:9  
 even these men and **w** when you sent . . . . . Wis 12:8  
 were those born of **w** made to indulge in . . . . . Sir 10:18  
 Menstruating **w** and others who . . . . . LJer 27  
 You treated **w** from Israel this way, and . . . . . Sus 57  
 the footprints of men, **w**, and children!" . . . . . Bel 20  
 groaned; young **w** and men became . . . . . 1Macc 1:26  
 their breasts, **w** filled the . . . . . 2Macc 3:19  
 citizens, with the **w**, grieve over him . . . . . 1Esd 1:30  
 Even the young **w** who had just been . . . . . 3Macc 1:19  
 territory, and **w** will give birth to . . . . . 2Esd 5:8  
 Even **w** were thrown down from a cliff . . . . . 4Macc 4:25



**WONDERS**

tests, miracles, **w**, war, a strong . . . . . Dt 4:34  
 signs and **w** against Pharaoh, . . . . . Neh 9:10  
 and unsearchable things, **w** beyond number? . . . . . Job 9:10  
 the God who works **w**, you have . . . . . Ps 77:14  
 me are signs and **w** in Israel from the . . . . . Is 8:18  
 God, who has done **w** for you; and my . . . . . Jl 2:26  
 cause **w** to occur in the heavens . . . . . Ac 2:19  
 to search out the **w** of the Lord. . . . . Sir 18:6  
 As you have worked **w** before, so rescue us . . . . . PrAz 20  
 people how many **w** the Lord God has . . . . . 2Esd 2:48

**SIGNS AND WONDERS**

Dt 7:19; 26:8; 29:3; 34:11; Neh 9:10; Ps 135:9; Is 8:18; Jer 32:20;  
 32:21; Mt 24:24; Mk 13:22; Jn 4:48; Ac 4:30; 5:12; 14:3; 15:12;  
 15:19; 2Th 2:9; Wis 8:8; Bar 2:11

**WORD**

events, the **LORD**'s **w** came to Abram a . . . . . Gn 15:1  
 took the **LORD**'s **w** seriously rushed . . . . . Ex 9:20  
 to the **LORD**'s **w** as he was . . . . . Nm 3:16  
 can return with **w** about the route we . . . . . Dt 1:22  
 Jericho sent **w** to Rahab. "Send . . . . . Josh 2:3  
 Job would send **w** and purify his . . . . . Job 1:5  
**LORD**'s **w** is tried and true . . . . . Ps 18:30  
 to depression, but a good **w** encourages . . . . . Prv 12:25  
 Hear the **LORD**'s **w**. Listen to our God's . . . . . Is 1:10  
 The **LORD**'s **w** that came to Hosea . . . . . Hos 1:1  
 This fulfilled the **w** spoken through . . . . . Mt 2:17  
 door. Jesus was speaking the **w** to them . . . . . Mk 2:2  
 and servants of the **w** handed down to us . . . . . Lk 1:2  
 beginning was the **W** and the Word was . . . . . Jn 1:1  
 Many who heard the **w** became believers and . . . . . Ac 4:4  
 as though God's **w** has failed . . . . . Ro 9:6  
 God's **w** is living, active, and . . . . . Heb 4:12  
 witness to the **w** of God and to the . . . . . Rev 1:2  
 I remembered the **w** that Amos the prophet . . . . . Tob 2:6  
 They sent **w**, therefore, to all the . . . . . Jdt 4:4  
 of mercy, you made everything by your **w**. . . . . Wis 9:1  
 in action and **w** so that a blessing . . . . . Sir 3:8  
 carried out the **w** that he spoke . . . . . Bar 2:1  
 Antiochus sent **w** throughout his . . . . . 1Macc 1:41  
 fulfilled the **LORD**'s **w** through Jeremiah. . . . . 1Esd 1:54  
 The **LORD**'s **w** came to Ezra, Chusi's son, . . . . . 2Esd 1:4  
 He gave the **w**, and the soldiers brought . . . . . 4Macc 9:11

**WORK**

completed all the **w** that he had done, . . . . . Gn 2:2  
 foremen of forced **w** gangs over the . . . . . Ex 1:11  
 tent, doing the **w** of the dwelling . . . . . Nm 3:7  
 Six days you may **w** and do all your tasks . . . . . Dt 5:13  
 blessed the **w** of his hands so . . . . . Job 1:10  
 of God, will understand it was God's **w** . . . . . Ps 64:9  
 and your hard **w** will end up in a . . . . . Prv 5:10  
 ignore the **LORD**'s **w**, they can't see . . . . . Is 5:12  
 people for a day's **w**. The other owed . . . . . Lk 7:41  
 one who sent me and by completing his **w** . . . . . Jn 4:34  
 they had seen my **w** for forty years. . . . . Heb 3:9  
 saw your powerful **w**, they praised you, . . . . . 3Macc 2:8  
 But it was the **w** of your hands, and . . . . . 2Esd 3:5

**WORKERS**

all the skilled **w** building the . . . . . Ex 36:4  
 of poor or needy **w**, whether they are . . . . . Dt 24:14  
 me, "Stay with my **w** until they've . . . . . Ru 2:21  
 wicked, destruction for **w** of iniquity? . . . . . Job 31:3  
 prey, but hard **w** receive precious . . . . . Prv 12:27  
**W** with flax will be dismayed; carders and . . . . . Is 19:9  
 with consecrated **w** at temples; so now . . . . . Hos 4:14  
 you can imagine, but there are few **w** . . . . . Mt 9:37  
 Zebedee in the boat with the hired **w** . . . . . Mk 1:20  
 but there are few **w**. Therefore plead . . . . . Lk 10:2  
 Tryphosa, who are **w** for the Lord . . . . . Ro 16:12  
 was overseeing the **w** in the fields, and . . . . . Jdt 8:3  
 He directed the **w** to build the walls and . . . . . 1Macc 10:11

**WORKS**

all his amazing **w** that our ancestors . . . . . Jgs 6:13  
 as I mention my **w** to the king . . . . . Ps 45:1  
 wool and flax; she **w** joyfully with her . . . . . Prv 31:13  
 with his tools **w** it over coals . . . . . Is 44:12  
 longer bow down to the **w** of your hands! . . . . . Mic 5:13  
 wisdom is proved to be right by her **w** . . . . . Mt 11:19  
 show him greater **w** than these so that . . . . . Jn 5:20  
 the mighty **w** of God in our own . . . . . Ac 2:11  
 God will repay everyone based on their **w** . . . . . Ro 2:6  
 And yet God's **w** were completed at . . . . . Heb 4:3  
 I know your **w**, your labor, and your . . . . . Rev 2:2  
 May all your **w** forever praise you! . . . . . Tob 3:11  
 secret ways and is a partner in God's **w**. . . . . Wis 8:4  
 because the **LORD**'s **w** are wonderful, and . . . . . Sir 11:4  
 All **w** of the **LORD**, bless the **LORD**, sing . . . . . PrAz 34  
 everyone about the **w** of the great God . . . . . 2Macc 3:36  
 All of heaven's **w** move and tremble . . . . . 1Esd 4:36  
 treasures so that your **w** might be seen. . . . . 2Esd 6:40

**WORLD**

there is no one like me in the whole **w** . . . . . Ex 9:14  
 to the **LORD**; he set the **w** on top of them! . . . . . 1Sa 2:8  
 light into darkness, banished from the **w** . . . . . Job 18:18  
 justice in the **w** rightly; he will . . . . . Ps 9:8  
 and my anger at the **w** will be finished . . . . . Is 10:25  
 before him—the **w** and all who dwell . . . . . Na 1:5  
 the kingdoms of the **w** and their glory . . . . . Mt 4:8  
 gain the whole **w** but lose their . . . . . Mk 8:36  
 single instant all the kingdoms of the **w**. . . . . Lk 4:5  
 on all people was coming into the **w**. . . . . Jn 1:9  
 the whole **w**, no other name has . . . . . Ac 4:12  
 is being spread throughout the whole **w** . . . . . Ro 1:8  
 everything and created the **w** through him . . . . . Heb 1:2  
 over the whole **w**, to test those who . . . . . Rev 3:10  
 truth mark all your ways. You judge the **w**. . . . . Tob 3:2  
 fills the whole **w**. It holds . . . . . Wis 1:7  
 spreads over the whole **w** from them. . . . . Sir 38:8  
 across the whole **w**, they carry out . . . . . LJer 61  
 whole inhabited **w**, freed the city, . . . . . 2Macc 2:22  
 king of the entire **w**. The **LORD** has . . . . . 1Esd 2:2  
 the shadow of this **w** and received . . . . . 2Esd 2:39  
 and cheat ourselves out of this sweet **w**? . . . . . 4Macc 8:23

**WORRY**

Don't **w** about your possessions because . . . . . Gn 45:20  
 living without **w** in the same way as . . . . . Jgs 18:7  
 Don't **w** about all the things people say . . . . . Ecc 7:21  
 me, Daniel, to **w**. My visions . . . . . Dn 7:15  
 with fear; all faces turn red with **w** . . . . . Jl 2:6  
 say to you, don't **w** about your life . . . . . Mt 6:25  
 and you don't **w** about what people . . . . . Mk 12:14  
 authorities, don't **w** about how to . . . . . Lk 12:11  
 him again you can be glad and I won't **w** . . . . . Phil 2:28  
 So don't **w**, my child, about the fact . . . . . Tob 4:21  
 about her will soon be free from **w**. . . . . Wis 6:15

**WORSHIP**

people began to **w** in the **LORD**'s name. . . . . Gn 4:26  
 come back here and **w** God on this . . . . . Ex 3:12  
 There you will **w** other gods, made of wood . . . . . Dt 4:28  
 by them. Don't serve them or **w** them . . . . . Josh 23:7  
 family among all the nations will **w** you . . . . . Ps 22:27  
 has been heard. **w** God and keep God's . . . . . Ecc 12:13  
 with idols; they **w** their handiwork, . . . . . Is 2:8  
 I'm a Hebrew. I **w** the **LORD**, the God . . . . . Jon 1:9  
 you all these if you bow down and **w** me . . . . . Mt 4:9  
 Their **w** of me is empty since they teach . . . . . Mk 7:7  
 who gathered to **w** were praying . . . . . Lk 1:10  
 that it is necessary to **w** in Jerusalem . . . . . Jn 4:20  
 them over to **w** the stars in the . . . . . Ac 7:42  
 of the Law, the **w**, and the promises . . . . . Ro 9:4  
 he said, All of God's angels must **w** him . . . . . Heb 1:6  
 the throne. They **w** the one who lives . . . . . Rev 4:10  
 They used to **w** with me there and . . . . . Tob 5:14  
 the nations would **w** only. . . . . Jdt 3:8

led them astray to **w**unthinking . . . . . Wis 11:15  
 bowing down to **w**their Lord, the . . . . . Sir 50:17  
 say to yourself, Lord, we want to **w**you . . . . . LJer 5  
 cover your servants and those who **w**you . . . . . PrAz 10  
 king said to him, "Why don't you **w**Bel?" . . . . . Bel 4  
 you the passion to **w**him and to do his . . . . . 2Macc 1:3  
 the differences in **w**and diet, and . . . . . 3Macc 3:7  
 support the temple **w**and recognized the . . . . . 4Macc 3:20

**BOW DOWN AND WORSHIP**

Dn 3:5, 6, 10, 15; Mt 4:9

**WORSHIP GOD**

Ex 3:12; 2Sa 15:32; Ps 55:19; Ecc 12:13; Jn 4:24; Ac 18:13; 1Co  
 14:25; Rev 19:10; 22:9

**WORSHIP HIM**

Dt 13:4; 1Sa 7:3; 12:14; Ps 22:29; 117:1; Jn 4:23; Heb 1:6; Rev  
 7:15; 19:10; 22:3

**WORSHIP OTHER GODS**

Dt 4:28; 13:6, 13; 28:36; 1Sa 26:19; 2Kgs 17:35; 17:37, 38; Jer 25:6

**WORSHIP THE LORD**

Ex 10:7, 8, 11, 24, 26; 12:31; 1Sa 15:25; 15:30; 2Sa 15:8; 2Kgs  
 17:25; 17:28, 34, 41; 2Ch 33:16; Ezr 6:21; Ps 147:12; Jer 7:2; Jon  
 1:9; Mt 4:10; Lk 4:8; 1Esd 1:4

**WORSHIPPED**

to the **LORD** and **w**in the **LORD**'s name . . . . . Gn 12:8  
 in his hand. Then he bowed low and **w** . . . . . Nm 22:31  
 you are displacing **w**their . . . . . Dt 12:2  
 on his face and **w**. Joshua said to . . . . . Josh 5:14  
 his head, fell to the ground, and **w**. . . . . Job 1:20  
 consulted, and **w**. Their bones won't . . . . . Jer 8:2  
 to Baal-peor, and **w**a thing of shame . . . . . Hos 9:10  
 those in the boat **w**Jesus and said, . . . . . Mt 14:33  
 temple area but **w**God with fasting . . . . . Lk 2:37  
 Our ancestors **w**on this mountain, but you . . . . . Jn 4:20  
 a lie, and they **w**and served the . . . . . Ro 1:25  
 Amen," and the elders fell down and **w** . . . . . Rev 5:14  
 their parents and **w**the God of heaven, . . . . . Jdt 5:8  
 honored Bel and **w**it daily, but . . . . . Bel 4  
 to the ground and **w**and blessed . . . . . 1Macc 4:55  
 They fell to the ground and **w**the Lord. . . . . 1Esd 9:47  
 While they **w**God and conducted their. . . . . 3Macc 3:4

**BOWED DOWN AND WORSHIPPED**

Ex 4:31; 12:27; 1Ch 29:20; Neh 8:6; Dn 3:7

**WORSHIPPED THE LORD**

Gn 24:48; 1Sa 1:19; 7:4; 15:31; 2Kgs 17:32; 17:33; Neh 9:3; Jon  
 1:16

**WORSHIPPING**

some of them for **w**the **LORD** our God . . . . . Ex 10:26  
 and be led astray, **w**and serving them . . . . . Dt 4:2  
 might make our children stop **w**the **LORD**. . . . . Josh 22:15  
 while he was **w**in the temple of . . . . . Is 37:38  
 As they were **w**the Lord and fasting . . . . . Ac 13:2  
 They didn't stop **w**demons and idols . . . . . Rev 9:20  
 and bowed down, **w**God. They said . . . . . Jdt 13:17  
 and behind them, **w**them. But say to . . . . . LJer 5  
 said, "I will keep **w**the Lord my God, . . . . . Bel 25

**WORTHY****WORTHY OF PRAISE**

1Ch 16:25; Ps 48:1; 96:4; 145:3; Phi 4:8

**WRATH**

which the **LORD** devastated in anger and **w**! . . . . . Dt 29:23  
 them live so that **w**won't come down on . . . . . Josh 9:20  
 yourselves, for **w**brings punishment . . . . . Job 19:29  
 the peak of their **w**, the wicked don't. . . . . Ps 10:4  
 help in the day of **w**, but righteousness . . . . . Prv 11:4  
 my proud, jubilant ones, to execute my **w**. . . . . Is 13:3  
 in my anger, and I took him away in my **w**. . . . . Hos 13:11  
 God's **w**is being revealed from heaven. . . . . Ro 1:18  
 on the throne and from the Lamb's **w**! . . . . . Rev 6:16  
 and send your **w**upon their heads. . . . . Jdt 9:9

the desert. But that **w**didn't last long, . . . . . Wis 18:20  
 sins." Mercy and **w**are with him, and. . . . . Sir 5:6  
 now, the Lord's **w**and anger haven't . . . . . Bar 1:13  
 As a result, he turned **w**away from Israel. . . . . 1Macc 3:8  
 cruel tyrant and the **w**of a savage beast. . . . . 2Macc 4:25  
 Law, so that God's **w**may not come on . . . . . 1Esd 8:21  
 with extreme **w**because the . . . . . 3Macc 5:30  
 Those who see that **w**will be horrified . . . . . 2Esd 15:37  
 you won't escape the revenge of divine **w**!" . . . . . 4Macc 9:32

**WRONG****DO WRONG**

Ex 23:2, 21; 1Sa 17:29; Ps 37:1; Prv 28:21; Is 26:10; 31:2; Eze 33:13;  
 33:18; Mt 7:23; Ro 6:13; Rev 22:11; 4Macc 2:12

**DOING WRONG**

Jer 4:22; 9:5; Ro 13:3; 1Co 6:8; 2Pt 2:15; LJer 17

**DONE WRONG**

Gn 31:36; 2Sa 24:17; 1Kgs 8:47; 2Ch 6:37; Neh 9:33; Est 1:16;  
 Job 36:23; Ps 19:12; Jer 16:10; 37:18; Dn 9:5; Col 2:13; 1Jn 1:9;  
 Wis 12:12

**Yy****YOKE**

flawless and on which no **y** has been laid . . . . . Nm 19:2  
 will put an iron **y** on your neck until . . . . . Dt 28:48  
 with twelve **y** of oxen before . . . . . 1Ki 19:19  
 one thousand **y** of oxen, and one . . . . . Job 42:12  
 shattered the **y** that burdened . . . . . Is 9:4  
 will break off his **y** from you . . . . . Na 1:13  
 Put on my **y**, and learn from me . . . . . Mt 11:29  
 like a chafing ox **y**, the one who holds . . . . . Sir 26:7  
 have you made your **y** so heavy on our . . . . . 1Macc 8:31

**YOUTH**

evil from their **y**. I will never . . . . . Gn 8:21  
 since his **y** responded, "My . . . . . Nm 11:28  
 While still a **y**, Hadad escaped to Egypt . . . . . 1Ki 11:17  
 for from my **y** I raised the orphan as a . . . . . Job 31:18  
 the sins of my **y** or my wrongdoing. . . . . Ps 25:7  
 the partner of her **y**, she even forgets . . . . . Prv 2:17  
 Lord showed their **y** no pity . . . . . Is 9:17  
 in the days of her **y**, like the time . . . . . Hos 2:15  
 A **y** here has five barley loaves and two . . . . . Jn 6:9  
 followed since my **y** because, from the . . . . . Ac 26:4  
 to the fullest as we did in our **y**. . . . . Wis 2:6  
 child, from your **y**welcome education, . . . . . Sir 6:18  
 not only for the **y**but also for the . . . . . 2Macc 6:31  
 the prime of their **y**, had ropes tied . . . . . 3Macc 4:8  
 already aging and past the strength of **y**." . . . . . 2Esd 5:55  
 Enjoy your **y**by changing your customs and. . . . . 4Macc 8:8

**Zz****ZACCHAEUS**

A man there named **Z**, a ruler among tax . . . . . Lk 19:2  
 Simon, Joseph, and **Z**with a sufficient . . . . . 2Macc 10:19

**ZADOK**

Ahitub's son **Z**and Ahimelech's son . . . . . 2Sa 8:17  
 But **Z**the priest, Jehoiada's son Benaiah, . . . . . 1Ki 1:8  
 are descendants of **Z**, the ones who may . . . . . Eze 43:19  
 was the father of **Z**, Zadok was the . . . . . Mt 1:14  
 son of **Z**son of Ahitub son of Amariah son . . . . . 1Esd 8:2  
 son of Shallum son of **Z**son of Ahitub . . . . . 2Esd 1:1

**ZEBEDEE**

James the son of **Z**and his brother . . . . . Mt 4:21  
 their father **Z**in the boat with . . . . . Mk 1:20

**ZEBULON**

borne him six sons." So she named him **Z**. . . . . Gn 30:20  
 Issachar, **Z**, and Benjamin. . . . . Ex 1:3

from **Z**, Eliab, Helon's son. . . . . Nm 1:9  
 Reuben, Gad, Asher, **Z**, Dan, and Naphtali . . . . . Dt 27:13  
 for the clans of **Z**. The border of . . . . . Josh 19:10  
 the princes of **Z** and the princes of . . . . . Ps 68:27  
 cursed the land of **Z** and the land of . . . . . Is 9:1  
 the sea in the area of **Z** and Naphtali . . . . . Mt 4:13  
 from the tribe of **Z**, twelve thousand . . . . . Rev 7:8

**ZECHARIAH**

of Israel. His son **Z** succeeded . . . . . 2Ki 14:29  
 the priest and **Z**, Jeberechiah's . . . . . Is 8:2  
 word came to **Z** the prophet . . . . . Zec 1:1  
 to the blood of **Z** the son of . . . . . Mt 23:35  
 was a priest named **Z** who belonged to . . . . . Lk 1:5  
 Hilkiah, **Z**, and Jehiel (the chief . . . . . 1Esd 1:8  
 Elijah and Enoch, **Z** and Hosea, Amos, . . . . . 2Esd 1:39

**ZEDEKIAH**

**Z**, Chenaanah's son, made iron horns for . . . . . 1Ki 22:11  
 year of King **Z**, Josiah's son . . . . . Jer 1:3  
 of Mahseiah son of **Z** son of Hasadiah . . . . . Bar 1:1  
 He appointed **Z** king of Judea and . . . . . 1Esd 1:44

**ZEPHANIAH**

the chief priest, **Z** the priest . . . . . 2Ki 25:18  
 and the priest **Z**, Maaseiah's son . . . . . Jer 21:1  
 word that came to **Z**, Cushi's son . . . . . Zep 1:1  
 and Hosea, Amos, Joel, Micah, Obadiah, **Z**, . . . . . 2Esd 1:39

**ZERAH**

sons: Nahath, **Z**, Shammah . . . . . Gn 36:13  
 from **Z**, the Zerahite clan; from Shaul . . . . . Nm 26:13  
 great-grandson of **Z**. He was from . . . . . Josh 7:1  
 of Perez and **Z**, whose mother was . . . . . Mt 1:3

**ZERUBBABEL**

Pedaiah's family: **Z** and Shimei . . . . . 1Ch 3:19  
 Judah's Governor **Z**, Shealtiel's son . . . . . Hg 1:1  
 Salathiel. Salathiel was the father of **Z** . . . . . Mt 1:12  
 of Rhesa son of **Z** son of Shealtiel . . . . . Lk 3:27  
 should we praise **Z**? He also was like . . . . . Sir 49:11  
 third young man, **Z**, who had spoken of . . . . . 1Esd 4:13

**ZIBA**

household named **Z**, and he was . . . . . 2Sa 9:2

**ZIKLAG**

**Z**, Madmannah, Sansannah . . . . . Josh 15:31

**ZILPAH**

given his servant **Z** to his daughter. . . . . Gn 29:24

**ZIMRI**

woman was **Z** the son of Salu, . . . . . Nm 25:14  
**Z**, his officer who led half the . . . . . 1Ki 16:9  
 all the kings of **Z**, Elam, and Media. . . . . Jer 25:25  
 like Phinehas did against **Z**, Salu's son. . . . . 1Macc 2:26

**ZION**

the fortress of **Z**—which became . . . . . 2Sa 5:7  
 the **LORD**'s covenant from David's City **Z** . . . . . 1Ki 8:1  
 appoint my king on **Z**, my holy mountain! . . . . . Ps 2:6  
 Look, daughters of **Z**—on King Solomon . . . . . Song 3:11  
 Blow the horn in **Z**, give a shout on my . . . . . JI 2:1  
 stumbling block in **Z**, which is a rock . . . . . Ro 9:33  
 holy tent, and so I was established in **Z**. . . . . Sir 24:10  
 Neighbors of **Z**, listen! God has . . . . . Bar 4:9  
 gathered together and went up to Mount **Z**. . . . . 1Macc 4:37  
 the ruins of **Z**, to give us a . . . . . 1Esd 8:78

**DAUGHTER ZION**

2Kgs 19:21; Ps 9:14; Is 1:8; 16:1; 37:22; 52:2; 62:11; Jer 4:31; 6:2,  
 23; Lam 1:6; 2:1, 13, 18; 4:22; Mic 1:13; 4:8, 10, 13; Zep 3:14; Zec  
 2:10; 9:9; Mt 21:5; Jn 12:15

**MOUNT ZION**

2Kgs 19:31; Ps 48:2, 11; 74:2; 125:1; Is 4:5; 8:18; 10:12; 18:7; 24:23;  
 29:8; 31:4; 37:32; Lam 5:18; JI 2:32; Obad 17; 1:21; Mic 4:7; Heb  
 12:22; Rev 14:1; Jdt 9:13; 1Macc 4:37, 60; 5:54; 6:48, 62; 7:33;  
 10:11; 14:26; 2Esd 2:40, 42; 13:35

**ZOAR**

Egypt, as far as **Z** . . . . . Gn 13:10  
 Jericho Valley, Palm City—as far as **Z**. . . . . Dt 34:3  
 fugitives flee to **Z** . . . . . Is 15:5

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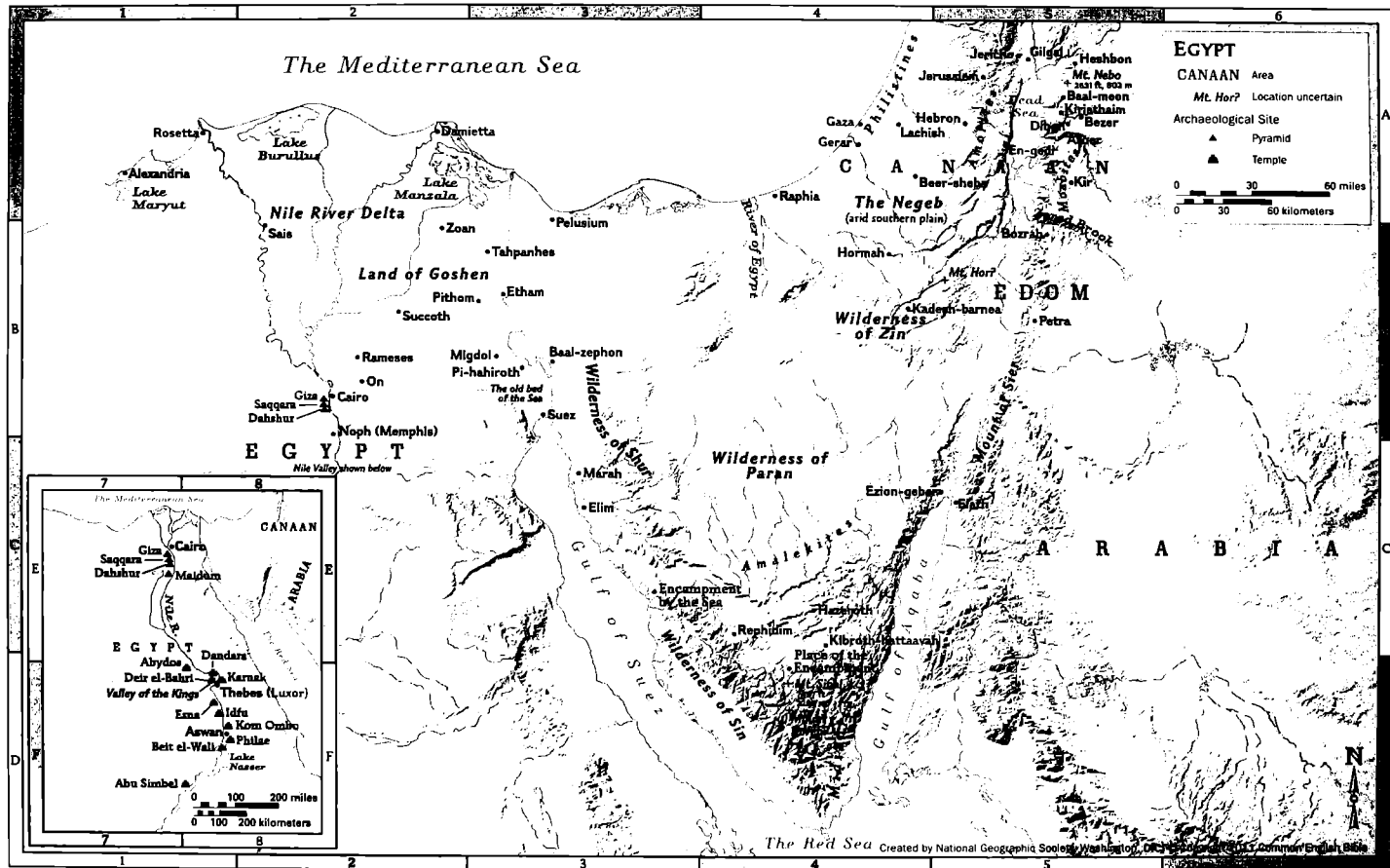
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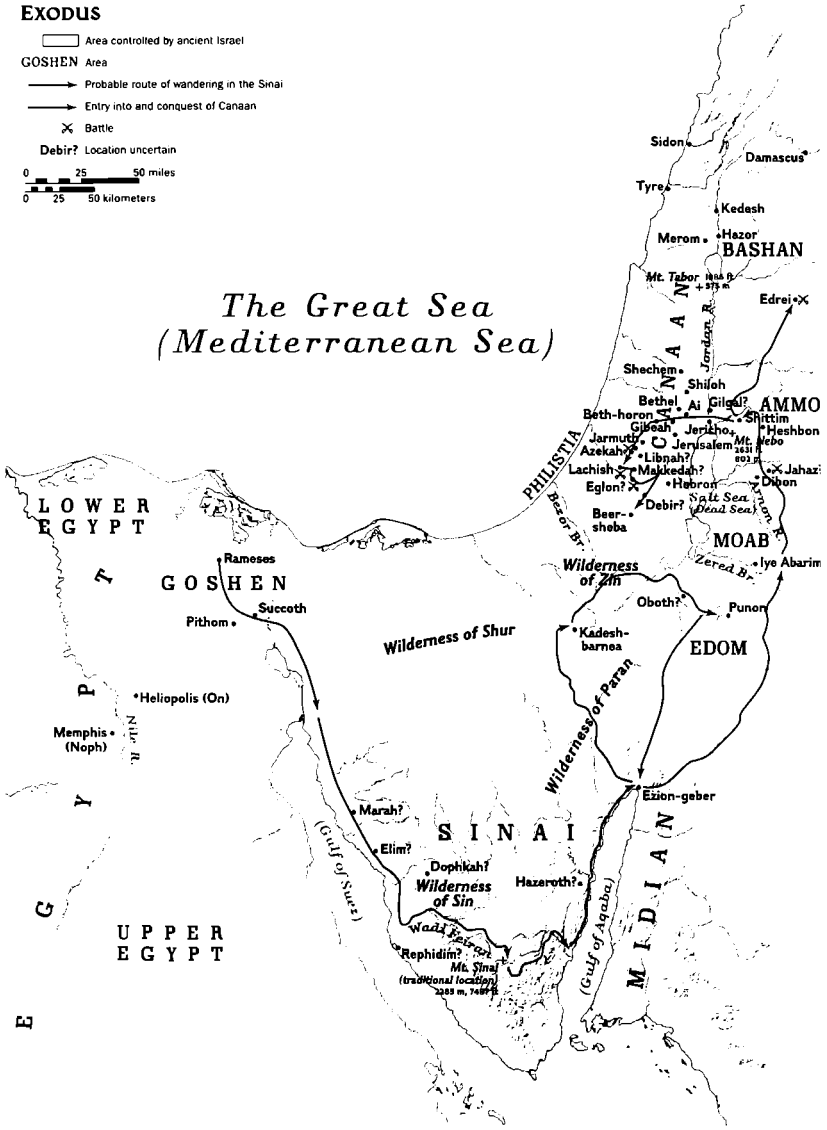
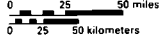
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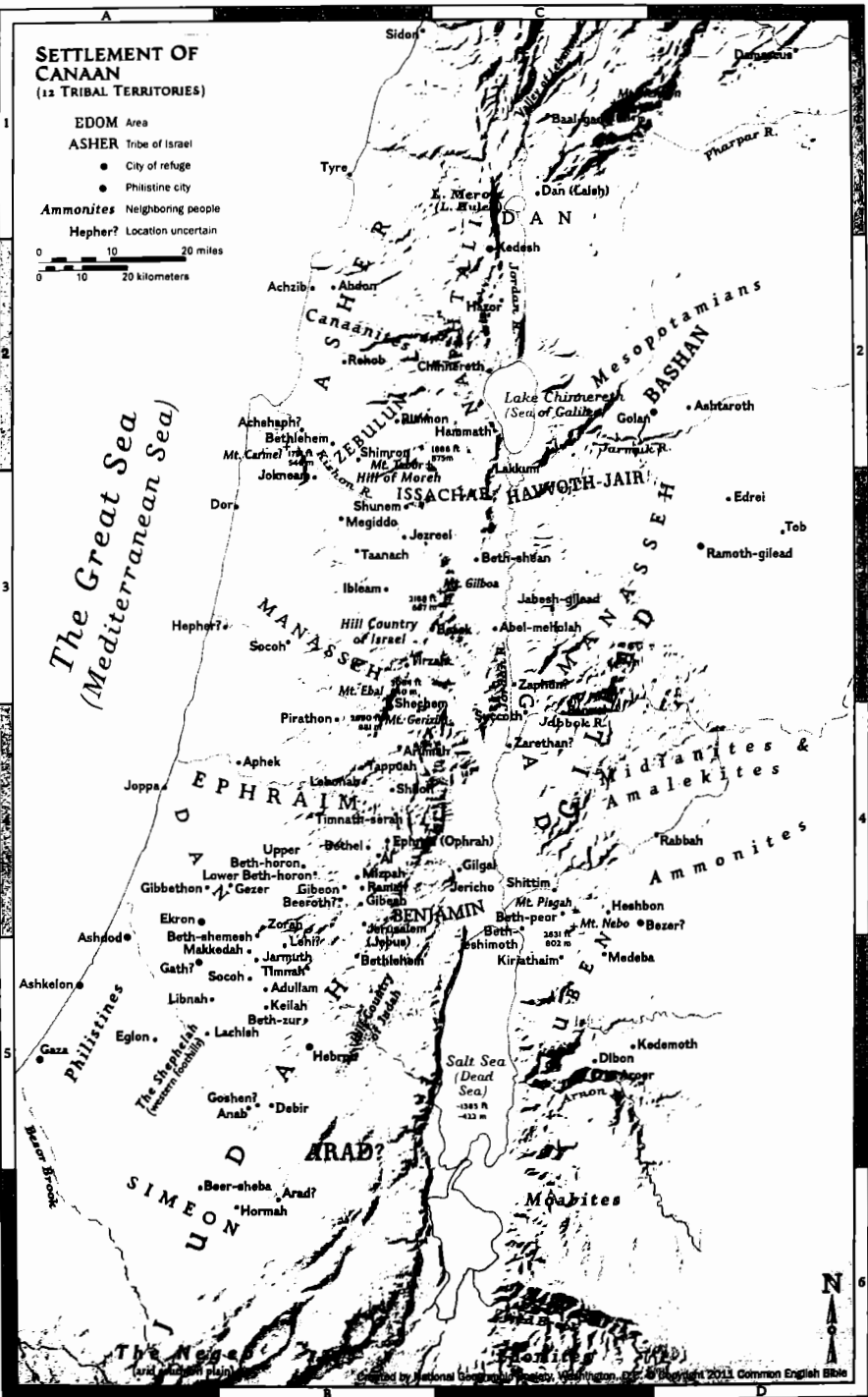
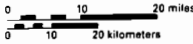
# EXODUS

- Area controlled by ancient Israel
- GOSHEN Area
- Probable route of wandering in the Sinai
- Entry into and conquest of Canaan
- ✕ Battle
- Debir? Location uncertain



**SETTLEMENT OF CANAAN**  
(12 TRIBAL TERRITORIES)

- EDOM** Area
- ASHER** Tribe of Israel
  - City of refuge
  - Philistine city
- Ammonites** Neighboring people
- Hepher?** Location uncertain








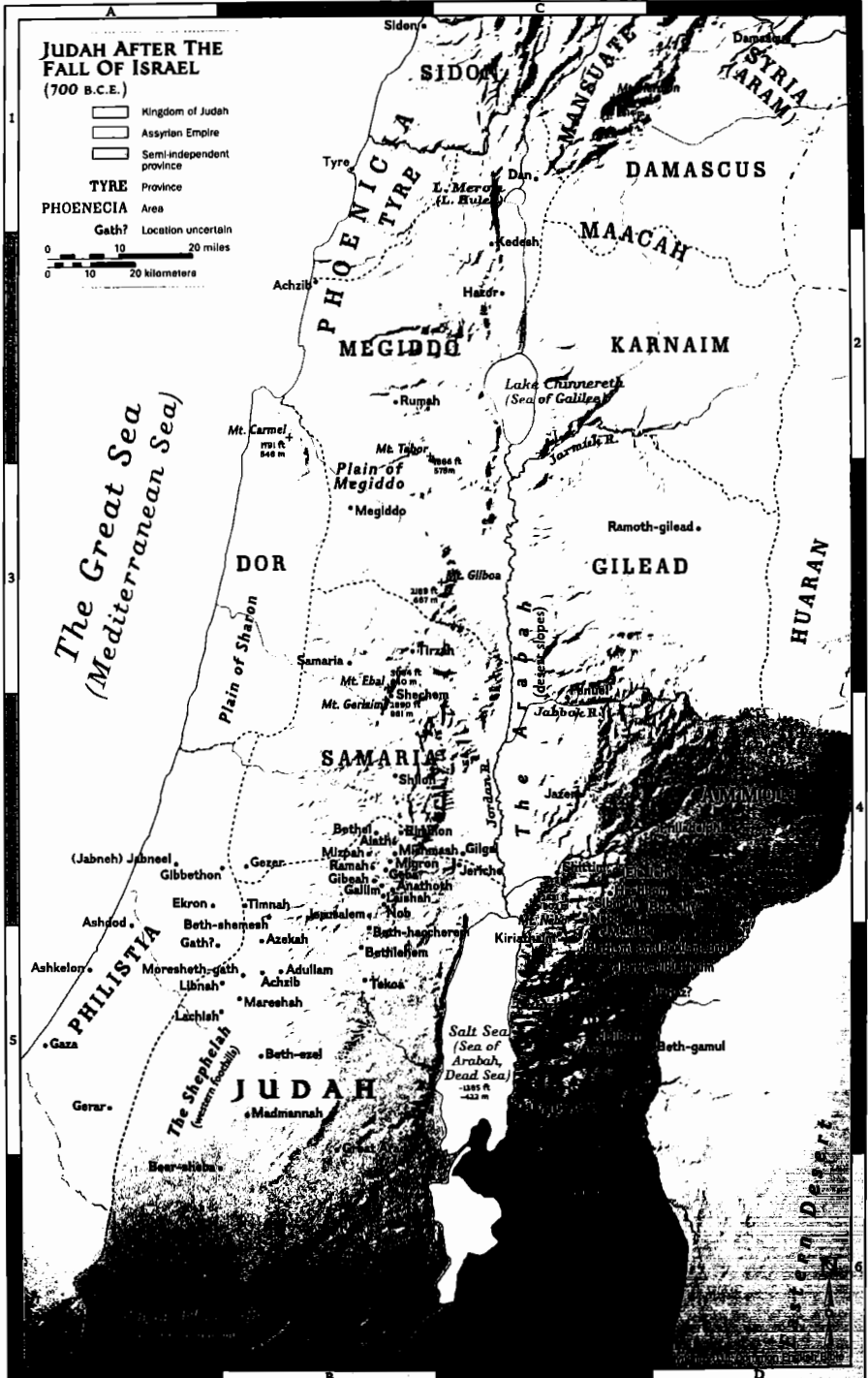
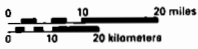


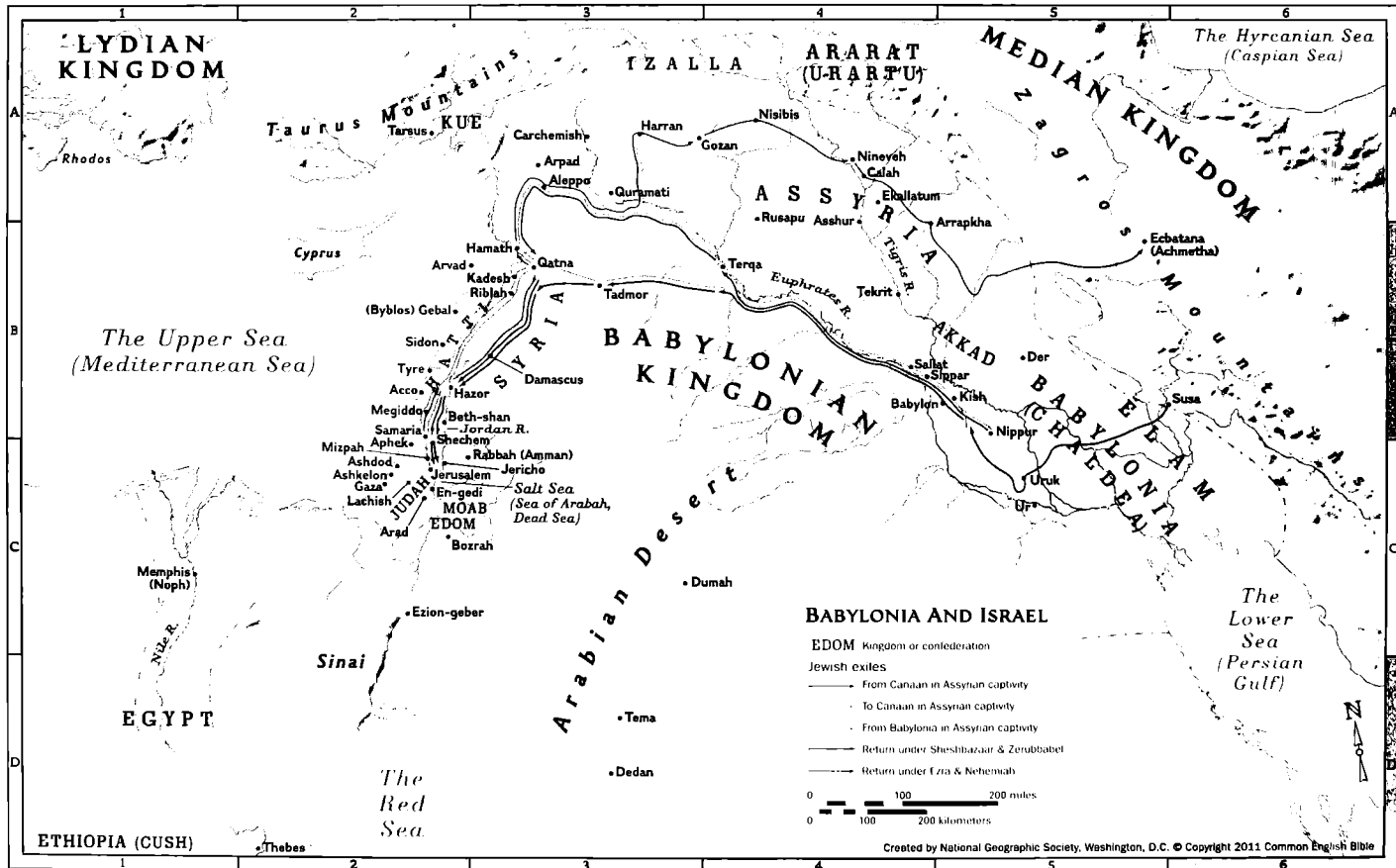


**JUDAH AFTER THE FALL OF ISRAEL (700 B.C.E.)**

-  Kingdom of Judah
-  Assyrian Empire
-  Semi-independent province

- TYRE** Province
- PHOENECIA** Area
- Gath?** Location uncertain

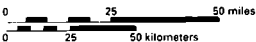




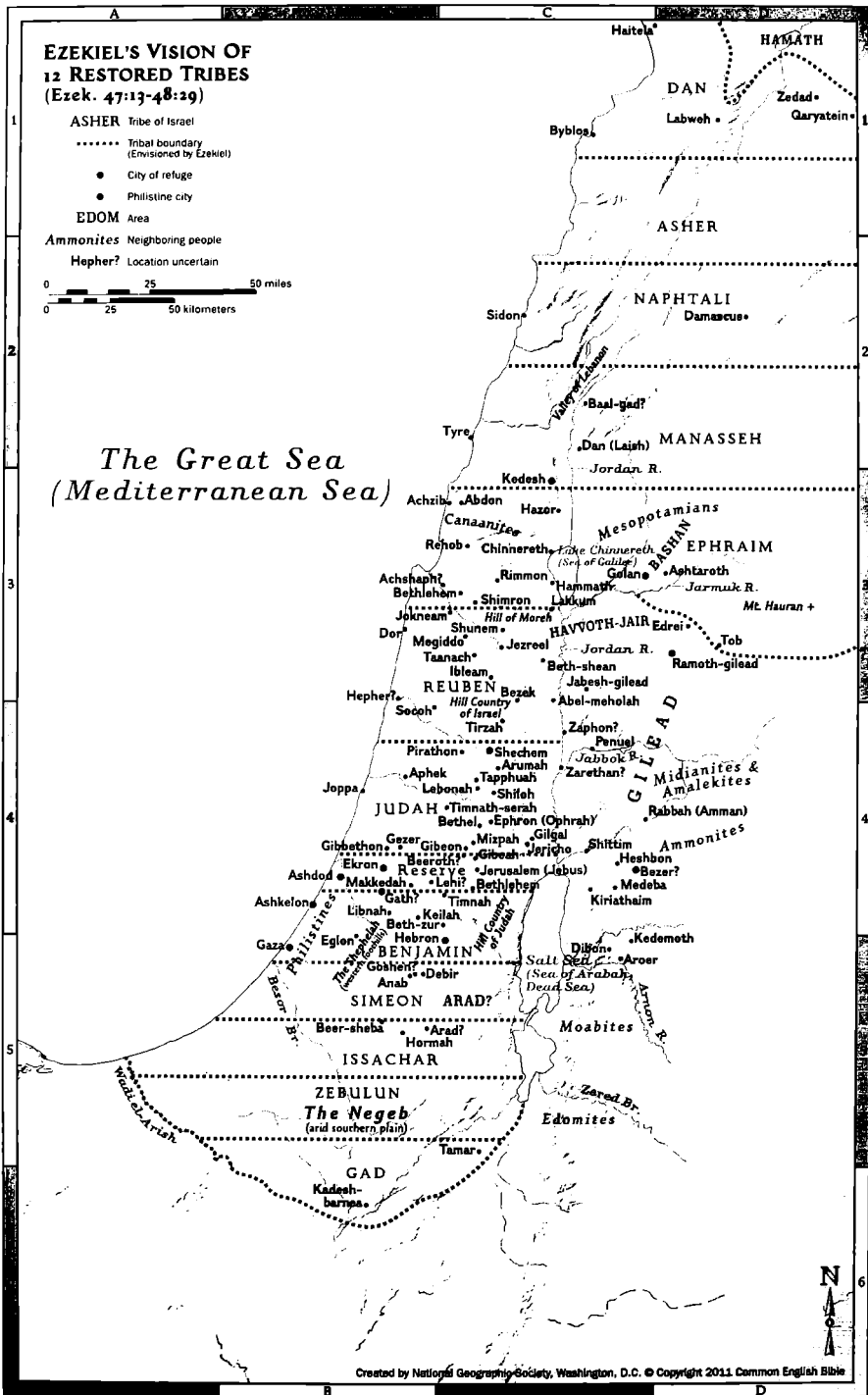
**EZEKIEL'S VISION OF  
12 RESTORED TRIBES  
(Ezek. 47:13-48:29)**

- ASHER** Tribe of Israel  
 ..... Tribal boundary (Envisioned by Ezekiel)  
 • City of refuge  
 • Philistine city

- EDOM** Area  
 Ammonites Neighboring people  
 Hopher? Location uncertain









*The Great Sea  
(Mediterranean Sea)*

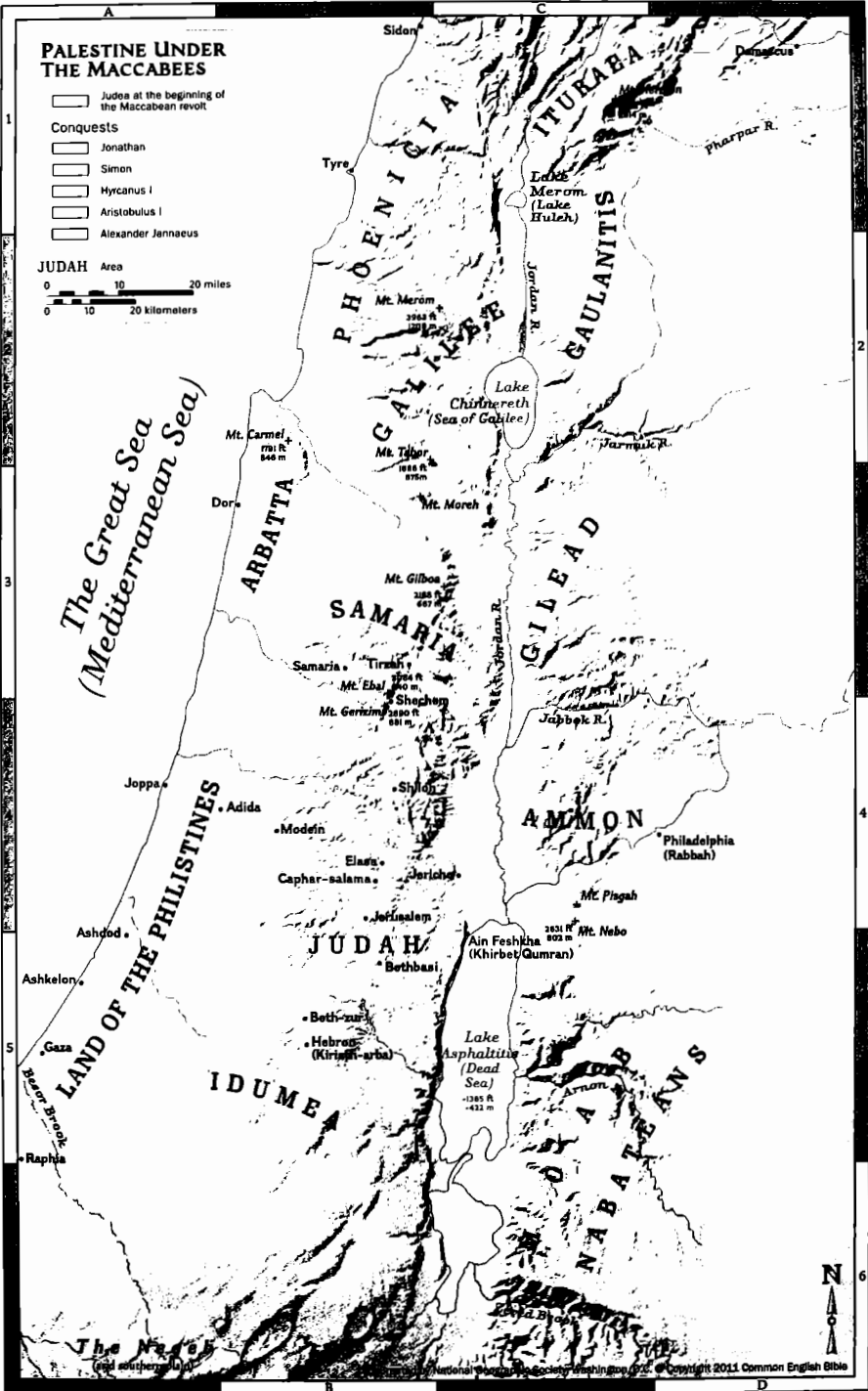
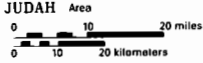


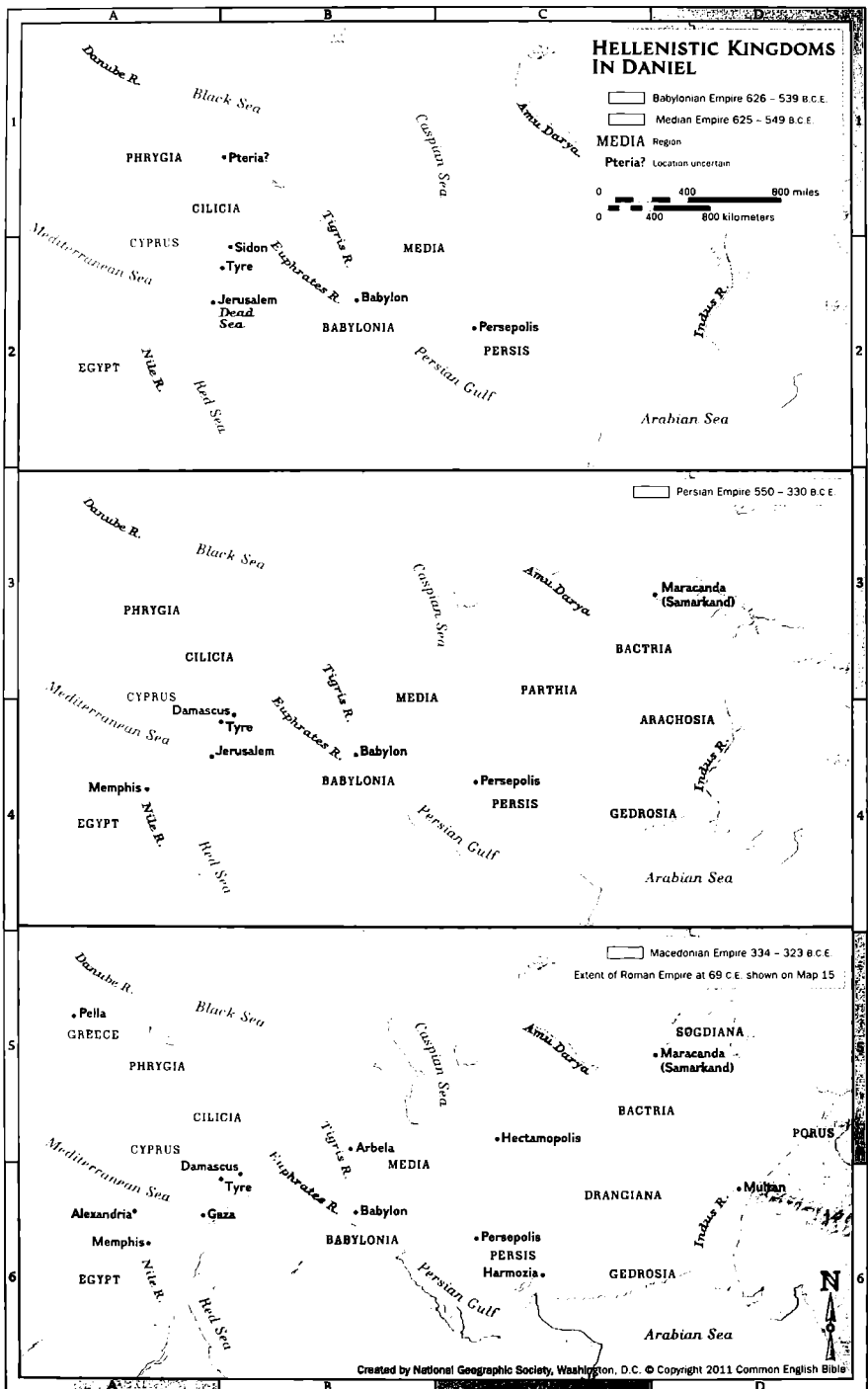


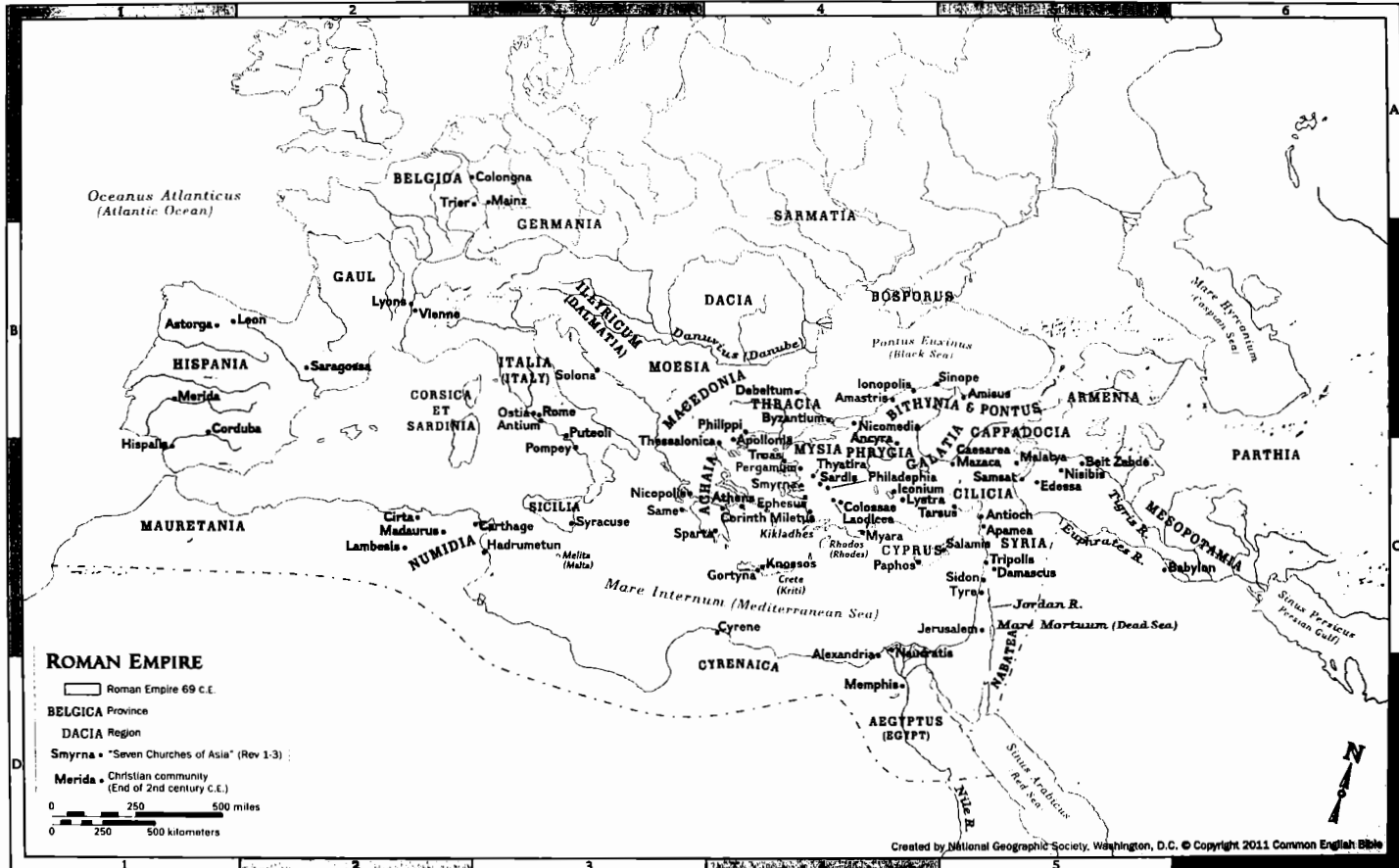


**PALESTINE UNDER THE MACCABEES**

-  Judah at the beginning of the Maccabean revolt
- Conquests**
-  Jonathan
-  Simon
-  Myrcanus I
-  Aristobulus I
-  Alexander Jannaeus







**ROMAN EMPIRE**

- Roman Empire 69 C.E.
  - BELGICA** Province
  - DACIA** Region
  - Smyrna** • "Seven Churches of Asia" (Rev 1:3)
  - Merida** • Christian community (End of 2nd century C.E.)
- 0 250 500 miles  
0 250 500 kilometers

**PALESTINE UNDER THE HERODS**

- PHOENECIA Kingdom or Province
- Boundary of Herod's Kingdom at greatest extent
- BATANEA Division of Israel
- Division boundary
- Damascus ● City of the Decapolis
- Marisa (Mareshah) ● Site
- Dion? ● Location uncertain

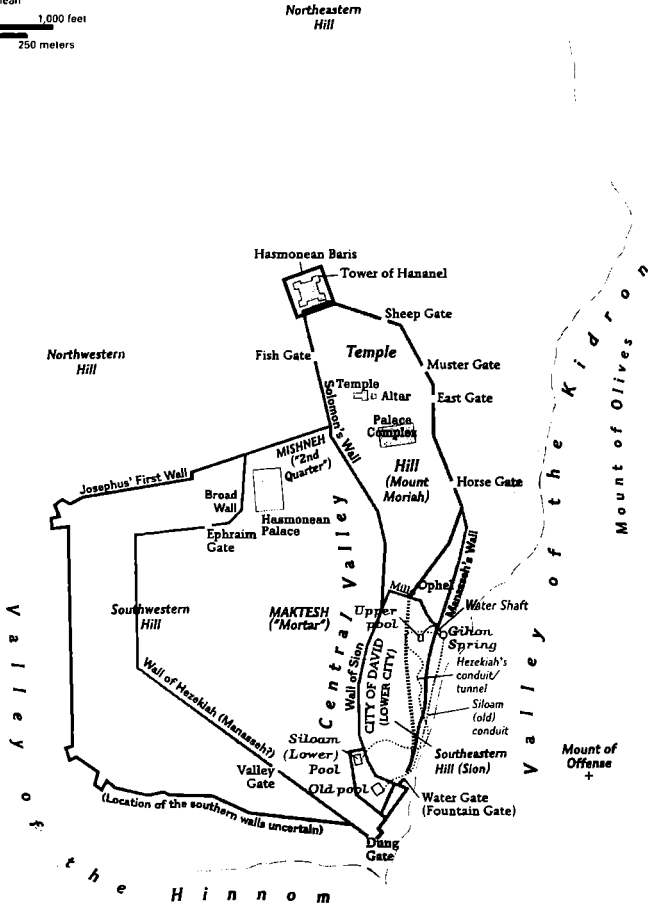


*Mare Magnum  
Vei Internum  
(Mediterranean  
Sea)*



**JERUSALEM  
(After Exile)**

- Jebusite city captured by David
- Additions**
- Solomon's
- 8th-7th centuries B.C. (Possibly by Hezekiah)
- Manasseh's
- Post-exile (Possibly by Nehemiah)
- Hasmonean



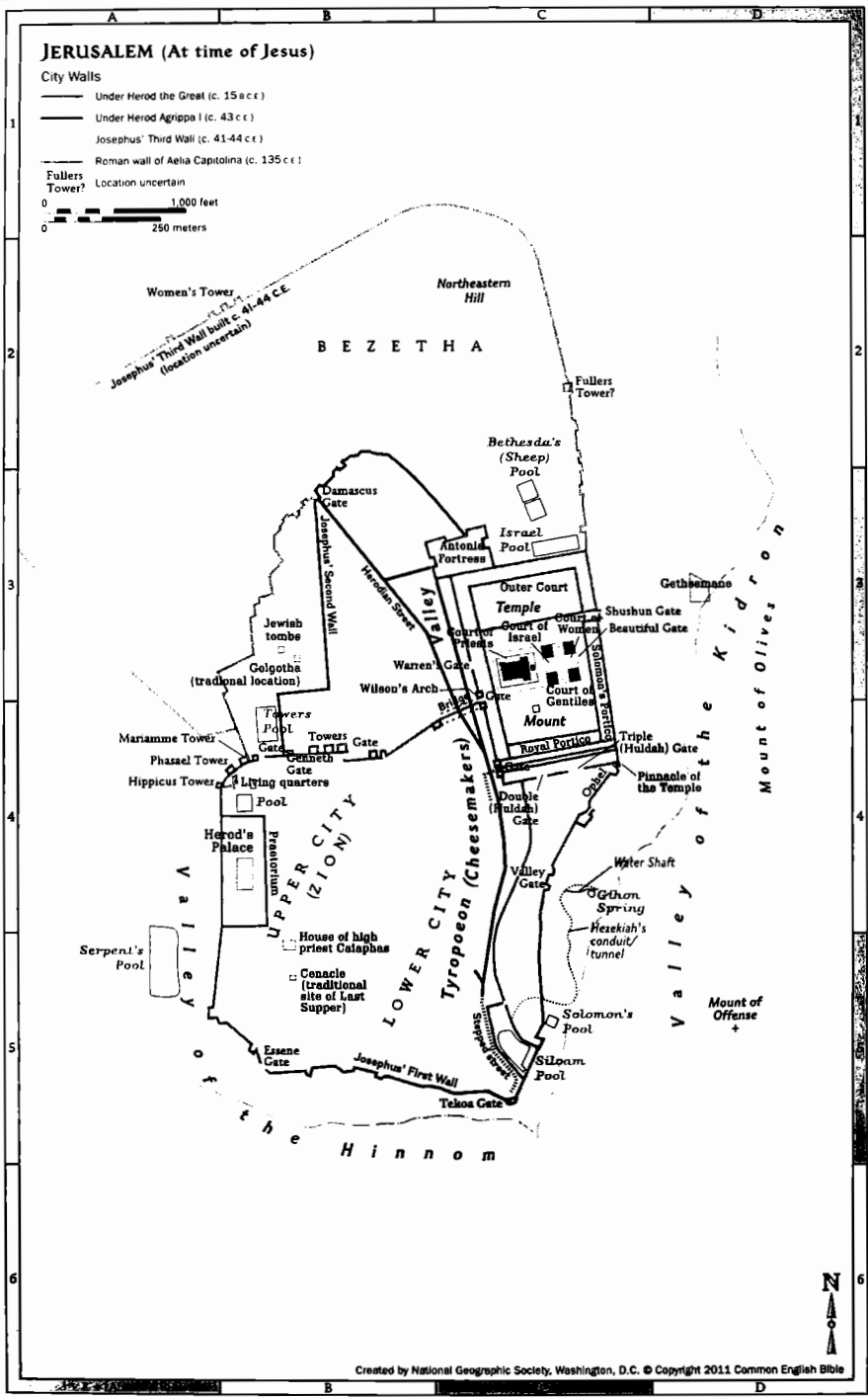
**JERUSALEM (At time of Jesus)**

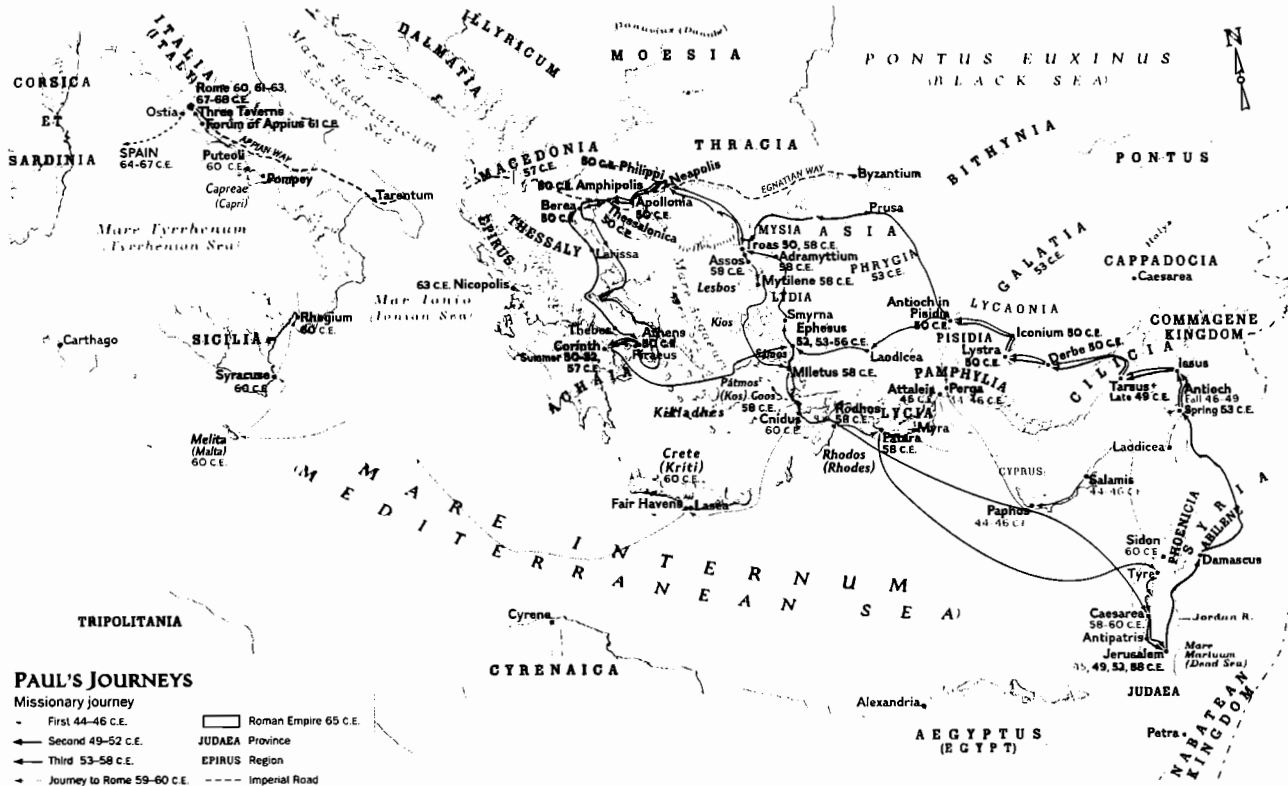
**City Walls**

- Under Herod the Great (c. 15 BCE)
- Under Herod Agrippa I (c. 43 CE)
- Josephus' Third Wall (c. 41-44 CE)
- Roman wall of Aelia Capitolina (c. 135 CE)

**Fullers Tower?**

Location uncertain



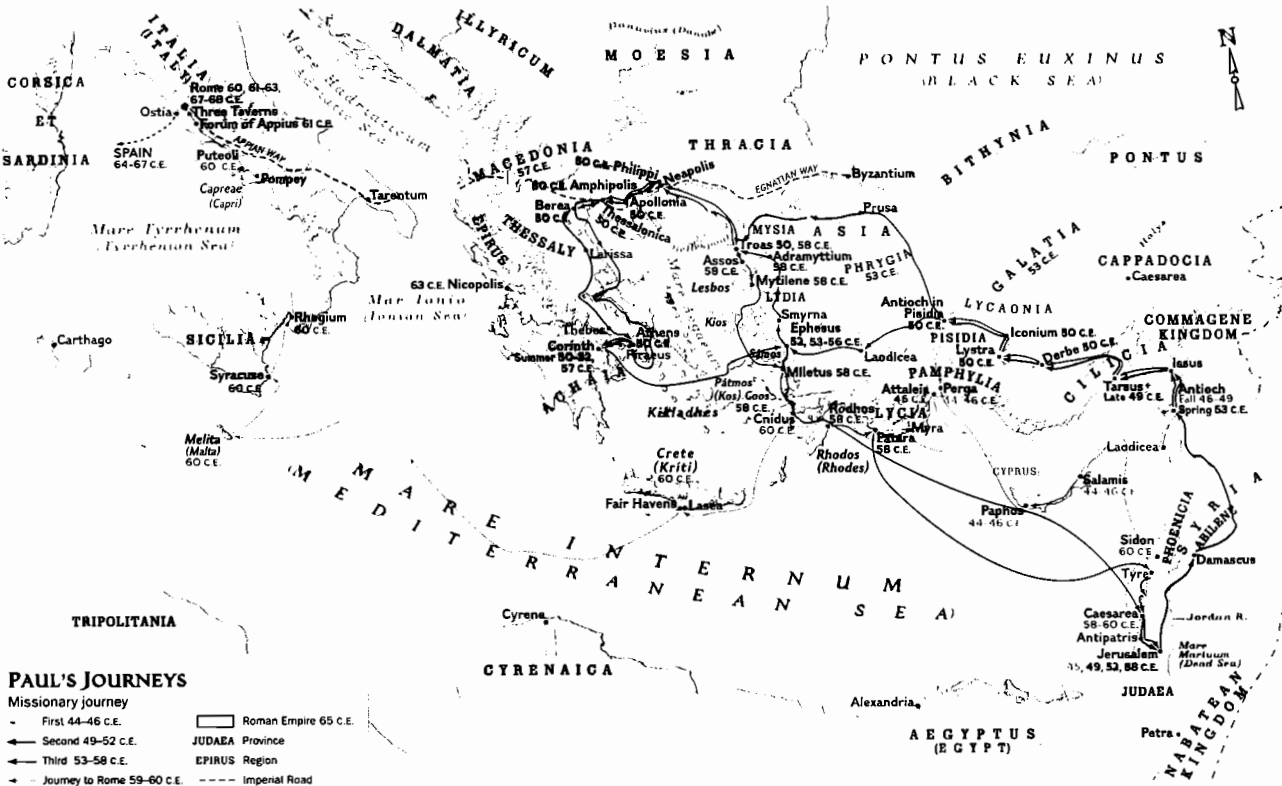


**PAUL'S JOURNEYS**

Missionary journey

- First 44-46 C.E.
- ← Second 49-52 C.E.
- ← Third 53-58 C.E.
- Journey to Rome 59-60 C.E.

Roman Empire 65 C.E.  
 JUDAEA Province  
 EPIRUS Region  
 - - - Imperial Road







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